



Faith Adventures for Children Together

Committed to URC Children Together:
enabling everyone to grow more like Jesus
together in the home, church and beyond.

For guidance on the purpose of the resource and how to use it as a launch pad for your engagement with children and families, please use this link:
<https://urc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/FACT-how-to-sheet.pdf>

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Theme: Our ordinary lives can lead us to extraordinary Godly encounters

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Introduction: What would be helpful to know in my planning?

Matthew and Tobit

This week we consider “ordinary” stargazers. It could be argued that they were far from ordinary – they came from a position of privilege as educated people with the resources to embark on a long journey carrying precious gifts – but they were busy doing what they “ordinarily” did and were led to an extraordinary encounter. It adds another layer of meaning to see these privileged people, who themselves were accustomed to being revered, kneeling in homage (a public show of respect) to the baby and his very ordinary parents.

The star could be compared to the ‘bat signal’ from Batman in that it appeared in order to call the stargazers to action. It leads us to ask what signs give us the prompt to seek God? What is our motivation for the things we do? They had been waiting to see a star like this – it was an expected thing, though they did not know when it would appear – so it might prompt conversations about things children are looking forward to, and signs that Christmas is getting closer. Be aware that not all children might be looking forward to Christmas.

Tobit is a book from the apocrypha. Christians





Explore

Ideas and activities to explore this week's Bible passage together

A way to explore the story

The Gospel reading reminds us of the stargazers coming to find Jesus from a distant country and the Tobit reading also calls to mind people across the world and through time seeing God's light and following it to Jesus. We too, whoever and wherever we are, can follow the signs God sends to lead us in the right way.

One way of exploring this theme is through a treasure hunt. Attached below are twelve cards. Each card tells a little bit about how Christmas is celebrated either in another part of the world or how it was celebrated in the past, reminding us that Jesus came for everyone – thousands upon thousands of people are celebrating the birth of Christ as we do.

On the back of each card, write or draw a clue of where the next card might be found. You can make these as simple or complex as you choose, depending on the age and interest of the children. Then hide each card, again judging by the children how hidden the card should be but give the first card to the children so that it gives them a clue as to where to find the next. As the group find each card, one child could read out what it says on the card and everyone could join in with the Christmas greeting written there. The final card should lead to where a nativity set/crib is set up, either the one in the church itself if they have one and it is accessible, or to one which the children can set up in the room where they are meeting.

Modern parables

Jesus used stories to help people understand the things of God, even though they weren't necessarily overtly Christian stories. Lots of children's books can be used in a similar way as a conversation starter on the week's theme. Examples are shared here but you may think of others too.

“Seek and Find” by Richard Scarry OR play this similar online game from Storytime Pup <https://youtu.be/PVOo3x7FplQ>

Talking together: How might we talk about the story together?

- We don't meet God in person so how do we encounter God today – what is a Godly encounter?
- The stargazers followed the star and it led to the manger. How might we follow God's light today?



Wondering together: suggested questions to use during activities

- The stargazers were looking forward to something special happening? I wonder what you are looking forward to most at the moment?
- I wonder if there's been a time you've felt close to God or seen something God is doing?

What's in the box (for under fives)

Use the special box or bag and sing "what's in the box/bag? What's in the box/bag? Let's see, let's see, what's in the box/bag" (to the tune of The Farmer's in the Dell). You could tap the top of the box twice after the word 'box'. Pull out the things one by one and then let the children play with them, talking about the theme or the story in simple terms.

This week's box could include:

- Stars (cushions/ toys/glow in the dark stars) – play with the stars, talking about how they help light the way at night. Talk about how the stargazers in the story followed a very bright star to find baby Jesus.
- Light sources (torches/ night lights/ fairy lights) – Have a variety of different light sources, use them to light up dark places where you are meeting (all create your own dark places to light up)
- Maps/ atlas/ world globe/ compass – Explore the maps and compasses and talk about how we find our way to places, what are our favourite places and what we can find there.
- Gifts – wrapped up presents of different shapes and sizes, perhaps containing things for a baby – talk about the stargazers going to see a new baby
- Kaleidoscope – look through like a telescope, see the lovely colours and shapes as you play with it. Talk about looking out for beautiful things – the light reminds us of God
- A set of play people to act out the story or random shapes/bits you can move around to



Watch as the needle slowly turns on the water to face North to South.

You can check the accuracy of your homemade compass by using a compass app on a mobile phone, or comparing with a navigational compass. Now we know where North and South are, we can work out East and West.

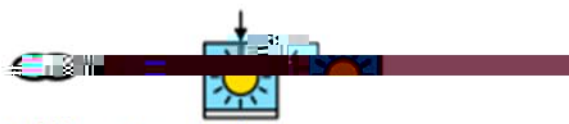
Everyday with Jesus – Walking the Way

What could we do this week to carry on what we've learned? Maybe members of the group could come up with a suggestion. If not, get them to choose from these two challenges:

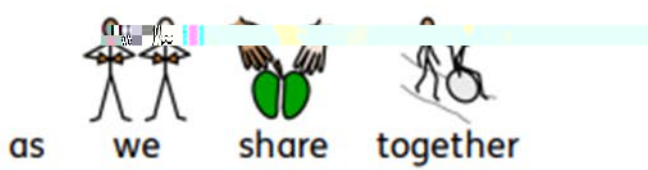
- This week try to be extra focused on spotting God at work around you or things that help



Jesus our friend



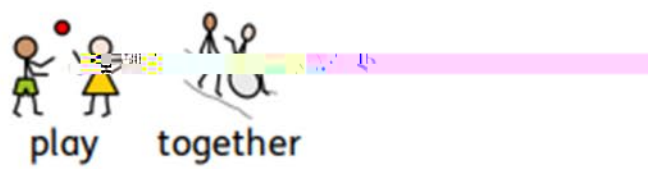
be with us today



as we share together



pray together



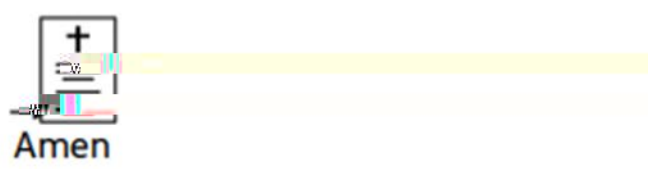
play together



and get to know you better



as children in your family



Amen

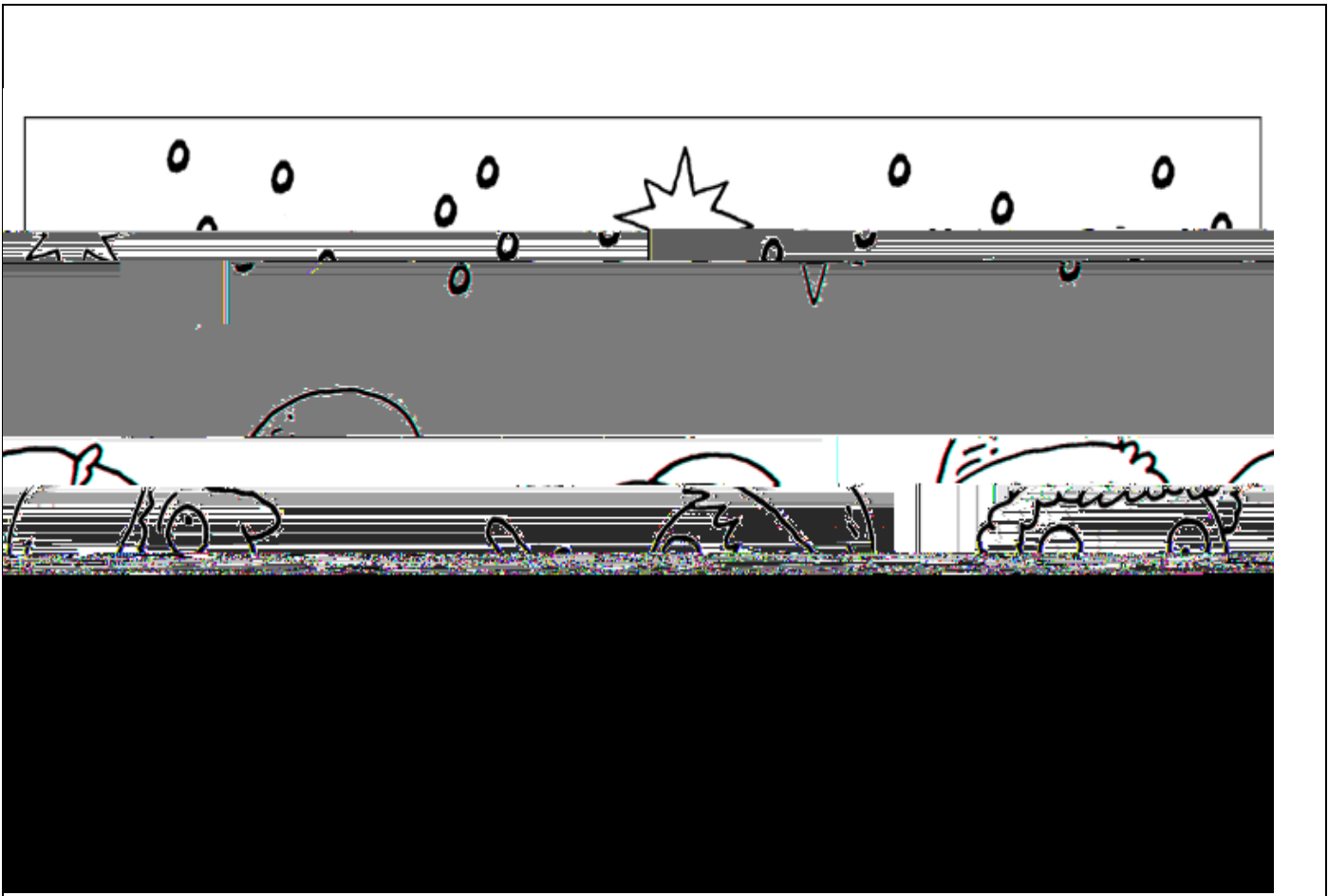


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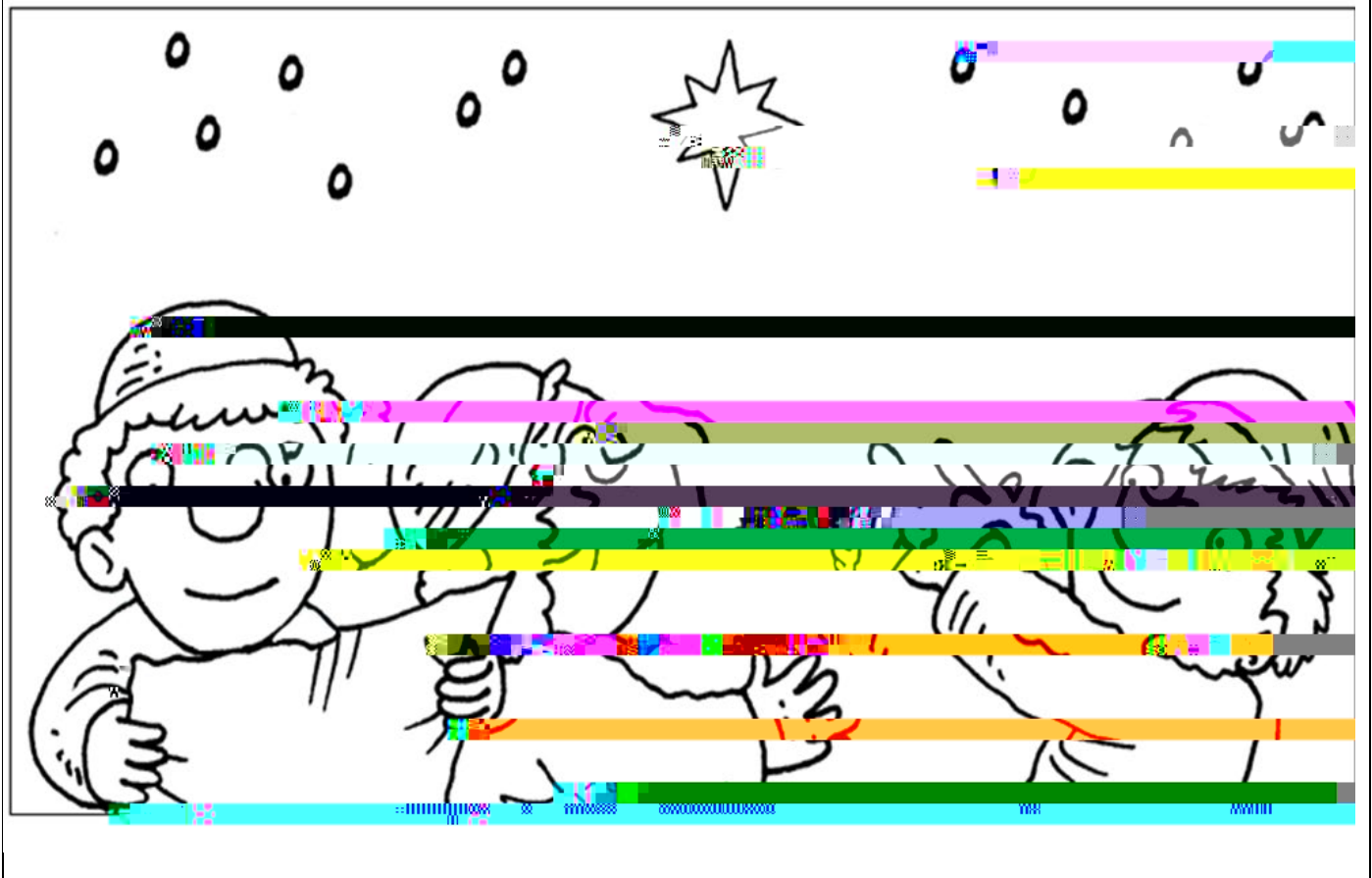




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