

Welcome to Families on Faith Adventures @ Home!

This resource has been put together for you by the United Reformed Church Children's and Youth Work team and the synod CYDOs and their equivalents.

We hope you will enjoy sharing a time of faith and fellowship together as a family through these stories, games, activities and prayers.

They are designed as a 'pick and mix' of ways to experience God's message through the Bible, explore what it means to you and express that in words and action.

The Walking the Way challenges are one way of continuing our walk with Jesus throughout the week.

These ideas are designed to be intergenerational - maybe even to be shared with members of the family you can't see now except via the internet.

The resources are based on our non-uniformed children's groups, Friends on Faith Adventures and Pilots, but have been modified to make them suitable for all families at home.

*These activities are planned to be used together as a family and under adult supervision. Please be aware of your family's ages and abilities as some activities may need more adult support than others. **Stay safe and have fun!***

This week's Bible story is:

Be the Star You Are

The Book of Esther



With many varieties of activities and things to do to help explore the theme. Look out for this 'hands on' symbol.

From

and

Get to know your Bible

The Bible is like a library made up of 66 books written by many different people over many years.

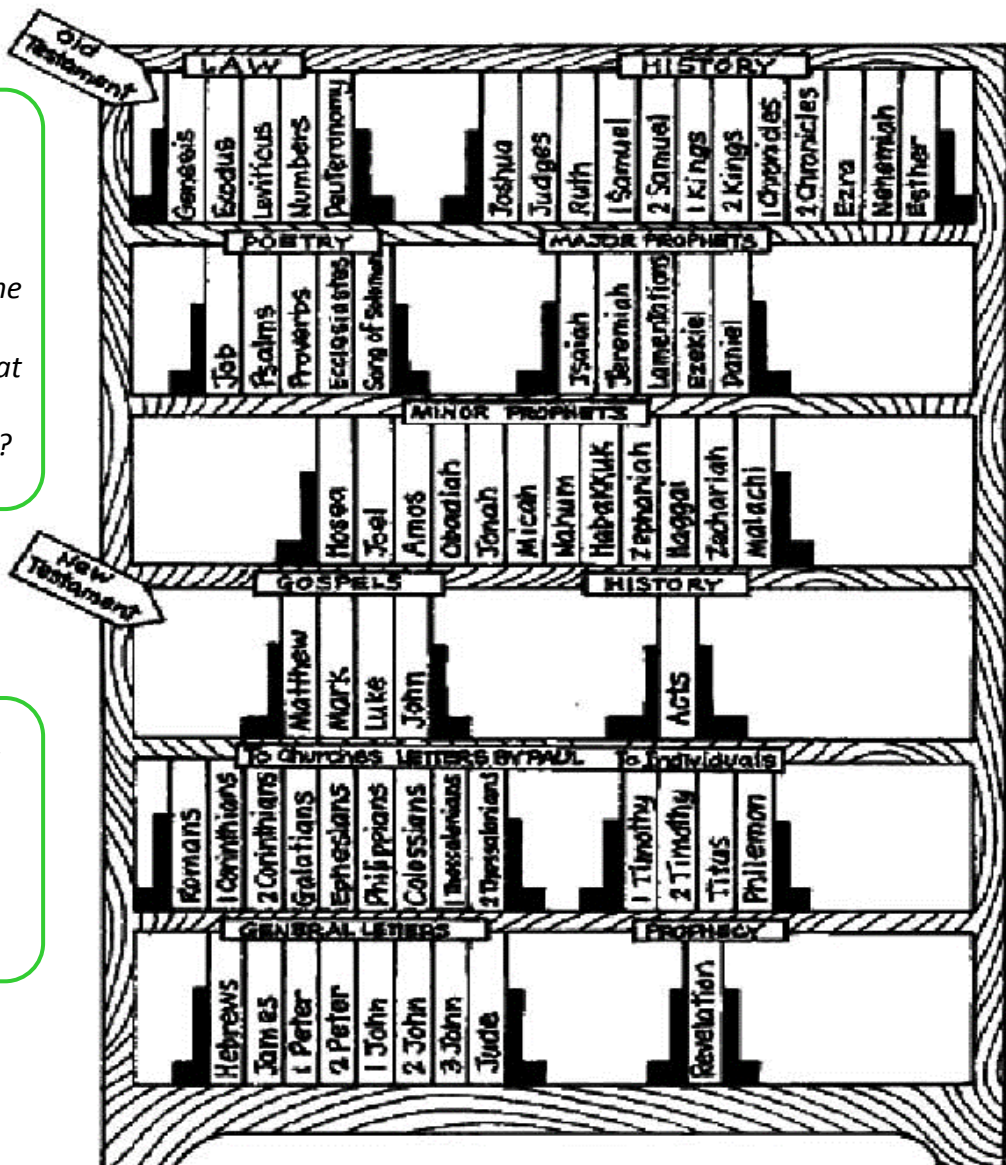
The Old Testament books were written before Jesus was born. They are the holy stories he would have grown up hearing and reading. There are 39 of these.

The New Testament tells us the stories of Jesus and his followers. There are 27 books in the New Testament.



Can you find and colour the book on the bookshelf that this week's story is from?

If you have a Bible, see if you can find the story in there.



You could print this out once and colour each new book on the bookshelf as you read stories from it.

Bible context

The Book of Esther was written around 450 BC, probably by someone who worked in the court that Esther married into.

It is the only book in the Bible not to mention the name of God: We are encouraged to find God at work within the story.

Online versions of the story

Watch and listen

Animation - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaS_ePAjCvk

Dance and sing

Song about Purim - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqJInVvJSZq>

Song about being brave - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4ShxU1MEOM>

You Are A Star sung by children - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O3LGa-EhrBw>

Esther retold

There was once a king in Persia, who had a prime minister called Haman. Now Haman hated the Jewish people. He especially hated one man called Mordecai. Haman had commanded all the Jews to bow to him but Mordecai had refused, saying he would not bow to a man. Haman vowed that he would get his revenge on Mordecai and his people.

Now the king was looking for a new wife to be queen. All the ladies in the land were brought to walk by him. There were many beautiful ladies but none as beautiful as Esther. So Esther was chosen to be queen and moved into the palace. Her uncle was Mordecai and she had lived with him since her parents died.

Nobody realised that Esther was a Jew, especially not Haman who actually crowned her queen.

Now, on with Haman's wicked plan. Haman was a powerful man and persuaded the king to make a rule that all enemies of the king would be destroyed. He told him that the Jews were the king's enemies and needed to be destroyed.

Haman casts lots (called PUR) to decide when this was going to happen.

Esther finds out about the plan and tells Mordecai; he reminds Esther that she is queen for just such a time as this and she must take action. They call all the Jewish people to come together and pray and fast to prepare themselves. Esther has a plan too.

She goes to see the king (this was a brave thing to do). She invites the king and Haman to a special feast. She tells the king that someone is trying to hurt her. The king was furious, asking, "Who is this person?" She points at Haman; "It is Haman, he wants to destroy the Jews and I am a Jew".

The king is furious and orders that Haman be taken away. Haman was never seen again.

The Jewish people were saved because of the bravery of a girl called Esther.

Mordecai was given Haman's job as prime minister.

Every year Jews remember this story in a festival called Purim.

The star who hid

Everything had changed. Everything was just a little bit different. Things at home were not the same. The adults were not going out to work like they used to; the children were not going to play with friends anymore. The family seemed to be staying in, all the time. Nobody was coming to visit, not even for a quick catch up. Yes, everything had changed.

It was different in Sam's bedroom too. Sam was spending more time in there and seemed to be a little sad some days. The toys all noticed the difference. The teddies were being hugged a little tighter, the crayons were exhausted from drawing countless rainbows, the iPad was drained of its batteries, the books had been read over and over again and the Lego had forgotten how many towers and buildings it had created. But not everything was busier; the scooter wasn't being ridden as much, the kite hadn't flown for a while, the football lay in the corner of the room un-kicked and the tennis rackets lay next to it. There was also something missing. Something that usually hung on the ceiling, just above Sam's bed. It was a big glow-in-the-dark star.

Thumper had noticed it wasn't where it should be. Thumper is the oldest, most loved toy in the bedroom; it is a small fleece blanket with a rabbit's head, it has been the favourite toy since Sam was born. It knew the importance of everyone playing their part in the bedroom. Thumper went looking for Star and soon found him lying in the dark corner at the bottom of the toybox.

"What are you doing here?" Thumper asked. "You should be up on the ceiling above Sam's bed"

"What's the point?" replied Star with a sad shrug. "Everything's changed. I'm not needed anymore."

“Not needed?” said Thumper. “You are needed now more than ever. This is the exact time you are needed!”

Star was not convinced. “I’m ok here Thumper, leave me alone. I will come back out when everything is back to normal”.

Thumper had heard enough; Star needed a lesson in being a toy. “You are a star. Your job is to be on the ceiling above Sam’s bed, soaking up the light in the daytime, ready to glow brightly and shine in the darkness of the night to bring comfort and remind Sam that we are not alone”. But Star was scared, he didn’t like how things were any more and wanted it all to go back to normal.

Thumper wrapped her fleece around Star and whispered, “Now is the time to be brave. Now is the time to be the star you are. Come out, take your place on the wall and shine in the darkness for Sam; Nobody else can do it but you, this is what you are for.”

Star knew she was right. Although it was frightening, he took a deep breath and climbed out of the toybox. Soon Star was back on the ceiling, soaking up the daylight, waiting for the chance to shine brightly in the darkness for Sam. Tonight Star would shine extra bright.

Thumper had gone back to the toybox. Peering in, she asked, “Now, who else is hiding in here and needs reminding of who they are?”

All about Purim

The Jewish festival that celebrates how Esther was brave and saved her people. It's the silliest most fun festival, the serious synagogue is now a noisy wild place. It is a festival to be silly, because it tells the story of someone who thought he was clever but turned out to be a fool.

People dress up in their silliest fancy dress and often hold funny beauty pageants, and silly hat competitions.

Jewish people are encouraged to think about how they can make a difference, so they give food baskets to friends and neighbours and give to the poor.

They tell the story of Esther once every day of the weekend.

Drowning out the name Haman 54 times during the story using noise makers, they also write his name in wax and melt it, write it on their shoes and walk on him and so on.

There is a lot of eating and drinking during Purim. On Purim, people should drink "Until he can no longer tell the difference between saying 'Cursed be Haman' and 'Blessed be Mordecai.'" A special food for Purim is 'Haman Tashen' - a sweet treat that is in the shape of a triangle, the shape of Haman's hat.

families on faith adventures

at home



What's in the box?

What treasures can you find to put in the box for your little ones to explore?

Perhaps older children could help find the things.



Use a box or a bag to hold the treasures and encourage any little ones to explore what's in the box/bag each week to go with the Bible story.

This week's Bible story is:

Be The Star You Are

Book of Esther



A home-made crown



Some fancy fabric or clothing like a queen might wear



Something with rainbow colours



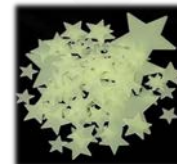
Jewellery



A toy to represent Esther



Some noisy toys or instruments



Star shaped toys or ornaments



Pray Together

Floating Star Prayers

This is a peaceful and reflective activity as you watch each floating star prayer open up. You can do this in a bowl inside or you could go outside into the garden and use a paddling pool or large container.

You will need thin paper cut into star shapes, pens and a bowl of water.



Think about the things you would like to bring to God and write and draw them on the stars.

Fold in the points on the star.

Place the folded star gently on the surface of the water.

Watch and wait as the folded paper gently open offering up your prayer to God. Sit quietly and reflect on the floating prayers.



Bubble Prayers

This is a fun way to pray while blowing bubbles in the air.

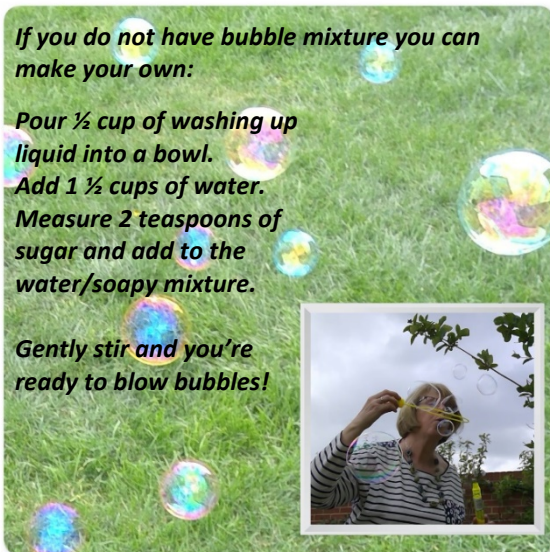
If you do not have bubble mixture you can make your own:

Pour ½ cup of washing up liquid into a bowl.

Add 1 ½ cups of water.

Measure 2 teaspoons of sugar and add to the water/soapy mixture.

Gently stir and you're ready to blow bubbles!



Bubble prayers are 'breath' prayers you say when you are blowing bubbles. Each bubble is like a rainbow if you look closely. Go outside your front door and blow bubbles into the street. With each breath that you blow, think about the people who are special to you and the people you want to say thank you for. Say thank you to God for your friends and neighbours and the people who help you to be brave in all sorts of ways. As each bubble floats away and pops, it is giving your prayer to God.

Pray Together

You Are A Star Prayer Card

In the story Esther was very brave. It is not always easy for us to recognise when we are brave and sometimes, we need someone to tell us and encourage us.

Sending a card is a special gift we can give others.



Make a card to tell someone they are a bright shining star. Send them some words of encouragement.

As you make the card talk to God about the person you are making it for. Tell God what makes them a star and ask God to bless them.

Here is a verse in the bible you can use.

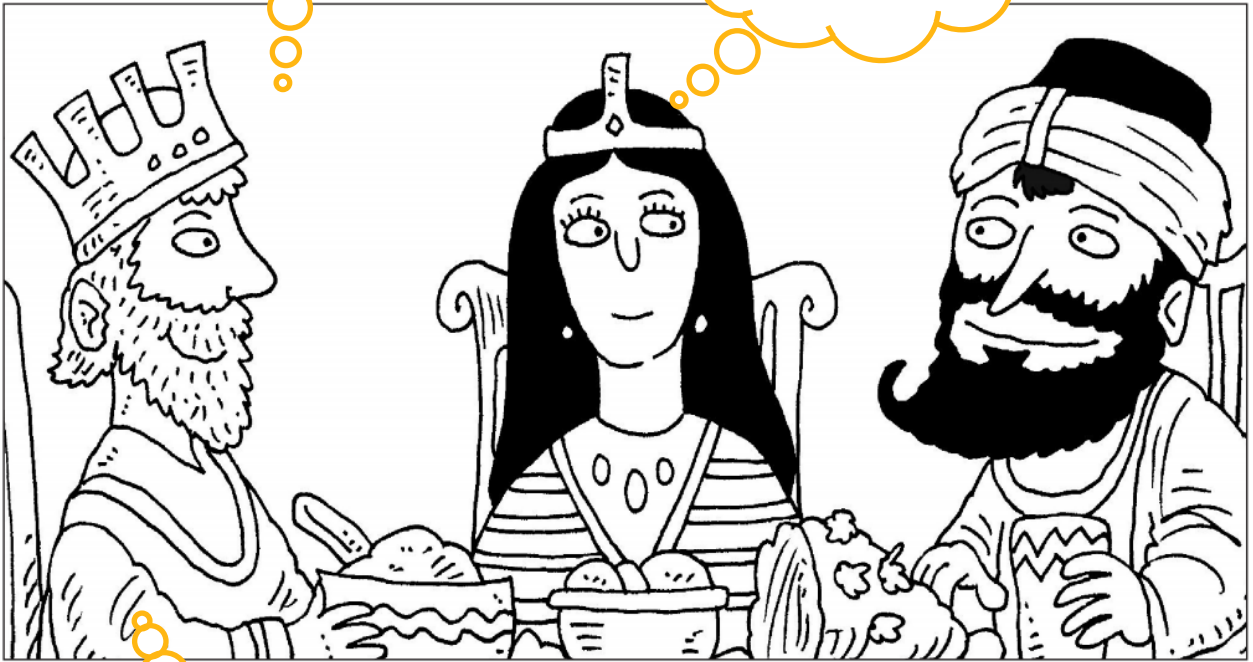
*'May the LORD bless you
and protect you.
May the LORD smile on you
and be gracious to you.
May the LORD show you his favour
and give you his peace.'*

Numbers 6:24-26



I wonder how it feels to stand up to someone powerful when things aren't right?

I wonder where Esther's bravery came from?



I wonder what's the bravest thing you've ever done and how you did it?

I wonder why people sometimes pick on people for what they believe in?

I wonder where God is in this story?

I wonder who your encouragers are?



TO DO TOGETHER...

GAMES

Costume Games

You'll need: a collection of clothes (boots, scarves, gloves, hats, big sweaters, joggers, anything oversized and the sillier the better).

The basic principles of this fun activity are simple really. HAVE FUN getting into the various costumes/clothing which you've gathered. It is essentially an individual activity, but very entertaining for others to watch. But this can be undertaken as:

- *a timed activity, taking it in turns to try and beat each other's times.*
- *a relay race, so once wearing all the items they must go a distance and back (based on how much space you have), racing against the clock or against other teams in your family or via video call with other families.*
- *a challenge game, so once wearing all the items they have to cut up chocolate with cutlery, or unwrap some other type of candy you have in the home... (you could introduce dice and once a six is rolled then they have to swap with another...)*

Other approaches can include:

Duvet covers – putting a selection of the costume clothes in a duvet cover (or in two if you're doing a race). Participants stand in the duvet covers with it done up around their neck, with the head showing above the duvet cover. The challenge is for them to change out of their clothes and into the costume clothes in the duvet cover without being able to see OR without the duvet cover undoing and falling down ...

Another angle is for a child to be changing into adult clothes and an adult changing into a child's clothes in each duvet.

We would recommend not including footwear in the duvet version of the game, and think about the floor surface on which you are playing this game – ensure it is not slippery for those in the duvets.

Make sure you have cameras at the ready!!



TO DO TOGETHER...

Window Stars

You will need:

*Tissue paper, napkins (separated into one layer)
Clingfilm or Greaseproof paper
Wooden skewers, pencils or straws
Glue and thread*



What you do:



Firstly make star shapes by sticking the sticks/straws together using Sellotape or glue.

When they are dry, glue them to tissue paper/napkins/cling film/greaseproof paper.

(You could even glue them with glitter glue if you have some)

After the stars have dried on the paper, trim the paper as close to the star as possible and coat them with some more glue to give them some strength and make them a bit more transparent.

The stars that have multiple colours were made by gluing just one of the star's arms to the tissue paper, cutting it out when it dried, and then repeating for the other arms or the effect created by folding some of the excess paper toward the middle of the stars' arms. As it turns out, folding the excess paper is easier than cutting it close to the wood. Depending on the ages of your children, this is a step they may need some help with.



This bits for grown-ups: To hang the stars, first put a piece of clear tape on the back of one of the points. The tape gives the paper a little strength so that it should not rip when strung together. Thread a needle with a long piece of white or clear thread, and thread through the star, tying a small knot around the intersection of the wooden sticks to hold it in place. You can cover it with a piece of Sellotape to secure it in place.

If you want to make a string of stars, repeat this at the top and bottom points of the star to join them.

Repeating this process, we strung multiple stars to each line and ended up with 7 lines that have 3-4 stars each.

Painting Stone Stars

On your daily walk, see if you can find a stone which you could paint (if you are lucky to be close to the beach you can get lovely smooth stones there, if you have a garden there might be some in the garden). When you get home, give it a good wash!

You will need:

- Stones – You need stones that are smooth and rounded.*
- Acrylic paint/paint pens/nail varnish*
- Sharpie pen (for writing message on the back)*
- PVA glue to seal/varnish*

What you do:

Choose your stone, wash it and draw a star shape on it with a pencil.

Carefully paint the star in white or yellow and then go over it and decorate it in any way you want. You could even put some glitter on it to add some sparkle. Write words of hope and positivity on the base of your stone.

If you don't have varnish, you could paint your rock using a mixture of paint and PVA glue which will last longer and if you don't have paints, you can use nail varnish, or permanent marker pens.

Once it is dry seal it with varnish, (spray varnish is the easiest, but make sure you spray it outside) or you could seal it by painting on PVA glue.

When you go on your daily walk, leave your stone somewhere for someone to find.

Why not get dressed up to go and place your star rocks around your walk.

If you can't find any stones, you could try this instead:

Salt Dough **You will need:**

- 1 cupful of plain flour (about 250g)*
- half a cupful of table salt (about 125g)*
- half a cupful of water (about 125ml)*

What you do:

Preheat the oven to its lowest setting and line a baking sheet with baking parchment.

This bit is for children to do: Mix the flour and salt in a large bowl. Add the water and stir until it comes together into a ball. Transfer the dough to a floured work surface and shape into smooth, stone shapes. You decide how big to make them but remember you are painting them afterwards. Also bear in mind that the bigger/fatter the model, the longer it will take to harden in the oven.

This bit is for grown-ups: Put your finished items on the lined baking sheet and bake for 3 hrs or until solid. It may take longer, so test it to see how hard it is.

This bit is for everyone to do: Leave to cool and then paint it grey like a stone with a shiny star on it, and then write words of hope or a prayer on the flat bottom.

Seal your finished star-stone with varnish or PVA glue.

Make a Noise Together

Bottle Shakers

Find any clean empty bottle or container, decorate with any items you may have and then you can decide what to place inside: shells, gravel, marbles, buttons, paper clips, rice, pasta etc. Think about possible hazards and use age specific items. Make sure the top is safely on and seal the top of your container so when you shake it nothing spills out! (e.g. use tape or glue)



Tube Shaker

Use a cardboard kitchen roll tube or a card tube from wrapping paper. Fill your tube with different noisy items and seal well at both ends. Decorate your tube by colouring, painting or putting stickers on it or cover your tube with wrapping paper, wallpaper or ordinary paper you have coloured or drawn on etc.



Spinning drum

Cut two circles of cardboard and stick a pencil to the inside of one circle with Sellotape. Poke two holes in each circle at 3 and 9 o'clock positions. Sandwich the two circles together, you will need to space them apart I used small crafting pom poms, but you could just use more card. Thread string through the two holes you made and tie a knot to secure. Thread some beads or pasta through your string and finish with a knot to secure. Now spin your drum between your hands and enjoy the noise.



Maracas:

Cut two strips of card 12 cm long and 3 cm wide, Stick the strips together to make it thick then fold in half. Now paint or cover your card with paper and colour or decorate. On the inside of your folded card place two bottle tops or coins stuck down well with Sellotape. Then bend your card and let the metal click together to make a great noise.



Walking the Way

Living the life of Jesus today

**Our Walking the Way Challenge
this time is...**

At Home:

Even during lockdown, there are things happening in the world which are unfair. Think about the things which need changing – maybe about the environment, or homelessness, or prejudice, or poverty, or refugees, and write a letter to your MP or to someone who can make a difference. Speak out like Esther did.

Outside:

When you go for your walk outside, put on some gloves and take a carrier bag so that you can pick up some litter as you go. Instead of the litter which spoils our environment, place one of the stones you have made or decorated to shine God's love into the world and bring people some encouragement as they walk past.

For Others:

If you go out to cheer the keyworkers on a Thursday night, use your noisemakers to make a loud noise, drowning out the name of the virus and our worries for a while and sharing gratitude for everyone who is helping to keep us safe. You could also sneakily deliver some of your "You are a star" cards through your neighbours' letter boxes to encourage them.



The
United
Reformed
Church

**families
on faith adventures**

at home

Adventurers Go!

You've shared together, now share with us!

Why not send photos of your crafts, your treasure boxes, your Walking the Way challenges - or dress up to make a tableau of the Big Story and take a photo to send in.

Email your photos to: lorraine.webb@urc.org.uk
with parental permission for them to be used in publicity and online URC social media.

Alternatively, share them on our Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/URCchildren.and.youth/>

Remember you can find more resources on our website:
<https://urc.org.uk/resources-for-children-and-youth>

And if you've enjoyed these activities, why not see whether your local church runs Pilots or Friends on Faith Adventures (FOFA) when things get back to normal again.

Created for you by Nicola Grieves (Eastern Synod), Judy Harris (National Synod of Wales), Hannah Middleton (Northern Synod), Philip Ray (Wessex Synod, North), Lorraine Webb (Programme Officer for CYW), and Ruth White (Wessex Synod, South) on behalf of the CYDO+ and Children's and Youth Work team and Pilots.



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