



Seasons <sup>OF</sup> <sub>THE</sub> Spirit™

# Seasons **ENCORE**

## **Ages 9-11**

**Weekly resources to help nurture  
actively growing faith**

*Revised Common Lectionary Year B*  
**FEB 26/2012 to MAY 27/2012**

### **LENT, EASTER**

# Contents



## Ages 9–11

About this Lent, Easter .....	1
This Lent, Easter for Ages 9–11.....	2

### Weekly resources

February 26, 2012 • Blessed Connections.....	3
March 4, 2012 • Living Legacy.....	9
March 11, 2012 • Cosmic Law.....	15
March 18, 2012 • Rich in Love.....	21
March 25, 2012 • Heart Promises.....	27
April 1, 2012 • Palm/Passion Sunday.....	33
April 8, 2012 • Easter Sunday.....	39
April 15, 2012 • Experiencing Resurrection.....	45
April 22, 2012 • Christ with Us.....	51
April 29, 2012 • Total Commitment.....	57
May 6, 2012 • Reach Out.....	63
May 13, 2012 • The Great Dance.....	69
May 20, 2012 • On Your Behalf.....	75
May 27, 2012 • Pentecost Sunday.....	81
Extra Resources .....	87
Developing Traditions in an Intergenerational Christian Community .....	93
A Discernment Story.....	94
About the Art for this Lent and Easter .....	95
Mingo Goes to Church.....	96
Evaluation form	

### Posters – Cap Stump

- Crucifix, Mexican
- Consuming Fire
- Old Woman in Prayer
- Person at the Window
- Rainbow over Pilbara

**Note:** *Music Booklets* are available as an optional purchase from your Distributor.

*From Start to Finish* provides suggestions for beginning and ending the year, plus an overview of *Seasons of the Spirit*. It can be downloaded free from the Library at [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca).

**Ages 9–11 writer and editor team:** Cathie Talbot, Colin Cross, Christiane Lange, Carol Wehrheim, Susan McIlveen, Susan Burt, L Lee Levett-Olson, Paul Turley

**Cover design:** Katherine Carlisle, Verena Velten **Illustrations:** Katherine Carlisle, Margaret Kyle

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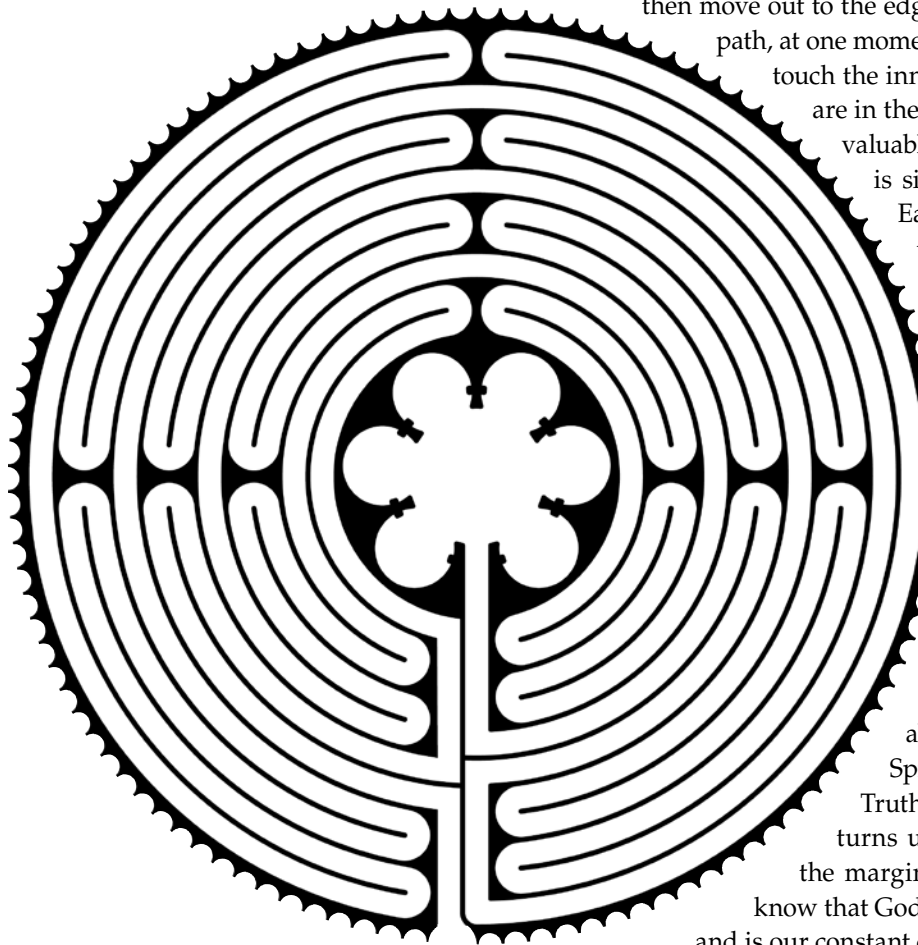
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# About this Lent and Easter



The labyrinth is a path that leads inward to a centre point, and back out again...but not directly. The circuits, or pathways, of a classic labyrinth like the one at Chartres cathedral in France draw close to the centre and then move out to the edges all along the way. Moving on the path, at one moment you find yourself close enough to

touch the inner core and in the next moment you are in the outer orbit. Neither position is more valuable – there is no “goal” at the centre, it is simply another place on the journey. Each spot has its particular perspective, its point of view and its truth.

The stories we encounter in this Lent and Easter take us on a labyrinth journey, moving us into the heart and out to the universe. God’s promises of presence, grace, peace, friendship, and joy are viewed from every perspective. There are rainbow reminders way out in the sky. An old man and an old woman hold their hopes as closely as a baby to the breast. Cosmic unity sparkles in the dew of the field and the stars above. Peace enters the room, and the Spirit enters the gathered community. Truth whispers, “Come closer,” and then turns us outward to engage each other on the margins. Through it all we are invited to know that God can and does meet us where we are and is our constant companion along the way.

Like a labyrinth journey, Lent and Easter is a time of allowing ourselves to be guided towards new insight and transformation. Following the lead of these stories, we are free to open ourselves to promises particular to us as individuals and communities of faith. By grace, may we emerge on Pentecost empowered and renewed, a People of the Way.



# This Lent, Easter for Ages 9–11

**In this Season of Lent** children will hear some foundational stories of God's promises from the Hebrew Scriptures. The colour purple is the symbolic colour for this season, but there will also be rituals based on the colours of the rainbow. The worship space will be set with rainbow-coloured strips of paper and tealights; bookmarks in different rainbow colours will help mark the progress through the Bible stories. Review the resource sheet "Lenten Ritual" (p. 88) for information on setting the worship space and the weekly "Gathering prayers." A weekly closing ritual includes lighting tealights and adding images to the poster *Rainbow over Pilbara*. You might consider ringing a small bell or a "singing bowl" as a signal for beginning the opening and closing rituals each week.

**In this Season of Easter** children will hear stories from the New Testament of Jesus' appearances to the disciples after the Resurrection and the ways in which Jesus' friends and followers shared the good news of God's love. Yellow or gold is the colour of this time of celebration. Review the resource sheet "Easter Season Resources" (p. 89) for information on setting the worship space and the weekly "Gathering prayer."

**Resources for Palm/Passion Sunday, Easter Sunday, and Pentecost Sunday** are designed for all ages to meet together. Consult with other leaders for plans for these three gatherings.

Ideas for setting worship and learning spaces, community building games, and integrating music and visual arts can be found in the booklet *From Start to Finish* in the Library on the *Seasons* website.

**Bible reading** The sessions are designed to help children begin to learn their way around the Bible. Encourage children to bring their own Bibles or provide Bibles for use during the sessions. Unless otherwise stated, scripture references are from the *New Revised Standard Version*. Some sessions include reading passages from the Bible and others offer different ways to engage the Bible stories. Be aware that reading skills still vary a great deal at this age. It is helpful to invite volunteers to read rather than "going around the circle." A resource sheet

"The New Testament" (p. 90) offers children an opportunity to learn more about the books included in this section of the Bible.

**Preparing for the sessions** Before the beginning of the season, review the introductory pages (pp. 1 and 2), the weekly resources, and the extra materials and articles at the end. Review the letter to families (p. 87) and add information about family programs that your congregation has planned for these seasons and any special activities you have planned for the group. As you prepare for each week's session, read the "Focus for Ages 9–11" on the Prepare page and review the activities, choosing those that will appeal to the members of the group and noting those which require extra preparation.

**Art posters** included with this resource offer opportunities for children to engage with fine art. Exploring this art together can reveal new insights for the whole group. Background information is provided in the article "About the Art for this Lent, Easter" (p. 95). The *Seasons of the Church Year* poster is a laminated colour teaching poster which can help children understand the flow and colours of the church year. It is available for separate purchase from the *Seasons* website.

**Music** offers a way into the moods and themes of the church seasons and weekly readings. Music referred to in the sessions is available in the following resources available for separate purchase: the *Lent-Easter 2012 Music Booklet*, Volume 7 of the *Seasons Songbook* and *Music CD*, and *Seasons .mp3 Downloads* (from the *Seasons* website). Song lyric files are also available in the *Music Booklet*.

**Website** ([www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca)) offers information about the curriculum resources, an **Ask the Rabbi** section in the **Action Zone**, and connections between weekly focus passages and current events or films in the **Spirit Sightings** section.

**Basic supply kit** Stock a container with clear tape, masking tape, scissors, glue sticks, white glue, felt markers, coloured pencils, pencils, plain paper, stapler, hole punch, removable adhesive, sticky notes. The "Prepare" section in each week's session will only list supplies not included in this kit.



# Blessed Connections

Water: essential to life, complicit in death. We are born of water and cannot live without it, but tsunamis and mud tides remind us water is not under our control. We should be wary – but also give thanks: today’s readings remind us that water cleanses and heals. Through water we are rescued.

## Focus scripture: Genesis 9:8–17

Scientists predict that water’s risks are set to worsen: more droughts, more floods, barren seas, water wars. The ancient Hebrews saw water in just this way, and the Genesis stories reflect it. Water betrays; it threatens life; if not controlled by a stronger force it can undo cosmic order altogether.

Israel’s neighbours told stories of divine beings battling amongst themselves, only noticing humans when the noise got annoying. Then the gods decided to use water to wipe the planet clean. This was the story of Utnapishtim, from the ancient epic of Gilgamesh, and the authors of Genesis knew it well: a flood that wiped out everything except for one rescued family and the animals they saved. Yes, the authors said, there’s truth in that story – now let’s tell it properly, with God at the centre.

The Genesis version has no divine battle; it begins as an outraged response to human violence, pours down grace with the waters to rescue original human blessedness, and ends with a promise to “all flesh.” Whenever the waters of chaos threaten to undo creation’s goodness, the rainbow reminds God not to let chaos prevail. Instead of destroying (dismembering) the cosmic solidarity of all creatures, God will re-member (join again in one) the flesh God first called good.

**Psalm 25:1–10** leans on the message of this story. Sin and stumbling bring consequences, but God can be reminded to forgive. “Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness sake.” We can pray for mercy because God’s rainbow shines.

Early Christians, as in **1 Peter 3:18–22**, saw the Noah story as a symbol of baptism. They confessed in Jesus Christ the Word who “became flesh” and through whom “every living creature” came to being. The waters

of baptism do not symbolize washing off the dirt of everyday life: they are a sign of our return to “original blessedness” out of chaos and into solidarity, by the remembering grace of God. Even Jesus experienced that, as in **Mark 1:9–15**. His baptism in the Jordan was followed by a time of testing and, when it concluded, “the fullness of God drew near.” That testing time, begun with baptism, is what the Season of Lent celebrates.

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The natural world carries messages of God’s grace. We will encounter some of these messages in the readings through Lent. Ancient people understood: all creation fell and rose together, what affects one species affects all – human actions have planetary and even cosmic implications. The oneness of creation under God’s grace shines in every rainbow arching through the clouds, a witness to God’s promise that the earth from which we come will never again be reduced to its primordial chaos.

The rainbow also reminds humans that we are part of that earth, sharing its fate with “all living creatures.” Perhaps there is still time for us to “re-member.” In one powerful ritual, the liturgist dips a green branch into the baptismal font, sprays water over the congregation, and calls out “Remember you are baptized.” This Lent begins with remembering, and baptism can be a powerful symbol through the season. We are called to recognize God’s mercy and faithfulness, and to reflect that covenant in solidarity with others, including the non-human creation.

Lent can prompt sober reflection on the brokenness around us. Where can we see violence and division dismembering creation? How are we complicit in that brokenness? And what actions could we begin, in this time and place, that might help us re-member again the covenant of grace?



**Focus scripture**  
**Genesis 9:8–17**

**Additional scriptures**  
**Psalm 25:1–10**  
**1 Peter 3:18–22**  
**Mark 1:9–15**

**O God, we still live in a broken world desperate for the grace of new beginnings. Help us to trust the rainbow sign, and to share the covenant of caring with all creation, in Jesus the Christ. Amen.**

If you have Internet access, visit [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca) to access Spirit Sightings for connections between current events and the focus passage.

## The Focus for Ages 9–11



Ideas for beginning and ending the church year and other leadership resources are in *From Start to Finish* (go to the Library on the *Seasons* website).

As children move through these years, they grow in sophistication and their ability to reason. There will be a variation between how a nine-year-old and an eleven-year-old will understand the stories from the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Younger children might want to know whether the story of Noah really happened. Older children will be more aware of similar stories from other cultures in the world. This week's session offers an opportunity to help children understand that the Bible includes many types of literature and these early stories were told to present truth about God

rather than the description of an historical event.

This Lenten season will be a time for the children to connect with God's promises and hopes for creation, especially God's people. Most children in this age group are quite involved in environmental projects and care passionately about caring for creation. Two of the Respond options this week pick up on this passion. Pray that children will be encouraged to participate in God's promise of renewal for all creation, and see themselves as part of this promise.

## Prepare

### Before the session

- Prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Genesis 9:8–17, and biblical background material (p. 3).
- Review "About this Lent and Easter" (p. 1) and "This Lent, Easter for Ages 9–11" (p. 2).
- Prepare a worship space with a purple cloth, purple pillar candle, construction paper strips, and tealights (see information on resource sheet "Lenten Ritual," p. 88).
- Bring matches, taper, offering basket, and Bible with a purple bookmark placed in this week's focus passage from Genesis.
- Bring basic supply kit (p. 2), and, if possible, *Lent–Easter 2012 Music Booklet*, *Seasons Songbook*, volume 7, *Seasons Music CD*, volume 7, and CD player.

### Gather

- Bring copies of the resource sheet "Lenten Ritual" (p. 88); save copies for next week.
- Bring, if possible, the song "I've Got a Voice" (pp. 6–7, *Music Booklet*; pp. 20–21, *Seasons Songbook*; #13, *Seasons Music CD*).

### Engage

- Review Genesis 6–9 as background for the last portion of the story which is the focus for this week's session.

- Bring this week's resource sheet "God's Promise to Noah" and a length of mural paper.
- Bring poster *Rainbow over Pilbara*.

### Respond

Choose one or more of the suggested activities. Prepare and bring materials.

- Rainbow promise:** copies of this week's resource sheet "Responding to the Promise"
- Rainbow bracelets:** heavy cord or jute, coloured beads (purple, blue, green, yellow, orange, red)
- Lenten prayers:** sheets of purple construction paper, used magazines, art supplies
- Lenten offering box:** (if your congregation has a Lenten offering) small boxes, used magazines

### Bless

- Bring rainbow stickers.
- Bring copies of resource sheet "Lent–Easter 2012" (p. 87).



# Blessed Connections

## Scripture

Genesis 9:8–17

**FOCUS** To participate in God's promise of renewal for all creation.

## Gather

**Welcome** the children as they arrive. Introduce newcomers to the group.

**Call to gather** Invite children to gather in the worship space. Explain that this week we begin a new season of the church year. Point out the purple cloth which is the colour we use for the Season of Lent. Explain that Lent is a time to learn about God's promises and explore what it means to live in God's way.

**Lent ritual** Distribute copies of the resource sheet "Lenten Ritual" (p. 88) and invite two volunteers to lead the group in the gathering prayer and candle lighting for Lent 1.

**Sing**, if possible, the song "I've Got a Voice" (pp. 6–7 in the *Music Booklet*, pp. 20–21 in the *Seasons Songbook*, #13 on the *Seasons Music CD*).

Receive the offering and extinguish the candles to signify the end of the gathering worship.

### Connecting with the focus

Invite children to think of the word "promise" and to share together their definitions of this word. Invite those who wish to name some of the promises they have made recently.

- **What makes it easy to keep a promise? What makes it hard?**
- **How does it feel when someone breaks a promise made to you?**

Promises are one of the themes during this Season of Lent, specifically promises from God. Invite children to listen for the promise in the Bible story for this session.

## Engage

### Preparing for the story

Invite children to share what they remember about the biblical story of Noah and the ark. Explain that there are similar stories about floods in many ancient cultures. These stories were told from generation to generation for thousands of years before being written down. Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship space and open it to today's focus passage using the purple bookmark. Show the group where the whole story is found in Genesis 6–9.

### The Bible story

Invite the group to gather around a length of mural paper. Explain that after you read each section of the summary on the resource sheet "God's Promise to Noah" you will pause so the group can draw images from that part of the story. When the reading is finished, look at the group mural that has been created. Explain that making agreements – and promising to keep them – was an important part of life in biblical

times, just as it is today. These agreements are sometimes called "covenants." Invite children to find **Genesis 9:8–17** and count how many times the word "covenant" is used.

- **In this covenant what does God promise Noah and his descendants?**

In Bible stories God's promise or covenant is often sealed with a symbol.

- **What sign or symbol was given as a reminder of God's promise?**

### The Bible and our lives

Explain that the stories in the first eleven chapters of Genesis were told to help people to understand who God is.

- **What does this story tell us about God?**
- **What does this story tell us about the way the world could be?**

**Art engagement** Look together at the poster *Rainbow over Pilbara*. Use some or all of the following questions to explore this image: Where do you see

warm colours in this painting? Where do you see cooler colours? What do you notice about the rainbow? How does the painting make you feel? Where would you like to be standing in this picture? Why? Invite children to share their own stories of seeing rainbows.

■ **How do you feel when you see a rainbow?**

In today's story the rainbow was a reminder of God's promises to care for the earth and all living things.

■ **How can we take part in God's promise to all creation?**

Encourage the group to think of as many ways as they can and record their suggestions on the mural created earlier.

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## Respond

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Choose one or two of these options.

- **Rainbow promise** In the story from Genesis, God makes a covenant with all creation. Invite children to consider how they might participate in the renewal of creation. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "Responding to the Promise" and invite them to write ideas for caring for creation in the bands of the rainbow. They might use a different colour of marker for each band, beginning with purple at the bottom and ending with red at the top. Make a display of these rainbow promises.
- **Rainbow bracelets** The rainbow is a biblical symbol of God's promise of renewal for all creation. Invite children to make bracelets in rainbow colours to remind them that they can participate in God's rainbow promise and care for the earth. Have them thread the beads onto the cord in the order of the colours of the rainbow, measure around their wrists, and tie off. If time permits, have them make extra bracelets to



give away to friends or family members.

- **Lenten prayers** Invite group members to begin creating a "rainbow wall of prayers" during the Season of Lent. This week distribute sheets of purple construction paper and invite participants to write, draw, or collage their prayers on the theme of "caring for creation." Display these prayers by attaching them in a row (horizontal or vertical) on a wall or bulletin board.
- **Lenten offering** Many congregations have a special offering during Lent. Let the children know about the offering and what it is for. Invite children to decorate small boxes with magazine pictures and words and use these to collect offerings at home during the season. Discuss things children might do to raise funds to contribute to the offering. Have them bring the boxes back on Palm/Passion Sunday to place in the offering plate during the worship service.



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## Bless

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**Gather** in the worship space and relight the tealight on the purple strip. Look together again at the poster *Rainbow over Pilbara* and invite children to think of some of the ways they can participate in God's promise to renew creation. Distribute rainbow stickers and invite children to add these around the edges of the poster as they share their thoughts.

**Pray** the following prayer or one of your own:  
God, we thank you for the promise

you made to Noah and his family.  
Help us to participate in that promise too.  
Amen.

**Blessing** Send each child out saying, "(Name), remember that you are included in God's promise to Noah."

Distribute copies of the family letter on the resource sheet "Lent-Easter 2012" (p. 87) for children to take home.

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## Reflect

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Some children may have had experiences of broken promises. In what ways did this session offer all children the assurance of God's constant love and care?



# God's Promise to Noah

based on Genesis 6:1—9:17

*Pause after each part and invite children to draw symbols to represent that section of the story. Each person will create their own drawings with everyone working together on the same length of mural paper.*

- PART 1:** The people on earth were mean and nasty. They did not live according to God's way. They didn't even try! God was not pleased. God wanted to start the world all over. *(Draw sad faces.)*
- PART 2:** God saw that Noah and his family were not like the rest of the people. They did try to live according to God's way. God told Noah to build an ark, a big boat with a house on it. God gave Noah all the measurements, right down to the last cubit. When Noah and his family began to build this big boat, the people around them made fun of them. There was no water anywhere nearby, only dry land. What good was a boat? *(Draw outlines of large boats.)*
- PART 3:** When the ark was built, God told Noah to put his family on the ark and to bring onto it two of every living thing, from ants to zebras. Still there was no water near the ark, just dry land. *(Draw some animals.)*
- PART 4:** Then it began to rain and it rained and rained so much that the earth was flooded. When the rain stopped, no dry land could be seen from the ark. The ark floated for days and days. *(Draw lots of rain and floods of water.)*
- PART 5:** After the sun came out and the winds blew, Noah looked for dry land by sending a raven from the ark. When the raven returned, Noah knew that there was no branch for the raven to land on. And no dry land for the ark to land on either. *(Draw some birds.)*
- PART 6:** Some days later, Noah sent out a dove. The same thing happened. More days later, Noah sent out another dove. When it returned, it had an olive branch in its mouth, the first sign of dry land. *(Draw green branches.)*
- PART 7:** When the ark landed on dry ground, everyone got out. Noah built an altar so he and his family could give thanks to God. *(Draw piles of stones.)*
- PART 8:** God was pleased with Noah and his family, but God did not want to flood the earth again. So God made a covenant with them that God would never again send a flood that would cover the whole earth. So God would remember that promise, God put a rainbow in the sky. To this day, when we see a rainbow we remember God's promise. *(Draw rainbows.)*



# *Responding to the Promise*

“When the rainbow appears in the cloud, I’ll see it and remember the eternal covenant between God and everything living, every last living creature on Earth.”

(Genesis 9:16 from *The Message*, a paraphrase of the Bible by Eugene Peterson)

**God promises to renew the earth and wants us to care for all of creation.**

*What are some things you can do in response to God’s promise to renew the earth?*

Blank curved lines for writing responses.

# Living Legacy

The readings for the second Sunday in Lent focus on another covenant: the promise God made to Abram and to Sarai. Again, we are reminded that such promises of faithful relationship are initiated by God, not based on merit or worth, with the purpose of bringing blessing to all the earth.

## Focus scripture: Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16

Abraham is the ancestor of “a multitude of nations” Christians share the Abrahamic tradition with Jews and Muslims. All three faiths count Abraham as their literal or spiritual ancestor, and all three recognize Abraham’s line as a legacy of divine grace.

The promise came to Abram and Sarai when they had no grounds to expect it. In a time of settled retirement, Abram and Sarai are called to leave all they know and journey into alien land: a land where God will help them find true home. We all share a reliance on that grace. We are not chosen through our own merit, yet we can respond in gracious thanks. Churches baptize infants partly on the grounds that God, whose grace incorporates us into a covenant people, does not wait for our ability to understand or respond: grace comes before we are ready to receive it or comprehend what it might mean.

As though to underscore this, the Genesis tradition enshrines God’s generous grace to the two mothers through whom Abraham’s legacy descends. Sarah is honoured and blessed with no preconditions. Abraham is required to walk blameless to receive God’s blessing, while Sarah does not. God blesses her before any actions deserve it.

Later in the story, when Hagar is twice treated badly by that same Sarah (her harshness does not negate God’s commitment), God appears twice to Hagar to assure her – in a way that no other woman in Hebrew Scriptures hears God’s message – that she and her child Ishmael are blessed and loved by God and will be protected from death.

The insight that not only Israel receives God’s blessing is picked up in the radiant conclusion to **Psalm 22:23–31**. Sometimes called “The Psalm of Christ” (for having been quoted by Jesus on the cross), this song begins with abandonment and despair and finishes with a vision of “all the families of nations” together in worship. Grace overwhelms despair.

In **Romans 4:13–25**, Paul struggles to put this grace into words. His experience of how adherence to law can become an empty shell drove him to divide “law” from “faith” as though the law brings no goodness. Yet the Jewish tradition recognized Torah law, the way that brings life, as itself a gift of divine grace. Faith is a response to, not the prerequisite for, that gracious promise. There is an interesting parallel between this Jewish understanding of Torah law and the relationship that Indigenous Australians have with what they call “law” which is also characterized by a sense of receiving the law as a gift and responding to it faithfully.

God’s free gift of life must be received in order to be experienced, and grace always invites a response. **Mark 8:31–38** and **Mark 9:2–9** both remind us that resurrection comes after suffering and death; and we must be ready to follow.



The Abrahamic Covenant reminds us God owes us nothing: the favour we receive comes undeserved. Apostles who heard Jesus’ call to take up the cross cannot argue they are not heroic enough for that call. God strengthened Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar, and God will also companion us on the road to life.

Baptism calls us to respond to grace by living gracious lives, believing that God will be with us in all that unfolds. It may be a long life full of honour; it may be execution at the hands of evil empires; but God goes with us through it all, and is faithful.

Perhaps the story of Abraham, Sarah, and Hagar is told in three religions in order to ensure that all of us together can keep faith as God has done. Baptism radically enlarges our family ties. As we “rise new” from the water we become kin to the baptized ones across all world history. What does this mean in practice? How do we show our kinship with the children of Abraham and Sarah in every land, and with the God who loves all creation as God loves us?



**Focus scripture**  
**Genesis 17:1–7,**  
**15–16**

**Additional scriptures**  
**Psalm 22:23–31**  
**Romans 4:13–25**  
**Mark 8:31–38 or**  
**Mark 9:2–9**

**Loving God of all generations, your grace is overwhelming. Help us to keep covenant with you in our kinship with one another, and honour your call by loving service.**

**For we ask this in the name of one who conquered death itself, Jesus the Christ. Amen.**

If you have Internet access, visit [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca) to access Spirit Sightings for connections between current events and the focus passage.

## The Focus for Ages 9–11



Ideas for beginning and ending the church year and other leadership resources are in *From Start to Finish* (go to the Library on the *Seasons* website).

While nine- to eleven-year-olds are increasingly interested in their peer groups, parents and other family members still play an important role in their lives. They are at an age when they are becoming more aware of their extended family. They hear stories that have been handed down through generations. They might be told they've been named after a grandparent or inherited a relative's skill as artist or sailor.

This week's session provides an opportunity for children to learn about the story

of Abraham and Sarah, a foundational story of faith. While this session provides only an overview of that story, what the children hear and explore is another promise from God, this one to Abraham and Sarah. The symbol of God's promise in last week's story was a rainbow and this week's symbol of promise is a star (see Genesis 15:5). Children will explore the idea that they are part of the generations promised to Abraham and Sarah. Pray that the children will hear God's promise to love them and be with them and will trust in that promise.

### Prepare

#### Before the session

- Prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16, and biblical background material (p. 9).
- Review "About this Lent and Easter" (p. 1) and "This Lent, Easter for Ages 9–11" (p. 2).
- Prepare a worship space with a purple cloth, purple pillar candle, construction paper strips, and tealights (see resource sheet "Lenten Ritual," p. 88).
- Bring matches, taper, offering basket, and Bible with the purple bookmark in last week's focus passage from Genesis, and a blue bookmark placed in this week's focus passage.
- Bring basic supply kit (p. 2), and, if possible, *Lent–Easter 2012 Music Booklet*, *Seasons Songbook*, volume 7, *Seasons Music CD*, volume 7, and CD player.

#### Gather

- Bring copies of the resource sheet "Lenten Ritual" (p. 88); save copies for next week.
- Bring, if possible, the song "I've Got a Voice" (pp. 6–7, *Music Booklet*; pp. 20–21, *Seasons Songbook*; #13, *Seasons Music CD*).
- Bring baby name book or dictionary of names.

#### Engage

- Review Genesis 12:1–9 and 15:1–6 as background for the focus for this week's session.
- Bring three copies of this week's resource sheet "God's Promise to Abram and Sarai."
- Bring information from "Ask the Rabbi" (on the *Seasons* website, [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca)) for the question, "Why do biblical names change?"
- Bring poster *Old Woman in Prayer*.
- Bring copies of this week's resource sheet "The Symbol of a Star."

#### Respond

Choose one or more of the suggested activities. Prepare and bring materials.

- Name acrostics:** sheets of paper
- Star names:** yellow poster board, art supplies, ribbon, star stickers, star templates (see pattern in the *Virtual Resource Booklet* in the Library on the *Seasons* website)
- Lenten prayers:** sheets of blue construction paper, used magazines, art supplies

#### Bless

- Bring star stickers and poster *Rainbow over Pilbara*.
- Bring copies of resource sheet "Lent–Easter 2012" (p. 87) for those who were not present last week.



# Living Legacy

## Scripture

Genesis 17:1–7,  
15–16

**FOCUS** To learn about God’s promise to Abraham, Sarah, and all people.

## Gather

**Welcome** the children as they arrive. Introduce newcomers to the group.

**Call to gather** Invite children to gather in the worship space. Remind children that we are in the Season of Lent, a time to learn about God’s promises and explore what it means to live in God’s way.

**Lent ritual** Distribute copies of the resource sheet “Lenten Ritual” (p. 88) and invite two volunteers to lead the group in the gathering prayer and candle lighting for Lent 2.

**Sing**, if possible, the song “I’ve Got a Voice” (pp. 6–7 in the *Music Booklet*, pp. 20–21 in the *Seasons Songbook*, #13 on the *Seasons Music CD*).

Receive the offering and extinguish the candles to signify the end of the gathering worship.

## Connecting with the focus

Invite children to share stories of their names (how they were chosen, meaning) using the resources brought if needed. In the ancient world names were very important. The Hebrew people gave their children names which described something special about them and everyone knew what their name meant. When children became adults their name might be changed to reflect a new relationship or other change. This happens today also; for example, a child named “Kathy” might change to “Kathryn” when she is older. Invite children to listen for the names that are changed in today’s Bible story.

## Engage

### Preparing for the story

Explain that last week’s story and today’s story come from the first book in the Bible, Genesis, which means beginning. Recall last week’s story of Noah and the flood. Use the purple bookmark to open the Bible to last week’s story about Noah. Then use the blue bookmark to turn to this week’s focus passage, a part of the story of two people named Abraham and Sarah. Their story is the longest story in the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament. Like the story about Noah and the flood, these kinds of stories were told from generation to generation for thousands of years before being written down.

### The Bible story

Form three groups and give each group a copy of the resource sheet “God’s Promise to Abram and Sarai,” assigning one part to each group. Invite each group to read their section and plan a short mime to dramatize what happens in that part of

the story. Take turns presenting the mimes, with a narrator from each group reading the text on the resource sheet.

**Art engagement** Look together at the poster *Old Woman in Prayer* and notice the expression on the woman’s face. Invite children to imagine that this woman is Sarai, praying and talking to God about how much she and Abram would like to have a baby. Then have them imagine that this figure hears the promise that she and Abram will have many descendants.

#### ■ What might her expression be then?

Recall that making covenants (or agreements) – and promising to keep them – was an important part of life in biblical times. Invite children to find **Genesis 17:1–7** and count how many times the word “covenant” is used.

#### ■ What is God’s promise to Abram and Sarai?

Invite children to find **Genesis 17:15–16**. Share information from “Ask the Rabbi” about the

answer to the question “Why do biblical names change?” When an “h” was added to the names of Abram and Sarai, it signified that they followed and trusted in God.

### The Bible and our lives

The promise made to Abraham and Sarah includes people today (see the end of verse 7). Dis-

tribute copies of the resource sheet “The Symbol of a Star” and review information together, noting that Christians, Jews, and Muslims all consider Abraham and Sarah to be part of their faith story.


■ **What are some of the things we can do each day to show that we are people of God?**

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## Respond

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Choose one or two of these options.

- ❑ **Name acrostics** Abraham and Sarah received new names as a sign of God’s promise to them. Distribute sheets of paper and invite children to print the letters of their first name down the left side of their papers. Have them use these letters of their names to describe themselves and the gifts and skills that God has given them. 
- ❑ **Star names** God promised Abram and Sarai they would have more descendants than the number of stars. Distribute star templates and invite children to trace on poster board and cut out. Have them print their first names in the middle of their stars and decorate with star stickers and words describing themselves (such

as, dancer, blue eyes, kind). Have them punch holes in the top of their stars, add a ribbon hanger, and hang from the ceiling of the meeting space.

- ❑ **Lenten prayers** Invite group members to continue building a “rainbow wall of prayers” during the Season of Lent. This week distribute sheets of blue construction paper and invite participants to draw star shapes on their papers and write prayers within these shapes on the theme of trusting in God’s promise of love for all people. Display these prayers by attaching them in a row above or beside the prayers from last week. 

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## Bless

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**Gather** in the worship space and light the tealights on the purple strip (remembering God’s promise to Noah) and on the blue strip (remembering God’s promise to Abram and Sarai). Distribute star stickers and invite children to place these on the sky in the poster *Rainbow over Pilbara* as they remember God’s promise that Abram and Sarai would have as many descendants as the stars.

**Pray** the following prayer or one of your own:  
God, we thank you for the promise you made to Abram and Sarai, and to us too. Amen.

**Blessing** Send each child out saying, “(Name), remember that you are included in God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah.”

Distribute copies of the family letter on the resource sheet “Lent–Easter 2012” (p. 87) to children who were not present last week.

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## Reflect

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How do the children understand the meaning of God’s promise? In what ways might you help them to grow in their relationship with God?



# God's Promise to Abram and Sarai

(based on Genesis 12:1–9, 15:1–6, and 17:1–7, 15–16)

## Part 1 Leaving home

(Genesis 12:1–9)

When Abram was seventy-five years old God told him to leave his homeland of Haran and journey to a new land. "Leave your country, your family, and your relatives and go to a land that I will show you," said God. "I will bless you and make your descendants into a great nation. You will become famous." So Abram packed up all his possessions, and took his wife Sarai, and his nephew Lot, and all their slaves and started out on a long journey. Abram didn't know where they were going but he trusted God. They finally came to a place called Sechem and Abram built an altar there to God. But that wasn't the end of the journey. They travelled further, to the hill country, and camped in a place near Bethel. Abram built another stone altar there. But that wasn't the end of the journey either. Abram and Sarai and everyone who was with them continued on to a place called the Southern Desert.

## Part 2 God's promise

(Genesis 15:1–6)

Abram and his family finally settled in a place called Hebron. There God came to Abram in a vision and told Abram that he would be the father of many nations. This was very hard to believe because Abram and Sarai were very old and had never had any children. "Don't worry," said God. "You will have a son of your own, and everything you have will be his." God took Abram outside and said, "Look at the sky. Look at all the stars! See if you can count them. That's how many descendants you are going to have." Abram believed God, but a long time went by and Abram and Sarai still didn't have any children.

## Part 3 New names

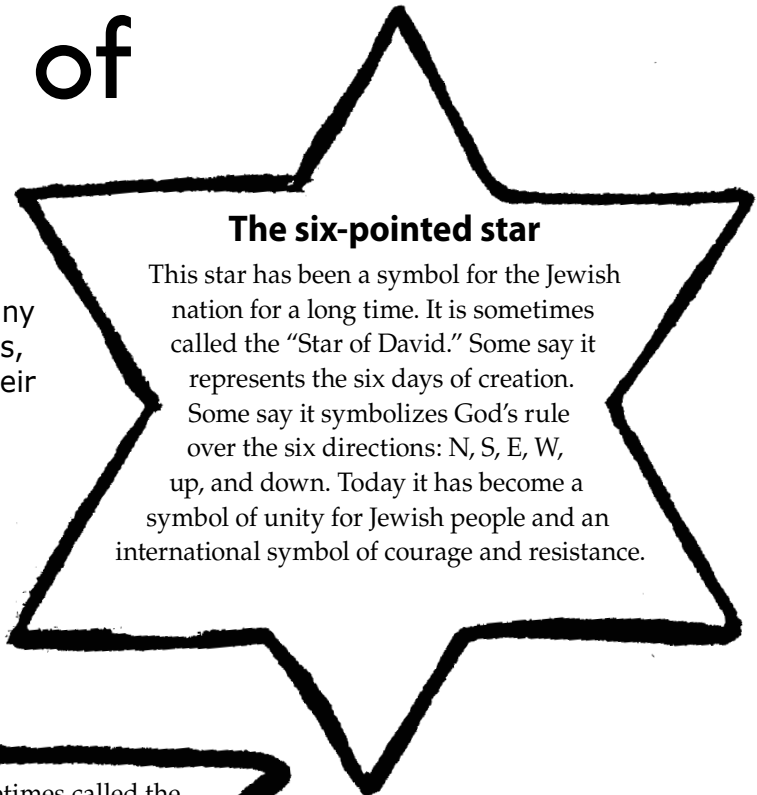
(Genesis 17:1–7,  
15–16)

Abram was ninety-nine years old and Sarai was ninety years old when God appeared again in a vision. "I am God All-Powerful! I will keep my solemn promise to you and you will have more descendants than you can count." Abram bowed his face to the ground and kept listening to God. "I am going to change your names as a sign of my promise," said God. "From now on your name will be Abraham. I will give you lots of descendants and they will become great nations. Some of them will even become kings." God also said that Sarai's name would be changed. "She will be called Sarah from now on. You and Sarah will have a baby boy and his name will be Isaac. You and Sarah will be the father and mother of many nations." And not very long later Sarah did have a baby boy, and they named him Isaac, which means "laughter."



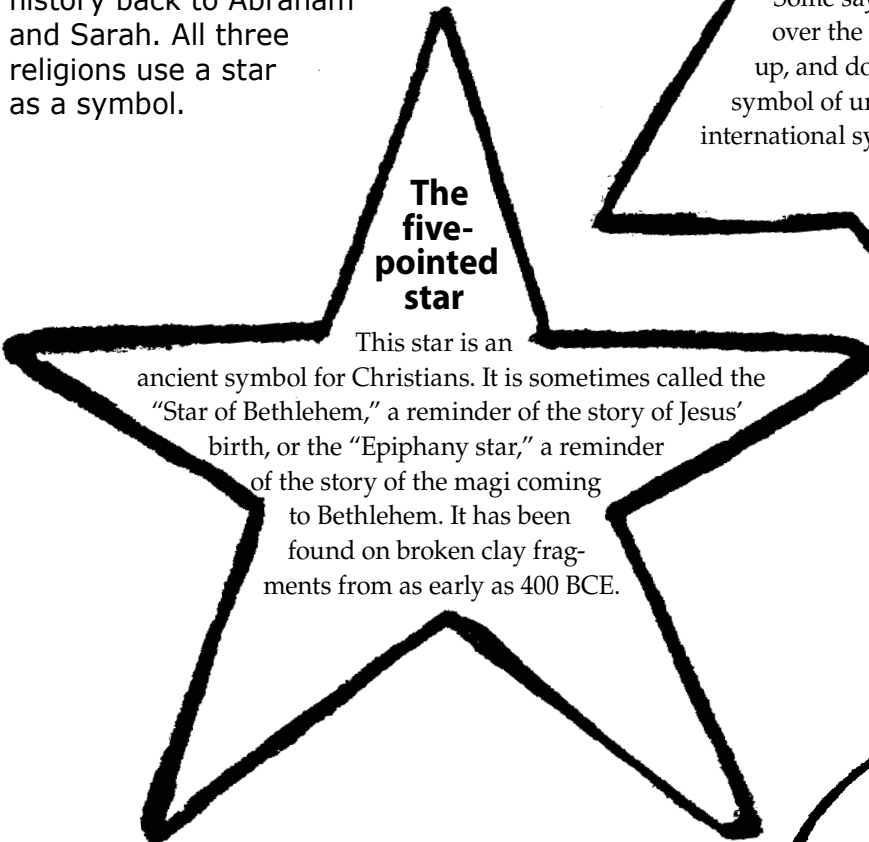
# The Symbol of a Star

God promised Abraham and Sarah that their children would continue through many generations. Three of the world's religions, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, trace their history back to Abraham and Sarah. All three religions use a star as a symbol.



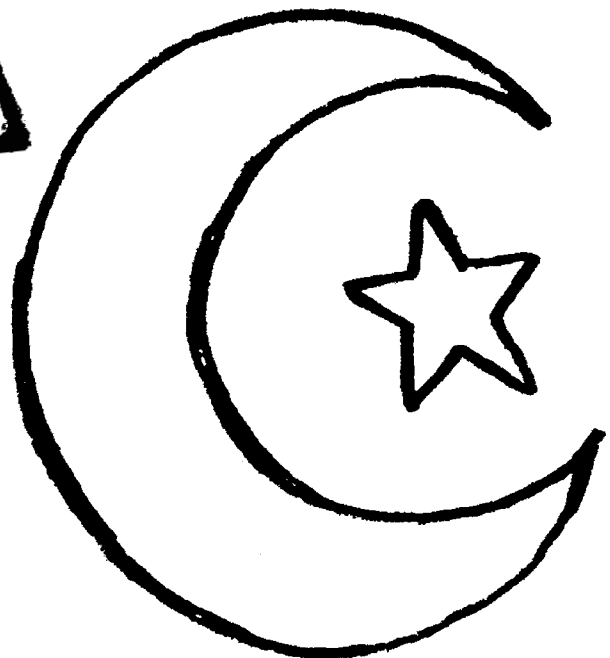
## The six-pointed star

This star has been a symbol for the Jewish nation for a long time. It is sometimes called the "Star of David." Some say it represents the six days of creation. Some say it symbolizes God's rule over the six directions: N, S, E, W, up, and down. Today it has become a symbol of unity for Jewish people and an international symbol of courage and resistance.



## The five-pointed star

This star is an ancient symbol for Christians. It is sometimes called the "Star of Bethlehem," a reminder of the story of Jesus' birth, or the "Epiphany star," a reminder of the story of the magi coming to Bethlehem. It has been found on broken clay fragments from as early as 400 BCE.



## The star and crescent

The combination of a five-pointed star and a crescent moon is the symbol of Islam. It is an ancient symbol that was used in central Asia and Siberia thousands of years before Islam. The crescent is the new moon and is a reminder to spend time in prayer and devotion to God.

# Cosmic Law

Classical music loves the words of Psalm 19: Beethoven and Handel both wrote glorious music using these verses. Yet most attention focuses on the first half of the psalm, the cosmic law preaching to all the world “the glory of God.” The second half that praises Torah and its Covenant Creator has not been served so reverently. Both forms of Law come from the same loving Creator.

## Focus scripture: Psalm 19

The Western world makes a distinction between cosmic law and human law(s), as though only the first came from divine inspiration. Most cultures would see that split as simply wrong. Some indigenous groups understand that the life-rules for human society come from the same divine Creator and follow the same universal principles, as the life-rules from which creation springs forth. This view is often shared by classical Chinese religions and the Hebrew Scriptures.

Observing creation, its rhythms in days and seasons, its ecological balance, its enduring harmony between individual self-expression and kin-based cooperation, can give us insight into how we live fruitfully together. The harmony of creation is meant to guide the harmony of human society.

The lectionary reminds us of this truth by linking **Psalm 19** and the Exodus covenant, **Exodus 20:1–17**. The God who rescued Earth from chaos and the Hebrews from slavery, sends the law to guide us along the path together. In the intriguing passage in **John 2:13–22**, Jesus reads his own fate into the destiny of the Jerusalem temple. Human actions are deeply intertwined with cosmic consequences.

Paul interprets this in an ironic way in **1 Corinthians 1:18–25**. Paul points to the irony

that the gospel he proclaims is centred on the crucifixion (and thus also the resurrection) of Jesus Christ. This seems utter foolishness to those who do not understand God’s workings. If we are not in tune with God, it is indeed hard to understand God’s ways.

Humans have understood the harmony of microcosm / macrocosm. All our scientific ideas rest on this foundation: what is true at the level of stars and planets must be true at the level of creatures and cells. Scripture assures us that God has created a cosmic harmony. We can believe what the heavens tell us; and we can practice that truth in our lives together. There is no separation between social law and natural law – both sides of the one reality are gifts of divine grace.

• • • • •

The law that God gives in Exodus 20:1–7 and that is celebrated in Psalm 19, seeks harmony among people and between people and God. Practicing this law gives life and creates the energy of community. This is also how the cosmos works; enormous life-giving energy operating harmoniously within the cosmic laws of God. God is constant in all God’s work and God’s creative action and grace can be seen at the level of the massive in a galaxy of a billion stars or the level of the minute in a single gene.



**Focus scripture**  
**Psalm 19**

**Additional scriptures**  
**Exodus 20:1–7**  
**1 Corinthians 1:18–25**  
**John 2:13–22**

**The heavens sing out your glory, O God, and your grace shines new each day. Help us live out such grace in our harmony with one another, and experience again the wonder of your presence in every person we encounter; in Jesus the Christ. Amen.**

If you have Internet access, visit [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca) to access Spirit Sightings for connections between current events and the focus passage.

## The Focus for Ages 9–11

Most children in this age group have a natural appreciation of the wonders of creation. They enjoy having a chance to explore nature whether in a city park or at the riverside or in a national park. They often instinctively sense the greatness of God and the wonders of creation and the universe even though they may not be able to articulate this. In this week's focus passage the psalmist marvels at God's creation. Even if you live in an urban environment you can help children connect with nature by encouraging them to notice even the smallest weed growing through a crack.

For this age group rules are very important and everything is about fairness. They complain that someone else was also talk-

ing if they are reprimanded for talking. They point out each time a deviation is made from the norm, whether during a family dinner or a game in the school playground. While they may see fairness first in terms of their own lives, they can also become advocates for others who they feel are being treated unfairly. The children in your group may hear the phrase "God's law" in today's reading from the psalms as a set of rules, defining what is right and wrong. This session will help them explore the idea of God's law as the loving and life-giving ways in which God calls people to live together. Pray that the children will sense God's guidance as they follow the way of love, peace, and justice.

### Prepare

#### Before the session

- Prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Psalm 19, and biblical background material (p. 15).
- Prepare a worship space with a purple cloth, purple pillar candle, construction paper strips, and tealights (see resource sheet "Lenten Ritual," p. 88).
- Bring matches, taper, offering basket, and Bible with the purple and blue bookmarks in previous focus passages from Genesis, and a green bookmark placed in this week's focus passage from the book of Psalms.
- Bring basic supply kit (p. 2), and, if possible, *Lent–Easter 2012 Music Booklet*, *Seasons Songbook*, volume 7, *Seasons Music CD*, volume 7, and CD player.

#### Gather

- Bring copies of the resource sheet "Lenten Ritual" (p. 88); save copies for next week.
- Bring, if possible, the song "I've Got a Voice" (pp. 6–7, *Music Booklet*; pp. 20–21, *Seasons Songbook*; #13, *Seasons Music CD*).
- Bring pairs of dice and/or playing cards.

#### Engage

- Bring copies of this week's resource sheets "Psalm 19" and "Rosh Hashanah."
- Bring slices of apple, a dish of honey, spoons and plates.

#### Respond

Choose one or more of the suggested activities. Prepare and bring materials.

- Sentence images:** bottom section of this week's resource sheet "Rosh Hashanah"
- Service project:** poster board, art supplies; research some of the needs of local shelters and food distribution programs.
- Lenten prayers:** sheets of green construction paper, used magazines, art supplies

#### Bless

- Bring happy face stickers and poster *Rainbow over Pilbara*.



# Cosmic Law

## Scripture

### Psalm 19

**FOCUS** To find joy in following the wise ways of God.

## Gather

**Welcome** the children as they arrive. Introduce newcomers to the group.

**Call to gather** Invite children to gather in the worship space. Remind children that we are in the Season of Lent, a time to learn about God's promises and explore what it means to live in God's way.

**Lent ritual** Distribute copies of the resource sheet "Lenten Ritual" (p. 88) and invite two volunteers to lead the group in the gathering prayer and candle lighting for Lent 3.

**Sing**, if possible, the song "I've Got a Voice" (pp. 6–7 in the *Music Booklet*, pp. 20–21 in the *Seasons Songbook*, #13 on the *Seasons Music CD*).

Receive the offering and extinguish the candles to signify the end of the gathering worship.

### Connecting with the focus

Invite children to form pairs and distribute dice or playing cards. Announce that it is time to start playing the game "Make it up." Explain that there are no rules and they should make the game up as they go along. After a short time, ask:

- **How is it hard to play a game with no rules?**
- **How do rules help when playing a game?**

In today's reading from the Bible we hear how God's rules or ways can give us some guidance.

## Engage

### Preparing for the Bible story

Open the Bible to the book of Genesis, where the purple and blue bookmarks are placed, and review the stories from the previous weeks: God's promise to Noah and God's promise to Abraham and Sarah. Invite a child to use the green bookmark to open to this week's reading from the Psalms. Explain that the psalms are songs or poems written to God or about God and God's people.

### The Bible story

Distribute copies of the resource sheet "Psalm 19." Explain that the group will read this paraphrase of Psalm 19 in a "round robin" fashion. Assign each verse to a member of the group and explain that as one person is finishing reading their verse, the next person will jump in. They will read the last two words of that verse together before the next reader moves on to their verse, so that the voices are overlapping. When the reading is finished, look together at the first section,

Psalm 19:1–6 on the resource sheet and in their Bibles.

- **Where does the psalmist see God's glory?**
- **What do you think is the story that is being told by the "voice with no words"?**

The last half of the psalm is about God's law, or God's wise ways. In Hebrew the word for "law" and "way" is *Torah*. They understood God's law not so much as a list of rules to follow, but as a way to live, sharing God's love, peace, and justice with others. Invite children to look again at **Psalm 19:7–14** on the resource sheet and in their Bibles.

- **What words or phrases are used to describe God's law or commandments?**
- **What does the psalmist say are the rewards for following God's wise ways?**

### The Bible and our lives

**Rosh Hashanah** Distribute copies of the resource sheet "Rosh Hashanah" and invite children to

read the information about this Jewish celebration and the tradition of eating apple slices dipped in honey. Distribute apple slices and invite children to spoon some honey onto a plate and eat the snack as you read again **Psalm 19:10**.

- **How can living in God's way be "sweet"?**
- **What can we do in the coming week to live God's way of love, peace, and justice?**

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## Respond

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Choose one or two of these options.

- **Sentence images** The psalmist uses different images to describe God's way of love, peace, and justice. Invite group members to create their own images of God's way by completing the sentences in the section "God's wise ways" on the resource sheet "Rosh Hashanah." Share these together as a whole group and continue to brainstorm aloud some more images as time permits.
- **Service project** We can proclaim God's beautiful law with our words and actions. Invite children to discuss things they might do to share God's way of love, peace, and justice (such as organizing a food or clothing collection). Make



plans for collecting and distributing the materials. Create a poster together about the chosen project and plan a time to announce it to the rest of the congregation.

- **Lenten prayers** Invite group members to continue building a "rainbow wall of prayers" during the Season of Lent. This week distribute sheets of green construction paper and invite participants to write prayers for the world on the theme of following God's way of love, peace, and justice. Display these prayers by attaching them in a row above or beside the row of prayers from the past two weeks.



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## Bless

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**Gather** in the worship space and light the tealights on the purple strip (remembering God's promise to Noah), on the blue strip (remembering God's promise to Abram and Sarai), and on the green strip (remembering God's beautiful world and God's wise ways). Distribute happy face stickers and invite children to place these around the edges of the poster *Rainbow over Pilbara* as they

think about how living in God's way "rejoices the heart" (Psalm 19:8).

**Pray** the following prayer or one of your own:

God, we thank you  
for your wise ways which help us to live  
with love, peace, and justice. Amen.

**Blessing** Send each child out saying, "(Name), remember to follow the pathway of God's ways."

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## Reflect

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In what ways do the children in your group have opportunities to celebrate the marvels of creation? How have they expressed their understanding of God's wise ways as a path to follow throughout life?

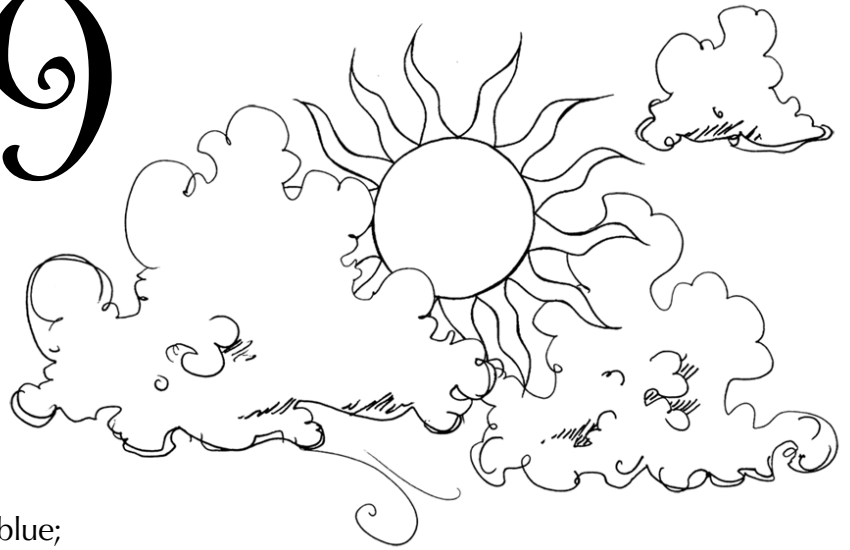


# Psalm 19

## Psalm 19:1–6

Look at all that beautiful sky!  
It tells us a story of God.  
In the daytime, it tells the story in blue;  
at night, in the sparkling of stars;  
even though there isn't any sound.  
We don't hear anyone speak  
but the voice of the sky tells a story;  
the stars sing a song about God.

God has made us that wonderful sky  
and the sun that shines every day.  
The sun rides across from the east to the west;  
like a bright golden bird it flies.  
The sun helps the plants grow strong and tall;  
the sun warms our hands and our face. \*



## Psalm 19:7–14

God's laws of love give us new life.  
God's teachings last forever,  
they make our hearts glad,  
they shine brightly like the morning sun.

God's laws are like signposts,  
showing us the way to joy.

God's ways are truthful and fair.  
They are worth more than gold.  
They are sweeter than honey from a  
honeycomb.

God's teachings warn us of danger.  
We sometimes do the wrong thing without  
knowing it.  
God doesn't let the wrong things take  
control in our lives.  
God helps us to start each day anew!  
God is our rock and our protector.  
Let our words and our thoughts  
always be pleasing to God.

\* Psalm 19:1–6 from *The Lectionary Story Bible, Year A*, by Ralph Milton. Copyright © 2008 Ralph Milton, Wood Lake Publishing Inc. Used by permission.



# Rosh Hashanah

**Rosh Hashanah** is the celebration of the Jewish New Year that occurs every year in September or October...wait! Before you get ideas in your head about Jewish people breaking out the champagne and noisemakers and staying up until midnight on some school night in September or October – it is not exactly that way!

The Torah mentions the observance of Rosh Hashanah in Leviticus 23:23–25. *Rosh* (which is the Hebrew word for “Head”) *Hashanah* (which is the Hebrew word for “Year”) means “Head of the Year” and is the beginning of a holy period of ten days called the “Days of Awe.” You know how every year you go to the doctor for a check-up and he or she tells you how you are doing and what things you need to do to stay healthy (like eat more vegetables!)? Well, these ten days are a time for Jews to go for a check-up too. Instead of a check-up for the body, it is a check-up for the soul. And instead of going to someone else for the check-up, Jews are expected to examine themselves.

What do we examine? We examine the choices we have made, how we have treated other people, how we have acted to make the world a better place. All of us have some things we have done well, but all of us have things that we need to improve upon. For those things, we ask for forgiveness and work toward being better and making the world a better place.

*Rabbi Morris* from “Ask the Rabbi” in the Library and Action Zone of the *Seasons* website ([www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca))

## Sweeter than honey

During Rosh Hashanah Jewish people celebrate God’s law as “more precious than gold, than much pure gold; sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb” (**Psalm 19:10**). During Rosh Hashanah, there is a ritual of eating apples with honey and praying.

After dipping the apple in honey: “Blessed are you, Lord our God, who creates the fruit of the tree.”

After eating: “May it be your will, God and God of our ancestors, to renew on us a good and sweet year.”

## God’s wise ways

The writer of Psalm 19 uses different images to describe the beauty and joy of knowing and following God’s wise ways. Create some of your own images by completing the following sentences:

**God’s love is as powerful as...**

**God’s peace is as deep as...**

**God’s rules are as fair as...**

**God’s ways are as beautiful as...**

# LENT – EASTER 2012

Dear Families,

**During the Season of Lent** the children will be hearing stories from the Hebrew Scriptures (also known as the Old Testament). These stories are about promises from God to Noah and his family and to Abraham and Sarah as well as the promises spoken through the Psalms and by the prophet Jeremiah. The Season of Lent is 40 days long (not counting the Sundays, which are all considered “little Easters”).

**On Palm/Passion Sunday** (April 1) children may bring home a “Holy Week Calendar” of readings and reflections which your family might do together.

**Following Easter Sunday** (on April 8) the Bible stories will be taken from the New Testament. Our group will explore stories in the gospels about Jesus’ appearances to the disciples after the Resurrection and the ways in which Jesus’ friends and followers shared the good news of the risen Christ. During the Easter seasons we will learn from Jesus’ teachings and the witness of the disciples how we too can live as a faithful community of people who share God’s way of love.

You might like to read to read these stories together at home: John 20:19–31, Luke 24:36b–48, John 10:11–18, Acts 8:26–40, John 15:9–17, and Acts 1:15–17, 21–26. Reading the Bible together suggests that these stories are important to you.

**We celebrate Pentecost Sunday** on May 27, marking the end of the Season of Easter. This is a day to celebrate the Spirit of God and the growth of the Christian community.

We will be praying for each child in our group during these seasons. We ask that your family also include us in your prayers as we prepare for and lead the sessions each week. May these Lenten and Easter seasons be a time of spiritual nurture and growth for our group and for your family.

Sincerely,



# Lenten Ritual

## Prepare a worship space...

1. Cover a small table with a purple cloth and place a purple pillar candle in the middle.
2. Cut strips of construction paper (one each of purple, blue, green, yellow, red) and place the strips in a circle, radiating out from the central candle.
3. Place a tealight at the end of each coloured ray (tealights can be white or the same colours as the coloured strips).
4. Each gathering prayer will focus on one colour, and the tealight on that particular coloured strip will be lit from the central candle.

## Lenten gathering prayers

### Lent 1

**One:** Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the central candle.*)

**Two:** The colour purple reminds us to say "I'm sorry." (*Use a taper to light the tealight from the central candle.*)

**All:** **We are sorry for the times we don't live in God's way.**

**One:** Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

**Two:** God has promised to be with us always.

**All:** **Thank you God. Amen.**

### Lent 2

**One:** Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the central candle.*)

**Two:** The colour blue reminds us of God's blessing. (*Use a taper to light the tealight from the central candle.*)

**All:** **God knows us each by name and cares for us.**

**One:** Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

**Two:** God has promised to be with us always.

**All:** **Thank you God. Amen.**

### Lent 3

**One:** Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the central candle.*)

**Two:** The colour green reminds us of God's

beautiful world. (*Use a taper to light the tealight from the central candle.*)

**All:** **God gives us many good gifts.**

**One:** Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

**Two:** God has promised to be with us always.

**All:** **Thank you God. Amen.**

### Lent 4

**One:** Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the central candle.*)

**Two:** The colour yellow reminds us of a warm hug. (*Use a taper to light the tealight from the central candle.*)

**All:** **God's love is with us in good times and bad.**

**One:** Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

**Two:** God has promised to be with us always.

**All:** **Thank you God. Amen.**

### Lent 5

**One:** Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the central candle.*)

**Two:** The colour red reminds us of God's love. (*Use a taper to light the tealight from the central candle.*)

**All:** **God's steadfast love is deep in our hearts.**

**One:** Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

**Two:** God has promised to be with us always.

**All:** **Thank you God. Amen.**



# Easter Season Resources

## **Prepare a worship space...**

1. Cover a small table with a gold or yellow cloth and place a white pillar candle in the middle.
2. Create a spiral shape leading out from the central candle by sprinkling a pathway of gold confetti or sequins.
3. Place six tealights at intervals along the spiral, with the last one at the end.
4. Each week the central candle will be lit first and a taper will then be used to light additional tealights, until all are lit by the seventh Sunday of Easter (May 20). These tealights will symbolize the growing light as the good news about the risen Christ spread out among the disciples and into the community.

## **Gathering prayer**

**Reader:** Loving God, we celebrate this Season of Easter, a time of new life and joy.

**All:** Alleluia!

**Reader:** We are called to be witnesses to the new life in Christ.  
*(Light the central Christ candle.)*

**All:** Alleluia!

**Reader:** We are called to spread the light of this good news.  
*(Light one or more tealights, adding one each week.)*

**All:** Alleluia!

## **Friendship bracelets (for May 13)**

### **Instructions:**

1. Twist three different colours of pipe cleaners together at one end to tie together.
2. Thread one coloured bead at a time onto the middle pipe cleaner.
3. Bring the two outside pipe cleaners around each bead and twist together to hold the bead in place.
4. Repeat with different colours of beads until long enough to fit around a wrist.
5. Twist all ends of the three pipe cleaners together to form into a bracelet.

## **Prayer lines (for May 20)**

I thank God for your gift of music in our church community.

I thank God for your leadership in our church community.

I thank God for the way you care for our church building.

I thank God for the ways you help lead worship.

I thank God for your visits to people who are sick or can't get to church.



# The New Testament

The books on this bookshelf are all in the part of the Bible called "The New Testament." How many books are there?

## The gospels

The first four books include stories about Jesus. Look in your Bible to find the whole title for each of these books. What do these titles tell you about these books? Each writer tells the stories about Jesus in slightly different ways.

## Acts

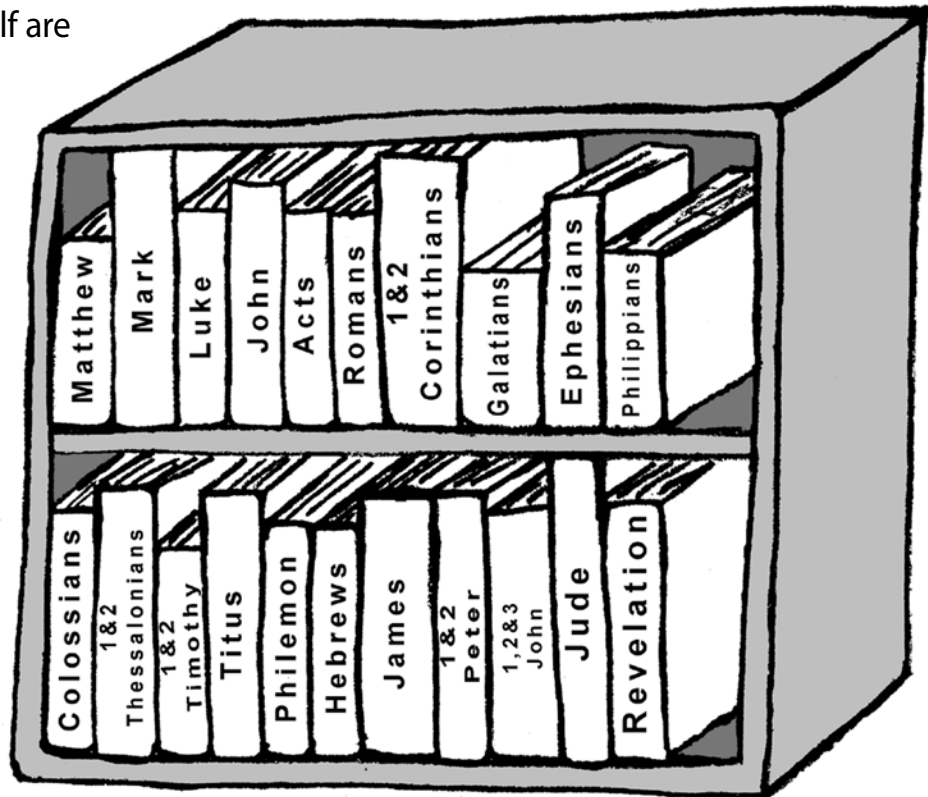
The first book after the gospels is usually called Acts. But the name of this book is longer. Look in your Bible to see what it is. This book is thought to be a continuation of one of the gospels. Which one? (*Find out by looking at the introduction to this book in your Bible.*)

## Letters

All the books following Acts except the last one are letters written to various churches, or individuals, or groups of people. How many letters are there? The titles of these books might be the name of the writer or the name of the receiver. Sometimes more than one letter was written to the same person or group. Which ones are these?

## The last book

The last book in the New Testament describes the visions of a man called John. What is it called?



# About the Art for this Lent and Easter

By Susan McIlveen

Find a well-lit place where you can arrange all of the art posters in front of you. Take in the range of colours and moods represented in the group as a whole. Now, consider each work in turn.

## **Person at the Window**

(Salvador Dali, 1925; oil on canvas, 103 x 75 cm/40.5 x 29.5 in)

Like the figure standing at the window, as viewers we are standing within a room looking out. We see something of what she sees through the window – water, sky, the land across the bay. We also see things she doesn't – reflections of water, land, and light in the window glass to her right; the person herself. In a similar way, as we look toward the Lenten journey that lies ahead, we see some things directly: practical choices we will make, spiritual disciplines we may embrace. But some things we can only see indirectly from here and must experience on the journey. What reflections linger in your mind from past Lenten journeys?

## **Rainbow over Pilbara**

(Sydney Nolan, 1982; enamel spray on canvas; 121 x 152 cm/47.5 x 60 in)

This image invites touch. Take your finger and follow the lines Nolan has made: the jagged grassland in the foreground, the ridged mountains behind, the rainbow arching across the whole. The original of this image is a larger work. Take your whole arm and re-create the sweeping gesture the artist used to spray the rainbow across the canvas. In the biblical story of Noah, a rainbow is a sign of God's promise to all creatures. What gestures and signs of promise do you imagine lie ahead of you on the Lenten journey? How is the Season of Lent itself a movement or gesture of promise?

## **Crucifix**

(Mexican, 17th century; polychrome wood) (*Not in ages 3–5 or 6–8*)

The cross is where Jesus' journey to Jerusalem ended. Little is known about the origins of this carving. Is it a representation of the cross on which Jesus was crucified, in which the wood is weeping with guilt for its role or with compassion for Jesus' suffering? Or is it a portrait of Jesus the Christ in which he is so deeply identified with his sacrificial death that his very body has become a wooden cross? Either way, this stark representation points us to equally stark truths: profound grief and profound love.

## **Cap Stump**

(Zach Pine, 3 February 2003; eucalyptus stump and flower caps)

For Zach Pine, art is a matter of noticing. Pine creates environmental art – sculptures made of natural objects,

arranged outdoors, and designed to be changed or even discarded by the elements. This piece, for example, was expected to last less than a day as the wind blew the flower caps away. Pine saw beauty in the decaying stump. By arranging flower caps in rays outward from its empty centre, Pine draws our attention beyond the present reality. New life is here as well, within the stump as it changes. New life is within and around us, too. The Season of Easter encourages us to watch for signs of death and resurrection in ourselves, our relationships, and our world.

## **Old Woman in Prayer**

(Prayer without End) (Nicolaes Maes, c. 1656; oil on canvas; 134 x 113 cm/52.75 x 44.5 in)

This painting contrasts earthly sustenance with spiritual nourishment. Imagine a line drawn diagonally across the image from the upper left to the lower right corners. A meal of fish and breads, a table and chair lie lower on the shadowed left side of the painting. Notice the greedy cat, seizing its moment. On the right, higher in the frame, the picture is filled with natural light. Here we find the face of a person deep in prayer, an open Bible, and the keys to life. Regardless of the distractions of the cat, the coming meal, and her responsibilities beyond this small circle of light, she is suspended in a moment with God. How might the first disciples have coped in the period between Jesus' death and the coming of the Spirit at Pentecost? How might we balance Jesus' earthly absence and spiritual presence for ourselves?

## **Consuming Fire**

(Vanessa Hollifield, 2006; stained glass mosaic; 33 cm/13 in diameter)

Compare this image with *Cap Stump*. The circle with lines radiating outward, and the contrasting inner circle are the same, but so much is different. Where the core of *Cap Stump* was dark and hollow, here the centre is filled with light. The fire of colour and light outshines the darkness between the individual pieces of glass. Of what else does this image remind you? A mandala for meditation? The top of a Celtic cross? The flame of a single candle in a pitch-dark room? There is lots of movement here, as the individual pieces of glass dance within the circle. How did the Spirit move the first disciples at Pentecost? How will it continue to move your church in surprising new ways this year?

In worship, outreach, or learning, let these images provide a visual counterpoint to the words and music of the seasons from Lent through to Pentecost.

Susan McIlveen is a Presbyterian church worker, writer, and editor. She lives in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, with her clergy spouse and two bossy cats.

