



Seasons ^{OF} _{THE} Spirit™

Seasons ENCORE

Multijage

Weekly resources to help nurture
actively growing faith

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

LENT, EASTER

Contents



Multiage (Ages 5–12)

About this Lent, Easter	1
This Lent, Easter for Ages 5–12	2
Weekly resources	
February 26, 2012 • Blessed Connections.....	3
March 4, 2012 • Living Legacy	11
March 11, 2012 • Cosmic Law.....	19
March 18, 2012 • Rich in Love.....	27
March 25, 2012 • Heart Promises.....	35
April 1, 2012 • Palm/Passion Sunday.....	43
April 8, 2012 • Easter Sunday.....	49
April 15, 2012 • Experiencing Resurrection.....	55
April 22, 2012 • Christ with Us.....	63
April 29, 2012 • Total Commitment.....	71
May 6, 2012 • Reach Out.....	79
May 13, 2012 • The Great Dance.....	87
May 20, 2012 • On Your Behalf.....	95
May 27, 2012 • Pentecost Sunday.....	103
Extra Resources	109
Developing Traditions in an Intergenerational Christian Community	115
A Discernment Story.....	116
About the Art for this Lent and Easter.....	117
Mingo Goes to Church.....	118
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.

Ages 5–12 writer and editor team: Cathie Talbot, Gerry Adam, Tom Adam, Christiane Lange, Sharon Harding, Meg Jordan, Carol Wehrheim, Susan McIlveen, Susan Burt, L Lee Levett-Olson, Paul Turley

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

Seasons of the Spirit resources for Lent, Easter 2012 is a collaborative effort of an international and ecumenical community that includes participation by *Seasons* writers, editors, resource persons, and members of the *Seasons* Production, Marketing/ Interpretation, Customer Service, Business Operations, and Publishing Teams.

Seasons of the Spirit is based on the *Revised Common Lectionary*, copyright © 1992 by the Consultation on Common Texts (CCT). All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., and are used by permission.

Seasons of the Spirit™. Copyright © 2011 Wood Lake Publishing Inc. All rights reserved. See Terms of Use at www.seasonsonline.ca.

For permission information contact permission@seasonsonline.ca.

ISSN: 1536-8955

ISBN: 978-1-77064-250-8

Published by:

Wood Lake Publishing Inc.

9590 Jim Bailey Road

Kelowna, British Columbia

Canada V4V 1R2


Phone: 1.800.663.2775


www.woodlakebooks.com

www.seasonsonline.ca

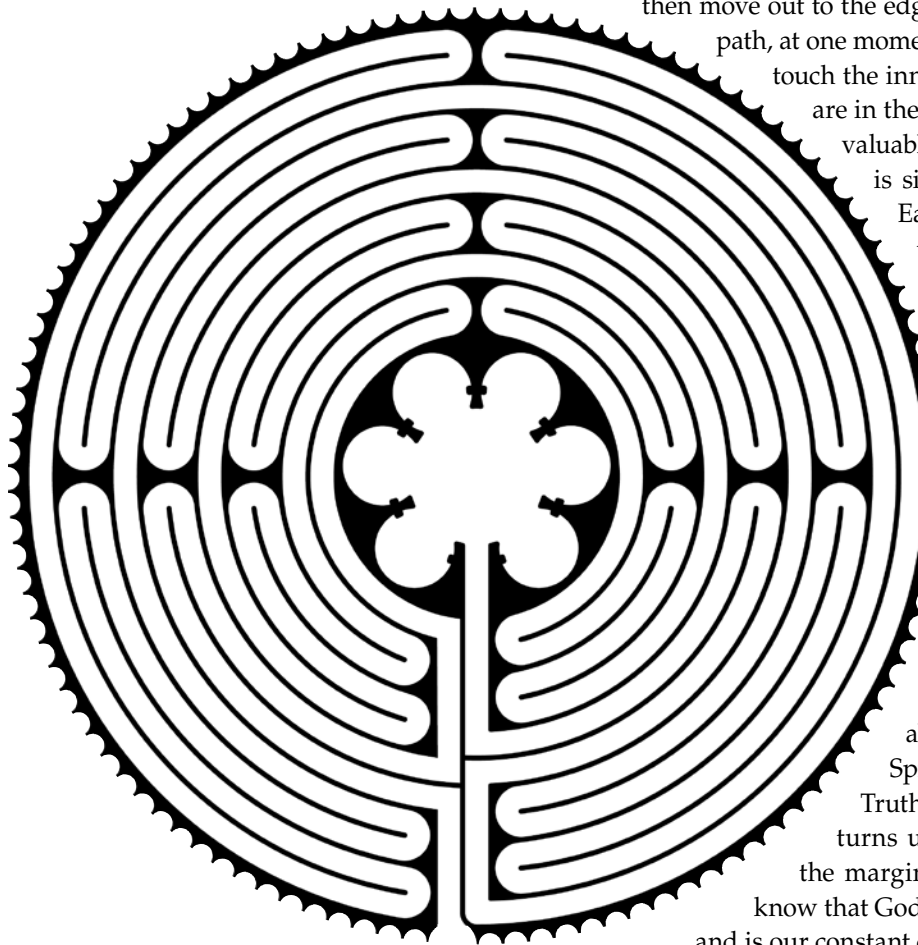
Seasons of the Spirit resources are produced collaboratively by teams of writers, editors, and resource persons from Australia, North America, and the United Kingdom. The teams include representation from denominations such as Anglican and Episcopal, Presbyterian, The United Church of Canada, The United Church of Christ, The United Methodists, and The Uniting Church in Australia.



Everything in this resource marked with this symbol  can be photocopied for use in your church during Lent, Easter February 26 to May 27, 2012. Everything else is copyright protected unless otherwise stated.

 At Wood Lake Publishing, we are committed to caring for the environment and all creation. *Seasons of the Spirit* resources are printed on SFI (Sustainable Forestry Initiative) certified and chlorine-free papers using vegetable oil inks suitable for children's packaging. Wherever possible, we offer digital options on *Seasons* products.

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 5–12

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. Children will be invited to walk down a rainbow path of stepping stones to enter the worship space each week and bookmarks in different rainbow colours will help mark the progress through the Bible stories. Review the resource sheet "Rituals for Lent" on p. 110 for information on setting space, opening and closing songs, and weekly prayers which include a different symbolic item each week. A weekly closing ritual includes adding images to the poster *Rainbow over Pilbara*.

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. 111) 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, from three-year-olds to adults, to meet together. Consult with other leaders for plans for these 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.

Leadership The Multiage sessions are designed to be led by a team of leaders. One leader may take the lead each week, providing leadership for each section of the session, or leaders might divide the sections of each session amongst themselves. Some activity zones in the Respond section can be self-directed; others are designed so that a leader or an older child is present to help younger children. Consider the ritual of ringing a small bell or a "singing bowl" as a signal for beginning the opening and closing rituals each week and for moving from one activity to another. Thank you for investing in this ministry of leadership.

Bibles Encourage older children to bring their own Bibles or provide Bibles for use during the sessions. Many Engage sections include a "Bible research" option for older members of the group. Unless otherwise stated, scripture references are from the *New Revised Standard Version*. A resource sheet "The New Testament" (p. 112) offers children an opportunity to learn more about the books included in this section of the Bible.

Articles and extra resource sheets Some of the weekly sessions refer to materials on the extra resource sheets and articles at the end of the package. Before the first session review the "Lent-Easter 2012" family letter (p. 109) and add information about special activities and church programs before duplicating the letter to send home with children.

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. 117). 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 referred to in the sessions can be found in Volume 7 of the *Seasons Songbook* and on Volume 7 of the *Seasons Music CD*. If you do not have this songbook or music CD, there are *Seasons .mp3 Downloads* of recordings and print music which can be purchased from the *Seasons* website. Printed music and song lyrics are also in the *Lent-Easter 2012 Music Booklet*, available as a separate purchase.

The Seasons website (www.seasonsonline.ca) provides background 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 (children and adult sizes), glue sticks, white glue, washable felt markers, crayons, coloured pencils, pencils, stapler, hole punch, removable adhesive. 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.

• • • • •

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 to access Spirit Sightings for connections between current events and the focus passage.

The Focus for Ages 5–12



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).

The story of Noah and the ark is probably a familiar one for children. It is found in more storybooks and toys than any other Hebrew Scriptures story and children never seem to tire of hearing it. For the younger children there are the animals. Imagine living on a boat with a whole zoo! For older children, the promise or covenant from God with the rainbow symbol may hold more power. For all of them, this is a story of great import, the first of God's promises that they will explore during this Lenten season. The resource sheet "God's Promise" provides more of the story than is found in the focus scripture so children can hear about the whole

story to help put God's promise in context.

Some children in your group are probably beginning to wonder whether a story like this is true. Encourage those children to focus on the truth that comes from the story: that God desires a new relationship with all people. For those who raise this question, you have a wonderful opportunity to help them understand that the Bible contains many types of literature and that these early stories in Genesis were told to present truth about God rather than as a description of an historical event. 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 5–12" (p. 2).
- Prepare a worship space with a purple cloth, purple pillar candle, and a Bible with a purple bookmark placed in this week's focus passage.
- Bring matches, offering basket, basic supply kit (p. 2), Bibles, and, if possible, *Lent–Easter 2012 Music Booklet*, *Seasons Songbook*, volume 7, *Seasons Music CD*, volume 7, and CD player.
- Review resource sheet "Rituals for Lent" (p. 110); prepare a stepping stone pathway with rainbow-coloured circles.

Gather

- Bring a copy of resource sheet "Rituals for Lent" (p. 110) and a rainbow-coloured object.

Engage

- Bring this week's resource sheet "God's Promise."
- Covenant group:** copies of the "Covenant group" section on resource sheet "God's Covenant," drawing paper, coloured pencils

- Art group:** poster *Rainbow over Pilbara*, copies of the "Art engagement group" section on resource sheet "God's Covenant," drawing paper, pastels

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- Prayer zone:** wide purple ribbon, pieces of purple paper; make a sign on poster board: "Our Lenten Prayer Wall"
- Craft zone:** supplies and instructions for "Rainbow bracelet" from resource sheet "Rainbow Reminders"
- Art zone:** supplies and instructions for "Rainbow posters" from resource sheet "Rainbow Reminders"
- Earth zone:** supplies and instructions for "Rainbow planters" from resource sheet "Rainbow Reminders"
- Outreach zone:** information about congregational Lenten offering project, small boxes, used magazines

Bless

- Bring rainbow stickers, and the "Blessing song" (on resource sheet "Rituals for Lent," p. 110).
- Bring copies of resource sheet "Lent–Easter 2012" (p. 109).



Blessed Connections

Scripture

Genesis 9:8–17

FOCUS To discover ways to take part in God's promise of renewal for all creation.

Gather

Welcome the children as they arrive, introducing guests and newcomers.

Opening ritual

Call to gather Invite children to follow the rainbow-coloured stepping stones to the worship area. Gather around the worship table and explain that today is the beginning of a new season in 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. The colour purple reminds us that

this is a time when we say to God that we are sorry for all the times we do not live in the light of God's promises.

Prayer Invite two volunteers to lead the "Lent 1" prayer on the resource sheet "Rituals for Lent" (p. 110), lighting the candle and placing the symbolic object. Invite the whole group to say the last line together.

Sing the song "Gathering Song" (on p. 110).

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Connecting with the focus

Invite children to offer their understanding of the word "promise."

- **What kinds of promises have others made to you?**
- **What kinds of promises have you made to others?**
- **What does it mean to keep a promise?**
- **How does it feel when someone breaks a promise made to you?**

Suggest that they listen for the promise in today's Bible story, and who makes that promise.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the purple bookmark to open it to this week's focus passage. Point out that today's story comes from the book of Genesis, the first book in the Bible. The word "genesis" means beginning. Invite older 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. Show the group where the whole story is found in Genesis 6–9.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "God's Promise" to tell the story based on **Genesis 9:8–17**, encouraging children to participate by creating some sound effects. After the story invite children to talk about what they liked about the story and some of the things they wonder about this story. Discuss with the group some or all of the following questions:

- **In this story what promise does God make to Noah and all living things?**
- **If you were one of Noah's children what questions might you ask about God's promise?**
- **What sign or symbol was given as a reminder of God's promise?**

■ **Why do you think people needed a reminder about this promise?**

■ **What do you learn about God from this story?**

Explain that there isn't just one answer for this question. We all hear different things in stories and there are many things to learn about God in the stories from the Bible.

Exploring the story further

(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.)

Covenant group The children in this group have the opportunity to explore other versions of the words of God's covenant in **Genesis 9:9–13** and to write it in their own words. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "God's Covenant," drawing paper, coloured pencils, and Bibles and invite participants to work as a group to follow the instructions in the "Covenant group" section of the resource sheet.

Art group The children in this group have the opportunity to talk about rainbows and make their own paintings of rainbows. Look together

at the poster *Rainbow over Pilbara* and talk about initial responses. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "God's Covenant," drawing paper and pastels, and invite participants to work as a group to follow the instructions in the "Art engagement group" section of the resource sheet.

Reporting Invite the covenant group to share their versions of the words of God's promise and invite the art group to display their drawings of rainbows beside the poster.

The Bible story and us

The rainbow is a reminder that God promises to love us and always take care of the earth and all living things. Invite children to share stories of times when they have seen a rainbow: Where were they? What did the rainbow look like? Do all rainbows look the same?

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

The rainbow is also a reminder that we can help to take care of the earth and all living things.

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

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- **Prayer zone: Lenten prayer wall** Lent is a special time to pray. Invite children to create a rainbow of prayers, adding prayers to a different strip of ribbon each week. Designate a space in the room and post the sign: "Our Lenten Prayer Wall." Tape a purple ribbon to the sign and provide purple squares of paper for the children to write or draw a prayer for all living things. Tape or pin these prayers to the ribbon and read aloud together.
- **Craft zone: Rainbow bracelets** God's rainbow is a reminder of God's covenant. Distribute supplies and review the instructions for making bracelets from the resource sheet "Rainbow Reminders." Invite each child to make a bracelet for themselves and extra bracelets to give away to friends or family members.
- **Art zone: Rainbow posters** In the story from Genesis, God makes a covenant with all creation. Invite children to create rainbow posters to remind them of God's covenant. Distribute supplies and review the instructions for creat-



- ing the posters from the resource sheet "Rainbow Reminders." Older children can write ideas for caring for creation beside each of the bands of their rainbows.
- **Earth zone: Growing seeds** We are called to work with God to help care for the earth. Distribute supplies and review the instructions for decorating plant pots from the resource sheet "Rainbow Reminders." Invite children to plant seeds or bulbs, take these home, and care for their plants as reminders of their call to care for creation.
- **Outreach zone: 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 return the boxes on Palm/Passion Sunday to place in the offering plate during the worship service.

Bless

Gather in the worship space and relight the candle. Look together again at the poster *Rainbow over Pilbara* and remember God's promise to Noah and his family. Distribute rainbow stickers and invite children to add these around the edges of the poster as they share ideas of how they can help to look after God's world.

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 as we care for the Earth too. Amen.

Sing the "Blessing song" (p. 110).

Blessing Send each child out saying, "*(Name)*, remember that God loves you. Let your life shine like a beautiful rainbow."

Distribute copies of the family letter on the resource sheet "Lent-Easter 2012" (p. 109) for children to take home.

Reflect

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? How might you support children during this Season of Lent?



God's Promise

(based on Genesis 9:8–17)

Providing a way for the children to participate helps them to remember the story.

People have told the story of Noah and the ark and the rainbow for many years. This story helps us remember God's promise to Noah and all living creatures. This promise is also called a "covenant." Listen to the story for the promise that God made to Noah, his family, and all living creatures.

Rain, rain, and more rain! (*Invite children to make rain sounds by rubbing hands together.*) Noah and his sons were glad they had built the big ark. Their neighbours laughed when they hammered on the big boat. (*Invite children to make hammering sounds by drumming on a table.*) There was no water anywhere around, so why were they building such a big boat? But now it had been raining for weeks and Noah and his family were glad to have the shelter of the boat. Well, it was a bit crowded with all the animals God told them to bring – two of every kind. Ants and zebras, kangaroos and coyotes, polar bears and ostriches. (*Invite children to make some animal and bird sounds.*)

After 40 days, the rain finally stopped. When Noah's family looked north they saw water. (*Invite children to shield eyes and look around.*) When they looked south, they saw more water. When they looked west, more water; when they looked east, even more water. Water was everywhere. For days and days, all they could see was water.

But God had not forgotten Noah, his family, and all the animals and birds and reptiles on the ark. God sent a wind to blow over the water. (*Invite children to make blowing sounds.*) The wind blew and blew and the waters started to go down. One day Noah could see the top of a mountain. Days went by and the waters went down and down. Finally the ark stopped floating and rested on dry ground. Finally it was time to get out of the ark – Noah and his wife, his sons and their wives, and all the animals and birds and reptiles. (*Invite children to make some animal and bird sounds.*)

Just then a beautiful rainbow appeared in the sky. (*Invite children to make an arch with their hands.*) "This rainbow is the sign of my promise, my covenant," said God. "I have set a rainbow in the sky because I'm reaching out to you and every living creature in love. This covenant will be with you and your children, and your children's children, and your children's children's children. And with all living creatures, forever!"

Then God said, "That's my part of the covenant. Here's your part. You can also reach out in love to the people of the world. And you can help to take care of the birds that fly in the air, and the animals that walk on the ground, and the fish that swim in the sea, and the grass and the flowers and the trees. Everything. It's yours to take care of."

So, every time we see the sun shine through the rain to make a rainbow, we can remember God's promise of love to every person and every living creature. And we can think about how we can help God to care for the earth today.



God's Covenant

Covenant group

Instructions

1. Read the two translations of **Genesis 9:9–13** below. Read those same verses in your Bibles, if you have different versions.
2. Work with the others in your group to draw a rainbow on a piece of paper and write God's promise in your own words on the arches of the rainbow.

"I am going to make a solemn promise to you and to everyone who will live after you. This includes the birds and the animals that came out of the boat. I promise every living creature that the earth and those living on it will never again be destroyed by a flood. The rainbow that I have put in the sky will be my sign to you and to every living creature on earth. It will remind you that I will keep this promise forever."

From the Contemporary English Version © 1995 American Bible Society

"I'm setting up my covenant with you, including your children who will come after you, along with everything alive around you – birds, farm animals, wild animals – that came out of the ship with you. I'm setting up my covenant with you that never again will everything living be destroyed by floodwaters; no, never again will a flood destroy the Earth."

God continued, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and everything living around you and everyone living after you. I'm putting my rainbow in the clouds, a sign of the covenant between me and the Earth."

From The Message by Eugene H. Peterson, copyright (c) 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of NavPress Publishing Group. All rights reserved.

Art engagement group

Instructions

1. Look at the poster *Rainbow over Pilbara*.
2. Use some or all of the following questions to explore this image:
 - **What do you notice about the rainbow in this painting?**
 - **Where else do you see rainbow colours in this painting?**
 - **Which colours seem warm? Which colours seem cool? Why?**
 - **Where would you like to be standing in this picture? Why?**
 - **How does the painting make you feel?**
3. Use the pastels to create your own rainbow picture to remember God's promises.



Rainbow Reminders

Rainbow bracelet

Materials needed: elastic thread, coloured beads

Instructions

1. String beads onto a length of elastic in the following order: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple.
2. Measure around the wrist, tie the ends of the elastic in a secure knot and snip the loose ends.
3. Wear as a reminder of God's rainbow promise.

Rainbow posters

Materials needed: white or black poster board, cut in half (one piece per child); red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple tissue paper

Preparation

1. Cut each piece of poster board in half.
2. Draw an outline of a rainbow shape with six arches on each piece of poster board.
3. Cut tissue paper into small squares and place each colour in an open container.

Instructions

1. Create a rainbow by covering each arch with glue and adding overlapping layers of tissue paper.
2. Begin with purple on the bottom and end with red on the top.
3. Display the poster as a reminder of God's rainbow promise.

Rainbow planters

Materials needed: plastic plant pots, squares of tissue paper in rainbow colours, paintbrushes, pebbles, potting soil, flower seeds or bulbs

Instructions

1. Prepare containers of white glue thinned with water.
2. Decorate containers by covering with a layer of glue, using the paintbrushes, adding tissue paper squares, and painting another layer of glue over the paper.
3. Place a layer of pebbles in the bottom of the pots, add soil, and plant seeds or bulbs.

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 to access Spirit Sightings for connections between current events and the focus passage.

The Focus for Ages 5–12



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).

Children in this age group often like to hear the stories of how their names were chosen and what they mean. Some are quite particular about their names, and whether or not it is acceptable to have a nickname. Sometimes children are given names that make connections to previous generations. This week's story is about names and also about generations of family. As children grow older they learn the concept of many generations and may have made a

family tree for a school project.

This week's session provides an opportunity to learn about another foundational story of faith, that of Abraham and Sarah. The symbol of God's promise to Noah was a rainbow and the symbol of promise in this story is a star (see Genesis 15:5). Children will hear that they are part of the generations promised to Abraham and Sarah. Pray that the children will hear and trust in God's promise to love them and be with them.

Prepare

Before the session

- Prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16, and biblical background material (p. 11).
- Review "About this Lent and Easter" (p. 1) and "This Lent, Easter for Ages 5–12" (p. 2).
- Prepare a worship space with a purple cloth, purple pillar candle, and a Bible with the purple bookmark from last week and a blue bookmark placed in this week's focus passage.
- Bring matches, offering basket, basic supply kit (p. 2), Bibles, and, if possible, *Lent–Easter 2012 Music Booklet*, *Seasons Songbook*, volume 7, *Seasons Music CD*, volume 7, and CD player.
- Review resource sheet "Rituals for Lent" (p. 110); prepare a stepping stone pathway with rainbow-coloured circles (see information on resource sheet) if not in place from last week.

Gather

- Bring a copy of resource sheet "Rituals for Lent" (p. 110) and a star.
- Bring baby name book.

Engage

- Bring this week's resource sheet "God's Promise to Abraham and Sarah" and print on folded pieces of card stock the words: Isaac, Sarai, Sarah, Abram, and Abraham.
- Bring poster *Old Woman in Prayer*.

- Name group:** information from "Ask the Rabbi" (in Library at www.seasonsonline.ca) for "Why do biblical names change?"
- Family tree group:** copies of this week's resource sheet "The Symbol of a Star"

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- Prayer zone:** wide blue ribbon, pieces of blue paper
- Poetry zone:** copies of this week's resource sheet "Promise Acrostics"
- Craft zone:** small jars with lids, star confetti, distilled water, glycerine, waterproof adhesive, spoons
- Art zone:** yellow poster board, art supplies, ribbon, star stickers, star templates (see pattern in the *Virtual Resource Booklet* in the Library at www.seasonsonline.ca)
- Music zone:** copies of section "Music" on the bottom of p. 15; recording is available on *Seasons Music CD*, volume 4 (#29) or as an .mp3 download from www.seasonsonline.ca.

Bless

- Bring star stickers and poster *Rainbow over Pilbara*.
- Bring the song "I Will Be Your God" (p. 15).
- Bring copies of resource sheet "Lent–Easter 2012" (p. 109).



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, introducing guests and newcomers.

Opening ritual

Call to gather Invite children to follow the rainbow-coloured stepping stones to the worship area. Gather around the worship table and 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. The colour for this season is purple.

Prayer Invite two volunteers to lead in the “Lent 2” prayer on the resource sheet “Rituals for Lent” (p. 110), lighting the candle and placing the symbolic object. Invite the whole group to say the last line together.

Sing the “Gathering Song” (on p. 110).

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Connecting with the focus

Invite children to share stories of their names (how they were chosen, meaning) using the resources brought if needed. Explain that 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 also happens today, for example, a child named “Kathy” might change to “Kathryn” when she is older. Invite children to listen for the names that change in today’s story.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table. Explain that the stories from last week and for today come from the first book in the Bible, Genesis, which means “beginning.” Use the purple bookmark to open the Bible and recall last week’s story of Noah and the flood. Use the blue bookmark to turn to this week’s focus passage, a part of the story of two people named Abraham and Sarah. Theirs is the longest story in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). Like the story about Noah, these kinds of stories were told from generation to generation for thousands of years before being written down.

The Bible story

Distribute name cards to five children and invite them to hold up the cards each time they hear

the name in the story. Use the resource sheet “God’s Promise to Abraham and Sarah” to tell this week’s story, based on **Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16**. After the story, invite children to share any questions and wonderings they have about this story.

Art engagement Look together at the poster *Old Woman in Prayer*. Notice the expression on the woman’s face. Invite children to imagine that she is Sarai, praying and telling God about how much she and Abram would like to have a baby. How might she look after their baby once it is born?

■ What promise did God give to Abram and Sarai?

Explain that not only did God promise that Abraham and Sarah would have children, God also promised to be their God and to love and care for all the generations.

Exploring the story further

(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.)

Name group The children in this group have the opportunity to learn more about biblical names. Distribute information from “Ask the Rabbi” about the question: “Why do biblical names change?” Look again at the name cards used in the story and notice how adding an “h” changed the names. Mention that God’s promise to be with Abraham and Sarah is also a promise for us. Distribute paper and invite each child to print their first name. Then under that name have them add an “h” to their name, placing it wherever they want. Introduce selves to each other by saying the “new” names.

Family tree group The children in this group have the opportunity to learn more about the promise made to Abraham and Sarah. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “The Symbol of a Star” and review information together, noting that Chris-

tians, Jews, and Muslims all consider Abraham and Sarah to be part of their faith story. Distribute pieces of paper and invite children to each draw large images of each of the three shapes on their papers. On their five-pointed stars have them write their names and names of some other Christians that they know. On the six-pointed stars have them write the names of Jewish people that they know or have heard of. On the crescent moons, write the names of Muslim people that they know or have heard of.

Reporting Invite the name group to report on their discoveries about names in biblical times and invite the family tree group to introduce the star as a symbol used in three major religions.



The Bible story and us

Remind the group that we are all children of God’s promise. God knows each of us by name and loves us.

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

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- **Prayer zone: Lenten prayer wall**  Lent is a special time to pray. Invite children to add to the Lenten prayer wall begun last week. Tape a blue ribbon to the sign beside the purple ribbon and provide squares of blue paper for the children to write or draw prayers that help them remember that they belong to God. Tape or pin these prayers to the ribbon and read aloud together.
- **Poetry zone: Acrostics**  Like Abraham and Sarah we are people of God’s promise. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “Promise Acrostics” and invite children to think of words from this week’s story which begin with each letter of the word “Promise” (such as “Sarai” for “S”) and write them on their sheets. Older children can create their own acrostic puzzles on the back of their sheets, using the letters of their names and others in the group.

- **Art zone: 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 or drawings to describe themselves (such as dancer, blue eyes, kind). Have the children punch holes in the top of their stars using a hole punch and add ribbon hangers. They can take their star names home or these can be suspended from the ceiling of the meeting space.
- **Craft zone: Star jars** God promised Abraham and Sarah that their descendants would be as many as the stars. Distribute jars and help children fill half-full with water, add a few drops of glycerine, and spoon in some star confetti. Place waterproof adhesive around the edges of the lids and seal the lid onto the jars. Encourage children to shake their jars to see the stars swirl as reminders of God’s love and promise to be with all people for all generations.

❑ **Music zone: God's promise** The song "I Will Be Your God" is a musical version of God's promise to Abraham and Sarah and to all of God's people. Read the words to this short song to the children and have them repeat each phrase after you. Then teach the children how to sing the song by singing or playing each line and inviting them to repeat after you.

Distribute copies of the section "Music" (bottom of p. 15) to those children who can read, and sing together again several times until the children know it. Encourage them to use this song to remember God's promise. Consider sharing this song during a worship service sometime during Lent.

Bless

Gather in the worship space and relight the candle. Look together again at the poster *Rainbow over Pilbara* and remember God's promise to Abraham and Sarah that they would have many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, more than the stars. Distribute star stickers and invite children to add these around the edges of the poster and remember that they are part of God's family.

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.

Sing the song "I Will Be Your God" (p. 15).

Blessing Send each child out saying, "(Name), God knows you by name and loves you. Go and share God's love."

Distribute copies of family letter on resource sheet "Lent-Easter 2012" (p. 109) to those who were not present last week.

Reflect

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?

Music

I will be your God _____ and you will be _____ the peo - ple of the prom-ise. _____

For - ev - er I will bless _____ and give my life _____ for you. _____



God's Promise to Abraham and Sarah

(based on Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16)

Invite children to participate by taking turns finding the name cards and placing them in a row as each is mentioned in the story.

Long, long ago, in a land far away, God appeared to a very old man named Abram. "I am God, walk with me and follow my way. I will make a covenant with you. You will have many children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren."

Because God was speaking to him, Abram fell to the ground. Then God said,

"This is my covenant with you. You shall be the father and grandfather of many nations.

From now on you will not be called Abram. Now you will be called Abraham because I have made you father and grandfather of many nations. Not only nations, but rulers will come from you.

I will make my covenant between you and me and with all your children for many generations, a covenant that will last forever. I will be your God.

As for Sarai, your wife, you shall no longer call her Sarai. Now she will be Sarah. I will bless her and I will give her a son. From her will come nations and rulers."

Years later, Sarah and Abraham had a son, Isaac. He was the first of many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Just as God had promised, Abraham and Sarah were the parents of nations and rulers.



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 five-pointed star

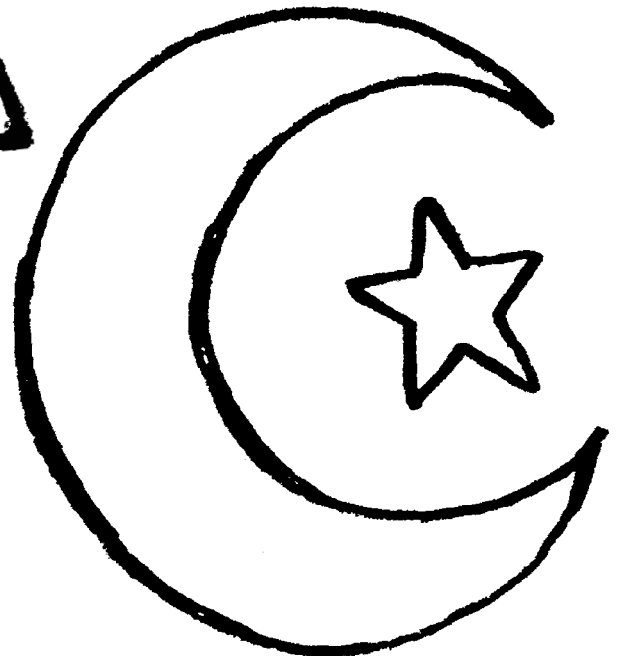
This star is an ancient symbol for Christians. It is sometimes called the "Star of Bethlehem," a reminder of the story of Jesus' birth, or the "Epiphany star," a reminder of the story of the magi coming to Bethlehem. It has been found on broken clay fragments from as early as 400 BCE.

The 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 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.





Promise Acrostics

Find words in today's story which begin with each of the following letters and write these words in the spaces beside each letter. Turn the page over and create your own acrostic by using the letters in your name. If there is time, make some acrostics using the letters of the names of other people in your family.

P _____

R _____

O _____

M _____

I _____

S _____

E _____

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 to access Spirit Sightings for connections between current events and the focus passage.

The Focus for Ages 5–12

Most children have a natural appreciation of the wonders of creation. Younger children in this age group can often become absorbed by their explorations in nature: watching a colourful bug crawl along a leaf, looking at a spider web, noticing a drop of rain hanging on a blade of grass, finding a beautifully patterned rock or shell. They often don't experience a separation between themselves and the rest of creation. Older children 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. Their interest in creation can draw them into Psalm 19 and the celebration of God's glory in the heavens. 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. You can help them appreciate the grandeur of God's creation by bringing some nature books and magazines to the group.

All members of the group will be encouraged to explore ways in which they can show God's loving and sweet ways in their daily lives. 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 an awareness of God as creator and be encouraged to explore their relationship with God through God's word.

Prepare

Before the session

- Prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Psalm 19, and biblical background material (p. 19).
- Prepare a worship space with a purple cloth, purple pillar candle, and a Bible with the purple and blue bookmarks from previous weeks and a green bookmark placed in this week's focus passage.
- Bring matches, offering basket, basic supply kit (p. 2), Bibles, and, if possible, *Lent–Easter 2012 Music Booklet*, *Seasons Songbook*, volume 7, *Seasons Music CD*, volume 7, and CD player.
- Review resource sheet "Rituals for Lent" (p. 110).

Gather

- Bring a copy of resource sheet "Rituals for Lent" (p. 110) and an item from nature.
- Bring a variety of items from nature or magazine pictures of nature items.

Engage

- Bring resource sheet "God's Ways."
- Bring posters *Rainbow over Pilbara*, *Cap Stump*; and article "About the Art for this Lent, Easter" (p. 117).
- Research group:** copies of resource sheet "Rosh Hashanah," slices of apple, a dish of honey, spoons and plates

- Action group:** poem "As Far As I Can See" (p. 23), large soft ball

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- Prayer zone:** wide green ribbon, pieces of green paper
- Craft zone:** small plain paper plates (cut in half), self-adhesive stars, glitter, craft foam, yarn, cardboard templates of star, crescent moon, and sun shapes (see patterns in *Virtual Resource Booklet* in Library at www.seasonsonline.ca)
- Quiet zone:** copies of this week's resource sheet "Thinking about God"; option: recording of meditative music, such as "Adagio" (#29 on *Seasons Music CD*).
- Writing zone:** resource sheet "Rosh Hashanah," strips of paper; print sentence starters on a sheet of poster board.
- Music zone:** song "To You, O God" (p. 1 in *Music Booklet*, p. 40 in *Seasons Songbook*, #17 on *Seasons Music CD*)

Bless

- Bring happy face stickers and poster *Rainbow over Pilbara*.
- Bring "Blessing song" (p. 110).



Cosmic Law

Scripture
Psalm 19

FOCUS To explore our relationship with God through God's creation and God's word.

Gather

Welcome the children as they arrive, introducing guests and newcomers.

Opening ritual

Call to gather Invite children to follow the rainbow-coloured stepping stones to the worship area. Gather around the worship table and 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. The colour for this season is purple.

Prayer Invite two volunteers to lead in the "Lent 3" prayer on the resource sheet "Rituals for Lent" (p. 110), lighting the candle and placing the symbolic object. Invite the whole group to say the last line together.

Sing the song "God Is With Us" (on p. 110).

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Connecting with the focus

Place the box of items from nature in the middle of the group and invite some children to take turns lifting the items or pictures out. Invite them to share their favourite things in nature and talk about some of their favourite places to be in nature (for example, a tree fort in the back garden, a public playground, a forest, a lake).

- **What are some of your favourite things to do in God's wonderful world?**

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table. Point out the purple and blue bookmarks marking the stories of Noah and Abraham and Sarah from the book of Genesis. Use the green bookmark to find this week's focus scripture reading in the book of Psalms. Explain that the psalms are songs or poems written to God or about God and God's people.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "God's Ways" to tell a story based on **Psalm 19**. Invite older children to help lead younger children in the words and actions for the response.

- **Where does the person who wrote Psalm 19 see God's glory?**
- **How do you think God's creation speaks without using any words?**

Exploring the story further

(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.)

Research group The children in this group will have an opportunity to learn about the Jewish festival of Rosh Hashanah, when people celebrate God's law as "sweeter than honey" (**Psalm 19:10**). Provide copies of the resource sheet "Rosh Hashanah" and read together 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 aloud **Psalm 19:10**. Invite children to repeat the phrase, "God's rules are more precious than gold and sweeter than honey."

- **How can living in God's way be "sweet"?**

Action group The children in this group will have an opportunity to reflect further on **Psalm 19:7–10** and the image of living in God’s way. Invite children to repeat each line and action after you for the poem “As Far As I Can See” (bottom of p. 23). When we follow in God’s ways we show God’s care and love. Gather in a circle and take turns throwing a soft ball to each other. Each time someone catches the ball he or she says one way they might follow in God’s loving ways.

Reporting Invite the research group to share information about the Jewish celebration of Rosh Hashanah and the action group to teach the rest of the children the poem “As Far As I Can See.”

The Bible story and us

Art engagement Invite children to look at poster *Cap Stump*, explaining what this is. Imagine together how much time it might have taken the artist to create this “nature picture.” Then look together at the poster *Rainbow over Pilbara* and look at how this artist painted God’s beautiful world. Why might the artist have painted the ground red?

- **If you were going to paint a picture of God’s wonderful world what would you include? Why?**

The psalmist reminds us that when we follow in God’s ways we show God’s care and love for everyone.

- **What would the world look like if everyone in the world chose to follow God’s loving ways?**

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- **Prayer zone: Lenten prayer wall** Invite children to add to the Lenten prayer wall. Tape a green ribbon to the sign beside the other ribbons. Distribute squares of green paper for the children to write or draw prayers that give thanks for God’s beautiful world. Tape or pin these prayers to the ribbon and read aloud together.



- **Craft zone: Mobile** Psalm 19 declares that the heavens tell us about God’s glory. Distribute paper plates and craft supplies and invite children to make mobiles as reminders of God’s glory. Help them print “The sky shows God’s glory” on their plates and decorate with star stickers and glitter. Help them each cut a sun, moon, and stars from craft foam; punch holes in the shapes and along the bottom of the plates, and tie shapes on with yarn. Make a yarn hanger for the top.



- **Quiet zone: Evening prayer** Many people pray at the end of each day. Provide children with copies of the resource sheet “Thinking about God.” Have them review the information and spend some time in quiet meditation as they



reflect on the two questions and say a silent prayer. They might also like to write their responses and prayers on the back of their pages. Option: play a recording of meditative music to create a reflective atmosphere.

- **Writing zone: 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 by completing the sentences in the section “God’s wise ways” on the resource sheet “Rosh Hashanah.” Have them write their sentences on strips of paper and glue them on the four prepared sheets of poster board. Review together and add more images as time permits.
- **Music zone: Soul words** Psalm 19:7 tells us that God’s law, or God’s way revives the soul. Explain to the children that we can think of our souls as God’s Spirit inside of us. Play the recording of the song “To You, O God” (#17 on the *Seasons Music CD*) and invite the children to listen quietly. Teach them the words (p. 1 in the *Music Booklet* and p. 40 in the *Seasons Songbook*) and invite them to create actions for each phrase.

Bless

Gather in the worship space and relight the candle. 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."

Prayer Read the words for the "Closing prayer" (below). After each line invite the children to join in on the phrase, "Your words, O God, give life."

Sing the "Blessing song" (p. 110).

Blessing Send each child out saying, "(Name), God loves you. Go and follow in God's loving ways."

Reflect

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?

Poem group

As Far As I Can See

As far as I can see, God is there. (*Shade eyes with hand and look around.*)

As high as I can stretch, God is there. (*Stand on tiptoe and reach up.*)

As low as I can go, God is there. (*Crouch down.*)

God says, "Reach out in love." (*Spread arms wide.*)

I will share some love with you. (*Shake hands and smiles at each other.*)



Closing prayer

One: God's word is perfect. It is richer than gold.
God's word is precious for the young and the old.

All: Your words, O God, give life.

One: God's word makes us glad, it opens up our eyes.

God's word can be trusted, the message is wise.

All: Your words, O God, give life. Amen.





GOD'S WAYS

Young children enjoy participating actively in a story. Rehearse the response (written in bold in the story) and the actions to go with the response. Older children in the group might like to lead the response.

Once there lived a songwriter who loved God and tried hard to follow in God's ways. One day our songwriter was drifting along in a boat, looking at the sky, and thinking about God's amazing creation. All day long the songwriter noticed the beauty of the sky, watching as the sun rose, travelled across the sky and then went down in a blaze of red and orange. As the sun went down, the first twinkling stars appeared in the night sky.

"Amazing!" thought the songwriter. "God made the sky and everything in it: the sun, the moon, the clouds, the rainbows, and all the stars. Isn't God amazing?" As the stars twinkled in the night sky, the songwriter thought about all the wonderful things that God had made and how wonderful it was to live in God's world. "I'll write a song about this," decided the songwriter.

The beauty of the stars, the clouds, the sun, and the moon tell of the glory of God. They say no words, but their message goes around the world.

Glory to God from morning (*stretch tall with arms raised overhead*)
to night (*place hands together as a pillow for head*).

From day to day and night to night the message of the creator God goes around the world.

Glory to God from morning (*stretch tall with arms raised overhead*)
to night (*place hands together as a pillow for head*).

The sun awakens us to a new day.
And God's word sets us on a new path.

Glory to God from morning (*stretch tall with arms raised overhead*)
to night (*place hands together as a pillow for head*).

We seek eagerly for God's word and God's path.
They are more precious than gold and sweeter than honey.

Glory to God from morning (*stretch tall with arms raised overhead*)
to night (*place hands together as a pillow for head*).

Yes, the people, from the smallest to the tallest, praised God for God's creation and God's word.



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)

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...



Thinking about God

In Psalm 19, we learn that the creation around us reminds us every day and night of God's glory and greatness. We also learn that God's way or law is a wonderful help to be faithful to God. To help you think about God by remembering God's creation and by observing God's way, think about your day when you go to bed each night. Here is a way to do that. You can practice now by remembering what you did and saw yesterday.

Sit or lie quietly for a moment.

What beauty do you remember seeing in the world today?

Give God thanks for creating the beauty in our world.

When did you see someone showing God's love to someone else?

Give God thanks for teaching us how to be loving and kind.

Put this page by your bed so you will remember to end your day this way.

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”).

Here are the Gathering and Blessing songs that we will be using during this season. You might like to use them at home for family prayer times as well.

Gathering song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

God is with us. **God is with us.**
Every day. **Every day.**
God will always love us. **God will**
always love us.
Thank you, God. **Thank you, God.**

Blessing song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

May God bless you. **May God bless**
you.
Keep you safe. **Keep you safe.**
May God’s love surround you. **May**
God’s love surround you.
Go in peace. **Go in peace.**

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 (April 8) we move into the Season of Easter. This season is 50 days long and the focus will be on Bible stories 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 times of spiritual nurture and growth for our group and for your family.

Sincerely,



Rituals for Lent

Lenten rainbow pathway

Create a pathway of “stepping stones” using large circles cut from coloured construction paper: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Cut several circles of each colour to make the pathway connect from the doorway of your meeting space to the worship area. During Lent the children will follow this rainbow path of stepping stones to gather in the worship space during the opening ritual each week.

Gathering prayers

Choose two volunteers to read the opening prayer each week: one will light the candle and the other will place an object (symbolizing the focus scripture theme) beside the candle. These symbols can remain in the worship space with all five displayed on the fifth Sunday. There are only five prayers included on this page because there will be a special all-ages gathering on Palm/Passion Sunday.

Gathering song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

God is with us. **God is with us.**

Every day. **Every day.**

God will always love us. **God will always love us.**

Thank you, God. **Thank you, God.**

Blessing song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

May God bless you. **May God bless you.**

Keep you safe. **Keep you safe.**

May God’s love surround you. **May God’s love surround you.**

Go in peace. **Go in peace.**

Lent 1

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

Two: On this first Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”
for the rainbow which is a sign of God’s love.
(Place a rainbow-coloured object beside the candle.)

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 purple candle.)*

Two: On this second Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”
for all the stars in the sky that remind us of God’s love. *(Place a star beside the candle.)*

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 purple candle.)*

Two: On this third Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”

for all the wonderful things in creation. *(Place an object from nature beside the candle.)*

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 purple candle.)*

Two: On this fourth Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”
for giving us hope when times are hard. *(Place a stone beside the candle.)*

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 purple candle.)*

Two: On this fifth Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”
for your love that is deep in our hearts. *(Place a heart beside the candle.)*

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 an Easter 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!

Somlandela

Somlandela, sonlandelu Jesu,
Somlandela, yonke indawo.
Somlandela, sonlandelu Jesu,
Lapho eyakhona somlandela.

We will follow, we will follow Jesus.
We will follow, we will follow him.
We will follow, we will follow Jesus.
Wherever he will lead us we will follow.

Traditional Zulu song

Prayer lines (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.

Thank you hand cards (May 20)

Fold construction paper in half and trace a hand outline.
(See illustration #1.)

Cut out the shape, leaving the folded side intact to make a card.

Choose a prayer line, cut it out, and glue it inside the card.
(See illustration #2.)

Write your name below the message.

On the outside of the card, print the name of the person chosen to receive the card.



Illustration #1

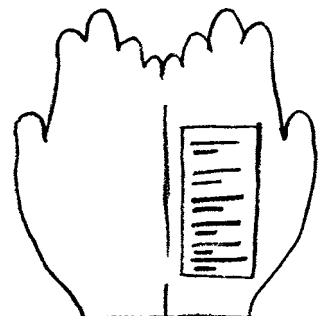


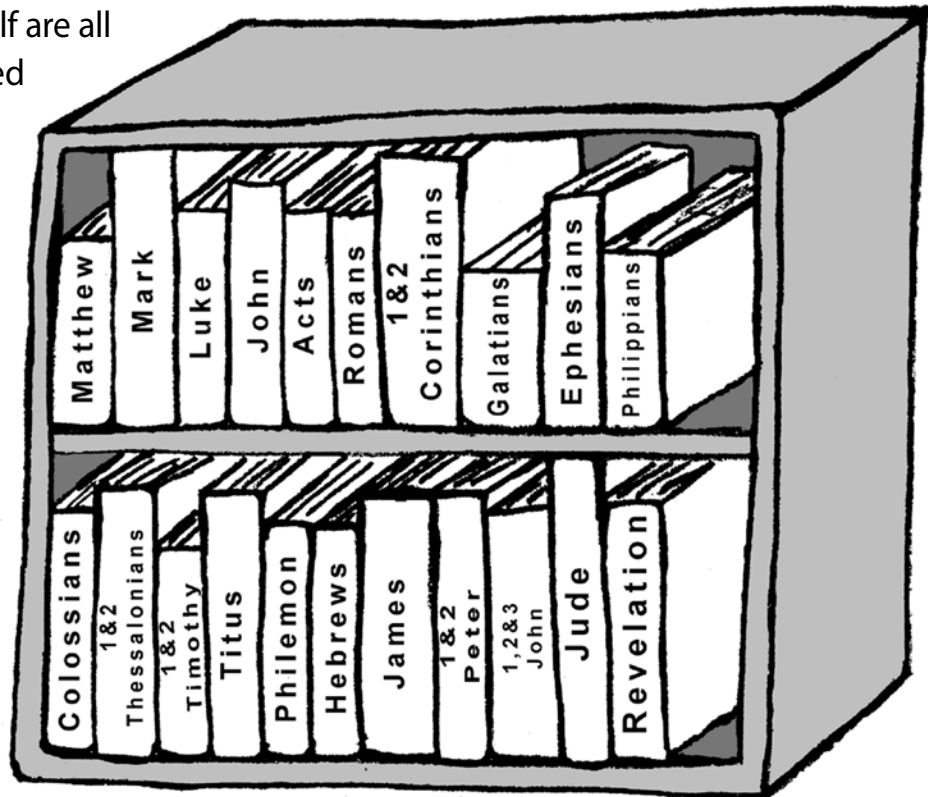
Illustration #2

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)

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.

