

# Introducing the Season

To orientate leaders to the focus scriptures, art images, and music offered by *Seasons of the Spirit* for Lent and Easter 2012.

## Before the session

- Remind leaders of the meeting and ask them to review their materials for Lent and Easter 2012 and bring them to this session.
- Bring newsprint, markers, and refreshments.

## Gather

- Bring name tags (optional), matches, and taper.
- Set a worship space with two lengths of fabric: purple (for Lent), and gold, yellow, or white (for Easter); a Bible; one purple and one white pillar candle; a piece of broken pottery and a butterfly symbol (a picture or an item crafted from pipe cleaners and tissue paper).
- Bring copies of the resource sheet “Gathering and Blessing Prayers.”
- Bring, if possible, song “To You, O God” (p. 1 in *Music Booklet*, p. 40 in *Seasons Songbook*, #17 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 7).

## Engage

- **Setting the scene:** a copy of “About this Lent and Easter” (p. 1), copies of “This Season at a Glance” (from “Planning and Overview” section of website), and some copies of the shared articles, “Developing Traditions in an Intergenerational Christian Community” (p. 93; p. 115 in Multiage resources) and “A Discernment Story” (p. 94; p. 116 in Multiage resources)
- **Engaging the scriptures:** Bibles and copies of the resource sheet “Bible Discussion”
- **Engaging the art:** copies of the resource sheet “Art Reflection”; variety of art supplies (such as charcoals, oil pastels, markers, crayons); display seasonal posters, arranged according

to the order in article, “About the Art” (p. 95; p. 117 in Multiage resources); option: set up several “galleries” if multiple sets available. (Note: Ages 3–5 and Ages 6–8 materials each have a poster that differs; don’t include the storytelling posters in the art displays.)

- **Engaging the music:** if available: copies of the *Lent-Easter 2012 Music Booklet*, or copies of *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 7, and *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 7, and CD player; invite a music leader to teach and lead the songs; make copies of song lyrics on the last pages of the *Music Booklet*.

## Respond

- Bring, for new leaders, copies of articles “Introducing Seasons of the Spirit” and “Seasons Session Flow” (from the “Planning and Overview” section of website).
- Bring copies of articles as needed from the booklet *From Start to Finish* (in Library on website), such as stages of faith development, multiple intelligences, creating a respectful learning environment, building community.
- Bring copies of Registration Form and Leader Record (from “Planning and Overview” section of website) if needed.
- Bring copies of several recent postings to *Spirit Sightings* (on website).

## Bless

- Bring, if possible, song “Light of Christ” (p. 8 in *Music Booklet*, p. 22 in *Seasons Songbook*, #6 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 7).
- Bring copies of Lectionary Bookmarks (from “Planning and Overview” section of website).

(Option: play Seasons music in the background as people are arriving and distribute name tags, if appropriate.)

**Welcome** participants and invite them to gather in the worship space. Point out the different colours

of fabric representing the liturgical colours of the two seasons of the church year that will be observed in the coming months: the purple of Season of Lent, representing penitence and reflection, and the gold, yellow, or white colour of celebration for Easter Sunday and the 50-day Season of Easter.

## PREPARE

## GATHER

(10 minutes)



## Opening ritual

**Pray** Distribute copies of the resource sheet “Gathering and Blessing Prayers” and invite two volunteers to read the prayers and light the candles.

**Sing, or listen to**, if possible, the song “To You, O God” (p. 1 in the *Music Booklet*, p. 40 in the *Seasons Songbook*, #17 on the *Seasons Music CD*).

## Making connections

Invite participants to share together their definitions

of the word “promise.” 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?**

Explain that God’s covenant and promises are one of the themes during in this year’s Season of Lent.

*(From Ages 9-11, February 26)*

## ENGAGE

*(45 minutes)*

### Setting the scene

This year we will be exploring readings from the Hebrew Scriptures during Lent, hearing words of promise and covenant which lead us to a “knowing deep down.” The stories of Noah and of Abraham and Sarah, and the readings from the Psalms and the prophet Jeremiah encourage us to examine what it means to live faithfully and be true to God’s covenant. In the first weeks after Easter Sunday we explore two stories about experiences of resurrection from the gospels of John and Luke. During the rest of the Season of Easter we reflect on how we are nurtured by Jesus, the good shepherd, and the ways in which we are called to bear fruit as we love one another and move out into the world as witnesses to live out the covenant.

**Introducing the season** Review the introductory material on the article, “About this Lent and Easter” (p. 1). Then distribute copies of the chart “This Season at a Glance” (from the “Planning and Overview” section of the Library) and review the information together, noting the focus passages and titles for each week. Invite participants to look at p. 2 in their resources, noting specific rituals and other information offered for their age group. Point out that all of the age-level packages include the same materials for the “All Ages” sessions for Palm/Passion Sunday (April 1), Easter Sunday (April 8), and Pentecost Sunday (May 27). Discuss together how these sessions might be offered.

**Reviewing the articles** Invite participants to find the extra resource sheets and articles at the back of their age-level resources. These articles provide helpful background for these seasons. Note which ones will be used in specific seasons and sessions, and which ones provide material for leadership support and development. Review in particular

the shared articles, “Developing Traditions in an Intergenerational Christian Community” and “A Discernment Story” on pp. 93–94 (pp. 115–116 in *Multiage*), providing copies as needed.

### Engaging the scriptures

Form pairs or small groups and assign each of the focus passages to the pairs or groups (using the chart “This Season at a Glance”). Distribute copies of the resource sheet “Bible Discussion” and invite each group to read their assigned passage(s) and discuss these, using the appropriate questions on the resource sheet. Ask each group to record their responses. Gather back in the large group to review and reflect on responses to the discussion questions.

### Engaging the art

**Gallery** Invite participants to find the resource sheet “About the Art” (p. 95, p. 117 in *Multiage*) in their age-level materials; distribute extra copies as needed. Then invite the group to move quietly around the room, viewing the posters one at a time and reading the information about the images on the resource sheet.

**Personal reflection** Distribute copies of the resource sheet “Art Reflection” and invite participants to choose one poster image for further reflection. Have them sit near their chosen image, looking at it more closely, and using the questions on the resource sheet to guide their reflections. (Option: gather as a large group to share insights.)

**Artistic response** If time permits, invite participants to respond to the art image that they have chosen by using the art supplies provided to write a journal entry or a poem, or create an abstract art piece which captures their feelings or insights.



## Engaging the music

(Use this section if the Seasons of the Spirit music resources have been purchased for use in your congregation.)

**Introduction** During these two seasons we continue to focus on the music from volume 7 of the *Seasons Songbooks* and the *Seasons Music CDs*. These songs used during Lent and Easter reflect the themes of the seasons using a range of styles from a variety of cultures.

**Review music** Invite participants to look through the *Music Booklets* and or *Seasons Songbooks*. Point out the songs that could be used for gathering and blessing (“To You, O God,” “Light of Christ,” and “Somlandela/We Will Follow”) and the songs that help explore the seasons’ themes (Lent: “Comfort Me” and “Don’t Be Afraid”; Easter: “Alleluia, Praise to God,” “I’ve Got a Voice,” “Listen Now for the Gospel,” and “Look Up, Look Down”). Draw attention to the margin notes with tips for leading

each of these pieces of music in groups. Discuss together the ways these songs might be used in church school, youth group, adult study groups, and in worship services.

**Sing or listen** Invite a music leader to lead the group in singing through the pieces in the *Music Booklet* or listen to the recordings on the music CD. Note that the *Season Music CD, volume 7* includes a recording of quiet music (“Adagio,” #29) for use during times of meditation and reflection.

## Moving into Respond

Invite participants to spend a few moments in silent reflection on the ways in which the scriptures, art, and music for these seasons have spoken into their lives.

■ **What are some words, images, or melodies that you will carry with you into the coming months?**

- **Review materials** Provide time for leaders to review and become familiar with their *Seasons* age-level materials. If some leaders are new, review the session flow, either as a group or by pairing off new and experienced leaders. Pay particular attention to any suggestions in the session materials for working with other groups or sharing in worship. Talk together about how new families might be welcomed and included in the preparations for Lent, plans for Palm/Passion Sunday and Easter Sunday, and celebrations for Pentecost Sunday.
- **Service and outreach projects** Review suggestions for service and outreach projects in the age-level materials. How might these projects be coordinated across age levels? Which age-level options might provide opportunities for the full congregation to be involved? How might this be encouraged and implemented? What information about congregational Lenten outreach projects will be helpful for age-

level groups? Identify church committees or other groups who might need to follow up on ideas that go beyond the responsibilities of this group or individual leaders.

- **Leadership tips** Distribute additional articles from the booklet *From Start to Finish*, if desired, and review together. Point out that this booklet is in the Library on the website, and also included in age-level folders in *SeasonsOnline* and *SeasonsDisk* versions. Explain that there is also a *Virtual Resource Booklet* in the Library which includes such things as patterns and recipes, community building games, and information about Lent and Easter symbols. Distribute copies of the Registration Form and Leader Record for this season, if these are used in your program.
- **Spirit Sightings** Distribute copies of recent *Spirit Sightings* or *Spirit Screenings* postings and review together. Encourage leaders to read these each week (information for accessing is included on each week’s biblical background page).

## RESPOND

(20 minutes)

**Gather** in the worship space and light the purple and white pillar candles again.

**Sing, or listen to**, if possible, “Somlandela/We Will Follow” (p. 12 in the *Music Booklet*, p. 34 in the *Seasons Songbook*, #22 on the *Seasons Music CD*).

**Pray** Lead the group in the Blessing prayer on the resource sheet “Gathering and Blessing Prayers.”

Distribute copies of the Lectionary Bookmarks for Lent-Easter 2012 for participants to use at home.

## BLESS

(10 minutes)





# Gathering and Blessing Prayers

## Gathering prayer for Lent and Easter

**ONE:** As we enter the Season of Lent,  
we open our hearts to God.

*(Light the purple candle.)*

**TWO:** The colour purple reminds us of the wounded  
and broken places in our lives and the world.

*(Place the piece of broken pottery beside the purple candle.)*

**ALL:** **During this Lenten season, may we draw closer to God. Amen.**

**ONE:** O God, we give thanks for the Season of Easter,  
and the witness to new life in Christ.

*(Place the butterfly symbol beside the white candle.)*

**TWO:** May the light of this season shine in our lives and in the world.

*(Light the white candle.)*

**ALL:** **Be with us, God, in this time and through the coming days. Amen.**

*(Adapted from the Ages 15–18 resources.)*

## Blessing prayer

**ONE:** When we are in times of change,

**TWO:** God promises to be there with us.

**ALL:** **We go out into the world, trusting in God's promise.**

**ONE:** May our faith be strengthened during these seasons.

**TWO:** May we have the courage of Mary Magdalene and the honesty of Thomas.

**ONE:** May we have follow the pathways of truth and justice.

**TWO:** May we truly listen to one another.

**ALL:** **May we be inspired to change the world with love. Amen.**

*(Adapted from the Ages 15–18 resources.)*



# Bible Discussion

## Focus scriptures discussion

Read the assigned biblical passage(s), discuss the questions below, and record some thoughts in the space provided.

### For the Lent readings

(February 26–March 25)

- What blessing and promise do you hear in these words?
  
- What do you hear in these words about living in a covenant relationship with God?
  
- What assurance do you hear in these words about God's comfort and presence?

### For the Palm/Passion Sunday and Easter Sunday readings

(April 1 and April 8)

- What emotions do you hear in the Palm/Passion passages? What do you wonder about?
  
- What emotions do you hear in the Easter passages? What surprises you? What new insights did you receive in reading the passages?

### For the Season of Easter readings

(April 15–May 20)

- How do these passages invite you to experience resurrection, Christ with us?
  
- What do you hear in these passages about being open to new possibilities in your relationship with the risen Christ?
  
- How do these passages invite us to live out the call to go out into the world as witnesses to new life in Christ?

### For the Pentecost Sunday readings

(May 27)

- What do these passages say about the power of the Holy Spirit?
  
- What new dreams and new hope might the Holy Spirit evoke in your church?



