

Planning



Sunday, December 26, 2021 – Saturday, January 1 • 2022

Finding Joy

During this Christmas season, we are invited to praise God and rest in the joy of God's presence in the birth of Emmanuel, God with us.

This week...

Ecumenical prayer calendar

Japan, North Korea, South Korea

As listed in *Pilgrim Prayer: The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle*, edited by Ester Pudjo Widiastih and Karen L. Bloomquist. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2018). <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/prayer-cycle> offers valuable aids for intercessory prayers, prayer on behalf of and in solidarity with others.

Special days (commentary on p. 92)

- December 26–January 1** – Kwanzaa
- December 27** – St. John the Evangelist
- December 28** – Feast of the Holy Innocents
- December 31** – New Year's Eve/Watchnight
- January 1** – New Year's Day
- January 1** – Name of Jesus/Holy Family Day

Personal reflection

How does the world – indeed, the universe – respond to the good news of the birth of Jesus the Christ? All things – land, and trees, and all manner of creatures – proclaim their praise to God. This event is not merely the birth of another child, which would be miracle enough, but it's more: God's blatant declaration of being present with us, with all of us, in this world, forever and ever.

How do you see aspects of creation praising God?

This week, how can you be present to someone who is going through a difficult time this Christmas?

The planning page is provided in text format for copying, adapting, and adding to your bulletin or online worship resources or website or social media (see Text folder, Worship Outline).

Sunday, December 26, 2021

Christmas 1

Revised Common Lectionary (Year C)

1 Samuel 2:18–20, 26

Psalm 148

the focus in age-level materials

Colossians 3:12–17

Luke 2:41–52

Liturgical colour white or gold

Notes

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Online Resources

Lection Connection

Essays and discussion prompts linking current events with this week's scriptures. Use for sermon preparation, Bible studies, and small groups or share on social media at <https://www.seasonsonline.ca/10/>.

Nurturing Faith and Spirituality at Home

An easy-to-share, weekly online resource supports the spiritual lives and faith formation of individuals and families at home. It is provided in the [Faith at Home](#) folder.





1 Samuel 2:18–20, 26
Psalm 148
 the focus in age-level materials
Colossians 3:12–17
Luke 2:41–52

Finding Joy

It is not surprising that the scripture passages for this first Sunday after Christmas would focus on unbridled joy; after all, we celebrate Jesus, Emmanuel, who shares our humanity and reaches out to us in love. Yet the word “joy” can be deceiving, because we may expect it to equal happiness, and that is not always the case. For Hannah, we can only assume her sorrow at not raising her child is challenged by the joy that he is serving in the temple. Similarly, Mary and Joseph’s anxiety over their lost child is presumably abated as they marvel at the youngster’s wisdom. Colossians reminds us that we should give thanks (again, with joy) to God in all we do. Most of all, Psalm 148 calls upon all creation to offer joyous praise to God.

1 Samuel 2:18–20, 26 We can sense the connection between Hannah and God through her son, Samuel, and imagine her emotions as she sews and delivers to Samuel new robes and sees his life marked by God’s blessing and favour. Her “offering” keeps her mindful of God’s central and personal relationship with her family.

Psalm 148 The traditional Hebrew title for the psalms means praises. Psalms were often sung accompanied by stringed instruments such as a lute or a harp. The word psalm itself comes from the Greek *psalmoi*, which refers to instrumental music and, by extension, the words that accompany it.

While many psalms are pleas or laments, even in these there are some elements of praise, if only in the last few verses. Psalm 148, however, is a song of praise in its entirety.

Interestingly, this psalm is directed not only at human beings. All of creation is asked to join in, in gratitude for having been created by this glorious God. The chorus call begins with the angels; includes the sun, moon, and stars; the heavens; all of the animals that walk, swim, or fly; the trees and mountains; and finally, all human beings, regardless of age, gender, or status. The closing verse names Israel

Loving God, in all times and seasons you surround us and embrace us. May we feel a true joy in knowing that, whatever is going on around us, you are ever-present. You seek to offer us hope and new life in the face of all things, and we cannot help but find ourselves overwhelmed with joy. Amen.

as God’s people, people who understand themselves to be particularly close to God. The psalms generally lift up God’s creative activity within the history of Israel, and this psalm does not ignore that reminder.

Surely we can readily recognize human praise of God, but that of the rest of creation may be more difficult. How do fire and hail, for example, express unbridled joy? Perhaps a clue lies in the concept of joy itself. We – and all creation – are called to find it deep within. Rather than looking for happiness on the surface of events, we are challenged to look deep within and find the joy that comes from knowing that, no matter what happens, the hand of God runs through all things. There is an overriding feeling of connection in this psalm – connection of all parts of God’s creation to all other parts, and to God. There is a feeling of closeness between God and what God has created.

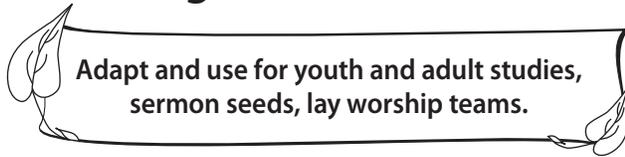
Colossians 3:12–17 speaks of God’s chosen, “holy and beloved” – those who live in harmony with God and with each other. The attributes of real connection seem to be “compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (v. 12). In **Luke 2:41–52**, Jesus’ family becomes “disconnected” from their son, with all the worry and fear that that brings. Jesus, as they eventually find out, has found his own connection with God and the tradition of his ancestors, in the temple. There is an echo of Samuel’s life experience in this passage, as the two boys are said to be increasing “in wisdom and in years...in divine and human favour” (v. 52) and “in stature and in favour with God” (1 Samuel 2:26).

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Unbridled joy runs through the readings for this week. What helps you to feel that kind of joy, a joy that cannot be contained? When life seems overwhelming, or when sorrow seeks to overtake you, how are you able to find joy within that? During this Christmas season, we are invited to join in Psalm 148 to praise God and rest in the joy of God’s presence in the birth of Emmanuel, God with us.



Reflecting on the Word



Connecting with life

- How did you experience deep joy in the preparation for and celebration of Christmas?
- What are some places where joy was noticeably lacking?
- What in your life and experience brings deep joy?

Scripture

Psalm 148 exhorts all creation to praise.

- What do you suppose might be going on in the life of the poet that evokes such a call?
- When have you experienced the concept of all elements of creation “praising God”?
- In what ways might songs of nature help you to focus on moments of deep connection with God, each other and all creation?
- What does the unbridled praise of Psalm 148 say to us a few days after Christmas?

Colossians 3:12–17 says that attributes of real connection with God seem to be “compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience” (v. 12).

- How does practicing kindness, humility, meekness, and patience help you feel closer to God? How does it bring you joy?

In Luke 2:52 and 1 Samuel 2:26, Jesus and Samuel are firmly grounded in God’s word and the traditions of the faith community.

- In what ways have you grown in God’s word and wisdom this year?
- What connection is there between their relationships with God and their communities?
- How do relationships in community open us up to opportunities where we experience God with us?

Connecting scripture and life

In Celtic tradition, an experience of particular closeness with God is called a “thin place” – a place where the “veil” between this world and the eternal world is transparent – where the Divine is experienced in momentary and particular closeness.

- How do you know when you are close to God?
- Have you experienced a “thin place” at times in your life? What were the circumstances?
- How might nature, or creation, play a role in helping to create a thin place? And how, in turn do “thin places” affect how we share in God’s creative impulse?

Focus for Worship, Learning, and Serving

This week marks the first Sunday of the Christmas season. For many people, the time leading up to Christmas Day demands much in terms of physical, emotional, and spiritual exertion. Today, we are invited to pause, reflect, worship, and rest in God’s presence. We are challenged to look deep within and find joy. All creation praises God; we can simply be in the midst of this praise, energized by the songs of nature, and focus on those moments when we become aware of our own deep connection with God, each

other and all of creation. The story of Jesus’ birth reminds us that God is present in the tangible and ordinary – which means that we are surrounded by the holy. In the focus passage for today, this holy presence is celebrated. How might worship, learning, and serving help the gathered and non-gathered community find new meaning and joy? What might you do this week to connect with that joy, with the story of Jesus, Emmanuel, God with us?



Finding Joy

Prepare

NOTE: The following suggestions are mere starting points; adapt, delete, and add according to your local needs.

- ❑ Recruit volunteers needed for worship.
- ❑ Choose an option for hearing Psalm 148. For the Bible story, arrange for a storyteller to present the story "[Skies and Sea Monsters](#)" on p. 94, or "[Sing and Laugh for God](#)" (in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week's materials). For the responsive reading, make available words for the chorus of "Go, Tell It on the Mountain."
- ❑ Bring items for setting the worship space: Cover a low table with a white or gold cloth and set a vase of greens and branches on it. You may wish to set shining decorations like stars in the greens.
- ❑ You might choose to print the art image [The Hope of the Child](#) on or in your bulletin (in the Images to Project and Print folder). For background to the art and artist, see "[Connecting with the Art](#)" on p. 8.
- ❑ Bring a song such as "Cosmic Hymn of Praise" (*Seasons Songbook, vol. 9, #1 on Seasons Music CD, vol. 9*). Printed music and recording are also available at *Seasons* MP3 Downloads, www.seasonsonline.ca.
- ❑ Set [stations](#) as described on p. 95–96.



Music Suggestions

Cosmic Hymn of Praise

Michael Mangan; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 9*

Oh, God Today Has a Human Face

Craig Mitchell; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 8*

Forever I Will Sing

Michael Mangan; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 5*

Greetings, Little Child of Bethlehem

Cecily Sheehy; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 2*

Good Christian Friends, Rejoice

Traditional; trans. John Mason Neale

Joy to the World

Isaac Watts

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

African-American spiritual



A chart that shows the licence holder(s) for each song in each of the 9 *Seasons of the Spirit* Music Volumes can be found at www.seasonsonline.ca. Click on Library; Seasons Music Information. Please contact a licence holder for permission to duplicate.

Gather

Call to worship

ONE: Light the candles:

RESPONSE: **the hope of our hearts has been born!**

ONE: Sing the carols:

RESPONSE: **the star to guide our spirits has risen!**

ONE: Embrace your neighbour:

RESPONSE: **the cradle of compassion receives us all!**

ONE: Believe in the mystery:

RESPONSE: **the love we long for is here.**

Opening prayer

God of stables and stars,
you are the hope that leads us forward.
You are the love that cradles our hearts.
You are the peace that quiets our fears.
You are the joy that sounds through our voices.
You are the face that shines through the Bethlehem baby.
Amen.

Prayer of confession

ONE: Gracious God,
you revealed yourself

in an ordinary circumstance:
a birth.

If we had been there,
would we have recognized you, or would we have
been put off by the parents' shabby clothing,
the crude surroundings,
the smell of the animals,
and the crying of the baby?

ALL: **We acknowledge our attraction
to all that seems spectacular or sensational.
We confess our inability to see you in places
or people
that seem unlikely or unlikeable.**

(silence for reflection)

Words of affirmation

God came among us
in a babe in Bethlehem
to awaken hope in us,
and assure us of a love that is everlasting.
Let us receive the good news of this grace. Amen.



Engage

Opening the word

1 Samuel 2:18–20, 26 Invite a young woman or young mother to read this passage.

Luke 2:41–52 Invite a 12- or 13-year-old (boy or girl) to read this passage.

Colossians 3:12–17

ONE: You are God’s chosen ones, beloved and holy;
TWO: clothe yourself with compassion and kindness.
ONE: You are God’s chosen ones, beloved and holy;
TWO: clothe yourself with humility and patience.
ONE: You are God’s chosen ones, beloved and holy;
TWO: clothe yourself with forgiveness and peace.
ONE: You are God’s chosen ones, beloved and holy;
TWO: clothe yourself with wisdom and gratitude.
ONE: For you are all part of one body,
TWO: so, above all, clothe yourself with love.

Psalm 148 *the focus scripture for age-level materials in ENCORE*

So now what? Christmas Day has come and gone. What kind of mood are people in now that Christmas is “over”? The Season of Christmas has just begun, and continues for several more days. It’s a time to begin thinking about what it really means that Jesus came to live as one of us. In the Christmas season, we can become wonderfully overwhelmed with feelings of joy and praise for God! Psalm 148 invites us to imagine all of creation praising God. Imagine it – how might animals offer praise? mountains? your home? this church building? a river? Invite people to reflect on this for a moment, and/or to offer ideas of how these things can praise God. How might you, as a church, make this praise become

more noticeable in your community in the coming year?

Choose from the following.

Bible story Have a storyteller present the story “[Skies and Sea Monsters](#)” (p. 94). Alternatively, for younger children, present “[Sing and Laugh for God](#)” (on page 1 of this week’s Exploring Our Faith).

Responsive reading *Invite the people to sing the chorus of “Go, Tell It on the Mountain,” as a response to the reading. (Alternatively, have a soloist or small ensemble sing the chorus.)*

ONE: Praise our God! Praise God from the heavens; sing praise from every mountain!

ALL: **Sing the chorus of “Go, Tell It on the Mountain.”**

ONE: Sun and moon, praise our God! Sing praises, all you shining stars!

Deep waters, praise our God! Sing praises, all you creatures of the seas!

Fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy winds, praise our God!

Hills and mountains and every sky-reaching tree, praise our God!

ALL: **Sing the chorus of “Go, Tell It on the Mountain.”**

ONE: Every creature of the earth, praise our God!

Every creature of the sky, praise our God!

Sing praises, all people of the earth!

Let young and old together praise our God!

ALL: **Sing the chorus of “Go, Tell It on the Mountain.”**

ONE: Let all creation sing praises, for God’s glory is among us!

Praise our God!

ALL: **Sing the chorus of “Go, Tell It on the Mountain.”**

Invite children, young people, and all who wish to move to the stations. Others will remain seated for proclaiming the word.

Respond

After proclaiming the word, you might invite those who have not already done so to move to and around the stations, taking ten minutes or so with a chosen practice.

Sing or listen to the song “Cosmic Hymn of Praise” as people gather together again (*Seasons Songbook, vol. 9, #1 on Seasons Music CD, vol. 9*). Printed music and recording are also available at *Seasons MP3 Downloads*, www.seasonsonline.ca.

Prayers of the people

God of overwhelming love and grace,
in this Christmas season we come before you in prayer.
We remember how you chose

to live among us,
declaring that our world was a worthy place
for you, the Creator,
to be present.

And so at this time, we pray for our world
and for all who live in it.

We especially think this day
of those for whom this is a difficult time.

For those who are missing loved ones
who have died, or are far away.

For those who are unable to be surrounded by others
and who struggle with all the emphasis on family and
togetherness in this season.



We think of all
for whom the emphasis on “stuff” simply underscores
not having enough.

And we think of how grateful we are
that you have sent Jesus into our world
and into our lives.

How might we reflect his message in our daily living?

How might we share with others the true joy
that Christ brings into our lives?

How can we – like all creation –
offer you the praise you deserve?

Open our hearts,
loving God.

Stretch our understandings
of our world

that we might find new ways
to travel with others
in the days to come.

We pray in Christ’s name, Amen.

Prayer of dedication or offering prayer

Generous God,
in this time of tinsel and trimmings
we pause and remember
that yours was the first Christmas gift of all.
With grateful hearts
we offer these gifts to you.
Wrap them in the radiance of your grace,
that they might spread love and healing in our world. Amen.

Bless

As we go forth:

May we, like the heavens,
praise God in the heights.

May we, like the shepherds,
journey in the name of love.

May we, like the stable owners,

make room for hope.

May we, like the angels,
sing out our joy.

May we, like Mary,
cradle peace in our hearts.

Amen.

Special Days Commentary

December 26 – St. Stephen

Acts 6 records that Stephen was among those chosen to be the first seven deacons in the church in Jerusalem. Their job was to take care of the widows of the church, but Acts 6:8 states, “Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.” Stephen’s actions and words caused him to be arrested and he gave a speech that angered the leaders so much that Stephen was dragged out of the city and stoned to death. The hymn “Good King Wenceslas” is in fact a St. Stephen’s Day hymn.

December 26 – Kwanzaa begins

Kwanzaa is an African-American celebration founded in 1966 by Dr. Maulana Karenga. The seven-day observance focuses on the traditional African values of family, community responsibility, commerce, and self-improvement. Kwanzaa, which means “First fruits of the harvest” in the African language Kiswahili, is not a political nor religious holiday, and contrary to some belief, it is not a substitute for Christmas. Rather, it is a time of reaffirming the ancestors and culture of African-American people.

December 27 – St. John the Evangelist

The church honours John, apostle and evangelist on this day. Traditionally, John is thought to have been the youngest of the apostles. He was called by Jesus as he sat fishing in a boat with this father Zebedee and his brother James. Tradition suggests he is the one referred to in scripture as “the one

whom Jesus loved,” the disciple who was entrusted with the care of Mary as Jesus hung on the cross. He was with Jesus in the garden and was a witness to the empty tomb. The fourth gospel is traditionally attributed to John.

December 28 – Feast of the Holy Innocents

In the middle of our Christmas celebration the church pauses to commemorate the slaughter of innocent children at the hand of Herod the Great. As recorded in Matthew 2:16, when Herod learned that the magi had left the country without telling him where to find the baby, he poured out his wrath on all male babies in and around Bethlehem.

January 1 – Name of Jesus/Holy Family Day

While some would not consider the first day of the year as anything other than a civic holiday, some churches do acknowledge it liturgically, and the *Revised Common Lectionary* provides readings for the New Year.

Some traditions observe this day as the Holy Name of Jesus while others refer to it as Holy Family Day. The first recalls the circumcision and naming of Jesus when he was eight days old as recorded in Luke 2:21. The latter refers to the account of Mary and Joseph’s presentation of the infant Jesus in the temple when he was 33 days old, in accordance with the Law of Moses. This story, recorded in Luke 2:2–4, relates how in the temple the prophets Simeon and Anna rejoiced at the sight of the baby, with the knowledge and understanding that the Messiah had finally come.



The Animals of Christmas

Dawn Armstrong

There is a legend shared by many countries that animals talk at midnight on Christmas Eve. The downside is that the animals talk about their humans and the humans may hear the prophecy of their death. Pragmatic Englishmen changed the legend so that humans cannot hear the animals, thus avoiding bad news.

It can be deduced from any nativity scene that a variety of farm animals attended the event of the birth of Jesus. A donkey bore Mary. Lambs, sheep, and goats were with the shepherds. The ox and ass are mentioned in descriptions of the stable scene. Camels provided transport for the Wise Men. Many more animals are included in Christmas tales and pageantry.

Native people of the Americas tell of deer who kneel on Christmas night, looking to the sky as if praising the Great Spirit. Cribs handcrafted by tribes of the United States and Canada include the fox, buffalo, and the bear in their mangers.

On Christmas Eve in Britain, bees gather to hum hymns and oxen and cattle rise in their stalls or kneel in adoration of the newborn king. In other lore, spiders provided the original version of tinsel by decorating trees with cobwebs. Tales credit Santa or angels or Jesus for turning the gray webs into gold and silver. To this day, it is said that every tree should have a spider ornament to acknowledge the happy spirit of the Christmas spider.

Santa provides for the animals as well as children according to European legend. He places grain all about for them on Christmas Eve.

Polar bear cubs know that Santa only comes after they go to sleep. In his off time, Santa is known to play with the animals around his North Pole home as well as feed and care for them.

Legend had St. Nicholas flying through the night sky in a sleigh or carriage drawn by goats or dogs, or on horseback. The reindeer-drawn sleigh was created by Dr. Clement Clarke Moore, who researched a variety of Christmas customs and legends before composing "The Night before Christmas." The 1822 poem was to be read to his children on Christmas Eve. The flying reindeer concept may have resulted from tales of Sami tribesmen who overindulged by tradition and then imagined that their herds could fly.

In sharing the news of the birth of Jesus, the rooster, raven, rook, ox, sheep, and ass speak to each other in Latin. The rhythm and words of the language sound like the natural voice of each animal so the recital is popular with children.

Tabby cats received the letter "M" for Madonna on their forehead as a reward for a tabby kitten comforting baby Jesus in the manger. The robin is said to have fanned the flames by flapping her wings all night to keep the newborn warm. The robin's chest became red from being kept painfully close to the flames for so long.

Throughout history, in our homes, hearts and memory, animals are an inseparable part of the magic of the holiday season. Treasure the spirit of wild animals and the gift of unconditional love from your pet this year.

By Dawn Armstrong, Humane Educator. Used by permission.



Skies and Sea Monsters

Based on Psalm 148

Skies and sea monsters, sing praise to God!
Let angels sing! Let the stars shine forever!
The sun and the moon and clouds heavy with rain,
may you never stop singing about what God has done!

Give thanks that God spoke, and you came into being,
sizzling fire, stormy wind, cedars scraping the skies,
sing praises with hail clattering down on the hills,
sing praises with fruit trees drinking deep from spring rains.

Sing oxen, sing eagles, sing snakes, worms, and slugs,
Sing kings, queens and princes, sing women and men,
Sing young and sing old, sing strangers and friends,
Sing songs without ceasing, for God's love never ends!

A recording of this story is available in
MP3 format in the Audio Stories folder.



Bible story

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Paper
- Player and recording of today's story "[Skies and Sea Monsters](#)"
- Alternatively, arrange for a storyteller to present the story



The practice of storytelling

Directions

1. Listen to the story "Skies and Sea Monsters."
2. Use the art supplies to draw or write your response to the story.



Living, Learning, Growing as Disciples

The following stations might be set up around your worship space, or in other places around the church, in your home, or outdoors. Choose one or more practices, depending on your space and numbers. Display the [directions](#) for all to see. Adapt stations for use when physically distancing and above all, follow the safe practices of your congregation and local health officials.

For your convenience, directions are formatted for printing and available in the Stations folder.

Health and Safety Practices



Basic supplies pens, pencils, markers, crayons, white glue/glue sticks, scissors, hand sanitizer, wipes placed in a basket or bin, two containers marked “clean” and “used”



Setting the space Utilize large spaces where people can maintain a safe physical distance. Spread out chairs around a large table or use tape to mark off the space around stand alone chairs.



Keep it clean Wipe down and disinfect places used for stations. Provide enough arts and crafts supplies to reduce sharing and mark containers “clean” and “used.” Remind people to use hand sanitizer as they begin and as they end stations.

Contemplative space

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Paper
- Two calendars – 2021 and 2022
- Personal journals (optional)



 **Suitable for ages 12-adult**

The practice of contemplation

Directions

1. Allow time for your mind and body to settle, taking a few deep breaths.
2. Bring your awareness to the calendars. Observe your own reactions to them, noting if any thoughts, memories or feelings come to mind.
3. When you are ready, take the paper provided and finish these prompts:
 - **At this time of year, these calendars remind me...**
 - **This past year has revealed...**
 - **As I look toward the new year, I hope...**
4. Once you have finished writing, make note of anything else you want to take away with you from this time: an insight, a resolution, a word or phrase on which you will continue to reflect, a new appreciation for this “transition” time of year. If you wish to create an image in response to this time of contemplation, there are art materials provided for you.

Creating a garland for birds

Materials

- Heavy cotton twine
- Tapestry needles
- Scissors
- Hand sanitizer
- Wipes
- Popped popcorn, chunks of apples, grapes, cranberries, oranges

 **Suitable for all ages**

The practice of sharing with creation



Directions

1. Use the needle to string the popcorn and fruit together on the twine. (Avoid using fishing line or thread, as birds can become tangled in it.)
2. String the garland around an outdoor tree for birds to eat.

Greeting cards

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Construction paper
- Recycled Christmas cards
- Decorative items such as sequins, Christmas stickers, foam stickers, felt, stamps, ink pads



The practice of sharing good news



Directions

It is said that in the early days of Christmas cards, people sent them after Christmas, as a way of sharing the good news of Jesus' birth. Make a greeting card that invites/encourages others to keep the spirit of Christmas with them throughout the coming year.

1. Take a piece of construction paper and fold it in half.
2. Choose pictures from old greeting cards, and/or other items to decorate your card.
3. Add words that invite the recipient to reflect throughout the coming year. Perhaps something like "Remember that Jesus is always with you" or "May you keep the spirit of Christmas with you every day."
4. Give or send the card to someone special.

New ways to praise

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Paper or pad of newsprint
- Bibles
- Personal journals (optional)



The practice of glorifying God

Directions

Psalm 148 celebrates how all creation praises God. How might we help it do that?

1. Look at the words of Psalm 148.
2. Imagine – or, if there are several of you, discuss – how different things in the psalm might praise God.
3. Discuss – or think about – ways you can help them do that. For example, a river praises God when it is clean. Is there a local river you can help clean up, or are there ways to educate people about not polluting local waterways? Writing letters to political leaders encouraging them to do things to help those in need is a way to help them praise God.
4. Write these ideas on paper or newsprint. Over the course of the new year, look for ways to help enact some of the things on the list.

The article "[Connecting with the Art](#)" on page 8 provides background to this season's posters and art engagement ideas for individuals and groups. You might add an Art station and select one of the art engagement ideas.



Sing and Laugh for God

A story based on Psalm 148

Look up at the sky and sing.
Look up at all the birds!
God has given you your life.
Sing and laugh for God.

Can you see the sun and moon?
Can you see the sky?
The song they sing is meant for God.
Why don't you sing it, too?

The whales and fishes laugh for God!
Snow and rain laugh, too!
All the hills and mountains laugh!
Why don't you laugh, too?

Queens and kings will smile for God!
Old men and women grin.
Children and their parents smile.
Why don't you smile, too?

If you breathe then you can sing.
Sing your song to God.
God has given you your life.
Sing and laugh for God.

*From the Lectionary Story Bible: Year A by Ralph Milton.
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Create: Nature Jar

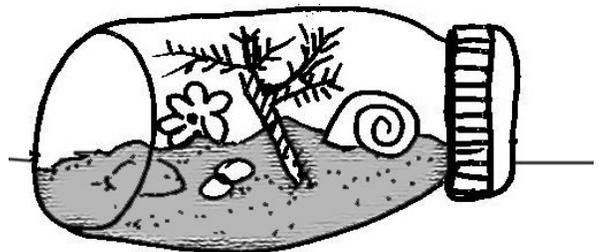
All creation gives praise to God. Make a nature jar as a reminder.

Materials

- Empty jar, with lid
- Sand
- A variety of items from nature (rocks, leaves, pine cones, rose petals, twigs)

Instructions

1. Pour some sand into your jar.
2. Choose a variety of items from nature to put inside.
3. When finished, replace the lid and tip jar sideways for display.



Activity: Bell for 2022

Instructions: The year 2021 is just about to end, and then we will begin 2022, the new year. In many places, people use bells to “ring in” the new year.

1. Inside the bell, draw something you hope will happen in 2022.
2. Cut out the bell.
3. Use a hole punch to make a hole at the top.
4. Thread some ribbon or string through the hole.
5. Hang your bell at home.

