

Planning



Sunday, November 20 – Saturday, November 26 • 2022

Reign of Christ

On this last Sunday of the Church Year, we anticipate a renewed Creation, which God envisioned in the One sent to transform and save.

This week...

Ecumenical prayer calendar

Indonesia, Philippines, East Timor (Timor Leste)

As listed in *Pilgrim Prayer: The Ecumenical Prayer Cycle*, edited by Ester Pudjo Widiasih 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. 164)

- November 20** – Reign of Christ/Christ the King
- November 24** – Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib (*Sikhism*)
- November 24** – Thanksgiving (USA)
Alternate materials for [Thanksgiving](#) are on p. 15
- November 26** – Day of the Covenant (*Baha'i*)

Personal reflection

“Christ is the image of the invisible God.” (Colossians 1:15)

Christ holds all things together – a way for God to also hold us close. We have a hard time imagining the complete glory of the Reign of Christ. God’s ways are grander than we can imagine. We can know that through Christ we can learn more about God’s wisdom and what we need to do to become a loving church community.

- **Walk mindfully this week, paying attention to the ways God is at work in your community.**

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).

November 20, 2022

24th Sunday after Pentecost
34th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Proper 29 (34)
Reign of Christ/Christ the King

Revised Common Lectionary (Year C)

Jeremiah 23:1–6
Luke 1:68–79

Colossians 1:11–20

the focus in age-level materials
Luke 23:33–43



Seasons of the Spirit™ is based on semi-continuous readings of the Revised Common Lectionary.

Liturgical colour white

Notes

- _____
- _____
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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.





Jeremiah 23:1–6
Luke 1:68–79
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Reign of Christ

Today's scripture readings provide several different images by which the faithful have come to know God and have testified to God's nature.

The prophet Jeremiah refers to God as a shepherd. In the first reading from Luke, Zachariah sings of a God who has been actively involved throughout human history. At the end of the gospel of Luke, Jesus is shown asking God's forgiveness for his persecutors. How do we see God, and how can we speak of God?

Jeremiah witnessed the final years before Jerusalem fell to Nebuchadnezzar in 597 BCE. In **Jeremiah 23:1–6**, he calls earlier kings of Israel to account, holding them responsible for the fact that the people of Judah are now being scattered into exile. The image of shepherd is often used in scripture to refer to kings, defining their roles as those meant to keep peace, defend people from attack, and hold the community together. Jeremiah indicts leaders for not only failing to gather the people but scattering them – the epitome of a bad shepherd. In response, Jeremiah proclaims that God will assume the role of shepherd, gather the scattered sheep from exile, and provide a new ruler who will govern according to God's plan.

In **Luke 1:68–79** Zechariah presents his eight-day-old son John in the temple and sings of God's promises to Israel and to his own son, John the baptizer. Zechariah's song parallels Mary's Magnificat (Luke 1:46b–55). The gospel writer compares these two songs with one another as well as with Simeon's song in the temple (2:29–32). Zechariah sings of the themes of Luke's gospel: God's faithfulness, God's way of peace, God's salvation for the people.

Gracious God – our shepherd, our guide, our sovereign – you reach out to gather us to you in so many different ways, showing us over and over how your realm of grace and love differs from the powers and principalities of our age, which we witness in our daily lives. Open our eyes that we may see you more clearly. Amen.

Colossians 1:11–20 Many scholars place the writing of Colossians at a time after Paul's death. The letter, however, bears Paul's name, likely an honour to a beloved teacher. This letter warns the Christians in Colossae against false teachers and, in the focus passage, speaks to the work of Jesus the Christ.

The writer describes Christ as the "firstborn of all creation" (v. 15). The Nicene Creed seeks to describe this dimension of Jesus' identity in the phrase "begotten, not made." Jesus is the image (in Greek, *ikon*) of the invisible God.

Verses 15–20 appear to be a fragment of an early hymn. Christ is praised here as the image of God and as one who has redeemed and reconciled the world. The writer calls on the Christians in Colossae to join in giving thanks for the gifts received through Christ.

The hymn also praises Christ as the agent of Creation. All things have been created through Christ, and all things hold together in Christ. As were the disciples in Colossae, we also are empowered to live new lives in Christ.

In Jesus, we learn that God's Messiah serves through suffering for the sake of others. **Luke 23:33–43** is the story of Jesus' crucifixion. In the midst of his suffering, Jesus shows compassion and forgiveness. The prayer of the thief who recognizes Jesus is our prayer as well – "Remember me when you come into your Kingdom" (v. 42).

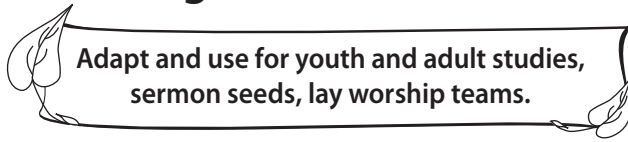
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It takes intentionality to live a life that is committed to God and God's way of peace, justice, mercy, and love above all else. But even amid competing allegiances, the scriptures today remind us that God's reign has been, is, and will be present. Further, it is a way to commit our lives and bring life to the world.

Perhaps we should ponder the question: To what should we show allegiance and what is affiliation?



Reflecting on the Word



Connecting with life

Visual images saturate our daily lives: logos, brands, icons, advertisements – consumer, political, artistic, and cultural. These images seep into our unconscious minds.

- **What competes for your commitment?**
- **What competes for your allegiance?**
- **What is the difference?**

Scripture

Jeremiah 23:1–6 The prophet makes clear that in God’s eyes, the purpose of leaders is to “attend to the sheep.” One of the central tenets of Protestantism is the concept of “the priesthood of all believers” – all the faithful bear responsibility for leadership.

- **Consider your role as a leader within your faith community. How well are you “attending the sheep”? Where do you feel most in need of God’s support and guidance?**

Luke 1:68–79 Zechariah’s prophecy previews several themes in Luke’s gospel: he proclaims that God has been active in the lives of God’s people throughout history. Remember that your personal and communal story is part of God’s larger story.

- **In what ways is God currently at work in the lives of people in your congregation?**

Luke 23:33–43 The power of unjust rulers and systems, capable of putting innocent people to death, terrifies us today as much as it did many centuries ago.

- **In the story of Jesus’ crucifixion, what different types of power can we find?**

Colossians 1:11–20

Consider what the Christian scriptures tell us about the life of Jesus.

- **What image from Jesus’ life comes to mind?**
- **What do these images suggest about the nature of God?**

Colossians 1:11–20 lifts up the supremacy of Christ. Even though we may understand the historical context in which Christ is contrasted with Caesar, the metaphor of Christ as king has been historically troublesome.

- **What might be some dangers, temptations, or challenges when speaking of Christ as king?**

Connecting scripture with life

During the Roman Empire, images of Roman gods and Caesar, who was referred to as divine and as “son of God,” proliferated on statues and money. The concept of Pax Romana attributed peace to Caesar and the Roman Empire, although it is a “peace” achieved through brutal oppression and the killing of many thousands of people.

The images from Jesus’ life in Luke 23:33–43 and the letter to the Colossians, and theological reflections, suggest that Christ leads the way toward reconciliation between God and humanity.

- **As Christ’s followers, what gets in our way? What prevents us from following our leader?**

Focus for Worship, Learning, and Serving

The traditional Church observance of the Reign of Christ/Christ the King has taken on a different character for progressive Christians living in a less narrowly defined and multi-faith religious world. While we don’t claim an exclusive claim to God’s grace, we who claim membership in Christ’s household still benefit from periodically taking time to clarify and celebrate just what the writer of Colossians claims as “the inheritance of the saints in the light.”

This Sunday offers us the opportunity to proclaim God’s way and Christ’s reign; even when those are more loving than we can imagine, we can reflect on this day on the truth that divine love is for each person. Christ’s peaceful reign does not know national boundaries. Instead, it is that which transcends all in order to hold us together and bind us by grace.



Reign of Christ

Prepare

NOTE: The following suggestions are mere starting points; adapt, delete, and add according to your local needs and context. If a community is gathered in person, they may speak the **bolded** lines. If worshippers are not all physically present, consider having a different individual say the bolded responses. Instructions are *italicized*.

- ❑ Recruit volunteers needed for worship.
- ❑ Choose an option for hearing Colossians 1:11–20. For the Bible story, arrange for a senior woman to present “[A Letter Teaches](#)” on p. 166. Alternatively, for younger children, arrange for a storyteller to present “[Jesus Helps Us to Learn to Live in God’s Way](#)” in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week’s materials. For the paraphrase, arrange for three voices.
- ❑ Create a litany of the worshipping community’s saving history to read alongside Luke 1:68–79.
- ❑ Bring items for setting the worship space: a crown of thorns, bread, bowl and towel, shroud, hammer and nails for the prayers of the people.
- ❑ You might choose to print *Just as We Are One* 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 song such as “Listen to Jesus” (*Seasons Songbook, vol 8, #15 on Seasons Music CD, vol. 8*). Printed music and recording also available at *Seasons MP3 Downloads, www.seasonsonline.ca*).
- ❑ Set [stations](#) as described on pp. 167–168.



Music Suggestions

Listen to Jesus

Bernadette Farrell; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 8*

Creator and Poet

Sandra Sears; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 3*

Jesus Came Bringing Us

Traditional Cameroon folk song; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 3*

Jesus Christ, Hope of the World

João Carlos Gottinari; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 3*

O Jesus Christ/Nzamuranza

Traditional Mozambican, Andrew Donaldson; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 3*

Dream God’s Dream

Bryan Sirchio

Everyone’s Rejoicing

Tom Colvin

Fear Not, for I Have Redeemed You

Jodi Page-Clark

Jesus, Remember Me

Taizé community

Shine, Jesus, Shine

Graham Kendrick



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

As honeybees and ant colonies make visible a unified spirit
for a common purpose,

may we reflect our oneness in God.

As the trees and flowers make visible the mysterious way
of dying and rising,

may we yield to a Divine Wisdom.

As the music of frogs and birds make visible the pulsing of
Creation’s praise,

may we worship with our every breath.

Gathered as one in the wisdom of God,
let us worship the Spirit of Christ in whom we are pleased
to dwell.

Opening prayer

O God, we pray that reconciling love may be evident among
us.

May we play our part in restoring all creation to the fullness
of balance and beauty
as we live in the example of Jesus the Christ.

Prayer of confession

The Spirit of Christ dwells within creation and causes each
element to shine forth with the beauty of God.

Yet, we confess that we do not always reflect the reconciling
love of God.

Instead, we are often divided within ourselves,
isolated from one another,
and disconnected from the rest of nature.



Worship Outline • November 20, 2022

We bring to mind those areas of our lives in need of reconciliation.
(silent prayer)

In this sacred space, we pray,
may our divided hearts mend as we embrace all people and every situation with the forgiveness of God.
Amen.

Words of affirmation

Share a sign of peace and reconciliation after the words of affirmation are offered, if you have not already done so.

God's tender mercy is upon us like the dawning of a new day. The forgiveness of God sheds light on the shadows and guides us into the ways of peace.
Resting in this forgiveness, let us replace old grievances and resentments with new love.

Engage

Opening the word

Jeremiah 23:1–6 Invite worshippers to think of the various organizations and/or people in the news who have participated in spreading personal or corporate harm or chaos, either through their actions or the functioning of their systems of production, power, or influence. How are they like the “shepherds” Jeremiah condemns? And how is Jeremiah’s vision of new and ethical shepherds a gift to God’s people?

Colossians 1:11–20 *the focus scripture for age-level materials in ENCORE*

Choose from the following.

Bible story Arrange for a senior woman to present the story “[A Letter Teaches](#)” on p. 166. Alternatively, for younger children, have a storyteller present the story “[Jesus Helps Us to Learn to Live in God’s Way](#)” (in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week’s materials).

Paraphrase

Introduction In Colossians, the author refers to Christ as the “image of the invisible God.” The metaphor from Jeremiah of shepherd, the characteristics of God listed in Luke 1:68–79 (such as compassionate, saviour, and merciful), and other phrases in the Colossians passage such as “first over all creation” and “head of the body” offer a chance for the worshippers to consider the image of the invisible God. Where do we see the image of God in the world around us today?

As Colossians 1:15–20 was likely an early hymn in the Christian church, The paraphrased responsive reading below could be used for the verses representing the hymn fragment.

VOICE 1: reads Colossians 1:11–14.

VOICE 2: In Christ, we see what cannot be seen;

VOICE 3: Christ is the beginning, first over all.

VOICE 2: Life flows from Christ in the heavens and on the earth;

VOICE 3: all we can see and all we cannot.

VOICE 2: Powers here on earth and powers above,

VOICE 3: everything comes through Christ.

VOICE 2: Everything finds its real purpose in Christ,

VOICE 3: for it is Christ who holds all things together.

VOICE 2: Christ holds the church and guides the body,

VOICE 3: from birth to death, Christ leads the way.

VOICE 2: In Christ, God’s goodness dwells with us.

VOICE 3: Every broken piece of creation,

VOICE 2: every fragment that is in disarray,

VOICE 3: whether it be on earth or in heaven,

VOICE 2: is united and made whole with God through Christ.

VOICE 3: In Christ’s self-sacrifice on the cross, creation is brought into God’s peace.

Luke 1:68–79 Zechariah recalls, in beautiful words and images, the history of God’s saving work and God’s promises for future salvation. Create a similar litany of the worshipping community’s saving history, making sure to connect it to some of the historic salvation history in the Bible as Luke does. Read what’s written alongside Luke 1:68–79.

If gathering in person, invite children, young people, and all who wish to move to the stations. Others will remain seated for proclaiming the word. For those participating at home, you might encourage them to use materials that have been sent.



Respond

Sing or listen to a song such as “Listen to Jesus” as people gather again (*Seasons Songbook, vol. 8, #15 on Seasons Music CD, vol. 8*). Printed music and recording are also available at *Seasons MP3 Downloads, www.seasonsonline.ca*).

Prayers of the people

As an option, during this prayer, people can bring in the various items mentioned and set them on display.

(A crown of thorns)

God of grace and mercy,
in the places where there is no gold,
and the world says only fools go,
those who live by righteousness,
among the poor,
among those forgotten and abused.
In this world,
help us to be the Body of Christ.

(Broken bread)

God of life and hope,
in the places where lives are broken,
and the world conspires against what is good,
with a greed only for itself,
among the broken,
among those hurting and rejected.
In this world,
help us to be the Body of Christ.

(A bowl and towel)

Servant God,
in the places where the poor serve the rich,
in a world imbalanced towards the powerful,
lauding it over the powerless,
among the forgotten,

among those who seem to give and receive so little.
In this world,
help us to be the Body of Christ.

(A shroud)

God of unconditional love,
in the places of death, where life is taken,
in a world of abuse and violence,
against its own children,
among the women and men,
among those where esteem and beauty have been
stripped away.
In this world,
help us to be the Body of Christ.

(Hammer and nails)

God of Jesus Christ,
in the places of torture,
in a world where life is cheap and power ignorant,
and one thrives on the other,
among those who cope with the degrading of their lives,
where imbalance painfully saps their living.
In this same world,
help us to be the Body of Christ. Amen.

Prayer of dedication or offering prayer

Generous God, you are the Source of all that we are and all that we have.
We return to you a portion of the gifts you have given us.
Bless this offering that it may further your purpose in the world,
gathering in the lost and lonely, tending to those in need,
healing the ill, comforting the grieving,
and sharing the good news of your love and compassion.
Amen.

Bless

Friends in Christ, God is pleased to dwell fully within, between, and around each of us,
and through the shared life of this community we make God’s Spirit visible in the flesh.

Let us continue the reconciling work of God,
bringing together all things into the realm of God’s unconditional love.

Special Days Commentary

November 24 – Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (*Sikhism*)

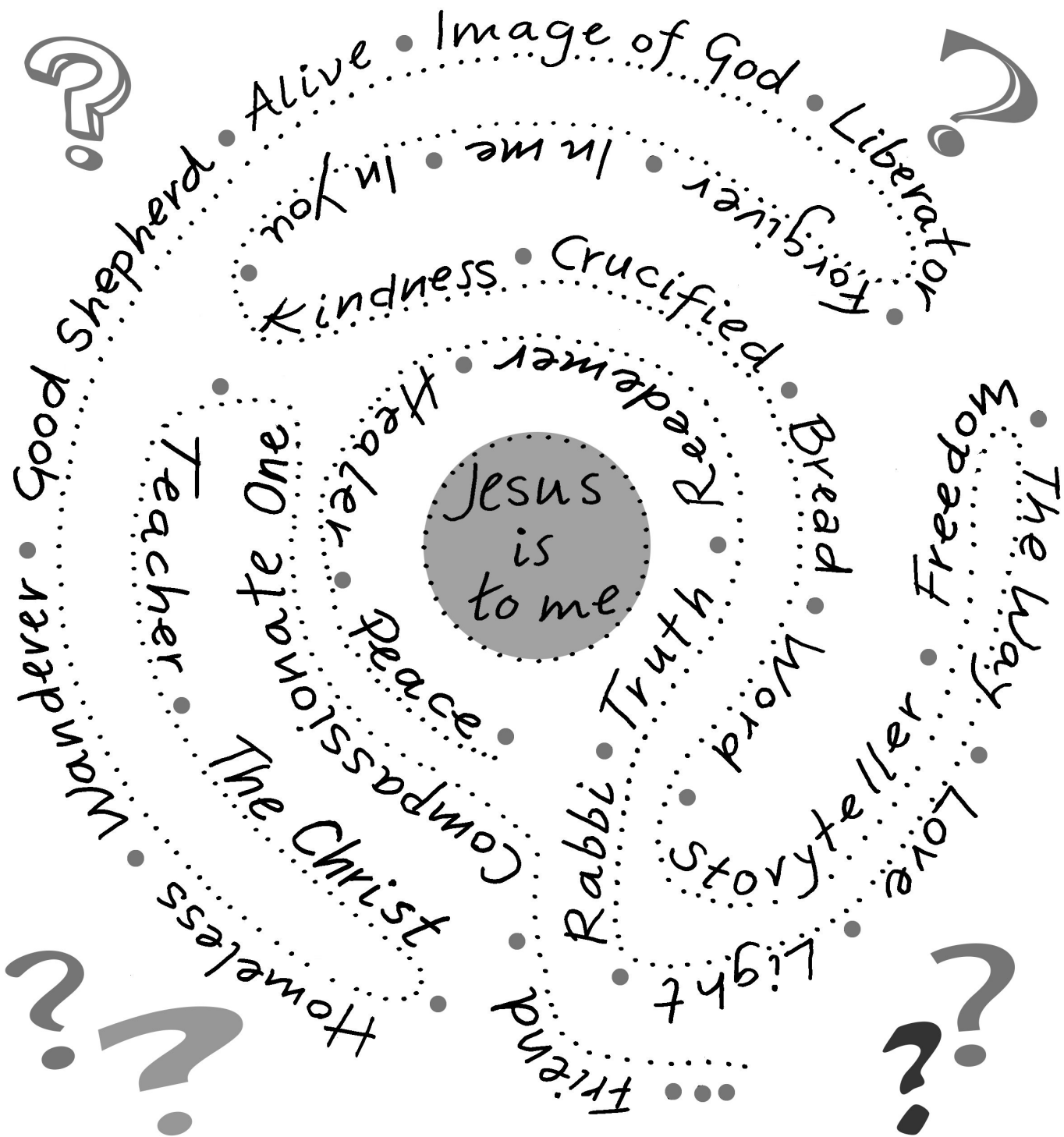
The ninth of the ten Sikh gurus was murdered on this day in 1675. He believed in the freedom of religion and the right of the Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs to live in peace and practice their own faiths.

November 26 – Day of the Covenant (*Baha’i*)

Celebrates the anniversary of the appointment of Abdul-Baha, the son of Baha’u’llah, as the Centre of the Covenant. The day is usually celebrated with special prayers and feasting.



Move your finger slowly around the labyrinth, reflecting on who Jesus is. When you reach the centre, take time to think about who Jesus is to you.



A Letter Teaches

Based on Colossians 1:11–20

We were a new church, young and still trying to find our place. I was just little when my father took my mother and me to a small gathering of people to talk about the teachings of a man named Jesus. We were mostly a group of Gentiles, but there were a few Jews there, too. Everyone was excited because there was so much to talk about and learn.

Most of the elders spoke of a man named Paul, who had first taught them about Jesus and helped them establish the church, but it had been some time since Paul had been to visit. Sometimes they received letters from Paul and other teachers, though. The letters helped teach us more about living in God's way. I still have one of those letters. I take it out from time to time to read to my grandchildren. May I read it to you? It said:

May you all feel strong with the strength that comes from the power of God. May you live each day with patience and joy, giving thanks to God for all your blessings.

God has saved us from the darkness of fear and sin and brought us into the reign of God's child, Jesus. Jesus gives us an image of the invisible God. It is hard to picture God, who was the first-born of all creation, who made the heavens, the earth, and all the things we see, and even the things we cannot see! But Jesus shows us these things; Jesus is the one who holds it all together. Like the head on a body, Jesus is the head of the church. Through Jesus, God came to reunite all things, whether on heaven or Earth and make peace.

Did you understand all that? Me neither. I understand it better now that I am an old woman. As a child, it both puzzled me and comforted me. I liked the idea of being strong through God. I have begun to understand more about the holy mystery, and though I am still puzzled, I am also amazed and filled with wonder, and indeed a strength that comes from God.

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



Bible story

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Paper or drawing pads
- Recording of today's story "[A Letter Teaches](#)"
- Alternatively, arrange for a storyteller to present the story

The practice of storytelling

Directions

1. Listen to the story "A Letter Teaches."
2. Use the art supplies to draw your reflection on this 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 onscreen or in person. 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.

The fullness of God

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Recycled newspapers or newsprint
- Construction paper in different colours
- Scraps of felt and colourful fabrics
- Play dough
- Paint and paintbrushes
- Cups of water



Suitable for all ages

The practice of creativity

Directions

1. Think about the images of God that you see around you and the examples of God’s presence that you see in creation. Using the materials at this station, create an artwork that represents these images.
2. When you have finished, share what you’ve created with another person at this station.
3. Walk around the table to see the different examples of creativity.

Younger children Help younger children at this station. Invite them to use the materials to create an image of God that they see in creation.

Holding things together

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Colour note paper and or blank note cards
- Envelopes



Suitable for all ages

The practice of appreciation

Directions

1. Think about the people in your congregation who hold things together – pastors, church staff, church school teachers, custodians and security personnel, and other volunteers.
2. Using the materials provided, write messages of appreciation to these people. You might share a personal story about what their contribution to the congregation means to you.
3. Before you leave this station, take a few moments to pray for your congregation and the way it makes a difference. Pray that all might continue to live out Jesus’ examples of love and justice for all God’s children.

Younger children Adults work with younger children at this station and help them write messages to people they appreciate in the congregation. Children might prefer to draw a picture to show their appreciation.



Acrostic meditation

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Paper



The practice of reflection

Directions

1. Think about how Jesus is important to you.
2. Try to put what you think into words that make an acrostic. In an acrostic, the first letter of each line, word, or paragraph – spells out a word or phrase. An example:

J	Jesus	Cherishes me and loves me for who I am.
H	Jesus	Helps me to be the person God wants me to be.
R	I	Realize that through Jesus I can make a difference in the world.
I	I want to	Invite others to discover the love of Jesus.
S	I will	Strive to live in the way of Jesus.
T	I will	Tell others about how much God loves them and how Jesus showed that love.

3. Write your own acrostic.

Pictures of the reign

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Bibles
- Sheets of paper
- Poster board



The practice of prophetic imagination

Directions

What will the reign or realm of God look like?

1. Look up one or more of the scripture passages below.
 - Matthew 18:1–5
 - Revelation 21:1–5
 - Luke 4:16–19
 - Isaiah 11:6–9
2. Based on the passages you've read, think of how you would complete the following sentence:
The reign or realm of God is where _____.
3. Draw a picture, or write the words you think of in large print on the poster board or on one or more papers.

Body language

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Bibles
- Paper
- Personal journals (optional)
- Copies of the directions



The practice of going deeper

Directions

1. Read the following passages that talk about the Body of Christ (the church).
 - Colossians 1:18
 - 1 Corinthians 12:12–31
 - Ephesians 4:11–13
2. Respond to some of the reflection questions, writing or doodling your thoughts on a sheet of paper or in your personal journal.
 - **What do these passages say about the church?**
 - **In what ways is the body a helpful image/metaphor for the church?**
 - **What special meaning do you find in these passages?**
 - **How might they help you as we grow together as the church?**

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.



Story and activities for the very young to use in church or at home.

Jesus Helps Us to Learn to Live in God's Way

Recalling some stories from the gospel of Luke

The Bible has many stories about Jesus or stories that Jesus told the helpers to learn to live in God's way. In these past weeks, we have heard some stories from a book in the Bible called the gospel of Luke. As you read or listen, think about what each story shows about God's love.

One day a woman was very upset because someone had taken some of her money. She asked a judge to help her, but the judge wouldn't listen. The woman would not give up. She kept praying to God and visiting the judge. Finally, the judge helped. We can keep trying to live in God's way.

Two people went to the temple to pray. The Pharisee didn't know how much God loves and cares for everyone. The tax collector knew he could ask God for help to live in God's way. We can pray to God. God listens to everyone.

Zacchaeus climbed a tree so he could see Jesus. Jesus welcomed Zacchaeus and went home with him for dinner. Many people didn't like Zacchaeus and were surprised that Jesus loved and cared for everyone. We can welcome and love others.

Jesus loved people, and Jesus looked after people. The cross reminds us of Easter and how Jesus helped us to learn to live in God's way.

Action Song

Look at Jesus

(Tune: "Baa, Baa Black Sheep")

Look at Jesus, and you will see *(hands shading eyes)*,

God's love is for you and me *(hands over heart)*.

Jesus shows us every day *(hands extended)*.

Jesus shows us every way *(lift hands high)*.

Look at Jesus, and you will see *(hands shading eyes)*,

God's love is for you and me *(hands over heart)*.



Jesus helps us to connect with God. Jesus has enough love and forgiveness for everyone and all creation.
Draw some different creatures and parts of Creation that Jesus loves.

