

Planning



Sunday, December 11 – Saturday, December 17 • 2022

Singing a New Song

We join Mary in praise of all that God can do by joining her song and finding ways that the song shifts our perspective of ordinary things.

This week...

Ecumenical prayer calendar

Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam

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. 60)

December 12 – Our Lady of Guadalupe

December 13 – St. Lucia

Personal reflection

Mary's song is one of power and bold proclamation. She uses her voice to praise God and to call us to pay closer attention to what God is calling us to do and who God wants us to love and care for. In singing about the oppressed, Mary's song reminds us today that there are still systems of oppression and places where we can be God's voice.

- **Consider what steps you might take this week to step out as a prophet for justice and liberation.**

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).

December 11, 2022

Advent 3

Revised Common Lectionary (Year A)

Isaiah 35:1–10

Luke 1:47–55

the focus in age-level materials

James 5:7–10

Matthew 11:2–11

Liturgical colour purple or blue

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 [Nurturing Faith and Spirituality at Home](#) folder.





Isaiah 35:1–10

Luke 1:47–55

the focus in age-level materials

James 5:7–10

Matthew 11:2–11

God of Justice, help us hear Mary's song as a song for us today. May we sing it loudly and boldly as we seek your justice and peace. Amen.

Singing a New Song

Mary is chosen by God for the special task of being Jesus' mother. Mary is young; she has no status or power in her society, she is an unlikely person for such an important task. Mary's prophetic song radiates love and celebrates God's transformative vision of justice that challenges the powerful and lifts up the weak.

A gorgeous vision of God's realm of justice burst forth. **Isaiah 35:1–10** tells of power reversals that mirror the Magnificat in Luke 1:47–55, this week's psalm: the blind shall see, the deaf shall hear, the lame shall leap, the desert shall be watery. In an interesting contrast to Isaiah 11:1–10, predator beasts are vanquished rather than reconciled.

Luke 1:47–55 More than any other female, Mary has indelibly marked Christian and Western history and culture, bearing the Christ child as well as all manner of gifts and baggage about the feminine ideal. For the Christian tradition, the Magnificat (which takes its name from the first word of the Latin text) is the great New Testament praise song of liberation. With elegant power and directness, Mary preaches as the prophet of the poor.

In Luke's gospel, as Mary arrives, Elizabeth's unborn child – who will be the prophet John the baptizer – leaps for joy at Mary's greeting. Mary responds to this blessing by singing the glory of God's powerful love that has chosen her to carry the Christ child. She sings because God acts with justice and mercy to lift those considered lowly and feed those who are hungry.

The Magnificat is revolutionary, with a long history of being banned by various church or political bodies. As recently as the 1980s, the government of Guatemala forbade

the public reading of it, as did the government of Argentina in the 1970s. Franciscan Richard Rohr notes the Magnificat is an elegant example of Jesus' teachings about the obstacles to the coming reign of God. Rohr calls these impediments the three "p's": power, prestige, and possessions. Mary sings at seeing how "the proud," "the powerful," and "the rich" will be "scattered...brought down...sent away empty."

Mary models trusting discipleship that surrenders utterly to God's claim on her life. We never hear of Mary's worthiness or any achievement that made her God's choice to bear the Liberator of humanity. Mary does not see herself as the actor; instead, God is the do-er and actor. Mary sings for all the generations who have hoped, and hope even still, for God's vision of justice to come to fullness in their lives. In Advent, we prepare to celebrate the birth of this saviour, Jesus, who shatters all expectations of what God's power and justice are like.

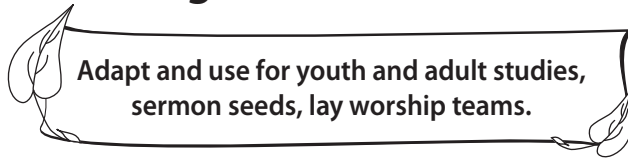
James 5:7–10 reminds us to wait, again with a prophetic reversal vision of the vulnerable made strong. When John the baptizer asks for confirmation of Jesus' identity **Matthew 11:2–11** reports actions of justice that serve as the witness to Jesus' identity.

• • • • •

Mary sings of joy and justice. Her courage to say "yes" and her belief that God will never abandon the promise to be with us is a profound witness of faith. Mary bears witness to the love of God and God's transformative vision that exceeds our conceptions of power. What is this deep love and joy birthing in us today? Where are we thirsty for life and justice? Where might we be "a stream in the desert" for others?



Reflecting on the Word



Connecting with life

Athletes often have a “power song” that increases performance when they are tired or need an energy boost. In popular culture, artist Rachel Platten’s “Fight Song” was used as an anthem by many to declare that they are not beaten down but would keep going, no matter what. Might Mary’s Magnificat be the power anthem of her time?

- **How does music change our moods and ways of interacting with the world?**
- **What anthems may we need right now in our world?**

Scripture

Isaiah 35:1–10 Most scholars agree that Isaiah 35:1–10 came from the time in Judah’s exile in Babylon. Hundreds of miles of rugged wilderness terrain stood between the exiles and their homeland. The difficult terrain was made even more threatening by the scarcity of water. Even for the fittest, an attempted return would be life-threatening, much less those weakened by age or illness. This wilderness barrier made it tempting to hunker down and stay in Babylon, where resources were plentiful and where many had grown comfortable over the years. It would take courage to find the way home.

In the image of a desert in bloom, Isaiah focuses on hope in God and what God can do in these wilderness places.

- **As we emerge from a Global Pandemic of the COVID virus, is there a clear path “home”? Is the way ever clear?**
- **How do we decide which paths to follow and which to avoid?**
- **What might “home” look like for those who seek it?**

Luke 47–55 American Artist Ben Wildflower imagined Mary differently than most when he created a wood carving de-

picting her in a triumphant pose, fist held to the sky, boldly proclaiming “Turn the rich away” and “Fill the hungry” and “Lift the lowly.” His art magnified Mary’s song and upset some people who did not realize the origin of the words in scripture.

- **How are we inspired by Mary’s song today?**
- **What songs do we sing that offer inspiration, motivation, or raise powerful emotions in ourselves?**
- **What songs do we need for this time?**

Matthew 11:2–11

- **How did John the baptizer prepare the way for Jesus?**
- **What has helped prepare the way for Jesus in your life?**

James 5:7–10 James asks us to be patient as we await the coming of the Lord.

- **When have we been asked to be patient?**
- **When we equate patience with suffering, who do we hurt?**
- **Can we be patient and also demand and act for change simultaneously?**

Connecting scripture and life

On this third Sunday in Advent, we are called to join our heartbeats with Mary’s in praising God. The Spirit fills us with power, as well, to prophesy to God’s vision of wholeness that comes to birth in Jesus the Christ.

- **What might you, individually and as a church, point to as God’s saving activity toward you in actions past, present, and future? What is your song of joy and justice?**
- **In what ways might we encourage one another to proclaim God’s vision of justice and peace?**

Focus for Worship, Learning, and Serving

The third week of Advent is one of joy, as we hear Mary’s song of liberation burst forth in worship. Mary’s role as a life-carrier is highlighted. The tone is celebration and joy, but the message is troubling for those who cling to power and self-importance. For Mary, a humble young woman entrusted to bring Jesus into the world, reveals that the way God sees the world might not always line up with

how we see the world. Mary’s story upsets those whom we may see as important or influential. Young people such as Mary have significant roles in our communities.

For many, Mary’s song has been domesticated and tamed through familiarity and countless renditions of the “Magnificat.” How can you enable your community to hear Mary’s song of radical justice as if for the first time?



Singing a New Song

Prepare

NOTE: The following suggestions are mere starting points. You are invited to adapt, delete, 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 physically present, consider having a different individual say the bolded responses. Instructions are *italicized*.

- ❑ Recruit volunteers needed for worship: two readers and a few actors for the reading from Isaiah.
- ❑ Choose an option for hearing Luke 1:47–55. For the Bible story, arrange for a storyteller to present “[Mary’s Poem](#)” on p. 62. Alternatively, for younger children, arrange for a storyteller to present “[Mary Visits Elizabeth](#)” in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week’s materials. For the reflection and meditation, arrange for someone to lead “[Sparks of Joy](#)” on p. 61.
- ❑ Bring items for setting the worship space: Advent wreath from Advent 2 and this week’s items for building the wreath – basket full of local flora. See “[Advent Wreath Prayers](#)” on p. 14.
- ❑ You might choose to print [Earth Has Hope](#) on or in your bulletin. See “[Connecting with the Art](#)” on p. 8 for background to the art and artist.
- ❑ Bring song such as “I Am Becoming Peace” (in *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9, #6 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 9, and available for purchase as an MP3 download at <https://www.seasonsonline.ca/order>).

- ❑ Set [stations](#) as described on pp. 63–64.



Music Suggestions

Joy for You and Me

Maria Millward and Damien Halloran; *Seasons Songbook* vol. 6

Jesus Came Bringing Us

Cameroonian Traditional; *Seasons Songbook* vol. 3

In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful

Taizé

Joy Shall Come Even to the Wilderness

Israeli traditional

Magnificat

Marty Haugen

Mary, Woman of the Promise

Mary Frances Fleischaker

My Soul Gives Glory to My God

Miriam Therese Winter



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

Holy One, you created the heavens and Earth and all that is.

Happy are those whose help is in God.

You bring justice for the oppressed, food to the hungry and set the prisoners free.

Happy are those whose help is in God.

God, you lift up the humble and watch over all who are vulnerable.

For all generations, praise God.

Advent candles

Invitation

Come and let us build
a new creation because
our hearts are full of song.
Our hands are weak
and our knees are feeble, but we can’t stop
ourselves from feeling this gladness
so far and wide that it feels like

the deserts of our uncertainty
burst with bright colours of joy.

Invite the people to come forward to find a basket full of local flora. Without moving anything on the table, invite the people to add nature’s bright colours to the wreath. When all who have chosen to participate have added their joy, continue with these words.

In the joy of this moment,
our spirits rejoice.
The Mighty One does
great things and
there is a lightness
in our beings that
we pray will
magnify God’s work.
We need that light to shine
with colour and song
and so today we bring one candle



Worship Outline • December 11, 2022

to join our HOPE and our PEACE
to magnify our JOY.

Invite one person to come forward and put an unlit candle on the table among flora and fauna.

Prayer

With this one light, we pray:
O God, we place this light in this holy space
as a reminder that we are on this journey together.

Be light along all our paths.

Lead us to a more just world

and help us to stay awake

and present to your love

in each ordinary day. Amen.

Candles are lit or switched on.

Sing song, such as “I Am Becoming Peace” changing “peace” to “joy” (*Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9, #6 on *Seasons Music CD*,

vol. 9. Printed music and recording are also available at are also available at <https://www.seasonsonline.ca/order>).

Prayer of confession

Holy One, we do not always see the joy in the ordinary.

We may mistake gaining power, possessions, status, or wealth for true joy.

Sometimes despair and emptiness overshadow the joy.

Sometimes we forget to say “thank you,” and we overlook simple things in our lives that are cause for gratitude and joy.

Sometimes we say “yes” and give of ourselves from a place of guilt rather than a place of joy or sense of justice.

We give of ourselves until there is no joy left inside us.

Help us to find the balance, courage and deep, abundant joy that is so needed in a hurting world.

Words of affirmation

May we lift our voices as we sing a new song! Even in our brokenness and imperfection, God never leaves us. May we sing praise as Mary does, steeped in the assurance of this truth: We are forgiven and cherished through and through. **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

Engage

Opening the word

Isaiah 35:1–10

Two readers recite this participatory excerpt from Isaiah. It can be done with a few “actors” who can either improvise actions to go along with each verse or they can look at the suggestions on this page ahead of time. Instead of a few people to do the actions, it could also be done with all worshippers. The readers can point to different sections to use their imaginations to animate each verse.

VOICE ONE: The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad, the desert shall rejoice and blossom; like the crocus, it shall blossom abundantly...

(Action: Move and stretch like a blooming flower.)

VOICE TWO: They shall see the glory of God strengthen weak hands and make firm feeble knees...

(Action: Moving hands, clench and release. Move knees up and down.)

VOICE ONE: Say to those who are of a fearful heart, “Be strong, do not fear!”

(Action: Hands over heart, hunch body over. Stand up tall with arms stretched open.)

VOICE TWO: Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened.

(Action: Eyes close then open.)

VOICE ONE: The ears of the deaf unstopped.

(Action: Hands over ears and then take them off.)

VOICE TWO: Then the lame shall leap like a deer.

(Action: Jump and leap.)

VOICE ONE: The tongue of the speechless will sing for joy.

(Action: Sing a loud note.)

VOICE TWO: Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. They shall have joy and gladness.

(Action: Let out a big sigh. Stretch arms upward.)

Isaiah 35:1–10 and Matthew 11:2–11

Read the texts. After the readings, ask people to reflect on the following questions:

- **When have you walked through a time of wilderness (time of uncertainty in your life, or an unfamiliar place)?**
- **What do you remember about that time? Were you searching for anything?**
- **Was there anything that brought you reassurance, strength of heart, or joy like a stream in the desert? Was there anything that blossomed for you during that time?**

People can reflect quietly to themselves or engage in dialogue with the person next to them, sharing anything they feel comfortable with.

Luke 1:47–55 the focus scripture for age-level materials in **ENCORE**

Introduction Invite people to recall when they were recognized and affirmed, even in some small way, for bringing joy to another person. Maybe someone recognized something they did, even a simple gesture, and thanked them for it. Maybe someone recognized a gift in them that they did not see. How did it feel to be seen in this way? How did it feel to be a bearer of joy for another?



Choose from the following.

Bible story Arrange for a storyteller to present “[Mary’s Poem](#)” on p. 62. Alternatively, for younger children, tell the

story “[Mary Visits Elizabeth](#)” (in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week’s materials).

Reflection and meditation Arrange for someone to lead “[Sparks of Joy](#)” on page 61.

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

As people regather, sing “I Am Becoming Peace,” substituting the word “joy” for the word “peace” (in *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9, #6 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 9, and available for purchase as an MP3 download at <https://www.seasonsonline.ca/order>).

Prayers of the people

You are the God of Mary and the God of us.

You give us courage to speak your truth and praise you in all things.

Thank you for giving us voices to raise in praise and in joy. Help our spirits magnify you, O God.

Give us the strength to lift up those who are oppressed or marginalized.

Give us strength as we seek lives wrapped in your justice. Help us be patient as progress is made.

God, may we lift our voices in loud song as we rejoice in you and the work you have done for us.

May we join in Mary’s song and be forever changed by our singing. Amen.

Invitation to the offering

In our offerings to God, we provide ways for this community to serve God and sing Mary’s song to the world. When we

combine what we offer God, our gifts serve Christ in ways we could not alone. Let us worship God with the giving of our tithes and offerings.

Prayer of dedication or offering prayer

To more fully embody the act of dedication in prayer, invite worshippers to outstretch their arms or hold open their palms.

God of plenty, like a great mother, you fill our lives with love, connection, and ultimate care.

In this moment, we hold open our arms or our hands and silently name to you the ways you have blessed us with safe homes, enough food, and enough, enough, enough... indeed, we thank you.

God who knows the world’s needs, we thank you so deeply that we know our very best response is to give back to you what was always yours to begin with: our talents, our money, our very best love.

We hold open our arms or our hands and silently name to you the ways we dedicate ourselves to you today.

We lift up the very money or time or talent or love we want to give to you...

...hear and feel and know our love for you, Beloved God!

With dedicated love, we pray. Amen.

Bless

May each life make large the Spirit of God
and may you know the fullness of God’s favour
resting upon each of you as you leave this place.
For see, God is turning the world upside down;
the plans of the self-important will come to an end
and the way of vulnerability will lead to life.

**The Mighty One is doing
good things in and through us.**

Go and give birth to the justice and love
which has been planted within you
by the Spirit of God.

Let it be so.

Special Days Commentary

December 12 – Our Lady of Guadalupe

Arguably the most important celebration on the Mexican calendar, this day marks the date of an apparition of Mary in a village north of Mexico City in 1531. The day is marked with a great fiesta of dancing, singing, arts and crafts, and exotic foods.

December 13 – St. Lucia

Lucia was born of noble and wealthy parents in Syracuse, Sicily, in 284 CE. Her father died when she was an infant, and her mother, Eutychia, raised her as a Christian. At the time, Roman authorities were trying to re-establish the wor-

ship of Roman gods, and Christianity came under scrutiny. Tradition has it that Lucia, as a young Christian woman, was betrothed to a man who was not a believer. Lucia resisted the marriage, and in return for a miraculous healing of her mother, she gave away her inheritance and dowry to the poor. When her betrothed learned of this he turned her over to the authorities. She was ordered to recant her faith but refused, and was killed in 304.

Lucia’s name was derived from the Latin word for *lux*, meaning light. She often is depicted wearing a crown of lighted candles. Because of when her feast day falls, she has been associated with Advent’s theme of light, and her feast day is of major importance in Sweden.



Sparks of Joy – reflection and meditation

Marie Kondo, the acclaimed Japanese organizing consultant and author, is best known for helping people de-clutter their homes and work spaces. Her book called *Spark Joy* suggests ways people can sort through and organize possessions they need or don't need. If you wish to simplify or downsize your belongings she suggests keeping the things that "spark joy." In Japanese the term for this is *tokimeku* meaning "flutter, throb, palpitate."

In a world where we over-consume Earth's resources and produce excessive waste, living simply becomes an act of justice. We witness this especially at this time of year leading up to Christmas. The practice of organizing material goods might seem like a problem for the privileged when we consider the reality that many live in poverty and lack basic necessities of food, shelter, and clothing. This disparity can be overwhelming and whatever our socio-economic reality, we may feel, at times, that we are caught up in a huge system in which we have little or no control. At times, our consumerism may serve as a distraction, or be driven by a quest for what we perceive happiness to be – often fuelled by media messages that we will be satisfied only once we have the latest and greatest...(fill in the blank). And it can be hard to see where there is joy when we are struggling to pay the bills and keep ourselves, and loved ones, fed.

Brother Roger was the founder of the Taizé community in France, a monastic community of brothers who commit to living simply. He was known for his joyful, child-like presence by the way he made people feel welcomed and special. Brother Roger's reflection may shed light on the difference between fleeting happiness or satisfaction with a deeper sense of joy:

"Joy is often perceived as the result of our own efforts, for instance as the satisfaction found in having done something well...In scriptures, however, joy is present at every new beginning: as the angels sing for the new-born Christ-child on that first Christmas eve...I am not responsible for creating my own joy (otherwise, my whole life would be torn between the search for satisfaction and the threat of discouragement), but I am responsible for longing for it continually" (*Seeds of Trust – Reflecting on the Bible in Silence and Song*. Ateliers et Presse de Taizé, 2005, p. 127).

In the Magnificat we hear Mary praising God for choosing her not because of what she has accomplished or for what she has. She is chosen, just as she is, humble and perhaps ordinary like us.

What if we take Marie Kondo's insight as a spiritual practice – those practices that nurture resilience, gratitude, and a deep joy rooted in the fact that we are loved by God. Can we look at our life each day and ask, "what sparks joy for me today?" By longing for and searching for joy, by making this a regular spiritual practice, perhaps we can cultivate in ourselves a spring to bubble up and quench our spirits. Let's practice together:

Take a moment, place your feet on the ground and take a full breath in and out. Close your eyes or soften your gaze.

- **When you hear the words "flutter, throb, palpitate" (from the Japanese term *tokimeku*) what image comes to mind?**
- **What does joy look like? feel like? taste like? sound like?**
- **What/where/who "sparks joy" for me today?**
- **What do you want me to know, God?**
- **What do you want me to do?**

Mary's Poem

Based on Luke 1:47–55

Times were difficult, and the people wondered if there would ever be an end to the conflict. They waited and waited and wondered if a leader was coming who would lead them in a new way. They wanted a leader who cared about them, would be fair to them, and, most of all, would love them. They were waiting for a Messiah to come from God. During this waiting, something happened to a young girl in the land.

It was a quiet morning. Mary had gone to the well for her mother and was back in her modest little house mixing the water with flour to make bread for the family. The wind was blowing gently through the window. Suddenly a bright light appeared in the upper corner of the room. Mary was startled and looked up. Was it a person surrounded by light or just light moving and shifting around? Mary was afraid. Was this an angel!? Deep down and all around, Mary heard a voice. Mary heard that she was to have a child, a very special child, and that child would be called Jesus; he would be a blessing for the world. He would be the one the people were waiting and waiting for. Mary could hardly believe what was happening. How could she, a poor girl from a poor family, be the one chosen to bring such a special child into the world? The more the voice spoke to her, the

more she believed. But what would it all mean? She was promised to Joseph in marriage, but the light and the voice convinced her that everything would be all right. After the light was gone, Mary thought about all that had happened. A poem, like a song, came into her head. Mary's thoughts were all about what would happen when God's child grew up to bring God's word to the people. Her heart was filled with joy. Her poem was like this.

Everything that is in me makes God seem greater than ever. My spirit is full of joy because God looks at me, God's poor servant. I can't believe it, but all the people who know me and will know about me will know how blessed I am because of all that God has done. God's love is for all people now and forever.

The child I will have will be very strong and will teach proud people just what God can do, and they will become humble.

The powerful feel powerless and the poor will feel rich. God will help all of God's people and will always forgive them. God will remember all the promises made to Abraham many, many years ago and will keep those promises for us today and for everyone who will be born into the world.

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 "[Mary's Poem](#)"
- Alternatively, arrange for a storyteller to present the story

The practice of storytelling

Directions

1. Listen to the story "Mary's Poem."
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 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.

Stepping stones on God’s path of hope

Materials

- Beautiful cloth from past weeks
- One large candle with several small candles, images of people and nature from around the world set around the large candle
- Small stones large enough to write on and set along the table with a sign “God’s path of joy” near it. (Use different images from last week if you are continuing the path of peace and hope.)



Suitable for all ages

This is an extension of the path of previous weeks.

The practice of prayer

Directions

1. Looking at the candle and the images, pause and take a deep breath. You may want to close your eyes and think about what and where there is a need for prayers for joy at this time.
2. Once you have decided for what you want to pray, take a moment to imagine those hurting places as something beautiful and fragile that also evokes your appreciation (such as a flower, a butterfly, or an infant). Imagine this delicate object is resting in your arms, and you are sending all your care, attention, and love towards it. Picture sending feelings of joy and happiness as well.
3. When you are ready, open your eyes. You are welcome to light a candle and imagine sending love and light and joy to the places and people for whom you are praying.
4. Using one of the markers, write a word on one of the stones lined along the table like a path, continuing the path from the previous week. These are words of prayer and intention, ways we want to act and be as we try our best to follow “God’s path of joy.”

Banner of joy

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Magazines
- Large piece of banner paper with the word “JOY” outlined on it, hung on a wall or laid on a table so that pieces may be glued to it.



Suitable for all ages working together

The practice of creativity

Directions

1. Cut out pictures of objects and people that inspire joy or remind you of joy.
2. Glue the pictures inside the outlines of the letters of the word “JOY.”
3. As you cut and paste, wonder to yourself or with others:
 - What brings me joy?
 - How can I offer joy to others?
 - Where does the world need joy??



Protest playlist

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Blackboard or whiteboard
- Chalk or dry-erase markers
- Paper



Suitable for
ages 12–adult

The practice of listening

Directions

According to the Smithsonian Institute, a good protest song:

- Has a simple message that people care about
- Is repetitive and easy to learn/remember
- Has a catchy melody
- Motivates/inspires people to be changemakers
- Is fluid (people could easily change the lyrics or add a new verse)

This may or may not describe the songs that most inspire your justice-seeking.

1. Recall the last time you went to a protest and the songs you heard and sang. What about those songs inspired you to make change?
2. Even if you haven't protested before, recall a song that made a justice issue click for you. Remember what it felt like to have your ideas and hope for the world put to music.
3. Write the name of one or two of those songs that most inspired you on the board.
4. Notice the songs that inspired others in your community.
5. Using paper and pen or the music playing app on your smartphone, make a playlist of songs to inspire you to be a changemaker.

Hail Mary

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Magazines
- Famous art or icons of Mary
- Bibles



Suitable for
ages 12–adult

Many Protestants have little experience with Mary. She is venerated in Catholicism, but is unfamiliar to most Protestants.

The practice of discovery

Directions

1. Begin this time of discovery by looking at the images of Mary. How would you describe her?
2. Read Luke 1:47–55.
3. Return to the images and wonder if this woman would say these words and what it might take for Mary to find the courage to say such things.
4. Using images from magazines and glue, create an image of Mary that would live up to these daring, provocative words.
5. As you create, reflect:
 - Does she look like you?
 - Does she give you courage?
 - What might you learn from her?

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.

Mary Visits Elizabeth

A story based on Luke 1:47–55

An angel told Mary that she was going to have a special baby! A baby whose name would be Jesus. Mary decided to go and tell her friend Elizabeth, who was going to have a baby, too.

Elizabeth ran down the path and hugged Mary.

“God loves you,” Elizabeth said to Mary. “Your baby will be very special.”

Mary and Elizabeth talked and talked.

Mary and Elizabeth had dreams and hopes for their babies. Soon it was time for Mary to go back home. She

was so happy she wanted the whole world to know, so she sang a song.

Mary’s Song (tune “London Bridge”)

God has blessed me with a child, with a child, with a child.

God has blessed me with a child, I’m so happy!
God will bring us peace and joy, peace and joy,
peace and joy.

God will bring us peace and joy, I’m so happy!
Praise to God who loves us so, loves us so, loves us so.
Praise to God who loves us so, I’m so happy!

Joy Coupons

You will need copies of the coupon (make as many as you want), scissors, markers and crayons, stapler

Directions

1. Read the words on the coupon or have someone read them to you.
2. Think about things you might do that will bring joy.
3. Think about to whom you will give your coupons.
4. Write a gift on each coupon and decorate with markers, crayons, or pencils.
5. Sign your name.
6. Put the coupons in a stack and make them all even like a book.
7. Staple one end of your book of coupons.
8. Talk with each other about who you will give your coupons to and what you think they might want you to do.
9. Give coupons to members of your family or other people you know well and be prepared to do what they ask you to do that will bring them joy, or use them for Christmas presents.

*This coupon
means that I will do
one thing for you to bring you*

Joy

I will

Signed by



Connect the dots to spell out the word JOY. Decorate it with markers. As you decorate, think of the joy Mary felt when she thought about what the gift of her child would be to the world.

