

# Planning



Sunday, December 25, 2022 – Saturday, December 31 • 2022

## Christmas Day

As we celebrate the joy of God-with-us in the birth of Christ, our joy is full of quiet wonder and loud song.

### 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. 89)

**December 26** – St Stephen

**December 26** – Kwanzaa begins

**December 27** – St. John the Evangelist

**December 28** – Feast of the Holy Innocents

#### Personal reflection

A joyous song erupts from the psalm. We are encouraged not just to use our voices but to grab instruments to add to our joy that is so contagious that all creation joins in. Enter into this joy with your own music.

- **Go for a walk and sing your favourite carol as you walk. Fashion an instrument or two from the flora and fauna you encounter to join in your singing.**
- **Sing in the shower where using a hairbrush as a microphone is optional.**
- **Turn on the Trans Siberian Orchestra or “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree” and dance in your living room.**

*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 25, 2022**

Christmas Day

**Revised Common Lectionary  
(Year A)**

Isaiah 52:7–10

**Psalm 98**

the focus in age-level materials

Hebrews 1:1–4, (5–12)

John 1:1–14

**Liturgical colour** white

#### 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 52:7–10

Psalm 98

the focus in age-level materials

Hebrews 1:1–4, (5–12)

John 1:1–14

We offer you a new song, God. It is a song of thanksgiving, a song of regret, a song of passion, a song of praise, a song of lament, and sometimes it is a song of joy. We thank you for the ways in which you hear our prayers, whatever their tone. Amen.

# Christmas Day

On this Christmas Day, we hear the call for *all* creation to witness God's saving action, and take up the song to praise God. This crescendo of celebration sings of awe of God who comes to us in Jesus to bring a new kind of justice – one of mercy, and fair, compassionate judgment. Joy to the world!

In **Isaiah 52:7–10**, the prophet describes the arrival of a messenger with an important message for the exiled people of Judah: “Your God reigns” (*Inclusive Bible*). Sentries watching from the walls of the destroyed Jerusalem recognize that the messenger's coming means peace, and they sing for joy.

**Psalm 98** Originally recorded as a hymn of praise within ancient Hebrew liturgy, Psalm 98 calls the people to praise God with a new song and to shout for joy in response to God's acts of creation and steadfast love.

God is faithful. The psalm begins with an invitation to offer praise for God's amazing accomplishments on behalf of God's people and recalls God's activity in the Exodus and deliverance of the people.

The invitation for God's people to praise is opened to all to break forth in joyous song. Human voices are not enough; our praise is to be accompanied by instruments – joyous sounds. The invitation is opened further with all creation joining in.

The hope of the psalmist's community is not in their own power, rather in God's power. In verse one, the reference to God's “right hand and holy arm” emphasizes that God works by God's own strength; no help from world powers, or from the kings and people of Israel, is required.

Traditionally recognized as an “enthronement psalm,” Psalm 98 has at its core God who reigns with justice and righteousness. The writer speaks of salvation and justice

from God. God is coming to judge with righteousness and equity, so we can await this judgment with joy. There is no cause for fear.

For the early Christians, who saw Jesus' earthly ministry as embodying and fulfilling God's reign, this psalm became a song about the coming of God's cosmic rule in the person of Jesus Christ. A link between this psalm and our celebration of Christmas is captured in the familiar Christian hymn, “Joy to the World,” written by Issac Watts (1674–1748). Based on Psalm 98, this carol offers praise to God's coming reign in the infant Jesus, and echoes the psalmist in proclaiming God's salvation plan for all people and all creation. Jesus' coming provides for the restoration of creation.

The coming of God's word into the world is celebrated in **John 1:1–14**. With no Nativity or birth story, this gospel writer presents a unique Christmas story; affirming the pre-existence of “the Word” which has become flesh and blood, and is the divine agent of creation in the world – a clear declaration of God's incarnation. God is intentionally at work in the context of our lives. For that we can sing new songs of joy.

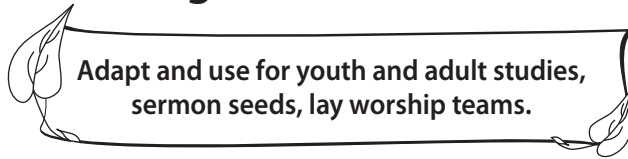
**Hebrews 1:1–4, (5–12)** considers old and new ways that God has made God's self known. In Jesus, we see the “reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being” (v. 3). This firstborn of God is the heir of God's awesome attributes.

• • • • •

The texts for this day announce good news and summon us to lift our voices in praise of God. Our collective “wow” at God's revealed glory prompts our joy-filled response in praise of Jesus, through whom God's glory is reflected. In what ways will we share this Christmas joy with our neighbours and all of creation?



## Reflecting on the Word



### Connecting with life

Joy has depth that sees one through the deepest, most sombre days as well as those we might consider happy. It allows us to sing a new song in our hearts.

- **When have you been joyful, not just happy?**
- **How does joy feel different from happiness?**
- **What are some common substitutes for joy?**
- **How have you experienced joy in times of sadness?**

### Scripture

**Psalms 98** is a song of praise in gratitude to God.

- **What evokes a new song for the poet of Psalm 98?**
- **What might evoke a new song in us this Christmas?**
- **What might one say about that on Christmas Day in a multicultural, multi-faith world?**

Writing a new song suggests that the old song is no longer enough.

- **What might you include in your new song of faith that wasn't in the former?**
- **Where and in what ways do you see, hear, feel the natural elements singing praise to God?**

Listen to the praise of Psalm 98 and other hymns sung on Christmas Day.

#### ■ **What message do they proclaim?**

**John 1:1–14** is a Christmas story, a birth narrative even. Listen to it in the context of the joyous praise of Psalm 98 and the hymns of this day. What message does it proclaim? What does it mean to proclaim?

**Hebrews 1:1–4, (5–12)** describes ways in which Christ reflects and embodies the love and way of God.

#### ■ **How might this description inform the way we live today?**

Hold Hebrews 1:1–4, (5–12) and John 1:1–14 in dialogue with one another.

#### ■ **What do they say in the context of Christmas Day?**

### Connecting scripture and life

The texts for today announce good news and beckon us to lift our voices in praise of God who reigns with justice and righteousness.

#### ■ **What is the good news we have to offer each other in this Christmas season?**

## Focus for Worship, Learning, and Serving

Christmas Day can be an overwhelming day full of sugar and lots of excitement. It is also a day full of memory of past celebrations when the children were younger and things were perhaps simpler. It can even be a day that feels so ordinary that it is not really clear what has changed in this new birth.

Embrace the power of song in your worship this morning – remembering old favourites and learning new tunes – that might bring joy into what might feel like another ordinary Sunday for some. The Psalm invites us to find such praise in the whole world that God has created.



# Christmas Day

## 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 storytellers to unwrap and share their favourite stories. Story suggestions are provided, but it may add meaning to this experience if volunteers from the congregation are invited to share their favourite Bible stories and storybooks.
- ❑ Arrange a brass ensemble for instrumental accompaniment in call to worship and opening hymn (optional).
- ❑ Bring items for setting the worship space, including the Advent wreath.
- ❑ For the reading from the gospel of John, have several different types of light sources (candles, lanterns, flashlights/torches, electric lamps, oil lamps) on display around the worship space.
- ❑ Set up a space in worship for storytime, which might include carpet squares and a chair or beanbags and a comfy couch or a cozy armchair, an afghan and a reading light or some combination of these to create a reading nook in your sanctuary. Invite each reader to sit in this space and share their favourite story to listening children or to the whole congregation.



## Music Suggestions

### Let's Go Out

Leigh Newton; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 4

### Alleluia

Traditional South African; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 2

Plan to include many Christmas carols and hymns this Sunday including:

### Angels We Have Heard on High

Traditional French carol

### Away in a Manger

Attributed to Martin Luther

### Go, Tell It on the Mountain

African-American spiritual

### Joy to the World

Isaac Watts

### O Little Town of Bethlehem

Philip Brooks

### While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks

Nahum Tate



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](http://www.seasonsonline.ca). Click on Library; Seasons Music Information. Please contact a licence holder for permission to duplicate.

## Gather

### Call to worship

*This call to worship incorporates strains of "Joy to the World," which can be played on any instrument(s) but are especially suited to brass. You might create a brass ensemble of young people from the congregation to play and lead.*

**NOTE:** *The call to worship can also be used without music.*

Come, and sing a new song to God!

**For God has done wonderful things!**

*(Instrumental "Joy to the world the Lord is come.")*

God brings justice and salvation,

**God's faithful love is for everyone.**

*(Instrumental "Let earth receive her king.")*

Tell everyone to sing songs of joy in praise of God!

**Make music and celebrate!**

*(Instrumental "Let every heart prepare a room.")*

For to us a child is born:

**Jesus, the light of the world.**

*(Instrumental refrain of "Joy to the World." Follow by singing "Joy to the World" as a hymn with or without a processional.)*

### Lighting the Christ candle

*Have all four Advent candles already lit.*

Christ is born,

and so we light this candle amidst the ones

that have illuminated our way through Advent.

This candle reminds us of the light of the world born on this day,

born every day, in our hearts and in the living of Christ's way of love, compassion, and justice.

*Light Christ candle.*



## Worship Outline • December 25, 2022

### Opening prayer

On this day of days, loving God,  
we gather to celebrate the wondrous gift of Jesus Christ.  
Born long ago and still today,  
Child of the universe present among us.  
May we, in the things we do and say,  
continue to give birth  
to the presence of the living Christ  
in our world today and always. Amen.

### Prayer of confession

What causes us to stop singing? What causes us to stop being amazed? Why must we be reminded to sing, marvel, and remember love and faithfulness? (*Pause.*)

Forgive us, God, for the times we quickly forget Christ born amongst us.

Help us remember Christ's peace, love, compassion, and justice born and growing to the ends of Earth; for all to see, sing about, and respond to in love. Amen.

### Words of affirmation

Let all Earth praise God. The seas roar, the hills sing together in joy, for God has come. All of you on Earth, make a joyful noise. Break forth in joy, for the God of peace has come to Earth. Amen.

## Engage

### Opening the word

*Select what stories will be shared, determined by the number of available storytellers on Christmas Day and the time available. Here are some options for your consideration.*

#### Luke 2:1–7, (8–20)

While the story of the birth of Jesus from Luke's gospel is traditionally read on Christmas Eve, people may expect to hear the story from the gospel of Luke on Christmas morning. Some suggestions for telling this story today include:

- Tell it – perhaps while adding the baby Jesus figure to the crèche.
- Share it. Invite the children to gather with you near the crèche and recall the story together, using the figures.
- Find a version of it in a children's Bible as in *Lectionary Story Bible Year B* on page 30 or Desmond Tutu's *Children of God Storybook Bible* (2010) on pages 62–63. Wrap the Bible and put a bookmark on the correct page.
- There are so many beautiful books that share the good news of Christmas that children cherish. Some possibilities that paraphrase Luke include:
  - o **Nativity** by Cynthia Rylant
  - o **Silent Night** by Lara Hawthorne
  - o **Song of the Stars** by Sally Lloyd-Jones
  - o **This Is the Stable** by Cynthia Cotten
  - o **Room for a Little One: A Christmas Tale** by Martin Waddell and Jason Cockcroft

You might ask families to share their favourite books and why they love them.

#### John 1:1–14

*Choose from the following.*

- Read the passage after the lighting of the Christ candle just after the opening prayer.
- Have several different light sources (candles, lanterns, flashlights/torches, electric lamps, oil lamps) on display

around the worship space. Each time the word "light" is mentioned in the gospel reading, volunteers light one or more lights. Light the last one or two lights after verse 14.

- Include a storybook such as *Jesus the Word* by Mark Francisco Bozzuti-Jones.
- Arrange for a storyteller to present "[Wonder-Full](#)" in Exploring Our Faith.

Introduce the reading with these words:

The gospel of Luke tells the story of how Jesus came to be born: the simple details of how Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem, and had shelter in a stable; of how Jesus was born in the night; how angels visited the shepherds and told them "tidings of great joy for all people"; and how the shepherds went to see the baby, and then went out to tell the world.

Today, we read another "Christmas" story from the gospel of John. This story paints a picture of what it means that Jesus was born: that God's creative world has come to live, that a new light is shining in the world, and that God's love has come for all people. It's the same story, told differently.

#### Psalm 98

Choose one or two from the following.

**Storybook** Find new meaning in the hymn text with a little boy who finds an opportunity to sing God's new song in his city in the storybook *Earth and All Stars* by Herbert F. Brokering. Instead of a sermon, this story might lead to a conversation with questions such as:

- **What extraordinary or ordinary things around your house or your neighbourhood make you want to sing to God?**
- **Is it easy or hard to learn a new song?**
- **What kinds of songs do you think God likes best?**





**Story** Arrange for a storyteller to present “[Shout for Joy](#)” (p. 90).

**Song** Issac Watts’ well-known Christmas song “Joy to the World” is based on Psalm 98. It offers praise to God’s work in making the whole world new again in the birth of Jesus Christ. If this is not a familiar song for the children, you might teach a verse or two.

**Paraphrase** Invite two or more voices to share in leading this responsive litany of praise.

Sing a brand new song to God,  
for God has done super-wonderful deeds!  
**Praise God for the gift of love.**

God’s deeds set things right for us,  
and God has told this to all creation.  
Everyone knows about God’s marvellous deeds.  
God is always on the side of God’s people.  
**Praise God for the gift of love.**

The ends of Earth know about the deeds of our God.  
**Praise God for the gift of love.**

Sing joyfully to God, all the earth.  
Open your mouths wide with God’s praises.  
**Praise God for the gift of love.**

Sing praises with the lyre,  
and with trumpets and horns.  
**Praise God for the gift of love.**

Make a joyful noise before our God!  
**Praise God for the gift of love.**

Let the sea and all that lives in it roar with joy.  
**Praise God for the gift of love.**

Let the rivers and the hills sing together for joy.  
**Praise God for the gift of love.**

God is coming!  
**Praise God for the gift of love.**

God will look over us fairly.  
**Praise God for the gift of love.**

*You might sing a simple alleluia, such as “Alleluia” Seasons Songbook, volume 2 (printed music and recording also available at [www.seasonsonline.ca/order](http://www.seasonsonline.ca/order)).*

---

## Respond

---

### Prayers of the people

O God, Loving Parent of all,  
who gave joy to the world  
in the newborn hope of Christ,  
may we find that this story  
with angels  
singing the good news of peace on Earth  
all because Mary had a baby  
is just the beginning of what  
the world needs most.

Inspire us to find your story  
still being told on silent nights  
after silver bells have gone quiet  
for this good news of a Saviour  
born to us this day reaches  
beyond this one day to change

all of our days.  
Allow the story of this good news to change  
the story of our lives, O God.  
Make it not just so that we love  
to tell the story but that we learn  
to share the amazing grace of your  
compassion and love.  
In hearing this story again, told in so many ways,  
may we remember that we  
are a part of your story too. Amen.

### Prayer of dedication

Loving Parent, bless these gifts with wonder and hope.  
Fill each token and coin with your good news story  
and make our hands and hearts ready to receive the stories  
of joy and change in sharing these gifts.  
Bless us all, your gifts. Amen.



**Bless**

*If possible, precede this by singing "Let's Go Out" (Seasons Songbook, vol. 4 and #16 on Seasons Music CD, vol. 4. Printed music and recording also available at [www.seasonsonline.ca/order](http://www.seasonsonline.ca/order)). Alternatively, sing "Go, Tell It on the Mountain." For the response, divide the congregation into two groups – left and right sides, front and back, or whatever is convenient to your setting.*

**ONE:** Go, and proclaim God's message of peace, good news, and salvation. Sing for joy. Say to the world, "Your God reigns."

**GROUP ONE:** Let's go out and proclaim it on the mountains,  
**GROUP TWO:** in the valleys,  
**GROUP ONE:** in the city streets,  
**GROUP TWO:** beside the oceans and streams,  
**GROUP ONE:** in the forests and the open fields,  
**GROUP TWO:** in schools and parks and workplaces.  
**ALL:** Let's go out and tell the good news: Jesus Christ is born!

---

**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 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 (December 26–January 1) 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 or religious holiday. 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. Jesus called him 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 witnessed 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.

# Shout for Joy

## Based on Psalm 98

*(In the voice of the psalm writer)* Have you felt so much joy that it felt like the whole world was singing? Have you ever felt like the song on the radio was just what you needed to hear? Or felt so much excitement about God's world that you wanted to write a whole new song?

That's what I do. I write songs for holidays or special celebrations to express how we feel. Sometimes these are sad songs; sometimes they are worry songs, sometimes they are thank you songs, sometimes they are "we're sorry" songs, sometimes they are happy songs.

All the time, we sing to God to say how we feel. There wasn't a song for this kind of joy, so I wrote one. It goes like this:

### Sing to God a new song!

God has done wonderful things.  
God has made our ordinary days  
feel extraordinary. God has loved us  
to the ends of the earth.

### Shout for joy!

Everybody! Everywhere!  
Burst into song because you are so happy.  
You are so happy because you love God  
so you can't stop making music  
with strings stretched over a shoebox.  
Pluck each string with joy  
and then keep making music  
with paper horns rolled up  
to make your praise even louder,  
shout for joy  
because God is awesome.

Hear the music in the crashing waves  
and how it echoes over everything.

Listen to the mountains sing  
and watch how the rivers dance  
as God comes close  
to everything and everyone on Earth.  
God is with us.

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 "[Shout for Joy](#)"
- Alternatively, arrange for a storyteller to present the story

## The practice of storytelling

### Directions

1. Listen to the story "Shout for Joy."
2. Have you ever felt the joy the psalm writer describes?
3. On a piece of paper, draw something that brings you joy.
4. Think back to the story. What would make your joy sing and dance? What would that look like?





## 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.

### All the earth

#### Materials

- Basic supplies
- Clear, fillable plastic ornaments
- Ribbon
- Droppers or pipettes (optional)



Suitable for all ages working together

#### The practice of reflection

##### Directions

All Earth rejoices with a new song.

1. Take the lid off your ornament and listen inside.
2. Imagine that new song filling up the whole world with wonder and love as you pour a small amount of green paint and carefully swirl it around the inside of your ornament. (Droppers or pipettes might control the amount of paint used and minimize the mess.)
3. Repeat this pouring and swirling with blue paint.
4. Listen inside your ornament again and wonder:
  - What would Earth's song be?
  - Does all Earth sing?
5. Add a small amount of white paint and swirl one last time.
6. Put your finger over the top and gently shake so that Earth is full of colour.
7. Replace the top and add a ribbon to complete your reflection.
8. Take this ornament home and hang it on your tree.

### Clothespin nativity set

#### Materials

- Basic supplies
- Clothespins/clothes pegs/dolly pegs
- Cardboard tubes, cut into quarters
- Fabric scraps
- Play dough
- Yarn



Suitable for all ages

#### The practice of storytelling

##### Directions

We may have heard many versions of the Christmas story – and sometimes it is important to find a way to put this story in our own words. Make this simple nativity set to tell the story at home every year.

1. This good news is all about a baby. Begin by moulding a baby out of play dough. Make a ball for the baby's head and a cone for the baby's body. Attach head to the body.
2. Wrap/swaddle the baby using one of the cloth scraps. Place the baby in one of the cardboard tube pieces for his bed.
3. Use the clothespins to make the rest of the characters: Mary, Joseph, and the angel. You can make shepherds and wise people, too, if desired.
4. Use scraps of fabric to make simple clothes to glue onto the figures. Yarn can help to tie fabric to the bodies of your nativity figures. Add glue to make sure your knots stick. You can also draw faces and clothes on the clothespins with markers.
5. Make flat circles from play dough. Push the clothespins into these pedestals so that the figures stand up straight.



## Christmas dance

### Materials

- Christmas carol recordings and player
- Open space
- Play instruments



Suitable for  
all ages

### The practice of joy

#### Directions

1. Which Christmas carol makes you so full of joy that you just want to get up and dance?
2. Dance with all your joy and invite others to dance with you.
3. Grab an instrument and add this joyful noise to your dance.

## Joyful noises

### Materials

- Basic supplies
- Jingle bells
- Cups
- Spoons
- Shoeboxes



Suitable for  
all ages

### The practice of listening

#### Directions

Shouting is loud – but there is something about softer noises that can also be full of joy and wonder. In this contemplative space, play with paint and listen for the gentle joy of jingle bells.

1. Using a spoon, dip a jingle bell into a cup of paint.
2. Drop the bell onto the piece of paper and use the spoon to roll it. Experiment with what kinds of sounds the bells make.

■ **What kind of sound does the bell make when you roll it fast?**

■ **What sound does it make when it rolls slow?**

■ **What happens when there is less paint?**

3. Wonder about joyful noises with jingle bell trails you make on the paper and delight in making these gentle sounds.

**Collaborative art option** This can be a large group activity with a large piece of paper to which each person adds their own joyful noises. Or it could be something done independently with individual sheets of paper or shoeboxes as suggested for younger children.

**Younger children** Shoeboxes with a paper placed in the bottom can be used with younger children who can roll the jingle bell around in the box simply by tilting.

*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.

---

## Wonder-Full

A story based on John 1:1–18

When a baby is born, it feels like a new beginning.

It feels like the whole world looks different than it ever did before. Your parents felt that way when you were born. A tiny new wonder was in their arms, and the whole world looked like it never had before.

It was a new beginning when you were born. When Jesus was born, it felt like that too, not just for Mary and Joseph, but the whole world felt like something had changed. The stars shined brighter. The shadows in the moon faded, and it felt like everything was as it should be. Life was full of wonder.

It is an exciting possibility when it feels like anything and everything can happen. That's how it feels when any baby is born. This child could grow up to change the world. Your parents certainly thought that, but they also probably found that love had new meaning. They loved their parents, and they loved each other. They loved their friends, but when you were born, dear child, love was bigger than they ever thought it was before.

That is the light that shines through all the sadness and worry. That is the light that shines in all people. That is the light that we carry when we discover again how wonder-full love is. It changes us so that we shine brighter. That's how it happened when Jesus was born, and that's how it happens with everyone born.

---

## Stars of Wonder

The skies rejoiced and the whole Earth was glad when the baby Jesus was born. There was one star in the sky that was brighter than all others. It helped the shepherds and the wise ones find the baby, Jesus. Make this play dough and wonder how they found that one star among all of the other stars to guide them to the baby.

### Materials

- Dark blue or dark purple play dough (might be pre-made or made as instructed)
- Play dough ingredients: 4 cups flour, 1 cup salt, 3 tablespoons cream of tartar (optional), 4 tablespoons oil, 1½ cups warm water
- Tiny foil stars
- Utensils such as a rolling pin, dull kitchen knives, star-shape cutters

### Instructions

- If making play dough, gather ingredients for play dough and mix together. Add more water, as needed, for the desired texture.
- Add dark blue or purple (mix blue and red) food colouring or washable tempera paint to play dough and knead. Be careful! Too much paint added to the play dough may discolour your hands.
- Add some tiny foil stars, not a lot but enough to create sparkle and wonder.
- Break into pieces for individual play, as desired.
- Invite play with utensils wondering aloud. Do you see one star that shines brighter than the others?



Connect the dots to spell out the word JOY. Use markers to decorate this ornament with things that bring you joy. Celebrate this joy you have by pasting your new JOY

ornament to the cardboard. Poke a hole in the top and tie a string through the hole and hang it somewhere that brings you joy.

