

# Planning



Sunday, January 29 – Saturday, February 4 • 2023

## Beautiful Vision

As we begin a three-week series on the Sermon on the Mount, we glimpse a re-imagined realm.

### This week...

#### Ecumenical prayer calendar

Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia

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. 148)

**February 1** – Black History Month begins (*Canada and United States*)

**February 2** – Feast of the Presentation/Candlemas

#### January 29, 2023

4th Sunday after the Epiphany

4th Sunday in Ordinary Time

#### Revised Common Lectionary (Year A)

Micah 6:1–8

Psalm 15

1 Corinthians 1:18–31

**Matthew 5:1–12**

the focus in age-level materials

**Liturgical colour** green

### Personal reflection

Not only is it hard to believe in our own blessing, but it can also be hard to see the blessing in others. Practice seeing what is beautiful in the people around you this week, including yourself.

- Wash your face and spend an extra moment gazing at your reflection. What blessing does God see in you today?
- Review the prayer list in your community and pray blessing upon each person brave enough to ask for prayers.
- When you're angered, try to take a deep breath and remember that every one of these people is blessed by God.

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).

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





Micah 6:1–8

Psalm 15

1 Corinthians 1:18–31

Matthew 5:1–12

the focus in age-level materials

O God, you turn things upside down, calling the wise to embrace your folly. Help us to grow in acknowledging our need for you. Open us to the vision of your reign on earth, and strengthen us to do our part. Amen.

# Beautiful Vision

Today, we begin a three-week exploration of a collection of Jesus' sayings in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus' radical vision of what God's reign on earth might look like is a vision of wholeness for all people. Paul reminds us that God's wisdom is different from worldly wisdom. Micah and the psalmist describe ways to live this beautiful vision.

The prophet in **Micah 6:1–8** begins his proclamation in a manner designed to get the attention of those around him. Making over-the-top public displays of faith and spoken word was standard practice for the religious leaders of the time. While the prophet's words are overly dramatic, they don't bolster the religious elite but instead disrupt the status quo. For the Israelites, these words reminded them of God's faithfulness and the blessings God bestowed upon them in their unfaithfulness or in their times of need. Verse 8 summarizes: do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God.

**Psalm 15** gives a similar response. The psalmist asks who may come before God in the temple. It is those who do what is right, speak the truth, and do no evil to their neighbours.

In **1 Corinthians 1:18–31**, Paul contrasts foolishness and wisdom. The people of Corinth seem to judge themselves by the world's standards rather than by God's standards. For the people of Corinth and for us, God's way is reimagining a better reality, a better way of living into the fullness of who we are called to be as disciples of Christ. In Christ, we are strengthened to participate in God's reign of justice and peace.

The vision known as the Beatitudes in **Matthew 5:1–12** presented for the Christian community in Matthew's gospel is both beautiful and challenging.

Jesus calls a group of disciples. They travel throughout Galilee, sharing the good news that God's realm is

breaking into the world. It is a message that the gospel writer's community desperately needs to hear. The gospel of Matthew speaks to a group of new Christians after a disaster. The temple has been destroyed and the people scattered. Jesus is no longer present in the flesh. What laws will govern the community now? What is the good news for those trying to be faithful in a hostile world?

Jesus goes through a litany of statements regarding who are blessed.

There is urgency in Jesus' teaching. He uses the present tense in this series of sentences beginning with the word blessed, or happy in some translations. Blessing is God's gift, a sign of covenant relationship with God. Jesus teaches that the blessed ones are those who are humble of heart ("poor in spirit"), who are gentle, who show mercy, who hunger and thirst for God's ways. Those who mourn will be comforted; those who make peace will be called God's children. Those persecuted in the cause of justice will find themselves part of God's transforming reality.

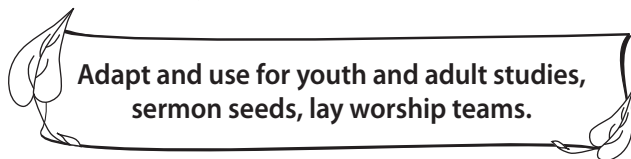
In Jesus' coming, God's love is revealed and made manifest. This teaching is directed to the disciples, to the Twelve and the larger group of men and women who accompany Jesus. The Beatitudes describe the way of life for those who commit themselves to follow. For the community of the gospel of Matthew, this beautiful vision is what life should be like.

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Our experience today is in many ways like that of the community of Matthew's gospel. We may not be persecuted for our faith, but the ways of faith often seem foolish compared with the values of society. How do the gospel values challenge contemporary views and turn them upside down? What challenges do you find in trying to live according to the standards expressed in today's readings?



## Reflecting on the Word



### Connecting with life

“Throughout human history, visions of change have been passionately offered and responded to. One example is the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr’s dream of a nation wherein his children would be judged by the content of character, not by the colour of their skin. Another is Nelson Mandela’s vision of a South Africa beyond the inhumanity of apartheid and an angry retaliation. And in Australia an apology to the Stolen Generations (indigenous children forcibly taken from their parents under a cultural assumption that this was for their good) with telling words of vision and hope” (Sean Gilbert). Such apologies have been offered in Canada for the culture of residential schools, and in the United States of America for the treatment of African American slaves.

In his apology, offered on behalf of the nation, Kevin Rudd, a former Australian prime minister, spoke of taking the first step to a future that embraced all. “A future based on mutual resolve and mutual responsibility.”

- **What is your response to a re-imagined future such as this? What does it inspire in you?**

### Scripture

**Micah 6:1–8** gives us the prophetic voice of getting back to the basics.

- **What does justice look like to you?**
- **What does this scripture say to you about your worship?**

**Psalms 15** describes those who abide in God’s dwelling place.

- **What is one word that best defines the actions we are called to live into?**

Jesus’ teaching in **Matthew 5:1–12** is countercultural.

- **What does blessed mean to you and your community?**
- **Where do you see the poor in spirit in your context?**
- **Who is someone known to you who works for righteousness?**
- **How does being a blessing live into the notion of doing justice, loving mercy, and walking steadfastly with God?**

The vision in Matthew 5:1–12 is not just an idealized notion of a renewed world, but the courageous facing and naming of that which is often opposed by culture and society.

- **How might this passage sound to the rich and powerful?**
- **How might this passage sound to those the world would call meek and those who mourn?**
- **When and how will the poor, hungry, and persecuted receive these things?**
- **How do you live the countercultural vision of Jesus? When do you experience opposition? What gives you courage to move forward?**

**1 Corinthians 1:27–30** reminds us that Jesus’ vision won’t be received as a wise or compelling teaching by everybody, nor will it be easy to implement.

- **How does the way of God seem foolish in your context?**
- **How is this foolishness reflected in your call to live as a disciple of Jesus?**

### Connecting scripture and life

We ponder God’s liberating and welcoming love, and as we ponder...

- **How do you envision a world where the faithful do justice, love kindness, and travel humbly with God?**
- **What paths of justice are you, individually and as a church, being called to follow?**

## Focus for Worship, Learning, and Serving

The opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount turn the way of the world on its head, and we are called to prepare our hearts to hear this with fresh ears. We glimpse a re-imagined realm where the meek inherit the earth and the merciful receive mercy.

Reading Matthew 5:1–12 alongside the other scriptures for this week, we hear that God’s transforming love often comes through liberation, and we are challenged to see God’s unbinding of conventions as an act of liberation for the poor in spirit and those who mourn.

During these three weeks, when we immerse ourselves in the Sermon on the Mount – the vision, beauty, wisdom, and anticipation that was and is Jesus’ teaching to the world – it is important to loosen our grip on some of the conventions we hold most dear, in order to see God’s reality and in order to experience the liberating love that God offers. To awaken to God’s reality and love, we must be willing to see the world differently and see ourselves in a new light.

# Beautiful Vision

## 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: six readers for Matthew 5:1-12 reading.
- ❑ Choose an option for hearing Matthew 5:1-12. For the Bible story, arrange for a storyteller to present "[Favour](#)" on p. 150. Alternatively, for younger children, arrange for a storyteller to present "[God's Dream – Part 1](#)" in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week's materials.
- ❑ Bring items for setting the worship space: bell or singing bowl for the prayer of confession, pens and scraps of paper for all in attendance, newspapers and magazines.
- ❑ You might choose to print [Red Ladder to Safe Harbour](#) on or in your bulletin. See "[Connecting with the Art](#)" on p. 8 for background to the art and artist.
- ❑ Bring song such as "What Does Our God Require of Us?" (*Seasons Songbook, vol. 3, #3 on Seasons Music CD, vol. 3*). Printed music and recording also available at [www.seasonsonline.ca/order](http://www.seasonsonline.ca/order).
- ❑ Set [stations](#) as described on pp. 151-152.



## Music Suggestions

### A World of Difference

Monica O'Brien, Gina Ogilvie; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 9*

### Be God's

Danielle Rose; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 9*

### Jesus, Face of God

James Maher; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 9*

### We Come to the Hungry Feast

Ray Makeever; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 6*

### Servant Song

Bobby Fisher; *Ziggy Stardust; Seasons Songbook, vol. 5*

### What Does Our God Require of Us?

Jim Strathdee; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 3*

### Come All You People/Uyai Mose

Alexander Gondo; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 1*

### I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me

Traditional African-American; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 1*

### There's a Song of Love

Handt Hanson; *Seasons Songbook, vol. 1*



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

*As worship begins, offer pen and paper to allow the gathered to muse on the question, "What is the one thing you would ask of God?" Allow meditative music to play as people enter into worship. Invite children to draw pictures of how God answers our questions.*

### Call to worship

Friends, come!

Gather around deep insight.

Feed on words of unusual wisdom,  
seeing before us an unfolding vision  
of a renewed and just world  
as close and real as our breathing.

Come!

Jesus,  
our teacher, healer,  
leader, and friend,  
invites our good and attentive company.  
Our time together will be blessed.

### Opening prayer

Open to your Spirit  
and alive to the Christ,  
who was, who is, and who comes,  
we gather in thanksgiving, O God.  
We offer you our adoration,  
our acclaim,  
and our very lives as we sing.

### Prayer of confession

*Give a brief introduction to this prayer for the beginning to make sense. It seeks to highlight how conventional wisdom is not the way of Christ. Explain that you will cue the people to begin each stanza by ringing a bell or singing bowl each time.*

(Ring bell.)

**We have heard it said:**

It's just common sense.

Self-protection at all costs.



## Worship Outline • January 29, 2023

Conquer or be conquered.  
Charity always begins at home;  
**and we often believe without thinking**  
*(observe silence followed by bell).*

**We have heard it said:**  
Of course, our culture is superior.  
Warheads make for peace and security.  
Wealth will buy happiness.  
Celebrities are role models;  
**and we often believe without thinking**  
*(observe silence followed by bell).*

**We have heard it said:**  
Nothing can be done to change that.  
The poor will always be with us.  
I am not my brother or sister's keeper.  
Tears are for women and children;  
**and we often believe without thinking**  
*(observe silence followed by bell).*

God of surprises and non-convention,  
grace us with a vulnerability and openness  
to hear the wise and lyrical voice of Jesus anew.

May our way of seeing,  
thinking,  
acting,  
and responding  
be changed in light of Jesus'  
great love of you  
and the world of your making.  
**Amen.**

### Words of affirmation

Blessed ones, the God who gathers us  
together with words of peace and hope,  
is the same God who renews grace and peace within us now.  
We are a loved and forgiven people.  
**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

## Engage

### Opening the word

#### Micah 6:1–8

Most often, we focus on the last verse in this beloved text. In today's worship, choose a translation that makes the question in verse 6 ring true for the questions weighing on your community. There are many ways that we find answers to our questions, sometimes even turning to scripture and listening for God's wisdom, but we often need insight from other sources. Invite the children to share their pictures of how God answers prayers to find such inspiration and insight into the beautiful vision Jesus offers us. This could also be an option for the children's message.

**Psalms 15** beckons us to look at how we treat others. Like Micah, we are engaged in a question and response that could be used liturgically as a call and response.

#### 1 Corinthians 1:18–31

Use newspaper headlines and magazine covers to identify ways considered "wise" by mainstream culture. Read aloud the headlines and feature articles from magazines before reading the 1 Corinthians passage. These can create a helpful sense of contrast between the power of love and what is seen as powerful in society.

#### Matthew 5:1–12

**Introduction** Kingdom of heaven, meek, righteous, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, persecuted are words found in what is often called the Beatitudes – in this week's reading from the gospel of Mark.  
*(Read one word at a time and invite people to call out synonyms for each word.)*

**Bible story** Have a storyteller present the story "[Favour](#)" on page 150 or "[God's Dream – Part 1](#)" from Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week's materials.

**Interactive reading** Below is a list of synonyms from the New Interpreter's Bible for the word "blessed."  
Arrange to have six readers read one of these words, one right after the other, whenever the word "blessed" appears in Matthew 5:1–12.

**Synonyms:** blessed, fortunate, happy, in a privileged situation, well off, OK.

After the reading, invite people to close their eyes and imagine themselves receiving a blessing from God. Ask:  
What do you feel? *(pause)* What do you see? *(pause)* What do you hear? *(pause)* What do you smell? *(pause)* Do you taste anything? *(pause)* What emotions do you experience? *(pause)* Have you felt this way before? *(pause)*

**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 “What Does Our God Require of Us?” as people gather again (*Seasons Songbook*, vol. 3, #3 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 3. Printed music and recording are also available at [www.seasonsonline.ca/order](http://www.seasonsonline.ca/order)).

### Prayers of the people

God of all goodness,  
by glimpsing something of your vision  
of a just and merciful world,  
we become acutely aware  
of how much inhumanity  
and suffering still exists in the world.

It would overwhelm us  
if it were not for the tender beauty  
and hope that arises each new morning  
and shimmers from the heavens at night.  
And so from graced places  
of gratitude and wonder we pray:

For Earth staggering under the weight  
of global warming and deforestation,  
**together, may we see and find another way.**

For people staggering under the weight  
of poverty, violence, and loss,  
**together, may we see and find another way.**

For nations staggering under the weight  
of pride and a need to impose their will,  
**together, may we see and find another way.**

**And for the Christian Church staggering under the weight**  
of seeming irrelevance within secular cultures,  
**together, may we see and find another way.**

God of all, honour the desires in our hearts  
and may they flourish within the people  
of grace and compassion we seek to be.  
**Amen.**

### Prayer of dedication

The poor struggle to put food on the table, the meek are bullied in the schoolyards, the mourners find no comfort in hollow words, and peacemakers are publicly ridiculed by those who should be emulating them. So, as we offer our gifts to you, Gracious God, we pray you would use them to bring blessings to all in this world. **Amen.**

## Bless

*Season after the Epiphany circle blessing*  
Go now, beloved,  
to follow the love of God  
to be surprised by God’s wonder  
to lift your voice for love and compassion.

Dare to believe that you are people  
on a mission of healing and grace.

Feel God’s encouragement  
to be a blessing as you offer blessings  
with your heart and hands and  
know that you never, ever go alone.  
**Amen.**

## Special Days Commentary

### February 1 – Black History Month begins (Canada and United States)

February 1 begins the month-long observance in Canada and the United States of Black History Month (also known as African-American History Month). The purpose of the observance is to recognize the rich and varied contributions Africans have made to the culture and history of North America and the world. February was chosen because it is the birth month of abolitionist Frederick Douglass and President Abraham Lincoln. Early promoters of Black History month hoped that a special observance of African-American contributions might encourage people of all ethnic backgrounds to examine their roots. This could lead to a coming together of racial groups out of mutual respect.

While observed primarily in Canada and the United States, the month’s premise of mutual respect and cooperation between races is one that can be appreciated worldwide. Within the church, special emphasis might be placed on the discussion of racial justice issues during February.

How should the church be addressing issues such as affordable housing, racial profiling, the impact of immigrants and refugees, and integrating persons of different backgrounds into communities? What are some tangible ways for your congregation to be involved?

### February 2 – Feast of the Presentation/Candlemas

This day, 40 days after the birth of Jesus, marks the traditional ending of the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany cycle. It has been observed both as the presentation of Jesus in the Temple and the purification or cleansing of Mary, following the birth of a male child, as was dictated by Levitical law. The theme of Jesus, the true light – anticipated in Advent and brought into being at Christmas – now is sent to all the world: “a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for the glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2:32). Because of the emphasis of Christ’s light overcoming the darkness, candles have played a large part in the celebration of this day, thus the name Candlemas. In some churches, candles are blessed and distributed to be taken home and used during family devotions.



# Wise Ones of This Beautiful Vision

*We are inspired and captivated by those that continue to expand and deepen God's dream for this world.*

There have been many wise ones who have inspired us to imagine a better world. They've taught us to dream with beautiful visions of how the world could change from the radical love of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to the nonviolent action of Mahatma Gandhi to the joy-filled forgiveness Desmond Tutu inspired. Wisdom comes from the climate activism of Greta Thunberg and the advocacy for girls' education by Malala Yousafzai. Many more, including the wise ones, have inspired your committed action to keep God's dream for this world alive.

Here are some options to celebrate and honour these wise ones and keep dreaming with our God.

**Beautiful vision dream hall** You might invite your community to share the wise ones that most inspire them to dream of a better world. Create a gallery of dreamers where people can craft picture frames for photographs or magazine clippings. Name plaques can be created from paper to share why this person inspires such a beautiful vision.

**Share in a book study** Be inspired by stories of hope-filled dreamers by sharing in a book study as a congregation. Titles you might choose to explore together: *Acting on Faith: Stories of Courage, Activism, and Hope Across Religions* by Diane Faires Beadle and Jamie Lynn Haskins or *Transforming Communities: How People Like You Are Healing Their Neighborhood* by Sandhya Rani Jha. For children and families, you might choose to share in reading the storybook *Holy Troublemakers and Unconventional Saints* by Daneen Akers.

**Host a film series** Especially as Black History Month begins in just a few days, you might opt to share in a film series. Films could be screened at church with the appropriate licences or watched at home through screening services. Many films have discussion guides, which can be found through a quick Internet search. Film choices might include *Romero* (1989), *Entertaining Angels: The Dorothy Day Story* (1996), *Milk* (2008), *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013), *Selma* (2014), *Cesar Chavez* (2014), *He Named Me Malala* (2015), *13TH* (2016), *Just Mercy* (2019), *Harriet* (2019) and *I Am Greta* (2020). Younger audiences might be inspired by *Ruby Bridges* (1998) or *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* (2019).



# Favour

## Based on Matthew 5:1–12

Come sit with me," Jesus said to his disciples. "I need to ask you a favour." The disciples and others gathered around Jesus and sat on the hillside. They were eager to hear what Jesus wanted to tell them and ask of them.

"The world needs your help. The world needs to know about my love. So, I need you to share it with everyone. But there's a catch," Jesus said.

The people looked at him with wonder and a tiny bit of fear. The crowd began to mumble and stir. "A catch?" said an older woman. "What does he mean?" asked a young boy.

"Well, I love people a lot, so this should be easy," a teenager said excitedly.

"No, it's not going to be easy," Jesus replied. "The world is going to reject you when you start helping me. You will be persecuted, and people will not say nice things about you. But it's oh-so-important work, and I need your help."

"Um, Jesus, I'm not too sure about that," one of his disciples said hesitantly. "Yeah, people are going to talk ugly about me? I'm not cool with that one bit," a voice in the crowd lifted up.

"Fear not!" Jesus said. He was quite fond of saying that.

"You will be greatly rewarded for this work. You will be called Blessed. I will be so very proud of you, and so will our God. The Spirit will be with you and will help you because it's an important favour I'm asking of you." Jesus looked at the crowd excitedly and saw blank stares. The people were unsure. But then, the smallest voice cried out, "Okay, Jesus! What do you need me to do? I'll help you!"

And Jesus smiled. He always knew that the little children would be the leaders.

"Thank you, my blessed, beloved child. I'm so grateful for you," Jesus said as he stood up, looking for the person attached to the voice he'd heard. But he couldn't find the child. So, he continued, saying: "I need you to always put the other person before yourself, and I need you to hurt when

the world hurts. I will comfort you. I will save you a place in the reign of God. I need you to be hungry for righteousness because the world isn't a fair place, and we need to work to make it fair. I need you to be full of mercy, and I'll make sure the Spirit keeps you filled with mercy to spare. Can you please be honest? An honest heart is the one that will see God. And, oh...peace. The world needs peacemakers. I need you to always work for peace, my dear children. Even when the world throws ugly things your way, be peaceful. Always seek peace. And spread love. You can never spread too much love. I'll show you how to love, so all you need to do is follow my example, and the world will be full of love."

"Sounds good to me," the small voice said, and the crowd began to nod their heads in agreement. The people thought that this was important work, and they were up for the challenge. The world needed them, and they were ready to go out and help Jesus.

"Oh, thank you, my beloveds! I am blessed because I get to call you my friends. And the world is blessed because it gets to learn about me through you. So, thank you. Thank you. Thank you."

Jesus stood up, threw out his hands and said, "Go! Now. You can do this. The world is waiting. And remember, you are never alone. I am always with you."

The people got up to leave, and Jesus stood at the top of the hill, watching them walk away out into the world. Jesus was in the middle of saying a prayer of thanksgiving for everyone when he felt a thud at his feet. He looked down to see the smallest child with the biggest smile hugging his legs. Jesus bent down and patted the child on the back. The child turned and ran away yelling with a hug and a smile. Jesus could barely make out the words, but he thought he heard, "Here I come world! I can't wait for you to meet my Jesus!" And Jesus smiled.

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



## Bible story

### Materials

- Recording of today's story "Favour"
- Alternatively, arrange for a storyteller to present the story
- Paper or drawing pads
- Basic supplies

## The practice of storytelling

### Directions

1. Listen to the story "Favour."
2. Using the drawing materials available, create a picture of the crowd sitting with Jesus on the hill. Are you present in the crowd?
3. Draw yourself if you're not already there. If you are, then colour yourself a bright colour. Think about where you might sit if you were in the story.
4. Create a word bubble and write inside the bubble what you would say when Jesus asks you to do him a favour. You may also write or draw your response on the back of the drawing.





## 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.

### Blessing cards

#### Materials

- Basic supplies
- Card stock/heavy paper cut into business- or index-size cards
- Art and craft supplies



**Suitable for all ages  
working together**

#### The practice of contemplation

##### Directions

1. Jesus encourages disciples to look at life’s challenges as blessings when they are considered from God’s perspective. Take seven cards each and make a set of “blessing cards” by printing the following phrases on the cards. One phrase on each card.

Depend on God  
God will comfort you  
Be gentle  
Live God’s ways  
Be kind  
Heart that sees God  
God’s peacemaker

2. Decorate your cards to personalize the meaning of the blessing.
3. Take one card each day and think deeply about its meaning, asking God to help you to live/know that blessing through the day.

**Younger children** might decorate seven cards (use index-size cards) and an older child, young person, or adult might write the phrases on the cards, simplifying as appropriate.

### Words full of vision

#### Materials

- Basic supplies
- Sticky notes
- Wall or bulletin board



**Suitable for  
ages 12–adult**

#### The practice of reflection

##### Directions

1. The prophet Micah makes bold proclamations about what it means to be in a right relationship with God. He summarizes with three active verbs: do, love, walk.
2. Reflect on all of the things that this community does.
3. Consider the things that this congregation might still be called to do.
4. Write 3 action verbs on sticky notes – one verb on each note – to celebrate what we do in this community and what still needs to be done. Post these verbs on the wall.
5. Give thanks for this wisdom.



## You are God's blessing

### Materials

- Large mirror mounted or securely propped up against a wall
- Fine-line markers
- Hand sanitizer or wipes



Suitable for  
all ages

### The practice of faith

#### Directions

Jesus echoes blessing. He repeats these simple blessings for the meek, the poor, and the grieving. These specific blessings might not define you, but you are still God's blessing.

1. Look at your reflection in the mirror and look for what God sees.
2. Gazing at your reflection, ask God what makes you such a blessing.
3. Listen for God's response and then write or draw that blessing on the mirror with a permanent marker.

**Younger children** might need to be prompted (as may well be true for older folks, too) about their blessing. Encourage young and old with blessings you hear from God and allow them to write that gift on the mirror.

## Walking meditation

### Materials

- Optional: labyrinth taped onto the floor, or printed finger labyrinths
- (See Finger Labyrinths in the *Virtual Resource Booklet* in the library at [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca))



Suitable for  
ages 12–adult

### The practice of movement

#### Directions

1. Begin with your feet firmly planted on the ground and read Psalm 15.
2. Take your first steps and wonder how you live and what moves you. Ponder these questions as you walk along the labyrinth path or ambulate along the edge of the room using one question for each lap:

- How might I walk if I were blameless?
- Do I walk the talk?
- Are my words helpful or hurtful?
- What causes me to stumble?

3. Give thanks for all the ways that God helps you to move.

**Alternative movement** You might choose to provide finger labyrinths to those who are not confident in their steps.

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.

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# God's Dream – Part 1

A story based on Matthew 5:1–12

Jesus invited his friends to come with him to the top of a tall hill. It was Jesus' favourite place to share his stories. Jesus began to talk with his friends.

"Today, I want to tell you about God's special dream for us.

"When you try to be kind to others, God sees you as a blessing.

"Even when you feel sad, God sees you as a blessing.

"No matter what happens, God looks at you and sees a blessing."

Jesus wanted his friends to understand that they were all a blessing. And Jesus had so much more to tell his friends about God's special dream.

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## Action Rhyme

Jesus knows us.

*(Point to self.)*

Jesus loves us.

*(Place hands at heart level.)*

Jesus helps us live and grow!

*(Reach up with hands and stand on tiptoes.)*

Jesus knows us.

*(Point to self.)*

Jesus loves us.

*(Place hands at heart level.)*

Now this love we'll show!

*(Open arms out wide as reaching.)*



# Blessing Pennant

1. Make a copy of the pennant, and cut around it.
2. Punch two holes along the straight edge.
3. Print your name on the dotted line, or ask a grownup to help you.
4. Decorate your pennant with crayons and markers.
5. Thread a drinking straw through the holes and tape in place.

