

Planning



Sunday, January 8 – Saturday, January 14 • 2023

Slow Epiphanies

On this first day of the Season after the Epiphany, which begins with the memory of Christ's baptism where it seems everything has become clear, we find ourselves wondering about what is revealed.

This Week

Ecumenical prayer calendar

Iran, Iraq, Syria

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. 112)

January 8 – Baptism of Jesus

January 13 – Maghi (*Sikhism*)

Personal reflection

For many believers, Jesus' baptism is an important touchstone, a place where we can connect with Jesus both as a human immersed in the waters of this world and as a beloved child of God. It's near impossible not to recall the babies that have been paraded down the aisle of the congregation full of beloved blessing or the moment in which we first took this bold step of faith ourselves.

- **What memories do you have of Baptism – your own or one you have witnessed?**
- **Who do you call your beloved? Do you use this term of endearment often?**
- **Who in your church or community needs to hear how beloved they are by God?**
- **How can that message be proclaimed in a way that they can truly experience it and know that they are God's delight?**

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).

January 8, 2023

Baptism of Jesus

1st Sunday after the Epiphany

1st Sunday in Ordinary Time

Revised Common Lectionary (Year A)

Isaiah 42:1–9

Psalm 29

Acts 10:34–43

Matthew 3:13–17

the focus in age-level materials

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 42:1–9

Psalm 29

Acts 10:34–43

Matthew 3:13–17

the focus in age-level materials

God of every epiphany, help us to remember that we begin every journey drenched in your love. Our identity, being, and calling begins (and ends and begins again) with you. Amen.

Slow Epiphanies

Every January, all who journey with the lectionary experience the baptism of Christ, when Jesus is publicly claimed as God's son and called beloved. Every year, we receive this invitation into a new way of seeing. We are slow to welcome this new perspective, but that doesn't stop God from this invitation to see differently.

Isaiah 42 begins by proclaiming, "here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights." For Christians, these words are echoed at Jesus' baptism, "this is my son..." (Matthew 3:17), but the opposite may be true for Jewish readers. Instead of hearing Isaiah and thinking "Jesus," they would hear about Jesus and think of "Isaiah." God claims and calls Isaiah as a prophet. This prophet will be "as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon..." (vv. 6–7). It's important to remember that the author of Isaiah didn't have Jesus in mind when writing this text, but the author of Matthew likely recalls the words of Isaiah.

Psalm 29 reveals God's power and majesty in dramatic natural events. God "sits enthroned over the flood," "breaks the cedars," "flashes forth flames of fire," "causes the oaks to whirl, and strips the forest bare." We don't tend to imagine floodwaters and whirling wind when we tell the story of Jesus' baptism in the river Jordan, but it does add a certain heavenly majesty to the moment. Moreover, we expect this kind of drastic change in moments of epiphany. Like Isaiah, it feels like a giant turning point; the former things have passed, new things are declared. We shall never be the same, thanks be to God.

Peter's speech in **Acts 10:34–43** takes the form of an early creedal statement, speaking to all nations and recounting key gospel events and themes. This succinct proclamation of the Christian story provides an important frame for the meaning of Jesus' baptism. These words might help us give words to our slow epiphanies.

In **Matthew 3:13–17**, we hear how Jesus begins his public life as a teacher, preacher, and healer by requesting baptism from John. What made the baptism of Jesus so important?

John calls everyone – including Jesus – to "repent" (or *metanoia* in the Greek). Rather than meaning regret or confession, *metanoia* means "go beyond the mind" or "go into the larger mind." Scholar Cynthia Bourgeault writes that this "'high teaching' was Jesus' central message: the Kingdom of Heaven means reaching beyond black-and-white dualities, into the larger heart and mind of God." Rather than "Change your bad ways!" we now hear, "Look! Look! God is inviting you to a new way of seeing! Come into the larger mind, see how God sees!" To "go beyond the mind" or "go into the larger mind" is no easy task, but the baptism of Jesus offers us some clues to how we might take steps to "repent."

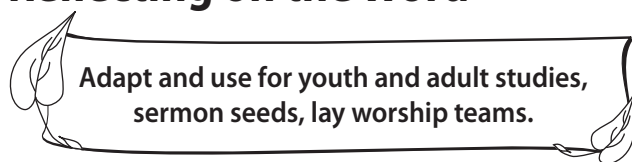
One such clue was the paradoxical nature of it all. As he will do so many times more, all-powerful Jesus is submitting to those to whom he brings the gospel. Thus, his baptism is a rite of passage, not to cleanse, but to embody for himself and the world the seemingly upside-down way he will liberate humanity from the prison of sin and small thinking. Through the universal symbol of water, Jesus models his invitation for all to move from unconsciousness (for which water is an archetype) to consciousness – a deeper awareness of just how deeply loved we are by a good and gracious God.

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This week's texts offer insight into Jesus' identity and calling, and into our own. Jesus emerges from the waters of baptism and hears the truth of his identity: Beloved. Child of God. The same can be said of each one of us. While Baptism might mark a beginning in the Christian journey, we are called beloved children of God. Isaiah reminds us that this is not a passive identity but an active calling to God's work of justice in the world. How are you living out the truth of your identity and calling as God's beloved?



Reflecting on the Word



Connecting with life

Change is hard for humans. John the baptizer resisted change. Yet very quickly, Jesus called John to release his old way of thinking.

- **Name some occasions in your life when it has been hard to give up your idea of how things should be, or how an event should proceed.**
- **Name a time when a positive life change nudged hard feelings.**
- **How did you succeed (or fail) to release your old point of view?**

Scripture

Isaiah 42 speaks to the calling of a prophet to “bring forth justice to the nations” (v. 1) and “open the eyes of the blind, bring out the prisoners from the dungeon” (v. 7).

- **How do you understand your calling as a Christian in light of this text?**
- **How does your baptism or understanding the truth of your identity as a beloved child of God prepare you for this work?**

Psalm 29 describes God’s might and power using powerful, often violent images from nature. This could be a trigger for those who have experienced a natural disaster, so engage with caution.

- **How does it make you feel to see God’s glory described in shaking, ripping, whirling, burning, and flooding?**
- **Verses 10 and 11 place God as ruler forever over the forces of nature, giving strength and peace to the people. Is this a helpful or harmful image for you?**
- **How do you reconcile the tragedy of natural disasters with God’s love?**

Acts 10:34–43 Imagine this story of Jesus’ ministry told by Peter is given to a person completely unfamiliar with Christianity.

- **Which elements of the Christian story would you next prioritize telling this person?**

Matthew 3:13–17 Jesus observes a long-standing ritual practiced by all Jewish observers when he comes to baptized. The Mishnah (oral laws explaining how to accomplish the written Law) speaks of 6 orders of ritual immersion that are to be observed. The highest order, Living Water, is for the forgiveness of sins and is to be done in flowing water. Ritual immersion required at least three witnesses, with one of the witnesses serving as the “required witness.” It is in their name that the immersion takes place. Following the immersion (done by the candidate without the help of a second party), the required witness announces blessings and benedictions on the candidate. For more information, go to <http://www.haydid.org/ronimmer.htm>.

Jesus approaches John to request a baptism of Living Water, the highest order of Baptism, in order to “fulfill all righteousness.”

- **Given the background information on the Jewish immersion ritual, what might Matthew have been trying to tell us in this account of Jesus’ baptism?**

Jesus’ baptism is a public act complete with a heavenly proclamation and the visible, corporeal presence of the Holy Spirit. In the Christian tradition, baptism is linked with beginnings, new life, entrance into a Christian community or the family of God; a profession of faith and/or a promise to teach and guide the newly baptized into faith; God’s grace which makes us “clean” and forgives sins; and receiving the Holy Spirit.

- **How do you and your community understand baptism?**
- **How does Jesus’ baptism fit into your understanding of baptism? Are there ways that it does not “fit”?**
- **How does God’s love and/or your identity as a beloved child of God affect your daily life? What changes in how you feel? ...how you act or respond to others? ...your goals?**

Connecting scripture and life

In the whoosh of a dove’s wings and a Spirit-filled voice, we perceive the vision of God’s unfolding purpose in the life of Jesus.

- **When have you sensed God’s spirit resting on you, as an individual and as a church?**
- **How is your life, as an individual and as a church, shaped by the knowledge that you are beloved?**
- **How do you live as people beloved of God and as people sharing the love of God with others?**

Focus for Worship, Learning, and Serving

On this day, we focus on the message that God speaks to Jesus during the baptism: “You are my Beloved.” This message is one that God speaks to each of us. This is reiterated in the reading from Isaiah. With a love that is so freely given, the hardest part may be to learn how to accept it!

On Baptism of Christ Sunday, it is traditional to observe a ritual that enables those gathered to remember their baptisms. How might you help people recall their beloved natures? How will you make room for those that have not yet been baptized but still need to hear this affirmation from God?

Slow Epiphanies

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 for worship: several for the processional, several to assist at the handwashing stations.
- ❑ Choose an option for hearing Matthew 2:13–17. For the Bible story, arrange for a storyteller to present “[Jesus Is Baptized: A Family Legend](#)” on p. 114. Alternatively, for younger children, arrange for a storyteller to present “[John Baptizes Jesus](#)” in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week’s materials. For the drama, arrange for four readers/actors and someone to play music.
- ❑ You might consider moving your baptismal font to a different location, allowing it to stand out more than usual. If your space is flexible, set up your worship space in the round with the font in the centre, giving you a clear view of everyone gathered. Leave the font empty. It will be filled during the call to worship.
- ❑ Fix paper dove shapes to fishing poles or PVC pipes; bring several pitchers of water for the processional.
- ❑ For the reading from Isaiah 42:1–9, you might print the reflective questions in the bulletin or prepare to project.
- ❑ Set up stations around the worship space for hand washing. Place basins and towels at each station.
- ❑ 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 “Be God’s” (*Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9, #3 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 9. Printed music and recording also available at www.seasonsonline.ca/order).
- ❑ Set [stations](#) as described on pp. 115–116.



Music Suggestions

Be God’s

Danielle Rose; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9

Jesus, Face of God

James Maher; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9

The Anointing

James Maher; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9

Children of the Spirit

Monica O’Brien, Gina Ogilvie; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 7

Invocation

Pastor de Lassala, James Jacka Coyle; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 7

In Christ There Is No East or West

John Oxenham

O Beauty Ever Ancient

Shirley Erena Murray

Take Me to the Water

African American Spiritual



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

Gather

Processional

Have the doves descend over each person as you process. Have several volunteers bring in pitchers of water. Display these on and around the Communion table. One will be used during the call to worship; the others will be used for handwashing later in worship.

Call to worship

Have someone slowly fill up the font during the call to worship, using one of the pitchers of water brought in during the processional.

When we are reluctant to dip our toes into faith’s river,

Jesus comes to teach us how to swim.

When we are hesitant to cup our hands to drink from the fountain of grace,

Jesus comes to reach in and splash our faces with God’s joy.

As it feels appropriate, the waters in the baptismal font might splash.

When we are unwilling to be the pipeline of hope,

Jesus comes to turn on the faucets God has installed in our hearts.

Come, let us worship.

Opening prayer

When we clasp the past tight to our fading memories, you come, Glory of creation:

to strip us bare of all pride and pretence, with your future; to slip the latch on the fears and worries that keep us bound from following you;

to stand with us when death and sin try to bully us.

And we cry,

“Glory!”



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When our faith flickers in the shadows of chaos,
you come, Servant of all:
to be the grace-crier through the streets of our hearts;
to teach eager students the songs of peace and hope;
to open eyes heavy-lidded by indifference.

And we cry,

“Glory!”

When we are dubious about being disciples,
you come, Baptism’s Spirit:
to journey with peace-walkers through the world’s violent
streets;
to strengthen us when we are bent by doubt;
to anoint us with rivers of grace, hope, and reconciliation.

And we cry,

“Glory!”

Call to reconciliation

The psalmist tells us that the One whose voice can knock trees to the ground listens to our hesitant prayers that speak how we have hurt others, as well as God.

Join me as we pray to the One who will bless us with peace and forgiveness.

Prayer of confession

You would have all people hear of your grace, servant God,
but we hinder your efforts by hoarding the word for ourselves.

You would have hope flow through our neighbourhoods,
but we thwart your plans by damming up hope in our hearts.

You would have us skip into your realm,
but we frustrate your future by clinging so tightly to those grudges we have carried for so long.

**Have mercy on us, Shaker of our wildernesses,
and unlock the shuttered doors of our hearts.**

**Remind us that at our baptism you touch us with the
waters of life,**

promise to be with us always,

and call us your beloved,

**even as you sang your joy to Jesus the Christ, at the waters
of the Jordan.**

Silence is kept.

Words of affirmation

You know the good news God has proclaimed to you:

we are called to let go of the past,

and to walk, hand in hand with the Spirit, into the reign
of God.

God forgives us, accepts us,

and sends us forth to do good

**and to testify about the One who baptizes us in the water
and the Spirit.**

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Engage

Opening the word

Isaiah 42:1–9 Read with the introduction, “Listen to God’s word, ‘Here is my servant...’”

Matthew 2:1–12 *the focus scripture for age-level materials in ENCORE*

Choose from the following.

Bible story Arrange for a storyteller to present “[Jesus Is Baptized: A Family Legend](#)” on p. 114. Alternatively, for younger children, tell the story “[John Baptizes Jesus](#)” (in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week’s materials).

Drama: Beloved

This is a drama with 4 characters: John, Jesus, the Voice of God, and the Holy Spirit. Attempt to have more than one gender represented and diversity that reflects your community. You might consider having a child play one of the characters. The actor playing Jesus should be dressed for Baptism. For the Holy Spirit, you might consider a dancer or someone with experience in liturgical movement; that person might wear all black and carry a bird kite or prop.

John on one side of the sanctuary. Jesus enters and approaches John.

JESUS: John! Hey there! Long time no see (*handshake/high fives/fist pump*). I’ve come to be baptized.

JOHN: (*flabbergasted*) I need to be baptized by YOU, but you come to ME?! I won’t do it (*turns his back*).

JESUS: Come on, John, friend, rabbi, allow me to be baptized now. (*John slowly turns back to Jesus.*) This is the right thing. I know it seems strange, but I need this from you. It’s necessary to fulfill all righteousness.

JOHN: (*Sighs. Looks up to heaven. Looks down to the ground. Looks up to Jesus.*) Okay, I trust you.

Music begins to play (example: “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing,” “Down to the River to Pray”). John and Jesus move to the font. John and Jesus freeze. The music swells, and the Holy Spirit makes a dramatic entrance. The Holy Spirit flies over to Jesus (running, dancing, leaping) and rests a hand upon his shoulder.

VOICE OF GOD: This is my child, whom I love and who brings me great joy.

The Holy Spirit leads Jesus and John out.

**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 “Be God’s” as people gather again (*Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9, #3 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 9. Printed music and recording are also available at www.seasonsonline.ca/order).

Affirmation of faith

We affirm our faith through the act of handwashing, symbolizing that we are always prepared to serve our neighbour in need.

Invite the worshippers to come forward to the stations set up around the worship space to have their hands washed and wash the hands of another. A volunteer will pour water over the hands of the first person to come to the station; that person will then pour water over the next person’s hand. End each hand washing with the blessing, “You are a beloved child of God.”

Prayers of the people

Your voice thunders in the night, and sings love songs in the morning.
Your voice tumbles raging rapids, and ripples pools of peace.
Your voice snaps trees in two, and can mend broken hearts with a sigh.
We give glory to your name, God of all our lives.

You, O God, moved over the watery chaos.
You hovered close and have remained close through the all the sickness and loss, despair and loneliness that are our constant companions.
Today, we remember especially...
(Offer prayers for the sick, grieving, and so on. After each prayer, repeat the refrain.)
We come to the waters of mercy.

You, O God, parted the sea
and delivered your people from bondage.
You sustained your people
and blessed us with freedom and new life.
You sustain us and give us hope that love will always overcome.
Today, we praise you for...
(Offer prayers of thanksgiving. After each prayer, repeat the refrain.)
We come to the waters of joy.

We give you thanks, O God, for the gift of water.
We give glory to your grace, child of the waters.
You cup your hands around our flickering faith, breathing us to new life.
You call us to work for justice, teaching us intentional acts of service.
You immerse us in courage, daring us to speak words of hope.
We give glory to your love, Spirit of wonder.
We give you the glory now and always. Amen.

Prayer of dedication or offering prayer

Leader stands at the baptismal font dipping hands into the water:
By your grace, God of the waters, we can open our eyes to see those in need around us. By your abundance in our lives, what we offer can bring hope and healing to more people than we can ever imagine. By your blessing, others are invited to the waters of life. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Bless

Consider offering this blessing in a circle, and using this same blessing for the whole Season after the Epiphany:

Go now, beloved, to follow the love of God,
to be surprised by God’s wonder to lift your voice for love and compassion.
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

January 8 – Baptism of Jesus

On this day, we celebrate the baptism of Jesus by John the baptizer in the Jordan River, and we recall God’s words, “This is my beloved Son” and the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Some churches observe a renewing of baptism during the service today.

January 13 – Maghi (Sikhism)

This day commemorates a battle in which 40 Sikhs (the Immortal Ones) laid down their lives for the guru (Guru Gobind Singh).



Our God of Justice and Power

Our work of justice and peace is challenged by how we understand God.

In this reflective practice, you'll enter into Psalm 29 to find images of God that might motivate and encourage your justice seeking as individuals and as a community committed to God's dream of justice and peace.

1. Begin by recalling images of God that have been important to you from scripture, art, and your own imaginations. Make a list, if desired.
2. Reflect on all of the shared images of God and how they inspire your love and service in the world. (For example, if God is your rock, does that inspire you to stand firm? Or if God is a mother hen, does that motivate your work to prepare wonderful meals at the soup kitchen?) Wonder together if there are images of God that are not working for you right now.
3. Roll out a large piece of paper onto your table or use a tablecloth. Scatter markers on the table. (Use permanent markers for a reusable tablecloth that might be used on your Communion table when it is completed.)
4. Read Psalm 29 together and then wonder:
 - **What do we learn about God in these words?**
 - **What causes us to fear God in this psalm? What brings us awe?**
 - **What are the images of God that inspire this psalm?**
 - **Write or draw on the tablecloth/paper.**
5. Reflect on all the justice works your congregation shares and the ways that each of you have participated in these efforts. Recall, as you are able, what you understood about God in those moments of service.
 - **What adjectives or verbs best describe the God you served?**
 - **Are there powerful metaphors to portray God in that work?**
6. Write or draw responses on the tablecloth/paper.
7. Discern together if there is one image of God that is meaningful to your congregation. Magnify those words and images that feel most important to your congregation's image of God on the tablecloth/paper with bold outlines and shapes.
8. Give thanks for this new awareness and insight into who God is.



Jesus Is Baptized: A Family Legend

Based Matthew 2:13–17

Sometimes people ask me, “What’s it like to have Jesus as a relative?” My mother loved to tell me the story of when her relative Mary came to visit us when she was pregnant with Jesus; it was at the same time my mother was pregnant with me. When Mary arrived, my mother said she could feel me leaping for joy inside her. Even before I was born, we had a special bond. Even though we didn’t always understand what it would mean, we knew that Jesus would grow up to be an example of how God desires that we live, full of love and peace.

I will never forget the day that Jesus came and asked me to baptize him. I would never have expected it! And it changed me. The way of living that Jesus teaches is very important to my entire family.

Before Jesus began his ministry, I wanted to do everything I could to help prepare the way for his message to be heard, so I went into the wilderness to share the good news that God loves everyone. I baptized people, initiating them into this way of living and inviting them into a new way of seeing.

Part of my baptism was like a symbol – like washing away the bad things from our past so that we could start afresh with God. When Jesus came to me and asked me to baptize him, I was so surprised. Jesus is the very example of how we are to live. I thought, “It should be Jesus baptizing me.” But even when I hesitated, Jesus insisted that I baptize him. It was a humbling moment.

As Jesus came up out of the water, it seemed as if the heavens were opened; I could feel the Spirit of God very close – like a dove descending on Jesus. Deep down and all around, it seemed words from God were swirling around, too, “This is my child, the Beloved, with whom I am very pleased.”

I got to serve Jesus, the one who has committed his life to bringing justice. I realized that when Jesus asked me to baptize him, he couldn’t bring about righteousness on his own. This is something that is best done with the help of others. It was an “aha” moment for me. I wasn’t merely just preparing the way, I have an important part of bringing justice and righteousness to our land.

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



Bible story

Materials

- Recording of today’s story “[Jesus Is Baptized](#)”
- 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 “Jesus Is Baptized: A Family Legend.”
2. Wonder together:
 - **What might you see if you were present at the baptism?**
 - **What might you feel if you were there?**
3. What happens when people are baptized in our congregation?
 - **What do you see? What do you hear? What do you feel?**
4. If you have been baptized, what stories do people tell about it? (If the children have not been baptized, an adult could share a story about their own baptism.)



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.

Doodle names

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Paper



Suitable for
ages 6–adult

The practices of prayer

Directions

Who are you? What gifts do you bring to this congregation, the wider community, and the world? At Jesus' baptism, God called him "Beloved." What names does God call you?

1. Ready yourself to hear who God says you are by writing God's name on a fresh piece of paper.
2. Draw a shape or a line or a doodle around God's name. This is your prayer space. Now listen. Who does God say you are?
3. As you hear each name God calls you, surround God's name with those names God calls you. Draw a shape or a line around each name.
4. Doodle lines and shapes that connect these names to God. Think of each stroke of your crayon or marker as a prayer of hope and possibility.
5. Take a breath or say "Amen" for each name God has called you.

Encouraging words

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Decorative letter-writing paper
- Pens
- Envelopes



Suitable for all ages
working together

The practice of encouraging one another

Directions

As Jesus came up out of the water, deep down and all around it seemed words from God were swirling around, saying, "This is my child, whom I love, and who makes me very happy." All of us need encouragement from others at different times in life to help us carry on.

1. Take a moment to think of someone who could use some words of encouragement this season.
2. Write a note of encouragement or affirmation, or draw a special picture for the person you are thinking of and either give it to them or mail it.



Paper plane prayer

Materials

- Basic supplies
 - Rectangular sheets of paper (any size or colour, but not too thick – can be scrap as long as you can write on one side)
 - Directions and diagrams for folding paper planes from www.foldnfly.com (we recommend the dart and one or two more)
 - Signs designating “Prayer Airport”
- Note** You will need to designate a “Prayer Airport” with enough space to throw the prayers.
- Make sure to keep the flight zone away from any open flames.



Suitable for
all ages

The practices of prayer and play

Directions

When Jesus was baptized, the Spirit of God descended upon him like a dove. We often imagine the Holy Spirit with bird and flight imagery. Today, we are going to send our prayers up to God, not on the wings of a dove, but on the wings of a paper plane.

1. Write a prayer on a sheet of paper. If you need help, fill in these sentences:
 “Thank you God for...”
 “Please help with...”
 “Take care of...”
2. Fold your prayer into a plane, any style you choose.
3. Go to the prayer airport and launch your prayers to God as many times as you wish. Imagine them flying to God’s ears.

You might do the station with the whole congregation during worship. Try showing a video or giving a step-by-step demo of how to fold a plane. Have the whole congregation throw their prayers away from any flames (for example, towards the back or side of the sanctuary). As the planes fly around the sanctuary, imagine the Spirit of God descending like a dove.

In water we grow

Materials

- Recording of “In Water We Grow” and player
- Candles or tealights and matches, or battery candles/tealights



Suitable for
ages 12–adult

The practice of wonder

Directions

1. Listen to the hymn “In Water We Grow.”
2. After listening to the hymn, wonder:
 - Who are you becoming?
 - How are you growing, or where do you anticipate growth?
 - Where are you feeling led?
 - Where is God calling you to serve?
3. Spark a match and light a candle in the hope of all that you are becoming.

Pocket blessings

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Printed copies of blessing from worship
- Card stock/heavy paper



Suitable for
ages 12–adult

The practice of blessing

Directions

Though many of the prayers in our worship change from week to week, sometimes we need to hear the same words over and over again to truly hear their blessing. In this Season after the Epiphany, we will bless each other with the same words each week.

1. Take a copy of the blessing and cut it out to a pocket-size shape.
2. Read the blessing and highlight any words that feel important to you now.
3. Add decoration to this blessing, as needed.
4. Glue it to card stock and tuck it in your pocket to remember in times when you need to remember how beloved and called you are.

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.

John Baptizes Jesus

A story based on Matthew 2:13-17

A long, long time ago, there was a man named John. He went to the Jordan River and waded in. The water covered his feet. Then it covered his knees. John stood in the water and called out, "Come everyone. Come and be baptized."

The people came from their houses. They came from the hills and fields. There were so many people who wanted to hear about God! They were ready to be baptized and live God's way of love and peace.

One by one, they walked into the river. John dipped them into the water and said a prayer. "Now you are baptized," John said. "Go and live God's way."

As the people left, they felt clean and new inside. It was a wonderful feeling.

Near the end of the day, John looked up and saw someone standing beside the river. It was Jesus! Jesus wanted John to baptize him too.

So John said a prayer to God, dipped Jesus in the river, and something wonderful happened! Jesus heard God say, "I am so pleased with you!" Jesus felt a dove gently touch him. John and Jesus felt very happy.

Handprint Dove

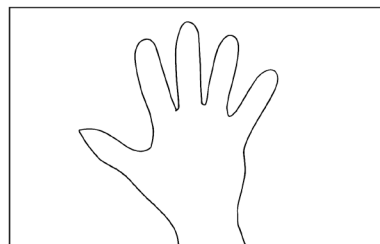
Make a dove to help remember Jesus' baptism.

You will need copy paper, markers, pens, glue, ribbon, scissors

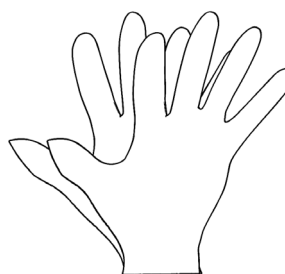
Directions

1. Fold a piece of paper in half.
2. Place your hand on the paper with your wrist on the fold.
3. Trace the outline of your hand or have someone trace it for you.
4. Give the thumb a point to represent the dove's beak.
5. Cut out the handprint leaving the fold at the bottom intact.
6. Fold the three middle fingers down on opposite sides of the dove to form the wings.
7. Cut across the tip of the remaining finger to resemble a tail.
8. Draw eyes on both sides of the head.
9. Glue the dove's body together with a loop of a ribbon between the sides so that the dove can be hung up.

3.

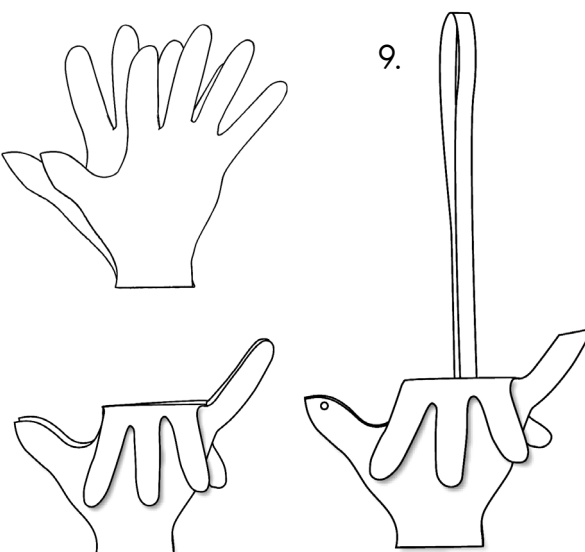


5.



9.

6.



A picture to decorate and then show to friends and family
as you tell them the story about John baptizing Jesus.

