

Planning



Sunday, January 15 – Saturday, January 21 • 2023

Called Together

As God inspires new possibility and redemption in prophets and communities, we hear God calling to us individually with our curiosities and as a community eager to imagine change.

This week...

Ecumenical prayer calendar

Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Yemen

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. 124)

January 16 – Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. (observed)

January 18 – Confession of St. Peter

January 18 – Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Personal reflection

Recall a time when someone called your name at just the right moment: someone you missed and hadn't connected with for a long time or a time when you were lost in a crowd and longing to hear a trusted voice. Or perhaps there was a time when someone said just what your heart needed to hear at the exact right moment.

■ **What did it feel like?**

■ **What about them knowing you and speaking to you made you feel loved?**

■ **How did those words fill you up and give you life?**

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 15, 2023

2nd Sunday after the Epiphany

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Revised Common Lectionary (Year A)

Isaiah 49:1–7

the focus in age-level materials

Psalms 40:1–11

1 Corinthians 1:1–9

John 1:29–42

Liturgical colour green

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 49:1–7**

the focus in age-level materials

Psalms 40:1–11**1 Corinthians 1:1–9****John 1:29–42**

Faithful God, you invite us to be curious. You ask big questions with us and allow us to create big magic by your side. Help us to listen and wonder. Amen.

Called Together

Many of us struggle to find meaning in a culture that often values productivity and possession above a sense of vocation and being. To what do we give our strength? What grabs our attention and makes us curious?

The prophet of **Isaiah 49:1–7** grabs our attention with the summons, “listen to me...pay attention.” Written following the defeat of the Southern Kingdom, Judah, by the Babylonians in 587 BCE, Isaiah 40–50 is commonly referred to as Second Isaiah. This section of the book of Isaiah has four passages, identified as Servant Songs. They tell about the call of God’s servant and chosen one.

The servant here is the prophet, or perhaps Israel itself, called to spend their strength for the important task of doing God’s will. God calls the prophet to proclaim to a people in exile in Babylon that God is faithful and will restore them. The Hebrew people begin to see a glimmer of hope after long years away from Judah and Jerusalem.

The prophet describes his vocation – God knew him before his birth and has given him powerful words to proclaim God’s message. The story follows a pattern common to Hebrew prophets: there is a strong sense of a task God wants the prophet to fulfill, and there is a point when the prophet feels vulnerable. Brené Brown explains how vulnerability is at the core of emotions such as fear, self-doubt, comparison, anxiety, uncertainty, grief, disappointment. Still, vulnerability is also the birthplace of love, belonging, joy, trust, empathy, creativity, innovation. So it is for this prophet and Israel.

The call is repeated as God promises to do even greater works. This is a story of a call – being called and known, experiencing failure to live up to the call, hope remaining strong, and being called with a greater purpose. God’s light

is to shine on all. Regardless of the people’s early success or failure, God is faithful. The servant maintains hope in God.

God’s faithfulness is never in doubt in **Psalms 40:1–11**. The writer praises God’s steadfast love. The testimony in this psalm offers a glimpse of what it is like to be wanted. The writer wants to remain in God’s true love and faithfulness. “Here I am” (v. 7) echoes Samuel’s call in 1 Samuel 3. The psalm is a vivid, physical testimony of being heard, seen, helped, and given a song of praise. To live in the ways of God’s life-giving law brings delight.

In **1 Corinthians 1:1–9**, Paul speaks of his call and reminds the Corinthian church that God has called them to be saints in community with Christ. God gives strength and spiritual gifts to be used by each who are a part of this wide call. God is faithful and will continue to strengthen, empowering people to live in service to God’s call.

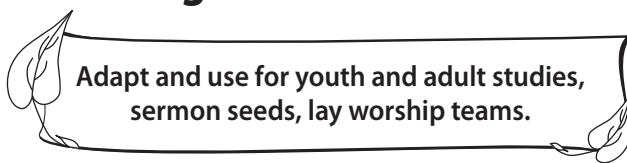
John 1:29–42 tells the story of Jesus’ baptism as a prelude to the call of the disciples. Many prophets and teachers had disciples who accompanied them and listened to their teaching. Jesus’ first disciples are disciples of John. They are drawn to learn more about the one whom John calls “the Lamb of God.” Jesus invites them to “come and see.” Andrew answers that call by finding his brother Simon Peter and bringing him to Jesus. Together they answer the call.

• • • • •

In each of this week’s readings, the call is to something wider – more than is imagined. In Baptism, we are named as members of the Body of Christ. What does it mean to be called and named by God? The biblical passages raise questions about our own call. How do we identify and confirm that call to be all we are and can be? Today, what does it mean to be “a light to the nations”?



Reflecting on the Word



Connecting with life

In her book *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear*, Elizabeth Gilbert dismisses the notion of following your passion to wonder about curiosity. She writes,

“Curiosity only ever asks one simple question: “Is there anything you’re interested in? Anything? Even a tiny bit? No matter how mundane or small? The answer need not set your life on fire or make you quit your job [...]; it just has to capture your attention for a moment. But in that moment, if you can pause and identify even one tiny speck of interest in something, then curiosity will ask you to turn your head a quarter of an inch and look at the thing a wee bit closer. Do it. It’s a clue. It might seem like nothing, but it’s a clue. Follow that clue. Trust it. See where curiosity will lead you next.”

- **What makes you curious?**
- **Have you followed that interest? Why or why not?**

Scripture

Isaiah 49:1–7 shares a vision for the people of God after a time of uncertainty.

- **When do we speak so loudly that people cannot hear us?**
- **When and how do we think as one voice?**
- **When do we experience “labouring in vain”?**
- **To whom should we be paying attention to today?**

The passage speaks of the prophets’ own wrestling with vocation and meaning.

- **What is your experience of God’s call on your life?**
- **How have you been liberated to live courageously, being all that you are in the grace and service of God?**

Psalm 40:1–11 reveals a God we can trust and in whom we find protection.

- **What does it look like, feel like, taste like to “delight to do God’s will”?**
- **Imagine speaking of God’s faithfulness with “unrestrained lips.” What message would you share, and how would you share it?**

Both the speaker of **Isaiah 49** and the church in **Corinth 1:1–9** seem to question their gifts for ministry.

- **When has this been true for you?**
- **Where, or in what does your church need reaffirmation that it is not lacking in spiritual gifts?**

Paul writes to an imperfect community, yet he is sincerely grateful for their faithful testimony.

- **In what ways is your congregation living and sharing the good news with your community? How can you express gratitude to them?**

In **John 1:29–42**, John testifies to Jesus as the Lamb of God, the one who is marked and “baptized by the Holy Spirit.”

- **What are the questions John’s disciples might have wanted to ask Jesus?**
- **What made them confident they had found the Messiah?**
- **Do you think Jesus knew about his mission? When did he know it?**

Connecting scripture and life

Imagine yourself exactly where you are. God is calling your name, asking you to become a part of something bigger than itself, and promising to strengthen and provide the gifts to do the tasks you are called to do. The time and attention you’ve spent becoming who you are to be used in the service of God’s love – to share in God’s compassionate care of the world.

- **What are the ways you can fully participate as God’s called, individually and as a church?**
- **What habits, words, and actions would help you to be most connected to your call?**

Focus for Worship, Learning, and Serving

Frederick Buechner wonders about vocation, suggesting, “Life itself becomes hurried after the start of the calendar year. We have our new plans, goals set and hopes renewed. Do we know how to pay attention?”

Though vocation might seem like an overwhelming question, paying attention is not. It is a question of curiosity. What makes you curious about God? Is it the same thing that makes the people in your community or congregation curious? How do our differing curiosities

allow for new epiphanies of God’s grace and love?

As big as these questions might be, there is magic to them – as Elizabeth Gilbert suggests. It could be a big magic where we allow ourselves to be silly and playful as we try to understand God’s call on our lives. And we get to do it together. We don’t need to ask these big questions all by ourselves. We get to share in the wondering. What a glorious gift! Thanks be to God!

Called Together

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: Invite someone to talk about their experience and struggles with this thing we term a “call from God” as an introduction to the reading from Isaiah 49:1–7
- ❑ Choose an option for hearing Isaiah 49:1–7. For the Bible story, arrange for two voices to present “Called to Be Lights” on p. 126. Alternatively, for younger children, arrange for a storyteller to present “You Are Special” in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week’s materials. For the drama, arrange for three voices to present “The Servant’s Mission.”
- ❑ Bring items for setting the worship space.
- ❑ You might choose to print Red Ladder to Safe Harbour on or in your bulletin (in the Images to Project and Print folder). See “Connecting with the Art” on p. 8 for background to the art and artist.
- ❑ Bring song such as “A World of Difference” (*Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9, #2 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 9. Printed music and recording also available at *Seasons MP3 Downloads*, www.seasonsonline.ca/order).
- ❑ Set stations as described on pp. 127–128.



Music Suggestions

A World of Difference

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

Be God's

Danielle Rose; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9

Let the People of God

Ken Medema; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 8

Sing Out

Marty Haugen; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 8

Called by Earth and Sky

Pat Mayberry; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 6

Listen, God Is Calling

Tanzanian traditional; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 2

I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry

John C. Ylvisaker

Will You Come and Follow Me (The Summons)

John L. Bell and Graham Maule



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

Gather

Call to worship

Based on 1 Corinthians 1:1–9

Grace and peace to you from God our Mother and Father
and from Jesus the Christ.

Amen.

Friends, in God we have been graced with wisdom and
knowledge,
we are not lacking in any spiritual gift.
We are continually encouraged and strengthened,
called as partners in Christ's mission of love and service to
the world.

We gather in hope.
We worship with the Spirit at play in our hearts.
Praise be to the God of goodness and light!

Amen.

Opening prayer

You who gives all,
holding back nothing for the sake of fuller,

wider expressions of love,
move us this day to take similar risks.
Grace us with renewed confidence,
and inspire us with an inviting,
touchable vision for life, work,
and service in your name.

Call to reconciliation

*Use a Kyrie sung response to enter into this time of confession.
Surround it with the promise of God's mercy by singing that same
Kyrie again after silence is kept.*

Prayer of confession

O Holy One,
who wondrously calls us into being,
calling us also into ways and being for life,
we admit before you and to those around us,
that at times it all seems too hard;
when we see little fruit for our labours,
receive ingratitude for honest endeavours,
or feel self-belittlement after daring to express a still latent
or developing gift.



Worship Outline • January 15, 2023

Forgive us,
not just for a lack of belief in you but a lack of belief in who
we are.

Forgive us for negative conclusions and false humilities that
would have us hide away and not hear the calls for cre-
ative love and justice that you place ever before us.

Self-giving God,
restore in us the undying courage of Christ and the ennob-
ling presence of the Holy Spirit.
Silence is kept.

*Kyrie is sung again. Sing the refrain at least five times to help create
and retain a spirit of longing and openness.*

Words of affirmation

Before you were born,
you were named with love and grace.

God is listening now and paying attention to each honest
confession.

You are forgiven.

You are redeemed.

You are loved.

Dare to grow into this affirmation of God's love.

Engage

Opening the word

Isaiah 49:1–7 *the focus in age-level materials*

Introduction There are many call stories in scripture – to older couples, to teenagers, to people involved in their work, to those opposed to God's hopes for them. Yet, we rarely hear stories from those with whom we worship about the calls they have heard. Is there someone who has chosen to live with the most vulnerable around us in a very intentional way? Perhaps a person walked away from a lucrative career to become a teacher to children. Might there be an older person/couple who, in retirement, find themselves in a way of life they would never have imagined at this stage in their lives? What about young people who wonder about the whispers in their souls and hearts that come in the middle of the night? Perhaps this is an opportunity to invite such folks to tell their stories, to share their journeys, to talk about their struggles with this thing we term a "call from God."

Choose from the following.

Bible story Have two actors present the story "[Called to Be Lights](#)" on page 126.

Dramatic reading Arrange for three voices to present "[The Servant's Mission](#)."

NARRATOR: The section of Isaiah in chapters 40–48 was composed during Israel's exile in Babylon, 586–536 BCE. Near the end of this period, Cyrus of Persia ruled over the Babylonian empire. He seemed more tolerant of other religions, and the Hebrew exiles began to see a glimmer of hope after long years away from Judah and Jerusalem. This section of Isaiah has several passages that speak of God's servant and

chosen one. The servant here may be the prophet, or perhaps the term refers to the Hebrew exiles as a group. The call is to the task of doing God's will.

GOD'S CHOSEN ONE AND SERVANT: *Listen to me, O coastlands, pay attention, you peoples from far away!*

NARRATOR: The chosen one recalls how the call to be God's prophet came to him early on. God called this prophet to serve before birth, naming him while still in the womb.

GOD'S CHOSEN ONE AND SERVANT: Yahweh formed my words to penetrate the heart like a sharp sword or a pointed arrow. I have dwelled in safety in God's presence.

GOD: You are my servant, Israel in whom I will be glorified.

NARRATOR: The prophet is bold to voice concerns to God.

GOD'S CHOSEN ONE AND SERVANT: *I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the Lord, and my reward with my God.*

NARRATOR: God, who formed this prophet to gather the people of Israel to lead them back into God's ways, responds to the prophet.

GOD: *It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth. Kings shall see and stand up, princes shall see and prostrate themselves because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel has chosen you.*

(Scripture in italics from New Revised Standard Version)

1 Corinthians 1:1–9 After reading this scripture, those gathered can greet each other eye to eye, and heart to heart, saying to each other, "I give thanks for you."

**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 "A World of Difference" as people gather again (*Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9, #2 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 9).

Prayers of the people

Holy God, our source of light and life,
we ask that you travel with us as we hold the questions.



The questions that have been refined to name what we seek,
what we need, and where we should go.
Sometimes we wonder, are we worthy to be called by you?

Yet. Sometimes, the answers shake us.
Sometimes, we are too afraid to admit truths about ourselves.
Old wounds remain and sometimes hurt.
We feel broken.
We are uncertain.
Fear haunts us.
Lessons learned need to be learned again and again.

Help us.
Help us to know we are not alone.
Help us feel our way through the shadows,
finding the gentle glow of the light.
Help us to see the sacred glow of another's light.
Help us know that sometimes the questions are the answers
and that by asking we are led to the home within our-
selves where you dwell.
Help us in our belief and unbelief, God,

that you have called us,
that you claim us,
and that we are here to serve.

Be our guide.
Be our soft space and sturdy foundation.
Be our healing balm.
Be our ever-true guiding presence,
leading us to each other,
showing us our companions along the journey.
You create such beautiful spaces for healing, rest, and
protection.
We give thanks, and we rest in the hope that you will be
with us now and in the years to come.
Amen.

Prayer of dedication or offering prayer

All that we are, O God,
and all we are called to be,
we bring to this special moment of offering and hope.
may our gifts be used imaginatively for the well-being of all.
Amen.

Bless

*Consider offering this blessing in a circle and using this same bless-
ing 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.

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

January 16 – Birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr. (observed)

Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., African-American civil rights leader, was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia. A Baptist minister and peace activist, Dr. King was a voice for equal rights for African Americans and others. Dr. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee. In 1983, his birthday was designated a national holiday in the United States, observed on the third Monday in January. On August 28, 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered a pivotal speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. The words, which have come to be known as the "I Have a Dream" speech, inspired the crowd of more than 300,000 people who made the march on Washington to advocate for civil rights. Dr. King spoke fervently of a day when all God's children would join hands and walk together as sisters and brothers.

January 18 – Confession of St. Peter

The feast day commemorates Peter's statement (or confes-
sion) that Jesus was Messiah, as recorded in Matthew 16:16,

Mark 8:29, and Luke 9:20. The predominance of Peter in the Roman Catholic tradition, coupled with the significance of St. Paul in Protestant theology, inspired the choice of the week between this day and the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul as the first Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in the Northern Hemisphere.

January 18–25 – Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was introduced in 1908 by the Rev. Paul Wattson, founder of the Franciscan Friars of the Atonement-Graymoor, to promote Christian unity throughout the world. The theme for this ecumenical event is established each year by Graymoor Ecumenical and Interreligious Institute.

The dates were initially chosen to reflect St. Peter's Chair (January 18) and the Conversion of St. Paul (January 25). These dates are still observed in most countries, including the UK and the US. The week always includes two Sundays in Canada, beginning the Sunday prior to January 25. In Aotearoa New Zealand and Australia, the week is generally observed between Ascension and Pentecost.



Big Magic Calling

We need each other when asking big questions about calling and vocation. Here is a conversation to share within a small group during this week.

1. Give thanks for each person here, by name, and give thanks to God for being in this room with each of you.
2. Consider the possibility of fierce trust as Elizabeth Gilbert describes in *Big Magic*:

“Fierce trust demands that you put forth the work anyhow because fierce trust knows that the outcome does not matter.

The outcome cannot matter.

Fierce trust asks you to stand firm within this truth: ‘You are worthy, dear one, regardless of the outcome. You will keep making your work, regardless of the outcome. You will keep sharing your work, regardless of the outcome. You were born to create, regardless of the outcome. You will never lose trust in the creative process, even when you don’t understand the outcome.

There is a famous question that shows up, it seems, in every single self-help book ever written: What would you do if you knew that you could not fail?

But I’ve always seen it differently. I think the fiercest question of all is this one: What would you do even if you knew that you might very well fail?

What do you love doing so much that the words failure and success essentially become irrelevant?”

1. Experiment with this possibility of trust in pairs. With paper and pen, have one person in each pair draw a picture without letting the other see. When they’re finished, it’s the partner’s turn to draw the same picture with instructions from their partner without sharing exactly what it is. Then the team can compare its drawings.
2. This may have felt silly and unrelated, but consider what it revealed to you about your trust in yourself, in others, and even in God. Share these insights and thoughts in conversation as you allow yourselves to reveal what you love most.
3. Finally, write each other some permission slips using the template below making sure that each person receives at least one. Consider the stories you have heard. Then fill out the form with tangible, actionable things that might be a stumbling block for that individual. (For example, I give you permission to believe that your job doesn’t need to define you. Or I give you permission to trust that God is excited about your next stop. Add details to add meaning and blessing to this permission giving.) Distribute permission slips in envelopes with each person’s name.
4. As you gave thanks in the beginning, give thanks for something that surprised you in this conversation. Give thanks again for each person in this room by name and thank God for this shared conversation.

Permission Slip

To: _____

From: _____

I have fierce trust in you and in God’s love for you. I give you permission to

Remember to make sure your grant gives permission for tangible, actionable things.



Called to Be Lights

Based on Isaiah 49:1–7

Before the prophet begins, have another voice set the scene.

VOICE: The people of Judah were far away from home. They were discouraged, they felt lost, they wondered if they would ever return home, and they wondered if God cared. Imagine now that you are the people of Judah – discouraged and lost... is that so hard to imagine? (*Prophet enters.*)

PROPHET: Listen, friends! Listen! Listen to me! Pay attention! Please! Over here, those of you in the back! Can you hear me back there? Good.

I have something important to say.

First, I must tell you that I am no one remarkable – just a man/woman from Judah. I work when the sun comes up and

labour all day. But although I am no one special, God chose me to be a light... To be your light; God filled me with powerful words – words of hope and love – to tell you. It sounds strange, I know, but I am here as your light, my friends. God wants you to know that for those of you who are far from home, who are lost or feel lost, who are being treated unfairly, things will be different. And those who are treating you badly? One day, they will respect you. Don't lose heart. Stay true to God, my friends, and you will see this come to pass – God's great community. It's a beautiful vision. Take this light I have given you, my friends, carry it and be that light to another.

VOICE: God has given us as lights to the nations – to the discouraged, to the lost, to those who are treated unfairly. Is that so hard to imagine?

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 "[Called to Be Lights](#)"
- Alternatively, arrange for a storyteller to present the story.

The practice of storytelling

Directions

1. Listen to the story "Called to Be Lights."
2. Using the drawing materials provided, create a visual retelling of today's story. What captures your imagination?
3. After drawing the story, tape each drawing into a cylinder and set a battery-operated tealight in the middle as a way to create a sensory retelling of the story using light.



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.

Humbling ourselves

Materials

- Printed copies of “[You Are Special](#)” from Exploring Our Faith, or homemade audio recording with players or readers to share the story with non-readers
- Dictionaries
- Cushions or yoga mats or rugs to create a meditative/prayerful space
- Copies of the directions – one for each person
- Hand sanitizer or wipes



Suitable for all ages
working together

The practice of humility

Directions

1. Read “You Are Special” from Exploring Our Faith.
2. After hearing the story, wonder what would happen if someone believed they were so special that they didn’t see the specialness in other people. What might happen?
3. Contemplate the word humble. If it is a new word for you, try out different definitions or look at pictures that show what being humble looks like.
4. Then, use your own body to see what it feels like to be humble. Try:
 - **kneeling on the ground or on a cushion with a bowed head.**
 - **sitting on knees, hands on the ground, bow your head to the floor.**
 - **lying on your stomach, arms out like a cross.**
 - **lying on your stomach as above but put your hands together above your head in a prayer pose.**
5. Reflect:
 - **What did it feel like to be humble?**
 - **Was it hard to move your body to be humble?**
 - **What did your body tell you about being humble?**
 - **How might you practice being humble all the time?**

Use your voice (without using words)

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Paper
- Sticky tape
- Wall/cardboard box/display board or bulletin board titled “Wall of Hope”
- Photographs and magazines and calendar pictures that can represent “hope”



Suitable for
all ages

The practice of hope

Directions

1. Draw pictures of what hope looks like to you or select from the photographs and magazine images that represent hope images.
2. Take your image and paste or tape it on the Wall of Hope.
3. Consider how these images convey hope without using words. What reactions or emotions rise to the surface as you look upon these images? How can you “use your voice” without using words?
4. The images will intermingle and overlap, creating a graffiti collage. You can place this in a prominent place for display, cover a bulletin board, or large cardboard box, making the image multi-dimensional.
5. You might add another layer to this hope-filled sharing by inviting people to draw a portrait of someone in the congregation who gives them hope and why. You might have names from the church directory for those hesitant to draw people.



Unfolding story

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Copy of John 1:29–42 or Bibles
- Sheets of paper



**An activity for
a group setting.
Suitable for ages
12–adult**

The practice of mystery

Directions

The disciples ask Jesus where he is staying, and Jesus answers them, “Come and see.” Jesus frequently answers questions in a manner that doesn’t give a concrete answer but rather opens the listener up to more questions. Playfully explore questions and answers.

1. Read John 1:29–42.
2. Each person writes a question at the top of their paper. You can choose a question inspired by the passage or choose a random life question.
3. Pass the piece of paper to the person to your right.
4. Silently read the question and write a short response. The response can be a phrase, one sentence, or another question.
5. Fold the paper over to hide the original question. (You should only see your response on the page.) Pass the piece of paper to the person to your right.
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 until the page is full.
7. Unfold the paper and enjoy the odd conversation the group has created on each page.
8. Discuss:

- **Are you comfortable with questions that don’t have clear answers?**
- **What are some examples of questions that don’t have clear answers?**

Word power

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Newspapers and other periodicals
- Black markers
- Bulletin board



**Suitable for
ages 12–adult**

The practice of giving witness

Directions

Isaiah 49:1–7 talks about the power of words. Words pierce our hearts, move us, and often call us to action. In this station, we will play words, specifically in the cutting away of words, to show how powerful just a few words can be.

1. Find a newspaper article or part of an article that interests you.
2. Using the black markers, strike out words with less power. Leave the most powerful words without any marks so that only a small selection of words are highlighted. Feel free to play and perhaps transform the message.
3. Place your creation on a bulletin board for all to see.

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.

You Are Special

A story based on Isaiah 49:1–7

Isaiah was feeling sad. He had tried to talk to people about God, but they just didn't understand.

Isaiah said: "I just can't do it!"

Isaiah sat on a rock. Isaiah sighed a big sigh.

Then Isaiah heard a voice deep inside and all around.

"You are special!"

It was God's voice, and God said: "You are special, Isaiah! My love shines through you all the time."

Then Isaiah wasn't sad anymore. He jumped off the rock and said: "I am special! I am chosen by God! Hooray!"

Bracelet

God reminded Isaiah that he was special to God, and the light of God's love shone in him.

Make a bracelet as a reminder that you, too, are special to God as you shine the light of God's love in the world.

You will need beads, plastic or jute lacing.

Directions

1. Thread beads on the jute or plastic lacing.
2. You might choose a different shape or hue for the variety of gifts and abilities you have.
3. Wear your bracelet as a reminder of the special relationship you have with God and the gifts God has given you.



Deep down and all around the prophet Isaiah heard the words, "You are special, Isaiah! My love shines through you all the time."

In another place in the Bible, there is a letter written by a man named Paul to the people in one of the first churches who were shining the light of God's love in the

world. Paul encouraged them, saying, "I give thanks to my God always for you" (1 Corinthians 1:4). Who do you know who shines the light of God's love – shows God's love – to others? Decorate the plaque below as a prayer to God, giving thanks for that person's love and light.

I give thanks
to God for

Name

who shows
God's love
I am loved by God

