



Following the Call

As the disciples are called to be fishers of people, we are invited to wonder what is calling us and leading us to find a place to dwell and grow in unity with others in our community.

This week...

Ecumenical prayer calendar

Cyprus, Greece, Turkey

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 day (commentary on p. 136)

January 25 – Conversion of St. Paul

Personal reflection

Pope Francis reminds us that “being a disciple means being constantly ready to bring the love of Jesus to others, and this can happen unexpectedly and in any place: on the street, in a city square, during work, on a journey.”

- **Take a walk through your community this week, wandering through the streets, through the squares, by the places where people work, and notice where the love of Jesus might be needed.**
- **Being “constantly ready” might give any one of us pause. Spend some time this week practicing an extra bit of self-care so that you can be ready to love others.**

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 22, 2023

3rd Sunday after the Epiphany
3rd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Revised Common Lectionary (Year A)

Isaiah 9:1–4
Psalm 27:1, 4–9
1 Corinthians 1:10–18

Matthew 4:12–23

the focus in age-level materials

Liturgical colour green

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.





Isaiah 9:1–4

Psalm 27:1, 4–9

1 Corinthians 1:10–18

Matthew 4:12–23

the focus in age-level materials

Inviting God, you call us to follow, to witness and to wonder. You call us to follow and risk all we know so that the change we need can finally be seen. Amen.

Following the Call

Following Christ's call is risky and full of uncertainty. The Season after the Epiphany invites us to journey into the choices and changes that mark the lives of those who follow in God's ways – and discern together what it means to follow Jesus today.

Isaiah 9:1–4 marks a hinge point in God's relationship with the people who live in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. Here the prophet speaks of the light of a new king, probably referring to a new prince born after 732 BCE, following a time of war. This king was to inaugurate a time of peace and justice. The four verses open with a promise that "there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish." The land that was brought into contempt will be made glorious. Speaking in the past tense, verses 2–4 speak as if the transformation has already taken place.

It's this transformation so longed for in **Psalm 27:1, 4–9** as it is clear something is happening in the psalmist's life. They find courage in trusting in God's provision of shelter and protection (v. 5). This psalm might offer comfort to a congregation in a time of transition. We are not alone in times of fear; as people of faith, we hold faith and fear together.

Matthew 4:12–23 is full of risk and uncertainty. Jesus has gone to Galilee to gather disciples and reaches out to Simon (Peter) and his brother Andrew. His call to follow sounds absurd and abrupt. It may be helpful to note that the writer of Matthew relates significant events in the story of Jesus without necessarily indicating the passage of time. Jesus speaks, and the fishers respond. These brothers change the direction in their lives and follow.

Andrew and Simon have no idea what they are following Jesus for. "I will make you fish for people," does not offer clarity. Questions raised by this text are numerous. Why these two people? Why this community? Why fishers and not someone else? This move by Andrew and Simon must have seemed impulsive at best and foolish at worst. What was it like for Zebedee, to watch his children, James and John, make what may appear to be a foolish and impulsive decision to follow a stranger and leave behind their responsibilities for providing for family and community? What is a parent's response to such choices?

Within this one passage, all the elements of Jesus' earthly ministry are included: proclaiming the presence of God's reign, teaching, healing, and calling disciples. An indication of the way Jesus ministers is found here, too. Matthew portrays Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophet Isaiah's description of God's faithful and peaceful servant. Jesus' actions indicate God's new ways and set a model for the church and all who seek to follow Jesus.

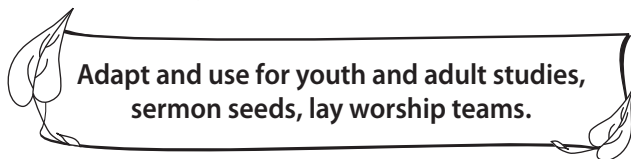
Paul calls the Christians in Corinth in **1 Corinthians 1:10–18** to change direction and be united in outlook. This miracle is possible, Paul believes, because of God's saving grace. Paul calls them to follow in God's ways, secure in the knowledge that they belong to Christ. Living into the unfolding vision of God will change the community of faith.

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God's call often comes through the gradual unfolding of events and experiences in our lives. This call becomes our invitation to follow in God's ways, extending the good news of God's saving love to others. In what ways do you and your church respond to the call to follow Jesus and "fish for people"? How do you support one another in your lives as disciples?



Reflecting on the Word



Connecting with life

Ponder the big and small decision points that have created stress in your life and reflect on the hinge points that have offered clarity or presented new opportunities.

- **When our options are limited, we often experience this as a loss. How might these times serve to focus our energies and direct our passions?**

Scripture

Isaiah 9:1–4 provides the historical backdrop from which the gospel writer draws. The people of Zebulun and Naphtali have had their homes and land invaded by the Assyrians. The prophet comforts them with the promise of an end to their oppression. But this promised light of salvation is more than a spiritual reality. For Zebulun and Naphtali, Isaiah's words will prove to be empty if they are not rooted in a physical reality of justice and peace for their people.

- **In what situations are we tempted to alleviate suffering with spiritual jargon rather than seeking justice?**

Psalms 27:1, 4–9 is a cry for help in a time of fear and trouble.

- **How does this psalm offer comfort in times of trouble?**
Verses 5 and 6 offer contrasting responses to fear.
- **What are the differences between seeking shelter from trials and holding your head up in the midst of them?**
Can we do both at the same time?

Often, our culture says, “Go,” and we adopt that message to motivate ourselves to work harder and find our identity.

- **What would it look like to shift your self-talk from “Go” to “Come”?**

1 Corinthians 1:10–18 describes the conflict in a church as members break into factions. Cliques form when people with similar interests and activities band together and exclude others who are not like them.

- **What positive emotions come from belonging to a group? What negative emotions come from exclusion?**
- **How does following God challenge us to think about racism, sexism, ageism, and other -isms?**

Matthew 4:12–23 presents a hinge point in Jesus' ministry and a hinge point in the lives of his first disciples. The narrative unfolds smoothly without questioning on the part of the actors.

- **What questions would arise for you if you were one of the fishers in this scene?**
- **What was the challenge of Jesus' call?**
- **What was the gift in Jesus' call?**

Linking Jesus with the prophet Isaiah (vv. 13–16) and John the baptizer (v. 17) before launching Jesus in his mission (v. 18 ff), the gospel writer establishes credibility in the eyes of the community.

- **What makes Jesus' ministry credible within the neighbourhood? What makes your church's ministry credible in your neighbourhood?**

Connecting scripture and life

“Disciples” has become a term for church members, so that we often hear it as an instruction to make recruits. That's not what is meant. It meant: Go and make learners. ‘Disciples’ meant ‘learners,’ people who will join in learning community and carry on learning – lifelong, to the end of the age.” (William Loader)

- **How might this definition of “disciple” give shape to your work and the work of your community?**
- **As the Sermon on the Mount will be the focus passages for four weeks, How might these weeks be a time of discipleship as defined by William Loader?**

Focus for Worship, Learning, and Serving

We do not see the first disciples struggle with their response to Jesus' call, but we know we struggle with following Jesus in our lives. Our worship for this week focuses on exploring our hesitations as we respond to God's call on our lives and re-visioning God's call as a gift as well as a challenge. Maybe it reminds us that there is not one call on our lives – but that there are many invitations that God offers.

It is always a question of when we choose to follow.

As we continue our Epiphany exploration, consider how you might reframe or re-imagine the way you hear Jesus' call to follow. When you respond to Jesus' call, are you reluctant or joyous? Do you feel as if you are going or coming? Do you see yourself being sidetracked from the future you planned, or do you see yourself stepping into a great light?

Following the Call

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: people to help distribute paper and pens and nets.
- ❑ Choose an option for hearing Matthew 4:12–23. For the Bible story, arrange for three voices to present “[A Day by the Sea](#)” on p. 138. Alternatively, for younger children, arrange for a storyteller to present “[Come, Follow Me](#)” in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week’s materials.
- ❑ Bring items for setting the worship space: pens and pieces of paper for all in attendance, small squares of netting for the gospel reading.
- ❑ 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 “Following Where Jesus Leads” (*Seasons Songbook*, vol. 8, #14 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 8. Printed music and recording are also available at www.seasonsonline.ca/order).
- ❑ Set [stations](#) as described on pp. 139–140.



Music Suggestions

A World of Difference

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

Be God's

Danielle Rose; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9

The Anointing

James Maher; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9

Following Where Jesus Leads

Kate Abba and Julia Abrahams; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 8

Come and Seek the Ways of Wisdom

Ruth Duck, Donna Kasbohm; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 7

Come and Follow Me

Tom Franzak; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 5

Listen, God Is Calling v. 3

Tanzanian traditional; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 2

Longing for Light, We Wait in Darkness

Bernadette Farrell

The Lord Is My Light

Taizé Community



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

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?” and place their answers (unsigned) in the collection, along with their tangible gifts that will be used to help answer such questions of others.

Call to worship

Based on 1 Corinthians 1:10–19

Now I appeal to you
sisters and brothers
because we all come with
so many questions
so many things that we need to ask God
so many things that we don't quite understand.

We bring all of these unanswered
questions together in our worship
and our praise of the One
who reminds us that we belong.

We belong here in this family of faith.
We belong to each other
and to our God. Praise God.

Opening prayer

Based on Psalm 27:1, 4–9

O God, you are our light and salvation.
Still, we fear.

There is so much
that remains unknown and uncertain.
We push against you, but you will not push us away.
You hold us close.

When we wonder what the day might bring,
you whisper, “follow me, I will make you:
readers to little children, bandagers of bruised hearts,
lovers of the forsaken, pilgrims who show the way to others.”



Worship Outline • January 22, 2023

We ask so much of you, O God.
We want your beauty and comfort.
We need your strength and peace.
You hear our cries
and answer us with your endless grace and love.
You are our joy.
Amen.

Call to reconciliation

If we come to God with open hearts and honest words,
we will not be pushed away but wrapped in God's loving
and forgiving embrace.
Let us join together in confessing our lives to God, praying...

Prayer of confession

Holy One,
we have so many questions
but we don't pause to listen
to your still small voice
to your invitation to follow
to your call to serve
to your affirmation of our gifts.
Instead, we push forward.

We do what needs to be done,
without aim or direction,
responding to the most immediate
demand for our attention.
We cross it off the list and
move on to the next.

Forgive us.
Forgive us for
our preoccupation
and our self-importance.
Call us again to seek your face
and follow the Christ.
We are listening now.
Silence is kept.

Words of affirmation

Dear Child of God, God is listening.
God has heard your prayer and wishes you peace.
God forgives you and loves you.
This is the good news. Amen.

Engage

Opening the word

Isaiah 9:1–4 It was a few weeks ago that we heard this passage, or at least it seems that way to any who were at the Christmas Eve/Day services, where most of these verses are set as part of that holy season. But now, with the presents broken or forgotten, with the last of the thank you notes written, with the decorations put away until the next time, with Christmas over and done, do we hear the words in a new way? Can they make a difference in our lives, despite their comfortable familiarity?

Matthew 4:12–23 *the focus in age-level materials*

Introduction

Distribute the netting that represents the fishing nets.
The disciples called to follow Christ in today's gospel reading were fishers. They saved their money to buy new nets. Their schedules were shaped by the times of day set aside for setting and collecting the nets. They tended and mended their nets to maintain their livelihood. Few of us are fishers, but we save our money and shape our schedules like them. We come with questions for God because there are so many things that we are tending. As you feel the netting in your hands, ponder this question. Consider your question again.

■ What is it that are you tending in this net?

(Leave time for people to ponder this question.)

Choose from the following for hearing the focus story.

Bible story Have three voices present the story "[A Day by the Sea](#)" on page 138, or arrange for a storyteller to present "[Come, Follow Me](#)" in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week's materials.

Dramatic reading A narrator will read the passage while gesturing. Alternatively, have someone read while another mimes the actions. Gestures are suggested and should be adapted for your space and context.

VERSE 12: *Make a withdrawing gesture.*

VERSE 13: *Walk forward as if on a shoreline with one arm and eyes tracing the waterline.*

VERSE 16: *Pause, allowing enough time for the four disciples to move into the worship space with their nets as if rising in the morning, going to work with their nets, and viewing the sunrise.*

VERSE 17: *Make an arcing gesture above head.*

VERSES 18–20: *Set gaze on two disciples: Peter and Andrew.*

Peter and Andrew exit the worship space with purposefulness, as if on a path.

VERSES 21 AND 22: *Set gaze on James and John.*

James and John exit the worship space with purposefulness, as if on a path.



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 “Following Where Jesus Leads” as people gather again (*Seasons Songbook*, vol. 8, #14 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 8. Printed music and recording are also available at www.seasonsonline.ca/order).

Prayers of the people

Gracious God, you have called us by name and invited us to be your disciples.

You have claimed us as your children, and we are grateful. We are grateful for the gift of this day, and this beautiful planet where we live, work, worship, and play.

Help us preserve its beauty and the natural life it supports.

We are grateful for the communities in which we live.

Grant us willing hearts and hands to make them places of welcome, work, and opportunity.

We are grateful for the people in our lives:

our co-workers, neighbours, friends, and families; those near and far, those we see often, and those we can only see in our fondest memories.

We call on you to be near to those whose lives, bodies, and spirits are broken.

We pray especially for... (*include prayers for your own community*).

We call on you to give wisdom and prudence to our leaders, that they may seek to do your will.

We call on you to bring peace where conflict rages and comfort where despair looms large. Jesus, we have heard you when you call, and we pray as you taught...

(*continue with the prayer that Jesus taught*).

Prayer of dedication

We are called to follow, yet are often slow to respond, God of grace.

We are blessed with more than we ever need or can use, yet we are reluctant to part with even a portion of this abundance.

As we offer our gifts to you, remind us that learning generosity is part of our call to follow the One who models your gracious nature in every word, every gesture, every day.

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.

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.

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

Special Day Commentary

January 25 – Conversion of St. Paul

This feast day commemorates the conversion of Saul, the zealous persecutor of Christians, to Paul, the apostle whose writing dominates the Christian Testament. The story of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus is told three times in the Acts of the Apostles (in chapters 9, 22, and 26).



Following Your Heart

Simon, Andrew, John, and James left their jobs and didn't look back. Jesus had something that these fishers wanted so passionately that they were willing to leave everything they knew and follow him. This opportunity for quiet meditation explores your heart and passions.

How to use It might be something that is shared with youth or adults to deepen their connection with this week's text. It might be used with committees, task forces, or other working groups in the church to help define their focus and purpose. Or it could be sent in the weekly email to prepare for worship that coming Sunday.

Directions

1. This is an exercise in allowing your heart to dream. If sharing in this exercise with a group, begin by sharing a recent dream and if it had anything to do with following your heart.
2. Work independently to dream about what your heart longs to follow. If this is a personal reflection, this might apply to the profession or passion that you might pursue. If working in a group, use this resource to consider your work together. (The example is for a Mission Committee.) Allow 15 minutes for this reflection.
3. Share your list with the group listening for where God is calling you. Are there things repeated and shared? Was there something that caught your/the group's imagination?

Imagine 3 to 5 things you'd do if you truly followed your heart. Dream without the worry of money or skill.	List simple ways you/your committee/your church could incorporate this possibility into your life (together).	List all the obstacles that keep you/your committee/your church from following your heart.	List ways you/your committee/your church might overcome the obstacles that stand in your way.
1. <i>Mission Committee Example:</i> Respond to the needs in our community right now.	Pray through the headlines, invite local leaders to share concerns/needs, invite members to bring their interests, write letters to congress, send money...	Meetings too short, lack of interest, "we've never done it that way," mission dollars already dedicated...	Designate 10 minutes to monthly agenda for new opportunities, open communication beyond committee.
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			



A Day by the Sea

Based on Matthew 4:12–23

(If possible, have a recording of lake or sea sounds. These sounds start prominently and then fade to the background while the sea speaks. The sounds never fade away completely, however.)

SEA: Ah, look who has come to visit me. Welcome, good people. I am the sea. I have been here for many, many years – centuries even. I have been here longer than you have been alive. Imagine that. I was here when the man they called Jesus came and invited four fishers, Simon, Andrew, James and John, to follow him and learn about God’s way of love – and they did! Can you imagine such a change? Change can be scary, but it’s natural. Take me, for instance. When you look at me or when you think of me, you think, “Ah, that’s the sea. It was here yesterday. It will be here tomorrow. Nothing different. Still the same.” But I am not the same. You should look more closely because I am constantly changing – coming in, going out, going up, going down, moving with the current, moving with the tide, and rolling with great waves. I am constantly here, but I am constantly changing. These fishers saw a chance to change. They saw a chance for a new life – a life drastically different from what they had been doing, and they seized the opportunity. To follow a man like Jesus is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and those fishers had a rare gift of sight – they saw Jesus’ offer as a gift; A chance to change. Change isn’t easy, but it is natural; embrace it. Don’t resist it. Ride it like a wave and let the world support you. The beauty of that day is that I watched these fishers embrace the secrets of the sea. Jesus came into their lives like a wave, and they moved with him. Maybe, someday, someone like Jesus will offer you the chance for a new life. And when that time comes, I wonder what you will say.

(The sound of the ocean – waves swelling and crashing. Perhaps a seagull screeching. These sounds start prominently and then fade to the background while the net speaks. They never fade away completely, however.)

NET: *(straining)* Hi theeeeerrree. One seccccooooonndddd. Grrrrrrrrrr. Ahhhhhhhhhhhh Woow. That was quite a load. Do you see all those fish I just caught? Amazing! Yes, like

the sea, I remember that day. I wondered why Jesus didn’t use a net like me to catch those fishers? If he wanted Simon, Andrew, James and John to go with him, why didn’t he just throw me out and over them? I’m really good at catching things, and I could have caught them, and they would have followed. But Jesus didn’t need me to catch them. He used his words, and his words were simple.

Jesus said, “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” That’s it. That’s all he said, and they dropped me to the ground and left. In the old days, Simon, Andrew, James and John used me; they threw me out into the fresh ocean, and I gathered fish for their supper. But now, they gather people and feed their hearts. They help people change their lives, and that is a good thing. Jesus was right. It was time for them to leave their nets and everything that kept them trapped here. It was time to embrace a new life, a free life. Being a net – something that likes to keep things here, keep things trapped – I have to say, I miss them. Time for another load. See you soooooooooonnnnnnn.

ZEBEDEE: Out cha go! Less talkin’ more catchin’ net! Name’s Zebedee. I’m the father of James and John. A lot of people ask me about that day, “Hey Zebedee, when Jesus came and convinced your son James and your son John to follow him, do you wish you had said ‘No!’?” But... how can you say no to someone like Jesus? I could see it in his eyes. He was pure of heart, and he had a vision and a purpose. He was going to teach my sons to be great; to be leaders; to follow in the ways of God. “But Zebedee,” they say, “don’t you miss your sons?” Of course I miss my sons. Every day I think about them. But I comfort myself by imagining them helping many people instead of helping just one – me! Maybe they will come back some day to visit. I would like that. But I trust in God to use their strong bodies, gentle hearts, and loving souls to do good in this world. How can a father be sad with such a gift for the world? Anyway, I stay busy with my net and stay close to the sea. They give me comfort. Nice to visit with you but I must be off. Shalom.

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



Bible story

Materials

- Recording of today’s story “[A Day at the Sea](#)”
- 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 “A Day at the Sea.”
2. Wonder if Sea, Net, and Zebedee ever spoke again. What might they say?
3. Draw a picture of them talking together.



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.

A time for joy

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Paper



**Suitable for
all ages**

The practice of joy

Directions

Today's story from the gospel of Matthew tells about new beginnings for Jesus and new beginnings for the four fishers Jesus invited to follow – a time of great joy in the fishers' lives. Isaiah 9:1–4, one of the other readings this week, also tells of new beginnings for the people of Judah – a new ruler, a time of peace and justice, and a time of joy/rejoicing.

1. On a sheet of paper, draw a picture of a moment of great joy in your life. Where were you? Who was there? What were you doing?
2. Somewhere on the drawing, label the moment, give it a title, and describe why it made you happy.
3. Display the drawings on a bulletin board for all to read.

Younger children What makes you happy? What are happy colours? What shapes are happy shapes? Using colour and shapes, draw about happy times.

Already called

Materials

- Basic supplies
- Paper
- Copies of the directions



**Suitable for
ages 9–adult**

The practice of reflection

Directions

1. Recall all of the times you have served others with love.
2. Make a list of every memory.
3. When no more memories come to mind, look back over your list. Give thanks for all of these times you have been called into service.
4. Look back over your list and recall when you were most aware of Jesus' invitation to love and action. Circle those times on your list.
5. Ask in the quiet, "Do these circles help me to know where God is calling me next?" and listen for God's wisdom.
6. Give thanks again for all that you have heard from God in this time of quiet reflection.



Marked with the cross

Materials

- Bibles
- A full-length mirror mounted to the wall or propped vertically and securely
- Permanent or transparent markers
- Hand sanitizer or wipes



**Suitable for all ages
working together**

The practice of belonging

Directions

In 1 Corinthians 1:10–18, one of the readings for this week, the people are arguing about to whom they belong. Is it Paul? Peter? Christ? Their competing loyalties were ripping apart their community. We also have competing loyalties and things that break apart our communities, but like the Corinthians, we have been baptized into the Body of Christ. In baptism, we are marked with the cross of Christ and sealed as God's own forever.

1. Look into the mirror. Draw a cross on the mirror over the reflection of your forehead.
2. Look at the other crosses drawn on the mirror. Each represents a member of your church community. Together with beliefs throughout time and space, you form the Body of Christ. Take a minute to appreciate them and give thanks for their gifts, love, prayers, and witness.

Mirroring unity

Materials

- An open space where people working in pairs can move around
- A copy of the [directions](#) for each pair



**Suitable for all ages
working together**

The practice of unity

Directions

In today's story from Matthew 4:12–23, Jesus calls the fishers and invites them to follow. They are united in one purpose. In the reading from 1 Corinthians 1:10–18, the apostle Paul calls the church at Corinth to "be united in the same mind and the same purpose." Paul wants the people to "be in agreement." In this exercise, you and your partner will move as one entity. To create unity, we all must be leaders and followers. For some, this will be an exercise in relinquishing the desire to lead and learn to follow. For some, this will be an exercise in creating agency and relinquishing the desire to follow.

1. Find a partner.
2. Choose a leader; the other will be the reflection.
3. Facing each other and making eye contact, the leader starts to move *in slow motion*. The person playing the reflection mirrors the leader's movements exactly. It is important that the pair keep eye contact. The challenge is to use your peripheral vision and not look directly at the moving body part. You want to disguise the fact that you are following the leader. Don't talk during this exercise. You can move any part of your body, not just your arms and legs. Be creative. Try moving your face, fingers, or hips. Play.
4. After practicing step 3 for a while, change leaders. Moving slower is better.
5. Once your pair is good at mirroring, ask another pair if they can tell who is leading. If your pair is really good, it will be difficult to tell the leader from the follower.
6. After practicing steps 3 to 5 for a while, try mirroring without assigning a leader (in essence, you are both leaders and both followers). Do you move as one unit?
7. Sometimes stop and watch other pairs work. Can you tell when one is leading?
8. In pairs or in the large group, share your experience. Think about these questions:
 - **What makes a good leader in this exercise?**
 - **In step 6, what was your experience when there was no assigned leader? Did you find yourself resisting the temptation to lead the pair? Or were you scared to lead? Or did your pair have a good balance of leading and following?**
 - **Did you achieve unity? How much work goes into creating unity? What is that work – how would you describe the work you just did?**

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.

Come, Follow Me

A story based on Matthew 4:12-23

Peter and his brother Andrew were fishers. They went out in their boat and caught fish in their net each day. Their net was so big.

Sometimes Peter and Andrew had to wait all night before they caught any fish. While they waited, they told stories that they had heard about a new teacher named Jesus.

One night, as Peter and Andrew were fishing, Jesus walked by. Jesus waved and called out, "Peter! Andrew! I need friends to help me. Come with me and you can help me teach people about God."

Peter and Andrew looked at each other. Wow! Jesus wanted their help! They put down their nets right away and followed Jesus.

Jesus walked further down the beach and saw two other fishers, James and John, fixing their fishing nets. Again, Jesus said, "James! John! I need friends to help me! Come! Follow me!"

What do you think James and John did? They went with Jesus, too.

Jesus and his new helpers, called disciples, travelled everywhere together, telling people about God's love.

Song: We Will Follow Jesus

Jesus says, "Come, follow me, and you can help me teach people about God's love."

Here is a song to sing when you are not sure what to do.

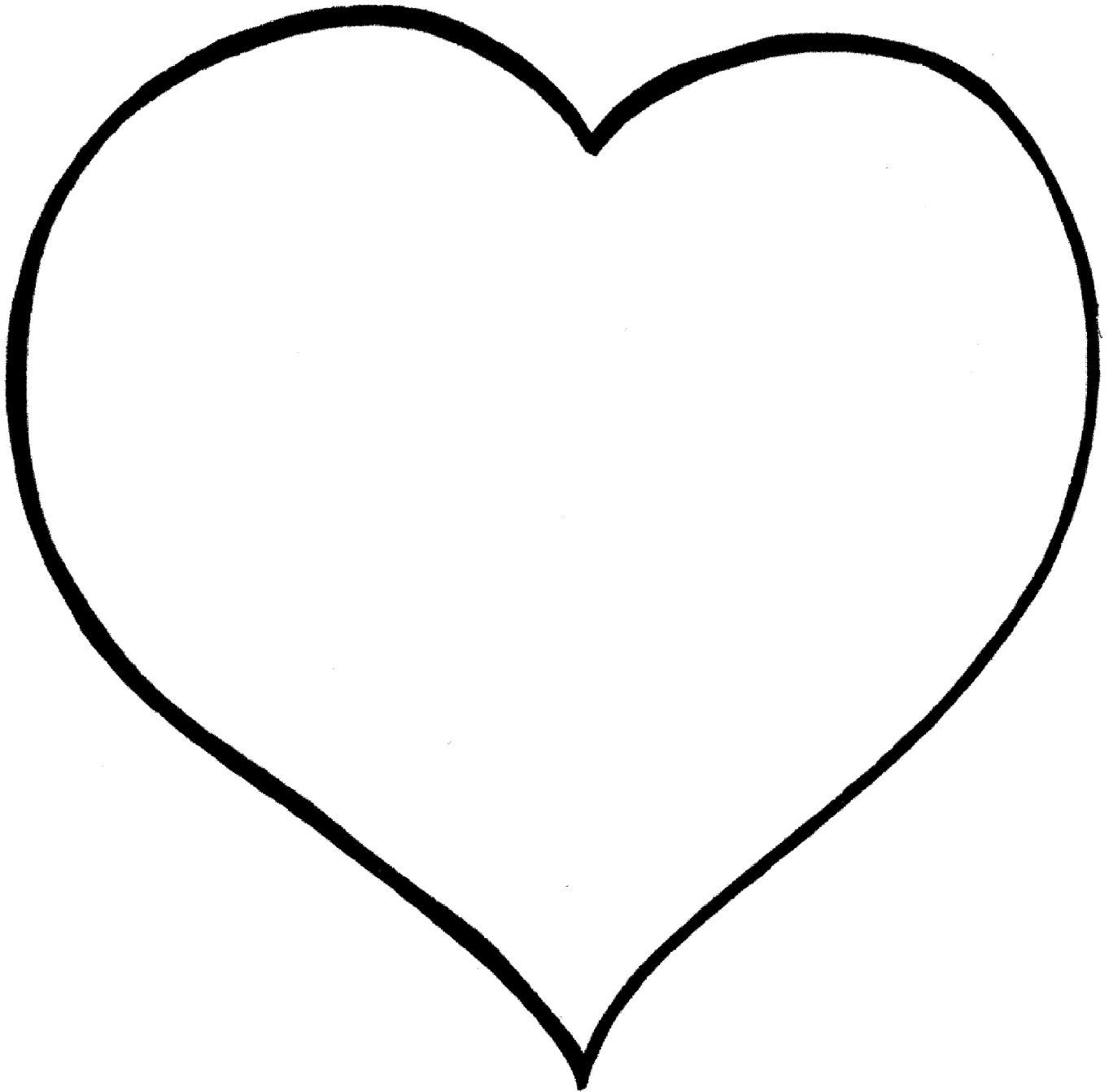
(tune: "The Bear Went Over the Mountain")

We will follow Jesus,
we will follow Jesus,
we will follow Jesus,
and share God's love with all (clap, clap).
And share God's love with all (clap, clap).
And share God's love with all (clap, clap).
We will follow Jesus,
we will follow Jesus,
we will follow Jesus,
and share God's love with all (clap, clap).



Happiness comes when we follow our heart. But what does your heart want? Imagine your heart could dream.

What would it dream about? (See some hints below.) Draw those dreams, desires, and wants in your heart.



Hints

- Imagine what you want to do or be.
- Imagine where you will live.
- Imagine all the people who will be with you.
- Imagine the things you will do to play and have fun.

