



Sunday, October 1 – Saturday, October 7 • 2023

## Questions and Quarrels

We join a hungry, thirsty, tired, grieving, grumpy people wandering in the wilderness.

### This Week...

#### Ecumenical prayer calendar

Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela

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. 76)

**October 1** – World(wide) Communion Sunday

**October 4** – St. Francis of Assisi

#### Personal reflection

Scan the headlines and your own heart for those accounts where a shared story healed a conflict or quarrel. When do we create space for each other to be seen and heard for our full humanity? How do we connect through our shared experience? Where are these spaces in your everyday 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).*

#### October 1, 2023

18th Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 21 (26)

26th Sunday in Ordinary Time

#### Revised Common Lectionary (Year A)

##### Exodus 17:1–7

the focus in age-level materials

Psalms 78:1–4, 12–16

Philippians 2:1–13

Matthew 21:23–32

Resources based on semi-continuous readings of the *Revised Common Lectionary* can be found in the RCL folder

**Liturgical colour** Green

The Season after Pentecost is a time to tell stories about God and who we are as Christ's disciples. Use the Storytelling Starters each week as an opportunity to encourage new stories. "[Tell Me a Story about the Story](#)" on page 77 invites curiosity and wonder about an old tradition in Jewish circles.

### 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.





**Exodus 17:1–7**  
the focus in age-level materials  
**Psalms 78:1–4, 12–16**  
**Philippians 2:1–13**  
**Matthew 21:23–32**



Resources based on semi-continuous readings of the *Revised Common Lectionary* can be found in the RCL folder.

Holy One, Wilderness is our companion still. Even as we face the challenges, may we learn from Wilderness the gift of not being in control. Amen.

# Questions and Quarrels

We are with Wilderness again. With a lack of control. With questions, questions, questions. Remember, God is here. God receives our questions, even when we pose them through a pout or with a temper. God invites us to enter into the wrestling and resolving of the questions, and not expect easy answers!

**Exodus 17:1–7** The people of Israel are wandering in the wilderness, led by Moses and Aaron. Since leaving Egypt, this is the third time there have been mumblings from the crowd. First, the people complained that the water of Marah was bitter (15:24–24). They grumbled and complained again when they found themselves hungry (16:2–15). Now, the people are camped at Rephidim and cannot find water. We might wonder whether there was no water or they did not know how to look for it in this new place.

The people lash out at Moses. How could they be sure that God is still with them? Despite their deliverance from Egypt and the experience of daily food provisions, their reliance on God's sustaining presence falters again, and they accuse Moses of intending to kill them.

Moses, in turn, cries out to God. "What shall I do with this people?" We might wonder if Moses is (but for God) alone in his leadership role, for Aaron is conspicuous in his absence.

When Moses strikes the rock, water rushes forth. The springs found there are named Massah and Meribah, Hebrew words that recall the Israelites' quarrelling and testing. Is this a reminder not to raise complaints to God? Or might such naming recall for the people the quarrelling and testing *and* the response of God's presence with them in the wilderness? Is it always rude to complain? What if the intent is to inform and comes across as a complaint? What if asking questions is how we find deeper understanding?

The question "Is God among us or not?" is a question that people of faith have wrestled with throughout the ages. Likewise, this will not be the last time that the people

of Israel grow anxious and fearful on their journey to a new land. Still, as is often the case for them, this time of crisis leads them to deepen their trust in God's presence.

Trust that God is among us is evident in **Psalms 78:1–4, 12–16**. God's provision is celebrated with joy. The lectionary skips over verses 5–11, the memory of the people's rebellion against God. As a remedy against this happening again, the psalmist calls the people to remember and recite accounts of God's powerful works.

In **Philippians 2:1–13**, Paul declares, "God is with us," and to live in God's name is to serve all. When Paul implores the community to "work out your salvation" (v. 12), he is not saying salvation is earned but that the community must take the steps necessary to reach and express their complete wholeness. God calls; humans respond.

**Matthew 21:23–32** How does the tone of the questions affect how we hear this story? We might hear the question posed to Jesus as an attack, "Who do you think you are?" Jesus' response may follow as a defence or counter-attack. We may see a mischievous attempt by Jesus to trip up the chief priests and elders. But what if the chief priests and elders are genuinely interested in the source of Jesus' authority because they find it intriguing, inviting, and unsettling? What if Jesus is inviting the priests and elders to give voice to what they suspect is true but will shift the ground beneath their feet dramatically? What if...?

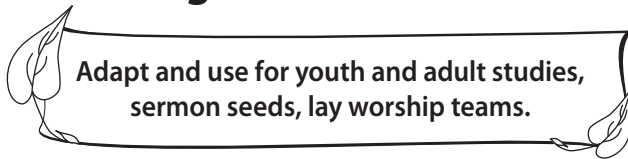
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Questions in the stories from Exodus and Matthew are not wrong, not for being questions or even critiques or challenges. But how we understand the way these questions are posed matters; it permits us to express frustration or shuts us down; it permits us to doubt, enquire, explore, or shuts us down.

How we approach God matters. Respect does not necessarily mean "handle with care" as if the stories, or God, might break if we push back, ask questions, get mad, or name our confusion or frustration.



## Reflecting on the Word



### Connecting with life

A poem by Barbara Dickenson titled “Go to the Ant” compares the attitude of a grasshopper with that of an ant. Dickenson notes that grasshoppers glorify God by “the sensuous enjoyment of each irretrievable moment,” and ants “grieve their yesterdays and grumble each tomorrow.”

- **What has been your experience of enjoyment of each irretrievable moment? What might make this enjoyment difficult to realize?**

### Scripture

**Exodus 17:1–7** The people in Exodus are frustrated and frightened, unsettled and uncertain. Moses and God don’t tell them not to express their frustration; they reiterate the promise and point to the evidence again: God is with us.

- **But what effect does the complaining have on Moses? Does it wear him down? Does it take energy from more fruitful aspects of his leadership?**
- **What can this story help us to remember about healthy relationships between communities and their leaders?**
- **What action can we take this week in support of our leaders?**

**Psalms 78:1–4, 12–16** The psalmist remembers God’s splitting open of rocks, causing streams to flow in the wilderness.

- **What feels dry and parched for us today? What would a stream, flowing water, look like to quench that thirst?**
- **Where in our neighbourhood is there a dry or empty patch of land? Do you have gardeners in your congregation looking for a project? What would it be like to start, or to join in with, a community project**

**to rejuvenate a public space and bring new life to an empty place together?**

### Matthew 21:23–32

Current practice for many sports coaches is to pose questions to the players and invite their responses. Empowering the players to explore the challenges not only invites them to find solutions to this challenge and own those solutions, but it also encourages them to work together. It nurtures their problem-solving skills so, in a game situation, they have the skills to find solutions on the run (as it were).

- **How do we see Jesus as a coach?**
- **How do we see this approach in parenting today?**
- **How is Jesus like a parent?**

### Connecting scripture and life

We assumed we would be through the Covid-19 pandemic after 12 months, then another 12, then another. Our struggles with climate change bring us similar goals and resetting of timelines for when we hope to meet them.

- **How do these experiences open windows into the experience of the people in the wilderness in the Exodus stories?**
- **What quarrels do we engage in with our leaders – church, community, state – in our frustration at being so unsettled and afraid?**
- **What challenges are our leaders facing, leading through such relentless uncertainty? How might the people offer their support and work through constructive questions and exploration rather than with destructive attacks and accusations?**

## Focus for Worship, Learning, and Serving

In the wilderness of division and conflict, this is a week to make space for each other to ask the hard questions. It’s a week to be gracious and kind and ever so gentle. Wrestling with questions shapes us as people, as it did for those in the time of Moses and Jesus. Those questions lead to the stories we “tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of God” (Psalm 78:4). After all, it is from these questions that midrash emerges, as Rabbi Adam Morris shares in “[Tell Me a Story about the Story](#)” on p. 77.

This week, there is space in worship to wonder about those stories – the midrash, the familiar stories we tell and why they matter. What do these stories tell us about God? How might we retell our Biblical story to reflect the questions in our community right now? How might these stories carry us into future quarrels and conflict? How do we create a wide welcome for every question and story to be heard at our table?



# Questions and Quarrels

## Prepare

NOTE: The following suggestions are mere starting points; adapt, delete, and 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 all physically present, consider having a different individual say the bolded responses. Instructions are *italicized*.

- ❑ Recruit volunteers needed for worship: several for Matthew 21:23–32.
- ❑ Choose an option for hearing Exodus 17:1–17. For the Bible story, arrange for a storyteller to present “No Longer Enslaved” on p. 78. Alternatively, for younger children, arrange for a storyteller to present “God Hears Every Grumbling” in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week’s materials. For the story about a story, provide copies of “Tell Me a Story about the Story” (p. 77), Bibles, pens and paper.
- ❑ Bring items for setting the worship space: a world map and battery-operated tealight candles for the Prayers of the People.
- ❑ You might choose to print *Desert Dancing* on or in your bulletin (in the Images to Project and Images for Printing folders). See “Connecting with the Art” on p. 8 for background to the art and artist.
- ❑ Bring songs such as “Gather Us, O God” (*Seasons Songbook*, vol. 6, #3 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 6. Printed music and recording are also available for purchase and download at [https://www.seasonsonline.ca/order\\_products/](https://www.seasonsonline.ca/order_products/)).
- ❑ Set stations as described on pp. 79–80.



## Music Suggestions

### Fill Us, God

Gerry Holmes; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9

### Hold Us in Your Grace

Keri Wehlender and Bruce Harding; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9

### At the Table of the World

Johengen Wren; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 8

### We Sing Of Your Glory/Tuya es La Gloria

Traditional; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 8

### Come, Let Us Seek Our God's Protection

Malawian folk song; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 6

### We Come to the Hungry Feast

Ray Makeover; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 6

### Glory to God

Murray/Sheehy; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 5

### Wa Wa Wa Emimimo/ Come, O Holy Spirit, Come

Traditional; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 5

### We Give Thanks

O'Brian & Watts; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 5

### Glory to God/Gloria a Dios

Traditional; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 2



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

## Gather

### Call to worship

Give ear, O people.

Remember the stories your ancestors told.

Give thanks for the glorious deeds of God.

**We give thanks and remember.**

Incline your ears, O people.

Listen to the stories we tell each other.

**We are listening.**

Open your mouth, O people.

Search this wide world for reasons to praise.

Give voice to the hope we need in a world full of conflict  
and discord.

**We will share these wonders from generation to generation.**

### Opening prayer

God of desert days and wilderness nights,

we rest in the comfortable space of your presence and trust

words and actions that tell the story of who we are and  
from where we have come.

We thank you for the abundance of your gifts,

and for the blessing of the unexpected.

Surprise us here again, O God. Amen.

### Prayer of confession

We have found ourselves in conflict.

Our whole world is divided. We have not escaped every  
quarrel.

The conflict is still with us. The tension is in our bodies.



## Worship Outline • October 1, 2023

Though the discord we feel may not yet have words, it lives in us.

Let us hold the space for one another... and be held in the space by others.

*After each of these invitations is offered, allow for silence. Conclude each silence with the chant below before offering the next invitation. In the last invitation, move from the chant to the words of affirmation.*

We hold each other through the family quarrels and grudges we keep...

*Silence and response*

We hold each other in the forgiveness we never received...

*Silence and response*

We hold each other in the daily divisions that confront us in headlines and newsfeeds...

*Silence and response*

We hold each other within the grumblings that feel unheard and ignored...

*Silence and response*

We hold each other in the frustration that no resolution has yet come...

*Silence and response*



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Arrangement: Alan C. Whitmore

## Words of affirmation

Beloved, know that God is at work in each of us, enabling us to both will and work for the realm we dream will come.

## Engage

### Opening the word

**Exodus 17:1–17** *the focus scripture for age-level materials in ENCORE*

**Introduction** Before hearing this story, call to mind the grumblings heard around the world right now. Consider all of those things that might be met with Moses' cry, "What shall I do with this people?" In all of these quarrels, we might be bold enough on World Communion Sunday to leave space for each other to find God is with us even in the discomfort of conflict and division. You might choose to repeat the chant from the prayer of confession after this space is held.

Choose from the following.

**Bible story** Arrange for a storyteller to present "[No Longer Enslaved](#)" on p. 78. Alternatively, for younger children, tell the story "[God Hears Every Grumbling](#)" (in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week's materials).

**Story about the story** Consider what the storytellers were doing in Exodus by creating space around this story. Name

three or four interesting details in "[Tell Me a Story about the Story](#)" and invite small groups to create their own midrash around these details. After these stories are composed, read Exodus 17:1–17 again and listen to these new midrashim. After all the stories have been shared, reflect on how these new stories changed the tone of the original. What do these stories help us to know about God's glorious deeds?

**Psalms 78:1–4, 12–16** wonder what "glorious deeds" of God we are passing down from generation to generation. How do these stories change us? How do these "glorious deeds" shape who we are as God's people?

Play with **Matthew 21:23–32** with actors or different voices reading Jesus' words with varying tones. Play it as if Jesus is annoyed, tired, loves the scribes and Pharisees, is exasperated, tender and kind. You might find more inspiration for this play from Richard Swanson at <https://provokingthegospel.wordpress.com>. How differently does this parable sound? How does it change our experience of the story? What insight does this play offer to our unfolding story now?

**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 “Gather Us, O God” as people gather again (*Seasons Songbook*, vol. 6, #3 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 6. Printed music and recording are also available for purchase and download at [https://www.seasonsonline.ca/order\\_products/](https://www.seasonsonline.ca/order_products/)).

### Prayers of the people

Offer prayers over a world map with (battery-operated) tea-light candles. Invite the gathered community to voice their prayers using the following words when placing their tea-light on the place where we pray God’s light shines.

We pray for the quarrels and conflict in (*name region/country*).  
**O God, hear our prayer.**

*Close this time of prayer with the prayer Jesus taught.*

### Invitation to Communion

Friends, we come to celebrate the joyful feast of the people of God.

**We come to this table with people from all over our world, sisters and brothers in Christ, to eat and drink.**

We come to this table to be nourished and renewed for the ongoing work of justice and love.

**We come to taste and see how good God is.**

It is not a huge banquet that we share but just enough bread and just enough wine/juice for us to share, for us to taste and see the abundant goodness of God.

It is this hope that springs from a rock and this delightful surprise that gathers us again on World(wide) Communion Sunday.

Today, we celebrate the space we create around the table, all across this vast world, by the cup and loaf we share.

Though we might not be in the same room, we witness to the power of this amazing story passed down from generation to generation to remind each other of God’s glorious deeds.

We come together into the ebb and flow of faith where our quarrels might be louder than our praise and our doubts may overshadow our hope to create this space again.

At this table, we will be renewed with Christians around the globe to live more and more fully into the goodness of God.

As we drink from the cup and share this bread, may your Spirit be with us, O Holy One, enlivening us and increasing our ability to always choose your love over all of our fears.

May this meal increase our wonder in all of your glorious deeds as we remember another time, not unlike our own, when the future was unknown and disciples gathered at a table in an upper room...

*Tell the story from the familiar words of your tradition.*

### Prayer after Communion

Gracious and loving God, you have made us one in the Body of Christ and nourished us at your table with holy food and drink. Now send us forth to be your people in the world. Grant us strength to persevere in resisting evil, to proclaim in all we are and do your Good News in Christ Jesus our Saviour. Amen.

### Prayer of dedication

O God, use these gifts to create space for every grumbling and complaint to be met with compassion and grace. Transform our whole world with love and hope, we pray. O God, we offer our open hands to share in this healing and change work. Amen.

## Bless

Today we have remembered the glorious deeds of God.

**We have recalled how God made streams come out of the rock in the wilderness, causing water to flow down like rivers.**

Empowered and blessed by God the creator, Jesus the redeemer,

and the friendship of the Holy Spirit, we must go and tell new generations of God’s glorious deeds.

**In our words, thoughts and actions, may we proclaim the glorious deeds of our God.**

## Special Days Commentary

### October 1 – World(wide) Communion Sunday

This day is observed in many parts of the world, although not by all churches. Some denominations produce special worship and learning resources for this day, and some ecumenical agencies encourage churches to acknowledge that on this day, perhaps more than any other, Christians around the world are – symbolically – gathered at a common table.

### October 4 – St. Francis of Assisi

Generally known as a lover of birds, animals, and creation, statues of St. Francis frequently appear in gardens – Francis of Assisi was also a strong champion of the poor and outcast of his time and society. The son of a wealthy Italian cloth merchant, Francis underwent a deep spiritual transformation. He lived a humble, peaceful life, rebuilding the ruins of church buildings as places of worship and refuge.



# Tell Me a Story about the Story

## The Role and Use of Hebrew Midrash

By Rabbi Adam Morris

If you have ever peered through the lens of a microscope, gazing intently into the inner workings of a cell or organism, then you understand *Midrash*. The use of a microscope is an exercise in looking into the fine details and secrets of something that the naked eye cannot determine. Using the microscope and peering into the untold stories of whatever is at the other end of the scope is not only some insight into the nature of that object but often some perspective on the nature of the one searching.

The same holds true for the experience of *Midrash*. Suppose the *Torah* or *Tanach* (entire Hebrew Bible) is the object being scrutinized. In that case, the microscope is the *Midrash* that allows its user (the reader) to see an aspect of the text that is not so clear from a literal or fundamental reading of the text.

The word *Midrash* comes from the Hebrew root that is related to interpretation. While *Midrash* can be thought of as interpretive literature, in itself, that definition is limiting. *Midrash* fills in the holes and gaps in our texts. It allows us to respond to the questions and inconsistencies within our sacred stories. By answering these questions about the text, we reflect and offer insight into our own concerns and values. *Midrash* adds a third or fourth dimension to the story when there appears only two or three. It is our way to sometimes seriously and sometimes more playfully add our humanity and divinity to these stories that light our way.

A *midrash* usually takes the form of a short story or insight that responds to some question posed by the original text of the *Tanach*. It can give insight into the nature of a biblical figure, event or even the nature of the Holy One. *Midrashim* were first offered by our Sages and early Rabbis, who either shared interpretations of our stories derived from a tradition of folk tales or created stories that originated within their fertile imaginations. In either case, these stories about our stories have become an important part of our religious tradition.

The *midrashim* themselves are not the only valuable inheritance, but the process of making *midrash* is something we also cherish. Rabbis, storytellers and Jews around the world continue to create new *midrashim* to this very day.

A story about the story... What? Perhaps an example of what such a question in the text and such a creative response looks like. When the Israelites stood at Mt. Sinai to receive the revelation from God as recounted in the book of Exodus, the text tells us that they were ready and stood: "at the foot of the mountain" (Exodus 19:17). However, the original Hebrew reads that they stood "*b-tach-teet ha-har*," literally underneath the mountain. What gives? What could that strange turn of phrase mean? Enter a *midrash*, which suggests that the Hebrew reads this way because when Israel approached Sinai, God lifted the mountain and held it over their heads, saying: "Either you accept the Torah or be crushed beneath the mountain." This *midrash* would tell us that God made the Israelites an offer they could not refuse! (How godfather-esque of God?!)

How does that story change the tone of the story in the Torah? How does it reflect upon the character of the people? What does it say about the nature of God? Why would this author insert this story into this narrative? The story and all these questions that arise from it are the fertile ground for discussion, learning and introspection that *midrash* provides and are at the heart of the spiritual process.

A *midrash*, while attempting to tie a nice little ribbon around a loose end in a story, ends up unravelling some other threads within the fabric of the story or within the reader's own assumptions and self-perceptions. Peering through the lens of the microscope may offer insight into some secrets while simultaneously causing others to surface. And yet, that is the beauty of the scientific/religious/spiritual process: it is one of mystery and discovery, of finding answers to some old questions and revealing new questions that call for new answers. In the Jewish tradition, *midrash* is one of our most potent tools in this process of discovering our truths.

Rabbi Adam Morris lives and works in Denver, Colorado. He serves as a consultant to the Seasons of the Spirit editorial team and answers the "Ask the Rabbi" questions at [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca).



# No Longer Enslaved

Based on Exodus 17:1–7

**W**hen the people of Israel were living in a land called Egypt, life there was hard. In that land, they were forced to do hard labour. They worked long hours in difficult conditions. They were not considered to be equals in the land and they wanted a different land to call home. They prayed and called out to God, crying out for freedom. God listened and led the people to freedom.

Once the people were no longer enslaved, they travelled for a long time to get to a new land. They travelled with their whole families, animals, and everything they owned. God guided them on their journey with signs and symbols. God was with them always.

On this day, the people had been walking through the wilderness. Hot and tired, they had just arrived at a place called Rephidim and set up camp there. They began to complain against their leader, Moses. They argued with Moses and demanded a drink.

“Why are you arguing with me?” Moses asked. Moses encouraged them, saying they should trust that God was with them and would give a sign, just like God had done so many times before.

But the people would not listen. Instead, they grumbled and

complained about being thirsty! Some even said that their life as enslaved people in Egypt was better than this journey to a new life and new land!

“Why did you bring us out of Egypt,” they demanded, “to kill us, our children, and livestock with thirst?”

Moses did not know how to respond to the people, so he asked God what to do. Moses said he was afraid that the people would keep complaining and yelling at him unless he did something about the water and their thirst.

God said to Moses, “Go ahead of the people and take some of the elders of Israel with you.” And God reminded Moses of the staff he carried; the one he had used before to perform a miracle on the Nile River. “Take the staff in your hand, and go,” God said. “Go to a place called Horeb. Strike the rock at Horeb, and water will flow from it, and the people will have something to drink.”

Moses did exactly what God said to do. He took some of the elders and his staff to Horeb. He struck the rock. And water flowed from it.

Even though the journey was hard, God was with the people, guiding and providing.

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



## Bible story

### Materials

- Recording of “No Longer Enslaved”
- 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 “No Longer Enslaved.”
2. Use the drawing pads or paper and pencils or crayons to record your response to the story.





## 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.

### Ebb and flow

#### Materials

- Mason or other small jars
- Water
- Food colouring
- Cooking oil
- Alka-Seltzer® tabs
- Hand sanitizer or wipes



**Suitable for all ages  
working together**

#### The practice of mindfulness

##### Directions

1. River flowed last week. In this week’s story, it has dried up. Reflect on this ebb and flow in your own faith life as you choose a jar.
2. Fill your jar about 2/3 of the way with oil and the remaining with water. Notice what happens.
3. Add drops of food colouring to your oil and water, and wonder what colour your faith feels like. Is your faith in a cycle of ebb or flow right now?
4. Drop in an Alka-Seltzer® tab and watch what happens.
5. Play with your jar, watching the ebb and flow within the jar.

**Younger children** might wonder at the way God’s love bubbles up.

### Grumbling and complaining

#### Materials

- Basic supplies
- Sticky notes
- Bulletin board space or wall



**Suitable for all ages  
working together**

#### The practice of prayer

##### Directions

1. Today, it seems there is not space for our grumbling and complaining. We are told to look on the bright side and emphasize the positive so that we often don’t give space to our pains and sorrows. Ask for God’s grace as you take time to write down the grumbings and complaints you are carrying right now. Write one complaint on each sticky note.
2. When you have written down all your grumbings, thank God for this space.
3. Add your sticky notes to the bulletin board or wall and make space for others to read their grumbings and complainings.

■ **How were your complaints similar or different from others?**

■ **What did it feel like to share in this space?**

**Younger children** might be encouraged to draw what frustrates and angers them on a sticky note.

*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.*



## Journeying together

### Materials

- Basic supplies
- Paper
- Paint



**Suitable for all ages  
working together**

### The practice of noticing

#### Directions

The people of Israel had been travelling together for many years. The people journeyed for a very long time to get where they were. Throughout their journeys, God showed the people that God was still with them. God asks Moses to make water flow from a rock in today's story. It is possible that later, whenever the people saw a rock or water, they were reminded of God being with them. Today, take a short journey and try to notice things that remind you that God is with you.

1. Travel around the inside of your church (or, weather permitting, journey outside).
2. What items do you notice that might remind you of God's presence? Are there rocks or water (such as in today's story)? Are there other things you notice that could be reminders of God's presence in your life?
3. Notice where there are spaces where you can be honest and tell the truth. Where are there areas where God can be found?
4. Create a reminder of God's presence and place inside or outside the church. Use the art supplies to create something simple that people could notice and understand.
5. Share what you have created in an upcoming worship time, then ask for permission to place it in or around the church.

## Glorious deeds

### Materials

- Basic supplies
- Scrapbook materials
- Paper



**Suitable for  
all ages**

### The practice of reflection

#### Directions

The psalmist sings about the stories we cannot hide from our children but generously pass down from generation to generation. They are that good. These stories assure us that God is part of our story.

1. Reflect on a story that you want to share with future generations. When have you seen and heard God's glorious deeds in your life?
2. You might choose instead to use the scrapbook materials to tell the story. What pictures might be added to this page? What embellishments reveal God's goodness in your story?
3. As you feel comfortable doing so, share your story with someone in the worship space and listen to theirs. Give thanks for these stories full of God's glorious deeds.

**Younger children** might be encouraged to use the scrapbook materials to tell the story of how good God is. They might be encouraged to draw a picture to illustrate their story.

## Like a rock

### Materials

- Paper
- Painting and clean-up supplies
- Song "Like a Rock" (in *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 1, #46 *Seasons Songbook Music CD*, vol. 1. Also available for purchase as a single download at <https://www.seasonsonline.ca/order-products/>).
- Hand sanitizer or wipes



**Suitable for  
all ages**

### The practice of creating

#### Directions

God asked Moses to strike a rock, and water flowed from it. God is like a rock – always present and sustaining. There is a song that also talks about what God is like; the song is called "Like a Rock." Today you will have a chance to explore the song, and then to create images from the song, and to create your own song or poem.

1. Listen to the song "Like a Rock."
2. Use the paint to draw each image from the song: rock, the sky, the sun, a river going to the ocean. As you paint each image, reflect on how God is like what you are painting.
3. Once you have finished painting, consider if you can write your own song lyrics or a poem. How would you describe what God is like?
4. Ask if you can share your song or poem at an upcoming worship service.

**Younger children** might listen to the song and respond by drawing what they saw in the song they heard.



Story and activities for the very young to use in church or at home.

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# God Hears Every Grumbling

A story based on Exodus 17:1-17

A long time ago the people of Israel left their homes in Egypt and travelled far, far away to a new land. They followed their leader, Moses. Each night the people set up a camp to rest and sleep. But one time, they stopped at a campsite that had no water to drink. The people went to their leader, Moses, and said, "We're thirsty. We're thirsty."

But still, there was no water. The people went to Moses again and said, "We're thirsty. We're thirsty."

Every day, the people said, "We're thirsty. We're thirsty."

Moses was upset because the people kept asking for water. Moses prayed to God, "What am I to do? The people are angry! They keep saying to me, 'We're thirsty. We're thirsty.'"

God told Moses, "Take your walking stick and go to the big rock." The people went with Moses to see what God would do. All the way to the big rock, the people complained, saying, "We're thirsty. We're thirsty."

When everyone reached the rock, Moses took the stick and hit the rock. Suddenly water came gushing out of the rock – clean, good water for everyone to drink. Water from the rock! What an amazing thing! What a wonderful surprise God gave to the people! The people drank and drank until they could not drink another sip of water. They knew God was still with them and would provide what they needed.

After that, the people did not have to say, "We're thirsty. We're thirsty." Instead, they could say, "Thank you, God, for listening to our grumbling. Thank you, God, for giving us water when we are thirsty."

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## Rock Reminders

Clean, good water flowing from the rock reminded the people that God was with them, listening to them.

Make a "thank you" rock as a reminder that God listens to all your grumbling and complaining.

**You will need** a large smooth rock, acrylic paints and paintbrushes, permanent marker(s), and self-adhesive stickers.

### Directions

1. Write or have someone help you write "Thank you, God" on your rock with a permanent marker.
2. Decorate your rock with paints and/or markers, or stickers.
3. Decide where you might put your rock to remind you of God's love and care for you.



## Wilderness surprise

When the people of Israel discovered they had no water to drink, they were afraid. They grumbled and complained to Moses. God used this thirsty and scary time to help people understand something important.

To find out what it was, put a circle around every other person in the rows of the crowd below, starting with the second person.

Use those letters to fill in the blanks of the first sentence. Then use the letters in the people not circled to fill in the blanks of the second sentence.

The people learned that \_\_\_\_\_  
 God \_\_\_\_\_

