

# Planning



Sunday, October 8 – Saturday, October 14 • 2023

## Covenant and Community

With ten rules for living, God invites the people of Israel into a committed relationship, and we lean into God's covenant and find new awarenesses of how God's loving ways shape us.

### This Week...

#### Ecumenical prayer calendar

Costa Rica, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama

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

**October 9** – Thanksgiving (Canada)

Materials for [Thanksgiving](#) can be found on p. 15

#### Personal reflection

As you ponder God's loving way in Exodus 20, notice the everyday rules and norms you live by. Which of these rules are difficult to abide by? Where do these norms create spaciousness and grace? Are there rules that you would like to introduce in your family or community for the sake of love?

*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 8, 2023

19th Sunday after Pentecost

Proper 22 (27)

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

#### Revised Common Lectionary (Year A)

**Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20**

the focus in age-level materials

Psalm 19

Philippians 3:4b–14

Matthew 21:33–46



*Seasons of the Spirit™*  
is based on semi-  
continuous readings of the  
*Revised Common Lectionary*.

**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. "[Reading the Parables through the Life, Death, and Raising of Jesus](#)" on page 89 might add to your sharing of Matthew 21:33–46.

### 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 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20**  
the focus in age-level materials  
**Psalms 19**  
**Philippians 3:4b–14**  
**Matthew 21:33–46**



Seasons of the Spirit™ is based on the semi-continuous readings of the Revised Common Lectionary.

Holy One,  
your care for us invites us into your holiness.  
We accept your invitation to enact your way  
and show your holiness with our living, our being.  
Amen.

# Covenant and Community

Most communities to which we belong have rules or guidelines to help us be together. These rules are not meant to be oppressive; they are intended to ensure everyone's rights are respected. One way we can show our love for each other in community is in the way we honour and respect each other's rights.

**Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20** Exodus can be seen in two parts. The first half (chapters 1–19 and 32–34) describes the story of Moses and the freeing of the Israelites from slavery. The second half (chapters 20–31 and 35–40) consists of instructions from God on how to live as freed people. Today's reading starts in the second half of the epic narrative, where Moses, the leader appointed by God, is affirmed as God's spokesperson on Mount Sinai as he receives the ten commandments delivered by God.

The original form and Hebrew language in Exodus 20 suggest that the commandments first may have been simply a list of ten words – murder, idolatry, adultery, and so on. These words were shorthand for a rule of life to guide the people of Israel along their journey to becoming the nation promised to Abraham.

The ten commandments summarize God's way of life. In the first commandment, we are called to acknowledge God as God alone and are called to honour our relationship with God. In the commandment regarding Sabbath, we are called to match the rhythm of our lives with God's rhythm. In the remaining commandments, God's loving wisdom lays out a life lived in relationship with other people that reflects God's relationship with us.

The reformer and theologian Martin Luther taught that every negative in this list implies a positive. For example, "do not kill" implies "support the living." The commandments offer a vision of the world that God promises to bring to fulfillment.

The ten commandments are sometimes referred to in scripture as God's law or the Law of Moses. They form the cornerstone of Israelite society. All were called to obey these concrete expressions of God's wisdom and will, regardless of occupation or social class. In the Hebrew scriptures, "the law" also refers to all the cultural knowledge one generation passes on to another. Later, the term Torah is used to refer to the Law – encompassing the first five books of the Hebrew scriptures.

Does the fearful response of the people to what they experience of God's power through thunder, lightning, and trembling mountains give us a glimpse into the underlying motivation for creating a golden idol in later scenes? Such a god is far less frightening and far more in our control.

The writer of **Psalms 19** extols the Creator's "ordinances": "more to be desired are they than gold...sweeter also than honey." God's loving wisdom sustains the community of creation and brings joy and purpose to all who live within it.

In **Philippians 3:4b–14**, Paul claims the wisdom and joy of being grounded in Christ. When Paul speaks of "confidence in the flesh," he refers to those things that give people "credit" in the world's eyes. In his accounting metaphor, Paul counts these as loss. There can be only one item on the credit side: Christ.

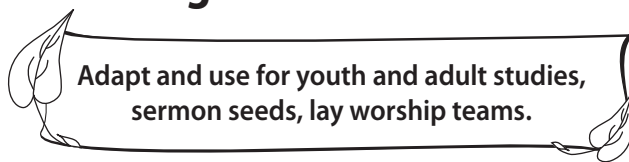
Jesus' parable in **Matthew 21:33–46** seems a word of sobering wisdom. Rather than accepting the challenge of such wisdom, the leaders turn on Jesus. They find no joy in God's wisdom, embodied in Jesus the Christ.

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This week's readings offer a glimpse of a world where all patterns of human living are grounded in a rule of love and respect. As we continue to grow as a community of God's people, these rules of love can help to shape our lives together. As a community of faith, what is the role of rules in your church – what is the role of the ten commandments in your life?



## Reflecting on the Word



**Materials** Bible story “[How to Be the Holy One’s People](#)” (p. 90)

### Connecting with life

Monastic communities live their lives according to what is named a “rule.” We speak in these materials of the way of God. A path, a pattern, a rhythm. What is meant in all this language is the guidelines for our behaviour. Like the lines on a road within which one cycles or drives; the chords played by a jazz band within which the soloists improvise. The ten commandments are such a rule, a pattern, a way. They are the chord structure, but the song is incomplete without the soloists’ interpretation of the chords. They are the lines, but the road is empty without cars, bikes, trucks, and vans.

- **Examining your life, what can you see of a rule, a pattern, a rhythm to your living?**

### Scripture

**Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20** The book of Exodus represents the journey of a people looking to build a new identity and relationship with a teacher they do not yet know. Throughout the book, the people learn what it means to be free and how to be in relationship with God. The commandments offer structure and guidance to a life of wandering; they are intended to be liberating and not restrictive.

We bring a variety of memories or experiences with the ten commandments.

- **What memories do you associate with the ten commandments? When did you first hear them? How were they taught or shared with you?**
- **Try writing the commandments in your own words, as the author has done for today’s Bible story “How to Be the Holy One’s People.” Will you frame them as what we are to “do,” or “do not”? Why?**

**Psalm 19** declares that God’s laws are more desirable than gold or sweeter than honey. Review God’s law as outlined in Exodus 20.

- **What is so sweet about this list of rules?**

**Philippians 3:4b–14** balances our desire to follow God’s law with our dependence on grace.

- **What cultural successes have no meaning for you when you compare them to your faith in Jesus Christ?**

### Connecting scripture and life

In what ways are we a community in covenant, or deeply committed relationship, with God?

The reformer and theologian Martin Luther taught that every negative in this list implies a positive. For example, “do not kill” implies “support the living.”

## Focus for Worship, Learning, and Serving

Many of us know the ten commandments well though our perception is negative. We do not consider these rules loving, kind, or even generous. Like Jesus’ parables, they are more likely to puzzle us than to bring us praise. Psalm 19 invites us to notice how the ordered workings of creation reveal God’s wise ways. These loving ways of wisdom in the ten commandments will shape the human community and enable all creation to flourish.

It is glory that we seek this week. We continue to hold space for each other to find that wonder where our questions collide with God’s love. How do these rules guide us to greater freedom? What is still enslaving us or holding us back? There is space in this week’s worship for contemplation and conversation. Encourage your community to encounter these stories as living words. They are still growing and changing just as we are, and only by seeking together for new understanding will we truly flourish.



# Covenant and Community

## 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: four for the prayer of confession and words of assurance; one or two to help with the prayers of the people.
- ❑ Choose an option for hearing Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20. For the Bible story, arrange for a storyteller to present “How to Be Holy One’s People” on p. 90. Alternatively, for younger children, arrange for a storyteller to present “God’s Loving Way” in Exploring Our Faith at the end of this week’s materials. For the choral reading, recruit two readers.
- ❑ Bring items for setting the worship space.
- ❑ 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 song such as “In God We Live and Move” (*Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9, #21 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 9. 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. 91–92.



## Music Suggestions

### As Long as We Follow/*Na Nzela Na Lola*

Joseph Kabemba; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9

### Fill Us, God

Gerry Holmes; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9

### Your Words, O God

Michael Mangan; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 7

### Be Still And Know

John Bell, Graham Maule; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 6

### A Circle of Love

Ed Seabough; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 5

### Live in the Spirit of Love

Felicia Sandler; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 3

### God Is So Good/*Mungu Yu Mwema*

Traditional Swahili; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 2

### Journey Together/*Sarantañani*

Zoilo Yanepa Chambi; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 1

### Ten Commandments

Changing Church; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 1

### There’s a Song of Love

Changing Church; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 1

### You Are Holy/*Du Ar Helig*

Per Harling; *Seasons Songbook*, vol. 1



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

## Gather

### Call to worship

Day to day, there are new wonders.

The heavens are full of God’s glory.

**We come held by the work of God’s hands.**

Above us and below us, the law of God is perfect.

It holds us together and revives our souls.

**We rejoice with our whole hearts.**

The commandments of God glitter like gold.

God’s law is sweeter than the sweetest honey.

It holds us together and shows us the ways of love.

**May the words of our mouths and the meditations on all our hearts praise and honour you today and every day.**

### Opening prayer

Law-giving God, you urge us to live in ways that bring you honour and enable people to live together, creating harmony and respect.

Teach us to be attentive to your words.

Help us hear you in the silence that speaks your life-giving word through the transforming power of your Spirit. Amen.

*After a time of shared silence, sing together a song such as “Be Still and Know” (Seasons Songbook, vol. 6, #7 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/)).*



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## Worship Outline • October 8, 2023

### Prayer of confession

*Before they became the ten commandments, the people of Israel probably knew them as ten words that served as a rule of life. This prayer reflects the power of words to create heartfelt responses that give shape to community.*

*Arrange to have four people standing in the worship space's four corners. The readers will take turns saying one of the words from each of the lists of words of contemplation below. Follow each word with ample silence. Explain that we will hear single words rather than speaking a prayer with prescribed sentences and thoughts. Invite those gathered to be attentive to the thoughts and feelings that arise with each word and allow these responses to guide a silent prayer of confession.*

### Words of contemplation

distance, separation, division, broken-hearted  
(give ample pause between each word);

harm, neglect, pollution, extinction  
(give ample pause between each word);

disregard, ignore, injustice, impoverished  
(give ample pause between each word).

### Words of affirmation

*Have the four people who read the words for the prayer of confession continue reading the words below slowly but without the extended space for silent prayer.*

Hear now these life-giving words:  
receive, welcome, reconcile, enfold;  
restore, conserve, beautify, care;  
attend, share, compassion, love;  
forgiven, forgiven, forgiven, forgiven.

May these words take root within us and become the living reality among and through us.

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## Engage

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### Opening the word

**Introduction** These loving ways God gave the people were the cornerstone of God's covenant. These were bits of wisdom about how we care for each other and helped shape and form us in God's love. Make space for wondering how these mandates help us know more about God's love now.

**Exodus 20:1–4, 7–9, 12–20** the focus scripture for age-level materials in *ENCORE*

Choose from the following.

**Bible story** Arrange for a storyteller to present "[How to Be Holy One's People](#)" on p. 90.

All ages might share a conversation to reflect on how we are God's people – how we worship, put God first, rest for a whole day, respect and care for our elders or other living creatures, and how we are grateful.

Alternatively, for younger children, tell the story "[God's Loving Ways](#)" (in *Exploring Our Faith* at the end of this week's materials).

**Choral reading** Recruit two people to share in this choral reading.

ONE: Read Psalm 19:1.

TWO: Read Exodus 20:1–3.

ONE: Read Psalm 19:2.

Two: Read Exodus 20:4.

One: Read Psalm 19:3–4a.

Two: Read Exodus 20:7.

One: Read Psalm 19:4b–5.

Two: Read Exodus 20:8–9.

One: Read Psalm 19:6.

Two: Read Exodus 20:12–15.

One: Read Psalm 19:7–9.

Two: Read Exodus 20:16–17.

One: Read Psalm 19:7–9.

Two: Read Exodus 20:16–19.

One: Read Psalm 19:10–11.

Two: Read Exodus 20:20.

**Matthew 21:33–46** Jesus told parables about ordinary life that were meant to be puzzles. These stories were meant to be explored and unpacked in community. After the reading, invite conversation about the questions that would have lingered after Jesus told this parable. What are the sticking points now? What would they have been for the first hearers? How does this parable help us to tell our story as individuals and as community? How do we continue to hold questions together in covenanted community? Consider sharing "[Reading the Parables through the Life, Death, and Raising of Jesus](#)" on page 89 to enrich the conversation.

**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 “In God We Live and Move” as people gather again (*Seasons Songbook*, vol. 9, #21 on *Seasons Music CD*, vol. 9. 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**

God, you are the essence of life, and you long for all people to share in the goodness you offer.

As we learn to live in the power of your sweet Spirit, we are so aware of a beautiful world torn apart by all those things addressed in your precious law.

We pray for people whose lives have been shattered by the anger, malice, and destructiveness that murders relationships...

We pray for communities, countries, and cultures afflicted by the ravages of war, greed, intolerance, and oppression...

We pray for homes and families struggling with the demands of employment and the expectations of success constantly demanding attention...

We pray for people who are seeking to forge new relationships, venturing into uncertain territory, and wondering how they will shape their futures in ways that bring hope to the land...

We pray for people who are learning to live with enough, daring to resist the endless expectations for more, and working for the common good of even those who rebuke and ridicule...

We pray for those quiet, persistent voices that remind us all that there is a language of the Cosmos inviting hope and stirring the precious life within toward a holy wholeness...

Holy One, may we be the people who cultivate kindness, stir the embers of truth, and listen in the silence for your voice. May we be people attentive to care who discern the spirit of the law that brings freedom to live and life for all. Let it be so. Amen.

**Invitation to the offering**

Paul reminds us that status, identity, or our dedication or attention to the rules will not secure our future within the arena of God’s activity. It is so easy to trip up on the details. God’s realm embraces the spirit rather than the letter of the Law and gives life rather than condemnation. In this confidence, let us offer the gifts of our lives for the sake of the world.

**Prayer of dedication or offering prayer**

Stir within us, spirit of the living God, that our lives may carry the Spirit of your law.

**May our finest offerings flow through these gifts into the world you love. Amen.**

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**Bless**

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Go with ways of wisdom for the Holy One: faithfulness, loyalty, reverence, stillness, respect.

Go with ways of wisdom for community: mutuality, honour, generosity, truthfulness, and contentment.

Go in the wisdom of Christ that enables all creation to flourish in the ways of love: forgiving, healing, restoring, creating, life.



# Reading the Parables through the Life, Death, and Raising of Jesus

By John Indermark

“A parable is...” How would you fill in the blank? An earthly story with a heavenly meaning? An extended religious metaphor? An allegory whose every detail symbolizes some spiritual principle?

“A parable is...” merits caution. Parables, particularly those of Jesus, defy a single “every size fits all” definition. Some are brief, and some are quite lengthy. A few take the form of allegory, but most do not. The parables of Jesus typically involve common elements from everyday life in first-century Palestine. The world of farmers and merchants, the interchange of family and business relationships, provide the “stuff” of these stories that would have been readily familiar to its original hearers. The genius in the parables comes in their transparency. Jesus frames these stories in such a way that their details or narratives allow us to “see through” them to catch glimpses of deeper matters. In the parables of Jesus, those deeper matters focus on God’s coming realm. “Kingdom of God” is the usual expression for that realm, though Matthew often employs “kingdom of heaven.” The two phrases carry the same meaning.

To read the parables through the life, death, and raising of Jesus means hearing them in concert with, not in isolation from, Jesus’ story. Our hearing of the parables of Jesus suffers when we do not keep them in context with the whole of Jesus’ particular story. Sometimes the context is verbalized in the text. Matthew prefaces the parable of the two debtors by indicating it arises out of Peter’s question on the limit to the obligation to forgive (18:21–35). Sometimes the context is provided by where the parable is set in a gospel’s structure. The three parables from Matthew 25 used as focus passages this season follow right after Jesus’

teachings on the end of the age in chapter 24. Equally revealing, they immediately precede Jesus’ announcement of his impending death and the authorities who conspire to carry it out by stealth (25:1–5). Even when the text provides no context, such as the series of brief parables in the latter half of Matthew 13, we still have the wider setting of Jesus’ story with which to interpret the words.

The discipline of reading the parables through the life, death, and raising of Jesus also provides insight into those parables unique to one gospel only. For example, the story of Jesus for Luke turns on the theme of inclusion for outsiders. Thus, this gospel relates parables of Good Samaritans and Prodigal Sons. Or consider the parable of the faithful sheep from Matthew (25:31–46) heard in this season. Its litany of feeding the hungry and giving drink to the thirsty and all other acts of justice does not arise out of thin air. It parallels the works of Jesus in that he dispatches the disciples of John the Baptizer to go and tell their imprisoned leader. It hints at the inaugural text for Jesus’ ministry in the Nazareth (Luke 4:18–19).

Why read the parables of Jesus through his life, death, and raising? The key is the modifier in that sentence: “of Jesus.” The church’s interest in parables is not simply exploring a literary form, although that can provide helpful background information. The church’s interest in parables is that they are “of Jesus.” They provide insight into the mind and heart of Jesus regarding his expectations of God’s realm and how those expectations intend to shape life now. In turn, we hear these parables against the backdrop of a particular story that helps us interpret these words in connection with the One who taught them.

*John Indermark is a writer and retired United Church of Christ pastor. He has authored a number of books published by Upper Room Books and Abingdon Press, in addition to writing for a variety of curriculum resources, including Seasons of the Spirit.*



# How to Be Holy One's People

Based on Exodus 20:1–20

Moses had answered the call of Holy One to help the people leave Egypt, where they had lived as enslaved people for many generations. Holy One had been speaking to the people for many years through Moses, who spoke the Holy Word faithfully, even when it was difficult for the people to hear. After leaving Egypt, the people of Holy One lived as a community, on the move, setting up camps in different locations and bringing everything they owned with them each time they packed up and travelled to somewhere new. The leaving and arriving, packing and unpacking, was guided by Holy One speaking through Moses.

When the people of Holy One arrived at the foot of a mountain – Mount Sinai – Moses was called to the top of the mountain, but the people had to stay at the bottom. Moses was sometimes called away from the people to be quiet for listening and talking with Holy One. In this talk, Holy One gave Moses rules of love and kindness to guide the people in their life together as a community. The way the people live will show other people something of who Holy One is, so this was an important set of guidelines.

Holy One spoke all these words:

I am Holy One. I brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of captivity, and you, my people, worship me as your Holy One.

You, people of Holy One, do not create idols to replace me. You do not choose the shape of anything in the skies, earth, or water. You, my people, do not worship idols, do not put things in your life in the place set for your Holy One...I must turn from those who turn from me and from their children and their children's

children; but I show steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You, my people, do not make wrongful use of the Holy Name; you keep it holy, sacred, with love. My people, remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. For six days, you work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath in honour of Holy One. You, your children, your employees, your livestock, and even visitors not of my people, staying in your town all rest on Sabbath. For in six days, Holy One made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore Holy One blessed the Sabbath day and set it for a holy day of rest.

My people honour those who offer care.

My people respect all life as sacred.

My people honour covenants, promises, and relationships with faithfulness and love.

My people respect others and what belongs to them.

My people honour truth, speak with honesty, and act with integrity.

My people take a posture of gratitude. They share with generosity and delight with their neighbours in the gifts that they receive.

Then the people witnessed thunder and lightning, sounds of trumpets, and the mountain smoking, and they were afraid, trembled, and stood at a distance. The people said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen, but do not let Holy One speak to us, or we will die." Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for Holy One has come only to test your loyalty and to inspire awe for Holy One who is our one, our only, Holy One."

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



## Bible story

### Materials

- Recording of "How to Be Holy One's People"
- 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 "How to Be Holy One's People"
2. Use the materials provided to respond to the story. You might think about the promises you make to God and how you keep your promises. How are you becoming more and more part of God's community of people?





## 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.

### Ten loving rules

#### Materials

- Basic supplies
- Writing paper
- Re-usable adhesive
- A board or window for display purposes



Suitable ages  
12 and up

#### The practice of building community

##### Directions

1. What would you choose if you had to create a list of rules or guidelines for living together?
2. Work with a partner or small group to create your “ten loving rules for living.”
3. Talk together: How would these make a difference? How do they differ from those in Exodus?

### God’s presence

#### Materials

- Paint
- Paper
- Play dough or moulding clay
- Hand sanitizer or wipes



Suitable for  
all ages

#### The practice of contemplation

##### Directions

Moses always carried a staff with him; The staff was a reminder of God’s constant presence, and the wonderful things God can do. Moses always had his staff with him. Create something small to remind you of God’s constant presence with you, and you can carry it around like Moses.

1. Use the materials provided to create a small reminder or keepsake. You can carry this with you to remind you of God’s presence.
2. Once you have created your piece of art, hold it in your hand and offer a prayer of thanks that God is always with you.



## Words of my mouth

### Materials

- Basic supplies
- Magazines
- Paper



**Suitable for all ages  
working together**

## The practice of contemplation

### Directions

The psalmist concludes this week's psalm, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O God, my rock and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). Words have been given to us in Exodus to give us life. What are the words in your mouth today?

1. Consider the words in your mouth as you thumb through magazines looking for mouths. What shape is your mouth? Is it open or closed?
2. You might also find words that give voice to your faith right now. Cut out those words as well as any mouths you find.
3. With these mouths and words, create a collage on paper with glue to reflect the meditation on your heart. Look for God in between the words and images. What might you be hearing from God today in response?

**Younger children** might need help with scissors but should find this contemplation easy to answer. Crayons might be provided for them to illustrate their vision.

## Rainbow community

### Materials

- Half sheets of coloured construction paper
- Table space



**Suitable for  
all ages**

## The practice of creativity

### Directions

The Exodus commandments provide loving wisdom that gives shape to the covenant community. God first established the covenant with God's people with a rainbow promising that we would always be God's people. When our relationships reflect God's relationship with us, all creation flourishes in love. What is the shape of this flourishing? What vision comes to your mind when you imagine all creation living in the loving wisdom of God? How are we held together in this rainbow community?

1. Use the paper provided to create a reflection of this vision.
2. Rip the paper, fold it, and give shape to it.
3. Place your finished creation on the table to gather together in one community.
4. Close with these words of prayer:

May the vision of a world flourishing in love spark our imaginations. May this vision become the whisper of the Spirit within us, giving shape to greater faithfulness, compassion, and justice. Amen.

*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.

## God's Loving Way

A story based on Exodus 20:1-4, 7-9, 12-20

Clippety-clop, clippety-clop went the donkeys. Trip-trot, trip-trot went the sheep. Step-step, shuffle-shuffle went the people. They were travelling across a big, hot desert.

Mothers and fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers, aunts and uncles, girls and boys. They were looking for a new home. Moses was leading them. The sun hurt their eyes. The sand hurt their feet. They were thirsty. They were tired.

After a long while, the people forgot how to live in loving ways. Sometimes they pushed and shouted. Sometimes they took food that belonged to others. Sometimes the children didn't listen to their parents, and the parents didn't listen to their children. Sometimes they did not stop to take time to be with God. Day after day, the people became more and more unhappy.

Moses was a loving leader and wanted to help the people. What could Moses do?

Moses decided to climb a mountain and pray to God, "Please help us, God. The people have forgotten how to live in loving ways."

Soon God answered Moses. "Moses, I will give my people some loving rules so they will learn to show love for one another."

Moses listened carefully. Then Moses wrote everything down so he wouldn't forget what God said.

Early the next morning, Moses climbed down the mountain and called all the people together. "I have wonderful news for you. God has given us some loving ways to help us live together. Come and listen."

Now the people were curious. What were these loving ways? And then Moses told the people how God imagined this world to be.

1. Remember, God is love.
2. There is only one loving God.
3. Say God's name with love.
4. Take time to rest and pray to God.
5. Parents and children, love and care for one another.
6. Share with each other. There were other loving rules, too. The people looked at each other and smiled. And then they prayed, "Thank you, God, for keeping your promise and bringing us back together again. Your way is full of love."

## Living Loving Ways

When Moses told the people about God's loving ways, they prayed, "Thank you, God, for keeping your promise and bringing us back together again. Your way is full of love."

I promise to...

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God always keeps promises. What kind of promises might you make to God's loving way? Maybe you could take some extra rest time or take better care of the people and animals God created. Or you could promise to try to be better at listening or sharing with your friends. Write or draw a loving way.



# Loving Ways

Moses gave God's message to the people, saying, "Here are some ways that you will live."



## Instructions

- Decorate and cut out the four hands and four hearts.
- Glue the hands and the hearts around the edge of a paper plate.
- Add a loop of yarn for a hanger.

