

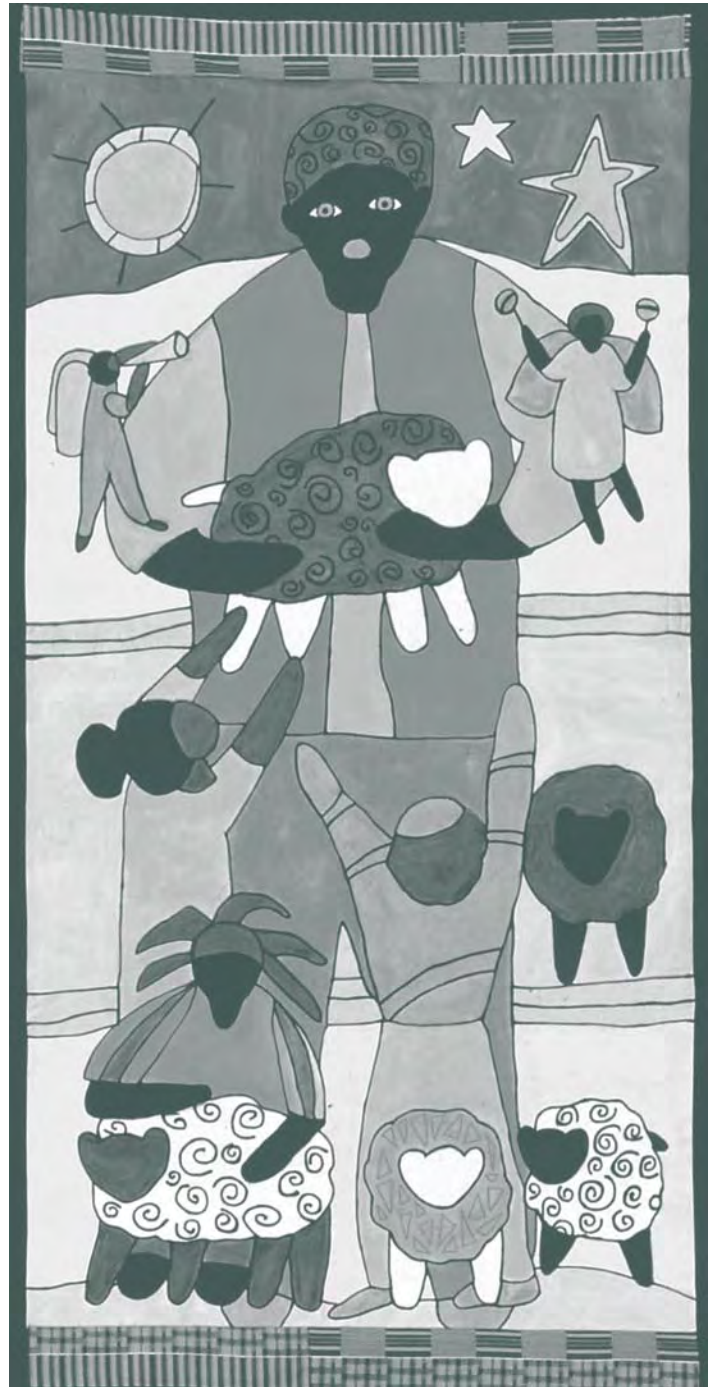
This Season... Pentecost 2

As we enter the second half of the Season after Pentecost, we continue to explore what it means to live as disciples of Christ. This continues to be a growing time for us, symbolized by the use of the colour green. Readings from the epistles are prominent in this season. The early Christian churches were beginning to realize that Jesus Christ was not going to return soon. They needed, therefore, to find ways to live together in community, supporting and encouraging each other. Jesus' message, which we also explore in some stories from the gospel of Luke, called them to live in a way different from the standards of the world around them. What is faithful living? Leaders, like Timothy, sought advice about how to deal with problems and questions from an experienced pastor. The question of what it means to be the church is as important today as it was in the first century. These texts still speak to us today as we explore what it means to live as disciples of Christ in everyday life. We can be confident through the challenges we face, knowing that God is already present in every situation we encounter.

In this season, we also remember our ancestors in the faith, those who have been our teachers and mentors, guides on our journey. We reflect on the ways in which we are mentors and guides for others, and are encouraged to share the faith with others. We rejoice in the hope that God is bringing about a reign of peace and justice for all people, and we celebrate that God's loving care is for all.

The art images this season are bright and colourful. Light breaks in at unexpected angles and in surprising ways. People support and care for each other. There are possibilities for transformation, moving from shadow to light, from isolation to community, breaking free of structures that confine.

As we move towards the end of the season and church year, we begin to prepare for the coming of the Messiah, the birth of Jesus the Christ, anticipated in Advent and celebrated at Christmas. In the birth of Jesus, God breaks into human history and creates a new heaven and earth. How will we recognize the new thing that God is creating? These are



the challenges the Pentecost season brings. We are encouraged by God's promise to be with us on our journey.

This Season, So . . .

The Season after Pentecost is a long stretch of ordinary time, a respite from the excitement of the holy days of the church year. Yet in the normal routine of moving from day to day, we learn to live more and more as disciples of Jesus Christ.

For some, this is a time to anticipate the arrival of spring, with its shades of new green in the leaves and grasses just emerging from a time of dormancy. After the cold of winter, there is the anticipation of the renewal of the earth. For others, this is a time when the green of summer is fading and when the anticipation is centred in a hint of changing leaves and of the new school year just beginning. For all, in the second half of Pentecost there is a sense that the pace of time is accelerating toward the end of one church year and the beginning of another.

Creating a welcoming space

Work to make your space communicate order and beauty. The ordinary aspects of a room for young children can communicate in extraordinary ways. Be sure the room is clean and warm and that you have cleared away toys or equipment that will not be used. Get down on child's eye level to experience what the children will experience. Cover bulletin boards or screens with green fabric or paper so you can display posters from this season. If you made a cloth for the worship table in the previous season, continue to use it. Otherwise find a green cloth for the table.

Priscilla, the puppet

Priscilla the puppet introduces the theme each week – she often asks a question or poses a concern and lets the children help her find a solution. Priscilla provides a simple way to focus the session and to help children connect the theme with their own lives. Go to www.spiritseasons.com and click on Library for a paper pattern and instructions for Priscilla. It's not necessary to use this particular puppet; you can find or create any simple puppet to serve as Priscilla. If you are uncomfortable with using a puppet, there is an alternate suggestion for introducing the theme at the end of the puppet conversation.

Storytelling

Helping children to make the biblical story their own is an important goal. For this to happen, you must first make the stories you tell your own. Read through each story several times. Note the high points, places where you may want to slow down for emphasis, or elements

of repetition. Now read the story aloud, paying attention to how it sounds. Decide where and how you will use suggested props. Consider your own group of children. If it includes young three-year-olds, you may want to tell an abbreviated form of the story. If you have highly verbal children, expect to be interrupted with questions or comments. Don't be discouraged if the telling of the story departs from the "script" or seems to go off track. Remember that the children will have many opportunities over the years ahead to hear biblical stories. Your goal is to meet the children where they are and to help them enter the story as they are able. And remember that the relationship you form with the children is an important aspect in shaping their faith – and in helping yours to grow.

Go to www.spiritseasons.com and use the user name *spirit* and password *child* to access supplemental week-by-week resources which you can use to adapt sessions if you are leading a group consisting mostly of three-year-olds.

Using the Seasons art

The art for this season includes many images that reinforce the theme of supporting and encouraging one another in ministry as we grow as disciples.

From the open arms of the figure in *First Steps, after Millet* to the supportive empathy of *Solice* to the close-knit relatedness of *The Good Shepherd*, the nature of building one another up that is at the core of community is clear.

The opening ritual for this season also emphasizes belonging in community where each disciple's unique identity and calling can be supported and lifted up.

Preparing for the season

Use the art images as a way to prepare for the season. Spend some time reflecting on the nature of community as you look at the images mentioned above. Then look at the poster *Interior of the Buurkerk, Utrecht*. Get in touch with the emptiness of the space and contemplate the loneliness of the solitary figure. Reflect on times when your own faith has been nurtured in community with others who call themselves disciples of Christ.

Pray Gracious God,
open me to the presence of your Holy Spirit,
as you reveal yourself in the ordinary
rhythms of this season.
Energize me in supporting and encouraging
these young members of your community of
faith. Amen.



Freed to Be

What does it mean to be the church? Jesus and Paul call us to embrace both the cost and promise of living in a faith community shaped and transformed by the gospel. Because God is already present in every situation, we can work with confidence through the challenges we face, helping one another to live as faithful disciples.

Focus Scripture: Philemon 1–21

Paul wrote many letters of encouragement and advice to the small communities of Christians throughout the Mediterranean world. But this letter is different. It is a personal business letter, written primarily to Philemon, though the letter mentions other Christians who meet at Philemon's home.

Paul, writing from prison, has a request for Philemon. In prison Paul has met Philemon's slave, Onesimus. Perhaps Onesimus is in prison as a runaway. Perhaps Philemon has sent this slave to minister to Paul in prison. However this slave happens to be in prison, through Paul's teaching Onesimus has become a Christian. Onesimus (meaning "useful") once seemed useless to Philemon, but now is beneficial to Paul and to the community.

Paul is sending Onesimus back, asking Philemon to forgive him and to receive him as a brother in Christ. Paul gently reminds Philemon that he owes Paul a debt, and suggests obliquely that Philemon might even consider freeing this slave.

Slavery was customary in New Testament times, and Jesus tells stories of servants and masters. But here we see how the gospel message from its earliest times is beginning to disrupt and transform accepted social structures. The early Christian communities had to face some challenges. Is it right to own slaves? What happens when the slave of a Christian becomes a Christian, too? Paul's word to them and to us is that, slave or free, we are all children of God. We are brothers and sisters in the faith, and equal in worth. What does it mean to be the church, a community so transformed in Christ?

Paul's words set a standard of behaviour, reminding disciples to be inclusive, hospitable, and forgiving. Disciples are called to exceed

the demands of the law in hospitality. Belonging to the Christian community will cost Philemon something, but obedience to the gospel brings a new and different freedom for him and for Onesimus.

Accustomed structures and customs are being transformed by Christ, and disciples are freed to respond to God's call. The crowds described in **Luke 14:25–33** follow Jesus because many think he is on a victory march to Jerusalem to reveal himself as Messiah, God's anointed saviour. But Jesus tells them the high cost of discipleship. Following Jesus means giving up possessions. It means putting first things first and giving as much attention to the gospel message as to business or politics.

Jeremiah speaks God's transforming message not only in words, but in dramatic actions. In **Jeremiah 18:1–11**, the prophet visits the potter's house and tells of God as the potter, reworking the clay (Israel) when the vessel is spoiled. Israel is called to repent and change. As Onesimus and Philemon are transformed by the gospel, as the disciples are set free to serve, so Israel is being shaped and changed by obedience to God.

Psalm 139:1–6, 13–18 celebrates the way in which God has formed and shaped us in a wonderful way, even from before our birth. Inside each of us there is great potential, and God is at work in us before we recognize it.

•••••

There is both cost and promise in following Jesus. As we continue in our discipleship, God is present in our lives, shaping and transforming us. Through us, transformation comes to the Christian family and to all those communities of which we are part. How can we help one another be good and faithful disciples?



September 9, 2007

Focus Scripture
Philemon 1–21

Additional Scriptures
Jeremiah 18:1–11
Psalm 139:1–6, 13–18
Luke 14:25–33

God, you know us inside and out. You created us, and you continue to shape us. Be present with us as we learn what it means to be faithful disciples, and help us respond to the transforming power of your love. Amen.

Go to www.spiritseasons.com and use the password *linking* to access Spirit Sightings for international current events links to this week's theme.

The Focus for Ages 3–5

For young children who are just learning how to use language, the church is a building where they go. More specifically, if children are not yet attending worship, “church” is the space where they attend church school or are cared for during worship services.

As you introduce the idea that the church is a community of believers, remember that this is a concept they will come to understand over time. While young children will probably still identify the church as a building, they can begin to build on that idea. Keep in mind that the experiences a child has at church serve to deepen and expand the concept. The richer the experiences, the more “church” will come

to mean. The more nurturing and affirming their relationships with teachers and others are, the more those relationships will open a child’s spirit to what God’s love is all about.

“Refresh my heart in Christ,” we read in the letter to Philemon. Although young children are not ready to study this letter, day-by-day through God’s Spirit they are becoming disciples. Be aware that the Holy Spirit works in and through the children to expand your own awareness of the nature of God, too, and to refresh your heart in Christ. Pray that you will be a channel of blessing for the children, and they for you.

From Start to Finish



Ideas for building community, strategies for discipline, and suggestions for setting up meeting spaces and integrating technology can all be found in the booklet *From Start to Finish*, available from your curriculum supplier and/or on the *Seasons* website.

September 9, 2007

PREPARE

Materials needed

Before the session

- ❑ Prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, Philemon 1–21, and biblical background information (p. 9).
- ❑ Gather items for the worship area: *green cloth, white pillar candle, matches, offering basket, and Bible with a bookmark placed in Philemon.*
- ❑ Bring *basic supply kit* (p. 94), *additional song sheet* (p. 93), and, if possible, *Seasons Music CD, vol. 5 and CD player.*

Gather

- ❑ Bring folded card stock with children’s names from last week and additional pieces of *folded card stock* for newcomers. Glue circles of *construction paper in skin tones of your children* to the backs of the folded cards.
- ❑ Bring song “*What If You Came to My Church*” (pp. 101–102).
- ❑ Bring *Priscilla, the puppet* (p. 2) and a *small mirror*. Tape mirror inside a folded card or cover mirror with a *cloth*.

- ❑ Print “disciple” on a sheet of *paper*. Because five-year-olds are beginning to read, use manuscript printing and upper and lower case letters.

Engage

- ❑ Bring poster “*Where Is the Church?*”
- ❑ Bring today’s *resource sheet “I’m a Disciple, Too!”*
- ❑ Bring *fingerplay “Here Is the Church”* (p. 93).

Respond

Choose from the options provided. Prepare and bring the materials.

- ❑ **Activity sheet:** *copies of today’s resource sheet, “Jesus says, ‘Come’”*
- ❑ **3D self-portraits:** *old newspapers, and large sheet of coloured paper*. Draw a simple church outline on the paper.
- ❑ **Painted footprints:** *mural paper or large sheets of white paper, paint with a little liquid soap added, flat tray or pan, dish pan of soapy water, and towels*. Print “Disciples Follow Jesus” in the middle of paper. Ask for additional adult help.

Go to www.spiritseasons.com and use the user name *spirit* and password *child* to access supplemental week-by-week resources which you can use to adapt sessions if you are leading a group consisting mostly of three-year-olds.

Freed to Be



Scripture

Philemon 1–21

FOCUS To affirm our place in the church.

GATHER

1

Welcome the children by name. Show the children their name cards. Invite each child to draw eyes, nose, mouth, and hair on the added paper circle.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship table. Invite a child to spread the green cloth and place the candle and Bible on the table. Point to the Bible and say:

The Bible is a special book of the church, where stories of Jesus and God’s love can be found.

Light the candle and say:

The candle reminds us of Jesus.

Hand out the ritual name cards to the children. As each child places the card on the table, say:

(Child’s name), you are a part of the church!

When all are welcomed, say,

We are a part of the church!

Receive the offering.

Sing “What If You Came to My Church” (pp. 101–102).

Singing prayer (tune: “Frère Jacques”)

God, we thank you, God, we thank you
(fold hands)

for the church, for the church (extend arms).

We are all together, we are all together
(hold hands)

in God’s love, in God’s love (fold arms over chest).

Extinguish the candle as a sign that the opening liturgy has ended.

Priscilla, the puppet, introduces the theme

Sing Priscilla’s song (p. 93) and welcome her. Nearby have a paper with “disciple” printed on it and a mirror hidden inside a folded card or covered with a cloth.

Priscilla: Hello, everyone! I see... (Name children. If some children were not present last Sunday, Priscilla gives them a particular welcome.) I’m so glad to see all of you who are a part of this church!

Teacher: That’s right, Priscilla. We are all a part of the church.

Priscilla: I have a question about a word I heard at church. Here it is. (Priscilla shows the disciple card.) Now let’s see... I know it starts with the letter “D.” Hmm. What do you think it might be? (Invite children’s responses.) Could it be dishwasher? Dining room? Doughnut? No, none of those seem right.

Teacher: Priscilla, this is a word that has something to do with the church.

Priscilla: You’re right! I just remembered – it’s disciple. But what does “disciple” mean?

Teacher: A disciple is someone who follows. We follow Jesus when we show God’s love to others. (Look at Priscilla and the children.) Would you like to see some disciples now? (Wait for their responses and then invite them to come up and look at the hidden mirror.) Who did you see? (Invite children’s responses.)

Priscilla: It looks like we are all disciples!

Teacher: Yes! Can you think of a way we show God’s love to others? (Invite children’s responses.) Let’s hear a story of how people in the church can show God’s love to others. (Place Priscilla nearby or say goodbye to her.)

If not using Priscilla the puppet, bring the printed word “disciple” and the mirror. Talk about what the word “disciple” means and tell the children that they are going to see a disciple. Then call them up one at a time to uncover the mirror and see themselves.

2

ENGAGE

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table. Open the Bible to the bookmark. Say that letters like this one helped people in the church know how to be Jesus' followers, Jesus' disciples. Today these letters in the Bible help us to be disciples, too. Use poster *Where Is the Church?* and resource sheet "I'm a Disciple, Too!" to tell the story.

After the story

Fingerplay "Here Is the Church" (p. 93)

Singing game "There's Someone Who Belongs at Church"

(tune: "Bingo." In turn, use each child's name.)

There's someone who belongs at church
And (child's name) is his (her) name-OH,
C-I-NDY, C-I-NDY, C-I-NDY (spell out
child's name),

And Cindy is his (her) name-OH!

When each child's name is being sung, that child walks or skips around the circle.

If the number of letters in a child's name is greater than five, put them in on the notes of the song however you can make them fit.

3

RESPOND

Very young children may still be in the "scribble stage." For these children, the process of using crayons or markers is all-absorbing, and they do not yet produce recognizable depictions. Talk with them as they work, and, if they agree, print a word or two of what they tell you under their drawings.

Choose from the following activities.

Activity sheet As part of the church, we can be disciples, too. Hand out copies of resource sheet "Jesus says, 'Come.'" Invite children to draw themselves in the picture. Talk about how children can be Jesus' disciples, following Jesus by showing God's love to others.



3D self-portraits We are all part of the church where we can learn more about God's love. Invite children to draw pictures of themselves on drawing paper. Then, draw an oval shape around each completed picture with black marker. Cut around the black lines. Cut another piece of paper the same size as each cutout drawing and print the child's name on it. Use these papers to back the drawings. Staple on three sides and stuff loosely with newspaper. Staple remaining sides closed. Place an outline of a church on a display board and pin completed "people" around it.

Painted footprints Jesus wants us to follow him in showing God's love to others. Sit around the mural paper. At one end, place a pan of paint. At the other end, place a dishpan of soapy water, a chair, and towels. One at a time, children take off one shoe and sock and carefully step in the paint. Hold the child's hand as the painted foot is put on the paper (the other remains on the floor). The child walks to the other end of the paper. Then, sits on the chair to have foot washed and dried. Repeat with another child. As children add footprints, the others chant and clap their hands:

*Jesus said, Follow me, follow me, follow me,
Jesus said, Follow me, come and follow me.*

Read title "Disciples Follow Jesus." Ask, "What might Jesus ask us to do to show God's love to other people?"

4

BLESS

Gather around the worship table. Light the candle. Say that the candle reminds us of Jesus, who wants the people of the church to follow him and be disciples.

Pray Thank you, God,
that we are a part of the church.

Help us to be good disciples,
showing your love to others. Amen.

Extinguish the candle.

Send each child out with the words, "(Child's name), you're a part of the church!"

REFLECT

How did the children respond to the new word, "disciple"? If there were children new to the group today, what evidence did you see that they felt affirmed and included?

Save the ritual name cards for next week.



Story Tip

If your church has a ministry similar to one mentioned in the story, be sure to mention it: "In our church, we collect cans of food in a big box. Then we take it to... In our church, some people help other people to build a brand new house..."

I'm a Disciple, Too!

As the story is told, encourage children to answer the questions by pointing to the appropriate illustrations on the poster "Where is the Church?" Teach the refrain:

Disciples follow Jesus,
and I'm a disciple, too!

Can you find a picture that has lots of food on the shelves?

Kendall's church has a food pantry where people of the church bring cans and packages of food. Then people who are hungry can come and get food to take home for their families. Jesus told us that disciples care about hungry people.

Disciples follow Jesus,
and I'm a disciple, too!

Can you find a picture with someone working on a roof?

Some people from Kendall's church are helping a family whose house needs to be repaired. They hammer on shingles to fix the roof. They fix broken windows. Jesus told us that disciples care about helping people find a safe place to live.

Disciples follow Jesus,
and I'm a disciple, too!

Can you find someone raking leaves?

Boys and girls from Kendall's church are raking leaves for Mrs. Walker. She is older and has a hard time taking care of her yard. Jesus told the disciples to show God's love to everyone, old and young.

Disciples follow Jesus,
and I'm a disciple, too!

Can you find some children making cards?

These boys and girls are making cards for people who live in a nursing home. Some people can no longer come to church, so the people of the church go to visit them! Jesus told the disciples to show God's love to people who are sick and lonely.

Disciples follow Jesus,
and I'm a disciple, too!

Can you find some teenagers washing cars?

The teenagers in Kendall's church are having a car wash. People give them money to make their cars shiny and clean. Then the teenagers send the money to other people of the church. They will buy a tent for people far away whose house was destroyed by a bad storm. Jesus told the disciples to show God's love to people who are near and far away.

Disciples follow Jesus,
and I'm a disciple, too!

Can you find a child who fell down?

These boys and girls are playing. This little girl fell down and they help her get up. Jesus told the disciples to show God's love whenever and wherever they are.

Disciples follow Jesus,
and I'm a disciple, too!

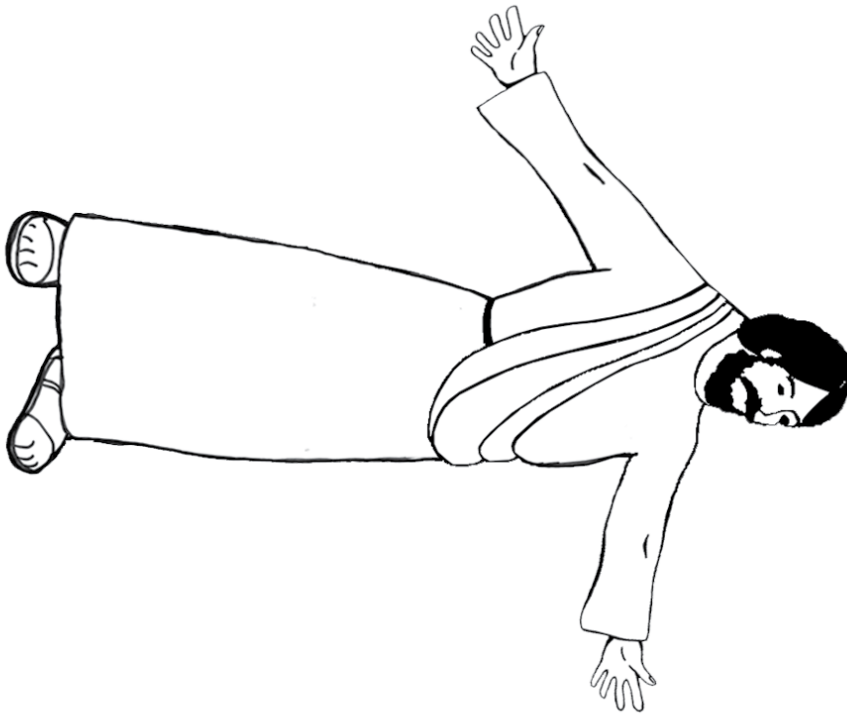
Can you find people at church praying and singing?

These people are at church praying and singing songs to praise God. They thank God for the church. They thank God for Jesus, who taught us how to show God's love to everyone.

Disciples follow Jesus,
and I'm a disciple, too!



Jesus says, "Come"



Dear Family,

Today the children heard a new word, "disciple," and learned that a disciple follows Jesus and shows God's love to others. Our young children are a part of the church and can begin to follow Jesus. Talk with your child about ways to tell others about Jesus and show them God's love.

Of Great Value

The God we follow showers us with blessing each day. Through a lost sheep and a lost coin, Jesus teaches about God, who can be trusted to seek us always, pursuing us with steadfast love. God's intention is to save. God's people are called to live within this treasure and gift, rejoicing as the faith community grows.

Focus Scripture: Luke 15:1–10

In chapter 14 of Luke, we learn that large crowds were following Jesus to hear him teach. Among them were tax collectors, sinners, Pharisees, and scribes. As chapter 15 opens, we hear grumbling among the Pharisees and the scribes: "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

Jesus responds to their complaint with parables. Imagine the response of the crowd who listens to these stories: Who puts 99 sheep in jeopardy to risk that one might be found? No one who is trying to run a livestock business! Who turns the whole house upside down – lighting a lamp and using precious oil – to search for a small amount of money and then, when it is found, throws a party? No one! But we might hear in these parables how God acts. God can be trusted to seek us and love us. Through these parables, we sense that the flock of sheep and the set of coins were not complete until the lost members were found.

The Pharisees and the scribes perhaps understood, in keeping with many in first-century Middle Eastern cultures, that wealth and good fortune were signs of God's blessing and that poverty was a sign of a person's sin. Not only does Jesus upset this understanding, in the parables God first is cast in the role of a shepherd, a class of labourers held in low esteem within first-century Jewish culture. Then, even more shockingly, God is cast as a woman, the least powerful group in their culture. No wonder the gospel that Jesus proclaimed was seen as good news to the poor (Luke 4:18).

In these parables we can glimpse God's way, God's searching love. The Pharisees and the scribes have been shocked by how Jesus seeks out those whom they perceive to be of

little value. God, however, is persistent in love for all. The reign of God that Jesus proclaims is an upside-down world where one sheep is worth spending the energy normally reserved for 100, where one coin is worth domestic disruption and expenditure, and where one repentant sinner is cause for rejoicing. Jesus' parables challenge all who listen to grow in understanding of what it means to be foolish, to be wise, to be lost, and to be found. Who will join in the celebration of God's mercy?

Even when hope is dim, God can be trusted. In the barren land described in **Jeremiah 4:11–12, 22–28**, a wasteland of the people's own making, there is little hope. But even in such a place of desolation and among those who have sinned greatly, God – who seeks all who are lost – will be present and will not give up.

The psalmist, in **Psalms 14**, trusts that God will restore God's people. God will not forget those who are poor and who have been mistreated by those in power. Sin will not have the final word in God's reign.

Paul knows that he has received undeserved mercy, and gives thanks for this blessing in **1 Timothy 1:12–17**. The good news for all is that, like a shepherd searching for a lost sheep and a woman a lost coin, God can be trusted to seek, to save, and to love.

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From Jesus' teaching, we learn that God's determination to seek us and to love us is beyond what humankind would consider wise or even rational. Jesus risked all to reach those in need of God's saving grace. When have you felt most "lost" and most "found"? In what ways might you and your church be as relentlessly loving as God?



September 16, 2007

Focus Scripture
Luke 15:1–10

Additional Scriptures
Jeremiah 4:11–12,
22–28

Psalms 14
1 Timothy 1:12–17

We praise and trust you, O God, for your gift of relentless and everlasting love. Kindle in us the zeal to guard the treasure of faith you have given, and to reach out to others with joy. Amen.

Go to www.spiritseasons.com and use the password linking to access Spirit Sightings for international current events links to this week's theme.

The Focus for Ages 3–5

Here is a story that really connects with the experience of young children! They know what it is to lose something important and they know what it is to be lost. It's not necessarily being lost for any length of time, although they may have had that experience. It's just that momentary feeling of being lost from that which is most dear and reassuring as they look around and cannot see a parent or a familiar caring person. The children also know what it is to find what was lost and to be found after being lost. They can easily relate to the joyous feelings expressed by the woman in the story. Out

of these very formative experiences comes a profound awareness about relationship with God: God cares, God loves, and God will always be with me. This is not just something to feel relief about; it's something to celebrate. Whatever you can do to bring forward that spirit of celebration will add immensely to the power of this session and its connection to the story of "Lost and Loved." (Note: although the focus scripture has two parables, three-to-fives will only hear the parable of the lost coin.) Give thanks and rejoice in God's persistent searching for us when we are lost.

September 16, 2007

PREPARE

Materials needed

Before the session

- ❑ Prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Luke 15: 1–10, and biblical background information (p. 15).
- ❑ Gather items for the worship area: green cloth, white pillar candle, matches, offering basket, and Bible with a bookmark placed in the gospel of Luke.
- ❑ Bring basic supply kit (p. 94), additional song sheet (p. 93), and, if possible, Seasons Music CD, vol. 5 and CD player.

Gather

- ❑ Bring a simple large-piece puzzle. Leave one piece in the box.
- ❑ Bring the ritual name cards from past weeks, and additional folded card stock with face circles for newcomers.
- ❑ Bring song "What If You Came to My Church" (pp. 101–102).
- ❑ Bring Priscilla, the puppet (p. 2). She is wearing a necklace.

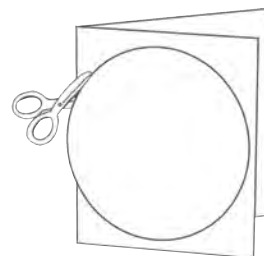
Engage

- ❑ Bring today's resource sheet "Lost and Loved," and ten coins.
- ❑ Bring poster "First Steps, after Millet."
- ❑ Bring a large cloth or sheet for a game (optional).
- ❑ Bring iced biscuits or creamed cheese on crackers, raisins, currants, or sultanas. Spread topping on biscuits or crackers beforehand.

Respond

Choose from the options provided. Prepare and bring materials.

- ❑ **Coin headband:** long strips of construction paper, and either tarnished copper coins and vinegar/salt solution (5 ml/1 tsp salt to 250 ml/1 cup) or a large coin and kitchen foil
- ❑ **Hidden coin:** copies of today's resource sheet "Where Is the Lost Coin?," red cellophane, and yellow crayons. Make a sample: decorate resource sheet and use a yellow crayon to draw a coin somewhere in the picture (yellow will not be seen under red cellophane). Staple a red cellophane page over the picture.
- ❑ **"Missing you" cards:** construction paper, round object (such as a plate), and art materials. Fold construction paper in half. Use the round object as a template and trace a circle onto each folded paper (overlap the left edge as illustrated). Cut out cards and inside each one print a message such as, "We miss you when you are not here."



Go to www.spiritseasons.com and use the user name *spirit* and password *child* to access supplemental week-by-week resources which you can use to adapt sessions if you are leading a group consisting mostly of three-year-olds.



Of Great Value

Scripture

Luke 15:1–10

FOCUS To hear in the parable of the lost coin that God will keep on loving us.

GATHER

Welcome the children. Invite them to put together a large-piece puzzle. When it is discovered that one piece is missing, have everyone search the room until it is found in the box. Admire the completed puzzle. Every piece of the puzzle was important so that we could see the whole picture!

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship table. Invite a child to spread the green cloth and place the candle and Bible on the table. Point to the Bible and say:

The Bible is a special book of the church, where stories of Jesus and God's love can be found.

Light the candle and say:

The candle reminds us of Jesus.

Hand out the ritual name cards to the children. As each child places the card on the table, say:

(Child's name), you are a part of the church!

When all are welcomed, say,

We are a part of the church!

Receive the offering.

Sing "What If You Came to My Church" (pp. 101–102).

Singing prayer (tune: "Frère Jacques")

God, we thank you, God, we thank you
(fold hands)

for the church, for the church (extend arms).

We are all together, we are all together (hold hands)

in God's love, in God's love (fold arms over chest).

Extinguish the candle as a sign that the opening liturgy has ended.

Priscilla, the puppet, introduces the theme

Sing Priscilla's song (p. 93) and welcome her.

Priscilla: Good morning, (Priscilla names each child). It's so good to see you.

Teacher: It's good to see you too, Priscilla. How are you?

Priscilla: I'm very happy now. I lost my necklace and now I've found it. (Priscilla shows her necklace.) It was a present from my uncle who lives far away. Yesterday was his birthday, and I wanted to remember him and wear the necklace all day, but I couldn't find it. I felt like crying. I searched everywhere for it.

Teacher: Where did you find it?

Priscilla: It was in the back of a drawer! Girls and boys, have you ever lost something in your house? (Listen to responses and ask how it felt to lose that item.)

Teacher: Sometimes, no matter how hard you look, you can't find the thing that you have lost. But when you do find it, how do you feel?

Priscilla: I know how I felt. I was so happy. I danced around my room and then I told my mother, and she danced with me. (Priscilla turns to the children.) Can you remember how you felt when you found something that had been lost? (Listen to responses.)

Teacher: I think everyone has lost something at some time. Jesus once told a story about a woman who lost something very special to her. Let's get ready to hear that story now. (Say goodbye to Priscilla or place her nearby.)

If not using Priscilla, the puppet, refer to the puzzle that the children put together when they first entered. Ask them if they have ever lost something that was important to them. How did it feel? Did they search for it? Did they find it again? What did that feel like, or how would they feel if they did find it?

2

ENGAGE



Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the gospel of **Luke**. Say that Luke wanted to help us learn more about Jesus and the stories that Jesus told. Luke wanted to help us learn how to be good disciples and live and love in God's way. Many of Luke's writings have been put in our Bible now. Use resource sheet "Lost and Loved" to present the story.

After the story

Poster First Steps Look at the poster together and talk about what you see. Encourage the children to find something you could smell; something you could hear; something that would feel soft; something that is growing; someone who is loved; someone who is car-

ing; someone who is loving. Ask questions such as, "How do you think the child is feeling? What do you think the man is saying to the child?" Reinforce the idea that God is just like these parents – loving and caring and always looking out for us.

Singing game "Where Is..." (p. 93)

or

Poem "Ten Coins" (p. 93)

Celebration snack Jesus wants us to celebrate God's persistent love for us. God loves everyone. Decorate iced biscuits (or creamed cheese on crackers) with raisins, currants, or sultanas to make happy faces. (Make sure all hands are washed before starting!)

3

RESPOND

Choose from the following activities.

- ❑ **Coin headband** The woman never gave up looking for her coin. Make a headband as a reminder of this story. Give each child a paper strip to decorate with markers. Demonstrate how to clean tarnished copper coins by dipping them into a salt/vinegar solution. Dry them and then tape the coins onto the headbands. Staple the ends of the headbands to fit the children's heads. (Note: if copper coins aren't available, place a large coin under kitchen foil, and rub the foil to get an imprint.)
- ❑ **Hidden coin** The woman searched until her missing coin was found. Show a completed sample of resource sheet "Where Is the Lost Coin?" with red cellophane covering the picture. Where is the coin hiding?

Encourage guessing and then lift up the cellophane to reveal where it is. Invite children to decorate their own pictures with many colours and only use yellow crayons to hide the coins somewhere in their pictures. Look at each other's pictures and guess where the coins are hidden. Continue this guessing game at home.

- ❑ **"Missing you" cards** Sending cards to children who are not present in your group today let's them know they are missed when they are not there. Talk about who is missing. Hand out prepared coin-shaped cards and read the words inside. Invite children to use the art materials to decorate the front covers. Several cards could be made for each absentee.

4

BLESS

Gather around the worship table. Light the candle. Say that the candle reminds us of Jesus, who helps us learn about God's love.

Pray Dear God,
thank you for loving us
as much as you do.

Help us to go and share that love with others. Amen.

Extinguish the candle.

Send each child out with the words, "(Child's name), go out and celebrate God's love."



In what ways did the children respond to the message of God's love for everyone? What stories did they want to share with you?



Story Tip

Use gestures and facial expressions to reinforce your words.

Lost and Loved

(based on Luke 15: 8–10)

(At the appropriate times in the story, encourage the children to say the words in bold.)

This is a story that Jesus told...

Once upon a time, there was a woman who lived in a small house at the edge of town. Every day she would wear a headscarf with ten coins sewn into it. *(Bring out ten coins and count them. Have children hold nine of them – conceal the tenth.)* She didn't keep her coins in a bank. She wore them on her head!

One morning she noticed that her headscarf felt different. Quickly she counted the coins on her scarf. *(Have children show their coins and together count them all.)* "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9?" She counted again. "1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9?" Oh, no! One coin is missing! Imagine how the woman felt. Her coins were so special to her.

The woman took a lamp and looked everywhere on the floor. "It must be somewhere in this house," she thought. "I must find it. It means so much to me."

And then the woman picked up a broom and started to sweep.

Swish, swish, swish, went the broom under the table.

Swish, swish, swish, went the broom under the chair.

Swish, swish, swish, went the broom all around the house. Around and around and around she swept.

Swish, swish, swish.

And then, there, right in front of her, she saw it! *(Reveal the coin.)* Hiding underneath a blanket! The woman was so excited that she jumped up and down on the spot.

Hooray! Hooray! Hooray! And then she ran out of the house to tell her friends the good news. **Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!** Everyone danced and danced and danced. The lost coin had been found.

Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!

The woman never gave up looking for her coin. **Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!**

And God will never give up loving us.

Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!

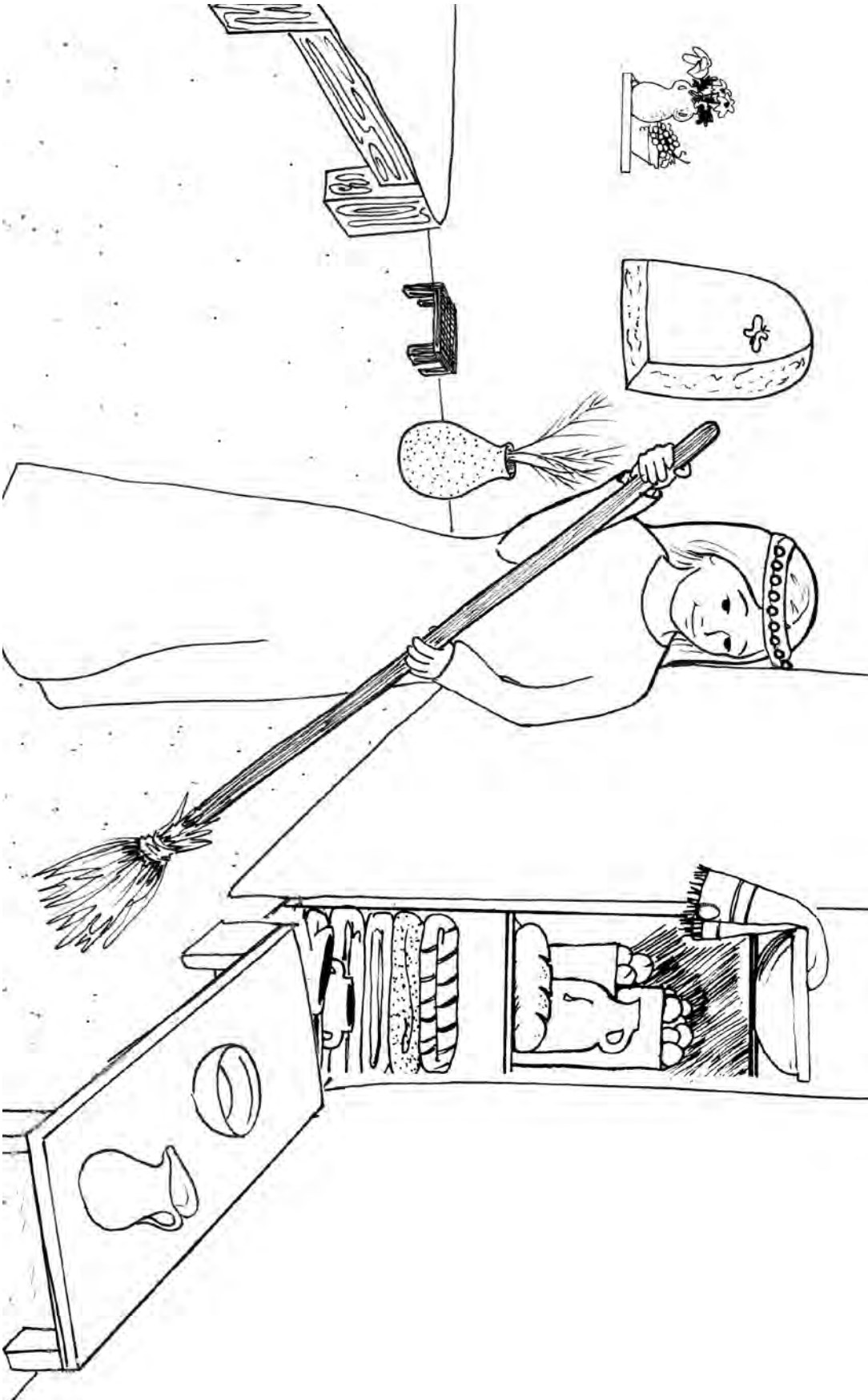
Everyone deserves God's love. **Hooray!**

Hooray! Hooray!



Where is the Lost Coin?

(based on Luke 15:8-10)



“Let’s celebrate! I’ve found the lost coin.” (Luke 15:9b)