

Sacrifice

In this week's readings, we witness people called by God to perform marvellous acts – giving birth in old age and curing the sick. Accepting these callings requires a willingness to sacrifice one's own comfort to serve God and others. The texts invite us to explore sacrifice in our own lives as we seek to live out God's call.

Focus scripture: Matthew 9:35–10:8, (9–23)

Matthew 9:35–10:8 (9–23) describes the ministry of Jesus and his disciples. There are many in need of Jesus' healing ministry. Jesus acknowledges that he cannot do this work alone and calls disciples to join him. However, the authority to cast out unclean spirits and cure disease requires that the disciples sacrifice their former lives and any hopes of wealth or prestige.

Jesus instructs them to begin their ministry in the Jewish community. While this may seem like an unfair exclusion of the Gentiles, it demonstrates the need to limit ministry at times so that it can be most effective, particularly when resources are few. It may also seek to address the internal turmoil of the predominately Jewish Matthean audience. The community needs to heal from the traumas experienced in the violent destruction of the temple, which was its primary sacred space and means of connecting to God. The passage points to the importance of ministering to and strengthening community. But this requires sacrifice and compassion on the part of those facilitating healing. The responses of the traumatized community are diverse, ranging from hostility and suspicion to gratitude and hospitality. Jesus is aware of this and instructs the disciples to mindfully discern their ministry.

Genesis 18:1–15 tells the prediction of Isaac's birth. Abraham and Sarah were focused on providing hospitality to mysterious visitors, an important custom in this time. Little did they know that it was

they who would be receiving a great gift that day. When they least expect it, God promises the miraculous birth of a child despite their old age. In accepting this promise, Sarah and Abraham had to sacrifice control of their life and trust in God. Despite their initial disbelief and laughter, they ultimately rejoice when Isaac is born.

In **Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19**, we hear the thankful voice of those who have cried out and have been heard by God. It serves as a reminder that God stands with and supports those who are persecuted. Even though they might meet death, God does not abandon them.

In great compassion, God creates and sustains hope. In **Romans 5:1–8**, Paul asserts how suffering need not end in despair, because of God's love that continues to pour into our hearts.


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Sharing the Good News brings joy and suffering. Paul shows us that this suffering ultimately leads to hope rather than despair. Likewise, Jesus demonstrates that making the sacrifice to share in his ministry does not require that we accept all suffering and hostility. Instead, we are called to discern where our ministry is most needed. God calls us, individually and as a church, to the urgent work of carrying God's love and care into the world, and we can trust in God to sustain us on the way. To what urgent work are you and your church being called today?



Focus scripture
Matthew 9:35–
10:8, (9–23)

Additional scriptures
Genesis 18:1–15
Psalm 116:1–2, 12–19
Romans 5:1–8

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

**Healing God,
help us to open
ourselves to
your call to aid
others. Teach us
how to sacrifice
our own comfort
and expectations
to better serve
the needs of our
hurting world.
Grant us vision,
strength, and
joy for this work.
Amen.**

Lection Connection
links current events
with this week's
scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and
click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 3–5

Discovery is what life is all about for three- to five-year-olds. A world of “firsts” awaits them. Surely one of the most precious things they will discover is that God loves them and that Jesus counts on their help to share the good news. You may be able to help them realize that everywhere they go is a good place to show God’s love. One of our joys may well be, that for us, these little ones are the good news.

Young children love both to tell their names and to hear them spoken aloud. There is something very special in hearing one’s name, particularly if it is said with affection or regard. As the children work and interact with their names today, they will each have the

opportunity to hear their names spoken with love and acceptance. Even Priscilla knows how good it feels to have others lovingly speak our names. What might be the good news that the children may feel is important to show? Try to encourage them to begin to articulate the good news of God’s love. They will find their own words and actions with which to communicate the good news. As you prepare for this session, be open to discovery with the children. Share their excitement at hearing their names as one of Jesus’ helpers.

Offer prayers that they may continue to experience the wonder of showing the good news.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, Matthew 9:35—10:8 (9–23), and [biblical background material](#) (p. 9).
- ❑ Set a worship space with green cloth, candle, offering basket, Bible with bookmark placed in focus passage.
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Growing Faith* (SGF) *Songbook*, *Seasons Growing Faith* (SGF) *Music CD*, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 6), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 6), and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Bring “Welcome Song” (on resource sheet [“Additional Songs and Poems,”](#) p. 82) or “Like a Rock” (p. 16 in *SGF Songbook*, #11 on *SGF Music CD*).
- ❑ On large sheets of coloured heavy paper, make a name card for each child, including Priscilla. (Print clearly and use lower case letters.) Have extras for visitors.
- ❑ Option: bring a puppet (see information on p. 2).

Engage

- ❑ Bring resource sheet [“Called to Follow”](#) and doll or stuffed toy for each child.
- ❑ Bring, if possible, song “What If You Came to My Church” (p. 37 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 6; #16 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 6).

Respond

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

- ❑ **Talking Masks:** copies of resource sheet [“Talking Mask,”](#) paper plates, and short cardboard tubes. For young children, cut copies of Jesus’ face and glue them onto paper plates before session.
- ❑ **Body tracing:** large sheets of coloured paper. Print, “We can show God’s love many ways” along the top of each paper.
- ❑ **Name plaques:** large name cards used earlier in session

Bless

- ❑ Bring “Blessing Song” (on resource sheet [“Additional Songs and Poems,”](#) p. 82) or “Jump for Joy” (p. 14 in *SGF Songbook*, #10 on *SGF Music CD*).
- ❑ Bring copies of [“Letter to Families”](#) (p. 81) for newcomers.

For groups consisting mostly of three-year-olds, supplemental resources can be downloaded from the Library at www.seasonsonline.ca.



Sacrifice

Scripture

Matthew 9:35–
10:8 (9–23)

FOCUS To hear our names being called to follow Jesus

Gather

Welcome each child, saying “Hello, *(child’s name)*. “Look, everyone, *(Child’s name)* is here!” Encourage them to find their name cards. Then, one at a time, have them hold their name cards out for others to see as they say their names. Collect the cards and mention that they will be used later in the session.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship space and point out the green cloth. Explain that during this time of the church year we learn about how to grow

as followers of Jesus. Light the candle, saying, “This candle reminds us of God’s love which is all around us.”

Pray Thank you, God,
for your love.

Thank you that we can be
with our friends here today. Amen.

Sing “Welcome Song” (p. 82) or “Like a Rock” (p. 16 in *SGF Songbook*, #11 on *SGF Music CD*).

Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Moving into the theme

Choose one of the following:

☐ Puppet conversation

Priscilla: Good morning, everybody! (Priscilla names each child.) What are those cards over there?

Leader: Those are name cards, Priscilla. (*Hand out the cards to the children and allow time for them to show these cards to Priscilla.*)

Priscilla: Can I have a card, too?

Leader: Of course you can, Priscilla. (*Place a card beside Priscilla.*)

Priscilla: (*Priscilla looks at card.*) Wow! I like to see my name on that card. It makes me feel special. It reminds me that God knows my name, too. And then I remember how much God loves me. I love my name card!

Leader: I’m glad you like it, Priscilla. In our story today we will hear about some people who also heard their names. When they heard their names, they were asked to help show God’s love.

- ☐ **Names** Say the name of each child in the group. Talk about how special it is to hear each other’s names. Remind children that God knows their names, too, and loves them, very much.

Engage

Before the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the gospel of Matthew. In today’s Bible story, Jesus invites his friends to go out and help him share God’s love by helping the people they meet.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet “Called to Follow” to tell the story based on **Matthew 9:35—10:8**.

After the story

Encourage children to stand up, walk to a doll or soft toy in the room, cradle it, and say, “God loves you.”

Sing “What If You Came to My Church” (p. 37 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 6; #16 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 6). Emphasize the words “hearing Jesus’ call.” End the song by saying each person’s name.

Invite children to carefully put the doll or soft toy back where they found it.

Respond

Choose from the following activities.

- ❑ **Talking mask** Jesus called out the names of friends and sent them to show God’s love to others. Jesus calls us by name and sends us out, too. Follow instructions on resource sheet “[Talking Mask](#)” to make masks of Jesus. Then, encourage children to use these masks, imagine they are Jesus, and call out to their friends to follow Jesus.
- ❑ **Body tracing** Jesus called each of his friends by name and sent them out to show God’s love and help the people. We can show God’s love, too. Hand out large sheets of paper and read the printed words: Help children each to trace a foot, a hand and head on their papers. Encourage them to colour their tracings and to draw in their facial features on the heads, including their ears. As they work, review how they might use their hands, feet, ears, and mouth to show God’s love.
- ❑ **Name plaques** Jesus wants us to show God’s love to others. Hand out the name cards used earlier in the session. As they trace their names with their fingers, one at a time, say together, “(Child’s name), is called to tell others about God’s love.” To decorate, use markers around the edges and then use glue sticks to spread glue over the printed letters. Sprinkle glitter over the glue. Gently shake off the excess. Encourage children to display their plaques at home as a reminder to show God’s love.

Bless

Gather in the worship space. Light the candle again and remind children that God loves them very much.

Pray Thank you, God,
for your BIG (*stretch arms wide*) love.
Help us to share lots of love
with our family and friends. Amen.

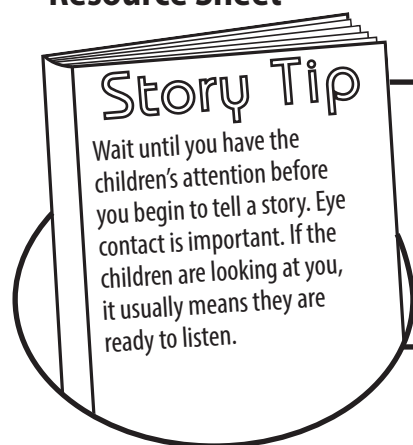
Sing the “[Blessing Song](#)” (p. 82) or the song, “Jump for Joy” (p. 14 in the *SGF Songbook*, #10 on the *SGF Music CD*).

Send each child out with the words, “(Child’s name), you are part of God’s beautiful world and God loves you.”

Distribute copies of the “[Letter to Families](#)” (p. 81) to newcomers to take home.

Reflect

Consider the ways the children are beginning to understand that they, too, are sent to show God’s love. How might you have observed them showing God’s love with each other and other members of your faith community?



Called to Follow

(based on Matthew 9:35—10:8)

(Place several dolls or soft toys around the room. Have children place their name cards in front of them.)

Jesus and his friends were doing so much travelling. They went from town to town telling people about God's love. They walked, and they talked, and they cared about the people they met.

Sometimes they met people who were very sick. Sometimes they met people who were feeling sad. Sometimes they met people who were feeling worried. Sometimes they met people who were lonely. And sometimes they met people who were afraid.

Jesus worked very hard to love and care for everyone. But there was so much to do and so many people who needed help.

Jesus turned to the friends and said, "So many people need our help. Here is what I would like you to do." And then Jesus began to call out the names of the friends.

"John, I would like you to go to the next town and teach the people about God's love."

"Peter and Andrew, go along this road until you get to another town. Please help the people there who are sick. Show God's love."

"Sarah and Mary, please go to the people who live by the river. Tell them God loves them. Share the good news."

Jesus called out the names of all the friends.

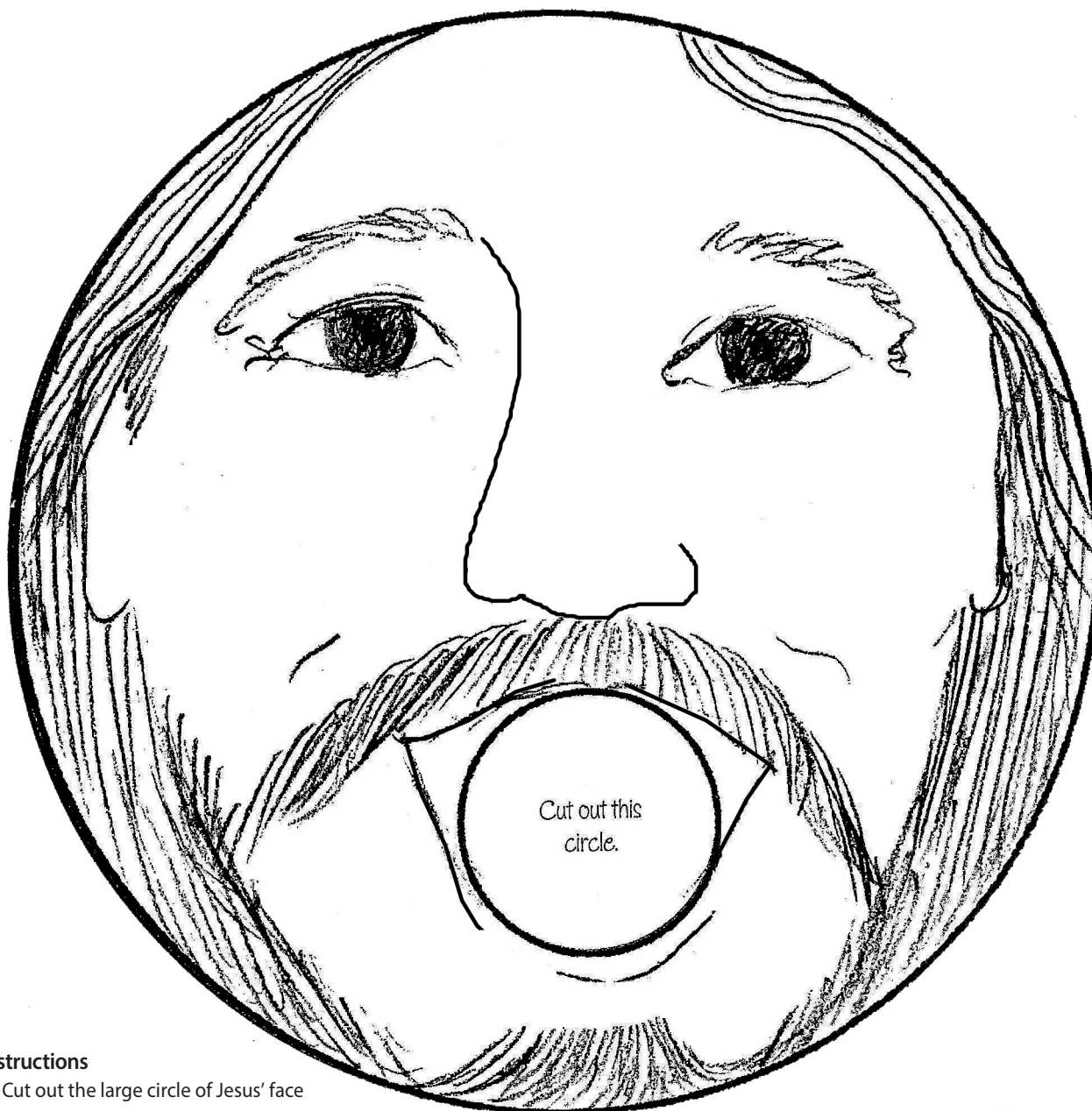
(Invite children to hold up their name cards. Call out each child's name in turn.) "(Child's name), go and show God's love."

And that's what everyone did. Some of Jesus' friends went to heal the sick. Some of Jesus' friends went to help people who were sad or lonely. Some of Jesus' friends went to be with people who were worried or afraid.

Jesus had many, many friends who wanted to help show God's love to everyone. Jesus calls us to do that, too!

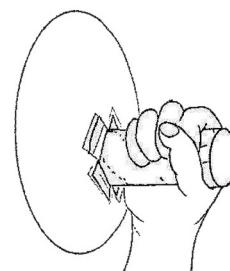
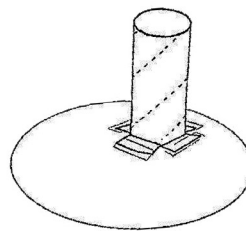


Talking Mask



Instructions

- Cut out the large circle of Jesus' face
- Glue the face to a paper plate
- Decorate the face
- Cut out the circle where the mouth would be
- Take a short cardboard tube and, at one end, cut into it about 2.5 cm./1 in. Do this 4 or 5 times. (see illus. 1)
- Turn the paper plate over.
- Spread out the cut flaps on the tube. Tape the tube over the opening of the mouth. (see illus. 2)
- Now the talking mask is ready! Hold the tube with one hand and place it over your mouth. Talk into the tube as if Jesus was talking. (See illus. 3)



Letter to Families

Welcome to the *Season after Pentecost*, the longest season of the church year, which begins on June 7, the week after Pentecost Sunday, and which will end on the Sunday before Advent. Traditionally this season is considered to be a time of learning and growth in the life of the church as we explore what it means to follow God faithfully day by day.

During the month of June the children will hear a story about the creation of the world from the first two chapters of Genesis and explore three of Jesus' teachings from the gospel of Matthew. Young children enjoy helping and caring for others and for creation, and this song affirms that they have a role to play. Additional action words can be substituted in this song, to emphasize some of the specific skills your child is learning.

I Can Sing and Pray

(tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

I can sing and pray and grow.
I can draw and laugh and throw.
I can push and pull and lift.
I can choose to share my gifts.
I can sing and pray and grow,
all because God loves me so.

During July and August the children will explore some foundational stories of our faith from the last chapters of the book of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus: the stories of Isaac and Rebekah, of Jacob and Esau and Rachel, of Joseph and his brothers, and of Moses and Miriam. A strong theme in these stories is that of God's care and love for God's people, and that we can trust in God's loving faithfulness, no matter what is happening in our lives. The following song reflects those themes:

God's Love

(tune: "The Wheels on the Bus")

God's love for me goes on and on,
on and on, on and on.
God's love for me goes on and on,
everywhere I go.

We will be praying for your child during these weeks. We ask that you and your child pray for us as well as we prepare for and lead the sessions each week. May this Season after Pentecost be one of growth and discovery for your child and your family.

Blessings,

Suggested children's Bibles for use at home: For young children, *Family Story Bible* or *The Lectionary Story Bible, Year A*. For older children, *Read, Wonder, Listen: Stories from the Bible for Young Readers*. Both are available from the publisher of *Seasons of the Spirit* at www.woodlakebooks.com



ADDITIONAL SONGS AND POEMS

WELCOME SONG

(tune: "London Bridge")

Gather round with us today,
to sing and pray, to learn and play.
Gather round with us today,
God loves us in every way.

BLESSING SONG

(tune: "London Bridge")

God is with us as we go,
as we go, home today.
God is with us as we go.
God loves us in every way.

GOD'S LOVE

(tune: "The Wheels on the Bus")

God's love for me goes on and on,
on and on, on and on.
God's love for me goes on and on,
everywhere I go.
(Repeat song using the words "you" and
"us" instead of "me.")

I CAN SING AND PRAY

(tune: "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star")

I can sing and pray and grow.
I can draw and laugh and throw.
I can push and pull and lift.
I can choose to share my gifts.
I can sing and pray and grow,
all because God loves me so.

I'M LOVED

(tune: "Head and Shoulders")

Head and shoulders, knees and toes,
knees and toes, knees and toes.
Head and shoulders, knees and toes,
all of me is loved!

(Other verses: Wiggly fingers, wiggly
toes... Eyes and ears, and mouth and
nose... Neck and elbows, hips and
feet...)

LISTEN, LISTEN

(tune: "London Bridge")

Listen, listen, God loves us,
God loves us, God loves us.
Listen, listen, God loves us,
God helps us to be friends.

SLEEP LITTLE BABY

(August 23)

Sleep little baby (close eyes and lay
head on folded hands),
safe in my arms (hug arms around
self).
I'll hug and rock you (cradle arms and
rock back and forth),
and keep you from harm (pretend to
hug a baby).
Hush little baby (put finger to mouth
and say "Shhh"),
don't start to cry (wave finger back
and forth and shake head),
I'll hug and rock you (cradle arms and
rock back and forth),
'cause I love you, that's why! (Fold
arms over heart.)

