

Holy and Humble Curiosity

This week's story from Exodus presents us with what, for Moses, was the unexpected, surprising, and humbling call to be an agent of God's justice. Moses has much to lose. His life has grown comfortable, but as Jesus affirms in today's gospel reading, life is only gained when you are ready to let it go. It all begins on holy ground, a place Moses enters with humility, but also a place he leaves with a renewed commitment to let his love, his passion for justice have the genuineness spoken of by the Apostle Paul.

Focus scripture: Exodus 3:1–15

When Moses encounters a burning bush, he has every reason to feel that the passion he once had for the suffering of the Israelite people was something that he long ago put behind him. As a young man and the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter, he had risked everything to intervene on behalf of a Hebrew slave who was being abused by an Egyptian. In exile, he had started a new life with a family and a livelihood as a shepherd for his Midianite father-in-law. But Moses remained one who asked questions, whose curiosity led him to places he might otherwise never go. His exile was the direct result of his questioning the abuse of his people. When Moses comes upon a bush that is burning, but not consumed, he asks questions and investigates, which in turn leads him to holy ground where he encounters the voice of God.

It is impossible to separate the curiosity and questioning of Moses from his encounter with the holy. Without a spirit willing to explore, wonder, and be open to what he was unable to understand, there would be no voice calling out to him. The questioning, the curiosity, and the sacred place in which he encounters the holy voice of God go hand in hand. What's more, the curiosity and the experience of holiness are inseparable from what comes next, the call of God for Moses to be God's agent of justice and liberation for the people. It may have seemed to the Hebrews that God had moved on, just as Moses had sought to move on, leaving the agony of the Israelites behind. However, God was listening to the cry of their oppression. When this questioning, curiosity-driven son of Pharaoh's daughter shows up, God calls upon Moses to speak out on behalf of justice. The kind of holy curiosity that

leads one in the ways of God is necessarily accompanied by the type of humility that inspires a person to remove their shoes on holy ground and to acknowledge their own weaknesses and limitations. It should come as no surprise that Moses humbly responds with apprehension at this justice liberation call. According to this week's text, Moses hears from God a word that is spoken to all whose curiosity brings them to holy ground and the call to be agents of justice, "I will be with you."

Psalm 105:1–6, 23–26, 45c opens with a song of praise to God. This moment of praise continues through the highlighting of the prophets, Abraham, and Jacob and ends with a description of Moses' call with his brother Aaron. This passage upholds the history and gratitude for past leaders. Moses is the first of a long line of prophets, who with the prophet Micah continue posing the question "What does the Lord require, but to do justice, to love kindness and walk humbly with our God?"

It is this counter anti-imperial, pro-covenant life that the Apostle Paul has in mind in **Romans 12:9–21** when he says, "let love be genuine...(v. 9). If your enemies are hungry feed them...(v. 20)"

It is this anti-imperial, God embracing covenant that Jesus bears witness to in **Matthew 16:21–28** when he says, "For those who want to save their lives will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

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Curiosity and questioning bring Moses in humility to the place of holy ground. What does holy ground look like for your community of faith?



Focus scripture Exodus 3:1–15

Additional Scriptures
Psalm 105:1–6, 23–26,
45c
Romans 12:9–21
Matthew 16:21–28

You who speak into the mystery of the universe, creating life out of chaos, you invite us to look at our world with wonder, humility, and an unrelenting commitment to your liberating love. May our worship bring us into an encounter with the calling of your holiness and the life of your justice. Amen.

Lecture Connection

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

The Focus for Ages 5–12

Young children like to do things on their own and are eager to assume new privileges and responsibilities. Each new challenge that is mastered builds a child's confidence in her or his ability to take on more challenges. Older children in this age group are experiencing some independence and may express a desire for more autonomy and responsibility. Nevertheless, they know the anxiety that can come with greater responsibility and participation in larger projects, and they often need to be reminded that they are capable of doing what is asked of them. They may identify with Moses' hesitation about doing what God asks, even as they enjoy imagining themselves in Moses'

place of being asked to do a great task.

For children in this age group, "holy ground" is usually pictured as the church sanctuary where worship takes place. This week's story suggests that holy ground can also be found in unusual and unexpected places, in fact, wherever we are prepared to enter into conversation and relationship with God. This will be a stretch for more literal thinkers in the group; however you can affirm the children's abilities to create holy ground in their homes, neighbourhoods, and communities.

Pray that the children will trust that God also calls them by name and leads them to do extraordinary things.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Exodus 3:1–15, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 99).
- ❑ Set worship space with green cloth; bring candle and Bible with bookmark placed in focus passage.
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2) and, if possible, *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 song "Be Still and Know" (p. 9 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 6; #7 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 6).

Engage

- ❑ Bring resource sheet "[God's Plan for Moses](#)."
- ❑ **Movement group:** copy of section "[Action poem](#)" (on bottom of p. 103)
- ❑ **Bible research group:** Bibles
- ❑ Bring poster *Dalbergia Sissoo* (*Indian Rosewood*) and paper child shapes (from resource sheet "[Patterns](#)," p. 108).

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ❑ **Story zone:** orange, yellow, and red construction paper, poster board, strips of paper, instructions from resource sheet "[Story Gallery Project-2](#)," (p. 111)
- ❑ **Discussion zone:** invite several congregational members to speak about their experiences of hearing God's call in their lives.
- ❑ **Quiet zone:** copies of resource sheet "[Labyrinth Meditation](#)"; option: recording of meditative music
- ❑ **Cooperative zone:** copies of resource sheet "[Call and Answer](#)"; make copies, cut sections apart, and place each set in an envelope.
- ❑ **Craft zone:** circles cut from black craft foam, scraps of red, orange, yellow, and green craft foam, yarn

Bless

- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song, "As We Go Now" (pp. 6–7 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 6; #28 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 6).



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Scripture

Exodus 3:1–15

FOCUS To listen, like Moses, for God's voice

Gather

Welcome the children and introduce any newcomers. Share stories and experiences from the past week.

Opening ritual

Gather in the worship space and invite a volunteer to light the candle as you say:

This candle reminds us
of God's presence with us.
In this space, we hear stories
about God and God's people.
(Place Bible beside candle.)

In this space, we know God's Spirit
is with us.

Sing or listen to, if possible, the song "Be Still and Know" (p. 9 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 6; #7 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 6).

Pray (Invite children to repeat each line after you.)

Loving God,
thank you for this place
where we can learn and share.
May we be open to the work
of your Holy Spirit. Amen.

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

Connecting with the focus

Invite children to talk about some of the chores and jobs that they are asked to do at home.

■ How do you feel when a job seems too hard for you?

Share a story of your own experience with a difficult task, and then invite children to share stories that they might have about experiences of being asked to tackle a challenging task. Explain that in this week's story someone is asked to do a really tough job.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship area and use the bookmark to open it to the book of Exodus. Recall last week's story about Moses: a baby who was hidden in a basket in a river, watched over by his sister Miriam, and rescued from the river by the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt. In this week's story Moses is a grownup who is married and has a job looking after his father-in-law's sheep.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "[God's Plan for Moses](#)" based on **Exodus 3:1–15**.

Wondering questions Invite children to imagine what happened next, using the following questions:

- I wonder what Moses said to Pharaoh to persuade him to let the Hebrew people go?
- I wonder what the Hebrew people thought about God's plan?

Exploring the story further

(To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.)

Movement group *(for younger children)* This group will engage the story through poetry and movement. Lead them in the poem and actions at the bottom of p. 103.

Bible research group *(for older children)* This group will have the opportunity to read the story for themselves. Distribute Bibles and help them find **Exodus 3:1–15**. Discuss what questions they have about the story. Why do they think Moses was hesitant to accept God's call?

Reporting Invite the movement group to share the poem and invite the research group to share some of their answers to the question.

The Bible story and us

Art engagement Invite children to look at the poster *Dalbergia Sissoo* (*Indian Rosewood*) and imagine that they have just walked out from the city towards this tree, and like the bush in the story of Moses, it is on fire without burning up. Have them imagine that they can hear a voice coming from the tree, calling them by name. Distribute paper child shapes (from resource sheet "Patterns," p. 108) and take turn using reusable adhesive to place the figures on the poster as they name something they might do in response to God's call.

■ **What things might God ask us to do to help people in the world?**

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

❑ **Story zone: Story gallery** *(Last week)* God calls us all to be part of God's way of love. Follow the instructions for this week on the resource sheet "Story Gallery Project-2" (p. 111) for creating a bush of flames naming some of those called to share God's love. Make plans for sharing the gallery of stories for this season with the rest of the congregation.

❑ **Discussion zone: Guest speakers**  God calls people today too to share God's love with others. Invite your guests to talk with the children about ways in which they experienced God's call in their lives and how they answered that call. Encourage children to ask questions.

❑ **Quiet zone: Meditation** *(for older children)*  Labyrinths are winding paths that people use to meditate on what God might be calling them to do. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "Labyrinth Meditation" and review the instructions. Invite children to sit quietly and slowly trace the labyrinth with their finger as they reflect on God's call in their lives. Option: play recording of meditative music.

❑ **Cooperative zone: Game** Like Moses, many people who feel quite ordinary have answered the call to do extraordinary tasks. Distribute envelope of sections from the resource sheet "Call and Answer" and have children work in pairs (pairing older children with younger) to match the names of the people to the work they were called to do by pairing slips of paper. Take time to discuss what things God might be calling group members to do.

❑ **Craft zone: Mosaics** *(for younger children)* When we are living in God's way we bring the light and warmth of God's love to the world. Distribute black foam circles and invite children to glue on scraps of coloured craft foam in the shape of a bush. Punch two holes in the top and thread with yarn. Encourage children to hang these up at home as reminders of God's call to share love and light in the world.

Bless

Gather around the worship area and light the candle again.

Sing or listen to, if possible, the song "As We Go Now" (pp. 6–7 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 6; #28 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 6).

Pray Lead the children in the following prayer, inviting them to repeat each line after you:

May we respond to God's call
to show God's love in all we do.

Blessing Offer the following blessing: "God calls you by name to make a difference in the world."

Reflect

As this is your final session as a group for this season, please take a moment to complete the evaluation form (at the end of this resource or in Library at www.seasonsonline.ca). The developers of the *Seasons of the Spirit* resources appreciate hearing about your experiences with the materials.

Action poem

Moses stood upon a hill (*stand up straight*).
The sheep were grazing all around (*shade eyes to look around*).
Suddenly he looked again (*look startled*).
A bush was burning bright (*shield eyes*).
A voice called out from that bright bush (*cup ear*).
"Moses! This is holy ground!" (*kneel down*)
"Moses, I have a job for you!" (*bow head*)
"Moses, go to Egypt!" (*point into the distance*)
"And set my people free!" (*raise hands up*)





GOD'S PLAN FOR MOSES

based on Exodus 3:1-15

Well-placed pauses can
enhance the drama of
this story.

When Moses was a baby, Pharaoh ordered the soldiers to throw the Hebrew baby boys in the Nile River. But Moses' mother and sister Miriam, both very brave, had a plan to save Moses. Pharaoh's daughter was part of their plan, but she didn't know it. This was important because God had a plan for Moses.

When Moses went to live with Pharaoh's daughter, Pharaoh did not know Moses was a Hebrew child. When Moses grew up, he left Egypt because it saddened him to see the Israelite people made to work so hard as slaves.

In another country, Moses lived a quiet life, taking care of sheep in the hills. But God still had a plan for Moses. And now it was time to let Moses know what God's plan was.

One day Moses was watching the sheep as he did every day. But this day Moses saw a bush on fire. Moses went closer. "The bush is burning, but it isn't burning up," he muttered. Then a voice said, "Moses, Moses!" And Moses answered, "Here I am."

Then the voice said, "Stay where you are. Take off your sandals. You are standing on holy ground. I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." At this, Moses took off his sandals and then covered his face with his hands, not wanting to look at God.

God continued, "I have seen the sufferings of my people in Egypt. I want you to go to Pharaoh to tell him to let my people go free. I will be with you."

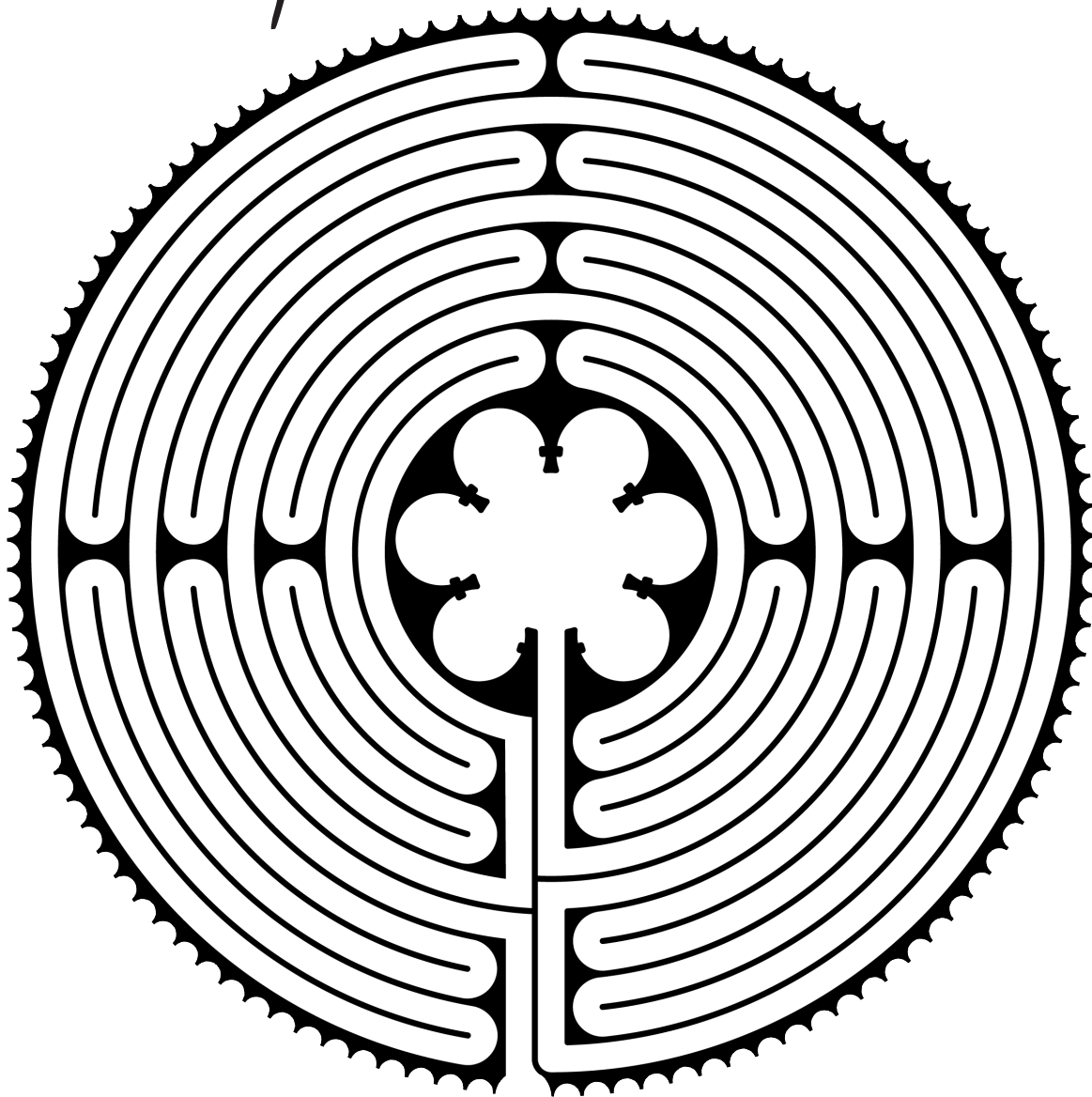
Moses did not want to return to Egypt. "But who am I that I should go to the Pharaoh? How will they know that you have sent me?"

"Tell them that my name is 'I AM WHO I AM.' Say to them, 'I AM has sent me to set you free.'"

Moses still wasn't sure he could do what God said. But finally Moses did, because this was God's plan.



Labyrinth Meditation



Labyrinths are paths that people move along to help them listen to what God wants to say to them.

1. As you slowly trace the path of the labyrinth to the middle, think about a question you would like to ask God.
2. When you reach the middle, think about how God might answer your question.
3. As you trace your way along the path out of the labyrinth, think about an action or change that God might be calling you to do and how you can begin to do it.
4. When you have finished, write your question on the back of this page and some thoughts that came to you as you followed the labyrinth.



CALL AND ANSWER

Chief Joseph

He appealed to the US government not to send his peaceful tribe, the Nez Perce, to a reservation.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

He worked for equal rights for white and black people in the United States and led the Montgomery bus boycott.

**Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi
(Mahatma Gandhi)**

He led the way to freedom in India by practicing non-violent resistance to unjust policies.

Aung San Suu Kyí Aung

She has used peaceful means to struggle for equal rights for all people in Burma.

Steve Biko

He used non-violent means to end the system of segregation, apartheid, in his country of South Africa.

Harriet Tubman

She was an American slave who escaped and risked her own safety to lead other slaves to freedom.

Florence Nightingale

She was a British woman who became known as the Lady with the Lamp and was a pioneer of modern nursing.

Ruby Bridges

She helped to end the segregation of white and black students in American schools. She was the first black student at her school.

Rachel Carson

She worked to protect the environment. Her book was called *Silent Spring*.

Vincent Lingiari

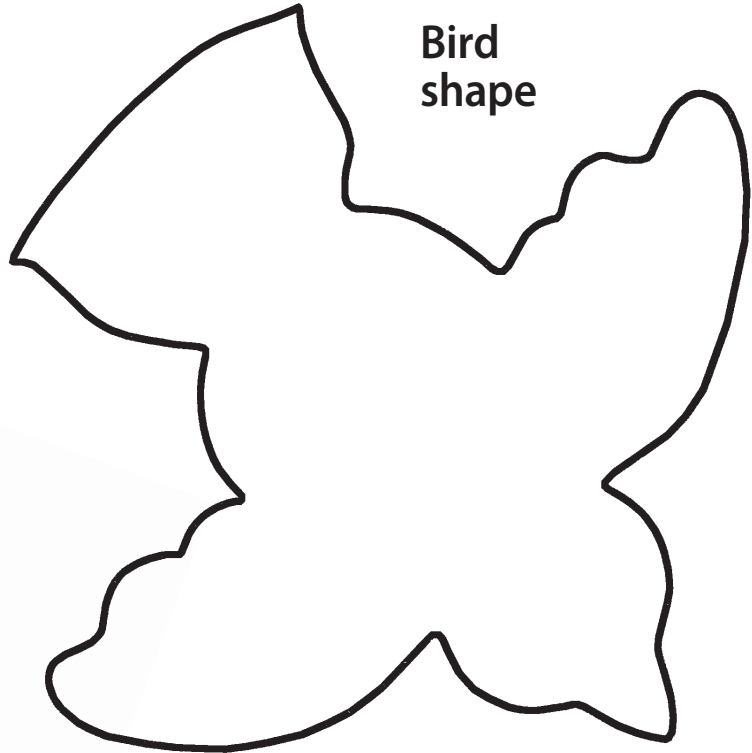
He was an Aboriginal rights activist who helped his Gurindji people receive their land back from the Commonwealth of Australia.

Patterns

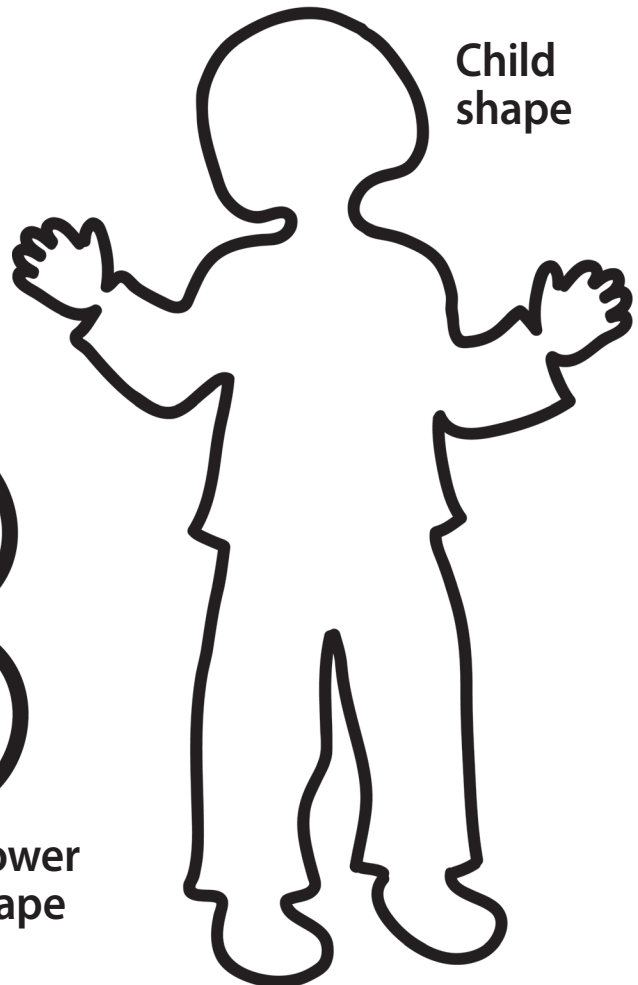
Hand shape



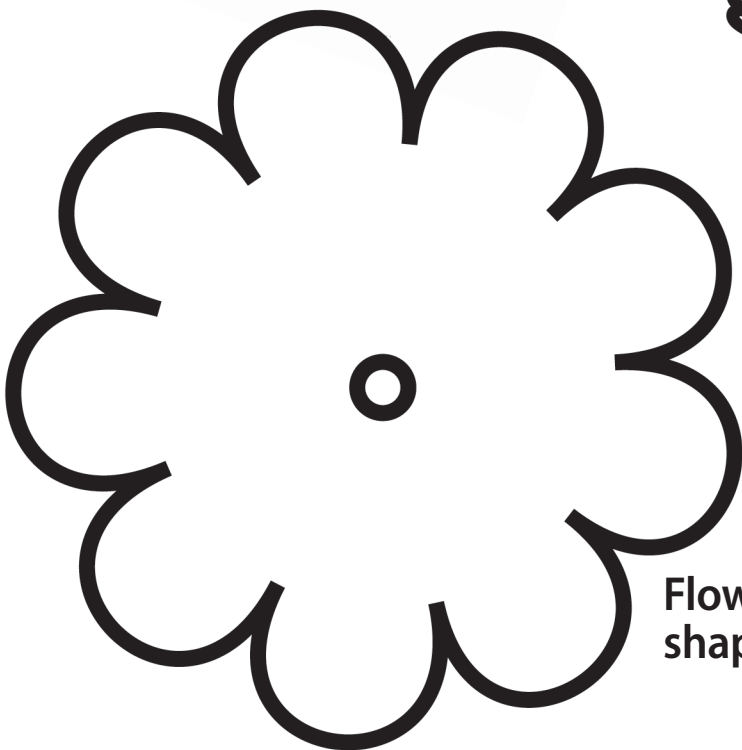
Bird shape



Child shape



Flower shape

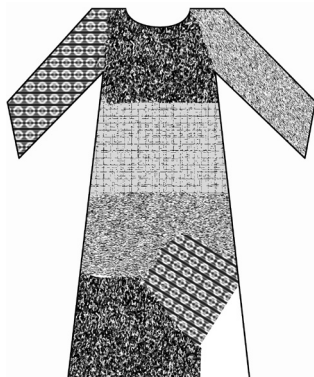


Story Gallery Project-2

The following projects can stand alone as an activity for that week, or the activities can be part of an ongoing project to create a “gallery” of images based on the stories from Genesis and Exodus. If you choose to do an ongoing project, mount each week’s art pieces as indicated and keep in the meeting room until August 31, when the group can host an “art gallery tour” for the rest of the congregation.

August 9: Fabric collage

Joseph’s special coat reminded him of the love of his father, Jacob (*Genesis* 37). Invite children to make fabric collages as reminders of this part of the story. Have them cut scraps from many different colours of fabric and collage these onto cardboard coat shapes by covering the cardboard with a layer of white glue and then pressing the fabric scraps onto the cardboard. Add glitter or star sequins if desired. Make an arrangement of the “coats” on a sheet of poster board, adding a title and scripture reference.

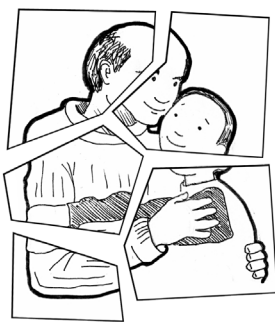


August 23: Courage words

Through the courage and love of women, Moses was kept safe (*Exodus* 1). Invite children to create “baskets of courage words” as reminders of God’s loving care. Draw a large basket shape on brown construction paper and have children work together to add lattice-work lines to make it resemble a woven basket. Cut this out and attach it to a sheet of poster board by taping around the bottom and sides, leaving the top open. Then help children to write inspiring words on strips of paper (such as “God’s love never fails” or “God is always with us” or “Friends are signs of God’s love”). Place these strips in the “basket” and add a title and scripture reference to the board.

August 16: Picture mosaic

Taking steps toward forgiveness brought the broken pieces of Joseph’s relationship with his brothers back together again (*Genesis* 45). Invite children to look through magazines and find pictures that represent for them the theme of forgiveness. Have them remove their pictures from the magazines and then cut into large pieces, like a jigsaw puzzle. Then have them glue the pieces onto a sheet of construction paper to re-form the picture, leaving small spaces between each piece. Make a display of the images, adding a title and scripture reference.



August 30: Flame names

Moses heard God’s voice call him by name, calling him to be part of God’s plan for the Hebrew people (*Exodus* 3). Talk together as a group about how God calls us all to be part of God’s way of love. Distribute orange, yellow, and red construction paper and help the children to cut these into flame shapes. Have them each write their name on one of the shapes. Then talk together about others who might also be called by God, such as family members, friends, people in church, helpers at school or in the community. Add these names to other flame shapes and then work together to glue the “flame names” onto a sheet of poster board to form the shape of a bush. Add a title and scripture reference.

