

# Coming through the Waters

Epiphany can shake the foundations of our faith. We may wonder what to do next. The Season after the Epiphany will offer opportunities to incorporate the new, weave it into the old ways or let go of old beliefs entirely. This week, we focus on the role of the Holy Spirit in the wake of earth-shattering discoveries.

## Focus scripture: Mark 1:4–11

The gospel of Mark opens with the story of John's preaching before Jesus' baptism. Prophets rarely live ordinary lives; Mark's gospel makes it abundantly clear that John was no exception to this rule. Just like the God he serves, he understands how to make something out of nothing. A meal of locusts and honey, a robe of camel hair held together by a belt of leather cord. John used the Jordan River for ritual cleansing so his followers would remain humble. He insists they believe in the power of God to deliver them by way of a forthcoming prophet who wouldn't need water for ritual cleansing. "This prophet will baptize you with spirit!" he proclaims. "You won't need me or this great river!"

Jesus' baptism is just like the baptisms of John's followers until he comes up out of the water. The sky seems to burst. A simple bird becomes the sign of God's presence resting on him. The familiar human they knew as nothing more than a simple man, friend, brother, and teacher is suddenly both son of Mary and Son of God.

**Genesis 1:1–5** Humans around the world have many accounts of the origins of peoples, places, problems. Genesis is a mysterious text that offers more than one story of creation. It begins with God creating something out of nothing by sorting things out. In this story, the very first act is to make a way for darkness and light to know their names and know their places. Darkness is called night and light is called day.

As if Genesis weren't poetic enough, **Psalm 29** offers a satisfying hymn about the voice of God moving across water, earth,

fire, and people for the sake of blessing it all with God's presence. This voice calls forth the glory of trees and entire civilizations; it is the cause and control for much of what we experience. The passages work together this week to set the scene for stories of human encounters with the voice that orders the chaos around and in God's people.

In **Acts 19:1–7**, Paul has found a small group of Jesus' disciples who have not been taught about the comfort of the Holy Spirit. Paul offers a simple explanation that links the baptism of Jesus to the baptism of all believers. He offers them a new way to experience repentance and prophesy. They are baptized into the Holy Spirit, and it is as if they feel a new order. They seem to have a new relationship with each other, Christ's story, and to all of creation. Paul teaches that there is something more significant than the ritual cleansing for repentance. There is an added element, the Holy Spirit that makes us behave as part of a new creation, a new covenant.

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Simple aspects of nature are put into new order when God speaks through them, and there are new identities for ordinary people when the spirit of God is evident in or through them. It is as if the passing season has shed new light on old questions about who we are and how we will behave. The Season after the Epiphany offers us a time to explore this as a call from old habits and into a fresh start. How will you respond to the needs of the people and planet in this Season after the Epiphany?



## Focus scripture

**Mark 1:4–11**

## Additional scriptures

**Genesis 1:1–5**

**Psalm 29**

**Acts 19:1–7**

**God of ancient knowledge and overwhelming truth, we seek understanding and patience as daily we realize we live in the depths of mystery and cannot know who we are until we learn more about who you are. Amen.**

## Lection Connection

links current events with this week's scriptures. Go to [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca) and click on the link.

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## The Focus for Ages 3–5

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Many young children can easily express love for their family and friends. They offer spontaneous affirmations of love, both verbally and non-verbally. Many of the Bible stories about Jesus include events that focus on God’s love for Jesus and in this week’s scripture reading God identifies Jesus as “Beloved.” The session offers the opportunity for leaders to affirm God’s love for all the children in the group.

Three- to five-year-olds have a limited sense of time and they may wonder why, in today’s story about Jesus, he is suddenly an adult when just a few weeks ago we were cel-

ebating Jesus’ birth. The conversation in the “Moving into the theme” section will help children imagine the transition between the birth story to the stories of Jesus’ adult ministry.

After the story, the children will have an opportunity to re-enact Jesus’ baptism. Take time to explain baptism rituals in your church. Mention that people of all ages may be baptized, and make sure that each of the children feels part of God’s family, whether or not they have been baptized. Emphasize that God’s love is for everyone and they are all God’s children. Pray that each child trusts that she or he is a beloved child of God.

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## Prepare

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### Before the session

- Read and prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, Mark 1:4–11, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 39).
- Prepare a worship space with a white cloth, candle, matches, offering basket, Bible with a bookmark placed in the gospel of Mark.
- Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), resource sheet “[Additional Songs](#)” (p. 76) and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), *Seasons Growing Faith (SGF) Songbook*, *Seasons Growing Faith (SGF) Music CD*, and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available for purchase at [www.seasonsonline.ca](http://www.seasonsonline.ca).

### Gather

- Option: bring a puppet (see information on p. 2).

### Engage

- Bring resource sheet “[Jesus is Baptized](#)” and a length of blue fabric.
- Bring dove, Mark, John, and Jesus figures from the [Storytelling Poster 1](#).
- Make a people figure (see [pattern](#) on p. 80) for each child.

### Respond

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

- Painting:** copies of this week’s resource sheet “[Beloved Child of God](#),” white crayons, watercolours, brushes, containers of water, blue construction paper; cut out dove shapes, one for each child; trim top and bottom of pages.
  - Mural:** mural paper, used magazines or catalogues; paint or draw the outline of a river on the mural paper; cut pictures of a variety of people from magazines or catalogues.
  - Glitter globe:** small jars with lids, flexible lids from plastic containers, glitter, glycerine, distilled water, waterproof adhesive, small plastic spoons; use [dove pattern](#) (p. 80) to cut a dove shape for each child from the plastic lids.
- ### Bless
- Bring, if possible, song “Nobody Else Like Me” (p. 20 in *SGF Songbook*, #13 on *SGF Music CD*).



# Coming through the Waters

## Scripture

Mark 1:4–11

**FOCUS** To hear, with Jesus, that we are loved by God

## Gather

**Welcome** children by name and invite them to talk about some of the things that make them feel loved.

### Opening ritual

**Gather** around the worship table and invite a child to help light the candle, a reminder that God is with us. Point to the Bible and explain that it is a special book with stories about God's love. Explain that this day we come together to sing and pray and learn how to live in God's way. Receive the offering.

**Sing** "God is With Us" (on resource sheet [Additional Songs](#), p. 76)

**Pray** Dear God,  
thank you for your love.  
Please help us share that love with others.  
Amen.

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

### Moving into the theme

Choose one of the following:

#### Puppet conversation

**Priscilla:** Hi everyone. I've been in a wondering mood. I've been wondering about Jesus and what games he played when he was a little boy. (*Encourage children to offer suggestions.*)

**Leader:** What games do we like to play today? (*Encourage responses.*)

**Priscilla:** I wonder what foods Jesus used to eat. (*Encourage children to imagine Jesus' favourite foods.*)

**Leader:** What are your favourite foods? (*Encourage responses.*)

**Priscilla:** There's so much to wonder about.

**Leader:** We're glad you came and got us wondering, Priscilla. (*Place Priscilla nearby or have her say goodbye.*)

- Wondering questions** Invite children to talk about their favourite games and food and then wonder together about what games and food Jesus might have liked when he was their age.

## Engage

### Before the story

Remember together the story of Jesus being born. Invite children to imagine Jesus growing up: have them crouch down small and then slowly stand up and stretch way up as they imagine Jesus as a grownup. Explain that today we have a story about Jesus when he was about the age of their parents. Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to

the gospel of Mark. Before telling the story, introduce the word "baptism" as something special that people do in church to show that they want to live in God's way. Place a length of blue cloth on the floor to represent a river. Invite children to gather beside it. Use the resource sheet "[Jesus is Baptized](#)" and the figures from the [Storytelling Poster 1](#) to tell the story.

### After the story

Invite children to re-enact the story. Decide who will be Jesus and who will be John while the rest stand beside the fabric river. Have "John" pretend to baptize "Jesus" as the group says together God's words, "You are mine. I love you." Repeat with other children in these roles. Mention that in our church today some people are baptized when they are babies or children like this group, and others

when they are adults like Jesus. At baptisms today we use water, too.

**Sing** "I'm a Child of God"

(tune: "London Bridges")

I'm a little child of God,  
child of God, child of God.

I'm a little child of God,  
God made me and God made you.

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## Respond

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Choose from the following activities.

- ❑ **Painting** We are all beloved children of God. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Beloved Child of God](#)" and read aloud the top section. Invite children to use white crayons to colour the dove, pressing firmly. Print each child's name with white crayon. Show them how to dip their brushes into water, then into blue watercolours and paint over the sheets to see the dove and names remain white. Glue pages onto blue construction paper.
- ❑ **Mural** Invite children to recreate the story of Jesus' baptism. Place the prepared mural paper on the floor and invite children to glue figures

beside the river. Add the figures of the dove, Jesus, and John from the story. Have children draw themselves in the crowd and display the mural in the church hall.

- ❑ **Glitter globe** The dove is a reminder of God's love. Give each child a small jar and help them fill their jars with water, then add a sprinkle of glitter (using spoons), a few drops of glycerine and a dove shape. Apply the jar lids and wrap lid with waterproof adhesive tape. Invite children to shake their jars, watching the dove float in the shiny water.

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## Bless

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**Gather** around the worship table and light the candle again.

**Sing or listen to**, if possible, "Nobody Else Like Me" (p. 20 in *SGF Songbook*, #13 on *SGF Music CD*).

**Pray** Thank you, God,  
for your love and  
for always being with us.  
Amen.

**Send** each child out with the words, "God bless you, (*name*), as you shine with God's love this week."

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## Reflect

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How might you continue to affirm for each child that they are beloved children of God, whether or not they have been baptized?





## Story Tip

It is important to tell the story as you feel it. If you enjoy it, the children will too.

# Jesus Is Baptized

(based on Mark 1:4–11)

*(Children are sitting along the shoreline [blue cloth] of the river. Give each child a paper figure and a crayon. Invite them to draw eyes, nose, and mouth on the figures. Have figures of Mark, John, Jesus and the dove nearby.)*

*(Show Mark.)* This is Mark. Mark is a storyteller who lived long, long ago. Mark wrote many stories of Jesus because he wanted people to know how wonderful Jesus is. This is one of Mark's stories...

It was the middle of the afternoon. It was a very hot day. A big crowd of people stood at the side of the river. *(Children place their figures along the shoreline.)* The people put their hands over their eyes to shade them from the glare of the sun. They were listening to John. *(Show John.)* John was standing in the water and talking to the people. *(Place John in the "water.")* "I am God's messenger," John said. "You must get ready. Get ready for the person who is coming to show us God's love and God's way. Come, come into the water and be baptized."

And soon some of the people followed John into the water. The water covered their feet. The water covered their knees. One by one,

John dipped them into the water and said a prayer. *(One by one, children put their figures in the "water.")* "Now you are baptized," John said. "Go and live God's way." As the people walked out of the water, they felt clean and new inside. It was a wonderful feeling. *(Children place figures on shoreline again.)*

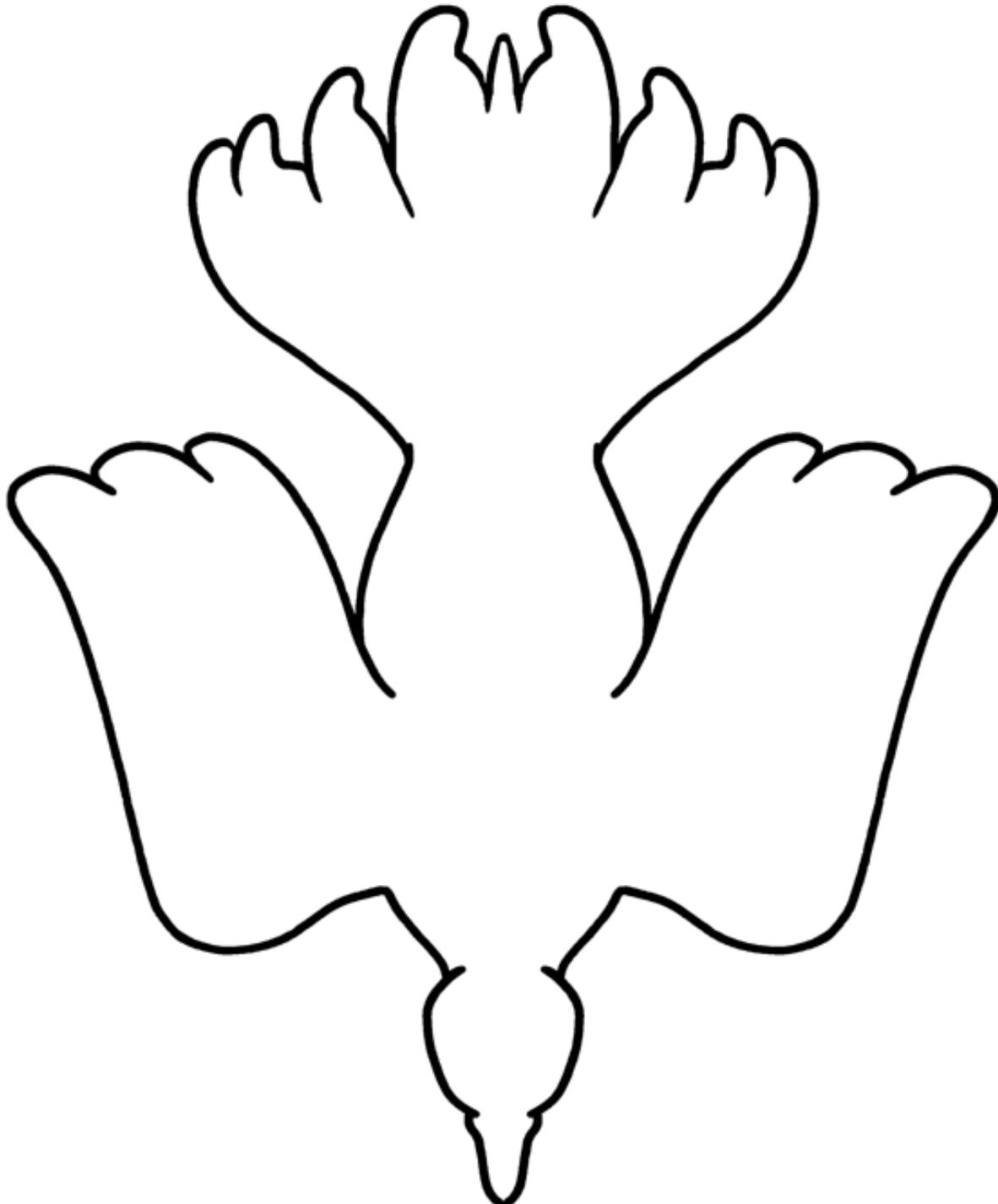
Now, one of the people who wanted to be baptized that afternoon was Jesus. *(Show Jesus.)* Jesus had walked all the way from Nazareth. "John, please baptize me, too," said Jesus. So John walked into the water with Jesus. John dipped Jesus into the water and said a prayer to God. Then something very, very special happened to Jesus. As Jesus came out of the water, Jesus felt God's love in a very special way. He felt God's love deep inside and all around. And then, looking up, Jesus saw light all around. It looked as if a dove was gently touching him. *(Gently touch the dove figure to the Jesus figure.)* Then Jesus heard a loving voice say, "You are loved by God. I am so proud of you."

What a special time for Jesus! Jesus knew that he was ready now to tell everyone about God's love.



# Beloved Child of God

When Jesus was baptized, Jesus felt God's love deep down and all around. Jesus heard God's loving words. God has loving words for you, too. Add your name, fill in the dove with white crayon, and then paint this sheet blue. Read God's message to you.



# Additional Songs

## We Are Waiting

(tune: "Frère Jacques" or "Are You Sleeping?")

We are waiting, we are waiting,  
every day, every day,  
to celebrate a birthday,  
to celebrate a birthday,  
Jesus' birth! Jesus' birth!

## Ring the Bells

(tune: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat")

Ring, ring, ring the bells.  
Ring the bells today.  
Jesus comes to share God's love.  
Ring the bells today.

## God Is With Us

(tune: "Frère Jacques" or "Are You Sleeping?")

God is with us, God is with us,  
all the time, all the time,  
comforting and loving,  
comforting and loving,  
Thank you, God. Thank you, God.

## If You're Happy and You Know It

F C7

If you're hap - py and you know it, clap your hands. If you're  
stamp your feet.  
snap your fingers.

F

hap - py and you know it, clap your hands. If you're  
stamp your feet.  
snap your fingers.

B $\flat$  F

hap - py and you know it, then your face will sure - ly show it. If you're

C7 F

hap - py and you know it, clap your hands.  
stamp your feet.  
snap your fingers.

Other verses:

If you're sad and you know it, cry boo hoo.  
If you're tired and you know it, give a yawn.  
If you're angry and you know it, stamp your foot.  
If you're excited and you know it, give a jump.  
If you're loving and you know it, throw a kiss.

## God Loves Us

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

We are all God's family. (Open arms wide.)  
Look around and you will see.  
(Shade eyes with one hand and look around.)  
God loves you and God loves me.  
(Place hands over heart.)  
We are all God's family. (Open arms wide.)  
Look around and you will know.  
(Shade eyes with one hand and look around.)  
God's love helps us all to grow.  
(Bring arms up and hold hands above head.)

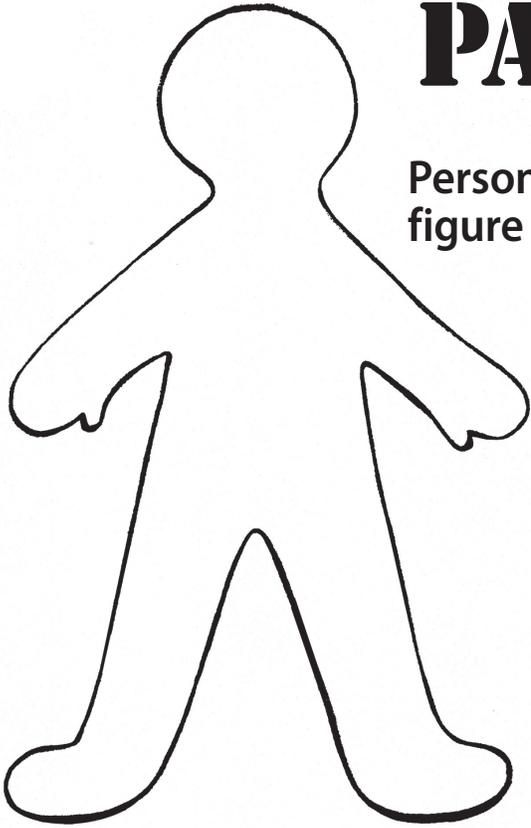
## We Will Follow Jesus

(tune: "The Bear Went Over the Mountain")

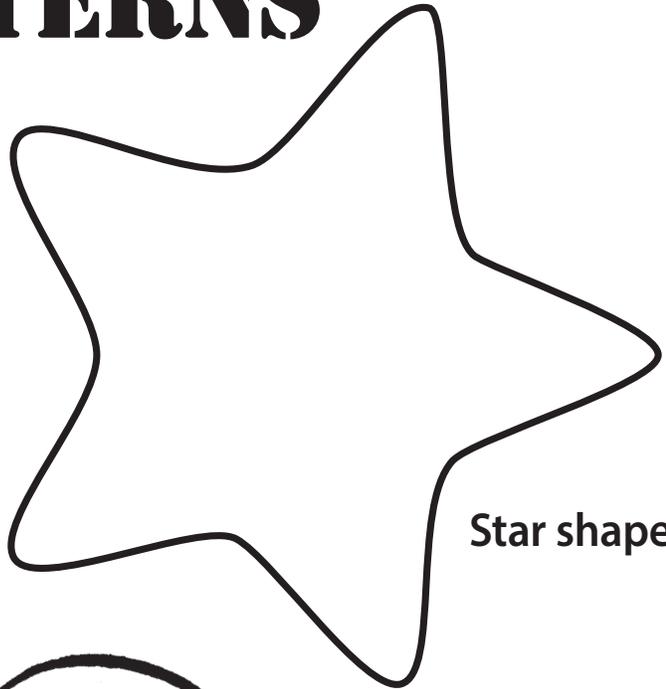
We will follow Jesus  
We will follow Jesus  
We will follow Je - sus  
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).  
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).  
and do what Jesus did (clap clap).  
We will follow Jesus  
We will follow Jesus  
We will follow Je - sus  
and do what Jesus did.



# PATTERNS

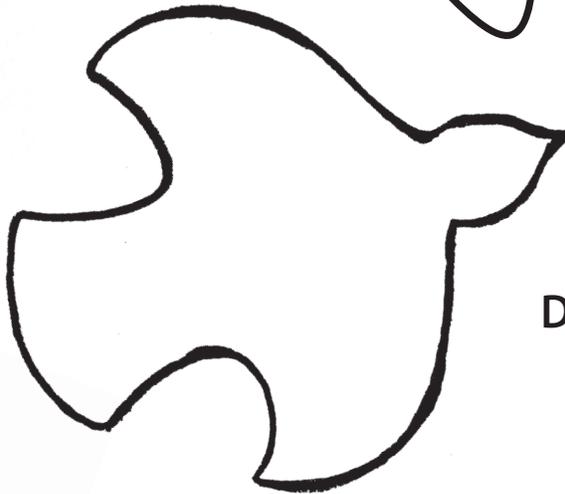


Person figure



Star shape

Footprint shape



Dove shape

Fish shape

