

Solidarity

This week's readings ask us to consider what it means to stand in solidarity with those who are marginalized. Solidarity may mean providing means of survival and support as God did for Hagar in the wilderness. But as Jesus shows, solidarity may also require us to enter uncomfortable, disruptive spaces in our pursuit of justice.

Focus scripture: Matthew 10:24–39

Jesus invites his followers into a space of discomfort and division. Jesus highlights that to follow him involves sacrifice and a willingness to disrupt the status quo – secrets will be brought into the open, family conflicts will arise, lives will be lost. This disruptive space mirrors the trials occurring within Matthew's primarily Jewish audience. The community was struggling with leadership, tradition, and ritual practice issues following the destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. Those who were following Jesus presented further complications as they disrupted communal unity through their new beliefs and practices.

Jesus reassures his followers that God values and cares for all people. Just as God cares for all creation. While this reassurance might bring comfort, Jesus concludes with the reminder that his message does not bring peace, but the sword. To bring about the reign of God requires radical changes in society; changes that challenge power structures. Followers are called to enact this change and to face the consequences that emerge from it.

Genesis 21:8–21 shifts the narrative focus from Abraham and Sarah to Hagar and Ishmael. With the text repeatedly reminding the reader that Hagar is Egyptian, Sarah labels the slave woman and her son a foreign threat to Abraham's lineage. Abraham casts Hagar and Ishmael cast out into lethal desert conditions at Sarah's request and, according to the storyteller, with God's approval. However, Hagar and Ishmael are not forgotten. Facing death, both cry out. God hears them. God stands in solidarity with and provides for those cast out into the wilderness by society. As womanist theologian Delores Williams

explains, this solidarity does not always fully liberate those who are oppressed, but it secures their survival. This offers hope that those who are oppressed and labelled as outsiders by society today have the power to find their voice, a voice that calls God and all of God's people to listen and to act.

In **Psalm 86: 1–10, 16–17**, we hear the cry to God from one who suffers affliction. It is a cry, like Hagar's, calling for strength, comfort, and God's favour. This call recognizes the power of God and understands that God uses this power to stand with those whom society scorns or deems shameful.

Romans 6:1b–11 invites believers to recognize the cost of discipleship. Through baptism, believers are united with Christ. To be one with Christ involves more than a metaphorical rising in new life. It requires that Christ followers live differently than they had previously. It requires that one live one's life like Christ – standing in solidarity with the marginalized, bringing healing, and sharing meals with those society has rejected. This new way of living is countercultural, challenging the conventions of Greco-Roman society that valued social hierarchy and status.


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God models for us how to stand in solidarity with those who are suffering. Solidarity requires that we not only listen for those suffering injustices but that we act. As followers of Christ, we enter uncomfortable spaces that disrupt our relationships to power and disrupt relationships, even with those closest to us. In doing so, we make God's love and justice more fully present in the world.



Focus scripture
Matthew 10:24–39

Additional scriptures
Genesis 21:8–21
Psalm 86:1–10, 16–17
Romans 6:1b–11

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

Gracious God, you are with us in times of great joy and in our wilderness moments. Help us to stand fearlessly in solidarity with those who are marginalized, just as you have been present with us. Grant us the courage to seek justice in your name. 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

Young children often enjoy watching birds at a backyard feeder or in a park. Some in your group may have personal stories to tell about encounters with birds, or coming upon a nest with tiny eggs. The image of a small bird, a sparrow, is at the centre of this week's story about God's love. For young children, the message of God's love is at the centre of all we do with them each week. The stories, activities, and songs help to reinforce the message of God's love, for each child.

In a discussion with the disciples about God's love, Jesus used the image of a sparrow, among the tiniest of birds, yet worthy of God's love and attention. This also offers children a concrete way of understanding God's

love. Even the smallest child will recognize the difference between themselves and a sparrow. If God offers love to this tiny bird, they can begin to imagine how much love God offers to people. The Respond activities offer opportunities for children to become "caregivers" in tangible ways.

The children in your group will not all have experienced love in the same way. You will need to be sensitive to their experiences as you begin to help them understand the scope of God's devotion towards us. As you prepare for this session, pray that God's love will be known and felt by each of the children. Offer thanks for this wonderful message of love that you are able to share with the children.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Matthew 10:24—39, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 15).
- ❑ 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*, 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*).
- ❑ Option: bring a puppet (see information on p. 2).

Engage

- ❑ Bring bird shapes cut from construction paper (see dove patterns in *Virtual Resource Booklet* in Library at www.seasonsonline.ca);

- ❑ Bring resource sheet "[God Loves Us So Much](#)" and a snack of bread and fruit.

Respond

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

- ❑ **Cards:** construction paper folded in half; print "Sign of God's love" on the outside of the card.
- ❑ **Pinwheels:** copies of resource sheet "[Pinwheel](#)," paper towel tubes, paper fasteners
- ❑ **Bird feeder:** sliced bread, egg white, pastry brush, birdseed in a shallow dish, straws, yarn, foam trays

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.



Solidarity

Scripture

Matthew
10:24–39

FOCUS To be reminded of God's abundant love

Gather

Welcome each child, saying "Hello, (*child's name*), we're happy you're here." Invite them to share experiences from the past week.

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. It's so nice to see you!

Leader: It's great to see you too, Priscilla.

Priscilla: I've been wondering about something. Maybe you can help me. Children, how do you know when someone loves you? (*Encourage responses.*) That's what I thought, too!

Leader: That's a good wondering question, Priscilla. In our story today we will hear about how much God loves us, too. (*Say goodbye to Priscilla.*)

- ☐ **Names** Ask the children, "How do you know when someone loves you?" When an answer is given, encourage everyone to use their bodies to make a "picture pose" of that action. Have them stand very still while you pretend to take their photograph. Repeat several times.

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 talked about birds to help his friends understand God's love. Distribute paper bird shapes and invite children to colour these and then "fly" them to place in different parts of the room.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "God Loves Us So Much" to tell the story based on **Matthew 10:24–39**,

sharing the snack, and inviting children to retrieve the birds as indicated.

After the story

Game Gather in a circle and lead the children in a game about God's love.

Leader: (*Say to one child.*) "How much does God love you?"

Child: This much? (*Holds out arms.*)

Leader: Oh, no, even more!

Leader and child join hands and ask the next child the question together.

Continue until everyone has had a turn and everyone is holding hands.

Leader: How much does God love us?

Children: God loves us so much! (*Raise hands together.*)

Respond

Choose from the following activities.

- ❑ **Cards** Jesus used the example of a sparrow to explain how much God loves us. Distribute folded construction paper and read aloud the words on the front of the cards. Invite children to glue their bird shapes (used earlier in the session) inside and decorate both sides of their cards. Encourage them to take their cards home as reminders of God's love.



- ❑ **Pinwheels** Jesus assures his friends and us of God's endless love. Distribute circles from the resource sheet "[Pinwheel](#)" and invite children to decorate the pictures. Help each child cut and fold along the lines. Distribute paper tubes and follow the instructions on the

resource sheet for assembling the pinwheels. As the children blow on their pinwheels, remind them that God's love goes round and round everywhere.

- ❑ **Bird feeders** Little birds are a reminder of how much God loves us. Give each child a slice of bread and show them how to use a straw to poke a small hole in the top. Help them lightly brush both sides of the bread with egg white and press bread into birdseed until coated, shaking off excess. Show them how to thread yarn hangers through the holes, and place on trays to take home as reminders to share 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.

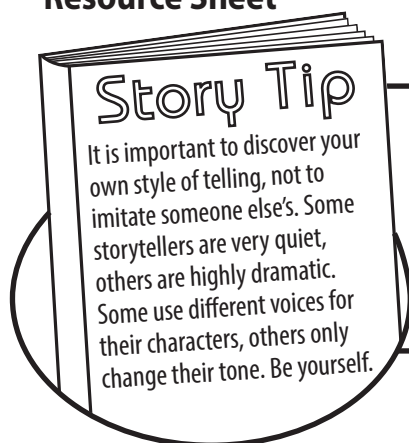
Sing the "[Blessing Song](#)" (p. 82) or the song, "Jump for Joy" (p. 14 in the *SGF Songbook*, #10 on the *SGF Music CD*).

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

Reflect on the ways in which the children experience God's love through the actions and work of your faith community.



God Loves Us So Much

(based on Matthew 10:24–39)

(Scatter paper birds [sparrows] around the room.)

One day, Jesus' friends were sharing some bread and fruit together. *(Share the snack of bread and fruit with the children.)* While they were eating, they began thinking about all the stories that Jesus had told them; stories about helping people; stories about healing sick people; stories about teaching people about God's love.

John looked around at the friends and said, "What are you thinking about?"

"Well," said Peter, "I'm thinking about all the people who need to hear about God's love."

"Me too," said Andrew, "there are so many people!"

"We know how to do lots of things," said Peter. "We know how to sail our boats. We know how to catch fish. We know how to fix our boats and nets when they are broken. But I'm just not sure how we can tell so many people about how much God loves us."

Jesus listened. And then Jesus smiled.

"You're worried about this new job I have for you," said Jesus. "Well, there will be some

good days when people will be so happy to hear your news. But there will also be days when people won't want to hear your news. They won't listen to you. When you are having a bad day, you must remember that God is with you even on those days. God's love is with us everywhere."

As Jesus was talking, some little sparrows flew down to share the crumbs from the bread that the friends were eating. *(Invite children to find the birds in the room and "fly" them to the story area.)*

Jesus pointed to the sparrows. "When you are having a day when showing God's love seems like a hard thing to do, just think about these sparrows."

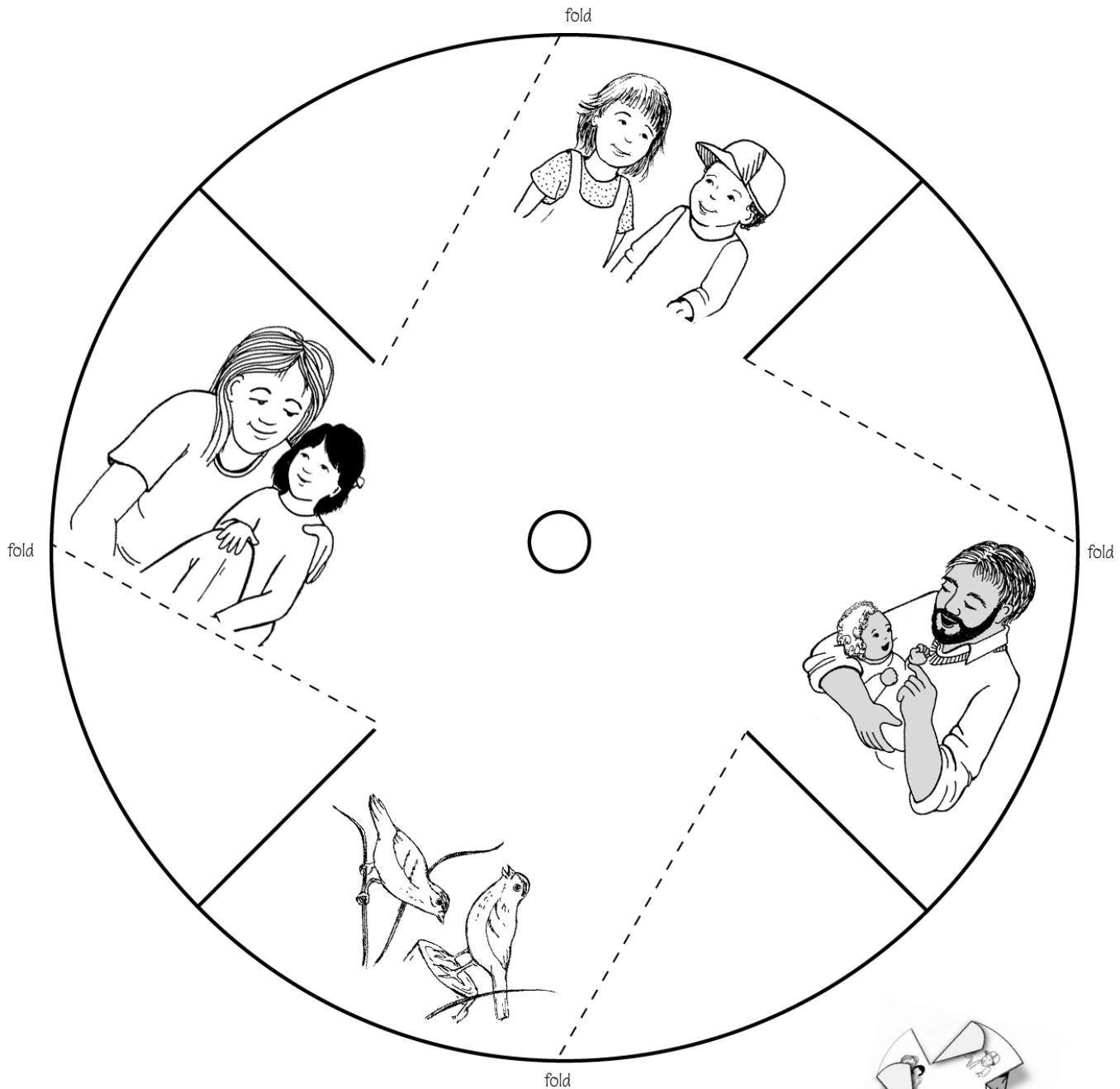
"Sparrows?" said John. "I don't understand."

"God loves all these little sparrows," said Jesus. "And if God loves little sparrows, imagine how much God loves you."

Everyone stopped to think about that. What wonderful news! Sharing God's love would not always be easy. But they knew that God loved them very much. God would be with them every day.



Pinwheel



Instructions:

- Cut out the circle.
- Decorate the circle.
- Cut along each solid line. Poke a small hole in the middle.
- Fold the dotted lines towards the pictures.
- Fasten pinwheel to a paper towel tube with a paper fastener. Twist fastener around several times to make the hole large enough to ensure that the pinwheel can move freely.
- Hold onto tube and blow gently on the pinwheel to make it spin.



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.)

