

Seen, Heard, Known

Christ sends, but do we still linger within our walls? Christ unifies, yet do we stand divided? The Season of Easter is one of new life and new birth. Filled with the excitement of what God has done and is doing, we do not stay quiet. Instead, we are sent to proclaim and to continue the physical acts of Christ on earth.

Focus scripture: John 20:19–31

At the beginning of John 20:19–31, the disciples are gathered behind locked doors. Likely, the glow of lanterns was kept low. Mary Magdalene had told the disciples of what she had seen in the garden that morning, and they are fearful of how the Jewish authorities might respond to Jesus' missing body. Appearing to them, the Light of the World must make his presence known. Jesus came with a message, "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." Jesus sends them not only to proclaim the gospel and the message of forgiveness but with the power to grant forgiveness themselves. Possessing the power of the Holy Spirit, they begin to do the work of Christ.

The next scene opens in v. 24, revealing that one of the disciples, Thomas, was not present for this closed-door meeting. The other disciples share the news that they have seen the risen Christ. Thomas rejects their accounts and instead declares that he will not believe until he sees it for himself. In their very first opportunity to do what Jesus sent them to do, the disciples encounter disbelief from one of their own. A week later, Jesus appears to them behind closed doors again. Thomas receives what he asked, yet Christ and the author of John in v. 29 and then in v. 31 declare that new life is not in seeing but in belief.

Human activity and all creation reveal God's way. **Acts 4:32–35** provides a glimpse of a community that faithfully responds to what God is doing among them. The presence of the Holy Spirit, which drives us to act in response to gospel news, fosters their selfless giving.

Psalm 133 is a song of ascent that was sung by pilgrims arriving in Zion. The reference to kindred is not one of bloodline but to their common faith and practice. Their coming together from all over to one common place is an act of devotion. The message of the song rings through the context of the church, too; God blesses unity.

Just because we are in the community of believers does not mean we are perfect. **1 John 1:1–2:2** warns believers of the danger that untruths can pose to the unity of the community. Not only do lies separate us from each other, but they separate us from Christ. However, in confession, we practice the good news of forgiveness, which is an ongoing process. What the light of Christ accomplishes is the acknowledgement of the shadows in our life. Community is to be there as we confess where sin still lingers.

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Jesus sends and forgives. From the garden, the risen Christ sent Mary to the disciples, and he then sent the disciples to share forgiveness in the world. When obstacles arose, Christ continued to show up and provide for the disciples' work of sharing the gospel. The disciples still go out, as we see in Acts, to share the message of Jesus Christ with the world while depending on the Spirit to keep them unified. Christ is the unifying factor of the church, and Christ's work still needs to be carried out in the world. Will you go where Jesus sends?



Focus scripture

John 20:19–31

Additional scriptures

Acts 4:32–35

Psalm 133

1 John 1:1–2:2

John 20:19–31

Christ, who bears the marks of love, grant us peace and open our eyes to see you among us. Blessed One, whether we see or don't see, may we believe, and through that belief grant us life in your holy and mighty name. 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 3–5

Although young children don't have to understand the "how" or the "why" of an event in order to enjoy a story, this age group is very sensory. They rely on their senses to understand the world and they learn through their first-hand experiences with people, objects, and environments. Learning about something without being able to see, touch, hear, smell, or taste can be a challenge. This need to experience something first-hand can help children understand why Thomas wants more concrete evidence of Jesus' appearance in today's biblical story.

Similar to Thomas, some children will not have been present for Easter, so it will be important to review the story of Jesus' resurrection in some way this week. This session explores another resurrection story showing that Jesus is alive in a new way. Children depend on knowing that there are secure and positive relationships for them to rely on. Pray that children will know that the love of Jesus will always surround them.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, John 20:19–31, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 45).
- ❑ Set a worship space with yellow or gold cloth, white pillar candle, matches, offering basket, Bible with a bookmark placed in this week's focus passage from the gospel of John.
- ❑ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), *Seasons Growing Faith (SGF) Songbook*, *SGF Music CD*, CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Cut out many [butterfly shapes](#) from different colours of construction paper (see p. 90 for pattern); print "Alleluia!" on each one and scatter around the room; bring a basket.
- ❑ Bring "Gather Round" (on resource sheet "Additional Songs," p. 89) or song, "Sing Alleluia!" (p. 23, *SGF Songbook*; #17, *SGF Music CD*).
- ❑ Option: bring a puppet (see information on p. 2).

Engage

- ❑ Bring Lenten calendar (from Lent) and container of stones.
- ❑ Bring a copy of today's resource sheet "Peace Be With You" and Thomas and Jesus figures from the poster [Storytelling Resources](#); mount the figures on paper tubes or craft sticks.
- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song "One, Two, Three, Alleluia!" (p. 22 in *SGF Songbook*; #15 on *SGF Music CD*).

Respond

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

- ❑ **Collage:** construction paper, tissue paper (plain colours and patterned with flowers, or Easter eggs, or butterflies), gold paper cut into small pieces
- ❑ **Puppet:** copies of this week's resource sheet "Thomas Puppet," yarn; copy onto cardstock or heavier stock paper; cut out puppet sections and place in envelopes for each child.
- ❑ **Peace plate:** plain paper plates, lengths of yarn with taped wrapped around one end; punch holes around the edges of the plates and print in the middle "Peace be with you."

Bless

- ❑ Bring, if possible, the song "Alleluia, Praise to God" (p. 5, *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #20, *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).



Seen, Heard, Known

Scripture

John 20:19–31

FOCUS To celebrate that Jesus is always with us

Gather

Welcome each child by name and encourage them to greet one another. Invite children to search the room and find the butterflies. Each time they find one they should shout, “Alleluia!” and “fly” the butterfly over to the basket.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship space and remind children that we are now in the Season of Easter and the colour for Easter is gold or yellow. This is the most joyful time of the church year. Light the candle, saying, “This candle reminds us that

Jesus is always with us.”

Sing “Gather Round” (p. 89) or “Sing Alleluia!” (p. 23 in *Seasons Growing Faith Songbook*; #17 on *Seasons Growing Faith Music CD*).

Pray Thank you, God,
that your love is all around us.
Thank you for being with us,
here and everywhere. Amen.

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

Moving into the theme

Choose one of the following:

☐ Puppet conversation

Priscilla: Happy Easter, everyone! (*Names each child.*) I saw something amazing last night!

Leader: Hi, Priscilla! Tell us about what you saw.

Priscilla: Well, I saw hundreds and hundreds of stars. The sky was full of them! There were so many I couldn’t count them (*pause*). But when I looked outside this morning I couldn’t see a single star. Where did they go?

Leader: Priscilla, in the daytime you can’t see the stars because the sun is so bright, but they are still there.

Priscilla: How do you know they are still there if we can’t see them?

Leader: Many people who study the stars have told us that they are there. And I believe they are.

Priscilla: Even though you can’t see them?

Leader: Yes, like the wind. How do we know it is there? (*Encourage children’s responses.*) There are lots of things that we can’t see with our own eyes, but we still know that they are there. (*Say goodbye to Priscilla.*)

☐ **Looking for stars** Invite children to sing “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star” and talk about times when they have seen stars. Where are the stars in the daytime? Talk about the fact that they are still in the sky but the sun is so bright we can’t see them. Ask the children if they can see the wind. How do they know it is there? Explain that there are lots of things that we haven’t seen or done, but we know they are real because of the stories that we hear from other people.

Engage

Before the story

Lenten calendar review Invite children to gather around the calendar from Lent. Remind group that during Lent we were counting each week by placing stones on the pathway. Have children place stones on numbers 29–34 and read aloud the phrase beside the illustration for March 25. Review briefly the stories of Holy Week: people cheered as Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, Jesus was arrested because some people didn't agree with what he was teaching, Jesus was put to death and buried in a cave tomb. Then have children place stones on numbers 35–40 and notice that the pathway ends at the open tomb. Explain that on Easter morning Jesus' friends discovered that he is alive in a new way.

Bible story In today's story, we hear about how some of Jesus' other friends learned about this

good news. Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the gospel of John. Use resource sheet "[Peace Be With You](#)" to tell the story based on [John 20:19–31](#).

After the story

Action rhyme Invite children to join hands in a circle and sing the following words to the tune "Ring around the Rosie":

Jesus is alive again.
Jesus is alive again.
Peace, Peace,
We all jump for joy!

Sing Continue to celebrate by singing, if possible, "One, Two, Three, Alleluia!" (p. 22 in *Seasons Growing Faith Songbook*; #15 on the *Seasons Growing Faith Music CD*) or another joyous song that the children know.

Respond

Choose from the following activities.

- ☐ **Collage** The Easter season is a joyful time, when we praise God that Jesus is alive in a new way. Distribute sheets of construction paper, butterflies from the Gathering activity, and other supplies, and invite children to create joyful Easter collages. Print "Alleluia!" on each of their collages.
- ☐ **Puppet** After Thomas met Jesus he wanted to tell everyone that Jesus was alive in a new way. Distribute envelopes with the puppet pieces and invite children to make their own "Thomas puppets" to share the good news of Easter with family and friends. Follow the instructions on



the resource sheet "[Thomas Puppet](#)" to make the puppets. Practice telling the story together as a group, using the puppets.

- ☐ **Peace plate** Jesus gave his friends a message of peace. Distribute the paper plates and read aloud Jesus' words, "Peace be with you." Invite children to decorate their plates using felt markers. Then help them use the lengths of yarn to lace around the plates, being careful to pull the whole length of yarn through each hole. When complete, tie the ends of the yarn to form a hanger and trim excess yarn.

Bless

Gather in the worship space and light the candle again.

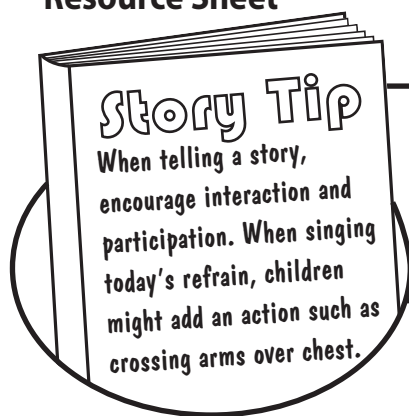
Pray Dear God, thank you for the wonderful story of Easter.
Thank you that Jesus is with us always.
Amen.

Sing, if possible, the song "Alleluia, Praise to God" (p. 5 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #20 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Send each child off with this blessing, "(Child's name), go and share the good news of Easter."

Reflect

In what ways did the children respond to the good news of Easter? What did you learn about the children from their comments and questions in this week's session?



Peace Be With You

(based on John 20:19–31)

(Use yarn or tape to mark out a small room. Invite children to sit inside this “room” and pretend to be Jesus’ friends. Teach the singing refrain [tune: “Frère Jacques” or “Are You Sleeping?”]. When telling the story, indicate when to sing the refrain by holding up the figure of Jesus. Have figure of Thomas nearby.)

**“Peace be with you. Peace be with you.
Trust in me. Trust in me.
I will always love you.
I will always love you.”
Jesus said. Jesus said.**

Long ago, Jesus’ friends were together hiding in a room. They were sad and they were afraid. Jesus was gone and they were worried. What should they do now? What should they do? *(Pause.)* Suddenly Jesus was there! *(Place the Jesus figure in the middle of the group.)*

Sing “Peace be with you...

Jesus’ friends were excited and happy! Jesus was back with them! What would happen next? What should they do?

Sing “Peace be with you...

Jesus smiled and said to the friends, “Peace

be with you. Just as God gave me a job to do, I’m giving you a special job.” Then Jesus said, “God’s Spirit is with you. If someone makes a mistake, give them another chance.” *(Pause.)* Then Jesus was gone. *(Remove Jesus figure.)*

Later, after Jesus had left, another friend, named Thomas, came to the room. *(Place the Thomas figure in the middle of the group.)* The friends said, “We have seen Jesus!” *(Children repeat.)* But Thomas didn’t believe them. Thomas wanted to see Jesus for himself. *(Pause.)* A week later, Jesus came to the friends again *(place Jesus figure beside the Thomas figure)*, and this time Thomas was with them to hear Jesus’ blessing.

Sing “Peace be with you...

Thomas looked at Jesus. Thomas could hardly believe what he saw. “Jesus, it really is you!”

Jesus looked lovingly at Thomas. “Yes, Thomas, here I am. You can see me. Now imagine all the people who have not seen me and they still believe I am with them.” Then Jesus turned to everyone and said, “Go. Tell people about me. Tell them about God. Spread God’s love to all the people!”

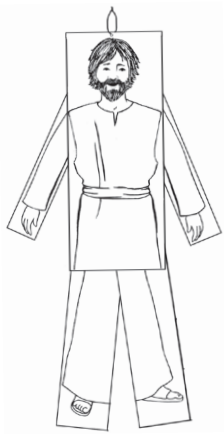
Sing “Peace be with you...



Thomas Puppet

Instructions

- (Option: glue this sheet to heavier paper.)
- Cut along solid lines.
- Decorate each section with crayons.
- Tape the puppet legs and arms onto the back of the puppet body.
- Use a hole punch to make a hole in the top of each puppet.
- Thread yarn through the hole and tie the ends of the yarn together to make a handle.
- Jiggle the puppet up and down to make the puppet move.



Additional Songs

Gathering Song

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

Thank you, thank you, thank you God.
Thank you for this day.
God loves you and God loves me.
We're glad we're here today.

Gather Round

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

Gather round the table now,
we gather round today.
Time to listen, sing, and pray,
Let's worship God today.

God's Promise

(tune: "Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping")

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

Listen closely. **Listen closely.**
To God's promise. **To God's promise.**
God will always love us. **God will always**
love us.
We can love too. **We can love too.**

Leaving Song

(tune: "Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping")

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

God is with us. **God is with us.**
As we go. **As we go.**
It is time to leave now. **It is time to leave**
now.
Go with God. **Go with God.**

Follow Me

(tune: "Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping")

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

I'm the shepherd. **I'm the shepherd.**
Follow me. **Follow me.**
Listen to my voice. **Listen to my voice.**
Share my love. **Share my love.**

Friendship Song

(tune: "Jesus Loves Me")

Jesus loves me and you too.
That's the good news and it's true.
Share God's love and be a friend.
Love's the gift that has no end.
Friends, join together. Friends, join
together.
Friends, join together, and share the love
of God!

Hand Signs

Jesus

Place the tip of the middle finger
of the right open hand into the
left palm. Repeat the
action in reverse.

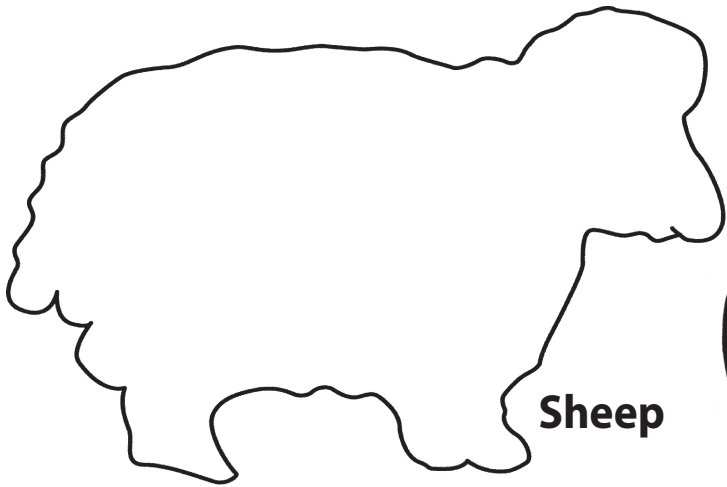


Love

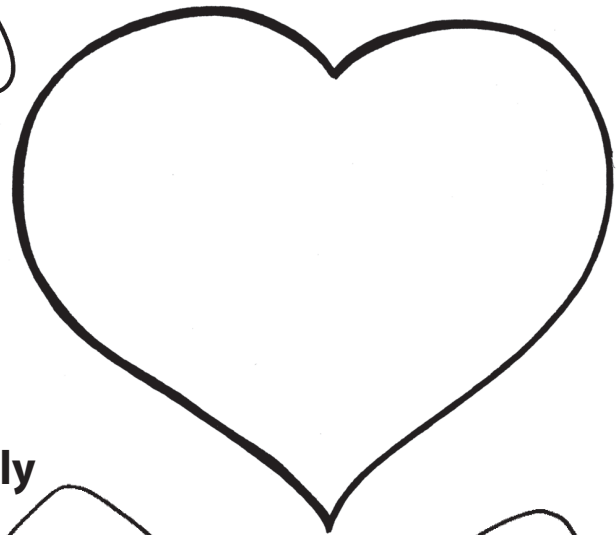
Open hands
are crossed
and pressed
to the left.



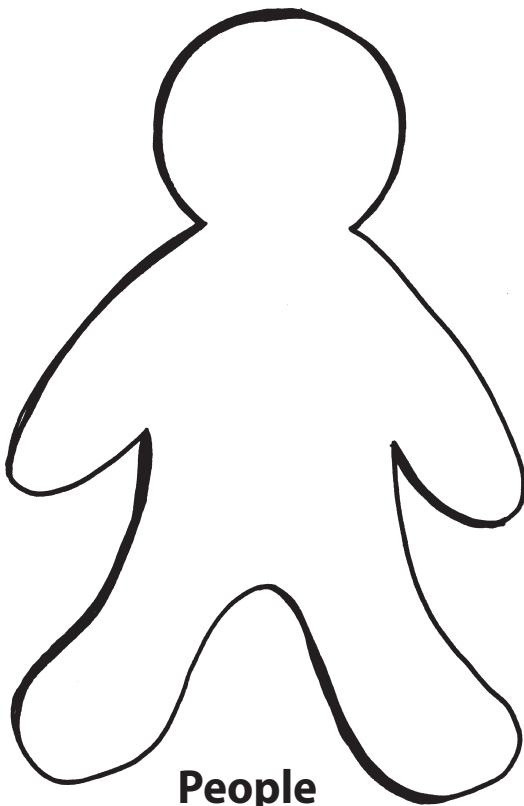
Patterns



Sheep

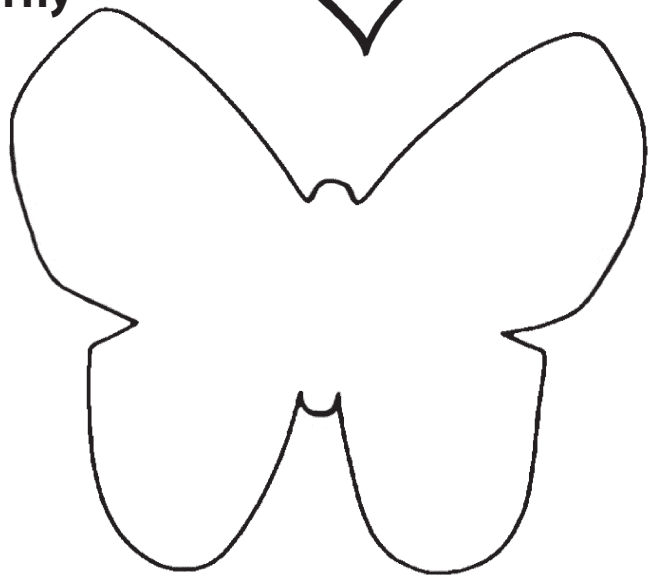


Heart



People

Butterfly



God knows me

Stars

