

Reaffirm, Redeem, Rename

Advent is complete, and the Christ has come. How might we, in this Christmas season, reaffirm the good news we waited to receive? How can we rename this redemptive act of God coming into the world, not letting the time pass by as though unimportant, but living into a greater understanding of God's workings in the world?



Focus scripture
Luke 2:22–40

Additional scriptures
Isaiah 61:10—62:3
Psalms 148
Galatians 4:4–7

Focus scripture: Luke 2:22–40

The story of Jesus' circumcision and naming follows the birth narrative. While we know that the child would be named Jesus, the name Joseph the angel gave Joseph, this is the ceremonial naming, like that of an infant at its baptism. This naming was a claiming of the child into their family. The writer also makes us aware of the necessity for this act due to the law of Moses, giving us a glimpse that even from infancy Jesus, by way of his parents, followed the law God had passed down through Moses. The prophetic voices of Simeon's and Anna's declarations further affirm Mary's and Joseph's understanding of who their child is and will be, not just for the redemption of Jerusalem but for the salvation of all people.

Isaiah 61:10—62:3 begins with a focus on the redemptions bestowed upon us by God. Speaking of the garments and jewels adorning a bride and groom, these are not gifts that are innate but are given by the grace of God. The imagery of a shoot in a garden helps us to understand that our redemption is not a one-and-done act of God, but a carefully nurtured and cultivated process. This is perhaps a theological pivot for the people of Israel to realize that salvation from their current plight is not immediate, and that the work of proclaiming and praising the name of God is not finished in an instant. The new name the writer describes is not mentioned, but seems directly related to the circumstance of the people, rather than an actual name to be given later. As such, it is not a far leap to conclude that we all can be renamed in our circumstance: that Christ is the breaker of

preconceived notions, stereotypes, biases and prejudices that were once used to identify a person or group of people.

Psalm 148 is almost a reflection of a creation story in Genesis, beginning with the cosmos then moving toward the earthly realm, and finally the creatures of Earth, the least of which is humanity. Amidst the praise that should come from all creation, we are reminded of the special relationship that the people Israel have as the chosen of God. The reaffirming statement in verse 14 draws the reader's mind back to the covenant between God and the people Israel, which continues to be fleshed out. Finally, the psalm helps the reader understand that praise to God is not complete without all parts of creation joining in that praise in equal measure.

Galatians 4:4–7 Paul begins this section by emphasizing the key actor in the work of redemption – God, through the work of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Adoption into the family of God is not of our doing, but God's; as family members we are also heirs to the kin-dom of God.

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Did Isaiah or the psalmist have in mind that righteousness and salvation would come into the world in a form as vulnerable as a newborn baby? Probably not, but Anna and Simeon saw in the Christ child salvation and redemption – a new beginning. Paul also sees the long-awaited hope taken form in Christ. As God's people, this is also our baby to bear and raise up. We are called to participating the creation of God's just realm on earth.

Spirit that strengthens us, grant us the courage to shout praise and adoration for the work of your hands. Grant us the peace and clarity of mind to think, act, and love in your 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

Materials for Epiphany can be found in the Library at www.seasonsonline.ca

What is the greatest gift that an elder can bring to a child? Perhaps it is to name the hope that they see in that child. In the story of Simeon and Anna, we have a biblical representation of that uncanny knack of elders to “see” potential in a child, to name it and to celebrate it with warmth and creativity. Of course, in the context of the gospel story, their receiving of Jesus takes on a sacred meaning as well as a human one, but the very human quality of it encourages as much contact with elders this week as can be arranged. If you invite them for a visit, ask them to bring along photos from their preschool days, and make sure there’s plenty of time for the two age groups to be creative together. This week, the children not only

get to see their age in relation to elders, they get to see it in relation to a baby. They will either bring one of their own dolls or use one that you provide or make. As the story in the temple unfolds, the children will be experiencing the adult relationship to Jesus through their own care extended to the doll – humming a lullaby, rocking it to sleep, holding it close. Although the Advent wreath and candles are over, today we will revisit them and light the white Christ candle. The season of watching and waiting is over and now we are in the time when Jesus will indeed show us how to live in God’s way. Pray that the generations, so often alien to each other, may accept the invitation to come together to share the gifts they have for one another.

Prepare

Before the session

- ☐ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, Luke 2:22–40, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 27).
- ☐ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), 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.
- ☐ Prepare a worship space with white or gold fabric according to the tradition of your congregation, bring a Bible with bookmark placed at Luke 2, the Advent wreath from last week.

Gather

- ☐ Bring a variety of bells.
- ☐ Option: bring a puppet (see information on p. 2).

Engage

- ☐ Bring resource sheet “[Jesus Is Presented at the Temple](#).”
- ☐ Bring Anna and Simeon figures from the [Storytelling Poster 1](#).

- ☐ Bring a doll or make a [sock doll](#) (p. 77) for each child, or phone the parents during the week and ask them to bring dolls for their children. Cut a small blanket for each doll from scraps of cloth.
- ☐ Cut out and bring many paper [people figures](#) (p. 80).

Respond

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

- ☐ **Christ candle:** small cardboard tubes, small paper plates, yellow tissue paper, and decorative materials (such as tiny pine cones, rickrack, glitter, coloured pebbles)
- ☐ **Activity sheet:** copies of today’s resource sheet “[God’s Gift of Love to Us](#),” and construction paper
- ☐ **Visiting elders:** variety of art materials. Arrange to have several elders bring early photographs of themselves and come to play with the children.

Bless

- ☐ Bring, if possible, song “Celebrate Emmanuel” (p. 6 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #10 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).



December 27, 2020

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Scripture

Luke 2:22–40

FOCUS To imagine the joy Anna and Simeon felt when they held baby Jesus

Gather

Welcome Ring a bell and announce each child's arrival. Encourage the children to ring bells to welcome each other in the same way. Invite everyone to help you set up the worship table. Point out the white cloth and the Advent wreath and say, "Today is the first Sunday in the Christmas season. We use a white cloth in this season to help us celebrate Jesus' birth. These candles – one, two, three, four, helped us count the weeks before we celebrated that Jesus was born. Today we light another candle just for Jesus."

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship table. Invite a child to help spread the white cloth and place the Bible on the table. Invite another child to "light" the central white candle, the Christ candle, by gently pulling up the yellow tissue inside it, to celebrate

the birth of Jesus. Explain that we can read stories about God's love in the Bible. Receive the offering.

Sing "God Is with Us" (on resource sheet [Additional Songs](#), p. 76)

We are here together.

Singing, praying, learning
that God loves us.

We love God, too!

Pray Loving God,
thank you for Jesus.
Help us to sing with joy and happiness.
Amen.

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

Moving into the theme

Choose one of the following:

☐ Puppet conversation

Priscilla: Hello everyone! (*Priscilla names each child.*) Our waiting time is over. Jesus has been born! Now we can celebrate.

Leader: You're right, Priscilla. We celebrate Christmas for 12 days. Let's sing a Christmas song to baby Jesus. (*Sing a song the children know.*)

Priscilla: I noticed that the worship cloth is white now, and after waiting and waiting 1, 2, 3, 4 weeks (*count the Advent candles*), we lit the Christ candle. It's the Christmas season!

Leader: Yes, and our waiting time is different. God sent us a wonderful gift of love – the gift of Jesus. Now we will wait to discover more about the things that Jesus did. And we will learn how Jesus helped people learn how to live in God's way.

Priscilla: When will we start?

Leader: We will start today. We will hear a story about when Jesus was still a tiny baby. (*Say goodbye to Priscilla or place her nearby.*)

☐ **Sing Christmas songs** Sit in a circle and sing some favourite Christmas songs. Mention that we are still celebrating Christmas but our waiting time is different – we are waiting to learn more about how Jesus helped people learn about God's love.

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 Luke. Mention that Luke was a storyteller who wanted people to know the good news of Jesus. Have dolls, Anna and Simeon story figures from the [Storytelling Poster 1](#), and small blankets ready. Prompt the children to sit cross-legged and “open” their flat hands like a book. Hand out a baby Jesus doll to each child. Begin telling the story with the resource sheet “[Jesus Is Presented at the Temple](#).”

After the story

Place figures of Anna and Simeon on the wall. Anna and Simeon were wise people who taught others how to live in God’s way. When they saw Jesus, they knew that Jesus would show every-

one what God is like. Older people like Anna and Simeon are called elders. Elders could be grandparents, older aunts and uncles, friends, or neighbours. Elders are wise because they have lived for many years and have done many things.

Scatter lots of coloured people figures on the floor. Invite children to name some elders they know. Each time a person is named, choose a figure and tape it on the wall beside Anna and Simeon. Encourage children to talk about the things they have learned from their elders.

Celebrate with Simeon and Anna all the wise elders and all followers of Jesus everywhere.

Sing, if possible, song “Would You Like to Hold the Baby” (p. 30 in *Seasons Growing Faith Songbook*; #21 in *Seasons Growing Faith Music CD*).

Respond

Choose from the following activities.

- ❑ **Christ candle** A Christ candle is a reminder of Jesus’ presence in the world. Give each child a cardboard tube to decorate with markers and/or glitter. Help them tape the candles upright on paper plates. Decorate the plate with small items such as tiny pine cones, rickrack, glitter or coloured pebbles. Push a tissue paper “flame” into the top of the tube to “light” the candle. (Print, “Jesus came to show us love” around the edges of the plates.)



- ❑ **Activity sheet** We can speak out and tell the world about God’s gift of love to us. Hand out resource sheet “[God’s Gift of Love to Us](#)” to decorate. Encourage children to draw someone they would like to tell in the empty window.



Tape a paper flap over each picture to create a curtain. As the children lift up each flap, they call out “Jesus came to show us love!” Then, lift up the last flap to reveal baby Jesus.

- ❑ **Visiting elders** Invite several elders to share some playtime with the children. Introduce them to the children and ask them to show photographs of themselves when they were younger. Talk about things they can do to help the children and things children can do to help them. Provide a variety of art materials and encourage everyone to create pictures together. Have a bulletin board display with a title such as “We bring joy and blessings to each other.” (If possible, invite these elders for the whole morning.)

Bless

Gather again around the worship table.

Pray Loving God,
thank you for your special gift of love.
Help us to tell others about it. Amen.

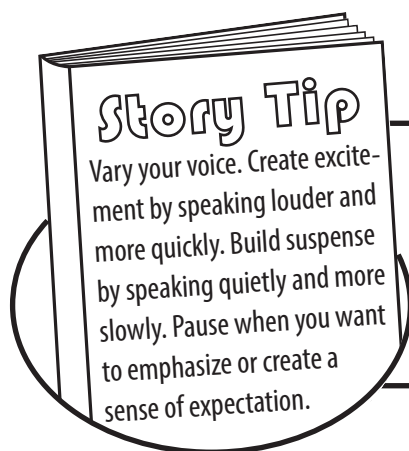
Sing or listen to, if possible, “Celebrate Emmanuel” (p. 6 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #10 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Send each child out with the words “(child’s name), God’s gift of love has been given to you.”

Reflect

How did the children respond to the opportunity to continue their celebration of Christmas? What inter-generational connections were made today? How can they be continued and strengthened?





Jesus Is Presented at the Temple

(based on Luke 2:22–40)

(Hand out a baby Jesus to each child. Hum a lullaby while children rock their babies.)

Shhh (*whisper*), baby Jesus is sleeping. Let me tell you what happened to him today. Mary and Joseph took baby Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem for a special blessing. They wanted to thank God for their precious baby. But while they were there, something surprising happened! (*Pause while children continue to rock their babies so they won't wake up.*)

Simeon, a very old man lived in that temple. (*Show Simeon.*) A long time ago God had promised Simeon that he would see a special child of God. Simeon waited and waited and waited. Simeon waited for a very long time. And now Simeon looked at baby Jesus. Simeon gently took Jesus into his arms. Suddenly Simeon knew. This *was* a special child of God! Simeon felt a wonderful love – a love that God wanted to give to everyone in the world. This was the child that God had promised! Yes! Yes! And then Simeon began to sing:

Praise God!
I am so happy. I am at peace.
Jesus will be a light to all people.
With my eyes, I've seen the love
God wants to give to everyone.

(Remind children not to let their babies wake up. They might hum a familiar tune while they rock.)

Anna, a very old woman also was in that temple. (*Show Anna.*) Anna remembered God's promise. And Anna waited and waited and waited. Anna waited for a very long time. Now Anna took baby Jesus in her arms. She lovingly rocked baby Jesus back and forth. And then Anna's face lit up with joy. "Yes! Yes!" she whispered, "This is a special child of God. This is the one we have been waiting for!" Anna carefully handed baby Jesus back to Mary and Joseph. Then Anna ran through the temple telling everyone the good news! The one they had been waiting for – a special person come to help them all – was born at last.

(Rock babies some more. They might want to give their babies gentle kisses.)

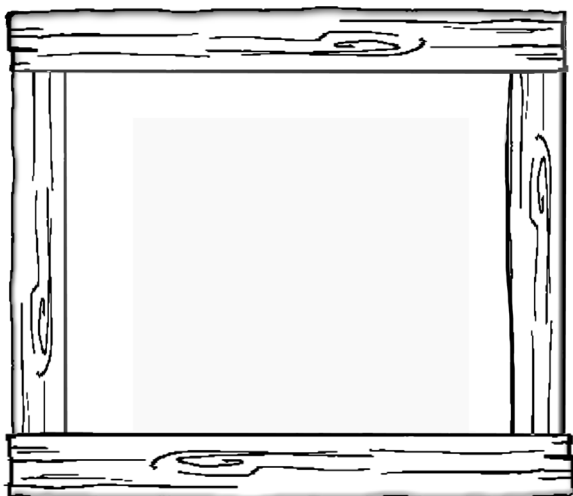
Now it is evening and Mary and Joseph are back home. They have a lot to think about. They don't understand everything that has happened, but they know God is with them. They saw how Anna and Simeon, two very wise people, had known how special their child was. Soon everyone will know!

(Gently help the children find places to lay their babies and cover them with blankets.)



God's Gift of Love to Us

Tape a paper curtain (paper flap) over each window. Then, as you lift each curtain, call out the good news and tell everyone that Jesus came to show us love!



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

The musical notation is written on a single staff in 4/4 time. It includes four lines of music with corresponding lyrics and actions. Chords F, C7, Bb, and F are indicated above the staff.

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

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

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

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.



Advent Resources

Advent Wreaths

Traditionally, the Advent wreath is a circle of evergreens, the round shape symbolizing the unending love of God and the evergreens symbolizing the hope for eternal life shared by all God's people. There are four coloured candles (either four blue or three purple and one pink), which represent the four weeks of Advent, and one white candle in the middle. The lighting of an Advent candle each week marks the growing excitement and anticipation of Jesus' birth and the white Christ candle is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day to celebrate Jesus' birth.

Wreath #1

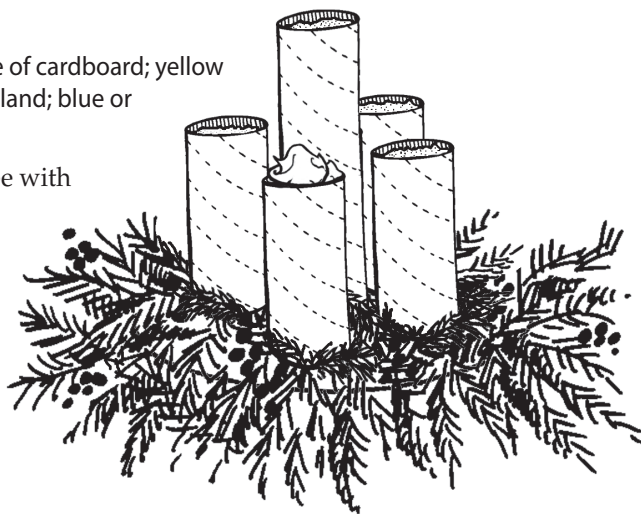
Materials: 15 cm/6 in Styrofoam circle; 4 small paper rolls or tubes; 1 paper towel roll cut down so it is slightly taller than the other tubes; yellow tissue paper; blue or purple paint; pink and white paint, greens (fresh, artificial or paper); gold glitter; low temperature glue; diluted white glue

Paint four tubes blue, or three purple and one tube pink, and the paper towel tube white. Press the paper towel tube into the middle of the Styrofoam circle. Position the four other tubes around the larger tube. (Push enough to put markings in the circle.) Remove the tubes and then use a low temperature glue to secure them in the Styrofoam. Cut yellow tissue paper into squares, brush them lightly with glue and sprinkle them with gold glitter. When dry, place the tissue paper inside the "candles" to be pulled up by the children. Decorate the base with artificial or fresh greens.

Wreath #2

Materials: 5 small paper rolls or tubes; 30 cm/12 in circle of cardboard; yellow and orange tissue paper; 60 cm/2 ft piece of artificial garland; blue or purple, pink, white and green paper; hot glue

Cover three tubes with blue or purple paper, one tube with pink and one with white. Cover the cardboard circle green. Cut slits around the bottom of each tube, about 1/2 in. up, and hot-glue onto the green base so that the "candles" stand up. Glue artificial garland around the base. Gently insert several squares of orange and yellow tissue paper into each "candle." (Twist the squares together first so they will stay together.) Each week a child can reach into the tube and pull up a flame.



Sock Doll (baby Jesus)

(Dec 20)

- Fill a small sock with stuffing almost to the top.
- Secure a rubber band around the top of the sock (illus. #1).
- Cut out a 5 cm/2 in circle from felt and draw a simple baby face on it with a fine-line permanent marker.
- Glue felt face below the rubber band (illus. #2).
- Fold top of sock down to make a cap (illus. #3).



Illus. #1



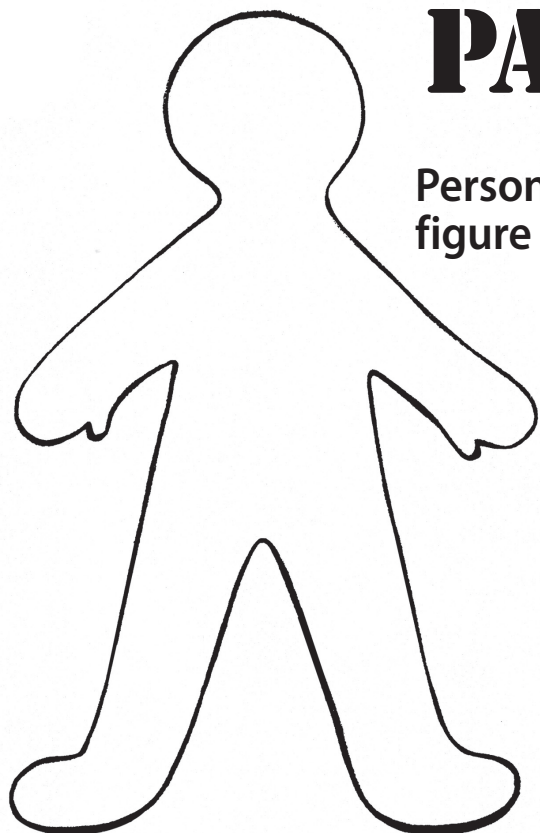
Illus. #2



Illus. #3



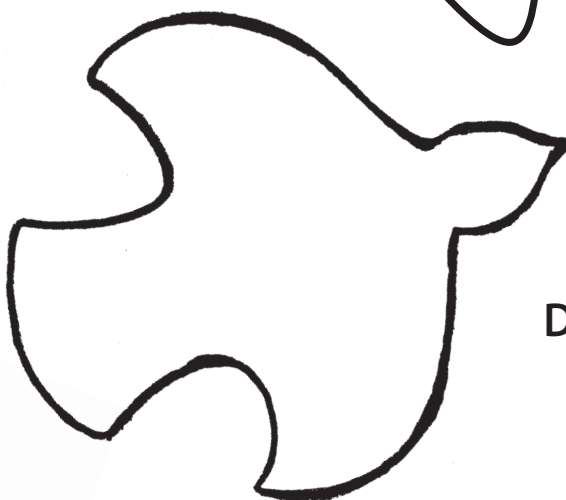
PATTERNS



Person
figure



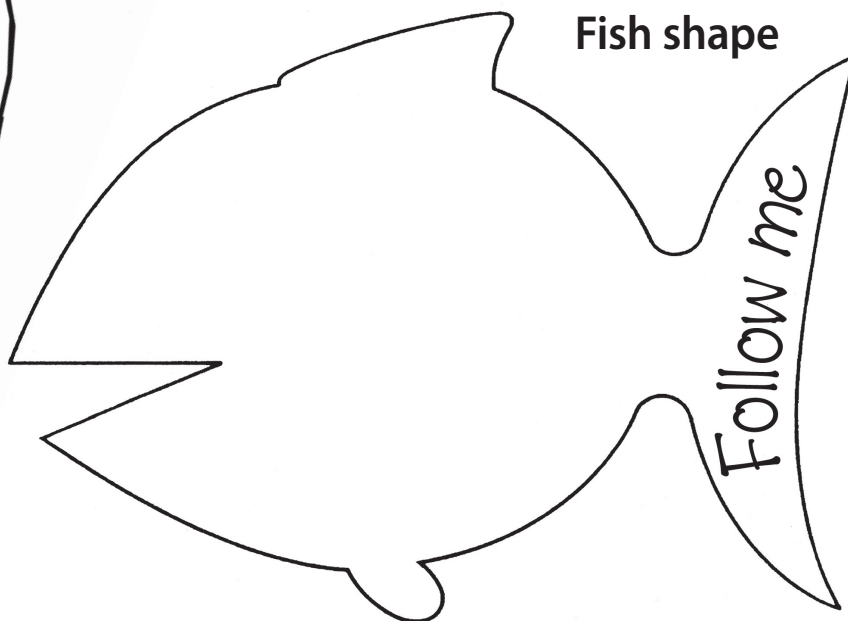
Star shape



Dove shape



Footprint shape



Fish shape

