

From Generation to Generation

In all generations, and in all times, God promises to be faithful and invites our response. In the readings this week, God makes a promise to Abram and Sarai, and asks that they be faithful to the covenant; God responds to the psalmist's cry for help, and the psalmist responds with praise; Paul reminds us to respond to God with faith; followers of Jesus are invited to respond by focusing on the gospel call in our lives.

Focus scripture: Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16

Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16 God makes another covenant. This covenant – or promise – is between God and Abram. God promises that Abram and Sarai will have children and land and that generations will follow them. At the time of the promise, Abram and Sarai are both of advanced age. Both Abram and Sarai are incredulous upon hearing God's news. It may have seemed that God's promise would be unfulfilled.

Later, when they are even older, the promise is realized. Abram and Sarai with new names Abraham and Sarah do have a son, whom they name Isaac. Part of the story serves as a reminder that God does keep promises, and that God's sense of timing may not always be the same as our own. Ultimately, though, we can trust; what may seem impossible for us is not impossible for God!

In this covenantal agreement, Abram and Sarai are promised a child, and they, in turn, are called to be "blameless," and faithful to the covenant. God's renewed promise results in name changes: Sarai becomes Sarah, and Abram becomes Abraham – mother and father of many nations. These new names are symbols and signs of new things and new identities with God.

In this week's passage, it happens to be that Abraham and Sarah were blessed with a child. It would, however, be important not to equate blessings and children in today's context. There are many people today who remain childless (either by choice or by circumstance) who could be harmed by overemphasizing a connection between having children and being blessed by God.

Similarly, it is harmful to suggest that people who do not have children do not have enough faith in God. Blessings come in many different ways and forms. Focusing on the fulfilment of God's promises, even if it seems impossible, is one key theme here. Although the time might feel long, God responds.

In **Psalm 22:23–31**, God responds to the psalmist's request for help; the psalmist then praises God and invites people from many generations to join in this praise. This writer has been in distress and wondering where God is. Feeling abandoned, they cry out to God, and God responds. The psalmist prayed with faith, trusted God to reply, and responds with praise.

Romans 4:13–25 references God's covenant with Abraham and Sarah and their faith. Having faith is not only about doing good things or obeying the law. Rather, faith is about how people live and commit to following Christ.

In **Mark 8:31–38**, the disciples are also reminded about faith and what it means to follow Christ. Jesus cautions the disciples, telling them that following him will not be easy. The disciples find it hard to believe that Jesus will suffer and die – after all, he is the Messiah! Peter challenges Jesus about this, and Jesus teaches that there is no benefit in gaining riches on Earth if it costs us our souls.

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God's grace reaches across generations, back into the past and forward into the future. God's inclusive love nourishes all creation. This week's passages invite us to increase our faith and follow in God's ways. How do we respond to God's faithfulness in our time?



Focus scripture
Genesis 17:1–7,
15–16

Additional scriptures
Psalm 22:23–31
Romans 4:13–25
Mark 8:31–38 or Mark
9:2–9

We praise you, O God of all generations, of all time and all space. When we wonder if you will respond to our prayers, remind us that you answer. Strengthen our faith so that we might trust in your promises. Continue to journey with us as we seek to be your faithful disciples throughout all generations.

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

Children in this age group often like to hear the stories of how their names were chosen and what they mean. Some are quite particular about their names, and whether or not it is acceptable to have a nickname. Sometimes children are given names that make connections to previous generations. This week's story is about names and also about generations of family. As children grow older they learn the concept of many generations and may have made a family tree for a school project.

This week's session provides an opportunity to learn about another foundational story of faith, that of Abraham and Sarah. The symbol of God's promise to Noah was a rainbow and the symbol of promise in this story is a star (see Genesis 15:5). Children will hear that they are part of the generations promised to Abraham and Sarah. Pray that the children will hear and trust in God's promise to love them and be with them.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16, and [biblical background material](#) (p. 11).
- ❑ Review ["About this Lent and Easter"](#) (p. 1) and ["This Lent, Easter for Ages 5–12"](#) (p. 2).
- ❑ Prepare a worship space with a purple cloth, purple pillar candle, and a Bible with the purple bookmark from last week and a blue bookmark placed in this week's focus passage.
- ❑ Bring matches, offering basket, [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), Bibles, and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), and CD player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at [www.seasonsonline.ca](#).
- ❑ Review resource sheet ["Rituals for Lent"](#) (p. 110); prepare a stepping stone pathway with rainbow-coloured circles (see information on resource sheet) if not in place from last week.

Gather

- ❑ Bring a copy of resource sheet ["Rituals for Lent"](#) (p. 110) and a star.
- ❑ Bring baby name book.

Engage

- ❑ Bring this week's resource sheet ["God's Promise to Abraham and Sarah"](#) and print on folded pieces of card stock the words: Isaac, Sarai, Sarah, Abram, and Abraham.

- ❑ **Name group:** information from ["Ask the Rabbi"](#) (in Library at [www.seasonsonline.ca](#)) for ["Why do biblical names change?"](#)
- ❑ **Family tree group:** copies of this week's resource sheet ["The Symbol of a Star"](#)

Respond

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

- ❑ **Prayer zone:** wide blue ribbon, pieces of blue paper
- ❑ **Poetry zone:** copies of this week's resource sheet ["Promise Acrostics"](#)
- ❑ **Craft zone:** small jars with lids, star confetti, distilled water, glycerine, waterproof adhesive, spoons
- ❑ **Art zone:** yellow poster board, art supplies, ribbon, star stickers, star templates (see pattern in the *Virtual Resource Booklet* in the Library at [www.seasonsonline.ca](#))
- ❑ **Music zone:** copies of section ["Music"](#) on the bottom of p. 15 (#29 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 4) or as a downloadable MP3 from [www.seasonsonline.ca](#).

Bless

- ❑ Bring star stickers.
- ❑ Bring the song ["I Will Be Your God"](#) (p. 15).
- ❑ Bring copies of the family letter ["Lent–Easter 2021"](#) (p. 109) .



From Generation to Generation

Scripture

Genesis 17:1–7,
15–16

FOCUS To learn about God's promise to Abraham, Sarah, and all people

Gather

Welcome the children as they arrive, introducing guests and newcomers.

Opening ritual

Call to gather Invite children to follow the rainbow-coloured stepping stones to the worship area. Gather around the worship table and remind children that we are in the Season of Lent, a time to learn about God's promises and to explore what it means to live in God's way. The colour for this season is purple.

Prayer Invite two volunteers to lead in the "Lent 2" prayer on the resource sheet "[Rituals for Lent](#)" (p. 110), lighting the candle and placing the symbolic object. Invite the whole group to say the last line together.

Sing the "[Gathering Song](#)" (on p. 110).

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

Connecting with the focus

Invite children to share stories of their names (how they were chosen, meaning) using the resources brought, if needed. Explain that in the ancient world names were very important. The Hebrew people gave their children names that described something special about them, and everyone knew what their name meant. When children became adults, their name might be changed to reflect a new relationship or other change. This also happens today, for example, a child named "Kathy" might change to "Kathryn" when she is older. Invite children to listen for the names that change in today's story.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table. Explain that the stories from last week and for today come from the first book in the Bible, Genesis, which means "beginning." Use the purple bookmark to open the Bible and recall last week's story of Noah and the flood. Use the blue bookmark to turn to this week's focus passage, part of the story of two people named Abraham and Sarah. Theirs is the longest story in the Hebrew scriptures (Old Testament). Like the story about Noah, these kinds of stories were told from generation to generation for thousands of years before being written down.

The Bible story

Distribute name cards to five children and invite them to hold up the cards each time they hear

the name in the story. Use the resource sheet "[God's Promise to Abraham and Sarah](#)" to tell this week's story, based on **Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16**. After the story, invite children to share any questions and wonderings they have about this story.

Exploring the story further

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

Name group The children in this group have the opportunity to learn more about biblical names. Distribute information from "Ask the Rabbi" about the question: "Why do biblical names change?" Look again at the name cards used in the story and notice how adding an "h" changed the names. Mention that God's promise to be with Abraham and Sarah is also a promise for us. Distribute paper and invite each child to print

their first name. Then under that name have them add an “h” to their name, placing it wherever they want. Invite them to introduce themselves to each other by saying the “new” names.

Family tree group The children in this group have the opportunity to learn more about the promise made to Abraham and Sarah. Distribute copies of the resource sheet [“The Symbol of a Star”](#) and review information together, noting that Christians, Jews, and Muslims all consider Abraham and Sarah to be part of their faith story. Distribute pieces of paper and invite each child to draw large images of each of the three shapes on their papers. On their five-pointed stars have them write their names and the names of some other Christians that they know. On the six-pointed stars, have

them write the names of Jewish people that they know or have heard of. On the crescent moons, write the names of Muslim people that they know or have heard of.

Reporting Invite the name group to report on their discoveries about names in biblical times and invite the family tree group to introduce the star as a symbol used in three major religions.

The Bible story and us

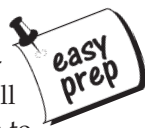
Remind the group that we are all children of God’s promise. God knows each of us by name and loves us.

■ **What are some of the things we can do each day to show that we are people of God?**

Respond

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

❑ **Prayer zone: Lenten prayer wall** Lent is a special time to pray. Invite children to add to the Lenten prayer wall begun last week. Tape a blue ribbon to the sign beside the purple ribbon and provide squares of blue paper for the children to write or draw prayers that help them remember that they belong to God. Tape or pin these prayers to the ribbon and read aloud together.



❑ **Poetry zone: Acrostics** Like Abraham and Sarah, we are people of God’s promise. Distribute copies of the resource sheet [“Promise Acrostics”](#) and invite children to think of words from this week’s story that begin with each letter of the word “Promise” (such as “Sarai” for “S”) and write them on their sheets. Older children can create their own acrostic puzzles on the back of their sheets, using the letters of their names and others in the group.



❑ **Art zone: Star names** God promised Abram and Sarai they would have more descendants than the number of stars. Distribute star templates and invite children to trace on poster board and cut out. Have them print their first names in the middle of their stars and decorate with star stickers and words or drawings to describe themselves (such as dancer, blue eyes, kind). Have the children punch holes in the top of

their stars using a hole punch and add ribbon hangers. They can take their star names home or these can be suspended from the ceiling of the meeting space.

❑ **Craft zone: Star jars** God promised Abraham and Sarah that their descendants would be as many as the stars. Distribute jars and help children fill half-full with water, add a few drops of glycerine, and spoon in some star confetti. Place waterproof adhesive around the edges of the lids and seal the lid onto the jars. Encourage children to shake their jars to see the stars swirl as reminders of God’s love and promise to be with all people for all generations.

❑ **Music zone: God’s promise** The song “I Will Be Your God” is a musical version of God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah and to all of God’s people. Read the words to this short song to the children and have them repeat each phrase after you. Then teach the children how to sing the song by singing or playing each line and inviting them to repeat after you. Distribute copies of the section “Music” (bottom of p. 15) to those children who can read, and sing together again several times until the children know it. Encourage them to use this song to remember God’s promise. Consider sharing this song during a worship service sometime during Lent.

Bless

Gather in the worship space and relight the candle. Remember God's promise to Abraham and Sarah that they would have many grandchildren and great-grandchildren, more than the stars. Distribute star stickers and invite children to place these on the worship table near the Bible.

Pray the following prayer or one of your own:

God, we thank you for the promise
you made to Abram and Sarai,
and to us too. Amen.

Sing the song "I Will Be Your God" (p. 15).

Blessing Send each child out saying, "(Name), God knows you by name and loves you. Go and share God's love."

Reflect

Distribute copies of family letter "[Lent-Easter 2021](#)" (p. 109) to those who were not present last week.

How do the children understand the meaning of God's promise? In what ways might you help them to grow in their relationship with God?

Music

I will be your God _____ and you will be _____ the peo - ple of the prom-ise. _____

_____ For - ev - er I will bless _____ and give my life _____ for you. _____





God's Promise to Abraham and Sarah

(based on Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16)

Invite children to participate by taking turns finding the name cards and placing them in a row as each is mentioned in the story.

Long, long ago, in a land far away, God appeared to a very old man named Abram. "I am God, walk with me and follow my way. I will make a covenant with you. You will have many children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren."

Because God was speaking to him, Abram fell to the ground. Then God said,

"This is my covenant with you. You shall be the father and grandfather of many nations.

From now on you will not be called Abram. Now you will be called Abraham because I have made you father and grandfather of many nations. Not only nations, but rulers will come from you.

I will make my covenant between you and me and with all your children for many generations, a covenant that will last forever. I will be your God.

As for Sarai, your wife, you shall no longer call her Sarai. Now she will be Sarah. I will bless her and I will give her a son. From her will come nations and rulers."

Years later, Sarah and Abraham had a son, Isaac. He was the first of many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Just as God had promised, Abraham and Sarah were the parents of nations and rulers.



The Symbol of a Star

God promised Abraham and Sarah that their children would continue through many generations. Three of the world's religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, trace their history back to Abraham and Sarah. All three religions use a star as a symbol.

The five-pointed star

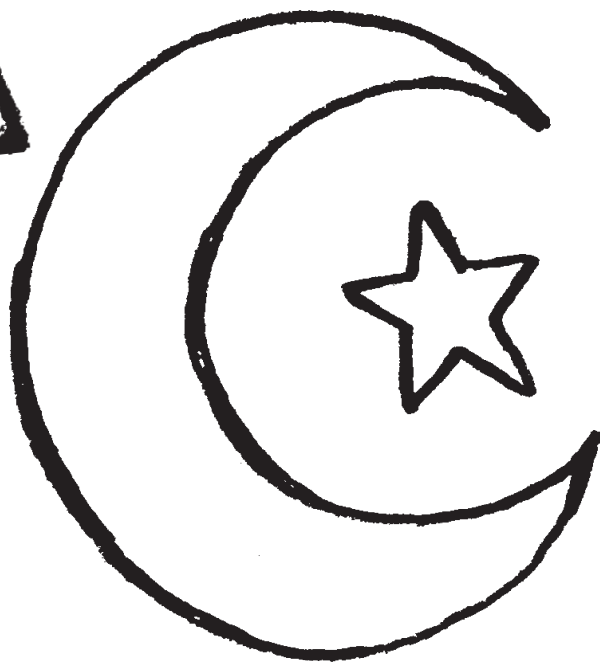
This star is an ancient symbol for Christians. It is sometimes called the "Star of Bethlehem," a reminder of the story of Jesus' birth, or the "Epiphany star," a reminder of the story of the magi coming to Bethlehem. It has been found on broken clay fragments from as early as 400 BCE.

The six-pointed star

This star has been a symbol for the Jewish nation for a long time. It is sometimes called the "Star of David." Some say it represents the six days of creation. Some say it symbolizes God's rule over the six directions: N, S, E, W, up, and down. Today it has become a symbol of unity for Jewish people and an international symbol of courage and resistance.

The star and crescent

The combination of a five-pointed star and a crescent moon is the symbol of Islam. It is an ancient symbol that was used in central Asia and Siberia thousands of years before Islam. The crescent is the new moon and is a reminder to spend time in prayer and devotion to God.





Promise Acrostics

Find words in today's story that begin with each of the following letters and write these words in the spaces beside each letter. Turn the page over and create your own acrostic by using the letters in your name. If there is time, make some acrostics using the letters of the names of other people in your family.

P _____

R _____

O _____

M _____

I _____

S _____

E _____

LENT – EASTER 2021

Dear Families,

During the Season of Lent the children will be hearing stories from the Hebrew scriptures (also known as the Old Testament). These stories are about promises from God to Noah and his family and to Abraham and Sarah as well as the promises spoken through the Psalms and by the prophet Jeremiah. The Season of Lent is 40 days long (not counting the Sundays, which are all considered “little Easters”).

Here are the Gathering and Blessing songs that we will be using during this season. You might like to use them at home for family prayer times as well.

Gathering song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

God is with us. **God is with us.**
Every day. **Every day.**
God will always love us.
God will always love us.
Thank you, God. **Thank you, God.**

Blessing song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

May God bless you.
May God bless you.
Keep you safe. **Keep you safe.**
May God’s love surround you.
May God’s love surround you.
Go in peace. **Go in peace.**

On Palm/Passion Sunday (March 28)

children may bring home a “Holy Week Calendar” of readings and reflections which your family might do together.

Following Easter Sunday (April 4) we move into the Season of Easter. This season is 50 days long and the focus will be on Bible stories from the New Testament. Our group will explore stories in the gospels about Jesus’ appearances to the disciples after the Resurrection, and the ways in which Jesus’ friends and followers shared the good news of the risen Christ. During the Easter seasons we will learn from Jesus’ teachings and the witness of the disciples how we too can live as a faithful community of people who share God’s way of love.

You might like to read to read these stories together at home: John 20:19–31, Luke 24:36b–48, John 10:11–18, John 15:1–8, John 15:9–17, and Acts 1:15–17, 21–26. Reading the Bible together suggests that these stories are important to you.

We celebrate Pentecost Sunday on

May 23, marking the end of the Season of Easter. This is a day to celebrate the Spirit of God and the growth of the Christian community.

We will be praying for each child in our group during these seasons. We ask that your family also include us in your prayers as we prepare for and lead the sessions each week. May these Lenten and Easter seasons be times of spiritual nurture and growth for our group and for your family.

Sincerely,



Rituals for Lent

Lenten rainbow pathway

Create a pathway of “stepping stones” using large circles cut from coloured construction paper: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple. Cut several circles of each colour to make the pathway connect from the doorway of your meeting space to the worship area. During Lent the children will follow this rainbow path of stepping stones to gather in the worship space during the opening ritual each week.

Gathering prayers

Choose two volunteers to read the opening prayer each week: one will light the candle and the other will place an object (symbolizing the focus scripture theme) beside the candle. These symbols can remain in the worship space with all five displayed on the fifth Sunday. There are only five prayers included on this page because there will be a special all-ages gathering on Palm/Passion Sunday.

Gathering song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

God is with us. **God is with us.**

Every day. **Every day.**

God will always love us. **God will always love us.**

Thank you, God. **Thank you, God.**

Blessing song

(tune: “Frère Jacques/Are You Sleeping”)

(Children repeat the bolded lines.)

May God bless you. **May God bless you.**

Keep you safe. **Keep you safe.**

May God’s love surround you.

May God’s love surround you.

Go in peace. **Go in peace.**

Lent 1

One: Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the purple candle.*)

Two: On this first Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”
for the rainbow which is a sign of God’s love.
(*Place a rainbow-coloured object beside the candle.*)

One: Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

Two: God has promised to be with us always.

All: Thank you, God. Amen.

Lent 2

One: Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the purple candle.*)

Two: On this second Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”
for all the stars in the sky that remind us of God’s love. (*Place a star beside the candle.*)

One: Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

Two: God has promised to be with us always.

All: Thank you, God. Amen.

Lent 3

One: Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the purple candle.*)

Two: On this third Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”

for all the wonderful things in creation. (*Place an object from nature beside the candle.*)

One: Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

Two: God has promised to be with us always.

All: Thank you, God. Amen.

Lent 4

One: Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the purple candle.*)

Two: On this fourth Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”
for giving us hope when times are hard. (*Place a stone beside the candle.*)

One: Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

Two: God has promised to be with us always.

All: Thank you, God. Amen.

Lent 5

One: Lent is a special time of praying. (*Light the purple candle.*)

Two: On this fifth Sunday of Lent we say “Thank you, God”
for your love that is deep in our hearts. (*Place a heart beside the candle.*)

One: Lent is a special time for thinking about God.

Two: God has promised to be with us always.

All: Thank you, God. Amen.

