

Signs of Promise

Water and God's promises are key themes that weave through this week's passages. After a great flood, God promises to safeguard the world and to be in deep relationship with all creation. A psalmist trusts in God's promises, and water is a sign of God's promise and protection in the first letter of Peter. As Jesus emerges from the waters of baptism, God's spirit rests on him – a sign of God's promise.

Focus scripture: Genesis 9:8–17

Genesis 9:8–17 follows just after the well-known story of Noah who is best known for building a large boat on which he, his family, and representatives of all land animals would be saved from the floodwaters.

In this week's passage, God promises to protect and never destroy the earth, and makes a covenant with all creation. A rainbow is a sign, a reminder, of the promise. God wants to be in a deep and mutual relationship with all of creation.

Although God promises there will never be a flood that destroys earth, today there are many devastating disasters. Tsunamis, hurricanes, floods, and other storms have resulted in a loss of life and significant damage to property and creation. How do we reconcile this promise with our modern-day realities? One way might be to continue to believe that God does not bring about this suffering. Rather, it is people's apathy about creation and human choices that destabilize the environment.

This Season of Lent could, therefore, be a time to re-orient and reflect on how humans have failed God's good creation. While humans may have destroyed parts of the environment, we may not be able to clean up the environment with only human wisdom – we need to rely on God's wisdom to change our ways. Lent is a time of reflection, of becoming closer to God and reflecting on God's promises.

The story of Noah is often told to children, and we might wonder where is there good news in the destruction of a people? Perhaps this story is more about God's promises, new beginnings, and creation care. Young children could likely relate to themes of being sorry for

something they did, for doing something new or doing something to take care of the earth. The story offers an opportunity to explore more about God-promises, regrets, and care for all of creation. God of the promise invites our trust.

The writer of **Psalm 25:1–10** trusts God and seeks to orient their whole self to God. They make requests of God to teach, forgive, and not to remember their past sins. This, too, is a story about being in relationship with God and relying on God's help.

Overwhelmed by violence and being threatened, the people of **1 Peter 3:18–22** also rely on God's help. The writer makes a clear connection between the waters of the flood and the waters of baptism, and reminds us that water is a sign of God's promise and protection. Baptism is a symbol of new beginnings.

Baptism that signifies cleansing and new beginnings is a central theme in **Mark 1:9–15**. As Jesus emerges from the waters of baptism, God's Spirit comes as a sign of peace and promise. This same Spirit also urges Jesus into the wilderness. While Jesus struggles in the wilderness, he is not alone.

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Trusting and relying on God's promises – even when life is difficult – is a key theme in these Bible passages. Trust and reliance on God are invited, even after a devastating disaster, while waiting on God's help during times of violence and during times of temptation. In all times, God invites us into a deeper relationship. During this Lenten season, how might you work to be closer to and more reliant on God?



Focus scripture

Genesis 9:8–17

Additional scriptures

Psalm 25:1–10

1 Peter 3:18–22

Mark 1:9–15

God, who has created all things, draw us into a closer relationship with you. When life's waters threaten to overwhelm us, help us to trust that you are with us at all times. Re-orient us away from our poor choices and help us to choose life with you. 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

Young children have many experiences with the concept of promise. The promises made in their young lives are the building blocks of trust: “I have to go away now and leave you with a babysitter, but I promise to come back.” Three-year-olds probably have had more experience of hearing a promise given to them, but older children will have begun to offer promises themselves. These experiences help them to grow in understanding about what it means to trust someone.

At the heart of the story of God’s relationship with Noah is God’s promise to all Noah’s descendants, including us. This may be the

children’s first hearing of this amazing story of promise, but it’s likely not their first experience of a rainbow. The rainbow offers a tangible image for children in this age group who are at the stage of concrete thinking. Children will explore the rainbow as a sign of God’s promise to Noah and to all people: “I will be with you and I will always love you.”

The Lenten calendar offers another concrete image for helping children to explore the journey through the Season of Lent. Each week’s story will remind children of God’s desire to be in a new relationship with God’s people. Pray that God’s rainbow may become a sign of promise for the children in your group.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Prayerfully reflect on this week’s focus scripture, Genesis 9:8–17, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 3).
- ❑ Review “[About this Lent and Easter](#)” (p. 1) and “[This Lent, Easter for Ages 3–5](#)” (p. 2).
- ❑ Set a worship space with purple cloth, purple candle, matches, offering basket, Bible with a purple bookmark placed in this week’s focus passage from Genesis.
- ❑ 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

- ❑ Bring “Gathering Song” (“[Additional Songs](#),” p. 89), or song “Thank God” (p. 28 in *SGF Songbook*; #18 on *SGF Music CD*).
- ❑ Option: bring a puppet (see information on p. 2) and necklace.

Engage

- ❑ Bring this week’s resource sheet “[A Rainbow Promise](#)” and rainbow stickers (one per child).
- ❑ Bring sheets of construction paper (five each of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple).

- ❑ Cut the Lenten calendar from poster [Storytelling Resources](#) and glue onto poster board. Bring a container of 40 small polished stones (see p. 88 for more information about the [Lenten ritual](#)).
- ❑ Bring song “God’s Promise” (see resource sheet “[Additional Songs](#),” p. 89).

Respond

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

- ❑ **Story picture:** copies of this week’s resource sheet “[Noah’s Ark](#),” light blue construction paper, animal stickers; follow instructions on resource sheet to prepare boats and sets of animals.
- ❑ **Rainbow catcher:** discarded CDs (two per child), yarn, construction paper in rainbow colours (cut into small triangles)
- ❑ **Mural:** mural paper (with a rainbow shape drawn with pencil; include six arches), six foil dishes of tempera paint (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple), clothes pegs/clothespins clipped onto pieces of sponge (several for each dish), painting smocks

Bless

- ❑ Bring “Leaving Song” (see resource sheet “[Additional Songs](#),” p. 89).
- ❑ Bring copies of “[Letter to Families](#)” (p. 87)



Signs of Promise

Scripture

Genesis 9:8–17

FOCUS To hear the story of Noah and learn about God's promise in the rainbow

Gather

Welcome each child, saying "Hello, *(child's name)*, we're happy you're here." Invite children to look around the room and notice the different colours. If possible, look outside to notice the colours seen through the window.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship space and point out the purple cloth. Explain that today is the beginning of a new season in the church year called Lent. The colour for Lent is purple. Lent is a special time to think about God's love and how special it is to be God's children. Light the candle, saying, "This candle reminds us of God's love shining in the world." Then repeat for each child, "God's love shines in *(child's name)*."

Pray Thank you, God,
for all the colours in our world,
for family, friends, and animals,
and especially for your love.
Amen.

Sing "Gathering Song" (p. 89) or "Thank God" (p. 28 in *Seasons Growing Faith Songbook*; #18 on *Seasons Growing Faith 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: Hi, everybody. I'm so glad to see you.

Leader: We're glad to see you, too. I noticed that you are wearing a beautiful necklace today. Can you tell us about it?

Priscilla: Oh, this necklace belongs to my mother. Whenever my mother needs to leave me with a babysitter, she gives me this necklace. It helps me to feel close to my mother even when she's not there. When I wear it, I remember that my mother will be coming back soon just like she promised.

Leader: Priscilla, do you know what a promise is?

Priscilla: Yes! It's when you say you will do something and then you do it! (*Turns to the children.*) Have you ever made a promise? Has someone ever made a promise to you? (*Encourage the children to talk about their promises.*)

Leader: Do you know that God makes promises, too? Today we are going to hear a story from the Bible about one of God's promises. (*Say goodbye to Priscilla.*)

☐ **What is a promise?** Explain that a promise means saying that you will do something and then making sure that you do it. Encourage children to name some promises that have been given to them by parents or friends. Invite children to talk about some promises they could make.

Engage

Before the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the book of Genesis. Explain that today's story comes from the first book in the Bible, Genesis, which means beginning. Use the resource sheet "[A Rainbow Promise](#)" to tell the story based on **Genesis 9:8–17**, encouraging children to participate with movement and sound. At the end of the story, give each child a rainbow sticker.

After the story

Distribute pieces of construction paper and invite children to use them to form a rainbow on a table

or floor. Remind the children that the rainbow reminds us that God promises to love us and always take care of the earth and all living things.

Lenten calendar Lent is a special time to remember God's wonderful promises to us. Invite children to gather around the Lenten calendar from the [Story-telling Resources](#) poster. Explain that we will count the days through Lent by placing stones on the pathway. Have children place stones on numbers 1–4, explaining that Lent began last Wednesday. Read aloud the phrase beside the illustration for February 21.

Sing "[God's Promise](#)" (on p. 89)

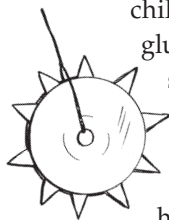
Respond

Choose from the following activities:

- ☐ **Story picture** A beautiful rainbow was there to welcome Noah's family as they left the ark. Distribute materials and help children to make their own picture of this scene (following the instructions on the resource sheet "[Noah's Ark](#)").



- ☐ **Rainbow catcher** Rainbows are reminders of God's promise. Distribute two disks to each child and demonstrate how to place a layer of glue around the outside edge of one printed side using glue sticks and stick on coloured triangle shapes. Then help them glue on a second disk (printed sides together) and put a length of yarn through the middle hole to make a hanger. Encourage the chil-



dren to suspend these in windows at home, where they can catch the sun and reflect rainbows.

- ☐ **Mural** Invite children to create a rainbow to remember God's rainbow promise. Place the mural paper with the outline of a rainbow shape on a table and demonstrate the use of the sponges, adding one colour to each arch. Have children complete the bands of colour of the rainbow by patting the paint-filled sponges within each line. Finish by inviting each child to place a hand in a different colour of paint and add their hand-print to the mural. Add a title such as, "God's rainbow promise" and display the finished mural in the church hall.

Bless

Gather in the worship space and light the candle again.

Pray Dear God, thank you for your rainbow promise.
Thank you that you will always love us.
Amen.

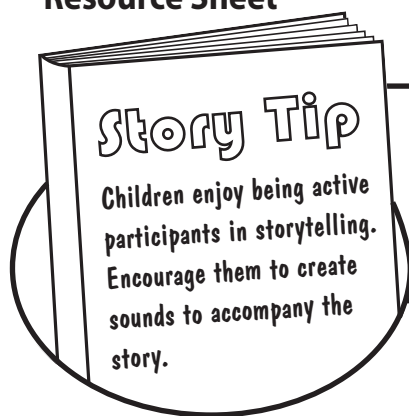
Sing the "[Leaving Song](#)" (on p. 89)

Send each child out with the words "(Child's name), God loves you. Go and shine, like a beautiful rainbow."

Distribute copies of the "[Letter to Families](#)" (p. 87) to take home.

Reflect

During this season of Lent consider how you will continue to reinforce God's promise to love and care for the children in your group.



A Rainbow Promise

(based on Genesis 9:8–17)

One day God said to Noah, “Noah, soon there will be a big rain. Everything will be covered with water. I want you to build a boat. A big boat. A gigantic boat to keep your family and the animals safe.”

So, Noah and his wife and their children began to build the boat.

Rasp-a-rasp-a-rasp went the saws. (*Encourage sawing motions and sounds.*)

Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! went the hammers. (*Encourage hammering motions and sounds.*)

They hammered and they sawed for many days. Finally, the boat was ready. It was good and strong.

Now it was time to call the animals. Noah opened the doors in the big boat and in they came. There were animals crawling and creeping, flying and waddling, running and jumping to get into the boat. (*Encourage making different animal sounds.*)

Then Noah and all his family walked into the boat. They shut the doors. They were safe inside.

Soon, it started to rain. Drip, drop, drip, drop... (*Pat knees to make dripping sounds.*) It rained a little harder. Drip, drop, drip, drop! (*Pat knees faster.*) The rain came faster and faster! (*Continue patting*

knees.) It rained all day and all night. It rained for days and days and days. Soon there was water everywhere. The boat started to rock up and down, up and down in the water. “When will the rain stop?” Noah’s family wondered. All they could see was water. Water everywhere! It rained and it rained and it rained.

But just when Noah and his family thought the rain would never stop, the sun came out. Slowly the water began to dry up off the ground. The boat finally stopped rocking. “Hooray!” shouted everyone. (*Raise arms and shout “Hooray!”*) Noah opened the doors. All the animals were ready. There were animals crawling and creeping, flying and waddling, running and jumping to get off the boat. (*Encourage making different animal sounds.*)

And then God said to Noah, “Now it is time for you to start again. You have everything you need – plants, animals, birds, and fish. You have the love of each other. You have my love! I promise to take care of the earth and the animals and all living things. I promise that I will always be with you.”

And when Noah and his family looked up, they saw a wonderful surprise. There in the sky was a beautiful rainbow to welcome them. (*Encourage children to pretend to be looking up at the sky.*) From that day on seeing a rainbow would always remind them of God’s wonderful promise.



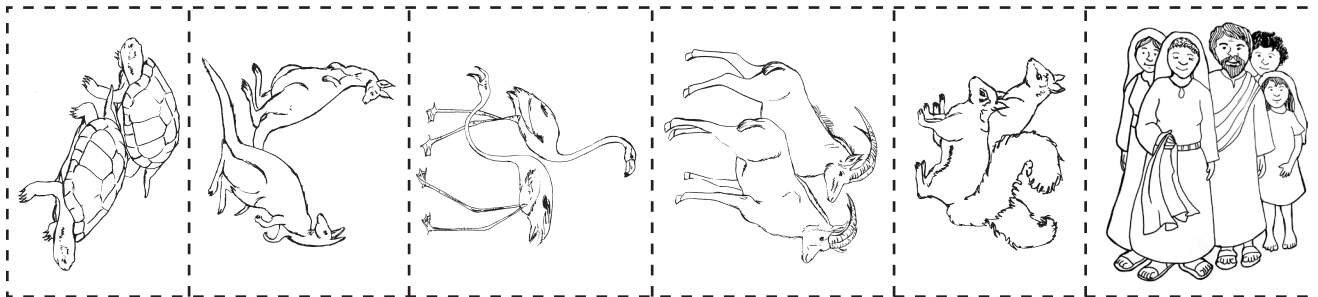
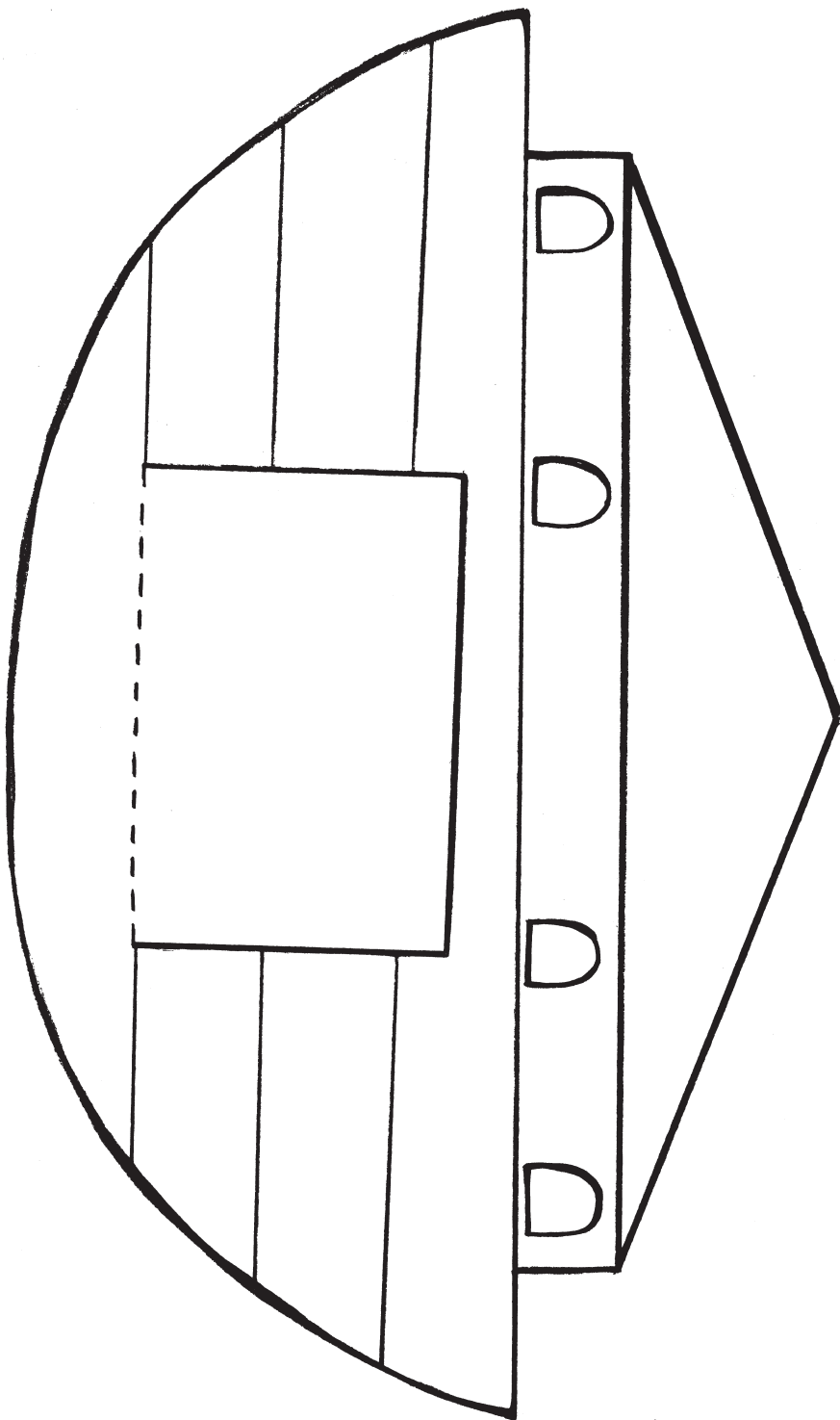
Noah's Ark

Before session:

- Make copies and enlarge if possible.
- Cut out the boats.
- Cut along solid lines of doors so that they open and close.
- Glue boats to larger sheets of construction paper.
- Cut out sets of animals and Noah's family.

During session:

- Children glue animals and Noah's family on the boat and in opening of door.
- Shut the door.
- Draw water around boat and a rainbow in the sky.
- Together, think of a title for the pictures.



Letter to Families

Dear Family,

During Lent the children will be hearing stories from the Hebrew scriptures (also known as the Old Testament). These stories are about promises from God and how God kept them. Children will hear about the promise to Noah and his family, the promise to Abraham and Sarah, and promises spoken in the Psalms and by the prophet Jeremiah. The children will be exploring these promises by using a “stepping stone” calendar each week, which will help them review the promises and count the days between the beginning of Lent and Easter Sunday. Here is a song you could sing at home each of the six Sundays during the Season of Lent.

Season of Lent

(tune: “Mary Had a Little Lamb”)

Now we are in the season of Lent,
season of Lent, season of Lent.

Now we are in the season of Lent,
we’re on our way to Easter.

Following Easter Sunday, on April 1, the Bible stories will be taken from the New Testament. Children will learn about Jesus’ appearances to the disciples after the Resurrection and the ways in which Jesus’ friends and followers shared the good news of God’s love. You might like to read these stories together at home: John 20:19–31, Luke

24:36b–48, John 10:11–18, Acts 8:26–40, John 15:9–17, and Acts 1:15–17, 21–26. Reading the Bible with your child suggests that these stories are important to you. Here is a song you could sing together during the 50-day Season of Easter.

Happy Easter to You

(tune: “Happy Birthday”)

Happy Easter to you,
Happy Easter to you,
Happy Easter everybody,
Happy Easter to you.

We celebrate Pentecost Sunday

on May 23, which marks the end of the Season of Easter. This is a day to celebrate the Spirit of God and the growth of the Christian community. The following poem can help children understand this image.

God’s Spirit

We can’t see the wind
but we know it’s there,
‘cause it rustles the leaves
and blows through our hair.

God’s Spirit is with us,
we know this is true.
And people can see it
in the things that we do.

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 these Lenten and Easter seasons be a time of spiritual nurture and growth for your child and your family.

Sincerely,



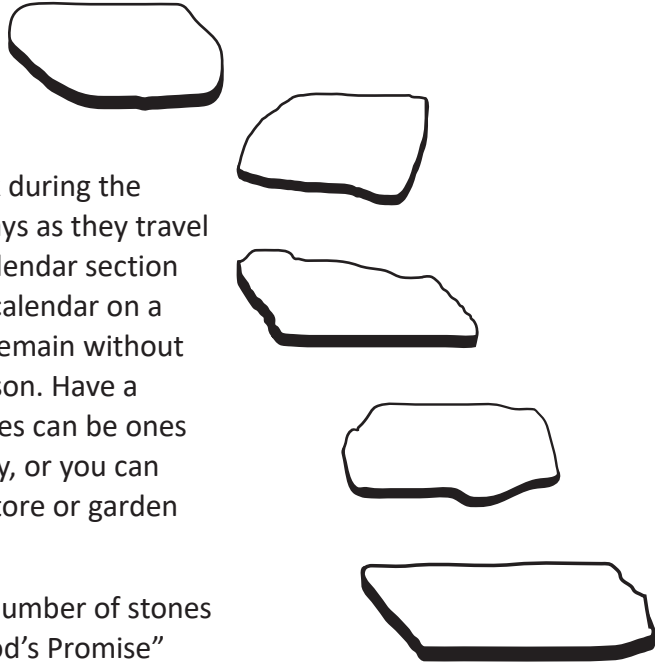
Storytelling Resources

Lenten calendar

The *Rainbow Path of God's Promises* is a calendar found on the poster [Storytelling Resources](#). This calendar will be used each week during the Season of Lent, to help the children mark the days as they travel through Lent towards Easter Sunday. Cut the calendar section off the [Storytelling Resources](#) poster. Place the calendar on a low table, preferably somewhere where it can remain without being disturbed during the six weeks of the season. Have a container of 40 small stones nearby. These stones can be ones collected from a beach or woodland area nearby, or you can purchase bags of polished stones from a craft store or garden centre.

Each week the children will place the required number of stones on the path for that week and sing the song "God's Promise" (on the resource sheet "[Additional Songs](#)" on p. 89). On Easter Day they will reach the empty tomb and celebrate Jesus' resurrection.

If the children will be part of an all-ages gathering on Palm/Passion Sunday and Easter Sunday, plan how you will complete the calendar activity. You might want to "look ahead" on your last day together as a group before Palm/Passion Sunday and then "look back" on the calendar on your first day together after Easter Sunday.



Note that the 40 days of the Lenten Season refer to the week days during this time. Each Sunday during Lent is traditionally considered a "little Easter" and is not counted as part of the 40 days.

Easter storytelling figures

The [Storytelling Resources](#) posters include figures to use in the Bible stories during the Easter season. There are figures of Jesus, Thomas, a pair of disciples, and two figures representing Philip and the Ethiopian official. Each figure is labelled with a date but they can also be used during the telling of stories on other Sundays if desired.

Cut out the figures and mount on paper rolls or large craft sticks so that the children can hold them and move them during the storytelling times.



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.

