

Community of Prayer

Jesus offers a prayer that showers disciples – in that time and for all time – with vocation and unity in God through Christ. So prayed for, the community of Jesus becomes a community of prayer. Such prayer strengthens and empowers faithful witness and service. Such prayer holds up the vulnerable in word and deed. Such prayer rejoices in God. Jesus' prayer intends to empower those who follow. Empowerment for witness is a backdrop in the other readings for this week.

Focus scripture: John 17:1–11

The prayer of Jesus in John 17:1–11 is intriguing in its own context, and perhaps more so when compared to the other gospels. In this part of the “Farewell Discourse,” Jesus offers publicly a rather intimate prayer. In this passage alone, he uses the term “father.” While many, understandably, approach this word with caution because of its emphasis on God's supposed maleness, the word is worth noting here simply for its intimacy.

For John, this prayer comes immediately before Jesus' arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. In contrast, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all have Jesus praying for God to remove this “cup of suffering.” John, on the other hand, presents a very different kind of prayer; this prayer focuses on unity, on glorifying the church, and for the disciples to be blessed in their work.

Neither prayer cancels the other out – in theory, Jesus could have spoken both of them. What is striking, though, is the emphasis the different gospel writers want to project. For John, it is as if the point now is “how do we move forward?” The prayer's power lies in Jesus' request that God will protect the disciples (the church) and keep them (it) unified. While we cannot know what will happen to the early believers at this point in John's gospel, the fervent hope and prayerful expectation that they may not be divided in vision or purpose is moving.

This emphasis on unity does not mean that all Christians are expected to agree – that would be foolish at best – but rather the fervent hope that we will recognize that what unites us is far greater than what divides us.

Acts 1:6–14 At the time of Jesus' ascension, Jesus promises that the Spirit will continue to shape the disciples as the body of Christ. This community is commissioned to do the work of Christ “to the ends of Earth.”

In the imagery of sky and cloud, **Psalm 68:1–10, 32–35** reiterates the promise that God will give power and strength to God's people and abide with those who are most vulnerable.

1 Peter 4:12–14, 5:6–11 sees suffering as the context of the church's witness. The context is said to be shared with “brothers and sisters in all the world.”

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Being the church is not easy – even at the best of times. We are called to be true to our tradition while at the same time being open to the indwelling and transformative presence of Christ. Sometimes we have to hang on to yesterday, and at other times we are called to let it go. Perhaps a key lies in the call to unity – not a false unity that has little value, but a real one that seeks understanding and strength as we reach out in service. In the 21st century, how do we continue the Christ life?



Focus scripture

John 17:1–11

Additional scriptures

Acts 1:6–14

Psalm 68:1–10, 32–35

1 Peter 4:12–14; 5:6–11

In his final hours, Jesus prayed for those who would follow him saying, “All mine are yours, and yours are mine; I have been glorified in them.” May the heart of Jesus beat on in us, the beloved community of witnesses. 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 5–12

The children in your group are probably familiar with prayer. We teach them prayers of thanks and encourage them to pray at home. They know to go to God with their petitions and requests. Learning about prayer, and being encouraged to pray for themselves and others, is an important part of their spiritual development. It helps them as they continue to build their own relationship with God. Overhearing the faithful prayers of someone who knows and loves them can have a powerful impact on children.

In this week's session, focusing on Jesus' prayer for all those who would hear the gospel story and follow God's way can help children grow in their prayer life as they mature in their spiritual development. They will be encouraged to pray for others. You can help them see that their prayers are one of the ways they are living out the call to be a follower of Jesus. Pray that the children in your group will grow in their prayer life.

Note: Next week's session is designed for all ages to meet together to explore the story of Pentecost.

Prepare

Before the session

- ☐ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's focus scripture, John 17:1–11, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 99).
- ☐ Set a worship space with white, gold, or yellow cloth, candle, and Bible with bookmark placed in focus passage.
- ☐ Bring [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2) and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 9) and *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 9), and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ☐ Bring a green plant in a pot.
- ☐ Bring, if possible, song "Come, Holy Spirit" (p. 12 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #13 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).

Engage

- ☐ Bring resource sheet "[Jesus' Prayer for Others](#)" and "Story line" from last week.
- ☐ **Game group:** print "Amen" on a sheet of paper.
- ☐ **Prayer group:** bring note paper

Respond

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

- ☐ **Easter zone:** strips of coloured paper (14 x 46 cm/5.5 x 18 in), hand-shaped templates (trace hand on card stock)
- ☐ **Art zone:** wide ribbons, person shaped templates (see pattern on resource sheet "[Easter Resources](#)," p. 119)
- ☐ **Craft zone:** copies of resource sheet "[Prayer Box](#)," self-adhesive stickers
- ☐ **Quiet zone:** copies of resource sheet "[Prayers for Others](#)," card stock
- ☐ **Outreach zone:** copies of resource sheet "[Prayers for Others](#)," magazines and newspapers, construction paper

Bless

- ☐ Bring, if possible, song "The Peace of the Earth" (p. 36 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #10 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).



May 24, 2020

Community of Prayer

Scripture

John 17:1–11

FOCUS To listen to Jesus' prayer for his friends and followers and explore how we can pray for others

Gather

Welcome the children and explain that we are almost at the end of the Season of Easter. Next week will be the end of the season, when we celebrate the special story of Pentecost. Invite them to share experiences from the past week.

Opening ritual

Gather in the worship space and lead the children in the ritual, inviting them to participate as indicated:

We light this candle to celebrate the light of God's presence in our lives.

(Invite a child to light the candle.)

During the Easter season we celebrate our new life in Christ.

(Invite a child to place the plant on the worship table.)

We are witnesses to God's love and light, as we follow Jesus, the risen Christ.

All: Alleluia!

Sing or listen to, if possible, the song "Come, Holy Spirit" (p. 12 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #13 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).

Pray this prayer or one of your own:

Loving God,
we know you are here with us.
May your Spirit be with us
as we follow the ways of Jesus. Amen.

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

Connecting with the focus

Invite children to talk about the prayers that they have said or heard. Explain that there are many different kinds of prayers (giving thanks, asking for help) and many different places to pray (such as at home or church camp). Invite those who have learned a prayer by heart to share it with the group. In this week's Bible reading we hear a prayer that Jesus said.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Story line Look together at the story line begun last week to remember the stories they heard so far during this Season of Easter: "Jesus is alive" (John 20:1–18); "Thomas" (John 20:19–31); "Emmaus" (Luke 24:13–35); "the first Christians" (Acts 2:42–47); "Stephen" (Acts 7:55–60); "John's community" (John 14:15–21).

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship area and use the bookmark to open it to the gospel of John. Long after Jesus was no longer with them, his followers remembered what Jesus taught them, telling stories of his ministry to people who had not seen or heard him. Today we

hear about a prayer that Jesus said for his friends near the end of his time with them, shortly before he was arrested.

The Bible story

Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Jesus' Prayer for Others](#)," based on **John 17:1–11** and invite two readers to lead the group.

Wondering questions Use the following questions to wonder together:

- **Why do you think it was important for the disciples to hear Jesus praying for them?**
- **What does Jesus ask God to do for the disciples?**

Story line Print the focus passage reference and the words “Jesus’ prayer” on another sticky note and add it to the story line. As this is the last week to use the story line, invite the children to decide what to do with it.

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.)

Game group *(for younger children)* This group will have the opportunity to say prayers for each other. Gather in a circle and place the paper with the word “Amen” in the middle of the group. Read the word aloud and explain that it means, “That’s my prayer, too.” Invite children to take turns going into the middle of the circle, holding the “Amen” sign, and saying a one-sentence prayer for a person or a situation. The rest of the group responds by saying “Amen.” Repeat until all those who wish have had a turn.

Prayer group *(for older children)* This group will have the opportunity to explore further the topic of praying for others.

Invite children to think about the people in their church and their neighbourhood and to write the names of those people they would like to pray for on note paper and place them on the worship table. Discuss the following question together.

■ What have you learned about prayer from the story today?

Reporting Invite the game group to share some of their prayers, and invite the prayer group to share their responses to the question.

The Bible story and us

In last week’s story from the Bible, Jesus promised his friends and followers that God would send the Holy Spirit to be with them. God’s Spirit encourages us when we are worried, comforts us when we are scared, and helps us when we don’t know what to do. In this week’s Bible reading Jesus prays to God, asking God to keep his friends safe and help them. Read Jesus’ prayer again from the resource sheet, inviting group members to imagine that Jesus is speaking to them and for them.

■ Why do you think it is important for us to pray for others?

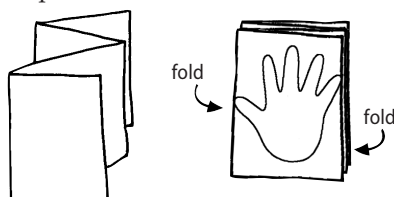
■ Who are some people that we could pray for today?

Respond

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

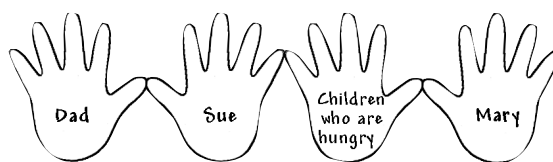
❑ Easter zone: Praying hands garland

Jesus cared about the disciples and didn’t want them to feel alone, so he prayed for them. Distribute strips of coloured paper and show the children how to fold their strips in half and then two more times to form accordion folds. Distribute hand-shaped templates and trace around these as shown. Cut these out, being careful not to cut the finger and thumb edges. Open out the chain of hands and help children print their prayer suggestions on hands. Decorate the hand shapes and tape all together to create a garland to hang in the worship area or church hall.



❑ Art zone: Prayer ribbons *(for younger children)*

Jesus prayed for his friends, and we can do the same. Distribute sheets of construction paper and invite children (and leaders) to use the template to trace and cut out the same number of person shapes as there are people in the group. Invite them each to print their name on all of their shapes. Lay one ribbon for each child and leader flat on the table and have each person tape one of their people shapes onto every ribbon. Encourage children to use their prayer ribbons at home as reminders to pray for one another.



- ❑ **Craft zone: Prayer box** Jesus prayed for all those who would hear his story and believe. That includes us! Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Prayer Box](#)" and review the instructions with the children. Help them to create and decorate their prayer boxes. If there is time, children may like to make an extra prayer box to give to family or friends. Encourage children to place their box somewhere as a reminder of Jesus' prayer.
- ❑ **Quiet zone: Prayer cards** (*for older children*) Jesus prayed for his friends and for the world and we can too. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Prayers for Others](#)" and read the prayers together. Then provide writing paper and pencils for the children to write their own prayers. Have them cut out their

prayers and glue these onto pieces of card stock to take home.

- ❑ **Outreach zone: Prayer collages** (*for older children*) As followers of Jesus we are called to pray for others. Provide newspapers and magazines and invite children to cut out a variety of pictures and create collages on sheets of construction paper. Encourage them to include a variety of people in different settings and situations. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Prayers for Others](#)" and have them choose prayers to cut out and glue onto their collages. Encourage them to also write their own prayers for the people or situations included in their collages. Create a display of the prayer collages for the church hall.

Bless

Gather around the worship area, light the candle again, and invite children to spend a few moments in silence looking at the flame.

Sing if possible, the song "The Peace of the Earth" (p. 36 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 9; #10 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 9).

Pray Lead the children in the following simple breath prayer. Begin by breathing in and out, slowly and

deeply. Read each line slowly and quietly. Repeat the prayer several times.

As you breathe in, say silently, "Peace be...
As you breathe out, say silently, "with you."
Then, as you breathe in, say silently, "Peace be...
As you breathe out, say silently, "with me."

Blessing Offer the following blessing: "God's peace and God's Spirit go with you."

Reflect

If this is your final session as a group for this season, please take a moment to complete the evaluation form (at the end of this resource or in Library at www.seasonsonline.ca). The developers of the *Seasons of the Spirit* resources appreciate hearing about your experiences with the materials.



Jesus' Prayer for Others

(based on John 17:1-11)

Reader 1: Jesus usually went off alone to pray. But sometimes Jesus prayed aloud. This is one of Jesus' prayers for his friends, the disciples, and for all the people all down the centuries who would follow in the way that he had taught.

Reader 2: God, the time has come for you to bring me glory so that I can bring glory to you.
You have given me power and I have brought glory to you here on Earth by doing everything that you gave me to do.

Reader 1: I know that those who love me and know you, God, will live forever.

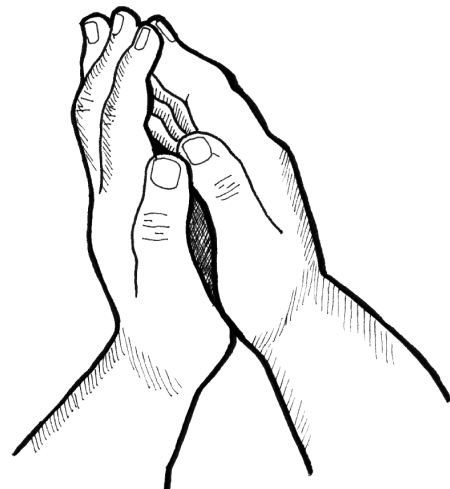
Reader 2: God, I have made your name known to many people. I have shown them what you are like. They have followed your word. Now they know everything that you have given me to tell them. They have believed what I told them.

Reader 1: God, now I ask this for my friends, and for everyone in the world, because they are yours. When I am no longer in the world and I am with you, they will still be in the world.

Reader 2: Keep them safe by the power of the name that you have given me. Then they shall be one with each other, just as you and I are one.

Readers 1 and 2: Jesus prayed for the first disciples and Jesus' prayer is for us too.

All: And we can pray for one another in Jesus' name.

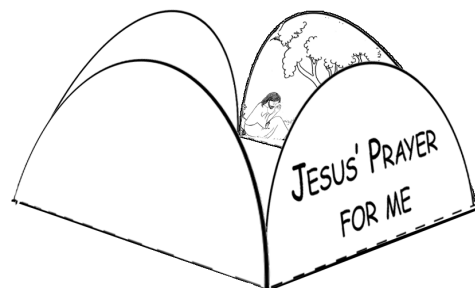




Prayer Box

Instructions

- Cut out the prayer box.
- Print your name in the blank spaces of the prayer.
- Turn the prayer box over and fold the flaps forward. (The words of Jesus' prayer will now be on the back of the box.)
- How will you decorate the blank paper under the flaps? You might draw a picture of Jesus praying in the garden, or you might write your own prayer to Jesus.
- Use crayons and small stickers to decorate the blank flaps.



**JESUS' PRAYER
FOR ME**

| Loving God,

| I pray for _____ and all those

| people who will hear my story

| and become my

| followers. _____ is my friend

| too.

| Help _____ to show your

| love in the world. May

| _____ know deep down inside

| how much you love (him/her).

| Amen.

Name



Prayers for others

For all those who go to bed hungry,
for all those who go to bed cold,
for all those who go to bed lonely,
we pray, O God of comfort and mercy.
Amen.

My friend was sad today, God.
Hold my friend in your loving arms.
Help me to show love to my friend, too.
Amen.

Thank you, God, for my church.
Help us to be a place of love for everyone.
Give us courage to stand up for others.
Give us strength to love people whom others do
not love. Amen.

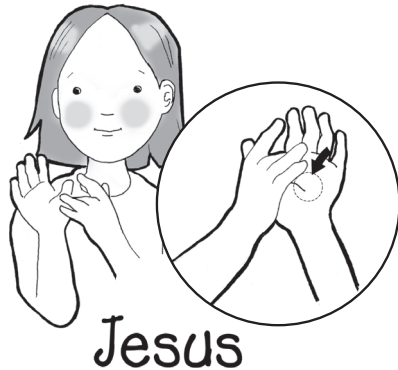
Loving God, thank you for my
church school leaders.
Send your Spirit to them as
they prepare.
Send your Spirit to us as we
learn together. Amen.

God of glory, I pray for the leaders
of all nations.
Show them the paths to peace.
Give them words of kindness to speak
to one another. Amen.

For whom do you want to pray?

Easter Resources

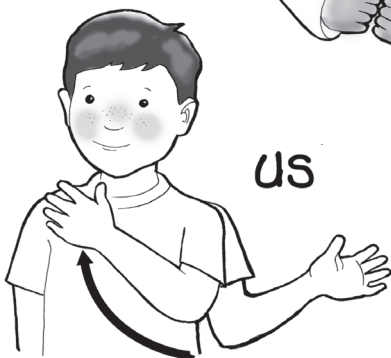
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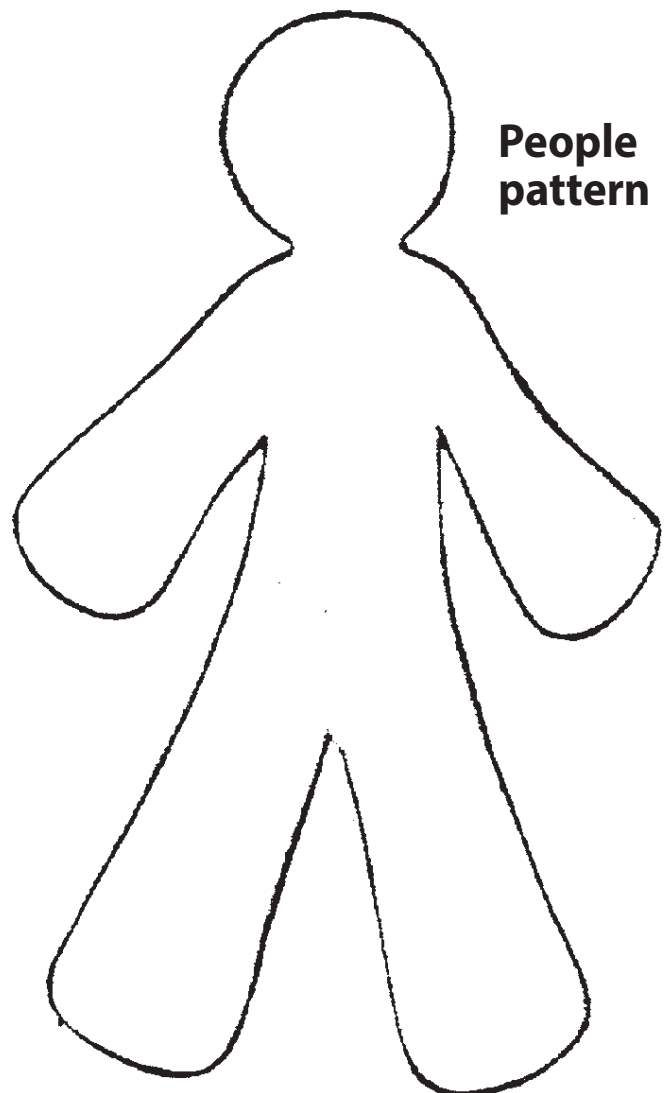


us



alleluia

People
pattern



Badge
pattern

Thank you
for sharing
God's love

