



Year A

Children's Stories for Worship

Based on the Gospel Text
from the Common Lectionary

Edited by Elsie Rempel



Children's Story

Cycle A, Epiphany 1

The Powerful Compliment

Title: The Powerful Compliment
Author: Janet Penner
Church: Fort Garry Mennonite
Fellowship, Winnipeg, MB
Text: Matthew 3: 13-17
Theme: God's compliment after
Jesus came out of the waters
of his baptism

Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children and ask them about special compliments that they may have received and given, and what it feels like to receive and give compliments. Explain that today's story is there to help us understand what it was like for Jesus to get a special compliment from God when he was baptized. Show them Matthew 3, where that event is recorded, and alert them to listen for it when the Gospel is read in the service. Invite everyone to become quiet and comfortable, to remember that God is near, and that this children's time is an important part of worshipping God. God loves it when we listen and respond to God's words and actions with our whole hearts

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Story:

(This is a true story, but the names have been changed.)

Matthew was about to start grade two in a new school. His mother phoned the teacher to warn her about her terrible son. She told her that Matthew got into fights every day and would swear at the teachers because of his bad temper. The teacher listened and thanked the mother for the warning and said good-bye.

This teacher believed that there was good in every person and wondered what Matthew would be good at. On the first day of school, she noticed Matthew was getting annoyed because the boy next to him was tapping his pencil. Matthew's face was getting red and his body was tensing up, but he was controlling his temper for the moment. So, the teacher decided to take action to avoid the fight she saw coming and called for the whole class's attention. She explained to them that, if things made them angry, they could control their temper by counting to 10 or by thinking of nice ways to ask the person who was bothering them to stop. Then she complimented Matthew for showing good self-control when someone was annoying him. She ended by saying, if they could all control their tempers like Matthew had shown her he was doing that morning, grade two would be a much more pleasant experience for everyone. When the children went out for recess, she told Matthew that if there ever was a time that things got too hard for him to handle, he could come tell her. She would be glad to help him sort it out. He did not have to solve all of his problems on his own.

Two months later, the teacher got a phone call from Matthew's mother. Matthew's mother wanted to know what the teacher had said or

done to produce such a change in her son. He was becoming pleasant, cheerful and helpful, even around his brother and sister. She was used to him crying and pretending to be sick every day so he could miss school. Now, when he was sick and she tried to keep him home, he cried that he wanted to go to school.

Matthew turned out to be one of the teacher's best behaved students. One honest compliment and the support of his teacher had given him the encouragement and power to improve his behaviour. Our Scripture reading today includes the compliment God gave Jesus after he was baptized. The heavens opened up and the Spirit of God descended as a dove and a voice from heaven said, "This is my son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." Pleasing God was a great compliment for Jesus.

Prayer:

Thank you God, for the blessing and strength we get from real compliments. Thank you for making us and saying that we are very good, and for supporting us with your blessings. Help us to share that blessing with others who need encouragement and strength. Amen.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder if Jesus remembered these words when he faced hard times.
- I wonder how Jesus shared the blessing of that compliment with others.
- I wonder what pleases God about each of us.
- I wonder how we can share the blessing of God's pleasure with us.



Show and Tell

Children's Story

Cycle A, Epiphany 2,

Title: Show and Tell
Author: Janet Penner
Church: Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, MB
Text: John 1: 29-42
Theme: Jesus' baptism and John promoting Jesus.
Needed: Pre-arrange for a few children to bring show and tell items. Have a supply of paper and crayons for drawing available.

Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children and show them something that is special to you, preferably from your childhood, or your children's childhood. Explain why it's important to you. Feel free to share memories associated with this item. Explain that today's scripture from the Gospel of John (show them John 1) includes a story where John does a kind of show and tell with Jesus, so today's children's story will help us understand how John and Jesus felt when he did that. Invite everyone to become quiet and to imagine John and Jesus sitting there with them. Relax and imagine it yourself and be thankful for the Holy Spirit who helps us connect with Jesus in this way. Once a worshipful silence is established, begin the story.

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Story:

Many of you are in day care, nursery or regular school. Do you have a time where you can bring things that are important to you and talk about them? When I was in school, my favourite time was sharing time. Some call it *Show and Tell or Learning About You* time. It was important because I could show and tell others about something that was special to me. Once, a boy brought his grandfather from far away to school for show and tell. The boy's eyes shone, his face was flushed and the words tumbled out of his mouth because he was so excited about sharing his grandfather with his friends. I wonder what is important to you. I have asked ____ and _____ to bring something to show us. Please tell us why it is important to you ... Thank you for sharing a part of yourselves with us. We enjoyed learning about you.

How do you feel when you get to share something that you find really exciting? When I shared my _____ with you, I was happy that you listened and were interested as I talked about something that was important to me.

In the Bible reading today, we heard about John who was excited when he saw Jesus walking toward them. Jesus was very special to John, especially after he had baptized him. John was so excited he shouted out that Jesus was coming. He told the people he knew Jesus was the Lamb of God and he, John, had actually seen the Spirit of God land on Jesus in the form of a dove at his baptism. Many people believed in Jesus because of John's show and tell.

Prayer:

Thank you God, for sending Jesus and blessing him at his baptism. Thank you for his cousin and good friend, John, who told others how special Jesus was and is. Help us show how special Jesus is too, by living in his way and telling others about Jesus and his wonderful, fair love. Amen.

If you would like to draw a picture, during the rest of worship, that shows what you think is special about Jesus and Jesus' love, you can take some paper and crayons back to your seat with you.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder why John was so excited about Jesus.
- I wonder what each of us thinks is special about Jesus.
- What kind of things can we show and tell others about Jesus?



Strange Invitations

Children's Story

Cycle A, Epiphany 3

Title: Strange Invitations
Author: Janet Penner
Church: Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, MB
Text: Matthew 4: 12-23
Theme: Jesus calls the first four disciples

Wondering questions:

- I wonder what the disciples asked Jesus about fishing for people.
- I wonder what you would do, if Jesus invited you to fish for people.
- I wonder what it would be like if your parents decided to move and serve Jesus in another place.
- I wonder what surprising or strange thing Jesus invites each of us to do.

Gathering Activity:

Warmly invite the children to come forward for children's time, and welcome them to that part of the worship where we make sure children can understand and connect with the worship theme of the morning. Ask them to do something that is slightly strange, like sit in a different place, sit in a boy/girl order, or stay standing to hear the story. Ask them if they feel a little strange because of the changes in the children's time routine. Explain that you did this because the story in Matthew 4 (show them the text) is about some strange instructions that Jesus gave his first followers. That strange invitation by Jesus will be part of the children's story this morning. Invite children to relax by remembering that Jesus is there with them and they can all imagine themselves right onto his lap. Relax into a thankful awareness of the Holy along with the children and introduce the story.

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Story:

Today we will hear four little stories about strange invitations.

1) A new girl came to church and quickly made many new friends. This made her very happy. Her birthday had passed a few weeks ago, but she wanted to have a party with her new friends, so she invited people to an unbirthday party. At the party, there was a cake, balloons and games, but the children were still confused about this unbirthday party. Some even brought presents. It was fun but strange.

2) Julie has a late December birthday. She doesn't like getting all her presents in one week and then waiting a year. So she celebrates her half birthdays instead and has a party in June. One time, her family invited people to bring half presents. Some people were so confused, but others got the idea and brought a half a box of cookies or Lego. Others brought regular gifts. It was fun to be creative with her birthday celebrations but it was also confusing for her friends until they got used to it.

3) Janet, the grown up who wrote this story, received an invitation to a "Moving and Shaking Party." The invitation said that people who came should wear comfortable clothes. She thought the party might be a dance. She was surprised. Instead of dancing, they helped move her friends out of their apartment into a house. They spent time shaking out their rugs and cleaning the apartment. Even though it wasn't what Janet expected, she still had a good time talking and working with friends. Everyone had a good laugh as they talked about how they had been tricked into helping her friends.

4) In today's Bible story, Jesus gives an interesting invitation to some fishermen, Simon Peter and his brother Andrew. Jesus

says, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." I can imagine what went on in their minds, a big net full of people being caught. (You may want to have a cartoon drawing of this to show the children.) We do not know what questions they asked Jesus about this interesting but strange invitation, but the Bible says they immediately left their nets and followed him. The same thing happened with James and John, who also left their boat, nets and father to follow Jesus. This wasn't what they expected to hear, but they had a good time getting to know the other disciples and working with Jesus. I'm sure they did not regret saying yes to Jesus' invitation.

Jesus still invites us to be his followers in surprising ways. People still follow Jesus' invitations. Sometimes that means sharing Jesus' love with others through our words and deeds. Sometimes, when adults accept Jesus' invitation, it can mean changing jobs and moving to do what Jesus has invited you to do. Sometimes, it can include moving overseas and getting used to many foods and habits that seem strange at first. Some of the money we give in our offerings helps to support missionaries who followed Jesus' invitation to serve God in places where everything seems strange at first. Thank goodness, Jesus is always with them, helping them get used to new ways.

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, that you stay with us when we are asked to do strange things. Thank you for the adventure of following you and learning new and surprising things. Please help us listen so we can hear with our hearts what you are asking us to do. Amen.



Children's Story

Cycle A, Epiphany 4

What makes us Happy

Title: What Makes Us Happy?
Author: Janet Penner
Church: Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, MB
Text: Matthew 5: 1-12
Theme: Beatitudes and happiness
Display: money, power ads, toy ads, toys, books, pictures of vacations, etc.

Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children as they arrive and let them know that it makes you happy to be together with them for this Children's Time. Ask them if they are happy and why? What else makes them happy? Explain that today's Gospel reading is from Matthew 5. Show it to them in your Bible and explain that this is a very famous part of the Bible where Jesus teaches about happiness that goes really deep into people's hearts. Invite them to settle and imagine themselves onto the lap of Jesus, who taught his followers about happiness a long time ago, when they were gathered in a group around him. Settle into the awareness of being in Jesus' presence and of passing on his wisdom to the children and the congregation as you prepare to tell this story.

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Story:

Everyone wants to be happy. All of us have different ideas of what happiness means. Some older people think of happiness as having money, power, becoming famous, having interesting work, or having a family. Some like to exercise, play on sports teams, or go on vacations to keep happy. Others see praying and learning about God as the way to be happy. Many people work at being happy. Sometimes they spend a lot of money or they spend a lot of time and energy in training for things they hope will make them happy. For example, to be a great sports person or musician, you have to spend hours practicing. Sometimes people think they will be happier if they get rich, but poor people can also be happy. (If you know of someone who was poor and happy or lived through some hard times, feel free to use their story.)

At Jubilee Partners near Comer, Georgia, Christian families live in simple houses on a former cotton plantation and help families of refugees learn English and get used to shopping and cooking in North America. These people might seem poor to us because they do not have much money, and they don't have television sets or much computer time, but they eat supper together in a big dining hall every day. They raise rabbits and chickens. They make crafts and have talent shows. The children have lots of fun together. The teenagers are friends with young and old and like playing with the preschoolers. They are happy about living in a serving, rural community.

For Matthew, who wrote today's famous scripture text, happiness meant being blessed. Some

smart people think that being blessed is like being congratulated. Instead of saying 'blessed' we could say, "Congratulations to the poor in spirit, for the Kingdom of God is theirs!" When you get congratulated, that means something good has happened or will happen to you. The reward or blessing that Matthew wrote about was the chance to be part of the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is where God is in charge, where God's ways rule. It is a happy way of living. It is worth giving up money and your reputation for. Participating in this reward can even be worth suffering for.

Prayer:

Jesus, we thank you for teaching us about the deep happiness of living with God's love and fairness. Please help us remember how much you love everyone and to treat others the way we want to be treated, so we can help your kind of happiness keep on growing. Amen.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder how many kinds of happiness there are.
- I wonder what kinds of happiness Jesus would congratulate us for.
- I wonder what kinds of happiness TV commercials encourage.
- I wonder if there is something that you wonder about this story.



Salty Thoughts

Children's Story

Cycle A, Epiphany 5

Title: Salty Thoughts
Author: Elsie Rempel
Church: Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg MB
Text: Matthew 5: 13 (14-20).
Theme: Jesus wants us to be like salt for the world

Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children as they arrive and let them know that it encourages you to be together with them for this Children's Time. Ask them if any of them like salty food? Wonder together why so many people like salt. Settle into the awareness of being in Jesus' presence and of passing on his wisdom to the children and the congregation as you prepare to tell this story. Explain that today's Gospel reading is from Matthew 5 and talks about salt. Ask them to prepare their bodies and hearts to hear this short reading from God's word. Read verse 13 to them and ask them to wonder together with you what that might mean.

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Story:

Like you and me, Luke had been wondering about what Jesus could have meant when he said we were to be like salt for the earth. Luke wondered if people taste salty so he licked his arm. Hmm, maybe a little. He looked out the window at the wintery roads. A truck was spreading something that looked like sand on them, but when he asked his Mom about it, she said it was spreading salt and sand. The sand created friction and the salt helped the ice melt so that it would be safer to drive and walk. This made Luke wonder if Jesus wanted us to keep others from falling down on the ice, so he went to ask his older brother, Marc, who was cooking supper that night. He thought Jesus would like Luke's idea of helping people walk and drive on slippery roads. As he tasted the soup he was cooking, he noticed that it needed more salt. That gave him a salty idea of his own. Maybe Jesus meant we were supposed to add flavour to life the way salt adds flavour to soup. While the soup was simmering, they decided to look up information about cooking with salt. Marc "Googled" till he found a site called "history of salt." There Marc found out that unrefined chunks of salt, from places like the Dead Sea, were used to preserve and season food. Instead of pouring it from a little box like we do, cooks used to keep gravel-like salty chunks in a cloth bag. This bag was dipped into soups or vats of fish until enough salt dissolved out of the rocks to flavour or preserve their food. Once the salt was all dissolved out of these chunks, nothing but bits of gravel stayed in the bag. Then it was time to throw them out and get some new salt chunks. Marc and Luke thought about that for a while. They were learning a lot about salt. Salt was important for safety, for flavour, and for keeping food from going bad when you don't have a freezer. But how could people be like that for each other? They decided that the question needed to simmer in their heads and hearts, just like the soup needed to simmer on the stove.

Prayer:

Jesus, we thank you for teaching us about salt and learning to be salty. It sounds a little strange but it also makes us feel good inside to wonder about it. Please help what we've learned about being like salt to simmer in our heads and hearts so that we grow in our understanding of what you taught. Amen.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder how many uses there are for salt.
- I wonder what ways Jesus thought people were like salt.
- I wonder how we can help each other be salty.



Children's Story

Cycle A, Epiphany 6 (or Proper 1)

Making Up

Title: Making Up
Author: Elsie Rempel
Church: Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg MB
Text: Matthew 5: 22-25a (21-37)
Theme: Jesus wants us to settle our differences quickly

Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children as they arrive and let them know that it encourages you to be together with them for this Children's Time. Ask them if any of them got into any fights this last week. Did any of them say sorry and make up so they could play together again? Wonder together why it can be so hard and so important to settle differences. Prepare your hearts to hear and wonder about Jesus teaching about making up. Explain that today's Gospel reading is from Matthew 5 and talks about making up, or settling your differences. Read verses 22 to 25a to them and leave a pause for wondering about their meaning before you begin the story.

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Story:

Michael was one of those boys who had a hard time living by the rules. He wanted to cooperate with his teachers and playmates, but before he knew it, things happened that made him angry. When he got angry, he forgot about the rules and just lashed out. Before he knew it, he was in trouble and the teacher or the principal was asking him to explain what he did and what he would do better next time that happened. Sometimes they even called his parents and asked them to talk over the problem with him at home. Michael did not like being in trouble. He did not like it at all. He wondered why there were so many rules. Sometimes he wondered why he got so angry while other people in his class just kept on playing. Today one of those girls who never get caught being nasty had teased him about being a trouble-maker at recess. Before he knew it, he had punched her in the nose, and you guessed it, she told on him, and he was in trouble again.

That evening after supper, his dad took Michael out for a walk and asked him how he felt about getting in trouble. Michael told his dad how much he hated it and how he got teased about being a trouble-maker. They walked in silence for quite a while. Then they started to wonder if Michael could develop some tricks that would make it easier for him to live by the rules. His dad remembered some tricks that had helped him when he was in school. They decided to make a peace trick bracelet that Michael could wear. It was made out of rope. For every trick they thought of they put a knot into the bracelet. They thought of quite a few. It made Michael happy to know there were so many good tricks for not getting into trouble. They even added one for making up quickly by saying, "I'm sorry. I didn't want to hurt you." In case he did hurt someone, that

trick could help him settle the trouble before any teachers got involved. What he liked best about making this bracelet is that it helped him know that his dad loved him and understood his problem. He knew his dad would be praying for him while he tried out his new set of tricks at school.

The next morning, Michael wore the bracelet to school and his dad prayed. Michael felt like he had a powerful protector on his wrist. The girl who never got caught came to tease him again, but instead of bringing his fists up to punch her, he fingered the bracelet on his wrist and remembered the tricks he and his dad had talked about. He smiled at her and walked away.

Prayer:

Jesus, we thank you for people, like Michael and his dad, who learn tricks that help them get along with others. Thank you for teaching us about settling our differences quickly. Please help us think of good tricks for getting along with others, too. Amen.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder what tricks they had for not getting into trouble.
- I wonder why some people have a hard time living by the rules while others find it easy.
- I wonder how we can settle differences quickly instead of getting into trouble.



Children's Story

Cycle A, Epiphany 7 (or Proper 2)

Loving Enemies

Title: Loving Enemies
Author: Elsie Rempel
Church: Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg MB
Text: Matthew 5: 43 – 48 (38 – 48)
Theme: Loving our enemies helps us grow up like Jesus
Supplement: The children's picture book, *Enemy Pie*, by Derek Munson, www.mennonitechurch.ca/tiny/1396

Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children as they arrive and let them know that it encourages you to be together with them for this Children's Time. Ask them if any of them have any enemies. Have any of them read the book, *Enemy Pie*, by Derek Munson? This story helps us understand today's Gospel reading from Matthew 5. Prepare your bodies and hearts to hear God's Word. Read verses 43 - 48 to them and leave a pause for wondering about their meaning. Explain that when the Bible talks about *being perfect* it means growing up like Jesus.

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Story:

In the book *Enemy Pie*, the main character isn't named. Let's give him one like Roger. Roger was looking forward to perfect summer holidays when Jeremy Ross moved in down the street. That could have been good, but Jeremy becomes his enemy when he seems to steal Roger's friends. Roger tells his dad that Jeremy is his very worst enemy. But Roger's dad helps him out by using a secret recipe and making some "enemy pie," a pie that is guaranteed to get rid of enemies. The strange thing about this pie is that it will only work on Jeremy if Roger invites him over and plays with him before he eats it. So, since it will get rid of his enemy, Roger agrees to spend time with Jeremy. As they shoot basketball hoops, jump on the trampoline, and throw water balloons at the girls, Roger starts wondering if Jeremy really has to be his enemy. They actually like doing many of the same things. So when his dad serves up the pie, he wants to warn him not to eat it. He is just ready to yell out, "Don't eat it! It's poison!" when he sees his Dad take a big bite, enjoy himself, and stay healthy.

Prayer:

Jesus, we thank you for stories, like *Enemy Pie*, that help us find ways for some enemies to become friends. Please help us be good friend-makers and peacemakers. Amen.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder what was in the recipe for enemy pie.
- I wonder when Roger began to learn that enemies often become friends when we get to know them.
- I wonder if you have stories about how enemies became friends. (If you do, please draw pictures about them and share the stories with me later.)



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Heroes

Children's Story

Cycle A, Transfiguration Sunday, (Sunday before Lent)

Title: Heroes
Author: Janet Penner
Church: Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, MB
Theme: Transfiguration and Jesus' heroes, Moses and Elijah
Optional: Display pictures or figurines of heroes like Superman, Spiderman, Catwoman, your parents, a teacher, and Jesus etc.
Text: Matthew 17: 1-9

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why Moses and Elijah were Jesus' heroes.
- I wonder what Jesus talked about when he met with his heroes.
- If you would meet Jesus on a mountain, what would you talk about?

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Gathering Activity:

Invite and warmly welcome the children as they arrive for Children's time. Show them the pictures or engage them in the topic of heroes in some other way that comes naturally to you. Ask them for their opinions on what makes a person into a hero? Who are their heroes? Why? What would you say if you could meet them? Would you be afraid to talk to them? Explain that in today's Scripture reading from Matthew, Jesus gets to meet with some of his heroes in a special way and that the Children's time has been planned to help them understand what that might have been like for Jesus. Encourage the children to open their hearts to the presence of Jesus and his Holy Spirit and to listen to the story with their ears and their hearts. Relax into that awareness of the Holy among you before you begin telling the story.

Story:

When Janet's 3 year old daughter had a chance to meet the children's entertainer, Fred Penner <http://www.fredpenner.com/>,

she just stood there staring at him with an open mouth. He was her hero and she was afraid of him when he wasn't just on TV, but was standing there and singing in front of her. But when she was 8, and she met another children's entertainer, Jake Chenier, <http://www.jakechenier.com/english.htm>, she wasn't scared at all. She even offered to help him clean up the stage and chatted casually with him as they worked. Some heroes are famous and lots of people know them. There are other heroes too, people who are very special to us because of the way they have helped us.

Tell the children about one or two of your own heroes, or of meetings with important people. Possibilities are: a sports star who inspired you to work hard at the sport and keep trying when practice was tough, a teacher of yours who got you through a tough year of learning or inspired you to go into a certain profession, a caregiver who nurtured you into who you are, a singing or movie star who came through hard times to rise to the top. (The singer, Celine Dion, lost her parents at an early age and was hungry and poor for many years.)

Heroes are people we look up to, their examples can help us do hard and right and important things, but they don't always know or care about us. Human heroes can disappoint us, but Jesus is a hero who knows us, cares about us and won't disappoint us. If we ask Jesus, he will always help us do the right thing, even when doing the right thing is hard.

Today's Gospel reading is about a time when Jesus met and talked with two of his heroes in a cloud on a mountain. His heroes were Moses and Elijah. This is what is famous about them. Moses was given the difficult job of leading the Israelites out of Egypt where they were slaves and had to work really hard. In the Old Testament Bible reading today, we heard about Moses going up the mountain and spending 40 days and nights with God before he brought down the Ten Commandments. Elijah was a great prophet who reminded the people about worshiping and serving God. Elijah also spent 40 days and nights on a mountain of God. God let Elijah see his back and spoke to him in the gently blowing wind. God gave Elijah the difficult job of getting the Israelites to listen and obey God again. The gentle voice on the mountain gave him the strength to do it.

We don't know what they talked about when they met in that cloud. Whatever they talked about, it was a turning point in Jesus' ministry, just like his baptism had been. Out of that cloud, Jesus' followers heard God repeat the compliment, "This is my Son; the Beloved, with him I am well-pleased. Listen to him." The first time, that compliment helped Jesus start his ministry. This time it gave him the courage to start his journey towards the cross.

Prayer: Thank you God, for helping Jesus by giving him a chance to talk with his heroes and by telling him you were pleased with him again. Thank you for heroes who help us work toward our dreams and for chances like this to be with your people and with your helping Holy Spirit. We hope you are pleased with our worship. Amen.



Children's Story

Cycle A, Epiphany 8

Title: Don't worry, be happy
Author: Elsie Rempel
Church: Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB
Text: Matthew 6: 24-34
Theme: God knows what we need, so we don't need to worry.

Don't Worry be happy

Gathering Activity:

Warmly invite the children to come forward for the children's time. Welcome them to that special part of worship where we help children understand and connect with the worship theme and with God, whom we gather to worship each Sunday. Ask them if there are things that they worry about and share a childhood worry that you dealt with. Jesus knew that people worry about all kinds of things. In today's Scripture reading from Matthew 6 (show them the text in your Bible), we will hear about how Jesus helps us when we are worried by reminding us that God cares for us and knows what we need. Today's story will be about a child who was worried that his parents wouldn't come back when they left him with a babysitter. Invite the children to prepare their hearts to hear the story by imagining themselves right onto the lap of Jesus, who is famous for inviting children onto his lap. Once there is a worshipful silence, begin the following story.

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Story:

Danny was a happy boy most of the time. He loved playing with his friends, and he really like playing in the sandbox with his trucks. But there was one thing Danny really hated. He hated it when both his mom and his dad would go places where children couldn't come along.

Whenever their sitter came over, Danny cried and cried. It wasn't the sitter's fault. She was really cool. After Danny would stop crying, she would enjoy playing with Danny and his trucks. She would give him the yummy snacks his parents had left for him. Danny hated having a sitter so much because he was worried his parents might not come back. Oh, he knew they loved him and wanted to come back home as soon as their meetings were over, but he worried that something might happen to them. A monster might come and gobble them up. Or, maybe, there would be a car crash. Or, or, or, all kinds of things could happen to them.

One evening when Danny had finally calmed down, he told the sitter about his worries. Just saying it helped him feel a little better. The baby sitter was really smart and loving. She asked him what his parents would tell him if they were there, holding him on their lap like

she was. Then she asked Danny to imagine himself right onto Jesus' lap, so he could tell Jesus about his worry. He did, and it helped him feel better. After that, she encouraged him to imagine his mom and dad being on Jesus' lap, too. That helped him feel even better, because it helped him remember that Jesus was watching over them even when Danny couldn't see them himself. He realized that Jesus loved them and was with them. Before long, Danny dozed off into a contented sleep, right on his loving sitter's lap.

Prayer:

Thank you Jesus, for your loving lap. Thank you that you love us all and know what we need. Thank you that you can help us be happy instead of worried. Amen.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder why Danny was so worried about his parents.
- I wonder how the sitter knew about imagining yourself onto the lap of Jesus.
- I wonder what worries we could leave behind by imagining ourselves and the people we love onto the lap of Jesus.



Children's Story

Cycle A, Easter 2

Too Good to be True

Title: Too Good to be True
Author: Elsie Rempel
Church: Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB
Text: John 20: 19 - 31
Theme: God's resurrecting power seems too good to be true, but it really is true.

Gathering Activity:

Warmly invite the children to come forward for the children's time, that part of worship where we help children understand and connect with the worship theme and with God, whom we gather to worship each Sunday. Open the topic by asking them if there are things that really amaze them, because they seem too good to be true.

In today's Scripture reading from John 20, the disciples had a hard time believing that Jesus had really been raised. (*Show them the text in your Bible.*) It made me think of a story about a caterpillar that had a hard time believing he could go to sleep and wake up as a butterfly, but he did. I think it's a story Jesus might have enjoyed telling children when they gathered around him. Let's prepare our hearts to hear the story by imagining ourselves right onto the lap of Jesus, who is famous for good stories and for inviting children onto his lap.

(Once there is a worshipful silence, begin the following story.)

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Story

Fuzzy was a caterpillar. He was very fuzzy and he loved crawling along little branches that led him to juicy leaves he would eat. That's what he did most of the time. Fuzzy was almost always hungry and just loved chewing green things. Now and then, when he had finished eating a really juicy leaf, and a beautiful butterfly would flutter by, he would sigh and think about how beautiful it was. There was something extra special about butterflies. They were so fluttery and colourful, but when he looked at their bodies and heads, he felt a special attraction, as if they were his cousins or something. Once, when he was very little, a butterfly had hovered near him to show him where the most delicious leaves were. And while he was eating them it told him that one day, he would grow up to be a butterfly, too, and be just as beautiful. He often thought about this story when his tummy was full and he was falling asleep. But he just couldn't believe it. Butterflies were so amazing and he was so ordinary. It seemed too good to be true.

But one day, when he had eaten an extra big leaf and was especially sleepy, he started rolling himself around in something that was coming out of his body. Soon he fell into a delicious, dark sleep. What was happening to Fuzzy?

Yes, he was wrapping himself into a cocoon, and falling into a very deep, long sleep. When he finally woke up he felt very tight in his cocoon, so he started wriggling and flexing his muscles. As he wriggled he noticed something on his sides and back.

The cocoon was cracking and getting looser, so he kept wriggling. Finally it fell off. Fuzzy was tired from the work and slept on the twig to which his cocoon had been attached.

After a while the warm sun and a gentle breeze woke him up. It seemed to be lifting something off of his back. He wriggled some more and looked at himself. Do you know what he saw? Wings! Beautiful wings!

Fuzzy wasn't a fuzzy caterpillar anymore. Fuzzy was a butterfly! When he stopped admiring his wings he looked around and saw another butterfly hovering nearby. It looked like one he had seen before. Maybe it was the one who told him the story. Now it was smiling at him and inviting him to come fly with her. Fuzzy still couldn't believe it.

He was scared, but happy, too. Finally he decided to give it a try. He loosened his grip on the twig just as a breeze picked up and lifted him gently into the sky. He followed the other butterfly and landed next to her on a nearby bush. Fuzzy was so happy, he thought he'd burst. But he didn't, he just flew around. It wasn't too good to be true after all.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder what it is like to be a caterpillar.
- I wonder what it is like to be a butterfly.
- I wonder who that other butterfly was.
- I wonder if Jesus felt like a butterfly after God raised him from the dead.

Prayer

Thank you Jesus, for true things that are too good to be true. Thank you for caterpillars and butterflies and for coming back to life on that first Easter. Amen.



Children's Story

Cycle A, Easter 3

Our Eyes Were Opened

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Title: | Our Eyes Were Opened |
| Author: | Elsie Rempel |
| Church: | Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB |
| Text: | Luke 24: 13 - 35 |
| Theme: | Walking with Jesus helps us see a brighter future. |

Gathering Activity:

Warmly invite the children to come forward for the children's time, that part of worship where we help children understand and connect with the worship theme and with God, whom we gather to worship each Sunday. Open the topic by giving them a chance to look through some bright-coloured sun glasses.

In today's Scripture reading from Luke 24, two disciples were so sad about Jesus' death on the cross that when the risen Jesus started walking and talking with them, they didn't even recognize him. (*Show them the text in your Bible.*) Listen to what happened to them when the Scripture is read in a little while.

Sometimes being sad can keep us from seeing the good things and the good friends that surround us. That's how it was for Christy until she got a good surprise. Let's prepare our hearts to hear the story by imagining ourselves right onto the lap of Jesus, who is famous for good stories and for inviting children onto his lap.

(Once there is a worshipful silence, begin the following story.)

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Story

Christy was a happy girl. She had lots of friends at her day care, in her kindergarten class, and in her Sunday school class. But one day, her Mom told her that they were going to move to a new city, about 100 km away, so Christy had to say good-bye to all her friends. *(Replace the city reference with the names of your city or town and another one that's not too far away.)* When their moving van took them and all their things away from the only home she had known, Christy cried and cried.

It didn't take long until Christy was going to a new day care, a new kindergarten, and a new Sunday school. There was nothing wrong with any of these, but Christy was sad, and missed her old home and her old friends.

Her parent wanted Christy to play in the playground across the street from their new home, but Christy wouldn't go play in it. She didn't have her old friends to play with and besides, the children who were playing there were strangers.

Christy's parents loved her very much and were worried about her sadness. They wondered what they could do. Finally, they decided to plan a surprise party for her in that playground. Whom should they invite? *(Recruit suggestions from the children.)* Yes, they decided to invite some of her old friends, and some children from her new day care, kindergarten and Sunday school class.

When the party guests arrived at the playground, Christy was watching her favourite TV show. Her dad called to her, "Christy, look what's happening across the street!" Christy didn't want to, but her dad just scooped her up and took her to the window to look. "Look what's happening at the playground, Christy!" he said. "Hmm," she answered. "I think some kids are having a party. Let me watch TV."

Christy didn't want to go, but her dad took her out and across the street. He took her right into the food line-up. Christy smelled yummy grilled

cheese sandwiches, which were her favourite food, and cheered up a little. But when she looked into the face of the person giving her the sandwich, she recognized the mother of her best friend back home. Christy opened her eyes wide and burst into a great big smile. "Look around some more," said her dad. She did, and as she did she saw her old friends, and they were playing with children from her new home.

Christy jumped out of her dad's arms and ran to hug and play with them. They played and played, and as it got dark and the party ended, Christy had a bunch of new friends. They helped her wave good-bye to her old friends as they drove off back to her old home. Christy was sad to see them go, but then she looked at her new friends, and was happy, very happy.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder what it is like to move away from your old home.
- I wonder how Christy's old friends felt as they showed up for the party.
- I wonder how Christy felt when her old friends helped her make new friends.
- I wonder how Jesus felt when Christy finally had new friends.

Prayer

Thank you Jesus, for understanding us when we are sad. Thank you for people like Christy's parents and friends who help us see the sunshine of friendship again. Amen.



Children's Story

Cycle A, Easter 4

I Just Wanna be a Sheep!

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Title: | I Just Wanna be a Sheep! |
| Author: | Elsie Rempel |
| Church: | Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB |
| Text: | John 10:1-10 |
| Theme: | Pretending to be a sheep helps us know the Good Shepherd. |

Gathering Activity:

Warmly invite the children to come forward for the children's time, that part of worship where we help children understand and connect with the worship theme and with God, whom we gather to worship each Sunday. Ask them if they have ever seen and touched sheep, or if they've ever pretended to be a sheep. Sing the first verse of the chorus, "I just wanna be a sheep, baa, baa/// And I pray the Lord my soul to keep, I just wanna be a sheep."

In today's Scripture reading from John 10, Jesus is explaining who he is to some teachers and says he is like a shepherd, and is like a gate in a sheepfold. (*Show them the text in your Bible.*) Thinking of Jesus as the Good Shepherd is one of the most famous and important ways of thinking about Jesus. And to experience Jesus as our shepherd, it helps to imagine that we are his sheep. So, instead of a story, we're going to have some fun imagining ourselves as some of Jesus' sheep. To make sure our imagining isn't bothering anyone else, we'll have to keep ourselves sitting in our places, and have most of the action happen inside our imaginations. Are you ready?

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Imagination Exercise

Close your eyes. Imagine that you are a woolly sheep. Reach up and feel the soft curly wool around your neck. Isn't it nice to be growing your own coat? It feels so nice it makes us want to baa with happiness. Let's try out our voices with three good baas: baa, baa, baaa.

But now, listen. I hear another voice. It's Jesus, and he's calling each of us by name. Do you hear Jesus calling your name? Then answer with a quiet little baa (*wait for some responses*). When Jesus calls us, we know we can follow him, because he loves us and knows what is best for us. We know his voice and we trust him. Jesus helps us find good green grass and herbs to munch on (*do some munching*). Jesus helps us find good clear water to drink (*do some slurping*). Jesus warns us when we're getting too close to the cliffs and other dangerous places. And at night, Jesus calls us into the sheepfold, with its stone fence to keep the wolves out. Let's listen to him calling for us. Jesus counts us as we come in at the gate to make sure we're all there. Jesus is such a good shepherd. I'm so glad I'm one of his sheep. I think I'll just go to sleep. (*Pause for 5-10 seconds. Then begin quietly singing the song, "I just wanna be a sheep, baa, baa."*)

Wondering questions:

- I wonder how Jesus can take such good care of so many sheep.
- I wonder how sheep are like people.
- I wonder how Jesus feels when we listen to his shepherd voice.

Prayer

Thank you Jesus, for being our good Shepherd. Thank you for knowing each of us by name and taking such good care of us. Thank you for loving each one of us like a good shepherd loves his sheep. Amen.



Children's Story

Cycle A, Easter 5

Together, even when we can't SEE each other

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Title: | Together, even when we can't see each other |
| Author: | Elsie Rempel |
| Church: | Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB |
| Text: | John 14:1-14 |
| Theme: | Just like Jesus lovingly prepared his disciples for his departure, his followers can stay connected through loving actions. |

Gathering Activity:

Warmly invite the children to come forward for the children's time to connect with the worship theme and with God, whom we gather to worship each Sunday. In today's Scripture reading from John 14, Jesus comforts his disciples who are worried about what will happen when Jesus leaves them. (*Show them the text in your Bible.*) When we really love someone, like our moms and dads, we don't want them to leave us either. But sometimes, they have to. That's what happens to Karly in today's story. Let's get ourselves ready to hear this story with our hearts by imagining ourselves onto the loving lap of Jesus.

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Imagination Exercise

Karly is four years old. Her dad is holding her and she is crying, hard. Karly is crying because her mom is sick and has gone away to the hospital. Karly is worried about her mom and wants her to feel better. Her dad is worried, too. He is so worried about Karly's mom that he wants to stay with her in the hospital. So, Karly's dad made arrangements for Karly to stay with her grandparents for a few weeks. He just told her about this and that's why she is crying so hard. She will be gone for more sleeps than she can count on her fingers!

Karly loves her grandparents, and, even before her dad reminds her, knows that they love her. She knows they will do good things with her, and give her yummy treats, but she is really worried about being away from her mom and dad for such a long time. She feels safest when she is with her mom and dad. How can she feel safe and know they still love her if she is so far away from them? That's what she tells her dad between her sobs.

Karly's dad gives her a long and gentle hug, and cries with her for a while. He prays for God to help them with their problem. Then he gets an idea.

Because of hospital rules they won't always be able to talk with Karly on the computer, or on the phone, but they can leave her with a special reminder of their love for her, that will always be available. He and Karly's mom will each sing a favourite song onto Karly's Tablet and mark it with a special icon. Then, when Karly feels lonely, she can pick up her Tablet, open up the icon, lay the Tablet on her chest, and feel their love for her in the sounds of their voices singing her favourite songs.

Karly likes that idea, and stops crying for a bit. And then she has an idea. When she wants to tell them something, she will tell her grandma or grandpa to write an email to them. Karly's dad really likes that idea a lot. They are still

both sad, but now they will have ways of knowing they are connected with each other by their love.

And that's what they did. Karly listened to those songs a lot, especially at bed time. And her grandma sent regular emails to Karly's mom and dad. And, after three long weeks, Karly's mom was well enough to come back home. Her grandma and grandpa brought Karly back home, too, and stayed there to help until her mom was completely healthy again. Being back together was even better than hearing her on the Tablet!

Wondering questions:

- I wonder if the songs on the Tablet made Karly feel like her mom and dad were with her.
- I wonder if God's great big love for us can hide inside things like parents singing songs for us on a Tablet.
- I wonder if Karly's sadness is like the disciples' sadness about missing Jesus.
- I wonder how else Jesus can help us know God's great big love.

Prayer

Thank you Jesus, for loving us, even when we can't see you. Thank you, for helping Karly's loving parents find a way to help her know they were still connected by their love for each other. Thank you for loving each one of us like Karly's parents loved her. Amen.



Children's Story

Cycle A, Easter 6

Known by Love

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Title: | Known by Love |
| Author: | Elsie Rempel |
| Church: | Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB |
| Text: | John 14:15-21 |
| Theme: | Other people can see we are God's through the loving actions God helps us do. |

Gathering Activity:

Warmly invite the children to come forward for the children's time to connect with the worship theme and with God, whom we gather to worship each Sunday. In today's Scripture reading from John 14, Jesus assures his disciples that his Spirit will help them know and share God's love with others. (*Show them the text in your Bible.*)

When someone loves us with a great big love, like God and our moms and dads, their love can help us be loving with others. That's what happens to Karly in today's story. Let's get ready to hear this story with our hearts by imagining ourselves onto the loving lap of Jesus.

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Story

Last week we heard about four-year-old Karly who had to stay with her grandparents because her mom was really sick in the hospital. Her mom and dad helped her remember how much they loved her by singing her favourite songs for her and recording them on her Tablet, so she could hear their loving voices whenever she needed them. It helped her a lot. Today we'll learn a bit about what else happened when Karly was at her grandparents' house.

Karly loves her grandparents, and she knows that they love her. But being with them isn't as good as being at home with her mom and dad. Oh, Grandpa took her to a children's museum that has lots of exciting play structures. And Grandma tries hard to cook Karly's favourite foods. They read lots of good books to her and even romp with her, but then they get tired and say they need to have a nap. Karly doesn't like staying quiet when they have their nap.

Sometimes Karly gets really tired of being there and wishes she could go home. Sometimes she cries quietly into her pillow, and complains to her favourite sock monkey. Sometimes she feels like punching and yelling at them. But when she picks up her Tablet, and listens to her mom and dad sing her favourite songs, she calms down. Hearing them sing to her helps Karly remember how much her parents love her. And when she feels their love for her in the sounds of their voices it even helps Karly remember how much she loves Grandma and Grandpa, and how much they love her.

Humming the song makes her feel like her mom and dad's love is inside of her. It helps her stay quiet when her grandparents take their nap. And after they finally wake up, it makes her feel like crawling up into Grandpa's lap and giving him a hug. It makes it easier to say thank-you when Grandma helps her colour a picture or sends her parents an email about the good times they are having. That makes

them really happy, and helps them see how much Karly's mom and dad love her. They are all happy that Karly knows and believes her mom and dad love her. It helps her love her Grandma and Grandpa.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder what it would be like to have to stay with Grandma and Grandpa for a long time.
- I wonder if the songs on Karly's Tablet were really full of love.
- I wonder if God's love for us is like Karly's parents' love.
- I wonder how we can hear God's songs of love for us.

Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for helping Karly love her Grandma and Grandpa. Thank you for sharing God's great big love with us through people who love and care for each other. Amen.



Children's Story

Cycle A, Easter 7

Keep Them Safe, Please

Title: Keep Them Safe, Please

Author: Elsie Rempel

Church: Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB

Text: John 17:11

Theme: Jesus prays for God to protect his followers.

Gathering Activity:

Warmly invite the children to come forward for the children's time to connect with the worship theme and with God, whom we gather to worship each Sunday. Today's Scripture reading from John 17 is part of a very famous prayer of Jesus. It ends with Jesus asking God to protect his disciples and to help them get along as well as Jesus and his Father get along. (*Read verse 11 to them from your Bible.*) In today's story, Karly is on a canoe ride with her parents. Let's get ready to hear this story with our hearts by imagining ourselves onto the loving lap of Jesus.

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Story

Karly was happy to be home with her parents again. The doctors had taken good care of her mom while Grandma and Grandpa took good care of her. Karly's mom had more energy every day. One spring day at supper she suggested that they go for a canoe ride on the river. Karly loved going on canoe rides, because the world looked so different from the river. She even had her own little paddle. Her dad loved the idea, too. They loaded their canoe, three paddles, three life jackets, and some snacks, and drove down to the boat launch.

As soon as they got the canoe into the water, Karly's mom got in and settled down on the back seat. That way she could help Karly get in and sit on the middle seat. Then her dad pushed off from shore, hopped in, and sat down on the front seat. Soon they were skimming on the water. Karly loved watching the water drip off the end of her dad's paddle. She loved watching the birds in the sky and just looking around.

Suddenly she noticed something on the water up ahead and near the other shore. She told her mom and dad so they would be quiet and watch with her. Guess what they saw?

They saw a family of ducks. Ducks usually fly away as soon as people come near them, but not these ducks. The ducklings were too young to fly! So, mother duck swam closer to the shore. Her ducklings followed her, like ducklings do. But the river bank was high and there wasn't a good place for them to climb up. Karly and her mom and dad didn't want to hurt the ducklings, but they did want to see them, so they quietly paddled closer and closer. So Mama duck tried something else to protect her ducklings, because she didn't know they were safe people. She flew up a little and then landed closer to them, and acted like her wing was broken. Mama duck was trying to get them to follow her so that they would leave her precious ducklings alone.

When Karly and her parents saw this they turned their canoe around and paddled away from the ducks as quickly as they could. They didn't want to scare Mama duck or her ducklings. They understood that Mama duck wanted to protect her ducklings, just like they wanted to protect Karly, and like Jesus wanted God to protect his followers.

Soon Mama duck and her ducklings were back together, were swimming more slowly, and even stopping to feed on the water lilies near the river's edge.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder why ducks are so scared of people.
- I wonder what you like best about this story.
- I wonder how this story is like Jesus' prayer for God to protect his followers.

Prayer

Thank you, Jesus, for people families and animal families that protect their young. Thank you for asking God to protect everyone who belongs to your big family. Amen.



Children's Story

Pentecost Sunday

Happy Birthday dear Church

Title: Happy birthday, dear Church

Author: David Bergen

Church: Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB

Text: Acts 2.1-4

Theme: Celebrating the birthday of the church

Supplies: birthday cake with icing; birthday candles (one for each child), banner that says "Happy Birthday, Church"

Gathering Activity:

After welcoming the children to story-time, invite them to join in singing Happy Birthday. Simply start singing together and when you get to "...Happy Birthday dear....." stop the song abruptly.

Wait a minute! Does anyone know who we are singing Happy Birthday for? No?

Story:

Well, let me tell you a story that will give you the answer.

Today is Pentecost Sunday. It's a very important day for everyone who loves and follows Jesus. It all started a long time ago.....

It was seven weeks after Easter. Jesus had died, but his friends knew Jesus was still alive because God had raised Jesus from the dead. A few weeks after that happened, Jesus went to heaven to be with God. But before he went, he promised his friends that God would not leave them alone. He promised them that God would send the Holy Spirit to always be with them.

Well, you know, a promise is a promise. And God keeps promises. So it was that 50 days later a large group of Jesus' friends were together in a small house. Suddenly

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something very strange happened. They heard a loud sound like a very strong wind. It blew into the room where they were. And with it came something that looked like little bits of fire dancing around, among the people who were there.

When all this happened, they remembered the promise Jesus given them, and they knew God was sending the Holy Spirit to be with them. Because the Holy Spirit was with them everyone who was there discovered they weren't afraid to tell other people about God. And they started talking. There were people there from many faraway places who spoke other languages. Even they understood, in their own language, what the disciples were saying about Jesus and about God. It was an amazing thing.

And so they shared the good news about God with everyone, of how God sent Jesus to tell people that: (Count off on your fingers)

1. God loves us
2. God forgives us when we're sorry for doing bad things
3. God wants the whole world to stop fighting
4. God wants us to live at peace and help each other

Soon people in many places learned about Jesus. They met together to help each other, to eat together, to be reminded about the things Jesus had said, and to learn how to live the way God wants us to live. When they got together this way, just as we do, they called it a church.

The day when all these amazing things started happening was Pentecost Sunday. It was the birthday of the church. And so today, many years later, we still celebrate the birth of the church and the wonderful news that God sends the Holy Spirit to be with us and help us do things we couldn't do by ourselves.

No birthday party is complete without a cake so I brought one along. (Get it from behind the pulpit of communion table) I need some help to get it ready. I put the icing on, but I haven't put the candles on. Can you help? I don't have enough candles for the age of the church, but I do have one for each of you.

I also brought along this birthday banner. Where should we put it?

Reveal the banner; hang it in a visible place. After putting candles on and hanging the banner, light the candles from a taller Christ candle. If there are many children, light the candle while they hold it, take it from them and place it on the cake. Ask one older assistant to hold the Christ candle for you.

Prayer:

Dear God, we love you and thank you for sending your Holy Spirit to live inside us and in the church, to help us live in God's way. We thank you for the church and for making us a part of it. Amen.

Sing:

Happy Birthday dear Church (with congregation). Invite everyone to help blow out the candles. Then, invite the children to share the cake with the congregation, after the service.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder how many birthdays the church has had.
- I wonder what it was like to have people together who spoke so many languages.
- I wonder how many languages are being used to celebrate the birthday of the church today.
- I wonder what new things God wants to birth in our church.



**Mennonite
Church
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Resource Centre

Always with us

Children's Story

Cycle A, Trinity Sunday

Title: Always with us.
Author: Barb Draper
Church: Floradale Mennonite Church,
Floradale, ON
Theme: When Jesus is with us we
can find the courage to do
things that scare us.
Text: Matthew 28: 16-20

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why Megan was afraid of singing in the nursing home.
- I wonder what ways of sharing God's love frighten us.
- I wonder at all the ways God's love can help us be brave and share that love with others.

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Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children as they come forward and engage them in some informal conversation about scary activities. Feel free to share things that used to, or still frighten you. As you show them today's text from Matthew in your Bible, tell them that it includes the wonderful promise from Jesus, that he is always with us, and that this can give us the courage to do things that scare us. Encourage them to settle into the awareness of Jesus being right there with you by imagining themselves on Jesus' lap. Imagine that Jesus has decided to tell them a story to help them understand how Jesus helps us do scary things. Allow a holy expectancy to settle on you and your listeners before beginning the story.

Story:

Megan's ears perked up as she overheard her mother say into the telephone, "I'm sure Megan would be happy to sing." She was very curious to

know who her mother was talking to and started dancing around the kitchen. Singing was one of her favourite activities. "Who was that?" asked Megan, as soon as her mother hung up the telephone. "It was Pastor Bill," said her mother. "He asked if you could sing at the nursing home when he leads the service there next week."

Megan stopped dead. "The nursing home! I hate going there!" Megan was almost in tears as she flopped herself into a chair.

Megan's mother sat down beside her. "Megan, what's wrong? You love to sing and the people there would love to hear you sing some of your favourite worship songs. Why don't you want to sing for them?"

Megan looked at her mother. "The people there scare me," she finally said, quietly. "There's a lady who doesn't have any teeth who has a really scary laugh. I'm afraid she's going to grab me and do something weird!"

"You don't need to be afraid of people because they are old," her mother said quietly. "That lady is probably lonely, but I will stay beside you so you won't get hurt. Jesus reached out to lonely people all the time and will be there with us, too, you know."

"Yes, I know, and I like to sing, but I'm still scared."

"It's okay to be scared," said her mother, "but it's not okay to let that fear keep you from reaching out to lonely people and sharing God's love with them."

When Megan agreed to give it a try her mother gave her an encouraging hug. The next Tuesday, Megan and her mother met Pastor Bill on the sidewalk outside the nursing home. "Let's sit down on this bench and pray before we go in," said Pastor Bill. As Megan sat down and closed her eyes, she felt the warm sun and the soft breeze blowing across her face. She felt the nearness of Jesus as Pastor Bill prayed for Jesus to be with them and bless the nursing home residents through their service that morning. As he prayed that they would be able to share God's love, Megan felt the warmth and courage of God's love growing in her heart.

Megan walked bravely into the nursing home, happily holding the hands of her mother and Pastor Bill. When it was time to sing her song she looked into the eyes of the residents instead of at their wheelchairs or twisted hands, and noticed that their eyes didn't look scary at all.

After the service Megan said, "Thank-you for praying with us and helping me not be scared, Pastor Bill." He tousled her hair and said, "Oh you're welcome, Megan. I always do that before I lead a service. It helps me remember that Jesus is with us, too. It is so good to know that Jesus has promised to always be with us, even till the end of time. And now, I think it's time for us to go out for an ice cream cone and celebrate that we were able to share that with others today."

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for being with us and sharing your love with us. Thank you for helping Megan be brave and loving instead of being scared to share your love. Please help us know you are with us and help us share your love bravely, too. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Doing the Right Thing

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 4

Title: Doing the Right Thing
Author: Barb Draper
Church: Floradale Mennonite Church,
Floradale, ON
Theme: Don't just talk about it, do the
right thing
Text: Matthew 7: 21-29

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how Mr. Stone and Mr. Sand felt when the houses they built were ten years old.
- I wonder why Mr. Sand talked so much and worked so little, and why Mr. Stone worked so much and talked so little.
- I wonder how stories about house building can help us live God's way.
- I wonder if God wants me to build, or talk, or both, or something else.

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Gathering Activity:

Warmly welcome the children to that special part of worship where we help children understand and connect with the worship theme and with God, whom we gather to worship. Ask them if anyone likes building things and plans to become a builder. Ask the rest of the congregation to raise their hands if they like building things. Tell them that today's Scripture reading from Matthew 7 (show them the text in your Bible) includes one of the most famous stories Jesus told, and that it is about building houses. Sing the song, "The wise man built his house upon the rock." Tell them that today's story is a modern version of the story Jesus told. Encourage them to listen for the ways it is the same, and the ways it is different. Ask them to join you as you prepare your hearts to hear today's story by becoming aware of and thankful for God's nearness. Once there is a worshipful silence begin the following story.

Story:

An older man decided to invest his money by having two houses built. He hired the Stone Construction Company to build one house and the Sand Construction Company to build the other house. At the end of every week, Mr. Stone and Mr. Sand would come and report on how construction was coming along.

Mr. Stone was a very careful worker who made sure his workers did everything properly. They dug the hole for the foundation carefully and waited till the weather was warm to pour the concrete. Mr. Sand was not so careful. He preferred going to the coffee shop to chat with his friends, especially when it was cold or wet outside. Mr. Sand liked telling stories that made people laugh and told lots of great stories. When it was time to report to the owner of the house, he made a story out of his report. He described how wonderful everything was; how smooth the concrete was on the basement floor and how beautiful the tall windows would look in the moonlight. However, he was a foolish builder. He didn't watch his workers closely enough, and didn't know that the foundation of the house actually had too much sand in the concrete mix.

Mr. Stone was not much of a talker. He liked doing things instead of talking about them. But Mr. Stone was a very good builder. When the construction crew got behind schedule, he picked up a hammer and helped them. When the wrong bricks were delivered, he noticed and sent them back. He made sure the plumbing, and the wiring, and the insulation were done right. But, when he reported to the owner, he just said, "The walls are up," or, "The shingles are on."

Mr. Sand's reports were long and colourful. He told the owner that the siding was just the colour of a mourning dove and that the carpet was so warm that it would remind people of a sandy beach on a sunny day. He said the kitchen was so beautiful that people would always be happy to cook and wash dishes in it. But, because he spent so much time at the coffee shop, Mr. Sand didn't notice that the cupboards in the kitchen weren't built properly and that there wasn't enough insulation in the walls.

When the houses were finished, the man paid Mr. Stone and Mr. Sand for their work. But, he said, "I will also pay you a bonus in 10 years. It will be based on how well the houses have stood the test of time." Mr. Stone just smiled, but Mr. Sand talked on and on about how happy the man would be with the wonderful house he had built.

Ten years later, Mr. Stone received a big bonus. The house he built was warm and cozy and solid. What do you think happened to Mr. Sand? You are right. He didn't get any bonus at all. Instead, he received a letter of complaint. It said:

"Mr. Sand, your words were better than your work. The house you built is not in good shape any more. The house creaks and groans when the wind blows or when someone walks across the floor. There are leaks in the basement and leaks in the skylight. Half the doors in the house don't work properly and the floors looked tired and dingy. You would do better to talk less and work harder. You are lucky I'm not taking you to court."

Prayer:

Thank you Jesus, for stories about building that teach us about doing our work carefully. Please help us to be dependable, like Mr. Stone was, so that we can serve well and be pleased with our own work. Thank you that we can always depend on you; that you are like a solid rock that we can build solid houses on. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Jesus Calls Whom?

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 5

Title: Jesus Calls Whom?
Author: Barb Draper
Church: Floradale Mennonite Church,
Floradale, ON
Theme: Jesus calls us all to be
friendly neighbours.
Text: Matthew 9: 9-13

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why Donnie had such a hard time finding friends.
- I wonder what made Karen different.
- I wonder who acted most like Jesus in this story.
- I wonder for whom I can be a good and friendly neighbour.

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Gathering Activity:

Warmly welcome the children to that special part of worship where we help children understand and connect with the worship theme and with God, whom we gather to worship. Ask them if making new friends is easy or hard for them. Tell them that the ideas for today's story come from the Scripture reading of Matthew 9 (show them the text in your Bible). These verses tell us about Jesus becoming friends with an unpopular person. Ask them to think about who is most like Jesus in today's story. Ask them to join you as you prepare your hearts to hear today's story by becoming aware of and thankful for God's nearness. Imagine Jesus sitting right beside you as your friend. Once there is a worshipful silence, begin the following story.

Story:

Sometimes, Donnie felt as though nobody liked him. His big sister was always telling him to hurry up and get

moving, or to get out of her way. Donnie's mother would heave a big sigh each time she asked him to clean up his room, or to wash his hands, or to please get his bicycle off the driveway. Then she'd come and finish doing what she had asked him to do, because Donnie hadn't done a good enough job.

At school, everyone else was so busy playing with their friends that Donnie got left out. On really bad days, when other children would pick on him or call him names instead of just ignoring him, he felt as though he didn't have a friend in the world. The teachers were okay, they didn't pick on him, but they were busy and didn't have time for him. When they talked to him it was usually to remind him to hurry up. Donnie often felt very sad.

One day Donnie saw a "for sale" sign on his next-door neighbour's front lawn. He prayed that the new neighbour would be friendly to him.

Weeks later, when a moving truck arrived, Donnie heard it and ran to his upstairs room so he could find out about the new neighbour by looking out his window. As he saw lots of furniture being moved in, but no toys and no bicycles, his heart sank. "It's probably another cranky old lady, just like the last neighbour," thought Donnie.

The next day Donnie saw the new neighbour come out of the house and get into her car. She was an older lady, but she wasn't cranky. She smiled and waved at Donnie, but he was too astonished to wave back.

Later that day, when Donnie was outside, the new neighbour came over to him. "Hi," she said, "my name is Karen. I'm your new neighbour. What's your name?" She was very friendly and soon Donnie was telling her all about their neighbourhood. He told her who lived in each house and which day the garbage truck came around. She was happy to have Donnie as a welcoming neighbour and friend.

After a few weeks, Donnie couldn't even imagine what his life had been like before Karen moved in next door. She asked Donnie to do little chores for her. Donnie happily did his very best and she praised him for his efforts. Then she would give him homemade cookies and milk. Karen never told him to hurry and she never yelled at him or teased him. Best of all, Karen really liked Donnie and waited for his visits. On days when other children were mean to him, Donnie would tell Karen about it. She would listen and then give him a big understanding hug. Sometimes they would brainstorm together about how Donnie could respond to these hard times.

Donnie was happy because he had finally found a good friend. He was happy that he could help and please her. Karen was happy too, because of the way Donnie had welcomed her by being a good, friendly neighbour.

Prayer:

Thank you Jesus, for friendly neighbours who help us know what your friendship is like. Please help us be good friends and neighbours, just like you are and want us to be. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Good News for Mr. Bowman

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 6

Title: Good News for Mr. Bowman
Author: Barb Draper
Church: Floradale Mennonite Church,
Floradale, ON
Theme: Jesus sends us to be good
news for the sick and needy.
Text: Matthew 9: 35 -10:8

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how Mr. Bowman felt when Katherine came to visit him.
- I wonder what it was like for Katherine's family to invite Mr. Bowman to live with them.
- I wonder why Mr. Bowman got better.
- I wonder how Jesus wants us to help and share good news with others.

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Gathering Activity:

Invite the children to come forward and welcome them warmly. Ask them if they ever get sent on errands to do good and loving things for their parents. Tell them that in today's Bible passage from Matthew 9 (show them the place in your Bible), Jesus sends his disciples to go and share good news and to help people who are sick. That is like going on errands for Jesus. Today's story is about a woman during pioneer times who did exactly that. Her name is Katherine, and she did her errand for Jesus by going across the street. Encourage the children to become settled and ready to worship and learn about doing errands for Jesus, by imagining themselves right onto Jesus' lap for the story. Begin the following story once a worshipful silence has been established in the gathered group.

Story:

In pioneer times there were no hospitals. People often lived in little villages.

Katherine and her family lived in the tiny village of Wintergreen. It only had twelve houses. Mr. and Mrs. Bowman lived in the tiniest of those 12 houses. They were old, and they had never had any children. One day, Mrs. Bowman got sick. Her husband tried to care for her because there were no hospitals. There was a doctor, but when the doctor came he shook his head and said there was nothing he could do to help her. There weren't many medicines in pioneer times either.

After two days, Mrs. Bowman died. All the neighbours in the village came to help with the funeral. The women of the village made pies and casseroles for Mr. Bowman because he didn't know how to cook and there were no restaurants.

Several weeks later, Katherine noticed that Mr. Bowman wasn't looking very well. She saw him out in the yard, trying to chop wood for his fire, but he kept stopping to rest. Finally he shuffled into his little house. Katherine wondered what she should do. He needed help. So, Katherine put some soup, which was leftover from their supper, into a bucket and took it to Mr. Bowman's house. She knocked on the door, but no one answered. When she called, "Mr. Bowman, are you home?" Katherine heard a groan from inside, so she opened the door and walked into his tiny house.

Katherine saw Mr. Bowman lying on his bed. She asked him, "Are you sick?" "I guess so," said Mr. Bowman. "I feel really weak." "Maybe this soup will help you feel better," she said. As Mr. Bowman ate the soup, Katherine looked around and saw how messy the tiny house had gotten since Mrs. Bowman died. It seemed like Mr. Bowman needed help with that, too.

As she returned to her family, Katherine was thinking hard. She decided that Mr. Bowman couldn't stay alone in his little house. He wasn't looking after the house properly and he wasn't getting enough to eat. He needed to move in with one of his children. But then she remembered that Mr. Bowman didn't have any children!

Katherine called her family together around the kitchen table. "We need to let Mr. Bowman come and live with us," said Katherine. She explained the trouble he was having living on his own. No one was very enthusiastic at first, but then, after they talked and prayed about it, they decided to invite Mr. Bowman to live with them.

That was very good news for Mr. Bowman. He had been very lonely. With the love and care he received from Katherine's family, Mr. Bowman was soon feeling good enough to help around the house. He sold his tiny house and used the money to build a big addition onto Katherine's house. That helped her whole family.

When Mr. Bowman tried to thank Katherine for her help, she said, "It was nothing."

"No," said Mr. Bowman, "It was not nothing. It was very good. You have been like Jesus and like the disciples that he sent out with good news and help for the sick and needy. You cared for me and healed me when I was sick. Thank you." Katherine just smiled and gave Mr. Bowman a hug.

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for the way you helped sick and needy people during Bible times. Thank you for the way Katherine helped Mr. Bowman during pioneer times. Please fill us with your love and care for sick and needy people, so we can share it with sick and needy people during our times. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

When Doing the Right Thing is Hard

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 7

Title: When Doing the Right Thing
is Hard
Author: Barb Draper
Church: Floradale Mennonite Church,
Floradale, ON
Theme: Jesus helps in the hard times
Text: Matthew 10: 24-39

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how Sarah's friends got such a mean idea.
- I wonder why it is tempting to pick on new people.
- I wonder what happened in school on Monday.
- I wonder what chances for doing the right but hard thing we will have this week.

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Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children warmly and ask them if anyone has a new person in their class or neighbourhood. Ask them if they are being welcomed and are making friends. Explain that today's story will be about some girls who have a new girl in their class, and that it leads to a hard situation. The ideas for today's story come from Matthew 10 (show them the place in the Bible) where Jesus is telling his disciples not to be afraid about the hard times they will face for his sake. Invite everyone to become quiet and comfortable; to remember that our loving, faithful God is near and that this children's time is an important part of worshiping God together. Once there is a worshipful silence, begin the following story.

Story:

Sarah, Betsy, Sandy, and Samantha were having a pyjama party. They were painting their toenails and talking and laughing just like all the other times,

but then someone started giggling about Dorothy, a new girl in their class. "She's such a dork! She doesn't know anything," said Sandy. "Dorothy always looks so serious," said Betsy. "Not always. I've seen her make smiley faces at Brian," said Samantha through her giggles. This gave Sandy the idea of playing a joke on Dorothy. "Let's write love notes to Dorothy and sign them 'Brian,'" she said, giggling at the idea. The other girls thought that would be fun, but Sarah got a bad feeling in her stomach. She wasn't having fun at the pyjama party any more. But the other girls were. "I know what else we should do," said Betsy. "I'll invite Dorothy to my birthday party next week. Then when Dorothy shows up, I'll act all surprised like I didn't invite her." "And none of us will talk to her," said Samantha.

Sarah couldn't keep quiet any longer. "I can't believe you'd do this," Sarah said to her friends. "Dorothy is new at our school, she doesn't have any friends and she's probably feeling really alone. Why would you think it's fun to be mean to her?" "Come on Sarah," said Betsy. "It'll be a lot of fun to watch her when she doesn't know what's going on." "No, it won't be fun, it will be mean," said Sarah, "How would you feel if it was you?"

But they didn't want to think about that. Instead, they turned on Sarah. "When did you become such a little saint?" said Sandy with a sneer. "Sarah goes to Sunday School," said Samantha. "She thinks she's better than us." Betsy glared at Sarah and said, "If you don't like our ideas, we won't like you." "Are you telling me to go home?" asked Sarah. Betsy didn't answer, she just continued staring until Sarah felt tears come to her eyes.

Sarah grabbed her backpack and put on her shoes and coat. She walked home slowly, trying not to cry. Her mother was surprised when she got there. "I thought you were going to spend the night with your friends," her mother said. "I was," said Sarah and then she couldn't say anything more because she was crying.

Sarah's mother handed her a box of tissues and made her some hot chocolate. Between sips and sniffles Sarah told her mother what had happened. "You did the right thing," said her mother. "I'm proud of you. Doing the right thing is sometimes really hard. Jesus knew that life wouldn't always be easy for those who follow him, but he has promised to be with us in those hard times. Jesus told us that God sees every little sparrow that falls to the ground. That means God sees and cares about the trouble you and Dorothy are in, so don't be afraid."

"But why do I have to lose all my friends?" asked Sarah. Sarah's mother gave her a hug. "Maybe you won't lose your friends. Maybe they'll realize you were being a good friend and were right. Your advice might keep them from getting into trouble. But even if you do lose your friends, you did the right thing. Following Jesus is more important than pleasing your friends," she said. "I'll bet Dorothy is looking for a new friend. Are you strong enough to offer her your friendship even if your old friends do make fun of her?" Sarah nodded. "I think so. If Jesus helps me." Sarah's mother gave her another hug and whispered gently, "Well, I think you can count on that. I'm so proud of you, Sarah. So is

Jesus.” As Sarah went to sleep she was feeling a lot better. She remembered that Jesus told his disciples something like, “I will stand up for everyone who stands up for me.”

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for helping us know what the right thing is, and for helping us do those things, even when it is really hard. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

The Lemonade Stand

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 8

Title: The Lemonade Stand
Author: Elsie Rempel
Church: Charleswood Mennonite
Church, Winnipeg, MB
Theme: We welcome Jesus when we
welcome God's Children
Text: Matthew 10:40-42

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how much lemonade the new children sold that day.
- I wonder why Jesus taught that it is important to be welcoming.
- I wonder how we can be welcoming to new people.
- I wonder how we can help people who are poor and hungry.

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Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children to their special place and time in the worship service. Ask them if they would like a cold glass of lemonade on a hot day and if any of them have sold lemonade to make money. How did it go? Have they ever wished they had money to buy some lemonade when children on your street were selling it? Tell them that's what will happen in today's story. The ideas for this story come from Matthew 10 (Show them the place in your Bible) where Jesus is telling his disciples how important it is to welcome and give a cold drink to little ones. Encourage the children to join you in preparing your bodies and hearts to worship Jesus through this story.

Story:

Sonya was playing outside on the sidewalk with her little brother, Luke. They were drawing chalk pictures and having a lot of fun. They were having so much fun drawing designs and funny

people that they didn't even notice the new children down the street set up a lemonade stand.

It was really hot outside. Suddenly, they noticed how hot and thirsty they were. As they got up to go inside and get a drink of water, they saw the new children and the lemonade stand. So, what do you think they did?...

That's right; they walked right up to the lemonade stand and said hi to the new children. The lemonade looked so-o-o good. There was a big sign that said, "5 cents a glass." But they didn't have any money in their pockets. The children who were selling the lemonade were very friendly to them, even if they didn't have money to buy their lemonade. They said, "Our lemonade is made from real lemons! We're selling this lemonade so that thirsty people can have a nice drink and so that we get more money for helping poor people not be hungry. We got this idea in our church. We will bring the money we earned back to church next Sunday, just like other families in our church will, so we can support a soup kitchen that feeds people who are poor and hungry. Helping poor people makes Jesus happy. We like it, too. Go home and ask your mom or dad if you can have some money for lemonade. It's only five cents a glass."

Sonya and Luke ran home and told their dad about the friendly children down their street. They told him how these new children were selling delicious lemonade, made from real lemons, so that they could give more money to a soup kitchen that feeds people who are poor and hungry. Their dad was happy to hear about their kind and friendly new neighbours. He was glad that they were people who wanted to please Jesus. He also liked the idea of having a glass of real lemonade. So, taking his wallet along, he walked down the street with Sonya and Luke to meet the new children and buy some lemonade. When they got there he bought five glasses of lemonade for... (you're right, 25 cents!), so that all of them, even the children who were selling the lemonade, could have a cool and delicious drink together while they chatted and got to know each other.

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for lemons, and for lemonade, and for friendly neighbours. Thank you for being so welcoming and for showing us how to welcome others. Please help us grow in the joy of being welcoming and helpful people. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Child Teachers

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 9

Title: Child Teachers
Author: Elsie Rempel
Church: Charleswood Mennonite
Church, Winnipeg, MB
Theme: Jesus helps us know God
like children do.
Text: Matthew 11:16–19, 25-30

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder what else Sandy learned from her Sunday school class.
- I wonder why children understand some things better than grown ups.
- I wonder what you could teach us about loving and following Jesus.
- I wonder if you would be willing to share some of the things you know with us, like Sandy's class was.

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Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children and ask them to sit so that they can see the rest of the congregation because the rest of the congregation will be part of the children's time today. Once everyone is settled, ask the congregation, "Will everyone in our church today who is a teacher, please raise their hands?" Then turn to the children and ask them, "Are any of you children teachers? No? What do you think makes a person a teacher?" Tell them that to be a teacher, a person has to understand things well enough to explain them to someone else. People who like explaining and who learn to understand a lot of things sometimes get jobs as teachers, but all of us can teach others about the things we understand. Ask the children what they understand really well. Tell them that today's Bible reading from Matthew (show them the place in your Bible) includes a lesson about children and what they can teach grown-ups. Encourage them to imagine themselves

on Jesus' lap while he surprises his disciples with this lesson about children. Imagine that the grown-ups here in church are the disciples whom Jesus is surprising.

Story:

Sandy was teaching Sunday school. Her lesson was about a curious conversation that Jesus was having with his disciples. It sounded like Jesus was frustrated that people didn't understand and accept the good news he was teaching them about living God's way. On that day, Jesus had surprised the grown-ups who were listening to him by saying that God helped children understand things that wise grown-ups didn't understand. Sandy wondered, how could she teach her Sunday School children a lesson about grown-ups understanding less than children. She was a grown-up. They were children. How could a grown-up teach children about teaching grown-ups. So she prayed and waited for Jesus to help her know what to do. After a while, she felt like Jesus was encouraging her to spend her Sunday school time learning instead of teaching. So she did. She told her children that she needed to learn what they knew about loving Jesus and living God's way. They were a little surprised, because usually Sandy taught them stories about Jesus, but after they prayed together they started telling her about how God lived in their hearts and loved everybody and wanted them to share. They said it was easy to trust Jesus because he was God's son. It really wasn't very complicated. Sandy thanked them and gave them each a hug. Then they had their snack time. That Sunday morning, Sandy learned that adults could stop making things so complicated and difficult, and could learn a lot about loving and following Jesus from children. She agreed with what Jesus said. Children can be teachers.

Prayer:

Let's light this Jesus candle and be quiet around it for a minute. (Light the candle) Then I'll ask you children to teach us what God has helped you understand about loving and following Jesus. I hope you will help us. (If you are unsure about getting a response from your children, call some of them in advance and ask them to think and pray about it during the preceding week.) ... Thank you for helping us know and love Jesus a little better today. You have been a blessing to us. Let's finish this part of our worship by praying together, "Jesus, thank you for knowing about children, and helping them know and love and trust you. Please help us adults to know and love and trust you like they do. Amen."



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Growing Plants and Words

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 10

Title: Growing Plants and Words
Author: Susan Kennel Harrison
Church: Hagerman Mennonite Church, Markham, ON
Theme: God's Word grows in cleared minds and hearts like seeds grow in good soil
Text: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how people are like these pots of different kinds of fill like soil, stones, and sand.
- I wonder how God's Word is like this little plant.
- I wonder how we can take care of the soil in our hearts.
- I wonder how it feels when God's Word grows in our hearts.

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Advanced preparation:

Fill one pot with potting soil, sand, and one with a third one full of rocks or marbles. Bring a pot with a plant already in it (a houseplant, or a dandelion, etc), and a small plant cutting needing to get planted. (If you don't have time to root a cutting, soaking a small plant in water and then gently removing the soil will provide a good substitute.)

Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children as they come forward and engage them in some informal conversation about gardens and plants. Settle the children and invite them to become aware of God's nearness in this time of children's worship. As the children settle in, pray that God will speak through you to the children. Open your Bible to Matthew 13 and tell them that the ideas for today's children's time come from this passage. If it has not already been read aloud in the worship service, read Matthew 13:1-9, from either the NRSV or NIV version.

Then say: "I've been trying to figure out what this story that Jesus told means. Have you got any ideas?" Listen to and thank them for each answer. Then show them your idea with this object lesson:

Object lesson:

I want to figure out what Jesus meant with this story by acting it out with these pots, and plants, and soil types. I hope you will help me.

Addressing the children, looking with them at the pots and plants in front of you, say, "I'm trying to decide which pot to use to plant this plant." Hold up the small plant.

"Where should I plant it?" Let the children volunteer some pros and cons about which pot they would put the little plant into. Work with them to draw out their reasons why they would choose the pot with potting soil, instead of another fill.

Jesus' friends didn't understand what Jesus meant with his story about the sower sowing the seed on different kinds of soil, the Bible story we just heard. Jesus explained it to them like this. Seed needs to fall on good soil to be able to grow. God's Word is a bit like that. For the Bible's stories and lessons to grow in us they have to fall on listening ears and hearts. Whenever we hear God's Word, it is being planted in the soil of our hearts. But, when we're not listening, or are busy worrying, our ears are more like rocks or sand, than like good soil. Plants need soil to grow well.

Prayer:

Thank you, God, for giving us your word to guide us and teach us how to be friends with you. Help us keep the soil in our hearts healthy. Help us make choices that let your words grow big and strong in us. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Growing Trouble

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 11

Title: Growing Trouble
Author: Susan Kennel Harrison
Church: Hagerman Mennonite Church, Markham, ON
Theme: The problem of not-so-good things crowding into our minds and hearts alongside of the good things.
Text: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why God's Word, like the little plant, did not grow in the puppet's heart.
- I wonder what activities the puppet will give up to make room for God's Word.
- I wonder if we are taking care of God's Word in our hearts, or if we're letting other things keep it from growing.

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Advanced preparation:

Gather two puppets, another puppeteer, and a "curtain", such as a blanket spread over chairs for the puppet holders to hide behind – or just hold a puppet on each hand.

Gathering Activity:

Warmly invite the children to come forward and welcome them to this special part of worship where we help children understand and connect with the worship theme and with God. Ask then if their heads ever get too full to focus properly. Tell them that this is a very common problem, and that Jesus talks about it in today's story. Encourage them to become quiet and ready to listen with their ears and their hearts. Once a holy silence has been established, read Matthew 13:24-30, especially if it has not yet been read aloud in the worship service. Tell them that two puppets are going to help you understand why Jesus told this story about planting.

Puppet Play:

Puppet 1: I wonder if you remember last week's children's story.

Puppet 2: Um-um- I'm not sure. Maybe these children can help me remember.
Encourage suggestions and feel free to drop hints.

Puppet 1: Yes, we talked about how we can grow God's Word in our hearts and minds, just like we can grow plants in good soil. So, how did it go for you? Is it growing?

Puppet 2: Oh, fine.... I guess.

Puppet 1: Looks puzzled, and looks at the puppet friend, waiting for more info.... Then the puppet looks at the kids and asks them; So, how did it go for you? Did God's Word get planted and grow in your heart? Puppet listens for responses and looks happy for the kids, but then looks sad, and stares at the floor.

Puppet 2: Is something wrong?

Puppet 1: Yeah.

Puppet 2: What?

Puppet 1: It didn't grow.

Puppet 2: What didn't grow?

Puppet 1: God's plant in my heart.

Puppet 2: What are you talking about? *Puppet looks puzzled, then brightens. Aha! Now I get it, you mean God's Word didn't grow in your heart. With empathy. What happened?*

Puppet 1: *Heaves a sigh and then talks as fast as possible.* Well, on Sunday night I read from God's Word and it started to get planted in my heart, but Monday morning I got up too late, and rushed around my room to get dressed, and rushed around the kitchen to eat, and rushed outside to school, then I went to soccer practice, then I went to piano lessons, then I went home, ate supper, watched TV, played on my computer, brushed my teeth, and went to bed. Tuesday morning I got up early to go to my badminton practice, then I had a busy day at school, then I had to go to my trumpet lesson – which meant I had to quick practice it first – then I rushed home, had supper, watched TV, played on my computer, talked to my friend on the phone, and went to bed. And that's how the whole week went, and I forgot all about reading and thinking about God's Word.

Puppet 2: No wonder your little plant died, you did not put it into the right pot!

Puppet 1: What do you mean?

Puppet 2: I mean that you put that little plant of God's Word into a pot that was packed full of other plants already and there was nowhere left for its roots to grow! If we want

God's Word to get planted in our hearts, we need to make sure other things don't crowd it out. Just like a plant, God's Word needs space to grow. Not only do those other things take up time in your life, they use up the food and water the little plant needs to grow.

Puppet 1: Oh. I didn't realize that. I guess I better pull some of those things out of my life and make some room for God's Word to grow instead! Thanks for helping me...
Hmm. I wonder what I'll pull out first.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for sharing your word with us. Thank you for this time of planting your Word in our hearts and for the chance to let it settle in during the rest of the worship hour. Help us water, feed, and make room for your Word to grow in our hearts for the rest of the week. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Finding a Treasure

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 12

Title: Finding a Treasure
Author: Susan Kennel Harrison
Church: Hagerman Mennonite Church, Markham, ON
Theme: God's way and community is growing and making a difference.
Text: Matthew 13:44-52

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how some stones catch our attention more than others.
- I wonder what kind of treasure our church family looks like among other groups of people.
- I wonder what kind of a jewel God's pure love would look like.

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Advanced preparation:

Collect a small container of gravel and a few craft gems, or shiny rocks. Mix it all together, hiding the prettier stones/gems from view. Have a polished stone or craft gem to give each child as a reminder of the lesson.

Gathering Activity:

Invite and welcome the children to their special time and place in the worship service. Help them settle in to the awareness of being in God's holy presence. Singing *Be still and know that I am God* is one good way of doing this. Open your Bible to Matthew 13 and show them the place where the ideas for today's activity come from. If it has not already been read aloud in the worship service, read verses 44-52 to them. Ask: "What do you think Jesus was trying to teach us with this story?" Listen and invite the children's responses...remember, there are no right/wrong answers. Then say: "Maybe this activity will help us understand what these stories of Jesus meant."

Object lesson:

Does anyone know what a Piñata is? If so, tell us what it is, and how it works.

Encourage the children to describe the process of candy falling all over the ground, and kids rushing to pick it up.

Why do the children rush around to collect the candy? What would happen if they moved slowly? What is it about candy that makes us want to run and get it?

Show the children the container of gravel. Make sure the gems/pretty stones are hidden from view.

If this container of stones were in that piñata, and fell all over the ground, would they run around to collect them? Why not?

Then, spread a towel or table cloth in front of you and scatter the gravel/gem mixture across the cloth. Observe whether any of the children want to take or touch the gems/pretty rocks amidst the gravel.

Some of these rocks might have been good to have in a Piñata after all. Why did we want to touch the gems/pretty stones more than the gravel? Yes, they do look precious. *Sit back thoughtfully and say,* Discovering God's loving way is like finding something really pretty or special among the average or plain stones. If these regular stones are like our everyday activities, the beautiful ones are like the signs of God's love that are waiting to be discovered in the middle of our ordinary lives— just like these pretty stones were waiting to be discovered among all these plain stones.

Today's Bible stories are about how people respond when they learn about God. Like the candy coming from the piñata, or gems showing up among the gravel, discovering God's loving way and people is a precious treasure that is worth dropping what we're doing so we can join this movement! We can call God our friend; join God's people and promise to be God's friends forever. Belonging to God's family is more special than other things around us; it is like being part of a treasure. The love God has for us and that God's people have for each other is a very precious treasure, it is worth wanting more than the most precious jewel. *Pick up and roll the prettiest gem in your hand.*

Gathering as the family of God, as we do every time we come to church, is a way of finding out and remembering just how special our friendship with God and God's people is.

Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for wanting to be our friend and helping us be friends to each other in our church. Help us to remember that you and your church are a treasure that is worth dropping everything else for. Amen.

To help children remember what a treasure it is to be part of God's family, give each child a polished stone or craft gem to take back to their seats with them.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Enough for All

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 13

Title: Enough for All
Author: Miriam Rempel
Church: Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg MB
Theme: There's enough for all, if we learn to share and offer what we have to Jesus.
Text: Matthew 14: 13 - 21

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder what Alex's puppets looked like.
- I wonder if it was hard for Alex to give her puppets to her counselor for a day.
- I wonder how Alex's puppets were like the lunch that Jesus shared with a crowd of people.
- I wonder what I could share so Jesus could do more than I can imagine with it.

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Gathering activity:

Invite and welcome the children to this special time of the worship service where we try to apply the worship theme to their lives. Encourage them to settle their bodies and their hearts so that they notice and are thankful for the nearness of God. Open your Bible to Matthew 14 and show it to the children. Say, "Today's scripture reading is about one of Jesus' miracles. Do any of you know the story of Jesus feeding five thousand people with two loaves and five fishes? What do you remember of the story?"

Important points to get are:

- *the disciples offer the food they have (2 loaves and 5 fish)*
- *Jesus blesses the food*
- *the people share it*
- *there are lots of leftovers.*

"If this story were to happen here, it would be like feeding everyone in church with just this bag lunch. *Bring out a small bag lunch.* Does this look like enough to feed everybody? *Pause for response.* You're right, it's not enough, but Jesus can take any little thing we offer and turn it into something that is enough. Let me tell you a modern story where that happened.

Story:

Alex owned two beautiful stuffed bear puppets. She loved these bears very much and took them along everywhere she went. Whenever her friends saw her bears, they wanted to play with them, too, because they looked so cuddly. Alex enjoyed sharing her puppets. When there was just one other friend, they would play with the bears together.

One day, Alex went away to a camp where she stayed in a cabin with seven other girls and a counselor. All of her cabin mates wanted to play with her puppets. Alex did not know what to do because she did not have enough puppets to share with everyone, and her new friends were starting to fight about who could play with the bear puppets next.

Alex told her counselor about the problem with not having enough to share. The counselor, who was a follower of Jesus, listened carefully and thought. Then she asked, "May I borrow your two puppets until tonight?" "I guess so, if they are not here, then at least the others won't fight about them anymore," Alex answered. She was a little sad not to have her puppets with her.

That evening, during supper, Alex noticed that a blanket had been draped over some chairs. It gave her a funny, but happy feeling in her tummy. After everyone was seated at supper, Alex's counselor got up and told the whole camp about Alex's dilemma. "So we counselors decided to put on a puppet show for everyone. After supper, we will all enjoy the puppets together." The funny, happy feeling in Alex's tummy grew.

It was a very good puppet show. Everyone laughed and had fun watching it. It became one of the campers' favourite memories of camp to tell others about when they got home.

The counselors used the puppets to give all the campers more fun with her puppets than Alex had ever had before.

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for people who are willing to share what they have. Thank you that you can still use anything we offer, and can do more than we can imagine with it. Please help us grow in the joy of sharing. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Greater than the Storms

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 14

Title: Greater than the Storms
Author: Miriam Rempel
Church: Home Street Mennonite
Church, Winnipeg MB
Theme: Jesus is stronger than the
storms in our hearts and on
the sea.
Text: Matthew 14: 22-33

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder if the other children were afraid during the thunderstorm too.
- I wonder how stuffed toys help us feel loved and safe.
- I wonder how many of us Jesus has helped by calming our fears.

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Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children warmly as they gather for this time of children's worship. As they do so, engage them with questions such as these:

- How many of you have ever been scared?
- What sorts of things scare you?
- Are any of you scared during thunderstorms?

Encourage them to grow still and prepare their hearts for a story that will help them understand what Jesus is like. Show them Matthew 14 in your Bible and tell them that today's Gospel reading is about a time when the disciples were very frightened because they were in a small boat on a stormy sea. Jesus helped them by calming that storm. If this text isn't being read elsewhere in the service, read it here. The story you will tell them is about Jesse, a boy who was frightened about a number of things. Some of the children might want to count how many things frightened Jesse.

Story:

Jesse was very nervous. He was going to his friend Max's house for his first ever sleepover birthday party with other friends from school. He liked Max a lot and he liked birthday parties, but he had never slept over at someone else's house before. Jesse still slept with a teddy bear and was scared that the others would tease him, but he needed his teddy to fall asleep.

Before Jesse left for the party, his Mom and Dad tucked Jesse's teddy bear into his overnight bag. Then they gave him a big hug and a kiss and said, "Remember that we love you and be brave." They knew that Jesse was nervous about the sleepover.

At the sleepover, Jesse and the other children had lots of fun playing together. They did not even notice the sky get darker as they played outside. Suddenly, they saw lightning in the sky and felt rain on their faces. They all ran inside. Jesse was very scared of thunderstorms and lightning, but he wanted to be brave. He managed not to cry. It was hard because the thunderstorm lasted until bedtime.

But, when bedtime came, Jesse felt like the thunderstorm had moved inside of him. He was scared of the stormy weather, and scared because he was not going to sleep at home tonight. He asked if he could go home, but Max's parents said the storm made it unsafe to take Jesse home.

Max saw that Jesse was nervous, so he asked Jesse what was wrong. Jesse told Max that the storm scared him and that he wanted to go home. He told Max that it felt like there was as much storm inside of him as outside in the sky. Max said, "When I felt that way and told my Dad about it, my Dad told me that Jesus was strong enough to stop the storms, both outside and inside. All I had to do was ask Jesus to help me. Do you want me to ask Jesus if he will help you, too?" "I guess so," Jesse replied. So, Max asked Jesus to help Jesse. Jesse felt a bit better.

Then Max crawled into his sleeping bag with his stuffed toy elephant, and got ready to sleep. Now Jesse knew it was okay to pull out his teddy bear, so he did. The storm inside of him was settling as he got into his sleeping bag.

Just before he fell asleep, Max whispered to him, "You know Jesse, you can talk to Jesus any time you want to, too, and he will help you if you're scared, or sad or angry."

Jesse thought about that for a while. He thought about how Jesus was stronger than his fears and that he could talk to Jesus anytime, just like Max had. He also thought about what a great friend Max was, and how good it was to spend a night at his place. Soon Jesse was sleeping peacefully, with his teddy bear tucked right up against his face.

Prayer:

Jesus, your storm calming powers are awesome. Thank you for calming Jesse's stormy fears. Thank you that you also calm the storms and fears inside of us when we ask for your help. It is so good to be your child. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Never Give Up

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 15

Title: Never Give Up
Author: Miriam Rempel
Church: Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg MB
Theme: The importance of persistence.
Text: Matthew 15:(10-20), 21-28

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how that brother could be so persistent (not give up).
- I wonder how his parents felt after he came home with the king's medicine.
- I wonder how Jesus felt about this little boy's actions.
- I wonder what things Jesus thinks we should never give up on.

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Gathering Activity:

Invite and welcome children to this special part of the worship service where we try to apply the worship theme to their lives. Ask them if they enjoy "once upon a time" stories and ask about their favourite ones. Tell them that today's story will take ideas from Matthew 15, the Gospel reading for this day, and retell those ideas in a new "once upon a time" story, and, because this story helps them understand ideas from God's word it is especially important to hear it well. To listen well, it is important to get comfy and quiet. It might even help them listen if they imagine themselves sitting right on Jesus' lap and that he, the best story teller of all, is telling them this story.

Story:

Once upon a time, a little boy wanted to help his brother, because his brother was sick. He thought the king could help his sick brother, but no one was willing to help him talk to the king. So, he asked his parents to help him. But his parents said, "We are not important enough to speak to the king. If you want to speak

to the king, you need to be one of the king's advisors. We are only poor people."

The little boy woke up early the next day and walked to the palace gate to wait for the advisors to arrive for their daily meeting with the king. He asked each one of the advisors if they would help him to speak with the king. Some advisors ignored the little boy, others told the boy to go home because he was not worthy to speak to the king. But, the boy kept standing there at the gate, asking and asking the advisors to help him. Some of the advisors became angry with the boy. Their voices got louder and louder, until the noise of the advisors brought the king out of his castle and to the gate. "Why have you not come to my chambers for our daily meeting?" the king asked. "This little poor boy keeps insisting on seeing you and will not go away." the advisors replied.

"Little boy," the king said, "I am too busy and important to speak with you, so go back home." "Please, king, I need your help," the boy pleaded. "My brother is very sick." "That is not my concern," the king replied. "I must look out for the welfare of those close to me." "My brother is just as important to me as your friends are to you. If I did not do everything to try to help my brother, I would not be a good brother. Don't you want all of your subjects to be good people?"

The king paused and began to smile. "You are right. What can I do for you today?"

"Please, could I get some of the medicine you have in your castle to give to my brother? I'm sure that would make him better." "Give this boy what he desires," the king commanded. Then he turned to the boy and said, "Thank you for reminding me that I am responsible to more people than those close to me. I hope your brother will be better soon."

Because the little boy did not give up, he found the help his brother needed. He also taught the king an important lesson about caring for all his subjects, and not just those who were closest to him.

Prayer:

Thank you, God, for never giving up on loving and caring for us. Help us know what things are important to not give up on, and help us keep on asking others about those things, just like the little boy in this story didn't give up with getting help from the king. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Special Task for God

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 16

Title: Special Task for God
Author: Miriam Rempel and Elsie Rempel
Church: Home Street Mennonite Church and Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg MB
Theme: We believe that Jesus carried out a special task for God.
Text: Matthew 16:13-20

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why the room in Edmonton got so quiet when the children were bringing the baskets of communion bread and grapes to the tables.
- I wonder how Jesus learned to do his special tasks for God's people.
- I wonder what special tasks God wants me to do to share his love today.

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Gathering Activity:

Invite and welcome the children to this special part of the worship service where we focus on the worship theme in a way that children find meaningful. Ask them about special tasks they get asked to do, such as setting the table, delivering something, handing out the Christmas presents, etc. How does doing these special jobs make them feel? Show them today's Scripture passage from Matthew 16:13-20, and tell them that it talks about people's ideas about what Jesus' special task was. Encourage them to settle their bodies and their hearts to help them listen well and be thankful for the way God listens to and accepts our worship.

Story:

A few years ago (in 2006) in Edmonton, at a large gathering of Mennonites, called the Mennonite Church Canada Assembly, the children who came to this gathering with their parents were given a very special job. They were asked to carry baskets of communion bread and grapes to each table of Assembly participants. Before they carried out this

special task, they participated in a special children's time in which the Denominational minister, Sven Eriksson, prayed a prayer of blessing over them. These children knew they were being given a special task. As they carried baskets of bread and grapes to table after table a holy hush settled over the large and crowded room. One four year old boy, who remembered how communion happened in his congregation, seriously told the adults at his table, "Every grown-up can take some bread from this basket. Children can take a grape. But then, I need to take the basket and give bread and grapes to another table so that there will be enough for everybody." This wasn't quite the way it had been explained to the group, but nobody laughed at him or corrected him. Everybody at his table did what he asked and was blessed by this helper of the church. He was doing something very special for God's people.

During Jesus' time on earth, some people thought he was a prophet. That means someone who delivered messages from God. In today's Scripture, Simon Peter called Jesus the Messiah. Messiah means the anointed one, or the chosen one, the one sent to us by God to rule forever. When Peter said that, he showed Jesus that he believed Jesus was especially chosen by God for a very special job. And then, a little later, Peter showed that he didn't really understand what that meant. Do you have any idea of what Jesus' special job was? It was to help people get to see, and know, and love God, whom we can't see.

God chose and sent Jesus to show us how much God loves us, and that God wants us to show our love for God by the way we live every day. Jesus taught and showed us how to follow God. When we follow God by following Jesus and listening to God's Spirit, we all get special jobs. We get to share in the special job of Jesus, helping others learn about and experience God's love and live in God's way. Sometimes that includes helping during special worship services, like the children did at the big church gathering in Edmonton. Sometimes it means simple things like holding our grandma's hand when we know she is sad. But whether it is big or little, it is always a special task, because it includes sharing God's loving ways with others.

Prayer:

Thank you, God, for sending us Jesus so that people could see and feel what you are like. Thank you for chances to help the church and our families with special tasks. Thank you most of all for your amazing love that makes us all, small and tall, into one big loving and helping family in the church. Amen.



Bullies & Sisters

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 17

Title: Bullies and Sisters
Author: Miriam Rempel
Church: Hope Mennonite Church,
Winnipeg, MB
Text: Matthew 16: 21-28
Theme: The power of a bully is less
than the power of people
who love us.

Gathering Activity:

Take a few moments to welcome the children and help them settle into good listening positions and a mood of holy listening. Ask these questions to engage them in the topic:

- What do you think of when I say something is powerful? (big, strong, etc.)
- How many of you know someone who sometimes acts like a bully?
- Is that person powerful?
- How many of you have a younger brother or sister?
- Do you think the bully or your little sibling is more powerful?

Today's story is about a bully and the power of a little sister. The main ideas for the story come from Matthew 16. (Show them the place in your Bible)

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Story:

Sam was seven years old. He was scared to go to school because of a bully he met at school. The bully was eleven. He would tease and threaten Sam every day. The bully was big, strong, and powerful.

Sometimes the bully would want things Sam had and just take them from him. Sometimes, the bully would trap Sam and others in the bathroom of the class closet. Whenever the bully came around Sam and the other kids would run away and hide because they were scared of him. If he caught Sam, Sam did whatever the bully wanted, because Sam didn't want to get hurt.

Sam also had a little sister, Emily, who was three years old. Sam was Emily's favourite person. Emily was always trying to do whatever Sam was doing. Sometimes, Sam was annoyed that Emily always wanted to be with him, but they loved each other very much. Sam liked to teach Emily the things he learned in school. He loved her hugs and kisses.

One day Emily came to school with Sam when his mom met with the teacher. Sam and Emily were playing outside when the bully saw them. The bully came over and started teasing Sam. He said Sam was a baby because he was playing with one. This made Sam sad and confused because his mom had told him to watch Emily, but Sam did not want the bully to call him a baby, either.

Then Emily did something that no one else had ever done. She said, "Play, too?" Emily asked the bully to join them. The bully had a confused look on his face. Then, he pushed Emily so she fell down. Emily started to cry, and then she looked the bully in the eyes and asked, "Why push me?"

The bully looked back at Emily and started to tease Emily for being a baby. Suddenly, Sam stepped between the bully and Emily and said, "STOP! That is my baby sister and I do not like you teasing her. All she wanted was for you to play with us. Why are you picking on Emily when she wanted you to be her friend?"

Emily kept staring at the bully, Tears still on her cheeks. Then a tear rolled down the bully's cheek. "I'm sorry," the bully said.

Emily saw the tear and asked again, "Come play with me?" At this, the bully sat down in the sandbox and began to play with Emily and Sam. Sam got to know his name and became the bully's first friend at school. Slowly the bully learned that being nice was better for him than being mean.

Prayer:

Thank you God, for the amazing power of your love at work in us. Thank you that sometimes bullies actually become friends. Please help us use loving words to build peace and friendship wherever we are. Amen.

Wondering questions:

- I wonder why the bully was so mean.
- I wonder why Emily wasn't scared of the bully.
- I wonder how God's love can help us live with bullies.
- I wonder if the bullies we meet can become friends.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

A Better Way

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 18

Title: A Better Way
Author: Joanne Peters
Church: Bergthal Mennonite Church,
Didsbury AB
Theme: By following Jesus' plan, we
can stay friends with people
who disagree with us.
Props: 2 puppets and a puppet
theatre or a table.
Text: Matthew 18:15–20

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why Jeff was so upset.
- I wonder what would have happened if Jeff had "gotten back" at Alfred by embarrassing him in front of the whole band?
- I wonder what happened when Frederick went and talked to Alfred.
- I wonder how using Jesus' better way will help us then next time we have trouble with our friends.

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This story was written as a puppet show, but can easily be adapted to be a skit. Children love puppet shows – even those with simple "sock" puppets, animal puppets, or stuffed animals from behind a table.

Gathering Activity:

Take a few moments to welcome the children and to help them settle into a mood of holy listening. Imagining themselves onto the lap of Jesus is a good way of doing this, even if it is a puppet show. Open your Bible to Matthew and introduce the show with words such as:

In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus gives us a great plan for when we don't get along with each other. Jesus tells us that we should go and talk to the other person. And, if we can't work it out on our own then we should ask others to help us figure out how to be friends. Jesus knew that we would sometimes have trouble getting along with each other so he gave us a plan to follow when we do disagree. Our puppet friends, Jeff and Clarita, just had that kind of trouble. Let's see what happened:

Puppet Play:

Jeff: *Enters; obviously upset and making “huffy” angry sounds.*

Clarita: *Enters – sees Jeff and is taken aback by his obvious displeasure.*

Jeff: *Sees Clarita and goes “stomping” over to her.* I am so ticked off! Let me tell you, if I so much as see him again I’ll . . . I’ll . . . I’ll knock him right into next week!

Clarita: Whoa, cool your jets there, turbo! What’s gotten you so freaked out?

Jeff: It’s that doofus, Alfred. That guy has the intelligence of a parking meter.

Clarita: That’s a pretty harsh thing to say. I thought he was your friend.

Jeff: WAS is right. Not anymore – nuh uh, no way, no how!

Clarita: Sounds serious. Tell me what happened.

Jeff: It is serious. You know how we’re both in the Tri-County Super-Duper Whiz-Kid Showdown Marchin’ Band . . . right?

Clarita: O . . . kay?

Jeff: Well, last week we had our final rehearsal and I was rippin’ into the main part of my tuba solo. I mean I was all over that piece – chewin’ it up, tearin’ it apart and servin’ it as the main course of that musical banquet. Know what I mean?

Clarita: You mean you were doing a great job?

Jeff: Yep, I was. I finished my solo and waited for the applause . . . modestly, of course.

Clarita: Of course!

Jeff: And, instead of applause I heard Alfred’s squawky voice bellowing across the room, “Hey, Jeff, there was so much wind coming out of that tuba I thought the top of your head was going to blow right off!”

Clarita: *Giggles, tries to cover it up by coughing.*

Jeff: It’s not funny! But everyone laughed and no one remembered to clap! We always clap for each other. I felt terrible. Alfred thinks he’s so cool, just because he plays drums. Big whoopee – take a stick, hit the drum, count the beat – it rarely goes beyond four you know – how hard is that?

Clarita: You know, Jeff, maybe Alfred didn’t realize that your feelings would be hurt. You two have always been such good friends.

Jeff: But not anymore. I’m going to get him back. I’m going to tell everyone that Alfred – he picks his nose with his drumsticks! Yeah, then no one will want to sit next to him or practice with him.

Clarita: Um, I don't think that's a good way to deal with this.

Jeff: No, you're right – I'll have to think of something meaner!!! Maybe I'll put a stink bomb on the end of his drumstick and when he hits the drum, it'll smell so bad everyone will be calling him "Skunk Boy" for the rest of his life. And then I'm going to tell everyone else in the band about what a lousy friend he was.

Clarita: Is being mean the only way you can deal with this? Isn't there a better way?

Jeff: Well, he hurt my feelings! What do you think I should do?

Clarita: Tell him he hurt your feelings. Maybe he doesn't know he hurt you. Then, the two of you could figure out a way to deal with this and still be friends.

Jeff: I don't know – do you really think it's worth a try?

Clarita: I think it's always worth a try. It sure sounds a lot better than rigging up a stink bomb and embarrassing him in front of everyone on purpose. Friends are worth the effort.

Jeff: But what if that doesn't work?

Clarita: Then you could ask someone else to help you work it out. Another friend or a trusted grown up might have some ideas on solving this problem.

Jeff: Maybe you're right. And maybe he didn't mean to be such a doofus. I think I'll go find him and ask him to talk about it with me.

Clarita: Uh, Jeff.

Jeff: What?

Clarita: I'd avoid using the word "doofus" too.

Jeff: Right! Gotcha! I'll go tell him how I'm feeling. *Both puppets exit.*

Prayer:

Thank you Jesus, for your better way of getting through problems. Thank you for friends like Clarita, who remind us of your better way. Please help us talk to people who hurt our feelings and to encourage our friends to do the same thing. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Passing on Candy & Kindness

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 19

Title: Passing on Candy & Kindness
Author: Joanne Peters
Church: Bergthal Mennonite Church, Didsbury AB
Theme: Jesus is kind and helps us; this helps us be kind and help others.
Text: Matthew 18:21-35

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how the young man felt when the candy store owner told him he didn't have to pay back the money.
- I wonder why he still wanted money back from his friend.
- I wonder how his friend felt when the young man had to work in the store.

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Props:

A small, **allergy-sensitive** treat, such as licorice, to share with the children will help finish the story well. This story was written to be a narrated drama, so invite a few Jr. or Sr. youth to act out the story as you read it. Simple costumes such as a large hat, fake glasses, an oversized jacket, etc., draw the children's attention. Or, the story can simply be read to the children.

Gathering Activity:

Begin by welcoming the children and telling them how glad you are that they wanted to come and listen to your story. Remind them that this story is being told to help them worship and that in worship we pray, and learn, and enjoy God's goodness. Open your Bible to Matthew and explain that the ideas for this story come from a story Jesus told. Introduce the theme with questions such as:

Have you ever loaned something to a friend?

What sorts of things might you let a friend borrow?

Would you expect to get your things back? Why?

What would you do if they couldn't give it back to you when you asked for it?

Listen to the story Matthew wrote down. Now, let's see what happens in our story.

Story:

Once there was a candy store owner. *First character enters.* She owned the most lovely, scrumptious, sweet-smelling, yummy candy store in the entire world. People came from far and wide to see, to smell, and especially to taste her fabulous treats. One day, a young man came into her store. *Second character enters.*

"Please, Miss" he pleaded. "May I have some of that lovely, scrumptious, sweet-smelling, yummy candy?"

"Of course!" she said, and filled a large bag with candy and gave it to the young man.

"That will be one hundred dollars," she said kindly. "How would you like to pay for it?"

"Pay? . . . P-P- P-PAY?" stammered the young man. "I don't have any money, but the candy looks so lovely, scrumptious, sweet-smelling and yummy. Could I please take it now and pay you later?"

"All right," said the kind candy store owner. "I'll send for you when your bill is due."

The young man gave her his address and left the store. Soon he met his friend who looked longingly at the lovely, scrumptious, sweet-smelling, yummy candy. *Third character enters.*

"Please", asked the friend. "Could I have some of that lovely scrumptious, sweet-smelling candy?"

"You can have one piece for a dollar," said the young man.

"But I have no money!" protested the friend. "Won't you please let me have some and I'll pay you later?"

"Fine," said the young man. "I'll give you one now and send for you when it is time to pay me."

The friend took and ate a piece of the lovely, scrumptious, sweet smelling, yummy candy. It was delicious. *They walk off stage.*

After a few weeks had passed, the candy store owner sent for the young man. *Second character re-enters.* "You owe me a hundred dollars," she reminded him. "It is time for you to pay me or give back the candy."

"But I haven't got the money and I've eaten the candy!" cried the young man. "Please, I'm begging you! Give me more time and I promise I will pay you back everything I owe you."

The store owner smiled at the man and said, "I still have plenty of lovely, scrumptious, sweet-smelling, yummy candy in my store and I am willing to share some of it with you. I can tell that you don't have much money. Keep the candy as my gift to you."

"Oh thank you, **thank you, THANK YOU!**" cried the man as he happily danced out of the store. As he was dancing, he bumped into his friend. *Third character re-enters.*

"Hey!" said the young man. "You still owe me a dollar. It is time for you to pay me or give back the candy."

"But I still haven't got the money and I ate the candy!" cried his friend. "Please, I'm begging you! Give me more time and I promise I will pay back the dollar I owe you."

"NO WAY, NO HOW, NUH-UH," bellowed the young man. "You either pay me right now or you'll be sorry!" The young man looked and sounded very angry.

The store owner overheard this through her open door. She came storming out of her front door. "That's enough!" she scolded. "You begged me for more time to pay the **hundred** dollars you owed me and I was kind enough to tell you to keep what I gave you as a gift. Then, the next minute, I hear you yelling at your friend because she wasn't able to pay you back **one dollar**. Why weren't you kind to your friend like I was kind to you? Guess what?!? You've made me change my mind. You will have to pay me back every penny of that one hundred dollars. You will earn that money by scrubbing my floors!"

Young man sadly follows the store owner off-stage. His friend exits in another direction.

Prayer:

Thank you for this story about the importance of passing on kindness. Help us be like the candy store owner. Amen.

Finale:

To help us remember to pass on God's kindness to others I am going to give each of you two little treats. Please enjoy one for yourself and share the other one with someone who didn't come up for this story. Thanks for helping me pass on a sign of God's kindness.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Generosity is like a potluck lunch

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 20

Title: Generosity is like a potluck lunch
Author: Joanne Peters
Church: Bergthal Mennonite Church, Didsbury AB
Theme: God's generosity is without limits.
Text: Matthew 20:1-16

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why we bring so much food to our potlucks.
- I wonder what other things we can share generously.
- I wonder why God is so generous.

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Gathering Activity:

Begin by welcoming the children and telling them how glad you are that they came to share your story and this special part of the worship service. This is where we talk about the worship theme in words and with stories to help the children understand what the whole service is about. Explain that today's service is about God's generosity. This is the place in my Bible where the ideas for my story come from. Show them Matthew 20. Tell them that one reason we gather to worship is to thank God for God's amazing generosity. Introduce the theme with questions such as:

- What does the word "generous" mean?
- Has anyone ever been generous with you? *Ask for examples.*
- Can you tell me how you have been generous with others?

Help the children settle into a mood of holy listening. Imagining themselves onto the lap of Jesus is a good way of doing this.

Story:

To find out more about what generosity meant I looked in my dictionary. The dictionary says that the word “generous” means overflowing and abundant. Do you know what those words mean? Well, I started thinking about things that were “overflowing” and “abundant”. Can you guess what picture came into my mind?! Come with me on this imaginary trip.

The picture I saw was that of a long table in our church. It was overflowing with plates and bowls and pots and baskets at a potluck. There were so many plates, bowls, pots and baskets that you could hardly see the table at all! Wonderful smells drifted from the table. I couldn't help but come closer to see and taste what was causing that delicious aroma. Can anyone tell me what is inside those plates, bowls, pots and baskets? Food! All different colours and kinds – breads, meats, vegetables, salads, casseroles, cheese, pickles and... my favourite... dessert! Let's pretend we're eating some of it. Mmmmm!!

The words “generous”, “overflowing”, and “abundant” made me think about yummy church potluck lunches! Do you know why?...Because it seems that no matter how many hungry people are waiting in line and no matter how many hungry people fill their plates, there's always plenty for everyone. It doesn't seem to matter whether you are the first in line or whether you are at the end of the line, there's still lots of food for everyone.

That's kind of how it is with God's love for us. God is very generous, and has plenty of love for everyone. God has even more love than our church has at our potlucks. God doesn't hold back! Better than a yummy church potluck lunch, there is plenty for all! Now that's worth saying thank you for when we gather to worship.

Prayer:

Thank you, thank you, thank you, for your generous, overflowing love. And thank you for the generous people in our church who bring so much food to our potlucks. Amen.

Finale:

End the children's time by offering the children each a treat from your “dessert” buffet bag. Remind them to wait patiently because, just like at a potluck, you have plenty for all!



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Just Do It!

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 21

Title: Just Do It!
Author: Joanne Peters
Church: Bergthal Mennonite
Church, Didsbury, AB
Text: Matthew 21: 28-32
Theme: God wants us to do what is
good and right.
Needed: A few small house or garden
plants, a small pot of weeds
or dirt, seeds

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder when what we do is more important than what we say.
- I wonder why it's so easy to make a good promise and so hard to keep it.
- I wonder what good and right things God wants us to do.

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Gathering Activity:

Begin by welcoming the children and thanking them for responding to your invitation to come forward. Explain how much harder it would be for you to tell them a story and worship with them if they were hiding behind the benches or chairs in the sanctuary. They did the right thing by doing what you invited them to do, because gathering the children for a children's story is a good and right part of a worship service. Ask them if they also do the right things their parents ask them to do. Provide the eager ones with the opportunity to share how they do things like clean their rooms, feed pets, take out the garbage, pick up toys, etc. Ask them if they ever say "no" to their parents' requests, but then reluctantly go and do what they were asked to do. Or do they sometimes agree to do something and then decide not to do it? Ask the children to give you a "thumbs up", "thumbs down" or "thumbs in the middle" to show how good or bad it is to respond in each of these ways. That's what Jesus was talking about in today's Gospel text. Help the children settle into a mood of holy listening by imagining themselves cuddled into the lap of Jesus while you read them the story from Matthew 21:28-32. Then show the children the plants you brought.

Story:

Jesus' story about the two brothers reminds me of gardening. Planting gardens is a good and right thing because we get good food to eat from gardens. Did some of you help your parents garden this year? If you did, you will know that a garden takes a lot of careful planning and hard work. The gardener has to decide what to plant, when to plant it, the best ways to care for the plants and when to harvest the plants. If a gardener makes all sorts of plans, buys the seeds, tells other people that she's planting a garden, but doesn't actually plant the seeds or care for the young plants nothing will grow just like nothing is growing in this pot (show pot full of dirt and packaged seeds).

But, if a gardener says, "It is too much work! This year I'm not going to plant anything. I'm just going to sit back and look at the dirt" but then changes her mind and plants the some seeds anyway, the garden will grow, just like this plant is growing (show small houseplant). To which gardener would you give a "thumbs up" or a "thumbs down"?

That's a lot like the answers Jesus got when he told the story about the two brothers.

Prayer:

Thank you, God, for keeping the promises that you have made to us. Please help us keep our promises and do the good and right things we say we will do. And when we say no to good requests, help us change our minds so that we go and do what is right. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Taking Charge

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 22

Title: Taking Charge
Author: Harold Schilk
Church: Lethbridge Mennonite Church, Alberta
Text: Matthew 21: 42-44
Theme: God comes to all kinds of people, inviting them to do God's will, by serving or leading others.
Needed: A Bible

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why it is so tempting to let your friends go ahead of others.
- I wonder how Cybil felt when she was asked to be a leader, even though she was tiny.
- I wonder whom God will call to be a leader from this group of children.

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Gathering Activity:

Invite the children forward by asking them to join you in a quick round of "Follow-the-Leader". Thank them for their participation and ask them if they thought you were a fair leader. How can we tell that leaders are fair? Encourage them to settle into a comfortable position so they can listen and participate deeply in this important part of the worship service. Once they are settled, explain that God wants people to treat others fairly, but that today's Bible story is about more than being fair. It is also about how God sometimes surprises us by God's choice of leaders. The ideas for this story came from Matthew 21. (Show and/or read the children Matthew 21: 42-44)

Story:

Billy was a strong, tall boy. He liked to play all kinds of sports. Since Billy was a few inches taller than most of the other children in the classroom, he was someone people naturally looked up to. Given this, it wasn't too much of a surprise when the teacher, Mrs. Anderson, asked Billy to be hall monitor. Being hall monitor meant Billy

was to help his classmates line up, take turns entering the washroom at the start of recess time (when too many want to go in all at once) and to take turns using the school's three swings. It was a simple job. The idea was to make sure that everyone got a chance and everyone got a turn.

Unfortunately, it didn't work out that way. Billy thought that his friends should benefit from his hall monitor job. And so... when it came time to line up and go to recess, Billy let his friends push their way to the front of the line. When it came time to play on the swings, Billy allowed his friends to go first. Also, instead of a five minute turn, they were allowed to swing for almost ten!

It felt good to be able to give special favours to friends. It felt good to be able to make up the rules. The other children, however, who were pushed aside and lost their place in line, or who had to wait an extra long time before they got to swing, didn't think that Billy was doing a good job. In fact, they thought that Billy was doing an awful job!

Do you agree?

How do you think the children felt?

What do you think they might do?

And what do you think the teacher did when she noticed what was going on?

She asked Billy to stop being hall monitor and gave the position to Cybil, who happened to be one of the smallest girls in the class. That surprised many children, because Cybil was tiny. Everyone had to look down at Cybil! But, Cybil was fair. She didn't let her friends push ahead or take extra long turns. In fact, Cybil had a very good sense of timing! Billy and his friends didn't want to listen to her at first, but everyone else (including Mrs. Anderson) did. And so, when everyone else followed Cybil's directions, recess became a better time for all. Soon everyone (including all of the big boys) respected Cybil. They found that Mrs. Anderson's new hall monitor was good at being in charge, even if she was small.

Prayer

Thank you, God, that Jesus showed and taught us good ways of being in charge. Thank you for picking leaders others wouldn't choose. Please help us be fair, whether we are in charge or not. Amen.

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**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Gabriel's Grand Party

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 23

Title: Gabriel's Grand Party
Author: Harold Schilk
Church: Lethbridge Mennonite Church, Alberta
Text: Matthew 22:1-14
Theme: God calls and invites everyone in the world to share in his goodness.

(The storyteller could wear a paper party hat for a visual attraction or for simple pleasure!)

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how much money we spend to have a normal birthday party.
- I wonder how it would feel to spend that money helping poor children.
- I wonder what our world would be like if everyone had enough.
- I wonder what ways we will find to share God's goodness with others.

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Gathering Activity:

Invite all the children who have had, or will have, a birthday this year to gather for the children's story. As you welcome them, engage them in some conversation about their ages and what they enjoy about birthday parties. If you are wearing a paper party hat, you could take a little poll about who thinks hats add fun to a party. Once a sense of familiarity and comfort has been established in this way, settle into a space of holy expectation with the children. Wonder about the good things about God we will learn from today's story. Explain that the ideas for this story come from Matthew 22, where Jesus told a story about a party.

Story:

Gabriel was almost 11 years old. Her birthday was just a few weeks away. "What would you like for your birthday?" asked her mother. "I dunno," answered Gabriel. "How about some yummy cake and party hats?" prompted her dad. "Not sure," said Gabriel. The cake sounded good but the hats seemed a bit too much.Too much...those words echoed through her thoughts as she headed to sit on her bed.

Suddenly, Gabriel brightened. “Yeah! It is all **too much**. I have now lived a whole ten years and I’ve got *too much*.” Ten years and ten birthdays had meant a whole lot of presents. Gabriel looked around her bedroom. Her closet was full of clothes. Books lined her bookshelves. Toys spilled out of her chest and lay all over the floor. Why get more?

These thoughts continued to stay with Gabriel and unsettled her. She had listened to the news about the three hurricanes that hit Haiti in September and couldn’t forget the pictures of people who had lost everything. It didn’t seem right that she had this much stuff.

And then there was the party! Whom to invite? Should she invite just her close friends? Should she invite everyone who invited her to a party during the last year? Or should she invite her whole class? Or grade division? Or even the whole school? And the same words came back into her head ...**too much ... too much**...Gabriel knew there were many children who didn’t have parents who could throw them a birthday party. Many Haitian children, while they might have a Mom or a Dad, no longer had a place they could call home. They had **too much** too, but...**too much** sadness and not enough joy.

Slowly an idea started forming in Gabriel’s head. She thought about all her parties and the many more that she had attended. “What if.... I was to throw a birthday party where all of my guests would not bring presents for me but would bring presents that I could send to those people who were still suffering from the hurricane? Wow.... Now, that would totally surprise all of my friends. It would be like throwing a party for people who would not be able to come to my party but who really need some presents.”

Gabriel’s parents loved this idea and threw a memorable party that her entire community noticed and remembered. They hung bright decorations, danced to Haitian music and even served Creole Chicken alongside of the other party food. They made cards to send to children in Haiti and gave money to Mennonite Central Committee’s relief program. It was fun and they felt like they were making a real difference with their gifts.

The memories of Gabriel’s party stayed with the children who came to her party. It felt great to know their party had sent a little love and joy to children with *too much* sadness.

Prayer:

Thank you God, for celebrations and chances to share your goodness in all kinds of ways. Thank you for giving us so much. Help us to be cheerful givers. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Tricky Money Talk

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 24

Title: Tricky Money Talk
Author: Harold Schilk
Church: Lethbridge Mennonite Church, Alberta
Text: Matthew 22:15-22
Theme: While we give our rulers what belongs to them, we must also give to God what is God's.
Needed: A piece of paper currency, such as a \$5 note, a dozen eggs, and a Bible.

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder what the people who didn't like Jesus did when he gave them such a smart answer.
- I wonder if money can ever belong to God.
- I wonder if others can tell that we belong to God.

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Gathering Activity:

Begin by welcoming the children and expressing appreciation for their participation in this special part of the worship service where we worship from a child's point of view. Show them some money so you can think about it together. Draw their attention to the government leader's head on it and ask them the same question that Jesus asked in today's reading: "Whose picture is this?" Then ask: "To whom does this bill belong?" While some of the children might say that the bill belongs to you, the story teller, that is not the case (which might also surprise you, especially if you took the bill out of your wallet!). Show them the © **Bank of Canada** that is on all Canadian paper currency. Explain that we are allowed to use money to buy things, but the actual money belongs to the government.

Object Lesson:

Let's just imagine what would happen if we didn't have money. *Take out a dozen of eggs.*

If you were an egg farmer, instead of taking your wallet, you would have to take dozens of eggs with you wherever you went so that you could trade the eggs for a new book or a new TV set. Just think what that would be like. For some things you'd need a lot of eggs! And, think how heavy or gooey someone's purse or backpack would get if they only had eggs to trade with! So, it's good that the government makes money and it's good that your parents earn money, and not just eggs, by working. If there was no money, what would your parents trade with? Governments make paper money so that people have an easy way of buying things. Jesus surprised people who had questions about money a long time ago, so let's settle down to learn some more about Jesus and money. Maybe this time we'll imagine ourselves settling in on the laps of the disciples who were watching and learning from Jesus.

Bible Story:

One day, some people who didn't like Jesus wanted to get him into trouble. These people knew that many of Jesus' followers did not want to pay taxes to the emperor. (Emperor is what they called the government leader at that time.) Can you imagine people not wanting to pay taxes?! Well, people who didn't like Jesus asked him if it was good or bad to pay taxes to the emperor. If Jesus said that it was good then his followers might think that Jesus was more the emperor's friend than their friend, because the emperor wanted lots of their money for himself. But, if Jesus said that it was bad to pay taxes, then the emperor and the tax collectors might think Jesus was trying to stir up trouble against them. So Jesus was trapped! What could he say? He would get in trouble if he said paying taxes was "good" or "bad".

But Jesus was smart. He knew that money belonged to the emperor because it had his picture on it. *Open your Bible to this part of the dialogue.* When Jesus asked the troublemakers whose picture was on the coin they answered, "The emperor's." Jesus then told them, "That's right. Give the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and give God the things that are God's." (Mt.22:21) *Show them the place where Jesus' smart answer is written down.* What a good answer! Sometimes we forget whose things are whose.

But, what did Jesus mean when he said, "Give God the things that are God's"? What do you think? What bears the image of God like money bears the image of the government? *Wait for a response, then affirm, or add the following.* People are created to show God's image. We are to live so others can tell we belong to God. That happens when we love and share with others; when we live in fair, caring, and healthy ways. The people who were trying to trick Jesus needed a reminder that they belonged to God. Jesus really got it right! He knew what belongs to God and what belongs to the government. And, the good news is that Jesus can help us get it right, too.

Prayer:

Thank you Jesus, for your smart answer about what belongs to the government and what belongs to God. Please help us live and use our money in ways that show we are yours. Amen.



**Mennonite
Church
Canada**

Resource Centre

Keeping Your Eye on the Ball

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 25

| | |
|---------|---|
| Title: | Keeping Your Eye on the Ball |
| Author: | Harold Schilk |
| Church: | Lethbridge Mennonite Church, Alberta |
| Text: | Matthew 22:34-46 |
| Theme: | What does it mean to concentrate on loving God with all that you are? |
| Needed: | A sponge ball and bat (plastic is good) and a Bible |

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why people wanted to trick Jesus with hard questions.
- I wonder what games Jesus played as a child, and what he had to keep his eye on.
- I wonder how we can stay focused on loving God and our neighbours.

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Gathering Activity:

Hold the bat and ball in your hands as you welcome the children to this special part of the worship service for children but don't say anything about the ball and bat. Engage them in a short conversation about things that are happening in your church community and then say, "I notice that you have been keeping your eyes on my ball and bat, and that is very good, because today's children's story is called "Keeping Your Eye on the Ball." This might surprise you because ball games aren't mentioned in the Bible, and this story time is there to help you understand one of today's Bible readings. What is important in our Bible reading today is a skill that's also very important in baseball. So let's imagine ourselves onto the laps of Jesus' disciples as they listened to Jesus, the best teacher of all, and see what we can learn from Jesus today. If they had played ball in Jesus' neighbourhood, I think Jesus might have explained the importance of keeping your eye on the ball something like this."

Object Lesson:

In the sport of baseball batters are told to keep their eyes on the ball. That means they are supposed to watch the ball. They aim their attention at the thing they want to make contact with – the ball. *(Show the children a few practice hits by throwing up the ball and lightly bunting the ball. At first hit the ball. Later try looking away from the ball - at people in the congregation, at the back of the church and note how you are likely to miss making contact.)* Ask the children, “Why am I not able to hit the ball when I am looking away but able to hit it when I look at it?” *(Answer: because it is hard to get something unless you aim for it)*

Story:

One day some people wanted to trick Jesus. Just like in last week’s story, they tried to give him a hard question that he wouldn’t be able to answer. They asked him: “...which commandment in the law is the greatest?” Now this was like asking someone “what is the best sport to play?” There are many different opinions on that. If someone were to say one sport, others would disagree and then a very vigorous debate could take place. *(You could ask the children what their opinion is of which is the best sport, but be careful, pandemonium could ensue!)*

But Jesus had the perfect answer to this hard question about what the greatest commandment is. I’ll read what he said from my Bible. Jesus said: “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” *(Matthew 22:37-40 NRSV)*

This answer was like answering the “what is the best sport?” question with: “the sport that makes you healthy and gives you the most pleasure.” Making people healthy and giving them pleasure is the main aim of sports. That would be hard to deny. Likewise, the greatest purpose of the commandments is to help us love God and each other better. That would be hard to deny. When we keep our eyes focused on loving God and neighbours as ourselves, we can make wonderful contact. That’s the skill of “keeping your eye on the ball” we want to remember from this story. Just like a batter can hit the ball when she stays focused on it, we can live in tune with the commandments when we love God and our neighbours as ourselves. With that answer, Jesus hit one right out of the ballpark!

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for your smart answer about the most important commandment or rule. Please help us stay focused on loving you and our neighbours as ourselves when we wonder about what is most important. Amen.



**Mennonite
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Resource Centre

The Best of Friends

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 26

Title: The Best of Friends
Author: Michelle J. Dueck
Church: Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, MB
Text: Matthew 23:1-12
Theme: When we are filled with God's love, our actions will spring out of that love, rather than out of a desire to impress others.

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how Nikki and Elizabeth got to be friends.
- I wonder if God wants to help us grow such friendships in our church family.
- I wonder how God's love shows through in the ways we help each other.

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Gathering Activity:

Take a few moments to welcome the children and help them settle into a mood of holy listening. Imagining themselves onto the lap of Jesus is a good way of doing this. Once they are settled, introduce the story as follows. The ideas for today's story come from Matthew 23. (Show them the text.) In today's Bible reading, Jesus scolds people who pretend to be good when others are watching them instead of being good because they are full of God's love. Many people get better at just pretending to be good as they get older, but in today's children's story there is an old person and a young person who don't just pretend to be good friends, they are true friends. If Jesus was talking about Nikki and Elizabeth, he would not scold, he would smile and say they are the kind of friends we should try to be. So let's listen.

Story:

Nikki and Elizabeth are best friends. They like eating gooseberries from the garden, working or playing in the yard, and painting pictures together. Elizabeth is older than

Nikki and likes to teach her things and tell her stories. Nikki is much younger than Elizabeth. She likes listening to Elizabeth's stories and always likes to help her. They became best friends the summer when Nikki was eight, and Elizabeth was seventy-six.

That was when Elizabeth taught Nikki to paint. Elizabeth is an artist and says that Nikki is an artist, too.

As Nikki grew bigger, she helped Elizabeth more and more with the yard work. Nikki wanted to water the flowers all by herself, or trim the tree all by herself, or to mow the lawn all by herself. When they painted together, Nikki wanted to do her painting all by herself. Nikki wanted to show Elizabeth what a big girl she was.

Each year, as Elizabeth got older, she stayed beside Nikki in the yard, telling her the names of the flowers and how much water they needed, what branches to cut off the tree, and what plants to mow around. When they painted together, Elizabeth made sure to tell Nikki what a wonderful job she was doing. She also made sure that Nikki was using the right brushes and the right colours. Elizabeth liked watching Nikki grow, and Elizabeth wanted Nikki to know that she could still do things, too.

Nikki loved Elizabeth for being Elizabeth, it didn't matter how old Elizabeth was or how much she could still do. Elizabeth loved Nikki for being Nikki, it didn't matter to Elizabeth how big Nikki was or how much she could do all by herself. Nikki learned that Elizabeth was happiest when they really worked together, and then Nikki was happy, too.

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for true friends who show us what your love is like. Thank you for helping us to be true friends with others and with you. Amen.



**Mennonite
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Resource Centre

Going Camping?

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 27

Title: Going Camping?
Author: Michelle J. Dueck
Church: Fort Garry Mennonite
Fellowship, Winnipeg, MB
Text: Matthew 25:1-3
Theme: Good choices help us get
ready for God's coming and/
or being in charge.

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder if Kristen learned to make better choices.
- I wonder what would have happened if Aunt Joy had just gone camping with Ben.
- I wonder what good choices we could be making this week.

Gathering Activity:

Invite and welcome the children to this special time of the worship service where we talk about the worship theme in ways they can understand. Encourage them to settle their bodies and their hearts so they can notice God's love all around and prepare themselves to hear what Jesus wants them to hear today. A short prayer of thanks for God's nearness would be appropriate here. Open your Bible to Matthew 25 and show it to the children. Tell them today's Bible story is about some people who made good and poor choices about getting ready for a wedding. The children's story is about two children who are getting ready for a special camping trip with their aunt.

Story:

Ben and Kristen were excited: on Friday, just five days away, their Aunt Joy was coming to take them camping. To help them get ready, Mom made a list of things that would be good for Ben and Kristen to pack. This is how their week went:

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On Monday, Ben chose his three favourite books and packed them into his backpack. Kristen chose favourite books, too, but she read them and let them fall behind her bed.

On Tuesday, Ben chose sports equipment to take along. He packed his ball and glove, his Frisbee, a pail, and a shovel into a bag. Kristen thought about her choices as she played ball in the yard, but then she got distracted and left her glove under the picnic table. And, she couldn't find her pail and shovel because they were hiding behind some bushes.

On Wednesday, Ben got out his sleeping bag, pillow, an extra blanket, and his flashlight, and put them all by the door. Kristen got out her sleeping bag, pillow, extra blanket, and flashlight too, but decided to make a fort in the basement with them. After all, she still had two days to get ready.

On Thursday, Ben chose and packed clean clothes for the camping trip. Kristen picked clothes too, but decided to wear them because they were so comfy. As she climbed trees and played under the deck they got too dirty to take along. They both picked out favourite snack foods to take along, but then Kristen ate hers.

On Friday, when Aunt Joy came, Ben was all ready to go camping, but Kristen wasn't. Ben crawled up on the couch to watch Aunt Joy from the window. Kristen ran to her room and crawled under her bed to look for her books. Ben ran outside to give Aunt Joy a hug. Kristen ran outside to look for her sports equipment. Ben and Aunt Joy packed Ben's bags into the car, but Kristen started crying and hid in her sleeping bag fort. What do you think happened? (Pause for responses)

This is what happened. Ben and Aunt Joy had a snack while they waited for Kristen. When she didn't show up they looked for Kristen. When they found her, Kristen was crying. She was sorry that she wasn't ready. Aunt Joy gave Kristen a hug and told her she had missed her. Kristen asked if she could still come camping. Aunt Joy said yes, so did Ben. Kristen smiled, pulled down her fort, rolled up her sleeping bag, and ran off to finish getting ready.

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for good stories that teach us about getting ready for important things. Thank you for loving people, like Aunt Joy, who give us second chances. Please help us make good choices this week. Amen.



**Mennonite
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Resource Centre

Using our Gifts

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 28

Title: Using our Gifts
Author: Michelle J. Dueck
Church: Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, MB
Text: Matthew 25:14-30
Theme: God gives us gifts for sharing Jesus' love with others
Snack option: Bring cookies from your grandparent's recipe, explaining how you learned it from them and are happy to share it with the children.

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder what happened when Isaac and Anna shared their song with Jessie.
- I wonder why God hides different gifts in each of us.
- I wonder what gifts each of us has to share.
- I wonder how the world becomes a happier place when we share our gifts.

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Gathering Activity:

Begin by inviting the children to come forward so you can worship and share a story together. Encourage them to settle in a comfortable position and to connect with that quiet spot inside where we can feel God's nearness. You might even want to share the cookies with them as an introduction to the story. If so, include a short prayer of thanks for the many gifts God gives us so we can share them with others. Open your Bible to Matthew 25 and show it to the children. Tell them that in today's Scripture Jesus tells a story that shows how important it is to share the gifts God gives people. Our children's story has the same idea, but it is about the kind of gifts that children are really good at sharing.

Story:

Jessie had a big brother, Isaac, and a big sister, Anna. When Grandpa and Grandma came to visit, they said that God had hidden some gifts inside of Isaac, and Anna, and Jessie. They had come to help the children find these gifts so that they could practice using them and be part of making the world

into a better place. Grandma and Grandpa helped Isaac bake lots of yummy chocolate-chip cookies. Jessie liked Isaac's cookies. Grandma and Grandpa helped Anna read and write big words and count to high numbers. Anna started writing stories and reading them to Jessie. Jessie liked Anna's stories. When it was Jessie's turn, Grandma and Grandpa helped Jessie learn a special song. They had fun singing it together. Then it was time to say good-bye.

After Grandma and Grandpa left, Isaac baked lots of cookies and gave some to the new neighbours. The new neighbour lady smiled and taught Isaac how to make brownies.

After Grandma and Grandpa left, Anna met a new boy at school named Tae. She helped Tae learn to read and write in English. Tae helped Anna learn Korean words and numbers. After Grandma and Grandpa left, Isaac and Anna asked Jessie about the song, but Jessie said the song was too special to share.

The next time Grandpa and Grandma came to visit, Isaac baked cookies and brownies for them. This made them very happy. Then, Anna showed them how much she could read and write and how much Korean she was learning. This made Grandma and Grandpa very happy, too. Finally, it was Jessie's turn. Jessie told Grandma and Grandpa he had kept their song a secret because it was so special. Grandma and Grandpa asked to hear it, but when Jessie tried to sing it, no sound came out. Jessie had forgotten the song. Jessie was sad and ran away to his room. Grandma and Grandpa were sad, too. Then they taught a special song to Isaac and Anna to sing, and asked them to share it with Jessie after he came out of his room.

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for people like the Grandparents in this story, who help us find and practice using our gifts as a way of sharing your love.



**Mennonite
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Resource Centre

Gussy finds a Bunny

Children's Story

Cycle A, Proper 29

Title: Gussy finds a Bunny
Author: Michelle J. Dueck
Church: Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg, MB
Text: Matthew 25:31-46
Theme: Jesus is both our shepherd and our judge. He expects God's children to look after those who are in need.

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how the baby bunny got lost from its mother.
- I wonder why Gussy was kind to the bunny instead of pouncing on it.
- I wonder what this story can teach us.

Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children to this special time of the worship service where we talk about the Bible's ideas in ways that children can understand. Encourage them to settle into a comfy position so they can listen well. Imagine together that Jesus is there with you, and Jesus is curious about the story being told because it is about something that really matters to him. Show them Matthew 25 in your Bible and tell them the story is about some pretty grown-up ideas that are on this page in the Bible, but even though it helps us understand some pretty grown-up ideas, it is also a true story about cats, a bunny, and a little white dog.

Story:

Gussy is a cat. He is big and tall and has green eyes. He loves to play. He lives in a house with an old tan cat who lies around a lot, a little white dog who likes to run and bark, and with two humans who take good care of them. Like most cats, Gussy likes taking naps in the warm sun, but even better than that, he likes racing and chasing and catching things to play with. He has fun

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sneaking up ever so quietly to pounce on unsuspecting toes, or toys, or anything that moves or might move if pounced on. Gussy actually liked the little white dog because he was fun to play with.

One afternoon, Gussy went outside and snuck under the fence into the neighbours' yard. Gussy nosed around in the freshly cut grass and found a baby bunny that wiggled. It was so little that it didn't have any fur yet. Somehow, it had lost its mother and its safe warm den. What do you think Gussy the cat did with this wiggly little baby bunny? (Pause)

This time Gussy didn't pounce. Gussy felt sorry for the baby bunny. He picked the bunny up in his mouth gently and brought the bunny to the humans who lived in his house. They named the bunny Wiggles. Gussy and the little white dog watched as Wiggles was bottle-fed, and watched Wiggles sleep in a cage. When Wiggles cried, Gussy helped get the people's attention. When visitors came over, Gussy sat right close to Wiggles' cage and stared at them. The old tan cat, ears flat, stared at visitors, too. Nothing that could hurt Wiggles was getting past his sharp cat eyes.

Sometimes Gussy would get impish and get ready to pounce on Wiggles, but then the little white dog would come running and barking at him from the other side of the room. Caring for Wiggles was a group effort. These animals and humans knew something important about getting along.

Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for this true story of caring for a lost little bunny. Help us to take good care of each other, and to be kind to people and animals that need our help. Amen.



Love your enemies

Children's Story

All Saints Day

Title: Love Your Enemies
Author: Barrette Plett
Church: Bergthal Mennonite Church,
Winnipeg, MB
Text: Luke 6:20-31 (Today's story
focuses on v:27-31)
Theme: Jesus wants us to surprise
people who are mean to us by
being kind and helpful, even if
that is hard and unusual.

Needed:

Apple, small milk carton, ball cap and coat,
toy cars, something special to you.

Wondering Questions:

- I wonder if these stories could be true.
- I wonder if children would give away their things to another person.
- I wonder what happened when these children did the hard but unselfish thing.

Gathering Activity:

Welcome and show the children the special item you have brought. Explain why it is special. Ask them if they think that you would give it away. Ask them how they think you'd feel if the item were lost, stolen or taken away from you. Explain that you have three stories for them where people have special things taken away from them and encourage them to settle into good listening positions and attitudes. While telling the story, pantomime the story or get some older children to act it out, using the props listed above.

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Story:

Our three stories are about a girl named Tracy, a boy named James and another boy named Paul.

Once, there was a little girl named Tracy. She was walking home from school. On her way home from school, she was going to have a snack; she had an apple and some milk. Her mom had given her the apple before school. It was the reddest, sweetest-looking apple and the girl loved apples. She shined it on her sleeve and was just about to bite into it when another girl ran up and grabbed the apple from her. Before she could say anything, the other girl took a big bite out of the apple. Tracy looked at the other girl. The girl started to run away, but Tracy shouted, "Wait!"

What do you think happened next?

When the girl stopped, Tracy said, "You must be very hungry. Would you like some milk, too?" The girl was surprised, but then came back to Tracy and took the milk. "Thank you," she said. "I haven't eaten all day because my mom didn't pack a lunch for me." Tracy was glad that she'd shared the apple.

The next day, a boy named James was walking to the store. He was wearing his new baseball cap; he'd gotten it for his birthday and it had his favourite football team's logo on it (e.g. *the Blue Bombers*). As he walked, it started to get windy and cool. He pulled up his jacket collar and walked on. When he was almost home, a bigger boy ran up to him and grabbed his cap! Before James could say anything, the boy put the cap on his head and started to run away, but James shouted, "Wait!"

What do you think happened next?

When the boy stopped, James said, "You must be very cold. Would you like to borrow my jacket, too?" The boy was surprised, but came back to James and took his jacket. "Thanks," he said, "My jacket is too small for me, but I'll give these back when my dad buys me a new one." James was glad that he'd offered his jacket.

The next day, a boy named Paul was playing with his new toy car in the sandbox. He'd just gotten the car from his Grandma. It was red and went very fast. He made lots of roads in the sandbox to drive it on. Suddenly, a girl ran into the sandbox and grabbed James' car. Before he could do anything, she shoved it into her pocket and started to run away. But James shouted, "Wait!"

What do you think happened next?

The girl stopped and James said, "That's my favourite car, but you can play with it if you want. I've already made some pretty neat roads here and I have some other cars, too. You wanna come see?" The girl was surprised, but came back to James. "Thanks," she said. "No one ever lets me play with them." "Maybe you shouldn't take their toys," thought James, but he decided not to bring it up right then. They made a great big city in the sand and played together all afternoon.

Prayer:

Jesus, help us to be kind and generous to people when they're not kind to us. Help us to look for ways to help people and to remember to treat others the way we would like to be treated.