



# Year C Children's Stories for Worship

Based on the Gospel Text  
from the Common Lectionary

Edited by Elsie Rempel



# Just another Ordinary Act

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Epiphany 2

**Title:** Just an ordinary act?  
**Author:** Miriam Susanne Wakeman  
**Church:** Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB  
**Text:** John 2:1-11 wedding at Cana  
**Theme:** Jesus makes the ordinary extraordinary  
**Needed:** materials for the selected object lesson, in which you turn the something ordinary into something special. Choose one of the following:  
- fold a piece of origami with ordinary paper  
- shine light through a prism to make a rainbow  
- make some type of drink with water and drink crystals  
- perform a magic trick

### Gathering Activity:

Good morning, I'm glad to see you all today. Let's settle into comfortable positions so we can listen well, and see well, and think well about a story where something very special happens. [*Once they are settled, begin with the object lesson. Talk about the ordinary object you've chosen (paper, light, water, etc.) Ask them if they see anything special about the object. Stress its ordinariness, how there are lots of the object etc, while you manipulate your object to turn it into some thing special (the drink, or origami figure, etc.) Put the object safely aside and focus on the story.*]

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**Story:**

Let's think about the story from John 2:1-11, that was just read to us. What do we remember? What happened in the story? *Review the basic facts; especially that Jesus made water into wine at a wedding.*

Great. I'm glad you were listening to the scripture reading. Do any of you drink wine? I did not think so. Do you think that the servants had ever filled jars with water before? (Yes) Do you think the servants were doing anything different for this wedding than for other weddings? (No) The servants were doing the ordinary things a servant was supposed to do. Jesus used these ordinary actions of the servants and ordinary things like jars and water to make something very special. He turned ordinary water into very good wine. That's how Jesus was, back then, and that's how Jesus is now. When we do ordinary things for Jesus, he can still use them to do something special; something that makes us and those around us feel special and loved. Ordinary can become extraordinary. *Pick up and hold the object you created out of something ordinary.*

**Prayer:**

Thank you Jesus, that you can use our ordinary actions to do extraordinary things. We want to follow you and be part of the special things that happen when you are at work among us. Amen.

**Wondering questions:**

- I wonder what the servants thought when they filled the jars with water.
- I wonder what they felt when they saw wine pour out of the jars.
- I wonder what this story wants to show us.
- I wonder what ordinary acts of ours Jesus wants to use to do something extraordinary.



**Mennonite  
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# Jesus announces his job

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Epiphany 3

**Title:** Jesus announces his job  
**Author:** Miriam Susanne Wakeman  
**Church:** Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB  
**Text:** Luke 4: 14-21 Jesus reads the scroll  
**Theme:** Today this has been fulfilled in your hearing

### Gathering Activity:

Good morning, I'm glad to see you all today. Let's settle into comfortable positions so we can listen well, and see well, as we enter this special part of worship. Today we'll start by thinking about jobs that we have. *Once they are settled, engage them with the following questions: Who here knows what it means to have a job. Do people ever give you jobs? What kind of jobs? (clean my room, take the garbage out, set the table, etc.)* Why do you think I'm talking about having jobs to do? Well, I hope you'll understand when I'm finished talking with you today. But now, let's think about the Bible story we heard during the scripture reading.

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[www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/ResourceView/23/6796](http://www.mennonitechurch.ca/resourcecentre/ResourceView/23/6796)

**Story:**

What did we hear in today's scripture? *Review the basics of the story.* Did you see who read today's Scripture? *Ask that person to stand up for them.* Well in the scripture \_\_\_\_\_ read, Jesus stood up to read to the people in the synagogue from the Torah. The synagogue was kind of like our church today, and the Torah is part of the Old Testament in our Bibles. That's a lot like \_\_\_\_\_ read the scripture for us to hear this morning. That was her/his worship job this morning. But, when Jesus stood up to read, his job was a little different. After Jesus finished reading, the people expected him to talk about what he read. They knew he was a wise man, and they were waiting for Jesus to explain what the words he read meant. They were waiting for him to have something like a sermon. But Jesus just said, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" and sat down. I wonder what the people thought about that. What do you think that means? Here's what I think it means. Jesus was telling the people that the Torah was talking about him. Jesus was saying that God had sent him to "bring good news to the poor, let the blind see, and free those who were trapped or treated badly." Jesus was saying that this was his special job on earth. Wow!

As Christians we have a special job on earth, too, the special job of doing what Jesus did. Jesus came to set us free so we can help others be free. We can help bring good news, we can let others know that we love them and that God loves them, too. Whatever special abilities we have, we can use them to help bring good news as we follow Jesus.

**Prayer:**

Thank you, Jesus, for helping people who are poor, and blind, and sick, and for freeing those who are trapped and treated badly. Help us join you on your special job. Amen.

**Wondering questions:**

- I wonder what it would be like to see for the first time.
- I wonder what it feels like for a captive to be set free.
- I wonder how we can help spread the good news of Jesus.



# Jesus won't always give you what you want

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Epiphany 4

**Title:** Jesus won't always give you what you want.  
**Author:** Miriam Susanne Wakeman  
**Text:** Luke 5: 1-11.  
**Church:** Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB  
**Text:** Luke 4:22-30  
**Theme:** Jesus calls us to follow him

### Wondering questions:

- I wonder what the people expected when Jesus said he was sent with good news for the poor.
- I wonder why Jesus would not perform miracles in his home town.
- I wonder what we can learn from being angry about not getting what we want.

### Gathering Activity:

Good Morning, Children. I hope you had a good week. Let's settle into comfortable positions so we can listen well, and see well, as we enter this special part of worship. Today we'll start by remembering last week's children's story. Remember: Jesus stood up, read from the scroll, and told the people that the Bible was talking about him, and sat down instead of having a sermon. That was his way of announcing that God had sent him to bring good news to the poor, to let the blind see, and free those who were trapped or treated badly. Today's gospel text shows us how the people in Nazareth reacted to what Jesus said after he announced what his job was and sat down.

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**Story:**

After Jesus made his announcement, the people in Nazareth were excited. They had heard about the miracles Jesus performed in other places, and now they wanted Jesus to do the same for them. They wanted to see what he could do. But, he didn't do what they wanted him to do. Maybe they were hoping he would change some water into good wine for them. But Jesus said, no, he was not going to do miracles in his hometown of Nazareth.

This did not make them happy. It made the people so angry they wanted to hurt him and throw him off a cliff.

Can you imagine how they felt? Have you ever been angry when you didn't get what you wanted? Maybe you asked your Mom or Dad to buy you something at the store and they said, "No, we're not buying that." Do you remember how you felt? Were you angry, sad, disappointed, or even jealous? Well, that is how the people in Jesus' hometown of Nazareth felt, when Jesus would not perform a miracle for them. Maybe the people of Nazareth wanted to see a miracle, just to see a miracle. Maybe they did not understand or care about the job that God sent Jesus to do. God did not send Jesus to entertain people with miracles; Jesus was sent to teach the people about God. Sometimes miracles helped Jesus show people what God wanted for the world. But, not always, and not this time in Nazareth. They almost did something very bad because they were so angry.

We live a long time after those people in Nazareth, but we can still learn about what God wants for us from Jesus. Jesus did not always do everything people wanted him to do then, and Jesus doesn't give us everything we ask for now, either. When we get angry about that, let's remember these people and

ask ourselves, "Will the things we're asking for help us be part of God's plan of love and right living?" And then, let's cool down, and ask Jesus to give us what we need to join in with God's good, big plan. When we do that, we will help Jesus do his important job on earth.

**Prayer:**

Jesus, it can be really hard when we don't get what we want. It can make us angry. Help us remember that you know what we need, better than we do. Help us learn from you and join in with God's big, good plan. Amen.



**Mennonite  
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Resource Centre

## True “Fish Stories”

### Children’s Story

Cycle C - 5

Title: True “Fish Stories”  
Author: Deb Wolf  
Church: Northgate Mennonite Brethren  
Church, Dawson Creek, BC  
Text: Luke 5: 1 – 11  
Theme: Jesus calls us to follow him.

#### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder what it was like to catch so many fish.
- I wonder how Simon, James and John felt about switching to “fishing for people” with Jesus.
- I wonder how our church is like a Jesus net.
- I wonder how Jesus wants us to help him collect people into the net of God’s Kingdom.

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#### Introduction:

I invited you to come up for a children’s story today, and you came. But if I invited you to leave your families and come with me on a long trip, what would you say? (allow responses) Even if a few of you would say yes to me, your parents would come here and say “No way!” If I told them that you’d be doing something really good, your parents would still say, “No, our children are too young to leave us.” But, what if I asked the young adults in our church to leave their jobs or their studies, to leave their families and come with me to follow Jesus. What do you think they’d do? (If someone from your church is on a mission/service trip, this would be a good time to remind the children of that.)

That’s what Jesus asks his friends Simon, James and John to do in today’s Bible story. (Open your Bible to Luke 5: 1-11 and show them the page.) When I think about this story, this is how I imagine it happened.

#### Story:

Simon, the fisherman, was tired! So were his fishermen friends, James and John. They had been fishing all night so their families could eat and have something to sell at market. But what had they caught? NOTHING! Their hands ached from the nets scratching them. Their eyes hurt from trying to see in the dark. Their hearts were sad because they had nothing to bring to their families to eat and sell.



Simon looked up and saw his friend, Jesus, coming towards them. His tiredness faded. Lots of people were following Jesus, crowding around and listening to him. Simon loved his friend, Jesus. Somehow, Jesus' kind eyes made Simon feel stronger and less tired. Jesus walked right up to Simon and asked him if he could borrow his boat to get off shore a little, so that more people could see him while he talked. What do you think Simon said? "Yes, Jesus!"

After talking to the people from Simon's boat for a while, Jesus asked Simon, James, and John to join him. He asked them to row out to deeper water and put their nets back in. They were surprised, because it wasn't the time of day for catching fish, but they trusted him, so they said, "Yes, Jesus!" They did what Jesus said – even though they hadn't caught ANY fish in that spot ALL night. Who knows what happened? Yes, would you believe it? Their nets almost broke and their boats almost sank with all the fish Simon, James, and John caught!

When they were back at shore, and had taken care of the fish, Jesus said to Simon, James, and John, "OK guys, I helped you with your work. Now, I'd like you to come and help me with my work. I'd like you to fish for people instead of for fish, so we can collect them into the net of God's Kingdom." What do you think Simon, James, and John said? That's right, they said "YES, JESUS!"

Jesus wants us say "YES, JESUS!" too. Yes, I want to be in the net of your kingdom. That net is full of love and truth and fairness. Yes, I will tell others and invite them into that net, too. For some people, that can mean going far away. For others it means following Jesus right here in (our church). For all of us it means loving Jesus and being Jesus' friends who share the love and blessings Jesus gives us.

**Prayer:**

Thank you, Jesus, that you are with us and still invite us to follow you. Fill our hearts so that we have the courage to invite others to follow you, too. Help us follow you, even when it seems scary. Thank you for leading us, knowing us, loving us and trusting us with collecting others into the net of your Kingdom. Amen.



# Following surprising instructions

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Epiphany 5

**Title:** Following surprising instructions

**Author:** Sherisse Langner Penner and Janice Penner, teachers at Winnipeg Mennonite Elementary and Middle School, Winnipeg, MB

**Text:** Luke 5: 1-11.

**Theme:** Jesus calls us to follow him

**Needed:** a paper towel, basin of water, and a clear cup.

### Wondering questions:

- I wonder what would have happened, if the fishermen in this story had refused to follow Jesus' instructions.
- I wonder if everyone who follows Jesus gets instructions that are surprising.
- I wonder what kind of surprising instructions Jesus has for us.

### Gathering Activity:

Invite the children to come and see what will happen in the children's story time. Thank them for gathering and invite them to become quiet, way down where they can feel God is near, where they can notice God is planning to surprise them with something today. Introduce the topic of following surprising instructions with this activity, an activity that can help us see that surprising things sometimes happen when we follow instructions. *Ask a helper to crumple up a paper towel and a second one to place it inside a clear cup. A third helper turns this cup upside down and immerses it in the basin. Then say something like: What happened? Were you surprised that the paper towel didn't get wet? The first time I tried this, I sure was! All kinds of things can happen when we follow surprising instructions. Now let's hear a story, from a six year old boy, where people were surprised at what happened when they followed some surprising instructions from Jesus.*

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## **Story:**

I was six years old when I saw Jesus for the first time. I remember that because it was the year Papa taught me to cast a net. We'd gone out to Lake Gennesaret nearly every day that summer. Papa and the men were using 8 foot nets, but Papa started me off with a 4 foot net. I vowed that some day I would be casting the 10 foot nets. There's nothing I wanted more than to be a fisherman like Papa. He told me once that the perfect casting technique required years of practice. Every time I cast the net into the water it became twisted and tangled. I could tell that Papa's friends were frustrated when this happened, but Papa patiently untangled the net and told me to try again, even when I got frustrated and wanted to give up.

The day I saw Jesus was one of those frustrating days, even for Papa. We had been out on the water all day and into the night, but had caught nothing! Papa's friend, Simon, finally told us to pack it in. There would be no fish today. We docked the boat at the shore, and I started washing the seaweed from the nets. As I did, I noticed Simon talking to another man. I couldn't hear what they were saying, but I was awfully curious. The man didn't look like any fishermen I'd seen lately, but I saw him step into Simon's boat. Simon shrugged his shoulders and brought the boat a little ways from the shore. My curiosity finally got the better of me. I put down the nets and raced to shore, pushing my way in front of the crowd that had gathered, eager to see what this strange man was going to do. Surely he wasn't going to try fishing tonight! I asked the older boy beside me who this man was. He told me it was Jesus, of Nazareth. Didn't I know that by now! I felt sheepish. Of course I had heard about Jesus, I had just never seen him before. Jesus started speaking from the boat and, even though there were hundreds of people on the beach, his calm voice could be heard by all. I was amazed that Jesus, the man everyone had been talking about, was sitting in Simon's boat!

After he finished speaking to the crowds, Jesus turned to Simon and said, "Go out into the deep water and let your nets down for a catch." Simon, along with the rest of us fishermen, was puzzled. I started to yell, "But we've been out all day and have caught nothing!" but Papa shushed me quickly. I was still puzzled when I saw Simon move the boat further from the shore, pick up the 8 foot net and, with perfect technique, cast it out into the deep water. After a few minutes Simon yelled, "It's full! The net's breaking! We need some help here!" Papa and I ran for our boat. Before I knew it both boats were filled with fish! I was so shocked that I froze for a moment and James had to tell me to keep working. Finally we made our way back to shore in boats that were nearly sinking! What a day! I never expected anything like this to happen!

The crowds cheered as we pulled onto shore. People couldn't stop talking about what a great catch we'd had. As I turned my head to start unloading the fish, I saw something few others saw that day. Simon fell down at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man." Jesus then said something I still think about today. He said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." I kept watching Simon as we cleaned up our best catch of the summer, still in awe of what we had received that day. He seemed different. Then, I heard Papa calling that it was time to go home. As we left the lakeshore, I saw Simon, James, and John all following Jesus. They just left everything and followed! I wished I could do the same. I didn't know much about Jesus the summer I turned six, but I knew that I wanted to get to know him.

## **Prayer:**

Jesus, please help us to be ready for your surprising instructions, to follow you, and get to know you better! Amen..



# Sean's Cactus

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Epiphany 6, February 14, 2010

|                |   |
|----------------|---|
| <b>Title:</b>  | <b>Sean's Cactus</b>  |
| <b>Author:</b> | Deb Wolf  |
| <b>Church:</b> | Northgate Mennonite<br>Brethren Church, Dawson<br>Creek, BC               |
| <b>Text:</b>   | Luke 6: 17 – 26   |
| <b>Theme:</b>  | When God is in charge, the<br>last come first, and the sad<br>become glad |
| <b>Needed:</b> | a paper towel, basin of water,<br>and a clear cup.                        |

### Wondering questions:

- I wonder what plants we are like.
- I wonder why Sean learned to trust Grandma.
- I wonder how God will help the mad and sad become glad in our families.

### Gathering Activity:

Invite the children to come and see what will happen in the children's story time. Thank them for gathering and invite them to become quiet, way down where they can feel God is near. After a sense of holy expectation has grown, show them the scripture text in your Bible, Jesus' Sermon on the Plain, and let them know that this sermon is about sad people becoming glad. For the children's time, you would like to share a story with them about a sad and mad boy, and how a prickly cactus and a Grandma helped him become glad.

### Story:

Sean was sad and Sean was mad. When he was sad, he was quiet, and when he was mad, he acted out. Sean was mad a lot these days.

Sean felt like nothing would ever be right again and that the sad and mad in him would get bigger and bigger until that would be all there was. You see, Sean had been taken away from his mad and sad family

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so that he would be safe. It is very sad when your own family is too sad and mad to be safe. Sean lived with foster families now.

His new foster parents were nice—they even said they were adopting him, and his foster sister, Maya, was fun—she really tried to be his friend, but Sean was afraid of getting close. If he opened up his heart to them it would just hurt more when he got moved again.

Just thinking about it made him even madder! Sean wanted a family that he could trust and stay with, but he was scared.

The person in his foster family who understood him best was Grandma, even if he didn't understand her. She said funny things like, "You will see when you believe." (Sean was pretty sure she had that backwards!) He wondered if Grandma could see things others didn't.

One day, while Sean was watering plants with Grandma, she showed him a little cactus plant. She said Sean was just like that cactus—brave, tough, hard to get close to, and used to living in a desert—but that, one day, something very beautiful would come out of that prickliness. Sean wasn't quite sure what that meant, but he liked it that Grandma thought he was tough and brave. He didn't live in a desert, and he didn't feel any prickles on his skin, but he decided to watch that cactus carefully. When no one was watching or listening, he called it Cactus Sean. He liked the funny, tough and prickly lump of a plant.

Sean and Grandma spent a lot of time together. He started asking her questions about all kinds of plants. They looked at her plant books together. He asked her to name people who were like the plants they looked at. This made them laugh and added a twinkle to their eyes. Grandma told Sean all about cacti, because she remembered calling him

one. She told him how cacti can go for long times without water, how some of them grow in places that are too hot for other plants to live, how they can be homes for animals and provide them with water and shade. Grandma said cacti were among the most hopeful and faithful plants God made, because, no matter how long the rain was in coming, they stood ready, trusting that God would eventually give them what they needed so that they could show their beautiful flowers.

Slowly, slowly, Sean became less sad and mad. He began to trust his foster family. He began to **believe** he would stay with them and, just like Grandma said he would, he began to **see**. He could see he was becoming part of a real and safe family.

One morning, the cactus bloomed. Sean saw it first and ran straight to Grandma's room to tell her about it. She ruffled his hair, gave him a hug and said, "I think more than one cactus is blooming today." Sean hugged her back and snuggled into her lap. He nodded. As they admired the beautiful blossom on the cactus, he told her his secret; that he had named the cactus, Cactus Sean and had been watching it carefully. She nodded back and stroked his hair. Then she said, "But today, your prickles aren't getting in the way, today your beautiful blossom is inviting your new family into your heart. I've believed you would for a while. Today both of us can see and feel it."

### **Prayer:**

Thank you, God, for loving Grandmas and for prickly plants that have beautiful flowers. Thank you for helping us to be loving and safe in our families and in our church. Please help all the children who are not safe to find safe and loving homes, like Sean did. Amen.



## Children's Story

Year C, Easter

# From tiny to Huge!

**Title:** From Tiny to Huge!  
**Author:** Donita Wiebe-Neufeld  
**Church:** First Mennonite Church,  
Edmonton, AB  
**Text:** Acts 10: 34-43  
**Theme:** Following Jesus makes us act a  
little strange

Today is Easter Sunday, the day when Christians around the world celebrate that Jesus is alive! You might wonder what difference does it make that Jesus is alive? We can't see him or touch him, so does it matter that the disciples saw him on Easter morning? For the next 7 Sundays, we will hear stories from the Bible book of Acts. The stories are about what happens to the disciples after Jesus goes to heaven.

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Peter tells the story:

After Jesus had talked to the disciples and gone back to heaven, the disciples started travelling everywhere to tell people about him. Peter told a Roman soldier, named Cornelius, about Jesus and Cornelius believed. Peter also told Cornelius' friends that Jesus was the son of God, sent to earth to heal people and teach us how to live good lives. He taught them that when Jesus died on the cross, he didn't stay dead, but was raised up alive on the third day. Jesus wants to forgive people's sins and invite them to live forever in heaven with him. The Roman people got very excited about this message of forgiveness and life, and many of them became Jesus followers. Then they told their friends too, and it didn't take very long before the tiny number of disciples grew to be a world-wide church with thousands and even millions of people wanting to follow Jesus.

Sophie's Seed:

Sophie held a small carrot seed in her left hand. In her right hand she held a carrot she had taken out of the fridge. "Wow", she thought, who would ever guess that something so small and dry could grow to be so big and delicious!" It was Easter break, and every year Sophie's family liked to start thinking about what they wanted to plant in their garden that spring. So they would pull out the leftover seeds from the year before, and start planning.

Sophie's mom laughed. "It is amazing. And it kind of reminds me of the story we heard in church at Easter time."

"What does a carrot have to do with Easter?" Sophie asked.

"Well, not the carrot." Her mom said. "I was thinking how after Jesus died on the cross, the disciples felt like everything was dead and dry, but then, 3 days later, something happened and then the church grew huge out of that tiny start. "

"The rock was rolled away and the grave was empty!" Sophie said.

"Yes. Jesus was alive. Kind of like a seed sprouting. And that was the start of what we call the church. The disciples got excited that Jesus was alive, and then they all acted like seeds too. They went out to tell other people the good news, and those people told more people and pretty soon the story had gone from a tiny thing that happened in Jerusalem, to a huge story that kept on growing all over the world."

Sophie looked at her carrot. "And the story keeps on feeding us and helping us grow, " she said.

Prayer:

Dear God, we praise you for the amazing and hopeful story of Jesus. Thank you that he is still alive and helps us grow. Help us to be like seeds, growing and spreading your love to others. AMEN

Question for adults:

What is God growing in your life right now?



## Children's Story

Year C, Easter 2

# From Coward to Courageous!

**Title:** From Coward to Courageous!  
**Author:** Donita Wiebe-Neufeld  
**Church:** First Mennonite Church,  
Edmonton, AB  
**Text:** Acts 5:17-32

Today is the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Easter, the season when Christians around the world celebrate that Jesus is alive! You might wonder what difference does it make that Jesus is alive? We can't see him or touch him, so does it matter that the disciples saw him on Easter morning? During this Easter season, we are hearing stories from the Bible book of Acts. The stories are about what happens to the disciples after Jesus goes to heaven.

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**Bible Story:**

After Jesus died, the disciples were scared at first. They stopped telling other people about Jesus because they were afraid they might be killed like Jesus was. But then Easter happened, Jesus was alive again, and they got excited. They knew that God was stronger than death and that God would always take care of them. They began telling lots of people about Jesus. Sure enough, it got them in trouble. Peter and some others got thrown in jail, but at night time, an angel let them out. Instead of running away scared and trying to hide, Peter went right back to the temple and told the people, "God raised Jesus from the dead and now Jesus wants to forgive our sins, teach us how to live, and someday we will live in heaven with him." The chief priests and police did not like this because the people were listening to Peter instead of them. They arrested the disciples and whipped them. They told them not to tell stories about Jesus. But the disciples never stopped telling those stories. Because they knew Jesus was alive, they went from being scaredy-cat cowards to being courageous!

**Sophie's Bravery:**

Sophie has many good friends in her grade two class at school. She always had someone to play with at recess, and someone to work with when there was a hard math question or a big group project, and friends to talk with. One day there was a new girl at school. The new girl was wearing a very ugly coat at recess time. It looked like something she got from an older brother. It was camouflage green, too big for her, and the elbows were ripped. On top of that ugliness, she was wearing an old orange toque that looked like it belonged to a construction worker-maybe her dad or an uncle. It was too big too. Some of Sophie's friends, who had really pretty new clothes, didn't want to play with her. They thought she was odd. Some of them started whispering to each other

about how ugly the coat was, and how maybe the new girl should go back where ever she came from. The nasty talk made Sophie upset. She wanted to be nice to the new girl, but she was also afraid that if she talked to her, that her own friends might want to send her away too. Then Sophie remembered that Jesus always talked with poor people, touched sick people, and even paid attention to children. She thought of the disciples who, even when they were afraid, wanted to tell people about Jesus. Sophie asked her friends to stop saying mean things. Then she went to the new girl and asked her to play. The next day, Sophie and her friends asked Karen, that was the new girls name, to join in their skipping game. Karen was really good at it. She even knew some fun new games that she taught all of them to play.

Remembering stories of Jesus can give us the courage to help other people even when we don't know them.

**Prayer:**

Dear God, sometimes we are too worried about what other people think. Please help us to be like the disciples who told stories about Jesus even when it was dangerous for them. Help us to be like Sophie, and to be kind to people who need friends, even if they seem a little different than us. AMEN

**Question for adults:**

How does knowing about Jesus' resurrection make you less fearful?



## Children's Story

Year C, Easter 3

# From Hate to Love!

**Title:** From Hate to Love!  
**Author:** Donita Wiebe-Neufeld  
**Church:** First Mennonite Church,  
Edmonton, AB  
**Text:** Acts 9:1-20

Today is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter, the season when Christians around the world celebrate that Jesus is alive! You might wonder what difference does it make that Jesus is alive? We can't see him or touch him, so does it matter that the disciples saw him on Easter morning? During this Easter season, we are hearing stories from the Bible book of Acts. The stories are about what happens to the disciples after Jesus goes to heaven.

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**Bible story:**

Saul was a man full of hate. He hated the way that so many people were following the teaching of this "Jesus" man. He knew that the Romans had killed Jesus on the cross, and he did not believe that Jesus was alive again. He thought everyone should be forced to go to the temple and do everything the way they used to-so he took a bunch of soldiers with him and he arrested Christians, throwing them in jail and even killing some of them. He thought he was right and the Jesus followers were wrong. Then one day, while he was walking into a city, Jesus spoke to him. There was a light so bright it made Saul blind, and a voice from heaven asked him; "Saul, why are you hurting me?"

After that, Saul believed that Jesus was alive. He stopped hurting people. He started listening to the people who loved Jesus. Pretty quickly, his hate turned into love. He started teaching about Jesus too. His name was changed to "Paul" to show that he was changed too. Paul was one of the greatest teachers about Jesus' love that there ever was.

**Sophie learns to love:**

Sophie really could not stand to be anywhere near Jerome, a nasty boy in her class. She really, really, didn't like his loud mouth teasing, his stinky tuna sandwich breath, the way he won all the games of tag at recess, or did better on math tests than she did. He always liked to tell her that he was better at math, and faster at tag. Some of the popular kids really liked Jerome and that made Sophie jealous. Jerome was just plain annoying!

Sophie decided that she didn't just dislike Jerome, she hated him. She started thinking about ways to be nasty to him. She tattled to the teacher and said Jerome was pushing other kids when they were playing tag. She told the math teacher that Jerome cheated on his tests. She whispered to other grade two kids that they shouldn't sit with him at lunch time.

Sophie's teacher noticed how mean Sophie was being to Jerome, so he asked Sophie to stay after class to talk about it. "Sophie, why are you being mean to Jerome?" He asked. Then he told her; "Did you know that Jerome is helping other kids with their math homework at the club after school? And he often shares his lunch with the children who don't have good lunches? I know he is kind of loud sometimes, but Jerome really wants to be a good part of our class. Can you help him with that?"

Sophie was surprised. She hadn't thought there was anything to like about Jerome, but she was wrong. She changed her heart from hate, to...maybe not love, but she started to like Jerome a little. After the talk with her teacher, Sophie decided that she could take the hate out of her heart and replace it with something better. She started to help Jerome with the math homework club.

Knowing that Jesus was alive changed Saul from hate to love. Jesus can help change our hate to love as well , and we can be freed to help others instead of hurt them.

**Prayer:**

Thank you Jesus for teaching us that our hate can be turned into love. You were kind to people who were mean to you. When you asked Saul why he was so hateful, his life changed and he started teaching people to follow you. Please help me to treat others with the kindness and love that will turn hate into love. AMEN

**Question for adults:**

What hate in your life longs to be changed into love? What can you do to help someone?"



# Children's Story

Cycle C: Easter 4

## From Sadness to Joy!

**Title:** From Sadness to Joy!  
**Author:** Donita Wiebe-Neufeld  
**Church:** First Mennonite Church,  
Edmonton, AB  
**Text:** Acts 5:17-32

Today is the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, the season when Christians around the world celebrate that Jesus is alive! You might wonder what difference does it make that Jesus is alive? We can't see him or touch him, so does it matter that the disciples saw him on Easter morning? During this Easter season, we are hearing stories from the Bible book of Acts. The stories are about what happens to the disciples after Jesus goes to heaven.

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**Bible story:**

Once, during the time when the apostles were travelling to tell people about Jesus, there was a special disciple named Dorcas. She was an amazing woman who helped everyone. She cooked food for sick people, sewed clothes for poor people, and did nice things for her neighbours. She was the person people went to for advice and help because it felt good to be around her. Everyone loved Dorcas very much. They were so sad when she got sick and died. They called the apostle Peter. Peter came and knelt down beside Dorcas and prayed that God would help these sad people and that Dorcas would live. God did a miracle, and Dorcas got up! The sadness of all of Dorcas' friends turned to joy.

**Sophie's sadness:**

Sophie was very, very sad. Her old pet cat, Sassy, whom she loved, had died. Sophie's mom and dad hugged her and explained that it was okay to be sad because it was good to show that she had loved her pet. "But in the Bible, God does miracles to make people alive again," Sophie said. "I want Sassy alive again too!"

"We would all like that," Dad said. "And we don't understand why sometimes God does miracles and sometimes does not. Sassy is not going to come alive again, but that doesn't mean that God isn't here. God knows what we need and is taking care of us, even when we don't understand. God will take good care of you too, even though right now you feel like you will never be happy again."

Two weeks later, when Sophie got home from school, there was a grey kitten playing in her room. It was not Sassy, but Sophie started to feel happy again. Later that night, when Sophie said her bedtime prayer, this is what she prayed; (ask children to bow their head and pray this with you.)

**Prayer:**

God, thank you that you care for me even when I don't understand why pets and people die. I know that you take care of them too. Thank you for the miracle you do for us when you help change our sadness back into joy. Thank you that you take care of us always, here on earth and in heaven. " AMEN

**Question for adults:**

How does knowing Jesus is alive help move your sadness toward joy?



# Children's Story

Cycle C, Easter 5

# From Out to In!

Title: From Out to In!  
Author: Donita Wiebe-Neufeld  
Church: First Mennonite Church,  
Edmonton, AB  
Text: Acts 11:1-18

Today is the 5th Sunday of Easter, the season when Christians around the world celebrate that Jesus is alive! You might wonder what difference does it make that Jesus is alive? We can't see him or touch him, so does it matter that the disciples saw him on Easter morning? During this Easter season, we are hearing stories from the Bible book of Acts. The stories are about what happens to the disciples after Jesus goes to heaven.

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**Bible story:**

Peter was a famous apostle. After Jesus went back to heaven, Peter was one of the people whose job it was to tell the story of Jesus and help people live the way God wants us to live. Peter was an important, smart person, a lot like you or me. So... just like you and me, he did not know everything. He still had to keep on learning. Back in Peter's time, the church was a new thing. People thought you could only be part of a church if you were following the same laws and even eating the same kinds of food. That meant lots of people who wanted to follow Jesus were not allowed in the church because they ate different lunches than the church people. It sounds silly to us, but it seemed important to Peter. Then God sent Peter a dream to teach him something new. In the dream, Peter saw lots of different foods that he thought he should not eat. God said it was okay. So Peter learned something new and started to teach that all people who wanted to follow Jesus should be welcome in the church. God loves everyone and invites us all of us to be part of the church.

**Sophie's Green Shirt Games:**

Sophie and her friends had a great idea for playing games at recess. They said that if you wore a green shirt, everyone would know that you wanted to play tag. It made it very easy to tell who was playing and who was not. That was very helpful when the schoolyard was crowded! All the kids knew about the green shirt rule, and they liked it.

The problem happened the next year when a private school opened up next door and those kids all wore red uniforms everyday! When they shared the playground, Sophie and her friends couldn't tell which of the red uniform kids wanted to play tag. How were they going to figure out who was playing and who was not? It was very confusing. Some greens said they should just keep the old rules and

the red school could go do their own thing. But that meant that lots of good players would be left out. The old rules just didn't make sense anymore. The principals from the two schools decided to help. They marked out a special field for everyone who wanted to play tag, no matter what colour they were wearing. It was a new way to do things, and it took awhile for Sophie and her friends to get used to the clash of many colours, but it turned out to be amazing. The kids from the two schools taught each other their favourite games, and there were always enough players for everything!

**Prayer:**

Thank you God that no one is outside of Your love. Thank you Jesus for always teaching us new things. Thank you for how you welcome people who are different and the way you teach us to welcome each other into Your church. AMEN.

**Question for adults:**

Who is considered outside of the church right now? Is there a way that God is inviting them in?



## Children's Story

Cycle C: Easter 6

# From Old to New!

**Title:** Old to New!  
**Author:** Donita Wiebe-Neufeld  
**Church:** First Mennonite Church,  
Edmonton, AB  
**Text:** Acts 16:9-15

Today is the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter, the season when Christians around the world celebrate that Jesus is alive! You might wonder what difference does it make that Jesus is alive? We can't see him or touch him, so does it matter that the disciples saw him on Easter morning? During this Easter season, we are hearing stories from the Bible book of Acts. The stories are about what happens to the disciples after Jesus goes to heaven.

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**Bible Story:**

One night, God gave the apostle Paul a special dream. He dreamt a young man asked him to go to a city called Macedonia to help teach about Jesus. So Paul and his friends, Silas and Timothy, went to the city. On the Sabbath day, the day people worshipped God, they went down to a place beside the river to pray. At the river they met an important woman named Lydia. Lydia ran a successful business selling purple cloth and she was already a follower of God, but she had never heard about Jesus. She liked the stories about Jesus, and soon her whole family wanted to follow Jesus too. Lydia used money from her business to help the apostles teach the stories, and she even let them stay in her house when they needed a place. She was already believed in God, but she was happy to learn more from Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

**Sophie Hears about Jesus in a New Way:**

Sophie had always gone to the same church, Peace Mennonite. She heard stories from the Bible in Sunday School, sang hymns in the worship service, and listened quietly when the pastor preached a sermon. Sometimes she, or other children, got to read the scriptures or sing in a children's choir, or help collect the offering. Sophie liked her church and she thought every church was just like hers-sort of quiet and serious.

One day, her friend Karen invited Sophie to go to her church. So she did. Karen's church was very different from what Sophie was used to! There were loud drums and guitars and a rock-band singer leading the music. People liked to wave their arms and clap when they sang, some even danced in the aisles! It was dark in the sanctuary so everyone could see the large screen and the pictures that went along with the pastor's sermon. The Bible verses were up on the screen too, and Sophie couldn't see who was reading them.

For Sophie, it was a very new way to hear the stories about Jesus. She liked doing the old things in new ways. The next week, she invited Karen to Peace church. Maybe she could share Bible stories in a way that would be new and different to Karen!

**Prayer:**

Thank you God for giving us lots of new and different ways to share the stories of Jesus with each other. Thank you for the way the stories of Jesus always give us new ways to think about and worship You. Help us to be good learners, like Lydia and Sophie. AMEN

**Question for adults:**

When Lydia hears stories of Jesus, her faith is renewed and she responds by using her gifts to help the apostles. What makes your faith and energy feel new?



## Children's Story

Cycle C: Easter 7

# From Prison to Freedom!

**Title:** From Prison to Freedom!  
**Author:** Donita Wiebe-Neufeld  
**Church:** First Mennonite Church,  
Edmonton, AB  
**Text:** Acts 16:16-34

Today is the 7th Sunday of Easter, the season when Christians around the world celebrate that Jesus is alive! You might wonder what difference does it make that Jesus is alive? We can't see him or touch him, so does it matter that the disciples saw him on Easter morning? During this Easter season, we are hearing stories from the Bible book of Acts. The stories are about what happens to the disciples after Jesus goes to heaven.

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**Bible story:**

One day, when the preachers, Paul and Silas, were praying, a strange thing happened. A slave girl started yelling: "Paul and Silas are here to preach good news and salvation." What she said was true, but her yelling was very loud. There was something wrong with the slave girl, and she was not able to stop herself from yelling things all the time. This slave girl's owners used her strange sickness to make lots of money by telling people's fortunes. The girl followed Paul everywhere, yelling, until Paul got very annoyed. He healed her by saying; "in the name of Jesus Christ". That was good for the girl since it set her free from her sickness. But the slave girl's owners were angry because now they couldn't use her to make lots of money. So the slave owners had Paul and Silas beat up and thrown in jail. In the middle of the night, God sent an earthquake. It shook so hard that the prison doors opened up. Paul and Silas were free! The jailer was amazed at how God had set the prisoners free. Instead of locking them up again, he took them to his own house, gave them bandages for their sores, and fed them a meal. The jailer and his whole family became Jesus followers that night, because they saw how God sets people free.

**Sophie:**

On Tuesday, when Sophie got home from school, she heard a bang against the living room window. When she ran outside, she found a little grey sparrow lying on the ground. Sophie felt bad for the little bird. It couldn't fly away, and if stayed on the ground, her cat might find it before it had a chance to get better. Sophie's Dad helped her get an old bird cage from where it was stored in the garage. She gently put the bird inside and brought the cage into her room. After a half hour or so, the little bird was fluttering around. It looked so cute. Sophie thought she would keep it. She would keep it safe so it could never hit another window or get eaten

by a cat. Maybe she could even charge her friends a dollar to come see the bird up close. She was busy making plans for the bird, her bird, when her Dad came into the room to see how things were going.

Sophie told him she wanted to keep it. Her dad was quiet for a moment, then he said, "Sophie, do you think the sparrow will like being in a cage all its life? Is that what God made the sparrow to do?"

Sophie thought about how she would feel if she was trapped. "I would like to be free. I think God wants to set people free," She said.

Sophie and her dad took the cage outside. Sophie opened it and when the little sparrow chirped and flew out, Sophie knew she had done the right thing.

**Prayer:**

Thank you God that you are in control of my life. You love me so much that you let me make decisions, even though some of my choices might be wrong sometimes. Thank you that you will always pick me up and give me a chance to be free. Help me to make choices that show Your love to other people too. AMEN

**Question for adults:**

What things "imprison" you? Can you trust God to set you free when you are trapped?



# Three Makes One

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Trinity Sunday

**Title:** Three Makes One  
**Author:** Karen Suderman  
**Church:** St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, ON, now serving as a Witness worker in South Africa  
**Text:** John 16: 12- 15  
**Theme:** The Holy Spirit helps us love and understand Jesus.

### Needed:

Three strands of yarn, string or rope long enough to braid. Each piece can be labeled with one of the following: "God the Father," "God the Son," and "God the Holy Spirit".

Small braids made of yarn (perhaps in three different colours) could be handed out to the children at the end of the story as a symbol of the trinity.

### Gathering Activity:

*Invite and welcome the children warmly. Help them settle into comfortable positions so they can listen well, and settle into a spirit of holy expectancy for this special part of worship. Open your Bible to John 16: 12-15.*

Read the words of Jesus in verse 12 to them and pause, then say, "I wonder what things Jesus decided his disciples weren't ready to hear... It had something to do with the way God is Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit, but is still one. *Lay the Bible aside and pick up the strands that will form a braid.*

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## Story:

### Three Makes One?!

Trying to understand what God is like is one of the biggest mysteries of life. It is a very holy mystery. So let's be quiet and wonder about this holy mystery for a few seconds.

For a very long time, Christians have used the idea of a Trinity to think about what God is like.

Did you know that Trinity is a word we use to describe three parts of God?

Has anyone here heard the word Trinity before?

Does anyone have a guess about what it means?

There are three parts to the Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

### Hold up the piece of rope labeled "Father".

Who is God the Father? Can anyone tell me anything about God the Father?

- Created the earth.
- Made us.
- Loves all creation from the biggest to the smallest.
- Other descriptions children add.

### Hold up the piece of rope labeled "Son".

Who is the Son? In the Bible, Jesus was also called the Son.

What are some things that Jesus did while he was alive?

- Healed the sick.
- Gave the blind sight.
- Preached to people and told them stories and parables.
- Died for our sins.
- Other descriptions children add.

So far we have talked about God the Father

and God the Son. *Hold both pieces up together.* Jesus was alive a long time ago, and sometimes it is hard to know what God the Father and the Son have planned for us today. It is hard to know how they work together. *Try to get the two pieces of rope to attach or stick together, without success.*

Does anyone know what the third part of the Trinity is?

It is the Holy Spirit. **Hold up the piece of rope labeled Holy Spirit.**

I wonder what the Holy Spirit does. Does anyone have any guesses?

- Is with us, always, even right here, right now.
- Helps us understand what God the Father and God the Son have planned for us.
- Helps us understand things today that Jesus didn't tell his disciples about.
- Other descriptions children add.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one in how they work together, creating, loving, and revealing God to us. *Holding up all three ropes, then ask a child near you to hold the ends while you braid them together.* The Holy Spirit helps us know that God, the Father and Jesus are still working in the world. The Holy Spirit nudges us to join God's work in the world.

### Prayer:

Father—Creator, Christ—Lord and Savior, Spirit—Loving Guide. You know us deep inside and help us to know you. You invite us to share in your life and your love. One God, three Persons, thank you for making us to be creative and helping and loving like you. Thank you for making the world and making things grow. We Love you God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, true and living, forever and ever. Amen.



## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 4

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>Title:</b>  | <b>Surprised by Respect/ a trusting stranger</b> |
| <b>Author:</b> | Elsie Rempel                                     |
| <b>Church:</b> | Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB       |
| <b>Text:</b>   | Luke 7: 1-10                                     |
| <b>Theme:</b>  | God works in strangers, too.                     |

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# Surprised by Respect

## a trusting stranger

### Gathering Activity:

*Warmly invite the children to come for the children's time especially if they like stories about surprises. Once they are ready to listen with their hearts, open your Bible to Luke 7 and say, "Today's story comes from ideas in Luke, chapter 7, where Jesus got a very good surprise." Show children the place in the Bible.*

### Story

What do your parents tell you about strangers? Would you let a stranger into your house without checking with your parents?

Because we want to keep our children safe from those few strangers who are mean and nasty, parents and teachers teach children things like:

- Don't talk to strangers,
- Don't invite them into your house unless your parents say it is okay.
- If a stranger calls on the phone, and you are home alone, let them leave a message on the answering machine, or say something like, "My mother can't come to the phone right now. Can I take a message?"

We teach you these things because we just don't know if we can trust people until we know them. Even though most strangers are good people, we teach children to be very careful around strangers so that they won't get hurt.

In today's Bible story, Jesus had been teaching his followers to trust God. Then a stranger, whom they didn't trust because he was a stranger, showed Jesus that he trusted God more than his followers did. They learned a lesson from the stranger that day.

There is a family with three children that had a similar surprise a few years ago, before there were cell phones. This family was getting ready to move to a new city far away, so their friends were having a goodbye party for them in a park. There were lots of them, and the children were playing on the play structures while the grown-ups were visiting.

When it was time for them to drive to one of their homes for a barbeque, the children piled into some of the bigger vans. It was good to see them having so much fun together. Parents counted heads, and everyone drove off. What nobody noticed was that this family's five year old daughter, Eva, had been left behind. Eva had been playing with other children in the sandbox and hadn't noticed the others leave.

When the rest of the group spilled out of the cars at their friend's house they noticed Eva was missing! What should they do? This is what they did. A car full of dads drove back to

the park to look for her. The mom called the police to report a missing child and then went to her house to wait in case someone would bring her home. And everybody prayed.

Back at the park, Eva had noticed she was alone and wondered what she should do. A kind stranger noticed she was looking lost and helped her. He asked her, and she told him her name and phone number. He called her phone number and her mom answered. She was so surprised and pleased by this stranger's help. He seemed like an angel to her. She told him that Eva's dad was on his way back to the park with some friends. She was proud of her daughter for remembering her phone number, too.

After the phone call, the man bought Eva an ice cream cone and helped her wait for the careful of dads. Soon the dads showed up at the park, calling Eva's name as they rushed out of the car. The stranger heard it and waved to them. Soon Eva was back with her dad, who hugged her tightly as he thanked the man for protecting and helping his little girl. He said he would never forget the lesson this stranger had taught him. He would never forget to double check for all his children when they left a place again. As they drove back to the party to celebrate her safety, he also thanked God for the goodness in this stranger.

### **Prayer**

Thank you, Jesus, that there are good strangers and that you sometimes help us through them. Amen.



# Lost & Found

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 5

**Title:** Lost and Found  
**Author:** Karen Suderman  
**Church:** St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, ON, now serving as a Witness worker in South Africa  
**Text:** Luke 7: 11-17  
**Theme:** Jesus cares for us and helps us when we are sad.  
**Needed:** Any object to "hide" somewhere at the front of the church before the children's time begins.

### Gathering Activity:

*Warmly invite the children to come for the children's time, to come if they are feeling happy, and especially if they are feeling sad. Once they are ready to listen with their hearts, open your Bible to Luke 7 and say, "Today's story comes from ideas in Luke, chapter 7, where someone was very sad." Show children the place in the Bible.*

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## Story:

I'd like to tell you a story, but I'm very sad, so I'm going to tell you about that instead. I am sad this morning because I have lost something that is special, I've lost my\_\_\_\_\_ *Describe the object.* I am scared I will never find it again. Has anyone here ever lost anything? Was it special to you? How did you feel?

What did you do when you lost something? Did you look for it? Did your Mom or Dad help you look for it? I wish there was something I could do so I could feel better. Can you think of anything that might help? *If the children suggest looking for it, take the suggestion; if not, steer the conversation in that direction. If you have a large group of children, suggest that three or four children look for it, and that others provide clues about where to look.*

Let me tell you where I thought I last had it. I was walking into church to get ready for the story. Then when I sat down for worship, I noticed it was gone. Let's look together for a little bit. *Look around the front of the church with the children. Look under the front pews, behind the pulpit, and anywhere else that you may think of. Allow one of the children to find the object and give it back to you.*

You've found it!!!! I am so happy. I thought that I had lost [name the object] forever!

Thank you so much! You really comforted and helped me! How do you think you comforted me? *Let the children answer the question.* Yes, you comforted me by helping my find my lost item. You also comforted me by listening to me and being with me. Thanks.

In our Bible story today, Jesus comforts and helps a very sad mom like you just comforted and helped me.. Jesus helped people feel better when they had lost something or when they were sad. Listen to the scripture reading to see how he helped her.

Sometimes we cannot get back what we have lost. Maybe a pet dies and we know that it cannot come back. Jesus has a plan for that kind of sadness, too. Jesus puts friends and family in our lives to be with us when we are sad. When they are sad with us, it helps us feel better. Before we looked for what I had lost, I started feeling better as soon as I could tell you about it. Jesus wants us to take care of each other when we are sad, just like Jesus took care of those around him.

## Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for taking care of us when we are sad, and by loving us through others. Help us to comfort people around us with your love. Amen.



# Birthday Gift

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 6

**Title:** Birthday Gift  
**Author:** Karen Suderman  
**Church:** St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, ON, now serving as a Witness worker in South Africa  
**Text:** Luke 7: 36- 8:3  
**Theme:** Jesus appreciates our gifts of love.

### Gathering Activity:

*Invite all the children forward. Ask them who enjoys getting and giving gifts. Once they have settled into a comfortable position for listening, open your Bible to Luke 7 and say, "Today's children's story is a lot like a story in Luke, where Jesus gets a special gift. Listen for that story when the scriptures are read. Let's take a moment to become quiet so we can listen with our hearts to this story about a teenager, named Greg, and his mom."*

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder what kinds of gifts are the most special.
- I wonder what kinds of special gifts we can make and give.
- I wonder what kinds of gifts could show Jesus our love.

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## Story:

“Hey, Mom, what is this?” Greg asked, holding up a crooked purple and yellow polka-dot birdhouse. Mom looked at it and smiled. “That,” she replied, “is a birthday gift you gave me when you were six years old.” Greg’s eyebrows rose. “Mom,” he said, “I am 19 now. Why would you keep such a silly-looking thing for 13 years? It doesn’t even have a door!” Mom simply responded, “Because it is the best gift you ever gave me. Let me tell you about it.”

Mom picked up the crooked birdhouse and set it on the kitchen table. She poured herself a cup of coffee and a glass of iced tea for Greg. She sat down with a sigh and began her story. “It was a few weeks before my birthday and your father told you that the gifts needed to be really special this year. Kelly had no trouble coming up with a special gift at all. She went right out and bought a bottle of perfume with allowance money she had saved. Your father gave me no hints, but from the way he kept on saying ‘I’d be excited if I were you!’ I knew he had bought the silver necklace I had been eyeing at the jewellery store.”

“You, however, walked around for days looking troubled. You wanted to do something special but didn’t know what to do. Dad and Kelly tried to help you think of ideas, but you didn’t like any of their suggestions.

“Four days before my birthday you woke up with an idea. You got out your allowance money, took your father’s hand and walked out the door. For the next three days you were shut up in the garage. You even put a sign on the door that said ‘No Moms Allowed.’ You poured your heart into your project. At breakfast on the morning of my birthday you wiggled in your chair like you had ants in your pants. You waited until Dad and Kelly gave me their gifts. Then you were off like a shot to the garage to get your gift. It was covered

with an old rag. You set it down in front of me and pulled off the rag with a flourish. There it was, polka-dotted, dripping with glue, crooked, no door, but it was the most beautiful gift I had ever received.”

Greg looked again at the purple, crooked birdhouse with no door and shook his head. “Why was *this* the most beautiful thing that you had ever received when Dad gave you jewellery and Kelly gave you perfume? Those other things were so much nicer than this!”

Mom replied, “This birdhouse is the most beautiful gift that you have ever given me because you made it with such a huge amount of love. You had poured your heart, your love for me, into the birdhouse for days. That made this gift so special. When we give gifts with such love, how nice they are doesn’t matter.”

## Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for gifts of love. Thank you for loving and accepting our gifts, no matter the size. We love you. Please take what we offer you and use it to spread your love all around the world. Amen.



# Love Lights

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 7

**Title:** Love Lights  
**Author:** Karen Suderman  
**Church:** St. Jacobs Mennonite Church, St. Jacobs, ON, now serving as a Witness worker in South Africa  
**Text:** Luke 8: 26-39  
**Theme:** Jesus' healing love is stronger than the things that scare us.

### Gathering Activity:

*Invite and welcome the children warmly. Help them settle into comfortable positions so they can listen well and settle into a spirit of holy expectancy for this special part of worship. Open your Bible to Luke 8 and show them where the ideas for today's story came from before you begin the children's story.*

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder if any of us are scared in the dark.
- I wonder what we 'see' in the dark.
- I wonder what we can do to not be scared.
- I wonder how Jesus' love is like a light.

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## Story:

Sally did not like to go to bed. She liked it when Mommy and Daddy tucked her in. She liked it when they read her stories. She liked it when they kissed her good night. Sally did NOT like it when they turned out the lights.

Things in her room looked different and scary in the dark. There were monsters in the corners and snakes on the floor of her room when the lights were out. Sally was scared in the dark.

One night Sally's daddy read her a story. Then her mommy tucked her in. They kissed her good night, turned out the lights, and left Sally to have a good night's sleep. Sally started to cry. The monsters were sitting in the corner of her room again and there were snakes on the floor. She called out for mommy and daddy.

"What is wrong?" asked Daddy. "There are snakes on the floor and monsters in the corners when the lights are out. I am scared!" Mommy gave Sally a big hug. "You know, when I was your age I used to be scared of the dark, too," said Mommy. "Really?" Sally was surprised. "Yes," replied Mommy, "I used to think the bogeyman lived under my bed. I was very scared." Daddy said, "When I was a boy I used to think a big mean dog lived in my closet at night. I was scared, too." Sally was even more surprised. Even Daddy had been scared of the dark!

Mommy looked at Sally and said, "When you feel scared at night try saying to yourself: Mommy loves me, Daddy loves me, and Jesus loves me. That love will protect me when I sleep." Sally repeated to herself, "Mommy loves me, Daddy loves me, and Jesus loves me. That love will protect me when I sleep." She felt better already.

Daddy smiled a great big smile. He quickly walked out of the room and came back a few seconds later holding something. Daddy handed Sally a flashlight. "This light," explained Daddy, "is like the love that protects you, Sally. It will show things for what they really are." With that Daddy turned out the light and sat on Sally's bed. "Shine the light on the snakes, Sally," Daddy said. Sally turned on the flashlight and shone it on the snake. It was only her skipping rope! Daddy asked her to shine the light on the monster in the corner. Sally gulped and shone the light in the corner. It was her big teddy bear wearing a silly hat!

Daddy looked at Sally and said, "This flashlight is your love light. When you are scared, say the words that Mommy taught you and use this light to brighten the scary corners. Then you will be comforted and protected. Do you feel better?" Sally smiled, "Yes, I do feel better, because I can see that the corners aren't really scary, and Mommy loves me, Daddy loves me and Jesus loves me. That love will protect me when I sleep."

Mommy and Daddy kissed Sally good night and turned out the lights. This time she was not scared. She curled up and fell asleep with the love light by her pillow.

## Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for the light of your love. Thank you for protecting us when we sleep and for helping us when we are scared. Amen.



# follow me

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 8

**Title:** Follow Me  
**Author:** Michelle Jantzi Dueck  
**Church:** Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg MB  
**Text:** Luke 9: 51-62  
**Theme:** Following Jesus is an adventure where we keep our eyes on God's way

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why Daniel invited all these children to join him on this ride to the river park.
- I wonder why Michael thought the ride to the river park was dangerous.
- I wonder if Lisa heard Alison call her a bully.
- I wonder why Lisa decided to follow.
- I wonder why Daniel said not to look back.
- I wonder how following Jesus is like following Daniel on this bike ride.
- I wonder what adventure Jesus wants us to follow him on.

### Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children and help them settle in positions where they can listen well, and be aware that they are worshipping. Explain that the ideas for the story came from today's Bible reading (show them Luke 9 in your Bible), where it says that following Jesus is an adventure. It is an adventure in which it is important to keep our eyes on Jesus, who is leading us on God's way. Connect this idea to today's story about following an older brother on an adventure, and invite the children to think about how Daniel is like Jesus.

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## Story:

"What do you want to do today?" Alison asked her twin brother Michael. "I don't know," said Michael, "what do you want to do?" They asked each other this question a lot. This conversation would have gone on for a long time, like it usually did, but that's when they saw Daniel, their older brother, riding towards them on his bike. "Alison, Michael, come, follow me," Daniel called out to them. "Where?" said Alison. Daniel was close now. "Down to the river park," he said. "I'm not allowed down to the river by myself, it's too dangerous," said Michael. "Yeah, getting there is hard, but you can do it if you follow me. It's OK with Mom and I will show you the way." Then Daniel rode past them.

Alison looked at Michael for a moment, then climbed onto her own bicycle and started riding after Daniel. She pedalled hard and finally caught up. Daniel was pleased that his sister was in on his adventure. After a while, Daniel and Alison rode past Lisa. "Lisa, follow me," called Daniel. Lisa looked surprised. "Me?" she asked. But Daniel was already past. Alison waited until she was past Lisa before asking, "Why did you invite her? She's a bully." "A good adventure might cure the bully in her," he turned and smiled at Alison. "Don't be scared, just follow me." Soon Alison could hear Lisa biking over the gravel behind her. Alison pedalled faster. She tried to stay close to Daniel.

Daniel and Alison and Lisa biked by Jacob and Jordan at the edge of the park. "Follow me," said Daniel. "Where?" said Jordan. "To the river park," said Alison, breathing hard. She was starting to get tired and they were now biking uphill. Jacob and Jordan grinned at each other, jumped on their bikes and started to follow. They pedalled hard and soon they passed Lisa and Alison. Alison pedalled faster, trying to keep Daniel in sight. "Let's race," said Jordan. Jacob nodded and sped along the path Daniel was riding. Jordan turned down a different path. "Come this way Alison," called Jordan, "I know a shortcut!" Alison didn't know what to do. Jordan looked like he was waiting for her, Daniel was almost out of sight, and she was scared of Lisa.

Alison wobbled a bit, but she shook her head at Jordan and kept to Daniel's path. The path was now dirt, with lots of tree roots; it went up and down a lot. Alison couldn't see Daniel, but she could almost see the river through the trees. She relaxed. "Slowpoke!" called out Jordan, "I'll win." Jordan raced off down his own path but Alison kept going. As soon as she turned the corner, she saw Daniel again. He was standing at the gate to the river park, smiling and waiting for the rest. Alison kept her eyes on the path, dodged the tree roots and rode up to Daniel, who gave her a big "high-five." He told her how proud he was of her for keeping up and following him the whole way. Then he gave her a long drink from his water bottle. Soon the others arrived in the park, dumped their bikes and relaxed along the river. They were all tired, but happy about enjoying this adventure together. Lisa didn't act like a bully at all. She was happy that she had been invited to join the fun and enjoyed gazing at the clouds and the river with the others.

When they biked back home, Alison and Lisa stayed close together. Alison told Lisa that Michael had been frightened to come because he thought it was dangerous. "Yeah, it was kind of dangerous," Lisa said, "but Daniel was there to show us the way."

## Prayer:

Thank you Jesus, for adventures. Thank you for inviting us to follow you on good adventures like Daniel did in our story. Help us enjoy the friendship of people who follow you. Amen.



# cookies

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 9

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
| <b>Title:</b>  | <b>Cookies</b>   |
| <b>Author:</b> | Michelle Jantzi Dueck  |
| <b>Church:</b> | Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg MB   |
| <b>Text:</b>   | Luke 10: 1-11, 16-20   |
| <b>Theme:</b>  | Jesus knows it is better to go out in pairs when we share God's good news with others.       |
| <b>Needed:</b> | Any object to "hide" somewhere at the front of the church before the children's time begins. |

### Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children and help them settle into a spirit of worship and holy curiosity. This settling includes finding a good place to sit in which they can listen well, and reminding everyone that the children's time is part of worship. Explain that the ideas for the story came from today's Bible reading (show them Luke 10 in your Bible), where Jesus tells his followers that they should stick with a buddy when they show and tell others about God's way.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why the neighbour lady was surprised.
- I wonder why Miriam got her brother and her Mom's help for her idea.
- I wonder how we can work together to show others that Jesus loves them.

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## Story:

Miriam liked the swing set beside the apartment building she lived in. When she was swinging, she could pretend she was flying. Swinging helped her not mind the fact that she couldn't walk. Who cares if you can't walk if you can fly? One day, when she was swinging high, she saw a moving van pull up to the apartment building. She swung high again and saw the driver open the big back doors of the truck and pull down a ramp. On the next swing up she saw a mother and two kids with boxes and backpacks walking towards the doors of the building. The girl was really little, but Miriam thought the boy was about her age. Miriam swung high again, but no one else came. The mother and the driver were the only people unloading boxes.

As Miriam watched them, she got an idea. Miriam decided that Jesus would like her family to help them move in, so she slowed down the swing and whispered her idea to her mom. Miriam's mom liked the idea, so she helped Miriam off the swing and into her wheelchair. Together they went up to their apartment, where Miriam loudly woke up her brother Jim. "Wake up! There's a new family moving in! Let's go help." Jim grunted, still half-asleep, and rolled over to look at her, "You're too loud... who's moving? Huh? Help...How can you help?" "You'll see," said Miriam. "You can't carry boxes," said Jim, with a yawn. "No, but you can," said Miriam with a grin. Jim looked at Miriam, Miriam looked at Jim. Jim finally smiled at her, got up and went downstairs to help the new neighbours. Miriam smiled and went to the kitchen with her mom. They had another part of Miriam's helping plan to work at.

A while later, when the whole hallway smelled like cookies, Miriam and her mom took some cookies, milk and tea and knocked at the open door of their new neighbours. Miriam saw Jim screwing table legs back onto a table; the new boy was smiling and passing him tools. "Can we come in?" asked Miriam's mom. "We live next door and we brought some milk and cookies," added Miriam. "Cookie?" said a small voice. Miriam grinned as the little girl's head poked out from under a pile of pillows and stuffed animals. She crawled out of her hiding spot and started waddling towards Miriam and the tray

of cookies on Miriam's lap. The new neighbour lady looked surprised by the tray with milk and tea that Miriam's mom was holding, and the plate of cookies on Miriam's lap. She smiled and invited them in. Jim secured the last leg and turned the table right-side up. He smiled at Miriam and said, "Perfect timing!" Miriam placed the cookies on the table and winked at her big brother.

The tea and milk were poured, cookies were passed around, and everyone introduced themselves. Miriam looked around, and smiled shyly at the other children. Shyly, they smiled back. The little girl grinned, her face already smeared with chocolate chips. "Friend?" she asked Miriam. Miriam grinned and nodded, "Friend." The neighbour lady looked at Miriam for a moment, "Why?" she asked. "Why did you come to us as a friend?" Miriam smiled, "Because Jesus loves you and wanted us to help you." The neighbour lady's eyes widened in surprise, but her son nodded. The little girl said "Cookie?" The boy poked his little sister, who quickly said, "Please." Miriam broke the last cookie and shared it with them. Miriam's mom smiled as she watched them. "She's right. Jesus loves us all and wants us to be helpful neighbours. Our helping was Miriam's idea... and good ideas, like good cookies, are meant to be shared. Jim and I were happy to join in." The neighbour lady smiled. Then she bent down and gave Miriam a hug. "Thank you, Miriam. Your friendly help was just what we needed today. I'm so glad you're our new neighbours and that you shared Jesus' love with us."

## Prayer:

Thank you Jesus for people like Miriam. Thank you for people like her family and new neighbours, whose help and friendliness made sharing your love such a good time. Please help us notice and take the chances for sharing your love that are around us. Amen.



# the short cut

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 10

**Title:** The Short Cut  
**Author:** Michelle Jantzi Dueck  
**Church:** Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg MB  
**Text:** Luke 10: 25-37  
**Theme:** Jesus shows how good neighbours care for people who get hurt.

### Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children for this part of worship that helps them understand the day's Bible reading, and help them settle into good listening positions and attitudes. Encourage them to imagine themselves sitting on Jesus' lap as Jesus teaches his followers about being good neighbours. Show them Luke 10 in your Bible, where the ideas for today's story come from and ask them to listen for the good neighbour in the story you will tell them.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how Alex knew it was important to find Mr. Cressman.
- I wonder if Mr. Cressman will still yell at the children when they cross his yard.
- I wonder how we can be good neighbours like Alex and his dad.

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## Story:

Alex and his friends liked to walk across Mr. Cressman's yard on their way home after school. They did this every day, and every day Mr. Cressman would come out on his porch, shake his cane and yell at them. And every day they would laugh and run away.

But one day, when they cut across the lawn, there was no one there to yell at them. Alex was worried. He missed Mr. Cressman and wanted to go check on him. "You mean go right up to the house... and knock on the door?" Some of Alex's friends laughed, the others looked scared. "Not me," they all said, and one by one they all went home. Soon, Alex was all alone. Alex rang the doorbell and knocked on the windows.

Mrs. Rodriguez, the lady who lived next door, came out onto her porch to ask Alex what he was doing. Alex told her his name and said he was looking for Mr. Cressman. Mrs. Rodriguez told him to go home and to stop bothering the old man. Alex said that only Mr. Cressman was allowed to chase him off his yard. Mrs. Rodriguez went back into her house. Alex went back to knocking on and listening at the windows.

Alex heard a phone ringing inside Mr. Cressman's house, but no one answered the phone. It stopped ringing. A while later it rang again. Still no answer. The next noise Alex heard came from behind him. He turned quickly. It was Alex's father. "Mrs. Rodriguez called me. She said that you're trying to break into Mr. Cressman's house." "No I'm not," said Alex, "I just want to know if he's home."

"I phoned Mr. Cressman, but he didn't answer," said Alex's father, "so I phoned his daughter. She's worried." Then Alex's father picked up a key from a special hiding place and unlocked the door. Together Alex and his father walked from room to room, calling out for Mr. Cressman.

They found him in a back room, with a bump on his head and a broom by his feet. He was breathing. They called out to him again and he slowly opened his eyes. Alex sat beside Mr. Cressman, held his hand, and talked to him while Alex's father called

the ambulance.

A few days later, Alex and his friends were again cutting across Mr. Cressman's lawn. Mr. Cressman came out onto the porch and yelled, "Hey! You kids!" They turned and looked back at him. Mr. Cressman steadied himself with his walker. "Thanks," he called. Then he smiled and waved at them. Alex smiled and waved back.

## Prayer:

Thank you Jesus for stories of good neighbours. Thank you for people like Alex and his dad. Please help us know how to share your love with people who get hurt, too. Amen.



# the helper

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 11

**Title:** The Helper  
**Author:** Michelle Jantzi Dueck  
**Church:** Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship, Winnipeg MB  
**Text:** Luke 10: 38-42  
**Theme:** It is really good and important to spend time with Jesus.

### Gathering Activity:

Invite the children forward in an inviting manner. Once you've helped them settle into comfortable positions and an attitude of holy listening, explain that it's really important to spend time with Jesus, even when there are a lot of things to do. That's what Jesus teaches in today's Bible reading (show them Luke 10 in your Bible). In this children's story, Jonathan finds one way of doing that.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why some people just love being helpers.
- I wonder what it is like to need lots of help, like Mr. Martens did.
- I wonder what it is like to visit with people when it's hard to understand their words.
- I wonder how Jonathan and Mr. Martens became such good friends.
- I wonder how this story reminds us of spending time with Jesus.

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## Story:

Jonathan was a helper. Before and after school he was a crossing guard and helped other children safely cross the street when there were no cars coming. He helped put away the sports equipment after gym class, and at lunch time he helped the other kids play nicely. Jonathan helped at home, too. He and his sister took turns setting the supper table, drying the dishes, taking out the compost and cleaning the cat's litter box. On Saturday mornings they helped clean the whole house. Jonathan was a helper.

When Jonathan's neighbour, Mr. Martens, had a stroke and couldn't lift or walk very fast anymore, lots of people wanted to help him. So did Jonathan. When Jonathan went over to mow the lawn, it was already done. Jonathan went to pull weeds from the flower gardens, but somebody else was already working on it. Jonathan went into the living room, but somebody was already vacuuming. Jonathan peered into the kitchen, but somebody was already making supper. Jonathan wandered downstairs, but somebody was doing laundry. Jonathan wondered where all these 'somebodies' came from.

Jonathan was sad, he really did want to help but he didn't know what to do. As he was walking to the door, he looked over and saw his neighbour, just sitting there. He looked lonely, even though there were others all around doing things for him. Jonathan paused, and then he went over and sat beside Mr. Martens. He couldn't talk very fast, and it was hard to understand some of his words, but Jonathan waited and listened. The more he listened, the more he understood. Once Mr. Martens realized Jonathan could understand him, he started telling him stories. Jonathan came to see him often. During these visits, Mr. Martens told him stories from the old country and other parts of the world, or stories about how much has changed, stories about children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, stories of war and of peace, and stories about strange weather and big disasters bringing people together. Sometimes, when the neighbour was too tired to talk, he asked Jonathan to read aloud from the Bible. Mr. Martens knew all of the stories from the Bible and asked Jonathan

to read stories he knew Jonathan would like.

Jonathan had a reading buddy at school, but this was different. One day his neighbour smiled and said to Jonathan, "I like it when you visit. You aren't in a rush but have time to talk with me. You're a great help." Jonathan smiled, "I like coming too," he said. "At first I came to help you, but now we are friends and you tell me such good stories. I'm glad you are my friend."

## Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for good stories and good friends. Thank you that you are our best friend and that we can spend time with you by helping others, by being quiet, by reading the stories you told in the Bible, and by praying. Help us be good friends with you. Amen.



# learning to pray

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 12

**Title:** Learning to Pray  
**Author:** Michelle Dueck  
and Elsie Rempel  
**Church:** Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship  
and Charleswood Mennonite  
Church, Winnipeg MB  
**Text:** Luke 11:1-13  
**Theme:** Jesus shows us how to pray.

### Needed:

A person who has practiced signing the Lord's Prayer enough to follow easily.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why some people just love being helpers.
- I wonder what it is like to need lots of help, like Mr. Martens did.
- I wonder what it is like to visit with people when it's hard to understand their words.
- I wonder how Jonathan and Mr. Martens became such good friends.
- I wonder how this story reminds us of spending time with Jesus.

### Gathering Activity:

After warmly welcoming the children and helping them settle so that they'll have room for an activity where they spread their arms, open your Bible to Luke 11. Explain that in today's Bible reading, the disciples ask Jesus how they should pray. Even though they had learned many prayers, and prayed those prayers as they were growing up, they still wondered what was most important to pray about. Ask the children if they ever wonder about how to pray and explain that Jesus gave us a prayer that is about these most important things.

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## Story:

The prayer in Luke 11 is the most famous Christian prayer. Many congregations pray it every Sunday. It is a very important prayer to learn. Often it is called the Lord's Prayer, because it was given to us by our Lord Jesus. Some people call it the "Our Father," because those are the words it starts with.

Like many short prayers, the Lord's Prayer is based on three parts: who, what, and why, in that order.

Who we are praying to is God, and that's where all prayer starts. This prayer starts with, "Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name." Please repeat that after me.

What we are praying for comes next. We pray for many different things, but Jesus taught his disciples to pray about important things like having enough food, forgiving people who do bad things to us, and asking for help to not do the bad things that we often want to do, and for protection from evil. The next part of the prayer is, "Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." I'll say that one part at a time and ask you to repeat it after me.

Why we pray comes last. We pray because God can really help us with all these important things. God has made the earth so it can grow enough food for everybody to eat. When we have enough to eat, it is much easier to show God's love to others. God has shown us how to forgive through Jesus and gives us the power to forgive through the Holy Spirit. When we live out this prayer by sharing and forgiving, we show how good God's plan for people really is. That gives glory to God and shows that God's way is what really matters, God's way rules.

Listen to and repeat the way this prayer ends: "For yours is the kingdom, the power and the Glory, for ever and ever. Amen."

To help us remember this prayer, we will add some actions while we say it again. Sign language helps people who can't hear to pray this prayer, but it also helps people who learn with their bodies to

remember it. We'll use just a few simple signs for the most important parts. I'll say and show it and then you can do and say it again with me.

## Signing instructions:

**Father:** Dominant hand held against forehead, non dominant hand close to but lower, both hands open while moving upwards.

**Our daily bread:** Place fingers of one hand together with thumb, as if you are holding a small piece of bread, and bring it to your lips, tapping them twice.

**Forgive our sins:** Hold both hands in front of body at chest level, with one stroking the other to show the forgiving process.

**Temptation:** Cross arms to touch the opposite elbow, and scratch the one elbow, to show how we are tempted to scratch when though it slows the healing of something like a mosquito bite.

**Deliver us from evil:** Extend dominant arm, fist down, from same shoulder in a strong forward motion, and hold out open hand, palm down, to symbolize Moses holding his staff over the Red Sea to deliver the Israelites.

**Power:** Clench one fist and raise that arm. Use the other hand to touch the clenched biceps to emphasize the power of that muscle.

**Glory:** Clench one hand in front of your stomach to resemble an altar. With the finger and thumb of the other hand, show smoke rising from the altar to remind us of God's glory.

**Amen:** Bring hands together at chest level with fingers pointing up.

While in this position add this final short prayer.

## Prayer:

Thank you Jesus for teaching us how to pray about the really important stuff and that we can pray to you about everything else that is on our hearts, too. Amen.



# toys & friends

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 13, August 1, 2010

**Title:** Toys & Friends  
**Author:** Miriam Suzanne Rempel  
**Church:** Home Street Mennonite Church,  
Winnipeg, MB  
**Text:** Luke 12: 13-21,  
particularly verse 21  
**Theme:** Being rich toward God.

### Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children for this part of worship that helps them understand the day's Bible reading, and help them settle into good listening positions and attitudes. Encourage them to imagine themselves sitting on Jesus' lap as Jesus teaches his followers about being rich toward God. Show them Luke 12 in your Bible, and read verse 21 to them. Explain that in today's children's time you will wonder together about what that means. To introduce the topic, ask them questions such as: How many of you have toys and games at home? What kind of toys do you have? Are they fun to play with?

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder what it would be like to have a toy store in the family.
- I wonder why it can be so hard to share our new toys.
- I wonder how I can be a good, sharing, and caring friend this week.

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## Story:

Today's story is about John and his parents. John loved to play with toys and games just like you. He was really lucky because his Mom and Dad owned the best kind of store in the world. Can you guess what kind of store it was? That's right; a big toy store.

One day, John saw a big truck full of toys come to the store. John's eyes opened really big and he had a big smile on his face. "Mom, Dad, can I have those toys?" John asked. He asked that question often. Sometimes he got one new toy but most of the time his parents said, "You have enough toys at home, you don't need any more." "But the new ones are way better," John whined and cried in reply. And even when he did get something new, he still complained and wanted more. He would show his friends his new toys, but never let them play with his toys because they might break them.

His parents were tired of hearing John whine, and of hearing him refuse to share, so they decided they would let him have all the toys he wanted. They put him in an empty room and started to bring in toy after toy after toy. Soon John could barely even move because the room was so full of new toys. "This is no good," he said, "now I have all these toys, but I can't really play with any of them. I have no room to move. How could I fit one of my friends in to play with me? I have too much. Take these toys away."

"That's right John," said his dad. "This is why we only let you have a few new toys once in a while. New toys are nice, but what is much better is to have someone to play with. When I was small, I had almost no toys at all, but my friends and I still had lots of fun, because we had each other to play with. Being a good, caring, and sharing friend is much more important than having the best and newest toy. The good news for children, in Luke 12:21, is that God planned for us to be rich in friends, not in toys. We are happier when we follow that plan."

After that, John asked for fewer toys, and learned to share the toys he had with his friends. He was happier than before because playing with and

making friends was really better than getting and protecting new toys.

## Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for teaching us that loving and caring for our friends is more important than the things we have. Help us share our things so that more people can be happy. Amen.



# letting go of treasure?

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 14

**Title:** Toys and Friends  
**Author:** Miriam Suzanne Rempel  
**Church:** Home Street Mennonite Church,  
Winnipeg, MB  
**Text:** Luke 12:32-40,  
especially v. 32-34.  
**Theme:** For where your treasure is,  
there your heart will be also.

### Needed:

A big bag filled with "treasure" (favourite toys, money, "cool" or costly things, and a Bible).

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder if Isabelle shared her things or became friends with Jessie.
- I wonder if my treasures keep me from being a good friend.
- I wonder what things Jesus would like me to share with others.
- I wonder what is more important than the things we call our treasures.

### Gathering Activity:

Presenter approaches the children's story area carrying his/her "heavy" bag and invites the children to come forward and see what is in the bag. If there are a large number of children it will help to select children who are sitting quietly to come and take items out of the bag to show the others. Include a Bible in the bag, take it out last, open it up to Luke 12 and read verse 34. Pause to wonder about what that could mean, and then begin the story.

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## **Story:**

My friend Isabelle lent this bag of treasures to me. She said this bag has all of the things that used to be most important to her. (Pull out a few items for a second time and talk about them; how cool they are, etc.) These were my friend's treasures for a long time. She really cared about them, so she took very good care of them. She never let anyone else use them or touch them, or read them, because she did not want anything to happen to them. She worried about them breaking, or getting ripped, or lost.

Then, one day, she met a little boy called Jessie. Jessie was playing with a stick in a pile of sand. He looked like he was having lots of fun playing. So Isabelle asked Jessie, "Why aren't you playing with a real toy?" Jessie said, "I don't have "real toys" right now. They got packed up when my parents moved here, and we have not found the right box yet." "Aren't you sad and worried about your toys?" asked Isabelle. Jessie said he was a little worried, but toys were not really that important to him anyway, and that he was more worried about finding friends with whom he could share the toys. "Oh, I never share my things, because others might break them," Isabelle replied. "Do you have friends around here?" Jessie asked her. "Not really," Isabelle answered, "others don't seem to like me." "Well, there are always other things to play with, but if no one wants to be your friend that can be pretty lonely," said Jessie.

That really made Isabelle think, and, as you can see by the bag of treasures she is sharing with me today, it also led her to share her toys and treasure her friends in new ways. She thought about what Jessie said and about what Jesus says in Luke 12: 32-34. She learned that following Jesus, just like being a good friend, includes being willing to give away or share our things.

## **Prayer:**

Thank you Jesus for teaching us about treasures and friends. Thank you for helping people like Jessie teach us that friends are a bigger treasure than things. Amen.



# challenging Charlie

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 15

**Title:** Challenging Charlie  
**Author:** Miriam S.R. Wakeman  
**Church:** Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB  
**Text:** Luke 12: 49-56  
**Theme:** Jesus knows it can be risky to stand up for God's ways.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why Charlie was so bossy.
- I wonder how Stephen felt when David stood up for him.
- I wonder what I would have done in that after school program.
- I wonder if David was praying when he took that deep breath before he challenged Charlie.

### Gathering Activity:

Good morning, children. How is everyone today? Did you listen to the Scripture this morning from Luke? Who thinks they can tell me what it is talking about? I think it is telling us Jesus knows that following him might mean we disagree with people who do not follow Jesus. Have any of you ever fought with someone because you thought what they said or did was wrong? Me, too. Let's prepare ourselves to listen to a story about someone who stood up for God's way, even when it was hard. We will listen better if we settle into a comfortable position and connect with that quiet spot inside where we know we are close to God. (Pause) Are you ready?

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## Story:

Once upon a time, there was a group of children in an after school program. In this group there was a girl named Charlie. Charlie expected everyone to do what she told them to do. If someone did not listen to her, she would tell mean lies about them to others, or she would tell others not to play with that person. One day during the after school program, David was doing some math homework on the pavement with Stephen, when Charlie came and told him she wanted him to move so that she and her friends could play a game. David moved, but he suspected that Charlie was going to play one of her teasing games with Stephen again, so he asked her, "Are you going to tease Stephen about his accent again?" Charlie replied, "Maybe, but that is none of your business, so move." David knew that Stephen's feelings were hurt when Charlie teased him for speaking differently. "Well, I know that, last time, your teasing game hurt Stephen's feelings a lot and I don't want you to tease him anymore." "Oh, you both are such babies! I was just joking! It's not my fault if he can't take it." David took a deep breath. Then he looked at her and said, "Charlie, you know people don't like being teased, and my parents and our teachers say that we should be nice to each other. And, my Sunday school teacher told us that Jesus wants us to help those who need help. Stephen only moved here a few months ago, and I am trying to help him have a better time at school. If that means you are going to pick on me instead, or tell others lies about me, fine, but I am not going to let you bully Stephen anymore." "Whatever," Charlie sighed, and walked away. And you know what? Charlie still teased David and Stephen after that, but lots of the others thought that David was very brave, and they decided to try and be braver, too. The children in the after school program became less scared of what Charlie might say about them, because

they knew it was not the truth. David chose to follow what he thought Jesus wanted, even though that meant standing up to a bully. Jesus knows that it is not always easy to follow him, but if we ask, Jesus will help us to stand up to others in order to follow Jesus' way.

## Prayer:

Dear Jesus, You know that sometimes others do things that are not what you want. Help us to show them your way. Help us to be brave when we need to say or do things that are different from what others are doing, so that we can follow you. Amen.

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# when is helping against the rules?

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 16

**Title:** When is helping against the rules?  
**Author:** Miriam S.R. Wakeman  
**Church:** Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB  
**Text:** Luke 13: 10-17  
**Theme:** Helping needy people is so important; we can even do it on days that are set aside for God.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how the woman got to be so bent over.
- I wonder what all the Sabbath rules were.
- I wonder what it was like to get helped and have people get angry about it.
- I wonder how we can know when it's all right to break a rule like Jesus did.

### Gathering Activity:

Good Morning. How is everyone feeling today? The Scripture passage today talks about a woman who cannot stand up straight. Have you ever crawled through a tunnel where you had to stay bent over? How did that feel? Please stand up and bend over and stay that way while I ask you some questions. If you could not ever stand up straight, how might that feel? Do you think that your muscles might get sore? What other problems might you have? Do you think you could still play all the games that you play now? Could you still do other things the same way, like eat at the table, or colour pictures? Probably not. Are you getting sore? Okay, sit down and get ready to hear today's story. Are you comfy now? Are you quiet inside? Have you connected with that quiet space inside where we know God is near? Good.

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## Story:

The woman that Luke, the doctor who wrote this part of the Bible, tells us about (*show them the passage in your Bible*), had been living her life without standing up straight for a long time. How do you think Jesus felt when he saw the woman? If you saw her, would you want to help her feel better? That's just how Jesus felt, so Jesus healed her so that she could walk straight again. Some of the people who were watching when Jesus healed the woman were happy, but others were mad. They were mad because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, and that was against the Sabbath rules. Is Sabbath a new word? Sabbath is what they called their special day for worshipping God. People were not supposed to do work on that day so that it would be easier to rest and worship God. Healing someone is a kind of work. Walking far is a kind of work. So is cooking food. So they had rules about these things. They had lots of Sabbath rules. Hundreds of rules. They got carried away with rules and some people forgot why they had the rules. The rules became more important than the good reason that started the rule making.

We have rules, too. Has anyone ever told you that you could not do something at a certain time? My mom never let me eat after I brushed my teeth before bedtime. I always had to go to sleep with clean teeth. Those kinds of rules are important; because they help our bodies stay strong and healthy. But, there were special times when my mom would let me eat something after I brushed my teeth, or go to sleep before I brushed my teeth.

Our bodies need rest, and we need time to focus on God and God's love for all of us. Sabbath rules were good. But Jesus broke the rules when he saw the bent-over woman because he wanted to help her feel better again. Jesus wants people to be free to worship him and not hurting like the bent-over woman was.

## Prayer:

Dear God, thank you for loving us, and caring for us. Thank you for giving us rules that help us take time for you. Please help us remember that rules are there to help us live well. Show us how we can help others to love you, too. Amen.



# humbled & honoured

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 17

**Title:** Humbled & Honoured  
**Author:** Miriam S.R. Wakeman  
**Church:** Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB  
**Text:** Luke 14: 1, 7-14  
**Theme:** Luke - do not take the place of honour, because you may be humbled. Humble yourself, so that you might be honoured

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how it feels to be humbled.
- I wonder how it feels to be honoured.
- I wonder how God helps us live with being humbled and honoured.

### Gathering Activity:

Our worship service today will include examples of being humbled and honoured, because that is what today's Gospel reading is about (*show children Luke 14*). Maybe you can talk about your favourite story of being humbled and honoured with others after the service. But, what does it mean to be humbled and honoured? Listen to this story and I think you will know what it means, because this happens to many of us.

Let's get ready to hear today's story by getting comfortable and quiet from the inside. Have we connected with those quiet spaces inside where we know God is near? Are we ready? Good.

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**Story:**

Sarah\* was excited because she was going to kindergarten for the first time ever. She was looking forward to making new friends, playing with different toys, and learning new things. But she was also a little bit scared because everything was so new and different in kindergarten. When her dad dropped her off at kindergarten with a big hug and a kiss, she was still a little bit scared. Soon she saw a big box of brand new, brightly-coloured blocks on the top of a shelf. Sarah loved building tall towers, so she went straight to the bin and found a stool so that she could reach them.

When she managed to get the blocks down to the carpet, another student called Joe, said, "You are not allowed to play with those blocks, they are the ones I always play with," and he took them away from her. Sarah felt very small and embarrassed. She did not know that the blocks were the ones Joe always played with. She found other blocks to play with but they were not as nice. Sarah had been humbled.

Later, when it was Sarah's turn to play at the water table, she saw a bright blue boat in the toy box that she wanted to play with. She started reaching for it, but then she remembered what happened with the blocks, so she let the other kids pick the toys they wanted first.

When it was Sarah's turn, the only toy left was a little wooden canoe that looked old with chipped and faded paint. She had just started floating the little canoe when the teacher came up to her and said, "Sarah, can I trade you that canoe for this new toy?" "I guess so," Sarah replied.

Then the teacher offered her a beautiful new boat, which was blue and purple, and it had a tiny bell on it that rang whenever the boat moved. None of the other toys had a bell on it. Sarah felt special because the teacher gave

her the nicest toy to play with. Now Sarah had been honoured.

**Prayer:**

Thank you, Jesus, that you understand the feelings we have when we are humbled and when we are honoured. Thank you that knowing you love us all, and knowing that each one of us is special to you, can help us do the right thing when we are humbled and when we are honoured. Amen.

\*feel free to change the name and gender of the main character



# Giving Up to Succeed

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 18

**Title:** Giving Up to Succeed  
**Author:** Miriam S.R. Wakeman  
**Church:** Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB  
**Text:** Luke 14: 25-33  
**Theme:** Think about the cost of being a disciple before you become one.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why some people try so hard to get good at a sport.
- I wonder if I will ever try so hard that I will give up eating treats.
- I wonder what things Jesus' disciples try really hard to get good at.
- I wonder what the rewards are of trying really hard to live like Jesus did.

### Gathering Activity:

Good morning, children, it is so good to see you. I hope you are well. I have some questions for you that will help us get ready for our story. Do you know what a disciple is? What do you think the *cost of discipleship* means? These are hard questions, but that's what God's Word is about for us today. (*Show them the Scripture selection in Luke.*) How many of you watched the Winter Olympics last winter? Do you think you could ever do what the athletes did? If you have, that will help you understand about the cost of discipleship. But now, let's get ourselves ready to listen. Do you remember how we do that? That's right, we settle into a comfortable position and connect with that quiet spot inside where we know that God is near. (*Pause*) Are you ready? Here is the story.

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**Story:**

The Olympic athletes had to give up lots of things to become good in their sports. They had to practice every day, even when they would rather have gone out to play with their friends. They could not eat junk food because they needed to keep their bodies healthy. They had to get up early in the morning to train for their sport. Some even had to go to a different type of school so that they would have enough time to practice and train. The athletes had to work hard to get to the Olympics.

Probably, the athletes thought about what they would have to give up if they wanted to become good enough to go to the Olympics. Other athletes worked just as hard but were not good enough to make the team. Some were even injured during their training. Then they had to work even harder to achieve their goal of going to the Olympics. Having to give up all of these things is the cost of becoming a good athlete.

In the Scripture read from Luke today, Jesus tells people to think about the cost of being his disciple before they become one. What do you think are some of the things that Jesus' disciples have to give up? (Should not hurt feelings, need to do what is right, not what is popular, etc.)

I want you to remember that although being a disciple costs something, the reward for being one is great and worth the things you need to give up. Listen for other costs and rewards of being a disciple in today's worship and talk about them with your family and friends after the service.

**Prayer:**

Thank you, Jesus, that there are many good things that are worth trying our very best for. Thank you that you tried your very best to show us God's loving way. Please help us be good disciples and try our best, too. Amen.



# lost and found

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 19

**Title:** Lost and Found  
**Author:** Miriam S.R. Wakeman  
**Church:** Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB  
**Text:** Luke 15: 1-10  
**Theme:** God celebrates whenever one of God's children is found

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how Isaac felt when he noticed that he had lost his parents.
- I wonder how Isaac knew he could trust the stranger who sat with him.
- I wonder how God felt when Isaac got back to his family.
- I wonder how God celebrates when he finds lost children.

### Gathering Activity:

Good morning, children. It is so good to see you. I'm so glad you all found your way here today. God's word for us today is about getting lost and getting found. *(Show them the Scripture selection in Luke.)* Have any of you ever been lost? How did being lost make you feel? But now, let's get ourselves ready to listen. Let's settle into a comfortable position and connect with that quiet spot inside where we know that God is near. *(Pause.)* Are you ready? Here is the story:

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## **Story:**

This is a story about Isaac, who lost his parents in the park. Isaac's family and friends decided to have a picnic in the park. They drove for about twenty minutes to get to the park. After they finished the picnic, Isaac ran off to a play structure on the other side of the hill from the picnic site, but he forgot to tell anyone that he was going to the playground. After he finished playing, Isaac went back to the picnic area. His family was gone. He walked to the parking lot and looked for his parents' car. It was gone, too. He looked for his parents' friends' car. They were gone, too. Isaac had lost his parents. He did not know where they were.

At first Isaac got very angry with his parents, because they had left without him. Then he got scared; what was he going to do now? It was too far to walk home, and he was not even sure which direction to go to get home. He decided to go back to the picnic area and think about what to do. On the way, Isaac passed a pay phone, so he thought he would call their cell number and tell them to come and get him. By now he was sad and missing his family.

A kind stranger gave Isaac two quarters for the phone call, and offered to sit with him until his parents arrived. Together, they walked back to the picnic area to wait for Isaac's parents who were on their way back to the park. They had noticed Isaac was missing as soon as everyone had gotten out of the cars and they had turned right around to look for Isaac in the park.

Meanwhile, Isaac started worrying that he would be in trouble. He had left the picnic without telling anyone. His parents were probably very mad right now. When Isaac's parents arrived fifteen minutes later, they both ran up to him and gave him hugs and kisses.

They were so happy that Isaac was safe with them again. When Isaac got home, his parents even called their friends and threw a party to celebrate finding Isaac safe and sound.

The scriptures today talk about how much God celebrates when people find their way to God. Just like in the story, all we need to do if we lose our way is call God and God will come and find us and set us back on the right path.

## **Prayer:**

Dear Jesus, thank you for keeping Isaac safe and that he found his parents again. Thank you that you care about us and find us when we are lost. Please help everyone who is lost find their way home again. Amen.



# caring for pets

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 20

**Title:** Caring for Pets  
**Author:** Miriam S.R. Wakeman  
**Church:** Home Street Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB  
**Text:** Luke 16:1-13  
**Theme:** We show we can be trusted by doing small jobs well.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how Allison liked taking care of her fish.
- I wonder how Allison felt when she got her puppy.
- I wonder what kind of things God trusts us with and wants us to take care of now.

### Gathering Activity:

Good morning, children, it is so good to see you. I hope you are well. I have some questions for you that will help us get ready for our story. How many of you have pets at home? How do you take care of them? If you know how to take care of a pet it will help you understand today's story. Learning how to take care of things is what God's Word is about for us today. (*Show them the Scripture selection in Luke.*) But now, let's get ourselves ready to listen. Do you remember how we do that? That's right, we settle into a comfortable position and connect with that quiet spot inside where we know that God is near. (*Pause.*) Are you ready? Here is the story.

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**Story:**

Allison wanted a dog for her birthday more than anything else. She asked her parents for a dog every day, although her birthday was still months away. One day, her mother took her to the pet shop. Allison got very excited. But, when they entered the pet store she took Allison to the fish tanks, instead of heading towards the dogs. "But Mom, I want a dog, not a fish!" Allison exclaimed. Her mom replied, "If you want a dog, you need to prove that you can take care of a smaller pet, like a fish, first."

After a week of taking good care of her fish, Allison thought that she would feed her fish some people food. Her big brother stopped her, and told her that fish only eat fish food. "Well, that's boring," thought Allison. But after that, she only gave fish food to her fish.

On Allison's birthday, her family gave her a box that kept wiggling. It wiggled because there was a brand new puppy inside of it. They told Allison how proud they were of the good care she had taken of her fish. Since she had proved she could take care of a small pet, they thought that, with her family's help, she could now handle a bigger pet. Together, they trained Mr. Wiggles (that is what Allison named the dog) to do all sorts of tricks.

Allison noticed that at first her mom often gave Mr. Wiggles doggy treats to teach him new tricks, but after a while she did not use them anymore. "Mom, why don't you use those treats to teach Mr. Wiggles tricks like you used to?" "Well Allison, doggy treats are what Mr. Wiggles likes, so I used what he likes to teach him how I would like him to behave. After a while I did not need the treats anymore, because pleasing me rewards Mr. Wiggles more than treats. At first, he loved the treats more, but now he loves you and me more than treats. He knows that we will always take good care of him, and love him."

**Prayer:**

Thank you God, for trusting us and teaching us to care for things like fish and puppies. Please help us share and take good care of our pets and each other, as one way of letting your love shine through us. Amen.



# the Have-lots & the Have-less

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 21

**Title:** The Have-lots  
& the Have-less

**Author:** Miriam S.R. Wakeman

**Church:** Home Street Mennonite  
Church, Winnipeg, MB

**Text:** Luke 16: 19-31

**Theme:** Jesus wants us to share and  
be fair.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why the have lots forgot to share fairly.
- I wonder how it felt to live in Have-Less kingdom.
- I wonder how the King felt when he saw that the Have-Lots people were being greedy and the Have-Less people were sharing.
- I wonder how Jesus, who is the King of Kings, feels when we share fairly.

### Gathering Activity:

Good morning, children.  
How is everyone today?

Is there anyone here who thinks they are rich enough?

Does anyone think it isn't fair when their friends have more toys, or better clothes, of better food than they have? Does this ever lead to trouble? I'm not surprised. God's Word for us today is about learning to share and be fair. (Show them the Luke text) So, let's get ready to listen to the story about some people who had some trouble with sharing fairly. To listen well, it will help a lot to get comfortable and really quiet. Imagine you are on Jesus' lap and that Jesus, the best story teller there ever was is telling you this story. Are you ready? (pause) Good.

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## Story:

Once upon a time, there were two kingdoms, the Have-Lots, and the

Have-Less. Now the people of Have-Lots had the biggest houses, the biggest cars, and the fanciest things imaginable. Their kitchens had taps that poured whatever kind of drinks they wanted. They had everything they could possibly want. The Have-Lots lived at the top of a mountain. When something was not good enough for the Have-Lots, they would throw it down the mountain.

This was how the Have-Less got everything they had. Whenever the Have-Less heard something rolling down the mountain, they all got out of the shelters they had managed to build with what came down the mountain, because the new thing might break their shelter if it rolled into it. Then they would gather around it and share it as equally as they could. This way everyone at least had a little.

The Have-Lots knew that the Have-Less lived at the bottom of the mountain and promised them that whatever came down the mountain was theirs to keep, but they did not really worry too much about them.

A long time ago the King of both kingdoms had made this deal with

the Have-Lots. "I will give you everything I have. Whatever you do not need I want you to take down the mountain and share with the people who live there. They are my people, too, and I want you to care for them, as I care for you."

Most of the Have-Lots had forgotten what the king had told them. Every once in awhile, the King would send them a messenger to remind the Have-Lots of what he had asked of them. Most people just ignored the messengers and continued to live as before.

One day, a great wind came and blew everything down into the valley, leaving the Have-Lots with nothing. The Have-Lots ran down the mountain to reclaim everything they had lost. When they got to the edge of the valley, the King of both kingdoms was waiting for them. He stopped them and said, "I have lived in this valley since I left you, but you have not shared as I asked you to. Whatever comes down the mountain belongs to my people who live here."

The Have-Lots thought about this. They decided to offer the Have-Less money if they would return their things. The Have-Less laughed, saying, "But, we have everything we need. We do not want your money. Come, we'll share what has come down the mountain with you." And they did. Then they threw a big party to celebrate that everyone finally had enough. The Have-Lots were amazed, and ashamed that they had not been sharing freely.

## Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for this story that teaches us to share fairly. Please forgive us when we act like the Have-Lots people did. Help us to share like the Have-Less people did, even when we have lots. Amen.



# faithful waiting

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 22

**Title:** Faithful Waiting  
**Author:** Barrette Plett  
**Church:** Bethel Mennonite Church,  
Winnipeg MB  
**Text:** Luke 17:5-10 and  
1 Timothy 1:1-14  
**Theme:** Faith and the rewards of faith.

### Needed:

Some seed packages, ripe vegetables, an acorn, and a picture of an oak tree.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder if Joshua ever thought his acorn wouldn't grow.
- I wonder how Joshua had enough faith to keep waiting and taking care of his acorn.
- I wonder what other things are worth waiting and caring for patiently.
- I wonder what kinds of seeds God wants us to plant and care and wait for.

### Gathering Activity:

*(Welcome the children and show them the seed packages, vegetables, the acorn, and the picture of the tree as they come forward and find their places to sit.)* Good morning. I showed you these seeds and vegetables to help you get ready to listen to today's stories. Our story today is from two places in the Bible, from Luke 17 and 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy. *(Show them the places in your Bible.)* They aren't about vegetables; they talk about having faith and growing in our faith. When we plant vegetable seeds, we have to have faith that they will grow, and we have to wait until they grow, so that's why our children's story is about seeds today. Let's get ready to listen. Make sure you are settled into a comfortable position. Get really quiet and think about being here together to worship and learn about God. Know that God is here among us, helping our faith grow. (pause) Are you ready? Here is the story.

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## Story:

A long time ago, there was a Sunday School class, in which the teacher asked the children to bring special things in to class. One Sunday in spring, the teacher asked everyone to bring a seed that they would plant. The teacher said that they would plant the seeds and watch them grow.

The next week, every child brought a seed. Most of them brought vegetable seeds, but one boy, Josh, brought an acorn. They all planted the seeds in the ground behind the church.

Every Sunday after that, they would go and water their little garden.

Before they left, they would pray and thank God for helping their

seeds grow. After one week, two little plants had started growing. They were peas. The next week, all the other seeds, except for Joshua's acorn, had started to grow. There were pea plants, cucumbers, and even broccoli. The children were really excited about the broccoli because it was such a curly plant. As summer got closer, the plants started to get bigger. Some of them even had blossoms. Only Joshua's plant had not sprouted. Some of the other children thought that his acorn probably wouldn't grow, and they told Joshua to plant something else like radishes. But Joshua's teacher encouraged him by saying, "No, God will help this seed to grow, too. But this one will take faithful waiting."

When Sunday School ended for summer, Joshua offered to take care of their garden during July and August. Every week, Joshua went to the little garden. He carefully pulled all the weeds and watched closely for any sign of his acorn sprouting. When fall came, and Sunday School started up again, the class harvested the vegetables from their garden, but Joshua's seed still hadn't grown. Joshua's teacher and Joshua winked at each other and

said, "Just wait and see, God will help this seed grow."

One Sunday morning, the next spring, when Joshua walked by the garden on his way to church, he saw something green. He stopped and looked. Right in the spot where he had planted his acorn last year, there was a little green shoot coming out of the ground. Joshua ran proudly to his Sunday School teacher and said, "See! Look! I knew God would make my seed grow, too!" The Sunday school teacher gave him a hug and took the whole class out to see the young tree shoot.

Every Sunday for the rest of that spring and summer, Joshua watered his little tree patiently. By the time fall came, it was almost up to his knee. He piled some leaves up around it to keep it warm in the winter. The next spring, he watched proudly as its leaves turned green and the tree kept growing. It grew slowly, but it kept growing every year. Every summer, Joshua would take care of his tree, until it was taller than he was! God's sunshine and rain kept helping that tree grow for many, many years. Joshua grew, too. One spring day, a grown up Joshua showed his Sunday school children the oak tree and helped them climb and sit in its branches. That summer, they came and sat in its shade after church. That fall, they collected its acorns and planted another oak tree. It had taken a long time, but Joshua's little acorn had turned into a strong, tall tree!

## Prayer:

Dear God. Please help us to have faith when it feels like we have to wait a really long time for things. Thank you for people, like the Sunday School teacher, who encourage us in our faith and help us wait. Please help us be like Joshua who kept caring for and believing that his seed would grow. Help us be good helpers and care givers. Amen.



# following *strange* instructions

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 23

**Title:** Following Strange Instructions  
**Author:** Elsie Rempel  
**Church:** Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg MB  
**Text:** Luke 17:11-19  
**Theme:** Sometimes Jesus expects us to trust and follow strange instructions.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why the people in these stories had to follow instructions that seemed strange to them.
- I wonder whom we can trust, even when they give us strange instructions to follow.
- I wonder if the woman in the first story was following God's instructions when she decided to help Lucille's cat.
- I wonder what strange instructions God has for us to follow today.

### Gathering Activity:

*(Welcome the children and ask them all to turn around two times, or hop on one foot, etc. before they sit down in their place to hear the story. Don't insist, but encourage them to follow your instructions.)* Who thought that I was asking you to follow strange instructions this morning? Who wondered why I was doing this? The reason I gave you strange instructions to follow, is because that's what our story will be about today. The ideas for this story come from Luke 17 (*show them the place in your Bible*) Now, let's do something that isn't strange. Let's get ourselves ready to listen. Settle into a comfortable position and connect with that quiet spot inside where we know that God is near. *(Pause)* Are you ready? Here is the story.

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## Story:

One day Lucille was walking in the woods behind her house. She met a kind older woman who was out there walking her dog. The woman was happy for the chance to chat with Lucille, because she was lonely. Lucille told her about her sick cat, who could only get better with expensive medicine, and that they didn't have enough money for the medicine. The woman asked her all about her cat's problems. They walked on, silently enjoying the singing of the birds and the rustle of the leaves. The woman said that being out in the forest reminded her of the many surprising ways that God shows his love. Lucille agreed, and they marveled at some interesting mushrooms that peeked out from under the fallen leaves. When it was time for Lucille to go home, the woman asked Lucille to come back in two days to the place in the woods where they had met today. And, would she please bring her dad and her cat along with her? Lucille thought this was very strange, but she had a feeling that she could trust this kind woman and agreed to follow her strange instructions. She told her dad all about this visit and he agreed to help her follow these instructions.

Two days later, Lucille's cat was even sicker. She could hardly walk, so Lucille packed her up in her cat cage. Her dad carried the cage, and together, they walked into the forest behind their house. The woman was already there, waiting for them. She told them that she was a veterinarian, an animal doctor, and that she wanted to help Lucille and her cat, by giving the cat the medicine it needed. She opened her bag and gave Lucille a bag of pills. If the cat would eat one every day for a week, she should soon feel better. Lucille was so happy she hugged the woman, who was quickly becoming a good friend. Lucille and her dad gave the cat a pill every day, and soon it was feeling better, just like the woman had said. Every time Lucille went back into those

woods, she hoped she would meet the kind woman again, so that she could tell her how much those pills had helped her cat.

This story is a lot like a story about Jesus in Luke 17 (show them the place in your Bible). Jesus went for a walk, too. He was walking with some of his friends when ten people with a bad skin sickness came to Jesus and asked him if he could heal them. He said that, yes, he could heal them. All they had to do was go and show themselves to the priests, who were leaders at their place of worship. This also seemed like a strange set of instructions for getting better, but they followed them. On their way to the priests, they noticed that their skin was getting healthy again. They were healed! This made them very happy. All of them kept walking to the priests, except for one of them. He was so happy, he just had to say thank you and praise God together with Jesus, so he came running back to Jesus and knelt down in front of his feet to thank him. Jesus was pleased and told him that he was healed because of his faith. The healed man skipped off to show the priests that he was now healthy.

## Prayer:

Dear God. Please help us to have faith when it Dear God, thank you for these stories of getting better by following strange instructions. Please help us to trust and follow your instructions when we need your help and when you want us to help someone else. Help us to remember to listen and do what you ask us to do. Amen.

\*A song that is particularly suitable for this story focus is Bryan Moyer Suderman's *When you learn to follow Jesus (you will act a little strange)*. Available on the CD, *God's Love is for Everybody*, © 2002, from [bryan@smalltallmusic.com](mailto:bryan@smalltallmusic.com)



# who needs a *Squeaky* wheel?

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 24

**Title:** Who Needs a Squeaky Wheel?  
**Author:** Elsie Rempel  
**Church:** Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg MB  
**Text:** Luke 18:1 – 8, especially 7-8.  
**Theme:** Persistence pays off, even with unfair people, but God answers quickly

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how it felt to keep on asking people to be fair to David for 23 years.
- I wonder when it is important to keep on asking and when is it better to stop asking for something.
- I wonder how God feels when people don't listen to people who are squeaky wheels for making things right.
- I wonder what things God wants us to be squeaky wheels about.

### Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children and ask them if they think asking for something many times is worth it. Does it get them into trouble? Ask those who get into trouble for asking for something again and again to sit on one side of you and those who end up getting what they want to sit on the other side.

People who keep on asking and asking for something are sometimes called squeaky wheels. Squeaky wheels can be very annoying, but sometimes it is important to listen to them, just like it's important to listen to a squeaky wheel on our cars because the squeak lets us know we need to add oil or fix the brake pads. Jesus told a story, it's written down here in Luke 18 (*show them*) about a person who was like a squeaky wheel and finally got fair treatment from an unfair judge. Today's children's story is about a modern mom who did the same thing. So, let's get ready to listen by settling into comfortable positions and connecting with that quiet spot inside where we know that God is near. (*Pause*) Are you ready? Here is the story.

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## Story:

This morning I'd like to tell you a true story about a woman from Langenburg, Saskatchewan. She liked making pickles and baking bread, but, when her son was treated unfairly she changed the way she lived and became a squeaky wheel. You see, Joyce Milgaard's son, David, was sent to prison for something he said he did not do. The judge thought David had killed someone, but he hadn't. David's mom believed her son was innocent, even when others didn't. So, instead of baking and cooking in her kitchen all the time, she started writing letters, making phone calls or visits to anyone who could help her son prove that he had not killed anyone and shouldn't be in prison. It took a very long time, but she just kept on trying to show that her son, David, deserved to be free. Sometimes she was discouraged and felt like giving up, but then she thought of people in the Bible who didn't give up, like the woman in Jesus' story, or the story of David and Goliath. These stories cheered her up. In a newspaper story about Joyce Milgaard, she told people that she prayed to God every day and said, "OK Father, what do you want me to do tomorrow?" God was different from the people she wrote letters to. God listened right away, and helped her keep on doing the right things to free her son. God listens when people are treated unfairly because God really wants things to be right and fair. That's why we say that God is righteous.

After 23 years of letters, and phone calls, and visits, Joyce and her friends finally proved that David was innocent. Finally, he was free and could come back home. She was so happy. In those 23 years Joyce Milgaard became very good at being a squeaky wheel when something was unfair. Soon other people, who needed her kind of squeaky wheel skills, asked her to help them. And she did. And she is still helping people with her special skill of being a squeaky wheel for fairness.

Quote from *Randy Burton, The StarPhoenix, January 29, 2005. Other facts in this story come from the website [http://www.injusticebusters.com/05/Milgaard\\_Joyce.shtml](http://www.injusticebusters.com/05/Milgaard_Joyce.shtml).*

## Prayer:

Thank you, God, for always listening and always being fair. Thank you for helping Joyce be a good squeaky wheel for fairness. Please help us be partners with you, like Joyce, in making this world a fairer place. Amen.



# God cares about what's inside

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 25

**Title:** God cares about what's inside  
**Author:** Barrette Plett  
**Church:** Bethel Mennonite Church, Winnipeg MB  
**Text:** Luke 18: 9-14  
**Theme:** Bragging and contempt are less pleasing to God than a dirty appearance.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder how these women felt after they gave their money for the offering.
- I wonder which person was listening to God's love on the inside.
- I wonder how the way we share our money lets others know what we are like on the inside.
- If our money talked about what's on the inside of us, I wonder what it would be saying.

### Gathering Activity:

As the children come forward, show them two packages and ask them which one they think has better stuff inside it. Open the pretty one first. Then open the ugly one. Ask them which present is better. This shows us that we can't always tell if something is good by looking at the outside. People are something like these packages. In today's Bible reading from Luke 18 (show them the passage) Jesus tells us that we can't always tell what people are like on the inside, but God can. Our children's story will help us understand this idea. Let's get ready to listen to this story with our hearts, by getting comfortable and quiet, as if we were each snuggled onto the lap of Jesus and he was telling us this story.

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## Story:

This is a story about two people. One person was a very famous woman. Everybody thought she was fantastic. She was very beautiful and did exciting things. She had so many friends that people actually worried that other people wouldn't like them if they didn't say nice things about her.

The second person in this story was also sort of famous. People talked about her a lot, but they didn't like her. She collected the town's garbage. Collecting garbage was important but it wasn't a fancy job. It was a smelly job, and her clothes got dirty. She often smelled stinky, like the garbage she collected. But when she found useful things in the garbage she gave them to people who were poor. Some people made fun of her clothes and the way she talked.

The famous woman was very rich. She was very good at pretending but she wasn't good at sharing. One of her friends told her it would be a good idea to share some of her money with poor people because then people would think she was really nice and she would be even more popular. She didn't want to share her money, but she agreed to try.

The next Sunday, the woman who was famous and the woman who collected garbage went to the same church. The woman who was famous sat as far away as she could from the woman who collected garbage. When the offering time started, the famous person took out a stack of paper pretend money that looked very real. She went to the front of the church and said, "I'm very famous and very important and I'm putting all this money in the offering plate to help the poor." Everybody clapped for her.

The woman who collected garbage put her money into the offering basket before she left the church, but she did it quietly. She gave the

money because she liked helping people who had less than she did. She put in \$100, but she had it in an old envelope, so no one saw how much she gave.

Later, when the ushers counted the money, they realized that the woman who collected garbage had given much more money than the woman who was famous and that her gift was fake because it was just pretend money. This made them wonder why everybody thought the famous woman was so much better than the kind woman who collected garbage.

## Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank you for knowing and caring about the good in people who aren't popular. Help us see your love in people in the way they share, even when they don't look fancy and aren't popular. Help us listen to your love inside of us and share it in ways that don't show off or brag. Amen.

\* Bryan Moyer Suderman's newly released CD, *My Money Talks*, would supplement this story very well. Available through [www.smalltallmusic.com/](http://www.smalltallmusic.com/).



# Hide and See! Jesus Came for Everyone!

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 26

**Title:** Hide and See! - Jesus Came for Everyone!  
**Author:** Joanne Peters  
**Church:** Bergthal Mennonite Church, Didsbury AB  
**Text:** Luke 19:1-10  
**Theme:** Jesus knows where we are and wants to visit with us even when we are feeling sad or angry or guilty.

### Needed:

a smaller child as a volunteer, one who won't mind being hidden for a while and climbing up on a pew or chair.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder if it is hard for outsiders to become insiders.
- I wonder if there are outsiders who would like to become insiders in our church.
- I wonder how we can help everyone that wants to, to see Jesus.

### Gathering Activity:

Welcome the children as they arrive and encourage them to get ready for today's children's time by settling into a comfortable spot and preparing their hearts to learn something important about and from Jesus. Show them the story about Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-10, and tell them that today's Gospel reading will be about Zacchaeus, a man who was short in size and short of honesty. He cheated people, and this made him unpopular.

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## Story:

Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus, so he climbed up into a tree so he could see him as he passed by. \_\_\_\_\_ has agreed to help us learn the lesson that Jesus taught people in this Bible Story. \_\_\_\_\_ will go and stand behind a crowd of people. (*After the child has taken his/her place, ask the people in the rows in front of the hidden child to stand up, so that the volunteer child can't see you, or the rest of the children. Then ask the hidden child and the other children who have gathered for the story the following questions.*)

(ask the hidden child) Without moving, tell me what you see in front of you? Where do your parents think you are?

(ask the other children) Do you think that the parents of this child know where he/she is even though they can't see him/her? (Yes, because they pay attention to where their child is going and saw their child move behind the taller children.)

(ask the hidden child) How would you feel if there was a puppet show going here in our children's time and this was where you had to stand? Where would you rather be standing? Are you feeling like an insider or an outsider now?

Ask those who were standing to block the child's view to sit down and invite the child to stand on a chair or pew so he/she can see over the heads of the people between him/her and the children's group.

(ask the child volunteer): Which view is better? Are you feeling more like an insider now?

(ask the other children): What else could have been done so that the child that was hidden could see what was happening? (*The crowd in front of him / her could have moved to make room and helped the smaller child see.*)

Do you know how I feel about \_\_\_\_\_ being over there and not being able to see? I feel sad, because \_\_\_\_\_ belongs here, with the rest of us, and I know that \_\_\_\_\_ would like to be here with us, too.

\_\_\_\_\_, please come back now and join our circle. I think you felt a little sad being away from us. We want you to feel like an insider, so come back into our circle. We'll wait for you and try to understand what Jesus was teaching while you come back.

Jesus was sad, too, because he knew Zacchaeus wanted to be accepted, and Jesus helped it happen. Listen carefully to the Gospel reading a little later to see how Jesus helped him. The reason that I was sad to have \_\_\_\_\_ so far away from us is that he/she belongs here with the church's other children. Jesus wants us to be a community in which we all know that we belong to the church and to Jesus. Jesus wants all of us to be able get close to him. Coming here for children's time is like gathering on Jesus' lap. When we gather here, it is to know and remember that Jesus came for everyone, short and tall, nice and not-so-nice people. Jesus is happy that outsiders get to see him and become insiders.

## Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for inviting outsiders to become insiders. Thank you for helping outsiders want to become insiders. Please fill us with your welcoming love, so that we can be loving and inviting like you. Amen.



# a gift from Grandma

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 27

**Title:** A Gift from Grandma  
**Author:** Charlotte Martens  
**Church:** Charleswood Mennonite Church, Winnipeg, MB.  
**Text:** Luke 20: 27-38  
(focusing on verses 36-38)  
**Theme:** God is a God of the living.

**Needed:**

A sample of three tulip bulbs to examine.

**Wondering Questions:**

- I wonder how there can be life inside of a dry and dead looking bulb.
- I wonder how the life inside of a tulip bulb can help us think and talk about God.
- I wonder what other ways we can see that God is a life-giving God.
- I wonder what signs of God's activity are coming to life among us.

**Gathering Activity:**

As the children arrive, welcome them and show the tulip bulbs to them. Engage them in questions about these bulbs, based on their knowledge of tulip bulbs, such as what they think they are, what they might be for, what type of tulip might be hiding inside, and finally, do they think these bulbs are alive or dead. Then, open your Bible and show them Luke 20. Tell them that today's story has been written to help us understand what Jesus meant when he said that "God is a God of the living, and not of the dead." Encourage them to imagine themselves sitting on the lap of Jesus, and that Jesus is explaining this hard idea to them with a story. Give them a short time of silence to settle comfortably into a listening position.

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## Story:

Julia was five years old and had just started kindergarten. Every Saturday morning she would go to her Grandma's house. Sometimes Julia and her Grandma baked cookies. Sometimes they built tall buildings with Grandma's old fashioned wooden blocks. On other visits they would read stories and sing songs. Julia and her Grandma both looked forward to their visits very much.

Julia knew that one of Grandma's favourite things for the two of them to do was sing together. Sometimes Julia would suggest singing a song just to see Grandma's eyes light up. Grandma had a favourite song. Perhaps you've heard it before- it goes like this: (ask the Grandmas in the congregation to help you sing it)

In the bulb there is a flower;  
in the seed an apple tree;  
in cocoons a hidden promise:  
butterflies will soon be free!  
In the cold and snow of winter  
there's a spring that waits to be,  
unrevealed until its season,  
something God alone can see."

Julia really liked the song, too, but the more she thought about it the more she realized that she just didn't understand what it was all about. So, Julia said to Grandma, "I like that song but I don't really understand it, what does 'unrevealed until its' season mean?" Grandma said, "God is a God of the living, of everything that's living. Even when we don't understand or can't see exactly what that life will be, the song says that God can see. Grandma could see that Julia still looked puzzled so she said, "Just a minute. I think I have something for you that will help you understand." Grandma rummaged around in her cupboard for a few minutes and came back with a small, shiny, silver bag. Julia excitedly looked inside the bag. Inside the bag were what looked like three small onions. They were brown and papery with little strings sticking out the bottom. Julia tried to hide her disappointment as she thanked Grandma for the gift. Grandma said, "I know they don't look like much now, but these are bulbs to plant in your garden. Right now, only God can see the life that is hiding inside them, but in the spring you'll be able to

see it, too. I hope these bulbs will remind you that God is a God of life."

Julia's Dad soon arrived to take her home. When Julia's Dad asked her what was in the bag she said, "Oh, just some bulbs. Grandma says there are flowers inside but I just can't believe there could be flowers inside something so ugly and dead looking." Julia's Dad said, "Why don't we plant them as soon as we get home. I don't think Grandma would have given you this gift if she didn't think it was special." Julia had to agree; Grandma had always given her wonderful gifts. So, Julia and her Dad dug some holes in the ground, put the bulbs inside and gently covered them with soil. Julia watered the bulbs with her very own watering can and then she looked at the ground to see if the bulbs were growing. Her parents reminded her that the bulbs would stay hidden until the spring.

Fall came and went. It began to snow. The snow covered Julia's bulbs with a fluffy, white blanket. And Julia, was busy with school, and then busy getting ready for Christmas, forgot about Grandma's gift. The months passed. Soon it was spring.

One day, Julia was practicing for her very first soccer game out in her yard. She kicked the ball as hard as she could. The ball bounced off the fence and landed right in the flower bed. Julia went to the flower bed to pick up the ball. As she leaned down to get it, she saw some little green shoots sticking out of the ground where she had planted her bulbs. Julia started to get excited. Maybe flowers had been hiding inside her bulbs after all. Julia checked her flowers every day until they began to bloom. They were beautiful tulips, a red one, a white one, and a yellow one! Julia called her Grandma to tell her the good news. She said, "Grandma, Grandma you were right! There was life hiding inside those bulbs. Today my tulips started blooming. I guess you and God were right. There was life inside of them." Grandma started singing "In the bulb there is a flower." Julia felt very warm inside and hummed along.

## Prayer:

Thank you, God, for the life that hides inside of things that seem dead. Thank you for the beautiful surprise of the tulips. Help us watch for the signs of life that are around us, and in us. Amen.



# Bible road signs

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 28

**Title:** Bible Road Signs  
**Author:** Joanne Peters  
**Church:** Bergthal Mennonite Church,  
Didsbury AB  
**Text:** Luke 21:5-19  
**Theme:** Don't let anything lead you  
astray from God's way.

### Needed:

A wooden train whistle would be good, but not necessary. A sheet of signs is included at the end of this story to be enlarged for telling or copied for responding to this children's time.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder what other stories are like road signs.
- I wonder if this is how Jesus would have explained this story to you if the streets he walked on had road signs.
- I wonder how we can help each other stay on God's pathway.

### Gathering Activity:

*As the children arrive, engage them in some relaxed conversation about road signs. (e.g. What road signs did they see as they came to church?) Do they know what the signs you have pictures of mean? Open your Bible, and show the children Luke 21. Tell them that Jesus is talking to people about paying attention to signs so we don't lose our way on God's path. Say something like, "Let's settle down so we can pay attention to today's story. Find that quiet place inside where you feel close to Jesus. Are you ready to listen with your ears and your heart?"*

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## Story:

Hold up the “railroad crossing” sign and ask what this sign is and what it means. Does this sign frighten you? Does the noise of a coming train frighten you? The railway crossing sign, and the train whistle, are strong, clear signs that help us stay out of the way when a train is crossing the street. Paying careful attention to these signs helps us to stay safe.

Hold up the “detour” sign and ask what it means? Detour signs are there to help us find our way when a road is blocked because it is being fixed. We have to follow all the other detour signs carefully until we’re back on the road, and on the other side of the blocked section. If we don’t follow the detour signs carefully, we could easily get lost. Road signs help us stay safe and keep us going in the right direction.

Can you think of “road signs” in the Bible? That might sound kind of odd, because they didn’t have cars in Bible times! But there are things in the Bible to help guide us and keep us on the right path in our lives.

Let’s think about some of those together. One of my favourite *verses* in the Bible is like a stop sign (hold up the stop sign). This verse says, “Be still and know that I am God.”

One of my favourite *stories* is like a “yield” sign, because it reminds me to slow down and see if someone else is there. Can you think of this story? (*The Good Samaritan slowed down to help a neighbour.*)

I think Jesus’ *advice*; to love your neighbour as yourself is a bit like the “playground” zone sign.

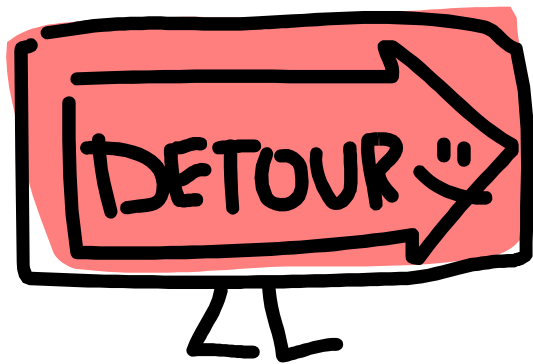
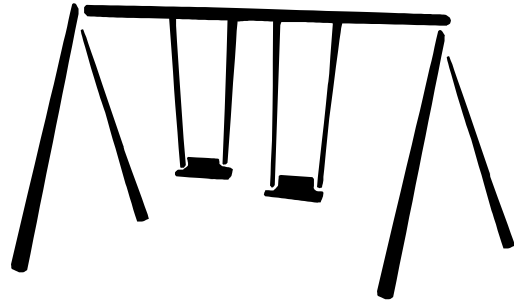
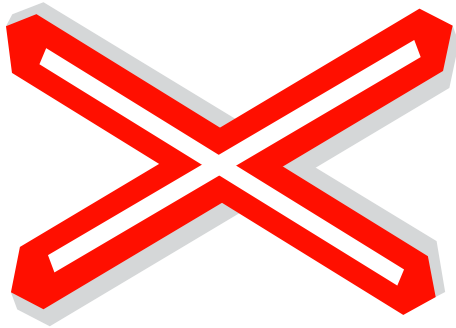
These Bible ‘road signs’ help us remember that we are God’s children and to watch out for each other. Today’s Bible verses are more like the “detour sign” that tells us to follow the signs carefully so we don’t get stuck or get lost and like the train crossing signs that warn

us of danger. Jesus wants us to pay extra attention to where we are going and to be extra careful about dangers that may lie ahead of us on our path. There are some things that we need to avoid and to warn others about. They are a way of saying, “Hey you! Pay attention to what is happening around you; be ready for what may lie ahead. Help other people understand it and get ready for it, too.”

## Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for road signs, and stories and words of advice from the Bible that help us know your way of living so we won’t get lost. Help us watch for and listen to the signs around us. Amen.

These road signs can help you remember some of the Bible's road signs.  
You may draw pictures of the Bible stories on the other side.







# from Darkness to Light

## Children's Story

Cycle C, Proper 29

**Title:** From Darkness to Light  
**Author:** Joanne Peters  
**Church:** Bergthal Mennonite Church,  
Didsbury AB  
**Text:** Luke 23:33-43  
**Theme:** Jesus' forgiving love can  
bring light into the darkest  
parts of our journeys, even  
when we face death.

### Needed:

Turn the lights off in the sanctuary for the telling of the children's story and have a soft, gentle light or lamp such as a small reading lamp, sparkly lava lamp or a flashlight ready to turn on. Tea lights for each child are optional.

### Wondering Questions:

- I wonder why the darkness can be so scary.
- I wonder about Jesus being like a light.
- I wonder how I can stay close to Jesus' light and share it with others.

### Gathering Activity:

*As the children arrive engage them in a relaxed conversation about being in the dark. (e.g. Have they ever experienced complete darkness because of a power failure late at night when all the lights went off in the house, on the microwave and on the TV.)* What did they do? Did someone light a candle or find a flashlight? Who likes the darkness? Who doesn't? Tell them about your feelings about darkness and that many people dislike the dark. When people go through really hard times they say they are going through dark times. *Introduce the story as follows,* "Today's Bible reading is about a very dark time for Jesus and another man, but even when Jesus was going through this very dark time, his love was like a light for the other man. (*Turn on your soft light.*) Think of Jesus' love as you look at this soft light and to prepare your hearts, minds, and bodies to listen to the story."

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## Story:

If it was really dark and you were sad, and someone near you turned on a beautiful, warm and wonderful light it would make you feel better. If I was in that situation, I would want to move closer to them, wouldn't you?

The man in the Bible story was very sad, because he was being punished by hanging on a cross. It was beside the one Jesus was on. Even though Jesus was suffering too, the man felt better because Jesus was near. He asked him to remember him in heaven, and Jesus said they would be in heaven together that very same day. Jesus was a light in his darkness.

There can be times in our lives when we feel like everything is dark. Maybe we are sick, or someone we know is sick. Maybe we're having trouble with friends, or something else is making us feel sad or lonely, like we are hurting inside. Jesus knows when we are sad or hurting and understands how we feel. Jesus is a gently shining light in the middle of all the sadness and darkness and loneliness. One of the names for Jesus is Light of the World.

Sometimes it has to be dark for us to notice how good it is to have a gentle light. Sad and dark times help us remember how good it is to be near the light of Jesus. When it is all dark around us, and a soft light is shining, we are attracted to the light and we are attracted to God's gently shining love in his Son, Jesus. Staying close to him is the best thing to do when the world feels dark or frightening.

Jesus' light is different from this lamp. Jesus' love light never goes out, it keeps shining, even when it seems dark all around us. Jesus shared his love, even when he was going through a really dark and hard time. When we know the loving Light of the World, and that Light of the World knows us, we can share that light and love with others so that they can see, hear, and feel the love of Jesus.

*(Each child could be given a little tea-light candle to take home, or to share with someone who is sick or sad. Remind them to light it only under adult supervision!)*

## Prayer:

Thank you, Jesus, for being such a loving light in our world. Thank you for sharing your light in dark times. Help us stay close to your light and share your light with others. Amen.