

# ***family@church***

***making family worship easier***

***Service Plans***

***YEAR THREE***

***A resource to help  
rural churches grow!***

*“It covers all the bases in a very user-friendly way and I can see why it is so  
immediately accessible and popular with families”*

**The Rt Revd Dr Mike Harrison, Bishop of Dunwich**

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# Using *family@church*: Year 3

Welcome to the *family@church* resource pack! This is the Year 3 pack that follows on from *family@church Year 1 and Year 2*. We hope you've enjoyed using the *family@church* material and have reached this stage with joy and excitement.

Year 1 covers the Gospel narrative at its most basic level, using the liturgical calendar as a guide. Year 2 goes a little deeper and aims to highlight the call of individuals and the basics of Christian discipleship (the bible, prayer etc). Year 3 focuses on biblical characters and explores how their faith and discipleship can inspire us to follow Jesus.

## **The Wall of Fame**

Throughout the year, we encourage you to create a 'Wall of Fame' by placing a picture, icon or image of the biblical character explored in each service on a board, wall or dedicated space. You can find some example images to print on our website or you can create or make your own!

## **Resources**

Where there are related or printable resources for a particular session, these can be found online or you can create them yourself using Google.

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# December – Advent/Christmas: Mary

**Theme:** This all age service focuses on the character of Mary, the Mother of Jesus, who stood by Jesus throughout his life. She was faithful to the fact that he was the Light of the World, even though others didn't believe at first. This service may be a Christingle service, in which case please use Year 1 and 2 resources as well.

## What you'll need for this service:

- An image of Mary, the Mother of the Lord, to place at the front of the church and then on the Wall of Fame.
- A 'magic' candle (a candle that relights when blown out!) These can be purchased online for about 99p.
- [A candle for each member of the congregation]

## Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.

## God's Family Gathers

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*Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**All And also with you.**

*Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme, place an image of Mary at the front, and lead into...*

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

**All Father, forgive us.**

We do foolish and silly things...

**All Father, forgive us.**

*+ May the God of light, who sent Jesus to Light up the way, shine upon you, forgive you your sins and keep you in life eternal. Amen.*

**SONG** (see song suggestions)

## God's Family Listens

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**Reading:** Luke 1: 46-55 (or John 1)

## Talk

*There are several versions of this talk. The key to this talk is to learn it by heart and make it your own! Do practice it first and learn how your candles work!*

When Jesus lived, he preached to his followers and said 'I am the Light of the World.' *In silence, light your magic candle.*

This candle symbolises Jesus, the Light of the World. *Have the lights switched off.*

In this darkened church, this small candle still shines bright. Jesus said he was the Light of the World. He was a Light nothing could put out. *Blow out your candle and watch it relight.* Could darkness put it out? No! Could evil put him out? No!

Now, there were people who didn't love Jesus and wanted to blow out that light! King Herod wanted Jesus gone, so he killed all the baby boys. Herod tried to get rid of Jesus. *Blow out your candle and watch it relight.*

But Jesus said, I am the Light of the World. Nothing can put him out!

When Jesus grew up, he often taught his followers how to love God and how to love each other. On one occasion, the crowd threw stones at him because they didn't like what they heard. *Blow out your candle and watch it relight.* But Jesus said, I am the Light of the World. Nothing can put him out!

Some Jewish leaders really wanted him gone. They didn't like the Light of Jesus! So, they plotted to have him crucified. On Good Friday Jesus died. They thought he was gone! *Blow out your candle and watch it relight.* But Jesus said, I am the Light of the World. Nothing can put him out!

On Easter Sunday, Jesus was given new life and rose again. But lots of people failed to recognise him. They thought he was gone. *Blow out your candle and watch it relight.* But Jesus said, I am the Light of the World. Nothing can put him out!

Still today, some people say that God doesn't exist or isn't real, that Jesus didn't do the things we're told about. They do not like his light. *Blow out your candle and watch it relight.* But Jesus said, I am the Light of the World. Nothing can put him out!

There was one person though who loved Jesus and believed everything he said. His mother, Mary. An angel appeared to her and said she was to mother Jesus, the Light in a dark world. Mary said yes. Mary watched that Light grow and do amazing things like turn water into wine and watched sick people made well again. Mary treasured all these things in her heart.

Mary watched as her Son Jesus died on the cross on that Good Friday. She waited with excitement for three days for her Son Jesus to appear to them again. Mary waited for the gift of the Holy Spirit and then told the people around her about Jesus, the Light of the World. *If this service is a Christingle service or an evening service, you may want the congregation to have a candle each and to share the Light of Jesus with them now from your 'magic' candle.*

So, she watched as loads of people tried to put out the Light. *Blow out your candle and watch it relight.* But she remembered that Jesus said, I am the Light of the World. Nothing can put him out!

*Switch on the church lights.*

So, how can we be more like Mary? She loves Jesus with her whole heart and she remembered that nothing can extinguish that Light. How can we share Jesus with other people, that he loves us and that he is still here with us now and the Light still shines in the darkness.

**SONG** (see song suggestions)

## God's Family Prays

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Let us pray,

Mary said, 'my soul magnifies the Lord and my Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.' Lord God, help us to worship you too. Help us to draw close to you and become more and more like Jesus our Saviour.

Mary said, 'the mighty one has done great things for me and Holy is his name.' Lord God, help us to see all the wonderful things you do for us. for sending Jesus to be born as one of us, for the signs and wonders he performed to show us your love, for giving his life for us on the cross and for giving us your new life.

Mary said, 'he has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away empty.' Lord God, we pray for those who are hungry, for the homeless and the poor. Help us to be lights to them in times of need. We pray for those who are sick or ill at this time and we remember before God those on our hearts and minds... *a quick moment's silence is kept.*

Mary said, 'he has helped Israel according to the promise he made to our forefathers.' Lord God, we pray for your Church throughout the world and we thank you for counting us as members of your family. Where there is darkness, help us bring light. Where there is pain, help us bring your healing. Where there is injustice, help us be people of truth.

### **The Lord's Prayer (modern)**

*If you have a crib scene, you may want to bless it here, after adding the characters. Place an emphasis on Mary as she is placed into the scene.*

**SONG** (*we suggest Away in a Manger or another Carol*)

## God's Family Goes!

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*If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert*

**All     We believe in God the Father,  
          from whom every family...**

**Church Family Notices can be given here.**

### **Blessing:**

+ *May the joy of the angels,  
the eagerness of the shepherds,  
the perseverance of the wise men,  
the obedience of Joseph and Mary,  
and the peace of the Christ child  
be yours this Christmas;  
and the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be among you and remain with you always. Amen.*

**SONG** (*see song suggestions*)

### **Song suggestions for December:**

Longing for light (Farrell)  
You are the King of glory (DuMosch)  
This little light of mine (Spiritual)  
Silent night (trad)  
Hark! the herald angels sing (trad)  
Away in a manger (trad)  
The Christingle Song (See Children's Society website)  
Can you see what we have made? (Kendrick)  
Light of the world (Hughes)  
Dear Mary, mother of the Lord (trad)  
Sing we of the blessed Mother (trad)  
Once in Royal David's City (trad)  
Let your light shine (Hillsong Kids)

### **Other ideas:**

- Combine this service with a Christingle service (see Year 1 and 2)
- If this service is towards the beginning of December, you may want to create family Advent calendars to take home. This can be done in a number of ways.
  - The easiest way would be to pre-cut an A4 sheet of card with 25 doors/openings. Get participants to decorate or colour in a background on another sheet and then stick the doors over the top.
  - Another way could be to think of 25 different forms of light (torch, sun, fire, LED etc) and to think about light every day in the run up to Christmas.
- As people enter, you could have a station decorating a small t-light pot (flower pot or glass jar) so people can take them home and place in their windows to symbolise Jesus the Light of the World.

### **Wall of Fame**

*Don't forget to print out an image of Mary to place of the wall of fame.*



# January – Epiphany: The Magi

**Theme:** This service focuses on the Magi, who followed the star to find Jesus. The service challenges us to think about following Jesus wholeheartedly and to not take our eyes off the star.

**What you'll need for this service:**

- An image of the Magi to place at the front of the church and then on the Wall of Fame.
- A five pointed star for each person (see online template - these could be cut out as people gather)
- Pens/pencils in pews.
- Talk 1 idea: A large star at the back of church
- Talk 2 idea: the numbers 1-12 printed on A4 sheets (see website)

**Before the service:**

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Place Prayer Stars in the pews or give out with hymn books.
- Talk 2: Place numbers under pews.

## God's Family Gathers

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*Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to.  
Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**All**    **And also with you.**

*Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays.  
Introduce the theme, place an image of the Magi at the front, and lead into...*

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

**All**    **Father, forgive us.**

We do foolish and silly things...

**All**    **Father, forgive us.**

*+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**SONG** (see song suggestions)

## God's Family Listens

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**Readings:** [Isaiah 60: 1-6 and] Matthew 2: 1-12

**Talk 1 – The Star of Christmas**

*Fix a large star at the back of church. During the talk, try to make as much eye contact with the star as possible. If the church is arranged in such a way, you could even slowly walk towards it during the talk, without taking your eyes off it.*

I'm a particular fan of The Wise Men, or Magi. Their story is one of the first stories in the Gospels that tell us about what it's like to follow Jesus.

These men and their entourage of camels, servants and households, set out on a long journey, one they had probably been planning for years. In the stars, they read the signs and they set out and followed a particular star that they believed would lead to a baby, born King of the Jews. They must have had to leave a fair amount of their lives behind. There was even a chance that they may not make it back home.

When they reached Jerusalem, they quickly learnt that they were not safe. Herod was jealous of this "new King" and vowed that those who tried to seek him would probably find themselves in serious trouble.

The Wise Men left their homes, for years, to find this promised Jesus. They faced uncertainty and trouble when they met Herod. Yet, they kept their eyes on the star that they had been watching for years. Even when the journey seemed long or dangerous, even when they were met with jealousy and trouble, they followed it right to the place where Jesus had been born.

They paid homage to Jesus and offered him gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

You might think that that was the end of their story. The Wise Men had to leave, having seen Jesus, by another road, as they knew of Herod's plan to kill Jesus. In a way, their going home by a different road also tells us that their lives had changed because they had met Jesus. Their gifts were symbols of the life that Jesus would live. The gifts show that Jesus' life would be given up for them. That he was indeed a King. They also showed that following Jesus was never going to be easy and that Jesus' life would bring division and unrest.

Yet, through it all, the Wise Men kept their eyes on the star. Somehow, they trusted that it would get them there safely. The Wise Men show us that we need to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and on the things that lead to him. Even when it's tough and the road is a bit bumpy. Even when we meet people who don't believe and trust in Jesus, our eyes should always be fixed on him. When we do, we find our lives are changed and take a different route.

*You may want to draw attention to the star you've been looking at throughout the talk.*

## **TALK 2 – The Twelve Days of Christmas**

*If your family@church service is near the start of the year or even within the Twelve Days of Christmas itself, you may want to use the following talk.*

*Before the service, place the 12 numbers under random pews. Tell people to look to see what number they have. As you sing and go through the 12 days of Christmas, each person has to stand as their number comes up!*

These few days between Christmas can often be seen as a bit of a 'low' in the Church's year. We've had the excitement of Christmas, then we seem to retreat a bit, maybe we're tired. We tend to do all the celebrating before we've even reached Christmas day. In fact, Christmas-tide lasts for 12 days beginning Christmas day and ending the day before Epiphany, next week. Of course, that's where we get the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" from, and the title of Shakespeare's play "Twelfth Night".

These twelve days were quite often the time when Churches would teach young people about the faith. So, I thought I would continue the Christmas cheer this morning and take a look at the twelve days of Christmas. For which, I may need your help.



On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... a partridge in a pear-tree. The partridge is... the Son of God, the greatest gift of all. (*John 3:16*)

On the second day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... two turtle doves. These symbolise the 2 Testaments, Old and New, bearing witness to our God in history, speaking into today. (*Hebrews 4:12*)

On the third day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... three French hens. These symbolise these 3 things... faith, hope and love. (*1 Corinthians 13:13*)

On the fourth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... four calling birds. These symbolise 4 gospels... Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.

On the fifth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... five gold rings.  
The first 5 books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch or Torah, the books of law.

On the sixth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... six geese a laying.  
6 days of Creation (*Genesis 1 and 2*), when God creates the heaven and the earth and all that is in it. (He rests on the seventh day)

On the seventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... seven swans a' swimming. Symbolises the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit... the Spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord. (*Isaiah 11*)

On the eighth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... eight maids are milking.  
Symbolises the 8 beatitudes...

1. *Blessed are the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3)*
2. *Blessed are the meek (Matthew 5:4)*
3. *Blessed are they who mourn (Matthew 5:5)*
4. *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for justice (Matthew 5:6)*
5. *Blessed are the merciful (Matthew 5:7)*
6. *Blessed are the pure of heart (Matthew 5:8)*
7. *Blessed are the peacemakers (Matthew 5:9)*
8. *Blessed are the persecuted (Matthew 5:10)*

On the ninth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... nine ladies dancing. Symbolises the 9 fruits of the Holy Spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. (*Galatians 5:22-23*)

On the tenth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... ten lords a-leaping. Symbolises the 10 Commandments – no others gods, no idols, keep God's name holy, keep the sabbath holy, honour your parents, don't murder, do not commit adultery, don't steal, don't bear false witness, don't covet. (*Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5*)

On the eleventh day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... eleven pipers piping. These 11 gifts symbolise the 11 faithful disciples... not including Judas, who betrayed Jesus, and not including Matthias, who was the only disciple not chosen by Jesus personally (*Acts of the Apostles 1*)

On the twelfth day of Christmas, my true love gave to me... twelve drummers drumming. Represent the 12 points of the Apostle's Creed...

1. *I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth:*
2. *And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, Born of the Virgin Mary,*
3. *Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried:*
4. *He descended into hell;*

5. *The third day he rose again from the dead;*
6. *He ascended into heaven, And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;*
7. *From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*
8. *I believe in the Holy Ghost;*
9. *The holy Catholick Church;*
10. *The Communion of Saints;*
11. *The Forgiveness of sins;*
12. *The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen.*

Maybe over the remaining few days of Christmas we can use this time to recall the gifts of God to our world, his coming as a baby in Bethlehem- that greatest gift of all, and then to recall the gifts that God has given us in our lives.

**SONG** (see song suggestions)

## God's Family Prays

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Using the Prayer Stars, announce the following five points, and allow people time to write their prayer requests on each point. Use a short prayer to begin each section.

- *World*
- *Thanksgiving*
- *Church*
- *Others*
- *Us*

*Example:*

- *Father God, we thank you for the gift of our wonderful world, so full of opportunities and wonder. We write down on the first point those parts of the world that need our prayers...*
- *Father God, we give you thanks and praise for sending us Jesus to become one of us and to show us your love. We write down something we are thankful for...*
- *Father God, we pray for your church, your family, here on earth. We write down our prayers for God's church, for its life, for those who lead her...*
- *Father God, we thank you for the gift of other people, especially those whom we love. We write down the name of someone who needs our prayers at this time...*
- *We pray for ourselves. We ask your Spirit for fill us and renew us, to keep us faithful to you. We write down something we need to pray about in our own lives at this time...*

*End with the Epiphany Collect*

Creator of the heavens, who led the Magi by a star to worship the Christ-child: guide and sustain us, that we may find our journey's end, in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### Lord's Prayer (Modern)

*Allow people time to bring their star forward to the Crib or another display.*

**SONG** (see song suggestions)

## God's Family Goes!

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*If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert.*

**All**    **We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family...**

**Church Family Notices can be given here.**

**Blessing:**

*+ May God the Father, who led the Wise Men by the shining of a star to find the Christ, the Light from Light, lead you also in your pilgrimage to find the Lord. And the blessing of God Almighty...*

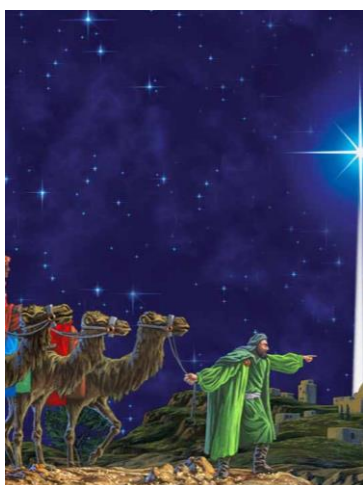
**SONG** (see song suggestions)

**Song suggestions:**

We three Kings (trad)  
Will you come and follow me  
Angels from the realms of glory (trad)  
See him lying on a bed of straw (trad)  
Joy has dawned upon the earth (Getty/Townend)  
Joy to the world (trad)  
The most beautiful night of the year  
Riding out across the desert (Children's song)

**Wall of Fame**

*Don't forget to print out an image of The Magi to place of the wall of fame.*



# February – Candlemas: Simeon

**Theme:** With a focus on Simeon, who proclaimed Jesus as a light to lighten the Gentiles, this service is about remaining faithful to God as God remains faithful to us. You may wish this service to be a Christingle service. See Year 1 and 2 for ideas.

**What you'll need for this service:**

- An image of Simeon to place at the front of the church and then on the Wall of Fame.
- A sheet of coloured paper each.
- Pens/pencils.
- Sticky tape (or a wax letter seal)
- [Small piece of string for each person]

**Before the service:**

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.

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## God's Family Gathers

*Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to.  
Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.  
**All And also with you.**

*Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays.  
Introduce the theme, place an image of Simeon at the front, and lead into...*

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...  
**All Father, forgive us.**

We do foolish and silly things...  
**All Father, forgive us.**

*+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## SONG

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## God's Family Listens

**Readings:** Luke 2: 25-35

**Talk**

How many people made a New Year's resolution in January? How many people have kept it? We like to make promises, or resolutions, to ourselves – at the start of the New Year, at our birthday or on an anniversary. We promise that we'll do more exercise, that we'll read more or practice playing the instrument we're learning more.

Promises to ourselves are simple. If we fail, we often move on and make another promise. You've probably heard that 'rules are there to be broken', but it's probably more the case that *promises* are there to be broken.

Throughout the Bible, God makes promises with his people. Unlike us, God always keeps his promises. In the reading we heard today, we hear about a man named Simeon. Simeon was an old man and we're told he was holy – he loved God. God had promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen Jesus.

Simeon did see Jesus, when he was brought to the Temple. When he saw Jesus, he remembered God's promise to him, and he said: 'Lord, I can now die in peace because you have kept your promise. I have seen Jesus with my own eyes and he will save the world. He is a light to lighten everyone.'

This is why, traditionally, the church blesses candles for Candlemas. The symbol of the light that is Jesus. That light lights up the way ahead of us and helps us to see God's promises all around us.

The name 'Simeon' means 'God-receiver'. God's promise was on Simeon even when he was named at birth. Simeon was patient and waited his whole life for God to show him this wonderful thing. He didn't know when God's promise would be fulfilled, but he knew that it would be.

God is faithful and he keeps his promises. I wonder how we are like Simeon? Are we faithful enough to continue loving God? Do we break our promises?

On your piece of paper I'd like you to write down a promise. A promise between you and God. Maybe you need to promise to pray more, or to read the bible more regularly? Maybe you need to be more patient, like Simeon. Maybe you need to trust that God keeps his promises. What has God promised you that needs your involvement and work?

Write down your promise, fold up your sheet and seal it. Write your name on the front. In November, we will revisit these promises. *If you use a wax seal, you'll need to station this so people can stamp their promise.*

*Some examples of promises: (display some round the church)*

- *I need to trust God more.*
- *I need to believe that God will provide everything I need.*
- *God is bigger than the things the world throws at me.*
- *I promise to pray more/read the bible more.*
- *I promise to be kinder to my friends.*

*Notes: The promises made today are not prayers or wishes. Prayer might help us achieve and see the promise fulfilled, just like Simeon.*

## SONG

## God's Family Prays

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*You may like to give out a piece of string to each person, or to have one large rope at the front. As each prayer unfolds, tie a promise knot in the rope. It should look like a heart.*

Let us pray,

Loving God, we thank you for Simeon who served you faithfully as he waited



to see Jesus. We thank you that you keep your promises to us. Help us to keep our promises to you. *Tie a promise knot.*

Living God, as Simeon served you in holiness and prayer, he kept his eyes open to see your wondrous works in the world. Help us to keep our eyes open to see you at work in our world too. *Tie a promise knot.*

Saving God, we thank you for sending Jesus the Light, to expose the darkness of our world. Help us to carry the Light of Jesus wherever we go and in whatever we do, showing us the way and keeping us, your family, focused on you. *Tie a promise knot.*

Giving God, we thank you for all the promises that you have fulfilled in our lives and for the promises we have yet to see fulfilled. Help us to share the Light of Jesus with others who doubt and disbelieve. *Tie a promise knot.*

Faithful God, as you were faithful to Simeon and are faithful to us, be with those who are sick or ill and with those who need our prayers at this time. Help us to take your Light to them. *Tie a promise knot.*

*End with the Candlemas collect:*

Lord Jesus Christ, light of the nations and the glory of Israel:  
make your home among us, and present us pure and holy  
to your heavenly Father, your God. and our God.

### **Lord's Prayer (Modern)**

### **SONG**

## **God's Family Goes!**

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*If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert*

**All    We believe in God the Father,  
          from whom every family...**

***Church Family Notices can be shared here.***

### **Blessing:**

+ *May Christ, whose light fills the skies,  
fill you with his light, gladden and warm your heart,  
and guide your feet into the ways of peace;  
and the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.*

### **SONG**

**Song Suggestions:**

Colours of day dawn  
Shine, Jesus, shine!  
Longing for light  
Be thou my vision  
The Spirit lives (Walk in the light)  
Shine a candle  
Like a candle flame

**Notes****Wall of Fame**

*Don't forget to print out an image of Simeon to place of the wall of fame.*



# March – Lent: John the Baptist

**Theme:** This service is about John the Baptist, who prepared the way for the Lord. Using his eccentric character, this service has a desert theme, which seems to be the experience of many throughout Lent. Lent might take us into the desert, but when we get there we find we're not alone!

## What you'll need for this service:

- An image of John the Baptist to place at the front of the church and then on the Wall of Fame.
- Print out the Locust Drive sheets from the *family@church* website. You'll need one per small group in your congregation.
- Dice and pens.
- Optional – yummy but disgusting looking foods to eat whilst blindfolded.

## Before the service:

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Prep a number of the regular congregation to be prepared to split into groups during the prayers and to pray aloud to encourage others, less familiar with praying, to do so.

## God's Family Gathers

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*Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**All**    **And also with you.**

*Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme, place the image of John at the front, and lead into...*

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

**All**    **Father, forgive us.**

We do foolish and silly things...

**All**    **Father, forgive us.**

*+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## SONG

## God's Family Listens

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**Readings:** Luke 3: 4-14

### Talk

John the Baptist was a man chosen by God to go ahead of Jesus and to prepare the way for him. He was a man who wore clothes made of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist. He ate locusts and wild honey. It sounds as if he was a bit strange, but actually there would have been lots of people like John at that time. People who lived in the desert to live a life of prayer and to get close to God.



*[Optional] [Now, he must have eaten all sorts of wild creatures, a bit like the contestants on I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here. John the Baptist was not a celebrity though, there were many people who did not like him. Today, I thought we'd have a go at I'm A Celebrity! We'll call it I'm A Prophet, Get Me Out Of Here!]*

*Pick a couple of volunteers to come forward and sit behind a table. Blind fold them and then present them each with a different dish that looks horrible!*

*Green Jelly – 'Frogs slime'*

*Raisins – 'Rabbit's Poo'*

*Something covered in sticky sauce. Use your imagination!*

*For each item eaten, prizes can be awarded. You could decorate the front of church to look like the 'I'm a Celebrity TV set'.]*

So, John the Baptist was a desert preacher. He wanted to prepare the way for Jesus and he lived his life simply so that he could focus on God. John reminds us that we have to prepare ourselves to welcome Jesus into our lives too. That is what Lent is all about – getting ourselves even more ready to accept the love that Jesus has for us.

In Lent, some people give up food or certain food items, and instead of eating they pray. What have you given up? If you haven't given anything up yet, maybe you might want to think about it. Instead of eating sweet puddings, maybe have something more simple and pray while you eat it?

Jesus wants to fill us with his love so that it is overflowing. He can only do that if we want him to and we prepare ourselves for it. John the Baptist shows us that we should want God's love so much that we'd be willing to give things up for it.

## **SONG**

## **God's Family Prays**

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*Locust Prayer Drive: Split the congregation up into small groups. Give each group a dice and a photocopied Locust Drive sheet.*

*When the group rolls the following numbers, they add a leg to the Locust and pray together according to the subject or issue. The aim is to complete the Locust. If the same number is rolled several times, then the group has to keep praying for the issue stated!*

- 1 Pray for a country of the World*
- 2 Pray for the leaders of the United Kingdom*
- 3 Pray for the Community*
- 4 Pray for your family*
- 5 Pray for your Vicar and church leaders*
- 6 Say thank you to God for something*

*Limit the prayer time to about 6 or 7 minutes. You may wish to have a few prayers written for each group for those not familiar with praying.*

## **Lord's Prayer (Modern)**

## **SONG**

## God's Family Goes!

*If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert*

**All We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family...**

**Church Family Notices can be shared here.**

**Blessing:**

*+ May Christ give you grace to grow in holiness,  
to deny yourselves, take up your cross and follow him;  
and the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.*

**SONG**

**Song Suggestions:**

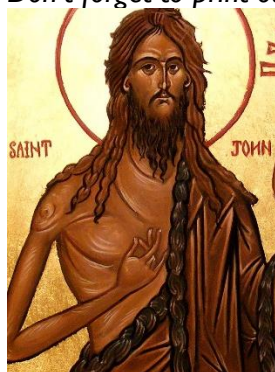
I am a new creation  
Take my life and let it be  
In Christ alone  
When I survey  
Blessed be your name (Redman)  
El Shaddai (Grant)

Other Lent activities that can be used in this service:

- Using a large wooden cross, bring up symbols, one at a time, that recall the Passion story. Reflect on how each one might draw us closer to God. For example, bring up a towel (washes the feet of his disciples), nails (pierced for our sins), a cloak (he was mocked), bread (tempted in the desert and the last supper).
- Encourage families to make promises to keep their chosen Lent observance. Provide a list of things families might do over Lent. Give lots of praise next month for those who have kept their promises, and encourage those who haven't been able to.
- Use ash to illustrate the message of Lent. Contrast ash with the blessing of water and oil.
- Use some of the Stations of the Cross to illustrate why giving things up is so important to Christians.
- Pair up members of the congregation with a family to share in their Lenten disciplines together.
- Use the Lent Kagera challenge, produced by the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich. This challenge helps families to reflect on Lent and the lives of others.

**Wall of Fame**

*Don't forget to print out an image of John the Baptist to place on the wall of fame.*



# April – Easter: Mary Magdalene

**Theme:** This service has an Easter theme, focused around Mary Magdalene's witness. Mary is often remembered for the demons cast out of her, yet she is mentioned in the Gospels almost more times than the Apostles. She has a special role to play and her story tells us that we do too!

**What you'll need for this service:**

- An image of Mary Magdalene to place at the front of the church and then on the Wall of Fame.
- Sheets of A4 paper in pews.
- Pens/markers in pews.

**Before the service:**

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Place paper and pens in the pews or give out as people enter.
- Hide up Easter Eggs around the church and churchyard for the Egg hunt!

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## God's Family Gathers

*Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**All**    **And also with you.**

*Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme, place an image of Mary Magdalene at the front, and lead into...*

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

**All**    **Father, forgive us.**

We do foolish and silly things...

**All**    **Father, forgive us.**

*+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## SONG

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## God's Family Listens

**Readings:** John 20:1-18 (use lectionary readings if this service falls on Easter Day)

**Talk**

Imagine what it must have been like for Mary Magdalene. She and the other disciples loved Jesus so much that they followed him and listened to his teachings. She found that the tomb they had laid Jesus' body in was now empty. How might she have felt? *Write some large words on the paper in your pews. Discuss some of the words, which might include: frightened, scared, alone, let down, rejected, confused, fearful, hurt.*

Mary thought that Jesus' body had been stolen and then she must have thought she was going mad as she saw the two angels in the tomb. She was so confused that she had forgotten all that Jesus had said.

Mary saw what she thought was the gardener. She didn't recognise Jesus, probably because Jesus looked very different because of what they did to him on Good Friday. But when Jesus said her name 'Mary' she was changed and she knew that it was Jesus. How must she have felt at that moment when Jesus said her name? *On the back of the sheets, write down new words that describe how she might have felt. (Look for opposites – fear into love, hurt into healed, rejected into welcomed, unsure into certain, frightened into peace.*

Mary recognised Jesus and then remembered what he said – that he would come back from the dead and be with us always. Even though he died, that was not the end!

Sometimes, we forget, like Mary, all the things Jesus has said. We forget that he is with us all the time, we forget that he forgives us, we forget that he loves us. When we forget, sometimes we have to listen really hard to hear Jesus saying our name too. When we hear Jesus say our name, we, like Mary, can be changed.

Jesus changed fear into love, sorrow in dancing and tears into joy. Easter reminds us that we can be changed, like Mary was, by the love and new life that Jesus wants to fill us with.

## SONG

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## God's Family Prays

*Use the following prayers as a template only, focusing on opposites and transformation. You could make the prayers interactive by displaying large card signs with the 'opposites' (fear to joy etc) on.*

Risen Lord Jesus, we thank you for calling Mary to be your follower. You loved her and called her by name and she was transformed. Lord Jesus, help us to hear you calling our name so that we may follow you. *You may want people to write down their own name on a piece of paper and bring it to the altar or pin it to a wall.*

Risen Lord Jesus, we thank you that you change **fear into joy**. Where there is fear in our world, cast it out.

Risen Lord Jesus, we thank you that you turn **darkness into light**. Where people walk in darkness, may you help us to share Jesus the Light of the world.

Risen Lord Jesus, we thank you that you turn **sorrow into dancing**. Where people have lost loved ones, may you remind them of your resurrection life.

Risen Lord Jesus, we thank you that you turn our **fear into love**. Whenever we feel ashamed, guilty or oppressed, reveal your love to us that we may shine as lights in our world, living your risen life.

*End with the Easter collect*

God of glory, by the raising of your Son you have broken the chains of death and hell: fill your Church with faith and hope; for a new day has dawned and the way to life stands open in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

### **Lord's Prayer (Modern)**

### **SONG**

## **God's Family Goes!**

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*If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert*

**All    We believe in God the Father,  
         from whom every family...**

**Church Family Notices can be shared here.**

### **Blessing:**

*+ God, who through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ has given us the victory, give you joy and peace in your faith; and the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.*

### **SONG**

#### **Song Suggestions:**

Christ the Lord is risen today (trad)  
See, what a morning (Townend/Getty)  
Meekness and Majesty (Kendrick)  
Christ Triumphant ever reigning (trad)  
Thank you for the cross, Lord (Hillsong)  
At the name of Jesus (trad)

Any other Easter hymns/songs

### **Wall of Fame**

*Don't forget to print out an image of Mary to place of the wall of fame.*



# May – Peter

**Theme:** This service is a **P-Party!** Focusing on Peter's preaching at Pentecost and using Pentecost to celebrate the church's birthday! Peter was far from perfect, yet God used him to preach the Gospel. Using Peter's story, this service will encourage people to think about serving God even when it seems difficult to do so.

**What you'll need for this service:**

- An image of Peter to place at the front of the church and then on the Wall of Fame.
- Think and make a list of all the things we do in church beginning with 'P'! *Prayer, praise, people, preach, Pentecost...*
- Make or buy a simple Piñata (a paper mache shape filled with goodies!)
- Give everyone a small horn or (child friendly) party poppers.
- [Party decorations for the church. You might like to give out party hats as people enter.]

**Before the service:**

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Decorate the church as if it were for a party. This might include a paper chain, party poppers or streamers on the ends of pews. Alternatively, people could help decorate as they enter the church. Decorations could begin with the letter P!

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## God's Family Gathers

*Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to.  
Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**All**    **And also with you.**

*Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays.  
Introduce the theme, place an image of Peter at the front, and lead into...*

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

**All**    **Father, forgive us.**

We do foolish and silly things...

**All**    **Father, forgive us.**

*+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**SONG**

## God's Family Listens

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**Readings:** Luke 22: 54-62 and John 21: 15-19

### Talk

So, today we are having a 'P' Party! Can you think of any 'P' words that relate to the church? *Praise, Pentecost, Pews, prayers, peace, people and so on...* ask people to call out their 'P'!

Well, today's message includes lots of 'P's! Every time I say a word beginning with 'P', blow your horn or popper.

**Peter** was one of Jesus' close pals. **Peter** loved Jesus, but often got things wrong. Some people thought Jesus was dangerous and lied in order to see him crucified. Whilst Jesus was being sentenced to death, **Peter** denied Jesus three times. In fact, he pretended not to have even known him.

After Jesus had come back from the dead, he appeared to **Peter** whilst he was fishing. Jesus asked **Peter** if he loved him, three times. Jesus wanted to forgive **Peter** for letting him down when he needed him the most.

After Jesus had gone back to heaven, **Peter** was present at the **Pentecost**. Now, they were fearful of being killed because they loved Jesus, so they were protected in a locked room. When the Holy Spirit came, the people in the room were filled with praise and prayer and were able to speak in languages that enabled them to spread the Good News of Jesus with people from all over the world who were in Jerusalem.

**Peter** preached to thousands of people and thousands decided to love Jesus on that day, and proclaim him as their Lord. The Spirit coming at **Pentecost** reminded the people that God was present with them and would never leave them, like he promised, and that he was a God of power.

**Peter** let Jesus down, yet Jesus built his church on **Peter**. He used him to preach to the people about the promises of God and to declare that we can have a personal relationship with Jesus. **Peter's** story reminds us that even though we may let God down from time to time, he never lets us down.

We can be filled with the Holy Spirit today. When we ask God to be with us and when we decide to follow him, he fills us with his power. When we are filled with his power, we can praise him and pray to him.

**Pentecost** is the birthday party of the church family, God's people. It's the story of how **Peter's** preaching to people from different parts of the world can change our praise and prayer in these pews today!

### SONG

## God's Family Prays

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### **Piñata Prayers**

Make a couple of small piñata boxes and put one of the following prayer pointers in each box.

- *The World – God's World*
- *The Church – Our Church*
- *Others – those who need our prayers*
- *Praise and Thanksgiving*

Get someone to come up and smash open a piñata box. Inside each box you'll get a prayer pointer. Use those prayer pointers to read out and pray prayers that are already planned.

End with the Pentecost collect

Holy Spirit, sent by the Father, ignite in us your holy fire; strengthen your children with the gift of faith, revive your Church with the breath of love, and renew the face of the earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

### **Lord's Prayer (Modern)**

### **SONG**

## God's Family Goes!

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If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert

**All**    **We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family...**

**Church Family Notices can be given here.**

**Blessing:**

+ *The Spirit of truth lead you into all truth,  
give you grace to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord  
and strengthen you to proclaim the word and works of God  
and the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.*

### **SONG**

#### **Song Suggestions:**

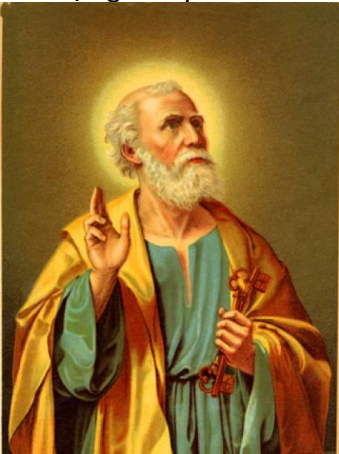
The Spirit lives to set us free (trad)  
Spirit of the living God (sung as a chorus)  
Come down O love divine (trad)  
He is the Lord and he reigns on high (Petra)  
You laid aside your majesty (Daugherty)  
Thine be the glory! (trad)



## Notes

### **Wall of Fame**

*Don't forget to print out an image of Peter to place of the wall of fame.*



# June – Trinity: Adam and Eve

**Theme:** Often we think that the Trinity was a post-Pentecost reality. Actually, the work of the Trinity is made known to us throughout the Bible. Although Pentecost helps us to make sense of the Trinity, the beauty of the Trinity, the very nature and character of God, is revealed to us in Genesis. We hope that exploring Trinity will lead people into relationship with God.

**What you'll need for this service:**

- An image of Adam and Eve to place at the front of church and then on the Wall of Fame.
- A small mirror for each pew or each person. You can make these by spreading smooth foil on some card.

**Before the service:**

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.

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## God's Family Gathers

*Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to.  
Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.  
**All And also with you.**

*Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays.  
Introduce the theme, place an image of Adam and Eve at the front, and lead into...*

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...  
**All Father, forgive us.**

We do foolish and silly things...  
**All Father, forgive us.**

*+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## SONG

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## God's Family Listens

**Reading:** Genesis 1 (select which bits you'd like to read). Maybe ask seven voices to read each day of creation.

**Talk**

Our God is a creative God. Out of love, he created our beautiful world, the entire universe. Adam and Eve are no exception. They were beautiful and God was pleased with all he had created.

Adam and Eve were created in God's image. They looked what God looked like. Their characters, personalities, their beauty. They could even think like God, act like him and be one with him. Amazing!

It didn't last long! Adam and Eve wanted their own way and they chose that way over God's way. We call our own way sin and God's way righteousness, joy and peace. Even though Adam and Eve sinned,

they were still made in God's image but there was now a block or a barrier between them and God. It seemed they couldn't be at one with God anymore. God still loved them deeply, after all he created them.

We too are made in God's image. Whatever our condition, wherever we've come from, whatever we've done – we are made in God's image and God's knows us and loves us fully.

Our sin holds us back from being the fullness of God's image. We often choose to sin rather than follow God's ways. Yet, we are still made in his image. Jesus, too, was the Father's perfect selfie, the image of the invisible God. Jesus looked like us, flesh and blood, just like Adam and Eve too. However, Jesus was at one with God – completely. He had no sin that could hold him back from God's perfect love and care.

God wants us to be completely at one with him too – just like Jesus was. Our sin does hold us back, but Jesus came to solve the problem. Jesus was God's perfect image and he died on the cross to build a pathway back to himself. When Jesus rose from the grave on Easter Day, he gave us new life – a new image. When the Spirit came at Pentecost, he gave us the power to accept that new image and live like we are made in God's image once again.

I wonder what that image of God looks like in your life? It might be as you help someone with something, as you care for your children; as you learn to be patient with someone; in learning to say that you are loved and you are beautiful simply because God made you. It might be praying more and becoming one with God more often.

You are made in God's image. He knows you and loves you and he will never give up on you.

## SONG

### God's Family Prays

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*Give everyone a mirror. Tell everyone to look at themselves in the mirror, and pray:*

We thank you, heavenly Father, that we are made in your perfect image and that your light, joy and love shines through us. We thank you that we are fearfully and wonderfully made to love and praise you. Help us to reflect your truth more clearly and walk in the ways of Jesus, your Son, our Lord.

*Tell everyone to look at someone else in their mirror, and pray:*

Father, we thank you for those around us. May they be a reflection of your love to us and to others in the world. We pray for them, asking your Spirit to guide and strengthen them in all they set out to do. We ask your protection over them as they step out into the world. May they always remember that they are made in your image.

*Tell everyone to look at the ceiling, floor or ministry team members in their mirror, and pray:*

Father God, we pray for the church, asking your hand to lead her as she proclaims the Gospel to the community around. May this church grow in grace, love and peace and may your blessing fall upon all who lead the church in this place and throughout the world.

*Tell everyone to focus their mirror at the door or windows, and pray:*

Father God, we pray for your world, which you gave your Son Jesus to save. Where there is violence or unrest, may you bring peace. Where there is hunger and thirsting, bring food and water. Where there is hate or division, bring rest and safety. Keep us firm in the knowledge that as we go out into the world, your image in us changes us into new creation to be more and more like Jesus our Saviour.

*End with the Trinity collect*

Holy God, faithful and unchanging: enlarge our minds with the knowledge of your truth, and draw us more deeply into the mystery of your love, that we may truly worship you, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

### Lord's Prayer (Modern)

### SONG

## God's Family Goes!

*If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert*

**All We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family...**

**Church Family Notices may be given here.**

### Blessing:

+ God the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer make you strong in faith and love, defend you on every side and guide you into truth and peace, and the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.

### SONG

#### Song Suggestions:

All hail the power of Jesu' name (trad)  
Blessed be your name (Redman)  
For God so loved (Hardwick)  
Immortal, invisible (trad)  
The splendour of the King (Tomlin)  
Indescribable (Tomlin)

- *The simple chorus 'Father we adore you' sung as a three part round is a powerful image of the Trinity – three parts sung at once, yet one song.  
Father of heaven... creator  
Jesus, Son of Man... redeemer  
Holy Spirit, breath of life... sustainer*

### Notes

#### Wall of Fame

*Don't forget to print out an image of Adam and Eve to place of the wall of fame.*



# July – Saints: Thomas

**Theme:** Thomas has a reputation of being the doubter, but he also declared ‘my Master and My God’ after he had seen Jesus. Many in our society want to see before believing. He refused to believe until he’d had a personal experience. Thomas teaches us about faith and trust.

**What you’ll need for this service:**

- An image of Thomas to place at the front of church and then on the Wall of Fame.
- A tray with several objects on, covered with a cloth. Use some objects that are identifiable and some that are more difficult. You may want to do this activities in smaller groups, in which case you’ll need several trays with items on.

**Before the service:**

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.

## God’s Family Gathers

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*Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**All**    **And also with you.**

*Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme, place an image of St Thomas at the front, and lead into...*

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

**All**    **Father, forgive us.**

We do foolish and silly things...

**All**    **Father, forgive us.**

*+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## SONG

## God’s Family Listens

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**Readings:** (John 20: 24-29 or) John 11:11-27

**Talk**

*Invite some people to the front to try and guess the objects under the cloth just by touching. You may wish to blindfold those participating. An alternative would be to ask one person to describe an object and another to guess what it is without looking.*

OR

*Play a simple game of Simon Says, and confuse people by saying Simon Says do one thing, whilst actually doing another. For example, by saying Simon Says touch your nose, but actually putting your hand on your head. See*

*who listens and copies or watches and copies and explain that we often rely on sight rather than instructions – sometimes this is not good!*

*Talk about the saying “seeing is believing”...*

St Thomas is well known as ‘doubting Thomas’. He refused to believe that Jesus had come back from the dead until he had seen the place where the nails had been. Jesus appeared to Thomas and allowed Thomas to touch the place where the nails of crucifixion had held him to the cross. Thomas then believed.

But Thomas followed Jesus throughout his ministry, even before Jesus died on the cross, Thomas was there.

In the reading we heard, Jesus’ close friend Lazarus had died. Lazarus was a popular and well-known man who loved Jesus. When Thomas heard about Lazarus’ death, he said that they should follow Jesus there and die with him. By saying this, Thomas was prepared to follow Jesus everywhere, probably even die and give up his life for him – Thomas loved Jesus that much.

The problem was that Thomas’ faith was based on what he could see and touch. Can we see the real Jesus now, rather than just the images of him around us in stained glass windows? Do we know that he is real, even though we cannot see him face to face, yet?

Jesus said that Thomas was blessed (special) because he believed when he saw Jesus. Jesus also said that those who have not seen him, but yet believe, are even more blessed. That’s us! Even though we haven’t seen him or touched his wounds, we can still believe that he lives for us and that he is with us right now!

It may be hard to believe in something we cannot see, but just like the game we played at the beginning, we know it’s there under the cloth, we just need to reach out and trust in God, believing that God has supplied everything we need to love, trust and follow him.

## SONG

## God’s Family Prays

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*St. Thomas is the Patron Saint of people struggling with doubt, blind people, architects, builders, carpenters, construction workers, geometers, stone masons, surveyors, theologians; as well as countries such as Italy, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.*

Father God, we pray for those who struggle with doubt, for those who cannot let go of their anxieties, concerns or unbelief. Lord, help us not to doubt, but to trust in you. Help us remember that you promised to be with us always.

Father God, we pray for those who are blind or struggle with sight and we thank you for all who care for them. We thank you for the technology that enables the blind to live life to the full and for all who continue to lead research in the area of sight.

Father God, we thank you for all who build, create or design. *We pray for the building of the new estate here in N, and for all who will live there.* We thank you for our village, homes, schools, pubs, halls and churches and for the wonder of construction and design.

Father God, we pray for all those lead the church. For our Bishops *N and N* and for our Priest and the ministry team in this place. Bless them as they seek to lead us in revealing God’s Kingdom in this place, helping those who doubt to believe and proclaim that you are God.

**May we, O God, by grace believe  
and, in believing, still receive  
the Christ who held His raw palms out  
and beckoned Thomas from his doubt.**

*(Thomas Troeger, 1984, Psalter/Hymnal of the Christian Reformed Church)*

*End with the St Thomas' Day collect*

Almighty and eternal God, who, for the firmer foundation of our faith, allowed your holy apostle Thomas to doubt the resurrection of your Son till word and sight convinced him: grant to us, who have not seen, that we also may believe and so confess Christ as our Lord and our God. Amen.

### **Lord's Prayer (Modern)**

### **SONG**

## **God's Family Goes!**

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*If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert*

**All We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family...**

**Church Family Notices can be given here.**

### **Blessing:**

+ May Christ who makes saints of sinners, who has transformed those who surround us today, raise and strengthen you that you may transform the world; and the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.

### **SONG**

#### **Song Suggestions:**

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine (trad)  
You are the King of glory  
Let us run with perseverance (Morris)  
Amazing grace (trad)  
What a friend we have in Jesus (trad)  
Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

### **Notes**

#### **Wall of Fame**

*Don't forget to print out an image of Thomas to place of the wall of fame.*



# August – Holiday Season: Jonah

**Theme:** This month we return to the beach! Well, nearly. Jonah's story features the sea! Jonah's story teaches us that even though we often try and run from God's call, God still provides for us. It was God who provided the large fish to swallow Jonah for three days and nights. There was probably a nicer way to be spared, but God provided.

**What you'll need for this service:**

- An image of Jonah to place at the front of church and then on the Wall of Fame.
- In style of *Year 1 August*, use beach balls and buckets to decorate the church and to provide a 'beach' theme backdrop for the service. If you have a blow up whale you may wish to display this at the front of church.

**Before the service:**

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Prep a children's group to create fish or make a fishing net to display in church. You may want people to create a fish on their arrival to church.

## God's Family Gathers

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*Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to. Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**All**    **And also with you.**

*Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays. Introduce the theme, place an image of Jonah at the front, and lead into...*

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

**All**    **Father, forgive us.**

We do foolish and silly things...

**All**    **Father, forgive us.**

*+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

## SONG

## God's Family Listens

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**Reading:** Jonah 1 or Jonah 2

**Talk**

*Ask people to cut out a fish to be used during the prayers later.*

You might think that everyone in the Bible was good, well behaved and obedient. But, you'd be very wrong.



Jonah was stubborn, disobedient, untrustworthy, faithless, shallow, bad-tempered, proud and loved to grumble. Hopefully you won't know anyone quite like that.

Actually, those qualities made Jonah the perfect man to do what God wanted. God needed a prophet to tell the people of Nineveh about their sin. Someone who would speak boldly and with confidence about the consequences of carrying on living in sin. It wouldn't be an easy task!

However, Jonah just kept running away. I wonder if you've been asked to do something, but have kept avoiding doing it? I wonder if God has asked you to do something but you run the other way? Every time Jonah ran away, God would manage to bring him back. God even provided a large fish, possibly a whale, to swallow Jonah and spew him up on the beach! The people of Nineveh listened to Jonah and God saved them.

However, Jonah was so stubborn that he was only concerned about himself. He wanted God to destroy Nineveh so his efforts were not in vain. God provided a bush for Jonah to sleep under, but Jonah was more concerned about the bush than he was for the people of Nineveh.

Jonah's story can help us though. Sometimes, God asks us to do things that seem impossible for us or even ridiculous. It might be God calling you to be a priest or to work for him in the church in some way. We might feel inadequate, or stubborn because we don't want to change – "I'm happy the way I am". We might not like the final answer.

Jonah's story teaches us that we need to trust that God knows what he is doing when he asks something of us, even if we do not know the final outcome. We need to trust that God will give us the strength and ability to carry out what it is he is asking. Jonah forgot, and, while he was wrapped up in himself, he was unable to see that God saved an entire city because of him. God wants to use us too, maybe not to save cities, but so he can save those around us, so he can save us from harm and pour out his love on us.

Will you run away?

## **SONG**

## **God's Family Prays**

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*Ask the congregation to write their prayers on a fish. At the end encourage the congregation to come forward and place it in a net. You might want to write the following prayers on large fish and ask members of the congregation to pull one from the net to read aloud for the prayers.*

Lord God, we thank you for the example of the Prophet Jonah. You were able to use him to save a city even though he was stubborn and ungrateful. Help us to listen to you and to do those things only which you want of us.

Lord God, you kept Jonah safe in the belly of a large fish and under the shelter of a bush. We pray that you would keep us from harm too, protecting us from all who seek to separate us from your love. We ask your care on the homeless and hungry, causing us to help those who need protection.

Lord God, you caused the fish to wash Jonah up on a beach. So, we pray, this holiday season, for all who are travelling and taking a break. May they return feeling refreshed and renewed and ask for their safe return. We pray for those planning to return to school or work over the coming month.

Lord God, you wanted to save a city from corruption and error. So, we pray for the nations and cities of our world, asking your wisdom and guidance on the leaders and rulers of the world. Send us as

prophets, like Jonah, into the world to speak against injustice and to encourage communities to live in peace.

Lord God, you hear us when we pray to you in faith. As we bring our prayers forward, we ask that you would change us into the people you want us to be.

*End with this collect*

Faithful Creator, whose mercy never fails: deepen our faithfulness to you and to your living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

### **Lord's Prayer (Modern)**

### **SONG**

## **God's Family Goes!**

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*If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert*

**All We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family...**

***Church Family Notices may be shared here.***

***Blessing:***

+ The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace. And the blessing of God Almighty...

### **SONG**

#### **Song Suggestions:**

Lord, thy word abideth (trad)  
Spirit of holiness (trad)  
Ancient words (Smith)  
Thy word is a lamp unto our feet  
Thou whose almighty word (trad)

### **Notes**

#### **Wall of Fame**

*Don't forget to print out an image of Jonah to place of the wall of fame.*



# September: Back to School

*Please refer to Years 1 and 2 for service templates and ideas.*

## October – Ruth: Harvest

**Theme:** focusing on the story of Ruth, the festival of harvest is illustrated by her qualities of commitment, trust and faithfulness. God is faithful too! When we recall what he has done for us, despite the bad times we go through, he remains steadfast and true. Harvest is more than just about food – it is about God’s faithfulness to us. This service encourages the exploration of that faithfulness.

**What you’ll need for this service:**

- An image of Ruth to place at the front of church and then on the Wall of Fame.

**Before the service:**

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- (Wheat template if you use alternative prayer idea 1)
- (Chalkboard film for alternative prayer idea 2)

### God’s Family Gathers

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*Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to.  
Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

**All And also with you.**

*Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays.  
Introduce the theme, place an image of Ruth at the front, and lead into...*

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...

**All Father, forgive us.**

We do foolish and silly things...

**All Father, forgive us.**

*+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**SONG**

### God’s Family Listens

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**Readings:** Ruth, chapter 1 (or a section of it).

*This reading lends itself to be dramatized in some way, or you may want to act out the whole story of Ruth, or portray it in some other way as people enter the church.*

## Talk

*Briefly recap the story of Ruth. You may want to act out a small part of her story.*

The story of Ruth is a beautiful one. Ruth was married to Naomi's son, but was now a widow. Ruth could have left Naomi to go back to her own family, but she loved Naomi so much that she promised to stay with her – your people will be my people and your God will be my God.

When Harvest came, Ruth had to work in the fields to provide food for Naomi. Thankfully, she was blessed. Boaz ordered that extra grain be dropped, just so Ruth could take home more!

Ruth's story teaches us a number of things. It teaches first about friendship and commitment to each other. Despite being a widow, Ruth remained faithful to Naomi. Despite there being a great famine in the land, Ruth supported Naomi and eventually harvested grain for them to eat.

It also teaches about how faithful God is to his people. God loved them very much and he cared for their needs and he provided for them. Naomi and Ruth felt insignificant in a very big world and they must have wondered how they would survive. But their faith in God, and his faith in them, meant that God was able to work through the bad to bring times of joy and peace to them. Ruth eventually gave birth to a son, Obed, who was the father of Jesse, the father of King David – ancestor to Jesus himself!

So, no matter how insignificant we often feel, God can use us to bring great change to our world.

Much of Ruth's story is about helping others and being committed to bring them relief, comfort and food. These actions are important to us because we trust and lean fully on God.

There are so many people in our world that need basic food and water supplies. Even in our country, people often go hungry and rely on foodbanks. I wonder if we might be like Boaz in that field – dropping a little extra grain to give someone the chance to eat. Every time we go shopping, we might want to think about buying an extra tin of something to share with a charity.

So many people feel distant from the people around them because of illness, sickness or loneliness. I wonder how we might be like Ruth who said, 'your people will be my people' and who embraced a whole new way of life to look after Naomi? How might you look after someone who needs you?

*You might like to read here a poem of God's faithfulness to us. The famous Footprints poem, for example.*

*Ask the congregation to think of times when God has been faithful to them. Ask them to reflect on how God's faithfulness inspires us to be faithful to others and attentive to the world around us.*

## SONG

*Suggested: Beauty for Brokenness*

## God's Family Prays

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*In the church have two "graffiti" points – large areas of paper where people can draw or write their thoughts. In the middle of one, write "God is faithful..." and on the other write "Lord, I struggle..." At this point in the service, ask people to visit each graffiti point and to write down*

- *Those moments when God is faithful (at home, my family, at work, last week, in my child's life etc...)*
- *Those moments when we struggle to see his faithfulness (it's OK to be honest here – when people suffer, when people go hungry, when we don't share the world's resources)*

*If you have an intercessor that can pray ab-lib, you may want to bring some of the things on the graffiti boards into the following prayers, praying for:*

- *The world and its needs*

- *Our country and its leaders*
- *The church and for the sharing of the Good News*
- *Thanksgiving for the example of Ruth*

**End with this collect**

Creator God, you made the goodness of the land, the riches of the sea and the rhythm of the seasons; as we thank you for the harvest, may we cherish and respect this planet and its peoples, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**Lord’s Prayer (Modern)**

**SONG**

**God’s Family Goes!**

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*If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader’s Insert*

**All We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family...**

**Church Family Notices may be given here.**

**Blessing:**

*+ The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord look kindly on you and give you peace. And the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.*

**SONG**

**Song Suggestions:**

- Come ye thankful people (trad)
- Great is thy faithfulness
- Now thank we all our God
- Beauty for brokenness (Kendrick)
- All creatures of our God and King (trad)

**Other ideas:**

1. Prayers: Using the wheat template, you may like to scatter these down the church aisle and ask each person to collect one, write their prayers on it and attach it to the graffiti board. Alternatively, you may want boards for different types of prayer – Thank You Prayers, Prayers for the World and so on...
2. Prayers: You might like to purchase roll out chalk board paper (blackboard film) with coloured chalks to write on. These are reusable and can be found on various shopping apps.
3. Telling the story of Ruth: as people enter the church they could travel round the church informally and meet each of the main characters of Ruth’s story. The characters can say a little bit about who they are – Ruth, Naomi, Boaz and a field worker, for example.  
*“I’m Ruth. My husband sadly died, but I loved my mother in law so much I wanted to look after her. So...”*
4. Part of the sermon slot could be to work out an acronym for RUTH that reflect what the story teaches us either about morality or harvest. For qualities, Resilience, Unique, Trust, Honesty; or for harvest, Resources, Universal, Together, Home. You might like people to

write these down or make bracelets using lettered beads spelling RUTH, so people can remember their acronyms as they wear them.

5. Harvest Ideas: traditional harvest festivals often include displays of food and wheat – why not use a display of wheat to tell the story of Ruth. There might be some tasty breads or other foods to taste for breakfast or lunch!

## Notes

### **Wall of Fame**

*Don't forget to print out an image of Ruth to place of the wall of fame.*



# November - Noah

**Theme:** In the season of remembrance, this service encourages everyone to recall God's great promises over us – his love and faithful to us. Looking back is sometimes hard, but as we move forward, it is important to recall God's presence with us at all times. Covenants are a good way to express this. God and his people have always shared in covenants and today we can celebrate the New Covenant – of Jesus' work on the cross and his promise of love to us.

**What you'll need for this service:**

- An image of Noah to place at the front of church and then on the Wall of Fame.
- The promises you wrote down and posted in February's service.
- String that stretches from end of the church to the other, down the middle of the church.
- Template for bunting flag. You may want to cut these out for the service or ask people to do it as they enter the church. Ensure they're printed on brightly coloured paper/card to symbolise a rainbow.

**Before the service:**

- Remember to pray together or to encourage prayer amongst all your team groups.
- Prepare bunting triangles and place them along with pens in the pews.

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## God's Family Gathers

*Give a warm welcome to the church. Point out the toilets if you need to.  
Draw attention to the Welcome Cards. Keep other notices for the end.*

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you. **And also with you.**

*Ask if anyone has any family church news – this may include birthdays.  
Introduce the theme, place an image of Noah at the front, and lead into...*

We admit that we sometimes say terrible things...  
**All Father, forgive us.**

We do foolish and silly things...  
**All Father, forgive us.**

*+ May Almighty God have mercy upon you, pardon and deliver you from all your sins, confirm and strengthen you in all goodness and bring you to life eternal, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

### SONG

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## God's Family Listens

**Readings:** Genesis 7:1-10 and 9:12-17

**Talk**

This is the season for remembering. *Recall what is remembered in this season – All Saints/Souls, November 5<sup>th</sup>, November 11<sup>th</sup> etc...*

Every week Christians talk about ‘remembering’. When Christians celebrate Holy Communion, when we share bread and wine, we remember Jesus and all that he did for us.

It might sound an odd thing to say, but God remembers. Of course he does! The bible talks about God remembering things all the time. Not that God is forgetful, but that he often helps us, his people, look back in order that we might change the way we live and move forward.

One of the greatest examples of this is Noah. You may remember the story of Noah and the ark, that God told him to build. God wanted to wipe away the sin from his beautiful world, so it rained for 40 days and nights. However, God remembered Noah and his family because they were good people and Noah loved the Lord God.

After the flood, God set a rainbow in the sky as a reminder that he would never again destroy the earth. God told Noah that whenever he saw the rainbow, he was to remember the covenant that God made with the earth. The rainbow reminds us that God doesn’t forget and that he keeps his promises because he is a God of love.

In February, we wrote down promises, which we’ve kept safe for you. *Recall briefly what happened at that service and give people space/time to write down promises if they were not there or have forgotten what happened!* I wonder if you can remember your promise? I wonder if you’ve kept to your promise? Maybe it was to read the bible more or to help others?

*Peg these promises to the washing line string down the centre of the church.* Unlike us, God never forgets his promise. God promised that he will be with us till the end of the age. He has never forgotten that! Every day, he shows us ways in which he has been with us in good times and in bad.

He cannot break his promises. Even if we break ours, God remains completely faithful to us. Often we wander off, but God remains there waiting for us. He comes to find us and brings us home again. God loves us so much and the rainbow is a sign of that love for us. But greater than that, Jesus came as proof of God’s love for us and we have the Holy Spirit, a seal of that covenant of love.

If you forgot your promise from the start of the year, or you need to renew it, now is the time to do that. And in the struggle to keep that promise, remember the rainbow – that God is love, he will never let us down and he remains faithful throughout. He has made a new covenant with us through the cross of Jesus – a covenant that will never see us fail or let down, but treasured and loved as his children.

## SONG

## God’s Family Prays

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*Ask the congregation to write prayers of thankfulness on the bunting flags they’ve been given. When they have done this, invite people forward to hang the bunting flags up with pegs along the washing line down the centre of the church. The colours will hopefully be interspersed with the promises made during the year and symbolise some sort of rainbow!*

- *Prayers should include thanksgiving for the promises of God in our lives – thankful that he is faithful.*
- *Sorrow in looking back – recall the season of remembrance. Sorrowful for wars and times of turmoil or unrest.*
- *Keep us watchful and hopeful – that we may see the signs of love around us.*



**End with this collect**

Almighty Father, whose will is to restore all things in your beloved Son, the King of all: govern the hearts and minds of those in authority and bring the families of the nations, divided and torn apart by the ravages of sin, to be subject to his just and gentle rule; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

**Lord's Prayer (Modern)**

**SONG**

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**God's Family Goes!**

*If there is a returning baptism family, see Leader's Insert*

**All We believe in God the Father,  
from whom every family...**

**Church Family Notices can be given here.**

**Blessing:**

+ God grant to the living, grace; to the departed, rest;  
to the church, the Queen, the commonwealth, and all humankind peace and concord; And to us and  
all his servants, life everlasting  
And the blessing of God Almighty... Amen.

**SONG**

**Song Suggestions:**

The Lord's my shepherd (Townend)  
Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us (trad)  
Shalom, my friends (RSCM)  
Let us build a house where love can dwell  
Jerusalem (*there are sometimes alternate words set to the same tune*)

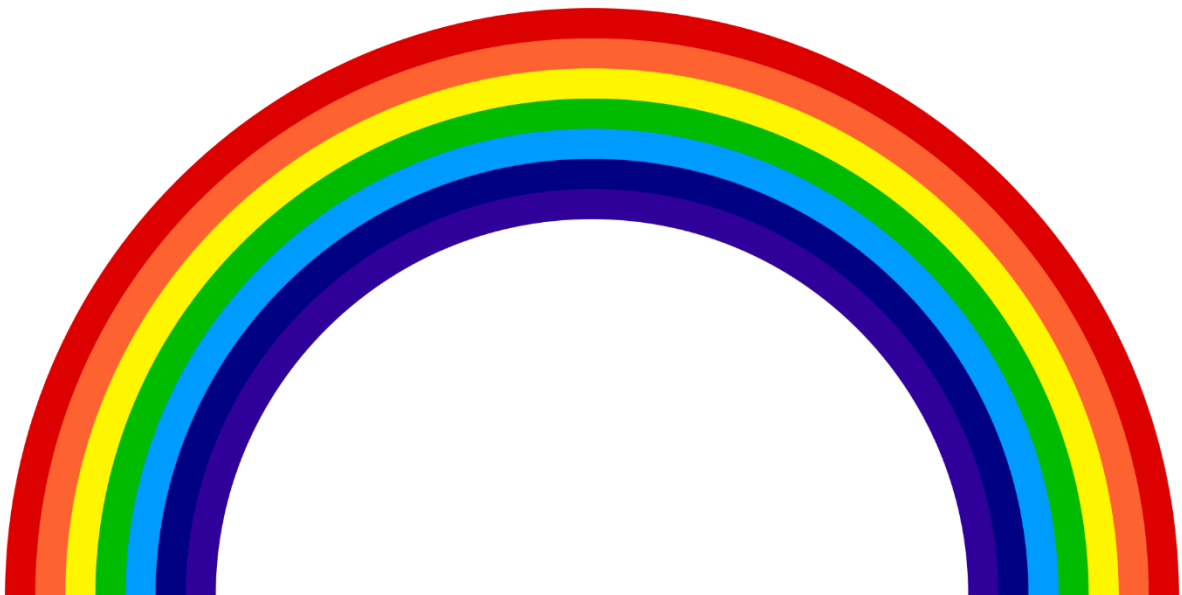
**Other ideas**

- The rainbow flag is often the symbol and sign of inclusion and diversity. Use the flag to talk about remembering to look back in order to move forward with God, about being a diverse church and about welcoming all.
- Allow people to take a flag of the rainbow home with them and encourage people to pray using their bunting prayer.
- Use lights to shine a rainbow on the church wall.
- A rainbow of poppies (different colours) could work as effective symbol for remembrance.
- The talk may want to include looking back after times of war in order to be able to move forward in peace. Or looking back when we have lost someone, treasuring the memories we have in order to 'use aright the time that is left to us here on earth'.

## Notes

### **Wall of Fame**

*Don't forget to print out an image of Noah to place of the wall of fame.*



### ***Resources online***

**January** Numbers for the 12 days of Christmas Talk  
Epiphany Star Templates

**March** Locust Drive template

**August** Jonah's Fish template

**October** Wheat template

**November** Bunting outline template