



issue 10

advent, christmas and epiphany
1 december 2013 to 2 march 2014

spill the beans

worship and learning resources for all ages



A lectionary-based
resource with a Scottish
flavour for Sunday
Schools, Junior Churches
and Worship Leaders

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ethos

There is a particular ethos behind this material: it's all about **story**. When we spill the beans about anything, we tell the story of what happened and we share the story of what that means for us.

We believe **story is the lifeblood of faith**. In story we can tell the truth and speak with honesty about things for which there are not yet words. Story contains mystery and is the poetry that forms faith. Stories grow as we grow and can reveal new truths at different times in our lives.

So we believe **giving stories** to people is one of the most important things we can do in sharing our faith. Children and adults hold stories in their being and keep coming back to them throughout life. Our culture is stored in story. The same is true for our faith.

We believe in telling story. This material is simply the **retelling of our faith stories**. It always starts with the story each week.

Then each activity is simply a way to engage the story and enable children and adults to imbed the story, capturing different aspects of it, highlighting different images that help us hold the story in our beings.

But we believe these faith stories ought to be able to **mingle with our own life stories**, our day-to-day experiences. So as activities are engaged, it is important to ask people to retell the faith story along with their own story of that week. It's the tangle of life stories with faith stories that perhaps make both real.

We believe **one story is the lens through which we hear other stories**. Faith narratives create a web: if we think about water, then what other stories involving water do we find in the Bible; if we are reflecting on forgiveness, what other stories of forgiveness can we hear. During activities the question ought to be asked: does this story remind you of other stories

in the Bible? Stories don't exist on their own but in a diverse web, each feeding the other.

We believe that **as we grow we reflect in different ways** on the faith stories we hold. Our idea is to invest these stories in people, offering each as a gift of faith. The story may be understood in a literal way during younger years, then with questions about their historical accuracy as people move into teenage years and then move into a third stage where we hear the story again for the first time, but this time holding the meaning, the deep down truth in the story that helps it shape our living and how we understand and engage with the world in justice and in grace. Story holds the faith more honestly and in a much deeper way than any creed and doctrine.

Join us and spill the beans.

spill the beans team

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For more information and extra materials, join us on the Spill the Beans blog:
<http://spillbeans.org.uk>

Key to Abbreviations

In the worship ideas section the following abbreviations are used:

CG	Common Ground
CH4	Church Hymnary, 4th Edition
CH3	Church Hymnary, 3rd Edition
JP	Junior Praise
MP	Mission Praise
SGP	Songs of God's People
WGRG	Wild Goose Resource Group



using spill the beans contents

Welcome to the tenth issue of the ongoing experiment called 'Spill the Beans'. It was always meant to be a wee local idea but it has grown somewhat as a group of people from the Church of Scotland and other denominations have got together to explore Bible passages and write worship and learning resources for their own congregations discovering that this was good fun, triggering imagination and creativity within their congregations.

There is quite a collection of things to use each week. Each piece is written with specific congregations in mind rather than some average android congregation. We even know the names of people who were thought about when the material was put together, how it might sound when it was read or how it might work in a particular congregation. Thus there may be the

need to be a little creative yourselves in adapting and evolving some of the ideas to suit your own place and culture and congregation. That is a good thing.

Of course, if you are creative and you'd like to share what you have done, then we have a place for that on our Blog (<http://spillbeans.org.uk>). There you'll find PowerPoint backgrounds for most weeks, a live discussion of the passages for that week and how we might be able to adapt and recreate what has been suggested.

But you are not expected to do it all every week. Each piece stands on its own and you just choose which ones you want to do, work best for you and are easier for you to use. Either way, let us know what you think, how you get on and what we can do to help out. Enjoy!

worship ideas

These are a few ideas that possibly expand upon the story offering words, phrases, poetry and ideas that could be used in some way in worship. They are not to be used exactly as they are but ought to be edited and expanded to suit the culture of your own faith community.

Each week we provide a selection of words, ideas and creative moments to take the theme and the passage a little further. We do not provide a ready made service or perfect prayers but ideas and pointers that hopefully scratch at your own creativity and provoke heaven's imagination within you.

age group ideas

Here are some helpful tips to guide you in your use of the material in age groups:

1. It presumes some introduction to the story will have taken place in worship together or will play a part in the service when children join it later.
2. Depending on the make-up of your own groups of children you will need to remain flexible in how you use the material.
3. Each idea has been given a guide age range to help your planning, but this is only a guide and your own circumstances may make certain crafts or activities more or less successful.
4. Before the sit-down activities if you have a group of young children or lots of boys, you may want to add a run-around type game before the gathering time to expend some energy.

5. Use the gathering time exercise to get into the story. Begin with a circle where the whole Sunday School is together and do this activity together (gathering time).
6. Then retell the story together (it should have been told already in worship if you begin together there).
7. Follow that by choosing as many or as few activities your space and time allow. You could offer a number of activities each at different stations all at the same time for all ages to self-select with a teacher staffing each one, or have traditional classes.
8. During activities, ask children to retell the story to you and ask about their week, what was happy and what was sad and if this week's story reminds them of other biblical and personal stories.

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through the season

Introduction

In this section you will find some ideas for scene-setting activities and a weekly visual focus as you move through the season.

These ideas are provided for you to use and adapt depending on the size, shape and layout of your worship space and whether you have access to or expertise in using projected images and audiovisual elements.

These ideas provide possible ways of linking all the weeks together which can be a helpful reminder to people of the thread of the story and the key aspects being focused on during worship.

These ideas can be used independently or together, accumulating over the season, and can also be linked with other elements of the worship material. They can also be adapted to be used within age groups.

Note these visual actions could be done at the start of worship as people arrive or at another suitable point during the service.

These are only suggestions or starting off points and we would be delighted to see and hear where these ideas lead you. Please get in touch with us or send us some images of what you have been doing that we can place on the Spill the Beans blog for others to see.

Advent – Christmas 1 Prophetic Pathways

During Advent and Christmas we will be focusing on the Old Testament passages from the prophets and thinking about the pathways the prophets encourage us to walk through Advent and beyond.

Here are a couple of suggestions for building pathways through your worship space to help people to remember and reflect on the words of the prophets and the connections those words have with their lives at this time.

Pathway Poster(s)

Prepare a large poster sized picture of a pathway. You can either have one poster which you add things to each week or a poster for each of the weeks. These can be hung around your worship space.

Pathways

Pathways can be made for your worship space by laying out stones to mark the edges of pathways or by using rolls of thick paper (or vinyl floor covering) cut into a pathway shape, the full width of the paper at one end and gradually tapering to a narrow path at the other end.

These pathways could easily be tidied up or rolled away from one week to the other, could be shaped to fit your worship space and could be moved around to different areas of your worship space. It would be good to take a photo of the pathway each week before you put it away and to display images from previous weeks either on PowerPoint or on a display board.

If you have some floor space that is not used for other things, you might want to lay out the pathway after worship and join the pathways together to make a mini labyrinth.

Weekly Suggestions

1 Dec Advent 1

Bible: Isaiah 2:1-5
Title: Pathway to Peace

Pathway Poster: add words 'Pathway to Peace' and add images of hands working together, one hand linking with another either by downloading images or by getting people to draw round their hands, cut out shapes and stick the hands to the poster.

Pathways: ask people to draw round their feet and cut out foot/shoe prints and lay them on the pathway. Alternatively, have footprints already printed and cut out of card and ask people to write their name on a footprint and lay the footprint on the pathway. If children are doing the shoe craft activity, they could bring their shoes to place on the pathway.

8 Dec Advent 2

Story: Isaiah 11:1-10
Title: Pathway to Transformation

Pathway Poster: add words 'Pathway to Transformation' and add images to represent change to the poster, for example: buds on trees, shoots growing from stumps, wells in areas affected by drought. You could also include images from your local area, perhaps allotment gardens, or from a food bank.

Pathways: have twigs available and ask people to lay twigs along the pathway. At some point during worship add some images (mentioned above) to the pathway.



15 Dec Advent 3

Story: Isaiah 35:1-10
Title: Pathway to Wholeness

Pathway Poster: add words 'Pathway to Wholeness' and add images of things that come together, for example last piece of jigsaw, a knitted item, people working together.

Pathways: lay out small poinsettia plants along edges of pathway. Ask people to scatter sand along the pathway. At the end of worship invite people to take a poinsettia home with them.

22 Dec Advent 4

Story: Isaiah 7:10-16 &
Matthew 1:18-25
Title: Pathway to Hope

Pathway Poster: add words 'Pathway to Hope' and add images from Christmas cards, like stars, candles, stables, nativity scenes.

Pathways: provide small pieces of gold and silver paper and ask people to write the word 'yes' onto the paper and then to scatter the words along the pathway.

24 Dec Christmas Eve/Watchnight

Title: Pathway to a Stable

Pathway Poster: add words 'Pathway to a Stable' and add straw to poster.

Pathways: provide baskets filled with straw and invite people to scatter straw along the pathway. If you used the big cardboard house in the previous season, you could place this at the end of the pathway as the stable, or build a little stable to place behind the house.

25 Dec Christmas Day

Title: Pathway through a Door

Pathway Poster: after adding title to the poster, stick some "New Baby" cards to the poster.

Pathways: buy Christmas gift tags which have string or thread for attaching the tags to presents. Write 'Jesus—the gift of Christmas' or a message suitable to your particular context inside the gift tags. Hang the gift tags from a small Christmas tree. Place the small Christmas tree at the end of your pathway. At some point during the worship, invite people to walk along the pathway and take a gift tag from the tree.

29 Dec Christmas 1

Story: Isaiah 63:7-9
Title: Pathway to a New Year

Pathway Poster: add words 'Pathway to New Year' and add images of stars and light to the poster.

Pathways: place tealights, either candles or little battery operated candles (usually available in poundshops) along the edges of the pathway. Write '2014' at the far end of the pathway. Provide star shaped cards and invite people to write something they are thankful for in 2013 or want to pray about in 2014 onto their star card. At an appropriate point in the worship, invite people to place their stars on the pathway.

through the season

Christmas 2 – Epiphany – Transfiguration 'Filtering the Light'

John starts his Gospel at the beginning, or better still, at the beginning of the beginning. In Genesis 1 there is the Word, then there is light and from then on Word and light is in all creation. John 1 mingles the themes of Word and Light, sometimes seen, other times obscured. Epiphany starts with that idea and the rest of the season of Epiphany, right up to the Transfiguration of Jesus, lets us look at the Light of the World from the beginning and then through the various filters of the events of Jesus life, and through other people's reactions, until, just before Lent begins, we get to see him in transfigured glory. Even then, the light we hear about we hear through Peter's, James's and John's retelling of what happened and we might be wondering if we ever see the Light of God unfiltered, maybe in the darkness of the cross, or in the garden of Easter?

Through the Season invites you to play and experiment with the use of light filters in order to set the scene for what we will hear. The aim is to let the church speak before anyone has even opened their mouths. It takes lots of words to describe light, but once someone has seen it, the explanation is more straight forward. Try describing the yellow light of an East coast Scottish morning in Autumn and you'll understand how hard that is to put into words. It is easier to take someone and show them, to let them see.

Here are some suggestions as to how to set the scene each week throughout the season using a light source and a variety of filters.

At the start of worship try to keep the church as dark as people can cope with, so that the light source and its filters become the focus. The focus can be on the filtered lamp, on its light, or on the effect on the walls and faces around it.

If you use data projectors, you could experiment with different single colour screens each week to add an extra dimension to the thinking about light. Some of the paintings by Mark Rothco might bring inspiration.

A source of light

A candle could be kept lit through the whole season but it would be a wide one, and it would not be bright enough to be seen through some filters. It can be very atmospheric but be careful of the fire hazard of covering a candle.

A light with a glass shade would be an alternative. IKEA, the source of a multitude of *Spill the Beans* props, have some suitable lights in various different styles.

Be wary of using spotlights as they can get very hot and melt/burn filters.

A naked bulb on an old standard lamp could be used with the frame of the shade covered with the various filters.

A light box might be an alternative if you need to create a small, bright area at the front of the church. YouTube has numerous instructions on how to make a good cheap light box. Alternatively dig out an old overhead projector... remember them!?

You will know the light in your building better than anyone, so you will have lots of more appropriate ideas. Take a little time to look at the light in your building and see if there are ways you could use the existing light sources, the lamps or windows.



Weekly Suggestions

5 Jan Christmas 2

(Epiphany is 6 Jan)

Story: John 1:1-18

Title: Beginning with God

Filter: Mirrors

God is reflected in everything. How many mirrors can reflect one light source? Mirrors of different sizes would be interesting, you could line them up so that the light can be seen only from certain places. Some people prefer to look at the reflection of darkness. Where would someone have to stand to see the light through a series of reflections in mirrors.

12 Jan Epiphany 1

Story: Matthew 3:13-17

Title: Beginning for the Son

Filter: Water

We focus on the baptism of Jesus. Water in jars or glasses would make great magnifying lenses for Jesus baptism. Imagine the way lenses increase and intensify the light in a lighthouse. The way Jesus began his ministry does the same for the meaning of his mission. A lighthouse, now there is another idea...

19 Jan Epiphany 2

Story: John 1:29-42

Title: Beginning in the Spirit

Filter: Old spectacles

This takes a wee bit of preparation. Weeks before, ask people to bring in their old spectacles and either distribute them so that everyone gets the chance to look at the world through another person's eyes, well, their glasses anyway. If you really want to make a focus and have time, it would be possible to either build a shade or hang a chandelier of spectacles around a lamp. If you want to do this, give yourself lots of time. Alternatively simply invite people to swap glasses for a few minutes. John had a different focus from everyone else but shared his vision an enabled other to see.

26 Jan Epiphany 3

Story: Matthew 4:12-23
 Title: Listening at the Lakeside
 Filter: Nets, muslin, tulle, organza

These make interesting layers for filters and set the stage for the fishermen who find out about Jesus while casting nets for fish and later for people.

An alternative would be to reflect light using hologram paper, like fish scales.

2 Feb Epiphany 4

Story: Matthew 5:1-12
 Title: Listening on the Mount
 Filter: Coloured gels

Coloured plastic sheets are used to create coloured light on spotlights (in the pre-LED era). Craft/art shops sell it. They make great odd coloured lenses for sunglasses, or just ask people to compare what they see through shapes cut out of gels. Make a lampshade to cover your lamp and change the light. This beatitudes invite us to see things differently, and to see people differently. A teal coloured filter or a pink filter does something wonderful to normal light, even more so when they are layered over each other. A simpler alternative is to ask everyone to come to church wearing sunglasses (or 3D specs) and compare the altered view. Is a world viewed through rose tinted specs?

9 Feb Epiphany 5

Story: Matthew 5:13-20
 Title: Listening to the Light
 Filter: A bushel!

A metal bucket or better still a metal bin would be a great cover for a light, a candle. You could use a number of them around the church. This offers the opportunity for a real before and after moment when you have lifted the bin off the light source: from dull to dazzle.

16 Feb Epiphany 6

Story: Matthew 5:21-37
 Title: Listening to the Past
 Filter: Pages of old bibles

We have grown used to back-lit words on computer screens. Glue together a filter from pages of old Bibles, they could all be of Matthew 5 or from the words of the Law. Do the old words brighten out lives or dull the light?

23 Feb Epiphany 7

Story: Matthew 5:38-48
 Title: Listening with Awe
 Filter: Fingers and hands

We look through fingers, and shade our eyes with our hands. Invite people to give shade to each other so that no-one is dazzled by a bright light. In Scotland shade is usually something we avoid, we don't want to live in someone else's shadow. In sunnier places giving shade is a loving gift, like in Psalm 121, "The shade over our right hand".

Cut out hand shapes, cloth from a shirt, carrier bags or bubble wrap (for precious wrapping) and use them to shade the light source. Doing this could become a gathering activity.



2 Mar Transfiguration

Story: Matthew 17:1-9
 Title: Listening to Him
 Filter: Something completely transparent (or nothing at all)

Use a bright light, a dazzling bulb, a naked flame, or wrap the precious light in bubble wrap, it is clear but still filters the light a little in a fascinating way. You cannot look at light for too long. We all are quickly dazzled, and come away with that irritating green blob in front of your eyes. Perhaps the Transfiguration is the nearest we come to the blinding light of the Glory of God.



advent candle liturgy

Introduction

Many churches have an Advent candle ring where week by week during Advent candles are lit. The ring traditionally holds 5 candles: one for each Sunday in Advent with a fifth candle, normally in the centre of the ring for Christmas Day. On the first Sunday of Advent one candle is lit, then on the second two and so on. In different church traditions the candles are understood to represent different things but all share a common overriding theme of preparation during the season of Advent.

The following simple liturgy picks up on the themes of Advent used in the weekly material in this edition of *Spill the Beans* for the weeks of Advent and Christmas: Pathway to Peace, Pathway to Transformation, Pathway to Wholeness, Pathway to Hope and finally Pathway to a Stable. Each Sunday will require someone to light the candle and someone to read a short sentence. On Christmas day and/or at a Watchnight service four people are required for the candle lighting and one for reading.

Top tip for candles

Use good quality ones and keep them in the fridge throughout the week when not needed. Many church suppliers sell sets of Advent candles for example Kevin Mayhew or Grace Supplies. As the liturgy suggests taking a flame from an existing lit candle, tapers will be required.

If a child is going to come forward to light the candles please ensure they are supervised by an adult.



The Liturgy

Advent 1 Pathway to Peace

*O come, O come, Emmanuel
(CH4 273, sing verse 1)*

As someone lights the first candle the following is read:

Advent begins and we step onto our path towards the Prince of Peace.

This Advent we remember all those places where peace is absent.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel
(sing verse 2)*

Advent 2 Pathway to Transformation

*O come, O come, Emmanuel
(CH4 273, sing verses 1 & 2)*

The first candle should already be lit. As someone lights the second candle (with a taper from the first candle) the following is read:

As we take a further step towards Transformation, we remember those places and people transformed by knowing and experiencing the love of Jesus, the transformer.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel
(sing verse 3)*

Advent 3 Pathway to Wholeness

*O come, O come, Emmanuel
(CH4 273, sing verses 1, 2 & 3)*

Candles 1 & 2 should already be lit. As someone lights the third candle (with a taper from one of the other candles) the following is read:

As we take a further step towards wholeness, we remember those people who feel less than whole and have still to find the wholeness offered by Jesus, the wholeness-maker.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel
(sing verse 4)*

Advent 4 Pathway to Hope

*O come, O come, Emmanuel
(CH4 273, sing verses 1-4)*

Candles 1-3 should already be lit. As someone lights the fourth candle (with a taper from one of the other candles) the following is read:

As we take a further step towards hope we remember those who live in dark places and who have lost all hope, may this be the year they find Jesus, the hope-giver.

*O come, O come, Emmanuel
(sing verse 5)*

Watchnight/Christmas Day Pathway to a Stable

The four candles for each Advent Sunday should all be lit. If you have a Watchnight service this liturgy should take place after midnight.

As four people gather around the Advent ring, each takes a flame from a different candle and as they light the fifth candle together the following words are read:

Peacemaker,
transformer,
wholeness-maker,
hope-giver,
we find you in a stable
and we welcome you once more
into our lives.

*Hark! the herald angels sing
(CH4 301)*



advent 1

pathway to peace

sunday 1 december 2013

isaiah 2:1-5

bible notes

Advent Longings

Advent is a time of longing and anticipation, as we travel on the prophetic pathways that lead to the arrival of the child who is God's answer to these very same longings. All the more important then, that time is taken to journey through Advent and to voice these longings in the reality of our world and in our communities of faith.

In this first week of Advent we find ourselves with Isaiah on the pathway to peace. He gives us a wonderful vision of a different world that can be: a world in which all of the nations are drawn to God's holy mountain, so that they may learn the ways of peace. In his vision Isaiah envisages God as teacher, peacemaker, and arbitrator; rather than say a kingly ruler who will dominate and rule with brute force.

The nations are universally drawn to God; they seek instruction in the ways of peace. In return, from God they receive instruction in justice, resolution of their disputes, and as a result the weapons of war can be turned into tools of production. The poetry of this promise is unforgettable and its words can take us to searing heights of hope. This is no pipe dream for Isaiah—he has faith this day will come.

Of course we are surrounded by a different reality, with conflict stalking the earth in Syria, Palestine/Israel, in many parts of Africa, to name but a few. A regularly

updated list of current conflicts (some dating back almost a century) details 44 different conflicts spread across the globe that are ongoing at this time.

Even in our own communities and families, peace can seem elusive and difficult to find. Undercurrents of dissent, frustration, and unease can readily stir protest when the triggers of inequality and injustice and pulled.

Martin Luther King Jnr said "Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek but a means by which we arrive at that goal."

Perhaps in preaching this week it is important to voice those longings, and to find an honest place for them in our worship. Scripture speaks to our reality, and it is important in order to hear its promise that we speak the truth about our lives and circumstances.

But we must not forget the promise. Will we begin that pilgrimage of peace this Advent to God's holy place where we may learn, against all the odds, to walk in the ways of peace? Will we open ourselves to learning the ways of justice, the values of God, God's priority for the poor?

In this passage God is the agent of transformation, but it begins with our turning to God. The challenge is for us to recognise our part: that change will not come until we turn to God in order that we might learn the ways of peace.

Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalm 122

Romans 13:11-14

Matthew 24:36-44



Peace, it seems then, is a matter of practice. In our thinking this week we may want to reflect on how in fact we might learn the practice of peace?

Who in history, or in your community would you recognise as a peacemaker and someone whose example we could follow? Indeed are there individuals in our families or communities with whom it is time to make peace with? How different would our communities be if only we could turn our energies away from negativity and destruction, to peacemaking, and the building up of others instead?

the story

Make Me A Channel

Ada enters singing "Make me a channel of your peace"; Andy is packing a suitcase while singing "Jingle Bells".

Ada: Hey Andy, what are you doing?

Andy: It's obvious. I am packing my suitcase.

Ada: *(with a hopeful tone)*
Are you going on your holidays without me?

Andy: No, I am going to Jerusalem.

Ada: Jerusalem!

Andy: Aye. Jerusalem.

Ada: JERUSALEM?

Andy: Aye, J-E-R-U-S-A-L-E-M.

Ada: But why are you going there?

Andy: It's where it's all happening.

Ada: Where what's all happening?

Andy: Peace.

Ada: Peace?

Andy: Aye, Peace

Ada: PEACE

Andy: That's what I said P-E-A-C-E.

Ada: Why do you have to go to Jerusalem for peace? Can't you stay here and be a peacemaker right where you are?

Andy: Well, you see, in the Bible the prophet Isaiah says that God is going to teach everyone on the holy mountain in Jerusalem and I don't want to miss out on that!

Ada: But Andy, Isaiah was speaking thousands of years ago, he is not meaning right now, just because you are reading this passage right now.

Andy: Oh...do you mean that God is not going to appear as a judge and jury next week and settle all the arguments like what to do with Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, child hunger, poverty, the bedroom tax, and sorting out the minister's hymn choices?

Ada: No, I don't think that is what Isaiah had in mind. Instead he was challenging the people to turn to God, to focus their life on God's teaching and on God's way of working. Then, by following that teaching we would seek ways to make peace with one another. We could work things out together so that we were truly living out the teaching of God, and then all of us can watch for peace breaking out, and maybe then we could see bombs turn into food, armies become helpers, military bases turned into new homes.

Andy: Ada...you are amazing. You make so much sense of the Bible and you have just saved me a wee fortune on air travel. That means I am helping the environment too. Maybe, I could just speak to the minister about the hymn choices and sort something out together.

Ada: You just do that Andy.

Both: *(Singing together)*
Make me a channel of your peace...

Retelling For Young People

Peacemaker, Peacemaker

The rhythm for this is based on the nursery rhyme 'pat a cake, pat a cake, bakers man'.

Peacemaker, peacemaker,
give me a chance
To turn back to God as fast as I can,
Singing, and praying,
and worshipping you,
To help make the world,
at peace for me too!

Peacemaker, peacemaker,
give me a chance,
To turn back to God as fast as I can,
To serve him and praise him
and follow him too,
To help make the world,
at peace for me too!

Peacemaker, peacemaker,
give me a chance
To turn back to God as fast as I can,
To love him, and serve him,
obey his truth too
To help make the world,
at peace for me too!

Peacemaker, peacemaker,
give me a chance
To turn back to God as fast as I can
To bring peace to others, say sorry too,
To help make the world,
at peace for me too!

Peacemaker, peacemaker,
give me a chance
To turn back to God as fast as I can,
To build tools of peace,
and fight no more too,
To help make the world,
at peace for you too!

worship ideas

Through the Season

Remember to visit pages 4 and 5 where you will find ideas that can be used to help set the scene throughout this season introducing symbolism for the theme being explored this week and encouraging a sense that each week is thematically tied together.

Gathering Activity

Offer everyone a sheet of paper and some simple origami instructions (the web has many examples and instructions you can download). In pairs or groups follow the instructions and together make some origami animals.

Talk together about transforming things, how difficult it is or how easy; and what you need to be able to transform things: instructions, examples, vision, and so on.

Call to Worship

Leader: A Pathway to Peace:

All: **this is the road we travel.**

Leader: Following the Peacemaker:

All: **this is the road we travel.**

Leader: Walking through Advent:

All: **this is the road we travel.**

Leader: Towards the Prince of Peace

All: **let us walk together.**

Candle Lighting Liturgy

This is detailed on page 8 for the whole of the Advent season.

Prayer of Praise

Milestone markers still appear
by roads long since made new.
The old stones still verge-rooted,
their etched mileages now weathered.
And yet, though smooth,
still beat the drum
of distance travelled
and distance yet to come.

And we, gracious God,
need markers on our pilgrim paths:
to keep us moving—
heart, soul and mind—
in love to you.

And Christmas, now in view, does that:
turns our mind to a child,
and our hearts to your grace,
and our souls to the depths of your love.

And in return for all you give and are—
our praise seems a present far too small.
But we give it willingly
as we travel hopefully
to greet a birth again.
Amen.

Prayer of Confession

The way ahead seems well signed:
Bethlehem—
star-led, stable-bound;
on our way,
as two modern proclaimers might say,
“from misery to happiness”.

Our way ahead is always well signed:
“I am the Way,”
said the one born in hay
when he grew to live
the love of God utterly
for the sake of a world
still intent
on a different measure.

Forgive us for not reading and heeding
the signs that you show:
for taking a different path than peace;
for hurting and not healing;
for self-regarding and not self-giving;
for too readily travelling
the return journey—
from happiness to misery—
and taking passengers with us!



worship ideas

Prayers for Others

If “double-edged”
was not already a phrase,
this time of year would need it coined.

Loving God, Christmas is a crisis
in all kinds of ways:
a reconvening of families far flung,
with tensions amid the tinsel;
a mad rush for readiness,
with time evaporating
like steam from a kettle;
a panic for presents
as measures of care;
a chaos of cards,
for the ones not near.

A double-edge to the season, to be sure.

But these crises will calm:
the day comes and the gathering
and the sharing and the tears
and the hugs and the pledges
for next time to be less fraught.

But there is a sharper double-edge.

Loving God, Christmas is a crisis
in much more cruel ways.
While the rest of the world, it seems,
celebrates,
the homeless lament,
the friendless grieve,
the lonely mourn.

They feel so much apart
from the heart of it all and yet, we know,
they are firmly in your heart—
you, whose son was homeless at birth;
you, whose son’s friends fled in the end;
you, whose son felt forsaken.
Amen.

Reflective Prayer

We are on the road:
in wonder and eager expectation.
We have the permission—
Christmas is officially in view
and our excitement grows.
The journey to Jesus’ birth has begun.
But help us not travel
like bullets from a gun
as if getting there is all that counts.

Give us patience
to ponder the heart of it all:
that a baby was the gift of hope
forever,
for all people.

Prayer of Dedication

God of mountain-top and valley,
of peacemaker and reconciler,
of new vision and a different way,
guide us along your pathway to peace.

As we bring ourselves on this day,
with all that we have and are,
use us as we are able
to be companions for others
as we journey together
walking in the light of your love.
Amen.

Reflection

Voice 1: The Lord will teach us
what he wants us to do;
we will walk in the paths
he has chosen.

Voice 2: We spread the map out
on the table.
It is not the satnav
making choices for us,
we have to make the choices:
this turn or that?
Over that crossroad?
Past that farm,
where the dogs are not tied up?
Through that part of town,
where it is always busy?
Up the steep hill,
where the views go on for ever?
Along the easy road
where the trees shadow the
path?
The map is laid out before us
and we can trace the route,
which route will it be today
on the way to God’s Kingdom?

Voice 1: We will walk the paths of peace.

Voice 2: We leave early,
starting in the dark,
with our torches
to light the path ahead.
We cannot see very far ahead,
only as far as the light shines.
We are worried we miss a turn,
and walk for miles off the path.
Up ahead there are other
pilgrims,
on Christ’s way of peace,
the small beams of their torches
light the distance.
We can follow them,
better than a map,
or searching for the sign posts.
We are not the only ones
on the path we have chosen.

Voice 1: We will walk the paths of peace.

Voice 2: There are a few of us
walking together,
we did not choose each other,
another did that,
strangers becoming friends.
Each one determined
to walk this way,
in this direction,
on the path of peace.
We could have chosen
another way
to get where we want,
but we each have heard
the call of Christ,
and are looking for his way.
Slowly, step by step,
word by word,
the threads of peace
weave a rope
between us.
The strong bond of peace
gives its name
to the road we have chosen.

Voice 1: We will walk the paths of peace.

Voice 2: We will walk the paths of peace.

All: **We will walk the paths of peace.**



Pathways of Peace

You will need: scissors, five balls of string, PowerPoint with instructions, responses and words of songs.

Cast: *God (hidden)*
Voice
Person (dressed in black, holding scissors)
Jesus (dressed in white, speaking from the centre)
People (all congregation)

Voice: *(begins with short instruction)*

A ball of string will be passed along each row. Could you please hold on to the string as it comes to you and pass the ball to the neighbour on your left.

When you hear the voice of God saying, "Made in my image", could you please respond, "We are one".

God: In my image I created all things.
Made in my image...

People: We are one.

God: From the very stuff of God came the sand between your toes,
the wind on your face,
the mighty swaying trees.
Made in my image...

People: We are one.

God: From the very stuff of God came the raging seas,
the delicate flowers,
the blazing sun.
Made in my image...

People: We are one.

God: From the very stuff of God came the slender snake,
the powerful lioness,
the playful puppy.
Made in my image...

People: We are one.

God: From the very stuff of God came baby girls and baby boys who grow into men and women like you.
Made in my image...

People: We are one.

God: I live in harmony with all that I have created.
There is no other way to be.

Voice: We feel that deep truth throughout our whole beings.

It is as it should be, as it was in the beginning, as it is now.

We are one, one with you, with nature, with each other.

But God, we forget too easily as division creeps in and cuts deep with its sword.

Pause

At this point the person dressed in black creeps in and cuts the string spanning across the aisles, while instrumental music plays.

Voice: We know that you live in harmony with all of creation but we have lost sight of the whole,
blinded by petty feuds and rivalry turned sour,
fuelled by hatred and bigotry which has led to destruction, persecution, violence and wars.
Where can we find peace?

God: Throughout history I have sent messengers to remind you that peace is within you.

I sent Jesus to live and explain this very truth.

Jesus: "I am in the Father and the Father is in me.
Because I live, you also will live. You will know that I am in my Father, and that you are in me, just as I am in you...
Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you...
Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid."

(from John 14, GNB)

We are one.

As people are speaking, Jesus links their hands, healing the divisions.

People: We know that hurts can be healed, divisions can be mended, barriers can be broken down.

We know that wars can be ended, wrongs can be righted, captives can be set free.

We know that evil will not have the final say, hate will be overcome, darkness will be banished, so that life might thrive.

We know that victory is ours through him who loved us.

We are one.

Voice: Let us join hands and sing these powerful words first spoken by Desmond Tutu.

As we hold hands and sing, we imagine that divisions are being overcome in our own community and in communities around the world.

After each singing, we call out the names of some of these communities.

People: Goodness is stronger than evil; love is stronger than hate; light is stronger than darkness; life is stronger than death. Victory is ours, victory is ours through him who loved us.

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Voice: Now... let us walk the pathways of peace in the light which the Lord gives us.

(from Isaiah 2:5)

A musical setting to accompany the Tutu prayer text is available in two WGRG books: *Love And Anger* and *There is One Among Us*.

worship ideas

Advent Communion Liturgy

This communion liturgy could be appropriately used on any Sunday during the season of Advent.

Invitation

Voice 1: A prophet once spoke

Voice 2: to God, let us go

Voice 3: to learn of his ways

Voice 4: and walk in his paths.'

Voice 1: A prophet once spoke

Voice 2: and challenged the people

Voice 3: to travel and journey

Voice 4: on the pathways of God.

Voice 1: A pathway to peace

Voice 2: where we will be challenged

Voice 3: to live in a new way

Voice 4: and learn ways of peace.

Voice 1: An impossible pathway

Voice 2: where all things are different

Voice 3: where a world is transformed

Voice 4: and the impossible reigns.

Voice 1: A pathway to wholeness

Voice 2: where all is complete

Voice 3: where all will be welcome

Voice 4: to travel the road.

Voice 1: A pathway to hope

Voice 2: where God will invite us

Voice 3: to join in the journey

Voice 4: and not be afraid.

Voice 1: A pathway to Christ

Voice 2: where God entered the world

Voice 3: to walk us the pathways

Voice 4: and keep learning the ways of peace.

Voice 1: So come, you are welcome

Voice 2: to join in this feast,

Voice 3: as we walk on the pathways

Voice 4: and be nourished by God.

Communion Hymn

Put peace into each other's hands CH4 659

Institution

We are beginning to think again about the story of Jesus a story told for centuries told by countless people heard by countless people and lived out by countless people.

We think again about Jesus birth and those who spoke of his coming.

We think of the prophets who knew something good was just around the corner. A change, an upset a new way of living.

And so Jesus came, born into a stable, born into obscurity, born of God.

He brought healing and wisdom, justice and love.

He challenged, inspired, upset and unsettled.

We remember Jesus: his life, his ministry, his call to us.

He lived out God's love and we seek to do likewise. He sat at a meal and here we do likewise. He gathered with friends, and here we do likewise. He shared bread and wine and here we do likewise.

He prayed and God blessed and here we do likewise.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Lord God, we gather as a family, a family united around the table and we give you thanks.

We give you thanks for those who speak your ways, those who walk in your paths, those who encourage us to see you.

We give you thanks that we can work for peace, for transformation, for wholeness, for hope.

We give you thanks that like the prophets long ago you encourage us to walk on your pathways and to bring about change in our time.

We give you thanks that as a family we can claim to know you. May we serve you in the ways that we speak to other people, care for other people, serve other people, demonstrate you to other people.

We give you thanks for Jesus, that through his story we can know more of you, feel more of you, experience more of you. Help us to live the story of Jesus day by day.

Lord, as we gather, a family united in your love, challenged by your prophets, of ages past and with us now, bless the gifts that you have given to us, gifts of bread and wine, which remind us of your love. Send your Spirit to bless them so that we can remember Jesus and all that he challenges us to be. In Jesus name we offer our prayers. Amen.

Sharing

In the same way that Jesus took the bread, and said 'This is my body, broken for you' let us take this bread, and break it to remind us of the love that God has for us all.

Bread is broken and shared

And Jesus also took the cup of wine and said 'This cup is like my blood which is shed for all' so let us take the cup and drink it to remember that God welcomes us all to his family.

Wine is poured and shared

Peace

Jesus spoke to his friends three days after he had died and they did not believe it was him. He had to show him his wounds saying 'Peace be with you' and then the disciples knew it was him. Let us share a sign of peace, love and welcome with one another.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for all that you have given us today. May we remember that whoever we are we can journey on your pathway. May we continue to serve you and to serve others. As we approach Christmas and remembering the story of the stable, may we remember Jesus, his life, your life, your kingdom. Amen.



worship ideas

Sending

Leader: Go from this place
to be messengers of God.

**All: We go with God beside us
to learn of his ways,
to walk in his paths,
to travel towards peace.**

Leader: And may his blessing
always be with us,
now and forever.

Praise/Hymns

And everyone beneath the vine
and fig tree *All the Assembly Songs
You'll Ever Need 16*

Behold! the mountain of the Lord CH4 715

Come now, O Prince of Peace CH4 275

Comfort, comfort now my people CH4 274

Goodness is stronger than evil WGRG

'I have a dream', a man once said CH4 710

I've got peace like a river MP 353

JP 120

Make me a channel CH4 528

MP 456

Now dawns the Sun of righteousness

MP 484

Pray that Jerusalem may have peace

CH4 82

Put peace into each other's hands CH4 659

The race that long in darkness CH4 290

The Spirit lives to set us free MP 664

We are marching in the light of God

CH4 516

MP 954

We pray for peace See right

When he comes MP 752

We pray for peace

1. We pray for peace, God, in our world,
so wrenched by war and sorrow.
Give us rebirth, and heal our earth
of fear and hate tomorrow.
*Teach peace in every mind,
and heal all wounded humankind.
Teach peace in every heart,
as people of one Maker.*
2. We pray for peace, God, in our streets,
where neighbours fear to travel.
Let gunfire end, our ways amend,
let violence unravel.
Teach peace...
3. We pray for peace, God, in our homes,
where we have hurt those nearest.
Renew each will, and help us still
to reconcile our dearest.
Teach peace...
4. We pray for peace, God, in our souls.
Oh, heal our selfish blindness!
God, touch each heart and help us start
to love each self with kindness.
Teach peace...

Words: Deborah L Patterson

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The song is from a collection
called "Balm in Gilead: Hymns
of Healing and Wholeness,"
published by the International
Parish Nurse Resource Center in
St. Louis, Missouri in 2010.

Tune: Greensleeves



age group ideas

gathering crafts

Advent Pathway

all age

You will need: a large poster-sized picture of a pathway with 24 footprints (outline only) drawn onto the pathway, colouring pens/crayons.

Ask a child/children to colour in one of the footprints. There is one for each day of December leading to Christmas Day (like an Advent calendar).

Although only one footprint can be coloured today, you can use this 'Pathway Advent Calendar' to gather round each week, to colour in the footprints of the week that has been and to begin to talk about pathway for the week.

This will be a fairly quick gathering activity as many groups will be getting nativity plays and songs ready for Christmas.

My Special Shoe

all age

You will need: old shoes of any size and any style (ask the congregation to bring in old shoes or buy some from charity shops), acrylic paint, paint brushes, PVA glue, glue spreaders, glitter, sticky gems, Christmas stickers.

Let the children choose a shoe each. Children can then decorate their shoe with paints, glitter, stickers, gems, pens.

Talk about the pathways the prophets took and what it means to walk the pathway of peace today. Discuss with the children their ideas of how they could walk pathways of peace in their homes, schools and community.

If a pathway is being laid out in the worship space, the shoes the children have decorated could be placed on the pathway or the children could take their shoe home to put beside their front door as a reminder of the Advent pathway every time they come in or go out of their house.

Funky Advent Ring

all ages

You will need: A4 size sheets of funky foam, A4 size black card, scissors, pencils, PVA glue, glue spreaders, glitter glue, envelopes.

Prepare funky foam by cutting A4 sheets in half length ways, then in half length ways again, giving 4 long strips. Cut the long strips in half across their length giving eight rectangles. Give each child five of these rectangles to make candles for an Advent candle ring.

Cut out small flame shapes from yellow and orange funky foam. Place five flame shapes in envelopes with one envelope per child.

Give each child a sheet of black card. Children should glue their five funky foam candles onto the black card and decorate the candles with glitter glue.

Have the children add one funky foam flame today and then invite them to take the candle sheet and envelope home to add the other flames, one on each Sunday of Advent and one on Christmas Day. Talk about preparing for Christmas and how making peace is part of that.



Working Through Advent

Through December you might find that it is helpful to have a craft that children can work on fairly independently and which they can come back to repeatedly over the next few weeks as different children or groups of children are busy with rehearsals for nativity plays or whatever is your local pattern.

It is a good idea to have something available which children can work on rather than them having to sit about waiting for their 'turn' to take part in the rehearsals. Craft sites like Baker Ross and Crafty Crocodile have many ready-to-use craft activities, for example a nativity mobile, and web sites have lots of ideas too.

age group ideas

activities

Sat Nav Way

age 6-12

You will need: recording device and ability to play the sound back (many mobile or smart phones will have this ability), local street maps.

Ask each child to describe how they got to church. What directions could they give you to get from the church back to their homes? If this is too far, give them a destination to get to that is closer. Have some street maps available so the children can find out the local street names.

Then encourage them to speak the directions as though they are a Sat Nav. For instance, "At the next junction turn right onto High St, travel along this road for a wee distance and turn left into Main St... and so on" It can be as detailed as the children wish. You can play some of them back afterwards.

Read The Signs

age 6-12

You will need: some printed road signs (readily available online) or draw your own, blank A4 sheets, colouring pens/pencils.

You may already have some road signs from previous activities in earlier issues of *Spill the Beans*. If not, create a few of your own to make a kind of assault course by signage. Place the signs on the wall around the room or around the table. At each sign the children have to follow the commands on them. So, for example, for a 70 mph sign they run fast on the spot, for a turn left sign they have to turn left, and so on.

For the activity side of this game the children could make up their own road signs, perhaps drawing on today's reading. What sign do they draw for the Lord's House, spears, ploughshares and so on.

The Lord's House

age 6-12

You will need: typical symbols used in the church (there may be differences locally), such as cross, communion cup, bible, hymn book.

The imagery of this week's reading is powerfully symbolic of a bigger meaning (swords turned into ploughshares). What other symbols do we have in the church? Talk about the common symbols found in your church.

- What do these symbols mean?
- What are they used for?
- Do the children think they are needed?

Metaphors

age 9-12

The end of the passage this week has some metaphors. Either give the children a list of metaphors (for examples see below) and ask them what they think the meaning of each might be, or start the common sayings and see if the children can finish them off while explaining what they mean. Can the children think of any others themselves?

- A heart of stone
- As strong as an ox
- It's raining cats and dogs
- I'm dead tired
- You had better pull your socks up
- Apple of my eye
- A light in the sea of darkness
- That noise is music to my ears
- You are a couch potato
- Jumping for joy
- School is the gateway to adulthood
- Kicked the bucket

Take The Pencil For A Walk

all age

You will need: A5 paper or card sheets, pencils.

Give each child an A5 sheet of paper/card and a pencil and then ask them to take their pencil on a journey without removing it from the paper so that lots of shapes are made as the pencil criss-crosses over the paper in lines, squiggles and zigzags.

Each person's pencil journey will be different. On this day and possibly over the next two weeks get the children to colour in their different sections and display them on your boards.

Blackout Drawings

all age

You will need: scratch art cards (available from craft providers like Baker Ross).

Each person travels a different road so in a similar way to the previous activity, this gives the children a chance to be creative in producing their own design by scratching away the black covering to create their unique drawing.