

issue 17

advent, christmas, epiphany  
29 november 2015 to 7 february 2016

# spill the beans

worship and learning resources for all ages

# sampler



A resource with a Scottish flavour for  
Worship Leaders, Sunday Schools,  
Junior Churches and Youth Leaders,  
based on the Narrative Lectionary.

[spillbeans.org.uk](http://spillbeans.org.uk)  
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# introduction

**A**T THE BEGINNING OF 2009 a conversation began amongst a couple, then a few, then a group about collaboratively creating resources that enabled us to tell the story of faith in a worship context and within age groups for younger people and teens. Spill the Beans was born as the result of that conversation and has grown and developed over the intervening years.

The ethos has remained the same, however. It's all about story. For 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.

## Narrative Lectionary

Over the course of 2011-2014 the Spill the Beans Resource Team completed a full cycle through the Revised Common Lectionary. As we neared the end of that cycle we began discussion about what to do once we had completed that cycle. We considered the pros and cons of remaining with the RCL for another cycle or trying a different tack. We have decided, in a spirit of continual experimentation, to journey with the Narrative

Lectionary which began a new four year cycle in September 2014. This is the fourth issue under the Narrative Lectionary. Note that a set of previous issues (1-12) which covered a cycle of the Revised Common Lectionary is available to purchase.

The Narrative Lectionary is a relatively new four year lectionary that focuses on story and retelling the broad sweep of the biblical narrative in each year. We felt that this focus has a natural resonance with the ethos of Spill the Beans. It is a little experimental and has the feel of a new adventure.

Why have we decided to do this? To fully understand this you need to know that Spill the Beans is a work of love. None of the contributors are paid for their contributions, these contributions are written and prepared with our own congregations in mind. Instead of working in isolation, we bring this work together, give it some spit and polish, and share it with others. This is how we can keep the cost so low.

Many of the team were attracted to the freshness of the different approach taken by the NL and see it as a means of sparking new ideas and experiences for our congregations.

We pray you will also be enthused and enlivened by a new approach within worship and in your age groups, engaging with the great biblical narrative so that all people will let these stories shape their own story of faith.

# spilling the beans

**I**N THIS 17TH ISSUE of Spill the Beans you will find an extensive collection of things to use each week. Each piece is written with specific congregations in mind rather than some average 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>) and Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/spillbeansresources>. There you will 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.

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. We encourage you not to use these exactly as they are but rather edit, expand and enmesh these ideas within 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.

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 so use your own judgement about what will work with your group.
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 to expend some energy.
5. Use the gathering time exercise with the whole group to get into the story together across the ages.
6. We encourage you to retell the story together.
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.
9. The intention is not to complete "the tasks" brilliantly, but rather to provide opportunities to begin conversations, build relationships, retell the story of the day, and talk about what it means for us today.
10. There are many websites that provide handout-type sheets that will have images, crosswords and wordsearches for the story of that week. They can be helpful in an emergency, but try to be more creative as leaders, the rewards are worth it.

# LATEST NEWS

## Narrative Lectionary Resources

There is a growing number of other areas of discussion and creativity that relate to the Narrative Lectionary. We encourage you to look at some of the other online resources that are using the Narrative Lectionary (NL).

Luther Seminary, from whom the Narrative Lectionary is sourced, offer excellent weekly notes and an audio podcast available from their website <http://www.workingpreacher.org>,

A very active Facebook group with super contributions and thoughtful discussion about the weekly issues raised by the scriptural texts can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/NarrativeLectionary/>.

RevGalBlogPals also provides some nuggets of wisdom on each week's text. Find them here: <http://revgalblogpals.org/category/narrative-lectionary/>.

Pastor John Stevens from Oregon is a source of continual creativity for children's talks using items picked up from the Dollar Store (Pound Store to us here in the UK) based both on the Revised Common Lectionary and the Narrative Lectionary. Find him here: <http://dskidsermons.com/>.



# contents

Through the Season Notes	4
Blue Christmas Ideas	6
Sunday 29 November 2015 (Advent 1)	8
Sunday 6 December 2015 (Advent 2)	16
Sunday 13 December 2015 (Advent 3)	23
Sunday 20 December 2015 (Advent 4)	32
Thursday 24 December 2015 (Christmas Eve)	40
Friday 25 December 2015 (Christmas Day)	46
Sunday 27 December 2015 (Christmas 1)	50
Sunday 3 January 2016 (Christmas 2)	58
Sunday 10 January 2016 (Epiphany 1)	65
Sunday 17 January 2016 (Epiphany 2)	73
Sunday 24 January 2016 (Epiphany 3)	80
Sunday 31 January 2016 (Epiphany 4)	88
Sunday 7 February 2016 (Transfiguration)	96
Extra Resources and Activity Sheets	105

*Please remember you can use the bookmark system within Adobe Reader to quickly move around this document.*

sample

# spill the beans resource team

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND EXTRA MATERIALS, join us on the Spill the Beans blog: <http://spillbeans.org.uk> or join the community at <http://www.facebook.com/spillbeansresources>.

The team producing this issue included:

- |                  |                     |
|------------------|---------------------|
| Shirley Billes   | Peter Johnston      |
| Keith Blackwood  | Tina Kemp           |
| Stephen Brown    | Caryl Kyle          |
| Ruth Burgess     | Jo Love             |
| Scott Burton     | Nikki McDonald      |
| Liz Crumlish     | Sandi McGill        |
| Stewart Cutler   | John Murning        |
| Shuna Dicks      | Scott Paget         |
| Jonathan Fleming | Lyn Peden           |
| Roddy Hamilton   | Linsey Schafer      |
| Karen Harbison   | Barbara Ann Sweetin |
| Jean Inglis      | Julie Woods         |

## Key to Abbreviations

In the worship ideas section the following abbreviations may be used to indicate different sources of worship music:

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| ATAS | All the Assembly Songs You'll Ever Need |
| 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               |



# 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 the technology you have on offer to assist.

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.

## Advent–Christmas

We continue with the tree(s) basis that we used to illustrate themes through the last season (Issue 16).

On Christ the King Sunday, our tree became a Chrismon tree, hung with symbols of Christ (Christ monograms).

As the season progresses, the tree will be populated by people and objects from our Narrative Lectionary until it becomes so over-populated that it is cleared away to make room for the freshness and simplicity of the gospel.

A different kind of nativity scene emerges from our journey through the Narrative Lectionary.

## Weekly Suggestions

### 29 Nov Advent 1

Story: 2 Kings 22:1-10; 23:1-3  
 Title: Rediscovery  
 Activity: White lights and a gold star are added to the Chrismon tree. If you have not already added Chrismon symbols, these should be added first, explaining their significance and setting the scene for the season (see Issue 16). In today's reading, God's people rediscover the words that bring hope. The symbols of light and the star help to illustrate this.

### 6 Dec Advent 2

Story: Isaiah 40:1-11  
 Title: Recreation  
 Activity: The words of today's reading from Isaiah 40 should be written or printed onto Christmas gift tags and hung on the tree (along with/on top of the symbols already present). These are words of hope and comfort for God's people in their darkness.

### 13 Dec Advent 3

Story: Ezra 1:1-4; 3:1-4 & 10-13  
 Title: Rebuild  
 Activity: The reading this week takes us into the temple. This Sunday, we might recall a link to Anna and Simeon who waited in the temple to see the fulfilment of God's promise. Create and place some Anna and Simeon figures on or under the tree.

### 20 Dec Advent 4

Story: Luke 1:5-13 & 57-80  
 Title: Revelation  
 Activity: John's silence is broken when he writes the name of his son on a tablet. Ask people to recall the names of those who have inspired them to praise God and/or those who have broken their times of silence with hope. Place some scrolls on tables around the sanctuary to which folk can go and write those names before placing the scrolls under the tree.

### 24 Dec Christmas Eve

Story: Luke 2:1-14(15-20)  
 Title: Rejoice  
 Activity: This is the day when the world holds its breath in expectation for what will follow the next day. Place an empty manger at the foot of the tree, perhaps a towel and bowl of water.

### 25 Dec Christmas Day

Story: Luke 2:8-20 or Matthew 2:1-12  
 Title: Retell  
 Activity: Capture something of the mayhem of Christmas Day by adding gifts to or under the tree, sheep (either cut out hanging on the tree) or a model sheep underneath the tree.

### 27 Dec Christmas 1

Story: Mark 1:1-20  
 Title: Recall  
 Activity: This would be a good Sunday to review the objects on and around the tree: Lights, star, Chrismon symbols, words of comfort and hope, Simeon and Anna who waited on God in the temple, scrolls of names significant for congregation. Consider how all of these play a part in the journey towards the gospel into which we enter today.

### 3 Jan Christmas 2

Story: Mark 1:21-45  
 Title: New Beginnings  
 Activity: As we crash into the gospel at great pace, Mark tells us of healing. Add the man with the unclean spirit, Peter's mother-in-law and the leper to the tree.

Our tree is now looking pretty weighed down by all these people and all the tradition we have thrown on it. It is time to make way for the newness and the urgency of the gospel. The tree might be toppled or swept away, symbolising a fresh start. Alternatively, it might be moved to a corner of the sanctuary as a reminder of traditions built on and journeys travelled.



## Epiphany

Having left aside (or swept aside) our tree for now, with the bells of Christmas still ringing in our ears, it is time to take Epiphany seriously: what is being revealed to us in this season?

Is the Incarnation to be allowed to slip quietly out of sight, or does it impact our everyday?

For these next few weeks we seek to focus on different elements of the Gospel and reflect on the insight we are being given as we approach the texts today.

As a focal point, a spot light would be a good visual, or even a single bulb illuminating whatever is being revealed each week.

### 10 Jan Epiphany 1

Story: Mark 2:1-22

Title: New Wine

Focus: Stop Sign / Road Block / No Entry

Symbolising all those barriers we erect to keep others from seeing Jesus: closed doors, inhospitable buildings, shutting out those who are different, those who do not behave as we do.

Give everyone a stop symbol as they come in to worship and encourage reflection/discussion on the stumbling blocks we place on the path of others.



### 17 Jan Epiphany 2

Story: Mark 4:1-34

Title: New Growth

Focus: Unplanted bulb and a bulb in bloom

Symbolising potential, nature and nurture.

Give everyone a bulb to take home to plant and nurture.



### 24 Jan Epiphany 3

Story: Mark 5:21-43

Title: New Life

Focus: Scrap of cloth

Symbolising the hem of Jesus' garment but also symbolising the cloak of life or death.

Cover the table with cloths. Cut or rip the scraps to give each person a piece to take home.

### 31 Jan Epiphany 4

Story: Mark 6:1-29

Title: New Context

Focus: Certificate of education / achievement

Symbolising learning or wisdom.

Share with one another moments of pride in achievement and moments when that pride has not been shared or appreciated.

### 7 Feb Transfiguration

Story: Mark 8:27-9:8

Title: New Perspective

Focus: A question mark

Symbolising Jesus' question: 'Who do you say I am?' And the many questions the disciples had about him.

Give everyone a question mark to take home and attach to their fridge to act as a daily reminder of the question with which Jesus confronts us. A template card is available on [page 113](#) should you wish to use this.





# blue christmas

## a liturgy for a reflective service recognising loss

### Introduction

While Advent and Christmas is a time of great festivity and joy for the majority of people within the Christian Community, it must be recognised that Christmas can be a particularly difficult time for people who may be grieving a loss, for those who are living alone, or those who have painful associations with this time of year.

As we have done in previous years, we provide this liturgy as a basis for a service that could be offered to your congregation at some point during this season. Our experiences have shown that this can be a very well received and helpful service.

### Liturgy

#### Opening Words

The light shines in the darkness.

In the darkness when masks slip and grief is allowed to surface, when the chill of loss burrows its way into fragile and vulnerable souls exposed and bereft, light whispers: *love lasts forever.*

In the darkness when memories taunt instead of comfort, when regrets triumph over achievements, light whispers: *love lasts forever.*

In the darkness when confidence wanes and hope takes flight and faith is questioned, light whispers: *love lasts forever.*

The light of love will carry us through the longest night.

### Carol

Once in Royal David's city

CH4 315 / MP 539

#### The Landscape of Loss

The landscape of loss looms starkly, draining colour from everything around, leaching the very soil, mirrored in sea and sky.

It brings a weariness that is hard to shake off, but burrows in like a parasite sapping energy, feeding on melancholy, choking life out of the brief intervals of forgetfulness or distraction.

It gathers like a mist weaving its tendrils in and around a city street: swirling, deepening, until obscurity reigns.

For a time, for a long time, vision is restricted to a very narrow horizon.



But, eventually, the view is expanded and, as other shapes hove into view the landscape begins to take on colour slowly, gradually, slightly out of focus.

And a creeping warmth dispels the chill of loss like the sun shining softly on the ocean.

The penetration is not complete, but it does make a difference on the surface loosening the grip and softening the blow until pain recedes enough to imagine seeing in colour again.

## Isaiah 9:2,6

Listen to these words from Isaiah.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

## Carol

Love came down at Christmas

CH4 316 / MP 451

## God Sends Angels

For those experiencing the anticipation of pregnancy in this season of waiting and expectation, God sends angels to massage soothing balm into the twinges of fear and apprehension.

For those mourning the emptiness of loss in this season of giving God sends angels not to fill the void, but to hold the space so that grief may be honoured and cherished.

Those same angels that announced earth-shattering changes in the lives of Mary and Joseph and Elizabeth and Zechariah and life-altering good news for shepherds going about their daily grind minister in our world today, stealing into lives disrupted by events longed for or dreaded, bidden or unbidden and wrap those invisible, noiseless wings around our lives mending and minding, swaddling in love, still being heralds of the Advent of God in *all* of life.

## Carol

Hark! the herald angels sing

CH4 301 / MP 211

## Words for Candle Lighting

*Four candles are lit as indicated and then a light is taken to be shared with the congregation who proceed to light each other's candles. Once they are all lit, the Carol is sung.*

Christmas wishes...

My wish for you this Christmas is hope: the hope that things can be different, that the odds can be reversed, that justice can prevail, that we can see God turning cartwheels right in front of our eyes?

Why?

Because God is continually trying to attract our attention so that, even in the darkness of life, we can see flickers of hope.

*Light first candle.*

My wish for you this Christmas is peace: not that wee moment of darkness when all is quiet and you can take a breath, but peace that is deep and lasting, that seeps in to everything you do, changing your perception, calming your fear, letting you relax as you have never done before.

*Light second candle.*

My wish for you this Christmas is love: the love that came in the form of a baby born in poverty and seen as a threat to political stability— that kind of love— not sentimental or slushy, but grounded in the reality of a harsh and brutal life, fighting for survival, succeeding against the odds, making all the difference; love that perseveres because love is of God.

*Light third candle.*

My wish for you this Christmas is joy: joy that ripples right to your toes, not the easy smile you wear or forced jollity you perform, but a joy that bubbles up from the depths lifting your spirit, sending you soaring, leaving you reeling and breathless; the joy of the baby God.

*Light fourth candle.*

*Share light with congregation.*

And with these gifts of hope and peace and love and joy, God fills us to the brim so that we can overflow into the world around us, being Christ to each other, seeing Christ in each other and serving even the least of these.

## Carol

Still the Night

CH4 309

## Blessing

God is... in quiet, subdued anticipation.  
God is... in frenzied impatience.  
God is... in joyful, building excitement.  
God is... and in sinking dragging worry  
God is.

The agony of waiting, be it joyful or dreadful, demands the presence of the God of infinite wisdom and patience who waits beside us and accompanies us through every moment, matching our steps, carrying us through with joyful swoop or careful compassion. In every waiting God is.

May you know that God right beside you and yours this Christmas.



advent 1  
sunday 29 november 2015

# rediscovery

## bible notes

### Unleashing the Word

**I**N THESE DAYS OF INFORMATION OVERLOAD through Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Wikipedia and so on, it seems incredible that in the past, so much control was exerted by withholding information.

Sacred texts were carefully controlled by religious authorities, as they were considered too dangerous to be delivered into the hands of the masses. And so, all through history, we find revolts and reformations based around release of the Word. Withholding scripture became a means of retaining power. When that power was breached reformation occurred.

The sacred text that Josiah discovered, probably carefully concealed by his predecessors, certainly gave him impetus to reclaim tradition and recover truths once shared and practiced. It might be useful to consider something of the context and chronology behind today's text.

Around 715 BCE, King Hezekiah became King of Judah. Hezekiah was a very pious king and began a series of religious reforms. He was succeeded around 687 BCE by his son Manasseh, who reigned for 45 years and was described as one of the worst kings, which is some reputation given the awful acts of many kings from that era. Manasseh was succeeded briefly by his son Amon who was murdered just two years into his reign before Josiah took over in 640 BCE. Josiah, by all accounts, sought to continue his great grandfather Hezekiah's reforms and organised the repairing of the Temple. It was during this work that the scroll, which was likely hidden for safe keeping during Manasseh's reign, was found. This led to Josiah's reforms.

At the start of Advent, a time of new beginnings, we might want to ask ourselves:

- As a community of faith, what is it that allows us to keep losing sight of the Word?
- How might we continue to "shake off the dust" and rediscover that Word for today, gradually uncovering the treasure and embarking on a journey of discovery?
- Why do we allow that reforming Word so often to slip into obscurity instead of being constantly reformed and

2 Kings 22:1-10, 23:1-3  
(Luke 24:30-32)



renewed by its message?

- Having rediscovered the Word, how do we contextualise it for our community?
- How do we encourage different generations, building on their experience and tradition, to see the Word in a new light for these times?
- How do we make way for the power of the Word to affect everyday life?

There is no danger today of the Word being hidden, but its accessibility does not seem to enhance our observance. The power is still there, waiting to be released, to emerge from the walls we build around it and bring about change.

There is no doubt that the kind of reformation that could be accomplished if we heeded the Word of God is needed now more than ever.

As we make every day choices that affect economy, politics and issues of equality and justice, how might the power of the Word direct our choices and effect change that makes a difference for all God's children?

As we look forward to celebrating the Incarnation, how might we give flesh to the reform that God seeks to accomplish?

This Advent calls us to be bold, to blow the dust off the Word, to release the power and to see in its wake, as the creativity of God is born for every time and place, disrupting and uprooting the whole people of God.

# the story

## Unearthing

*A dialogue, to follow the Bible reading, between the high priest Hilkiyah and one of the builders who has repaired the house of the Lord.*

- Hilkiyah: What a transformation!
- Builder: Thank you, sir!
- Hilkiyah: I knew you were the man to lead the restoration work.
- Builder: Thank you... thank you, sir.
- Hilkiyah: When I think of the ruins you started with...
- Builder: Yes, it didn't look promising, but I had a good team and we know our materials.
- Hilkiyah: You do, you certainly do. Who'd have thought that simple wood and stone could be turned into this wonderful finish.
- Builder: We re-used a lot of what was here, sir. I can account for everything else, everything we had to buy.
- Hilkiyah: No, no! I told you, the King needs no accounts from you. Your honesty is beyond doubt.
- Builder: Thank you, sir. I'm honoured that his majesty thinks so.
- Hilkiyah: Did you come to his reading of the book you found?
- Builder: The book you found! I only told you it was there.
- Hilkiyah: That's what I wanted to ask: how did you know it was there?
- Builder: Like I said, sir, workmen know their materials. I knew it was neither wood nor stone that I'd tripped on that day! It was something softer under all the dust.
- Hilkiyah: Softer? *(chuckling)* There is not much that is soft in God's Law! Did you hear the King's reading?
- Builder: Oh I heard it read the first time when Shaphan first read it out to you. Remember?
- Hilkiyah: You were listening?
- Builder: Not at first, not really, except that I was curious having been the one who unearthed it. By the time Shaphan was five minutes into it, well, we had all downed tools.
- Hilkiyah: Really? *(pause)*
- Builder: And all I could think was... *(voice trailing off, shaking head)*
- Hilkiyah: What? What were you thinking?
- Builder: How was it lost? How did that happen? Did people get careless or self-assured or what? How did something so important get buried in the dust?
- Hilkiyah: We won't lose it again, that's for sure!
- Builder: Such faith, sir. You have such faith. That's why you're the priest and I'm just a builder!
- Hilkiyah: Just a builder? You build, you restore, you transform. Look at this place!
- Builder: I can do that for the Lord's house, sir, but not for the Lord's people. I don't know, I have a feeling we could so easily bury all our best intentions all over again, forgetting how we're supposed to live and losing sight of God's commandments.
- Hilkiyah: Well, you know what to do then.
- Builder: Do I?
- Hilkiyah: Just keep on unearthing them.



# the story

## Retelling For Young People

### Remembering The Rules

One Tuesday after school, Laura said to her mum, "Ask me again about the school rules, mum!" Laura had been learning the rules her teacher wanted everyone to follow in class. Every day, she loved reporting back to her mum about how well she was keeping the rules. So far this term, Laura was really proud of keeping the first three rules. It was the last one that was the hardest!

"OK," said mum that Tuesday. "Tell me the school rules, dear."

Laura screwed up her face as she concentrated. Then she repeated from memory the sign on the classroom wall. "Arrive on time. Say please and thank you. Always try your best. And the number one rule for everyone, everywhere—treat others the way you want them to treat you."

"And how did you get on today?" asked mum.

"I was on time this morning! And I said please every single time I asked for something: to borrow Natalie's pencil sharpener, for David to fill up my water bottle at lunch, oh, and to take turns with Aswad on the skipping ropes at gym. I said thank you to the dinner ladies for my soup and sandwich, and to the janitor for helping us take the recycling bins out. And I tried my best at most things, mum. Mr Johnston said he could see I was putting in more effort at skipping today. I'm getting better!"

"And how did you get on with the number one rule for everyone, everywhere?"

Laura sighed. "Oh mum! Treat other people the way you want them to treat you. That should be so easy! Why is it so hard? It's hard to even remember that rule. Then it's hard to do! I saw Kirsty sitting on her own at lunchtime and I didn't ask her to play with us. I would have wanted someone to ask me to play with them if I was sitting on my own, but I didn't do that for Kirsty. Why is it so hard?"

Mum sighed too. "Laura, I wish I knew! You're right, we all forget very easily."

Laura was surprised to hear her mum say that even grown-ups found it hard to follow the number one rule for everyone, everywhere. Treat other people the way you want them to treat you.

"What can we do then, mum?"

"Let's just keep reminding each other, will we? Because then we'll have the best chance of doing the right thing and not always forgetting. I think it's a rule we just need to keep seeing and reading and saying and hearing, over and over again! I know I need to be told more than once. I need to hear it lots of times: treat other people the way you want them to treat you! That's something I never want to forget."

"Thanks, mum, you're the best!" said Laura.

*Have a chat with the children, asking what they thought of what Laura's mum said. Are there some rules that are good to hear lots of times, over and over again, whatever age we are?*

# worship ideas

## Through the Season

Please visit pages 4 and 5 where you will find ideas that can be used to help create a linking theme using the tree motif that will continue throughout this issue. This week add white lights and a gold star to the Christmas tree.

## Gathering Activity

This gathering activity will develop from today until Epiphany. You might want to encourage the welcoming team to organise this activity for each week.

*You will need: a large box or crate, five jars with lids (IKEA do cheap ones), a big bag of play sand, lots of scrap paper (check your recycling bin), pens.*

Fill small squares of paper with sand and twist into a parcel.

In the vestibule or in a place in the church where people can gather, set up a table with the box, five pasta jars with numbers taped on and some pens.

As worshippers arrive, give them a parcel of sand and invite them to go to a table where each week a question will be placed. They are to pour their sand into the jar to symbolize a sense of community and solidarity with other worshippers. Then on the paper wrapping, write an answer to the question on the table, crumple it up and place it in the jar as well.

Following worship, put the lid on the jar, tape it and put it in the box/crate.

Put a sheet of paper on the table with the heading 'Weighting on Christmas' that says:

Put the sand from your parcel in the jar.

This week's question:

What story or passage in the Bible has most strongly shaped your faith?

After writing your answer on your parcel paper, crumple the paper up and place it in the jar with the sand.

## Call to Worship

From the silence of eternity  
the sound of the Word echoes,  
speaking life into being.

Come let us hear,  
let us rediscover,  
let us re-read our lives  
in the light of the Word's  
goodness and truth,  
and as we do so  
may we worship God.

## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God, present in our sanctuaries today,  
yet not confined by physical structure,  
make your power known in our worship.

As we praise your name,  
may our voices be strengthened and our hearts be lifted.

May we be reminded that we cannot contain  
or define your majesty or limit your power  
to what we know and understand.

Forgive us when we have made you smaller  
to enhance our comfort,  
when we have attempted to hold you back  
because we are not ready.

You crash into our sanctuaries,  
into our worship, into our lives,  
whether we are ready or not.  
You refuse to wait any longer.

May we stand aside,  
or be caught up in your wake  
as you weave your way through the world,  
changing the lives of all your people with the power of love.  
Amen.

## Prayer for Others and Ourselves

God, in this season of Advent we pray for new beginnings:  
new beginnings in our worship;  
new beginnings in our community;  
new beginnings in our daily lives;  
new beginnings birthed out of the love  
you bring to the chaos around us;  
new beginnings for those who suffer;  
new beginnings for those who mourn;  
new beginnings for those who hunger or thirst;  
new beginnings for those who have nowhere to call home;  
new beginnings that begin at home in us as our hearts are  
changed by the power of your love.  
Help us to blow the dust off our faith  
and go and live out the good news that you came to share.  
God of Advent, empower us to live our faith today.  
Amen.

## Prayer of Dedication

God of revelation,  
uncover in us the expectation to serve,  
reveal in us a spirit of compassion,  
let loose in us the desire to give back  
of our time, our treasure, and our talent.

May we work in this Advent season  
looking forward to the rediscovery  
of hope and joy in our time,  
and in our place.  
Amen.

## Reflection

The frost  
rests  
in a pattern of promise  
across the cold night  
as winter haunts us  
and the air cools  
and the words of hope  
lie crisp and cold  
in this solstice season.

And the darkness, too,  
with deliberate rhythm  
slices a sliver of light  
from each end of the day,  
reducing, reducing, reducing,  
in a silent attack  
that shrinks the light.

Yet ever quickening  
under the cold breath of winter  
is the Word,  
first in creation,  
clean and new,  
yet without  
the grandiose schemes of religion  
attached to it.  
Still crisp  
in the thin,  
austere  
light.

But it is weak as yet.  
Its ancient echo  
stirs the prophets once more,  
hoping this time  
we might hear it  
and break the cold  
with its mention.  
Until then,  
we must wait.

Expect the frost to lie longer  
and the day to grow shorter  
but not forever.

Come, Lord Jesus,  
come,  
O Word of Life.

# worship ideas

## Take Home Ideas

Take time to look out a box from the attic or leaf through an old scrap book, autograph book, school annual or photo album. Allow time to rediscover feelings, passions, hopes, dreams and strength of relationships.

Ask an older relative to dig out some of their treasured books, bibles, hymn/songbooks from their youth or childhood. Encourage them to tell you the stories attached to these items and consider including the family in the storytelling time.

Look and see if you can find some of your own special books of faith from your past. Invite a friend to join you and share your stories with them.

Perhaps they may be encouraged to go and search for their own hidden treasures to share part of their faith journey with you. Notice what you learned about yourself and about those with whom you shared stories. In what way did these old texts provoke memories which shaped who they and you are today?

## Sending

May the past  
be the foundation of our faith.

May the present  
be the channel of our faith.

May the future  
be the focus of our faith.

And may we, in journeying together,  
uncover new truths,  
rediscover fresh insights  
and share new visions  
in the story of God's people.

## Praise/Hymns

Before the world began one Word was there	CH4 317
Behold the amazing gift of love	CH4 478
Breathe on me, breath of God	CH4 596 / MP 67
Bring many names	CH4 134
Come, thou long-expected Jesus	CH4 472 / MP 102
Here in this place	CH4 623
Hope is a candle	CH4 284
I will always bless the Lord	CH4 27
Inspired by love and anger (omit v. 6)	CH4 253
Isaiah the prophet has written of old	CH4 241
Lord, teach me all your ways	CH4 21
New every morning	CH4 214 / MP 480
O come, O come, Emmanuel	CH4 273 / MP 493
Sing of the Lord's goodness	CH4 157
Thanks to God whose word was spoken	CH4 605
The candles at Advent	see right and <a href="#">page 106</a>

## The Candles at Advent

*A poem or song for Advent.*

1. The candles at Advent as Christmas draws near;  
their strong and unfaltering flames we hold dear.  
And each has a message God's promise reminds,  
in sending our Saviour, whose life to us binds.
2. The first of the candles brings Hope with its light,  
through times of despair or whatever our plight.  
When reaching to touch its most delicate ray,  
the faithful and trusting through him find the way.  
*Light of darkness, Hope is to come,  
for God will send his Son.  
Hope everlasting when he shall come down,  
the long awaited One.*
3. The Love that this candle tells of shall endure;  
is always forgiving, and caring and sure.  
Our Lord is to come and he comes us to lead:  
to teach us to love in our word and our deed.  
*Light of darkness, Love is to come,  
for God will send his Son.  
Love everlasting when he shall come down,  
the long awaited One.*
4. Now, Peace is the candle, its elusive flame,  
some search for relentlessly; striving in vain.  
In quiet reflection, considering God's grace,  
for those ever thankful shall surely find Peace.  
*Light of darkness, Peace is to come,  
for God will send his Son.  
Peace everlasting when he shall come down,  
the long awaited One.*
5. The light from this candle, emitting great Joy,  
bring thoughts of our Saviour who comes as a boy.  
And let us be joyful, while singing his praise,  
to welcome his coming and follow his way.  
*Light of darkness, Joy is to come,  
for God will send his Son.  
Joy everlasting when he shall come down,  
the long awaited One.*
6. The Christmas Day candle: a symbol of Christ,  
its brilliance shines with a flicker so bright:  
a life of compassion, obedience and love  
and sent by his Father from heaven above.  
*Light of darkness, waiting is done,  
for God has sent his Son.  
Promise fulfilled and all praise be to God  
for now the time has come!*

Words: Cecilia Young  
Music: Peter Johnston (see [page 106](#))



# age group ideas

## gathering



### The Lost Wall

all age **My Story**

age 9-12

*You will need: Duplo, wooden bricks or lots of cardboard boxes to build walls.*

Draw brick shapes on to a large sheet of corrugated card and gather the children around. Ask them to tell stories: just one or two sentences about things that they have lost or have been lost in their families. Write or draw the items on the bricks on the wall.

Use these as ideas as a way to introduce and discuss the story.

## crafts

### Story Wall

age 3-5

*You will need: A4 sugar paper in pale orange or buff colours to look like bricks, lining paper, PVA glue, glue spreaders and crayons.*

Give each child a sheet of paper and ask them to draw something from the story of their lives. For example receiving their first new pair of red wellies, teaching their dog a new trick, a picture of their house, getting biscuits at Grandma's house, or some such. Next, instruct the children to glue their pictures to the lining paper to make a wall of story bricks.

Discuss the pictures with the children and the stories behind them. Talk about today's story and how the builders found an important 'story book' when they were taking down and rebuilding walls. Talk about the ways the stories of the bible are important to Christians and how they help us to live God's way.

### Mini Scrolls

age 6-8

*You will need: thick A4 paper, used tea bags (still damp), felt tip pens, plastic drinking straws and sellotape.*

Give each child a sheet of paper and a tea bag. Instruct them to wipe the tea bag across the paper to make it look old. Once the paper has dried, lay the paper landscape and get the children to draw a picture from their favourite story on one half of the page and from their favourite bible story on the other half of the page. Sellotape a plastic straw to the short edge of the paper and roll it into a scroll at the end of the discussion. Tie the scroll with a piece of wool for added affect.

Have each child show his or her 'scroll' to the other children and describe their pictures and why these are their favourite stories. Talk about what it would feel like to lose their favourite stories and then to find them again. Relate this to today's story.

*You will need: jotters, scissors, sticky back plastic, pictures from magazines, newspapers, printed images of things the children are interested in (either from the web or the children could bring pictures from home if you so choose), scrap paper, felt tip pens and glue sticks.*

Give each child a jotter and instruct them to cover the front, and back if time permits, of the jotter with the images in a collage style. Images could be supplemented with words or pictures drawn onto the scrap paper by the children. Get the children to cover the whole of the front of the jotter, leaving no gaps, with images overlapping. It is best to layout the design beforehand and then glue all the pieces down. The children should work in pairs to cover the images with sticky back plastic, helping each other to smooth the sticky back plastic down so that there are no bubbles. It would be helpful if you could cut the sticky back plastic to size to fit the jotters beforehand.

Discuss with the children the importance of stories and which stories have an influence on the stories of their lives, for example stories they have read, stories from their families, from their community or from the bible. Talk about the excitement of the rediscovery of the scriptures in today's story and how those stories were important for the people.

### Mega Scroll

all age

*You will need: lining paper, used tea bags (still damp) wooden doweling rods cut just slightly longer than the width of the lining paper, marker pens, strong tape and scissors.*

Divide the children into groups of four or five with a variety of ages in each group. Give each group a length of lining paper (about 1 m in length) and a wee pile of damp tea bags. Instruct the children to wipe the tea bags across the lining paper, so that it looks old. While the paper is drying, discuss with the children their favourite stories and books, why they like those stories or books and things they have learned from those stories or books. Talk about the stories of the bible in the same way and then when the paper is dry, instruct the children to write the titles of the stories or books or draw a picture from the stories or books on the scroll. Secure the dowelling rods to the end of the scroll about 5 c.m. from the edge using strong tape.

Talk about the importance of stories and learning things for today from the stories of the past.

# age group ideas

## activities

### Story Retelling

age 3-5

*You will need: a suitable story to read, or a copy of the Retelling for Young People found on [page 10](#).*

In our passage today, the secretary reads aloud from the rediscovered book to the king. Take this opportunity to sit with the children and read a short story. Consider using the children's story in this edition for this week and place it in a book to read from.

### Build It

age 3-5

*You will need: junior tool kit, simple toy building materials.*

Using a junior tool kit, let the kids build a masterpiece of their own creation. Once they are finished, talk about each tool, what it is used for and ask the children to show others how it works.

### Covenant

age 6-12

*You will need: junior tool kit, simple toy building materials.*

Explain to the children what a covenant is and why it is so important (a promise/agreement between two people or groups). Discuss what the children would put in a covenant if they made one at school, your own group and the church. Once a number of points for the covenant have been agreed on, write them down. You can make some parchment from paper and wet tea bags and then write them on it and then make it into a scroll. If the group are doing it together, each member is to put their signature on it. Alternatively, each child could create one of their own.

### Seeking the Hidden Scroll

all age

*You will need: lots of shoe boxes and small coins (1p, 2p and 5p), a simple scroll.*

Beforehand, place lots of coins (1p, 2p and 5p) in the boxes and also a scroll or book in one of the boxes. Build a wall in your meeting space before the children arrive for their lesson. Selecting one box at a time, the children are on a search to find the scroll and all the money. Once they have the money, the money should be sorted and counted. Once all the boxes have been checked, instruct the children to rebuild the wall. If your scroll contains a story, you could read this now.

## games

### Seeking Games

all age

Some traditional seeking games like "Hide 'n' Seek" or "Sardines" could be played this week if you have enough space to allow this.

Alternatively, you could have some activities that require some kind of searching, for instance a Where's Wally book or some examples of Spot the Difference images.

### Creative Building

all age

*You will need: Duplo or Lego.*

Allow the children to use their creativity to build a fantastic building, talking about the building of the Temple related in this week's story.

### Jenga Message

all age

*You will need: a tabletop or giant garden Jenga set (or similar).*

You can often find Jenga sets in charity shops or affordably through online shops. On one of the largest sides of one of the bricks write a message using a marker pen, then set up the set yourself so that you can ensure that this marked piece is placed into the tower with the message side facing down so that the children cannot easily see it.

Let the children play the game in the usual way, but with the extra challenge that they are trying to find the hidden message before the tower collapses.



# discussion starters for teens

## rediscovering lost things

### Preparation

The time today is centred thinking about rediscovering lost things.

In the activity/discussion section is the brief retelling of the author's experience of losing and finding something. It would give a lot more life and reality to the session if you could replace this story with a story from your own life/experience.

For the living it out section, you will need a piece of music to allow the young people to sit and think. The piece suggested is a piano-based classical piece, but feel free to substitute it for any music you prefer which will achieve the same space for the young people. This song can be streamed from the composer's sound cloud page here: <https://soundcloud.com/ludovicoeinaudi/sets/ludovico-einaudi-in-a-time>.

### Opening Activity

#### Rediscovery Quiz

We start by having a fast paced quick quiz. The aim is to see if by answering questions fast we remember things that we had forgotten about growing up and our childhood. Ask the young people to answer the questions as quickly as possible using the first answer which comes into their head.

1. What is your name?
2. Who was your best friend in primary one (first year of school attendance)?
3. What was your favourite toy growing up?
4. What was the first song you remember singing with your friends?
5. What was your favourite colour?
6.  $5 \times 7 = ?$
7. Did you have a teddy bear?
8. What was your favourite book?
9. What was the first concert you went too?
10. What was your favourite car?

At the end of the quiz, invite the young people to think about what they remember and the answers they wrote down. Did they rediscover anything in the process of answering the questions?

### The Word

Read 2 Kings 22:1-10; 23:1-3.

### Activity/Discussion

- Can you sum up the story in one short sentence?
- The King puts the money of the people into building up the temple. As part of the rebuilding process, a lost book of God is found.
- How do you store valuable things in order to find and protect them?



- What was the last thing you lost? How did you feel when you had lost them?
- What is the longest you have lost something and then found it again?

Last night the writer lost a white envelope with some papers in them. He looked around his house and could not find it. He looked in every room he could think of. The writer had a picture in his head of the envelope sitting on the drawers in the hallway and he was so confident the envelope was there. He looked for three hours and still could not find it anywhere, always returning to this set of drawers. It was only later, in a little used room, near the door while taking an "I am sure it will not be here, but I will look anyway" type search, that he found the envelope. As soon as he had the envelope, he did the work and sorted the contents as soon as possible, sending emails and writing documents on the computer using the information he had found.

In the Bible story the response to the rediscovery is very important.

- What is the response in the story? Is this response right given the rediscovery?
- If you were the king what would your response be?
- What would demand such a response from the entire community?

### Living It Out

A lot of the old testament is about wondering, dreaming, longing and preparing for God to come. Today is the beginning of Advent. Advent is the season where Christians prepare for Christmas, the birth of Christ, literally Christ with us. Yet the birth only marks the start. Jesus is not contained as a baby, he grows and works.

Listen to the song and as you listen consider what your response to Jesus is when this question is posed: What do I need to rediscover about God which will help me to respond well?

Play the song "Discover at night" by Ludovic Einaudi from the album *In A Time Lapse*.



# extra resources and activity sheets

# The Candles At Advent

**A D A C#m F#m D E**

1.The cand-les at Ad-vent as Christ-mas draws near; their strong and un-fal-ter-ing flames we hold dear. And

**A C#m F#m D A E7 A**

5 each has a mes-sage God's pro-mise re-minds, in send - ing our Sav - iour, whose life to us binds. 2.The

**A D A C#m F#m D E**

9 first - of the cand - les brings Hope with its light, through times of des-pair or what - ev - er our plight. When

**A C#m F#m D A E7 A A D**

13 reach-ing to touch its most del-i-cate ray, the faith-ful and trust-ing through him find the way. Light of dark-ness,

**E A A F#m Esus E A D E A**

18 Hope is to come, for God will send his Son. Hope ev-er - last-ing when he shall come down, the

**F#m D E Asus A Asus A**

23 long a - wait - ed One.

Words: Cecilia Young  
 Music: Peter Johnston

1. The candles at Advent as Christmas draws near;  
their strong and unfaltering flames we hold dear.  
And each has a message God's promise reminds,  
in sending our Saviour, whose life to us binds.
  
2. The first of the candles brings Hope with its light,  
through times of despair or whatever our plight.  
When reaching to touch its most delicate ray,  
the faithful and trusting through him find the way.  
*Light of darkness, Hope is to come,  
for God will send his Son.  
Hope everlasting when he shall come down,  
the long awaited One.*
  
3. The Love that this candle tells of shall endure;  
is always forgiving, and caring and sure.  
Our Lord is to come and he comes us to lead:  
to teach us to love in our word and our deed.  
*Light of darkness, Love is to come,  
for God will send his Son.  
Love everlasting when he shall come down,  
the long awaited One.*
  
4. Now, Peace is the candle, its elusive flame,  
some search for relentlessly; striving in vain.  
In quiet reflection, considering God's grace,  
for those ever thankful shall surely find Peace.  
*Light of darkness, Peace is to come,  
for God will send his Son.  
Peace everlasting when he shall come down,  
the long awaited One.*
  
5. The light from this candle, emitting great Joy,  
bring thoughts of our Saviour who comes as a boy.  
And let us be joyful, while singing his praise,  
to welcome his coming and follow his way.  
*Light of darkness, Joy is to come,  
for God will send his Son.  
Joy everlasting when he shall come down,  
the long awaited One.*
  
6. The Christmas Day candle: a symbol of Christ,  
its brilliance shines with a flicker so bright:  
a life of compassion, obedience and love  
and sent by his Father from heaven above.  
*Light of darkness, waiting is done,  
for God has sent his Son.  
Promise fulfilled and all praise be to God  
for now the time has come!*



**Who do you  
say I am?**



**Who do you  
say I am?**



**Who do you  
say I am?**



**Who do you  
say I am?**

Sampler

# sampler

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