



Advent 2015

# engage**together**



A Resource for assisting those with responsibility for facilitating multi-age engagement throughout Advent, based on the Revised Common Lectionary

Welcome to the special **Advent Edition** of **Engage Together!**

In addition to the usual Early Word resources, you will also find suggestions for multi-age household or small group activities (that can also be adapted for the worship context). For those interested in further Advent resources, including daily devotional readings and prayers, these can be found at [CTM Seasonal Resources](#) from November 9 onwards.

This Advent Edition of **Engage Together** includes...

**Early Word outlines** from Margaret Griffiths and Linley Liersch that can be used, adapted or serve as a launching pad for other ideas plus additional links compiled by Chris Barnett

**Multi-Age activities** provided by Cath James and Beth Barnett for use by households, small groups and congregations

Recognising the uniqueness of each individual congregation or faith community, these resources may or may not be helpful for your specific context. Be that as it may, any feedback to [chris.barnett@ctm.uca.edu.au](mailto:chris.barnett@ctm.uca.edu.au) would be greatly appreciated as it will assist in the preparation of future Early Word resources.

Yours Faithfully,

Chris Barnett

(Children & Families, Uniting Church Synod of Victoria & Tasmania)

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UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA



SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



## November 29, 2015

Bible: This reading is part of apocalyptic sayings found in the gospel of Mark. Jesus is talking with the disciples about the end of the age. He is explaining that there will be signs and disasters, heralding a world facing collapse. However, the Advent message is of hope. Hope because God will be with us. Today is the first Sunday of Advent. If you have an Advent wreath a family may be involved in lighting the first candle.

1. Have the letters 'H O P E' printed on individual large pieces of card or paper. Give them out to four children and ask them to hold them up. Let them work out which letter comes first and the word the letters make. I wonder what Jesus was saying about hope? Explain that Jesus was telling his disciples that even though there would be a lot of trouble at the end of time, we don't need to be worried because we know that God will be with us.

Sometimes at Christmas we think about Jesus as Immanuel – which means “God with us”. Advent is a time of waiting and getting ready. Waiting and getting ready for the birth of Jesus, Immanuel, “God with us”. As they wait for the special day, some people get ready by using an Advent calendar; opening a new pocket daily until Christmas day. We are waiting for the special day. *(Give the children and adults a yellow paper cut out candle with the word “hope” written on it).* Here is a paper candle for you to keep near your bed or put in a special place to remind you that God gives us hope. We wait for Christmas, looking forward to especially celebrating “God with us”.

2. Have two baskets or boxes labelled 1 - HOPES and 2 - FEARS. Show them to the children and adults. I wonder what our hopes might be this Advent season? Let's take a few minutes to think and talk together about our hopes. I wonder if they may be something like being in the school concert or the church pageant? Discuss some relevant hopes the children in your particular church might have. (You may be given hopes for particular toys for Christmas!) Now what about our fears? I wonder what we are a bit worried about. *(Either give out slips of paper for people and children to write their hopes and fears on, or pretend to put them in the boxes/baskets.)* Let us put our hopes in the 'hope box' and fears in the 'fear box'. Then we will pray to God asking that God will help us overcome our fears and bring about our hopes.

### Reading

Luke 21: 25-36

Trust in God

### Song Suggestions

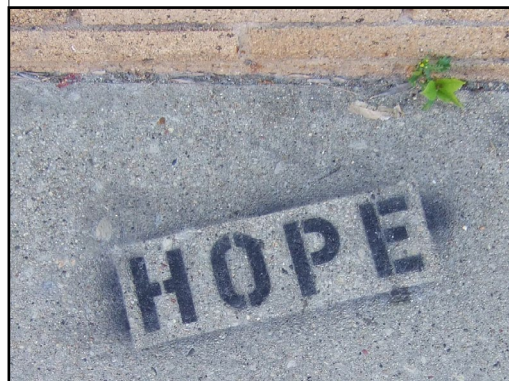
The Lord's Prayer (Welcoming Voices)

Seek ye first the kingdom of God  
(Together in Song)

Romans 8:38 Absolutely nothing can separate us from God's love (Four plus Three)

### [Singing the lectionary](http://lectionarysong.blogspot.com.au/2012/11/songs-hymns-and-music-for-advent-1c.html)

<http://lectionarysong.blogspot.com.au/2012/11/songs-hymns-and-music-for-advent-1c.html>



### Links

#### [Worshiping with children](http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com.au/2015/07/year-c-first-sunday-of-advent-november.html)

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com.au/2015/07/year-c-first-sunday-of-advent-november.html>

#### [Mustard Seeds](http://seedstuff.blogspot.com.au/2012_11_01_archive.html)

[http://seedstuff.blogspot.com.au/2012\\_11\\_01\\_archive.html](http://seedstuff.blogspot.com.au/2012_11_01_archive.html)

#### [Sermons4Kids](http://www.sermons4kids.com/waiting_and_watching.htm)

[http://www.sermons4kids.com/waiting\\_and\\_watching.htm](http://www.sermons4kids.com/waiting_and_watching.htm)

Image: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/abbot45/577826572/> - Creative Commons





3. Today, as we prepare for the coming birth of Jesus, we hear in our Bible reading some of the signs for the coming of the kingdom of God (eg. strange things happening to the sun, the moon and the stars, seas roaring and tides raging). Today, as we prepare for the coming birth of Jesus, we see many signs in the community around us that Christmas is on the way.

***What signs of Christmas coming do we see around us:***

*at home?*

*down the street?*

*in the church?*

Ask some adults to explain what they know about the liturgical symbols in the worship centre to the children / other adults / visitors.

Eg. *Purple* is the seasonal colour that represents preparation for the coming baby who is the King of Peace. (*Lent, for which the seasonal colour is blue, is also a time of preparation for the coming of the King. Some congregations may use Royal Blue in Advent to contrast with Lent*). *Where do we see the colour purple around the church? (eg .banners & falls, bookmarks in the bible; etc)*

Eg. An *Advent Wreath* is used to count down until Christmas. An Advent Wreath is often created with a ring of four purple candles representing Hope, Peace, Love and Joy (though sometimes the fourth candle, for Joy, may be pink). On Christmas Eve the central Christ candle is lit in celebration of the birth of the new King who brings God's light to the world.

Eg. *Stained glass windows*. If you have any nativity stained glass windows, stop and work out who the characters are in the story? What are they doing?





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## December 6, 2015

Bible: Luke gives us a picture of where John, the son of Zechariah, fits into the political and priestly frame. The word of God came to John when he was in the wilderness. John moved around the Jordan preaching and baptizing. This was fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah and Luke repeats the words of the prophet.

1. Our reading today from Luke is all about an unusual man called John. He was dressed differently to other people and he had lived in the bush. But God had called him to come and tell people about God's love and living God's way. John baptized many people, but there were some people who didn't want to hear or be baptized. They thought they were ok as they were. I wonder if we can tell other people about God's love?

Let us all stand in a line up this aisle and we will invite some of the adults to join us. We will pass a message on from person to person and see if the message reaches the end. correctly. Do this a few times with different phrases, using 'God loves you and wants you to tell others about God's love' as the final phrase.

2. John the Baptist was telling people to be sorry for the things they had done wrong and to prepare for the coming of Jesus. Many people start preparing for Jesus' birth at Christmas by thinking of gifts. I wonder what sort of gifts you are thinking about GIVING this Christmas? Who here makes Christmas gifts to give to others? Sometimes they take a while to make and you have to start preparing them early.

I know of a girl, about 6, who made an unusual gift for her grandma at Christmas. She wrote out a list of some things she could do for her grandma and asked her grandma to choose three things from the list. Some of the things on the list were: painting her fingernails, massaging her shoulders, giving a foot bath, making milkshakes. All of these ideas the little girl had been busy preparing. She had been practicing. We don't always have to spend money to give gifts; sometimes the nicest gifts are the ones we make ourselves.

3. Last week we looked around the church for the signs of Christmas. This week I want you to tell me *'what you do to get ready for Christmas... at church... at home... at school... in the community?'*

We need to remember that in this time of Advent we are getting ready for the coming of Jesus, as a baby and as an adult. John the Baptist (who was Jesus' cousin) went out into the wilderness to hear God's voice and understand God's message. John also called people to get ready, to prepare the way for the adult Jesus who is the Lord. We know that Advent is a time for getting ready to celebrate Jesus' birth. However, we are also getting ready to remember Jesus' whole life – baby, child, teenager and adult – as Lord of all.

### Reading

Luke 3: 1-6

Prepare the way

### Song Suggestions

Before, before (Click)

[Prepare the Way](#) (Darrell Evans)

[Singing the lectionary](#)

<http://lectionarysong.blogspot.com.au/2012/11/songs-hymns-music-for-advent-2c-9.html>



### Links

[Worshipping with children](#)

<http://worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.com.au/2015/07/year-c-second-sunday-of-advent-december.html>

[Mustard Seeds](#)

<http://seedstuff.blogspot.com.au/2012/12/advent-2-c-december-9-gods-messengers.html>

[Sermons4Kids](#)

[http://www.sermons4kids.com/fanfare\\_for\\_a\\_king.htm](http://www.sermons4kids.com/fanfare_for_a_king.htm)

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## December 13, 2015

Bible: Many people came to John the Baptist to be baptized. However, John stated that the rite of baptism was of no value unless there was an inner change of heart. The people asked 'what then should we do?'. They were told to do their work honestly, and if they had an abundance of clothing or food to share it with those who had none. The people wondered if John was the Messiah, but he said there was One coming who was mightier and would baptize people with the Holy Spirit.

1. This passage in Luke's gospel is in direct contrast with the messages children hear in the media. Giving to others does not feature often.

Here is an old story I read about four rivers. They had met and were discussing where they would go when God called them to start their work. The River Thames spoke first. She was going to England where she would be the most famous river in the world. The River Hudson was next. He was going to America and would be known as the wealthiest river in the world. The River Ganges was going to India where he would be known as the world's most sacred river. The River Nile said she was going to Africa where she would flow over the hot desert and give water to many people.

I wonder which river was a giving river? The Thames wanted to be famous, the Hudson wanted to be wealthy, the Ganges wanted to be sacred, but the Nile wanted to give people water in a dry land.

2. Sometimes it is difficult to share our things. Jesus said if we have two coats then we should give away one to someone who hasn't any coats. (Beforehand organize a member of the congregation to join the children to answer questions. Brief them regarding the answers). Questions could be as follows or make them relevant to your church.

If you had 50,000 dollars given to you, would you give some away? ***I would!***

If you had 3 nice cars would you give one away to someone who badly needed a car? ***Of course!***

If you had so much food that it wouldn't fit in the fridge, would you give some away to a hungry person? ***Naturally!***

If you only had two nice shirts (dresses) would you give one away to someone who hadn't any nice clothes? ***No! If I only had two I would need them both.***

Think together about when it might be easy and when it might be hard to give things to others?

### Reading

Luke 3: 7-18

Facing Challenges

### Song Suggestions

Action Man (Find Out)

Let Justice Roll (Welcoming Voices)

When I needed a neighbour, were you there (Together in Song)

[Singing the lectionary](#)

<http://lectionarysong.blogspot.com.au/2012/11/songs-hymns-music-for-advent-3c-16.html>



### Links

[Worshiping with children](#)

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com.au/2015/07/year-c-third-sunday-of-advent-december.html>

[Mustard Seeds](#)

<http://seedstuff.blogspot.com.au/2012/12/advent-3-c-december-16-sharing.html>

[Sermons4Kids](#)

[http://www.sermons4kids.com/spirit\\_of\\_christmas.htm](http://www.sermons4kids.com/spirit_of_christmas.htm)

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3. Around Christmas we have a lot to celebrate. Ask “*What are you celebrating at the moment?*” Answers might include finishing school or work, school or university results, Christmas parties, family arriving or trips to see family, giving and getting gifts.

When the people came to John the Baptist they asked him what they could do to show they wanted to follow God. John the Baptist told them to help the poor; not take advantage of others, to lead right lives.

***In the middle of our celebrations what do we do to help those less fortunate than ourselves? What family traditions do we have that help others?*** (eg. Christmas Bowl, local Carols by Candlelight raise money for ..., Kmart giving tree for Uniting Care, singing carols at nursing homes, send sponsor child a gift; some may not receive gifts this year because they would rather the money goes to a good cause).







## December 20, 2015

Bible: The words in verse 37 of the first chapter of Luke are key words: 'For nothing will be impossible with God'. The angel said this when he told Mary of Jesus' birth. Mary would have been encouraged to speak with her relative Elizabeth who was also pregnant. Mary's hymn 'the Magnificat' combines prophecy from the Old Testament with the new hope for the world in the coming of Jesus.

1. I wonder if you like happy surprises. Can you think of something that happened to you that was a real surprise and it was great?. (**Relate a story about yourself that was a happy surprise or relate the following story**). I know of a lady who had a happy surprise. It was her birthday and her sister had said that because it was a special birthday she would like to take her out for afternoon tea. The lady and her sister arrived at the afternoon tea place and sitting around were a lot of the ladies' friends and relatives. She was so surprised! Everyone had kept the secret very well.

As you all know, Mary was the mother of Jesus. She had a big surprise when the angel Gabriel visited her and told her she was going to have a baby. As well her relative Elizabeth was having a baby. That was another big surprise. God sometimes gives us big surprises!

2. When we light the pink candle (or the 4<sup>th</sup> candle) we think of Mary. I wonder if you knew that Mary, Jesus' mother was not very old, probably younger than 20? God didn't choose someone with great experience of having children to be Jesus' mother. She was just an ordinary person. This reminds us that at any age, young or old, we can honour God and serve others. Have printed on card or a long piece of paper words like 'WE ARE LOVED BY GOD' and ask the children to display it to the whole congregation. Mary knew that she was having a special baby, and this is the baby's birth we think about in a few day's time on Christmas day!
3. Invite people to share about a special family visit they have recently made or one they are about to make this Christmas. **What was this catch up like? (eg. lots of greetings, hugging, smiles, talking and catching up). Was there some surprising news shared? Were photos taken?**

In the Bible reading today Mary (a young woman) is catching up with her cousin Elizabeth (an older woman). Both have heard amazing news from God and experienced the love of God in their lives. Both are now pregnant for the first time, they have a lot to share. Even the baby John the Baptist jumps in Elizabeth's womb. **Why was the baby so happy?** Both the baby and Elizabeth are glad that Mary has come and they recognise Mary's baby as Lord.

### Reading

Luke 1: 39-45 (46-55)

A happy surprise

### Song Suggestions

God in a Bod (Welcome Mat)

The Virgin Mary had a baby boy  
(Together in Song)

[Singing the lectionary](#)

<http://lectionarysong.blogspot.com.au/2012/12/songs-hymns-music-for-advent-4c-23.html>



### Links

[Worshiping with children](#)

<http://worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com.au/2015/07/year-c-fourth-sunday-of-advent-december.html>

[Mustard Seeds](#)

<http://seedstuff.blogspot.com.au/2012/12/advent-4-c-december-23-expect-unexpected.html>

[Sermons4Kids](#)

[http://www.sermons4kids.com/marys\\_song.htm?Luke+1:46-49](http://www.sermons4kids.com/marys_song.htm?Luke+1:46-49)

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### **Additional Song Suggestion Information**

[Action Man](#)

<http://www.suvic.org.au/shop/find-out-cd/>

[Before, before](#)

<http://www.suvic.org.au/shop/welcome-mat-the-click-cd/>

[God in a Bod \(Welcome Mat\)](#)

<http://www.suvic.org.au/shop/welcome-mat-the-cd/>

[Let Justice Roll](#)

<http://www.suvic.org.au/shop/welcoming-voices-songs-of-love-and-justice-cd/>

[Prepare the way](#)

<http://www.onlinesheetmusic.com/eric-nuzum-a59228.aspx>

[Romans 8:38 Absolutely nothing can separate us from God's love](#)

<https://www.snackmusic.com.au/products/four-plus-three/>

[Seek ye first the kingdom of God](#)

<http://www.hymnary.org/hymn/AHBII/745>

[The Lord's Prayer \(Welcoming Voices\)](#)

<http://www.suvic.org.au/shop/welcoming-voices-songs-of-love-and-justice-cd/>

[The Virgin Mary had a baby boy](#)

<http://www.hymnary.org/hymn/AHBII/307>

[When I needed a neighbour were you there](#)

<http://www.hymnary.org/hymn/AHBII/629>







## Multi-Age Activities for Households, Small Groups and Larger Gatherings

### Week 1 (beginning Sunday, 29 November)

#### 1.1 Justice Edge (Jeremiah 33:10-16)

##### For discussion

How many things can you fit in your address? For example you probably live at a number, in a street, in a town, in a state, in a country. What about continents, galaxy, planet? What other things can you think of?

While most of us have a place we call home, we also share our common home with people, animals and other living things. We are all part of God's world. What parts of your address do you share and with whom?

##### Gratitude prayer

Share sounds of 'joy and gladness' regarding something you are grateful for in your home or where you live.

##### Faith in the world

This weekend will see people all around the world out on the streets as part of the People's Climate March. The Uniting Church is a partner organisation of the march and is encouraging families to join with a march in their area to express our care for God's world.

See: <http://www.peoplesclimate.org.au>

#### 1.2 Destruction and Restoration

##### (Jeremiah 33:10-16)

You will need:

- Blocks, small leafy cuttings, small rocks, farm animals
- Large piece of sturdy cardboard.
- Ahead of time draw a network of streets and roads in black marker on the cardboard. Along the roads, write the following verses:

11 "there shall once more be heard the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voices of those who sing, as they bring thank offerings to the house of the LORD"

12 "in all its towns there shall again be pasture for shepherds resting their flocks"

13 "flocks shall again pass under the hands of the one who counts them"

14 "when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah."

15 "he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land."

16a "Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety"

16b "The LORD is our righteousness."

Use the a large piece of sturdy cardboard as the base for this activity. Make streets and houses from blocks. Add farm animals and trees, some small plants as gardens, a few small rocks and fences.

If you have time, provide these resources and invite participants to help build the city as you begin the intro. If your time is limited, set up the city yourself ahead of time.

*Intro: 'Today we are reading from the book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah is a prophet – he speaks about what is going on in the world for people and for God. At the time that he speaks, things are going badly...for people and for God. The people don't love God, they have lived heartlessly and they have "wheeled and dealt" themselves into trouble with*





*the countries and kings around them. Now their country has been overrun by soldiers and beaten up in a war. Everything is looking hopeless and Jeremiah describes a picture of the deserted city in ruins. Everything broken."*

As your group is gathered around the city, invite participants from each side of the cardboard to destroy a bit of the city as you say:

*"Countries from the north had invaded, countries from the south had attacked, countries from the west had threatened and countries from the east had conquered. The city was in ruins."*

Reflect for a few moments on the destruction of the city. If it's appropriate to your gathering, remind one another of places in the world today where cities and villages are in ruins from violence.

Explain that the passage doesn't leave the city destroyed without hope.

Invite participants to begin reconstructing and restoring the city, so it's a healthy and fair place to live, as you read the whole passage. Point out that as the rubble is cleared and the streets and roads become visible again, some of the words of hope from the passage can be read along the roads.

Ask for volunteers who are willing to read the verses on the roads as you come to these points in the passage.

### Extensions

*Reflect on the creative work of rebuilding, set to the sound track of God's prophetic voice. Make this a prayer for your community/household.*

*'Loving God, Thank you for your words to us in times of trouble, for hope and second chances. Give us courage and strength for rebuilding where injustice and violence have broken communities in all places in the world. Help us to hear your voice as we work for justice and peace. Amen.'*

### 1.3 Activity: Righteous Branch (Jeremiah 33:10-16)

You will need:

- Large tree stump or log that has been cut so the rings of the tree are exposed
- Off-cuts/shoots with leaves approximately 30 cm long
- Small slips of paper and pens (optional)

Invite participants to gather around the large stump or log.

*Intro: "Here I have a tree. What has happened to my tree? (take answers, affirming all responses with 'that could be what happened...')*

*It has been cut down. Is it going to grow anymore? (take answers, affirming all responses)*

*We're not sure exactly how or when this tree came to be cut down, but we can tell a few things about the tree from looking at it carefully. What else can we tell about this tree? (take responses)*

*One thing we can see is how many rings there are in the tree stump – and this tells how many years the tree survived.*

*Today we are reading from the book of Jeremiah in the bible. Jeremiah speaks God's words to God's people. And they are like this tree. They have been cut down. Their cities and villages are being attacked by other stronger countries and destroyed.*

*But Jeremiah assures us that it's not all over for God's people. He gives us a picture of something new sprouting up out of the old cut down tree trunk.*

*The rings in the old stump remind us of the past generations of God's faithfulness, and the new sprout invites us to pray for God's new ways in the future."*

Invite participants to take a leafy shoot and place it into one of the cracks in the stump as you offer prayers as a community.





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This can happen several ways:

- People may volunteer to pray a brief prayer as they place their shoot in the stump
- Some may wish to offer silent prayers as they place their shoot in the stump
- If you are in a more structured context, some prepared prayers may be read as participants signify their 'Amen' to the prayers by adding a shoot to the stump

\*Some theological traditions make a direct correlation between the 'sprout' (here in Jeremiah and also in Isaiah) and the life of Christ as an individual. In this activity, with multiple spouts, we witness, not to multiple 'Christs', but to the life of Christ shared and expressed in all of us.

## Week 2 (Beginning Sunday, 6 December)

### 2.1 Justice Edge (Luke 3:1-6)

#### For discussion

Have you ever had an experience where it felt like you were alone in what you thought and yet you felt it was still right? What did you do? Were you afraid to speak up? If you did, what happened? Share your experiences.

Watch 'The Lone Nut' - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fW8amMCVAJQ>

Discuss together what you see in this clip. Who do you think you usually are? Who would you like to be? In what ways are you a leader?

#### Faith in the world

Have a look at the JustAct website: <http://www.justact.org.au/>

Choose an issue that you care about and would like to see change.

Send a Christmas card to your local member of Parliament wishing them a Happy Christmas and thanking them for being your representative in Parliament. Ask them to take action for the issue you have chosen.

If you don't know who your local Federal MP is you can find out at: <http://apps.aec.gov.au/eseach/>

### 2.2 Guess Who? (Luke 3:1-6)

You will need

- Print out of card template (x2)
- scissors
- markers
- paper clips
- cardboard box

Play a game of **Guess Who?** using the characters from the reading and members of your own household and neighbourhood.





Make up two sets of cards from the template, cutting out the cards, adding some colour, and adding some features (hair colour, length, glasses, hats, earrings, facial hair etc.) to the blank heads to identify them as people in your household or neighbourhood.

Play with two players\*

Each player places their set of cards in front of them on a table. Place a cardboard box between the players so that the opponents can't see each other's cards. Each player chooses one character, and marks this card with a paperclip.

Players take turns asking questions to 'eliminate' possible characters, until they guess their opponent's marked card. Ask questions like 'does your character have a hat?' – depending on the answer the asker turns face down all the cards bearing the relevant characteristics. First person to guess their opponent's character wins.

If playing with a more biblically and historically literate group you might use questions like 'Is the character a person of authority?' or 'Is the character related to any of the other characters?'

\*It is also possible to play in teams, taking it in turn to guess.

\*It is also possible to play in a large group with images on a screen. As a group, try to work out the identity of just one mystery person. If the process goes quickly the group can play a few rounds. If you are using this idea as an Early Word or intergenerational experience, choose 'John' as the last round:

- Emperor Tiberius
- Pontius Pilate
- Herod King of Galilee
- Philip (King of Iturea & Trachonitis)
- Lysanias, King of Abilene
- Priest Annas
- Priest Caiaphas
- John

### Extensions

- Google each of the characters and see what you can find out about them together
- Talk about the dramatic antithesis between the elite power, privilege, titles and affluence of Tiberius, Pilate, Herod, Philip and Lysanias and the 'raw' simplicity of John's power
- Consider how Luke contrasts the political context with the prophetic voice of John

### 2.3 Timeline (Luke 3:1-6)

You will need:

- 1m length of thick wool or rope
- cardboard cutout arrows from template
- cardboard cloud from template

This passage locates the coming of Jesus in historical time by reference to the contemporary rulers, as well as in relation to God's purposes and plans by reference to the prophetic words of Isaiah.

Invite volunteers to:

- Place a piece of string on the floor/table as a timeline
- Read out each verse on an arrow and place it on the floor/table pointing to a single point (team up strong readers and agile bodies to work in pairs on this)
- Place the cloud in the middle
- Add verse from Isaiah, pointing from behind towards cloud

Talk about:

- The importance of this point in time
- Why did Luke want us to remember it?
- What was the message?
- What was about to happen?

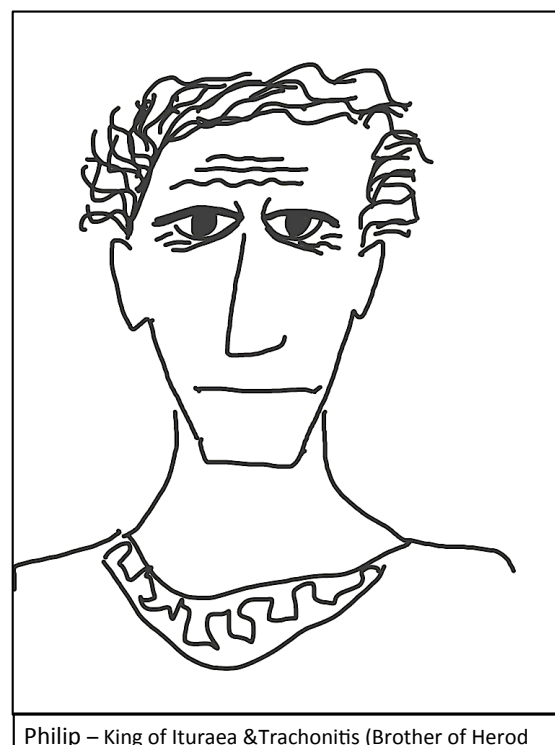
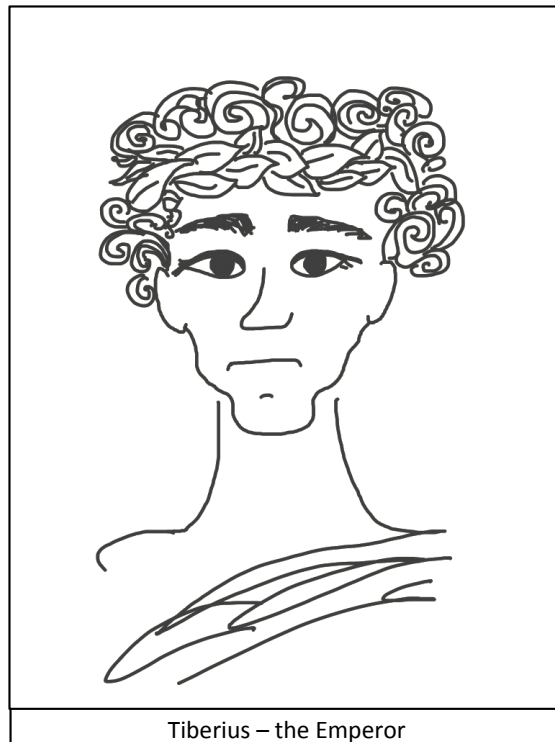


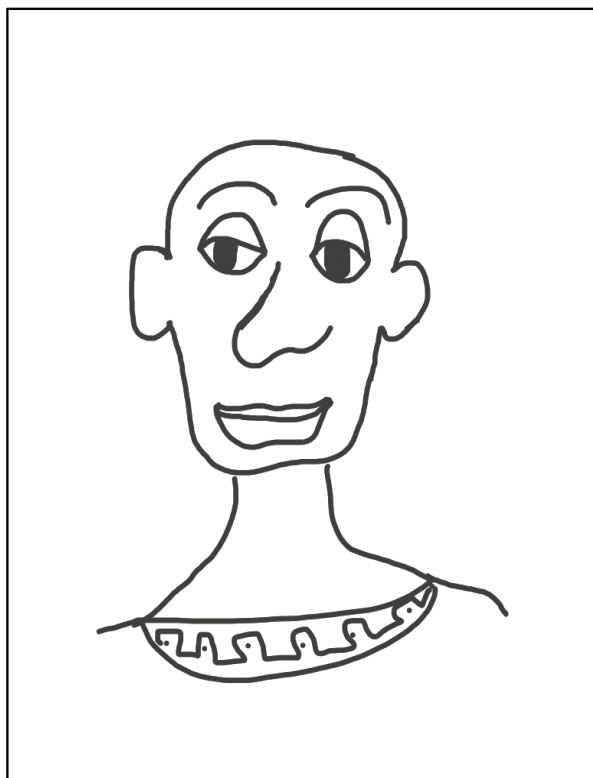


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Advent 2015

Templates for 2.2 Guess Who (Luke 3:1-6)

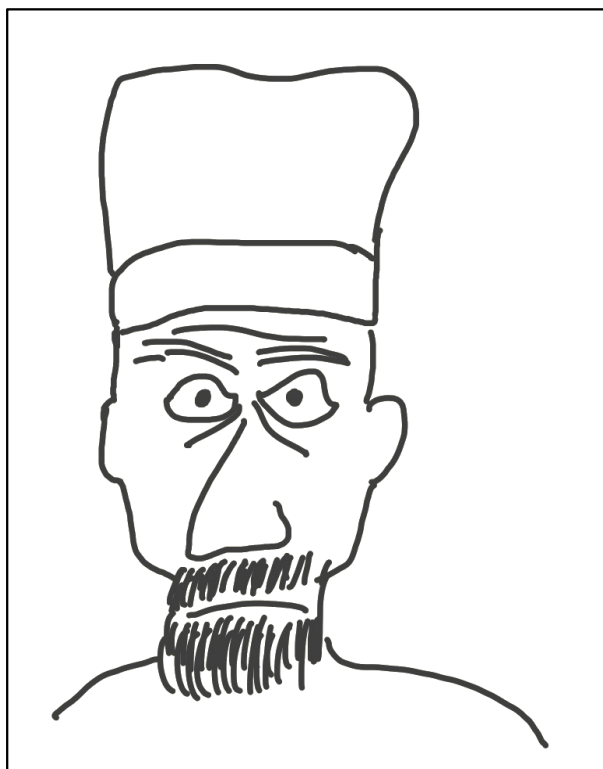




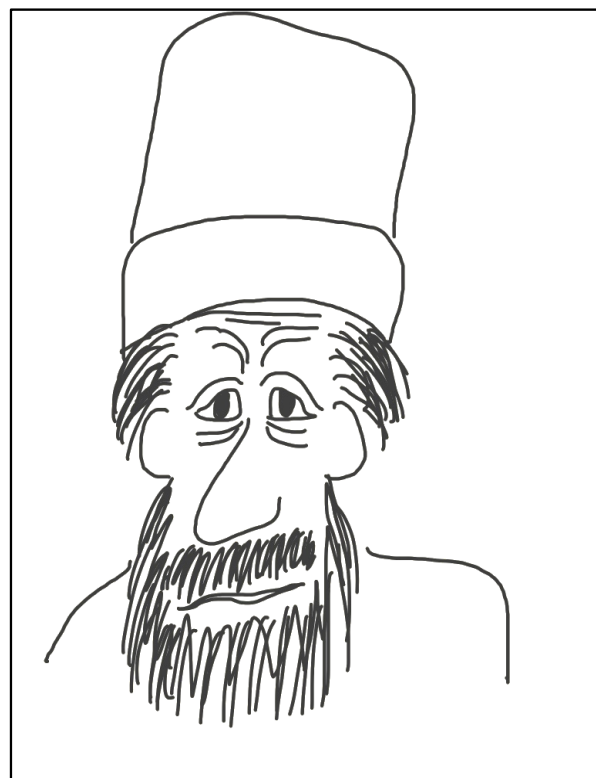
Herod – King of Galilee



Pontius Pilate – Governor of Judea



Caiaphas – the priest



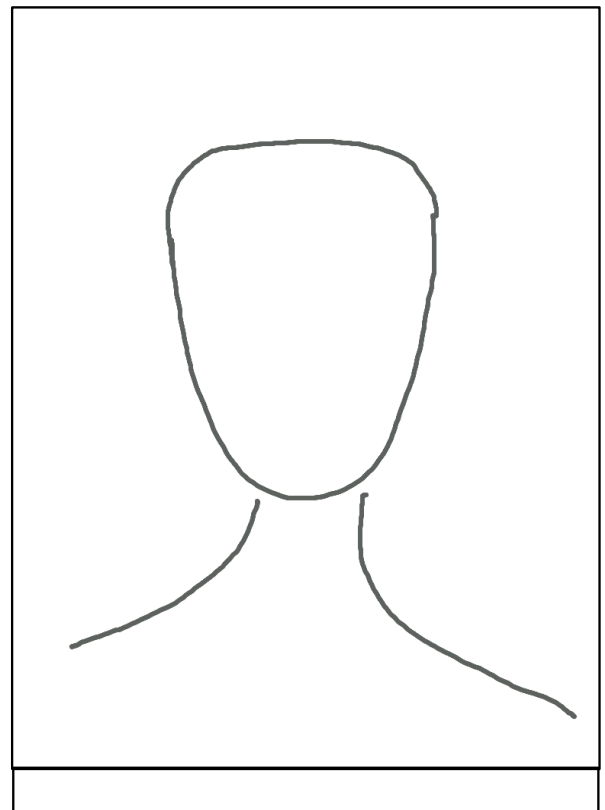
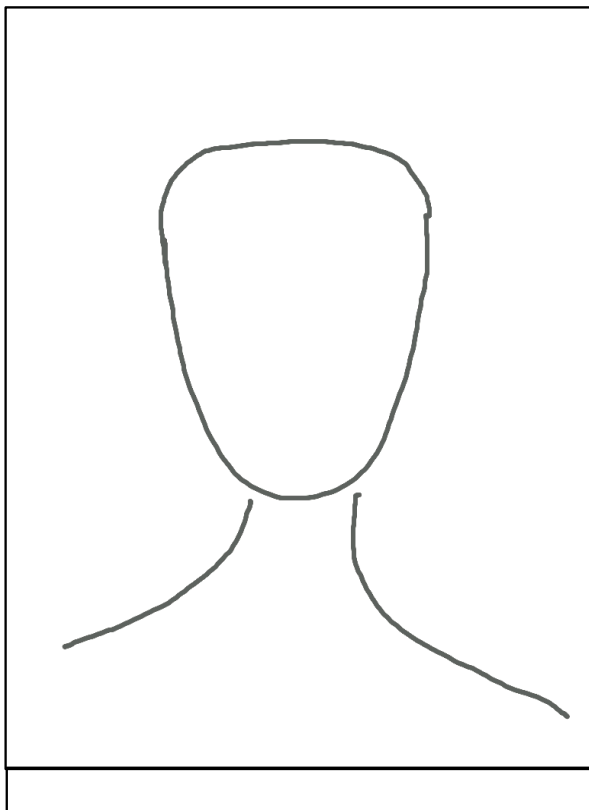
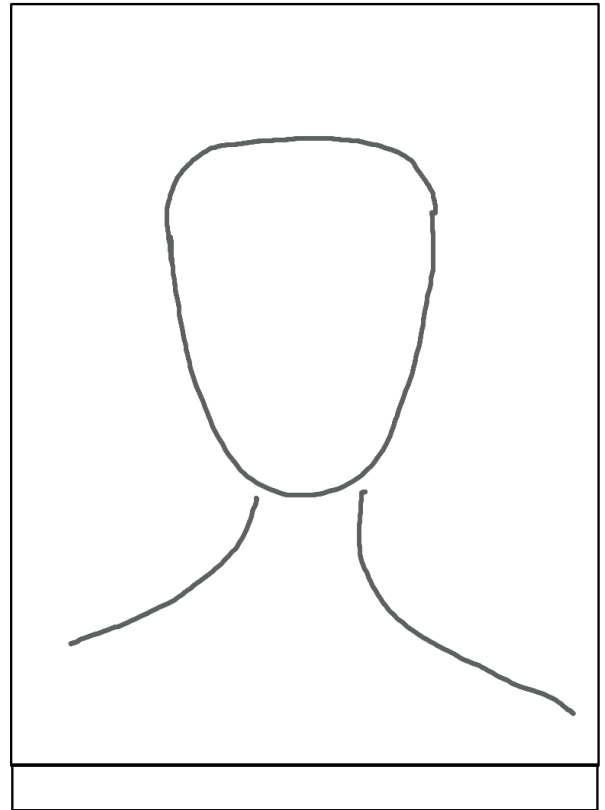
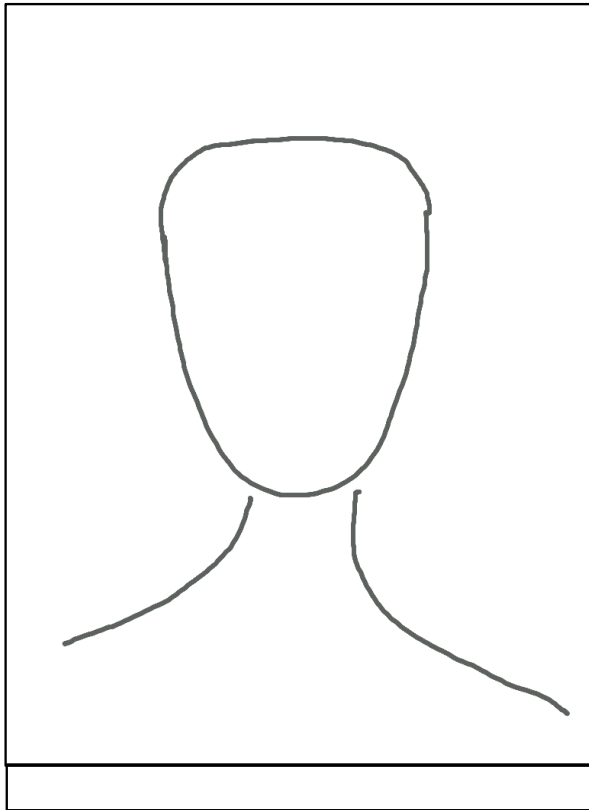
Annas the Priest





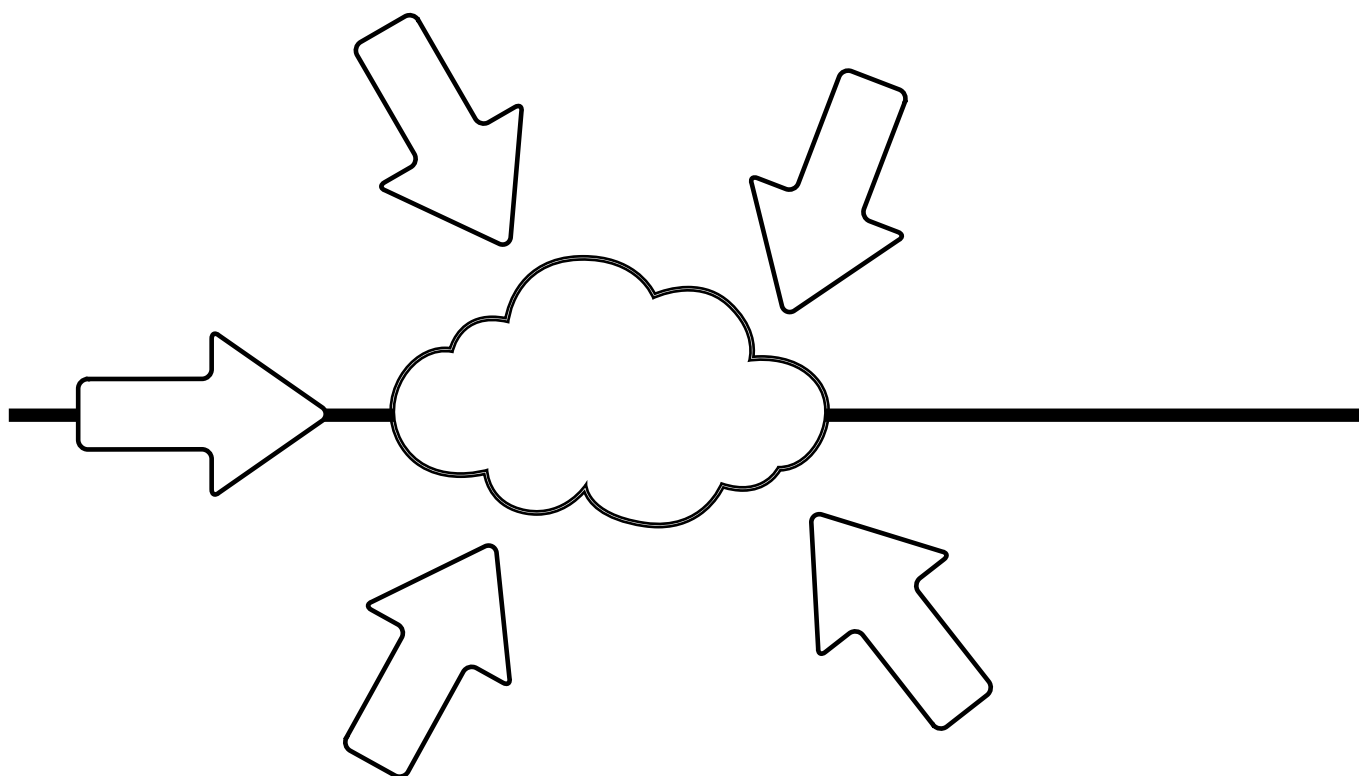
engagetogether

Advent 2015





Templates for 2.3 Timeline (Luke 3:1-6)



*the word of God came to John son of  
Zechariah in the wilderness.  
He went into all the region around  
the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of  
repentance for the forgiveness of sins,*





*In the  
fifteenth  
year  
of the  
reign of  
Emperor*

*Annas  
and  
Caiaphas  
were the  
Jewish  
high  
priests*

*When  
Pontius  
Pilate  
was  
governor  
of Judea*

*Herod  
was the ruler  
of Galilee. Herod's  
brother, Philip, was  
the ruler  
in Iturea  
and  
Trachonitis,  
and  
Lysanias  
was the ruler  
of Abilene.*

*"In the desert someone is shouting, 'Get the road  
ready for the Lord! Make a straight path for him. Fill up  
every valley and level every mountain and hill. Straighten  
the crooked paths and smooth out the rough roads.  
Then everyone will see the saving power of God.'"*





## 2.4 Sand play (Luke 3:1-6)

- Use a large tray of sand with sand that is damp enough to build sand castles
- Explain that in today's reading there are mountains and valleys and roads and rugged bushland
- Invite the group to sculpt the sand into those features, as you read the text, and remind them of: "Every Valley... Every mountain and hill... crooked roads... rough country..."
- When this is complete read the entire passage again
- Invite imagining travelling along these windy crooked roads and climbing these steep slopes
- Ask what happens to the mountains and valleys and roads in the reading (they change, they are evened out, the land is made flat)
- Highlight that the reading is talking about everything that could get in the way between us and God. John yells out, reminding people of the ancient words from the prophet Isaiah that promise that anything that could get in the way between us and God is about to be made smooth and straight and even
- Invite participants to level the mountains and make the ground smooth and even

### **Extension**

- Prompt prayers for places where things aren't smooth, and where the way things are get in the way of people knowing God's love and justice
- Decide together on some prayer words to write in the sand

## **Week 3 (beginning Sunday, 13 December)**

### **3.1 Justice edge (Zephaniah 3:14-20)**

#### **For discussion**

In sharing a household, often we have to wait. We wait for the bathroom, for people to finish with the sauce over dinner; we wait for people to get ready to go somewhere.

Some people, who have to leave their home because they are afraid of being there, have to wait a long time before they can settle somewhere else.

Waiting can be irritating or it can be a way of living with hope.

In Advent we wait for the birth of Jesus and all the promise and hope that comes with his arrival. We have hope that things will be put right.

#### **Faith in the world**

The President of the Uniting Church Assembly has established an appeal for people who have had to leave Syria because of the conflict and who are resettling here as refugees. SHARE is collecting donations for Uniting Church agencies working with the Syrian refugees in local communities. More information is at: <http://www.bit.ly/syrianappeal>

As a household, you may like to choose to go without something this week and donate the money instead. Or you may like to institute a 'waiting' cup where you donate money every time you have to wait for someone. Alternatively you can raise the money another way. Choose how you will organise this as a household.





### 3.2 Cheering Reading (Zephaniah 3:14-20)

Sometimes the presence of God invokes awe and silence. Sometimes tears. But this passage calls on the people of God to shout and cheer because of God's presence with them.

Invite your gathering to participate heartily in a responsive reading of this passage, cheering and shouting in response to each phrase.

Read the passage a phrase at a time, pausing at the marked places for cheering. If you are doing this in your worship gathering, an enthusiastic and prepared leader for the cheering will help keep the flow strong between the reading and the response.

- You might need to support this with some practice before you start. A Mexican wave or two drawing on cricket or concert culture can help warm up a more reserved group
- For some enhanced cheering, use some sound effects (for example <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzAluei6qpM>)

Sing aloud, O daughter Zion; [cheers and jubilation!]  
shout, O Israel! [cheers and jubilation!]  
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,  
O daughter Jerusalem! [cheers and jubilation!]  
The LORD has taken away the judgments against  
you, [cheers and jubilation!]  
he has turned away your enemies.  
The king of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst;  
[cheers and jubilation!]  
you shall fear disaster no more.  
On that day it shall be said to Jerusalem:  
Do not fear, O Zion; [cheers and jubilation!]  
do not let your hands grow weak.  
The LORD, your God, is in your midst, [cheers and  
jubilation!]  
a warrior who gives victory;  
he will rejoice over you with gladness, [cheers and  
jubilation!]  
he will renew you in his love; [cheers and jubilation!]  
he will exult over you with loud singing [cheers and  
jubilation!]  
as on a day of festival.  
I will remove disaster from you, [cheers and

jubilation!]  
so that you will not bear reproach for it.  
I will deal with all your oppressors at that time. [cheers  
and jubilation!]  
And I will save the lame and gather the outcast,  
[cheers and jubilation!]  
and I will change their shame into praise and renown in  
all the earth. [cheers and jubilation!]  
At that time I will bring you home, [cheers and  
jubilation!]  
at the time when I gather you;  
for I will make you renowned and praised  
among all the peoples of the earth, [cheers and  
jubilation!]  
when I restore your fortunes  
before your eyes, says the LORD. [cheers and  
jubilation!]

### 3.3 Music Mashup (Zephaniah 3:14-20)

This text has inspired musicians in different ages to write songs sets to these words.

Listen to excerpts from some of the examples over the page, or find more of your own. Some of the settings you'll find on YouTube\* are not always easy to appreciate. Still, take a light-hearted and generous approach to listening to how various people have interpreted the text musically.

Discuss which parts of the text are repeated and emphasised and which parts are left out.

As a more structured activity, give participants a copy of the text, and a marker: Challenge participants to circle or highlight phrases in the text that they hear in the music.

If you are doing this in a larger gathering, display one copy of the text on screen and invite participants to call out (stop the music when they do) and identify phrases from the text they hear in the excerpts.





\* **Music Mashup Samples**

- Matt Maher, *Sing over your children* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gNLScyQ7cqQ>
- Handel, 'Rejoice, greatly, O daughter of Zion' *Messiah*. (This is actually based more directly on a similar text in Zechariah – but worth including to expand awareness of resonances and differences across biblical texts)
- Compassion Art 'There is always a song' <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPQIDSDmTA>
- Topu Maola, *The Lord thy God in the midst of thee* (1972 Universal Music - Brentwood Benson Publishing) ccli 31384 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2JK\\_rMjluQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2JK_rMjluQ)
- Andrew Bishop, *The Lord thy God in the midst of thee* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUiYjHcAnFA&list=P\\_LMZw3Hb624irktoTzNdPJhXkgioyknS\\_0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZUiYjHcAnFA&list=P_LMZw3Hb624irktoTzNdPJhXkgioyknS_0)

**Week 4 (beginning Sunday, 20 December)**

**4.1 Justice Edge (Luke 1:39-45)**

**For Discussion**

Waiting for something special to take place – the birth of a baby, a big celebration, Christmas Day – can be filled with frantic activity, heightened emotions and an excited nervousness. Interestingly, many faith traditions encourage people to spend time “waiting” in silence. Why do you think that is? As a household spend some time in silence together. It may be as little as five minutes. Play some quiet music in the lead up to help you get into the right frame of mind. Or you can use a mantra: “Come, Lord Jesus, come” or “Maranatha” (sometimes translated as “Our Lord comes”). Share how the experience was for you.

**Faith in the world**

In silence again, or with music playing, cut up some strips of coloured paper. Take a strip of paper and write down something you hope for in the world. Join the strips together into a paper chain and hang this up in your home as a Christmas decoration.

**4.2 The inside story (Luke 1:39-45)**

You will need:

- Video of an ultrasound eg: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkE30X5thul>

Give a thumbnail sketch of the story so far:

*Eg. “So far in the Gospel of Luke, Mary has been told by God’s messenger that she will have the baby Jesus, that he will begin to grow inside her, just like all babies begin. She is pregnant. This is exciting but surprising news for Mary. In this reading, she goes to visit her older relative, who is also pregnant.”*







If your gathering includes younger children, give a straight and simple explanation of the word 'womb', which will occur in the reading.

*Eg. "A baby grows in a part of the mother's body, just below her tummy, close to the food supply and where it can have lots of cuddles. This part of the body is sometimes called the 'womb'."*

Continue with the explanation

*Eg. "We are going to watch a video of a baby in a mother's womb, while we hear this story about two pregnant women and the babies growing in their wombs. Listen carefully for what the baby does in the story."*

Read text as images are displayed.

#### **Follow up**

*"Did you hear what the baby in Elizabeth's womb did in the story? (take responses – re-read if necessary). The little baby, not even born yet, seemed to know that Jesus – not even born yet either – was nearby. Whoever we are, from the littlest to the largest, the oldest to the only just starting in life, whoever we are, we can know that Jesus now fully alive, risen and with us by his spirit, is close by."*

\*If you are doing this reading in your household and you have an ultrasound of one of your household members, watch that together. This is a lovely opportunity to affirm the life of your children from conception as part of God's story.

\*If your gathering includes children, give a simple direct explanation that they are looking at a baby growing inside the mother.

\*Be sensitive to the presence of those in your community who have grief or trauma around the loss of an infant or a terminated pregnancy. Be careful in your language about the child in the womb. This text does bear witness to the spiritual life of the foetus, participating in the purposes of God, but does not offer grounds for judgement over the stories of those whose little one's existence was short for any reason. If in doubt, this is not the idea to use in a public setting, but is more appropriate within the warmth and intimacy of a family.

#### **4.3 Drama pairs (Luke 1:39-45)**

This story only has two characters – Mary and Elizabeth. Divide your group in two, making pairs, designating one person 'Elizabeth' and the other 'Mary'.

Explain that you will go through the passage and rehearse each character's actions – and then put the story together. Start with Mary, reading the bits of text and practising the actions and exclamations listed below.

Then practise Elizabeth's role, again reading the bits of text and rehearsing the actions and exclamations for her part.

Finally, put the two parts together, reading the whole text (intact) as all the Marys and Elizabeths do the rehearsed actions and exclamations

\*If you are doing this in a large gathering, it may be more comfortable and workable to divide your group down the middle and have a collective of 'Marys' on one side and a collective of 'Elizabeths' on the other, rather than individual pairs.

#### **Mary**

1:39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste

***Footsteps - slapping hands on knees***

to a Judean town in the hill country,

***Cheesy grin – "yee-ha!"***

1:40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

***Wave – "hi there!"***

1:42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women

***Point to self – "that's me"***

1:43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord

***Point to self – "that's me"***

1:44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting

***Wave – "hi there!"***

1:45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

***Thumbs up – "amen"***





### **Elizabeth**

l:40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

***Wave - "hi there!"***

l:41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb.

***Hands on tummy - 'Ouch'***

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit

***Hands in the air - 'praise the Lord'***

l:42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

***Thumbs up - point at Mary***

l:43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?

***Hands out-stretched - welcome Mary.***

l:44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy.

***Hands on tummy - 'Ouch'***

l:45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

***Double thumbs up***

### **Combined parts – Full text**

l:39 In those days Mary set out and went with haste

***Mary: Footsteps - slapping hands on knees***

to a Judean town in the hill country,

***Mary: cheesy grin - "yee-ha!"***

l:40 where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth.

***Mary: Wave - "hi there!"***

***Elizabeth : Wave "hi there!"***

l:41 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb.

***Elizabeth: Hands on tummy - "Ouch"***

And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit

***Elizabeth: hands in the air - "praise the Lord"***

l:42 and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb.

***Mary: point to self - "that's me"***

***Elizabeth: Thumbs up point at Mary***

l:43 And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord

***Elizabeth: Hands out-stretched to welcome Mary.***

***Mary: point to self - "that's me"***

l:44 For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting,

***Mary: Wave - "hi there!"***

the child in my womb leaped for joy.

***Elizabeth: Hands on tummy - "Ouch"***

l:45 And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

***Mary : thumbs up - "amen"***

***Elizabeth: double thumbs up***

