

Risen and Real: Resources for Intergenerational Worship

Early Word Sixth Sunday of Easter Year B May 6, 2018



What this is: **Intergenerational Bible reading;** Optional Exegesis; Optional Prayer



Where it's used: Any intergenerational gathering; Early word or Bible reading or Ministry of the Word, especially for Sixth Sunday of Easter Year B May 6, 2018



Time: 5-15 minutes depending on how many of the stages you want to use.

Quick intro +1 baby reading

Intro + baby reading and b word reading

Intro + baby reading + b word reading + thinking it through

Intro + baby reading + b word reading + thinking it through + prayers



Bible focus/theme: 1 John 5:1-6; Born of God, being God's Babies.



What's needed:

- 8 'babies' made from stocking lengths and Dacron filling. Use permanent marker to add faces, tuft of wool for hair (optional).
- Use 8 different coloured cloth wraps, each with one part of the text written on it with permanent marker.
- Tie a tag with the 'interpretation' that accompanies each section of text to the corner of the wrap.
- Number each baby according to the order of lines in the text. (See picture)
- Set up babies on a table easily accessible to your gathering.
- Display set of 'eye' art images.
- Full text on screen or print copies distributed among the group.
- **Optional:** 8 shoe boxes, extra pieces of fabric for blankets, permanent markers.
- **Optional for extension activity:** additional stocking, filling, markers, wool
- **Optional:** Flipchart of verses, interpretations from tags and space for suggestions (see below)

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Everyone who believes
that Jesus is the Christ
has been born of God,
and everyone who
loves the parent
loves the child.
By this we know
that we love the children of God,
when we love God
and obey his commandments.
For the love of God is this,
that we obey his commandments.
And his commandments
are not burdensome,
for whatever is born of God
conquers the world.
And this is the victory
that conquers the world,
our faith.
Who is it that conquers the world
but the one who believes
that Jesus is the Son of God?
This is the one
who came by water and blood,
Jesus Christ,
not with the water only
but with the water and the blood.
And the Spirit is the one that testifies,
for the Spirit is the truth.

Extra Notes: This outline provides a succession of three different readings of the text. The passage is short and dense, so more than one reading is really helpful for taking in the symbolism and structure of the text.

But you can just choose on or two of the readings, to stand alone.

Whichever readings you choose from the 3 options below, use the introduction and the summary at the end.

Connect:

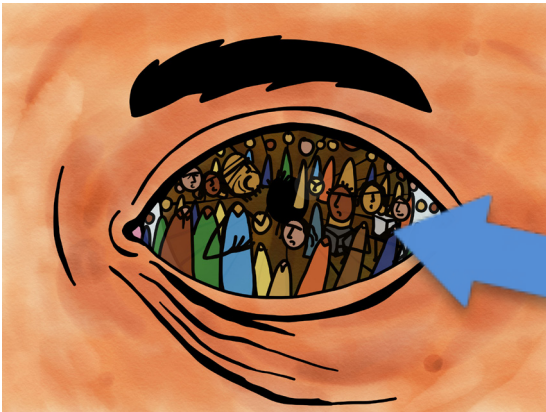
Our reading today comes from the book of First John – a book of sermons but written in the form a letter.

As we've been following the readings through the season of Easter we've encountered lots of different imaginative and creative ways the writers of the bible have of talking about God and how people are connected to God.

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We've seen

- Jesus being imagined as a **stone**, and we are a **building**;
- Jesus as a **shepherd** and we are **sheep**,
- in another reading it imagines us all connected and growing together as **branches** on a **vine** – and the whole of the **vine** is Jesus,
- right at the beginning this same book of sermons in the form of a letter, imagined us as **witnesses** in a **trial**, giving evidence of what we've seen and heard of Jesus.



Invite a volunteer to come and point out the item you've mentioned in one of the 'eye' pictures displayed. Note that the 'stone' is small and hard to find in the first picture

We've discovered that reading the Bible asks us to switch our imaginations into hyper-drive and imagine ourselves as all kinds of different things.

So today – get ready for it – today our Bible reading imagination turns us into [drum roll] tiny newborn babies.

So let's get our imaginations going. For some of us it's been a long time since we were a baby - what are some of the things a new born baby does?

(Welcome and affirm all suggestions – and lead the gathering in some crying, sleeping and eating simulations.)

Great warming up of imaginations!

Context

I know it's hard to understand why, but there are some people who think being called a little baby is an insult, a put down. Crazy, right? - because babies are completely awesome brand new human beings, and it's pretty wrong to think of any kind of a human being as an insult or a put down, let alone a freshly made brand new one!

So let's be clear, that's not what being called babies works in the Bible – in the Bible, being called a baby is something beautiful and precious, and exactly the way God wants us to think of ourselves – full of love, loved not for anything we can do but just because we are. So as we listen to what the book of First John says about us being God's little babies, we have it firmly fixed that being called a baby is a good thing to hear.

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Content:

This Bible reading today from the book of First John is wrapped around 8 little babies – so we need some volunteers to take care of these. Babies are best taken care of by a team, not just one person alone.

Call for volunteers of different ages to take a baby. As each volunteer receives their baby, ask if they have some other people around them to help them take care of the baby.

Each of these babies has a little bit of First John chapter 5 verses 1 to 6 written on their blanket, wrapped around them.

The babies are numbered. Let's hear them read in order, listening close and still using our imaginations to understand being called God's precious babies.

Call for each baby in turn by number. The person with the baby should unwrap it and read, or give the wrap to someone near by to read – keeping in mind the team care of the baby.

- 1 Everyone who believes
 that Jesus is the Christ
 has been **born of God**,
- 2 and everyone who
 loves the parent
 loves the child.
- 3 By this we know
 that we love the **children of God**,
 when we love God
 and obey his commandments.
- 4 For the love of God is this,
 that we obey his commandments.
 And his commandments
 are not burdensome,
- 5 for whatever is **born of God**
 conquers the world.
 And this is the victory
 that conquers the world,
 our faith.

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- 6 Who is it that conquers the world
but the one who believes
that Jesus is the Son of God?
- 7 This is the one
who came by water and blood,
Jesus Christ,
- 8 Not with the water only
but with the water and the blood.
And the Spirit is the one that testifies,
for the Spirit is the truth.

Great! – I wonder if we got all of that first go?

Let's read again – this time we can all join in enthusiastically on the words that begin with the letter B, which are highlighted in the text. Take a moment to make sure you can read all the words and know what they are. Check that the person next to you can too – and help each other if that's needed.

(give a minute for this).

Everyone who **believes**
that Jesus is the Christ
has been **born of God**,
and everyone who
loves the parent
loves the child.
By this we know
that we love the **children of God**,
when we love God
and obey his commandments.
For the love of God is this,
that we obey his commandments.
And his commandments
are not **burdensome**,
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Jesus Christ,
not with the water only
but with the water and the **blood**.
And the Spirit is the one that testifies,
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Consider

It's good to read this from a few directions – first we read being really conscious of the image of being God's babies.

Then we read noticing some other key words.

We can explore this reading further, as you might have noticed that your blanket also has a tag on it – this is an explanation of the text.

Let's read again, but this time we'll stop and think a bit more about what it means for followers of Jesus to be imagined as little Babies. How does this image – being babies, help us understand God and how God wants us to live?

Find the tag on your baby blanket.

With those around you make sure you (or they) can read it and are reading to read it aloud.

Let's hear the text again bit by bit

- and then the thought that's on your tag
- then we'll leave some time for other thoughts and reactions to this astounding and beautiful and playful image of being God's babies.
- And we'll add them to our flipchart/bed boxes *Whichever option you are choosing

Option A: Provide a (shoe)box for each baby as a bed. Use permanent markers to write the gathering's extra ideas on the box. At the end of your gathering time, leave the boxes with the babies in them, wrapped in their blankets and the tags showing, in your community space with an invitation for people to explore the text and the other thoughts again later.

Option B: Use a flip chart prepared with the text, the tag interpretations and space for other thoughts from the group. Add the suggestions in the spaces as they are made.

Consequence - Prayer

Finish with a prayer that gathers your thoughts.

Lead with several prepared lines, and the responses between, then leave open space for prayers to rise from within your gathering, leading the response between each one.

Responses:

We cry out to you

We are held in your love

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Sample prepared lines

- Loving God we thank you for giving us life.
- Thank you God for looking after us, feeding and loving us each day.
- We pray for fragile young lives in our communities and beyond. May their lives be help with dignity and love.
- We pray for those who seek to start life afresh in this country, however they arrive. May their passage here be safe and their welcome as hearty and caring as the way we welcome the arrival of our own children.

Add more from your own community.

Extension activity – as the rest of the service proceeds, provide the resources (stocking lengths, Dacron filling, markers, wool, fabric squares) for those who wish to make their own baby to take home, with the text, or their favourite parts of the text written on the wrap.

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First John says it like this:	Here's a thought...	What do you think?
1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God ,	Everyone who trusts in Jesus is like God's little precious babies	
2 and everyone who loves the parent loves the child .	Everyone who loves God is also going to love God's little precious babies	
3 By this we know that we love the children of God , when we love God and obey his commandments.	It all lines up: we love God, we love his little babies, we follow what he says	
4 For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome,	But what kind of commands do you give babies? – commands that are good, not terrible tricky ones.	
5 for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith.	God's little precious babies win God's battles – not by being big and strong and violent, but by confidence in God's loving faithfulness.	
6 Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?	Because love is what wins. And God's little precious babies are fully stoked with love.	
7 This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ	Jesus himself, came as a little precious baby.	
8 Not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.	It's God's way – little babies, doing what God says, full of love, that's what truly wins.	