

2024-2025 Guidelines
Faith and Light international

United in Jesus



Contents

- Introduction Raúl Izquierdo Garcia 3
- Message from the provinces of Africa..... 5
- Practical information 7
- Presentation of the theme of the year 8
- Teams 2024/2025 9
- Prayer for each meeting 11

- 1. Unity through our differences 12
- 2. Playing music together 16
- 3. Listening to each other 21
- 4. Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace 25
- 5. Finding healing in unity 30
- 6. Walking in the light 34
- 7. Praying together 38
- 8. A new life in Jesus 42
- 9. The Spirit of Jesus binds us together 46
- 10. Let us put on the armour of God 50
- 11. Water, source of life 54
- 12. Celebrating unity 59

- Appendices / Meditations
 - Christmas 63
 - Feast of Light 65
 - Easter..... 67
 - Pentecost 69
- The Marian Shrine of Kibeho, Rwanda 71
- Artist’s workshop 72
- Faith and Light prayer back cover



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Introduction



Raúl Izquierdo Garcia
International Coordinator

United in Jesus

To all the Faith and Light communities around the world:

You have in your hands the new guidelines, drawn up this year by our brothers and sisters from Africa. It is a gift to the Faith and Light family, produced for the first time by the provinces of this wonderful continent, radiant with light and beauty, but still marked by violence and hunger in many places. We have so much to learn from their way of living joy, celebration and faith! I would like to begin by thanking them, on behalf of us all, for their enthusiasm and their work in the service of all our communities. Thank you Africa! I would also like to express my gratitude to the International Secretariat and to Marie-France Violette for coordinating this project.

The theme "United in Jesus" is proposed at a time in human history when confrontation and tension are visible all around us. Everything seems to have become focused on the extremes, and people are losing their capacity for dialogue and listening. Each group and each nation asserts its identity, its autonomy, its differences, and the Other becomes a threat. Gaps and walls appear and cultures become Manichean: black or white, with me or against me. And in the midst of all this, we will take a path that speaks of unity, and of unity in one Jesus.

This is why today, more than ever, Faith and Light is called to be a prophetic and courageous movement. We form a family and a community made up of people who are sometimes very different, and because we are united in Jesus, we can call ourselves brothers and sisters. Jesus unites us beyond our abilities and disabilities. He unites us around him, who is the way, the truth and the life. With him, we can do anything and nothing is impossible. It is a marvellous richness that Faith and Light is made up of Christian communities of different denominations, forming this family called to flourish in ecumenism.

Let us pray that these guidelines will help us to move forward in this direction and to become aware of the importance of unity, despite our differences. May we include our desire for unity in our prayers, our concrete actions and our decisions. May it also help us to grow in faith and strengthen the bonds within our communities. Our simple and joyful testimony will always challenge others and will be like salt in a world that is becoming increasingly bland and insipid.

Enjoy your journey in unity!

Raúl Izquierdo García
International coordinator

Message from the provinces of Africa

Three Faith and Light African provinces worked on these guidelines: Capricorn Africa (South Africa, DR Congo Lubumbashi, Zambia and Zimbabwe); East Africa (Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, DR Congo Kivu and Rwanda); Our Lady of Africa – The Savannah (Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Central African Republic and Togo). In all of our countries, we share a love of the bright colours of our national and local clothing, the rhythm of our music and dances, our cultural styles and our magnificent and majestic landscapes, which are home to many wild animals, large and small.

Although the 'official' language of an African country may be English, French or Portuguese, the number of indigenous "African" languages in a country can be considerable. Nigeria, for example, has over 520 different languages, although the official language is English. The Democratic Republic of Congo has over 210, excluding the two official languages, French and Swahili. In Zimbabwe, the languages are Shona, Ndebele and English. In South Africa, there are a total of 35 languages, 12 of which are official languages (including sign language), while the most widely spoken languages are isiZulu and isiXhosa, the main one being English. At Faith and Light, whatever language is spoken in the countries and provinces of Africa, when we meet, we speak the language of friendship, love, tolerance, acceptance, trust and understanding.

God's presence is deeply felt in the life of our communities. Our members are active in their local churches, whether they be Methodist, Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian or other Christian denominations. Masses and services are often filled with lively songs of praise, dancing and prayers that touch the heart and soul.

Although there may be differences in some parts of our services, we recognise the similarities and the fact that Jesus is at the centre of our praise and worship.

Our communities are scattered, sometimes far away from one another, from city centres to rural areas. Unemployment and poverty can be found practically everywhere. War, political tensions, corruption, crime and gangsterism are genuine scourges that endure in many countries. Even in the face of difficulties, the resilience of our Faith and Light communities gives us the strength to remain united with God and with each other.

When Africa was asked to work on this year's guidelines, the news was greeted with considerable enthusiasm. Coordinated by Marie-France Violette, Vice-International Coordinator for the provinces of Africa and the Indian Ocean, the project team is made up of 26 people in total, including one person with an intellectual disability, not forgetting the valuable support of the International Secretariat. Each province was responsible for four months of the year. The teams responded to this challenge using a variety of communication methods, including WhatsApp, e-mail, telephone and Zoom, as well as face-to-face meetings. However, Africa is a vast continent and many regions with poor network coverage experienced connection problems, as well as difficulties in meeting due to financial and transport constraints.

In addition, because of the large number of languages spoken in Africa, it was sometimes necessary to call on the services of interpreters to facilitate communication. However, nothing has stopped us in our mission. We have relied on prayer and our commitment, allowing ourselves to be helped and guided by God. The guidelines you hold in your hands today are the fruit of our collective efforts, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

It has been a great joy for Africa to contribute to the preparation of these guidelines. Although we may not be rich in material goods, we

offer the world our generosity and our love of God. We invite you to feel the rhythm of Africa - this beautiful and colourful continent - which will bring vibrant joy, love and inspiration to each of your community meetings.

With love and friendship,
Marie-France Violette and Jacinta Munro

[Practical information](#)

Two or three songs are suggested for each month. You can **download from the intranet** of the Faith and Light International website:

- **The songbook** with the lyrics
- **The audio files and video links** for the melodies

QR code of the Intranet



To request the [Intranet access codes](#), email the Secretariat international@foietlumiere.org

Once you have logged in, click on "**Booklets and documents**" and then on "**Songs from the 2024-2025 guidelines**".

Presentation of the theme of the year

Preparing this year's guidelines has been a happy journey through the countries of Africa. The discussions between teams from different denominations in different countries, each with its own culture and language, have given us immense joy. This diversity bears witness to the international dimension of Faith and Light. Although Faith and Light was born of the Catholic Church, it soon became clear that some of its members belonged to other Christian denominations. This is how it became an international ecumenical movement. With so many different languages, faiths and cultures, what is it that unites us?

Guided by the Holy Spirit, our project team felt inspired by these biblical references:

- **1 Corinthians 12, 12-27:** The apostle Paul compares humanity to a single body made up of many different parts.
- **John 17, 20-26:** Jesus speaks to us of the unity between the Father and the Son. This unity must be the testimony of our belonging to Christ.

This unity for which Jesus prays is both a gift from God and the fruit of human effort. We must fight against everything that pushes us towards division. Unity is the fruit of love; it is the cement that holds us together in our families and in all Faith and Light communities where friendship, tolerance and trust are lived out.

Beyond our different liturgies, it is Jesus who brings us together every month under the banner of Faith and Light, wherever we are in the world.

On this year's theme "**United in Jesus**", we invite you to journey with us in search of unity beyond our differences. We sincerely hope that communities around the world will appreciate these guidelines in the colours of Africa. Let us all remain "united in Jesus".

In friendship from the three provinces of Africa
Jacinta Munro

Teams 2024-2025

Capricorn African Province

DR Congo Lubumbashi, South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe



Jacinta Munro
Provincial
coordinator



Andrea Hart
South Africa



David Price
South Africa



John Bailey
South Africa



Judi Nienhuis
South Africa



Kathryn Morgan
South Africa



**Rev Mark H.
Stephenson**
South Africa



**Fr Richard
O'Riordan**
South Africa



Stuart Munro
South Africa



Wendy Chivell
South Africa



Bertin Mwanya
DR Congo
Lubumbashi



**Bruno
Ngoy Kalume**
DR Congo
Lubumbashi



**Matanda
Bakali**
Zimbabwe



**Lorraine
Lunga**
Zimbabwe

Teams 2024-2025

Province Our Lady of Africa, the Savannah

Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ivory Coast,
Centrafrican Republic, Nigeria, Togo



Sister Anne-Marie Ngono
Cameroon



Caroline Ouedraogo
Burkina Faso



Claude Assosou
Benin



Clotilde Kpa
Ivory Coast



Sister Véronique de Portzamparc
Ivory Coast

Province East Africa

Burundi, DR Congo Kivu, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda



Father Guillaume Ndayishimiye
Burundi



Godeberthe Mukagasana
Rwanda



Jeanne Mukamutesa
Rwanda



Sister Mechtilde Kayitesi
Rwanda



Yves Bertin
Hirwa
Rwanda



Illustrations:
Sacha-Lee Bing



Illustrations:
Belinda Basson



Marie-France Violette
Vice international coordinator

Prayer for each meeting

As we say this prayer together, may we discover what unites us, as we reflect on the theme of each month:

Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light;

Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

To be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen



1

Unity through our differences



The word of the month

In his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul is concerned about the quarrels dividing the Christian community and decides to write to them. For him, the very meaning of our Baptism is at risk. To be baptised 'in the name' of Christ is to be united with Christ. So we can no longer be divided among ourselves! No one can say "I was baptised in the name of so-and-so, Paul, Apollos or Peter"; we have all been baptised "in the name" of Christ.

Further on, St Paul develops the idea of the diversity of gifts. One is given a word of wisdom; another a word of knowledge; others receive a gift of faith or of healing; but the one who acts in all this is the Holy Spirit, who freely grants them. They are not given for personal satisfaction and cannot be a cause for pride or self-assertion. On the contrary, they are given for a common purpose: to serve and build up the community and they cannot give rise to rivalry or confusion.

Then Paul presents the Christian community as a body, and he asks this question: *"If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be?"* Each of us is unique and we are called to live our vocation by offering our gifts at the service of all.

Let us trust in God, who has entrusted us with gifts so that we may bear fruit. Let's use our hands, our imagination, our smile, our intelligence, and our heart that He has given us to make our Faith and Light communities more united, more joyful and more alive than ever!

Reference texts 1 Corinthians 1, 10-13 / 12, 4-11 and 12-18

Welcome and reunion

For this first meeting of the year, we light the community candle and say the Faith and Light prayer together (see back cover). We then form a circle, holding each other by the arm, and sing the song "Bind us together Lord". The coordinator introduces the theme of the month and explains the different ways of greeting each other around the world, giving a few examples (shaking hands, kissing on the cheeks, bowing to each other, etc.). Everyone turns to their neighbours and greets them in the way they prefer.

Sharing Together

This quote from Desmond Tutu (former Anglican Archbishop of South Africa and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984, who died in 2021) invites us to share: *"Differences are not meant to separate or alienate. It is precisely because we are different that we understand that we need each other."*

In small groups

- How can we build friendships with people who are different from us?
- How can we meet them?
- Do I feel well integrated into my church or my Faith and Light community?
- How can we invite new people into our community, whatever their church or culture?

Artist's workshop

Create a character with different body parts and choose a face (see page 72).

Celebration

Game: Paper caterpillar race

The aim of the game is to move a paper caterpillar forward as quickly as possible by blowing on it with a straw until you reach the finish line. How do we make it ? (see page 72).

Video demonstration: <https://youtu.be/pT6Da8vV08Q>

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for bringing us together at Faith and Light. Help us to walk with each other and accept our differences so that no one in our community feels excluded, for whatever reason. Help us to care for and reach out to the weakest, so that we can all feel part of Faith and Light. Guide us to be confident and look to the future knowing that you are always with us, whether we are alone or in community. Amen.

Prayer of a poor person

We thank you Lord for loving us with all our differences.

And until the next meeting

During the community meeting, small cards are placed in a basket with the names of each member of the community written on them. Each person draws a name at random and tries to contact this person between now and the next meeting to ask for news, visit them or suggest a walk.

Songs

Bind us together Lord / Bob Gillman

Make me a channel of your peace / Sebastian Temple (1928-1997)

He's got the whole world in His hands / Robert Lindon and William Henry.



2

Playing music together



The word of the month

Playing music together brings great joy and satisfaction to our Faith and Light communities. It often transcends linguistic and cultural barriers, enabling people from different backgrounds to find a common language and to feel integrated and valued. Music creates a spiritual and emotional bond that strengthens the bonds of fellowship, mutual support and spiritual growth. Everyone can share their emotions, sensitivities and specific gifts, even if some of us find it difficult to communicate.

Let's remember the words of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI: *"Music and song help to bring the Word of God down to the depths of the heart and to pray". Let the words penetrate our soul and, through song, let our prayer rise up to God.*

In Africa, we love to dance, sing and play the drum with all our being. It helps us create bonds by bringing people together around a shared experience. When the music carries us away, we tap our feet, sway our hips and soon we're all humming and singing together in an atmosphere of joy.

God's works and words move us, enlighten us and fill us with wonder, making our lives dance to the rhythm of his Spirit. We can unify our voices and our hearts in a common expression of praise and gratitude to God through hymns, psalms and spiritual songs. So let's press "Play" at our next meeting!

Reference text: Psalm 150, 1-6

Welcome and reunion

On arrival, there are scrap materials available on the entrance table. For example, cans with lids or empty bottles with caps and pebbles to put inside (maracas), wooden chopsticks, rubber bands, and various containers that are turned upside down to be used as drums... Each person creates an instrument: a drum with sticks, maracas, tambourine, etc., which can be used at this meeting and at future meetings.

Examples of recycled instruments: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2EiCJ9_E3k

We will use these instruments to accompany one of the two songs of the month.

Sharing Together

We suggest miming **Psalm 150:1-6**.

Verse 1-2: *"Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens. Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness."*

Mime gestures of praise and adoration, raising your arms to heaven or joining your hands in prayer. Make expansive movements to represent the extent of God's power.

Verses 3-5: *"Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with timbrel and dancing, praise him with the strings and pipe, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals."*

Use gestures to mimic each musical instrument mentioned, such as blowing into an imaginary flute, playing a harp or striking a tambourine. You can also simulate dance movements to represent joy and celebration.

Verse 6: *"Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord."*

Invite everyone to participate by making gestures of praise and including the audience in the celebration. Use gestures of openness to invite everyone to praise God.

In small groups

- How do we feel when we sing in praise of God?
- How can we use music to pray in our daily lives?
- Do we know how to play an instrument? Do we share this gift with the others?

The artist's workshop (see page 73).

1/ Everyone colours the image of an African drum to assemble all the drawings into a garland to decorate the room.

2/ Make a kazoo

Celebration

Drum Concert

Using the instruments chosen at the start of the session, a first group of 3 or 4 people begins to play, keeping the same percussion rhythm: tip-top-top/tip-top-top. A second small group follows with a different rhythm: taaaaap-tap/taaaaaap-tap. A third and then a fourth continue with other rhythms: tiptop pouet/tiptop pouet or ziiiiiiip tra la la PLOC/ ziiiiiiip tra la la PLOC/.. etc. Each group must keep to its own rhythm throughout the game.

or

Game: Freeze Dance

The players are spread around the room. The leader starts the music. When he presses pause, everyone must freeze instantly. If he catches anyone moving, they move to the side and wait for others to join in. The last person to dance gets a round of applause.

Prayer

Praying with the five fingers of your hand

1. The thumb is the finger closest to us. So let's start by praying for those who are closest to us.
2. The index points the way. Let us entrust to the Lord those who provide education and medical care: teachers, doctors and priests.
3. The medium, the longest, reminds us of our rulers. Let us pray for the president, members of parliament, the entrepreneurs and

administrators. They are in charge of our country's destiny, and they need God's help.

4. The ring finger. This is our weakest finger, and it reminds us to pray for the weak, for those who have many problems to solve or who are suffering from illness.

5. And the little finger, the smallest of all fingers, reminds us to pray for ourselves.

The prayer of a poor person

Thank you Lord for the beauty of music in our lives.

And until the next meeting

Everyone is invited to look for a new song to teach the community at the next meeting.

Songs

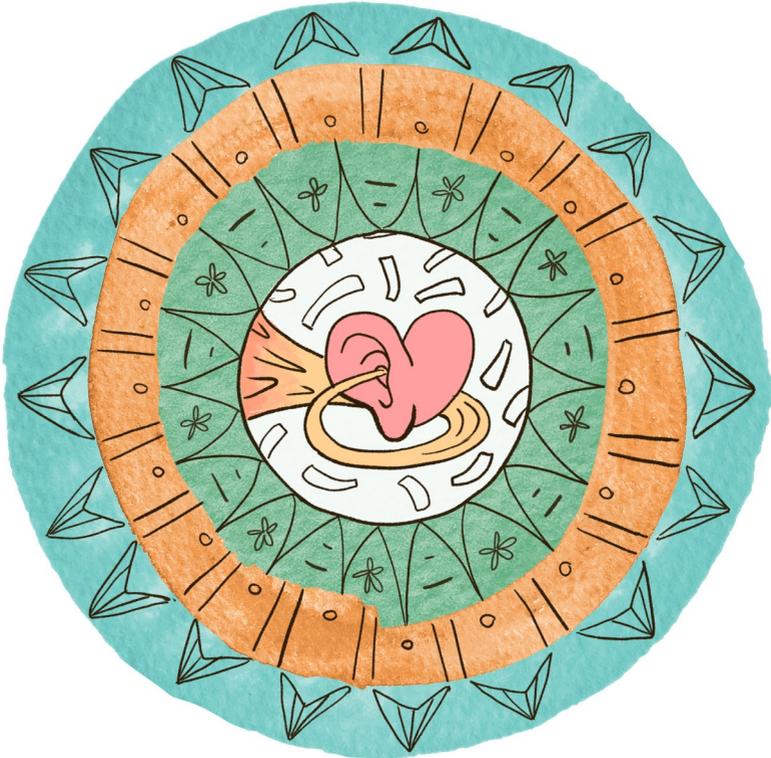
Jabulani Africa (Rejoice Africa) / Lionel Peterson

There is no one like Jesus ("Hakuna Wakaita sa Jesus" in Shona language) / Patrick Matsikenyiri and Daniel Damon



3

Listening to each other



The word of the month

This is what James tells us in his epistle: *"Know this, my beloved brothers: everyone must be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger"*. Is that why God gave us two ears and one tongue? Is it more important to listen than to speak? It's so easy to express an opinion, to pass judgement or to correct others, to give advice without making a sincere effort to listen to them. Sometimes it's so tempting to say "I know how you feel", but this is rarely the case.

"Listening is the highest form of welcoming others, which does not consist in changing them but in offering them a space where change is possible", a quote from Father Henri Nouwen, a Dutch Catholic priest who lived with people with disabilities in a L'Arche community in Canada, and the author of around forty books on spirituality, who passed away in 1996.

Listening is how we get to know and understand each other, but sometimes we listen without hearing. Real listening involves putting ourselves in the other person's shoes, trying to understand their point of view, showing them that we are paying attention to what they are saying, being aware of their body language, their emotions, and the meaning given to their words and silences. We can learn to listen with our eyes.

When we truly listen to another person, we really care about how they feel and what they have to say. Listening is loving. Listening with love means being open and receptive to the other person's thoughts and feelings. Listening leads us to turn away from our own preoccupations and pay attention to those of others and to those of God when we listen to his Word. Listening techniques are no substitute for a heart made sensitive by the Holy Spirit, open to others in the sharing of joys and sufferings. Isn't that the very essence of the Faith and Light community life, where friendships are built?

Reference texts: James 1:19 and Matthew 13:1-9/18-23

Welcome and reunion

Upon arrival, each person picks a piece of paper from a basket with a question to ask another member of the community (What typical dish from another country have you eaten? Do you have a pet? What kind of music do you like to listen to? Have you ever travelled by train/ plane? etc.). If someone cannot read or write, a friend joins in to help asking the question. Then we share each other's questions and answers. Through this activity, we learn to listen to each other. The coordinator introduces the theme for the month and we sing "Open our eyes Lord".

Sharing Together

Relive the Gospel of Matthew 13, 1-9/18-23 "The Parable of the Sower", which highlights the importance of listening to and understanding the word of God.

In small groups

- Are we listening to each other or are we thinking about what we are going to say next?
- Is it useful to look at someone when we are listening? How can I listen better?
- Do we have someone to talk to in our daily lives?

Artist's workshop

The mystery drawing. Follow the instructions to draw a series of shapes and add colours. At the end, you will have to guess what your drawing represents! (see page 73).

Celebration

Game: the corded telephone (see page 74).

or

The boat and the rocks

Prepare as many slips of paper as there are players. Write "boat" on several slips of paper and "rock" on the other slips.

- Each player draws a slip at random. Those who have the "boat" slips will be blindfolded and those with the "rock" slips will find a space to stand in the room symbolising the sea.
- The "boat" players will have to go from one end of the room to the other avoiding the rocks to avoid running aground.
- When a boat approaches a rock, the latter imitates the sound of waves "shh, shh, shh" to warn it that it is too close.
- When a boat reaches the other side of the room, it becomes a rock, so another boat player will launch, and so on.
- The rocks can change position in the sea as each new boat begins its journey.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for giving us two ears so that we can listen to others when they share their joys and sorrows. Help us to hear with patience what they need to express. Thank you Lord for your presence in our community. Teach us to pray in silence, listening to our Father.

Prayer of a poor person

Let us lift up our eyes and seek the Lord with all our heart.

And until the next meeting

Phone or visit a member of the community we haven't seen for a long time, to check on them and listen to them in friendship.

Songs

Open our eyes Lord, we want to see Jesus / Robert Marcus Cull

Amen, we praise your name, O Lord / Stephen Molefe ("Amen, Siyakadumisa" Xhosa language)



4

Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace



The word of the month

The celebration of Christmas reminds Christians of the miraculous birth of a little child named Jesus, Son of God, who gives himself to all mankind. This is the mystery of the Incarnation. Jesus came to us in the form of a newborn baby, in a state of extreme vulnerability. The infant Jesus disarms us: he is nothing but tenderness, love and fragility. Faced with this fragility, we are called to find Christ among the humblest and to give priority to the little ones.

Let us always remember the miracle of the Christmas story: ***"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"*** John 3:16. God loves the world so much that he comes to be close to each one of us, without imposing himself, but respecting our freedom.

He invites us to go through the stages of life by showing us the path to follow, that of Love. This unconditional love cannot be earned or conquered; it is received as a gift. It is in this world as it is, with its shadows and illusions that Christians are sent to bear witness.

If we listen to his Word, if we learn to love, to forgive, to welcome others and to comfort them, then we will move towards a path of happiness, towards light, towards holiness and towards the Kingdom of God.

Let us be witnesses to God's presence in our Faith and Light communities and in our lives, so that everyone can believe in His Love. Let us be his messengers of peace, the messengers of the Good News!

Reference text: Luke 2 ,1-20

Welcome and reunion

Everyone brings a small object symbolising Christmas to place on the prayer corner.

Sharing

Together

Mime the Nativity scene (Luke 2, 1-20)

Several members of the community play the various roles in the scene: Joseph, Mary, the infant Jesus, the Magi, the angel, the shepherds, the donkey and the ox.

Prepare the following decorations in advance: the stable, the gifts (wrapped) carried by the three Magi, the Star of Bethlehem, the shepherd's staff, the cradle, the clothes worn at the time, etc.

In small groups

- In what country and town was Jesus born? Where exactly?
- How do you like to celebrate Christmas?
- What's your favourite Christmas memory?
- Christmas is also a time when we think more about others. Do you have any examples?

Artist's workshop

Christmas stars. Everyone will make a cardboard star and decorate it with small geometric designs (see page 74).

Celebration

Game: the box of questions

Write questions on small slips of paper and put them in a box. The questions can be about the story of Jesus' birth or about Christian Christmas traditions.

Examples:

- When was Jesus born?
- Who visited him after he was born?

- What sign did the shepherds see that led them to Jesus?
- What gifts did the Magi bring Jesus?
- etc.

With a Christmas carol playing in the background, the participants sit in a circle and pass the box around. When the music stops, the person holding the box draws out a question and tries to answer it. If they answer correctly, they keep hold of the paper and the box continues to circulate. If they get it wrong, the question goes back into the box so that someone else can have a chance to answer it later. The game continues until all the questions have been answered.

Prayer

Dear God in heaven, we thank you for giving us your Son, Jesus. As we celebrate the miracle of Christmas, let us always remember that you love each and every one of us, and that you continue to be present with us when we are together.

Lord Jesus, may the grace of this Christmas bring the gift of reconciliation and brotherhood to all families. We ask that all the world's Christians may celebrate your coming in freedom and peace. Amen.

Blessing

A Christmas letter from Jesus

“When you look for me at Christmas - You won't need a star.
I'm no longer just in Bethlehem - I'm right here where you are.
You may not be aware of me amid the celebrations,
You'll have to look beyond the stores and all the decorations.
But, if you take a moment from your list of things to do,
To close your eyes and say a prayer, I'm waiting here for you.
You're the one I want to be with. You're the reason I came!
And you'll find me in the stillness, where I'm whispering your name.”

So, wherever you are in the world, and after all the celebrations around Christmas have passed, we must remember that isn't the end of the story. Whether we are happy or sad, we know that Jesus is

with us always. He knows your every need and longs to comfort you and be that special friend you need. He will give life real meaning, and your heart real peace. Amen.

Prayer of a poor person

Whether I am happy or sad, Jesus is always with me.

And until the next meeting

We will do our best to organise an outing that will enable everyone to take part in an event, promoting unity and fraternity (football match, theatre play, recreational or cultural outing, etc.).

Songs

Away in a manger/Music composed by William J. Kirkpatrick in 1895

Silent night, Holy night/Written by pastor Joseph Franz Mohr and composed by his friend Franz Xaver Gruber



5

Finding healing in unity



The word of the month

There are many stories of healing in Mark's Gospel, highlighting Jesus' special care for people who are sick and have a disability, but also the importance of faith. By restoring people's physical health, Jesus shows his ability to restore their spiritual health too, offering reconciliation with God and inner renewal.

In this Gospel, Jesus meets a crowd of scribes who are talking to his disciples. A man comes up to him and explains that his son is possessed by a spirit that makes him mute and causes convulsions. He said he had asked the disciples to expel the spirit, but to no avail. Jesus then expresses his disappointment at the disbelief of those around him and asks that the possessed child be brought to him to be healed. The child's father, realising his lack of faith, asks the Lord to come to his aid. This humble request highlights the relationship between faith and the ability to receive healing and the grace of Jesus.

This passage invites us to recognise our limits. Sometimes we are faced with difficult situations that we cannot face alone. We are called to strengthen our faith and pray, turning to Jesus to help us overcome our doubts and weaknesses, to receive his healing, whether physical, emotional or spiritual.

Following this event, the disciples question their inability to heal the child themselves. Jesus replies: ***"Spirits like that can only be driven out by prayer"***. By emphasising the importance of prayer, Jesus encourages his disciples to cultivate a deep relationship with God and to seek His support in all situations, even the most difficult. But there is still an answer to the disciples' question: "Why couldn't we drive this spirit out? Jesus replied: "It's only through prayer that you can drive out this kind of spirit.

The Lord's Prayer taught by Jesus invites us to unite by turning to God in the same spirit. By reciting this common prayer, we gather around the same words and the same intentions, putting aside the differences between our respective Churches to focus on what unites us: faith in God and our relationship with Him as Father. In this way, we become aware of our fraternal bond as children of God, members of the same spiritual family.

Strengthened by our trust in Jesus' promise: ***"Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them"***, let us unite in prayer to Christ and ask God's Spirit to strengthen our faith and calm our hearts.

Reference text: Mark 9, 14-29

Welcome and reunion

Each member of the community is given a small card on which they can write their first name. The cards will then be fixed to a large panel around the heart of Jesus drawn in the centre. A string can be used to symbolise the bond of love that runs from the heart of Jesus to each person.

Sharing

Together

Reliving together the Gospel of Mark 9, 14-29.

In small groups

- Does God still heal today? If so, in what way?
- What do you do when you run into difficulties?
- What prevents us from presenting our concerns to Jesus and opening our hearts to him?

Artist's workshop

Make a little paper chair (see page 75).

The 4 legs of the chair keep it in balance. In a Faith and Light

community, each member is important for the mutual support and harmony of the group. The four legs symbolise the diversity of gifts and qualities within the Christian community.

Celebration

Zip-Zap name game

The players form a circle around the leader. He points to a player and says **Zip!** The designated player must say the first name of the person on his or her right as quickly as possible. If the leader says **Zap!** the player has to say the name of the person on the left. If the leader says **Zip Zap!** everyone change places and form a circle again, making sure they have different neighbours. If a player makes a mistake, he takes the leader's place until another player makes a mistake.

Prayer

Our faith is sometimes so weak and fragile, Lord we ask you to strengthen us when we are feeling discouraged, teach us to share the weight of our burdens in our Faith and Light communities and to accept those who are different from us. Amen.

Prayer of a poor person

Jesus, help me to deepen and strengthen my faith.

And until the next meeting

We pray for the members of the community who were not present at this meeting and for the healing of our hearts.

Songs

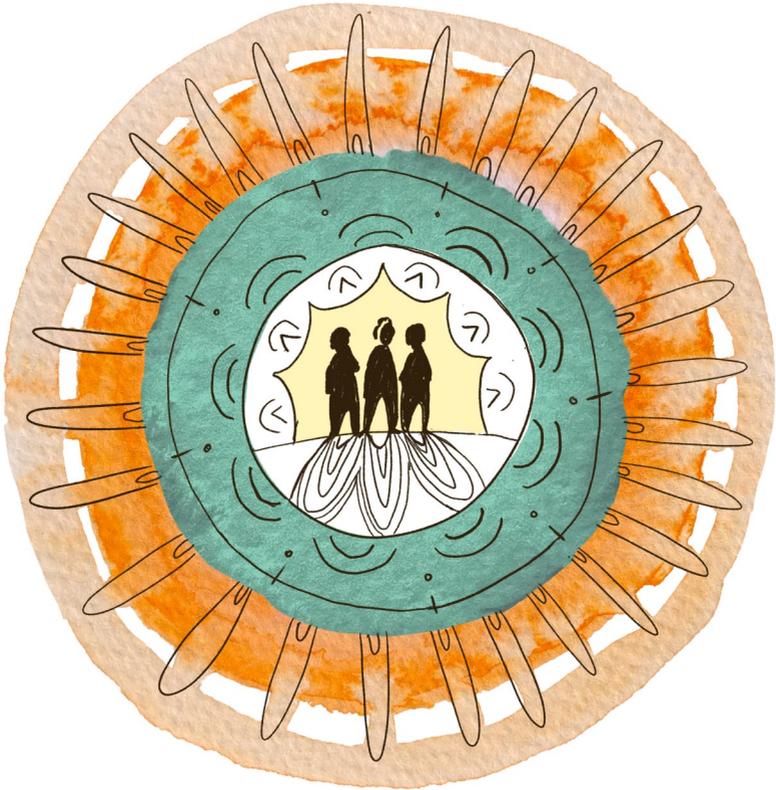
Change my heart, O God / Eddie Espinosa

I have decided to follow Jesus / Simon Kara Marak



6

Walking in the light



The word of the month

The Gospel of John begins by describing Jesus as the one who is the eternal Word of God, and also as the one who is the Light. Walking in the light means recognising our faults when the Lord reveals them to us, acknowledging them before Him and sometimes also before others so that we can be lifted up on our journey of faith. James writes: **"Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."** Jesus, who assumed our human nature, except for sin, made himself close to us by accepting his Father's will; he offered himself as a sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins.

We are quick to talk about the sins of others. If, instead of seeing others' shortcomings, each of us sincerely acknowledged our own, there would be healing. In a family, between brothers and sisters, between parents and children, in a couple... the first to acknowledge his or her sin out of love for the truth allows grace to heal.

Walking in the light means living your life according to the Word of God and following Christ: **"I am the light of the world! Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"**. John 8, 12 The light is the love that is in us. It enlightens us and everything around us.

Jesus Christ summed up God's holy law as follows: **"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And this is the second, which is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself"** (Mt 22:37-39).

So if you let yourself be guided by the love of Christ, you will walk with Him in the Light. Sin distorts our vision of ourselves and of the world, but the Lord's forgiveness clears away this shadow and darkness and gives us a new light.

It is our turn to share the Light of Christ to the world, especially to our children and our brothers and sisters with disabilities. Let us be witnesses to the Good News of the Gospel! The source of the joy of knowing that we are loved, accepted and forgiven! God is an actor in the world, but those who believe in Him are his arms, his hands and his mouth for carrying out concrete action in the world. That's why Saint Paul tells us: ***"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it"***. (1 Cor 12:27)

Reference texts: 1 John 2, 1-11 and Luke 18, 42

Welcome and reunion

Each person receives a lit candle and enters the semi-dark meeting room in procession. Together we sing "Walk in the Light" to the prayer corner where the candles are placed.

Sharing

Together

We will relive the Gospel of Luke 18:42, recounting the healing of the man born blind. By restoring sight to the blind man, Jesus shows that he can dispel physical and spiritual darkness and bring light into our lives.

In small groups

- What sources of light are we familiar with? What is light used for?
- Why is Jesus the Light of your life?
- What aspect of your life are you allowing Jesus to illuminate?

Artist's workshop

Faith and Light logo puzzle (see page 75).

Celebration

Song game: The farmer in his field

The players form a circle, holding hands, and start singing as they go round. The player who plays the farmer stands in the centre while the others sing "The farmer in his field". When the second verse is sung,

"The farmer takes his wife", he chooses his wife from the circle and she joins him in the centre. The process continues until the cheese is chosen.

Lyrics

The farmer in his field. (x2) Ohay ohay ohay The farmer in his field,
The farmer takes his wife. (x2) Ohay ohay ohay The farmer takes his wife
The wife takes her child. (x2) Ohay ohay ohay The wife takes her child.
The child takes the nanny. (x2) Ohay ohay ohay The child takes the nanny.
The nanny takes the cat. (x2) Ohay ohay ohay The nanny takes the cat.
The cat takes the mouse. (x2) Ohay ohay ohay The cat takes the mouse.
The mouse takes the cheese. (x2) Ohay ohay ohay The mouse takes the cheese.
The cheese is eaten (x2) Ho hey, ho hey, ho hey The cheese is eaten.
This was the song of the farmer in his field.(x2)

Melody of the song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFEWNNwggSY>

Prayer

Lord, you are the light that leads us away from sin and draws us closer to you. Help us to share your light with those who are suffering, so that we can contribute to the coming of your kingdom. Amen.

Prayer of a poor a person

Thank you Lord for the light you give us every day.

And until the next meeting

Let us not allow the light that Jesus Christ has kindled in us to be extinguished. Let's light our candles during our prayer time and open our hearts to his Word.

Songs

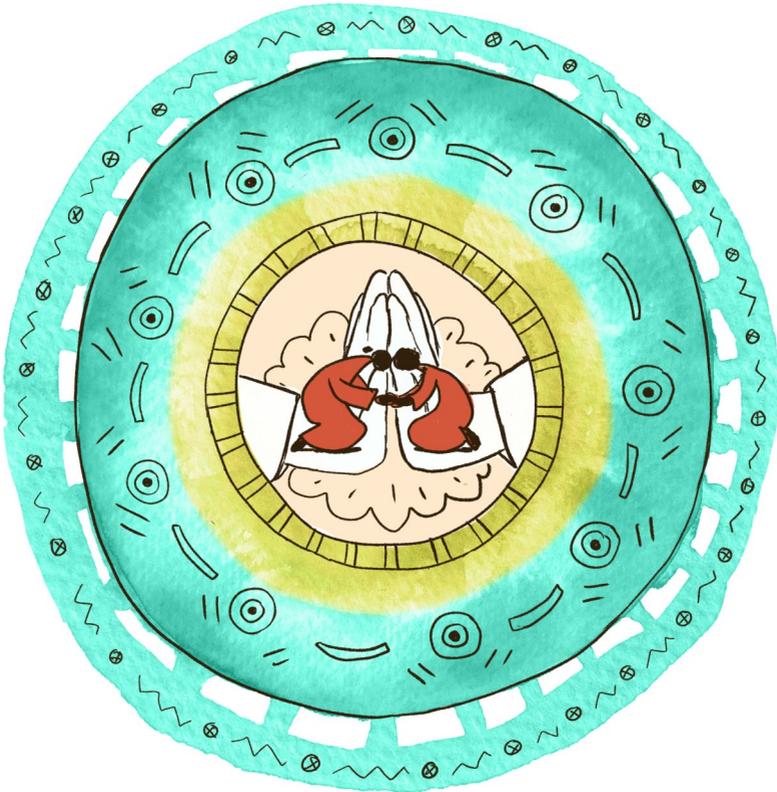
Walk in the light / Damien Lundy

Faith and Light song / Faith and Light



7

Praying together



The word of the month

"Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." Mt 18, 19-20.

We can discuss several approaches to these verses: Jesus tells us in the Gospel: ***"When two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."*** We need others to turn themselves to God: when we falter in the difficulties of our lives, when our prayer becomes impoverished, let us lean on the presence of our brothers and sisters in the same community! Then we can experience the power of prayer with our children, our friends, our brothers and sisters with disabilities. How can we love this Christ who is present but invisible? Here is the simplest answer: ***"Whenever you did it to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me"*** Mt 25, 40. May Christ strengthen us in our commitment.

Jesus is among us when we come together in his name and love one another. With these words, Jesus invites all Christians to pray together, whatever different denominations and Christian churches there are today. The Lord's Prayer that Jesus taught us underlines the unity and communion between Christians and makes all human beings children of the same Father.

Our commitment to charitable works such as pastoral care for the sick and disabled opens our hearts. We are so loved by God that we have no choice but to let that love overflow. In the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus had deliberately chosen to read this passage from the book of the prophet Isaiah, revealing the mission to which he felt sent by his Father (Luke 4 18-19). ***"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me"***

because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the Good News to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim a favourable year granted by the Lord."

In this way, through the testimony of our lives, people will see Jesus as a liberator from suffering and oppression, as a light that frees us from meaninglessness and despair.

Reference text: Matthew 18, 19-20

Welcome and reunion

Form small groups of three people who hold each other by the shoulders. One person moves through the middle of each group with a picture of Jesus, saying "Wherever two or three people are gathered together, I am in their midst". Then everyone sings "Father, Make us one".

Sharing Together

A member of the community rereads this verse from Matthew's Gospel: "If two of you on earth agree to ask for anything, they will get it from my Father in heaven". We can say prayers of petition, but in the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to begin with "Thy will be done". Let us ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of helping us to understand God's will.

In small groups

- How important is community prayer to you?
- How do we know that people like us?
- What are the different ways of praying?
- Does God answer us? How does God respond?

Artist's workshop

Make a heart garland (see page 75).

Celebration

Game: air - earth - sea: everyone has their place in creation.

The players form a large circle. The first player throws the ball and says one of the three words: air, earth or sea. The player who receives the ball must name an animal that lives in the corresponding environment. For example, if it's "air", he has to say the name of a bird. If it's "earth", he'll say the name of a land animal, and so on. If he gets it wrong, all the players change places. If he gets it right, it's his turn to throw the ball.

Prayer

Lord, guide us to live in love and communion, forming a single body of which you are the head and we are the members.

Prayer of a poor person

Lord Jesus, thank you for the friends you give me.

And until the next meeting

We are invited to pray as a family or with a few friends.

Songs

Father, Make us one/Floyd McClung

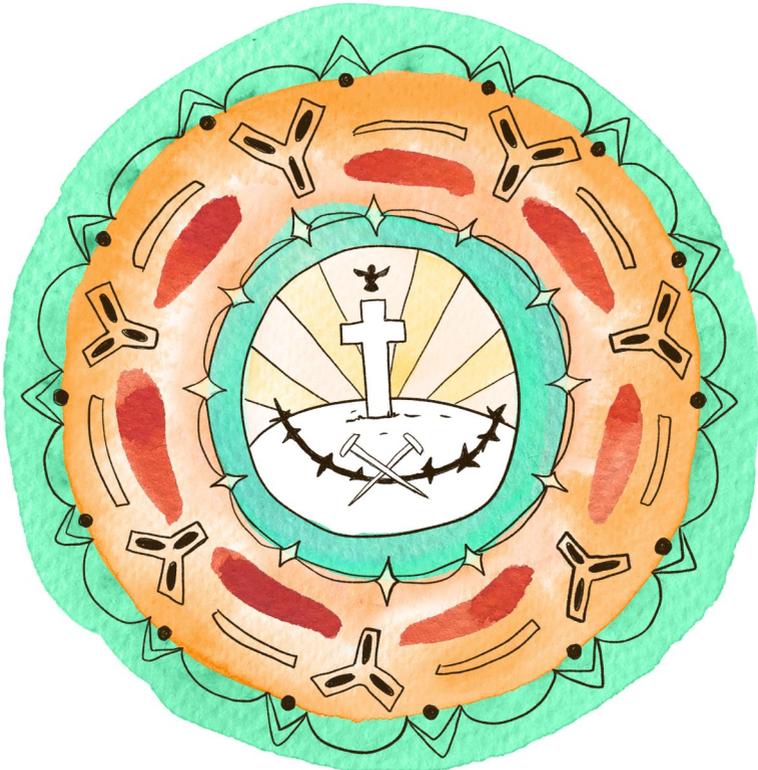
Father I adore you/Composed both by Terrye Coelho Strom

Oh Lord hear my prayer/Taizé community. Tune is by Jacques Berthier.



8

A new life in Jesus



The word of the month

Easter Sunday is an exciting day! The word "Easter" (in Hebrew: Pessah) conjures up the idea of a journey like no other, a perilous route that nonetheless turns out well. The death and resurrection of Jesus are the fundamental pillars of the Christian faith. Without these two major events, there would be no base on which to build our faith. On Good Friday, Christians of all denominations remember the ordeal of Christ's crucifixion, and then celebrate his resurrection on Easter Day with immense gratitude and joy.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ represents victory over death, suffering and sin: offering the hope of new life in God and redemption for all believers. In our Faith and Light communities, we experience this time with great fervour and enthusiasm, and this hope gives us the strength to persevere through life's difficulties and challenges.

The Church has always invited us to celebrate this event. This spring night reminds us that light will prevail over darkness, that the covenant between the Lord and all mankind is renewed, and that the living Christ is the sign of this. That's why the bells can ring out again and the Paschal candle remains lit throughout Easter. Joyful songs return to our celebrations as the Hallelujah is heard once again.

So, every Sunday of the year, let's invite the Risen Christ into our lives, and let's not be afraid to look to the future with confidence. Let us thank God for his blessings and his grace, so that every Sunday will be a day of joy for us!

Reference text: Luke 24, 1-6

Welcome and reunion

Two groups are formed. The first group proclaims "Christ is risen, Hallelujah". The second group responds "He is truly risen, Hallelujah". Then an Easter song is sung, for example "Hosanna!".

Sharing

Together

Reliving the Gospel according to Luke 24, 1-12

In small groups

- Share an experience when you realised that Christ had worked through you.
- Have I given up bad habits and chosen to be closer to Christ?
- What actions can we plan in our parish to bear witness to the friendship that unites us in Faith and Light?

Artists' workshop

Make a candle holder to decorate (see page 76).

Celebration

Game: the egg hunt

Before the meeting, someone hides Easter eggs in the room or outside, either shop-bought or home-made, decorated or just made of chocolate. The eggs must be hidden in places that are accessible to everyone.

Each participant is given a bag to put the Easter eggs in and the hunt can begin. The game leader counts down the time from 5 or 10 minutes, and by the end everyone must have found some eggs.

Those who have plenty of eggs share with others who don't have as many.

Prayer

Jesus, we can rely on you without fear or doubt, come into our hearts. We ask you to give us the strength to live and to love. Lord, You are risen! You are truly risen!

Prayer of a poor person

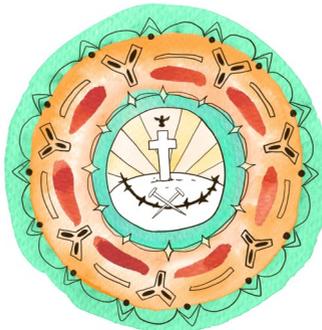
Lord, make me a new man/a new woman.

And until the next meeting

Until the next meeting, let's ask the Holy Spirit to inspire us to take some practical charitable actions to help someone in need.

Songs

Be still and know that I am God/John L. Bell
Hosanna/Carl Tuttle



The Spirit of Jesus binds us together



The word of the month

After his resurrection, Jesus had promised his disciples that he would send them the Holy Spirit (Luke 24, 49). God chose the Jewish feast of Pentecost, fifty days after Easter, to send them the Holy Spirit as they were gathered with Mary to pray. On that day, the frightened apostles were transformed into courageous witnesses to the risen Christ. They received the grace to speak without fear in different languages, and this was the beginning of missionary activities through the proclamation of the Gospel.

They set off to share this good news, which they could no longer keep to themselves. In a very short space of time, thousands of people were baptised, and this signified the birth of the Church, which the Holy Spirit continues to guide to this day. Pentecost symbolises not only the unity between believers, but also the beginning of their mission to evangelise and transform the world by the grace of God.

In our Faith and Light community, as in our lives, we are called to seek this common language of love and forgiveness. It is good to be with those we love and with those who have the same ideas or beliefs as we do, but we also need to reach out to others and bear witness to the faith that sustains us.

As Pope Francis reminded us on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Faith and Light, "*Within Christian communities, I invite you to adopt the evangelical approach of leaven: do not isolate or shut yourself away, but take part in the life of the Church in the parishes and districts, bring your experience and bear witness to God's choice of the left-behind, the little ones and the excluded. May the spirit of communion and friendship, which is part of your charism, always make you instruments of reconciliation and peace, especially where there is conflict and division*".

Reference texts: Luke 24, 49, Romans 8, 14-16 and 26-27, Galatians 5:22-26

Welcome and reunion

Upon arrival, everyone receives a beautiful image of the Holy Spirit to take home with them.

Sharing

Together

Revisit the Gospel of Luke 24, 13-49. The risen Jesus meets the pilgrims on the road to Emmaus and implicitly announces to the disciples the coming of the Holy Spirit.

In small groups

- Which of the fruits of the Spirit mentioned in Paul's text to the Galatians do I need most?
- What can I do to pick it and keep it?

Artist's workshop

Fruits of the Spirit Cootie Catcher (see page 76).

One player chooses a number between 1 and 10, and the other player opens and closes the dish as many times as the number indicated. The first player then chooses one of the 4 drawings in the centre of the dish. Unfold the dish to read what is written underneath (one of the fruits of the Spirit).

Celebration

Game: The breath of the Holy Spirit (see page 76).

Prayer

Spirit of God, Spirit of love, peace and unity, watch over our family, our Faith and Light community, our Church and all humanity. Unite us in faith and help us to overcome our divisions so that we can pray to you together and find the courage to overcome life's trials.

Prayer of a poor person

We thank you, Lord, for your Spirit has united us into one body.

And until the next meeting

Choose one fruit of the Spirit and ask God to help you cultivate it.

Songs

Community Song / Faith and Light

We are one in the Spirit / Fr. Peter Scholtes



Let us put on the armour of God



The word of the month

Saint Paul's message in the epistle to the Ephesians is also addressed to each of us, members of Faith and Light. God has sent us the Holy Spirit to help us, and he has equipped us with his armour to protect us from the forces of Evil.

With the **belt of truth**, let us each day aspire to truth in our words and actions.

Let us put on **the breastplate of righteousness** and seek to live a just and upright life to protect ourselves from being attacked and wounded.

Let us go forward with confidence and not be afraid, for our **shield of faith** stops the arrows of evil and the **helmet of salvation** protects our minds from evil thoughts. Let us not allow ourselves to be distracted by the enemy of our soul and let us remain centred on Christ.

Let us not abandon the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God; we trust in its value.

Let us take as our **footwear the zeal** to proclaim the Gospel of peace, asking for the Holy Spirit to help us.

Despite all the protection afforded by the armour of God and the Spirit, we can still feel alone and discouraged at times. That's why Saint Paul encourages us to persevere in prayer and remain constantly in God's presence.

We must always remain vigilant and pray whenever needed, not only for ourselves, but for everyone, wherever they are in the world. We know that Faith and Light communities pray for each other, strengthening their unity and their bond with God.

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to clothe us in his armour of divine protection, to make us witnesses to the Lord's Love so that the communities can continue to live and grow on every continent. Let us remember that we are all one family in Jesus Christ.

Reference texts: Ephesians 6, 11-17

Welcome and reunion

As soon as the first members of the community arrive, we begin to sing the song "Blessed be the name of the Lord" with gestures.

Sharing

Together

We try to mime every part of God's armour.

- Belt of truth: place your hands around your waist as if you were fastening a belt.
- Breastplate of righteousness: place one hand over your heart and the other over your abdomen, as if you were putting armour on your chest.
- Shoes of zeal to proclaim the Gospel of peace: pretend to put on shoes or tie your boots, then take a step forward to symbolise walking.
- Shield of faith: hold one arm out in front of you with an open palm as if you were holding a shield to protect yourself.
- Helmet of salvation: place your hands on your head as if you were putting on a helmet.
- Sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: pretend to draw a sword from your side and hold it in front of you.

In small groups

- What is the purpose of God's armour?
- What are the different parts?
- Do I dare ask Jesus to help me?

Artist's workshop

Reconstruction of the armour of God (see page 77).

Celebration

Game: Armour relay race

Form teams. The first member of each team has to put on a hat, shoes, belt, jacket, he takes a spoon and places a ping-pong ball in it. Then he has to walk (trying not to drop the ping pong ball) to a point

chosen by the facilitator, walk around it, come back and pass on his clothes to the next person. The game continues until all the players have participated.

Prayer

Lord our God, help us to put on the armour of our spiritual life. Let truth be our belt and justice our banner. Protect us with the shield of faith and the helmet of salvation, and defend us always with your word and your Spirit. Amen.

Prayer of a poor person

You are great, my God.

And until the next meeting

Let us resolve to listen carefully and to immerse ourselves in the Word of God. It is the sword of the Spirit which truly strengthens us.

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4, 6-7.

Songs

I am in the Lord's army (with gestures)/Roland St John Hanneman

Blessed be the name of the Lord (with gestures)/Clinton Utterbach



Water, source of life



The word of the month

Our God is a God of life; water is the source and prerequisite for all life. The mystery of water is omnipresent in the Scriptures. In the beginning, when God created heaven and earth, his Spirit hovered over the waters, while everything was formless and empty. Then, at the time of the flood, when the waters covered the earth, God saved the Ark, sheltering Noah, his family and the pairs of animals, by raising it above the water.

Later, God prepared his prophet Moses, who had been rescued from the waters, to become the shepherd of the Hebrew people. In the Sinai desert, at Massah and Meribah, Moses quenched the thirst of his people by making springs of water gush forth from the Rock. He then guided his people across the Red Sea on dry land, thereby freeing them from the land of slavery, Egypt, and leading them to the promised land of freedom.

The prophet Ezekiel tells us of his vision of a river whose source flows from the threshold of the sanctuary, whose waters turn the desert green again and purify the Dead Sea. This river of living water, the Jordan, will give new life to the Dead Sea, into which it will flow (Ezek 47:1-12).

The Jordan was the last passage before entering the Promised Land where milk and honey flow, a river-border symbolising the separation between death and life. By immersing himself in it, Jesus left the world of death and opened the way to the "Kingdom" and the fullness of Life. By immersing himself in the waters of the Jordan, John the Baptist offered the crowd a rite of purification, an act of conversion and confession of sins. Conversely, Jesus the Saviour took upon himself the sin of humanity by diving into the Jordan. He overcame the sin of the world through water and blood!

For Christians, baptism becomes the entry into a new life, where death is no longer the end of life.

At Jacob's well, Jesus promised the Samaritan woman living water springing up as a source of life. The Samaritan woman also thirsts to love and be loved, but she is unaware that only Christ can fill her heart. The living water that Jesus offers the Samaritan woman is himself (Jn 4:1-43).

On the Cross, blood and water flowed from Christ's pierced torso, symbolising the principles of life. Very soon early theologians saw in this the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, as did Catholic theology in the following centuries. The first purifies, the second nourishes. They are the visible signs of God's grace and Mercy.

We see that water is ever-present in our lives and in our journey of faith. In the Faith and Light boat, let us sail together through the stormy waters of life, supporting each other in difficult times and keeping faith in God who guides and protects us.

Reference texts: Ex 17, 1-7 , Jn 5, 5-9

Welcome and reunion

When you come in, bring a container of clean water for washing your hands, a basin and a towel. Also bring drinking water and glasses. On arrival, members of the community are invited to wash their hands and refresh themselves with a glass of water as a sign of welcome.

Sharing Together

Reliving the Gospel of John 4, 1-30 - Jesus and the Samaritan woman.
"Whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."
Jesus said.

It is in Jesus that we can draw the meaning of our lives, joy and peace of heart, courage and confidence in the face of difficulties; he is the living water that fills all our thirsts, all our deepest desires. To draw from this source, we have prayer, a heart-to-heart with God.

In small groups

- Is water important?
- Can we live without it?
- Is it still a symbol of life?

Take a moment to reflect together on the benefits of the water of Baptism. Share stories about the Sacraments.

Artist's workshop

An easy-to-make little raft (see page 77).

Celebration

Playing on water

In turn, each player tries to mime different ways of using or consuming water in all its forms (drinking, watering, washing, drawing water from the well, steaming water, making snowballs, washing socks, feeding animals, growing plants, breaking ice, making an igloo, etc.). The rest of the community tries to guess what they are. One person lists all the uses of water to emphasise its vital importance.

Prayer

Lord our God, your Spirit has been hovering over the waters since creation. This water, a precious gift, is the source of life: it purifies us, quenches our thirst, makes our plants grow and gives us life through baptism. Amen.

Prayer of a poor person

Lord, bless you for the gift of water and the beauty of nature.

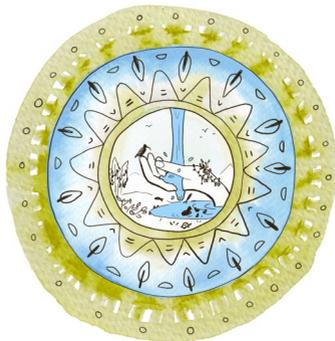
And until the next meeting

I'll show my love for those close to me with special gestures.

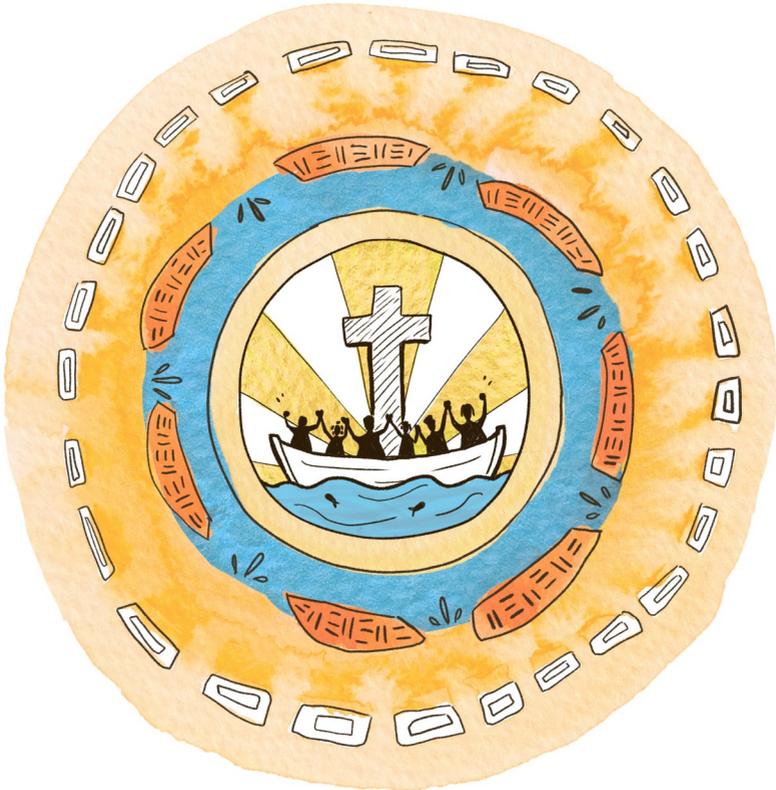
Songs

All things bright and beautiful/Cecil Francis Alexander, Edwin George Monk,
George Mcbeth McPhee

I've got peace like a river/Marvin Frey



Celebrating unity



The word of the month

This passage from the Gospel of John records a moving prayer by Jesus shortly before his arrest and crucifixion. He prays that his disciples will remain united despite the challenges ahead, stressing that unity among them is essential if the world is to believe that God has sent him. This extract highlights the fundamental importance of unity in Christian testimony and the Church's mission.

The large Faith and Light family is made up of around 1,250 communities in 86 countries. We are all brothers and sisters, united around the person with an intellectual disability, who is deeply loved by God. In our communities, we are invited to welcome others as they are, with their gifts, their vulnerabilities and their differences. By sharing friendship, prayer and service, we see how unity can transcend cultural, social and denominational barriers. Communities are a vibrant witness to God's love and to the diversity of his creation.

So let us ask the Holy Spirit to continue to show us the way to unity by strengthening us in our faith and in our commitment within our communities, to help us accept our differences and draw closer to one another in a spirit of brotherhood and reconciliation. May He renew our hearts and minds, giving us the wisdom we need to work tirelessly for the unity Jesus desired for his Church.

Let us pray for God's Church in every country of the world, especially for Christians who live in countries where they are persecuted or do not have the freedom to practise their faith. Let us implore God to grant them strength and protection, and also ask him for the grace of peace and justice so that all can live their faith in freedom and security.

Let us also pray for our families and our communities, where we learn that the most important thing is to love one another, as Christ has asked us to do. In good and bad times, we remain united.

Reference text: John 17, 18-23

Welcome and reunion

In Kinyarwanda and Kirundi, the languages spoken in Rwanda and Burundi, the term "hobe" is used as a form of friendly greeting, equivalent to "bonjour" in French. When everyone is there, we form a big circle, the first person says "hobe" to the person next to them, patting them on the shoulder with a smile, and so on, each in turn.

Sharing

Together

Reliving the gospel of John 17, 18-23.

Just before entering into his Passion, Jesus prays for his disciples and ends his prayer with a call for unity, the fruit of love. There are many divisions in our society and in our families. Are we ready to fight against everything that pushes us towards division? How can we become builders of communion and peace in our daily lives?

In small groups

Throughout the year, using our guidelines, we have walked together in unity:

- What unites the members of our community?
- How can we strengthen unity and cohesion in our community?
- What activities can encourage exchanges?

Artist's workshop

Paper chain doll to colour in (see pages 78).

Celebration

The dance of friends

The leader starts the music and everyone dances. When the music stops, he names a body part (e.g. left arm or right leg). The players have to stop and immediately raise the part of the body named.

Be careful, if he says "left leg and right leg", the players will have to sit down to lift both legs!

Prayer

Lord our God, you have allowed us to live this year together. We ask you to hold us in faith and unity in spite of our differences. We have shared good times, we have listened to each other, Jesus has filled us with his peace and we have walked in his light. We entrust to you our joys, our doubts, our poverty and our worries. We know that you love us and that you will help us to grow in faith. Amen.

Prayer of a poor person

Lord Jesus, you are our unity.

And until the next meeting

Visit families in the community and bring them a small gift (a basket of fruit as a sign of sharing and friendship).

Songs

Celebrate in every land/Kirt Bromley

Let there be love shared among us/Dave Bilborough



Christmas

Many of us love Christmas, with all its lights, the sharing of gifts, the joy of children and the good cheer of friends and family reunions.

To celebrate Christmas is to celebrate the infinite love of God, who became a vulnerable child in order to experience our humanity in all its fragility. This divine gesture transcends mere festivities and invites us to contemplate the depth of God's love for all mankind.

The early Church did not celebrate the birth of Jesus, but the sacrifice of Christ, the true paschal lamb. In the Middle Ages, devotion focused on the mystery of the Incarnation, when the Word became flesh. More people began to hear about Jesus's life.

In the 13th century, three years before his death, Francis of Assisi celebrated Christmas in a new and profound way, in the small mountain village of Greccio, in Italy. He prepared a manger with hay, brought in an ox and a donkey, and invited the villagers to join him. When the villagers arrived at the manger, all creation sang with joy, and the night became bright and solemn, filled with light and hymns of praise. Heaven and earth were united in love at the celebration of Christmas. It is said that Francis was "bathed in tears" as he stood by the manger, convinced that God was present in the trees, the stars, the donkey, the ox and all the people gathered there. Francis, in his deacon's habit, sang John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1).

Are we too preoccupied with buying presents for our loved ones? Or fuss too much about preparing the evening meal? Of course, it's

important to organise these festive moments, but the essence of Christmas Eve lies elsewhere...

The celebration of Christmas is an invitation to enter into a profound relationship with God, with others and with all creation. It is a time to renew our faith in Jesus who has come to save us, to remind us of the promise of redemption and salvation through him.

"God lowers Himself out of love and raises us up so that we may be where He is", Saint Bonaventure reminds us.

God has come among us, he is with us today and always, that is our hope.

Father Dick O'Riordan
Father Benozzo Gozzoli
Cape Town

The Feast of Light

"I am the light of the world", Matthew 4:16

On 2 February, we celebrate the "Presentation of Jesus in the Temple" by Mary and Joseph. This feast brings the liturgical season of Christmas to a close. Candles are lit and carried in procession to welcome Christ, the light that enlightens the nations. We pray: "The Lord will come with great power; he will enlighten the eyes of all those who serve him".

Forty days ago, we celebrated the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Today, we remember the holy day when he was presented in the temple, thereby fulfilling the Law of Moses whilst going out to meet his faithful people. Led by the Spirit, Anna and Simeon went to the temple, recognised Christ as their Saviour and proclaimed him with joy. How can we fail to be touched by the great faith and patience of Simeon and Anna?

Then we prayed: "United by the Spirit, may we now go to the house of God to welcome the Lord. There we will recognise him in the breaking of bread until he returns in glory."

This Feast of Light reminds me of the days before Christmas, when my mother would light a candle and place it on the windowsill facing the road. By doing this, she was indicating to passers-by that there was "room in the inn": she invited them to table and offered them a Christmas cake and a drink.

I'm also thinking of my friend Patrizia, here in Cape Town. She prepares her delicious Italian food and then brings it to people living in the streets. She knows their names and their lives. It's a story of love.

South Africa has many homeless and hungry people. Sometimes, when I bring food to people in need, they often say to me: "God bless you". I'm speechless. It's only then that you realise that a part of the light has been shared. Jesus is the light of the world, and through this light it is He who unites us beyond our differences, in the service of one another.

Father Dick O'Riordan
Cape Town

Easter

It had been foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus would die and rise again in three days to fulfil the prophecies of the first covenant. "All that was written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (cf. Lk 24:35-48).

For Christians today, celebrating the resurrection of Jesus is a great feast, a momentous event, a source of joy and peace. But for the apostles and their companions, Easter was a time of disbelief and doubt.

On the third day after his death, when the eleven disciples heard that Jesus' body was no longer in the tomb where it had been laid, they thought it was absurd and did not believe it. Even Peter, who had run to the tomb and seen the empty shroud, went home wondering what had happened.

That same day, on the road to Emmaus, the risen Jesus approached two of his disciples, listened to them at length and explained to them the meaning of the Scriptures about "this Jesus", gradually opening their minds and hearts.

The two disciples then told the eleven frightened Apostles what had happened on the road, and how they had recognised the Lord when he had broken the bread. While they were talking about it, the risen Jesus appeared in their midst. Everyone was very afraid because they thought they were seeing a spirit. Then Jesus showed them his hands and feet marked by nails, and he ate a fish in front of them. They were filled with wonder and joy when they recognised him. They then believed in his promise and in what he had sought to make them

understand: according to Scripture, "Jesus had to rise from the dead". Let's remember that the twelve Apostles bore witness to the resurrection of Jesus throughout their lives and that almost all of them died as martyrs because of this truth they were proclaiming to the world.

This belief in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead is central to our lives as Christians, whatever our denomination. And it is at Easter that we celebrate this event with joy in our hearts, with the certainty that Jesus is alive and that he walks with each one of us, wherever we may be.

Stuart Munro
Methodist lay preacher, South Africa

Pentecost

Let us admire the work of the Holy Spirit in history. We see **the Breath** (ru'ah/pneuma) **of God** at the beginning of creation: it hovers over the waters, distinguishing and discerning everything, while the earth is still empty and vague, tohu-bohu as it says in the Bible (Gn 1, 2). God created heaven and earth by **his Word, by his Breath and by his Spirit** (Gn 1, 1-2, 4). "Then the Lord God moulded man from the dust of the ground; he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being". (Gn 2,7)

Let us admire the Spirit of God who inspired and guided the prophets to convey the divine messages to the people. In the Old Testament, prophets such as Moses, the Judges, the Kings, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc. are described as having received visions, revelations and instructions from God, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. These prophetic messages were intended to teach, warn, encourage or correct the people of Israel.

In the New Testament, we also find references to the Holy Spirit acting through the prophets. For example, the apostle Peter quotes the prophet Joel when he speaks of the gift of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-18).

In the same way, the apostle Paul speaks of how the Holy Spirit gives prophetic gifts to certain members of the Church to build up the community (1 Corinthians 12:4-11): the gift of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, etc. God's children are encouraged to use these gifts to demonstrate God's love in the world.

Let us call on the Holy Spirit and ask him for his light, and let us hasten to gather the fruits as they are presented by Saint Paul: **"charity, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"** (Gal 5:22-23).

We are already living with the "first fruits of the Holy Spirit" (Rom 8:23); the Holy Spirit, which was breathed into us from the moment we were conceived in the womb, is present in every human being and reveals to each one of us that we are called to be children of God (Rom 8:16). This is how we can call God "Abba, Father".

The Spirit continues its work **helping us in our weakness**, to teach us to pray better. It is good for us to always remember God's blessings, so that we can grow in faith and love. Let us regularly call upon the help of the Holy Spirit, the Creator, the Spirit of love, communion and peace, who sanctifies the children of God, brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ.

It is never too late to be converted and return to the Lord, to forgiveness and reconciliation, to peace, truth and the freedom of the children of God.

God never despairs of his children: *"You are precious in my eyes and I love you"*, says the Lord to his people.

Father Guillaume Ndayishimiye, sj.
Province East of Africa.

The Marian Shrine of Kibeho, Rwanda

From 28 November 1981 to 28 November 1989, in Kibeho, a small village in the south-west of Rwanda, the Blessed Virgin Mary, introducing herself as the **Mother of the Word, Nyina wa Jambo**, appeared to three Rwandan schoolgirls: **Alphonsine Mumureke** (now a nun in Italy), **Nathalie Mukamazimpaka** (still there to this day) and **Marie-Claire Mukangango** (married in 1987 and killed in the genocide against the Tutsis in 1994).

She said she had received revelations about the "Rosary of the Seven Sorrows of the Virgin Mary". The Virgin Mary wished it to be revived and spread throughout the Church.

Mary said to her visionaries, and in particular to Nathalie on 15 May 1982: "No one gets to heaven without suffering". Suffering can be a means of sharing in Christ's sufferings for the salvation of the world. Kibeho is thus a reminder of the place of the cross in the life of Christians and of the Church.

In accordance with Mary's wishes, authorisation was granted in 1992 for a chapel to be built. The recognition of the apparitions in 2001 by Bishop Misago of Gikongoro reinforced Kibeho's already considerable popularity amongst pilgrims from all over the world. Despite the civil war that would overshadow the whole of the following decade, the fruits of the pilgrimage to Kibeho were many and varied: conversions, healings and numerous religious vocations, etc.

It is now easy to access this sanctuary. From Kigali (Rwanda's capital), it takes three and a half hours by car. The road is fully paved. And Kibeho is 28 km from the town of Huye (formerly known as Butare) in the southern province of Rwanda, which borders northern Burundi.

Father Guillaume Ndayishimiye, sj

Artist's workshop

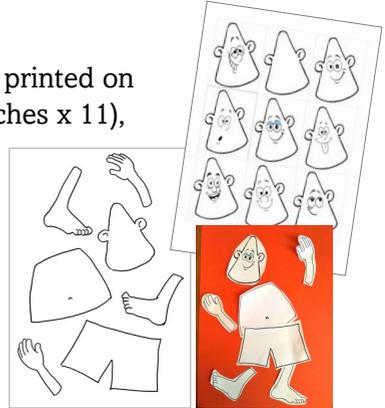
Images can be downloaded from <https://www.foietlumiere.org/en/community/guidelines/artists-workshop-2024-2025-guidelines/>

1/ Unity through our differences

Figure to put together

Materials: drawings of the man and faces printed on or A4 size standard white sheets (or 8,5 inches x 11), scissors, coloured pencils, glue or tape.

- Hand out the two drawing sheets.
- Cut out pieces of the man and a face of your choice.
- Colour.
- Make up the man on coloured paper.

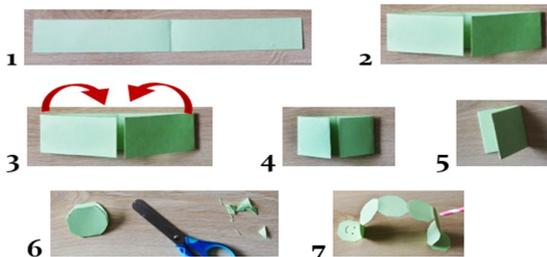


Game: Paper caterpillar race

Materials: sheets of paper in different colours, scissors, pen, ruler, straws. Make several copies...

Tutorial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yss3-upCVWM>

Cut a strip of Canson type art paper measuring 14 cm by 3 cm.



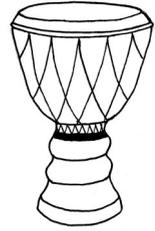
To make the caterpillar crawl, gently blow on the third segment with a straw!

2 / Playing music together

African drum

Materials: drawing of the drum printed on white paper, coloured pencils or markers, long string, clothes pegs or tape.

- Hand out a drawing to each person to colour in.
- Make a garland by attaching all the designs to a string stretched between two points to decorate the area.



Making a kazoo

Materials: cardboard rolls (of toilet paper), thin paper (tissue paper, greaseproof paper, etc.), rubber bands, scissors.

- Cut out a piece of paper and secure it at one end with one or two rubber bands. The paper should be taut, but not too taut so that it can vibrate.
- Make a small opening with scissors.
- Talking or singing in the tube, the air makes the paper vibrate and the voice comes out of the opening distorted!



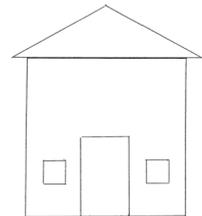
3 / Listening to each other

The mystery drawing

Materials: white paper, coloured pencils or markers.

Distribute sheets of paper and 4 different coloured pencils to each child. Each person must draw, following the instructions as they go along:

- Draw a large square in the middle of the page.
- Using a different colour, on the inside of the large square draw two smaller squares to the left and right.



- Choose another colour and then draw a vertical rectangle between the two small squares

Then draw a large triangle at the top of the first large square. It looks like a house. Everyone can colour it in and add a garden, figures, clouds, animals, a fence, etc. Afterwards, pin up the works for viewing.

Game: the corded telephone



Materials: 2 empty cardboard or plastic yoghurt pots, 1 piece of string at least 3 metres long (cotton, fishing line, fine metal wire), scissors, pin.

- Pierce a small hole in the bottom of the yoghurt pot with a pin or the tip of a compass.
- Pass the string through each hole and tie a knot to trap the thread. Stretch the string tightly between the two pots and do not touch it. Do not speak too loudly.

You can have fun getting your partner to guess the sound of the fly, the frog, the bicycle bell, etc.

4 / Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace

Decorative Christmas stars

Materials: card, star templates, scissors, paint and brushes (or white pen).



- Transfer the star templates to the card and cut them out.
- Decorate with motifs using a fine brush and white paint.

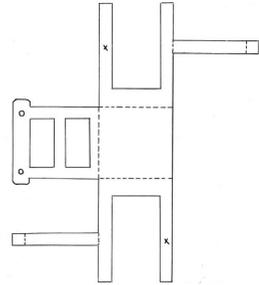


5 / Finding healing in unity

Making a little paper chair

Materials: diagram of the chair printed on several A4 sheets, scissors, glue, stickers, coloured pencils or markers, small decorations.

- Cut out the outline of the chair.
- Fold over the dotted lines.
- Fix with assembly adhesive.
- Decorate the chair with stickers, drawings, etc.

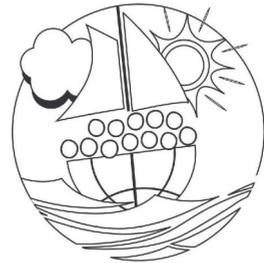


6 / Walking in the light

Faith and Light jigsaw

Materials: large cardboard puzzle board, black and white line art printed on several A3 sheets (double the size of a standard sheet of paper), coloured pencils or markers, scissors, tape.

- Cut the sheets into several pieces and give them to each person to colour in.
- Put the jigsaw together on the cardboard to create the shape of the whole logo.



7 / Let us pray together

The heart garland

Materials: A4 sheets of paper in different colours, stapler or glue.

- Cut strips 2 cm x 30 cm long.
- Fold the strip in half and mark the fold.
- Fold the two free ends inwards and staple on the outside.
- Before stapling, pass each strip inside the previous one.



8 / A new life in Jesus

Candle flower holder

Materials: 15 x 15 cm square cardboard, coloured felt pens, glue, small flat candles (tea lights).

- On a piece of cardboard, draw an initial circle in the centre, the size of the tea light candle, then circles all around for the petals, then the leaves.
- Colour the flower and leaves and cut out the outline (or not) and stick the tea light candle in the centre.

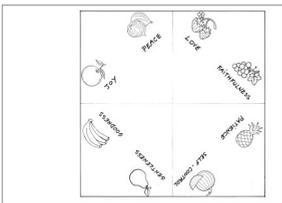


9 / The Spirit of Jesus unites us

Fruits of the Spirit Cootie Catcher

Materials: model printed on white A4 sheets, scissors, felt pens or coloured pencils.

- Give each person a sheet of paper. Cut out the edges to make a square sheet and colour in the fruits of the spirit.
- Fold according to the pattern and work it with the fingers of both hands



Game: The breath of the Holy Spirit

Materials: cut out cups to make an open door, scissors, a bag of chickpeas.

- Form several teams. Place the cups upside down on a table.
- Place 10 chickpeas per team on the table.
- Players must blow through a straw on the chickpeas to guide them into the cup.



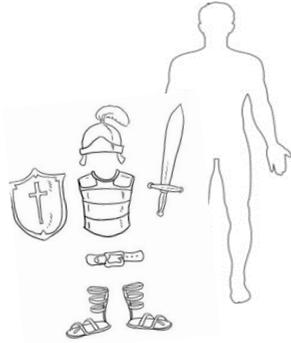
The aim of the game is to get as many chickpeas into your cup as possible!

10 / Let us put on the armour of God

Reconstructing God's armour

Materials: printed sheets of the silhouette and parts of the armour (sword, helmet, breastplate, belt, sword, shield, shoes), scissors, glue, coloured pencils or markers.

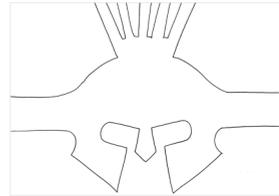
- Divide up the armour accessories between each person and colour them in.
- Write the corresponding virtue on it.
- Glue each part onto the silhouette to make God's armour.



Centurion helmet

Materials: A3 sheets of card, scissors, glue or tape, rubber bands.

- Reproduce the model on a large sheet of cardboard.
- Cut out the outline and attach a rubber band to the 2 ends.
- You can add aluminium foil or any other decoration.



11 / Water, source of life

An easy-to-make little raft

Materials: several corks, coloured paper, scissors, stickers, rubber bands, wooden skewers, liquid glue.

- Glue 3 corks.
- Place 2 elastic bands around the caps to keep them going.
- In a sheet of coloured paper, cut out the boat's sail (approx. 10-12 cm high).
- Make 2 small holes, one at the top and one at the bottom of the sail.
- Insert the sail on the spike as shown in the photo, with the widest part of the sail at the bottom. Place the mast between the stoppers.



- Stick stickers on the sail.
- Cut a triangle from a sheet of coloured paper to create the boat's flag and glue it to the top of the mast.

12 / Celebrating unity

Paper Doll chain to colour

Materials: photocopy several copies of the paper doll chain model on A4 sheets, scissors, felt pens or coloured pencils, tape or stapler.

- Give everyone a strip.
- Start folding as close as possible to the drawing.
- Fold like an accordion.
- Cut the outline of the silhouette all the way through (take care not to cut the arms).
- Gently unfold the accordion and delete the remaining half-characters.
- Everyone colours their three characters and writes their first name on the middle one.
- When everyone has finished, glue the little ribbons together to make a large ribbon and decorate the prayer corner.



* * *

Faith and Light prayer

Jesus, you came into our world
to reveal the Father to us, your Father and our Father.
You came to teach us to love one another.
Give us the Holy Spirit, according to your promise,
so that he will make us instruments of peace and unity,
in this world of war and division.

Jesus you have called us to follow you
in a community of Faith and Light.
We want to say "yes" to you.
We want to live in a covenant of love
in this big family you have given us,
where we can share our sufferings and difficulties,
our joys and our hope.

Teach us to accept our wounds, our weakness
so that your power may be revealed.
Teach us to find you in all our brothers and sisters
especially in those who are the weakest.
Teach us to follow you in the ways of the Gospel.

Jesus come and live in us and in our communities
as you first lived in Mary.
She was the first to welcome you.
Help us to be faithfully present, with her,
at the foot of the cross,
near the crucified of the world.
Help us to live your Resurrection.

Amen