

Growing and changing

Planning

Theme **Becoming the good news**

Six weeks in which we observe how Jesus takes up the mission of the Old Testament writers. We think about how we enter the stories to become the good news. The *Season setting* article on page 4 provides an overview of the theme and you can find the Lent calendar on page 5 and on the [WEB](#).

For Lent activities for midweek or Sundays go to the [WEB](#) click on the Seasonal tab and Lent.

Week 5 of 6

Growing and changing John 12.20-33

A seed has to be planted to grow into something great. Jesus shows us how we should follow his example.

This week's reading provides an opportunity to:

- think about the 'grain of wheat' metaphor
- reflect on how being flexible enables us to grow and develop.

Other Bible readings for this week

RCL Fifth Sunday in Lent,
Jeremiah 31.31-34; Psalm 51.1-12;
Hebrews 5.5-10

www.rootsontheweb.com

Week by week

Bible notes
Prayers
PostScript: up-to-the minute comment
Bible study worksheet
Children's sheet
Templates for craft activities
Further resources
Links to other materials for this week

Prepare your session

Read **John 12.20-33** and the notes on page 20 to find out more about the reading. Choose from the materials to suit the age range, length of session and preferences of your group. Integrate prayers and singing at appropriate moments.

For shorter sessions, use the reading followed by *Seeds of growth* on page 21.

Prayers

Additional prayers can be found within this weekly material.

A prayer for Lent

A prayer to build up every week in Lent.

God, who sent angels to look after your Son, Jesus,

look after us all, today and always.

God, whose Son, Jesus, faced difficult times,

look after us all, today and always.

God, whose Son, Jesus, reminds us what is important,

look after us all, today and always.

God, whose Son, Jesus, brings light to the world,

look after us all, today and always.

God, whose Son, Jesus, was to die for us all,

look after us all, today and always.

Amen.

A personal prayer

Invite the children to find time each day this week to look at something growing. It might be a plant in a garden, or windowsill box, or a weed in the corner of a flagstone. As they look at it, invite them to pray:

God, who makes all things grow, help me grow in love of you.

Amen.

A prayer on the theme

It isn't much, a tiny seed
dead and buried in the ground.

But if we love the seed
and look after it well,
then look, a tiny shoot
reaching for the sky.

Help us as we grow,
to reach for the sky!

Amen.

Music

See p.1 for key to abbreviations.

Sing

Abba, Father, let me be
Higher, higher (KS, TS, SOF)
Come, let us sing of a wonderful love
I'm special
In everything that I do (JP, KS)
Jesus, thank you for the cross (KS)

Lift his name high (KS)
Lord, I lift your name on high
Thank you, Jesus
What kind of man was this (CHY)
Will you come and follow me?

Listen

'Children of the cross' by St James' worship group, on *Let the children come to me*. MP3 backing track and lyrics available on the [WEB](#) and from www.blackburn.anglican.org.

Gather

Prepare the space

On a cloth in the middle of the floor, lay out a number of items of fruit and vegetables – between about 10 and 20, if possible. Also place one seed on the cloth. Don't let anyone touch the display, and don't mention the seed!

Gathering activity

Ask the group to sit around the fruit and vegetable display. Talk to them about which is their favourite. Do they know what they all are (especially if you put out something unusual), Now explain that you're going to play an observation game. Ask everyone to close their eyes as you move the objects around, and remove one from the display. They open their eyes and guess what has been taken away. Play this game several times, moving the fruit and vegetables around, and removing a different one, but leaving the seed where it is each time. On the final turn, remove the seed. Let the group try to guess what is missing and then show them the seed and explain it's been there all along.

Explain that all the fruit and vegetables have come from seeds, and that Jesus used a seed to illustrate his own death, as being a source of life for others.

Gathering prayer

We come to God who wants us to grow.
We come to God who created everything.
We come to God who knows us all.
God, who loves every tiny part of creation,
we gather in your name today.
Amen.

Open the Word

Based on John 12.20-33
Bible notes are on page 20.

With very young children

Today's activity offers a chance to explore what is involved in planting seeds

You will need: gardening items, e.g. buckets and spades, kneelers, a watering can, a wheelbarrow; fabric flowers or vegetables; some tiny plant pots; some sand and some dried peas to use as seeds.

- Encourage the children to play with the gardening items in the sand.
- If you have someone to work with the toddlers, they could put some sand into a plant pot and then plant a pea 'seed' in it. If appropriate, you might talk about what might happen to the seed. An extension to this activity would be to sow some mustard seed on to damp cotton wool in an egg box lid, for the children to take home.

Guidance on exploring the Bible reading with young people is on the next page.

With children

You will need: some gentle music (though not essential); some music and the means to play it.

- Invite the children to become seeds and to curl up as small as they can.
- Explain that they are buried in the ground.
- As you play the music, encourage the children to grow, to push through the soil and then to stretch as tall and as wide as they can. Ask them to stay where they are and listen to the story.

Talk about

After reading the Bible story to your group, use these discussion points.

Think about how you felt when you were rolled up in a tight ball.

- Did you feel safe? Could you see? Could you hear? Could you do anything?
- If we stay wrapped up in a ball we might feel safe, but we can't grow.
- What do you need to help you to grow?

Dying to grow

based on John 12.20-33

Jesus had arrived in Jerusalem. Lots of people wanted to meet Jesus. A group of people from a different country wanted to meet Jesus. They asked one of Jesus' friends, whose name was Philip, who passed the message on to another friend, whose name was Andrew and he passed the message on to Jesus.

However, before Jesus met anyone else, he wanted to try to make sure his close friends understood what was going to happen to him. He told them,

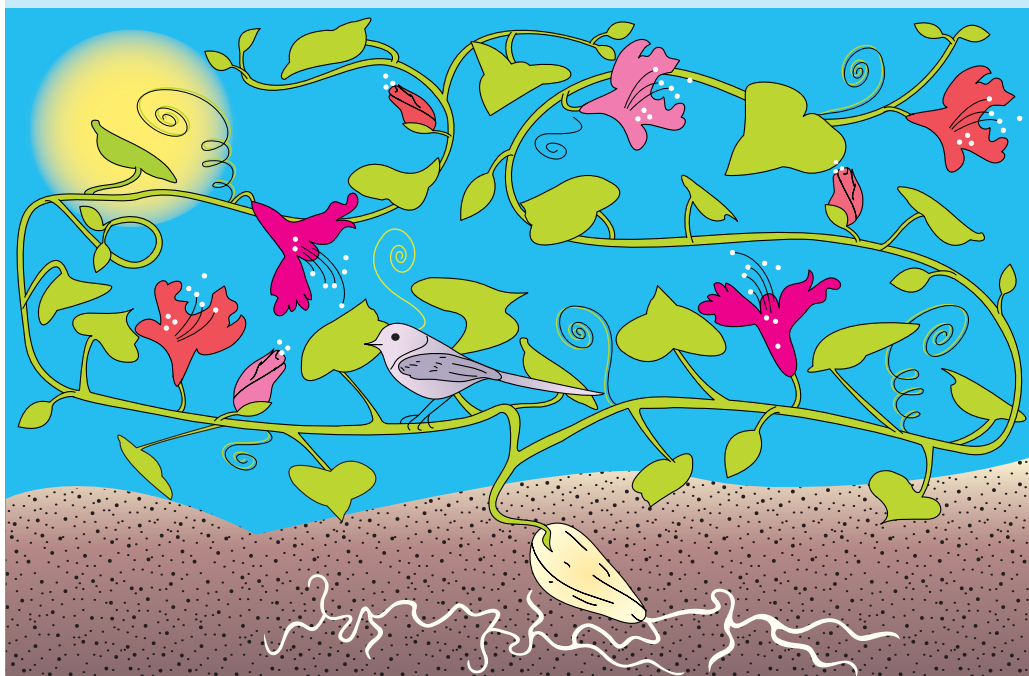
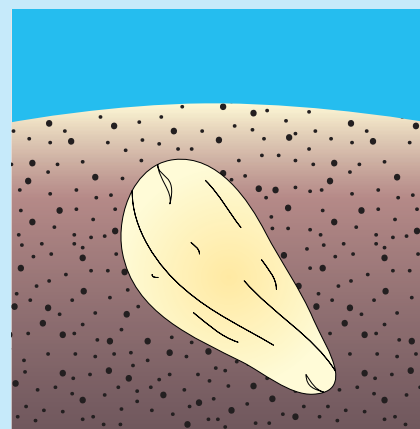
'When we plant seeds in the ground, it is as if they are dead to us. But then they begin to grow. They grow into food or flowers or trees and suddenly there is so much more than what was buried in the ground.'

It is the same for me. I must die and be buried so that more people can live. And it is the same for you. If you are prepared to let go of your life, your life will actually grow.

But I find all this so hard! Part of me wants to say "Father, get me out of this!" But no, I need to focus on what God wants me to do. This was what I came to do. Father God, make your name great!

And the people who were there heard a voice, which sounded like thunder, say,

'I have made my name great and I will make it great again!'



Bible study and response with young people

- Beforehand, read **John 12.20-33**. Read and print out a copy of the Bible study sheet [WEB](#) for each group member. There are additional Bible notes on the [WEB](#).
- Gather interviews and profiles of celebrities from magazines and newspaper supplements, to use in the *Explore* section. Use an internet search engine to find and print a few images people have created of Jesus.
- In the session, read the Bible passage together, preferably from a Bible so the group can see what happened immediately before and after the events here. Look at the *Bible notes* and *Make connections* sections.
- Use this conversation spark to provoke first reactions from the group:
What's the difference between an A list celebrity, a Z list celebrity, and you?
- Encourage people to respond to the reading using the response activity below or the options on the next page.

Respond Random acts **YP** 15 MINS

An act of service

You will need: marker pens or paints; paper or card to create signs.

- If you can, watch together the YouTube clip(s) entitled *Random Acts of Kindness Signs*. These are short videos of people holding up signs in random places (on a bicycle wheel spoke, over a balcony, on a lamp post, etc). The signs encourage attitudes or actions, e.g. Share a smile, Ring your mum, Pay for a stranger's meal, Show compassion.
- Ask, Do you think these signs change people's behaviour? How might they help them to grow?
- Invite the young people to discuss and decide on one phrase they would like to pass on to other people, to encourage people to grow in faith.
- Allow time for everyone to prepare signs with their phrase, think about where they will be displayed, and make them an appropriate size.

Live in faith

Encourage the group to try to complete the actions suggested for this week on the Lent calendar from p.5 or on the [WEB](#).

Growing and changing John 12.20-33

Bible notes

The feast of Passover is a major Jewish festival for which thousands came to Jerusalem in Jesus' time. Jesus had already openly been in the city. It seems surprising then that some people found one of the disciples, Philip, and asked him to take them to Jesus. It may have been their custom to be introduced in this fashion, or they may have been fearful of a direct approach to a man developing the reputation Jesus had. Indeed, Philip seems to have mustered the support of Andrew.

The Gospel does not actually confirm that they got to meet and speak with Jesus, however, because in response to the disciples' approach, Jesus revisits a theme he had previously developed about dying and rising; giving up life to save it and being lifted up. Now he emphasises that he will follow God's will to the last and, when he is lifted up, people will be called to respond by following his example of service.

Make connections

One of the prizes frequently offered by local and national music radio stations is a backstage visit to meet a celebrity performer or band at a concert. These celebrities are heavily guarded and getting access to them is not easy. Jesus had become a celebrity in his own time, yet he rarely made himself difficult to contact even though he knew various groups wanted nothing better than to see him dead and buried.

In a few sentences Jesus makes clear his life and death has a purpose and that it's now beginning to unsettle him. We all get nervous at major life events. Whether it's an exam, an operation, the first day in a new job or a stage performance, the butterfly feeling begins and everything from sleep to appetite can be disturbed. It was the same and more so for Jesus as he knew what was going to happen to him.

Explore

- Look at some celebrity interviews and see what insights they give into the lives of these well-known people. What can you find that amuses, surprises or shocks you?
- Work in threes or fours to design a magazine profile of Jesus. Allow space for a picture and a paragraph that you write as the magazine editor, introducing Jesus to your readers.
- Then complete the feature by selecting six of these questions and write Jesus' imaginary answers.
 - When and where was your most vivid childhood memory?
 - The most important thing you've learned from your parents is...?
 - Where's your favourite place to eat?
 - What's the most important thing to achieve in life?
 - What do people think of you?
 - What would you most like to do for your friends?
 - How would you like to be remembered?
 - What are the best and worst things that anyone has ever said about you?

Respond to the Word

Based on John 12.20-33

See p.19 for ways of presenting the Bible reading.

Tweet Ongoing activities

C + YP 10 MINS

Two activities that can be ongoing throughout Lent

- **With children:** Look back at *The Faces of Lent* activity from 26 February. Repeat this activity for this week's passage.
- Focus on how Jesus must have been feeling and the emotions of his friends and followers as they listened.
- **With young people** The Tweet could be about what Jesus said, but also about the underlying message.

Mime Meaning

C + YP 20 MINS

Mime and movement to the lyrics of a song

You will need: the music and lyrics of 'Unless a Grain of Wheat' by Bernadette Farrell. It is available through a simple online search.

- Play the song to your group.
- Work out together a mime for the chorus of the song. Discuss symbolic and strong gestures to reflect the words (especially if you have older boys in the group – this is mime, not dance!)
- If you have a large group, divide into groups, and give each group a slip of paper with the verse lyrics on. If a smaller group, you may want to work on alternate verses.
- Use the process of working out appropriate movements to explore their meaning and tone.

Make Popcorn

C 20 MINS

Activity to show how a lot can come from a little

You will need: a bag of microwaveable popcorn; a microwave; two bowls, one small, one large.

- Have a bag of popcorn kernels. Let the children feel the corn inside. Keep a small bowl aside for when the popcorn is ready.
- Let the group get involved in reading the instructions and following them, listening to it popping and the bag growing in the microwave.
- When the popcorn is ready, take the bag out slowly, so they can see how full it is. Open it carefully (mind the steam!) and pour it out. It will soon fill the small bowl, so bring out a larger bowl in which to transfer it all.
- Let the children eat as you talk about how something small can produce great things – a pot of bubble mix, rice, a drop of water and ripples, dough and, of course, seeds. From Jesus' life, death and resurrection, we are part of a massive global family of Christians over 2,000 years later.

Play Seeds of growth

C 10 MINS

A matching game

You will need: some of the fruit and vegetables from the *Gathering activity* and their seeds.

- Set out a table with some of the fruit and vegetables down one side and a selection of their seeds down the other. You might place each piece of fruit or vegetable on a numbered sheet of paper, and each seed on a lettered sheet of paper.

- Invite the children to match the seeds with the fruit and vegetables. A larger group could work in teams. You might provide each person or team with a chart with the numbers down one side and they add the letter of the seed they think it matches.

Pray Popcorn prayers

C + YP 10 MINS

A prayer and craft activity using the popcorn made earlier

You will need: popcorn; needles and cotton thread.

- Give each of the group a needle threaded with cotton and knotted at the other end.
- Explain that this is a reflective prayer. Ask them to thread a piece of popcorn on for each of the things they want to thank Jesus for – times when they have felt him close.
- Then invite them to add popcorn for the people that have helped them in their faith journey, thanking God for them as they do so.
- Finally, ask them to thread a piece of popcorn for all those people, family and friends, who they would like to know Jesus, and pray as they do that God would help them live out their faith to those people.
- They can take their popcorn chains home as a reminder of their prayers and people.

Listen and watch One Solitary Life

C + YP 10 MINS

A poem and reflection

You will need: a copy of the reflection 'One Solitary Life' (There are many versions on the Internet, a good one being on www.onesolitarylifemovie.com/), and the means to show it; resources according to the range of response options your group might like to make.

- With your group, read or watch the poem 'One Solitary Life'.
- Invite the group to make their response to the poem using art, drama, music, poetry or movement.
- They might create something that could be shown to others during Holy Week.

Send out

Live in faith

Ask the group to think about all the people who are part of their lives. Ask them to commit to doing one thing this week that will help one person to grow and develop, e.g. help someone improve at sport, or in class.

Pray

May God bless you with rain,
 may God bless you with sunshine.
 May God bless you with food,
 may God bless you with shelter.
 And until we meet again,
 may you grow in God's love
 and plant seeds of God's love,
 wherever you may be.
Amen.