



Coming through the Waters

Scripture

Mark 1:4–11

FOCUS To ponder what it means to be God's beloved children

Gather

Welcome the children as they arrive, introducing guests and newcomers. If you have not met as a group for several weeks invite children to share stories of the Christmas holidays. Explain that this is the first Sunday of a new season, the Season after the Epiphany, when we hear stories about Jesus and the disciples.

Opening ritual

Gather around the worship space. Point out the colour white, marking this as a special Sunday, and explain that the white candle is called the Christ candle, and is the one from the middle of the Advent wreath.

Sing or listen to, if possible, the "Circle Song" (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #11 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Prayer ritual Come, let us remember God's love poured out over all creation and us. (*Pour water into bowl.*)

Let us remember the light of God's love that Jesus brought to our world. (*Light the candle.*)

God's love shines out for you and me. (*Invite the children to repeat this line after you.*)

Receive the offering and extinguish the candle to signify the end of the gathering worship.

Connecting with the focus

Invite children to play a game by following your lead in a series of rhythmic actions, such as slapping fingers twice and clapping hands once. Repeat the actions until the group has the beat going well and then pass on the lead by pointing to another player, who introduces a new series of actions set to a different beat. Play until all who want to have had a turn leading the group. Explain that this week's Bible story is about two special leaders, John and Jesus.

Engage

Prepare for the Bible story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship area and use the bookmark to open it to the focus passage in the gospel of Mark. Explain that there are very few stories about Jesus' childhood in the Bible and in today's story Jesus is now an adult. Invite children to help create a "workshop" with the carpentry tools in one area and a "river" with the blue fabric in another.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet "[Baptized with God's Spirit](#)" to tell the story based on **Mark 1:4–11**. After the story, ask:

- **How would you describe John the baptizer to someone else?**

- **What are some of the things you wonder about when you hear this story?**

Invite children to imagine Jesus as he was walking away from the river after his baptism and thinking about what he had just heard.

- **What are the special words that Jesus would remember?**

Explore the story further

(*To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to their interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.*)

Bible research group The children in this group will have an opportunity to explore the biblical story further. Distribute Bibles and invite three volunteers to read **Mark 1:4–11** (narrator, John's

voice, and the voice of God) while the rest of the group follows in their Bibles. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Baptism in Jesus' Time](#)" and invite children to review the information, beginning with the section about the crowd, then about John, and lastly about Jesus. Discuss the questions in each section together before moving to the next.

Drama group The children in this group will have an opportunity to act out the Bible story. Assign the parts of John, Jesus, and other people and provide costumes, if desired. Read **Mark 1:4–11** as the children act it out. Invite the rest of the group to make water sounds when John baptizes people.

Reporting Invite the research group to report on their discussion and the drama group to offer a re-enactment of the story.

The Bible story and us

Jesus' baptism marked a new beginning for Jesus as he got ready to share God's love with everyone. The story of Jesus' baptism is a reminder that we are also loved by God and also called to share in the work that Jesus did.

■ What kinds of things can we do to help share God's love with others?

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

- ❑ **Art zone: Soap doves** God's Spirit came to Jesus in the form of a dove. Invite children to make dove shapes as reminders of this story. Have them rub a few drops of vegetable oil on their hands, place some soap clay on the waxed paper, and mould the clay into dove shapes. Let dry overnight.

Caution: Warn children to keep their hands away from their faces until the soap clay has been washed off their hands.

- ❑ **Quiet zone: Group litany** This story reminds us that we are all beloved children of God. Distribute slips of paper and invite children to write one line each, beginning with, "When I..." (get up in the morning, move to a new school, am feeling sad) to contribute to a group litany. Have them glue these strips onto a sheet of poster board and print the refrain, "I know that I'm God's beloved child" under each line. Post in the meeting space.
- ❑ **Music zone: Baptism song** The first two verses of the song "Invocation" offer a prayer for baptism. Invite the

children to listen to the recording of this song (#5 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7) and sing the first two verses. After singing, talk with the children about baptism as it is practiced in your congregation: who is baptized, who performs the baptism, what does it mean. Then sing the first two verses of the song again.

- ❑ **Interview zone: Baptism** As in Jesus' time, baptism today marks the beginning of something new. Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Baptism in Our Church](#)" and invite children to use the questions to interview the guest(s), asking their own questions about baptism too. Make arrangements to visit the sanctuary to see the font or area of baptism.
- ❑ **Outreach zone: Baptism cards** In baptism, the church promises to support and encourage the one who is baptized. Distribute paper and dove templates and invite children to cut dove shapes, glue these onto folded construction paper, and write messages inside such as, "Welcome to our church family." Make arrangements with the minister or worship team to distribute cards to the newly baptized.



Bless

Gather in the worship space and relight the candle. Invite children to repeat each line after you: "God's love shines out for you and me. God's love shines out for all to see." Distribute slips of paper to take home as reminders that we are all God's beloved children.

Pray "O God, you called Jesus beloved.

Help us to always know that we too are your beloved. Amen."

Sing, if possible, the song "May You Find Peace" (p. 26 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #19 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Blessing Send each child out saying, "Go in peace, knowing that you are God's beloved child." Distribute copies of the resource sheet "[Family Letter](#)" (p. 99) for those who did not receive it at the beginning of Advent.

Reflect

Jesus' baptism marked the beginning of his teaching and healing ministry. How will you minister to the children in your group in this new year?



Baptized with God's Spirit

(based on Mark 1:4–11)

To help the children place this story in Jesus' life, especially for older children, connect this story of Jesus the adult to the story of the visit of the magi.

When Mary, Joseph, and Jesus returned to Nazareth, the village in Galilee where they lived, Joseph took up his work as a carpenter. The child Jesus probably spent many hours playing around the workshop and learned the trade of working with wood from Joseph.

Then the day came when Jesus knew that God had a special job for him. When Jesus told Mary and Joseph, they probably remembered the messages from angels and the words of Simeon in the temple. They knew this day would come.

At the same time, John, the son of Elizabeth and Zechariah, was preaching along the Jordan River. The people called him John the baptizer because he baptized

people in the river. John was not hard to spot in the crowd of people who came to him. His clothing was made of camel's hair and tied with a leather belt around his waist. He lived on locusts and honey. And his words were astonishing.

"Turn from your old ways and be baptized," he called out. "But someone will come who is more powerful than I am. I will not be equal to untie his sandals. I have baptized you with this water. This powerful one will baptize you with God's Holy Spirit."

Jesus left Nazareth and headed to the Jordan River. He came to the place where John was baptizing the people. Jesus followed the people into the river and John baptized Jesus.

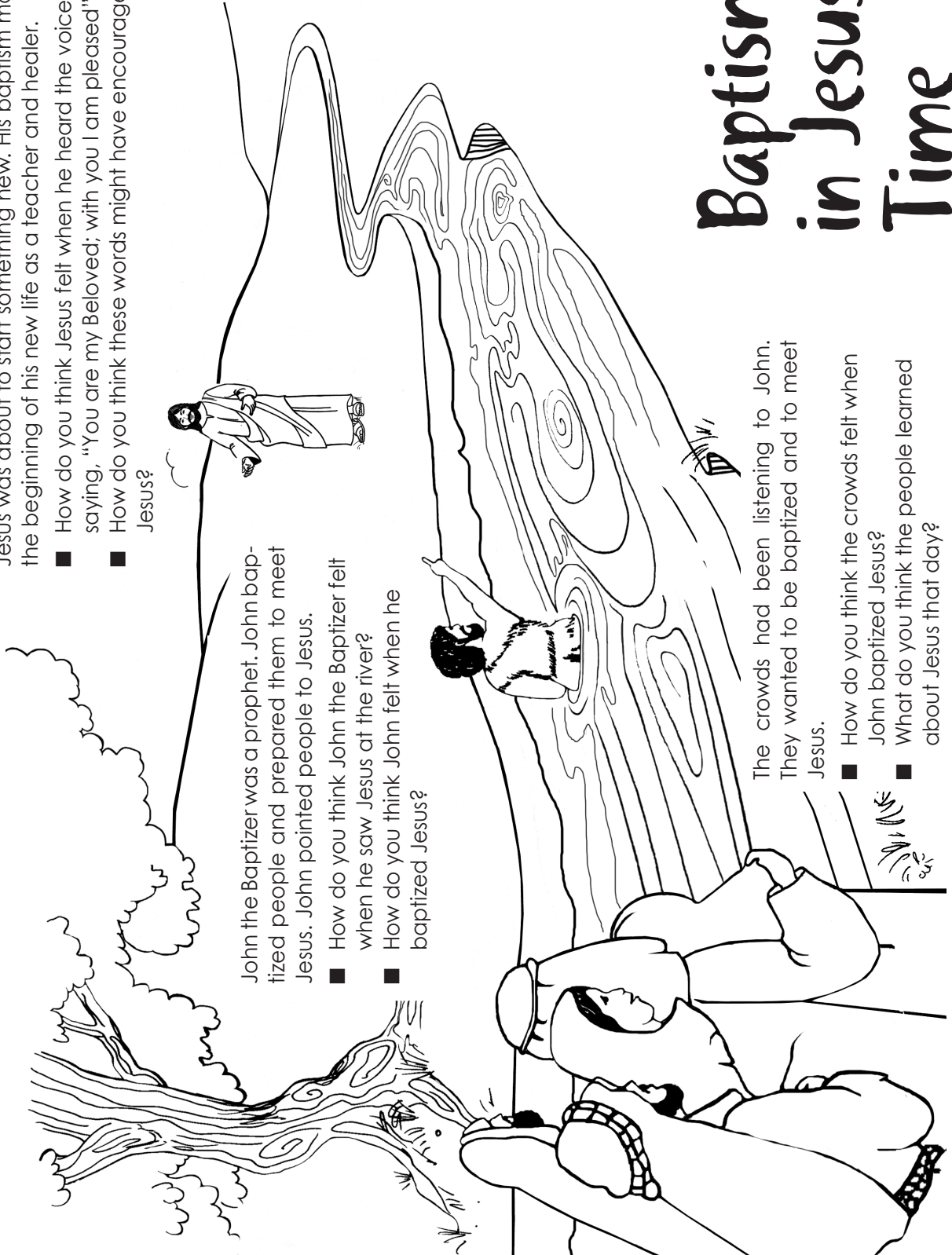
As Jesus was walking out of the water, something happened that didn't happen after other people were baptized. The skies opened. God's Holy Spirit came down to Jesus like a dove. And a voice said, "You are my Beloved. I am very pleased with you."

Now Jesus was ready to do the special job for God.



Jesus was about to start something new. His baptism marked the beginning of his new life as a teacher and healer.

- How do you think Jesus felt when he heard the voice saying, "You are my Beloved; with you I am pleased"?
- How do you think these words might have encouraged Jesus?



John the Baptist was a prophet. John baptized people and prepared them to meet Jesus. John pointed people to Jesus.

- How do you think John the Baptist felt when he saw Jesus at the river?
- How do you think John felt when he baptized Jesus?

The crowds had been listening to John. They wanted to be baptized and to meet Jesus.

- How do you think the crowds felt when John baptized Jesus?
- What do you think the people learned about Jesus that day?

Baptism in Jesus' Time



Baptism in Our Church

When Jesus was baptized, a whole new life started for him, and his ministry was the start of a whole new life for many other people.

When we celebrate baptism today, we remember Jesus' baptism. Every church baptizes people a little differently, and some churches focus on certain meanings of baptism. Today, as you listen and observe, try to answer these questions about baptism in your church.

Who is baptized in our church?

Who baptizes people in our church?

Where does baptism happen?

From where does the water for baptism come?

What words are spoken in the baptism?

Is Jesus' baptism mentioned in our baptism service?

What does the congregation do during the baptism?

What does baptism mean to people here?

What is baptism the start of in our church? What new beginning does it signal?

