

More than Enough

God's abundant presence sustains us in all circumstances. God provides more than we need – food, faith, grace, salvation. We are called to respond to God's activity among us, ordering our lives in ways that proclaim and extend God's abundant gifts to others.



Focus scripture

John 6:1–21

Additional scriptures

2 Samuel 11:1–15

Psalms 14

Ephesians 3:14–21

Focus scripture: John 6:1–21

Miracle stories are well-known, and many theories and ideas abound about how things worked out as they did. However, perhaps these musings about whether miracles happen or not sidestep what is most significant about the stories, which reveal more and more about the nature of Jesus and God.

The feeding of the five thousand is one of the few stories that appears in all four gospels. All gospels note the number of loaves and fish – five loaves, two fish – and each narrative holds a similarity that other stories common in all the gospels don't. It seems we should not underestimate the impact this event had in the lives of the disciples and so should give due consideration as to what it might say to us.

In the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John, the feeding of the five thousand doesn't stand alone; it is linked with the story of Jesus walking on the water of a lake on a dark, stormy night.

These two stories are bound by the nature of those who are in the company of Jesus. In each circumstance, the people are in need. In the first story, it appears that the people dropped whatever they were doing and just joined the crowd following Jesus; they didn't think about anything other than the possibility of seeing a sign. While there is no mention of hunger in this retelling, the people are non-the-less unprepared, and Jesus wants to feed them. In the second story, it is the disciples who are in need, as they are on a perilous

journey on the lake. In both cases, there may not have been the need to intervene: a hungry crowd will finally disperse and go and find food; the disciples may well have managed the crossing even though they were scared – after all, there were some experienced fishermen on board. But it is the nature of God to be compassionate. Christ provides food for the hungry, comfort in times of fear, offers the word's "I am here," and reassures the people, and us, that God is active in our lives.

2 Samuel 11:1–15 God acted in David's life with an abundance that sustained David. Yet David wants more. David exhibits arrogance and deceit and uses his power and authority for selfish ends. God's grace is sufficient, and God will not abandon David, but in this situation, David abandons God. The consequences are bitter for all involved.

In **Psalms 14**, the writer laments those who act as if God does not exist.

God's grace is sufficient. The beautiful prayer for the church in **Ephesians 3:14–21** emphasizes that we are given all that is needed to live our faith.

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What do we learn about the nature of God in these texts? We see that God is abundantly generous, does not abandon us, that God's reconciling power is at work within us and is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine" (Ephesians 3:20). That takes some serious thinking.

 *Seasons of the Spirit* is based on semi-continuous readings of the *Revised Common Lectionary*.

Generous God, may we see you amidst the crowds in which we travel, and respond with gladness and thanks for the miracle of goodness that your presence brings.

Lection Connection

links current events with this week's scriptures. Go to www.seasonsonline.ca and click on the link.

The Focus for Ages 5–12

While abundance may not be a familiar term for the children in your group, they do know something of what it is to have enough for everyone, and about sharing to make that happen. As they become increasingly aware of injustices that exist in the world, children often want to do something tangible. The story of a child sharing food will resonate with these characteristics. Older children in the group will also have an opportunity to explore the story of Jesus walking on the water, which is part of this week's reading. Miracle stories like these need not be explained away; instead, children can be encouraged to question and wonder

and be open to the mystery and the truth they hold.

The story of a child taking a leading role offers an opportunity to affirm the place of children in the church community. It is important to be intentional about thanking children for the gifts they bring to the faith community. Pray that the members of your group will recognize the abundance in their lives, and will see that they too can make a difference in sharing God's love in their world.

Note: The story from John's gospel will be seen through the lens of the early church, and this week's reading from Ephesians will be included in the session.

Prepare

Before the session

- ❑ Read and prayerfully reflect on this week's scriptures, John 6:1–21, Ephesians 3:14–21, and [biblical background](#) material (p. 67).
- ❑ Set up the "house church space" (see resource sheet ["About the Early Church,"](#) p. 119).
- ❑ Bring offering basket, [basic supply kit](#) (p. 2), matches, candle snuffer, and, if possible, *Seasons Songbook* (Volume 7), *Seasons Music CD* (Volume 7), and CD or MP3 player; downloadable sheet music and MP3 recordings are available at www.seasonsonline.ca.

Gather

- ❑ Bring a small bell or "singing bowl."
- ❑ Bring, if possible, the "Circle Song" (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #11 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Engage

- ❑ Bring this week's resource sheet ["Jesus Feeds a Crowd"](#); make a copy of this week's resource sheet ["Other Readings,"](#) cut out the section "God's Incredible Love," roll it like a scroll and tie with ribbon or yarn; place in the worship space.
- ❑ Bring a picture, or pictures, of different kinds of bread.
- ❑ **Bible research group:** copies of section "A second story" (on resource sheet

["Other Readings"](#))

- ❑ **Drama group:** baskets, five bread rolls, two paper fish

Respond

Choose one or more of the following activities and bring materials to set up the chosen zones.

- ❑ **Quiet zone:** copies of this week's resource sheet ["Being Generous"](#)
 - ❑ **Art zone:** sheets of poster board cut into quarters, decorative paper, clear adhesive covering, copies of resource sheet ["Being Generous"](#); make cardboard templates from fish and bread shapes; precut shapes for younger children
 - ❑ **Outreach zone:** poster board; contact an organization which distributes food to find out which items are needed the most and make copies of this list.
 - ❑ **Craft zone:** modelling clay, craft materials (such as craft sticks, pipe cleaners, different kinds of paper)
 - ❑ **Community zone:** resource sheet ["Poster Board Banner"](#) (p. 120), art and craft materials, poster board banner from previous weeks or sheets of construction paper
- ### Bless
- ❑ Bring, "Children of the Spirit" (pp. 8–9 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #4 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).



More than Enough

Scripture

John 6:1–21

FOCUS To be amazed at the wonder of God’s abundant love

Gather

Welcome the children as they arrive. Introduce newcomers to the group.

Call to gather Ring the bell or “singing bowl” as a signal to gather in the “house church space.” Invite a child to light the candle.

Pray the following prayer, inviting group members to repeat each line after you:

God of all creation,
thank you for stories about Jesus,
who showed us how to live in your way.
Amen.

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

Receive the offering. Extinguish the candle to signal that the opening ritual has ended.

Connecting with the focus

Invite children to look at the pictures of the different kinds of bread. Talk about which ones they would like to try. Mention that people eat different kinds of bread in different parts of the world. Share the bread snack together and invite children to name some different types of bread that they know. Explain that one of the stories we read from the Bible today is about someone who shared their snack of bread and fish.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table and use the bookmark to open it to the gospel of John. Recall that we have been reading from the letter to the Ephesians and hearing about how the first Christians met in each others’ homes. We can imagine that as they talked together they would help each other to remember stories about Jesus. Today we will read a story from the gospel of John about some things that Jesus did. Stories like these were told from person to person and passed from community to community before they were written down.

The Bible story

Use the resource sheet “[Jesus Feeds a Crowd](#)” to tell the story based on **John 6:1–15**.

- **What questions do you have about this story?**
- **What questions might the boy have wanted to ask Jesus about what happened?**
- **What do you think this story teaches us about God’s love?**

This week we also have another reading from the letter to the Ephesians. Invite child to take this week’s scroll (from the resource sheet “[Other Readings](#)”), unroll it and read aloud the letter based on **Ephesians 3:14–21**. When the letter is finished, invite a child to help glue it onto a sheet of poster board.

■ What does this letter say about God’s love?

Exploring the story further

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

Bible research group (for older children) The children in this group will have an opportunity to explore the second part of the gospel reading. Distribute copies of the section “A second story” from the resource sheet “[Other Readings](#)” and invite children to read the introduction and prepare a skit based on **John 6:16–21**.

Drama group The children in this group will have an opportunity to act out the story from **John 6:1–15**. Provide props (baskets, five bread rolls, two paper fish) and review the story on the resource sheet “[Jesus Feeds a Crowd](#).” Assign parts and have the children act out the story. Provide help only when needed.

Reporting Ring the bell or “singing bowl” as a signal to gather as a whole group again. Invite the two groups to share their dramas.

The Bible story and us

The word “abundant” means “lots” or “plenty.” The story of the feeding of the crowd and the reading from the letter both describe something that is abundant.

- **When have you seen people sharing generously with each other?**
- **What are some ways that we can share God’s love with our families and friends?**

Respond

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

- ❑ **Quiet zone: Reflection** The story of the feeding of the crowds speaks of God’s abundance and reminds us of our own responsibility to share that abundance. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[Being Generous](#)” and invite children to think about ways in which they can be generous with what they have and what they can do. Encourage the group to share ideas with each other, and to take their pages home to share with their families.
- ❑ **Art zone: Placemats** Jesus gave thanks to God before sharing food with the crowd. Invite children to make placemats as reminders of the story. Provide templates and decorative papers for children to cut out fish and bread shapes. Distribute copies of the prayer on the resource sheet “[Being Generous](#)” to glue onto poster board rectangles, adding the bread and fish shapes. Encourage children to draw a border around the edges. Help them cover the placemats in clear adhesive covering.
- ❑ **Outreach zone: Serving** The story of a child sharing loaves and fish encourages us to share God’s abundance with others. Explain that we can share with others by collecting food for groups that distribute food to people in need.



Review the list of food items needed by local organizations. Invite children to make a poster by drawing images of these kinds of food. Place the poster and copies of the list of food items needed in the church hall. Encourage children to invite others in the church family to contribute. Plan how the food will be delivered to the organization.

- ❑ **Craft zone: Symbol** The story of the miracle of loaves and fishes is an illustration of the abundance of God’s love. Invite children to use the clay and other craft supplies to create a symbol as a reminder of God’s abundance. They might create a loaf and/or fish shape, or another shape that reminds them that God provides more than enough for our lives and for the world, and that we are called to share from that abundance.
- ❑ **Community zone: Banner** (*stand alone or ongoing activity*) Invite children to create their own poster using symbols and phrases to remind them of the messages from this week’s reading from the letter to the Ephesians or continue working on the banner begun on July 11. Review information on the resource sheet “[Poster Board Banner](#)” (p. 120) and invite children to create symbols and choose words and phrases based on this week’s reading.

Bless

Gather in the worship space and relight the candle. Invite the children to remember how the bread and fish were shared by all the people in this week's story.

Pray (*inviting children to repeat each line after you*)

Thank you God,
for giving us so many ways
to share your love with others. Amen.

Sing, if possible, the song, "Children of the Spirit" (pp. 8–9 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 7; #4 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 7).

Blessing Send the children out with these words "Go out and share God's abundant love with the world."

Reflect

In what ways are you and the children sharing God's abundant love with each other and with the congregation and wider community? If you chose the service project option in Respond how will you follow up on this project?



Jesus Feeds a Crowd

(based on John 6:1-15)

**Tell this story with vibrancy.
You were there!**

When I heard about the way Jesus taught and healed, I wanted to see Jesus. I heard that he talked about ordinary things like mustard seeds to tell about God. I heard that he healed a little girl even though the people thought she was dead. Yes, I wanted to see Jesus in person. So when I heard he was headed to our town, I made sure I was there.

Jesus came across the Lake of Galilee and when he got to this side, a crowd had already gathered. When I got there, I saw Jesus and the disciples heading up the mountain.

I hurried to get to the front of the crowd. I didn't want to miss a thing.

I saw Jesus sit down with the disciples. It didn't look like Jesus was going to speak. I was disappointed.

Then Jesus looked up and saw the crowd of people coming toward him. I heard Jesus say to one of the disciples, Phillip, "Where will we buy bread to feed all these people?"

Jesus said it in the way that suggested that he knew the answer. You know how it is when an adult asks you a question, but already knows the answer. But you still have to answer the question.

One look at the large crowd, and Phillip said, "If I worked for six months, I wouldn't have enough money to buy food to feed all these people, not even a snack."

Another disciple, Andrew, heard Jesus and Phillip. "Jesus," said Andrew, "here is a boy who has five small loaves of bread and two fish. But that is certainly not enough for this crowd."

Almost as though he hadn't heard them, Jesus said, "Tell the people to sit down."

The disciples went among the people, telling them to sit down. No one was really counting, but there must have been more than five thousand people sitting on the green grass.

When we were all seated, Jesus took the five small loaves of bread and the two fish. "Thank you, God, for this food," Jesus prayed and then gave us food, as much as we wanted! No, I don't know how he did it.

After we had all eaten, the disciples came around with baskets and collected all the leftovers. Twelve baskets of leftovers! Can you imagine?

As people began to realize what had happened, they said to one another, "This must be the prophet who is to come from God."

As they whispered to one another, Jesus went farther up the mountain to be alone.



Other Readings

A second story

The scene: After Jesus was able to provide food for a huge crowd people really started talking about him. They had already heard about Jesus, this rabbi or teacher who was healing the sick and getting rid of people's demons. Now they had seen something amazing for themselves. When Jesus heard what they were saying, he was afraid the crowd would want him to become their ruler, and Jesus didn't want that. So Jesus left and went further up a mountain to be by himself.

The task: Read **John 6:16–21** and make a short skit to tell the story. Use costumes and include speaking parts for a narrator, some disciples, and Jesus. The speaking part for Jesus could be read from the Bible.

God's Incredible Love

(based on Ephesians 3:14–21)

Dear friends and followers of Christ:

Everything in the world, everything in heaven and on earth, has life because of God!

God's love is abundant. It is so big and wide and long and high and deep that you can't even measure it.

God's love is planted deep in our hearts.

And this amazing and powerful love of God can work through us if we let it.

When God works through us, incredible things can happen.

We can do more than we could ever imagine in our wildest dreams.

Let's tell the whole world about this amazing love of God.

Stand firm! God's Spirit will give us the power to be strong followers of Jesus Christ.

Always give praise to God! Amen!

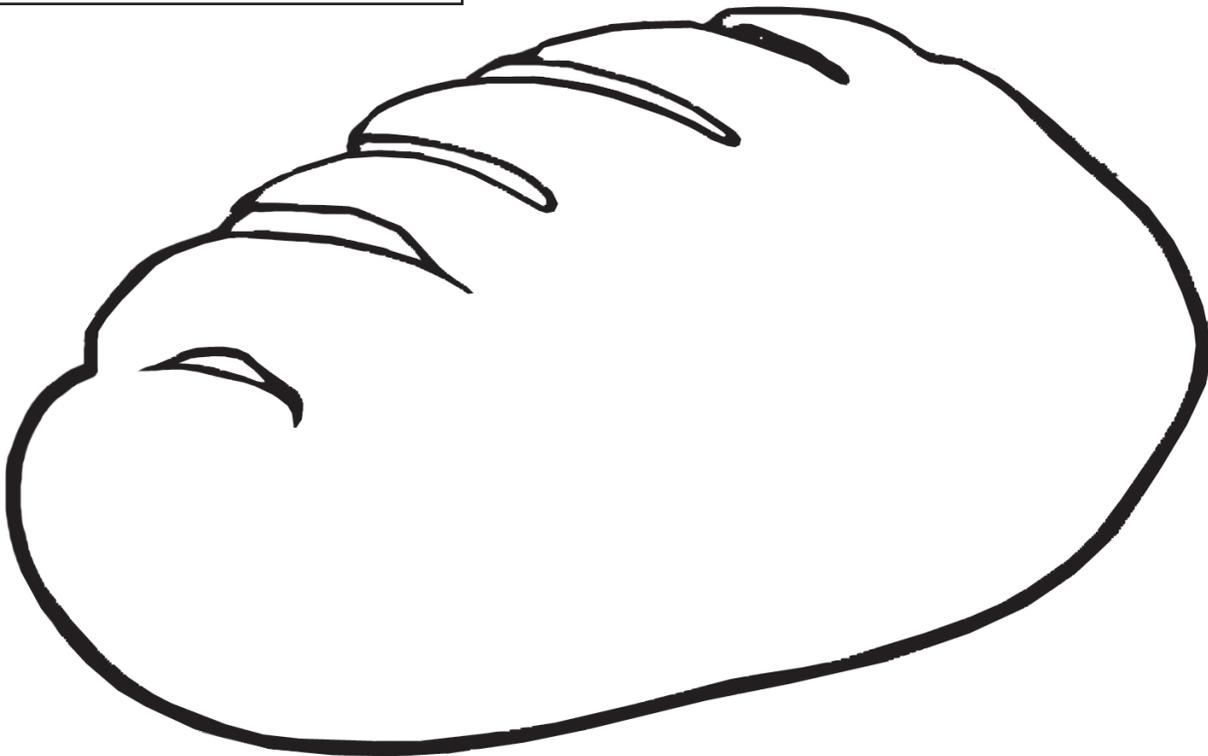
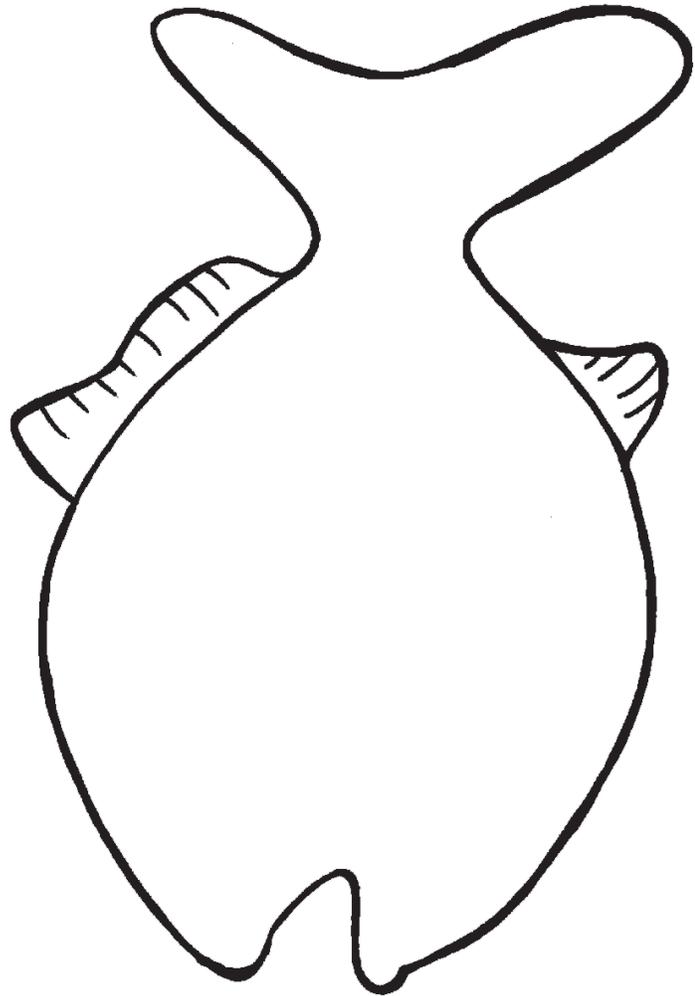


Being Generous

The story from **John 6:1-14**, the sharing of the bread and fish, is a story of the abundance of God's love. It also reminds us that we have a responsibility to share too. Think about some of the things you could do to share God's love with others and write your ideas in the shapes below.

Here is a prayer that you can share with your family:

Loving God, we thank you for your abundant love, which provides all that we need. May we remember to share each day, from what we have and from what we can do. Amen.



About the Early Church

The early church

Most of the first Christians were probably Jewish and went to the synagogue on the Sabbath. But as Christians they also met on Sunday, the day that celebrated Jesus' resurrection. They would meet in one another's homes, rather than in the synagogue, for worship and fellowship. Both men and women shared leadership in these "house churches," where Christians would pray and sing together, read from the Hebrew Scriptures, tell stories about Jesus, and exchange news of other Christian communities. This news often came in the form of letters. The apostle Paul was instrumental in the formation of many house churches. Letters in his name were often addressed to such groups. People might also receive letters from other Christian communities as a way of encouraging and supporting each other.

Sharing food

Those who gathered together in the early house churches would usually share meals together. Often they would remember Jesus' last meal in a ritual of sharing bread and wine. The leftover food from their communal meals would be gathered by the deacons to share with widows and orphans in the community and those who were infirm and elderly.

Weekly ritual

July 15 and July 22, and August 5 to August 26 the children will gather in the "house church space" for their opening worship time and to explore that week's reading from the letter to the Ephesians.

- Gather in the house church space, sitting on the mats, and putting on biblical costumes if desired.
- Participate in the gathering worship and activity together.
- Invite a child to get that week's letter from the basket, open it and read it aloud.
- The children will share a snack together as they listen and discuss the questions.
- After each letter has been read it will be glued onto a sheet of poster board to create a display.

Creating a "house church space"

- ❑ Place a low table or box in the middle of an area and cover with brightly coloured fabric.
- ❑ Place on the table a Bible with a bookmark placed in the letter to the Ephesians, a candle in a holder or small oil lamp, a plate and goblet (clay if possible), and a jug.
- ❑ Beside the table place a basket (to hold the weekly scroll letters).
- ❑ Around the table provide small mats (or folded towels) for children to sit on.
- ❑ Shawls, cloaks, and/or headdresses could also be provided as simple costumes.
- ❑ Prepare the letters by making a copy of each week's resource sheet, cutting out the letter, rolling it like a scroll, and tying with a ribbon; place in the basket.
- ❑ Place a snack on the plate each week; bring juice to place in the jug and small glasses.



Church chant

One by one, two by two (*two people join hands, then two more*)

the early church grew and grew.

Three by three, four by four (*more join, then all join hands*)

love was shared, more and more.

No matter how big (*spread hands wide apart*), no matter how small (*bring hands close together*), we can all share God's love, we can share it with all. (*Put arms around each other's shoulders.*)

One community all are we (*hold hands in a circle*) bringing peace and harmony! (*Raise joined hands high.*)

We Are the Church

(*tune: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat"*)

You and I, we are the church.

We are the church together.

Sharing love and sharing joy,

we are the church together.



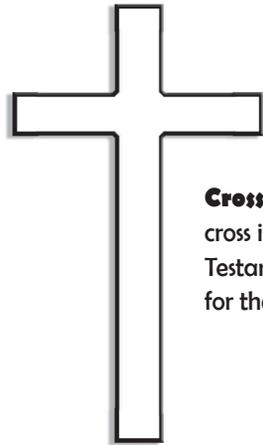
Poster Board Banner

Symbols Different symbols can remind us of the messages in each week's readings from the letter to the Ephesians. Here are some common Christian symbols and their meanings.

Dove — the most common symbol for the Holy Spirit

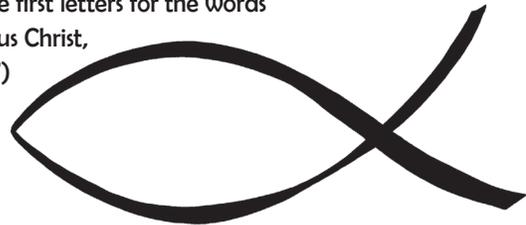


Flame — symbol of the Holy Spirit



Cross — an empty cross is a New Testament symbol for the risen Christ

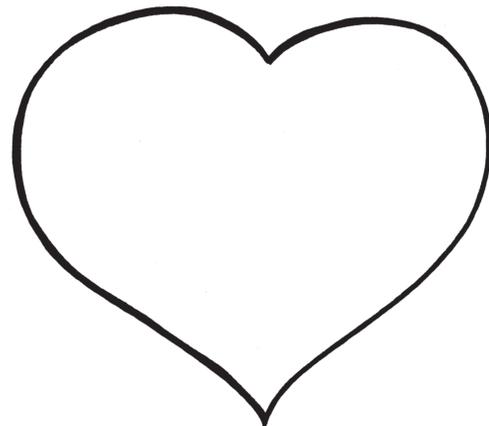
Fish — early Christians often used the fish as a symbol of Christ (the letters of the Greek word for fish are the first letters for the words in the sentence "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Saviour")



Butterfly — a symbol of Jesus' resurrection



Heart — symbol for love (of God, of Jesus, of people)



Making a banner

1. Make templates of the patterns of different symbols (*see note below*).
2. Use the patterns to cut symbols from craft foam or different kinds of paper such as construction paper, wallpaper samples, gift wrap, corrugated cardboard.
3. Arrange symbols on a sheet of poster board.
4. Add words and phrases from each week's reading from the letter to the Ephesians.

For pattern shapes such as fish, dove, cross, flame, footprint, heart, and butterfly go to www.seasonsonline.ca and click on "Library," and then on "Virtual Resource Booklet."

