

## HOME SERVICE FOR SUNDAY 11<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022

Welcome to this act of worship on EDUCATION SUNDAY for you to use at home on your own or with others. If you have internet access, there are [links in blue to click on](#) to take you to the songs, Bible reading and a spoken version of today's message. I would recommend that you say the words of the service aloud, rather than read them silently to yourself – this really does help. Whatever you decide to do, spend this time with God, knowing that other people are sharing this service with you, but in different places. Rev. Alan Boyd



Today is Education Sunday. Inspired by the teaching ministry of Jesus, in our prayers, we remember all those who are involved in education. Inspired by the teaching ministry of Jesus, we bless God and think about the transformation he brings to our lives.

### A TIME OF QUIET AND PREPARATION

*Let's be quiet for a while as we take a deep breath, collect our thoughts, and bring our experiences of the past week here. We come to God as we are – not as we ought to be. God is here as we meet to offer praise and prayer.*

We are God's family together and he knows each of us by name. If we listen for his voice, we'll hear him calling us. No-one is ever truly lost.

*You might want to use these words to guide you in a time of silence:*

**Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here. Come bow before him now with reverence and fear. In him no sin is found –we stand on holy ground. Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here.**

### OUR GATHERING PRAYER & CALL TO WORSHIP

Lord, you are here and as we gather at the start of another new Methodist year, we thank you for your faithfulness, we ask you for your guidance, we listen to your voice, and we commit to follow you in the days, the weeks, the year ahead.

Our Lord welcomes us: the lost and the lonely, the nervous and the confident, the bored and the enthusiastic. However and whoever we are, Come, worship our God.

### A HYMN OF PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING (StF 110 "In the wonder of creation")

[\(CLICK HERE FOR THE MUSIC\)](#)

*The tune is: "God is here! As we his people ...."*

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words ....

- 1 In the wonder of creation,  
when all nature shares one song,  
showing God's imagination,  
all may see his love goes on.  
Through the Holy story spoken,  
of God's people called as one,  
gathered, exiled, saved and broken,  
this we learn: His love goes on.**
- 2 In the Christ who died to save us;  
in God's risen, living Son;  
through the Spirit, whom he gave us;  
this we know: His love goes on.  
In the telling of the Gospel,  
Matthew, Mark and Luke and John  
join the Church in testifying  
through the years, his love goes on**
- 3 From the perfect days of gladness  
when the sun has brightly shone,  
to the slog of working madness,  
all the while his love goes on.  
Through the times of hard temptation,  
seeking strength but finding none,  
In our human desperation,  
mercy comes: his love goes on**

4 In the joys of celebration,  
of new birth or victory won,  
in the deep peace of salvation,  
tell the world his love goes on!  
Through the dark days of depression,  
when all sign of faith is gone,  
hope may find no fresh expression,  
but we trust his love goes on.

5 Through the hopes of our tomorrows,  
and the things we've left undone -  
future joys and present sorrows -  
through all time, his love goes on.  
In our Kingdom-shaped endeavour,  
when God's glorious work is done,  
to the promise of forever,  
God is here: his love goes on

(Andrew T Murphy)

#### A PRAYER OF PRAISE

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We're going to go on praising God in prayer. Between each section of prayer, please sing/read/pray/proclaim the words of the chant "Come all you people, come and praise your maker" from the Iona Community. If you don't know the tune, you can learn it by [CLICKING HERE](#). So, let's pray ...

**Come all you people,  
come and praise your maker,  
Come all you people,  
come and praise your maker,  
Come all you people,  
come and praise your maker,  
Come now and worship the Lord!**

God, we your people love you. We've come today to praise you, to listen to your word and to learn from you. We are different from each other: young and old, quiet and loud, serious or frivolous, tired or lively. Help us all to worship you with one heart and mind.

**Come all you people ...**

Lord, who calls the lost to be found, who seeks to know us and be known, we worship you. We praise you for your constancy, your faithfulness, your unending love, and your undiminished passion for the wellbeing of your people.

**Come all you people ...**

God, we're so glad we're able to meet with you and with each other. We thank you that we all

have the capacity to learn, to learn from our surroundings, from each other and from you. It says in the Bible, we are fearfully and wonderfully made, Today, we gather to sing your praises and to learn more about you and the way you love and care for us. Open our eyes, our ears, our minds, and our hearts to hear your word for us today

**Come all you people ...**

#### INTRODUCING OUR OLD TESTAMENT READING

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*The early chapters of Genesis are the Foundation texts of the Jewish Religion. Abram - later Abraham - is the first historical figure in the development of our faith. He's the prototype of all who dare to follow an inward call at great personal risk. He leaves Haran in Mesopotamia to journey to an unknown land. What will happen? What will he find when he gets there? Will he lose his way?*

#### OUR OLD TESTAMENT READING:

[GENESIS 12:1-9 \(CLICK HERE TO LISTEN\)](#)

#### Abram's call and journey

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<sup>1</sup>Now the Lord said to Abram, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' <sup>4</sup>So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. <sup>5</sup>Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, <sup>6</sup>Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. <sup>7</sup>Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land.' So, he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. <sup>8</sup>From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and invoked the name of the Lord. <sup>9</sup>And Abram journeyed on by stages towards the Negeb.

## **A SONG OF THANKS AND ANTICIPATION** **(STF 161 "Speak, O Lord, as we come to you")**

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*Let's sing a song of thanks and anticipation as we think about this Bible passage and prepare to turn to the New Testament shortly:*

[\(CLICK HERE FOR THE MUSIC\)](#)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words ....

**Speak O Lord, as we come to you  
to receive the food of your holy word.  
Take your truth, plant it deep in us;  
shape and fashion us in your likeness,  
that the light of Christ might be seen today  
in our acts of love and our deeds of faith.  
Speak, O Lord, and fulfil in us  
all your purposes, for your glory.**

**Teach us, Lord, full obedience,  
holy reverence, true humility.  
Test our thoughts and our attitudes  
in the radiance of your purity.  
Cause our faith to rise, cause our eyes to see  
your majestic love and authority.  
Words of power that can never fail;  
let their truth prevail over unbelief.**

### **FOR OUR YOUNGER PEOPLE**

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I wonder how often you've lost something and have looked everywhere for it – the usual place, the unlikely places, and sometimes the very last place that it should be. Then when you've found it at long last, you felt relieved, happy, and you might have called out: "It's not lost after all: I've found it!" Jesus told lots of stories about things being lost then being found, and the happiness when that happens. That's what the next Bible reading is about. It seems to be a story of a lost sheep and a lost coin, but Jesus is really talking about God and us finding people who feel lost, or maybe don't feel loved or wanted. Have a listen to the Bible reading, then try out the activity sheet at the bottom of these pages. As you do that, think of the people you know, or know about, who may be feeling lost or forgotten just now.

### **INTRODUCING OUR NEW TESTAMENT READING**

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*In the reading we're about to hear, people are flocking to Jesus, but as so often in the view of the Scribes and Pharisees, not the 'right sort' of people. Not only that, but Jesus also eats with*

*them – these social outcasts. So, he teaches something important through 3 Parables back-to-back. All about seeking the lost. The 3<sup>rd</sup> parable – which we won't be reading - is Jesus' most famous – the story of the prodigal son. Today we hear 2 shorter parables that lead up to it – the story of a lost sheep and that of a lost coin. Jesus confronts the Pharisees, the crowd, and us with a God who takes initiatives to reach social outcasts and a God who longs to gather the lost into his kingdom.*

### **OUR NEW TESTAMENT READING:**

[LUKE 15:1-10 \(CLICK HERE TO LISTEN\)](#)

#### **The Parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin**

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<sup>1</sup>Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. <sup>2</sup>And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.' <sup>3</sup>So he told them this parable: <sup>4</sup>'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? <sup>5</sup>When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. <sup>6</sup>And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." <sup>7</sup>Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance. <sup>8</sup>'Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? <sup>9</sup>When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." <sup>10</sup>Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

### **A TIME OF CONFESSION**

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We are God's family together and he knows each of us by name. If we listen for his voice, we'll hear him calling us. No-one is ever truly lost. But that's how we often feel Lord - because of what's happening in our lives, or how we live them, or in what we say or don't say, how we speak, in what we do or don't do, in who and what we put first in life, and in who and what we put last. We wander. We feel, or are, lost. So, Lord, in a time of quiet thoughtfulness, we bring to you all these things that make us lose our way...

*(A time of silence as we offer our confessions)*

Lord God, we're sorry when we wander away. Bring us safely home to you. We're sorry when we want to go our own way instead of your way. Bring us safely home to you. We're sorry when we ignore others and don't recognise that they're feeling like they don't belong. Bring us safely home to you.

## **WORDS OF FORGIVENESS**

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Some words from the Shepherd's Psalm: 'Surely God's goodness and love will be with us all our life. And we will live in the house of the Lord forever.' The Lord Jesus says to us: the words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. Hear then his word of grace to us; our sins are forgiven. AMEN

## **RETURNING TO OUR SONG OF THANKS (STF 161 "Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds")**

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[\(CLICK HERE FOR THE MUSIC\)](#)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words ....

**Speak, O Lord, and renew our minds;  
help us grasp the heights of your plans for us.  
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time  
that will echo down through eternity.  
And by grace we'll stand on your promises,  
and by faith we'll walk as you walk with us.  
Speak, O Lord, till your church is built  
as the earth is filled with your glory.**

*(Keith Getty and Stuart Townend)*

## **A REFLECTION ON THE READINGS**

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[TODAY'S MESSAGE \(CLICK TO WATCH/LISTEN\)](#)

You may have heard of the famous book on relationships: "MEN ARE FROM MARS AND WOMEN ARE FROM VENUS" by John Gray. Perhaps you've read it. Or you might just go with the title - and that's enough for now, thank you - because sometimes men might as well be from Mars and women might as well be from Venus given the differences between us (apart from the obvious). After all, my wife Ashley does sometimes say - what planet are you from? Or, more likely, what planet are you on?

Some say that men are interested - actually over-interested - in 'things' and machinery and what makes them work, and so there are more

men than women who are what you'd call 'sad anoraks'. Although it's a mixed picture and is changing, there certainly are more men than women standing around in anoraks noting down train numbers, photographing aeroplanes, polishing steam engines, collecting model buses, talking about photography, building workshops, turning wood, drilling metal, screwing screws.

I'm trying to gently lead up to the confession that I've become a sad anorak. On my day off when I was in Circuit, or on most Tuesdays since retiring, I won't usually be at home. Instead, chances are I'd be clambering over the wing of an aeroplane down at an Air Museum grinding, polishing, sealing, generally banging bits of metal and whistling - with neither a hymn book nor a sermon in sight. As happy as a sand boy with all the other sad anoraks down there.

Why did I start doing that? Sure, I've always been interested in aircraft and being around them. And everyone says you ought to have a hobby to take your mind off things and to unwind - sounds good to me. But I suppose that the real reason is that it's a way to restore some perspective, get away from things and 'find myself'.

Now I can just hear some of you say "Find yourself? We didn't bother 'finding ourselves' when I was young. We just put a plaster on it and got on with life". And you're probably right - maybe we are a bit obsessed with ourselves and how we feel and are a bit inward looking. But the point is, that's not always a bad thing, and aren't some things worth trying to find?

Whether it's yourself, or a goal in life, or the search for a true friend or partner, or a way forward, or happiness, or love, or sanity and composure, or innocence, or true peace, or a sense of self-worth, or the truth, or a true way of life or something a lot simpler - aren't some things really worth trying to find?

Human beings are capable of deeply passionate caring and very determined searching. Especially passionate and especially determined searching when they're looking for members of their family who are 'lost'. Think of those - maybe you - who as adopted or fostered children, are consumed with a passion to find their own flesh and blood and biological family. To find out who they really are and why.

Or a parent trying to find out why their teenage child seems to have gone off the rails and fallen

in with the wrong crowd - they want to find them again and get them back. Yes, human beings are capable of deeply passionate caring and very determined searching especially when looking for members of their family that are 'lost'.

The Old and New Testament lessons remind us that God is like that too. In the Old Testament in general, there's a consistent picture of a broken-hearted God, having lost his people but who keeps looking for them - he creates a paradise only to lose his children as Adam and Eve fall away from him, but God keeps on looking. Cain kills Abel, but God keeps on looking.

As civilisation begins, it becomes so corrupted that it seems as if only a flood in the time of Noah can sweep it all away and start again - God keeps on looking. Civilisation slowly builds itself up again, and then consumed by self-confidence and self-importance, a monumental tower is built - the tower of Babel - and the whole lot comes crashing down - tower, humanity, community - all come crashing down - but God keeps on looking. Both of those situations seem horribly familiar and up to date, don't they?

And then God finds and calls Abram - and through him and his wife Sarai and their descendants something new can begin. God's committed, determined searching goes on. That need is right up to date too.

Then in the New Testament, more pictures of the committed, determined searching again. Told in simple stories that we're all familiar with. A lost sheep is found and carried home shoulder high. A woman searching on a dusty, muddy, barely lit floor for something valuable. Her relief and joy when she finds it again. They reinforce that picture again of God searching as well. 'Mothering' all who are his people and seeking their good with a determination and fierceness.

The joy when finding a lost sheep or a lost coin restores wholeness to a flock or a purse - echoes the joy when a lost person, a lost soul, a lost cause is found and brought back. What about the story of Matthew the tax collector in Matthew 9? Here God's priority for searching goes on. Jesus finds a very unpromising person, a tax collector - he brings him home, onto 'the way', into his group and he takes some stick for doing it. But Jesus reminds everyone of why he's searching, why he's choosing this man, why God has so much joy when finding a lost person,

restoring wholeness to his people. Relief & joy in God's heart and Kingdom when it happens.

And Jesus is saying - if you are alongside God then you're also called to search with him for those who are 'lost' with the same energy and care you'd spend on searching for your family.

I wonder what we'll end up searching for and finding as a nation now that our new Prime Minister - Liz Truss - is in place? We've certainly lost our way in recent years. What about the lost and those who have lost everything in the massive floods in Pakistan? How can we help find them a new way forward?

Or the lost who are about to step into a flimsy inflatable with a dodgy outboard motor and try to get to safety here? Will we share in the committed, determined searching that we can't leave to someone else. The searching that God does for hope, fairness, a new life, a new beginning for our fellow humans and ourselves?

Being 'lost' takes many forms. The search also takes many forms. Some years ago, I began to spend lots of time over 3 years with a family who have known what 'being lost' is in a terrible way. On perfectly ordinary night, doing perfectly ordinary things, Jonjo, their little 20-month-old had a terrible accident. Although they didn't know it at the time, he was lost from that moment on. We spent two weeks together in intensive care, but there hadn't been any hope from the beginning and no matter how well he was cared for, no matter how tightly we held on to him, he died.

A loss of innocence, a loss of life, a loss of a life to be lived, a loss of heart and hope for his mum and dad and brother and sister. A heartache for family, friends and neighbours. Terrible feelings of inadequacy and heartbreak on my part. Tears and sobs like some of us had never heard before. Questions that can't be answered, and a flood of grief and anger that seemed impossible to stem.

And yet the search for meaning and purpose went on and goes on. The emergency baptism of Jonjo and his brother and sister in the ward. The sharing of a whole community - doctors and nurses - in that blessing next to the respirator. The conversations with other parents because of this. The baptism of the children of other families that then came. The passion and commitment for the search for the lost.

The joy as gradually some of what is lost begins to be found. Rediscovering the joy of the gift of life they've known in their son. Remembering the life that lives on in a brother and sister. Just beginning to start off again on a path of hope for the years ahead.

Finding again the care shown by family and neighbours that gives strength and restores faith in men and women. Searching for meaning and purpose and, against all expectations, beginning to find God near the centre of things.

There were many more tears to come and much more grief to live with. Time did not heal, but a possible new way of living slowly emerged. Some things are worth looking for, aren't they? God seeks our good with a determination, fierceness and passion and asks us to be alongside him in this task.

We have our part to play. Whether we're men from Mars or women from Venus, we're all human beings living in the real world, the middle of real life, seeking above all to make God's kingdom a reality in our place and our time. Searching for all who are lost, all that is lost, and bringing them home.

Maybe we're one of the lost ones who need to be found again and need to want to be found again. Wanting to be found is vital. Let's simply raise our voice and ask for help – help from God, help from family, Church family, friends and others. There's no shame in that, and there's nothing brave about battling on regardless and thrashing around helplessly on our own.

Maybe we're called to be one of the searchers for the lost ones. We'll often feel we are a lone, ill-equipped, shepherd stumbling over rocks and through thickets to find that sheep, the people, the situation, the justice that others have given up on. But God – and we – will persevere.

We may be the woman that scrabbles around in the dim light to find that precious coin - that fairness, that way forward, that wholeness and wholesomeness that no-one else thought we'd see again. But God – and we – will persevere.

And what a celebration there will be when we say "Rejoice with me for I have found what I had lost" for God is part of the search and God joins in the celebration. And perhaps the celebration can begin when the searching starts. AMEN

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## A PERSONAL PRAYER

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God of all my choices – be in my decision making.  
God of all my goals – be in my hopes. God of all the paths I could take – be in my journeying. God of all I am – be with me always and give me the courage to look for and to find my true identity in you, today and always. Amen.

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## A HYMN ABOUT WHAT WE TRULY SEEK (StF 254 "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God ")

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[\(CLICK HERE FOR THE MUSIC\)](#)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words ...

**Seek ye first the kingdom of God  
And his righteousness,  
And all these things shall be added unto you;  
Allelu-, Alleluia :**

*Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Allelu-, Alleluia!*

**Ask, and it shall be given unto you;  
Seek, and ye shall find, knock,  
and the door shall be opened unto you;  
Allelu-, Alleluia :**

*Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Allelu-, Alleluia!*

**We shall not live by bread alone,  
But by every word  
That proceeds from the mouth of the Lord  
Allelu-, Alleluia.**

*(Ken Lafferty)*

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## PRAYERS FOR THE WORLD

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God, we bring you our prayers for other people. You know our every need and will not let us wander far from your love. Thank you, God, for seeking us out, for bringing us together as we ~~to~~ give thanks for education, and for all who help us and every other human being to learn and grow. As we use our words to praise you, we remember that we can also use words to encourage and support others. And so we offer prayers of hope and encouragement for our world:

*(A time of quiet to remember world - in which you can recall, or pray out loud for our world, people, places or situations)*

As well as our prayers for the wider world, on this Education Sunday, we hold up before you: parents and all who care for children - that they

may share the joys of living and learning in God's world. We pray for all in schools, colleges & universities – staff, students, those with special needs, those with learning difficulties, governors, volunteers, members of this Church, local authorities, central government - that learning & teaching may be to everyone's good and the glory of God.

We thank you and pray for the learning and discovering growing that has continued in and beyond this Church over many years and will continue here and beyond as we share our lives, faith and experience with our families and others. On this education Sunday, we remember those in other countries whose learning has been disrupted by political or economic upheaval or war. May they once again be able to enjoy their learning in peace.

In silence we remember our own needs and those of others known to us. *(Silence)* We know that you are not kept within buildings, we know that you do not belong to us, but we are thankful that you allow us to be caught up in your concern and action. And so, we offer these prayers in Christ's name, confident that you will not be slow in answering and promising that we will not be slow in our response. **AMEN.**

**OUR FINAL HYMN,  
(StF 409 "Let us build a house")**

[\(CLICK HERE FOR THE MUSIC\)](#)

Sing/Read/Pray/Proclaim the words ...

- 1 Let us build a house where love can dwell  
and all can safely live,  
a place where saints and children tell  
how hearts learn to forgive.  
Built of hopes and dreams and visions.  
rock of faith and vault of grace;  
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:  
All are welcome, all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.**
- 2 Let us build a house where prophets speak,  
and words are strong and true,  
where all God's children dare to seek  
to dream God's reign anew,  
Here the cross shall stand as witness  
and as symbol of God's grace;  
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:  
All are welcome, all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.**

- 3 Let us build a house where love is found  
in water, wine and wheat:  
a banquet hall on holy ground,  
where peace and justice meet.  
Here the love of God, through Jesus  
is revealed in time and space;  
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:  
All are welcome, all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.**
- 4 Let us build a house where hands will reach  
beyond the wood and stone  
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,  
and live the Word they've known.  
Here the outcast and stranger  
bear the image of God's face;  
let us bring an end to fear and danger:  
All are welcome, all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.**
- 5 Let us build a house where all are named,  
their songs and visions heard  
and loved and treasured,  
taught and claimed  
as words within the Word.  
Built of tears and cries and laughter,  
prayers of faith and songs of grace,  
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:  
All are welcome, all are welcome,  
all are welcome in this place.**

*(Marty Haugen)*

**A BLESSING**

No-one is ever truly lost. Creator God, searching God, sow the seeds of your love deep in the soil of each human heart. Bring each one of us to fulfilment in your kingdom here on earth as in heaven. Extend our friendship, deepen our faith, widen our hope, pour out your Spirit, send out your grace, reach out your love so that we may grow in your name. AMEN

*Some words, prayers and hymns are taken from, based on, or inspired by, those in 'Churches Together in England Resources for Education Sunday 2022', 'Companion to the Lectionary', 'Roots' and 'The Green Heart of the Snowdrop'" (Wild Goose Publications). Hymns are used by permission under CCL.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

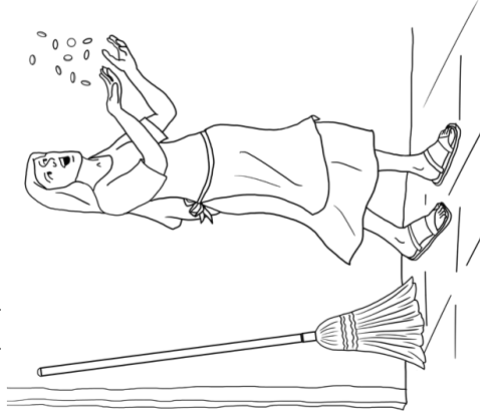
# ROOTS Activity sheet

11-17 September 2022



## Luke 15.1-10

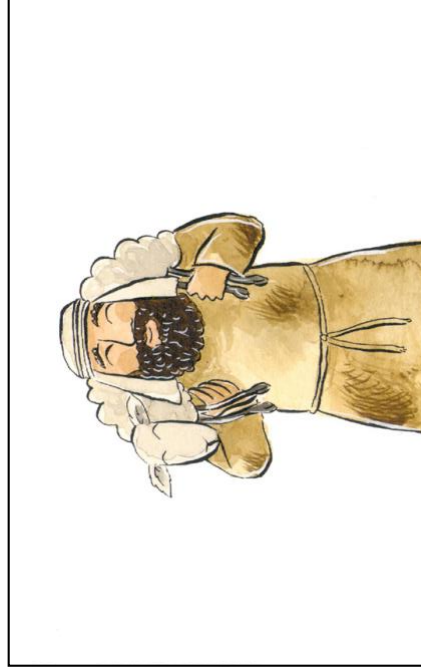
Jesus tells stories of looking for lost things and the joy there is when they are found, to explain why searching for lost people matters to God.



Found!



Add details to the background of this picture to show that a celebration is taking place.



## Puzzle

Can you find one lost sheep?



Create a cartoon strip for the story of the woman who lost her coin. Focus on why she is searching for it, what she did to search, and how she felt when the coin was found.

