

Living the Seasons at Home

May 10 - Living Stones

The Easter season lasts for seventy days, until Pentecost on May 31. So during this time, we share accounts of how the presence of the risen Christ made a difference to those early followers. This week's story is a challenging one as it talks about the cost to Stephen of following Jesus. It is also Mothers' Day and you may like to think about how our mothers have given themselves in costly ways for their children and families.

Readings for this Season of Easter

Acts 7:55–60 (the focus for age-level materials)

Psalms 31:1–5, 15–16

1 Peter 2:2–10

John 14:1–14



Read Acts 7:55–60 in an age-appropriate Bible or story Bible, or this story “Brave Witness” from SeasonsFUSION, based on Acts 7:55–60. You may like to connect with the story by finding a palm-sized stone or rock and holding it in your hand as you read or listen.

Brave Witness

The church started with a few people, Jesus' followers, spreading the good news. Then more people heard about Jesus and became followers too. In just a short time, there were many more people who wanted to find out about Jesus and live the way he taught. They all came together and were one group, one body.

The leaders soon realized that they needed more people to help tell the story, to say the prayers, and to care for all the people in the group who needed help. The disciples decided that a special group of leaders called deacons was required to care for all the people. They chose people who were full of faith and the Holy Spirit. One of them was Stephen.

The new deacon Stephen cared for and served the people well. He made sure every person got enough food. Stephen did his work because he loved God and he believed that Jesus was sent by God. However, this strong belief got Stephen into trouble.

Stephen did more than good works. He told others about Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, the one sent by God. The religious leaders argued with Stephen about this and would not listen. They did not believe what Stephen believed about Jesus and they wanted to stop Stephen from talking about Jesus. Some of them plotted against Stephen. Soon Stephen was arrested and taken before the religious judges.

(Set the stone on a table or the floor with a thud.)

These leaders and judges were angry! People told lies about Stephen. When he said they were wrong, the leaders and judges got even angrier. But Stephen didn't stop speaking. "You are against God's Holy Spirit," he shouted. Now the religious leaders would take no more. They dragged Stephen away.

They took Stephen outside the city. Even though the crowd began to throw stones at Stephen, Stephen was filled with God's love.

When Stephen fell to the ground, he yelled, "God, do not hold this against them." Then Stephen, the faithful deacon and follower of Jesus Christ, died.

Something to think and talk about

- As the community of Jesus' followers grew, the leaders needed to explore new structures and ways of being community. Some within the community took on the responsibility of caring for those who were often neglected. These caring leaders were called deacons.
- One of the deacons was named Stephen. Stephen had a kind heart and showed love to others the way Jesus did. Some who were not part of the community became angry at the way Stephen talked about Jesus and shared love like Jesus. They put Stephen to death, and the community grieved and remembered Stephen's loving ways.

Together this week

The community of Christ's followers re-organised itself so it could share the news of Jesus' love. Each person had a part to play.

■■ Together talk about what part each member of your household plays in sharing love to those in your home.

■■ Think also about those beyond your home.

■■ How might you work together even better to show love?

■■ How could you show how grateful you are for the mothers in your family?

Prayer

Love is calling.

Love is our purpose.

May we give our all to the ways of love. Amen.

