

**EPISCOPAL CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM**

**PRESCHOOL  
KINDERGARTEN**

**CHALICE**



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# Preschool Kindergarten Chalice

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Note: The following letter is for teachers and parents of children in the preschool/ kindergarten level of church school. These pages can be reproduced or used as a model for a personalized letter.

## Episcopal Children's Curriculum

### Unit I. PROMISE

Dear Parents and Guardians,

For young children, the stories treated in this unit are told with a repeated accent on these prevailing themes: God keeps the promises made to Noah, Abraham and his descendents and Moses. Also, people can always depend on God's care.

In ways appropriate to their own age level, the children will enjoy the good news of the Old Testament. A foundation is laid for their later understanding of the covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Moses in the Hebrew tradition..

We encourage you to talk about the lessons with your child. Do this by reading together the children's book, *Moses*, which tells the story of Moses beginning with his childhood and continuing with his encounter with the burning bush and his leadership in freeing the Hebrews from their Egyptian captors.

Scripture passages and excerpts from *The Book of Common Prayer* that the children will encounter are cited below. Look up the passages and excerpts with your child and show them where they are in the Bible and Prayer Book. The Take-Home Cards given to learners each week feature illustrations and text related to session themes. They also include useful instructions for parents. These collectible cards, which are 5 by 7 inches, can be displayed in a photo album, kept in an oversized recipe box, or used in any way you find helpful.

Following are summaries of the unit's sessions:

**Session 1: "Noah Build an Ark"** tells how God chose Noah and his family to do an important job. They obeyed God and did what God told them to do. (*Genesis 7:1a*)

**Session 2: "Noah Sent a Dove"** describes how Noah sent a raven and a dove to see if there was dry land again when the rains stopped. (*Genesis 8:4*)

**Session 3: "God Showed a Rainbow"** tells how God promised Noah, by putting a rainbow in the sky, that it would never rain that much again. The rainbow is a sign of God's promise to care for us always. (*Genesis 9:13*)

**Session 4: “Abraham and Sarah Obey God”** tells how God asked Abraham and Sarah to go to a new place to live—a place they had never heard of before. Abraham and Sarah obeyed God by going to a new home. (*Genesis 12:1a, 2*)

**Session 5: “Isaac Was the Son of Abraham and Sarah”** is about God’s promise to Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son, Isaac, who would be blessed by God. (*Genesis 17:19a; 21:6*)

**Session 6: “Moses Was Found in the Bulrushes”** is about baby Moses who was kept safe in a basket hidden in the river. His older sister stayed nearby to watch and his mother was chosen to care for him in the home of the Egyptian ruler. (*Exodus 2:10a, b*)

**Session 7: “Moses Heard god in the Burning Bush”** describes how God spoke to Moses in a burning bush and called him to be leader of God’s people. God promised to bring the people of Egypt into a land of their own. (*Exodus 3:2*)

**Session 8: “Moses Led God’s People Out of Egypt”** tells how Moses led the people of God safely out of Egypt, crossing the Red Sea. (*Exodus 13:3a*)

**Session 9: “All Saints: God’s People”** describes how the promises of God are kept for all the saints. God promises them (as saints) to love and care for them always. (*Psalms 145:10*)

Yours in Christ,

Church School Teachers

# PROMISE

## SESSION 1

### NOAH BUILT AN ARK

#### FOCUS

God chose Noah and his family to do an important job. They did what God told them to do. The children should be able to say that Noah's job was building an ark.

#### GETTING READY

This unit is about the promises of God. The stories are from the *Book of Genesis*. It is important to remember that preschool and kindergarten learners interpret stories literally. For example, if we speak at length about a flood that destroyed everything on the face of the earth, the children might be frightened. They may wonder during the next heavy rainy season whether such destruction will happen again.

In the story of Noah, we emphasize how God cared for Noah and his family and all the animals. Noah also was a man of faith who did what God directed him to do.

The story begins with the description in *Genesis 6* of the wickedness of humankind. At first God planned to destroy creation, but "Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord." God told Noah to build an ark of cypress wood for his family and two of every living thing. Noah obeyed God and built the ark.

Consider with care how to share stories in ways that concentrate on God's care for us all and on the obedience of God's faithful people.

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favor, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy holy Name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For Guidance

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 832

#### TEACHING TIP

At the beginning of the year young children are often insecure about leaving their parents and entering a new classroom. Invite parents to join the class and sit with the children until they become involved in the activities. Once a child is comfortable most parents can leave quietly.

## **GATHERING**

Before the session begins, prepare the gathering area. Provide a variety of activities for the children to begin working on. These could include puzzles, storybooks, paper and crayons or markers. Have a table where the children can make name tags. Write their names and let them decorate the tags with stickers.

When everyone is present, invite the group to join in saying:

Teacher: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Children respond: And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

(These words will be used at each session in this unit.)

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. To do this, gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Genesis 7:1a*:

“Then the Lord said to Noah, ‘Go into the ark, you and all your household, . . .’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

When telling Noah’s story to young children, two lines of thought are most appropriate: God cared faithfully for Noah, his family, and the animals; and Noah did what God directed him to do.

Avoid dwelling on the theme of destruction as punishment; this part of the story can come at a later time in the children’s lives. In order to be faithful to the *Genesis* account, an introduction something like the following can be used:

- God made this wonderful world and its people. But there came a time when people had begun to spoil the world by disobeying God and doing many wrong things.
- God decided to send a great flood to wash the world clean. However, God wished to save a family from the flood together with the animals.
- God chose Noah to build an ark or a big boat for Noah’s family and the animals. God told Noah how big the boat must be and how to build it so it would float.
- God told Noah to take a male and female of every living thing, including birds, animals, and every creeping thing. Children will delight in thinking of all the kinds of animals and imagining what it was like for Noah to do as

God directed, caring faithfully for his family and all the occupants of the ark.

- When the flood ended, there would be a new beginning on earth.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Crayon Resist**

Trace the ark pattern on Poster No. 13 provided in the Teacher's Packet on a large piece of white construction paper. Invite the children to color the ark with wax-based crayons, being sure to press hard enough to leave a good coating of the color. When the ark is completely colored, use diluted blue tempera or watercolor to wash "rain" over the ark. The crayon resists the paint and keeps the ark "dry."

### **Option 2. Ark Pictures**

Using the ark pattern in the Teacher's Packet, trace the ark on a piece of heavy paper and cut it out. Use a paper fastener to attach the ark to another large piece of paper. This will make it possible to move the ark up and down. Invite the children to color the ark and to add water and waves to the background paper. Animal figures (from magazines or original drawings) can be glued to the picture.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play a version of tag. The leader is Noah, and all the children are the animals. Noah catches the animals and brings them to the ark. (The ark may be under a table, in a corner, or inside a circle.) When the animals are all safe on board, the ark is ready to leave. Let the children pretend to crawl, hop, fly, or swing like the animals.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Use blocks or large cardboard boxes to build an ark in the classroom. Use masking tape to join box parts. Provide enough blocks, boxes, or box panels so that the resulting ark will be big enough for children to get into. (Appliance boxes are a great size for this.) Children can tape strips of brown paper as planks on the outside of the ark. A large sheet or piece of cloth can be hoisted as a sail. Construct a short ramp, or mark off an entrance path with tape. Remember that the "ark" does not have to be perfect; the point for preschoolers is to be physically and dramatically involved in the process of building and occupying the ark.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play a recording of rain, and/or pretend that rain is falling. Gather the children under a table or a large blanket, huddled together. Noah's ark was a dark and crowded place to be. Wonder together what it was like to live on the ark.

What was it like to listen to the rain fall and fall and fall?

What do animals do in the rain?

What do people do when it rains?

How do animals hear the rain?

What things does God ask us to do?

Who helps us to do what God asks us?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce "Praise God, from whom all blessings flow" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 43, stanza 4; *We Sing of God*, 10). Use these gestures with the phrases of the hymn:

Praise God, (*hands held out with palms up*)

from whom all blessings flow; (*turn hands over, wiggle fingers while lowering hands*)

praise him, (*hands held palms up*)

all creatures here below; (*bring hands slowly down to the side and together in front*)

praise him above, (*bring hands together in prayer*)

ye heavenly host: (*slowly raise hands over head*)

praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. (*bring hands together in prayer, bowing head to chest*)

Sing with the music audiotape for this year's sessions, *Children Sing!*

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Noah listened to God. God asked Noah to do a difficult thing, and Noah worked hard to do what God asked of him. Talk about the story.

What were some of the hard things Noah had to do? Who helped him?

What do you think they did first, second, . . . last?

How do people go about building boats, ships, arks?

How might Noah's family have felt about getting on the ark? helping out?

How is living on an ark different from living in a house? a cave? a nest? a burrow?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 1 includes a picture of an ark, a Scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Help the children to collect the cards and keep them safe by providing a means to get them home. Plan to send cards to children who miss class.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

As a concluding activity, gather the children together for prayer. The first words of the prayer change each week.

God, thank you for caring for Noah and his family.  
Thank you for caring for us and those we love.  
(*Pray for the concerns of the children.*)  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Today is the first session of a new unit. Reflect prayerfully about each child. What did you observe today? Recall something each child seemed to enjoy. Consider how future sessions can help individuals to participate fully.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

In the next session, the story of Noah continues. He sends out a raven and then a dove to discover whether the waters of the flood have receded. Perhaps these birds are common to your area. Pay particular attention to their habits, and imagine for yourself how they figured in the *Genesis* account.

# PROMISE

## SESSION 2

### NOAH SENT A DOVE

#### FOCUS

When the rains stopped, Noah sent a raven and a dove to see if there was dry land again. The children should be able to tell why the birds were sent and what happened to them.

#### GETTING READY

Noah, his family, and all the animals were safely on the ark that God had told Noah to build.

Then the rains came, and the earth was flooded. According to *Genesis 7:17*, “The flood continued for forty days on the earth; and the waters increased, and bore up the ark, and it rose high above the earth.”

As adults, we may tend to dismiss the account of Noah because of its inherent difficulties: How could it be true? How does it fit with what we know about natural science?

The story requires a symbolic interpretation. It explores the universal themes of obedience, faithfulness, and trust in God; making new beginnings; hope and redemption.

Children love to hear Noah’s story repeated over and over. In an intuitive way, they sense that it teaches important truth about God and us.

This session goes beyond the story as it was told in the previous session. Here we include the drama of waiting for the rain to stop and the waters to recede, and the birds sent to spy out the land.

O gracious Father, who openest thine hand and fillest all things living with preciousness: Bless the lands and waters, and multiply the harvests of the world; let thy Spirit go forth, that it may renew the face of the earth; show thy loving-kindness, that our land may give her increase; and save us from selfish use of what thou givest, that men and women everywhere may give thee thanks; through Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For the Harvest of Lands and Waters  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 828

#### TEACHING TIP

Children at the preschool/kindergarten level become fully involved in

doing activities. The process is far more important to them than their finished products. Any creative project may go through a series of transformations in a child's mind before it is completed. For example, children will enjoy gluing feathers on paper doves but as they work, they may talk about chickens and other fowl, or other uses of feathers. They should be encouraged to have these kinds of interaction.

## **GATHERING**

As the children arrive, use pictures provided on Poster No. 12 in the Teacher's Packet to interest them in ravens and doves. Point out similarities and differences in the birds' appearance. Use the third picture (of a bird's nest) to invite conversation about how birds carry the materials and build their homes. If a real bird's nest is available, use it to enhance the discussion. Be sure to have alternative activities such as puzzles and storybooks for children with shorter attention spans.

When all have arrived, say together:

Teacher: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Children respond: And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Genesis 8:11*:

“... and the dove came back to (Noah) in the evening, and there in its beak a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Review the story of Noah and the ark as it was shared at the previous session. Continue with these added details:

- It rained for forty days and forty nights. When the rain stopped, Noah wanted to know whether it was safe to leave the ark.
- Tell the story of the birds Noah sent out:
  - After forty days, Noah opened the window of the ark and sent out a raven. The raven flies and flies, but finally must come back.
  - Then a dove flies out, but could find not place to land. So Noah put out his hand and brought it back into the ark.
  - Later the dove is sent out again. This time it comes back with an olive leaf. So Noah knew that the waters were going away.

- After seven days, the dove is sent out again, but this time, it does not return.
- Tell and retell the story, inviting the children to participate by describing the outcome of each of the four flights from the ark.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Paper Doves**

Ahead of time, prepare a dove for each child (using the pattern provided on Poster No. 13 in the Teacher’s Packet). The children can attach their doves to sheets of construction paper. A piece of leaf or a small twig may be glued to each dove’s beak. Either real or paper feathers can be glued on the birds.

### **Option 2. Rain and Sunshine Pictures**

For each child, provide two inexpensive paper plates. On one of their plates, the children will draw Noah’s ark in the rain. On the other, they can draw the ark with the sun shining. When the drawings have been completed, staple each child’s two plates together over a craft stick or tongue depressor. The children can retell the story using their completed projects.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play “Weather.” The leader calls out a kind of weather, and the children respond with appropriate movement and/or sounds. When it is windy, they can sway back and forth and make wind noises. For rain, they can cover their heads and run in place. For snow, they can shiver and hug themselves tightly. For hail, they can clap and stamp their feet. For sunny weather, they can sit down and smile.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Act out the story, allowing class members to take turns being the raven and the dove. Plan a way to involve as many individuals as possible—by asking a different child or pairs of children to role-play each flight.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Wonder together about the birds and their flight from the ark.

What would it be like to fly over so much water?

Would the birds come back? Why, or why not?

The dove brought back an olive branch as a sign. Why was this good

news? How would a bird get a piece of leaf or a branch to bring back? What else might the dove have brought back?

Wonder about what happened to the dove when it did not return.

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing again “Praise God, from whom all blessings flow” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 43, stanza 4; *We Sing of God*, 10). Use the same gestures with the phrases outlined in Session 1.

Repeat the hymn and movements as long as children are interested, using the *Children Sing!* tape.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Noah and his family and the animals had been in the ark for a long time. Noah and everyone waited and waited for the rain to stop so they could go outside.

What might Noah and his family have done while waiting for the birds to return? How would they have felt?

Are there times you have waited for something?

How does waiting feel?

What does it feel like when the waiting is over?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 2 has a picture of a dove, a Scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather the children together for prayer:

Thank you, God, for the birds of the air,  
especially the raven and the dove.

*(Pray for the concerns of the children.)*

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

How did the children respond to the continuing story of Noah and the ark? Did any of them know other versions they wanted to share? If so, what did their contributions indicate about their understanding? How could you include their ideas or correct any misconceptions?

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session focuses on the rainbow and the promise God made to Noah. Spend some time thinking about rainbows. Look around and make note of any rainbows you see, either real or reproduced. In what connection is the symbol of a rainbow used?

# PROMISE

## SESSION 3

### GOD SHOWED A RAINBOW

#### FOCUS

God promised Noah, by putting a rainbow in the sky, that it would never rain that much again. The children should be able to tell that the rainbow is a sign of God's promise to care for us always.

#### GETTING READY

The *Book of Genesis* introduces us to the theme of covenant. God makes promises, and the people respond with a promise to be obedient and faithful. The Noah story presents us with the first example of covenant.

In the story for this session, Noah and his family enter a new world. They have high expectations and look forward to a new beginning. The family and the animals begin to find new homes. The birds make nests, the animals find their lairs, and the people build new homes and plant gardens.

In this setting, God makes a covenant with Noah that “never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” (*Genesis 9:11c*). The sign of the covenant was a rainbow in the clouds.

In the recurring theme of covenant, the ultimate promise of God is made through the coming of Jesus. We remember this at every baptism as we renew our own covenant to be obedient and faithful to God.

Young children understand promises in self-centered terms (“I promise” and “you promise”). The rainbow in Noah's story is a concrete symbol that God made a promise that would always be kept. It is a story that will help children understand God's promises in a larger sense.

Almighty God, you have placed in the skies the sign of your covenant with all living things: Grant that we, who are saved through water and the Spirit, may worthily offer to you our sacrifice of thanksgiving; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Easter Vigil

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 289

## TEACHING TIP

Creating options offer an opportunity to observe how young children approach art activities. Note the differences between the approaches of three- and five-year-olds. The youngest class members will be likely to combine all colors, resulting in a picture that is mostly brown. Older children may show ability to separate the colors; some of them will be able to create realistic rainbows.

## GATHERING

Display the full poster of a rainbow, from the Teacher's Packet, Poster No. 1. Collect several other items that can be arranged in a rainbow display (such as crayons, markers, pieces of construction paper, or balls of yarn), and place them near the poster. As the children arrive, invite them to put the items in the order of the colors in the rainbow. Or have a colored box for each rainbow color for the items. Provide books and puzzles as well.

Gather the group and say:

Teacher: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Children respond: And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

## STORY

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Genesis 9:13*:

“I set my (rain)bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Begin by reviewing the portions of Noah's story from the two previous sessions.

- Continue by sharing the excitement and happiness the ark's occupants felt when they realized that dry land had appeared. They could now leave the ark and begin a normal life again.

- Describe the scene as all the animals in pairs walk off the ark. Imagine them as they find new homes appropriate to their species (birds looking for trees to nest in, small animals looking for holes and caves, larger animals looking for soft places to lie down).

- Picture Noah’s family thinking about how to start over by building new houses, planting gardens, and preparing foods. They were excited about how new everything looked and were ready for a new beginning.
- Then a wonderful thing happened. God placed a rainbow in the sky and made a promise to be kept forever: God would never again send a flood to cover the whole earth.
- The rainbow was God’s promise to take care of people and all the creatures of the earth.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Rainbow Collage**

Let the children tear or cut up pieces of construction paper in the colors of a rainbow and glue them to a blue background. The children may add cotton balls for clouds in the surrounding sky.

### **Option 2. Rainbow Finger-paint**

Give each child a piece of finger-paint paper, or a slick piece of shelf paper. Drop three blobs of finger-paint in primary colors onto the paper. Encourage the children to create rainbows. Use old shirts turned backwards for painting smocks.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play a variation on the game, “Red light, Green light.” The leader signals the group to stop moving when they hear “Rain,” and to begin moving on “Rainbow.” If the game is to be played in small space, use simple hand and body motions (standing in place). Where space permits, set up a long course between the leader and the group of children.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Enjoy a “Rainbow” feast of fruit and vegetables in various colors. Possibilities: red berries, orange carrots, yellow squash slices, green lettuce, blueberries, purple cabbage. Small pieces or slices of each food will be sufficient. Children and teachers can arrange the snacks on white paper plates to highlight the colors. Some of the questions in the Conversation section (below) could be used while all are eating and socializing. Use the hymn suggested under Music as a blessing.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Locate one or more prisms the children can use to produce rainbows. Sunlight from windows or flashlights can be used to produce the colors on walls, ceiling, and floor. Or, gather some pictures of rainbows. Wonder:

Where do all the colors come from?

How long, how high, how far away, how big can rainbows be?

Can anyone touch a rainbow? Why, or why not?

What do you think of when you see a rainbow?

Why do people like rainbows?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Repeat the use of “Praise God from whom all blessings flow” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 43; *We Sing of God*, 10). Gestures to accompany the hymn are provided in Session 1. Use the tape *Children Sing!* to enrich the experience.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

When Noah saw the rainbow in the sky and heard God’s promise, he was very thankful. God promised to take care of Noah, and Noah promised to worship God always.

What is a promise?

What was the promise God made to Noah?

What kinds of promises do you make?

Who makes promises to you?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 3 has a picture of a rainbow, a Scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Change only the first line for the closing prayer ritual:

God, we thank you for rainbows and promises.

*(Pray for any needs the children may express.)*

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:  
Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Food is fun for children, and can be a great help for community building in a group. Preparing food and eating together is a good time for conversation and getting acquainted. If the class had a "Rainbow feast," what did you observe about their interaction as they tried the different foods?

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session focuses on journeys. Think about trips you took as a child. What were they like for you? Imagine how you would feel as a child on a long journey.

# PROMISE

## SESSION 4

### ABRAHAM AND SARAH OBEY GOD

#### FOCUS

God asked Abraham and Sarah to go to a new place to live—a place they had never heard of before. They did what God told them to do. The children should be able to tell how Abraham and Sarah obeyed God.

#### GETTING READY

The story of God’s people, which is also our story, begins with the call of Abraham. God said to Abram (Abraham’s name before God changed it), “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you” (*Genesis 12:1b*). It must have been difficult to leave the place where Abram had always lived and the people that he loved and cared about.

But Abram did not hesitate. He set off immediately with his wife Sarai (later called Sarah), his nephew Lot, and other family members for the land of Canaan.

From the story of Abraham and his wife, Sarah, we derive our first understanding of the covenant relationship between God and the chosen people. The emphasis is on their faithful obedience to God’s call.

Remember, O Lord, what you have wrought in us and not what we deserve; and, as you have called us to your service, make us worthy of our calling; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Proper 1

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 228

#### TEACHING TIP

The best atmosphere for learning encourages young children to be attentive and to participate. Occasionally it may be necessary to help a child respond in a positive manner. Teachers can do this by reminding each one that in our class we take care of one another and all the things we use. Give children specific, positive directions, such as “Sit down in this place,” “Walk to the table,” and “Your turn to talk will come when I have finished.”

## GATHERING

Prepare a small traveling bag that contains some typical items one would take on a trip. As the children arrive, invite them to examine the items and discuss what they might pack if they were going on a journey. Or, cut out pictures of things you might take on a trip from magazines. Give each child a “suitcase” made from a folded piece of construction paper. Let them “pack” for the journey by gluing the pictures to the paper.

When all have arrived, gather the group and say:

Teacher: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Children respond: And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

## STORY

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Genesis 12:1a, 2*:

“Now the Lord said to (Abraham), . . . And 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.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

The focus in this story is on the faithfulness of Abraham and Sarah in obeying God’s call. Some of the details of the story, such as the changes in their names and the various place names mentioned in the biblical account, will have no real meaning for young children; these can wait for a later time.

- Begin by describing how Abraham lived in a land where his family had been for a long, long time.

- God asked him to leave his home and travel to a far-away place. Abraham wondered where God wanted his family to go. Who would go along? What would they would take with them?

- Explain what it was like to move in those days. There were no trucks or vans or modern roads. Everything had to be carried on the backs of animals or people. There were no hotels or motels. Travelers had to take their own tents to camp in. There were no restaurants or fast-food outlets. There wasn’t any ice or coolers, so food needed to be prepared each day.

- At the end of the day, they had to take care of the animals that carried their belongings and then set up tents. Fires would be started to cook the food.

- The next morning, the tents had to be folded, and the animals prepared

for the journey. After breakfast was made, someone had to prepare food for lunch. Finally they would get underway.

- Even though Abraham and Sarah had always lived in the same place, they obeyed God and moved to a new land.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Abraham's Tent**

Use the tent pattern from Poster No. 13 in the Teacher's Packet. Give each child a piece of construction paper on which to trace and cut out a tent. Glue the tent to another sheet of paper, and fold back the flaps on the dotted line. The picture can be colored with crayons or magic markers. Children may add details if they wish.

### **Option 2. Sarah's Bag**

Give each child a large square of muslin or plain, light-colored cloth. The children can decorate the cloth with markers or crayons. Cut or punch a hole in each corner of the cloth. Bring the corners together and lace a string, ribbon, or yarn through the holes, tying it to make a handle. The children will have a bag to pack for a journey.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play a game called "Sarah and Abraham packed for the journey." The teacher explains that all are going to help Abraham and Sarah get ready for their journey. Use a small sack or suitcase, and pretend to put something in it that would be needed for their journey. For example, "Sarah and Abraham packed a pillow for their journey." Pass the suitcase to the next child who adds something. Keep passing the suitcase around. Five-year-olds may enjoy trying to remember the items that were named before their turns. Children can help one another remember the items when the list gets long, by chanting together. End the game by saying something like, "The suitcase is full. It's time to go on the journey."

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Set up an obstacle course with chairs, boxes, tables, draped cloths, and pictures of biblical lands in the time of Sarah and Abraham. Children can take turns being Sarah, Abraham, fellow travelers, and loaded camels and donkeys to travel the course. Use simple dress-up clothes for the people on the journey. Narrate encounters with sandstorms, looking for water, pitching a tent, unloading and loading the animals, and other events of a journey.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Imagine what it would be like to go on a long journey. Wonder about:  
Where might we go? What kinds of things might we see on the way?  
How will we eat on the trip? How will we sleep?  
How long will the journey take? How will we know when we get there?  
How will we know that God is with us?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the hymn “ Now thank we all our God” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 397; *We Sing of God*, 66). If teachers are not comfortable in leading the singing, use the tape *Children Sing!* or say the words in unison with the following motions:

Now thank we all our God, (*hands folded in prayer*)  
with heart, and hands, and voices, (*touch heart, hands, and mouth*)  
who wondrous things hath done, (*make sweeping circular gesture with  
right hand*)  
in whom his world rejoices; (*sweeping circular gesture, left hand*)  
who from our mother’s arms (*arms together, cradle motion*)  
hath blessed us on our way (*hands folded in prayer*)  
with countless gifts of love, (*sweeping circular gesture, right hand*)  
and still is ours today. (*sweeping circular gesture, left hand*)

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Abraham and Sarah obeyed God. They took their tents and their things and traveled to a new place to live. They trusted God, did what God said, and God blessed them.

What does it mean to obey someone? Who are some of the people we obey?

What are some things we do to obey (in class and at home)?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 4 includes a tent scene, a Scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

To end this session, gather the children for a closing prayer:

We thank you, God, for Abraham and Sarah,  
and for keeping them safe on their journey.  
*(Pray for the needs of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:  
Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

This session has been on obedience, and brings to mind discipline in the classroom. Reflect on the children's ability to follow directions. How have they responded? If there is difficulty, could it have been because the directions were too complicated? (Most young children can remember only one directed action at a time.)

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session's focus is on the birth of Isaac under the most unlikely of circumstances. Think about Sarah's joyful response to the news and to the baby's birth.

# PROMISE

## SESSION 5

### ISAAC WAS THE SON OF ABRAHAM AND SARAH

#### FOCUS

God promised Abraham and Sarah that they would have a son whom God would bless. The children should be able to tell that Isaac was the son of Abraham and Sarah.

#### GETTING READY

In the previous session, the theme was obedience on the part of Abraham and Sarah. They responded to God's call to go to a new land and acted in total faith. God had promised that Abraham's name would be "great" and that future generations would honor him.

In the years that followed, a very real concern arose for the couple. They still had no children. How could the covenant be fulfilled under these circumstances? Then, in *Genesis 15:5-6*, Abraham receives another word from God: He and Sarah would have an heir after all. Their son would be called Isaac, which means "he laughs."

In giving a son to the aged Abraham and Sarah, God fulfills the promise that their descendants will be as numerous as the stars. (A well-known symbol for Abraham is a large star surrounded by a field of smaller ones.)

For young children, the simple story of Isaac's arrival and the meaning of his name can be a source of delight.

God and Father of all believers, for the glory of your Name multiply, by the grace of the Paschal sacrament, the number of your children; that your Church may rejoice to see fulfilled your promise to our father Abraham; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Easter Vigil

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 289

#### TEACHING TIP

Children learn more efficiently if the material presented makes use of more than one of their senses and involves direct experience. In the various options provided in this session, pay special attention to the opportunities for children to see, hear, touch, and smell. (In other sessions, tasting is also a possibility.)

## GATHERING

Collect a group of magazine or newspaper pictures showing contrasts among people who are happy or “not happy.” As the children arrive, invite them to sort the pictures into two stacks: Happy and not happy. Talk about what might make the people smile or laugh. Another idea is to set up a tent (a blanket or sheet spread over chairs or tables) and invite the children to sit inside and read books that have been placed under the tent.

When all are present, gather the group and say:

Teacher: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Children respond: And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

## STORY

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Form a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Genesis 17:19a*:

“God said (to Abraham), ‘. . . Your wife Sarah shall bear you a son, and you shall name him Isaac.’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell the story of the birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah.

- Abraham and Sarah were very, very old people. They had never had any children of their own, but they were old enough to be grandparents.
- God told Abraham that Sarah would have a baby boy.
- God told them to name him Isaac. The word “Isaac” means “he laughs.”
- When Sarah heard this news, she laughed! How could an old person like her have a baby?
  - God told Abraham to trust him. God said, “Is anything too wonderful for the Lord?” (*Genesis 18:14a*)
  - Just as God had promised, Isaac was born.
  - “Now Sarah said, ‘God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me.’” (*Genesis 21:6.*)

## CREATING

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### Option 1. Smiling Faces

Give each child a piece of white construction paper. Using round sponges dipped in tempera, the children can make circles of differing colors. When the paint has dried (a few minutes), use a marker to draw a smiling face on

each circle. As the children work, talk about the smiles of Abraham, Sarah, and their friends when Isaac was born.

### **Option 2. Musical Drawing**

Provide the children with crayons and plain white paper. While playing any type of instrumental music that suggests joy and celebration, invite the class members to express their own feelings as they listen to the music.

### **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play “Make Me Laugh.” Pairs of children sit opposite each other. It is the task of the first child to make the other one laugh (by any means except touching, such as saying something funny, or making a face). The other children can observe and clap in a rhythm as the game progresses, pair by pair. When a player finally laughs, it is time to change roles. With younger children, the teacher may be the one who takes the lead to make each child laugh. Older ones are likely to pursue the game eagerly.

### **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Set up a center that includes a simple tent made from a blanket over two chairs or a table or use the area created for the Gathering. Designate a space for outdoor cooking. Add pots, wooden spoons, and logs and fire made from brown and orange construction paper.

Invite children to act out parts of the story of Abraham and Sarah. Encourage them to experience what it was like to camp on their journey. Add a doll at an appropriate time. Let the children express their pleasure at the birth of Isaac.

### **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sometimes “things that don’t fit” make us laugh, such as a clown with huge shoes or a dog wearing a doll’s hat. Sometimes things that are out of place make us laugh: a car in a swimming pool, or a pie in someone’s face. It is this sort of incongruity that appears in the story of Isaac’s birth. When Sarah laughed at the impossible, God surprised her. She laughed again.

Encourage the children to wonder about laughter.

What makes us laugh? How many ways can we laugh?

What might make us laugh over and over again?

Why did Sarah laugh?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing the hymn “Now thank we all our God” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 397; *We Sing of God*, 66). Use the hand motions suggested in the previous session and the music tape *Children Sing!*

Now thank we all our God, *(hands folded in prayer)*  
with heart, and hands, and voices, *(touch heart, hands, and mouth)*  
who wondrous things hath done, *(make circular gesture with right hand)*  
in whom his world rejoices; *(circular gesture, left hand)*  
who from our mother’s arms *(arms together, cradle motion)*  
hath blessed us on our way *(hands folded in prayer)*  
with countless gifts of love, *(circular gesture, right hand)*  
and still is ours today. *(circular gesture, left hand)*

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Abraham and Sarah were old when God promised them a baby. They were even older than many grandparents, and they had waited a long time to become parents. When Isaac was born, they rejoiced that God had done such a wonderful thing for them.

Why was Isaac’s birth such a happy surprise for Sarah and Abraham?  
Have you ever waited for something that was promised to you?  
Have you ever waited for a baby in your family? What was it like to wait?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 5 includes a picture, a scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

At the end of the session, join a circle for the final prayer:

Thank you, God, for keeping your promise to Sarah and Abraham.  
*(Pray for the concerns of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

What have the children revealed about their own families? (Many children do not live in nuclear families, and teachers need to be particularly sensitive to this fact.) In what ways can we assure children repeatedly that we are all members of the family of God?

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session shifts to Moses as an infant. Consider the role of Miriam as she watched over her young brother, and reflect on the ways in which parents, siblings, teachers, and neighbors may watch over children today.

# PROMISE

## SESSION 6

### MOSES WAS FOUND IN THE BULRUSHES

#### FOCUS

Moses was kept safe in a basket hidden in the river. His older sister stayed nearby to watch. His mother was chosen to care for him in the home of the Egyptian ruler. The children should be able to tell the story of baby Moses.

#### GETTING READY

Just as the covenant with Abraham is regarded as the beginning of our spiritual history, God's covenant with Moses is viewed as part of the continuing story of God's mighty acts. The story of Moses is important because he later received the Commandments from God and began to bring order into the community of Israel.

When Moses was born, Pharaoh had ordered that all male Hebrew babies be slain. The Egyptians no longer remembered Joseph and all he had done for them, and now they were concerned about the increasing number of Hebrews in their land. Moses' mother kept her son hidden for three months. But she was afraid that the Egyptians would soon find him. So she made a basket, coated it with tar, and put the baby among the reeds in a river. Miriam, Moses' sister, hid among the reeds to make sure he was safe. (See *Exodus 1:1-2:10*.) Later when Pharaoh's daughter found the baby, Miriam came forward and offered to find a nurse for the baby. She returned with her mother.

In telling young children the story of Moses in the bulrushes, it is not necessary to explain the perilous situation, which can be a frightening. Instead, we focus on the care and concern of Moses' mother and sister, and the daughter of Pharaoh.

O God, you have taught us to keep all your commandments by loving you and our neighbor: Grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit, that we may be devoted to you with our whole heart, and united to one another with pure affection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Proper 9

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 230

#### TEACHING TIP

Children learn when they are at play. Play is, in fact, children’s “work.” Programs for young children traditionally include dramatic play with props and clothing from everyday life. This helps children to understand through practical experiences. The same kind of role-play can also help them to enter into Bible stories. Activities suggested in this guide provide opportunities for young children to learn through playing. Including one or more play-oriented activities (from Games, Doing, and Creating) will strengthen the class members’ involvement and understanding.

## **GATHERING**

Bring in a large basket, a blanket, and a doll. As the children arrive, allow them to arrange the blanket in the basket to make a resting place for the doll. Talk about keeping babies warm and safe. Why is this important? Who takes care of babies? Provide additional activities such as puzzles, storybooks, and crayons and paper for children not interested in the doll and basket.

When all are present, gather the group and say:

Teacher: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Children respond: And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Form a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Exodus 2:10a,b*:

“the child grew . . . she named him Moses . . .”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell the story of Moses’ infancy in your own words.

- Imagine the preparations his mother made for the baby Moses. His mother carefully made a basket, just the right size for a baby. She covered it with tar so it would float. Then she filled the basket with warm, soft bedding.

- Include a possible conversation between Miriam and her mother about what was happening. Miriam was worried about her baby brother. She wanted to keep him safe. She helped her mother prepare the basket. Her mother told her that this was the only way to keep Moses safe. Emphasize that Moses was put into the basket and hidden among the reeds to keep him safe.

- Then they carefully put the baby Moses into the basket. Together they took the basket to the edge of the river where tall plants would keep the

basket near the edge.

- Miriam stayed nearby to watch over him. She hid herself in the reeds and waited to see what would happen.
- Then Pharaoh's daughter and her maids came to the very place they had put the basket.
- Miriam wondered, "Will someone find my brother? If someone does, where will he be taken? What will I do then?"
- Pharaoh's daughter saw the baby and told her maids to bring him to her. She held the baby gently. Miriam bravely approached the women and offered to find a nurse for the baby Moses.
- Miriam ran home to get her mother. Pharaoh's daughter asked Moses' own mother to be his nurse. Moses would be safe.

(Encourage the children to go home and look at the pictures of Moses and Miriam in the children's book, *Moses*, pages 2-9, with their families.)

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Bulrushes**

Drop blue and brown paint onto white drawing paper. Take turns spraying the paper with water from a spray bottle. The water causes the paint to form designs representing water and reeds. Talk with the children about how the reeds would have hidden the baby in the basket, keeping him safe. Dry the water paintings flat.

### **Option 2. Moses' Basket**

Using small, inexpensive baskets, line them with padding of tissue or cloth. The children may create babies for their baskets (from small stones, clothespins, or cardboard).

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play a hide-and-seek game. Take turns hiding a baby doll for others to find. The person who hides the doll can keep watch (as Miriam did) and give clues to let the others know when they are getting near to the baby doll.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Fill a large tub or basin with water. Put some dirt and sand in the bottom. Children can add other items, such as straw and twigs. The children can take turns stirring the water to see how it changes as the mud is disturbed. Further exploration could include items that sink or float. (The basket with the baby Moses floated.)

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Wonder about the baby Moses as he lay in the basket hidden in the reeds.  
He did not cry. Why would he have been so quiet?  
What kind of day was it? warm? cool? Was the sun shining?  
When Moses was awake, what did he see or hear? insects? birds?  
Miriam was hiding in the reeds, watching and waiting. How did she feel?  
What was hard about watching? What might she have done while she was waiting?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the hymn, “Go Down, Moses” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 648; *We Sing of God*, 98). Children love to make the refrain a command, adding a shake of the fist or a wagging finger at the words, “Let my people go!” Encourage the children to shout emphatically. Sing with the audio tape *Children Sing!*

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Moses was just a little baby. He needed lots of people to help him. Talk about the people in the story who helped Moses.  
How did his mother help him? How does your mother or father help you?  
How did his sister Miriam help him? How do your sisters and brothers help you? How do you help your brothers and sisters?  
How did Pharaoh’s daughter help him? How do your friends and neighbors help you? How do you help them?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 6 includes a picture of Moses as a baby, a Scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Conclude the session with a prayer:

Thank you, God, for keeping Moses safe.  
*(Pray for the concerns of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Pray for the safety of each child. Sometimes the story of Moses in the reeds raises children's fears of being abandoned. Were any such concerns expressed by the children? How can we reassure children that they will be protected and cared for?

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session focuses on Moses and God's call for him to lead the people. Reflect on how messages are sent and received. What are the means of communication we use?

# PROMISE

## SESSION 7

### MOSES HEARD GOD IN THE BURNING BUSH

#### FOCUS

God spoke to Moses in a burning bush and called him to be leader of God's people. God promised to bring the people of Egypt into a land of their own. The children should be able to tell the story of Moses' meeting with God at the burning bush.

#### GETTING READY

A unique aspect of our biblical heritage is the fact that key figures are fully human—made just like all of us with our strengths and weaknesses. Before Moses could assume his role in the continuing story of Israel as God's chosen people, he fell into a rage when he saw a man abusing a Hebrew. He killed the man, not knowing that there were witnesses. Pharaoh sought to destroy Moses in turn. Moses had to flee from Egypt. He went to the land of Midian where he stayed for a number of years.

While Moses was in Midian he married Zipporah and became a shepherd for the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro. While he was tending the sheep, he saw the “blazing” bush and heard God's voice calling him. Moses was commissioned by God to be the one to lead Israel out of their bondage in Egypt. (See *Exodus 3*.)

The emphasis for young children is on the wonder of Moses' meeting with God. They will marvel at the bush that burned and did not turn to ashes. They will also understand why God told Moses to remove his shoes, because this was a special place. Finally, they will understand that the God of great power was present and speaking to Moses.

He made his ways known to Moses  
and his works to the children of Israel.

Psalm 103:7

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 733

#### TEACHING TIP

When using crayons in eight primary colors, store them in emptied juice cans. Cover the cans with construction paper of matching colors. Place all red crayons in the can that is covered with red, and continue with the sorting

for all the colors. This method of storage will not only encourage the children's development of sorting and sharing skills but also eliminate complaints that a box of colors is "no good" because of a broken or missing crayon.

## **GATHERING**

As children arrive, invite them to play with some toys. To begin the session, invite each child by name to leave the play area and come to the circle. (Leaving play behind and responding to the teacher's call may become the basis for both the Story and the Conversation, below. It will be important that the children are aware of being called from one activity to a different one.)

When everyone has joined the circle, say:

Teacher: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Children respond: And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Form a class circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Exodus 3:2*:

"And the angel of the Lord appeared to (Moses) in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed."

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

At the previous session, Moses was an infant. It will be important to make clear that Moses grew up and became a man in Egypt.

- One day when Moses was watching his sheep in the desert, he saw a bush that seemed to be on fire.
- He stopped where he was and turned to look at the bush more closely. He could see the flames and hear them crackling. Moses could hardly believe his eyes, for the burning bush did not turn to ashes.
- Then, to his great surprise, Moses heard the voice of God calling from the bush.
  - God said, "Moses, Moses!"
  - Moses answered, "Here I am." Moses was probably frightened at first.
  - God told Moses to take off his shoes because this was "holy ground." It was holy because God had spoken there.
  - God told Moses that he had an important job for Moses to do.
  - Moses did what God called him to do.

(Encourage to children to look at pictures of the burning bush in the children’s book, *Moses*, p. 13, at home with their families.)

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Burning Bush**

Provide each child with a piece of sturdy paper and a handful of twigs, grass, and dry leaves. Glue the material onto the paper in the form of a bush, adding bits of torn and crumpled flame-colored tissue and cellophane paper. Add some gold foil bits to the bush if desired.

### **Option 2. Straw Painting**

Give each class member a piece of finger-paint paper or glossy shelf paper. Put some runny blobs of red and yellow paint on the paper. Children can use straws to blow the “flames” of paint around the paper. The colors can swirl and mix like a roaring fire.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play a memory game. On a table where all the children can see, place a pair of sandals, a miniature sheep, and a burning bush (like the one described in Creating, Option 1, above). Ask the children to close their eyes as you remove one of the objects. The children then try to remember what is missing. Variations might include more objects or pictures related to the story of Moses. Repeat as long as the children are interested.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Dramatize the story of Moses and the burning bush. Use a staff, headcloths, sandals, bells for the sheep to wear, and a branch anchored in a bucket of dirt. Put red and yellow crepe paper or strips of cloth on the bush to simulate the burning fire. Involve as many children as possible, and repeat the scenes.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

God used a burning bush to get Moses’ attention. Yet the bush was not consumed by the fire. Wonder about these questions:

I wonder what it’s like to stand on holy ground?

Why didn’t the bush burn up?

What would you do if God called you?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time 10 minutes)*

Listen again to the hymn, “Go Down, Moses” (*The Hymnal 1982, 648; We Sing of God, 98*) on the music tape *Children Sing!*. Sing stanza 2 and the refrain. Encourage the children to enter enthusiastically into the story the song tells.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time 10 minutes)*

Moses was doing his job tending sheep when he was called by God. Remind the children of what happened earlier in the session as they were playing with toys and were called to join the circle.

What makes us stop and listen?

What made Moses stop and listen?

What did Moses do when God called to him from the bush?

What do we do when mothers or fathers call to us and ask us to do something?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 7 has a picture of the burning bush, a Scripture verse, a hymn stanza, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for the closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for calling Moses to lead your people.

*(Pray for the concerns of the children.)*

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER’S REFLECTION**

Consider the work of teachers in the Church as a calling from God. How does this call affect the lives of adults who respond? How has God’s call to teach affected your own life? How has your relationship with the children changed during the teaching of this unit?

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session will focus on another dramatic event in the lives of God's people—escape from Egypt and the Exodus. Think about the relationship of this story to the ongoing human quest for freedom. Have you experienced a personal event of deliverance and freedom?

# PROMISE

## SESSION 8

### MOSES LED GOD'S PEOPLE OUT OF EGYPT

#### FOCUS

Moses led the people of God safely out of Egypt, crossing the Red Sea. The children should be able to tell a simple version of the Exodus story.

#### GETTING READY

The saga of the captivity of the Israelite slaves and the ten plagues may intrigue some young children. However, talking about the final plague (death of the first-born sons) can be very disturbing for them. It is better for this age group to focus on God's act of deliverance. The people suffered under a cruel Pharaoh, but they were saved by God and given their freedom.

We can take a clue to our approach to this story from the structure of the Passover meal shared by our Jewish neighbors. The first of the four questions asked at the meal (by the youngest child present) is simply, "Why is this night different from all other nights?" The answers to this question and the three that follow, underscore the most important facts to remember: The people suffered cruelty in Egypt, but Moses led them to safety with the help of God.

God continues to be with his people as they flee Egypt. Pharaoh had a change of heart and sent his armies to return the Israelites to slavery. The people were faced with a dilemma. They were caught between the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army. Moses lifted his rod, and the waters parted. After they safely crossed to the other side, the waters came back together. They praised God with dancing and singing.

This is the night, when you brought our fathers, the children of Israel, out of bondage in Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea on dry land.

Easter Vigil

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 287

#### TEACHING TIP

In the Doing section of this session, a recipe and directions are given for making matzos. Matzo is a flat bread made without yeast or leaven. This involves cooking with the children, a valuable experience for young learners. Start the project by asking everyone to wash their hands. Children may want

to touch and taste the raw dough; if this is permitted, double the recipe. Plan to have an adult assistant who will handle the baking so that the children are not in contact with the hot stove. Allow sufficient time for the baking, cooling, and sharing.

## **GATHERING**

Bring several slices of bread and several pieces of matzo (which may be obtained in most grocery stores). Invite the children to taste both. Talk about the likenesses and differences between the two types of bread. Use the word “matzo.” Explain that part of the difference in their texture and taste is the absence of yeast from the matzo. Introduce the words “leavened” (with yeast) and “unleavened” (without). Practice saying the words.

When all have arrived, gather the group and say:

Teacher: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Children respond: And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. In the circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Exodus 13:3a*:

“Moses said to the people, ‘Remember this day, on which you came out of Egypt, . . .’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Take up the story of Moses by reviewing the previous session’s story briefly.

- God had spoken to Moses and asked him to lead the people out of Egypt. His brother Aaron would be his helper.
- The life of the people was very hard because Pharaoh was unjust. Their work was hard, and they were not free. They longed to leave and go to a new land.
- Finally, the time came when God would help them to escape. They learned at the last minute that they were going to leave.
- There was not even time to put yeast in their bread dough to make it rise. They baked it just as it was, and it looked like a flat cracker.
- They gathered up the things they could carry with them and followed Moses to the shore of the Red Sea. But soon they were chased by Pharaoh’s army. The sea was in front of them and the army was behind them. They had no place to go. What would they do?

- Then a great thing happened. Moses held up a rod and pointed it at the sea. The waters fell back on each side, and there was a dry path for the people. They hurried, and soon they were safely across. Then the waters came back together.

(Remind the children to go home and look at the children's book, *Moses*, pages 16-23, and read with their families the story of how Moses freed the people and led them across the Red Sea.)

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Path Through the Sea**

Provide each child with a piece of blue construction paper. Use crayons to make waves and possibly fish, to suggest a drawing of the sea. When the children are ready, spread thin paths of glue through their seas. Sprinkle fine sand on the glue. Talk with the children about Moses as he led the Israelites through the Red Sea.

### **Option 2. Moses Puppet**

Give each child a paper lunch bag, scraps of construction paper, crayons, yarn, and glue. Invite the children to create their own versions of Moses. Position each bag so that the puppet head is created on the flap. The children can then put their hands inside and make their puppets talk. Attach a pipe cleaner to each puppet to represent the rod of Moses.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play “Follow the leader” (through the Red Sea). Choose children to be Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. These three will lead God's people out of Egypt across the desert, over the mountains, and across the Red Sea where everyone will dance for joy. If the classroom is not large enough, the game can be played sitting in a circle with everyone using hand motions to suggest movement through the countryside and the water.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Invite the children to join in mixing and baking matzos (Passover bread). Mix together 2 cups of flour, 2/3 cup of water, 2 teaspoons of sugar, 2/3 teaspoon of salt, and 1 teaspoon of oil. Knead well. Roll out the dough until it is thin. Place on a cookie sheet. Make holes in it with the tines of a fork. Bake at 425° F until golden brown (about 10 minutes). When cool, share pieces of the unleavened bread with all the class members. (Plan to proceed with other activities during the baking and cooling.)

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

The path provided for the people to pass through the parted waters of the Red Sea was a miracle from God. We still celebrate this wonderful deed.

Wonder about this miracle.

What held the water back?

Was the path wet? What did it feel like to walk through the sea?

How was God present with the people?

How would you have celebrated getting to the other side of the sea?

What dance did Miriam do? What dance would you do?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

In this final session on Moses, the children may sing the story of the Exodus, using all four stanzas of “Go Down Moses” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 648; *We Sing of God*, 98). Sing with the *Children Sing!* tape while making matzo.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Have a conversation about the Exodus, using the word itself with the children. Think aloud about how the people left Egypt in a great hurry.

What are some of the things the people did in order to leave in a hurry? (Mention the bread that had to be baked without its yeast.)

Why were the people glad to be leaving Egypt? Who was going? Who was following them? What happened?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 8 pictures the place where the people crossed the Red Sea, and includes a Scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for a closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for bringing your people safely out of Egypt.

*(Pray for the needs of the children.)*

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:  
Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

What did the children remember from the story? Did the burning bush and the parting of the sea seem like miracles to them? Children accept miracles of God without questioning them. Did you see any examples of this among the group?

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

Session 9 in this unit is designed for use on or near All Saints' Sunday. Use it on the date that is most compatible with your local congregation's worship and Christian education schedule. What saints have been important in your life?

# PROMISE

## SESSION 9

### ALL SAINTS: GOD'S PEOPLE

#### FOCUS

The promises of God are kept for all the saints. The children should be able to say that God promises them (as saints) to love and care for them always.

#### GETTING READY

All Saints' Day is one of the seven principal feasts of the Church. It may be observed either on the fixed date designated for its observance, November 1, or on the Sunday following that date. The theme of the day focuses on the generations of men and women who have faithfully served God and the Church in years past as well as those who are now living witnesses to Christ in the world today.

Saints are found in every walk of life today as they have been over the years. All baptized people are in the company of those who are honored at this time. They are children of God and saints of the Church. Through baptism, we are ordained to the ministry of God's people in the world. Our job as saints is to love God with all our hearts so that others may come to know Jesus Christ.

The "communion of saints" transcends both time and space. The celebration of All Saints' Day is a time for the Church to honor all those who have shown their devotion to God. We offer up their names in thanksgiving and remembrance because they have shared their faith with others.

Very young children can grasp the good news that God cares for them and thinks of them as belonging to the Church's family of saints.

Almighty God, you have knit together your elect in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of your Son Christ our Lord: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints in all virtuous and godly living, that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

All Saints' Day

*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 245*

#### TEACHING TIP

All Saints' is celebrated in varied ways in Episcopal congregations. Be aware of your own church's customs, and consider how the children in the class can be included or helped to notice how this feast day is different from other worship services.

## **GATHERING**

Identify each child by name, adding the word "saint." Bring all the "saints" together. Gather the group and say:

Teacher: Blessed be God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Children respond: And blessed be his kingdom, now and for ever.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Join in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Psalm 145:10*:

"All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your faithful shall bless you."

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Introduce All Saints' Day by using the following information.

- On this day we remember all the people who have loved and praised the Lord. They are people like Noah and his family, Abraham and Sarah, and Moses, Miriam, and their mother. They are people like us.

- The saints are people of long ago and people who are alive now who obey and worship God. They are mothers and fathers, grandparents, shepherds, musicians, writers, heroes, fire fighters, police, king and queens, teachers, boys and girls—all kinds of people everywhere.

- Thousands and millions of people are saints. There are so many, they are like the stars in the sky. We find saints of God in all kinds of place, too.

- God promises to be with the people in the stories and those who are alive now.

- We are all saints, too. God promises to care for us all through our lives.

- On All Saints' Day we celebrate all those who are God's people. We sing and we praise God for all the saints.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Crowns for Saints**

Using the pattern on Poster No. 13 provided in the Teacher's Packet, cut out a paper crown for each class member. Give the children markers and crayons to decorate the crowns. Write the words "(child's name), a saint of God" on each finished crown.

### **Option 2. All Saints' Pennants**

Give each child a pennant of felt or other sturdy fabric. (A rectangle cut diagonally will make two pennants.) Use glitter, fabric or paper scraps, crayons, and markers to decorate the pennants. Write the children's names on the pennant with glue. Sprinkle glitter on the glue. Attach the pennant to a dowel or stick.

### **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play "Guess which saint." The leader sits with the children in a circle. The leader describes one of the children, beginning with one clue such as, "This saint is wearing red." Add clues one at a time until the other children guess who is being identified.

### **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Put together a saints' parade. Plan a marching route. Use drums and other rhythm instruments if available. If children made saints' pennants, these can be carried in the parade. Show the world the saints of God.

### **WONDERING**

*(Time 10 minutes)*

Collect pictures of people of all ages from magazines and other sources engaged in a wide variety of activities. Look at all these people, repeating that the saints of God include many kinds of people in all the world. Wonder about the saints of God:

How are these saints (in the pictures) alike? different?

In what ways does God take care of these people?

How does God take care of us?

### **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Listen to the hymn, “For all the saints” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 287; *We Sing of God*, 46) on the music tape *Children Sing!* As the children sing the first stanza, use accompanying hand movements such as the following:

For all the saints, *(make an encompassing circle with arms)*

Who from their labors rest, *(bring hands together, and rest head)*

Who thee by faith before the world confessed, *(cup hands on mouth)*

Thy Name, O Jesus, be forever blessed. *(cross arms on chest)*

Alleluia, alleluia! *(clap hands)*

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Talk about the special day in the Church when we give thanks for all the saints of God. On All Saints’ Day, we remember saints whose stories are in the Bible. We remember saints whose stories are found in other books. Some are famous, and some are not. And we give thanks to God that we can be saints, too.

Ask: What are the names of some of the saints you’ve heard about? The children may know churches named for saints, or they may know the four Evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) as saints from having heard the Gospel lessons introduced repeatedly in church.

Share the names of some of the men and women on the Church’s calendar of saints (*The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 19-30). Invite the children to ask questions about these persons.

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 9 includes pictures of many of God’s people, a Scripture verse, a hymn stanza, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for a final prayer:

Thank you, God, for all the saints.

Thank you for your love and care.

*(Pray for the needs and concerns of the children.)*

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Pray for the young saints in the class. Remember each one as a precious gift from God. Recall the times you acknowledged the children as individuals with unique qualities.

Note: The following letter is for teachers and parents of children in the preschool/kinder-garten level of church school. These pages can be reproduced or used as a model for a personalized letter.

## **Episcopal Children's Curriculum** **Unit II. JESUS: STORYTELLER**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

In this unit, Sessions 1-4 are devoted to Advent preparations for the feast of the Nativity. The next four sessions shift to scenes with Jesus in his adulthood and ministry. He taught the people about the reign of God by telling stories with simple but unforgettable images.

Young children cannot grasp the full meaning of the parables that Jesus told. It is appropriate, however, to tell Jesus' stories in simple form to preschool and kindergarten learners. Through repeated exposure to the key elements of these stories, they will be able at a later time to understand what the kingdom of God is like.

We encourage you to talk about the lessons with your child. Do this by reading together the children's book, *Stories Jesus Told*, which illustrates the parables the children hear in Sessions 6-9.

Scripture passages and excerpts from *The Book of Common Prayer* that the children will encounter are cited below. Look up the passages and excerpts with your child and show them where they are in the Bible and Prayer Book. The Take-Home Cards given to learners each week feature illustrations and text related to session themes. They also include useful instructions for parents. These collectible cards, which are 5 by 7 inches, can be displayed in a photo album, kept in an oversized recipe box, or used in any way you find helpful.

Following are summaries of the unit's sessions:

**Session 1: "Advent Begins a New Year"** focuses on Advent as the beginning of a new year in the Church. (*Revelations 21:5b*)

**Session 2: "Shepherds Watch Their Flocks"** is about the daily work of shepherds in the time of Mary and Joseph. (*Luke 2:8*)

**Session 3: "The Shepherds Hear the Good News"** focuses on the message heard by the shepherds—at first from one angel, and then from a heavenly host of angels. They were afraid. But they listened to the good news that they would find the newborn baby wrapped in swaddling cloths in a manger. (*Luke 2:10*)

**Session 4: “The Shepherds Visit the Baby”** is about the climactic visit of the shepherds. They found Mary and Joseph and the Child Jesus, just as the angels had promised. (*Luke 2:16*)

**Session 5: “The Wise Men Brought Gifts”** is about the visit of the Wise Men at Epiphany. The children learn about the gifts presented to the baby by the visitors who followed the star to find the Holy Family. (*Matthew 2:11b*)

**Session 6: “The Mustard Seed Grows into a Bush”** tells how God provides for growth. Jesus grew up and told stories. We all grow from babyhood into older persons. And plants and animals, too, demonstrate the growth cycle. (*Mark 4:31*)

**Session 7: “The Lost Coin Was Found”** is about the excitement of finding something that was lost. The woman celebrates and tells all her neighbors when she locates the misplaced coin. (*Luke 15:9b*)

**Session 8: “The Lost Sheep Is Safe”** tells how the shepherd rejoices and celebrates when he finds the sheep that strayed away from the flock. (*Luke 15:6b*)

**Session 9: “Jesus Is the Good Shepherd”** places the emphasis on Jesus as the one who is like a shepherd. Jesus knows all our names and wants us to be with him, just as a shepherd knows his sheep. (*John 10:14*)

Yours in Christ,

Church School Teachers

# JESUS: STORYTELLER

## SESSION 1

### ADVENT BEGINS A NEW YEAR

#### FOCUS

The first Sunday of Advent is the beginning of a new year in the Church. This is when we remember that God is always doing new things. The children should be able to say that Advent begins a new Church Year.

#### GETTING READY

The season of Advent underscores the connection between Jesus and Old Testament prophecies as we wait again for the Nativity. Advent begins the Christian year and comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning coming or arrival. These four weeks are a time of waiting, love, and hope when the Church prepares for the coming of the Messiah and makes ready for his second coming at the end of time.

Advent is a solemn season marked by a change in vestments and hangings of the color purple, which signifies penitence and royalty. The collects for the Sundays in Advent focus on preparation, expectation, and the power of the light of Christ. In a four-week season of solemn prayer, we recall anew what it means to await our Lord's coming.

As you begin this series of sessions on Advent themes, find ways to help the children gain a sense of the significance of this season—a time of recalling what God has done in the past and looking ahead to the coming of Christ. For young children, it is appropriate to devote time to preparation for the church's celebrations of Christ's birth.

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life, immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and for ever.  
*Amen.*

First Sunday of Advent  
*The Book of Common Prayer* p. 211

## TEACHING TIP

During Advent, young children are excited about Santa Claus and the fantasies connected with Christmas in our culture. Teachers can expect this to be a natural and enjoyable phase in the lives of boys and girls. Respect children's enthusiasm. Be confident that your own sharing of the true meaning of Advent and Christmas will lay a foundation for the class members' evolving understanding of the Nativity story.

## GATHERING

Begin each session during the four Sundays of Advent centered around an Advent wreath. During the gathering time for this first session, children may help put together parts of the wreath. Purchase or make a circular form. Use a styrofoam ring, or place four mounds of clay for candles on a sturdy plate. Put the candles in place. Add small pieces of seasonal greens around the base. Invite the children to help with these preparations. As the work progresses, talk about Advent as a time when something new is happening in the Church. Provide some alternative activities such as storybooks and puzzles.

When everyone is present, gather around the Advent wreath. As the first candle is lit, introduce the following:

Teacher: Christ has, died.

Children: Christ is risen

Together: Christ will come again.

*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 363*

The wreath will be used each of the four Sundays in Advent, the greens may need to be replenished. (Extinguish the candle when the activity is concluded. The candle should be relit just before the Saying Goodbye activity.)

## STORY

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather the group in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Revelations: 21:5b*:

“ . . . See, I am making all things new.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell a story using the following suggestions about how God is always beginning something new:

- When the world began, everything God made was new—animals, plants, people, sun, moon, and stars.
- When Noah and his family left the ark, God was helping everything to be new again.
- When Abraham and Sarah heard God calling them to travel, this was a new beginning for them.
- When Moses led the people out of Egypt, God was bringing them to a new land.
- When Jesus was born, God was beginning something new and wonderful.
- Advent is a time for us to remember that God is always making things new. This is the very first part of the new year for the Church.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Advent Wreaths**

Give each child a piece of cardboard cut in the shape of a circle about the size of a saucer with the center cut out to resemble a wreath. Before the children arrive, glue four birthday-candle holders at equal spaces around the circle. Allow each child to glue pieces of green construction paper or tissue, which has been scrunched to small pieces around the circle. Place small candles in the holders.

### **Option 2. Advent Wreath Pictures**

Using the patterns on Poster No. 14 in the Teacher's Packet, cut a green circle and four Advent candles for each child. Glue the wreath and the candles on a large piece of heavy paper. Place a dot of glue and some glitter, or a piece of yellow construction or tissue paper, at the top of each candle as the light.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play the game, "What's new?" Gather small objects and place them in a bag, (such as miniature animals, figures of people, twigs, stones, and leaves). Place three things together where the children can all see. Ask the class members to close their eyes. Quickly place a fourth object with the others and tell the group to open their eyes. Ask, "What's new?" Continue to add new objects, removing others. It is best not to have more than four or five items visible at a time.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Arrange to take the children on a trip to the nave of the church where they can see the congregation's Advent wreath in place. Point out the candles, talk about the colors, and show which candle will be (or has been) lit first.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

For Sessions 1-5 (Advent through Epiphany), establish a wondering center in the classroom area. This may be a table, a large box, a small rug, or a piece of fabric spread on the floor in a corner. In the wondering center for this session, place some hay or dry grass.

Invite the children to gather around. Wonder about the hay. What makes it smell like this? What does it feel like to sleep on?

Encourage the class members to ask questions or offer comments. The purpose of this center is to encourage imagination, not to provide specific details about the Christmas story. If older children anticipate the season and speak about crèches, respond simply by saying, "Let's wait and see."

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the refrain of "O Come, O come, Emmanuel" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 56; *We Sing of God*, 12). Talk about the word "rejoice" and what it means. Encourage the children to think of active ways in which they can show "rejoicing." Use their suggestions to provide movement during the singing. The music tape *Children Sing!* may be helpful to introduce the hymn.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Review with the children some of the new things God has done (as in Creation, the story of Noah, and the birth of Jesus). Ask:

When have you seen something new? Accept all answers (such as new toys, new clothes, new cars, and new houses).

When have you seen a new baby animal or baby person? How did it look? What sounds did it make? Who takes care of new babies?

## **TAKE-HOME, CARD**

Card 10 has a picture of an Advent wreath, a line from an Advent hymn, a prayer that may be used at home as the candles are lit, and a note to parents. Help the children to collect the cards by providing a way to get the cards home. Plan to send the cards to children who are absent.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Relight the candle on the Advent wreath for the closing. Gather the children around the wreath and say a closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for all things new.  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
*(Pray for any needs or concerns the children may express.)*  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Extinguish the candle on the Advent wreath. Join with the children in a circle, say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

The church is the authentic place for sharing the true meaning of Christmas. For that reason, we should ask ourselves whether we are focusing on the Church's season or allowing secular customs to overshadow it. In what ways can we help the children to sense the unique character of Advent?

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

If a fresh Advent wreath is needed for next time, gather new greenery. The next session is about the shepherds watching over their flocks. They were caring for their sheep as part of their daily routine. Think of ways we can stop during our busy days and take a moment to let someone know we care.

# JESUS: STORYTELLER

## SESSION 2

### SHEPHERDS WATCH THEIR FLOCKS

#### FOCUS

The shepherds watched over their sheep in the fields near Bethlehem, both day and night. The children should be able to tell ways shepherds care for their sheep.

#### GETTING READY

Stories about shepherds tending sheep appear often in the Bible.

In *Genesis 37*, 17-year-old Joseph is a shepherd for his father, Jacob. While he was tending the sheep, he had two dreams. These dreams increased the jealousy his brothers felt. Later they would sell Joseph into slavery and tell his father he had been killed.

Moses was tending sheep in Midian when God appeared to him in a burning bush (*Exodus 3*). David was a shepherd who also wrote psalms to praise God. He was tending his father's sheep when Samuel came to anoint him as king of Israel (*I Samuel 16*).

The Scriptures are filled with references to shepherds to help us understand God's care and love for us. When we hear of the shepherds in the Nativity story, we are reminded not only of their vocation to care for their flocks, but also of our understanding that Jesus Christ comes into the world as the Good Shepherd.

Young children can identify with the trust the sheep had in their shepherds.

The Lord is my shepherd;  
I shall not want.  
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures;  
he leadeth me beside the still waters.  
He restoreth my soul;  
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his Name's sake.  
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil;  
for thou art with me;  
thy rod and thy staff, they comfort me.  
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies;  
thou anointest my head with oil;

my cup runneth over.  
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.

*Psalm 23 (King James Version)*  
*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 476*

## **TEACHING TIP**

Young children learn by manipulating miniature figures and objects (as when they move tiny trucks on an imaginary road or play with dollhouses). The Nativity story offers an opportunity for children to work with the figures that are part of a typical crèche. Inexpensive plastic, wooden, or cardboard manger scenes are readily available at this time of year. A manger scene is included in the Teacher's Packet, with figures to be cut out on Posters No. 2, 14, and 15. The scene can be used in the Wondering section of the unit's sessions.

## **GATHERING**

As children arrive, greet them by their names and invite them to place fresh greens around the class Advent wreath. Provide storybooks for an additional activity.

For the second Sunday of Advent, light two candles, say:

Teacher: Christ has died.

Children: Christ is risen.

Together: Christ will come again.

*The Book of Common Prayer, p.363*

Extinguish the candles and relight them just before the Saying Goodbye.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Luke 2:8*:

“In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Prepare a story in your own words to convey to the children what it might have been like for shepherds in the hills near Bethlehem.

- The work of shepherds was important. In all kinds of weather, they watched over the sheep. They had to work when there was rain and snow.
- Shepherds faced dangers and threatening animals in order to protect the sheep.
- Sometimes they were all alone.
- The shepherds were respected for the care they gave to the flocks. The sheep knew that they could trust the shepherds.
- On the night Jesus was born, the sheep were gathered in a safe place. It may have been cold. The shepherds had their cloaks wrapped around them as they watched over the flock. A fire may have been burning to provide warmth and light. Perhaps lambs were bleating softly—bah, bah.
- The shepherds may have been talking quietly to one another or resting. They may have made music with flutes.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Flock of Sheep**

Give each child a piece of dark blue or purple construction paper, glue, and cotton balls or a handful of cotton batting. Children can glue the “wool” on the paper to represent a flock of sheep. The class members may wish to use crayons to add details.

### **Option 2. Shepherd’s Crook**

Give each child a cellophane-wrapped candy cane with a curved top. At one end of the cane, tape about two feet of brown crepe paper streamer. Ask the children to wind the streamer around the canes. When wrapped, each will look like a shepherd’s crook. Suggest that the class members take the “crooks” home and hang them on the family Christmas trees. When Christmas Day arrives and wrappings are removed, the crooks will be happy surprises.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play a version of “I Spy.” Sit in a circle and pretend that you are around a campfire in the fields where sheep graze. Give each child a chance to be “shepherd.” The shepherd says, “I spy with my eye, something that is (give a clue).” The other children “guess” what is being spied. Older children may pretend to see the kinds of things shepherds would have seen, but the younger class members will likely speak about things they see in the room around them. Either kind of clue is okay.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Gather some old towels or pieces of dark cloth and tie these around the children's heads, to serve as shepherd costumes. Lead the group in role-playing the work of shepherds tending sheep. (Some of the children could wear white pillowcases and pretend to be sheep.) Possible actions would be herding, calling, feeding, finding of strays, or chasing away threatening animals.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

To the hay in the wondering center (see Session 1 of this unit), add some simple shepherd and sheep figures. This session's story was about what shepherds' lives were like, and what they did. Spend some time wondering about the following:

What did the shepherds talk about? What stories did they tell? What songs did they sing?

What would it be like to be a shepherd long ago? What would make them happy, excited, or worried?

What would you do if you were a shepherd? How would you care for your sheep?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing the first stanza of "The First Nowell" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 109). A recording from the music tape *Children Sing!* could be playing in the background. The carol lends itself to accompaniment with chimes. A xylophone, spoons, or bells can be used to create the sounds of chimes.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

The shepherds had to watch their sheep very closely and wait patiently for each one. Sometimes they had to search for lost sheep and bring them home. When shepherds saw that thorns or rocks had injured a sheep, they would use oil to treat the wounds. To be sure that sheep did not fall into danger on a steep path, the shepherds would use a cane-like stick (called a crook) to guide them.

Talk with the children about all the things shepherds would do in order to take good care of their sheep: seeing that they had plenty to eat, water to drink, and a safe place to stay at night. Ask: When you take care of animals

(pets), how do you feed and water them? What else do you do to provide them with good care? How do you keep them from getting hurt?

### **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 11 has a picture of shepherds with a sheep, a Scripture verse, a stanza of “The First Nowell” and a note to parents. Remind the children to take home the card, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

### **SAYING GOODBYE**

Relight the candles on the Advent wreath for the closing. Gather around the wreath for the final prayer.

Thank you, God, for shepherds.  
*(Pray for any concerns the children may have.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Extinguish the candles. Hold hands in a circle and say:  
Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER’S REFLECTION**

This session (with its repeated emphasis on shepherds who tended their sheep, cared for them, and kept them safe) offers an opportunity for teachers to observe whether the children in the class feel cared for, loved, and safe. What evidence could you gather from the things children said or did? Is your class a place where children feel comfortable and at home?

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The focus of the next session is on the appearance of angels to share the good news of Christ’s birth with the shepherds. Sounds of Christmas are now likely to be everywhere around us. Listen with care and consider how they affect you and your understanding of the Nativity.

# JESUS: STORYTELLER

## SESSION 3

### THE SHEPHERDS HEAR THE GOOD NEWS

#### FOCUS

An angel surprised the shepherds near Bethlehem and told them good news from God. The children should be able to tell what the good news was.

#### GETTING READY

The story for this session begins long ago one night on the hillside near Bethlehem. It was probably cold where the shepherds were watching over their flocks. Suddenly an angel from God appeared before the shepherds, interrupting the night.

At first the shepherds must have been terrified. But the angel told them not to be afraid because “I am bringing you good news of great joy for all people.” (*Luke 2:10*) Then the angel told the shepherds that the long-awaited Messiah had been born in Bethlehem. They would find him lying in a manger, wrapped in bands of cloth.

Then a whole host of angels appeared suddenly to sing, “Glory to God in the highest!” The night was now filled with light and sound.

It is important for young children to hear the whole story of the birth of Jesus. The scenes create strong images that call all of us into the presence of God. The story of the shepherds gives us the opportunity to share their wonder and awe of the birth of Jesus.

Just as the angels announced good news to the shepherds, the Church of Jesus Christ proclaims good news to all people.

O God, who wonderfully created, and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Of the Incarnation

*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 252*

#### TEACHING TIP

As Christmas draws nearer, the children’s excitement and activity level are increasing. Balance their need to be active in the classroom with times that encourage quiet reflection. Use techniques such as soft music, low

voices, and reduced lighting to enhance a peaceful atmosphere. Pay particular attention to the pace of activities.

## **GATHERING**

As children arrive, invite them to assist in putting fresh greens around the Advent wreath. Provide crayons and paper and storybooks for alternative activities.

When everyone is present, light three candles. As each one is lit, talk about waiting. Mary is waiting for Jesus' birth (candle one). Joseph is waiting for Jesus' birth (candle two). We are waiting to celebrate the baby Jesus' birth (candle three). Watch the candles in silence for a few seconds, then say:

Teacher: Christ has died.

Children: Christ is risen.

Together: Christ will come again.

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 363

Extinguish the candles and relight them just before the Saying Goodbye activity.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Luke 2:10*:

“And the angel said to (the shepherds), ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people . . .’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Display the picture of an angel on Poster No. 2 in the Teacher's Packet. Recall the story of the shepherds from the previous session, when they were watching their sheep by night. Continue by telling in your own words how angels brought them good news (*Luke 2:8-14*).

- First, the shepherds saw one angel. This frightened them, but the angel told them not to be afraid.

- The angel shared joyful news—Jesus was born in Bethlehem.

- The angel told them to go to see the baby. The baby would be wrapped in cloths, sleeping in a manger. A manger was a place where animals were fed.

- Suddenly the sky was filled with angels! The dark night was filled with light. The shepherds were so surprised that they could not speak.

- The angels praised God and said, “Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth” (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 356).
- The shepherds looked at each other. What had just happened?

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Angels in the Sky**

Encourage the children to make a “sky full of angels.” Give each child a piece of blue construction paper. Use white wispy feathers, paper lace doilies cut in wedges, or other white fabric or material to make the angels. Glitter, sequins, and shiny foil can be added. Play a recording of one or more carols, including “The First Nowell,” as the class works.

### **Option 2. Shepherd Figures**

Make simple figures of shepherds. Give each child one and one-half craft sticks (or popsicle sticks) that have been glued together to form a cross shape. Cut scraps of material, tissue, or crepe paper large enough to fold over the form to make “robes” for the shepherds. Cut a hole for the neckpiece of the stick. Cut paper circles about the size of a quarter for heads. The children can draw faces on the heads and glue them to the neckpiece. Other pieces of fabric or paper can be used to create headgear for the shepherds.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Invite the children to be shepherds in a circle, and play “Good News.”

First, practice saying a simple statement such as “Jesus is born!” (Allow each child to say it.)

Then invite the group to clap their hands in rhythm as they all chant together, “Good news, good news! Who has good news?”

The teacher points to an individual child who then responds with the good news (the statement practiced earlier). Clap again in unison and give several children a chance to say the good news.

If interest holds, repeat the game by introducing other statements, phrases, or words associated with the good news, such as “Glory to God in the highest!” or “Alleluia!” (The children may suggest ways of saying the good news in their own way.)

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Provide towels, cloths, and other items for children to role-play being shepherds and sheep. Add costumes suitable for angels, and encourage the class members to act out the angels’ coming to share good news. The

shepherds can be frightened, the angels can speak, and everyone can celebrate the joy of the occasion.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Add angel figures from Poster No. 2 in the Teacher's Packet to the hay in the wondering center, along with the shepherds and sheep that were placed there at the previous session. Encourage the children to react to the story of the angels bringing the good news to the shepherds. Wonder about:

How might the angels have looked? What were their voices like? How did they move?

What other sounds might they hear?

Invite the class to close their eyes and imagine that they see a night sky full of angels. After a few seconds, perhaps some children would be willing to share their thoughts.

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing stanzas 1 and 2 of "The first Nowell" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 109) using the tape *Children Sing!* On the refrain, the children can use their hands expressively (like a conductor or choir leader) to suggest the rise and fall of the notes in the melody. Explain that Nowell (Noel) means "birthday."

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Angels appeared to the shepherds. Christian art and statuary include many representations of these heavenly figures. Show the picture of an angel from Poster No. 2 in the Teacher's Packet and provide other examples of pictures, carvings, and statues of angels. Ask the children to look at each one: How are they different? Alike? How do we know that the picture is an angel?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 12 includes a picture of an angel, a Scripture verse, a hymn stanza, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Relight the three candles on the Advent wreath for the closing time. Gather for the final prayer: say,

Thank you, God, for the good news the shepherds heard.  
(*Pray for any needs the children may express.*)  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Extinguish the candles. Hold hands in a circle and say:  
Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Take a few moments to reflect on each child's individuality. Be thankful for the joy and "good news" that each one has brought to you during this season.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session is designed for the fourth Sunday of Advent. The Christmas story will be told. As you go through the holiday cards now arriving from friends and relatives, notice how many reflect Jesus' birth.

# JESUS: STORYTELLER

## SESSION 4

### THE SHEPHERDS VISIT THE BABY

#### FOCUS

The shepherds decided to go to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus. The children should be able to tell the story of Jesus' birth in their own words.

#### GETTING READY

As Advent is drawing to a close, take time to reflect on the story of the Nativity and the Church's celebration of the days of Christmas.

After the angel had told the shepherds about the birth of Jesus, they went at once to Bethlehem. The shepherds must have questioned all that had just happened: the message from the angel, the light in the dark night sky, and the sound of the voices of many angels praising God. They wanted to "see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." (*Luke 2:15b*) The shepherds found Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus lying in a manger. The message from the angel was true.

After they saw the Christ Child with their own eyes, the shepherds began telling others the good news. Everyone who heard their story was amazed at what the shepherds said. (*Luke 2:18*)

When Mary heard them talking, she "treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart." (*Luke 2:19*) The shepherds returned to the fields praising God for all they had seen and heard.

In the midst of the busy holiday season, your class may be the only place where the children will hear and think quietly about the story of Jesus' birth. Be confident in knowing that this is a significant moment in the lives of children.

(O God), you gave Jesus Christ, your only Son, to be born for us; who, by the mighty power of the Holy Spirit, was made perfect Man of the flesh of the Virgin Mary his mother; so that we might be delivered from the bondage of sin, and receive power to become your children.

Preface for the Incarnation (alt.)

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 378

#### TEACHING TIP

Because we are all bombarded in the days before Christmas with all the stimuli of the season (buying and wrapping gifts, going to parties,

preparing for programs, rehearsing music), it is not unusual for tensions to rise. Young children become overtired and irritable, cry easily, and become anxious. Be sensitive to the children's situation emphasizing quiet, soothing activities and a less frenzied atmosphere.

## **GATHERING**

As the children arrive, renew the greens around the class wreath and light the four Advent candles, one by one. Talk about the four weeks of Advent (for children, a long time of waiting and preparation), and note that the season is almost over. As an additional activity give each child a paper place mat and invite them to draw the shepherds and angels.

When everyone is present, invite the group to gather around the lighted wreath in silence, then say:

Teacher: Christ has died.

Children: Christ is risen.

Together: Christ will come again.

*The Book of Common Prayer, p.363*

If your Advent wreath has a fifth, white Christ Candle, talk about how that candle will to be lit on Christmas Day. Extinguish the candles on the wreath until the Saying Goodbye activity.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Luke 2:16*:

“So they went with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in a manger.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

In your own words, tell the story of the shepherd's visit to the baby Jesus. Then encourage the children to retell the story in their own words.

Use the following outline:

- Begin by recalling the appearance of the angels to the shepherds in the countryside during the night. The angel had brought a wonderful message, and the sky had been filled with angels, light, and the sound of praise.
- The angels told the shepherds to go to Bethlehem where they would find Mary and Joseph with the baby Jesus. The shepherd hurried into the town to find the family with a baby in a manger.
- When they arrived, they found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in

a manger. Mary and Joseph had traveled to Bethlehem to register to pay their taxes. They could not find any place to stay. The innkeeper told them they could stay in a manger where the animals were kept. There Jesus was born. His mother wrapped him in cloths. (Use the figures of a Nativity crèche as you tell the story and describe the scene the shepherds saw.)

- The shepherds were excited that they had found the baby the angel had told them about. They began to tell everyone what had happened.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Baby in the Manger**

Obtain a plain, brown sandwich bag for each child. With scissors, cut parallel to the folded bottom. Open it out and fold the sides down to make a small paper manger. Let the children fill the mangers with dry straw, grasses, or shreds of paper cut from the remainders of the bags. Using the pattern on Poster No. 14 in the Teacher's Packet, cut out a baby figure for each child. The children can add color with crayons or markers. The figures can be placed in the mangers.

### **Option 2. Christmas Story Pictures**

With Christmas carols playing in the background, give each child a piece of paper and watercolors, washable markers, or crayons. Ask the group to draw the scene of the baby Jesus in the manger, with Mary and Joseph and the shepherds gathered around.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play a game using the black-and-white manger outline and the colored figures on Posters No. 2, 14 and 15 in the Teacher's Packet. Cut out the figures of Mary, Joseph, the Christ Child, angel, shepherds, sheep, and animals. Put the cutout figures in a basket. Invite each child to close his/her eyes and take a figure. The group members help to identify each figure and position it on the manger outline (mounted on a wall or easel). Use removable cellophane tape to attach the figures. Repeat as often as the children's interest holds.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Encourage the children to re-enact the Christmas story, using again the costumes collected for previous sessions. Add a piece of blue cloth for Mary's shawl, a brown robe for Joseph, and a baby doll with a light blanket. The class members can take turns playing the various roles.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Add figures of Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus to the wondering center (along with the hay, shepherds, and angels placed there in previous sessions). Wonder:

What was it like on the night Jesus was born?

What do you see there? What do you hear?

How would it be like to visit Mary, Joseph, and the baby?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing the hymn, “Away in a manger” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 101; *We Sing of God*, 20) using the tape *Children Sing!* and hand motions like the following:

Away in a manger, no crib for his bed,

*(cradle baby Jesus in arms)*

The little Lord Jesus laid down his sweet head.

*(fold hands together and lay head upon them)*

The stars in the bright sky looked down where he lay,

*(point to the sky)*

The little Lord Jesus asleep on the hay.

*(fold hands together and lay head upon them)*

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Invite the children to talk about their experiences of Christmas. They will be excited about gift giving and all the usual celebrations surrounding the holiday. Redirect their thoughts by asking:

Where have you seen pictures or scenes that tell the story of Jesus’ birth? What were they like?

What kinds of decorations or things could we use at home to remind us of the baby Jesus? What songs or music have you heard that sing about Jesus?

What happens in our church on Christmas Eve and/or Christmas Day?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 13 includes a picture of the Nativity, a Scripture verse, and a Christmas poem. Remind the children to take the card home, tell their families the story of the night Jesus was born, and to keep the card in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather around the Advent wreath, re-light the four candles, and: say,

Thank you, God, for the baby Jesus  
and for your love at Christmas.  
*(Pray for the special needs of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Extinguish the candles. Join with the children to conclude, saying:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Take time to focus on the wonderful gift of the Christ Child. Consider the good news that our Lord came into the world and lived as a child, experiencing the same joys and struggles that come into the lives of the children in your class. We think of children themselves as gifts from God. In what ways have young boys and girls awakened you to the love of God?

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session will focus on the Wise Men who brought gifts to the Holy Family. It is intended for the week nearest to the Feast of the Epiphany, January 6. Reflect on ways in which your own teaching can be an offering to Jesus Christ.

# JESUS: STORYTELLER

## SESSION 5

### THE WISE MEN BROUGHT GIFTS

#### FOCUS

The Wise Men brought gifts for the baby Jesus. The children should be able to tell about the visit of the Wise Men, and the gifts they presented.

#### GETTING READY

In Luke's story of the birth of Jesus, the first people who worshipped the baby Jesus were shepherds who had been tending their flocks nearby. In Matthew's account, the first to worship Jesus were non-Jewish visitors who came from far away lands—the Magi (*Matthew 2:1-12*).

The Magi, or Wise Men, were astrologers. A popular belief at the time of Jesus' birth was that a star was added to the sky each time a child was born. The Wise Men had seen Jesus' star and knew that it must mark the birth of a very important person. The star guided the Wise Men on their journey first to Jerusalem and then to Bethlehem.

When the Wise Men arrived in Jerusalem, they consulted King Herod who would surely know about the births of important people. King Herod talked to his advisors who told him that the child had probably been born in Bethlehem. The Wise Men continued their journey to the small village.

When they arrived, they worshipped the baby Jesus and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Our own traditions of gift giving in the season of the Nativity stem, in part, from the story of the Wise Men.

Young children enjoy the story of the Wise Men. The bright star that led the Magi to Jesus and the giving of gifts offer concrete images that make the story come alive.

Almighty and everlasting God, increase in us the gifts of faith, hope, and charity; and, that we may obtain what you promise, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Proper 25

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 235

#### TEACHING TIP

It is inevitable that young children will be excited about Christmas and all that has happened in both the church and their homes. It is appropriate that

there be a calming, quieter atmosphere for a time. This session can serve that function. Teachers can help to re-echo the good news of Christ's birth, and bring a satisfying sense of closure to the season.

## **GATHERING**

Collect three containers that could represent gifts presented by the Wise Men—such as a foil-wrapped box for gold, a simple brass urn for frankincense, and a covered porcelain or pottery bowl for myrrh.

As the children arrive, ask them to think about what might be in these containers. Who might have brought them? Why? Provide other activities such as picture books or puzzles.

When everyone is present, gather around the Advent wreath. Notice the four candles have all been lit, and each one is probably burned down by now. The waiting is over, we have celebrated the birth of Jesus. Prepare to light a Christ Candle. On some Advent wreaths, this is the center, white candle. If your wreath does not have a center candle, put a white candle in a holder in the center. Greens may be placed around the base. Children can help with this. As the Christ Candle is lit, say these words:

Teacher: Christ has died.

Children: Christ is risen.

Together: Christ will come again.

*The Book of Common Prayer, p.363*

Extinguish the candle when the Gathering activity is concluded.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Matthew 2:11b*:

“ . . . they offered him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Begin with a simple reminder that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. In your own words, tell the story of the Wise Men.

- Describe the special star in the East that was seen by the three Wise Men. They lived in lands far from Bethlehem where Jesus was born.

- When they saw the bright star, they wanted to follow it. They used the star to help them find their way.

- The Wise Men traveled a long way over miles of desert following the star.

- They thought that a baby who had such a bright star would be in Jerusalem. They stopped to talk with King Herod and asked where they should go.
- King Herod did not know what to say. He called together some of the men who had studied the word of God and asked for their advice. The Wise Men were told to go to Bethlehem. They began traveling there at once.
- When the Wise Men arrived in the village, they found Mary and Joseph and the baby. They knelt down and worshiped Jesus.
- Then each of the Wise Men gave Jesus a valuable gift. The first one gave gold, the second gave frankincense, and the third gave myrrh. (The children will know about gold, but they may wonder about the other gifts. Explain that incense is burned to make a good smell. Myrrh is used to keep things from spoiling.)
- We would bring different gifts to a baby today. But in the time of Jesus, they were very expensive and the best.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Three Wise Men**

Using the outlined figures provided on Poster No. 14 in the Teacher's Packet, make the three Wise Men. The three figures may be traced and cut out, or copied onto a plain sheet of drawing paper. Provide crayons and markers for children to use to fill in the features and clothing of the Wise Men. (Five-year-olds may be able to trace and cut out the figures on their own.)

### **Option 2. Star Paintings**

Cut out star shapes from cellulose sponges (in a variety of sizes). Put white or yellow tempera paint on plates to serve as temporary stamp pads. Give each child a piece of dark construction paper, and invite the children to dip the star shapes in the paint to create star paintings. Glitter could be sprinkled on the wet paint.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play "I See the Star." Use a single large star shape. Ask the children to close their eyes as you place the star somewhere in the room. Then say, "Who sees the star?" The children open their eyes, look for it, and shout out, "I see the star, and I'm going to Bethlehem to see the baby." Children can take turns placing the star in various places. With a small class, it might be possible for everyone to join as a group to travel to where the star is.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

The Wise Men brought the baby Jesus three gifts frankincense, gold, and myrrh. Bring in something made of gold, a sample of a strong perfume, and incense. (Be careful of those with allergies.) Invite the children to explore the various items.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Add three Wise Men and their camels to the hay, shepherds, angels, and the Holy Family in the wondering center. Wonder about:

What would it be like to follow a star? What would it be like to ride on a camel?

What would it be like to be far away from home?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing “The First Nowell” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 109) with the music tape *Children Sing!* Note that stanzas 2-5 are about the star and the three Wise Men. The children will be able to join in singing the refrain. Or, invite the children to listen carefully to a reading of the carol’s words. When they hear “gold, and myrrh, and frankincense” (in stanza 5), they can stand up or raise hands.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

The Wise Men brought gifts to the baby Jesus. What were their gifts? What else did they give besides the gold, frankincense, and myrrh? (They worshiped and loved Jesus.)

We also give gifts to one another each year when we celebrate Jesus’ birth. Not all gifts come in boxes with ribbons, for many gifts are things we do for others (acts of kindness, helping with things that need to be done, or sharing love). What are some of the special things you do for others? How do these gifts make other people feel?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 14 has a picture of the Wise Men following the star, a Scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Let the Christ Candle be lighted for the closing. Gather the children for the prayer:

Thank you, God, for Wise Men who traveled far,  
Thank you for the bright, shining star.  
*(Pray for the needs of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Extinguish the candle. Hold hands in a circle and say:  
Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Now that the busy season of Christmas is ended, but still fresh in everyone's memory, what were some of the highlights of time spent with the children in your class? You may want to jot down some specific notes about activities that could be done in succeeding years, or new ideas that may have occurred to you in recent weeks. Save the notes for yourself or others who may be teaching this age group.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The coming sessions in this unit are on stories Jesus told. The focus for the next session is the parable of the mustard seed. Consider the significance of plants and gardens in your own life.

# JESUS: STORYTELLER

## SESSION 6

### THE MUSTARD SEED GROWS INTO A BUSH

#### FOCUS

When Jesus grew up, he told many stories about God. Jesus told about a tiny mustard seed that grows into a big bush to be a home for birds. The children should be able to retell the story in their own words.

#### GETTING READY

This session is the first in a series of three that focus on the parables of Jesus. These parables can be a source of delight to young children when they are told simply. The story of the mustard seed is so familiar that teachers may be tempted to deal with it quickly and without prayerfully thinking about its meaning. In preparation for teaching, read the parable daily, thinking about its metaphor for the kingdom of God that grows beyond our expectations.

Jesus often used seeds or plants in his stories. In this parable, he uses a mustard seed to help people understand the kingdom of God. Jesus selected the mustard plant because “it is the smallest of all the seeds on earth.”

It is not too soon to tell the parables of Jesus to young children. The imagery of the mustard seed that turns into a shrub where birds can build their nests will remain in the children’s consciousness and contribute to their future encounters with Jesus.

We give you thanks, most gracious God, for the beauty of earth and sky and sea; for the richness of mountains, plains, and rivers; for the songs of birds and the loveliness of flowers. We praise you for these good gifts, and pray that we may safeguard them for our posterity. Grant that we may continue to grow in our grateful enjoyment of your abundant creation, to the honor and glory of your Name, now and for ever. *Amen.*

For the Beauty of the Earth  
*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 840*

#### TEACHING TIP

Children enjoy activities that can be very messy and require clean-up time. One way to make this task easier is to cover the work surfaces with newspaper. When one child is finished, a new sheet of newspaper can be put on top for the next child, providing a clean space in which to work. When

everyone has had a chance to work, simply roll up all the newspapers and throw them away.

## **GATHERING**

Before class, locate a tree limb about two to three feet high, and put it in a container with some rocks around the base to hold it steady. During the next four weeks, selected items or pictures will be hung on this tree to encourage the children to remember the stories told. If it is not possible to use a branch, one may be drawn and cut from construction paper and attached to a wall.

As children arrive, direct their attention to a table where clear plastic bags with a few mustard seeds in each have been placed (Mustard seed can be found in the spice section of a supermarket.) Talk with the children about plants that grow from seeds. Provide puzzles and books as additional activities.

When all are present, say:

Teacher: Christ has died.

Children: Christ is risen.

Together: Christ will come again.

*The Book of Common Prayer, p.363*

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Mark 4:31*:

“It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth . . . .”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

As you tell this story about the mustard seed, emphasize the growth that takes place.

- When Jesus was a boy, he lived with Mary and Joseph in a town called Nazareth.
- His father was a carpenter, and Jesus probably helped him make things out of wood.
- When Jesus grew up, he began to travel and teach people about God, his heavenly father.
  - As a teacher, Jesus told many stories.
  - One of his stories was about a mustard seed. (Ask the children if they have planted flower or vegetable seeds. How big were the seeds when you planted them?)

- Jesus reminded the people that the mustard seed is the smallest of all the seeds on earth.

- After it is planted, it grows into “the greatest of all shrubs.” It has many branches that are strong enough for birds to build nests in them. (If children have planted seeds, ask them how big the plants grew.)

- We grow just like the mustard seed when we learn new things.

(Remind the children to look at stories that Jesus told at home in the children’s book, *Stories Jesus Told*, pp. 2-5.)

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Plant-and-Bird Finger Painting**

Provide each child with a piece of smooth-surfaced paper, such as shelf or freezer paper. Put a small amount of green finger-paint in the middle. Allow the children time to create many different kinds of plants. When they have finished their plants, add a tiny drop of red, blue, or yellow paint to each one. This bright spot of color becomes a bird in the mustard tree. (Be sure to roll up the children’s sleeves and cover their clothes with old shirts or smocks.)

### **Option 2. Flower and Seed Picture**

Give each child a piece of white paper on which a brown horizontal line has been drawn about one-third of the way up the page. Below the line, glue some seeds. Provide the children with crayons or colored markers, and invite them to draw plants that grow from the seeds above the line. Older children could add roots, leaves, birds, and other details to the scene.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Instruct the children to squat down and make themselves as little as they can and pretend they are seeds. The teacher says, “Children, you can grow while I count to 10.” The seeds then begin to have new life and grow. Repeat, counting to different numbers (in order to let the children enjoy various rates of growing). A variation would be to put on a record and allow the children to grow slowly as the music is playing. When the music stops, so do the growing seeds.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

In Jesus’ story of the mustard seed, birds could build their nests in the plant that grew. Provide the children with balls of play dough. (See Poster No. 13 in the Teacher’s Packet for a recipe.) Invite the children to use the dough to create plants, seeds, birds, or birds’ nests.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Give each child one tiny mustard seed to hold and examine. Ask questions like these:

What else is this tiny?

What will it do if we plant the seed?

How many different kinds of seeds are there?

How many different kinds of plants are there?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the hymn “Savior, like a shepherd” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 708; *We Sing of God*, 105) by playing the music tape *Children Sing!*

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Ask: What was the story Jesus told about a seed? What happened? How long would it take for the seed to grow into a plant? What kind of plant would it become? How big would the plant be? Would it be big enough to hold a bird’s nest? How many birds could it hold? Would the plant be big enough to play under?

What are some things we can see growing? How do we know that we are growing? Have you watched something grow? (Explore examples with the children, such as brothers and sisters, babies, pets, or plants.)

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 15 includes a picture of birds in a mustard bush, a Scripture verse, a hymn stanza, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather in a circle for this prayer:

Thank you, God, for seeds that grow,  
and for your loving care.

*(Pray for any concerns the children may express.)*

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

How has this lesson helped the children to begin to understand that the kingdom of God is a place of safety and love? What kinds of activities help the children sense God's loving presence in the classroom, in the church?

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session is about a woman who lost a coin. Remember a time when you lost something and searched long and hard to find it. Reliving such an experience in your memory will help in preparing to tell Jesus' story to the children.

# JESUS: STORYTELLER

## SESSION 7

### THE LOST COIN WAS FOUND

#### FOCUS

Jesus told about a woman who lost a coin and looked and looked until she found it, and then called to friends to tell them how happy she was. The children should be able to tell the story in their own words.

#### GETTING READY

In Luke’s Gospel, the parable of the lost coin is a “What if. . .” saying of Jesus; he does not describe it as something that had actually happened. In the story, a woman discovers that one of her ten coins is lost. She carefully searches her home, using a lamp and broom. When she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors to celebrate.

Jesus told the parable of the lost coin to underscore the “joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (*Luke 15:10b*). Jesus told this parable after Pharisees and scribes complained that Jesus associated with sinners and even ate with them. The good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ is that God searches diligently for all who are lost.

As in the case of other parables, young children will not understand the deeper meaning of the story. But we can share the concepts of lost-and-found (as in the case of the woman’s coin) and joy and celebration at the end.

O God our King, by the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ on the first day of the week, you conquered sin, put death to flight, and gave us the hope of everlasting life: Redeem all our days by this victory; forgive our sins, banish our fears, make us bold to praise you and to do your will; and steel us to wait for the consummation of your kingdom on the last great Day; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

On Sunday

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 835

#### TEACHING TIP

In working with young children we notice that they will engage in creative activities for the sheer joy and sensory pleasure that they derive from the *process*. They will usually not be able to conceive of an idea and carry it through to a final *product*. Their ideas will change as they work.

When finger-painting, for example, children will make a picture, smooth it over, and make another. Accept all efforts without imposing adult ideas of how things should look.

## **GATHERING**

As children arrive, encourage them to check the “story tree” and see what is to be added—coins or miniature brooms should be available on a near-by table. (See Gathering, Session 6.)

When everyone is present say:

Teacher: Christ has died.

Children: Christ is risen.

Together: Christ will come again.

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p.363

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Luke 15:9b*:

“... ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost.’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell the story of the lost coin that was found using the following outline.

- One day a woman was cleaning her home. She liked to keep it neat. Everything had a place, and she spent time every day putting her home in order.

- While she was cleaning, she looked in the safe place where she kept her coins. She had counted them the day before and knew that she had ten.

- Something didn’t look right, so she counted the coins again. There were only nine! That couldn’t be right. So she counted them again. But there were only nine.

- Even though it was light outside, she lit her lamp and began searching for the coin.

- She still couldn’t find it. So she took her broom and carefully swept the floor, hoping to find her lost coin.

- Suddenly, she saw a flash of light in a corner. The coin had almost rolled out of sight, but there it was!

- The woman called to her neighbors next door to come and celebrate with her. She was so happy that she had found the lost coin.

(Remind the children to go home and look at the story of the lost coin in the children’s book, *Stories Jesus Told*, pp. 6-11.)

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Broom-and-Coin Collage**

Give each child a sheet of construction paper folded in half and opened out flat. On one half of the paper, glue on a stick with pine needles or paper shreds at one end to make a broom. On the other half, attach a penny with clear tape. As the children work, talk about the story.

### **Option 2. Making a “Rejoice” Picture**

Invite the children to use bright finger-paints (red, yellow, orange, pink) to make pictures that show the joy (great happiness) of the woman who found her coin and called her neighbors to tell them about it. The process of painting can be accompanied by conversation about rejoicing.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play “Coin, coin, who’s got the coin?” (a variation of “Button, button, who’s got the button?”). The children sit in a circle with the palms of their hands pressed together. The teacher goes to each child and pretends to drop a coin into his/her hands. One child actually does get the coin, without anyone knowing. The teacher then chooses a child to guess “Who’s got the coin?” If the guess is wrong, everyone can help. The one who was chosen takes a turn hiding the coin in someone else’s hands. (The game is cooperative, with emphasis placed on hiding and guessing rather than on being right or wrong.)

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Obtain brooms, mops, large brushes, and whiskbrooms (as many as possible). Engage the children in setting up an imaginary interior of a house, determining where doors and windows and furniture would be located. Then invite them to discover that a coin is missing. The children can use all the brooms and other implements to sweep in search of the coin.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Hold ten pennies in the palm of your hand. Take one away to illustrate how it would feel to lose one. Invite the children to wonder aloud about the woman who lost her coin in Jesus’ story. Say, I wonder what it would be like to lose something you needed very much.

I wonder how hard we might look?  
How long might we keep looking? A day? A week? a year? forever?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing “Savior, like a shepherd” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 708; *We Sing of God*, 105). Before singing, you may want to listen together to the music on the tape *Children Sing!*, moving and swaying gently to the melody.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

The children may enjoy retelling the story of the woman and the lost coin in their own words.

How could she have misplaced it?

Where do you think she might have found it?

How long do you suppose it took her to find it?

How would the neighbors feel when the woman shared her good news with them? How do you think they celebrated?

Invite them to share stories of times when they themselves lost things and then found them. Ask:

How does it feel to lose something you really care about? What do you say?

When you find something you have lost, how do you feel? What do you say? Who do you tell?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 16 includes a picture of the woman looking for the lost coin, a Scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather in a circle for a closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for finding what is lost.

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

*(Pray for the needs of the children.)*

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

How did the young children relate to the concepts of losing and finding in the parable of the lost coin? What connections did they seem to make with experiences in their own lives? Consider how their comments and activities may help you to engage them in future sessions.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next two weeks focus on Jesus the shepherd. The image of shepherd appears throughout the Scriptures. Most of us do not think about actual sheep and the persons who care for them. But consider how the theme of shepherd occurs in our daily lives. Think about persons who have been or are your own shepherds (guides, mentors, and leaders).

# JESUS: STORYTELLER

## SESSION 8

### THE LOST SHEEP IS SAFE

#### FOCUS

Jesus told about a sheep that wandered away from home. The shepherd went to find it and brought it back safely. The children should be able to tell the story of the lost sheep.

#### GETTING READY

In the story of the lost sheep, Jesus paints a picture of a good shepherd who cares about each sheep in the fold. When one of the sheep strays, the shepherd goes into the wilderness to search until he finds it. When the sheep is found, the shepherd rejoices, calling together his friends and neighbors to “Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.” (*Luke 15:6b*)

To make clear his message that God reaches out to all persons and not simply to those who are already safely in God’s “fold,” Jesus told a series of parables: the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son (Prodigal). In each of these, the primary theme is “joy in heaven” when the lost are found. In this session for young children, the emphasis is on joyful celebration.

The image of the shepherd finding a lost sheep speaks to children at an intuitive level. It is not essential that they hear weighty explanations; we can trust the Good Shepherd to speak through the story to the hearts of the young learners.

Lord Jesus Christ, Good Shepherd of the sheep, you gather the lambs in your arms and carry them in your bosom: We commend to your loving care these children. Relieve their pain, guard them from all danger, restore to them your gifts of gladness and strength, and raise them up to a life of service to you. Hear us, we pray, for your dear Name’s sake. *Amen.*

For a Sick Child (alt.)

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 459

#### TEACHING TIP

Take a trip through your classroom through the eyes of your children. Get down on your knees to make yourself their height, enter the door, and “walk” around the room. What are the children seeing? Are there some things that can be done to make the room more appealing? More usable?

## GATHERING

The final additions to the “story tree” (begun in Session 6 of this unit) should be a sheep, a shepherd picture, and possibly a miniature shepherd’s crook. As the children arrive, invite them to put the new items on the tree. Talk about the items already on the tree. What do they remember about the things on the tree from the previous sessions? Ask what has been added.

A fun alternative would be to hide sheep around the room and ask the children to find them and put them on the tree.

When all are present, gather in a circle and say:

Teacher: Christ has died.

Children: Christ is risen.

Together: Christ will come again.

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 363

## STORY

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Luke 15:6b*:

“ . . . ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.’ ”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell Jesus’ story of the lost sheep (*Luke 15:3-7*) in your own words.

- Without shepherds, sheep could not take care of themselves for very long.
- In the land where Jesus lived, there were many hills, rocks, and small bushes. Sheep often got caught among the rocks or in the bushes.
- Because there were so many hills, sometimes the shepherd might not notice that one of the sheep was missing from the flock.
- Often the shepherd must count the sheep to make sure they are all together and safe.
- One day, a shepherd looked at the flock and realized one of the sheep was missing. That morning, there had been 100 sheep, but now there were only 99.
- The shepherd knew that if he didn’t find the sheep, the wild animals would. He also knew that the missing sheep would be very frightened.
- When he found the missing sheep, the shepherd put it around his shoulders to carry it home. When they arrived, he called his friends and neighbors to celebrate.

(Encourage the children to go home and look at the story of the lost sheep in the children’s book, *Stories Jesus Told*, pp. 12-23.)

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Sponge Sheep**

Give the children pieces of brown construction paper. Using small, round pieces of sponge and white tempera, each child can create a flock of sheep. (The sponge piece is dipped repeatedly in the white tempera and stamped on the paper.) When the paint is dry, details such as eyes, ears, and legs can be added to the sheep. Older children may want to draw a shepherd to add to the scene.

### **Option 2. Sheep Masks**

Use white paper plates to create sheep masks. Cut two holes for the eyes (do this ahead of time for younger children). Make ears by gluing on two black paper triangles. Use magic markers to add noses and mouths. Glue cotton balls or cotton batting to the masks to make them furry. Attach ends of string to either side of the plate so that the children can wear their creations.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Create a simple sheep's pen (a sheepfold) from a box or children's blocks. As the children cover their eyes, the teacher hides cotton balls (sheep) around the room. Three-year-olds will need obvious hiding places; older children will be able to search more thoroughly.

The children (shepherds) are to find the hidden sheep and bring them to the pen. When all are located and safely in the fold, clap hands and rejoice. Repeat the game as long as the children are interested.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Role-play the story of the lost sheep. Use a towel and rope as a costume for the child who plays the shepherd. All the other children will be sheep, rocks, or bushes. If masks were made (Option 2, Creating, above), they can be worn for this activity. Allow several children the opportunity to be the shepherd, and the sheep that gets lost. Remember to rejoice when the sheep is found.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Display the picture of the Good Shepherd Poster No. 3 in the Teacher's Packet. Wonder aloud together:

How do you think the lost sheep felt? Why did it get lost?

How did the other sheep feel while the shepherd was out looking for the lost one?

How would you feel if you were the lost sheep? How would you feel when you were found?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing “Savior, like a shepherd” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 708; *We Sing of God*, 105). The music tape *Children Sing!* may be helpful. Use these motions:

Savior, like a shepherd lead us; (*sway gently with the music*)

much we need thy tender care; (*cradle arms*)

in thy pleasant pastures feed us; (*stretch arms out*)

for our use thy folds prepare. (*bring arms together*)

Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus! Thou hast bought us, thine we are.

*(cross arms over chest)*

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

The shepherd in Jesus’ story took care of his sheep. Each one was important to him. Talk with the children about these questions:

In what ways did the shepherd care for the sheep?

How did the shepherd feel when he discovered that one of them was missing? What did he do about it?

How did he feel when he found the lost sheep? What did he do?

In the conversation time, help the children to make connections between the shepherd’s concern for the sheep, children’s concern for things they care for, and God’s concern for them. Ask:

What is very important to you (pets, stuffed animals, special blankets, or other items)? What do you do to care for it?

Who takes care of you? How?

How does God take care of us?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 17 has a picture of sheep, a Scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather the children for the closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for finding the lost sheep.  
(*Pray for the needs of the children.*)  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

From the children's comments and participation in this session, what is their sense of being cared for by others? by God? Consider how your own work with the class will contribute to their sense of belonging and feeling secure and safe.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The final session of this unit focuses on Jesus as the Good Shepherd. Continue to think about this powerful image for the providence and grace of God. In what ways do teachers become shepherds for learners?

# JESUS: STORYTELLER

## SESSION 9

### JESUS IS THE GOOD SHEPHERD

#### FOCUS

Jesus is the good shepherd who knows his sheep. The children should be able to say that Jesus knows us by name and calls us to follow him.

#### GETTING READY

This session continues with the shepherd image. Jesus describes a shepherd who knows each of his sheep and can call them by name. When he calls his sheep, they “follow him because they know his voice.” (*John 10:4b*) They will not follow a stranger, and will run because they do not recognize his voice.

The specific focus of this parable is on the intimate relationship between Jesus and each one of us. Jesus knows us and calls us by our names, just as shepherds know and call their sheep. In the Church, we place great value on names for they signify the worth and dignity of every human being. Names are used at our baptism, and often we speak aloud the names of saints who have gone before us in every generation.

In preparation for teaching, read *John 10:1-18*, in which Jesus calls himself the good shepherd. Think about the guidance offered by our Lord and our personal response to the Good Shepherd. Jesus expects us to follow when we are called. God also speaks to others through our lives.

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people: Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Fourth Sunday of Easter

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 225

#### TEACHING TIP

In this unit we have moved through the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. The early sessions necessarily related to Jesus’ birth and childhood. In helping children to make the connection between Jesus the Child and Jesus who is a grown man, it is important not to “leave behind” the Nativity story. Continue to speak of Jesus who was born to Mary as the same person who grew up to be a teacher, storyteller, and good shepherd.

## GATHERING

Ahead of time, tape a large sheet of colored paper to a wall or display board. Using the sheep figure on Poster No. 14 in the Teacher's Packet as a pattern, cut out a supply of white paper sheep (enough to be sure there is one for each child).

As the children arrive, greet them by name and give a paper sheep to each one. Invite the children to tape their sheep figures on the large sheet of paper. Write the individual names under each sheep with a marker or crayon.

When all are present, gather in a circle near the sheet filled with names and sheep. Say these words:

Teacher: Christ has died.

Children: Christ is risen.

Together: Christ will come again.

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 363

## STORY

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *John 10:14*:

“(Jesus said) I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, . . .”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

For this session, compose a story about a shepherd and sheep.

- There once lived a shepherd who knew each one of the sheep. He had even given names to every sheep. (Ask the children what names they would give the sheep.)
- When the shepherd called the sheep, they followed because they know the shepherd's voice.
- One day a friend came with the shepherd. When she called the sheep, they did not come because they did not know her voice.
- When the shepherd needs to move the sheep from one place to another, they follow. (Ask the children why the shepherd moved the sheep—for water, for food, for a safe place to rest.)
- Jesus is sometimes called the Good Shepherd. (Reread the verse from John's Gospel.)
- As our Good Shepherd, Jesus knows each one of us, and he knows all of our names. We are called to follow Jesus just as sheep are called to follow their shepherd. Jesus cares for us just as a shepherd cares for a flock of sheep.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Illuminated Names**

Provide large sheets of construction paper. Use a felt pen to write each child's name in large, open letters across a sheet of paper. Invite the children to use markers and crayons to add color and decorations. As they work, talk about Jesus the good shepherd who knows each of us by name. If possible, write across the top of each child's sheet the words, "Jesus knows my name."

### **Option 2. Straw Sheepfold**

Obtain pieces of construction paper, straw, and liquid glue. Invite the children to construct sheep pens by gluing the straws onto the paper in box-like shapes. Other details can be added with crayons and markers. As they work, talk about how shepherds call their sheep to come into the sheepfold (a safe place).

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play "The shepherd says. . ." (a variation on the familiar game, "Simon says. . ."). The shepherd leader calls out instructions, using the name of each child. When the instruction is preceded by the words, "The shepherd says. . .," the child who is called may do the suggested action. But if only a simple command is given without reference to the shepherd, no action can be taken. (The game could be set up so that the participants are working their way toward a sheepfold.)

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Role-play a shepherd caring for sheep and calling them by name. A few simple props for shepherds and sheep may be helpful. Encourage the children to name the sheep and use the names as part of the role-play.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Wonder aloud about why we have names. Ask:

What would happen if we didn't have names? How would we know one another? How would we call to a friend? How would our mothers and fathers call us?

How do you think Jesus knows all our names?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Listen and sing “Savior, like a shepherd” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 708; *We Sing of God*, 105) using the music tape *Children Sing!* The same motions suggested in Session 8 can be used.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Direct the children’s attention to the display of names and sheep (see Gathering, above). Guide the group in making some simple comparisons:

Shepherds know their sheep, and they call them by name. Who knows you by name? Who calls you? What do you do when you are called by name?

Talk about how sheep gather together as a flock. When do we gather together? Why do we come together? Who calls us together?

We come to the church because Jesus calls us. (Talk about the ways people talk about Jesus, sing about him, and tell stories about him. We use his name when we pray.)

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 18 includes a picture of Jesus, a Scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather in a circle for a closing prayer:

God, we thank you for knowing our names.

*(Pray for the needs of the children.)*

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER’S REFLECTION**

This is the last session of the second unit for the Chalice Year. Think about the individuals in the class. What have you noticed about the growth and development of each one? How have they changed during your time together? In what ways do you feel their experiences in the church have contributed to their progress?

Note: The following letter is for teachers and parents of children in the preschool/kinder-garten level of church school. These pages can be reproduced or used as a model for a personalized letter.

## **Episcopal Children's Curriculum**

### **Unit III. EUCHARIST: SACRED MEAL**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The heart of Christian worship is the Holy Eucharist, at which the people gather to remember Christ's "life, death, and resurrection, until his coming again" (BCP, Catechism, p. 859). Gathering for this sacred meal is the Church's faithful response to Jesus' words that institute this sacrament. In the Episcopal Church, all baptized persons are welcome at the Lord's Table; it is here that we participate in the breaking of bread (the sharing of Communion).

The first five sessions of this unit have been prepared to help preschool/kindergarten learners focus on key images related to Eucharistic celebration. The concluding four sessions are designed to be scheduled around the period that includes Holy Week through the second Sunday of Easter.

We encourage you to talk about the lessons with your child. Do this by reading together the children's book, *Eucharist: A Child's Story*, an illustrated story of the Eucharist celebration.

Scripture passages and excerpts from *The Book of Common Prayer* that the children will encounter are cited below. Look up the passages and excerpts with your child and show them where they are in the Bible and Prayer Book. The Take-Home Cards given to learners each week feature illustrations and text related to session themes. They also include useful instructions for parents. These collectible cards, which are 5 by 7 inches, can be displayed in a photo album, kept in an oversized recipe box, or used in any way you find helpful.

Following are summaries of the unit's sessions:

**Session 1: "Jesus Ate with Friends"** is about sharing meals. Scenes of families and friends eating together are part of children's daily lives. Jesus enjoyed going to his friends' homes to eat and enjoy their company. His relationship to his disciples would have included many common meals. (*Matthew 11:19*)

**Session 2: "We Gather at the Altar"** directs our attention to the actual place where Eucharist is celebrated in church. The Holy Table (altar) is at the center of the Church's sacred space, even though liturgical customs vary among congregations. (*Luke 22:14*)

**Session 3: “Jesus Offered Bread and Wine”** shifts to the elements that are brought to the table for the celebration. They learn that the prayer at the Eucharist includes the same words Jesus spoke when he had his Last Supper with his friends. (*I Corinthians 11:28*)

**Session 4: “We Give Thanks to God”** is about sharing with others, the primary reason for being at God’s table. We give thanks for all that God has done for us—not only in supplying our daily needs, but also for the life and work of Jesus Christ. (*Luke 2:16*)

**Session 5: “Jesus Sang with the Disciples”** offers an opportunity to look at singing as a vital part of our celebrations of Holy Eucharist. (*Matthew 26:30*)

**Session 6: “Jesus Shared the Last Supper”** describes what it was like for Jesus to be joined by his disciples at his final meal. (*Matthew 26:20, John 13:5*)

**Session 7: “Christ Has Died”** offers a time to tell the children what happened during the final days of Jesus’ life, including Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, and Good Friday. (Holy Eucharist, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 363)

**Session 8: “The Lord Is Risen”** treats the good news of Easter Day. The children are introduced to the activities that occur in their congregation to celebrate the feast of the resurrection. (*Matthew 28:7*)

**Session 9: “Jesus Walked on the Road to Emmaus”** is based on the story of Jesus’ appearances to Cleopas and his companion. They were joined by the risen Lord and did not recognize him until he broke bread with them. (*Luke 24:35*)

Yours in Christ,

Church School Teachers

# **EUCHARIST: SACRED MEAL**

## **SESSION 1**

### **JESUS ATE WITH FRIENDS**

#### **FOCUS**

Our celebration of the Eucharist is a sacred meal, a gathering of Christ's people who eat and drink together. The children should be able to tell that Jesus shared meals with his friends.

#### **GETTING READY**

Eating with other people is a primary way in which we learn to relate to the human family. It is evident in both Hebrew and Christian traditions that sacred meals play a key role in the lives of God's people. Entering fully into Eucharistic celebrations in our churches requires that we recognize the importance of coming together around a table, or sharing a meal. The experience is made holy by the presence of Jesus Christ, who instituted the sacrament of Eucharist.

This session focuses on the first element of Eucharist—the gathering of the people. We recall that Jesus enjoyed eating and drinking with his followers. He did so in the context of first century hospitality extended toward visitors. Because there were no public places to eat or stay, strangers were to be treated with honor and respect.

The story for this session is about Jesus and Zacchaeus (*Luke 19:1-10*). Jesus went to Jericho and was met by a large crowd. Zacchaeus, a wealthy tax collector, wanted to see Jesus but he was short and could not see over the heads of the others.

Zachaeus climbed a tree so he could see Jesus pass by. When Jesus came to the tree, he called out to Zachaeus. Zachaeus promised to repent and return all the money he had taken from others illegally. Jesus went to stay at Zachaeus' house to stay.

Give us grateful hearts, our Father, for all thy mercies, and make us  
mindful of the needs of others; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Grace at Meals

*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 835*

#### **TEACHING TIP**

Eating food is both a sensory and a social experience for children. Teachers may wish to include a simple snack time within the session to

provide an opportunity for the class to enjoy social interaction during mealtimes. Include a prayer of thanks for the food, and encourage sharing of both food and conversation. It is important that the teachers sit with the children and enter fully into the experience.

## **GATHERING**

Beforehand, gather some everyday tableware and serving items, including silverware, bowls, dishes, cups, and breadbaskets. As the children arrive, invite them to set the table using the dishes and other items. Talk about the items and share what the children do at mealtime in their homes. Provide the children with paper and crayons and puzzles as alternative activities.

When all are present, say:

Teacher: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

Children: Therefore let us keep the feast.

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 364

These words will be repeated at the Gathering throughout this unit.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read from *Matthew 11:19a* (alternate):

“... (Jesus) came eating and drinking, ...”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell a story about Jesus' life with his disciples, focusing on their need for food as they traveled from place to place.

- People who lived when Jesus was on earth they did not have restaurants and hotels as we do. Travelers like Jesus and his friends stayed with people in villages and shared their food.

- Coming together for a meal offered people a chance to pass along news and to talk about many things together. Jesus enjoyed eating and drinking and visiting in people's homes.

- One day, Jesus came to a town called Jericho.

- A man named Zacchaeus climbed a tree so he could see Jesus. Jesus saw him and said, “Come down; for I must stay at your house today.”

- Together they went to Zacchaeus' home where Jesus and his friends ate together.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Family Placemats**

Make placemats to take home and use for a family meal. Purchase plain white paper placemats, or use 12- by 18-inch pieces of construction paper. Children can decorate the mats with crayons or markers.

### **Option 2. Mealtime Collages**

Provide the children with paper plates or round pieces of paper. Each child can glue a variety of items and pictures to the base—anything that suggests having meals together with family and friends. Magazine pictures of food and people eating, plastic tableware, paper cups and napkins, can be used.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play “Friend, friend.” One child chooses a friend to invite to a meal, saying, “Friend, friend, from across the street, please come over now and eat!” When the friend comes, the children say together, “Come in (*name*), from over the way. What would you like to eat today?” The child who responded to the invitation pantomimes something to eat, and the others guess what it is. Repeat as long as the children are interested.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Set up a place for children to role-play meal preparation and eating. Use paper or plastic plates, glasses, cups, cooking utensils, tablecloths, napkins, and silverware. Encourage the children to set the table, invite “guests,” and enjoy conversation. This might also be a time to share a simple snack such as juice and graham crackers.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Wonder aloud with the children about these questions:

I wonder what it is like to be hungry or thirsty.

I wonder how people in other parts of the world eat together. I wonder what people talk about. I wonder what people pray about.

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Listen to “Let us break bread together on our knees” (*The Hymnal 1982, 325; We Sing of God, 53*) on the tape *Children Sing!* As you sing, use these motions to accompany the words of the hymn:

Let us break bread together on our knees;

*(hand motions for breaking bread)*

Let us break bread together on our knees;

*(hand motions for breaking bread)*

When I fall on my knees, *(clasp hands in prayer, and/or kneel)*

with my face to the rising sun, *(lift arms above head)*

O Lord, have mercy on me. *(clasp hands in prayer)*

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Share the picture of Jesus eating with friends from the Teacher’s Packet, Poster No. 4. Ask the children what they notice in the picture. For example, What are the people wearing? How are they seated? What foods do you see? What seems to be missing?

When do you and your family eat meals together? How do you sit? What kinds of food do you eat? How are your meals like the ones Jesus shared with his friends? How are they different?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 19 shows Jesus eating with friends. It includes a Scripture verse, the doxology, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their parents, and add it to the collection from the last unit.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Form a circle for the closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for food to eat and friends to share it.

*(Pray for any concerns the children may express.)*

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

In today's society, many children may not sit down regularly for meals with their families at home. Their sense of sharing a mealtime with other people may be limited. Consider ways in which a classroom snack time could provide such opportunities.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session will focus on the Altar (Holy Table) where the Eucharist takes place. Take an opportunity to pay particular attention to the altar in your own church. What is distinctive about it? How would you describe it? Reflect on the sacredness of the space in which Holy Communion is celebrated.

# **EUCHARIST: SACRED MEAL**

## **SESSION 2**

### **WE GATHER AT THE ALTAR**

#### **FOCUS**

Jesus gathered with his friends around a table. They prayed, ate, and sang together. We gather in church around an Altar. We pray, eat, and sing together. The children should be able to identify their church's Altar and describe what the people do as they gather for Eucharist.

#### **GETTING READY**

The previous session focused on how Jesus shared meals with all kinds of people and how eating and drinking are very important in families and communities. We now direct our attention to the actual place where Eucharist is celebrated. The Holy Table (Altar) is central in the Church's sacred space, even though furnishings, architecture, and liturgical customs may vary.

Young children can sense the special character of the sacrament that is shared around an altar. It is not too soon to introduce the ways in which the Church's celebration of Holy Communion shares characteristics of a family gathering where prayers, food, and song are shared. The children will also be interested in how linens and vessels are placed on the altar. They can appreciate the invitation offered to the people of God to come to the Altar (Holy Table) at their own church's Eucharistic gatherings.

The terms purificator, corporal, paten, and burse have little meaning to three-, four-, and five-year-old children. Place the emphasis on the simple similarities between the sacred meal of Eucharist and a family meal, as suggested in the Story (below).

Grant, O merciful God, that your Church, being gathered together in unity by your Holy Spirit, may show forth your power among all peoples, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Proper 16

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 232

#### **TEACHING TIP**

In this unit on the Eucharist, teachers will need to be sensitive to the varied backgrounds and experiences of the children. Some will have been

regular participants in the congregation's celebrations of the sacrament. Others may have attended rarely or never. It may not be the custom for children to attend worship or to receive Holy Communion. Describe the customs of your church. If children receive the bread and wine, show them how to hold their hands and how to take the wine. If they do not receive, show them how to cross their arms to receive a blessing. Remember these differences when choosing activities and talking with the class members.

## **GATHERING**

Set up a small table and cover it with a clean cloth or sheet. Place candlesticks and candles on the table. As the children arrive ask them where they have seen this kind of table before. Invite them to place a cup and plate on the table along with a cloth placemat. Provide books and puzzles as alternative activities.

When everyone is present, say these words:

Teacher: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

Children: Therefore let us keep the feast.

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 364

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Luke 22:14*:

“When the hour came, (Jesus) took his place at the table, and the apostles with him.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: *Thanks be to God.*

Tell a two-part story. Begin by saying again that Jesus and his friends shared meals together around a table. Then direct the children's attention to how a family's table is prepared for a meal today.

- Ask the children to look at Poster No. 5 of a family meal.
- When our families eat together we often begin by saying a prayer. Some families like to sing instead of saying a prayer.
  - We enjoy eating, but it is also fun to talk together. Sometimes we tell our families what we did. Sometimes we listen to others.
  - We look forward to sharing at mealtimes.
  - Show the children Poster No. 6 of people taking communion.
  - We prepare the Altar for the sacred meal we call the Eucharist.
  - We put a cloth on the Altar, and set out a plate and a cup. Candles are lighted. Bread and wine are placed carefully on the altar.

- At the Altar, we pray, sing, and eat. We look forward to sharing together.

(Remind the children to look at the children's book, *Eucharist: A Child's Story*, when they go home.)

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. God's People Gathered**

Provide the children with sheets of construction paper in varied colors. Ask them to draw altars on the sheets. (A simple outline of a table is sufficient.) Distribute clipped magazine pictures of a wide variety of people, and let each child choose several to paste around the altar on his/her sheet, or let them draw their own figures. Add candles with glitter and glue. Talk together about the people gathered for Eucharist.

### **Option 2. Family Meal Drawing**

Give the children paper and crayons. Suggest that they draw their families gathered for any meal (breakfast, lunch, dinner, or supper). As they work, invite discussion about the people in the pictures and what the tables have on them.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Invite the children to join in a version of the well-known children's action song, "This is the way we . . .," singing:

This is the way we light the candles,  
Light the candles, light the candles,  
This is the way we light the candles,  
Before we eat together.

(Continue with "set the table," "say our prayer," and any other movements you wish to add. Demonstrate each time an appropriate action to accompany the singing.)

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Visit the Altar in your church. Perhaps a priest, a deacon, or a member of the altar guild will be able to join the group and describe how the Holy Table is prepared. Invite the children to kneel quietly there (as a whole class or in small groups by turn). Ask them to look carefully at everything they can see: the altar itself and the things in the surrounding area. Ask some of the Wondering questions.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

If you could not visit your church's altar (see Doing), perhaps you can borrow Eucharistic linens and vessels to display for the class. Or you may be able to locate a large picture of an altar area in a church. (Note that Take-Home Card 20 has such a picture in miniature.)

Encourage the children to wonder:

What makes the altar different from all other places?

Who are all the people who gather at the altar in our church? In other churches?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing the first stanza of "Let us break bread together on our knees" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 325; *We Sing of God*, 53). Use the motions from Session 1 to accompany the words of the hymn. Use the tape *Children Sing!* to help with learning the music.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Talk about mealtimes around tables. Use questions like these:

When do we come to a table to eat? (Breakfast, lunch, dinner or supper, and snack time.)

What kinds of tables do we use? (Counters, high chairs, picnic tables, and dining tables.)

When do people come together to eat at our church? (Dinners, receptions, snack times.)

Talk about the people of the church coming to a special kind of table called an altar, where they share a special meal called the Eucharist (Holy Communion). Children may be able to share, in their own words, how they have taken part in coming to the altar or taking part in the sacrament.

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 20 includes a picture of an altar prepared for celebrating Holy Communion, the fraction anthem, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their parents and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for the closing prayer:

God, we thank you for bringing people together at our church's altar.  
*(Pray for the needs and concerns of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

The Last Supper, which is the basis for our Church's liturgy of Holy Communion, was a meal that Jesus shared with his disciples. The concept of Eucharist as a sacred meal is sometimes overlooked in Christian education. Our teaching of children is aimed at helping them to sense the similarities between family meals and our gathering at the altar. Did the children in your class see any of the similarities and differences?

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session is focused on the elements of bread and wine used in Eucharist. As you think about teaching, reflect again on what this sacrament means to you personally. Read the Great Thanksgiving from the service of Holy Communion in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

# **EUCHARIST: SACRED MEAL**

## **SESSION 3**

### **JESUS OFFERED BREAD AND WINE**

#### **FOCUS**

Jesus gave *bread* and *wine* to his friends (the apostles) at a meal they shared the night before he died. The children should be able to say that bread and wine are given at the Holy Eucharist because Jesus asked us to remember him in this way.

#### **GETTING READY**

This session shifts our attention to the elements of bread and wine in the sacrament of Holy Eucharist.

In both Hebrew and Christian tradition, the breaking of bread is an important symbol. This act suggests hospitality toward guests, concern for the nourishment of human beings, and our responsibility for sustaining life on the earth.

Through the Eucharist, Jesus offers his very self to the world as a sacrifice, in the very same way that he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples in the Upper Room. He gives himself for our salvation just as he offered the cup of wine on that night. We rejoice in that good news each time we gather as God's people at Holy Communion.

Practices in congregations will vary with respect to children's participation in Eucharistic celebrations. In planning this session, keep in mind the customs in your church.

On the night he was betrayed (Jesus) took bread, said the blessing, broke the bread, and gave it to his friends, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Holy Eucharist II, Prayer C

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 371

#### **TEACHING TIP**

Discussions about the Eucharist may reveal inappropriate behavior by the children or other children. Most of these instances are simply due to the extension of play behavior on their part. Guide them gently, by helping the children to learn behavior that is acceptable. Suggest that we are quiet while others pray and as we remember Jesus. We give thanks and we ask Jesus to

be with us around the altar.

## **GATHERING**

Ahead of time, obtain small quantities of the following ingredients: flour, water, yeast, salt, and sugar or honey. A mixing bowl and a baking pan can be displayed as well. As the children arrive, invite them to imagine what these items would become if we mixed them together and put them into a hot oven. Have some empty bowls and spoons available for pretend bread making.

When all are present, say:

Teacher: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

Children: Therefore let us keep the feast.

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 364

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *I Corinthians 11:28b*:

“ . . . eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Begin with some simple statements to review the previous sessions: Jesus had meals with his friends around a table, and we gather at the Holy Table (altar) in our church for a sacred meal called the Eucharist.

Tell a simple story about families who come to your congregation’s celebration of Eucharist (Holy Communion). To personalize the account, you might tell about your own family.

- About halfway through the worship service, we pass the peace by greeting each other. Demonstrate passing the Peace and ask the children to pass the Peace among themselves.

- While the offerings are collected, the priest puts the bread and wine on the altar.

- Then the priest asks us to pray saying the same words Jesus used at the Last Supper with his friends. We may hear the same words we used at the Gathering.

- We take turns going up to the altar to receive the bread and wine.

- This is the way Jesus asked us to remember him.

(Remind the children to look at the children’s book for this unit, *Eucharist: A Child’s Story*, at home with their families.)

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Clay Loaves**

Give the children pieces of clay (brown or white, if possible). Invite them to create individual loaves of bread. Put these away to dry before they are taken home. (Names should be marked on the loaves.)

### **Option 2. Bread and Wine Pictures**

Supply small bits of brown construction paper (the children may want to tear their own), large piece of manila paper, and glue. Ask the children to glue the paper bits on the paper to look like bread that is broken for us to eat. Purple finger-paint may be used to make dots on the picture to represent the wine that we share.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play “What’s missing?” Using Poster No. 14 from the Teacher’s Packet. Cut out the pictures of the paten, chalice, bread, and wine (or substitute pictures) and put all the items on a table. Ask the children to close their eyes. Remove one item. The children open their eyes, and the teacher says, “What’s missing?”

Repeat, replacing and removing different items each time. (Older children may be able to take turns leading the game.)

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Bring a loaf of bread dough that is ready to put into an oven. In addition, provide a separate lump of dough that the children can touch, smell, and knead. Talk about how bread is made and baked (see Gathering, above).

If time permits, allow the children to watch as the loaf of dough is placed into the oven.

This activity could follow the Gathering at the beginning of this session. While the bread is baking, proceed with other teaching activities.

When the bread has cooled, use it for Wondering (below).

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Display samples of different kinds of bread (the bread from the Doing activity could be used). Offer the children the opportunity to taste at least one kind.

Wonder aloud about these questions:

How many different kinds of bread are there?

What would we do if there was no bread? How would we make sandwiches or toast? What is your favorite kind of bread?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing the first and second stanzas of “Let us break bread together on our knees” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 325; *We Sing of God*, 53). Listen to the music tape *Children Sing!* and use these motions to accompany the words. Add these movements:

Let us drink wine together on our knees;

*(make hand motions of drinking from chalice)*

Let us drink wine together on our knees;

*(make hand motions of drinking from chalice)*

When I fall on my knees, *(clasp hands in prayer)*

with my face *(frame face with hands)*

to the rising sun, *(lift arms above head)*

O Lord, have mercy on me. *(clasp hands in prayer)*

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Obtain a picture showing people receiving bread and wine at a Eucharist. (The Teacher’s Packet includes Poster No. 6 of such a scene.)

Ask the children whether they go to the altar with their families or their teacher. Ask:

How do the people know when it is time to go forward?

What words does the priest (deacon) say when the bread is given?

What are the words that are said when the wine is shared?

What do you think about when you are at the altar?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 21 provides a picture of a loaf of bread and a chalice, the words of invitation to receive the gifts of God, a prayer, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take this card home, share it with their parents, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather in a circle for a closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for your gifts of bread and wine.  
*(Pray for the needs of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

In what ways are the children responding to the activities and discussions about the Eucharist (Holy Communion)? Be sensitive to all feelings they express. Take note of the kinds of questions they ask. To what degrees are they curious? reverent? joyful? anxious?

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The focus of the next session is on giving thanks. Verbal “thank yous” are important. In our tradition as the people of God, we remember that all the earth and everything in it join to praise the Creator. Consider how our lives' daily rhythms, together with our worship as a congregation, become an offering of thanksgiving.

# EUCHARIST: SACRED MEAL

## SESSION 4

### WE GIVE THANKS TO GOD

#### FOCUS

Jesus gave *thanks* to God at every meal. When we celebrate the Eucharist, we join in a *Great Thanksgiving*. The children should be able to say that we give thanks to God at Holy Communion.

#### GETTING READY

The sessions in this unit have focused on the concrete elements in the Church's celebration of Eucharist: the meal, altar, bread, and wine. Now we turn to the theme of thanksgiving, central to all that is said and done in the service.

The Greek word “eucharist” means “gratefulness” or “thanksgiving.” Celebrations of Eucharist by gatherings of Christians include the community’s prayers to thank God for all that has been done for us in the person of Jesus Christ. The long prayer that forms the heart of the liturgy of Holy Communion is called the Great Thanksgiving. In this prayer is the story of Jesus’ actions at the Last Supper, including the words he spoke.

Young children can learn how and why we thank God for the gifts that we have received. The Catechism describes Eucharist:

Q. Why is the Eucharist called a sacrifice?

A. Because the Eucharist, the Church’s sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, is the way by which the sacrifice of Christ is made present, and in which he unites us to his one offering of himself.

Q. By what other names is this service known?

A. The Holy Eucharist is called the Lord’s Supper, and Holy Communion; it is also known as the Divine Liturgy, the Mass, and the Great Offering.

An Outline of the Faith (Catechism)

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 859

We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son.

Holy Eucharist

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 368

## TEACHING TIP

It is a natural thing for young children to be completely involved in the things they say and do, including the saying of “Thank you!” As their teachers, we can strive to incorporate those joyful feelings in their participation in the Church’s worship. Work with the children to develop this connection by talking freely with the children about Eucharist as thanksgiving.

## GATHERING

Bring in a variety of objects for which young children might be thankful. Examples are a teddy bear, a birthday card or other birthday party item, a picture of a family, a box of cookies, a balloon, or other such simple things. As the children arrive ask them what these things might have in common. Keep note of their answers and refer to them in the story. Provide paper and crayons for children to draw pictures of anything they are thankful for.

When all are present, say:

Teacher: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

Children: Therefore let us keep the feast.

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 364

## STORY

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read from *Luke 22:17*:

“Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, ‘Take this, and divide it among yourselves . . . .’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell a story that begins with times you said “Thank you” to someone at home, at work, or elsewhere. Refer to the items from the Gathering and any additional pictures the children drew. Be specific in the details. For example:

- When my son helps me at dinner, I say, “Thank you for helping me set the table.”
- When a friend at work gave me a gift, I said, “Thank you for the candy.”
- When I was little, I gave thanks for my stuffed bear to sleep with and for my birthday.
- We learn to say thank you when we are even younger than you are. (Ask

the children when they have said “thank you” when they received something from a parent, a neighbor, or a friend.)

- Jesus said thank you to God. He gave thanks for everything God gives to us. When he was with his friends at a meal, he would thank God for the food at the table.

- We also say thank you to God at our meals.

- When we celebrate the Eucharist at church, we say a prayer that gives thanks to God. We thank God for sending Jesus to be with us. We thank God for all that Jesus has done for us.

(Remind the children to look at the children’s book for this unit, *Eucharist: A Child’s Story*, at home with their families.)

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. “Thank You” Collages**

Give the children pieces of construction paper, and glue or glue sticks. Write the words “THANK YOU” in the middle of the paper. Invite the children to glue pieces of confetti, glitter, or other sparkling or colorful material on the letters so that they stand out from the page. As the group members are at work, talk with them about giving thanks to God for all that we have.

### **Option 2. A Prayer of Thanks**

Make photocopies of the short Prayer of Thanks that is included on Poster No. 14 in the Teacher's Packet, one for each child to take home. It is a simple prayer with generous border space. Supply markers and crayons for the class, and invite the children to decorate the sheets in their own ways.

It does not matter if the children cannot read the prayer for themselves. It could be easily memorized as they work.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sitting in a circle with the children, play music or sing a song as an object is passed from one person to another. Use one or more of the items used in the Gathering. Stop the music, and the one holding the object says, “Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_” to the one from whom the object came. The other child responds with “You’re welcome.” Repeat until everyone has had a turn.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Take a trip into the nave of your church to show the children the altar book from which the Great Thanksgiving is read at the Eucharist. These

words could be read aloud for the class members to hear:

“. . . (A)cccept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; . . .”  
(Holy Eucharist I, BCP, p. 335.)

Or, “We give thanks to you, O God, . . .”  
(Holy Eucharist II, Prayer B, p. 368.)

Suggest that the children listen for the words “thanksgiving” or “thanks” when they come to church to receive the bread and the wine at the Eucharist.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Invite the children to wonder:

About all the things people might be thankful for. Wonder about what it would be like if no one ever said “thank you”. How you feel when someone says “thank you” to you?

How does it make you feel to say thank you in another language? Share some examples, either from your own experience or using the following:

Gracias (Spanish); Merci (French); Danke (German).

Let the children try saying the words. Wonder about all the languages God hears when people everywhere are giving thanks in prayers.

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Listen to the music tape *Children Sing!* as you sing both stanzas of “Let us break bread together on our knees” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 325; *We Sing of God*, 53). Use the motions suggested in the previous sessions.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Talk with the children about expressing thanks to others. Ask:

When do you say thank you? Who are some of the people you thank?  
How do you say it?

When have you heard someone say “Thank you!” to you?

Why is it important to say thank you? How does it make you feel?

How can we say thank you to God? (Prayers at meals; coming to the church to worship; saying prayers when we are alone.)

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 22 shows a hand extending a wafer, with the words “. . . and be thankful.” Included are a hymn stanza and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their parents, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather in a circle for a closing prayer:

We thank you Lord for so many things, but especially for Jesus.

*(Pray for the needs of the children.)*

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Saying thank you can be such an ingrained, reflexive sort of habit that we may forget the simple joy involved in expressing gratitude. What opportunities for being grateful (and saying so) have you experienced lately in your own life? Consider how many occasions are provided in the class sessions for teachers to say thank you to the children.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session focuses on music we sing during the Eucharist, particularly the Sanctus (Holy, holy, holy. . .). How does music during the Eucharist affect you as you worship? Spend a moment or two reflecting on this experience.

# **EUCHARIST: SACRED MEAL**

## **SESSION 5**

### **JESUS SANG WITH THE DISCIPLES**

#### **FOCUS**

Jesus' disciples sang when they ate together. We sing in our church at the Eucharist. The children should be able to say or sing the Sanctus from the Eucharistic liturgy.

#### **GETTING READY**

In both the *Gospel of Mark* and the *Gospel of Matthew*, it is recorded that the final act at Jesus' Last Supper was the singing of a hymn (*Mark 14:26* and *Matthew 26:30*).

Music has always been important to the people of God. Moses and Miriam celebrated the crossing of the Red Sea with singing and dancing. The psalms were written as songs to reflect different emotions of the writers, such as praise, adoration, thanksgiving, sorrow, sadness, and joy.

The Church throughout the centuries has placed great value on psalms, hymns, and instrumental music. Some of the greatest musical compositions were written for the Eucharist. There have been times when music was banned from church worship. People soon began to realize that worship of God was a joyful event and that joy was reflected through music.

Congregational singing plays an important role in worship services as we praise God together through music. In preparation for this session, consider the music you have experienced in church that has enriched the worship experience for you or someone you know.

Father, your people worship you with many voices and sounds, in times of joy and sorrow. Move us to express the wonder, the power, and the glory of your creation in the music we make and in the songs we sing. *Amen.*

Consecration of a Church

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 572

#### **TEACHING TIP**

The suggestions under Creating in this session are focused on expressing feelings with music. For preschool children especially, music involves the whole person (heart, mind, voice, and body). Moving rhythmically or creating with bright colors while listening may nurture children's apprecia-

tion for the gift of music.

## **GATHERING**

As the children arrive, involve them in singing some songs or hymns that are familiar to them such as “Jesus Loves Me” or “Let Us Break Bread Together” and doing some familiar fingerplays. Coming together and sharing music is a lead-in activity for what follows in the Storytelling (below). An alternative activity could be a cozy corner with books where music is playing softly.

When everyone is present, say:

Teacher: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

Children: Therefore let us keep the feast.

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 364

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read aloud *Matthew 26:30*:

“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Prepare a short story about singing God’s praises.

- When Jesus and his friends were together for meals, they would sing praises to God.
- The songs they sang were called psalms. We have many of these in our Bibles and our Prayer Book.
- The songs had words like: “Sing to the Lord with thanksgiving; make melody to our God on the lyre . . .” (*Psalms 147:7*), and “O come, let us sing to the Lord . . .” (*Psalms 95:1*). (You may want to use an autoharp or other simple instruments for plucking a few notes to accompany the words as you sing or say them.)
- Show the children Poster No. 7 from the Teacher’s Packet of people singing.
- When we meet to pray, especially at church, we sing words of thanks and praise to God. (Mention songs or hymns of praise that will be familiar to the children in your group. Perhaps ones they have learned during this unit or from the music tape *Children Sing!*)
- At the Eucharist, all the people in our church join in saying or singing “Holy, holy, holy, . . .” (Use the words of the version familiar to the

children.) But it isn't just in our church that this happens.

- All around the world in many languages God's thankful people sing those very same words!

(Remind the children to look at the children's book for this unit, *Eucharist: A Child's Story*, at home with their families.)

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Rhythm Streamers**

Give each child several lengths of crepe paper, or use pieces from pre-cut rolls of streamers. Let the class members decorate their streamers with markers and attach them to a cardboard disk about 3 inches in diameter. (Cover table surfaces with several thicknesses of newspapers to absorb any of the liquid that may soak through the crepe paper.) Attach the streamers to a short straw (one per child), or tie them together at one end so that they can be waved in the air while singing.

### **Option 2. Painting to Music**

Play the music tape *Children Sing!* or tapes of other church music in the background. Sit with the children and ask them to close their eyes and listen for a short time. Stop the tape. Provide materials for the children to paint what they hear (watercolors, tempera, or finger-paint) as they listen to the music for a longer period.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play a game of musical chairs where the child who does not have a chair become the choir director, leading the rest of the class in singing the Sanctus or any other hymn or song they wish. Repeat the game as often as time and interest allow.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Go to the area where your church's organ is located. Ask the organist, director of the choir, or another trained musician to play a Sanctus used at your church's celebrations of Holy Eucharist. Or perhaps you can arrange for a choir member to come to the class and sing the words for the children, helping them join in. (You may want to tape this period of exploration and play parts of it at later times.)

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Show the children a copy of *The Hymnal 1982*. Open it to show how many pages of music it contains. Wonder aloud:

Why do we have so many songs and hymns? What if we didn't have any songs to sing?

What makes the songs and hymns different from other things we sing?

How does it sound in church when everyone is singing a hymn? When everyone is quiet?

What would it be like at church if no one ever sang anything?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Lead the children in singing the "Sanctus" (*The Hymnal 1982*, S 129; *We Sing of God*, S 5), or use any other version that may be more familiar in your congregation. Follow your church's customs as you sing. Use the music tape *Children Sing!*

Clap out the words of "Holy, holy, holy, . . ." in a rhythm. Help the children to clap in unison. Add the words, one line at a time, as the clapping continues. The children may want to join in saying the words.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Talk about music and singing.

When do you like to sing? Where? Who sings with you? What do you sing?

How does it make you feel when you are singing?

Have you ever just listened as people are singing in church? What did it make you think? feel? What are some of the words you remember best?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 23 is an illuminated "Holy, holy, holy," with a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather in a circle for a closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for music and singing.  
(*Pray for the concerns of the children.*)  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Join hands and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

How is music used in your classroom? Do you love to sing? Or do you feel self-conscious and hesitant about singing with children? It is important that children enjoy the chance to sing, and they are seldom critical of their teachers' efforts. How do the children in your own group respond to music and singing?

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next four sessions of this unit focus on the events of Holy Week and Easter. The themes of Eucharist will reappear, this time in relation to the Church's liturgical year. The principal concept will be the act of sharing. Consider how Jesus' sacrifice invites us to join in a ministry of reaching out to others.

# EUCHARIST: SACRED MEAL

## SESSION 6

### JESUS SHARED THE LAST SUPPER

#### FOCUS

On the night before Jesus died, he had a special meal with his friends. We call this the Last Supper. The children should be able to tell what Jesus and his friends shared at this meal.

#### GETTING READY

In preparation, read the separate accounts of the Last Supper in *Matthew 26*, *Mark 14*, *Luke 22*, and *John 13*. *Mark*, *Matthew*, and *Luke* identify the meal as the annual Passover celebration. *John* places the Passover on Good Friday.

This session is about the events of Maundy Thursday, with an emphasis on the concept of Jesus' Last Supper as a time of sharing—a sharing of the hospitality of Jesus, who washed the disciples' feet and spoke of his approaching sacrifice. The washing of feet was a custom of hospitality in Jesus' time. People wore only sandals, and feet became dirty and dusty from the unpaved roads. Servants usually washed the feet of guests at the door of the house. Jesus' washing of the feet of the disciples placed him in the role of servant.

The previous five sessions have helped us to think about the Eucharistic celebration as we experience it in our own church's worship. This session and the one that follows are focused on the Last Supper as an event of the last week in Jesus' life. The Scripture account is closely linked to our Church's liturgy.

The Lord Jesus, after he had supped with his disciples and had washed their feet, said to them, "Do you know what I, your Lord and Master, have done to you? I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done." . . . I give you a new commandment: Love one another as I have loved you. . . . By this shall the world know that you are my disciples: That you have love for one another.

Maundy Thursday

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 274

## TEACHING TIP

Reviewing the events of Holy Week with young children requires particular sensitivity. They think of Jesus as their living friend. It is difficult for them if our descriptions of what happened on Good Friday include too much graphic detail. Still, they cannot be shielded from the fact that Jesus died on a cross. The death of Jesus, for Christians, is always considered in the context of the resurrection. Jesus died and rose again; that is the good news for us all.

## GATHERING

Display Poster No. 8 in the Teacher's Packet of a painting of The Last Supper. As the children arrive, invite them to look at the painting and talk about what they see. Identify the people as Jesus and his friends. Provide crayons and paper or puzzles as alternative activities.

When everyone is present, say:

Teacher: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

Children: Therefore let us keep the feast.

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 364

## STORY

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read aloud *Matthew 26:20* and *John 13:5*:

“When it was evening, (Jesus) took his place with the twelve . . . .”

“Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples feet and to wipe them with a towel that was tied around him.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

In your own words, tell about Jesus' Last Supper, supplying enough details to help the children visualize the scene. Point to Poster No. 8 that shows a painting of the Last Supper.

- Jesus and his friends arrived in Jerusalem in a kind of parade. People shouted Hosanna! and laid leafy branches on the road for the donkey Jesus rode to walk on. This was a great honor.
- Jesus invited his friends for dinner. His friends had been with him for a long time.
- They met in an upstairs room where special guests could eat.

- Jesus washed the feet of his friends as a servant might do for a guest.
- Jesus and his friends talked and enjoyed sharing the meal. They passed food around the table and poured wine to drink.
- This was the very last meal Jesus shared with his friends, and that is why we call it the Last Supper.
- At the end of the meal, Jesus shared bread and wine with his friends. The words he used are the very same words we repeat at the Eucharist in our church.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Gathered at the Table**

For each child, draw a table outline on a large sheet of construction paper. Supply for each one a paper circle (to represent Jesus) and twelve smaller circles (to represent the disciples at the Last Supper). Ask the children to arrange and glue the circles around the table. Some of the group members may wish to use markers or crayons to add facial features.

### **Option 2. Water Footprints**

Gather sheets of brown construction paper, markers and crayons, a shallow basin for water, and some towels. Invite each child to place a bare foot in the water and step down firmly onto a sheet of the paper. The result will be a moist print that can be outlined. The children can help one another to dry their feet. As this activity proceeds, talk with the class members about Jesus' washing of the disciples' feet.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Pretend that everyone is at the Last Supper. Play "When I was there, I saw. . . ." Collect the following items to be on display for the game: plate with bread, glass of wine, tablecloth.

The children gather in a circle. The teacher begins the game by choosing one of the items in the display and saying, "When I was there, I saw (name the item)." In turn, each child repeats the words and chooses an item to name. After the group has done this a few times, they may wish to add actions to accompany the naming of each item (gestures or pantomime).

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Role-play the arrival of Jesus' friends to have the supper with him. Use towels for headpieces and robes as costumes. As the friends arrive, remind

them to remove their shoes. Let the children take turns pretending to wash each other's feet. This could be combined with the Creating, Option 2 activity.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Use Poster No. 8 from the Teacher's Packet, which is a full-color reproduction of a painting of Jesus and the disciples at the Last Supper. (Or, use one of the classic scenes frequently available in books). Wonder aloud with the children:

What do you suppose they talked about as they arrived for the meal? at the table as they ate? after they sang and said goodnight?

How do you think they felt when Jesus started washing their feet?

What might they have had to eat?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Listen to the music tape *Children Sing!* to introduce the first stanza of "For the bread which you have broken" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 340; *We Sing of God*, 55). The simplicity of both the words and the melody make this hymn for Holy Eucharist an ideal one for young children to learn and sing repeatedly.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Talk about the Last Supper. Ask: Who were the twelve disciples with Jesus? Say their names. (Peter, Andrew, James, John, Philip, Barnabas, Bartholomew, Matthew, Simon, Jude, Thomas, and Judas) Perhaps the children would enjoy saying some of them aloud together. (It is not expected, of course, that the children would remember all of the names.) Many churches are named for the disciples, and class members may know about this.

Where was the Supper held? What did Jesus and the disciples do there? Who shared the bread and the wine?

Why do we remember this story so well?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 24 has a picture of The Last Supper, a hymn stanza, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for the closing prayer:

God, we thank you that Jesus shared the bread and wine.  
(*Pray for the needs and concerns of the children.*)  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

How has this session about the Last Supper helped children see its relation to the Eucharist? What have you observed about the children's reactions to the story? Is it familiar to them or completely new?

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session, also related to Holy Week, focuses on the Church's celebration of the Eucharist as a time when we remember how Jesus died on the cross. Consider reflectively the ancient words that we repeat in the Eucharist (Rite II): Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

# **EUCHARIST: SACRED MEAL**

## **SESSION 7**

### **CHRIST HAS DIED**

#### **FOCUS**

The day after Jesus' last meal with his disciples, he died on the cross. The children should be able to tell in their own words that the Last Supper was on Thursday, Jesus died on Friday, and he rose again on Sunday (Easter Day).

#### **GETTING READY**

This unit has been designed to help young children understand the celebration of Holy Eucharist in the Church. In the Church's liturgy, Maundy Thursday celebrates this event. But at every Eucharist we remember the whole story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection.

The most important thing for the children to understand is the connection between what happened in Jesus' last week and what we do in worship at Holy Eucharist. In this session and the one that follows these links will be stressed:

Thursday: Jesus ate his last meal (the Last Supper) with his friends; we call it Maundy Thursday.

Friday: Jesus died on a cross; we call it Good Friday.

Sunday: Jesus rose from the dead; we call this happy day Easter.

Almighty Father, whose dear Son, on the night before he suffered, instituted the Sacrament of his Body and Blood: Mercifully grant that we may receive it thankfully in remembrance of Jesus Christ our Lord, who in these holy mysteries gives us a pledge of eternal life; and who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  
*Amen.*

Maundy Thursday

*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 274*

#### **TEACHING TIP**

Jesus on the cross is a compelling Christian image that most young children probably have seen. With support and guidance, they will have a reverent appreciation for it. They have no need to revisit the painful details of the crucifixion itself. Even so, some children who hear references to the death of Jesus will volunteer information about his suffering on the cross.

We do not deny the fact that Jesus suffered and died. But as Christians, we look upon the cross with the knowledge that God overcame death. The good news of our faith is that Jesus rose again and is living and active among us. With young children, the connection should always be clear: Jesus died. Jesus rose again. (See the Story, which begins with the reading of the Memorial Acclamation from the Eucharist.)

## **GATHERING**

Arrange a display of items that suggest the days and events of Holy Week, such as the following: palm branch, bread and wine, cross, and a lily. Use pictures if the items suggested are not available.

Invite the children to look at all the items. Encourage conversation and comments, but do not share explanations at this point. Provide crayons and paper, puzzles and books for alternative activities.

When everyone is present, say:

Teacher: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

Children: Therefore let us keep the feast.

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 364

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Gather in a circle, open *The Book of Common Prayer*, and explain that you are going to read from it. Show them the page. Read the Memorial Acclamation from Holy Eucharist, Rite II, Prayer A (p. 363):

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

The mood for story time in this session should be quiet. The days of Holy Week itself are like that—offering us the full range of human emotion (apprehension, sadness, despair, waiting in hope). The week ends in the wonderful joy of Easter.

In your own words, tell what happened during the final days of Jesus' life—the time from Palm Sunday until Easter Day. Use the items in the Gathering in telling your story. Young children do not need extensive details.

- Jesus' last week began on Palm Sunday. He came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey. People were glad to see him and spread palm leaves on the road.

- On Thursday, he met with his friends for the Last Supper. First he washed their feet, which were dusty and tired. Then they all shared bread and wine just like we do in church during Eucharist.

- On Good Friday, Jesus died on the cross. His body was placed in a tomb, a room carved out of rock.

- Holy Saturday is the time when we wait and get ready for the good news of Easter.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Three-Part Picture**

Use the patterns on Poster No. 14 in the Teacher's Packet to photocopy and make cutouts of the following for each class member: paten and chalice, cross, and lily. For each child, prepare a sheet of construction paper that has been folded into thirds to create three panels. Ask the children to glue the three cutouts to the panels in order from left to right, to represent Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Day. Use markers or crayons to color the pictures.

### **Option 2. Crosses**

Provide each child with two pieces of cardboard, one longer than the other. Glue the two pieces together to form a cross. Invite the children to decorate the cross with a variety of natural items such as leaves, twigs, seeds, or small stones.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Using a bean bag or soft ball, conduct a tossing game. To begin, the teacher says "Thursday," and tosses the ball to a child. The whole group responds with "Maundy Thursday," "Last Supper," or "Jesus' last meal with his friends." The teacher then says "Friday," and tosses to another child. The group says either "Good Friday" or "Jesus died (on a cross)." The teacher says "Sunday," and tosses to another class member. The group responds, "Easter" or "Jesus rose from the dead."

The children may then be able to take charge and call out days, tossing to one another, and responding as individuals.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Use the items (or pictures) from the Gathering: 1. bread and wine for the Last Supper (Maundy Thursday); 2. a cross for Good Friday; and 3. a lily for Easter Day (Sunday).

Set up three chairs (or stools or large blocks) in a row, a few inches apart. Talk again with the children about the order of the three days, and point out which items go with each day. Invite the children to take turns placing the

items in a correct sequential order from left to right.

Note: This activity could be combined with Conversation (below).

### **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

The events of Holy Week arouse powerful emotions. Ask the children:

How do you think Jesus' friends felt at the Last Supper?

How would it make them feel to hear that Jesus had died on the cross? What might they say to one another? Where would they go? What would they do all day on the Saturday after Good Friday?

Do you think they would ever smile again? When?

### **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing again the first stanza of "For the bread which you have broken" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 340; *We Sing of God*, 55). The music tape *Children Sing!* may be helpful for this activity.

### **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Let this time be more of a guided story time than a series of questions and answers. Invite the children to explain, in their own way, what happened on each of these days: Thursday, when Jesus had his last meal with his friends; Friday, when Jesus died on the cross; Sunday, when Jesus rose from the dead to everyone's joyful surprise.

To prompt their storytelling, ask: How would you tell the story to your mother, father, brother, sister, or some other person familiar to individuals in the class?

Give each child a chance to tell, even if it means many repetitions.

Children may feel comfortable helping one another.

### **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 25 includes a picture of a lily, the Memorial Acclamation, and a note to parents. Remind the child to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

### **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for the closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for Holy Week in our church.

*(Pray for the needs and concerns of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:  
Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Reflect on the reactions of the children to the events of Holy Week. For younger class members, this may be the first time they have heard some of the information that was shared in this session. In what ways did their reactions mirror your own feelings? How can teachers, parents, and others show continuing sensitivity to the children's growing understanding of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection?

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session is on the resurrection of Jesus. How does your own joy in the celebration of Easter affect your faith in God? How can you share your joy with the children in your class?

# **EUCHARIST: SACRED MEAL**

## **SESSION 8**

### **THE LORD IS RISEN**

#### **FOCUS**

Easter Day, with its joyous services of Holy Eucharist, is a feast that proclaims the resurrection. The children should be able to say that Easter is a celebration of Jesus' rising from the dead.

#### **GETTING READY**

Easter celebrates the very heart of the Christian faith: Our Lord overcame death and was raised to new life. Because of this, we too have been given the gift of new life and the hope of the resurrection. This is what we celebrate in the baptisms that occur at the Easter Vigil and during Holy Eucharist.

Christians learn that every Lord's Day (Sunday) is a little Easter, reminding us of the empty tomb. The story for this session describes the women who visited the tomb of Jesus on Easter Sunday (*Matthew 28:1-10*). They were sad and fearful. However, when they looked inside the tomb, it was empty. Soon after, Jesus greeted the women and told them not to be afraid.

At the Holy Eucharist, we remember the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Early in their lives, it is important for young children to link the good news of Easter with the Church's celebration of Eucharist.

. . . After his glorious resurrection he openly appeared to his disciples, and in their sight ascended into heaven, to prepare a place for us; that where he is, there we might also be, and reign with him in glory.

Preface for Ascension

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 379

#### **TEACHING TIP**

The Easter bunny and egg hunts can often overshadow the religious importance of Easter. As you share this session with the children focus their attention on the joy of Easter because of the gift of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The enjoyment of all the other aspects of the celebration is seen as secondary to the joy of the Resurrection.

## **GATHERING**

Use again the lily that was part of the display at the previous session. Add a large cardboard cross behind or near the lily. As the children arrive, let them share in twisting squares of tissue paper into flower shapes. These shapes can be taped to the cross. The cross can be completely covered with flowers. When everyone is present, say:

Teacher: Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us;

Children: Therefore let us keep the feast.

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 364

## **STORY** (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Matthew 28:7a*:

“Then go quickly and tell (Jesus’) disciples, ‘He has been raised from the dead.’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

In your own words, tell the story of the resurrection as it is found in *Matthew 28:1-10*.

- After Jesus died, two women went to see the place where he had been buried. They were very sad and worried that they could not move the stone in front of the grave.
- Suddenly there was a great earthquake.
- An angel from heaven came and rolled back the stone and then sat on it.
- The angel looked like lightening, and his clothes were white as snow.
- The guards were very frightened and shook with fear.
- The angel showed the women the empty tomb and told them that Jesus was not there. He had risen from the dead! Soon his friends would be able to see him again.
- The women ran to tell Jesus’ friends what had happened. Then Jesus himself greeted them. They were so happy. They touched his feet and bowed down and worshiped him.

## **CREATING**

(*Time: 15minutes*)

### **Option 1. Easter Flowers**

Give the children sheets of white construction paper and glue. Provide

brightly colored pieces of paper (such as scraps from other projects), to be torn into small flower shapes. Arrange and glue the flowers to the paper background. When completed, the children can add stems and vases with crayons or markers. As the work progresses, talk with the class members about the beautiful flowers we see in church at Easter.

### **Option 2. Leaf Butterflies**

Make Easter butterfly symbols from pieces of colored tissue paper. Arrange the tissue to form butterflies, by gathering a large sheet in the center and wrapping it with a pipe cleaner, that can then be antennae. As they work, talk with the children about butterflies as Easter symbols of new life.

### **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Invite the children to join in a game called “Alleluia!” Many exciting things happen in springtime. Easter comes in the spring when we remember the resurrection of Jesus. Sitting in a circle, think of signs of Easter or springtime. As each one is mentioned, stand and say together joyfully, “Alleluia!” Examples: Easter eggs, Easter flowers, Easter candles, birds singing, flowers blooming, new clothes, and other signs of the season.

### **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Using a blanket, sheet, or other large cloth, and two chairs, create the impression of an empty tomb. Role-play visiting the tomb. When the children find that Jesus is not there, lead them in repetitions of the Easter Acclamation:

Teacher: Alleluia. Christ is risen.

Children: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

### **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Ask the children to imagine that they were with the women when the angel told them that Jesus had returned to life. To set the scene, describe the garden where the tomb was located (the coolness of the early morning, the birds singing, the dew, the sun rising). Wonder aloud:

What do you see? hear? feel? smell?

What would you say when you heard what the angel said? What would you do?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Listen to the music tape *Children Sing!* and sing “Good Christians all, rejoice and sing” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 205; *We Sing of God*, 38). Use these hand motions:

Good Christians all, *(make big circle with arms)*

rejoice and sing! *(clap hands)*

Now is the triumph of our King!

To all the world *(make a big circle with hands)*

glad news we bring:

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia! *(clap hands)*

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Talk with the children about Easter in your church:

What do we do that is different from other times? What is the same?

What do we see in the church at Easter?

What do we hear? What do we sing about?

Spend some time sharing what the children do in their families at this time. They may wish to talk about new clothes, Easter egg hunts, the Easter bunny, and other customs. (All these are related to the Easter themes of resurrection and new life. The children probably cannot make these connections, but they are part of the foundation for their understanding of the resurrection in the future.)

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 26 includes a Paschal candle picture, a Scripture verse, a hymn stanza, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Join in a circle for a closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for the good news of Easter.

*(Pray for the needs and concerns of the children.)*

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Think about the ways this unit's focus on the Eucharist has affected your own participation in, and understanding of, the Church's celebration of Holy Communion. How does the concept of each Sunday as a little Easter contribute to a sense of joy and hope in worship? As you hear the words of the Communion liturgy, reflect on your work in teaching the children.

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The final session of this unit is about the story of Jesus' resurrection appearance on the road to Emmaus. In preparation for teaching, think about these words from Luke's Gospel: ". . . he was known to them in the breaking of the bread." (*Luke 24:35b.*)

# **EUCHARIST: SACRED MEAL**

## **SESSION 9**

### **JESUS WALKED ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS**

#### **FOCUS**

After the resurrection, two of Jesus' friends were walking on the road to Emmaus when a stranger joined them. Later, at a meal, they knew he was Jesus. The children should be able to tell that Jesus is with us as we share bread and wine at the Eucharist.

#### **GETTING READY**

Soon after the first Easter, one of Jesus' followers named Cleopas and a friend were traveling to Emmaus. They talked about everything that had happened to Jesus. While they were walking, Jesus joined them, but they did not recognize him.

Jesus taught them many things, and when they reached Emmaus, the two friends invited Jesus to dinner. At the breaking of the bread, they recognized Jesus (*Luke 24*).

It is clear from the New Testament that the worship of early Christians centered on the celebration of the Lord's Supper (Eucharist, Holy Communion). The good news of Jesus' resurrection was proclaimed in words and acted out in the sacred meal. Bread and wine were shared in the context of the Church's prayer of thanksgiving for all that God had accomplished in the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross.

During this unit, the children have looked at how the Church celebrates the Eucharist. In preparation for the final session, consider the living presence of the risen Christ in your life. That presence is felt especially as we gather around the Holy Table. Throughout our spiritual journeys, our union with Christ is strengthened by participation in the sacramental life of the Church.

O Lord, support us all the day long, until the shadows lengthen, and the evening comes, and the busy world is hushed, and the fever of life is over, and our work is done. Then in thy mercy, grant us a safe lodging, and a holy rest, and peace at the last. *Amen.*

In the Evening

*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 833*

## TEACHING TIP

Consider whether it would be possible to arrange an exhibit in your church of items that have been created by the children to recognize the work they have accomplished. As an alternative, the class members could share with other groups a hymn stanza they have learned, with the accompanying motions.

## GATHERING

Place a whole loaf of bread in a basket. As the children arrive, invite each one to break off a small piece and eat it. Talk about bread and the times we share it with one another. When everyone has arrived, repeat the Easter Acclamation:

Teacher: Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Children: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

## STORY

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Luke 24:35b*:

“ . . . (Jesus) had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Drawing on the narrative in *Luke 24:13-35*, compose a story for the children about Cleopas and his friend who met Jesus on the road to Emmaus.

- Two people who had known Jesus were walking on a road.
- A stranger joined them and asked what they were talking about. They told him all about what had happened to Jesus. They missed Jesus.
- Then they told the stranger about the women who had visited the tomb on Sunday morning. An angel said that Jesus was alive! Other people went to the tomb and they all found it empty.
- The stranger began to talk about all that had happened.
- When they reached a village, they asked him to stay with them. The stranger agreed.
- They had dinner. At the table, the stranger took bread and blessed it. Suddenly the friends recognized who the stranger really was. It was Jesus! But then he disappeared from their sight.
- The two friends returned as fast as they could to Jerusalem to tell Jesus’

disciples what had happened.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Sharing A Meal**

Obtain sheets of light-colored paper, one for each child. Glue to each sheet a rectangle of white paper to represent a table. Add a small oval of brown paper to serve as bread. Give the prepared sheets to the children, and explain that the table and bread are ready. Ask them to use crayons or markers to draw Jesus and his two friends at the table. Talk about the story as the children work.

### **Option 2. Broken Bread**

Ahead of time, cut loaves of bread, one for each child, from white newsprint (simple oval shapes). Collect sheets of construction paper and brown liquid markers or crayons. Invite the children to color the paper loaves to make them look like baked bread. Conduct a ceremony in which the children tear (break) their loaves into one or more pieces. The broken loaves can then be glued to the construction paper backing. Talk about the story as the children work.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play a guessing game, “Who is it?” Gather where all the children can see. Place a chair with its back to the group. One child sits on the chair, and another comes from behind (unseen) to tap on the chair. The sitting child asks, “Who is it? What do you have to say?” The tapper can say any of the following: “Alleluia!,” or “Christ is risen,” or “Easter brings good news.” The child in the chair tries to guess who it is. Children can take turns sitting in the chair. Tappers may learn to disguise their voices, and they may think of other appropriate words to say.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Role-play the story of the men on the road to Emmaus. The two friends and Jesus can walk on the road, talking. When the bread is broken, Jesus disappears. The two friends run to tell all the other children about what happened. Repeat, allowing other children to play the three roles. If available, use costumes and props.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Cleopas and his friend were puzzled about the news that Jesus was alive again. They found it hard to believe, and they talked about this over and over again as they walked on the road toward Emmaus. Wonder about;

What would it be like to walk with Jesus?

Would you know it if Jesus came to talk with you? How would you know?

What might you say to Jesus if he were here with us right now?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Listen to the music tape *Children Sing!* and sing again “Good Christians all, rejoice and sing!” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 205; *We Sing of God*, 38). Add the movements that were suggested in the two previous sessions.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Use several review questions to help the children to recall what happens at the Eucharist, focusing especially on our eating and drinking together. Be sensitive to those who do not receive communion or who do not attend. Ask:

When God’s people come together for Communion, what do they receive from the priest? What does the priest say as the bread and wine are given?

Why do we do this in our church again and again?

(This conversation time will provide clues for teachers concerning how the children perceive the Holy Eucharist. Look for indications that the time spent during this unit has affected their understanding.)

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 27 contains a picture of a priest with bread and wine and a Scripture verse. Also included is a poem and a note to parents. Remind the children to take this card home, share it with their parents, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for a closing prayer:

We thank you, God, for our daily bread.

*(Pray for the needs and concerns of the children.)*

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Form a circle, hold hands, and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Faithful participation in Episcopal worship enriches our sacramental life. Consider ways of conveying to children the significance of each gathering where we remember Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Reverence and awe are communicated to children as they observe the participation of the persons they know best—their families and their teachers.

Note: The following letter is for teachers and parents of children in the preschool/kindergarten level of church school. These pages can be reproduced or used as a model for a personalized letter.

## **Episcopal Children's Curriculum** **UNIT IV. THE CHURCH PRAYS**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

In An Outline of Faith (*The Book of Common Prayer*, Catechism, p. 856-857), prayer is defined as “responding to God, by thought and by deeds, with or without words.” The seven kinds of prayer listed in the Catechism are adoration, praise, thanksgiving, penitence, oblation, intercession, and petition.

The Catechism defines corporate worship as uniting “ourselves with others to acknowledge the holiness of God, to hear God’s word, to offer prayer, and to celebrate the sacraments: One of our goals is to incorporate our children into the community of God’s praying people. This is accomplished mainly by personal example, as children observe their own families and teachers engaged in prayer.

We encourage you to talk about the lessons with your child. Do this by reading together the children's book, *Let Us Pray*, an illustrated book of prayers.

Scripture passages and excerpts from *The Book of Common Prayer* that the children will encounter are cited below. Look up the passages and excerpts with your child and show them where they are in the Bible and Prayer Book. The Take-Home Cards given to learners each week feature illustrations and text related to session themes. They also include useful instructions for parents. These collectible cards, which are 5 by 7 inches, can be displayed in a photo album, kept in an oversized recipe box, or used in any way you find helpful.

Following are summaries of the unit’s sessions:

**Session 1: “We Pray Like Jesus”** introduces children to the story of Jesus teaching his disciples to pray. We call this prayer the Lord’s Prayer. (*Matthew 11:19*)

**Session 2: “We Say the Lord’s Prayer”** helps the class members to think about times when they hear the Lord’s Prayer in church from *The Book of Common Prayer*. (Holy Eucharist, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 363-364)

**Session 3: “We Pray in Different Ways”** is devoted to the different kinds of praying we do. Children can understand that they can say thank you to God, that they can tell God they are sorry when wrong things are done, and that they can ask God for help. (*Psalms 19:14*)

**Session 4: “We Use *The Book of Common Prayer*”** is oriented to Episcopal history. Activities are designed to help children understand that *The Book of Common Prayer* can help us pray at all time, both in church and at home. (*Isaiah 56:7*)

**Session 5: “We Worship”** is about praying together in the morning, at midday and in the evening. (*Luke 4:8*)

**Session 6: “Leaders of Our Prayers”** describes how the church is led in its public prayers by bishops, priests, deacons, and lay people. (Prayers of the People, Form III, *The Book of Common Prayer*)

**Session 7: “Prayers of the People”** focuses on the Prayers of the People, a time when people in the congregation are invited to offer their own prayers, silently or aloud. (*Romans 12:12*)

**Session 8: “We Pray at Baptisms”** is about Holy Baptism and how we pray together during this service of the newly baptized and each other. (Holy Baptism, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 306)

**Session 9: “We Celebrate Pentecost”** tells what happened to the apostles on the Day of Pentecost, introducing the children to the celebration as our time for remembering when the Church began. (*Acts 2:4*)

Yours in Christ,

Church School Teachers

# THE CHURCH PRAYS

## SESSION 1

### WE PRAY LIKE JESUS

#### FOCUS

Jesus taught his friends how to pray. We join in the same prayer Jesus taught. It is called the Lord's Prayer. The children should be able to say the name of the prayer and that it is found in the Bible.

#### GETTING READY

The first two sessions of this unit are devoted to the prayer Jesus taught us, which we know as the Lord's Prayer. In this session, the focus is on showing the children that the prayer is in the Bible in *Matthew 6:9-13* and *Luke 11:2-4*. Note the differences in the language. Some churches use "debts" and "debtors" while others use "trespasses" and "trespassed."

Jesus himself prayed in the tradition of the Hebrew people. The prayer Jesus taught his disciples is almost wholly drawn from Hebrew sources. What is original about Jesus' prayer is the order in which the phrases appear. All the requests are secondary to the two phrases at the beginning. God's name is to be hallowed above all other names, and our first desire is for the coming of God's kingdom on earth.

Just as the disciples wanted to learn to pray, we invariably struggle to find words for our praying. The Scriptures and the Prayer Book become our sources of help.

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
    hallowed be thy Name,  
    thy kingdom come,  
    thy will be done,  
    on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
    as we forgive those  
        who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
    but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
    and the power, and the glory,  
    for ever and ever. Amen.  
    The Lord's Prayer

## **TEACHING TIP**

Because preschool/kindergarten children think first about themselves and their immediate world, they will pray for and about the things that touch their own lives—such as pets, toys, food, clothing, family members, and friends. It is unrealistic to expect them to pray for larger causes (such as world missions, relief of suffering, and various human needs). Children’s prayers are authentic offerings to God.

## **GATHERING**

Before class, mark the floor with a circle, using tape, chalk, or pieces of paper—or arrange chairs in a circle. As the children arrive, invite them into the circle and visit with them about their week—the things that have happened and the thoughts they may have had. Provide another quiet area where children can work with play dough or clay. Tell them that we use our hands for many things. We use our hands to work with clay and to pray.

When all are present and seated, lead the children in a quieting activity such as breathing deeply and exhaling slowly. When all are settled, say:

Teacher: The Lord be with you.

Children: And also with you.

Teacher: Let us pray.

Compose an extemporaneous prayer of thanksgiving, naming each child. Invite the children to contribute. When finished, explain to the children that we will use “the Lord be with you” with the children’s response “And always with you” anytime that we pray in class.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Matthew 6:9*:

“Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Use *Luke 11:1-4* to prepare a brief story about Jesus and his friends (the disciples).

- One day Jesus went to pray. His friends were watching him.
- When he had finished, they asked him to teach them how to pray. (Show

the children Poster No. 9 of Jesus with his friends.)

- Jesus said a prayer for them that we call the Lord’s Prayer. (Open the Bible and let the children see *Matthew 6:9-13* and *Luke 11:2-4*. Point to the beginning of the prayer in both places.)
- Conclude the story time by saying the Lord’s Prayer. Some of the children will know it. All can join in the Amen.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Framed Prayers**

Ahead of time, make a copy of the Lord’s Prayer text provided in the Teacher’s Packet, Poster No. 16, and trim to a size no larger than 5 by 7 inches for each child. Supply inch-wide strips of colored paper, in 6-inch and 8-inch lengths. (Or purchase frame mats from a craft store.) The children can decorate the frames with glue and glitter or glitter pens. On background pieces of construction paper, the children can glue their copies of the prayer and add the frame around it. Talk with the children about the prayer and where they might like to keep it.

### **Option 2. Jesus Taught Us to Pray**

Prepare ahead of time a sheet of white paper for each child, on which is drawn an open Bible. Underneath, print “Jesus taught us to pray.” Distribute the sheets to the children, and invite them to use crayons for decorating the page in any way they wish. As they work, talk with them about the Lord’s Prayer and the fact that it is found in the Bible.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

The following exercise helps the children hear the phrases of the Lord’s Prayer.

Take a skein of thick yarn and wind it into a ball. Finish with a firm knot. Write the word “Amen” on a large piece of cardboard.

Ask the children to sit in a circle on the floor. The children will unroll the ball of yarn. Place the cardboard in the middle of the circle, with the word “Amen” facing down. Hand the knot to one of the children. Say the first phrase of the Lord’s Prayer (“Our Father, who art in heaven”) as the child unrolls a length of the yarn, handing the ball to the next person. Say the next phrase while the second child unrolls a length, passing the ball to a third player. Continue to the end of the prayer. At the end of the prayer, the child holding the ball of yarn reaches for the cardboard and leads in saying, “Amen.”

Rewind the yarn ball, and repeat the prayer and yarn unrolling as long as

the children are interested.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

In many churches, the text of the Lord's Prayer is displayed in a prominent place. If this is true in your church, take the children to see it.

Another possibility would be to invite a needleworker to visit the class and show the Lord's Prayer done in cross-stitch or embroidery. The children can enjoy hearing about the different stitches and designs.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Place a Bible where all can see it—preferably one with pictures. Leaf through the Bible with the children, showing them the story about Jesus teaching his disciples to pray. Use “I wonder” statements like:

I wonder how many people in the whole world say this prayer.

I wonder if all of us will continue to say this prayer when we grow up.

I wonder how this prayer sounds in other languages.

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing the first stanza of “Lord of all hopefulness” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 482; *We Sing of God*, 78). Begin by introducing the tune of the hymn while you listen to the music tape *Children Sing!* Let the children hum along with you, clapping hands slowly to the beat

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Talk with the children about the Lord's Prayer. Ask:

Have you heard other people saying this prayer at church? at home? other places? When would you like to say it yourself?

Try saying the prayer together, with the teacher sharing phrases one by one, and the children echoing the words in unison each time:

Teacher: Our Father, who art in heaven, . . .

Children: (echo) Our Father, who art in heaven, . . .

Introduce this exercise by saying that the group will be saying the very words that Jesus taught us to use when we talk with God (Younger children may find it sufficient to do the first few phrases.)

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

*Unit IV. The Church Prays—Session 1*  
*Chalice Year Preschool/Kindergarten—Copyright © 2009 Virginia Theological Seminary*

Card 28 is an illuminated text of the Lord's Prayer. On the back is a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

### **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for a closing prayer:

We thank you, O God, for the prayer Jesus taught us.

*(Pray for the needs and concerns of the children.)*

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Holding hands in a circle, say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

How did the children respond to the Lord's Prayer? Are many able to say it? Young children sometimes get the impression that the prayer is for adults. In what ways can teachers and parents encourage children to think of the prayer as theirs also? How can they be helped to use it?

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session highlights the use of the Lord's Prayer in both private and corporate prayer. The text appears in all the worship services of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Consider how the prayer affects your own daily life.

# THE CHURCH PRAYS

## SESSION 2

### WE SAY THE LORD'S PRAYER

#### FOCUS

The Lord's Prayer appears frequently in our services of worship. The children should be able to say that the Lord's Prayer is in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

#### GETTING READY

This second session on the Lord's Prayer shifts to its importance in *The Book of Common Prayer*. In preparation, leaf through the Prayer Book and note the prayer's position in the various services, such as Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, Compline, and Holy Eucharist. Note the two translations, one is the traditional version and the second is a more contemporary form.

The fact that the prayer appears so often in the Prayer Books of all Christian churches underscores its role in our traditions and services of worship. Jesus' prayer is also a model for private devotion as well. We are reminded that requests are not at the beginning of the prayer. The only petition for a material blessing is "Give us this day our daily bread." In praying for our bread, we think about the needs of others in the world.

It is important for young children to experience and know the Lord's Prayer so that it will always be a part of their lives.

Almighty God, who hast promised to hear the petitions of those who ask in thy Son's Name: We beseech thee mercifully to incline thine ear to us who have now made our prayers and supplications unto thee; and grant that those things which we have faithfully asked according to thy will, may effectually be obtained, to the relief of our necessity, and to the setting forth of thy glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For the Answering of Prayer

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 834

#### TEACHING TIP

Dramatic play helps bring stories to life for young children. The stories are internalized and made a permanent part of children's lives when they have a chance to put on costumes and devise lines and actions. They enjoy repeating an episode again and again.

## GATHERING

As suggested for Session 1, prepare ahead of time a marked-off space for gathering in a circle. As the children arrive, engage them in conversation about their activities and thoughts during the previous week. Provide crayons and paper where they may draw pictures of things they are thankful for. Use these pictures at the close of the Gathering.

When all are present and seated, lead the group in a quieting activity such as gentle rhythmic swaying and soft breathing. When all are settled, say:

Teacher: The Lord be with you.

Children: And also with you.

Teacher: Let us pray.

Compose an extemporaneous prayer of intercession and thanksgiving, naming each child. Include the pictures drawn earlier by the children.

## STORY

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from *The Book of Common Prayer*. Gather in a circle, open the book, and let the children see where the reading is. Read from p. 363:

“And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say . . . .”

Tell a story about a family who goes to church together. Adapt the story to fit the schedules and services of your own congregation. You may want to use puppets or pictures of people to accompany the storytelling.

- Mike and his family go to church every Sunday. They go to the family service. Before going to church, they eat breakfast.

- When they get to church, they all go in to the worship area together. Mike’s mom and dad both kneel before they sit down. The church is very quiet.

- Then the procession comes down the aisle. Sometimes Mike’s big sister, who is an acolyte, carries the cross.

- Mike stands when everyone else stands, finds the hymns when it’s time to sing, kneels to pray, and sits when everyone sits.

- Since their church has Eucharist every Sunday, Mike remembers some of the words that are said each week.

- He knows when the priest mentions the prayer that Christ taught us, he should kneel.

- He knows some of the words, but even when he doesn’t know all the words, he says “Amen” at the end.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Prayer Book**

Make a prayer book, folding a piece of red construction paper in half. Fold white paper to use for the pages inside the book. The children can decorate the front with a cross (made with glue and gold glitter), or a cross cut from yellow construction paper or gold foil. Add a copy of the Lord's Prayer to each child's prayer book. Send a note home to parents explaining that this is a cover for the child's own book of prayers. The child can add pictures of people and things they wish to pray for.

### **Option 2. Praying Hands**

Supply a piece of white paper for each child, along with crayons. Talk briefly with the children about people praying the Lord's Prayer together while using the Prayer Book. Invite the children to trace their hands, one on top of the other so that both show. The children can then decorate their picture of their own praying hands.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Make a set of four game cards, using the pictures provided on Poster No. 12 in the Teacher's Packet: Bible, Prayer Book, church, house. Gather the children in a circle, show the cards and connect each one to the Lord's Prayer. (The prayer is found in the Bible; the prayer is found in the Prayer Book; we pray the Lord's Prayer at church; we pray this prayer at home.)

Play a game similar to musical chairs, in which the children pass the cards around to one another as music plays. When the music stops, the four children holding the cards take turns explaining the connection of each one to the Lord's Prayer. (For example, the child holding the house card might say, "We pray the Lord's Prayer at home.") Repeat.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Take the children to visit the nave of the church. Sit together in pews. Notice how many books are provided for the worshipers to use. Ask the children to find *The Book of Common Prayer*. Open one of the Prayer Books and lead the group in the Lord's Prayer. (Older children may be able to find the Lord's Prayer for themselves and follow along.)

## WONDERING

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

On a table, display a Bible and a Prayer Book. The Prayer Book should be open to one of the places where the Lord's Prayer appears. Wonder aloud:

How many people use *The Book of Common Prayer* as they pray the Lord's Prayer?

How many people pray this prayer every day?

How many of you can say this prayer without looking at the book?

## MUSIC

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing again "Lord of all hopefulness" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 482; *We Sing of God*, 78) using the music tape *Children Sing!* Add these motions with the words:

Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy, *(raise arms and hands)*

Whose trust, ever child-like, no cares could destroy,

*(bring hands together in prayer)*

be there at our waking, *(yawn and stretch hands)*

and give us we pray, *(bring hands together in prayer)*

your bliss in our hearts, Lord, *(touch hearts with one hand)*

at the break of the day.

*(extend one arm and hand in an opening movement)*

## CONVERSATION

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

As suggested in the previous session, say the Lord's Prayer together, with the teacher sharing the phrases one by one, and the children echoing the words in unison each time:

Teacher: Our Father, who art in heaven, . . .

Children: (echo) Our Father, who art in heaven, . . .

If your congregation uses the contemporary version of the prayer as in Rite II services, you may prefer to use it in the class. (On the basis of the children's response, decide how much of the prayer to include in the echo pattern.)

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 29 has a picture of children praying, a Scripture verse, a hymn stanza, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home,

share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for a closing prayer:

We thank you, O God, for the Lord's Prayer.  
*(Pray for the needs and concerns of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Holding hands in a circle, say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Young children sense the importance of the Lord's Prayer and frequently will begin to join those around them when it is said aloud. Often they will substitute words that are more familiar to them. Have you noticed this occurring among the children in the class? Continue to use the prayer and encourage the children's participation.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session will focus on different forms of prayer (thanksgiving, confession, and petition). Be aware of these forms in your own faith and practice.

# THE CHURCH PRAYS

## SESSION 3

### WE PRAY IN DIFFERENT WAYS

#### FOCUS

The principal kinds of Christian prayer include thanksgiving, confession, and petition. The children should be able to tell these three ways of praying to God: saying thank you, saying we are sorry for doing what we have done wrong, and asking for God's help.

#### GETTING READY

The Catechism of *The Book of Common Prayer* contains a section entitled "Prayer and Worship" (pp. 856-857), in which the "principal kinds of prayer" are listed and defined. The seven kinds of prayer are adoration, praise, thanksgiving, penitence, oblation, intercession, and petition.

Knowing and understanding these forms of prayer help us in our praying. We are enriched spiritually when we remember the many connections between our common life and God.

The principal forms of prayer are important to both our corporate liturgies and our personal devotions in the Christian community. The distinctions between the different kinds are not important for young children. They only need to begin hearing about the many ways we speak to God.

O Lord our God, accept the fervent prayers of your people; in the multitude of your mercies, look with compassion upon us and all who turn to you for help; for you are gracious, O lover of souls, and to you we give glory, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Prayers of the People

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 395

#### TEACHING TIP

Young children are not ready to use formal language about prayer. But they can be helped to think of times, feelings, and ways of talking with God. This session focuses on three forms of such talking that are understandable to a child. Being able to recognize the differences among them is more a matter of feeling and sensing than it is an ability to name them precisely.

## **GATHERING**

As the children arrive, form a circle for informal conversation about the events in their lives during the preceding week. When all are present, invite the children to close their eyes and remember something that has happened to them recently. They can make a picture of it in their minds, just as if it were happening on a television screen. Say something like this: “What would you like to tell God about what happened?” Provide markers and chalk for the children to actually draw the pictures in their minds for others to see. When all have arrived, say:

Teacher: The Lord be with you.

Children: And also with you.

Teacher: Let us pray.

Offer a prayer in your own words.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather the children in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Psalms 19:14a*:

“Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you . . . .”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Prepare a story that describes a day in the life of a particular child. Include events like the following:

- The morning is bright and beautiful, a perfect day for playing or going to school.
- Emily says a prayer while getting dressed: “Thank you, God, for this wonderful day!”
- After arriving at school or the playground, Emily finds that everyone wants to use the slide at the same time. Emily always likes to be the first one down the slide.
- Today, however, Jimmy gets to the slide first. Emily tells him to move, but he won’t. So she shoves him out of the way.
- Jimmy falls down and cries. Emily feels terrible, because Jimmy is her friend.
- Then Emily remembers that she can say in a prayer to God: “I am sorry

for what I did to my friend. Forgive me.” Jimmy soon stops crying, and Emily feels better.

- After school, Emily comes home and learns that her older brother came home sick earlier that day. She remembers to say a prayer to God: “Please help my brother get well soon.”

- At bedtime, Emily says the Lord’s Prayer with her dad.

(Encourage the children to read at home about prayer with their families in the children’s book, *Let Us Pray*.)

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Three Ways to Pray**

Ahead of time, cut out pictures from magazines that could be linked with the three forms of prayer: Thanksgiving, confession, and petition. Put them in stacks.

Provide a large sheet of white paper for each child, folded into thirds. Ask the children to choose one picture from each stack and glue it to one of the sections of the sheet. As the group works, talk with them about the forms of prayer and how the pictures are related to these. If the children wish to add their own illustrations, they may do so with crayons or markers.

### **Option 2. Praying All Day**

Give each child a paper plate on which is glued a photocopy of the circular pattern provided on Poster No. 16 in the Teacher’s Packet (representing morning, activities of a day, and bedtime). Let the children color the plates in their own way. Punch a hole in the top of each one, and string a piece of yarn through the hole so that it can be hung to serve as a reminder that we pray all through the day.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Use the finger play, “Open, Shut Them,” in the following way:

As the children sit in a circle, say:

Open, shut them, (*open and close hands*)

Open, shut them, (*open and close hands*)

Give a little clap. (*clap hands*)

Open, shut them, (*open and close hands*)

Open, shut them, (*open and close hands*)

Lay them in your lap. (*fold hands in prayer*)

The teacher then says, “Thank you, God, for. . . .” The children supply responses. Repeat several times.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Set up a prayer corner in the room with a small table, a chair or cushion, a child's prayer book, a cross, and a candle. Invite the children to visit the prayer corner anytime during the session alone or in twos.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Point out the prayer corner and some of the things that are placed there. Wonder about:

Why do people bow their heads when they pray? close their eyes? fold their hands?

How do candles help people pray? Is it easier to pray when it is quiet, or noisy?

What happens when God hears us pray?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Use the music tape and sing again "Lord of all hopefulness" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 482; *We Sing of God*, 78). Use the motions suggested in Session 2.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

It is important to convey to children that our praying (speaking with God) is not confined to a particular time or place. Talk about these questions:

Where can we pray to God? When? What do we do when we pray?

(You may want to point out that we can pray when standing, or sitting, or kneeling; with eyes closed or open; while walking, riding, working, playing.)

We talk and listen to God in our prayers. What are some of the things we want to say to God? (In the conversation, include saying thank you, saying we are sorry, and asking for help for others and ourselves.)

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 30 includes several pictures of things to be thankful for, the words "Thanks be to God," a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for a closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for each new day.  
Forgive us when we do things we shouldn't.  
*(Pray for the needs and concerns of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:  
Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Reflect on the children's expressed thoughts and feelings about praying. What kinds of concerns do they have? For what do they give thanks? ask for forgiveness? ask on behalf of themselves and others? Consider how the sessions of this unit provide insight into what the world of a child is like.

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session focuses on *The Book of Common Prayer* as important to the identity of Episcopal churches and those who worship in them. Spend some time this week becoming more familiar with this book.

# THE CHURCH PRAYS

## SESSION 4

### WE USE THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

#### FOCUS

We call what we do together in church “worship.” In Episcopal churches, *The Book of Common Prayer* helps us to pray. The children should be able to say that Episcopal churches use *The Book of Common Prayer* as they worship.

#### GETTING READY

Our heritage as Episcopalians comes from the history of the Church of England, which is also known as the Anglican tradition. This tradition centers on *The Book of Common Prayer*, first introduced by Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, in 1549. The Prayer Book has undergone various revisions. The current version of *The Book of Common Prayer* (1979) is the fourth one used in the United States.

A sense of the history of the Church and of the widespread use of the Prayer Book can be introduced to young children without all the historical details. For adults, the Prayer Book helps us appreciate that we are part of the larger Anglican community throughout the world. We are united in prayer as we retain our prayer book heritage.

Gracious Father, we pray for thy holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in any thing it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ thy Son our Savior. *Amen.*

For the Church

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 816

#### TEACHING TIP

Young children are able to focus on only one aspect of relationships at a time. For instance, a child may know that she has a brother but not be able to say that her brother has a sister. Similarly, children have difficulty understanding how it is possible to be both a Christian and an Episcopalian at the same time. In this session the focus is on the Episcopal Church’s Prayer Book, and it is best to use the terms Episcopal and Episcopalian

throughout.

## **GATHERING**

Set up a low table in the room. Light a candle, and set it securely in the middle of the table. As children arrive, invite them to gather in front of the table. Talk with them about quiet times. Provide an additional activity, such as story books and puzzles.

When all are present, ask the group to watch the candle flame in silence and to think about what they might like to say to God. After a short time, continue:

Teacher: The Lord be with you.

Children: And also with you.

Teacher: Let us pray.

Pray aloud for the children, thanking God for bringing everyone together. Invite the children to join in the prayer by adding their own words of thanksgiving and intercession.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the book, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Isaiah 56:7d*:

“ . . . my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell in your own way a simple version of the story of the first English Prayer Book. Include the following:

- Long ago, in the country called England, people who worshiped God did not have their own Bibles and prayer books. Most people did not have books at all, and many people could not read.

- When people came to church, they just listened to the priest.

- Often they did not understand what was being said.

- One bishop of the church named Thomas Cranmer was a very wise man. He wanted the people in the Church of England to have a book of their very own to help them pray.

- So Thomas Cranmer wrote the first book that was called *The Book of Common Prayer*.

- Open a copy of *The Book of Common Prayer*. This book is like the book Thomas Cranmer wrote. We use this book to help us to pray in our church.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Prayer Book Markers**

Help each child to make a bookmark with ribbons. Use a long narrow strip of heavy cardboard or plastic needlepoint canvas. Punch three holes in the top of the cardboard and tie thin ribbons of Episcopal colors (red, white, and blue) to the top of the strip. Ribbons can also be glued or taped in place. When the cardboard strip is inserted in the inside spine of the Prayer Book, the ribbons can be used as place markers.

### **Option 2. People with Prayer Books**

Provide each child with a large paper doll cut from a sheet of construction paper. Invite the children to color their paper people in their own ways. When the coloring is finished, supply each child with a small paper prayer book marked with a cross (in the color used in your congregation—usually red, blue, or black). Glue the prayer book to the doll. As the children work, talk about people coming together at church to use their prayer books. The finished figures can be displayed together as if they were standing in church.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play “Finding the Prayer Book.” The children hide their eyes while the teacher places a Prayer Book in an unlikely but visible spot. The children open their eyes and walk around looking for the book. When each one finds it, he/she sits down in silence. When all have found it, let the children take turns “hiding” the book for the next times.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Invite an older person from the congregation (perhaps a grandparent) to come to the class and share a treasured Prayer Book that has been used for many years. The guest may want to tell about when and who first used the Prayer Book, and where it was used.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 5 minutes)*

Gather at the table that was used in the Gathering (above). Add a copy of *The Book of Common Prayer* at the side of the candle. Wonder about the following:

How does this book help us to pray? What if we didn't have a book? Who would teach us to pray? How would we remember all the ways to pray?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Listen once more to “Lord of all hopefulness” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 482; *We Sing of God*, 78) on the music tape *Children Sing!*. Introduce the remaining stanzas, pointing out that this hymn asks God to be with us throughout the day. Invite the children to mime the activities suggested by the words of the hymn.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Talk with the children about the use of *The Book of Common Prayer* in all Episcopal churches.

When you go to our church to pray, where do you find the Prayer Book? What if you visit another church? Would you find Prayer Books there? Where? Why?

What do all the Prayer Books look like? (Point out that the books are different in size, color, and bindings.)

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 31 has a picture of *The Book of Common Prayer*, the words “Let us pray,” a “Question and Answer” on prayer from the Catechism, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for a closing prayer:

We thank you, God, for *The Book of Common Prayer*  
and for our friends to share it with.

*(Pray for the needs of the children.)*

Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Did the children appear to be familiar with the term Episcopal and *The Book of Common Prayer*? Which children seemed most comfortable with the Prayer Book? What family and church experiences might account for this? Could any of these experiences be shared with the other children during their time in class?

## **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session focuses on forms of prayer for various times during the day, and the provisions made for the Daily Office in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Take time to review the prayers and directions (rubrics) for Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and other services such as Noonday Prayer and Compline.

# THE CHURCH PRAYS

## SESSION 5

### WE WORSHIP

#### FOCUS

Christians are a people who believe that prayers should be lifted up to God all through each day. Sometimes they gather for worship in the morning, at midday, and in the evening. *The Book of Common Prayer* includes services of prayer for use at all those times. The children should be able to say that we use the Prayer Book for Morning, Noonday, and Evening Prayer.

#### GETTING READY

*The Book of Common Prayer* is more than a book that is only kept in the pew racks of churches. It belongs to each baptized person and is important because it links our daily living with Scripture and forms of prayer. In the Prayer Book is the Daily Office—prayers for use at stated times of each day, accompanied by a two-year cycle of readings from the Bible (pages 934-995).

*The Book of Common Prayer* includes traditional prayers as well as specific prayers for noonday, evening, and nighttime (Compline). In addition, the Prayer Book includes Daily Devotions for Individuals and Families for different times of day.

Just as the focus of this session is upon helping children to think of opportunities for praying to God, so the Prayer Book invites us to use the many prayers that belong to our Anglican heritage.

O Almighty God, who pourest out on all who desire it the spirit of grace and of supplication: Deliver us, when we draw near to thee, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship thee in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Before Worship

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 833

#### TEACHING TIP

Even though preschool/kindergarten children do not read themselves, it is important for them to know that *The Book of Common Prayer* is the guide

for worship and prayer among members of their church. It is appropriate to provide them with opportunities to handle and examine the book, taking care to do so with appreciation for its special place in our lives.

## **GATHERING**

As the children arrive, direct their attention to the Poster No. 10 in the Teacher's Packet that shows a rising sun, a noonday sun, and an evening sky. Talk with the group about the rhythm of what happens in their lives in the morning, during the day, and as night appears. Provide story books, prayer books, and puzzles for the children to use. When all are present, say:

Teacher: The Lord be with you.

Children: And also with you.

Teacher: Let us pray.

Offer a prayer in your own words, or use the one on page 5 of the children's book, *Let Us Pray*.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Luke 4:8*:

“ . . . It is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, . . . ’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell a story about children in a household where parents use *The Book of Common Prayer* for prayers during the day. Use details and circumstances that would be familiar to children in your group. Include elements like the following:

- In the morning, just after breakfast, the family gathers around the table. One of the children brings *The Book of Common Prayer* and the Bible.

- Today the prayer begins: “Lord God, . . . you have brought us in safety to this new day.” (BCP, p. 137)

- On Saturday, when there are no activities, the family sometimes says special prayers after lunch. They usually say the Lord's Prayer.

- After dinner or at bedtime, the Prayer Book is used once more. Tonight the prayer began with “Lord Jesus, stay with us, for evening is at hand and the day is past; . . .” (BCP, p. 139)

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Through the Day in Prayer**

Ahead of time, prepare for each child a set of four cutouts: a rising sun (half circle of deep orange), noonday full sun (circle of brighter orange), a moon (crescent of pale yellow), and a prayer book (red, blue, or black book shape with a cross pinned on it). Give the children sheets of white or pale blue construction paper, to which they may glue the cutouts in this order (from left to right): rising sun; noonday sun; moon. Add the prayer book cutouts to the sheets. The children may add drawings of people, buildings, or trees and bushes. As they work, talk with the group about the theme of this session.

### **Option 2. Houses of Prayer**

Help each child to make a church building (house of prayer) where people come to worship. Trim off the bottom half of a small paper bag. Turn the bag so that the bottom becomes the top of the building. The children may color in windows and doors and other details of their churches. They may want to add a cross.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Invite the children to join in a variation on the finger play, “Here is the church.”

1. *Interlock fingers and tuck inside of hands, saying:*  
Here is the church.
2. *Bring both index fingers up, to form the steeple, and say:*  
Here is the steeple.
3. *Open the thumbs, saying:*  
Open the doors.
4. *Open up hands, fingers still interlocked, and say:*  
See the people praying. *(Conclude by curling fingers down.)*

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Conduct an organized role-play, “Come to Prayer.” The teacher narrates extemporaneously to provide structure for the following action:

Give the leader a bell. The children scatter around the room, pretending to do all the things they might do at home as they are getting ready to go to church. The leader stands alone in the door of an imaginary church and rings

the bell. The others stop what they are doing and walk to church, entering quietly and reverently, kneeling and praying.

When this scene is completed, the bell can be given to another child, and the role-play can begin again. Repeat several times.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

*The Book of Common Prayer* helps us to talk with God (pray) in the morning, at noontime, and in the evening. Wonder about:

What might we talk to God about when we get up in the morning?

What might we say to God in the middle of the day?

What things might we want to tell God just before we go to bed?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing again “Lord of all hopefulness” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 482; *We Sing of God*, 78). Point out explicitly that the hymn helps us to remember to pray throughout the day.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Talk with the children about all the times people come to church to pray together—not just on Sundays but on other days as well. Whenever people gather to pray, they can use the Prayer Book. Ask:

When do you pray alone? When do you pray along with other people? Where?

At what times do you pray at the church?

What are some times other than Sunday when people come to the church to pray?

If you wanted your (mother/father/older brother or sister) to find the Lord’s Prayer printed on a page, where would he/she/they look? Could you find it yourself?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 32 illustrates praying throughout the day. Also included are a Scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for the closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for being with us morning, noon, and night.  
*(Pray for the needs and concerns of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

How well do the children understand that worship of God can take place on any day, at any time? As a result of the sessions in this unit, do the children show a greater understanding of the importance of the Prayer Book in the lives of the Church's people?

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session focuses on the people who lead the prayers of the Eucharist. Think about any time that you have led prayers, with the children, with your family, or with other adults. How has leading prayer affected you?

# THE CHURCH PRAYS

## SESSION 6

### LEADERS OF OUR PRAYERS

#### FOCUS

When the people of God assemble for worship, they follow the example of Jesus our Lord who calls us to prayer. Bishops, priests, deacons and lay people lead the Church in prayer. The children should be able to name one or more of the people at their church who lead them in prayers.

#### GETTING READY

This unit began with sessions on the prayer Jesus taught his friends (the apostles), that is found in the Bible and the Prayer Book. We then moved to sessions on the kinds of prayer we address to God and how *The Book of Common Prayer* helps us in our private and corporate worship. This session, along with the two sessions that follow, will focus on the role of the Church's ministers in leading our prayers. Both priests and other people have always led us in prayer, teaching us how to pray, and offering prayers for others. Lay people often read prayers during Eucharist and sometimes lead other services.

The first portion of this unit helps children to think of all God's people who pray. Now we turn to the ministry of those who lead us in our prayers.

Almighty God, the giver of all good gifts, in your divine providence you have appointed various orders in your Church: Give your grace, we humbly pray, to all who are [now] called to any office and ministry for your people; and so fill them with the truth of your doctrine and clothe them with holiness of life, that they may faithfully serve before you, to the glory of your great Name and for the benefit of your holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

For those to be ordained

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 256

#### TEACHING TIP

Young children's thinking tends to center around their own lives and activities. They believe what they see and often do not make logical inferences. For the children, adults such as teachers and priests are perceived

as staying where they are most often seen (in school and in church). They are surprised when they see their priest or teacher in the grocery store or at the service station. Describe the everyday lives of clergy and teachers as well as their functions at church.

## **GATHERING**

Obtain a clergy stole of any color. Place it alongside a Prayer Book on a low table. As the children arrive, direct their attention to the display and invite their comments. Provide story books, children's prayer books, and puzzles for an alternative activity. When all have arrived, say:

Teacher: The Lord be with you.

Children: And also with you.

Teacher: Let us pray.

Compose a prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for the children in the class and for your own bishop(s), priest(s), deacon(s), and others who lead prayers and pray for others.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from *The Book of Common Prayer*. To do this, gather the children in a circle, open the book, and let the children see where the reading is. Read:

“I ask your prayers for God’s people throughout the world, for our bishops, priests, and deacons; for this gathering; and for all ministers and people. Pray for the Church.” (BCP, 385)

Prepare a story about the clergy and others who lead the prayers during the Eucharist. Begin by telling about a bishop of your diocese who comes to visit your congregation. Include details like these:

- Everyone makes special preparations for guests. When the bishop comes to our church, we want to make the visit special. The bishop greets people and talks to our priest and many others.
- When the bishop is here, he leads us in prayer when we pray at the Eucharist.
- Most of the time, the person at the altar leading our prayers at the Eucharist is our priest.
- Some churches have deacons who lead the prayers at Eucharist and help bishops and priests.
- Show the children the stole used at the Gathering. A stole is worn by a bishop, a priest, or a deacon, as they lead us in prayer.

- People who are not priests or deacons or bishops read from the Bible and often lead us in other prayers such as the “Prayers of the People.”

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Stoles**

Help the children to make stoles. For each child, cut a narrow strip of muslin about 24” long using pinking shears. Provide several symbols appropriate for stoles (such as crosses, triangles, trefoils, fish, or chalice). The children may choose symbols to glue onto their stoles. Show the children how a priest wears a stole. A deacon wears the stole across the left shoulder and tied at the side. Demonstrate. The children can use the stoles to help them remember to pray at home.

### **Option 2. Prayer Portraits**

Provide sheets of drawing paper, crayons, and markers. Ask the children to think about the people who lead prayers at church or at other times and to draw a picture of that person. Encourage the children to create these portraits in any way they wish. You may want to add to each child’s drawing the name of the person pictured.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Devise a board game, “Who Is Praying?” Cut out the squares from the Poster No. 15 in the Teacher’s Packet, showing a bishop, a priest, a deacon, and several people who are worshipping. Glue these to a sheet of posterboard or heavy paper and place on the floor or a low table. Gather the children around the board. Toss a small pebble so that it lands on one of the figures. Ask: “Who is praying?” The children can respond by identifying the figure. (You can vary the game by asking questions like: What are some of the things this person does?) Continue as long as interest holds.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Cut out the paper dolls and vestments found on Posters No. 11 and 12 in the Teacher’s Packet. Invite the children to take turns dressing the dolls to create bishops, priests, and deacons. As they do so, talk about the roles of these leaders of prayer in our churches. Or visit the vesting room to see some of the vestments worn by clergy and others.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

When bishops, priests, deacons, and others lead us in prayer at a service in church, they wear special clothes called vestments. Invite the children to wonder about:

Why do priests and others wear special vestments? When are some times they are worn?

Who makes the vestments? Why are they made of beautiful materials and designs? Why are they so carefully made? (Note: In some congregations, people have made vestments for special occasions. You might want to locate and share one of these with the children.)

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Use the music tape *Children Sing!* to introduce “Joyful, joyful, we adore thee” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 376; *We Sing of God*, 60). Hum the tune as the children clap the rhythm. Use shakers or tambourines if available to give a sense of celebration.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Talk with the children about the clergy at their church. What are their names? What do we call them? (Take care to help the group to know what the ordained leaders in your congregation prefer to be called.)

Ask: What are some of the things you see (name the clergy person) doing? When does he/she lead us in prayer? What does (clergy person) wear? When? Who else leads us in prayer?

Share the name of your bishop. The bishop usually visits each congregation sometime during each year. What are some of the things we do to get ready when our bishop comes? What will the bishop wear? Where will the bishop stand or kneel or sit to pray?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 33 includes a picture of a clergy stole, a line from *The Book of Common Prayer*, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for the closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for those who lead us in prayers.  
*(Pray for the needs of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

What kinds of relationships do the children have with the clergy? Are they able to talk with them? How do the children respond to the presence of a priest? How could you encourage informal contacts between children and ordained persons?

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session focuses on Prayers of the People, in which the baptized community of Jesus Christ voices thanksgiving and petitions to God. Read and pray one of the forms of the Prayers of the People from *The Book of Common Prayer*. Consider how our personal prayers are joined with those of others in acts of corporate worship.

# THE CHURCH PRAYS

## SESSION 7

### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

#### FOCUS

When we gather for worship in the Church, our liturgies include Prayers of the People, a time when the congregation joins in making both general and specific intercessions. The children should be able to say that these prayers are for them as well as for others.

#### GETTING READY

In this session we turn to the Prayers of the People, an essential part of our worship that includes children as well as others. It is important for children to know that their prayers really matter.

In the Prayers of the People, the congregations prays for the Church, its members, and mission; the nation and its leaders; the welfare of the world; the concerns of the local community; those who suffer or who are in trouble; and those who have died. Often prayers of thanksgiving are included. There are six forms of the Prayers of the People in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

Lord, hear the prayers of your people; and what we have asked faithfully, grant that we may obtain effectually, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Prayers of the People

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 394

#### TEACHING TIP

It is important to emphasize that all our concerns can be brought to God in our prayers. When praying with young children, be sensitive to the people they care about. Young children are frequently keenly aware of problems or discord at home. Accept what children say, but avoid pressing them for details.

#### GATHERING

Set up a small table in the front of the room. Provide all the materials for a small altar: a cloth, candles, and flowers. As the children gather, seat them in

front of the table. Invite the children to put the cloth and other items on the altar, then ask them to name persons for whom they wish to pray. Repeat several times until all are present, then say:

Teacher: The Lord be with you.

Children: And also with you.

Teacher: Let us pray.

Compose a prayer of intercession and thanksgiving.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading aloud from the Bible. Gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Romans 12:12c (TEV)*:

“ . . . pray at all times.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Prepare a story about a family on their way to church, perhaps riding in their car and talking together. They talk about their prayers to God. They say what they would like to pray for.

- One parent talks about praying for a friend at work who has a sick daughter.
- Someone else mentions a storm where a tree fell close to their house.
- Another wants to pray for her friend’s grandmother who is in the hospital.
- Another wants to give thanks for their new puppy.
- The family decides to mention these things during the Prayers of the People.
- Conclude by describing the family standing or kneeling together for the Prayers of the People. They listen very carefully to the spoken petitions and sometimes add their own.

(Remind the children to read at home about prayer in the children’s book, *Let Us Pray*.)

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Prayer Poster**

Provide a sheet of construction paper for each child, along with a

selection of magazine pictures representing people from all over the world. Older children may wish to select their own pictures. Invite the children to glue the pictures to the paper under the caption “We Pray for People Everywhere.”

### **Option 2. A Child’s Prayer List**

Give each child a sheet of paper. Instruct the children to fold the paper in half two times. (The sheet will have four spaces when folded correctly.) The class members can use crayons or markers to draw pictures of four people they would like to pray for. While they work, tell the children that people in the church often have lists of people they pray for on a regular basis. (If the children want to add the names of the people they drew, print these on their sheets.)

### **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

The following is a “movement prayer” (a type of echo pantomime). It is adapted from Prayers of the People, Form I (BCP, 383). The teacher says the first line and does the suggested movement. The children can say the second line as they do the movement.

With all our heart and with all our mind, let us pray to the Lord, *(fold hands in prayer)*

Lord, have mercy.

For our Bishop, and for all clergy and people, let us pray to the Lord, *(form a cross with arms)*

Lord, have mercy.

For our President, for the leaders of the nations, let us pray to the Lord, *(salute)*

Lord, have mercy.

For help in caring for the earth, let us pray to the Lord, *(raise right hand in promise)*

Lord, have mercy.

For those who are sick, or sad, or in trouble; let us pray to the Lord, *(bow head in sorrow)*

Lord, have mercy.

For all that have died; let us pray to the Lord, *(make traditional sign of the cross)*

Lord, have mercy.

That we may live our lives in faith and hope; let us pray to the Lord, *(raise hands and arms upward)*

Lord, have mercy.

In the communion of all the saints, let us pray to the Lord, *(extend hands out front, palms open)*

Lord, have mercy.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Take the children to the nave of your church, and find the place where the leader stands during the reading of the Prayers of the People. If the service bulletin of the congregation includes the names of people to pray for, show the list to the children. Display any vestments that may be worn by the person who leads the prayers. Give the children an opportunity to stand in the leader's place. Older children may be interested in practicing the responses used in Form I or Form IV of the Prayers of the People.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Note that in some of the Gatherings in previous sessions of this unit, the children will have heard their teacher(s) praying for *them*. Remind the group of this, and compose a short prayer of intercession to use at this point. Wonder aloud:

How does it feel when someone prays for you?

How does it feel to pray for other people?

Encourage the children to say whatever they are thinking about prayer. Ask: What else do you wonder about when you pray?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing along with the music tape *Children Sing!* "Joyful, joyful, we adore thee" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 376; *We Sing of God*, 60). Begin to introduce the words of the hymn. Sing the first stanza with the children, clapping to the beat of the hymn and marching in place.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Talk with the children about the particular part of the service we call "Prayers of the People." Open the Prayer Book and show the children the forms of the prayers. Count them. (One traditional form appears in Rite I, p. 329. Six other forms follow Rite II, pp. 383-393.) Ask:

Who reads the Prayers of the People at our church? What does that person wear? Where does he/she stand?

What do you remember about the Prayers of the People you have heard?

Is there someone/something you would like to pray for at the Prayers of

the People? Who? What?

What do the people in the congregation do as the prayers are read? What can they say or add to the prayers?

What do the people say? If children seem attentive, you may wish to use a repeated response (Forms I or IV) that young children can listen for and perhaps join in saying.

### **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 34 shows children praying and includes a scripture verse, a responsive prayer, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

### **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for the closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for the prayers of all your people.  
*(Pray for the needs and concerns of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

To what degree do the young children seem to sense that the Prayers of the People belong to them as well as to adults? As their teachers, how can we help them to feel included and to know that God listens to their prayers?

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The next session connects *The Book of Common Prayer* with the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Think about the question found on page 302: "Will you by your prayers and witness help this child to grow into the full stature of Christ?"

# THE CHURCH PRAYS

## SESSION 8

### WE PRAY AT BAPTISMS

#### FOCUS

When someone is baptized, *The Book of Common Prayer* tells how we celebrate this sacrament. The children should be able to describe a baptism, including the fact that we pray together at the service.

#### GETTING READY

This session will be a review for children who participated in the sessions of Unit III, in the Shell Year of Episcopal Children's Curriculum. But for other children, it will be a brief introduction to the Sacrament of Baptism.

The particular emphasis of this session is upon the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. It is an act of prayer by the whole people of God. Every time a baptism occurs in the congregation, we are called to remember how each of us was welcomed into Christ's Church. The people around us prayed, giving thanks and promising to assist in our growth as members of the baptized community.

All of us, young children included, are reminded that prayer is central to the sacrament.

May Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us a new birth by water and the Holy Spirit, and bestowed upon us the forgiveness of sins, keep us in eternal life by his grace, in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Amen.*

The Renewal of Baptismal Vows, Easter Vigil  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 294

#### TEACHING TIP

The children's knowledge and experience in relation to services of baptism are likely to vary widely. Some may never have seen a baptism, while others will have participated often. Be sensitive to this fact and also to the possibility that some may not yet be baptized. This session offers an opportunity to assure children that they are all included in the prayers of the church. All God's children are loved by Jesus Christ.

## **GATHERING**

Arrange a cloth over a low table, and place a clear bowl of water in the center. If you wish, add candles and some flowers. As children arrive, ask them to sit where they can see the table and the bowl. Talk quietly about water and all the reasons why it is important. Provide another area where children can use paper and blue markers to create water pictures. When all are present, say:

Teacher: The Lord be with you.

Children: And also with you.

Teacher: Let us pray.

Lead a prayer of intercession, using the names of the children.

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from *The Book of Common Prayer*. Gather in a circle, open the book, and let the children see where the reading is. Read:

“We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water.” (BCP, p. 306.)

Create a story about a service of Holy Baptism for a child in your congregation.

- Tell about the preparations for this very special day.
- The family invites relatives and friends to be present. Everyone looks forward to sitting together at the church. Parents and godparents, brothers and sisters, read over the service in *The Book of Common Prayer* so that they know just what will happen.
- Describe the baptism itself and the prayers that are said (over the water, for the child being baptized, for the child’s parents and family, for the whole congregation).

Describe the way the baby or other person is presented to the congregation and how everyone promises to help the person grow in faith.

Note the happiness and joy that surrounds a baptism.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Water Painting**

Using the outline drawing of a baptismal pitcher (ewer) in the Teacher’s Packet, Poster No. 16, prepare for each child a sheet of white drawing paper

with the pitcher reproduced at the top. Using plain water and brushes, ask the children to paint the paper under the pitcher with the clear water. Add to the painted surface drops of water-soluble paint (blue, green, purple, or other suitable colors). The children can swirl the colored paint with their brushes.

### **Option 2. Baptism Pictures**

Ahead of time, use the pattern in the Teacher's Packet, Poster No. 16 to prepare for each member of the group a shell symbol cut from colored construction paper. Take pictures of each child, or ask each one to draw a self-portrait.

Attach the pictures to the shell symbols. The children can decorate the edges with crayons or markers, or tiny shells found at craft stores. (Note: A shell is frequently used at baptisms for pouring water on the person being baptized. It is a symbol of the Sacrament of Baptism.)

### **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play "Shell, shell, who has the shell?" as a variation on "Button, button." A child is chosen to sit in the center, with eyes closed. A shell is then passed around the circle, from child to child, until the teacher says, "Stop." The child who has the shell at that moment hides it in a fist. All the other children also pretend to have the shell clasped in a fist. The children chant, "Shell, shell, who has the shell?" The child in the center opens his/her eyes and has three guesses to discover who has the shell. The child who actually has it now takes a turn in the middle. Repeat as long as interest remains high.

### **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Role-play a baptism, allowing the children to take turns being celebrant, the person being baptized, godparents, family members, and the congregation. Show how a shell can be used to pour water. The teacher can help by directing the parts of the service. Use any props that seem appropriate. Be sure to include the times when prayers are said.

### **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Wonder about baptism:

How does it feel to be baptized? To have the Holy Spirit in your heart? To belong to Jesus, be marked as Christ's own forever?

How long is forever?

Wonder what it is like to be loved by God.

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Sing “Joyful, joyful, we adore thee” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 376; *We Sing of God*, 60). The music for this hymn (a prayer) is taken from Beethoven’s “Ode to Joy” (Ninth Symphony). Play a recording of this composition, allowing the children to move freely to the music, or use the music tape *Children Sing!*

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

At the baptismal service, the people join in praying for the persons about to be baptized and for all other baptized people. Talk with the children about the way the congregation joins in the litany on page 305 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. (We all say the same words seven times: “Lord, hear our prayer.”)

Focus on learning to enter into the responses.

Ask: Have you heard people saying together, “Lord, hear our prayer”? When? Did you join in?

When might you want to say these words? Tell about times when you have wanted to say “Lord, hear our prayer.”

With older children, the teacher may want to compose a series of short petitions to which the group can respond in this way.

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 35 includes a picture of a shell, lines from the Baptismal Service in *The Book of Common Prayer*, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for the closing prayer:

God, we thank you for water and for baptism.  
Lord, hear our prayers. (*Pray for the children.*)  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

### **TEACHER'S REFLECTION**

Think back over the eight sessions of this unit devoted to the theme of Christian prayer. How have the children's responses to praying changed? Do they feel more comfortable about offering their own petitions? joining with others? What have they said that reflects an understanding that they can pray at home, or alone wherever they are?

### **LOOKING AHEAD**

The session that follows is designed to be used on Pentecost Sunday. Use it on the date most appropriate for your congregation's calendar. (It can be inserted at any point during the period this unit is used.)

# THE CHURCH PRAYS

## SESSION 9

### WE CELEBRATE PENTECOST

#### FOCUS

Pentecost is a Church Feast at which we remember the Church's beginning. The children should be able to tell ways the Church celebrates at this festival.

#### GETTING READY

Pentecost is one of the Principal Feasts of the Church—with Easter, Ascension Day, Trinity Sunday, All Saints' Day, Christmas Day, and The Epiphany. (See the BCP, p. 15.)

The Day of Pentecost is celebrated by Christian worshipers recall the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the twelve apostles in Jerusalem.

The event described in *Acts 2* occurred at the time of the major Jewish feast of Pentecost when people from many nations gathered in Jerusalem each year. At the Feast of Pentecost, the disciples of Jesus were gathered in the Upper Room behind locked doors. They were afraid they would be arrested and put to death, just as Jesus had been. Suddenly, a wind blew through the room and tongues of fire appeared over the heads of the people in the room. The Holy Spirit had come to them just as Jesus had told them it would.

From that moment they went forth into the world to tell the story of Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Son of God, and to preach the Good News of Jesus to all the people.

In fulfillment of his true promise, the Holy Spirit came down from heaven, lighting upon the disciples, to teach them and to lead them into all truth; uniting peoples of many tongues in the confession of one faith, and giving to (the) Church the power to serve (God) as a royal priesthood, and to preach the Gospel to all nations.

Preface for Pentecost (alt.)

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 380

#### TEACHING TIP

The story of the apostles' role following Jesus' resurrection is a single narrative stretching over the 50 days of Easter and including the Ascension.

It culminates at Pentecost. In sharing the story with children, it is best to move quickly through the main events in order to focus chiefly on the feelings of joy and celebration of Pentecost.

## **GATHERING**

As in previous sessions, prepare a low table the children can gather around. As the children arrive let them cover the table with a red cloth and add a red candle. Talk with them about the color red. Help the group to focus on objects they know about that are red, items they own that are red, and events where they might see the color. Accept all contributions. When all are present, say:

Teacher: The Lord be with you.

Children: And also with you.

Teacher: Let us pray.

O Lord our God, give us by your Holy Spirit,  
a willing heart, and a ready hand  
to use all your gifts to your praise and glory;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

*Archbishop Cranmer (alt.)*

## **STORY**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. To do this, gather in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Acts 2:4a*:

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit . . . .”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell a simple story something like this:

- At the time of Jesus and even before that, the people of God had a celebration. People looked forward to this because they could go to Jerusalem to pray and give thanks to God.

- But in the year when Jesus died and rose again, everything was different. The disciples wondered what they would be doing at Pentecost. Jesus had promised that God would be with them, but they did not understand.

- On the day of the feast of Pentecost, something wonderful happened! There was a sound like a strong wind. The apostles' faces were shining with light like fire. They all began to speak in a different language. But still they

understood one another. How could this be?

- The Holy Spirit of God came to them. This was what Jesus had promised. Now they knew that God would be with them always.

## **CREATING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Pentecost Collars**

Obtain a large sheet of white craft paper (preferably 12 by 18 inches) for each child. Fold the sheet in half and cut a slit to the fold on one side. At the center, cut out an oval large enough for a child's neck. The collars can be easily slipped on after the children have decorated them with red crayons and markers. (As the children work, share with them that people frequently wear something red on Pentecost Day. They can wear their collars on this day.)

### **Option 2. Celebration Streamers**

Make celebration streamers. Provide the children with sturdy disposable cups. They can tape or glue streamers of red crepe paper or strips of red tissue along the bottoms of the cups. Small bells can be added to the bottom of the streamers. Practice waving the finished streamers.

## **GAME**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Play a birthday party game like "pin the candle on the cake." Make a poster of a cake, and cut out individual red candles from construction paper. Give each child a candle to pin on the cake.

## **DOING**

*(Time: 15 minutes)*

Provide un-iced cookies or cupcakes and red icing. Invite the children to decorate the cookies or cupcakes. Serve the treats as part of a Pentecost birthday party.

## **WONDERING**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Wonder about Pentecost.

What would the wind feel like? Would it be blowing soft or hard?

What would the fire shining brightly look like? What would it feel like?

## **MUSIC**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce and sing “Hail thee, festival day” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 225; *We Sing of God*, 42). Use the music tape *Children Sing!* to get started. Have a parade! Wear Pentecost collars or carry streamers (see *Creating*, above). Or use rhythm instruments. March around the room, singing, “Hail thee, festival day” or “Happy Birthday” to the Church.

## **CONVERSATION**

*(Time: 10 minutes)*

This is the Church’s birthday; we celebrate it each year. Ask the children: Think back to the story. What happened to the disciples? Why do we remember this?

What do we call this celebration? What do we do that is different?

What color is used in the church today?

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 36 has a picture of a Pentecost banner, a Scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and keep it with all the other cards from this year. Tell them that they can remember all the stories and lessons by looking at the cards and reading their books.

## **SAYING GOODBYE**

Gather for the closing prayer:

Thank you, God, for the celebration of Pentecost.  
*(Pray for the concerns and needs of the children.)*  
Keep us safe each day, and bring us back again.  
In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.  
Children: Thanks be to God.

## **TEACHER’S REFLECTION**

What reactions to the Pentecost story did you observe among the children? Do they have an opportunity to share in any of the congregation’s celebrations of this Feast?