

EPISCOPAL CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

**PRESCHOOL
KINDERGARTEN**

SHELL



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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. CREATION

Dear Parents and Guardians,

This unit follows the structure of the first story of Creation, found in *Genesis 1:1-2:3*. While young children, especially the three- and four-year-olds, cannot be expected to recall the sequence of the seven “days” in the story, it is reasonable to present the creation as an unfolding process: God makes the earth, the sun, moon, and stars; next, God makes everything that lives upon the earth—animals and plants and people; finally, on the seventh day, God rests.

We encourage you to talk about the lessons with your child. Do this by reading together the children’s book, *A Song of Creation*, an adaptation of Canticle 12 “A Song of Creation” (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 88-90). A few key lines that correspond with the *Genesis* account have been selected and illustrated in this book.

Scripture passages and excerpts from *The Book of Common Prayer* that the children 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: “God Made Light and Darkness” is the first of eight sessions on the Creation account found in *Genesis 1*. The emphasis is on the light we call day and the dark we call night, and that both are good gifts from God who made them. (*Genesis 1:5*)

Session 2: “God Made Water, the Sky, and Land” is about God’s creation of water, sky, and land. The children will talk about water and how it makes them feel, describe the sky, and express their gratitude to God. (*Genesis 1:1*)

Session 3: “God Created All Plant Life” is about God’s work in making all plant life—Day 3 in *Genesis 1*. The children will talk about the way we use plant life. (*Genesis 1:11a*)

Session 4: “God Made the Sun, Moon, and Stars” is about God’s creation of heavenly bodies—sun, moon, and stars. The children will share aloud their ways of thinking about all these. (*Genesis 1:16*)

Session 5: “God Made the Fish and the Birds” is about the fifth day of Creation when God made all marine life and all the birds of the air. The children will talk about several kinds of birds and fish. (*Genesis 1:20*)

Session 6: “God Made All the Other Animals” is about the sixth day of Creation when God made all the other animals and human beings as well. The focus for this session with the children will be on the creation of animals. (*Genesis 1:25*)

Session 7: “God Created Human Beings” is about the second part of *Genesis 1:24-31* when God made human beings as a final act of creation. The children will learn that every person is a unique creature of God. (*Genesis 1:27*)

Session 8: “God Rested from the Work of Creating” is about the final day in the first *Genesis* story of Creation that is devoted to God’s rest. The children will contrast work and rest. (*Genesis 2:3*)

Session 9: “The Church’s People: Saints of God” is for use on All Saints’ Sunday. All the people who have worshiped and loved God are called “saints.” (*Psalms 149:1*)

Yours in Christ,
Church School Teachers

CREATION

SESSION 1

GOD MADE LIGHT AND DARKNESS

FOCUS

This is the first of eight sessions on the Creation account found in *Genesis 1:1-2:3*. The emphasis is on the light we call day and the dark we call night and that both are gifts from God who made them. The children should be able to speak of places and times for both light and darkness, to tell how they feel about the light and the dark, and to describe ways to cause light to shine.

GETTING READY

This unit follows the first story of Creation in *Genesis* chapter 1. Another story of creation follows in *Genesis* chapter 2: 1-3 about Adam and Eve. For preschool children, we focus on the wonder of God's creation from the first story. God created the heavens and the earth in six days and rested on the seventh. At the end of each day God said that what was made was good. In this session, we begin with the first day of creation when God made the Light and the Dark. This is not the light from the sun, stars, and moon; they will be created on the fourth day. This is undifferentiated light that gives hope out of the dark emptiness.

This introduction to the Bible explains the beginnings of the universe. Its poetry and repeating phrases are appealing to children. The story of God's actions to bring the world into being does not need to match scientific research to be believed as part of our faith. God is indeed the creator of all that is.

Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

For the Care of Children

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 829

TEACHING TIP

This may be the first time this particular group of children has been together. They may need the support of parents as they become comfortable with the room, the teachers, and the other children. Invite parents to remain

in the room with their children until the children are engaged in an activity. At that point most parents will be able to leave quietly.

GATHERING

As the children arrive, address each one by name and invite them to observe the “Light and Darkness” Poster No. 1 from the Teachers Packet. What do they see? What would they like to add to the poster?

Because preschoolers need choices, in addition to the poster, provide a variety of puzzles and storybooks related to the Creation story. Allow the children to interact with these after they have seen and responded to the poster.

When everyone has arrived, gather the group and say:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 84

These words will be used at the beginning of every session. Invite the children to join in. (If it is part of your congregation's practice to make the sign of the cross, do so with the children.)

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Establish a comfortable spot for storytelling, where all the children can see. Describe the Bible as a special book that tells many things about God and God's people. The story that we will hear today comes from the first two pages of the Bible, in the book called *Genesis*. *Genesis* means “beginning.” Open the Bible and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Genesis 1:5*:

“God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Explain to the children that after we read from the Bible we say “The word of the Lord” and respond with the words “Thanks be to God.” You may wish to practice this a few times.

Begin this day by telling the story of Creation, Day 1, light and darkness, day and night.

The story might go something like:

- In the beginning there was nothing. There was so much nothing that it had no beginning and no end. Everything was very dark and there was nothing to see.

- Then God spoke and said, “Let there be light.” And light appeared at the words God spoke.
- God saw the light. It was bright and beautiful. And God saw that the light was good.
- Then God separated the light from the darkness. There were two things now, light to see by and darkness. God called the light Day and the darkness was called Night.
- There was evening and there was morning, the first day.

(Encourage the children to read, with their families at home, the children’s book, *A Song of Creation*.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Let There Be Light

Give each child a square of black construction paper. Fold the square in half. Open up the paper and glue gold foil wrapping paper or yellow construction paper to the inside bottom half. An alternative would be to use glue and gold glitter. When the paper is folded, it is dark. When it is opened, it is light and dark. The children can close the paper and say, “God said, ‘Let there be light!’” Then open the paper and say, “And God saw that it was good.”

Option 2. Light and Dark

On one table provide light colored paper and crayons. On another table provide dark paper and chalk and white crayons. The children can take turns making light and dark pictures. Talk with the children about the difference between light and dark as they work.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Let the teacher and children join together in a circle on the floor. In the center, place pictures of different kinds of light (candle, flashlight, car headlights, light bulb, etc.). These can be found in magazines and newspapers.

Ask the children to choose a picture. The teacher then begins a get-acquainted game by saying his/her name and what kind of light he/she has chosen (“I am Mrs. Thomas and I am a candle,” for example). Then the teacher tosses a small beanbag toward one of the children, who says his/her name and what kind of light is on his/her chosen picture. The child tosses the beanbag to another member of the circle, and the game continues until all have had a chance to say their names and to identify all the kinds of light. Conclude the game by reminding the children that we have many ways of supplying light in the darkness, and that all light is a gift from God the Creator.

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Take a walk to look at God's world and talk about it. Smell the air. Look at the sky. Feel some created things. Take turns hugging a tree. Stop to listen.

Or, if circumstances do not permit a venture outdoors, make up a walk. Sit inside in a close circle and pantomime a walk outside. Examples: Huff and puff up a hill; shade eyes from the sun; tilt heads and listen to the sweet songs of birds. Let the children think of other movements.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

In the very beginning God made light. Light a large candle and place it in the center of the circle, with all the children able to see. Talk about the light from the candle, using questions like these, beginning with the words, "I wonder": How far can the candle be seen? If we were outside at night, how many people could see the candle? How many other candles can we light from this one? What would we do without light?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

The hymn for the weeks on Creation will be "All Things Bright and Beautiful" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 405; *We Sing of God*, 68). It is recorded on the tape for the Shell Year, *Children Sing!* Begin with the refrain:

*All things bright and beautiful, All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful, The Lord God made them all.*

Invite the children to sit on the floor, with arms free to move. Be sure that all can see, and make eye contact with them. Slowly move arms to form a large circle, starting at the lap and ending over the head. Do this movement silently, then begin to sing the refrain.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Use questions like the following to encourage the children to think aloud about darkness and light: When does it get really dark? Are there places where it would be dark in the daytime? Where? When does the light begin each day? When is the daylight brightest? Where (or when) were some of the brightest days you can remember?

How does it make you feel when you are in a dark place? Why? How does the light make you feel? Why do we have both days and nights?

The questions may prompt children, especially the five-year-olds, to tell stories about times when they were afraid of the dark or glad about the light of daytime.)

Speak about darkness and light as gifts from God and say that each is good.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 1 contains the refrain of the hymn, “All Things Bright and Beautiful,” an illustration, a note to parents, and a Scripture verse. 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 are absent.

SAYING GOODBYE

Ask everyone to join in a circle near the “Light and Darkness” poster. Pray with the group:

God, we thank you for the days and nights
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for any concerns the children may express.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in the circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

When the session has ended, go over the list of children who were present, thinking prayerfully about their participation. How did each one respond to the learning activities? What problems were evident, if any? Which children need more time or attention as they get used to this new setting?

LOOKING AHEAD

Next week’s retelling of the Creation account will focus on earth, water, and sky. Consider prayerfully the theme for the session, and offer thanks for the goodness in God's creative work. Be alert to ideas for teaching that may arise throughout the coming week.

CREATION

SESSION 2

GOD MADE WATER, THE SKY, AND LAND

FOCUS

The focus for this second session is on God's creation of water, sky, and land. The children should be able to describe the qualities of water and how it makes them feel, tell about the sky and how it changes in appearance, and express their gratitude for the land God has made.

GETTING READY

The previous session centered on light and darkness, day and night, which appeared on the first day of Creation (*Genesis 1:1-2:3*). The account of the second day includes the forming of the firmament (a giant dome that held back the waters above from the earth beneath). Dry land does not appear until the third day. But for young children, a world of water and sky without land would be a very difficult concept, so the activities for this session include all three. The story however, will focus on the second day of Creation.

On the second day, the Bible introduces the waters that cover the earth. Because humans are relating this story of Creation, it is from the vantage point of the earth as the center. This is long before humans ventured into space to see the earth from above.

We are surrounded by water in its many forms. The dome referred to in Scripture holds back the water in the sky from the waters of the earth. In other versions of the Bible, the dome is called the "firmament," an ancient term for the atmosphere. The modern translation is dome or sky.

Children are fascinated by the world and can be encouraged to give thanks to God for making everything that is.

We give you thanks, most gracious God, for the beauty of the earth and sky and sea; for the richness of the mountains, plains, and rivers; for the songs of birds and 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

Teachers may be apprehensive about using mud and water in the classroom, especially when children are dressed in their best clothes. Place sheets and old towels on the classroom floor to soak up any excess water and prevent the floor from becoming slippery. Put rain ponchos over the children to protect their clothes. (These are inexpensive.) Be sure to have plenty of towels on hand.

GATHERING

Engage the children as they enter by pointing out the “Water, Sky, and Earth” Poster No. 2 from the Teacher’s Packet and inviting them to imagine what they might add to the picture. This poster will serve as a background scene for the next several weeks. Provide storybooks, puzzles, paper, and crayons for additional choices.

When all have arrived, invite them to join in saying:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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 *Genesis 1:1*:

“In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell the story of Creation for the second day, the creation of water and sky, using your own words. Young children learn through repetition and enjoy hearing significant stories told over and over, so you may wish to repeat the story from last week as well.

- A possible way to begin would be to call the children’s attention again to the background scene on Poster No. 2. Let the children help to identify water, sky, and earth.
- We heard this story last week. Listen for what is new and different today.
- On the second day God said, “Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters.” God created a dome to keep the waters above the earth separated from the waters of the

earth. (Explain what a dome is for the children.)

- God called the dome sky.
- The waters above from the sky bring us rain and snow. The waters of the earth give us water to drink and places to swim.
- It was the end of the second day.

(Remind the children that they can read the Creation story with their families in *A Song of Creation*.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Mud Sculpture

Set up for molding and sculpture play. If possible, use real mud. If not, wet sand or brown salt dough can be substituted. Give children time to enjoy working with the materials. The children should not be expected to “make things.” Let this be a process-oriented, exploratory time with raw material – dirt (and perhaps a few small stones).

Option 2. Land, Sea, and Sky

Ahead of time, gather pages from magazines that have large expanses of color suggesting land and water. Examples could be grassy plains, lakes, oceans, or picture backgrounds of brown, green, or blue. Colored copy paper could also be used.

Provide each child with a sheet of light blue construction paper representing the sky. Invite the children to create the land and the sea on their sheets by tearing small pieces of the magazine pictures and gluing them to the blue background.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Play “Follow the Leader.” The teacher or a child may be designated a leader. Use your imagination to: climb mountains, swim rivers and oceans, trek through forests and fields, and fly higher and higher into the sky and outer space.

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Water is a wonderful medium for children’s play. Plan to provide some experiences with water such as these:

Set up a pouring place with basins and containers of different shapes and sizes.

Invite children to play with ice cubes. Watch them melt.

Drop a variety of objects into a large container of water; note which ones float and sink.

Share pictures of water: oceans, ponds, rivers, streams, and fountains.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wonder about the sky. Say, “I wonder how the sky would look if. . . .” Look through a prism, colored glass, cellophane, or through water droplets on a window pane.

(If the room does not have a window that affords a view of the sky, move to a different part of the building or go outside.)

Say, “I wonder why clouds are different colors?” Or, “I wonder why the sky looks different early in the morning and late in the evening.”

Such questions are meant to stimulate children’s interest in the created world. There are many answers to these questions, so the children are always right.

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing the refrain of “All Things Bright and Beautiful” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 405; *We Sing of God*, 68). Use the tape *Children Sing!* as background. Invite the children to make arm circles (as described in Session 1). Repeat, encouraging everyone to join in. Vary the tone of voice and the expressiveness of the gestures.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Ask the children to name things in the room. Would they be able to name all the things outside? All the things in the world? Why not? Speak of how God has given us everything we use to make all the objects around us.

Give the children time to think and to respond in their own ways. Introduce the word ‘space.’ God made space and everything in it, and space is so big that no one knows where it ends!

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 2 is illustrated with a seascape, and contains the first verse of *Genesis*, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take their cards home, show them to their families, and keep them in a safe place.

SAYING GOODBYE

Gather in a circle and use the closing prayer, changing only the first line:

God, we thank you for water, sky, and earth.
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for any concerns the children may express.)
Be with us as we go.
And bring us back again. 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 seem more comfortable and at home in the classroom today? Were new students made to feel welcome?

Young children need a balance between active (concrete) experiences and quiet times devoted to listening and thinking. Did the time today offer opportunities for both?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session will focus on plant life as part of God's creation. Think about your favorite plants or trees. How have plants brought beauty to your life?

CREATION

SESSION 3

GOD CREATED ALL PLANT LIFE

FOCUS

The focus for this week is on God’s work in making all plant life – Day 3 in *Genesis 1*. The children should be able to name a significant number of plants God has created, and to speak of all the uses for plant life.

GETTING READY

In *Genesis 1:9-13* God created the dry land and all the plants of the earth. God names the physical frameworks of the universe: the Sky, the Earth, and the Seas. God then says, “Let the earth put forth vegetation.” This is an indirect command because God is telling the earth what it should do.

This is the way that the first garden is planted. In the garden are all the plants that produce fruit and all the plants that produce seeds. Consider the wide varieties of plants that grow in your geographical area. It is overwhelming to think of all the different kinds of plants from all over the world.

By creating plants, God provided food for the creatures that would appear at a later time; and once again God saw that it was good.

Almighty God, we thank you for making the earth fruitful, so that it might produce what is needed for life: Bless those who work in the fields; give us seasonable weather; and grant that we may all share the fruits of the earth, rejoicing in your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

For Agriculture

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 824

TEACHING TIP

Young children are imagining, wondering, and thinking much of the time. They do so in mental images and pictures, and they attempt to find words for these thoughts. Allow children plenty of time to think, wonder, and imagine, and to enrich their vocabularies with descriptive words for labeling (naming) thoughts. The “Conversations” and “Wondering” suggestions on these pages offer opportunities for imagining and naming.

GATHERING

Bring to class a large bouquet of flowers, real or artificial. Spread the individual flowers on a table. As the children arrive invite them to choose one, put it in an arrangement, and tell two others why they chose it. Provide storybooks and puzzles as alternative activities.

When everyone is present, say together:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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 *Genesis 1:11a*:

“Then God said, ‘Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with seed in it . . .’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

With the learners’ help, add plant life to the background poster used at the last sessions. (Use all or part of the cutouts from the Teacher’s Packet.)

In your own words, tell a story about the third day of Creation. You may wish to begin with a review of what God created on the first and the second days — light and darkness, the dome and the sky.

The continuation of the story might go something like this:

- On the third day, God called the waters under the sky to one place. When this happened, dry land appeared. God called the dry land Earth. The waters that had gathered together were called Seas.
- “And God saw that it was good.”
- Then God said, “Let all kinds of plants grow on the earth.” The plants were like strawberries and blackberries that have fruit. They were vegetables like potatoes and carrots. They were trees like apple and pear trees.
- Some of the plants had seeds like flowers and bushes. Some were like big oak trees and pine trees.
- God had planted the first garden on the earth.

To enhance your story, name plants and trees that the children will know. Ask them to add others that have not been said. All answers are acceptable.

(Tell the children that they can read the story of Creation with their families in *A Song of Creation*.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Nature Rubbings

Do nature rubbings. Tape some natural materials to a tabletop. Select materials that are fairly flat, such as leaves, bark, flowers, and vines.

The children can place pieces of plain drawing paper over the objects. Using the broad sides of crayons or chalk, they can create rubbings that will show the images under their sheets of paper.

Talk with the children about the many patterns and shapes of natural things God has created. Each child can include several shapes on a single piece of paper, and may use different colors of crayons in the process.

Option 2. Apple Trees

Before class, cut out tree shapes from green or brown construction paper. Give each child a “tree” and several one-inch squares of red tissue paper. Invite the children to wad up the squares of tissue into “apples” and glue them to their trees.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Try this simple finger play, “A Little Sun”:

A little sun, *(form sun with arms)*

A little rain, *(use fingers to make rain come down)*

Now pull up all the weeds! *(hand motions, pulling weeds)*

All in a row, *(hold hands and fingers upward)*

The flowers grow *(move hands up, wiggling fingers)*

From tiny little seeds. *(point to imaginary seeds in palm of hands)*

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

What’s inside? Explore some of the foods God has provided for people to eat. Use two apples and a cabbage. For each food, invite children to describe and touch it, just as it is.

Then pose the question, “What do you think is inside (each of these)?” Encourage children to speculate—to describe what they think the shape and pattern will be.

Start with the cabbage. Explore, cut, and explore some more. Taste.

Cut one of the apples. Divide and share with the children. Then ask whether they know of a surprise the apple has inside. It is something they could not see as they ate just now.

Cut the second apple in half across the middle. The seed pockets form a star pattern. Distribute the apple pieces as a snack.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Look at several kinds of seeds, such as dried beans, peas, and sunflower, mustard, and poppy seeds. See if the children can identify them. Ask:

I wonder what would grow from this seed if it were planted.

I wonder how big the plant would be.

I wonder how long it would take to grow. I wonder where this seed came from.

I wonder what kinds of seeds can fly through the air.

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Return to “All Things Bright and Beautiful” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 405; *We Sing of God*, 68). Ask the children to join in the singing, with arm circles. Sing or say the stanzas, with the group singing the refrain after each one. Use the tape *Children Sing!* if it is helpful.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

How many different kinds of plants can the children name? As they list the ones they remember, count the responses and announce the total one or more times. Ask, “Can we name all the plants in the world?”

Some people have the same names as plants. Name some of these.

We enjoy the beauty of blossoms on flowering annuals, bushes, and trees. Name a number of these.

Plants can be the source of medicines that help us to stay well. Plants clear the carbon dioxide from the air and give oxygen to breathe.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 3 has a picture of an apple tree, a note to parents, the “Johnny Appleseed Grace,” and a verse from *Genesis*. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their families, and keep it in a safe place.

SAYING GOODBYE

Change only the first line of the goodbye prayer ritual:

God, we thank you for plants, flowers, and trees,
And for our families and friends.

(Pray for the special needs of the children.)

Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Three-year-olds do not really play together consistently, but four- and five-year-olds will begin to engage in more cooperative play. All these children need an opportunity in their games and creative activities to care for one another. Is this happening in the class?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session will focus on the creation of the sun, moon, and stars. Imagine yourself as a three-year-old looking upward and enjoying all that can be seen in the sky, particularly in various kinds of weather and in the evening before bedtime. Young children in today's culture are exposed early to knowledge about outer space; how does such knowledge compare with the wonder of God's creation?

CREATION

SESSION 4

GOD MADE THE SUN, MOON, AND STARS

FOCUS

The focus of this session is on God's creation of heavenly bodies—sun, moon, and stars. The children should be able to share aloud their ways of thinking about these.

GETTING READY

On the fourth day of Creation, God created the sun, moon, and stars. In light of what we know of the universe, we could speculate that the other galaxies came at the same point in the story. The significance of the Creation on this day is that without night and day we would not have time, seasons, years, decades, or millennia.

For children, this translates to birthdays, Christmases, play, and sleep—all the rhythms of their lives. In telling today's story to the children explain all the aspects of time that are affected by the creation of the sun for the day, and the moon and the stars at night.

In urban and suburban areas the stars are often faint and many are totally obscured. Star charts, portable planetariums, and fluorescent stars that are available from science and museum stores may enhance the experience for teachers and children.

Almighty and everlasting God, you made the universe with all its marvelous order, its atoms, worlds, and galaxies, and the infinite complexity of living creatures: Grant that, as we probe the mysteries of your creation, we may come to know you more truly, and more surely fulfill our role in your eternal purpose; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For Knowledge of God's Creation
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 827

TEACHING TIP

Often it is necessary to quiet a group of active children after a noisy or especially busy time. These transition times can be facilitated through signals that communicate a change to children. Signals such as a light turned off, soft music, or a whispered direction to individuals or small groups can serve this purpose.

GATHERING

Place the background Poster No. 2 from the Teacher's Packet, "Water, Sky, and Earth," at the children's eye level. As the children arrive, the teacher can add the sun and the moon (from Teacher's Packet). Give each child a star to add to the sky. (Gold star stickers could be used if the poster is laminated and they can be easily removed.) Talk with the children about the wonder of God's creation. Provide books and puzzles as alternative activities.

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

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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 *Genesis 1:16*:

"God made the two great lights . . . and the stars."

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Remind the children of all the things God has made so far. After you name each item the children may wish to respond, "And it was good!" God made the Light and the Darkness. God made the Sky and the Earth. God made all the plants on the earth.

- Tell the story of the fourth day in your own words based on *Genesis 1:14-19*.
- God said, "Let there be a light for the daytime. Let there be lights for the nighttime."
- God made the day and the night so that we would have time. Days make weeks and weeks make years. Each year we have seasons, fall, winter, spring, and summer. The day helps the plants to grow and the seasons tell them when to sleep, when to bloom, and when to give fruit and seeds.
- Some days are special days, like Sundays when we come to worship God that come every week, and like birthdays and Christmas that come only once a year.

(Tell the children that they may read with their families about the days of Creation in their book, *A Song of Creation*.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Twinkling Night Pictures

Make twinkling night pictures. Use dark blue or black construction paper. Provide silver, gold, white, or yellow sparkles (glitter, sequins, foil pieces, star stickers, anything that shines).

Invite the children to create a night sky, to which the twinkling stars will be added. As they are working, sing together several times the nursery rhyme, “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,” or other familiar songs about stars.

Option 2. Sun, Moon, and Star Mobiles

Make mobiles, one for each child.

Glue two popsicle sticks together at the center to form a cross. Use cardboard cutouts of the sun, the moon, and three stars. Add strings to each.

Tape the sun to the center of the cross, and the four other cutouts to the corners. Attach a string for hanging.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Play “Sun, Moon, and Stars.”

Ask the children to sit in chairs or on a rug in a circle. Give each child the name of “sun,” “moon,” or “star.” (Distribute the names evenly and randomly.)

Choose one child to be “caller,” and remove one chair (or close up one spot on the rug).

Instruct the caller to say “sun,” “moon,” or “star” (or any combination of the three).

Children whose names have been called must change places. As they are doing so, the caller tries to find a vacant place. The child remaining now becomes the caller, and the process is repeated. (The teacher may wish to be the caller so all children can participate in the same way.)

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Provide one large flashlight and several smaller flashlights. (If possible, provide one light for each child.) Turn out the classroom lights, and shine the flashlights on the ceiling. Move the larger flashlight across the ceiling as the moon might move across the night sky.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Shine a flashlight through a colander. This will make stars on the ceiling.
Invite the children to imagine they are looking at the sky at night. What do they wonder about?

I wonder what causes stars to twinkle.

I wonder where the stars are when I can't see them.

I wonder how far away the stars are.

I wonder if all the stars have names.

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the first stanza of “Many and Great, O God, Are Thy Works” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 385; *We Sing of God*, 63), an American folk hymn set to “Dakota Indian Chant,” a Native American melody. After singing it through several times, add a hand drum or some substitute. Or the children might enjoy striking their palms on the floor to form an accompanying chorus of drumbeats. The music on the tape *Children Sing!* will help establish the rhythm.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Explore questions like these: How does the sun feel in the summer? In the winter? What does the sun do?

How does the moon change? Which shape of the moon do you like best? Why?

Use the “Star Chart” Poster No.4 from the Teacher’s Packet.

How many stars are in the sky?

For older children, introduce the word “galaxy,” and explain that God has made many galaxies.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 4 includes a nighttime picture, a verse from *Genesis*, 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

Invite the children to join in the concluding prayer:

God, we thank you for the sun, moon, and stars,

And for our families and friends.

(Pray for the concerns of the children.)

Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Holding hands in a circle, say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: *Thanks be to God.*

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

The people of God have rejoiced in the wonders of God's creation. Their worship, as evidenced by the *Psalms* and other passages of Scripture, glorified the Lord for setting us in such a marvelous universe. Has this teaching session with the children helped them, in ways appropriate to their own understanding, to give praise to God? What will they learn in coming years that will build on what they already know and feel?

LOOKING AHEAD

The focus for next week will be on the creation of birds and fish. Think about the many different kinds of birds and fish in the world. What do you recall about them that has touched your life and reminded you of God's creation?

CREATION

SESSION 5

GOD MADE THE FISH AND THE BIRDS

FOCUS

On the fifth day of Creation (*Genesis 1:20-23*), God made all marine life and all the birds of the air. The children should be able to name several kinds of birds and fish, and explain how swimming and flying creatures differ from all others.

GETTING READY

The biblical account of the fifth day of Creation tells about all the fish and birds that are on the earth and in the waters. Once again as with the plants, God commands the waters to produce swarms of living creatures. The birds of the air are commanded to fly over the earth.

God describes these as every living creature that moves of every kind, even the sea monsters. Every winged bird of every kind is given life. Then God blessed the earth saying, “Be fruitful and multiply.”

Children can imagine all the creatures of the waters from the giant whales—perhaps the sea monsters named in the Scripture passage—to the wiggly jelly fish or minnows with which they may be familiar. The beautiful colors of all the birds that fly (and perhaps the other winged creatures that we are not so fond of) are viewed differently with this day of God’s activity in the creation of the world.

O heavenly Father, who has filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works; that, rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For Joy in God’s Creation
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 814

TEACHING TIP

Young children need opportunities to use and develop their large muscles. Ideally this is accomplished through outdoor play—climbing, running, and riding wheel toys. Teachers in the church can help to provide other opportunities indoors, through music activities that include expansive arm

and body movements that reflect the words of hymns. Use imagination in choosing large-muscle responses to music.

GATHERING

As the students arrive, the teacher will help them add bird or fish cutouts (from the Teacher's Packet) to background Poster No. 2, "Water, Sky, and Land." (NOTE: Some children may have missed one or more of the earlier sessions. This is an opportunity to talk with them about the Creation account.) Provide books and drawing materials for choices.

When all are present, teacher and students together say:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen

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 *Genesis 1:20*:

"And God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let the birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky.'"

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

One or more of the following can enrich the story of this day of Creation: Listen for birds outdoors. Use a tape recording of a bird's song. Look at an aquarium, or a fishbowl with one or more fish.

Review the first four days and ask, "What do you think God made next?"

- Begin the Bible story by saying that on the fifth day, God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let the birds fly above the earth across the sky."
- In this way God created the sea monsters, such as the whales, the dolphins, and the octopus. God created all the creatures of the sea such as the starfish and the sharks. God made everything that moves.
- Then God made all the birds that fly and some that don't. God created the hummingbirds and the chickens, the eagles and the robins on the fifth day.
- God saw all of these wonderful fish and birds and God saw that it was good.

(The children can read more about these in their book *A Song of Creation* at home with their families.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Fishbowls

Cut large sheets of manila paper into fishbowl shapes. Ask the children to put fish, shells, and other sea creatures in the fishbowl by using crayons to draw them.

When they have finished coloring, the children can paint the whole surface of the paper with very thin blue or green tempera paint or watercolors. The paint will not adhere to the colored areas and will “add the water” to the bowl.

Option 2. Bird feeders

Recycle small aluminum or plastic containers, pint-size milk cartons, or jar lids by attaching string to the tops. Invite the children to spread a mixture of birdseed and peanut butter on the bottom of the container. The containers can then be taken home and hung in a tree to feed the birds. If you have children who are allergic to peanut butter, you may wish to string Cherrios or other cereal onto strings.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

“Bird, Bird, Fish,” is a variation of the game “Duck, Duck, Goose.”

The children sit in a circle on the floor or in chairs. One child is selected to begin by walking around behind the circle, gently tapping each of the other children and saying, “Bird, Bird, Bird.” At one point, before going around the whole circle, the child should say, “Fish.”

The child tapped when “fish” is said gets up, and both children try to get back into the same empty space or chair. The one who does not make it starts the game over again.

DOING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Using pictures of birds and fish (magazines such as *World* and *National Geographic* are good sources), ask the children to sort the pictures into categories of “flying things” and “swimming things.”

When they are finished with this broad classification, the teacher could help the children to sub-divide the two categories into “water birds” and “land birds,” or “shellfish,” “saltwater fish,” “fresh water fish,” “mammals,” etc.

NOTE: Young children can sort items using only one attribute at a time.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Put out some collections of objects for children to explore, such as shells, feathers, pebbles, and eggs. If a conch shell is available, let the children listen to “hear the ocean.”

Use statements like:

I wonder how many different kinds of shells God made.

I wonder how many different eggs there are.

I wonder how these pebbles became so round and smooth.

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing again “All Things Bright and Beautiful” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 405; *We Sing of God*, 68).

Introduce “Morning Has Broken” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 8; *We Sing of God*, 6). Sing it several times, and invite the children to suggest movements that can be added to the music. Use the tape *Children Sing!*

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

God made all the creatures that live in the water (marine life); ask the children to name as many as they can.

Turn the children’s attention to birds and all winged creatures. How many kinds of birds can they name? Consider the different ways birds fly: eagles soar and glide, robins and crows flap their wings.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 5 provides a picture of fish, a note to parents, and a poem. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their families, and keep it in a safe place.

SAYING GOODBYE

Gather the group into a circle for the weekly prayer ritual. Change the first line:

God, we thank you for the birds and fish,

And for our families and friends.

(Pray for the needs of the children.)

Be with us as we go,

And bring us back again. Amen.

Holding hands in the circle, say:
Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.
Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

This session began the second half of the eight weeks on Creation. What do the children seem to be gaining from their experiences thus far? Is there evidence that they think with wonder and awe about all that God has made?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is on the creation of animals. Humans will be in Session 7. Consider all of the animals God has made. Some have been helpful to humans; others have hurt humans. What is our responsibility to all God's creatures?

CREATION

SESSION 6

GOD MADE ALL THE OTHER ANIMALS

FOCUS

On the sixth day of Creation, according to *Genesis 1:24-31*, God made all the other animals and human beings as well. The focus for this session will be on the creation of animals. Session 7 will be about people. The children should be able to name several different kinds of animals.

GETTING READY

On the sixth day of Creation, God created all the animals that walk on the earth and humans. To emphasize the specialness of humans to God, the next session is devoted to the creation of people. In this session, the focus will be on *Genesis 1:24-25*.

The creation of animals invites the children to think about all the creatures great and small that are part of nature and the natural order of the world. The order of creation, interestingly, follows the theory of evolution: vegetation, swarming creatures, fish, birds, and animals. Keeping in mind that we think of a day as twenty-four hours, a day of Creation may be quite a different time period in God's time.

Once again God commands the earth to bring forth new life—the animals. Another aspect of creation is that God names the parts of the universe but leaves the naming of the fish, birds, animals, and other creatures to humans.

God created all animals both tame and wild and even the animals that crawl upon the earth. And God saw that it was good. These verses can remind us that all living creatures are God's creatures no matter how annoying to us.

O God, you created all living things on the face of the earth and gave us dominion over them: Grant that we may be faithful to this trust in the way we treat all animals, both wild and tame. Teach us to admire their beauty and to delight in their cunning; to respect their strength and to wonder at their intelligence. Grant that our use of them may be both merciful and wise. So may we lend our voice to their praise of your goodness, which endures forever. *Amen.*

For Animals
Prayer Book Studies 25 (1973)

TEACHING TIP

Playing games with children can be very enjoyable, especially if the rules are clear to everyone. Think through a game carefully before attempting it in the group. The teacher must understand the rules thoroughly and should anticipate any ways the children might become confused or feel uncertain about how to proceed. When giving directions to young children, share one step at a time and keep the details to a minimum.

GATHERING

As you greet the children, distribute cutouts of pets and animals from Poster No. in the Teacher's Packet, and add them to the "Water, Sky, and Land" background poster. (By now the poster will be getting crowded with cutouts from this and previous sessions, but this illustrates the fact that the earth is teeming with all the forms of life God has made.) Invite the children to draw pictures of their pets and arrange the pictures around the larger poster.

Talk with the children about animals, the theme for this week. Ask questions like:

What is your favorite animal?

Do you have a special pet at home? (Let the children take turns telling about their pets.)

When everyone has arrived, teachers and children gather and say:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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 *Genesis 1:25*:

"God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good."

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Review the sequence of events in the six days. Use the chart from Poster No. 5 in the Teacher's Packet to represent the key acts of creation.

- On the sixth day, God created all the animals that walk upon the earth. Think about all the animals of the earth and begin your story by naming some of the animals familiar to the children.

- On the sixth day, God created cats and dogs, elephants and camels, frogs and turtles, and bears. God created so many different kinds of animals that they would not all fit in one place on the earth. So different kinds of animals live in different kinds of places.
- Some animals live in the desert. Some live in the jungle. Some live in the mountains. And some live in the forests.
- God made all the creatures and the Bible tells us that some day the lion and the lamb will play together and the bear and the cow will share their food. The snakes will not hurt the children and everyone will live together in peace. (*Isaiah 6:6-9*)

(The children’s book, *A Song of Creation*, can be read at home by the children and their families to reinforce the Creation story.)

CREATING

(*Time: 15 minutes*)

Option 1. Make Pet Rocks.

Gather small stones, enough to provide one for each child. Scrub them clean and let them dry. Using tempera, allow the children to choose colors and paint their rocks. Draw eyes, noses, tails, whiskers, etc., with permanent markers to create small animals (mice, squirrels, rabbits).

Option 2. Paper bag Puppets

Use lunch-size paper bags. Invite the children to draw eyes, nose, ears and tongues on the bags to create animals. Allow the children an opportunity to play with their animal puppets by retelling the story of God’s creation of the animals and allowing them to participate with their puppets.

GAME

(*Time: 10 minutes*)

Try “Animal Pantomime.” Ask the children to use their bodies to suggest different kinds of animals, including walking and crawling creatures. Suggest or model some of the possible movements, such as ways of walking or eating.

DOING

(*Time: 15 minutes*)

Use play dough to fashion different kinds of animals. Set them aside to be arranged in a display when dry. (Younger children will make shapes that represent animals for them though they may not be recognizable by others. Accept all creations, allowing the children to talk about what they have made.)

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Arrange for an animal (puppy, kitten, rabbit, gerbil) to be brought to class, or substitute a stuffed animal or photograph.

Use statements like:

I wonder why God created this animal.

I wonder if animals know about God.

I wonder what the animal thinks about other animals.

I wonder what the world would be like if there were no animals.

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the song, “He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands”:

He’s got the whole world in his hands,

He’s got the whole wide world in his hands.

He’s got the whole world in his hands,

He’s got the whole world in his hands.

The familiar stanzas are:

1. He’s got you and me, sister, in his hands.

2. He’s got you and me, brother, in his hands.

3. He’s got everybody here in his hands.

Add the names of some animals: He’s got puppies and kittens; He’s got tigers and lions, etc. The children can suggest movements to go with each verse.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Use the puppets from Storytelling (above) or the paper bag puppets from Creating. Ask the children to suggest the sounds different animals make; invite everyone to pretend he or she is one of the animal creatures.

Ask questions about animals: Which ones move very slowly? Where do animals sleep at night? What kinds of food do they eat? Do you have any pets? How do they move? How do you take care of them?

Encourage the children to be thankful to God for making so many interesting animals in the world.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 6 is a two-sided reproduction with lions on one side and sheep on the other. Remind the children to take the card home, show it to their families, and keep it in a safe place.

SAYING GOODBYE

At the end of the session, gather the children for prayer.

God, we thank you for all animals
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for the needs of the children.)

Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Holding hands in the circle, say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

In thinking about the time spent with the children, consider these questions: Did they develop an appreciation for God's animals? What did they say or do to demonstrate their understanding that animals need kindness and care? What more could be done in the weeks ahead to encourage a sense of wonder at God's work in the world?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on the creation of all human beings. Think about the unique gifts of each child in the group. Be prepared to recognize those gifts in some way. Be thankful to God for your gifts as well.

CREATION

SESSION 7

GOD CREATED HUMAN BEINGS

FOCUS

The focus for this session will be on the second part of *Genesis 1:24-31*. God made human beings. Every person is a unique creature of God. The children should be able to name ways in which they are special in the eyes of God. They will also be able to name ways in which people are different from all the rest of creation; they can talk, sing, pray, love, and care for one another.

GETTING READY

Reflect on the uniqueness of all people, especially the children in the group. In this session we focus on God's creation of human beings as told in *Genesis 1: 26-31*. God was pleased with all that was created. God said, "Let us make humankind in our image ... and let him have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the cattle and all the wild animals, and creeping things of the earth."

"So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

Being created in the image of God is not the same as being the mirror image of another person. It is in God's divine image that we are created. Perhaps it is through our ability to talk, reason, and live a moral life that we are most like God. It is also significant that in this Creation story male and female are created at the same time.

Many children's Bibles drop this part of the first story and insert the story of Adam and Eve. The stories are different and have different purposes. We will focus on God's work as the Creator.

O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Prayer for the Diversity of Races and Cultures
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 840

TEACHING TIP

Young children work at different levels of ability and at differing rates of speed. Rarely will all the children in the class be working on exactly the same thing at the same time. Providing alternative activities such as books to look at, puzzles to solve, or coloring projects, will help to keep all the children involved in the learning process.

GATHERING

As the children arrive, present each one with a construction paper button that says, "I'M SPECIAL, GOD LOVES ME." (Attach the buttons to children's clothing with safety pins or masking tape.)

Invite the group to gather around the "Water, Sky, and Earth" poster from the Teacher's Packet. Add the picture of people. Talk about all the different kinds of people in the world (of many different ages, speaking many languages, etc.). Describe how all human beings are very special to God the Creator who loves them every one.

When all have arrived, say together:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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 *Genesis 1:27*:

"So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

- Today is still the sixth day of Creation. God has created all the animals and saw that it was good.
- Then God decided to make human beings, boys and girls, men and women, just like you and me.
- God said the humans are to care for all the animals, fish, and birds.
- God blessed all the people he created and said, "Be fruitful and multiply." God wanted the people to follow God and do God's will on earth.
- God told the people to care for the animals and the plants. God said, "I have given you all the plants with seeds and fruits so there will be

food.” There will be enough food for everything that breathes.

- God saw all that he had made and it was good.

(The children can read more about this with their families at home in *A Song of Creation*.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Handprint Pictures

Set up an area for painting. Spread smoothly thinned finger-paint over a large sheet of glazed paper. Do this for each color used. These will be the “stamp pads.” Give the children sheets of white paper, and help them to place their hands in the finger-paint and then on the paper. The children may do one print of each hand in one or more colors, or they may choose to do more than one print of the same hand.

Be sure to label the prints with the children’s names as they finish. Clean-up materials should be close by for easy removal of the paint. After the prints have dried, point out how each one is different and special, just as each child is different and special.

Option 2. Crowd Mural

Make a “crowd mural.” Tape a very large piece of butcher paper or craft paper onto a wall or a large table. Prepare some templates of heads of different sizes. Use the templates to fill the mural with a crowd of blank heads of different sizes and colors. Invite the children to draw faces on the heads. Ask them to tell what might be special about each of the persons they make.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

For this game the children will sit in a circle with the teacher. Ask one child to sit with his/her eyes covered by the teacher’s hand. Sing or say the following rhyme to the tune of “Frère Jacques”:

I am special. I am special.
God made me. God made me.
Someone special is missing.
Someone special is missing.
Who can it be? Who can it be?

While the children are singing, the teacher beckons another child to move out of the circle and stand behind the teacher. At the end of the verse, the teacher uncovers the first child’s eyes and gives that child three chances to say who has left the circle.

The child who left the circle then takes a place by the teacher, and the game continues.

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Growing up is part of God's plan for us. Invite a parent and small baby to visit the class. Help the children to touch the baby gently and to sing or talk to him/her. Some of the children may have baby brothers and sisters at home and will wish to tell about them.

Ask the children to think about what it is like to be a baby; how the baby will look when grown-up; what kinds of things the baby will like to do. Ask: What will the baby have to learn in order to be just like you (a three-, four-, or five-year-old)?

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Ask the children to think about what they look like. Ask if anyone else looks exactly like them. Ask how they are the same as others and how they are different from others. Wonder about all the people in the world. Does God know every one of them?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

The children have had the opportunity to experience several hymns and other songs or poems. Ask them to select their favorite and sing or say the words while doing the kinds of the motions they have learned. Close this time with the refrain from "All Things Bright and Beautiful" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 405; *We Sing of God*, 68).

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

The focus for this conversation time is "I am special, and God loves me." Recognize each child as "special," with specific characteristics accepted and praised. Invite children to share their comments, descriptions, and assessments of their own uniqueness. Be aware that because children are tied to physical and observable characteristics, the comments will likely be limited to these.

The teacher's comments should broaden the children's views by providing more subtle, intangible concepts: kindness, friendliness, thoughtfulness, enthusiasm, and the ability to think and feel.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 7 contains a picture of children, a prayer, 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

As a concluding activity, gather the children together for prayer. Change the first line of the familiar ritual:

God, we thank you for all people,
for our families, and friends.
(Pray for the needs of the children.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

This class session was designed to celebrate the differences among people and to express God's love for each one of them. How did the children respond to one another? What is the evidence that they can be loving and caring?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is on God's day of rest. We are all busy people with lots to do. What does true rest in God mean for you?

CREATION

SESSION 8

GOD RESTED FROM THE WORK OF CREATING

FOCUS

The final day in the first *Genesis* story of Creation is devoted to God's rest (*Genesis 2:2*). The children will be able to contrast work and rest and to tell why both are important.

GETTING READY

On the seventh day of creation, the Bible tells us that God rested. The establishment of this day (Sabbath) is one of the reasons, according to biblical scholars that this story comes first. God's day of rest underscores our own need for rest from work. The Sabbath in the Hebrew tradition was Saturday. For Christians it became Sunday.

But the work of creating the world did not end on the seventh day. God is still making all things new.

It is important for young children to understand our need for work and play and for a time of rest. It is also important for them to know that the seventh day is dedicated to God. Therefore we worship on the seventh day.

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray you, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

A Prayer for Quiet Confidence

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 832

TEACHING TIP

For young children, the concept of work is integrated into their concept of play. Indeed, their play is their work. Allow opportunities for expressions of play as work, in this and other class times. Teachers should value the children's play as an essential aspect of their learning.

GATHERING

As the children arrive, invite them to look at the pictures of the Creation story from the sequence cards found in the Teacher's Packet, Poster No. 5.

Talk with them about the story and help them to remember some of the topics from the previous sessions. Fill in information for anyone who may have been absent during preceding weeks. Allow the children to look at the pictures in any order they wish and to rearrange them. (Laminating the pictures will give them longevity.)

When everyone has arrived, teachers and children gather and say:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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 *Genesis 2:3*:

“So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

The children respond: Thanks be to God.

Retell the Creation story using the sequence cards, in the Teacher’s Packet, as references.

- God had worked hard to create all of the things of the earth.
- God saw everything he had made and it was very good.
- The heavens and the earth were finished. All of the creatures of the earth were made.
- On the seventh day God finished all the work he had done and rested from all the work of creating.
- God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.

(The children can read the story of Creation with their families at home in *A Song Of Creation*.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Creation Clothesline

Hang a clothesline at a level where all the children can see, or somewhere where it will be seen by the whole congregation. Clip to the line various symbols and words indicating the order of creation.

Give the children a variety of art materials to make something special of their own. When they are finished, hang their creations on an appropriate section of the clothesline or in sections of their choice. Preschool children will not necessarily have a plan for their work. Accept what they offer,

asking them to tell about their art themselves. They may change their minds often as they describe what they made.

Option 2. Quiet Pictures

Play soft, restful music for the children as paper and crayons are distributed. When everyone has the materials, invite the children to create the most restful picture they can as they listen to the music. Talk with the children about moving the crayons slowly as the music moves slowly.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Play a game called “Guess What’s Missing?” Using the sequence cards from Poster No.5 in the Teachers Packet, place them on a chalk or bulletin board ledge, or ask individual children to hold the cards. The other children should cover their eyes while the teacher removes a picture or asks one child to sit down. The children can then guess which one is missing. Repeat the game several times so that all children who wish have an opportunity to participate.

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Focus on the quiet and rest following times of work.

Ask the children to role-play a puppy or kitten who is playing in the yard, then gets very tired and lies down to rest. Repeat this activity one or two times.

Invite each child to choose a partner and to help that person pretend to take a nap. Some suggestions might be singing a lullaby, telling a story, or giving a gentle back rub. After a few minutes, reverse the roles.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Play some quiet music and dim the lights. The children can share their favorite lullabies. One or more children may sing several of these. Wonder about rest and sleep with the children.

I wonder what makes a dream.

I wonder where our dreams go when we are awake.

I wonder what animals and birds dream about.

What would the world be like if everyone slept at the same time? If no one ever slept?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

The emphasis for the music time should be on restfulness. The hymns selected for this unit, “All Things Bright and Beautiful” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 405; *We Sing of God*, 68), or the “Dakota Hymn” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 385; *We Sing of God*, 63), should be sung in quiet tones. Teachers can talk with children about lullabies. In keeping with the restful theme, movements that are gentle and quiet (such as slow arm and head motions) may accompany the singing of the hymns.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

The central focus of the discussion should be on work followed by rest. If God rested after creating the world, then rest must be very important.

First, ask the children to share times when they work. What kinds of work do they do? What are some other kinds of work people do?

Turn next to the concept of rest (naps, sleep at nighttime, and at times when we are sick, etc). Discuss with the children how they feel after they have had naps or in the morning when they awaken. Allow for differences in waking behavior to be shared.

Invite the children to share “going-to-bed” activities. Do they read stories, listen to music, play a favorite game, and/or say their prayers? Encourage the children to say a prayer before going to bed each night. Share prayers that they might wish to say. These prayers should focus on being thankful to God, and asking God’s blessing on others.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 8 is a picture of a child asleep holding a teddy bear, 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 in a circle. Change the first line of the closing prayer:

God, we thank you for work and for rest,
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for the needs of the children.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in the circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

This session of the unit allowed the children an opportunity to think about both work and rest. Did they exhibit an interest in the kinds of work people do? Was the concept of resting a pleasant idea for them? In what ways did the children differ in their abilities to do the suggested activities?

LOOKING AHEAD

The final session of this unit has been prepared for use on All Saints' Sunday. Schedule it on the Sunday before or the Sunday after if church school is not held on the feast day. Think about all the people in your life who have influenced your faith.

CREATION

SESSION 9

THE CHURCH'S PEOPLE: SAINTS OF GOD

FOCUS

This session has been prepared for use on All Saints' Sunday. The children should be able to say that all the people who have worshiped and loved God are called "saints," and they should be able to name some of the saints honored in the Church.

GETTING READY

All Saints' Day is one of the seven principal feasts of the Church. It takes precedence over any other day or observance, and it may be observed on the Sunday following as well as on the fixed date of November 1.

The theme of the day is the remembrance of the faithful people in all generations who are members of the Body of Christ, now and in years past.

Saints are those we learn about in the Scriptures as well as those people who have devoted their life to God throughout history. They are people in every walk of life today who seek to do Christ's will in their lives. All baptized people are children of God who are honored at this feast.

Preschool and kindergarten children can enter into the spirit of celebrating the fact that they, with the members of their families and their congregation, all "belong together" as "saints."

The communion of saints transcends both time and space. The celebration of All Saints' Day is a time to offer up the names of those living and dead who have loved God with all their hearts, minds, strength, and souls.

Almighty God, by your Holy Spirit you have made us one with your saints in heaven and on earth: Grant that in our earthly pilgrimage we may always be supported by this fellowship of love and prayer, and know ourselves to be surrounded by their witness to your power and mercy. We ask this for the sake of Jesus Christ, in whom all our intercessions are acceptable through the Spirit, and who lives and reigns for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect: Of a Saint

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 250

TEACHING TIP

In this as in other sessions, the telling of the story is central. Children enjoy listening to someone telling a story. In order to enhance this experience, teachers are reminded of the following: Read the story to yourself several times. Practice telling it while watching in a mirror for appropriate places to gesture or change facial expression. While telling the story to the children, relax, maintain eye contact, and enjoy it.

GATHERING

Ahead of time, cut out simple “people” figures from white construction paper. As the children arrive, greet them one by one with the news that this is All Saints’ Sunday. Give them one of the figures and print the name of the child on it. Say, “We’re naming all these saints who are here today.” Allow the children to decorate their figure.

When all are present, say:

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. Amen.

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Gather the group in a circle, open the Prayer Book, and show the children *Psalm 149* (BCP, 807). Read aloud *v. 1*:

“Hallelujah! Sing to the Lord a new song; sing his praise in the congregation of the faithful.”

Use the following outline in speaking simply about All Saints’ Day:

- This is a day when we remember all the people who have loved and worshiped God. In all Episcopal churches, we have a special celebration for remembering that we all belong to one another, like one big, big family.
- The saints of God include ourselves and our friends in this church, our parents and their friends, grandparents and their friends, great-grandparents and their friends . . . and on and on as far back as people have known about God and God’s Son, Jesus. Thousands and millions of people have been saints of God.
- Many churches are named for saints of long ago. Refer to your own or other churches bearing the name(s) of saints.
- Saints that we know about are Saint Nicholas who loved and cared for children, and St. Francis who loved birds and animals. One day St. Francis was walking in the forest. He stopped by a tree with lots of birds. He began to tell the birds about God and Jesus. The birds stopped singing and listened until St. Francis had finished his story. Then the birds flew

away.

CREATING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Option 1. Paper Saints' Boutonnieres

Ahead of time, cut rectangles of red construction paper approximately two-by-four inches in size. Print each class member's name on one of these at the right. On the left, make a small slit in the paper.

Prepare circles of white tissue paper, approximately four inches in diameter. Fold each circle in half, grasp it tightly at the middle of the fold, and gather it up to form a flower shape.

Work with the children to insert the paper flowers into the slits on their nametags, taping at the back. Use safety pins or masking tape loops to attach the boutonnieres to lapels, shirts, or dresses.

Option 2. Saints' Finger Paintings

Give each child a sheet of paper for finger-painting, and a generous glob of paint. Demonstrate how to make a small saint's face, and ask the children to make a large number of saints' faces—as many as they can get on the sheet. Hang the paintings to dry; they can be sent home the following week.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Invite the children to make a "Circle of Saints." The teacher says, "I'm a saint, _____ (*call the name of a child in the class and invite him/her to take your hand*), you're a saint, and we are saints together." The child calls the name of another class member, takes his/her hand, and the three circle members repeat the words (above). Continue until everyone in the class is joined in a circle. If the class is large, two circles can be forming simultaneously with teachers, then joined at the end into a full chorus for the chant.

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

If possible, take a walking tour to the nave of the church to see where all the living saints take their places to worship God. If the windows include representations of the Church's saints, show one or more of these to the children.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wonder about all the saints of God all over the world, using statements such as the following to spark comments from the children:

I wonder how many saints there have been.

I wonder what people remember about the saints who lived long ago.

Saints of God are in every church in the whole world. I wonder how many churches there are.

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the hymn, “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 293; *We Sing of God*, 49). The tune is especially appealing to young children even if they find it difficult to join in all the words. Sing the first stanza several times. You may want to experiment with substitutes for “doctor,” “queen,” and “shepherdess” such as fireman, lawyer (two syllables), coach, nurse (one syllable), astronaut, minister (three syllables). Use the tape *Children Sing!*

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

All God’s people are saints if they do what God wants them to do. What are some of the things God asks us to do? Who are the people who do follow God’s law? Do you know any of them? Are you a saint?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 9 contains a picture of a church and people, a stanza from “I Sing a Song of the Saints of God,” and a note to parents. Remind the children that they now have nine cards. They can tell the story of Creation to themselves and their families. Ask them to keep the cards in a safe place.

SAYING GOODBYE

Gather the children for the closing prayer (adding new lines):

God, thank you for making us saints in your Church.

Thank you for our families and friends,

(Pray for the needs of the children.)

Be with us as we go,

And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle, saying:

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

One of the aims of the *Episcopal Children's Curriculum*, is to help the children feel that they belong to the Church, along with people of all ages. To what degree is this already the case for the class? This All Saints' session would be a good time to look for evidence of the children's sense of "belonging."

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 II. JESUS, SON OF GOD

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The early sessions of this unit are designed to coincide with the Church's observance of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. We move from looking at our living God, who created everything and who made us, to studying the One who becomes incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth. The remaining sessions are stories from the ministry of Jesus, including his selection of the twelve disciples and stories of his deeds of power. The stories speak with their own authentic power and offer children special opportunities to wonder about the person of Jesus.

In this unit for preschool- and kindergarten-age children, we look at We encourage you to talk about the lessons with your child. Do this by reading together the children's book, *At the Manger*, follows the first six sessions about the birth of Jesus and his boyhood.

Scripture passages and excerpts from *The Book of Common Prayer* that the children 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 8 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 Had a Family” tells the story of how Mary heard that Jesus would be her son from Gabriel, one of God's angels. Children will talk about their family and the things they do together. (*Luke 1:31*)

Session 2: “Mary Is the Mother of Jesus” describes how Mary waited expectantly for Jesus to be born. The children will talk about ways a mother prepares for a baby's birth and how Mary felt as she waited. (*Luke 1:46-47*)

Session 3: “Joseph Waited for Jesus” tells how Joseph did what God wanted him to do by taking care of Mary and the baby Jesus. The children will wonder how Joseph took care of Mary and helped her prepare to have her baby. (*Matthew 1:24*)

Session 4: “Jesus Was Born in a Stable” is the story of how Jesus was born in Bethlehem in a stable because the inn was full. The terms stable, manger, inn, and swaddling cloths will be introduced. (*Luke 2:7*)

Session 5: “The Wise Men Knew Jesus Was Special” describes how the Wise Men recognized Jesus as a special child of God. Mary and Joseph were amazed. (*Matthew 2:9b*)

Session 6: “Jesus Grew Up” tells how Jesus lived with Mary and Joseph and grew up doing the things children enjoy. When he was twelve years old, he went with his family on a trip to Jerusalem and visited the temple. (*Luke 2:42*)

Session 7: “Jesus Chose Disciples” tells the story of how Jesus chose twelve friends, called disciples, to be with him. The children will talk about what these friends of Jesus were like. (*Mark 3:13-14a*)

Session 8: “Jesus Calmed the Storm” tells the story of how Jesus made the wind and the sea be quiet so the disciples would not be frightened. We will explore how to trust in Jesus who helps us when we are afraid. (*Mark 4:39b*)

Session 9: “Jesus Fed the Five Thousand” introduces the idea of sharing what we have with others. After Jesus blessed five loaves and two fish, there was enough food to feed over five thousand people. (*Matthew 14:19*)

Yours in Christ,
Church School Teachers

JESUS, SON OF GOD

SESSION 1

JESUS HAD A FAMILY

FOCUS

God wanted Jesus to be born into a family. Mary heard this good news from Gabriel, one of God's angels. The children can describe things they do as families, and how they pray for, care for, and love one another. The children should be able to tell in their own words what the angel said to Mary (*Luke 1:26-38*, especially v.31).

GETTING READY

Advent is the beginning of the Church year. It is the season that calls us to begin our preparations for Christmas. Only the preparations are not buying presents, having parties, and preparing for huge feasts as much of the world does. Advent calls us to quiet reflection, to prepare our hearts for the coming of the baby Jesus again at Christmas and for the coming of Christ at the end of time.

Young children, however, are developmentally unable to focus on the Second Coming of Christ and are totally centered on the activities surrounding Christmas. Our job as teachers is to help them focus on the true meaning of Christmas—the story of the birth of the baby Jesus. All the activities in the first five sessions of this unit are designed to help children know the Nativity story.

The first session tells of the Annunciation, the visit of the angel Gabriel to Mary to announce the coming birth of Jesus. The story from *Luke* tells of a young girl, about 13 years old, who is engaged to a man named Joseph. Mary lived in Nazareth and had been faithful to God all her life. She quickly said yes to the angel's request of her. Mary and Joseph would be the earthly parents of God's only Son.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, who sets the solitary in families: We commend to your continual care the homes in which people dwell. Put far from them, we pray, every root of bitterness, the desire for vainglory, and the pride of life. Fill them with faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, and godliness. Knit together in constant affection those who, in holy wedlock, have been made one flesh. Turn the hearts of the parents to the children, and the hearts of the children to the parents; and so enkindle fervent charity among us all, that we may

evermore be kindly affectioned one to another; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For Families
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 828

TEACHING TIP

Children belong to different kinds of families (single parent, grandparents, blended families, or other living arrangements). In talking about families with children, teachers need to be accepting of each one. The important idea to stress is that we are all part of God's family, and fully accepted. Teaching activities and discussion should include opportunities for every child to participate without feeling different.

GATHERING

Begin each session during the four Sundays of Advent with an activity 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 all these preparations.

Light one candle. (Extinguish the candle when the activity is concluded. The candle should be re-lit just before the Saying Goodbye activity.)

Alternative activities such as a Nativity set that the children can move around to tell the story would be helpful.

When everyone is present, gather around the Advent wreath and light the first candle. Then say:

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 362

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 *Luke 1:31*:

“ . . . you will . . . bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

In your own words, tell the story of the angel Gabriel coming to Mary to give her the good news that she is going to have a very special baby boy named Jesus. The story in the *Gospel of Luke* is in the form of a conversation between Gabriel and Mary.

- God wanted Jesus to be born into a family. God chose Mary to be the baby's mother and sent the angel Gabriel to tell her the wonderful thing that was about to happen.
- Mary was going about her daily chores, perhaps grinding some grain into flour, or mending some cloth. Suddenly out of nowhere an angel appeared before her.
- "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."
- Mary was very confused and wondered what this meant for her.
- The angel saw her confusion and fear and said, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God."
- Then the angel told her, "... you will have a baby. It will be a boy. You will name him Jesus. He will be the Son of God."
- Mary answered Gabriel, "Here I am the Lord's servant. I will do what God asks of me."

(The children can read the story of the birth of Jesus in the children's book *At the Manger* at home with their families).

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Stockings for Jesus

Many families hang stockings on Christmas Eve, usually one for each member of the family. This year, consider helping the children to prepare and hang a stocking for Jesus.

For each child provide a plain, two-sided stocking sewn from felt, cut from construction paper, or purchased ready-made. Gather varied collage materials, such as sequins, lace, glitter, and ribbons. Decorate the stockings for Jesus to be taken home and hung along with the family's. Introduce this stocking idea by explaining that during the season of Advent, family members can think of a gift they will give to Jesus, a deed, a promise, a task, or a commitment to pray—whatever they feel Jesus would like from them. The gift should be written or drawn on a piece of paper and put in the stocking for Jesus.

Option 2. Figures of the Angel Gabriel

Use white cardboard to make a few simple angel shapes: wings, heads, full figures, or heads with halos. (Patterns can be found in the Teacher's Packet, Poster No.11.) Cut out several of each shape ahead of time. Collect some angel collage material, such as silver and gold paper, cloth, ribbon, or string. Use some polyester batting or cotton balls to add dimension to the wings.

Children can decorate the angel figures. Punch a hole and insert a yarn loop in each angel so that children can hang their completed figures at home as reminders of the angel Gabriel's message to Mary.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing the following words to the tune of "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush":

We are all God's family, family, family.

We are all God's family, let us thank the Lord!

A relatively simple circle game can be played in a small, indoor space. Children hold hands and skip or dance around in a circle while singing. Larger spaces and outdoor areas allow for greater swinging motions and faster circling. If the group wishes, make up some verses including the children and their families. End each new verse with the words, "Let us thank the Lord."

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Set up a play area with a variety of puppets and dolls (children, parents, grandparents, and others). Make paper bag or sock face puppets to add to the collection. Put faces on the finger ends of gloves to make "families" of people. Form family groupings with the puppets, and act out stories such as the one about Mary and the angel or simple family events that could involve preparations for Christmas. Cardboard boxes can be small puppet theaters.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Angels come in all shapes and sizes. Angels are messengers from God. Display an angel figurine or a picture of an angel. Wonder:

Why God made angels? Where angels live?

What messages angels might bring?

If you saw one, how would the angel look?

Why do we think about angels in Advent?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Teach the children the hymn, "Go Tell It on the Mountain." (*The Hymnal 1982*, 99; *We Sing of God*, 19). An Afro-American spiritual, this hymn is a joyful announcement of the miraculous event of Jesus' birth. Use the tape *Children Sing!* to introduce the music.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Talk with the children about what families do together. God gives us families so that we may love and care for one another. We pray and celebrate in our homes, thanking God for the coming of Jesus. The Church, too, is a family in which we love, care, pray, and celebrate.

Some ideas for conversation are:

How do people in families help and care for one another?

What do families do together?

What does your family enjoy doing?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 10 depicts the angel Gabriel, a Scripture verse, a poem, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, tell their families about the angel's message, and keep the card in a safe place.

SAYING GOODBYE

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

Thank you, God, for Jesus, Mary, and the angel Gabriel,
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for the concerns of the children.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Join hands in a circle to conclude, saying,
Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.
Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Take a few moments in a quiet place to review the session, recalling moments of personal contact with each child. What glimpses of family life or concepts of family did children share? Were there some common threads of understanding?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on the family of Jesus and his mother, Mary. How has this time of Advent been a time of preparation for you?

JESUS, SON OF GOD

SESSION 2

MARY IS THE MOTHER OF JESUS

FOCUS

Mary waited expectantly for Jesus to be born. The children should be able to describe ways a mother prepares for a baby's birth and to tell how they think Mary felt as she waited.

GETTING READY

In this session, the children will be able to think of the usual ways in which a mother prepares for a birth. As teachers, our preparation in this season of Advent includes a fresh awareness of Mary's unique mission as bearer of the Messiah. She waited in the knowledge that God was acting to redeem humanity.

Initially, Mary acted on the information given her by the angel Gabriel and went to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Elizabeth was an older woman who was not able to have children. A visit from the angel Gabriel announced the birth of Elizabeth's son John to her husband Zechariah. When Mary sees Elizabeth, she sings a song of joy that the church has named the Magnificat (Song of Mary).

My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;
for he has looked with favor on his lowly servant.
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

From The Song of Mary (Magnificat)
The Book of Common Prayer, pp. 91-92

TEACHING TIP

Children learn by taking on the identity of others and experiencing activities through dramatic play. Teachers can provide this opportunity for children with very simple props that can be stored in a box when not in use. Some items that could be included would be loose-fitting clothing such as that worn in biblical times: sandals, towels for head wear, cotton rope for use as belts or to secure head pieces

GATHERING

As the children arrive, invite them to draw pictures of their mothers or other family members. Gluing dark construction paper borders around a sheet of plain drawing paper can make simple “picture frames.” Provide crayons or markers. As pictures are completed, put them up where they can be seen by the group. Some children may want their mothers’ names written on their pictures.

Invite everyone to help place fresh greens around the Advent wreath. When everyone is present, gather around the Advent wreath and light two candles. Then say:

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 362

Extinguish the candles when the Gathering activity is concluded. The candles should be re-lit just before the Saying Goodbye activity.

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. Gather the group in a circle and show them where the passage is. Read *Luke 1:46-47*:

“And Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.’ “

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.
Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Begin the story by telling the children that Mary is very happy about the news that she will have a baby.

- The first thing she does is to go visit a family member to tell her about the news. Tell about Mary’s visit to Elizabeth and how happy Elizabeth was to see Mary.
- The other woman, Elizabeth, is going to have a baby, too. The angel Gabriel had told them that the baby would be named John.
- Both women are getting ready for their babies to be born.
- Include in the story the ways that mothers and fathers prepare for the birth of a baby. (The children may add some thoughts from their own experiences of baby brother’s and sister’s arrivals.)

CREATING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Option 1. Birth Announcements

One way parents prepare for the birth of a new baby is to design announcements. Fold 9x12 pieces of construction paper in half, and invite the children to decorate the outside with crayons. On the inside print the following:

Date of Birth (December 25)

Name (Jesus)

Place of Birth (Bethlehem)

Parents (Mary and Joseph)

Older five-year-olds may be able to fill in the information by copying it from a poster or chalkboard. Younger children will need to have the announcements filled in for them. They can decorate the announcements.

Option 2. Mother and Baby Pictures

Using a posterboard with “Mary Sang to God” printed in the middle, invite the children to choose pictures from magazines that depict any or all of the following: people singing, mothers and babies, families, children, baby items, and toys. The pictures can then be pasted around the words to form a montage.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Like all mothers, Mary would have thought about how she would hold and gently rock her baby. Sing the familiar nursery rhyme, “Rock-a-bye, Baby.” Then ask the children to join in the following motions to the rhyme:

Rock-a-bye, baby (*rock a baby in arms*)

In the tree tops (*standing, raise arms to be a tree*)

When the wind blows (*“trees” sway from side to side*)

The cradle will rock. (*rock cradle in arms*)

When the bough breaks, (*drop arms to side*)

The cradle will fall (*drop softly to the floor*)

And down will come baby,

Cradle and all.

Repeat as often as interest allows.

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Set up a small housekeeping area or corner. Use cardboard boxes for table, stove, cradle, or other household furnishings. Provide several dolls, diapers, bottles, and other infant items. Help the children, both boys and girls, practice caring for babies. Talk about how Mary and Joseph would help each other take care of the baby Jesus.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wonder with the children about new babies. What do new babies think about? What do mothers worry about for their babies? What do they dream about? Did Mary wonder about these things, too?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing the refrain from the hymn, “Go Tell It on the Mountain” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 99; *We Sing of God*, 19). If circumstances permit, encourage the children to shout out the good news of Jesus’ birth. Hand-clapping and skipping may be added to the singing. Use the tape *Children Sing!*

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Invite the children to think aloud about some of the things Mary and Joseph might have done to get ready for the baby Jesus. Mary may have made a baby’s blanket. Joseph, a carpenter, may have made a cradle for him.

Children enjoy talking about “a long time ago.” Encourage them to think about such questions as these: What kind of house might Mary and Joseph have lived in? What would a baby’s cradle have looked like in their house? What are some of the things babies have now that Jesus did not have?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 11 includes a picture of Mary, 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

Relight the candles on the Advent wreath. Gather around the wreath and pray.

Thank you, God, for Jesus' mother, Mary,
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for the needs of the children.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Extinguish the candles on the Advent wreath. Hold hands in a circle and say:

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

In what ways are the children beginning to understand the meaning of the birth of Jesus? How do they feel about their own families?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on Joseph's role as caregiver for both Mary and Jesus. Think about expectant fathers and how their expectations have changed over time.

JESUS, SON OF GOD

SESSION 3

JOSEPH WAITED FOR JESUS

FOCUS

Joseph did what God wanted him to do by taking care of Mary and the baby Jesus. The children should be able to tell ways Joseph might have cared for Mary and helped her prepare to have her baby.

GETTING READY

This session will be about the role of Joseph as faithful husband to Mary and the earthly father of the infant Jesus. *Matthew 1:18-25* tells the story of the angel Gabriel's visit to Joseph in a dream. The story of the birth of Jesus is found in only two of the four Gospels, *Matthew* and *Luke*. Most Christmas stories combine the two accounts, but they are two stories with two different endings.

Reading the stories separately and then comparing them helps us to understand more about the birth of Jesus. The story is probably more complex than these two versions would suggest.

For young children we only need to share from this story that Joseph was told by the angel that he should marry Mary and take care of her and her baby. The angel also told Joseph that the baby was to be named Jesus.

In Luke's version of the story Mary and Joseph travel to Bethlehem to be counted. Matthew's version only tells us that they were in Bethlehem when the Wise Men arrived.

O God, who from the family of your servant David raised up Joseph to be the guardian of your incarnate Son and the spouse of his virgin mother: Give us grace to imitate his uprightness of life and his obedience to your commands; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect for Saint Joseph

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 239

TEACHING TIP

Time is an elusive, abstract concept for young children who experience time in a general way—as right now, later, or before. “Once upon a time” or

“Long, long, ago” are familiar beginnings for stories and are consistent with young children’s simplistic understanding of time. It is not until late elementary age that children understand historical and contemporary dimensions of time, and a sequence of events in relation to time.

GATHERING

As the children arrive, direct their attention to a picture of Mary, Joseph, and the donkey from the Teacher’s Packet, Poster No. 6. They are traveling to the town of Bethlehem where Jesus would be born. Using a very long piece of paper from a roll, draw a road from one end to the other. The children can help by drawing rocks and plants along the way. Place the picture of Mary, Joseph, and the donkey at one end of the completed road. At the other end, draw the outlines of buildings or paste a picture of Bethlehem. Add the word “Bethlehem.”

When everyone is present, put fresh greens around the candles of the Advent wreath. Light three candles and say:

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 362

Extinguish the candles when the Gathering activity is concluded. The candles should be relit just before the Saying Goodbye.

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 these words from *Matthew 1:24*:

“... Joseph ... did as the angel of the Lord commanded him.”

Conclude with the words: The word of the Lord.
Children respond: Thanks be to God.

In your own words tell the story of the angel Gabriel’s visit to Mary.

- Continue the story with a description of the angel’s visit to Joseph (*Matthew 1:24*).
- Describe Joseph and his work as a carpenter. (Name the things that Joseph might have done to prepare for the birth of the baby boy, such as build a cradle for the baby or make some toys.)
- Mary and Joseph set out on a long journey to Bethlehem from their home in Nazareth. They are going to Bethlehem to be counted because

Joseph is of the house of David, the king, who was also born in Bethlehem.

(Encourage the children to read about the birth of the baby Jesus, at home with their families, in the children's book *At the Manger*.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Preparing a Place for a Baby

Babies are so little when they are born that they need special places to sleep in order to be warm and safe.

Give each child a small empty container (jewelry box or margarine tub), and a small baby figure. Making these figures can be part of the project, or they can be made ahead of time. (Use a baby cutout, purchase a small plastic baby, or use soft material or cotton to create a baby figure.)

To decorate the outside of the container that will hold the baby figure, provide the children with a variety of coarse fabrics or natural materials. Soft fabrics and other materials may be used to line the inside of the container. As the children work, talk with them about how Mary and Joseph found and prepared a place in Bethlehem for the baby Jesus.

Option 2. Walking to Bethlehem

Invite the children to draw pictures of Mary and Joseph on the journey to Bethlehem. Use crayons and brown paper as a background.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Play "Follow the Leader." Choose one child to be Joseph (a headpiece and staff would add to the fun). "Joseph" will then lead the rest of the children over the hills, down into the valley, through the streams, and around the huge rocks – avoiding other obstacles on the way to Bethlehem. Children can take turns being the leader.

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Joseph is traditionally shown walking, while Mary rode the donkey on their journey to Bethlehem. It was a long way to walk. Ask the children to trace their shoes on brown paper and cut them out. Paste or tape the shoes around the room to represent a long journey by foot.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wonder about waiting and time. How long is a minute?

How long does it take to blink your eye? How long will it be till your next birthday? How long does it take for the sun to come up? to go down in the evening?

A minute for children can seem like an hour. Accept all answers as reflections of their concept of time (and waiting in Advent).

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing the refrain from the hymn, “Go Tell It on the Mountain.” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 99; *We Sing of God*, 19). Use rhythm instruments or hand clapping to accompany the singing.

Christmas carols are not sung in the Church’s liturgy until Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. In order to help children learn carols so that they will be able to join in singing them at the appropriate time, practice them in the church school. This session would be a good time to introduce children to the hymn, “O Little Town of Bethlehem” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 78, 79). Use the first stanza. Say the words with the children. Sing or play the tape *Children Sing!*

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Explore the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem.

Ask: How many days do you think they traveled? What was it like to ride a donkey? Where would they have slept at night? What might they have had to eat along the way? What was the longest trip you ever took? How did you travel? Where did you sleep and eat?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 12 has a picture of Mary and Joseph, 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

Relight the three candles on the Advent wreath for the closing time. Gather around the wreath and say:

God, thank you Mary and Joseph and Jesus,
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for any concerns the children may have.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

In reviewing this session, be aware of responses from the children that tend to reflect stereotypes of male and female roles. Were the girls reluctant to participate in carpentry? Were the boys hesitant to make a bed for the baby? How could you help both boys and girls understand that each person, regardless of gender, can enjoy many different kinds of activities?

LOOKING AHEAD

Session 4 tells the Christmas story. Many of the children may be hearing it for the first time. Recall one of your own early Christmases. What made the Christmas story special to you?

JESUS, SON OF GOD

SESSION 4

JESUS WAS BORN IN A STABLE

FOCUS

Jesus was born in Bethlehem in a stable because the inn was full. The children should be able to describe stable, manger, inn, and swaddling cloths.

GETTING READY

Teachers may use this session on the last Sunday of Advent rather than on Christmas Day. The focus is on the birth of the Christ Child, laid in a crib and wrapped in swaddling cloths prepared by his mother. The stories found in *Luke* and *Matthew* tell us it is a birth that does not go unnoticed. The heavens sing for joy at the sight! God sends angels to proclaim the news to shepherds and sets a star high in the sky to ensure that others may find the baby and worship him.

God wants this child to be the light of the whole world. After hearing the song of the angels and seeing the signs in the sky, the witnesses became God's messengers to all the people they met. We, too, are called to be messengers to the world and declare that Jesus is born. We share the true meaning of this holiest of nights.

O God, you make us glad by the yearly festival of the birth of your only Son Jesus Christ: Grant that we, who joyfully receive him as our Redeemer, may with sure confidence behold him when he comes to be our Judge; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

Collect for The Nativity of Our Lord: Christmas Day
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 212

TEACHING TIP

Church school classes are often suspended for the Sunday(s) that follow Christmas. Teachers may wish to maintain contact with their students during this holiday time by sending letters or cards to the children. A letter might include a prayer, provide a puzzle, and/or suggest a game or other activity a young child might enjoy.

GATHERING

As the children arrive, invite them to help set up a Nativity scene (crèche). Using three-dimensional figures and a stable, decide as a group how to arrange the people and animals in the scene, naming each one as it is put in place.

Renew the greens around the Advent wreath and light four candles.

When everyone is present, gather around the Advent wreath and light the first candle. Then say:

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 362

If your Advent wreath has a fifth, white Christ Candle, talk about how that candle is to be lit on Christmas Day.

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 *Luke 2:7*:

“And (Mary) gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell in your own words the wonderful story of the birth of Jesus. Use the following outline:

- Mary was going to have a baby. He would be the Son of God. His name would be Jesus.
- Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem to be registered—to have their names written down to be counted by the Roman government.
- They arrived in Bethlehem at night and looked for a place to sleep.
- All the inns and hotels, places for people to spend the night, were filled up. There was no room for them at the inn.
- One innkeeper gave them a stable, a place for animals to spend the night.
- That night the baby was to be born. Mary wrapped the baby in clean cloths and put him to sleep in a manger, which is used to feed the animals.
- The angels told the shepherds to come and see the baby because he was the Son of God.

(The children can read this story with their families in *At the Manger*.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Manger Scenes

Before class, glue five popsicle sticks in the shape of a stable on a piece of white construction paper for each child. (Three sticks for a U-shape to represent the floor and two walls; the other two sticks form a gabled roof.) After the glue has dried, trim the paper to the shape of the stable. Provide markers, crayons, or paint sticks for children to draw a manger scene. They may add Mary, Joseph, the baby Jesus, and any other figures they wish. Punch a hole and put a string loop on each manger so it can be hung at home. Stars for the top of the manger can be purchased ready-made or created from shiny yellow paper, silver foil, or plain paper sprinkled with glitter.

Option 2. Christmas Bells

Christmas is a beautiful time. Special efforts are made to plan liturgies, decorate churches, and be with friends and relatives. Children can make a Christmas bell to celebrate. Use large, unwaxed paper cups to serve as bells. Hang a small jingle bell inside, pulling the string through to the outside end of the cup to form a loop for hanging. Children can decorate the bells. Glue pieces of velvet, greens, glitter, sequins, rickrack, or tinsel onto the cups. Try to find some festive and special materials for the bells.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Play “Knock, knock, who’s here for Christmas?” The children sit in a circle on the floor or in chairs. One child sits in the middle of the circle. Blindfold the child in the middle. Without saying anything, point to another child who will go to knock on the door. The child goes to the middle, knocks on the chair or floor, and says, “Knock, knock.” The blindfolded child says, “Who is knocking at Christmas time?” The response is, “I am knocking. Who am I?” The blindfolded child tries to guess who. If children do not want to be blindfolded, arrange the group so that one child can sit with his/her back to the group and cannot see who’s knocking.

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Give everyone a chance to be one of the major characters in the Christmas

story. A few pieces of colored cloth for head coverings would be enough to provide costumes for the players. A baby doll can be Jesus. Use lengths of cloth to wrap the doll. Give everyone a chance to wrap the baby Jesus. Use a small box for the manger.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wonder about the night Jesus was born.
Use the following “I wonder. . .” statements:
I wonder what it was like on that first Christmas Day?
I wonder how the air felt? I wonder what it smelled like?
I wonder if the angels talked?
I wonder if the animals saw Jesus?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Lead the children in a march with the song, “Go Tell It on the Mountain” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 99; *We Sing of God*, 19). Sing the verses with the children. Find a spot in the room (or weather permitting, outdoors) for a “mountain.” Let the children take turns singing from the pretend-mountain.

Sing “Away in a Manger” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 101; *We Sing of God*, 20) like a lullaby.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Christmas is very special for children. Consider asking the following questions:

What does Christmas feel like? When do you feel very happy, sad, or tired?

What would you like to do most on Christmas Day?

What would you tell the baby Jesus about Christmas?

If you could give a gift to the baby, what would it be?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 13 has the manger scene on the front and a verse of “Away in a Manger.” Remind the children to take the card home, share the Christmas story with their families, and keep it in a safe place.

SAYING GOODBYE

Relight the four candles on the Advent wreath, and gather the children around it. Say the closing prayer.

God, thank you for the birth of Jesus,
(Pray for the needs of the children.)
And for our families and friends.
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

From your observations, how do the children understand and relate to the baby Jesus? Consider with care how our teaching about the baby Jesus in these early years of the children's lives will leave room for them to wonder and grow in their faith as they develop in other ways.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is about the coming of the Wise Men on the Feast of the Epiphany. Now that Christmas is over, what memories will help you to grow in your faith?

JESUS, SON OF GOD

SESSION 5

THE WISE MEN KNEW JESUS WAS SPECIAL

FOCUS

The Wise Men recognized Jesus as a special child of God. Mary and Joseph were amazed. The children should be able to tell the story of the visit of the Wise Men according to *Matthew 2:1-12*.

GETTING READY

In *Matthew's* version of the story of Jesus' birth, the Wise Men from the East follow a star that has special importance to them. It tells them of the birth of new king. They set out on a long journey to find the new king and bring gifts. On the way they get lost and stop in Jerusalem to ask directions of King Herod. The chief priests and scribes tell the king and the Wise Men that the ancient scrolls and prophecy say the baby will be born in Bethlehem.

The Wise Men travel to Bethlehem, again following the star that stops over the place where Jesus is. There they find Mary, Joseph, and the baby. They bring gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

This visit by the Wise Men does not occur on the night of Jesus' birth but may have happened as many as two or three years later. The Church celebrates the visit of the Wise Men on the Feast of the Epiphany, twelve days after Christmas.

Many carols we associate with Christmas are appropriate for singing on Epiphany. "We Three Kings" was written to celebrate this feast day. "Angels from the Realms of Glory," "The First Nowell," "In the Bleak Midwinter," and "What Child Is This?" include references to the Wise Men.

O God, by the leading of a star you manifested your only Son to the peoples of the earth: Lead us, who know you now by faith, to your presence, where we may see your glory face to face; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen*.

Collect for The Epiphany
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 214

TEACHING TIP

Epiphany is often the last time the infant Jesus is mentioned. It is very difficult for young children to make the transition from the infant to the adult Jesus. Help them by talking about the fact that all babies grow up to be big boys and girls and men and women. Jesus also grew up over many years just as they have grown and will continue to grow.

GATHERING

As the children arrive, give each child a star to wear either as a name tag or affixed to a headband. Adjust the circumference of each child's headband with a paper clip. Use all the figures in the Nativity scene. Place the three king figures at a distance, and let children take turns moving them to join Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus. Provide glitter pens, stickers, and foil stars to decorate the star.

When everyone is present, gather around the Advent wreath, and say:

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 362

Extinguish the candle when the Gathering activity is concluded unless it can be placed in a protected place in the classroom.

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 *Matthew 2:9b*:

“...and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.
Children respond: Thanks be to God.

In your own words tell the story of the Wise Men:

- They saw the star in the East.
- They stopped in Jerusalem to visit with Herod.
- They traveled to Bethlehem to visit the baby Jesus and give him three gifts.
- Jesus was still a baby when the Wise Men visited him.
- (Look at the text of “We Three Kings of Orient Are” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 128; *We Sing of God*, 27). Many of the details described in this text are traditional embellishments of the story. Three small, specially wrapped

boxes could be used to add drama to the telling of the story.)
(The children can read about the Wise Men and their gifts, at home with their families, in the children's book, *At the Manger*.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Bethlehem Star Pictures

Give the children pieces of deep blue construction paper to serve as a background. Each child can make one special, large star to go in the center of the paper. Provide shiny gold foil paper, bright yellow construction paper, gold ribbons, and glitter. Help younger children with cutting. Glue the special large stars in place.

Option 2. Gifts for Jesus

The three gifts of the Wise Men (gold, frankincense, and myrrh) are symbolic offerings. Give each child three pieces of paper on which to draw gifts that could be given to Jesus. Emphasize things they can do, say, or feel that are loving and caring. Place the gifts in the middle of a square of fabric or paper, gather the ends, and tie them together to make a pouch.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wrap a small box in gold foil paper. Gather the children in a circle, and cover the eyes of one child. The rest of the children pass the box from hand to hand, saying: "Wise man, wise man, where is your gift?" The box stops and is hidden in the hands of the child who has it on the word "gift." The child whose eyes were covered then guesses who has the gift. Repeat the game as long as the children are interested.

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Make or purchase enough paper crowns for all the children. In a corner of the room put the crowns, towels, spreads, or cloth for robes, clothespins, and cording. Encourage the children to dress as royalty. Wrap some boxes for gifts to carry. Encourage processions of wise people coming to visit a swaddled baby doll. Play music for the processions.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wonder about the Christmas star. I wonder where the star came from. What made the star appear? What music did Mary, Joseph, and Jesus hear on that special night? What music do stars hear? What does the music of angels sound like?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing carols with the children. Start and end with “Go Tell It on the Mountain” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 99; *We Sing of God*, 19). “Away in a Manger” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 101; *We Sing of God*, 20) and “We Three Kings of Orient Are” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 128; *We Sing of God*, 27) would be appropriate. The last tells the story of the three kings, and the refrain is easily learned by children, especially if all join in on the first line. Use the tape *Children Sing!*

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

The Wise Men followed the star and traveled a long way to present their gifts to Jesus. They would tell their story to many others.

Some possible questions to ask:

What did the Wise Men bring to Jesus?

How did the Wise Men travel?

What stories would they tell about Jesus after they went home?

If you had been with the Wise Men, what would you have remembered best?

Have you ever told someone about the birth of Jesus?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 14 includes a picture of three Wise Men, 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 lit for the closing. Gather the children and say this prayer. The first two lines are changed from previous weeks. Feel free to add anything that seems appropriate.

God, we thank you for Jesus' birth.

And for our families and friends.
(Pray for any concerns the children express.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

How have the children perceived the events and activities of this season? Children learn by imitation. Have we, as adults, conducted ourselves in a manner that reflects the true meaning of the Christmas story and the generosity of God toward us?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on one of the few stories we have of Jesus' boyhood. What children have you known who have been a spiritual presence or guide for you?

JESUS, SON OF GOD

SESSION 6

JESUS GREW UP

FOCUS

Jesus lived with Mary and Joseph and grew up doing the things children enjoy. When he was 12 years old, he went with his family on a trip to Jerusalem. The children should be able to wonder aloud about what Jesus might have done as a child, tell how he grew, and describe his visit to the temple (*Luke 2:41-52*).

GETTING READY

The story of Jesus in the *Gospel of Luke* tells about Mary and Joseph taking the baby to the temple eight days after he was born to be dedicated as the first born. The visit ends with their return to Nazareth where “the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.”

Joseph was a carpenter and would presumably have trained Jesus to follow in his trade. When Jesus was not working with his father, he would have spent many hours playing with his friends, helping his mother, and learning about the Hebrew people and the story of God’s people through the Hebrew Scriptures.

Judging from Luke’s account of Jesus in the temple, where he was listening and asking questions, he must have learned his lessons well. The story of the visit to the temple in Jerusalem happened when Jesus was 12. He had traveled to Jerusalem with his family at the Passover. This was a typical time for families to visit the temple and make their offerings.

Jesus became so engaged with the teachers of the temple that he was left behind when his family began their journey back home. When Mary and Joseph returned to look for him, they searched for three days before they found him in the temple.

Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy and care of children: Give us calm strength and patient wisdom as we bring them up, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Prayer For the Care of Children

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 829

TEACHING TIP

Children grow at differing rates physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Their abilities to think and to perform tasks change daily. Celebrate with each child his/her unique abilities, and help children to be respectful of one another. Understanding the individual differences and accepting them should not, however, prevent us from offering challenges that promote their growth.

GATHERING

When everyone has arrived, say:

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 362

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 *Luke 2:42*:

“And when (Jesus) was twelve years old, (Mary, Joseph, and Jesus) went up as usual for the festival (in Jerusalem).”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.
Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Begin to tell the story by saying that Jesus had a loving, caring family as a child.

- When Jesus was 12 his family made a journey to Jerusalem to visit the temple at the Passover. This was a trip they made every year.
- When it was time to go home, Mary and Joseph thought Jesus was with other family members. When they could not find him among the other travelers they returned to Jerusalem.
- Mary and Joseph were frightened when they could not find Jesus. They searched everywhere and asked everyone for three days.
- At the end of that time, they found Jesus in the temple listening to and learning from the teachers there. He did not realize that his parents would be looking for him and be upset.
- Jesus was preparing to fulfill God’s plan for him.

(Remind the children that they can read the children’s book, *At the Manger*, at home with their families.)

CREATING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Option 1. Temple Rubbing

Set up a center where the children may take turns making temple rubbings. On a table tape one or more cardboard templates made from the pattern supplied on Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packet. Supply paper for each child and old crayons for the rubbing. Older children will be able to use this center alone after being given careful instructions. Younger class members will need help. This project can be pursued while another activity engages the rest of the group. As the rubbings are being made, talk about how Jesus went to a temple like this when Mary and Joseph took him to Jerusalem.

Option 2. Clay Lights

Give a lump of clay to each child. Allow the children opportunity to feel, pound, and roll the clay. Then suggest that they make candle holders.

The younger children can make the candleholders from a simple clay lump with a candle anchored in it. As this project proceeds, talk with the children about lights that would be needed in Jesus' home when he was a child or in the temple he visited.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Invite the children to join in a rhyme-and-action game. The rhyme is:

Jesus grew,
I grow, too.
Let me show
What I can do!

Chant the rhyme repeatedly. At the end, let an individual child demonstrate a physical action, such as running, jumping, skipping, or any other move that seems appropriate.

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Tape a long sheet of brown wrapping paper to a wall, beginning at the floor.

Measure the children by marking the paper and writing their names by their individual marks. Celebrate with each child by saying, "_____, you are growing, and you are now _____ tall!"

Save the paper for a later time to show how much the children have grown in the intervening months (years).

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wonder about what Jesus did when he was the same age as the children.

Ask questions like the following:

What kinds of animals would Jesus have cared for?

How did he help his mother? Joseph?

What kind of toys do you think he may have had?

What kinds of things would Jesus do outdoors? inside? Would he have liked to climb trees?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

As we move from the Christmas season and the early days of Epiphany, we turn to Jesus' life as an adult. An excellent hymn to assist in making this transition would be "When Jesus Left His Father's Throne" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 480; *We Sing of God*, 77). Use the tape *Children Sing!* Sing or say the first stanza only.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Talk with the children about the story of Jesus' visit to the temple, and the time he spent with the teachers. Ask questions like these:

What did Jesus do inside the temple? Whom did he talk with?

When did you have a time to talk with grownups? What did you talk about?

Do grownups understand your questions? Do you understand the answers?

Why, or why not?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 15 includes a picture of Jesus, a Scripture verse, a child's prayer, 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 for a final prayer:

God, we thank you for helping us to grow in your love.

Thank you for letting Jesus be a child just like me,

And for our families and friends.

Be with us as we go,

And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle for the closing:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

How have the children responded to Jesus' childhood? Is their concept of Jesus still that of a baby, or have they accepted his growing up? As the sessions move ahead to deal with Jesus' adult ministry, watch for indications that the children might still be confused about how old Jesus is.

LOOKING AHEAD

Jesus was a teacher. He taught by performing miracles, by asking questions, and through the use of parables. The stories we tell about him as a healer and worker of miracles make clear that he was the Christ, Son of the living God. In preparing to tell these stories about Jesus, reflect on the miracles and the simple acceptance of them by children.

JESUS, SON OF GOD

SESSION 7

JESUS CHOSE DISCIPLES

FOCUS

Jesus chose twelve friends, called disciples, to be with him. The children should be able to tell something about these friends of Jesus, in their own words.

GETTING READY

Jesus' three-year ministry begins with the calling of the twelve disciples. They are to accompany him and learn to share in his work. In this small company the Church has its beginning, for they become "apostles"—persons sent out to share the gospel with the whole world. The calling of the apostles in the Gospels (principally *Mark 1:16-20, 3:13-19; Matthew 10:1-4; Luke 6:12-16*) shows Jesus asking people to follow him, learn from him, and share his message.

Twelve specific people are called by name Simon (Peter), Andrew, James (brother of John), John, Philip, Bartholomew (Nathaniel), Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus (Jude), Simon, and Judas. Many others, including women such as Mary Magdalene also followed Jesus and learned from him.

Almighty God, who gave such grace to your apostle Andrew that he readily obeyed the call of your Son Jesus Christ, and brought his brother with him: Give us, who are called by your holy Word, grace to follow him without delay, and to bring those near to us into his gracious presence; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Collect for Saint Andrew
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 237

TEACHING TIP

We tend to use the words disciple and apostle interchangeably. Children are likely to have difficulty focusing on a particular idea if different words are used for it. For this session, choose to use either disciple or apostle, and be consistent throughout.

GATHERING

Cover a table with a large sheet of paper—big enough to provide some space for each child to draw pictures of friends, using crayons or markers. Talk about friendship as the children work. When everyone is present, say:

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 362

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 *Mark 3:13-14a*:

“ (Jesus) went up on the mountain, and called to him those whom he desired; and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, . . .to be with him. . . .”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.
Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Begin the story by telling the children that the boy Jesus, who was a baby at Christmas and who stayed behind in the temple, is now a grownup. Jesus is ready to begin teaching people about God and need helpers to do so.

- Jesus chose the disciples to follow him and be his close friends.
- One day Jesus was walking by the sea where there were many boats. In one of the boats were Simon and his brother Andrew. They were fishermen who spent their days fixing their nets. They would go out on their boats at night to catch fish and return early in the morning.
- Jesus called to Simon and Andrew and said, “Leave you nets behind and come and follow me. I will teach you to be fishers of people.”
- Jesus often took his disciples, his friends, up into the mountains and to places by the sea where he taught them about God.

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Disciple Dolls

Cut out a chain of six paper dolls, one for each child, by folding a sheet of paper into six sections and cutting out a simple figure. The dolls will be joined at the hands. Invite the children to color the dolls to look like Jesus

and his friends. (In addition, they may wish to make individual dolls look like themselves or their friends.)

Option 2. Disciples' Faces

Give each child a white paper cup turned upside down. Decorate the cup as the head of a disciple by drawing a face on the cup and gluing fabric and yarn on the cup for hair, beard, and headgear. String or yarn can be used to secure the headpiece to the cup. Label the cup with the name of the disciple chosen by the child.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

We do not expect children to memorize the names of the twelve disciples, but they can become familiar with them—and have fun with rhythm at the same time—by playing this game:

Clap hands for each syllable of the name. Example: John (one clap), Andrew (two claps), and Bartholomew (four claps). Repeat for all twelve or as long as the children seem interested.

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Divide the children into teams of two. They shake hands with each other as friends, passing the Peace. The words to say are, “The peace of the Lord be with you.” Each child then finds a new partner and repeats the handshake and greeting.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

We have some information about a few of the people who were Jesus’ friends, such as Peter, Andrew, John, Mary and Martha, but we do not know very much about them. Wonder aloud about these people: What kinds of things did Jesus’ friends like to do? What were their families like? Did they have brothers and sisters? What were their houses like? Did they have birthday parties?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing again “When Jesus Left His Father’s Throne” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 480; *We Sing of God*, 77). The hymn refers to Jesus’ life on earth. Use the tape *Children Sing!* to introduce the hymn.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Discuss with the children the characteristics of friendship, selecting examples from the life of Christ. Talk about Jesus' friendship with the twelve disciples, and expand the discussion to include some of the women such as Mary Magdalene, Mary, Martha, and Joanna. Ask questions like:

What did Jesus talk about with his friends?

What do you talk about with your friends?

What did Jesus enjoy doing with his friends?

Do you like to do the same things? What do you like that is different?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 16 has a picture of Jesus and friends, a Scripture verse, a friendship 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 for the following prayer:

God, thank you for friendship.
Thank you for the disciples of Jesus,
(Pray for any concerns the children may express.)
And for our families and friends.
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Friendship, for preschoolers, may take the form of "I'll be your friend if you do something for me." They have yet to develop a concept of friendship as a mutual give-and-take relationship with others. What insights did you gain about the way the children in the class interact with one another? Are there ways that you might be able to encourage positive friendships among the children in the weeks to come?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next sessions focus on the miracles of Jesus in the calming of the storm and the feeding of the five thousand. Spend some time reflecting on these miracles. Children have an acceptance of miracles as part of life. Their attitude can help adults to gain a greater sense of awe and wonder about the mighty works of God.

JESUS, SON OF GOD

SESSION 8

JESUS CALMED THE STORM

FOCUS

Jesus made the wind and the sea be quiet so the disciples would not be frightened. The children should be able to recall times when they were afraid, and to express their trust in Jesus who helps us at such times.

GETTING READY

The Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* all record the miracle story of the stilling of the storm. Jesus had spent the day teaching and healing people who had come to see him. He and the disciples got in a boat at the end of the day. Almost immediately, Jesus fell asleep. Suddenly, a storm blew across the water.

The disciples were frightened as they were caught in the midst of the turbulent sea. In all three accounts, the disciples tremble with fear, and they turn to Jesus for comfort and help. They wake Jesus. Jesus responds to their fears by calming the waters and allaying their terror.

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be our strength: By the might of your Spirit lift us, we pray you, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Prayer For Quiet Confidence

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 832

TEACHING TIP

Children learn best from direct, concrete experiences. When attempting to teach concepts such as wind and storms, we provide simulated classroom experiences such as wind from an electric fan and stormy seas through stirring water with a spoon. This type of learning experience will help children to remember the story.

GATHERING

Set up a fan near the classroom entrance. (Be sure the fan blades are covered by a protective grill so no one can get hurt.) As the children gather, turn on the fan. Feel the air moving. Change the speed of the fan to simulate heavy wind. Talk about storms and wind blowing. Encourage the children to make “storm” noises. Ask the children to describe some storms they remember. Some may want to draw pictures of storms, using dark construction paper and chalk.

Gather the children in a circle and say:

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 362

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. To do this, gather the group in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Mark 4:39b*:

“ . . .(Jesus) said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still!’“

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell, in your own words, the story of Jesus in the boat with his friends.

- They set out to sail across the water.
- Jesus fell asleep on a cushion in the back of the boat.
- A great storm came and tossed the boat about on the water. The waves beat at the boat. The disciples were frightened.
- They called to Jesus, “Teacher don’t you care about us. We are going to drown.”
- Jesus woke up and spoke to the wind and the sea saying, “Peace! Be Still!”
- The wind stopped blowing and the sea became very still.
- Jesus said to the disciples, “Why were you afraid? Do you not have faith?”

(Use rain and water sounds made by rubbing hands together, snapping fingers, slapping thighs, and stomping feet to make the rain storm.)

CREATING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Option 1. Boats

Use half of a paper box for each child as the base of a boat. Half-pint milk cartons also can be used. Glue a piece of fabric to a 12” dowel for a sail. Stick a ball of plastic clay in the middle of the boat. Insert the dowel sail. Decorate with magic markers.

Option 2. Storm Painting

Use fingerpaint or colored liquid starch. Put mounds of paint on the table, and invite children to make storms. This will be messy but wonderfully expressive. Roll up the children’s sleeves, and use smocks (or men’s shirts turned backwards) to protect clothing. Several children can storm-paint at the same table. Different storm colors (black, grey, and shades of dark brown and blue) can be put on different tables. A less messy alternative would be to use the paper and chalk suggestion in the Gathering activity. Provide large pieces of dark paper and fat chalk.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

lose to a hidden object. Choose an object to hide, such as a small boat. Cover the eyes of one child while the rest of the group quietly hides the boat. Take away the cover and let the child begin to search for the boat. As the child gets farther away from where the object is hidden, the group makes loud storm noises. When the seeker is close to the boat, the group is still. Children in the group can take turns hiding and seeking the boat.

DOING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Children can act out parts of the story with boats. Float small boats in a tub filled with water. (Boats made in the Creating activity could be used.) A storm can be created by stirring the water vigorously with large spoons. Children can add the storm sounds with their voices.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Ask the children to close their eyes and imagine they see and hear a storm. Describe the dark clouds, the sound of thunder, the flashes of lightning, the wind, and the large drops of rain that may fall.

With everyone’s eyes open, wonder about questions like these:

Where does the storm come from? Where will it go?

When Jesus and his friends were in a storm on the sea, what did they think

about?

What did Jesus say to the wind? Did he speak in a loud voice or a soft one?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Listen to “When Jesus Left His Father’s Throne” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 480; *We Sing of God*, 77) on the music tape *Children Sing!* Enjoy the rhythm of the music. Say aloud that some kinds of music (like this hymn) make us feel calm. The words help us to remember that we trust Jesus to be with us.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Use the picture from Poster No. 7 in the Teacher’s Packet of Jesus and the disciples in the storm. Talk about the people in the picture, what is happening, and what the disciples feel. Look at the postures and facial expressions of the disciples. Some ideas for conversation:

What happened in the story?

What were the disciples doing? What was Jesus doing?

When have you slept through a storm?

When have you been frightened by a storm? What made you feel better?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 17 contains a reproduction of “Jesus and the Storm,” a Scripture verse, a prayer for peace, 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 following prayer:

God, thank you for the story of Jesus and the storm;

And for our families and friends.

(Pray for the needs of the children.)

Be with us as we go,

And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER’S REFLECTION

Learning to be independent and to handle the uncertainties of life are major tasks for preschoolers. Children are faced with many distressing and challenging moments as they strive to move beyond the sure and certain place of home and family. During this session, did any of the children reveal their anxieties? We can be supporting, reassuring, and comforting.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is on Jesus' feeding of the 5,000. As you prepare and eat meals this week, consider this miracle and reflect on the conditions of poverty in which persons lack food. What is Jesus Christ calling us to do in a world of such inequity?

JESUS, SON OF GOD

SESSION 9

JESUS FED THE FIVE THOUSAND

FOCUS

After Jesus blessed five loaves and two fish, there was enough food to feed over five thousand people (*Matthew 14:13-21*). The children should be able to tell this story in their own words.

GETTING READY

This story of Jesus' feeding of the crowd, like the stilling of the storm and other miracle accounts, bears witness to the mighty works of the Son of God. His deeds of power demonstrate that he is the Messiah, the Christ.

The people had come to hear Jesus teach about God. They were in a remote place where there were no stores or shops where people could buy food. Jesus cared for the people very much. He cured those who were sick. When evening came the disciples came and said to Jesus, "Send the crowds away so they can get something to eat." Jesus turned to the disciples and said, "They do not need to go away, you give them something to eat."

The disciples were amazed. They only had two fish and five loaves of bread, how could they feed 5,000 people? Jesus made the people sit on the grass, and then taking the food he looked up to heaven, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the people to eat. The food was more than enough, and there were twelve baskets left over.

Almighty God, whose loving hand has given us all that we possess: Grant us grace that we may honor you with our substance, and, remembering the account which we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Prayer For the Right Use of God's Gifts
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 827

TEACHING TIP

In this session, the children will use play dough to create loaves and fishes. Following is an easy and inexpensive way to make enough of the dough for eight learners:

- 3 cups water
- 3 cups flour

1 1/2 cup salt
6 tablespoons oil
6 tsp Cream of Tartar
Food coloring

Use an electric skillet or large saucepan. Mix well before the heat is turned on. Cook and stir until it sticks together in a ball and the color has dulled somewhat. Cool. Knead well. Stored in an air-tight container, play dough will keep for months.

GATHERING

Fill a basket with paper fish. As children arrive, invite them to take some fish and color them. Children may cut and color more fish for the basket. When all the children are present, gather in a circle and say these words:

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 362

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the story by reading from the Bible. To do this, gather the group in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Matthew 14:19*:

“Taking the five loaves and the two fish, (Jesus) looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.
Children respond: Thanks be to God.

In your own words tell the story of the loaves and the fish from *Matthew 14:13-21*.

- The people had followed Jesus to a lonely deserted place to hear him teach about God.
- When night came the people were hungry and the disciples told Jesus to send them away so they could get some food.
- Jesus told the disciples to feed the people with the two fish and five loaves of bread they had.
- They brought the bread to Jesus. Jesus blessed the bread and broke and gave it to the disciples who gave the food to the people.
- It was a miracle that the loaves and fish were enough for everyone. With God’s help, Jesus made the miracle happen.

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Kneading Bread, Making Bread and Fish

Make or purchase play dough in colors for fish and bread. (A recipe is included in the Teaching Tip.) Put out play dough, rolling pins, cookie cutters, and other kitchen utensils. Children may make bread loaves and/or fish. The group could put their “loaves and fishes” in a communal basket. Plates, small baskets, or plastic bags could be provided for children to take home some pieces of the play dough bread and fish.

Option 2. Stuffed Fish

Divide the children into three groups or teams. Provide each group with two large fish shapes (symmetrical and identical) cut from sturdy but pliable paper. Invite the groups to decorate one side of each paper fish, using crayons or markers.

When the decoration is completed, staple together the lower halves of each pair of paper fish. Insert stuffing of newspaper, torn into small pieces and crumpled. When finished, staple the other half of each fish. Display the stuffed fish (on a board or suspended from strings).

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

To the tune of “Here We Go ‘Round the Mulberry Bush,” sing verses like these:

“This is the way we bake our bread, bake our bread, bake our bread, early in the morning.”

“This is the way we catch the fish, catch the fish, catch the fish, early in the morning.”

If the children are enjoying this activity, it can be continued with: “we say a blessing,” “we eat together,” “we share our food.”

As each verse is sung, add a movement that demonstrates the key words, such as kneading bread, pulling in a fishing pole, folding hands for a prayer, using knives and forks, and extending hands toward one another.

DOING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Share bread (homemade or from a bakery) with the class. Place the loaf on a cutting board, and pass small pieces to each child as it is sliced. Talk about how many pieces are needed so that everyone will have some. What would happen if there were more people? Would there be enough to share with everyone?

Another possibility would be to have two kinds of bread: leavened (made

with yeast) and unleavened (matzoh). Share these with the children and talk about the differences.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Think about the miracle itself, asking questions like the following:

Who might have made the bread Jesus shared with all the people? Who might have caught and cooked the fish?

What kind of prayer did Jesus say before giving the bread to the people?

Would the people have been surprised? If you had been there, what would you have thought about Jesus?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing again “When Jesus Left His Father’s Throne” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 480; *We Sing of God*, 77). The repeated use of this hymn places the emphasis on Jesus himself, who he was, what he came to do, and what he calls us to be. The hymn relates to the miracle accounts clearly. Use the tape *Children Sing!*

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

The story of the feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle account that appears in all four Gospels. In the *Gospel of John*, it is “a lad” who brings barley loaves and fish to Jesus.

In a conversation time, invite the children to think about these questions:

Have you ever felt hungry? What did you do about it? Who helped you?

Has there been a time when you shared your food with someone else? Who might need to have other people share food with them?

TAKE-HOME CARD

A picture of loaves and fish, with a Scripture verse, is on the front of Card 18. On the back is a simple table grace, with 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 for the closing prayer:

God, thank you for all miracles,
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for any concerns the children may have.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

In focusing on the sharing of food with others, through the story of the miracle of the loaves and fish, were the children able to get a sense of thanksgiving for all they have? Did they gain an awareness of those who lack sufficient food? Make a note of how this awareness could be increased the next time this session is used.

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 III. BAPTISM: BELONGING

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Many preschool and kindergarten children will have witnessed baptisms, and some of them will be able to tell of their own (either from personal memory or from stories told them by parents and others). Baptism happens only once for each of us. But whenever another child or older person is baptized, we join in the congregation's renewal of the Covenant of Baptism, extend our welcome, and promise to encourage and support the newly baptized. We are full participants in the celebration.

Infants and young children are baptized before they can respond intellectually to the liturgical actions. Others make the promises for them. It is the work of parents and teachers to help children grow in understanding and claim these promises made in baptism as their “own.” For every Christian, it is the work of a lifetime to live out the Baptismal Covenant.

In this unit for preschool- and kindergarten-age children, we look at We encourage you to talk about the lessons with your child. Do this by reading together the children's book, *A Baptism Story*, which focuses on a baptism at the Easter vigil.

Scripture passages and excerpts from *The Book of Common Prayer* that the children 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 Was Baptized by John” tells the story of how Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by his cousin, John. (*Mark 1:9*)

Session 2: “Baptism Is a Sacrament” explains that Baptism is a celebration that happens at church, which is called a sacrament. We will talk about what happens at a baptism at our church. (*Mark 1:9*)

Session 3: “Baptism Is Joining the Family of God” helps the children understand that in Baptism we are welcomed into the family of God—the Church. (*Mark 10:14b*)

Session 4: “We Use Water for Baptism” describes how we are baptized with water. Water is used at a baptism when the words “I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” are said. (Thanksgiving over the Water, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 306)

Session 5: “We Are Marked as Christ's Own Forever” focuses on how we are baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We are “sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever.” (Holy Baptism, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 308)

Sessions 6-8 have been designed for use around Holy Week and Easter Day:

Session 6: “Jesus Went to Jerusalem” describes Palm Sunday when Jesus went to Jerusalem with his disciples, and people spread palms on the road to welcome him. (*Mark 11:9b*)

Session 7: “Jesus Died in Love for Us” is about how Jesus died on a cross on Good Friday. The cross stands for God's love for us. (Anthem 1, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 281)

Session 8: “Jesus Rose from the Dead” tells about the celebration of the good news at Easter that Jesus rose from the dead. The story of the resurrection will be shared with the children. (*Mark 16:6*)

Session 9: “Baptism Means New Life with the Risen Jesus” explains that baptisms are scheduled at Easter because the sacrament means new life with the risen Jesus. The children learn that Baptisms happen at Easter, at the same time of year when we enjoy butterflies, eggs, and other symbols of the season. (Holy Baptism, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 308)

Yours in Christ,
Church School Teachers

BAPTISM: BELONGING

SESSION 1

JESUS WAS BAPTIZED BY JOHN

FOCUS

Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by his cousin, John (*Mark 1:9-11.*) The children should be able to tell the story of Jesus' baptism in their own way.

GETTING READY

For the first five sessions of this unit, the focus will be on the sacrament of Baptism, beginning with the baptism of Jesus by John in the River Jordan. The sacrament of Baptism and the sacrament of Eucharist are the two sacraments instituted by Jesus. Baptism happens only once for each of us. However, whenever we witness a baptism, we join in renewing our baptismal vows.

For John and for the Jews, baptism was ritual washing, a cleansing of the body and the soul. For us as Christians, Baptism is the full initiation into the Body of Christ, when we are "marked as Christ's own for ever." (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 308)

Father in heaven, who at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit: Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

Collect for The Baptism of Our Lord
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 214

TEACHING TIP

Music for this session is from *The Hymnal 1982*. If a hymn is unfamiliar, ask an organist or choir member to play or sing it for a tape recording. This resource can be used in class to help the children learn the tune and words. (All the music for each year and age level of this curriculum is also on the tape *Children Sing!*)

GATHERING

As the children arrive, focus their attention on the picture of Jesus' baptism from the Teacher's Packet, Poster No. 8. Ask the children to talk about what they think might be happening in the picture. Identify the people in the picture.

When all are gathered, say:

Teacher: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

Children respond: One God and Father of all.

The Book of Common Prayer, p.356

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 *Mark 1:9*:

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell, in your own words, the story of how John baptized Jesus. Use the picture on Poster No. 8 from the Teacher's Packet.

- John was a relative of Jesus. He lived outdoors, wore animal skins for clothing, and ate wild bugs and honey.
- He baptized people in the Jordan River, saying, “turn your life around and listen to what God is telling you.”
- People listened to John.
- One day Jesus came to the river and asked John to baptize him.
- John baptized Jesus. As Jesus came up out of the water, the heavens opened and the Spirit descended upon him like a dove. A voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Doves

Children can make three-dimensional birds, using the pattern On Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packet. Photocopy or trace the pattern onto a piece of white construction paper or posterboard. Cut out the birds beforehand; older children may wish to cut out their own. Invite the children to draw eyes on the dove and cut small pieces of white tissue paper to glue on as feathers. Cut the body of the dove on the dotted line and insert the wings. The doves

may be hung from pieces of string. Display them in the classroom for the next few weeks of this unit.

Option 2. River Jordan Pictures

Make watercolor pictures of the River Jordan. Use long strips of paper and several shades of blue watercolor paint. Paint with long, flowing brush strokes and sweeps of color the length of the paper. Or, paint the river with plain water first, then add drops of color. Swirl the color through the water with brushes.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Play “Getting Closer to the River.” Place a piece of long blue paper or cloth on the floor. Line the children up 8 to 10 feet from the cloth, parallel to it. Choose one child, “John,” who invites the children to come to the river. The children then ask permission to move ahead by small or large steps. Celebrate as each one reaches the river. (This is a variation of the game “Giant Steps.”)

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Set up a “baptism table” where children can pretend they are taking part in a baptism. A designated corner of the room or marked-off space on the floor may be used. (If possible, plan to have the area available each week during this unit.) Include a large shallow bowl with about one cup of water, a towel, and a doll or two.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Jesus was baptized in a river. This is very different from the way most people are baptized in the church now. There have been songs written about this river. “Michael, Row the Boat Ashore” is one of them. Sing it if you wish. The words suggest characteristics of the river, cold, deep. Wonder with the children about the river, using questions like:

- What kind of day was it when Jesus was baptized?
- Was the air warm or cold? Was the water warm or cold?
- How deep was the river?
- How many people were there when Jesus was baptized?
- How many others were baptized by John?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

A hymn for this session is “Christ, When for Us You Were Baptized” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 121). Look at the first stanza. The words retell the story of Jesus’ baptism. Introduce the hymn using the tape *Children Sing!*

CONVERSATION

(*Time: 10 minutes*)

John was Jesus’ cousin. They may have had opportunities to get to know each other as children. John prepared the way for Jesus to be recognized as the Son of God. Invite the children to share their thoughts about the following:

What is a cousin? Do you have cousins?

What are some of the things you like to do with your cousins?

Did Jesus and his cousin John enjoy the same things?

When Jesus came to the river, did John know who he was?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 19 contains a picture of a dove, a Bible verse, story summary, 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

Say the following prayer of thanksgiving. Add any line that seems appropriate.

God, thank you for Jesus’ baptism.
And for our families and friends.
(*Pray for any concerns the children may have.*)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

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

TEACHER’S REFLECTION

Baptism is the first of the two great sacraments instituted by Jesus and recounted in Scripture. This story is an important link between the Bible and the practice of baptism in the church. Did the children make connections between the two? Is this something that needs consideration in the weeks to come?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session will look at the sacrament of Baptism in the church. Recall a recent baptism that you have attended or participated in. What was meaningful for you?

BAPTISM: BELONGING

SESSION 2

BAPTISM IS A SACRAMENT

FOCUS

Baptism is a wonderful celebration that happens at church, called a sacrament. The children should be able to tell what happens at a baptism at their church.

GETTING READY

According to the Catechism (An Outline of Faith), “the sacraments are outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace. . . Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ’s Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God.” (*The Book of Common Prayer*, 857-859)

The sacrament includes the renunciation of sin, the declaration of God’s forgiveness, and the assurance of rebirth. It also involves promises—the promises of God, who enters into a new covenant with us, and the promises we make in return. For young children, the main purpose of this session will be to help them see baptism as a special event in the life of the person being baptized and in the life of the congregation.

O God, you prepared your disciples for the coming of the Spirit through the teaching of your Son Jesus Christ: Make the hearts and minds of your servants ready to receive the blessing of the Holy Spirit, that they may be filled with the strength of his presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

For Those About to be Baptized
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 819

TEACHING TIP

For many reasons, some of the children may not be baptized. Be sensitive to this fact. While presenting the sacrament of Baptism as the Christian response to God’s love, reassure the children that Jesus loves *all* of them just as they are.

GATHERING

Use Poster No. 9 from the Teacher's Packet that shows the inside of a church. As the children arrive, invite them to find things in the scene that are similar to their own church building. Add the cutout of the baptismal font to represent today's focus. Invite the children to draw a picture of their own baptism or one they remember. Display the pictures around the poster.

When all are gathered, say:

Teacher: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

Children respond: One God and Father of all.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 356

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 *Mark 1:10*:

“And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Show the children *The Book of Common Prayer*. Open to the title page of the service of Holy Baptism (p. 297). Because Jesus was baptized, we baptize people in the church.

- In your own words, tell a story of a recent baptism in your church. You may wish to include the following:
- The family gathers outside the church. The baby (child) to be baptized is dressed in special white clothes. They take their seats in the very front of the church.
- The service begins. The priest says, “There is one Body and one Spirit.” The people respond, “There is one hope in God’s call to us.” The priest says, “One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism.” The people respond, “One God and Father of all.” (Just the way we began our class today.)
- Parts of the Bible are read aloud. The priest gives a sermon, a teaching about the Bible.
- Then the people to be baptized move to the baptismal font and are presented to the priest by the parents and godparents. Prayers are said and the water is blessed.
- The baby (child) is baptized in the “Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. *Amen.*”

(The children can read *A Baptism Story*, the book for this unit, at home with their families.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Celebration Collages

Baptism is a time of joyful celebration and welcome. Use stickers, bits of colorful paper, cloth, and streamers to put together a “celebration collage.” Glue everything to a piece of paper shaped like your church.

Option 2. Baptism Cards

Make cards with folded construction paper and scraps of paper, felt, lace, and ribbon. Let the children design and decorate the outside of the cards. Inside the cards, write the individuals’ names. If appropriate, add date and place of baptism—past or future—for each one.

(If there is to be a service of Holy Baptism in the church relatively soon, the cards could be a message of welcome for each person being baptized.)

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Place a table in the front of the room, and seat the children around it. Place the following on the table: water, a cross, a towel, a shell, and a large candle. Invite the children to close their eyes while the teacher covers one of the items on the table. Ask: What’s hidden? When the guessing ends, reveal the item. Repeat as long as the children are interested.

DOING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Take the children to the place in the church where baptisms take place. Gather around the font. As you tell the story of a baptism in your church, let the children touch the font. Pour some water, and let them feel it. A member of the clergy may join the class for this time.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wonder about a person who is being baptized. Outline the scene and actions of a baptism. Ask the following:

How might the baby feel?

How do you think a mother and father feel when their baby is baptized? the godparents?

Sometimes people are baptized after they are grown-ups. How do you think they might feel?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

A hymn for this session is “Christ, When for Us You Were Baptized” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 121). Listen to the first and the last stanzas on the tape *Children Sing!* The words retell the story of Jesus’ baptism and relate it to our own baptisms.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Talk with the children about baptisms they remember, perhaps even their own. Recall and share what you remember or know about some of their baptisms. (If possible, talk with parents before the session.) The following questions may be used:

What happened at the baptism?

Who was there?

Where do people stand?

What does the priest or deacon do?

What are some of the words that are said? by parents? godparents? a priest? the people in the congregation?

These questions are likely to be easier for five-year-olds, but it is appropriate to encourage all the children just to think about them.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 20 includes a picture of a baptism, the words “Baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” a question from the Catechism, 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

Say this prayer, adding any other line that seems appropriate:

God, we bless you for giving us baptism.

And for our families and friends.

(Pray for the needs of the children.)

Be with us as we go,

And bring us back again. 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 words like baptism and sacrament? Are they beginning to learn church words? Continue to use the language of the church and of God, helping the children become used to their use and unfolding meanings.

LOOKING AHEAD

Are there family stories, clothing, candles, or other mementos of your own baptism or the baptism of a child that you recall? What role, if any, have godparents had in your life? Think about the promise made by the entire congregation to support the newly baptized. Is there a connection between this promise and your role as a teacher in the church?

BAPTISM: BELONGING

SESSION 3

BAPTISM IS JOINING THE FAMILY OF GOD

FOCUS

In baptism we are welcomed into the family of God. The children should be able to say that persons who are baptized belong to the church.

GETTING READY

In preparation, review again the Catechism questions on baptism, especially “What is Holy Baptism?” and “Why then are infants baptized?” (*The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 858-859) Think about baptism as being welcomed into the Church.

Infants and young children are baptized before they can consciously make a covenant or respond to the questions intellectually. Others make the promises for them. It is the work of parents, teachers, and the whole congregation to help children grow in understanding of these promises for themselves.

The Scripture chosen for this session is the story of Jesus’ receiving and blessing children in *Mark 10:13-16*. Although this is not specifically related to baptism, it is appropriate as a means of underscoring the concepts of being welcomed and truly belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father, you sent your own Son into this world. We thank you for the lives of these children entrusted to our care. Help us to remember that we are all your children, and so to love and nurture them, that they may attain to that full stature intended for them in your eternal kingdom; for the sake of your dear Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For the Gift of a Child

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 841 (alt.)

TEACHING TIP

Time is one of the most difficult concepts for young children and is the last to be learned developmentally. Their thinking about events from the past is distorted. They may say they were baptized yesterday or last Sunday when it was actually two or more years ago. What evidence of this characteristic have the children shown in this session? Use pictures and specific objects that will help them to remember past events.

GATHERING

Direct the children's attention to the outline of the inside of a church, from the Teacher's Packet, Poster No. 9. If the baptismal font was not added to the scene at an earlier session, do so now. Also, add the figure of a member of the clergy. Talk about baptism as a way of welcoming us all into the Church. Provide the children with name cards that they can decorate with stickers, markers, and crayons. Display them around the poster.

When everyone has arrived, say:

Teacher: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

Children respond: One God and Father of all.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 356

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

To introduce the story, gather the group in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Mark 10:14b*:

“Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.”

Conclude with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

In your own words tell the story of Jesus and the children (*Mark 10:13-16*).

- Crowds were always gathering around Jesus. Grown-ups were always asking him hard questions.
- Sick people were trying to get near to him, so Jesus would touch them and heal them.
- One day Jesus was sitting and talking to a group of people.
- Some children came running up to him laughing. Jesus hugged them and held their hands.
- The disciples told the children not to bother Jesus, to go away.
- But Jesus said, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them. The kingdom of God belongs to them.”
- We remember this especially at services of baptism. In Jesus' name, the priest or deacon says, “Let us welcome the newly baptized.”

(Encourage the children to read *A Baptism Story* with their families at home.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Welcome Banner

Using a large sheet of paper (or felt), add the word “Welcome” in colorful letters. Invite the children to draw or color anything that represents welcome for them. Display the banner near the church entrance for everyone to see.

Option 2. We Belong to the Church

Using an instant camera, take pictures of each of the children. (If you do not have access to one, take the pictures the week before with a regular camera and have them ready for this session.) Paste the pictures to small paper plates and encourage the children to decorate the outer edges of the plates with crayons. Arrange the pictures so that they may be displayed near the Baptismal Table (see Doing below).

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Our names are significant at baptism as each of us becomes a member of the church family. Go around the group, and clap the name of each child (one clap per syllable). Encourage the children to clap for and with one another. Older children may enjoy guessing whose name is represented by the number of claps. Close by saying that God knows each one of us by name.

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

If you have not already done so in an earlier session, set up a “baptism table” where children can pretend they are taking part in a baptism. A designated corner of the room, or marked-off space on the floor, may be used. Include a bowl of water, a towel, dolls, a cross, a shell, and a candle. Add to the table a stack of blank “baptism certificates.”

As the children practice baptizing dolls, focus their attention on the pretend names, asking, “What is the name of this baby?” Fill out a certificate each time that a different child is involved. As the certificate is completed, say something like, “This baby is now welcome to the Church.”

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Jesus blessed the children as they were brought to him. Jesus touched each child. Use the following questions to wonder about the story:

What were the children like? How old were they? Were they boys or girls?

How did the children feel when Jesus welcomed them?

How did Jesus' hands feel as he touched them? What might he have said to them?

What might the mothers and fathers have been thinking?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the refrain from “All Glory, Laud, and Honor” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 154; *We Sing of God*, 30) using the tape *Children Sing!*

We may imagine that the children who were welcomed and blessed by Jesus might have sung “hosanna” just as we do during the celebration of Holy Eucharist (BCP, pp. 334, 362).

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

When we are baptized, we become a part of the church family. Discuss with the children what it means to be a member of a family—beginning with their own families and expanding the idea to include their church school family, the parish family, and the larger Christian family. With the concepts of Christian baptism and “welcoming” in mind, ask questions like the following:

Who belongs to your family?

Are all families the same? How are some different?

How do we become members of the church school family?

How do we become members of the parish family?

What makes us a part of the Christian family?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 21 has a picture of Jesus with the children, a Bible 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

Say this prayer, adding any other lines that seem appropriate:

God, we thank you for calling all children to you.

Thank you for sending us Jesus,

(Pray for the concerns of the children.)

Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. 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 children seem to feel welcome and a sense of belonging to the parish? In this session, was there evidence that these feelings are growing? You may want to look more closely at how your parish provides for the welcoming of children. In what ways could they be incorporated more fully into the church family?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next lesson will focus on the use of water in the sacrament of Baptism, how water is blessed and used as well as how it is significantly related to our lives. Think about the importance of water for all living things.

BAPTISM: BELONGING

SESSION 4

WE USE WATER FOR BAPTISM

FOCUS

We are baptized with water. The children should be able to describe how water is used at a baptism when the words “I baptize you in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” are said.

GETTING READY

The Catechism includes the question, “What is the outward and visible sign in Baptism?” The answer is “water.” (*The Book of Common Prayer*, 858.) Baptism is a ritual of washing. We give thanks to God for the water. The celebrant asks God to bless the water by the power of the Holy Spirit that those who are baptized with it are cleansed of sin and born into the life of Jesus Christ.

In the liturgy for Holy Baptism the prayer blessing the water is rich in biblical imagery.

We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life.

We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Therefore in joyful obedience to your Son, we bring into his fellowship those who come to him in faith, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Thanksgiving over the Water
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 306

TEACHING TIP

Experiencing the properties of water is a significant step for young children as they learn about the world around them. It is a delight for them simply to play in water—pouring, stirring, splashing—and feel it on their

skin. This concrete activity in connection with the study of baptism will help to make the sacrament real for the learners.

GATHERING

Display Poster No.9 from the Teacher's Packet showing the inside of a church. A baptismal font and the figure of a clergy person have been added at previous sessions.

In front of the poster, on a low table, place a container of water (a silver, crystal, or ceramic bowl). As the children arrive, speak with them about the use of water at baptism. They may want to play with the water; if you choose the Doing activity (below), reassure them that there will be an opportunity for this later.

When all have arrived, say together:

Teacher: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

Children respond: *One God and Father of all.*

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 356

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Show the children *The Book of Common Prayer*. Open to page 306. Read the words,

“We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water” (from the Thanksgiving over the Water).

Say that these words are from a prayer that is said at every baptism.

Use your own words to tell the story of water in the history of God's people. Use the descriptions in the prayer of “Thanksgiving over the Water” (above and in BCP, p. 306).

- Before there was light and dark, before there was day and night, there was water.
- God made the water come together into the seas and formed the dry land.
- God made the rain and the water in the rivers, streams, and lakes.
- After many years, God parted the Red Sea and led the people of Israel across to freedom.
- Many more years later, John baptized Jesus in the water of the River Jordan.
- Today we are baptized in water, as we become a part of God's family. (Encourage the children to read *A Baptism Story* at home with their families.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Water Painting I

Make a picture by dropping blue and green paint onto white drawing paper. Take turns spraying the paper with water from a spray bottle. The water causes the paint to “flow” in designs over the paper. Dry flat.

Option 2. Water Painting II

Provide each child with a sheet of shiny-white paper. Put a blob of blue finger-paint on the paper and let the children make water pictures, swirling and waving the paint.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Play a version of “Simon Says.” Concentrate on actions having to do with water. If you wish, substitute names of children for “Simon.” Suggestions:

Simon says, wash your face.

Simon says, wash your hands.

Simon says, drink a glass of water.

Simon says, water the flowers.

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Children love to play with water, watching it flow, spray, splash, puddle, and drip. Use bowls, dishpans, pails, or a water-play table if available. Provide plastic tubes, squirt bottles, cups, funnels, and other interesting equipment. Wash some dolls. Have paper towels and drying towels available.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Move to the baptismal table (see previous sessions), and place on it the bowl of water the children saw at the Gathering. Invite everyone to wonder about water, especially as it is used at baptism. Ask:

How does the water become holy?

How do you think babies feel when the water splashes on their heads?

If the water could talk, what do you think it would say?

How many people have been baptized in the whole world?

How God feels when a new person is baptized?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Using the music of “All Glory, Laud, and Honor” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 154; *We Sing of God*, 30), change the first line of the refrain as follows:

For rain and dew and water,
We thank you, God our King!

Continue with the words, “to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring.” Repeat the refrain as it appears in the hymnal.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Talk with the children about the water we use at baptism. Ask where does water come from?

What are some of the things we do with water?

Why is water fun to play in?

When can water be scary? How can we be safe in the water?

What would happen if there weren't any water?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 22 has a picture of a baptismal font, the first line of the Thanksgiving over the Water (from the baptismal liturgy), a poem about baptism, 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

Say this closing prayer, adding whatever may seem fitting:

God, we thank you for the gift of water,
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for the needs of the children.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle, and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

This session focused on the water of baptism and connection with the history of God's people. Did the children remember the story of Creation from Unit I when they were mentioned?

LOOKING AHEAD

The final session of this series on baptism will be "We Are Marked As One of Christ's Own Forever." In prayer and thought, consider what it means to belong to Christ, in your own life and in the lives of the children.

BAPTISM: BELONGING

SESSION 5

WE ARE MARKED AS CHRIST'S OWN FOREVER

FOCUS

We are baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. We are “sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ’s own for ever.” The children should be able to say that the priest makes the sign of the cross on the forehead at baptism.

GETTING READY

Baptism is an initiation that is a significant moment in each Christian’s spiritual journey. When we are baptized with water and sealed by the Holy Spirit in this public act of the Church, we are “marked as Christ’s own for ever.” (BCP, p. 308) Baptism happens only once for each Christian and we belong to God always. We are called to fulfill the promises of the Baptismal Covenant as we live as Christian people in the world. And we are asked to renew these promises at each baptism that we witness.

Young children need to know that they are loved and accepted by God. This assurance early in their lives will be a strong foundation as they are challenged by the world as they grow up. Our job as teachers is to help build this foundation.

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to you, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly yours, utterly dedicated to you; and then use us, we pray, as you will, and always to your glory and the welfare of your people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

A Prayer of Self-Dedication
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 832

TEACHING TIP

Young children have deep thoughts about God, but frequently lack the vocabulary for expressing them. Their actions and simple statements are often profoundly meaningful. As a teacher, be a careful observer and intent listener, always alert for insights the children are gaining.

GATHERING

Greet children as they arrive. Use your finger to draw a cross on the palm of each one's hand. Ask them to watch carefully and to remember how the cross was made.

Invite children to sit in a circle. Together, make crosses in the air with your hands or fingers. Talk about these actions. Pass the sign of the cross around the circle from hand to hand. Or give each child a piece of paper and crayons and ask them to make as many crosses as the paper will hold.

When all are present, say together:

Teacher: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

Children respond: One God and Father of all.

The Book of Common Prayer, p.356

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Show children *The Book of Common Prayer*. Open to page 308. Read the words,

“[Y]ou are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever.”

Tell a story in your own words about what it means to be “marked as Christ's own for ever.”

Begin by pointing out the part of the baptismal service where the priest marks the forehead of the person being baptized. What happens to the person after the baptism?

The story may be personal or be about someone you know. It may include the following:

- When (name) was little he/she went to Sunday school and learned about God and the stories of Jesus. At night she/he said prayers and gave thanks to God for all the gifts God had given.
- Every year on the date of her/his baptism there was a birthday cake—not for his/her real birthday but for her/his baptismal birthday.
- When (name) learned to read, he/she read the stories of God from the Bible.
- Every Sunday (name) went to church with his/her family.
- As (name) grew older, he/she learned more about God and worked to help other people learn about God, too.

(The children's book for this unit tells the story of a contemporary baptism. The children can read it at home with their families.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Stained Glass Crosses

For each child in the class, cut a large cross from white paper. Using glue and colored tissue paper torn into small pieces, cover each cross to create a stained glass effect.

Option 2. Marking

One of the ways in which things are marked is by stamping. Use sponges cut into simple shapes (cross, shell, candle). Put some thinned tempera paint in a shallow plate to serve as a stamp pad. Stamp pieces of cotton cloth for scarves, scrap pieces of wood, or paper of different sizes and shapes. Some children may wish to stamp their hands.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Many children's games use the idea of being marked or singled out as part of the play. Select a game the children in your class know in which someone is designated as the leader or marked as "it." Examples: tag, hide-and-seek, or follow the leader.

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

For the final time, arrange a baptism table area for children to role-play and practice baptism. Include a bowl of water, cross, towels, dolls, shell, candle, and baptismal certificates. As the role-play proceeds, note carefully whether the children add the marking of the dolls' foreheads with the sign of the cross.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Gather around the baptismal table (see Doing, above). Invite the children to be quiet for a moment, and then say something like:

When you see all these things (on the table), what do you "wonder" about?

Which one is your favorite? Why?

What does baptism make you wonder about?

What do you think it means for us all to belong to Christ?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing again “Christ, When for Us You Were Baptized” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 121), stanzas 1 and 4. Hand motions can be added to the final stanza (pouring water, marking crosses on foreheads, praying, and opening hands at the end). The audio tape *Children Sing!* may be helpful.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Use the conversation time for an open-ended kind of review. This is the last of five sessions on the sacrament of Holy Baptism. Here are some possible ways to proceed:

The next time you are in church when someone is being baptized, what will you look for? listen for? think about?

If someone asked you, “What happens at a baptism?,” how would you answer?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 23 will include a picture of a baby, a line from page 308 of the *The Book of Common Prayer*, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take their card home, show it to their families, and keep it in a safe place.

SAYING GOODBYE

Say this prayer of thanks, adding other lines that seem appropriate:

God, thank you for making us your children,
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for any concerns the children may express.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

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

TEACHER’S REFLECTION

In this concluding session on baptism, what evidence do the children show that they have developed an awareness of the sacrament? What kinds of things have they said or done that may point to deeper understanding? What have been the reactions of their parents, if any?

LOOKING AHEAD

The remaining sessions of this unit are designed to be used around Easter, both before and after Easter Day. They can be adapted to fit the needs of individual parishes. As Easter celebrations draw near, consider ways that this season has been meaningful for you.

BAPTISM: BELONGING

SESSION 6

JESUS WENT TO JERUSALEM

FOCUS

Jesus went to Jerusalem with his disciples, and people spread palms on the road to welcome him (*Mark 11:1-10*). The children should be able to share the story in their own words.

GETTING READY

Lent is a time for reflection on what it means to be baptized Christians in the world. It is a time when we fast, pray, read and study scripture, and renew our commitment to follow Christ.

The last week of Lent, called Holy Week, is a time to hear the events of the last week in the life of Jesus before his death and resurrection. This session and the three that follow it are on the themes of Palm Sunday, Holy Week, and Easter. By revisiting these events and examining our own lives we are able to truly celebrate the resurrection and new life of Easter.

The story for this session is Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. We call this day Palm Sunday because palms were strewn in Jesus' path as he rode into the city. We also call it Passion Sunday because the Gospel is about Jesus arrest, trial, and crucifixion. It is an important story of our faith that the children will hear year after year, absorbing what is meaningful to them.

It is right to praise you, Almighty God, for the acts of love by which you have redeemed us through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. On this day he entered the holy city of Jerusalem in triumph, and was proclaimed as King of kings by those who spread their garments and branches of palm along his way. Let these branches be for us signs of his victory, and grant that we who bear them in his name may ever hail him as our King, and follow him in the way that leads to eternal life; who lives and reigns in glory with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. *Amen.*

From The Liturgy of the Palms
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 271

TEACHING TIP

Young children are just beginning to have a concept of time. They are likely to think concretely about “yesterday, today, and tomorrow” and

“morning, noon, and night.” Extending this understanding in relation to longer periods of time (weeks, months, years) will not always be successful. One way to help is to provide pictures that show what happened at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end.

GATHERING

Make a large cross from pieces of wood or branches. As the children arrive, invite them to help cover this cross with palms. Use purchased palms, other greens, or paper (cut and fringed to resemble palms). The people along the route in Jerusalem used palms because that is what was close at hand. Plan to use this wooden cross in Sessions 7, 8, and 9.

When all are present, say together:

Teacher: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;
Children respond: One God and Father of all.

The Book of Common Prayer, p.356

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 *Mark 11:9b*:

“Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.
Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell, in your own words, the story of Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem. Invite children to be the crowd along the way and say, “Hosanna! Hosanna!” Include the following:

- Jesus and his disciples were going to Jerusalem.
- Jesus sent two of the disciples ahead to get a colt (baby horse) that had never been ridden before.
- They brought the colt to Jesus and put their coats on it for him like a saddle.
- People spread leafy branches from the palm trees nearby on the road.
- Some went ahead, and many were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!”
- It was like a parade.

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Class Mural

Tape a long strip of paper (brown or white) to a table or the floor. Print “Hosanna! Hosanna!” across the top (horizontally). Sketch lightly in pencil a road and some circles suggesting the crowd. Provide the children with paints and brushes, markers, or large crayons. Encourage them to fill in faces and clothes for the people in the crowd.

Ahead of time, make paper palm leaves from green paper. Allow each child to glue or paste these leaves to the roadway where Jesus would travel. When completed, display it on a wall or board.

Option 2. Palm branches

Provide a cardboard tube for each child. Pull several strips of crepe paper through the tubes, leaving long “fronds” hanging out one end. Tape the other ends of the paper streamers securely to the tubes. These simulated palm branches may be used for waving (like pompons).

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Ask the children to join a circle, hands joined and held up high. Choose one child to go under each set of hands, alternating being inside and outside the circle. As the first child completes the circle, another child is selected to follow along. Add one child each time until no one is left.

As the children play, say: “Hosanna, hosanna in the highest!”

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Reenact the Palm Sunday procession. The children can take turns being Jesus. Use headcloths, towels for robes, and cloths to place on the ground for Jesus to walk over. Say “Hosanna! Hosanna!” Gather or make palms to wave. (See Creating, Option 2, Palm branches.)

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Think about the people who greeted Jesus on Palm Sunday. Some of them went ahead and others followed Jesus on the road to Jerusalem. Ask:

How did they feel as they saw Jesus riding on the colt?

What might they have talked about to one another?

What do you think the road was like? dusty? smooth? rough?
What would you have done if you had been there?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing “All Glory, Laud, and Honor” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 154; *We Sing of God*, 30). This is a hymn for use on Palm Sunday and fits the theme for this session. The children may be familiar with it by now if it was used in earlier sessions of this unit. They may want to sing this hymn in the Doing activity or while playing the Game (above). Or simply play the music from the tape *Children Sing!*

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Many churches celebrate the Palm Sunday by beginning with “The Liturgy of the Palms” (BCP, p. 270). In some congregations, the people gather outside or in other parts of the church building. The palms are blessed and distributed, and the procession begins with the singing of “All Glory, Laud, and Honor.”

Spend some time talking with the children about your own church’s observance of Palm Sunday. Questions might be: Do you remember Palm Sunday of last year? What kinds of things did we do? (Did anyone save palms or palm crosses from last year?) What do you think the service will be like this year?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 24 contains a picture of a cluster of palm fronds together with the closing lines of the Sanctus. Also included is the refrain from Hymn 154, 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

In saying goodbye, preface the prayer with the concluding words of the Sanctus (from today’s session). Then use the familiar closing lines.

Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
(Pray for any needs the children may have.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Think about the session just ended. Were the children excited by it? Did they exhibit a sense of anticipation? Did the role-play of the event make it exciting? Why, or why not?

LOOKING AHEAD

Consider carefully the theme and approach for the next session. While it is important to say that Jesus died on the cross, it is far more important for young children to be able to focus on the good news of the resurrection. Pray that this may happen in the lives of the class members.

BAPTISM: BELONGING

SESSION 7

JESUS DIED IN LOVE FOR US

FOCUS

Jesus died on a cross on Good Friday. The cross stands for God's love for us. The children should be able to say that Jesus died on a cross and to identify the cross in several of the art forms they may see in churches.

GETTING READY

Jesus died. That is a fact. There is no Easter, no resurrection, without his death. Indeed, we would not even know that the crucifixion happened if it were not for the fact that Jesus rose again.

Young children in the church cannot be shielded from the full story of Holy Week, but teachers and parents need to think through carefully how to approach it. To dwell on the crucifixion story in detail can be very disturbing to children who have acquired a deep love for Jesus. Teaching about Good Friday and the cross, therefore, should always be linked, in the minds of both teachers and learners, with the joyous good news of the resurrection.

In the teaching suggestions for this session, children are allowed the freedom to absorb only what they are capable of understanding about the cross of Christ. The focus on the cross as a symbol is twofold: It speaks of Christ's death and resurrection, and it stands for God's love for each of us.

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ was lifted high upon the cross that he might draw the whole world to himself: Mercifully grant that we, who glory in the mystery of our redemption, may have grace to take up our cross and follow him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

Collect for Holy Cross Day

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 244

TEACHING TIP

Some children may ask about, or volunteer to tell in their own words, the physical details of the crucifixion. While we certainly do not want to deny that Jesus suffered horribly in dying, it is essential for us all (both children and adults) to see that Jesus overcame death and is living and active among us. Hearing of the death of Jesus may also prompt young children to raise

questions of their own about the general topic of death and dying. As teachers, we listen and seek to respond honestly and on the children's level. Avoid euphemisms for death (such as "going to sleep" or "going away"). Focus instead on God's love for us whether we live or die.

GATHERING

Poster No. 10 in the Teacher's Packet, includes a large sheet that contains crosses in various art forms, together with individual matching crosses. Cut out the crosses according to instructions.

Display the poster where all the children can reach it. As they arrive, share the cut-out crosses and invite them to "match" their examples with the ones on the poster.

When all are present, bring out the cross that was used at the previous session. The palms that were placed on it have been removed, and it is now plain and undecorated.

Say together:

Teacher: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;
Children respond: One God and Father of all.

The Book of Common Prayer, p.356

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Show the children *The Book of Common Prayer*. Explain that you will say words that are used in the church on Good Friday. Turn to page 281 and read the following from Anthem 1:

We glory in your cross, O Lord,
and praise and glorify your holy resurrection;
for by virtue of your cross
joy has come to the whole world.

In your own words, share the story of what happened during Holy Week—the time between Palm Sunday and Easter. This will include the following:

- On Thursday, a day we call Maundy Thursday, Jesus shared a meal with his friends. We call that meal the Last Supper.
- After the supper, people who thought he was doing something wrong arrested Jesus.
- On Good Friday, Jesus died on the cross (see Getting Ready and the Teaching Tip, above).

- On Holy Saturday, Jesus' friends were sad and waited and prepared for what would come next.
- On Sunday, Jesus rose from the dead and it was the first Easter.

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Wooden Crosses

Gather small twigs, moss, tiny shells, miniature pinecones, or other natural items. Using florist's clay and tape, form a cross with the twigs—wrapping the tape around the intersection and sticking the base into the clay. Allow the children to decorate the base with the other items. Small paper plates can be used to carry the crosses home.

Option 2. Cross Picture

Using the picture on Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packet, photocopy enough copies of the "hidden cross" coloring sheet for all the class members. The children will color the spaces; the result is a cross on a colored background.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Invite the children to sit on the floor in a circle. Using a bean bag or soft toy (this may be decorated with a cross), ask the children to toss the bag to one another as they say the nursery rhyme, "Hot Cross Buns." Tell them the "bun" is hot, and they don't want to be caught holding it when the rhyme stops. Play as long as their interest holds.

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Tour the church building to look for different crosses on display. Stop at each cross and talk about it. (Some may have special stories.) Remember that crosses also occur naturally in the building structure, as in cross beams or window supports.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Gather several crosses of differing types, sizes, and designs. Look at these examples with the children, and wonder aloud about the following:

Who made the crosses; where they might rest or be displayed; why they are different.

It is not necessary to label or explain each one. Simply repeat, “I wonder. . .,” and let children share their thoughts.

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Teachers may choose not to have music this week in order to convey the quiet, reflective atmosphere of Holy Week.

If you wish, sing the refrain from “All Glory, Laud, and Honor” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 154; *We Sing of God*, 30).

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Spend some time visiting with the children about the observance of Holy Week in your own church. Here are some suggestions for conversation:

What are the traditions in your congregation (foot-washing, Tenebrae, Easter Vigil)? What are the names of the services people will attend? What kinds of music will there be? How will the church look inside on the different days (colors, candles, vestments, altar)?

The children will have very limited knowledge, but this occasion can plant the idea that they can be watching and listening carefully in this year’s observances.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 25 includes a cross and the memorial acclamation, “Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again (BCP, p. 363).” There is also 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

Say this prayer:

God, thank you for Holy Week in our Church,
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for the concerns of the children.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

This session is filled with many openings for children to raise issues or make comments. In listening carefully to what they say, are there clues to their special concerns and needs? If so, how could these be pursued at a later time? (Should you involve parents, clergy, or other persons with pastoral skills?)

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is on the triumphant celebration of Easter. The suggestions for teaching will be just as appropriate during the season following Easter Day. What will make this an occasion for real joy and gladness for you?

BAPTISM: BELONGING

SESSION 8

JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD

FOCUS

Jesus rose from the dead. We celebrate this good news at Easter. The children should be able to tell, in their own words the story of the resurrection.

GETTING READY

Easter is the most festive and joyful day in the life of the church.

On Easter morning, three women brought spices to anoint the body of Jesus, which was in the tomb. This was a common burial practice of the Jews. They were concerned about the large stone in front of the tomb and wondered who would roll it away for them.

When they arrived, the stone had already been removed. Inside the tomb sat a young man dressed in white. He gave a greeting that contains God's frequent message, "Don't be afraid." He then said, "Jesus has been raised." (*Mark 16:6*)

Without the resurrection, the Christian Church would not be in existence. Celebrate this day with a focus on the true meaning of Easter, helping children to center on the new life Jesus brought to everyone.

Almighty and everlasting God, who in the Paschal mystery established the new covenant of reconciliation: Grant that all who have been reborn into the fellowship of Christ's Body may show forth in their lives what they profess by their faith; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect for Thursday in Easter Week
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 223

TEACHING TIP

If this session's plans will be used on Easter Day, teachers need to prepare for more flexibility than at other times. Children will probably be dressed in their Easter best and may have invited friends and relatives to come with them. Choose activities that can be adapted for unexpected guests.

GATHERING

Prepare a basket of tissue or crepe paper flowers, or obtain cut flowers. (Children may help to make the paper flowers.) Using tape, invite each child to attach flowers to the cross—preferably the same one that was used at the two previous sessions. As each child finishes this task, encourage him or her to say “Alleluia!”

When all are present, say together:

Teacher: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

Children respond: One God and Father of all.

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 356

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 *Mark 16:6*:

“But [the angel] said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised, he is not here. Look, there is the place where they laid him.’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: *Thanks be to God.*

Young children have experienced and understand the concept of “surprise.” They love surprises that bring them happiness and delight. Let this element of surprise be dominant as you retell the story of Easter morning from *Mark 16:2-7* in your own words.

- The women who went to the tomb were very sad because Jesus, their dear friend, had died on Good Friday.
- They went to the tomb where Jesus was buried.
- The tomb was empty. An angel said Jesus was not there.
- Jesus had risen from the dead! He was alive again.
- What a wonderful surprise!
- Now they knew that Jesus would be with them always, just as he is with us always.

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Easter Cards

Using folded construction paper, glue, and pictures of flowers cut from old magazines and greeting cards, encourage children to create a card that shares the good news of the Gospel. Prepare messages (such as “Jesus Christ is Risen” or “Christ is risen. The Lord is risen indeed.”) to be pasted inside the finished card.

Option 2. Paper Easter Eggs

Ahead of time, cut large egg shapes from construction paper (preferably light, pastel shades). Supply glitter, ribbon, stickers, and cotton balls. Let the children decorate their eggs in their own way.

Eggs, as symbols of new life, have long been used in Easter celebrations. As the children work, you may want to speak simply about this fact. They can take the eggs home to share with family members.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

The good news of Easter can make us want to dance for joy. Provide each child with a colorful scarf, ribbons, or strips of scrap fabric. Show the children how to move about the room waving items like these in a happy parade. If you wish, distribute rhythm instruments as well.

This form of celebrating can easily be combined with the Music activity (below).

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Dramatize or role-play the Easter story, using simple costumes. Help the children to express the surprise and gladness the women and the other friends of Jesus felt at the resurrection.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

In most years, there will be signs of springtime at Easter. Remember that the children in the class will have few if any memories of previous Easters or springs. They find the shoots of new life springing up from the ground to be a source of wonder and delight. Wonder about:

How does each plant (bulb, bush) know when to come up?

How do the birds know when to begin building nests? How do the squirrels and other animals know when to wake up after their winter naps?

What other surprises does springtime bring?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Use the refrain of “Jesus Christ Is Risen Today, Alleluia!” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 207; *We Sing of God*, 40). This is a wonderful hymn that expresses the joy and triumph of Easter in words and music. Choose a movement to accompany the Alleluia phrase in each line. Some suggestions are: raising hands up high, clapping hands, or turning around in circles. Use the tape *Children Sing!*

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Let the conversation center on the transformation in the church building at Easter. If they have been into the nave to see for themselves, ask what they saw. Were they surprised? If they have not yet been there, this can be a time to share things they can look for.

Ask: What color(s) are used? Where are the flowers? What kinds of flowers do they see? (There may be banners. Describe these.) Speak also about the Paschal candle that appears at Easter.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 26 has a picture of the empty tomb, an Easter acclamation, 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

Give children flowers from the class cross to take home. Say this prayer:

God, we bless you for this glorious Easter.
Thank you for giving us your son, Jesus,
(Pray for the needs of the children.)
And for our families and friends.
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Did feelings of surprise, excitement, and joy emerge for the children during the activities in this session? As their teacher, were you also able to enter into the celebration of the season? Think about your own responses to the Easter news.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session will be the final one of the unit. It will make connections between the sacrament of Holy Baptism and Easter (the Church's traditional time for welcoming new members). What signs of new life, spiritual and physical, have you noticed around you?

BAPTISM: BELONGING

SESSION 9

BAPTISM MEANS NEW LIFE WITH THE RISEN JESUS

FOCUS

We have baptisms at Easter because the sacrament means new life with the risen Jesus. The children should be able to say that baptisms happen at Easter, at the same time of year we enjoy butterflies, eggs, and other symbols of the season.

GETTING READY

This session presents the relationship between the meaning of Holy Baptism and the resurrection of Christ. The children are not able to make sophisticated analogies; they cannot, for instance, explain why an Easter egg is a symbol of new life. Nor will they be able to explain baptism as new life. But it is important for them to enjoy the symbols and hear key ideas in connection with each season.

The biblical passage for this session is Jesus' command to the disciples, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (*Matthew 28:19-20*) The words should be familiar to the children.

O God, who made this most holy (season) to shine with the glory of the Lord's resurrection: Stir up in your Church that Spirit of adoption which is given to us in Baptism, that we, being renewed both in body and mind, may worship you in sincerity and truth; 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.*

Collect for Easter Day
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 222 (alt.)

TEACHING TIP

This session brings to a close a unit on the sacrament of Holy Baptism, followed by study of Holy Week and Easter. In some churches this may mean a transition not only from one unit to another but also from one teacher (or team of teachers) to another. Prepare the children for this transition.

Make it a celebration of what has happened and a time to look forward with anticipation.

GATHERING

Butterflies are a sign of new life in the spring. As the children gather, invite them to make butterflies, using the pattern on Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packet. Place the butterflies on the class cross (preferably the same one that has been used in previous sessions).

When everyone is present, say together:

Teacher: One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism;

Children respond: One God and Father of all.

The Book of Common Prayer, p.356

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 *Matthew 28:19-20*:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Begin the story by telling the children that after Jesus rose from the dead on Easter, he spent some time with his friends.

- He taught them many more things about God and what they were to do.
- When it was time, Jesus ascended into heaven to be with God.
- Before he left, he told his disciples to do these things:
- Tell all kinds of people about him—to spread the Gospel (the Good News).
- Baptize the people in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
- Obey the commandments.
- And to remember that Jesus will be with us always.

Close by telling the children that all the signs of new life that come in the spring help us remember what Jesus said.

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Caterpillars

A caterpillar that changes into a cocoon and then a butterfly is one of God's great surprises. Cut egg cartons in half lengthwise. Each half, turned hump side up, can be a caterpillar body. Insert chenille pipe cleaners to make antennae. Use markers to color the caterpillars.

Option 2. Butterflies

Using the pattern for the large butterfly on Poster no. 11 in the Teacher's Packet, cut out one butterfly for each child from black construction paper. Glue bright bits of tissue paper over the spaces in the wings. Hang or tape these near a window or light source.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Ask the children to sit in a circle. They take turns standing up. As each child stands, the rest of the children say, "(Name), Jesus will be with you!" Continue until everyone has had a turn.

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Take a trip outside to look for signs of new life. Children may take paper bags with them to collect items if this is appropriate. For older children, the walk could be set up as a simple game to hunt for specific items. (Scout the area for your walk ahead of time.) Plan to return to the classroom with a few treasures for all to examine carefully and talk about.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wonder with the children about Jesus words, "I will be with you always."
Say, I wonder what Jesus meant. How do we know when Jesus is with us?
Can we talk to Jesus? How does he talk to us?
What helps us be closer to Jesus?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing the hymn "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today, Alleluia!" (*The Hymnal* 1982, 207; *We Sing of God*, 40). The children may enjoy repeating some of

the movements they already know or making up new ones to fit with the word “Alleluia.”

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

If baptism was a part of your own congregation’s Easter weekend, spend some time describing what happened. Ask questions like:

What makes it “special” to be baptized at Easter? At what time of day does it happen?

What happened when the Celebrant said, “Let us welcome the newly baptized”?

Ask: What could we (the class members) do to make newly baptized people feel welcome in our church?

How is baptism a sign of new life? What are some other signs?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 27 includes a picture of a butterfly, the words of welcome from the service of Holy Baptism, 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

Say this prayer.

God, thank you for welcoming us,
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for any concerns the children may have.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. 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 sessions from this unit, and recall things the children have done and said. Did they become more aware of the sacrament of Holy Baptism? Was there evidence that they had new thoughts and feelings about the celebration of Easter? What kinds of activities will they experience in future years in relation to these topics?

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. WE ARE THE CHURCH

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The purpose of this unit to enable children to explore the concept of church in concrete ways. We will be looking at the history of the Church. The three-, four-, and five-year-olds have a limited concept of time, but they do know there is a “long ago,” and they like to hear about it. In their own mysterious way, they are able to grasp that Jesus belongs uniquely to both the long-ago time and our present experience. It is important for them to sense that the Church's people have been worshiping (hearing Bible stories, praying, singing, receiving Communion) for a long, long time.

In this unit for preschool- and kindergarten-age children, we look at We encourage you to talk about the lessons with your child. Do this by reading together the children's book, *We Are the Church*, which is designed to suggest the history of God's worshiping people.

Scripture passages and excerpts from *The Book of Common Prayer* that the children 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 Worship God at Church” is about going to a church building to worship God. Not everyone goes to the same church, for there are many church buildings. (*Psalm 122:1*)

Session 2: “Many People Worship at Church” is about the many different people we find at church. The children will learn about some of them, including the clergy, lay leaders, teachers, neighbors, friends, and family. (*Acts 2:42*)

Session 3: “We Read the Bible” tells how the Bible is read aloud at church. We will talk about reading the Bible and seeing where people stand to read it. (*II Timothy 3:15a, 16a*)

Session 4: “The Bible Has Stories about What God Has Done” focuses on listening at church to stories of what God has done. Stories from the Old Testament are read in church, and we learn about important people in the Bible. (*Psalm 78:4b*)

Session 5: “The Bible Has Stories about Jesus” tells about hearing stories at church of Jesus and his followers. The Gospel reading in the service is always about Jesus. (Gospel Responses, *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 357-358)

Session 6: “We Pray” is about praying at church with other people. We pray while kneeling, standing, or sitting Prayer is talking with God and listening to God. (*I Thessalonians 5:16-18*)

Session 7: “We Sing Hymns” describes the way we sing hymns at church. The children will look at a hymnal and find out when it is used. (*Psalm 95:1a*)

Session 8: “We Love and Help One Another” helps the children understand that people in the church love and help one another. They will learn how we can show love and be helpful. (*Mark 12:31*)

Session 9: “Pentecost Is the Birthday of the Church” helps the children understand the ways their church celebrates this Christian festival. (*Acts 2:44a*)

Yours in Christ,
Church School Teachers

WE ARE THE CHURCH

SESSION 1

WE WORSHIP GOD AT CHURCH

FOCUS

We can go to a church building to worship God. Not everyone goes to the same church, for there are many church buildings. The children should be able to name their own church and tell how it is different from others they have seen.

GETTING READY

The sessions in this unit correspond to the parts of the Liturgy of The Holy Eucharist (*The Book of Common Prayer*, Rite I, 323; Rite II, 355). The first part of the liturgy is “The Word of God,” which includes the Old Testament reading, the Psalms, the Gospel, the sermon, and the Prayers of the People. The second part is “The Holy Communion.”

In the Baptismal Covenant, we promise to “continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers” (BCP, 304). In practical terms, this means at least the following:

Attending worship to hear Scripture read and interpreted, to sing and pray, and to receive the bread and wine of the Eucharist.

Loving and serving others, in acts of charity and mission, and honoring God with gifts of our resources and ourselves.

Young children can learn about all these dimensions of worship and participate in worship with their families, even if they are not doing so on a regular basis. This session focuses on the church building itself as a place where people of God gather to worship God.

O Almighty God, to whose glory we celebrate the dedication of this house of prayer: We give thee thanks for the fellowship of those who have worshiped in this place; and we pray that all who seek thee here may find thee, and be filled with thy joy and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with thee, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

On the Anniversary of the Dedication of a Church
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 204

TEACHING TIP

Children are not yet ready to follow the structure of worship. They do not listen to the readings from Scripture with understanding. But they can become aware of the different parts of the service when they are helped to see connections with what they already know and experience. These sessions on the church are designed to provide some of that experience.

GATHERING

Gather pictures of different churches, including one or more pictures of your own church. Invite the children to look at the pictures and comment on the differences and similarities. Introduce the name of your church and the fact that it is a particular kind of church—Episcopal. Many churches are Episcopal churches. Invite the children to examine the pictures and to find those that look most like their own church building. Provide paper crayons and colored pencils and invite the children to draw a picture of their church. Note what they draw and ask them to share their pictures.

When all have arrived, greet them in the words of The Peace (BCP, 332, 360). This may be done individually or with children sitting in a circle.

Teacher: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Children: And also with you.

(Show the children ways to pass the peace—a gentle squeeze of the hand, a hug, a small bow, or a nod of the head to the other person. Pass the peace around the circle of children. Note that this greeting will be used each week during the unit on the church.)

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 *Psalm 122:1*:

“I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Display Posters No. 12-15 from the Teacher’s Packet that show pictures of early Christians and Christians today. The outline below will suggest a possible way of using these four scenes to illustrate a brief story.

- Long ago, men and women (fathers and mothers) and their children (boys and girls) thought about God, prayer to God, and heard good news about Jesus, God’s Son. They met together outdoors, in their houses, and in places called synagogues.
- Today, men and women and their children think about God, pray to God, and hear all about Jesus, indoors and outdoors, at home, at work, and at play. They come together in church to be with other Christians.
- Long ago, people of all ages enjoyed meals together. They ate and drank and talked about all that God had done. They gave thanks to God especially for the good news of Jesus.
- Today, families and friends go to the Church’s special meal of bread and wine. We hear good news about Jesus, and we give thanks to God.
- Say: “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’”

(Encourage the children to look at the children’s book, *We Are the Church*, with their families. Each week it will reflect various aspects of church life now and when the church first began.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Stained Glass Windows

Many churches have stained glass windows. Some churches do not. However, “stained glass” is fun to make. Give each child a ziplock plastic bag containing a small amount of finger paint. It is best to use only one color per bag. The children will enjoy squeezing the paint to spread it all around. Unzip each bag, cut along the two sides, and open to dry. The paint dried onto the plastic will make wonderful “stained glass.” String yarn through a hole punched at the top of the bag (in the center), and hang near a window. Note: You may want to test out this process yourself before introducing it to the children. Determine an amount of paint that will dry quickly and provide a transparent effect.

Option 2. Church Bells

Bells being rung are a signal that worship is beginning. Use the pattern on Poster No. 11 in the Teacher’s Packet to make a construction paper bell for each child. Purchase small, very light metal bells, and use string to attach one to each paper bell. Children can decorate their bells with crayons or markers.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Pretend to be getting ready to come to church. Use the tune of “Here We Go ‘Round the Mulberry Bush,” and make up verses about what the children do to get ready for church. Act out each verse as it is sung. It is not necessary

to have everything in chronological order. Examples: brush our teeth, put on our shoes, drink our juice, feed the dog, drive the car, and get dressed.

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Using table blocks, wooden blocks, Legos, bristle blocks, or other flexible building material, children can construct churches.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wonder about different churches. Ask questions like:

How many churches are there in the whole, wide world?

How many people go to all these churches?

How can God be in all the churches at once?

How does God hear all the prayers, music, and worship?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the hymn “Open Your Ears” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 536; *We Sing of God*, 85). Pay particular attention to the words of the first verse. Talk to the children about listening and the many ways we can do this. We not only listen with our ears, we listen with our minds and our hearts as well. God talks to us in many ways. The tune is recorded on the music tape *Children Sing!* Sing it fast! Encourage the children to clap the rhythm.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

The word “liturgy” means “the work of the people.” Our Episcopal liturgy includes many actions. Young children are acute observers. Explore with them what they have seen in church. Following are some ideas for questions:

What books do you see? What color(s) are they? Where are they kept? What do people do with them?

Who are the people who lead the service? What do they wear?

What are some of the things we see them doing?

What else do we see?

Affirm children’s observations, remembering that they do not need to be aware of everything or to have precise and logical ways of speaking about the things they mention.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 28 has a picture of people at church, a Scripture verse, and a note to parents. Help the children to add these cards to their collection and keep them in a safe place by providing a means to get the cards home. Plan to send the cards to children who miss class.

SAYING GOODBYE

At the end of the session, gather the children for the closing:

God, thank you for church buildings to worship in,
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for any concerns expressed by the children.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen .

Hold hands in a circle. (Children may want to pass The Peace again.)
Conclude by saying:

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

For some children, this may be the first introduction to the particular parish to which they belong. Did the children know the name of the church or that it is an Episcopal church? Think about ways to remind them of these facts in the weeks to come.

LOOKING AHEAD

The session that follows focuses the people who attend worship. If the children do not participate in worship, reflect on how the class experience can become worship for them. What does your own participation in worship mean to you?

WE ARE THE CHURCH

SESSION 2

MANY PEOPLE WORSHIP AT CHURCH

FOCUS

We see many different people at church. The children should be able to name some of them, including the clergy, lay leaders, teachers, neighbors, friends, and family.

GETTING READY

Children need to explore the concept of church in concrete ways. One of those ways is by encountering the people of God who worship together in the church. In the early Church people worshiped in many of the same ways we do today. They gathered together with families and friends to worship God and share the Holy Eucharist. They also helped each other as a community, loving and serving each other in the name of Jesus Christ.

The Scripture reading from the *Acts of the Apostles*, chapter 2, recalls that, “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” In this biblical description of the early Church we see many familiar elements: breaking bread together, the beginning of what is now a formal tradition of Eucharist; praising God; and having goodwill toward others.

The concepts of “long ago” and “now” can help children begin to understand the long history of God’s people as Christians.

Almighty and everlasting God, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift: Send down upon our bishops, and other clergy, and upon the congregations committed to their charge, the healthful Spirit of thy grace; and, that they may truly please thee, pour upon them the continual dew of thy blessing. Grant this, O Lord, for the honor of our Advocate and Mediator, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

For Clergy and People
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 817

TEACHING TIP

Young children use a variety of learning styles that need to be considered in selecting activities for the class. Some children learn easily by listening. Others will need to see something in order for it to have meaning for them. A

third group will need to touch items and use their bodies to learn. To be able to identify the different learning styles the children exhibit, the teacher will need to be a careful observer of the children's responses. Provide as many different approaches to learning as possible.

GATHERING

Display the simple outline of a church building from Poster No. 16 in the Teacher's Packet. Invite the children as they arrive to arrange figures of people around the church. Sources of figures are magazines, pictures taken from the parish directory if there is one, photographs, small play figures from various children's games, or "pipe cleaner people" (see directions in the Teacher's Packet).

When all are present, greet them with The Peace (BCP, 332, 360). This may be done individually or with children sitting in a circle.

Teacher: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Children: And also with you.

Pass the Peace—a gentle squeeze of the hand, a hug, a small bow, or a nod of the head to the other person—around the circle.

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the story with a short reading from the Bible. Gather the group in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Acts 2:42*:

"And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Posters No. 13 and 15 show people worshiping today. Keeping in mind the worship customs in your own parish, tell about a service in story form. This may be the weekly service if children regularly attend, a chapel service they take part in, or a special family service they may have been to. It may include:

- Jordan and his sister Kate went to church with their parents.
- They stood and waited for the cross to come down the aisle. A hymn was being sung. It was one they knew so they sang, too.
- They stood while the opening prayers were said. When it was time to read from the Bible they sat down to listen. One of their favorite stories

about Jesus was read as they stood to hear the Gospel.

- They sat down again while a sermon about Jesus was given.
- They stood up again to say the Creed and the Prayers of the People.
- Then everybody greeted everyone else by saying, “The Peace of the Lord be always with you.”
- Some friends of theirs passed the collection plate. They both put their money in by themselves.
- After singing some more it was time for Holy Communion. Prayers were said to bless the bread and the wine. The Lord’s Prayer was said by everybody. Jordan and Kate knew it too.
- Soon it was time to go to the altar with their family. Some children received the bread and wine; some received a blessing.
- After saying another prayer and singing another hymn, the priest dismissed the people by saying, “Let us bless the Lord.” Everyone replied, “Thanks be to God.”

(Encourage the children to read about the worship in the children’s book, *We Are the Church*, at home with their families.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes.)

Option 1. People in the Church

Give each child several “people” cut from the pattern on Poster No. 11 in the Teacher’s Packet. Invite the group to color the people to resemble friends who are in church with them.

Option 2. People Puppets

Make finger puppets to represent the many people who are in church. Make small cardboard loops that will slip over children’s fingers easily. Or, if possible, obtain an inexpensive plain white, cotton glove for each child. Cut people’s faces from magazines and provide blank face shapes for children to draw and color. Attach the faces to the cardboard finger loops, or to the fingers of the gloves. With either method, the children can wear several people puppets at one time.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Invite the children to enjoy 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 conclude:*

And see all the people!

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Use towels, lengths of cloth, scarves, old pillowcases, belts, cords, and sashes for children to dress up as people from biblical times. When everyone is robed, take a “pretend” walk to church, in follow-the-leader style, or actually walk down the halls and see where the other people are. Start with one child who chooses another, saying, “Come to church with me.” When all the children have been chosen, conclude with a prayer time in “church.” (This activity can be done without the biblical costumes if the teacher prefers.)

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wonder about the faces and names of people in all the churches of the world. Invite the children to respond to “I wonder. . .” statements like these:

I wonder how many churches there are in the whole world.

I wonder how many people worship God each day? On Sundays?

I wonder what a stranger would think of our church? What would Jesus think if he came today?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing the hymn, “Open Your Ears” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 536; *We Sing of God*, 85). Clap the rhythm a few times. Join hands and move in a circle, or do a line dance around the room. Use the music tape *Children Sing!* to support this activity.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Talk with the children about the people they know who go to your church. All persons are welcome there. Some possible questions:

What are the names of people we know in our church? Which ones are friends? family members? neighbors? classmates?

Who are the priests (deacons)? the lay participants in the services? the acolytes? the choir members?

When do babies come to church? teenagers?

Do you know people who go to other churches? Where do they go?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 29 includes a picture of priest at the altar, a Scripture verse, 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, gather the children for the Closing:

God, thank you for all the people at church,
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for the concerns of the children.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle. (Children may want to pass The Peace again.)

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Did the children appear to be aware of all the different kinds of people who attend your church? Consider the ways in which we can foster the idea that all people are loved and welcomed by God.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on the Bible as it is read in church. Spend some time this week with a Bible. Read some of your favorite passages. How does your own reading of the Bible as the Word of God influence your teaching?

WE ARE THE CHURCH

SESSION 3

WE READ THE BIBLE

FOCUS

At church the Bible is read aloud. The children should be able to tell how the Bible is read in the church's services and show where persons stand to read it.

GETTING READY

The Episcopal Church uses the Bible, *The Book of Common Prayer*, and *The Hymnal 1982*. The Bible provides us with the stories of God's people in history through the Torah, the first five books of the Bible, which we call the Pentateuch, the Psalms, the Prophets, and the Wisdom books. The Gospels give us the story of Jesus Christ and his teachings, culminating in his death and resurrection. The Epistles tell us of the struggles of the early church to interpret Christ's message for the present and the future.

The Book of Common Prayer provides the biblical basis for the traditions of the sacraments and rites that communicate who we are as Christians and Episcopalians. *The Hymnal 1982* provides the music that supports our worship and the traditions of the Church.

The purpose of this session is to point out to children that the reading of the Bible is central to our worship.

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Proper 28

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 236

TEACHING TIP

In order for children to experience a sense of appreciation and love of the Bible, they must be able to enjoy the stories at their own level of understanding. When adults begin to interpret a story for them, by sharing hidden meanings or by adding a moral at the end, the Bible may seem to be a "hard book" to be avoided rather than a living book to be valued.

GATHERING

In a separate area of the classroom, arrange a variety of children's Bibles or Bible stories—from the church or public library. As the children arrive, invite them to enjoy looking at the books. Make this an inviting place to curl up and read a book. As more children arrive ask one who is already there to “read” their book to the new person.

When all have gathered, greet them with The Peace (BCP, pp.332, 360). This may be done individually or with children sitting in a circle.

Teacher: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Children: And also with you.

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the story with a reading from the Bible. Gather the group in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *II Timothy 3:15a, 16a*:

“. . . From childhood you have known the sacred writings . . . All scripture is inspired by God“

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Begin by sharing some of the following:

- People told the stories of the Bible to each other a long time before they were written down.
- We are sharing the written Word of God when we read the Bible.
- From listening and reading we learn about God and God's people.
- Retell the story of Creation from Unit I, or one of the stories about Jesus from Unit II that you enjoy telling.
- Ask the group members to share some of their favorite stories from the Bible.

(Remind them that they can read with their families from the children's book, *We Are the Church*.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Bible Story Books

Fold several sheets of paper in half and staple them to form a book, using a piece of construction paper on the outside for a cover. Provide crayons, markers, or paint for children to draw stories, people, or events from Bible

stories they know. If children ask, be prepared to write down titles or stories for their pictures.

Option 2. People in the Bible

Provide children with play dough and invite them to create figures of familiar people or stories from the Bible. Encourage children to talk as they work. The process of creating is far more important than the production of recognizable figures.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Bring a “mystery bag” (paper or cloth) that contains objects that will remind the children of Bible stories they have learned this year. Examples: shells, small animal figures, artificial plants (the story of Creation); baby in a manger, other individual crèche figures (the Nativity); loaves and fish, a boat (Jesus’ miracles); a dove (Jesus’ baptism).

Invite individuals to reach into the mystery bag, take out articles one at a time, and tell a story.

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Visit the church nave, and look at the lectern. Try to have a step available so children can climb up to reach and take a close look at the Bible used in church. Give each child a turn to be “the reader.” Also show the children where the Gospel is read and possibly a Gospel book.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Collect and display a variety of adult Bibles. Allow and encourage children to touch and look through them. What differences do they see? Talk about the different sizes, the thin paper, coverings, kinds of print, and pictures.

Wonder about how many stories are in the Bible. Wonder about all the people all over the world who read the Bible. Wonder about how many different languages the Bible is written in.

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing the hymn “Open Your Ears, O Faithful People” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 536; *We Sing of God*, 85). Sing and clap with the song. Use rhythm instruments or stamping feet to make a special sound each time the word *Tora* is sung. Use the music tape *Children Sing!* to support this activity.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

God speaks to us through stories in the Bible. It is very important that we listen to these stories and learn what God is saying to us. Here are some questions to spark conversation:

Where have you seen the Bible in church?

Who reads from the Bible in church?

Where is the Bible at home? Who reads from it? Who tells stories from the Bible?

Where else have children seen Bibles?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 30 contains a picture of a Bible, a Scripture verse, 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, gather the children for the closing:

God, thank you for the Bible,
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for the needs of the children.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle. (Children may want to pass The Peace again.)

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

By being exposed to the Bible in a variety of ways, it is hoped that the children will begin to appreciate it as the very special and important book that it is for Christians. Did the children show any evidence of this appreciation? In what ways could they be helped to treasure the Scriptures?

LOOKING AHEAD

In the next session, the children will meet Abraham and Moses as representatives of Old Testament stories we learn in church. Recall some of your own early experiences with Bible stories. Were there parts that frightened you? delighted you? intrigued you? As you prepare to teach the children, you may wish to be guided by these personal feelings.

WE ARE THE CHURCH

SESSION 4

THE BIBLE HAS STORIES ABOUT WHAT GOD HAS DONE

FOCUS

We listen at church to stories of what God has done. The children should be able to say that stories from the Old Testament are read in church.

GETTING READY

We call the Holy Scriptures the Word of God because God inspired their human authors and still speaks to us through the Bible (*The Book of Common Prayer: Catechism*, p. 853). The Church's Lectionary includes daily readings from the Old Testament, the Epistles, and the Gospels. The Sunday readings from the Old Testament have been chosen with the theme of the Gospel lesson in mind.

In church we hear the stories of what God has done in the Old Testament (the Hebrew Scriptures). This is the first reading from Scripture. Young children can learn to know when the Scriptures are read in worship, whether at the Eucharist or in Morning Prayer (or other Offices).

In this session, the intention is help the children recognize that the readings came from the Bible.

O God, whose wonderful deeds of old shine forth even to our own day, you once delivered by the power of your mighty arm your chosen people from slavery under Pharaoh, to be a sign for us of the salvation of all nations by the water of Baptism: Grant that all the peoples of the earth may be numbered among the offspring of Abraham, and rejoice in the inheritance of Israel; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Easter Vigil Prayer

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 289

TEACHING TIP

Children's first introduction to the Bible should be through key figures in the history of God's people, about whom they will hear again and again throughout their lives. Details of the stories will come at a later time when they will be able to grasp their larger meanings. Refer to Abraham and Moses as people of the Bible who followed God because they believed in God's promise to them.

GATHERING

Again arrange a reading area in the classroom. Display books of children's Bible stories or children's Bibles. These can be obtained from the church's library or a public library. As the children come in, invite them to look at the books. Point out some of the stories that are from the Old Testament. If sharing of works worked for the last session, invite the children to do so again.

When all have arrived, greet them with The Peace (BCP, pp. 332, 360). This may be done individually or with children sitting in a circle.

Teacher: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Children: And also with you.

STORY

(Time: 10 Minutes)

Begin with a short reading from the Bible. Gather the group in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Psalm 78:4b*:

“ . . . we will tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders that he has done.”

Conclude with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Begin to tell the story in your own way. You may wish to start by saying:

- In the Bible, we can read the story of Abraham and his wife, Sarah. They traveled far to a new land because God had told them to go. Abraham had God's blessing and promise, and he did what God asked of him.
- In the Bible, we can read the story of Moses, who was given a special bed to float in the water so he would be safe. When Moses grew up he led the people of God to freedom in the Promised Land.
- We can also hear the story of Joseph, who was given a special coat by his father who loved him very much. He had dreams and told other people what the dreams meant. Joseph gave God's people food when they were hungry.
- Another story tells about a man named Jonah who was swallowed by a big fish, but God saved him.
- All of these stories are in the Bible.
- We read parts of these stories in church each week.
(Invite the children to read about some of these stories at home in the

children's book *We Are the Church*.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Bible Markers

Children can make ribbon Bible markers to take home and put in Bibles or Bible storybooks. Give each child a 12-15" length of wide ribbon. Decorate the ribbons with glitter, fabric paint, or by gluing scraps of fabric to them.

Option 2. Tablet stories and writing

During Old Testament times, people preserved their stories of faith by telling them over and over to one another. Few people knew how to write or had materials for doing so. Stories that were written were inscribed on clay or wax tablets. Give the children an opportunity to experience this.

Use styrofoam trays, such as those in which produce is packed. With sticks or pencils, children can write on the "tablets." Younger children can make marks and pictures, and older children may wish to write some words or simple sentences. The pressure on the styrofoam will make visible indentations. When everyone has finished, paint the "tablets" with tempera to reveal the drawings/writings.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Set up a simple obstacle course in the classroom, or outside if weather permits. The obstacles could be a blanket over a chair for a sand dune, a box for a rock, a coat rack for a tree. Invite the children to go around or over the obstacles as they wander through the desert like Abraham and Sarah.

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Cover a box with red and orange paper to represent the "burning bush," and draw a circle around the bush to designate the holy ground. Invite the children to take off their shoes, as Moses did, and to enter the circle. Once the children are all in the circle, talk about Moses' call from God. Share these lines spoken by God to Moses at the burning bush: "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground. . . I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." (*Exodus 3:5-6a*) Read from the Bible, or paraphrase in your own words.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Think about the people of the Bible who lived long, long, ago. Tell the children it was even before their grandparents or great-grandparents were born. Invite the children to wonder about the following:

What was it like to live a long, long time ago?

What kind of clothes did people wear?

What kind of food did they eat?

How did they worship God?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing the refrain from “Open Your Ears, O Faithful People” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 536; *We Sing of God*, 85). Use the music tape *Children Sing!*

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

When the Old Testament is read aloud in church on Sundays, we hear only parts of the story that support the Gospel lesson. Children who listen attentively to the readings will often recognize names and events they have learned in church school. It is these early instances of recognition that become the basis for a gradual incorporation into listening and responding congregation. Some questions that might be considered are:

What are the names of some of the people in the Bible that we might listen for when we hear the readings in church?

How do readers tell us what they will read?

What do readers say when they finish? What do we say then?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 31 contains pictures of Abraham and Moses, 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, gather the children for the ritual of parting. Say:

God, thank you for the Bible;
Thank you for stories of Abraham and Moses,
And for our families and friends.
(Pray for the needs of the children.)
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

The Old Testament stories may not be familiar to the children. There is often confusion with the names of characters as well. Was there any indication that the children in your class were confused in this way? How can teachers and parents help them, through the years, to form clearer concepts?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is centered on the reading of the Gospel lessons in the church's public worship, and how we learn from them about the life of Jesus. Spend some time looking at the four Gospel accounts as you prepare. Which one do you turn to most often? Why?

WE ARE THE CHURCH

SESSION 5

THE BIBLE HAS STORIES ABOUT JESUS

FOCUS

At church we hear about Jesus and his followers. The children should be able to explain that the Gospel reading in the service is always about Jesus.

GETTING READY

The Gospel is central to our worship. It is read at Morning and Evening Prayer and at celebrations of Holy Eucharist. The entire liturgy revolves around the life and teachings of Jesus, and his death, resurrection, and ascension. Without this focus to our worship, we would not be Christians.

The focus for this session is to help the children learn that each time that we gather for worship we share stories about Jesus. Jesus himself did not leave any writings. His followers wrote the information we have about him. These are called the Gospels. There are four Gospels: the *Gospel of Matthew*, the *Gospel of Mark*, the *Gospel of Luke*, and the *Gospel of John*. The first three Gospels are called the Synoptic Gospels because many of the stories about Jesus are similar and the writers may have used similar original sources. The *Gospel of John* is very different, although the basic story of Jesus' ministry is the same.

Almighty God, . . . you have given to your Church the Gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God: We thank you for this witness, and pray that we may be firmly grounded in its truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Collect for Saint Mark (adapted)
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 240

TEACHING TIP

Young children, because they are literal thinkers, will be much more likely to recall the events in a story if they see a picture or handle an object related to it. This is why picture books are so popular with young children. Often, they can repeat a story verbatim just by turning the pages and looking at the pictures. This is not so much a matter of their having memorized the text as it is their ability to follow clues they receive from the pictures.

GATHERING

As the children arrive, provide them with paper and crayons or markers. Invite them to draw a picture of their favorite story about Jesus. Stimulate their thinking by displaying some of the pictures from the Teacher's Packet (Posters No. 6, 7, or 8), or other pictures you may have. Display the finished pictures.

When all have arrived, greet them with The Peace (BCP, pp. 332, 360). This may be done individually or with children sitting in a circle.

Teacher: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Children: And also with you.

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Gather the group in a circle. Open the Bible, and show the children the four Gospel books: *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*.

The story for this session should be a simple telling of the story of Jesus using verses of Scripture from the four Gospels. Begin by saying:

- When we are in church, there is a time for a reading from one of the four Gospels. The Gospel reading is introduced by the deacon or priest who says, "The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to —(the name of the Gospel)—." The people answer by saying, "Glory to you, Lord Christ."
- After each Gospel, the reader says, "The Gospel of the Lord." The people answer, "Praise to you, Lord Christ." (BCP, pp. 326, 357-358)
- Use the following verses to tell in your own words a brief story of the life of Jesus.
- *Luke 2:7*: "And [Mary] gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn."
- *Mark 1:9*: "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan."
- *Matthew 4:23*: "Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people."
- *John 20:19c*: ". . . Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'"

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Gospel Finger-Painting

For each child, divide a piece of glossy paper into four sections. Put a small amount of four colors (such as red, green, purple, and blue) on the paper, one color in each section. Talk about the stories of Jesus in the four Gospels as the children finger-paint with the four different colors. (Note: There is no particular significance to the colors chosen; they have no relationship to liturgical colors. The purpose of the activity is simply to stress “fourness” when thinking of Gospels in the Bible.)

Option 2. Stories about Jesus

Fold a sheet of white paper in half and write in waterproof marker on the front “Holy Bible.” Use watercolors to paint pictures of Jesus inside the “Bible.”

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Play a game called “Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.” Ask the children to sit in a circle, and choose one of them to stand in the middle. Give the child in the middle a scarf or small piece of cloth. Toss the cloth into the air and say: “Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, bless the one that this falls on.” The child on whom the scarf falls then has the opportunity to stand in the middle, repeat the rhyme, and toss the scarf.

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Take a tour of the church to look for stained glass windows, carvings, paintings, or needlepoint designs that remind us of Jesus. Let the tour provide time for telling some of the events in Jesus’ life.

Or, make a series of large paper footsteps and put a symbol of an event in Jesus’ life on each one. Place the footsteps around the classroom or around the building. Take a “walking” trip and tell the story of each footprint.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

The meaning of the word gospel is “good news.” Wonder with the children about “good news.” Some suggestions are:

Why is the story of Jesus good news?

What was the most wonderful thing you can think of about Jesus?

What would you think of as really “good news”?

How would you share “good news” with your friends?

How would you share the “good news” about Jesus with your friends?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing “Day by Day” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 654; *We Sing of God*, 99). Use the hand motions of three fingers at the number three, folding hands for “pray,” hand over eyes to “see,” crossing arms on chest for “love,” and extending one arm for “follow.” Sing or say the words slowly so that it will be a quiet prayer. The music tape *Children Sing!* may be helpful to introduce the hymn.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Talk about the stories of Jesus from the Bible. Encourage children to share their ideas and comments. Some possible questions:

When do we hear stories about Jesus in church?

What stories do you know about Jesus?

When do we hear about Jesus as a baby? Jesus as a boy?

What are some of the things Jesus did?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 32 includes a picture of Jesus, 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, gather the children for the ritual of parting and say:

God, thank you for Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John,

And for our families and friends.

(Pray for the concerns of the children.)

Be with us as we go,

And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER’S REFLECTION

IV. We Are the Church—Session 5

Shell Year Preschool/Kindergarten—Copyright © 2009 Virginia Theological Seminary

At the end of this session, the children should be making the connection between the stories they have heard about Jesus and the Gospel reading heard in a church service. What evidence have you seen of this connection? In what ways can it be strengthened?

LOOKING AHEAD

In the next session, the children will focus on prayer—especially forms of prayer used in church. Spend some time reflecting on both the informal and formal types of prayer that you experience. Explore *The Book of Common Prayer*, noting the various types of prayers it contains.

WE ARE THE CHURCH

SESSION 6

WE PRAY

FOCUS

At church we pray with other people; we pray while kneeling, standing, or sitting. The children should be able to say that prayer is talking with God and listening to God.

GETTING READY

On page 856 of *The Book of Common Prayer* we learn the definition of prayer, the different kinds of prayer, and the reason for corporate worship. In corporate worship that we join with others to acknowledge the holiness of God, to hear God's Word, to offer prayer, and to celebrate the sacraments. Jesus gave us an example of how we should pray when he was asked to do so by the disciples. This is the prayer that we know and call the *Lord's Prayer*.

Children can and do pray in their own very special ways. Some may already know the *Lord's Prayer*. The purpose of this session is not to teach the children how to pray but simply to help them recognize that people in the congregation pray together when they come to church.

O Lord, mercifully receive the prayers of your people who call upon you, and grant that they may know and understand what things they ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to accomplish them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Proper 10

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 231

TEACHING TIP

Children's prayers are very often specific to the concrete experiences they think about each day. They believe that they are the center of the world; they often perceive all good things as answers to prayer and all bad things as punishment. By recognizing this characteristic, adults can be more sensitive listeners to children's prayers.

GATHERING

Before the children arrive, arrange the Gathering place to include several copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* alongside several prayer books prepared especially for children. Encourage the children to look through the books. Ask whether any of the books look familiar. Where have they seen the Prayer Book? What differences do they notice between the Prayer Book and the other books displayed? Provide puzzles and paper and crayons as alternative activities.

When all have arrived, greet them with The Peace (BCP, pp. 332, 360). This may be done individually or with children sitting in a circle.

Teacher: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Children: And also with you.

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the story with a reading from the Bible. Gather the group in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *I Thessalonians. 5:16-18*:

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Begin by saying, “All our lives, every day, we should pray to God. We listen and talk to God through prayer.”

- Create a story, in your own words, about a day in the life of a small child. Tell about all the times we pray and talk to God throughout a typical day. Examples:
- We thank God for the new morning when we get up.
- We thank God for love when we give our family a hug before going to school.
- Include in the story both times when prayers are said with others and times when prayers are said alone.
- We say grace at meals, and bedtime prayers.
- Invite the children to share their own prayers at different points in the story.

(The children can read about prayers at home in the children’s book *We Are the Church*.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Picture Prayers

Ahead of time, collect several boxes of pictures clipped from magazines. Also, obtain a variety of stickers (optional). Sort the pictures and stickers by category, such as: people, animals, nature, events. (Older children may wish to cut out their own pictures.)

Prepare a sheet of heavy posterboard or cardboard (9" by 12") for each child. Use a colored marker to draw a border about 1" in from the edge. Write, "Thank you, God" at the top of each sheet. The children will glue pictures and stickers from the boxes to their cardboard sheets. Their choices should represent what they are thankful for. Provide crayons and markers in case some of the children would like to draw their own pictures.

Option 2. Praying Hands

Fold pieces of construction paper in half, and ask each child to trace a hand, with the "little finger side" of the hand touching the fold. Cut out the hands (without cutting the folded edge), and open up the sheets. The result will be two hands attached and open; when closed again, they will be like hands folded for prayer. Children can draw pictures of what they would pray for on the inside of the hands. Or, a simple prayer written on a piece of paper can be inserted between the hands.

Another option for this activity is to make hand molds out of plaster-of-paris. Mix the plaster, taking care to follow precisely the directions on the package. Pour the mixture into aluminum pie plates, having previously coated them by rubbing with a cake of soap. As the plaster sets, have each child place a hand in the center of the plate, hold for a few seconds, and remove. The print should remain; if not, wait a bit more and try again. Insert a straw in the top for a hole. When the plaster is dry, remove the mold from the pie plate. Tie a ribbon through the hole. Be sure to label each plate with the child's name and transfer the name to the mold as soon as it is removed.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Invite the children to stand in two circles, one inside the other. Ask them to face each other and to say to the person in front, "I thank God for ____." Clap hands as a signal to move around the circle. Clap again as a signal to stop. Then say to the person in front, "I thank God for _____." Repeat as often as the children are interested and have things to share.

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Take the children into the church or chapel. Sit down in the pews. Look for the Prayer Books and Hymnals. Practice holding and opening the Prayer Book. Pull down or put the kneelers in place. Try kneeling on them. Gather around the altar. Kneel or stand there as custom allows in your church. Say a prayer with the children. The Lord's Prayer would be appropriate.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

When we pray, we talk to God and trust that God will hear our prayers. Wonder with the children about how God hears prayers. Here are some suggestions:

Can God hear when everyone talks at the same time?

How can God hear us when we whisper or say prayers in our heads?

How do we know whether God hears us?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing the hymn, "Day by Day, Dear Lord, of You Three Things I Pray" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 654; *We Sing of God*, 99) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Invite the children to use hand motions as they sing, holding up three fingers, folding hands to pray, hand over eyes to see, both arms across chest for love, and arm extended to represent following.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

In church we pray together. We pray while sitting, standing, or kneeling. Most of the prayers we use in church are found in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Show the book to the children. Mention that every prayer ends with the word "Amen." Say the word together a few times. Some ideas for conversation:

When have you seen people praying? What did you hear?

What do you pray for?

What are some prayers you can say?

What kinds of prayers can you make up?

Share some prayers, saying *Amen* after each one.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 33 includes a picture of people praying, a Scripture verse, a 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

At the end of the session, gather the children for the ritual of parting and say:

God, thank you for listening to our prayers,
(Pray for any concerns the children may express.)
And for our families and friends.
Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and conclude.

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Prayer is conversation with God, both informal and formal. We pray individually and with others. What sense did you get that the children were comfortable praying in any or all of these ways? Were you, as their teacher, comfortable in allowing the children to create their own prayers?

LOOKING AHEAD

In the next session, the activities will center on the singing of hymns during worship in the church. Look through a hymnal and select some of your favorite hymns. Reflect on these as you prepare for the next session.

WE ARE THE CHURCH

SESSION 7

WE SING HYMNS

FOCUS

At church we sing hymns. The children should be able to identify a hymnal and explain when it is used.

GETTING READY

Good liturgy and the environment in which it takes place will employ at times all the human senses—sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch. Young children are learning primarily through direct sensual experience. They will not have words to describe what they sense to be unique about the church. But in many ways they will reflect what they see and hear among adults. When the adults around them are open to the Spirit of God, children will show their own openness to prayer and worship.

Music is an especially important element in worship, and it opens the way for greater participation by children in particular. When worshipping people sing joyfully, children will identify with them, also.

This session focuses on the music of the church and will help children to learn its place in worship.

O God, whom saints and angels delight to worship in heaven: Be ever present with your servants who seek through art and music to perfect the praises offered by your people on earth; and grant to them even now glimpses of your beauty, and make them worthy at length to behold it unveiled for evermore; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For Church Musicians and Artists
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 819

TEACHING TIP

Children are able, almost unconsciously, to remember words set to music. When they hear hymns sung repeatedly in church, they pick up the words even when they do not have a full understanding of their meaning. The process is helped along by the poetry, the rhythm and meter, of the hymns.

GATHERING

Play tapes of hymns (words and music) as children arrive. Use *Children Sing!* for this Gathering. Provide rhythm instruments for children to join in with the music. Clap, sway, tap out a rhythm, or pretend to play piano/organ along with one of the hymns on the tape.

When all have arrived, greet them with The Peace.

Teacher: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Children: And also with you.

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the story with a short reading from the Bible. Gather the group in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Psalm 95:1a*:

“O come, let us sing to the Lord.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

In your own words tell the story of music in the story of God’s people. You may want to include some of the following:

- People have always made music. Music is referred to in *Genesis 4* where it says Jubal is the ancestor of all those who play the lyre (harp) and pipe (flute.)
- The psalms are hymns of the Hebrew people that were sung in celebrations and in temple worship.
- The hymns we sing often tell stories.
- Many of the Christmas carols, such as “Go Tell It On the Mountain”, tell the story of the Nativity.
- “Jesus Christ Is Risen Today” and other hymns tell the story of Easter.
- Choose a hymn to tell the story of Jesus through the use of music.

(The children can read about music in the Church in the children’s book *We Are the Church* at home with their families.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Musical Instruments

Choose one of the following to make:

1. Rhythm instruments. Drums can be made from round oatmeal containers. Shakers are made from paper plates filled with pebbles and

taped around the edges. Tying small bells to the edges of sturdy plates can make tambourines.

2. Stringed instruments. Use a block of wood with nails at each end. Wind string tightly around the nails for strings. Or, cut out the inside of a very thick disposable plate so only the rim is left. Wrap several bands of string over the opening and around the rim to create a set of strings.

3. Bells. Tie large jingle bells to ribbons.

Option 2. Painting to Music

Give children large sheets of white paper. Play recorded hymns. Ask the children to close their eyes and listen to the music. While listening, they can use their fingers to make “pretend” music drawings. Encourage the children to talk about the music and how they feel about it.

Now hand out several colors of paint or markers. Replay the music, and let the children do “musical” drawings on the paper.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Play “Pass the Bell.” With children sitting closely together in a circle, pass a small bell around. Play a tape of church music. When the music stops, the child who has the bell stands up and rings it, saying “Alleluia.” When the music starts again, the children continue the game.

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Visit the choir’s space at your church. If possible, arrange for the children to try on a choir robe. Look at the music folders. Try sitting in choir stalls (pews), or rehearsal chairs. Look at the organ, especially the keyboard. Arrange to have someone play a short piece the children know.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wonder about the singing of hymns and music.

Wonder about all the music in the world.

Wonder about the music the birds make.

Wonder about all the music that praises God.

Wonder about the music of angels.

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Repeat the two hymns being used in this unit: “Open Your Ears” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 536; *We Sing of God*, 85) and “Day By Day” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 654; *We Sing of God*, 99). Use the tape *Children Sing!*

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Talk about singing in church. Hymnals should be available for children to look at. Some ideas for conversation and questions:

When do we sing?

What do children like to sing in church?

What happens when people are singing? (Processional, offering, during Eucharist, recessional.)

Who sings?

What are the special clothes worn by choir members?

Where does the music come from?

Are there bells in church?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 34 includes a picture of children singing, a verse from Scripture, 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

At the end of the session, gather the children for the ritual of parting:

God, we bless you for the gift of music.

And for our families and friends.

(Pray for any concerns the children may have.)

Be with us as we go,

And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle. Say these words.

Teacher: Let us bless the Lord.

Children: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER’S REFLECTION

Children usually enjoy all types of music. How did the children respond to the hymns and other music in this session? How well did they remember the hymns used earlier in the year? Are there ways for young children to be involved in a music program at your church?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is on the church as a community of people who love and help one another. Reflect on ways that you, as a member of the congregation, participate in outreach programs and offer support to others through prayer and concrete acts of helpfulness.

WE ARE THE CHURCH

SESSION 8

WE LOVE AND HELP ONE ANOTHER

FOCUS

People in the church love and help one another. The children should be able to tell ways we can show love and be helpful.

GETTING READY

It is important for us to consider the significance of the church as “the Body of Christ” in the world. As baptized people who pray and worship, we are called to seek and serve Christ “in all persons,” loving our neighbors as ourselves. As Christ’s ministers, we pray for and do what we can to ensure justice and peace among all people.

When adults think of the Church’s outreach, their thoughts often turn at once to helping the poor and the homeless, and visiting the sick. These are necessary undertakings for the people involved in these ministries. Children, on the other hand, have an understanding of outreach limited to the people very near to them: family, friends, classmates, and neighbors.

This session is designed to help children begin to understand what it means to follow Jesus’ command to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. *Amen.*

A Prayer attributed to St. Francis
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 833

TEACHING TIP

As the children approach the end of a year in church school, there will be many observable changes in their abilities. This session on caring for others offers an opportunity for noting the levels of maturity many of them have gained. For example, the three-year-olds are now almost four. Are they

moving toward more cooperative play and behavior? The fives, almost six and thinking about first grade, are likely to be more helpful and eager to please adults. Is this noticeable?

GATHERING

Once again, use the outline drawing of a church and the paper figure patterns from Posters No. 11 and 16 in the Teacher's Packet. Make several sizes of blank figures. Talk with the children as they come in about people they love, care for, and help. Invite the children to select figures to color, adding clothes, faces, or names. Tape the figures inside the church outline.

When all have arrived, greet them with The Peace (BCP 332, 360).

Teacher: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Children: And also with you.

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the story with a short reading from the Bible. Gather the group in a circle, open the Bible, and let children see where the reading is. Read *Mark 12:31*:

“. . . You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

In your own words tell the story of Jesus giving the Great Commandment, from the *Gospel of Mark*. Include the following:

- Jesus was talking with many people about God and who God is for us.
- One of the people asked Jesus, “Which commandment is the first of all?”
- The man knew about the rules of God—the Ten Commandments: Love God, Honor your mother and father, Don't kill, Don't lie, Keep the Sabbath (Sunday) holy. (You can name all ten, but only a few are necessary for this story.)
- Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”
- Jesus wants us to love God and to show our love for God by caring for other people.

(Remind the children that they can read on their own in the children's book

We Are the Church at home.)

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Caring Cards

Each child can make a card to give to someone else. Decorate the cards with markers, stickers, bits of colored paper, tissue paper, and ribbons. Cards may be made for parish shut-ins, for residents of nursing homes, or for the clergy to take on pastoral calls. Young children can be reluctant to give up their handwork, especially for purposes that are vague and abstract. If this happens in the class, children can make one additional card to take home for parents or grandparents.

Option 2. Helping Hands

Provide the children with large sheets of paper, one for each child. Instruct everyone to trace one hand on his/her sheet. Ask the children to move around, tracing their hands onto the sheets of all the others. Repeat the tracings as often as there is room on the papers. The result will be sheets filled with hands—one's own surrounded by classmates' tracings. Help the children to write their names on the traced hands. Drawings can be decorated with crayon or marker. As the children work, introduce the idea that the finished sheets will show "helping hands."

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Play a version of "Farmer in the Dell." Change the words to "A friend helps a friend, Heigh Ho the Derry O, A friend helps a friend." Ask the children to form a circle, with one child in the middle. As the children sing, the child in the center chooses another child to come into the circle. Continue until the circle cannot hold any more children. Repeat as often as interest holds.

DOING

(Time: 20 minutes)

Provide simple props and costumes that suggest a home environment: aprons, pots and pans, baby dolls, tools, and stuffed animals. Role-play situations with the children that require them to be helpful to someone else.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Choose carefully some pictures of people in need or people caring for one another. Look at the pictures with the children. Wonder about the pictures:

What happened?

How do the people feel?

What do the people need?

What could we say or do to help?

What would these people pray for?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing “Day by Day” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 654; *We Sing of God*, 99) with the *Children Sing!* music tape. As the hymn is introduced, talk with the children about ways we can love and follow God by caring for others.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

Every day we have opportunities to be caring, helpful, and loving to others. Here are some possible conversation questions:

What are some of the things you do to help? at home? at church? in the neighborhood?

How do you show people you care about them?

What are some ways we can show love?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 35 has a picture of children singing, 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

At the end of the session, gather the children for the closing:

God, thank you for hands to help and hearts to love,
And for our families and friends.

(Pray for the needs of the children.)

Be with us as we go,

And bring us back again. Amen.

Hold hands in a circle and say:

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Normally, children think that the world revolves around them; early childhood is an egocentric period. It is commonly held that children cannot demonstrate empathy (enter into the pain or discomfort of other persons). Yet, there is convincing evidence that many children do show compassion and understanding for others at a very early age, especially if they have role models in older children and adults. Do any of the children in your class exhibit exceptional caring behavior? Could they be role models for other children?

LOOKING AHEAD

Pentecost is a very important celebration for the Church because of the gift of the Holy Spirit. We speak of the festival as the “birthday of the Church.” As you prepare for this session, reflect on how you recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit in your life. (See the Catechism, BCP, pp. 852-853.)

WE ARE THE CHURCH

SESSION 9

PENTECOST IS THE BIRTHDAY OF THE CHURCH

FOCUS

Pentecost is the birthday of the Church. The children should be able to tell ways their church celebrates this Christian festival.

GETTING READY

The feast of Pentecost is one of the three main festivals of the Church Year. (Easter and Christmas are the other two.) It is a joyful celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit. We speak of it as “the birthday of the Church.”

The Day of Pentecost is celebrated by Christian worshipers as a time to 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.

Because children love and understand birthday celebrations, the children will enjoy the activities related to this day.

Almighty God, on this day you opened the way of eternal life to every race and nation by the promised gift of your Holy Spirit: Shed abroad this gift throughout the world by the preaching of the Gospel, that it may reach to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect for The Day of Pentecost
(Whitsunday)

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 227.

TEACHING TIP

It is not necessary to explain the Holy Spirit to the children. The ideas associated with the wonderful powers of the Holy Spirit, as God's gift to us, are readily accepted by the children without question.

GATHERING

Red is the color used for the Day of Pentecost. As the children gather, ask them to help decorate the classroom with red: balloons, crepe paper streamers, ribbons, and banners. Wear something red.

When all have arrived, greet them with The Peace.

Teacher: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

Children: And also with you.

STORY

(Time: 10 minutes)

Introduce the story with a short reading from the Bible. Gather the group in a circle, open the Bible, and let the children see where the reading is. Read *Acts 2:44a*:

“And all who believed were together. . .”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Children respond: Thanks be to God.

Begin by telling a 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.
- When Jesus died and rose again, everything was different. The disciples wondered about Pentecost. Jesus had promised that God would send a comforter be with them, but they did not understand what he meant.
- When Pentecost came, something wonderful happened! There was a rush of wind. Fire appeared above their heads. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. They all began to speak in a different language. But still they understood one another. How could this be?
- This was what Jesus had promised. Now they knew that God would be with them always.
- The disciples did many wonders and signs.

CREATING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Option 1. Pentecost party hats

Give each child a red piece of paper, cut in a half circle 12" in diameter. Invite them to decorate these pieces with glue, glitter, ribbon, and markers. Create a cone by rolling the paper into a point at one end and stapling it together at the base.

Option 2. Flames to wave

Make some flames. Take short pieces of paper tubes or squares of thick cardboard. Attach several strips of red, yellow, and orange crepe or tissue paper. Children can wave the flames or blow on them as if they were afire.

GAME

(Time: 10 minutes)

Since young children think of Pentecost as the Church's birthday, play a birthday party game such as "Blind Man's Buff (Bluff)." Place a blindfold on one of the children, and turn that child around. The child blindfolded must then try to catch one of the other children; that child then gets blindfolded. Remember that some children will not wish to be blindfolded, and they should not be forced to do so.

DOING

(Time: 15 minutes)

Decorate small cupcakes or thick sugar cookies with red cinnamon candies. Use a mixture of confectioners' sugar and water as the glue. Use the cupcakes for a party at snack time, or send them home for dessert. Sing "Happy Birthday" to the church.

WONDERING

(Time: 10 minutes)

Wonder about the wind. Make some wind sounds together. Some ideas for wondering:

Where does the wind come from?

Where does the wind go?

How do we know the wind is blowing? softly? briskly? as in a storm?

How does the wind make us feel?

MUSIC

(Time: 10 minutes)

Sing one or both of the hymns used during this unit. If you wish, choose a hymn used at the Pentecost Eucharist in your congregation.

CONVERSATION

(Time: 10 minutes)

We regard Pentecost as the birthday of the Church, and we hold the festival as a celebration of the Church's beginning. Talk with the children about the events, special decorations, and other aspects of Pentecost as it is celebrated in your congregation.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 36 contains a Pentecost picture, a Scripture verse, a stanza from a hymn, and a note to parents. Remind the children to take the card home, share it with their families, and put it with their collection. They now have 36 cards to review what they have learned this year.

SAYING GOODBYE

At the end of the session, gather the children for the ritual of parting:

God, thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost,
And for our families and friends.

(Pray for any concerns the children may have.)

Be with us as we go,
And bring us back again. *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 react to the birthday celebration of the church? In what ways were they included in the parish-wide activities?