

**EPISCOPAL CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM**

**PRIMARY**

**CROSS**



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# Primary Cross

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

## Episcopal Children's Curriculum

### Unit I. STORIES

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The purpose of this unit is to share with primary-age learners a collection of stories about biblical persons whom they will hear about repeatedly throughout their lives in the Church. The people of God in the Bible are flesh-and-blood men and women who exhibit every human emotion and whose weaknesses and sins are presented realistically. These figures have noble and brave qualities that shine through their life histories.

Old Testament prophets spoke harsh messages of judgment that could be frightening for primary-age children. The prophetic view of God as judge can seem dark and menacing. When talking about the stories of the prophets, we emphasize the positive aspects of their work—their courage in speaking out against wrong, their promise of a better future, and their image of a Messiah who would initiate the rule of God.

We encourage you to talk about the sessions with your child. You can do this by reading together the learners' book, *God's Prophets*, which tells the stories of the Old Testament prophets in a format designed for primary-age children. We also encourage you to read the Scripture passages cited below with your child. The Take-Home Cards given to learners each week can be used in your discussions. The cards provides a list of main facts and ideas from the stories the children learn at church school. These collectible cards, about the size of a postcard, can be displayed in a photo album, kept in a recipe box, or used in any way you find helpful.

Following is a description of the sessions for this unit:

**Session 1: “Amos”** describes the prophet and his writings, which contain the oldest material in the Bible actually written by a prophet. He was a shepherd and a dresser of sycamore trees who traveled north from his home in Judah in order to preach to the people of Israel. He stayed with the task to which God had called him. (*Amos 7:14-15*)

**Session 2: “Isaiah”** is about a younger contemporary of Amos, the aristocratic prophet Isaiah. Not only did Isaiah prophesy against the wealthy and spiritually careless of his time, but also he portrayed a future time when the world would know God's peace in a new and powerful way. (*Isaiah 6:8; 11:6*)

**Session 3: “Daniel”** shares the famous account of Daniel in the lions' den. This Jewish story is perhaps the last of the Old Testament books to be written. The story of Daniel's miraculous escape has always held a special fascination for children. Daniel's story illustrates his complete faith in God. (*Daniel 6:23*)

**Session 4: “Elijah”** takes a long step backward to the story of Elijah. In particular, we encounter him in a period of great discouragement. As he cowered in a cave, he experienced a strong wind, an earthquake, and fire. But God spoke to him in “a still, small voice.” (*I Kings 19:9*)

**Session 5: “Jeremiah”** turns our attention to a youth named Jeremiah who received a call from God to be a prophet in Judah. In his long career he was never reluctant to remind the people of their wickedness. He was opposed and rejected throughout his ministry, but always he trusted in God. (*Jeremiah 1:7*)

**Session 6: “Jonah”** shares the complete story of the prophet Jonah to assist the learners in knowing more about Jonah than just the episode of the “big fish.” This story underscores God's mercy and love. (*Jonah 1:17*)

**Session 7: “Nehemiah and Ezra”** offers an opportunity for the children to hear how Ezra, a priest, read the law of Moses aloud to the people following Nehemiah's successful mission to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. The readings disclosed a long-neglected harvest celebration. In feasting and prayer, the people praised God and rejoiced. (*Nehemiah 8:9a, 18a*)

**Session 8: “Esther”** tells a portion of the story of Esther, a Jewish woman married to the king of Persia. She was successful in saving her people from destruction by enemies. During their time of exile in Babylon, the people showed that they had the will to survive. (*Esther 9:32*)

**Session 9: “All Saints: Servants of God”** is about the theme of All Saints' Day. The session reminds us that the Church honors prophets, priests, the Saints on the Church's Calendar, and ordinary people whose lives have been devoted to faithful service of God. (*Psalms 31:23-24*)

Yours in Christ,  
Church School Teachers

## FOCUS

Amos, a herdsman, answered God's call to be a prophet. He pleaded the case of poor and oppressed people. The learners should be able to describe Amos as a prophet of God who stood for justice and right living.

## GETTING READY

In the eighth century BCE, the people of God in the northern kingdom of Israel were enjoying a time of great optimism. Their army was strong and had been successful in defending their territory. The economy was booming. Merchants were making money, and people were able to build summer homes and houses of ivory furnished with silk-upholstered couches. They enjoyed fine lamb, veal, wine, and oil. There was much leisure time, and people partied and drank heavily. No one seemed to worry about the future.

Outwardly, people were religious. Shrines at Bethel, Gilgal, and Beersheba were visited by crowds of people. Sacrifices were offered freely, and tithes poured into the coffers of these sites. All festivals and assemblies for worship were well attended.

But south of the border in the kingdom of Judah, in the village of Tekoa, a simple shepherd named Amos was observing the wickedness and spiritual emptiness of Israel. God called him to go to Bethel and prophesy.

How did Amos know about life in Israel? Perhaps he had gone there to take sheep to market and had seen with his own eyes the injustices of the rich people toward the poor. Their lives did not measure up to the will of God.

Amos was harsh in his denunciation of Israel's moral decay. He warned that God's judgment would surely come upon these people because of their way of life.

The priest Amaziah warned the king about Amos. Then Amaziah took it on himself to denounce the visitor from the south. He told Amos to go home. But Amos was not intimidated. He went on to deliver more pronouncements of doom and to call for justice.

Almighty God our heavenly Father, guide the nations of the world into the way of justice and truth, and establish among them that peace which is the fruit of righteousness, that they may become the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

For Peace Among the Nations

*The Book of Common Prayer, p. 816*

## TEACHING TIP

The books of the prophets in the Hebrew Scriptures are placed in the Bible by the length of the books, longest to shortest, not chronologically. The prophets were part of the history of their times with different religious and cultural backgrounds. However, they shared a strong faith in God and belief that God was a part of the peoples' lives.

## STORIES

Session 1

**Amos**

## GATHERING

If possible, display a table scale that uses weights on one side to balance what is weighed on the other. Any scale may be used, or sketch a scale on the chalkboard or easel.

As the students arrive, invite them to examine the scale. Ask about its use and why it would be important.

When all have arrived, lead the group in saying together *Psalm 78:1-4*, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 694-695. (The words are included on Poster No. 1 in the Teacher's Packet.)

Hear my teaching, O my people;  
incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

I will open my mouth in a parable;  
I will declare the mysteries of ancient times.

That which we have heard and known,  
and what our forefathers have told us,  
we will not hide from their children.

We will recount to generations to come  
the praiseworthy deeds and the power of the Lord,  
and the wonderful works he has done.

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Share the story of Amos. Read aloud *Amos 7:14-15*:

“Then Amos answered Amaziah, ‘I am no prophet, nor a prophet’s son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees,’ and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’”

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

Compose a story that includes information from Getting Ready and these details:

1. Amos was a shepherd and a “dresser of sycamores” (not the sycamore we know today, but more like a fig tree). He was called by God to travel twenty-five miles north from his village in Judah. He crossed the border into the kingdom of Israel where he warned people about their ways of living.

2. Israel's people were enjoying great prosperity. They lived in luxury, with many possessions. But Amos saw that the rich were insensitive toward the poor people of the land. The scales of justice were unfairly weighted in favor of the rich. Amos said in *Amos 5:24*, “. . . let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Wealthy people prayed to God, but they did not listen to God's call for justice.

4. Amos spoke out. He warned that God would punish Israel if its wealthy citizens did not repent and change their way of living. The people did not

like hearing what he had to say.

5. The priest Amaziah wanted Amos to leave and return to his home in Judah. Amos answered that he was only a shepherd and dresser of sycamores. He also declared that he was sent by God and was not subject to the orders of Amaziah or the king of Israel.

6. Amos obeyed God's call even though he may have been frightened and lonely. He believed God would be with him because he carried God's message.

(Encourage children to read at home the account of Amos in the learners' book, *God's Prophets*, chapter. 1.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Amos of Tekoa**

Distribute sheets of light blue construction paper and pieces of white, brown, and green chalk. Invite the learners to use the sides of chalk pieces to create tree trunks. Add leaves and branches by using chalk tips and smaller strokes. Under or near the finished trees, draw sheep. These can also be made with the sides of chalk pieces, applied in swirling motions. (Crayons may be substituted for the chalk.)

As the learners work, describe Amos' background as a shepherd and "dresser of sycamore trees."

### **Option 2. Waters of Justice**

Provide for each learner a sheet of construction paper and a small branch with a few leaves on it or rolled strips of paper. The learners may dip their branches into blue, green, and white tempera paint placed in pie tins or other shallow containers, and make sweeping strokes on the paper. Encourage the group to make their pages look like tumbling waves of water. As a caption for each completed picture, write: "Let justice roll down like waters." As the children are working, talk with them about Amos' call for justice for the poor.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, "How to Live"**

Introduce a version of the familiar game, "Red Light, Green Light." Invite a learner to be Amos and go to one end of the room with his/her back turned to the other class members.

Amos then faces the group and gives a command about living the way God requires (being just to the poor, feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, or avoiding sinful behavior). While Amos turns around and counts to ten, the others try to reach the place where Amos is standing.

As the counting ends, Amos shouts "Repent," and turns around to try to catch someone moving (or not living according to the commands). Any individual who is caught must sit down. When someone touches Amos, he/she becomes the prophet.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “The Story of Amos”**

Use Puzzle Sheet I.1 titled “The Story of Amos.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

Learners may do the puzzle independently or together in pairs or small groups.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Ask the learners to find the *Book of Amos* in their Bibles. Ask: Which book comes before *Amos*? Which one follows? Locate *Amos 5:24*, and read it aloud. Point out that this call for justice is the line most often associated with the prophet *Amos*.

### **TALKING IT OVER** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Remind the learners that Amos warned the people of Israel that they were not living in ways that God would approve. The very rich were taking advantage of the poor and failing to be merciful and compassionate. (On the scale of justice, the poor people were cheated by the rich.)

Ask: What did Amos say when he saw people living in expensive homes while other people were poor and did not have enough to eat? Would Amos find the same thing happening today? Where? What do you think Amos would say to us if he came to visit?

What do we do or could we do to make life better for others? Who helps us to do it?

### **INQUIRING** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Invite a gardener who is familiar with pruning to visit the class. Ask the visitor to set up a pruning demonstration, using a small bush or tree, and describe the purposes of pruning. Emphasize how much better plants grow and produce when they are carefully pruned and cared for. Amos' work as a “dresser” was very important.

### **IMAGINING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “Amos saw the angry priest, Amaziah, coming toward him. He . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and complete the story in their own way. What would Amos say or do?

*Individual response.* The class members can write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage the learners to express their own thoughts.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize the encounter between Amos and Amaziah. Encourage the learners to take turns in playing the two roles. Stress the anger of the priest and the courage and determination of the prophet.

### **MUSIC** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Sing with the *Children Sing!* tape the hymn, “O God, our help in ages past” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 680; *We Sing of God*, 102). Invite the learners to imagine that Amos is singing along with them. Ask: How do you think he would feel about the words of the hymn?

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Story Tree.* During this unit, develop a story tree to emphasize facts about the biblical persons. Locate a sturdy tree branch, and anchor it upright in a bucket or pot of pebbles or gravel. Cut out the picture of Amos from Poster No. 2 in the Teacher's Packet, mount it on heavier material, and add a string for mounting it to the branch (tree).

Use strips of heavy paper or tagboard for writing down several facts about Amos. Encourage the learners to compose these in their own way. Suspend the strips on string and attach them to the picture of Amos.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 1 has a picture of Amos, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . *(add thanksgivings)*.  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

How well did the learners seem to grasp the special role of Amos as a prophet of God? What were their responses to his message about living according to God's will?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is on the prophet Isaiah and his prophecy of a time of peace under the rule of God. What comes to mind for you when you hear the term, "peaceable kingdom"?

## FOCUS

Isaiah, a prophet, shared visions of what God is like and of a day when there would be peace in the world. The learners should be able to say that Isaiah called God “holy” and spoke of a peaceable kingdom.

## GETTING READY

The prophet Isaiah, like Amos, lived in Judah during the eighth century BCE. He was called by God in the year King Uzziah died. This king had reigned forty years, and Judah grew strong and prosperous under his leadership. The military forces were well-equipped with horses and chariots imported from Egypt. The city of Jerusalem was well fortified.

Many people had become rich, enjoying large estates and imported luxuries. Customs from neighboring countries had been incorporated into their daily life. Religion flourished, and great crowds of worshipers offered incense and sacrifices in the temple.

Isaiah was a young aristocrat. He watched all the wealth around him and was repelled by it. He believed the people had lost any true sense of their dependence on God. Ultimately, he devoted his life to calling Israel back to a life of faith and obedience.

When Uzziah died, Isaiah went into the temple to pray. There he had a vision of God high overhead, with a train that filled the temple space. He saw two winged creatures called seraphim.

One of the seraphim called out to the other, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah was overcome by the holiness of God. He felt small, unworthy, and unclean in the presence of the Most High. Then a seraph flew down and touched his lips with a burning coal from the altar. Isaiah felt the forgiveness of God, and he responded at once to God's call to prophecy. He said to God, “Here am I! Send me.” (See *Isaiah 6:1-8*.)

One of the best-known prophecies of Isaiah is that of the peaceable kingdom. It would come under the reign of a Messiah descended from the house of David. The harmony and reconciliation in the coming kingdom of God would affect even the animal kingdom. Animals that are naturally enemies would eat and dwell together in beautiful peace. The whole world would be filled with knowledge of God. (See *Isaiah 11:6-9*.)

Seek the Lord while he wills to be found;  
call upon him when he draws near.  
Let the wicked forsake their ways  
and the evil ones their thoughts;  
And let them turn to the Lord, and he will have compassion,  
and to our God, for he will richly pardon.  
For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor your ways my ways, says the Lord.  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways,  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.  
For as rain and snow fall from the heavens

## STORIES

### Session 2

### Isaiah

and return not again, but water the earth,  
Bringing forth life and giving growth,  
seed for sowing and bread for eating,  
So is my word that goes forth from my mouth;  
it will not return to me empty;  
But it will accomplish that which I have purposed,  
and prosper in that for which I sent it.

The Second Song of Isaiah  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 86-87

## TEACHING TIP

The reading and writing skills of primary-age learners will vary greatly. In choosing activities, be aware of the developmental levels of the class members. Suggestions in the sessions provide for differences in the learners' skill levels. For example, Exploring the Story, Option 1 is designed for non- or beginning readers. Option 2 (a puzzle) may be completed as a group activity for beginning readers or as an independent activity for others. Option 3 is clearly designed for competent readers.

## GATHERING

From the Teacher's Packet, display Poster No. 3 of "Peaceable Kingdom," by Edward Hicks. This is one of several such paintings this artist produced.

As the students arrive, invite them to study the scene. What is unusual about it? What does the artist seem to be telling us?

When all are present, say together *Psalms 78:1-4* from *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 694-695.

Hear my teaching, O my people;  
incline your ears to the words of my mouth. . . .

(Continue to the end. Poster No. 1 containing the words is included in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Isaiah 6:8; 11:6*:

"Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I; send me!' (*Pause.*) . . . The wolf shall live with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them."

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

Use information from the Getting Ready and the following outline for your story:

1. Isaiah lived in Jerusalem, in the southern kingdom of Judah, during the eighth century BCE. He was from a well-to-do family.

2. He observed all the wealthy people living in extravagant ways. It seemed to him that they had forgotten about God. They were not humble and sincere in their worship.

3. King Uzziah reigned in Judah for forty years, and he led the people to have a strong army. Under his rule, many grew very rich.

4. In the year the king died, Isaiah went into the temple to pray. There he had a vision of God with a cloak that filled the temple space. He saw two winged creatures called seraphim. One of them called out to the other, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Isaiah was overcome and felt unclean in the presence of the Most High. Then a seraph flew down and touched his lips with a burning coal from the altar. Isaiah felt God’s forgiveness, and he responded to God’s call to prophecy.

5. While in the temple, Isaiah heard God say, “Whom shall I send?” Isaiah’s immediate response was, “Here am I; send me!” Isaiah was being called to serve as a prophet. It would be his work to call the people back to faith and obedience.

6. Isaiah spoke about a future time when God would send a descendant of King David to be the Messiah. His rule would bring all the world’s people together in a time of true peace.

7. The prophet’s vision of the Messiah’s kingdom included harmony and peace in the animal kingdom. (Share the scene described in *Isaiah 11:6-9*, and refer to Poster No. 3 used at the Gathering.) He would possess the Spirit of God. There would be a complete change in the natural order.

(Encourage children to read the story of Isaiah at home in the learners’ book, *God’s Prophets*, chapter 2.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Plaques: “Isaiah’s Message”**

Provide each learner with a large paper plate, glue, scissors, and a variety of materials that suggest animals—yellow felt for lions and cotton balls for rabbits. Invite the class members to create their own “peaceable kingdom” in the center of their plates. They may decorate the outsides with markers or crayons. Strings or other hangers may be attached to display the finished products.

### **Option 2. Pictures of Isaiah**

Provide each learner with a sheet of white paper, brown or black paint, and a small sponge. Invite the learners to make silhouette pictures of the prophet Isaiah with arms lifted upward. Provide materials for “swirling smoke,” such as tissue, cotton balls, or gauze. Add below the completed pictures the caption, “Send me!”

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Animal Hunt”**

Ahead of time, hide a toy lion and a toy lamb (or pictures of these two animals) somewhere in the classroom. Inform the class members that they

are to walk around searching silently for the lion and the lamb (with hands held behind their backs). When individuals find the objects, they are to sit quietly until everyone has located them. At the end of the “Animal Hunt,” place the lion and lamb together in the center of the room and offer a prayer of thanks for God's peace.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “The Prophet Isaiah”**

Use Puzzle Sheet I.2 titled “The Prophet Isaiah.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Searching for “Holy, Holy, Holy”**

Ask the students to find the *Book of Isaiah* in their Bibles. When they have located it, invite them to look for chapter 6 and the words, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.” Distribute copies of *The Book of Common Prayer*, and ask the students to find “Holy, holy, holy Lord” in the Service of Holy Eucharist (pp. 334, 341, 362, 367, 371, and 373).

## **TALKING IT OVER** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Isaiah went into the temple to pray, and he had a powerful vision of God. Ask: How do you think Isaiah felt when he saw the swirling smoke that looked like the robes of God? What might he have thought? How do you think the voice of God sounded to Isaiah?

Invite the learners to respond to these questions: Have you ever felt that you were very close to God? When and where? Is it possible to sense God's presence anywhere we happen to be? Why, or why not?

## **INQUIRING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Invite a visitor who has knowledge of animals and their habits (such as someone who works in a veterinarian's office, a biology teacher, or a pet store owner). Encourage the visitor to describe how a zoo must keep animals apart to prevent them from destroying one another. Ask: What would it be like for some of the animals in Isaiah's vision of the peaceable kingdom? How would they be different from animals we know?

## **IMAGINING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “Isaiah heard the voice of God asking, ‘Whom shall I send?’ He . . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and finish the story in their own ways.

*Individual response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage them to express their own thoughts.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize either the call of Isaiah in the temple, or the prophet's description of the peaceable kingdom.

## **MUSIC** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Sing again with the *Children Sing!* tape “O God, our help in ages past” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 680; *We Sing of God*, 102). Try adding hand motions to accompany the first two stanzas:

O God, our help in ages past,           *(hands folded as in prayer)*  
our hope for years to come,       *(hands raised upward)*  
our shelter from the stormy blast, *(arms clasped across chest)*  
and our eternal home:   *(arms extended, palms open)*

under the shadow of thy throne       *(gentle kneeling posture)*  
thy saints have dwelt secure; *(head bowed, hands at chest)*  
sufficient is thine arm alone,       *(looking upward)*  
and our defense is sure.           *(arms extended)*

### CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Story Tree.* Continue the story tree project described in Session 1. Cut out and mount the picture of the prophet Isaiah from Poster No. 2 in the Teacher's Packet. Add string, and hang it on the tree branch. Use narrow strips of heavy paper or tagboard to write facts about Isaiah. Suspend these on a string and attach them to the picture.

### TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 2 has a picture of Isaiah, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

### CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . *(add thanksgivings)*.  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

### TEACHER'S REFLECTION

What evidence did you gather that the learners shared Isaiah's sense of awe in the temple? What were their reactions to his vision of a peaceable kingdom? How can you help learners be aware of the presence of God?

### LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is on the Hebrew prophet Daniel. When, in your own life, have you most needed to place your whole trust in God? How are trust and prayer related?

## FOCUS

Daniel would allow nothing to prevent him from praying faithfully to God. He was saved from the lion's den because he trusted in God. The learners should be able to tell the story of Daniel in their own words.

## GETTING READY

Modern Bible scholars believe that the *Book of Daniel* was not written until around 167 BCE, in a time of bloody persecution for the Jewish people. The temple in Jerusalem had been used for idol worship by non-Jews, and the people were being pressured to abandon their faith in God and accept the religion of a Greek king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

The purpose of the *Book of Daniel* was to encourage the Jews to remain faithful to God. The writer demonstrates the superiority of the God of Israel over the human wisdom of pagan persecutors.

Daniel clearly has a message of lasting worth: God is in charge of history. Through the rise and fall of nations, God prepares the world for the day when all people will acknowledge the Creator's divine rule.

This session is devoted to the famous story found in *Daniel*, chapter 6. A new king named Darius has placed the highly favored Daniel in charge as a “president.” But other leaders—jealous of Daniel, yet unable to find any real fault with him—conceived a plot. They asked the king to sign an irrevocable order requiring that people pray only to him rather than to God. Darius did so.

But Daniel simply went on praying to God three times a day as usual. His disobedience to the king's order caused Daniel's enemies to insist that he be thrown into the lions' den. Darius, who respected Daniel, regretted having signed an order that could not be revoked. He hoped against hope that Daniel's God would save him from the lions.

The next day, the king himself went to the den and cried out to Daniel, who emerged safe. An angel of God had protected him. The king then sent Daniel's enemies to the lions. He issued a decree that the whole nation should worship the God to whom Daniel prayed. Once again, Daniel triumphed on behalf of the one true God in whom he trusted completely.

Almighty and merciful God, in your goodness keep us, we pray, from all things that may hurt us, that we, being ready both in mind and body, may accomplish with free hearts those things which belong to your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Proper 2

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 228

## TEACHING TIP

The Imagining activities for the class sessions include the possibility of role playing scenes from the lives of the biblical persons being studied. Provide a classroom prop box containing squares of fabric, sandals, and other materials that could be used for costumes. Glance ahead to discover

## STORIES

### Session 3

### Daniel

any particular items that might be helpful for portraying each figure.

## GATHERING

Display Poster No. 4 in the Teacher's Packet that shows Daniel with the lions. As the learners arrive, invite them to discuss the scene. Ask: Have you ever seen a real lion? Where? Were you allowed to be with the lion? Why is this man with these lions?

When all are present, conclude the Gathering by saying together *Psalm 78:1-4*, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 694-695.

Hear my teaching, O my people;  
incline your ears to the words of my mouth. . . .

(Continue to the end. The words are included on Poster No. 1 in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Open the Bible and read *Daniel 6:23b*:

“So Daniel was taken out of the (lions') den, and no kind of harm was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Use information from Getting Ready and the following outline for telling the story of Daniel:

1. Daniel was always faithful to God, and he prayed daily.
2. When Darius (pronounced *d'RYE'us*) became king, he made Daniel one of the presidents (leaders) over the people. He was so distinguished and did such a good job that other leaders became jealous. They tried to find something wrong with him, but they could not.
3. Daniel's enemies persuaded King Darius to issue an order that everyone must pray only to him, not to God.
4. Daniel knew about the order, but he went on praying to God three times a day, just as he always had.
5. Punishment for this kind of disobedience meant being thrown into a den of lions. Darius did not really want this to happen to Daniel, but he could not change his own order so Daniel was thrown to the lions. The king hoped that Daniel's God would save him.
6. When Darius went to check on Daniel the next day, he found him still alive. An angel had closed the mouths of the lions. (Refer to Poster No. 4 used in the Gathering.)
7. Darius then believed in God, and he ordered that all the people should pray and follow the Lord of Israel. Daniel's trust and his prayers had worked a miracle.

(Encourage children to read the story of Daniel at home in the learners' book, *God's Prophets*, chapter 3.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Daniel Triptych**

Provide sheets of construction paper for the class members. Instruct them to fold these into three equal sections. Invite the learners to use crayons or markers for creating three scenes from Daniel's story. Suggestions: Daniel praying to God. The king worrying about Daniel. Daniel safe with the lions.

### **Option 2. Lion Pictures**

Ahead of time, gather pieces of felt, yarn, buttons, and other items. Provide construction paper to be used as background, and encourage the learners to create the lions that were in the den with Daniel. Suggestions: buttons for eyes; yarn for manes and tails; felt for bodies.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Nice Lion”**

Play a children's party game called “Nice Lion.” Ask the learners to form a circle, seated either on chairs or on the floor. Appoint one person to be the “lion.” The lion must go around the inside of the circle, kneeling at each person's place. The person must pet the “lion” on the head and say, “Nice lion,” or “Nice kitty,” without laughing. The person who can say “Nice lion” without laughing gets to be the “lion” for the next round. This game results in much fun and laughter.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Daniel and the Lions”**

Use Puzzle Sheet I.3 titled “Daniel and the Lions.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Ask the learners to locate the *Book of Daniel* in their Bibles. Advanced readers may help others in this task. Turn to chapter 6 and look for these key words: Darius, Daniel, den of lions, living God. Read *Daniel 6:26-27* in unison.

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Daniel trusted in God, even when he knew that the lions might kill him. Ask: How do you suppose Daniel felt when he learned that he was being thrown into the den with the ferocious animals? Would he have wanted to change his mind about disobeying the king's order? Why, or why not? What would he have said when an angel appeared to protect him?

Turn the conversation to this question: When have you had to trust someone to protect you? How did it feel? (Point out that it is natural to be afraid in times of danger. Our trust in God often means paying attention to our fears.)

## INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite several young persons from the congregation to visit the class and demonstrate a simple act of trusting. A typical way is to fall backward freely into the arms of another, trusting that person for protection from injury. The young people could also be paired off with children in the class who are blindfolded. They could walk around the classroom or down the hall and back. Ask: How did it feel to “let go” and trust someone completely? How does this kind of trust compare with our trust of God?

## IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “My name is Daniel. I was just thrown into a lions' den by soldiers of the king, and I . . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and complete the story in their own way.

*Individual response.* The learners may write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage them to express their own thoughts.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize the meeting between Daniel and King Darius after Daniel emerged safe from his overnight stay in the den of lions.

## MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing again with the *Children Sing!* tape “O God, our help in ages past” (*The Hymnal* 1982, 680; *We Sing of God*, 102). Suggest that the group substitute “lions' den” for “stormy blast” in the second stanza. Repeat the hand motions as suggested in Session 2.

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Story Tree.* Continue this project as described in Session 1. From Poster No. 2 in the Teacher's Packet, cut out and mount the picture of Daniel, add string, and hang it from the tree branch. Supply narrow strips of heavy paper or tagboard for writing details from the story of Daniel. Suspend these on string and attach them to the picture.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 3 has a picture of Daniel, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

How would you characterize the learners' reactions to the story of Daniel and the lions? How well did they understand trusting in God alone?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is about the still, small voice of God speaking to the prophet Elijah. When have you had an inward sense of God's call? What was your response?

## FOCUS

Elijah, a prophet, heard God speaking in a still, small voice. God told him to anoint leaders and promised that some people would remain faithful and refuse to worship idols. The learners should be able to tell the story of Elijah in the cave.

## GETTING READY

The thrilling story of the prophet Elijah is found in the *Books of Kings* (*I Kings 17-19* and *II Kings 1-2*). He lived in the ninth century BCE. We remember him best for his contest on Mt. Carmel with the priests of Baal.

Elijah challenged the priests to call for rain to end a drought. They danced and made offerings to Baal while Elijah taunted them. But nothing happened. Elijah then repaired the altar of God, surrounded it with twelve stones, and put out an offering. Three times he filled four jars with water and poured them over the offering, drenching the wood at the altar. The God of Israel responded to Elijah's prayer by sending a fire that consumed the offering, the wood, the stones, and even the dust. This was followed by a downpour; the drought was over.

Just after this clear victory over the pagans, Elijah learned that Queen Jezebel, wife of King Ahab, was determined to kill him. She opposed the worship of God. Frightened by the queen's bitter anger, Elijah fled for his life. He was sustained by heavenly food as he journeyed forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God. There he took refuge in a cave.

While Elijah was in the cave, God passed by in a great, strong wind. The wind was followed by an earthquake, and the earthquake by a fire. But God was not in either of these. After the fire came a still, small voice. Elijah went out of his cave to meet God.

God said, for the second time, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (See *I Kings 19:13*.)

Elijah answered that he had done his best for God. Still, the people of Israel were not keeping God's covenant. Prophets were being slain by the sword. Elijah felt utterly defeated, as if he were the only faithful person left. His life was in grave danger.

But the truth was that God had only begun to battle the enemies of faith. He told Elijah to anoint new kings of Syria and Judah, and to anoint Elisha to be his successor as a prophet. God also promised that there would still be 7,000 faithful souls who would not bow down to the false god, Baal.

O God, your never-failing providence sets in order all things both in heaven and earth: Put away from us, we entreat you, all hurtful things, and give us those things which are profitable for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Proper 4

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 229

## TEACHING TIP

Throughout this unit, the learners are hearing about people who had a

## STORIES

Session 4

**Elijah**

clear call from God. Some of them responded at once; others showed resistance. The stories include dramatic episodes. Stress the fact that God's call can come to each of us in quiet, simple ways. Offer opportunities for the learners to wonder how they themselves respond to the wishes of God.

## GATHERING

Ahead of time, prepare a tape recording with a voice that speaks just one line: "What are you doing here?" As learners arrive, ask them to help you record sounds they make of wind, earthquakes, and fire. Play back their recording, pause, and play the recording of the question. Allow some silent space, then rewind the tape.

Place a recorder near the center of the classroom. As others arrive, invite each one to play the two segments of tape and rewind it for others to hear.

When all are present, say together *Psalm 78:1-4*, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 694-695.

Hear my teaching, O my people;  
incline your ears to the words of my mouth. . . .

(Continue to the end. The words are included on Poster No. 1 in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Read aloud from the Bible *I Kings 19:9*:

"(Elijah) came to a cave, and spent the night there. Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'"

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Compose a story including information from Getting Ready and the following details:

1. During the reign of King Ahab and his wife Jezebel, the people began to turn away from worshiping God. They put their trust in pagan gods.

2. The prophet Elijah was sent by God into this situation to warn the people of what would happen to them if they continued to worship other gods.

3. Elijah had a contest with the priests who worshiped the god Baal to end a drought. The priests danced and prayed to Baal while Elijah taunted them to no avail. Elijah then repaired the altar of God, surrounded it with twelve stones, and put out an offering. Three times he asked the people to fill four jars with water that he poured over the offering, drenching the wood in a puddle of water. God responded to Elijah's prayer by sending a fire that consumed the offering, the wood, the stones, and even the dust. This was followed by a downpour; the drought was over. Elijah won the contest proving that God was all-powerful.

4. As a result of Elijah's success, Jezebel wanted him put to death. He fled into the wilderness, traveling forty days and night. Alone in a cave, Elijah became discouraged and afraid.

5. The Lord came to the prophet, saying, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” God came by in a great wind. Then came an earthquake and a fire. But the voice of God reached Elijah through a still, small voice. (Play the recording made during the Gathering.)

6. Elijah felt isolated and threatened.

7. God renewed Elijah's spirit and gave him a new job to do.

(Encourage the children to look at the story of Elijah at home in the learners' book, *God's Prophets*, chapter 4.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Elijah's Flight**

Provide construction paper, white glue, clean sand, fabric scraps, and bits of other paper. Suggest that each learner make a scene showing Elijah, the prophet, traveling toward Mt. Horeb and the cave. To do so, spread watered-down glue over the entire surface of the paper, then sprinkle with sand to create a desert-like surface. Use fabric scraps and paper to fashion the figure of Elijah.

### **Option 2. Elijah at the Cave**

Invite the learners to create a picture of Elijah as he stood at the entrance to the cave during the wind storm, earthquake, or fire. Suggest that they glue torn bits of colored construction paper onto a dark background. The figure of Elijah may be placed in the center of the picture.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Still Voice”**

Invite the class members to sit in a circle, either on the floor or in chairs, for a game called “Still Voice.” Beginning with one learner, whisper a message in a still, small voice. Explain that the words are to be passed along. Examples of appropriate messages: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” “God was not in the earthquake.” “God was not in the fire.”

Enjoy comparing the original with the message that came out at the end. If interest holds, try several transmissions of a message around the circle. Wonder aloud about hearing messages correctly and passing them along to others.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Elijah the Prophet”**

Use Puzzle Sheet I.4 titled “Elijah the Prophet.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Ask the students to turn, in their Bibles, to *I Kings 19*, and find God's question, “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (It appears twice, in verse 9 and verse 13.)

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Elijah was frustrated because he had done God's work to the best of his ability but now faced great danger, especially after Jezebel threatened his life. Ask: How does it feel to do the right thing but still have everyone mad at you? Perhaps Elijah felt that God had forgotten him. When have you felt forgotten or unappreciated? What can we do about it when we have such feelings?

Have you ever worked hard at something and then had a teacher or parents tell you to work harder? What did you do or say? How did you feel?

## INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Arrange to take the class members to a place of quiet (the nave of the church, a chapel, or an unused room). Invite them to experiment with being totally still, with their eyes closed. In a soft voice, suggest that the learners think about God and what God wants each of us to be and to do. Then urge that they pray silently while listening for any inner voices that may be speaking to them.

Tell them that God does not always speak when we want. Explain that if we spend time in quiet, we will be ready if God does want to speak to us. As the group returns to the classroom, remind them about Elijah's experience of hearing God's reassuring word.

## IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "It has been forty days since I left on my journey. My name is Elijah, and I . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations to finish the story in their own ways.

*Individual response.* The learners may write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage the learners to express their own thoughts.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize Elijah's stay on Mt. Horeb. Drape a sheet or other cloth over a table or large chair to simulate a cave. Class members may take turns trying out the cave's interior. Arrange sound effects for the wind, earthquake, and fire. Decide how to introduce the still, small voice of God.

## MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Listen to "O God, our help in ages past" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 680; *We Sing of God*, 102) on the *Children Sing!* tape. For this session, substitute "an angry queen" for the words, "the stormy blast." Pretend that Elijah is listening with the group.

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Story Tree.* Add Elijah to the tree branch, as described in Session 1. Cut out and mount his picture from Poster No. 2 in the Teacher's Packet, adding string for hanging. Use narrow strips of heavy paper or tagboard to write sentences about the prophet and his experiences. Suspend these on a string and attach them to the picture.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 4 has a picture of Elijah, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

How would you assess the learners' understanding of Elijah as a servant of God? What was their response to his situation after he was threatened and had to flee for his life? In what ways can the class members be encouraged to listen for what God has to say?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is on God's call to the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah felt unworthy of God's call because he was young and inexperienced. When have you felt inadequate or unprepared for assuming an important task?

## FOCUS

Jeremiah was young when he heard God's call to be a prophet. God told him what to say to the people of Judah. The learners should be able to tell the story of Jeremiah's call.

## GETTING READY

The prophet Jeremiah's ministry took place over a forty-year period straddling the late seventh and early sixth centuries BCE. He lived through many ominous changes in the little kingdom of Judah, often threatened by its neighbors.

He was the son of Hilkiah, a priest in the village of Anathoth, about three miles northeast of Jerusalem. The family must have had financial resources, since Jeremiah was able to give his whole time to prophesying. At the end of his life, he had money enough to pay his cousin for a field that belonged to the family estate.

The pleasant life of the village did not prevent the boy Jeremiah from thinking about the wickedness of his people and of all the surrounding nations. He seems to have had a tender heart, and he was pained at the thought of God's disappointment with the evil of humankind. He had read the works of the prophets who preceded him.

One scholar has said that the call of Jeremiah “is one of the most intimate, self-revealing documents in all literature.”

God said to Jeremiah that he had been chosen even before he was born. Jeremiah protested, “. . . I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth” (*Jeremiah 1:6b*). God replied that Jeremiah would be given words to say, and he would be protected. Then God touched the youth's mouth and promised him that he would have great authority as an agent of the divine will.

Immediately, Jeremiah had two visions: a branch from an almond tree and a boiling pot. They signified that God knew about the events in the world, and that Judah could expect invasion from enemies in the north.

To warn Judah, Jeremiah was instructed by God to wear a wooden yoke—a harness for oxen—around his neck. God later promised to break the yoke so that the people of Israel would regain their freedom from oppression (*Jeremiah 30:8*).

For the rest of his days, Jeremiah could expect to be opposed and rejected. But he would prevail, for God would be with him.

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

Proper 1

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 228

## STORIES

Session 5

**Jeremiah**

## TEACHING TIP

Children at the primary age level have an expanding ability to voice their feelings and express opinions. They may at times feel powerless about getting adults to hear them when they have something important to say. Teachers in the church have a special opportunity to be good listeners and to show learners that their words are heard and valued.

## GATHERING

Ahead of time, locate several fairly large magazine pictures of human faces. Cut out only the mouths, and glue them to a sheet of posterboard or newsprint for a display. (If the pictures are not readily available, draw several mouths instead.)

As the students arrive, invite individuals to imagine what the lips might be saying if they belonged to persons who speak for God. If they wish, older learners may add phrases or sentences in cartoon-like balloons over the pictured mouths.

When all are present, say together *Psalm 78:1-4*, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 694-695.

Hear my teaching, O my people;  
incline your ears to the words of my mouth. . . .

(Continue to the end. The words are included on Poster No. 1 in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Read aloud, from the Bible, *Jeremiah 1:7*:

“But the Lord said to me, ‘Do not say, “I am only a boy”; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you.’”

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

Tell the story of Jeremiah using information from Getting Ready and the following outline:

1. Jeremiah grew up in a village not far from Jerusalem. He was the son of a priest.
2. While he was still quite young, he heard God's call to be a prophet. He protested that he would not know what to say. “I am only a boy,” he said to God.
3. God told Jeremiah that words would be given to him. God would tell him where to go and would protect him.
4. Jeremiah became God's prophet for a period of forty years. He said later that he could not have held God's message inside him without sharing it, not even if he tried to do so. (See *Jeremiah 20:9*.)
5. This prophet's message was to warn the people that Judah would be destroyed because its people had turned away from God. To make his message clear, Jeremiah wore a yoke around his neck as God told him to.

The yoke, used to harness oxen, represented the power that other nations would hold over Judah.

6. The people failed to listen to Jeremiah, but he continued throughout his life to prophesy and warn them.

(Encourage the children to look at the story of Jeremiah at home in the learners' book, *God's Prophets*, chapter 5.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Clay Pots**

Jeremiah understood pottery. Early in the *Book of Jeremiah*, the prophet visited a potter's shed and had a revelation. God is like the potter, and we are like the clay. If we do not turn out right the first time, there is opportunity for reworking the clay into something new.

For each learner, provide a lump of clay, playdough, or other modeling compound. Invite the class members to create pots. Remind them that they can rework their lumps of clay over and over until they are satisfied with the final product.

### **Option 2. Clothespin Prophet**

Provide one-piece wooden clothespins, small scraps of fabric, pipe cleaners, yarn, and glue. Invite the learners to create miniature dolls of the young prophet Jeremiah. A fine-tip felt marker may be used to draw eyes and mouths on the clothespin heads. The yoke Jeremiah wore may be made from the pipe cleaners. If desired, use modeling clay to make bases for the prophets so that they will stand erect.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, "Who Will Be Chosen?"**

Gather the learners in a circle for a game, "Who Will Be Chosen?" Give an object to each person (markers, pencils, or blocks). At a signal, ask the learners to pass their objects to the persons on their right. The objects are to be kept moving at all times. Anyone who drops an object is "out," but the object is still in.

As the process continues, it will be harder to avoid dropping an object. The last person to drop out of the circle is the "chosen prophet." Ask this person to recite a verse from *Jeremiah*.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, "Jeremiah"**

Use Puzzle Sheet I.5 titled "Jeremiah." Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Bible Search**

Ask the learners to find the *Book of Jeremiah* in their Bibles. When they have located it, ask them to find *Jeremiah 1:7* and locate the sentence, "I am only a boy."

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Jeremiah was very young when God called him to speak out and warn the people of Judah that they were not living in the right way. He knew that they might not listen to him, but God promised that he would be given the words to say. Jeremiah could count on God's help and protection.

Ask: How would it feel to be ignored when you have something important to say? Have there been times when this has happened to you? What did you do about it? How important do you think it is to speak out when you feel sure you are right?

## INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite as a class visitor someone who has experienced a call to a particular ministry or occupation—anyone who is certain that he/she is truly meant to be in a vocation. Encourage the visitor to tell when the call seemed insistent and how he/she responded. Ask: How old were you? What made you sure you should do what you are doing? What advice do you have for young persons thinking about their future?

## IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “Jeremiah was sitting quietly, thinking about the people of Judah. Suddenly he heard . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and finish the story in their own ways.

*Individual response.* The learners may write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage them to express their own thoughts.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize the conversation between God and Jeremiah. Learners may alternate in portraying the roles.

## MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing again “O God, our help in ages past” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 680; *We Sing of God*, 102) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Tell the learners that as Jeremiah continued to prophesy, he faced fierce opposition from groups of people. Think about this prophet as you substitute “angry crowds” for the words “stormy blast” in the first stanza.

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Story Tree.* Continue the project described in Session 1. Cut out and mount the picture of Jeremiah, from Poster No. 2 in the Teacher's Packet. Add string and hang it from the tree branch alongside the other prophets. Supply narrow strips of heavy paper or tagboard, and invite the learners to contribute phrases or sentences about Jeremiah. Suspend the strips on string and attach them to the picture.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 5 has a picture of Jeremiah, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

What did the children say about the young Jeremiah as he contemplated God's call? What evidence did you gather that the class members see the importance of speaking out for God and right behavior?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is on the familiar story of Jonah. Read this short book of the Bible, and compare it with any versions of the story you may have heard in the past.

## FOCUS

Jonah, a prophet, was reluctant to do as God told him. He suffered shipwreck, was saved miraculously, and preached the message of God. The learners should be able to tell the story of Jonah in their own words.

## STORIES

Session 6

### Jonah

## GETTING READY

The legend of Jonah was probably composed between 400 and 200 BCE at a time of interest in how the chosen people of God were related to other nations in the world. It is unlikely that there was an actual person named Jonah. The story underscores the depth of God's mercy.

The *Book of Jonah* can be outlined under two headings:

1. *First Mission.* Jonah was called by God to go to the wicked city of Nineveh and call on the people to repent of their sins. Jonah did not want to do this, and he fled on a ship bound for Tarshish. Because of his rebellion, a heavy storm threatened to destroy the ship and everyone on it. Finally, the sailors heeded Jonah's request and threw him into the sea. The storm ceased. Jonah was swallowed by a great fish, where he remained three days before being spewed out onto dry land.

2. *Second Mission.* God told Jonah once again to preach to the Ninevites. Jonah did so, with great success. Everyone repented. Even the king put on the sackcloth of repentance. God was merciful and forgave the people. The prophet was so angry about this turn of events that he pleaded with God not to forgive the people. Then he sulked bitterly, wishing to die. A gourd plant grew to provide him shade, then died. Jonah was sorrowful about the plant. God said, "If you can be so sad about the plant, why could you not have similar pity for the great city of Nineveh with all its inhabitants?" (See *Jonah 4:10-11.*)

Grant us, O Lord, to trust in you with all our hearts; for, as you always resist the proud who confide in their own strength, so you never forsake those who make their boast of your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Proper 18

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 233

## TEACHING TIP

Certain Bible stories, like that of Jonah, are so frequently told and illustrated that children may easily exclaim, "We *know* that story!" But versions of biblical stories often have incorrect or different outcomes than the actual biblical account. Encourage learners to listen for differences in this story from the Bible and the one they know. Scripture can speak to us in ways we had not considered before. Look for new insights.

## GATHERING

On a chalkboard or easel, prepare a simple outline drawing of a large fish, along with a wavy water line to suggest the sea. As the learners arrive, invite them to add to the scene in any way they wish. (They may want to add ships,

other fish, or a human figure.)

When all are present, say together *Psalm 78:1-4* from *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 694-695.

Hear my teaching, O my people;  
incline your ears to the words of my mouth. . . .

(Continue to the end. The words are included on Poster No. 1 in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Read aloud, from the Bible, *Jonah 1:17*:

“But the Lord proved a large fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Use information from Getting Ready and the following outline for telling Jonah's story:

1. God called Jonah to go to the people in the city of Nineveh, who were very wicked.

2. Jonah did not want to obey this call from God, so he set out on a ship going in the opposite direction.

3. Jonah was not able to hide from God. A terrible storm threatened to sink the ship. Knowing that the storm was brought on by his refusal to obey God, Jonah told the sailors to throw him overboard.

4. God spared Jonah's life by sending a great fish to swallow him. Three days later, the fish spewed him out on the beach.

5. God called Jonah once again to preach to the people of Nineveh. This time the prophet obeyed. To his surprise, the people did repent and turn to the Lord. God had mercy on them and forgave them.

6. Jonah did not feel the Ninevites should have been spared from punishment. Angry he went into the hot desert to pout. God provided him with a bush for shade.

7. The bush withered and died, and Jonah was upset and sad about it. God took note of Jonah's feelings about the bush's death. Why didn't he also pity the inhabitants of Nineveh?

(Encourage the children to look at the story of Jonah at home in the learners' book, *God's Prophets*, chapter 6.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### Option 1. Jonah's Bush

Distribute sheets of white, green, and brown construction paper; pencils, crayons, and markers; and glue or gluesticks. Encourage the learners to create a picture of Jonah in the desert under the bush that God provided (a gourd plant). Ask them to draw the scene, then cut out green and brown leaves to glue to the branches of the bush. Challenge the class members to

write, in their own words, how Jonah felt about the bush—either before or after it died.

### **Option 2. Jonah and the Big Fish**

Supply art paper, watercolors, and brushes. Invite the learners to paint a blue sea containing the big fish and Jonah. Outlines of the figures may be made in pencil before painting or drawn on separate pieces of paper, cut out, and glued to the sea paintings. Put the pictures aside to dry.

## **EXPLORING THE STORY** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

### **Option 1. Game, “In the Fish's Mouth”**

To begin the game, “In the Fish's Mouth,” ask the class members to count off by threes. Instruct all the “ones” to become big fish and spread throughout the room, moving their arms like giant mouths. Tell each one of the “twos” to find a fish and stand inside (being hugged). Let the “threes” move around the room, mimicking a swimming stroke and waiting for an empty fish's mouth to stand in. When you call out, “Switch,” all the twos leave the fish mouths and compete with the threes to swim quickly into another fish mouth. Continue the process several times.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Jonah”**

Use Puzzle Sheet I.6 titled “Jonah.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Invite the students to find the *Book of Jonah* in their Bibles. Notice how short it is. Ask the learners to locate these words: Jonah, God, fish, sea, and Nineveh. (For older learners, suggest verses to find and read aloud to one another.)

## **TALKING IT OVER** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Jonah tried to run away from the work God called him to do. He also became very angry because God was willing to forgive the repenting citizens of Nineveh. Ask: Why do people sometimes try to get out of doing what they do not want to do? If you have ever done this, how did it feel to be caught at it? When have you been surprised that your own work turned out really well? How did you feel about this?

The story of Jonah ends very abruptly. Ask: Do you think Jonah continued to be a prophet of God? Why, or why not?

## **INQUIRING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Ask a member of the congregation to take on the role of a Ninevite, repenting and wearing sackcloth. Invite this person to the session. Ask: What was it like to hear Jonah preaching? What did people decide to do after they heard him? Why? What was the purpose of putting on sackcloth? How did the people of Nineveh feel about God before and after Jonah's visit?

## IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “Jonah was asleep in the ship. The sailors woke him up and said . . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and finish the story in their own ways.

*Individual response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage them to express their own thoughts.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize the story of Jonah. Set the stage for two major scenes: Jonah's experiences at sea and Jonah under the bush in the desert.

## MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Listen on the *Children Sing!* tape to “Almighty God, your word is cast” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 589; *We Sing of God*, 91). Explain that “cast” means tossed. You may want to add movement to accompany the first stanza:

Almighty God, your word is cast    (*tossing motion with arms*)  
like seed upon the ground,            (*sweep palms downward*)  
now let the dew of heaven descend (*hands raised, then fluttering down*)  
and righteous fruits abound.        (*raise arms to pick fruit*)

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Story Tree.* Continue this project as described in Session 1. Cut out and mount the picture of Jonah from Poster No. 2 in the Teacher's Packet. Add string and hang it from the tree branch. Supply narrow strips of heavy paper or tagboard for writing phrases and sentences about the story of Jonah. Suspend the strips on string and attach to the picture.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 6 has a picture of Jonah, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

As the class members examined Jonah's experiences, what did they say about God in the story? Was it clear that God cares what happens to people? Consider how to reemphasize this theme in future sessions.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is about Nehemiah and Ezra. Think of times in your life when you have rededicated your life to God.

## FOCUS

In the time of Nehemiah the governor, the people of God rebuilt the wall of Jerusalem. When it was finished, all the people were called together to hear the word of God read aloud. Nehemiah and Ezra, the priest, re-established a holy observance known as the Festival of the Booths. The learners should be able to describe these events.

## GETTING READY

The period of history covered in the Old Testament books of *Nehemiah* and *Ezra* is difficult to reconstruct chronologically. *Nehemiah 8* speaks of the two men as contemporaries. Many scholars believe that Ezra followed Nehemiah by as much as a generation, in the fifth century BCE. The central facts are:

- Nehemiah, a cupbearer to Artaxerxes the Persian king, was a Hebrew. A cupbearer was a person close to the king who could influence policy. Nehemiah received the distressing news that the beloved city of Jerusalem in his homeland had fallen into severe disrepair as a result of the conquest and long exile of the Jewish people. He received an appointment as governor, and was given permission by the king to return to Judah and supervise the reconstruction of the city walls. The walls were rebuilt in a record fifty-two days despite conspiracies to prevent the project from being completed.

- Ezra was a priest and teacher of the Jewish faith. He started reading the Scriptures aloud and directed the reestablishment of a strong Jewish identity. He has been called the father of modern Judaism.

According to *Nehemiah 8:9-18*, the people reacted with weeping when they heard Ezra and the Levites (a temple group) reading the law of Moses. They realized that they had long neglected the worship of the God who had brought their ancestors out of slavery in Egypt and into the promised land.

Nehemiah declared that the occasion should be festive, not sorrowful. He declared a time of feasting to celebrate their new religious understanding.

Through their reading, Ezra and the others rediscovered the ancient harvest Festival of the Booths (or tabernacles), during which the people of God remembered the temporary shelters of their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. (See *Leviticus 23:39-43*.) This feast had been neglected since the time of Joshua. The people were instructed to gather branches, make booths, and take part in feasting and prayer for eight days.

This festival is known by modern-day Jewish people as Succoth. (A booth is a “succah” in Hebrew.) It is a festival of thanksgiving held four days after Yom Kippur and is the most joyous of Jewish holidays.

Almighty and everlasting God, whose will it is to restore all things in your well-loved Son, the King of kings and Lord of lords: Mercifully grant that the peoples of the earth, divided and enslaved by sin, may be freed and brought together under his most gracious rule; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Proper 29

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 236

## STORIES

Session 7

**Nehemiah and Ezra**

## TEACHING TIP

Primary-age learners are able to recall religious and secular celebrations of previous years. They identify with the customs that mark the special days and seasons in the Church. The learners delight in making preparations for all such occasions. In teaching, make it a point to explain the Scriptural background and deeper meanings of these religious observances.

## GATHERING

Ahead of time, form a frame for constructing a classroom booth. This may be done simply by placing chairs as walls and laying several sticks over them, from back to back, to serve as the ribs for a covering.

Obtain a supply of evergreen branches, or use green crepe paper streamers to simulate the leafy covering for a booth. As the learners arrive, invite them to help finish the project. Allow individuals to sit in the booth.

When all are present, say together *Psalm 78:1-4*, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 694-695.

Hear my teaching, O my people;  
incline your ears to the words of my mouth. . . .

(Continue to the end. The words are included on Poster No. 1 in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Read aloud, from the Bible, *Nehemiah 8:9a; 18a*:

“And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, ‘This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep.’ *(Pause.)* And day by day, from the first day to the last day, (Ezra) read from the book of the law of God.”

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

Compose a story based on information in the Getting Ready and the following outline:

1. During the time when God's people were being allowed to return to their homes after a long exile in Babylon, Nehemiah traveled from Persia to Jerusalem and directed the rebuilding of the city walls. In just fifty-two days the people accomplished this difficult task.

2. It had been such a long time since the Jewish people had worshiped God in their homeland that they had forgotten much of the Hebrew Scriptures. They did not know about the ways in which their ancestors had worshiped.

3. A priest named Ezra also came to Jerusalem. He set about teaching the people and reading aloud from the Torah (Hebrew Scriptures), with explanations of the meaning. The people were very sad that they had neglected their duty to God for such a long time. They especially regretted that they had not heard the law of Moses read aloud and had not kept the

Jewish feasts.

4. From their reading, Ezra and others rediscovered the Festival of Booths. It was a harvest celebration during which the people remembered the temporary dwellings of their journey out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Booths were made from leafy branches, and a time of prayer and feasting lasted eight days.

5. The feast of the booths was reinstated, and the people had joyous celebration.

(Encourage the children to look at the story of Nehemiah and Ezra at home in the learners' book, *God's Prophets*, chapter 7.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Succahs (Booths)**

Ahead of time, gather enough small boxes (individual-size cereal boxes would work well) for all the class members. Remove one side of each of the boxes. Invite the learners to use a variety of materials for creating booths like those built by the people in Jerusalem for the festival of the booths. Cover the tops with green leaves, and decorate the insides with fruits and vegetables.

### **Option 2. The Book of the Law**

Provide standard-size white paper, crayons, and markers. Ask the class members to fold sheets of paper in half at the center to form two book pages. Invite them to copy on the two segments of the paper these verses, which were probably read aloud by Ezra:

I am the Lord your God. (*Leviticus 26:1b.*)

You shall keep my laws. (*Leviticus 19:19a.*)

Borders and decorations may be added around the verses.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Succah”**

Invite the class members to work together to pantomime the building of a booth (“succah” in Hebrew). A leader reads the rules below, allowing time for the group to make appropriate motions. (These are the actual rules observed by Jewish families.)

It must be less than thirty feet high. There must be three walls. The walls must be able to stand against a strong wind. The roof must keep out the sun, but you must be able to see the stars. The succah is decorated with plants, fruits, and vegetables. A blessing is said as one enters the succah. Meals are eaten in the succah (*pause*) except when it is raining (*make the sound of rain*). The family sleeps in the succah (*pause*) except when it is raining (*make the sound of rain*). The succah must be temporary since it will have to be torn down at the end of the festival.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Ezra and Nehemiah”**

Use Puzzle Sheet I.7 titled “Ezra and Nehemiah.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may wish to work independently.

### Option 3. Scripture Search

Ask the students to find the books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah* in their Bibles. Suggest that they turn to *Nehemiah 8:13-17* and read together the story of the festival. What kinds of tree branches did the people gather?

### TALKING IT OVER (Time: 10-15 minutes)

The story of the rebuilt walls and the restoration of the Festival of the Booths reminds us of the importance of preserving traditions and our identity as a worshipping people.

Ask: How would it feel to discover that your church building was crumbling and no one met there to worship anymore? What would you want to do about it? What if people had forgotten all about Thanksgiving Day? All Saints' Day? What could be done to begin these celebrations again? (Explain that Nehemiah and Ezra had faced a similar situation. The city of Jerusalem had to be repaired, and the people had to begin all over again to celebrate their festivals that were long forgotten.)

### INQUIRING (Time: 10-20 minutes)

Invite someone who has been to Israel to visit the class and talk about the walls outside the city. Ask the visitor to describe the gates through which one enters the city. If no one is available for this assignment, obtain pictures of the city of Jerusalem from a library or travel agency. Look for the city walls. Consider how Nehemiah helped the people rebuild the walls in only fifty-two days.

### IMAGINING (Time: 10-20 minutes)

Share a story starter: "Ezra has been reading aloud from the law of Moses, and people are getting ready to build booths. I am going to . . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and compose the rest of the story.

*Individual response.* The learners may write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage them to express their own thoughts.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize the scene when Ezra and others discover the Feast of Booths in the *Book of Leviticus*. Include the excitement and joy of the people as they gather branches and build the shelters for their own celebration.

### MUSIC (Time: 10-15 minutes)

Sing again "Almighty God, your word is cast" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 589; *We Sing of God*, 91) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Invite the learners to pretend that they are in Jerusalem in the time of Ezra. Add a new stanza, using these words:

O God the Lord, we read your word  
and learned about your Law,

now help your people celebrate  
the Feast of Booths again.

### CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Story Tree.* Continue this project as outlined in previous sessions. Cut out and mount the pictures of Nehemiah and Ezra from Poster No. 2 in the Teacher's Packet. Add string and hang them from the tree branch. Provide narrow strips of heavy paper or tagboard for writing facts about each of these Jewish leaders. Suspend the strips on string and attach them to the pictures.

### TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 7 has a picture of Ezra and Nehemiah, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

### CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . *(add thanksgivings)*.  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
Learners: Thanks be to God.

### TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Were the learners able to identify with the people's situation in the time of Nehemiah and Ezra? How did they react to the story of the Festival of Booths? In what ways can the class members be encouraged to take part in religious traditions and celebrations as each year progresses?

### LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is about Esther. Think especially about the role of women in the Bible and among the Church's leaders today.

## FOCUS

Esther, who became a queen, established the feast of Purim to celebrate the saving of her people from their enemies. The learners should be able to describe Purim and explain how it began.

## GETTING READY

The biblical *Book of Esther* is a story of Jews being delivered from enemies. It was probably written between 350 and 250 BCE, long after the event it describes.

Esther, a beautiful Jewish woman, had been an orphan. She was brought up by Mordecai, her cousin. She attracted the eye of King Ahasuerus of Persia, they were married, and she became the queen.

An evil, power-hungry man named Haman was the chief minister to the king. In his vain desire for special honor, Haman demanded that all people show him deference by prostrating themselves on the ground whenever he passed by.

The Jews—particularly Mordecai, one of their leaders—refused to bow to Haman. This was something they would do only for God, not for a man. Haman began to hate the Jews, and to seek revenge against them. He plotted to have all Jewish people killed and tricked the king into signing a law to that effect.

Mordecai discovered the plot and told Esther about it. Risking her life, Queen Esther told the king about the danger to her people. The king was enraged at Haman's deception. He arranged for Haman to be hanged, the Jews were saved, and everyone feasted for seven days.

Today, Jewish people read the *Book of Esther* (called *Megillah*) at the annual Feast of Purim, in February or March of the modern calendar. The word “purim” means dice. When Haman was setting a date for killing the Jews, he threw dice and came up with the numbers twelve and thirteen. So he commanded that the massacre begin on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar. Because the Jews escaped this awful fate, the Purim feast is celebrated each year.

Grant to us, Lord, we pray, the spirit to think and do always those things that are right, that we, who cannot exist without you, may by you be enabled to live according to your will; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  
*Amen.*

Proper 14

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 232

## TEACHING TIP

Many persons, both adults and children, have a misconception about people in the Scriptures. They tend to become larger than life, with heroic qualities that obscure their common humanity. Frame the stories of biblical people in such a way that learners sense the real feelings, problems, and anxieties of the key figures. They were subject to the same human weaknesses we all share.

## STORIES

Session 8

**Esther**

## GATHERING

Ahead of time, make a gold crown or obtain one from a costume closet or party supply store. Also bring a pair of dice. Place both the crown and the dice on a rich-looking piece of fabric where the learners will see them. As the learners arrive, ask: Who might wear such a crown? What would such a person be able to do? When are dice used? Why might they be here?

When all are present, conclude the Gathering by saying together *Psalm 78:1-4*, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 694-695.

Hear my teaching, O my peoples;  
incline your ears to the words of my mouth. . . .

(Continue to the end. The words are included on Poster No. 1 in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Esther 9:32*:

“The command of Queen Esther fixed these practices of Purim, and it was recorded in writing.”

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

Share the story of Esther in your own words, using Getting Ready and the following information:

1. King Ahasuerus was king of the Persian empire where many Jewish people lived in exile. He chose Esther, a beautiful Jewish woman, to be his queen. Her cousin, Mordecai, was a leader of the Jewish people. The king, however, did not know Esther was Jewish.

2. Haman, the king's chief minister, commanded that all the king's servants bow down to him. Mordecai refused to do so. Haman was very angry.

3. Haman tricked the king into ordering that all Jews to be killed.

4. Mordecai heard of the plan and asked for Esther's help. Even though Esther was the queen, she was not allowed to see the king unless he asked for her. Esther decided to approach the king on her own. She fasted and prayed for three days.

5. Esther invited the king and Haman to a banquet. Pleased with Esther, the king granted her a wish. Her wish was that he attend a second banquet.

6. At the second feast, she revealed that she was a Jew and that Haman was plotting to kill her people. The king ordered Haman killed and issued another order that saved the Jews.

7. To celebrate the saving of Jewish lives, Esther instituted the Feast of Purim. This was a celebration of seven days of merriment. (Explain that “purim” was the word for the dice Haman used when he was deciding on a day to kill the Jewish people. The numbers on his dice determined the month and the day.)

8. Jewish people today still celebrate the Feast of Purim. They dress in

costumes, prepare delicious food, and play games. The story of Esther is read every year. Children make loud booing noises every time the name of Haman appears and cheer at the names of Esther and Mordecai.

(Encourage the children to look at the story of Esther at home in the learners' book, *God's Prophets*, chapter 8.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Purim Masks**

At the Feast of Purim, everyone dresses up in costume and wears a mask. For each class member, provide a large paper bag or paper plate, markers, and two lengths of string. Invite the learners to create their own Purim masks. Assist in determining the placement of holes for the eyes. All can then decorate their masks in their own ways.

### **Option 2. Esther's Crown**

Cut a pattern from posterboard for making Esther's crown. These can be simple bands or elaborate designs with points. Learners will trace the pattern on construction paper. Their crowns can then be decorated with glitter, sequins, and other items. Add food coloring to white glue, and put large drops on the crowns. When it dries, it looks like colored jewels. Use glue to attach other adornments.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “What Happened?”**

On file cards, list five or six events in the story. (Examples: Esther became queen. Haman plotted against the Jews. Mordecai discovered Haman's plan. Esther fasted for three days. Esther held a banquet for the king. The Jewish people were saved. Everyone celebrated at the Feast of Purim.) Introduce the game, “What Happened?” Divide the class members into teams of two or three. Ask each team to draw a card and prepare to act out the event. Continue as long as the group is interested.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Esther”**

Use Puzzle Sheet I.8 titled “Esther.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Invite the learners to find the *Book of Esther* in their Bibles. It is located just after the books of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*. (Explain that all of these three stories tell about the Jewish people in exile.) Look for the names of Haman and Mordecai. When this story is read at Purim, the children may clap for Mordecai and Esther. They stamp their feet and make booing noises when they hear Haman's name.

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

This story has many of the same kinds of people and events that are found in other ancient tales. A beautiful young girl becomes a queen. An evil person plots to hurt others. The queen discovers the evil plan and risks her life to save the people.

Talk with the learners about these qualities in Esther's story, including her courage and willingness to risk everything to help others. Ask: What are some other stories you have heard that have a similar good ending? Who are some characters who have risked a great deal to help other people?

How do such stories help us? Why do we like to hear them? Are they like real life? Why, or why not?

## INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

If possible, invite a Jewish person to visit the class and talk about the Feast of Purim. The talk may include traditions, food, and activities that are a part of the festival.

## IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "I am one of the Jews living in Persia. The plot to kill us has been stopped. Queen Esther has told us to celebrate, so I . . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and decide how they would rejoice.

*Individual response.* The learners may write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage them to express their own thoughts and feelings. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" way to finish the story.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize parts of the story of Esther: Esther becomes queen; Haman asks everyone to bow down to him; Haman plans to kill the Jews; Haman tricks the king; Mordecai tells Esther; Esther has a banquet and reveals the plot; the Jews are saved and celebrate.

## MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing again the hymn, "Almighty God, your word is cast" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 589; *We Sing of God*, 91). Listen on the *Children Sing!* tape to stanzas 2 and 3. Ask the learners: Which of the words could describe Haman and people like him? Which words are their opposites?

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Story Tree.* As described in previous sessions, continue this project. Cut out and mount the picture of Queen Esther from Poster No. 2 in the Teacher's Packet, adding string to hang it on the tree branch. Ask the learners to write facts from her story on narrow strips of heavy paper or tagboard. Suspend these on string and attach to the picture.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 8 has a picture of Esther, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

In hearing the story of Esther, were the learners impressed by the feelings of excitement, tension, and joy? Were they able to identify and applaud the role Esther played in saving her people from danger?

## LOOKING AHEAD

Session 9 is designed for use at the class meeting nearest the celebration of All Saints' Day. (You may use it at any appropriate point in the unit's sequence of sessions.)

## FOCUS

On All Saints' Day, we give thanks for all the people of God, past and present, who have been devoted and courageous. The learners should be able to say that people in every generation have been faithful servants of God.

## GETTING READY

The celebration of All Saints' Day is an opportunity for the Church to honor prophets, priests, the Saints on the Church's Calendar, and ordinary people whose lives have shown their devotion to God. We offer up their names in thanksgiving and remembrance because they have shared their faith with generation after generation.

All baptized people are themselves in the company of those who are honored at this time. They are children of God and saints of the Church. Through baptism, we are ordained to the ministry of God's people in the world. Our job as saints is to love the Lord with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength, so that others may come to know Jesus Christ.

After the establishment of the Church under the Emperor Constantine, in the fourth century, Christians began to observe an increasing number of days to honor saints. If a church did not have a local martyr to honor, it was not unusual for Christians to seek “relics” of saints from other areas (articles that they may have owned or touched, even their bones).

In time, in various areas a day was set aside to honor All Martyrs or All Saints.

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

All Saints' Day

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 245

## TEACHING TIP

The concept of who is a “saint” may be new to primary-age learners. They may not be familiar with the lives of saints. Their ideas may be colored by stained glass windows they have seen, making saints larger than life. In teaching, seek to portray the saints as persons like ourselves, who ate, slept, played, worked, and worshiped God. Point out that we are all saints by our baptism.

## GATHERING

Gather a collection of pictures showing people in various walks of life. If possible, include images of several Saints from the New Testament. Display these on a bulletin board or table top. As the learners arrive, invite them to think about who the pictured individuals might be, and how they might be servants of God.

## STORIES

Session 9

**All Saints:  
Servants of God**

When all are present, say together *Psalm 78:1-4*, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 694-695.

Hear my teaching, O my people;  
incline your ears to the words of my mouth. . . .

(Continue to the end. The words are included on Poster No. 1 in the Teacher's Packet.)

## **STORYTELLING** (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Psalm 31:23a, 24*:

“Love the Lord, all you his saints. . . . Be strong, and let your heart take courage, all you who wait for the Lord!”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Use the following outline to share a story about All Saints' Day:

1. The people of the Bible studied so far (in this unit) were all faithful to God. Some were called by God for a special purpose, or to show God's love for the people of Israel.

2. God calls people to prophesy, to help others, to teach, and to make clear how God's people are to live.

3. God called prophets in the days before the birth of Christ. Jesus called the apostles and others to follow him and be teachers of others. God “calls” people in every generation to obey the Commandments and do God's will.

4. On All Saints' Day, we remember all the people who have been called by God.

5. Tell a story about your favorite saint. Stories about St. Patrick or St. Francis appeal to primary-age learners. Their stories are found in Unit IV in this guide.

(Encourage to children to look at a story of the saints of God at home in the learners' book, *God's Prophets*, chapter 9.)

## **CREATING** (*Time: 15-20 minutes*)

### **Option 1. A Saint of God**

Provide the learners with paper, crayons, and markers. Invite them to draw portraits of themselves. Some may want to draw stick figures with their characteristics, such as curly hair. When the artists have finished their work, identify the pictures by writing on each one: “(Name), a saint of God.” Glue the portraits to a background sheet of colored construction paper to create a frame effect. Display the gallery of saints for all to see.

### **Option 2. Saints' Sculptures**

Invite the learners to use playdough or other sculpting material to create the figures of persons they regard as “saints.” A variation may include creating symbols for selected saints.

Following is an easy and inexpensive way to make enough playdough for

eight learners:

3 cups water  
3 cups flour  
1 1/2 cups salt  
6 tablespoons oil  
6 teaspoons 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, playdough will keep for months.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “I Am a Saint”**

Play a game called “I am a saint.” The game begins as one player says, “I am a saint, and I \_\_\_\_\_.” The blank is filled in by naming something that a saint would do, such as: pray, help others, give food to the poor, tell people about God, and the like. The game continues until everyone has had a turn. A variation for older learners would be to state that each contribution must begin with a letter of the alphabet, starting with “A” and continuing through to “Z.”

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “All Saints: Servants of God”**

Use Puzzle Sheet I.9 titled “All Saints: Servants of God.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Hymnal Survey**

Invite the learners to look in *The Hymnal 1982* for “The Index of First Lines,” pages 954-960. Locate hymns that contain the word “saint” in the first line. Find other hymns that include these “saint-like” words: faithful, servants, Christians, prophets.

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Examine the words to the hymn, “I sing a song of the saints of God” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 293; *We Sing of God*, 49) by listening to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. As you name the different “saints,” talk about where you might meet such persons today. Ask: Who are some of the doctors you know? soldiers? priests? teachers? In what ways could these persons be saints of God? Does the hymn describe us in any way? How?

## INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite the learners to select a variety of magazine pictures (some of those used at the Gathering may be included) and work as a group to create a collage of saints. The pictures may be attached at random to a colorful

background and labeled “Saints of God.”

If your church has stained glass windows or other artwork depicting Saints, go as a group to see how many different Saints you can find. How are they shown? Can you tell what they did?

### IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “If I could serve God in any way I wanted to, I would . . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about how the story might continue. Ask: How would you serve God?

*Individual response.* The learners may write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage them to express their own thoughts. Avoid giving the impression that there is a “right” way to finish the story.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups may dramatize how they, as today's saints, are engaged in serving God.

### MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing with the *Children Sing!* tape the hymn “I sing a song of the saints of God” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 293; *We Sing of God*, 43). It has a strong rhythm that leads to marching as part of the celebration. An alternate hymn would be “For thy dear saints” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 279).

### CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Story Tree.* Invite the learners to make small pictures of themselves to hang on the tree branch along with the biblical figures. If they wish to attach strips containing facts about themselves, encourage them to do so.

### TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 9 has a picture of many saints, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

### CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

### TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Sometimes we associate the word “saint” only with persons who have dramatic life stories. Were the learners able to sense that saints are ordinary people who serve God? How clearly do they perceive the Church's Saints as role models for their own lives? Consider how to emphasize in the future that obedient and faithful living in the everyday round of our lives is “saintly” behavior.

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

## Episcopal Children's Curriculum

### Unit II. SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Dear Parents and Guardians,

This unit begins with the season of Advent, the early weeks of the Church calendar. The first five sessions, which also include Christmas, will be scheduled around church activities planned for this time. The last four sessions touch on selected portions of Jesus' teaching in *Matthew 5-7* that we call the Sermon on the Mount. We will be looking at several themes in Jesus' teaching ministry.

We encourage you to talk about the sessions with your child. You can do this by reading together the learners' book, *Jesus Teaches*, which describes the teachings of Jesus in a format designed for primary-age children. These stories, which include the Beatitudes, prayer, and the Golden Rule, complement the last four sessions of the unit.

We also encourage you to read the Scripture passages cited below with your child. The Take-Home Cards given to learners each week can be used in your discussions. The cards provides a list of main facts and ideas from the stories the children learn at church school. These collectible cards, about the size of a postcard, can be displayed in a photo album, kept in a recipe box, or used in any way you find helpful.

Following is a description of the first five sessions for this unit:

**Session 1: “Advent”** introduces the concept of this Church season. It is the beginning of a new Church Year, a time of preparation for celebrating Christ's birth. The teachers will be helping the children to define the word “Advent” and enter into the spirit of quiet reflection and prayerful waiting. (*John 1:4-5*)

**Session 2: “Messiah”** looks at the Hebrew title for the long-expected Savior announced by the prophets. The people of God were certain that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David. They yearned for an earthly king to rid them of their Roman rulers. (*Isaiah 53:11*)

**Session 3: “Elizabeth, Zechariah, and John”** is about the birth of John the Baptist. His birth story in the *Gospel of Luke* comes just six months before Jesus was born to Mary. His mother Elizabeth was a cousin of Mary. The angel Gabriel had visited both women to tell them of their appointed roles as mothers of special children. (*Luke 1:63*)

**Session 4: “Mary, Joseph, and Jesus”** is devoted to the narrative of Jesus' birth as it appears in *Luke 2:1-20*. The familiar story follows Mary and Joseph as they travel from their home in Nazareth and arrive in the crowded town of Bethlehem. Finding no room at an inn, they are allowed to sleep in a stable area. There the Son of God was born and laid in a manger. (*Luke 2:4-5*)

**Session 5: “Simeon and Anna”** is for use around Epiphany. This session focuses on the events recounted by Luke that lie behind the Church's celebrations of Holy Name (January 1) and the Presentation in the Temple (February 2). These episodes in Jesus' infancy follow immediately after the Nativity. (*Luke 2:30*)

The final four sessions are about Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount:

**Session 6: “Jesus Taught the People”** introduces the threefold ministry of Jesus as teacher, preacher, and healer. This is the way his work is summarized in *Matthew 4:23* and *9:35*. (*Matthew 5:1-2*)

**Session 7: “Jesus Taught About Peace”** is devoted to one of the Beatitudes: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.” As he began the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus named the kinds of people who are especially blessed by God. (*Matthew 5:9, 44a*)

**Session 8: “Jesus Taught Us to Pray”** focuses on the structure of the Lord's Prayer as it appears in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. The prayer has seven petitions. Learners will look at the Lord's Prayer in two versions in the Prayer Book and consider hymns as forms of prayer. (*Matthew 6:9-15*)

**Session 9: “Jesus Asks Us to Live Faithfully”** lifts up two qualities of the Christian way of life that Jesus describes in the Sermon on the Mount: to trust God and not be overly anxious about provisions and to practice the “golden rule” of treating others as we would wish to be treated. (*Matthew 7:7-8*)

Yours in Christ,  
Church School Teachers

# SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Session 1

**Advent**

## FOCUS

In the season of Advent, we prepare again to celebrate the coming of Jesus into the world. He is like a light that keeps darkness away. The learners should be able to say that Advent is the beginning of a new Church Year.

## GETTING READY

Advent is a multi-faceted season in the Church Year.

For adults, these weeks of waiting are a time of penitence—a “little Lent” during which we reexamine ourselves, confess our sins and weaknesses, and invite Jesus Christ to come anew into our lives. We remember the words of Hebrew prophets as they proclaimed the dual message of judgment and hope associated with the coming of the Messiah. Through our reading of Scripture and prayers of devotion, we prepare ourselves in heart and mind for the Church's annual celebration of the Savior's birth.

For children and youth who are surrounded on every side by the excitement of holiday events, Advent is marked by thoughts of Christmas Day. For them, the days of waiting may be more frenzied than renewing. It is important for the Church's teachers to provide younger learners with times of calm and quiet to encourage a habit of reflection. By intuition, children can enter into the deeper meaning of the season.

For persons at all age levels, Advent can be located as a specific event on the calendar. It is the beginning of a new liturgical year, different in every respect from the civil New Year. It is also a time for thinking about the great theme of light. In our part of the globe, Advent comes when the days are shorter and the nights are longer. We are reminded that no darkness of any sort can win over the presence of the Son of God. He said, “I am the light of the world” (*John 8:12* and *9:5*).

Dear People of God: In the season of Advent, it is our responsibility and joy to prepare ourselves to hear once more the message of the Angels, to go to Bethlehem and see the Son of God lying in a manger.

Let us hear and heed in Holy Scripture the story of God's loving purpose from the time of our rebellion against him until the glorious redemption brought to us by his holy Child Jesus, and let us look forward to the yearly remembrance of his birth with hymns and songs of praise. . . .  
*Amen.*

A Bidding Prayer, Advent Festival of Lessons and Music  
*The Book of Occasional Services* (2nd ed.), p. 30

## TEACHING TIP

Primary-age learners are aware of various beginnings and passages in their lives. They know how long it is until their next birthday. They know that January 1 is the beginning of a new calendar year, but this date is not as significant for them as the opening of a new school year in the fall. As they take their places in the life of the Church, it is important for the class members to know that Advent is the beginning of the Church Year, a time of preparation and waiting.

## GATHERING

As the learners arrive, ask them to help in putting together an Advent wreath. Make or purchase a circular form. Use a styrofoam ring, or place mounds of clay on a sturdy plate. Place the four candles in the ring. Add small pieces of seasonal greens around the base of the candles.

When everyone is present, gather around the wreath. As the first candle is lighted, say together the following Sanctus from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 362. The words are included on Poster No. 5 in the Teacher's Packet.

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.  
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.  
Hosanna in the highest.

The Advent wreath candles will be lit during the Gathering in each of the four weeks of Advent. The greens may need to be replenished at each session. (Extinguish the candle when the activity is concluded unless the wreath can be placed in a protected area in the classroom. The candle should be relit just before the Closing.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible, and read aloud *John 1:4-5*:

“. . . in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

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

Using the following outline, tell the story of Advent in your own words:

1. Advent means “coming.” During these first weeks in the Church Year, we are waiting for the coming of Jesus.
2. We spend time preparing for Jesus' coming, just as his parents prepared for his birth. Our preparation is an act of making room in our hearts for Jesus.
3. Tell a story about waiting and preparation from your own experience or use the following:

Myra had wanted a baby sister or brother for a long time. Then last summer, her parents told her that her mother would have a baby around Christmas. Myra was so excited. She couldn't wait to tell all of her friends.

She helped her mom get her old crib from the attic and put it together. At first the baby would sleep in her parents' room in a bassinet they borrowed from a neighbor. Then the baby would move into a room that had been used for storage.

The family worked together cleaning the room, painting the walls, and putting up pictures of clowns and balloons. For a while, there was so much to do Myra didn't mind the waiting. But now, everything was ready and all that was left was the waiting. Myra thought this was the hardest part.

4. Just as the Hebrew people awaited the coming of the Messiah, we wait to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Advent Announcement**

When a new book is just about to go on sale or a movie released, we may see a printed announcement about it. The information is a message of anticipation. Invite the learners to make their own announcements about the coming of Jesus. Provide markers, crayons, and paper. Ask the class member to create designs around the words, “He is coming!”

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

For each learner, supply a sheet of blue construction paper, three strips of purple paper (or purple ribbon), one strip of pink paper or ribbon, green foil paper, scissors, and glue. Invite the class members to create pictures of an Advent wreath.

Cut the green foil paper into leaves of any shape, approximately one inch long. Glue these leaves to the blue construction paper in a circle. When the wreath is finished, attach the candles (purple and pink strips) evenly around the circle. Glue glitter to the candles to represent “light.”

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Advent”**

Invite the learners to think of gifts that can't be put in a box and wrapped. Suggest things like the warmth of the sun, fresh air, the shade of a tree on a hot summer day, and the smell of fresh baked cookies.

As each learner says the name of a gift, he/she gets up, pretends to place the gift in the center of the circle, and says, “Thank you, God, for give us . . . .” The game ends when all have had an opportunity to present a gift or time has run out.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Advent”**

Use Puzzle Sheet II.1 titled “Advent.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Ask the learners to turn in their Bibles to *John 1:4-5* and *Genesis 1:3-4*. Compare the two Scripture passages. What does light mean in each one? How are they the same? different?

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Talk with the learners about the concept of waiting for different lengths of time. How long is a minute? hour? day? month? moment? forever? To experiment with varied periods of waiting, arrange for a ringing bell or other sound that is made outside the range of the learners' vision (so that they will

not be able to anticipate exactly when it will occur). Wait together in silence for the sound. Vary the time intervals. Ask: What was it like to wait? How long were the waiting times? What are some of the things we wait for each day? each week? each month? each year?

### **INQUIRING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Visit the worship space at your church to examine the Advent wreath. If possible, ask a person who helped to make the wreath join you. Ask: How was the wreath made? How are the candles attached? How do the greens stay fresh for four weeks? Do you have to replace the candles if they burn too low?

Invite learners to describe Advent wreaths and special calendars they use at home.

### **IMAGINING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “It is the first Sunday of Advent. My family will light the Advent wreath. We will . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about what they might ask to do or in what ways they will participate.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is an expected way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* The learners can role play a period of Advent devotions. Assign responsibilities for preparation, candle-lighting, reading of Scripture, and leading prayers.

### **MUSIC** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Introduce the hymn, “Creator of the stars of night” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 60; *We Sing of God*, 13) by listening to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. Read the words aloud. Ask: As we hear the words, what pictures do we see in our minds? Which of these pictures are familiar? What is new to us?

### **CONTINUING ACTIVITY** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

*Ornaments of the Season.* Using the pattern for this session found on Poster No. 6 in the Teacher's Packet, copy the ornament design for each class member. Cut out and mount on heavy paper or tagboard. The learners may color the designs with markers or crayons and then fold and assemble them, using glue or tape. Hang the completed decorations on a string stretched across the classroom. The completed ornaments can be taken home after the fourth Sunday of Advent, to be used as decorations. (Decide on a method of storing these in a safe place between sessions. The finished collection will include five ornaments.)

### **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 10 has a picture of an Advent wreath, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

How did the learners express their concepts of waiting? How were these related to the waiting of the Advent season? What topics were most on the minds of the learners?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on the concept of Messiah. God's people waited centuries for their Savior. In each Advent season, we also wait upon the Lord as we open our hearts to the coming of Christ. As you prepare for celebrating Christ's birth, what are your thoughts and prayers?

# SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Session 2

**Messiah**

## FOCUS

In Advent, we remember that God's people waited for the coming of the Messiah. Christ is another name for "Messiah." Christians wait each year to celebrate the Messiah's birth in Bethlehem. The learners should be able to say what "Messiah" means to the Church's people.

## GETTING READY

Messiah is Hebrew for "anointed one," and the word Christ is its Greek equivalent. Anointing marked the coronation of kings. The Hebrew people were well acquainted with the prophet's vision of a triumphant successor to King David who had ruled long ago. They longed for the Messiah to come. They believed his reign would save them from their Roman oppressors and restore a united kingdom of God's people.

At the time of Jesus' birth, the Hebrews were governed by Herod, a puppet king who answered to the Roman authorities. While they had some freedom to practice their faith, they still chafed under the rule of foreigners. They wanted a military and political ruler who would restore their place among other nations.

The people were not expecting a Messiah to be born of an ordinary woman from Nazareth. Jesus' birth in a lowly manger did not fit their picture of the coming of a powerful king. His style of life as a preacher, teacher, and healer also did not correspond to their hopes and dreams of a king. Many were unable to accept Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah.

One prophet, however, described the Messiah as a lowly servant who would suffer and die for the sins of the world. The words of Isaiah (see chapter 53) describe the life and ministry of the Messiah.

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Second Sunday of Advent

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 211

## TEACHING TIP

Titles for Jesus include: Savior, Lord, Son of God, Son of Man, Christ, and Messiah. Such an abundance of names for one person may be confusing for primary-age learners as they read the Bible on their own and take part in the Church's liturgies. In teaching, as the different titles are introduced, take time to explain them and to make clear how they all describe Jesus.

## GATHERING

As the learners arrive, invite everyone to help place fresh greens around the class Advent wreath. Talk with the group about the arrival of the second week of the season. Remind them that the candle lighting is a time of silent devotion, and encourage them to think of what they would like to pray for as

the candles are lit. When everyone is present, light two candles, saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, . . .

Sanctus, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 362

(Continue to the end, using Poster No. 5 from the Teacher's Packet.)

Extinguish the candles when the activity is concluded unless the wreath can be put in a protected place in the classroom. The candles should be relit just before the Closing.

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open *The Book of Common Prayer* to page 849. Read aloud the question:

“Who do we believe is the Messiah?” Pause, then read the answer, “The Messiah, or Christ, is Jesus of Nazareth, the only Son of God.”

Compose a story based on the following outline:

1. For a long, long time before Jesus was born, the people of God had been expecting a strong leader who would change their lives. The name for such a leader was “the Messiah.” The prophets had said the Messiah would be a descendant of King David, who had ruled many years before.

2. The people had lived through wars and times when they had to leave their country. Now they were in their own land, but they were ruled by the Roman government, and they had to pay heavy taxes. They longed to be free.

3. In a small town, God sent an angel to tell a young woman that she had been chosen to be the mother of Jesus, the Messiah. The woman, who was really just a teenager, was named Mary. The people who were waiting for a new king to fight the Romans would never have chosen someone like Mary.

4. Mary was soon to marry Joseph, a man in her village. At first, he planned to quietly leave her when he discovered that she was going to have a baby. But after he saw an angel in a dream, he knew that God wanted him to marry Mary and help take care of the new baby.

5. Just before Mary was to give birth, they had to go to Bethlehem to take part in a Roman census. When they arrived, the only place they could find to spend the night was a manger where animals were kept near an inn. There Jesus, the Messiah, was born. Most of the Hebrews who were patiently awaiting the Messiah were completely unaware of this quiet event.

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### Option 1. Picture the Messiah

If at all possible, obtain a recording of Handel's *Messiah*, and arrange to play a portion of it at this session. Provide paper, markers, and crayons. As the learners listen to the choral music, invite them to create their own images of the Messiah based on what they hear. (If the recording is not available, an alternative approach would be to read aloud *Isaiah 9:6-7* several times. Ask: What picture of the Messiah do these verses suggest?)

### **Option 2. Reflected Messiah**

Write the word “Messiah” in pencil on the top halves of colored construction paper sheets that have been folded lengthwise. Supply chalk, and ask the class members to use a variety of colors and designs to trace the letters and decorate the paper on the top part only. When they are finished, fold the papers in half once again, with the colored portions on the inside. Rub hard across the papers. The result will be a reflection of the original creation on the bottom half of the paper.

## **EXPLORING THE STORY** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

### **Option 1. Game, “Looking for the Crown”**

For a game, “Looking for the Crown,” hide enough small crowns for each person in the class. (Use crowns made from pipe cleaners or substitute a picture.) Say to the learners, “For many years the people of God watched and waited for the Messiah to come. They were looking for a king to save them from their enemies and make their nation strong again.”

Ask the class members to pretend they are Hebrews searching for a crown for a king. After they have found a crown, ask them to go back to their seats and wait quietly. The game is over when everyone is seated or the time is up.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Waiting for the Messiah”**

Use Puzzle Sheet II.2 titled “Waiting for the Messiah.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Prayer Book Search**

Ask the learners to locate the Catechism in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 849. Ask: What does the Prayer Book have to say about the Messiah?

Another idea is to pass out index cards with words for Jesus to each learner, such as Messiah, Christ, Anointed One, Messiah, Leader, Lord, Savior, or Son of God. Ask the class to close their eyes while one learner hides his or her card. The group then looks for the card. Continue until all cards have been hidden and found.

## **TALKING IT OVER** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Messiah is a Hebrew title that means “anointed one.” Explain to the class members the custom of biblical times when certain persons were anointed with oil by a priest or a prophet. David was anointed by Samuel, to be the King of Israel. Christians are anointed in baptism. A priest uses oil to make the sign of the cross on the person's forehead.

Ask: What do you think it means to be anointed in this way? What does the priest say? (Repeat the words: “(Name), you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in Baptism and marked as Christ's own for ever.”) What does it mean to be marked? The mark is invisible, so how will people know we belong to Christ?

Point out that the anointing at baptism is the Church's way of saying we

are all very important in the eyes of God—as important as rulers and royalty.

### **INQUIRING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Visit the church's nave or a chapel. Invite the learners to look for pictures and symbols that help them to think about Jesus. These may be in windows, embroidered on hangings, or carved in wood. Do the titles Messiah or Christ appear anywhere in these places? If so, where?

If you are unable to visit the church, bring items or pictures to class.

### **IMAGINING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “I am a Hebrew child waiting for the Messiah to come. Last night I had a dream about the Messiah. It began . . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about how the coming Messiah will look and what he will do? Remind the learners that a Hebrew child would not yet know about Jesus.

*Individual Response.* The class members can write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is an expected way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* The learners can dramatize their ideas about the coming Messiah. The presentations may be pantomime or a composed dialogue.

### **MUSIC** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Sing again “Creator of the stars of night” (*The Hymnal 1982, 60; We Sing of God, 13*) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Divide the class into two groups. Ask one group to read or sing the words as the other group pantomimes them.

### **CONTINUING ACTIVITY** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

*Ornaments of the Season.* Use the pattern on Poster No. 6 in the Teacher's Packet for this session to copy the ornament for all class members. Cut them out and mount them on heavy paper or tagboard. The learners may color the designs with markers or crayons and then fold out and assemble with glue or tape. Hang the completed ornaments on a string stretched across the classroom. The ornaments can be taken home after the fourth Sunday of Advent, to be used for decoration. (Store in a safe place. The finished collection will be five ornaments.)

### **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 11 has a symbol for the Messiah, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

### **CLOSING**

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Did the learners connect the concept of a Hebrew Messiah with the birth of Jesus? Did they link the long wait of the Hebrews for their Messiah and our own waiting during Advent?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is on the birth of John the Baptist to Elizabeth and Zechariah. Elizabeth was the relative Mary visited before Jesus was born. Zechariah predicted that John would be the one to prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah. Consider how you are preparing for the coming of the Christ.

## FOCUS

John was born six months before his cousin Jesus. His father, the aging Zechariah, named the child John because the angel Gabriel had told him to do so. The learners should be able to tell the story of John's birth and naming.

## SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Session 3

**Elizabeth, Zechariah, and  
John**

## GETTING READY

In Advent, the Church remembers John the Baptist, prophet and herald of Christ's ministry.

When John began to preach a message of repentance, he called people to be baptized. The people wondered if he might be the Christ (the expected Messiah). But John answered, "I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (*Luke 3:16*). John meant Jesus of Nazareth.

John was just six months older than Jesus. The *Gospel of Luke* tells the story of his birth to Elizabeth and Zechariah, an older couple. His father, a temple priest, did not believe the angel Gabriel who told him that his wife would have a son. Because of this disbelief, he was struck speechless until after the baby's arrival.

The angel Gabriel also visited the Virgin Mary, telling her that she would bear the child Jesus. At the end of his announcement, he told Mary that her cousin, Elizabeth, had conceived (*Luke 1:36*). Mary went at once to see Elizabeth and stayed with her for three months. We can imagine that the two women shared many thoughts and prayers as they contemplated the future of their sons.

When Elizabeth's child was circumcised on the eighth day, she said that his name was to be John. This surprised everyone because the family had no relatives by that name. Naming children after the father or other male relative was the custom of the Jews. Then Zechariah asked for a tablet and wrote, "His name is John" (*Luke 1:63b*). Immediately Zechariah could speak again.

The aging priest was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke eloquently of the Lord God of Israel who was acting with great power. His words are the basis for The Song of Zechariah (*Benedictus Dominus Deus*), found in *The Book of Common Prayer*, Canticle 4, pages 50-51.

O God, you have taught us through your blessed Son that whoever receives a little child in the name of Christ receives Christ himself: We give you thanks for the blessing you have bestowed upon this family in giving them a child. Confirm their joy by a lively sense of your presence with them, and give them calm strength and patient wisdom as they seek to bring this child to love all that is true and noble, just and pure, lovable and gracious, excellent and admirable, following the example of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Thanksgiving for a Child  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 443

## TEACHING TIP

The naming of a child in the Jewish tradition is a very special event. When we are addressed by our names it makes us feel valued and a part of the community. Be sure that everyone knows everyone else's names, especially visitors or new class members. Take time during class sessions throughout the year to emphasize names, and play an occasional name game.

## GATHERING

As the learners arrive, put fresh greens around the candles of the Advent wreath. Light three candles. As each one is lit, talk about waiting during the weeks of Advent. When all three candles are lit, say:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, . . .

Sanctus, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 362

(Continue to the end, using Poster No. 5 from the Teacher's Packet.)

Extinguish the candles when the Gathering activity is concluded unless the wreath can be put in a protected place in the classroom. The candles should be relit just before the Closing.

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Luke 1:63*:

“(Zechariah) asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, ‘His name is John.’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell the story of John's birth in your own words, using the following:

1. Zechariah was a priest in the temple. It was his turn to pray all day in the sanctuary. While he was praying, an angel appeared to him.

2. The angel told Zechariah that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would soon have a son whose name would be John.

3. Zechariah did not believe what the angel said, because he and his wife were old and had never had any children.

4. The angel said, “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to you to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, you will become mute, unable to speak, until after the day these things occur” (*Luke 1:19-20*).

5. When the baby was born, all their relatives and friends were rejoicing.

6. It was the custom to name the baby at the age of eight days. Elizabeth told everyone that the baby's name would be John. Their friends and family were confused. Babies were named after family members (a boy was usually named after his father), and neither Elizabeth nor Zechariah had a relative named John.

7. Zechariah asked for a tablet. He wrote, “His name is John.” Immediately, he began to speak again. Zechariah told all who were gathered

there how John would prepare the way for the Lord.

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Finger Puppets**

Make small rectangles of paper, measuring 1 x 2 inches. Using markers and colored pencils, the learners may draw and color small pictures of Zechariah, Elizabeth, Gabriel, John, and a relative. After the drawings are completed, use tape to attach them to fingers of one hand to create tiny puppets. Class members may tell the story of John's birth to one another, speaking through their puppets.

### **Option 2. Angel Gabriel**

The angel Gabriel appeared before Zechariah to announce that John would be born. For each learner, supply the following items for creating a figure of the angel: 5-ounce white paper cup, two pieces of gold foil paper, a small styrofoam ball, scissors, tape, and glue.

Instruct the class members to turn the cups upside down and attach the balls to the bottoms to make the angel's head. Cut pairs of wings from the gold foil and fasten them to the cups with adhesive tape. If the learners wish, they can decorate the angels with glitter and other sparkling materials, adding sequins to the styrofoam balls for eyes.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Charades”**

Zechariah could not speak after the angel appeared to him. Play the game, “Charades.” A team of students must communicate a message to another team without speaking aloud. Pantomime must be used. Suggested messages: You and your wife will have a son. I am an angel from God. You will not be able to talk. His name is John. (You may want to try single words or just names, asking, “What is it?” or “Who is it?”)

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “John and Zechariah”**

Use Puzzle Sheet II.3 titled “John and Zechariah.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Bible Search**

Ask the learners to locate in their Bibles *Luke 1:76*, and compare it with *Luke 3:4*. How are they the same? different? Of whom do these verses speak?

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Many of us can enjoy the two birth stories of *Luke 1-2* because we know what it is like to welcome a new child into a family. This is a very special event. Ask: What kinds of things happen when a new baby is born? How are

babies named? Who comes to visit? What happens in the church? What do we say when a baby is baptized?

### INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Recalling Zechariah's experience of being struck speechless, explore with the learners what it would be like not to be able to speak. Ask: Have you ever known someone who could not speak? If you could not use your voice, how would you talk with another person? use the telephone? order food at a restaurant? Invite the learners to "speak" to one another without using their mouths or voices.

### IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "Zechariah was alone in the temple. He was praying to God. Suddenly . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about what they might have seen or heard.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is an expected way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* The learners can dramatize the appearance of the angel Gabriel to Zechariah, the temple priest. Show Zechariah's surprise and disbelief.

### MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing again "Creator of the stars of night" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 60; *We Sing of God*, 13) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Use rhythm instruments to accompany the words. (If instruments are not available, create a few of your own from cans containing sand, bottles, and sticks.)

### CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Ornaments of the Season.* Using the pattern for this session on Poster No. 6 in the Teacher's Packet, make a copy of the ornament for each class member. Cut out and mount on heavy paper or tagboard. The learners may color the designs with markers or crayons and then fold and assemble with glue or tape, making a three-dimensional ornament. Hang the completed decorations on a string stretched across the classroom. The ornaments may be taken home after the fourth Sunday of Advent. Decide on a place to store them between sessions. (The completed collection will be five ornaments.)

### TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 12 has a picture of Jesus and John the Baptist, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

### CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Which aspects of the story of John's birth appealed to the learners? Did the learners know that he was Jesus' cousin? What ideas do they have concerning the role John would play in Jesus' life?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on the Nativity story from the *Gospel of Luke*. We tell this story again and again, but sometimes we do not really hear it because it is so familiar to us. Spend some quiet time meditating on the scenes, looking for new insights that affect you personally.

## FOCUS

Jesus was born to Mary in the city of Bethlehem. The learners should be able to retell the Nativity story as it appears in Luke's Gospel.

## SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Session 4

Mary, Joseph, and Jesus

## GETTING READY

Three of the four Gospels contain Nativity passages. The *Book of John* describes the Word of God who came as the light of the world (*John 1:1-18*). The story in *Matthew 1*, which begins with a genealogy, has been called a kind of Christmas catechism reflecting the official position of the early Church concerning the identity of Jesus.

Only in *Luke 2:1-20* do we have a more complete story. We sense the awe of the Savior's birth in a lowly stable (probably a cave outside Bethlehem, possibly with a lean-to attached). It is clear that God's salvation is for all humankind, beginning with the lowest level of society, the shepherds. *Luke* uses three titles for Jesus: Savior, Christ (the Anointed), and Lord.

(*Mark*, the first of the Gospels to be written, makes no allusions to Jesus' birth. This narrative opens with Jesus' baptism and the beginning of his three-year ministry.)

The nativity story in *Matthew* continues after the genealogy with Joseph's reaction to the news that Mary "was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit" (*Matthew 1:18*). He changed his mind about leaving her after the Lord appeared to him in a dream.

In *Luke*, Mary learns about the birth of her child from the angel Gabriel. She then visits her cousin Elizabeth, who is about to give birth to John the Baptist. After Mary returns home, she and Joseph learn they must travel to Bethlehem for a Roman census. There she gives birth to Jesus in a stable. Angels proclaim the birth to nearby shepherds, and they visit the baby Jesus.

The story in *Matthew* does not mention the trip to Bethlehem, the birth in a manger, or the visit by the shepherds. It continues with the arrival of the Wise Men from the East who were following a star. (*Luke* does not mention Joseph's dream or a star.)

Stories of the nativity often include portions of both stories. The star described by *Matthew* as part of the story of the Wise Men is usually included in the descriptions and displays of the manger scene from *Luke*.

Almighty God, you have poured upon us the new light of your incarnate Word: Grant that this light, enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives; 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.*

First Sunday after Christmas Day  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 213

## TEACHING TIP

Acknowledge the learners' excitement about Christmas. They are excited about parties, plays, and gifts they are buying or making. Encourage them to

talk about their family traditions in relation to the Church and Advent preparation: What do they remember from last year? What will they do this year?

## GATHERING

As the learners arrive, renew the greens around the Advent wreath and light four candles. The four weeks of Advent, of waiting and preparation, are almost over. Conclude the candle lighting with the words:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, . . .

Sanctus, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 362

(Continue to the end, using Poster No. 5 from the Teacher's Packet.)

If your Advent wreath has a fifth, white Christ Candle, talk about how it is to be lit on Christmas Day. Look on page 80 of *The Book of Common Prayer* for the Antiphon for the Twelve Days of Christmas. Use these words if the Christ Candle is lit.

## STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Luke 2:4-5*:

“Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell the story of Jesus' birth in your own words. Use the following outline if needed:

1. The angel Gabriel had announced to Mary that she would have a child. He would be God's Son. The angel said she should name the baby Jesus.
2. When it was time for Mary to have her child, the Roman government called for a census (a time of counting the citizens so that taxes could be collected from everyone). All the people had to return to the home cities (towns, villages) of their ancestors.
3. Mary and Joseph traveled from their home in Nazareth to Bethlehem to be counted in the census.
4. When they arrived, they could not find a place to stay. An innkeeper let them sleep in his stable. Here the child Jesus was born. Mary wrapped him in cloths and laid him on the straw in a manger.
5. An angel told shepherds in a nearby field that Jesus was born. Then the night sky was filled with angels, praising God.
6. The shepherds went to Bethlehem to see the baby sleeping in the manger.

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Silhouette Creche**

Provide brown construction paper, toothpicks or popsicle sticks, and pieces of straw. Invite the learners to use the materials to create the stable manger where Jesus was born. When they have finished, distribute black paper and suggest that each person create silhouettes of Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. If time permits, figures of angels, shepherds, and animals may be added.

### **Option 2. Star Pictures**

Cut large stars from construction paper or posterboard. Invite the learners to draw their favorite scenes from the Nativity story in the centers of their stars. The outside of the star may be decorated with glitter or other shiny materials.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Christmas Concepts”**

Gather several old Christmas cards or use pictures from magazines for a game, “Christmas Concepts.” Put these in a basket. Write the words “Peace,” “Joy,” and “Love” on large sheets of paper. Invite the learners to form three teams. Ask the members of each team to choose a card and place it under one of the words, in relay-race style. When all the cards are on display, talk about how the pictures fit under the main concepts.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Mary, Joseph, and Jesus”**

Use Puzzle Sheet II.4 titled “Mary, Joseph, and Jesus.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

The learners may plan and conduct Advent devotions for the Fourth Sunday. Which readings will they use? Which prayers? Help them locate the readings in the Bible.

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Talk with the learners about the significance of the Christmas story. Ask: Why is this such an important story for us? How do we celebrate the birth of Jesus in our church? at home?

Point out some of the connections between popular symbols of the season and the Nativity themes. Examples: candy canes—shepherd's crooks; stars—star of Bethlehem; candles—Jesus as the light of the world; bells—announcing the good news of Jesus' birth. Ask: What are your favorite Christmas stories? How is God or Jesus a part of these stories?

## INQUIRING (Time: 10-20 minutes)

In England, an annual tradition is the giving of Christmas Crackers. These are made from six-inch cardboard tubes (such as paper towel rolls) that are filled with prizes. The prizes may include wrapped candy, a Scripture verse, a miniature Nativity scene, a special greeting, or other similar items. The tube is then wrapped in Christmas paper, foil, or colored tissue paper and tied at each end with curling ribbon. The crackers can then be distributed among patients in a hospital or nursing home.

Share the directions with the learners, and invite them to plan a time for making Christmas Crackers—at home or at church. Where will they get the supplies? What will the prizes be? Who could they give them to?

## IMAGINING (Time: 10-20 minutes)

Share a story starter: “I live in Bethlehem. I have just heard about the baby born in the stable. I . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and to describe what they have seen or heard.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is an expected way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* Find the Christmas story in *Luke 2:1-7* and show it to the learners. Invite them to role play the story. Ask for volunteers to be Mary, Joseph, the innkeeper, the angels, and the shepherds. Encourage the class to add their own words and ideas. If there is time, reassign roles and do the role play again.

## MUSIC (Time: 10-15 minutes)

Introduce the hymn, “Good Christian friends, rejoice” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 107) by listening to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. Invite the learners to form a circle. During the first and last phrases of each verse, skip around the circle to the right and then to the left. In the middle, stand and do motions that reflect the words—such as rocking a baby in your arms when the word “born” is sung.

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY (Time: 10-20 minutes)

*Ornaments of the Season.* Using the pattern for this session on Poster No. 6 from the Teacher's Packet, make a copy of the ornament for each class member. The learners may color the designs with markers or crayons and then fold and assemble, using glue or tape. Hang the completed decorations on a string stretched across the classroom. Following this session, all ornaments made during Advent can be taken home for use in holiday decorating. Note that a fifth ornament will be created at the next session.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 13 has a picture of a Nativity scene, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Do the learners understand that Holy Scripture is central in our celebration of Christ's birth? What opportunities will they have to worship in the congregation and to take part in other church-related programs during the holiday season?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is designed for use on the Sunday closest to Epiphany. It focuses on Mary and Joseph's visit to the temple where they encounter Simeon and Anna, two people who recognize the infant Jesus as the Christ. Consider: Would you recognize Jesus if he appeared to you today? How do you think he would look? What might he say?

# SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Session 5

**Simeon and Anna**

## FOCUS

Both Simeon and Anna recognized the young child Jesus as the long-awaited one whom God would send. The learners should be able to describe the scene in the Jerusalem temple when these two people spoke with Joseph and Mary.

## GETTING READY

The only New Testament texts we have concerning Jesus' birth and infancy are found in *Luke 2* and *Matthew 2*. They form the basis for a two-week period of the Church's festival liturgies in December and January:

The Nativity (Christmas Day, December 25)—*Luke 2:1-20*

The Holy Name (January 1)—*Luke 2:15-21*

The Epiphany (January 6)—*Matthew 2:1-12*

Then, on February 2, we recall the Presentation in the Temple, based on *Luke 2:22-40*.

The content of the two Gospel chapters has been combined in popular storytelling. *Luke* alone describes Jesus' birth in a manger and the presentation in the temple, and *Matthew* alone tells about the later visit of the Wise Men. But Christmas creches, pictures, pageants, and dramas frequently portray the scenes as if they had all happened at the same time. Few talk about what happened after the visit of the Wise Men. There are two different stories. In *Matthew*, Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt. In *Luke*, Mary and Joseph take Jesus to Jerusalem and present him at the temple. Teachers can help young learners to recognize the separate events in each story.

In this session, we concentrate on the story of the Presentation. The background of this ceremony is found in *Exodus 13:1-16*. In Israel, the first-born—both human beings and animals—was to be consecrated to God. In the case of the Holy Family, there was no real need for them to observe the custom, but they did so in order to identify Jesus as a recognized participant in the life and destiny of Israel.

In the temple they found Simeon, a very religious man who believed he would see the Messiah before he died. Simeon took the baby Jesus into his arms and knew immediately that he was God's Son. The family also saw Anna, a prophetess, who also was very old. She, too, recognized Jesus as the Son of God.

Almighty and everliving God, we humbly pray that, as your only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple, so we may be presented to you with pure and clean hearts by Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.  
*Amen.*

The Presentation

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 239

## TEACHING TIP

In sharing the Scriptural accounts of Jesus' infancy with primary-age learners, teachers have a dual responsibility: to present the texts accurately, and to link the brief stories with celebrations of the Church. Be alert to class

members' tendencies to combine Christmas, Holy Name, Epiphany, and the Presentation into a single narrative. Help them separate the different parts of the story.

## GATHERING

As the learners arrive, gather once more around the Advent wreath. Notice the four candles have all been lit, and each one is probably burning low by now. The waiting is over, and we have celebrated the birth of Jesus.

When everyone is present, prepare to light a Christ Candle. On some Advent wreaths, this is the center, white candle. If your wreath does not have a center candle, put a white candle in a holder in the center. Learners may help to place fresh greens around the base. As the Christ Candle is lit, say these words:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, . . .

Sanctus, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 362

(Continue to the end, using Poster No. 5 from the Teacher's Packet.)

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

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible, and read aloud from *Luke 2:30*:

“ . . . for my eyes have seen your salvation . . . ”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

In your own words, tell the story of the Holy Family's visit to the temple in Jerusalem and their encounter with Simeon and Anna (*Luke 2:22-40*). The following outline may be helpful:

1. Eight days after Jesus was born, he was named Jesus. This was according to Jewish custom. The Church celebrates this event on January 1. It is called The Holy Name of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Another part of the Jewish ritual for new babies was the presentation in the temple. The law of the Lord required that every firstborn male was to be dedicated as holy to the Lord.

3. Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem to fulfill this law.

4. In the temple they met the aging Simeon, who was a deeply religious man. He believed that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah, the Christ.

5. When Simeon saw the baby Jesus, he took him in his arms and blessed God, saying, “Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation . . . .” Simeon knew that Jesus was God's Son.

6. Anna, a prophetess, was also in the temple. She was very old. She was faithful to God and worshiped, prayed, and fasted in the temple both night

and day.

7. When Anna saw Jesus, she gave thanks to God and told everyone that he was the Savior.

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Illuminated *Nunc Dimittis***

Using the pattern in the Teacher's Packet, make enough photocopies of the *Nunc Dimittis* (The Song of Simeon) to provide one for each class member. Invite the learners to use markers or crayons to decorate the outside design. The finished product may be mounted on a construction paper background.

### **Option 2. Decorated Candles**

Simeon spoke of Jesus as a light to enlighten the nations. Candles remind us of the light that Jesus brings to the world. Supply short candles (preferably thick in diameter), sequins, glitter, or foil paper. Invite the learners to use the materials to produce decorated candles. Using glue or paste, create designs on the outside of the candles. Sprinkle glitter and sequins over the glue. Learners could also cut small pieces of foil and glue them to the candles.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Who Am I?”**

Lead a game, “Who Am I?” Provide a series of clues that describe the persons at the temple on the day of Jesus' presentation. From the clues, the class members guess the names. Following are some suggested clues. Learners may create additional ones.

Clue 1. I brought Jesus and his mother to the temple in order to fulfill the Jewish law. (Joseph)

Clue 2. I am a woman who thanked God for this child. I have prayed for his coming for over seventy years. (Anna)

Clue 3. I was carried into the temple by my father. Simeon also held me in his arms. (Jesus)

Clue 4. I went to the temple with my husband and child. I watched as Simeon and Anna blessed my child. (Mary)

Clue 5. I have seen the Savior. I have held the Christ in my arms. (Simeon)

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Simeon and Anna”**

Use Puzzle Sheet II.5 titled “Simeon and Anna.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Ask the learners to turn in their Bibles to *Luke 2:29-32*. Compare this text with “The Song of Simeon” in *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 66 and

120. Note that this Song also appears on pages 51 and 93.

### TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Review the story of Jesus' presentation at the temple. Ask: What do you think caused Simeon and Anna to recognize Jesus as different? How do you suppose Mary and Joseph felt about the attention given to their child? (Consider how parents appreciate having people notice their infant children.) Simeon and Anna recognized Jesus as the Son of God. What would you have done if you had been at the temple? In what ways do we recognize Jesus as the Son of God?

### INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Ask the class members to form a circle and set the candles they decorated for the Creating activity in front of them. (If you did not make the candles, give each person a candle to hold.) Place a large candle in the center where all can see. Dim or turn out the lights in the classroom. Ask the learners to experience the absence of the lights. Light the large candle. Ask: What has changed since the candle was lighted? How is Jesus Christ like the light? Using another candle lit from the center candle, light each of the candles in the circle. What happens when we spread the light of Jesus to others?

### IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "I went into the temple in Jerusalem. I saw Simeon and Anna there. They were praying quietly. Suddenly, they were speaking words of praise to the Lord. I . . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and consider what they would have seen, heard, or said.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is an expected way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* The learners can work in four-member teams to role play the presentation of the baby Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem.

### MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing again "Good Christian friends, rejoice" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 107) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Invite the learners to clap the rhythm.

### CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Ornaments of the Season.* Using the pattern for this session from Poster No. 6 in the Teacher's Packet, make a copy of the ornament for each class member. Cut out and mount on heavy paper or tagboard. The learners may color the design with markers or crayons and then fold and assemble with glue or tape. Hang the completed decorations on a string stretched across the classroom. This fifth ornament can be taken home after the session, to join the four that were completed earlier in the unit.

### TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 14 has a picture of the presentation of Jesus in the temple, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind

children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Were the learners able to sense the joy and excitement that Simeon and Anna experienced upon seeing the infant Jesus? Has the class members' participation in the Christmas season and the Epiphany celebration provided them with a feeling of joy about Jesus? Why, or why not?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session begins the theme of Jesus as teacher, with a focus on The Sermon on the Mount. Reflect on your experience as a teacher. In what way has Jesus' teaching been a model for you?

# SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Session 6

**Jesus Taught the People**

## FOCUS

As Jesus became more widely known for his teaching, preaching, and healing, a great crowd gathered at a mountain to hear him teach. We call his words on that occasion the Sermon on the Mount. The learners should be able to describe the setting and identify Jesus' ministries as teacher, preacher, and healer.

## GETTING READY

The ministry of Jesus is summarized in *Matthew 4:23* and *9:35*. He came among us as teacher, preacher, and healer. This way of describing his work appears to have been carefully included by the writer of *Matthew*.

As teacher, Jesus took his place in the tradition of the rabbis who interpreted Scripture and engaged people in thoughtful conversation about God and the meaning of life. Indeed, he was addressed as rabbi many times in the *Gospel of John*.

As preacher, Jesus was like the Hebrew prophets. He could offer both pronouncements of judgment and visions of a future reign of God. He proclaimed a gospel of love, repentance, and forgiveness.

As healer, Jesus performed deeds of power. He helped the lame to walk, the deaf to hear, and the blind to see. In quiet ways, he prayed for peace and reconciliation.

Every aspect of Jesus' ministry could be regarded as teaching, preaching, and healing. In this unit, the learners will be looking intently at the Sermon on the Mount—three chapters of the teachings of Jesus recorded in the *Gospel of Matthew*.

In Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, Jesus used the Ten Commandments as a foundation on which to base his ministry. He also gave his followers rules to live by. For example, Jesus told the people not only to love their neighbor, but also to love their enemies. Jesus taught that humility was important, especially in religious practices. He told his followers to store up their treasures in heaven, which would last for eternity, rather than on earth, where they would perish.

O God, by your Holy Spirit you give to some the word of wisdom, to others the word of knowledge, and to others the word of faith: We praise your Name for the gifts of grace manifested in your servants, and we pray that your Church may never be destitute of such gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*.

Of a Theologian and Teacher  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 248

## TEACHING TIP

Outside the immediate families of primary-age children, teachers are the most influential people in their lives. As the learners' world expands, their teachers have many opportunities to reflect positive images and provide support and encouragement. Respect the children's unique gifts from God. Do whatever is possible to make the church school setting a joyful and loving place for every individual.

## GATHERING

From the Teacher's Packet, display Poster No. 7, which shows the Sermon on the Mount. As the learners arrive, ask them to think about what Jesus appears to be doing in this picture and what he may be saying.

When all have arrived, conclude the Gathering by saying together:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, . . .

Sanctus, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 362

(Continue to the end, using Poster No. 5 from the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING (Time: 10 minutes)

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Matthew 5:1-2*:

“When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them . . . .”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Compose a story about Jesus as a teacher using the information in Getting Ready and in the following outline:

1. Jesus went around Galilee and surrounding areas teaching, preaching, and healing. Teaching was one of his primary ministries, and he approached it in differing ways.

2. Sometimes he would show people what he was talking about. For example, he told his listeners to look at the birds and the flowers. He said that God cares for us in the same way he cares for these creations. Another time, he put a little child in the middle of the crowd and said, “You must become as one of these to enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Several times in the Synoptic Gospels (*Matthew*, *Mark* and *Luke*), someone asked Jesus who will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Each time Jesus called a child to his side and told those assembled that unless they became like children, they would never enter Heaven. Jesus emphasized that humbleness is an important virtue. In *Mark*, he explained that whoever welcomed a child welcomed both him and God, the Father.

3. Jesus also told stories called parables. These stories were about things people knew from personal experience like coins, a mustard seed, and a field of plants.

In *Mark 12:42*, Jesus described a widow who offered two coins at the temple at the same time many wealthy people put in much greater sums. Jesus said that the widow’s contribution meant more because she gave all that she had.

In *Luke 13:19*, someone asked Jesus what the kingdom of God was like. Jesus replied that it is like a mustard seed that was planted in the garden and grew into a great tree with many branches where birds go to nest.

In *Luke 8:4-8*, Jesus told to a crowd the story of a sower who was planting seeds. Some of the seeds fell on the path and were trampled, some

fell on the rock and died quickly for lack of water, some fell among the thorns and were choked, and some fell upon the good soil and grew to be strong and healthy.

4. Sometimes Jesus would tell his stories to a few people, usually the disciples gathered around him. At other times, he would tell stories to crowds of people.

5. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was teaching many people in many ways.

(Encourage the children to read at home about how Jesus traveled and taught in the learners' book, *Jesus Teaches*, chapter 1.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Sermon on the Mount**

Suggest that the class members create their own scenes for the Sermon on the Mount. Provide blue and brown construction paper, scissors, and glue. The learners may cut out their own mountains and place them on blue backgrounds. Provide pencils, markers, and crayons for drawing in the details. Where will they put Jesus? the crowds? the birds? the flowers?

### **Option 2. Card Holders**

Provide learners with pipe cleaners and beads (pony beads work well). Suggest that the learners make designs with the pipe cleaners that will display a Take-Home Card. One way is to thread beads on the pipe cleaner, connect to make an oval, and bend in half at a right angle. The card rests on the bottom half, and is supported by the top half. Encourage learners to keep the holder where they can see it each day.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Go to the Top of the Mountain”**

Ahead of time, prepare a list of questions about the biblical stories and people the learners have experienced this year to be used in a game called “Go to the Top of the Mountain.” As the learners answer a question correctly, they may take a prescribed number of steps up the mountain. Only the person who is asked the question may answer, but the others may help by using hand signals or giving other clues. The object of the game is to get everyone to the top of the mountain.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Jesus Taught the People”**

Use Puzzle Sheet II.6 titled “Jesus Taught the People.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

The following verses of the Bible contain the word “teaching”: *Matthew 4:23, Matthew 9:25, Matthew 21:23, Mark 6:6, Luke 13:22, Luke 21:37.*

Ask the learners to find these in their Bibles and read them aloud.

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Jesus was a teacher, preacher, and healer. Ask: How would you explain each of these three words? What did Jesus do as teacher? preacher? healer? Who are some of the people you know who teach? who preach? who heal? Have you yourself taught someone something? If so, what? Would it be possible for you to preach? How might you help in healing someone?

## INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Announce a “turn-about” time for the learners. They are to take charge of the class session. First, help them identify what and how they would teach. Ask: What is your favorite way to learn? What kinds of stories do you like? What activities do you like? Where would you like to have class? Then suggest that they interview you about the work of teaching. They may ask questions like: Why did you decide to teach in the church? What do you like best about it? How do you get ready for class sessions? What do you hope to accomplish?

## IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “I am with a crowd at the foot of a mountain. Jesus has just arrived. I . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about what they might be seeing, hearing, and thinking.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is an expected way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* The learners can form sub-groups to role play Jesus teaching the people in the way he did during his Sermon on the Mount.

## MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Introduce the hymn, “O Jesus, I have promised” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 655; *We Sing of God*, 100) by listening to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. Next, read the words of each stanza slowly. Which words refer to Jesus? Point out that the word “master” is used frequently to mean teacher. Principals of private schools are often called headmasters.

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Sermon Scene.* Begin with a large, shallow box. Invite the learners to create a three-dimensional scene of the Sermon on the Mount. At this session, they may put in the mountain and trees. Materials may be as elaborate as clay and real pieces of twigs and leaves or as simple as paper and crayons.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 15 has a picture of the Sermon on the Mount, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

From the learners' comments and reactions, how do they regard people who teach? Why? What do they associate with teaching and learning? What were the class members' reactions to the description of Jesus as a teacher who held classes outdoors?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session continues an examination of Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount, focusing specifically on the Beatitude, "Blessed are the peacemakers." Consider the ways in which you help to promote peace among others. In what form do you receive blessings from God?

# SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Session 7

## Jesus Taught About Peace

### FOCUS

In the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us to be peacemakers and to pray for our enemies. The learners should be able to define “peace” among people and say how it feels to be reconciled with another person after an argument.

### GETTING READY

Beatitudes are a form of speech or writing that promise a blessing for persons at the end of time, when the complete reign of God will be established. These statements are meant to teach people that living a good and humble life will be rewarded in Heaven. They appear in both Hebrew and Greek literature.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus began with a series of Beatitudes. Some have to do with the way people *are* (poor in spirit, mourning, meek, or persecuted). Others speak of what people *do* (hunger and thirst for righteousness, act with mercy, cultivate pure hearts, or make peace).

The following are the terms Jesus used in the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount:

The “poor in spirit” are able to stand before God without assuming that they are examples of good behavior or able to handle life all by themselves.

The people who “mourn” are the ones who feel grief about sin and evil in the world.

The “meek” are the people who are without status and power in life.

Persons who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” long for the final salvation that comes from God.

The “merciful” are slow to condemn others and quick to forgive.

The “pure in heart” have an undivided loyalty to God.

The “peacemakers” are those who work for unity and love in their personal relationships and among all peoples of the world.

The ones who are “persecuted for righteousness' sake” are punished or injured because they live to serve God.

This session concentrates on the work of “peacemaking”—a form of Christian service that can be performed everywhere by persons of all ages.

Almighty God, kindle, we pray, in every heart the true love of peace, and guide with your wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth, that in tranquility your dominion may increase until the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

For Peace

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 258

### TEACHING TIP

Primary-age children are well aware of the absence of peace in the world. Not only do they see violence (and war) on television, but also they may be experiencing forms of it in their own neighborhoods and schools. As the

concept of peacemakers is explored, strive to help learners in recognizing that peace can begin with individuals, especially themselves.

## GATHERING

Display the Peace Symbol found on Poster No. 6 in the Teacher's Packet. As the learners arrive, ask them if they have ever seen this before. If so, where? What does it mean?

When all have arrived, gather the group and say:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, . . .

Sanctus, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 362

(Continue to the end, using Poster No. 5 from the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Matthew 5:9, 44a*:

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God. . . .

I say to you, Love your enemies . . . .”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Using the following outline and information from *Getting Ready*, introduce the Beatitudes from the opening lines of the Sermon on the Mount. Emphasize “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

1. When Jesus began to speak to the crowds who had gathered at a mountain to hear him, he began by naming the kinds of people who are especially blessed by God.

2. He began by saying, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Many of those who had gathered to hear him were poor. They had seen how haughty and rude rich people could be. But Jesus talked about the importance of being poor in spirit. Everyone, rich and poor, was important to God.

3. Then Jesus talked to those who were sad. There were probably people in the crowd who knew someone who had died or was very sick. Jesus' words of comfort must have been helpful.

4. Jesus' message might have also been confusing. He blessed the meek who would inherit the earth. Meek people are quiet and usually not leaders. How could they inherit the earth? Think about the powerful people you know. Are they meek?

5. He continued, talking about people who wanted to more about God and those who showed mercy.

6. Then Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.” Throughout his ministry, Jesus encouraged people to love their enemies. Ask the learners if they have ever had an enemy. Could you love this person?

7. Jesus knew that peace comes from God. When people stop treating one another in hateful and harmful ways, God's peace can turn them into friends.

Peace begins with knowing God.

8. Jesus' message is the same for us. We are to treat others with love and respect. And we are to pray for those who hate us.

9. Tell the story of someone at school or in the community that may be difficult to love or respect. For example, describe the following scenario or one of your own: Sara was walking in line to the lunch room, looking forward to eating with her friends. Paul, who was behind her, kept trying to step on her heels. When she turned to confront him, the teacher told her there was to be no talking in the halls, and that Sara would have to eat alone. Sara was so angry. Did Jesus expect her to love someone like Paul that no one in the class even liked?

(Encourage the children to read at home about the Beatitudes in the learners' book, *Jesus Teaches*, chapter 2. Ask them to also look at chapter 3, which talks about people being like salt and light, and chapter 4 about going the second mile.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Peace Tree**

Provide large sheets of construction paper, markers, and crayons. Invite each class member to draw a tree with bare branches and to add pictures on the branches that would remind them of peace. Suggestions: two children holding hands, a cross, a mother holding a baby, a sleeping puppy or kitten, the stars at night, or clouds in a blue sky.

### **Option 2. Peace Symbol**

Show again the Peace Symbol from Poster No. 6 in the Teacher's Packet. Explain that this symbol was created years ago as a sign of peace. Supply paper, markers, crayons, scissors, glitter, glue, and other materials. Invite the class members to design and create a new peace sign of their very own. (If some learners prefer, they may copy the Peace Symbol.)

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, "Let Peace Begin with Me"**

Divide the class into two groups to play a game, "Let Peace Begin with Me." Instruct each group to form a circle, holding hands. Direct one circle to stand inside facing out, and the other to stand outside facing in. The inner circle then moves slowly to the right as the outer circle moves slowly to the left. Everyone says the words, "Let peace begin with me, let the time be now." At this point, each person shakes hands with the person opposite and says, "The peace of the Lord be always with you." Continue as long as time permits.

If possible, obtain a recording of "Let peace begin with me," to be played as the circles move.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, "Jesus Taught About Peace"**

Use Puzzle Sheet II.7 titled "Jesus Taught About Peace." Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Ask the class members to find *Matthew 5:3-11* in their Bibles. Read each verse aloud and discuss its meaning.

### **TALKING IT OVER** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Discuss how people can be active in making peace. Ask: When we are angry with others, what kinds of actions can we take? (Discuss the ways people handle feelings of anger, including hitting, fighting, and speaking in hateful ways. For each of these possibilities, what would be a constructive alternative?) Consider questions like:

How do we go about making peace with a deliberate bully? Must we simply “give in” to such a person? (Refer to the incident in Storytelling.) Why, or why not? Encourage the class members to supply personal examples of times when peace replaced hostility.

Emphasize the importance of self control in dealing with others, especially when we are angry or afraid. How can we control our anger? What is our responsibility in these kinds of situations? We also need to learn to work with others, even when we disagree. Ask: How do you decide to do something with friends when there is a disagreement?

### **INQUIRING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Invite two older students to come to the class and pretend to have a fight as the group observes. Give directions to the actors on how to begin the skit. Ask that the episode end peacefully. Ask both the visitors and the class members to share the feelings they had during the “fight.” Even though the young actors were pretending, did they find themselves beginning to feel angry? How did they feel when they made peace? How did the class members feel about the ending of the skit?

Sometimes our peace is disturbed by actions that do not involve anger and fighting. For example, we may be impatient when we have to wait for others to finish a task. Ask: What do you do when you are impatient? How do you feel when someone complains all the time? How do you deal with a person who makes mean remarks about others? about yourself? What can you do if someone is left out? What if that person is you?

### **IMAGINING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “My friends and I were on the playground. Two of them started to argue over what they wanted to do. I . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about what they might do in this situation.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is an expected way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* The learners can form teams to role play being peacemakers in a variety of situations.

## MUSIC (Time: 10-15 minutes)

Sing again “O Jesus, I have promised” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 655; *We Sing of God*, 100) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Try substituting the words “make peace” for “serve thee” in stanza 1. Read over the words of stanza 2. What do these lines suggest about making peace with others?

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY (Time: 10-20 minutes)

*Sermon Scene.* Continue working on the three-dimensional scene of the Sermon on the Mount, as described in Session 1. Add Jesus and the disciples. Materials used may be as elaborate as clay or as simple as paper and crayons.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 16 has a picture of Jesus with children, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

How did the learners respond to the idea of being peacemakers? Were any of the class members able to share difficult situations they have faced? Consider ways in which the class atmosphere fosters cooperation and non-violence.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is about the Lord's Prayer, which Jesus shared in his Sermon on the Mount. What does this prayer mean to you? Think about how and when you pray as you prepare to teach this next session.

# SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Session 8

## Jesus Taught Us to Pray

### FOCUS

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us to pray. We remember it each time we join in the Lord's Prayer. The learners should be able to pray the Lord's Prayer as their congregation does.

### GETTING READY

The Lord's Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 6:9-13*) is addressed to "our Father in heaven." This is a common phrase in the *Gospel of Matthew*. The prayer consists of seven petitions. The first three of these are alike in meaning. They call on God to accomplish God's purpose in the world:

1. "Hallowed be your name."
2. "Your kingdom come."
3. "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The four other petitions are as follows:

4. "Give us this day our daily bread." This is probably a request asking God to meet our basic daily needs. It especially addresses the needs of the poor and daily laborers.

5. "Forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors." God's forgiveness is not automatic or unconditional. The fullest experience of God's forgiveness comes through repentance and forgiving others.

6. "Do not bring us to the time of trial." This is probably a petition asking God for strength to help us resist the temptations that are part of daily living.

7. "but rescue us from the evil one." We pray that God will deliver us from the power of all that is evil in the world.

The "doxology" – "for yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen" – appears in Episcopal liturgies but is not in many New Testament manuscripts. Some Christian traditions omit this part of the Lord's Prayer.

In the service of Holy Eucharist, the Lord's Prayer always follows immediately after the Great Thanksgiving. In Morning and Evening Prayer, it is the opening prayer following the psalm(s), readings, and canticles.

Almighty God, you have given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplication to you; and you have promised through your well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name you will be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, our desires and petitions as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of your truth, and in the age to come life everlasting. *Amen.*

A Prayer of St. Chrysostom  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 102

### TEACHING TIP

The Lord's Prayer will be known by most primary-age learners in the church. Some of them may already know it from memory. Others may know only selected phrases of the prayer, or may have misconceptions of words

and meanings. In teaching, begin by checking out the learners' present level of understanding.

## GATHERING

Display Poster No. 8 in the Teacher's Packet, which shows children praying or supply magazine pictures of people praying in a variety of settings. Set out paper and crayons. As the learners arrive, invite them to draw a picture of themselves or family members at prayer.

When all have arrived, gather the group and say:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, . . .

Sanctus, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 362

(Continue to the end, using Poster No. 5 from the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Matthew 6:9-15*:

“Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

Your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us to the time of trial,

but rescue us from the evil one.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Jesus was teaching about how we are to practice our faith, especially the way we pray.

2. Jesus shared a way of praying that we now call the Lord's Prayer.

3. The prayer is divided into two parts. In the first part, we praise God and ask that God's will be done. Look again at the Scripture passage. Define “hallowed” (to make holy). Describe some ways we can praise and honor God. For example, we can praise God in songs and by thanking God for the good things we have been given. Use an example from your own experience of how you have honored God in your prayers.

4. The second part of the prayer asks for four things we need from God. The four requests are for our daily bread (what we need to nourish our bodies); forgiveness for our sins (as we forgive other people); and protection from temptation and evil (strength to be faithful to God at all times).

5. Tell a story that incorporates these requests. For example: Sometimes

before he goes to sleep, Tom's dad says the Lord's Prayer with him. One night, Tom heard the words in a special way. He remembered the lunch his mom packed for him and how hungry he had been that day. He thought about how he had teased his little sister that morning until she cried. Later that day, an older student on the bus had taken his backpack and wouldn't give it back. A teacher intervened and asked Tom to shake hands with the older child. That was hard, but not as hard as asking his sister's forgiveness when he saw her that evening. When his dad asked God to keep us from "the time of trial," Tom thought about how easy it would have been to copy the answers from his friend's homework. Something told him not to do it. Tom kept thinking about his day and the words of the Lord's Prayer as he fell asleep.

6. The Lord's Prayer is included within every service of worship in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

(Suggest that the class members read at home stories about prayer in the learners' book, *Jesus Teaches*, chapters 5 and 6. Encourage them to look for a key word that is in both chapters.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Paint a Prayer**

Invite the learners to paint a prayer. Provide watercolors, brushes, and paper. Soft, prayerful music may be played in the background as the class members work.

### **Option 2. Prayer Alphabet**

Provide paper, markers, and crayons. Ask the learners to select four letters of the alphabet and draw them on the four corners of the paper. (Suggest that they avoid the letters X and Z.) These may be simple block letters or fancy ones. The next step is to draw or write simple prayers that begin with each of the chosen letters. Offer suggestions as needed.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, "Pray for Others"**

Ask the learners to form a circle to play a game, "Pray for Others." Pass an object such as a cross or Prayer Book around the circle to each person. When a class member gets the object, he/she says, "I pray for \_\_\_\_\_." Continue around the circle until everyone has had an opportunity to pray for someone or something.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, "Jesus Taught Us to Pray"**

Use Puzzle Sheet II.8 titled "Jesus Taught Us to Pray." Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Ask the learners to find the Lord's Prayer in their Bibles, either in

*Matthew 6:9-13* or *Luke 11:2-4*. Compare the New Testament text with the two versions of the Lord's Prayer in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 97. Additional challenge: Find the Lord's Prayer in all the services of the Prayer Book.

### TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Prayer is talking with God. Jesus taught us the Lord's Prayer as one way to do this, but we can pray in many other ways as well. Ask: What are some other ways in which we pray to God? Encourage the class members to share their favorite forms of praying from the Prayer Book, at meals, when they go to bed, or at other times. Point out that many hymns are prayers set to music. You may want to distribute hymnals and invite class members to find several musical prayers.

Ask the learners whether it is possible to pray without words. Why, or why not?

### INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Take a prayer walk through the church. Remind the learners that they may pray all during the walk. As you pass the classrooms, pray for teachers and students. As you pass the church's offices, pray for the people who work there. In the nave of the church, pray for the people on the prayer list, the saints depicted in the windows, the clergy, or all the people who worship there. Gather in front of the altar and say the Lord's Prayer. Continue the prayer walk back to the room, praying for all Creation as you pass a window or go outdoors, and so on. As the group returns to the classroom, say the Lord's Prayer once again.

### IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "I am ready for bed. The room is silent and the lights are out. Before I sleep, I want to talk with God. I . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about what they would say.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own thoughts. Avoid giving the impression that there is an expected way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* The learners can form teams to role play various times when people pray together.

### MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Listen again to "O Jesus, I have promised" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 655; *We Sing of God*, 100) on the *Children Sing!* tape. Note that this is a prayer in the form of a hymn. As we sing it, what do we promise to do? What do we ask God to do?

### CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Sermon Scene.* Continue developing the three-dimensional scene of the Sermon on the Mount, as described in Session 6. At this session, the learners may add the people gathered on the mountainside. Materials used may be as

elaborate as clay or as simple as paper and crayons. Pipe cleaners can be fashioned into people.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 17 has a picture of the Sermon on the Mount, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

What did the learners have to say about prayers and the act of praying? How many of the class members already know the Lord's Prayer? Did they understand prayer as conversation with God? What sense did you get that the learners remember to pray each day? What could you do in the future to encourage learners to pray?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is about Jesus' teaching that called on us to live faithfully. What kind of commitment does Jesus ask of us? How can our lives show faithfulness to God?

## FOCUS

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us to live faithfully, asking and seeking what we need. We are urged to take Jesus' words to heart and practice his teachings. The learners should be able to describe ways people can be faithful to God in their lives.

# SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Session 9

**Jesus Asks Us  
to Live Faithfully**

## GETTING READY

The Sermon on the Mount is the longest and best-known collection of Jesus' sayings. In *Matthew 5-7* Jesus teaches the disciples about living the Christian life. He ascends a mountain with them and sits to teach. Matthew is probably connecting Jesus with Moses who received God's law on a mountaintop. Rabbis in Jesus' day sat to teach.

In The Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells his disciples how to live the Christian life and describes what God's kingdom is like. Persistent prayer and the Golden Rule are two important teachings from the Sermon on the Mount that are introduced in this session.

In the sermon, Jesus teaches the disciples difficult concepts about living the Christian life. His followers are called to forgive people who have hurt them, love their enemies and treat others with mercy. Jesus encourages the disciples to pray to God without giving up (*Matthew 7:7-8*) and not to be anxious. These verses do not mean that they can use prayer to manipulate God into doing their will. Jesus uses the image of "knock and the door will be opened to you" to acknowledge how difficult it is to be merciful, and to love and forgive enemies.

The Golden Rule is one of Jesus' most famous sayings. "In everything do to others as they would have them do to you" (*Matthew 7:12*) was not original to Jesus. Similar sayings were used by Jews and other religious groups for many centuries. The Golden Rule is a summary of the Sermon on the Mount. It distills Jesus' sayings on forgiveness and mercy as contained in the law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets.

The Sermon's content is relevant to primary-age learners who have already experienced the opposites of faith at work in the world around them. They observe people who fail to live by Jesus' teachings. They hear the voices of advertising and get caught up in the excessive "wants" of our culture.

This final session of the unit underscores the message that God can be depended on to hear our requests and supply our needs.

This is another day, O Lord. I know not what it will bring forth, but make me ready, Lord, for whatever it may be. If I am to stand up, help me to stand bravely. If I am to sit still, help me to sit quietly. If I am to lie low, help me to do it patiently. And if I am to do nothing, let me do it gallantly. Make these words more than words, and give me the Spirit of Jesus. Amen.

In the Morning  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 461

## TEACHING TIP

Primary children are at a stage of faith development that is closely related to the faith of persons around them. They believe what their parents, teachers, and friends believe. They will grow in faith as they experience God's grace in others. It is important that influential adults exhibit and talk about their commitment to God, and offer loving care to young persons in their charge.

## GATHERING

Ahead of time, write on a chalkboard or large sheet of paper the words, "I believe . . . ." As the learners arrive, ask them to share specific beliefs. As the class members answer, write their responses with chalk or a marker.

When all have arrived, gather the group and say:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, . . .

Sanctus, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 362

(Continue to the end, using Poster No. 5 from the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Matthew 7:7-8, 12*:

"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. . . . In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets."

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Jesus taught us to live faithfully and to trust God.
2. Living faithfully means not worrying constantly about what we will eat or wear to school. God can be trusted to provide what we really need.
3. Another way to show our faith in God is to live by the Golden Rule, treating others as we would want them to treat us.

4. Share with the learners your own experience of what it means to trust God's care and to be concerned as well for the welfare of others. Or, tell this story in your own words:

Amy's mom was going to have a baby. Amy and her parents were excited and looking forward to having a new baby. About a month before the baby was born, Amy's mom had to go to hospital to keep the baby from arriving too early. Amy didn't find out about this until a neighbor picked her up from school and took her to the neighbor's house.

Amy immediately started worrying. Who would take care of her? Who would pack her lunch each day? Who would help her decide what to wear? Was the baby going to be all right? What was wrong with her mom? She finally just started to cry.

The neighbor was very kind, but Amy wanted things to be the way they were supposed to be. Later that evening, her dad picked her up. A surprise was waiting in the car. Her grandmother had come to take care of them while Amy's mom was in the hospital. Amy was so relieved.

That night, her grandmother suggested that Amy think of things she could do for her mother and the baby when it arrived. Amy decided she would clean her room as her mother had asked and make a special card for her mom. When she said her prayers that night, she thanked God for letting her grandmother come.

(Encourage the children to read at home about the Golden Rule in the learners' book, *Jesus Teaches*, chapter 9. Suggest that they also look at Jesus' message about worrying and judging others in chapters 7 and 8.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. The Golden Rule**

Write the Golden Rule—"Do to others as you would have them do to you"—on strips of yellow construction paper. Invite the learners to decorate their "ruler" with markers, crayons, glue, sequins, confetti, and glitter. Suggest that they display their rules in a special place at home.

### **Option 2. Worry Beads**

Bring in wooden beads and heavy string or twine. Help the children string the beads on the string and then tie the ends together. Encourage them to decorate the beads with markers. Explain that these are to be used as "worry beads." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told his followers to trust God and not be anxious or worried. Encourage the children to take the beads home. When they are worried or anxious, invite them to touch the beads as a reminder that God will take care of them.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, "Seek and Find"**

Play a version of Treasure Hunt called "Seek and Find." Ahead of time prepare a list of items for the learners to find. Include things like a Prayer Book, a Bible, a copy of the Lord's Prayer, a cross, a short prayer written on a piece of paper by an adult, a Bible verse written on an index card by a teen, and the like. Be sure it is really possible for the learners to find these items.

Divide the group into teams and send them on their search. The treasure hunt can be limited to the classroom only.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, "Jesus Taught Us to Live Faithfully"**

Use Puzzle Sheet II.9 titled "Jesus Taught Us to Live Faithfully." Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Locate the following passages in the Bible. They all tell about people who learned to live faithfully from Jesus. Make a list of them. *John 1:45, Matthew 4:21, Luke 10:39, Matthew 9:9, John 4:7.*

### TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

The disciples like Peter, Matthew, James, and John, and women like Mary, Mary Magdalene, and the Samaritan women at the well, learned how to be faithful from Jesus. Share a sentence or two about each of these people. They taught others to have faith in Christ. In every generation, people share their faith. What does it mean to live faithfully? Who are some people you know who live faithfully? How can we live faithfully?

### INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite one or more adults from the congregation who volunteer or work with people who live in poverty. Ask them to describe their work and the people they work with. Ask the class members to serve as reporters. Suggest that they interview the visitor(s), asking questions like: Why do you do this kind of work? Do you ever think of the Golden Rule when you are doing this work? How do the people you help treat you? Could we do anything to help the people you work with?

### IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "I went to hear Jesus teach about the way to live. It was good to be in the crowd and listen to what he said. As I came home, I thought the hardest thing for me would be . . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and complete the story.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is an expected way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* The learners may form teams to role play the Golden Rule in operation. How do Jesus' words change our attitudes toward others?

### MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Introduce the hymn, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God" (*The Hymnal 1982, 711; We Sing of God, 106*) by listening to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. This simple melody can be sung as a round.

### CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Sermon Scene.* Complete the three-dimensional scene of the Sermon on the Mount. The learners may add more people or more details as their imagination allows.

### TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 18 has a picture of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

How would you characterize the learners' understanding of what it means to live faithfully? How do they express their own trust in God? Would you say that this unit has contributed to their appreciation for Jesus' teaching? Why, or why not?

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

## Episcopal Children's Curriculum

### Unit III. WORSHIP: PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY

Dear Parents and Guardians,

This unit, *Worship: People in Community*, begins with four sessions on the orders of ministry: laity, bishops, priests, and deacons. All Christians have responsibilities for leadership and serving in the Church, both in its formal worship and in its mission to meet the needs of others. The next four sessions offer a rapid exposure to events leading to Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension.

We encourage you to talk about the sessions with your child. You can do this by reading together the learners' book, *We Worship*, which describes the teachings of Jesus in a format designed for primary-age children. These stories, which include descriptions of the orders of ministry, the Church Calendar, and the final events of Jesus' time on earth, are tied to the content of the sessions.

We also encourage you to read the Scripture passages cited below with your child. The Take-Home Cards given to learners each week can be used in your discussions. The cards provides a list of main facts and ideas from the stories the children learn at church school. These collectible cards, about the size of a postcard, can be displayed in a photo album, kept in a recipe box, or used in any way you find helpful.

Following is a description of the first five sessions for this unit:

**Session 1: “We Are All Ministers”** defines ministry as service. When Jesus bent to wash his disciples' feet, he set the example of humble service that is to be imitated by all his followers. The Prayer Book definition of the Church's ministers begins with the laity. Lay persons serve God within the life of the congregation by faithful participation in worship. Their service is carried out in the world where they live, work, and play. Primary-age learners can begin to see themselves as valued members of the order of the laity in their congregation. (*I Corinthians 12:4-6a*)

**Session 2: “Bishops Are Like Shepherds”** is about bishops. A bishop is a shepherd and overseer of Christians in congregations. The apostles were the first bishops. For primary-age learners it will be important to emphasize the name(s) of their own bishop(s) and the name of their diocese. (*I Timothy 3:1b*)

**Session 3: “Priests Serve God's People”** turns to the work of priests in the Church. The priest stands primarily as a representative of Christ to the people. This person also serves as a counselor to people in need, a visitor among the sick, and a leader in the congregation. (*I Peter 5:2*)

**Session 4: “Deacons Also Serve”** lifts up the office of deacon, a person who assists in the ministry of Christ. Traditionally, a deacon's ministry is among the poor, the sick, and all who need comfort. (*Acts 6:6*)

**Session 5: “Others Serve in Our Church”** invites the learners to examine all the other roles for serving in the Church's worship—as acolytes, ushers, altar guild members, readers, and singers in the choir. (*Psalms 100*)

The final four sessions are about Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension:

**Session 6: “We Observe Lent”** is about Lent as the season of penitence and of preparation for baptisms that will occur at Easter. The Scripture study is the story of Jesus' forty days in the wilderness following his baptism by John. (*Luke 4:1-2*)

**Session 7: “Jesus' Last Week”** is devoted to the story of Holy Week. It begins with Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem with his disciples. The next day Jesus drove the money-changers out of the temple and continued his controversial teaching. Following his last meal with his disciples on Thursday, he was betrayed and then crucified on Friday. On Saturday Jesus lay in the tomb. (*Mark 11:8-9*)

**Session 8: “Easter: Christ Is Risen”** brings the glad news of Easter—the announcement that Jesus' body was not in the tomb on the morning of the first day of the week when women went there. The activities are designed to emphasize the true meaning of Easter as the Feast of the Resurrection. (*Mark 16:6*)

**Session 9: “The Church Worships the Risen Lord”** focuses on the fifty days of the Easter celebration. The Scripture story is from *Acts 1*, with its account of Jesus Christ's ascent into heaven. (*Acts 1:11b*)

Yours in Christ,  
Church School Teachers

## FOCUS

In the Church of Jesus Christ, all the baptized members are ministers who serve God and other people. The Episcopal Church has four orders of ministry, and the first order is that of lay persons. The learners should be able to explain that they are “ministers” in the Church.

## WORSHIP: PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY

Session 1

**We Are All Ministers**

## GETTING READY

The words “ministry” and “service” have the same meaning. Both refer to the act of looking after the wants or needs of another. As Christians, we are all called to serve God and our neighbors, just as Jesus did. He said to his disciples, “I am among you as one who serves” (*Luke 22:27*). To demonstrate his role as servant, Jesus washed his disciples' feet at the Last Supper.

In the Church, we elect some persons for special forms of serving. The writer of the *Letter to the Ephesians* spoke of the work of various forms of ministry: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. All these people have a single mission to pursue. They are to help “the saints” (the church's members) to be equipped for using their own gifts of ministry or serving. That is how the Church grows in strength—everyone has a service to contribute. (See *Ephesians 4:1-16*. Note also *Romans 12*, on the same theme.) Bishops, priests, and deacons serve God through their teaching and leadership of all the people.

We serve God when we gather regularly for prayer, teaching, and receiving the Sacraments. That is why we call our worship a “service.” After we have received Holy Communion, we join in a final prayer asking God to send us out “to love and serve.” (See the post-Communion prayers of Rite Two, *The Book of Common Prayer*, pages 365-366.) Serving God cannot be separated from everyday ministry among our neighbors.

In a more general sense, all the work that we do in the world can be viewed as a ministry for God as well as for other people. When we give our best effort to all the daily tasks we undertake, we are engaged in Christian service. In this session, teachers have an opportunity to encourage primary-age learners to look upon their own roles as forms of ministry. As baptized members of the body of Christ, they serve the Lord in their own ways.

Almighty and everlasting God, by whose Spirit the whole body of your faithful people is governed and sanctified: Receive our supplications and prayers, which we offer before you for all members of your holy Church, that in their vocation and ministry they may truly serve you; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

For all Christians in their vocation  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 256

## TEACHING TIP

In many congregations, there may be few if any opportunities for primary-age learners to serve in ministries like ushering, reading the

Scriptures, and leading the prayers. Older learners serve in these capacities on occasion, and many are acolytes and singers. Teachers can be advocates for the present or future involvement of the class members in these forms of service. Point out also the many ways in which they can serve God in their homes, at school, and in their contacts with other people each day.

## GATHERING

Prepare two displays. In one, place items associated with household serving, such as: a table setting of china and flatware; hammer, saw, and nails; yard clippers and a trowel; paper, pencils, school books; first aid kit. In another area of the classroom, arrange items used in the church's service, such as: Bible, Prayer Book, and hymnal; flower vase, processional cross, and offering plate; chalice, altar linen, and a stole.

As the learners arrive, invite them to inspect the displays. Ask: What general name(s) could be given to each collection? What might the two groups of items have in common?

When all are present, conclude the Gathering with the Confession of Sin:

Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Confession of Sin  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 79

The words are included on Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet.

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible, and read aloud *I Corinthians 12:4-6a*:

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in every one.”

Finish with the words: The Word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Prepare a presentation on Christian ministry based on your own experiences or using the following outline:

1. We call Jesus Lord, and we recognize his rule over all of life. But Jesus called himself a servant. At the Last Supper, he bent down to wash the disciples' feet. He said that we should all serve one another.

2. Refer to the display areas used in the Gathering. Ask the learners to describe how the objects on display could be used to serve God and others. For example, someone might use the tableware to feed the poor or the first aid kit to help a friend who fell down and skinned a knee. At church, a layreader reads the Bible for everyone to hear the Word of God and the ushers use the collection plates to gather the offerings. Tell the following story in your own words:

3. Once there was a young person named Dan who wanted to serve God. He went to the leaders of his church, but they said he was too young to be a priest or deacon. However, he was just the right age to be an acolyte. Dan also enjoyed music and found out he was also the right age to sing in the youth choir.

Dan enjoyed doing this service at the church, but he still felt that he could do more. The principal at his elementary school had just announced a new program in which fourth-graders would help first-graders learn to read. Reading had never come easy for Dan, but he felt he might be able to help someone who may be struggling to read.

The principal seemed pleased that Dan had volunteered to stay after school two days a week to be a part of the reading program. He began working with a first-grader that week. Sometimes Dan felt that they never made any progress, but other times he could tell the younger child had more confidence.

Toward the end of school, the fourth-grade tutors were recognized in a special assembly. Dan received a gift his first-grader had made—a book all about Dan. Dan was ready to find even more ways to serve God at church, at his school, and in the community.

4. We can serve God in many ways. What are some ways you can serve God?

(Encourage learners to read at home about worshipping and serving in the learners' book, *We Worship*, chapter 1.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Friendship Bracelet**

Supply beads, embroidery floss, ribbon, and other materials to make a bracelet. Challenge each learner to make a bracelet to give to a friend in the class. Make clear that everyone in the group is to receive a completed bracelet made by someone else. The bracelets are to be reminders that we are all involved in ministry to others.

### **Option 2. Key Ring Reminders**

We can all be God's ministers (servants helping others) at home, in school, and at work. Suggest that the learners make key rings as reminders of their calls to serve. Give each class member a metal key ring or suitable substitute. Supply small cards, with holes punched in one corner. Ask everyone to take one or more of the cards and write on them words like the following: share, help, give, pray. Crayons and markers may be used to illustrate the chosen words. Put the finished cards on the key rings.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Doing Ministry”**

Cut out one yellow circle and one green square for each member of the class. Divide the learners into two groups for a game called “Doing Ministry.” Give each person in the first group two yellow circles. Everyone in the second group gets two green squares. Ask the learners to walk around the room with their eyes closed. When they bump into one another, they ask, “Are you God's minister?” The person who was bumped responds, “We are all God's ministers,” and hands one of the paper shapes to the “bumper.” The object of the game is for everyone to end up with a yellow circle and a green square.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “We Are All Ministers”**

Use Puzzle Sheet III.1 titled “We Are All Ministers.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Prayer Book Search**

Invite the learners to locate the Baptismal Covenant, *The Book of Common Prayer*, page 304. Examine the questions and answers. Where is the word “serve”? How does this answer speak about our ministry?

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

We are all God's ministers wherever we are. Talk with the learners about acts of serving that happen at home, at school, and elsewhere. Cite examples such as these: a parent calms us down after we have been hurt, and bandages our wounds; a neighbor shares vegetables or flowers from a garden; we help a friend to learn a new game or understand a school assignment.

Ask: What are some of the ministries that happen through the church? (Speak of money given for the church's work; food shared with hungry people; clothing offered to needy persons.)

Also ask: When have you been able to help someone else? Have there been times when you were especially kind without being reminded? When you did a chore without being asked?

## INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite a lay person who serves in one of the outreach ministries in the church to speak with the learners about ministry among the people of God. Ask the visitor: How did you become involved in serving? What part does God play in your ministry? What encouragement would you give to members of the class?

## IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “We are all God's ministers. I will do God's work in the world by . . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about how they could serve.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or

draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is a “right” way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* Provide a box containing items of clothes worn by ministers in the church, such as a priest's stole, a surplice, a choir robe, and ordinary clothing such as aprons, hats, and the like. Ask the learners to use these props for acting out various forms of Christian ministry. (Be alert to the group's role playing of ministry by laity as well as clergy.)

### MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Introduce the hymn, “’Tis the gift to be simple” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 554; *We Sing of God*, 87) by listening to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. Point out that this folk tune came from a group called Shakers. They lived in communities that combined daily prayer and working with their hands. Explore the words and the tune. What images come to mind?

### CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Ministry Book.* Begin a large class book containing a 12 x 18-inch sheet of construction paper for each session. For each page in the book, invite the learners to contribute pictures or brief stories of people involved in ministry. Attach all items produced at this session to a page titled “We Are All Ministers.”

### TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 19 has a picture of people doing ministry, a Scripture verse, facts about the theme, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

### CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

### TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Were the learners able to think of themselves as “ministers”? How well did they understand that Christian ministry can happen in all areas of life, including their own? What more can be done to help the class members find their ministry as baptized persons in the Church family?

### LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is about the role of bishops in the Church. Recall times you have seen a bishop. What is your understanding of a bishop's ministry in the Church?

## FOCUS

The word “bishop” means “shepherd.” As a shepherd cares for a flock, an ordained bishop oversees the work of Christ’s people in a region called a diocese. The learners should be able to define the word “bishop,” name the bishop of their diocese, and tell something the bishop does.

## WORSHIP: PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY

Session 2

### Bishops Are Like Shepherds

## GETTING READY

The Greek word for bishop is *episkopos*, from which “Episcopal” is derived. The Episcopal Church is governed by bishops—shepherds or overseers. Their office is implied but not clearly described in the New Testament. The word “bishop” appears only in these verses of our English translations:

*Philippians 1:1*, in the apostle Paul’s greeting to the Christians at Philippi.

*1 Timothy 3:1-2*, and *Titus 1:7*, which admonish bishops to be “above reproach” and “blameless.”

From early centuries of Christian history, the Church has ordained bishops and charged them with oversight of the congregations. In the examination of a person being ordained bishop, the Presiding Bishop says to the bishop-elect, “You are called to guard the faith, unity, and discipline of the Church; to celebrate and to provide for the administration of the sacraments of the New Covenant; to ordain priests and deacons and to join in ordaining bishops; and to be in all things a faithful pastor and wholesome example for the entire flock of Christ” (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 517).

Bishops visit congregations, confirm people, serve as counselors and pastors to clergy and laity, preside at diocesan meetings, and take part in the sessions of the House of Bishops of the Church’s General Convention. Every twelve years, the General Convention elects a member of the House of Bishops to be the Presiding Bishop.

The first Episcopal bishop in the United States was Samuel Seabury. He was an American priest who traveled all the way to Scotland to be ordained a bishop.

In all their duties, bishops remember their calling to serve Jesus Christ.

To you, O Father, all hearts are open; fill, we pray, the hearts of your servants whom you have chosen to be bishops in your Church, with such love of you and of all the people, that they may feed and tend the flock of Christ, and exercise without reproach the high priesthood to which you have called them, serving before you day and night in the ministry of reconciliation, declaring pardon in your Name, offering your holy gifts, and wisely overseeing the life and work of the Church. In all things may they present before you the acceptable offerings of pure, and gentle, and holy lives; through Jesus Christ your Son, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and power and glory in the Church, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Ordination: Bishop (alt.)

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 521

## TEACHING TIP

Primary-age learners may not have had an opportunity to see or be with a bishop. Where this is true or if the last visitation from the bishop was some time ago, look for photographs to make discussions more personal. (These may be available in diocesan newspapers or from members of the bishop's staff.)

## GATHERING

Display Poster No. 10 from the Teacher's Packet showing a bishop ordaining a priest in the Church. As the learners arrive, ask: What do you think is happening here? Who are the people? Have you ever been present at an event like this? If so, when?

When all are present, conclude the Gathering with the Confession of Sin:

Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed, . . .

Confession of Sin

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 79

The words are included on Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet.

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible, and read aloud *I Timothy 3:1b*:

“. . . whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Using the following outline, prepare a presentation about bishops:

1. Jesus is called the Good Shepherd. Like a shepherd calling a flock of sheep, Jesus calls people to follow him.

2. As the early Christians began to organize the Church, certain people who were elders were chosen to be bishops. The word “bishop” means “shepherd.” The bishops look after the Church as a shepherd looks after a flock. Their role is to care for Christian people. A bishop taking part in a liturgy carries a shepherd's crook as a reminder that he or she is like a shepherd.

3. When the Episcopal Church in America was formed, there were no Episcopal bishops in this country. Samuel Seabury became the first bishop of the Episcopal Church soon after the Revolutionary War.

4. Bishop Seabury was born in Connecticut and trained and ordained in England. He was assigned to parishes in New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. During the American Revolution, he remained loyal to the British crown and served as a chaplain in the British army.

5. After the war, he was chosen by a group of clergy to sail for England to be ordained as bishop. The Church of England refused to ordain him because he could not swear allegiance to the king. Seabury then went to

Scotland to a group of bishops who agreed to ordain him.

6. He returned to America as Bishop of Connecticut in 1785. Later he helped ordain the first bishop to be consecrated on American soil.

7. Today there are many bishops in America. Some are diocesan bishops. Each one of these is in charge of a diocese (a region of the country). Some bishops are assistants known as suffragans. Others are simply called assistants.

9. Our diocese is the Diocese of \_\_\_\_\_. The name of our bishop(s) is/are \_\_\_\_\_. We pray for the bishop(s) every Sunday.

(Invite the children to find out more about bishops by reading at home the learners' book, *We Worship*, chapter 2.)

## CREATING (Time: 15-20 minutes)

### Option 1. Bishop's Crook (Crozier)

Provide each learner with a large sheet of sturdy aluminum foil. Show them how to twist the foil to form a shepherd's crook. Then wrap the foil with ribbon, yarn, or masking tape to make it look like a wooden crook. If masking tape is used, cover the foil, then use shoe polish to make the tape brown. (These may be small replicas or life-size.) As the learners work, discuss the bishop's shepherd-like role.

### Option 2. Bishop's Mitre

Supply each learner a rectangle of sturdy paper. See the diagram in the Teacher's Packet for making a mitre, a bishop's hat. Fold the paper according to the lines indicated. The class members may then decorate the mitres with markers, crayons, fabric crosses, and other designs.

## EXPLORING THE STORY (Time: 10-15 minutes)

### Option 1. Game, "Follow the Bishop"

Gather the learners for a version of the game, "Follow the Leader," called "Follow the Bishop." Choose one member of the class to be the "bishop," and give him/her a crook to carry. It may be a simple stick. The rest of the class follows the bishop to a certain spot, at which time someone else assumes the bishop's role. The bishop may lead the class to an area of the classroom and ask everyone to kneel and pray. At the next place, everyone could act out a service to the poor. Upon returning to the "diocese," a new bishop is chosen. The crook is passed along to each succeeding bishop.

### Option 2. Puzzle, "Bishops Are Like Shepherds"

Use Puzzle Sheet III.2 titled "Bishops Are Like Shepherds." Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### Option 3. Prayer Book Search

In *The Book of Common Prayer*, locate the service for the Ordination of a Bishop, p. 511. Find out who should be present at the service. What does the

bishop-elect wear? Turn to pages 518-520. What does a bishop promise?

### TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

If the learners have known a bishop or have been present at a visitation, ask them to share what they remember. What did the bishop do? say? Add information about the diocesan bishop's work. If possible, make copies of your bishop's calendar of visits to share with the class members. It is usually available in a diocesan newspaper or special newsletter to parish clergy. Look at Poster No. 10 that was used at the Gathering. Which one is the bishop? How can you tell? What is his hat called? (a miter) What is he holding?

### INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite a member of the congregation who has recently been confirmed by or served with the bishop of your diocese. Encourage learners to ask: What happened at the confirmation? How did it make you feel? What did the bishop say and do? What was the bishop wearing? How did you help the bishop? What kinds of things did you do?

### IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "One day the bishop came to visit our church. We . . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about what they might do, see, hear, or say.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* Provide a box containing items of clothing worn by ministers in the church, such as a priest's stole, a surplice, choir robes, and ordinary clothing (aprons, hats, and the like). Add a piece of white or red cloth to represent a bishop's cope (outer garment). The learners can use these props to role play a bishop's visit.

### MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing again "Tis the gift to be simple" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 554; *We Sing of God*, 87) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Invite the members of the class to devise motions to accompany the words and music.

### CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Ministry Book.* As described in Session 1, create a large book for the class, with pages made of 12 x 18-inch sheets of construction paper. For this session, invite the learners to contribute pictures or stories of bishops. Attach the pictures to a page titled "Bishops Are Like Shepherds." Store the book in a safe place between class sessions.

### TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 20 has a picture of a picture of a bishop ordaining a priest, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received

this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

What were the learners' impressions of a bishop's role? How well were they able to make the connection between a bishop's ministry and the work of a shepherd?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on the role of priests in the Church. Recall priests or other ministers you have known. What were the roles they played in your life? How did they help you to be a part of God's ministry?

## FOCUS

Churches are served by ministers who are ordained and called “priests.” They are pastors and teachers who lead in prayer, preside at sacraments, and help Christians to do their work as God’s people in the world. The learners should be able to name one or more priests and tell two or more things a priest does.

## GETTING READY

Priests are representatives of Jesus Christ among the Church’s people. Priests are also the people’s representatives before God. In this intermediary role, persons ordained to the priesthood take their places in a tradition that began in early Israel.

Among the Hebrews, the priestly office had two main functions—to pray for discernment of the will of God, and to offer up sacrifices on the altars. The earliest priests were descendants of Levi, one of the sons of Jacob. Later, the priesthood was opened to others.

In Christian worship, the sacrificial system of Judaism was no longer needed. The death of Christ on the cross was “a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world” (*The Book of Common Prayer*, Holy Eucharist I, p. 334). The Church’s priests are not, therefore, offering a new sacrifice. They are celebrating the mystery whereby the bread and wine of the Eucharist become the spiritual food of Christ’s body and blood, given for the people of God. Priests as celebrants are presiding over a feast that is kept faithfully by Christ’s Church.

A person becomes a priest through a process that leads to ordination by a bishop. The process begins with reflection and prayer in the person’s congregation. It continues with the bishop and a committee of people in the diocese who help the person decide if they are called by God to become a priest. In many cases, the bishop sends the person to seminary for three years to be trained in Scripture, theology, preaching, liturgy and other important aspects of Church life. After seminary, the bishop ordains the candidate a deacon, then a priest.

As Christ’s representatives, priests are able to bless people and offer God’s pardon for sins that are confessed. They baptize people and administer the sacramental rites of marriage, reconciliation of a penitent, and unction of the sick.

Above all, priests are called to be servants. They have a special role to play in maintaining the health of the congregations as communities of believers who live faithfully. Their preaching and teaching affect all that the Church does.

God and Father of all, we praise you for your infinite love in calling us to be a holy people in the kingdom of your Son Jesus our Lord, who is the image of your eternal and invisible glory, the firstborn among many brethren, and the head of the Church. We thank you that by his death he has overcome death, and, having ascended into heaven, has poured his gifts abundantly upon your people, making some apostles, some prophets,

## WORSHIP: PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY

Session 3

**Priests Serve God’s People**

some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry and the building up of his body. *Amen.*

The Consecration of the Priest

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 533

## TEACHING TIP

Primary-age learners probably have a limited knowledge of everything a priest does in the church. They may know only that priests lead worship on Sundays. In teaching this session, ask questions and encourage learners to describe a priest's ministry in their own words. Make a special effort to portray priests as people who experience all aspects of human life.

## GATHERING

Display a priest's stole or other vestment used in your congregation along with the picture from Poster No. 10 in the Teacher's Packet showing a priest reading the Gospel. As the children arrive, ask: What is happening in this picture? Who wears these items? When?

When all are present, conclude the Gathering with the Confession of Sin:

Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed, . . .

Confession of Sin

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 79

The words are included on Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet.

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible, and read aloud *I Peter 5:2*:

“ . . . tend the flock of God that is in your charge, . . . ”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Using the following outline, tell a story about a person who became a priest.

1. One day, \_\_\_\_\_ was praying. God seemed to be saying, “You should be a priest.” \_\_\_\_\_ talked with the rector at the church and with many other friends and relatives. Everyone agreed, this was what should happen.

2. Then \_\_\_\_\_ went to talk with the bishop. The bishop asked \_\_\_\_\_ to meet with a committee. The bishop and the committee also agreed.

3. In the fall of the next year, \_\_\_\_\_ went to a school called a seminary. At the seminary, \_\_\_\_\_ learned more about the Bible, the history of the Church, and many other subjects, for three years. \_\_\_\_\_ passed many examinations and tests.

4. After graduation from the seminary, \_\_\_\_\_ was ordained a deacon.

5. \_\_\_\_\_ was a deacon in the church until the bishop decided it was time for ordination to the priesthood.

6. \_\_\_\_\_ became a priest at a special service. Now \_\_\_\_\_ does all the things others priests do—leading worship and preaching, baptizing people, celebrating Eucharist, teaching, and visiting the sick.

(Encourage learners to find out at home how priests serve in the church by reading chapter 3 in the learners' book, *We Worship*.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Lenten Stole**

Make a stole similar to one that a priest would wear during the upcoming season of Lent. Bring in a piece of purple cloth, about 6 feet long and five inches wide. Look at the stole used in the Gathering and in the picture on Poster No. 10 in the Teacher's Packet. Talk about the symbols that could be used on the stole. Help the learners draw different symbols on construction paper. (Use the Take-Home Cards for this unit for ideas and patterns.) Cut the symbols out and glue them to the cloth stole. Display the stole on a hangar in the classroom for the remainder of this unit.

### **Option 2. Cross**

In many churches, clergy persons wear crosses with their vestments as they lead worship. Some are very simple, others are carved wood, or silver and gold decorated with jewels. Provide a 4 x 6-inch posterboard cross for each learner. Suggest that the learners decorate their crosses, using markers, glue, foil paper in a variety of colors, or other decorative items. Attach pieces of yarn so that the crosses may be worn around the learners' necks. A more involved activity could begin with wooden crosses. Add paint and other decorative materials.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Freeze Pantomime”**

Invite the players to play “Freeze Pantomime.” Start by moving slowly around the room, pretending to do things a priest might do. When the leader calls “Freeze,” all the learners stop and remain just as they were at that moment. The leader then goes around and names what the others are doing. Suggestions: praying with people, reading the Bible, meeting with groups, teaching a class, reading the Gospel in church, preaching, visiting a sick person, and the like.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Priests Serve God's People”**

Use Puzzle Sheet III.3 titled “Priests Serve God's People.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Priests have been a part of the worship of God's people since the early days of Hebrew history. The first priests were of the tribe of Levi. They

wore special garments. Ask the learners to find *Exodus 28* to discover what the first priests wore.

### TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Priests are called to serve God. They go to school and are ordained before they become priests. Talk with the class members about the ministry of priests. From the learners' present knowledge, make a list of things priests do. Then add other duties priests perform that were not mentioned. Be sure to include: meeting with people who have special problems, hearing confessions, performing baptisms and marriages, visiting hospitals when people are sick, conducting funerals, leading the vestry, and taking care of the business of the church.

### INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite a member of the clergy to visit the class. Ask: What does being a priest mean to you? What do you do as a minister to God's people? What advice would you give to someone who wants to become a priest? As an alternative, invite someone who wants to be a priest, or has served on a vestry ordination committee or a diocesan commission on ministry.

### IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "I know a priest who cares for God's people. One day . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about what might happen when they meet a priest, or what the priest might be doing.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* Provide a box containing items of clothing worn by ministers in the church. Include a priest's stoles, a surplice, choir robes, and ordinary clothing such as aprons, hats, and the like. The learners can use the props to role play the ministry of a priest among people in the congregation.

### MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing again "Tis the gift to be simple" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 554; *We Sing of God*, 87) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Circle dances can be an enjoyable way to experience the rhythm of this hymn. Invite the learners to join hands and move to the right for the first phrase, to the left for the second, to the center for the third, and then out again. Repeat.

### CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Ministry Book.* Continue working on a large class book as described in Session 1. Use 12 x 18-inch sheets of construction paper for pages. For each page, invite the learners to contribute pictures or stories of priests involved in ministry. For this session, attach the completed items to a page titled "Priests Serve God's People."

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 21 has a picture of a priest reading the Gospel, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

As the session began, what did the learners know about the ministry of priests? How did their ideas change or expand as a result of the activities and discussions? Is it clear to the class members that priests have special functions, but that Christian ministry is a responsibility of all the Church's people?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is about the ministry of deacons. Read the story of the apostles' ordination of assistants in *Acts 6* and on page 856 of *The Book of Common Prayer* on the ministry of a deacon. Reflect on the ministry of service.

## FOCUS

As the Church's people grew in number, Jesus' apostles knew they must have helpers. They chose and ordained persons called deacons. In every generation, the Church has continued this order of ministry. The learners should be able to describe the work of deacons and (possibly) name particular deacons.

## GETTING READY

The word “deacon” comes from the Greek *diakonos*, which simply means “servant.” The only New Testament references to deacons are the following:

- Paul's greeting to the church at Philippi (*Philippians 1:1*), in which he speaks of bishops and deacons together. In *Romans 16:1*, Paul mentioned Phoebe, a valued helper whom he called “a deaconess.”

In his letter to the Romans, Paul asks the church in Rome to extend hospitality to Phoebe because of her support of Paul and others. He states that she has been a “benefactor of many.” Phoebe is called a deacon by Paul, which could indicate an ordained office or simply one who serves the Church. She is, however, clearly a recognized leader in the Church.

- The qualities desired in a deacon are listed in *I Timothy 3:8-13*: seriousness, sobriety, unselfishness, faithfulness and good character, monogamy, and ability to manage well.

One tradition, based on *Acts 6*, holds that the seven persons chosen by the apostles and ordained to assist in serving people were the Church's first deacons. Included in their number was Stephen, the first martyr. Many biblical scholars doubt the certainty of this interpretation.

From later documents of the Church, we gain a picture of deacons as assistants to bishops and priests. They were entrusted with works of mercy among the poor. In early liturgies, deacons read the Gospel and assisted at the altar. This practice has continued to the present time.

In today's Church, the office of deacon is often “transitional.” That is, a candidate for Holy Orders is first ordained a deacon before being later ordained to the priesthood. Some dioceses include so-called “perpetual” deacons—persons ordained to the office of deacons who do not plan to pursue ordination to the priesthood.

O God, most merciful Father, we praise you for sending your Son Jesus Christ, who took on himself the form of a servant, and humbled himself, becoming obedient even to death on the cross. We praise you that you have highly exalted him, and made him Lord of all; and that, through him, we know that whoever would be great must be servant of all. We praise you for the many ministries in your Church, and for calling this your servant to the order of deacons. *Amen.*

The Consecration of a Deacon  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 545

## TEACHING TIP

# WORSHIP: PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY

Session 4

Deacons Also Serve

Learners at the primary age level are beginning to participate more fully in worship. They can read and understand more and more of what is said and done, but they may not yet have the accompanying vocabulary. Teachers can help learners to focus on the particular people who lead in the congregation's worship, identifying them by name and describing their duties. Be ready to answer learners' questions about any rituals or aspects of worship. Open the door for class members to express their curiosity about the Church's customs.

## GATHERING

Display the picture of a deacon in a hospital on Poster No. 10 in the Teacher's Packet. As the learners arrive, invite them to examine the scene and speculate about what is happening.

Conclude the Gathering with the Confession of Sin:

Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed, . . .

Confession of Sin

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 79

The words are included on Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet.

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Acts 6:6*:

“They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Compose a presentation about deacons in the Church, using the following outline:

1. Jesus told his apostles to go into the whole world and preach the Gospel, heal the sick, and teach the Word of God.

2. As the early Church began to grow and large numbers of people became Christians, there was more work than the apostles could do. They chose assistants to help them—persons called deacons. This word means “servant.”

3. In *Romans 16*, Paul asks the church in Rome to extend the hospitality of the church to Phoebe because of the way she had helped Paul and others. Because accommodations were often treacherous and unhealthy, Christian travelers depended on the hospitality of other Christians. Phoebe is called a deacon by Paul, which might have indicated an ordained office or simply a person who serves the Church. Tradition indicates that she had been entrusted to bring the Letter of Paul to the Church in Rome, an important task for a woman of that time. Paul makes it clear in that letter that she is to be offered hospitality in the gracious way she has ministered to others. He says, in *Romans 16:2*, that she has been a “benefactor of many and of myself as well.”

4. In the various Christian traditions, deacons have been given the responsibilities of visiting the sick, feeding the hungry, and assisting priests at the administration of sacraments. Women called deaconesses have performed ministries in parishes and as nurses in hospitals.

4. Today, many deacons (both men and women) serve God in the Episcopal Church. They help the needy, and they read the Gospel and assist priests at the Eucharist.

(Encourage the children to find out more about deacons by reading at home chapter 4 of the learners' book, *We Worship*.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Gifts from Deacons**

Invite the group to make gift plaques with Scripture verses written on them. As a deacon might do, the learners can take the gifts to members of the congregation who are ill or in nursing homes. For each class member, provide a piece of construction paper, a smaller piece of white typing paper, small squares of colored tissue paper, and glue.

Here are two possible verses that may be written or copied for this project: “O give thanks to the Lord” (*Psalms 136:1*) and “Make a joyful noise to the Lord” (*Psalms 100:1*). Learners may suggest others.

Attach the verses to the construction paper backgrounds and decorate by scrunching the small squares of tissue into flowers and gluing them around the frames.

### **Option 2. Deacons Serve**

Provide paper, crayons, and markers. Fold paper sheets into fourths, then unfold and lay flat. Invite the learners to create pictures within each of the spaces made by the creases. Give the pictures the overall title, “Deacons Serve.” The learners may portray anything they perceive as a way the Church's deacons serve God and other people.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Seven Up”**

Play a game, “Seven Up.” Begin by choosing seven learners to be “deacons.” (Smaller classes can play by choosing a smaller number.) The other class members hide their eyes as each of the “deacons” gently taps someone on the head. As players are tapped, each one raises a hand to avoid being tapped a second time. (Eyes are still closed.)

When the deacons have finished and returned to the front, all the players open their eyes. The ones who were tapped take turns guessing who tapped them. When a correct guess is made, the two people change places. The game continues with a new group of “deacons.”

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Deacons Also Serve”**

Use Puzzle Sheet III.4 titled “Deacons Also Serve.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### Option 3. Prayer Book Search

Ask the learners to locate the service for the Ordination of a Deacon, *The Book of Common Prayer*, pages 537-547. Look for the list of Scripture passages that might be used in the service. Ask: What questions does the ordinand (person being ordained) answer?

### TALKING IT OVER (Time: 10-15 minutes)

Even if there is not a deacon at work in your congregation, talk with the class members about this ordained office. Describe what a deacon wears in liturgies, and how a deacon's stole goes over the left shoulder and is tied at the right of the waist. Discuss also the ministry of deacons in which others may share. Ask: Who can visit and pray with people when they are sick? Who can send them cards and notes? Who can bring donations of food and clothing for the poor (to the church or other agency)? Ask: Have you ever assisted your parents and others with these kinds of ministry?

### INQUIRING (Time: 10-20 minutes)

If one is available, invite a deacon to visit the class and discuss this form of Christian ministry. A substitute visitor could be a lay person in the congregation who is responsible for service ministry. (In some congregations, lay persons are trained to be Stephen Ministers—serving people in need.) Ask: How can young persons become involved in acts of service within the Church?

### IMAGINING (Time: 10-20 minutes)

Share a story starter: “If I could be ordained a deacon to serve God, I . . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about what they might ask to do or in what ways they would participate in this ministry.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is a “right” way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* Provide a box containing items of clothing worn by ministers in the church, including a stole, a surplice, choir robes, and ordinary clothing such as aprons, hats, and scarves. The learners can use the props to role play the ministry of a deacon in the congregation.

### MUSIC (Time: 10-15 minutes)

Listen again to “’Tis the gift to be simple” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 554; *We Sing of God*, 87) on the *Children Sing!* tape.

### CONTINUING ACTIVITY (Time: 10-20 minutes)

*Ministry Book.* Continue working on a large class book, with pages made of 12 x 18-inch sheets of construction paper. Invite the learners to contribute pictures or stories of deacons involved in ministry. Attach the items to a page titled “Deacons Also Serve.”

### TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 22 has a picture of a deacon visiting a hospital, a Scripture verse,

facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Were the learners able to connect the ministry of the deacon with ordinary acts of helping others? In what ways did they believe themselves able to serve in the Church?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on the roles of lay persons within the Church's liturgy. In what ways have you or a member of your family carried out such a ministry? If you have not had this opportunity, talk with some one who has.

## FOCUS

Members of the Church serve as readers, acolytes, and in other roles to assist the people in their praise of God. The learners should be able to describe the tasks of servers in their church and to describe how they can be Christ's ministers as worshipers and in assigned roles.

# WORSHIP: PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY

Session 5

**Others Serve in Our Church**

## GETTING READY

The Holy Eucharist, the central act of worship for Christians, is a celebration. All celebrations require preparation and coordinated effort, and this is especially true for worship. The priest presides, but the celebration belongs to the whole congregation. The assistance of various lay persons is needed to make the occasion truly liturgical (that is, “the work of the people”).

The place of gathering—the nave of the church—needs to be in good order. Ushers help people to their pews and see that they have Prayer Books, hymnals, and service leaflets.

The altar requires careful preparation. An altar guild cleans the vessels, takes care of the candles and their holders, arranges for flowers and other decorations, and looks after many details involving linens, vestments, and hangings.

There are several crucial roles that lay persons play during the service itself. The lay reader reads lessons from the Bible and the intercessory prayers during the Eucharist. Acolytes assist the clergy during the service by carrying the processional cross, lighting and snuffing out candles, and assisting the priest in preparing the bread and wine for Communion. A chalice is a lay person who administers the chalice, or cup of wine, during Communion. Musicians and choir members also make important contributions.

Episcopal churches all over the world include these lay tasks as part of a congregations' worship of God. A worship service is a team effort. It is important for primary-age learners to be introduced to the many facets of Christian service. They can anticipate taking their own places as servants in the holy place we call the church.

Everliving God, whose will it is that all should come to you through your Son Jesus Christ: Inspire our witness to him, that all may know the power of his forgiveness and the hope of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

For the Mission of the Church

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 816

## TEACHING TIP

As a footnote to this session, introduce the word “stewardship.” It means the faithful giving of our time, talents, and money for the work of the Church. Everyone in the church can assist with gifts of money offered in gratitude for all that God has given to us. Point out also that many of the acts of service (ministry) by individuals who assist with the congregation's

worship are done by volunteers. Their efforts are their offerings to the Lord. Encourage the learners to contribute what they can to their church.

## GATHERING

Display Poster No. 10 in the Teacher's Packet that shows a picture of ushers receiving the people's offerings in a church. As the learners arrive, invite them to talk about the picture. Ask: What is happening? Why? If you were in the scene, how could you participate? As an alternate, display pictures of people who serve at your church, if they are available. Ask: Who are these people? What have you seen them doing?

When all are present, conclude the Gathering with the Confession of Sin:

Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed, . . .

Confession of Sin

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 79

The words are included on Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet.

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 729, and read aloud *Psalms 100:1*:

“Be joyful in the Lord, all you lands;  
serve the Lord with gladness  
and come before his presence with a song.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell a story about the people who participate in worship in your congregation. The following outline will help you. Use names of people you know who serve the church in these ways.

1. People who are not ordained to special orders of ministry—persons like you—also serve in the Church. Describe how lay people assist in worship in your own words or by telling the following story:

2. Kate liked to come early to church with her mom who is a member of the altar guild. The church is always quiet and seems to be waiting for everyone to arrive. Someone else in the altar guild did a lot of preparation on Saturday. But mom still checks on the flowers and the candles. She then puts the hymn numbers up on a sign at the front. I like the next part best. She brings out the wine and the wafers from a special room behind the altar. She usually lets me carry the box of wafers. The wafers and the wine go on a little table beside the altar.

By this time, other people are coming into the church. The ushers are getting the service leaflets ready and the choir is warming up in the choir room. Several acolytes are putting on their vestments. Soon they will get the cross and candlesticks from the front of the church and take them to the back of the church. Being an acolyte is something I really enjoy. Now I am a candle bearer, but one day I want to be a server.

A lay reader has come up to the podium to make sure the Bible reading he has prepared is ready to read. A chaliceist has also arrived and is talking to the priest about her assignment.

When I hear the choir coming in the back, I know it is time to find my seat. By now the church is almost full and the organist is playing quiet music.

Soon we will all stand for the procession. I feel like I am a part of everything that happens.

(Encourage the children to read at home about those who serve in worship in chapter 5 of the learners' book, *We Worship*.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Prayer Book Markers**

Suggest that the class members make ribbon Prayer Book markers. For every learner, provide three 24-inch lengths of narrow ribbon (about 1/4 inch wide), preferably in different colors. Supply a piece of cardboard or plastic mesh, approximately one inch wide and five inches long. (If using cardboard, punch three holes equidistant from one another about an inch from the top end.) Thread the ribbons through the cardboard holes, or through holes in the mesh. When they are drawn even, each ribbon length will provide two page markers (so there will be six in all). Slip the cardboard or mesh strip between a Prayer Book's spine and binding. Clear nail polish applied to the ends of ribbons will prevent fraying.

### **Option 2. "Gladness" Plaque**

From the Teacher's Packet, make photocopies of *Psalm 100:1b*: "Serve the Lord with gladness!" Give one to each learner to be mounted on a piece of sturdy colored paper. Invite the class members to color in the letters of the words and to design a border. Punch two holes in the top of the plaque, and add gold cord or yarn for hanging.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, "Who Is Serving?"**

Invite the learners to play "Who Is Serving?" by pantomiming the actions of various people who serve during worship. These may be priests, deacons, lay readers, altar guild members, acolytes, chalice bearers, ushers, or others. Challenge the other class members to answer the question, "Who is serving?"

### **Option 2. Puzzle, "Others Serve in Our Church"**

Use Puzzle Sheet III.5 titled "Others Serve in Our Church." Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Prayer Book Search**

Ask the class members to turn in *The Book of Common Prayer* to find a

service of Holy Eucharist commonly used in your congregation. Locate the places where various persons in addition to the priest may take part. Note particularly the directions on pages 322 or 354.

### **TALKING IT OVER** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Talk with the learners about the people they have noticed who assist with your church's worship. In what ways do they serve God? How does their work make a difference for the congregation? Have you ever wondered who arranged the flowers? Who decides where to put them? Where do the service leaflets come from? Who makes sure Prayer Books are in the right places? Who cleans the chalice after it is used? Who lights the candles? Ask: In which of these forms of service would you like to be involved?

### **INQUIRING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Invite an acolyte, usher, altar guild member, or other person who serves at worship to visit the class session. You may want to take the class to the worship space and meet the guest speaker there. Ask: How would you describe your ministry? Show us what you do. How were you trained to do it? What have you learned from serving the Church in this way? What advice would you give to others who might want to serve in your role?

### **IMAGINING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: "When I participate in the worship at my church, I . . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about what they might do in order to be actively involved.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* Provide a box containing items of apparel worn by ministers in the church. Include a priest's stole, a surplice, choir robes, and ordinary clothing such as aprons, hats, and the like. The learners can use the props to role play serving God in the church.

### **MUSIC** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Sing "'Tis the gift to be simple" (*The Hymnal 1982, 554; We Sing of God, 87*) with the *Children Sing!* tape.

### **CONTINUING ACTIVITY** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

*Ministry Book.* Continue the class book project as described in earlier sessions of this unit. Use 12 x 18-inch sheets of construction paper to form the pages. For each page, invite the learners to contribute pictures or stories of people involved in ministry. For this session, attach the pictures to a page titled "Others Serve in Our Church."

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 23 has a picture of ushers, a Scripture verse, facts about the story,

and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Had the learners noticed the people who are not priests or deacons who serve in the church? Do they know the names of people who perform these ministries? Are the learners interested in specific roles of service in the future?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session offers a careful look at Jesus' temptation in the wilderness and ways the Church observes Lent. Think about the ways you observe the season of Lent. What is meaningful for you?

## FOCUS

The forty days of Lent are based on the forty days Jesus spent in the wilderness when he was preparing for his ministry. We observe these days to recall that we belong to Christ as “his own forever,” and to prepare for the Easter celebration. The learners should be able to tell the story of Jesus' days of fasting and his temptations, and to explain in their own ways why we observe the Lenten season.

## WORSHIP: PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY

Session 6

**We Observe Lent**

## GETTING READY

The season of Lent takes its name from the Old English word “lencten” (lengthen). It is springtime when the days are getting longer.

From the earliest centuries of Christian history, this forty-day period has been associated with preparation for Holy Baptism. For a long while, baptisms were celebrated only at Easter and Pentecost, and the adult candidates (called catechumens) needed weeks of preparation. They were instructed in the Bible, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer.

In time, as adult baptisms gave way to the practice of baptizing infants, the character of Lent changed. It became a penitential season for all Christians during which people fast, pray, and take on spiritual disciplines to prepare for the good news of the resurrection on Easter Day. We recall our own baptisms and ask God's help in keeping the Baptismal Covenant.

The forty days are based on the story of Jesus' time in the wilderness following his baptism, when he rejected the temptations of Satan (*Mark 1:12-13; Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13*). After Jesus was baptized by John in the river Jordan, he was led into the wilderness. He spent forty days fasting and praying to prepare for the work God wanted him to do.

After much debate about how to calculate the number of days, the Church decided that Sundays would not be counted. (They are preserved as feast days of the resurrection.) The length of time from Ash Wednesday to Easter is about seven weeks.

Almighty God, you know that we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves: Keep us both outwardly in our bodies and inwardly in our souls, that we may be defended from all adversities which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Third Sunday in Lent

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 218

## TEACHING TIP

Primary-age learners are aware of the existence of evil in the world. When they hear the word “devil,” they may associate it with costumes or cartoon pictures they have seen. Be sensitive to class members' questions or fears concerning a personified spirit of evil. Counter the concept of the devil as a concrete monster. Evil speaks in subtle, inner ways that we know to be the opposite of what is right and good.

## GATHERING

From the Teacher's Packet, display Poster No. 11 showing Jesus in the wilderness. As the learners arrive, invite them to examine details in the picture. Ask: What is happening here? What could be the story of this painting?

When all are present, conclude the Gathering with the Confession of Sin:

Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed, . . .

Confession of Sin

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 79

The words are included on Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet.

## STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Luke 4:1-2*:

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days; and when they were over, he was famished.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Share the story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness in your own words. Use the following outline:

1. After Jesus was baptized by John in the river Jordan, he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. There he spent forty days alone, fasting and praying. He was preparing himself for the work God wanted him to do.

2. While he was in the desert, the devil came to tempt Jesus three different times. To tempt is to try to get someone to do wrong.

3. The first temptation: Jesus ate nothing, and he became very hungry. The devil showed Jesus large stones and said, “If you are the Son of God, turn these stones into bread, so you can eat.” Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’” (Jesus would not use his powers to provide food for himself.)

4. The second temptation: The devil showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and said, “I will give you all of this. You can be king of all the world, if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus answered, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” (Jesus would not bow down to the devil.)

5. The third temptation: The devil took Jesus up to a high mountain cliff overlooking Jerusalem. The devil said, “If you are the Son of God throw yourself down from this cliff, and the angels will catch you.” Jesus answered, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” (Jesus would not do something spectacular to attract attention.)

6. Then the devil gave up and left Jesus alone.

7. Filled with the power of the Spirit, Jesus returned to Galilee to begin his ministry.

(Encourage the children to read at home about the Church year and the seasons in the learners' book, *We Worship*, chapter 6.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Jesus in the Wilderness**

Invite the learners to create a picture of Jesus in the wilderness, using scraps of burlap, sand, yarn, sticks, sandpaper, and other similar materials with rough textures. Glue these items to a cardboard background. A shallow cardboard box or lid would support heavier layers, including rocks.

### **Option 2. Lenten Chain**

To help the learners count the days of Lent, make a Lenten prayer chain. From the calendar date of this class session (likely to be a time within that forty-day season), count the days remaining until Easter. For each class member, provide a strip of purple paper for each of the counted days. Invite the members to think of someone or something to remember in prayer for each of the days, then to put the name or a picture of one person on each strip. Use glue or tape to join the strips as links in a purple chain. Suggest that the learners take the chains home, pray for the persons, and remove a link daily as Easter approaches.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Temptation”**

Play a game called “Temptation” to simulate temptation. Divide the class into two teams for relay races. These may include: walking across the room while balancing an eraser on the head with hands behind back; walking across the room with a ball of cotton balanced on a plastic spoon without touching it with your hands. Learners may think of other such challenges. As the game progresses, be alert to the times when it is tempting to cheat a little because of the difficulty. Discuss the influence of such a temptation.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “We Observe Lent”**

Use Puzzle Sheet III.6 titled “We Observe Lent.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Ask the learners to find the story of Jesus' temptation in *Luke 4:1-13* and *Matthew 4:1-11*. Compare the two stories. How are they the same? What is different?

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Primary-age children, like anyone else, are often tempted. They may want to sneak a candy bar or cookie just before dinner or read by flashlight under the covers after bedtime. It may be tempting for them to cheat on tests when they are not able to answer questions. Ask: What are some things that are hard to resist? How does it feel to be tempted in such ways? What happens when we give in to the temptations and do the wrong things? How do you feel when you do resist temptation?

Suggest to the class members that Lent is a time for confessing the times we have failed to resist temptation. When we are honest in our confessions, God forgives us.

### **INQUIRING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Focus on the painting of Jesus in the wilderness on Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packet that was displayed at the Gathering. Ask: Is the devil in the picture? In what way? Does the painting tell us about the three temptations of Jesus? How?

### **IMAGINING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: "Jesus was alone in the wilderness for forty days. When he came back, he . . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about Jesus' memories of his time in the desert. What would he want to do after such an experience?

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* The class members may wish to dramatize Jesus' experience in the wilderness and his return to Galilee.

### **MUSIC** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Introduce the hymn, "Dona nobis pacem" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 712; *We Sing of God*, 107) by listening to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. The words are in the ancient language of Latin. They are pronounced DO-nah NO-beese PAH-chem. This phrase means "Give us peace."

### **CONTINUING ACTIVITY** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

*Lent/Easter Mural.* Plan to use four large sheets of posterboard. Make a purple border around two of these, and a gold border around the other two. On the first sheet (purple border), invite the class members to design and create a mural scene representing Jesus' time in the wilderness. Use tempera paint and large brushes, dividing portions of the scene to individuals and teams of learners. Display the finished panel in a safe place.

### **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 24 has a picture of Jesus in the wilderness, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

### **CLOSING**

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

What were the learners' reactions to the story of Jesus' temptations? How real is the concept of temptation in their own lives? Are the class members able to describe the season of Lent as a time for reflection, confession, and assurance of God's pardon?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on the last week of Jesus' life, from the triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to his death on the cross. Reflect on how the observance of Holy Week has affected you in the past. How will you observe it this season?

## FOCUS

Jesus' last week began with his entry into Jerusalem, followed by crowds who praised God and welcomed him as king. By the end of the week, people were watching as Jesus was put to death. The learners should be able to describe the events of Holy Week, including Good Friday.

## WORSHIP: PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY

Session 7

**Jesus' Last Week**

## GETTING READY

When the Emperor Constantine embraced the Christian faith in the fourth century, the Church's worship and seasonal observances were enhanced and expanded. Constantine was responsible for building churches in Jerusalem at places that were connected with events in Jesus' life. It became a custom for people to make pilgrimages to the sites.

By late in the century, services were held in a different Jerusalem church on each day of Holy Week, to recall the events leading up to Jesus' crucifixion. This was the beginning of the traditions surrounding our Holy Week celebrations.

At the beginning of the week (Palm Sunday), Jesus entered Jerusalem in triumph among cheering crowds who proclaimed that he was the long-expected Messiah. On Monday, Jesus drove the money changers from the temple, saying that the temple is a house of prayer.

Over the next two days, he continued his ministry of teaching. At the same time, the leaders who opposed him gave Judas money to betray Jesus.

Jesus shared the Last Supper with his disciples on Thursday, then went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. He was arrested there after Judas betrayed him with a kiss. Early Friday, he was condemned to death. He was taken outside of Jerusalem and hung on a cross where he died.

On Saturday his friends and followers mourned his death, not knowing that the next day would bring great joy to all people.

Primary-age learners' knowledge of the sequence of events from Palm Sunday through Good Friday is likely to be fragmentary. They are ready to hear a more orderly account and to learn why we observe the week as "holy."

Almighty and everliving Good, in your tender love for the human race you sent your Son our Savior Jesus Christ to take upon him our nature, and to suffer death upon the cross, giving us the example of his great humility: Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his suffering, and also share in his resurrection; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  
*Amen.*

Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 219

## TEACHING TIP

Primary-age learners have come to know Jesus as a friend. It will be difficult for some of them to understand his condemnation, trial, and death.

For this reason, it is important to end the account of Good Friday with references to the joyous surprise of Easter.

## GATHERING

Display Poster No. 12 from the Teacher's Packet of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. As the learners arrive, ask them to talk about what is happening in the scene. Speculate about where Jesus is going and why the crowd is celebrating.

When all are present, conclude the Gathering with the Confession of Sin:

Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed, . . .

Confession of Sin

*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 79

The words are included on Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet.

## STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Mark 11:8-9*:

“Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Use the following outline to compose a story about Jesus' last week:

1. On Sunday, Jesus entered Jerusalem. Crowds believed that he was the long-expected Messiah and would be a victorious king. They put him on a donkey and scattered leafy branches and clothing in the road. (We call this day Palm Sunday.)

2. On Monday, Jesus drove the money changers out of the temple. It was a busy week, and people were buying sacrifices to offer in the temple. Jesus said this was no place for people to be buying and selling. He told them that the temple was a house of prayer.

3. On Tuesday and Wednesday, Jesus continued to teach people. But key leaders opposed him and plotted to get rid of him. They gave Judas money to betray Jesus.

4. On Thursday evening, Jesus had his Last Supper with the disciples. He said that the bread and the wine were his body and blood. They did not understand that he knew he must die. Jesus took them to the Garden of Gethsemane where he prayed. Judas came with soldiers who arrested Jesus and took him away. (We call this day Maundy Thursday.)

5. Friday morning, Jesus was tried and condemned to die. At nine o'clock he was hung on a cross outside Jerusalem. For six hours he suffered, and then he died. His body was placed in a tomb. (This day is Good Friday.)

6. The rest of Friday and all of Saturday were a very sorrowful time for Jesus' disciples. They had no idea that the next morning would bring joyful

news.

7. Each year in our Church's worship, we remember Jesus' last week. We have special prayers each day from Palm Sunday until Easter. We call this time Holy Week.

(Encourage the children to read about Holy Week at home in the learners' book, *We Worship*, chapter 7.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Palm Sunday Picture**

For each learner, provide a sheet of construction paper to serve as a background, possibly light blue. Distribute scraps of colored paper and containers of glue. Invite the class members to create a Palm Sunday scene of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, by tearing the scraps and gluing pieces onto the background.

### **Option 2. The Last Supper**

Invite learners to use pipe cleaners for making the twelve disciples who were with Jesus at the Last Supper. Small pieces of fabric can be used for clothing, and small bits of paper for faces. The figures can be arranged around a white table made by folding a piece of paper one inch along each edge, then mitering the corners and securing them with transparent tape.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, "Spread the Word"**

Invite the learners to sit in a circle and play the game, "Spread the Word." Begin by whispering a message to the person next to you. That person whispers to the next, and so on. When the message has been all around the circle, the last person to hear it says it aloud. The end message may be surprising. Suggested messages: "He has been arrested." "He has been crucified." "Hosanna in the highest." "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

### **Option 2. Puzzle, "Jesus' Last Week Begins"**

Use Puzzle Sheet III.7 titled "Jesus Last Week Begins." Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Encourage the learners to work in pairs to locate any of the events of Holy Week in one or more of the Gospels. The passages are: *Mark 11-15*; *Matthew 21-27*; *Luke 19:28-23:56*; *John 12-19*.

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Jesus faced the hardest possible decision in returning to Jerusalem. He knew that he would be opposed, then arrested and put to death. Ask: As the disciples followed Jesus into the city, what do you think they expected? As

the week passed, what did they wonder about? On the night of the Last Supper, what might the disciples have thought? How would they feel on Good Friday?

Ask: Have there been times when you had to make a hard decision? What helped you decide? What do you do when bad things happen?

### INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite to the class session a member of the congregation who helps with the palms that are distributed on Palm Sunday. Ask the visitor to bring some palm fronds to examine. If the person knows how to make crosses from strips of palm, ask for a demonstration.

### IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “It was a warm sunny day in Jerusalem. We heard that Jesus of Nazareth was coming, so we . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about what they might see, hear, or say.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is a “right” way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* The class members may wish to dramatize one of the following events: Jesus' entry into Jerusalem; removal of the money changers from the temple area; the Last Supper.

### MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing again “Dona nobis pacem” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 712; *We Sing of God*, 107) with the *Children Sing!* tape. This hymn is meant to be sung as a three-part round, as indicated in the hymnal text. One group begins singing. The second group joins in at the second line as the first group sings on. The third group enters at the end of the third line. If you plan to try this, practice saying the words in a round before singing.

### CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Lent/Easter Mural.* Continue this project as described in Session 6. Use the second large sheet of posterboard, with a purple border. Invite the class members to design a mural panel showing Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Use large brushes and tempera paint for this panel of the mural. Display the finished poster and, if necessary, store it in a safe place with the panel made earlier.

### TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 25 has a picture of Jesus carrying his cross, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

### CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,

and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

From your observations, were the learners able to sense the contrast between the events of Palm Sunday and what happened on Good Friday? What kinds of comments or questions did they offer?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on the joyous event of the resurrection. What will the coming of Easter mean for you?

## FOCUS

At Easter, we celebrate the glad news that Jesus rose from the dead and is living still. The learners should be able to retell the resurrection story according to the *Gospel of Mark* and explain that the joyous season of Easter is the high point of the year for Christians.

## WORSHIP: PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY

Session 8

**Easter: Christ is Risen**

## GETTING READY

Easter is the oldest and the greatest of the Christian Feasts. It may have begun in the time of the apostles, since it is the only day in our Church Calendar that is determined by the moon rather than the sun. This is in keeping with Jewish practice. (Easter Day in our Western churches is the first Sunday after the first full moon following March 21.) Certainly the festival was being observed throughout the Church by the second century.

The word “Easter” is from the name of an ancient English spring goddess. A more authentic name for the festival is Pasch—a form of Pesach, the Hebrew word for Passover. In the resurrection of Jesus from the grave, death itself was destroyed. This was a miracle foreshadowed in the original passover of the angel of death among the enslaved Hebrews in Egypt. The resurrection is the climactic event of our faith—the great paschal mystery. As our annual celebration begins, we light a paschal candle from the new fire.

The early Easter observances were vigils that combined the joyous announcement, “Christ is risen,” with the sacrament of Holy Baptism administered to candidates for baptism who had undergone an extensive period of preparation for their admission to the Church. All other Christians renewed their covenant of baptism at the service.

These ancient traditions lie behind the Easter Vigil liturgy found in *The Book of Common Prayer*, pages 285-295.

Primary-age learners can enter into the awe and wonder of Jesus' rising from the dead. They can also be welcomed as full participants in the liturgies of the resurrection.

O God, who by the glorious resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light: Grant that we, who have been raised with him, may abide in his presence and rejoice in the hope of eternal glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be dominion and praise for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Tuesday in Easter Week  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 223

## TEACHING TIP

Research suggests that children know about death before they are two years old. Primary-age children will have varying degrees of experience with death and dying. Some will have lost relatives and friends, while others may know only about the death of animals. In teaching the good news of Easter, it will be important not to suppress or minimize the sadness and loss that death represents. Jesus' resurrection is not a magical fantasy that takes away

human sorrow. Speak of Easter as loving news from God that death is not the end. We have hope of life beyond death.

## GATHERING

Ahead of time, arrange an Easter table in the classroom. Use a white tablecloth, an Easter lily or other blooming plant, and a wooden or brass cross. Play a recording of Easter music in the background at low volume. You may want to play the Easter hymn from the *Children Sing!* tape. As the learners arrive, ask: Why do you think the cloth is white? What could be the connection between the cross and the flower?

When all are present, invite the group to join in the Easter acclamation:

Teacher: Alleluia. Christ is risen.

Learners: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

(Repeat one or more times so that participation is joyous.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Mark 16:6*:

“But he 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 they laid him.’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell the story of Jesus' resurrection, based on the first account in *Mark 16:1-8*. Use the following outline as a guide:

1. The day between Good Friday and the first day of a new week was the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday). On that day the followers of Jesus were in sorrow, for he was buried in a tomb. Their hope was gone because their teacher and friend was no longer living.

2. After the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, went to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body with spices. (This was a Jewish custom.) The sun had just risen.

3. The women wondered who would roll away the big stone from the door of the tomb.

4. When they arrived, they were greatly surprised that the tomb was open.

5. They went inside. They saw a young man dressed in a white robe. How surprised they were!

6. The young man said, “Do not be alarmed. Jesus has been raised. Go, tell the disciples and Peter that Jesus is going to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you.”

7. The women ran from the tomb. They were trembling. They were so afraid that they did not say anything to anyone.

(Encourage the children to read at home about the first Easter in the learners' book, *We Worship*, chapter 8.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Easter Greetings**

Ahead of time, prepare for each learner a 6 x 8-inch piece of light-colored construction paper, folded in the center to form 4 x 6-inch greeting cards. Obtain a supply of paper scraps in bright colors. Supply pens, markers, scissors, and glue. Suggest that the class members design Easter greetings to be shared with family members, friends, or neighbors. The front cover can include flowers or abstract designs created from the scraps. Inside, write: "Christ has risen. Happy Easter!"

### **Option 2. Easter Lily Hangings**

Collect the following items to give to each learner: A piece of felt approximately 8 x 10 inches, in light blue or a neutral shade; a fluted white cutout of a lily-shaped blossom (felt or other fabric); two or more green felt lily leaves; a dark green or brown pipe cleaner to serve as a lily stem; a few beads or pearls (optional). Supply glue, and encourage the class members to create a hanging to be kept at home through the fifty days of Easter.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, "New Life"**

Play a game to allow the children to act out the theme of new life. First, ask them to be caterpillars by taking tiny steps from one place to another. When you say "cocoon," they should spin in place, then squat down, staying very still for a short time. When you say "butterfly," the children should slowly stand up, stretching their "wings," and then move gracefully around the room, flapping their arms. An alternative would be to imitate seeds that move from the dark ground to become blooming flowers.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, "Easter: Christ Is Risen"**

Use Puzzle Sheet III.8 titled "Easter: Christ Is Risen." Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Prayer Book Search**

Ask the learners to find the Easter acclamation in *The Book of Common Prayer*, on one or more of the following pages: 294, 323, 355. Form two groups to shout out the greeting antiphonally. One group begins, and the other responds.

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Talk with the learners about the theme of resurrection. Describe again the joyous surprise of Jesus' rising from the dead. Ask: How does this news make a difference in our lives? What do we believe about resurrection?

Describe the sharp contrast between the cross and the flower on the Easter table at the Gathering. The cross stands for suffering and death, and the flower for Christ's victory in the resurrection. We use the color white in the

church during the Easter season because it stands for light, purity, and triumph over evil.

### INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Ask an adult choir member to come to the class, preferably in the vestments that will be worn at the Easter services. Ask: What will you be singing today? How long have you been getting ready for this special day? How does it make you feel to sing about the resurrection? What are your favorite Easter hymns? Encourage the class members to listen attentively to Easter music in this season, and to sing the hymns with enthusiasm.

### IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “Jesus is risen! We . . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about what they might say to do.

*Individual Response.* The class members can write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is a right or wrong way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize the events of the first Easter morning.

### MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Introduce the fifth-century hymn, “That Easter day with joy was bright” (*The Hymnal* 1982, 193; *We Sing of God*, 36). Read the words aloud, and ask the class members to raise their hands each time they hear the words Jesus, Christ, and Lord. Sing the first stanza with the *Children Sing!* tape until the tune is familiar. Move on to the other stanzas.

### CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Lent/Easter Mural.* Continue this project as described in Session 6. On the third sheet of posterboard (gold border), invite the class members to create a mural scene suggesting Jesus' resurrection. Use large brushes and tempera paint. Display the finished panel, and store in a safe place.

### TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 26 has an Easter picture, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

### CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Did the learners grasp the good news of the resurrection as the true meaning of Easter? What indications did the class members give that they see the contrast between the Christian message and the sentimentality of Easter advertising and products? Does the season bring joy for the learners? Why, or why not?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on Easter as a fifty-day season, and the resurrection as central to all Christian liturgy. How does the good news of Easter affect your prayers and worship?

## FOCUS

In the Church's worship, we proclaim that Jesus died, was buried, and rose again. He ascended into heaven. At every service and throughout the year, we rejoice at the good news of our risen Lord. The learners should be able to explain that the Easter season lasts fifty days, with Ascension Day coming forty days after Easter Day.

## GETTING READY

The fifty days of Easter—extending from Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost—correspond to the Jewish feast of Pentecost, which lasts seven weeks. St. Athanasius called the Easter season “the great Sunday.” In the ancient Church, neither fasting nor kneeling was allowed during these days, for Christians were to continue in the spirit of joy and rejoicing.

Forty days after Easter Day, we celebrate the story of Jesus' ascension into heaven as described in *Acts 1:1-11*. The disciples had gathered with Jesus forty days after his resurrection. He promised that they would receive power from the Holy Spirit. After he said this, “as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.” (*Acts 1:9*)

Suddenly, two men in white robes stood by them. They told the disciples that Jesus had been taken into heaven and “will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” (*Acts 1:11*)

Ascension and Pentecost were all one celebration in the Church until they became separate festivals around the fifth century. As a part of the Easter season, Ascension Day is a further affirmation of the transcendence of the risen Lord.

In the service of Holy Eucharist, throughout the weeks of Easter, the celebrant begins, “Alleluia. Christ is risen.” The people respond, “The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.” (BCP, pp. 323, 355.)

But what about the rest of the year? Do we leave the resurrection story behind? Every Sunday is “a little Easter.” For Christians, the principal gatherings of the people for worship happen on the first day of the week (Sunday), in commemoration of the resurrection.

Every time we come together as a congregation to pray and receive Holy Communion, we repeat the Creed's affirmation: “On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.” And in each form of the prayer we call the Great Thanksgiving, we join in a memorial proclamation of Christ's death, Christ's resurrection, and Christ's coming again.

The crosses on our church spires are empty. They stand as reminders that the one who was crucified is neither on the cross nor in a tomb. He is risen and is “seated at the right hand of the Father” in heaven.

Almighty God, whose blessed Son our Savior Jesus Christ ascended far above all heavens that he might fill all things: Mercifully give us faith to perceive that, according to his promise, he abides with his Church on earth, even to the end of the ages; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. *Amen.*

## WORSHIP: PEOPLE IN COMMUNITY

Session 9

**The Church Worships the  
Risen Lord**

## TEACHING TIP

Primary-age learners have limited concepts of time. A year is a very long period for them, and they are not yet ready to use trace the entire Church year. Still, they can be introduced to factual information that is relevant to their immediate experiences. In this session, let them know that Easter is more than one day and that the Easter news is always with us.

## GATHERING

Ahead of time, place the following words on a chalkboard or easel, in order from left to right:

Lent———Easter———Ascension———Pentecost

As the learners arrive, encourage them to say the words aloud and to notice their arrangement. Ask: Why does Lent come first? What happens in the Church after Easter Day? (If the class members wish, they may add simple drawings under the words that have meaning for them.)

When all are present, invite the group to join in the Easter acclamation:

Teacher: Alleluia. Christ is risen.

Learners: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Acts 1:11b*:

“This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Use information in the Getting Ready and the following outline for a presentation:

1. Easter Day is not the end of Easter. Our celebration lasts fifty days.
2. At every service of Holy Eucharist during the fifty days of Easter, the priest will continue to say, “Alleluia. Christ is risen,” and the people will respond, “The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.”
3. For forty days after Jesus' resurrection, he appeared many different times to the apostles. He told them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the Holy Spirit.
4. Jesus told the apostles that they would become his witnesses all over the world.
5. Suddenly, Jesus was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of sight. This is called the ascension of Jesus.
6. Two men in white robes appeared. They promised the apostles that Jesus would come again.
7. We remember this story at a festival called Ascension Day, which comes forty days after Easter Day. Following Ascension Day, we still have

another ten days of the Easter season.

8. Every time Christians worship, we recall the glad news of Easter. We could call every Sunday a “little Easter” because we are always celebrating the resurrection.

(Encourage the children to read at home about the fifty days of Easter in the learners' book, *We Worship*, chapter 9.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Easter Calendar**

Ahead of time, prepare a simple calendar that includes a square for each day from Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost—fifty squares arranged as seven weeks (plus one) on the page. Label the Sundays and Ascension Day. Make a photocopy for each learner. Share markers and crayons, and invite the class members to fill in the days that have already passed and to decorate the calendar for use at home. Suggest that set aside a time to fill in a square for each day left in the season, saying “Christ is risen,” as they do so.

### **Option 2. Easter Medallions**

For each learner, provide a ball of clay large enough to form a round pancake shape approximately four inches in diameter. Distribute sheets of foil to be placed under each learner's clay on the work surface. Demonstrate how to create an Easter medallion by flattening the clay and smoothing it on top. Provide sturdy toothpicks for etching letters or drawings on the medallion. Some class members may want to write “Christ is risen,” and others may prefer to sketch lilies or other Easter reminders. The etching process needs to be done very gently. Leave the medallions on the foil, and bake in an oven to harden. They may be used as paperweights.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Fifty Days”**

Prepare a supply of small paper squares—49 white, one red, and 50 in other assorted colors. Obtain one small envelope for each class member. Place about the same number of white squares in each envelope, and add the red square to one of the envelopes. Divide the other squares evenly among the envelopes.

On a sheet of posterboard, mark off a space for each day of the Easter season, from Easter Day through the Day of Pentecost.

Invite the learners to gather the board for a game of “Fifty Days.” Hand each one an envelope. Announce that the goal is to place a white square on each of the fifty days of Easter. In turn, each player is to keep eyes closed, reach into his/her envelope and pull out a square. If it is white, it goes on the board as the group shouts out the number of the day: “Second day of Easter,” “Third day of Easter,” and so on. The game continues until forty nine white squares are on the board. The fiftieth day is Pentecost, and it requires a red square. Who has it?

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Easter Is Always”**

Use Puzzle Sheet III.9 titled “Easter Is Always.” Make copies for

everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Prayer Book Search**

Ask the learners to turn in *The Book of Common Prayer* to find the Collects for the season of Easter. They appear in traditional and contemporary language (pp. 170-175 and 222-227, respectively). Ask: Where is the Collect for Ascension Day?

### **TALKING IT OVER** (Time: 10-15 minutes)

In the Prayer Book, locate the forms of the Great Thanksgiving that are most familiar to your congregation. Read aloud the Memorial Acclamation (of Christ's death, resurrection, and coming again). Ask: When do we hear these words? In what way do they remind us of Easter? of Ascension Day? Encourage the learners to think about the statement, "Every Sunday is a little Easter." Why would this be so? What is said? What is done? Why do we celebrate? (Talk with the class members about the theme of resurrection at every service.)

### **INQUIRING** (Time: 10-20 minutes)

Ask for the names of lay persons who will be readers at the services during the season of Easter. Invite a member of this group to visit the class and talk with the learners about the privilege of reading. Ask: How did you get to be a reader in the Church? How do you find out what you are to read? How do you prepare? What advice would you have for young persons who might want to be readers in the future?

### **IMAGINING** (Time: 10-20 minutes)

Share a story starter: "I was standing near Jesus, when all of a sudden . . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and decide what they saw, heard, or felt.

*Individual Response.* The class members may write their own endings or draw illustrations. Encourage them to express their own ideas. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" wrong way to end the story.

*Group Role Play.* The learners may role play the scene when Jesus ascended into heaven. Choose persons to be Jesus and the white-robed figures. The remainder of the class members can be disciples.

### **MUSIC** (Time: 10-15 minutes)

Listen again to "That Easter day with joy was bright" *The Hymnal* 1982, 193; *We Sing of God*, 36 on the *Children Sing!* tape. Sing stanza 1 as it is written. Then experiment with the following substitute stanza (to suggest the fifty days of the season):

All Easter days with joy are bright,  
the sun shines out with fairer light,  
when, to our longing eyes restored,  
the Church's people see their Lord.

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Lent/Easter Mural.* Finish this project by designing a fourth panel (gold border). Suggest that the tempera painting could depict Jesus' Ascension. Use large brushes and broad strokes. Arrange to display all four mural panels in a place where the congregation may view it in succeeding weeks.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 27 has a picture of an Ascension window, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

As you reflect on this session, were the learners intrigued by the celebration of the Easter season? What were their comments or questions about the story of Jesus' ascension into heaven? Was there evidence that the class members appreciate the importance of the resurrection in Christian worship?

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

## Episcopal Children's Curriculum

### Unit IV. SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

Dear Parents and Guardians,

This unit, Saints of the Church, is offered as a means of examining the lives of eight exemplary figures in Christian history—four men and four women. Two of the eight saints, Patrick and Francis, may be familiar figures to the learners. The other six may be new to them.

They are among the Saints whom we honor in our liturgies and Christian storytelling. Their lives are reflections of the Church's long story—its struggles, its triumphs, its failures, and its redemptive witness.

We encourage you to talk about the sessions with your child. You can do this by reading together the learners' book, *Saints of the Church*, which describes the lives of these saints in a format designed for primary-age children. These stories, which include descriptions of each saint the children talk about in church school and the Church's first Saints who were Jesus' apostles, are tied to the content of the sessions.

We also encourage you to read the scripture passages cited below with your child. The Take-Home Cards given to learners each week can be used in your discussions. The cards provides a list of main facts and ideas from the stories the children learn at church school. These collectible cards, about the size of a postcard, can be displayed in a photo album, kept in a recipe box, or used in any way you find helpful.

Following is a description of sessions for this unit. The eight stories of saints are arranged chronologically:

**Session 1: “Agnes of Rome”** is devoted to Agnes, a teenage girl of Rome in the third century. She chose a life of service to Christ, having decided to forego marriage. Faced with condemnation and certain death, Agnes bravely refused to give up her faith and devotion to the Lord. Her day on the Church Calendar is January 21. (*Matthew 18:2-5*)

**Session 2: “Athanasius of Alexandria”** introduces a highly influential bishop, teacher, and writer of the fourth century. He was born in Alexandria, Egypt, the son of Christian parents. We remember him best for his debate over the nature of Jesus Christ. His day is May 2. (*Matthew 10:32*)

**Session 3: “Patrick of Ireland”** tells the story of Patrick, born in Britain and destined to be a missionary to Ireland. God called him to Ireland and a life of danger as he proclaimed the Gospel of Christ. Among the many stories told about him is the legend that he drove the snakes out of Ireland. His day is March 17. (*Matthew 28:19*)

**Session 4: “Benedict of Nursia”** presents a man who chose to live a simple, solitary life. In time he was sought out by others, and he established a community of monks. His Rule has provided a model for spirituality for both clergy and laity through the present day. The Benedictines, in both male and female communities, are noted all over the world for their quiet disciplines of Scripture reading and prayer. His day is July 11. (*Proverbs 1:5*)

**Session 5: “Hilda of Whitby”** takes us to northern England in the seventh century, where Hilda of Whitby gave in to the wishes of her bishop and remained in her own country rather than travel to a convent in France. Her day is November 18. (*Ephesians 4:1-3*)

**Session 6: “Francis of Assisi”** is about Francis of Assisi—known for his love of the poor and his care for animals and birds. He was an itinerant preacher of Christ. Legend has it that he produced the first Christmas creche. His day is October 4. (*Matthew 11:29*)

**Session 7: “Clare of Assisi”** shares the story of a beautiful young woman who turned down marriage in order to follow Christ in a life of poverty. She was head of a community called “Poor Ladies,” later known as Poor Clares. Her day is August 11. (*Luke 12:34*)

**Session 8: “Julian of Norwich”** is the story of Lady Julian of Norwich, England. She became an anchoress—a person who lived in quarters attached to a church. One of her windows looked in upon the church so that she could take part in worship. The other opened onto the street. People came to her to share their problems. Her day is May 8. (*John 4:25*)

**Session 9: “Pentecost: Communion of Saints”** is about Pentecost and is meant to be used on the Sunday nearest to that Principal Feast of the Church. The story from *Acts 2* is shared. Pentecost, as the birthday of the Church, reminds us of our unity in a truly catholic tradition. (*Ephesians 6:18*)

Yours in Christ,  
Church School Teachers

# SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

Session 1

**Agnes of Rome**

## FOCUS

The Church honors as “saints” certain persons in its history who have been brave and outstanding witnesses to Jesus Christ. Among the saints and martyrs (persons who suffered and died for their faith) is Agnes of Rome, who refused to worship other gods. Her name means “pure” in Greek and “lamb” in Latin. The learners should be able to define “martyr” and to tell why we remember the faith of Agnes.

## GETTING READY

During the early centuries of Christian history, many of Christ's followers refused to abandon their faith when it was opposed. The Roman empire tolerated the new religious sect for only a short time. It soon became obvious that what Christians believed was just the opposite of Roman beliefs and posed a threat to the Roman way of life.

The Romans believed in many gods; the Christians believed in one God. The Romans valued the state—the government and the emperor—over all else. Christians valued God above all else. Romans believed that family loyalty led to loyal service of Rome. Christians often left their families in order to worship God through Jesus Christ.

Agnes lived during a time of particularly intense persecution of the Christians by the Romans. Many people were asked to give up their belief in the Christian God and worship the emperor. Those who stood firm and refused were put to death.

As a young girl, Agnes lived in Rome. Because of her wealth and beauty, she was courted by young suitors who wanted her as a bride. Instead, she devoted her life to serving Jesus. This was dangerous because the Emperor of Rome, Diocletian, had decided to kill anyone who would not obey Roman law and worship Roman gods. The young men who had courted her reported her to Roman officials.

Faced with condemnation and certain death, Agnes bravely refused to give up her faith and devotion to the Lord. She was killed by a sword. Agnes' death, in 304 CE, was especially sad because she was so young.

In legend, Agnes appeared to her grieving parents after she died. She was smiling and carrying a small, white lamb. Her name means “pure” in Greek and “lamb” in Latin. We remember her on January 21. “Come away to the skies” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 213) is appointed for singing on St. Agnes Day.

Almighty and everlasting God, you choose those whom the world deems powerless to put the powerful to shame: Grant us so to cherish the memory of your youthful martyr Agnes, that we may share her pure and steadfast faith in you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Agnes

*Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (4th ed.), p. 127

## TEACHING TIP

Some of the details of saints' lives are gruesome. Focus on each person's love for God and God's love for the person. Their faithful devotion to God, even in the face of death, was stronger than anything else in their lives.

Emphasize this devotion, and stress that the lives of the saints are examples for all of us.

## GATHERING

Ahead of time, prepare signs to post in the classroom, prohibiting Christian worship:

You may not pray.

You may not read the Bible.

You may not say the name of Jesus.

You may not sing hymns.

You may not meet for Holy Communion.

Note: for non-readers, you may want to use small pictures of the forbidden activities with an X or line drawn through them.

As the learners arrive, invite them to read the signs. Ask: How do they make you feel? What would you do if you were told you *must* obey the signs?

Conclude the Gathering with “A Prayer attributed to St. Francis” from *The Book of Common Prayer*, page 833. The words are included on Poster No. 13 in the Teacher’s Packet.

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.*

## STORYTELLING (Time: 10 minutes)

Open the Bible, and read aloud *Matthew 18:2-5*:

(Jesus) “called a child, whom he put among them, and said, ‘Truly, I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

In your own words, share the story of Agnes of Rome using information from Getting Ready and the outline below:

1. Agnes was a young girl, about thirteen years old, who lived in Rome in the third century. She was very beautiful and belonged to a wealthy family.

2. Agnes was a Christian who decided not to marry but to devote her life to serving Jesus. This was a serious decision for a young girl in Roman times.

3. The Roman emperor Diocletian thought Christians were dangerous. He decided to kill anyone who would not obey the Roman law and worship the Roman gods.

4. Roman law expected women to marry and have children. The Romans believed that they would live on after death through their children. The more children they had, the bigger the legacy they would leave. They also thought large families would keep the Roman empire strong.

5. Several eligible young men of wealthy Roman families wanted to marry Agnes because of her beauty. When Agnes refused to marry, they reported her to the officials.

6. Even when she was faced with death, she would not give up her faith or her devotion to Christ. Agnes was put to death by the sword. Her body is buried on the Via Nomentana in Rome.

7. A legend says that Agnes appeared to her grieving parents after her death. In the vision she was happy and smiling, carrying a little white lamb. Pictures of Agnes usually show her with a lamb. She is the patron saint of girls. Her name means “pure” in Greek and “lamb” in Latin.

(Encourage the children to read at home the story of Agnes in the learners' book, *Saints of the Church*, chapter 1.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Lamb Prints**

Provide each learner with a piece of blue or green construction paper and thick white poster paint. Invite the learners to make a flock of lambs on their paper sheets, using sponges or their thumbs. When the paint has dried, the learners may use markers to add legs, ears, and other features to the lambs.

### **Option 2. Lamb Puppets**

Provide for each learner a brown lunch bag, scraps of white and black construction paper, glue, yarn or cotton balls, and crayons or markers. The class members can create lamb puppets, using the bottoms of the bags for the heads. Add eyes, ears, noses, and other details. Yarn or cotton balls can be glued to the bags to simulate fleece.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “I Choose to Follow Jesus”**

Make a line of chairs facing in alternate directions. There should be enough chairs for all but one player. The player without a chair is Agnes.

Everyone except Agnes sits in the chairs. Agnes walks around the chairs,

taps another player, and says, “I believe in Jesus.” The second player gets up to follow saying, “I choose to follow Jesus, too.” The game continues until all players are standing.

Agnes then gives a signal and everyone sits in a chair. The one left standing is the new Agnes. The game can be repeated as long as interest and time permit.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Agnes of Rome”**

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.1 titled “Agnes of Rome.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Prayer Book Search**

Invite the learners to look in *The Book of Common Prayer* at the Calendar of the Church Year on page 19. Note that there is a page for each month. Ask them to locate Agnes in January. Ask: Who are the other saints in January? Choose one or two other months to examine. Explain that the days listed in bold black print are Feast Days of the Church. Holy Eucharist is celebrated on these days.

## **TALKING IT OVER** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Agnes was a young girl when she died for her belief in Jesus Christ. She was able to make a very difficult decision and stick to it in spite of threats from others.

Ask: What are some hard decisions children have to make today? How can our faith in Jesus help us to do what is right? What can we do when other people push us to make wrong decisions? How do you feel when you have made a choice you know is right? How do others help you choose?

## **INQUIRING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

If possible, arrange a tour of the church. Look for stained glass windows, statues, pictures, and other representations or symbols for saints. Discuss why churches might want these things for others to see. (If your church does not contain such examples, check out library books on the saints and arrange a display.)

## **IMAGINING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “After her death, Agnes appeared to her family in a vision. Agnes told her parents . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and describe the way Agnes may have looked. What would she tell her family?

*Individual response.* The children can write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage the learners to express their own thoughts. Avoid giving the impression that there is a “right” way to finish the story.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize parts of Agnes' story: Her refusal to marry the young men; her profession of faith in the face of threats by the Roman officials; her appearance to her family after her death.

## MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Introduce the hymn, “Come away to the skies” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 213) by listening to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. This is a lively hymn, appropriate for remembering Saint Agnes because it has been appointed for singing on her day (January 21). Provide ribbons, scarfs, or streamers, and invite the learners to move gracefully as the words are sung or said.

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Saints Sun Catchers.* Begin a collection of symbols for the Saints in the form of window medallions. From Poster No. 14 in the Teacher's Packet, duplicate the pattern for Agnes of Rome. Make a copy for each member of the class. Invite the learners to color the symbols with wax crayons. When they are finished, lightly rub the paper with baby oil on a cotton ball until the medallions are translucent. The symbols can then be hung with string or taped to a window. During the unit, decide at each session on which symbols to display in the classroom. Save the others in folders to be distributed at the end of the unit.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 28 has a picture of Agnes of Rome, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

The lives of the Saints are attractive role models for primary-age children. What did the learners say about Agnes? Was there evidence that they sensed her deep devotion to God? Consider how the lives of the Saints can enrich the lives of the children as this unit progresses.

## LOOKING AHEAD

In the next session, the focus is on Athanasius, who was a significant

figure in the development of the Nicene Creed. Read this Creed and think about its meaning in your life. Note especially the concept of the Trinity.

## FOCUS

Athanasius of Alexandria was a bishop, teacher, writer, and great defender of the faith. We remember him especially because he helped to write the Nicene Creed. The learners should be able to say why it is important for the Church's leaders to make Christian beliefs clear through writing and speaking, and to tell the story of Athanasius, who is one such leader.

## SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

Session 2

**Athanasius of Alexandria**

## GETTING READY

Athanasius was born in Alexandria, Egypt, in 295 CE. His parents were Christians, and they saw to it that he was well educated in Alexandria schools. When he was a young boy he spent some time with a hermit named Anthony who lived in the desert outside the city. It is likely that Athanasius was sent there for his safety during the Roman persecutions.

Athanasius became a deacon at age twenty-four. Shortly afterward, he was named secretary to the Bishop of Alexandria.

At this time, some people were beginning to question the divinity of Christ. One who did so was Arius, a parish priest in Alexandria. He proposed the view that Jesus was only a special human being. He said that Jesus was created by God; but because he lived, breathed, ate, and wept—as ordinary people do—he was not God.

Athanasius and others strongly opposed what Arius taught. They said Jesus was both fully human and fully divine. The Trinity consisted of three equal Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

As this controversy spread throughout the Church, many arguments and divisions arose. Constantine, the emperor of Rome who had made Christianity legal and stopped the persecutions, called the first Council of the Church's bishops, in 325 CE. They met in Nicaea, Bithynia (modern Turkey).

Athanasius accompanied his bishop to the Council and was instrumental in the writing of the Nicene Creed. This statement of the Church's belief in the Trinity, and Jesus as being fully human and fully divine, was decisive in defining Christian doctrine. We continue to say this Creed at Holy Eucharist.

Athanasius became Bishop of Alexandria in 328 CD. He did not waver in his beliefs throughout his life. He wrote widely and debated with those who opposed him, persuading the Church to hold fast to its faith in the Trinity.

Uphold your Church, O God of truth, as you upheld your servant Athanasius, to maintain and proclaim boldly the catholic faith against all opposition, trusting solely in the grace of your eternal Word, who took upon himself our humanity that we might share his divinity; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.  
*Amen.*

Athanasius  
*Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (4th ed.), p. 221

## TEACHING TIP

Primary-age learners believe in what they have been taught by parents, teachers, and other adults. They identify with the Church's beliefs as stated in the Creeds. Help the class members appreciate the fact that Christians in every generation for hundreds of years have believed and repeated the words of the Creeds. The learners are joining with the Church's people who still say these beliefs aloud together.

## GATHERING

Place on display several open copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* with markers pointed to the Nicene Creed. As the learners arrive, ask them to examine the Creed. Invite questions and comments. When have the class members heard these words? Suggest they close the Prayer Books and see how many phrases of the Creed they can say on their own.

When all are gathered, say together “A Prayer attributed to St. Francis” from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 833.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon; . . .

(Continue to the end, using Poster No. 13 in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible and read aloud *Matthew 10:32*:

(Jesus said,) “Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Share the story of Saint Athanasius in your own words.

1. Athanasius was a leader of the early Church who was very serious about his faith in Jesus Christ.

2. Athanasius was born to Christian parents in Alexandria, Egypt. He attended school and grew up worshiping God. As a young man, he was made a deacon of the Church. Very soon afterward, he became secretary to the Bishop of Alexandria.

3. A priest named Arius also lived in Alexandria. He said that Jesus was not really God. He thought Jesus was just a very special human being who was created by God. His ideas spread and caused many arguments. Athanasius said Arius was wrong.

4. People were choosing sides over their different beliefs. Some followed Arius, others Athanasius. The emperor Constantine decided to call a Council to help stop all the quarreling.

5. The Council was held in a town named Nicaea. Athanasius went to this council with his bishop.

6. The bishops declared Arius was wrong and decided to prepare a statement of what the Church believed. Athanasius helped to write what we

now call the Nicene Creed. It makes clear our belief in the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

7. Athanasius became a bishop and spent his life acknowledging Jesus before all the people.

(Encourage the children to read at home a story about Athanasius in the learners' book, *Saints of the Church*, chapter 2.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### Option 1. “We Believe”

Explain that the bishops at the Council of Nicaea wrote on either papyrus or parchment. Papyrus was a kind of paper made from a plant that grew in water, mostly in Egypt. Parchment was made from thin, dried animal skins. The language of the Council was Greek.

Provide for the learners a supply of markers and strips of sturdy paper (preferably tan). Suggest that they copy the Greek word for “We believe” on their paper strips. Write the word on a chalkboard or easel for all to see:

**Πιστευομεν**

### Option 2. Illuminated Creed

Make a photocopy of the Nicene Creed for each learner. Provide the group with markers, and invite them to illuminate the Creed by decorating the margins with symbols of the Trinity—such as triangles, trefoils, and shamrocks. The finished illuminations may be framed with pieces of colored construction paper.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### Option 1. Game, “Treasure Hunt”

Before the class session, hide several objects or pictures that illustrate the concept of three-in-one, such as a triangle, a plant with three leaves, a fleur-de-lis, or a trefoil (Girl Scout symbol).

Ask the learners to work in teams to search for the items. Be prepared for them to find additional items other than those hidden. When all objects or pictures are found, discuss how they might help us to begin to understand the one God in three Persons.

### Option 2. Puzzle, “Athanasius of Alexandria”

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.2 titled “Athanasius of Alexandria.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### Option 3. Prayer Book Search

Ask the learners to find the Nicene Creed in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Note that it is found in more than one place, is always part of the Eucharist, and usually begins “We believe . . . .” Ask: How many times is the word *believe* found in the Creed?

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Athanasius wrote down just what he believed and why. We can still read what he wrote because people saved his work. How do people share their beliefs now? How do you share what you believe with other persons?

If you wanted to find book about what Episcopalians believe, where would you go? What is a book about our beliefs that is in every Episcopal church? *(The Book of Common Prayer)*

## INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite someone who is a writer, editor, or librarian to visit the class and discuss how people share their thoughts and beliefs in writing and how documents and books are preserved for others to read.

## IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "Athanasius went to a table, sat down, and began to write about the Trinity. He said . . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and pretend to be Athanasius. What would they want to say?

*Individual response.* The children can write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage the learners to express their own thoughts. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" way to finish the statement.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize their ideas of what they believe about Jesus Christ, and how they would explain the Trinity to others.

## MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Introduce stanza 3 of the hymn, "O Jesus, I have promised" *(The Hymnal 1982, 655; We Sing of God, 100)* by listening to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. As you listen or sing the words, use the following motions:

O Jesus, *(point upward)*  
thou hast promised *(hold up three fingers, as in a pledge)*  
to all who follow thee, *(spread out arms)*  
that where thou art in glory *(raise hands over head)*  
there shall thy servant be; *(hold hands in front, palms up)*  
and, Jesus I have promised *(hold up three fingers as in a pledge)*  
to serve thee to the end; *(hold hands out in front, palms up)*  
O give me grace to follow, *(sweep arms across in front)*  
my Master and my friend. *(hold hands over heart)*

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Saints Sun Catchers.* Begin or continue making a collection of symbols for the Saints in the form of window medallions. From Poster No. 14 in the Teacher's Packet, duplicate the pattern for Athanasius. Make a copy for each member of the class. Invite the learners to color the symbol with wax crayons. When they are finished, lightly rub the paper with baby oil on a cotton ball until the medallions are translucent. The symbols can then be hung with string or taped to a window. Decide on which symbols to display, and arrange to save all the learners' work in folders until the end of the unit.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 29 has a picture of Athanasius of Alexandria, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Were the learners able to understand that Athanasius was a real person who struggled to make the Church's beliefs clear and share them with others? What more can be done to help the Saints “come to life” in the coming sessions of this unit?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is about Patrick of Ireland. Recall any stories or legends you may have heard about this famous Saint. What are your favorite stories? Why?

# SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

## Session 3

### Patrick of Ireland

## FOCUS

Patrick was a missionary to Ireland. We remember many legends about him. Most important, he was a builder of Christian churches, and he persuaded kings to become followers of Jesus Christ. The learners should be able to define “missionary” and tell the story of Patrick, who traveled to share his faith with others.

## GETTING READY

Most people know that March 17 is St. Patrick's Day—an observance widely associated with Ireland and its people. Even people who have no Irish ancestors claim the right to celebrate.

Patrick was born in Britain—about 390 CE. Patrick's grandfather had been a priest. His father was an official of the Roman government and a deacon in the Christian church.

When Patrick was about 16, he was kidnapped by Irish slave traders. While in Ireland, he tended sheep and endured the hardships of slavery. He found a renewed sense of his faith and prayed daily.

After six years in captivity, Patrick heard a voice telling him there was a ship waiting to take him home. Patrick escaped from his master and traveled 200 miles to the ship. At first the sailors turned him away, but then his prayers were answered and they took him on board. The ship landed in Gaul (France), and from there Patrick made his way back home.

Patrick studied for the priesthood and later became a bishop. In the year 432, he heard another voice calling him back to Ireland. Patrick returned as a missionary to a country dominated by the ancient religion of the Druids. He was constantly in danger as he went about the countryside proclaiming the Gospel. Many of the legends that surround him are concerned with miraculous escapes from the Druid priests and kings who wanted to kill him.

Tradition says that Patrick drove the snakes from Ireland. He is remembered also for having used a shamrock to illustrate the Trinity.

He traveled throughout Ireland for thirty years, establishing churches and schools to teach about Christ. The real stories about Patrick are exciting enough without all the legends.

Almighty God, in your providence you chose your servant Patrick to be the apostle of the Irish people, to bring those who were wandering in darkness and error to the true light and knowledge of you: Grant us so to walk in that light that we may come at last to the light of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Patrick

*Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (4th ed.), p. 175

## TEACHING TIP

Traditionally, missionaries went to foreign countries to convert nonbelievers to Christ. In our time, missionary work can be a simple sharing of one's faith with neighbors or friends at school. Primary-age children naturally share who they are and what they believe with others. Encourage the learners to invite friends to church school or to other activities. Help

class members to welcome visitors and show God's love to them.

## GATHERING

Display a map of Ireland, a shamrock, or any other St. Patrick's Day decoration. As the learners arrive, ask where they have seen these items and what they associate with them. (Many schools decorate classrooms during March with leprechauns and other figures, so these will be familiar to class members.)

Conclude the Gathering with “A Prayer attributed to St. Francis” from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 833.

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon; . . .

(Continue to the end, using Poster No. 13 from the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible and read aloud *Matthew 28:19*:

“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, . . .”

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

In your own words, tell the story of Patrick. Make use of information in the Getting Ready and the following outline:

1. Patrick was born in England to a Christian family. His father was a deacon of the Church and a Roman official in Britain. His grandfather was a priest.

2. When Patrick was a teenager, he was kidnapped by three men from Ireland who sold him as a slave. Patrick spent six years tending sheep for his master. During this time, he prayed for the chance to go home.

3. One night, Patrick heard a voice telling him that a ship was coming to take him to freedom and his family. Patrick ran away from his master and traveled 200 miles to the ship. At first, the sailors refused to take him. He prayed to God that they would not leave him behind. The sailors changed their minds.

4. Patrick returned to his family and began studying to be a priest. Later, he was made a bishop.

5. Patrick again heard a voice. This time the voice asked him to go back to Ireland. It said, “Come again, holy boy, come and walk again in the midst of us.” Patrick returned to Ireland as a bishop and a missionary.

6. Patrick spent the rest of his life in Ireland, telling the kings and the people about Jesus. He built many churches and led many Irish to be baptized.

7. Many stories are told about Patrick, including: He chased the snakes out of Ireland. He used a shamrock to explain the Trinity. Shamrocks and the

color green are symbols for Patrick.

(Encourage the children to look at the story of Patrick at home in the learners' book, *Saints of the Church*, chapter 3.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Shamrocks**

Provide glue, scissors, and a supply of white and green construction paper cut into four-inch squares. As an alternative, invite the learners to paint paper green and use it to make shamrocks. Here are directions for making a shamrock:

Fold the green paper in four. Cut a heart shape, keeping the fold intact. Open the paper, and there will be four hearts. Trim the fourth heart to form a stem. Glue the shamrock to a white square. To illustrate the Trinity, write Father on one leaf, Son on the second, and Holy Spirit on the third.

### **Option 2. Paintings of Patrick**

Give each learner a sheet of white construction paper, paint, crayons, and a paint brush. Invite the learners to create a picture of Patrick using as many shades of green as they can find or make. Suggest that they include pictures that suggest events in Patrick's life: boat, sheep, cross, bishop's hat (miter), shamrock, and church.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Keep the Snakes out of Ireland”**

Use masking tape or other material to designate an area on the floor as “Ireland.” Select one member of the class to be Patrick. The rest of the class can pretend to be snakes. Patrick must keep the snakes out of the space by touching them. Anyone who is tapped by Patrick must sit down. Anyone who gets inside becomes Patrick.

A variation would be to set a specific time of one minute. At the end of that time, a new Patrick is chosen.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Patrick of Ireland”**

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.3 titled “Patrick of Ireland.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Bible Search**

Ask the learners to find *Matthew 28:16-20* in their Bibles. Invite a volunteer to read the passage aloud. Ask: To whom was Jesus speaking? What did he ask them to do? How did they carry out this task? The disciples became “missionaries” of Christ—persons who carried his message to others. In what way was Patrick a missionary?

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Describe missionaries as people who tell others the story of Jesus Christ. Ask: What would a missionary be sure to share about Jesus? Who told you about him? Would you call that person a missionary? Why, or why not? Who are some of today's missionaries? How would we find out more about them? If you were a missionary, where would you go? What would you say? How could you be a missionary right now?

### **INQUIRING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

If possible, invite a person who has been a missionary or someone who has visited a mission in another country to visit the class. Encourage class members to ask questions of the visitor.

An alternative would be to view a short videotape of a mission in another country. The Episcopal Church Center in New York City distributes published items connected with the annual Church School Missionary Offering. Check to see whether current materials may be available. Or consider asking a vestry member to make a presentation on your church's involvement in missions throughout the world.

### **IMAGINING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: "One day, as Patrick was tending sheep, he . . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations to describe what happened to Patrick as he escaped from Ireland. What was he thinking? wondering? hoping?

*Individual response.* The children can write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage the learners to express their own thoughts. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" way to finish the story.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize parts of Patrick's story: his kidnapping; his escape; his reunion with his family; his call to return to Ireland; his charming of the snakes; or his explanation of the Trinity with the use of a shamrock.

### **MUSIC** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Introduce the hymn, "I bind unto myself today" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 370; *We Sing of God*, 58) by listening to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. The words of this hymn may have been written by Patrick. It is sometimes called "St. Patrick's Breastplate." A breastplate was a kind of armor soldiers used to protect their chests in battle. Patrick needed no armor because he had a strong belief that God would protect him.

The words, either sung or said, provide a strong rhythm. Invite the learners to march to the hymn.

### **CONTINUING ACTIVITY** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

*Saints Sun Catchers.* Continue making a collection of symbols for the Saints in the form of window medallions. From Poster No. 14 in Teacher's Packet, duplicate the pattern for Patrick. Make one for each member of the class. Invite the learners to color their symbols with wax crayons. When they are finished, lightly rub the paper with baby oil on a cotton ball, until the medallions are translucent. The symbols can then be hung with string or taped to a window. Decide on which ones to display. Save the others in

folders until the end of the unit.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 30 has a picture of Patrick of Ireland, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Are the learners able to see Patrick as a missionary and a saint of the Church? What evidence did you gather that the class members know they also can be missionaries by sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session tells the story of Benedict of Nursia, who founded a community known for commitment to prayer and a simple lifestyle that includes daily Scripture reading, prayer, work, and sufficient rest. Are these elements present in your life? What do they mean for you?

# SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

Session 4

**Benedict of Nursia**

## FOCUS

Benedict was a monk who headed a community known for prayer and a simple style of life that included in each day hours of prayer, reading, physical labor, and adequate rest. Today, all around the world, both men and women honor his “Rule” for living. The learners should be able to share Benedict's story and to say at least one idea from his Rule.

## GETTING READY

The idea of dedicating one's life to God can be traced to the Hebrew Scriptures. Prophets like Samuel lived in the temple from a very young age.

In the New Testament, we read of widows who vowed to dedicate their lives to serving the Church rather than to marry again. In the early Church, when Christians faced persecution, much courage was needed to stand firm in the faith. Many, like Agnes, also chose not to marry in order to spend their lives in devotion to Christ (Session 1).

Once Christianity was legal, during Constantine's rule as emperor, things changed. Potential members flocked to the Christian community, sometimes only to seek the favor of the ruling powers. The Church grew, power structures were established, and bishops donned vestments as regal as the emperor's.

Many devout Christians became angry about extravagance in the Church. They believed simplicity was the key to true faith and that Christ's followers should follow his example of poverty and prayer. Some withdrew to the desert, and others formed isolated communities.

Benedict was the founder of Western monasticism. Raised in luxury and well-educated, he became disgusted with the excesses of the world and chose to live a simple, solitary life. People who heard about Benedict sought him out. He finally agreed to form a community. He left this first community after some thirty-five years and built a monastery in Monte Cassino. There he lived out the rest of his days and developed his Rule. Following are examples from the rules Benedict wrote for his community:

- All guests are to be welcomed as you would welcome Christ.
- Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Everyone should have times for working and times for reading.
- Care of the sick is more important than anything else.
- Serve one another.
- Do not annoy others.
- Be humble.
- Prayer should be short and pure.

Almighty and everlasting God, your precepts are the wisdom of a loving Father: Give us grace, following the teaching and example of your servant Benedict, to walk with loving and willing hearts in the school of the Lord's service; let your ears be open to our prayers; and prosper with your blessing the work of our hands; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.  
*Amen.*

Benedict of Nursia  
*Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (4th ed.), p. 277

## TEACHING TIP

Rules are very much a part of life for primary-age children. Not only do they live by rules at home and at school, but they insist that rules be followed to the letter. In teaching about the Rule of Benedict, make clear that rules are guidelines for living in harmony with others. They are not a means of controlling other people.

## GATHERING

Write the word “RULES” on a large piece of paper or on a chalkboard. As the learners arrive, invite them to name some of the rules they live by—at home, in school, at church, or in the community. Encourage the class members to comment on the rules and why we have them.

When all have arrived, invite them to join in “A Prayer attributed to St. Francis” (BCP, p. 833).

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon; . . .

(Continue to the end. The words are included on Poster No. 13 in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible and read aloud *Proverbs 1:5*:

“Let the wise also hear and gain in learning, and the discerning acquire skill . . . .”

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

Use the following outline to compose a story:

1. Benedict and his twin sister, Scholastica, grew up in a wealthy family in Italy. When Benedict was 10, he was sent to school in Rome.
2. Benedict liked his studies, but he began to realize that he did not like the way people lived. They wasted money and food, and they behaved badly. Benedict believed that people ought to live as Jesus did, in a simple way.
3. At first Benedict lived alone in a cave in the mountains. There he thought about God and prayed. Others heard about him and came to join him.
4. Benedict formed a community of twelve houses. Twelve monks lived in each house. When this community became too small for all those who wanted to become a part of it, Benedict moved to Monte Cassino.
5. At Monte Cassino, Benedict built a very well-known monastery. Here he wrote his Rule of Life and lived until he died.
6. Nearby, Benedict's sister, Scholastica, established a community for women. This may have been the first Benedictine Convent—a place for

women to live who dedicate their lives to God and the Church.

7. Benedict's Rule of life required four hours spent in prayer, five hours in spiritual reading, six hours of work (gardening, cooking, cleaning, caring for livestock, and other chores), one hour eating, and eight hours of sleep. This Rule was very reasonable. In other places, the rules were more harsh.

(Encourage the children to read at home about the life of Benedict in the learners' book, *Saints of the Church*, chapter 4.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Create Within the Rule**

Provide the following for each learner: One 9 x 12-inch sheet of construction paper (any color); two 1 x 4-inch strips of blue paper; four 2-inch squares of yellow paper; three red triangles of any size; six torn scraps of green paper (any size), and glue. Invite the learners to create anything they wish under the following two-point rule:

Do not change anything you been given.

Use everything.

As the learners work, talk with them about the challenge of living within a given rule.

### **Option 2. Wooden Crosses**

Monks have traditionally worn simple wooden crosses around their necks on long leather strips. Invite the learners to make their own crosses. Use popsicle sticks or twigs tied together in the center with string, jute, or yarn. Attach the crosses to long strings or pieces of yarn so they can be worn.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Changing the Rules”**

Games require rules. When the rules change, so do the games. Begin by playing “Tag,” limiting the movement to walking around the room. After a few minutes, make a change of rule, such as: When “it” tags another person, both become “it.” Continue changing rules at regular intervals. The leader decides when the game ends.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Benedict of Nursia”**

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.4 titled “Benedict of Nursia.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Bible Search**

Invite the learners to open their Bibles and locate *Proverbs 1:5*. Invite a volunteer to read the passage aloud. Examine the *Book of Proverbs* for other rules. Which ones would help us in our living today? Why? Which would not? Why? What are some other rules found in the Bible? (Recall the Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, and Jesus' New Commandment).

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Rules are a part of everyone's life. What are some of the rules we live by? Why are they important? How can rules be changed? Which rules would you like to change? What are some rules you make for yourself? How well are you able to keep them?

Share with the learners the seven short excerpts from Benedict's Rule, listed under Getting Ready (above). Encourage each class member to choose one that interests him or her. Discuss the reasons for their choices.

## INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Arrange to visit the church's nave or a chapel. While there, explain to the learners that monks like Benedict and nuns like his sister, Scholastica, spent many hours in silent prayer.

Ask the learners to experience what this was like. Tell them to find a place to kneel. Begin a period of silence. After some time has elapsed—possibly a bit longer than young learners will find comfortable—break the silence, and discuss the difficulty of this sort of discipline. Explain that the monks and nuns learned to be wholly quiet as they sought God.

## IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "Benedict spent many hours in meditation and prayer. One day, while he was praying . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and think about what Benedict might have prayed. How might God have answered his prayers?

*Individual response.* The children can write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage the learners to express their own thoughts. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" way to finish the story.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize parts of Benedict's story: His time spent in a cave alone; his establishment of a community; or his writing of the Rule.

## MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Introduce the hymn, "Take up your cross, the Savior said" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 675) by listening to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. If crosses were made as described in Creating, Option 2, the learners may lift them up during the singing or reciting of the hymn, especially at each occurrence of the word "cross." An alternative would be to invite the learners to cross their arms when they hear the word.

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Saints Sun Catchers.* Continue working on a collection of symbols for the Saints in the form of window medallions. For each class member, duplicate the symbol pattern for Benedict from Poster No. 14 in the Teacher's Packet.

Invite the learners to color the symbols with wax crayons. When they are finished, lightly rub the paper with baby oil on a cotton ball, until the medallion is translucent. The symbols can then be hung with string or taped to a window. Decide on which ones to display. Save the others in folders until the end of the unit.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 31 has a picture of Benedict of Nursia, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Has this session on Benedict helped the learners understand the need for prayer in our daily lives? In what ways could you encourage them to pray more often in the weeks to come?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session presents Hilda of Whitby. Hilda was one of the first women leaders in the Church in England and a faithful follower of Christ. Who are some of the women you regard as role models for the Christian life?

# SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

Session 5

## Hilda of Whitby

### FOCUS

Hilda of Whitby, who took her Christian faith very seriously, began an abbey where both nuns and monks lived. They practiced peace and charity. The learners should be able to describe Hilda's life and tell why the Church honors her memory.

### GETTING READY

Because of Patrick's great success in Ireland, Christianity flourished there. Soon missionaries were sent to Scotland and England to convert the people to Christ. A kind of British Christianity evolved, different from that of Rome. This version of the faith allowed women like Hilda to be leaders of the Church.

Hilda was born to a noble family and was baptized when she was a teenager. She lived as a respected member of the king's court until she was 33. At that time she decided to devote her life to God by taking religious vows. The bishop was impressed by her holiness and asked her to establish a small monastic settlement.

Because of Hilda's wisdom, eagerness for learning, and devotion to God, she became the abbess of Whitby. This monastery housed both women and men. The monks and nuns under Hilda's leadership lived a life of study and prayer. Many people, including kings and other leaders of the country, came to Hilda for advice and counsel.

When an important decision had to be made about the Church, Hilda convened the Synod of Whitby. Its task was to reconcile the differences between British and Roman Christianity. Among the issues was the determination of the date of Easter. Rites of the Church also differed in many respects.

Although Hilda sided with the British view, the Roman ideas prevailed. She accepted this with grace and obedience.

O God of peace, by whose grace the abbess Hilda was endowed with gifts of justice, prudence, and strength to rule as a wise mother over the nuns and monks of her household, and to become a trusted and reconciling friend to leaders of the Church: Give us the grace to recognize and accept the varied gifts you bestow on men and women, that our common life may be enriched and your gracious will be done; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Hilda

*Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (4th ed.), p. 405

### TEACHING TIP

Primary-age children are beginning to develop a sense of self based upon their abilities. They compare themselves with others their age. They perceive others as better or not as good as they are in social, academic, and physical attainment. Be aware of these comparisons among class members, and provide varied activities so that each learner can achieve a measure of success. God provides gifts for each person. It is up to us to discover our own gifts and help others to discern theirs.

## GATHERING

Display Poster No. 15 in the Teacher's Packet of a monastery or abbey. As the learners arrive, ask them to examine the scene. Where might it be? What would be likely to happen there? Who would live in this place?

When all are present, conclude the Gathering with “A Prayer attributed to St. Francis” (BCP, p. 833).

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon; . . .

(Continue to the end, using Poster No. 13 included in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible and read aloud *Ephesians 4:1-3*:

“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

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

Use the following outline as you share the story of Hilda of Whitby:

1. Hilda was a member of a wealthy family in northern England. She was baptized a Christian when she was 13. She led a respected life in the court of the king, remaining dedicated to God.

2. When she was 33, Hilda decided to become a nun. The bishop was so impressed by her holiness that he asked her to start a small monastic community near her home.

3. Hilda eventually established three monasteries, the last of which was at Whitby. Here monks and nuns worshiped together and established a great center of learning. Abbess Hilda became well known for her justice, patience, wisdom, and good sense.

4. When the Church needed to make an important decision, a Synod was held at Whitby. Hilda led the meeting, helping the bishops to establish common worship practices in Britain. This included celebrating Easter on an agreed-upon date.

5. Hilda was very kind to individuals. One day she heard about a man named Caedmon, who sang songs to God in English rather than the usual formal Latin. Hilda encouraged Caedmon to become a monk and to continue his praise to God through song.

6. When Hilda died, several people who loved her said they saw her body being carried to heaven by angels.

(Encourage the children to read at home about Hilda of Whitby in the

learners' book, *Saints of the Church*, chapter 5.)

## CREATING (Time: 15-20 minutes)

### Option 1. Celtic Cross

Using the pattern for a Celtic Cross from Poster No. 14 in the Teacher's Packet, trace enough crosses on poster board for each member of the class to have one. (This is a form of the cross found often in British churches.) Invite the learners to decorate the crosses with markers or crayons. Attach the crosses to background sheets of colored construction paper.

### Option 2. Abbey Scene

Provide the learners with a variety of materials, such as magazines, construction paper, cloth, scissors, glue, markers, and other appropriate items. Invite the class members to create individual images of an abbey (such as the one on Poster No. 15 used at the Gathering).

## EXPLORING THE STORY (Time: 10-15 minutes)

### Option 1. Game, "Hilda Heard the People"

This activity emphasizes the importance of hearing what people say and really listening to them.

The learners sit in a circle. Ask a volunteer to be "Hilda" and sit in the center of the circle. The teacher begins a message from the people of England, to be said only once. (Whisper to the learner next to you, and so on around the circle.) Each learner is asked to repeat the message until it arrives at the end of the circle. The last person says the message aloud to Hilda. Hilda must respond to the message, even if it doesn't make sense. Suggested messages:

When should we celebrate Easter?

How can we live in peace?

How many monasteries did you start?

Do we have to sing in Latin?

After each message, ask a new volunteer to sit in the middle of the circle.

### Option 2. Puzzle, "Hilda of Whitby"

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.5 titled "Hilda of Whitby." Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### Option 3. Bible Search

Ask the learners to locate the following passages in the Bible: *Judges 4:4-5*; *Acts 16:14*; *Romans 16:1-2*; *II Timothy 1:4-5*. What are the names of women mentioned in these passages? In what ways were they leaders of God's people?

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

The monks and the nuns at Whitby lived together at the abbey. They shared daily work as well as worship and meals. Ask: What would it be like to live with a number of other people? How many people live in your house? How are jobs shared? How are decisions made? Who decides what to serve for each meal? Who determines what family members watch on television?

Hilda was a wise Christian who gave advice to people who came to see her. Ask: When you need help to decide what to do, whom do you ask? Why?

## INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Reexamine Poster No. 15 from the Teacher's Packet of an abbey or monastery used at the Gathering. Ask: What do you think it would be like to live there? What might people do each day? Where would they go to pray together? alone? How would they get food? Who might come to visit? Why? How did they have light at night? How did they travel? How did they tell time?

## IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "Hilda encouraged Caedmon to write songs in praise of God. I can praise God by . . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations to complete the statement.

*Individual response.* The learners can write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage them to express their thoughts in poems or songs. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" way to respond.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize Hilda's encouragement of Caedmon, the composer of English songs of praise.

## MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Listen to the hymn, "The Church's one foundation" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 525) on the *Children Sing!* tape. Ask: In what way do the words make us think of saints like Hilda?

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Saints Sun Catchers.* Continue work on a collection of symbols for the Saints in the form of window medallions. Duplicate the pattern for Hilda from Poster No. 14 in the Teacher's Packet, providing one for each member of the class. Invite the learners to color the symbols with wax crayons. When they are finished, lightly rub the paper with baby oil on a cotton ball, until the medallion is translucent. The symbols can then be hung with string or taped to a window. Decide which ones to display. Save the others in folders until the end of the unit.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 32 has a picture of Hilda of Whitby, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Hilda was a wise woman who became a leader of the Church. In what roles do the learners see women in your congregation? Consider ways to emphasize that all persons, regardless of gender, can be respected leaders in the Christian community.

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is on Francis of Assisi, who is known for his care for God's creation. How do you care for the earth and the living things that God has made?

# SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

## Session 6

### Francis of Assisi

## FOCUS

Francis of Assisi gave up a comfortable life in order to become a monk—one who stood for a very simple style of life and who devoted himself to helping the poor. Also, he is remembered because of his love for all of God's creation. The learners should be able to tell one or more stories about Francis and to say how we honor him in the Church today.

## GETTING READY

Francis is probably the most admired saint in history, yet the least imitated. His simple life, clothing, and manner of speaking, attracted many people to him and to God whom he served. Very few people are willing to denounce material values and goods and live among the poor and the suffering. In fact, the later members of Francis' own community (the Order of St. Francis) eventually took a different road.

Stories abound of the miracles he performed, his extreme dedication to poverty, and his intense love for all of God's creation.

In the year 1224, Francis was on a retreat in the mountains when he experienced an intense spiritual encounter. When he recovered, the marks of Christ's wounds (*stigmata*) were on his hands, feet, and side. Two years after his death, Francis was canonized as a Saint.

Another story about Francis took place on Christmas Eve. Francis wanted to help the people who lived in a small village celebrate the coming of Christ in a special way. He found a cave nearby where he laid some hay and brought several animals. On Christmas Eve, the people gathered around the cave and worshiped the Christ Child in a setting similar to the manger in Bethlehem. From that time until today, people have had manger scenes in churches and homes.

Francis also wrote beautiful poetry and prayers. We remember especially his “Canticle of the Sun,” and the prayer attributed to him that is included in our Prayer Book (see the Gathering, below). *The Hymnal 1982* includes two of his hymns: “All creatures of our God and King” (400), and “Most High, omnipotent, good Lord” (406-407).

Most high, omnipotent, good Lord, grant your people grace to renounce gladly the vanities of this world; that, following the way of blessed Francis, we may for love of you delight in your whole creation with perfectness of joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Francis of Assisi

*Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (4th ed.), p. 357

## TEACHING TIP

Primary-age learners are introduced to ecology through school, Earth Day celebrations, and other activities. This session is an opportunity to praise God the Creator, and to stress the importance of caring for all that God has made. Introduce Francis as a follower of Christ who loved God, the earth, and all creatures.

## GATHERING

Beforehand, set up a Nativity scene like the ones used at Christmas and Epiphany, or display a picture of one. As the learners arrive, invite them to think about the creche. Ask: When and where do we usually see this scene? How do we happen to have creche scenes in churches and our homes?

When all are present, conclude the Gathering with “A Prayer attributed to St. Francis” (BCP, p. 833).

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon; . . .

(Continue to the end, using Poster No. 13 that is included in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Open the Bible and read aloud *Matthew 11:29*:

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

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

Using the following ideas, tell the story of Francis in your own words:

1. The words read from the Bible (above) describe Francis of Assisi. He was a gentle person who cared deeply for others, taking on the burdens of the poor as Jesus did.
2. The prayer that was said just before the Scripture reading is said to have been written by Francis. It tells us to be more concerned about others than about ourselves.
3. Francis did not start out his life being unselfish. He was born to a wealthy family. His father was a cloth merchant. He spent very little time in school, was spoiled by his parents, and tried to be a soldier.
4. Enemy soldiers captured him, and he spent a year in prison. It took another year before he recovered his health.
5. Francis decided to follow Christ. He believed the best way to do this was to get rid of everything he owned and to live simply among the poor.
6. He was kind to animals and birds. One day as he was walking along a road, he saw a huge flock of birds of many kinds. Francis spoke to them saying, “My brothers, praise God. You have been clothed with beautiful feathers and given wings to fly. Be thankful that the Creator cares for you.” The birds listened to Francis and he gave them his blessing.
7. Francis wanted people to experience Christmas in a new way. He found a cave near the town and celebrated the Christmas service there with the animals. This was the beginning of the Christmas creche.
8. Today's followers of Francis are called Franciscans. They wear brown habits and live simply.

(Encourage the children to find out more at home about Francis by looking at the learners' book, *Saints of the Church*, chapter 6.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Nature Mobile**

Provide each learner with the following: two plastic straws and six 12-inch lengths of string or yarn. Join the straws together at the center, and tie the strings to the middle and the four ends of the cross. The last string is for hanging the finished mobile. Allow the learners to select five objects from a variety of natural materials (feathers, twigs, seed pods, pine cones, shells, and the like).

As the learners work, talk about Francis' great love for nature and all God's creatures.

### **Option 2. Bird/Animal Pictures**

Francis is often pictured with a bird sitting on his shoulder. Some churches have a blessing of the animals on the feast of St. Francis. Provide the learners with paper, crayons, and markers. Invite them to create their own pictures of Francis with animals and birds.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, "Talk to the Animals"**

Francis is said to have talked with animals. Play a game in which animals talk to Francis:

Form a circle, and select one person to stand in the middle to represent Francis. Place a blindfold on Francis. The others in the circle move slowly to the right until Francis says, "Stop!" and points to someone in the circle. The person in the circle who is chosen makes the sound of an animal. Francis must then guess the name of the person making the sound.

Francis gets three tries at guessing the correct name. The game continues until everyone who wishes has had a chance to be Francis, or until it is time to stop.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, "Francis of Assisi"**

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.6 titled "Francis of Assisi." Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Bible Search**

Locate the following Scripture passages: *Genesis 8:8*; *Isaiah 40:31*; *Matthew 23:37*; and *Luke 15:4*. List the names of the birds or animals that appear. In what way might these Bible verses have influenced the life of Francis?

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Francis was one of the first people to encourage others to care for God's creation. Ask: How did he go about doing this? What lessons can we learn from Francis? What are some of the things we are learning today about caring for the earth? Why should we help the animals? clean up trash? save water? recycle various containers?

### **INQUIRING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Take a walk outdoors to experience the world of nature. In turn, concentrate on touching various natural objects, looking around with care, and smelling flowers, dirt, and air. Ask: What have we seen and heard that might be like what Francis experienced? What is different? What would Francis say about our air or our water?

### **IMAGINING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: "Francis loved all animals and wished them no harm. In one small village, a wolf was scaring the people. They could not go out of their houses at night. St. Francis agreed to talk to the wolf. He . . . ."

Invite the learners to use their imaginations and finish the story.

*Individual response.* The children can write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage the learners to express their own thoughts. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" way to finish the story.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize scenes from the life of Francis: his charming of the wolf, the first creche, or his care for people and animals.

### **MUSIC** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Listen to the hymn, "All creatures of our God and King" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 400; *We Sing of God*, 67) on the *Children Sing!* tape. As you sing or say the words written by Francis, ask the learners to draw or write different things that give praise to God, such as sun, moon, stars, morning, water, and fire.

### **CONTINUING ACTIVITY** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

*Saints Sun Catchers.* Continue working on a collection of symbols for the Saints in the form of window medallions. Duplicate the pattern for Francis from Poster No. 14 in the Teacher's Packet, enough for each member of the class. Invite the learners to color the symbols with wax crayons. When they are finished, lightly rub the paper with baby oil on a cotton ball, until the medallion is translucent. The symbols can then be hung with string or taped to a window. Decide on which symbols to display. Save the others in folders to be distributed at the end of the Unit.

### **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 33 has a picture of Francis of Assisi, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

### **CLOSING**

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

How well were the learners able to connect the efforts of Francis with today's interest in the creation? In what ways could Francis continue to be a role model for the class in the future?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is on the story of Clare, a woman who followed Francis in her dedication to poverty, chastity, and obedience. Her Order (Community of Sisters) became known as the Poor Clares, because they gave all they had to the poor and lived on the charity of others. In what ways do people help the poor in your church or community?

# SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

Session 7

Clare of Assisi

## FOCUS

Clare was inspired by Francis to devote her life to following Christ's teaching. She became the leader of a convent where the nuns were noted for helping the poor. The learners should be able to tell Clare's story and to tell the why they are called "Poor Clares."

## GETTING READY

Clare, like Francis, was born into a noble household in Assisi. Unlike Francis, Clare grew up in a family that was dedicated to God. Her father was killed while traveling in the Crusades. Her mother was a devoted Christian who received a vision about Clare before she was born. The vision said that this child would share great light with the world. Because of the vision, the baby was named Clare, which means "the clear one."

In a world of material wealth and excess, Clare lived a holy life devoted to God. Because of her strong faith in God, Francis visited her often after he became a monk.

On Palm Sunday 1212, Clare left her comfortable home and went to a chapel called Portiuncula. There she dedicated her life to God by taking a vow of poverty—cutting off her long, blond hair, and putting on a coarse robe.

Clare contributed much to the Church. She established the Second Order of Franciscans for women. (Today, a Third Order of Franciscans exists for lay people.)

Overshadowed by Francis in his lifetime, Clare came into her own after his death. She kept her vow of poverty unwaveringly, refusing food and money from Church authorities. And she became a spiritual advisor to popes and other clergy.

Clare based her vow of poverty on the Virgin Mary, declaring that Jesus was born into poverty, lived in poverty, and died in poverty. Not only did she rid herself of creature comforts, but also she emptied herself spiritually in order to be open to the will of God.

O God, whose blessed Son became poor that we through his poverty might be rich: Deliver us from an inordinate love of this world, that we, inspired by the devotion of your servant Clare, may serve you with singleness of heart, and attain to the riches of the age to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Clare

*Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (4th ed.), p. 305

## TEACHING TIP

Primary-age children are able to recognize differences among socio-economic groups. They can empathize with people in need if they address questions like: How would it feel not to have enough to eat? shoes to wear? money for toys? Stories and pictures, especially photographs, can lend a concrete dimension to the problems of poverty and homelessness.

## GATHERING

Ahead of time, cut a slit in the top of an old shoe box. Wrap the box in brown paper. Print “Poor Box” on the front.

Set the box in a prominent place, with paper and pencils nearby. As the learners arrive, ask them to write or draw something they think the poor need and put it into the box.

When everyone is present, conclude the Gathering with “A Prayer attributed to St. Francis” (BCP, p. 833).

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon; . . .

(Continue to the end. The words are included on Poster No. 13 in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible and read aloud *Luke 12:34*:

“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell the story of Clare in your own words, using the following outline:

1. Clare was a beautiful young girl who lived in Assisi. Francis grew up in the same town.

2. Clare dedicated her life to God. She prayed, did good works for others, and helped other women to learn about God.

3. When she was 18, she decided to join Francis in dedicating her life to God and living among the poor.

4. Clare left her family's home and went to a chapel nearby. There she met Francis and several of his followers. She cut off her long, blond hair and put on a robe made of rough fabric.

5. For a short time, Clare lived in a Benedictine convent. Soon, however, she formed a community of women who had all taken vows of poverty.

6. Clare encouraged others to give up their possessions and follow Christ. She and her “sisters,” as she called those who joined her, wove cloth and made clothes for the poor. They also made altar cloths for churches.

7. The sisters were so poor that they went without shoes and food. They came to be known as the “Poor Clares.”

(Encourage the children to read at home about Clare of Assisi in the learners' book, *Saints of the Church*, chapter 7.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Cross Picture**

Provide each learner with a paper coffee filter and a cross of black construction paper. Invite the class members to drip drops of food coloring on the paper. Bring extra filters and food coloring to give learners a chance to experiment by making different variations. When the finished creations are dry, glue the black cross to the center. The cross picture can then be hung in remembrance of Clare.

### **Option 2. Weaving**

Clare and her nuns wove cloth and made clothing for the poor. They also made altar hangings for nearby churches. Make a simple loom by cutting a number of 1-inch slits in the ends of a 4 x 6-inch piece of cardboard. Wrap yarn around the “loom,” fitting one strand in each slot. Tie off. Using another piece of yarn, weave over and under to create a solid piece of cloth. Use different colors of yarn so you can make a design with the looms on a bulletin board.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Poor Clare, Find Your Shoes”**

The nuns who followed Clare and took a vow of poverty, walked about without shoes. Ask the learners to remove their shoes and place them in the center of the circle. Invite the class members to move around in a circle, saying, “Poor Clare, poor Clare, she has no shoes to wear.” Repeat three times. After the third time, all the learners scramble to find their own shoes in the middle.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Clare of Assisi”**

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.7 titled “Clare of Assisi.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Bible Search**

Locate *Luke 12:34* in the Bible, and invite a volunteer to read it aloud. What treasure is being talked about? What would Clare consider to be her treasure?

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Clare expressed her love for the poor by giving them all she could and by making clothes for them. Who are the poor today? How do people go about helping them? What could you do to help others?

Share with the learners information about outreach programs in your congregation or diocese. Who do these efforts serve? How can families and young people participate in these programs?

## INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite someone who volunteers in a soup kitchen, shelter, or other agency that helps the poor in your community. Ask this guest to share his or her experiences with the class.

## IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “Francis would visit Clare at her convent once a year. Clare had one wish. She wanted to share a meal with Francis. One day, they sat down to share a picnic and . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations to continue the story.

*Individual response.* The children can write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage the learners to express their own thoughts. Avoid giving the impression that there is a “right” way to finish the story.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize parts of Clare’s life: her prayer and devotion; having her hair cut; making clothes for the poor; or the picnic with Francis.

## MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Reintroduce the hymn, “Come away to the skies” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 213). Listen to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. This is the same hymn chosen for Agnes. What might Agnes and Clare have had in common? Why would this hymn suit them both?

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Saints Sun Catchers.* Add to the collection of symbols for the Saints in the form of window medallions. Duplicate the pattern for Clare from Poster No. 14 in the Teachers’ Packet, making a copy for each member of the class. Invite the learners to color the symbols with wax crayons. When they are finished, lightly rub the paper with baby oil on a cotton ball until the medallion is translucent. The symbols can then be hung with string or taped to a window. Decide which ones to display. Place the others in folders and save them until the end of the unit.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 34 has a picture of Saint Clare of Assisi, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).

Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Clare's example shows that even people who have very little can share what they have. What evidence did you gather that the learners are concerned about persons less fortunate materially than they are? How can the class members be helped to act on this?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on Julian of Norwich. Julian lived in England during very difficult times. As a young woman she became very ill. After she recovered, she devoted her life to God. Has there been a crisis in your life (or for someone you know) that has increased your faith in God?

# SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

Session 8

## Julian of Norwich

### FOCUS

Julian of Norwich was an “ anchoress,” one who lived alone in loving devotion to Christ. People sought her out for counsel and spiritual advice. She wrote about the love of the Lord. The learners should be able to describe Julian's life and to tell why she is remembered in the Church.

### GETTING READY

Julian lived in the northern part of England during the Middle Ages. We know very little about her early life. The times were very difficult.

We learn about Julian from her own writings. She tells of an illness that brought her near death when she was 30 years old. A priest had been called to give her the last rites of the Church (a special blessing for a dying person). When he held up a crucifix in front of her face, Julian received sixteen “ showings.” These showings were visions of the Trinity and the Person and Passion of Christ.

Julian wrote down the visions immediately in what is called the short form. Some twenty years later, she wrote a longer form that includes the short versions and extended interpretations of their meanings. This book is called *Revelations of Divine Love*.

Following her recovery from illness, Julian became an anchoress in the Church of St. Julian in Norwich, England. It is assumed that she took her name from the church; her given name is lost to history.

Anchoresses were common in medieval England. An anchoress is a person who lives alone in a room or rooms built onto a church building. One window opened into the church so the person could participate in the Eucharist and receive the Sacrament. Another window opened onto the street so the person could give spiritual advice and prayer to the common people.

Lord God, in your compassion you granted to the Lady Julian many revelations of your nurturing and sustaining love: Move our hearts, like hers, to seek you above all things, for in giving us yourself you give us all; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*.

Dame Julian of Norwich  
*Lesser Feasts and Fasts* (4th ed.), p. 225

### TEACHING TIP

Learners at the primary-age level are likely to form very close attachments to adults in their lives—school teachers, music instructors, sports coaches, and others. Church school teachers can also serve as important friends and advisers. Cultivate an unhurried atmosphere in the church school in order to be open to children's questions and shared confidences. Take care to guard the learners' privacy and offer counsel prayerfully.

## GATHERING

Display Poster No. 15 of a medieval English town from the Teacher's Packet. As the learners arrive, ask them to think about what it might be like to live in such a place. How would life be different from today? In what ways might it be the same?

Conclude the Gathering with “A Prayer attributed to St. Francis” (BCP, p. 833).

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon; . . .

(Continue the prayer to the end. The words are included on Poster No. 13 in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible and read aloud *John 4:25*:

“The woman said to him, ‘I know that Messiah is coming’ (who is called Christ). ‘When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.’”

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

Using the following outline, tell the story of Julian of Norwich in your own way.

1. Julian lived in Norwich, England. We do not know the name she was given at birth.
2. When she was 30 years old, she became very ill and almost died.
3. While she was sick, she saw visions of Jesus Christ that she called “showings.” There were sixteen visions in all.
4. Julian got well and wrote down what she had seen.
5. In one of her visions, she saw a small round object in her hand, no bigger than a hazelnut. Julian wondered what would become of this. She concluded it would be all right because God loved it.
6. She became a holy woman ( anchoress) to the church of St. Julian in Norwich. Julian took her name from the church.
7. As a holy woman, or anchoress, she spent much time alone, praying to God. She was not a nun like Clare who lived apart from the world, since she talked to the people of the town about their problems and gave them advice and prayer. Her room had two windows—one to look out on the street and another that looked into the church.
8. Twenty years after her illness, she wrote a longer version of the sixteen visions. In each vision, God was telling about love.
9. Julian died in 1417, when she was about 70 years old.

(Encourage the children to read at home about Julian of Norwich in the learners' book, *Saints of the Church*, chapter 8.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Two Windows**

Provide each learner with two sheets of construction paper the same size, one white and the other a different color. Supply crayons or markers. In the colored construction paper, cut a slit in the form of an H, one inch from the top and down the center. Fold the flaps back to form two windows. Attach the windows on top of the white sheet. Invite the learners to draw a church behind one window and a street scene behind the other. They may wish to add a silhouette of Julian in the center.

### **Option 2. “All will be well . . .”**

Write the phrase, “All will be well, and all manner of things will be well,” on a sheet of paper. Copy one for every class member. Gather materials such as glue, glitter, crayons, markers, and other decorative materials. Invite the learners to decorate these comforting words from Lady Julian.

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Going to Norwich”**

Gather the class members in a circle, seated on the floor or chairs. Ask the group to imagine they are friends of Lady Julian who live in the English countryside. They are planning a trip to Norwich to see her at her window, one by one.

The first person in the circle says, “We're going to Norwich, and we're taking *(name an appropriate gift for Lady Julian)*.” The next person repeats the line, including the named item, then adds another gift. The process continues to the end of the circle, with the last person naming all the gifts including his/her own.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Julian of Norwich”**

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.8 titled “Julian of Norwich.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Lady Julian concluded that “Love was our Lord's meaning.” Invite the learners to locate passages in their Bibles on God's love, and the love of God and neighbor. If a Bible concordance is available, practice finding listed references under the heading, “love.” Or assign the following citations to be located and read aloud: *Deuteronomy 6:5; Psalm 31:23; Mark 12:33; Luke 6:27; John 3:16; John 13:34; John 15:9; Ephesians 5:22; I John 4:7; I John 4:21.*

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

People came to Julian to ask for advice and prayer. Ask: Where do you go

for help and advice? What kind of problems need outside help? What are some practical problems you have? (homework, dealing with friends) Is there someone whom you ask to pray for you?

Shift to the question: Have you ever given advice to someone else? Has a friend ever asked your opinion? What did you do or say? Talk about what it means to be sensitive to others' feelings when they are in trouble or distress.

### **INQUIRING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Invite someone dressed as Lady Julian to visit the class. This person may tell what it was like to live as an anchoress in England. Encourage the students to ask questions about her illness and recovery, her visions, and her writing.

### **IMAGINING** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: "When people came to the church yard to see Julian, they . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and share what they might have seen or said.

*Individual response.* The learners can write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage them to express their own thoughts. Avoid giving the impression that there is a "right" way to finish the story.

*Group role play.* Individuals or small groups can dramatize Julian giving advice and prayer to the people of the town.

### **MUSIC** (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Sing "I heard the voice of Jesus say" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 692) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Create hand movements to accompany the words. Ask: In what ways might this hymn remind us of the saints whose stories we have examined in this unit?

### **CONTINUING ACTIVITY** (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

*Saints Sun Catchers.* Add to the collection of symbols for the Saints in the form of window medallions. For each class member, duplicate a copy of the pattern for Julian from Poster No. 14 in the Teachers' Packet. Invite the learners to color the symbols with wax crayons. When they are finished, lightly rub the paper with baby oil on a cotton ball until the medallion is translucent. The symbols can then be hung with string or taped to a window. Decide on which ones to display, and save the others in folders.

## **TAKE-HOME CARD**

Card 35 has a picture of Lady Julian of Norwich, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## **CLOSING**

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Which aspects of Lady Julian's story appealed to the learners? As you recall the study of eight saints during this unit, how would you describe the learners' general reactions? What more can be done to lift up the Church's Saints as models for all Christians' lives?

## LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is about the Feast of Pentecost as an occasion for recalling the generations of saints who have continued to devote their lives to God and the Church. Who are the saints you will remember on Pentecost?

# SAINTS OF THE CHURCH

Session 9

**Pentecost:  
Communion of Saints**

## FOCUS

On the Day of Pentecost, when we celebrate each year the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the followers of Christ, we remember as well that the Church's people belong to an unbroken line of faithful Christians. The Church is the “communion of saints,” composed of all those who from generation to generation have glorified the risen Lord (in worship and deeds). The learners should be able to explain that the saints of the past are joined with us (the saints of today) in the Church.

## GETTING READY

Several themes come together when we think about the meaning of Pentecost, one of the Principal Feasts of the Church:

- The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles marked the beginning of their missionary activity. Peter's sermon was the first proclamation of the good news of Jesus Christ, and the response of the listeners resulted in a large company of baptized believers. The Church had begun.
- The apostles' experience and Peter's sermon remind us that the gift of the Holy Spirit accompanies our own baptisms. In the prayer of thanksgiving over the water at the service of Holy Baptism, we recall the presence of the Spirit from Creation until now. (See *The Book of Common Prayer*, pages 306-307.) To be baptized “by water and the Spirit,” is to be welcomed into the “communion of saints.” This communion includes the Church's children as well as youth and adults.
- Powerful symbols are associated with the descent of the Spirit: flames of fire and a descending dove. The fire image is from *Acts 2*, when flames appeared over the heads of the apostles. The dove is from the accounts of Jesus' baptism, in *Mark 1:10*; *Matthew 3:16*; *Luke 3:22*; and *John 1:32*.

In this unit, the learners examine the stories of eight saints spanning many centuries of Christian history. We recognize that their lives were connected in an unbroken succession with the lives of the Saints present at the first Pentecost. From generation to generation, Christians take their places in the great “communion of saints.”

Almighty and most merciful God, grant that by the indwelling of your Holy Spirit we may be enlightened and strengthened for your service; 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.*

Of the Holy Spirit  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 251

## TEACHING TIP

The world of primary-age children is expanding from their immediate families to the larger communities of school and other peer groups. It is difficult for them to think of people who lived long ago as their companions in “the communion of saints.” But it is important to introduce the concepts of continuity and inclusiveness as we speak about the Church's people. In storytelling and class activities, remind the learners that Christians from the past are still present with us in spirit.

## GATHERING

Display the picture of Pentecost on Poster No. 16 in the Teacher's Packet. As the students arrive, invite them to examine the scene and speculate on what is happening.

When everyone is present, conclude the Gathering with “A Prayer attributed to St. Francis” (BCP, p. 833).

Lord, make us instruments of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon; . . .

(Continue to the end, using Poster No. 13 in the Teacher's Packet.)

## STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Read aloud *Ephesians 6:18*:

“Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.”

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

Use the following outline to compose a story:

1. Begin by describing your congregation's plans for celebrating the Feast of Pentecost.

2. Explain that Pentecost was a Jewish festival that took place fifty days (seven weeks) after Passover. On this day the people of God gave thanks for the annual harvest. Also, they thanked God for the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses. Share the story of the first Christian Pentecost, as told in *Acts 2*.

3. The disciples of Jesus were gathered in an upstairs room in Jerusalem, not sure what they were expected to do following the resurrection of Jesus seven weeks before and his ascension. Crowds of visitors were in the city for the festival.

4. Suddenly there was a sound like mighty rushing wind, and flames descended on the heads of the disciples. They were receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit that had been promised by Jesus.

5. The disciples went out onto the roof as crowds gathered around, attracted by the sound. They began to speak. The crowds understood in their own languages.

6. Peter preached to the crowd and told them to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins. He promised that they would also receive the gift of the Spirit.

(Encourage the children to read at home a story about Pentecost in chapter 9 of the learners' book, *Saints of God*.)

## CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Pentecost Windsock**

Provide sheets of 9 x 12-inch white construction paper, along with crayons and markers and a supply of 12-inch crepe paper streamers (orange, yellow, and red). Suggest that the learners decorate each sheet with a dove and flames, then staple the 9-inch sides together to form a tube. Attach the streamers at the bottom of each tube to create windsocks. Add balanced string handles at the top for hanging.

### **Option 2. Blowing Wind Paintings**

Drop dots of thin tempera paint on sheets of art paper. The learners can use drinking straws to blow the paint across the paper to form patterns. A variety of colors may be used, and the sheets may be turned to change the direction of the “wind.”

## EXPLORING THE STORY *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

### **Option 1. Game, “Pentecost Symbols”**

Ask for a volunteer to be the “caller.” The remaining members of the group may sit in chairs in a circle. Provide each person with either a dove or a flame cut from construction paper.

The volunteer calls out either “dove” or “fire,” and those who have the Pentecost symbol just named rise to exchange seats with one another. The caller quickly claims one of the empty chairs. The person left without a chair then becomes the caller (giving his/her symbol to the previous caller). The game continues.

### **Option 2. Puzzle, “Pentecost: Communion of Saints”**

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.9 titled “Pentecost: Communion of Saints.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Directions are given on the sheet.

This can be a class or small group activity, or learners may work independently.

### **Option 3. Scripture Search**

Ask the learners to find *Acts 2* in their Bibles and to look for the following words: disciples, wind, fire, Holy Spirit, languages, Peter.

## TALKING IT OVER *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Remind the learners that the followers of Jesus who received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost are Saints whose days we celebrate in the Church during the year. They were the Church's first saints. But all baptized and faithful Christians through the many centuries of history are also “saints.” We give thanks for this great company of people and remember them at Pentecost.

Ask: When have you heard the words “communion of saints”? (See the Apostles' Creed.) Where could you find out more about the saints of the past? If you could live in a different time in the past, which saint would you like most to meet? At some future time, people will be looking back at us. What would you want them to remember about you?

## INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Plan a way for the learners to think about Christians who speak different languages. Invite one or more persons to visit the class and tell a portion of the Pentecost story (or share the Lord's Prayer) in another language. (If no one is available to come in person, perhaps a tape recording can be made ahead of time.) Emphasize that, even though we speak different languages, we have a common "language of the Spirit," since we are all one in Christ's family, the Church.

## IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "When the wind and fire came on Pentecost, the disciples . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and complete the story in their own way.

*Individual response.* The learners may write their own endings or draw pictures. Encourage them to express their own thoughts.

*Group role play.* Invite the class members to pretend they are in the upstairs room and to role play the events of Pentecost. Choose a learner to play the part of Peter, who explains the meaning of what has happened.

## MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Listen on the *Children Sing!* tape to the Pentecost version of "Hail thee, festival day!" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 225; *We Sing of God*, 42). Read the stanzas aloud then sing along with the tape. Listen for the words, "fire," "Spirit," and "tongues."

## CONTINUING ACTIVITY *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

*Saints Sun Catchers.* Conclude the project developed during the unit. For each student, make an empty shield. Invite the learners to create and color symbols for themselves. When the students have finished coloring these with crayons or markers, rub the paper with oil to produce a translucent effect. Attach string or tape for placing the medallion in a window to catch the sun's rays. Distribute the Sun Catchers made throughout this unit. Suggest that the learners hang them in windows at home.

## TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 36 has a picture of Pentecost, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind children that the cards can be collected and displayed with others received this year.

## CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We give thanks for . . . (*add thanksgivings*).  
Bless all whose lives are closely linked with ours,  
and grant that we may serve Christ in them,  
and love one another as he loves us. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form IV  
*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 388

Stand in a circle and say:

Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Learners: Thanks be to God.

## TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Which aspects of the Pentecost story and its symbolism seemed to appeal most to the learners? How well are they able to link the gift of the Holy Spirit with the concept of a “communion of saints”? Are they beginning to think of themselves as baptized Christians who have a spiritual connection with the men and women studied in this unit?