

EPISCOPAL CHILDREN'S CURRICULUM

PRIMARY

SHELL



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Primary Shell

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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. PENTATEUCH

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Pentateuch is the name for the first five books of the Bible: *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*. The theme for the Pentateuch Unit is God's faithfulness in keeping promises. In our baptism, we become part of God's people, from Abraham to the present. It is important that our children hear again and again the stories Hebrew Scriptures, as the promises of God are fulfilled.

God makes promises, and the people offer promises in return. These promises are called "covenants."

In the stories, we learn that the people in the Hebrew Scriptures are subject to the same feelings people have known in every household and generation: love and devotion; jealousy, hatred, and deception; murderous anger; bereavement and deep sorrow; prayer; and rebellion against God.

God works with people who are very similar to us. Although we may fail to keep our promises, God always remains faithful and acts to save us.

In this unit for primary-age children, we look at key figures in *Genesis* and *Exodus* that are part of the Pentateuch or Torah, the Hebrew name for the first five books of the Bible. We encourage you to talk about the lessons with your child. Do this by reading together the learners' book, *God's Chosen People*, which follows the session outline by chapter, and looking at the Scripture passages cited below. The Take-Home Cards given to learners each week can also be used in your discussions. 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 are summaries of the unit's sessions:

Session 1: "Noah" reviews the story of the Flood, emphasizing the events that occurred after the ark came to a rest. The rainbow appears as a sign of God's promise to never destroy all of creation with a Flood. Read the story in *Genesis 9:8-13*.

Session 2: "Abraham and Sarah" is about God's promise that their descendants would be as numerous as the stars or the sands of the seashore. Even though they were very old, Sarah gave birth to a son whose name was Isaac. (*Genesis 12:1-7*)

Session 3: "Isaac and Rebekah's Twins" recounts the story of the birth and sibling rivalry of Jacob and Esau. Although the family experiences jealousy, betrayal, and deception, God's faithfulness never wavers. (*Genesis 25:24-34*)

Session 4: “Jacob” describes his flight from Esau's anger and Jacob's dream of a ladder extending to heaven, with angels going up and down. In the dream, God promises to always be with Jacob. Jacob, whose name is later changed to Israel, receives the blessing of God at Bethel. Through Jacob, the covenant first made with Abraham is renewed. (*Genesis 28:10-22; 35:9-12*)

Session 5: “Joseph” is about Jacob's family and his love for Joseph. As a sign of his love, Jacob gives Joseph a beautiful coat with long sleeves. Joseph's jealous brothers plot against him and sell him to Egyptian traders. Jacob believes his beloved son is dead. (*Genesis 37:2-28*)

Session 6: “Joseph and the Pharaoh” describes Joseph's ascent from slavery to become a trusted administrator in the house of Pharaoh. He becomes God's instrument for feeding his aged father and brothers as they come to Egypt during a famine. (*Genesis 39:1-5; 41:41*)

Session 7: “Moses and Miriam” takes place 600 years later in Egypt where the Israelites are held in slavery. To punish the people and reduce their numbers, the Pharaoh orders the slaying of all male babies. With his sister Miriam's help, Moses is saved by the Pharaoh's daughter, who finds the baby floating in a river. (*Exodus 1:22-2:10*)

Session 8: “Moses and the Red Sea” describes the hardships of the Hebrew people and how Moses is chosen to lead them to a new land. After repeatedly refusing to let the people go, the Pharaoh finally agrees to set them free. When he has a change of heart and comes after them, Moses lifts his rod, parts the Red Sea, and the people are saved. (*Exodus 14*)

Session 9: “All Saints, People of God” celebrates the Christian community in which we are a part of God's saints in the world. We are reminded that God continues to keep his promises. (*Ephesians 1:15-16*)

Yours in Christ,
Church School Teachers

PENTATEUCH

Session 1

Noah

FOCUS

God made a covenant with Noah and all his descendants. The learners should be able to say that the rainbow is a sign of God's promise to care for all living things.

GETTING READY

The title of this unit, “Pentateuch,” is a Greek name for the Hebrew “Torah,” the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament). The stories chosen for the sessions focus on the men and women who play central roles as God preserves the Hebrew people. They appear, one by one, in the books of *Genesis* and *Exodus*.

The ancient Hebrews looked for “signs” that would make clear God's intentions, and for special signs that would help in decision-making. The early Christians looked for similar signs. Jesus' birth was announced to the shepherds as a “sign” of the coming of a Savior for God's people. The apostles themselves performed many great acts, following Jesus' resurrection. The Church saw these as “signs” of God's presence in a new way.

One of the major signs from God was the appearance of a rainbow in the sky following the great Flood. It accompanied God's promise to Noah never again to destroy the whole earth with a deluge.

The primary-age learners will have heard the story of Noah many times in the church and in popular children's versions. In this session, it will be important to link the story with the deeper insight that God makes promises to people. We begin to explore the covenant-faithfulness of God.

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

Easter Vigil
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 289

TEACHING TIP

Some versions of this story play up the violence that occurred to the people who were drowned in the Flood. Children may believe that they will be punished in a similar way. Adults who say repeatedly that God is angry when we are bad may be contributing to an image of God that stresses judgment over love and mercy. Let the focus of this session be on the love of God who promises to make all things new.

GATHERING

As this may be the first time this group of children will be together, use some of the class time to make name tags and introduce one another.

Write the word “promise” in large letters on a sheet of paper. Display it on a board or wall. As the learners arrive, invite them to construct a rainbow

beneath the word. Provide a variety of materials in the colors of a rainbow, along with scissors and tape.

Conclude the Gathering with *Psalm 23*, an expression of God's care for us. This Psalm was chosen because it reflects the covenant-faithfulness of God—the underlying theme of the unit. A poster containing the words is included on Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet.

It is hoped that by repeating this Psalm at each gathering the learners will appreciate it and commit it to memory by the end of the nine sessions.

When all are present, gather the group and say together:

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

Psalm 23 (KJV)

The Book of Common Prayer, pp. 476-477

STORYTELLING (Time: 10 minutes)

To share the story of God's covenant with Noah, begin by opening the Bible and letting the learners see where the reading is. Read aloud *Genesis 9:8-13*, which ends with God's promise:

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, “As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I will establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.” God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

(Explain to the group that whenever we read the Bible aloud, we end by saying these words.)

1. Begin by showing the group the pages of the books of *Genesis* and *Exodus*. Explain that in this session and the ones that follow we will be thinking about people God chose as leaders. Their stories are important because they were the first to receive promises from God.

2. The first story is about Noah. Ask the children to share what they remember about it. (Most will be likely to recall the tale of the ark, the occupants, and the rains that washed the earth clean—followed by a rainbow.)

3. In your own words, review the account in *Genesis 6-9*, focusing particularly on what happened at the end of the Flood. Share the suspense as Noah sent out each of the birds, and the excitement of leaving the ark with all the animals.

4. Emphasize the promise that God made never again to destroy the earth with a flood. Introduce the word “covenant” as a promise from God, and describe the rainbow as a reminder to us that God will always care for the creatures of the earth. This is the first promise we read about in the *Book of Genesis*.

(Remind the learners that they can read the story of Noah and the Flood at home in the learners book, *God's Chosen People*, chapter 1.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Crayon Resist

Provide each learner with a sheet of drawing paper and brightly colored crayons. Invite them to draw a rainbow or a picture of the ark with the rainbow. When they are finished coloring, let the children use blue water-color paint to cover their drawing. The paint will not adhere to the colored surface, making it appear that the colors are emerging through the storm.

Option 2. Rainbow Bookmarks

Give each learner a piece of stiff cardboard (1 x 4 inches), and four 12-inch lengths of ribbon in rainbow colors—red, yellow, green, and blue. Glue the ribbon edges to one end of the cardboard and secure with clear postal tape. Learners add their names to the cardboard pieces. These will become Bible bookmarks.

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

Option 1. Game, “Rainbow Promise”

Randomly assign each player a color of the rainbow. Call out the colors of the rainbow repeatedly, now and then saying “rainbow (*blue*).” The learner who is that color stands and makes a promise, such as “I promise to

smile at my friend.” Continue the game until all have had a turn to make a simple promise.

Option 2. Puzzle, “God's Covenant with Noah”

Use Puzzle Sheet I.1 titled “God's Covenant with Noah.” 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. Finding the Place

Provide each learner with a Bible. Allow learners to explore the pages of the Bible. Ask them to tell you what they discover and note their responses. Point out where the story of Noah's Ark can be found (*Genesis 6:11-9:17*) and the location of *Psalms 23*.

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

Talk with the group about promises. God made a promise to Noah and his family. God is faithful in keeping his promises. Discuss the importance of promises. Ask: What are some of the promises you have made? What kinds of promises have others made to you? How do you feel when you break a promise you have made? Or when others break promises to you?

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

If possible, bring in a prism or other object such as a cut glass bowl, that creates a rainbow when light shines through it. Encourage the children to take turns creating their own rainbows. Observe that the glass or prism must be held just right to produce a rainbow effect.

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “One day two animals heard Noah call them to come aboard the ark. They responded by . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Noah have said or done?

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 choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: Noah building the ark, the animals arriving two by two, the ark as it sailed the stormy waters, and the sighting of the rainbow when the rain stopped. (Costumes and props may be used to enhance this activity.)

MUSIC (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Listen to “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 390; *We Sing of God*, 65) on the Primary Shell *Children Sing!* tape. The hymn tune is particularly uplifting and invites active engagement. Suggest movements that the children could use with the hymn. For example, When the word

praise is sung, they could lift their arms. In the second verse, the children could stretch their arms out as “borne on eagle wings.”

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

Class Diorama. Discuss with the class some possible scenes from the story of Noah and his family. Help the class members to choose and create one of the scenes in a box. Cover the inside of the box for the chosen scene. Items to complete the diorama can be created by the children, using a variety of materials, from simple drawings to three-dimensional objects.

A new diorama box will be needed for each session in this unit. A collection of supplies can be assembled and kept for making the dioramas.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 1 has a picture of Noah and the ark, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Present the card as a collectable that can help learners remember the story. Invite them to display it or keep it in a special box at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with this prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We give thanks for the story of Noah and the
rainbow.

(Add thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

Stand in a circle and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Noah's story is familiar to many, but it is important not to assume everyone knows it or has heard its message of God's love. From your observations, were any details of the story new to the class members? What kinds of questions did they ask about it? What evidence did you observe that the learners sensed the promise signified by the rainbow?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session tells the story of God's call to Abraham and Sarah and God's promise to make their descendants as numerous as the stars. Their response was one of faithfulness and obedience to God. Consider times in your life when you have heard or followed God's call.

PENTATEUCH

Session 2

Abraham and Sarah

FOCUS

Abraham obeyed when God called him and his family to a new land. God promised Abraham a son and a new home. The learners should be able to tell what God promised to Abraham and how Abraham responded.

GETTING READY

Abraham and Sarah were chosen to be the ancestors of God's chosen people. A customary symbol for Abraham is a large star surrounded by a field of many smaller stars; it signifies the promise of God that the descendants of Abraham would be "as numerous as the stars of heaven" (*Genesis 22:17*).

Because of Abraham's obedience to the call of God, he is an example of one who acted with complete faith in God's promise. For Jew, Christian, and Muslim alike, Abraham is our spiritual ancestor. The covenant between him and God is vital to our understanding of who we are as a people. (*Psalm 105* has a long recitation of what God has done for the "offspring of Abraham." Or, read *Hebrews 12:8-19*, in which a New Testament writer explains the faith of both Abraham and Sarah.)

The call of Abraham, his faithfulness to God's promise, and his journey with his wife, Sarah, appeal to children. In addition, the promise of a new baby to an old couple is important to this story. Many can identify with what it means to go to a new home, facing the uncertainties of what life will be like after the move and the birth of a baby. The concept of Abraham's trust in God is important for understanding our faith.

Hallelujah!

Give praise, you servants of the Lord;
praise the Name of the Lord.

Let the name of the Lord be blessed,
from this time forth for evermore.

From the rising of the sun to its going down
let the Name of the Lord be praised.

The Lord is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.

Who is like the Lord our God, who sits enthroned on high,
but stoops to behold the heavens and the earth?

He takes up the weak out of the dust
and lifts up the poor from the ashes.

He sets them with the princes,
with the princes of his people.

He makes the woman of a childless house
to be a joyful mother of children.

Psalm 113

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 756

TEACHING TIP

Primary-age children tend to see obedience as doing what grown-ups tell them to do. They probably will understand God as the supreme authority to be obeyed. In discussing Abraham and Sarah's obedience to God, emphasize that Abraham and Sarah willingly did what God wanted them to do because they trusted God.

GATHERING

Drape a sheet or blanket over a table, two chairs, or a suspended rope to form a tent. As the children arrive, invite them to sit in the tent and wonder what it would be like to live in one.

When everyone has arrived, gather the group and say:

The Lord is my shepherd;

I shall not want. . . .

(continue to the end, using Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet).

Psalm 23 (KJV)

The Book of Common Prayer, pp. 476-477

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Share the story of God's call to Abraham, beginning at *Genesis 12:1-7*. Open the Bible and let the learners see where the passage is located. Read aloud *Hebrews 11:8*:

“By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to set out for a place that he was to receive as an inheritance; and he set out, not knowing where he was going.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Prepare four cards or sheets of paper on which are lettered the names Abram, Abraham, Sarai, and Sarah. As you begin the story, put up the names Abram and Sarai.

2. In your own words, tell about Abram's call from God to go to a new land. He and Sarai did not know where this land was; all they had was the promise of God that they would be shown where to go. Add details about what it would be like to pack up everything and start on such a journey. Abram was leaving the land of his ancestors, knowing he would never return. He and Sarai must have wondered about the dangers of setting out in quest of the new land.

3. Continue the story, stressing Abraham's obedience. He was faithful in doing just what God asked of him.

4. As you conclude, put the names Abraham and Sarah on display and explain that God changed their names in this way in order to make clear that they had been chosen to become ancestors of God's people in the world. Speak of “covenant,” the word we use to mean a great promise from God.

(God made a covenant with Noah, and now God made a covenant with Abraham.)

5. Explain that God also promised that Abraham and Sarah would have a son who would be called Isaac.

(Remind learners to read at home about the faith of Abraham and Sarah in the learners' book, *God's Chosen People*, chapter 2.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Sand Pictures

Give the learners sheets of construction paper and pencils. Instruct the learners to draw pictures of Abraham, Sarah, their tent, and any other details of their journey. After they have finished drawing, apply glue to the pencil lines. (The glue can be in small bottles or paper cups, and applied with a toothpick.) While the glue is still wet, sprinkle sand on the picture. Shake off excess sand and let dry completely. (A large box of sand can be set up to deal with the process efficiently.)

Option 2. Load the Camel

Use the pattern on Poster No. 13 in the Teacher's Packet to prepare a camel outline for each learner (on a sheet of construction paper). The children can use crayons and markers to add items to the camel's back (such things as Abraham and Sarah would have needed to take on their journey).

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

Option 1. Game, "On a Journey"

Play a version of the game "Grandmother's Trunk," called "On a Journey." Begin the game by saying, "I'm going on a journey with Abraham and Sarah, and I'm taking _____." Fill in the blank with an item that might have been taken by Abraham and Sarah. Then invite the learners to add to the list, one at a time, repeating what has been said before. (Example: "I'm going on a journey with Abraham and Sarah, and I'm taking a cooking pot, a camel, and a _____.")

Older children might enjoy a more difficult version of the game where each item must begin with a specific letter of the alphabet, either one particular letter or the alphabet in sequence.

Option 2. Puzzle, "To a New Land"

Use Puzzle Sheet I.2 titled "To a New Land." 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. Find the Name Changes

Help the learners find *Genesis 17*, in their Bibles. Ask the group to work in teams to find where Abram becomes Abraham (verse 5), and Sarai becomes Sarah (verse 15). Display the word cards from the Storytelling (above) to help the teams find the names.

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

Abraham's choosing to go where God led him was an act of faith and obedience. Talk about the word "obedience." What does it mean to obey? Who are some of the people we obey? Why? What are some of the ways people obey God today? Why? (If the conversation turns to the consequences of disobedience, emphasize the positive privilege of obeying rather than dwelling mainly on the aspect of punishment.)

At Holy Baptism, parents and godparents answer this question: Do you promise to follow and obey (Christ) as your Lord? Older members of the class can find this question in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 303.

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite as a visitor someone who has been on a long trip. Ask this person what it is like to prepare for the trip, to arrive at their destination, and to return home again.

Encourage learners who have had similar travel experiences to describe how they felt about getting ready for the trip, being away from home, and coming back to their home. Emphasize the excitement of the event, and consider what it would be like not to come back home again.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "It was a very dark night. Abraham and Sarah had been traveling for a long time. Abraham looked up at the sky, suddenly filled with stars, and said . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Abraham and Sarah have seen or said?

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 Abraham's call, or possible events that might have occurred on the long journey of Abraham, Sarah, and their household. (Costumes and props may be used to enhance this activity.)

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Listen on the *Children Sing!* tape to "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 390; *We Sing of God*, 65). Read aloud the words to the first stanza. Sing as a group, imagining that the words are being sung by Abraham's household. Listen again to the tape. Ask: What movements might fit the words?

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

Class Diorama. Consider with the group some possible scenes from the story of Abraham, Sarah, and their household. Let the class members choose and create one of the scenes inside a box. (See suggestions for this activity in Session 1.)

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 2 has a picture of Abraham and Sarah, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to save this card with the one from last week. Soon they will have cards that tell many Bible stories.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.
We give thanks for the faith of Abraham and Sarah.
(Add thanksgivings)
We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.
From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

Stand in a circle and say:

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Psalm 23 is very comforting at all age levels. How have the children responded to the use of the Psalm as an opening ritual in these first two sessions? Did the learners understand God's promise to Abraham?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session moves ahead to the family of Isaac, son of Abraham and Sarah. Jacob and Esau are the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah. Their story involves sibling rivalry. Think about the evidence of similar rivalry in today's families.

PENTATEUCH

Session 3

Isaac and Rebekah's Twins

FOCUS

Isaac, son of Abraham and Sarah, married Rebekah; they had twin sons named Jacob and Esau. The learners should be able to tell the story of the twins and how Jacob came to be the next leader of God's people.

GETTING READY

This session is intended to fill in the general sequence of the *Genesis* account: Abraham and Sarah had a son, Isaac, who grew up and took his place in the story of God's chosen people. Isaac married Rebekah, and they had twin sons. Jacob was born after Esau, and he became his mother's favorite.

Jacob was quiet and preferred to spend his time around his mother's tent. A clever schemer who succeeded by his wits, Jacob was a man destined by God for a life of blessing marked by conflict. Esau was an outdoorsman who lived for the present and cared little for the prestige of a birthright. Jacob tricked his brother Esau out of the birthright by taking advantage of him in a moment of weakness. (A birthright was a privilege given to the firstborn son in a family in the form of his father's blessing. It was not shared with other sons. The oldest son succeeded his father as head of the family. The birthright came with a double portion of inherited land and could be sold to a younger brother, as Esau did.)

Children in Grades 1-3 (primary age) are aware of what it means to feel rivalry with a sibling, and they also understand what is fair and honest. They can enter easily into the story of Jacob and Esau.

Jacob was entrusted with the role of leading God's chosen people, the focus of the next session in this unit. (The incident of Jacob's deception in receiving the blessing of his blind and aged father, Isaac, provides further insight into Jacob's character, but it is not included here.)

Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;
make known his deeds among the peoples.
Sing to him, sing praises to him,
and speak of all his marvelous works.
Glory in his holy Name;
let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.
Search for the Lord and his strength;
continually seek his face.
Remember the marvels he has done,
his wonders and the judgments of his mouth,
O offspring of Abraham his servant,
O children of Jacob his chosen.
He is the Lord our God;
his judgments prevail in all the world.
He has always been mindful of his covenant,
the promise he made for a thousand generations:
The covenant he made with Abraham,
the oath that he swore to Isaac,

Which he established as a statute for Jacob,
an everlasting covenant for Israel,
Saying, “To you will I give the land of Canaan
to be your allotted inheritance.”

Psalm 105:1-11

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 738

TEACHING TIP

Primary-age children tend to have a rigid view of fairness. They are likely to protest loudly when they feel an injustice has been done to them or to someone else. When they hear of Jacob's trading of a birthright for a bowl of stew, expect some to respond, “It's not fair.” Recognize this as a natural response.

GATHERING

Using a hot plate, chafing dish, or electric skillet, heat some lentil soup so that the learners will smell the aroma as they arrive. Ask them to identify the smell and to recall the aromas of some of their favorite foods.

When all are present, say:

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want. . . .

(continue to the end, using Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet).

Psalm 23 (KJV)

The Book of Common Prayer, pp. 476-477

STORYTELLING (Time: 10 minutes)

Share the story of Isaac and Rebekah's twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Open the Bible to let the learners see where *Genesis 25:24-34* is located. Read aloud verse 27:

“When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Begin with a brief “bridge” from the previous session. Tell, in a few sentences, about the way God kept the promise made to Abraham and Sarah. In their old age, they had a son named Isaac. Isaac grew up and married a woman named Rebekah.

2. Introduce the twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah, noting that Esau was born first and was entitled to the “birthright.”

3. Describe how Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup. Tell how hungry Esau was when he came in from hunting. Recall Jacob's crafty insight into how to trick his brother out of what was rightfully his. (Boys and girls alike will be able to enter into the feelings of the brothers.)

4. Conclude by noting that Jacob was destined to be the leader of God's people. His story in *Genesis* is long and important.

(Remind learners to read at home the story of how Isaac gave his blessing to Jacob in the learners' book, *God's Chosen People*, chapter 3.)

CREATING (Time: 15-20 minutes)

Option 1. Jacob and Esau

Provide each member of the class with paper, pencils, crayons and markers. Invite them to draw their own pictures of the twins, Jacob and Esau. A reading of the descriptions in *Genesis 25:24-28* will help.

Option 2. Esau's Bow and Arrows

Give each learner a piece of construction paper 6 x 9 inches, seven drinking straws, a piece of string 18 inches long, and some feathers (paper feathers may be used). Make a "quiver" by rolling the construction paper into a 6-inch roll, taping the seam, and stapling or taping the bottom closed. Attach 12 inches of the string to the quiver as a handle. Make the bow by attaching the remaining 6 inches of string to one of the straws, bending the straw slightly. The feathers are attached to the remainder of the straws to create arrows. As the learners work, discuss what Esau might have used and how long it might have taken him to make his bow and arrows.

EXPLORING THE STORY (Time: 10-15 minutes)

Option 1. Game, "Jacob and Esau"

The learners form a circle around a chosen player who is blindfolded. The circle moves around while the blindfolded player points an arm and says "Esau." The player selected enters the circle and says "Jacob." They move about inside the circle calling to each other until "Esau" is caught. "Jacob" then must guess the true identity of "Esau." The game continues as others get the chance to play the different parts.

Option 2. Puzzle, "Jacob and Esau"

Use Puzzle Sheet II.1 titled "Jacob and Esau." 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. Finding a Chapter

Explain to the learners how the Bible is organized into "books," "chapters," and "verses." Open the Bibles to the *Book of Genesis* and note the numbers indicating chapters and verses. The larger numbers denote chapters. Look through *Genesis*. How many chapters does it have? This session's story of Jacob and Esau is in chapter 25. Locate it. Older learners may enjoy finding additional chapters (such as Noah's story in chapter 9, and Abraham's story beginning in chapter 12).

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

The events of this story arouse many feelings about relationships in a family. Primary-age children can identify with the situations of Jacob and Esau. Use this opportunity to talk about feelings that occur among people in households. Ask: How does it feel when you are angry? jealous? left out? treated unfairly? What do you do when you have these feelings? How does God want us to act?

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Serve small portions of lentil soup (see Gathering). Plastic spoons can be used to give each class member a taste. Invite reactions. Some will like it, others will not. Ask: Have you ever been so hungry that any food would taste good? (This is what happened for Esau, and he was willing even to give up his birthright in exchange for some of his brother's cooking.)

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “After eating the soup, Esau realized that Jacob had tricked him. He was upset and began to think . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Esau have thought?

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 choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: Esau as the hunter and Jacob as the quiet brother at home, the encounter of Esau and Jacob with the soup, or another imaginative encounter between the two brothers. (Costumes and props may be used to enhance this activity.)

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing with the *Children Sing!* tape “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 390; *We Sing of God*, 65). Ask the learners to compose a new stanza about God's faithfulness.

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

Class Diorama. Invite the children to create a scene that illustrates the story of Jacob and Esau. (See suggestions for this activity in Session 1.)

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 3 has a picture of Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Esau, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

End this session with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We give thanks for all the promises of God.

(Add thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

Stand in a circle and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

It is hoped that the stories and activities of this unit will help the learners see the characters as real people. To what extent did the children see the personalities of Jacob and Esau? What activities were most helpful for achieving this goal? Are there other approaches that would be useful?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on Jacob as a grown man who has married and returns to his home and his brother. On his journey he has an important dream. Throughout the Bible dreams are regarded as significant means of communicating God's messages. Reflect on how people today receive messages from God.

FOCUS

God appeared to Jacob, blessed him, and changed his name to Israel. Jacob had twelve sons who inherited the land of Abraham and Isaac. The learners should be able to tell the story of Jacob's dream and that Jacob's name was changed to Israel.

GETTING READY

The story of Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel, stretches over twenty-six chapters of the *Book of Genesis*—from his theft of Esau's birthright, chapters 25-27, to his death and burial, chapter 50. Biblical scholars have found at least three sources for the story which account for some of the repetitions and inconsistencies.

The twelve tribes of Israel are the descendants of Jacob's sons. The sons and a daughter, Dinah, were the children of four women. Rachel, whom Jacob loved dearly, was mother to Joseph and Benjamin; she died when Benjamin was born.

For primary-age children, concentrate on the central figure of Jacob as the successor to his father, Isaac. He received the blessing and promise of God. This session focuses on two scenes that took place at Bethel: Jacob's dream and the changing of Jacob's name to Israel.

Soon after leaving his family, alone and in the wilderness, Jacob had a dream in which God spoke to him. The surprise for Jacob was that God could be so powerfully present in such a desolate place. In the dream, angels of God were ascending and descending a ladder that went from earth to heaven. The ladder probably resembles a walkway that ancient worshipers used to ascend a holy temple. During the dream, God blesses Jacob with promises of God's presence, care, and a homecoming. Much later, after wrestling with God all night, Jacob's name is changed to Israel, meaning "God rules." Biblical writers also interpreted it to mean "the one who strives with God."

Jacob is pictured with all his weaknesses as well as his deep emotions seen in his sorrow over the death of his beloved Rachel and his weeping over the disappearance of his son, Joseph.

God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,
and though the mountains be toppled into the depths
of the sea;
Though its waters rage and foam,
and though the mountains tremble at its tumult.
The Lord of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

Psalm 46:1-4

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 649

TEACHING TIP

Put together a prop box with clothes and accessories useful for biblical drama and role play. Use a trunk or sturdy storage box to keep costumes and

PENTATEUCH

Session 4

Jacob

other items that will be used in the Imagining activities throughout the units. Include bathrobes, lightweight towels, scarfs, and other lengths of fabric for robes or headcoverings. Sandals, small hanging purses, cords for waists, and sheets for groundcloths can also be included. Encourage the learners to contribute items to the box.

GATHERING

Bring in a large stone or brick and place it on the floor. As the learners arrive, invite them to think about all the uses for the stone. Toward the end of the time, ask: Would you use it for a pillow?

When all have arrived, say:

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want. . . .

(continue to the end, using Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet).

Psalm 23 (KJV)

The Book of Common Prayer, pp. 476-477

STORYTELLING (Time: 10 minutes)

Share the story of Jacob's dream and the blessing he received from God, in *Genesis 28:10-22* and *35:9-12*. Show the learners where the passages are located. Read aloud *Genesis 35:10, 22c*:

“God said to him, ‘Your name is Jacob; no longer shall you be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name.’ . . . Now the sons of Jacob were twelve.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Begin by asking the children to share what they remember about the relationship between Jacob and Esau, the twin brothers. Ask: How would Esau feel about being cheated? What do you think Jacob would do when he found out how angry his brother was?

2. Share in your own words the account as it appears in the Bible. Describe Jacob's receiving a blessing from his father, Isaac. It should have been Esau's blessing instead. Esau was very angry. (Describe the older brother's rage.)

3. Jacob fled, afraid and deeply troubled. Would he have slept well? Why, or why not? Introduce the story of the dream. A ladder extended to heaven, with angels going up and down. God spoke to Jacob and promised to be with him; he would receive the land through which he was traveling.

4. Refer briefly to Jacob's love for Rachel and their marriage.

5. Share the fact that Jacob and Esau were at last reconciled.

6. Finally, tell about God's blessing of Jacob at Bethel, and the changing of his name to Israel. Display the two names for the children to see, stressing God's promise.

(Remind learners to read at home the story of how Jacob met Rachel and his reconciliation with Esau in the learners' book, *God's Chosen People*, chapter 4.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Card Spin

Provide each learner a 5 x 8 inch piece of sturdy cardboard. Beforehand, write "JACOB" on one side, and "ISRAEL" on the other. Give the learners glitter, paint, or crayons to decorate the names. Punch holes at each end and tie strings to the holes. Invite the learners to hold both strings and spin the cards so the sign will quickly "flash" both names.

Option 2. Jacob's Ladder

Invite each learner to construct a ladder from brown construction paper. Cut out and glue or tape the ladder to a sheet of drawing paper. Using markers and crayons, the learners can use their imaginations to create versions of Jacob's vision in his dream. As they work, talk about the story with the class members.

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

Option 1. Game, "Climb the Ladder"

Play a variation of "Bluebird, Bluebird, Through My Window." The players stand in a circle, holding hands. Someone is chosen to be "Jacob" and go in and out through the joined hands of the players in the circle, while the class sings or chants "Jacob, Jacob, climb the ladder. *(repeat three times)* O, Jacob I'm tired."

Then "Jacob" taps another player on the shoulder as the class sings, "Take an angel, and tap, tap on the shoulder. *(repeat three times)* O, Jacob, I'm tired." The play continues until all have joined 'Jacob.'

Option 2. Puzzle, "The Twelve Sons of Jacob"

Use Puzzle Sheet I.4 titled "The Twelve Sons of Jacob." 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. Choral Reading

Write the Scripture reference (*Genesis 28:11-13*) on the chalkboard or a large sheet of paper. Display it where everyone can see. Learners can copy the reference and find it in their Bibles. Give the children time to read the passage silently. Read the passage in unison. Older children may wish to locate and read additional passages.

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

Jacob's dream was very important to his relationship with God. What was Jacob's dream? What did Jacob say and do when he awoke?

Talk about dreams. Ask: What kinds of things do we dream about? When do dreams seem real? Have you ever had a dream that “came true”? Why do we remember some dreams for a long time? Why did Jacob remember his dream?

You may want to note aloud that the song, “We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder,” is based on the story of Jacob's dream. Learners who know the song may enjoy singing it.

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Bring in a large stone or book. Invite the learners to take turns lying on it as if it were a pillow. Discuss why Jacob would have used a stone: How did putting your head on a stone feel? Would you be able to sleep on a stone? What kind of dreams might you have if you slept on a stone?

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “Jacob had slept on his journey many times. On another night as he slept . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Jacob have dreamed about?

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 choose to dramatize Jacob's running away from home, Jacob's dream, and his return and renewed relationship with Esau. (Costumes and props may be used to enhance this activity.)

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Listen to the hymn, “Shalom, my friends” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 714; *We Sing of God*, 108) on the *Children Sing!* tape. Talk about the meaning of shalom (peace). Form a circle and sing the hymn a few times. Add the following actions as the learners sing:

Shalom, my friends, (*turn to the person on the right and shake hands*)

shalom, my friends, (*turn to the person on the left and shake hands*)

shalom, shalom. (*bow to the center twice*)

Shalom, my friends, (*turn to the right and shake hands*)

shalom, my friends. (*turn to the left and shake hands*)

Shalom, shalom. (*bow again to the center*)

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

Class Diorama. Create, in a box, the scene of Jacob's dream or some other agreed-upon aspect of the story for this session. A miniature ladder can be made from sticks or straws. Feathers, doilies, small pieces of sheer fabric can be used for angels. Take this time as an opportunity to review by looking at the dioramas made earlier. (See suggestions in Session 1.)

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 4 has a picture of Jacob and Rachel, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to ponder. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.
We give thanks for the story of God's chosen people.
(Add thanksgivings)
We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.
From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

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 fantasies of early childhood are questioned as children reach primary age. They may question angels ascending and descending a ladder. What responses did the learners give to this story that suggest where the children may be in their development in terms of differentiating fact from fantasy?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session centers on another story of sibling rivalry and of God's redemption in a disastrous situation. Consider any times when you or someone you know has experienced something good coming out of a bad situation.

PENTATEUCH

Session 5

Joseph

FOCUS

One of the twelve sons of Jacob was Joseph whose mother's name was Rachel. Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt by his older brothers. The learners should be able to retell the story of Joseph's experience

GETTING READY

As we work our way through the story of God's chosen people, we come to the account of Abraham's great-grandson, Joseph, who takes up the leadership of the Hebrew people.

The story of Joseph's relationship with his brothers has always interested children. Within the span of a few paragraphs in *Genesis 37*, a series of powerful scenes is set.

Joseph's boasting and his father's favor make his brothers jealous. The “coat of long sleeves” he received from Jacob (the “coat of many colors” in other translations) was in contrast to the typical short, sleeveless garment of a worker in Joseph's time. Such a gift was seen by the brothers as further evidence that their father treated Joseph as a favorite. They were so angry they put him in a pit and sold him into slavery.

He was now far away from his family and faced a hard life in Egypt. Joseph, however, led what some might call a “charmed life.” The main point of the story is that Joseph was protected and saved for the purpose God intended. God was with him, and Joseph was to play a key role in saving the people of Israel. Joseph became an instrument of God's covenant-faithfulness.

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock;
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh,
stir up your strength and come to help us.
Restore us, O God of hosts;
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

Psalm 80:1-3

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 702

TEACHING TIP

The story of Joseph and his brothers has been captured in a musical called “Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat.” Most video stores have copies of the play. If you have access to video equipment in the classroom, share short scenes that would appeal to your group. Encourage learners to watch the entire video with their families.

GATHERING

Bring in a colorful piece of cloth, large enough to be draped over the shoulders of a child. Choose a pattern that will appeal to both boys and girls. As the children arrive, invite them to try on this special garment and encourage them to share how it feels to wear it.

Gather the group, and say:

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want. . . .

(continue to the end, using Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet).

Psalm 23 (KJV)

The Book of Common Prayer, pp. 476-477

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Share the story of Joseph and his brothers. Open the Bible and show the learners where the passage is located, in *Genesis 37:2-28*. Read aloud verse 28d:

“And they took Joseph to Egypt.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Begin by saying that Jacob had a large family. When he was older, he and Rachel had a son named Joseph. Joseph was the eleventh son of Jacob, and Benjamin was the twelfth and last. The brothers had a sister named Dinah. (If the class members are curious about the names of the other sons, share the list from *Genesis 35:22-26*. It is unnecessary to explain their parentage.)

2. Jacob loved Joseph very much, and gave him a coat with long sleeves. Describe the jealousy of the brothers.

3. In your own words, tell about the brothers' anger at Joseph when he confided a dream that suggested he was more important. They plotted against him and eventually threw him into a pit.

4. Describe the great sorrow and mourning of Jacob (Israel) when he thought Joseph was dead. Explain that Joseph's brothers lied to their father. In fact, Joseph was still alive and had been carried off to be a servant in Egypt.

(Remind learners to read at home the story of how Joseph's brothers put him in a pit and sold him into slavery in the learners' book, *God's Chosen People*, chapter 5.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Joseph's Coat

Use the pattern for Joseph's coat from Poster No. 13 in the Teacher's Packet to make one for each member of the class. Invite the children to decorate Joseph's coat as they imagine it might have been. (We know the coat had long sleeves; it could have been made in a variety of colors and/or patterns such as wide or narrow stripes, checks, or embroidered designs.)

Option 2. Joseph's Dreams

Provide the learners with a variety of collage materials: pieces of cloth, wallpaper, cotton balls, yarn, markers, crayons, paper, and glue. Describe

Joseph's dreams about the stars and the wheat. In both dreams (*Genesis 37:5-11*), Joseph is the center of worship. Suggest the learners illustrate Joseph's dreams by using the materials available. As the group members work, talk about how they would have felt if Joseph had been their brother.

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

Option 1. Game, “Number Thirteen”

Players stand in a circle and count off 1-13. (If there are more children, start with 1 again and continue until all children have numbers 1-13. If there are fewer children, assign a different number to each one.) Begin the play by calling out “Jacob's child number_____.” The player whose number has been called, calls out another “Jacob's child number,” and the two change places in the circle. Continue until everyone has had a chance to trade places, or so long as interest lasts. Older children may wish to play this game by using the actual names of Jacob's children; names of all thirteen should be listed on cards.

Option 2. Puzzle, “Joseph in Egypt”

Use Puzzle Sheet I.5 titled “Joseph in Egypt.” 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 Verses

Review how to find the chapters in the Bible, and help the learners to locate chapter 37 in *Genesis*, which tells the story of Joseph and the encounter with his brothers. Show the class members the smaller numbers that indicate verses within the chapter. Ask: how many verses does this chapter contain? Explain that knowing chapter and verse numbers helps us to find our way in the Bible.

Practice: Find *Genesis 37:2*—How old was Joseph? Find *Genesis 37:9*—What did Joseph dream about? Find *Genesis 37:28*—Where was Joseph taken?

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

Discuss the jealousy that sometimes arises among brothers and sisters in families. Ask: Why were Joseph's brothers jealous of him? What did their jealousy lead them to do?

Continue with questions like these: When has someone been jealous of you? What happened? When have you felt jealous of someone else? What were those feelings like? What did you want to do?

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

When Joseph became a slave in Egypt, he remained there and had to learn a whole new way of life.

Invite to the class someone who lived for a while in another country, or someone from another country who has come here to live. Ask the visitor to

share some of the experiences of being a stranger in a new land. How did it feel to learn a new language? to try new foods? to find one's way around?

Discussion might include references to refugees from many lands who have taken up residence in new countries, including our own, where they have found new opportunities for serving and leading others.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “As Joseph was taken away by the Egyptian slave traders, he thought . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might have been going through Joseph's mind? Was he afraid? How did he feel about his brothers?

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. You may prefer to invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: Jacob telling Joseph to go see about his brothers; Joseph's encounter with his brothers; Joseph being sold into slavery to the Egyptians.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Primary-age children can practice singing “Shalom, my friends” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 714; *We Sing of God*, 108) as a simple round after listening to the song on the *Children Sing!* tape. Divide the class into two or three sections depending on the size of the group. Children can learn the Hebrew words in the second stanza: shalom (peace); chaverim (my friends).

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

Class Diorama. In a box, create a selected scene from the story of Joseph and his brothers. (See suggestions in Session 1.) Display all the dioramas side by side, in the order of their creation. Consider choosing a title for the whole series.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 5 has a picture of Joseph with his coat, a Scripture verse, facts about Joseph, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We give you thanks for the story of Joseph.
(Add thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.
From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All 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 story of Joseph includes many negative feelings. In what ways do the children in your class demonstrate positive and negative feelings toward others? Consider ways in which you as the teacher can encourage the learners to be accepting and caring of one another even when they experience conflict or disagreement.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session continues the story of Joseph and what happens to him in Egypt. Joseph was a stranger in a foreign land. Reflect on an experience you may have had or heard about that involves being in a strange place. Use this to consider how Joseph may have felt.

PENTATEUCH

Session 6

Joseph and the Pharaoh

FOCUS

Joseph went to Egypt, and God was with him. Pharaoh, the ruler, put Joseph in charge of the land. The learners should be able to tell that Joseph became the chosen one of God in Egypt.

GETTING READY

Between the ages of 17 and 30, Joseph led an exciting life. He was a gifted leader of others, and had a quality of spirit that enabled him to know what others could not. God spoke to him not only in his own dreams but also through the dreams told to him by other people.

The main story line of Joseph's years in Egypt in an unforgettable part of *Genesis*. Joseph was the favorite son of Israel (Jacob) but was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. He was taken to Egypt where he worked as a servant to Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's guard. He ended up in prison on a false charge brought by Potiphar's wife. While in prison he impressed Pharaoh as an interpreter of mysterious dreams.

Pharaoh's dreams pictured seven thin cows that ate seven fat cows and seven healthy stalks of wheat that were consumed by seven blighted ones. Joseph, who had been thrown into prison and forgotten, interpreted the dreams to mean that God would send seven years of good harvests followed by seven years of famine and drought. Pharaoh's power was linked to the fertility of the Nile. Its failure meant the collapse of his authority.

Pharaoh released Joseph from prison and gave him an official position in his government. Joseph's foresight and planning sustained Egypt during a famine that spread to his family's homeland. Hearing that there was food in Egypt, his father and brothers traveled there and were reunited with Joseph.

It is important to study these events so that the story of the Hebrews as slaves in Egypt—in a later time when Joseph was no longer remembered and honored—can be understood.

The theme in Joseph's story is the same one encountered in previous stories. God was with him and was carrying out a saving purpose through his life. The survival of God's chosen people depended on the role Joseph played.

Then he called for a famine in the land
and destroyed the supply of bread.
He sent a man before them,
Joseph, who was sold as a slave.
They bruised his feet in fetters;
his neck they put in an iron collar.
Until his prediction came to pass,
the word of the Lord tested him.
The king sent and released him;
the ruler of the peoples set him free.
He set him as a master over his household,
as a ruler over all his possessions,

To instruct his princes according to his will
and to teach his elders wisdom.
Psalm 105:16-22
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 739

TEACHING TIP

When inviting a visitor to help with a class session, plan ahead. The guest needs to know the purpose of the visit, and how much time to count on. Prepare the learners ahead of time by reminding them to listen for specific information and suggest questions they may wish to ask.

GATHERING

Display at least two contrasting pictures—one showing people who live with famine, in hunger, or in great need, and another showing people enjoying plenty of food and comfort. As the learners arrive, ask them to think about the two pictures. What makes them different?

Gather the group, and say:

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want. . . .

(continue to the end, using Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet).

Psalm 23 (KJV)

The Book of Common Prayer, pp. 476-477

STORYTELLING. (Time: 10 minutes)

Share the story of Joseph's life in Egypt. Open the Bible and let the learners see where the passages, *Genesis 39:1-5* and *41:41*, are located. Read aloud verse 41:

“And Pharaoh said to Joseph, ‘See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt.’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Begin by describing Joseph as a person who seemed able to rise to a place of leadership. He was sold to a man named Potiphar by the traders who took him to Egypt. Before long he was in charge of Potiphar's household affairs.

2. Joseph was falsely accused of misbehavior and put in prison. But the chief guard was so impressed with Joseph that he put him in charge of the other prisoners.

3. Joseph had a gift for being able to tell what dreams meant. He interpreted a dream for a servant in the home of Pharaoh, ruler of the land of Egypt.

4. Two years later, when Pharaoh himself had a dream no one could understand, the servant remembered Joseph and told Pharaoh about him. Joseph was able to interpret the dream (*Genesis 41*). He predicted that in just

seven years, not enough food would be available. It would be important to store up supplies so that the country would be ready. Pharaoh put Joseph in charge. (To illustrate what could have happened in Egypt, refer to the contrasts of need and plenty in the pictures shown at the Gathering.)

5. Joseph was still a young man when all this happened. Things turned out just as he had predicted, and he was respected by everyone.

(Remind the children that they can read this story at home. The learners' book, *God's Chosen People*, chapter 6, describes Joseph's life in Egypt and his interpretation of the Pharaoh's dreams.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Hieroglyphics

The Egyptian alphabet differed from ours. They relied on picture writing called hieroglyphics. Photocopy the chart of Egyptian writing found on Poster No. 13 in the Teacher's Packet. Invite the learners to write a sentence in hieroglyphics. Pencils and paper can be used. Brushes and ink would be more authentic.

Option 2. Pharaoh's Necklace

Provide each learner with a necklace made by cutting a semi-circle from white drawing paper. Supply gold paint and purple and black markers. Encourage the class members to decorate their necklaces in the style of the Egyptian Pharaoh. (A picture is available in the learners' book, *God's Chosen People*, p. 19.)

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

Option 1. Game, "Cows and Grain in Egypt"

This game is based on the dream of Pharaoh that was interpreted by Joseph. One player is chosen to be a cow, and the rest of the players are grain. The grain moves between two safety zones (areas of the room designated as such) while the cow tries to catch them. As each grain is caught, it becomes a cow and tries to catch the grain. The game ends when all the grain has been caught.

Option 2. Puzzle, "Joseph and the Pharaoh"

Use Puzzle Sheet I.6 titled "Joseph and the Pharaoh." 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. Team Relay

Make up 3 x 5-inch cards with questions about Joseph, such as:

What river was Pharaoh standing by? *Genesis 41:1*.

What animal was in Pharaoh's first dream? *Genesis 41:3*.

Where was Joseph when Pharaoh sent for him? *Genesis 41:14*.

How old was Joseph when he began to serve Pharaoh? *Genesis 41:46*.

Divide the players into teams of two or three, and challenge them to find

the answers in the Bible. When a team's members have finished, they can separate and help the others.

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

Consider the topic of famine. What would it be like not to have enough food? Many people in the world continue to go hungry. What have you heard about any of these? Who are the people in our (community, town, city) who do not have enough to eat? In what ways can they be helped?

Find out how your congregation participates in feeding the hungry.

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Pharaoh entrusted Joseph with great responsibility. When the famine came, people in Egypt and other countries would be dependent on the food he managed to store.

People who are hungry often must depend on others for food. Invite a person from your church or community who is involved in feeding ministries. Explore ways that learners and their families can be a part of these ministries.

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “One day Joseph was sitting in prison. He remembered one of his dreams. The dream was about” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Joseph have dreamed?

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 choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: Joseph in prison; Joseph interpreting the dream for Pharaoh; Joseph providing for the people in Egypt during the famine. (Costumes and props may be used to enhance this activity.)

MUSIC (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Listen on the *Children Sing!* tape to “Shalom, my friends” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 714; *We Sing of God*, 108). Divide into groups and sing it in a round.

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

Class Diorama. Select an event in Joseph's life as a leader of his people for inclusion in the growing collection of diorama scenes. (See Session 1 for suggestions.) Consider with the class a way of displaying all the dioramas where members of the congregation could see them at the end of the unit.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 6 is a picture of Joseph in Egypt, a Scripture verse, facts about Joseph, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We give you thanks for all that Joseph did.

(Add thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All 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 goal of games is to encourage learners to cooperate rather than compete with one another. When you have played games, do the children appear to seek the competitiveness that they may experience elsewhere? Stress the fact that everyone wins when learning something new.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session tells of the birth of Moses and his rescue by Pharaoh's daughter. Reflect again on how God cares for us as he cared for this child. How are you helped to know that God loves and cares for you?

FOCUS

Many years after Joseph, the Hebrew people were all made slaves in Egypt. Moses was born into one of these families and was saved from death by his mother and sister, Miriam. The learners should be able to retell the story of Moses' birth and rescue.

GETTING READY

Over several centuries Joseph's descendants increased in Egypt. The memory of Joseph faded as Egyptian kings enslaved the Hebrews to build public monuments. God's people lived and worked in oppressive conditions under cruel leadership. At the time of Moses' birth, Pharaoh felt threatened by the growing Hebrew population and ordered all newborn Hebrew males to be killed.

Moses' mother placed her infant son in a pitch-covered basket and put it in the Nile River to save his life. His sister Miriam hid in the reeds nearby to watch over her brother and keep him safe.

When the Pharaoh's daughter came to the river to bathe, she saw the infant in the basket. When the child was brought to her, she realized he was one of the Hebrew children. Miriam appeared and offered to find a Hebrew woman to care for the child—Moses' own mother.

When the child was older, the Pharaoh's daughter adopted him for her own son, raising him in the same palace of the king who had ordered him killed. She named him Moses because she had drawn him from the water.

O eternal God, you have promised to be a father to a thousand generations of those who love and fear you: Bless these children and preserve their lives; receive them and enable them to receive you, that . . . they may become the children of God *Amen.*

For a Child Not Yet Baptized
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 444 (alt.)

TEACHING TIP

Primary-age children frequently enjoy paper-and-pencil activities. Younger learners who are learning to read can count the number of letters required to fill blanks, match words or figures that look alike, and move through mazes. Puzzles enrich the class sessions by highlighting vocabulary, relationships, and key facts.

GATHERING

Display Poster No. 1 of Miriam and Moses from the Teacher's Packet. Ask the learners to think about who these persons might be, where they might live, and what they might be doing.

When all are present, gather the group and say:

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want. . . .

(continue to the end, using Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet).

Psalm 23 (KJV)

The Book of Common Prayer, pp. 476-477

PENTATEUCH

Session 7

Moses and Miriam

STORYTELLING (Time: 10 minutes)

Share the story of the infant Moses. Open the Bible and let the learners see where *Exodus 1:22-2:10* is located. Read aloud *Exodus 2:10*:

“When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, ‘because,’ she said, ‘I drew him out of the water.’”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Begin by gathering up the pages of the *Book of Exodus* between a thumb and forefinger, to help the children understand that the story for this session is at the beginning of the second book in the Bible. Answer any questions the group may have about the Bible as a collection of “books.”

2. Explain that Joseph, who became a leader in Egypt, brought his brothers and their families to that country. See *Genesis 49-50*.

3. Many years later, when Joseph and all his brothers were dead, the Egyptian people forgot about all that Joseph had meant to them. A new Pharaoh grew afraid of the growing number of Hebrew people. He made them slaves and decreed that all baby boys in Hebrew families should be killed.

4. In your own words, tell the story of what happened to the Hebrew child Moses. Describe the plan to set him afloat in a basket smeared with tar and place him in the river among the reeds.

5. Moses was saved by the Pharaoh's daughter, who found the basket in the water. Moses' sister Miriam stood nearby. His own mother was summoned to be a nurse for Moses.

6. Moses grew up in Pharaoh's household as a member of the royal family.

(Remind the children that they can read this story at home. The learners' book, *God's Chosen People*, chapter 7, describes Miriam's role in saving Moses and how the Pharaoh's daughter named him.)

CREATING (Time: 15-20 minutes)

Option 1. Moses' Basket

Gather natural materials from outdoors (dried weeds, sticks, straw, and leaves). Provide each learner with a piece of construction paper (neutral color) and glue. Suggest that the class members draw and color the Nile River with the reeds (bulrushes) on the bank. Using the collection of assembled materials, they can then fashion baskets to add to their river scenes.

Option 2. Cartoon Story

Draw a cartoon of the story of Moses as a baby using four panels. Learners can work together on different panels, or draw an individual cartoon. In the first panel, depict Moses in the basket among the reeds in the river. In Panel 2, show Miriam watching nearby. Panel 3 could be Pharaoh's

daughter discovering the baby. The final panel could show Moses in his mother's arms, with Miriam and Pharaoh's daughter nearby.

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

Option 1. Game, “Where's the Baby”

Use a small doll or other object to represent a baby. Play “Where's the Baby?” Gather the learners in a circle. Explain that Moses' mother has to hide her baby to keep him safe, and only Pharaoh's daughter can find him. Select one person to be Pharaoh's daughter, and arrange to cover that person's eyes. Then pass the baby around the circle behind the children's backs until Pharaoh's daughter says “Stop.” Pharaoh's daughter must then guess who has the baby.

Option 2. Puzzle, “The Birth of Moses”

Use Puzzle Sheet I.7 titled “The Birth of Moses.” 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. The Book of Exodus

Ask the learners to open their Bibles to the *Book of Exodus*, noting that this is where we find the whole story of Moses. The book may have been marked with a ribbon, as an activity in Session 1. Talk about *Exodus* as the second book of the Bible. Which book is first? How many chapters does *Exodus* have? Ask each learner to find the name of Moses. (Older learners could be challenged to count the number of times his name appears in one or more assigned chapters.)

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

Talk with the learners about their responsibilities for younger siblings or friends. Ask: Are you expected to entertain younger children if your parents or other adults are busy? How do you feel about caring for younger children? What kinds of things do you do together?

Note the picture in the learners' book, *God's Chosen People*, p. 23, showing a children's game from biblical times. What kind of games do you play with younger children?

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

The Hebrews in Egypt made bricks out of mud to build houses and palaces for the Egyptians. Gather the ingredients for making bricks—mud, straw, water, and a container that resembles a brick shape. Talk with the learners about how these were made and how it takes large numbers of them to build a building. If possible, make a brick and let it dry until the next session.

Note that, in some parts of the world, building blocks are still fashioned by hand in just this way.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “Miriam placed baby Moses in the water as her mother had told her to. As she hid among the reeds, she saw Pharaoh's daughter approach. She thought” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What was Miriam thinking?

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 choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: Moses' mother and Miriam discussing what would happen to the baby Moses; Pharaoh's daughter finding Moses in the river; Moses growing up in Pharaoh's house. (Costumes and props may be used to enhance this activity.)

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Listen to “Shalom, my friends” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 714; *We Sing of God*, 108) on the *Children Sing!* tape. Remind the class members that “shalom” is a word of the Hebrew people whose stories we have been hearing in this unit.

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

Class Diorama. In a box, create a scene showing the baby Moses floating on the water. Water can be simulated by using a mirror or aluminum foil. (See suggestions in Session 1.) Place the completed diorama near the ones related to Joseph, but leave some space to suggest that a long time elapsed between Joseph and Moses.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 7 has a picture of Moses and Miriam, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We give you thanks for saving the child
Moses.

(Add thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand in a circle and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

This unit is designed to acquaint primary-age children with key figures in the Pentateuch (Noah, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, Jacob and Esau, Joseph, and Moses). How well do the learners appear to grasp the sense that the stories in *Genesis* and *Exodus* follow one upon the other to form a picture of God's chosen people? As you think over the sessions with your own class, what more can be done to highlight the people and actions?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session deals with one of the most important events in biblical history—the Exodus. Consider times when you have not felt free—when you might have been held captive by events, lack of time, or responsibilities. What would freedom from these have meant to you?

PENTATEUCH

Session 8

Moses and the Red Sea

FOCUS

Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt across the Red Sea to safety. The learners should be able to tell the story of the Exodus.

GETTING READY

Pharaoh's daughter raised Moses as her own son after rescuing him from the Nile River. As Moses grew up the Hebrew people continued to live in slavery in Egypt. One day Moses witnessed an Egyptian master beating a Hebrew slave. In a fit of rage Moses murdered the Egyptian and fled for his life. He went to Midian where he married and worked as a shepherd.

While tending the flocks, God appeared to Moses in a burning bush. God had heard the prayers of the oppressed Hebrew people and called Moses to lead them out of bondage. At first Moses asked God to find someone else to lead the people. But God insisted that Moses go to Egypt. With his brother Aaron as his spokesman, he was to free the Hebrew people and lead them to the promised land.

Moses became the giver of the law and leader of the chosen people of God. He led the Exodus out of Egypt and presided over a restless people. They spent forty long years in the wilderness on the way to a land that God had promised them.

Our Jewish brothers and sisters celebrate the Exodus in their annual observance of Passover. They remember all that Moses said and did at the command of God. Jesus grew up in the tradition of his people, and celebrated the Passover. One such celebration may have been at the Last Supper.

At the Easter Vigil, when Christians celebrate the history of salvation, we recall the Exodus and give thanks for the deliverance of God's people out of bondage.

O God, you led your ancient people by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night: Grant that we, who serve you now on earth, may come to the joy of that heavenly Jerusalem, where all tears are wiped away and where your saints for ever sing your praise; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Easter Vigil
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 290

TEACHING TIP

The way in which teachers ask questions can affect learners' participation in discussions. Questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no require follow-up questions. Note in the sessions of the Episcopal Children's Curriculum most questions are invitations for sharing. When more than one answer is possible, learners recognize that they can invest more of themselves in the conversation. A variety of responses will also help teachers to gain more insight into the learners' thinking.

GATHERING

Bring in a long stick, and display it in the front of the room. Ask the learners to think about what the stick might be used for, then to write or draw their ideas on a chalkboard or large piece of paper, under the posted words: “The stick could be used for”

When all have arrived, gather the group and say:

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want. . . .

(continue to the end, using Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet).

Psalm 23 (KJV)

The Book of Common Prayer, pp. 476-477

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Share the story of the Israelites' departure from Egypt, under the leadership of Moses. Open the Bible and show the learners where *Exodus 14*, is located. Read aloud verse 30a:

“Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians; . . .”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Tell learners about the situation of the Hebrew people as slaves in Egypt. They endured many hardships, and Pharaoh grew more and more harsh as their ruler.

2. God had chosen Moses to be the one who would lead them to a new land where they would be free. Moses had grown up in Pharaoh's household and was the right person to stand up for his people. God spoke to him from a burning bush and told him he would be the leader of the Hebrews.

3. Again and again Pharaoh refused when Moses said, “Let my people go!” The day finally came when the Pharaoh agreed to set the people free. Describe clearly what happened, including the Pharaoh's change of heart, his pursuit of the Israelites with chariots and an army, the Israelites' miraculous crossing of the sea, and the destruction of the Egyptians. Include references to Moses' rod or stick, which he held to part the sea, so that the learners will think of the stick they wondered about at the Gathering.

4. Conclude by talking about God's promise to be with Moses and the people. It was a promise that God kept—a “covenant” made with Moses, God's chosen servant and leader of the people.

(Remind the children that they can read this story at home. The learners' book, *God's Chosen People*, chapter 8, describes the crossing of the Red Sea.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. God's Call

Moses was called by God for a very important task. Many other people are called to work for God today. Remind learners that people do God's work by helping others in hospitals and clinics, at schools, and in the community. Invite the learners to look through magazines, select pictures, and make paper collages showing people they believe to be called to do God's work.

Option 2. The Crossing of the Red Sea

Collect a supply of materials that could be used to simulate the water of a sea: blue wrapping tissue, cellophane, crepe paper, or facial tissues. Distribute sheets of heavy paper or posterboard to the learners. Ask them to use glue or gluesticks to create their own versions of the Hebrews' crossing of the Red Sea. The paper can be scrunched to represent the parted water. Figures in the path through the sea can be drawn with pens or markers, or individuals may choose to make either paper cutout or pipe cleaner figures.

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

Option 1. Game, "Moses Says"

Play "Moses Says" by selecting someone to be the leader—Moses. Proceed by asking the leader to give a series of commands. Examples: Moses says, "Gather up your things." Moses says, "Bring food." Moses says, "Pray to God for help." Moses says, "Mark your doorpost." Moses says, "Bring your flocks and herds." Moses says, "Follow me." Players respond to the commands by pantomiming the actions. Older learners may wish to devise their own commands, possibly substituting "Pharaoh says . . ."

Option 2. Puzzle, "Through the Red Sea"

Use Puzzle Sheet I.8 titled "Through the Red Sea." 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. The Life of Moses

On 3 x 5-inch cards, write at least six events from Moses' life: Moses was put in a basket when he was a baby. Moses was found by Pharaoh's daughter. Moses grew up in Pharaoh's house. God called Moses from the burning bush. Moses asked Pharaoh to "Let my people go!" Moses led the Hebrew people across the Red Sea.

Distribute the cards to the learners in random order. Ask the learners to arrange themselves in the correct order of the events. Class members could work in teams as well as individually.

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

It was very important to the Hebrew people to have the freedom to follow and worship their God. Talk with the learners about freedom. Ask: What would it be like not to be free? to be slaves? Some of the class members may be able to discuss slavery in other places and other times.

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

The Hebrew people had to leave Pharaoh's land in such a hurry that they could not wait for their bread to rise. Show the learners a piece of matzo or other bread made without yeast (unleavened)—and some bread made with yeast (leavened). Invite the class members to taste and compare the different kinds.

If time permits, the class could make their own unleavened bread. You will need 1 3/4 cups of flour, 1/2 tsp. of salt, and 1 cup less 1 tsp. of warm water. Mix together to form dough. Knead and form into four equal balls. Roll flat and bake at 500 degrees on baking sheets until edges are brown.

Bake the bread at home, and bring it in the following week as a snack.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “After the Hebrews had begun their exodus from Egypt, Pharaoh's armies came after them. Moses looked back at the armies intent on taking the people back, and then turned his eyes to the waters of the Red Sea. He thought . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Moses have thought?

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 choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: the start of the Exodus from Egypt; the joyful journey to the banks of the Red Sea; walking between the waters of the Red Sea to escape Pharaoh's armies. (Costumes and props may be used to enhance this activity.)

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing again “Shalom, my friends” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 714; *We Sing of God*, 108) as a round. Listen to the song on the *Children Sing!* and pretend that the group is rejoicing over their safe passage through the sea.

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

Class Diorama. In a box, create a scene from the events surrounding the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt—such as the crossing of the Red Sea, or the rejoicing of the Hebrews on the other side. Add the diorama to the growing display.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 8 includes a picture of Moses raising his staff to part the Red Sea, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We give you thanks for bringing your people
out of slavery into freedom.

(Add thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand in a circle and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

An inherent theme running through this unit is the concept of “covenant.” God makes covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Moses. The covenants are renewed repeatedly in the lives of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. As the learners have heard about these key figures in the story of God's chosen people, have they begun to sense the importance of God's promises—and of our own promises to be God's faithful people? In what ways might the theme of covenant affect the children's understanding of their place in the Church?

LOOKING AHEAD

Session 9 of the unit is designed for use at the class meeting nearest the time of your congregation's celebration of All Saints Day. (It may be inserted at any point within the sequence of sessions in Unit I.)

PENTATEUCH

Session 9

All Saints: People of God

FOCUS

In the New Testament, “saints” refer often to all members of the Christian community. In the long tradition of the Church, the lives of certain great figures in Christian history have been recalled and celebrated in prayer. The learners should be able to name one or more of these honored saints.

GETTING READY

This session focuses on six saints in Lesbia Scott’s hymn “I sing a song of the saints of God.” Luke was a physician who might have written a gospel and the *Acts of the Apostles*. Margaret of Scotland was a queen who worked among orphans and people in poverty in the eleventh century.

Joan of Arc, the “shepherdess on the green,” heard a call from God at age thirteen to rescue her country from its enemies. She fought alongside the French prince and helped win many battles before being put to death in 1431. Martin of Tours was a soldier born in Hungary in the fourth century. He served the poor, became a bishop, and established many monasteries.

John Donne served as a priest in England and is remembered for his poetry and preaching. Ignatius of Antioch wrote letters to Christians throughout the Mediterranean world about the love of God in Christ. The Romans condemned him to death in the Colosseum in an effort to destroy Christianity.

The church also celebrates the lives of ordinary people, “all the rest who do Jesus’ will,” who live in our families, communities and churches.

For in the multitude of your saints you have surrounded us with a great cloud of witnesses, that we might rejoice in their fellowship, and run with endurance the race that is set before us; and, together with them, receive the crown of glory that never fades away.

Preface for All Saints

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 380

TEACHING TIP

A common way of distinguishing between ourselves as *saints* and the Church's commemorated *Saints* is to use either a small “s” or a capital “S.” At some level everyone in the Church is part of “the communion of saints.” Primary-age children will appreciate this inclusiveness.

GATHERING

On a chalkboard or display, write the following names—allowing plenty of space around each one: Mary, Elizabeth, Margaret, Catherine, Clare, Constance, Teresa, James, Paul, John, Peter, Patrick, Mark, Stephen. Add names of the children in the class.

As the children arrive, ask them to find names on the list that they know.

When all are gathered, say together:

The Lord is my shepherd;
I shall not want. . . .

(continue to the end, using Poster No. 9 in the Teacher's Packet).

Psalm 23 (KJV)

The Book of Common Prayer, pp. 476-477

STORYTELLING (Time: 10 minutes)

Open the Bible, and show the learners where the following passage is located: *Ephesians 1:15-16*. Read aloud:

“I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason I do not cease to give thanks for you, as I remember you in my prayers.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. In this session, let the storytelling time be used for helping the learners to appreciate a favorite children's hymn in the Episcopal Church: “I sing a song of the saints of God” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 293). Read the words aloud, then identify the names of the saints who are mentioned in the hymn, as follows:

a doctor (Luke, who wrote a Gospel and the *Acts of the Apostles*)

a queen (Margaret, Queen of Scotland)

a shepherdess (Joan of Arc, a brave heroine of France)

a soldier (Martin of Tours, a preacher of the Gospel)

one (who) was slain by a fierce, wild beast (Ignatius of Antioch, a bishop of the second century)

Note the reference to “a priest” in the second stanza; this could refer to any number of recognized saints.

2. Read aloud the third stanza, which makes it clear that saints do not belong only in the past but include Christians of today. All God's people belong to the “communion of saints.” Identify the Saints whose names were on display at the Gathering. Circle the names of recognized saints. Note how our own names belong in the list.

An especially helpful resource is the book, *I Sing A Song of the Saints of God*, by Lesbia Scott, with illustrations by Judith Gwyn Brown (Morehouse: Harrisburg, 1981).

(Remind the children that they can read at home about the people studied during this Unit in the learners' book, *God's Chosen People*, chapter 9. The story shows how they are a part of the community of saints.)

CREATING (Time: 15-20 minutes)

Option 1. Paper Banners

Cut banner-size pieces from brown paper bags or large craft paper rolls. Ask the learners to think of specific saints (including themselves) and decorate their banners with identifying symbols or scenes. Use crayons or markers. When finished, attach the saints' banners to dowel sticks or cardboard tubes.

Option 2. Saint Tags

Cut posterboard into shield-like shapes, in a size appropriate for a name tag. Each learner adds his/her name to the tag, followed by the word “saint.” Decorate the tags with markers and crayons.

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

Option 1. Game, “The Saints”

Play a game similar to “Seven Up.” Appoint 2-5 learners to stand in the front of the room. All others hide their eyes. The appointed ones—the saints—walk quietly around the room, each tapping a seated person gently. When each saint has tapped someone, the saints return to the front.

The learners who have been tapped must then guess which saint tapped them. If they guess correctly, they change places and become the new saints. Repeat as long as there is interest.

Option 2. Puzzle, “All Saints”

Use Sheet I.9 titled “All Saints.” Do this paper-and-pencil activity together as a class.

Option 3. Locating Saints' Days

Distribute copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* to all the learners, and assist them in locating the Church's Calendar on pages 19-30. Point out the entries in boldface type (“black letter” days) honoring Saints from the Bible. Note the other saints chosen by the Church from the long history of Christendom. Suggest that the learners find the dates for all the saints whose shields were examined at the Gathering (above).

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

Read aloud from the Apostles' Creed (*The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 54 or p. 96): “I believe in . . . the communion of saints.” Note that Christians have said this line together for many hundreds of years.

Talk with the learners about “the communion of saints.” How do they understand it? How would they put its meaning into their own words? How do they feel about being related to all the saints? How does our own congregation celebrate All Saints' Day?

We can think of saints as our own Christian community praying and worshipping together. We can also think of our being united as saints on earth with all the “company of heaven” who have gone before us, including the Saints honored on the Church's calendar.

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Take the children into the church or onto the church grounds to look at banners, stained glass windows, sculpture, needlework, and other items that commemorate the Saints of our Church.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “For the saints of God are just folk like me, and I mean to be one too . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might you do to be a saint?

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. In advance of this session, think about particular Saints of the Church (both women and men) whose life stories might appeal to the learners in the class. Prepare simple narrative scripts that include actions of the selected Saints. Small groups can dramatize the stories; the teacher or one of the older children can serve as narrator. Costumes and props could be used but are not essential.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Listen to “I sing a song of the saints of God” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 293; *We Sing of God*, 49) on the *Children Sing!* tape. Since this is a hymn about sainthood, let the children choose to be saints mentioned in the hymn. As they sing, each saint can take a bow at the appropriate point. The group could also march as they sing.

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

Saint Figures. Obtain a large piece of flat cardboard. Place it on the floor. Provide a small box to serve as a miniature church building. Set out markers, glue, pipe cleaners, and other craft materials. Give each learner a small pumpkin and suggest they decorate it as a saint they know. Some children may choose to make living persons they love and admire. Others may decide on Saints from the Church's calendar.

Place the completed pumpkins on the big piece of cardboard. Learners may write the names of their saints on the cardboard. This project could be displayed as part of the congregation's All Saints' celebration.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 9 has an illuminated manuscript of selected words from the hymn, “I Sing A Song of the Saints of God.” On the back are a Collect and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

End this session with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We give thanks for all the promises of God.

(Add thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

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 what ways has this All Saints' session helped to convey to the learners their own place in the communion of saints? As they considered the Saints of the past, did their comments or actions indicate an appreciation for the unity that exists between Christians of the past and of the present?

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. JESUS: HEALER

Dear Parents and Guardians,

During the second unit, we help learners know Jesus as a real person and to enter into a relationship with him. From his birth on, Jesus is perceived to be fully human. Yet he is different from all others. Everything he does—his preaching, his teaching, his great deeds—causes people to think of the power of God. Underlying Jesus' entire ministry is the concept of Jesus' mission as the Messiah, the Christ, who has come into the world.

The stories will help learners understand that Jesus is living and active now. In sickness and trouble, in times of disappointment and loss, we can turn to him in prayer and know that he is with us.

Within a short span of one unit, we cannot cover everything about the life of Jesus. Therefore, we will focus on stories surrounding his birth and selected miracles.

We encourage you to talk about the lessons with your child. You can do this by reading together the learners' book, *Jesus: Healer*, which highlights the healing miracles of Jesus, including those found in Sessions 6-9. An optional learners' book for this unit, *Jesus, Son of God*, is designed to acquaint the children with key moments in the life of Jesus. Events in the book include his birth, his visit to the temple at age 12, his baptism in the River Jordan, his teaching and his miracles, the Last Supper, Good Friday, and his resurrection. This book will add to information children learn in Sessions 1-5 and in Unit III, Sessions 6-9.

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. 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.

Sessions 1-5 are designed for the seasons of advent, Christmas, and Epiphany. Sessions 6-9 are about Jesus' miracles. Following are summaries of the unit's sessions:

Session 1: “Elizabeth and Zechariah” is about the parents of Jesus' cousin, John. Their story emphasizes both the waiting of an older, childless couple who have put their trust in God, and the coming of the Messiah. Mary visits Elizabeth after she is told that she will give birth to Jesus. (*Luke 1:5-25*)

Session 2: “John the Baptist Is Born” describes the role John played in preparing the way for Jesus Christ. Everyone had assumed the baby would be named for his father Zechariah. When Zechariah wrote the name John, he regained his speech and described the role his son would play in the unfolding story. (*Luke 1:57-79*)

Session 3: “Mary and Joseph,” mother and father to Jesus, are both told by angels that Mary will be given a child and that his name will be Jesus. In this session, learners are introduced to Mary's song of rejoicing, the “Magnificat.” (*Luke 1:26-28*)

Session 4: “Shepherds Glorify God” tells about the first visitors to see the baby Jesus. Like Mary and Joseph, they were visited by angels who told them of the Messiah's birth. (*Luke 2:8-20*)

Session 5: “Epiphany Is the Feast of Lights” reminds learners that Jesus is “the light of the world.” The story of the Wise Men and their journey to see Jesus is a part of this season of the year. (*John 1:5*)

Session 6: “Jesus Changes Water into Wine” is based on the traditional “first” miracle in which Jesus turns water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana. (*John 2:1-11*)

Session 7: “Jesus Heals a Blind Man” recounts how Jesus restored the sight of a blind man at Bethsaida. Unlike other miracles, it occurred in two stages with Jesus touching the man's eyes twice before he can see clearly. (*Mark 8:22-25*)

Session 8: “Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-Law” shows Jesus' compassion and care for people he met. He reaches out to this woman during a busy day, just after he has given the Sermon on the Mount. (*Matthew 8:14-15*)

Session 9: “Jesus Raises Jairus' Daughter” describes how Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. By the time Jesus reached the house, the family was mourning the loss of their child. Jesus went in the house, took the child's hand, and told her to get up. (*Luke 8:40-42, 49-56*)

Yours in Christ,
Church School Teachers

FOCUS

The people of God waited a long time for the coming of God's Son. To be ready for Jesus' birth and ministry, God sent John the Baptist who was the son of Elizabeth and Zechariah. The learners should be able to tell the story of John's parents, and to link the Church's season of Advent with the themes of waiting and preparation.

GETTING READY

Each of the four Gospels begins in a different way. But all the writers make clear that the coming of Jesus Christ into the world is the long-expected introduction of the time when God would fulfill the hopes of the Jewish people through the coming of a Messiah.

Only the *Gospel of Luke* tells the story of the birth of John the Baptist to Elizabeth and Zechariah. The *Gospel of Matthew* tells of the birth of Jesus and Herod's attempt to murder him, but does not include John's infancy. Matthew then advances his story to the time when both Jesus and John are adults and John baptizes Jesus in the wilderness. *Mark* does not include the annunciation or birth of Jesus in his testimony; it begins with John's baptism of Jesus. In *John*, the first appearance of John the Baptist is as a witness to the coming of the Messiah. John, filled with the Holy Spirit, was the forerunner of the Christ, the one who would "make ready a people prepared for the Lord" (*Luke 1:17d*).

Each year's Advent season is a time for remembering that God's people wait for the coming of Christ. The story of John reminds us of the themes of Advent: waiting and preparing.

While primary-age children are not ready for the symbolic significance of Luke's story, they can enjoy the sense of waiting and preparing. They can also picture the scenes and the events.

Almighty God, by whose providence your servant John the Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of your Son our Savior by preaching repentance: Make us so to follow his teaching and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching; and, following his example, constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

The Nativity of Saint John the Baptist
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 241

TEACHING TIP

The season of Advent is a time when the Church focuses on the quiet preparation for the coming of Christ. The world presents another image in this season—one that is often hectic and overwhelming. During the next four sessions, slow the pace and take time to discuss with the learners the true meaning of Advent and Christmas.

GATHERING

JESUS: HEALER

Session 1

Elizabeth and Zechariah

Begin each session during the four Sundays of Advent with an activity centered around an Advent wreath. During the gathering time for this first session, learners may help put together parts of the wreath. Purchase or make a circular form. Use a floral oasis, or place four mounds of clay for candles on a sturdy plate. Put the candles in place. Add small pieces of seasonal greens around the base. Invite the class members to help with all these preparations.

When everyone is present, gather around the Advent wreath and, as the first candle is lighted, say together the Gloria in Excelsis (below, and on Poster No. 10 in the Teacher's Packet). For most primary-age children, these words will already be familiar, recognized from their participation in the Church's worship. Repeated use of the Gloria in class will help all to commit the lines to memory. Depending on the needs of the group, you may want to introduce a section at a time over several sessions. If so, three divisions could be as follows: Glory to God in the highest, . . . ; Lord Jesus Christ, only Son . . . ; For you alone are the Holy One, . . .

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth. . . .

(Continue with the Gloria in Excelsis, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 356)

Since the Advent wreath candles will be lit each of the four weeks in Advent during the Gathering, the greens may need to be replenished at each session. If you use a floral oasis, put it in a circular cake pan with water to preserve the greens. (Extinguish the candle when the activity is concluded unless the wreath can be put in a protected place in the classroom. The candle should be re-lit just before the Closing activity.)

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Share the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah from *Luke 1:5-25*. Open the Bible and show the learners where the passage is located. Read aloud verse 17d:

“[A]nd he will . . . make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

The learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Begin by asking the learners to think about what they remember about Advent in the Church. How long does Advent last? How would a visitor to our church know it is that time of year? What does “Advent” mean? Print the word on a board or easel, and explain that it means “coming.” In Advent we prepare ourselves for the coming of Christ and our great festival of his birth.

2. In your own words, tell the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth from *Luke 1*. Include the following:

a. Zechariah, a priest, and his wife, Elizabeth, lived in Jerusalem. They

were older and disappointed that they had no children.

b. Zechariah was surprised when the angel Gabriel appeared to him in the temple and told him Elizabeth would bear a son named John. This son would be blessed with God's Spirit. He would help to prepare God's people for the coming of Christ for whom they had waited so long.

c. Because Zechariah questioned Gabriel, Gabriel told him he would not be able to speak again until after the child was born.

d. People waited by the temple, wondering why Zechariah did not come out. When he did, he could not speak; he could only make motions.

e. Just as Gabriel had announced, Elizabeth became pregnant. She was grateful to God that she would have a child at last.

3. This story is part of our Advent tradition. We remember how Zechariah and Elizabeth waited. And we remember how the people of God waited for Christ's coming.

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Advent Calendar

Provide each learner with a blank calendar (Poster No. 17) and a sheet of picture squares (Poster No. 14) from the Teacher's Packet. Assist the learners as they fill in the numbers on the blank calendar to correspond to the current year's calendar. Supply the learners with the correct number of picture squares for the days of Advent. (A total of 28 are provided, but the number of days in Advent will differ from year to year.) The picture squares are to be colored and added to the blank calendar form from the First Sunday of Advent through December 24 (Christmas Eve). At home, the learners will cut out one square per day and attach it to the calendar with glue or tape.

Option 2. Advent Chain

Provide each of the learners with enough 1 x 4-inch strips of construction paper for the number of days from the First Sunday of Advent through Christmas Eve—and an envelope to hold the strips. Invite the children to decorate each strip with glitter, gold stars, stickers, and cutouts from old greeting cards. Instruct the learners to take the strips home and make chains, adding new links each day through Advent. When a chain is complete, it may be hung on the family Christmas tree.

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

Option 1. Game, “Zechariah's Message”

After the angel Gabriel appeared to Zechariah in the temple, Zechariah could not talk. Zechariah had to communicate with his friends without speaking. In this game, the teacher whispers a message to one or two learners who must then act out the message without speaking. The others guess what the message might be.

Suggestions: “Elizabeth and Zechariah had no children.” “The angel Gabriel visited Zechariah.” or “Elizabeth was full of joy when she learned

she would have a baby.”

Option 2. Puzzle, “Elizabeth and Zechariah”

Use Puzzle Sheet II.1 titled “Elizabeth 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 Name Search

Invite the learners to open their Bibles to *Luke 1:5-25*. As they look over the words, ask them to notice how many times Zechariah, Elizabeth, and Gabriel appear in the story. (Younger learners can count.) Ask individuals or pairs to choose and read aloud a phrase or sentence containing one of the names. If you wish, let other class members find the passages that are read.

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

Discuss times of waiting. People wait in lines, wait for mail to arrive, wait for buses or trains. What are some of the things boys and girls wait for? (Birthdays, Christmas, and summer vacation.)

In the time of Zechariah and Elizabeth, the people of God were waiting for the Messiah to come. What might they have felt? What might they have thought about while waiting? Elizabeth and Zechariah were waiting for the Messiah, but they were also waiting for a child. How might they have felt? Why was the news of the baby so wonderful?

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

The angel Gabriel told Zechariah that his son John would prepare the people of Israel for the coming of the Messiah. During the days of Advent, churches make many preparations for Christmas. Consider one event in your congregation that requires planning—perhaps a service of lessons and carols, a special outreach project, or decorations for the church. Invite someone who is involved in such planning to share with the learners how the event will be carried out.

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “As Zechariah prayed in the temple, something amazing happened” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Zechariah have seen?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: The angel Gabriel's visit to Zechariah;

Zechariah in the temple, unable to speak; Elizabeth's discovery that she was to have a child.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

The hymn for this session is “Come thou long-expected Jesus” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 66). This hymn expresses high anticipation for the coming of the Messiah by the Hebrew people. Play the hymn on the *Children Sing!* tape, and ask the learners to listen for the words “long expected.”

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

Class Mural. Attach a long sheet of brown wrapping paper to a surface in the room. Divide the sheet into five sections. For this session, invite the class members to illustrate the story of Zechariah in the temple with the angel Gabriel. Additional scenes can be added during future sessions.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 10 will have an Advent Calendar, a hymn stanza, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

If necessary, relight the candle on the Advent wreath for the closing. Gather the children around the wreath and say this prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We give thanks for the angel Gabriel's message for Zechariah and Elizabeth.

(Encourage the learners to add their own thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

Extinguish the lighted candle on the Advent wreath. Over the four weeks of Advent these repetitions and gestures of closure help to mark the liturgical significance of the season.

Finally, join with the children in a circle to conclude, saying:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Primary-age children are aware of the many tasks involved in preparations for Christmas, yet they may feel left out if older children and adults

underestimate their abilities to help. In this session, did you detect any signs of frustration among the learners as a result of others being too busy to include them in tasks of preparation? What might be done in coming sessions to help these children feel accepted and important?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on the birth of John the Baptist. Recall the birth of a child in your life—a sibling, cousin, a friend's child, or your own. Reflect on the joy a birth can bring as you read the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah.

FOCUS

The people of God prayed for Jesus to come. Zechariah, John's father, spoke of the day when God would send the Messiah. The learners should be able to say that John the Baptist was born to prepare the way for Jesus Christ.

GETTING READY

This session continues the story of Elizabeth and Zechariah. Their son was named at the ceremony of circumcision eight days after his birth, as was customary Jewish law. The choice of “John” must have been a startling one since that was not a family name for the couple. The first male child in a family was usually given his father's name or that of a deceased relative.

At the circumcision, Zechariah, who was still mute, asked for a tablet. He wrote the name “John.” At that moment, Zechariah was able to speak. He began describing the role his son John would play in preparation for the Messiah's ministry. His words form “The Song of Zechariah,” found in the Canticles on pages 50-51 and pages 92-93 in *The Book of Common Prayer*.

In the song, John is compared to the Old Testament prophet Isaiah since both men were prophets who foretold of the coming of mankind's savior. Zechariah referred to the “Most High,” which is another term for “God.” God is called “Most High” to establish clearly that God is all powerful and all knowing.

Primary-age learners will be able to appreciate the drama of John's birth, including the joy and the puzzlement of the parents' neighbors and relatives.

You, my child, shall be called the prophet of the Most High,
for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way,
To give his people knowledge of salvation
by the forgiveness of his sins.
In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
To shine on those who dwell in darkness and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. *Amen.*

Canticle 16 (excerpt)

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 93

TEACHING TIP

The season of Advent provides a time for helping children to think about more than the usual “getting ready for Christmas.” The concepts of waiting and preparing, especially as we know these themes in the words of Hebrew prophets, can be introduced and talked about. Primary-age children have a sense of the movement in a story (with its beginning, middle, and end). Refer to Advent as the beginning of the Christian story.

JESUS: HEALER

Session 2

John the Baptist Is Born

GATHERING

As the learners arrive, invite everyone to help place fresh greens around the class Advent wreath. When all have gathered, light two candles, and say together the Gloria in Excelsis (below, and on Poster No. 10 in the Teacher's Packet):

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth. . . .

(Continue with the Gloria in Excelsis, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 356)

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 activity.

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Continue the story of John the Baptist's birth and infancy, found in *Luke 1:57-79*. Open the Bible and show the learners where the passage is located. Read aloud verse 76:

“And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, . . .”

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

1. Review the story from the previous session. Zechariah would not be able to speak until the baby John was born to Elizabeth. Describe what it might have been like for Zechariah during the months of waiting.

2. Talk about how Elizabeth and Zechariah prepared and waited for the birth. (We remember every Advent what it is like to wait and prepare.)

3. Describe the joy and celebration of neighbors and relatives when they heard about John's arrival.

4. Tell about the giving of a name to the baby. Everyone assumed he would be given his father's name of Zechariah, for that was the custom. But Elizabeth said it should be John. That surprised everyone. Then Zechariah asked for a tablet and wrote, “His name is John.”

5. Note the amazement of the people when Zechariah wrote the name and was then suddenly able to speak again. They sensed that God was with John in a special way, and they wondered about it.

6. Zechariah then spoke in a long poem. He wanted the people to know that John would be helping to prepare for the coming of the Messiah, whom he called “the Most High” (verse 76).

7. Depending on their interest, you may want to show the children the words of Zechariah in *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 50-51 and 92-93.

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. John's Banner

Give each learner a 9 x 12-inch piece of felt. From scraps of felt, construction paper, glitter, ribbon, and markers, invite the class members to create their own banners welcoming the newborn John.

Option 2. Prepare the Way

Provide the learners with pieces of drawing paper. Ask each one to draw illustrations of how their families prepare for the coming of Jesus at Christmas. While the group is working, discuss preparations for Christmas at church and at home.

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

Option 1. Game, “Zechariah? Zechariah?”

All players sit in a circle with their eyes closed. The teacher taps one person on the head. That person stands up, opens his/her eyes, and becomes “Zechariah.” The rest of the learners are then told to stand but must keep their eyes closed. They wander slowly around the room. A player who bumps into someone asks, “Zechariah? Zechariah?” If the player who is bumped replies, then he/she cannot be “Zechariah,” because Zechariah cannot speak. When a player gets no response, he/she opens eyes and holds hands with Zechariah but now may not speak. The play continues until all players have opened their eyes.

Option 2. Puzzle, “John the Baptist is Born”

Use Puzzle Sheet II.2 titled “John the Baptist is Born.” 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. Advent in the Prayer Book

Invite the learners to find references to Advent in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Suggest the following page numbers: 37, 75, 159, 160, 211, 212, 345, and 378.

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

For many, many years before the time of Zechariah and Elizabeth, the people of God had waited for the coming of God's Son. Prophets had written about waiting and preparing for what God would do. In Advent, especially, we wait and prepare. What is waiting like? How do we prepare for the coming of Jesus? What are some things we can do to prepare ourselves, in heart and mind, for the coming of the baby Jesus at Christmas?

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite to the class a couple who are expecting a baby or parents/grandparents who have just welcomed a baby into their lives. Ask the visitors to

share their feelings about waiting for the baby's arrival. Ask them how they chose a name for the baby.

Invite learners who have had similar experience waiting for a new sibling or cousin to describe their feelings. Emphasize the excitement of the event instead of feelings of being left out.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "When John was born, Elizabeth and Zechariah" Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Elizabeth and Zechariah have thought, said, or done?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can dramatize the scene where John is given his name by Elizabeth, and it is confirmed by Zechariah.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Listen again to "Come thou long expected Jesus" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 66), on the *Children Sing!* tape. Introduce the words of the second and third stanzas. Talk with the learners about the hope of the people Israel for the coming of a Messiah. John's message would be to tell people to prepare for the ministry of Jesus.

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

Class Mural. Invite the learners to add to the mural the scene in which the baby John receives his name.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 11 has a picture of John the Baptist as a child, facts about the story, and a question to ponder. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

If necessary, relight the candles on the Advent wreath. Gather around the wreath for the closing prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We give thanks for the birth of John to
Elizabeth and Zechariah.

(Add your own thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

Extinguish the two lighted candles on the Advent wreath. Give children in the class pieces of greenery from the wreath. Suggest that they place these in Advent wreaths at home. This may also serve as a reminder to bring some fresh greenery next week.

All stand in a circle and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

It is likely that Zechariah and Elizabeth are not familiar figures for the learners, so the story of John's birth may be new. How did the class members react to the details provided in this session? What kinds of questions did they ask?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on the angel Gabriel's visit to Mary. Many artists have used this theme in their work. As greeting cards arrive at your home or are purchased in stores, note any that show the Annunciation.

JESUS: HEALER

Session 3

Mary and Joseph

FOCUS

As the Church waits each year for Jesus' birth (in Advent), we sing with Mary, "My soul magnifies the Lord." The learners should be able to tell about the visit of the angel Gabriel and Mary's song, saying the first line.

GETTING READY

With skill and beauty, Luke interweaves the parallel stories of the infants, John and Jesus:

—The announcement of the angel to the parents, and the angel's words, "Do not be afraid, . . ." to Zechariah (*Luke 1:13*), and to Mary (*Luke 1:30*). See also these same words spoken to Joseph in *Matthew 1:20*.

—The questioning of the angel (by both Zechariah and Mary).

—The two unusual births.

Luke's purpose is to heighten the drama of God's sending of Jesus Christ, the long-awaited Messiah.

Matthew tells the story of Joseph's dream, which reassures him about his betrothal to Mary and the baby's birth.

In this session, we share the story of "the annunciation"—Mary's visit from the angel Gabriel. (This story is read on the Fourth Sunday of Advent, Year B, and each year on March 25.)

The archangel Gabriel was first mentioned in the Old Testament as the angel who helped Daniel understand his visions. He is most known as the celestial being who announced the miraculous births to Zechariah, Elizabeth (John the Baptist's mother), and Mary.

On the third Sunday of Advent, Christians take time out from the seriousness of the Advent season and rejoice that Christ's birth is soon to come. The one pink candle included in an Advent wreath is to be lighted on this Sunday.

Primary-age children can sense in Advent the awe and wonder experienced by Mary and Joseph, Zechariah and Elizabeth, as they waited for the promised births.

Pour your grace into our hearts, O Lord, that we who have known the incarnation of your Son Jesus Christ, announced by an angel to the virgin Mary, may by his cross and passion be brought to the glory of his resurrection; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

The Annunciation

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 240

TEACHING TIP

In recent years, a number of writers have opened up for us once more the wonder of angels. In a scientific age, people are inclined to be skeptical about such lines as "For (God) shall give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways." (*Psalms 91:11, The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 130.) It has been suggested that children have a special affinity for angels. In

discussing the appearance of angels to Mary and Joseph, accept any comments or stories the children in your class may offer about experiences with angels.

GATHERING

As the learners arrive, put fresh greens around the candles of the Advent wreath. Perhaps some of the children have brought these from home. Light three candles. As each one is lit, talk about waiting. Mary is waiting for Jesus' birth (candle one). Joseph is waiting for Jesus' birth (candle two). We are waiting to celebrate the baby Jesus' birth (candle three). When all three candles are lit, say together the Gloria in Excelsis (below, and on Poster No. 10 in the Teacher's Packet):

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth. . . .

(Continue with the Gloria in Excelsis, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 356)

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 activity.

STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Share the story of Mary's visit from the angel Gabriel (*Luke 1:26-38*). Open the Bible and show the learners where the passage is located. Read aloud verse 31:

“And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

The learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Begin by telling of the angel Gabriel's appearance to Mary, with the announcement that she would be the mother of Jesus. She was overwhelmed, but she accepted the news as a faithful servant of God. (*Luke 1:26-38*.)

2. Mary sang a song we hear in church. Show the class members “The Song of Mary” in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 50 or 91. Practice saying the first line together.

3. Explain that Mary was a young cousin of Elizabeth. The angel's announcement to Mary happened just six months after Elizabeth had heard her own exciting news. (The story of Elizabeth, Zechariah, and John was told in the last two sessions.)

4. Share the story of Joseph's dream (*Matthew 1:18-25*), including the angel's use of the prophet Isaiah's words in verse 23: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel' (which means, God with us).”

5. Mary and Joseph waited for the birth of the baby Jesus.

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Mary's Ornament

Provide each learner with half of a styrofoam ball, and a variety of old Christmas cards that show the Mary, the mother of Jesus. The learners select pictures from the greeting cards and glue one to the flat sides of the styrofoam halves. The rounded portion of each ball can be decorated with ribbon, glitter, poster paint, or gift wrap. Attach hangers to the tops of the ornaments.

Option 2. Joseph's Gift

Joseph was a carpenter. Imagine that he anticipated the arrival of the child Jesus by making a toy for him. One possibility would be a dreidel, used in Hebrew games. Invite the learners to make dreidels by using the pattern provided on Poster No. 13 in the Teacher's Packet.

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

Option 1. Game, "Mary's Journey"

As Mary waited for her baby, she journeyed to visit her cousin Elizabeth. Invite the learners to take the journey with Mary, using an adapted form of the game, "Going on a Lion Hunt."

The teacher (leader) says: "Let's go on a journey."

Learners repeat this, and each succeeding phrase: "All right, let's go." "What do you see?" "I see a mountain." "Can't go around it." "Can't go under it." "Let's go over it." (Make motions that suggest traveling over a mountain.) Replace 'mountain' with other words (such as a town, a desert, a lake, a river), and let the group travel around, over, under, or through each one as appropriate.

Option 2. Puzzle, "Mary's Song of Praise"

Use Puzzle Sheet II.3 titled "Mary's Song of Praise." 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. Who Am I?

The teacher writes several quotations from Scripture or factual statements on 3 x 5-inch cards. The cards are distributed to the learners who then work in pairs to identify the person who either said or might have said the quoted words. Examples:

"Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid . . ." (angel; *Matthew 1:20*)

"Here am I, the servant of the Lord; . . ." (Mary; *Luke 1:38*)

"Come, Mary, let us be married." (Joseph; based on *Matthew 1:24*)

"My soul magnifies the Lord, . . ." (Mary; *Luke 1:46*)

"Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." (angel Gabriel; *Luke 1:28*)

"The angel said the baby's name will be Jesus." (Joseph; based on

Matthew 1:21)

He was betrothed to Mary (Joseph)
She was Elizabeth's cousin (Mary)

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

Talk with the learners about Mary's response to God, in *Luke 1:46-55* (The Magnificat). When we use these words in our church's worship, we remember how the Church has always honored Mary. She accepted what God told her and had great faith.

Read Mary's song aloud slowly. Ask the learners to listen for signs that she loves and trusts God.

Ask: What do you hear, in Mary's words, about faithfulness to God? Who are some persons you know who have a strong faith in God? What do they do or say to show their faith?

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Blue is the traditional color associated with Mary. In some congregations, the color of cloth used in the church during Advent—on the altar and for clergy vestments—is blue. (It is called Sarum blue.) Take a walk around your church. Look for any pictures, windows, statues, or hangings that represent Mary. What color is she wearing in each of these?

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: "One morning while Mary was in the garden, an angel appeared . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What other things might Mary and the angel have said?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to dramatize the scene of Mary and the angel.

MUSIC (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Introduce "The angel Gabriel from heaven came" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 265) which tells the story of the annunciation in the form of a poem. Sing it with the *Children Sing!* tape, and listen for the repeated phrase, "Most highly favored lady, Gloria!"

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

Class Mural. Encourage the learners to fill in the third panel of the mural with a scene that shows Mary's visit from the angel. (See Sessions 1 and 2.)

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 12 has a picture of Mary and Joseph, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Relight the three candles on the Advent wreath for the closing time. Gather the children together around the wreath. Say the prayer that follows:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.
We thank you for Mary and Joseph, and their
faithfulness in following your will.
(Add your own thanksgivings)
We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.
From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

Extinguish the lighted candles. All stand in a circle and say:
Teacher: Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.
Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Mary, Jesus' mother, is one of the most familiar figures from the Bible for primary-age children. What did the learners in your class know about Mary? How much did they perceive about the unusual circumstances surrounding her pregnancy? As their teacher, you will need to assess how much the children are able to understand about the virgin birth. In what ways can you help them to see this as God's miracle?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session will be an opportunity to retell the beautiful events of the Christmas story. Recall how you first heard this story, and note what was most significant to you. How have your perceptions changed as you have grown older?

JESUS: HEALER

Session 4

Shepherds Glorify God

FOCUS

Angels appeared to shepherds on the night Jesus was born. They glorified God. The learners should be able to retell the story of Jesus' birth.

GETTING READY

The image of a shepherd is imprinted throughout Holy Scripture. The chosen leaders of the people of God in the Pentateuch (Unit I) are shepherds. David, the great king of Israel, was a shepherd. God is also called shepherd (as in *Psalms 23:1* and *80:2*).

The “traditional” story of Jesus’ birth unites the testimonies in the Gospels of *Luke* and *Matthew*. The story in *Luke* says that after the Annunciation, Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to register in the census where Jesus was born in a stable. Shortly after Jesus’ birth, an angel appeared to a group of shepherds tending their flocks nearby and tells them of Christ’s birth. The shepherds go to Bethlehem to see Jesus.

It is not surprising that the first announcement of the birth of Jesus comes to shepherds as they keep watch over their flocks out in the fields. Shepherds were poor, and Luke makes it clear that it is the poor who are the first ones to receive the good news of salvation from God. Shepherding was also considered a questionable profession by some religious leaders in Jesus' day. Luke's purpose is to show that God's message of salvation is first revealed to people on the fringes of society.

In the *Gospel of Matthew*, an angel appears to Joseph after Mary becomes pregnant and tells Joseph not to forsake Mary because she has been conceived by the Holy Spirit. No mention is made of their journey to Bethlehem or the shepherd's visit. Later in *Matthew*, three Wise Men come to Bethlehem to honor Him. King Herod becomes anxious that this child will usurp his power. An angel tells Joseph in a dream that he is to flee with his family to Egypt until Herod dies. Joseph, Mary, and Jesus return to Israel after Herod's death to settle in the city of Nazareth in Galilee.

In this session, the children are invited to identify with the shepherds and to experience their wonder and amazement at the birth of Jesus.

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Fourth Sunday of Advent

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 212

TEACHING TIP

Teachers can be like shepherds, offering kind words and encouragement to class members and reassuring them that they are loved and cared for in the Christian community. Primary-age children love to receive mail—short letters, notes, and greeting cards. Send the learners personal messages during the Advent season. Take-Home Cards can be sent to students who have missed class.

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 by saying together the Gloria in Excelsis (below, and on Poster No. 10 in the Teacher's Packet):

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth. . . .

(Continue with the Gloria in Excelsis, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 356)

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)

Tell the story of Jesus' birth, focusing mainly on the shepherds (*Luke 2:8-20*). Open the Bible and show the learners where the passage is located. Read aloud verse 9a:

“Then an angel of the Lord stood before them (the shepherds), and the glory of the Lord shone around them . . .”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

The learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Ask the group to pretend they are outdoors at night. Describe the sleeping sheep nearby. (It may be helpful to suggest that the children close their eyes as you set the scene.)

2. In your own words, tell the story of the shepherds as it is found in Luke's Gospel. An angel brings them the news of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem.

3. The sky was suddenly filled with angels, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven”

4. The shepherds spoke with one another and decided to go to Bethlehem. They found Mary and Joseph, and the Child—just as the angel had said.

5. Then the shepherds returned to their flocks, praising God.

Tell the children that Advent always ends with the glad news for which we have waited and prepared: Christ the Savior, the Messiah, is born!

(Encourage children to read at home about the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem in the optional learners' book, *Jesus, Son of God*, chapter 1.)

CREATING (Time: 15-20 minutes)

Option 1. Christmas Mobile

Provide each learner with two drinking straws, four paper circles, four pieces of string, and stickers or pictures of the Nativity, the shepherds, the angels, and the star. The learners will attach their four pictures to each of

their paper circles and tie a string to each circle. Tie each circle to a different end of the two straws. Then the two straws are crossed and tied in the middle with a final string that becomes a hanger.

Option 2. Nativity Silhouettes

Give each learner a sheet of blue or purple construction paper and a sheet of black construction paper. Using blue paper as a background, each learner will tear or cut a black piece into figures of the Holy Family and the manger. Glue the black silhouette figures to the colored background.

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

Option 1. Game, “Tell the Story”

The players sit in a circle and begin to tell the story of Jesus' birth, one by one, beginning with the shepherds tending their flocks on a hillside. Each player shares a sentence or two. (Teachers may need to help the process get started.) All take turns until the story is complete. If interest holds or the number of children is large, the story may be told again.

Option 2. Puzzle, “Shepherds”

Use Puzzle Sheet II.4 titled “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. Reading the Story

Provide Bibles for all class members, and help them to find *Luke 2*. Invite individuals or groups to read specific verses. Or do a choral reading of verses 1-14.

If you choose to do the choral reading, older learners may wish to add a special effect (after every even-numbered verse) by repeating a refrain composed of verse 14, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace” After a few practices, the class can present the reading to another group in the church during the Christmas season.

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

Invite the learners to share their version of the Nativity story. Encourage them to add details that may be a part of their imaginations yet not in the actual account. Remind them that this story has been told in many different ways from many different perspectives. They may recall such children's books as *The Littlest Angel*, *A Certain Shepherd*, or *A Donkey's Tale*. They may wish to read or have these stories read to them as part of their preparation for Christmas.

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Give learners an opportunity to construct a creche scene of their own. Build a manger from cardboard boxes, wood scraps, or blocks. Use real straw or shredded brown paper. The figures could be made from cardboard,

styrofoam, or other materials and costumed with scraps of fabric. Act out the story.

Talk about creches the learners have seen. Where were they? How did they differ? Why do we have such scenes in our churches and homes?

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “One cold, starry night, shepherds were tending their flocks in the hills above Bethlehem. They were talking with one another about . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might they have said?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: The shepherds going about their nightly chores; the appearance of the angel and the sky full of angels; the visit of the shepherds to the stable.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

“Angels we have heard on high” (*The Hymnal* 1982, 96) shares the story of the Nativity from the perspective of the shepherds. The words of this hymn can be used effectively with the group role play (see *Imagining*, above). The “Gloria” refrain is similar to the hymn used in the previous session and the “Gloria in Excelsis” the learners are reciting at the beginning of each class during this unit.

After listening to the hymn on the *Children Sing!* tape, work together to compose a new stanza. Discuss the stanzas, their content and rhyming pattern. Help the learners write four lines of their own that tell the Christmas story. Sing the new words.

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

Class Mural. A fourth panel can now be added to show the birth of Jesus. The scene can be produced for this session alone if the mural idea has not been used earlier. (See Session 1 for suggestions on this activity.)

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 13 has a picture of shepherds and angels, a Scripture verse, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Relight the four candles on the Advent wreath, and gather the children around it for the closing prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We give thanks especially for the gift of your son, Jesus.

(Add your own thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

Extinguish the lighted candles. All stand in a circle and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

When primary-age children hear the story of Jesus' birth, they are able to identify with it from various points of view. For example, they may be able to think of themselves as shepherds coming to see the baby Jesus. Or they may think imaginatively of how the angels viewed the scene. Or they may cast themselves in the role of bystanders. Some may even describe the birth through the eyes of Mary or Joseph. What did you observe about the class reactions to the Nativity story during this session?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on Epiphany as the Feast of Lights. As you look at all the holiday decorations during this season, note the use of lights, candles, and blazing fireplaces. What feelings do these stir in you? Do you feel the presence of Christ as a light in the darkness?

JESUS: HEALER

Session 5

Epiphany Is the Feast of Lights

FOCUS

Jesus' birth is like a light in the darkness. Candles remind us of the good news of his coming. The learners should be able to say that Epiphany is a feast of the Church that reminds us Jesus is “the light of the world.”

GETTING READY

In our popular culture, the seasons of Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany are melded into one long period that ends after December 25. For most people, the story ends there; the Wise Men arrive with the shepherds on Christmas Eve.

In the Church it is possible to preserve the Twelve Days of Christmas, ending with the Feast of Epiphany (January 6)—the traditional time for remembering the Wise Men's visit.

In the ancient churches, Epiphany was linked with the themes of light, the baptism of Jesus, and the miracle at Cana. This connection is reflected in the Scripture readings from the Lectionary of today's churches.

Epiphany, when the Wise Men reached Jesus, is the traditional culminating day of Christmas activities. For many, it is the day Christmas trees and other holiday decorations are taken down. Parties or festive meals are also common. In Germany and Scandinavia, children dress up as Wise Men and go from house to house in groups of three singing carols and collecting money. In many parts of the world, an Epiphany cake is prepared with a bean baked inside. Whoever finds the bean is crowned king or queen for the day. In France, two pieces of the cake are set aside and taken to neighbors who are shut-in or lonely. In Italy and certain Orthodox sects of the Church, people open gifts on Epiphany.

For primary-age children, Epiphany services are likely to be remembered for the color white and the bright candlelight. Although the learners do not yet think in metaphors, it is entirely appropriate to introduce the concept of Jesus Christ as “the light of the world.”

In the mystery of the Word made flesh, you have caused a new light to shine in our hearts, to give the knowledge of your glory in the face of your Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

From Preface for Epiphany
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 378

TEACHING TIP

Primary-age children can make concrete associations among ideas. These associations take the form of comparative statements such as “Happiness is a warm puppy” or “Summer is freedom.” As their teachers, it is important to provide opportunities for learners to create their own ways of expressing comparisons. A session on Epiphany as a time for thinking of Jesus as light offers teachers such an opportunity.

GATHERING

As the learners arrive, gather 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, we have celebrated the birth of Jesus.

When everyone is present, prepare to light a Christ Candle. On some Advent wreaths, this is a white candle placed in the center of the wreath. If your wreath does not have a center candle, put a white candle in a holder in the center. Children can help place greens around the base of the candle. As the Christ Candle is lit, say together the Gloria in Excelsis (below, and on Poster No. 10 in the Teacher's Packet):

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth. . . .

(Continue with the Gloria in Excelsis, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 356)

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

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Share with the learners the meaning and importance of Epiphany, one of the principal Feasts of the Church (January 6). Open the Bible and show the learners where John's Gospel is located. Read aloud *John 1:5*:

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

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

1. Begin by asking the learners to share how the interior of the church was decorated for the days of Christmas. What did they like best? Was there a creche? Is it still present?

2. Introduce the word “Epiphany,” and explain that it is always on January 6, twelve days after Christmas Day. Epiphany means “a showing forth” or “making known.” So Epiphany is when we celebrate once more the fact that Jesus was born and made known to the whole world as the One for whom the people of God had waited.

3. Tell in your own way the story of the Wise Men, the bright star that guided them, and their presentation of gifts to the Child Jesus. This is the Epiphany narrative, found in *Matthew 2:1-12*. In many congregations, the Wise Men are not added to the creche until Epiphany.

4. Light a candle (or use the Christ Candle of the Gathering). Invite the learners to think about how candles can light our way in the darkness. Describe how candles are a part of our Epiphany services in the Church. They help us to think of Jesus as “the light of the world.”

(Encourage learners to read about Epiphany at home in the optional

learners' book, *Jesus, Son of God*, chapter 2. It describes the journey of the Wise Men, their meeting with Herod, and how they followed the star to the baby Jesus.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Epiphany Candle Holders

Collect enough yogurt containers or baby food jars for each learner to have one. Decorate the outside of the container with gold glitter, gold foil, or other shiny material. When this task is completed, give each person a 5-inch candle and a piece of florist clay to secure the candle in the bottom of the container. Talk with the class members about the image of Jesus as the light of the world, as represented by candles.

Option 2. Candle Pictures

Provide each learner with a sheet of construction paper and 6 x 2-inch strips, in a variety of colors. Invite the learners to create their own candle array by arranging the strips on the background. When complete, add foil or yellow paper flames. Scripture verses that refer to light may be added to the finished pictures.

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

Option 1. Game, “Lighting the Candle”

Use the pattern from Poster No. 14 in the Teacher's Packet to make a candle-and-flame outline to be displayed on a board or wall. Tear flame-colored paper (yellow, orange, red, or gold) into small pieces—more than the number of class members. Place the pieces in a basket to be passed around during the game.

Form teams or play the game as a total group. The teacher asks a question, and teams or individuals respond. When a question is answered correctly, a piece of the flame is added to the outline at the top of the candle. Continue until every learner has had opportunity to add a piece to the flame.

Questions to ask (answers in parentheses):

On January 6, what do we celebrate? (Epiphany)

How many days after Christmas Day is Epiphany? (Twelve)

Who came to visit the baby Jesus at Epiphany? (Wise Men)

How did the Wise Men know where to go? (Followed a Star)

What did the Wise Men bring? (Three answers—each worth one piece of the flame: gold, frankincense, myrrh)

What does the word Epiphany mean? (Challenge for older learners: “showing forth,” or “making known.”)

Who is the “light of the world?” (Jesus Christ)

Additional questions can be composed by teachers or older learners.

Option 2. Puzzle, “A Feast of Lights”

Use Puzzle Sheet II.5 titled “A Feast of Lights.” 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

Help the learners to find the *Gospel of John*. Then encourage them to help one another to find the following verses that refer to Jesus as the light of the world: *John 1:5, John 9:5, John 12:36*.

They can also find the story of the Wise Men in *Matthew 2:1-12*.

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

Light a candle and place it on a table in the front of the room where the learners can observe it. Talk with the learners about Epiphany as a time when we describe Jesus as the light of the world. Invite the learners to comment on what is meant by this expression. Ask: How are Jesus and light connected? Why does light make us think of Jesus? If light and darkness had a battle, which one would win? What is different when light shines into a dark space? What happens when Jesus shines on us?

These questions are designed to encourage the learners to make the comparison and form the analogy in their own way. Accept all responses, listening for the learners' individual perceptions.

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Invite to the class someone who can demonstrate the way candles are made. Examine some of the candles that are used for the altar in your church. What are they made of? How are they made? (with molds? by dipping?) If time permits, a candlemaking project could be organized for the class members.

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: "The Wise Men visited the baby Jesus in Bethlehem. They believed he would change the world. When they left, they told others about him. Their story began" Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What stories might the Wise Men have told?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: The Wise Men's visit to Herod; the Wise Men's visit to the Holy Family; the Wise Men's return journey.

MUSIC (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

The hymn for this session is "We three kings of Orient are" (*The Hymnal 1982, 128; We Sing of God, 27*). Listen to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. Select descriptive scenes in the words to act out. Note: The names of the

Wise Men are in this hymn; they are not found in Scripture.

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

Class Mural. Invite the learners to complete the class mural by adding a scene showing the visit of the Wise Men to the baby Jesus.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 14 includes a picture of a candle, a Scripture verse, facts about Epiphany, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Let the Christ candle be lighted for the closing. Gather the class members for the closing prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We thank you that Jesus is the light of the
world.

(Add your own thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From *The Prayers of the People, Form VI*
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All 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 this session on Epiphany help the learners to enter into the Church's celebration? As the season of Epiphany continues, what can be done to assist them in learning more about the feast day?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session shifts the focus from Jesus the infant to Jesus the man. Consider ways in which you can help them to see that Jesus, God's Son, is the same person, both as a baby and as a grownup. Primary-age children do not perceive easily that the events of Jesus' ministry happen thirty years after his birth. The transition happens so quickly in the Church's Calendar that attention to this sudden shift is required for the learners at this age level.

JESUS: HEALER

Session 6

Jesus Changes Water into Wine

FOCUS

Jesus went to a wedding at Cana and changed water into wine. The learners should be able to tell the story of Jesus' first miracle.

GETTING READY

In John's Gospel, only seven miracles of Jesus are recorded. All are called "signs." These deeds of Jesus help to increase people's belief in him, but more importantly they reveal Jesus to be truly the one who is "greater" than John the Baptist. Jesus is the Messiah, ushering in a new age with a new power that can only come from God.

The first of the signs is the miracle of water changed to wine at the wedding in Cana (*John 2:1-11*). In the story of Jesus' first miracle, Jesus and his disciples are invited to a wedding shortly after the beginning of his ministry. During the wedding, the wine runs out. Jesus' mother looks to him for help, but Jesus tells her that his hour has not yet come.

Jesus, however, orders the servants to fill six large jars with water. After this is done, he asks that some of the water be given to the wine steward to taste. The steward tastes it and tells the bridegroom how impressed he is with the quality of the wine. The steward is surprised that the groom has kept the better wine and not switched to an inferior wine later in the celebration, as was common.

Because the story includes concrete facts, this miracle account appeals to children. We can share it with young learners, trusting that they will understand the Gospel writer's message.

Dearly beloved: We have come together in the presence of God to witness and bless the joining together of this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony. The bond and covenant of marriage was established by God in creation, and our Lord Jesus Christ adorned this manner of life by his presence and first miracle at a wedding in Cana of Galilee. It signifies to us the mystery of the union between Christ and his Church, and Holy Scripture commends it to be honored among all people.

The Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 423

TEACHING TIP

Primary-age children are attracted by people who exert power and perform heroic deeds. Jesus' deeds of power in his miracles will appeal to most learners. Many are beginning to understand that Jesus is more than just one hero among others. As teachers of this age level, we listen and observe—allowing the children to think and speak of Jesus, Son of God, in their own ways.

GATHERING

As the learners arrive, share Poster No. 2 of "The Marriage at Cana," from the Teacher's Packet. Ask: What is happening in the scene? Who are

the people in the picture?

When all are present, gather the group and say together the Gloria in Excelsis (below, and on Poster No. 10 in the Teacher's Packet).

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth. . . .

(Continue with the Gloria in Excelsis, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 356)

STORYTELLING (Time: 10 minutes)

Tell the story of Jesus' changing of water into wine at Cana, his first miracle. Open the Bible to *John 2:1-11*, and show the learners where the passage is located. Read aloud verse 11:

“Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

The learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Begin by saying that Jesus grew up and gathered disciples to follow him. He did many great deeds of power (miracles). People were amazed. They understood that he was not like other men. They believed in him.

2. In your own words, sketch out the scene of the wedding at Cana. Invite the children to imagine how it would feel for the host to discover that there was not enough wine to serve all the guests. What could be done?

3. Using information from *Getting Ready*, describe what happened in detail. Describe how Jesus had the servants fill the jugs with water and then offered a sample to the steward. Explain how surprised the steward was when he tasted the wine. He had expected the host to use his best wine early in the celebration, but this wine was better by far.

4. End the story by underscoring that this was the first miracle Jesus did. Because of they saw what Jesus did, his followers believed in him.

(Remind the children that they can read this story at home in the learners' book, *Jesus: Healer*, chapter 6. It describes the miracle of Jesus' changing the water into wine.)

CREATING (Time: 15-20 minutes)

Option 1. Jesus Attends a Wedding

Invite the learners to imagine that the story of Jesus at the wedding is happening this week. They can create their own pictures that would represent the wedding. The pictures can be cut from magazines and include members of the wedding party and other people dressed in their best clothes—together with food, wine or fruit punch, and flowers. Pictures can be pasted on backgrounds of construction paper. Talk with the learners about the joy and celebration on this occasion.

Option 2. Wine Vessels

Give each child a portion of play dough, salt dough, or clay if available. (Recipes for play dough and salt clay can be found on Poster No. 15 in the Teacher's Packet.) Encourage each learner to create a water jar like one of the twelve that Jesus used when he turned water into wine. After the vessels have dried, they may be decorated at a later session.

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

Option 1. Game, “Water, Water, Wine”

With the players seated in a circle, one player walks around the outside of the circle tapping each player gently on the head and saying, “Water, water, wine.” At “wine,” the person tapped gets up and walks quickly around the circle and tries to catch the tapper, who in turn walks quickly to get to the vacated space of the person who was tapped. (This game is based on the children's game, “Duck, duck, goose.”)

Option 2. Puzzle, “Water to Wine”

Use Puzzle Sheet II.6 titled “Water to Wine.” 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 the Scripture

Provide each learner with a Bible. Invite the group members to find *John 2:11* and read it aloud in unison: “Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.” Since this is the first miracle, suggest that the learners might wish to find other miracles of Jesus. Examples (one in each Gospel): *Mark 8:22-25*, *Matthew 8:14-15*, *Luke 8:49-56a*.

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

Jesus' deeds of power were signs that pointed toward his true identity as the Son of God. Ask: What was the miracle that happened at Cana? Why was Jesus able to do this?

Talk with the learners about miracles: What is a miracle? What stories have you heard in which a miracle happened? How is Jesus involved in miracles today?

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Bring in a jar of water, some grapes, a bowl, a sieve, and a masher. Offer the learners a small cup of water. Help them to describe the taste, texture, and color of the water. Work together to mash the grapes. Strain the pulp from the juice, using the sieve. (Note that the skins of the grapes determine the color.) Explain that this is the first of many steps in making wine. Conclude by tasting the grape juice and comparing it to the water.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “One sunny day when Jesus was attending a wedding . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Jesus have said and done in response?

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 choose to participate in a dramatization of the events of the wedding at Cana. You may choose to invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box).

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

The hymn for this session is “Let us, with a gladsome mind” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 389; *We Sing of God*, 64). Introduce the hymn by listening to it on the *Children Sing!* tape. Discuss the meaning of the words. Note any vocabulary that may need definition.

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

Class Experience Story. To create an “experience story” the learners tell the story in their own words, working together to form the finished composition. The teacher writes the text down as the group tells the story. Invite the class members to give their ideas about what happened when Jesus performed his first miracle at the wedding in Cana of Galilee.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 15 has a picture of the wedding at Cana, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

At the conclusion of this session, gather for the closing prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We give you thanks for Jesus' miracle at Cana.

(Add thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All 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 students respond to the story of Jesus' first miracle? Were they comfortable sharing their thoughts? What impressions of Jesus as a man of great power were the learners able to express? Look for ways to extend their understandings of this in future sessions.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida. As you prepare to share this story with the children, reflect on the beauty of God's creation. What would it be like to see it for the very first time? Or to lose the ability to see it?

JESUS: HEALER

Session 7

Jesus Heals a Blind Man

FOCUS

Jesus restored the sight of a blind man at Bethsaida. The learners should be able to tell the story of this healing miracle.

GETTING READY

In *Matthew 4:23* and *9:35*, the ministry of Jesus is described in three ways: teaching, preaching, and healing (“curing every disease and every sickness among the people”).

Jesus' *teaching* was principally in the form of parables. A parable is a simile or metaphor that is often a story. It involves everyday life and household objects. Parables are a primary means of Jesus' teaching, closely related to the main focus of his teaching, the kingdom of God.

His *preaching* announced the coming rule of God in the world.

His acts of *healing* were for people who asked for help or for those whose friends or families asked for Jesus' help.

In the previous session, Jesus was introduced as one who did great deeds of power (miracles). This session and the two that follow are on Jesus' miracles of healing. The stories are taken from the three Gospels of *Mark*, *Matthew*, and *Luke*. These are known as the Synoptic Gospels because these Gospels contain similar structure, perspective, and content and are different from the *Gospel of John*. The word “synoptic” comes from a Greek word meaning “seen together.”

Only Mark tells the story of how Jesus restored the sight of a man at Bethsaida (*Mark 8:22-25*). Unlike the other miracles, it occurs in stages, with Jesus touching the man's eyes twice before he can see clearly. Like other Gospel accounts of miracle, the story portrays Jesus as the true Messiah, the awaited Son of God.

The story of Jesus' restoring a blind man's sight is an appropriate introduction to the healing narratives. Children can learn through this story to empathize with people who have handicaps.

O God, the strength of the weak and the comfort of the sufferers:
Mercifully accept our prayers, and grant to your servants the help of your
power, that their sickness may be turned into health, and our sorrow into
joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen*.

For Recovery from Sickness

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 458

TEACHING TIP

Primary-age children have an awe for the power of God. They tend to accept the stories of Jesus' deeds of power (miracles) without question. Although the children do not yet understand the *why* of Jesus' miracles, it is important to remember that the New Testament stories of Jesus point to the larger truth that Jesus is Son of God. That is why the miracles are called “signs” of the rule of God.

GATHERING

Display Poster No. 2 from the Teacher's Packet, showing Jesus in an act of healing. As the learners arrive, talk with them about the picture and what is happening in the scene.

When everyone is present, gather the group and say (using Poster No. 10 in the Teacher's Packet):

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth. . . .
(Continue with the Gloria in Excelsis, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 356.)

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Share the story of Jesus' healing of the blind man at Bethsaida. Open the Bible to show the children the location of *Mark 8:22-25*. Read aloud verse 25:

“Then Jesus laid his hands upon his eyes again; and he looked intently and his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.”

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

1. Begin by talking about the work of Jesus. He taught people about God. He preached good news of what God was doing in the world, and he healed people. Ask the children to recall any stories they remember about Jesus as healer. Simply listen and receive any responses.

2. In your own words, tell the story of the blind man at Bethsaida.

3. Make the man's situation very clear. Describe his friends' concern, and tell how they begged Jesus to touch him.

4. Describe the way Jesus went about healing the man: taking him outside the village, performing the miracle by touching his eyes twice, and then telling him to go on his way without returning to the village. Note the man's response. (At first, he sees dimly and says that he can see people who look like “trees, walking.” Later, after Jesus touched his eyes a second time, he was able to see everything clearly.)

5. Invite the children to be sit for a moment with their eyes closed, as you suggest they give thanks to God for the miracles of Jesus, the Messiah.

(Remind the children that they can read this story at home in the learners' book, *Jesus: Healer*, chapter 7. It describes the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Braille Bible Verse

Give each child a 3 x 5 index card, a large safety pin, and a copy of the

Braille chart included on Poster No. 15 in the Teacher's Packet. Instruct the learners to use a pencil to write the following in Braille: "Glory to God in the highest." When they have finished making the dots with their pencils, the learners can poke the dots with the points of the safety pins, creating a Braille message.

Option 2. Water Painting

Provide the learners with pieces of white construction paper and water-based markers. Ask them to draw pictures of a landscape that includes trees. When they have completed their drawings, they can use clear water and a paint brush to "paint" over the picture. The result will be a blurring of the originals. Talk with the class members about people that look "like trees, walking. . ." (*Mark 8:24*).

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

Option 1. Game, "I Was Blind. . ."

Play an adapted version of the parlor game, "I Spy." The players pretend that they have been blind but are now able to see. One person says, "I was blind, and now what do I see?" (*He or she chooses object in the room without naming it aloud*). The other players ask yes-or-no questions until one has guessed the object. The person who guesses correctly then continues the game by repeating the question.

Option 2. Puzzle, "Jesus Heals a Blind Man"

Use Puzzle Sheet II.7 titled "Jesus Heals a Blind Man." 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. Key Words

Write on 3 x 5-inch cards one or more sets of key words from the story of the healing of the blind man of Bethsaida (Jesus, blind man, village, hand, trees, sight). Ask the learners to form pairs. Distribute the cards. In each pair, one member reads a word in silence and spells it aloud to the other, who has his/her eyes closed to simulate blindness.

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

Jesus healed the blind man at Bethsaida in response to the pleas of some people who "begged him" to do so. Talk with the learners about these friends of the man.

Ask: Why do you suppose they cared so much about him? What made them think Jesus could help?

In what ways can we show our concern for people with physical impairments? Could a blind person get around our church easily? What could we do to make it easier?

How do we go about seeking help from Jesus? (The discussion could lead naturally to considering the importance of intercessory prayer on behalf of others.)

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Explore the experience of being blind. Children can be very understanding about the physical handicaps of others if they have a chance to share their thoughts with a sensitive, caring adult. Perhaps using a blindfold or clear glasses smeared with petroleum jelly will help the class members to experience the plight of someone who is blind or has limited vision. Remind everyone that we should give thanks to God daily for the ability to see with our eyes.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “One day Jesus came to my town. He touched my eyes twice, and suddenly . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What was it like to no longer be blind?

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. You may prefer to invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: The blind man's friends bringing him to Jesus to be touched; Jesus' healing of the blind man (in two stages); what happened to the blind man and his friends after Jesus left; other healings the learners know about.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Listen on the *Children Sing!* tape to “Let us, with a gladsome mind” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 389; *We Sing of God*, 64). You may want to note that this hymn is based on *Psalms 136*. Older learners might enjoy comparing the first stanzas with the psalm in *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 789-791.

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

Class Experience Story. Continue the narrative begun in Session 6. Ask the learners to tell their own version of the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida. They can add descriptive details about the man, his friends, the scenes with Jesus, and everyone's joy that such a miracle had occurred. Invite the learners to add their own feelings about the miracle and what it meant to the people who knew Jesus. If the children could ask for a miracle now, what would it be?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 16 has a picture of Jesus healing a blind man, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to ponder. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We give you thanks for the gift of sight.

(Add thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

If the children have not been exposed to differently abled people, or have encountered prejudice against someone who is different, their responses may include laughing at physical handicaps or making negative remarks. Did you encounter any of this in today's session? What can you do in future classes to help children see that God loves and cares for everyone?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session deals with the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. In this story, Jesus shows compassion after a long, hard day. Reflect on the behavior of most people after a long day of work. How are they likely to respond to others who need their love and care?

JESUS: HEALER

Session 8

Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-law

FOCUS

Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law who was ill. The learners should be able to tell the story of this healing event.

GETTING READY

The second healing miracle chosen for this unit is that of Peter's mother-in-law. Told in two simple verses in *Matthew 8:14-15*, this story is also found in *Mark 1:29-31*. There is one difference. *Mark* says that after the woman was healed, she “served them” (Jesus, Peter, Andrew, James, John, and perhaps others in the house). But *Matthew* says only that she “served him” (Jesus). Some scholars believe this is important: *Matthew* wants to show that Jesus is not just one person in a group. He is like no one else and deserves to be treated in a special way.

For primary-age children, the miracle is presented as a simple story showing Jesus' compassion and care. This healing takes place in the midst of a hectic day in Jesus' life, just after he comes down from the mountain where he had taught the crowds in what we call the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5-7*).

On that day, a crowd had been gathering around Jesus. They were beginning to bring their sick to him. When Jesus saw this, he ascended a mountain and talked to the crowd, laying out the basic tenets of his message. After descending the mountain, Jesus cured a man who begged to be cleansed of leprosy. Jesus also healed a man who was paralyzed. Jesus had performed these miracles before he arrived at the home of Peter's mother-in-law.

O Lord, your compassions never fail and your mercies are new every morning: We give you thanks for giving our brothers and sisters both relief from pain and hope of health renewed. Continue in them, we pray, the good work you have begun; that they, daily increasing in bodily strength, and rejoicing in your goodness, may so order their life and conduct that they may always think and do those things that please you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Thanksgiving for a Beginning of Recovery
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 460

TEACHING TIP

Teachers live with a degree of tension when teaching learners about suffering and distress. On the one hand, we instinctively avoid dwelling on hurt and loss. But on the other hand, we do not want to be overly protective. It is important to remember that primary-age children have their own ways of handling the hard facts about human life. They value hearing the truth. In the case of Jesus' miracles of healing, the learners can best appreciate what happened if they have an adequate picture of the human pain that moved Jesus to have compassion.

GATHERING

Bring in some things that are used to help people who are ill such as a thermometer, a heating pad, a warm blanket, ice bag, or other health care items. Invite the learners to examine and talk about these items as they arrive.

When all are present, gather the group and say:

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth. . . .

(Continue with the Gloria in Excelsis, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 356)

STORYTELLING (Time: 10 minutes)

Tell the story of how Jesus healed Peter's mother-in-law from *Matthew 8:14-15*. Open the Bible and show the learners where the passage is located. Read aloud verse 15:

“ . . . (Jesus) touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

The learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Begin by reminding the children that Jesus did many wonderful deeds. In the previous session, we heard about his healing of a blind man. Ask: How do you think Jesus' disciples would feel about him when they saw and heard about his special power to heal?

2. Share the story from *Matthew* of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law. Introduce it by describing how great crowds of people had been following Jesus all day. They were watching everything he did.

3. Jesus was invited to the home of Peter, his disciple. He probably expected to find this a quiet place where he could relax and have dinner with close friends.

4. But when Jesus entered the house, he found Peter's mother-in-law sick in bed with a fever. Jesus took her by the hand. She was well at once and was able to serve him.

5. Instead of having a quiet evening, Jesus was visited by many others who were sick and wanted to be healed. People were sure that Jesus was indeed the Messiah they had been hoping for.

(Remind the children that they can read this story at home in the learners' book, *Jesus: Healer*, chapter 8. It describes the healing of Peter's mother-in-law.)

CREATING (Time: 10-20 minutes)

Option 1. Get-Well Cards

Provide the learners with construction paper and a variety of materials, such as markers, pictures from magazines and old greeting cards, ribbons,

glue, doilies, and glitter. Invite them to make “Get-well” or “Thinking of you” cards for members of the congregation who are ill, shut-in, or in nursing homes or hospitals.

Option 2. Prayer for Healing

Beforehand, copy one of the “Prayers for the Sick” from pages 458-461 in *The Book of Common Prayer* and make photocopies for each learner in the class. Invite them to illustrate or decorate the prayers.

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

Option 1. Game, “Smile, Jesus Loves You”

It is difficult to keep from smiling when someone tells you not to. The object of this game is for the players to try not to smile when others look them in the face and say, “Smile, Jesus loves you.”

Begin with one person who says, “Smile, Jesus loves you.” The second player responds, “I know Jesus loves me, but I can't smile.” If the second player smiles, then he or she must join the first player in making others smile.

(This game can be linked with either of these concepts: Smiles and laughter contribute to our health and well-being; when people have been sick and are well again, we are happy.)

Option 2. Puzzle, “Peter's Mother-in-Law”

Use Puzzle Sheet II.8 titled “Peter's Mother-in-Law.” 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. Healing Prayer

While we cannot heal people in the way Jesus did, we can pray for them. Ask the group or individuals to compose a prayer for healing. Write the prayer on a chalkboard or a piece of newsprint. When completed, say the prayer together. For examples, see the prayers for the sick in *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 458-461.

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

Discuss with the learners how they might help to care for family members who are ill. (Recall the items used in the Gathering when speaking of making sick persons more comfortable.) Include praying for the sick, both at home and in the congregation during Prayers for the People.

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Invite to the class someone from the congregation who visits people who are hospitalized or ill at home. Ask the visitor to share what is done to help care for these people. Suggest that learners ask the following questions: How do you help people who are sick? What do you talk about?

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “One day when I was sick with a fever, my son-in-law Peter brought a friend home for supper” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Peter’s mother-in-law have said?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to dramatize the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law. Possible scenes would show the woman sick in bed and her family’s concern; the arrival of Jesus and others who came to visit in the home of Peter; Jesus’ act of healing and the joy of those who saw the woman get up and serve the meal; the gathering of other sick people hoping Jesus would heal them as well. The role playing could also focus on caring for sick persons the learners know.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Listen to “Let us, with a gladsome mind” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 389; *We Sing of God*, 64) on the *Children Sing!* tape. Ask the learners to imagine that they have been sick and are now healed. The words of the hymn are a prayer of praise to God for helping them to be well again.

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

Class Experience Story. Draw from the discussions and activities some suggestions the learners can list about the care of people who are ill. Include some simple rules for visiting the sick, together with prayers that may be said.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 17 has an illuminated prayer for the sick, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Close this session with the following:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We give thanks for doctors, nurses, and all
others who care for sick people.

(Add your own thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Discussions of illness may prompt class members to disclose difficulties their families are having. If any of the children indicated such problems, consider how you might respond by giving extra support to individuals and their families.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session of this unit focuses on the healing of Jairus' daughter. Most people find it particularly distressing when a child becomes ill or dies. The child, however, often shows great faith and trust in God. Reflect on an experience you may have had in facing a critical illness or death.

JESUS: HEALER

Session 9

Jesus Raises Jairus' Daughter

FOCUS

Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead. The learners should be able to tell the story of this miracle in their own words.

GETTING READY

The third healing story chosen for this unit is the raising of Jairus' daughter whose sickness had led to her death. The account is found in *Mark 5:21-43*, *Matthew 9:18-26*, and *Luke 8:40-42, 49-56*. *Mark*, the earliest Gospel, provides more details about what happened in the house when Jesus raised the girl. The shortest version is in *Matthew*. It is *Luke* who tells us that the girl was twelve years old.

In all three Gospel versions, Jairus asks Jesus to heal his daughter, but his plea is interrupted by a woman who has suffered for years from hemorrhages. She touches the hem of Jesus' garment and is healed. (Her great faith has made her well.) Then the encounter with Jairus continues. In effect, Jesus is performing two miracles at the same time.

As Jesus resumes his journey to Jairus' house, they receive word that the child is already dead. But Jesus assures Jairus that his child would be all right. Jesus entered the house, took the child's hand, and told her to get up. She rose, and Jesus told the child's mother to get her something to eat.

In this last session of the unit, primary-age children will be especially touched by the young girl's dying, and Jesus' compassion in raising her. The story should be shared quietly and reverently to provide a concluding glimpse of Jesus the Healer. He is the Messiah who shows forth God's power over both life and death.

O heavenly Father, you give your children sleep for the refreshing of soul and body: Grant me this gift, I pray; keep me in that perfect peace which you have promised to those whose minds are fixed on you; and give me such a sense of your presence, that in the hours of silence I may enjoy the blessed assurance of your love; through Jesus Christ our Savior.
Amen.

Prayer For Sleep

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 461

TEACHING TIP

If one or more of the children have experienced a recent or particularly painful death in their families or among their friends, this story may be disturbing. Teachers may decide not to tell this story. An excellent substitute story in this situation would be Jesus the Good Shepherd in *John 10:11-15*.

GATHERING

If possible, borrow a portable Communion set used by clergy to bring Holy Communion to sick persons at their homes or in hospitals. (A picture has been provided on Poster No. 4 in the Teacher's Packet.) Allow the learners to inspect the items and talk about their use.

When all have gathered, say:

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to his people on earth. . . .

(Continue with the Gloria in Excelsis, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 356.)

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Share the story of Jesus' raising Jairus' daughter from the dead. Open the Bible and show the learners where *Luke 8:40-42, 49-56* is found. Read aloud verse 50:

“When Jesus heard this he replied, `Do not fear. Only believe, and she will be saved.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

The learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Ask the class members who have been present for the three previous sessions to recall the stories they heard of Jesus' deeds of power (water into wine at a wedding; healing of a blind man near a village; healing of Peter's mother-in-law). Write the four miracles on a chalkboard as learners describe them. (This list will be used in a Creating activity.) Remind them that healing is a very important part of Jesus' work.

2. Drawing on the account in Luke's Gospel, tell the story of Jairus' daughter in your own words. Include the following:

- a. Jairus was a leader of a synagogue, a very religious man.
- b. Jairus begged Jesus to come to his house and heal his only daughter, who was dying. The girl was just twelve years old.
- c. But before Jesus could start to the house, someone delivered the news that the child was already dead.
- d. Jesus was calm. He said to Jairus, “Do not fear. Just believe. Your daughter will be all right.”
- e. In spite of all the weeping and wailing at Jairus' house, Jesus asked the girl's parents and three of his disciples (Peter, James, and John) to go with him into the house. There he took the child by the hand and told her to get up. She did. Then Jesus told the girl's mother to get her something to eat.
- f. Jesus did not want anyone to tell what had happened. It was not yet time for everyone to know that he was the Son of God.

(Remind the children that they can read this story at home in the learners' book, *Jesus: Healer*, chapter 9. It describes the healing of Jairus' daughter.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Picture Book

When children are ill, they enjoy receiving gifts of picture books—especially ones made by other children. Make a Miracle book to be given to a child who is ill.

Briefly list the four miracles the learners have studied using the list made during the Storytelling. Invite each learner to select one of the miracles to illustrate on a sheet of paper. Sew or staple the sheets together in the center. The final page could include a prayer for healing.

Option 2. TV Picture

Give each learner an empty tissue box and a roll of white paper approximately 24 inches long by 3 inches wide. First instruct the learners to draw scenes from the story of Jairus' daughter as if they were on movie film, one frame at a time. When finished, the "film" can be inserted in the tissue box, through slits on the sides. The frames will show through a screen cut in the front. The paper is then drawn through the TV while the learners narrate the story.

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

Option 1. Game, "Faith Walk"

Having faith means trusting. One of the ways to help primary-age children to understand this is to take a faith walk. Ask the class members to form pairs. One of the partners puts on a blindfold. The other partner becomes the guide, leading on a walk. The one who cannot see must trust the other to lead safely. After a few minutes, the players exchange places.

Option 2. Puzzle, "Jesus Heals a Little Girl"

Use Puzzle Sheet II.9 titled "Jesus Heals a Little Girl." 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 Find

Encourage the learners to work together in three teams to find the story of Jairus' daughter in the Bible. Each team is assigned one of the three Gospels in which it appears: *Luke 8:40-42, 49-56; Mark 5:21-24, 35-43; and Matthew 9:18-19, 23-26*. Ask the following questions: What was the name of the girl's father? What was wrong? Who was outside the house when Jesus arrived? What happened when Jesus went inside to see the girl? Who was with Jesus? What did Jesus say? How old was the girl? What did Jesus want the girl's family to give her? (These questions will reveal differences among the three accounts. Let the learners discover some of these for themselves.)

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

Continue to discuss Christians' concern for the sick. When someone is very ill, what do we do? think? say? Jairus, the ruler, came to Jesus with the news about his daughter, expressing his deep faith in Jesus' power to heal. Our own reaction to sickness in our families includes doing all we can ourselves, getting medical help, and praying earnestly. Invite the class members to talk again about praying for the sick.

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite a member of the clergy or a lay visitor (such as a Stephen's Ministry representative) to visit the class and share details about ministry to sick persons provided by the Church—including services of healing and anointing, and administration of Holy Communion. The items used in the Gathering (or the Teacher's Packet picture on Poster No. 4) can be discussed.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "I had been very sick. My mother and father were very worried about me. They told me I had died, but that Jesus . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story of Jairus' daughter could continue.

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: The girl's illness; Jesus' encounter with Jairus; the healing of the girl; what happened after Jesus left.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Listen again to "Let us, with a gladsome mind" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 389; *We Sing of God*, 64) on the *Children Sing!* tape. In the hymnal, look particularly at the words of the sixth stanza. Encourage the learners to write their own stanza to add to the hymn.

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

Class Experience Story. Review what the learners have written about the two healing miracles and the wedding at Cana. Add to the story by asking for comments from the learners about the raising of Jairus' daughter. Encourage the class members to think about all four stories and make some general observations. Read the full experience story aloud.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 18 has a picture of Jesus, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session by joining in the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.
We give thanks for all who care for the sick.
(Add thanksgivings)
We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.
From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

How have the learners responded to the stories of the miracles that Jesus did during his life on earth? Primary-age children usually accept these stories without question until they are about eight or nine years old. Did the children in your class accept these miracle stories?

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. BAPTISM: PEOPLE IN COVENANT

Dear Parents and Guardians,

During the third unit, we will look at Holy Baptism. An Outline of the Faith (commonly called the Catechism) in *The Book of Common Prayer*, includes the following questions and answers (page 858):

Q. What are the two great sacraments of the Gospel?

A. The two great sacraments given by Christ to his Church are Holy Baptism and the Holy Eucharist.

Q. What is Holy Baptism?

A. Holy Baptism is the sacrament by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ's Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God.

The Church considers baptism to be an important sacrament that we do in response to a command from Jesus Christ himself. Each time we enter a church, we are baptized and members of God's family.

We encourage you to talk about the lessons with your child. You can do this by reading together the learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, which describes different aspects of baptism. An optional learners' book for this unit, *Jesus, Son of God*, will add to information children learn in Sessions 6-9.

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. 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.

Sessions 1-5 are about the origin and present-day practice of the sacrament of baptism. Following are summaries of the first five sessions:

Session 1: "Jesus Was Baptized" describes the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. The appearance of the Spirit in the form of a descending dove marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry. (*Matthew 3:11-17*)

Session 2: "The Apostles Baptized People" is about the Church's birth at Pentecost where Peter and the apostles baptized 3,000 people. Baptism became a rite of initiation into the resurrection community, the "body of Christ." (*Acts 2:38-40*)

Session 3: "The Church's People Are Baptized" shows that Christians everywhere demonstrate their greatest degree of unity in their acceptance of Holy Baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. (*Acts 2:40-41*)

Session 4: “Baptized People Make Promises” is about the gift of the Holy Spirit in the presence of God with all baptized people. The children will learn about promises we make to God at baptism. (*Acts 2:38b-39*)

Session 5: “The Church Is a Family of Faith” shows that faith is shared in the family of God's people. In baptism, we promise to support baptized people and provide encouragement and teaching. (*II Timothy 1:5*)

Beginning with Session 6, the Unit turns to the season of Lent, Holy Week, and Easter.

Session 6: “Jesus Washes His Friends' Feet” helps children understand what Jesus was teaching us when he washed the disciples' feet at the Last Supper. (*John 13:1-15*)

Session 7: “Jesus Died and Was Buried” helps learners understand the events of Good Friday. They will learn about Jesus' death on the cross and his burial in the tomb provided by Joseph of Arimathea. (*John 19:38-42*)

Session 8: “Jesus Is Alive” is about the good news of Easter that is for all people. On the third day after his crucifixion, Jesus was raised from the dead. Mary Magdalene was the first person to see him at the empty tomb. (*John 20:1-18*)

Session 9: “God Forgives Us” because Jesus died for our sins and was raised to new life. Just as God forgives our sins, we are expected to forgive others. Children will explore times they have forgiven another person or when they have been forgiven. (*Luke 11:2-4*)

Yours in Christ
Church School Teachers

BAPTISM: PEOPLE IN COVENANT

Session 1

Jesus Was Baptized

FOCUS

Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. The learners should be able to tell the story of this event in their own words.

GETTING READY

The story of Jesus' baptism appears in *Mark 1*, *Matthew 3*, and *Luke 3*. John's Gospel does not include it. In Mark's version, the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove and the accompanying voice from heaven are known only to Jesus. In *Luke* and *Matthew*, the people see and hear as well.

John the Baptist had received a call from God and began baptizing people who were drawn to his message of repentance. During this time, John lived in the wilderness and ate locusts and wild honey. John told those who came to him that one more powerful than he was coming soon. Jesus arrived at the River Jordan one day and asked John to baptize him. The moment after Jesus' baptism, the spirit of God came down from heaven in the form of a dove and said, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

The baptism offered by John the Baptist prepares people for the work of Jesus. They confess their sins and are cleansed as they await the appearance of God's Chosen One, the Messiah. The Church has always understood Jesus' baptism as the beginning of his ministry; from that time on, it is clear in the Gospels that God is acting in Christ to bring about all that was promised through the prophets of Israel.

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

The Baptism of our Lord
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 214

TEACHING TIP

The Church's specialized vocabulary includes words such as Eucharist, anointed, baptism, resurrection, and life everlasting. Children may classify these as "church words." If young learners hear the words often, they will incorporate them into their vocabularies—even if the meanings are not clear. Use and define words in ways that help the children's understanding of our faith.

GATHERING

Display Poster No. 3 of an outdoor baptism from the Teacher's Packet. As learners arrive, direct their attention to the picture. Ask them to describe

what is happening and why.

When all are present, gather the group and say:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and
the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. *Amen.*

The Apostles' Creed
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 96

The Apostles' Creed is used to introduce each session in this unit on Baptism and Lent/Easter. You may wish to display Poster No. 11 of the Creed from the Teacher's Packet to help learners begin to say it together. It is hoped that by the end of the unit, some learners may have memorized this Creed.

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Tell the story of Jesus' baptism. Open the Bible, and show the learners where *Matthew 3:11-17* is located. Read aloud verses 16-17:

“And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly, the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.’”

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

1. Begin by describing the ministry of John the Baptist, who was a cousin of Jesus. John preached in the wilderness, calling on people to repent (turn around) because the time was at hand for people to know in a new way that God rules.

2. John wore camel's hair and leather. He ate locusts and wild honey.

3. Many people came to the River Jordan to seek baptism from John. As

they were baptized, they confessed their sins.

4. John spoke of the one who would come after him, a man much greater than he was. “I am not worthy to carry the sandals of this man,” John declared. (See *Matthew 3:11-12*.)

5. Then Jesus came and asked John for baptism. John exclaimed, “I need to be baptized by you. . . .” (verse 14)

6. John consented to baptize Jesus. As Jesus came up out of the river's water, John could see the Spirit of God (the Holy Spirit) coming down like a dove and settling on Jesus. A voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.” (verse 17)

Remind the learners that we celebrate the Baptism of the Lord (Jesus) every year on the first Sunday after January 6 (the Epiphany). (The learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, chapter 1, describes baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. Remind the children that they can read this story at home.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. John the Baptist

Invite the learners to make a “John the Baptist” figure from round clothespins and scraps of fabric. The round head of the clothespin becomes John's head. Features can be added with markers or pens. The rest of the clothespin is the body and can be dressed simply with a rectangular piece of cloth. Wrap the cloth around the figure, tying a knot at the shoulder. A piece of string or yarn around the middle completes the outfit.

Option 2. Dove Mosaic

Using the outline of a dove from Poster No. 15 in the Teacher's Packet, create a pattern from cardboard. You will need one pattern for every four children in the class. Provide each learner with a piece of blue construction paper, a piece of white typing paper, and glue. The learners will trace the pattern on the construction paper with a marker, and then fill in the dove image with small pieces torn from the white paper and glued inside the outline. Overlapping pieces will give a feathery effect.

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

Option 1. Game, “Come to the River”

The teacher begins the game by calling on a class member and describing three actions that must be taken in order to get to the river such as “jump three steps, clap hands over your head five times, and turn around twice.” That child then joins the teacher at the river and helps to give instructions for the next class member. The game continues as long as interest holds. (Actions will need to be adapted to the abilities of individuals, and suitable for the classroom space.)

Option 2. Puzzle, “Jesus Was Baptized”

Use Puzzle Sheet III.1 titled “Jesus Was Baptized.” 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. One in Three

Divide the class into three teams, and assign to each one the name of a Gospel (*Mark, Matthew, Luke*). Each team is challenged to find the story of Jesus' baptism in their Gospel, and to prepare a pantomime of the account. Help each team to map out the details of the story and decide how to present one or more of the scenes. As the pantomimes conclude, note the differences among the three Gospel stories.

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

The Church has always understood Jesus' baptism as a very special event in his life. Soon after John baptized him in the River Jordan, Jesus began to teach, preach, and heal.

Ask: How do you think Jesus felt after he was baptized? What would you have been thinking if you had been there?

When baptisms happen in our own church, how do we help to welcome the newly baptized? What are some of the words we say? things we do?

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

John the Baptist lived in the wilderness and ate locusts and wild honey. Provide a variety of natural foods (berries, nuts, honey, and other items available locally) for the class members to taste. Talk with the learners about eating foods that one can gather in woods, fields, or desert. Draw on the experiences of those who have been camping or hiking, with opportunities to pick berries or prepare other natural foods.

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: "As I stood on the bank of the River Jordan, I saw" Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue.

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can dramatize the scene of Jesus' baptism by John in the River Jordan. A long blue cloth or strip of paper can be used to simulate a river.

MUSIC (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

The hymn for this session is "Descend, O Spirit" (*The Hymnal 1982, 297; We Sing of God, 50*). This hymn lends itself to dramatic movements such as the following:

Descend, O Spirit, (*move arms in downward, swooping movement*)
purging flame, (*bring hands together in front, and fan them upward and outward like a flame*)
brand us this day with Jesus' Name! (*make the sign of the cross on foreheads*)

Confirm our faith, (*stand tall and fold arms in front*)
consume our doubt; (*move arms in a large circle outward*)
sign us as Christ's, within, without. (*form cross with arms extended*)
Play the hymn on the *Children Sing!* tape while the group does the motions together.

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

Baptismal Banner. Plan with the learners a design for a banner to be put on display for baptisms. This project will extend through Session 5.

In preparation, assemble several large pieces of felt in harmonizing colors and items such as yarn, glue, rickrack, or other decorative materials. (The completed banner could be displayed by the church door as a welcoming symbol. Or it could be mounted in a hallway or in the classroom on the days when a baptism will occur in the congregation.)

Work out the plan on a large sheet of paper before beginning to make the banner. Concentrate on colors and symbols rather than putting a lot of words in the design.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 19 has a picture of an outdoor baptism, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We give you thanks for the Baptism of Jesus.
(Other thanksgivings can be added)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Had the learners heard the story of Jesus' baptism before? How much did they recall? What new insights did they reveal? Consider what more can be done to help learners sense that Jesus and John the Baptist lived at the same time but had different missions.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session focuses on the increase in the number of Christians as a result of Peter's sermon following Pentecost. His hearers asked to be baptized. Consider the meanings of this sacrament of the Church, and why persons of all ages are baptized today.

BAPTISM: PEOPLE IN COVENANT

Session 2

The Apostles Baptized People

FOCUS

When the Church was born at Pentecost, Peter and the apostles baptized 3,000 people. The learners should be able to tell this story, noting that people come to be baptized in the Church today.

GETTING READY

Sessions 2 through 4 of this unit are based on just five verses from *Acts 2*. In this introductory session, we look at the early Christian community as a baptized people; in the succeeding sessions, the overall aim is to help young learners consider the significance of the sacrament of Holy Baptism. (We will return to the *Acts of the Apostles* in Unit IV, but with a different focus: to examine the lives of individual persons who were important to Luke, the writer, as he described the Church's beginnings.)

After Matthias was chosen to join the eleven apostles, they gathered in one place. Suddenly, a great wind rushed about the house and tongues of fire appeared. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in new languages. The apostles began preaching to the people outside. The crowd could not believe that the apostles could speak in different languages so that everyone who had gathered there could understand their message.

The apostle Peter preached boldly to his fellow Jews. He declared that the work of Jesus Christ, now raised from the dead, had been foretold by the prophet Joel. He declared, "This very Jesus is Lord and Messiah."

The people were deeply touched. They wanted to know what they could do. Peter urged that they repent, seeking forgiveness of their sins. On that very day, 3,000 people responded and sought baptism from the apostles.

Almighty God, by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, you turn us from the old life of sin: Grant that we, being reborn to new life in him, may live in righteousness and holiness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

At Baptism

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 254

TEACHING TIP

Primary-age children will enjoy field trips and visitors more if they are prepared ahead of time. Discuss who will be coming or where the group will be going. Suggest questions the children might ask or specific things to look for. Give simple, clear directions.

GATHERING

Display Poster No. 4 of a baptismal font, a banner, and a Paschal Candle from the Teacher's Packet. As the learners arrive, point out the items on the poster. Ask when and where these might be seen. Ask: How would you explain these pictures to someone who had never seen them?

When all are present, gather the group and say the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. . . .
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 96

(You may wish to continue using Poster No. 11 of the Creed from the Teacher's Packet.)

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Tell the story of Peter's sermon and the baptism of thousands. Open the Bible and show the learners where *Acts 2:38-40* is located. Read aloud verse 38:

“Peter said to them, `Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.’”

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

1. Begin by inviting the children to recall the most recent service of Holy Baptism they attended. How many persons were baptized? How many persons come to our congregation's worship each week? Can you guess?

2. Share with the learners the fact that we become members of the Church through our baptism. This has been true ever since Jesus' death and resurrection.

3. Describe the scene after Pentecost when Peter and the other apostles began to tell people that Jesus, who had been raised from the dead, was truly the Son of God for whom God's people had waited so long. Peter preached a sermon about Jesus that caused people to listen closely. They believed what he said. They asked, “What should we do?”

4. Peter told his hearers to repent and be baptized. By “repent” he meant “turn around” and be different: Stop opposing what God is doing and accept Jesus as Messiah. Do what God wants you to do.

5. So 3,000 people did what Peter said. They were baptized that day by Peter and the other apostles. (Compare 3,000 with the number of people in your own congregation.)

6. Many more people were baptized by the apostles. The church was growing, and there were more and more people who became Christians.

(The learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, chapter 2, describes how Jesus' apostles baptized people in the names of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Remind the children that they can read this story at home.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. 3,000 Baptized

Provide each learner with a sheet of construction paper and a small dish

of poster paint. Ask the class members to place their thumbs in the paint and stamp them on their sheets of paper as many times as possible. Repeat until the paper is filled. Enjoy counting how many thumbprints could be stamped by each learner. When the paint is dry, add faces and other details with fine-point markers.

Option 2. Baptism Picture

Give learners paper and crayons. Ask them to draw a picture of a baptism. Suggest they look at Poster No. 4 from the Gathering that shows a baptismal font, a banner and a Paschal candle for ideas. Learners can label the people at the baptism if they wish to do so.

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

Option 1. Game, “Stand Up, Sit Down”

Gather the players in a circle, and invite them to sit in chairs or on the floor. Tell them to stand if the statement they hear is about baptism, and to sit if it is not. Read the following statements:

1. Peter preached a sermon at Pentecost. (stand)
2. Isaac was the son of Abraham and Sarah. (sit)
3. Three thousand were baptized at Pentecost. (stand)
4. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus fled to Egypt to escape Herod. (sit)
5. Jesus went to the temple when he was twelve. (sit)
6. Peter said, “Ask for the forgiveness of your sins. . . .” (stand)
7. “(The Christians) devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship. . . .” (stand)

Other statements may be added by the teacher or at the suggestion of the learners.

Option 2. Puzzle, “The Apostles Baptized People”

Use Puzzle Sheet III.2 titled “The Apostles Baptized 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. Find the Answer

Invite the learners to find *Acts 2* in their Bibles. Note that the *Acts of the Apostles* is in the New Testament right after the Gospels. In the story of the first Pentecost, the people asked Peter, “What shall we do?” Ask the class members to work in pairs to find Peter's answer.

Ask the learners: Who is the promise for? What did the people devote themselves to?

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

This story is about 3,000 people who were baptized at one time. Ask: How do you think the apostles managed to do it? If you had been there with a camera, what would your pictures show? After all the people were baptized, where do you think they went? What might they have said to others about what happened?

Talk with the group about what baptisms are like in your own congregation. Have the learners been to a service of baptism where many people were baptized? What was it like?

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Visit the baptismal font in your church. Before taking this field trip, explain that each learner should study the font carefully so that when the group returns to the classroom, everyone will be prepared to draw a detailed picture. Compare the font in your congregation with the one on Poster No. 4 used in the Gathering (above). Another possibility would be to gather the group around the font for a group picture made with an instant camera. Post the scene in the classroom.

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached about Jesus. When the people heard him, they” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What did the people think? What did the apostles do?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can dramatize the scene in which Peter and the other apostles baptize members of the crowd.

MUSIC (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Sing again with the *Children Sing!* tape “Descend, O Spirit” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 297; *We Sing of God*, 50), using again the following motions:

- Descend, O Spirit, (*move arms in downward, swooping movement*)
- purging flame, (*bring hands together in front, and fan them upward and outward like a flame*)
- brand us this day with Jesus' Name! (*make the sign of the cross on foreheads*)
- Confirm our faith, (*stand tall and fold arms in front*)
- consume our doubt; (*move arms in a large circle outward*)
- sign us as Christ's, within, without. (*form cross with arms extended*)

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

Baptismal Banner. Continue to work on the baptism banner introduced in Session 1. Make patterns from the adopted design and begin to cut from the felt.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 20 has a picture of a priest and a family at a baptismal font, the baptismal formula, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We thank you for the Sacrament of Baptism.

(Other thanksgivings can be offered)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

The baptism of thousands at the first Pentecost is the beginning of this sacramental rite in the Church. Have the children gained a sense that the story of baptism is continuous from the time of the apostles until today in your own congregation? Are they able to see a connection between a baptism that happened at a river and what happens at the font in their own church?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session looks at details of a service of Holy Baptism as it is administered in the Church today. Spend some time reflecting on a baptism you have witnessed recently. Review in *The Book of Common Prayer* the order of the service and the italicized directions (rubrics).

BAPTISM: PEOPLE IN COVENANT

Session 3

The Church's People Are Baptized

FOCUS

Baptized persons are known in the world as Christians. The learners should be able to say whether they, or others they know, have been baptized—and to share stories of the sacrament of baptism.

GETTING READY

This session offers teachers and learners an opportunity to share what they know about Holy Baptism as it has been preserved and practiced in the Church. We remember over and over what this sacrament means—for ourselves and others. In preparation, read through the service in *The Book of Common Prayer*, including the introductory comments under the heading “Concerning the Service” on page 298. Note especially the first sentence:

“Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into Christ's Body the Church. The bond which God establishes in Baptism is indissoluble.”

John the Baptist's immersion of Jesus in the River Jordan is the basis for the Christian practice of baptism. Baptism was not a new concept, however. Jewish people already had been baptizing converts on the day of their circumcision. John was apparently was the first man to baptize Jews instead of Gentiles. Baptism in the early Church was generally a full immersion in water. The act of sprinkling water over the baptized came later, when immersion in colder climates was impractical.

Primary-age learners are beginning to have a sense of what it means to belong to a group along with others. Baptism, an initiation into the Church, establishes a tie to God that can never be broken. This is important to a child's growth in faith.

Grant, Lord God, to all who have been baptized into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, that, as we have put away the old life of sin, so we may be renewed in the spirit of our minds, and live in righteousness and true holiness; 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 all Baptized Christians
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 252

TEACHING TIP

Throughout this unit, the sacrament of Baptism is lifted up as the ideal for all persons. Some children, however, may not have been baptized for a variety of reasons. Be sensitive to this. Reassure the group that God loves everyone, baptized or not. Encourage children to talk with their parents about baptism.

GATHERING

Ahead of time, collect items that are part of a traditional baptism. Display them in the classroom. Suggestions: a baptismal certificate, a baptismal candle, a christening dress, and pictures of a baptism.

As the learners arrive, ask them to look carefully at the items. Show them the service of Holy Baptism in *The Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 299-308. Invite their questions.

When all are present, say the Apostles' Creed (using Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packet):

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. . . .
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 96

STORYTELLING (Time: 10 minutes)

Share a story about the Church as a community of baptized persons. Open the Bible and show the learners again where to find *Acts 2:40-41*. Read aloud verse 41a:

“So those who welcomed (Peter's) message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.”

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

1. Review the story of Peter's sermon and the many people who were baptized as a result (from the previous session).

2. If possible, obtain copies of baptismal records to show to the learners: certificates of Holy Baptism (actual or photocopied); a record of baptisms from the congregation's register; one or more family Bibles showing entries for baptisms. The items used in the Gathering (above) can be shared at this time. Invite the learners to share any stories they know about past, present, or future baptisms.

3. Tell the story of a baptism that you have attended. Use the service in *The Book of Common Prayer* as an outline. Describe the people who took part, the parents, godparents, or sponsors, the baby or person baptized. What happened at the moment of baptism? How did the people at the service greet the person who was baptized?

(The learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, chapter 3, describes how baptism makes us members of the Christian community. Remind the children that they can read this story at home.)

CREATING (Time: 15-20 minutes)

Option 1. A Baptism Book

Make booklets that can be given to the newly baptized at your church. Give each class member several sheets of drawing paper. Tell the group to fold their sheets in half and staple them in the center. Invite the learners to

use crayons and markers to fill their books with illustrations of a baptism, using the items from the Gathering and the Take-Home Cards.

Option 2. My Baptismal Certificate

Give the learners copies of the simple baptismal certificate provided in the Teacher's Packet on Poster No. 15, along with a variety of materials such as glue, ribbon, glitter, paint, tissue, and construction paper. Ask the learners to make Baptismal Certificates by printing their names, birthdays, and any other information they know. (They can complete the certificates later by asking their parents or friends to help with items they do not know.) The certificates can be decorated in any way the children choose.

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

Option 1. Game, "Pass the Good News"

In Holy Baptism, we are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Gather the group in a circle. Whisper good news to one learner, who then passes it along to the next. Continue around the circle. The last person in the circle can stand and say the "good news" in a loud voice. Compare the final message with the one first whispered, and correct any errors that may have occurred. For "news," use sentences like the following:

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; . . ."

"Love one another as I have loved you."

"I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, . . ."

Option 2. Puzzle, "The Church's People Are Baptized"

Use Puzzle Sheet III.3 titled "The Church's People Are Baptized." 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. Find Baptism

On a piece of newsprint or a chalkboard, write the following citations: *Matthew 3:16; Acts 8:13; Acts 9:17-18; Acts 16:14-15; Acts 16:27, 33.*

The learners work in teams to locate the verses in their Bibles. Ask them to find out who was baptized in each passage. Write down the names on the board or newsprint. In the order given above, these are Jesus, Simon, Saul/Paul, Lydia, and the jailer.

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

Primary-age children are very much aware of what it means to belong to an identifiable group. Talk with the class members about the groups to which they belong, such as Cub Scouts, Brownies, sports teams, dance classes, and clubs. Discuss uniforms, pins, activities, and meeting places for these groups.

Ask: How is belonging to the church different from belonging to other groups? How is it the same? What does it mean to belong to the family of God?

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite a member of the congregation who was baptized as an adult or teenager to visit the class. Encourage the visitor to share details about what happened. What preparations were made? How did it feel to be welcomed into the church's family? What difference did the baptism make in the visitor's life?

IMAGINING

(Time: 10-20 minutes)

Share a story starter: "When I went a baptism at our church, I saw" Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What did they see? Who else was there? What happened?

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. Invite the learners to act out a service of baptism. Items from the Gathering can be used as props.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing again the first stanza of "Descend, O Spirit" (*The Hymnal 1982, 297; We Sing of God, 50*) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Use the movements from the previous session. Introduce the second stanza. Sing several times, adding the following actions:

Forbid us not (*open arms in a welcoming gesture*)
this second birth; (*make a cradle with folded arms*)
grant unto us the greater worth! (*fold hands in prayer*)
Enlist us in your service, Lord; (*raise hands above head, reaching heavenward*)
baptize all nations (*pour water with hand as a basin*)
with your Word. (*hands together, opened like a book*)

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

Baptismal Banner. Attach the larger pieces of the felt design to the background piece of cloth for the basic design of the banner begun in earlier sessions.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 21 has a picture of an infant child being baptized in an Orthodox service, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We give you thanks for the gift of Baptism.
(Add your own thanksgivings)
We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.
From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

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 familiar were the learners with the sacrament of baptism as it is administered in your congregation? How many of them had been to a baptism? What were their experiences? Encourage the children to attend a Service of Holy Baptism.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is about the promises that are made by a person being baptized, and by sponsors or godparents at the baptism of infants. As you prepare, think about the promises we make to others, to the children in our lives, and to God.

BAPTISM: PEOPLE IN COVENANT

Session 4

Baptized People Make Promises

FOCUS

People who are baptized make promises to God, and they know that God makes a promise to them. The gift of the Holy Spirit is the living presence of God with all baptized people. The learners should be able to tell one or more promises to God that are made at baptism.

GETTING READY

The sacrament of Holy Baptism happens only once for each of us. But every time a new member is baptized into the Church (the Body of Christ), the whole congregation responds to this invitation: “Let us join with those who are committing themselves to Christ and renew our own baptismal covenant” (BCP, p. 303).

The Baptismal Covenant is at the heart of the service. It reminds us of our responsibility to live in the world as persons of faith who love God and our neighbors.

The concept of making a solemn promise, with the intent of keeping it, can be understood by primary-age children. It is important for them to be introduced to baptism as a covenant—a bond in which promises were made on their behalf by members of the congregation.

God makes several important promises in the Old Testament, especially to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. To Abraham, God decrees that his descendants will be as numerous as the stars. God also promises to make Abraham's future son, Isaac, a great king of nations.

God makes a similar promise to Isaac. God tells Isaac that his descendants would live in an alien land, but one day they would return to their homeland and rule as a mighty kingdom.

To Jacob, God promises that his offspring will be like the dust of the earth. Many nations would come from Jacob and his descendants.

God makes a different covenant with Moses. God chooses Moses to lead the people out of Egypt into the Promised Land, the land of “milk and honey.” A new covenant between God and the people of Israel is summed up in the Ten Commandments.

God makes a promise to us when we are baptized that our sins will be forgiven and that we will have the gift of God's presence with us in the person of the Holy Spirit.

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

For Those About To Be Baptized
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 819

TEACHING TIP

In this session, be alert to the learners' concepts of what it means to make promises and keep them. Primary-age children can be very vehement about promises. Link the promises made in baptism with the learners' seriousness about promises in general. For instance, note the rituals and actions connected to promises children make as members of clubs, teams, or other groups.

GATHERING

Write the word “promise” on a sheet of paper or a chalkboard. As the learners arrive, invite them to write or illustrate a promise they have made recently.

When all are present, gather the group and say the Apostles' Creed (using Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packet):

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. . . .
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 96

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible and show the learners where to find *Acts 2:38b-39*. Read aloud verse 39:

“For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.”

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

1. Describe baptism as a sacrament in which promises are made. Review the story of a baptism in your congregation told in the last session. Focus on The Baptismal Covenant (BCP, p. 304) as a time when promises were made by all who were there.

2. Mention briefly the questions of the Covenant, putting each one in your own words.

3. Talk with the learners about promises God made to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. He promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars or the grains of sand on the seashores. God promises that Isaac's descendants would rule over a mighty kingdom. God tells Jacob that his offspring would be like the dust of the earth. God's promises to Moses were much more formal. God gave Moses the law as a binding covenant between God and the people of Israel.

4. Explain that God also makes a promise to us when we are baptized. We are promised that God will forgive us when we do wrong and ask for forgiveness. God gives us the gift of the Holy Spirit at baptism.

(The learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, chapter 4, describes the kinds of promises made during baptism. Remind the children that they can read this story at home.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. New from Old

Baptism is a time for the Church to welcome new members to the community. In addition to the booklets made last session, the learners could decorate baptismal candles to be given to the person or family of the newly baptized.

Bring enough 12-inch white taper candles for each learner. Talk about baptismal symbols that could be used in decorations by looking at Poster No. 4 in the Teacher's Packet and the Take-Home Cards. Ask the learners to draw the symbols and cut them out. Attach them to the candle with two-sided tape. Invite the learners to write a brief message or draw a picture to give to the newly baptized along with the candle.

Option 2. My Promise Book

Each learner can make a book of coupons by stapling strips of paper together. On the strips, the learners write or draw pictures of promises they will make to members of their families. Examples: I promise to hang up my clothes without being reminded. I promise to clean my room next Saturday. I promise to help with the dishes on Sunday. Suggest that they include several “stewardship” coupons of promises they will make to the Church. Examples: I will give ___ of my allowance to the offering. I will sing in the children's choir.

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

Option 1. Game, “Promises, Promises”

Print, in large letters, the word “promises” on newsprint or a board. Make a line or square under each of the eight letters. On eight index cards, use a marker to print each of the letters in the word. Form teams, and distribute the cards evenly among them.

The teacher asks questions about promises made in baptism. Teams take turns to answer. A correct answer permits a team to tape one of the cards under the letter it matches. Encourage teams to help one another until all the cards are posted. (If the group is large, two boards and two sets of cards can be used.)

Here are some sample questions to ask:

At baptism, what do we say we believe about God the Father? (Answer: that God made/created heaven and earth.)

What do we say we believe about Jesus Christ? (Any phrase from that section of the Creed would be an acceptable answer.)

What else do we say we believe in? (Several answers are acceptable: the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.)

What do we promise to do about attending the Church's services?

What do we promise to do about evil (wrong)?

What do we promise to say to others about Jesus?

How do we promise to treat other people?

Option 2. Puzzle, “Promises of Baptism”

Use Puzzle Sheet III.4 titled “Promises of Baptism.” 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. The Baptismal Covenant

The baptismal covenant, which is central to our faith, can be understood at every age level. Invite the learners to talk over the promises made in the Baptismal Covenant, from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 304. Suggest they express these promises in their own words. (The final paragraphs in Chapter 4 of the learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, may be helpful.)

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

Begin by asking the learners: When you join a special group (Brownies, Cub Scouts, school clubs, and others), what do you promise to do? Why do you think these promises are important? Ask learners to describe how these promises are made. Is there a special ceremony?

Talk with the learners about what happens when promises are broken. Why does this happen? How can we help one another to keep the promises we make? How do group members help you keep promises?

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Invite an active member of the congregation to visit the class. Talk with this visitor about the promises made at baptism and how Christians work together to keep them. The learners could prepare interview questions based on the questions of the Baptismal Covenant, such as: How do you take part in the Church and its services of Holy Eucharist? What helps you to live a Christian life? What do you tell other people about your faith in Jesus? How do you serve and care for other people? What do you do to work for justice and peace?

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “At a service of baptism, people make promises. I try to keep promises by . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how they keep their promises.

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. Play a version of “Charades” by dividing the class into teams. Each team thinks of a promise from either the Bible or their own lives. (Be prepared with suggestions for younger learners, who may need help.) The teams then take turns acting out promises for the others to guess.

MUSIC (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Listen again on the *Children Sing!* tape to “Descend, O Spirit, purging flame” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 297; *We Sing of God*, 50). Invite the learners to

create their own stanza that tells about the promises we make to God, and God's promise to be with us always.

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

Baptismal Banner. Add details to the banner, using the trimmings and smaller pieces created for the design.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 22 has a picture of a baptismal scene showing a young girl with a candle, a Scripture verse, facts about baptism, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Close the session with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We give you thanks for the promises made
at baptism.

(Add additional thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From *The Prayers of the People, Form VI*

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Primary-age children are able to make promises and are very much aware of promises made to them. To what extent did the class members grasp the concept of the promises made to us by God? How can this understanding be reinforced in the coming sessions?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session looks at the roles of godparents, parents, and members of the congregation in the lives of the newly baptized. Consider how you have carried out one of these roles. Who has been a Christian role model for you?

BAPTISM: PEOPLE IN COVENANT

Session 5

The Church Is a Family of Faith

FOCUS

Faith is shared in the family of God's people. In Holy Baptism, we all promise to support baptized people and provide encouragement and instruction. The learners should be able to tell how families, godparents, and teachers in the Church share their faith.

GETTING READY

Parents and godparents are asked two questions when a child receives Holy Baptism (see BCP, p. 302):

—Will you be responsible for seeing that the child you present is brought up in the Christian faith and life?

—Will you by your prayers and witness help this child to grow into the full stature of Christ?

The answer to both questions: “I will, with God's help.”

Teachers, parents, and godparents are crucial in helping children fulfill their baptismal promises. These adults can discuss and reinforce Bible stories with children and emphasize the deeper meaning behind the stories. These important role models also can set examples of prayer, worship, kindness and compassion for children to follow. They can encourage children to become involved in volunteer activities that help those less fortunate.

Clearly, the role played by family members and godparents is critical.

In the baptism service, the Celebrant also asks the congregation:

—Will you who witness these vows do all in your power to support these persons in their life in Christ?

The people respond: “We will.” (See BCP, p. 303.)

Responsibility for the Christian nurture of newly baptized persons falls on parents, godparents, and the congregation as a whole.

This session is intended to help primary-age children to think about all the persons at home and in the congregation who grow with them as Christ's faithful people. The Church is a “family of faith” similar to households in which young Christians grow and learn each day.

Grant, Almighty God, that we, who have been redeemed from the old life of sin by our baptism into the death and resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ, may be renewed in your Holy Spirit, and live in righteousness and true holiness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

At Confirmation

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 254

TEACHING TIP

This session's emphasis on families and their role in helping children to grow as Christians may result in discussions about the class members' own family life. Be a sensitive, thoughtful listener. You may find opportunities to

cooperate with parents in encouraging habits of prayer and conversation about the Christian faith. Speak with the children's parents or send occasional letters to their homes.

GATHERING

Ahead of time, post several sheets of newsprint in the classroom. As the learners arrive, invite them to think of the names of all the people they know who are members of their congregation. With crayons and markers, they can put the names on the newsprint (as on a graffiti board). Help with the spelling of names if necessary.

When all are present, gather the group and say the Apostles' Creed (using Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packet):

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. . . .
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 96

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Open the Bible and show the learners where to find *II Timothy 1:5*. Read the verse aloud, explaining that it is the apostle Paul speaking to the younger Timothy:

“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.”

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

1. Tell a story about how the Church shares its faith with people of all ages. For example, in church school, children learn about God. Teens may be involved in church youth groups, and adults may be in Bible study classes.

2. Then talk about families: Some families are large, others are small. Every family is different and has its own way of doing things, but our families are important to us when we are growing up, for we spend more time with them than with anyone else. We learn in families, and we do many things together. We laugh, we cry, we play, we work, we eat and sleep, and we speak and listen. In Christian families we pray together, go to church, receive Holy Communion, and hear the good news of Jesus again and again. Our faith in God is shared in our families.

3. Tell about the apostle Paul's young Christian friend, Timothy. Paul believed that Timothy's faith in Jesus was growing because of what he learned from his grandmother, Lois, and his mother, Eunice (*II Timothy 1:5-7*). Paul tells Timothy to “rekindle the gift of God that is within you.”

4. Ask the children: How does your family (your parents and your godparents) help you to learn more about God and God's Son, Jesus Christ? Do not press for answers, but allow time for anyone who wishes to share.

5. Describe your congregation as a family brought together by Holy

Baptism. We are all Christians together at worship and at other times. We are people who care about one another, just as family members do.

6. Share the fact that the early Christians who were baptized by the apostles of Jesus wanted to be taught. They had many questions to ask, and they wanted to learn how to be good followers of Christ. Ask the learners to think of “one good thing” each one remembers about a teacher at your church, and then to share aloud if they wish.

(The learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, chapter 5, describes the family of God that Paul called “the body of Christ.” Remind the children that they can read this story at home.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. My Family, God's Family

Give each learner a large sheet of white drawing paper, crayons, and markers. Ask the learners to fold the paper in half. On the left side of the paper the learners will draw pictures of family members as they arrive at church. On the right side of the paper, the learners will draw pictures of any other persons they know who are members of God's family.

Option 2. Family Collage

Provide construction paper, scissors, glue, and a variety of magazines. Invite the learners to create a collage of pictures that represent “Our Families” and “The Family of God.”

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

Option 1. Game, “Family”

Half of the learners form a circle. The other half walk around outside the circle as music is played or sung. When the music stops, each person on the outside finds a partner in the circle. They clap hands, saying, “I have a family. You have a family. We are part of God's family.” The partners then change places. A new group stands in the circle, and the rest move around the outside until the music stops. The game can continue until time is up or interest wanes.

Option 2. Puzzle, “Family of Faith”

Use Puzzle Sheet III.5 titled “Family of Faith.” 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. Find the Letters

The Scripture for this session is from *II Timothy*. This is the first time a passage from an Epistle has been cited in this unit. Explain to the learners that “epistle” means “letter.” Show the class members where the letters begin in the New Testament, just after the *Acts of the Apostles*. The longest letter is *Paul's Epistle to the Romans*. The shortest letters are *II John*, *III John*, and *Jude*. *Paul's Second Letter to Timothy* is about half way through

the New Testament epistles. Invite the learners to find the greeting (compare it to “Dear Timothy,”) and the closing (compare it to “Sincerely yours,”).

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

Begin by describing Timothy, his mother Eunice, and his grandmother Lois. Ask: What do you think Eunice and Lois might have told Timothy?

Invite the class members to share stories about people in their own lives who have talked with them about God. Encourage the sharing of prayers and family activities that have special meaning to the children.

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite a member of the congregation who is a godparent to visit the class. Ask: How did it feel to be chosen as a godparent? In what ways do you stay in touch with your godchild? What are your hopes for your godchild? What would you like to say to other godparents in the Church?

Invite the learners to share stories and experiences they have had with their godparents.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “A special person who helps me know about God . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. Suggest that the story include something about the person's life in the Church.

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 choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: going to church with a godparent; sharing an experience described by a learner during the Inquiring; reading together from the Bible.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Introduce the words to “Our Father, by whose Name” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 587. The second stanza appears in *We Sing of God*, 90). Listen to the hymn on the *Children Sing!* tape. The words of the hymn reflect the love of God for all families. Notice that the three stanzas relate to the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. You may need to explain “sentinel” in the first stanza.

CONTINUING ACTIVITY

(Time: 10-20 minutes)

Baptismal Banner. Complete the details of the banner project, and secure it to a pole so that it may hang in the classroom or elsewhere in the church for all to enjoy. If possible, the banner may be presented formally to the church as a gift from the class. This could be done in a family service of worship or at a fellowship gathering.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 23 has a picture of a family gathered at a baptismal font, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

Thank you for our families and for others
who love us.

(Learners may add names of people)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learner: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

From the class activities, what did you discover about the learners' sense of belonging to the Church as a family of faith? What did they say about the people they know in your congregation? Think of ways to encourage more interaction with other church members.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next three sessions look at events of Holy Week and Easter. Session 6 is about Jesus' washing of his disciples' feet at the Last Supper. This was to signify Jesus' role as a servant. Think about your own opportunities to serve other people.

BAPTISM: PEOPLE IN COVENANT

Session 6

Jesus Washes His Friends' Feet

FOCUS

Jesus had a Last Supper with his friends. The learners should be able to tell what Jesus was teaching when he washed the disciples' feet at this meal.

GETTING READY

This is the first in a series of three sessions in this unit that relate to the themes of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Day.

Holy Week begins with the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. On Thursday, he gathered with his disciples for a Passover supper. In the Gospels of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* he instructs his disciples to find a place to prepare the meal. Jesus and his disciples break bread together and Jesus says the words that are similar to those we hear at Eucharist. He tells them that one of them will betray him. The writer of the *Gospel of John* provides a different story of what happened at the Last Supper. He shares a footwashing in *John 13:1-15*.

Footwashing was not uncommon at that time. The roads were dusty, and many wore open sandals. Washing a guest's feet would be a kind gesture that would also limit dirt being brought inside. The disciples might have expected a servant to wash their feet. They were dismayed that Jesus would take on the role of a servant to wash their feet.

Today churches often schedule a footwashing on Maundy Thursday as part of Holy Week observances. Footwashing is a reminder that we are to follow Christ's example of servanthood.

What Jesus says about “washing” would probably have been linked by early Christians to their baptisms. Jesus says to Peter that, even though he does not understand it yet, he must allow Jesus to wash him in order that he may be truly united to his Teacher and Lord. In our baptism, we are both cleansed of sin and made one with Christ.

For primary-age children, already concerned about status and position, the story can have an important impact. Jesus' lesson on humble service to others—exemplified in this sign he performs at the Last Supper—is a powerful reminder to us that the life of a people baptized into Christ's Body is meant for serving others.

The word “Maundy” is an old English word formed from the Latin *mandatum* (as in the word “commandment”). On Maundy Thursday we remember Jesus' words from *John 15:2*, spoken that night after the Supper: “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

Almighty God, you gave to your servant special gifts of grace to understand and teach the truth as it is in Christ Jesus: Grant that by this teaching we may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen*.

TEACHING TIP

In forming questions for learners, begin with fact questions that get the learners in touch with the story. Let the next level of questions ask for comparisons regarding events or lives of people in the story. The last level of questioning can focus on how an individual feels, or would respond to an event or circumstance. Children will be more comfortable discussing their feelings after they have had time to think about the content of stories.

GATHERING

Ahead of time, clip out magazine or newspaper pictures of persons engaged in forms of service to others (such as waiters, bank tellers, computer instructors, or salespersons in stores). As learners arrive, ask: What do the pictures seem to have in common? What are the people doing? What heading could be written to connect the pictures together? (Be alert for any responses that suggest “service” and “serving.”)

When all are present, gather the group and say the Apostles' Creed (using Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packet):

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. . . .

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 96

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Tell the story of Jesus' washing the disciples' feet at the Last Supper. Open the Bible and show the learners where *John 13:1-15* is located. Read aloud verse 14:

“So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

The learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Begin by describing sandals worn in Jesus' day, and the common practice of having a servant wash away dust from the feet of guests arriving for a meal.

2. Describe the scene as Jesus and his disciples gathered for the supper that would be his last before he was betrayed and led away to be tried and crucified. The Twelve might expect that a servant would wash their feet.

3. But Jesus did a very surprising thing! He put a towel around his waist, took up a basin of water, and did the footwashing himself.

4. Reveal Peter's surprise and protest, and share Jesus' reply to him.

5. Explain that Jesus wanted to make it very clear that he had come to be God's special Servant. He wants us all to learn to be servants to one another. That is the way we let the world know that we are a baptized community

who cares about the people around us, and will be helpful to them. We do not act proud and boastful, expecting simply to be served by others.

(The learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, chapter 6, describes the relationship of baptism to the season of Lent. Remind the children that they can read this story at home.)

CREATING (Time: 15-20 minutes)

Option 1. Towels

Provide each child with a piece of cloth or inexpensive dish towel. Use flat cotton or linen cloth; avoid fabric that pills easily. Using fabric markers or other permanent markers, invite the learners to decorate the towels with symbols such as a cross, fish, Greek letters, or other Christian symbols. (Display some possibilities from books or articles about Church symbolism.) The towels will serve as reminders of Jesus' servanthood, demonstrated by the footwashing account in the *Gospel of John*.

Option 2. The Last Supper

Examine one or more pictures of the Last Supper. (Note that a reproduction of the well-known painting by Leonardo daVinci can be found in the optional learners' book for the Shell Primary year—*Jesus, Son of God*.) Invite the class members to create their own versions of the Last Supper. Give each learner a piece of construction paper, markers, and other art materials. Some may wish to draw; others may want to create a collage effect by adding tissue and other materials.

EXPLORING THE STORY (Time: 10-15 minutes)

Option 1. Spinner Game, “What Happened?”

Use the game board provided on Poster No. 15 in the Teacher's Packet. Paste the sheet to a piece of heavy cardboard. Use a long-shank paper fastener to attach the spinner through a hole at the center.

Players take turns spinning. The spinner will point to a picture of one of the following: towel, basin, sandals, foot, stairway to the Upper Room, a feast table, a cup, or a loaf of bread. As the spinner stops, the teacher says: “Tell how this picture fits into the story of the Last Supper.”

Option 2. Puzzle, “Jesus Washes His Friends Feet”

Use Puzzle Sheet III.6 titled “Jesus Washes His Friends' Feet.” 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 the Scripture

The account of the footwashing appears only in the *Gospel of John*. Help learners to find *John 13:1-15*. Provide a series of quoted phrases or clauses from the passage. Ask the class members to locate and call out the verse numbers.

Possible quotations: “before the festival of the Passover” (verse 1); “tied a towel around himself” (verse 4); “Lord, are you going to wash my feet?” (verse 6); “you also ought to wash one another's feet” (verse 14). (Add other quoted phrases of your own choosing.)

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

Talk with the learners about the role of servants. How was Jesus a servant in the story of Maundy Thursday? Ask: What did the disciples think about what Jesus was doing? What would you have said or done if you had been there? How can/do we serve other people? What are some of the ways God calls us to serve others?

Spend some time reflecting aloud about the needs of hungry and homeless people in your community and in other parts of the world. Encourage the learners to think about forms of service that may be open to members of your congregation.

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Invite a clergyperson to come to the class in vestments for a footwashing. Ask the visitor to speak about this centuries-old practice in the Church.

While respecting the serious nature of this event, be ready for some levity for primary-age children. Footwashing can a fun and community building experience as well. For example, let the children make footprints in paint on large pieces of butcher paper. Then have a footwashing. Encourage a spirit that helps the learners sense the theme of service. Be sure to think through details such as a proper container for the water and sufficient towels.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “Jesus welcomed the disciples to the Last Supper. He had a towel in his hand. When Jesus knelt at my feet, I . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What would it be like to have Jesus wash your feet?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: the footwashing, the Last Supper, or other events that exemplify servanthood.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing with the *Children Sing!* tape “As Christ breaks bread” (stanza 3 of “I come with joy to meet my Lord” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 304, *We Sing of God*, 51). This hymn for Holy Eucharist is set to an American folk tune and is especially appropriate for this session on the Last Supper. Repeat the stanza several times.

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

Easter Garden. Begin an Easter garden. Use a tray or flat surface to

display several pots in which seeds or small plants can be placed. Work with the learners as they do the planting and watering. Pansies work well for this kind of project. Be sure to include some grass seed, which will sprout quickly and provide a carpet of green for the garden.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 24 has a picture of a bowl and a towel, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We thank you for all people who serve others.

(Add other intercessions)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Primary-age children can be concerned about the welfare of other people. How do the class members demonstrate their awareness of others' needs, and ways in which people of all ages serve one another?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is about Good Friday. Read one or more of the Gospel accounts. Recall when you first became aware of what happened on Good Friday. How old were you? What were your reactions? How has your understanding of the Crucifixion changed?

BAPTISM: PEOPLE IN COVENANT

Session 7

Jesus Died and Was Buried

FOCUS

Jesus died on the cross and was buried in a tomb provided by Joseph of Arimathea, his friend. The learners should be able to tell of Jesus' death and burial on Good Friday.

GETTING READY

From the Church's point of view, we are not leaving the theme of baptism behind as we turn to the sessions related to Holy Week and Easter. For in baptism we have been “buried with” Christ and raised up to new life. (That is the symbolism expressed by the apostle Paul in *Romans 6:4* and *Colossians 2:12*.)

These words from the Epistles are echoed in the prayer, Thanksgiving over the Water, in our service of Holy Baptism (BCP, p. 306): “We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection.”

The Easter Vigil has often been a time for baptism as far back as the early Church. Individuals spent three years preparing for baptism, with the final preparation occurring during Lent.

After the events of Maundy Thursday, including the Last Supper and Jesus' arrest and trial, Jesus died on the cross. Two followers, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, took his body and prepared it for burial with spices such as myrrh and aloë. Spices were placed between the cloth and the body to take away the odor of decay.

The two men wrapped Jesus' body in linen cloths and placed it in a tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea that was located in a garden. They also wrapped the head of Jesus in a linen napkin. Afterward, they covered the entrance to the tomb with a large stone. Tombs located in caves usually were sealed by stones to keep in smells and keep out animals.

Little is known of Joseph of Arimathea except that he practiced his Christianity in secret because he feared Jewish authorities. Nicodemus had come to Jesus previously and asked Jesus to teach him.

For primary-age children, we share the story of Holy Week and encourage their participation in the Church's enactment of the drama of Jesus' death and resurrection. This lays the foundation for their later understanding of baptism and new life in Jesus Christ.

Almighty God, we pray you graciously to behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed, and given into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

Good Friday
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 221

TEACHING TIP

Primary-age children may have many questions about Jesus' death on the cross. They may ask, Why would anyone want to kill him? Who wanted him to be put to death? It will be important for teachers to think through proper responses. Stress the fact that it was “enemies” of Jesus who called for him to die. Avoid singling out individuals or groups as primarily responsible. (Christians understand that all humankind bears responsibility for the death of the Son of God.)

GATHERING

Display two crosses in the front of the classroom. Drape one with a black ribbon or piece of black cloth. Cover the second one with brightly colored fabric or ribbons, or tissue flowers. By the side of each cross, post a large sheet of newsprint or posterboard. As the learners arrive, invite them to write words or draw simple pictures that express their feelings about each cross. (Younger learners may want to dictate words to older class members or the teacher.)

Gather the group, and say the Apostles' Creed (using Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packet):

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. . . .
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 96

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Share the story of Jesus' death and burial on Good Friday. Open the Bible and show the learners where to find *John 19:38-42*. Read aloud verse 40:

“They took the body of Jesus, and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews.”

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

1. Begin by sharing in a few sentences the essential facts of Good Friday: Jesus was condemned to death and taken outside the city of Jerusalem to a hillside where he was hanged on a cross between two criminals. He suffered and died. (For children of primary-age, these facts require no elaboration.)

2. Describe the two men who were secret friends of Jesus: Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (the same one who had come to Jesus at night to ask him questions about faith in God, as described in *John 3:1-21*). Both

were Jewish leaders. They took the body of Jesus after his death and prepared it for burial in a new tomb that belonged to Joseph. (You may want to tell about the spices used to preserve the body, including myrrh. Remind learners that myrrh was one of the gifts brought by the Wise Men at the time of Jesus' birth.)

3. Good Friday ends in deep disappointment for all the friends of Jesus. They remembered all that he had said and done. They could not understand why their Lord and Teacher was now dead.

4. Say the words of the Apostles' Creed that refer to the crucifixion of Jesus.

(The learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, chapter 7, describes the events of Good Friday. Remind the children that they can read this story at home.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Crayon Cross

Draw an outline of a cross (approximately 5 x 7 inches) on a sheet of construction paper. Invite the learners to use a black crayon to divide the cross into irregular segments, then color the segments with crayons or markers. The crosses may then be cut out.

Option 2. Stained Glass Crosses

Provide a supply of broken wax crayons. Invite the learners to shave a variety of colors onto a piece of wax paper to form a cross. (Use the side of a pair of scissors, a hand-held pencil sharpener, or a cheese grater.) When the crayon shavings are completed, place another piece of wax paper on the top and iron the wax paper at a medium temperature. This will melt the crayon and seal the two pieces of wax paper together. A cross shape can be cut out of the fused sheets.

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

Option 1. Game, “Cross Puzzle”

Using the pattern on Poster No. 16 in the Teacher's Packet, copy a cross for each learner. The crosses can be cut to form a puzzle. Learners can use and reuse their cross puzzles. Trade puzzles with other learners for fun. Provide envelopes for taking them home.

Option 2. Puzzle, “Jesus Died and Was Buried”

Use Puzzle Sheet III.7 titled “Jesus Died and Was Buried.” 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. Seven Last Words

We can locate seven sayings of Jesus that were spoken from the cross. They are spread among the four Gospels. Invite the learners to find, in their Bibles, the seven “last words” of Jesus. These may be found in *Luke 23:34; Luke 23:43; John 19:26; Matthew 27:46; John 19:28; John 19:30; Luke 23:46*.

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

Allow time for the learners to express their feelings about the events of Good Friday. Ask: What do you remember best from the story? How do you feel when you hear about Jesus' crucifixion? Why is this so important for Christians?

Think together about Joseph of Arimathea. Why would he want to provide a tomb for Jesus? What made him do this?

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Locate a crucifix, an icon, or another image of the crucifixion (such as a stained glass window, a painting, or a sculpture). Take the class to visit the place. Spend some time in quiet reflection. Ask learners to look at the object quietly and then close their eyes and remember it. Invite them to open their eyes and move to a new place to look at the same object. The learners may respond to this visit by drawing or painting their own feelings about Good Friday.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “It was Saturday morning and everyone in Jerusalem seemed very sad. They were all talking about . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might the people have gone on 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 story.

Group role play. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: people standing around looking at the empty cross, remembering the events of the day before; Joseph of Arimathea providing the tomb for Jesus' burial; a visit to the garden where Jesus was buried; or a scene of a group of children sharing stories of their friend Jesus.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing with the *Children Sing!* tape “There is a green hill far away” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 167; *We Sing of God*, 31). Encourage the children to think about the words and mood of this Good Friday hymn.

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

Easter Garden. Add more green plants and a few rocks to the Easter garden. Check on the progress of seeds, and add water if needed. Ask the learners: When the garden is complete, where will it be displayed so that others in the congregation may see it?

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 25 has a picture of a Navajo cross, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus.

(Add intercessions)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Were the children able to sense the sadness felt by the friends of Jesus after the crucifixion? What did the class members say about Good Friday? Have they gained a clear grasp of the link between Jesus' death and the good news of Easter?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session is designed for use on Easter or a class session following. It focuses on the discovery of the empty tomb by Mary Magdalene. As you prepare to share with the learners, reflect on Easter joys you have experienced in your own life.

BAPTISM: PEOPLE IN COVENANT

Session 8

Jesus Is Alive

FOCUS

Jesus was raised from the dead on the third day after his crucifixion. Mary Magdalene was the first person to see him at the empty tomb. The learners should be able to tell what happened on Easter morning.

GETTING READY

We sometimes assume that the Easter news, like the Nativity event, is so well known and loved that it will simply “teach itself” and not require careful attention.

Children may know about the resurrection and some can tell the story in their own way. But it is important for teachers to reflect on the Gospels' witness to Jesus' rising from the dead. If that had not happened, we would remember little else about him. He alone is greater than death; in this, Jesus is truly the Son of God whom we confess in our creeds. It is this risen Christ who meets us and claims us in Holy Baptism. He is living and active, our host at every celebration of Holy Eucharist.

All four of the Gospel writers record stories about the resurrection. In *Matthew*, Jesus is placed in the tomb after his death by Joseph of Arimathea. The Pharisees remember Jesus' promise that he will rise in three days, and so they heavily guard the tomb's entrance. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary visit the tomb on the third day. After an earthquake, an angel rolls away the stone. The angel tells the women that Jesus has been raised and is on his way to Galilee. The women meet Jesus along the road and he asks them to bring the disciples to Galilee.

In *Mark*, the “Marys” go to anoint Jesus' body on the third day. They are worried that they will be unable to move the stone back. Upon arriving at the tomb, they discover that the stone has already been moved. A man wearing a white robe tells them not to be afraid. He says that Jesus has been raised from the dead and that they should go and tell His disciples.

Luke's story begins in the same way: the women go to anoint Jesus' body, only to find the stone already rolled away. The women go in and find the tomb empty. Two men in dazzling clothes appear suddenly and tell the women to tell the apostles.

In *John*, Mary Magdalene goes to the tomb and sees the stone removed on the third day. She runs to Simon Peter and another disciple and says that Jesus' body has been stolen from the tomb. The two men go to the tomb and when they see the discarded linen cloths, they believe. Mary Magdalene later confronts the risen Jesus at the tomb.

Primary-age children are not too young to understand that the resurrection is the reason for the Church's being. It is important that they have an opportunity to hear and talk about Easter's good news.

Almighty God, whose blessed Son restored Mary Magdalene to health of body and of mind, and called her to be a witness of his resurrection: Mercifully grant that by your grace we may be healed from all our

infirmities and know you in the power of his unending life; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Saint Mary Magdalene
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 242

TEACHING TIP

Like Christmas, Easter is part of our commercial culture. It is an exciting day for children. Easter candies, bunnies, and egg hunts are likely to be on their minds. Eager expectancy is connected with the arrival of spring (now or just ahead on the calendar). For this class session, encourage active engagement and a spirit of thanksgiving for the good news of the resurrection.

GATHERING

As the learners arrive, invite them to share in building an empty tomb. As a base, use a cardboard box, florists' foam, or damp sand. Attach leaves, sticks, and grasses as a covering for the tomb.

Rocks and pebbles can be added. Include a larger stone that might have been at the tomb's door.

When all are present, gather the group and say the Apostles' Creed (using Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packet):

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. . . .
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 96

At the conclusion, point out the phrase, "on the third day he rose again from the dead."

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Tell the story of Easter morning. Open the Bible and show the learners where *John 20:1-18* is located. Read aloud verse 18a:

"Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord.'"

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

The learners respond: Thanks be to God.

1. Read aloud the story to the children from the Bible (using John's account, cited above). Although the Easter Gospel will be read in worship, it can be very beneficial for the group to hear its joy in the comfort of their own class, with their church school teacher(s).

2. Following the reading, invite the learners to join enthusiastically in the Acclamation:

Teacher: Alleluia. Christ is risen.

Learners: The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia.

3. Spend some time together discussing the congregation's celebration of Easter. Describe the celebrations happening in other churches and all around the world. This is the day we remember the victory won by our Lord over death itself.

4. If baptisms occurred at your church during the Easter Vigil, invite any children who were present to share details about the service or describe it in your own words.

(The learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, chapter 8, describes the service of the Great Vigil of Easter. Remind the children that they can read this story at home.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Mosaics from Eggshells

Use broken, dyed eggshell fragments to create mosaics of Easter symbols: colorful eggs, butterflies, or blooming flowers. Provide sheets of construction paper, pencils, and glue. The learners will draw outlines of chosen symbols, then arrange and glue pieces of eggshell to form the mosaics. (Small bits of colored tissue or other paper could be used in place of the eggshells.)

Option 2. Illuminated “Alleluia!”

Make copies of the open-letter outline of the word, “Alleluia!” from Poster No. 16 in the Teacher's Packet. The learners can use wax or washable markers to add colors to the letters. It may be helpful to supply pictures of illuminated letters so that the class members can get ideas of how to do this kind of project. As the children work, talk about the Church's use of “Alleluia!” at Easter and through the liturgical year. (You may want to explain that it is not used in Lent, a time of preparation for the good news of Easter.)

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

Option 1. Game, “Easter Symbols”

Introduce four symbols of Easter: a sunrise, a butterfly, an Easter egg, and an Easter lily. Ask the group members to sit in a circle of chairs. Assign the name of a symbol to each one in turn. Let one person be the caller (or the teacher may take this role). The caller shouts out one of the four symbols. Everyone bearing that symbol's name rises and scrambles to change seats with the others. The game can continue as long as time permits.

Option 2. Puzzle, “Jesus Is Alive”

Use Puzzle Sheet III.8 titled “Jesus Is Alive.” 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. Choral Reading

Choose an Easter hymn that will be, or has been, used in your church's Easter worship. Read the words together once or twice until the learners are familiar with them. Then assign parts so that one group reads the first stanza, another the second, and another the third. If there is a refrain, all can join together. (In a small group, the teacher can alternate with the learners for the choral reading.)

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

Briefly review the events of the first Easter. Recall all the persons in the story. Talk about the fear and amazement of the visitors to the tomb, and the disciples' disbelief. Ask: If you had been there, how would you have felt? What would you have said? Where would you have gone to share the news?

Wonder aloud whether anyone in the class has experienced a surprise that involved fear or amazement. Allow the learners to share their own stories.

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Place an Easter lily in the center of the group. Ask the learners to describe the flower and its scent. Ask: Why is the lily a symbol of Easter? Has anyone seen the bulb of a lily at the time it was planted? What did it look like? Explain that the bulb can appear to be dead; it represents for us the burial of something that has died. When spring comes, the flower grows from the bulb to show us that new life comes from old.

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: "Early in the morning my friends and I heard that the tomb where Jesus was buried was empty. We . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations to discuss how the story could continue. What might they have seen or heard? What would they do?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: the visit to the empty tomb by the two Marys; Mary's announcement to the disciples about what had happened, and their response; or the surprise and joy of the followers of Jesus when they knew he was alive.

MUSIC (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Listen to the refrain, "Hail thee, festival day" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 175; *We Sing of God*, 33) on the *Children Sing!* tape. Encourage exuberant movement as the learners sing.

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

Easter Garden. Place an Easter lily and other fresh flowers in the Easter garden.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 26 has a picture of a font, Paschal candle, and banner, a Scripture verse, facts about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

For the resurrection of Jesus.

(Encourage learners to share their own
thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Were the children able to enter into the joyous celebration of Easter? In what ways were they able to express their understanding of the resurrection? The meaning of the resurrection unfolds throughout our lives. Primary-age children are just beginning to grasp the importance of the story.

LOOKING AHEAD

The final session in this unit is on the concept of forgiveness and connects baptism to God's forgiveness for all people. Think about times in your own life when you needed to be forgiven and when you have been able to forgive others.

BAPTISM: PEOPLE IN COVENANT

Session 9

God Forgives Us

FOCUS

Because Jesus died for our sins and was raised to new life, we are forgiven by God, and we forgive others. The learners should be able to ask God for forgiveness for themselves and others through prayer and action.

GETTING READY

Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" in *Matthew* lays out the basic tenets of Christianity. Jesus refers to the Ten Commandments and other Jewish laws as the foundation upon which he has built his ministry. Jesus describes the selflessness and compassion that his followers should show to others. In the same passage Jesus tells his followers to "turn the other cheek" when they have been wronged.

Found in the *Gospel of Luke*, this is often called the "Sermon on the Plain." In Luke's version, Jesus tells his parable of the Good Samaritan to help people understand their responsibilities to one another. In both Gospels, Jesus includes a prayer for all Christians that is now called "The Lord's Prayer." Matthew and Luke include slightly different forms of this prayer in their gospels.

Jesus explains that if we ask God for forgiveness, we will be given it. Jesus also expects us to forgive others just as we have been forgiven.

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.*

General Confession
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 79

TEACHING TIP

The topic of forgiveness may result in what are known as "teachable moments." These moments come when students ask questions or share something from their own lives, opening the door to broader discussion. The learners may raise questions about God's forgiveness that a teacher cannot always anticipate. At such times, the plan for the day can be laid aside in order to attend to the immediate needs of the children to talk about God in their own lives.

GATHERING

Write the words "forgive" and "forgiveness" on a display board. Place several copies of *The Book of Common Prayer* and *The Hymnal 1982* on a table near the display board. Invite the learners to find either word in one of

the books. As they find examples, write the page numbers underneath the words.

When all have arrived, gather the group and say the Apostles' Creed (using Poster No. 11 in the Teacher's Packer):

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth. . . .
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 96

STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Talk with the children about Christian forgiveness. Open the Bible and show the learners where the Lord's Prayer is located in *Luke 11:2-4*. Read it aloud:

He said to them, "When you pray, say:
Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive
everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial."

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

1. After reading the passage above, ask: Do these words sound familiar? Share the two versions of the Lord's Prayer from *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 364, and the other version in the Bible in *Matthew 6:9-15*. Note that the word "trespasses" and "sins" are the same.

2. Tell the children that God asks us to pray. One of the things God asks us to pray for is forgiveness for ourselves and for others.

3. If you are comfortable in doing so, share with the learners a story about a time when you needed to be forgiven, and when you forgave someone else (or use the story below).

4. Tell the following story: Jim was so excited about going with his class on a field trip to a pond. They were going to learn about the plants around the area and try to catch some tadpoles to bring back to the classroom. He and Jeff had looked forward to sitting together on the bus and being partners that day.

When he got to school that morning, he ran up to Jeff, who was already waiting with his other classmates near the parking lot. Jeff pretended not to see Jim. Jim was so confused. Then he realized that Jeff had chosen another person to be his buddy for the day. Jim was so upset that he shoved Margaret who just happened to be standing nearby. He didn't mean to hurt her, but she fell and scraped her arm.

When Margaret went inside for a bandaid, Jim felt miserable. He wished they had never planned this trip. When Margaret returned, he told her he was sorry. She smiled and said everything was all right. Then Jeff tapped Jim on

the shoulder. He said he was sorry he had been mean to Jim and hoped Jim would still be his friend. By the time the bus came, Jim decided it would be a good day after all.

(Remind the children that they can read at home about forgiveness in the learners' book, *God's People Are Baptized*, chapter 9.)

CREATING (Time: 15-20 minutes)

Option 1. Forgiveness Mobile

Use paper and coat hangers to make Forgiveness Mobiles. Provide each learner with two pieces of construction paper in different colors. Also needed will be crayons or markers and pieces of yarn or string. Ask the learners to use one color of paper to cut out circles or diamonds for these two words: "God" and "forgives." They will do the same with the other color of paper, adding the words "We" and "forgive." (If the children wish, they can put each word on both sides of the paper shapes.) Punch holes in the pieces, insert string or yarn, and tie to the coat hangers. Hang the mobiles for all to see.

Option 2. Framed Prayers for Forgiveness

Give each learner a piece of white paper, 8 1/2 x 11 inches. Invite the class members to write their own simple prayers for forgiveness. Help younger learners, with suggestions such as "God, forgive us," or "Dear God, forgive our sins." When the prayers are completed, the children can use crayons or markers to decorate the edges as frames.

EXPLORING THE STORY (Time: 10-15 minutes)

Option 1. Pass the Peace

Form a circle for passing the Peace, doing it just as it would be done in a service of Holy Communion. Say in your own way, "In our church, we confess our sins together, and the priest tells us that we are forgiven by God. Then we pass the Peace to one another."

Practice passing the Peace. The teacher says, "The peace of the Lord be always with you." The class members respond, "And also with you."

Pass the Peace around the circle, greeting one another spontaneously with handshakes or hugs. At the conclusion, remind the learners again that the Peace is a time for remembering God's goodness in forgiving us all.

Option 2. Puzzle, "Forgiveness"

Use Puzzle Sheet III.9 titled "Forgiveness." 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. Forgiveness in the Prayer Book

Give each class member a copy of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Ask the learners to work individually or in pairs to locate one or more of the following: The Lord's Prayer, p. 97; The Baptismal Covenant, p. 304;

Confession and Absolution, p. 360; Prayer following Baptism, p. 308. As the passages are located, find the phrases that include “forgive” or “forgiveness.” Read these aloud together.

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

Talk about the meaning of forgiveness (from God and among ourselves). Encourage the learners to share times when they have felt forgiven by someone else. Ask: When have you forgiven a friend or a family member? How easy (or hard) is it to forgive? When have you felt forgiven?

Have you chosen not to forgive someone? How did you feel? Talk about how God always forgives us. Is there someone you need to forgive now?

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Plan a trip to the church or a quiet worship space. Introduce the Confession of Sins on page 360 of *The Book of Common Prayer*. Talk about the statements in the prayer, and ask learners think about things they have done or left undone.

Read the prayer or say it together. Wait a few minutes in silence for learners to think about the things they want God to forgive.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “I was playing with my friends, and a fight began . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might have happened that would cause someone to forgive or to need forgiveness?

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 choose to participate in one or more scenes depicting a situation where forgiveness is needed and offered.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing “Day by day” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 654; *We Sing of God*, 99) with the *Children Sing!* tape. As you introduce this hymn, comment that our being forgiven increases our resolve to live as God’s faithful people (children). The words of the hymn are a prayer that we can do so.

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

Easter Garden. Add an empty cross to the garden, to remind us that Jesus was raised from the dead. Consider arranging a class procession to take the garden to a place where it can be seen by others in the congregation. Who will carry it? What words could be said when the garden is put in place? Make a card to explain who made the garden and why.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 27 has a picture of a priest baptizing a baby, a Scripture verse, facts

about the story, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Close the session with the following prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

Thank you for your promise of forgiveness.

(Add thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

At what level were the learners able to discuss the concept of forgiveness? Did the fact of God's forgiveness seem to have meaning for them? In what ways were you able to discern their reactions?

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. CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The New Testament book the *Acts of the Apostles* tells us about the leading figures in the earliest Christian churches. In *Acts*, we hear the story of what happened at the first Pentecost and how the Holy Spirit gives ordinary people the power to be witnesses to the risen Jesus Christ.

The apostles and a growing circle of baptized believers centered the spiritual life of their communities in prayer. They included persons from all walks of life, young and old. They celebrated the Eucharist together and followed the apostles' teaching. Members of the community helped the poor and opened their homes to one another in Christian hospitality. Like all communities, they also dealt with conflicts and differences of opinion.

We encourage you to talk about the sessions with your child. You can do this by reading together the learners' book, *The Church Begins*, which tells the stories of people in the New Testament book of *Acts*. 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. 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.

In this unit, we introduce the learners to eight men and women who play significant roles in the book of *Acts*.

Session 1: “Luke Wrote the Story” is about the writer of the *Acts of the Apostles*, who also wrote the *Gospel of Luke*. Luke, who was probably a physician, became a traveling companion of the apostle Paul. He writes about the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church. (*Acts 1:1-2*)

Session 2: “Peter Preached Good News” describes the apostle who preached with power after the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Children will learn about Peter's imprisonment and miraculous rescue by an angel of God. (*Acts 12:4-11*)

Session 3: “Stephen, Faithful Servant” is about a man “full of grace and power” who was one of seven chosen to assist the apostles. The apostles, overwhelmed by their duties of preaching and tending to the needs of the community, chose assistants. Stephen is also remembered for forgiving his enemies who cause his death. (*Acts 6:2-8*)

Session 4: “Paul Was Changed by God” tells about the man who passively watched the stoning of Stephen but later became a leading missionary in the Church. The children will find out how Saul became Paul after his conversion on the road to Damascus. (*Acts 9:1-22*)

Session 5: “Barnabas: Early Christian Leader” is introduced as a person willing to give up his possessions to help the poor. He later became a companion of Paul and took the lead in defending the inclusion of non-Jewish believers into the Church. (*Acts 4:36-37*)

Session 6: “Dorcas Was a Good Neighbor” tells the story of a Christian woman who did “good works and deeds of charity.” At her death, the community sorrowfully showed Peter the clothing she had made for others. After praying, Peter raised her from the dead. (*Acts 9:36-42*)

Session 7: “John Mark Was a Young Christian” tells the story of a young person who became a trusted friend of Peter. Paul questioned his readiness for missionary travel, but Barnabas believed in him and accepted him as a companion. (*Acts 12:12*)

Session 8: “Lydia Welcomed Others” tells of a businesswoman from Joppa who heard the good news from Paul. After she and her household were baptized, Lydia invited Paul and his friends to stay in her home. Her story conveys the spirit of the Church as a welcoming community. (*Acts 16:14-15*)

Session 9: “Pentecost Is a Festival” retells the story of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended at Jerusalem. This event began the story of the Church. With the power of the Spirit, Jesus' followers became a community of witnesses to the Risen Lord. (*Acts 1:8-2:4*)

Yours in Christ
Church School Teachers

CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Session 1

Luke Wrote the Story

FOCUS

Luke wrote the *Gospel of Luke* and the *Acts of the Apostles* in our Bible. *Acts* is a history book about the beginnings of the Church. The learners should be able to name the two books written by Luke and tell where to find them in the Bible.

GETTING READY

We are enriched by Luke's accounts of Jesus' life and the beginnings of the Christian church. He shares the Pentecost story, introduces key figures (especially the missionary Paul), and helps us to enter into the continuing community of faith. From the example of the persons studied in this unit, our Church's life is shaped.

Luke, generally believed to be the author of both the *Gospel of Luke* and *Acts*, may have been a physician from Syrian Antioch. He is the only Gentile to author a biblical book. Luke emphasizes saving sinners and makes an effort to include women more than other Gospel writers. Luke also accompanied Paul on many of his missionary journeys.

Paul, a tentmaker from Tarsus and a Roman citizen, started out his career as a staunch persecutor of Christians. Paul received a personal call from Jesus and was immediately converted. He became a missionary who traveled throughout the ancient world preaching about Christ.

The Gospels include four accounts of Jesus' life and his teachings in the books of *Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke*, and *John*. The *Gospel of Mark* is considered to be the first written. *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* are called the synoptic Gospels because of their similar structure. While the three Gospels are alike, each has its own individual focus. From a literary perspective, the *Gospel of John* is considered separately. *John*, perhaps the most complex of the Gospels, is more philosophical and not in the same chronological order as the other three.

Almighty God, who inspired your servant Luke the physician to set forth in the Gospel the love and healing power of your Son: Graciously continue in your Church this love and power to heal, to the praise and glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. *Amen.*

Saint Luke

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 244

TEACHING TIP

Primary-age children can enter enthusiastically into role playing of the stories in the New Testament, all of which include strong human feelings. Costumes need not be elaborate; simple headdresses are usually sufficient. Use pieces of fabric in varied colors, with ties of ribbon or loose elastic. In smaller classes, individual children can play more than one role. For larger groups, devise roles for bystanders so that everyone will feel included.

GATHERING

Place a variety of Bibles on a table for the learners to examine. If possible, include illustrated children's Bibles. Encourage discussion about the names of the books, and point out that the many stories were written by different persons. See how many of the biblical authors the children can name on their own.

Each session of this unit will use the Lord's Prayer during the Gathering. (Poster No. 12 with the words of the prayer is included in the Teacher's Packet.) Use either the traditional or contemporary form.

When all are gathered, begin with these words:

“And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,”
or “As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,”:
Our Father Amen.

STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Open the Bible and read aloud *Acts 1:1-2*:

“In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught, until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Share with the learners in your own words the following:

1. The line we just heard from the Bible is at the beginning of a book called the *Acts of the Apostles*, and it is the second book in the New Testament by the same writer. (Notice how he begins, “In the first book. . . .”)

2. Ask: Who do you think might have written this? What was the name of his first book? (The learners may be able to guess at some possible names, but do not expect a correct answer. Simply encourage them to think again about biblical writers.)

3. Tell the story of Luke, who was a faithful follower of Jesus and a companion of Paul. Refer to information in the Getting Ready section. He traveled widely and observed the life of early Christians. Help the learners to see the locations of his two books, both of which were addressed (like letters) to a friend whose name was Theophilus. Luke's purpose was to put down in writing the story of how Jesus' followers were gathered in churches. We call *Acts* a kind of history book.

(The learners' book, *The Church Begins*, chapter 1, tells about Luke, the writer, and continues with stories he recorded. Encourage the children to read the story at home.)

CREATING (*Time: 15-20 minutes*)

Option 1. Writing Experiments

In our time we write easily, not only with pens and pencils on paper but also with typewriters and computers. Such was not the case for Luke, who wrote laboriously on scrolls. Invite the learners to experiment with writing on a variety of surfaces with several kinds of instruments. Suggestions: Charcoal, chalk, soap, soft sticks, and porous stones can be used on paper, cloth, wood, smooth rocks, and pieces of pottery.

Option 2. “My Church”

Ahead of time, obtain pens, ink, and long, narrow strips of paper to serve as scrolls. For each scroll two sticks will be needed. Learners can write on the scrolls, composing one or more sentences about their own church—people they know and things they will always remember. (Non-writers can draw their ideas.) Attach sticks to the ends of the completed scrolls and roll toward the center.

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

Option 1. Game, “Sit or Stand for Luke”

Invite the children to sit in a circle. The teacher will read a series of statements, and the learners will respond by standing or remaining seated.

The statements (below) are designed to contrast characteristics of life in Luke's time with our life today. The children “stand up for Luke” or remain seated for examples of contemporary times. Some learners may wish to contribute their own statements.

- Letters and books are written on scrolls. (*Stand.*)
- People wear robes and sandals. (*Stand.*)
- Letters are sent by telephone. (*Sit.*)
- People walk from city to city. (*Stand.*)
- People wear jeans and sneakers. (*Sit.*)
- People travel by jet plane. (*Sit.*)
- The Church's story is just beginning. (*Stand.*)

Option 2. Puzzle, “Luke's Letters”

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.1 titled “Luke's Letters.” 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. Reading Luke's Books

Learners sit in a circle, each with a Bible in hand. The teacher says, “*Luke.*” Everyone locates the *Gospel of Luke*, at the first page. When all have found it, the group is asked to read aloud in unison *Luke 1:1-4*. In the same way, the teacher says, “*Acts,*” and the group finds and reads *Acts 1:1-2*. (Call attention to the name of Luke's friend Theophilus in both passages.)

Repeat this activity with other passages from Luke's two books if the children's interest is high and time permits.

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

The New Testament writings preserve for us the stories of the earliest churches and their shared memories of the life and work of Jesus Christ. Encourage the children to reflect on the importance of the Scriptures, using questions like these:

Suppose we had no books or newspapers, no records or videotapes about the past. How would we ever find out important facts about the past, such as the years famous people lived and great events we do not want to forget? (Allow time to share several examples of things we write down because we want to remember—perhaps about our nation, our schools, or even about our own families.)

Shift the focus to the time in which Luke was writing. Ask: Why would people care about remembering the facts of Jesus' life and the stories he told? Why do you think Luke wanted to write his Gospel and *Acts*?

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

The tradition that Luke was a physician is based on a reference from *Colossians 4:14*. Scholars have disagreed on how much weight to give to the fact that Luke pays special attention to healing stories and includes other details typical of a doctor's observations. The Collect for St. Luke in *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 244, calls him “the physician.” Because Luke may have been a doctor, consider inviting to the class someone from the medical profession (doctor, nurse, or assistant) who can talk with the children about the ancient arts of healing. Encourage the visitor to bring objects or pictures that might illustrate the difference between medical practice today and in Luke's time.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “One day Luke was sitting at his desk thinking about Jesus. He remembered a story he had heard. The story began . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Luke have written?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to participate in one or more of the following scenes: Luke writing to his friend Theophilus; Theophilus and others reading what Luke has written; Luke setting out on a journey.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Introduce “Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 535; *We Sing of God*, 84) by listening to it on the *Children Sing!* tape.

Focus on the words “publish abroad,” and talk with the learners about the Church's work of telling everyone about Jesus Christ.

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

Class Book. Explain that, like Luke, the class (as a group) will write their

own brief record of what happens during the sessions of this unit. The “book” will contain large, blank sheets with the title, “Our Class History.” (This activity gives the children a chance to feel what it is like to write history themselves.)

Ask the learners to contribute statements about what they learned in this session on Luke. The teacher writes these statements in the book, as directed by the learners. Add a date to each week's page. Class members could add to the book samples of items they produced during the session.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 28 includes a picture of Luke and a Scripture verse. On the back are facts about Luke and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with this prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We give thanks for the writings of Luke.
(Encourage the learners to add their own thanksgivings.)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.
From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

The Lord's Prayer would have been very significant for Luke; he recorded it in his Gospel (*Luke 11:2-4*). It is important to consider the words with care and to help children appreciate how Jesus taught his followers to pray.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session introduces Peter as he appears in the *Acts of the Apostles*. Reflect on the vital role played by this fisherman who received a charge from Jesus, “Build my church.” It will be important for teachers to think of what they already know about Peter, and to make new discoveries.

CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Session 2

Peter Preached Good News

FOCUS

Peter was one of the twelve disciples and a leader of the early church. When he was put in prison because of his faith in Jesus, an angel from God set him free. Peter gave thanks for his rescue. The learners should be able to tell the story of Peter's imprisonment and release.

GETTING READY

The story about Peter chosen for this session is set during the early persecution of Christ's followers. A new king, Herod, dealt harshly with Christians, hoping to stop the Church's growth.

Around this time, the king had the apostle James put to death. Peter was then arrested. The night before Peter was to appear in front of the royal court, an angel came to Peter and told him to stand up and put on his belt, sandals, and cloak. As Peter did this, his chains fell off. The angel instructed Peter to follow. They went through the city gates, which opened on their own, and out of the city walls. At this point, the angel disappeared.

Peter had become the principal leader of the Church in Jerusalem after Jesus' ascension. He was the first apostle to perform a miracle. Peter already had converted many people before his arrest. By setting Peter free, God allowed Peter to continue to preach the Word of Jesus Christ.

The Christian gospel is all about being freed from anything that would prevent us from a life of obedience and dedication to our Lord. Imprisonment can be more than merely physical incarceration; we can be caught in many webs of human making that lead to a feeling of hopelessness. The good news is that God is with us and is accessible to us as we pray.

Almighty Father, who inspired Simon Peter, first among the apostles, to confess Jesus as Messiah and Son of the living God: Keep your Church steadfast upon the rock of this faith, so that in unity and peace we may proclaim the one truth and follow the one Lord, our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Confession of Saint Peter
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 238

TEACHING TIP

Children at this age level vary widely in their reading skills. In choosing activities, be especially sensitive to the individuals who cannot read easily. Encourage those who can read well to share their gifts and to help others in the class. Use group reading to avoid singling out persons who are hesitant about reading aloud.

GATHERING

Provide a long piece of coarse cloth and a pair of used leather or rope sandals. Allow the children to examine and try on these items (the cloth

servicing as a mantle—a cape or cloak). Talk about how it would feel to put on this kind of clothing every day. Note aloud that these items will be important in the story that will be shared today.

If the actual cloth and sandals are not available, pictures or simple drawings of both can be substituted.

When all are gathered, begin with these words (using Poster No. 12 in the Teacher's Packet):

“And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,”
or “As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,”:
Our Father, . . . Amen.

STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Open the Bible and show the learners where *Acts 12:4-11* is found. Introduce the story of Peter by reading aloud *Acts 12:5*:

“While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Remind the learners of Peter's place in the story. Tell the story of Peter's imprisonment and rescue, using information from the Getting Ready section. Include details provided by Luke in *Acts*:

1. King Herod the king was persecuting Christians, killing some and putting others in prison. It was a frightening time for all of Jesus' followers.
2. At the time of the Passover, Peter was seized and placed in prison, guarded by two men. He was bound by two chains.
3. Christians prayed for Peter.
4. One night, Peter was awakened by an angel. The chains fell away, and the angel told him to get dressed and put on his sandals. Then Peter was led outside. He was free!
5. Peter thought he was dreaming until he was outside the city. Then he knew for sure that he had been rescued by an angel from God.

You may want to add props such as prison chains made of brown paper or foil.

(The learners' book, *The Church Begins*, chapter 2, describes Peter's ministry after Jesus ascended to heaven and his imprisonment. Remind the children that they can read this story at home.)

CREATING (*Time: 15-20 minutes*)

Option 1. Prison Picture

Provide each learner with a plain piece of white paper, glue, and assorted squares or strips of brown, black, and gray construction paper. Ask the children to create a prison like the one in the story. Patterns for simple figures of Peter and an angel are included on Poster No. 16 in the Teacher's

Packet. These may be added to the learners' prison pictures.

Option 2. Peter's Sandals

Trace each learner's feet on sturdy brown cardboard. Cut these out. Punch three holes in the soles and attach heavy string or yarn to make thong-type sandals. While working on this project, recall the story of Peter's rescue.

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

Option 1. Game, "Peter's Release"

A learner is selected to be Peter and sits on a chair pretending to be in prison. The teacher chooses one other class member to be the angel and whispers the secret words to both Peter and the angel ("Get up quickly," from *Acts 12:7*).

Each learner knocks on Peter's prison door and says, "Knock, knock, who's in prison?"

The prisoner responds, "It's Peter. What should I do?"

Children who are not the angel can make up their own responses to Peter's question, such as "Pray to God," "Go to sleep and do not worry."

Peter is released from the prison when the "angel" says the secret words.

Guards at the prison door could be added to the scene, and children could take turns being Peter and the angel. The game can be repeated with new secret words provided by the teacher, such as "Dress yourself," "Put on your sandals," and "Wrap your mantle," all of which are taken from *Acts 12:8*.

Option 2. Puzzle, "A Prayer for Peter"

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.2 titled "A Prayer for Peter."

With copies provided for each learner, allow the class to work together or individually. Instructions are given on the puzzle sheet.

Option 3. Searching the Scripture

Invite the learners to turn to *Acts 12*. Based on their experience of the previous week, they should be able to locate the passage on their own.

Provide help for those who need it; encourage the group members to help one another.

Ask the learners to locate in the chapter the specific verses where the following can be found:

- a. The arrest of Peter (verse 3).
- b. The appearance of an angel to Peter (verse 7).
- c. What Peter said after he was free (verse 11).

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

Human history is filled with stories of persons who are arrested and placed in prison because of their ideas, their commitments, or their undivided loyalties. The *Acts of the Apostles* includes accounts of much suffering by the earliest Christians as they stood up for their faith in Jesus Christ.

Spend some time talking about Peter and the reasons for his imprisonment. Ask: How would Peter feel about his situation? Could he have done

anything differently? Why, or why not?

Consider the other Christians. How would they react to Peter's imprisonment? What did they do?

Ask the learners whether they have known or heard of anyone who was imprisoned or who suffered because of a belief. What could be done to help or to show care and concern? (Stress here the Church's prayers for all who are oppressed or in prison. See, for example, *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 386, Prayers of the People, Form II.)

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Invite a member of the congregation to dress as Peter and visit the class, sharing his experiences of being set free from prison, according to *Acts 12*. The purpose of this role play is to enhance the learners' appreciation for Peter as a very real person who had the same feelings we do (fear, discomfort, anxiety, surprise, hope, and gratitude to God).

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: "As Peter sat prison, he thought . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might have happened?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes. Individuals or small groups can choose to participate in dramatizing the story of Peter's escape from prison, using the following props: robes, garland for angel, chairs arranged to create a prison.

MUSIC (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Continue to learn the words of "Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 535; *We Sing of God*, 84) by singing along with the *Children Sing!* tape.

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

Class Book. Continue with the book, "Our Class History," which was described in the previous session. Ask the children to contribute what they have learned concerning Peter. The teacher and learners can add summary sentences or illustrations. Add a date for the entries.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 29 includes a picture of Peter and a Scripture verse. On the back are sentences about Peter and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with this prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.
We give thanks for Peter's faith and leadership.
(Encourage learners to add their own thanksgivings.)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.
From *The Prayers of the People, Form VI*
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

End with these words:

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

The sessions of this unit are focusing on people in the *Acts of the Apostles*. In thinking back over the session, did the learners seem to sense that Peter was a real person? Consider how characters in succeeding stories can be made to come alive for the children.

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session will be about Stephen, a person of faith and ability who served the Church. Reflect on ways to serve Christ that are open to all people of faith.

CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Session 3

Stephen, Faithful Servant

FOCUS

Stephen was one of the seven helpers appointed by the apostles. He was a gifted leader in the early Church. The learners should be able to tell what Stephen did and describe him as a person of faith and goodness.

GETTING READY

Stephen was a Hellenistic (Greek-speaking) Jew who was chosen as one of seven assistants to the original apostles. At one point during his ministry, Stephen was accused of not respecting the law of Moses. Stephen declared that the prophecy of a Messiah had been fulfilled in Jesus and that Moses' law had been surpassed by the teachings of Christ. Stephen's accusers were so angered by this that they stoned him to death without an official trial. Saul, later called Paul, was a witness to Stephen's death.

This session on Stephen raises the interesting question of whether the seven chosen by the apostles (*Acts 6*) were forerunners for the office of deacon in the Church. Biblical scholars differ in their point of view; many have concluded that the diaconate was not a part of this early stage in the Church's life. In *The Book of Common Prayer*, the Collect for Stephen refers only to his martyrdom, even though the Calendar on page 30 calls him "Saint Stephen, Deacon and Martyr."

The word "deacon" comes from the New Testament Greek word that means "servant" or "minister." In *Acts 6:2*, the verb translated "serve tables" could mean "serve as a deacon." For this reason, Stephen and the others who were chosen by the apostles to assist in the ministry of the early Church are sometimes called deacons.

We give thanks, O Lord of glory, for the example of the first martyr Stephen, who looked up to heaven and prayed for his persecutors to your Son Jesus Christ, who stands at your right hand; where he lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting.
Amen.

Saint Stephen
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 237

TEACHING TIP

Children sometimes focus on violent acts in stories, such as the stoning of Stephen. It is important to guide learners by shifting the emphasis to Stephen's response. He does not return anger with anger; instead, he forgives his attackers just as Jesus did. A class should not role play the stoning itself or get the idea that this is the only memorable part of the story.

GATHERING

As the learners arrive, call their attention to a large card on which you have printed the words, "We forgive." Invite them to talk about what these words mean. Have they heard them in the Lord's Prayer? Without

mentioning Stephen, suggest that these words will have special meaning in today's story.

When all are gathered, begin with these words (using Poster No. 12 in the Teacher's Packet):

“And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,”
or “As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,”:
Our Father, . . . Amen.

STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Share the story of Stephen by reading from the Bible. Show the learners where *Acts 6:2-8* can be found. Read aloud *Acts 6:5b, 8*:

“. . . and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, . . .
And Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and signs among
the people.”

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

Tell in your own words the story of Stephen, using information from the Getting Ready section.

1. The apostles found themselves with too much to do. They could not preach the good news about Jesus and attend to the needs of all the people (especially serving food at common meals).

2. The apostles decided to choose seven men who would have the special job of serving food and caring for the early Christians.

3. Stephen, who was full of faith and the Holy Spirit, was one of the seven who were chosen.

4. Stephen was a person who could do great signs and wonders. And he preached as well.

5. The enemies of the Christians argued with Stephen because of his faith in Jesus Christ.

6. Stephen preached a strong sermon, and it angered his enemies so much that they stoned him to death.

7. Before he died, Stephen forgave his enemies (see *Acts 7:60*). One person who stood by at his stoning was a man named Saul. This person would later have an amazing encounter with Jesus and change his name to Paul.

(Remind the children that they can read this story at home in the learners' book, *The Church Begins*, chapter 3. It describes Stephen as one of the people the apostles chose to help them.)

CREATING (*Time: 15-20 minutes*)

Option 1. Serving Tables Collage

Provide magazines that include pictures of various people serving food to others. Examples: A parent serving a meal; restaurant servers; or people delivering food, such as meals-on-wheels. Invite the children to create

individual collages on the theme of serving tables. The word “serving” can be lettered as a caption.

Option 2. “We Forgive” Placemats

Use either plain paper placemats or sheets of construction paper approximately 9 by 12 inches. The learners will decorate these with yarn, ribbon, glitter, paint, or crayon (or a combination of these) to spell out the words “We forgive” in the center. When finished, you may wish to add clear plastic covering. As the learners work, focus on Stephen's life and work and the fact that he was a person of faith who forgave his attackers.

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

Option 1. Game, “Seven Servants”

Play the game “Seven Up,” which involves choosing up to seven children to be the chosen “servants.” (Smaller classes can use this game by allowing only a few to pretend they are among the seven.) The rest of the children hide their eyes while each of the servants gently touches one other child on the head. As the other players are touched, each one raises a hand while keeping eyes closed.

When the servants have returned to their places, all can open their eyes. The ones who were tapped take turns guessing which servant touched each of them. Everyone has several chances to guess correctly. When someone guesses correctly, that person replaces the one who did the tapping. The game continues with a new group.

Option 2. Puzzle, “Stephen Serves”

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.3 titled “Stephen Serves.”

Provide copies for each learner. Follow the directions given on the sheet. Learners may work independently or in small groups.

Option 3. Scripture Search

Each learner has a Bible in hand, and the teacher asks the group to locate key passages, announcing chapter and verse. This exercise helps the children to practice finding the *Acts of the Apostles* and reading key verses.

Encourage the learners to help one another. When a verse has been located, read it aloud in unison. Use the following key verses: *Acts 6:5b*; *Acts 7:54-55*; *Acts 7:58*; *Acts 7:60*; *Acts 8:2a*.

These lines from the story of Stephen describe what kind of person he was and what happened to him in the end. It is important to emphasize the fact that he forgave his persecutors.

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

Spend some time talking about persons who serve others in our church today. They help by reading Scripture, leading prayers, visiting the sick, teaching, and doing many other forms of Christian service.

- Why did the apostles need others to help them?
- What work did Stephen do after he was chosen?
- Who could be helpers in the Church today?

Some persons who help in the Church are called Deacons. How are today's deacons like Stephen? In what ways could all of us serve Christ as deacons do? Do you help at home with daily tasks and chores? Do you help to get an allowance or because you want to serve others? How does helping other people serve Christ?

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Invite a clergy or lay person to visit the class and talk with the learners about forms of Christian service in your congregation. If your church has a deacon, this person could help the children to think further about the questions under Talking It Over.

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: "Stephen knew God wanted him to help people. Stephen's favorite way of helping was . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Stephen have done?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Individuals or small groups can choose to participate in a scene where the apostles choose helpers, including the laying on of hands and the prayer.

MUSIC (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Continue to sing "Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim" (*The Hymnal 1982, 535; We Sing of God, 84*) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Ask the learners to mention the people they can remember from their study in this class: Luke, Peter, and Stephen (who was the first Christian martyr). Collect simple instruments for helping learners to mark the rhythm as they sing. If several instruments of the same type are available, divide the children into instrument groups for playing and singing.

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

Class Book. Refer to this section in the previous sessions. Take a few minutes to add to "Our Class History." Add comments and the date.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 30 includes a picture of Stephen, a Scripture verse, facts about Stephen, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with this prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We give thanks for Stephen's service and ministry.

(Encourage the learners to add their own thanksgivings.)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.
From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

What part of the story did the class focus on? Did they understand how difficult it must have been for Stephen to forgive his adversaries? Were they able to relate the story of Stephen to the forgiveness of Jesus? Are there signs that the children understand the importance of forgiveness in their own lives?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session will introduce the apostle Paul, who was changed dramatically by encountering Christ. While few of us have had so radical a life-changing event as Paul, undoubtedly there have been times when Jesus Christ has had a vital effect on our lives. Consider these changes, however modest they may seem, while preparing for the session on Paul.

CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Session 4

Paul Was Changed By God

FOCUS

Paul, who had hurt early Christians, was called by God to be an apostle for Jesus Christ. The learners should be able to retell the story of how Paul's life was changed by God.

GETTING READY

This session is about Paul's conversion, recorded in *Acts 9*. It is a significant story for the Christian church. Paul the missionary was responsible for much of the spread of Christianity in the first century. Most scholars of the Bible have concluded that his epistles in the New Testament were written before the Gospels.

The apostle Paul's name in Hebrew is "Saul." In this story, he is still known as Saul, the persecutor of Christians who was present at the stoning of Stephen. Following his conversion, he was known in the early Christian churches as Paul (the Roman form of Saul). He became a leading figure by preaching, starting churches, writing letters, and defending the Christian faith with intensity.

"Conversion" means changing from one way of believing and acting to a radically different life. Saul, who had threatened the followers of Christ, experienced a complete transformation by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Saul was heading towards Damascus one day with letters for the Jewish synagogues threatening the Christians there. Suddenly a heavenly light flashed near Saul and a voice asked, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Saul asked who the voice was, and Jesus identified himself. Jesus told Saul to go into the city and await further instructions. Saul, who had been blinded, had to be helped into Damascus. He was blind for three days and had nothing to eat or drink.

Meanwhile, the Lord appeared to Ananias in a vision and said that he must lay his hands on Saul so that Saul could see again. Ananias knew Saul's reputation and was frightened. The Lord explained that he had chosen Saul as his instrument. Ananias touched Saul and immediately Saul's vision was restored. Ananias baptized him.

Paul's mind and energies were now devoted to preaching the good news of the risen Lord.

Sharing Paul's story at this age level lays the foundation for understanding the power of God in Christ to change people, and for developing a forgiving and open spirit toward persons whose lives are changed by the Gospel.

O God, by the preaching of your apostle Paul you have caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world: Grant, we pray, that we, having his wonderful conversion in remembrance, may show ourselves thankful to you by following his holy teaching; 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.*

Conversion of Saint Paul

TEACHING TIP

While we want to make classroom sessions enjoyable for learners, we must also focus on the serious aspects of the stories we tell. It is partly by a sense of reverence for the Bible and the Church's story that we transmit to learners a genuine commitment to Christian faith.

GATHERING

Using Poster No. 6 provided in the Teacher's Packet that shows the "Road to Damascus," discuss with the learners what it would have been like to travel on such a road. People wore sandals, and the road was rocky and hazardous. Explain that this is like the road from the city of Jerusalem to the town of Damascus. A very important event happened here.

When all are gathered, begin with these words (using Poster No. 12 in the Teacher's Packet:

"And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,"
or "As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,"
Our Father, . . . Amen.

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Begin this session on the conversion of Paul by reading from the Bible. Let the learners see where *Acts 9:1-22* is found. Read aloud *Acts 9:22*:

"Saul became increasingly more powerful and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Messiah."

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

In your own words, tell the story of what happened to Paul on the road to Damascus, using information from the Getting Ready section. The following outline suggests key points:

1. Paul, whose earlier name was Saul, stood by at the stoning of Stephen. He did not object to hurting and killing Christians because he believed they were wrong in saying that Jesus was the risen Son of God.

2. Intent on getting rid of Christians, Paul went to the religious leaders and asked for permission to search for Christians, arrest and tie them up, and take them to Jerusalem. He set out on a journey to Damascus to do just that.

3. As Paul traveled on the road (refer to Poster No. 6 used in the Gathering activity), he was overcome by a strong light and a voice speaking to him (see *Acts 9:4-6*). It was Jesus' voice. Paul fell to the ground, overcome. His companions did not understand what was happening.

4. Paul arose and opened his eyes. But he could not see, and had to be led on to Damascus. For three days he was blind, and he neither ate nor drank anything.

5. Paul was visited by a disciple of Christ who lived in Damascus named

Ananias. Ananias laid his hands on Paul, and Paul's sight was restored. Paul was baptized and received the Holy Spirit (*Acts 9:17-18*).

6. Paul began to move about in the synagogues of Damascus, preaching that Jesus (the very one he had rejected) was indeed the Son of God.

(Remind the children to read at home about how Saul's life was changed on the road to Damascus in the learners' book, *The Church Begins*, chapter 4.)

CREATING (*Time: 15-20 minutes*)

Option 1. Paul Puppets

Create simple puppets from paper bags or other materials to represent the persons in the story of Paul's conversion (Paul, his companions, and Ananias). Draw faces on the bottom part of a paper bag. Use fabric or construction paper to make clothing for the puppet. Put on a play about Paul using the puppets.

Option 2. Sand Paintings

Invite the learners to create a picture of Paul on the road to Damascus, using construction paper, glue, and colored sand.

Fine sand can be dyed a variety of colors by adding food coloring to small amounts in jars or plastic bags. Shake well to distribute the color. Dry before using. (The sand could be put into shakers or empty glitter jars.)

Each child makes a simple line drawing with pencil (few details). Apply glue and sand where desired.

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

Option 1. Game, "Paul and the Voice"

Scramble and distribute the three sets of color-coded word cards found on Poster No. 5 in the Teacher's Packet. Each set, arranged in correct order, forms a sentence from *Acts* (each set a different color). Ask the learners to share the words on the cards so that all understand each one. The teacher says, "Listen carefully as I read." The teacher reads *Acts 9:4-5*, repeating if necessary.

The learners are challenged to reconstruct the sentence (forming three groups). Each group holds up cards while the others read aloud what they see. Ask: Whose voice did Paul hear?

Depending on the size of the group, one or more sets of cards may be used.

Option 2. Puzzle, "Paul's Journey"

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.4 titled "Paul's Journey." Duplicate a copy for each member of the class. Directions are written on the puzzle sheet. Use as independent or small group work.

Option 3. Finding Letters of Paul

Note aloud that Paul wrote many letters after his conversion. We can find them in the New Testament. Write on a chalkboard or chart, the names of

the following letters: *Romans, I and II Corinthians, I and II Thessalonians, Galatians*. Ask the learners to find the letters in their Bibles as you call out and point to the names.

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

In conversation, compare the way Paul had been with the way he became after his experience on the road to Damascus. Discuss the great change that occurred in his life. Ask: Have you known people who changed? Have you yourself ever changed the way you think? In what ways?

Think about a situation you have been in recently that you also experienced when you were younger. Did you respond the same way? What was different? Why do we change as we grow older?

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Because Paul is a Saint of the Church and his work essential to understanding the New Testament, we have many ways of remembering him, such as stained glass windows, tapestries, and needlepoint designs. Find out whether your own church includes some of these and arrange a field trip for the class to visit them, or let the learners examine books about Paul.

Many congregations bear the name of St. Paul—not only in the Episcopal Church but also other denominations. Share this observation, taking note of any examples in your own community.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “Paul was hurrying along the road to Damascus. Suddenly. . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might have happened to Paul?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box) or use the puppets made in the Creating exercise. Encourage the children to act out the story of Paul's conversion, including his blindness and his baptism by Ananias, after which he recovered his sight (*Acts 9:17-19*).

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Continue to sing “Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim” (*The Hymnal 1982, 535; We Sing of God, 84*) with the *Children Sing!* tape.

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

If the class history book has not been a part of your activities during this unit, you may want to begin it now (see Continuing Activity, Session 1). Review the previous sessions and record the learners' comments.

Class Book. If this project is underway, let the learners think back over the session and decide what they would like to add to “Our Class History.”

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 31 includes a picture of Paul, a verse from Scripture, facts about Paul, and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with this prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We give thanks for the life of the apostle Paul.

(Encourage the children to add their own thanksgivings.)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Every week throughout the Church year, words of the apostle Paul are shared in the reading of the Epistle. The learners will encounter Paul and his writings repeatedly throughout their life in the church. Has this session helped to lay a foundation for the children's understanding of Paul as a key person in the New Testament?

LOOKING AHEAD

In the next session, the learners will be introduced to Barnabas, one of the first teachers in the early Church, who became a companion of Paul. Think about your own role in carrying on the tradition of teaching the good news of Jesus Christ.

CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Session 5

**Barnabas:
Early Christian Leader**

FOCUS

Barnabas was called to be a leader with Paul in the early Church. He helped to raise money for feeding the poor and the hungry. The learners should be able to share one or more key facts about Barnabas.

GETTING READY

Our knowledge of Barnabas is limited to a few passages in the *Acts of the Apostles*. Still, we sense that he was a wise and understanding figure in the early Church.

Barnabas was a Christian missionary who worked closely with Paul. Barnabas brought Paul to his first meeting with the apostles in Jerusalem, and was later appointed as leader of the recently-established church in Antioch. After a successful term in Antioch, Barnabas teamed up with Paul and taught many Christians. Barnabas says that he received a call to be a missionary from the Spirit.

Barnabas also defended Paul at a time when others naturally questioned the motives of this former persecutor of Christians. He also supported the young John Mark, even when Paul had doubts (*Acts 15:38*). Barnabas and Paul disagreed over whether John Mark should go with them on a missionary journey; this argument led the two men to go their separate ways, but they remained on friendly terms with each other. We associate Barnabas with the Church's ministry to persons in financial need.

At the primary age level, learners are beginning to be much more aware of the larger world—and of the people who are in need of assistance. This session on Barnabas can be an opportunity to look outward and think of the Church's mission to relieve human suffering.

Grant, O God, that we may follow the example of your faithful servant Barnabas, who, seeking not his own renown but the well-being of your Church, gave generously of his life and substance for the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Collect for Saint Barnabas

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 241

TEACHING TIP

While it may seem to be a natural extension of this session on Barnabas to involve the learners in a particular service or outreach project, it is important to be careful in choosing an activity. Most projects are best undertaken when parents and other supportive adults are involved. Some appropriate activities might include raising money for a specific cause or collecting items for a food or clothing drive.

GATHERING

Spread magazine pictures on a table for learners to look at as they arrive. These pictures should show people in need, such as homeless persons and others who need food, clothing, and care. You could also include information and pictures showing specific ministries your congregation is involved in. After talking about how people in the Church help the poor, indicate that this session is about someone who did so.

When all are gathered, begin with these words (using Poster No. 12 in the Teacher's Packet):

“And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,”
or “As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,”:
Our Father, . . . Amen.

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Begin this session by reading from the Bible. Open the Bible and show the learners where *Acts 4:36-37* is located. Read aloud:

“There was a Levite, a native of Cyprus, Joseph, to whom the apostles gave the name Baranabas (which means ‘son of encouragement’). He sold a field that belonged to him, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.”

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

Tell in your own words the story of Barnabas using information from *Getting Ready*. The story of Barnabas is in chapters 13-15 in *Acts*. He cared about loyalty to friends, he was truly generous, and he took an active part in the early Church's growth. You may wish to use the map on Poster No. 7 in the Teacher's Packet to point out Cyprus, Jerusalem, and Antioch.

1. Barnabas was from a Greek-speaking Jewish family that lived in Cyprus (Greece). He returned to Jerusalem to live among the Jewish people.

2. Barnabas was one of the early converts to the Christian faith. He sold a field and gave the money to the Christian community in Jerusalem. He may have been a well-to-do person, but he cared about sharing with needy people.

3. When Paul became a Christian, it was Barnabas who spoke out in his favor. Barnabas knew that the Christians were suspicious of Paul because he had once persecuted Jesus' followers, but now he had come to believe in God's Son.

4. Barnabas went to Antioch, where he was probably the leader of the Christian community. Antioch, the place where followers of Jesus were first called “Christians,” became a kind of home base for Christian leaders, and it was from there that Barnabas and Paul traveled to preach in other places.

(Remind the children that they can read at home about how Barnabas sold his land to help the poor in the learners' book, *The Church Begins*, chapter 5.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Barnabas Coins

Use clay or playdough to fashion simple coins like the ones Barnabas might have given for the needs of the poor. A paper plate can be used as the base for this project so that the clay may be pressed into a thin round pancake shape. With a blunt-tipped object (pencil or small dowel), carve a “B” for Barnabas in each coin. Some learners may wish to add other pictures or scrollwork to their coins (or possibly the date of June 11, for St. Barnabas Day on the Church calendar).

Option 2. Barnabas Triptych

Supply each learner with an 8 1/2 by 14 inch sheet of paper folded in thirds. Invite the learners to draw and color three pictures that represent the life of Barnabas (such as Barnabas preaching, giving money to the poor, and traveling).

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

Option 1. Game, “Words About Barnabas”

On 3 x 5 cards, letter the following key words from the story of Barnabas: field, money, apostles, Paul, Cyprus, Greek, Jerusalem, Antioch, travel, preaching, leader. The learners work in pairs. Each pair chooses a card and prepares to tell or act out something about Barnabas, using the key word. (Teachers should help learners who may have difficulty in reading any of the words. The emphasis here is on recalling and telling Barnabas' story, not on reading. Teachers may give hints to any pair that is puzzled about a card.) If interest is high, the cards can be redistributed for a repeat of the process.

Option 2. Puzzle, “Barnabas Helps Others”

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.5 titled “Barnabas Helps Others.” Provide a copy for each member of the class. Directions are given on the puzzle sheet. The puzzle can be completed individually or as a group activity.

Option 3. Scripture Hunt

Review facts about Barnabas that can be found in the *Acts of the Apostles*, particularly in these passages: *Acts 4:36-37* (giving money); *Acts 9:27* (believing Paul); *Acts 13:46a* (speaking out, with Paul).

Write the Scripture citations on slips of paper (several copies of each), and place them in a box or basket. The learners are invited to choose a slip and look up the reference in a Bible. When all have located their passages, the learners with the same verses can read aloud together.

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

Talk about how important Barnabas was to the growth of the early church—providing money for the poor, offering assistance to Paul in their travels together, and serving as a leader of the church at Antioch. (A number

of Episcopal churches bear the name of St. Barnabas. If there is such a congregation in your own or a neighboring diocese, tell the class about it.)

Consider ways the Church's people today can share money and help people in need. Share information about projects undertaken in the congregation, or by the Episcopal Church through the Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief (for example).

Note that Paul, Barnabas, and many others worked together to lead the early churches. Talk with the children about the ways in which Christians work together in the church today on common projects. Who are some of the people they know who are leaders working together?

INQUIRING

(Time: 10-20 minutes)

Invite a representative of a congregational outreach project to visit the class and share what is being done. (Possibilities would be meals-on-wheels, clothes closet, day care for children or adults, home visitation, or hospital ministry.) Let the guest know beforehand about the session's focus on Barnabas as a charitable leader of the early Church.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "Barnabas wanted to help the poor. He thought and thought. Then he knew . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Barnabas have done?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Let the learners act out the story of Barnabas' selling of his field and giving the money to the apostles to help the poor. Or, encourage the learners to role play several scenes in which they themselves are doing something important to assist others.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

During this session begin to teach the hymn, "Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 550; *We Sing of God*, 86). Sing stanzas 1 and 5 with the *Children Sing!* tape. Explain "tumult." When the learners are familiar with the hymn, ask how the words remind us of the people we have met in this unit.

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

Class Book. Invite the learners to add items to "Our Class History" that reflect the story of Barnabas. Also include important data about the Church's outreach to people in need.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 32 includes a picture of Barnabas and a Scripture verse. On the back are facts about Barnabas and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with this prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.
We give thanks for the good works of St. Barnabas.
(Encourage the learners to add their own thanksgivings.)
We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.
From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Stewardship and outreach (giving of one's "life and substance") are vital aspects of ministry among Christians. In what ways has this session on Barnabas enlarged the learners' understanding of giving and sharing?

LOOKING AHEAD

In the next session, the class will become acquainted with Dorcas, a woman who was a beloved neighbor. The name "Dorcas" is associated with "good works and acts of charity" (*Acts 9:36b*). Her story is prominent in the *Acts of the Apostles*; because of her, many others were led to faith in Jesus Christ. Who are the persons who have been examples, for you, in your journey of faith?

CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Session 6

**Dorcas Was
A Good Neighbor**

FOCUS

Dorcas, the seamstress, was a woman who did many good things for her neighbors. When she died, the apostle Peter raised her from the dead. This caused others to believe in Jesus. The learners should be able to retell the story of Dorcas.

GETTING READY

Dorcas appears in the *Acts of the Apostles* within the story of Peter's ministry. In *Acts 9:32-35*, Peter heals Aeneas, a bedridden resident of Lydda. Aeneas has been paralyzed for eight years. This great wonder caused people who heard of it to turn to Jesus Christ.

While at Lydda, Peter was summoned urgently to the seaport town of Joppa. Peter arrived at a house where several widows were weeping. They were holding clothes that the woman of the house, Dorcas, had made for them. Dorcas, who is also known as Tabitha, was a kind and compassionate woman who often did good deeds for her neighbors. Peter had been asked to come to Joppa because Dorcas had recently fallen ill and died. Peter prayed beside Dorcas' body and told her to get up. Dorcas stood up and "many believed in the Lord" (*Acts 9:42*).

Luke, the writer of the *Acts of the Apostles*, shares these stories to show how God worked through Peter's life to promote the growth of the early Christian community.

Almighty God our heavenly Father, you declare your glory and show forth your handiwork in the heavens and in the earth: Deliver us in our various occupations from the service of self alone, that we may do the work you give us to do in truth and beauty and for the common good; for the sake of him who came among us as one who serves, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

For Vocation in Daily Work

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 261

TEACHING TIP

Miracles in the New Testament accounts can never be explained. Far more significant for the reader, and for Christian believers, is the fact that these stories bear witness to the mystery of God. (See the Teaching Tip in Unit II, Session 9, p. 109.) Primary children still accept miracles at face value although some may begin to speculate about how they could have happened. As their teachers, we can encourage the learners' to wonder, remaining open to their questions.

GATHERING

Bring to the class examples of articles sewn by hand with needle and thread. Clothing would be ideal, but quilts or other needlework pieces would also be useful. A few needles, spools of thread, and other sewing notions in a protective case could also be on display.

If possible, allow the learners to examine the handwork. Point out the fine details of the stitching, and talk about the loving care that goes into making such items.

When all are gathered, begin with these words (using Poster No. 12 in the Teacher's Packet):

“And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,”
or “As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,”:
Our Father, . . . Amen.

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story of Dorcas by reading from the Bible. Open the Bible and let the learners see where *Acts 9:36-42* is located. Read aloud *Acts 9:36*:

“Now there was at Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell the story of Dorcas, keeping in mind the following:

1. Dorcas, like Paul, had two names (Tabitha in Hebrew, Dorcas in Greek). She lived in Joppa, a city by the sea. It might be fun to talk about how the same name is different in different languages. For example: John, Juan, Jan, Ian, Ivan; and Mary, Marie, Maria.

2. She was known for the good things she did to help her neighbors, especially the clothing she made. Refer to the items used in the Gathering activity. Talk about how she gave her time as well as her money to provide clothing for those in need.

3. When she died, her friends were stricken with grief. They sent for Peter, the apostle, asking him to come at once.

4. When Peter arrived, the widows who were her friends were crying. They showed him the beautiful clothing Dorcas had made with her own hands.

5. Alone in the room, Peter prayed, laid his hands on Dorcas, and said, “Tabitha, rise.”

6. Dorcas was raised from the dead, and everyone rejoiced in what God had done. Because of this, many more people came to believe in Jesus, the

risen Lord.

(Remind the learners that they can read this story for themselves in *The Church Begins*, chapter 6. The book describes who Dorcas was and how Peter laid his hands on her.)

CREATING (Time: 15-20 minutes)

Option 1. Tunics

Supply the learners with paper bags, and demonstrate how to fashion a tunic by cutting holes for a neckline and for arms. Garments of this type were worn by both men and women in Dorcas' day. Let each class member make and decorate a tunic, perhaps tracing tiny stitches along the sides (seams).

This project can also be done with blunt needles and real cloth (burlap or other coarse fabric). The completed tunics may be decorated with fabric paint.

Option 2. Thread Pictures

A time-honored way of decorating fabrics is to embroider them with thread of various colors and textures. Invite the learners to use paper, glue, yarn, and embroidery thread to create designs of their own choosing. As they work, talk with the children about the long history of needlework and fabric design.

EXPLORING THE STORY (Time: 10-15 minutes)

Option 1. Game, “Our Neighbor Dorcas”

Cut apart the story cards (pictures) found in Poster No. 16 in the Teacher's Packet. Each of these represents an element of Dorcas' story. Place these in a basket or other container. Each learner will take a card, tell how it relates to the story, return the card, and pass the basket to the next person.

A variation would be to arrange the cards in sequence for retelling the story. The learners could work in teams to explain each card or tell part of the story. (If preferred, teachers could photocopy additional copies of each card so that there would be enough for every learner to choose one.)

Option 2. Puzzle, “Dorcas Sews for Neighbors”

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.6 titled “Dorcas Sews for Neighbors.” Make a copy for everyone in the class. This puzzle can be read aloud and done together in class, in small groups, or independently.

Option 3. Who Am I?

The teacher reads clues and provides specific citations from the *Acts of the Apostles*. The learners respond to the question, “Who am I?” They may

identify the person from the clues alone, or search in the Bible for the answer. As soon as the biblical person has been correctly named, the class reads the cited verse from their Bibles, in unison. Use the following clues and verses:

- a. My name is Theophilus, he wrote his second book to me. (Luke, *Acts 1:1*.)
- b. My name means “son of encouragement.” (Barnabas, *Acts 4:36*.)
- c. I did great wonders among the people. (Stephen, *Acts 6:8*.)
- d. An angel told me to get up quickly. (Peter, *Acts 12:7*.)
- e. Peter prayed for me. (Tabitha/Dorcas, *Acts 9:40*.)
- f. I was blinded while traveling. (Saul/Paul, *Acts 9:8*.)

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

Consider with the learners how people and events have an important effect on others. For example, Dorcas was a genuinely good neighbor to others. Ask: What did Dorcas do that made people really care about her? How would you have felt if you had been one of the persons who knew Dorcas? Who are some of the persons you know who are caring neighbors or friends? What do they do that causes others to respect and love them?

Share with the learners the fact that the raising of Dorcas from the dead was one among many events, shared in the *Acts of the Apostles*, that caused more and more people to become followers of the risen Jesus. Encourage the class members to speculate on how they might have reacted if they had been there. What would they have said to Peter? to the neighbors who were crying? to Dorcas herself?

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

The long tradition of Dorcas Societies and other “sewing circles” related to the Church have their origin in the story of Dorcas from *Acts*. Usually, their purpose is to do charitable works. Invite a representative of such a group in your church's community to visit the class and share information (examples of projects or stories of recipients of their aid). Allow time for the learners to ask questions.

MAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “One day while Dorcas was sewing. . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Dorcas have been thinking?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Assign roles to the class members: Dorcas, Peter, friends, and neighbors. Use props such as pillows, mat, blanket, tunics or robes,

headpieces, and scarves. In mime form, act out the raising of Dorcas from the dead. Possible scenes: mourning friends; sending for Peter; Peter's arrival, and his praying alone with Dorcas who has died; Dorcas' awakening; everyone's joy; others becoming believers in the Lord.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Continue to learn “Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 550; *We Sing of God*, 86) by singing with the *Children Sing!* tape.

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

Class Book. Allow the learners to suggest brief entries in “Our Class History,” concerning their study of Dorcas. Suggest they include information about the clothing she made for others.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 33 has a picture of Dorcas and a Scripture verse. On the back are facts about Dorcas and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with this prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We give thanks for the good works of
Dorcas.

(Add thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

In the New Testament, women play a vital role in extending the Church's ministry. What are some signs that the learners appreciate the shared leadership of men and women in the Christian community? What more could be done to assure that they will grow in such an understanding?

LOOKING AHEAD

Persons of all ages were involved in the Church's beginning. The next session focuses on John Mark, a young Christian in Jerusalem. In what roles do youth serve in your own congregation?

CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Session 7

John Mark Was A Young Christian

FOCUS

John Mark was a member of a Christian family in Jerusalem where the apostle Peter stayed after he was miraculously freed from jail. The learners should be able to tell why we remember John Mark as an early Christian.

GETTING READY

In the New Testament we find several references to a believer in Jesus named Mark. Mark may have been the young man who fled naked when Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane. In *Colossians 4:10*, he is a cousin of Barnabas. An early tradition holds that John Mark wrote the *Gospel of Mark* while he was in Rome.

We do know that John Mark was the son of Mary of Jerusalem and a travelling companion of Paul. John Mark's family also was very prominent in the early Church. He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on their missionary duties until John Mark split off with Barnabas and went to Cyprus. Eventually Paul and John Mark were able to reconcile the quarrel that caused the rift between Barnabas and Paul. John Mark was reported to be the first Christian missionary in Alexandria.

In this session, we have an opportunity to think about John Mark as a youth who was deeply influenced by his relationship with Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and others in the New Testament church. He is an example of the full participation of young people in the life of the Church.

O God, by whose grace your servant John Mark, kindled with the flame of your love, became a burning and shining light in your Church: Grant that we also may be aflame with the spirit of love and discipline, and walk before you as children of light; 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 A Monastic (adapted)

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 249

TEACHING TIP

Often, children do not feel included in the life of a congregation. Teachers can be advocates for children and make a conscious effort to recognize the gifts of children and look for opportunities to encourage their involvement alongside others.

GATHERING

Tape some large sheets of newsprint or other paper to the classroom wall. As learners arrive, invite them to clip out from old magazines pictures of persons young and old who could work together. Or bring in pictures of people of all ages in various parish activities and ministries. Use tape loops to attach the pictures to the wall sheets to make a collage. This project

anticipates discussions in this session on the cooperative roles of people of all ages in the Christian community.

When all are gathered, begin with these words (using Poster No. 12 in the Teacher's Packet):

“And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,”
or “As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,”:
Our Father, . . . Amen.

STORYTELLING (*Time: 10 minutes*)

Introduce John Mark by opening the Bible and letting the learners see again where the *Acts of the Apostles* is located. Read the following verse adapted from *Acts 12:12*:

“...(Peter) went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many had gathered and were praying.”

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

Drawing on the following information, construct and tell the story of John Mark:

1. John Mark was a young person who lived in Jerusalem with his mother Mary (not one of the Marys of the Gospels). His family was prominent in the early Church.

2. Because he lived in Jerusalem, John Mark knew all about the events of Good Friday and Easter, and he may even have known Jesus. He would also have known some of the apostles, especially Peter.

3. A dramatic event led young John Mark to take an active role in the Church. When Peter was freed from prison (see Session 2), he went at once to the home of John Mark's mother. A group was gathered there to pray for Peter's release, and they were amazed when the servant Rhoda said that he was now at the door.

4. John Mark became close to Peter after that. He was led to join his cousin, Barnabas, on a journey with the apostle Paul. He helped the older men to share the story of the risen Lord.

5. Later, Paul had doubts about allowing John Mark to travel with him. We do not know why. Barnabas defended John Mark, and together they went their own way.

6. Later, John Mark was like “a son” to the apostle Peter (*1 Peter 5:13*).

7. John Mark may have been the writer of the *Gospel of Mark*. We call him Mark the Evangelist.

To help the learners grasp the relationship of John Mark to Peter, Paul, and Barnabas, point to all four in the composite picture on Poster No. 7 provided in the Teacher's Packet.

(Encourage learners to read at home a story about John Mark found in the learners' book, *The Church Begins*, chapter 7.)

CREATING (Time: 15-20 minutes)

Option 1. Pipe Cleaner Puppets

Using chenille pipe cleaners of various colors, the learners can make figures to represent the young man John Mark and others in his story. Instructions are included on Poster No. 16 in the Teacher's Packet. Bits of paper and fabric can be added to provide clothing and other details.

Option 2. Drawing Mark's Story

Provide the learners with strips of sturdy paper, approximately 6 x 18 inches. At the bottom of each strip, print "For Mark, O Lord, we praise you." Fold the paper into four sections, and ask the children to draw on each section a scene that could have happened in the life of John Mark. Crayons or markers can be used.

EXPLORING THE STORY (Time: 10-15 minutes)

Option 1. Game, "Who Am I?"

Provide the learners with a series of clues that describe people in the life of young John Mark. From the clues, the class members guess who each person is. Following are some possibilities; if older learners wish, they may create additional clues of their own as the game progresses.

Clue 1. I was in prison, and an angel rescued me. (Peter)

Clue 2. Peter knocked at the door of my house. (Mary, John Mark's mother)

Clue 3. I answered the door when Peter knocked. (Rhoda, the servant)

Clue 4. John Mark is my cousin. (Barnabas)

Clue 5. John Mark traveled with Barnabas and me. (Paul)

Clue 6. John Mark was like a son to me. (Peter)

Clue 7. I trusted John Mark all along. (Barnabas)

Option 2. Puzzle, "John Mark Helped Peter"

Use Puzzle Sheet IV. 7 titled "John Mark Helped Peter." Make copies for everyone in the class. Follow the directions given on the sheet. Do the activity together as a class or individually.

Option 3. Finding the Gospels

Invite the learners to practice the skill of locating each of the four Gospels, and particularly the *Gospel of Mark*. A fairly reliable way to do this is to hold the Bible upright on its spine, then open it as near the middle as possible; in most classroom Bibles, the result is finding pages from the *Psalms*. Now split the right-hand section in half again; the Bible will then be open at or near the Gospels.

Practice this "trick" several times, and let the learners compare where their fingers fell.

Assist the group in finding the beginning of the New Testament and locating each of the Gospels. Note particularly how Mark's Gospel begins.

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

When Peter was miraculously released from prison, he went to the home of John Mark and his mother because he trusted them. It would not have surprised Peter to know that they were inside the house praying for him to be set free. Peter and John Mark were close friends. As Christians, they prayed, traveled, and worked for the growth of the early Church.

Peter was much older than John Mark. What would it have been like for an older person and a young one to work together? What might they have learned from each other?

What do people of different ages do together in our congregation? How can we work with persons older than we are? younger than we are? What might we learn from one another?

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Young persons, like John Mark, continue to make important contributions to the Christian community. Invite one or more members of the congregation's youth group (teenagers) to visit the class and describe their work in the Church. Possible topics would be serving at the altar, community service projects, missions trips, retreats for prayer and study, and diocesan events.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: "John Mark was praying. Suddenly. . . ." Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might John Mark have heard?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box) or use their pipe cleaner puppets. Role play scenes in which John Mark travels with others (Peter, Paul, Barnabas) to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ in other places. Encourage children to invent dialogue, perhaps stories about Jesus that Peter might have told. The learners can take turns to repeat the activity.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing "Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 550; *We Sing of God*, 86), or "Ye servants of God, your Master proclaim" (*The Hymnal 1982*, 535; *We Sing of God*, 84). Listen to both on the *Children Sing!* tape.

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

Class Book. Entries about John Mark can be added to "Our Class History." If time permits, read over the entire book.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 34 has a picture of John Mark and a Scripture verse. On the back are facts about John Mark and a question to think about. Remind learners to add

this card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with this prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.
We give thanks for the life and work of John
Mark.

(Add thanksgivings)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.
From *The Prayers of the People, Form VI*
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

An aspect of this session has been a recognition that persons of all ages were active and vital to the early Church. Tradition holds that John Mark was young. In what ways have the learners begun to sense the intergenerational character of the Christian community? What more could be done to help them feel included in your own congregation?

LOOKING AHEAD

The next session will focus on Lydia, who was baptized and showed Christian hospitality. Consider ways your own faith community welcomes other persons.

CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Session 8

Lydia Welcomed Others

FOCUS

Lydia was a woman who sold purple cloth in the city. When she heard the story of Jesus from the apostle Paul, she was baptized. The learners should be able to tell the story of Lydia.

GETTING READY

The spread of the Church from “Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth” (*Acts 1:8b*) was possible only because of the ministries of the apostles. They traveled at great risk, proclaimed the gospel boldly, and offered their lives in witness to what God had done in Christ.

The story of Lydia and her response to the good news is an example of the personal and intimate ministry of the Church's early evangelists. Lydia was a Gentile woman originally from Thyatira. She was a seller of purple cloth, which was a luxury in the ancient world. Purple dye, a precious commodity in biblical times, came from a Mediterranean snail. Purple frequently was associated with royalty and high officials. We can assume that Lydia was probably wealthy.

Lydia was a religious woman, even before her conversion to Christianity. When she heard Paul preach the good news of Jesus Christ, she became a follower of Christ. She and her whole family were baptized.

After the baptisms, Lydia's home became headquarters for Paul while he performed his missionary duties in Philippi, where she was living at the time. The fact that Lydia operated a business and was well respected in her community makes her story appealing. She was devoted to God and supported the work of the apostles through her hospitality and personal example.

The concept of Christian hospitality (making people feel welcomed and cared for) can be understood by primary-age children. They can think of ways to be welcoming to others.

Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in your steadfast faith and love, that through your grace we may proclaim your truth with boldness, and minister your justice with compassion; for the sake of our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Proper 6

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 230

TEACHING TIP

Primary-age learners vary in their acceptance of others who are different in some way, or who are not familiar to them. Teachers can model positive attitudes and welcoming behavior toward the children as they arrive for class, and in receiving visitors and new class members.

GATHERING

Collect several examples of fabric in various shades of purple (remnants, or articles of clothing). As the learners arrive, invite them to examine the cloth and pay particular attention to the variations in color. Speculate on how cloth is dyed and what makes the color purple.

When all are gathered, begin with these words (using Poster No. 12 in the Teacher's Packet):

“And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,”
or “As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,”:
Our Father, . . . Amen.

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Introduce the story of Lydia by reading from the Bible. Show the learners where *Acts 16:14-15* is located. Read aloud *Acts 16:15*:

“When (Lydia) and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.’ And she prevailed upon us.”

Finish with the words: The word of the Lord.

Learners respond: Thanks be to God.

Tell the story of Lydia in your own words. Wear something purple, or wrap a purple shawl or cloth around your shoulders. The following information will be useful in developing a narrative:

1. Lydia was a resident of Philippi, a worshiper of God, and a dealer in purple cloth.

2. On a sabbath day, she was with other women at a place of prayer near a river.

3. Paul and his companion, Timothy, and possibly Luke, joined the women and proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ.

4. Lydia listened eagerly to Paul's words and believed what she was hearing. She wanted to be a follower of the risen Christ and to hear more about what he had done.

5. She and her whole household were baptized. (“Household” could mean both relatives and servants.)

6. Lydia opened her home in generous hospitality to Paul and other Christians.

7. Lydia continued to be a prosperous business person. Purple cloth was woven and dyed under her supervision. Purple was a very durable dye, difficult and time-consuming to produce. Therefore, purple textiles were especially valued and worn by persons of high stature.

(Remind children to read the story of Lydia at home in the learners' book, *The Church Begins*, chapter 8. It tells how she welcomed Paul and his friends to her home.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Weaving Welcome Mats

Weave “welcome mats” from construction paper strips of various purple shades. Print the word “Welcome” on a strip to be pasted in the middle of the mat. Get suggestions from the children about places to take the mats. For example, a church dinner, a nursing home, or a children's ward at a hospital.

Option 2. Adding Purple

Provide the learners with small squares of white cloth, approximately 8 x 8 inches. Supply water-soluble purple markers or watercolor paints for adding designs to the cloth. You could also show children how to dye cloth using fruits and vegetables, such as red beets and purple cabbage.

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

Option 1. Game, “Lydia Listened”

This activity emphasizes the importance of being a good listener. It also reviews facts about Lydia.

The learners sit in a circle. The teacher will begin a message, to be said only once. Whisper to the learner next to you, and so on, around the circle. The aim is to have each learner repeat the message only once to see if it arrives accurately at the end of the circle. Suggested messages:

Lydia was a good listener.

Paul preached the good news of Jesus.

Lydia believed Paul.

Lydia was baptized.

Lydia welcomed Paul and his friends to her house.

Option 2. Puzzle, “At Lydia's House”

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.8 titled “At Lydia's House.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Follow the directions given on the sheet. Do the activity together as a class, or individually.

Option 3. Unlocking the Code

List on a chalkboard or chart the following Scriptural citations. The first refers to Lydia, and the others are from sessions in previous units of this year. This activity is for both review and skill development:

Acts 16:15

Matthew 4:23

Luke 2:7; 10:29-37

John 11:33a, 33c, 35

Mark 1:9, 11

Work with the learners to help them identify the following: name of the book, numbers of the chapters, verses cited. The important things to note are the colons after chapter numbers, commas between separate verses within a chapter, and semicolons between citations when more than one chapter is indicated.

When learners are confident, ask them to find the chalkboard citations in their own Bibles. To end this activity, read aloud *Acts 16:15*.

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

When Lydia had been baptized into the Christian community, she opened her home to other Christians, insisting that Paul and his friends remain for a time. Such hospitality on the part of early Christians helped greatly to strengthen and support the growing Church.

We use the word “hospitality” to describe our welcoming and caring for visitors, guests, and all members of the community. Ask: In what ways might Lydia have made her guests welcome? How do we provide a welcome for visitors in our own homes? in our church? How could we make a new class member feel welcome?

INQUIRING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Churches sometimes have welcoming committees, assigned greeters, and others who engage in a ministry of hospitality. Invite a member of the congregation who is involved in your church's welcoming ministry to visit the class. (Inform the person ahead of time that the focus of the session is on Lydia, who practiced hospitality in the early Church.)

Consider how visitors are greeted and welcomed at your church. Perhaps arrangements could be made for children to assist greeters on one or more occasions.

IMAGINING *(Time: 10-20 minutes)*

Share a story starter: “Lydia and her family stood beside Paul, ready to be baptized. Then . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What might Lydia have thought?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). Let the children act out the story of Lydia, beginning with the group of women praying by the riverside and concluding with the newly baptized people welcoming Paul and other Christians at Lydia's house.

MUSIC *(Time: 10-15 minutes)*

Sing “Jesus calls us; o'er the tumult” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 550; *We Sing of God*, 86) with the *Children Sing!* tape. Ask: How do the words of this hymn remind us of Lydia and the others in her household?

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

Class Book. Conclude “Our Class History” by adding a final notation on the study of Lydia. You may want to include information about your church's own ministry of hospitality. Review the book and decide as a group where to keep or display it.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 35 has a picture of Lydia and a Scripture verse. On the back are facts about Lydia and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this

card to their collection at home.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with this prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this
life.

We give thanks for the life of Lydia.

(Encourage the learners to add their own
thanksgivings.)

We will exalt you, O God our King;

And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.

From The Prayers of the People, Form VI

The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

In this unit we gain a picture of the early Church—people from many walks of life hearing the good news of Jesus Christ, being baptized, and taking on active roles as Christians. The growth of the Church was steady as individuals reached out to share their faith with others. Have there been clues that the learners sense the importance of such sharing today?

LOOKING AHEAD

Session 9 has been prepared for use on Pentecost Day. It will not matter if this date occurs before Sessions 1-8 have been completed. Consider how to incorporate your congregation's plans for celebrating this feast.

CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Session 9

Pentecost Is A Festival

FOCUS

Jesus told the disciples that he would send the Holy Spirit to them so that they might spread the good news to the ends of the earth. The learners should be able to tell how this promise from Jesus was fulfilled at Pentecost.

GETTING READY

At Pentecost, the apostles were empowered in a new way—changed from being hesitant and uncertain about what they were to do. They began to proclaim with confidence what God had done in Jesus Christ, and their vision expanded to include a ministry to the whole world.

Pentecost is named for the fiftieth day after Easter and is celebrated as the day the Holy Spirit descended upon the Church. Just before he ascended, Jesus told the apostles that they would be baptized in the Spirit. At this point, Jesus was lifted away in a cloud. Suddenly two men appeared before the apostles and asked them why they were looking towards heaven. The men told them that Jesus would come again in the same way he left them.

On the day of Pentecost, all the apostles were gathered in a house. A great wind from above rushed about the house and tongues appeared so that each man could speak a new language. The apostles began preaching to the people outside using the different languages. The crowd could not believe that the men really were able to communicate with them in their own languages. Peter told the crowd that it is the will of God. He began telling those assembled about the good news of Jesus Christ. The people believed and 3,000 were baptized that day.

At our own baptisms, we are assured of God's presence and aid in our lives. Being baptized “by water and the Spirit” empowers us to continue in the apostles’ teaching. We, too, share with joy the good news of the risen Christ.

Help class members link the celebration of Pentecost to baptism. The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost; we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

O God, who on this day taught the hearts of your faithful people by sending to them the light of your Holy Spirit: Grant us by the same Spirit to have a right judgment in all things, and evermore to rejoice in his holy comfort; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Pentecost
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 227

TEACHER TIP

Until now, the learners may have thought of the celebration of Pentecost only as the church's birthday. This is most appropriate for young children. Primary-age children, however, can begin to be aware of the wider

significance of the story. In this session, the vision expands as we think about the coming of the Holy Spirit and what this means to the people of God.

GATHERING

Display the Pentecost picture on Poster No. 8 from the Teacher's Packet. As the learners arrive, invite them to spend some time looking at the stained glass picture and considering what might be happening.

When all are gathered, begin with these words (using Poster No. 12 in the Teacher's Packet):

“And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,”
or “As our Savior Christ has taught us, we now pray,”:
Our Father, . . . Amen.

STORYTELLING *(Time: 10 minutes)*

Share the story of Pentecost by reading from the Bible. Show the learners where *Acts 1:8-2:4* is found in the Bible. Read aloud *Acts 1:8*:

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

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

The story for this session includes both the Ascension story and the Pentecost event. Use the following outline and information from the Getting Ready section in constructing your story:

1. Review the events of Holy Week and Easter. Describe Easter Day as the time of Jesus' resurrection.
2. For forty days after Easter, Jesus appeared and spoke to the disciples, teaching them many things.
3. The time came for Jesus to ascend into heaven. This is called the Ascension.
4. Just before he was lifted up into a cloud, Jesus promised that he would send the Holy Spirit to help the disciples spread the good news. They waited.
5. On the tenth day after the Ascension, the disciples heard a sound like the rush of a mighty wind, and tongues of fire appeared to rest upon them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. When they spoke, those who heard them could understand in their own languages.
6. With the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples were empowered to spread the gospel. The work of sharing the good news of Christ continues to this day; it is a task shared by all baptized Christians.

(Remind learners to read at home about the first Pentecost in the learner's book, *The Church Begins*, chapter 9.)

CREATING *(Time: 15-20 minutes)*

Option 1. Wind Pictures

Give each learner a sheet of construction paper, chalk, markers, and crayons. Invite the group to draw pictures of the wind. Possibilities might include great swirls of clouds, trees bending, flags flying, or water spray. See Talking It Over (below) for suggestions on conversation that might accompany this activity.

Option 2. Wind Streamers

Obtain a large curtain ring (or a substitute) for each learner. Cut lengths of red, white, and gold ribbon (or thin strips of crepe paper or colored cellophane). The learners can tape or tie the ribbons or strips around the rings to form Pentecost “wind streamers.”

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

Option 1. Game, “Keep the Pentecost Balloon Up”

Use a red balloon, perhaps with light cellophane streamers attached to suggest flames. When the balloon is tossed into the air, the learners are to keep it aloft by blowing on it. (They should keep hands clasped behind their backs.) The game can be made more challenging by using two or more balloons, or by blowing only through straws.

Option 2. Puzzle, “Jesus Keeps His Promise”

Use Puzzle Sheet IV.9 titled “Jesus Keeps His Promise.” Make copies for everyone in the class. Follow the directions given on the sheet. Do the activity together as a class. Read the words aloud as the learners work through the puzzle.

Option 3. Locating Activities

Learners will sit in a circle, with Bibles in hand. Point out the *Acts of the Apostles*, where the stories of Ascension and Pentecost take place. Write these Scriptural references on a board or chart:

Ascension, *Acts 1:8-11* (the promise)

Pentecost, *Acts 2:1-4* (the promise is fulfilled)

When the teacher says “Ascension,” the learners locate the first reference. Read the passage in unison. Ask: What was the promise Jesus made?

When the teacher says “Pentecost,” the learners locate the other reference. Again, read the lines in unison. Describe Pentecost as the fulfillment of Jesus' promise.

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

Share Christina Rossetti's poem, “Who Has Seen the Wind?” on Poster No. 16 in the Teacher's Packet. Talk about the wind. When do we feel the wind? What does the wind sound like? When we are indoors, how do we know the wind is blowing outside?

The Bible talks about the Holy Spirit as the rush of a mighty wind. The

disciples could not see the Holy Spirit, but they could hear it and feel it.

Invite the learners to share their thoughts. How would they describe the Holy Spirit? Have they heard people talk about the Holy Spirit? When have they heard the words said in church? (Describe how we baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.)

INQUIRING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Take the learners into the church to look at the banners, stained glass windows, tile mosaics, and other decorations that depict the Holy Spirit through the symbols of flame, wind, or the dove.

Another option would be to explore the word “evangelism” (sharing the good news of Christ with others) by inviting a class visitor who could speak in simple language about the work of teachers, preachers, and missionaries who lead in the Church's work of evangelism.

IMAGINING (*Time: 10-20 minutes*)

Share a story starter: “The disciples heard the sound of a strong wind blowing. Then they felt . . .” Invite the learners to use their imaginations and discuss how the story could continue. What could the disciples have felt?

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. Invite the learners to dress in biblical costumes (from the prop box). After discussing the feelings that the disciples might have had on the day of Pentecost, lead the learners in a mime of the story of the coming of the Holy Spirit. Together, work out slow, exaggerated movements to communicate the emotions of the disciples (fear, amazement, surprise, excitement, and hope). You may want to use instrumental music to set the mood or accompany the actions. Allow learners to lead the mime if they wish to do so.

MUSIC (*Time: 10-15 minutes*)

Sing “Like the murmur of the dove's song” (*The Hymnal 1982*, 513; *We Sing of God*, 81) with the *Children Sing!* tape.

Learners may wish to make hand motions like doves flying as they sing.

After the entire group has become familiar with the hymn, divide into two groups for singing:

Group 1: Like the murmur of the dove's song, like the challenge of her flight,

Group 2: like the vigor of the wind's rush, like the new flame's eager might:

All: come, Holy Spirit, come.

Repeat several times.

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

Class Book. Add items to “Our Class History” that relate to this session and your church's celebration of Pentecost. Consider adding a line that points

to the future and the fact that all the class members will continue the story of the Church that begins in the *Acts of the Apostles*.

If this is the last class session of the Unit, you may wish to review all the pages and key people.

TAKE-HOME CARD

Card 36 provides a Pentecost picture and lines from *The Book of Common Prayer*. On the back are facts about the Feast of Pentecost and a question to think about. Remind learners to add this card to their collection at home. This card completes the set for the Shell Year Primary Unit. The learners will have thirty-six cards they can add to a previous collection. Look for a new set next year.

CLOSING

Conclude the session with this prayer:

We thank you, Lord, for all the blessings of this life.

We give thanks for the glad news of Jesus Christ, and for what happened at Pentecost. (Encourage the learners to add their own thanksgivings.)

We will exalt you, O God our King;
And praise your Name for ever and ever. Amen.
From The Prayers of the People, Form VI
The Book of Common Prayer, p. 393

All stand and say:

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

Learners: Thanks be to God.

TEACHER'S REFLECTION

Consider the learners' response to the session. What evidence do you see that indicates they are thinking of Pentecost as something more than simply a celebration of the Church's birthday? Are they showing a greater awareness of how the Christian faith has spread over the world through the centuries?