

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Second Sunday after Christmas
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Matthew 2:1-12

The Incarnation: the Word made flesh. The Word, with God from the very beginning and hovering over the creation process with God, is now an infant lying on a bed of straw surrounded by curious animals. The awe and wonder of this incredible breakthrough can become awash in sentimentality and cuteness. Each year we tiptoe up to this amazing gift: God, in human flesh, coming to live among us. Each year we choose our response.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

A star so bright it commanded the attention of wise men from far away and from a very different faith tradition. Tenaciously, these wise ones followed a star to a very different land and humbly knelt before the infant. Who did they believe this infant was? Who do we say he is?

Theme: A Star Led the Way

Before: If these children were in class last Sunday, and you used this curriculum, you may want to tell them that today's story happened just before the story we had last week. If you can darken your classroom even a bit, bring a flashlight (with fresh batteries!) as a prop for telling the story and as a prop for the children's acting out the story. If you have a manger scene you are comfortable bringing to the class with you, set it up in a corner of the classroom. Bring a small box wrapped in gold gift wrap, two small containers of sweet smelling spices (cinnamon, nutmeg, allspice, or whatever you have in your cupboard). Although frankincense and myrrh were both used in incense and perfumes, the fragrance was the benefit. Additional props for the play could be a scarf for Mary, a small blanket and a doll to be Jesus, and scarves for the three wise men. If you choose to do the second activity, you will also need paper, crayons, glitter, and glue.

Beginning. Tell the children that the story we have today happened while Joseph, Mary, and baby Jesus were still in a manger with a bunch of animals.

Praying: Thank you, God, for sending us the baby Jesus. Help us to seek Jesus as the wise men did. Amen.

The Story: The baby Jesus, his mother Mary, and Joseph, his daddy, were all together in the manger. The animals had made room for this little family, and the baby was getting stronger each day. (Shine the flashlight on the manger, if you brought one.)

Way far away, some wise men were traveling on their camels at night. What is that new bright star (shine the flashlight in a corner of the room opposite the manger) they asked each other. A star that bright and that new must be pointing to something very special, they decided. They packed some treasures and started to follow the star. (Move the flashlight beam closer and closer

to the manger as you tell the rest of the story) They were far, far away, so it took then a long time to get to where the star was pointing.

When the star finally appeared to stand still (hold the flashlight beam over the manger) they got off their camels, tied them to a tree, carried their treasure chests with them and tiptoed into the manger. “May we please look at your baby, Ma’am?” they asked Mary. When they saw the baby, they knelt down beside him, opened their treasure chests, and put their presents beside the baby. They gave the baby gold (place the gold box on the floor in front of you) they gave him frankincense (place one of the containers on the floor beside the box) and myrrh (place the other container there). Then, they got up, got back on their camels, and went back home by a different road.

Activity: Invite the children to make a play about this story. (You will need at least 5, so if you have fewer, some children can play more than one part. Ask who wants to play the part of Mary, who wants to be Joseph and who wants to be each of the three wise men. An additional child can be the star by shining the flashlight. Where in this room shall the manger be? Where shall the wise men begin their journey? What shall we do with the scarves? The presents the wise men bring? Let the children act out the play, doing it over again with different people playing different parts, if they want.

Activity: If time permits, let the children draw pictures of the play to take home with them. Offer crayons and paper. Glitter would be great fun, if you want to use it.

Getting Closure: Invite the children to tell you what their favorite part of the story.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for the wise men who traveled to see Jesus. Help us to see your star and see Jesus. Amen.

Printed by the Office for Formation and Vocation Ministries of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017.

© 2012 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.