

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year C– First Sunday in Lent**  
**Lesson Plans for Older Children**  
**RCL Old Testament Readings – Track One**

**Scripture: Deuteronomy 26:1-11**

**Background:** Lent is a reflective season – an opportunity to go deep within ourselves and focus on our relationship with God and with others. The forty days of Lent remind us of the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert following his baptism, pondering who he was and what he was to do. They also remind us of the forty years that the people of God wandered in the desert following the Exodus from Egypt, learning how to be the community of the people of God. The Hebrew Scripture lessons in year C focus on the covenants or promises that God made with the people of God. Like Jesus, we choose to enter this time of “desert,” in order to remember the promises of God, hear the stories of ways in which they were fulfilled (hint: They didn’t always look the way the people expected!), and the ways in which we are called to participate in those promises in our own time – to discover who we are in God and what we are to do.

**Preparing for Lent:** Lent began earlier in the week, on Ash Wednesday. Some of your children may have participated in Ash Wednesday services, and some likely have not, so it is a good idea to notice the shift in liturgical seasons with your class. If few or none of your class participated, you may want to begin with the opportunity to be marked with ashes. For young children, you can explain that when they were baptized they were marked with an invisible cross of oil, “sealing them with the Holy Spirit and marking them as Christ’s own forever.” On Ash Wednesday we remember our baptism by making the invisible cross visible in the marking of ashes on our forehead, reminding ourselves that although we do things that separate us from each other and from God (through sin), we are always connected to Christ through our baptism. Lent is a special time of year in which we focus on ways in which we connect with God and each other. Marking the sign of the cross on our forehead as we enter the season of Lent reminds us of the ways we are intentional to focus these practices of connection. (You might also choose to forego the ashes, but to have the children trace the sign of the cross on their forehead at the beginning of class to remember). These intentions may take the form of giving something up for a period of time (fasting) or taking on a discipline or practice that brings us closer to God. Older children may want to think about adopting a practice for the 40 days of Lent. For younger children, knowing that this is a time that we pay extra attention is likely enough. If your church adopts a project or corporate discipline for Lent, think about how you might participate in that practice as a class, adapting for your age group.

You will want to make some changes to your classroom to notice this liturgical shift. The change from Epiphany should be from a sense of light to a sense of sparseness. If you have a worship area, change the colors to reflect the colors your church uses during Lent, whether you use purple or Lenten array. A mix can also be effective – for example, purple underlays with rough burlap or sacking material on top. A simple cross can be used. If you use plants, dry branches, or even an empty planter filled with potting soil work well for Lent. Partway through the season you might plant wheat grass seed in the potting soil and notice through the weeks how

it grows (or not!). Generally, lightly watered wheat grass should sprout in about a week to ten days, and this can be fun to do in anticipation of Easter bowls or baskets.

Remember, the word “Lent” comes from the Anglo-Saxon word for spring, literally meaning “lengthen,” referring to the lengthening days. The Hebrew Scripture lessons in Year C contain the theme of remembering the promises God made to Abraham and the “great family” of which we are a part. Each story can be remembered with a symbol, which could be used to create a mobile or memory bowl to which the symbol can be added each week. Suggestions for symbols and use of them can be found in each week’s lesson. If your class model has someone different teaching each week, you will want to consult to determine how you might use this consistently week to week during the season of Lent. You may also want to determine together if you will use the same opening or closing practice to bring consistency to your class time, regardless of who is leading.

### **A Notation for This Week’s Lesson**

*Deuteronomy 26:3b “Today I declare this before the Lord our God. I have come into the land the Lord promised to give us. He promised this to our ancestors.” (New Century Version/International Children’s Bible)\**

In this week’s lesson, the people of God are hearing a reminder of God’s covenant/promise as they are about to end their time in the desert and cross over into the promised land. We hear this story as we are crossing into Lent, into our time in the desert as a reminder that this period of time is not forever, and that God keeps God’s promises, even when things are difficult. They remember God’s promises as they anticipate their future with God.

(\*The New Century Version is a translation at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading level, which makes it a useful Bible for younger readers and pre-readers.)

### **Theme: Remembering and Anticipation**

**Before Class:** Make the changes to your room or worship area for Lent, or gather materials to have your class make the changes to the room/worship area themselves. Determine which activity options you will be using and gather the materials needed. Fill a small bowl with sand to represent the desert. You will add items to this bowl each week to help you remember the story, so be sure it is big enough to hold these items.

You will need enough Bibles or copies of the lesson for each child. You will also need copies of the Lent Calendar, stickers, and a Lenten journal for each child. Look ahead to the activities and choose which one you will do.

- **For the Mobile:** You will need a wooden embroidery hoop for each child, markers, ribbons, glue, sand, string, and symbols.
- **For the Story bag:** You will need a small cloth bag for each child, markers, paint, etc. to decorate the bag.

**Beginning:** Gather the children in your usual manner, perhaps with an opening song or greeting. Remind them that the seasons of the church year have changed, and it is the time of Lent, the

time we set aside to pay attention to the ways in which we come close to God, and to step away from things that separate us from God. How might we show that change in our worship space? If you have time, have the children help re-set the room for Lent.

Remind the children that through their baptism, they are always a part of God's great family, "that they are marked as Christ's own, forever." Remember (or look forward to!) your baptisms through marking each child with the sign of the cross on their forehead, either with ashes (to reference Ash Wednesday) or invisibly.

**Opening Prayer:** Thank you, God, for the gift of Lent, the time we pay special attention to the ways we can come closer to you. Help us to hear your promises, and to remember that we are part of your great family. Amen.

**The Story:** The Deuteronomy lesson needs some back story/context in order to be intelligible to your class. Ask your class what they remember about the Exodus story (or briefly summarize that story if it is an unfamiliar one for your students). After the people of God escaped slavery in Egypt, they traveled in the desert for 40 years (enough time for a whole generation of children to grow up, and elders to die), before they entered the land God had promised them. This section of Deuteronomy is Moses giving instruction to the people before they enter into the promised land. He reminds them of their time in captivity (time which many of the people had not personally experienced!), and makes plans with them for how their time as slaves will shape them as free people in their new home. It is important for them to remember how God kept God's promises, even when it seemed impossible. The bowl of sand is here to remind us that the people of God wandered in the desert. During the next few weeks, we will add items to the sand to remind us of the promises God made to the people.

Help the children find Deuteronomy 26:1-11 in the Bible. Have the children read the passage in an age-appropriate, reader-friendly version, such as the International Children's Version, or read it to them. If you have enough Bibles, you can use this time to practice Bible skills by working together to find the passage and to note where it is in the Bible (last book of the Pentateuch, or Jewish Torah – "Pentateuch" means "five," and refers to the first five books of the Hebrew Scripture.) (You can also print out the passage for reading aloud.) Note that this passage is making plans for how the people will celebrate and observe something that hasn't happened yet – their first harvest in their new land, and that this harvest will serve as an opportunity to remember the promises of God, and their own story as people who were slaves, but now are free.

**Reflection Questions:** (use the ones that interest you or seem best for your group)

- I wonder why the people of God spent time remembering their time in slavery before entering the promised land?
- I wonder what God's promise to give the people land (which is referenced here – the main story of God's promise to Abraham will come next week) meant to the people while they were in slavery? While they were wandering in the desert for 40 years?
- Now that they are about to enter the land, I wonder why they need to make plans for remembering these stories in the future?
- Why will they remember these stories specifically at the time of harvest?

- Why will they say “The Egyptians were cruel *to us?*” and “the Lord *brought us* out of Egypt,” when the people doing the remembering were not slaves in Egypt themselves?
- I wonder how the season of Lent is like waiting to enter the promised land from the desert?
- I wonder what we need to remember about our faith story during the time of Lent?
- I wonder what we are looking forward to when Lent turns into Easter?

### Activity Options:

1. **Lent Calendar** Create a simple Lent calendar (like an Advent calendar) on which to mark off the days until Easter. A simple version is attached to this lesson, which contains a simple family question for each week of Lent. You can fill in the days with stickers (stars would be a good choice as they’re easy to find and they connect with next week’s promise to Abram that God would give him a family as big as the stars in the sky, but other stickers would also be fine), or simply have the children check off the days with crayons. Check off the first days, from Ash Wednesday to the first Sunday of Lent, and explain to the children how to take the calendars home and use them.
2. **Mobile or Story bag** Each story in the coming weeks lends itself to a symbol, which can be created to hang on a mobile or to fill a story bag that the children can take home at the end of Lent to remember the promises of God. The symbols will be a star, a red leaf, stones, a portion of a map or a road, and a cross.
  - a. **For the Mobile:** You will need a wooden embroidery hoop for each child. Have the children decorate the hoop while you think about the reflection questions above. (For example, they can color the wood with markers, or wrap the hoop with ribbons. Or you could cover the hoop with glue and dip it in sand to remember the desert.) Tie three 10” pieces of string to the hoop at 1/3 intervals around the hoop. Tie the three strings together 1” from the long end to create a hanger for the mobile. You will tie a string with a new symbol onto the mobile each week. (You could also create a mobile to decorate your classroom and use as you tell that week’s story).
  - b. **For the Story bag:** You will need a small cloth bag for each child. (These would be easy to make, or can be found inexpensively at craft stores. Burlap or muslin would be good choices to reflect the colors of the desert. ) Have the children decorate the story bag as you wonder about promises and the stories that you will hear over the coming weeks.
3. **Journal.** An inexpensive journal can be created for each child to use during Lent. Composition books work well, or you might simply gather several pieces of notebook paper, and make construction paper covers by stapling them together down the sides. Journaling can be in words or pictures, and can be free-form, or follow a prompt. A possible prompt for this week could be this: *What stories and promises from the Bible, or from my own life with God, do I want to remember in the coming weeks of Lent?* The journal could also be a place for exploring possible Lenten disciplines, such as prayer, fasting, or charitable giving. You might want to explore some of these ideas as a group before having the children do their own thinking/writing/drawing about them. Fasting can be giving up festive food or drink, but your group might also be more creative – fasting from complaining, for example.
4. **Congregational Project:** If your congregation takes on a particular project for Lent, consider how to incorporate that into your class time. (As an example, our congregation

does a sock drive for homeless teenagers as part of our Maundy Thursday observance, and one of our church school classes spent class time during Lent creating flyers and making a tri-fold display of feet to solicit participation in this project. On Maundy Thursday we set a record for the ingathering of socks!!)

**Getting Closure:** Gather in your story area as you prepare to end class. This can be a good time to share concerns and prayers. You might choose to again remind each child that they are a child of God through the tracing of an invisible cross on their foreheads.

**Closing Prayer:** (This can be done as a body prayer by placing your hands on the mentioned body part as you pray.)

God be in my head and in my understanding.  
God be in my eyes and in my seeing.  
God be in my mouth and in my speaking.  
God be in my heart and in my loving.  
God be in my hands and in my touching.  
God be in my legs and in my moving.  
God be in my life and in my journey.  
Amen.

*Written by Cindy Spencer*

## LENT CALENDAR 2016: Remembering God's Promises

							<b>Story Prompts</b>
		Shrove Tuesday  Feb. 9	Ash Wednesday  Feb. 10	Feb. 11	Feb. 12	Feb. 13	<i>Share a favorite memory of time spent with your family. What is your family looking forward to in the next weeks?</i>
<b>Feb. 14</b> <b>First Sunday of Lent</b> <i>Remembering God's Promises</i>	Feb. 15	Feb. 16	Feb. 17	Feb. 18	Feb. 19	Feb. 20	<i>Share a favorite memory of time spent with your family. What is your family looking forward to in the next weeks?</i>
<b>Feb. 21</b> <b>Second Sunday of Lent</b> <i>God's Promise to Abraham</i>	Feb. 22	Feb. 23	Feb. 24	Feb. 25	Feb. 26	Feb. 27	<i>List as many members of your family as you can. Who do you consider family that is not related to you?</i>
<b>Feb. 28</b> <b>Third Sunday of Lent</b> <i>God's Promise to Moses</i>	Feb. 19	March 1	March 2	March 3	March 4	March 5	<i>Tell of a time you tried something new. Was it hard? Scary? How did it go?</i>
<b>March 6</b> <b>Fourth Sunday of Lent</b> <i>The Promised Land</i>	March 7	March 8	March 9	March 10	March 11	March 12	<i>Do you have any places or symbols that remind you of a story? Tell it.</i>
<b>March 13</b> <b>Fifth Sunday of Lent</b> <i>A Road in the Desert</i>	March 14	March 15	March 16	March 17	March 18	March 19	<i>Does your family enjoy road trips? Tell a story from a trip you have taken.</i>
<b>March 20</b> <b>Palm Sunday</b> <i>God's Promised Servant</i>				Maundy Thursday  March 24	Good Friday  March 25	Holy Saturday  March 26	<i>As we go through Holy Week to get ready for Easter, share your favorite Bible story. What is your favorite part of Holy Week?</i>
<b>March 27</b> <b>EASTER SUNDAY!!!</b>	Easter Monday!						<i>What is your favorite thing about Easter?</i>

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

*© 2016 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.*