

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Sixth Sunday of Easter
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: John 14:23-29

"Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again." An astounding discovery! The Easter news was spread to all who would listen. The disciples told people, who in turn, told people, and to this day, we hear the message — a message of weeping and then of joy that comes with the morning of a new day. We too like the disciples weep **AND** then delight in the joy bursting forth in us. We too are called to bring this message with our lives, and, if necessary, with words, to those who have not yet heard it.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Letting go of the companionship of Jesus to receive him in a larger way. Letting go of certainties to be open to the promised Holy Spirit. Letting go of our need to be in control to trust the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Theme: Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Church

Before: A suggestion for creating an art project depicting the Holy Spirit (whom we know is with us but we cannot see) is to use a package of white tissue paper. Cut it into sheets the size of the paper you will offer the children. You will also need plain paper, crayons and glue sticks. The children can draw the Holy Spirit and then cover their drawings with several sheets of white tissue, so you cannot see what they have drawn.

Beginning: Invite the children to wonder with you. I wonder if there are things that we cannot see, but we know are there. What about the wind? We cannot see the wind, but we can feel it blowing and see it moving the trees. What about love? What about breathing?

Tell the children that today we have a story about something we cannot see, but we know is there.

Praying: (Gather the children by your altar and light the candle, if you choose). Thank you, God, for loving us so much you even send us things we cannot see so we can know you more. Amen.

The Story: Jesus was getting ready to go back and be with God. He would not be walking around wearing clothes and sandals, eating food and drinking liquids. Instead, the Holy Spirit would come and be with us. The Holy Spirit can go anyplace but cannot be seen. The Holy Spirit is right with us when we pray, is with us when we have to do hard things, is with us when we are sad, and it is with us when we are happy. But, just as we cannot see the wind, we will not be able to see the Holy Spirit.

Option: Invite the children to use their imaginations to watch for the Holy Spirit. Suggest they sit in a circle and one child go open the door to your classroom; he or she doesn't have to open it very wide, and invite the Holy Spirit to come in. The rest of you can say, "Welcome, Holy Spirit,

thanks for coming in." Then you can make a place for the Holy Spirit to sit beside one of you. Then, you can make a space beside another child and keep on until the Holy Spirit has been invited to sit beside each child. Tell the Holy Spirit you are so glad that not only can the Holy Spirit be here with us today, but it can also go home with each of us when we leave.

Activity: Ask the children to help you figure out how to draw a picture of the Holy Spirit, since we cannot see the Holy Spirit. Show them that they can draw a picture and then fasten sheets of white tissue paper on top, so we cannot "see" the Holy Spirit. (Typical images of the Holy Spirit are the dove and flames.)

Getting Closure: Talk about ways to notice the Holy Spirit in our homes and where we go all week. When we are sad or having to do something hard, we can close our eyes and know that the Holy Spirit is right there with us. When we say our prayers, the Holy Spirit will be helping us to remember people we want to pray for.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, Holy Spirit, for being here with us today. Help us to feel your presence in our lives each day. Amen.

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Sixth Sunday of Easter
Lesson Plans for Older Children

Scripture: John 14:23-29

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Letting go of the companionship of Jesus to receive him in a larger way. Letting go of certainties to be open to the promised Holy Spirit. Letting go of our need to be in control to trust the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Theme: Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Church

Before Class: You will need copies of the Bible and art supplies.

Beginning: As the children if they have ever heard the saying, "Seeing is Believing." Invite them to wonder: I wonder if we can think of things we cannot see that we believe? (Some examples: Stars too far away to see, the wind, electricity, microwaves cooking our food, phone conversations, the Internet, etc.) Tell them that today's scripture passage tells us about another thing we cannot see but that is right here with us. Invite them to listen carefully to the scripture for today and keep in mind images or words that come to them.

Opening Prayer: God, thank you for the love you have given us. Send us the help we need to do the work you give us to do each and every day. Amen.

The Story: John 14: 23-29. Suggested ways to break up the passage: invite three readers to read the three sections: 23-24, 25-26 and 27-29.

Questions:

Jesus tells us he is sending us the Advocate, the Holy Spirit. I wonder if anyone can tell me what an "advocate is?" (Someone who helps, who stands in for. Lawyer's are called advocates.)

If we cannot see the Holy Spirit, what are some clues that the Holy Spirit is here with us? (We can do things that we would have thought were too hard to do, we remember to pray for people, we are able to love difficult people, etc.)

What does Jesus say to comfort the disciples and, therefore, to comfort us? (verse 27)

If you were going to describe the Holy Spirit to someone who didn't know what the Holy Spirit is, what words would you use? How might you describe the Holy Spirit?

Activity: Brainstorm with the children

Invite them to name the ways the Holy Spirit has been represented in passages we have read previously. (The Dove that descended on Jesus at his baptism, for instance.)

Invite them to discuss what they would like to create as an icon for the Holy Spirit to add to our collection of icons. When they have come up with ideas, work together to create the icon that will stay in your classroom and then allow time for each child to create one to take home.

Getting Closure:

Decide where to display this icon.

Discuss strategies for noticing the Holy Spirit at work in our lives during the week. (A person who has been a pest becoming easier to be around. Finding yourself praying at a time you don't usually pray, etc.)

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, thank you for sending us the Holy Spirit. May we recognize it in our lives as we walk with you each day. Amen.

John 14:23-29

²³Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

²⁵ 'I have said these things to you while I am still with you. ²⁶But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. ²⁷Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid. ²⁸You heard me say to you, "I am going away, and I am coming to you." If you loved me, you would rejoice that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I. ²⁹And now I have told you this before it occurs, so that when it does occur, you may believe.'

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Lesson Plans that Work
Year C – Sixth Sunday in Easter
Gospel Lesson for Adults

Scripture: John 14:23-29

"Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again." An astounding discovery! The Easter news was spread to all who would listen. The disciples told people, who in turn, told people, and to this day, we hear the message — a message of weeping and then of joy that comes with the morning of a new day. We too like the disciples weep **AND** then delight in the joy bursting forth in us. We too are called to bring this message with our lives, and, if necessary, with words, to those who have not yet heard it.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

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Theme: Listen to what the Spirit is saying to the Church

Before Class: You will need Bibles (preferably one for each person) or print outs of the reading for today, paper, pens or pencils, newsprint (or other large paper), and markers. Appoint someone to be the scribe or have a laptop and printer ready to go.

Beginning: Tell the group that the method of Bible Study we will experiment with today is Paraphrase. The passage we have today is beautiful, extremely abstract, and sometimes difficult for a new Christian to access. We will read it and then, together, rewrite it in our own words.

Opening Prayer: God, we thank you for your Word, which is rich and empowering. Help us to find in your word today the words you want us to receive. Amen.

The Scripture: John 14: 23-29. You could suggest the following breaks in the reading: One voice to read verses 23-24, another to read verses 25-26 and 27-29.

The Process: Paraphrase

Read through the passage once.

Maintain silence for a bit and then suggest that different voices read the same passage again. With one person scribing, ask the group to offer words and phrases they think are key to this passage.

Look for what Jesus expects of us and what Jesus will send to help us.

Working together, rewrite this passage so it could be read to our contemporaries who might not be Christians, but who want to understand what it is that we believe.

Note: if you have a large group, you may want to split them into two groups and have them come up with two versions. At the end of the session, you can compare them.

Getting Closure: Evaluate this method of doing Bible study and compare it to other methods you have tried. Next week is the last session in this unit. Your group will need to decide whether they will choose to continue to meet, stop for the summer, or consider a different option such as meeting on a Wednesday night in each other's homes or at the church for "Bible and Iced Tea."

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Help us to be aware of the workings of the Holy Spirit in our daily lives. Amen.

John 14:23-29

²³Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.

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