

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – Fourth Sunday of Advent
Lesson Plans for Younger Children

Scripture: Matthew 1:18-25

The school year began months ago; New Year's Day is over a month away. Yet here we are, beginning our new Church year with the First Sunday of Advent. Advent invites us to risk pushing on through the world's weariness to expectant hope. Something's coming we proclaim! Immanuel: God With Us in the form of an infant. We celebrate what happened 2000 years ago while we look to the promise that Jesus will come again. We are also called, as we live in this parenthesis time, to look for messages God continues to send: what has happened, and will happen again, is also happening now: right here.

A Notation for This Week's Gospel

Isaiah knew this day would come: a young woman and a baby — Emmanuel — God With Us. God chooses to dwell in the womb of a woman. A messenger is sent to assure Mary's fiancé that he should stay with her and help her raise their son. Could it be that this message, God With Us, is not just about what happened then or just what will happen in the future? Could we risk believing: God IS With Us – Now?

Theme: God is With Us

Before: A simple craft, "Angels to Go," will need at least one facial tissue per child (probably more!), either cotton balls (a portion of a tissue balled up could be substituted), and thin ribbon, string, or even plastic twist-its. Be prepared to share with the children a dream you have had that was either pleasant or funny — no nightmares. If you are going to do the movement activity with the children, consider dressing in clothes that will enable you to flop on the floor.

Beginning: Ask the children if any of them have had a really fun dream they would like to tell us about. If it seems appropriate, tell them your dream. Then tell them our story today is about a dream. But first, today we light all four candles, or color the fourth candle on our artwork.

Praying: Thank you, God, for dreams that help us know you love us. Amen.

The Story: Joseph was about to get married to Mary, who would be the mother of baby Jesus. He was all ready to get married to her. Then Mary told Joseph something that sounded very strange to him. She told him an angel had come to her house and told her she was going to have a baby, the baby would be the son of God. Joseph went back to his house and thought and thought about this. He was thinking he had better not get married to her, even though he wanted to. He worried and worried, and finally he fell asleep. While he was sleeping an angel came to him in a dream. Maybe it was the same angel that had visited Mary. The angel told Joseph that he should get married to Mary. The baby would need a daddy, and Joseph would make a very good daddy to baby Jesus. When Joseph woke up, he and Mary got married and Joseph was a good daddy for Jesus.

Movement Activity: A movement activity for Joseph’s dream. Ask the children to show with their bodies what adults look like when they are worried. (They pace around, maybe with arms crossed, worried faces.) So, together we can be a very worried Joseph, pacing around the room. Then, let’s get very tired and slump on the floor and pretend to fall asleep. Now while our bodies are being asleep, let’s get up and become great big, huge, angels with immense long wings we can hold out with our arms. We can swoop around the room being angels until we find Joseph asleep and can come hover over Joseph and then tell him Jesus needs him to be the daddy. Then the angels can swoop off and we can be Joseph again, waking, rubbing our eyes, and feeling much better. Of course, be open to the children’s suggestions for the choreography.

Activity: Angels to Go

Show the children how to shape the angels by folding the tissue diagonally, then poking a cotton ball, or a balled up piece of tissue, in the center to make the head. Tie a piece of ribbon or string—or use the plastic twist-it—at the “neck” of the angel and fluff out its wings. The angels can go home with the children and perhaps one or two could stay in the classroom to greet the children when next they come.

Getting Closure: Sit in a circle with the children, angels seated in front of each child. If the children know “Silent Night” you could sing a verse of the carol together.

Closing Prayer: Thank you, God, for Joseph the daddy of Jesus. Help us to follow you as Joseph did. Amen.

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