

Lesson Plans that Work
Year A – First Sunday after Christmas
Lesson Plans for Younger Children
Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Isaiah 61:10-62:3

We now celebrate the birth of Christ and the light of the world that has come into our lives. We have heard of the salvation that Jesus is bringing us and revel in the stories of hope and joy that the prophets share with us. During this time of year, it is important to help the families of our community remember the focus of this season, the birth of Christ. Especially with children, the emphasis that Christmas isn't just one day is a very important message to hear. Encourage families to celebrate the 12 days of Christmas by putting aside their errands – to take time to tell stories, play games, call on friends and family and enjoy the light of Christ that has come into the world for all of us.

Theme: Joy to the World, Rejoice!

Supplies Needed: Cloth for prayer space, Bible (with a translation used in your parish) white candle, nativity set including three kings. If using Option 2, pre-cut paper stars.

Prepare: Prepare your prayer/gathering space with a small table, or space with a piece of cloth, it could be white, linen or gold depending on your traditions. On this cloth place a white candle. Near your prayer space add a nativity scene if your church has one. If your scene also has the three Kings, place them farther away but yet noticeable for the children.

Welcoming the children: Gather the children together at the prayer table and ask:

- I wonder what gifts you gave this Christmas?
- I wonder if you felt happy this Christmas?
- I wonder who made us feel happy by loving us this Christmas?
- I wonder if that feeling is a gift too?

Some kinds of gifts we can't see, such as the happy feeling we get when someone loves us.

Remind the children that we have now entered a new season in the church. What changes have they noticed in the room? What colors should they look for in the main Church? We are now in the season of hope and joy the season of Christmas.

- I wonder if Christmas is only one day?

Opening Prayer: Light the candle. Use the prayer below by having the children repeat each line of the following:

God you give us the light, (God you give us the light)
 Thank you for loving us. (Thank you for loving us.)
God you give us hope, (God you give us hope)
 Thank you for helping us. (Thank you for helping us.)
God you give us your love. (God you give us your love.)
 Thank you for loving us. (Thank you for loving us.)
Amen.

After the gathering/opening prayer time, you can move to another space in the room for storytelling. It allows the children to move and stretch and renew their focus on the story.

Gather together for your story.

The Story: In the Bible we hear stories from special people called prophets, they said things to many people for God. One of the prophets was Isaiah, he wanted people to know more about God, and begin to tell people about what would happen.

Read the passage – Isaiah 61:10-11 aloud. The version listed is New Revised Standard. You should use a translation of the bible that is used within your own parish.

Isaiah 61:10-11

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD,
 my whole being shall exult in my God;
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
 he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
 and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its shoots,
 and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
 to spring up before all the nations.

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After reading this aloud, ask the wondering questions:

- I wonder what the word rejoice might mean?
- I wonder what God wanted to us know when Isaiah talked about the garden springing up?
- I wonder how praise for God can spring up?

Activities

These options can be done within your same space or a separate area. Encourage movement after the storytelling.

Option 1: Today you will use your whole being to praise God.

How can we move our bodies to show that we are:

Happy
Sad
Excited
Joyful
Fearful
Loving

Have the children either take turns showing their action to one another or you can do this exercise as a group. As the leader be sure to lead by example, showing joy and excitement in all of your movement.

Then have the children create a prayer using their bodies.

God we are thankful for...

God you give us joy...

God we pray for those who are sick....

Or sad...

Or hurt....

God we thank you for your love for each of us.

Amen.

Encourage the children to act out this prayer; you can invite their families in to share in the enthusiasm as well.

Option 2: Using precut stars, you can play a version of 'hide and seek'. Have one child hide the stars in the room. After the stars are hidden have the other children find the stars. You can take turns until each person has had a chance to hide the stars.

End the game – by asking who was looking for the star? What were they looking for? In this way you are building the anticipation that the story of Christ's birth isn't over. You can encourage the children to return next week to hear the rest of the story.

Gather/Ending: Gather the children together in a circle in your prayer area.

If you would like sing use any favorite Christmas Hymn.

At this point you could invite the families in for your movement prayer or use the prayer below.

Use one of the stars from your game. Begin your prayer time explaining that you will pass the star, and when you hold the star you can name something that makes you very happy.

Closing Prayer: Thank you God for all sorts of feelings, happy, sad, joyful, fearful and loving. Thank you for loving us. Amen.

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