

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

Scripture: Jeremiah 31:7-14

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: Proclaim and Give Praise

Supplies Needed: Cloth for prayer space, Bible (with a translation used in your parish.)

If using Option 1 – pinecones, plastic knives or craft sticks, peanut butter or Crisco (if peanut allergies), string, birdseed, brown lunch bags.

If using Option 2 - One of each item listed per student (blue napkins, pretzels – use gluten free pretzels if allergies, cup, Triscuit – or gluten free option if needed for allergies, candy canes, small chocolate coins, cinnamon candies, and apple juice. A hymnal for the ending prayer time.

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, add them to your prayer space this week.

Welcoming the children: Gather the children together at the prayer table and ask some wondering questions –

- I wonder why we have 12 days of Christmas?
- I wonder if anyone is still saying ‘Merry Christmas’ to each other? Why or Why not?

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

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 Jeremiah, he wanted people to know more about God, and begin to tell people about what would happen.

Read the passage – Jeremiah 31:10-14 aloud. The version listed is New Revised Standard. You should use a translation of the bible that is used within your own parish. With older children they can take turns looking up the verses and reading them aloud.

Jeremiah 31:10-14

Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
and declare it in the coastlands far away;
say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him,
and will keep him as a shepherd a flock."
For the LORD has ransomed Jacob,
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.
They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD,
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,
and over the young of the flock and the herd;
their life shall become like a watered garden,
and they shall never languish again.
Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.
I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
I will give the priests their fill of fatness,
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,

says the LORD.

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When the children have read this aloud, ask the wondering questions:

- I wonder who Jeremiah was talking about when he spoke of the shepherd?
- I wonder what Jeremiah was talking about when he said the people will be radiant over the grain, the wine and the oil?
- I wonder how we can continue to care for the earth and be satisfied with God's bounty?

Activities

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

Option 1: Taking care of God's bounty. Today we will make birdfeeders to help take care of the birds.

Give each child a pinecone. Depending on the ages of your children and abilities you can tie string to the top of the pinecone prior to the class or have the children do this themselves. Once the pinecone has a string attached use peanut butter (or Crisco if you have any peanut allergies) and have the children spread it on a pinecone with plastic knives or craft sticks. Then have the children roll their pinecone in birdseed.

Variation: The children could make one to give away and one for their homes. To continue the idea that Christmas isn't just one day, these could be given as gifts to neighbors or people in your church.

Place the prepared birdfeeder in a brown lunch bag for easy transportation home. Or the children could decorate the bag if given as a gift.

Ask the children why it is important to continuing to take care of God's creation.

Below are two Episcopal resources on environmental stewardship.

<http://eenonline.org/action/earthday.htm>

<http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/eco-justice>

Option 2: A snack that aids in retelling the story of Christmas.

You can use a bible to tell the story having the children take turns reading the verses, or have the children tell the story themselves using the snack items as their props for the story.

Tell the story and pass out snack as you tell the story.

- An angel came to Mary – hand out blue napkin
- An angel came to Joseph and they went on to Bethlehem – Walking stick (pretzels – use gluten free pretzels if allergies)
- They went to the inn but there was no room – empty cup
- So they went to the stable to be with the animals – Hay (Triscuit – or gluten free option if needed for allergies)
- And angels appeared to the shepherds and said Glory to God in the highest – Shepherd's crook (candy canes)
- And there was a great light that filled the sky – Three wise men followed this light bringing gifts
 - Gold – small chocolate coins
 - Frankincense – cinnamon candies
 - Myrrh – apple juice

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

Ask the children what their favorite Christmas hymns are; sing the first verse from a few for your gathering prayer time.

Closing Prayer: God of Love and Light, thank you for the gift of your son and the gift of this earth. Help us to walk in the light. Amen.

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