

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year C– First Sunday in Lent**  
**Lesson Plans for Younger 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. 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 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. Ask what they noticed that is different in your worship and/or class spaces this week. What colors and textures do they notice? 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. 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:** (Bring out the bowl filled with sand, and place it where everyone can see it.) Today's story happened in the desert. This bowl has a small piece of the desert, to remind us that God's people lived in the desert for a long time. This piece of the desert can also help us think about this time of the church year, Lent, when we try to keep things simple so that we are free to focus on God. During the weeks to come, we will add things to this bowl to help us remember the story for each week, but for this week, we just need the bowl full of sand.

In today's story, we go all the way back to the time the people of God escaped from slavery in Egypt. During the time of slavery, the people lived in a land called Egypt, and they were not free to do what they wanted. They had to do everything the Egyptians said, even live where the Egyptians said. A man named Moses led the people out of Egypt, into freedom. After they were free, they didn't know where to go, and they wandered in the desert for 40 years. During this time, they began to learn how to live together as the free people of God. After 40 years, they came to the land that God was giving them for their own. Moses was still with them, but he was old, and was not going into the new land. He gathered the people together before they crossed the river into this new land, to remind them of the promises of God, and the ways that God had fulfilled these promises even during the times of slavery and while they wandered in the desert. And they looked forward to the ways in which God would be with them in the new land, even making plans for how they would celebrate their first harvest of food. When they grew their crops, they were to bring an offering of them to the priests, and to remind the priests and themselves that God had promised them that they would be the people of God and that God would care for them by providing land where they could grow food.

### **Reflection Questions:**

During the next six Sundays of Lent, we will be like the people of God in this story, reminding ourselves about the promises of God as we prepare to live as part of the people of God in our own communities.

- I wonder what stories we might hear?
- I wonder what a promise is?
- I wonder how you feel when someone promises you something?
- I wonder if it is hard to wait for a promise?

### **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 burning bush, stones, a portion of a map or a road, and a cross. Today you will make the base of the mobile or the bag.
- 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.

**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:** Thank you, God, for your many promises, and for time for us to remember them through our faith stories.

*Written by Cindy Spencer*

## LENT CALENDAR 2016: Remembering God's Promises

							Story Prompts
		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.*

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