

Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11)

## Mary and Elizabeth – Luke 1:39-66

### Prepare to Wonder

#### Faith Word: ADVENT

The Advent candle for the third Sunday of Advent is the Joy candle. If your church uses purple candles, the Joy candle is the pink one. We have already heard about the joy Elizabeth and Zechariah experienced when the angel gave them news of a son to be born to them. Last week we heard about Mary's joy at the announcement of the upcoming birth of Jesus. Today, the two stories come together as Mary travels to see her cousin Elizabeth.

Mary greeted Elizabeth upon her arrival. When she did, Elizabeth's child leapt in her womb. Elizabeth told Mary that the child jumped for joy in the presence of the Lord. Elizabeth knew that her baby knew that Jesus was God's Son, even while both were still in the womb. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and told Mary that God has blessed her and her baby. Elizabeth also wondered why she was given the honor of God's Son visiting her.

Elizabeth, by her presence and words, must have reassured Mary that God had chosen her for a very special job. Mary joyfully praised God with a song that has become known as the Magnificat. Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months. It must have been comforting for Mary to have the presence of Elizabeth as she waited for the coming baby. What joy the two must have felt preparing together for the birth of their sons.

#### Spiritual Practice for Adults

The third week of Advent we light the candle of Joy. As you light the candle of Joy, reflect on the symbolism of the circle representing God's eternal love. Ask God to be present with you and hear your prayer. Lift up a name of someone who brings you joy. Lift the name up in prayer throughout the day. In the evening, thank God for being present with you and hearing your prayer.

# Come Together

## Come Together

**Supplies:** *Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, purple cloth, battery-operated candle, picture of a musical note*

**Prepare Ahead:** *Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a purple cloth, battery-operated candle, and a Wonder Box (see p. 3). Display the Unit 1 Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15) and Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 22). Place the picture of a musical note inside the Wonder Box.*

- Point to the Unit 1 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 22), and invite the children to wonder about what the word *Advent* means.
- Invite the kids to join you in a circle.

**SAY:** This month we are talking about stories at the beginning of Jesus' life. Our story today is about Mary sharing good news with her relative Elizabeth.

- In this curriculum, we recommend reading stories from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary-age child to read the stories, "Mary and Elizabeth" (pp. 194–5) and "Mary's Song" (pp. 196–7), from the storybook.

**PRAY:** Dear God, thank you for giving us many ways to share good news. Amen.

## Mary and Elizabeth – Preschool

**Supplies:** *Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons*

**Prepare Ahead:** *Photocopy "Mary and Elizabeth" (Reproducible 2A) for each child.*

- Invite the preschoolers to use crayons to color the picture of Mary and Elizabeth.

**SAY:** Mary shared good news with Elizabeth. Who do you share good news with?

## What's Wrong? – Younger Elementary

**Supplies:** *Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons*

**Prepare:** *Photocopy "What's Wrong?" (Reproducible 2B) for each child.*

- Hand out a copy of "What's Wrong?" to each child.

**SAY:** Mary was going to have a baby! Mary wanted to share her good news with her relative, Elizabeth. But ten things are wrong in the picture. Can you find them?

- Invite the kids to look for what's wrong in the picture and circle the items. Why do those items not belong?
- Invite the kids to color the picture.

## How Did They Feel? – Older Elementary

*Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pencils or markers*

*Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "How Did They Feel?" (Reproducible 2C) for each child.*

- Hand out a copy of "How Did They Feel?" to each child.

**SAY:** Mary and Elizabeth were going to have babies! Complete the words on the page to find related words for how they might have felt.

- Invite the kids to figure out the words on the page by filling in the missing letters. If they need some hints, the answers are: *stunned, unexpected, wonder, eye-opener, revelation, astonished, shocked, and amazed*. The bonus word is *surprise*.

**ASK:** What words did you find? What's the bonus word?

## Verse Out of Order – All Ages

*Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, red and green card stock, scissors, gluesticks*

*Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Verse Out of Order" (Reproducible 2D) onto red or green card stock for each kid in your class.*

- Hand out a copy of "Verse Out of Order" to each child, allowing the kids to choose either a red or green copy of the page.

**SAY:** The words of this month's Bible verse can be found in the boxes on the page. But the words are in the wrong order. Cut the boxes apart and use Luke 2:11 to find the correct order. Paste the boxes down onto a separate sheet of card stock.

- Hand out additional sheets of red and green card stock. The kids who cut the Bible verse boxes apart from a red sheet may want to glue them down in the correct order to a green sheet (and vice versa).
- Invite the kids to use a *Common English Bible* to find the correct order.
- Have the kids share the Bible verse aloud.

## Wonder Time

### Interactive Bible Story

*Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book*

*Prepare Ahead: Potocopy "Mary and Elizabeth" (Reproducible 2F) for each child.*

- Invite several readers to take turns reading the story one section at a time.

**ASK:** What do you think will happen to Mary next?

## Share a Story

*Supplies:* Celebrate Wonder DVD, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, TV, DVD player

- Invite the children to join you, sitting in a circle on the floor.
- Watch the Session 2 video (Celebrate Wonder DVD).

## Wonder with Me

*Supplies:* Class Pack, Wonder Box, scissors

*Prepare Ahead:* Lay out the Wonder Story Mat for Unit 1 (Class Pack—pp. 7 & 18). Cut out the three remaining Bible story figures (Class Pack—p. 6), if not already done.

- Place the Wonder Box on the Unit 1 Wonder Story Mat.
- Show the children the Unit 1 Faith Word Poster (Class Pack—p. 22).

**SAY:** Today's faith word is *Advent*. Advent is a time we wait and prepare for the birth of Jesus. Advent can be full of excitement, like baking cookies, or it can be a time of quiet reflection as we watch the flames on Advent wreath candles.

- Hold up the communication device figures.

**ASK:** Whom did Mary share the good news with this week?

**WONDER** together:

- Was there a part of the story that brought you joy?
- How do you think Elizabeth felt when Mary came to visit?
- What do you think Elizabeth and Mary did during the visit?
- Place the tablet figure on the matching shadow on the Wonder Story Mat.
- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the musical note of Advent.

**WONDER:** Why might a musical note remind us of joy?

## Experience Wonder

### Good News Worth Sharing

*Supplies:* Reproducible Kids' Book, smartphone or camera

*Prepare Ahead:* For this activity, refer back to the "Christmas Thoughts" activity you may have started last week (p. 9). If you did not start the activity last week, you may choose to do so now. Or simply refer to the prompts provided on Reproducibles 1D and 1E.

**ASK:** What was the good news that Zechariah and Elizabeth were given in our Bible story a few weeks ago?

- Zechariah and Elizabeth were told they would have a baby. The baby grew up to be John the Baptist.

**SAY:** In today's Bible story, Mary shared the good news she received with Elizabeth. Mary was going to have a baby too! Let's look back at the Christmas Thoughts we've been talking about.

- Invite the kids to look at the Christmas Thoughts your class has hung up on the Christmas tree or somewhere else in the classroom. (You may also just look at Reproducibles 1D and 1E.)
- Invite the kids to choose one Christmas Thought to share with the class.
- As each kid shares, take a few candid pictures using your smartphone.

**SAY:** When we share good news with others, you can see the joy on our faces! Take a look at the pictures I took while you were telling your stories.

- Invite the kids to look at the pictures you took.

## Examine the Bible Verse

**SAY:** Our Unit 1 Bible verse is Luke 2:11. Find it in your Bibles.

**ASK:** Is the Book of Luke in the Old or New Testament? (*New*) Where is Luke located in the New Testament? (*third book*) In what chapter of Luke is our verse located? (*2*) What is the verse number? (*11*)

**SAY:** Our Bible verse tells us about the good news of Jesus' birth.

- Gather the kids around the Bible Verse Poster (Class Pack—pp. 10 & 15). Read it together.

## Peaceful Place

**Supplies:** *Leader Guide—p. 113, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, book: "All the Colors of Christmas" by Matthew Paul Turner, child-friendly Advent wreath, Nativity set, music player with headphones and Christmas music playlist, card-making supplies, crayons or markers*

**Prepare Ahead:** *Photocopy the Unit 1 Faith Word coloring sheet (Leader Guide—p. 113) for each child.*

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Invite the children to draw a picture of a gift they'd like to give to someone special.
- Have each child color the Faith Word coloring sheet.

**Tip:** *All of the supplies/activities suggested for the Peaceful Place are optional.*

# Go in Peace

## Spiritual Practice – Exploring Advent Through Presence

**SAY:** A spiritual practice is something we do to help us be present with God. Advent is a time we can be present with God as we wait and prepare for the birth of Jesus.

- Guide the children through a spiritual practice:
  - Gather around the Advent wreath and light the first, second, and third candles on the wreath. As you light the candles, have the children sing, “Getting Ready for Christmas” to the tune of “This Is the Way.”

**SING:** This is the way we light our candles, light our candles, light our candles. This is the way we light our candles, getting ready for Christmas!

**SAY:** The third candle on the Advent wreath is to remind us of the joy that Jesus brings. Think of someone who brings you joy.

**PRAY:** Repeat after me: “God, thank you for *(have the children share the name of someone who brings them joy)* and the joy they bring. Amen.”

- Bless the children before they leave. Touch each child as you say this blessing: “May you be filled with the joy of Jesus during this season of Advent.”

## Family Spiritual Practice

**Supplies:** *Reproducible Kids’ Book; Leader Guide—pp. 111, 112*

**Prepare Ahead:** *Photocopy “Celebration Chart” (p. 111) and “Family Letter” (p. 112) for each child.*

**SAY:** Let’s take a look at your Take-Home Pages (*Reproducibles 2F–2G*). Ask your family to read the Bible story and participate in this week’s spiritual devotion with you. There’s an extra activity for you to do sometime this week.

- Send home a copy of the Take-Home Pages, a copy of the Family Letter, and a copy of the Celebration Chart with each child.

# Supplemental Activities

---

## Preschoolers – Jump for Joy

- Have the children stand arm's length apart.
- Tell the children to repeat after you and follow your motions.

**SAY:** Jump for joy! Jump for joy! Mary will have a baby boy! (*Jump up and down.*)

**SAY:** Mary went to see Elizabeth and stay with her a while. Elizabeth was waiting to give birth to her first child. When Mary hugged Elizabeth, Elizabeth's baby jumped for joy! (*Jump up and down.*)

**SAY:** Then Elizabeth said a blessing for Mary and her boy. Jump for joy! Jump for joy! Mary will have a baby boy! (*Jump up and down.*)

**WONDER:** Who do you like to visit at Christmastime? What do you like to do when you visit? Who would you like to surprise with a visit?

## Early Elementary – Christmas Wreath

**Supplies:** paper plates, stick-on bows, scraps of ribbon, Christmas wrapping paper, glue, yarn, cotton swabs, scissors, hole punch

**Prepare Ahead:** Cut the center out of the paper plates. Cut the yarn into six-inch pieces. Punch out two holes in the paper plate and tie the yarn through each hole for a hanger. Place glue on the cut-out center of the paper plates.

- Give each child a wreath, glue, and cotton swab. Show the children how to use the cotton swabs to apply glue to the supplies and place them on the wreath.
- Invite each child to create a Christmas wreath using the supplies provided.

**SAY:** We hang wreaths on our door before Christmas to remind us that Christmas is coming.

**ASK:** Do you notice anything similar about the wreaths we are making and the Advent wreath?

**SAY:** They are both circles, and a circle reminds us that God is always with us and that God's love never ends. When we wait during Advent, we use the wreath to help us remember that God is always present with us and God's love never ends!

**WONDER:** What else helps you remember that God is with you always? How do you feel knowing that God will always love you, no matter what?

## Older Elementary – Sharing Joy

*Supplies: construction paper, stickers, markers, old Christmas cards, and so forth*

**SAY:** We talk a lot about *presents* (*emphasize the word*) at Christmastime. We all have a list of what we want. We have been talking about *presence* (*emphasize the word*) the last few weeks. They sound almost the same, but they have very different meanings.

**ASK:** What do you think the word *present* means? What do you think the word *presence* means? Can presence be a present?

**SAY:** Let's make a present for someone today. We are going to make Christmas cards to give to people in our church who can't be with us in person. We will be spreading joy when we give the cards away.

- Let the children create cards with the supplies you have provided.

**WONDER:** How do you feel when you give someone a present? How do you feel when you get a present from someone? How do you feel when you are together with friends or family?

## Intergenerational Activity – Cocoa Recipes

*Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book; small jars (one for each participant); varieties of cocoa mix, chocolate chips, candy, and spices (see Reproducible 2E); spoons*

**Tip:** Make a photocopy of Reproducible 2E for every two to three participants. Place the different ingredients in disposable bowls. Make spoons available.

**SAY:** This week let's make some hot cocoa to give as a gift. At the end of the activity, we'll make some hot cocoa to enjoy ourselves.

- Invite the participants to refer to Reproducible 2E to fill a jar with the ingredients listed on the page. Each participant should choose one recipe on the page.
- Encourage the adult participants to help ensure that kids and youth add appropriate amounts of ingredients to the jars.
- Once the participants have filled a jar with cocoa ingredients, invite them to seal the jars.

**SAY:** Who would you like to give your jar of cocoa to?

- Invite the participants to share the names of the persons with the class.
- Once the participants have made their jars, invite them to make their own cup of cocoa using the hot water (or milk).



Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. (Luke 2:11)

## Jesus' Birth – Luke 2:1-20

### Prepare to Wonder

#### Faith Word: ADVENT

The time of waiting and preparing for the birth of Jesus is almost over. The Advent season will soon come to a close with the birth of the baby Jesus, in a manger in Bethlehem.

The second chapter of Luke is a familiar one to most of us. Caesar Augustus dominated the Roman Empire and ordered everyone to travel to their hometowns to be registered. The registration of each person was to ensure that taxes were paid by everyone in the empire. Since Joseph was from the house of David, Mary and Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem, even though Mary was about to give birth.

Jesus was born in humble circumstances in Bethlehem. Travelers during this time often stayed in a guestroom in the home of a family they may not know. Since so many people were in Bethlehem, Mary and Joseph could not find a guestroom to stay in. A manger filled with straw was Jesus' first bed. A manger is simply the place where the family's stock was fed.

Shepherds were quietly tending their sheep, when the angelic pronouncement that a savior had been born in Bethlehem. The surprise they felt at one angel's pronouncement must have turned to awe when the entire sky was filled with a heavenly host. The shepherds quickly went to find the baby and confirm what the angels had announced. When they found the baby in the manger, they hurried off to tell others of the holy birth. Mary was left to remember the events and to consider them carefully. I wonder what she must have been thinking.

#### Spiritual Practice for Adults

As you light the candles in the Advent wreath this week, take time to remember the hope, love, and joy you have felt this season. The fourth candle in the Advent wreath is the candle of Peace. Jesus was born to bring peace to the world, to give us hope of a better future, to celebrate the big and small things joyfully, and to share God's love with all people. Reflect on these things as you light a candle and pray.