

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

Mary's Good News – Luke 1:26-38

Prepare to Wonder

Faith Word: ADVENT

Today is the second Sunday of Advent. In the lesson, we define Advent as a time when we wait and prepare for the birth of Jesus. Our spiritual practice for the next few Sundays will be on exploring Advent through presence.

Advent is the beginning of the church year. The church year (called the liturgical year) begins four Sundays prior to Christmas. It is traditionally a time of preparation and waiting for the birth of the Christ Child.

In our story this week, Mary is visited by the angel of the Lord, Gabriel, and told she will have a baby and she will name the baby Jesus. Mary is confused and probably afraid of Gabriel's words. She is not married; how could she have a baby? Gabriel reassures her not to be afraid, that God is pleased with her. Mary accepts Gabriel's words with joy and tells the angel she is a servant of God and will do what God wants her to do.

Mary then starts the time of waiting and preparing for the birth of Jesus. She has much to do, not just to prepare physically for the birth, but also to prepare herself spiritually. She had faith in God, so she presented herself to God to fulfill what God had planned. She was present, but how did she prepare? I'm sure she prepared in all the necessary ways: blankets, diapers, a place for him to sleep. How did she prepare her heart? Did she spend time in prayer? Did she share with people she knew would understand her unusual position of expecting a baby without being married?

Today we may wait and prepare in many ways for the birth of Jesus. We have Advent wreaths and calendars to mark off the days. We have Christmas programs and decorating to help us be present with God as we wait.

Spiritual Practice for Adults

The second week of Advent, we light the candle of Love. As you light the candle, ask God to be present with you and hear your prayer. Lift up a name of someone who needs to feel God's love today. 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, Advent candle*

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 Advent candle 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 learning that she will be Jesus' mother.

- In this curriculum, we recommend reading stories from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary-age child to read the story, "Mary's Joy" (pp. 192–3), from the storybook.

PRAY: Dear God, thank you for choosing Mary to be Jesus' mother. Amen.

Mary's Good News – Preschool

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons*

Prepare Ahead: *Photocopy "Mary's Good News" (Reproducible 1A) for each child.*

- Invite the preschoolers to use crayons to color the picture. Share that God sent an angel with a message for Mary.

SAY: What are some of the ways God speaks to us?

Advent Calendar – Younger Elementary

Supplies: *Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons*

Prepare: *Photocopy "Advent Calendar" (Reproducible 1B) for each child.*

- Hand out a copy of "Advent Calendar" to each child.

SAY: During the season of Advent, we count down to Christmas. This Advent calendar will help you count down the days at home. For each day, color the numbers in the box either red or green.

- Since today is December 5, kids can begin to color in the numbers for days 1–5.
- Younger or older kids may want to do this activity, too, or take one home. Prepare extra copies of the page.

What's the Word? – Older Elementary

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, pencils or markers

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "What's the Word?" (Reproducible 1C) for each child.

- Hand out a copy of Reproducible 1C to each child.

ASK: What's written on this page?

SAY: The message comes from today's Bible story. But what does it say? Some of the letters are correct. Other letters have been switched out with symbols or numbers that resemble the missing letters. Try to figure it out, but if you get stuck, look for the answer in Luke 1:30-31 in a *Common English Bible*.

- Invite the kids to solve the message on the page.

ASK: What is the message on the page?

Christmas Thoughts – All Ages

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, red and green card stock, hole punch, ribbon, scissors, a large jar, optional: a Christmas tree

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Christmas Thoughts" (Reproducibles 1D and 1E) onto red or green card stock. Cut all the cards apart and use a hole punch to make a hole where you see indicated on each card. Thread a piece of ribbon through each hole and place the twelve cards in a large jar.

- Place the jar next to a Christmas tree in your classroom. If you don't have a Christmas tree, that's okay. Designate a place in your classroom where the "Christmas Thoughts" cards can be hung after they are pulled out of the jar.
- Invite one kid to pull a card from the jar, and have the child read it aloud. If the child cannot read the card, ask a volunteer to help.
- Have the child hang the card on the tree or elsewhere. Invite each kid to respond to the prompt on the card.
- There are twelve cards. Plan to pull four cards from the jar this week. Then pull four more cards next week (December 12) and four cards the following week (December 19).

Wonder Time

Interactive Bible Story

Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book

Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Mary's Good News" (Reproducible 1F) 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 1 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 four Bible story figures (Class Pack—p. 6).

- 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.

SAY: Sometimes we aren't physically present with someone, but we can still share with them the awe and wonder of waiting for the birth of Jesus.

WONDER together:

- How can you share the awe and wonder of Advent with someone you love who lives far away?
 - What does it feel like to wait for something you really want?
 - What can we do to help us wait patiently?
- Place the figure of the smartphone on its matching shadow on the Wonder Story Mat.

- Read the message on the phone to the kids.
- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the second candle of Advent.

WONDER: How do you think the Advent wreath helps us wait for Christmas?

Experience Wonder

Clothespin Angel Ornament

Supplies: wooden clip-type clothespins, coffee filters, gold or silver chenille stems, string, markers, glue or tape, scissors

Prepare Ahead: Cut the chenille stems into fourths. Make a circle out of each chenille stem, leaving enough on one end to place inside the clip of the clothespin. Cut pieces of string about six inches long. Tie the ends of each piece of string together to form a hanging loop.

- Give each child a clothespin and a coffee filter. Show the children how to scrunch the coffee filter in the middle and place inside the clip part of the clothespin.
- Have the children clip the end of the chenille stem into the top clip of the clothespin. Have the children draw a face on the front of the clothespin.
- Place the string loop inside the clothespin clip and tape or glue the clip together.

SAY: One of the ways we can prepare for Christmas is to make ornaments. Today we are going to make an angel ornament to help us remember that the angel Gabriel visited Mary to tell her she would have a special baby.

WONDER: If God sent an angel to you today, what do you think God's message to you would be?

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: “Mary, the Mother of Jesus” by Tomie dePaola, 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. Make extra copies of the Unit 1 Faith Word coloring sheet to leave in the Peaceful Place this month.*

- Assist the children, as needed, as they interact with the items provided.
- Have the children make Christmas cards for 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 and second 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 second candle on the Advent wreath is to remind us of the love Jesus brings. Look at the circle of the Advent wreath. The circle is a symbol to remind us that Jesus’ love and peace are eternal and never stop. Think of someone you love.

PRAY: Repeat after me: “God, thank you for *(have the children share the name of someone they love)*. Amen.”

- Bless the children before they leave. Touch each child as you say this blessing: “May you be filled with the love 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 1F–1G*). Ask your family to read the Bible story and participate in this week's spiritual practice 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 – Great Joy Game

- Have the children stand arm's length apart.
- Tell the children to repeat after you and follow your motions. Recite the words in a sing-song voice.
 - Sweep, sweep, went the broom. (*Pretend to sweep with a broom.*)
 - The angel came to Mary's room. (*Fold hands as if in prayer.*)
 - Peace to you! Don't be afraid! (*Shake head no.*)
 - You know the promise God has made. (*Cross hands over heart.*)
 - You will have a baby boy. (*Pretend to rock baby.*)
 - He will bring the world great joy! (*Clap hands four times.*)

SAY: Mary was surprised when Gabriel came to her with the message she would have a baby. God can surprise us in many ways. We aren't usually surprised by angels in today's world.

WONDER: Have you even been surprised by God? How might God surprise us today?

Early Elementary – Angel Message Relay

Prepare Ahead: Use masking tape to create a start line and a turn-around line for each team.

SAY: In the Bible story, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to share the good news of her pregnancy. Gabriel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary! I have good news to tell you. You're going to have a baby named Jesus!"

SAY: Let's have a relay race. We're going to pretend to be Gabriel and move how we think he might have moved. I wonder how an angel moves and appears.

- Split the children into teams, and have each team line up behind the start line you created. Give these directions:
 - When I say, “Go,” the first person on each team will move to the turn-around line and back.
 - Without running, each person will move however she or he thinks an angel might move. This could be pretend flying, jumping, and so forth.
 - When you get back to your team, say, “Good news, Mary!” and the next person in line will go.
- Make sure the children are lined up in their places. Then count back from five and say “Go.” The first team to finish the relay with every team member wins.

Older Elementary – Share-the-Message Charades

Supplies: index cards, pen or pencil

- Invite the group to brainstorm nouns from today’s story. Write each noun on each index card. Examples: Mary, Gabriel, baby, news, and so forth.
- Encourage one child at a time to draw a card and act out the noun on the card. The rest of the group will guess what the child is pretending to be.

WONDER: Why do you think this story is important for us to hear every year?

Intergenerational Activity – Bible Verse Cookies

Supplies: two or more packages of refrigerated sugar cookie dough, tubes of decorating icing, disposable plates, nitrile gloves, cookie sheets, spatula, napkins, wet wipes, markerboard or large sheet of paper, marker

Tip: You may choose to save some class time by making the cookies at home instead.

SAY: This month we are waiting for Christmas. Let’s decorate these cookies with letters that will help us learn this month’s Bible verse.

- Write the following letters on the markerboard or large sheet of paper:
Y, S, I, B, T, I, D, C, H, I, C, T, L.
- Invite the kids to use decorating icing to put one of the letters you wrote on each cookie. If you have extras, invite one or more kids to put stars or snowflake design on the additional cookies.
- Use nitrile gloves to put the cookies in the correct order of the verse. Then point to each letter as you recite the verse:

SAY: This month’s Bible verse says, “Your savior is born today in David’s city. He is Christ the Lord,” (Luke 2:11, CEB).

- Invite the kids, youth, and adults to eat the cookies.