

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

## **Simeon and Anna – Luke 2:21-38**

### **Prepare to Wonder**

#### **Faith Word: ADVENT**

Jesus is born, and the waiting is over. Actually, waiting is not over for everyone. In our Bible story this week, we meet Simeon and Anna in the temple. Mary and Joseph have come to the temple for the ritual purification of Mary and the dedication of the baby Jesus. This was done to fulfill the requirement of Jewish law. While at the temple, Jesus is immediately recognized as a special baby by Simeon and Anna.

Simeon takes Jesus in his arms and praises God. A long time ago, God spoke to Simeon and told him he would not die until he saw the Messiah. Simeon praised God and rejoiced that God's words had been fulfilled: baby Jesus was the Messiah. Mary and Joseph were amazed at the wonderful words Simeon said.

Anna was also present at the temple on that special day. She was a devout widow who spent her days in the temple fasting and praying. Like Simeon, she was very old. When she saw Jesus, she also praised God and declared to everyone who could hear that the baby Jesus was the Messiah.

Simeon and Anna waited for years and years for the promised Messiah. They never stopped hoping the day would come and, when it did, they knew immediately that the baby Jesus was "the" Gift from God.

As we see, with Anna and Simeon, waiting is a part of a bigger story in the Bible. Anna and Simeon did not sit by waiting for God to casually plop Jesus in their lap. They prayed, stayed faithful, and kept their eyes and hearts open to recognize Jesus when he was presented. We, too, must actively wait and be prepared to see and hear the words God speaks to us.

### **Spiritual Practice for Adults**

Light all the candles on the Advent wreath, including the Christ candle. Offer your presence to God and sit silently as you imagine God's love washing over you.

# Come Together

## Come Together

*Supplies:* Class Pack, Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook, Wonder Box, white cloth, battery-operated candle, white pillar candle (Christ candle)

*Prepare Ahead:* Set up a Wonder Table (see p. 3) with a white 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 Christ 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 baby Jesus being brought to the temple.

- In this curriculum, we recommend reading stories from the *Celebrate Wonder Bible Storybook*. Allow an elementary-age child to read the story, "Simeon and Anna (pp. 202–3), from the storybook.

**PRAY:** Dear God, thank you for giving a family and community to Jesus. Amen.

## Simeon and Anna – Preschool

*Supplies:* Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons

*Prepare Ahead:* Photocopy "Simeon and Anna" (Reproducible 4A) for each child.

- Invite the preschoolers to use crayons to color the picture.

**SAY:** Jesus was born! What holiday do we celebrate Jesus' birth?

## Hidden Pictures – Younger Elementary

*Supplies:* Reproducible Kids' Book, crayons

*Prepare:* Photocopy "Hidden Pictures" (Reproducible 4B) for each child.

**SAY:** When Simeon and Anna saw Mary's baby, they knew Jesus was the Savior they had been waiting to find. Find ten hidden winter items in the picture. Color the page.

- Invite the kids to look for the hidden items in the picture.

**ASK:** What items did you find? What did the items you found have to do with winter?

**SAY:** Simeon and Anna met baby Jesus and his family. Simeon and Anna knew that Jesus was the Savior.

- Invite the kids to color the page.

## Hidden Bible Verse – Older Elementary

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

*Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Hidden Bible Verse" (Reproducible 4C) for each child.*

- Hand out a copy of "Hidden Bible Verse" to each child.

**SAY:** Simeon and Anna saw Mary's baby. They knew Jesus was the Savior they had been waiting to find. Look up Luke 2:11 (CEB) to find the words of the Bible verse hidden on the page. Write the verse in the space on the page and color the picture.

- Invite the kids to find the words to this month's Bible verse.

**ASK:** What does this month's Bible verse say?

- Invite the kids to share the words of this month's Bible verse.

## Stars and Constellations – All Ages

*Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book, clipboards, pencils*

*Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "December Stars and Constellations" (Reproducible 4E) for each child.*

- Hand out a copy of "December Stars and Constellations" to each child.
- Invite the kids to look over the stars, constellations, and star pictures on the page.

**ASK:** Do you recognize any of the star pictures on the page?

- Invite the kids to share any star pictures they recognize. This sheet shows the same stars and constellations that we saw in November. We are using the same star chart because the sky has not changed significantly. Use this opportunity to see if any kids in your class have tried to find star pictures in the sky.

**SAY:** This fall, we began looking at the night sky to see star pictures. If you are having trouble finding these shapes, here's a tip.

- Point to Orion on the star chart.

**SAY:** Orion is the figure of a man. His belt has three bright stars that are pretty easy to find in the winter sky. If you can find the belt, you might be able to find some of the other stars and constellations on the sheet.

- Invite the kids to take the sheets home and look at the sky.

**SAY:** Looking at stars gives me a sense of awe.

# Wonder Time

## Interactive Bible Story

*Supplies: Reproducible Kids' Book*

*Prepare Ahead: Photocopy "Simeon and Anna" (Reproducible 4F) for each child.*

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

**ASK:** What do you think it was about baby Jesus that Simeon and Anna saw that made them declare he was the Messiah?

## 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 4 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 final Bible story figure (Class Pack—p. 6), if not done already.*

- 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:** We said the definition for *Advent* is a time when we wait and prepare for the birth of Jesus. Waiting for the birth of Jesus is just part of the story. Simeon and Anna waited many years to see Jesus. Like Simeon and Anna, we wait to learn more about Jesus. That is why we continue to read the Bible stories and learn about Jesus.

- Hold up the communication device figures.

**ASK:** When Simeon and Anna saw Jesus, they praised God. But they also told everyone that Jesus was the special baby they had been waiting to meet. Jesus was the special gift God had sent to the people.

**WONDER** together:

- What was the best gift you received at Christmas?
- How did it feel to wait for Christmas to open the gift?
- Are you waiting for something special now?

- Place the computer figure on the matching shadow on the Wonder Story Mat.
- Show and read the messages to the kids.
- Open the Wonder Box to reveal the Christ candle.

**WONDER:** What do you think this candle has to do with our story?

## Experience Wonder

### Waiting Games

*Supplies:* Reproducible Kids' Book

*Prepare Ahead:* Photocopy "Waiting Games" (Reproducible 4D) for each participant before class.

- Have older kids pair up with younger kids.
- Hand out a copy of "Waiting Games" to each pair of children.

**SAY:** Take a look at the games on this page. Read the games and then decide which ones could be played right now in class. Other games will need to be played with a parent or other adult at a time when you are waiting for something.

- Invite the pairs to read over the games on the page. Older kids will need to read the games aloud to younger kids.
- Have the pairs play any of the games they can. Some games will not work during class.

**ASK:** Which games were you able to play during class? Which ones will you need to play later?

- Invite the class to share what they learned from the page. Find out which games they played.

**ASK:** When have you had to wait for something good to happen?

**SAY:** Sometimes it can be hard to wait. Simeon and Anna waited for God's Savior to come. Take this page home. Invite an adult who cares for you to take pictures of the boxes on their phone. Sometime when you find yourself waiting, ask the adult who saved the pictures on their phone to play one of the games described.

- Invite the kids to share any other games they've played during times of waiting.

## 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: "I Can Praise God" by Naomi Joy Krueger, 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 today's story.
- 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:** Spiritual practice is something we do to help us connect to God. It doesn't have to be the same spiritual practice all the time, but it can be. This month we have been using the Advent wreath to connect us to God. We will light all the candles on the Advent wreath, and we will add this big white candle. This is the candle that was in the Wonder Box, and it is called the Christ candle. We light this candle after Jesus has been born.

- Guide the children through a spiritual practice:
  - Gather around the Advent wreath and light all of the 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!

**PRAY:** Touch your pinkie finger: "God gives us hope"; touch your next finger: "God gives us love"; touch your middle finger: "God gives us joy"; touch your index finger: "God gives us peace"; touch your thumb: "God gave us Jesus. Amen."

- Bless the children before they leave. Touch each child as you say this blessing: "May you be filled with the hope, love, joy, and peace of Jesus all year."

## 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 any child who does not already have them.

**SAY:** Let's take a look at your Take-Home Pages (*Reproducibles 4F–4G*). 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

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### Preschoolers – Ring 'round Baby Jesus

*Supplies:* baby doll

- Have the children stand in a circle. Place the baby doll in the middle of the circle.

**SAY:** Simeon and Anna waited and waited for a special gift from God. Baby Jesus was that special gift. When Simeon and Anna saw baby Jesus, they praised God. Let's praise God for Jesus too.

- Sing the words to the tune of "Ring Around the Rosie." Sing several times and change the word *ring* to other movement words (*tiptoe, skip, hop*).

**SING:** Ring 'round baby Jesus,  
A very special baby.  
Praise God for Jesus.  
We all shout, "Hooray!"

**WONDER:** How do you think Simeon and Anna knew Jesus was a special baby? How do you think Mary and Joseph felt when they heard Simeon and Anna praise God for their baby?

## Early and Older Elementary – Christmas Gift Blessing

*Prepare Ahead:* Invite the children in your group to bring one of the gifts they received on Christmas.

**SAY:** We are all very lucky. We got gifts that bring us joy! We received gifts that help us play. Maybe the gifts even help us get to know our families and friends better. We got gifts that celebrate unique things about us. I got the gift of *(name a gift you received)*, and it brings me joy because I love *(hobby or unique quality about yourself)*.

**ASK:** What gift did you bring today?

- Invite the children to show their gifts one at a time.

**SAY:** God wants us all to find delight in our lives. God made all people to experience joy and play and love. God wants these things for each of us because God delights in us. Each of you is special to God. I am going to say a blessing for our gifts, and while I do, please hold up your gift.

**PRAY:** Dear God, we thank you for our good gifts—those we hold up now and those so small and invisible to our own understanding. We ask that you bless these gifts. May they inspire creativity, collaboration, and connection within ourselves, with you, and with our communities. Help us recognize how lucky we are and share with others our abundance. It is in Christ's holy name. Amen.

## Intergenerational Activity – Help in the Nursery

*Tip:* Today's Bible story about Simeon and Anna meeting baby Jesus and his family is a great opportunity for different generational groups in your church to help care for babies and very young children in your church. Work with your nursery coordinator to make part of today's session take place in the nursery.

*If you don't have babies or very young children in your church, then you might consider asking parents with babies to visit your classroom today.*

- Invite the participants to play with the babies in your church. Have them wash their hands, and supervise their play closely.
- After some time has passed, gather your class together (youth and adults may be included as well). Discuss the experience.

**ASK:** What did you enjoy about playing with the babies today?

**SAY:** When Jesus' family brought him to the temple, Simeon and Anna rejoiced. They knew they were meeting God's Savior.