

HERE WE COME!

Plan a celebration atmosphere with streamers, decorations, and party snacks for the children.

SCRIPTURE WORDS AND WORSHIP

Rejoice means to be glad, to celebrate, to express happiness. The people in the Old Testament were looking forward to a time when God would send a Savior and everything would be wonderful. Psalm 126 is filled with celebration over the possibility. Introduce the scripture words from Psalms. Help the children feel the joy these people must have felt.

At Christmas time, we feel the joy of the holiday. But in letters written to the early church, the Christians were told to rejoice continually for the life, ministry, and salvation brought to earth by Jesus.

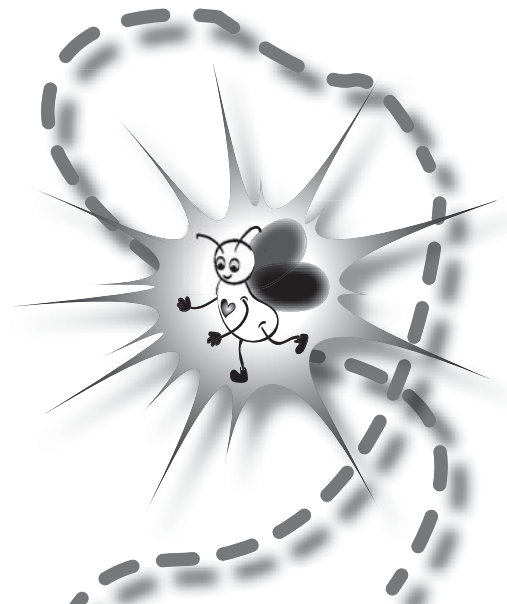
MOVING MUSIC

- "Rejoice in the Lord Always"
- "I've God the Joy, Joy, Joy" (campfire song)
- "Joy to the World" HS 258

Rejoice in the Lord Always

Traditional

Re- joice in the Lord--- al --- ways and a -
gain I say re - joice! Re - joice in the Lord ---
al --- ways and a - gain I say re - joice! Re -
joice --- re - joice --- and a - gain I say re - joice! Re -
joice --- re - joice --- and a - gain I say re - joice!



DARE TO REJOICE

There is something to be joyful about in the celebration of Christmas.

Scripture Words

My mouth is filled with laughter, and my tongue with shouts of joy.
—Psalm 126:2 NRSV adapted

Rejoice always.
—I Thessalonians 5:16 NRSV

LIVE AND LEARN

The Jewish people were looking forward to the coming of a Savior who would save and protect them. They referred to the one who would save them as the Messiah. But they had waited and waited and it had not happened. Finally when the moment came, the angels couldn't keep quiet about it. They had to tell somebody. The scriptures in Luke 2:8–15 record the angel visit to the shepherds on the hills above Bethlehem. Weave the children into the story by asking the questions in italics.

- It was nighttime in the pasture. The sheep had settled down for the night and the shepherds were spaced around them for protection. *Would you like to sleep out under the stars and make sure your animals were safe all night? What would you sleep on?*
- The shepherds knew the sheep had to be kept close together. Some of the shepherds could sleep a little, but at least one had to be awake to watch over things. *Is anyone still awake at your house when you go to bed?*
- All of a sudden there was a great light in the sky. It was brighter than the stars. It was brighter than the moon. But it wasn't supposed to be light at night! *What could be happening?*
- The shepherds looked at the light, shading their eyes. There they saw an angel. None of the shepherds had ever seen an angel before. *Would you like to see an angel?*
- The angel spoke to them. "Don't be afraid." The angel knew the men were frightened, seeing something they had never seen before. *Have you ever been afraid of something you saw for the first time?*
- "I have wonderful news for you," said the angel. "This will make you happy. This will make people everywhere happy. They will be full of joy over the news." *What do you do when someone tells you wonderful news?*
- "This very night, in the city of Bethlehem, the Messiah you have been waiting for is born. The Savior is coming into the world as a baby." *Have you ever seen a newborn baby? What was it like?*
- "You will want to go see the baby," said the angel. "This is how you will find him. He will be wrapped in cloth like all new babies, but he will not be in a baby bed. You will find him lying in a manger." *Do you know what a manger is? Have you ever seen a new baby in a manger? Why do you think baby Jesus was in a manger?*
- Suddenly the angel wasn't alone. There were angels everywhere! They were singing and telling God how happy they were. "Glory to God!" some sang. "Peace on earth," sang others. They were so full of joy over the good news that Jesus was born. *Would you like to sing songs like the angels?*

Teach some Christmas carols. The story next week focuses on the birth of Jesus in the stable, and will include the actual visit of the shepherds. If you are using nativity figures, walk the shepherds to the manger and line them up around Jesus.

STORY TALKING

There are many ways to express joy. During the holiday season the sights and sounds of Christmas fascinate the children. Use an assortment of bells, such as hand bells and jingle bells, as part of the celebration. Play Christmas music, sing carols, and let the children accompany the music with their bells. Visit other classes and share the experience.

UP AND AT 'EM

Pretend to be the shepherds and take a long walk to the manger.

SENSE-A-TIONS

Provide scraps of cloth, yarn, clothespins, and markers. Let the children make shepherds. Bend a chenille stem around the neck of the clothespin to make the arms. Measure a rectangle of cloth twice the length of the clothespin for the robe. Fold it in half and cut a small notch in the center of the fold. Slip the clothespin through the hole. Arrange the robe over the arms and tie with yarn at the waist. Add faces, hair, and a head covering, if desired.

THERE WE GO

Let the children take their shepherds with them. Inexpensive sheep may be available and can be part of your gift to them.