



Community of Christ

# COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS

CHILDREN

27 NOVEMBER 2016 — 1 JANUARY 2017

# COMMUNITY OF CHRIST LESSONS



Discipleship is grounded in spiritual formation and includes scripture study, worship, mission, peacemaking, and lifelong learning—for all ages. We invite you to use these lessons for your class, group, or congregation.

**Lectionary-based:** The weekly lessons connect the *Revised Common Lectionary* for worship with Community of Christ identity, mission, message, and beliefs.

**Quick, easy:** The lessons are designed for approximately 45-minute class sessions with two to three pages of ideas, discussion starters, and activities. Additional preparation help may be found in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament* (with focus on the gospel according to Matthew).

Lessons are available for these age groups:

**Children (multiage, 6–11):** Help children engage in the Bible and introduce mission and beliefs with stories, crafts, and activities.

**Youth (ages 12–18):** Engage teens in scripture study and provocative questions about identity, mission, and beliefs.

**Adult (ages 19 and older):** Deepen faith and understanding with reflective questions, theological understanding, and discussion ideas.

Note: Unless otherwise noted, all Bible scripture references are from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) Bible, copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (HOPE)

LESSON 1  
27 November 2016

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 24:36–44/24:43–51 IV

**Lesson Focus:** God is with us in this life and wants us to prepare for the kingdom of God on Earth.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- discuss what it means to be prepared.
- explore the difference between hope and worry.
- focus on the theme of hope for the first Sunday of Advent.

## Supplies

- Bible (NRSV)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Advent wreath with candles or a picture of an Advent wreath, matches or lighter
- Timer, a bag or suitcase, various items to pack (for example: clothing, toothpaste and toothbrush, books, snack items, or toys)
- Large sheets of newsprint, markers or crayons
- Empty glass jars of any size (one for each child), various colors of tissue paper, glue, paintbrushes, newspaper to cover work area, paper cups or plates for glue, battery-operated votive candles

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 24:36–44 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 18.

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

*(15% of total lesson time)*

Greet children by name and invite them into the classroom. Show the class an Advent wreath (or a picture of an Advent wreath). Share with the class that today is the first Sunday of Advent and on this Sunday we focus on the theme of *hope*. Explain there are five candles in an Advent wreath, one for each of the four Sundays before Christmas and one for Christmas Day. Each Sunday we will add the light of one more candle until all five are lit on Christmas Day. Light the first candle in the wreath together and echo-sing verse one of “Hope Is a Light” CCS 398.

Hope is a light, (Hope is a light.)

Hope is a light to show the way.

(Hope is a light to show the way.)

Light the candle of hope. (Light the candle of hope.)

—Daniel Charles Damon,  
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**Note:** You might also consider creating a living Advent wreath by having the students sit in a circle and take turns sharing how they can represent the hope of Jesus in the coming week. You could do this in the Gather or Send section of the lesson. You may also want to consider, depending on supplies, allowing the children to make their own Advent wreaths and add a candle each week.

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

Have children imagine they are getting ready to go on a trip. Ask them what they might pack in their bags or suitcases. Is there anything they absolutely could not leave behind? What items could they leave out?

Invite the class to play the packing game. Before class set out a bag or suitcase and various items to pack. Have children take turns packing the bag, setting the timer before each child begins. For each child, pick a different amount of time. For example, give the first child two minutes, the second child 30 seconds, and the third child 90 seconds. Do not tell them how much time they will have; they must stop packing when the timer rings. Allow each child to have at least one opportunity to pack the bag.

Discuss with the class how it felt not knowing how much time they would have. Did they find it frustrating? What was difficult about it? Did they pack everything they needed in the time allowed? How did they decide what to pack and what to leave out?

Today's scripture passage reminds us to prepare for Jesus, here and now, by the way we live and the choices we make.

Read Matthew 24:36–44. What did the scripture passage say we needed to prepare for? (*the coming of Jesus*)

**Note:** When reading this passage with children, they may focus on the idea that some people will be left behind and some will be taken away. Such mistaken theology can be frightening to young children. Older children may know this idea from popular culture as the Rapture. Community of Christ theology of scripture understands the ideas presented by the Rapture or the popular series of books and movies entitled *Left Behind* are without sound theological basis. Community of Christ theology supports the idea that what matters most is the mission of Christ—building of the kingdom of God on Earth in this life. Older children are able to explore this idea more deeply.

There are many ways we prepare to meet Jesus and share his love with others. Today we are going to explore some of those ways.

Lay a long sheet of newsprint on the floor for each child. Have the children choose partners. Children take turns lying on their sheets of newsprint while their partners trace their outlines on the paper. Working together, have them write on their body outlines ways they can prepare to meet and share Jesus. For example, on the

head they might write “study the Bible” or “read good books.” For the eyes they might write “watching positive movies” or “look for opportunities to help others.” For the hands they might write something about planting flowers for an elderly neighbor or playing the piano. For the feet, they might write about joining a walk for charity or collecting food for a local food bank. When their outlines are filled in with ideas, have the children share a few ideas with the class.

**Note:** If large sheets of newsprint are not available, each child could draw an outline of a person on a single sheet of paper, or you could create one large outline and complete it as a class. You could also name a body part and have the children act out ways to prepare each part instead of writing the ideas down.

## 3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing

(35% of total lesson time)

In Jesus' time, people expected the Messiah would come soon to save them from difficulties they faced each day. They lived in fear of what others might do to them. They had hope the Messiah would deliver them from hardship at any moment. They spent more time focused on the future than on what they could do to prepare for Jesus in the present.

This is the first Sunday of Advent. Advent is a special time of waiting for Jesus' birth. We live in hope and believe that Jesus came to be with us on Earth.

Sometimes we spend so much time and energy worrying about all that can go wrong in our lives (like making a mistake, getting bad grades, or getting into an accident) that we forget to live in hope. What is something that worries you? What is something that makes you feel hopeful?

Today we are going to talk about our worries and brainstorm ways to find hope amid those worries.

Pass out a paper and pen or pencil to each child (or do the activity together as a class on a large sheet of paper or a chalkboard). Make two columns. Label the first column WORRIES and the second column HOPES. Write something in the WORRIES column that you worry about or are afraid of. In the column labeled HOPES, write something that would ease your worry. An example of a worry might be sleeping in the dark. A matching hope might be to have an adult check in on you or have a nightlight. Another example of a worry might be failing a math test. The hope could be that it is an opportunity to learn from mistakes and do better

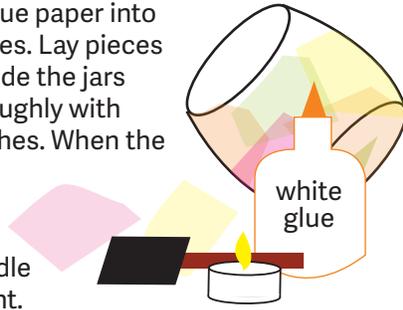
next time. Fill each column with several examples. Ask the children the following:

- What was difficult about this activity?
- Could you find hope for each item you listed in the WORRIES column?
- With whom could you share your worries and fears?
- Who helps you feel hope?

Today we are going to make a lantern to remind us that even though our worries and fears cause us to feel we are in the dark, our hope is in the light of Jesus.



Give an empty glass jar of any size to each child. Pass out various colors of tissue paper, glue, and clean paintbrushes. Have children tear the tissue paper into shapes of various sizes. Lay pieces of paper on the outside the jars and coat them thoroughly with glue using paintbrushes. When the surface of the jar is completely covered, place a battery-operated votive candle inside the jar and light.



**Note:** An alternate object lesson is to have each child create a picture of a light source like a lantern, a flashlight, or a candle. The idea is to represent the light of hope.

## 4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived  
*(10% of total lesson time)*

Gather in a circle. Sing together "If You're Ready to Serve Jesus" to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It." (Tune is found at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=71hqRT9U0wg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71hqRT9U0wg).)

- If you're ready to serve Jesus, clap your hands.
- If you're ready to serve Jesus, clap your hands.
- If you're ready to serve Jesus, you will live in hope that frees us.
- If you're ready to serve Jesus, clap your hands.
- If you're ready to serve Jesus, stomp your feet...
- If you're ready to serve Jesus, shout, "Amen"...
- If you're ready to serve Jesus, do all three...

## 5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope  
*(5% of total lesson time)*

Close with the following prayer:

Dear God,  
Help us to be ready to serve you,  
and to live in hope each day.  
Amen.

# SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT (JOY)

LESSON 2  
4 December 2016

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 3:1–12/3:27–40 IV

**Lesson Focus:** Preparing for the kingdom of heaven means making choices that help bring about God’s shalom.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- talk about the life of John the Baptist.
- explore the meaning of repentance.
- practice ways to make responsible choices.
- add the joy candle to the Advent wreath.

## Supplies

- Bible (NRSV)
- Recommended: *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A* by Ralph Milton (ISBN 9781551455471) available from Herald House.
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Optional: paper and pens or pencils, clothes for costumes, script at the end of the lesson
- Advent wreath, candle for hope and candle for joy
- Plain paper cups, yarn or string; jingle bells; scissors; buttons, washers, or tiny sticks; markers or crayons

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 3:1–12 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 20 .

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

*(15% of total lesson time)*

Greet students by name and remind them that last Sunday was the first Sunday of Advent—the Sunday of *hope*. Invite students to share with the class one time they felt hope over the last week or one time they helped someone else feel hopeful.

Share with the class that this week they will add another candle to the Advent wreath—the candle of *joy*—to represent the joy of Jesus’ coming. Ask them to share about a time when they felt joy. Were they by themselves or with other people?

As you add the joy candle to your wreath, echo-sing verse three of “Hope Is a Light” CCS 398. Sing it through several times.

Joy is a song, (joy is a song.)

Joy is a song for all to sing.  
(Joy is a song for all to sing.)

Light the candle of joy. (Light the candle of joy.)

—Daniel Charles Damon,  
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**Note:** You might also consider creating a living Advent wreath by having the students sit in a circle and take turns sharing how they can represent the joy of Jesus in the coming week. You could do this in the Gather or Send section of the lesson. You may also want to consider, depending on supplies, allowing the children to make their own Advent wreaths and add a candle each week.

# 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction  
(35% of total lesson time)

Today's scripture passage is about people who heard about the coming of Jesus from an unexpected and unlikely person.

Read "John Says, 'Get Ready!'" from the *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A*, pages 24–25, or Matthew 3:1–12 from the NRSV Bible. Ask the children to pay close attention to what John the Baptist tells the people they must do.

Ask:

- What was it about John the Baptist that made people feel he was different from them? (*strange clothes, lived in the wilderness, ate odd food, told them to repent*)
- What does John say we should do to help prepare the way for Jesus? (*repent*)
- What does it mean to repent? (*say we are sorry for our poor choice, change the way we live, try not make the same choice again*)

Have children work in pairs to create a skit about John the Baptist. What would John say to us today? What do we need to repent for? How can we change? Who would John the Baptist's audience be today? Have students write down their lines if it is helpful.

Act out the skits for the rest of the class.

**Note:** If you have a class of mainly younger children, you may act out the skit found at the end of this lesson. Provide simple costumes for the children to wear. Have one child or adult read the skit as the rest of the class acts it out.

# 3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing  
(35% of total lesson time)

Repentance is not just about saying you are sorry when you make an irresponsible choice. It means changing the way you think and act. Changing is not always easy to do. Preparing the way for Jesus means we need to make choices every day that help others and show them how Jesus loves them. Why is that difficult to do?

The choices we make each day show others what is important in our lives. God wants our choices to reflect our yearning to build the kingdom of God on Earth (shalom).

In this lesson, I will tell you about a choice someone has made. It will be your job to decide whether you think the person made a responsible choice. Give a thumbs-up if you think the choice was responsible. Give a thumbs-down if the person could have made a better choice.

- Sam throws her trash on the ground. (*thumbs-down*)
- Juan notices a new student at school and invites her to play with him and his friends. (*thumbs-up*)
- Sarah waits patiently in line for her turn to play a game. (*thumbs-up*)
- Bobby yells at his mother when she asks him to do his chores. (*thumbs-down*)
- Fatima teases her sister about her new haircut. (*thumbs-down*)
- Kevin offers to clean up the kitchen for his mother who is ill. (*thumbs-up*)
- Yvonne volunteers to help receive the offering at church. (*thumbs-up*)
- Mike apologizes to his friend for saying something mean. One minute later he says something else mean. (*thumbs-down*)
- Maria leaves the water running while brushing her teeth. Her mother reminds her to turn it off next time. The next time she brushes, she leaves the water running again. (*thumbs-down*)
- Jessica lies about finishing her homework so she can spend more time playing with her friends. (*thumbs-down*)

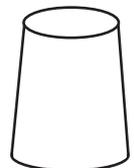
**Note:** Older children may enjoy going deeper with these statements. As they answer with a thumbs-down, invite them to share a choice that might be more responsible. If the answer is a thumbs-up, invite the students to share why it was a good choice. They could also do a variation of the game in which they stand or sit according to their choice, or act out better choices. Add other relevant situations as suitable.

John's words in the scripture passage today invite us to say we are sorry when we do something to hurt someone else. However, words are not enough. We also have to change the way we act. Changing is how we help prepare the way for the kingdom of God.

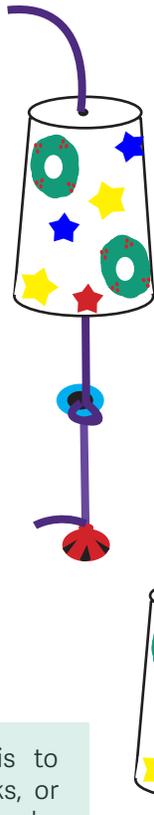
Our craft today is a reminder of how we should live this week with joy that Jesus brings. Every time you look at or ring your bell this week, think of the ways you can joyfully repent and make responsible choices to help prepare for the kingdom of God on Earth.

### Paper-Cup Bell Instructions:

1. Give each child a plain paper cup to decorate.



2. As children decorate their cups with markers, crayons, and stickers, pass out a jingle bell and a piece of yarn or string twice as long as the cup.
3. Have children poke a small hole in the bottom of the cup using the tip of a pen or pencil.
4. Tie the jingle bell to one end of the yarn.
5. Tie a knot in the yarn about 1½ in / 4 cm above the bell. Then thread the yarn through a button, washer, or around a tiny stick. This step will help keep the bell from shifting through the top hole.
6. Thread the long end of the yarn up through the inside the cup.
7. Create a loop and tie off the end of the yarn.



## 4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived  
(10% of total lesson time)

Gather in a circle with children holding their bells. Sing together one verse of “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” CCS 99. Have children joyfully ring their bells (or instruments) as they sing along.

*Chant together, “I am preparing for the kingdom!” and ring bells together.*

## 5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope  
(5% of total lesson time)

Offer a closing prayer of joy.

**Note:** An alternate object lesson is to find items in nature (like sticks, rocks, or seedpods) that children could use to make joyful noises. They could also create an instrument out of “found” items around the classroom or found in the recycling bin.

### The Kingdom of Heaven Has Come Near

**Narrator:** John the Baptist doesn’t look like most people I know. I mean, how many people do you know who wear clothes made of a camel’s hide? And those bugs? Ugh. Not even honey could make those things taste good. But there is something about him that makes me want to get to know him. I’m going to take a walk down to the river to hear what he has to say.

**John:** (yelling to the crowd) You! You need to get ready! Jesus is coming soon!

**Person 1:** How do we get ready? Should we pack a suitcase?

**John:** No! No! No! You need to start living your life in a better way. When you do something wrong, don’t just say you’re sorry. Change the way you act! Share with your neighbors, help those who suffer, and be kind to one another!

**Person 2:** We really are sorry. How can we live in God’s way?

**John:** First, you have to be baptized in the water. That will show others you are ready to live in a better way and wash away the bad choices. But you also have to get ready for someone else to come who is more powerful than I am.

**Person 3:** What do you mean?

**John:** God is sending someone to us who will change everything. I can make you clean with water, but he can make you clean with the Holy Spirit. It will fill you with warmth and comfort and help you make good choices. Who is ready?

**Various People:** Me! Me! Me!

*(John begins baptizing people)*

**Narrator:** Ah! So that’s what it is all about. I can’t wait to meet the one who is coming. Are you ready to meet him, too?

# THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT (PEACE)

LESSON 3  
11 December 2016

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 11:2–11

**Lesson Focus:** Actions are just as important as words. Christ asks us to act compassionately toward others.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- read about John the Baptist.
- practice using actions instead of words.
- add the candle of peace to the Advent wreath.
- write a peace prayer.

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read “Exploring the Scripture” for Matthew 11:2–11 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 22.

## Supplies

- Bible (NRSV)
- Recommended: *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A* by Ralph Milton (ISBN 9781551455471) available from Herald House
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Advent wreath, three candles, matches or lighter
- Note cards or slips of paper with Advent-themed word written on them
- Dove outline (*at end of lesson*) for each student, markers or crayons, scissors, hole punch, string

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson  
(15% of total lesson time)

Greet children as they enter and invite them to gather around the Advent wreath. Have the wreath set up with two candles—one for hope and one for joy. Ask students to share what the two candles represent (*two themes of Advent*). Invite a child to add the third candle to represent peace. Explain that the coming of Jesus’ birth is a promise of peace here on Earth—God’s shalom. As you light the candle of peace, sing verse two of “Hope Is a Light” CCS 398.

Peace is a prayer, (peace is a prayer.)

Peace is a prayer that starts with me.  
(Peace is a prayer that starts with me.)

Light the candle of peace. (Light the candle of peace.)

—Daniel Charles Damon,  
© 2007 Hope Publishing Company

**Note:** You might also consider creating a living Advent wreath by having the students sit in a circle and take turns sharing how they can represent the peace of Jesus in the coming week. You could do this in the Gather or Send section of the lesson. You may also want to consider, depending on supplies, allowing the children to make their Advent wreaths and add a candle each week.

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction  
(35% of total lesson time)

Ask the children who the main character in last week’s scripture passage was (*John the Baptist*). Why was he so well known? (*wore strange clothes, preached about repentance, baptized people, told about the Messiah who was coming*) Today’s scripture passage tells us a little more about John and what happens to him next.

John was a faithful messenger of God. Everywhere he went he told people the Messiah was coming soon. He urged people to repent, be baptized, and change the way they lived their lives. The King of Israel did not like what John had to say. He was afraid this Messiah would try to become the king. So the king threw John in jail for a long time. Even though he was in jail, John's followers would come and tell him about what they saw and heard. Our scripture passage today begins with this story.

Read Matthew 11:2–11 from the NRSV or “You Are Just as Important” from the *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A*, p. 31 (recommended).

- What kind of Messiah do you think John was expecting? (*someone who would become king and save his people*)
- What kind of Messiah was Jesus? Did he try to be the king? What acts did he do? (*healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, helped the lame walk, restored hearing to the deaf, raised the dead*) What acts were Jesus' followers doing? (*same as Jesus*)
- Who did Jesus say John was? (*a prophet to prepare the way for Jesus*)

For many years, prophets told people about a Messiah who someday would come to help them. The Jewish people believed these words, but many people did not believe Jesus was the one. John even had doubts and questions. Jesus' answer to those questions and doubts was to tell John to look at his actions. What he did was proof of who he was.

Have any of you ever heard the saying “Actions speak louder than words”? Today we are going to see if our actions really do show what we mean.

**Note:** Ahead of time, prepare note cards or slips of paper with Advent words or phrases to act out. If you have a class with mostly older students, have them each write a word or phrase to act out on a note card. They could use the theme of Advent or peace. Suggested words and phrases might include hope, joy, love, peace, manger, shepherds, donkey, star, angels, wreath, or candles. Place cards in a basket.

Play a game of Advent Charades. Have a student stand in front of the class and act out a word or phrase written on one of the cards. The actor may not use any words or sounds to help the class guess what his or her actions mean. The class may yell out guesses until someone gets the correct answer. Pick a new actor and continue to play until all students who wish get a turn.

What was it like to try to guess what someone meant using only their actions and no words? What made it difficult? What made it easy?

## 3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing  
(35% of total lesson time)

People in our lives might say they believe one way and then they act differently. Have you ever told people you believed something and then acted differently? How did you feel afterward?

When we choose to follow Jesus, we agree to try to live like Jesus. What are some of the ways we can be like Jesus? Is it always easy to do what we know is right? What makes it difficult?

Who do you know whose actions show you they care about you? What does this person do to show you?

One way we can show others about God's love is to pray for them. Today we are going to write our peace prayer for someone we care about. What are some symbols we use for peace? One symbol we use is a dove.

Have children cut out the dove outline provided at the end of the lesson. If you have a group of older students, have them write a simple prayer of peace for someone they know on the dove. If your group is younger, you may want to provide them with a simple prayer to copy. One such prayer might be:

Dear God,  
Thank you for [insert name].  
I pray [name] will have peace.  
In Jesus' name,  
Amen.

## 4 SEND

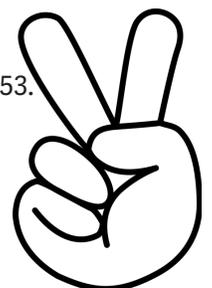
Explores how the lesson might be lived  
(10% of total lesson time)

Gather in a circle and have each child show one action they could use this week to show others about Jesus.

## 5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope  
(5% of total lesson time)

Sing together “Shalom chaverim” CCS 653. Offer each other a sign of peace.



**Dove Pattern**



# FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT (LOVE)

LESSON 4  
18 December 2016

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 1:18–25/2:1–8 IV

**Lesson Focus:** Jesus' birth fulfilled God's promise to love and be with us.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- light the fourth candle of Advent (love).
- read the story of Joseph's encounter with an angel.
- discuss the meaning of "Emmanuel."
- discover ways to show God's love to others.

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 1:18–25 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 24.

## Supplies

- Advent wreath, four candles (hope, joy, peace, love), lighter or matches
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Bible (NRSV)
- Recommended: *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A* by Ralph Milton (ISBN 9781551455471) available from Herald House
- Paper and pencils or pens
- Construction paper (green, brown, other colors), scissors, glue, heart stencils (three sizes), items for decoration (sequins, paper, stickers)

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

*(15% of total lesson time)*

Greet children as they enter and invite them to sit around the Advent wreath. Light the first three candles and review with the class what each candle represents. (*hope, joy, and peace*) Add today's candle that represents *love*. Explain to the children that this candle represents the love that Jesus brings into our lives during this season of waiting for Jesus' birth. As you light the fourth candle sing together the fourth verse of "Hope Is a Light" CCS 398.

Love is a gift, (love is a gift.)

Love is a gift our hearts can give.  
(Love is a gift our hearts can give.)

Light the candle of love. (Light the candle of love.)

—Daniel Charles Damon,  
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**Note:** You might also consider creating a living Advent wreath by having the students sit in a circle and take turns sharing how they can represent the love of Jesus in the coming week. You could do this in the Gather or Send section of the lesson. You may also want to consider, depending on supplies, allowing the children to make their advent wreaths and add a candle each week.

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

*(35% of total lesson time)*

In our scripture passage today we are going to hear about how love happened in an unexpected way. Our story starts with Mary and Joseph, who were Jesus' earthly parents. They were engaged to be married, but before it was time for the wedding, Mary became pregnant. Joseph knew it could not be his child, but he was a good person and did not want to embarrass Mary. So he decided to break his engagement to her quietly.

However, before he could break off his engagement with Mary, something unexpected happened.

Read together Matthew 1:18–25 from the NRSV or “Joseph’s Brave Choice” from the *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A*, p. 35.

Explore the following questions with the students:

- How do you think Joseph was feeling?
- What did Joseph decide to do?
- What does “Emmanuel” mean? (*God with us*)
- Is God with us? How does that feel?

In today’s scripture passage we are told that Jesus is “Emmanuel,” which means God is with us. What are some ways you know God is with you each day?

We are going to create an acrostic poem made up of words that begin with each letter of “Emmanuel.” Have children write the letters EMMANUEL from top to bottom along the left side of their paper. Each word they choose should describe a way we know God is with us. That word could describe God’s nature or actions. For example:

**Note:** Younger children may need more help thinking up words on their own. If your class has fewer independent learners, create one acrostic together. If your students are more advanced, have them create their own and share with the class.

Energy  
Mercy  
Message  
Attitude (good)  
Newborn king  
Understanding  
Excitement  
Love

### 3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing  
(35% of total lesson time)

Living in God’s “upside-down” kingdom asks us to put love first. Today’s story about Joseph reminds us that sometimes being compassionate is more important than following the law if obedience to that law would hurt someone. Joseph had an important role in God’s plan for creation. Instead of abandoning Mary, he stepped out in faith and love and married her.

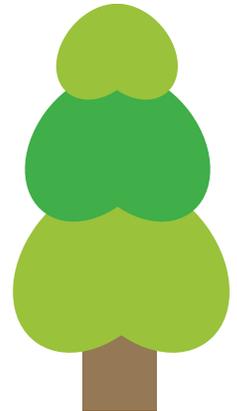
Jesus asks us each day to look at the people around us and see them the way God sees them. What is difficult about that? How can you show other people that God loves them?

Today we are going to create a love tree as a reminder of God’s love for us and the love God wants us to show each other.

Hand out the following supplies to each child: one piece of construction paper for the background, one

piece of brown paper for the tree trunk, one piece of construction paper for hearts, pencil or pen, scissors, glue, stencils, and various items to decorate tree (stickers, markers, sequins, paper).

1. Cut a trunk out of the brown paper and glue it to the background paper.
2. Trace three hearts (large, medium, and small) on another piece of construction paper.
3. Cut out hearts.
4. Glue the large heart *upside-down* above the tree trunk, barely overlapping it.
5. Glue the medium-sized heart *upside-down* above the large heart, barely overlapping it.
6. Glue the smallest heart *upside-down* above and barely overlapping the medium heart.
7. Decorate the tree.
8. Write across the top of the page: **Emmanuel: God with Us.**



**Note:** An alternate object lesson would be to have one child look at a picture or page of a magazine upside-down for 60 seconds. Then have another child look at the picture or magazine page right side up. Have them describe what the picture looked like from their perspective. Do this several times with a variety of pictures. What was it like to look at the pictures upside down? How did you describe what you saw? How is this like sharing God’s upside-down kingdom with others?

### 4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived  
(10% of total lesson time)

Gather around the Advent wreath and sing all four verses of “Hope Is a Light” CCS 398: Remind children that next week is Christmas and you will light the final candle together.

Hope is a light...  
Joy is a song...  
Peace is a prayer...  
Love is a gift...

### 5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope  
(5% of total lesson time)

Close with each student finishing the following statement: This week I will show God’s love to \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_.

# CHRISTMAS DAY

LESSON 5  
25 December 2016

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Luke 2:1–20

**Lesson Focus:** Jesus came to bring hope for all people.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- read the story of Jesus' birth from Luke.
- examine a song about Jesus' birth.
- discuss the idea of God's "upside-down" kingdom.
- discuss who would benefit from the good news of Jesus' birth.

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Luke 2:1–20 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 25.

## Supplies

- Advent wreath and five Advent candles, matches or lighter
- Bible (NRSV)
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Optical illusion image (end of lesson)
- Optional: Scratch art paper, toothpick, or fork to scratch off coating
- Optional (Homemade scratch art paper): white card stock cut to postcard size, crayons, painter's tape, small roller brush or paintbrush, black tempera paint, liquid laundry detergent, shallow bowl

# 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson  
(15% of total lesson time)

Greet each student and welcome them to God's upside-down kingdom.

Gather around the Advent wreath. Review what each of the four candles represents (*hope, joy, peace, and love*). As you light each candle, sing together the first four verses of "Hope Is a Light" CCS 398.

Hope is a light...  
Joy is a song...  
Peace is a prayer...  
Love is a gift...

Add the last candle to the center of the wreath. Explain that today you are lighting the Christ candle in honor of Jesus' birth. As you light the final candle, sing together the last verse of CCS 398:

Jesus is born, (*Jesus is born.*)  
Jesus is born in us today. (*Jesus is born in us today.*)

Christ, the light of the world.  
Christ, the light of the world.)

—Daniel Charles Damon,  
© 2007 Hope Publishing Company

**Note:** You might also consider creating a living Advent wreath by having the students sit in a circle and take turns sharing how they can represent the hope, joy, peace, and love of Jesus in the coming week. You could do this in the Gather or Send section of the lesson.

# 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

(35% of total lesson time)

Provide each child with a copy of the optical illusion image found at the end of this lesson. Read the instructions aloud, then have everyone focus on their copy of the image. Don't tell them they should see a Jesus image; let this be a surprise. If some do not see

the image, let them try again. This time, instruct children to face a light source (window, lamp) when they close their eyes. They should see an image on the back of their eyelids. Discuss the activity.

- What did you see when you first looked at the image?
- What did you see after focusing on the image and then looking away?
- Did you expect to see a Jesus image? What did you expect?
- Today's scripture story tells of a time when Jesus came unexpected to many.

In our scripture today Jesus, the Messiah—who was expected by many to be a royal king—came as a baby born in a stable. Angels first announced his birth not to leaders, but to shepherds in a field watching their sheep.

Today's scripture passage may be a familiar one to most students. Take turns reading Luke 2:1–20 aloud. If your class has enough students to act out the story, give children the opportunity to pick which character he or she might want to portray as you read the story. Take note of which roles are most requested.

After reading and acting out the story, ask the children who they think is the “star” of the story. Was it Mary? Joseph? Jesus? The angel? Or the shepherds?

In today's scripture passage, an angel came to share the news the Messiah had arrived. However, he came to persons many people would not have expected—lowly shepherds on a hillside. Why is this unexpected or upside-down?

When you want to share good news about your day, who do you tell first? Your parents? Your best friend? Your teacher?

If you were the angel sharing good news about Jesus' birth, who would you talk to first? Would it be your family? The television or newspaper? The President?

### **3 RESPOND**

Takes the learners from hearing to doing  
(35% of total lesson time)

In our scripture passage today, the angel first visited a group of shepherds. In Jesus' time, shepherds were not rich or powerful. In fact, they were not popular or important. Why do you think the angel visited the shepherds first?

The story of the angel coming to the shepherds shows that Jesus was going to be different from expected. He

would eventually minister to poor people, sick people, outcasts, Jews, non-Jews, and many others that some felt were not worth saving or spending time with. Everything Jesus taught was upside-down.

Have students take turns acting out the following scenarios (or some you would like to add) from the life and ministry of Jesus. Ask students how each scenario shows how God's kingdom is upside-down or unexpected.

- Jesus meets a leper and heals him by touching him.
- Jesus meets an outcast woman at the well and ministers to her.
- Jesus invites fishers to become his disciples.
- Jesus has dinner with a tax collector.
- Jesus teaches that when someone hurts you should forgive them by turning the other cheek.

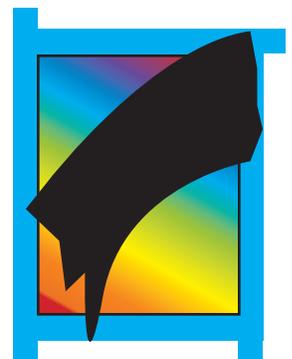
We learn about Jesus in various ways. One way is through hymns. Read the words of “Star-Child” CCS 420 and make a list of the people the hymn suggests need to hear about Jesus. Are these people you expected to read about? If so, why? If not, why? How can we share the good news of Jesus' birth with people like this? What other persons would you add to the list?

#### **Optional activity: God's Love Made Visible Scratch Art**

Begin by giving each child a piece of scratch art paper and a pointed utensil such as a toothpick, a fork, or a pencil. Invite the children to scratch a design into the paper that represents God's upside-down kingdom (a star, an angel, a manger scene, a dove, or an Advent wreath, for example). As they scratch into the black, a colorful design will be revealed. If you use homemade scratch art paper, create it one or two days ahead of time (see instructions below). Have children share their symbol with the class and explain why they chose it.

#### **Homemade Scratch Art Paper**

1. Tape a piece of white card stock (approx. 4 x 6 in / 10 x 15 cm) to a covered work surface with painter's tape, creating a .5 in / 1.2 cm border, leaving a white surface area about the size of a postcard.
2. Using one or more colors, completely color the white space of the card using wax crayons.
3. Mix the black tempera paint and the liquid detergent in a 1:1 ratio and pour into a shallow bowl. For example, one cup of paint to one cup of detergent.



4. Using a paintbrush or paint roller, paint the entire card. Cover all areas you have colored and taped. Let dry.
5. Repeat step 4 as needed to cover the entire card area.
6. After the paint dries, carefully remove painter's tape.

## 4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived

*(10% of total lesson time)*

Review how each person is part of God's upside-down kingdom. Have each child share how he or she is a part of God's upside-down kingdom. Sing together "Joy to the World!" CCS 408, "Star-Child" CCS 420, or "Hope Is a Light" CCS 398.

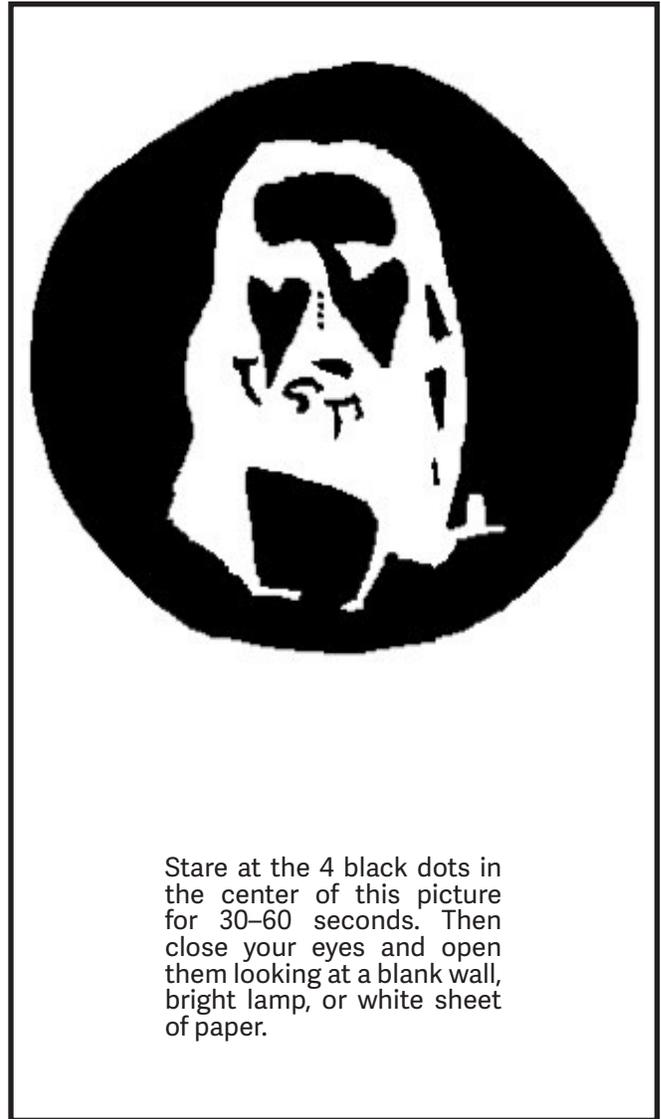
Have children complete the following sentence: This week I will share the good news of God's upside-down kingdom with \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_.

## 5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope

*(5% of total lesson time)*

Pray a popcorn prayer of praise and hope. Allow children to share words or sentences of praise and hope as they feel moved and as many times as they would like. End with an amen.



Stare at the 4 black dots in the center of this picture for 30–60 seconds. Then close your eyes and open them looking at a blank wall, bright lamp, or white sheet of paper.

# FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS DAY

LESSON 6  
1 January 2017

**Focus Scripture Passage:** Matthew 2:13–23

**Lesson Focus:** We are called to listen for what God is asking us to do.

## Objectives

*The learners will...*

- read about Joseph's dream.
- engage in a listening object lesson.
- discuss what they can do to help build God's kingdom on Earth in the coming year.

## Supplies

- Bible (NRSV)
- Recommended: *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A* by Ralph Milton (ISBN 9781551455471) available from Herald House
- *Community of Christ Sings (CCS)*
- Assorted instruments, noisemakers, or recorded music
- Paper, crayons or markers

**Note to teacher:** In preparation for this lesson, read "Exploring the Scripture" for Matthew 2:13–23 in *Sermon & Class Helps, Year A: New Testament*, p. 26.

## 1 GATHER

Activates background knowledge, prepares and motivates for lesson

*(15% of total lesson time)*

Greet students and invite them to sing "Listen in the Silence" CCS 153 three times through. Invite students to sit in a circle and turn to a partner. Have partners take turns telling three facts about themselves. After one partner shares, the other partner then repeats the three facts he or she heard. Have partners trade roles and repeat.

Ask the students to share what was difficult and what was easy about the activity.

Repeat activity adding extra background noise (music playing, banging on percussion instruments, or other noisemaking). After the students learn and repeat three new facts about their partners, ask them to share what was difficult or easy about the object lesson this time. Did they have to listen more closely to one another? Could they hear their partners the first time or did they have to say it more than once?

## 2 ENGAGE

Invites exploration and interaction

*(35% of total lesson time)*

After Jesus was born, his parents stayed in Bethlehem for a while. They planned to return to their home in Galilee after Jesus was a bit older. In a far-off country, a group of wise men (magi) saw a bright star shining in the sky. They were sure that star meant someone important had been born, so they packed their belongings and traveled to see where the star led. They stopped in Jerusalem to ask King Herod if he knew where this new king was. Herod learned the baby might be nearby in Bethlehem and became afraid. What if this new king tried to take his place as king? The wise men went on to see baby Jesus but promised to let Herod know where they found the baby.

What can you tell me about the wise men who came to visit baby Jesus? What did they bring to him? After they had visited Jesus, one of them had a dream that Herod was going to try to kill the baby. So they did not go back to tell Herod where the baby was and went home another way.

Today's scripture passage is about a time when Joseph, like the wise men, had to listen carefully to learn what God wanted him to do to protect his family.

Read Matthew 2:13–23 from the NRSV or “Run Away from King Herod” from the *Lectionary Story Bible, Year A*, pp. 40–41.

Ask:

- Who warned Joseph that his family was in danger? (*an angel*)
- How did the angel visit Joseph? (*in a dream*)
- Why did the family need to run away to Egypt? (*King Herod wanted to kill Jesus*)
- Who visited Joseph after Herod died? (*an angel in another dream*)
- Where did they go when they left Egypt? (*Galilee*)

When Mary, Joseph, and Jesus were forced to leave their home and go to another country, they became what we call refugees. A refugee is someone who goes to live in a foreign country because it is unsafe for them to live in their country. Even today millions of people are refugees. They often have to live with little food and water around many strangers. Close your eyes and imagine what that would feel like. Would you feel safe? What would you miss about your home if you had to leave today? What would you take with you if you could only take what you could carry in a small bag? Who would you miss most?

It must have been strange and scary for Jesus' family to leave all their friends and family and move to a country where they were strangers. Have you ever moved to a different place? How did you feel?

**Note:** If you have an older group of children or want to go deeper, invite the children to research more about refugees in magazines, the newspaper, or on the Internet. One site that offers information about and pictures of refugee children is [http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGlp14E/b.9326709/k.DA19/The\\_Refugee\\_Crisis\\_Through\\_the\\_Eyes\\_of\\_One\\_Family.htm](http://www.savethechildren.org/site/c.8rKLIXMGlp14E/b.9326709/k.DA19/The_Refugee_Crisis_Through_the_Eyes_of_One_Family.htm). You could also search “refugee children” for more information and pictures.

### 3 RESPOND

Takes the learners from hearing to doing  
(35% of total lesson time)

In our scripture passage today, God communicated with Joseph in a special way—through dreams. Tell about a dream you have had. Was it scary? Was it funny? Did it feel real?

Dreams can be funny or scary. They can be realistic or silly. God has a dream for us—to create God's shalom (God's kingdom on Earth). What do you think that might look like? What can you do to find out what God's kingdom will be like?

In Community of Christ, we believe that our choices and the way we live our lives help create God's kingdom (shalom) here on Earth. We do this by acting in ways that promote justice, wholeness, and peace for every person. When people disagree, we try to help them reconcile with each other and try to treat every person as a child of God who is worthwhile and sacred.

Write the word “shalom” at the top of the chalkboard or a large piece of paper. Brainstorm with the class what shalom looks like and list ideas on your paper. These might include no war, no bullies, everyone is safe, people take care of one another, or everyone has enough to eat and drink.

Pass out a piece of paper and markers or crayons to each student. Ask them about their dream for the world. Have them draw how they will help make that dream of shalom come true.

### 4 SEND

Explores how the lesson might be lived  
(10% of total lesson time)

Gather in a circle with the pictures the children created. Go around the circle and have each child share about their pictures and one way they will work this week to help God's vision of shalom become real.

Sing together the first verse of “Jesus Is Calling” CCS 578. Have children brainstorm ideas for motions to the song as time allows. An alternate song is “Peace, Salaam, Shalom” CCS 310.

### 5 BLESS

Time of prayer, praise, blessing, and hope  
(5% of total lesson time)

Close by reciting the Mission Prayer together. Encourage children to create motions for each line of the prayer.

God, where will your Spirit lead today?  
Help me be fully awake and ready to respond.  
Grant me courage to risk something new  
And become a blessing of your love and peace.  
Amen.