

Fourth Sunday of Advent Liturgy

We Gather to Remember

Prelude (Piano or Organ)

Introit "Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence" Choir/ Children

Lighting of the Three Advent Candles

Advent Candle of Hope

Advent Candle of Peace

Advent Candle of Joy

Song "O Come, O Come Emmanuel"

O come, O Bright and Morning Star, and bring us comfort from afar!

Dispel the shadows of the night, and turn our darkness into light.

Refrain:

Rejoice! Rejoice! Immanuel, shall come to you, O Israel

O come, O King of nations, bind, in one the hearts of all mankind.

Bid all our sad divisions cease, and be yourself our King of Peace.

Refrain

We Gather to Glorify God

Opening Sentences

Leader: We come to glorify God and to rejoice in the One who saves us.

Sound of Tambourines

Men: God comes, so we might believe, so we might be blessed.

Women: Our hearts leap for joy! For God is coming to us in a child.

Sound of Tambourines

Youth: God comes for those who hunger for hope, for those who thirst for grace.

Leader: Holy is the One who comes in God's name, who fulfills every promise of God.

Sound of Tambourines

Council Members: God comes to walk with those who follow in faith, to bring peace to a shattered world.

All: The Time is fulfilled, the kingdom of God has come near; the true light which enlightens everyone is coming into the world.

Sound of Tambourines

Lighting of the Fourth Advent Candle- The Candle of Love

The angels announced the good news of a Savior. God sent his only Son to earth to save us, because he loves us! *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."*

(John 3:16-17)

Opening Prayer (Leader)

+Opening Hymn”

Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates”

Translator: Catherine Winkworth; Author: Georg Weissel (1642)

All

Lift up your heads, ye mighty gates! Behold, the King of Glory waits;
 The King of kings is drawing near. The Savior of the world is here.
 Life and salvation He doth bring. Wherefore rejoice and gladly sing:
 We praise Thee, Father, now, Creator, wise art Thou!

Left Side of Pulpit

A Helper just He comes to thee, His chariot is humility,¹
 His kingly crown is holiness, His scepter, pity in distress,
 The end of all our woe He brings; wherefore the earth is glad and sings:
 We praise Thee, Savior, now, mighty in deed art Thou!

Right Side of Pulpit

O blest the land, the city blest, Where Christ the Ruler is confessed!
 O happy hearts and happy homes, To whom this King in triumph comes!
 The cloudless Sun of joy He is, who bringeth pure delight and bliss.
 We praise Thee, Spirit, now, Our Comforter art Thou!²

All

Fling wide the portals of your heart; Make it a temple set apart
 From earthly use for Heaven’s employ, adorned with prayer and love and joy.
 So shall your Sovereign enter in and new and nobler life begin.
 To Thee, O God, be praise, For word and deed and grace!

We Gather to Confess and Receive God’s Forgiveness**Call to Confession (Minister)**

Friends, our high priest, Jesus Christ knows all our weaknesses and can sympathize, because he was tested in every way we are, only without sinning. So let’s come boldly to the throne of grace, where we can find mercy and grace to help when we need it most.

Confession (Leader)

Our God, we lower our heads before you and we confess that we have too often forgotten that we are yours. Sometimes we carry on our lives as if there was no God and we fall short of being a credible witness to you. For these things we ask your forgiveness and we also ask for your strength. Give us clear minds and open hearts so we may witness to you in our world. Remind us to be who you would have us to be regardless of what we are doing or who we are with. Hold us to you and build our relationship with you and with those you have given us on earth.

Assurance of Pardon (Minister)

New every morning is God’s love for us, and so we are bold to proclaim the Good News:
 In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

Sharing of God’s Peace (Go around as we share God’s peace)

We Gather to Intercede for One Another

Community Concerns

Pastoral Prayer (Four persons are assigned to lead in the prayer for hope, for peace, for joy, and for love.)

Response

“What A Friend of Jesus”

Joseph M. Scriven, 1855

What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!

What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

Oh, what peace we often forfeit. Oh, what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!

We Gather to Proclaim God's Word

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 2:4-7

Anthem

Sermon

We Gather to Affirm our Faith

Affirmation of Faith

Advent Credo

Leader: It is not true that creation and the human family are doomed to destruction and loss.

All: This is true: For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

Leader: It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty, death and destruction.

Women: This is true: I have come that they may have life, and that abundantly.

Leader: It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and destruction rule forever.

Women: This is true: Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder, his name shall be called wonderful councilor, mighty God, the Everlasting, the Prince of peace.

Leader: It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule the world.

Men: This is true: To me is given authority in heaven and on earth, and lo I am with you, even until the end of the world.

Leader: It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are the prophets of the Church before we can be peacemakers.

Minister: This is true: I will pour out my spirit on all flesh and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall have dreams.

Leader: It is not true that our hopes for liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity, of peace are not meant for this earth and for this history.

Youth: This is true: The hour comes, and it is now, that the true worshipers shall worship God in spirit and in truth.

All: **So let us enter Advent in hope, even hope against hope. Let us see visions of love and peace and justice. Let us affirm with humility, with joy, with faith, with courage: Jesus Christ—the life of the world.**

(Written by Daniel Berrigan, S.J. in *Testimony: The Word Made Flesh*)

Silence

We Gather to Dedicate Ourselves

Call to Offering (Leader)

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them: if service, in our serving; whoever contributes, in liberality; whoever does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. (Romans 12:6-8)

Offertory Song

“O Little Town of Bethlehem”

Words: Bishop Phillips Brooks (1835-1893), 1868.

Music: “St. Louis,” Lewis Henry Redner (1831-1908), 1868.

O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie.
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting Light
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

For Christ is born of Mary and gathered all above
While mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wondering love.
O morning stars together proclaim the holy birth
And praises sing to God, the King and Peace to men on earth.

How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming, but in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.

O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray
Cast out our sin and enter in. Be born to us today
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell.
O come to us, abide with us our Lord Emmanuel.

Thanksgiving Prayer (Unison)

We are the receivers of hope, of peace, of joy, and of love. We are receivers of grace, receivers of Jesus. We are the givers, following God’s call, following Jesus, following our hearts. Lord, we give these offerings for the work of your kingdom, with humble thanks for all the gifts we received.

+Closing Hymn "O Come All Ye Faithful" HFJ#135
By: John F. Wade

O come all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come now, O come now to Bethlehem.
Come and behold the ruler of all angels!

Refrain

O come in adoration (thrice) Christ the Lord!
Sing, alleluia, all ye choirs of angels;
O sing, all ye blissful ones of heav'n above.
Glory to God In the highest glory!

Refrain

Amen, Lord, we greet You, born this happy morning;
Jesus, to You shall all glory be given; Word of our God,
Now in the flesh appearing.

Refrain

+Closing Prayer (Minister)

+Benediction (Minister)

Depart in peace, and take with you the certain knowledge that God is always coming into the world. We will seek God, not in a long ago stable or ancient manger, but in the people we meet and the depths of our own hearts. May the blessing of the advent season make you a blessing to others; May the peace of the season pervade all that you do. We will welcome the challenge of discipleship. We will offer ourselves as God's ministers. We will go forth in hope, peace, joy, and love.

Response

Refrain: "O come in adoration (thrice) Christ the Lord!"

Postlude (Piano or Organ)

Sources

1. Words for Worship edited by Arlene M. Mark
2. Worship Resources 9th CCA Assembly
3. Resources and Reflections for Worship
4. Worship Together
5. Worship Elements and Symbols
6. Hymnal of Faith Journey
7. www.ucc.worshipresources.com

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Lectionary Title 4: **The Birth of Jesus**

Old Testament: Isaiah 9:6-7 (NRSV, 1989)

For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onwards and for evermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

New Testament: Luke 2:4-7 (NRSV, 1989)

⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

General Concept: Being born among the lowly, Jesus shared their aspirations to bring about a new era of shared prosperity, justice and peace.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

N/K/YE: **Jesus is a gift from God. We welcome Jesus with a joyful heart.**

ME/OE: **Jesus is the son of God given to us. We welcome Jesus with a joyful heart.**

Y: **Jesus is born to bring us joy. His coming to us brings new life.**

A: **Jesus is born to save us.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

The proclamation of Isaiah about the child or the son who is going to be born as the sign of the savior messiah is a strong prophetic claim with a vivid picture of hope for a people on the verge of hopelessness already. This messiah-child shall be named as Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. This announcement is enough for one to say that the coming messiah is a powerful liberator and leader who has authority resting upon his shoulders.

This pronouncement also articulates the hope where both the northern and southern kingdoms will again be united after it has been divided for about two hundred years already. And the realization of this hope will come from the south as originally promised by Yahweh to King David (2 Samuel 7:12-13) and reiterated to Solomon (1 Kings 9:5) before the events that led to the tragic division of the kingdom and even to the event of exile of the Northern Kingdom in 721 BCE.

Isaiah echoes the call for a new chapter and a new undertaking in the history of God's people which will be beneficial for the people of both the North and the South. The prophecy also confesses the power of this Messiah or Savior to defeat the enemies and to create an everlasting peace which cannot be compared with the kind of peace brought and offered by the foreign rulers and empires wanting to dominate them. The peace or shalom referred to by Isaiah is something different from the peace of the empire; for the peace of the empire means just plain passive subordination to the will of the empire or the foreign

ruler but in shalom, peace is referred to as the implementation of justice which, according to the mosaic and Deuteronomic teaching refers to responding to and prioritizing the needs of the poor, the oppressed and the widow and defending and upholding their basic rights as fellow children of God (cf. Deut. 10:17-19; 16:20). Justice also is not just a political term for being a quiet follower of the ruler but it is a state of being where needs are met especially of those people who are in great and desperate need. This is the work of the messiah; to implement justice and peace to the established kingdom. The persistent struggle for justice and real peace is clearly one of the signs or marks of the true Messiah(cf. Ps. 72:1-4).

The birth of Christ took place in a manger. This is because there is no more place for them in the inn or any lodging place then in Bethlehem when Joseph and Mary arrived there for Joseph to register in compliance to the imperial imposition of a census. This shows the extreme overcrowding of the city with the returning natives there. The reality was that it was very difficult to find a place to stay there anymore. If the socio-economic conditions will be examined at this point, then it might be observed that the needs of those in the margins such as Mary and Joseph were not met because of the serious lack of lodging facilities in the city.

The reference to the manger can also speak of the humble beginnings of Jesus of Nazareth yet it also speaks strongly of the reality of the economic and social conditions where Jesus was born. The simple and straightforward narrative of the homelessness of Jesus and his being wrapped only in swaddling clothes reminds the readers of the very lowly character of the birth of Jesus. This reality also reflects the typical situation of ordinary people in ordinary times under the reign of the Roman Empire. Nothing is so special among the ordinary because it presents the picture of a typical response of the empire to the plight and hardships of ordinary people; nothing.

This part of Luke's narrative is a prelude for the present readers of the gospel to a situation where an old reality will be confronted with the new especially in terms of the people's situation under imperial control. It speaks of a coming Savior who knew what it meant living in the shadows of the Roman Empire and its effect on the life expectations of each individual living in the same condition.

This is where Jesus comes embodying an entirely new reality. He is now coming standing in solidarity with the suffering and struggles of the hopeless in their social, economic, political and spiritual situation, a situation which further consigns them to further destitution and marginalization and the continuing loss of hope for a better future. This is where Jesus' birth as savior of his people will be recognized as truly the beginning of a radically new messianic age embodied clearly in his forthcoming ministry that will eventually lead him to the cross.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

Jesus' entry into the scene was inauspicious, to say the least. Luke's story about the visit of a group of shepherds, however, shows his birth as a great cosmic event participated in by a heavenly host. The presence of lowly shepherds and heavenly angels shrouds Jesus' birth in a mystery that would be unlocked only at this death and resurrection. Until then, Jesus grew up an ordinary child of ordinary parents among ordinary people.

This kind of narrative stands in sharp contrast to the dominant narratives that trace the beginnings of historic personalities in the royal cradle. Even the biblical writers saw it fit to connect the humble beginnings of Moses and Jesus to a royal origin. Moses was the son of Hebrew slaves but grew up under the care of an Egyptian princess. Jesus was born of poor parents but in reality he descended from the line of David, Israel's greatest king in consonance with the prophecies about the coming of a kingly messiah. But in God's great plan of salvation, Jesus was not meant to be raised a king.

Why was God's messiah born a commoner? This is a clear judgment on the rich and powerful. They can't serve as messiah because they don't and won't accept the vocation of messiah as intended by God in that salvation includes deliverance from material bondage. This was proven when Jesus challenged the rich young ruler to be a messiah to the poor, which he sadly declined because he was very rich. It's not that God doesn't call the rich but that the rich reject the messianic calling. They would rather that they defined the role of messiah in their own terms. Jesus was born into a circumstance where responding to God's call coincided with his raging anger against evil in all its forms and with his burning desire to save his people even at the cost of his life. There were other messianic figures from Jesus' own social background with perhaps the same intensity of love for the nation but for one reason or another they failed to grasp God's plan of salvation as Jesus did. *In choosing Jesus, an ordinary person, God let known to the world the nature and scope of salvation.*

Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session and with the consistent example shown by parents and other significant adults, the children will be able to:

1. begin to accept Jesus was born as a gift to us;
2. begin to be aware that children are gifts of God to their parents;
3. begin to talk about the purpose of God for us; and
4. retell the Christmas story as children see it.

II. Concept: Jesus is a gift from God. We welcome Jesus with a joyful heart.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), manger, activity sheets, small white paper plate, stapler. a simple drawing of a baby face, string or yarn, puncher

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet each child and ask them to see the set up the manger using recycled materials.
2. Please refer to the Advent Liturgy.

B. Getting Ready

1. Let the children sit together. Ask them what they call what the teacher is holding. (A gift) Encourage them to describe a gift (something is freely given) and who among them wants to receive a gift. (Every one).
2. Tell the class to play the game "Pass the Gift". Let the children form a circle and ask them to sit down. Give the box to one child and instruct him or her to pass the gift as soon as the music starts. When the music stops, the one who holds the box last can take a look what's inside it. Do this three times and let the three winners to stand in front.
3. Ask the three winners: "How did you feel when you received the gift?" Ask the other children: "How do you feel when you receive the gift? How do you feel when you do not receive a gift?"

C. Learning Time

1. *Motivation.* Say: "Let us find out in the story God's gift to us."
2. Present the story. Instruct the class to look at the activity sheets.

Jesus, God's Gift For Us!

(Based on Luke 2:1-20)

Joseph and Mary have to be counted. They walk a long trip towards Bethlehem. But, Mary rides a donkey because she is about to give birth. They reach Bethlehem and have to stay in the only available place—the barn. It is a beautiful night. Mary gives birth to Jesus. Joseph and Mary are very happy. They know Jesus is a precious gift to them. They wrap him with cloth. They put hay in the manger and lay Jesus there.

On the same night, the shepherds are quietly watching their sheep. All of a sudden, the angels appear. They are singing, "Glory to God in the highest! Peace on Earth, Goodwill to men!" Then, they tell the shepherds, "Go to Bethlehem because Jesus is born. He is wrapped in cloth and sleeping in the hay." Immediately, the shepherds run away to see Jesus. They are so happy. As they leave the barn, they start to praise and thank God for His gift to us—Jesus.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask the following questions:

1. Do you know that God has a special gift for us? (Yes)
2. Who is God's special gift for us? (Jesus)
3. Why do you say that Jesus is a gift from God? (Jesus came to save us.)
4. What do you think Jesus looks like when he was a baby? (He looks like other babies—tiny.)
5. How did Mary and Joseph feel when they saw baby Jesus? (They felt happy.)
5. How did the shepherds know about Jesus? (The angels told them.)
6. What did the shepherds do when they saw baby Jesus? (They were happy. They praised and thanked God for giving Jesus to us.)
7. Who are God's gifts to the parents? (Children are gifts of God to their parents.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Who is God's special gift to us?" (Jesus) "Why do you think we are God's special gifts to our parents?" (Like Jesus, God has also a purpose for us.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Tell the children to jump three times and say "yes" to acknowledge that they are God's gift to their parents. Ask what is God 's purpose for us. Lead them to say: "To bring joy to our parents; To show love for others; To obey and please God; etc."
2. Teach the memory verse.

For N/K: "For a child has been born for us... and He is named Prince of Peace."
(Isaiah 9:6)

For YE: "For a child has been born to us, and He is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

3. Creative activity

- a. **For N/K:** Tell the children to make a picture pocket. Provide each child a paper plate with two punched holes (about 3 inches apart) in its top part, a piece of paper (sticker is preferable) with these sentences (Jesus is a gift from God to us. I am a gift from God to my parents.) a piece of string, and glue if needed. As a pr-eassigned task, tell each child to bring two baby pictures.

- 1) Fold both sides of the plate leaving a space at the center to see. Fold the bottom part to cover the two folded sides to make a pocket.

- 2) Tie the plate using the two punched holes on top. Paste or glue the piece of paper on the front part of the pocket. Decorate your picture holder. Insert your first baby picture. Let the children complete the frame in the activity sheet using the other baby picture..

- 3) Tell the class to stand and show their work. Lead them to say the sentences written on their picture pockets.

- c. **For YE:** Provide each child with the activity sheet that shows the outline of the family of Jesus. Tell the class to connect the numbers 1 to 55. Then let them decorate their work. Have them complete the sentences below the outline: _____ is a gift from God to us. I am a gift from God to my family because _____.

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the children to recite the memory verse.
2. Reflective action: *I will share the love of Jesus to others.*
3. Offering
4. Closing songs: "When Jesus Was" and "O Come, All You Faithful" (HFJ # 135)
5. Closing prayer: "Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to us. Thank you for sending us to our parents as a gift. Help us to do your purpose for us like your son, Jesus. Amen.

Middle and Older Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. accept that Jesus was born as a gift to us;
2. become aware that children are gifts of God to their parents; and
3. begin to talk about the purpose of God for us.

II. Concept: Jesus is the son of God given to us. We welcome Jesus with a joyful heart.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), a well wrapped gift, written outside "Every one, love God", a DVD Player or radio (if available).

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Greet everyone with a smile and do some review on the previous lesson.
2. Please refer to the Advent Liturgy.

B. Getting Ready

1. Prepare strips of paper. Paste these labels in different parts of the room: Father and son; Mother and son; Father and daughter; and Mother and daughter. Tell the children to get ready to play the game "Parent and Child". Distribute names and let the children paste them on their chests. Ask them to find their match and stand near the correct label. All those pupils who have the correct match win.
2. Ask: How did you feel when you were able to find your match? Based on the game, what do you think parents feel with their children? What do you think children feel about their parents?

C. Learning Time

1. Say: "God, the Father sent His son Jesus to us as His gift. He was born as a human being to be able to live with us."
2. Tell the class to read Luke 2:4-7 in unison.
3. Ask them to read the text again and rearrange the pictures according to the text (Refer to the activity sheet.)
4. Call on some pupils to retell the story using the given pictures.

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask these questions

1. Who was God's gift to us? Why do you think so?
2. Since all the inns were full, where did the innkeeper lead Joseph and Mary to spend their night? How did Joseph and Mary show their humility? Why do you think God allowed Jesus to be born in a manger?
3. How do you think Joseph felt after seeing Jesus as told to him by the angel?
4. How do you think Mary felt after seeing Jesus as told to her by the angel?
5. Like Jesus, who is God's gift to your parents?
6. How do you think your parents felt when you are born? Why?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: "At home, who are God's gifts to their parents? (Children) Ask: Who is God's gift to us? Why did God give Jesus to us? How do we welcome him?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Teach the memory verse: "For a child has been born to us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)
2. Ask: "What do you think is God's purpose for us?" Expect answers like the following:
 - a. God's purpose for us is to bring joy to our parents.
 - b. God's purpose for us is to show love for others.
 - c. God's purpose for us is to obey and please God.

For ME

3. Tell the class to complete the table in the activity sheet.

Place	What God wants me to do as my purpose in life
1. At home as elder or younger brother or sister	
2. In school with my seatmate, classmate, and teacher	
3. In the Sunday school class	
4. During communion	

4. **Creative activity.** Manger Envelope Craft (http://www.daniellesplace.com/html/Bible_themes_-_Christmas.html)
 - a. Prepare these materials: short envelop, bond paper, construction paper, crayons, paste, scissors
 - b. Tell the children to do the following:
 - 1) Cut the upper part of the envelope, leaving an inch from the side to serve as a border.
 - 2) Cut strips of brown construction paper and paste on the inside of the envelop.
 - 3) Draw, color the baby Jesus on a clean sheet of bond paper and paste it at the center of the envelope.
 - 4) Color the rest of the envelope. Put designs.
 - 5) Finally, cut and paste a star and put on top of the manger envelop.
 - c. Ask the class how they feel with what they have done.

For OE

3. Tell the class to complete the table in the activity sheet.

Place	What God wants me to do as my purpose in life
1. At home when asked by my parents to do something	
2. In school with my seatmate, classmate, teacher, and other school officials	
3. In the Sunday school class as leader or member of the class	
4. During communion	
5. In the community when asked to manage our wastes at home	

4. Let the class study the picture in the activity sheet and tell how the family welcomed a baby. Then ask them to write different ways of welcoming a new baby in their family.
5. Creative activity. Popsicle Manger (www.whattoexpect.com/blogs/astudentatmamauniversity/nativity-crafts-for-kids-popsicle-stick-nativity)
 - a. Prepare these materials: popsicle sticks, acrylic paint, hot glue, and shredded green straw.
 - b. Tell them to do the following:
 - 1) Paint five popsicle sticks brown. These will be the outline of the stable. Allow the sticks to dry completely. Cut about 1/3 from the top of two of these sticks. (These will be the walls of the stable.)
 - 2) Next, cut one of the popsicle sticks in half. Paint one to represent Mary and the other to represent Joseph. Make sure that are facing sideways and bending over the manger.
 - 3) Cut another popsicle stick in thirds. Paint one of the thirds white to resemble an angel. Use gold pipe cleaner to make a collar and halo, if desired.
 - 4) Cut one of the thirds slightly smaller and paint to resemble Baby Jesus.
 - 5) Take one of the thirds from the step above and paint it brown. When it's dry, cut it lengthwise to make thin sticks. Glue these together in a top-heavy "X" shape to make the manger. Put in the manger the shredded green straw to look like hay. Hot glue baby Jesus into the manger.
 - 6) Finally, assemble the Popsicle Stick Nativity with hot glue.
 - c. Ask the class how they feel with what they have done.

G. Closing Worship

1. Tell the class to recite the memory verse.
2. Reflective action: *I welcome the coming of Jesus with a joyful heart.*
3. Offering
4. Closing song: "O Come, All You Faithful" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 135)
5. Closing prayer: Dear God, thank you for giving Jesus to us. Thank you for showing to us Jesus as a human being like us. Help us to do what your purpose for us in our lives. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Youth Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. express one's insight on how Jesus brought joy as he is born;
2. support the idea that Jesus brought joy as he was born as a fulfillment of the prophecy; and
3. relate the joy of birth in terms of God's purpose for each child.

II. Concept: Jesus is born to bring us joy.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), hymnal, song chart, activity sheets, 4 sets of pictures and boxes

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time
2. Please refer to the Advent Liturgy.

B. Getting Ready

1. Prepare the class to play a game. Divide them into four groups. Let them give a word for each set of pictures. The first group to finish is the first to show their answers. All the groups with all correct answers win. (joy, peace, faith, family)
2. After the game, ask the children.
 - a. How were you able to answer our game? Did you find it easy or hard?
 - b. How do you feel when you are with your whole family during Christmastime?
 - c. What will the world look like if there was peace? How would you feel?
 - d. What would it look like if all people had faith in God?
3. After hearing the answers, tell the learners that God would like us to be happy and be joyful. We brought joy to our families when we were born. Jesus' birth also brought joy to his family and to God's people. God gave us his precious gift to save us and fulfill the prophecy.

C. Learning Time

Have the students sit in a circle and pretend they were in a "story village." The teacher reads the text from Luke 2:4-7 as the students listen. Then tell the students to retell it in their own way and in a language that is most comfortable to them. Retelling versions may vary, this is fine as long as important details are accurate.

⁴So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David.

⁵He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child.

⁶While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born,

⁷and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

Sample Version 1: Joseph who was in Nazareth travelled to Bethlehem, the town of his ancestor David. He brought along with him his pregnant soon-to-be wife to be registered. As they stay there, their baby was born. Mary wrapped their new born baby in cloth and put him in a manger. The couple stayed in the barn because all room was full.

Sample Version 2: Joseph was a descendant of David so went to Bethlehem to register. He brought Mary but she was already about to give birth at that time. The time came for Mary to give birth but they could not find a place to stay for the night so they went to a stable and she gave birth to a son.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Ask these questions.

1. Where did Joseph and Mary go to be registered? What could have happened along the way on their journey?
2. What happened when they got to their destination?
3. Where did Mary give birth and why?
4. What do you think were Joseph and Mary's reaction to Jesus' birth?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "What is Jesus' role according to Isaiah 9:6-7? If you lived during the time of Jesus under the rule of the Roman Empire, how would you feel if you heard the news that a "son" who has these roles have been born?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Present this verse: "For a child has been born to us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father and Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6) Ask the class what comes to mind with the following names given to Jesus:
 - a. Wonderful Counselor
 - b. Mighty God
 - c. Everlasting Father
 - d. Prince of Peace
2. Say: "Just like Jesus who brought joy to His family and to the world when he was born, we also brought joy to our family when we were born. God has a purpose for sending Jesus to us." Ask: "What could be God's purpose that he gave you to your family?" Let the class write in your journal about your thoughts.

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "O Come, All You Faithful" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 135)
3. Closing prayer: "O God of all, we thank you for preparing our hearts in accepting Christ with renewed and joyful hearts. As we live, may we always remember that Jesus came to earth to bring us joy. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen."

Adult Level**I. Objectives**

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. relate the birth of Jesus with God's plan for salvation;
2. explain the meaning of Isaiah's prophecy of the child that shall be born unto us; and
3. focus on one's faith on the real reason for the coming of the Messiah.

II. Concept: Jesus is born to save us.

Materials: *The Holy Bible* (NRSV, 1989), hymnal, song chart

III. Learning Experiences**A. Opening Worship**

1. Welcome time
2. Please refer to the Advent Liturgy.

B. Getting Ready

Let the class share some of the things they do to celebrate Christmas as a family.

C. Learning Time

1. Tell the class to read Isaiah 9:6-7 and Luke 2:4-7.
2. Discuss the meaning of these verses.
 - a. *Isaiah 9:6-7.* Isaiah prophecies about the twofold nature of the Messiah, one who was given to us by God and one who was born as a human being.
 - b. *Luke 2:4-7.* These verses record the actual events that took place related to the travel of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem and the actual birth of Jesus to fulfill the prophecy.

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

Discuss the lesson by asking these questions.

1. What could be the meaning of Isaiah's prophecy that a child is born to us?
2. Why do you think God's Messiah was born as a commoner and not raised as a king?
3. How can you relate the birth of Jesus with God's plan of salvation?

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "What does the birth of Jesus signify? What events happen to prepare for the coming of Christ, our Messiah? How do we prepare ourselves to welcome our Messiah?"

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. *Interpreting an editorial cartoon.* Present the editorial cartoon in the activity sheet. Ask the class to share their thoughts related to the coming of Jesus.
 - a. How do the poor people during Jesus' time similar to the poor people today?
 - b. How can the Good News of Jesus help these people? What can we do to help spread the Good News?
 - c. Do you still see hope in this situation? Explain why or why not?
 - d. Where or to whom do you see hope?

2. Ask: How would you nurture your faith? Write an action plan from the following situations.
 - a. The political campaign will start anytime for the May 2016 election.
As a church, how can we nurture our faith for this election season?
 - b. The Lumads in Mindanao still experience military harassment. As one of members of the council in the nearby church in the area, how would you live up to your faith and respond to the needs of the Lumads?
 - c. The local government approved a foreign company to do mining in your area. They even promised additional jobs for the local people and even built concrete roads. On the other hand, this plan has resulted to massive nature destruction. What could be the collective action of your church based on your faith?

G. Closing Worship

1. Offering
2. Closing song: "O Come, All You Faithful" (Hymnal of a Faith Journey # 135)
3. Closing prayer: "O God of all, we thank you for preparing our hearts in accepting Christ with renewed and joyful hearts. As we live, may we always remember that Jesus came to earth to bring us joy. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen."