

## **LESSON 1**

# **ADVENT I**

### **LESSON NOTES**

#### **FOCUS: THE PROPHETS**

- **LITURGICAL ACTION**
- **CORE PRESENTATION**

#### **THE MATERIAL**

- **LOCATION: FOCAL SHELVES AND CHRISTMAS SHELVES**
- **PIECES: ADVENT CARDS ON A RACK OR TRAY; 4 ADVENT CANDLES IN A BOX, MATCHES IN A METAL CONTAINER AND A CANDLE SNUFFER, ALL ON A TRAY; PURPLE OR BLUE CLOTH OR FELT; MODEL OF BETHLEHEM; OPTIONAL: CANDLE HOLDERS**
- **UNDERLAY: PURPLE (OR BLUE) AND WHITE**

#### **BACKGROUND**

This lesson, together with the next three lessons, helps the children to anticipate the mystery of Christmas. We move toward Bethlehem and arrive at the birth of Jesus and the lighting of the Christ Candle in the church.

Churches often have customs that preclude doing a single lesson about Advent on each of the Sundays of the season. For example, the whole congregation might use the first Sunday to make Advent wreaths together, or use the fourth Sunday to hold a Christmas party for the children. In such situations, group the lessons as seems best to you, presenting two or even three Advent cards on one Sunday. Remember, too, to start the first Advent session together by telling the story of the Holy Family (pp. 20-26), in order to change the liturgical color from green to purple (or blue).

#### **NOTES ON THE MATERIAL**

Find the materials for this presentation on the Christmas shelves and the focal shelves. The Christmas shelves are to the left of the focal shelves. The model of Bethlehem stands to the far left on the top shelf of the Christmas shelves. In the middle of the top shelf you'll find the tray or rack of Advent cards. The box of candles, container of matches and candle snuffer are on a tray at the left end of the second shelf (below the model of Bethlehem).

A special stand or carrier rack for the Advent cards makes them visible to a child scanning the room. This stand for the cards should also hold the rolled-up underlay. If you do not use this stand, put the rolled-up underlay and cards in a tray. You may want to line the tray with purple or blue cloth or felt.

There are five cards or wooden plaques, representing, in this order:

- the prophets
- the Holy Family
- the shepherds
- the Magi
- the birth of Jesus

These cards or plaques are laid on a strip of cloth divided into five equal sections, one section for each of the four weeks of Advent, plus an additional section for the feast of Christmas. The first four sections of this cloth are purple or blue (for Advent); the fifth and final section is white (for Christmas). This cloth is the Advent underlay; roll up the underlay so that the white segment is hidden inside. (An illustration of the underlay, with all five cards or plaques and candles laid out in order, appears in Lesson 5, p. 68.)

Many churches use blue for their Advent color. In this presentation, we refer to the liturgical color purple, but use whatever color your church uses. Instead of referring to the royal color (purple), point out that blue is a good color for getting ready, because it is the color associated with Mary, Jesus' mother. Without the mother Mary, there would be no baby.

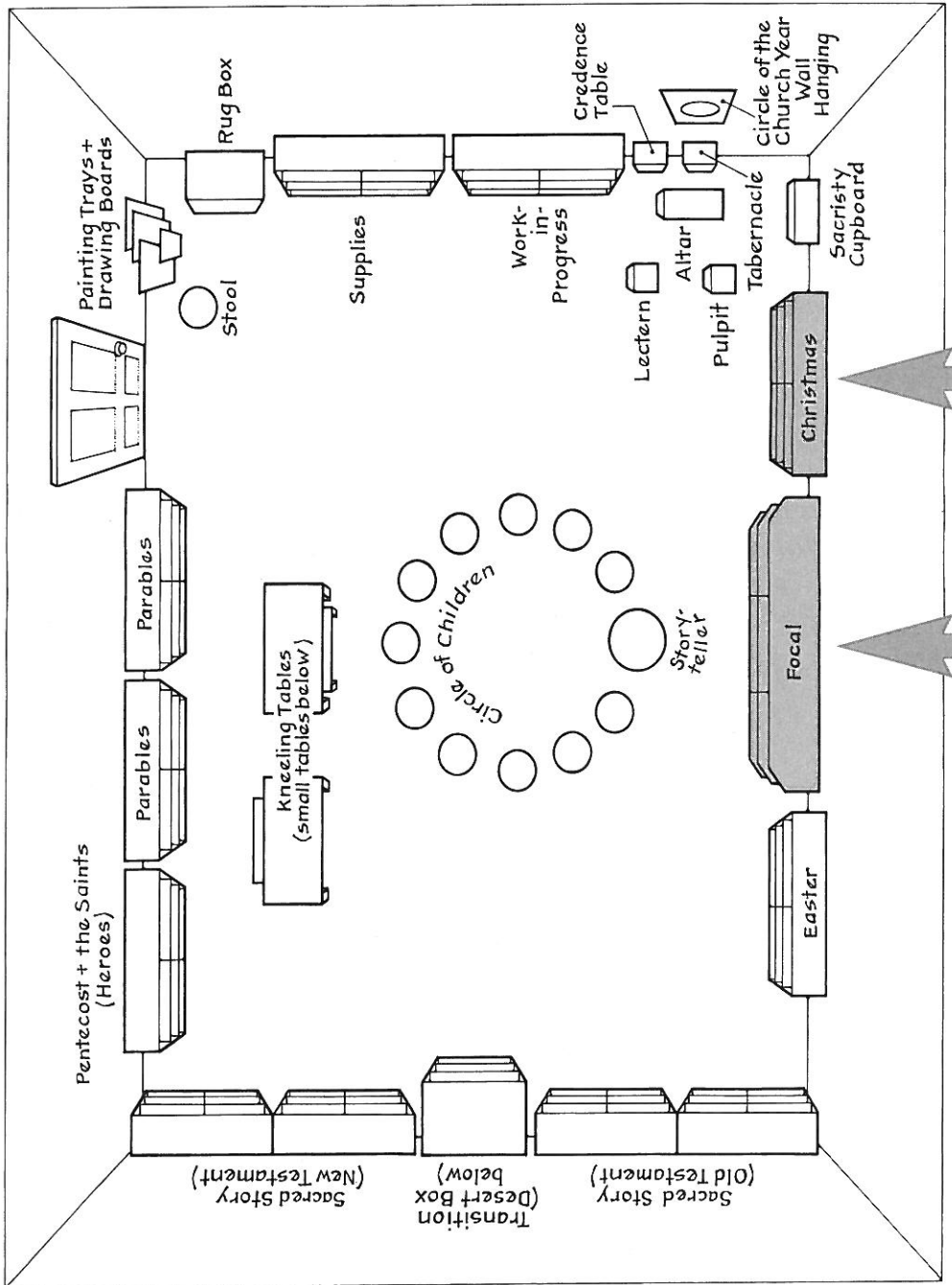
You also need a box to hold the four candles used in the lesson. In this presentation, we refer to one rose and three purple candles, but, again, follow the custom of your church. Use candles with wide bases for stability (e.g., votives or pillar candles), or, if you use tapers, also use candle holders. You also need a metal container for matches; look in an import store for beautiful and inexpensive metal containers. Though this container may tarnish quickly, some children may enjoy keeping it polished in the classroom! You will also need a candle snuffer. Keep these items (candles, matches and snuffer) on a tray lined with purple or blue cloth or felt.

Finally, you need a model of the city of Bethlehem, similar to that pictured on page 31. It is to be set in the middle of the circle of children to show that we are all on the way to Bethlehem, including the storyteller.

### ***SPECIAL NOTES***

**Classroom Management:** Working with fire during the work period is problematic. It means something different for different ages or for different children. Some children need more supervision than others. Sometimes children are more attracted to the fire

than to the meaning of this lesson, so they need a lot of support and supervision to get past that. This attraction, however, is still a point of entry into the lesson, so don't worry too much about why they are interested. Only be aware that these are the very children that need the most supervision. One pragmatic way to address these issues is by making a rule for *everyone* that the storyteller always lights the candles.



**WHERE TO FIND MATERIALS**

## MOVEMENTS

*When the children are ready, go to the Christmas shelves.*

*Bring the cards and underlay (on the rack or tray) to the circle and place them beside where you will be sitting. Then, in a separate trip, bring the tray holding the box of candles, container of matches and candle snuffer; again, set this beside where you will sit. Finally, in a third trip, bring the model of Bethlehem and set it in the middle of the circle. On each trip, walk carefully and handle the materials with respect. Be seated and wait until everyone is ready, then begin.*

*Start to roll out the underlay as you introduce the color of Advent, the season of getting ready. Only unroll as much underlay as is needed to hold the first Advent card.*

*Move your hand over the purple.*

## WORDS

Watch carefully where I go so you will always know where to find this lesson.

Everything is changed. It is now the time of the color purple.

Purple is the color of kings and queens. No one could wear purple in those days except royal people. Roman citizens could wear a little stripe of purple, but that was all. Purple is a serious color, and something serious is about to happen. A King is coming, but he is not the kind of king that people thought was coming. This King had no army, no great house, and no riches. This King was a baby who was born in a barn.

The King who was coming is still coming. This is full of mystery. You know, a mystery is hard to enter sometimes. That is why this time of Advent is so important. Sometimes people can walk right through a mystery and not even know it is there. This time of year you will see people hurrying in the malls buying things and doing this and that, but they will miss the Mystery. They don't know how to get ready or maybe they just forgot.

The Church learned a long time ago that people need a way to get ready to enter or even come close to a mystery like Christmas. The Church set aside four weeks to get ready. This is such a great Mystery that it takes that long to get ready. During this time, we are all on the way to Bethlehem. We are all making the

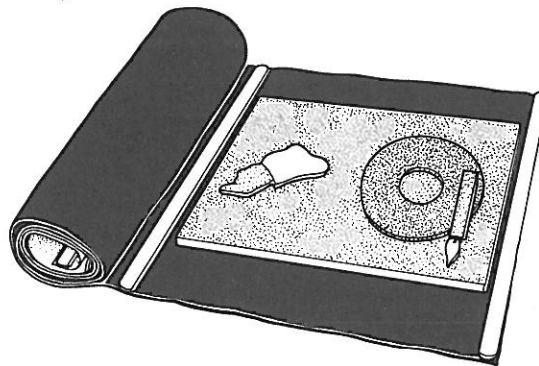
## MOVEMENTS

*Place the first Advent card in its section of the underlay. The first card shows one lit Advent candle and a prophetic hand pointing the way.*

## WORDS

journey. We are all getting ready to enter the Mystery of Christmas, so let's go with the prophets, the Holy Family, the shepherds, the angels, the Magi and all the rest to make the journey that was not just back then. It is also now.

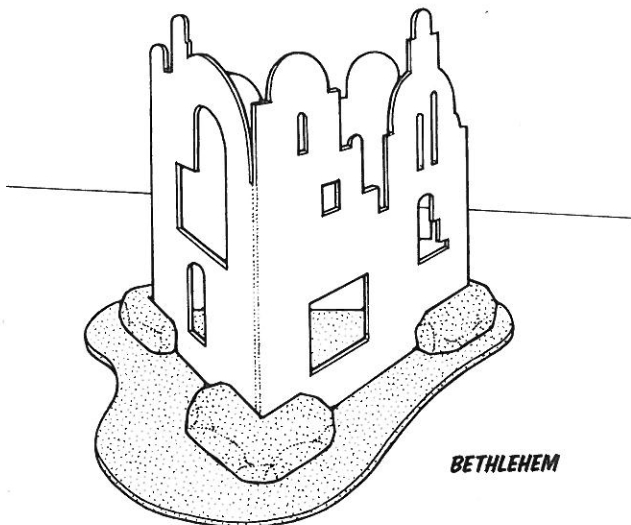
- Prophets are people who come so close to God, and God comes so close to them, that they know what is most important.



**THE FIRST ADVENT CARD (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)**

*Point to the model of Bethlehem that you put in the middle of the circle when the lesson began.*

- They pointed the way to Bethlehem. They didn't know exactly what was going to happen there, but they knew this was the place.



This Sunday is the time we remember the prophets. Here is the hand of a prophet pointing the way to Bethlehem, showing us the way, too.

## MOVEMENTS

*Point again. Be emphatic, bold, definite.*

*Place the first of the purple candles between you and the section of the underlay with the card on it. Pick up the container with the matches in it. Open the container, strike a match and light the candle.*

*Sit for a moment and genuinely enjoy the light of the prophets. You might even have the door person, with a nod from you, turn out the light, so the candlelight is more visible. Sometimes the candles burn down inside so that all the children see is the light glowing within the candle or the glow over the top of the candle. The storyteller looks down into the candle and sees the flame, but the children may not.*

*If you turned off the light, have the door person turn it back on now. Pick up the candle snuffer.*

*Snuff the candle. Hold the snuffer over the flame for it to fill with smoke. When you lift it, the smoke will rise and begin to spread out.*

## WORDS

■ Stop. Watch. Pay attention. Something incredible is going to happen in Bethlehem.

■ This is the light of the prophets. Let's enjoy the light.

■ Prophets are the people who know the most important things. They knew which way to go. They are the ones who showed us the way. Now we can go to Bethlehem, too.

■ I want to show you something very strange and very important. Look.

I want to show you what happens when the light is changed. Sometimes people don't pay attention to this. They miss this part.

Look. Do you see how the flame is in just one place now? It is right here. When I change the light, it will no longer be in just one place. You can't see it after it spreads out all over the room, but it is there.

■ Watch. Do you see it? It is no longer here in this one place. Now it is spreading out, getting thinner and thinner as it fills up the room with the light of the prophets. Anywhere you go in this room you will be close to the prophets.

There may even be one sitting in this circle. Prophets can be boys, and prophets can be girls. They pay attention. They know things.

## **MOVEMENTS**

*Enjoy the moment and then begin to put the material back. There is no wondering at the end of this lesson. It is better to let the presence of the prophets rest in the room.*

*Carry Bethlehem back to its shelf first. Then put the card and the underlay back in their rack (or tray) and return the rack to its shelf. Put away the candle tray last, making certain the wax in the candle has had time to cool, so that it will not spill out into the cloth-lined tray. Be certain that the matches are secure in their container.*

*When everything is put away, come back to the circle and begin to help the children make their decisions about what work to get out next.*

## **WORDS**

- ▶ Now watch carefully where I go with this material, so you will always know where to get it when you want to work with it.

## **LESSON 2**

# **ADVENT II**

### **LESSON NOTES**

#### **FOCUS: THE HOLY FAMILY**

- **LITURGICAL ACTION**
- **CORE PRESENTATION**

#### **THE MATERIAL**

- **LOCATION: FOCAL SHELVES AND CHRISTMAS SHELVES**
- **PIECES: ADVENT CARDS ON A RACK OR TRAY; 4 ADVENT CANDLES IN A BOX, MATCHES IN A METAL CONTAINER AND A CANDLE SNUFFER, ALL ON A TRAY; PURPLE OR BLUE CLOTH OR FELT; NATIVITY SET FIGURES OF MARY, JOSEPH AND THE DONKEY; MODEL OF BETHLEHEM; OPTIONAL: CANDLE HOLDERS**
- **UNDERLAY: PURPLE (OR BLUE) AND WHITE**

#### **BACKGROUND**

This lesson helps children continue to prepare for the Mystery of Christmas. We move toward Bethlehem, guided by the pointing prophets, with the Holy Family, the shepherds and the Magi. We arrive at the birth of Jesus and the lighting of the Christ Candle in the church. This week's presentation focuses on the Holy Family.

You begin this week's lesson by presenting the first of the four Advent cards and telling about the prophets; see Lesson 1, pages 27-33 for the movements and words.

In this lesson, you then add the second Advent card and tell the story of the Holy Family.

#### **NOTES ON THE MATERIAL**

You will find the material for this presentation on the Christmas shelves and the focal shelves. For a complete description of these materials, see the Notes on the Material in Lesson 1, page 27.



## ***SPECIAL NOTES***

**Classroom Management:** You'll find a useful tip about working with fire on page 28. Another issue that can arise with the Advent presentations is resistance on the part of older children to language about "getting ready to enter the Mystery." Supporting children as they struggle with their resistance is part of our art. These children do not yet know how the language of the Christian people works. There is little experience of this language in our culture, and certainly none in their formal schooling.

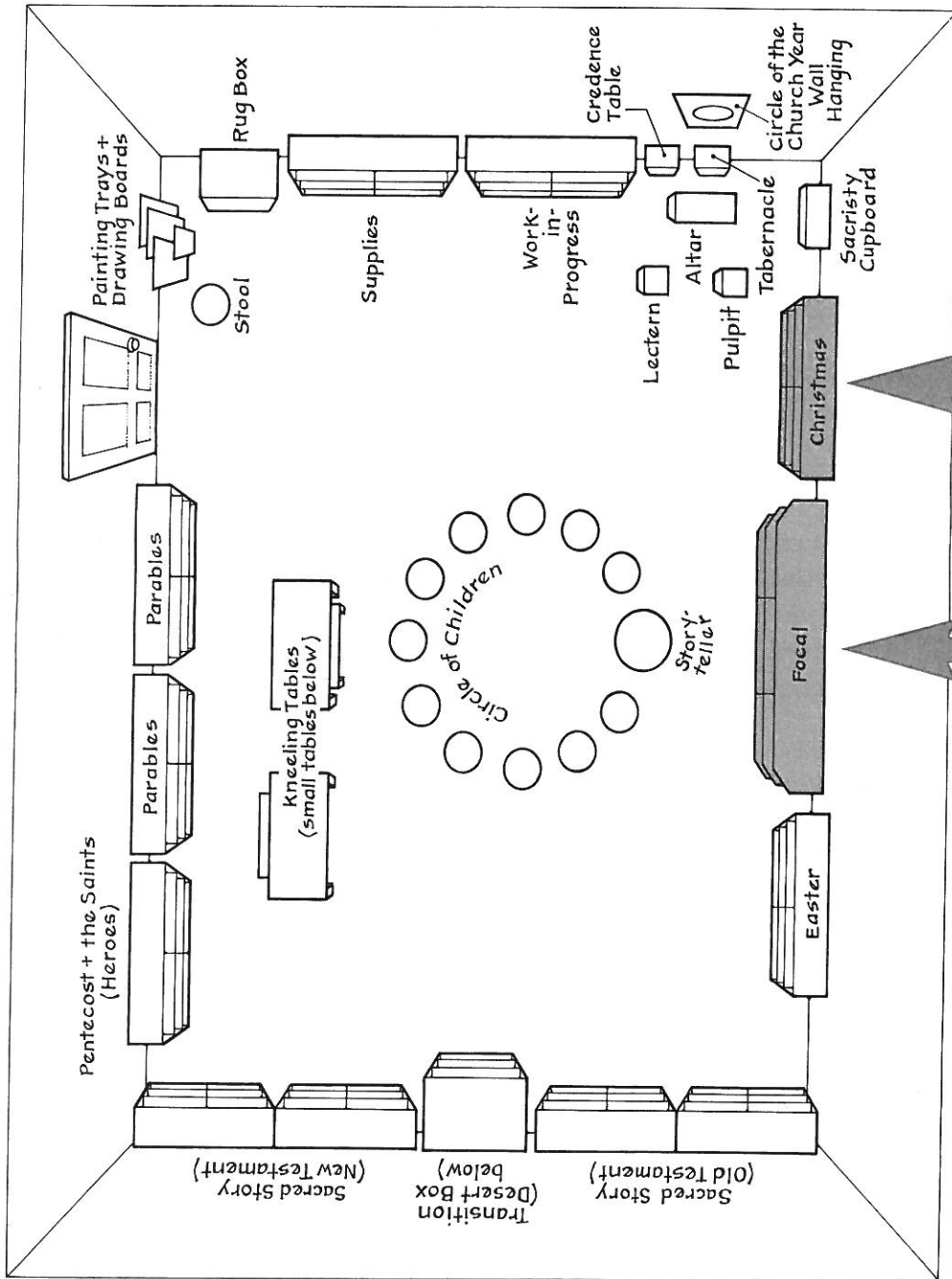
Don't give in to their honest—or sometimes not so honest—complaints about being bored or already having had this lesson. Sometimes children resist simply to be disruptive or even to avoid the discomfort of intimacy.

Affirm that being a part of the story is not easy. God never said it was easy. You never said it was easy. It is not easy like arithmetic. Arithmetic is a way of speaking that is always the same.  $2+2=4$ . In elementary arithmetic, this is always correct.  $12-4=8$ . Lovely. Arithmetic is comforting. It keeps things in order!

Religious language also gives order to our lives, as in going to church each Sunday, going to church for weddings and funerals, and by observing the seasons of the Church year. When it gives order, it also asks us to find what is new and different in the sameness. Religious language is generative language: it calls us to be who we are really supposed to be, creatures who create.

This lesson is different from math and science in another way. We are trying to enter into a mystery. We want to come as close to it as we can. You can't do that and at the same time stand back and measure it or analyze it. You can't add three mysteries to four mysteries to see what the sum of a mystery is. Each mystery enters into the sum of all mystery. The mystery of Christmas is more like a door to enter than a wall on which to write numbers or draw pictures.

What is important in this sort of language is finding your way into a meaning, a meaning that grows. In religious language there is always more. It is like a well that is never empty. You can become tired of such a challenge, but the language and its source is never exhausted nor emptied.



**WHERE TO FIND MATERIALS**

## MOVEMENTS

When the children are ready, go to the Christmas shelves and get the materials you need, as described in Lesson 1, Advent I (p. 30).

Place the first Advent card and tell about the prophets. Do not minimize or rush that first story. End with the words: "Something incredible is going to happen in Bethlehem."

Unroll the underlay to uncover the next section. Place the second Advent card to your left of the first card. The second card shows two candles lit and an image of Bethlehem.

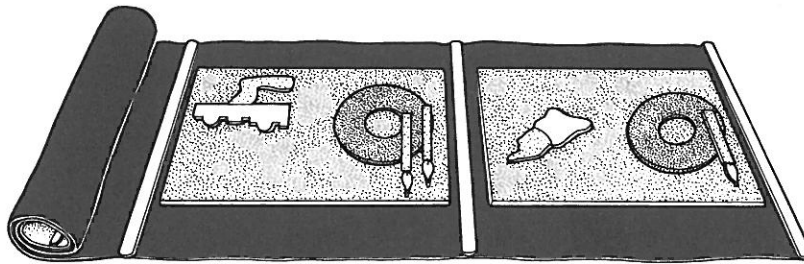
Point to the symbol of Bethlehem on the card.

## WORDS

▶ Watch carefully where I go so you will always know where to find this lesson.

▶ This is the card of the Holy Family.

▶ Do you see Bethlehem on the card, and the road? The Holy Family is on the way to Bethlehem and we are going with them.



**THE FIRST AND SECOND ADVENT CARDS (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)**

Turn around to the focal shelves behind you. Take Mary from the Holy Family on the center of the top shelf and place her on the card, close to you.

▶ Here is the Mother Mary.

Next take the Joseph figure and place him on the card.

▶ Here is the Father Joseph.

Place the donkey figure on the card, between Mary and Joseph.

▶ Here is the donkey.

## MOVEMENTS

*Sit back and enjoy how, in this second week of Advent, we are all on the way to the Mystery of Christmas. Then get out two candles and light them.*

*The door person can turn out the classroom lights so the children can see the candles glow. Sit back and enjoy the light.*

*If you turned off the light, have the door person turn it back on now. Pick up the candle snuffer from the candle tray.*

*Snuff the first candle. Hold the snuffer over the flame for it to fill with smoke. When you lift it, the smoke will rise and begin to spread out. Then snuff the second candle in the same way.*

*Enjoy the moment and then begin to put the lesson back. There is no wondering at the end of this lesson.*

## WORDS

Mary was about to have a baby. It is very hard to walk when you are about to have a baby. Sometimes she could not take another step. Then she rode on the donkey.

It is also hard to ride on a donkey when you are about to have a baby. When she couldn't ride another step, she got down and walked. She rode and she walked.

They must have been the last people coming up the road to Bethlehem that night.

Here is the light of the prophets. Here is the light of the Mother Mary and the Father Joseph as they make their way to Bethlehem.

Let's enjoy the light.

Now watch. I am going to change the light. Do you see how the light of the prophets is just in one place? I am going to change the light so that it can be in every place.

Watch. Do you see how the light of the mother Mary and the father Joseph is just in this one place? I am going to change the light so that it can be in every place.

Do you see how the light is not gone? It is changed. It is not in one place. Now it is spreading out, getting thinner and thinner, to fill up the whole room. The room is filling up with the light of the prophets and with the light of the mother Mary and the father Joseph. Anywhere you go in this room you can come close to them today.

Now watch carefully where I go with this material, so you will always know where to get it when you want to work with it.

## **MOVEMENTS**

*Carry Bethlehem back to its shelf first. Then put the card and the underlay back in their rack (or tray) and return the rack to its shelf. Return Mary, Joseph and the donkey to the focal shelves. Put away the candle tray last, making certain the wax in the candles has had time to cool, so that it will not spill out into the cloth-lined tray. Be certain that the matches are secure in their container.*

*When everything is put away, come back to the circle and begin to help the children make their decisions about what work to get out next.*

## **WORDS**