

LESSON 5

EPIPHANY

LESSON NOTES

FOCUS: THE WISE MEN'S GIFTS

- 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, DONKEY, SHEPHERD, SHEEP, WISE MEN, CHRIST CHILD, MANGER; FRANKINCENSE, MYRRH, GOLD-COVERED CHOCOLATE COINS; TWEEZERS; MODEL OF BETHLEHEM; OPTIONAL: CANDLE HOLDERS
- UNDERLAY: PURPLE AND WHITE

BACKGROUND

Epiphany is a Greek word that means "showing forth." The date of its celebration is January 6th. It was originally concerned with the commemoration of the Baptism of Christ and later became associated with the Magi, an emphasis of the Latin Church of the West. Today it is often thought of as the manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles.

You begin this week's lesson by presenting the four Advent cards and the Christmas card and telling the stories found in Lesson 1 (pp. 27-33), Lesson 2 (pp. 34-39), Lesson 3 (pp. 40-44) and Lesson 4 (pp. 45-51).

NOTES ON THE MATERIAL

You'll find the materials for this presentation on the Christmas shelves and 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 laid out in order, appears on 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.

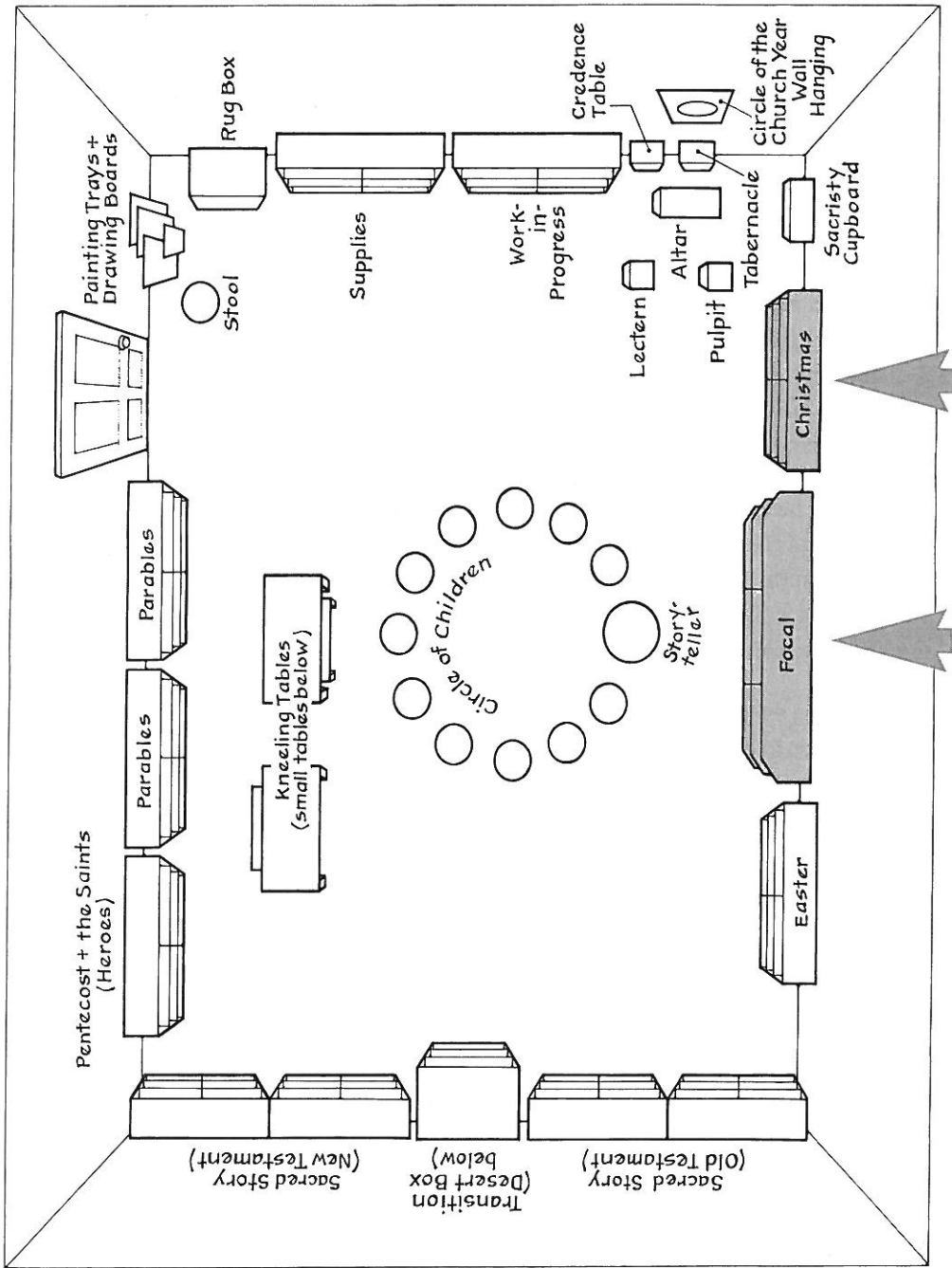
You also need a box to hold the four candles used in the lesson. In this presentation, we refer to one rose and three purple candles, but, again, follow the custom of your church. Use candles with wide bases for stability (e.g., votives or pillar candles), or, if you use tapers, also use candle holders. 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.

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.

You will need the figures from the Holy Family, which sit in the center of the top shelf of the focal shelves.

Also from the focal shelves, you'll need the Christ Candle, which sits to the left of the Holy Family on the top shelf. This candle will be used in Lesson 6, too, when you tell the story of Baptism.

Finally, you will need to include the gifts of the Magi: lumps of frankincense, lumps of myrrh and gold-covered chocolate coins.



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 (pp. 30-32). Do not minimize or rush that story. End with the words: "Something incredible is going to happen in Bethlehem."

Place the second Advent card and tell about the Holy Family (pp. 37-38). Do not minimize or rush this story. End with the words: "They must have been the last people coming up the road to Bethlehem that night."

Place the third Advent card and tell about the shepherds (pp. 42-43). Do not minimize or rush this story. End with the words: "Run to Bethlehem to see the child who will change everything."

Place the fourth Advent card and tell about the wise men (pp. 48-49). Do not minimize or rush this story. End with the words: "...because, like us, they too are on the way to Bethlehem."

Place the Christmas card and tell about the birth of Jesus (p. 49). Do not minimize or rush this story. End with the words: "All the old cow could do was look and look at the baby with its big brown eyes."

Place the four Advent candles and the Christ Candle, one by one, between you and the underlay with the five cards on it.

WORDS

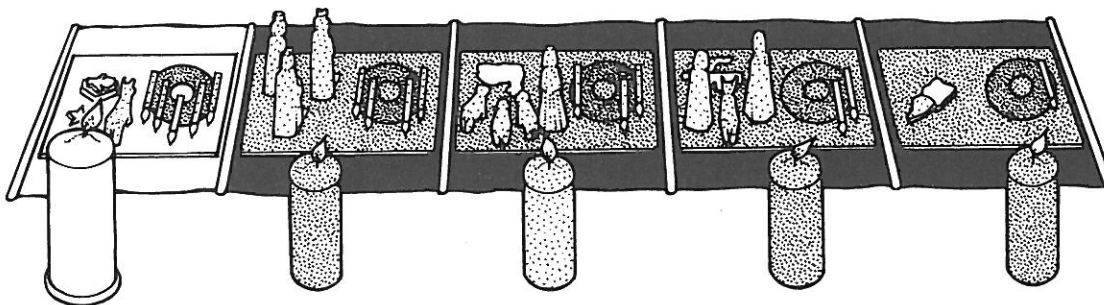
■ Watch carefully where I go so you will always know where to find this lesson.

■ Here is the candle of the prophets. This is the candle of the Holy Family. Here is the candle of the shepherds. Here is the candle of the wise men. Here is the Christ Candle.

MOVEMENTS

WORDS

Light all five candles in order.



THE ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS CARDS AND CANDLES (STORYTELLER'S PERSPECTIVE)

Return again to the fourth card and candle.

Show the gold coins.

Take out the container of frankincense and open it. Using tweezers, pick up one of the crystals of incense. Place it in the flame of the light of the Magi.

The incense will bubble and turn black. Keep lighting new pieces if you need to until the children can smell it. This may take some time. Do not let them pass it around, because the tweezers get hot.

When this is completed, you then get out the myrrh and place it in the flame of the king's candle.

► This is the light of the Magi, the kings, the wise men. They brought gifts: frankincense, myrrh and gold.

► The gold was for a king, but for a different kind of king, so they also brought frankincense. This is something that was used for worship, then, and it is still used to pray today.

► Here is frankincense. Watch. First there is the black smoke, and then when it turns white, the fragrance, the scent, is released. Do you see? Can you begin to smell it?

► This is myrrh. This was not a gift for an ordinary king. This is what is burned at funerals. It is also placed with the dead for their burial. This is for someone whose death is important.

Watch. Do you see the smoke? Can you begin to smell the scent? It is very different from frankincense. Some people like one, and others like the other. They are both important as gifts to show that this king was not to be like other kings. Now let me change the light as we did before.

MOVEMENTS

Take out the candle snuffer from the candle tray.

Snuff out all the candles slowly, starting with the candles of Advent.

Slowly snuff out the Christ Candle.

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

Replace everything without hurrying. Return to the circle and ask the children what work they would like to get out that day.

WORDS

Now watch. I am going to change the light.

Now I am going to change the light of the Christ Candle. Look. It too is spreading out to fill up the room. As it spreads out, it gets thinner and thinner until you can't see it at all. That doesn't mean that it's gone. It only means that you can't see it. You can still feel Christmas. It is filling up the room with the prophets, the Holy Family, the shepherds and the three kings. Anywhere you go, you can come close to them.

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.