

A Good Shepherd Story of Jesus

Advent III The Shepherds

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ADVENT III, The Shepherds MA TERIALS

Items from the large Advent basket:

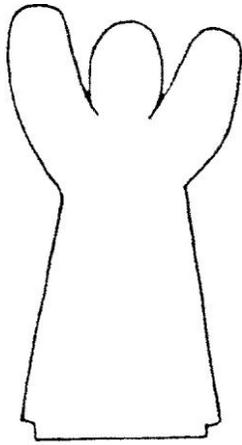
- the underlay
- first three Advent cards
- 3 candleholders
- 2 purple candles
- 1 pink candle
- smaller basket to carry wooden figures from Advent/Nativity set

Items from the Advent/Nativity set (see next page for silhouettes of figures):

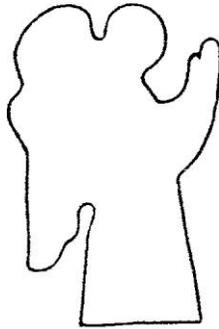
- prophet
- annunciation angel
- Mary
- Joseph
- shepherd's angel
- shepherd
- shepherd with staff
- shepherd boy
- 2 sheep

Items from the worship shelf:

- candle snuffer
- matches

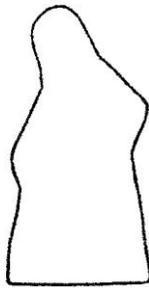
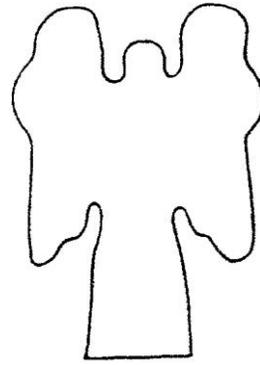


Prophet

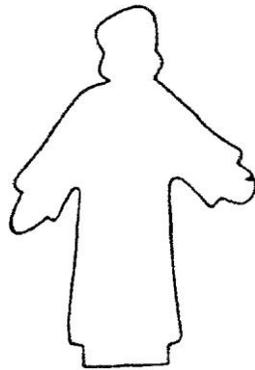


Annunciation Angel

Shepherd's Angel



Mary



Joseph



Shepherd



Shepherd with Staff



Shepherd Boy



Sheep

INTRODUCTION TO ADVENT

The Good Shepherd Program is an ideal vehicle for the celebration of the season of Advent. It is an easy way to show the children in a touchable, concrete way the four weeks of "waiting and getting ready".

The stage is set for Advent by using an underlay that changes from purple to white. The underlay is 45 x 12 inches. The purple fabric on one end is 36 x 12 inches and the white fabric on the other end is 9 x 12 inches. The underlay is rolled up with the white end to the inside and unrolled a little each week of Advent. There is great anticipation as the children eventually see the white piece appear. They actually see us approach the holy season of Christmas.

The Advent cards are used each week as the stories are shared. The first week only the card with one candle on it is used. The second week that card and the one with two candles on it are used. And so on. Each week we begin with card one, repeating in a shorter version each part of the Advent story, while adding the current week's story at the end.

Each week the card is placed on the underlay, the appropriate wooden figures from the Advent/Nativity set are placed above each card and a candle is placed next to the figures. The set becomes a horizontal Advent wreath. Just like we light the candles of the Advent wreath, so here we light the candles of the Advent story. The children are encouraged to take the Advent basket from the shelf and see if they can tell the story each week. Since matches are the only thing in the Good Shepherd room that must not be used by children, they are reminded to ask for adult help in the lighting of the candles as they tell the stories.

Each lesson of Advent contains an explanation of the candle used on the given week as well as telling you which wooden figures and Advent cards are to be used. During the "circle of light" be sure to place the appropriate bookmark representing each week's story in the Good Shepherd classroom Bible. This allows the children, non-readers as well as readers, to become familiar with where the Advent stories are found in the Bible.

Each week we emphasize the waiting and getting ready for the birth of Jesus. Those exact words may not be used, but the message is sent to the listeners that the incarnation of Christ into this world is a time of great joy and wonder. That is the message of Advent.

ADVENT 10, The Shepherds LUKE 2:8-16, 20

ACTIONS

After speaking, get the Advent basket from its shelf. Return it to the circle. Then get the basket of wooden figures, the matches and candle snuffer. Set them all in front of you.

Allow 10-15 seconds of silence as you gently touch one of the cards or figures to center yourself and the children. Then unroll the purple underlay to the length of three cards.

Reverently stroke the purple cloth.

Place the wooden prophet figure to left front of the first part of the underlay. Place the first Advent card on the purple underlay near the end.

Touch the prophet figure gently.

Place a purple candle in holder to the right front of the underlay.

Pause as you light the first candle and enjoy the light for a few seconds.

Place the figures of Mary, Joseph and the annunciation angel to left center of the second purple section in front of the underlay.

Touch the Mary figure gently.

WORDS

Watch carefully where I go to get this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

All the words to my story are inside me. Will you please make silence with me so I can find all the words to my story?

This purple cloth tells us it's Advent.

We're waiting and getting ready.

Long ago the prophets came to the people of God and said these words of hope, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. "

This is the prophet who spoke the words of God.

And this is the prophet's candle of hope that we lit to celebrate the first week of Advent.

Many, many years later, Mary and Joseph were visited by an angel.

The angel told Mary she would have a special baby boy that she would name Jesus.

Place the second Advent card next to the first on the purple underlay.

Place the second purple candle in holder to right front of the second card, in front of the underlay.

Light the second purple candle and pause for a few seconds to enjoy the light.

Place the 3 shepherd figures in front of the underlay to the left of center.

Add 2 sheep figures next to the shepherds.

Place the shepherd's angel figure next to the shepherds.

Lower your voice to a whisper.

Smile and shake your head.

Spread both hands to include ALL people.

Keep hands extended.

Lay an imaginary baby in the manger.

Smile as you speak these words of joy.

Place both hands in front of you with one over the other and move them up from your waist nearly to your chin.

Later, when it was almost time for the baby to be born, Mary and Joseph made their way to Bethlehem, where they had to be counted.

This is the angel's candle of expectation.

Last week we lit this candle to celebrate the second week in Advent.

Outside of the city of Bethlehem there were poor shepherds.

They stayed out in the field with their sheep day and night.

One night as they watched their sheep in the darkness, an angel of the Lord came to them.

The sky was filled with the glory of God and the shepherds were afraid.

But the angel said, "Do not be afraid; I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people;

for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

"And the way you will know is that you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. "

Then many angels joined the one and sang, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among all people. "

The shepherds heard the song and were filled with joy.

Touch your chest lightly when you say "they".

Place both palms on the floor and bow your head, briefly.

Lift both arms up, praising God.

Place the third Advent card on the underlay next to the second.

Place the pink candle in its holder to right front of the purple underlay.

Light the pink candle and pause for a few seconds to enjoy the light.

Snuff all candles, return them, holders, and cards to the Advent basket. Place all wooden figures in their basket. Return the rolled underlay to the Advent basket.

After speaking, return the Advent basket to its shelf. Then carry the basket of figures to its shelf. Finally return the snuffer and matches. Return to the circle to sit down.

They decided to run together to Bethlehem to see if they could find the special baby.

When they found the baby they knelt down and worshipped him.

Then they went back to their work filled with joy, praising God for everything they had seen and heard.

Today we begin the third week of Advent.

This is the shepherd's candle of joy. It is pink because it is a candle of special joy.

We celebrate the joy of the shepherds as we light the third candle of Advent.

WONDERING QUESTIONS:

- wonder how the angels sounded?
- wonder if the sheep were afraid when their shepherds left to go find the baby?
- wonder if the baby cried when they found him?

Watch carefully how I put away these materials so you will know how to use them if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

Watch carefully where I return this story so you will know where to find it if you choose to make this your work today or another day.

Dismiss all children ONLY after everyone has had a chance to choose their work.

I wonder what you will make your work today? Will you make Advent cards? Will you paint or draw? Or will you work with a story to make it your own? Let's go around the circle and choose work.

Remember, if you choose to work with the Advent story from today, you may use all the materials except the matches. Ask one of the adults and they will help you light the prophet's, the angel's and the shepherd's candles. Let's begin.

ADVENT III, The Shepherds TEACHER HELPS

The fact that the message of joy was brought to poor shepherds set the tone for all of Christ's ministry. This was not to be a religion saved for those who could afford to offer expensive sacrifices and keep themselves ritually clean each day. NO! This savior came for the poor, the dirty and those the rest of society considered unworthy.

Shepherds were not considered especially bright and definitely unworthy of being those who would hear the announcement of the birth of the Messiah. I'm sure if we were able to ask any faithful Jew of the first century AD, they would have told us that such an announcement would come to others more worthy.

But Jesus' birth began an inversion of what society "expected". From Bethlehem to the cross, Jesus never did what people expected. We symbolize that by using the special pink or "joy candle" for the shepherds. Notice that after the shepherds conquer their fear, they have no doubt, no questions. Without hesitation these lowly in the eyes of this world run to find the baby. When they find him they don't ask questions, they simply bow down and worship. Then they return to their work again, not questioning, but rejoicing about what they had seen and heard.

I've always wondered what the shepherds were like the following morning. Did they go back, just to be sure? Did they ask each other if it was all a dream? I don't know. I do, however, believe that their lives were changed for all time by the experience they shared that night in the fields outside Bethlehem.

The first wondering question asks how the angels might have sounded. Will the children say that they sang all the words, like a choir? Or will their perception be a loud speaker in the sky?

The second question regards the sheep that were left behind. We have made a point of speaking of the good shepherd who never leaves his sheep. Some children may find this story unfaithful to the story of the good shepherd. Others may explain it by saying that God took care of the sheep while the shepherds were away. Allow the children to explain it as they need. This is a step to helping them cope with simple discontinuities in scripture teachings.

The third question is based in real experience for many of the children. Often they know that when someone comes into a room making noise, the baby there will cry or at least wake up. It will be interesting to hear their perception of this special baby. Have we already succeeded in making this a baby who does not cry like normal children? I hope not.

The special joy of this week of Advent comes through in the story of the shepherds. Let your heart and spirit be light and joy-filled as you share this story and light the third Advent candle.

SUGGESTED DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Read I Samuel 16: 1. Joseph and Mary were sent to Bethlehem to register in the census. According to the scripture who else was born or lived in Bethlehem that we've studied. (Teachers: Read I Samuel 16:1-13. Bethlehem was home to Jesse and his son, David.)

There were rich people in the town of Bethlehem and there were people who kept all the laws of the Jews. Why do you think God sent the angels to the shepherds who were considered not as good as other people in society?

Imagine you are Joseph and Mary. It's late and you're tired. Then, you hear voices approaching the cave where you and your baby are trying to rest. How do you feel? What will you say?

After the shepherds got over being afraid, they were very excited. Why would the news of this new king make the shepherds happy? (Teacher: The peace and goodwill was a promise for ALL people - not just those who were rich and powerful. Also, this king was Jewish, not Roman, like the king who ruled the shepherds.)

WARNING

The use of candles and matches should be closely supervised by a responsible adult. Serious injuries may result from contact with flame or hot wax.