



Weaving God's Promises

LESSON 14

Angels Come to Mary and Joseph

Summary of Today's Story

In the Gospel of Luke, the angel Gabriel comes to Mary, who is betrothed but not yet married to Joseph. Gabriel announces to Mary that she will conceive a son by the Holy Spirit and is to call him Jesus. The angel tells Mary of her son's unique role in the salvation history of the people.

Mary then goes to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who is pregnant with a son who will be known to us as John the Baptist. After visiting, Mary returns home singing praise to God in the famous song known as the *Magnificat*.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Joseph receives a divine revelation from an angel who appears to him in a dream. Joseph is about to divorce Mary because of her pregnancy. In the dream, the angel tells Joseph, as he has already told Mary, that the son that she will bear will be the savior of their people. "You will name him *Jesus*, for he will save the people from their sins."

Where You'll Find Today's Story

In the Bible

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version* Bible.

Luke 1:26-38 (annunciation to Mary)

Luke 1:39-56 (includes Mary visiting Elizabeth, mother-to-be of John the Baptist and the Magnificat)

Matthew 1:18-25 (annunciation to Joseph)

In Children's Bibles

If you plan to use a children's Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers in the space below.

In Our Sunday Lectionary

Today's story is told in church on the following Sunday:

Annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26-38):

Year B: Fourth Sunday of Advent

Mary with Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-56):

Year C: Fourth Sunday of Advent

Annunciation to Joseph (Matthew 1:18-25):

Year A: Fourth Sunday of Advent



Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

During Advent, we usually recognize Mary, the mother of Jesus. In the Advent wreath, she is often symbolically represented in the third, pink, candle.

For this lesson, we will cover two stories, recognizing the role of both Mary and Joseph in the preparation for the coming of our Lord and their son Jesus. The story of how the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary (called *The Annunciation*) is found in Luke. Joseph's story is found in Matthew.

When Gabriel appears to Mary, her first response is fear. One of the first words that the angel speaks is "Do not be afraid." The raw sense of divine presence can be frightening. At the moment when divine reality with its divine purpose breaks in upon the human consciousness, the effect is overwhelming. We tremble and shrink before the awful magnitude of new possibility and new life to which we are now called.

So Mary receives the call to a new and uncertain future. Gabriel informs Mary that she will bear a son, although she has not yet married and consummated her marriage. Her second response is perplexity to the angel's news. "How can this be?" Indeed, how does God make changes that to us, if in our control, seem inconceivable?

The angel gives Mary the answer that serves as God's answer to our own insufficiency and inabilities: "With God nothing is impossible."

Mary's final response is one of obedience and trust: "Let it be to me according to your word." When God calls us to a new commitment, that is the only sufficient response to God's commission.

And Gabriel says to Mary, "You are favored among women!" What favor is she given? She is given the favor of bearing a son far from her home, in a stable—a son who, though beloved by the humble, is hated by the powerful, often in danger and finally put to death on a cross amidst a jeering crowd. That was the "favor with God," a favor that many would be reluctant to claim. Mary may, even at this point, realize that God promises not unbroken happiness but a deeper truth, not ease and prosperity but reconciliation and union with God, through this child that she will bear.

Joseph discovers that Mary is "with child." Under Jewish law, he has two options: to "divorce her quietly" or bring her to court, which would "put her to shame." The first option is more merciful than the other, and Joseph, being a "just man," favors that option. His sympathy and kindness is apparent here.

But as Joseph is thinking about what to do, an angel comes to him in a dream. Like Mary, he is told that she has conceived a child by the Holy Spirit and that they are to call the child Jesus, "for he will save his people from their sins." *Jesus* in Hebrew means *Yahweh is salvation*.

Joseph, like Mary, is quietly obedient to the divine commission. Keeping in mind what the angel told him, he remains betrothed to Mary, then marries her but remains chaste until the birth of the baby Jesus.

Mary and Joseph, in the midst of uncertainty and unexpected happenings, face a difficult choice: submit to the divine will or doubt it and try to control one's own destiny. Both choose to trust in God's word, even though it means leaving the old ways of living (Joseph not heeding the Jewish law), living in difficult circumstances (a stable, then as refugees in Egypt), and living in fear and anxiety for their lives (running from Herod, then following the path of Jesus to his rejection by the people and his death on the cross).

These two stories of Joseph and Mary are perfect examples of the kind of faith and obedience that we can try to imitate, the humble submission to the will of God when God calls us to mission.



The Episcopal Thread

Look at Hymn 438 in the *Hymnal 1982* (New York, NY: Church Publishing, 1985) for a beautiful rendition of the *Song of Mary (Magnificat)*.

The *Magnificat* is also an important part of our Morning and Evening Prayer. It is suggested for use after the Old Testament reading during Evening Prayer on Sundays, at Evening Prayer on all Feasts of our Lord and other Major Feasts, and at any time if only one reading is used.



Gathering

As the children enter the classroom, engage them in a simple opening activity. On pages 12-13, you'll find two Gathering Activity handouts to use if you wish. Or you might have the children create an angel or a simple Christmas ornament. If you have a Jesse tree in the classroom, have the children make ornaments. (You'll find directions for making and hanging Jesse Tree ornaments on p. 16 in the activity section at the end of Lesson 13.) If you have a class Advent calendar, use it to count down the days until Christmas.

This is also a good time for all children to have a brief time of fellowship. Children will enjoy sharing with each other their sense of excitement and expectation during this Advent season.

After all the children have arrived, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer.



Telling the Story

Read aloud today's story from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, tell the story in your own words, or read from the version of the story we provide, found on pages 8-11.

Begin with Mary's story, then tell Joseph's.

These stories are great when acted out, side by side. You'll find several suggestions of ways to dramatize a story along with other suggestions for ways to bring these stories to life on pages 2-3 under Storytelling Enhancements in the Appendix on the Website.

There is no need to analyze the stories immediately after telling them. For now, let the stories sink into the children's minds and hearts. Later, when having snacks or doing an activity, bring up the stories again, inviting the children to talk about them.



Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your classroom.

Materials

small table with a cloth to cover it
two candles
Advent wreath with Advent candles or one large Christ candle
matches
Bible
cross
optional: flowers (real, fake or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles. If you are using an Advent wreath, light the appropriate number of Advent candles.

Read one or two verses from today's scripture to help the children connect the story that they just heard with the Bible. If working with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses.

Suggestions for the reading:

For younger children: Luke 1:30

For older children: Luke 1:26-35 or Matthew 1:18-21

Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

Reader: A reading from the Gospel of Luke:
(*Read the selected passage.*)

Reader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Invite prayers of thanks to God for God's work in our lives during the past week. Ask the children to remember when God has been active in their lives, or when they have seen the work of God—at home, at school, with family or friends.
- Welcome intercessory prayers, asking for God's help or presence. Encourage children to pray for themselves or for others who are in any need or trouble. At this time of Advent, ask for special prayers for the needy and the poor in their neighborhood.
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks for these special occasions.
- End the prayer time by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



Sharing

Pass out snacks and say a simple grace, such as this

one, a traditional Jewish table grace that Mary and Joseph probably would have said at meals:

- Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth.
Amen.

This is a good time, while sharing a snack, to discuss the stories that have just been read. You may want to re-create a supper scene with Joseph and Mary and imagine their table conversations after the news from the angel. Or imagine how they must have felt upon receiving such momentous news.

Be sure to end any discussion with a reminder of the obedience and trust that Mary and Joseph exhibited and that we are to follow when faced with a divine revelation. Notice the peace and sureness that infuses these gospel readings, which come from the humble trust and submission to God in which Mary and Joseph responded to the word of God.



Activities: Arts, Crafts, Games, Drama, etc.

After Sharing, begin an activity to supplement and enhance today's story. While the children are doing an activity, talk about the story so they make the connection.

Suggested story-related activities are provided at the end of this lesson on pages 12-28.

Additional activity ideas can be found on pages 3-6 in the Appendix where we've provided suggestions and directions for a variety of general activities that can be adapted to any lesson. Also included are outreach and service projects that can be done at any time.



THREADS Take-Home Paper

At the end of this lesson you will find a two-page take-home paper for families called *Threads*. *Threads* provides parents with a briefer version of the information on scripture and Episcopal faith found in the introduction to the lesson, as well as multiple suggestions for household activities and prayer. Parents can use *Threads* to continue each child's classroom experience at home throughout the week. We suggest duplicating and distributing these two pages to children and/or their parents at the end of each lesson.

ACTIVITIES FOR THIS WEEK'S SESSION



Memorization

There is no new memorization for this lesson. However, encourage the children to continue to work on memorizing the Lord's Prayer and/or the Nicene Creed.



Weaving Our Faith

Before the closing prayer, take a few minutes to help the children think about today's story and what it teaches us about God by asking questions such as:

- What was our story about today?
- Who did we talk about?
- What did God do?
- What do we learn about God?
- How would we respond if God appeared to us?

To help the children recall the main points of the story, you may prompt them with key words, such as: *angel, praise to God, savior, Jesus*.



Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into the church worship service or back to their homes in the knowledge of the love and protection of God. You may say your own prayer or use one from the *Prayer Book* or say a simple one like the following:

- Thank you, Lord God, for sending your Son Jesus Christ to earth, to be born as a baby as we were, to live as we live. Help us now to prepare the way for the coming of your Son Jesus, so that we can learn from him how we can be close to you and live in your love, for ever and ever. *Amen*.

End the class with a dismissal that is used in church, such as:

- Go in peace, to love and serve the Lord.

The children respond:

- Thanks be to God.



Weaving God's Promises

LUKE 1:26-38, 39-56; MATTHEW 1:18-25

Mary finds out the news

Mary is engaged to Joseph. That means that she is planning to be married to Joseph. They both live in a little town called Nazareth, each in their own house.

One day, Mary has a visitor at her home. It is not just an ordinary visitor, like you or me. It is an angel, and the angel's name is Gabriel. One moment, Mary is alone. The next moment, Gabriel is standing there, right in front of her. Mary is surprised. "Who is this person? How did he get here? And why is he here?"

Gabriel speaks right away. "Greetings, special one! God is with you!"

Usually when people come to see you, they will say something like, "Hello! How are you!" No one has ever called her "special one" before, or told her "God is with you." Mary is confused. And she is a little afraid. She wonders, "What kind of greeting is this, anyway? Who would talk to me like this?"

The angel knows that Mary is afraid—who isn't afraid of an angel when you sees one? And Gabriel does not talk ordinary talk. But he is coming to Mary with no ordinary message. He has a special—and very important—message from God. He says to her, "Don't be afraid, Mary! God has specially chosen you!"

Mary relaxes a little, but she doesn't say anything. She waits for what Gabriel will say next. He says, "The Holy Spirit has put a seed of a child in you. In nine months, you will give birth to a baby boy. Call him *Jesus*."

Mary still is quiet. What this angel is telling her is hard to believe. He says more: "Your son Jesus will be great. He will be called the Son of God, and he will be king forever and ever."

Then Mary has a question. “How can this be?” she asks. “I’m not married yet! Doesn’t a child come from both a man and a woman?”

The angel says, “This will be the work of the Holy Spirit, not of ordinary events. The child that is in you will be born of God, not of a man. He truly will be the Son of God.”

Mary says, “Oh.” This is really big news. But she believes what Gabriel is saying, as unbelievable as it sounds.

Then Gabriel says more. “Now, remember your cousin Elizabeth, who lives up the road? She is too old to have children, or so they all say. But she too will have a baby, and he will be born in just a few months. People say that Elizabeth having a baby is impossible, but I tell you: Nothing is impossible for God.”

Gabriel looks at Mary. It’s quiet in the room. Mary needs to decide, does she say *yes* or *no*? Finally, Mary says, “Here I am. I am God’s servant. I will do whatever God asks of me.”

Mary has said *yes*. Gabriel lets out a big sigh and then he is gone.

Mary visits her cousin Elizabeth

Elizabeth lives in the countryside, a ways away from Mary, but not too far to walk. Mary wants to see her.

As soon as the angel is gone, Mary puts on her cloak and hurries to Elizabeth’s house. She has news to tell Elizabeth.

Elizabeth is home. Mary knocks on the door and then goes inside. “Elizabeth!” she calls.

Elizabeth hears Mary call to her. At the same time she hears Mary’s voice, the baby inside her jumps. And then Elizabeth feels the Holy Spirit fill her up. She feels the heat of the Spirit, and the glow of the Spirit, and the peace of the Spirit inside her. She knows this is because of Mary.

“Mary!” she says happily. “You are blessed, and so is the baby inside you! I know that you are the mother of the one I will call Lord. How am I so blessed,

that you, the mother of my Lord, is here to see me? I know this is true because as soon as I heard you call to me, the baby inside me jumped for joy.”

Mary too is happy, and she gives thanks to God for what God has done for her. “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior. He has treated me with favor, even though I am just his lowly servant. He has done great things for me, and he does great things for his people. How holy is God!”

Mary and Elizabeth talk and talk, and Mary stays at Elizabeth’s house for three months. They share many stories, and their babies grow inside them all this time. Then Mary goes back to her own home.

Now Joseph finds out the news

Joseph is going to be married to Mary. One of these days, like all husbands and wives, they will have children. But right now, since they are not married yet, the idea of having children is far off. Wait until we are married, he thinks. And then I will be a husband and a carpenter, and Mary will be my wife, and we will have children.

But then Joseph starts hearing things from neighbors. Nazareth is a very small town, and everybody knows everybody else. And people talk.

When a man and a woman are going to be married, they don’t see each other before they are married. Sometimes they have not even met each other. They don’t go out to dinner together, or see a movie together, or even talk to each other. Joseph wakes up, does his carpenter work, eats and goes to sleep. Mary wakes up, does her house chores, eats and goes to sleep. When the day comes for them to marry, then they will meet each other and live in the same house together. But it’s not time for that yet.

So when Joseph’s neighbors tell him that Mary is expecting a child, Joseph was confused, and then bothered. How can there be a baby yet? We cannot get married if Mary has already been with another man! I must stop our marriage from happening!

When Joseph has made up his mind to part from Mary—but before Joseph has a chance to say anything to Mary—an angel comes to his house to visit him. He doesn't come to Joseph's door, like he did with Mary. He waits until Joseph falls asleep. And then when Joseph starts to dream, the angel comes into his dream.

But just like Mary, Joseph is afraid. Who wouldn't be afraid when an angel comes to see you?

The angel says to Joseph, “Joseph, don't be afraid! I have good news, not bad news!”

Joseph breathes quieter in his sleep. And he listens to what the angel in his dream is saying. The angel says, “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. You know that she is about to have a baby. But the child inside of her is not an ordinary child. This is a child who is from the Holy Spirit, not from a man.”

Joseph thinks, in his dream, “The Holy Spirit?”

The angel speaks again. “Mary will have a son, not a daughter. Call him *Jesus*. Your son Jesus will save his people from their sins, their wrongdoings. So people will also call him Emmanuel, because this means ‘God is with us.’ Because of Jesus, God will truly be with you.”

Then Joseph wakes up. He remembers his dream. It was not an ordinary dream. He knows that his dream was not made up, but was real, that the angel was real, and the news about Mary is real. She is expecting a baby, yes. But this baby comes from the Holy Spirit, from God. And the baby will be called Jesus and will come to help his people come closer to God.”

Joseph decides what to do, thinking, “Mary and I can still get married. She will still be my wife. She will still have a baby, and he will be named Jesus. This is what the angel of God told me, and I will do what God tells me to do.”

So the days and months pass, and Joseph and Mary get married. And soon, they will have a child.



Weaving God's Promises

GATHERING ACTIVITY: ANGELS

Draw what you think an angel from God might look like.



Weaving God's Promises

GATHERING ACTIVITY: DIAL-A-MESSAGE

Angels brought a message to Mary and to Joseph. Now we get telephone messages! Use the telephone dial below to unlock the coded message and find out what the angels on the other end of the telephone are saying to us.

Look at the dial. One number has 3 different letters. The right letter to use will have the right combination of line plus number: $2^1 = A$, $2^2 = B$, $2^3 = C$, etc.

$4^2 3^2$ $9^1 4^3 5^3 5^3$ $2^2 3^2$ $2^3 2^1 5^3 5^3 3^2 3^1$ $8^1 4^2 3^2$ $7^4 6^3 6^2$ $6^3 3^3$ $4^1 6^3 3^1$





Weaving God's Promises

CHRISTMAS CARD PUPPETS for Primary

Children make stick puppets out of nativity figures found on Christmas cards and act out the story of the birth of Jesus.

Materials:

old Christmas cards, with nativity figures
craft sticks
glue
scissors

Directions:

Set out Christmas cards and invite the children to make stick puppets and act out the Christmas story.

1. Ask the children to cut out nativity figures they find on the Christmas cards and glue them to craft sticks.
2. As you read the story of the birth of Jesus, have the children act out the story with their stick puppets.



Weaving God's Promises

ANGEL HALOS for Preschool

Children make halos from paper plates and decorate them.

Materials:

- paper plates
- glue
- glitter or glitter glue
- sequins
- markers or crayons
- scissors
- optional:* thin ribbons

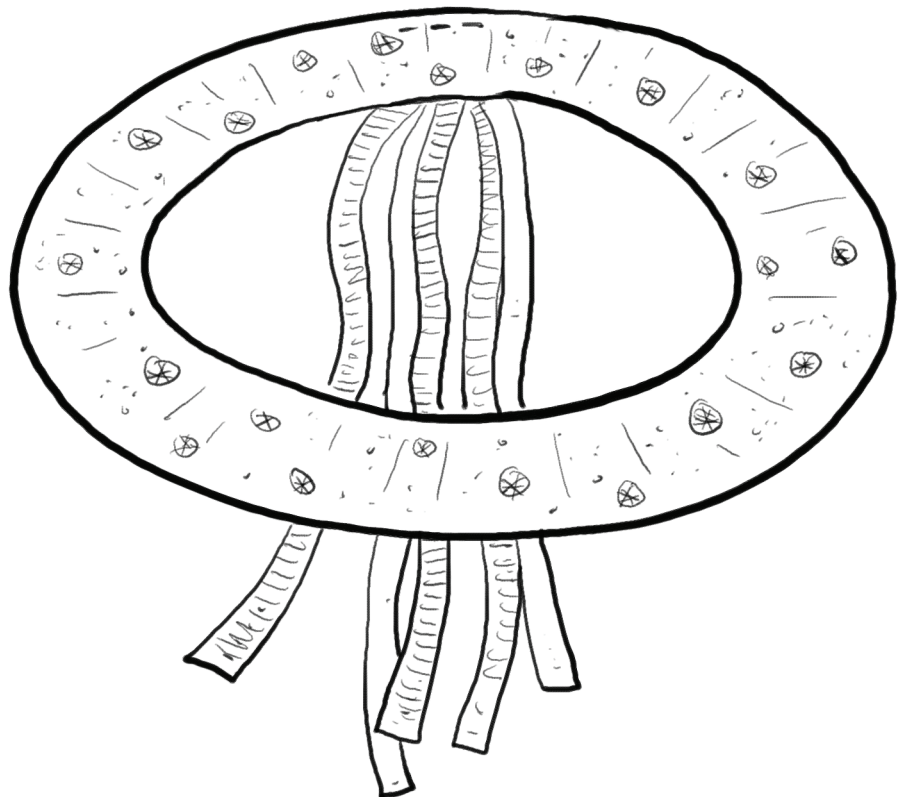
Preparation:

Cut the center out of the paper plates to make halos. Make one for each child.

Directions:

Hand out the paper plates with the center removed and invite each child to make an angel halo.

1. Have the children decorate their halos with markers, glitter and sequins.
2. If the children want ribbons trailing behind, cut several lengths of ribbon and help the children tape the ribbons to the back of their halos.





Weaving God's Promises

PAPER PLATE ANGELS for Primary

Children make stand-up angels from paper plates.

Materials:

paper plates
markers or crayons
stapler
scissors

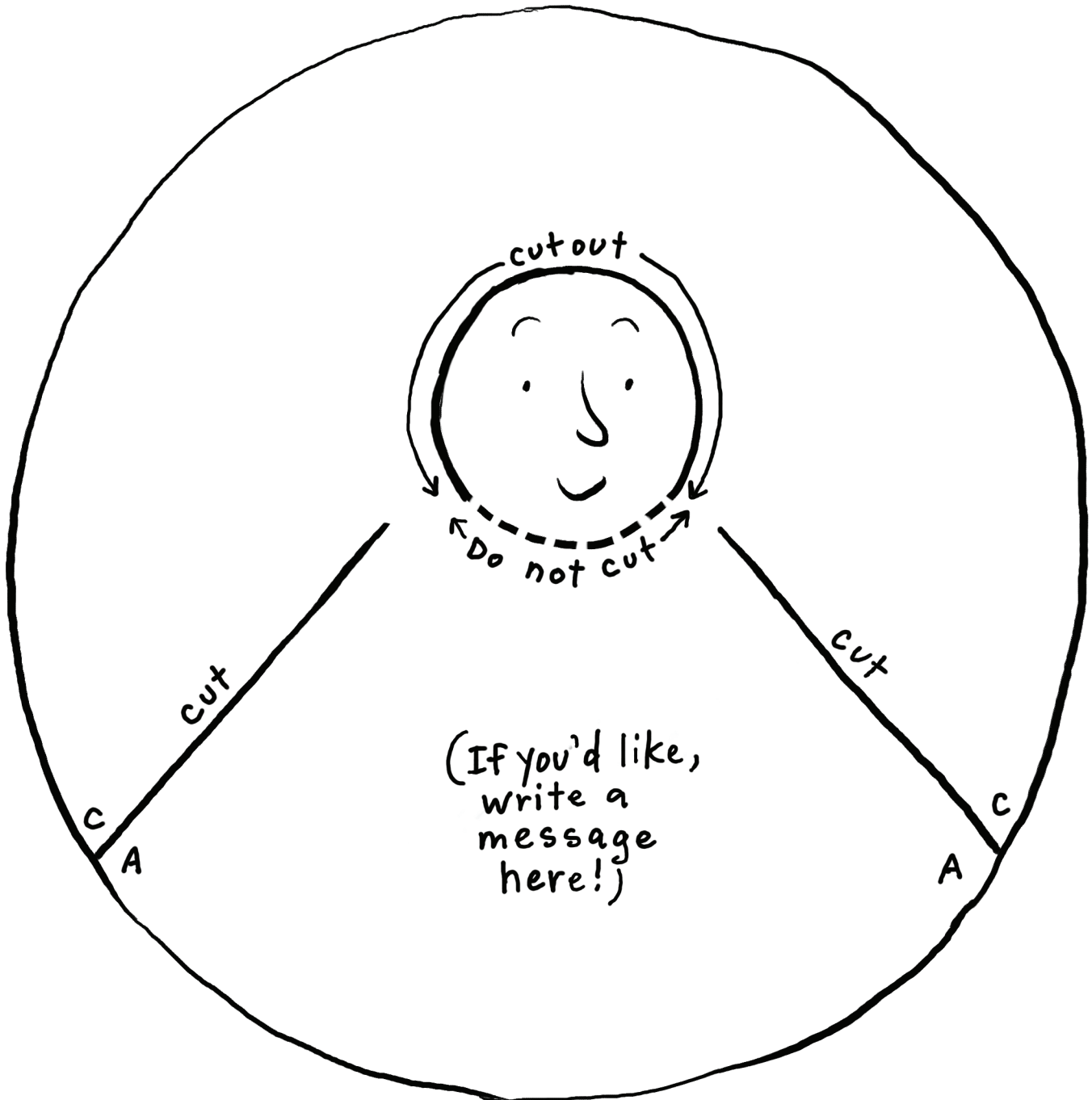
Paper Plate Angel Example (p. 17)

Directions:

Invite each child to make a paper plate angel. Give the children these directions:

1. Draw a face on the back of a paper plate.
2. Cut out the top part of the head and make two side cuts (see the *Paper Plate Angel Example*, p. 17).
3. Bring both points A to the back to form a cone shape. Staple closed.
4. Fold B to the back. Head should stand tall. Points will move up to form the wings.

PAPER PLATE ANGEL EXAMPLE





Weaving God's Promises

ANGEL MAGNETS for Primary

Children color pictures of angels and make them into magnets.

Materials:

Angel Picture (p. 19)

foam sheets

scissors

glue

magnetic strips

crayons

optional: digital camera and printer or instant print camera and film

Preparation:

Make a copy of the *Angel Picture* for each child.

Directions:

Hand out the *Angel Pictures* and invite each child to make an angel magnet. Offer these directions:

1. Color the *Angel Picture* and cut it out.
2. Glue the picture onto a piece of foam sheet and cut out again.
3. Cut a piece of the magnetic strip to fit your picture, remove the adhesive backing and stick it to the back of the angel.

Variation:

Take a picture of each child and cut around the outline. Have the child glue this photo to a piece of foam sheet and add a magnetic strip, giving each angel someone to talk to!

ANGEL PICTURE





Weaving God's Promises

CRAYON ETCHING ANGEL PICTURES for Primary, Elementary

Children “etch” angel pictures in black paint, which has been brushed over brightly colored blocks of color.

Materials:

white paper
crayons in bright colors
black poster paint
saucers or small bowls
paintbrushes
dishwashing liquid
craft sticks
toothpicks

Directions:

Invite each child to create an angel picture. Offer these directions:

1. On the white paper, make large blocks of color with crayons. Use bright colors and cover the entire page.
2. In a bowl or saucer, mix a little black paint with a couple of drops of dishwashing liquid.
3. Cover the crayon-colored page with black paint and let dry.
4. Use a craft stick to scratch off the black paint so the colors underneath show through. Scratch out an angel picture. For thinner lines and sparkles, use a toothpick.



Weaving God's Promises

STAINED GLASS ANGELS for Elementary

Children make stained glass angels from black poster board and tissue paper or cellophane.

Materials:

Angel Pattern (p. 22)

colored cellophane or tissue paper

light colored pencils

black poster board

scissors

glue

hole punch

ribbon or paper clip

Preparation:

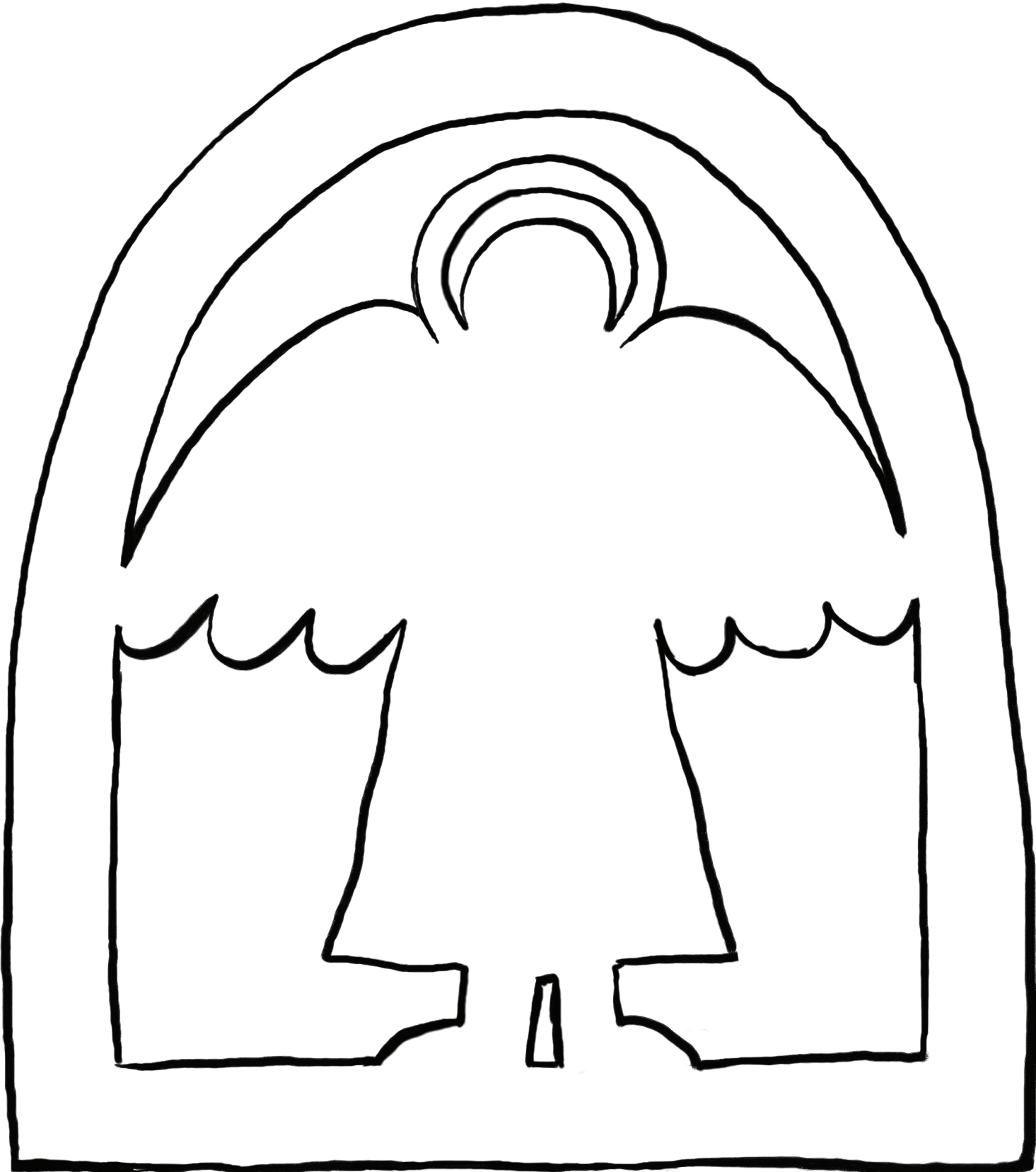
Copy the *Angel Pattern* onto poster board and cut it out. This is the template for the stained glass picture.

Directions:

Set out the pattern and invite each child to make a stained glass angel. Offer these directions:

1. With a colored pencil, trace around the template to make an outline on the black poster board.
2. Cut out the empty (non-pictorial) areas.
3. Cut pieces of tissue paper or cellophane and glue them to the back of the poster board to create a stained glass effect.
4. Punch a hole at the top. Use a paper clip or thread ribbon through the hole for hanging.

ANGEL PATTERN





Weaving God's Promises

ANGEL PRAYER CATCHERS for Intermediate

Children make ribbon angels and hang them inside paper plate rings, which they cover with prayers.

Materials:

wired 2" ribbon, white with gold trim
scissors
round doll heads, ½" in diameter
doll hair
glue gun
Prayers (p. 25)
stiff white paper dinner plates
thread, yarn or ribbon for hanging (monofilament [fishing] line works well)
hole punch

Preparation:

Make a copy of the *Prayers* for each child.

Directions:

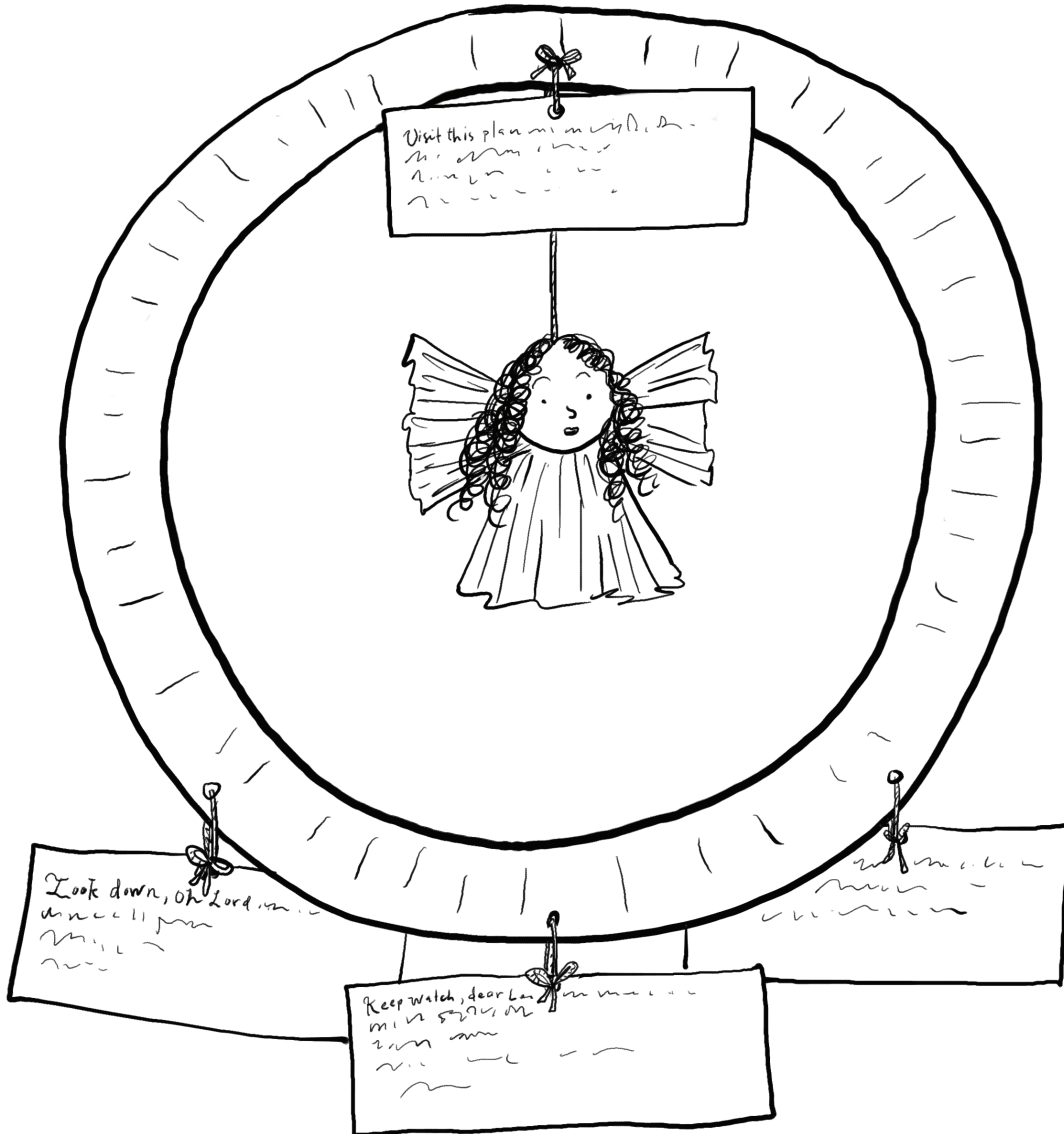
Distribute copies of the *Prayers* and invite each child to make an angel prayer catcher. Give the children these directions:

1. Cut the center out of the paper plate. Punch a hole near the inside edge.
2. Cut off two pieces of ribbon, one 4" long and one 2" long.
3. Fold the 4" piece of ribbon accordion style. Then pinch one end and open up the ribbon to make the angel's gown. Use a glue gun to glue a doll head on the pinched end. Now you have the angel body.
4. Fold the 2" ribbon accordion style. Then pinch it in the middle and spread both sides out to make the angel's wings. Use a glue gun to glue the wings to the back of the angel.
5. Cut off a piece of doll's hair and glue it to the top of the head.
6. Cut a short length of ribbon or thread and glue it to the back of the angel. Thread the end of the ribbon or thread through the hole in the plate and tie, allowing the angel to hang inside the plate ring.

7. Cut out the prayers. Decorate them if you wish. Glue them to the plate or hang them from the bottom.
8. Punch a hole at the top of the plate and thread a piece of yarn or ribbon through the hole for hanging.

Easy Variation:

For an easier project, have the children draw an angel picture and cut it out, then decorate it and hang it.



Prayers

Be our light in the darkness, O Lord,
and in your great mercy defend us
from all perils and dangers of this night;
for the love of your only Son, our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Be present, O merciful God,
and protect us through the hours of this night
so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this life
may rest in your eternal changelessness;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Look down, O Lord, from your heavenly throne,
and illumine this night with your celestial brightness;
that by night as by day your people may glorify your holy Name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Visit this place, O Lord,
and drive far from it all snares of the enemy;
let your holy angels dwell with us to preserve us in peace;
and let your blessings be upon us always;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night,
and give your angels charge over those who sleep.
Tend the sick, Lord Christ;
give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering,
pity the afflicted, shield the joyous;
and all for your love's sake. *Amen.*



Weaving God's Promises

BEADED HALOS for Preschool, Primary

Children make halos with transparent beads.

Materials:

different shapes of transparent beads (not too small)
plastic lacing, either clear or colorful, *or* gold or white, gold or silver pipe cleaners
liquid glue
scissors

Directions:

Invite the children to make beaded halos.

1. Cut pieces of lacing to fit the top of each child's head, plus 6" for knotting. If using pipe cleaners, estimate how many are needed (usually 2 or 3). Be sure to allow room for twisting the pipe cleaners together. (The pipe cleaners will need to be twisted together after the beads have been strung onto them.)
2. Knot one end of each piece of lacing or make a hook on one end of each pipe cleaner so that the beads won't fall off.
3. Have the children string different clear beads on lacing or pipe cleaners.
4. When they are finished, help each child tie the ends of the lacing together to finish the halo. If using pipe cleaners, help the child twist the pipe cleaners securely together to make a halo. To make sure it stays together, put a drop of glue at the ends where the pipe cleaners are twisted together.



Weaving God's Promises

GLUE ORNAMENTS for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make delicate glue ornaments that will catch the sunlight.

Materials:

Star Pattern (p. 28)
thick white craft glue in glue bottle with nozzle (like Elmer's®)
transparent plastic wrap
paper
pencils
tape
glitter, beads, sequins, tiny pom-poms

Preparation:

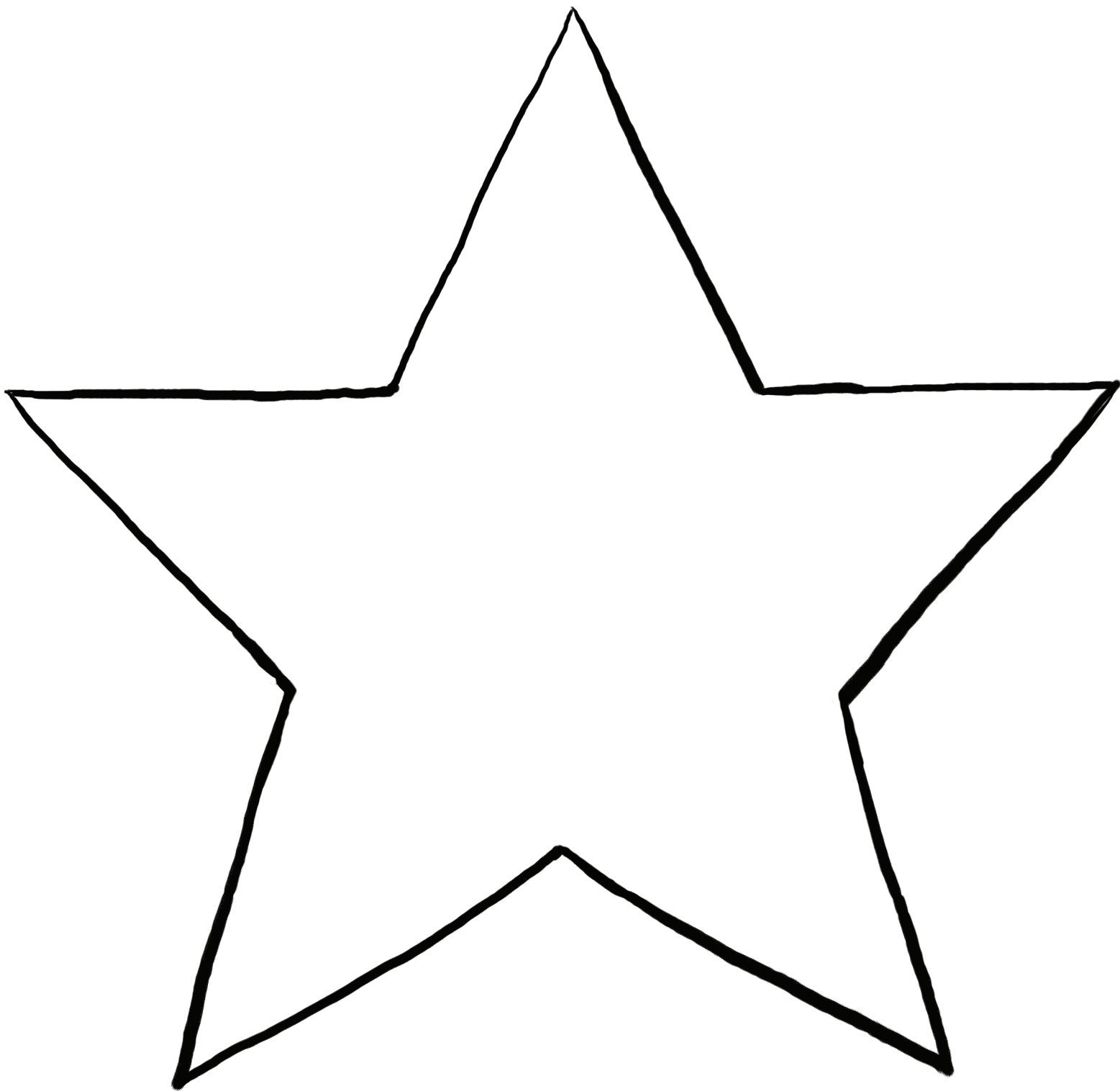
Make a copy of the *Star Pattern* for each child.

Directions:

Distribute the *Star Pattern* and invite each child to make a glue ornament. Give the children these directions:

1. Make a simple design, no larger than 2" in diameter or use the star pattern. Lay it on a flat surface.
2. Lay a piece of plastic wrap over the pattern; tape it down so it won't wrinkle.
3. Trace over the pattern with the glue.
4. While the glue is still wet, sprinkle with glitter, beads, sequins or tiny pom-poms. Let set for 24 hours before turning the ornament over to dry on the other side. Let dry for another 24 hours.
5. Hang on a tree or in a window as a suncatcher.

STAR PATTERN



LESSON 14: ANGELS COME TO MARY AND JOSEPH



We Believe . . .

Look at #438 in *The Hymnal 1982* for a beautiful rendition of the *Song of Mary (Magnificat)*.

The *Magnificat* is also an important part of our Morning and Evening Prayer. It is suggested for use after the Old Testament reading during Evening Prayer on Sundays, at Evening Prayer on all Feasts of our Lord and other Major Feasts, and at any time if only one reading is used.



Today's Story:



Luke 1:26-38, 39-56; Matthew 1:18-25

When Gabriel appears to Mary, her first response is fear. One of the first words that the angel speaks is “Do not be afraid.” The raw sense of divine presence can be frightening. At the moment when divine reality with its divine purpose breaks in upon the human consciousness, the effect is overwhelming. We tremble and shrink before the awful magnitude of new possibility and new life to which we are now called.

Joseph has his own angelic encounter. Like Mary, he is told that she has conceived a child by the Holy Spirit and that they are to call the child Jesus, “for he will save his people from their sins.” *Jesus* in Hebrew means *Yahweh is salvation*.

Mary and Joseph, in the midst of uncertainty and unexpected happenings, face a difficult choice: submit to the divine will or doubt it and try to control one's own destiny. Both choose to trust in God's word, even though it means leaving the old ways of living (Joseph not heeding the Jewish law), living in difficult circumstances (a stable, then as refugees in Egypt), and living in fear and anxiety for their lives (running from Herod, then following the path of Jesus to his rejection by the people and his death on the cross).



Words of Faith

Angels—heavenly beings who serve God and bring messages from God

Savior—one who redeems, rescues and restores; our Savior is Jesus, the Messiah, the Promised One of God

Jesus—the one to be born to Mary and Joseph; he will our Savior

God sends Jesus for our salvation.

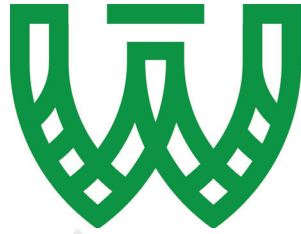


Sharing

Read today's stories aloud from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, or tell the stories in your own words. Begin with Mary's story, then tell Joseph's.

These stories are great when acted out, side by side. Invite household members to either pantomime the actions as the story is read, or have them improvise the story after you've finished reading, creating their own dialogue.

Reinforce the idea that faith and obedience to the will of God when God calls us to mission (as shown by both Mary and Joseph) is the most appropriate response. As the angel said to Mary, "Don't be afraid"—even when the challenge looks big and our resources feel limited!



Weaving God's Promises



This Week at Home

- **Consider putting together your own family Christmas pageant.** Recruit friends and neighbors, gather simple costumes and props and ask everyone to gather at a certain time during Advent or Christmas for an unscripted, impromptu enactment of the events in these passages. An easy way to do this is have narrators read the text, pausing to let the actors improvise their dialogue. Do as many scenes from these stories as you wish, breaking up the scenes by singing Christmas carols. Conclude with a celebratory feast! This could become a new household tradition!
- **Roleplay encounters with angels.** Read the stories of Joseph and Mary first so you know what happened to them. Choose one in your family to be Joseph's *angel* and one to be *Joseph*. Improvise what might have happened between them. Do the same for *Gabriel* and *Mary*. Then act out how *you* would greet an angel!
- **Create some angel art.** Gather your favorite art supplies. Talk about angels, including what we *do* know (not much) and what we *imagine* (quite a bit). Then create artwork of angels (paintings, drawings, sculpture, etc.). Display these through the holiday season.
- **Share good news with each other.** Make a halo out of tinsel garland. Ask one household member to play an *angel*; the *angel* wears the halo, going to each person to tell them some bit of "good news." This can be as simple as "Jesus is coming," or something very specific for the person, "Maria, Jesus loves you very much!" or "Franklin, God so enjoys it when you sing!"
- **Make a list of ways your household could observe Advent**, for example, creating and using an Advent Wreath, creating and using an Advent Calendar, creating and using a Jesse Tree, singing or reading Advent hymns together (like "O Come, O Come, Immanuel," "Come, thou long-expected Jesus," etc.) Do your best to "keep Advent" even as the excitement for Christmas builds. You may find lots of additional Advent craft and activity ideas online; search for "Advent crafts" or "Advent activities."



Household Prayer

Lord, you chose Mary and Joseph to be the earthly mother and father of your Son Jesus. You chose ordinary people, not supermen or superwomen, to do your holy work. Call us, too, Lord, to do your work. Whether you send angels or dreams—or your small still voice—call us too. Amen.

