Lesson Plans That Work: Intergenerational Lesson Plan
Advent 1 (B)
New Testament: Mark 13:24-37

BACKGROUND
Today we begin Cycle B, the second year of the three-year cycle from the Revised Common Lectionary. This cycle features the Gospel of Mark. It's succinct, no frills, and no extra data. Just the facts as Mark perceived them. Jesus will come back – no matter how long it takes. The truth Jesus came to show us will not go away. When will Jesus come back? Who knows? "When" didn't seem to matter to Jesus – just that we be ready.

BEFORE CLASS
This lesson plan contains more activities than you will have time to do; you are invited to select the ones that work best for you and your group. You might want to display some art for Advent, which you can find by doing an Internet search for "Advent Art." Anglicans Online will probably show up. Their web site has a wealth of beautiful work that can be downloaded and copied. If your congregation includes people of significantly different ethnic backgrounds you might search "Advent in _____," inserting the country you want to find.

BEGINNING
Supplies Needed: name tags and markers

Before the session begins, you might choose to write at the top of each name tag: Today is the first day of _____ and see what this statement does as a conversation starter.

PREVIEW
Explain to the group – if no one has guessed it – that today is the first day of the new church year. It is also the first Sunday of Advent, the time we wait to see what God will do Christmas. Amid the flurry of activities that will precede Christmas, we can make some choices about finding times to just be and to be available to God. Tell the group what you have planned for the session and what time the session will conclude.

OPENING PRAYER
Dear God, as we gather to watch, help us to see what you would have us see. Amen.

GATHERING ACTIVITY
Ask the group to brainstorm with you to come up with different kinds of "waiting." One kind of waiting is for something we cannot influence: the weather, a new tooth coming in, etc. Another kind of waiting is for things that we can do something about, like finding bits of time to be together as a family. Then tell the group that we will hear

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about waiting in today's story, and if they'd like, they can comment about the "waiting" in the story.

THE STORY: MARK 13:24-32, 33-37

Supplies needed: Copies of the Bible or this passage for today.

Read the passage aloud or tell it in your own words, something like this: Jesus will come back, Mark is sure about this. Mark reminds us we that know summer is coming when a fig tree puts out little green leaves on its bare branches. So when Jesus is almost here, there will be clues. But it is not about worrying when it might happen – it is about being ready now and keeping awake!

A FIG TREE

Supplies needed: A bare branch, secured in an empty pot using rocks or wadded up paper. White card stock or paper, felt markers or crayons, yarn or ribbon.

Beforehand, cut the paper in circles, squares, and triangles, then punch a hole in the top of each piece. Show the group your handmade fig tree. Ask the group to brainstorm with you to come up with some "signs" that Christmas is coming, signs that we can make into ornaments for the little tree. (Some ideas to get them started: a star, the crib, a "No Vacancy" sign, candles, a Salvation Army red kettle, etc.) Then, invite each person to make an ornament to tie onto the tree. (Very young children may need someone a bit older to work with them.)

OUTREACH PROJECT

Invite the group to consider an outreach project your church can do as a part of Advent. How about adopting a family in the community that needs a bit of help and purchasing age-appropriate toys for them to give to their children? Or maybe each family could place a small dish on their table at home, add coins to it and then bring all the coins on Christmas to send to Episcopal Relief and Development or some other charity? If the group settles on one idea, ask for a volunteer to get the word out to other members of the church.

AWAKE! PRAYERS

Supplies needed: Paper and pencils or crayons

Ask the group to brainstorm to come up with some unexpected times we could spend in prayer – even if it is just for a minute, such as waiting for the light to turn green, standing in line to get lunch, waiting your turn to swing on the swing. Then ask people to think of two kinds of prayers: "Please" prayers and "Thank you" prayers. Now write or draw these prayers to take home.

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ADVENT WREATHS

Supplies needed: Refer to the Advent wreath page at the close of this lesson plan.

Show people how to create an Advent wreath. You may decide to simply demonstrate and send home a copy of the Advent wreath page for families to create their own at home or have all the materials on hand and send home Advent wreath sets.

ADVENT WREATH PRAYERS TO GO

Supplies needed: Paper and pencils

Equip people with an Advent prayer to say when they light their Advent wreath at home, or to offer before their evening meal. Ask family members to sit together and include in their group at least one person who lives alone. They can either choose one of the prayers you offer – or create one of their own – to thank God for the many blessings they receive and ask for help in staying awake! Have them create their prayer sheet to take home and put on their table, encouraging them to decorate it.

Watch, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning, lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. Amen. (Mark 13: 35-36) (The Book of Common Prayer, p. 75)

Almighty God, give us grace to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Amen. (A New Zealand Prayer Book, p. 550)

NATIVITY SET

Ask the group to share traditions they have for the use of a manger scene. (One family brings out all the figures and lets the young children put them in different places during Advent.) If you have a few Nativity Sets, invite people to use them and create different ways of setting them up or arranging them.

CENTERING PRAYER

Supplies needed: a bell or a glass and a spoon

Invite the group to spend a couple of minutes in silence. We will sit comfortably, close our eyes, and be still so God can use this time. Tell them that it doesn't matter that odd thoughts will come to mind. When they do just let them go away. Tell them you will ring the bell to signify that we are beginning and that you will make that sound again when we are done. If this is the first time the group has experimented with silence, keep the silence to less than 3 minutes.

GETTING CLOSURE

Thank you, God, that you are right here with us as we wait. Amen.

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THE ADVENT WREATH

A traditional Advent wreath will have four taper candles (three blue and one may be pink) set in a wreath of evergreen branches. A bright blue ribbon may be tied to each candle. Frames to hold the candles could be purchased at a religious book store or on online for as little as $4.00 and as much as $50.00.

One candle is lit the first Sunday of Advent, two on the second, three on the third and all four on the Fourth Sunday of Advent. If the candles have not burned all the way down, a white candle may be placed in a candle holder and set in the center of the wreath for the season of Christmas (December 25 – January 5).

A variety of other options are possible. Here are a few suggestions.

You could make a holder for the candles using Styrofoam circles, sold in hobby and discount stores. Cut holes in the circles to hold the candles and arrange the greens, securing them with pins. Caution: Styrofoam is flammable, so don't let the candles burn all the way down, and as you would with any Advent wreath, never leave it unattended.

You may also use Oasis, which is green florist foam, which you can get from your florist or order online. If you keep watering the Oasis throughout Advent, your greens will stay fresher. It is a good idea to keep a plate under your Oasis wreath so the water does not get on the table. If you use the Oasis, you can simply press the candles into the foam, but do not wiggle them around as the holes will get too big.

If the family wants to leave the candles burning during supper, the tapers will quickly burn down. An attractive, if slightly more expensive, option is to use pillar candles instead of tapers.

Another option is to use a large round tray. (A pizza pan will do.) Place candles in candle holders, arrange them in the pan, and add greens. Place the arrangement where it will remain and then pour in water, which will keep the greens fresh longer.

If you don't have sufficient candle holders, consider using small juice glasses (or glass baby food jars) and securing the candles in the containers with clay or Play D-oh. Or just pour baking soda into the jars around the candle, or secure the candles with marbles or small stones. The glasses can then be placed on the pizza pan or large round tray and greens arranged around them. Water can also be added.

Where candles burning brightly are a safety hazard, consider using votive candles (or even the tea light candles) in votive glasses, small glasses, or glass baby-food jars. These can then be arranged in a circle. Greens could be added and all could also be placed on a tray that holds water

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