Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children
Advent 1 (B)
New Testament: Mark 13:24-37

BACKGROUND
Advent means “coming.” The coming of the baby Jesus, God among us in human flesh. The coming of Christ again "the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory. In between those two great comings is God’s constant longing for each of us to come to God, to love God, and to let God love us. "Be alert." Notice. Listen. Watch. For what? For the ways God will choose to get our attention this season. For those moments when we notice that our ways are not in alignment with God’s ways. For those shimmering glimpses of the Kingdom of God.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK’S READING
Ominous warnings of end times: These warnings and words of hope heard in a community that was pretty sure the world was coming to an end. The message: Keep alert! Stay awake! Pay attention! Jesus just might come this very night. Implicit is the invitation to make some changes in our priorities and to notice what really matters.

THEME
Keep Alert!

BEFORE CLASS
Decorate your space with blue streamers or ribbons, an undecorated Christmas tree, an Advent calendar, calendar for the liturgical year, or Advent wreath. The idea is to make sure that in some way the space is different to mark the beginning of the church year and the season of Advent and that you have a way to mark time during Advent.

BEGINNING
Greet your class with the words: "Happy New Year!" Then ask them why they think you are using this greeting. Spend time catching up with what is happening in their lives. Then ask the children if there is something they want us to be praying for as we open with prayer. Offer some suggestions for things you want to be praying for to give them the concept.

OPENING PRAYER
Thank you God, for bringing us here today. Thank you that we are beginning a New Year in our church. Help us to ‘Keep alert’ as we prepare for your coming. Amen.

THE Episcopal CHURCH

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

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

In the Bible we hear stories of many people. These people are just like us, they eat and sleep, go to school and work. God has a plan for each of them, and in hearing the stories we learn that God's plan is for each of us too.

Read the passage using a translation of the bible that is used within your own parish.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Who is speaking here? (Jesus)
- Who is Jesus speaking to? (his disciples – the people that have been traveling with him)
- If Jesus is speaking to us, what do we think he means by "Keep alert!" or "Keep Awake?"

You might wish to tell the children that the disciples were pretty sure that the world was coming to an end very soon. They asked Jesus when it would happen and Jesus told them not to worry about it. Since the world did not come to an end, people in the Church have come up with the tradition of Advent as a time of getting ready for Christmas, celebrating the coming of Jesus and, just in case Jesus does choose to show up, being ready.

- If we thought Jesus was really going to come this year, what things might we do differently?
- What would Jesus expect to find?
- What might we add to our lives or what might we start doing?
- What might we stop doing?

ACTIVITY

New Year Resolutions

We are now in the season of Advent which begins a new year in the church. Advent means "coming" and we wait for the coming of Christ at Christmas. Today we heard, "Be alert." Notice. Listen. Watch. For what? As we prepare for the coming of Christ what can we notice? What do we listen and watch for? (Allow them some time for brainstorming and write their responses up on the whiteboard or easel.)

You are now invited to write some "New Years Resolutions" for this time of Advent. Who can tell me what a resolution is? (allow them time to respond) Resolutions are promises we make to ourselves and each other. They usually involve something we want to do differently, something we want to stop doing, or something we want to stop doing. Think about preparing for the coming of Christ at Christmas. What resolutions would help you prepare yourself and "Be alert" for the coming of Christ?

- Write a couple of resolutions for the class.
- Invite each person to write resolutions for themselves to take home with them and post in their room as a reminder.

THE Episcopal CHURCH

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

- What resolutions might be suggested for the faith community, for the world?

GETTING CLOSURE

As we draw closer to Christmas, how do you and your family get ready? In light of the resolutions, how might getting ready be different this year? Share, giving each student an opportunity to respond.

CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Collect for the First Sunday in Advent, Book of Common Prayer, page 211.)

THE Episcopal CHURCH

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.