Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children
Advent 3 (B)
New Testament: John 1:6-8, 19-28

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
The Gospel of John tells the story of John the Baptist from a slightly different perspective. Who is this John? John understands he is a messenger of the light – not the light itself. Those in charge of keeping the faith are confused. Who is this man? Is this the long-awaited Messiah – or Elijah – or a prophet? John sees his mission as baptizing, and pointing to the one who is coming after him.

THEME
Who Are You?

BEFORE CLASS
You will need copies of the Scripture in script form. (see below) You will also need paper, pens or pencils, and art materials for the “Who are you” response time.

BEGINNING
If you have children who were in class last week, and the mural they made of John the Baptist is still available, have the children describe their John the Baptist to children who were not there. If all were there last week, did they get interesting responses from the congregation?

THE STORY: JOHN 1: 6-8, 19-28
Before you begin, ask the children if they know what a Pharisee is. Pharisees were a religious group/political party who emphasized the importance of the rites and laws set forth by Moses. Invite children to read the parts of John, Levites, and Narrator.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Who did those sent by the religious authorities think John might be? (Christ, the expected Messiah, or Elijah, expected to return to prepare people for the Messiah. See 2 Kings 2:11 and Malachi 4:5, and Deuteronomy 14:15.)
- Who does John say that he is? (John 1:23)
- Who does the writer of the Gospel of John say that John the Baptist is? (John 1:6-8)
- Why do you think God needed John the Baptist to prepare or "make straight the way of the Lord"? To stay awake, be alert, be ready?

ACTIVITIES

Interview with John

To reinforce the message that John the Baptist understood his mission as being a messenger and that the Pharisees could not make him fit their expectations, consider turning this passage into a TV interview. A reporter can interview John and an assortment of Pharisees. Work with the children until they can come up with paraphrases of the passage that seem to make sense to them.

Who Are You?

The Pharisees sent Levites to ask John all these questions and they are trying to understand who John is and how he relates to the Messiah. They ask him: "Who are you?" This is an important question for all of us to think about and understand.

Discuss with the children how they would answer the following questions:

- Who am I?
- Who has God made me to be?
- If a group of people were asking me this question, how would you answer?

After you have discussed it, invite the children to draw a picture, write a poem, or find a creative way to answer these questions to show others their answer/answers.

GETTING CLOSURE

In a few words, what would we say to others about Jesus? In what ways can we be messengers to someone we know about meeting Jesus? Do we want to add something more to the New Year's resolutions we wrote the first week in Advent?

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for the messengers you send. Thank you for inviting us to be messengers, also. Thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus, and for John who brought the message. Amen.

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JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

Narrator: There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him,

Levites: "Who are you?"

Narrator: John confessed and did not deny it, but confessed,

John: "I am not the Messiah."

Levites: "What then? Are you Elijah?"

John: "I am not."

Levites: "Are you the prophet?"

John: "No."

Levites: "Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

John: "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'"

Narrator: John was quoting what the prophet Isaiah said. Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.

Levites: "Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?"

John: "I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal."

Narrator: This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

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