Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children
Proper 14 (B)
Old Testament: Psalm 23

BACKGROUND
We continue to remember Israel's leaders and how they strived to serve God. Each had their own challenges and gifts. The need for faithful leadership continues today and we seek wisdom from how these leaders sought the welfare of their people and showed their devotion to God.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING
The lesson appointed for this day tells of David's son, Absalom, dying and of David's grief. Since this is not appropriate for a children's lesson, we focus on Psalm 23 instead.

THEME
The Lord Is My Shepherd

BEFORE CLASS
Gather the supplies for water coloring or banner making, find recordings of the psalm and something to play music on, print the psalm out and cut into strips.

BEGINNING
Greet everyone and ask them how their week was. Invite people to share a "high" or a "low" from the past week.

OPENING PRAYER
Loving God, you are always with us. Help us to remember to turn to you in times of joy and of need. Amen.

THE STORY: PSALM 23
Remind the group that our study of David continues. Today we will learn one of the psalms he may have written. Find Psalm 23 in a bible and read it to the class. Consider using the Contemporary English Version (below) OR the version found in the Book of Common Prayer.

You, Lord, are my shepherd.
I will never be in need.
You let me rest in fields
of green grass.
You lead me to streams of peaceful water,
and you refresh my life.

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You are true to your name,
and you lead me along the right paths.
I may walk through valleys as dark as death,
but I won't be afraid.
You are with me,
and your shepherd's rod makes me feel safe.
You treat me to a feast,
while my enemies watch.
You honor me as your guest,
and you fill my cup until it overflows.
Your kindness and love will always be with me
each day of my life, and I will live forever in your house, Lord.
(Contemporary English Version)

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- I wonder if this psalm sounds familiar to you?
- I wonder what part you liked best?
- I wonder how this psalm makes you feel?

ACTIVITIES

Watercolors
Invite the children to imagine what the scenes of this psalm look like - still waters, green pastures, oil overflowing, etc. Then distribute watercolors and invite them to paint a scene. If they don't want to paint something specifically from the psalm's imagery, they could paint a peaceful scene.
or
Created an "illustrated version" of this Psalm by printing it out on banner paper and leaving room for the children to add their own pictures of all the great imagery (shepherd, fields, streams, paths, valleys, rod, feast, cup, house).

Play Music while They Work
Either recordings of hymns with this theme (The King of Love My Shepherd Is, A Mighty Fortress Is Our God) or Bobby McFerrin's beautiful version which uses feminine language for God.

Encourage a "Movement Collage"
The children act out or assume postures for key words as the psalm is spoken aloud or sung. Set up an Echo Reading: Split into two groups. The first group says a line and the other group repeats it. Then the second group says the next line and the first group repeats it. Have them match tempo and pitch.
or
The first group says a line and the second group shares what that means to them, then switch.

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Psalm Scramble
Mix up the strips of paper with verses. Invite children to work together to put the strips into order. Have them read it together once completed. (If time, they may want to find other ways to order the strips to create a new psalm.)

GETTING CLOSURE

Gather everyone together and invite them to share their work or their favorite part of the class time. Read through the psalm again and ask them to raise their hand or give a thumbs-up sign at the parts they especially like.

CLOSING PRAYER

Dear God, you are our Shepherd. We thank you for comforting us and caring for us. We are glad to have everything we need. Help us to share your love with others. Amen.

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