Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Younger Children
1 Christmas
New Testament: John 1:1-18

BACKGROUND
The world – that played Christmas carols all through the penitential season of Advent – has packed away the ornaments, taken down the Christmas trees, and has moved on to after Christmas sales. We gaze in wonder at the gift shimmering before us that we have barely unwrapped, let alone begun to understand. God among us – the Word made flesh. So we make the only response we can: we celebrate! We keep the greens in the church and sing the Christmas carols. We are being nurtured for the work that will be given us to do.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING
Hovering over all of history – the parts we have recorded and all that came before – is the Word. The Word was with God and the Word was God. This Jesus, whom we can begin to grasp as the baby born on Christmas, is obviously something infinitely beyond our understanding. This is light no darkness can blot out. This true light is now loose in the world. John had proclaimed this coming, yet those Jesus came to did not accept him. But the choice is still there: accept him and become the children of God.

THEME
Celebration – A Child among Us

BEFORE CLASS
You will notice that the Scripture for today (John 1: 1-8) is incredibly beautiful and mostly over the heads of the children. The words, read by you, at the end of your time together may find a place in the child and will grow in years to come.

There are three options for today, keeping in mind you may have a different make up of children today because of the holidays.

- Birthday Party: angel food cake, cake decorations, candles, juice or water.
- Mini-Pageant: items for costumes such as robes, towels, cloth, scarves, baby doll, stuffed animals for the manger, etc.
- Creating a Manger Scene: large piece of paper or butcher paper and crayons

Note: Keep in mind that your class may be small today if people are still away for the holidays, AND you may have new children there that are visiting for the holidays. You may want to have nametags. Make sure and have everyone introduce him or herself if that is the case. You can go around the circle and invite each child to say their name and the first thing they did on Christmas morning. OR their name and the most

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memorable thing about Christmas for them. Keep this in mind during the lesson, trying not to ask too many questions from the previous weeks.

BEGINNING

Greet the children with "Christ is born!" and invite the children to share what they did at their house for Christmas. Try to steer them away from a litany of "I got...." Ask what special food did they had. Did any other people come to your house? Ask if anyone has a specific cultural aspect to their Christmas (Swedish meatballs, Mexican tamales, etc.) and invite their stories.

OPENING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for giving us Jesus. Thank you that he came as a baby and we can be together today to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Amen.

ACTIVITIES

Mini-Pageant

If the children have been involved in – or witnessed – a church pageant, invite them to recreate of it in the class. That way, if only a few of the children got to participate, all can take turns playing the parts. If there was no pageant, the children could present a mini pageant to you, either taking the parts them selves, or using stuffed animals to represent Mary, Joseph, the baby, shepherds, angels – even the three kings arriving a bit early.

Creating a Manger Scene

Using a large piece of paper, you could sketch the beginning of a manger (perhaps simply the outline of the building), and off in the distance, a hill for shepherds and angels. Ask the children to tell you what happened on Christmas, prompting them as you need to. ("Who was born?" "Where was that baby born?" "Who was there when he was born?" What animals might have been there? "What is a shepherd?") As you are hearing the story from the children, invite them to draw the story on the piece of paper. The angel they made on the Fourth Sunday of Advent could be attached to the drawing, or you could encourage them to draw angels.

Birthday Party

Ask the children what we usually do when someone is having a birthday. How do we celebrate the birthday? A cake, of course! Show the children the angel food cake you have brought. Invite the children to help you decorate the cake with the sugar. Then, light the candles and sing "Happy Birthday" to Jesus. Blow out the candles and have a little party.

GETTING CLOSURE

Depending on which option you chose, invite the children to tell you what you have done together today and gather the ideas for your closing prayer.

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CLOSING PRAYER

You could simply sing a verse of "Silent Night" – or again thank God for the gift of the baby Jesus. Or if time permits and it feels right to you, read the gospel for today to the children (John 1: 1-8).

JOHN 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. 8 He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. 11 He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. 12 But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, 13 who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. 15 (John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me."') 16 From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. 17 The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

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