Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Adults
Advent 4 (B)
New Testament: Luke 1:26-38

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
A message, directly from God, sent by an angel! No wonder the angel had to begin with "Do not be afraid." And for whom is this message? A very young girl, engaged but not yet married. The message: "You are to bear a child, the Son of the Most High." The angel makes a compelling case, the young girl chooses to risk accepting, and God is choosing to come among us as a human being – the word made flesh.

THEME
Do Not Be Afraid

BEFORE CLASS
You will need copies of the script found at the end of this lesson. You may also want to make copies of “Annunciation” and “After Annunciation” found at the end of this lesson so people can take them home.

BEGINNING
Spend your usual beginning time with coffee and tea.

OPENING PRAYER
Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer, page 212)

THE STORY: LUKE 1:26-38
Hear the story read aloud. Invite three people to read the parts of the story: Narrator, Angel, and Mary. Script can be found at the end of the lesson.

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REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What catches your attention, raises questions, stirs your imagination as you listen to this reading? Share in a circle without comments.
- Why do you think the angel had to say, so very quickly, "Do Not Be Afraid"?
- I wonder if we would be afraid if we were in Mary's shoes?
- What do you imagine Mary's feelings to be when she heard the entire message?
- How do you understand this story? What implications does it have for you this Advent?
- Why do you think God chose a teenage peasant girl to be the Mother of Jesus?

GETTING CLOSURE

Read the two poems by Madeleine L'Engle, "Annunciation" and "After the Annunciation" from her book The Weather of the Heart (H. Shaw, 1978). After you read them, invite the group to say what stood out for them as we approach Christmas.

Annunciation
To the impossible: Yes!
Enter and penetrate
O Spirit. Come and bless
this hour: the star is late.
Only the absurdity of love
can break the bonds of hate.

After Annunciation
This is the irrational season
when love blooms bright and wild.
Had Mary been filled with reason
there'd have been no room for the child.

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, God, for this community of people as we share our thoughts. Continue to awaken our imaginations, especially as we grow in the love you have for us. Keep us open to your spirit. Amen.

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LUKE 1:26-38

Narrator: In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said,

Angel: "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."

Narrator: But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her,

Angel: "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Narrator: Mary said to the angel,

Mary: "How can this be, since I am a virgin?"

Narrator: The angel said to her,

Angel: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God."

Narrator: Then Mary said,

Mary: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

Narrator: Then the angel departed from her.

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