Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Older Children
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 reading or script for today, a large roll of paper or a couple of sheets of newsprint taped together, and markers. If you have access to a length of gold tinsel bring it in, along with some glue and other art supplies to help create the angel.

BEGINNING
Mini-Review. Today is the last Sunday of Advent – the Fourth Sunday of Advent. We have been looking at things to pay attention to, to get ready for, and be mindful of during this season. The message of Advent is to 'Stay awake!' Let's see if we can remember any of the messages – or the messengers – we have read about – talked about – even acted out. If I said 'Pharisee,' what would you say? If I said 'honey and locusts,' whom would you remember? Do you remember way back to the First Sunday of Advent and what the disciples were worried about and what Jesus told them?"

OPENING PRAYER
Thank you, God, for people who help keep us aware of your coming into the world. Thank you for the friends of Jesus, John the Baptist, the Pharisees, and each one of us

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here today. We need each other to help keep awake and alert to your presence among us. Amen.

THE STORY: LUKE 1:26-38

The idea of this is not to get the "right answer" but to get them thinking about surprise. Say to the children: God is a God of Surprise. If you agree, why? If you disagree, why?

Ok, let's see what surprises we can find in the story for today. You can either read it as the teacher, or you can invite three children to read the parts of: Narrator, Mary, and Angel.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- If someone asked you to describe an angel, what would you say?
- Would "scary" be part of your description?
- What did the angel say to Mary, when he noticed that she was pretty scared of him? (Luke 30)
- What other things did the angel say to make Mary feel more confident about saying yes to his strange announcement to her? (Luke 36)

ACTIVITIES

Angel Creation

Invite the class to collaborate on drawing the angel as he might have appeared to Mary. Notice that the angel is referred to as "he" so the angel will not be frilly and feminine. Let the children decide what he looked like and draw him. When they finish, they may choose to hang it where all can see. And if they do not want to share him, that is OK, too.

GETTING CLOSURE

Invite the children to hang the angel in the class space. Note that the life-sized John the Baptist might have already been hung. These are two characters of Advent who bring us messages. Review the class's New Year's resolutions. You could leave them up for the rest of the year or you could fold them up and bring them back out on the last Sunday of Epiphany (the Transfiguration), which is the Sunday before Lent begins. You could then discuss how they have been following them.

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you for the season of Christmas that so very soon will begin. Help us to keep awake to notice the fun we are having and the fun we may be able to make happen for someone else. 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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