Lesson Plans That Work: Lesson Plans for Younger Children
Proper 21 (B)
Old Testament: Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22

BACKGROUND
This is the first Sunday of the fall season. Some areas of the country will have already experienced some seasonal changes. Feel free to engage the children in a conversation about the seasonal changes and some things that we are grateful for about nature. You may ask the children to collect leaves throughout the week and to bring them in next Sunday. In this week's Old Testament reading, we find the Book of Esther with God acting behind the scenes. Queen Esther finds that the Jewish people, including herself, are being threatened by Haman, the King's chief advisor. Haman does not like Mordecai, Esther's father, and both Mordecai and Haman are trying to gain influence with the King. Queen Esther shares her fears with the King and he has Haman killed.

A NOTATION FOR THIS WEEK'S READING
This reading is set during the Persian Empire (539-333 BCE). Queen Esther stands up for her people to King Ahasuerus at Mordecai's urging. She stands up for her Jewish faith and the result is an edict that allows Jews to assemble and defend themselves. This leads to a great celebration that the Jews observe through Purim. Purim celebrates the liberation of the oppressed and this festival meal forbids mourning during its remembrance.

THEME
Being Brave and Being Thankful are Important

BEFORE CLASS
Prepare your supplies for the activities you choose.

Cornucopia: Thanksgivings

- Cut out one cornucopia for each child in the class. You may print a cornucopia online or you may draw one of your own to cut out. To see a picture of this type of cornucopia, you may search the following term online: "Cornucopia cutout".
- Magazines with pictures of flowers, fruits, or fall foods or drawing materials for children to draw them on the cornucopia.
- Scissors
- Glue

Paper Plate Cornucopia

- One paper plate per cornucopia to be made; cut in the shape of a basket (cutout the top middle half leaving the edge intact).

THE Episcopal CHURCH
Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

- Construction paper for students to draw fruits/vegetables
- To see a picture of this type of cornucopia, you may search the following term online: "Cornucopia craft with paper plates".

BEGINNING

Invite the children to gather together and ask: What are you most thankful for? What does it mean to be brave? Once everyone that wants to share what they wish to, invite them to prayer.

OPENING PRAYER

Thank you Lord, for Queen Esther's bravery. Through her example, we see that you want us to be brave and to help others. We are thankful for Esther's people and their gratitude for her bravery. In God's name we pray, Amen.

THE STORY: ESTHER 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22

The Book of Esther is popular with members of the Jewish faith because it gives a historical account of their plight during the Persian Empire. Queen Esther, a Jew, chose to speak up for her people after her father urged her to. The daughter of Mordecai, Esther, is the former Queen's replacement, chosen through a contest. Esther refuses to bow to the second in command, Haman. Haman wants King Ahasuerus to kill all Jews. Mordecai encourages Queen Esther to stand up for her people. King Ahasuerus favors Queen Esther and he honors her plea for her life and that of the Jewish people. Haman is hung where he had hoped Mordecai would be hung. A new edict is signed by King Ahasuerus that allowed the Jewish people to assemble and defend themselves. This led to the creation of the Jewish Holy Day, the festival of Purim. This festival is still celebrated in the present day. In 2016, it will be celebrated on March 23-24. This Holy Day for the Jewish community is one of celebration and allows for fun filled days and noise making. In observance of Purim, the Book of Esther is read at the synagogue and noise is made every time Haman's name is mentioned. This is believed to help eradicate his name. Purim helps Jews celebrate their unity as a people. This Holy Day also includes the care of those less fortunate. Jews are asked to give money or food to needy people. In addition, Jews send food as gifts to their friends. Lastly, Purim is celebrated among family and a large feast is included. In your classroom, ask your students to stand while you read a few of the Young Child Friendly Verses.

Read the following to the children:
Queen Esther was at dinner with the King and Haman when the King asked her what her greatest desire was. Queen Esther let them know that she and her people wanted their lives saved because Haman had treated them like slaves. The King hung Haman and allowed Queen Esther's people to be free. The Jews were very grateful that Haman did not get his way and they celebrated their freedom every year with food and gifts to those that need them.

THE Episcopal CHURCH

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

Instruct the children to make noise (clapping, stomping feet, voice) every time you mention Haman's name. Explain the significance of his name and his evil intentions to the Jewish people.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

After you have finished teaching the lesson, ask the children the following questions:

- When is a time that you have been brave?
- Who are some people that you and your friends might be able to help?

Share with the class some of the possible places in your local area that you would give money or food to help needy people (a food bank, a low income senior citizens housing complex). Ask the children to name a few friends that they would gift food to if they celebrated Purim like the Jewish people. Lastly, encourage your students to share this story with their family during dinner tonight.

ACTIVITIES

Cornucopia: Thanksgiving

The cornucopia is a symbol of abundance and nourishment. The fall and Thanksgiving season is one where we are encouraged to focus on the abundance we have. The craft activity for today's class will be a cut out cornucopia that will be decorated by each child.

Encourage each child to decorate a cut out cornucopia with magazine pictures or to draw decorations on the cornucopia. They may include flowers, fruits, or fall foods. To see a picture of this type of cornucopia, you may search the following term online: "Cornucopia cutout".

Paper Plate Cornucopia

Encourage each child to decorate a paper plate cornucopia. They may use magazine pictures or draw decorations on the cornucopia. They may include flowers, fruits, or fall foods. To see a picture of this type of cornucopia, you may search the following term online: "Cornucopia craft with paper plates".

Bingo Game

Today is the last day of the Bingo Game that we began at the beginning of September. Today is week 4 of a 4 week long Bingo Game.

When all nine spots have a sticker the Bingo Card is complete! Encourage students to complete their Bingo cards during the class if their open spots are able to be accomplished onsite. You may now send the Bingo cards home.

GETTING CLOSURE

Gather the students back and ask them to share the following: What is your favorite part of the fall season? What are some things that you are thankful for?

THE Episcopal CHURCH

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.

CLOSING PRAYER

Thank you, Lord for all of our neighbors. Help us to be friendly to those that are not like us and to be helpful to those that need a hand. You created all of us in an equal manner and we need your guidance to return to that. In God's name we pray, Amen.

THE Episcopal CHURCH

Published by the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, 815 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017. © 2015 The Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America. All rights reserved.