



TEACHER GUIDE
Preschool B

Unit 4: December

Happy Birthday, Jesus!

One in Christ Preschool—An Overview

Welcome to the One in Christ preschool curriculum and to an easy-to-use format that will help you plan your “Jesus Time” and related experiences. There is one Teacher Guide for each month of the year. (Be sure to recognize that these are not disposables, like magazines.) Each month (unit) has 4 weeks of lessons, with 4 days per week. You will find that there is an abundance of ideas. This provides you with the freedom to pick what works best for you. Don’t try to cover all the material given. Make choices—make it your own!

To help you organize by quarters, the covers are color-coded. The Fall quarter (September, October, November) has autumn orange covers; the Winter quarter (December, January, February) has red covers for Christmas through Valentines; the Spring quarter (March, April, May) has spring green covers; and the Summer quarter (June, July, August) has turquoise blue covers. Each quarter will have one bonus lesson (because of variations in schedules and calendars). Please note the flexibility of the program, which has a Summer quarter for preschools that have a year-round program.

You also have flexibility in how you store your Teacher Guides. The pages are 3-hole punched if you would like to place each quarter in a separate binder. The pages are also perforated if you want to place them in file folders. Or you may simply want to place these colorful Teacher Guides on a bookshelf as your religion curriculum library.

Let’s see what a week provides. The first page of a weekly plan gives you an overview for the week. This is followed by 2 pages of ideas for each of 4 days of Jesus Time lessons. Note that each activity has a heart icon. To keep track of the activities you select to use, you can put a check mark, or better yet a cross, in the heart icon. Checking off activities will also help you in your planning next year!

You will find teaching tools referred to in the lessons such as play scenes, Bible figures, puppets, and *The Story Bible* (hardback edition), all available from Concordia Publishing House (CPH). Song suggestions come from *Little Ones Sing Praise (LOSP)* or *Lift Little Voices (LLV)*, also available from CPH, along with CD recordings of the songs. You will need a variety of materials and methods for teaching a Bible story because each week, the story is presented four times. This repetition is important, age-appropriate, and educationally sound. One time is not enough for a good story—children want to hear it over and over again. (Note: If you do not have the materials suggested, you can still teach the lessons, adapting them to fit with the materials you do have available.)

The second main section of each week provides circle time and center ideas on a variety of themes. Though independent of your Jesus Time, connections to our faith are made to show children that Jesus is part of all parts of our lives. The categories are Express (language development), Create (the arts), Explore (science and math readiness), and Relate (social development). Take note of the numbers in parentheses at the end of each activity. These relate the activity to an early childhood curriculum standard. Reproducible copies of these standards are found in the Administrator’s Manual. The standards are based on a compilation of state and national preschool standards.

Family Letters encourage families to read from *The Story Bible* with pages listed (from the hardback edition) each week, so that children can hear the Bible account both at home and at school. (Note: If you find it difficult to get weekly letters to the home, consider giving parents the entire packet at the beginning of the year.) Blessings!



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3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis, MO 63118-3968
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“Here Is the Stable” finger play in Lesson 14 by Carolyn Bergt.

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Cover and interior illustration by Marilee Harrald-Pilz

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From the Editor—A Look at This Month

Our theme this Christmas is birthdays—the best birthday, Jesus’ birthday! Birthdays are always special, but none is so special as the birthday of Jesus at Christmas. It’s His birthday, but we get the gifts, especially the greatest gift—Jesus! God gives us so many gifts through Jesus, such as Baptism, in which we become children of God! He gives us forgiveness, life, and salvation (which are even better than gold, frankincense, and myrrh!).

This month we will look at four different aspects of this blessed season. We will explore the anticipation of Advent and the announcements that the Savior would soon be born. (*Note:* While reference will be made to Advent, and though Christmas Day is yet to come, we all know that the season is here! Christmas needs to be celebrated more than on December 25, and more than the twelve days after that, so celebrate all month. Actually, celebrate all *year* because God’s plan, put into motion at Christmas, affects our whole life.) We will also look at the birth announcement (by the angels) and the birthday gifts (from the Wise Men, who may have arrived around Jesus’ first birthday). We will also consider Jesus as a young boy, leading up to His twelfth birthday, after which His family took another special trip.

Your biggest challenge this month will be to use the children’s anticipation and enthusiasm in

productive ways, because no matter what is going on, those two qualities will abound! To help children recognize the treasure we have in Jesus, surround your telling of the Christmas story with a sense of wonder and awe. Create an environment of reverence and respect, helping to see that Christmas is about Jesus, not about themselves. A moment of silence or a quiet story presentation can help put the focus on worship and respectfully honoring God’s gift. We can celebrate and enjoy, but always keep your eyes on Jesus!

You are encouraged to use *The Story Bible* (© 2011 Concordia Publishing House) as a companion piece to the lessons you will teach in your classroom. Also encourage family use of this book in the home. (*Note:* Page listings are based on the hardback edition, © 2011.) The CPH Big Books titled *The Savior Is Here! Listen and Cheer; Follow That Star;* and *Little Boy Jesus* will be important companion pieces in this unit. There are also a multitude of titles in the CPH Arch Book series related to the Christmas season that can be used to enrich your lessons. As you view the materials lists, consider that you may not need all items, depending on which activities you choose. We provide you with many ideas that you can pick and choose and adapt. Think of this resource as a guide, not a prescription. May God bless you!

Meeting Individual Needs

As adults we have learned how to calm down when we are stressed. Calming can be difficult for children with special needs who cannot understand the root context of what caused their stress. Learning to calm under stress is a skill developed through experience. An intellectual delay will increase the learning curve of this process and may alienate a student from his or her peers. Instructing a student to “calm down” is often ineffective since they do not yet have the tools to become calm. Some techniques for teaching preschoolers who are prone to dramatic emotional outbursts are to take deep

breaths, get a drink of water, go to a quiet spot, or verbally state “I need my space.” This will give the student experience in effective and socially acceptable ways to calm. For students with underdeveloped communication skills, crying for what they want is the first and most effective way to communicate a need. Through practice, crying may be replaced by picture communication cards or sign language. Teaching students to communicate their needs and self-soothe will help students socially in preschool and provide the building blocks of acceptable behavior in years to come.

Week 14—God Has a Plan for Salvation

THE SAVIOR IS COMING!

LUKE 1:26-38; MATTHEW 1:18-25; LUKE 2:1-7

Discovery Points

Law: Because of sin, we need a Savior.

Gospel: God loved the world so much that He gave His Son to save us from the punishment of our sins. All along, God knew what needed to be done.

Sanctification: Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can trust that our caring God always knows what we need. We rejoice that our Savior was born!

Background

As teachers of young children, we often get to see the sense of wonder and surprise that children exhibit when they hear good news. Especially at this time of year, children exude excitement and anticipation. We have a unique opportunity to help children and their families focus on the coming of the Savior. We can take the common holiday fixtures of candles, lights, evergreens, crèches, and angels and interpret them in the light of the Gospel—leading students and families to rejoice in God, their Savior.

The Advent wreath is a wonderful visual to help children wait for Christmas. The wreath gives opportunities to talk about circles (God’s love has no end), counting to four, and the colors blue or purple and pink. The theme of patience comes through as God’s people waited through history for the Savior, and Mary and Joseph had to wait for Jesus to be born. Most families have Christmas trees, so we will use them as reminders of God’s never-ending love (just as the color of the evergreen Christmas tree never changes) and the promise of life in heaven (as the tree’s conical shape “points” to heaven).

There is a communication theme this month. This week focuses on the message. In these Bible accounts, the angel is shown as messenger and proclaimer of the best news ever!

Bible Words

My spirit rejoices in God my Savior. Luke 1:47

Week 14

Day 1 Materials

- Family Letters: The fall into sin, Noah, Joseph, Moses
- Poster paper
- Angel puppet or figure
- *The Savior Is Here! Listen and Cheer!* (CPH Big Book)
- Straw
- Play dough
- “News of Great Joy!” (Appendix)

Day 2 Materials

- *The Story Bible* (available from CPH)
- Crèche figures of Mary, Joseph, and angel

Day 3 Materials

- Family Letter 14
- Poster paper
- Red paper and tape

Day 4 Materials

- Zippy puppet, carrying gift bag with long, rolled-up list inside
- Reproducible 14
- Poster paper



Have Family Letters available from previous lessons about the fall into sin, Noah, Joseph, and Moses. You will also need a sheet of poster paper that has the word “PLAN” printed on it in big letters. Hold up the “PLAN” poster and explain to the children that whenever you hold it up, they are to say with you, “But God had a plan.”

Hold up the Family Letter illustration from the fall into sin. Ask, **Do you remember who these people are?** (Adam and Eve) **Yes, they are Adam and Eve. What was special about Adam and Eve?** (They were the first people God made.) **Remember that God had given Adam and Eve a beautiful place called the Garden of Eden, where they lived with all the animals. Did they get to stay in the garden?** (No) **Why not?** (Because they ate the fruit God told them not to eat.) **Yes, they were the first people to sin. What was the promise God gave them?** (That He would send a Savior to take their sin away) **Adam and Eve sinned, and so do we** (hold up poster and lead children to speak with you), **but God had a plan.**

Hold up illustration of Noah. **What happened to Noah?** Accept responses. **Yes, God put him on an ark with the animals to save him from the flood. God saved Noah from the flood, but did that save him from his sin?** (No) **Noah wasn't the Savior** (shake head no, then hold up poster), **but God had a plan.**

Hold up illustration of Joseph. **Joseph was a very special baby. When he grew up, God used him to save his family when there was no food for them to eat. But did Joseph save them from their sin?** (No) **Joseph wasn't the Savior** (shake head no, then hold up poster), **but God had a plan.**

Hold up illustration of Moses leading Israel out of Egypt. **Who is this?** (Moses) **Yes, many, many years after Joseph, God used Moses to lead his people away from Pharaoh in Egypt. But did Moses save them from their sin?** (No) **Moses wasn't the Savior** (shake head no, then hold up poster), **but God had a plan.**



God's plan was to send a Savior. People waited and waited and waited for the Savior. Finally the time was right. Soon the Savior would be born. God sent an angel to announce that Jesus was coming!

Hold up an angel puppet or figurine. **God sent an angel to give a message to a young woman named Mary. She had been waiting for the Savior too. When the angel came to see her, she was so surprised! The angel had good news for her. He told her that she was going to have a baby. This baby would be the Savior! She would be His mother, and God would be His Father. Mary was so happy! She knew that God was finally**

sending the Savior He had planned—and it was Jesus!

God's angel was very busy. The angel also brought a message to Joseph in a dream. The angel said that Mary would have a baby. He should be named Jesus because He would save His people from their sins.

The people had waited years and years for the Savior to come. Now the angel said the Savior would be born in just a few months. The angel's message is also for you and me because Jesus came to be our Savior too! Jesus came to forgive our sins and to save us. He came to give us the promise of eternal life in heaven!

✦ ✦ ✦ God Has a Plan for Salvation ✦ ✦



Either this week or next week, use the CPH Big Book *The Savior Is Here! Listen and Cheer!* to tell the story of baby Jesus, born at Christmas. (Next week, you will again tell the Christmas story, but with an emphasis on the angels and shepherds.) Use a variety of media throughout the week to tell this beloved story each day. You can also use the flannelgraph or cuppette figures and other books you have to share this story each day.

Option: Use the reproducible “News of Great Joy!” from the Appendix to retell the Bible lesson. If possible, have a man and woman or two older children read the script. Note that although we often see girls taking the part of the angel in Christmas plays, the Bible usually speaks of angels taking the form of a man when they appear to humans. You might want to send home copies of the reproducible so that parents can retell the story in this way.



Emphasize that we can celebrate that the wait is over and the Savior has come! Celebrate in song. Sing this echo song to the melody of “Are You Sleeping?” and have the children repeat each phrase after you.

Mary listened / Mary listened

To an angel: / To an angel:

Soon the wait is over. / Soon the wait is over.

The Savior’s near! / The Savior’s near!

Joseph listened / Joseph listened

To an angel: / To an angel:

Soon the wait is over. / Soon the wait is over.

The Savior’s near! / The Savior’s near!

We aren’t waiting. / We aren’t waiting.

He has come! / He has come!

God sent Jesus for us. / God sent Jesus for us.

He’s the one. / He’s the one.

He’s God’s Son. / He’s God’s Son.

Another special song about waiting for the Savior is “What Do You Hear” (*LLV*, p. 11).



I wonder . . . what part of that story is about you? Accept answers, guiding the children to understand that we need a Savior too because we are sinners who need God’s forgiveness.

Say, **The story of baby Jesus lying in the manger on a bed of straw is a beautiful story.** Hold up several pieces of straw obtained from a craft, garden, or farm supply store. Give each child a piece. Say, **The story of the first Christmas, when Jesus was born, is a wonderful story, but it is only**

the beginning of the story. Jesus was born to save us, and He saved us by dying on the cross to take away our sins. (Break your straw in half and use it to form a cross shape. Use a small lump of play dough to hold the two pieces together. Let the children do the same.) **Christmas and the cross are both important. All that Jesus did was for us because He loves us! As we celebrate Jesus at Christmas, let’s also remember Jesus on the cross. He did it for us—that is the part of the story that is about you!**



If you have a crèche that you will be using in your classroom, use the figures from that nativity scene as you tell the story (but do not use the shepherds or Wise Men yet).

God's people had waited and waited for the Savior to be born who would take away their sin. There was a young woman named Mary who lived in a town called Nazareth. Mary was excited because soon she would be getting married to a man named Joseph. Can you show me with your face how you think Mary felt? (Happy) But one day, Mary got a surprise! Show the Mary figure.

Mary was at her house, and suddenly, she saw an angel! Show the

angel figure. Show me with your face how you would look if you saw an angel at your house. (Surprised; afraid) Yes, Mary was surprised and a little bit scared. The angel said, "Hello, Mary! You are very special to God, and He is with you!" Mary was surprised enough to see an angel, but then the angel told her something even more surprising. He told her, "You will have a baby boy. He will be God's Son." Then Mary knew that her baby was going to be the Savior that God had promised. Show me how you think Mary felt now. (Happy) Yes, Mary was happy that the waiting was over. God's plan for saving us was finally going to happen.



Review the story by holding up the Mary and angel figures as you sing this song to the melody of "Reuben and Rachel."

**Mary, Mary, look beside you.
There's an angel standing near!
It is Gabriel, sent from heaven
With good news for you to hear.**

**"Mary, Mary, don't be frightened.
God is with you, favored one.
You will have a little baby,
Jesus Christ, God's own dear Son."**

**"How can this be?" Mary wondered.
"I've not married anyone."
"God can do all things," said Gabriel.
"For this child will be God's Son."**

**Mary said, "I am God's servant.
As God says, so let it be."
We join Mary in her praises;
Jesus came for you and me.**

**"My soul magnifies the Lord now;
And my soul finds joy in Him.
He has done great wonders for me.
Holy, holy, be His name."**

**To the Lord now give great glory.
In your Savior find your joy.
See the great things God does for us.
Praise Him, every girl and boy.**

✦ ✦ ✦ God Has a Plan for Salvation ✦ ✦



The angel also came to Joseph. The angel told Joseph to name the baby “Jesus” because He would save His people from their sins. Show the illustrations and read the text from *The Story Bible*, pages 269–271 and 278–280. In these two stories, the angel had an important baby announcement. The angel announced that the Savior would soon be born. That Savior is Jesus, because He saves us from our sins.



Do you think that Mary ever sinned? Yes, Mary was a person like you and me. Sometimes she did things God didn’t like. Do you think Mary ever yelled at someone? (Maybe) Do you think Mary ever wished she had someone else’s nice clothes or big house? (Maybe) We don’t know what sins Mary might have done. But we know that even though she sinned, God’s angel told her she was special.

Just like Mary, Joseph was a sinner, and we sin too. But we are still special to God. Yes, we are so special to God that He sent Jesus to be born and die on the cross to take our sin away. Jesus was Mary’s Savior and Joseph’s Savior and our Savior too.

Show the children a simple four-count rhythm—clap, clap, pat, pat (patting hands on knees). Say the following along with the rhythm:

**Jesus / is / Mary’s/ Savior,
And He’s / my/ Savior / too!**

After saying it two times, change the word “Mary” to “Joseph.” After saying this two times, change the name to the name of a child. Continue around the circle, saying the chant twice with each child’s name.



Pray the following echo prayer to reinforce the concepts of this lesson, pausing at each asterisk so that students can repeat the phrase after you:

**Dear heavenly Father, * we are sorry * that we have sinned. *
Thank You * for sending our Savior, Jesus, * to take our sin away. *
We pray in His name. * Amen. ***



Say, **Think about this! How would you feel if it was your birthday but everybody else got the presents? Listen to responses. This is exactly what happens at Christmas. It is Jesus' birthday, but we get all the presents!**

This shows us how much Jesus loves us. At His birthday, He gives us the best present of all—His love and forgiveness. Jesus was born so that He could save us. That's why we call Him *Savior*.



Say, **Let's hear again about this most special birth day. The announcements have been sent out. An angel told Mary and an angel told Joseph that the baby Savior, Jesus, would soon be born.** Display the first illustration from the Family Letter. Encourage the children to join you in performing the accompanying actions as you speak the following lines:

Pat your hands on your legs. **Walk, walk, walk. Mary and Joseph moved through the crowd of people in Bethlehem. So many people came to be counted by the king. Bethlehem was filled with people.**

Knock on the floor in front of you. **Knock, knock, knock. Joseph knocked on the door of the inn. "Do you have a place for Mary and me to stay tonight?"**

Shake your head no. **"No, no, no. There is no room in the inn. But you can stay in the barn, a little stable."**

Nod your head yes. **"Yes, yes, yes! Here is a place for us," said Joseph. "We can stay in this stable with the animals. It is warm and dry. We can stay here."**

Rest your head on your hands as if sleeping. **Sleep, sleep, sleep. Then a wonderful thing happened! Jesus, the Savior, was born! His mother, Mary, placed the sleeping baby in a manger filled with hay.**

Pretend to rock the baby. **Rock, rock, rock. Mary and Joseph took good care of baby Jesus. They fed Him and kept Him safe and warm. Mary and Joseph loved baby Jesus. They knew that He was their Savior, sent by God, who loved them.**

Put your finger over your lips to indicate quiet. **Hush, hush, hush. Baby Jesus sleeps.** Fold over the second part of the illustration on the Family Letter.

✦ ✦ ✦ God Has a Plan for Salvation ✦ ✦



Hold up a piece of poster paper on which you have written “Jesus.” **The name *Jesus* means “God saves.” That is exactly what Jesus does for us. Let’s look at Jesus’ name.** Point to the letters as you spell J-e-s-u-s. Have the children say each letter with you. **Let’s sing a song to help us remember how to spell Jesus’ name and what it means.** Sing to the melody of the song “Bingo.” Point to each letter in Jesus’ name at the appropriate time. Say, **This song is about the message of the angel, announcing that baby Jesus, the Savior, would soon be born.**

**Mary soon will have a son
And you will name Him Jesus.
J-e-s-u-s, J-e-s-u-s, J-e-s-u-s.
And you will name Him Jesus.**

**He’ll save people from their sins,
So you will name Him Jesus.
J-e-s-u-s, J-e-s-u-s, J-e-s-u-s.
So you will name Him Jesus.**



To review the story of Jesus’ birth, teach the following finger play.

Here is the stable on Christmas Day. (*Hold hands as if folded, but pulled apart just enough so the fingers overlap.*)

Here is the manger where Jesus lay. (*Turn hands over, fingers still interlaced, palms up, and “rock the baby.”*)

Angels sang songs of peace on earth. (*Have interlaced fingers pointing up and spread widely. Wiggle fingers to represent winged angels flying.*)

So let’s celebrate our Savior’s birth! (*Clap your hands with fingertips pointing up to celebrate the joy.*) -CSB



Have each child make an Advent chain to count off the days until Christmas Day. Before class, precut 1 × 6-inch strips of red paper; provide each student with the exact number needed to match the number of days till Christmas. Show the children how to make a paper chain, looping and then securing the strip ends. For faster, stronger adhesion, provide tape strips rather than glue. Each day, as you cut or tear off a loop, sing the following song to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.” (Consider making copies of the song to send home with the chains so the families can get involved too.)

Christmas, Christmas soon will come.

Jesus’ birthday, oh, what fun!

Cut a loop off every day.

When they’re gone, it’s Christmas Day.

Christmas, Christmas soon will come.

Jesus’ birthday, oh, what fun!



Today's lesson will focus on the reason why it is so important that Jesus was born on earth. Use the puppet Zippy to introduce the concept. Add a Christmas ornament or a gift bow to the top of Zippy's head, or attach some other Christmas decoration. He carries a gift bag that contains a long roll of paper with words on it.

Teacher: Hello, Zippy! You're looking festive today. What are you doing?

Zippy: (*Out of breath*) I heard you're getting ready for Christmas, so I came right over with my list.

Teacher: Yes, we are getting ready for Jesus' birthday. Would you like to help us?

Zippy: Jesus' birthday? No, no, I don't have time for *that*. Christmas is coming!

Teacher: But Zippy, Christmas *is* Jesus' birthday. They are the same thing.

Zippy: But what about my Christmas list? (*Zippy pulls list out of bag and unrolls it.*)

Teacher: Wow, Zippy, that's a long list. What's on it?

Zippy: (*Reading from the list*) Well, there's a video game and a Transformer and I need some new blocks and some more LEGOs . . . (*Add names of toys that might interest your children.*)

Teacher: Hmm, Zippy . . . are you sure you need all those things?

Zippy: Well, I don't suppose I *need* them . . . but I sure *want* them!

Teacher: Zippy, I know of something else you need more than anything on that list. Yesterday I heard that you yelled at your mom because she wouldn't buy you something at the store.

Zippy: (*Hangs head*) Yes, I did. My mommy felt really sad when I did that.

Teacher: What did you need then?

Zippy: I needed my mommy to forgive me.

Teacher: Did she?

Zippy: Yes. She said that because Jesus died on the cross to take our sins away, she could forgive me.

Teacher: We all sin, Zippy, and do things we shouldn't. That's why God had a plan to give us the gift we need most—a Savior!

Zippy: I get it now! It is Jesus' birthday, but He gives the best gift to us—He gives Himself!

Teacher: We don't deserve the gift, because we are sinners who do wrong things. But God loves us so much that He gives us Jesus, who forgives us and takes away our sins!



Use Reproducible 14 to celebrate the great gift that God gives us at Christmas. Suggest that the children use three colors: yellow for the star and the hay in the manger; brown for the wooden manger; and any color they want for the background around the picture. *Option:* Provide glitter pens for the star.

✦ ✦ ✦ God Has a Plan for Salvation ✦ ✦



Print “God cares for you” on the board or poster paper. “Read” the words together several times. Then say, **God’s gifts to us at Christmas are very special. He gives us His love and forgiveness. He gives us the best gift of all—Jesus, our Savior. Why does God give you these blessings? Because God cares for you!**

Read the printed words again. Then tell the children that they are to whisper these words each time you point to them (or use some other signal, like making the sign of the cross).

Teacher: God loves you and God loves me.

All: (*Whispering*) God cares for you.

Teacher: God gave you a fam-i-ly.

All: God cares for you.

Teacher: When we do wrong, God loves us still.

All: God cares for you.

Teacher: He’ll love us always. Yes, He will.

All: God cares for you.



Review some of the songs learned this week. Also sing the following, which emphasizes Jesus’ purpose. Sing to the melody of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

**We are sad when we do wrong,
We do wrong, we do wrong.
We are sad when we do wrong.
Help us, help us, God.**

**God sent Jesus down to earth,
Down to earth, down to earth.
God sent Jesus down to earth,
To save us from our sins.**

**We are happy Jesus came,
Jesus came, Jesus came.
We are happy Jesus came,
So we are now forgiven.**



Bring out the puppet Zippy again.

Zippy: Happy. Sad. Happy. That’s me.

Teacher: What are you talking about, Zippy?

Zippy: Well, first I was happy. Our family began decorating our house to celebrate Christmas—I mean, Jesus’ birthday. I got to help. That made me happy. But then I became sad.

Teacher: What made you feel sad, Zippy?

Zippy: (*Sadly*) My daddy was putting up a string of lights. He told me to be very careful so I wouldn’t step on them, but I was so excited, I forgot. I started jumping up and down. I was so excited! Then I stepped on some of the lights and broke them.

Teacher: Oh my! What happened next?

Zippy: I felt so very sad. I told my daddy I was sorry.

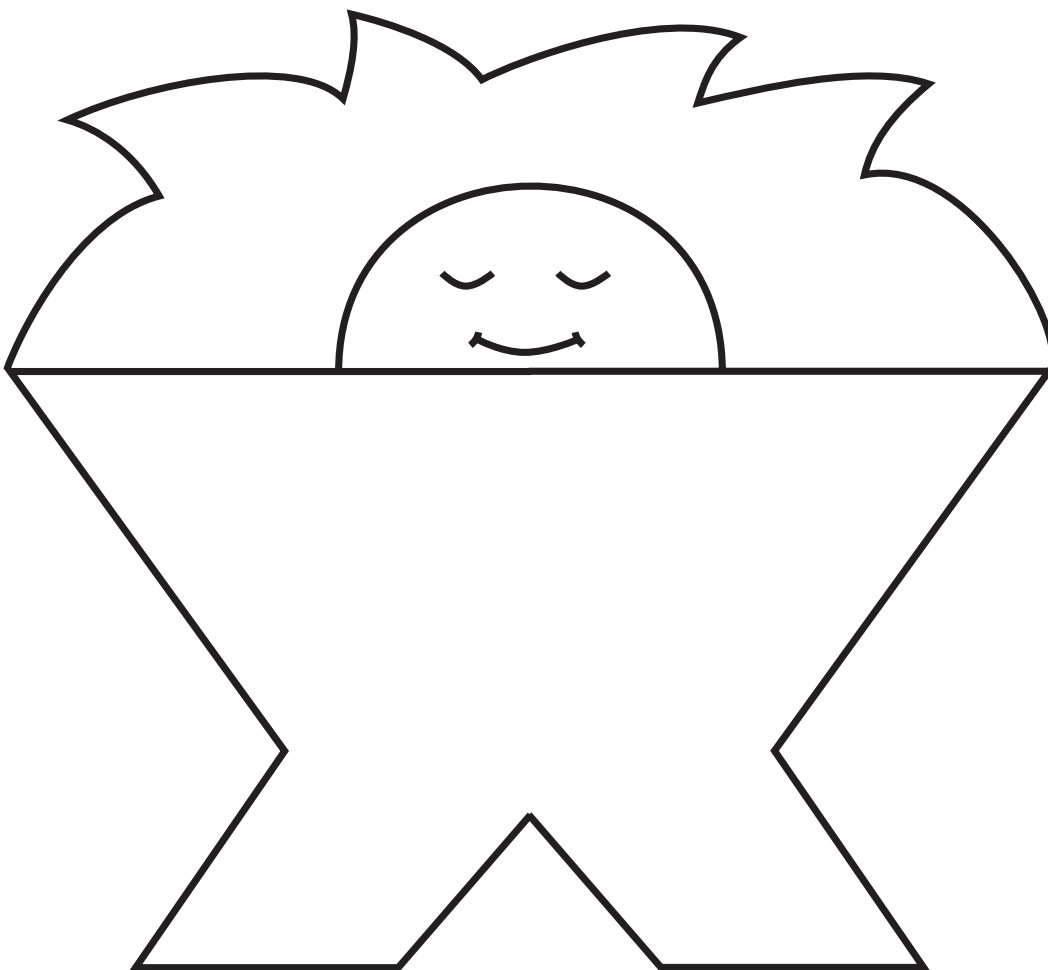
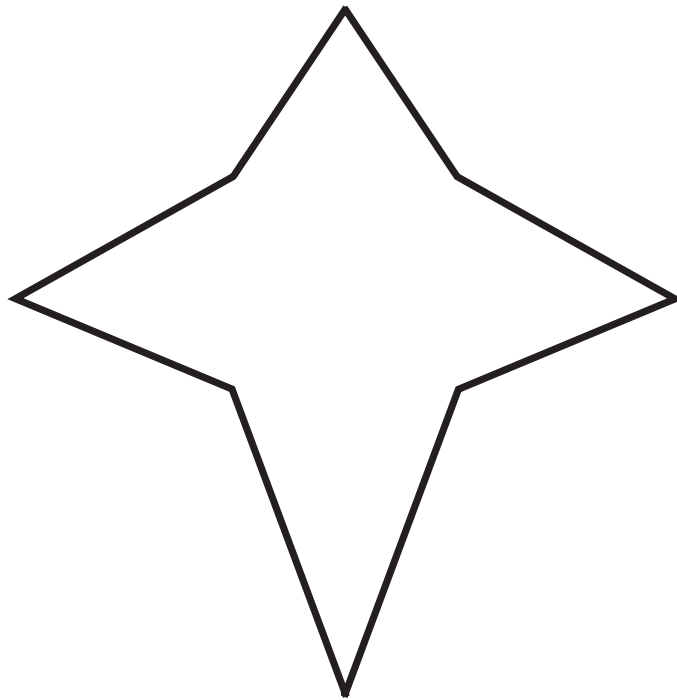
Teacher: What did your daddy say?

Zippy: (*Happily*) He hugged me and said, “I forgive you, and Jesus forgives you too.” Then I felt really happy again!

Teacher: Now I understand—happy, sad, happy. We are sad when we do wrong things. And that’s why Jesus came to earth on the first Christmas long ago. He came to be our Savior. He died on the cross and arose again to take away our sins so that we could be forgiven. Jesus makes us happy!

Zippy: He sure does! Jesus is the best Christmas gift of all!

The Best Gift of All



ANTICIPATION

The Magnificat

(Worship) When Mary heard the message of the angel, she praised and thanked God. (See Luke 1:46–55.) Read this abbreviated version of Mary’s song to the children. Then point out that this “long” song has many short sentences that tell great things about God. Read the song again, stopping after each sentence to clap 3 times. That is the signal for the children to shout “Amen!” Explain that when we say *Amen*, we are saying “I believe this truth.” Saying “Amen” can be their way of agreeing with the words.

**My soul glorifies the Lord.
My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
The Mighty One has done great things for me.
Holy is His name.
He shows mercy and kindness to all His people.
He remembers His promises.
His words are true.**

Option: John Rutter’s “Magnificat anima mea Dominum” is a lively rendition of the first few verses of the Magnificat. Although it is sung in Latin, the students will pick up the joyful spirit of the tune when you explain what it means. This would work well for moving with scarves. Use this piece as an opportunity to focus on fast and slow tempos and to have students identify instruments. Several recordings are available on YouTube. (P.2.1.2)

God With Us

(Worship) Introduce one of the great hymns of the Church, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (LSB 357). Children will enjoy participating in the refrain, waving their hands on the words “Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel.” Depending on the children’s ability, you might want to also teach them to gradually bring their hands down to cross their chest on the words “shall come to thee, O Israel!” Point out that *Emmanuel* means “God with us.” (See Matthew 1:22–23.)

Another important song to sing is “Jesus! What a Name to Know” (LOSP, p. 47). This song is good to sing at any time of the year, but it is especially appropriate during Advent as we remember that the angel announced, “You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). (P.4.4.1)

Advent Wreath

(Worship) Point out and lead a discussion about an Advent wreath in your room. **We are in a special time of the year. It is called “Advent.” Say that word with me.** (Advent) **Advent means “coming.” Who is coming?** Be prepared for students to say “Santa Claus.” If they do, explain that we have presents at Christmas because it is Somebody’s birthday. **Christmas is coming, and Christmas is Jesus’ birthday! So, in Advent, we are especially thinking about when Jesus was born at Christmas.**

Point out that the wreath is a circle. **A circle has no beginning or stopping point. That reminds me of God’s love—it never stops. God shows His great love in sending us the baby Jesus to be our Savior. Listen!**

**God’s love is like a circle,
A circle big and round.
For when you see a circle,
No ending can be found.**

**And so the love of Jesus
Goes on eternally.
Forever and forever,
I know that God loves me.**

Option: Use the patterns in the Appendix to create an Advent poster or bulletin board. (If using candles, use the battery-powered type for safety.) (P.2.1.1)

Sing of His Love

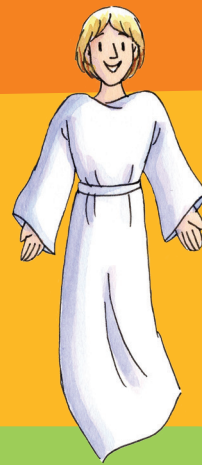
(Worship) Sing the following to the tune of “The Farmer in the Dell.”

**We thank You for Your care.
We thank You for Your care.
God gives His love for us to share.
We thank You for Your care.**

**We thank You for Your love.
We thank You for Your love.
Jesus came from heaven above.
We thank You for Your love. (P.4.4.1)**

Express

ANTICIPATION



Waiting

(Circle Time) Bring out the puppet Zippy to discuss waiting.

Teacher: Hi, Zippy. You'll have to wait a minute while I talk to the children.

Zippy: I hate waiting! I do not like to wait!

Teacher: Zippy, why does waiting make you so upset?

Zippy: Because waiting means doing nothing. And I would rather be doing something.

Teacher: *(To the children)* Can you tell me about a time when it is hard to wait? *(When we are hungry; when we want to play; when we are anxious to go someplace special)* Is it okay to get mad or to push someone when we are waiting? No! Does it help to cry or pout while we are waiting? No!

Zippy: Maybe we need to find something to do to help us learn to wait patiently.

Teacher: *Patience!* Now *that* is a good word to learn. God's people had to be patient for years and years and years while they waited for the Savior to come. But when the time was right, God kept His promise and sent Jesus to be born as our Savior.

Zippy: They had to be patient for years and years! I'm glad I only have to be patient for a few weeks until Christmas comes!

Teacher: Let's learn a song that we could use to learn to be patient while we wait.

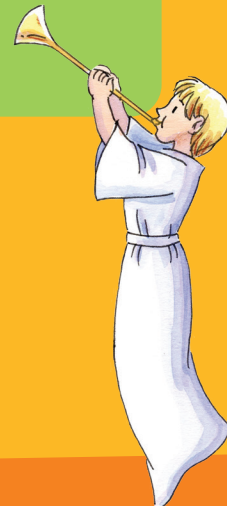
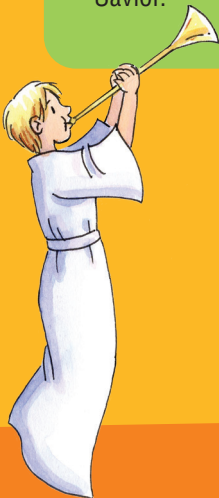
This echo song is great to use whenever you have to wait during the school day. Sing it to the melody of "Are You Sleeping?"

We are waiting / we are waiting
***For our friend** / for our friend.
All of us are waiting / all of us
are waiting
***For our friend** / for our friend.

While we're waiting / while
we're waiting,
****We can sing** / we can sing.
While we all are waiting / while
we all are waiting,
****We can sing** / We can sing!

*Instead of "for our friend," substitute whatever you're waiting for—"for our lunch," "to go outside," and so forth.

**Instead of "sing," substitute any action you choose, such as "jump," "dance," "hum," "stretch," and so forth. (P.4.4.2)



Four Candles in a Ring

(Circle Time) Choose 4 students to form a “human Advent wreath” by holding hands in a circle. The rest of the students and teacher will join hands to form a circle around them. The teacher touches one child—a “candle”—in the inner circle; the child puts his/her hands above his/her head to form a “flame.” The children and teacher in the outer circle walk around, singing this song to the tune of “The Farmer in the Dell.” (P.3.2.7)

Four candles in a ring, 4 candles in a ring, 1 is burning, 3 are left, 4 candles in a ring.

The teacher “lights” an additional “candle” so 2 are “burning.”

Four candles in a ring, 4 candles in a ring, 2 are burning, 2 are left, 4 candles in a ring.

The teacher “lights” an additional “candle” so 3 are “burning.”

Four candles in a ring, 4 candles in a ring, 3 are burning, 1 is left, 4 candles in a ring.

The teacher “lights” the final “candle” so all 4 are “burning.”

Four candles in a ring, 4 candles in a ring, 4 are burning, 0 are left, 4 candles in a ring.

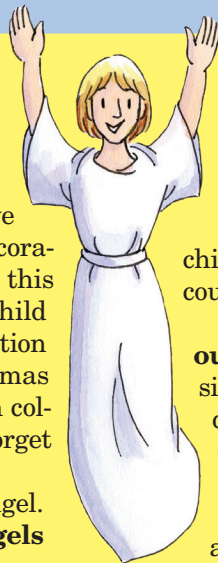
**Now Christmastime is here, now Christmastime is here!
Jesus Christ is born for us! Now Christmastime is here!**



A Multitude of Angels

(Circle Time) Most families have some type of angel among their decorations. The week before, or early in this week, send a note home asking each child to bring an unbreakable angel decoration or a picture of an angel from a Christmas card or book. Bring some of your own collection to share with those who may forget or do not have an angel to bring.

Have each child hold his or her angel. Say, **My, my, we have a lot of angels here! Many people have angel decorations at Christmas to remind them of the angel that told Mary and Joseph that Jesus would be born. Also there were angels that sang when He was born. It is wonderful how different artists have**



many ideas of what angels might look like. Show your angel and model how to briefly describe it using 1 or 2 attributes and a complete sentence: “My angel is gold and shiny.” Invite each child to briefly describe his or her angel, encouraging them to use complete sentences.

Ask, **I wonder: how could we sort our angels?** Accept responses; if possible, sort by children’s criteria. If they don’t have acceptable ideas, suggest your own. **Which angel is tallest? Which is shortest?** Guide children in lining up the angels by height. If you have a good area in which to display the angels, group them together for the children’s further exploration, reminding them to be extra careful when handling them. Tag the angels in some way (such as using a string with a small name tag attached) to identify their owners. (P.1.5.2)

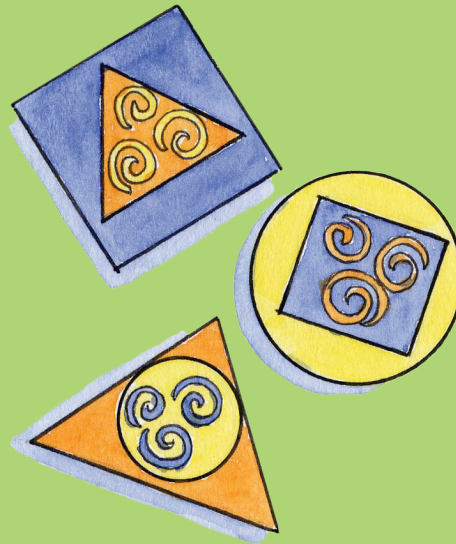
Express

ANTICIPATION

Decorate Your Tree

(Art) Emphasize that Christmas trees are a reminder of Jesus because they point to heaven. For a spectacular tree for your classroom, try this. Choose 3 colors, such as turquoise, orange, and yellow; each color will be used on all the tree decorations the children make. Provide 2-inch and 4-inch paper circles, squares, and triangles in each of the 3 chosen colors. Also provide $\frac{1}{2} \times 3$ -inch strips of paper in each of the 3 colors.

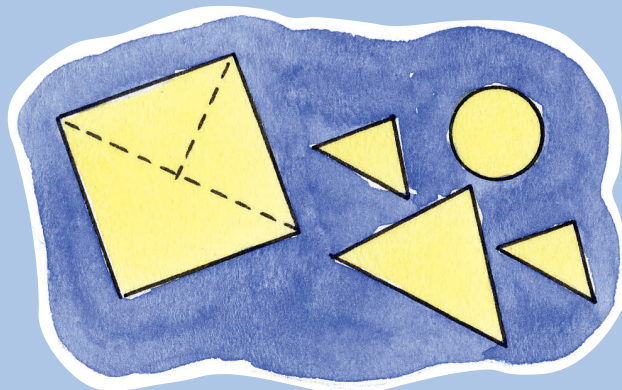
For each ornament, a child will choose 1 larger shape and 1 smaller shape that is a different shape and a different color than the larger one. Have the student glue the smaller shape in the center of the larger shape. Then have the student choose 3 strips in the third color and wrap them around a pencil to curl them, then glue them in the center of the smaller shape. For a hanger, tape a tied loop of string to the back of the ornament. (P.4.1.2)



Angels!

(Art) Point out: **The angels were very busy at Christmas, giving messages about the coming of the Savior, Jesus. Usually angels are invisible, but sometimes they appear in a shape people can see. Very few people have ever seen an angel, but the Bible gives some very good descriptions. They usually look like men, very powerful men. Sometimes they have wings, and sometimes they don't. Their clothing is usually described as shining brightly. They must be awesome, because the people who see them are usually frightened at first. So angels usually start speaking by saying, "Don't be afraid."** Explain that many artists have tried to draw angels, even though they haven't seen one. Show a variety of angel pictures from Christmas cards or from the Internet.

Demonstrate step-by-step how the children can create angels. Give each child a blue sheet of paper for the background and a square of yellow paper (a true square, not just a rectangle). Demonstrate how to draw and then cut on a line from one corner at the top of the yellow square to the opposite corner at the bottom, creating 2 triangles.



They can glue one triangle on the blue background to form the angel's robe, positioning a point at the top and the longest edge on the bottom.

Take the remaining triangle and demonstrate how to draw and cut on a line from the top point of the triangle to the center of the long edge across the bottom, forming 2 smaller triangles. Glue them in place to form the angel's wings (with the point toward the robe and the longest edge facing outward).

Now give each student a yellow paper circle (or a pattern to trace and cut a circle from yellow paper). Glue this in place for the head. For extra fun, allow the students to add silver or gold glitter to their angels. (P.4.1.3)

Evergreen Branch Painting

(Art) Say, **Evergreen wreaths and trees are always green. That reminds us that God always loves us. That's why He sent Jesus to be our Savior!**

Cover a table with a large piece of mural paper or newsprint. Place a tray filled with about 1 inch of green paint in the center of the table. Provide several stems clipped from evergreen trees or shrubs. Encourage the children to dip the stems in the paint and press or sweep them on the paper. If you plan to have the children give Christmas gifts to their parents, you may want to cut the paper into pieces after it is dry to use as wrapping paper. *Option:* After the green paint has dried—perhaps on another day—let the children add red paint to the same paper using fresh evergreen stems. (P.4.1.2)



Finger-paint Angels

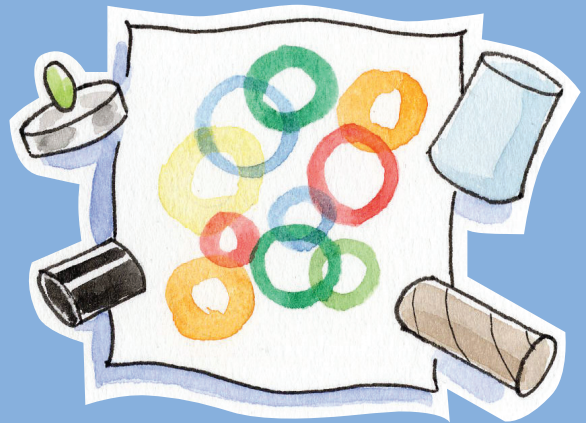
(Art) Place finger paint on finger-paint paper so the children can make angels. Show children how to link their thumbs together and move their other fingers back and forth to make angel wings. They can then use their fingers to make a head and gown. Say, **God sent the angel Gabriel to tell Mary and Joseph that Jesus would be born.** (P.4.1.1)

Advent Wreath

(Art) **The Advent wreath reminds us that Jesus' birthday is coming!** Give each child some Model Magic or homemade modeling clay that will harden. Tint the clay green or plan to have the children paint it green after it hardens. Ask, **How could we make an Advent wreath?** Accept ideas. **Let's roll our dough into a snake and put the ends together to make a circle.** Demonstrate how to do so. Ask, **How many candles will we need? (4)** **What color should they be?** (Answers may be blue, purple, pink, or white depending on the traditions of the Advent wreath in your congregation or classroom) Give students birthday cake candles to press into the dough. (P.4.1.1)

Circles

(Art) When talking about Advent and Christmas wreaths, say, **A wreath is shaped like a circle to remind us that God's love will never end.** Provide each child with a piece of paper with the caption "Just like a circle, God's love for (child's name) will never end." Set out several colors of paint on small trays, along with a variety of circle-shaped items of different sizes, such as empty film canisters, plastic or Styrofoam cups, and biscuit cutters. Encourage the children to dip the items in the paint and stamp them on their papers. Encourage them to use various colors and sizes of shapes and place the "stamps" all over the page, even overlapping the images. (P.4.1.2)



Create

ANTICIPATION

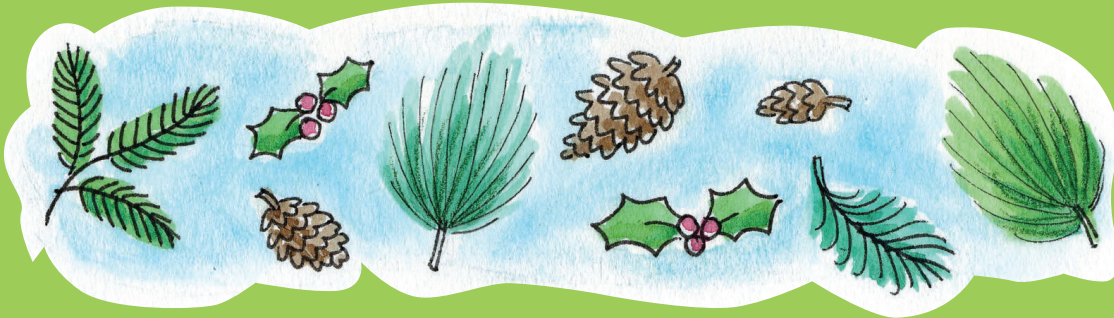
Impressions

(Sensory) Have children make play dough “tablets” by flattening play dough and rolling it smooth with a small rolling pin. Show children how to press evergreen boughs into the play dough and carefully pull them up, leaving an impression. This can also be done with pinecones and holly leaves (but do pre-trim sharp edges and points). Encourage the children to use expressive words to describe the items and the impressions, such as *sticky*, *smelly*, *scratchy*, *bumpy*.

If possible, have several different kinds of evergreen branches to explore. Talk about how they are alike and different from one another. **Remember in the fall, when many of the**

trees lost their leaves? God made some trees and bushes that don’t lose their leaves. They are called “evergreens” because they are ever—always—green.

Add pinecones to your science table and/or sensory table. It is great to have different sizes and varieties. If possible, have the children gather them from school property and notice what types of trees they come from. Encourage students to sort them, arrange them by size, and make patterns. Students could also use a balance to weigh the pinecones. Explain that the seeds for the trees are in the pinecones. **When the pinecones are on the tree, they may close up when it is damp or windy to protect the seeds inside.** (P.1.1.3.1)



Baby Items, Now and Then

(Manipulatives) Set out a variety of modern baby items and clothing to explore. Then set out a baby doll and long strips of cloth the children can use to wrap the doll as swaddling cloths, as baby Jesus was wrapped. Provide straw/hay (check craft stores), which the children can place in a “manger”—a box—for the “baby” to sleep on. Encourage the children to join you in singing the following echo song to the tune of “Are You Sleeping?”

Baby Jesus / Baby Jesus,
Born today / Born today,
Sleeping very softly / Sleeping very softly
On the hay / On the hay.

Mary loved Him / Mary loved Him.
Joseph cared / Joseph cared.
Jesus brings us God’s love / Jesus brings us God’s love,
Love to share / Love to share. (P.3.4.3.2)



Nativity Figures

(Sensory/Manipulatives) At a Water or Rice Center, hide plastic nativity figures and animals. When a child finds a figure, talk about what part it played in the Bible story.

Set out several nativity sets made of different materials and in different styles. Let the children sort the figures, placing all the mangers together, all the Marys, all the sheep, and so forth. Also encourage sorting by color and size. (P.1.5.2)

Light One Candle

(Math) Sing “Light One Candle, Advent’s Here” (LOSP, p. 78) or “Advent Wreath Song” (LOSP, p. 80). Give 4 children pieces of construction paper to match the colors of the Advent wreath in your classroom or church. Label one piece “Hope,” another “Peace,” another “Love,” and another “Joy.” (Or refer to a poster or bulletin board if you made the Advent wreath suggested in the Appendix.) As you sing the song, have the 4 students hold up the appropriate paper for each stanza. At the end of the first stanza, say, **We had 0 candles. Now how many do we have?** (1) At the end of the second stanza, say, **We had 1 candle and we added 1 more. Now how many do we have?** (2) Repeat with each succeeding stanza. (P.1.2.5)

Linking Cube Candles

(Manipulatives) Encourage the students to use linking cubes to make candles for an Advent wreath. **How many cubes will you need?** (4) **What colors will you need?** (Blue or purple and pink) **Make the candles all equal in height. How can you light the candle?** (Put a yellow linking cube on top.) **After a candle burns, it gets smaller. How can you show that?** (Take a linking cube off the bottom. (P.1.2.10)

Explore

ANTICIPATION

Marching Angels

(Social Activity) Say, **God sent one angel to tell Mary and to tell Joseph that the Savior, Jesus, would soon be born. After Jesus was born, many more angels came to praise God and to tell some shepherds about the Savior.** Sing the following song about angels. Have students line up single file and march around in a circle or on a specified line or path as you sing the following song to the tune of “The Ants Go Marching.” (P.3.4.2.1)

The angels go marching 1 by 1. Praise God! Praise God!
The angels go marching 1 by 1. Praise God! Praise God!
The angels go marching 1 by 1,
Announcing that the Savior will come.

Refrain

And they all go marching from heav’n—to earth—to tell—the good news.
March-march-march. March, march-march-march.

(Pair children to march by 2s.)

The angels go marching 2 by 2. Praise God! Praise God!
The angels go marching 2 by 2. Praise God! Praise God!
The angels go marching 2 by 2,
For Jesus is born for me and you.

Refrain

(Put children in groups of 3 to march.)

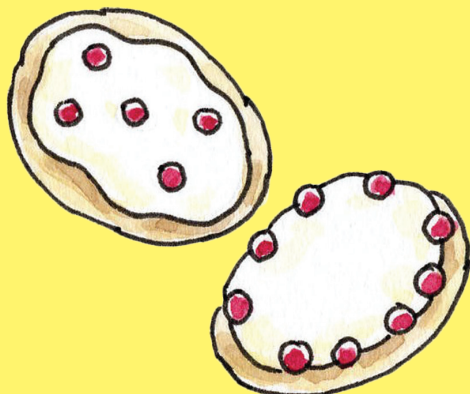
The angels go marching 3 by 3. Praise God! Praise God!
The angels go marching 3 by 3. Praise God! Praise God!
The angels go marching 3 by 3;
The shepherds are very surprised to see.

Refrain

(Put children in groups of 4.)

The angels go marching 4 by 4. Praise God! Praise God!
The angels go marching 4 by 4. Praise God! Praise God!
The angels go marching 4 by 4,
Our newborn Savior to adore.

Refrain



Christmas Cookies

(Snack) Decorating Christmas cookies is a tradition in many homes, but you may have some children who have never had the opportunity. Everyone will enjoy doing it whether they’ve done it before or not. A simple way to do this is to provide circular sugar cookies. Put white or green frosting in a plastic bag; snip off a corner of the bag so frosting can be squeezed out in small amounts. Use the frosting as “glue” to hold small cinnamon dot candies in place. Provide small tongs or tweezers for handling the candies. (P.3.4.3.1)

Relate