



CHRISTMAS JOY

SPECIAL OFFERINGS

CHURCH LEADERS—PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Christmas Joy Offering 2020

Multi-age Children's Lesson Plan (ages 5-10)

Guiding Scripture: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him ‘Emmanuel,’ which means ‘God is with us.’” (Matthew 1:23)

Resources and Supplies:

- Bibles for each participant (or Children's Bible version of Matthew 1:18-23)
- Copies of Children's Activity Sheet #1 for each participant
- Coloring supplies (crayons, colored pencils, markers, etc.)
- Newsprint and markers
- Copies of the four [Minutes for Mission](#) for the Christmas Joy
- Note cards (or copies of Children's Activity Sheet #2), stamps, envelopes, pens

Lesson Objectives:

- Children will hear and share stories about God being with people and communities.
- Children will think about how gifts from individuals and congregations can be the perfect gift to support leaders and leadership development in the church as they read accounts of stories of individuals who have been helped by the Christmas Joy Offering.
- Taking inspiration from an individual who benefited from the Christmas Joy Offering, children will share acts of kindness to others in their community.

Gather (5-10 minutes):

Invite the children (and any adult helpers or teachers present) to share a story using one of the following prompts:

- Christmas Joy: Share a story about something that brings you joy each year at Christmas time.
- The Perfect Gift: Share a story about a gift you gave or received that felt like “the perfect gift.”
- God is with us: Share a story about a time that you felt God's presence with you.

Affirm all of these stories as they are shared. Share with the children that all of these prompts relate to both the Christmas season, and an important way that the congregation gives a gift to the wider Church through the Christmas Joy Offering.

Prayer this opening prayer, or create one of your own:

God who created and lived among us, we are grateful to remember that you are still with us. You are with us when we are gathered together, and you are with us when we are on our own. In our joy at Christmas time, and we ask that you help us not just to be grateful recipients of gifts, but also help us find ways to be thoughtful givers who share gifts of love, caring and joy with others this season and always. Amen.

Enter the Story (10–15 minutes)

Read Matthew 1:18–23 (you can use any Bible version, or a story Bible that includes the naming of Jesus as Emmanuel and the meaning of the name, “God is with us”).

Discuss the following questions:

- When the angel came to Joseph in a dream and told him what was going to happen, how do you think he felt?
- There could be many other names to describe the wonderful things about Jesus — why do you think God chose Emmanuel “God is with us” specifically?

Using Activity Sheet #1, have the children create a comic-strip style illustration of the story.

Connecting Stories (20 minutes)

Thinking about cards, decorations, hymns and Scriptures that surround us in the Advent and Christmas seasons, brainstorm words that come to mind to describe this time of year. Collect the children’s ideas on newsprint or a whiteboard.

**If gathering virtually, brainstorming can be done in the chat feature of your meeting platform. (some words that may come up might include happy, gift, present, hope, faith, joy, holy, wait, prepare, star, angel, etc.)*

Tell the children that today, we will be focusing on two of those words particularly: Joy and Gift.

Tell the children that at Christmas, we don’t only exchange gifts with our loved ones, we also share gifts with people we may not even know. Ask the children if any of them have done specific gifts at Christmas to people that they do not know who are in need *(If your congregation has traditions around an “Angel Tree,” food baskets for families in need or other mission-focused giving opportunities, highlight those here.)*

Tell the children that part of our tradition in the Presbyterian Church is to support ministries of the church through special offerings. We are preparing to receive the Christmas Joy Offering. *(If your congregation is a Four for Four congregation or participates in other offerings, you can remind the children of their participation in One Great Hour of Sharing, the Pentecost Offering and the Peace and Global Witness Offering as well).*

The focus of the Christmas Joy offering is “Leadership: Past, Present and Future.” The funds that are shared by congregations are specifically used to support educational opportunities at Presbyterian-related schools for people of color, and to assist those in ministry or retired from ministry who are facing special challenges.

Form the children into two or four groups (depending on the number of participants) and give each group one story (if using four groups), or give one group stories one and two, and the other group stories three and four (if using two groups):

1. The Ripple Effect (the story of Stillman College student Rose Bryant)
2. Living Together as a Community, Creating Positive Change in the World (the story of Presbyterian Pan Am School and Adelite Hategeka)
3. A Life Changed, but Still Fully Lived (the story of Rev. Dr. Stewart Pattison)
4. A Love Story (the story of Rev. Ken Tracy and his spouse, Carol)

**If gathering virtually and you have the capacity to create rooms, use that feature, if not, you could do this as a large group, perhaps selecting only stories 2 and 3*

Ask each group to spend a few minutes reading and discussing the stories and come back to the larger group ready to share a brief summary. After all the groups have shared, discuss any of the following questions, or some of your own:

- How did God work through the Christmas Joy offering to help the people featured in each story?
- What was the perfect gift that each leader was given?
- How do you think each of these people have been or will be leaders?
- Where was there hope in your story? Where was there joy?

Acts of Kindness and Christmas Joy (10–15 minutes)

In story #2 above, we learned about a young woman named Adelite, who attends the Presbyterian Pan American School. Adelite is a leader in a program at the school called “Random Acts of Kindness” in which students write nice notes to other students, faculty and staff. She says, “I know from personal experience that words are powerful and receiving a simple note can change your day. It shows you that there is someone else who cares for you.” She describes the act of sending these notes as “the perfect opportunity to use words for a good cause rather than harm.”

Invite the children to brainstorm people in your church community who could be sent notes by your class (aim for two to three names for every person gathered). Ideas might include shut-ins, congregational leaders such as elders and deacons, staff members such as sextons, secretaries and pastors, college students entering exam time, and others.

Encourage students to write a note of appreciation, prayer or encouragement, and/or to draw a picture. Include the Scripture reference Matthew 1:23 or the words “God is with us” on each note (or use Children’s Activity Sheet #2). Come up with a plan to mail or hand-deliver each letter.

Closing (5 minutes)

Gather the group together for a short closing ritual. Invite each person to place the note(s) that they made and name the recipient of that note, giving thanks for the ways that they are a part of your community.

**If gathering virtually, ask each person to hold their note in their hands visible to their camera as you pray together.*

Pray this prayer, or one of your own:

God who is always with us, we thank you for the chance to gather as your people and to learn about how our church cares for leaders — past, present and future. We are especially grateful for Rose, Adelite, Stewart, and Ken and Tracy, and the ways that they have been leaders and the offerings that have helped to support them. Help us to be joyful and generous. Amen.

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