Advent 1

Background

Focus: the prophets

Material

The basket for Advent is on one of the center shelves.

It contains:

- a blue felt underlay
- 4 blue votive candles
- 5 advent cards

You’ll also need the model of Bethlehem. And you’ll need the snuffer and matches from the Christ candle basket.

Movements

Words

When the children are settled, go to the shelves and bring the Advent basket to the circle. In separate trips, get Bethlehem and the snuffer and matches. Take your time, treating the materials with care and respect. Be seated and wait until everyone is ready, then begin.

Place the model of Bethlehem in the center of the table. Start to roll out the underlay as you introduce the color of Advent. Only unroll as much underlay as is needed to hold the first Advent card.

Move your hand over the blue.

Watch carefully where I go so you will always know where to find this lesson.

Everything is changed. It is now the time of the color blue.

Blue is the color of getting ready. It is the color of the sky just before dawn. Advent is the season of getting ready.
Blue is also the color of Mary, the mother of Jesus. She is about to have a baby. But this will be a very special baby. This baby will be a king. But the king who is coming is not the kind of king that people thought was coming. This king had no army, no great house, and no riches. This King was a baby who was born in a barn.

The King who was coming is still coming. This is full of mystery. You know, a mystery is hard to enter sometimes. That is why this time of Advent is so important. Sometimes people can walk right through a mystery and not even know it is there. This time of year you will see people hurrying in the malls buying things and doing this and that, but they will miss the Mystery. They don’t know how to get ready or maybe they just forgot.

The Church learned a long time ago that people need a way to get ready to enter or even come close to a mystery like Christmas. The Church set aside four weeks to get ready. This is such a great Mystery that it takes that long to get ready. During this time, we are all on the way to Bethlehem. We are all making the journey. We are all getting ready to enter the Mystery of Christmas, so let’s go with the prophets, the Holy Family, the shepherds, the angels, and the Magi and all the rest to make the journey that was not just back then. It is also now.

Place the first Advent card in its section of the underlay. The first card shows one lit Advent candle and a prophet pointing the way.

Prophets are people who come so close to God, and God comes so close to them, that they know what is most important.
Point to the model of Bethlehem that you put in the middle of the circle when the lesson began.

They pointed the way to Bethlehem. They didn’t know exactly what was going to happen there, but they knew this was the place.

Point to Bethlehem again. Be emphatic, bold, definite.

Stop. Watch. Pay attention. Something incredible is going to happen in Bethlehem.

Place the first of the blue candles between you and the section of the underlay with the card on it. Light the candle.

This is the light of the prophets. Let’s enjoy the light.

Sit for a moment and genuinely enjoy the light of the prophets.

Prophets are the people who know the most important things. They knew which way to go. They are the ones who showed us the way. Now we can go to Bethlehem, too.

Pick up the candle snuffer.

I want to show you something very strange and very important. Look.

I want to show you what happens when the light is changed. Sometimes people don’t pay attention to this. They miss this part.
Snuff the candle. Hold the snuffer over the flame for it to fill with smoke. When you lift it, the smoke will rise and begin to spread out.

Enjoy the moment and then begin to put the material back. There is no wondering at the end of this lesson. It is better to let the presence of the prophets rest in the room.

Carry Bethlehem back to its shelf first. Then put the card, the underlay, and the blue candle back in the Advent basket and return it to the center shelf. Return the matches and snuffer to the Christ candle basket.

When everything is put away, come back to the circle and begin to help the children make their decisions about what work to get out next.

Look. Do you see how the flame is in just one place now? It is right here. When I change the light, it will no longer be in just one place. You can’t see it after it spreads out all over the room, but it is there.

Watch. Do you see it? It is no longer here in this one place. Now it is spreading out, getting thinner and thinner as it fills up the room with the light of the prophets. Anywhere you go in this room you will be close to the prophets.

There may even be one sitting in this circle. Peophets can be boys, and prophets can be girls. They pay attention. They know things.

Now watch carefully where I go with this material, so you will always know where to get it when you want to work with it.
Advent 2

Background

Focus: the Holy Family

Material

The basket for Advent is on one of the center shelves.

It contains:
- a blue felt underlay
- 4 blue votive candles
- 5 advent cards

You’ll also need the model of Bethlehem.
You’ll also need the Holy Family on their tray.
And you’ll need the snuffer and matches from the Christ candle basket.

Movements

When the children are ready, go to the shelves and bring the Advent basket to the circle. In separate trips, get Bethlehem, the Holy Family, and the snuffer and matches. Take your time, treating the materials with care and respect. Be seated and wait until everyone is ready, then begin.

Place Bethlehem in the center of the table. Unroll the underlay just enough for the first Advent card. Place it and tell about the prophets. Do not minimize or rush that first story. End with the following words:

Words

Watch carefully where I go so you will always know where to find this lesson.

Something incredible is going to happen in Bethlehem..
Unroll the underlay to reveal the next section. Place the second Advent card to your left of the first card. The second card shows two candles lit and an image of Bethlehem.

Point to the symbol of Bethlehem on the card.

This is the card of the Holy Family.

Do you see Bethlehem on the card, and the road? The Holy Family is on the way to Bethlehem and we are going with them.

Take Mary from the Holy Family and place her on the card, close to you.

Here is the Mother Mary.

Now take the Joseph figure and place him on the card.

Here is the Father Joseph.

Place the donkey figure on the card between Mary and Joseph.

Here is the donkey.

Mary was about to have a baby. It is very hard to walk when you are about to have a baby. Sometimes she could not take another step. Then she rode on the donkey.

It is also hard to ride on a donkey when you are about to have a baby. When she couldn’t ride another step, she got down and walked. She rode and she walked.

They must have been the last people coming up the road to Bethlehem that night.
Sit back and enjoy how, in this second week of Advent, we are all on the way to the Mystery of Christmas. Then get out two blue candles. Place them between you and the section of the underlay with the card on it. Light the candles.

Here is the light of the prophets. Here is the light of the Mother Mary and the Father Joseph as they make their way to Bethlehem.

Sit for a moment and enjoy the light.

Let’s enjoy the light.

Pick up the candle snuffer. Snuff the first candle. Hold the snuffer over the flame for it to fill with smoke. When you lift it, the smoke will rise and begin to spread out.

Now watch. I am going to change the light. Do you see how the light of the prophets is just in one place? I am going to change the light so that it can be in every place.

Snuff the second candle in the same way.

Watch. Do you see how the light of the mother Mary and the father Joseph is just in this one place? I am going to change the light so that it can be in every place.

Do you see how the light is not gone? It is changed. It is not in one place. Now it is spreading out, getting thinner and thinner, to fill up the whole room. The room is filling up with the light of the prophets and with the light of the mother Mary and the father Joseph. Anywhere you go in this room you can come close to them today.

Enjoy the moment and then begin to put the lesson back. There is no wondering at the end of this lesson.

Now watch carefully where I go with this material, so you will always know where to get it when you want to work with it.

Carry Bethlehem back to its shelf first. Then put the cards, the underlay, and the blue candles back in the Advent basket and return it to the center shelf. Return the Holy Family to their shelf. Return the matches and snuffer to the Christ candle basket.
When everything is put away, come back to the circle and begin to help the children make their decisions about what work to get out next.
Advent 3

Background

Focus: the shepherds

Material

The basket for Advent is on one of the center shelves.

It contains:
- a blue felt underlay
- 4 blue votive candles
- 5 advent cards

You'll also need the model of Bethlehem.
You'll also need the Holy Family on their tray.
And you'll need the snuffer and matches from the Christ candle basket.

 Movements       Words

*When the children are ready, go to the shelves and bring the Advent basket to the circle.* In separate trips, get Bethlehem, the Holy Family, and the snuffer and matches. Take your time, treating the materials with care and respect. Be seated and wait until everyone is ready, then begin.

*Place Bethlehem in the center of the table. Unroll the underlay just enough for the first Advent card. Place it and tell about the prophets. Do not minimize or rush that first story. End with the following words:* Something incredible is going to happen in Bethlehem.

Watch carefully where I go so you will always know where to find this lesson.
Place the second Advent card and tell about the Holy Family. Do not minimize or rush this second story. End with the words:

They must have been the last people coming up the road to Bethlehem that night.

When you have finished, unroll the underlay to reveal the third section. Place the third Advent card to your left of the second card. The third card shows three lit candles and an image of a sheep.

This is the card of the shepherds.

Take the shepherd and sheep from the Holy Family tray and place them at the third Advent card, close to you.

On the third Sunday in Advent we remember the shepherds who were standing in the fields around Bethlehem keeping their sheep. They were trying to stay awake so the wolves could not come and get the sheep. Suddenly there was so much light in the sky that it hurt their eyes.

They were afraid. Their hearts were beating so loudly. When they could hear something besides their own hearts, they thought they heard singing in the sky! That also scared them until they heard the words of the song. The angels were singing, “Don’t be afraid.” Angels often say that, because it is scary to have a messenger of God come to you.

The angels’ singing sounded something like this: “Don’t be afraid. We bring you tidings of great joy. Peace on earth and good will to everyone. A Child is born. Go. Hurry. Run to Bethlehem to see the Child who will change everything.
Place three candles, one by one, between you and the three cards on the underlay. Here is the candle of the prophets. This is the candle of the Holy Family. Here is the candle of the shepherds.

Light the candles. Let's enjoy the light.

Sit back and enjoy the light.

Take out the candle snuffer. Now I am going to change the light. Do you see how the light of the prophets is just in one place? That is very helpful. That helps us see the light. Watch

Snuff out the three candles slowly, as if you are doing it for the first time. Take time for the interpretation of what you are doing. Take time for the words. Now it is changed, and the light that was in just one place is now spreading out. It gets more invisible as it spreads out. Soon it will fill up the whole room.

Here is the light of the Holy Family. It is easy to see when it is all gathered in one place. Now watch; I am going to change the light. Look. It, too, is spreading out. Do you see the figures in the smoke? Watch how it changes. Look. It is spreading out and filling up the whole room. Just because it's hard to see doesn't mean it isn't there.

And here is the light of the shepherds. I am going to change the light. Do you see how it is in one place? Now it can go be in every place. Look. It is filling up the room with the shepherds and mixing with the Holy Family and the prophets. Anywhere you go in the room today they will be there.

Enjoy the moment and then begin to put the lesson back. There is no wondering at the end of this lesson. Now watch carefully where I go with this material, so you will always know where to get it when you want to work with it.
Carry Bethlehem back to its shelf first. Then put the cards, the underlay, and the blue candles back in the Advent basket and return it to the center shelf. Return the Holy Family to their shelf. Return the matches and snuffer to the Christ candle basket.

When everything is put away, come back to the circle and begin to help the children make their decisions about what work to get out next.
Advent 4

Background

Focus: the wise men and Christmas

Material

The basket for Advent is on one of the center shelves.

It contains:
- a blue felt underlay
- 4 blue votive candles
- 5 advent cards

You’ll also need the model of Bethlehem.
You’ll also need the Holy Family on their tray.
And you’ll need the snuffer, matches, and Christ candle from the Christ candle basket.

Movements

When the children are ready, go to the shelves and bring the Advent basket to the circle. In separate trips, get Bethlehem, the Holy Family, and the snuffer and matches. Take your time, treating the materials with care and respect. Be seated and wait until everyone is ready, then begin.

Place Bethlehem in the center of the table. Unroll the underlay just enough for the first Advent card. Place it and tell about the prophets. Do not minimize or rush that first story. End with the following words:

Words

Watch carefully where I go so you will always know where to find this lesson.

Something incredible is going to happen in Bethlehem.
Place the second Advent card and tell about the Holy Family. Do not minimize or rush this second story. End with the words:

They must have been the last people coming up the road to Bethlehem that night.

Place the third Advent card and tell about the shepherds. Do not minimize or rush the story. End with the words:

Run to Bethlehem to see the Child who will change everything.

When you have finished, unroll the underlay to reveal the third section. Place the fourth Advent card to your left of the third card. The fourth card shows four lit candles and an image of the three kings.

This is the card of the wise men.

THE FOUR ADVENT CARDS (STORYTELLER’S PERSPECTIVE)

Take the wise men and place them on the fourth Advent card, close to you.

On the fourth Sunday in Advent we remember the three kings, the Magi, the wise men. They came from far in the East, and they were so wise that people thought they were magic. In fact, we get our word “magic” from the name they were called in their language, “the Magi.”

As you talk about the stars, look up and then at your hands as if they were a book and point into the sky to note the proper places of the stars.

Of all the things that they knew, they knew the most about the stars. They knew where each star was supposed to be at each time of the year, so they could tell people when it was time to plant their crops or take a trip in the ocean in a boat or cross the high mountain passes when the snow wasn’t too deep.

Suddenly they saw the wild star. It was not on any of their star maps. It went where it wanted to go. It did not stay put. They decided to follow the wild star to see where it was going and what it wanted to show them.
Place four candles, one by one, between you and the underlay with the cards on it. Here is the candle of the prophets. This is the candle of the Holy Family. Here is the candle of the shepherds. Here is the candle of the wise men.

Light the candles. Let’s enjoy the light.

Sit back and enjoy the light. Then, instead of snuffing the candles, unroll the fifth and final segment of the underlay, which is white.

Move your hand over the white. This is when the baby is born, the one we have been waiting for.

Lay down the white card for Christmas. Then slowly take the baby in the manger and place him in the middle of the white card. Here is the Christ Child, the mystery of Christmas. This is amazing, but of all the creatures there that night, perhaps the most amazed of all was the old cow.

Sit back for a moment. Look at everything that has been placed before the children. Look around at the children. Touch the materials of the lesson laid before you all. Then say: When the old cow came up to the feed box in the morning to eat some straw, it found a baby lying in the manger. Someone had put a soft cover over the straw. The manger had become a bed. All the old cow could do was look and look at the baby with its big brown eyes.

Wait. Something is missing! I wonder what it could be?

Wait. The children will probably discover quickly that the white card needs a candle, too.

They followed the star all the way to Bethlehem, but they came from so far away that they got there after the baby was born. They are always late, it seems. Every year they are late. They usually don’t arrive until January 6th, but we remember them anyway because, like us, they too are on the way to Bethlehem.
Get the Christ candle from its basket and place it in line with the four blue candles.

Light the Christ candle. Sit back and enjoy the light.

Take out the candle snuffer.

Snuff out all the candles slowly.

Now watch. I am going to change the light.

Now I am going to change the light of the Christ candle. Look. It, too, is spreading out to fill up the room. As it spreads out, it gets thinner and thinner until you can’t see it at all. That doesn’t mean that it’s gone. It only means that you can’t see it. You can still feel the Christmas light. It is filling up the room with the prophets, the Holy Family, the shepherds, and the three kings. Anywhere you go, you can come close to them.

Enjoy the moment and then begin to put the lesson back. There is no wondering at the end of this lesson.

Now watch carefully where I go with this material, so you will always know where to get it when you want to work with it.
Carry Bethlehem back to its shelf first. Then put the cards, the underlay, and the blue candles back in the Advent basket and return it to the center shelf. Return the Holy Family to their shelf. Return the matches and snuffer to the Christ candle basket.

When everything is put away, come back to the circle and begin to help the children make their decisions about what work to get out next.