The Light

Background

Focus: the rhythm of the Godly Play classroom

This lesson sets the tone for the whole year. It describes the flow of a typical Godly Play session and lays out the groundrules.

Material

There are two baskets for The Light on the top shelf of the center bookcase.

The first contains:
- a white felt underlay
- the Christ candle on a glass base
- metal box of matches
- candle snuffer

The other contains:
- several white tealight candles

Movements

Words

Sit in your place at the table and address the group.

The Godly Play room is a very special place. It’s holy ground. When Moses saw God in the burning bush, God told him to take off his shoes because the place where he was standing was holy ground. We take off our shoes to come into the Godly Play room because it’s holy ground. If you still have your shoes on, please go back into the hallway now and take them off. Then come back into our room, holy ground.

When we’re on holy ground, we have all the time we need. So we don’t need to hurry. We can walk more slowly. And we talk more softly, because someone might be talking with God, and we don’t want to disturb them. This is a special place to be with God, to talk with God, to listen to God, and to hear the stories of God. So we need a way to get ready to be in such a special place with God.

I’ll show you how to get ready to be with God.
Try this several times until all the children respond.

Showing the children where to find the words, lead them in singing one of the songs.

Select a returning child to move the hand on the liturgical clock. Help him or her find the correct block for the arrow to demark while explaining.

Get the two baskets of materials for The Light. Spread out the white felt underlay. Place the Christ candle in the center of it. Place the matches in your hand, ready to use.

Once we’ve taken off our shoes and walked slowly to take our seats, we greet one another. I’ll say, “The Lord be with you,” and you will say, “and also with you.”

Let’s practice.

    The Lord be with you.
    And also with you.

We’ll use this greeting to begin each Godly Play session.

The next thing we do on holy ground is we talk to God. There are lots of different ways to talk to God. One way is to sing. We can sing our thanks to God.

Here on our Godly Play room walls we have the words to lots of songs we can sing. Let’s sing one now.

Next we mark God’s time. We select someone to move the hands forward on our wall clock that marks God’s time.

Today is the sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost. So our clock will point to the sixteenth green block after this burning hot red block for Pentecost.

The next thing we do on the holy ground of our Godly Play room is we listen to God. We can make our bodies very quiet. This is how. Close your eyes and listen to the quietness. Now see if you can make your feet get very still. See if you can make your legs get very still. Feel your body getting very still. Now your arms are getting very still. Now your head is very still. Now your breathing is very still. You can’t hear it at all. Breathe in… and out… in… and out. Now we are ready to listen to God, to hear one of God’s stories. This is a story about the light.

Watch. Watch where I go to get this story.

Once there was someone who said such amazing things and did such wonderful things that people began to follow him. But they didn’t know who he was. So one day they simply had to ask him.
Strike the match on the word “Light” and light the Christ candle.

Sit peacefully and enjoy the light.

And he said, “I am the Light.”

Let’s enjoy the Light.

People who love the Light can become one with the Light. This is how your light became one with the Light. Watch.

Hold up one of the tealight candles and look at it. Then look at the child opposite you and say:

Light the child’s candle from the Christ candle and place it on the white underlay in front of the child

Continue lighting teals for each child. Hold each unlit candle and, looking at a child, say:

[Name], this is your light.

Then light the tealight and place it on the white underlay in front of that child.

When several candles are lit, say:

Look how the light is growing. It all came from the Light here.

Point to the teals.

Look, the light is in so many places at once.

After lighting more candles, say:

Many have come to the Light to receive their light. But the Light is not smaller. It is still the same. I wonder how so much light could be given away and the Light still be the same?

When all the children have a candle lighted for them, light one for yourself and say:

There was even a day when I received my light and became one with the Light.

Let’s enjoy the Light.

Sit silently and enjoy the light.
Point to the flame in your candle.

Slowly lower the candle snuffer over your candle then raise it. Watch the smoke curl up into the air and fade into the whole room.

Go around the circle and change the light of each child. When all the tealights are changed, change the Christ candle as you say:

Sit silently for a moment and then slowly put all the materials back on the shelf.

There comes a time when the Light is changed so it's not just in one place any more. It can be in many places at once. Watch. You see the light is just in one place now.

I'm going to change the light so it is not just in one place any more. It can be in many places all at once. Watch.

Now I will change each of your lights so they can be in more than one place.

Even the Light was changed. The Light that was just in one place at one time is in all places at all times. So the Light can be everywhere in this room and even in other places.

Now it's time to talk to God about the story you just heard. You can talk to God by making something that shows how this story feels to you. You may use any of the supplies on this shelf here. Only take what you'll use, though, and remember that you'll be responsible for putting away whatever you take out. Right now I'll dismiss you one at a time to get your supplies. While you're working, remember to keep that deep quiet in you so everyone can have the quiet they need to talk to God.

One at a time, ask each child if he or she knows what supplies she'd like to use. Dismiss each child one at a time to begin work. While the first child gets her materials, ask the next child what he'd like to do. Continue one at a time around the circle. Don't worry if this takes a long time. If they don't learn to do this now, you'll have confusion the rest of the year.

When artwork time is over, blink the lights to signal time to put away supplies. Make sure each child puts away everything he

Now it's time to put your work away. You don't need to hurry. Be sure to put all your supplies back where you found them so they'll be here for next week.
or she got out.

When all the children have put away their supplies and returned to the circle, get the basket containing the Christ candle. Spread the appropriate seasonal underlay on the table. Place the Christ candle on it.

As you light the Christ candle, say:

- Give each child a chance to share. Help them keep their answers focused on the story they heard. As each one finishes, they may either put their work on the bulletin board or keep it to take it home.
- Get a Bible from the center bookshelf.
- Read John 8:12 to the children, showing them how to find it again in the Bible.

We light the candle to remind us that Christ is with us.

The next thing we do on holy ground is we share what God said to us during the story. You may want to show us your artwork and tell us about it. Or you may want to share something you thought when you heard the story of The Light.

On holy ground we also listen to God by reading the Bible. The story we heard today is in the Bible.

Now it's time to give thanks to God. You can say something you are thankful for or something about the story or your work today.

I am going to change the Light now. Look, the light is all in one place. I'm going to change the Light so it is not just in one place any more. It can be in many places at once. Watch.

Snuff the candle, taking time to watch the smoke dissipate.

Return the snuffer, candle, and underlay to their basket. Place the basket and the Bible back on the center bookshelf.

Pass out the napkins and demonstrate unfolding it onto the table in front of you.

It is time to get ready for our feast. Here is your napkin. Unfold it in front of you like this.
Pass the food around the table. Today our feast is [describe]. We’ll pass the basket around, and you may take one of each. But wait to eat until everyone is served. Watch.

Pass the drinks as well. You may have one drink. But wait for everyone to be served.

When everyone is served, say: Thank you, God, for this joyful feast. Let us enjoy the feast together.

Eat the feast.

When all are finished, demonstrate how to clean up by folding together the corners of your napkin and placing it in your empty cup. Place both in the trash can which the doorkeeper passes around. Now let’s put away our napkins.

We’ll put everything into the trash can as it comes around the circle.

The last thing we do on holy ground is sing the benediction. The benediction asks God to bless us as we leave this place. Let’s sing it together.

Sing the Benediction.

When the song is over, I’ll say “Thanks be to God” and you say, “Alleluia, alleluia.” Let’s try it.

Thanks be to God.

Alleluia. Alleluia.