

## Third Sunday of Advent – year A

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### Preparation

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Read [Isaiah 35:1-10](#) and [Matthew 11:2-11](#). Pay attention to the words or phrases that jump at you. Read over the lesson so that you are familiar with what is intended to happen. Gather the materials that you will need for each section of the lesson. For deeper thinking or for ways to extend the lesson take a look at the following websites:

[http://www.episcopalchurch.org/109452\\_4242\\_ENG\\_HTM.htm](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/109452_4242_ENG_HTM.htm)

<http://www.textweek.com/yeara/adventa3.htm>

<http://www.efree.mb.ca/lectionarypuzzles/in-awag.htm#ad3> – word puzzles

<http://www.msscrafter.com/newtestament/johnbaptist.htm>

[http://www.sermons4kids.com/star\\_light\\_star\\_bright.htm](http://www.sermons4kids.com/star_light_star_bright.htm)

<http://www.ebibleteacher.com/children/lessons/john.htm>

<http://www.sundayschoollessons.com/adv2art.htm>

<http://www.sundayschoollessons.com/advm3les.htm>

<http://www.word-sunday.com/Files/a/3Advent-a/A-3Advent-a.html>

### Gathering

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#### Materials needed

- Small table or end of one table
- Advent Wreath
- Candle lighter
- Bible and bookmark
- Blue or purple cloth
- Newsprint and markers
- A Christmas card in an envelope

Print up the prayer on the newsprint so that the readers can say the prayer with you. Gather around the small table or at the end of one table. With the children place the blue/purple cloth on the table. Have them help you place the Advent wreath and the Bible on the cloth. Light the first two purple candles and the pink candle. Pray the following prayer together:

**Loving God of new beginnings, be with us today.**

**Loving Jesus of new light, be with us today.**

**Loving Spirit of new hope, be with us today. Amen.**

Blow out the candles. Show the children the envelope. Ask them if they know what is inside it. *Wait for their responses.* Bring out the Christmas card from the envelope. Ask the children what the message of the card is. *That Christmas is coming, that Jesus is going to be born soon are couple of possible answers.* Tell the children, we get lots of messages everyday – from the TV, from our parents, from the internet, from our friends. The hard work is deciding which messages are important and which aren't. Jesus reminds in today's story what messages we need to be listening to.

## Story Time

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### Materials

- picture of a desert that looks dead (consult [this link](#))
- picture of a blooming desert (consult [this link](#))

### Instructions

- Print up a picture of desert and a blooming desert and put them nearby.
- Teach the children the following chant to be used throughout the story:

**Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.**

John the Baptist knew it was almost time for his work on earth to be done. He was sitting in the prison of the king. John the Baptist knew that the king was very angry with him for what he had said about God's kingdom coming into the world. John remembered what the prophet Isaiah said about the coming of God's kingdom. *Pass around the picture of the desert as you start.* This is what he remembered:

The desert shall be glad. It will start blooming. There will be many flowers. It will show off the glory of God. Remind those who are feeling weak and those who are afraid, "Be strong! Do not be afraid! God will come and save you."

The eyes of the blind shall be opened, those who are sick will be healed. Waters shall break out over the desert. It will become a place of joy. God will be with all those along the way and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.

*Pass around the picture of the desert blooming.* John thought about all he had heard about Jesus. He was able to get a message to a couple of his friends. He asked them to go and see Jesus and ask him this question: "Are you the one God is sending to save us?"

**Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.**

Jesus answered them this way: "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard. The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the sick are healed, the dead are raised and the poor have the good news of God's kingdom shared with them. Blessed are those who love God with me."

**Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.**

As John the Baptist's friends went their way, Jesus began to tell the people around him about John. Jesus said to the people, "What did you go out to the desert to see? Someone with soft clothes on? You will only find those kind of people living in big houses! What did you go out to the desert to see? A prophet? Yes that is who you went out to see!"

**Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.**

Jesus went on to say, "John is the one about whom the prophets wrote that there will be a messenger sent ahead. Someone who will prepare the way. Among all those born John the Baptist is the greatest. Remember this that even the smallest one in the kingdom of God is greater than him."

**Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.**

## Response

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### Project Idea 1: Advent Message Card

*Sharing the message of the prophets is an important part of Advent. This card will give the children a special way to do that.*

#### Materials needed

- bell image at end of lesson
- cinnamon sticks
- sandpaper
- construction paper
- glue
- scissors
- markers
- seasonal stickers (stars, etc. if you have them)

#### Instructions

Copy the bell image and cut it out. Trace it onto the sandpaper. For younger children cut one out for each child, older children can do this themselves. Give each child a piece of construction paper and have them fold it in half to make a card. Explain to the children that bells have long been used to share messages of danger and of joy and the bell they are going to be sharing will be a message of joy. Give each child a sandpaper bell. Have the children glue the sandpaper bell to the front of the card. Have them print on the front **'Advent Blessings'** and on the inside **'Everlasting Joy Comes To Us From God'**. Let them decorate their cards with the seasonal stickers (if you are using them) or by drawing other bells and stars onto the card themselves. When they are ready give the children a cinnamon stick and have them rub the stick over the sandpaper – this will release the smell of cinnamon and stick it to the card. Have them think about who they want to give their card to – someone who needs to know about the message of Jesus coming to the world. Encourage the children to sign their cards before they give them away.

### Project Idea 2: Outreach Gifts

*Christians all around the world pay attention to those in need all year long. This idea will connect the gift of Jesus with the gifts that we also need to share.*

#### Materials needed

- large reusable bags
- sharpie markers
- note from the end of the lesson
- Christmas stickers
- some personal item that you have easy access to – check the list in the note – enough for each child to have one to put in their bags

#### Instructions

Make enough copies of the note so that each child has one. Bring one of the personal items so that each child will have one to put in their bags. Give each child a bag and read the note to them. Explain that they are going to make a gift for someone who has little or nothing this year for Christmas. Encourage them to write a Christmas message onto the outside of the bag and then decorate it with the stickers. Give them each a copy of the note and the personal item in their bags. Encourage the children to work with their families to fill up their bags and bring them

back next Sunday. A reminder phone call towards the end of the week might be a good way to follow up on this response.

### **Project Idea 3: Ornament – Messenger Bell**

*Bells have been used to pass out messages for centuries. The children can remember the message of joy shared in today's story when they look at their bells.*

#### **Materials needed**

- bottom half of egg cartons
- glue
- tinfoil
- glitter
- pipe cleaners
- small jingle bells (if you have them)
- yarn or ribbon
- scissors

#### **Instructions**

Cut the egg cartons into individual cups. Make sure you have at least three for each child. Cut the tinfoil into 15 cm diameter circles – enough to cover each egg cup. Explain to the children that bells have long been used to share messages of danger and of joy and that the bells they are going to make will be messengers of God's joy – Jesus coming into the world. Give each child the egg cups and the tinfoil. Have the children put an egg cup upside down in the centre of one of the tinfoil circles. Have them gently fold the tinfoil around the cup, including the inside of the cup. Pierce each cup from the top to make a hole through the tinfoil and egg cup with the scissors. Have the children put a pipe cleaner through the hole and add a jingle bell if using and make a knot so that it doesn't slip off. If not using jingle bell make a knot in the pipe cleaner so that it doesn't slip off. Do the same with the other two egg cups – turning them into bells. When the children have three made lightly spread glue over the outside of the bells and shake glitter on the bells. Tie the three bells together with a piece of yarn or ribbon – making a loop so that it can be hung up somewhere. Encourage the children to hang up their bells to remind themselves to be messengers of the coming of Jesus.

### **Closing**

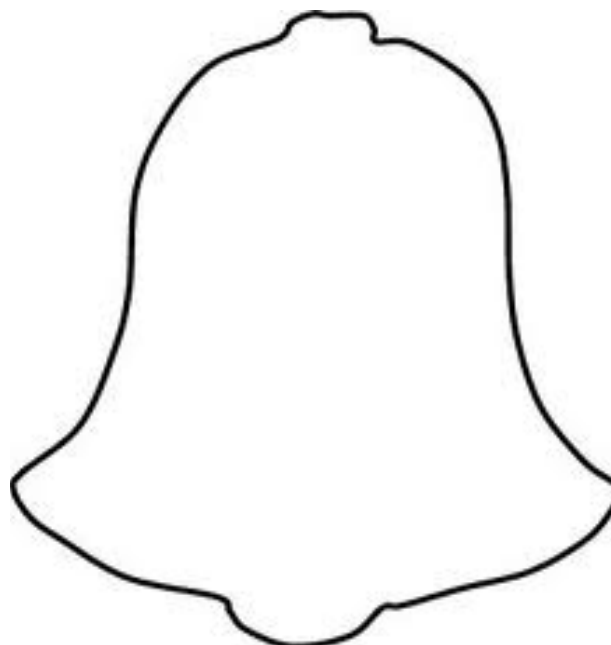
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Gather with the children around the worship table again. Relight the candle. Say the prayer line by line and encourage the children to repeat it after you:

**O God renew our hearts with love  
As we journey to Bethlehem  
O Jesus guide us in our dreams of hope  
As we journey to Bethlehem  
O Spirit give us visions of joy  
As we journey to Bethlehem. Amen.**

## Bell Image

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## Outreach Letter

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Dear Families,

Our Sunday School is participating in an outreach project. We are collecting personal items for the homeless in our community. Here is a list of things that you could collect and put into the plastic bag and then bring back next Sunday to be distributed to those most in need:

- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Floss
- Comb
- Soap
- Facecloth
- Hard candies
- Deodorant
- Warm socks
- Mittens
- Scarf
- Christmas Card

Thank you for being generous and sharing what God has given you with those who have less and are in need. To quote the prophet Isaiah: *Everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.* (Isaiah 35:10b)

Blessings to you through the rest of Advent.