

United Church of Christ Connections in *Gather 'Round* Winter Quarter 2008-2009

For all ages

Those who desire an inclusive language version of Psalms used during this quarter may wish to use the Psalter in *The New Century Hymnal*, pages 621–731.

Preschool

Session 1

Gather 'round

5. Sing a Christmas or Advent song. One choice is the chorus to “O Come, All You Faithful” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 135). Another choice is verse five of “Yonder Come Day,” on the Gather 'Round CD (track 22). This verse starts: “Yonder come day, Christ is a-comin.” The words are on page 89 in this guide. Walk to the area where you tell the Bible story as you sing the song.

Connect to the story

4. Sing “Our Friend Immanuel” to the tune of “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” This song is on page 3 of My Bible Storybook. The music may be found in *The New Century Hymnal*, number 133. Point out the manger scene on the worship table. Explain that Jesus is the special Immanuel of this song. Say, “We often sing songs about Immanuel when we are waiting for Christmas.”

Session 2

Gather 'round

5. Sing “Our Friend Immanuel” to the tune of “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” The words are on page 3 of My Bible Storybook. The music may be found in *The New Century Hymnal*, number 133. Walk to the area where you tell the Bible story as you sing the song.

Ending and sending

5. Say, “We’re going to sing ‘Joy to the World.’ Don’t worry if you don’t know all the words, just sing or hum along. As we sing, you can imagine how God’s love is for everyone in the whole world.” Sing the first verse of “Joy to the World” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 132).

Session 3

Gather 'round

2. Sing a Christmas or Advent song, such as the chorus to “O Come, All You Faithful” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 135).

Ending and sending

1. After cleaning up, gather near the worship table for your ending activities. Sing “Our Friend Immanuel” to the tune of “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” The words are on page 3 of My Bible Storybook. The music may be found in *The New Century Hymnal*, number 133.

Session 4

Gather 'round

2. Sing a Christmas song, such as the refrain of “O Come, All You Faithful,” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 135).

Connect to the story

1. Stand up to sing “Silent Night, Holy Night.” Words and motions for this song are on page 11 of My Bible Storybook. The words with music may be found in *The New Century Hymnal*, number 134. Sing the song a second time substituting the German words stille Nacht (SHTEE-leh nahkt), heilige Nacht (HI-lee-geh nahkt) for “silent night, holy night.” Tell children this is a different language, the German language. The song was first sung in the German language. Sing the song a third time without the motions. Gently pass the doll used in the story from person to person as you sing.

Ending and sending

2. Pass around a basket of rhythm instruments. Sing the first verse of “Joy to the World” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 132). Encourage everyone to move joyfully and use the instruments as you sing.

Middler

Session 4

Connect to the story

4. The angels sang in today’s story. Sing “Silent Night, Holy Night” using the words on page 16 of Grow. The words with music may be found in *The New Century Hymnal*, number 134. Or use hymnals to sing another Christmas carol.

Ending and sending

3. Sing one verse of “Joy to the World” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 132) or some other Christmas carol. Encourage the children to sing out with joy.

Session 10

Responding

Let it shine.

Children will make lanterns to remind them of Jesus’ words about setting our lamps on a lampstand and not hiding them. When we share the good news, it spreads to places we don’t expect, just as the light from a lantern shines into all corners of a room. Cut the bottom off of 2-liter soda bottles. (Recycle the tops.) Children will follow the directions on page 36 in Grow to make their lanterns. Give each child a tea light to place in his or her lantern. After lighting the candles, they may sing or chant the words to “This Little Light of Mine,” found on page 37 in Grow. The words with music may be found in *The New Century Hymnal*, number 524 or 525.

Junior Youth

Session 3

Ending and sending

1. Join together after completing the Responding options. There are many songs with the words to Mary’s song. Sing “My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 106) or another version of the Magnificat.

Session 6

Ending and sending

2. Sing a song of calling, such as “Tú Has Venido a la Orilla” (You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 173) or “Hush, Hush” on the Gather ’Round CD (track 4).

Session 10

Connect to the story

4. Ask youth to think about how they can have their words and actions match up. Hum the tune to “This Little Light of Mine” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 524 or 525) or play a recording of this song.

Youth

Session 1

Ending and sending

4. As your closing prayer, sing an Advent hymn such as “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 116). Purple represents royalty and also penitence. Advent wreaths typically have three purple candles and one pink candle for the third Sunday in Advent.

Session 2

Ending and sending

3. Sing an Advent hymn such as “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 116).

Session 3

Ending and sending

2. Sing “Bwana Awabariki” (May God Grant You a Blessing), track 8 on the *Gather 'Round* CD. An alternative is “Come, O Long-Expected Jesus” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 122).

Session 4

Ending and sending

2. Sing a song that celebrates Jesus’ birth, such as “Angels We Have Heard on High” or “Go, Tell It on the Mountain” (*The New Century Hymnal*, numbers 125 and 154).

Session 6

Connect to the story

4. Sing “Tú Has Venido a la Orilla” (You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 173) or another song that speaks of God’s call.

Session 8

Ending and sending

2. Invite the youth to pray short prayers for one another between each verse of a song. Begin by leading youth in the first verse of a prayerful song such as “Alleluia” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 765). You will lead by praying after the first time through. Then pause to allow youth to pray silently or aloud for one another. Continue in this manner until all who wish to have offered a prayer.

Parent/Caregiver

Session 1

Responding

Singing our invitation. Today is the first Sunday of Advent. Many Advent hymns express the longing the Hebrew people felt for the coming of the Messiah. Sing some hymns together that express this longing and also declare the good news that God indeed is among us. Suggested hymns from *The New Century*

Hymnal are: “Come, O Long-Expected Jesus,” number 122, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” number 116, “Toda la Tierra (All Earth is Waiting),” number 121. Pause for a few moments of silence after each hymn. Allow yourselves to focus on the message that God is present among you.

Session 2

Gather 'round

5. Sing a song about John the Baptist or Advent, such as “The Baptist Shouts on Jordan’s Shore” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 115).

Session 3

Gather 'round

1. Sing an Advent song about the angel’s visit to Mary. One possibility is “Mary, Woman of the Promise” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 123).

Ending and sending

4. Sing one of the many songs based on the Magnificat (Luke 1:47–55). One possibility is “My Heart Sings Out with Joyful Praise” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 106).

Session 4

Gather 'round

2. The focus for this session is on rejoicing in Jesus’ birth. The shepherds were among the first people to learn of and find joy in this event. Sing the first two verses of “The First Nowell” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 139). Or sing another song about Jesus’ birth.

Responding

Noel. Noel is the French word for Christmas. It also means “Christmas carol.” Read or sing “The First Nowell” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 139). (“Nowell” is the Anglicanized version of “Noel.”) Prepare for a special family carol celebration by cutting out the letters N-O-E-L from red felt. Fasten magnetic stripping behind each letter. Place your letters on any metal surface at home and have fun singing and acting out this joyful Christmas song.

Ending and sending

3. Sing “Joy to the Word!” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 132) or another joyful Christmas carol.

Session 5

Gather 'round

2. Sing “Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 286) or another song about the Spirit’s activity.

Session 6

Gather 'round

3. Sing “You Walk along Our Shoreline” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 504) or another song about following Jesus.

Ending and sending

4. Sing “You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore” (Tú has venido a la orilla) (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 173) or another song about following Jesus.

Session 7

Gather 'round

3. Sing a song about health or healing, such as “There Is a Balm in Gilead” (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 553).

Session 8

Responding

Story in song. Turn today's story into a song for young children. Set it to the tune of a familiar song. The lines do not have to rhyme. Since young children like repetition, it may help to use a song that has a repeated line. For example, sing the story to the tune of "This Little Light of Mine" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 524 or 525) and substitute the words, "Take your mat and walk" for the repeated lines, "This little light of mine." Sing your song after completing it. Add motions and rhythm instruments.

Session 10

Responding

This little light. Sing "This Little Light of Mine" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 524 or 525) or another simple song that speaks of sharing the good news of God's love. After singing it once, share thoughts about growing in God's way of love. Share examples of God's transforming power or express a hope for God's justice in particular situations. Each person who talks can hold a candle while speaking. After several people have shared, sing the song again, adding phrases that relate to what people have just talked about. For example, "At my son's soccer game, I'm goin'-a let it shine."

Session 11

Ending and sending

2. Sing "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 472) or another song that speaks of Jesus' healing presence and touch.

Session 12

Gather 'round

2. Sing the song, "My Shepherd Is the Living God" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 247) or another song about God's provision.

Ending and sending

4. Close by singing verses 1 and 2 of "Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 252) or another song that speaks of Jesus as our provider.

Session 13

Responding

Peace be with you. Choose a short song or chorus to sing together that speaks of God's peace and presence. One suggestion is the first verse of "I've Got Peace Like a River" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 478). Take turns sharing a situation that affects your family for which you would like to experience more of God's peace. After each person has shared, sing the song together. Be sure to sing the song once for each person who is in the group, even if someone does not wish to share a request. If the group is very large, you could break into smaller groups to give time for each person to share.

Ending and sending

4. Turn to "God Be with You" (*The New Century Hymnal*, number 81) and sing together. Or sing another song of blessing. Link arms with the person beside you as you sing this closing song.