

Line 3 – In loud voices, they will all say the last line, *Light is everywhere*. When the activity is over, collect the circle and the streamers. Say: “Let us go to the story corner for a very special story.” 10 min.

11. Story Time: “Mary and Joseph”

After discussing the story questions, conclude: “Yes, and now that an angel has told Joseph Jesus would save the world, he and Mary waited for this great blessing.”

12. Dismissal. 10 min.

Lesson 2: Come to My Garden

Key Concepts

1. Flowers, plants and trees are God’s gifts to us.
2. We are the caretakers of the earth.

Objectives

During this session, students will

1. Examine the display table.
2. Listen to a story about a grandmother’s special meal.
3. Explain why the meal was so special.
4. Brainstorm ways to care for the earth.
5. Draw a picture of a garden.
6. Describe, with help, the *Antasdan* service.
7. Participate in an *Antasdan* service.

Materials Needed

1. On the display table, place the ceremonial cross (*Background for Teacher*); a bouquet of flowers; a rose; flower and/or vegetable seeds; magnifying glass; fresh basil (enough to give each child a leaf, a sprig or two); a few string beans.
2. For each child: white or manila construction paper (9"x12"), crayons, four different colored tissue paper circles 2"-3" in diameter to make flowers.
3. A Children’s Bible.

Background for Teacher

The Blessing of the Field (*Antasdan*)

In earlier times, this service was performed outdoors. Today it is performed mostly in churches. As a symbol for the four directions of the world, the east, west, north and south corners of the church are blessed by the priest who prays for abundance of crops and protection against natural disasters. Prayers are also requested for churches, cities, villages, the Catholicos, Armenia, the priests and for the people.

Prepare a simple processional cross to use during the *Antasdan* service which you will conduct outdoors (if the weather permits) or indoors. You can cut out an Armenian cross (at least 8" high). Tape it to a stick or ruler and tie some basil around the base of the cross. (Basil is a pungent, sweet-smelling herb, and is a symbol of royalty. Its name comes from the ancient Greek word *basilikos* meaning “royal.” You can wrap the cross and the stick in foil.

Procedure

1. Welcome children warmly and direct them to the display table. Encourage them to handle and look at the objects, utilizing the magnifying glass. Point out things for them to notice, e.g. the colors of the flowers, the beauty of the rose, the sizes of the flower seeds.
Ask: “Does anyone have anything to say about the objects on the display table today? What do you think today’s lesson will be about?”
2. Stand to say the opening prayer together. Sing the hymn *Aravod Looso* introduced last Sunday. 10 min.
3. Move to the story corner. Before reading the story, say: “Look at the picture of a grandmother in her garden. Today’s story is about her. How many of you have grandmothers who cook special meals for you?” Read the story and review it with the help of the children. Discuss the question at the end of the story. (Possible answers: the beans were from the grandmother’s garden; the friends were happy to be together; the stew was made with love.) 5 min.
4. Direct the children to the table. Say: “There are other gardens in your lesson. Can you find them?” Read *God’s Word to Us* and *We Learn About God* and brainstorm the question at the end of the paragraph. Help the children give examples like *do not litter, plant seeds, recycle, etc.*
5. Ask a child to distribute construction paper. “Today we are going to draw a beautiful flower garden. What kinds of things can you put in your picture?” They may suggest things like flowers, trees, birds, insects, sun. Say: “Before we begin to draw the flowers, we need to draw the grass and the sky. Begin to draw the grass on your paper. When you finish, draw the sky.” (It is always helpful if you demonstrate before you ask the children to draw.) Continue the rest of this activity after snack. Collect the papers, writing the child’s name on the back as you do, and get the table ready. 5 min.
6. Snack. Teach the second line of the *Prayer Before Meals* in English.
“Let us in peace eat this meal, which the Lord has prepared for us.” (Each week, you recite the prayer in Armenian, encouraging any of the children who wish to join you.) 10 min.
7. Return the papers to the children. Demonstrate how to make the flowers. Say: “We are going to finish our gardens. Take a tissue paper circle. Put a dot of glue on your paper and place only the center of the circle on it. Turn up the ends of the circle. Make three more of these.”
8. Ask: “What else can we add to our pictures?” Help the children think about adding the sun, some birds and butterflies to their pictures. (If there is time, the children can make additional flowers.) Share the pictures or display them on a wall in the classroom with the Bible quote (Genesis 1:11), “Let the earth grow plants and flowers, grass and trees.” 10 min.
9. Read *Our Armenian Way* and *We Celebrate*. If weather permits, take the children outside to celebrate a brief worship based on the *Antasdan*. (In this case, you might want to have story time first.) Say: “I am going to take you outside for a prayer activity that will remind us of the *Antasdan* service of the Armenian Church. Do you remember what the priest blesses during this service? (He blesses the four corners of the world.) For whom does the priest pray? (He prays for the people of the world.)” Remember to take the cross with you. Stand in a group with your students and face in one direction. One student should hold the cross. Ask everyone to say: “Bless the world and protect all who live in it. + In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.” If there is inclement weather, do the same thing indoors.
Say: “Now turn to your right to face in another direction.” Give the cross to another student to hold and repeat the blessing above. Do this until you have all returned to the place from which you started. 10 min.

10. Story Time: “Jesus is Born”

After discussing the story question, conclude: “At the end of our story an angel guided the holy family to Egypt. May an angel guide us all back to our homes today.”

11. Dismiss the class. Give each child a leaf of basil to take home, reminding them of the significance of the basil. 10 min.

Lesson 3: Bless This Table

Key Concepts

1. Jesus is generous, loving and kind.
2. We should be thankful to God for his gifts.

Objectives

During this session, students will

1. Examine the display table.
2. Participate in a discussion of God’s special gifts.
3. Recall the story of the miracle of the loaves and the fish.
4. Hear about the “Blessing of the Grapes” service.
5. Design a place mat with illustrations of grapes, bread and fish.

Materials Needed

1. On the display table, place cut-outs (or toy replicas) of two loaves of bread and five fish; bunch of grapes.
2. Colored construction paper (yellow, white), 11"x18"; scissors; crayons; *Prayer Before Meals* (see Appendix) to glue in the center of the mat; optional: stickers of fish, grapes and bread (fish can readily be found; the other two perhaps online or through catalogues).
3. A Children’s Bible.

Procedure

1. Welcome children warmly and direct them to the display table. Encourage them to look carefully at the objects.
2. Stand to say the opening prayer together. 5 min.
3. Move to the story corner. Say: “Look at the pictures of birthday presents and a cake.” Read *Our Life Together*. With the children, discuss the gifts that God has given to them (family, friends, food, pets). Also talk about birthdays, how they are celebrated and who attends. (You may want to have a list of the children’s birthdays posted somewhere in the classroom.) 10 min.
4. Remain in the story corner for the story of the miracle of the loaves and fish. Say: “Look at the picture of Jesus with a lot of people.” Use the paper cutouts or replicas of the bread and fish as you read the story (*God’s Word To Us*). 5 min.
5. Say: “Now look at the picture of a child lighting a candle.” Read *We Learn About God*. Gifts which may be named are: new baby, pets, food, beautiful weather, rain, visits from grandparents or other family members, a family birthday celebration or gathering. Accept what the child offers. In response to the question about saying thank you, remind the children, they can say a prayer of thanks or light a candle in church. 5 min.