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Rhythms of Grace • January Year 1

Theme: Jesus was baptized into God’s Family.
We are baptized into God’s family.

Scripture: The story of Jesus’ baptism
(Matthew 3:13-17)

Date: _____

Location: _____

Volunteer Roles:

Facilitator _____

Storyteller _____

Celebrant _____

Center Leader _____

Guide _____

Items Needed for this Session

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gathering | <input type="checkbox"/> assortment of small dolls | <input type="checkbox"/> church model made of foam core (Instructions in Appendix I, p. 101) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Storytelling | <input type="checkbox"/> Bible, Jesus doll <input type="checkbox"/> Storytelling Script <input type="checkbox"/> large, long piece of blue cloth | <input type="checkbox"/> poster with these words “This is _____, a child of God, and in (him/her) I am well pleased.” <input type="checkbox"/> dove shape made of poster board |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exploring | <p>Baptismal Fonts</p> <input type="checkbox"/> water bowl, non-breakable, water <input type="checkbox"/> a variety of small dolls <input type="checkbox"/> jar of lip balm <input type="checkbox"/> white towels | <p>Doves</p> <input type="checkbox"/> dove shapes made of poster board <input type="checkbox"/> white glue or glue stick <input type="checkbox"/> feathers <input type="checkbox"/> crayons, markers or colored pencils |
| | <p>Water Table: Shells</p> <input type="checkbox"/> sea shells, assorted sizes and shapes <input type="checkbox"/> water table or large plastic bin, water <input type="checkbox"/> towels | <p>Reenact Jesus’ Baptism</p> <input type="checkbox"/> dove shape made of poster board <input type="checkbox"/> large, long piece of blue cloth <input type="checkbox"/> Jesus doll |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regathering | <input type="checkbox"/> people shapes made from poster board <input type="checkbox"/> mural-size kraft paper church outline | <input type="checkbox"/> elements for the Eucharistic table (see Eucharist) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eucharist | <input type="checkbox"/> altar table and elements (pita bread, juice, chalice, paten, purificator, corporal, altar cloth) <input type="checkbox"/> Bible and Jesus doll | <input type="checkbox"/> Eucharistic Prayer (see p. 100) <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Gather our Hearts</i> song lyrics (see p. 99) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dismissal | <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Jesus Loves Me</i> song lyrics (see p. 99) | |

Leaders and Aides Pre-service: Set up space. Finalize details. Pray.

Leaders and Aides Post-service: Clean-up and share feedback. Set dates, discuss theme for next month.

Rhythms of Grace

Today's Theme: Jesus was baptized into God's Family.
We are baptized into God's family.

Today's Scripture: The story of Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:13-17)

Our Worship Service

Gathering



We symbolize gathering together as a Christian family by finding representations of ourselves and bringing them together in a model of the church.

Storytelling



Today we hear the story of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan river.

Exploring



Baptismal Fonts

Explore the ritual of Baptism, practice pouring the water and sealing with oil.
(*sensory integration, gross motor, communication*)

Doves

Create and decorate poster board cut-outs of doves.
(*fine motor, communication*)

Water Table: Shells

Experiment with seashells and water.
(*gross motor, sensory integration*)

Reenact Jesus' Baptism

Engage in free play reenacting the story of Jesus' baptism.
(*gross motor, sensory integration, kinesthetic awareness*)

People in the Church

Create self-portraits to display together on a Church mural.
(*fine motor, communication*)

Regathering



We show ourselves as part of the Body of Christ by placing representations of ourselves inside the church.

Sing *Jesu, Jesu*.

We bring elements of the Eucharist to the Celebrant to create the Eucharistic table.

Eucharist



Sing: *Gather our Hearts*

Gather our hearts, oh God.
Gather our thoughts, oh God.
Bring us together around you.

Celebration of the Eucharist

Dismissal



Sing and Sign: *Jesus Loves Me* Blessing

Celebrant: "Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord."

Participants: "Thanks be to God!"

This Month's session Plan

Gathering



Before the session, create the church model from foam core according to the instructions (Appendix I, p. 101). Hide an assortment of small dolls around the worship space. Place church model in the middle of the room.

Together children and adults find the dolls and place them in the model church.

Storytelling



Theme: Jesus was baptized into God's Family. We are baptized into God's family.

Before the session, create poster with "This is _____, a child of God, and in (him/her) I am well pleased." Place blue cloth on the floor to represent a river.

Hang poster board dove shape above storytelling area.

See Storytelling Script on following page.

Place the Bible and the Jesus doll by the Storyteller.

Exploring



Baptismal Fonts

Create a font using a large, non-breakable bowl. Reenact the story, or have leader show how babies are baptized using dolls, a shell to pour the water, and a small container of lip balm to "seal" baby's forehead with a cross.

Water Table: Shells

Place a variety of shells in a water table for imaginative water play.

People in the Church

Participants color/design a self-portrait from the cut-outs of people. (Save to use later in Regathering.)

Doves

Participants color and glue feathers onto poster board cut-outs of doves.

Reenact Jesus' Baptism

Using the Jesus doll or themselves, invite children to use blue "river" cloth and dove shape from Storytelling to play act Jesus' baptism.

Regathering



Call each participant by name to place themselves—the cut-outs from People in the Church (see above)—on the church outline hung on the wall.

Singing *Jesu, Jesu* participants bring Eucharistic elements to the Celebrant then sit in a circle around the Eucharistic table.

Eucharist



Sing: *Gather our Hearts*

Gather our hearts, oh God.

Gather our thoughts, oh God.

Bring us together around you.

Celebration of the Eucharist

Dismissal



All sing and sign *Jesus Loves Me*.

Celebrant provides the blessing:

Celebrant: "Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord."

Participants: "Thanks be to God!"

Storytelling Script

Place the Bible and Jesus doll by the Storyteller. Place the "This is _____, a child of God..." poster in the storytelling area. Lay out blue cloth "river" on floor. As you tell the story "baptize" the Jesus doll using the blue-cloth "water" and God's words. Put the Jesus doll in the middle of the cloth. Invite participants to pick up the ends of the cloth and cover the doll simulating Jesus going under the water. Then, remove the cloth as you speak these words: "This is my Son and in him I am well pleased."

Our story today is from our Bible (*show Bible*), our book that tells the stories of God and God's people, of Jesus (*show Jesus doll*), God's son, and of how much God loves us (place hands over heart).

Today's story is from the second part of our Bible.

Show Bible and divide it in half by placing your hand between the left and right halves.

The second part of our Bible is called the New Testament. It has the stories of Jesus.

When Jesus was a young man and ready to begin his ministry, he traveled to the place where his cousin, John the Baptist, was baptizing people in the Jordan River. People were baptized as a way to ask God's forgiveness and to begin again.

When Jesus saw John he went into the water and asked John to baptize him.

Jesus went down into the water. As he rose back out of the water, the sky opened, a dove appeared (*point to the dove, above*) and God spoke, "This is my son and in him I am well pleased."

Jesus left the river and went into the desert to be alone with God and to pray.

We are baptized with water when we join God's family. Let's all pretend to be baptized.

Invite parents to help baptize each child. Using words from the story and the child's name, enact a pretend baptism. Demonstrate by baptizing the Jesus doll. Refer to the poster with these words:

"This is (insert child's name) a child of God, and in (him/her) I am well pleased."

Amen.

After an appropriate pause, the Storyteller goes on to explain the activities of the day.

Rhythms of Grace • February Year 1

Theme: Jesus invites us to enter the Kingdom of God.

Scripture: The Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44)
The Pearl of Great Value (Matthew 13:45)

Date: _____

Location: _____

Volunteer Roles:

Facilitator _____

Storyteller _____

Celebrant _____

Center Leader _____

Guide _____

Items Needed for this Session

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> Gathering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Storytelling</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Exploring</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Regathering</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Eucharist</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Dismissal</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> gold coins</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bible, Jesus doll</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Storytelling Script</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> gold coins, wooden box/treasure chest</p> <p>Pearl Stringing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> plastic pearls of various sizes and colors</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> wire, string, yarn, floss</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> scissors</p> <p>Coin Search</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> gold coins</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> large bucket</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> packing peanuts, dry rice or sterilized potting soil</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> large styrofoam ball (from Storytelling)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> recorded music, player</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> altar table and elements (pita bread, juice, chalice, paten, purificator, corporal, altar cloth)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Bible and Jesus doll</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Jesus Loves Me</i> song lyrics (see p. 99)</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> wooden box/treasure chest</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> plastic pearls of various sizes and colors</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> large styrofoam ball (large pearl)</p> <p>Collage</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> poster board with treasure chest drawn on it</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> magazine photos of “treasure” items</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> white glue or glue sticks</p> <p>Treasure Box Painting</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> small wooden boxes</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> craft paints, brushes, water</p> <p>Treasure Hunt Path</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 8 ½" x 11" foam squares in various colors</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> treasure chest and coins from Gathering and Storytelling</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> elements for the Eucharistic table (see Eucharist)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Eucharistic Prayer (see p. 100)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Gather our Hearts</i> song lyrics (see p. 99)</p> |
|--|---|--|

Leaders and Aides Pre-service: Set up space. Finalize details. Pray.

Leaders and Aides Post-service: Clean-up and share feedback. Set dates, discuss theme for next month.

Rhythms of Grace

Today's Theme: Jesus invites us to enter the Kingdom of God.
Today's Scripture: The Hidden Treasure (Matthew 13:44) and The Pearl of Great Value (Matthew 13:45)

Our Worship Service

Gathering



We begin to call to mind the notion of treasure—used in this session's parables as a metaphor for understanding the Kingdom of God—by gathering together hidden gold coins.

Storytelling



Today we hear two stories about the Kingdom of Heaven: The Parable of the Hidden Treasure, and the Parable of the Great Pearl.

Exploring



Pearl Stringing

Children make and share their own string-of-pearls craft.
(*fine motor, sensory integration*)

Treasure Box Painting

Children create their own colorful treasure box to take home.
(*fine motor, communication*)

Coin Search

Participants search for buried treasure.
(*gross motor, sensory integration*)

Treasure Hunt Path

Participants follow the path and receive the treasure.
(*gross motor, kinesthetic awareness*)

Collage

Children explore the idea of treasure with a collage activity.
(*communication, fine motor*)

Regathering



Play Pass-the-Pearl to affirm that we are all treasured in the Kingdom of God.
Sing *Jesu, Jesu*.

We bring elements of the Eucharist to the Celebrant to create the Eucharistic table.

Eucharist



Sing: *Gather our Hearts*

Gather our hearts, oh God.
Gather our thoughts, oh God.
Bring us together around you.

Celebration of the Eucharist

Dismissal



Sing and Sign: *Jesus Loves Me* Blessing

Celebrant: "Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord."
Participants: "Thanks be to God!"

This Month's session Plan

Gathering



Before the session, hide gold coins in various locations around the room. Place the treasure chest in a prominent location, visible to all as they arrive. As participants arrive, they are invited to gather gold coins hidden around the room and put them in the treasure chest.

Storytelling



Theme: Jesus invites us to enter the Kingdom of God.

See Storytelling Script on the following page.

Place the Bible and the Jesus doll by the Storyteller.

Place the treasure chest with gold coins and the assortment of pearl-shaped beads hidden from view but within reach of the Storyteller. Keep the large pearl hidden until the last as indicated in the story text.

Exploring



Pearl Stringing

Children string colored pearls (beads) of various sizes on strings of various widths, knotted on one end. Provide larger beads with large holes and thicker string or yarn, as well as small beads, beading wire or floss.

Coin Search

Children search for “treasure” (gold coins from the Gathering activity) buried in a giant pot or bin of sterilized potting soil. Children sift through material to find coins.

Collage

On large poster board, draw an image of a treasure chest. Participants select magazine pictures depicting treasure and glue them to poster board. Children name each treasured object.

Treasure Box Painting

Provide small wooden boxes purchased at a craft store (1 per child), craft paints and brushes. Children create their own treasure chests. Provide paint smocks, drop cloth and paper towels for clean-up. Children name what they might put in their boxes. Children can also name chosen colors as well as other things that are the same color.

Treasure Hunt Path

Create a rectangular grid of colored foam squares (construction paper, carpet samples, foam squares) on the floor. Within the grid, make a single-color path that a child can navigate from beginning to end. Place a treasure chest, coins or pearls at the end. Children follow the path to collect treasure. Variations: color Hopscotch, color Simon Says.

Regathering



Participants gather in a circle. Play music while passing the large Styrofoam “pearl” around the circle. When the music stops, the person holding the pearl says their own name. Group responds, “(Person’s name) is treasured in the Kingdom of God.” Continue until all have had a turn.

Singing *Jesu, Jesu* participants bring Eucharist elements to the Celebrant then sit in a circle around the Eucharistic table.

Eucharist



Sing: *Gather our Hearts*

Gather our hearts, oh God.
Gather our thoughts, oh God.
Bring us together around you.

Celebration of the Eucharist

Dismissal



Celebrant provides the blessing:

Celebrant: “Go in Peace to Love and Serve the Lord.”

Participants: “Thanks be to God!”

All sing and sign *Jesus Loves Me*.

Storytelling Script

Place the Bible and Jesus doll by the Storyteller.

Place the treasure chest with gold coins and the assortment of pearl-shaped beads hidden from view but within reach of the Storyteller. Keep the large pearl hidden until the last as indicated in the story text.

Our story today is from our Bible (*show Bible*), our book that tells the stories of God and God's people, of Jesus (*show Jesus doll*), God's son, and of how much God loves us (*place hands over heart*).

Jesus spent a lot of his time going from village to village teaching people about God. Sometimes Jesus talked about the "Kingdom of God." The Kingdom of God is a place where everything is just as it should be. Everyone is cared for and happy. Everyone is included and loved and treated fairly.

The Kingdom of God is a beautiful place. It is also very precious.

Ask the following question.

"What does it mean when something is precious?"

Pause to hear children's answers.

When something is precious, it means that it is important to us. It is very valuable and special and we care for it.

Ask:

Can you name anything that is precious in your life?

Solicit answers (e.g. toys, possessions, clothes).

Suggest other 'precious' things (e.g. parents, pets, grandparents, the Church, Jesus.)

Jesus told two stories about the Kingdom of God and how it is precious. Jesus called these stories parables.

First, (*present treasure chest with gold coins*) Jesus said that the Kingdom of God was so precious that it was like a man who found a hidden treasure (*sift coins through fingers*).

The man wanted to keep the treasure so much that he buried it in a field. Then, he bought the field. The man knew that he could hold onto the treasure because he had buried it in the dirt. He did not want to lose his precious treasure.

Then, Jesus also said that the Kingdom of God was so precious that it was like a pearl (*present different sized pearl beads*), but not like this pearl (*pick up small pearl*), or this pearl (*pick up medium pearl*), or even this pearl (*pick up another, larger pearl*). The Kingdom of God was like *this* pearl. *Present giant styrofoam pearl, previously hidden.*

The Kingdom of God something so special, so valuable, so precious that we want to have it forever.

Jesus invites *us* to come into the Kingdom of God, where everything is beautiful. We are invited because God believes that we are precious, too.

God knows us and loves us and wants us to be part of this beautiful Kingdom. When we close our eyes and say a prayer to God, we are in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not a place, but a feeling—a feeling of being loved, of knowing that we are safe and welcomed and that God is at our side.

God loves us and wants us to know that we are precious.

Amen.

After an appropriate pause, the Storyteller goes on to explain the activities of the day.