

# Holiday Celebration

## **PRESCHOOL, UNIKIDS & TWEENS LESSON: “ADVENT GARDEN”**

### **Lesson Intention & Overview**

The intention of this lesson is to focus on the true meaning of Christmas.

### **Advent Garden Overview**

*Information based on ideas and language used in Waldorf Schools. Actual source Unknown...*

- Advent, a time of waiting and becoming, is perhaps the favorite and most precious time of year for children. There is much warmth, anticipation and loving preparation for the holiday season. At a time of year when we can be consumed by consumerism and rushed by busy social calendars, the essence of Advent calls upon us to slow down, breath deeply, prepare, and wonder. To spiritually walk the Advent spiral...the path we have the children walk in our Advent Spiral.

### **Affirmation**

I let my Christ light shine!

### **Bible Quote**

“I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.” Luke 2:10

# Sacred Circle

## **Uniting Affirmation**

Invite one of the children to create an affirmation that affirms the lesson of the day, for example: My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am \_\_\_\_\_. The rest of the circle then affirms the first child by saying, "(Name), you are \_\_\_\_\_." The next child then repeats the affirmation and is affirmed by the circle. This continues until all of the children and teachers have been affirmed.

## **The Blessing**

This activity gives the children the opportunity to bless all those present and all those who could not be with them for the day. This helps the children to know that their presence in the classroom is important and that they are missed when they are absent. Lead the children in a blessing for all those who are part of your spiritual family.

Use our pet blessing box, in which the students can place photos of their pets, and bless all of our pets.

## **Sacred Breath**

This is the time when we use a breathing exercise to de-stress and to move our attention into the present moment. If the children are distracted and moving around it will be more difficult for them to pay attention to what is happening in the circle. **Example: Balloon or Drain**

## **HeartMath: Shift & Shine**

- Share that when we are feeling tired, or stressed, we can shift our feelings by focusing on our heart.

### Steps to Shift & Shine

1. Put your hand on your heart and feel it beating
2. Now pretend to breath in and out through your heart
3. Think of someone or something that makes you feel special, (*Like a family member, or a pet or a special place outside*)
4. Allow the children to experience this feeling or about 30 seconds, increasing each week as they are able to.

## **Love Offering**

Lead the children in blessing the love offering by inviting them to hold their offering in their hand (their offering can be money or can be anything they would like to bless the world with, such as: love, joy, peace) and pray the blessing of your choice. Then pass the basket and invite each child to add their offering.

## **Celebrations**

Invite the children to share something they would like to celebrate. Use noise makers and pom-poms to cheer after each celebration.

# **Advent Garden**

*Source: Waldorf Education*

## **Supplies**

- 50 yards of evergreens
- Variety of Stars
- Crystals
- Table
- Table cloth
- Christ Candle
- 1 Apple/child
- 1 Candle/child
- Soft Music
- String of white Christmas Lights
- Stuffed animals
- Photos of people

Electric candles and small electric votive candles can be used in place of traditional candles.

## **Overview**

- The Advent Garden is a large spiral path of evergreens that leads to a center table upon which one candle will be lit in a darkened room. The path is adorned with large stars, and representations of the four earthly kingdoms (mineral, plant, animal and humankind) are present in the garden. Crystals shine out their reflections of the flickering candlelight.
- After an opening verse and story, music is gently played while each child in turn walks the path to the center carrying a candle held in an apple. The candle is lit, and then the child walks out. On the journey out, the child chooses a star upon which to leave the candle. Not only is there immense expectation as one enters toward the light, but also in the beauty of how lightened the room becomes with each individual deed. It is truly an experience of wonder.
- Encourage the children to keep the silence as the program unfolds.

## **Prepare Ahead**

- Use the evergreen to create a spiral that is wide enough for the children to walk the path.
- Cover the table with the tablecloth and place in the center of the spiral.
- Place the Christ candle and matches on the table. Arrange greenery and/or star garland and Christmas lights around the candle.
- Scatter the crystals, paper stars, photos and the stuffed animals throughout the evergreen spiral.
- Cut holes in the top of each apple large enough to hold the candle securely. Place a candle in each apple and set aside.

## **Opening Verse (Read by teacher or older student)**

- Read the verse  
We walk with candle toward the Light  
While Earth awaits with hope so bright;  
In the Light which finds new birth  
Love may spread o'er all the Earth.  
Deep Mid-Winter drawing near ~  
May Light arise in our Garden here.  
~J.E. Kral

## **Lighting the Center Candle**

- The children are seated on the outside of the spiral.
- The teacher quietly walks the spiral and then lights the center candle

## **Advent Garden Story**

*Source: Waldorf Education*

Long, long ago, Mother Mary was preparing for the first Christmas. It was time for her to weave a robe for the Christ Child who was soon to be born. Among the stars she wandered, and they gave her radiant threads of crystal for the Child's robe. To the Moon she went, and it gave her silver threads. Threads of gleaming gold the Sun gave to her.

And so Mother Mary gathered all the lovely threads and began to weave. But alas! The threads slipped apart and could not be woven together. On her way went Mother Mary, searching, searching.

"Ah, dear stones and crystals," said Mother Mary, "you are so strong and firm. Can you help me to weave these threads into a robe for the Christ Child?" "No, Mother Mary. We will mark your pathway to the stable and give you sturdy ground for your footsteps, but we cannot help you weave your threads."

"Ah, dear plants," said Mother Mary, "you are so lovely and green. Some of you are green even in the depth of winter. Can you help me to weave these threads into a robe for the Christ Child?" "No, Mother Mary. We will make you a garden where the Christmas rose can bloom, but we cannot help you weave your threads."

"Ah, dear animals," said Mother Mary, "you are so nimble and lively. Can you help me to weave these threads into a robe for the Christ Child?" "No, Mother Mary. Our brother Donkey will help you on your long journey, but we cannot help you weave your threads."

Now Mother Mary no longer knew where to turn for help to weave her lovely threads. But lo!

There came an angel to her and spoke softly, saying: "Mother Mary, you must ask the children for the love in their hearts. When the children of Earth send you their love, then you will be able to weave the Christ Child's robe."

And that is just what happened. And now, each year at Advent time the angel comes and brings us a light in the darkness. From it every child can take a light. These lights will send heart's love to Mother Mary, to weave a robe for the coming Christ Child.

### **Candle Lighting**

- Turn on the music.
- Each child in turn walks the path to the center carrying a candle held in an apple.
- When they reach the center table, they light their candle.
- They then walk back out of the spiral.
- On the journey out, the child chooses a star upon which to place the candle.

### **Closing Verse**

*Source: Waldorf Education*

The gift of the light we thankfully take,  
But not shall it be alone for our sake.  
The more we give light the one to the other,  
It shines and spreads life a-growing still further;  
Till every spark by friends set aflame,  
Till every heart the joy shall proclaim;  
Not long shall continue the dark of the year,  
The Christ draws near.

~M. Tittman