

## Summaries of Godly Play Stories

### The Holy Family:

Our worship today centered on the story of the Holy Family. We entered into the story of the Mother Mary, the Father Joseph, and Jesus who we met both as a baby and a risen savior. In both forms, Jesus was, as he has been since, “reaching out to give the whole world a hug.”

You can support your child by furthering the discussion during the week. Stories of Jesus' birth and resurrection from your family's Bible, children's Bible, or the resources suggested at the end of this email would be great places to start the conversation.

### Circle of the Church Year:

Our worship today centered on the Circle of the Church Year story. This story is from the Liturgical Action shelf and whose stories help us all understand why we do the things we do in church. This particular story explains the “Three Great Days” (Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas), the times we use right before them to get-ready both personally and communally (Lent, Eastertide, and Advent). The colors change in church for very good reasons – just ask your child! Here are some hints: White is the color of pure celebration, Green is the color of growing times, purple is the color of royalty and is very serious in nature, while red is HOT and signals the appearance of the Holy Spirit.

### Creation (Genesis 1:1-2:3)

“In the beginning...” The story today was our first story of Creation from the very first line of Genesis. Our bible has 2 Creation stories – the other is about Adam and Eve and a certain serpent. With the gift of each day, God said, “It is good.” Remember with your child what was created on those first six days, perhaps reading the story from a bible or bible storybook. Spend some time thinking about the 7<sup>th</sup> day when even God rested and gave us the gift of a day to remember all the gifts from the other days. “I don’t know where you go to remember... only you and God know that place that is just right for you.”

### Parable of the Good Shepherd (Matthew 18:12-14; Luke 15:1-7)

We heard the Parable of the Good Shepherd, which is found in a gold parable box because parables are gifts that were given to us 2,000 years ago! In the story, The Good Shepherd knows each of his sheep by name and they know the sound of his voice. While he shows them the sheep the way to the good green grass and the cool, clear water, he also goes wherever he needs to when they are in danger. Wonder with your child who the sheep may really be? Who might the Good Shepherd be? Have you ever come close to a place like the one in the story?

### Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 24:32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19)

We heard the Parable of the Mustard Seed today. Mustard seeds are very, tiny seeds. The ones we use for cooking are actually mustard seedpods! I wonder how something so large could come from something so small? Could it ever go back to the way it was before the mustard bush grew out of the seed? How come?

### The Great Flood (Genesis 6:5-9:17)

We heard the story of The Great Flood today. The Flood Story is believed to be a myth by most scholars – a way for ancient people to understand the world around them. God’s beautiful creation had changed a great deal before the flood and God chose Noah and his family to build the ark and preserve the creatures while the earth was washed clean. After the rain stopped and the earth was dry enough to depart the ark, God made a covenant with all people that this would never happen again. The sign he gave was a “bow in the sky” which we think of as a rainbow. (We made one today using a prism!)

When one of our daughters was very small, she must have really been thinking about this story after she heard it in Godly Play because a few days later she became very worried about all the people who were not on the ark when the flood happened. This may be a troubling story for you or your child, too. Our tradition is full of stories that are challenging; many of them linked to a God who seems punitive or capricious at times. I remember responding to our child that the God who was in the Flood

Story was not the God I knew and we talked about the God that we know to be present to our family. How have you responded to these kinds of questions? Maybe we can share some better answers in these future emails.

### A Work Day

Even though we wish it was always true, we never have all the time we need for the response time or “Work Time” in Godly Play. This week we had a “Work Day” which is a scheduled Sunday every 6 weeks or so when we take all the time we need and just work. We don’t have a story, instead children are encouraged to really enjoy an art project or story for a good, long time... even do both. Ask your child what they did today... then ask them why they chose that thing to do. Chances are those 2 questions will yield way more information about who your child is becoming spiritually than you ever expected!

### The All Saints Lesson

Today we heard the All Saints Story in celebration of All Saints Day (the day that follows All Hallows Eve!) In our Episcopal/Anglican tradition, we trust that each of us is a member of the Communion of Saints just by virtue of being one of God’s children. The symbol in the story is a mirror, an invitation to remember that God loves each of us just the way we are. And yet, we are called to try and be our best selves in everyday life. Saints in our tradition – St. Patrick, St. Nicholas, St. Valentine and so many more – are only part of the story. Wonder with your children who are the saints they know personally – the choice is theirs. Who do they see as saints? Remember the old hymn, “I sing a song of the Saints of God?” Do you “see them in school or at lanes or at sea ... for the saints of God are just folk like me and I aim to be one, too.”

### The Great Family

This was our first story of the year told in the beloved Desert Box! The story today was about Abram and Sarai (who God later renamed Abraham and Sarah) who left their home and family for a place that God would show them. They found God was with them everywhere they went, not just in this place or that place. God promised them that he would make of them a "Great Family" but they were far too old to have

children so they laughed when God told them this. But they laughed again when God blessed them with a child in their old age and named their baby 'Laughter' (Isaac in their language)! And God did keep God's promise and made of them a great family of many generations including us. "As many as the grains of sand in the desert, as many as the stars in the sky."

In the Bible, you can find this story in Genesis 12-15, 24

### Exodus

Today, we heard the story of the Exodus and we tell this story in the Desert Box. The People of God found their way to Egypt where there was food and jobs because there was no rain where they were living. But when they got to Egypt, Pharaoh trapped them and they became slaves. One of the People, Moses, went to Pharaoh and demanded, "Let my people go!" but each time Pharaoh said "NO." Bad things happened over and over in the land but each time Moses asked to let his people go, Pharaoh always said no. Finally, something happened that was so awful it is hard to talk about. The Angel of Death took the oldest son of each Egyptian family, even Pharaoh's but passed over the Hebrew homes because they had marked their doors with the blood of a lamb. (This is where the celebration of Passover gets its name.) This time Pharaoh said yes and the Hebrews quickly packed their things, not even waiting for their bread to rise - matzo -and fled. Pharaoh changed his mind, sent his army after them but the sea opened up and let them through, closing again on Pharaoh's army. The People were free and danced in celebration.

In the Bible, you can find this story in Exodus 11:1-15:21

### Baptism

Today we heard the Story of Baptism. In our Episcopal tradition, Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into the Church. It is like a gateway of sorts. We baptize people in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. We use three white overlapping circles as a way to understand the Trinity. We ask the children to remember the day of their baptism or look forward

to it as we light candles from the Christ candle. A good question for you to explore with your child is, "How does the Light change?" "Where does that Light go?" You may be amazed at what they have to say...

### Baptism side by side with Faces #4 Jesus Baptism

Today, we shared two stories of Baptism. The first story was about the rite of Baptism in our church today. In our Episcopal tradition, Holy Baptism is full initiation by water and the Holy Spirit into the Church. It is like a gateway of sorts. We baptize people in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer. We use three white overlapping circles as a way to understand the Trinity. We ask the children to remember the day of their baptism or look forward to it as we light candles from the Christ candle.

The second part of the story was about the Baptism of Jesus by his cousin, John. When John looked into Jesus' face that day by the Jordan River it was as if he was seeing him for the first time!

Then we wondered together about these two stories side by side. What would they have to say to each other if they could have a conversation?! Please explore this question with your child at home. There is so much more to grapple with than we have time on Sunday morning.

### Mary, Mother of Jesus

The beginning of Advent is the perfect time to stop and think about Mary's story. While the birth in Bethlehem is how we usually get introduced to her, she had a pretty exciting pregnancy that included a visit by an angel/messenger from God to both herself and Joseph, a pre-teen child 'lost' for three days in the Temple in Jerusalem, and a son who had moments of being very rude to his mother as an adult. And there she was, at the foot of the cross, present to something a parent dares not even imagine. Today, let your child share a little of what they remember from the story. You may help them with these story pieces for cues: An angel, a baby, a sword, a bunch of forget-me-nots, a painting of Jesus healing a blind man, a cross, an empty tomb, and a red flame. We remember Mary this time of year by changing some of the colors in church to a 'Marian Blue.'

## The First Sunday of Advent

In the Near Room, we changed our colors on the altar and the calendar to purple, the distinctive color of royalty and of anticipation. The people 2,000 years ago were waiting for a Messiah and we wait today. (That is a challenging part of being a Christian) On this first Sunday in Advent, we remember the prophets who pointed us to Bethlehem, the city where King David had been born 1,000 years earlier. They knew that something special was to happen there. They were not clear what it was but they told the people then to "Pay Attention, for something amazing was to happen in the City of David." Wonder as a family this week how you as a family pays attention when you believe something amazing is about to happen. How does your family get ready? How does it feel to wait when you are not quite sure what you are waiting for? Will you do anything during Advent to pay attention in a different way?

## Mystery of Christmas/The Glorious Impossible

Today, your child looked at the Christmas story through the eyes of Italian renaissance artist Giotto di Bondone and his frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, Italy. These beautiful works include Mary's visitation by the angel and the birth in a stable. They also include parts of the story that are often left out but are important, too. When the tiny infant Jesus is presented in the Temple by his parents an old man, Simeon, recognizes the child as the one for whom he has been waiting. His prayer upon seeing Jesus is memorialized in the 'Nunc Dimittis', the Song of Simeon, which you may have heard in the Episcopal evening prayer and compline services. Our story today also included the Massacre of the Innocents. King Herod was so worried that his power would be challenged by the new Messiah of the Jews that he ordered all boy babies to be killed in the land. Joseph had a dream and understood to take his family far away and so they had already fled to Egypt by the time of this terrible event. Imagine Egypt, the place that had held the Israelites captive, was now a place of safety! Wonder with your child about this whole story and where they felt most connected? What part do they want to especially tell you about. Ask them to describe that particular picture as they remember it. Why did the artist draw it that way? If your child was the artist would they paint it differently? Tell

them how you might imagine painting it. This story and the art can be found in a book called The Glorious Impossible by Episcopal theologian Madeleine L'Engle who also wrote A Wrinkle in Time.

### Advent 1-3

This is the third week in Advent. As we get closer to the mystery that is Christmas, the Advent wreath gives us a little perk in a pink candle for the third week. On the first week of Advent, the prophets point us toward Bethlehem. On the second week we remember the Holy Family's trip to the City of David, Bethlehem. They got there so late, there was only a stable available for them to sleep in that night. On the third Sunday, the shepherds were called by the angels to run to Bethlehem to see the Saviour. The candle is pink today to remind us that amid all this waiting is a special kind of joy. Pink also reminds us of Jesus' mother, Mary. Wonder with your child about which part of Advent is their favorite. Why? And share with them your favorite part and why. Do you remember waiting for Christmas when you were a child? Share those stories with your child!

### Advent I-Christmas

Today we heard the whole story of Christmas as explained by the Advent calendar. Some of it our children had hear earlier in the season and some was fresh today. Just as the readings in church repeat on holy days and the whole cycle of readings (the lectionary) repeats every three years - we repeat some core stories of our faith every year. This Godly Play version of Advent is just such a story.

The first week of Advent, a purple candle is lit and we remember the prophets from the Old Testament who knew something special was to happen in Bethlehem and they told the people to stop and pay attention. To recall the second week of Advent, we light the second purple candle and remember Mary and Joseph and their long and uncomfortable trip to Bethlehem when Mary was heavy with a baby inside. "They must have been the last people to arrive in Bethlehem that night." We remember the third week of Advent by lighting a rose colored candle. The rose color is one of the colors we have to remember Jesus' mother, Mary. But we also light a rose candle for this week to add a little joy to

this serious time of waiting in Advent. We remember the angels announcement to the shepherds that night to get going into Bethlehem for a savior had been born. And run they did! We signal the fourth week in Advent by lighting the final purple candle and remembering the Three Magi who knew all the stars in the sky. When they saw "a wild star" they just knew they had to follow it and so they began the long journey from their homeland in the east. We remember them on the fourth week of Advent but we also acknowledge that they really arrive for our celebration of Epiphany on January 6th because they have so far to go. Finally, we light the white Christ candle. White in the church is the color of pure celebration and so we light this candle for Christmas, the day Christ was born. We wondered together how the cow who usually found her breakfast in a manger felt when she saw a baby there! We imagined she looked at the baby with her big brown eyes and was as amazed as everyone else was.

### Epiphany

The story this week was **Epiphany** which is celebrated on January 6th. It is the day our tradition designates to remember the arrival of the Magi in Bethlehem. We recalled together all the weeks in Advent as we had before Christmas but gave special attendance to the final purple candle, the one that represents the 3 Kings. Here we stopped and paid attention to what the three gifts were and what they symbolize as gifts for a baby who is the Messiah. Gold is not a surprising gift for a king! But did you know that frankincense was used in worship thousands of years ago and is still used today? A cool fact is that the smoke of frankincense starts as black and then turns to white and we saw that today. Myrrh is a resin that was burned at funerals. What did the three wise men foreshadow about this baby that maybe others did not yet realize? Wonder together with your children what they would think if someone brought a baby you know these gifts?

### The Exile and the Return

Today, we heard the story of the Exile and the Return. We remembered the time after Abraham, Moses, and David but 500 years before Jesus when the Babylonians came and destroyed the Jewish temple and the city of Jerusalem. Many of the Israelites were marched off to Babylon for a long exile. How could they be with God who they believed was back in

Jerusalem, in the destroyed temple? They hung their harps in the trees by the rivers of Babylon and they wept. But over time, they realized that God was in this place of captivity, too. When the Persian king took control they could go home but not all the Jews did. Some stayed for, just like Abraham had discovered, God was not to be found in just one place. All of God was everywhere. Wonder as a family where you and your child see God?

### The 10 Best Ways to Live

Well, that is another frame to put around the 10 commandments! Today in the +++++ Room, we heard the story of the 10 Best Ways to Live. We talked together about how hard they are to keep all the time but God asks us to try. The first four are about how to Love God while the last six are ways to help people love one another. The middle one, Remember the Sabbath, is a bridge between Loving God and Loving People, isn't it?

The 10 Best Ways are found in the Old Testament and were given to Moses but Jesus simplified what we are called to do in the New Testament. Matthew 22:36-40 Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

It is fun to try and name all the 10 Best Ways when children are older and to try and name the ways your family shows love towards God and love towards people with children of any age.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kq4h30py-Xc&feature=related>

### Isaiah – The First of Three Scrolls

Today in the +++++ Room, we heard the story of the book of the prophet Isaiah. This book covers over 400 years and is believed to be three different writers stitched together in one book. The first 'scroll' of Isaiah was written when the Assyrians attacked ancient Jerusalem. Isaiah had a vision of heaven itself and he was a visitor there. Later, Isaiah prophesied about a great Light, born to show the way. This Light, a

child, was called “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Ring any bells from the New Testament or Handel’s Messiah?

### Side by Side Parables of the Good Samaritan & Great Pearl

Today's presentation in the Far Room was a side-by-side sharing of the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and the Parable of the Great Pearl (aka The Pearl of Great Price) (Matthew 13:45-46). Parables are the closest thing we have to the actual words of Jesus. The phrase and concept of The Good Samaritan may be familiar but you might want to watch the video

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UccWt6Rx43E>) or check the scripture to get the story straight. The Parable of the Great Pearl is less than 25 words in the Bible but takes much longer to tell for in it a merchant sells EVERYTHING he owns, including his house and every possession inside, for the pearl for which he had been searching. In our Godly Play worship today, we heard both stories and wondered about them individually (why a man whose people (the Samaritans) was part of a culture with a great deal of distrust and enmity towards the Jews (who felt the same about the Samaritans) would stop and help (and really care with his time, money, and concern) when a priest and Levite (both thought to be devout Jews) crossed to the other side of the road and passed by). In the Great Pearl Parable, we wondered what would be so valuable that someone would give up every possession they had. Who are the Samaritans to your family? What would the Pearl of Great Price be to you? Your child? We bet there will be some surprises!

### Parable of the Good Samaritan

Today's story was the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Parables are the closest thing we have to the actual words of Jesus. The phrase and concept of The Good Samaritan may be familiar but you might want to watch the video

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UccWt6Rx43E>) or check the scripture to get the story straight. In our Godly Play worship today, we heard the story and wondered together why a man whose people (the Samaritans) was part of a culture with a great deal of distrust and enmity towards the Jews (who felt the same about the Samaritans)

would stop and help (and really care with his time, money, and concern) when a priest and Levite (both thought to be devout Jews) crossed to the other side of the road and passed by. We spent a significant time wondering how the story might have changed if the hurt person or the helper had been a woman or a child. Who are the Samaritans to your family? Who does your family 'Samaritan' to? Ask your children their thoughts before you offer yours. I bet there will be some surprises!

### Mystery of Easter (a.k.a. Lenten Puzzle)

Today we heard the story of The Mystery of Lent. We hear this story on the Sunday before Lent starts to remind us a change is coming and that we are about to enter another mystery. This time of waiting is like Advent but it is even longer because the mystery it helps us get ready for is an even bigger mystery - Easter! The 'story' is really a puzzle of 6 pieces in the shape of a cross to represent the 6 weeks of Lent. It is purple on one side, the color of waiting, royalty, and seriousness. On the other side, the puzzle is white, the color of pure celebration! That is the paradox of the season - it is both serious and somber but promises pure celebration in the resurrection.

### Faces I

In the \*\*\*\* Room today, we heard the first in our seven story series called The Faces of Jesus. Over Lent, we remember Jesus' life and ministry over seven stories that we merge into all the Sundays of Godly Play in Lent. Faces I is the story of the birth of a baby, born to be a king but not the kind of king that people were expecting - one with riches, an army, and the ability to free the people of Israel from the oppression of the Romans. No, the king who was born was called The Word and was born a wordless child - not at all what people expected. We wondered about the story together by bringing pieces of other Godly Play stories that we think are important to "help tell the story." Ask your child what they brought to the story and why?

### Faces I and II

In the \*\*\* Room today, we heard the first two in our seven story series called The Faces of Jesus. Over Lent, we remember Jesus' life and ministry over seven stories that we merge into all the Sundays of Godly Play in Lent. Faces I is the story of the birth of a baby, born to be a king but not the kind of king that people were expecting - one with riches, an army, and the ability to free the people of Israel from the oppression of the Romans. No, the king who was born was called The Word and was born a wordless child - not at all what people expected. Faces II remembers how very human and how very divine Jesus was when he was a boy. In this story from Luke, Jesus stayed in Jerusalem after a Passover pilgrimage with his parents and went to the Temple to study with the priests there. His parents, understandably worried and tired after searching for him for three days, couldn't help but ask (and I imagine there might have been shouting involved) "Why did you do this?" Jesus answered, "Didn't you know that I would be in my Father's house?" While they did not understand then, Mary and Joseph did not forget. We wondered about the stories together by bringing pieces of other Godly Play stories that we think are important to "help tell the story." Ask your child what they brought to the story and why?

#### Faces 1-4

We are all on the journey toward the greatest Christian mystery, which we know as Easter. In Godly Play, we spend the six weeks of Lent revisiting pivotal moments in the life of Jesus and his journey to the cross and beyond. We add a little more to the story each week. Today we remember the miracle of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, his boyhood adventure in the Temple in Jerusalem, his baptism in the Jordan River by his cousin John the Baptist and a voice from above saying "This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased." Then his 40 days in the desert wilderness and the temptations he was subject to there. He gave Satan a stern rebuke after 3 enticing temptations. "I am to be a king but not that kind of king," he said. Spend some time hearing from your child what they thought was important about the story. Was there something from the room that they brought to the circle to help tell the story better?

## Faces 1-5

We are all on the journey toward the greatest Christian mystery, which we know as Easter. In Godly Play, we spend the six weeks of Lent revisiting pivotal moments in the life of Jesus and his journey to the cross and beyond. We add a little more to the story each week. Today we remember the miracle of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, his boyhood adventure in the Temple in Jerusalem, his baptism in the Jordan River by his cousin John the Baptist and a voice from above saying "This is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased." We continued with his 40 days in the desert wilderness and the temptations he was subject to there, and Jesus ministry in the world after he left the desert. Today, ended by remembering Jesus' healing of blind Bartimaeus. "When you are touched by Christ, you are changed forever." Spend some time hearing from your child what they thought was important about the story. Was there something from the room that they brought to the circle to help tell the story better?

## Faces 1-7

Today we heard the final story in the Faces of Christ series that walks us through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Quite a lot for little ears in one-day you might think. But then again as Christians we spend our whole lives trying to understand the story, don't we? So rejoice in knowing your children are walking down 'The Jesus Road' already. Your job as parents is not to turn away from the story because you struggle with it. We all do! Your job is to ask them what they think. "I wonder how Jesus can still be with us in a new way?" "I wonder how the deep sadness of Friday can turn into the pure celebration of Easter?" Is there a place in the story of Jesus life that you like him best? Why? While you all are talking, share with your child your answers even if the answer is "I don't know" and be open to the possibility that a child, as Jesus told us, is worth our full attention for they will show us the way. Luke 9:47-48 But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side and said to them "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is greatest."

## Knowing Jesus in a New Way #1

Easter is such a big mystery and so amazing that it cannot be contained in just one Sunday. It spills over into six more weeks we call Eastertide. Eastertide is our road to Pentecost. Today in Godly Play we began our journey through Easter to Pentecost by starting a story that helps us remember the appearances Jesus made after his resurrection but before his ascension. Today, we remembered how the 3 'Mary's' were the first to go to the tomb, looking to care for Jesus' body. The tomb was empty but one Mary heard the gardener call her name - but it wasn't the gardener at all - it was Jesus. Peter and John raced one another to see the empty tomb. "They could feel his presence in his absence." Each of us experiences Jesus differently. Wonder with your child how it must have felt for those who went to the tomb and how you would have felt if it was you who were there. Blessings on your wondering together!

## Knowing Jesus in a New Way #2

Our series of stories for this time between Easter and Pentecost is called Knowing Jesus in a New Way. After Jesus had risen on Easter, he appeared among his followers in different ways until the time of his Ascension. Soon after Jesus' ascension, the Holy Spirit came to us on Pentecost.

"Be known to us, Lord Jesus, in the breaking of the bread." Our cantor calls and we respond in song with these words before the Eucharist in our worship. Today in Godly Play we spent some time with one of the core stories from the gospel writer Luke. Two men were walking the road to Emmaus and deeply troubled by the crucifixion of Jesus. A fellow traveler joined them and when they reached their destination, the two invited the third to share a meal. It was not until then that they recognized the third man was Jesus. The children are starting to notice in these post-Easter stories of Jesus that people do not recognize him immediately. Wonder with your children if you would recognize Jesus

today? Do you know him in the breaking of the bread?

### Knowing Jesus in a New Way 3

We are still on the journey from Easter to Pentecost and remembering how Jesus appeared before he ascended. Today we wondered about Thomas, 'the doubter.' Jesus had appeared to the disciples but Thomas could not believe which is understandable. 8 days later Jesus came to the disciples again while they were sharing a meal and Thomas was there and seeing Jesus, fell to his knees. "Blessed are those who have not seen and still believe," Jesus said. Wonder as a family whether you are one who needs to see to believe. What might you have seen (or not seen) that has helped you believe?

### Knowing Jesus in a New Way 4

The Eastertide journey continues in Godly Play as we are still finding that Jesus keeps appearing unexpectedly. He had risen on Easter – Alleluia! – but he just kept showing up in surprising ways before his ascension. Today we remembered our stories from the last three weeks and added a new one. John's gospel (21:1-23) tells us that Jesus' disciples made the long trip to Galilee as Jesus had instructed and stopped at the Sea of Galilee, which was home to some of them. Fishing was unsuccessful until someone tending a fire onshore called out to them to throw their nets to the other side. Why not? They filled immediately and they had to drag the nets to shore. John recognized that the man on shore was the Lord and Peter had hopped out of the boat to get to Jesus! Jesus gave Peter special instructions, "Feed my lambs... tend my sheep... feed my sheep." Wonder at home together what Jesus might have meant. How do you tend or feed any of Jesus' sheep? How do your children? Listen to one another, as you do you may hear something Jesus has been trying to share with you for some time!

### Knowing Jesus in a New Way #5

(Matthew 28: 16-20; Mark 16:15-18)

Jesus has risen but has not ascended into heaven. His disciples meet him on a mountaintop in Galilee, just as Jesus asked them to do. "Go everywhere. Tell my story, even this part, to everyone. Show everyone how to be good disciples."

Jesus said more to them, "Tell them the story so they can become part of it." "Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

This was too far, too much. Then in their dismay they heard him say, "I am with you always to the end of the age." Then he was gone.

Jesus was always doing strange things – coming and going. And yet, he always seemed to ask his disciples to do challenging but important things. Sometimes they didn't want to hear Jesus ask them to do one more hard thing! This business of being a Christian was not the easy road then and it is often not the easy way today!

Wonder as a family what hard things are happening in your lives right now. Would they feel harder or easier if you asked God to be with you as you faced them? Why?

### Knowing Jesus in a New Way #6

Mark 16: 19-20; Luke 24: 50-53; Acts 1: 9-12

On the sixth Sunday in the season Eastertide and knowing Jesus in this new, post-Easter way, we remember how the disciples returned to Jerusalem. They gathered again in their room and Jesus was there.

They were more comfortable now with the new way of knowing him, so they ask many questions, most of them were silly. And then he was gone, withdrawn in a way that is hard to understand or imagine. The disciples waited – what was to happen next?

While they waited they found someone to replace Judas. God helped them choose Mathias, so now they were The Twelve, once more. They waited some more. They waited and waited.

Wonder together in your family about the story. How do people in your family do with waiting? Are some better than others? Have you ever waited and not understood what you are waiting for? Blessings on your conversations at home.

### Knowing Jesus in a New Way #7 Acts 2:1-13

We started to know Jesus through the stories that he told and the stories about him while he lived among us 2,000 years ago. In these past few weeks, we have tried to know Jesus in a new way during the time after Easter and before he ascended to heaven. But this week, we remember how everything changed for the disciples when the Holy Spirit came to them – they could speak languages they never learned... it must have been a crazy scene in Jerusalem!

What has happened is what the prophet Joel wrote about in the Old Testament. He said that God will pour out God's spirit on us so that our sons and daughters will prophesy, the young will see visions, and the old will dream dreams. This has just happened in Jerusalem.

In Godly Play, we sometimes describe the Holy Spirit as being like a fragrant scent or a candle whose flame is out but the essence lingers in the trailing smoke – you cannot see these things but still, somehow, you know they are there.

Wonder as a family if you have ever come close to the Holy Spirit. Is that a feeling you have now? In the past? Hope for? What does it feel like? Anything like the disciples felt?

Blessings on your time of wondering together.

### Abraham Object Box from Vol. 6

“The Story of Abraham”

Genesis 12:24-25:11

Today we heard the story of Abraham's life or (more specifically) the key points in what we know of Abraham's story. This trajectory over

Abraham's life supplements and enhances *The Great Family* story that we heard earlier. We started with the rocks that represented the altars Abraham built when he found that God was everywhere. Then we remembered the sand, stars, and dust that represented how great in size the great family would be. ("As many as the stars in the sky...") 3 strangers foretold of the baby, Isaac, who would be born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. A bundle of twigs, a bowl of fire, and a knife helped us understand how God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac when he was a boy but stopped him and a ram was sacrificed instead. Finally, a small cave helped us remember the cave at the Oaks of Mamre where Abraham and his beloved Sarah were buried. Talk with your children about what they liked best and what they might want left out of this story. Are they the same things that you were choosing? Talk about your choices and why you made them. When you do this, you will be sharing a bit of the story of your family and connecting to The Great Family – of which we all are part!

### Sarah Object Box

"The Story of Sarah"

Gen 12-23

Like the Abraham Story, the Story of Sarah fills out the core Godly Play story called The Great Family. While all stories in the Bible are important, stories of women are especially important to share, as there are relatively few of them! Sarai means princess and it was Sarah's original name as Abram was Abraham's until God changed them when they were to have The Great Family. At first, the beautiful Sarah and Abraham followed God purely on trust and God always showed them the way. When the time came to seek the security of work and food in Egypt for a time, Pharaoh wanted Sarah for himself until he found out she was married and he turned them out from Egypt. After returning to Canaan and living there for a long time, Sarah still had no children so she offered her maid, Hagar, to Abraham as a wife which was the custom. Hagar had a boy named Ishmael and years later, Sarah had a baby when she was very old which was unbelievable (so unbelievable that they named the baby *Laughter* which is Isaac in their language.) Seeing the older Ishmael play with the young Isaac made Sarah so jealous that she forced Abraham to send his son, Ishmael, and Ishmael's mother, Hagar, away. But God went with them, as he did with Abraham and Sarah and Ishmael is thought to be the forefather of the Arab

people. There is lots of real human emotion in Sarah's story. Talk with your children about what part of the story makes the most sense to you. What are the big feelings that go with that part? Enjoy talking about big feelings! They are a present for us today as they were for people of the Bible and it is one of the greatest things that connect us to *The Great Family*.

### Books of the Bible

Today, we played with the Bible, which is not a book... really. It is a volume full of shorter books written by all different people for all different reasons. There is poetry (Psalms and more!) and words of wisdom (Proverbs) and imaginative futuristic stories (Daniel and parts of Isaiah) and stories to comfort people feeling great pain and oppression (Ruth, Job, and Revelation) and stories named after their writers or wannabees (lots of others!) The point is that real people who had stories to share and people they wanted to remember wrote the Bible to share with others in their villages, tribes, and churches. Wonder with your child what they would like to know more about in the Bible and maybe spend some time in *the good book together!*

### Circle of the Holy Eucharist

Today in Godly Play, we played with all the things that happen in our church service and worked them into a circle – the first half of our circle was *The Liturgy of the Word* and the second half was *The Holy Communion*. When you think about it as a circle, all the parts of our worship are important to all the other parts. Hearing and reflecting on scripture with readings and a sermon helps us get ready to be fed at the Communion. And the spiritual food of the bread and wine feeds us to be Christ to others in the world after we leave the table... then we come back to recharge ourselves and the cycle continues... Wonder together about your favorite part of the Circle of the Eucharist. Is there a part that your child thinks could be left out and we would still have all the worship we need? Share your thoughts on this question as well!

### Parable of the Sower

Matthew 13:1-9

A lot of people think they have this parable all figured out. If you put seeds in good soil they grow, right? Thorny soil is problematic; rocky soil is darn near impossible and skipping the soil makes seeds merely bird food! But Jesus reminds us in the telling of this parable that the seed grows to some extent everywhere. So what is that seed he is talking about? The soil? Does that mean good soil is not really important? We encourage you to read this parable together and then start to wonder about what Jesus might be saying to you on this very day as a family.

### Traditions of Christmas

The way the Christian people celebrate Christmas was a natural outflow of other traditions and celebrations that came in the darkest time of the year- the Solstice. Today, we played with traditions from around the world and discovered that people searched for the *sun* to return in the dark days just as we now celebrate the arrival of the *Son, (Jesus)*, who came in those darkest days of the year as well. Remember together all your traditions of Christmas are at home now and of your childhood. What must it have been like to wonder if the light would come back enough to warm you up and to grow your food?

### Parable of Parables

“What’s really inside a parable?” That is the question we played with today when we heard this story to help us play with the concept of what a parable really is and why Jesus offered them to us. Using a series of nesting boxes, we shared together how the story and words that were just right for one generation of hearers needed to be changed to “fit” the next. So parables have been told and retold over hundreds and hundreds of generations since Jesus shared them with us 2,000 years ago. So the question for your family to consider is, “I wonder who is going to make the next parable box?” and “ I wonder if you have ever come close to the inside of a parable?”

### MLK Jr. Object Lesson

Sometimes we forget that Martin Luther King, Jr. was a minister before he was an activist. Today we remembered that MLK Jr. is more than a holiday. He was a man who considered what God and the world called him to do. Influenced by his parents, Gandhi, and his faith, he is a model

for us all – especially children as so many of his choices were influenced by his childhood experiences as well as being a father himself. Recalling MLK Jr’s “I have a dream” speech, what do you and your children dream for the next generation? What are the similarities and the differences for your family members?

Good Shepherd & World Communion (Vol. 4) is a story that helps us mesh the scripture we hold so dearly in our Bible and our weekly worship together (our Liturgy). As we revisit the Parable of the Good Shepherd and weave it together with all the people around the world who share in the Eucharist at communion tables everywhere, there is a connectedness that goes way beyond our own congregation! I wonder if you have ever come close to this table? I wonder if you have ever heard the words of the Good Shepherd spoken just for you?

#### Parable of Good Shepherd told side-by-side the Good Shepherd & World Communion

How much Good Shepherd can one Sunday morning experience? Today, we heard the story that we know so well and played with it. How would the parable told by Jesus ‘speak’ to us today if we heard/played with/embodied it in a whole new way. Parables are presents that Jesus gave us 2,000 years ago but they were given to us in such a way as to be timeless and “keep speaking.” Read this parable from a new translation and wonder together how it tries to teach us how to be in the world and what to look for on all the days, not just Sundays.

Try this version from a modern translation called The Message:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John 10:1-21&version=MSG>

#### Resurrection Eggs

Hands down this is one of the most popular stories in both of our Godly Play sanctuaries. It could be the brightly colored plastic eggs and the tiny surprises inside but we observe a much deeper engagement between children and material. This story has 12 symbols that help us remember the Passion story, the last week in Christ’s life – each contained in an egg. As hard a story as it is, it is the crux of our Christian story and children seem to be called back to it. We see this with the desert and the Baptism story as well. Perhaps your child can tell you

about one of the parts of this story that they remember. Is that part the one they liked the best? Maybe it was the part they felt was most important? Perhaps it was the part that was closest to their own story?

Mystery of Pentecost Mark 16:19-20, Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:5-14 and Acts 2:1-12 Pentecost is all about transformation. Today we remember the changes that transformed the disciples to apostles when they received the Holy Spirit. But that doesn't just happen on Pentecost does it? We are invited by this elusive presence of God, this spirit that is as close as our breath but hard to "see." Was there a time that you or your child can recall recently when the Holy Spirit transformed you? What was that like? Did other people see it or feel it, too?