



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

LESSONS FROM THE LITURGICAL CALENDAR *Ascension Day*

Summary of Today's Story

For forty days after his death, Jesus appears to his apostles and promises them the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Then Jesus is taken up to heaven while they watch.

Where You'll Find Today's Story

In the Bible

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version* Bible.

Acts 1:1-11

In Children's Bibles

If you plan to use a children's Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers of today's story in the space below.

In Our Sunday Lectionary

Today's story is told in church on the following days:

Year A: Ascension Day

Seventh Sunday of Easter

Year B: Ascension Day

Year C: Ascension Day



Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

There are times when God “disappears” to put us on our own. God wants persons, not puppets. And yet there is a sense in which Jesus did not go away at all.

Jesus is God with us (Emmanuel), which means that the reality of God’s presence is tied to the very existence of Jesus, not just to his acts or his miracles or his teachings. As he ascends into heaven, he brings us with him.

Jesus had said to his disciples (and to us), “I will be with you to the end of the age.” Where he had once dwelt among them, he now dwelt within them. In some ways, he was more real than he was before. They could reach him wherever they were, in a deeper and more abiding relationship.

And so it is with us. Jesus dwells within us. Though we have never seen or known Jesus in the flesh, as his disciples did, Jesus is as much with us now as he was with them at his ascension. When he ascends to heaven, he becomes available to all of us, at all times and in all places. His ascension signifies the total assurance and fulfillment of his promise to us. He has made our reconciliation with God happen; his work is complete, so he can now join his Father in heaven.

Jesus’ ascension into heaven is not the end of the story for us, but the beginning. Jesus promises us that the Holy Spirit will be with us.



The Episcopal Thread

Ascension Day falls on a Thursday, forty days after Jesus’ resurrection. This follows the biblical text which says that Jesus walked on the earth as the risen Christ for forty days before he ascended into heaven.

Even though Ascension Day falls on a weekday, it is one of the seven Principal Feasts observed in the Church. Hymns sung in honor of this day are found on pages 214-222 in *The Hymnal 1982* (New York, NY: Church Publishing, 1985) and are often sung on the Sunday between Ascension Day and Pentecost, so are very familiar: “Hail the day that sees him rise” (Hymn 214); “See the Conqueror mounts in triumph” (Hymn 215); “Hail thee, festival day!” (Hymn 216).



Gathering

As the children enter the classroom, engage them in a simple activity that relates to

today's lesson. For the younger children you might set out a story box with items that tell the Easter story or a box of church items for the children to play with. Or you might have them mold something out of play dough or draw pictures until the rest of the children arrive.

As another option, you might have the younger children make stick puppets of the apostles, which they can use during storytelling time. You'll find directions and patterns on pages 11-12 in the activity section at the end of this lesson.

On page 8, you'll find a Gathering Activity that the older children might enjoy. Or you might simply allow them a brief social time, during which they can renew friendships, share news and just be together.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer.



Telling the Story

Today's story is a story full of awe.

Keep this sense as you tell the story, either reading it aloud from a children's Bible or telling it in your

own words. If you tell the story in your own words, you can make it come alive by setting it in the present tense. Or tell the story as if you were one of the apostles present with Jesus. Put wonder and awe into your voice as you speak and use hand motions. For other ways to enhance the story, see pages 2-3 in the Appendix, also available to download.

In today's story, the apostles watch as Jesus ascends to heaven. If children made stick puppets during Gathering time, invite them to use their puppets as you tell the story.

Do not stop to analyze or discuss the story at this time. For now, let the story sink into the children's minds and hearts. Later, while having snacks or doing an activity, you can bring up the story again and invite the children to talk about it.



Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your classroom.

Materials

small table with a cloth to cover it
 2 candles or a single large Christ candle
 matches
 Bible
 cross
optional: flowers (real, fake or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles.

Read one or two verses from today's scripture to help the children connect the story that they just heard with the Bible. If working with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses.

Suggestions for the reading:

For younger children: Acts 1:9

For older children: Acts 1:9 or 1:9-11

Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

Reader: A reading from the book of Acts. (*Read the selected passage.*)

Reader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Invite prayers of thanks for God's work in our lives during the past week. Encourage the children to mention any ways, large or small, that they have noticed God's guidance. You may offer your own prayers of thanks as an example.
- Welcome prayers of concern or petition. Children may offer prayers for themselves or for others who are sick or in need or trouble. Encourage the children to share their concerns for friends or family members who they know are going through difficult times. Share your own concerns and bring them to God for God's care.
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks for these special times.
- End the prayer time by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



Sharing

Pass out snacks and say a simple grace, such as:

Bless this food, Lord God, and the hands that prepared it. Let this food nourish us that we may nourish others, in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Or:

May God—the one who comes to us—bless our meal and help us to see his coming in every single moment of our lives. *Amen.*

—adapted from *One Hundred Table Graces*, p. 73
(NY: Bell Tower, 1992)

Or invite one child to lead the class in a table grace learned from home or camp or elsewhere.

This is an excellent time, while sharing a snack, to begin talking about the story that the children have just heard. Encourage the children to enter into the story and the experiences of the apostles as they watch Jesus go up to heaven and hear the news about his ascension from the “two men dressed in white.”

You might ask:

- Is Jesus really gone from us?
- How is he still with us?

Note that at the same time that Jesus promises us the Holy Spirit, he also commands us to use the power of the Spirit to witness to the rest of the earth.

Discuss:

- What does that mean?
- How can we witness to Jesus?



Memorization

There is no memorization for lesson.



Weaving Our Faith

As the class draws to a close, take a few minutes to help the children summarize the story and say what they learned today by asking questions such as:

- What was our story about today?
- What happened to Jesus?
- What did he promise us?
- What did he tell us to do?

Encourage the children to remember key words from the story, such as: *ascension* (which needs to be defined for them), *heaven*, *Holy Spirit*, *witness* (which also needs to be defined).



Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into

the church worship service or back to their homes with the knowledge of God's guidance and love. The prayer can be very simple, such as this one:

- Lord God, we thank you for being here with us today and for sending your Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit for us. Send us now back to our families, that we may love them as you love us, in Jesus' name. *Amen*.

End the class with a dismissal that is used in church, such as:

- The peace of the Lord be always with you.

The children respond:

- And always with you!

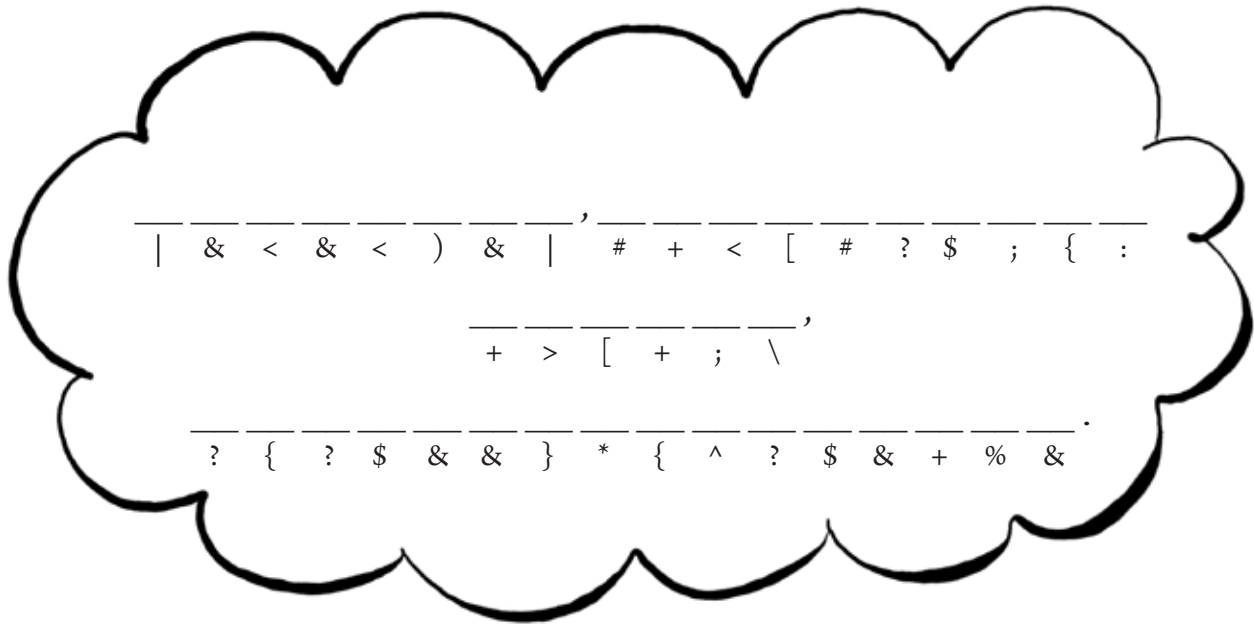


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GATHERING ACTIVITY: JESUS GIVES US GOOD NEWS

Jesus loves us all, and he wants us to know that. What did he tell us before he went to join God in heaven? Use the code below to discover and write the message in the cloud.

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)	B	#	I	{	O]	V
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WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

ASCENSION MOBILE for Elementary

Children make mobiles that remind them of Jesus' ascension into heaven.

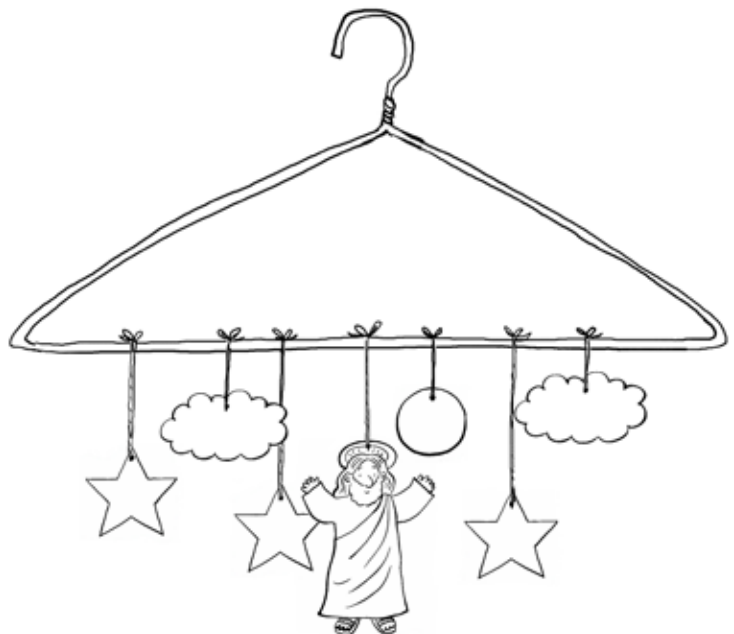
Materials:

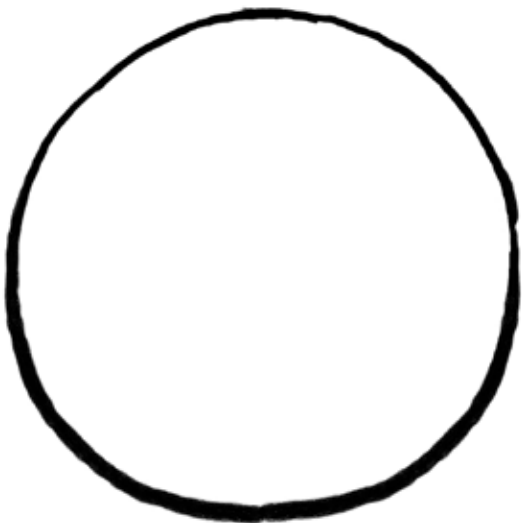
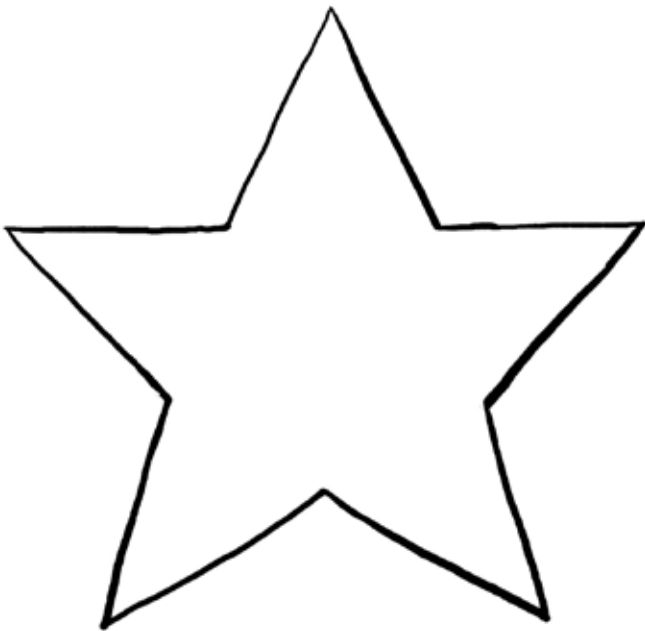
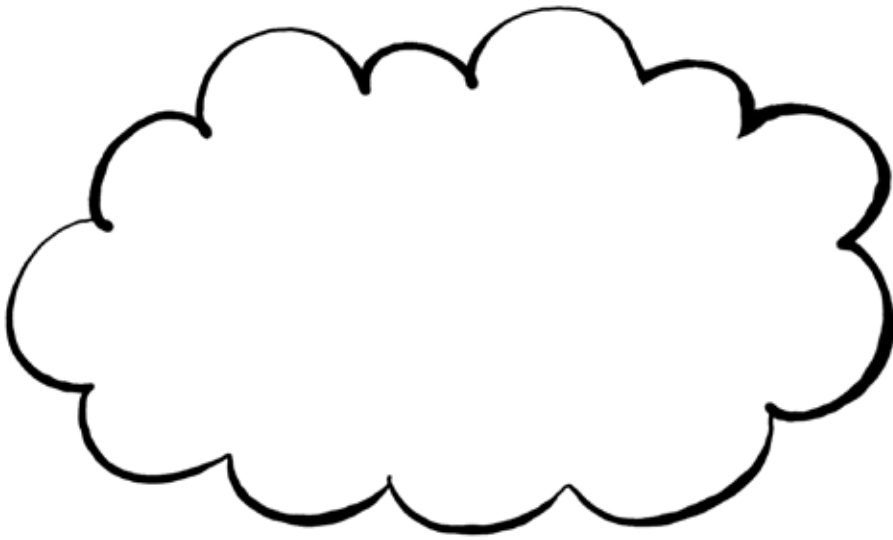
white poster board or construction paper
patterns (p. 10), 1 per child
scissors
cotton balls or pillow stuffing
gold glitter or glitter glue
glue
string, filament thread or yarn
hole punch
markers or crayons
clothes hanger, 2 sticks or embroidery hoop

Directions:

Invite each child to make an Ascension Mobile. Give children these directions:

1. Make/draw these figures and cut them out: Jesus, sun, moon, stars and clouds (p. 10).
2. Glue the cotton balls or pillow stuffing on the clouds.
3. Color/decorate the other cutouts. Put glitter on the sun and stars.
4. Punch a hole at the top of each figure and tie a thread to each.
5. If using two sticks, tie these together with thread, string or yarn. Hang the figures from the hanger, sticks or hoop, placing Jesus in the middle.







WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

STICK PUPPETS for Preschool

Children make stick puppets of Jesus and his disciples.

Materials:

- copies of picture of Jesus and disciples (p. 12)
- craft sticks
- crayons or markers
- glue
- scissors

Preparation:

Make enough copies of the picture of Jesus and his disciples so that there is at least one figure for each child. You may need to cut these figures out, or outline an oval shape around each figure and let the children cut around the outline.

Directions:

Distribute at least one figure to each child and invite them to make a puppet on a stick.

1. If you haven't already done so, have each child cut out and color at least one figure. If there are enough figures and sufficient time, it might be nice to let each child make one Jesus and one disciple puppet.
2. Glue a figure onto a craft stick, leaving room at the bottom of the stick for the child to hold it.
3. If possible, use these stick puppets during storytelling time.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

ASCENSION DAY PARTY

for Preschool, Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Children take part in a picnic commemorating Jesus' ascension into heaven.

Materials:

bubble-blowing materials
picnic food
napkins
optional: kites

Preparation:

Plan an Ascension Day picnic to celebrate with your class. Get bubbles for blowing, kites for flying and finger food for eating! Scout out a grassy or other pleasant spot outside the church, on a hilltop or in an open space nearby.

Directions:

Invite the children to celebrate Jesus' return to heaven. Provide some direction with regard to the activities to follow. Help the younger children as needed.

1. Suggested activities: fly kites, blow bubbles and have some snacks. A symbolic "cloud" treat, such as pudding with whipped topping or baked meringues would be fun.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

DECORATE YOUR CHURCH FOR ASCENSION DAY

for Preschool, Primary, Elementary

Children decorate their classroom or church with visual reminders (clouds and relevant scripture) that recall the ascension.

Materials:

large white paper
pillow fiber or newspaper
butcher paper
glue or stapler
tape or tacks
scissors
thread or string
hole punch

Directions:

Invite children to decorate the classroom or church for Ascension Day. Help the younger children as needed.

1. Cut large cloud shapes from the white paper.
2. Glue pillow fiber to the paper clouds. Or, to make full, pillow-like clouds, make two similar/matching cloud shapes from the white paper, staple around the edges and stuff with crumpled newspaper before stapling the open end.
3. Make a hole in the clouds and thread the string or thread through, and then hang them from the ceiling of your church classroom, in the hallway or other appropriate area.
4. On the butcher paper, write any (or all) of these scriptures:
 - *... as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight (Acts 1:9).*
 - *And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).*
 - *This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).*

Hang the butcher paper for all to see.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

PROMISE KEY CHAINS for Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

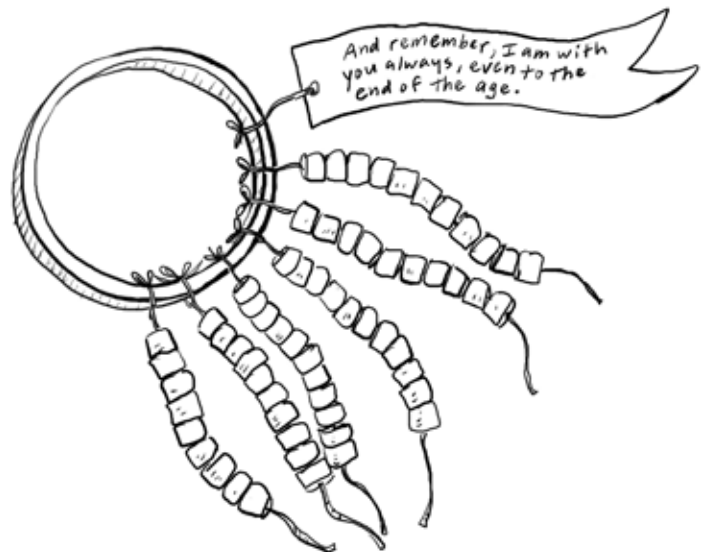
Children make key chains to symbolize and carry God's presence with them. (*The passage from Matthew 28:16–20 tells of God's living presence, what he asks of us and what he promises in return. Children can carry this promise with them on the key chain.*)

Materials:

- plain metal key chain hoop or any key chain
- 6 rainbow-colored beads per child: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet
- plastic string
- white paper
- pens, pencils or fine-tip markers
- clear adhesive shelf paper
- scissors
- hole punch

Directions:

1. Cut the string into six lengths, approximately 6" long, for each child.
2. Knot one end of each string. To make a rainbow design, thread one color bead, in the order above, onto each of the six strings. Or, thread one of each color bead, in the order above, onto a single string. Tie the string(s) to the key chain.
3. Cut a small piece of paper, approximately 1" x 4". On the paper, write these words: *And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age* (Matthew 28:20). Cover with the clear shelf paper. Make a hole, tie a string through the paper and attach to the keychain.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

RAINBOWS OF PROMISE for Primary, Elementary

Children create rainbows with Jesus' words, promising to be with us always.

Material:

- 6 strands of rainbow-colored yarn per child: red, orange, yellow, green, blue and violet
- pillow fiber
- glue
- clear adhesive shelf paper
- paper
- markers, pencils or pens
- scissors

Preparation:

Cut the adhesive paper to approximately 5" x 8", two pieces per child. Cut at least one strand of each color yarn per child; for a fuller rainbow, you may choose to cut several strands of each color.

Directions:

Distribute the adhesive paper to each child and invite them to create a rainbow of promise.

1. On the nonsticky side, draw a rainbow shape.
2. Peel away the backing, being careful not to let the paper stick to itself. Lay it on the table, adhesive side up.
3. Show the children how to apply the yarn, in the order above, to the rainbow pattern on the sticky side of the adhesive.
4. At the base of the rainbow, place pillow fiber for clouds.
5. On a piece of paper, write these words:
And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20) Cut this paper to the desired size and place it on the rainbow design.
6. Place a second piece of clear adhesive paper over the finished design to seal and protect the contents.

