

Lesson Plans that Work
Year C– First Sunday after the Epiphany
Lesson Plans for Older Children
RCL Old Testament Readings – Track One

Scripture: Isaiah 43:1-7

Background: In the Sundays after Epiphany, we will hear from a variety of prophets, each speaking to God’s relationship with the people. Although these prophets were speaking to a particular circumstance in a specific time and place, their words are helpful reminders to us today about our own relationship with God. Prophets seek to change the minds and behaviors of their audience.

A Notation for This Week: This passage from “Second Isaiah” was written during the Babylonian Exile, just as the possibility for return to their homeland was first appearing. The words are meant to be comforting and to provide reassurance that God is still with them and things will get better. Through Isaiah, God reminds the people of God’s constant presence and care, even when the people have strayed and disobeyed. Since this might be a day for Baptisms, one may also make the connection to our own living in covenant with God and God’s continued presence in our lives and those of the baptismal candidates.

Theme: I Have Called You by Name, You are Mine

Before Class: You will need paper, markers, and art supplies as well as a copy of today’s reading from the Common English Bible (<http://www.commonenglishbible.com>). Decide how you want to incorporate music into this lesson. Locate music (and musicians if desired) and learn the songs. If you plan to do the Name Buddies activity, locate people who share names (first or last) with each child.

Beginning: Play or sing the song “Hush, Hush, Somebody’s calling my name” from Lift Every Voice and Sing (LEVAS). It might be a challenge to teach this song, so you might want to simply pull it up on YouTube to play for the class, or you could invite in a choir director or member to sing it and talk about it a little bit.

Opening Prayer: O Lord, you know each one of us and call us by name. Help us to share your love with others, and to remember that you are always here for us. Amen.

The Story: Isaiah 43:1-7

Consider reading this from the Common English Bible which can be found here: <http://www.commonenglishbible.com>.

As you read the passage to the children, ask them to listen for one word or phrase that brings them comfort or makes them feel good. Encourage the children to share their word or phrase with the rest of the group. Optional - read the passage again and invite people to raise their hand when they hear “their” word or phrase.

Reflection Questions:

- I wonder what surprised you in this reading?
- I wonder what emotions you felt when you heard this?
- I wonder how the people of God felt when they heard it?
- I wonder how God knows everyone's name?
- I wonder if you know where your name came from?
- I wonder why names are so important?

Activities:

Art: Name Buddy Letters: encourage the children to write letters to someone who shares their name (either first or last). Have them use words and phrases from today's passage in their letters. Have them decorate the margins with bright colors (somewhat like an illuminated manuscript).

If your church will be celebrating baptism today, have the children create illustrated letters of encouragement for those being presented for baptism.

Movement: Have the children work together to use their bodies to spell out each child's name. Each person can form their body into a letter on the ground. Take a quick photo with your cell phone or iPad to show the children what they looked like! For added fun, have each group create a cheer for that name.

Challenge for the Week: Invite the children to ask their families the story of their names. How were those names chosen? Who else do they know with that name?

If your church is celebrating baptisms, have the children ask their families about their own baptism memories and traditions.

Closing Prayer: Teach the children how to use a verse from this passage as a breath prayer. (This idea is from Carolyn Brown's *Worshipping with Children* blog.)

Breathe in while saying, "I have called you by name." Breathe out while saying, "You are mine." Practice saying it together. Imagine saying it when you have done something really fine or are having a great day.

Share a closing prayer in which you call each person by name. It can be as simple as: "Thank you God, for (insert the children's names here) and for being with all of us every day. Amen."

Sing: Be Not Afraid (Wonder, Love and Praise) - this song works well with the verses spoken by a good reader and the refrain sung by everyone or "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" in LEVAS.

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