

*Mic. 5:2–5a*  
*Luke 1:46b–55*  
*Heb. 10:5–10*  
*Luke 1:39–45*  
*(46–55)*

# Joyful Waiting

**Goal for the Session**      *Children will enter into the joy of Mary and Elizabeth and plan to tell the good news.*

## ■ P R E P A R I N G   F O R   T H E   S E S S I O N

### Focus on Luke 1:39–45 (46–55)

#### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Stephen A. Cooper

In the encounter of Mary and Elizabeth, Elizabeth becomes the first human witness to the good news the angel brought Mary in the annunciation (1:26–38). Both women are pregnant with significance, for between them they bear the messenger and the message. Through narrative, speech, and song of praise the characters in this lection prophetically proclaim the gospel: God is working salvation for us in Jesus. The meeting between these two women is about the confirmation of hope, the fulfillment of a promise. The rest of the gospel makes explicit the means and nature of that fulfillment through Jesus’ teachings, parables, healings, death, and resurrection.

#### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Robert Redman

The Magnificat rounds off this celebration of God’s goodness by recalling God’s covenant faithfulness to Israel (v. 55). The covenant of God with God’s people is the golden thread that binds together the Old Testament and the New Testament, the old Israel and the new Israel: “I will walk among you, and will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Lev. 26:12). The best hope of the Christian in every age finds its voice in Mary’s song, and it has rested securely on this: God is good, and God keeps promises.

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Michael S. Bennett

The development of hope within community takes time. How many Marys and Elizabeths (or Zechariahs and Josephs) might there be sitting in the pews, awaiting an opportunity to connect more deeply with the people around them? How many long to connect their small story with the larger stories of God? How might our churches encourage the cycle of recognition and response that widens the reach of the Holy Spirit? Much can be learned from sitting quietly with our brothers and sisters as the world pushes us relentlessly toward a louder, larger, and ever more expensive December 25.

#### NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Charles L. Campbell

Mary’s song, her Magnificat, gives voice to this subversive incarnation that she and Elizabeth embody. Indeed, the fact that Mary sings the Magnificat is itself odd and subversive. This young, unwed, pregnant woman—a thoroughly marginal person in her culture—proclaims one of the most important prophetic words in Scripture. The image is extraordinary, even comical: young, pregnant Mary gives voice to a song for the ages, a song that invites us beyond our realistic expectations and our numb imaginations. She herself seems amazed at what has happened, as her opening words indicate. And the rest of her song announces the larger implications of the upside-down world God has inaugurated.

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

*Luke 1:39–45  
(46–55)*

## Focus on Your Teaching

Christmas is almost here! Children are about to burst with excitement and anticipation. But are there some children for whom these are difficult times: a divorce, a death, a job loss, family stress? Keeping the focus on the birth of Jesus can help all children approach Christmas with joy. The options in Responding provide take-home projects to extend that focus to the family. The story for the children includes the annunciation of the births of John and Jesus to place the visit of the expectant mothers in context.

*God of life and love, may my preparations for Christmas be centered on the birth of Jesus so that I can be present to these children in whatever way they need. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- blue or purple cloth
- artificial evergreen wreath
- 4 battery-powered candles
- offering plate
- Bible
- Color Pack 6, 7, 8, 27
- Resource Sheet 1
- copies of Resource Sheets 2 and 3, printed back-to-back
- scissors, tape
- colored pencils
- 1" x 8½" blue or purple paper strip, paper chain started Dec. 2
- Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019; CD player

For Responding

- option 1: card stock, markers
- option 2: boxes (cereal boxes, gift boxes, tissue boxes), construction paper, newsprint, markers, tape or glue
- option 4: Color Pack 28; *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019; CD player

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, make an example of the folding book on Resource Sheets 2 and 3 (Reversible Folding Story, Front; and Reversible Folding Story, Back). Be sure these resource sheets are copied back-to-back! For option 2 in Responding, you may want to cover the boxes for the children.

Greet each child. Invite early arrivals to help you set up a worship space with a blue or purple cloth, the paper chain from December 2, an evergreen wreath with four candles inside it or around it, an offering basket, and a Bible open to the Gospel of Luke.

When everything is ready, gather the children around the worship space. Find out what they remember about Advent: it ends on Christmas Day, it is a time to prepare for the coming of Jesus, and the color for Advent is purple or blue. Lead the following Advent litany:

**Leader:** Prepare the way for God!

All: Come, Lord Jesus.

**Leader:** Today we light all four candles on the Advent wreath.  
And we pray,

All: Come, Lord Jesus.

**Leader:** The waiting seems long and we cry out,

All: Come, Lord Jesus.

**Leader:** Show us your path, God. Teach us your ways. You save us, and we wait for you.

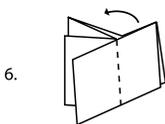
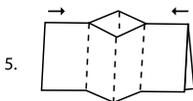
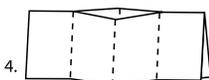
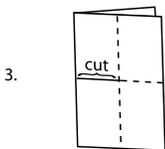
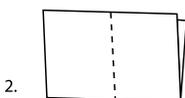
Show the group Color Pack 6. Ask:

✠ Why do you think these children are so happy?

✠ What makes you really happy?

Suggest that they listen for two happy women in the Bible story.

If your group is mostly younger children, invite some teens or adults to help with the books.



## EXPLORING

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship table, keeping it open at Luke. Ask the child to turn to Luke 3. Recall with the group the story of the man, John the baptizer, from the two previous sessions. Then, have the child turn to Luke 1, where the story for this session is found. Explain that this story is before the births of John and Jesus. Tell the story using Resource Sheet 1 (Waiting for Their Babies).

Review the story by looking at Color Pack 7 and 8. Ask:

☞ What parts of the story do these pictures show?

Tell the children that they are going to make books that tell the story of Elizabeth and Mary's visit. Distribute scissors, colored pencils, and two-sided copies made from Resource Sheets 2 and 3 (Reversible Folding Story, Front; and Reversible Folding Story, Back). Show them how to fold the paper, waiting to move to the next step until everyone is ready.

1. Fold the paper in half lengthwise, then in half again. Open it flat.
2. Fold the paper in half crosswise, then in half again. Open it flat.
3. Again, fold the paper in half crosswise. Cut along the solid line, being careful to stop at the end of the cutting line. Open the paper.
4. Fold the paper in half again along the lengthwise crease line, with the Elizabeth and Mary story on the outside.
5. Holding each end of the fold, gently push toward the middle until the center sections move away from each other and form two separate page folds.
6. Bring the outside sections around the center sections to form a book.

When the books are completed, read the story aloud as the children follow in their books. Provide colored pencils so they can add illustrations and decorations. Show them how to refold their books to reveal the story of Christmas, and have them color the illustrations.

When it is time to move to Responding, ask:

- ☞ How can you use your book to tell the good news of Jesus to someone else?  
 ☞ How else can you tell and celebrate the good news of Jesus' birth?

## RESPONDING

Offer at least two options so children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest older children who can work on their own.

1. **Christmas Table Tent** Children can tell the good news of Jesus' birth to any who come to their homes. Give each child a sheet of card stock. Have him or her fold it in half crosswise and create a hard crease by going over the crease with a ruler or hard object. Provide markers for the children to write a message about the birth of Jesus and to decorate the table tents. As they work, talk about where they might place the table tent at home.

EASY  
PREP

2. **Blessing Box** As families spend time together over the Christmas holidays, they can use a blessing box to speak and pray blessings for one another and others. Any kind of box will do. Each child will need a box to cover with construction paper, or you can cover the boxes in advance of the session. Brainstorm words of blessing that are especially appropriate for the Twelve Days of Christmas. For example, phrases from Mary's song in Luke 1:46–55 or the story on Resource Sheet 1 or short prayers that the children write could be used. Print their ideas on newsprint so they can copy them on their boxes with markers. Additional decorations can be added. The children can write Christmas blessings on paper strips and place them in the boxes. When they are finished, talk together about how their families can use the boxes between Christmas and Epiphany (January 6).
  
3. **Feeding Hungry People** Mary's song speaks of God feeding people who are hungry. If the group is participating in an Advent project that includes hunger programs, read aloud Luke 1:53a. If possible, tally what the children and their families have given to feed hungry people in your community. Pray for those who contributed and the people who will receive the food.

#### Dance and Sing

Dance and sing, for God  
 will be with you,  
 Glory, hallelujah!  
 Dance and sing, for God  
 will be with you,  
 Glory, hallelujah!

Chorus:  
 Dance and sing for joy,  
 Glory, hallelujah!  
 Dance and sing for joy,  
 Glory, hallelujah!

*Repeat verse and chorus (1x)*  
*Repeat chorus (3x)*

#### O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, O come,  
 Emmanuel,  
 And ransom captive Israel,  
 That mourns in lonely exile  
 here  
 Until the Son of God  
 appears.

Rejoice! Rejoice!  
 Emmanuel shall come to  
 thee, O Israel!

If your group is not supporting a hunger program, perhaps you can tell the children about one so their families can donate to it. Children always remember more when you tell a story. Talk with church members who work in the program to get information about it and the people it serves.

4. **Song** Christians have praised God with song and dance for centuries. What better time than the birth of Christ to show this joy? Play “Dance and Sing” (Color Pack 28; track 4 on *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019) and invite the children to clap to the beat. Then have them sing “Glory, hallelujah!” each time. Add “Dance and sing for joy” in the chorus. Finally, add “Dance and sing, for God will be with you” in the verse. Conclude by singing the whole song and clapping.

#### CLOSING

Gather at the worship space. Light all four Advent candles. Recall that the first Advent candle reminds us of encouragement or hope; the second one, to get ready for Jesus; the third one, to give to others; and the fourth one, that God loves us. Add a blue or purple paper link to the church year paper chain.

Sing together “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel” (Color Pack 27; track 13 on *Singing the Feast*, 2018–2019).

Pray: *God, teach us your ways. We wait for you all day long. Amen.*

Invite the children to respond: *Come, Lord Jesus.*

Say good-bye to each child, with this blessing: “(Name), you belong to God.”

December 23, 2018  
Joyful Waiting

Multi-Age  
Resource Sheet 1

## Waiting for Their Babies based on Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)



First, there was Zechariah and Elizabeth, a couple too old to have children, or so they thought. The angel Gabriel told Zechariah when he was on duty in the temple that his wife, Elizabeth, would have a baby boy. They were to name the baby John. Now they are waiting for the baby to be born.

Second, there was Mary, a teenage woman, who lived in Nazareth. She was engaged to Joseph. But out of nowhere the angel Gabriel told her that she was going to have a baby boy. She was to name the baby Jesus. Now she is waiting for the baby to be born.

Elizabeth and Mary are related, but we aren't sure how. Before Gabriel leaves Mary, he tells her that Elizabeth will have a baby boy, too.

Zechariah and Elizabeth lived in the hill country of Judea. Mary decided to visit them. Now this wasn't a walk next door for a cup of tea. No, it was a long walk, and Mary stayed for months.

When Mary got to their home, she called to Elizabeth. How surprised Elizabeth must have been! In those days, you couldn't e-mail and say, "I'm coming to see you next week."

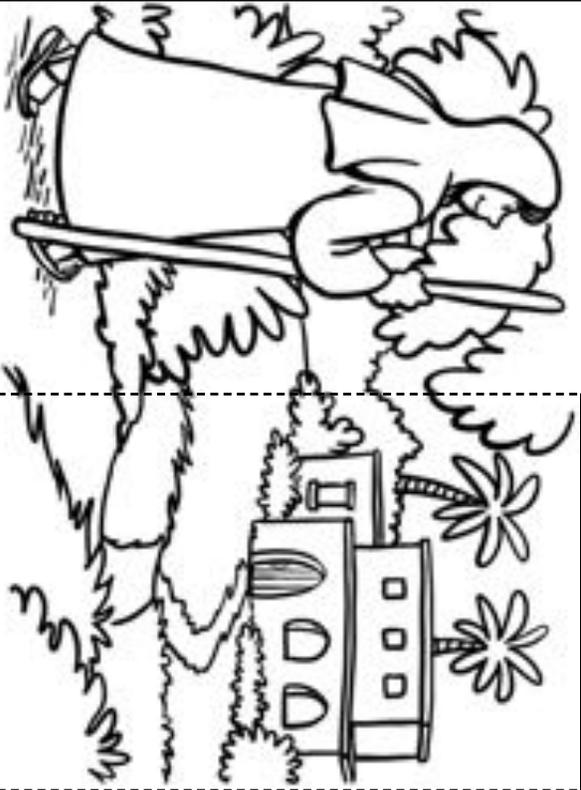
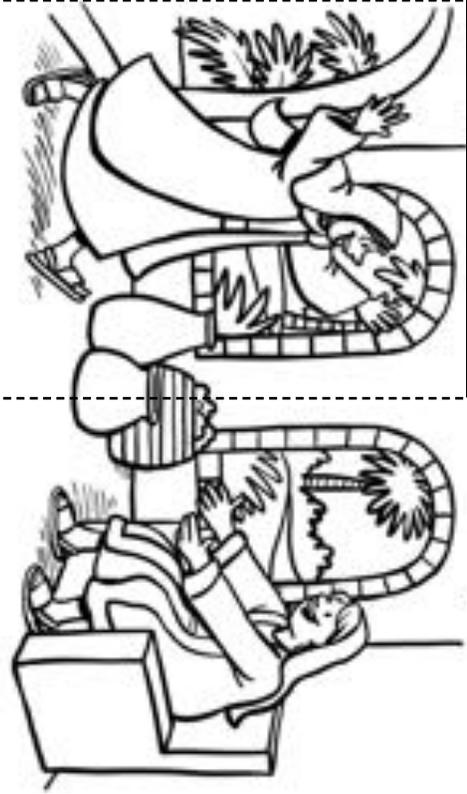
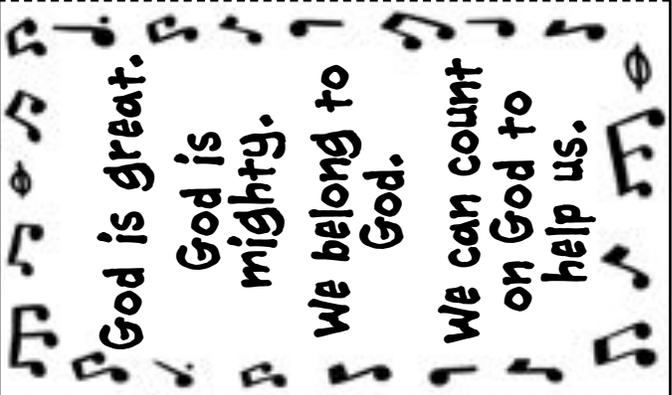
When Elizabeth heard Mary's voice, the baby boy inside Elizabeth jumped. And at that moment, Elizabeth was filled with God's Holy Spirit.

"God has blessed you above all women," Elizabeth shouted. "Your baby is blessed, too. How honored I am that you have come to me. My baby leaped with joy inside me when I heard your voice."

Mary praised God with all her heart,  
God is great.  
God is mighty.  
We belong to God.  
We can count on God to help us.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months. Then she went back to Nazareth.

**Reversible Folding Story, Front**

 <p>Mary walked a long way to visit Elizabeth. Elizabeth was so happy to see Mary!</p>	<p><b>Mary Visits Elizabeth</b></p> 
 <p>Mary and Elizabeth were waiting for their babies to be born. Elizabeth's baby would be John. Mary's baby would be God's Son, Jesus.</p>	<p><i>cut</i></p>  <p>God is great. God is mighty. We belong to God. We can count on God to help us.</p>  <p>Mary sang a song about God's power and love.</p>

## Reversible Folding Story, Back

		<h1>The Christmas Story</h1> <p>As you look at this book, tell the story of Jesus' birth in your own words or have someone read Luke 2:1-20 as you point to the pictures.</p>
		<h2>Hallelujah! Jesus is born!</h2>   