



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

LESSONS FROM THE LITURGICAL CALENDAR *The Season of Epiphany*

On the first Sunday after Christmas you may teach a lesson on the overall season of Epiphany.

Summary of Today's Story

The season of Epiphany is about celebrating how God has shown God's own self to us through the person, acts and teachings of Jesus.

In this lesson on the season of Epiphany, you can focus on the meaning of the season, the kinds of stories that are told and why they are important for us.

The Epiphany recognizes and celebrates several things, all connected with the beginnings of Jesus Christ's work of manifesting (revealing) God.

The Feast of Epiphany refers first to **the coming of the Wise Men** to Jesus. Here we celebrate the revelation of Jesus Christ to the whole world. This is a celebration of the mystery of promise. The mysterious Magi bring their symbolic gifts and offer them to the holy child, as we sing in this hymn:

*Sacred gifts of mystic meaning,
Incense doth their God disclose,
Gold the King of kings proclaimeth,
Myrrh his sepulcher foreshows.*

—Hymn 127, *The Hymnal 1982*
(New York, NY: Church Publishing, 1985)

When We Celebrate

The day of Epiphany is January 6, when we celebrate the coming of the Wise Men to Jesus. This celebration ushers in the season of Epiphany, which may last anywhere from three to eight weeks.

The season of Epiphany is connected with the incarnational cycle of the Church year—that is, it is tied to Christmas rather than to Easter. Thus, we count the weeks after the Epiphany until we bump into the season of Lent. Because the date of Easter varies, so does the date of the first day of Lent, and that, in turn, determines when the season of Epiphany ends.

Secondly, Epiphany recognizes the **baptism of our Lord** by John the Baptist. This is the day when Jesus became known to all, not when he was born but when he was baptized and proclaimed by God as “My beloved Son.”

Thirdly, in Epiphany we hear of **Jesus’ first miracle**, which is told in John’s Gospel, at the wedding in Cana. John says, “This deed...is the first of the signs by which Jesus revealed his glory and led his disciples to believe in him” (John 2:11).

Fourthly, the glorious manifestation of Jesus as the Son of God is told in the story of **the Transfiguration**. The gospel reading on the Last Sunday after the Epiphany is always the story of the Transfiguration of Jesus.

The common theme of all these events is Jesus Christ’s manifesting God to humans. In this way, Epiphany has a deeper meaning than Christmas, for instead of simply celebrating the birth of Christ, it testifies to the whole purpose of the incarnation: the manifestation of God in Jesus Christ beginning with his birth (and recognition by the Magi) and with his baptism and ministry (James F. White, *Introduction to Christian Worship*, Revised edition, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990, p. 66.)

During these weeks in Epiphany, we hear of Jesus’ mighty signs (miracles) and teachings as he lives out this manifestation of God. As we hear these stories, we commemorate those works and teachings of Jesus which led up to the final events in Jerusalem—his death and resurrection.



The Episcopal Thread

Epiphany is one of the seven principal feast days of the church year. (For the other six, see *The Book of Common Prayer*, p. 15.) We take this season seriously, celebrating it with a solemn joy.

Our observance of this season is characteristic of the Anglican love of the marking of liturgical time, which we take from our Celtic Christian heritage. The Celtic Christians of the 4th-6th centuries hallowed both time and space as dimensions of the divine, and we too, as Anglican and Episcopal inheritors of that tradition, take joy in the seasons of the Christian year and our places of worship.

Many of our beloved hymns are special to the Epiphany season. They can be found on pages 116 to 139 of *The Hymnal 1982* (New York, NY: Church Publishing, 1985).



Gathering

As the children arrive, welcome them back to church school after the Christmas season.

This would be a good time to encourage them to briefly share their Christmas stories with each other.

For young children, a good introduction to this lesson would be to have available (1) a nativity scene with the Three Kings, and (2) things associated with baptism, such as a doll with water and shell as a pretend baptismal font.

Older children always enjoy a fellowship time. Today they will have lots to catch up on and stories to share with each other.

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

Tell briefly what the Epiphany season is about—celebrating how God has shown God's own self to us through the person, acts and teachings of Jesus.

The stories of this season are covered in the lessons from the Bible, but you may give a brief summary of them, explaining how they fit into the theme of the season (see the Summary of Today's Story on pp. 1-2). The stories that are told in church during the season of Epiphany include:

- the visit of the Wise Men
- Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River
- Jesus' first miracle at the wedding in Cana
- Jesus' transfiguration

(The story of the miracle at Cana will not be taught during this year because it is told in the Gospel of John, which is taught in Year 2. We are teaching the Gospel of Matthew in this year's curriculum, Year 1).

Here are other topics that you may include:

- *The color of Epiphany:* The liturgical color of the season is traditionally green, the color of living things and of God's creation.
- *Naming the days:* The day of Epiphany is January 6, when we celebrate the coming of the Wise Men to Jesus. The first Sunday following this date is called the *First Sunday after the Epiphany*. We continue with the *Sundays after Epiphany* until Ash Wednesday and Lent.
- *How we celebrate:* To celebrate the coming of the Magi to honor Jesus, we often have an Epiphany party or feast in the church. A "king's cake" is baked, filled with coins or perhaps a single coin. The finder becomes *king* for the evening. We also celebrate Jesus' baptism on the first Sunday after the Epiphany, traditionally performing baptisms in the church at this time.

You'll find more information on Epiphany in the separate document titled *Epiphany/Lent Overview*.

After telling the children about the season of Epiphany and its stories, proceed to Prayer, saving any discussion for later, while having snacks or doing an activity.



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. Then light the candles.

Read one or two verses from the lectionary reading for this Sunday. This will 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, though we recommend keeping the reading short.

Note: The church staff will be able to provide you with the lectionary reading for today, the First Sunday after Christmas. The reading can also be found in the Prayer Book under The Lectionary on pages 889-931.

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 (*name of book*): (*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 the work that God has done for us during the past week. Allow children to share the ways in which they have been guided by God or felt God's presence in their lives.
- Welcome prayers asking for God's help in healing, reconciliation or presence in time of trouble. Children may offer prayers for themselves, for family members or friends or for those in the community in need whom they do not know, such as the hungry and the homeless.
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks that we can celebrate these special times with one another in our church family.
- 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:

- For the good food which God has given us, and for the hands that prepared it, we thank you, God.
Amen.

While the children are sharing a snack, invite them to share their sense of Epiphany and what we are celebrating.



Memorization

There is no memorization for this lesson.



Weaving Our Faith

Before your closing prayer, help the children pull the strands of this lesson together by asking questions such as:

- What was today's lesson about?
- What stories did we hear about today? What do they tell us?
- What did we learn about the season of Epiphany?

To help the children recall the main points of the lesson, you may prompt them with key words, such as: *light, glory, baptism, miracle, coming of Wise Men, manifest.*



Closing Prayer

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

the church worship service or back to their homes wrapped in the love of Christ. The prayer can be very simple, such as this one:

- Loving God, you let your Son Jesus Christ be known to all the world, so everyone can love him and follow him and praise him all the days of our lives. Stay with us, we pray, as we return to our families, and keep us in the knowledge and love of you and of your Son Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

End the class with a dismissal that we say in church, such as:

- The peace of the Lord be always with you.

The children respond:

- And also with you.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

EPIPHANY LANTERNS

for Preschool, Primary, Elementary

Children make decorative Epiphany lanterns.

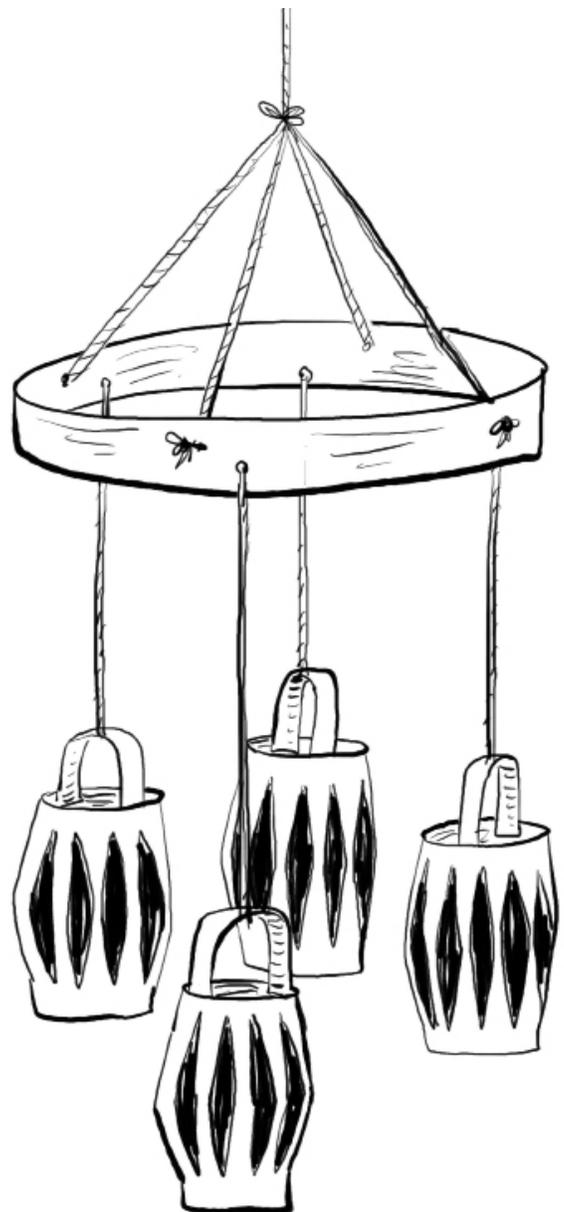
Materials:

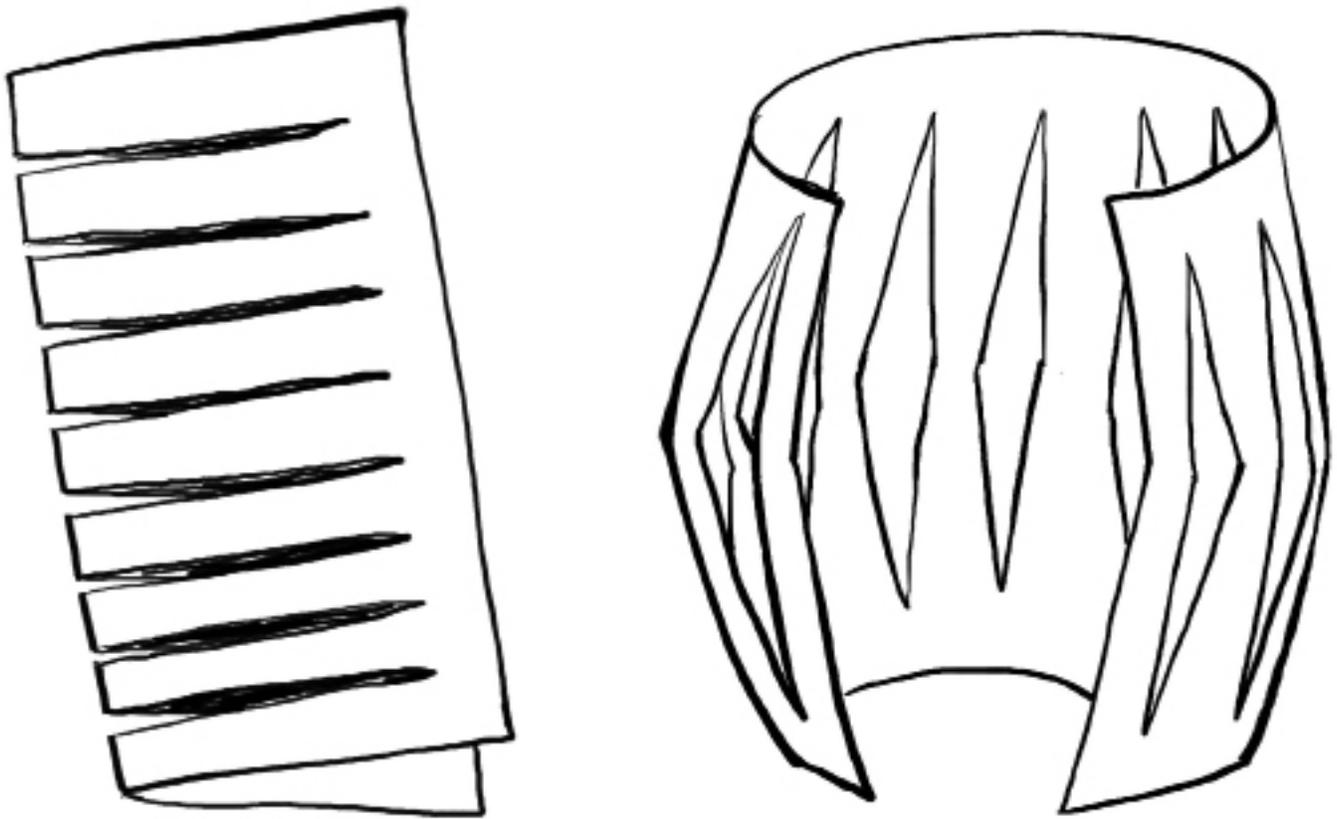
construction paper, assorted colors
scissors
glue
stapler
markers or crayons
optional: glitter or glitter glue
other decorative items, such as sequins, ribbons or “jewels”
poster board (variation, for older children)
string or thread
hole punch

Directions:

Invite each child to make a lantern. Help the younger children as needed.

1. Give a piece of construction paper to each child and ask them to fold it in half from top to bottom (that is, horizontally).
2. Show the children how to cut slits starting at the folded side, almost to the edge of the paper, and evenly spaced across.
3. Unfold the paper. Decorate the outside of the lantern (that is, the side with the protruding fold) with crayons, markers, sequins, glitter, ribbon, etc.
4. Now fold the paper lengthwise (that is, vertically), with the fold and decorated side facing outward so that you end up with an O-shaped opening at each end. Staple the ends together.
5. Cut strips of paper for the handle. Glue or staple a handle to each lantern.





Variation—Lantern Mobiles (for older children):

1. Make a mobile frame out of thick paper, such as poster board cut into a strip and stapled together to make a ring.
2. Following the above directions, use a half sheet of paper for each and make 4-5 mini lanterns for each mobile.
3. Punch a hole in the center of each lantern's handle. Tie a piece of thread or string through each hole.
4. Punch holes around the mobile frame and tie the lanterns to it.
5. Take another piece of thread or string and use two of the existing holes across from each other on the mobile frame to make a handle for hanging.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

CANDLELIGHT GLOW LAMPS

for Preschool, Primary, Elementary

Children make candle-powered lamps.

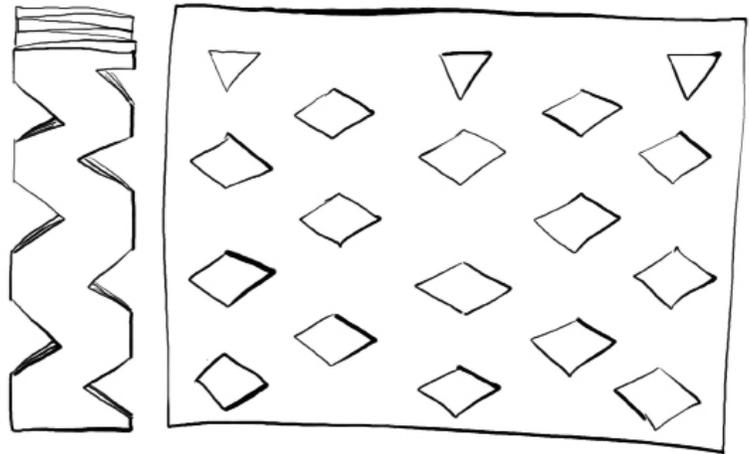
Materials:

- black or other dark-colored paper
- tissue paper, various colors
- scissors
- glue
- glass jar, 1 per child
- tea lights or votive candles, 1 per child

Directions:

Invite each child to make a lamp. Help the younger children as needed.

1. Give each child a black or dark-colored piece of paper. Show them how to fold it in half, repetitively, along the width.
2. Cut out small triangles along the folded sides. Open the paper.
3. Glue colored tissue paper over all the cutout areas.
4. Place a small candle inside the glass jar.
5. Roll and form the paper around the jar, with the tissue paper to the inside, against the glass. Glue the paper to the jar.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

GIFTS OF THE WISE MEN

for Preschool, Primary

Children make a craft that displays gifts symbolic of those offered by the three wise men.

Materials:

colored construction paper, 1 piece per child
white construction paper, 1 piece per child
gold glitter or glitter glue (for the gold)
tiny bit or piece of incense (for the frankincense)
small dark rock (for the myrrh)
glue
scissors
pen or pencil

Preparation:

You may wish to draw the three doors on the construction paper so the children can see where to cut. Or you may even cut the doors open for the younger children.

Directions:

Give one piece of colored construction paper to each child and invite them to prepare the gifts of the three wise men. Help the younger children as needed.

1. If you haven't already done the cutting, show the children how to cut three "doors" on the colored construction paper (that is, three sides of a door, such that you can fold the door back, as if opening/closing).
2. Instruct the children to glue the paper with three doors on top of the white construction paper, making sure they don't glue the doors shut!
3. Inside the first door, glue some glitter.
4. Inside the second door, glue the incense.
5. Inside the third door, glue the "myrrh."



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

TIN-CAN LANTERNS

for Intermediate

Children make lanterns that cast light through unique designs.

Materials:

large tin cans (empty), 1 per child
water for freezing
hammers
large nails
dowel rods, 1 per child
eye hooks
string or ribbon
paper
pencils or pens
tape
tea lights, 1 per child

Preparation:

Each child needs a can. Fill each can with water and freeze. Bring the cans to church already frozen.

Directions:

1. Instruct the children to make a simple design of their choice on the paper. Have them tape this design to the can, to use as a model.
2. With a hammer and nail, poke holes in the can to along the outline of the design. Make these large enough for light to shine through.
3. Poke two holes near the top of the can, across from each other.
4. Empty the ice from the can.
5. Thread the string or ribbon through the two holes at the top and tie.
6. Screw an eye hook through one end of the dowel stick. Thread the loose end of the lantern string through and tie.
7. Put a tea light into the lantern.



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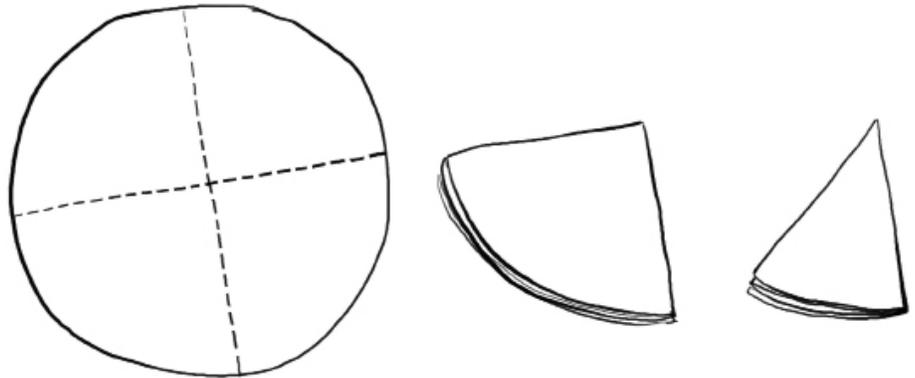
for Children

EPIPHANY STARS for Intermediate

Children make Epiphany stars.

Materials:

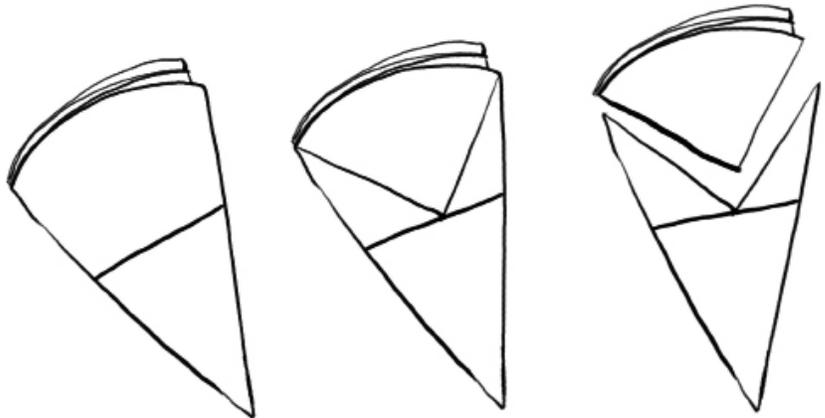
dark construction paper
mechanical compass
pencils
rulers
scissors
rubber cement
tissue paper, various colors



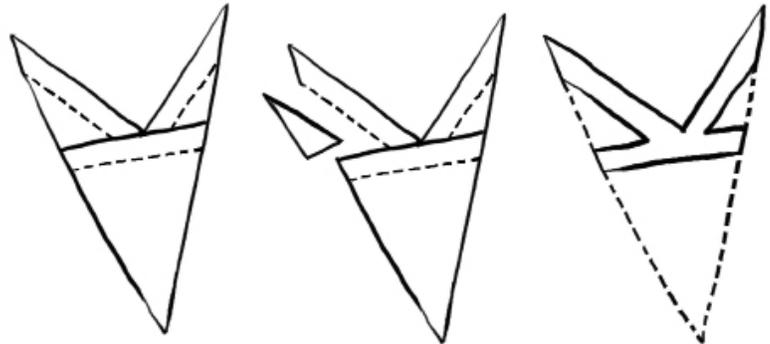
Directions:

It might be helpful for the children to watch and copy each step as you make an Epiphany star.

1. Give each child a piece of construction paper. Show the children how to use the mechanical compass to measure a 12" circle on the construction paper. Cut out the circle, fold in half, then in half again, then in half yet again—resulting in an eighth-folded sheet.



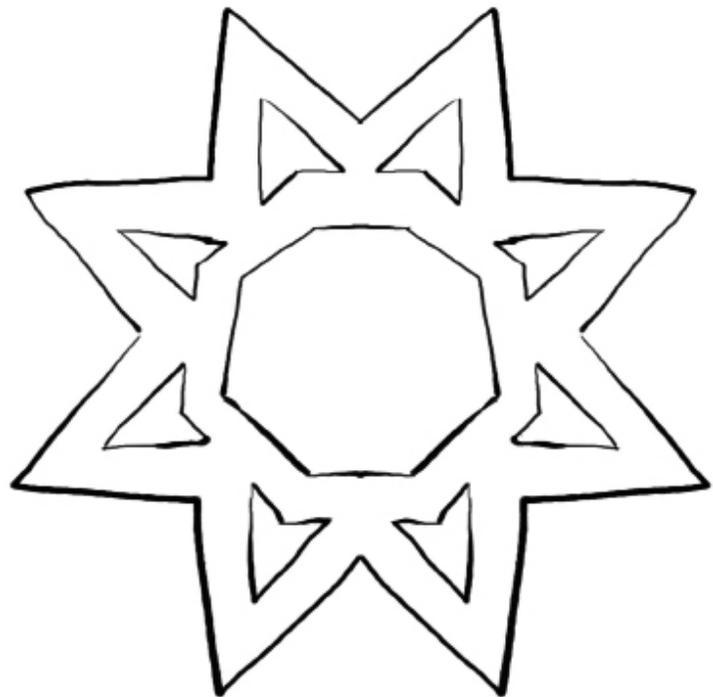
2. Use a ruler to measure and find the midpoint of each edge of the folded circle. Draw a line in pencil connecting these points.



3. Find the center of that line. Draw a line connecting this center point to each of the two outside points of the folded circle. Cut on these two lines through all of the thicknesses.

4. Draw light lines around $\frac{1}{4}$ " in from the cuts, stopping at the original midline. Also draw a light line $\frac{1}{4}$ " below that midline, parallel to it. Cut the V-shape, right on the midline from the outside in to the light line (see illustration). Then cut on all of the light lines (see illustration).

5. Open to find an eight-point star.
6. Make another star of the same size.
7. Spread some rubber cement on one of the stars and lay a sheet of colored tissue paper on it. You can put one color in the center and then place different colors over each of the star points, or use the same color for the entire star.
8. Spread some rubber cement on the second star and place this on top of the first star, sandwiching the tissue paper between.
9. Cut off any excess tissue paper.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

AN EPIPHANY STAR BOX

for Preschool, Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Children use paints, beads, ribbon and other items to decorate a star-shaped box, which contains a special message.

Materials:

small star-shaped cardboard boxes (available at craft stores)

paint, puffy paints, glitter pens, or markers

glue

scissors

Jesus, Light of the World message (p. 16)

optional: decorative items like small flowers, jewels, beads, gold cord, ribbon

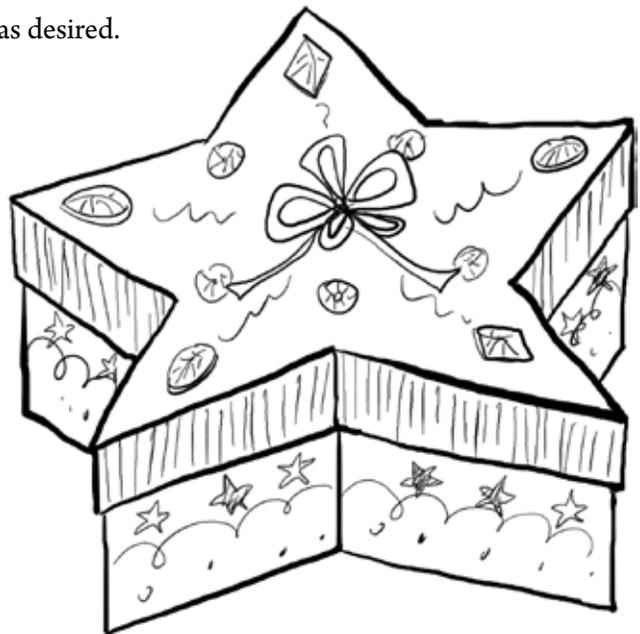
Preparation:

Make copies of the *Jesus, Light of the World* message (p. 16)

Direction:

Invite each child to decorate a box as follows:

1. Cut out the *Jesus, Light of the World* message and glue it to the inside bottom of the box.
2. Color the box with markers or paint
3. Use the decorative items to decorate the top of the box as desired.



**Jesus,
Light of the World**



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

EPIPHANY PRAYER BOX

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children make a prayer box where they may store “fill in the blank” prayers for the Epiphany season.

Materials:

- Box Pattern (p. 18)
- poster board or card stock paper
- markers or crayons
- scissors
- glue
- Prayer Starters (p. 19), or write your own
- optional:* star stickers, sequins and other decorative items

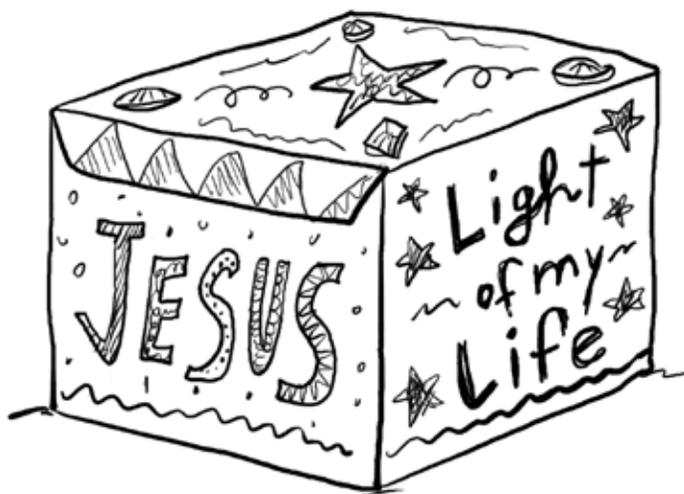
Preparation:

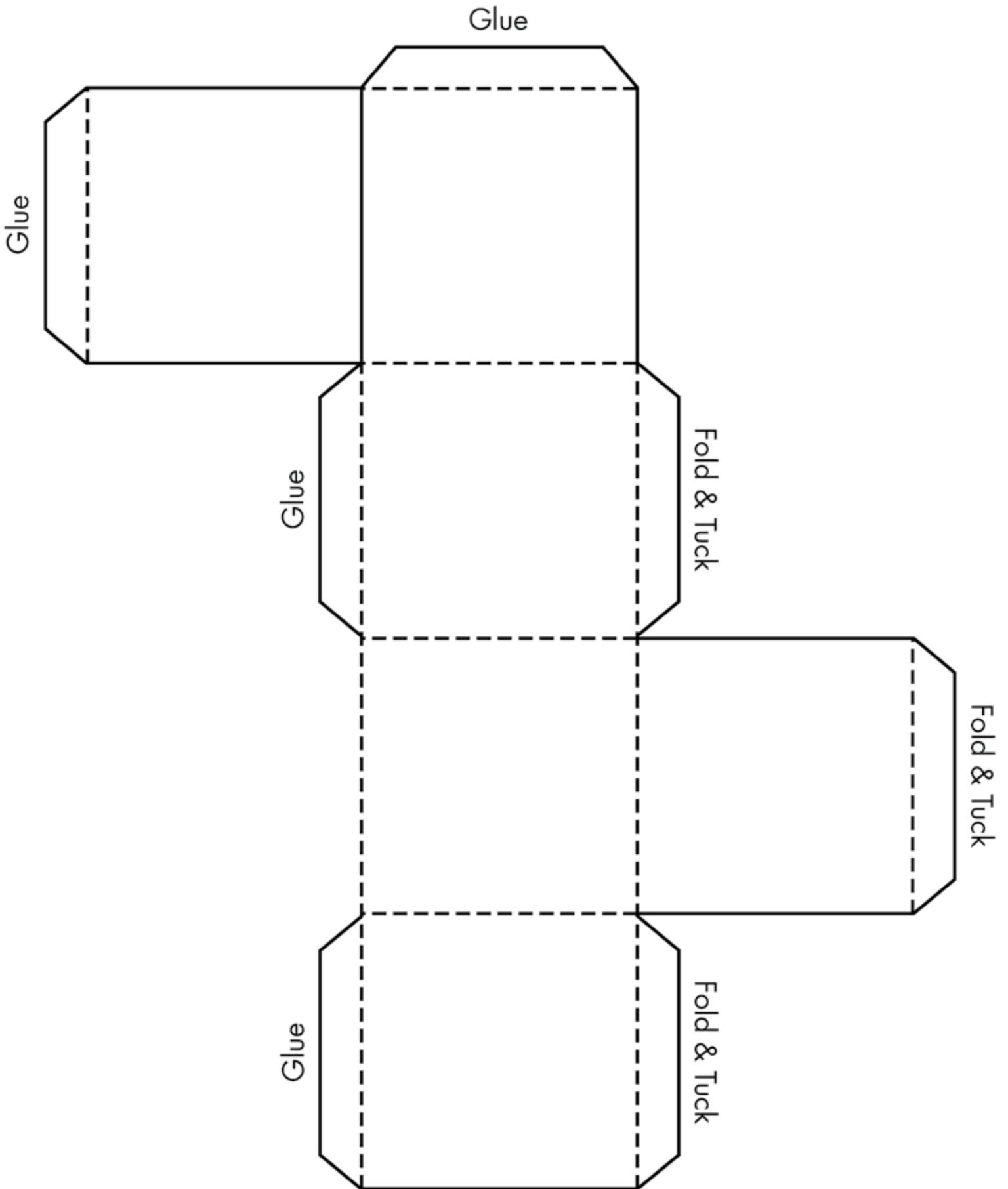
Trace the box pattern on poster board or card stock paper, one per child. If the children are unable, cut out the pattern for them.

Directions:

Invite each child to make a prayer box as follows:

1. Cut out the box pattern from the poster board or card stock paper.
2. Color, with markers or crayons, what will be the outside of the box. You may also color the inside.
3. Fold on the dotted lines and glue the tabs where instructed, to make the box shape. Let the glue dry before putting on more decorations.
4. For a fancy box, add stickers, sequins, jewels or other items.
5. Cut out the prayer starters and put them in the box.
For older children: Write the beginning of your own prayer and put it in the box.
6. Use these prayers at home during the season of Epiphany. Take a prayer starter out of the box each day, finish the prayer, then put the prayer starter back in the box for another day.





Prayers Starters

Dear God, today I thank you for the gift of _____ .

Dear God, I pray for this person today: _____ .

Dear God, thank you for _____ .

Dear God, here's what I need help with today: _____ .

Dear God, you gave me this little blessing today: _____ .

Thank you for that.

Dear God, be with me today when I _____ .



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

FOLLOW THAT STAR for Preschool

Children make their own star and play a simple game of “following the star to Bethlehem.”

Materials:

balloon stick or thin dowel stick
thin ribbon, 12"-18" per child
star pattern (p. 21)
card stock or poster board paper
scissors
hole punch
transparent tape

Preparation:

Trace a copy of the star onto the paper and cut out, one star per child.

Directions for making the star:

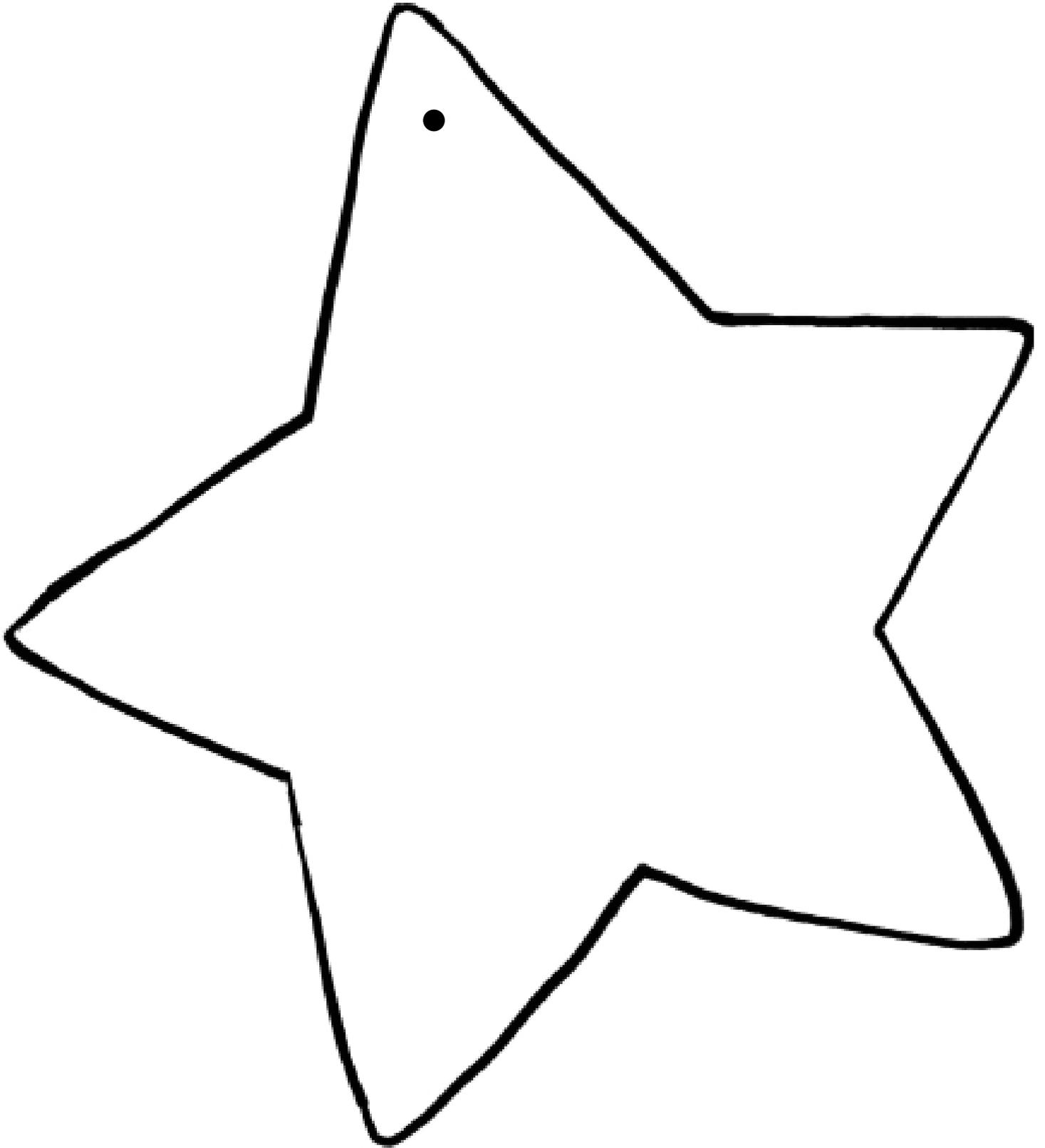
Invite each child to make a star as follows:

1. Punch a hole through one of the star points.
2. Thread a 12"-18" length of thin ribbon through the star and tie.
3. Use crayons to decorate the star.
4. Tape the ribbon securely to the stick so that the star dangles from it.

Directions for the game:

Children can take turns being the *Star of Bethlehem*. The others are the *magi*.

1. Have children close their eyes while you count to ten. While you are counting, the *Star* will move to a spot in the room; when you say “Ten,” the *Star* will stop and hold up his or her star on the stick, so that the *magi* can see it.
2. The *magi* can then open their eyes, find the *Star*, and go to it.
3. Let the *Star* do this two or three times before you rotate.
4. Or have the *Star* move around the room and let the *magi* follow, as in Follow the Leader. Again, rotate the *Star* so that all children have a chance to be the *Star of Bethlehem*.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

KING'S CROWN

for Preschool, Primary

Children use sturdy paper and fancy decorations to make a crown worthy to be worn by Jesus!

Materials:

- plain white crowns (available at craft stores) 1 per child, or , if making homemade crowns, copies of the Crown Pattern (p. 24) and white poster board
- crayons
- adhesive star stickers, sequins, gems and other decorations
- glue
- scissors
- copies of the *Worship the King of Kings* message (p. 23)

Preparation:

1. If you are using the Crown Pattern (p. 24), use it to cut crowns from white poster board, one per child.
2. Also cut out the *Worship the King of Kings* message (p. 23), 1 per child.

Directions:

Invite each child to make a pre-cut crown as follows:

1. Decorate the crown with crayons.
2. Glue the message *Worship the King of kings* onto the outside of the crown.
3. Fit the crown around your head, then tape the ends of the crown securely.
4. Add adhesive stickers, sequins and gems as desired.

Or children can cut and fit their own crowns, using poster board, as follows:

1. Cut out the Crown pattern.
2. Fold a large sheet of poster board in half.
3. Place pattern on the fold and outline the shape.
4. Cut out the crown. Do not cut at the fold. Unfold for a full-size crown pattern.
5. Glue the message *Worship the King of Kings* on the outside of the crown. Decorate with crayons.
6. Add adhesive stickers, sequins and gems as desired.

Worship the King of kings

1. Cut out pattern.
2. Fold a large sheet of white paper.
3. Place pattern on the fold and outline the shape.
4. Cut out the pattern. Do not cut at the fold.
5. Unfold for a full-sized crown.
6. Tape to fit child's head.

