

Angels: God's Messengers

Music Workshop: Chimes & Carols

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Bible Text: Luke 2:1-20

Memory Verse: Luke 2:10-11 NRSV

¹⁰But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.

Goals and Objectives:

At the end of the rotation, students will be able to:

- Describe an angel as a messenger of God.
- Identify who are the messengers today of God's good news.
- Know that the story of Jesus birth is found in the New Testament, and be able to find it in the Gospel of Luke.
- Know that Gospel means "Good News."
- Consider ways in which they, too, may be messengers of God's good news.
- Be able to say the Memory Verse.

Workshop Overview:

Music: Students will explore Christmas Carols and the meaning of their texts as they learn to play choir chimes and discuss ways in which they too, can be messengers of God's good news.

Supplies:

- Hymnals: ELW (Evangelical Lutheran Worship) - One/child or every two children
- Bibles
- Chime Books: Ring and Sing for Christmas
- Hand chimes
- White board and markers

Leader Preparation:

- Read the scripture for this lesson and background information.
- Write the memory Bible verse on the whiteboard.

Match the Chimes with the appropriate Chime book: e.g. All of the Chimes that are notated as "F" go with the "F" Chime book and so on. Pay attention to accidentals.

Have the chime books and matching chimes lined up and ready to go. Or have someone prepping this while the lesson is starting.

Note: A lot of background information is given in this lesson plan. Share what seems appropriate for the age level and attention span of the children you are working with.

Opening:

Greet your students warmly, welcoming them to the music workshop. Introduce yourself and any other leaders.

[Note: The Shepherd will quietly take attendance, etc. while you are starting your lesson.]

Say: Let's begin with prayer. Ask for any prayer requests. Ask if anyone would like to lead the group in prayer. Be prepared to say a prayer yourself, working in prayer requests. A suggestion: "Dear Lord, thank you for making sure that we all know the good news of your son Jesus. Thank you for the angels' message to all people who would listen. As we learn more about Jesus, help us to have open minds, hearts, and ears. May we never be afraid to share the good news with others. Amen."

Dig In:

What is a "carol?" What do they all have in common? [They tell parts of the Christmas story.] What's your favorite one? (Have someone take notes/make a list for later.)

Webster's Dictionary: "Carol"

A song of praise or joy, especially for Christmas.

To sing in a loud, joyous manner.

Wikipedia:

*A **Christmas carol** (also called a **noël**) is a **carol** (**song** or **hymn**) whose lyrics are on the theme of **Christmas** or the winter season in general, and which is traditionally sung in the period immediately surrounding the holiday. Christmas carols may be regarded as a subset of the broader category of **Christmas music**.*

Say: Christmas carols have been around for a long time. One of the earliest records of a carol dates back to the fourth century around the year 413. (Let that date sink in....) And it is still sung today! It can be found in our hymnal, ELW 295. "Of the Father's Love Begotten"

If there is time, play it for the class while someone reads or sings the words to verse 4, about the angels. A copy is at the end of this lesson.

Have hymnals available and explain that the large numbers on the top of the pages in the back part of the hymnal are where the songs or hymns are found. The small numbered pages, with numbers at the bottom in the front of the hymnal are where the service music is found.

Say: We're going to take a look at a couple more carols that also have to do with the angels.

Ask: What are angels? (Accept answers but get around to Angels are God's messengers.)

Ask: What messages did they bring in the Christmas story?

(They told Mary she was going to have Baby Jesus, they told Joseph Mary was going to have Baby Jesus and things would be alright, and they announced to the shepherds that Jesus was born.)

Ask children to find hymn/carol 289, "Angels We Have Heard on High." Read the first verse together. Then ask them to imagine the following:

It's a simply beautiful image: the shepherds in a great field, staring up in wonder at a sky full of the heavenly hosts, singing out their praise and joy, the echoes of their song reverberating off the mountains to add to the cacophony. It isn't hard to imagine the shepherds' response. This group of young boys must have looked at each other wide-eyed, then whooped and cheered and run as fast as they could into the village, a stampede of sheep following them. Giddy with excitement and out of breath, did they burst into the stable and crowd around the manger? Or did they stop at the stable door, suddenly shy and overwhelmed, and peek in at the couple holding a tiny baby? Did they fully understand what they were witnessing? Do we even fully understand what they were witnessing? This hymn invites us to "Come to Bethlehem and see." Today, we go to Bethlehem. We peek through the stable doors, and we kneel in amazement before the Christ child, our ears still ringing from the angels' song. More so than the shepherds, we are able to see who this child is, because we know the Gospel story. We know that the angels would come again, this time to announce that Christ was not where the women looked for Him, but that He had risen. It isn't hard to imagine that a "Gloria" would have been on those angels' lips as well.

Set the hymnals down and pass out the chimes and corresponding chime books. Find this carol and "Ring" and "Sing" it together. Be sure to partner younger kids with older kids. Chimes play on the circled words and dampen (or stop) on the underlined word. Demonstrate how to hold and play the chime being careful of those around you.

Ask: What is another carol about the angels? (Hark! The Harold Angels Sing)
Let's take a look at this hymn/carol:

Scripture References:

st. 1 = Luke 2:14, 2 Cor. 5:19

st. 2 = Gal. 4:4, John 1:14

st. 3 = Isa. 9:6, Mal. 4:2, Phil. 2:7-8, 1 Pet. 1:3

This hymn by Charles Wesley (in 1739) was written within a year of Wesley's conversion. Thus, as Albert Bailey writes, "the inspiration of his newly-made contact with

God was still fresh" (*The Gospel in Hymns*, 100). Rather than simply tell the nativity story, Wesley pours theological truths into this text.

The first verse tells the story of the angels proclaiming Christ's birth, and the second and third verse go on to make it very clear why the angels sang. Simply by describing Christ, Wesley tells us the entire Gospel story. We are told of Christ's nature, his birth and incarnation, his ministry, and his salvific (saving) purpose. The *Psalter Hymnal Handbook* describes the hymn like this: "A curious mixture of exclamation, exhortation, and theological reflection. The focus shifts rapidly from angels, to us, to nations. The text's strength may not lie so much in any orderly sequence of thought but in its use of Scripture to teach its theology. That teaching surely produces in us a childlike response of faith; we too can sing 'Glory to the newborn King!'"

The tune is written by Mendelssohn and was first performed in 1840 at the Gutenberg Festival in Leipzig, Germany, a festival celebrating the anniversary of Gutenberg's invention of the printing press.

1 Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king.
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!"
Joyful all ye nations, rise;
join the triumph of the skies;
with the angelic host proclaim,
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"
Refrain:
Hark! The herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn king!"

2 Christ, by highest heaven adored,
Christ the everlasting Lord,
late in time behold him come,
offspring of the virgin's womb.
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;
hail the incarnate deity,
pleased in flesh with us to dwell,
Jesus, our Emmanuel. [Refrain]

3 Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the sun of righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
risen with healing in his wings.
Mild he lays his glory by,
born that we no more may die,
born to raise us from the earth,
born to give us second birth. [Refrain]

Find this carol in Ring and Sing and play through it.

Reference back to the list you made at the beginning of favorite carols: Select some to play through. Please make sure to include “Away in a Manger” and “Silent Night” as children will sing those on Christmas Eve. Here’s some background on a few:

Joy to the World

In Genesis 3, one of the great tragedies in all of Scripture occurs. Adam and Eve sin against God, and are banished from the garden as God puts a curse upon the ground. It is a heartbreaking rupture in God’s perfect creation, and it is hard not to read this text without feeling a twinge of despair. And yet, before the curse comes a promise. God declares that the woman shall bear offspring that will crush the head of the serpent. Jesus, the Son of Man and Son of God, will come to break the curse, to renew the creation, to make whole what is now broken.

In Psalm 98, all of creation is called upon to make a joyful noise before God, for the Lord has come to “judge the earth,” and restore His Creation. We should not fail to see our own hand at work in the destruction of creation, in our sins of waste and decadence. This “judgment of the earth” is, in some part, a judgment of us as caretakers. But God is merciful and full of grace, and rather than leave everything in our hands, He gives us the Life-giver. In this beautiful hymn written in 1719, Isaac Watts makes the connection between the coming of Christ into this world and the beginning of that restoration. Christ brings “joy to the world,” a light where there is darkness, growth where there is decay. And we, along with all Creation, respond with a song of praise.

Scripture References:

st. 1-3 = Ps. 98

st. 2 = Ps. 96:11-12

st. 3 = Gen. 3:17-18

Silent Night, Franz Gruber, 1818, Scripture Luke 2:1-20

In the small, quiet town of Oberndorf, Austria, on a snowy Christmas Eve, a priest and an organist wrote what is now the most beloved Christmas carol world-wide. Stories abound as to the exact circumstances of the hymn’s origin, and there are societies dedicated to the task of protecting the authentic hymn text and story. If you ever visit Bronner’s Christmas Wonderland in Frankenmuth, Michigan, you can visit a replica of the Silent Night Chapel. Movies and operas revolve around the hymn, and almost every recording artist that has ever made a Christmas album has recorded it. In a sense, this spreading of the Word is a joy. But these honors should also make us wary. Paul Westermeyer writes, “Partly because of its popularity, STILLE NACHT can easily point to itself rather than beyond itself to the Word” (*Let the People Sing*, 153). It is important, then, to not simply listen to what we might consider a quaint, nostalgia-evoking carol,

but to sing out the depth of these words. For the "dawn of redeeming grace" is something far greater and grander than any song we could ever write.

Although he composed nearly one hundred works, Franz Gruber is remembered for only one—the tune of "Silent Night," composed on Christmas Eve, 1818. He scored the tune for tenor and bass soli (sung by Mohr and Gruber on that night) with the final phrase to be repeated in harmony (sung by the village choir girls); the singing was accompanied by guitar. In 1854 he wrote an account of the history of "Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht," accompanied by a score (dated 1833) for two solo voices, chorus, organ, pizzicato strings, and two horns.

Gruber was born into a linen weaver's family and studied violin and organ even though his father wanted him to work in the family business. In addition to serving as parish organist for St. Nicholas Church in Obendorf, he taught school in nearby Arnsdorf (1807-1829) and Berndorf (1829-1833). He spent the balance of his career as organist and choir director in Hallein, where he founded the famous Hallein Choral Society.

Away in a Manger - Scripture vs 1: Luke 2:4-7, attributed to Martin Luther, 1885
Closing:

Thank children for coming and for their good work and learning.

Say: When you sing carols, think about what part of the Christmas story they are telling and sing them loudly! Go caroling if you get the chance. This year, our church is going on Sunday, December 22, at 12:30!! Share the good news with others!

Prayer: Lord, thank you for the gift of Jesus. There are many ways your message is shared. Today we are especially thankful for music and carols to bring the good news! Help us to share the good news of Jesus' love with others. Amen.

If you have extra time:

Using the memory verse written on the white board or index cards, have everyone read the verse. Then ask a student to erase or remove one word. Then have everyone read the verse filling in the missing word. Have students take turns erasing/removing words, each time reading the verse aloud as a group. You may consider that each time you read the verse you say it in a different way – whispering, while standing on one foot, slowly, quickly, etc.

Resources:

The hymnody.org
www.wikipedia.org
www.webster.org

Faith Quest Lesson Sets at Kirk of Kildaire Presbyterian Church. "Shepherds and Angels (Revised): Bread of Life Café. 2005. <http://www.kirkofkildaire.org/quest/FQlessons/ShepAngRe...dBreadofLifeCafe.htm> (prayer)

If you use this material, even in a modified form, please include the following reference:
Hulbert, Carol. "Shepherds And Angels: Messengers of the Covenant – Video Workshop." Dec. 2007.
Place URL where lesson found inside angle brackets <www.rotation.org>.

CHRISTMAS

Of the Father's Love Begotten 295

1 Of the Fa - ther's love be - got - ten ere the worlds be -
2 Oh, that birth for - ev - er bless - ed, when the vir - gin,
3 This is he whom seers in old time chant - ed of with
4 Let the heights of heav'n a - dore him; an - gel hosts, his
5 Christ, to thee, with God the Fa - ther, and, O Ho - ly

gan to be, he is Al - pha and O - me - ga,
full of grace, by the Ho - ly Ghost con - ceiv - ing,
one ac - cord, whom the voic - es of the proph - ets
prais - es sing; pow'rs, do - min - ions, bow be - fore him
Ghost, to thee, hymn and chant and high thanks - giv - ing

he the source, the end - ing he, of the things that are, that
bore the Sav - ior of our race, and the babe, the world's re -
prom - ised in their faith - ful word; now he shines, the long - ex -
and ex - tol our God and King; let no tongue on earth be
and un - wea - ried prais - es be: hon - or, glo - ry, and do -

have been, and that fu - ture years shall see,
deem - er, first re - vealed his sa - cred face,
pect - ed; let cre - a - tion praise its Lord
si - lent, ev - 'ry voice in con - cert ring
min - ion, and e - ter - nal vic - to - ry

ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
ev - er - more and ev - er - more.
ev - er - more and ev - er - more! A - men.

Text: Marcus Aurelius Clemens Prudentius, 348-413; tr. composite
Music: Plainsong mode V, 13th cent.

DIVINUM MYSTERIUM
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