

## Getting Started

### Introductions

*Set up circle and pocket chart.*

*Introduce Circlekeepers (names and church affiliation), class (state its purpose), and theme of current story series; review last week's story.*

*ID groups; pass out bags with materials; participants make nametags.*

### Opening: The Presentation and the Story

*Present Journey to Bethlehem for **Week 1 of Advent (the prophets)**.*

### Attendance

*Take attendance, greet participants, distribute bonus items as appropriate: folders and brochures to first-timers, certificate...four times, book...six times.*

### Explain the Talking Piece

**We'll do different activities to learn this story; sometimes we'll use a talking piece. The talking piece creates a space in which everyone can speak and listen in peace. Each person in the circle gets a chance to speak without being interrupted, and to listen without needing to respond.**

**When we are using a talking piece, here is how it works:**

- 1. The talking piece is passed around the circle from person to person.**
- 2. Only the person holding the talking piece may speak.**
- 3. It is always okay to pass; just say, "I pass."**

### Check-In Round

**Today our talking piece is: **wooden prophet figure****

**We will use it for a check-in round; when the talking piece comes to you please...**

- 1. Say your name**
- 2. How familiar you are with this story (new, heard before, could tell)**
- 3. A word or more about how you are feeling today**

**I'll go first...**

### Agreements Round

**These are the four agreements for our time together:**

- 1. Honor the talking piece—when it is being used, speak only when you are holding it**
- 2. Speak from the heart—tell your truth as you are comfortable to share**
- 3. Listen from the heart—be attentive, with a positive spirit; avoid side conversations, comments or questions.**
- 4. Protect personal privacy—Tell about God, Jesus, this class and the story we learn, but keep confidential personal information that is shared**

**Now let us see if we can all accept these agreements: I accept these agreements...**

## Engaging the Story

### Word I Heard

Listen to **the words of the prophet Isaiah.**

**This time close your eyes or focus on the candle.**

**As you listen, notice if any word or phrase gets your attention... Read or tell**

**Before you open your eyes, recall a word or phrase that got your attention...**

*Ring chime... Now open your eyes.*

**For this round, name a word or phrase that you heard in the reading/telling.**

### Listen to the Story

*Read topics on Listen to the Story handout—go around circle and each woman can read a paragraph; use talking piece so if someone doesn't want to read they can opt out easily. Show illustration of yoked oxen on page 16 of Life in Bible Times.*

### Illustrated Manuscript and Messiah Music

*Tell about illustrated manuscripts. Show an example.*

*Remind about the oratorio and chorus from Handel's "Messiah" (on handout).*

*Illustrate the story with pictures, designs, or enhancements to the letters/words.*

*Play the music while working*

### Show and Tell

**For this round, we will show and tell about our manuscript illustrations.**

### Leave-a-Blank

*Have the women tell one word at a time (in a round) of verses 2-3. Write one word on an index card and place on floor in breath units (as on story map). Read together.*

*Call one woman up to take one card away. Read together. Call another woman up to take two cards away. Read together. Repeat until all meaningful words are gone.*

*Then try to say the verse in a "natural" way (vs. robotic way). Ask for volunteers to repeat the verse.*

### Connections

*Each person has an opportunity to respond to possible connections between the story and their life experience.*

*Connection topics are named by the Circlekeeper (they are also on the handout).*

**Listening to the story in light of our own life experience we hear the prophet say:**

***The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light;***

***those who dwell in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.***

**And we are invited to consider: What is a source of light in my life?**

**In this story the promised savior is named:**

***Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace***

**What name would you like to give the One who gives you hope?**

## **Winding Up**

### **Prayer Cards**

### **Collection**

*Gather all the items in the Circle and those passed out which need to be returned.*

### **Closing**

*Standing in the Circle, conclude with prayer and/or song such as “Go Now in Peace.”*