

## “The Wonder of Christmas Hands”

“The Wonder of Hands” is a devotional series for Iowa District West preschool and early childhood ministries. The devotional series continues the theme from the District’s August conference. Directors are invited to use the devotion personally, share during a staff devotional time, or make copies to share with associates for their personal devotional time. The devotions might also be used for Board meetings or other gatherings of ministry leaders and partners. Please feel free to make copies and share. God-willing a new devotional theme will be shared the beginning of each month during this school year.



**December 2013**

### **Celebrating God’s Amazing Christmas Hands**

One of my favorite preschool activities is the annual Christmas Concert. Parents and grandparents come with their cameras and beam with pride at their little ones standing in front of everyone with smiling faces.

At our church many of the preschool children will hold hands as they walk down the center aisle on their way to the chancel. If one is a little scared about being around all those people without mommy or daddy with them, another little hand reaching out seems to give such wonderful reassurance. Once they’ve reached their destination in the front of the sanctuary, teachers’ hands help each little one find the right place to stand. Then the most amazing thing happens! I am always amazed at the enthusiasm little 3 and 4 year olds muster to sing about Baby Jesus.

Each song is accompanied by little hands making the motions that emphasize the lyrics. “Away in a Manger” is a favorite because the children are so cute when they rock their imaginary Lord Jesus to sleep and lay His head on the hay.

Mary and Joseph were no doubt amazed when Baby Jesus joined their little family on that first Christmas through the miracle of divine incarnation. Luke tells us that when the Baby was born, His mother, Mary, “*wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn*” (Luke 2:7).

The love; the care; the awe that Mary and Joseph must have felt when they held the Savior of the World in their hands! When Mary nursed Him; when she rocked Him in her arms, holding and protecting Him with virgin hands, she humbly served the One who “*came not to be served, but to serve*” (Mark 10:45).

And serve He did. Baby Jesus, from His birth, would keep the Law in perfection, and then stretch out His own innocent, divine hands on the cross, to redeem undeserving sinners like us. Salvation is the most amazing Christmas gift, given to us by God’s Amazing Christmas Hands.

Just before Christmas break, I am sure that each preschool and early childhood center in Iowa District West will celebrate the Wonder of God's Amazing Christmas Hands at Christmas parties complete with cookies and treats prepared and served by loving, caring hands. Your hands reflect the Amazing Christmas Hands of God each time you serve a snack, read a story, or teach 3 and 4 year olds to sing about Baby Jesus.

If you have a Christmas Concert, take time to notice the hands of your students as they enthusiastically make the gestures that punctuate the words they sing. Words about Jesus, the Babe of Bethlehem, Who is Immanuel, God with Us.

### **Hand in Hand - Reflections and Discussion**

- + What are the joys and blessings you hope to experience during the Advent and Christmas Season with your students?
- + How might you share the blessings of Christmas in your classroom in a way that will help your students develop enthusiastic faith in Baby Jesus?
- + How might you involve the pastor or others in sharing the blessings of God's Amazing Christmas Hands with un-churched families?

### **Holding God's Hand in Prayer**

Be near me, Lord Jesus; I ask Thee to stay  
Close by me forever and love me, I pray.  
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender care,  
And take us to heaven to live with Thee there. (LSB 364/365, stanza 3)

Thank You Jesus, for coming into the world to give us the greatest gift: Salvation. Amen.

Authored by Rev. Ray Smith, Iowa District West Early Childhood Cabinet