The Holy Family

Background
Focus: the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ

The Holy Family holds deep significance for our work throughout the year. That is why it sits right in the center of the focus shelf in the room, right behind the storyteller every week of the year. The Holy Family is the matrix - the Latin word for womb - out of which new life comes. This story is the story of the re-creation of the universe. Christ’s incarnation changes everything. Most especially, it changes the way we understand ourselves, each other, the Creator, and the created world around us.

Material
The tray containing the Holy Family is on top of the center shelves.

It contains:
- underlays in all the liturgical colors (white, red, blue, purple, green)
- baby Jesus in the manger
- Mary figure
- Joseph figure
- donkey figure
- shepherd figure
- sheep figure
- wise men figure
- risen Christ figure

Movements
Words

The storyteller sits in front of the center shelves, the focus shelves. In the center of the top shelf is the Holy Family.

Bring the tray containing the Holy Family to the table. Place the figures to the side of the tray.

Watch. Watch where I go.
Pull out the blue underlay and place it on the top of the stack of underlays on the tray.

Blue is the color of Advent. It’s the color of the sky just as the light is dawning, the color of hope and promise. It’s the color of waiting for something wonderful to happen. It’s the color of waiting for the Christ child to be born.

Pick up the Christ child in the manger and hold it in the palm of your hand for all the children to see. Place the Christ child in the center of the tray.

This is the Christ child in the manger. He is holding out his arms to give you a hug.

Hold Mary in the palm of your hand, showing her to the children. Place her behind the manger, looking across it to the children.

Here is the mother, Mary.

Hold Joseph in the palm of your hand, showing him to the children. Place him beside Mary.

Here is the father, Joseph.

*THE HOLY FAMILY*
Hold out the donkey, showing it to the children.

Here is the donkey that Mary rode when she and Joseph went to Bethlehem to be counted by the Roman soldiers. Mary was about to have a baby, so it was hard for her to walk. Sometimes she rode on the donkey. It is also hard to ride on a donkey when you are about to have a baby. Sometimes she got down and walked.

Place the donkey beside Mary.

The donkey was in the stable when the baby was born. He was surprised to find a baby in the feed box, the manger, where he expected to find his breakfast.

Hold out the shepherd, showing it to the children. Place it facing the Christ child, to the storyteller's left of the manger. Pick up the sheep and do the same with it.

Here is the shepherd who saw the great light in the sky at night. There were more shepherds than this, but we will put down one to remind us. Here is one of the sheep. There were many more, but this will do to remind us.

When they saw the great light in the darkness, they were afraid. I would be, too. Then they heard singing. That scared them, until they heard the words. The angels sang that they came to bring peace on earth and good will to all people. The shepherds were to go to Bethlehem, and they did.

Hold out the figure of the three Magi, showing it to the children.

Here are the three kings, the wise men. They were so wise that people thought they were magic. In their languagae, they were called Magi, and that word is the word from which we get our word magic. They knew so much that people thought they were magic. Of all the things they knew, they knew the most about the stars.

Place the wise men facing the manger to the storyteller's right of the manger.

One day they saw the wild star. The Magi knew where all the stars were supposed to be in the sky, but this star was new, and it moved. This star was not on their maps of the sky. So when it moved, they were curious, and followed it. It led them to the stable where the Christ Child was.

The wise men brought with them gifts for the Christ Child: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.

Pick up the Christ child in the manger. Hold him out to the children and continue holding him as you speak.

Here is the little baby reaching out to give you a hug. He grew up to be a man and died on the cross. That is very sad, but it is also wonderful, in an Easter kind of way.
Pick up the risen Christ and slowly and with dignity move the two figures together, superimposing the baby in the manger on the risen Christ with outstretched hands.

Now he can reach out and give the whole world a hug. He is not just back then, in this place or that place. He is everywhere, and in every time.

Place the Christ Child in the manger back in the center of the scene. Place the risen Christ behind Mary and Joseph, between the storyteller and the figures.

Sit for a moment and look at the story to let the story rest.

This is the Holy Family, and you can work with these figures any time you wish. In our classroom, they are for you.

Pause and then begin the wondering.

- I wonder what part of the story you liked best?
- I wonder what part of the story was the most important?
- I wonder what part was about you or what part you were in?
- I wonder if we could leave any of the story out and still have all that we need?

After the wondering is over, put the story away carefully. Return the lesson to its spot on the shelf. Then return to your spot in the circle and dismiss the children one by one to do their work.