The Story of Joseph

Background
Focus: Joseph, a leader, dreamer, and interpreter of dreams (Genesis 37:1-31, 49:1-6)

The story of Joseph adds to the core narrative of the journey of the people of God from the beginning of the “Great Family” to the Exodus. Why did the People of God move to Egypt and become slaves? It was because of a famine in their land. There was also a famine in the land of Egypt, but they had stored up grain during the good years, so there was food there. Why did they store the grain? Because of Joseph’s leadership. Here is his story.

Material
The basket for The Story of Joseph is on one of the Old Testament shelves.

It contains:
- a tan felt strip underlay
- 12 son figures in box
- coat of many colors
- 12 heads of grain
- image of sun, moon, and stars
- box of 20 silver coins
- pyramid
- cow
- ear of corn
- sack of grain

Movements
Words

Move with deliberation to the shelf where the material waits. Watch. Watch where I go.

Pick up the basket containing the material and return to the circle. You may need to say: Everyone needs to be ready.
Take the underlay from the basket and unroll it just enough so that the first object will fit, right to left (storyteller's perspective).

Open the small box and place the twelve People of God figures on the underlay. The Great Family grew. Jacob had twelve sons.

Place the coat of many colors on the underlay. Jacob’s favorite son was Joseph. To show his love, Jacob gave Joseph a long-sleeved coat with many colors. This made Joseph’s brothers hate him.

Place the twelve heads of grain on the underlay. One night, Joseph had a dream. He and his brothers were working in a field gathering wheat. Suddenly, Joseph’s bundle rose up and all of his brothers’ bowed down before his. Joseph told his brothers this dream and they hated him even more. They wondered if Joseph would rule over them.

Place the image of the sun, moon, and stars on the underlay. Joseph had another dream. In this dream, the sun, moon, and eleven stars bowed down before him. Joseph told his father and brothers about this dream, and they all became angry. It sounded like not only the brothers but also Jacob and his wife would bow down before Joseph.

Place the box of silver coins on the underlay. One day, when the brothers were far away in the fields with the flocks, Jacob sent Joseph to see how they were doing. Joseph went to them, and when his brothers saw him coming, they decided to kill him, but the oldest brother, Reuben, convinced them not to. Instead, they took away his coat and put him into a pit.

Soon, a caravan of traders came past. The brothers sold Joseph to the traders for twenty pieces of silver. They took Joseph’s coat and dipped it in the blood of a goat and brought the coat to their father. They told Jacob that a wild beast had killed Joseph, and Jacob wept.
Joseph was taken to Egypt and sold as a slave. A captain of Pharaoh’s army named Potiphar purchased him. Potiphar’s wife had Joseph sent to jail, but Joseph remained close to God and God to him. Some of the Pharaoh’s servants were in jail with Joseph. They had dreams and Joseph told them what they meant.

When the Pharaoh’s servants were released, they found that the Pharaoh had dreamed many dreams that no one understood. One of them told Pharaoh about Joseph, and Pharaoh called for him.

The Pharaoh’s dream had two parts. First there were seven fat cows and seven skinny cows. The thin cows ate the fat ones. Then he dreamed there were seven fat and good ears of corn and seven sick and thin ones. The thin ones swallowed up the good ones.

Joseph told the Pharaoh that his dreams meant that there would be seven good years followed by seven bad years. He told Pharaoh that this was a warning to save up grain during the good years so that there would be food for the people of Egypt in the bad years. Pharaoh agreed and put Joseph in charge of gathering and saving the grain. Joseph was now thirty years old.

The lands near Egypt also had bad years. The people from the lands near Egypt came to Joseph to beg for food. Jacob sent ten of his sons into Egypt to get food to eat.

When the brothers came to Egypt, they bowed down before Joseph. They did not recognize him, but Joseph knew who they were. He kept one of the brothers with him and gave the others grain and told them to go home.

Then all of them came back. This time Joseph told them who he was. He said, “God sent me before you to preserve life.”

Joseph and his family spent the rest of their days in Egypt. When Jacob died, Joseph took him home to be buried in the land of their fathers. Then Joseph and his brothers returned to Egypt where, years later, their children would become slaves because the new Pharaoh forgot all that Joseph did.
Sit for a moment and look at the story from beginning to end to let the story rest. 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. Pick up each object in reverse order and remind children what the object is, saying, for example, “Here is Joseph’s coat of many colors.” After all of the story is back in the basket, carefully model how to roll the underlay back up and place it in the basket as well. 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.
