



People of Color Who Inspire: Additional Stories from the Communion of Saints

The Center for the Theology of Childhood

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An imaginative method for nurturing the spiritual lives of children

Harriet Tubman

Extension Lesson



Greetings,

Please see the enclosed revised and updated version of the Harriet Tubman story, part of our People of Color Who Inspire series. Based on feedback from several storytellers we identified areas in the original story where we needed to adjust the language. These changes were made to more clearly express the heart of the story and honor our Beloved Me, Beloved We vision to *delightfully and prophetically inspire brave spaces so that every child who comes close to Godly Play encounters a felt sense of their inherent worth and dignity as one uniquely and fully created in God's image (Beloved Me) and co-creates a way of being and inspiring inclusive communities which celebrate the diversity of God and God's creation (Beloved We).*

As part of our Beloved Me, Beloved We initiative, we convened a team of eight people in the spring of 2022 to lead an audit of several of our stories including the Harriet Tubman story.

The process of auditing our materials was intensive and included storytelling, wondering, and response time for each story and discussion regarding the ways the language impacted various diverse lived experiences in the group. After careful consideration, the following adjustments were made:

- 1) Changing the language from “slave” and “master” to “enslaved” and “enslaver” which represents the enslaved person as a reality imposed on that person, not something intrinsic to that person’s identity as a beloved human.
- 2) Adjusting the language around the Civil War to highlight the fact that though slavery was illegal, it was and still is something that impacts the United States, especially Black people, and there is still much work to be done for justice and equality.

As with every script, we suggest you begin by reading the Background section in preparation for telling the story. You know your circle of children better than we do, so we always encourage you to adjust when and if necessary for your context.

Sincerely,

Heather Ingersoll

Heather Ingersoll

Introduction

People of Color Who Inspire is a collection of stories written to supplement the collection of stories about the saints in *The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 7*. In the collection of lessons on the saints found in Volume 7, there is a lesson called, “The Child’s Own Saint.” The lesson invites the children and Godly Play mentors in a Godly Play room to add to the lessons on the saints by writing the story of one of their own heroes. This story, and the others in this collection, serves as an example of this—a Christian person who inspires us all to strive for justice and respect the dignity of every human being.

These stories are for children, so they try to minimize the distance between the child and the adult we are talking about. Some of the ways this is done is to keep the relationship informal, such as calling the person by their first name and emphasizing things about the person’s childhood. This means that the stories are somewhat open and very personal to engage the child’s intimacy and wonder with these amazing people who inspire.

We are intentionally spare with the details of these stories so as not to obscure the core reality. However, we encourage Godly Play mentors to include children’s books on the shelves nearby, just as we do with the other heroes of the church.

Beautifully crafted materials for telling Godly Play stories, including this lesson, are available from Godly Play Resources. A link to the store is found at www.godlyplayfoundation.org.

Godly Play is an interpretation of Montessori religious education developed by Jerome Berryman. It is an imaginative approach for working with children that supports, challenges, nourishes, and guides their spiritual quest. It is more akin to spiritual guidance than what we generally think of as children’s education. It involves children and adults, as mentors, moving together toward fluency in the art of knowing how to use Christian language to nourish their spiritual lives.

Godly Play assumes that children have some experience of the mystery of the presence of God in their lives, but that they lack the language, permission, and understanding to express and fully enjoy that in our culture. In Godly Play, we show how to enter into parables, silence, sacred stories, and liturgical action in order to discover the depths of God, ourselves, one another, and the world around us.

If you are not an experienced Godly Play mentor, we strongly encourage you to first download and read *How to Lead Godly Play Lessons*, available at www.churchpublishing.org/godlyplaydigital. This will explain the background of Godly Play, its methodology, and clear guidelines for its use. You will need this grounding before attempting to lead a Godly Play presentation, such as this one, or establishing a Godly Play program in your church or school. We also recommend attending a Godly Play Foundation training. A schedule of training can be found at www.godlyplayfoundation.org.

There are additional Godly Play resources available from Church Publishing Incorporated at the website from which this lesson was downloaded. You will find these at www.churchpublishing.org/godlyplaydigital. All of the stories can also be found within the printed eight volumes of *The Complete Guide to Godly Play*, found at www.churchpublishing.org/godlyplayprint. You will also find a number of books by Jerome Berryman about the spirituality of children, as well as the Godly Play method, at www.churchpublishing.org.

Enjoy the wonder of Godly Play, and blessings on you and the ones you lead in this transformative experience!

Extension Lesson

The Story of Harriet Tubman

(Born 1820–Died March 10, 1913)

Harriet Tubman is called “The Moses of Her People” because, like Moses, she helped her people escape from slavery.

How to Use This Lesson

- Extension Lesson—to be used after the children are fluent in the Core Lesson called “Introduction to the Saints” (*The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 7, Lesson 1*)
- Afterwards Lesson—stories about things and events that took place after the biblical era
- This lesson is part of a comprehensive approach to Christian formation that consists of eight volumes. Together, the lessons form a spiral curriculum that enables children to move into adolescence with an inner working knowledge of the classical Christian language system to sustain them all their lives.

The Material

- Location: The Mystery of Pentecost shelf, next to St. Patrick (whom we remember in March)
- Pieces: Saint tray, model of one-room cabin, small hoe and rake, a small Holy Bible, and red cross on a white cloth
- Underlay: Purple

Background

Harriet Tubman was born about 1820 and died on March 10, 1913. Her parents named her Araminta, but she changed her name to Harriet after her mother. Her mother taught her Bible stories. She especially loved the Exodus story and later became known as “Moses” for her tireless and dangerous work as a “conductor” on the Underground Railroad, leading slaves North to freedom. She rescued some seventy enslaved people, including her elderly parents, and made thirteen trips.

When Harriet was about thirteen years old, she refused to stop an enslaved person who was trying to escape. When the overseer threw a two-pound weight at him, it hit Harriet in the head and severely injured her. She began to have seizures and visions. She believed they were from God and used them to help guide her as she planned her own escape and then helped others. Still, the injury caused her to have seizures, along with visions and vivid dreams for the rest of her life.

In 1849 Harriet became so ill that her master planned to sell her. She didn't want to leave her family, so she escaped. Her husband did not want to go, so she traveled alone at night, "following the North Star." She was helped by people who were part of the Underground Railroad. This was a network of free Blacks and White abolitionists. Eventually, she crossed the border into Pennsylvania, where slavery was outlawed. She said, "When I found that I crossed that line, I looked at my hands to see if I was the same person. There was such glory over everything; the sun came like gold through the trees, and over the fields, and I felt like I was in Heaven."

She was not really safe in Pennsylvania. Her owner was looking for her, so at any moment she might find herself captured and returned to slavery. Some encouraged her to travel to Canada where she could really be safe, but instead she made the brave decision to return to Maryland to help free her family and friends. She said, "God was always there. He gave me my strength."

Harriet took her parents to Canada so they would be completely safe, but they missed her, were sick, and were sad in the cold, foreign country. Before the Civil War she brought her parents to Auburn, New York, and bought a small house. In 1859 she and her parents purchased a larger house owned by Frances Seward. The loan was arranged by her son, a banker in Auburn. Frances was the wife of Senator William Seward, who was then secretary of state under President Lincoln. The larger house made her parents more comfortable and freed her to work for the Union Army when the Civil War broke out in 1861. She was a nurse, laundress, cook, scout, and a kind of guerrilla leader or spy in Union-occupied Port Royal, South Carolina. She said, "The good Lord has come down to deliver my people, and I must go and help him."

After the war Harriet continued to help formerly enslaved people and the elderly in her community. She also became an enthusiastic suffragette, attending local meetings and national conferences. In 1869 she met and married Nelson Davis, a Civil War veteran, who was twenty-two years younger than her. They adopted a daughter, Gertie.

Harriet Tubman died in 1913. Even as she died, she was thinking of others. She told those gathered around her bed to say good-bye, “I go to prepare a place for you.” She was buried with military honors in Fort Hill Cemetery in New York. In 2016 the treasury secretary announced a plan to have her image placed on the front of the twenty-dollar bill. Up until that time all U.S. bills had featured White men.

Notes on the Material

Harriet Tubman’s story sits on a small, shallow tray about six inches square, with sides about two inches deep. It has a groove in the front to slide the “saint booklet” in so the children can see it when they approach the Mystery of Pentecost Shelf.

The booklet is 5" × 4.25". The cover has an image of Harriet Tubman on it. The second page has a map of the world with the United States highlighted as Harriet Tubman’s home. It also has an image of the flag of the United States. The third page has a time line beginning with the year 1 CE and ending with the year 2500 CE. It has an arrow indicating when Harriet Tubman lived. The rest of the book contains the story of her life.

Objects are placed behind the booklet to help us remember her story. The objects are a model of a one-room cabin, a small hoe and rake, a small replica of the Holy Bible, and a red cross on a white cloth to symbolize the fact that Harriet was a nurse in the Civil War. The underlay is a 12-inch square piece of purple felt and is folded on top of the objects.

We remember Harriet Tubman on or near the date of her death, in March, so we recommend you place the materials for this lesson on the Saint shelves next to the story of St. Patrick, whom we also remember in March.

Special Notes

In the collection of lessons on the saints found in *The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 7*, there is a lesson called, “The Child’s Own Saint.” The lesson invites the children in a Godly Play Room to add to the lessons on the saints by writing the story of one of their own heroes. Harriet Tubman is one such hero—not an official saint of the church, but a Christian person who inspires us all to strive for justice and respect the dignity of every human being.

These stories are for children, so we worked to minimize the distance between the child and the adult we are talking about. Some of the ways this is done is to keep the relationship informal, such as using the person’s first name and emphasizing things about the person’s childhood. This means that

the stories are somewhat open and very personal to engage the child's intimacy and wonder with these amazing people who inspire.

We are intentionally spare with the details of these stories so as not to obscure the core reality. However, we encourage Godly Play mentors to include children's books on the shelves nearby, just as we do with the other heroes of the church.

Also note that we intentionally refer to Harriet Tubman as a "slave" in the story, as opposed to saying she was born "enslaved." We are aware this is now the preferred language by many, but felt it was too obscure for young children. The word "slave" also connects this lesson with the story of Exodus in *The Complete Guide to Godly Play, Volume 2*.

Movements

Go and get the material for Harriet Tubman's story.

Unfold the purple underlay in front of you and say:

Take the booklet from the tray and place it in the center of the underlay with Harriet Tubman's image facing up and toward the children.

*Place the model for the **one-room cabin** on the underlay.*

*Place the **hoe and rake** on the underlay.*

*Place the **Holy Bible** on the underlay.*

Words

Watch where I go to get the lesson for today.

This is the story of Harriet Tubman. We remember her during the time of the color purple—during the season of Lent.

Harriet was born a slave. A White man owned her and her family, like he owned his horses and land.

She lived with her family in a one-room cabin. Her mother and father had eleven children, so there was family everywhere.

They worked hard and the children helped. They plowed the fields, planted crops, and hauled logs to be cut into boards to build things.

Slaves had to do whatever their masters told them. One time when Harriet was only six years old, her master sent her to another plantation to take care of the White owner's baby. The people there beat her and fed her only table scraps.

Harriet's mother told her many stories from the Bible. She especially loved the story of Moses leading the People of God into freedom. She wanted to do that, too.

Movements

*Place the **red cross** stitched on a white cloth on the underlay.*

Guide the wondering about Harriet Tubman's life by using these wondering questions.

Words

One day Harriet escaped. She was free, but she decided to go back thirteen times to help others escape along a trail called the "Underground Railroad." She became a new Moses, but this time "Moses" was a Black woman full of God and full of courage.

Some people thought owning people was okay. Others thought it was awful. A war began in our country to decide if people could do that.

Harriet figured out how to help in the war. She said, "The good Lord has come down to deliver my people, and I must go and help Him."

She became a nurse and took care of the soldiers who were hurt. She also used her cleverness to show the soldiers where the enemy armies were and what they were going to do next.

The war lasted four years. It was terrible, but when it was over, slavery ended in our country.

After the war Harriet returned to her family, where she began to care for the poor and sick. She always seemed to find a way to help, so she also fought for women's right to vote.

Harriet was always a helper, but mostly we remember her because she was a new Moses, who led people out of slavery into freedom with God's help.

I wonder what parts of Harriet Tubman's story you like the best?

I wonder what part is most important?

Movements

Show the children the booklet. Point out the map of the world showing where Harriet Tubman lived, the flag of the country, the time line showing when she lived, and the story printed in the booklet to help the children remember Harriet Tubman.

Model how to place the lesson back on the tray and then carry it back to its spot on the shelf.

Return to your spot on the circle and begin to dismiss the children to their work.

Words

I wonder what part is like you or where you might be in the story?

I wonder what part of the story we could leave out and still have all the story we need?

Let me show you what is inside this booklet and how you can use it to remember Harriet Tubman.

Now let me show you how to put the story away.

Here is the cabin that helps us remember the little cabin Harriet lived in when she and her family were slaves. Here is the hoe and rake that reminds us of how hard the whole family had to work. Here is the Holy Bible that reminds us that Harriet's mother taught her the stories from the Bible and how Harriet's favorite was the one about Moses. And here is the red cross that helps us remember that Harriet was a nurse and a fighter in the war that ended slavery.

Now I wonder what your work is today? It might be something about this story, or another story you have heard, or something else. Only you know what is right for you.

Instructions for Printing Booklet

Print booklet on photo paper (8.5 × 14).

Print in booklet mode, portrait.

Fold both pages in half.

Trim to fit in stand.

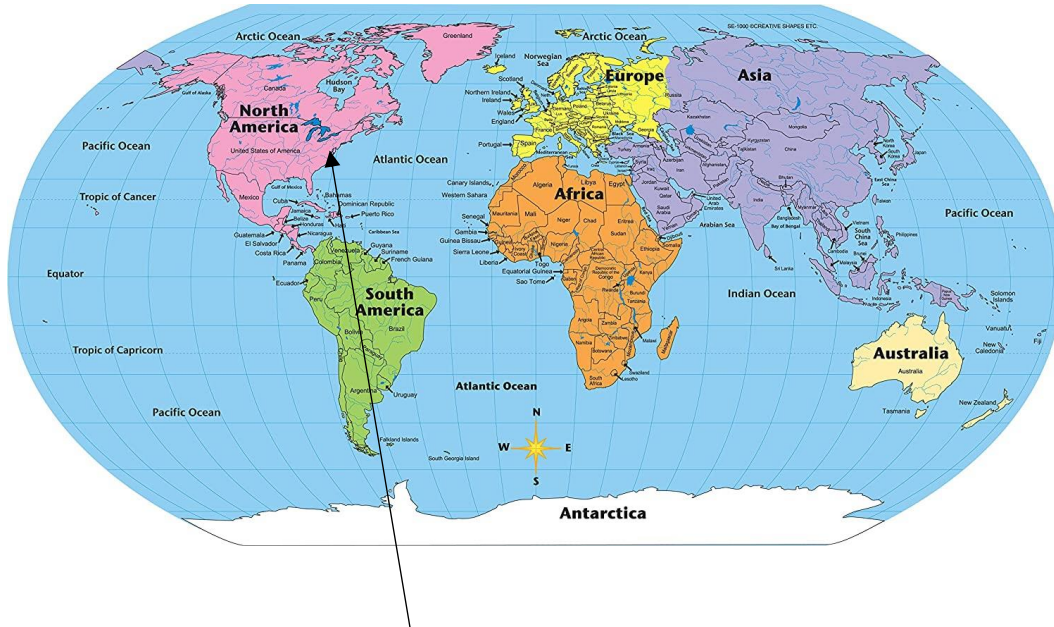
- 1.5" off the bottom
- 1" off the top
- ½" off the right side

Staple on the fold in two places.

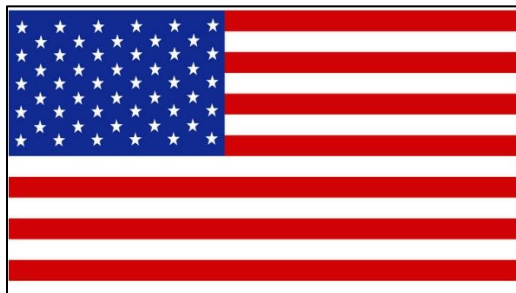


HARRIET TUBMAN

HARRIET

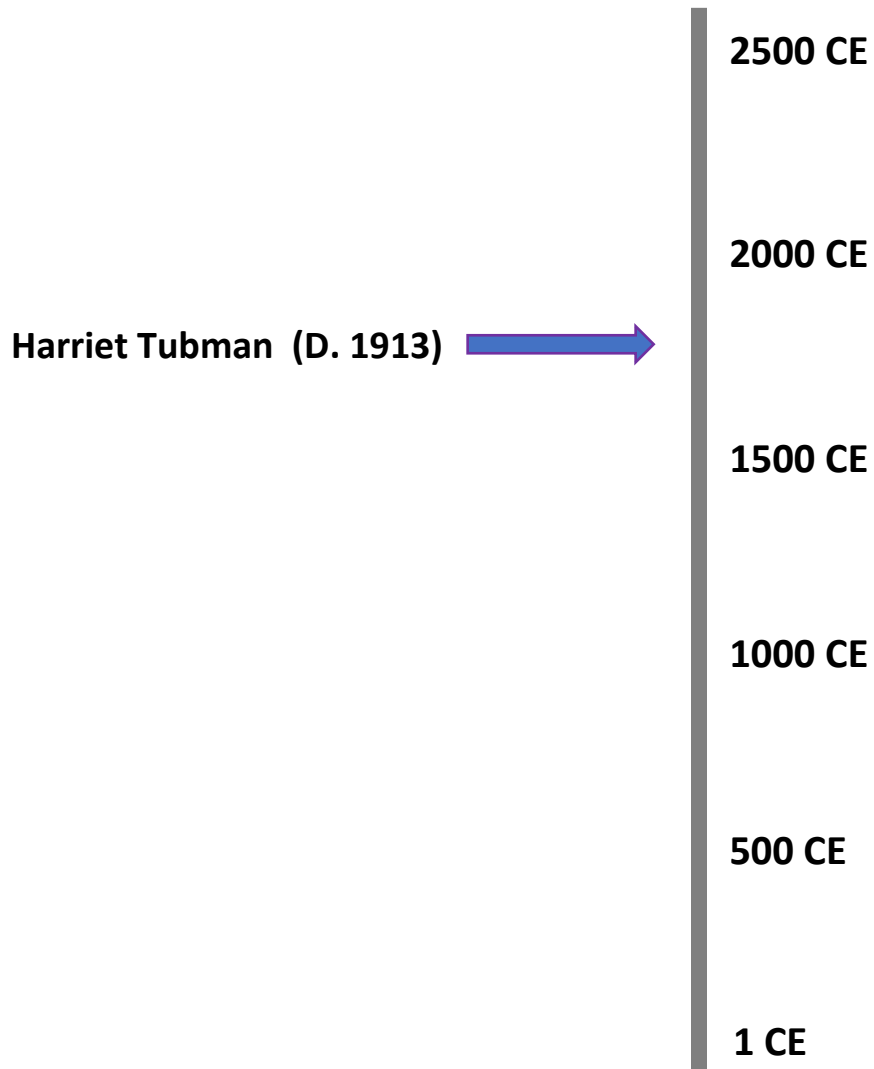


The United States, Harriet Tubman's Country



**The Flag of the
United States**

TUBMAN



HARRIET TUBMAN

This is the story of Harriet Tubman. We remember her during the time of the color purple – during the season of Lent.

Harriet was born enslaved. A White man enslaved her and her family. He believed he owned them, just as he did his horses and land.

Harriet lived with her family in a one-room cabin. Her mother and father had eleven children, so there was family everywhere.

They were forced to work very hard. They had to get up when their enslaver told them to get up; they had to eat when they were told to eat; they had to do the hard, dirty work no one else wanted to do – plowing the fields, planting the crops, and hauling the logs.

One time when Harriet was only six years old, her enslaver sent her to another plantation to take care of another enslaver's baby. The people there beat her and fed her only table scraps.

Harriet's mother told her many stories from the Bible. She especially loved the story of Moses leading the People of God into freedom. She wanted to do that, too.

One day Harriet escaped. She decided she was free, but went back thirteen times to lead others into freedom along a trail called "the underground railroad." She became a new Moses, but this time "Moses" was a Black woman full of God and full of courage.

Enslaving people is wrong, but some people still wanted to do it. This started a war in our country called the Civil War.

Harriet figured out how to help in the war. She said, “The good Lord has come down to deliver my people, and I must go and help Him.”

She became a nurse and took care of the soldiers who were hurt. She also used her cleverness to show the soldiers where the enemy armies were and what they were going to do next. She was a spy.

The war lasted four years. It was terrible, but when it was over, it was against the law to enslave people. Still, there was and is much more work to be done so that Black people are loved by people in the same way they are loved by God.

After the war Harriet returned to her family where she began to care for the poor and sick. She always seemed to find a way to help, so she also fought for women's right to vote.

Harriet was always a helper, but mostly we remember her because she was a new Moses, who led people out of enslavement into freedom with God's help.

I wonder what parts of Harriet Tubman's story you like the best?

I wonder what part is most important?

I wonder what part is like you or where you might be in the story?

I wonder what part of the story we could leave out and still have all the story we need?

The Story of Harriet Tubman