



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

LESSON 15

Jonah

Summary of Today's Story

The prophet Jonah is commissioned by God to tell the people of Nineveh, a city in Babylon, that they will be destroyed because of their wickedness. Jonah does not want to go, so he runs away. God sends a storm to endanger the ship on which he has boarded, and the sailors in desperation throw him overboard, at Jonah's insistence.

Jonah is at once swallowed by a big fish, and after three days in its belly and a prayer of repentance, he is spit up onto dry land. He then goes to Nineveh.

The people hear his words and are immediately remorseful. Everyone in the city repents, and God spares the city. This enrages Jonah ("for I knew that you were a gracious God and merciful. . . and ready to relent from punishing" [4:2]), so he leaves the city and goes up on a hill to mope. God sends a plant to shade him, then a worm to eat the plant and a hot wind to make him miserable. When Jonah feels sorry for himself, God teaches him a lesson: If you feel so sorry for that plant, which you did not even grow, think of how I feel about the people in Nineveh, who are my people and who are so needy!

Where You'll Find Today's Story

In the Bible

We recommend the *New Revised Standard Version Bible*.

Jonah 1–4 (the entire book)

In Children's Bibles

If you plan to use a children's Bible for storytelling, write the page numbers of today's story in the space below.

In Our Sunday Lectionary

Portions of today's story are told in church on the following Sundays:

Year A: Proper 20

Year B: Third Sunday in Epiphany (RCL)



Weaving Our Story with the Biblical Story

The book of Jonah is often laughed at, for it is one of the funniest stories in the Bible, but it is also one of the most important books of the Old Testament. It contains a very important message: that there is no greater mystery than the mercy of God, and that mercy is offered to all. God's love and mercy are not to be limited. God includes all people and nations, even Israel's traditional enemies, under God's cloak of grace and love.

In Jonah's day, there was a narrow-minded mentality among the Israelites that insisted that only the Israelites—God's chosen people—came under the love of God and were worthy to be saved. This is the same mentality that Jesus opposed in his parable of the good Samaritan. We see the same mentality today, when people insist that only "their church" or "their country" or "their race" is "God's church" or "God's country" or "God's race," that is, that God chooses one group and rejects the rest.

The author of the book of Jonah was brave enough to caricature this kind of thinking. In the book, it is the foreigners who are obedient to God's will, while God's "chosen one" turns his back on God.

Thus, we see in Jonah a strong emphasis on universalism and tolerance toward other nations. The author anticipated St. Paul's mission to open up the Good News to all people, not just to the Jews: "Is he not the God of Gentiles also?" (Rom. 3:29).

When we read the story of Jonah, we can pick up on some of the humor as the author makes fun of the prophet. For example, while Jonah is on the boat trying to run away from God, he deals with foreign sailors who are better and more devout than he is. The captain has to tell Jonah to pray! Jonah preaches

in the capital of the evil empire of Babylon, to Ninevites who understand God better than he does.

So when Jonah finally prays to God, from the belly of the fish, the fish throws up. Jonah ends up on dry land, presumably the same land that he was fleeing from. After running away, getting caught in a storm, getting thrown overboard by devout sailors, and getting swallowed by a fish, he is back where he started, and God patiently begins again.

But God eventually sees repentance and brings mercy and forgiveness to Nineveh, through a dishonest and disobedient prophet at odds with the God who commissioned him. And then Jonah is angry at God for sparing their lives!

Sometimes God is as patient with us, disobedient servants, as God was with Jonah, a disobedient prophet. But nothing can stop the power of God's mercy, and nothing can get in the way of God's love for all of God's people.

As humans in a broken world, we may try to stop God's universal love from being known to all people. We do this in the same way that Jonah did—by insisting that the people of Nineveh do not deserve God's forgiveness, by refusing to spread the Good News to other people, by refusing to love others as we love ourselves.

But as *people of God*, we also try to extend God's love to all people. We do this as individuals, in our acts of kindness and mercy in our everyday lives. And we do this as the people of God's Church, in our worship, our outreach, our hospitality and welcome to people, and our service to people in need.



The Episcopal Thread

This story is about us—our own arrogance and then our repentance.

Look at Jonah’s multiple failings, and see his need for repentance and forgiveness, and his need for change of life and transformation by God.

In the Prayer Book, one of the most moving and comprehensive pleas for a new beginning comes on Ash Wednesday. The service on Ash Wednesday (*BCP*, pp. 264-269) helps us to prepare for the days of the Lord’s passion and resurrection, starting with this day of special penitence.

Look especially at the Litany of Penitence (*BCP*, p. 267) which Jonah would have done well to pray in his sullen days of frustration and anger at God. “We have been deaf to your call to serve,” we say. And we ask for repentance for “all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us.”

Jonah might also have learned to pray for our enemies instead of against them, as we pray in this prayer (*BCP*, p. 816): “O God, the Father of all, whose Son commanded us to love our enemies: Lead them and us from prejudice to truth, deliver them and us from hatred, cruelty, and revenge, and in your good time enable us all to stand reconciled before you...”

And again, in one of baptismal promises, we vow to “seek and serve Christ, loving our neighbors as ourselves.” (*BCP*, p. 305). This commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves originates from Leviticus 19:18, but Christians remember it because Jesus held it up as one of the greatest commandments. Thus it becomes part of the core of Anglican teaching as well.



Gathering

As the children enter the room, engage them in a simple activity that relates to today’s lesson. Allow the children time to greet each other and visit for a few minutes as others arrive. Encourage these friendships in the church, as they help the church to grow.

One activity option is to make stick puppets of Jonah and the different elements in today’s story. (See p. 15.) Pictures include Jonah, a boat, a whale, people of Nineveh, a large plant and a worm. They can use these in the storytelling time.

Or you might give them a puzzle to do or a picture to color. See the Gathering Activity, *Jonah’s Adventures*, on page 14.

After all the children have arrived and had a few minutes of activity or fellowship time, gather them together and say a simple opening prayer.

- Loving God, we thank you for giving us this time so that we can be with our friends and with you. Bless all of us who are here, and also those who are absent today. Give comfort to those of us who are sick. And we ask now that you send your Holy Spirit upon us as we hear your special story about your very silly prophet. This we ask in Jesus’ name. *Amen.*



Telling the Story

Read aloud today's story from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, tell the story in your own words, or read from the version of the story we provide, found on pages 8-13. Use story aids such as a flannel board or miniature figures, or even simple pictures, to help bring the story to life.

As you tell the story, use your words expressively! There are a lot of strong emotions in this story—anger, fear, remorse, not to mention Jonah's temper tantrum on the hill. There are the funny parts also, so do not be afraid to bring out the humor!

After you have finished telling the story, a simple "What a story!" can signify your ending. Let the story and its meanings enter into the hearts and minds of the children, without any analysis or discussion at this time. The story itself is powerful on its own. Give the children some time to absorb it. Later, while having snacks, you can bring up the story again and invite the children to talk about it and explore its message.



Prayer

Set up a small worship center in your room.

Materials:

- small table with a cloth to cover it
- 2 candles or a single large Christ candle
- matches
- Bible
- cross
- optional:* flowers (real, artificial or handmade by the children)

Have the children set up a simple altar with the materials listed above. Invite them to place on the altar any drawings or crafts that they created during Gathering time. Then light the candles.

Read a verse from today's scripture from a Bible so that the children connect the story they heard with the Bible, which is the word of God. If working mainly with older children, you might expand the reading to several verses.

Suggestions for the reading:

For younger children: Jonah 1:17

For older children: Jonah 1:17 or 3:10

Help familiarize the children with our liturgy by doing the reading as it is done in church. Read as follows:

Reader: A reading from the book of Jonah:
(*Read the selected passage.*)

Reader: The word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Invite the children to sit in a circle and join in prayer. Say a brief prayer yourself then invite prayers from each child in the circle:

- Invite prayers of thanks for God's work in our lives during the past week. Encourage them to be specific: being able to forgive their sister for losing a toy, making a new friend at school, learning to do a new sport, beginning to understand long division, seeing a beautiful flower blossom, waiting for Christmas. There are many things to thank God for!
- Welcome any prayers of concern or petition, prayers for themselves or for others in need who are going through hard times. Pray for those who are sick, and for those who are hungry or poor.
- Ask if anyone has had a birthday or celebrated a special day during the past week and give thanks for these special times.
- End the prayer time by praying together the Lord's Prayer.

Carefully extinguish the candles.



Sharing

A snack such as goldfish crackers or tuna fish on

crackers would be an appropriate food to share today! Pass out the snacks and say a simple grace, such as:

- Give us grateful hearts, O Lord, for all your gifts, and make us mindful of the needs of others, in Jesus' name. *Amen.*

Or children can say a favorite grace of their own. If the group has been learning table graces throughout the year, say a grace aloud together.

While sharing the food, bring up the story of Jonah. There are many elements of the story that you can discuss with the children. You might discuss:

- How did Jonah act? Look at his disobedience, his running away from God. Look how he got angry *because* he knew that God would be merciful to the Ninevites! Look how he pitied himself because he lost the plant that God provided for him!
- Do we ever act like Jonah did towards God? Both adults and children can probably remember how we have behaved with our parents! He tries to run away from what is right to do, hides from God, gets mad at God for being loving, doesn't want to forgive, and cares about things more than about people—and still he is God's prophet!

- Look at the other characters in the story: the sailors, the captain of the boat, the people of Nineveh and especially its king.
- We can also look at the humor in the story. Even the animals of Nineveh wore sackcloth of repentance. In fact, the author seems to be very concerned with the animals in that city, for he mentions the animals in God's scolding of Jonah, as the last line of the book. And of course, we all laugh at the thought of Jonah the prophet in the belly of a whale for three days—the smell must have been terrible in there!

At some point in your discussion, be sure to focus on the fact that God did spare the people of Nineveh, the capital of the Israelites' greatest enemy, Babylon. This is the whole purpose of the book, to say that God's mercy is not to be limited, as we would limit God's mercy to our own friends and those who agree with us. Ask:

- Whom do we consider Ninevites today?



Memorization

There are no Bible passages to be memorized for this lesson.



Weaving the Family of God

Our faith as the *people of God* is woven from the stories of God, from our own personal experiences, from our

community together, and from our ability to integrate of these experiences.

As your time together draws to a close, briefly summarize the story of Jonah and what God taught us, or draw out the children's recall of the story by asking questions, such as:

- What did Jonah do in this story?
- How did he disobey God?
- What did God teach Jonah about the people of Nineveh?
- How does God want us to think about people from other places?

Encourage the children to remember key words and ideas from the story, such as: *God's mercy for all people*, and *compassion for all*. God's love is universal, not to be limited by us.



Closing Prayer

Before the children leave, say a closing prayer to send them into

the church worship service or back to their homes with God's love and blessing. Here is a prayer that you may use, or say your own prayer:

- God of all people, you teach us in the story of Jonah that all people are your people. And you showed us, in sending Jesus your Son, that you love us all and that you ask us to love each other as you love us. Guide us now, this week, as we go back to our families and friends, and help us to love one another as you love us. We ask this in the name of your Son our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

End with a dismissal used in church, such as:

- The peace of the Lord be always with you.

The children respond:

- And also with you.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

Jonah 1-4 (the whole book)

Jonah Runs Away

Jonah is a prophet. His job is to say what God wants him to say, and to do what God wants him to do. And most of all, when you are a prophet, your job is to stay with God, because God will stay with you, no matter what.

Not everybody wants to be a prophet, especially if it means that God tells you to do something you don't want to do—and especially if God tells you to do something scary.

This is a story about a prophet who doesn't like being a prophet.

One day, God says to Jonah, "Jonah."

"Yes, God."

"Do you know about that city called Nineveh?"

Jonah says, "I know that it's a bad city. We all stay away from it because it's bad. The people do bad things. Even the cows are bad."

God says, "That's where I want you to go. I want you to tell them that I am displeased with how they are behaving."

Jonah starts to get nervous. "But why? They're bad, I tell you!"

God says, "Why would I send you to a good place? You're a prophet. You are supposed to remind people about me and give them a nudge towards me if they are behaving badly. So where are all the badly behaving people that need to know about me? In the bad places! And Nineveh is the baddest of the bad cities. So go, and I will tell you what to say."

Jonah starts to walk. But instead of walking towards Nineveh, he walks the other way. Then he runs. When he gets to a town that is next to the sea, he finds a ship that is going to Tarshish. Tarshish is in the exact opposite direction from Nineveh. Jonah pays for a ticket to Tarshish and gets into the ship. “Now I’m safe from God,” he thinks. “I’m going the other way.” Then he goes down to the lower deck of the ship, finds a nice bench, and falls asleep. He’s happy.

A Storm...and Man Overboard!

But God has other plans for Jonah. God’s plans do not include Jonah going to Tarshish, far away from Nineveh. God’s plans are for Jonah and Nineveh to meet each other, and soon!

God sends a great wind across the sea. The storm tosses the ship around like a paper boat.

“We’re going to break up!” cries one of the sailors. “We’re about to sink! Everybody, pray to your gods to save us!” For the sailors on the ship were from all different places, and they each worshipped different gods.

The sailors try everything. They throw all the cargo into the sea—their food, their packs of clothing, the stuff they were delivering, their extra supplies. But still the ship keeps tossing and leaning. The deck is filling up with water. They try steering into the wind, then steering away from the wind. But nothing works. Everybody is trying to keep the ship from sinking. Everybody, that is, except Jonah. He is fast asleep.

Finally, the captain goes downstairs and sees Jonah, fast asleep. “How are you sound asleep when we’re all about to drown in this storm? Get up and pray to your god! Maybe your god will save us!” Jonah goes upstairs to join the rest of the men, fighting the storm and the wind.

Upstairs, the sailors have one more idea. One of the men says, “Maybe this storm is happening because of one of us.” They find out who it is—Jonah. The men turn to Jonah. He is not surprised.

One man asks, “Why is this happening to us because of you? What is it that you do? Where do you come from?”

Jonah says, “I am Hebrew, and I worship the God of heaven and earth. It just happens that I am running away from him. That’s why God sent this storm.”

Then the sailors say, “What are we supposed to do to you, to make the storm go away? How can your God stop this storm? It is getting worse, and we are all going to die!”

Jonah knows the answer. “You need to pick me up and throw me into the sea, because this storm is my fault. When you throw me overboard, the storm will stop.”

But the sailors are good people. They do not want to throw Jonah into the sea. He will drown! One says, “Well, let’s try some more. We’re not going to get rid of this guy. Maybe if we row harder, we’ll make it through to safety.” But as hard as they row the ship, it keeps tossing and floating farther and farther from the land. Finally, they know they need to throw Jonah out.

“Please, God, forgive us! We do not want to let this man die! Please do not kill us when we throw him out of the ship!” Then they pick up Jonah and throw him off the side of the ship.

Suddenly, the wind stops blowing. The water is still. The storm is gone. And so is Jonah.

Jonah’s Savior: a Fish

Jonah hits the water as a wave blows over him, and he sinks under the sea. Then something else blows over him, and its mouth opens and sucks Jonah in. God has sent a big fish to swallow Jonah. Jonah slithers through the fish’s mouth and lands in its belly. Jonah sits in the fish’s belly for three whole days.

He has nothing to do in the belly of the fish. So he prays to God. “The waters of the sea were closing in on me, and you saved me from drowning. Thank you, God! I will now do as you ask me.”

Then God speaks to the fish, who has been swimming around with a man in his stomach for three days. The fish swims to the place where God has told him, and spits out Jonah.

God Tells Jonah the Exact Same Thing

Now God says to Jonah, “Jonah.”

“Yes, God.”

“Do you know about that city called Nineveh?”

Jonah groans and sighs, but he says, “Yes, Lord.”

God says, “Go and tell them my message. I will give you the words to say when you get there.”

This time, Jonah trudges over to the city. When he gets downtown, he stands in the middle of the city and shouts out to everybody who can hear the words that God told him to speak. They are harsh words. He shouts, “Because this city is evil, in 40 days, Nineveh will be destroyed! In 40 days, Nineveh will be destroyed!” Then Jonah walks back out of the city and up the hill. There, he sits and waits to see God destroy the city, just as Jonah told them God would. God always keeps his promises.

But the people in the city hear the words, “Nineveh will be destroyed because the people have done evil!” Even the king hears this bad news. He gets up from his throne and puts on clothing of mourning and sadness, which in those times means wearing a garment made out of sackcloth and covering yourself in ashes. Then he tells all the people, “God has spoken to us! It’s time for us to stop our evil ways and stop hurting each other, and time to start doing good. Let us all show that we are sorry for our sins, by fasting and by wearing sackcloth. Every creature—men, women, children, cows, sheep, donkeys, chickens, dogs, kittens—every creature you must dress in sackcloth. And everybody will fast, not eat or drink. Then maybe God will change his mind and save our city.”

So all the people change from their nice clothes into sackcloths, and they pour ashes on themselves, and they stop eating and start praying to God. Then they find all of their animals and dress them up in sackcloth also—their cows and sheep, their donkeys and chickens, their dogs and cats and hamsters.

Everybody wears sackcloth and prays. Maybe God will change his mind because the people have changed their ways.

God sees the people of Nineveh, all dressed in sackcloth and walking around praying. He sees them stop hurting each other and start acting kindly. So God does change his mind. After 40 days, Nineveh is still there.

Jonah Is Mad

After 40 days, Jonah is still there, too. He is sitting high on the hill above Nineveh, waiting for the city to be destroyed. Will God pour down fire on the city, just like he did with Sodom and Gomorrah? Or maybe rain down big stones? Or will there be a giant flood?

When the 40 days have passed, Jonah waits. Nothing happens. Day after day, Jonah waits and watches the city. It's still there! Jonah thinks, "After all I said, what God told me to say, and the city is not destroyed after all! How embarrassing! Now I look like a liar and a fool to people!"

Jonah cries out to God, "See? I told you so! That's why I ran away in the first place! I knew—I *knew* you are a God who loves and forgives people! I *knew* you were slow to anger and quick to take back punishment! But look at my reputation! I look like a fool, and I can't stand it! I am so angry that you let those people live, after I said they would die, and even though they were so evil! So kill me right now! I am too angry to live!"

God says to Jonah, "Why are you so angry? Is it right for you to be so angry?"

But Jonah doesn't answer. Instead, he stomps to another part of his hill and makes a little booth for himself, that shades him from the hot sun. Then he plops himself in the shade under the booth. He is going to wait to see what will happen to the city.

But still nothing happens. At least, nothing bad happens. The people are still there. What does happen to the city is that it is a nicer city and not a wicked city.

A Bush Comes and Goes

Jonah's booth doesn't give him much shade from the sun. It is too little, so when the sun moves, Jonah sits in the sun under the booth and gets hot. So God makes a giant bush grow next to the booth. The bush grows over Jonah's head and gives him some cool shade. Jonah is very happy about the bush. He loves the bush. That night, he falls asleep, comfortable under the bush.

The next day, just before the sun rises, a worm comes up too. God sends a giant worm that attacks the bush. The bush withers and shrinks, and then it dies. Then when the sun comes up and starts to get hot, God sends a hot wind to blow on the land. As Jonah sits under his booth, the hot wind blows on him and the hot sun beats down on his head.

Jonah says, "I am miserable! The bush is gone, the sun is beating down on my head, and I am so hot! Let me die now! I feel so sorry for myself!"

God Scolds Jonah, Gently

God says to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry at the bush?"

Jonah says, "Yes! I am angry enough to die!"

God lifts up his eyebrow. "Really! You never grew that bush, you never took care of that bush! It came one night and disappeared the next day. And now you are angry at it because it died and doesn't take care of you!"

Jonah crosses his arms and scowls. "Yes, that's right! I loved that bush!"

God says, "That's just a bush. Think about all those thousands of people of Nineveh—the men and women with their families. They didn't know what they were doing, and now they do. They are my people, too. Should I not love them? Should I not care for them? And—what about all those innocent animals? You care about your bush. Look into Nineveh and see the people—and then the cows and horses, the donkeys and sheep, the chickens, the dogs and cats, the raccoons, the hamsters, the turtles, the ducks ..."

For whom does God care?

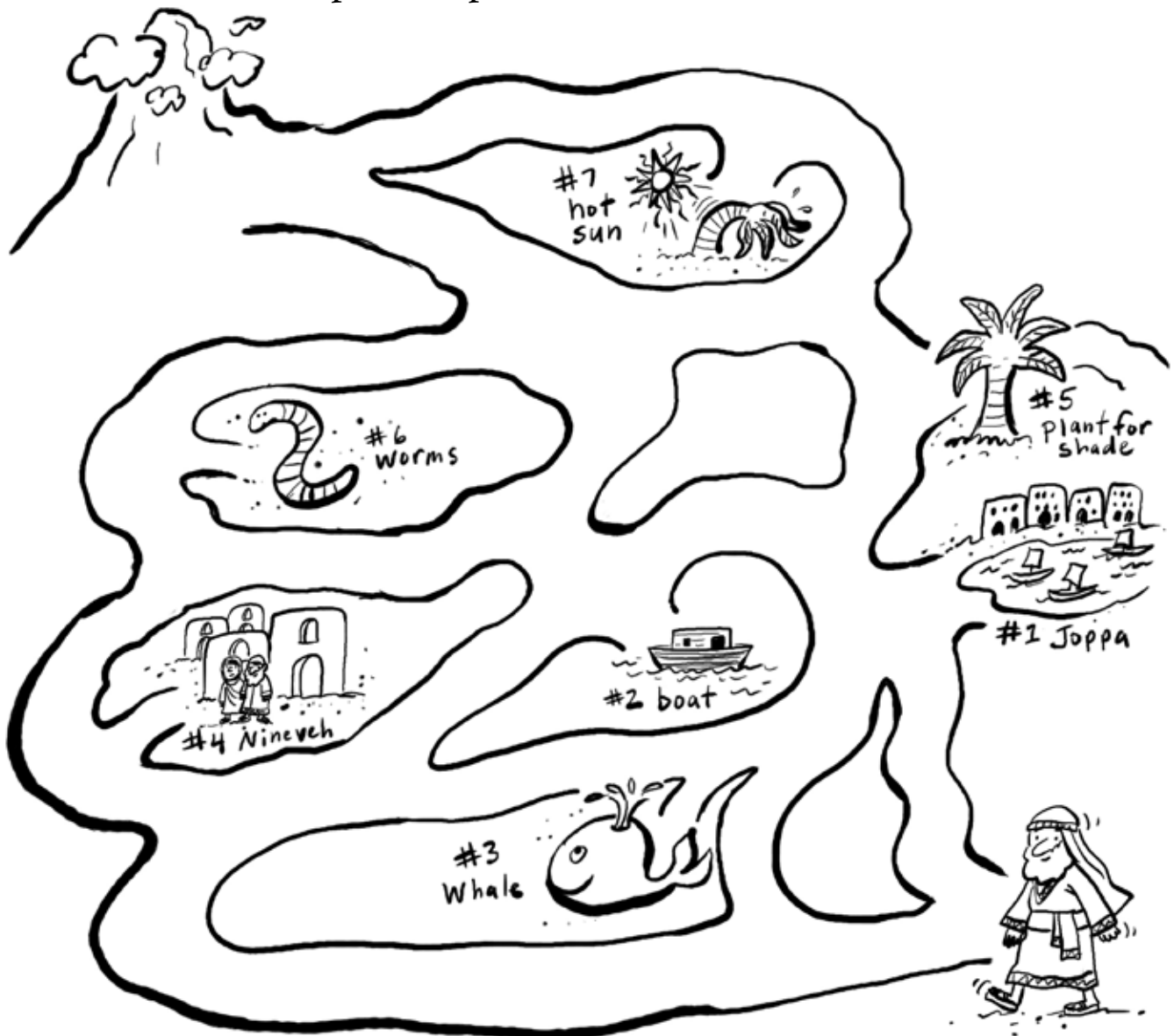


WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

GATHERING ACTIVITY: JONAH'S ADVENTURES

Follow Jonah through his adventures.
Help him find his way to the hill, where he can talk to God.
Stop at each place, in the order indicated.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

GATHERING ACTIVITY: JONAH STICK PUPPETS for Preschool, Primary

Children make stick puppets to tell the story of Jonah, the whale and the people of Nineveh.

Materials:

story figure patterns (pp. 16-19), 1 set per child
craft sticks, 7 per child
glue or tape
crayons

Preparation:

Make a copy of the story figure patterns for each child. Preschool teachers may need to cut these figures out ahead of time for the children.

Directions:

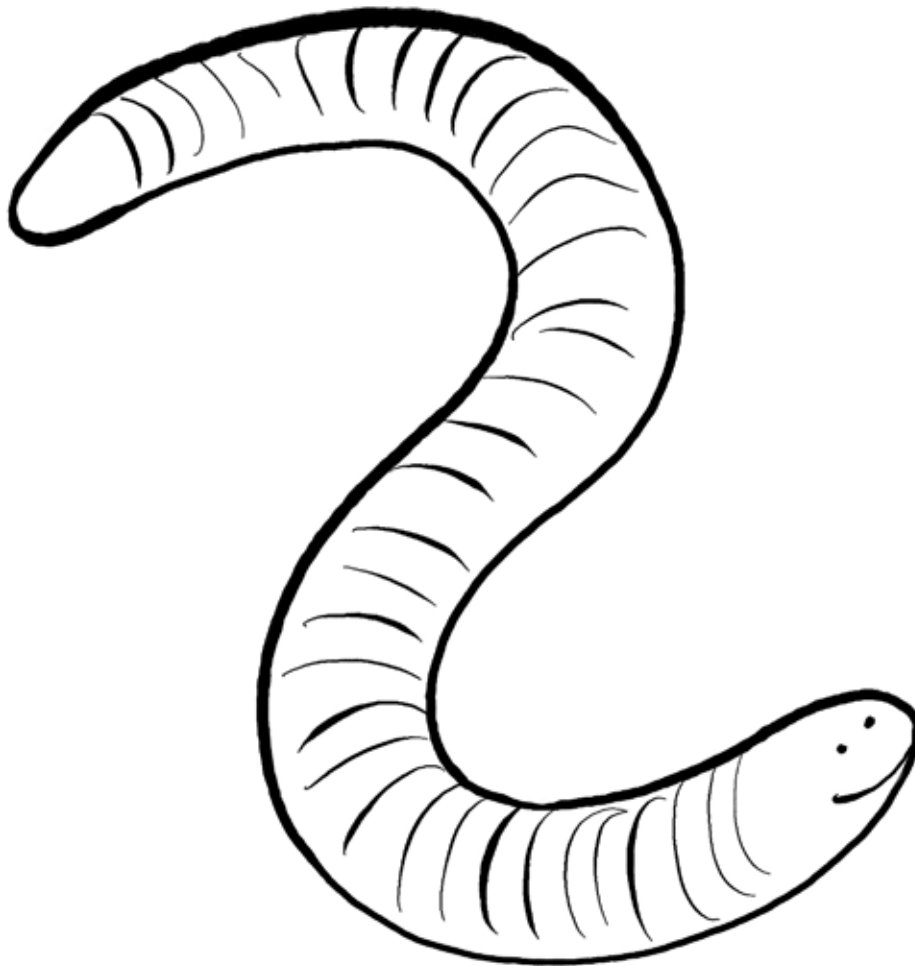
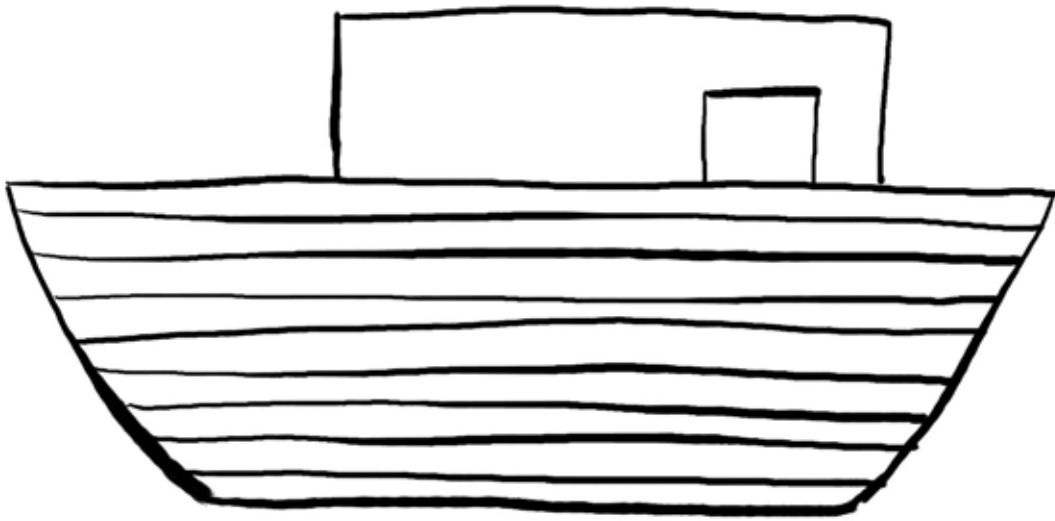
Invite each child to make puppets as follows:

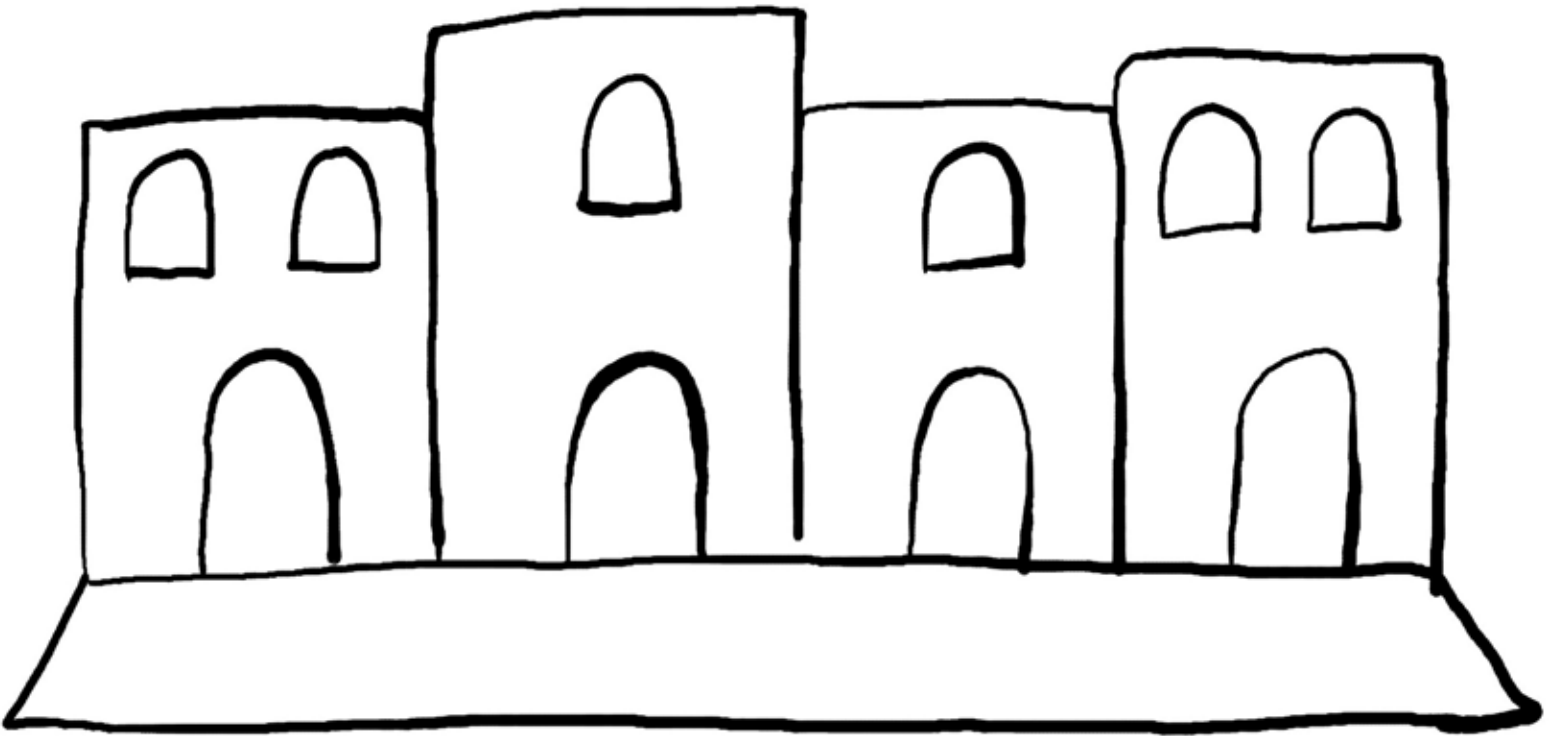
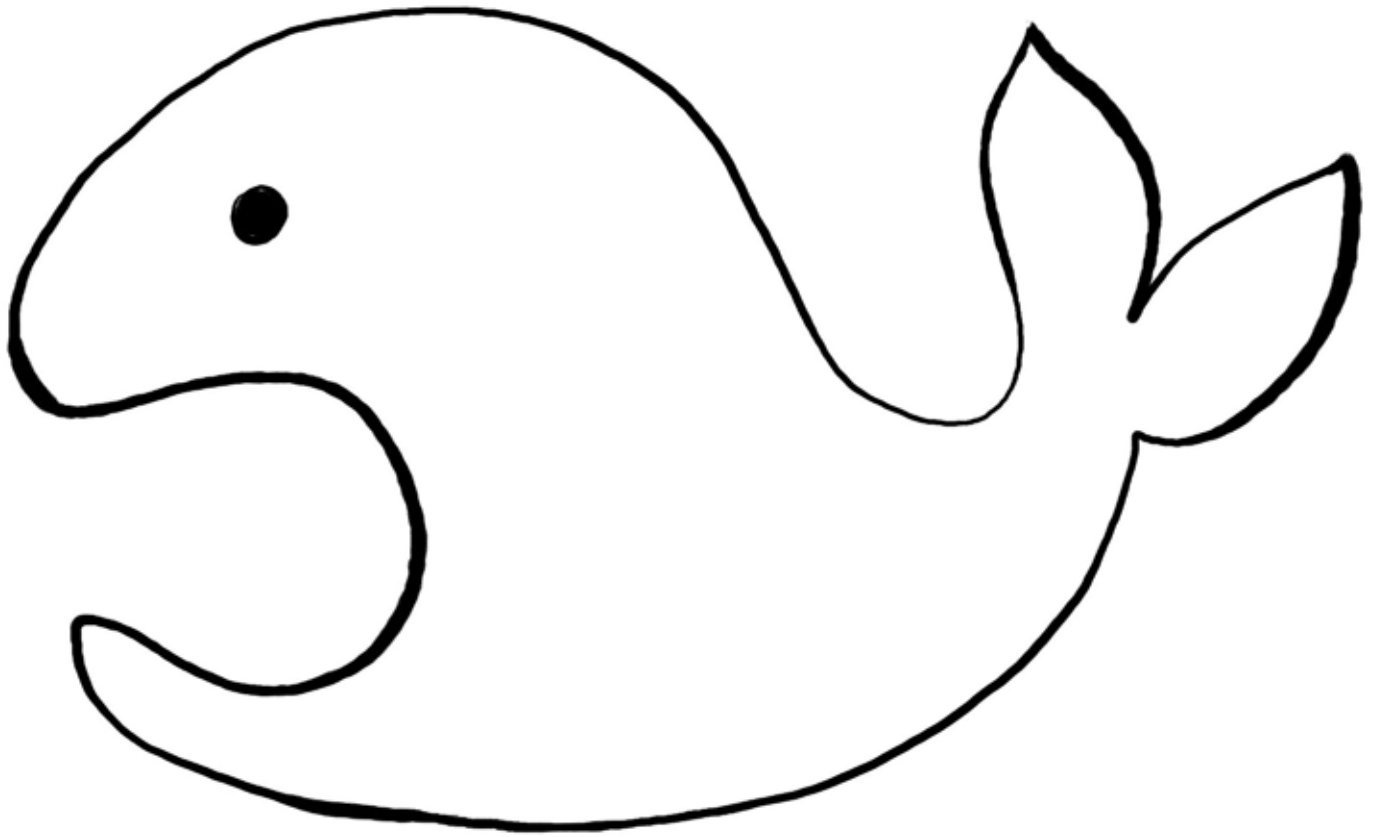
1. Color the figures, then cut them out.
2. Glue or tape the figures onto craft sticks.

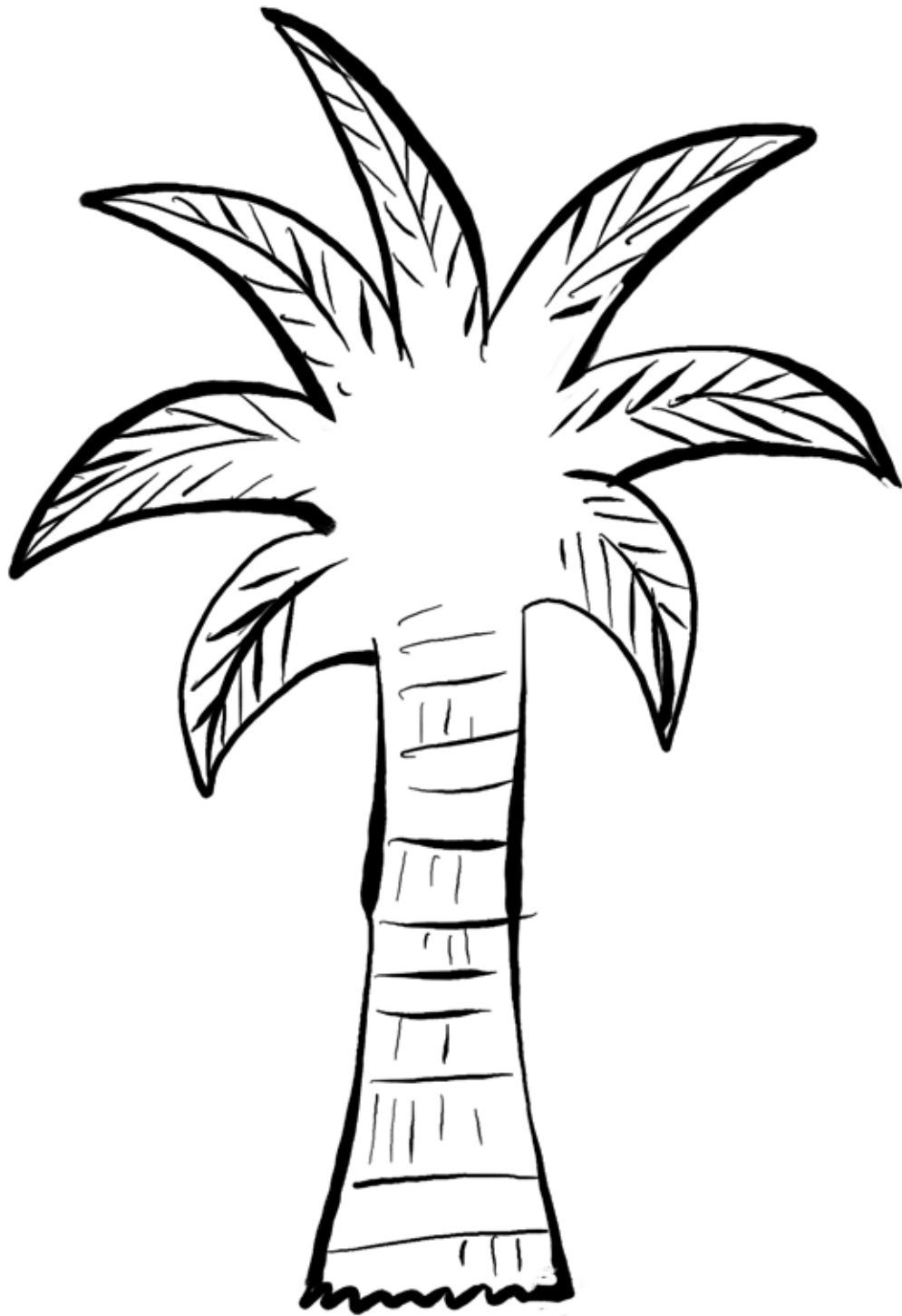
Suggestion for storytelling:

If the figures are cut out ahead of time, this is a very simple activity that would work well for the Gathering time. The children can then use these stick puppets during the Storytelling time.











WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

ALL GOD'S PEOPLE: SEQUENCE PEOPLE DRAWINGS for Elementary, Intermediate

Children work in triads to draw the head, torso and legs of one of God's people.

Materials:

paper
pencils or markers

Directions:

1. Divide the group into teams of three children. Give each team a piece of paper and pencils or markers for each child.
2. Show the children how to fold their paper into three sections crosswise, like a letter.
3. The first player on each team draws the head and neck of a person in the top third of the paper. Let a tiny part of the neck show on the middle section of the paper so that the second child knows where to begin drawing. The first player then folds the paper so that most of the picture does not show and passes the paper to the second player.
4. Without looking at the first picture, the second player draws the shoulders, arms, and torso of a person, down to the waist, in the middle section of the paper. Let a tiny part of the waist show in the third section of the paper so that the third player knows where to begin drawing. The second player then folds the paper again so that the drawn pictures do not show and passes the paper to the third player.
5. Again without looking at the drawn pictures, the third player draws the legs of a person from the waist down on the bottom section of the paper. When finished, the team can unfold the picture to see what kind of person has been created.

And don't forget, no matter how we look, we are all God's people! Jonah could well have learned that lesson!



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

JONAH INSIDE THE WHALE

for Preschool, Primary, Elementary, Intermediate

Children make a whale that can swallow Jonah.

Materials:

- whale and Jonah pattern (p. 22), 1 copy per child
- clear plastic wrap
- crayons
- glue or tape
- scissors

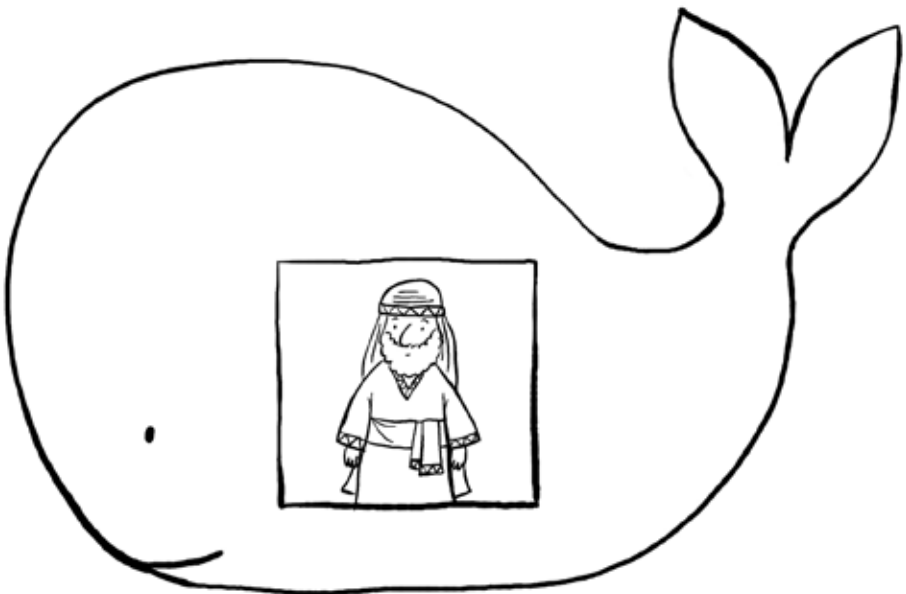
Preparation:

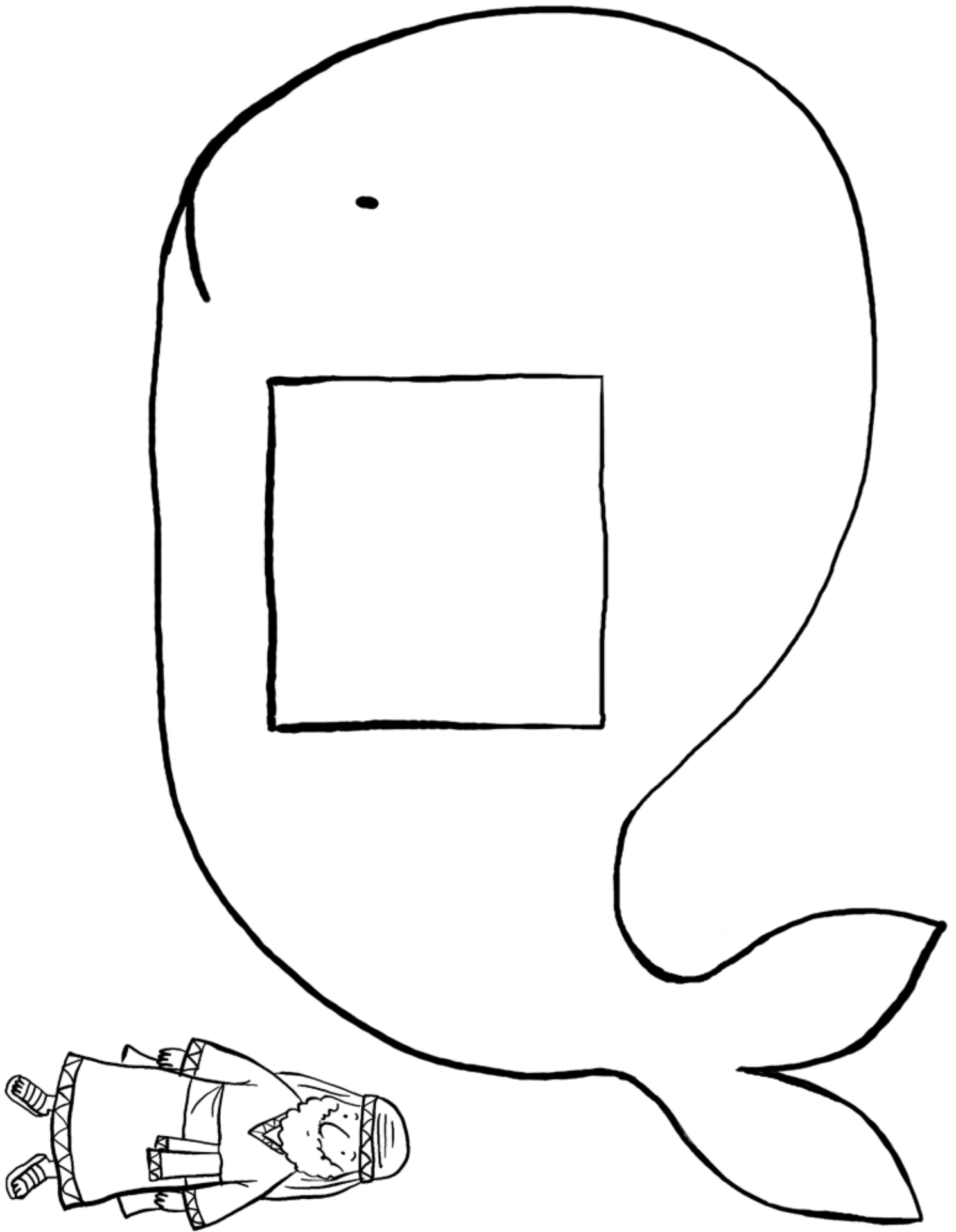
Make a copy of the pattern for each child.

Directions:

Invite each child to make a picture as follows:

1. Cut out Jonah and both parts of the whale. Cut out the center of one whale part, as shown in the pattern.
2. Color Jonah and the whale.
3. Cut a piece of plastic wrap just a little larger than the cut-out center of the whale.
4. On the back of the cut-through whale, glue or tape the plastic wrap.
5. Glue the two parts of the whale together, making sure that the glued side of the plastic wrapped whale is on the inside. *Leave the mouth side of the whale unglued.*
6. Slide Jonah into the whale from the mouth side so that he shows through the whale's "window."







WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

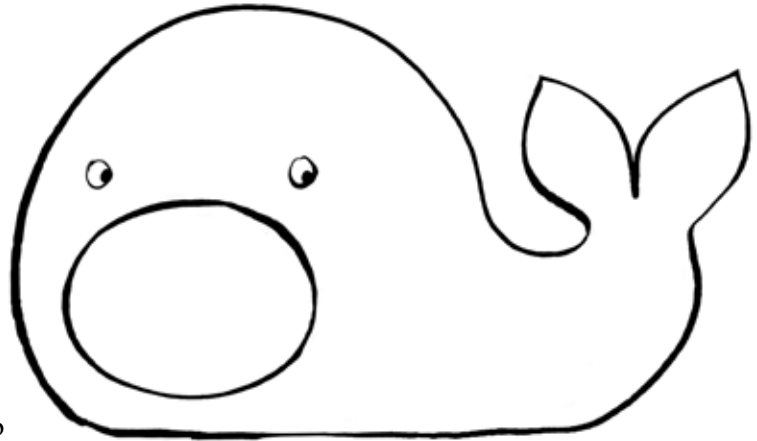
THE WHALE THAT SWALLOWED JONAH

for Preschool, Primary, Elementary

Children make a big whale with a mouth big enough to swallow Jonah.

Materials:

butcher paper
crayons
scissors
cotton stuffing or tissue
pipe cleaners
stapler or tape
felt



Preparation:

1. Cut two pieces of butcher paper, approximately 12" x 18" for each child. Use paper clips or stapler to hold the papers together. Draw a large whale pattern on the top paper. Make sure that you draw a large mouth so that Jonah can fit inside.
2. Fold a piece of felt in half. Draw a figure of Jonah, approximately 4" x 7", on the felt. This may be a very simple shape, but the figure should be broad so that you can stuff the inside.
3. If your group is capable, let the children cut out the whale and Jonah. If your group is very young, cut out both the two whale shapes and two Jonah shapes so that you have two identical patterns. Do this for each child.

Directions:

Invite each child to make Jonah and the whale as follows:

1. Cut out the whale picture on two pieces of butcher paper, if this has not already been done.
2. Staple, glue or tape all sides of the whale together *except* for the mouth side. Leave this side open for Jonah's entrance.
3. Color the whale.
4. Cut a piece of pipe cleaner so that it fits around the whale's mouth or head area. Tape it to that area to hold the mouth open.
5. If this has not already been done, cut the figure of Jonah from the felt, cutting two identical figures.
6. Staple or glue the figure together, *except* for the head area. Then stuff the inside lightly with cotton stuffing or tissue. Staple or glue the rest of the figure.
7. Put Jonah inside the whale.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

FLOATING PICTURE

for Intermediate

Children assemble a picture of Jonah and his companions under the sea.

Materials:

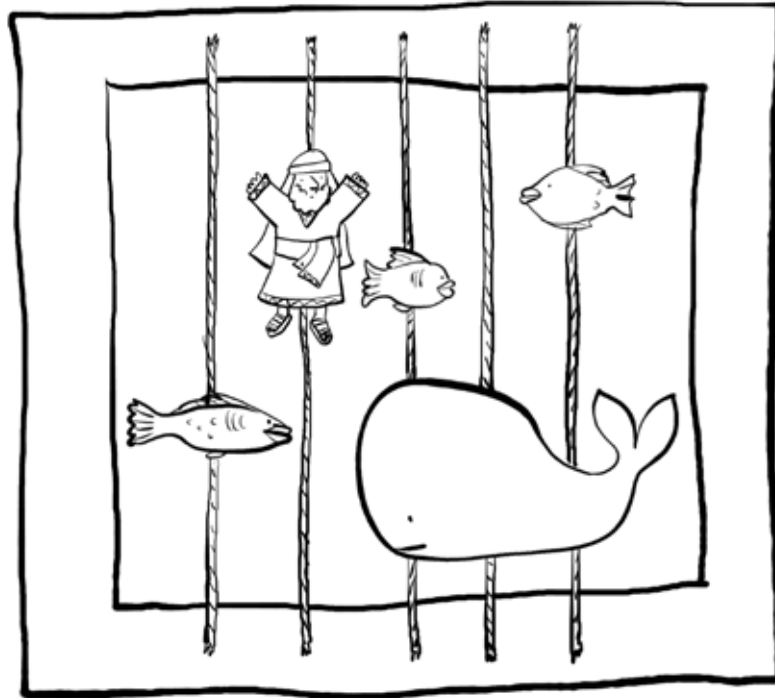
cardboard or poster board
clear filament (fishing) thread
scissors
tape
stapler
construction paper
markers
small seashells or other embellishments.

Directions:

Invite the children to create the picture as follows:

1. Cut two identical pieces of poster board or cardboard around 12" to 16" square. These will be the two sides of the frame. The size can vary but should not be too small or the pictures will not "float."
2. Cut out the center of each frame, leaving a 2" border.
3. Draw, color, and cut out pictures of Jonah, the boat, and the whale. Add other embellishments if desired, such as fish and octopus, seashells, etc. Cut these out also. Make sure that all pictures will fit inside the frame.
4. Measure a length of thread for each picture so that the thread runs from the top of the frame to the bottom. Cut the threads.
5. Lay one poster board flat on the table, right side down. Lay the pictures, also right side down, where you want them to be inside the frame.
6. Carefully place the threads underneath each picture and tape them to the top and the bottom of the frame. Then staple the taped area to make sure that the thread stays secure.
7. Tape or glue the pictures to the threads, where you want them to be on the picture. Tape will work better than glue.

- When the picture is the way you like it, put the second frame on top of the first one, hiding the taped/stapled areas. Glue the second frame onto the first one.
- Decorate the frame with markers, seashells, etc.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

A CONTEMPORARY STORY ABOUT JONAH for Intermediate

Children retell the Jonah story for their times and videotape it.

Materials:

video camcorder
videotape

Directions:

1. Pick a contemporary scene or country, or part of your city. (Watch for stereotyping!)
2. Pick actors to play the different parts.
3. You can fill in the script below and have someone narrate the story while the other children act it out. Or you can make up your own story, using your own words.
4. Videotape the story!

Script

There is a person named *(name)*. God tells *(name)* to go to *(place)* to tell the people that they have behavior problems. They have been doing things like *(kinds of bad behavior)*, which God does not like. But *(name)* takes a *(vehicle)* to *(another place)*, running away from God.

But *(bad situation)* happens. *(Name)* leaves the *(vehicle)* and is swallowed up by *(whatever!)*. After regretting his/her decision to go against God, *(name)* is spit out by *(the whatever)* and goes to *(first place)*. They change their behavior immediately by *(action)*.

(Name) gets mad and goes to *(third place)* to mope and pout. God sends a *(thing)* to protect him/her from the hot sun. But then God sends a *(animal or thing)* to destroy it. God scolds *(name)* for not caring for the people in *(first place)* as much as he/she cares for the *(thing)*.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

JONAH'S RELAY ADVENTURES for Intermediate

Children reenact scenes from Jonah's travels in this relay race.

Materials (two of each):

optional: sailor's hat

newspaper

sheet

construction paper

chair or stool

hat

2 tables

donut holes

long piece of fabric rolled up, or long foam, or rolled up butcher paper

Preparation:

Set up 6 stations (you will need two of each station):

- | | | |
|---|---------|--|
| 1 | boat | sailor's hat, unfolded newspaper on floor |
| 2 | whale | table covered with sheet |
| 3 | Nineveh | construction paper taped to floor |
| 4 | hill | chair or stool, hat |
| 5 | plant | table, donut holes |
| 6 | worm | long rolled up fabric or paper, or long foam |

Directions:

1. Divide the group into two teams. Each team lines up. (If you have only a few children, you may do this as a single team.)
2. Here are the instructions for the race. At your signal, the first person on each team goes through each station. At the end of station 6, they run back to their team, and the second person goes.
 - 1 Put on the hat, sit on the newspaper, and use hands to "row" in a complete circle. Then go to station 2.
 - 2 Crawl under the table and say loudly, "Boy, it's hot in here!" Go to 3.
 - 3 Stand on the construction paper and yell "Clean up your act!" Go to 4.
 - 4 Put on hat and sit down. Get up and go to 5.

- 5 Crawl under table and eat a donut hole. Finish swallowing. Go to 6.
 - 6 Pick up worm, wrap around neck, unwrap and whap it on floor.
3. When the last person on a team has finished this race, the whole team yells “We’re all forgiven! Alleluia! Let’s party!”



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

GIANT WHALE

for Preschool

Children make a huge, colorful whale out of poster board.

Materials:

poster board
whale pattern
paint or markers
scissors
glitter
thin glue
paintbrushes
large googly eyes

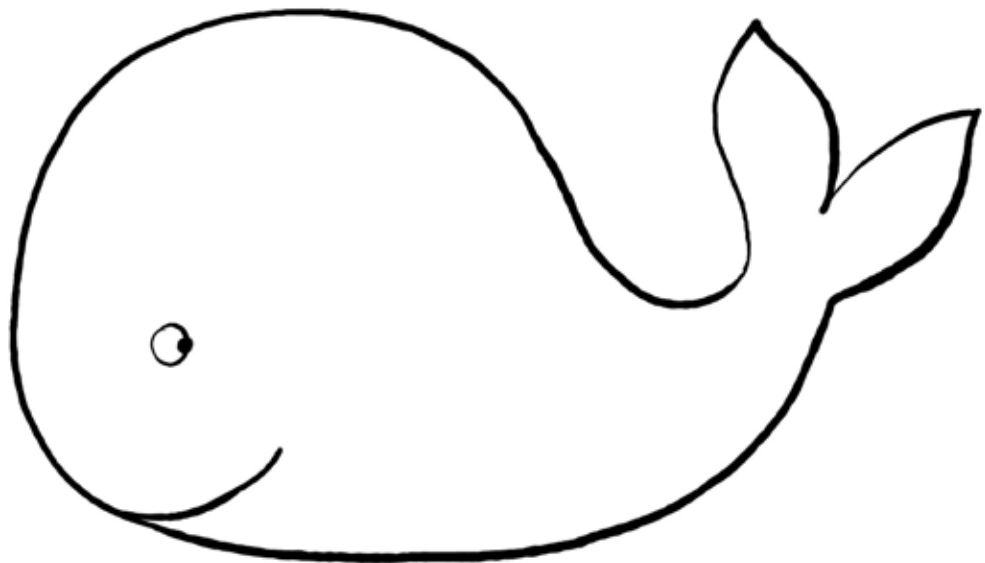
Preparation:

Outline a whale design for each child, using a whole sheet of poster board for each whale. Put some glue into a bowl and thin it with water.

Directions:

Invite each child to make their giant whale as follows:

1. Cut out the whale.
2. Use paint or markers to decorate the whale.
3. Glue a googly eye on the whale.
4. Brush glue onto the whale's body. Sprinkle glitter.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

JONAH GETS CAUGHT INSIDE THE WHALE for Preschool

Children play this singing game like London Bridges, with the same tune.

Directions:

1. Have two children, or you and one other child, hold both hands together. The other children get in a line. While you sing the song, the two children hold their hands up to let the other children between them, one at a time.

Jonah runs away from God, (*Children pass through the two people.*)

away from God, away from God.

Jonah runs away from God.

Whale swallows Jonah. (*Put hands down on one child, who is caught in between.*)

Jonah prays inside the whale, (*Rock the child back and forth.*)

inside the whale, inside the whale.

Jonah prays inside the whale.

God saves Jonah. (*Lift up arms and let that child go.*)

2. Begin the song and the game again, until all children have been “caught” inside the whale.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

WHALE'S TAIL

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children work together in teams to catch the whale's tail.

Materials:

piece of fabric for the tail

Directions:

You will need a lot of space for this game.

1. Invite the children to divide into two teams with an equal number of people and form two straight lines, facing front. Have players hold the shoulders of the player in front of them.
2. The last person in each line gets the fabric put in his or her back pocket for the whale's tail.
3. On your signal, the *first player* of each line tries to grab the tail of the other line. *The players must keep holding on to each other.* The rest of the line tries to help their player get the tail while keeping the other team from grabbing their tail.

Variation:

Have the players hold hands or lock arms rather than hold shoulders.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

BALLOON STORY POP

for Elementary, Intermediate

Children pop balloons to find the scenes from Jonah's story hidden inside and put them in the correct order.

Materials:

- balloons
- papers with story lines (p. 33)

Preparation:

Make a copy of the paper with the story lines. Cut out the pieces and roll them up. Place a piece of paper in each balloon and blow up the balloon.

Directions:

1. Form a circle and bring out the balloons.
2. Children bat the balloons around for a few minutes. For a challenge, tell them that they cannot let the balloons touch the floor.
3. When you say "*Stop and pop!*" they stop batting the balloons and try popping them.
4. When the balloons are popped, players take out the papers and try to put them into the correct story sequence.

STORY LINES FOR BALLOON STORY POP

God tells Jonah to go to Nineveh

Jonah gets on a boat

Boat in a storm

Sailors draw lots, and lot falls on Jonah

Jonah is thrown overboard

Whale swallows Jonah

Jonah prays inside the whale

Whale throws up and out pops Jonah

God tells Jonah to go to Nineveh

Jonah goes to Nineveh

Jonah preaches to the Ninevites

Nineveh people repent of their wicked deeds

Jonah gets mad and goes up to the hill

Plant grows to shade Jonah

The sun is hot

Worm kills the plant



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

GROUP DRAWING for Elementary

Children create a mural of the scenes from Jonah's story.

Materials:

- large sheet of butcher paper
- paint or markers

Directions:

1. Put the butcher paper on the wall.
2. Assign different children to draw different parts of the Jonah story:
 - Jonah, in each scene
 - city of Nineveh
 - boat
 - storm
 - whale
 - people of Nineveh and animals fasting
 - hill with plant
 - worm



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

JONAH'S BIG CATCH PHOTO SHOOT for Preschool, Primary, Elementary

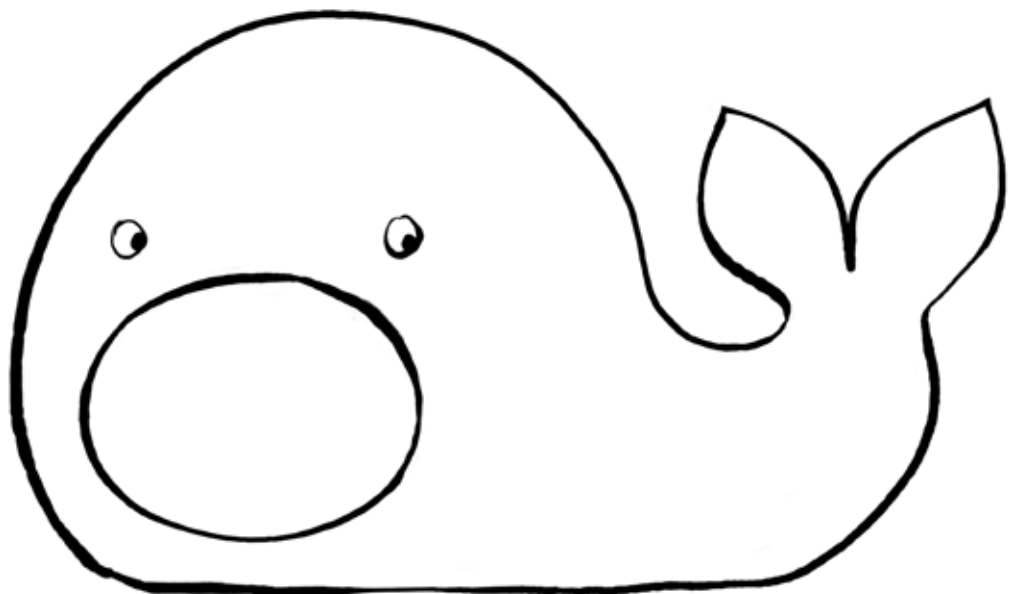
Children get their picture take with Jonah's famous whale.

Materials:

- camera (instant if possible)
- very large sheet of paper or cardboard (may use colored butcher paper taped together)
- paint
- optional:* poster board
- optional:* seashells
- glue
- tape

Directions:

1. Make a giant whale from cardboard or paper, with his mouth wide open (see illustration). Invite the children paint it.
2. Post the whale to a blank wall.
3. Take a picture of each child standing next to the whale's mouth, like a "souvenir photo."
4. Cut out the poster board to make a photo frame. Glue it onto the photo. Decorate with seashells.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

JONAH FISH SHAKER

for Primary, Elementary

Children recreate, in a bottle, Jonah's underwater adventure.

Materials:

empty clear plastic bottle or jar, with wide neck and with cap, without labels; 1 per child
plastic disposable plates, various colors
Jonah and fish patterns (p. 37)
permanent markers
water
blue food coloring
optional: confetti fish
masking tape
scissors

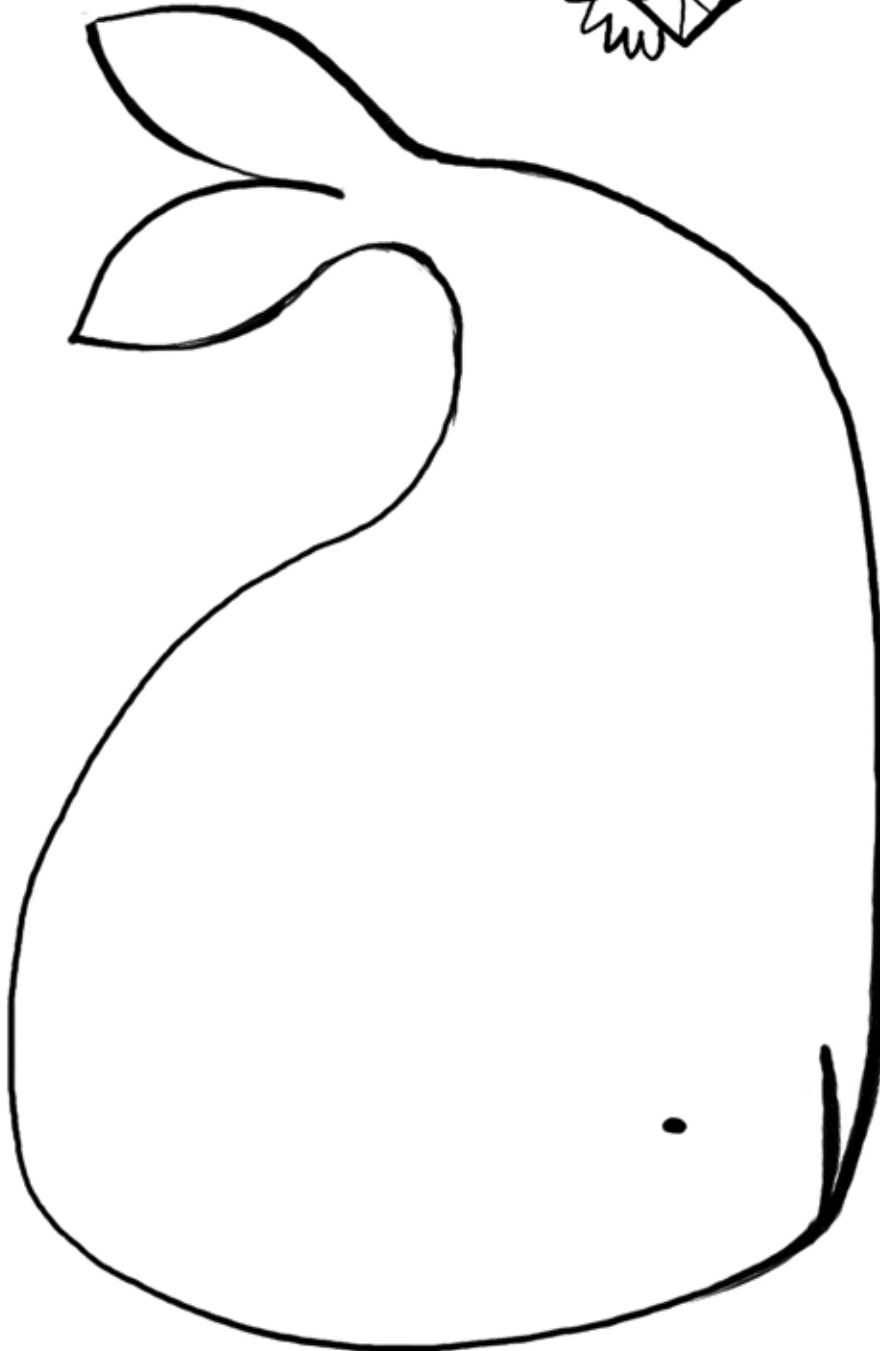
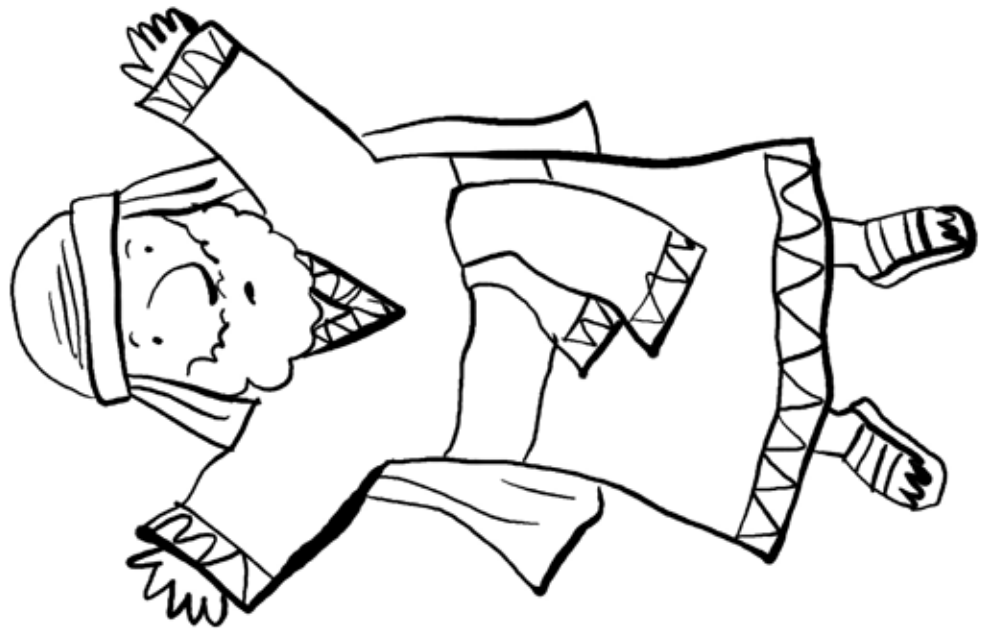
Preparation:

Take the labels off the bottles or jars. Make a copy of the Jonah and fish patterns for each child.

Directions:

Invite each child to make a shaker as follows:

1. Use the Jonah and fish patterns to cut figures out of the plastic plates. Children can use their own designs if they prefer, but make sure that the figures are thin enough to fit through the opening of the bottle. Color in details such as eyes with a permanent marker.
2. Fill the bottle with water. Add 2 drops of blue food coloring.
3. Put the Jonah and fish figures into the bottle. Also add confetti fish if you have them.
4. Tape the cap shut, and shake the bottle.





WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children

GIANT WHALE WITH WATER SPOUT for Primary

Children make their own big, 3-D whale.

Materials:

butcher paper (if you have gray butcher or banner paper, this is ideal)
pencils
paint, markers or crayons
tape or stapler
pipe cleaners
tissue, newspaper or other stuffing material

Directions:

1. Cut two pieces of butcher paper for each child, the larger the better!
2. Put the two pieces of paper together and draw a large whale design on one. The leader may help with drawing the whale shape.
3. Cut the whale shape out of both pieces of paper, so that you have two identical shapes.
4. Keeping the papers together, decorate your whale with eyes, mouth and other features.
5. Tape or staple most of the whale together, leaving the top, bottom or mouth open.
6. Stuff the whale with stuffing material. Tape the remainder of the whale shut.
7. Curl the tips of a three or four pipe cleaners. Hold the uncurled ends together and staple them to the top of the whale, making the “spray” from the “spout.”



We Believe . . .

This story is about us—our own arrogance and then our repentance. Look at Jonah's multiple failings, and see his need for repentance and forgiveness, and his need for change of life and transformation by God.

In the Prayer Book, one of the most moving and comprehensive pleas for a new beginning comes on Ash Wednesday. The service on Ash Wednesday (*BCP*, pp. 264-269) helps us to prepare for the days of the Lord's passion and resurrection, starting with this day of special penitence.



Words of Faith

*God's mercy for all people –
We bring the Good News*

"to the ends of the earth," because God is a God of all creation

*compassion for all – All are included in
God's circle of love.*

***God's love is universal, not to be
limited by us.***

LESSON 15: JONAH



Today's Story: Jonah 1–4

In Jonah's day, there was a narrow-minded mentality among the Israelites that insisted that only the Israelites—God's chosen people—came under the love of God and were worthy to be saved. This is the same mentality that Jesus opposed in his parable of the Good Samaritan. We see the same mentality today, when people insist that only "their church" or "their country" or "their race" is "God's church" or "God's country" or "God's race," that is, that God chooses one group and rejects the rest.

The author of the book of Jonah was brave enough to caricature this kind of thinking. In the book, it is the foreigners who are obedient to God's will, while God's "chosen one" turns his back on God.

Thus, we see in Jonah a strong emphasis on universalism and tolerance toward other nations. The author anticipated St. Paul's mission to open up the Good News to all people, not just to the Jews: "Is he not the God of Gentiles also?" (Romans 3:29).





Sharing

Read the story of Jonah from a children's Bible, showing the pictures, or from your family Bible.

There are many elements of the story that you can discuss with your family, for example:

- Observe how he runs away from God.
- Observe how he got angry *because* he knew that God would be merciful to the Ninevites! Observe how he pitied himself because he lost the plant that God provided for him!

At some point, focus on the fact that God *did* spare the people of Nineveh, the capital of the Israelites' greatest enemy, Babylon. This is the whole purpose of the book, to say that God's mercy is not to be limited, as we would limit God's mercy to our own friends and those who agree with us.



WEAVING GOD'S PROMISES

for Children



This Week at Home

- **Make a big fish and fill it with good deeds.** Using wrapping paper, cut two mirror images of a big fish and staple them together, leaving the mouth area open. Then tear or cut pieces of paper, and, on each piece, write a small act of kindness that one can do easily. Create as many as you can. Stuff these pieces of paper into the mouth of the fish. Each day, each family member pulls out one piece of paper and does that deed. *Examples:* "Wash your own snack dish." "Smile and say good morning to everybody." Etc.
- **Identify those who are the excluded today.** Think about and discuss what peoples are considered "Ninevites" today. Whom do we exclude, look down on or silently condemn? These may be national groups (Afghans), social groups (the poor, immigrants, ex-offenders, women, blacks, Hispanics), oppressed people (Congolese, low-caste Indians) or people whom we merely exclude by ignoring (Roma, popularly known as "gypsies"). Closer to home, whom do we personally exclude? people in the poorer part of our neighborhood? new kids at school? Why do we do this, and how can we change?
- **Talk about running away from God.** Jonah ran away from God—or at least tried to!—because he did not want to do what God asked him to do. Create a pocket page that you may call "Running to and from God." You will need paper, crayons and glue or tape. On one side, title one side *Running away from God.* Title the other *Running to God.* On another piece of paper, draw a picture of a boat, cut it out, and glue or tape it to the *Running away from God* side. Leave the top of the boat open to form a pocket. On another piece of paper, draw a picture that represents God (*sun, cloud, man with a beard, Jesus, cross, etc.*). Cut this out and glue or tape it to the *Running to God* page. Then take small pieces of paper, and on each piece, write either a word (or draw a picture) of different things God might ask you to do. Take turns putting each situation in one of the pockets. Does this situation make you want to run *away* from God? Or would you obey, running *to* God?



Household Prayer

God of all people, you teach us in the story of Jonah that all people are your people. and in sending Jesus that you love us all. Help us to love one another as you love us. We ask this in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

