

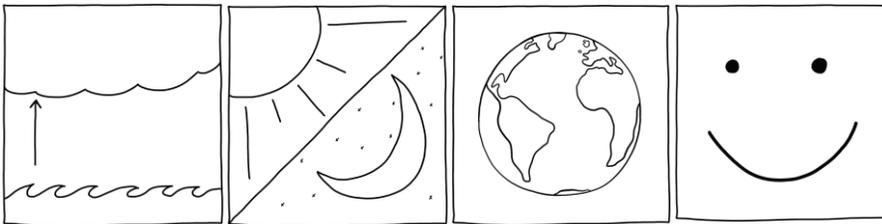
Lenten Devotion Booklet for Families

Celebrating God's Creation

This booklet contains eight lessons to support your family through the season of Lent. There are more lessons than there are weeks in Lent so please choose the lessons that work best for your family or find time to do them all. We hope that it will serve as a companion for your family as you join Trinity in exploring the ways that we can be good stewards of God's creation. Make sure to check out the family activities that are found at the end of the booklet also. Blessings!

Lesson 1: Separation of the Water

Scripture: Genesis 1:6-10



(a) God made a covering for the waters and called it sky. (b) There was morning and night on the second day. (c) God separated the water and land. (d) God was very happy.

Reflection: This is not so much a time to make sure children received the information or facts of the story, but rather, an opportunity for your children to share what stood out to them and what they imagined when they listened to the story.

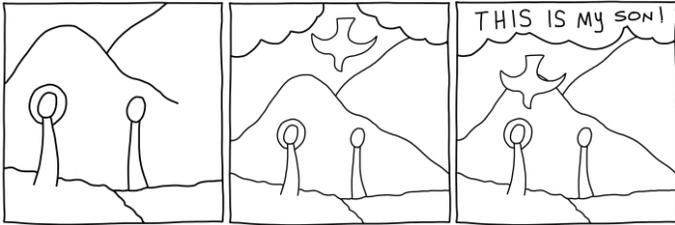
- What is surprising about this story?
- Let's imagine together why God gave us water...
- What do you love about water?
- How might God quench our thirst, like water on a hot day?

Coloring: Spend some time coloring together from your coloring book throughout the week, revising the story. Notice what words, phrases and symbols you see in the coloring sheet.

Closing Prayer: God, You are our Good Creator. All that you made is awesome and beautiful. As we use water today, we will remember you and give you thanks. Amen.

Lesson 2: Baptism of Jesus

Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17



- (a) Jesus went to the Jordan River where John the Baptist was. (b) While John baptized Jesus, the sky opened and a dove came down (c) A voice from the sky said, "This is my son whom I love so much and makes me so happy"

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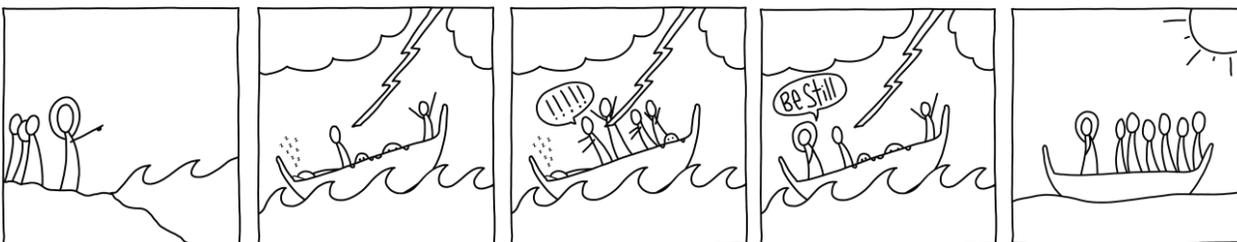
- What is something that might seem ordinary to someone else but is actually really special or amazing?
- Discuss who in your family has been baptized or whether any of you would like to be baptized.
- What are your shared memories about baptism? Example: Who have you seen get baptized? What was it like when you were baptized, if you were?
- Baptism is an outward sign of our place in God's family and our calling to be a part of God's story in creation. How might you be a part of God's story? How might your gifts be used to fulfill God's dreams in the world?

Coloring: Spend some time coloring together from your coloring book throughout the week, revising the story. Notice what words, phrases and symbols you see in the coloring sheet.

Closing Prayer: Loving God, Thank you for baptism water and how it frees us to live with joy and hope as your children. Help us remember we are enough in your eyes. Amen.

Lesson 3: Calming of the Storm

Scripture: Mark 4:35-41



- (a) Jesus told his disciples, "Let's cross the lake." (b) A huge storm arose, but Jesus stayed asleep in the back of the boat. (c) The disciples were scared and told Jesus to do something (d) Jesus ordered the wind and water to, "Be still." (e) The disciples were amazed.

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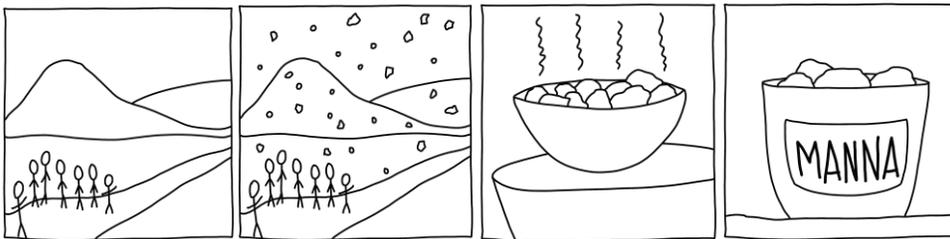
- Have you ever experienced a storm? Maybe a thunderstorm or really windy days? Where were you? What was it like?
- Discuss what it would have been like to be on the boat in the windstorm with Jesus.
- Are there things in your life that have felt storm or caused you to feel afraid?
- Are there storms you've shared together as a family? How have those been resolved or not? Are there storms about which you could pray?

Coloring: Spend some time coloring together from your coloring book throughout the week, revising the story. Notice what words, phrases and symbols you see in the coloring sheet.

Closing Prayer: Dear God, whether you calm the storms in our lives or give us the courage to face them, we give you thanks for your strength, peace, and comfort that cover our fears. Amen.

Lesson 4: Manna and Quail

Scripture: Exodus 16



(a) The Israelites complained in the desert because they were hungry. (b) The Lord made quail and bread come down from heaven and told the people to gather just what they needed for that day. (c) Some people didn't listen and tried to collect extra, which rotted overnight. (d) The Israelites called the bread "manna" and put some in a jar so they could tell their future children how the Lord provided for them in the desert.

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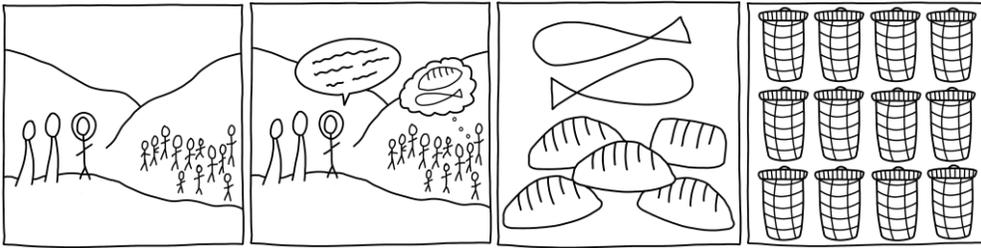
- What might it have been like to be an Israelite in the wilderness?
- How did God provide for them?
- How does God provide for our family?
- How might we show God how grateful we are for God's care?

Coloring: Spend some time coloring together from your coloring book throughout the week, revising the story. Notice what words, phrases and symbols you see in the coloring sheet.

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, we praise and thank you for how you patiently and faithfully care for all our needs. Please renew our trust in you and your promise to give us our daily bread. Amen.

Lesson 5: Feeding of the 5,000

Scripture: Mark 6:31-44



(a) Jesus and the disciples tried to find a quiet place to rest, but the crowds beat them there. (b) Jesus taught all day, and everyone grew hungry. (c) Jesus blessed the little food they had – five loaves of bread and two fish – and the disciples gave the food to the people. (d) All 5,000 people got plenty to eat and there were even twelve baskets of leftovers.

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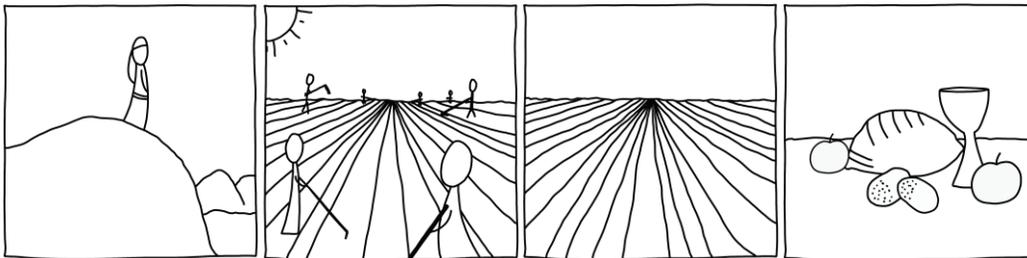
- How does Jesus care for the people in the crowd spiritually and physically?
- How has God provided for our family by giving us enough or more than enough?
- How might our family help those around us who don't have enough?

Coloring: Spend some time coloring together from your coloring book throughout the week, revising the story. Notice what words, phrases and symbols you see in the coloring sheet.

Closing Prayer: Compassionate Christ, you care tenderly for us in mind, heart, and body. Please open our eyes to the needs of those around us today and make us your hands - like the disciples - in serving those needs in your name. Amen.

Lesson 6: Rest for the Land

Scripture: Leviticus 25:1-7



(a) God spoke to Moses on the mountain. (b) God told Moses, tell the people to work the land for six years. (c) God told Moses land rest on the seventh year. (d) God told Moses, food will grow during the resting time, and you and all who are hungry can eat of it.

Reflection: This is not so much a time to make sure children received the information or facts of the story, but rather, an opportunity for your children to share what stood out to them and what they imagined when they listened to the story.

- How do you feel when you need to rest?
- How do you feel when you've rested well?

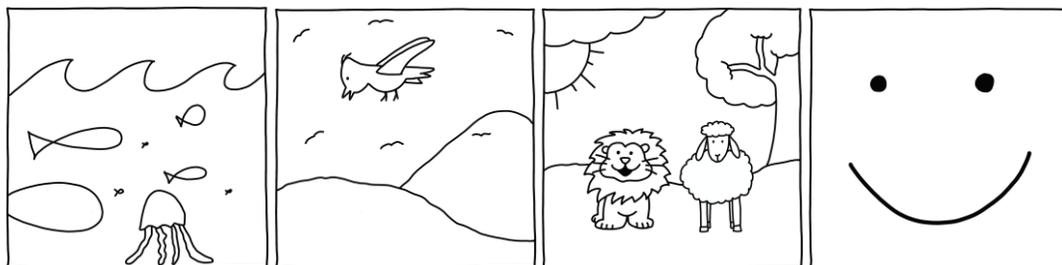
- Who, or what, needs rest? You? Our family and friends? Our yard, or our garden? Your toys? Our pets? Our work? Why might these need rest (or not)?
- How can we incorporate more rest and Sabbath into our family rhythm each week?
- How does taking care of ourselves help us live into what God has in store for us?
- Why might God have listed all of the people (and animals) that could eat from the land? Why was it important to list all of them?

Coloring: Spend some time coloring together from your coloring book throughout the week, revising the story. Notice what words, phrases and symbols you see in the coloring sheet.

Closing Prayer: Gentle God, thank you for all that your earth provides. Thank you for knowing what is best for us and for all the earth, and for the goodness of rest. Amen.

Lesson 7: Creation of Animals

Scripture: Genesis 1:20-25



(a) God called out and made the creatures of the water. (b) God called out and made the creatures of the air. (c) God called made the creatures of the land. (d) God saw how good all of creation was.

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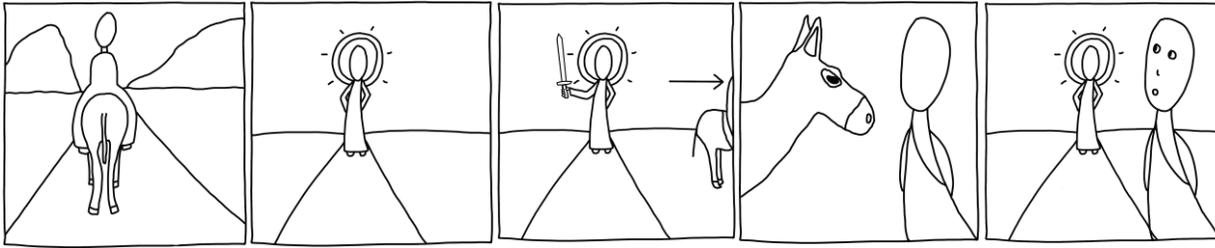
- What animal do you hope to see someday?
- Where have we been as a family when we've seen animals?
- What does God show us when we look at the amazing variety of animals on the earth?
- Why is it important to care for animals?
- How do we care for our family's pets?

Coloring: Spend some time coloring together from your coloring book throughout the week, revising the story. Notice what words, phrases and symbols you see in the coloring sheet.

Closing Prayer: Imaginative God, you delight in creation and we do, too. Thank you for filling the world with such fantastic creatures. Help us to celebrate all that you have made. Amen.

Lesson 8: Balaam and the Lord's Messenger

Scripture: Numbers 22:22-35



(a) Balaam and his donkey set off on a journey (b) God sent an angel to get in Balaam's way (c) The donkey tried three times to avoid the angel – angering Balaam as he did so (d) The donkey reminded Balaam that he had always been a faithful companion (e) God revealed the angel to Balaam.

Reflection: This is not so much a time to make sure children received the information or facts of the story, but rather, an opportunity for your children to share what stood out to them and what they imagined when they listened to the story.

- Sometimes it is difficult to listen to each other. When have you felt ignored in our family? When has it been challenging for you to listen?
- How does it feel when you are listened to?
- How can we listen better to each other in our family?
- How does God teach us when we learn to listen well to each other?
- Are there ways you'd like to listen better about chores, helping your siblings, to each other's stories and feelings, etc.?

Coloring: Spend some time coloring together from your coloring book throughout the week, revising the story. Notice what words, phrases and symbols you see in the coloring sheet.

Closing Prayer: God-with-us, thank you for teaching us through all that surrounds us. Help us to listen well to one another and to all of creation. Amen.

Family Activities

Below find a description of ideas you can do with your family during the Lenten season. Pick and choose which ones you like the best and adapt as you need. Have fun and enjoy God's creation!

Splash: Let water refresh you. Go to the shore of a lake, or the banks of a river, or the coastline. Or after a rainstorm, find some puddles. As a family, get near the water. And let loose! Jump and try to splash each other. Reach your hands in and scoop up water to throw on each other. Kick the water at one another. Come in clothes you won't mind getting wet, or in swimsuits, and bring new dry outfits if you want. But get in the water, even if it's just up to your knees, and play (parents, too!). Laugh together. Enjoy the cool relief of the water.

Bless: At the beginning of the school year, or the summer, or before a certain event, or just on some day you want to make special, choose to bless each other. Remember how Scripture records Jesus' baptism? It says he hears a voice at that moment, a voice he knows is God's telling him, "You are my child, my beloved. In you, I am well pleased." It doesn't have to be an occasion as profound as baptism for us to tell each other that. Fill a small bowl or pitcher with water, gather your family around, and take turns offering each other blessings. Wet each other's foreheads or hands, and speak your love and delight.

Test: Did you know you can poke holes in bag full of water and it won't leak? Try this experiment with kids: Fill a zip-loc bag $\frac{3}{4}$ full of water. Seal it. Then take a bunch of newly-sharpened pencils or colored pencils and slowly, one at a time, poke them through the bag, piercing both sides but not pulling them all the way through. It could be fun to let each person in the family try to see how many pencils they can poke through their own bag. Do this experiment outside, or over a tub or sink, because at the end, when you remove the pencils, you'll want to watch the water squirt out!

Measure: Keep track of how much water comes to renew the earth by creating a rain gauge. Recycle a plastic bottle by cutting off the top. Have kids help to measure the increments you want to track and mark the bottle accordingly with a permanent marker. Find a place outdoors where the gauge can catch a lot of rain but stay secure. When you go to check it, say a prayer of gratitude for the ways the water nourishes the earth.

Invite: Let the sharing of food do the work of creating community by hosting an informal picnic. Make sandwiches. Gather fruits and veggies and chips and cookies. Pack a basket full of food, and take it to a nearby park, or relax in your own yard. Invite friends or neighbors or strangers to join you. Ask them to bring something to add to the feast, if they want to. Throw down some blankets. Enjoy a meal together. Marvel at how much goodness surrounds you. Linger.

Observe: Reflect on how land "works," and how it "rests," by observing different lands and their uses in your own area. Go for a walk, or a bike or bus ride, or a drive, past manicured lawns and well-tended gardens. Make sure your trip also takes you past uncultivated land, too: old farms or fields of tall native grasses or wildflowers. Take note of the differences you see in each sort of land, and talk about the different processes both go through. Let each person share what beauty they see in the different places you observe.

Plant: Send out potential for growth, nutrition, and loveliness by making seed balls and casting them into places in your city or town that could use some beautifying. Seed balls are easy: you'll need clay (if you can't find natural clay from your area, Crayola air dry clay will work), compost or soil, and seeds for plants and flowers that are native to your area. You'll want a 5:1:1 ratio – 5 parts clay, 1 part compost/soil, 1 part seed. Roll the parts together with a few drops of water to bind them. The final products should be about the size of a golf balls. Let them dry in the sun. Then toss them around

abandoned lots, empty spaces at parks, by roadsides, or other places that could use some color and love!

Identify: Note and name the good things that fill your yard with handmade garden markers. Using outdoor paint and old bricks or large rocks, create colorful identifiers for each plant growing in your garden. Or, if you're not growing a garden, paint the markers with words that express the qualities you want all who come to your space to experience – "peace" or "love" or "hope." Or mix it up – some of your markers can identify tomatoes and carrots, others can invite people to experience gratitude and joy. A clear coat of outdoor paint over the finished product will help protect the markers through many seasons.

Supply: Help to provide for other creatures by collecting needed items. Call your local animal shelter and ask what sort of donations would be most welcome (food, treats, and toys are usually very appreciated). Purchase these, or host a drive for them at your church or in your neighborhood or with your extended family. Say a prayer for all the animals at the shelter, for the people who work with them, and for the people who will come to give them homes.

Pose: Enter into an animal's world for a while by practicing "animal yoga." There are traditional yoga poses named for animals, of course – the cobra, the downward-facing dog, the eagle, the cat – and you could learn those. It might also be fun for kids to invent poses: What does a snail look like? How does a giraffe reach those leaves? Can you balance like a bird, or shape your body like a starfish? Hold those poses, and think about the qualities of those animals. As you breathe in deeply, and out slowly, give thanks for who you are and for all the diversity of creation.

Witness: Learn how injured animals are cared for and healed by visiting a wildlife rehabilitation center or refuge. Learn about the unique journeys of each animal at the center. Pay attention to the ways their injuries happened and how people can help prevent future harm to wild animals. Ask the center if there are ways you, your family, or your class at school or church can help their efforts.

Feed: Draw beauty to your yard and help to provide for other creatures by building a simple birdfeeder. The base could be a pinecone, a cardboard tube, or an orange peel cup. Coat the base with peanut or almond butter, then roll it in – or fill it with – birdseed, run some yarn through the feeder, and find a branch to hang it from where you'll be able to watch the birds who come to feast!

We are thankful for the work of the "Illustrated Children's Ministry" which created this resource.

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