



Narrative Lectionary - Worship Resources

Program 1 2018-19
September 9, 2018 – December 30, 2018
Worship Resources

** SAMPLE **

Flood and Promise, Genesis 6:5-22; 8:6-12; 9:8-17

September 9, 2018

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

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Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

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Flood and Promise, Genesis 6:5-22; 8:6-12; 9:8-17

September 9, 2018

Scripture Readings

Text: Genesis 6:5-22; 8:6-12; 9:8-17

⁵The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.

⁶And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. ⁷So the Lord said, “I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.”

⁸But Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord. ⁹These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. ¹⁰And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

¹¹Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. ¹²And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth.

¹³And God said to Noah, “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. ¹⁴Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch.

¹⁵This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. ¹⁶Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and put the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks. ¹⁷For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. ¹⁸But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. ¹⁹And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. ²⁰Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive. ²¹Also take with you every kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them.”

²²Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.

⁶At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made ⁷and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth.

⁸Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; ⁹but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. ¹⁰He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; ¹¹and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. ¹²Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more.

⁸Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him, ⁹“As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, ¹⁰and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹²God said, “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: ¹³I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. ¹⁶When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.” ¹⁷God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Secondary Text: Matthew 8:24-27

²⁴A windstorm arose on the sea, so great that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. ²⁵And they went and woke him up, saying, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” ²⁶And he said to them, “Why are you afraid, you of little faith?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a dead calm. ²⁷They were amazed, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?”

Flood and Promise, Genesis 6:5-22; 8:6-12; 9:8-17

September 9, 2018

Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Lord

Narrator: The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that he had made humankind on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said,

Lord: “I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created—people together with animals and creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.”

Narrator: But Noah found favor in the sight of the Lord. These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw that the earth was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its ways upon the earth. And God said to Noah,

Lord: “I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth. Make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and put the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks. For my part, I am going to bring a flood of waters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. And of every living thing, of all flesh, you shall bring two of every kind into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds, and of the animals according to their kinds, of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every kind shall come in to you, to keep them alive. Also take with you every

kind of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them.”

Narrator: Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. At the end of forty days Noah opened the window of the ark that he had made and sent out the raven; and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. Then he sent out the dove from him, to see if the waters had subsided from the face of the ground; but the dove found no place to set its foot, and it returned to him to the ark, for the waters were still on the face of the whole earth. So he put out his hand and took it and brought it into the ark with him. He waited another seven days, and again he sent out the dove from the ark; and the dove came back to him in the evening, and there in its beak was a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. Then he waited another seven days, and sent out the dove; and it did not return to him any more. Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him,

Lord: “As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

Narrator: God said,

Lord: “This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.”

Narrator: God said to Noah,

Lord: “This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.”

Flood and Promise, Genesis 6:5-22; 8:6-12; 9:8-17

September 9, 2018

Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: All of God’s creation is precious to God.

Have you ever had a computer freeze on you? You know, the kind of freeze where pushing all the buttons does nothing? The only way to reboot is to do a hard reset. It usually means turning it all off, waiting 10 seconds, and then starting it up again. The hope is, of course, that the bug that caused the freeze is gone, and that all your precious data is saved. Noah’s story is a little like that. God’s creation “froze” (it ceased to live up the potential God had given it), and God needed to do a hard reset.

Not long after God created all things, many of God’s creation were “evil continually.” It grieved God to see all the things God had made had become corrupt. So much so, God intended to destroy it all.

But God couldn’t do it. What God made was too precious. So, God found humans who were righteous and saved them, along with their families. God saved one pair of every kind of walking and creeping animal. God saved one pair of every kind of bird and flying creature. God saved one of every kind of plant and food. God saved all the sea creatures. Nothing was decimated completely. From the very beginning, God’s plan included a way to preserve, not to extinguish, all that God had made.

God’s hope, of course, was that through this reset, the corruption of humanity and all flesh would be gone, and the potential for goodness would be saved. We know, of course, corruption still exists. But so does the potential for goodness within each of us. That potential is enough for God to hold onto hope that the things God created are worth preserving. God’s promise is that God will never give up on God’s creation—animals, plants, and humanity—ever again.

Scripture Summary

Noah’s story shows us how saddened God can be at our thoughtless actions. How that same creator has the power to destroy us all with one swipe. And, miraculously, chooses not to.

Call to Worship

L: You are my children—all you creatures, wild and tame.

C: Come, let us praise the Lord!

L: I will remember my covenant with you.

C: Come, let us praise the Lord!

L: Never again will I utterly destroy you.

C: Come, let us praise the Lord!

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Faithful God,

C: You have called us to places unknown and have promised to be our guide. Yet we prefer to find our own way and do our own thing, taking credit when things go well and blaming others when they don’t. We resist putting our trust in you. We forget your covenant with us. And we suffer for it. Turn us around to walk where you are leading. Forgive us for wandering from the path. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

L: God is faithful at all times and to all who seek guidance. May you know the grace which has been freely offered to you, and the special blessing which God continually grants to all who simply ask. Receive the forgiveness of your loving creator, for the sake of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Flood and Promise, Genesis 6:5-22; 8:6-12; 9:8-17

September 9, 2018

Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

O Lord, you preserved Noah as a sign that you hadn't completely given up on your creation. Assure us of your mercy that we might live to proclaim it and share your promises with all humanity. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Offertory Prayer

Give us grateful hearts, O God, for all that you have bestowed upon us, though undeserving. Bless these token gifts that we offer back to you, in service to a world that is broken, unequal, and crying out for justice. Use us in your mission and make us true servants of your Son, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Even in the most forsaken of places, O God, you can find something worth redeeming. Give us your eyes to seek out what is good, true, and just, and to expand it for the sake of the love which brought us to be. Merciful Creator,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: All people, all creatures, all growing things are precious to you, who breathed your Spirit and poured your living waters over the earth. Cultivate within us that same respect, and make us champions for the downtrodden and disadvantaged, for the abused and mistreated, for the exploited and misused of your beloved creation. Merciful Creator,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We are often so certain that we know who is evil and who is good, who is worthy of saving and who is not.

Give us humility to acknowledge that we—like everyone else—are neither fully righteous nor fully depraved. Give us courage to correct ourselves when we are found in error, and may we leave the task of judgment to your own infinite wisdom. Merciful Creator,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: The evil that we do—and that we wish upon others—is a plague on our bodies and a stain on our souls. Visit us with your healing mercy—the kind which frees us from ourselves and opens us up to love again. We bring before you all your children who are in need this day, (especially...). Merciful Creator,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Make of us one great human family—both on earth and in your everlasting fellowship. Make us mindful of your servant, Noah, and give us his obedience that we might also share in his blessings. Merciful Creator,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: You hold all creation in your hands, O Lord. Hold these our prayers, and the unspoken desires of our hearts, together with your grand vision for the world. Make us part of the solution. In Christ we pray. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

You never forget your covenant, O Lord, your promise to preserve us and not to harm us. Be present with us now in this taste of mercy—the sign of our Savior's body and blood. Bring us close to you, that we might go out to the far corners of your wide earth, nurtured, and inspired to proclaim your message of deliverance.

Flood and Promise, Genesis 6:5-22; 8:6-12; 9:8-17

September 9, 2018

Liturgy

Litany

L: From the very beginning, we tested God's patience.

C: Even Eden wasn't enough for us.

L: We listened to whispers of evil, and not our Creator.

C: Whether it was eating from the Tree of Knowledge,

L: Or living wicked and selfish lives.

C: God could count on us to do the wrong thing.

L: By the time Noah came along, God had had enough;

C: God was ready to wipe us all out and start again.

L: And who could blame God?

C: God's glorious creation, the human, had become a major disappointment.

L: No wonder God decided to send the rain to carry us away.

C: The real wonder is that God decided to spare any of us.

L: Like a parent who will never give up on wayward children,

C: God gave us another chance with the sparing of Noah and his family, and enough animals to repopulate the earth.

L: Not only that, God made a covenant with us, a sacred promise.

C: God would never destroy the earth with water.

L: The rainbow in the sky is a symbol of that promise.

C: Rainbows only come when the rain is over, when the sun is coming out again.

L: And while we continue to listen to the Evil One too often, following our worst impulses,

C: God remains faithful to that covenant made so long ago.

L: God loves us, flawed as we are, too much to wipe us out.

C: We are God's plan for the world, us and no other.

L: And it is up to us. Who will we listen to? Who will we follow? How will we live?

C: If the world will be destroyed, we will do the destroying, not God.

L: Over thousands of years, we have taken what we wanted from the earth, without giving back as we should.

C: Resources depleting at a rapid rate, we face the real possibility that humans have shortened the life of this planet.

L: This beautiful world, God's precious creation, is in danger once again, because of us.

C: We know that God will keep God's promise, because God always does.

L: But will we keep our promises to God?

C: Will we be good caretakers of creation, or wasters and spoilers?

L: God has always given us a choice, never forced us.

C: So, what will it be? Will we stop listening to the devils within us, and listen again to the Lord?

L: It may soon be too late.

C: But it's not too late yet.

L: Please God, help us choose wisely and well.

All: Amen!

Flood and Promise, Genesis 6:5-22; 8:6-12; 9:8-17

September 9, 2018

Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Noah, Mrs. Noah, Lion, Elephant

Mrs. Noah: Oh, Noah you're home. Did you wipe your feet on the doormat? Of course, you didn't. I swear, between you and the kids, this place is a zoo!

Noah: Actually, that's what I need to talk to you about.

Mrs. Noah: Your sloppiness?

Noah: No, the zoo part. Listen, I know I'm not exactly a neat freak...

Mrs. Noah: Neat Freak? Neat Freak? This is the man who leaves so much toothpaste in the sink that I have to buy a new tube every week! This is the man whose idea of cleaning the house is shoving everything into the closet.

Noah: You gotta admit it does make the house look cleaner!

Mrs. Noah: When I opened the closet door, it was like an avalanche! I was almost buried in junk!

Noah: Ok, ok, I admit it. Major slob. But I need to tell you something very important. It's about... well, I'm not sure how to put this... but...

Mrs. Noah: What? What? Spit it out!

Noah: What do you think about getting some pets?

Mrs. Noah: This is a joke, right? After the mess you and the kids make, you want me to welcome a dirty animal into the house? No way!

Noah: Um, well, it's kind of... out of our hands now.

Mrs. Noah: What do you mean?

Lion: (*enters*) Roar! (*to Noah*) Where am I sleeping?

Noah: (*to Lion*) Don't worry, there's a place for you and your lioness.

Elephant: (*enters, looking around*) Not exactly the jungle, but I guess it will have to do. (*to Mrs. Noah*) How do you do? I'd shake your hand, but I don't have one. You can shake my trunk if you like.

Mrs. Noah: Noah, what in God's earth is going on? There's a lion and an elephant in my living room. I want some answers, now!

Noah: Well, dear, I've been talking with the Almighty.

Mrs. Noah: (*sarcastically*) How lovely! What have you two been chatting about?

Noah: Well, you know the world is going to hell in a handbasket, you've said so yourself.

Mrs. Noah: Well it is! Everything is out of control!

Noah: What if I told you a great flood is coming? God said so, but we'll be safe! I just need to get an ark and gather up two of every animal!

Mrs. Noah: Unbelievable! And I suppose (*points to Lion and Elephant*) that explains our... guests?

Noah: Right! I knew you'd understand!

Mrs. Noah: I most certainly do NOT understand! I don't even know what an ark is.

Noah: It's a boat. A really, really, really big boat. So, when the rain starts, we get inside and ride out the storm.

Mrs. Noah: And where are we supposed to get an ark? Arks R Us?

Noah: Honestly? I need to build it.

Mrs. Noah: You? Build? You couldn't use a hammer if your life depended on it!

Noah: But our lives DO depend on it. God promised! I'll build the ark, and everything will be all right!

Mrs. Noah: I don't know... (*to Lion and Elephant*) You two, if we're keeping you safe, you're following some rules. Lion: No roaring after 9 PM. Elephant: I am NOT sweeping up your peanut shells, got it? Not a single one!

Lion: (*to Elephant*) Delightful, isn't she? I think I'd rather take my chances out in the rain!

Elephant: I agree. I don't go where I'm not wanted! Come on! (*they start off*)

Noah: Stop! Stop! You have to stay! And I need to round up all the other animals! Build the Ark! It's God's command!

Lion and Elephant: Well, ok then. We're staying—for God's sake.

Mrs. Noah: Noah, if you're out building this... ark, what am I supposed to do with these... beasts?

Lion: Beasts! I am offended, madam!

Elephant: As am I! (*to Mrs. Noah*) But you do have a point. We will earn our keep. I can vacuum, obviously, and Lion here will do the dishes! Lick 'em all clean!

Noah: Hear that, dear? I'm sure we'll all be very happy together! Happy and safe!

Mrs. Noah: Safe? Maybe. Happy? I doubt that.

Noah: You'll see! It will be like a Disney cruise! Forty days and forty nights of fun!

Mrs. Noah: I've always wanted to go on a cruise... Ok, you win.

Noah: We all win, dear! (*looking up to God*) We'll be ready, Lord! (*exits*)

Mrs. Noah, Lion and Elephant look at each other and shrug. They exit together.

Flood and Promise, Genesis 6:5-22; 8:6-12; 9:8-17

September 9, 2018

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

All of God's creation is precious to God.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Way to display and manipulate paper cut-outs, a PowerPoint, or other images of:
 - red heart
 - orange olive branch
 - yellow sun
 - green sprouts
 - blue rain drops
 - indigo waves
 - violet dove
 - rainbow colored earth

Setting the Scene/Background

The following rhyme reminds us of God's promises by connecting each color with an action, a feeling, and a symbol. Using whatever media, add each colored symbol in order, starting with red on top and violet on the bottom.

Gestures for each action verb include:

- Rejoices / jazz hands
- Offers / hands out
- Yields / arms scooping (harvest)
- Grows / bodies squiggle up to standing
- Believes / prayer hands
- Invites / beckoning arms or arms around shoulders
- Voice / cup hands to mouth
- Remind / point to head

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Invite a kid (or kids) to help display the symbols.

Share the rhyme, introducing movements if helpful, and adding each symbol to the rainbow display.

RED rejoices in great *love*: God's heart for all below, above.

ORANGE offers gifts of *peace*: an olive branch means fear can cease.

YELLOW yields bright rays of *hope*: the sun means we don't need to mope!

GREEN grows shoots of endless *grace*: New life sprouts in every place!

BLUE believes with deepest *trust*: rain drops will stop—we know they must!

INDIGO invites our *awe*: with waves that wash away each flaw.

VIOLET voices *gratitude*: for healing tones the dove has cooed.

RAINBOWS remind us with this rhyme: God cares for Earth now, all the time.

Reflection Questions

- Name the colors of the rainbow.
- What promise does the rainbow remind us of?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

Ask children with attention issues to help post the symbols. Non-readers can learn only the colors and gestures.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Candles with drip guards sufficient to your group
- Lit Christ candle

Call of Abraham, Genesis 12:1-9

September 16, 2018

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Call of Abraham, Genesis 12:1-9

September 16, 2018

Scripture Readings

Text: Genesis 12:1-9

12Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

⁴So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother’s son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan,

⁶Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. ⁷Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. ⁸From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and invoked the name of the Lord. ⁹And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

Pronunciation Guide:

Haran: HAY-ruhn

Canaan: KAY-nuhn

Shechem: SHEE-kehm

Moreh: MO-reh

Bethel: BETH-el

Ai: AY-ee

Negeb: NEH-gehb

Secondary Text: Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Lord

Narrator: Now the Lord said to Abram,

Lord: “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Narrator: So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother’s son Lot, and all the possessions that they had gathered, and the persons whom they had acquired in Haran; and they set forth to go to the land of Canaan. When they had come to the land of Canaan, Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. Then the Lord appeared to Abram, and said,

Lord: “To your offspring I will give this land.”

Narrator: So he built there an altar to the Lord, who had appeared to him. From there he moved on to the hill country on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and invoked the name of the Lord. And Abram journeyed on by stages toward the Negeb.

Call of Abraham, Genesis 12:1-9

September 16, 2018

Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: God's blessing is meant to be shared.

When God called Abram, it was for a purpose greater than the blessing of Abram. Sure, God told Abram God would “make of you a great nation,” and “make your name great.” Abram would have those things. But it wasn't only for Abram's sake he would gain these favors. God blessed Abram, so he would be a blessing to “all the families of the earth,” so—everyone might receive these gifts.

We live in a culture that values personal achievement. Often, that personal achievement comes at the expense of others. We climb the corporate ladder, and sometimes the only way up is by climbing over someone else. We post on social media the edited versions of ourselves to cover up the pain, hurt, and failures we don't want others to see. We desire our blessings, our successes, our victories without considering who gets hurt along the way.

But we too, are blessed to be a blessing to others. The gifts and skills God gave us are meaningless unless we share them. Our successes mean nothing unless we use them to help others succeed. What we post online and off is a lie unless we share our most authentic selves, which can give others permission to be their most authentic selves. We can walk this life's journey together, supporting each other, blessing each other.

As soon as God proclaimed his promise to Abram, God sent Abram on a journey. He brought along his family and all that he had acquired and traveled in stages across the countryside. When they stopped to camp and worship, Abram built an altar as a remembrance of what God had promised and what God was going to do. Abram left markers of God's goodness all across the land.

We can use the gifts God has given us to leave markers of God's goodness all across the lands we travel—from the people we encounter daily, to those we connect with virtually from all over the world. Our words and actions are reflections of who God has created us to be. We can leave markers of God's goodness every time we speak, act, listen, post, tweet, and interact. We too can be blessed to be a blessing.

Scripture Summary

Abram spends his golden years—the time when most are relaxing and looking back on their lives—to follow God's leading on a long and uncertain journey. He risks everything on the promise that the best is yet to come.

Call to Worship

L: We step out in trust, not knowing where we go.

C: God is faithful!

L: We follow your lead, O Lord, even when we don't understand.

C: God is faithful!

L: Bring us to the place where your promise is fulfilled.

C: God is faithful!

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Faithful God,

C: You have called us to places unknown and have promised to be our guide. Yet we prefer to find our own way and do our own thing, taking credit when things go well and blaming others when they don't. We resist putting our trust in you. We forget your covenant with us. And we suffer for it. Turn us back around to walk where you are leading. Forgive us for wandering from the path. In Jesus' name. Amen.

L: God is continually faithful to all who seek guidance. May you know the grace which has been freely offered to you, and the special blessing which God continually grants to all who simply ask. Receive the forgiveness of your loving creator, for the sake of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Call of Abraham, Genesis 12:1-9

September 16, 2018

Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

Faithful God, Abram and his family trusted you with their lives and all that they owned. May we also place our days within your hands, sure of the promise you have made us: to go before us, beside us, and after us with your protection. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Offertory Prayer

As Abram built altars in thanksgiving, so we place upon your altar these signs of our gratitude for all the blessings in our lives. Mercifully receive them for the good of your creation and bless us with the peace which comes with following in your generous footsteps. For the sake of our Savior. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: By stages you led your servant Abram to the land that you had promised him. Give us his faith to follow your leading, step by step, even when we cannot see beyond our own noses, and the destination feels uncertain. Guiding God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We give you thanks for the world you have placed in our care, O Lord. It is vast, mysterious, rich, and surprising. Teach us to tend it well and preserve it for the generations which follow. Guiding God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We are citizens of your kingdom, God, where your word is nourishment and mercy is the law of the land. When we are confused about our loyalties and obligations, remind us that we belong first to you, and that we owe you our lives and our livelihood. Guiding God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your healing mercy is not just for a few, but for all your longing children. We ask a special measure of your grace today upon those whom we know need it, (especially...). Guiding God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Abram and Sarai placed their lives in your hands. Make us their worthy descendants, chosen and called to be blessings to all whom we encounter, and joined eternally with them in your great fellowship. Guiding God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: We offer our prayers and you hear them. You have given us so much already, yet we continue to ask, knowing of your boundless mercy. For this we thank you, and we pray all these things in your beloved son Jesus' name. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Jesus promises to be with us to the end of the age. We meet him again in the bread and the wine, a recognition of our spiritual family and our place at God's table. Let us come now in gladness to receive what is freely offered, with no conditions and no limits: the feast that has no end.

Call of Abraham, Genesis 12:1-9

September 16, 2018

Liturgy

Litany

L: God bless you! That's more than just a response to a sneeze.

C: It's asking God to bless your life.

L: We ask God to bless us all the time.

C: But do we stop to notice the blessings we already have?

L: We exist, for one thing. We live and breathe, eat and sleep.

C: Love and are loved. Huge blessings right there.

L: After life and love, the rest is all extras: the nice house, the new car, the latest clothes, and toys.

C: We can get confused and think that if we have more stuff, it means God loves us more,

L: That God blesses us more richly than our neighbors because, somehow, we think we're better than they are.

C: When the reality is quite different.

L: God's blessings for us all are the same—life and love.

C: The rest is up to us. Sometimes our fortunes are random, not good nor bad, not God's reward or punishment.

L: But here's what God does expect from us:

C: Make other people's lives better. Give people love.

L: In other words, be a blessing ourselves.

C: So simple, yet how many of us consistently do it?

L: Paying it forward, as the saying goes. Visiting the sick, feeding the homeless.

C: Even paying the toll of the driver behind us. Random acts of kindness,

L: All are blessings we pass along because God has blessed us.

C: And if we all did this, every one of us,

L: We could make God's world a beautiful place of joy and plenty.

C: The next time we hear someone say, God bless you!

L: Remember that God has blessed you.

C: And now it's your turn. Live. Love. Pass it on!

Call of Abraham, Genesis 12:1-9

September 16, 2018

Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Bob from *Bob's Big House O' Blessings*, Karina, a customer

Bob: Good morning! Welcome to Bob's Big House O' Blessings! How can I help you?

Karina: I'm not sure. I guess I'll just browse for a while.

Bob: Browse away, esteemed guest! Admittedly, this is an overwhelming number of blessings to choose from!

Karina: My friend Lola was very pleased with her blessing from you. You gave her curly hair, and blue eyes. She looks lovely!

Bob: That's what we like to hear at Bob's Big House O' Blessings! Satisfied customers! Now, how about you? Would you like some artistic talent? A nice singing voice? How about sports? How sporty would you like to be?

Karina: I'm plenty sporty, I think. And I don't have a beautiful voice, but I do love to sing anyway. As for art talent, I may not be a painter or a sculptor, but I love looking at works of art and appreciating them.

Bob: You're not giving me much to go on here. How about smaller feet? Or... bigger feet? Do you like your current I.Q.? I can definitely make you smarter, with either bigger or smaller feet, your choice.

Karina: I don't know...

Bob: Special deal today. Better brain, better feet, all for one low, low price!

Karina: I'm no genius, but I love to learn new things. And what's the matter with my feet?

Bob: Absolutely nothing! I was just choosing a random body part to improve!

Karina: Oh, ok.

Bob: So, I'll be in the back doing inventory. Let me know when you need help!

Karina: Thank you, but now that I think about it, there really isn't anything I need from here after all.

Bob: That's not possible! Everybody needs something from Bob's Big House O' Blessings!

Karina: But you see, I'm just so grateful for the blessings I do have. Grateful to God!

Bob: God? I get it, you've been patronizing my competition! Listen, whatever God has given you, I can give you a new and improved version! Satisfaction guaranteed!

Karina: I am actually quite content with what I have. In fact, I like to use what I've been given to help other people, whenever I can.

Bob: You help people too? Since when is everyone in the blessing business??

Karina: I hate to break it to you, but everyone is in the blessing business—or should be! (*shakes his hand*) Good luck with your store, Bob, really. And don't worry, there's plenty of blessing to go around. (*exits*)

Bob: Hmmm. I'd better diversify! How about Bob's Big Bucket o' Chicken? I can cook! Everybody loves chicken... (*exits*)

Call of Abraham, Genesis 12:1-9

September 16, 2018

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

God's blessing is meant to be shared.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Candles with drip guards sufficient to your group
- Lit Christ candle

Setting the Scene/Background

Prior to this lesson, arrange to darken your worship space as much as possible as kids come forward. Make sure the Christ candle is lit. Set out a container with the individual candles.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Offer everyone an unlit candle. Ask if your unlit candle is doing much good. How can the candle become helpful?

Light your candle from the Christ candle. Discuss how this is like God's blessings.

Ask if your lone candle will help everyone else see. How could it become helpful?

Light an older child's candle. Notice how a candle doesn't lose any light by sharing. Relate this to God's blessings.

Share your light again. Ask the first child to share their light. Notice how much brighter it is.

Encourage kids to share until everyone's candle is lit. Invite helpers to take the light to the aisles.

Notice how helpful it is to spread the blessings of God. Remind kids that God blesses us with gifts that are helpful, and God's blessings are meant to be shared.

Reflection Questions

- How has God blessed you?
- How can you share your blessings with others?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

Small children will need a helper. Children with attention issues will need assistance keeping candles upright. When lighting candles, always tip the unlit candle toward the lit candle. Use guards to protect little hands.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Several two-sided "Detour" cards: one side a challenge, the other a blessing gained by facing that challenge, such as: stubbed tow/make a new friend; feeling hungry/decide to help others who are hungry; baby sibling drives you crazy/learn patience, etc.
- Separate set of one-sided "Highway" cards (i.e., get everything you want for birthday/Christmas; never feel hungry; sleep in a comfortable bed, etc.). Note that there is no separate blessing on the flip-side of these.

Joseph in Prison, Genesis 39:1-23

September 23, 2018

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Joseph in Prison, Genesis 39:1-23

September 23, 2018

Scripture Readings

Text: Genesis 39:1-23

39Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. ²The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master. ³His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands. ⁴So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him; he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. ⁵From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. ⁶So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge; and, with him there, he had no concern for anything but the food that he ate. Now Joseph was handsome and good-looking.

⁷And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." ⁸But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, with me here, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand. ⁹He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

¹⁰And although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not consent to lie beside her or to be with her.

¹¹One day, however, when he went into the house to do his work, and while no one else was in the house, ¹²she caught hold of his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside.

¹³When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, ¹⁴she called out to the members of her household and said to them, "See, my husband has

brought among us a Hebrew to insult us! He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice; ¹⁵and when he heard me raise my voice and cry out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside." ¹⁶Then she kept his garment by her until his master came home, ¹⁷and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me; ¹⁸but as soon as I raised my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside."

¹⁹When his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, saying, "This is the way your servant treated me," he became enraged. ²⁰And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison. ²¹But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. ²²The chief jailer committed to Joseph's care all the prisoners who were in the prison, and whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. ²³The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.

Pronunciation Guide:

Potiphar: POT-ih-fahr

Ishmaelites: ISH-mayehl-aits

Secondary Text: Matthew 5:11-12

¹¹"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Joseph in Prison, Genesis 39:1-23

September 23, 2018

Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Wife, Joseph, Master

Narrator: Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands. So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him; he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had, the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge; and, with him there, he had no concern for anything but the food that he ate. Now Joseph was handsome and good-looking. And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said,

Wife: "Lie with me."

Narrator: But he refused and said to his master's wife,

Joseph: "Look, with me here, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand. He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Narrator: And although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not consent to lie beside her or to be with her. One day, however, when he went into the house to do his

work, and while no one else was in the house, she caught hold of his garment, saying,

Wife: "Lie with me!"

Narrator: But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside. When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, she called out to the members of her household and said to them,

Wife: "See, my husband has brought among us a Hebrew to insult us! He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice; and when he heard me raise my voice and cry out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside."

Narrator: Then she kept his garment by her until his master came home, and she told him the same story, saying,

Wife: "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me; but as soon as I raised my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside."

Narrator: When his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, saying, "This is the way your servant treated me," he became enraged. And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison. But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favor in the sight of the chief jailer. The chief jailer committed to Joseph's care all the prisoners who were in the prison, and whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper.

Joseph in Prison, Genesis 39:1-23

September 23, 2018

Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: We can experience blessedness despite injustices we face.

Kid: "That's not fair!"

Parent: "Well, life's not fair."

We've all heard it, probably more times than we care to remember. We all know it in our heads. But our hearts continue to fight this reality. How often has a boss chewed us out for something our coworker did? Or the IRS taken more than you have to give? Or a driver passed you by to do a zipper merge when it was your turn? How many imaginary arguments have you repeatedly won or lost because you played out the scene in your head over and over again before ever even speaking with the person face-to-face?

Joseph's situation was most certainly not fair. He had done everything right, but was still punished (by people, not God). Not only was he innocent of the charges brought by his master's wife, but he had intentionally avoided that particular crime. He had refused her advances but was sent to prison for it anyway.

But we have the gift of hindsight. We now know that Joseph's time in jail put him in a position to come before the Pharaoh one day, which led him to become the second most powerful man in the land. What first looked like a terrible injustice led to a most amazing blessing. If he had responded to his imprisonment with anger, resentment, and bitterness, he never would have risen to the top, and he never would have impressed the Pharaoh's servants. His groundedness and integrity helped him turn an unjust situation into a blessed one.

Maybe our lives would be more peaceful if we stopped trying to acquire fairness. Instead, we might look at our lives as a series of events—some more fair than others. But for every event we have a choice for how we respond to the event. Joseph chose to respond by behaving the way he always had—with responsibility, integrity, and compassion. These led to blessings greater than the injustices he endured. We will always face injustice. How we carry ourselves despite these injustices is within our control. When we behave with responsibility, integrity, and

compassion, then it doesn't really matter what happens to us; we are internally whole no matter what happens externally. We are blessed.

Scripture Summary

Joseph's unfortunate rejection by his brothers has eventually landed him in great favor with his Egyptian master . . . and his master's wife. Being framed for an uncommitted crime lands him in prison, but he is soon to find a place of favor there as well. Either Joseph is the unluckiest of men, or he is perpetually blessed by a God who continues to send fortune his way.

Call to Worship

L: Sometimes bad things can work for good.

C: Rejoice and be glad!

L: Sometimes disappointment leads to greater joy.

C: Rejoice and be glad!

L: Praise God who turns our mourning into dancing.

C: Rejoice and be glad!

Confession and Forgiveness

L: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: Faithful God,

C: You have called us to places unknown and have promised to be our guide. Yet we prefer to find our own way and do our own thing, taking credit when things go well and blaming others when they don't. We resist putting our trust in you. We forget your covenant with us. And we suffer for it. Turn us back around to walk where you are leading. Forgive us for wandering from the path. In Jesus' name. Amen.

L: God is faithful at all times and to all who seek guidance. May you know the grace which has been freely offered to you, and the special blessing which God continually grants to all who simply ask. Receive the forgiveness of your loving creator, for the sake of Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Joseph in Prison, Genesis 39:1-23

September 23, 2018

Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

Lord, you are faithful to those who call upon you. Show us your goodness in the midst of our trials, that we might find the strength to praise you without ceasing. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Offertory Prayer

You have showered us with blessings too numerous to count, O God, and your mercies seem to know no end. Help us to see our lives through the lens of abundance and not scarcity, rejoicing in what we have rather than pining after that which we do not. Receive these gifts as a sign of our gratitude for all that you have done and continue to do for us. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: Loss can often pave a path to greater blessing, O Lord. Help us look beyond what is worrying us today and embrace the long journey which always leads to you in the end. Trustworthy God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We look around the world and we see injustice, dear creator. Inequalities, atrocities, greed, and simple carelessness. When one suffers, we all suffer. Work out your justice on earth and use us as your agents of mercy. Trustworthy God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We enter once more the season of change and decay, but also of harvest and hope. Show us glimpses of the promise that lies beneath the fallow ground, the hope of life which emerges from all that dies. Trustworthy God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We lift up all who are imprisoned for crimes they didn't commit, or who are persecuted for standing by unpopular beliefs. Give them hope, endurance, and justice wherever possible. We lift up all those in need this day, (especially...) Trustworthy God,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your servant Joseph was a model for endurance and hope. Give us his strength when we suffer, his exuberance when we celebrate, and bring us at length into communion with all the saints who have faithfully gone before us. Trustworthy God,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: Hear our prayers, O God, and make us instruments of your peace and justice on earth. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

Your table is ready, O Lord, and your invitation is open to all. Show us your favor, that we might bless others in a similar way, not as they deserve but as they are your beloved children. For we share this meal will all your people, and in it we are all reconciled to you.

Joseph in Prison, Genesis 39:1-23

September 23, 2018

Liturgy

Litany

- L: Whoever said life was fair?
- C: We encounter unfairness every day we live.**
- L: Bad things happen to good people.
- C: People of bad character rising to the top.**
- L: Why me? We ask. I don't deserve this pain.
- C: Why them? We complain. They don't deserve this good luck.**
- L: We carry around our mental tote boards, listing our grievances, the good fortune of the undeserving.
- C: For some of us, life boils down to this: did I get all that was coming to me?**
- L: Or, worse: it is not enough for me to succeed. You must fail, too.
- C: For others of us, we hurt with those who suffer and struggle, who did nothing wrong and yet are faring so badly in this world.**
- L: Questions for God someday.
- C: We don't know God's answer, but there might be a hint.**
- L: All will be well in the end, whatever our troubles now.
- C: We will stand in the glorious presence of God and be welcomed home, but until then,**
- L: We can see the world as it is, clearly: an unfair place, a lot of the time.
- C: Then we can do the only thing that helps.**
- L: We can work on us.
- C: Our reactions, our responses. Our strength of character in the face of disappointments.**
- L: We can't control what happens to us.
- C: We can control how we deal with what happens to us.**
- L: From great hardship, great blessings can come.
- C: The companionship of those who endure the bad times right along with us.**
- L: The courage we never thought we had, to right what wrongs we can.
- C: The faith that God is with us in all of this, no matter what.**
- L: We are, all of us, forged in the fire. Our struggles make us who we are. Our challenges make us stronger, more compassionate.
- C: Many times, the most unlikely turns of events happen.**
- L: The skies clear. The pain stops. We find love, and purpose, and peace.
- C: All these things have been inside of us all along.**
- L: But it took life's twists and turns, to bring out our best selves.
- C: Heaven is heaven and not earth. But until we get to that place of eternal joy and ultimate fairness,**
- L: May we stop comparing our fortunes with others.
- C: May we believe with certainty that every page of our story unfolds as it should, as it must.**
- L: Because we none of us know what the last page will reveal. Only God does.
- C: And God loves us too much to let our story end sadly.**
- L: If fairness eludes us here, surely fairness will be ours there.
- C: Meanwhile, let us be a voice of justice for others.**
- L: Let us make this a fair world, as much as we are able.
- C: And trust God to handle the rest.**

Joseph in Prison, Genesis 39:1-23

September 23, 2018

Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Joe, Jailer

Jailer: All right, exercise time! Everybody out of their cells. Out to the prison yard! Move it, move it! *(to Joe)* You again! What am I doing wrong this time?

Joe: Well, maybe group exercise isn't for everyone! Maybe some prisoners would like to do yoga.

Jailer: Yeah, yeah, whatever. Anything else, oh great advocate?

Joe: Well, I hate to bring up the food again, but...

Jailer: I'll have you know, the cook uses my mom's recipes! Delicious, every one of them!

Joe: I think saying yesterday's liver Jell-O surprise is "delicious" is kind of a stretch.

Jailer: Filled with iron! And it was jiggly! Healthy, and kind of whimsical too!

Joe: On behalf of my fellow inmates, might I suggest that the cook check out Bon Appetit?

Jailer: La-di-da. Bon Appetit.

Joe: Trust me on this. Better food, fewer uprisings.

Jailer: Well, that would be a nice change. What else might the prison folk desire?

Joe: Well, if clothes make the person, these clothes are just making us—depressed. Orange jumpsuits flatter nobody! I might suggest nice blue robes with maybe a paisley trim.

Jailer: Oh really, Mr. Coat of Many Colors?

Joe: That's it! Coats of Many Colors for all!!

Jailer: Listen, this prison system isn't made of money. Plus, these people have actually committed crimes. I don't think we need to coddle them.

Joe: It's not coddling. It's being humane!

Jailer: No one needs a coat of many colors!

Joe: Oh yeah? Well no one deserves liver Jell-O surprise!

Jailer: *(sighing)* Listen, Joe, I know the Pharaoh thinks you're all that, and I guess I am impressed by the way you speak up for everyone's rights, but I'd really appreciate your backing off a little bit.

Joe: I'll back off when you treat us all like people and not animals!

Jailer: Ok, ok. You're giving me a headache. If I give everyone yoga classes in the yard, and give them better food...

Joe: And?

Jailer: And decent clothes.

Joe: And the opportunity for an education, so that they will qualify for good jobs when they get out.

Jailer: So now we need books too?

Joe: Yes, and lots of them!

Jailer: All right, all right! I never thought I'd live to see the day when prisoners were well treated! They are lucky to have you in their corner, Joe, that's for sure!

Joe: I use my influence where I can!

Jailer: Well you have plenty of that in Egypt. Most people flat out don't believe Potiphar's wife. You'll probably be sprung soon.

Joe: When I go, I want to know that you will become the prisoners' next champion!

Jailer: Me?

Joe: You! Treat them as human beings, give them some dignity and kindness. You'll be surprised how much nicer your life will be.

Jailer: I'm convinced! Thanks, Joe. Now I see the light!

Joe: And that's another thing. This jail is entirely too dark. A few extra lamps, maybe some candles...

Jailer: Enough! Enough!

Joe: Sorry!

Jailer: Now, don't you have some dreams to analyze or something?

Joe: Righto! My work here is done! Farewell, friend jailer! *(exits)*

Jailer: But wait! You haven't been released yet! Come back! *(to audience)* I'm in trouble now!

Joe: *(pops back in)* No you're not. I'm back! I was just kidding! I shall serve my sentence. Then I shall go!

Jailer: That's better.

Joe: I shall see you anon!

Jailer: What's with the fancy talk all of a sudden?

Joe: I don't write these scripts, I just perform them.

Jailer: OK. Well, since you're still here, let me tell you about my dream last night. I was standing in a field of cheese puffs, and my cousin Biff was there, and all of a sudden... *(they exit)*

Joseph in Prison, Genesis 39:1-23

September 23, 2018

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

Life's not always fair, but God is always good.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Several two-sided “Detour” cards: one side a challenge, the other a blessing gained by facing that challenge, such as: stubbed tow/make a new friend; feeling hungry/decide to help others who are hungry; baby sibling drives you crazy/learn patience, etc.
- Separate set of one-sided “Highway” cards (i.e., get everything you want for birthday/Christmas; never feel hungry; sleep in a comfortable bed, etc.). Note that there is no separate blessing on the flip-side of these.

Setting the Scene/Background

Prior to worship plant the “detour” and “highway” cards around the sanctuary. The “Highways” represents times when life is relatively easy, times when God’s blessings are obvious, but not “necessary” for maturing in anyway. The “Detours” represents real challenges children may face; let them be specific to your context and age group.

These are times when God’s blessings may be harder to see, but ultimately help us to grow, mature, and step outside our comfort zones as they lead us to become our true self.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Invite kids on a trip through life as you walk through your sanctuary. Discover the highways and detours.

With each “highway,” identify obvious blessings, but articulate how these don’t necessarily help us become our true self.

With each “detour,” affirm the frustration and challenge, but notice how God blesses us in these situations in ways that help us become more our true self and better able to share God’s blessings with others.

Remind children that life isn’t always fair, but even when things feel tough, God is blessing us—and helping us become a blessing to others.

Reflection Questions

- Have you had any “detours” in the past few days? What kind?
- How did God bless you in that tough time?
- How could you share that blessing with others?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

Be mindful of children with ambulatory restrictions: place “detours” and “highways” in accessible places. Invite readers to read cards with words. Make some cards with images so non-readers can help, too.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Small, smooth river rocks

Rescue at the Sea, Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14, 21-29

September 30, 2018

Planning Worksheet

Preaching Themes

Kids' Storytime Ideas

Skit or Creative Ideas

Worship Setting

Props for Kids' Storytime or Skit

Hymns

Special Events (Baptism, New Members)

Choral Music/Special Music

Guest Speakers/Announcements

Rescue at the Sea, Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14, 21-29

September 30, 2018

Scripture Readings

Text: Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14, 21-29

⁵When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the minds of Pharaoh and his officials were changed toward the people, and they said, “What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?” ⁶So he had his chariot made ready, and took his army with him; ⁷he took six hundred picked chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them.

¹⁰As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord. ¹¹They said to Moses, “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? ¹²Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, ‘Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians?’ For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” ¹³But Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. ¹⁴The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.”

²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. ²²The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. ²³The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and chariot

drivers. ²⁴At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. ²⁵He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said, “Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt.” ²⁶Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers.” ²⁷So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. ²⁸The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. ²⁹But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Secondary Text: Matthew 2:13-15

¹³Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” ¹⁴Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, ¹⁵and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

Rescue at the Sea, Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14, 21-29

September 30, 2018

Scripture Readings

Dramatic Reading of the Text

Readers: Narrator, Officials, Israelites, Moses, Lord

Narrator: When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the minds of Pharaoh and his officials were changed toward the people, and they said,

Officials: “What have we done, letting Israel leave our service?”

Narrator: So he had his chariot made ready, and took his army with him; he took six hundred picked chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. As Pharaoh drew near, the Israelites looked back, and there were the Egyptians advancing on them. In great fear the Israelites cried out to the Lord. They said to Moses,

Israelites: “Was it because there were no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us, bringing us out of Egypt? Is this not the very thing we told you in Egypt, ‘Let us alone and let us serve the Egyptians?’ For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.”

Narrator: But Moses said to the people,

Moses: “Do not be afraid, stand firm, and see the deliverance that the Lord will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you see today you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to keep still.”

Narrator: Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all

night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. The Egyptians pursued, and went into the sea after them, all of Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and chariot drivers. At the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and cloud looked down upon the Egyptian army, and threw the Egyptian army into panic. He clogged their chariot wheels so that they turned with difficulty. The Egyptians said,

Officials: “Let us flee from the Israelites, for the Lord is fighting for them against Egypt.”

Narrator: Then the Lord said to Moses,

Lord: “Stretch out your hand over the sea, so that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and chariot drivers.”

Narrator: So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and at dawn the sea returned to its normal depth. As the Egyptians fled before it, the Lord tossed the Egyptians into the sea. The waters returned and covered the chariots and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea; not one of them remained. But the Israelites walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left.

Rescue at the Sea, Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14, 21-29

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Theme and Liturgy

Preaching Theme

Main Idea: Sometimes our best action is to keep still.

Have you ever seen a horror flick where a monster is chasing a group, and although they decide to stick together, one in the group panics and runs? You know what happens. The runaway gets eaten, of course. They would have done better to remain with the group, to keep still instead of run.

When faced with dicey situations, a normal reaction is fight, flight, or freeze. Some people prepare for a fight. Others run. Some freeze up, unable to think or act. When faced with an Egyptian army, many of the Israelites froze. Without thinking it through, they cried that they were better off in Egypt than dead in the wilderness. They did not desire to fight. They were too weary to flee. So, they just stopped. Cried. Complained. Succumbed to fear.

Moses offered another option. Be still. Moses told them not to be afraid, that God would fight for them. “You have only to keep still.” Not frozen—intentionally still.

Stillness is a practiced art. The ability to be still amid chaos is cultivated over time by meditation, prayer, and just plain practice. Someone I love has trouble with stillness. She is constantly moving, fixing, cleaning up, organizing. Her whole world is noisy with action. When recommending she practice the art of being, the art of stillness, I suggested she do all her dishes, and then leave one dirty fork in the sink. The thought drove her crazy! I assured her it was a tiny practice for a bigger goal... when other, more terrifying things will come like cancer, the death of a parent, or a child leaving for college, the art of stillness will benefit her greatly. She will have practiced sitting uncomfortably with the event of dis-ease. She will have learned to be still.

In those moments of intentional, uncomfortable stillness, God is wildly active. It is in those moments God fights for us. God fights the illness. God fights the grief. God fights to be present when we need God the most. Sometimes our best course of action is to be still.

Scripture Summary

The enslaved Israelites made it out of Egypt under Moses' leadership. So far, so good. But now, the Egyptian army advances ever nearer. How long will faith in their leader endure? Perhaps the better question is, who is really in charge here?

Call to Worship

L: Out of Egypt I have called my people.

C: We will trust in God who preserves us.

L: The armies advance and trouble multiplies.

C: We will trust in God who preserves us.

L: The water ahead looks deep and dangerous.

C: We will trust in God who preserves us.

Confession and Forgiveness

L: Confident in God's mercy, we confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

L: God of forgiving grace,

C: We are not always patient to wait for your words and your actions in our lives. We whine and complain, and we try to control those things which are out of our control. We manipulate, cheat, and extract all we can for our gain. Forgive us. Transform our hearts, our minds, and our behaviors so that we might be more like you.

L: We are blessed to be loved by a fierce and passionate God who will stop at nothing to claim us as God's own. In God's goodness, today, all our sins are forgiven, washed clean, and we are transformed into new creations, made whole by the saving work of Jesus Christ, our savior and Lord. Amen.

Rescue at the Sea, Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14, 21-29

September 30, 2018

Liturgy

Prayer of the Day

O Lord, your chosen people had no choice but to trust you and you delivered them. Keep our eyes fixed on you when the waters rise, and the troubles of our lives seem insurmountable, for you are our savior and guide. Amen.

Offertory Prayer

You have delivered us again and again, O God, and brought us into the life you have promised. Receive our gratitude through these gifts which we offer to your service, and for the benefit of all your children. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Prayers of the Church

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: It is easy to panic, O Lord, when we can't see a way out of the crisis before us. Remind us of your faithfulness in the past, and your promise to guide us always into a better place than even we can imagine. Strong deliverer,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your creation is vast and bewildering, and we are inseparable from it. Instill within us a healthy fear and respect for nature, as well as a fierce desire to preserve and defend it. Strong deliverer,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Strengthen all leaders and give them patience and compassion for those whom they guide. Give us wisdom when others look to us for leadership, and a willing cooperation when we are the ones who must follow. Strong deliverer,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Fear is our impulsive response to uncertainty and insecurity. Surround us with your calming Spirit when we are out of our depth, and bring your healing presence to all who cry out to you, (especially...). Strong deliverer,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Your servant Moses trusted you, and we enjoy the legacy of his faithfulness. Make us one with all the saints, and worthy to be called your children. Strong deliverer,

C: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

L: You who parted the seas and delivered the Israelites are certainly capable of granting these our prayers. Receive them for the sake of our savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Eucharistic Invitation

You saved your chosen people, O God, and made us one with them in the sacrifice of your son. Bring us together now at his table, in memory and in celebration of all that has been done on our behalf. Come, taste, and see the Lord's goodness!

Rescue at the Sea, Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14, 21-29

September 30, 2018

Liturgy

Litany

L: Let go.

C: Let go and let God.

L: Be still.

C: Be still and know that I am God.

L: We've heard those sayings countless times;

C: Encouraging us to quiet ourselves, let go of our fear.

L: To give God a chance to do God's work.

C: When we can't take another step physically, emotionally,

L: That is precisely where God does some of God's greatest work.

C: Be it parting a sea for the Israelites,

L: Or giving our hearts comfort and peace in a difficult time,

C: We don't have to do it all ourselves.

L: We can't do it all ourselves.

C: But we keep trying anyway, don't we?

L: Taking on more and more, fighting tooth and nail far beyond the point of exhaustion.

C: Our loud busyness, the clamor as we struggle on,

L: All drown out the voice of the one we need to listen to,

C: The one who wants to carry us through dangerous

waters to safety.

L: But so often we brush God's help aside. We try to face life all on our own.

C: Who can be quiet at times like these?

L: We can.

C: Instead of panic, can we try placidness?

L: Instead of terror, tranquility?

C: We can find that place inside of us where God waits...

L: Waits to do our fighting for us, if we just allow it.

C: When we reach the banks of our Red Sea,

L: With the enemy close behind us, and no clear path ahead,

C: May we stop, and breathe, and trust.

L: God has a way ahead for us, even a miracle.

C: Therefore, move forward, calmly, steadily.

L: And watch as the treacherous waters part,

C: Giving us just enough space to make it to safety.

L: God can do what we could never do.

C: Let God do it, for us, for the world.

L: Be still and know...

C: That the Lord is our God.

All: Amen!

Rescue at the Sea, Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14, 21-29

September 30, 2018

Creative Expression

Skit

Characters: Moses, Izzie the Israelite, Egyptian soldier

Moses enters and starts pacing. Izzie sneaks up and taps him on the shoulder.

Moses: (*jumps, startled*) Huh? What the...? Why did you do that?

Izzie: We need to have a word with you, Moses.

Moses: We? You're the only one here.

Izzie: I represent the group. And WE are not happy campers right now.

Moses: Oh, no?

Izzie: No. Look behind you. Do you see the huge army of the Pharaoh's soldiers coming straight towards us?

Moses: (*squints*) Is that who that is? I thought it was a bunch of moving trees.

Izzie: Moving trees.

Moses: See them all the time. Gotta get a new contacts prescription as soon as I get settled in the Promised Land.

Izzie: Which we have zero chance of reaching at this point.

Moses: Oh, ye of little faith! We have the Lord with us!

Izzie: (*squints*) Where? I don't see anybody, and my vision is 20/20!

Moses: Trust me, God is here. There is no reason to panic.

Izzie: I can think of 600 reasons to panic. 600 Egyptian soldiers are coming for us.

Moses: Oh, I see them now! That's a big crowd!

Izzie: Yes, and we are doomed, thanks to you.

Moses: Me? What did I do?

Izzie: You brought us out of the land of Egypt, that's what.

Moses: Where you were slaves!

Izzie: We would rather be slaves again than be in this pickle.

Moses: No, you wouldn't.

Izzie: Yes, we would.

Moses: No!

Izzie: Yes!

Moses: (*holding hand up*) Stop! This is no time to argue! *Egyptian soldier enters, looking fierce. Moses has his back turned and doesn't see him.*

Izzie: (*pointing to soldier*) He's... it's...we're...

Moses: (*continues to hold hand up*) He's— it's— we're what? Some spokesperson for the people you are!

Izzie: (*scrie(s)*) Help! Help! For heaven's sake do something!!!!

Soldier: Ho, ho, ho! There's nothing to be done! Me and my 599 buddies are going to make quick work of the lot of you! (*he takes a step forward, Izzie backs up*)

Izzie: We are on the shore! There's nowhere to go! We are trapped! (*she looks off, pointing*) Oh, my goodness!! Moses, what are you doing?

Moses is holding his hand up and waving it around.

Izzie: The waters are parting! We can make a run for it! Moses, I take it all back. You are a true leader!

Moses: (*looking at hand*) I have no idea how I did that!

Izzie: (*grabbing Moses*) Come on, Moses! Come on, everyone! Let's go! (*they exit*)

Soldier: We're coming to get you, slaves! All 600 of us! Be afraid. Be very afraid! (*runs off*)

Splashing sound is heard.

Soldier: Ahhhhhh!! The water! It's covering us! We're drowning! *Glub, glub, glub . . .*

(Moses and Izzie re-enter.)

Moses: Safe and sound on the other side! I told you not to panic! I just needed to hold up my hand like this! (*holds it up. Nothing happens*) Like this! (*he swings his arm wildly, still nothing*) Darn it, doesn't work anymore. And here I thought I had a new marketable skill! Oh well, onward to the Promised Place. Land ho!!! (*exits*)

Izzie: (*holds her hand up—nothing happens*) Oh, well, worth a try. (*exits*)

Rescue at the Sea, Exodus 14:5-7, 10-14, 21-29

September 30, 2018

Kids' Storytime

Main Message

We can trust God will be there for us when we need God.

Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- Small, smooth river rocks

Setting the Scene/Background

This contemplative practice can help kids practice trusting that God is with them, especially when life gets scary. Stretching or dancing helps work out nervous energy before kids calm themselves. You can direct children to notice their breath with phrases like “Breathing in,” “Breathing out”; or simply, “In”/ “Out.”

Remain focused as long as possible, but end before squiggles become disruptive. Take home suggestion: kids may use the stone whenever they are worried to remind them that we can be still, and that God will be our strong, safe place. God is our rock and firm foundation.

Telling the Story

Tell the story using the *KidStuff* bulletin.

Activity

Stretch or wiggle. Hand everyone a stone. Have kids sit with a calm body, eyes closed, and the stone in hands.

Encourage kids to notice their breath.

After a few seconds, invite kids to focus on the stone: how it feels, its weight, its smoothness, its solidity. Continue for at least 30 seconds.

Invite kids to bring their attention back to you as they open their eyes. Discuss how it felt to focus on the rock.

Share the take-home suggestion. Send the rocks home.

Reflection Questions

- What do you do when you get worried or anxious?
- Can you try to pray and remember that God is your safe place?

Notes for Special Needs Kids

Encourage helpers to help small children or kids with attention issues not throw their rocks. All children, especially those with autism or attention issues, can benefit from contemplative prayer. It will take practice for leaders and the kids. Avoid criticism or judging; keep inviting and encouraging. Some children may feel unsafe closing their eyes in this setting; let them simply focus on the rock.

Next Week's Props

- *KidStuff* bulletin
- List of goofy movements and more serious commands

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