

FAITH QUEST -- Story: The Story of Jonah
St. Mary's Anglican Church, Regina

King's Theatre

Purpose: The children will learn the order of the story of Jonah. They will know that God loves all of the people in the whole world and wants everyone to be saved. They will compare the lesson of Jonah to their own lives.

Preparation: Read the Book of Jonah and the background information. Review Jonah's travels on the map. Be prepared to read the following verses from Jonah.

Ch. 1: 1-4, 11-12, 15-17

Ch. 2:1-2, 9-10

Ch. 3:3-5, 10

CH. 4:1-2, 10-11

Materials: Map of area where Jonah travelled
Cardboard Boat
Costumes/Black outfits (see note on "Mime" below)
Map for Jonah to hold
Landscaping cloth to drape over table for the fish.
Script (see below)

Advanced Prep: Prepare to read the script with feeling. Set out materials.

Presentation: Welcome the children and introduce yourself. Tell the children that they will be learning about Jonah, a man who didn't want to do what God told him to do.

Opening Prayer: Oh Lord, help us to know that You are a gracious and merciful God. Help us to learn to listen to You and to follow the path You want us to follow. Amen

Have the children find Jonah in their Bibles and follow along as you read these verses.

Ch. 1: 1-4, 11-12, 15-17

Ch. 2:1-2, 9-10

Ch. 3:3-5, 10

Ch. 4:1-2, 10-11

Memory Verse: Jonah 4:2b "I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abounding in love,"

If this is the last week of the rotation have the children locate Joppa, Nineveh and Tarshish on the Bible Map and see if they can show where God wanted Jonah to go and where Jonah tried to go.

Discuss important concepts such as:

- obedience vs. disobedience and the consequences
- how God provided for Jonah even though he was disobedient
- things we learn about God - patience, power, desire for all to repent, grace, slow to anger, creativity

Explain to the children that they are going to act out the story of Jonah while you read the story pretending to be God. Tell them that they will mime the story and therefore will only have to do the actions that go along with what you say. They will mime being the tree, worm, even the whale (covered in the black cloth!). They will have to listen closely to the story in order to know which actions are appropriate. You can tell the story several times in order to involve everyone or split into two groups with the shepherd and leader each being the storyteller for a group. Take time to watch the stories being told.

N.B. Mime is a quiet and reflective way to do drama. Sometimes it is more helpful to dress in black t-shirts and sweats (from King's Theatre) in order to quieten the voice and focus on the mime actions required. Mime is stylised, "clean", spare. Editor suggests you do some "warm-ups", practising some miming of parts of the story before you begin the drama.

It may be effective to have the person who reads the script be out of sight. (You will find the script follows this lesson plan.)

Reflections: God gave Jonah another chance. Did he deserve it?

Have you ever given anyone another chance? Why? Is it important for Christians to do this?

What do you think God was trying to tell Jonah when he asked Jonah why he was so concerned about the plant Jonah didn't plant or care for?

Journals: God was merciful to Jonah. Imagine that a friend asks you about God and how is always (surely!) angry with us. Tell them in your own words about God's mercy and about Jonah.

Closing in prayer: Dear God, help us to do the things you would have us do. Help us to remember that you always love us, as you love all of the people in the whole world.

God's Narration for Mime

Adapted from adaptation from Today's English Version by Amy Crane
 [Bracketed statements in italics are suggestions for play action, if needed. Reader should pause to allow plenty of time for students to creatively fill in the gaps.]

Let me tell you about Jonah. He is one of the people I called to be a prophet, to share my word with the world.

Jonah is good and true and faithful. But he also can be a bit headstrong. One day I told him to go to Nineveh. It was a large city, but also an evil city. I told Jonah to go and tell them of my great anger.

Do you think Jonah hopped up and headed to Nineveh to do what I asked him?
No, not Jonah. He ran away! He found a map and headed in the other direction, on a ship to Tarshish in Spain.

[Rock the boat to show the storm rocking the boat.]

I sent a great wind. The ship was tossed and rocked by the storm. The sailors were very upset and prayed to all sorts of Gods (but not to me).

[Actors are distressed. Start praying. Jonah is sleeping.]

Finally, someone found Jonah sound asleep. They discovered Jonah was trying to run from me, the one true God who made land and sea.

[Act it out.]

Jonah explained that in order to save themselves, they must toss him into the sea.

After trying many ways to bring the ship safely to shore, the sailors took Jonah's advice. They tossed him overboard. At once, I stopped the winds and the sea was calm. The sailors were in awe of my mighty power and promised to serve me.

[Act it out]

Meanwhile, I sent a great fish to swallow Jonah. He rode inside the belly of that smelly fish for three days. He sang and he prayed for me to be with him. Of course I was with him, even in that dark, cold, smelly belly of the fish.

[Jonah goes in a fish made from a table draped with landscaping cloth.
While Jonah is in belly of great fish, have him pray.]

If you are comfortable, the children could all sing "Kum Bah Yah"

After three days, I ordered the great fish to spit Jonah out upon the land. It did.

[Jonah leaves fish. Reacts to being on land again.]

Once again I spoke to Jonah. "Go to Nineveh. Proclaim to the people the message I have given you."

This time, Jonah went.

[Act it out. Jonah goes through town yelling, "In forty days Nineveh will be destroyed!"]

The people of Nineveh believed the message Jonah carried. They tore their clothes and put on sackcloth (clothes made of rough fabric, worn to show repentance). The king repented too, and commanded that all people and animals fast (not eat any food) to show me that they are truly sorry.

[People run around apologizing. King commands that everyone must behave from now on.]

I saw that they were truly sorry for what they had done. I saw that they had given up their evil ways. So I changed my mind and did not punish them.

Jonah was very unhappy about this. He became angry.

[Jonah yells at God that he knew God would just forgive everyone because God is patient, gentle, kind, forgiving, etc. Jonah stomps off, saying he is better off dead than alive. Decides to sit outside town and wait to see what happens.]

Jonah ran away again. He built a booth outside town. He sat down and waited. He was watching to see if I would change my mind about forgiving the Ninevites after they said that they were sorry.

I sent a tree to grow up quickly and give him some shade from the hot sun.

[Tree pops up. Jonah is happy to have it.]

The next day I sent a worm to kill the tree.

[Worm chews tree and it disappears as quickly as it came. Jonah starts complaining about missing his shade and again he wishes he were dead.]

"What right do you have to be so angry?" I asked Jonah.

Jonah tells me that he has every right to be angry with me and again wishes he were dead.

And ever so patiently I explained to Jonah:

"Why are you complaining about this tree?"

In one day I made it grow up.

In the next I made it die.

Did you do anything to help it live or die? So why should you feel sorry for it?

And as for the Ninevites. I made them, too — the grownups, the children, the animals. So it is my business, and only my business, if I decide to destroy them or forgive them."

Scripture taken from the Good News Bible in Today's English Version - Second Edition,
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KUMBAYA

Kumbaya my Lord, kumbaya
Kumbaya my Lord, kumbaya
Kumbaya my Lord, kumbaya
Oh Lord, kumbaya

Someone's singing Lord, kumbaya
Someone's singing Lord, kumbaya
Someone's singing Lord, kumbaya
Oh Lord, kumbayah

Someone's laughing, Lord, kumbaya
Someone's laughing, Lord, kumbaya
Someone's laughing, Lord, kumbaya
Oh Lord, kumbaya

Someone's crying, Lord, kumbaya
Someone's crying, Lord, kumbaya
Someone's crying, Lord, kumbaya
Oh Lord, kumbaya

Someone's praying, Lord, kumbaya
Someone's praying, Lord, kumbaya
Someone's praying, Lord, kumbaya
Oh Lord, kumbaya

Someone's sleeping, Lord, kumbaya
Someone's sleeping, Lord, kumbaya
Someone's sleeping, Lord, kumbaya
Oh Lord, kumbaya
Oh Lord, kumbaya