

CHILDRENS CHURCH
LENT RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN



Introduction

At the time of writing (February 2021) the world has been in the grip of a global pandemic for almost one year. As well as the suffering and losses which Covid-19 has caused directly, the restrictions to combat its spread have had forced most people to radically rearrange their day to day their day to day lives. Children have been especially hard hit by the changes, in many cases they have been deprived of direct contact with their friends, grandparents and wider family, missed out on much of the educational and social opportunities brought by school (The relentless work and dedication of teachers in providing the best learning experience possible in these circumstances must be acknowledged, but it is impossible to replicate a classroom or playground through a screen) and had their hobbies either cancelled or dramatically altered.

All things considered, we felt that this year it just was not appropriate to have too penitential a feel to Lenten devotions. Consequently, the resources which we have offered are focused on preparing for Easter and celebrating animal life. This is not to suggest that young people are not capable to engaging with the sad reality of our current brokenness, especially when it comes to the treatment of our fellow creatures and the environment. Anyone who has the privilege of working with children in church knows just how insightful their thoughts and profound their spirituality can be. But "there is a time to every purpose under Heaven" and spring 2021 is not a time for too heavy a Lent.

For each of the activities there will be a short video on the ASWA YouTube website. In planning the activities, we have tried to bear in mind that children are of course living in very different circumstances. In some cases, going outdoors will not be possible or appropriate, but many for others, time to the garden and/or a park will be a big part of their day. We've tried to make the activities flexible, so that people who want to can take advantage of more movement/time away from screens, but this is not necessary for participation.

Whatever your current situation, we hope that you enjoy some of these ideas, and wish you a very blessed Lent.



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Week 1 - Preparing an Animal Alleluia

CONTEXT

It is the custom in Anglican worship not to use the word Alleluia during Lent. The purpose of this activity is to focus on Lent as a time when we get ourselves ready for the big Easter celebration which is coming. Part of this involves doing things differently for a while, remembering why we need God and His help. It is also true that we appreciate things even more when we have spent some time without them, so this makes the Alleluias of Easter really special when they do come.

ACTIVITY

Draw out the letters of the word "ALLELUIA" on white paper, glue them onto card and cut them out. Decorate each letter with animal designs of your choice e.g. tiger stripes or fish scales. When finished, put the letters in a box and keep it somewhere safe. You can then take it out and use the letters as part of your Easter decorations when the festival comes.

PRAYER

Loving Creator, help us to find ways this Lent to know and follow you more closely. Open our eyes to the wonder and beauty of your Creation, and the responsibility we have for it. **Amen.**



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Week 2 - Jesus and the animals in the wilderness

CONTEXT

Mark's Gospel describes Jesus going out in the wilderness, and being spending time with the animals there.

Many Saints also chose to live away from human beings, sometimes for a little while, and sometimes permanently. Making a conscious effort to pay attention to the amazing animal life which surrounds us can bring a lot of joy, and draws us closer to God. Not only does it help us to appreciate the wonder of creation, it reminds us that the universe isn't all about us.

ACTIVITY

Go for a walk and make a list of different creatures you can spot. Take a moment to look carefully at the animals and birds you might often pass by without noticing. With current Covid restrictions this will have to be close to home, but appreciating how life surrounds us right where we are is no bad thing! Depending on where you are, going out for a walk at night can also be a great experience, even if you hear more creatures than you see. As well or instead of this, making a fat-ball or bird-feeder and watching your feathered neighbours eat can be a great activity and very rewarding. This can work even if you only have a balcony.

The websites below have some great suggestions in relation to all of this.

RSPB

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/fun-and-learning/for-kids/games-and-activities/activities/make-a-speedy-bird-cake/>

Natural History Museum

https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/how-to-make-a-bird-feeder.html?gclid=CjwKCAiAmrOBBhA0EiwArn3mfEXCV24tHt4OvOIGj88bHwtVI2Vp7UUh2eLpTFj2HghvCLm8qJrAdkBoCCOAOAvD_BwE

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, animals welcomed you in the stable when there was no room in the inn. As an adult you were often rejected by human beings, but the creatures of the desert shared their home. Teach us to see that we can learn from the example of the creatures who surround us, and soften our hearts to their lessons. **Amen.**



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Week 3 - Snakes and Staffs

CONTEXT

Snakes, and reptiles generally, often get a bad press. In reality though, many species are no threat at all human beings. Even ones which are potentially dangerous are not “bad” any more than rivers or fire are “bad”. Animals and other aspects of the natural world can hurt us if we don’t treat them with proper respect, but that doesn’t mean that we should see them negatively. Snakes basically just want to get on with their snakey lives unmolested, usually they would far rather keep away from human beings and only bite if they feel threatened. Snakes come in many different sizes, shapes and colours: reds, yellows, blacks, green, some are even cream and white like tiramisu. They have very varied habitats and lifestyles too, not all snakes are venomous.

Snakes in the book of Exodus can be dangerous, but they are also symbols of healing and power. Moses was nervous about whether people would listen to his message, so God gave him a staff which he could turn into a snake, just to make sure that everyone paid attention.

ACTIVITY

Make a “Snakes and Ladders” game using “Snakes and Staffs”. Draw out or print out a board (you can find plenty of free, printable blank boards online). If you feel like drawing a board, you could even use a design with numbered desert stones rather than squares.

Once you have your board, draw and colour some snakes and staffs onto paper. Then you can either glue them onto your board OR if you prefer, glue them onto cardboard, cut them out and blu-tak them to your board. The advantage of doing this is that once you have played your game of snakes and ladders/staffs, you can move your snakes/staffs around so that the play is different every time. Also, if you prefer it and are able to go outdoors, you can collect twigs to use as your staffs instead of drawing and cutting them out.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you made creatures which squirm and slither, scurry and scamper. You made beings with scales and fur and feathers and proclaimed all your work as good. Open us eyes to see and celebrate the beauty in all life. **Amen.**



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Week 4 - Taking a Break

CONTEXT

Lent gives the Church a time in the year when we pause and reflect. A time to pause and focus on spiritual things, rather than just our everyday chores and the tasks in front of us. Sometimes, especially when we are busy and worried, it is easy to forget what is really important in life. Taking a break to recharge our batteries is part of the rhythm of Christian life. It is also part of nature too, most animals need sleep and play in order to stay healthy and happy. Many of them also need to spend time being sociable with members of their own species.

ACTIVITY

Make a bat-mobile. Bats are creatures we often think about sleeping, partly because many bat species are nocturnal and sleep when human beings are awake, and partly because they do it in such a memorable way, hanging upside down. They are chill out in other ways whilst dangling from their toes, grooming and socializing with fellow bats.

Firstly, draw and cut out some bats hanging upside down. Remember as this is a mobile, both the back and the front of your bats are going to be visible, so you need to decorate both sides of your paper or card! Cut out some pieces of string and attach these to the toes of your bat, make sure that the strings are different lengths so that your bats can dangle from different heights as they doze on your mobile. You can then attach your bats to an old coat-hanger, two-crossed pieces of garden cane, or any other suitable item to hang up.

Another possibility which requires more commitment and adult help, but would be extremely rewarding, is making a bat-box for real bats. The RSPB produce some useful guidance, and bat-box making kits are available online, starting from around £10.

Bat Conservation Trust

<https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/bat-boxes>

PRAYER

God of all times and all good purposes, you made us and all your creatures to know life in all its fullness. Help us to recognise our need for rest and play, and to understand that our fellow animals have that exact same need. Give us strength and courage to help build a world in which every being has the chance to not only exist, but to flourish. **Amen.**



www.aswa.org.uk

Week 5 - Floating Ark

CONTEXT

The story of Noah's Ark and the flood reminds us that animals suffer for the bad choices which human beings sometimes make, but also that we have a role in helping to put things right. Importantly too, at the end of the story, God makes a promise to all Creation, and sends a rainbow as a reminder of this.

ACTIVITY

Make an ark and get it to float. Some researchers now believe that the original idea of the ark may have been modelled on a coracle, meaning that the ship described in the story would have been round. You could make a coracle shaped ark out of plasticine. Equally, you might want to use an empty food tub of some sort. If you have some small toy wooden or plastic animals, you can even see whether you can get your ark to float with them inside.

PRAYER

Lord our Father and Protector, you enfold all of your Creation with your love, and you entrust it to our care. Teach us to watch over our fellow creatures with compassion, and remember that you hear the beat of the tiniest heart, and feel the pain and joy of every being. **Amen.**



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Week 6 - Vegetable Leviathan

CONTEXT

There are many amazing aspects of animal life and creation that human beings are only just starting to explore. There is still a lot that we don't know about marine life, especially in the deep ocean. For instance, scientists still know very little about Colossal Squid, even though they are around 14m long and have built-in flashing lights (they are believed to use bioluminescence for hunting). Interestingly, "Leviathan" is one of the many Biblical words of uncertain meaning. Nobody is sure exactly what sort of sea-creature it is intended to represent. There are many amazing animals for us to learn about, but of course, in order to do that we have to protect them and their habitat.

ACTIVITY

Make a Leviathan out of your favourite vegetables or fruit, and eat it afterwards. It can even "swim" in its own ocean of hummus, yoghurt or whatever else you like. As nobody knows exactly what the creature was meant to be, you can use your imagination as much as you like.

PRAYER

God of wonder, may we never lose sight of the miracles and mysteries which surround us. Keep us curious and joyful as we explore your world. Give us eyes to see the wonder in the animals who share our planet, and the wisdom to appreciate the uniqueness and value of each one. **Amen**

