

BEGINNINGS

CREATION: IN GOD'S IMAGE

THEME

God created us in His image to be the stewards of His whole creation.

BACKGROUND

The first two chapters of *Genesis* present two distinct stories of creation, written at different times in history by different authors who use different writing styles to tell the same story in different form. However, despite scientific discrepancies and contradictions with one another, both accounts put forth the same theological concepts-that all creation is good, that God created us in His own image, and that we are to control and care for creation as God's representatives.

The first story, *Genesis* 1:1 through 2:4, is a carefully worked out theological statement which systematically expresses Israel's belief that God created everything there is out of nothing (*ex nihilo*) and that everything that God created is "good," a notion contrary to the beliefs of some religions which teach that anything material is "bad."

The image of light with its attribute of goodness is brought out at the very beginning when God, by His word, creates the light, separates it from the darkness of chaos, and calls it good. It is further carried out when He creates lights in the firmament to "give light upon the earth" and to "separate the day from the night." The implication is that light is like a beacon; it enables us to see-both physically and spiritually.

Creation is described in the second story, *Genesis* 2:5 through 3:24, in a narrative form. Here God and the characters in the story interact in a humanlike way. The climax of both stories is the creation of human beings to whom God gives a status of dignity and worth by making them "in His image" and by giving them responsibility for taking care of His universe.

To be created in the image of God does not mean that we are God ourselves. It means that we "are free to make choices, to love, to create, to reason, and to live in harmony with creation and with God." (BCP, page 845). This is what makes us humans different from the rest of creation. We do not live strictly by instinct as do animals and other living beings. We have the ability to think. We can choose what we do or do not do. This is a

privilege, but it is also an awesome responsibility, one that we often misuse.

These creation accounts show how the people of Israel saw their relationship with God as His light. The stories were told to present an understanding of that relationship. Whether they were true or not, the point of the stories is the same. We human beings, in our special relationship with God, have the responsibility for taking care of what He has made. In our freedom to choose, we can either respond in loving obedience or we can “seek our own will” and sin. The choice is ours.

BIBLICAL REFERENCES:

Genesis 1:1-2:24	The first creation story
Genesis 2:2-25	The second creation story

PRAYER BOOK REFERENCES

CATECHISM

Human Nature	p. 845
God the Father	p. 846

MORNING PRAYER

A Song of Creation	pp. 47-49; 88-90
Venite	pp. 44-45; 82
Prayers for the Natural Order	pp. 827-828
Collect for the Stewardship of Creation	pp. 208; 259

SUGGESTED HYMNS

<u>Hymnal</u>	<u>1940</u>	<u>1982</u>
All things bright and beautiful	311	405
For the beauty of the earth	296	416

PRAYERS

Use the Collect "For Stewardship of Creation on" pages 208 or 259, or one of the "Prayers for the Natural Order" on pages 827 and 828 of the Book of Common Prayer, or the following:

Heavenly Father, you made the world and all that is in it. You made us and gave us your world to take care of. Be a guiding light for us as we live from day to day so that we will make the choices that you would like for us to make. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

PURPOSE

To give students an understanding of what it means to be created in God's image and to be stewards of His creation.

SUGGESTED PRESENTATION

Open with a prayer. Since this is the first Sunday of the Church School year, take some time to make sure that the students know each other and that you learn a little something about each of them.

Say a few words about the Season After Pentecost. Remind students that this is the liturgical (or Church) season of the year when we think about and learn about the beginnings of the Christian Church and its growth, stressing that by Church, we mean the people, not the building. Tell them that this year you and they will spend this season learning about the beginnings and growth of the faith from which Christianity came-that of the people of God in the Old Testament.

Begin with a discussion about ancestors and how we can learn something about who we are and why we are the way we are by hearing stories about our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. The Old Testament is the story of our ancient ancestors from long, long ago. It is the story of how they lived, what they thought about God and what they thought God wanted them to do. We can learn from studying about these ancient people some of the things we need to know about God and what He wants us to do.

God chose these people of the Old Testament to be a LIGHT TO THE NATIONS. That means that one thing He wanted them to do was to be an example for all the other people in the world (the nations), so that all others would come to know Him and love Him too.

Talk about what it means to be a LIGHT. Ask

- What does light do? (It guides us; it makes us able to see in the dark; it makes things clearer; and it warns us of danger.)
- What are some expressions that we use to talk about light in these ways? (Someone's "face lights up"; if we do not know something, we are "in the dark"; if someone is good at something, we say that he or she is a "shining example".)

See if students can come up with other expressions that are familiar to everybody.

Tell the class the story of creation, going into detail especially with the smaller children, by naming specific animals and plants, so that they will get a feel for the fact that God made everything in the world. Use the creation story from Genesis 2 to tell how He made man and woman, forming man from the dust and breathing life into him and making woman from the rib of the man.

Emphasize that God made man and woman in His image and discuss what it means to be the image of God. Ask students if they know what an IMAGE is. Let a few of them answer; then, hold a mirror in front of one of them and ask, "What do you see? Is this you or is it a 'likeness' of you?" Discuss the difference between an image or a likeness and a real person. Explain that when we say that God made us in His image, we mean that He made us like Himself in the sense of being able to think, to reason, and to make choices. Emphasize that although we are like God, we must remember that we are not God.

In the story of creation, God gave instructions to the man and the woman, Adam and Eve. He told them that He would let them name everything that He had made and that He was giving them the job of taking care of every plant and animal.

This is something that human beings can do because they are able to think, reason, and make choices. Plants, of course, cannot take care of themselves, and animals live by instinct, eating when they get hungry and protecting themselves when they sense danger is near.

One who takes care of something is called a STEWARD, and that is what God wants us to be for His creation-its stewards. Talk about ways the students themselves can be stewards and take care of God's creation for Him. When we are good stewards for God, we are also acting as lights for others, showing them how to be good stewards too.

PRESCHOOL ACTIVITIES

CRAFT

Make name tags that will help children identify with being made in the image of God.

Take Polaroid pictures of each child for them to glue onto colored circles of construction paper, which you have cut out before class. Punch a hole in the construction paper and run a piece of yarn through it large enough to get over a child's head. Print each child's name on the circle under his or her picture.

Talk to them about how these pictures are images of themselves. The pictures are not the actual people, but they show what the people are like. When we say that God made us in His image, we are saying that we are like God in some ways, and people can tell a little bit about what God is like by looking at us. That is why it is important for us to set a good example for others.

MATERIALS

- circles of colored construction paper
- glue
- Polaroid camera and film
- hole punch
- yarn
- marker

COLOR SHEET

Have children color the sheet that is included with this lesson, GOD TOLD ADAM AND EVE TO TAKE CARE OF HIS WORLD. As they color, talk to them about how God wants us to take care of His world too. Give them some ideas of how we can do this (being kind to animals, watering plants, not littering on the highways, etc.). Be specific and think of simple things that are not beyond the reach or capability of children.

GAME

Make a game like Bingo for children to play. Before class, use the BINGO PATTERNS that are included with this lesson and glue them onto pieces of colored poster board to make cards with nine squares of animals and plants on each card. Do not put them in the same order on any two cards. Also before class, make and cut out individual squares with the animals and plants on them, one for each animal or plant. For Bingo tokens, use pennies or small hard candy.

To play the game, pass out the cards that contain the nine squares and have children take

turns drawing a small card from a box into which you have put them. Have them call out the name of the animal or plant on the card. The corresponding animal or plant is then covered up on the big card. The first child to have three squares in a row, horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, covered up on his or her big card calls out “Creation Bingo!” and is the winner. After the game is finished, let children keep the pennies or candy.

MATERIALS

- poster board for cards
- scissors
- glue
- box to put individual cards
- pennies or hard candy for tokens

CRAFT

Cut out and give each child at least one animal from the NAME THE ANIMALS patterns included with this lesson. Explain that Adam and Eve got to name all of the animals that God made, and that here are some animals they did not name. Let each child color and give a name to the particular animals which he or she has been given. Let them glue the animals to construction paper and write the name given at the top of the paper.

MATERIALS

- construction paper
- one or more animals for each child
- crayons
- glue

ELEMENTARY ACTIVITIES

CRAFT

Make name tags that will help children identify with being made in the image of God.

Pre-cut circles about 4 inches in diameter from colored construction paper. Cut circles about 3 inches in diameter from white construction paper. Pass one of each of these out to the students.

Instruct students to draw a picture of themselves on the white circles, doing something that they like to do (swimming, watching TV, reading, drawing, etc.). Then have them glue the white circle to the colored circle. Punch a hole in the colored circle and hang around their necks with a piece of yarn.

As they are color, extend your discussion about being made in the image of God. Tell them that the pictures they drew of themselves are images of themselves. They are not the actual people but they show what the people are like. When we say that God made us in His image, we are saying that we are like God in some ways, and people can tell a little bit about what God is like by looking at us. That is why it is important for us to set good examples for others.

After all the name tags have been made, go around the table and have each child tell his or her name and explain the activity in the picture. This is one way of getting acquainted on this first Sunday of the church school year.

MATERIALS

- circles of colored construction paper
- circles of white construction paper
- markers
- glue
- hole punch
- yarn

STORY SHEET

Use the story sheet, THE CREATION STORY, to retell the story of God's creation of everything in the world. Have students tell you what goes in the blank spaces and let them draw a simple picture in each.

GAME

Before class, cut circles from colored construction paper, about three inches in diameter. Use the CREATION PATTERNS included with this lesson. Cut out and glue one animal, plant, celestial body, or sea to a colored circle. Punch a hole in the circle and slip a piece of yarn through it long enough to hang around a child's neck.

Hang one of these around each child's neck like a name tag, but let it hang down in back instead of in front. Do not tell them which of the objects is on their circle. The object of the game is to find out by asking the other students questions what it is that is on the circle. Only "yes" and "no" questions may be asked. The winner is the first student to guess which object of creation is on his or her circle.

MATERIALS

- circles of colored construction paper, 3" in diameter
- patterns
- scissors
- hole punch
- yarn
- glue

COLOR SHEET

Have children color the sheet that is included with this lesson, GOD TOLD ADAM AND EVE TO TAKE CARE OF HIS WORLD. As they color, talk to them about how God wants us to take care of His world too. Give them some ideas of how we can do this (being kind to animals, watering plants, not littering on the highways, etc.). Be specific and think of simple things that are not beyond the reach or capability of children.

MIDDLE SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

GROUP CRAFT

To combine the idea of being made in God's image with getting acquainted on the first Sunday of class, have the students make a poster together which depicts that part of God's image that they see in themselves.

Be sure that they understand the concept of image. Tell them that although we are all like God in our ability to think, to reason, and to make choices, there are some things that we do individually that we may do better than someone else and some things that we do not do as well. But as in a body, all of the individual parts are important and have their places. Have them take a few minutes in silence to think about which part of "God's body" they feel best describes them.

Pass out sheets of colored construction paper, with everyone choosing his or her favorite color. Ask them to draw the part of "God's body" that they feel they best represent (ears if they are good listeners, eyes if they are good observers, mouths if they speak well, hands if they are good helpers, etc.). After printing their names on their body parts, cut them out and glue them to a piece of poster board on the top of which you have printed GOD CREATED US IN HIS OWN IMAGE.

If there is time and the students do not feel self-conscious about it on this first day, let them tell why they chose the body part they did for themselves.

MATERIALS

- poster board
- colored construction paper
- black markers
- scissors
- glue

DRAMA

Assign parts to students of the different items mentioned in the creation story. Then read Genesis 1:-2:4 or write your own paraphrase if time is a problem. Tell students to act out, with hand motions or sound effects as you read their individual parts. For example, when you come to the statement that God created birds, the student representing birds could flap his or her arms; for fish, a swimming motion. Tell them to use their imaginations and not to be too concerned about the motion exactly fitting the role. If your class is small, a student could play more than one role.

DISCUSSION

Enlarge on your discussion of the stewardship of creation by asking the questions below and telling students to try to look at things through the eyes of God as they answer.

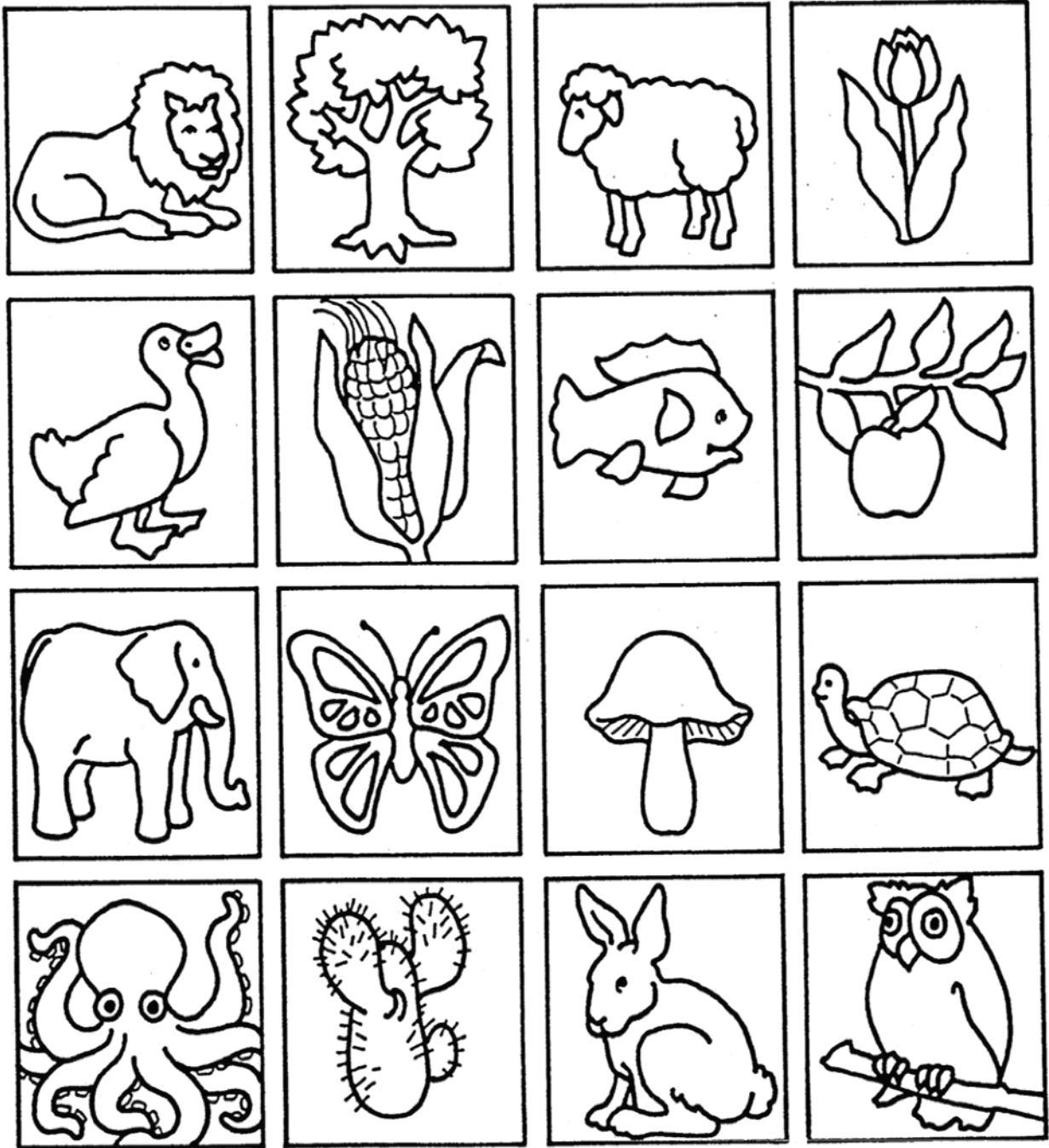
- What does God mean by wanting us to take care of what He has made?
- What are some things that we and other people do that harm the world?
- We are but small parts of creation. How can we as individuals do our part in taking care of the world?
- What can we do as a class?

MUSIC/CRAFT

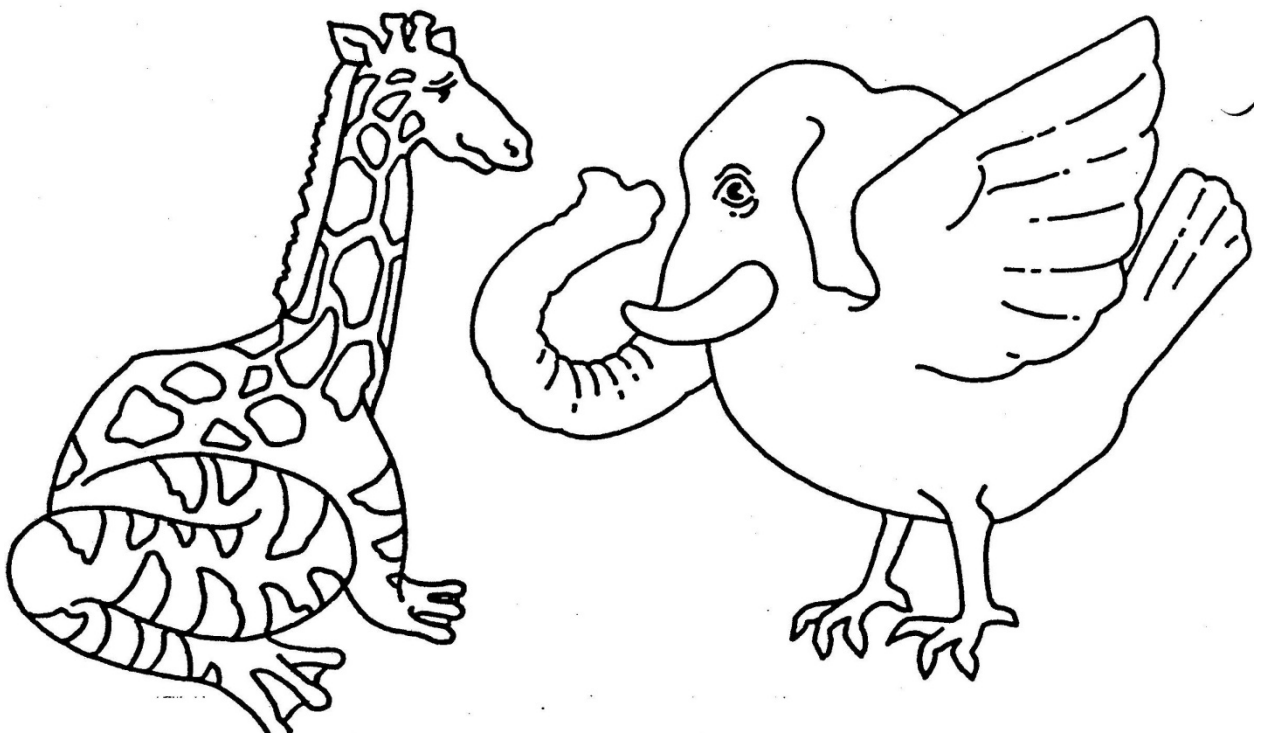
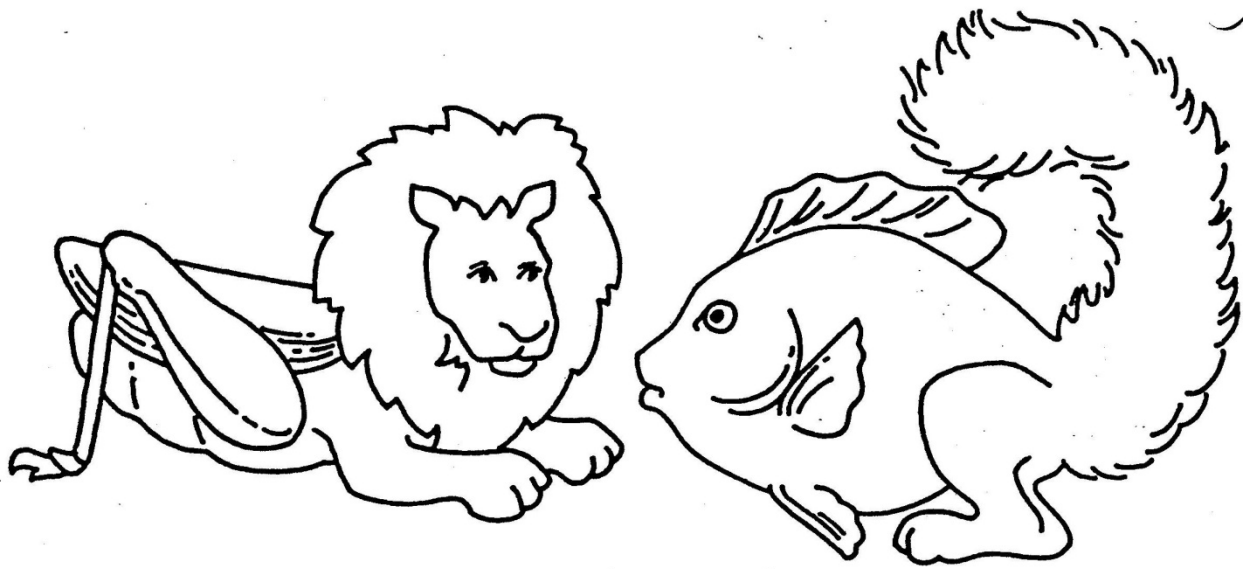
Before class, print the words to the hymn, “All things bright and beautiful,” on newsprint, and hang it where all can see it. Tell students to choose a verse of the hymn to illustrate, and to write that verse on their picture. Hang these on a clothesline when completed.

MATERIALS

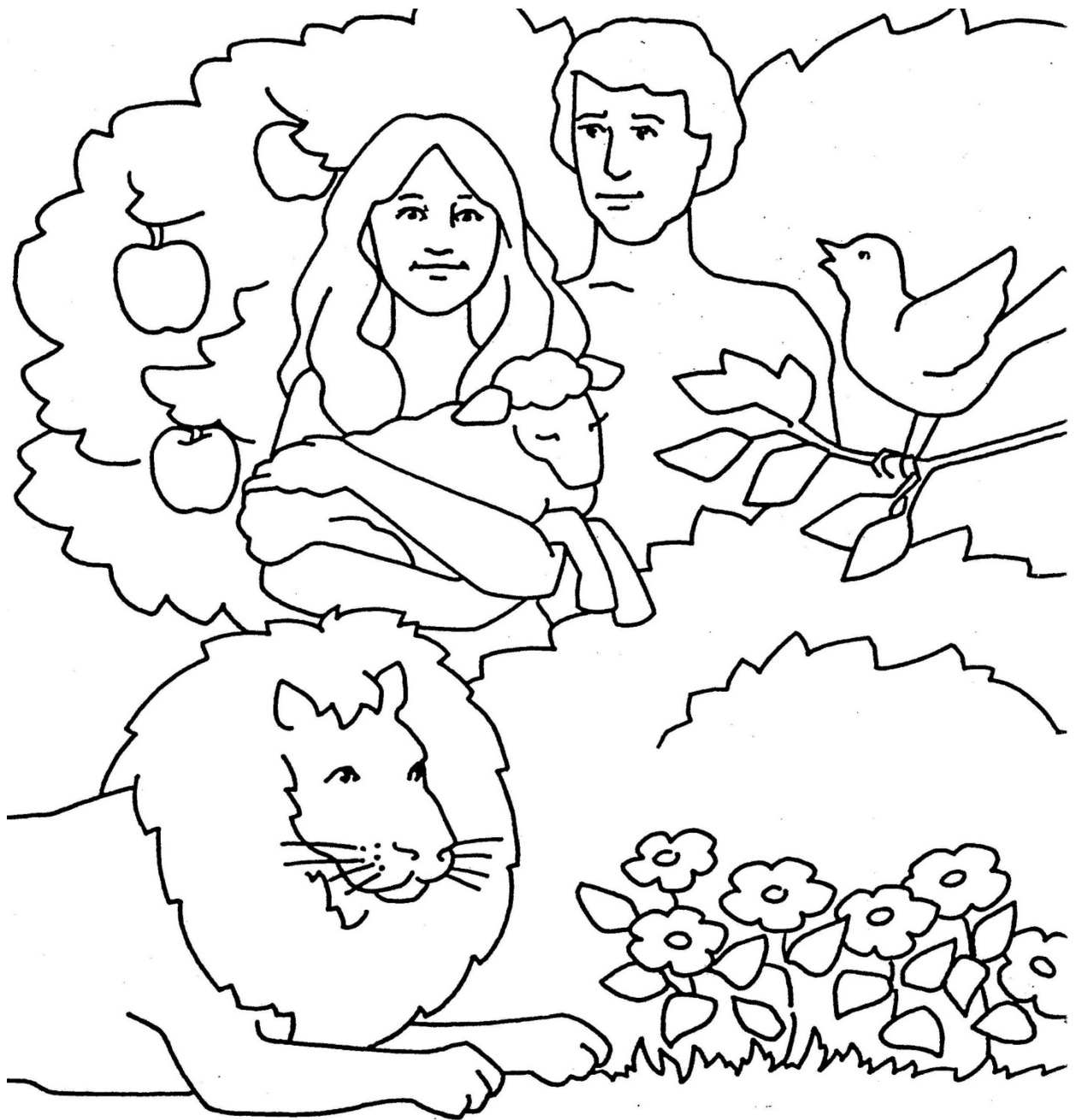
- drawing paper
- markers
- newsprint
- clothesline and clothespins



BINGO PATTERNS



NAME THE ANIMALS



**GOD TOLD ADAM AND EVE TO
TAKE CARE OF HIS WORLD**

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Everything was very dark. So God

Created the _____ to

light up the world in the daytime and the _____ to light up the world at night.
Then He

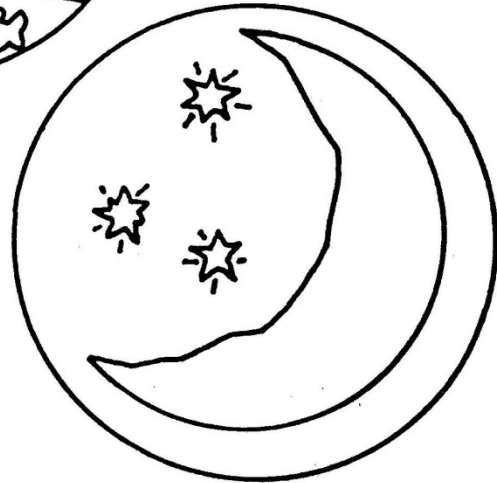
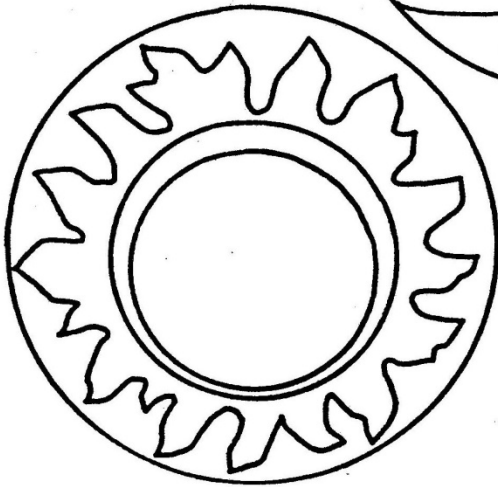
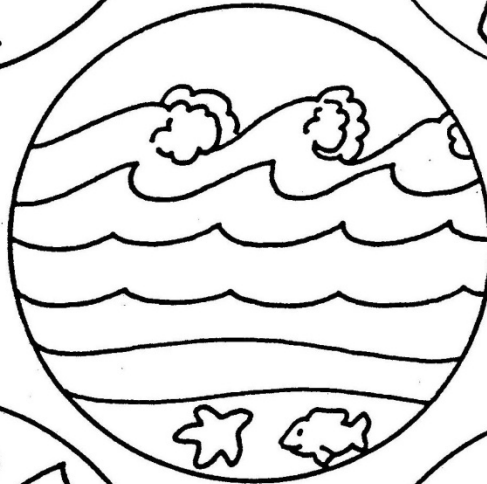
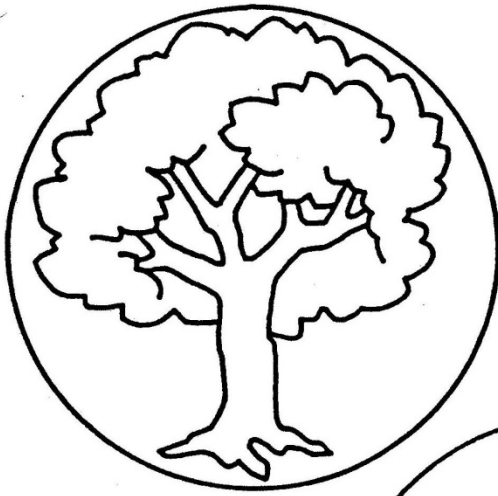
made _____ and _____ to grow in the ground,

to fly in the air, and _____ to swim in the sea, and
_____ to live on the ground. Then God

made a _____ and a _____ in His
own image and told them to name everything and

to take care of all that He had made. God saw everything that He had made and said that it
was very good.

THE CREATION STORY



CREATION PATTERNS