

Youth Worship Lesson – May 2, 2021

GROWING AND CHANGING

Youth issue:

Why is change important?

Focus Scripture: Acts 8:26–40 (Leviticus 21:16-23)

Purpose: To recognize our lifelong need to grow and change and to celebrate our world of happy differences

Preparation

Worship Table – **Yellow cloth**

Pictures and materials for story and activity are at the end of the lesson
Inkpad, coloured paper, scissors, glue stick, coloured markers

Lighting of the Christ Candle

We light the Christ candle to remind us that God is always with us.

Easter Greeting

Parent: *Christ is risen!*

All: Christ is risen, indeed!

Opening Prayer

Parent: *O God, we thank you for this wonderful world.*

Everything and everyone in your world is special;

no two flowers are alike, no two of us are alike.

Help us to remember that we are members of your worldwide family,

*and help us to be loving neighbours to those around us. **(nod)***

All: Alleluia! Amen.

Introducing the Theme – “Fingerprint Poster”

In advance: Bring a large piece of poster/chart paper. Write the title “A World of Happy Differences” along the top of the sheet. Bring ink pad, squares of coloured paper, scissors, glue sticks, crayons or coloured markers, and wipes or a damp cloth (**for cleaning hands**).

God made each of us different. We all have different characteristics and abilities. One of the things that is unique to each of us is our fingerprints.

Give each youth a piece of paper and set out the ink pad.

*I invite you to make a thumb print in the middle of your piece of paper. Then, turn it into something unique. You could draw in eyes, antennae, and legs to make it a bug; you could add fingerprints around the edges to turn it into a flower; be creative. **(While they do this, hang the “A World of Happy Differences” poster.)** Cut out your picture and glue it onto the poster.*

Then write your name beside it. **(Give time for this. As they work, encourage them to compare the fingerprints and notice the differences.)**

This poster celebrates the individuality that we are all born with. We are all different.

Exploring the Theme

No two people are exactly alike— not even identical twins. That is the way God made our world. Yet sometimes we seem to have trouble accepting this as God’s plan or God’s way.

(Show the teaching picture “Philip and the Ethiopian.”) What are some of the differences between these two people? (they are of different racial backgrounds, their dress suggests that they are from different cultures, one appears to be wealthier than the other)

When the disciples began to carry on Jesus’ work, they were telling the “good news” only to Jews, who they thought of as “God’s chosen people.” Other people were called “Gentiles” and referred to as “unclean” because they did not follow the same religious laws. Today in our story, Philip’s understanding grows as he shares the “good news” with an Ethiopian official.

(Read Acts 8:26-28 or have your child read.)

Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, “Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” This is desert. Therefore, he arose and went. In addition, behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. Moreover, sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet.

What was the Ethiopian doing? (reading a scroll) Where had he been? (to the temple in Jerusalem)

*The Ethiopian may have been a convert to Judaism but would not have been permitted to worship in the Court of Israel. He would have only been allowed in one of the lesser outer courts, such as the Court of the Gentiles. **(Show teaching picture “The Temple” and locate the Court of the Gentiles.)** This was because he was a foreigner – not a Jew – and also because he was a eunuch (**yoo-nuhk**) – a male who is unable to have children. Jewish law stated who was allowed close to the Holy of Holies, and who had to worship from farther away, and this man had two reasons for being sent to the back of the temple.*

Let’s read the section of the Hebrew Scriptures that outlines these laws.

(Read Leviticus 21:16-23.)

In addition, the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to Aaron, saying: ‘No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God. For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch. No man of the descendants of Aaron the priest, who has a defect, shall come near to offer the offerings made by fire to the LORD. He has a defect; he shall not come

near to offer the bread of his God. He may eat the bread of his God, both the most holy and the holy; only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane my sanctuaries; for I the LORD sanctify them.”

How does this law feel to you? How did Jesus treat these people? What other story do you recall that occurred in the Court of the Gentiles? (Jesus overturning the merchants' tables) It is important to remember that the laws in Leviticus were written over a thousand years before Jesus lived. They were written for a different time and different circumstances. Part of Jesus' ministry was to update people's understanding of how God wants us to live.

Let's continue the story of Philip and the Ethiopian.

Read Acts 8:29-40.

Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go near and overtake this chariot.” Therefore, Philip ran to him, heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, “Do you understand what you are reading?” In addition, he said, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” Moreover, he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture, which he read, was this:

*“He was led as a sheep to the slaughter;
And as a lamb before its shearer is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.
In His humiliation His justice was taken away,
And who will declare His generation?
For His life is taken from the earth.”*

Therefore, the eunuch answered Philip and said, “I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?” Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. Moreover, the eunuch said, “See, *here is* water. What hinders me from being baptized?”

Then Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” In addition, he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” Therefore, he commanded the chariot to stand still. Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. Now when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. Nevertheless, Philip was found at Azotus. Passing through, he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea.

How did the Ethiopian man feel after he was baptized? Why do you think he felt that way? Do you think it was an easy decision for Philip to baptize this man? Why or why not? What change and growth was happening in Philip? What is the “good news”?

Before Jesus died, he told his disciples that he was like a grape vine and they were the branches that would grow the fruit – help spread God’s love. In this story, we see Philip building a branch into Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church is one of the oldest Christian churches. Perhaps it was started by the man in this story.

Jesus also said that God would prune the vine’s branches so that they would produce more fruit – more love. (If the youth did not hear the Theme Conversation, add more details.) Pruning means discarding dry branches – unloving attitudes and actions.

Jesus was trying to help the disciples realize that change and growth is necessary throughout their lives. They needed to continually stretch their understanding of God and God’s ways. How does it feel for you when people and situations around you change? (friends move away, a new minister comes, you move to a new class or school, a pet dies, etc.) What changes are you facing in your life right now? Does your faith help?

Change Within Our Church

Jesus challenged the way the Hebrews understood the laws of Leviticus and asked them to reflect on their meaning in a different time. The church today also struggles with new ways of understanding God and God’s ways. Let’s look at some of our understandings that have changed over the last 100 years and some that we are struggling with right now.

Hang the poster and read the statements, then discuss them with questions such as: *Do these statements surprise you? Do you think change comes easily in our church? Which ones are we still struggling with? What helps us through times of growth and change? What other changes could we add to this list?*

Sample Statements

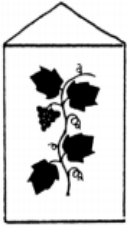
In the past, the Church taught that:

- Women should not be ministers.
- Blacks/people of colour/Indigenous people are lesser people.
- Dancing is wrong for Christians, or dancing is not allowed in the Church building.
- You must not work, shop, go to shows, or play cards or sports on Sunday. Sunday is for church, rest, or reading the Bible only.
- The King James Bible is the only Bible to use.
- The church should not remarry people who have been divorced.
- You should think of God as a loving grandfather and call God “he.”
- LGBTQ+ people should not be church leaders.
- Children should not receive communion.

Change can be hard. It is important to remember that God made each of us, and that we are all part of God’s family. It also helps to remember that no matter what, God is with us.

Memory Verse: Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. Acts 8:26

Integrating the Theme – "Vine and Branches" Banner



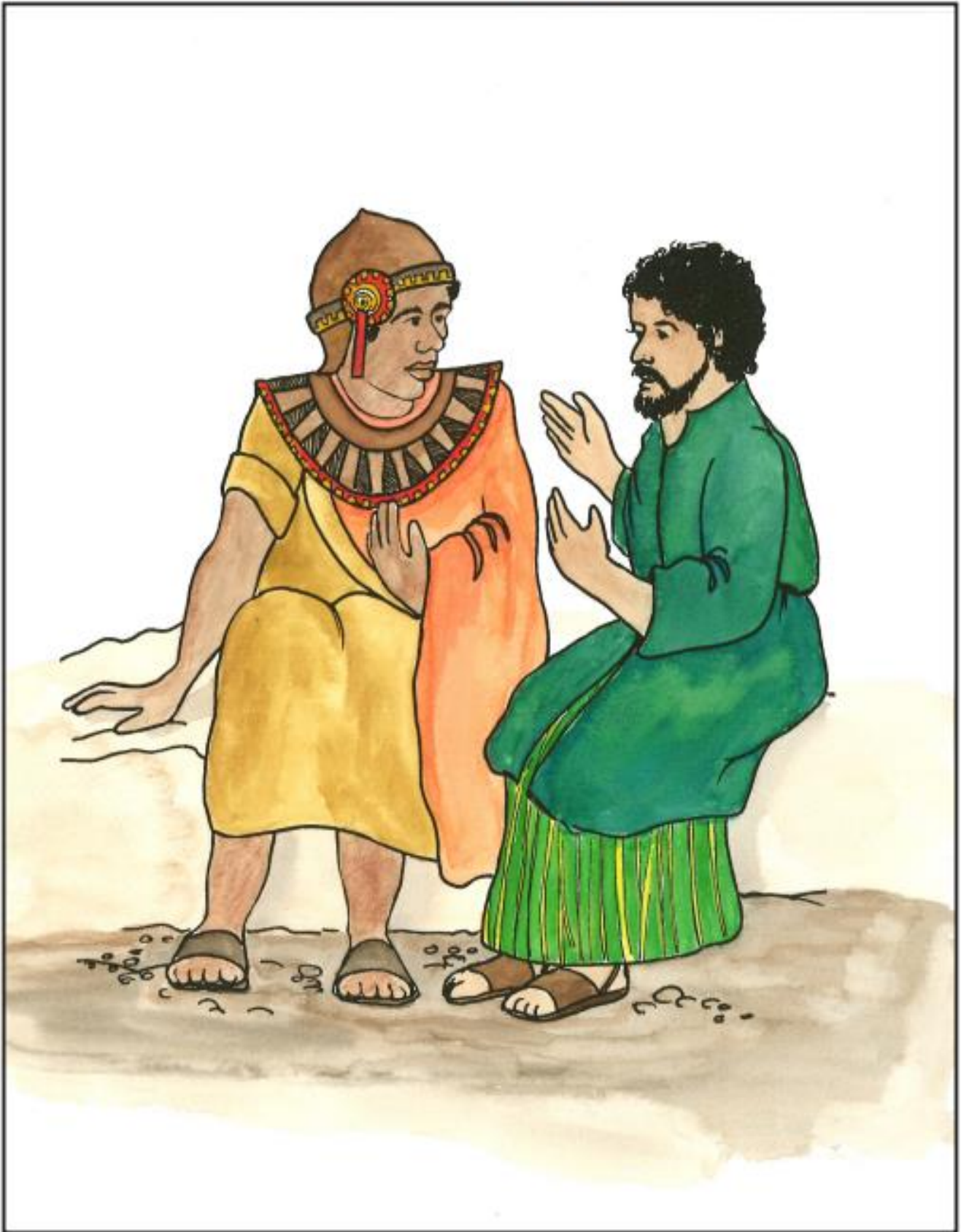
In advance: Bring cardboard patterns and a large piece of cloth or paper, felt pieces or coloured paper, fabric markers or coloured markers, scissors, and glue.

Today we heard about Jesus' image of the church as a vine and branches. We're going to make a banner that will remind us that God, the gardener, is with us to help us grow and change.

Closing Prayer – "The Lord's Prayer"

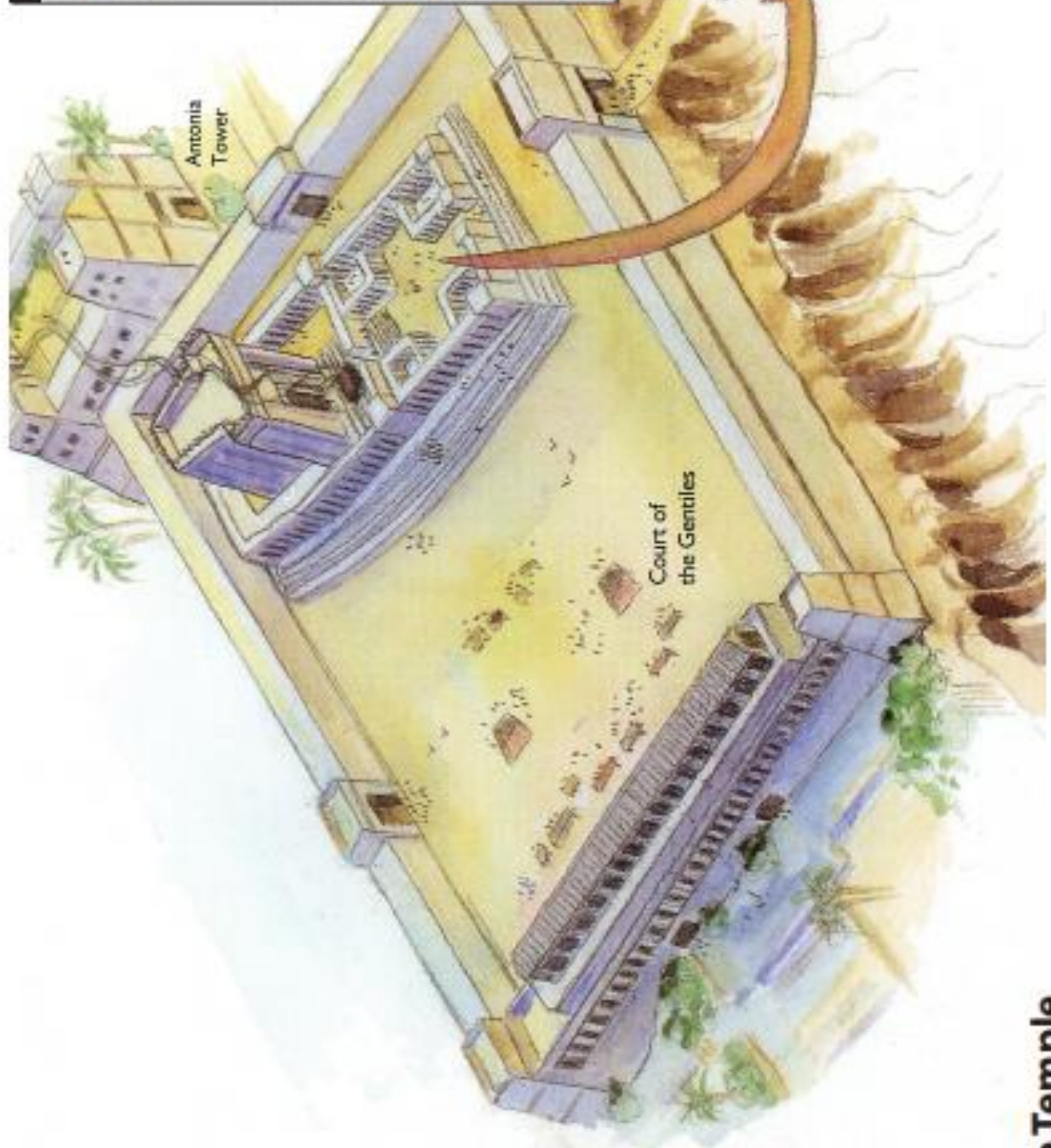
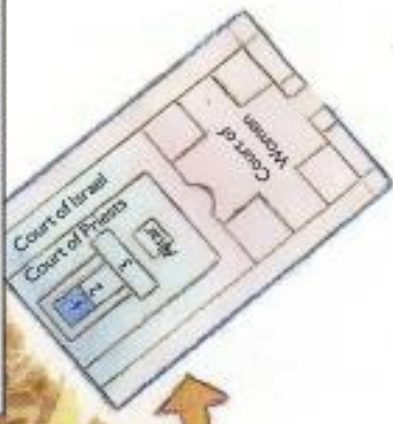
**Our Father, who art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
The power, and the glory,
For ever and ever.
Amen.**

Philip and the Ethiopian



KEY OF THE FLOORS PLAN

- Holy of Holies (1)**
Entered only once a year by the High priest on the Day of Atonement. In the first temple this room held the Ark of the Covenant.
- Holy Place (2)**
This contained the golden Altar of incense, a golden table with 12 loaves of holy bread, and a 7-branched candlestick.
- Porch (3)**
The original temple was made up of the Porch, Holy Place, and the Holy of Holies. The T-shaped section is the tallest part of the Temple area.
- Court of the Priests**
The place where only priests could go.
- Court of Israel**
Where Jewish men went to worship and watch the priests do for sacrifices.
- Court of the Women**
Where Jewish women and children went to worship.
- Court of the Gentiles**
The only place where non-Jewish people could worship. This is where the animal sellers and moneychangers were.



The Temple

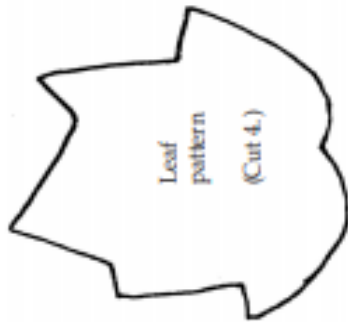
The first temple was built in Jerusalem by King Solomon about 957 BCE. After more than 350 years, it was destroyed by the Babylonian army. The Ark of the Covenant containing the 10 Commandments on clay tablets disappeared. Those returning from exile in Babylon began rebuilding a second temple in 520 BCE, called Zerubbabel's Temple after the current governor. Invading Greeks in 325 BCE and the Romans in 63 BCE pillaged this temple. Around 20 BCE, King Herod began to dismantle the second temple in order to build a new and greater

one. The basic structure was completed in a year and a half but construction continued for over 60 years. All male Jews over 12 were expected to come to worship at the temple on 3 specific festivals each year. Romans kept watch over the Temple area from the Antonia Tower. During an uprising in 70 CE, perhaps before it was totally finished, the Temple was destroyed. Today a small area of one wall, known as the Walling Wall, is all that is left.

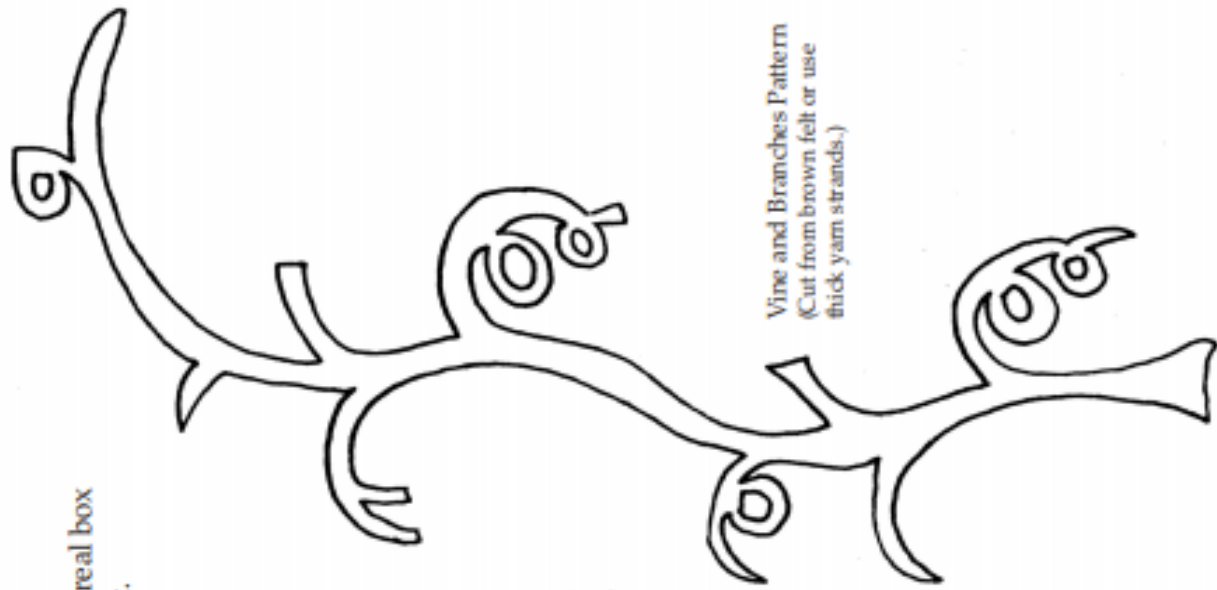


I am the vine; you are the branches. John 15:5

Trace patterns onto cereal box cardboard and cut out.



Grape Pattern
(Cut 9 purple grapes.)



Vine and Branches Pattern
(Cut from brown felt or use thick yarn strands.)

Cut background material 13cmx23cm/5inx9in. Fold over 2cm/3/4in at top for pocket for stick hanger. (Chopsticks work well.) Glue or tape hem with masking tape.

Vine and Branches Banner Pattern

(Banner can also be made from construction paper.)