

‘ACTING THE BIBLE’

at

Beckley School

**JONAH AND THE WHALE
(The Book of Jonah)**

5 October 2023

Joint Benefice of

**The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Beckley St. Nicolas, Forest Hill with Shotover
St. Barnabas, Horton-cum-Studley St. John the Baptist, Stanton St. John**

The Four Parishes 'Acting the Bible' team (previously known as 'Open the Book') leads assembly once a fortnight in Beckley School. The team take stories fresh from the pages of the Bible, and make them into mini dramas, to be acted out by themselves, together with Beckley schoolchildren. Through this, it is hoped that the Bible stories are brought alive, and remembered by the children, especially as they too are involved in the acting.

The team is led by Betty Dye, a Licensed Lay Reader, and includes members from Forest Hill, Stanton St John and Beckley. They meet once a fortnight to write the scripts, with the aim of adhering as closely as possible to the original Bible texts. This often involves comparing different Bible translations and even reading the New Testament in the original Greek!

ACTING THE BIBLE OCTOBER 2023

JONAH AND THE WHALE THE BOOK OF JONAH

Cast: Narrator; Jonah; God; King of Nineveh; Sailor 1 and 2; Chorus

NARRATOR: Our story today is about a very big, very important, but very wicked, city called Nineveh. The people who lived there knew nothing about the Lord God. The Lord wanted to warn them that if they continued with their bad behaviour he would destroy the city. So he decided to send his prophet Jonah to warn them that is what would happen.

(Jonah looking miserable wander on from main door. God behind curtain.)

GOD: Jonah, come! I have an important job for you to do. Go to Nineveh and warn the people living there that if they continue in their violence and cruelty their city will be destroyed. Go now, immediately!

JONAH: What? To Nineveh? To our enemies? And what if they believe me and change their ways? If that happens, I know you are a kind and merciful God and you will forgive them!

CHORUS: Jonah didn't want to do what God said. So he decided to run away.

(Jonah dash back to hall door and then all round the back of the hall.)

NARRATOR: Jonah's plan was to get on a boat and go to Tarshish, which was as far away from Nineveh as he could go.

JONAH: I will go to the seaport. I will buy a boat ticket. I will get on the boat and go to Tarshish. When I am there it will be impossible to deliver that message to the people of Nineveh and God will have to destroy that evil city.

NARRATOR: So Jonah bought his ticket and got on the boat. After all that running around he felt exhausted, so he lay down and fell asleep.

(Jonah walk towards the curtain and then back to the left side of the hatch, pull up shawl and go to sleep.)

NARRATOR: Once the boat was out at sea, in the middle of the ocean, something happened.....

CHORUS: God sent a storm. A big storm, a fierce storm. The wind blew, the waves crashed and the boat began to sink.

(Sailors stagger on hall door side, rolling from side to side.)

SAILOR 1: Sailors, throw the cargo overboard so we do not sink. All of you must beg your gods to save us! Get that passenger Jonah, wake him up and make him to pray to his god. Pray, everyone! Someone here has done something very bad and this storm is a punishment for what they have done.

SAILOR 2: I know who it is. I got a sign which told me it was our passenger, that man Jonah.

(Run over and drag Jonah out of bed.)

Here man, what have you got to say for yourself?

JONAH: My God, the Lord, has power over the heavens, the land and the sea. This storm is my fault because I disobeyed him. I ran away to avoid doing what he said I should do. If you get rid of me, the storm will stop. Throw me overboard and you will be safe.

SAILOR 1: Your God has the power to do this?! Forgive us if we have got this all wrong and we kill an innocent person, but we just have to throw him overboard.

(Sailors pick up blue sheet and throw it over Jonah who lies down flat on the ground.)

CHORUS: The water was cold, the water was deep. Jonah fell down and down and down under the swirling waves.

NARRATOR: As soon as Jonah left the boat the wind died down, the waves flattened, and the sailors were saved. Then God sent a huge sea creature to swim past and in one gulp it swallowed Jonah whole. There inside the fish he stayed for three long days.

JONAH: *(From under the sheet)* I disobeyed God because I refused to go and warn the people of Nineveh. But look at me now! First that dreadful storm and now I am trapped inside a fish. I was so stupid, so wilful. God, I am so sorry, please forgive me. I will do what you asked me to do. If I get out of here, I will go to Nineveh. Oops, what's happening? Oh, this is scary!

CHORUS: The fish coughed an almighty cough and up came Jonah. The massive creature spat Jonah out onto a sandy beach.

(Sailor 1 pull back the sheet. Jonah get up, brush yourself down, wipe your face, shake your hair dry and start to trudge all round the outside of the hall.)

NARRATOR: So Jonah turned around and travelled all the way back home and then back up to Nineveh. When he arrived, he spoke out the Lord's message loud and clear.

(Jonah stand in front of the hatch. Mime preaching.)

JONAH: The Lord God is going to destroy this city in 40 days if you don't repent and turn away from the evil you are doing.

NARRATOR: The message was so loud and clear that everyone believed Jonah, all the people and even the king himself.

(Jonah stand back to curtain side when the King wringing his hands comes in from hall door side.)

KING: Disaster! Destruction! No one must eat or drink anything. We must clothe ourselves with sackcloth to show God how sorry we are. Let's confess our sins, repent, tell God that we are sorry and beg Him for mercy.

GOD: *(from behind curtain).* Oh what joy! It has happened, just as I hoped it would. Now I can forgive these people. The whole city will be saved from destruction. Jonah has done a great job.

(King get up, raise hands in the air, smile and drift off to hall door)

JONAH: I knew this would happen, now the Lord will forgive them. I can't bear it. But you never know, perhaps the Lord will not forgive all of them. I'm going to go up on to that hillside, and watch to see what happens.

NARRATOR: Angry and sulking Jonah climbed the hill, built a shelter, sat down and watched to see what would take place.

(Jonah march back and forth and then finally, grumpily sit down. huffing and puffing.)

The day was extremely hot so God made a bush grow up and cast a shade over Jonah so he did not suffer too much.

CHORUS: The sun was hot, but the shade from the bush was cool and fresh.

(One of the chorus run out and put a potted plant behind Jonah.)

NARRATOR: Jonah sat on the hillside under the shade all day, but that night God let a worm nibble through the stem of the bush, so that next morning it wilted and died.

(Chorus run back and take away the plant.)

Jonah was furious. Now he was exposed once more to the burning heat of the sun.

GOD: Jonah why are you angry?

JONAH: I am angry that you killed the plant, Lord. Poor plant! You should have let it live.

GOD: You feel sorry for the plant, Jonah, though you did nothing to make that plant live or die. Don't you think it is right that I should feel sorry for all the one hundred and twenty thousand helpless people who live in Nineveh? I love to show love and kindness to everyone on earth and forgive anyone who is sorry for what they do wrong.