



At Home

THE STORY OF NEHEMIAH

The Book of Nehemiah is in the First Testament, in the first section of the Bible. Nehemiah was a cupbearer to the king of Persia. This was a very high-ranking job and wasn't one given to just anyone. To protect the king from being poisoned, it was Nehemiah's job to serve the drinks and to ensure they were safe to drink.

The book of Nehemiah tells the story of how this man was called by God to rebuild Jerusalem's walls when they were destroyed by the Babylonians, and how the king of Persia helped him.

It was during the 20th year of the reign of King Artaxerxes of Persia, that Nehemiah was told that the walls of Jerusalem were in ruins. This was right back in the 5th century BCE. Nehemiah told the king that he wanted to go back to Jerusalem and rebuild them – the king agrees and even helps him by giving him letters of introduction so Nehemiah can secure building supplies.

Nehemiah was a great leader and knew how to motivate people, how to form them into teams and how to use the skills to get a job done. He is often used as a model for leadership even now. He had an aim, he explained to the Jewish people what that aim was, and he secured their help in getting the walls rebuilt.

Unfortunately, they are surrounded by other nations who don't want to see the walls rebuilt so Nehemiah had to train and create guards to protect the builders as they worked. After just 52 days, the walls are rebuilt and that was down to the leadership of Nehemiah and the hard work and courage of the Jewish people.

But not all the people had been courageous. Nehemiah saw that the rich had been unjust towards the poor and so he put right the wrongs they had endured. They had forgotten that they were God's people and had forgotten the laws handed to Moses by God when the people wandered in the desert all those years ago. So he invited

the prophet Ezra – who has his own book in the Bible called the Book of Ezra – to read the books of the law to the people, to remind them once again that they were God's people and that the laws passed to Moses were still their laws. The Jewish people gathered together and Ezra led them in prayer, they repented or said sorry for their wrongdoing, and they committed their lives once again to God alone.

When the city walls are dedicated by Ezra, the Jewish people gathered together to witness the rituals. We are told that the young were filled with celebration at the rebuilding not only of their walls but also of their community. We are also told that the old people wept, not because the walls had been rebuilt but because they had been destroyed in the first place – they wept for the past sins of the people and for the people they had lost in the journey to reach the dedication.

So people were laughing and crying at the same time, joyful and sorrowful all in the same crowd. But those who are laughing allowed the others to cry, and those who were crying allowed the others to laugh – they all understood each other so well that they gave each other permission to be who they were and to express how they were feeling at that time.

This story teaches us about being a leader when we watch Nehemiah – he communicated with people, he valued them, he encouraged them and he found out what they were good at. And it teaches us the role of prayer and tradition as we watch Ezra the prophet dedicate the rebuilt city walls by reading aloud the books of the law to remind the people who they were, God's people. And it shows us what a true community looks like working together for a common purpose for God, and loving each other so much that they allowed each other to express their feelings without judgement.

This is a very special story and very applicable for us at Manningham Uniting Church as we build our own city walls, our new church building.

BRICKLAYING

Bricklaying is a real skill. The bricks need to be knitted together so they stay strong and hold the walls firmly, otherwise they would just topple over. Nehemiah and his teams of builders would have used lots of bricks to rebuild the city walls and temple. Let's hope our builders have done the same at Templestowe!

Use whatever you have at home – Lego, Duplo, wooden blocks, boxes – and make a wall with bricks knitted together firmly. You might also like to tell the story of Nehemiah and build the walls at the same time? Can you remember the characters in the story?

Check out the the story of Nehemiah here: <http://manninghamuc.org/?p=4951>

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

As you create your wall, think of each brick as a person you know. Each person has a place in your community. They are each part of a whole wall of lots of individual bricks each knitted together to hold firm.

This is our community right now. We have to stick together and support each other through COVID19 or the whole wall will fall down. When we are told to stay home, we must stay home to protect people who are vulnerable. Make your wall firm and play your part.

I wonder how the Jewish people felt when they were building the walls.

I wonder how Nehemiah felt when he told the king of Persia what he wanted to do.

I wonder how the Jewish people felt at the end when they were crying and laughing together as one.



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MESSY NATURE

Just as we have homes, so does all the wildlife in your garden. Go outside and see if you can find animal homes. Remember, if you find some, don't touch with them, just look as you might break the home. You might find birds' nests if you look up in the trees, or a possum nest with a sleepy possum. You might find all sorts of bugs under rocks. Remember to put the rocks back without squashing the bugs! Draw or write about what you find in your garden. When you go on a walk, have a look at other people's gardens or in the park. Look up into the trees and see what you can find.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Everything has a home. Everything belongs somewhere. Talk about your home and what makes it home for you.

For more thoughts on nature, climate and the First Peoples of Australia, visit the Common Grace website. In particular, check out this page which includes activities designed for children but appropriate for anyone: https://www.commongrace.org.au/kids_and_creation

Check out the Messy Nature video: <http://manninghamuc.org/?p=4951>

NOWHERE TO CALL HOME

In human society, there are people who are homeless, people who sleep in their cars or on the streets in shop doorways. You might not see it where you live but you will see more homeless people in places like Melbourne. These people are homeless for all sorts of reasons but it is never a good thing to have nowhere to belong. Talk about what you could do to help someone who is homeless. It isn't a simple problem to fix but it is never right to have people in our communities who have nowhere to call home.

For more information about homelessness in Melbourne, go to this website: <https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/community/health-support-services/social-support/pages/homelessness.aspx>
See what you can find out about where you live.



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MESSY KITCHEN

Nehemiah and the Jewish people were working very hard and would have needed lots of energy. Hilary is cooking some energy balls in today's Messy Kitchen.

Check out the Messy Kitchen video: <http://manninghamuc.org/?p=4951>



STORYTIME

We all love stories. Here are 4 which illustrate different parts of the Nehemiah story.

- **Story of the Potato People** is the story of a Grandma who looks after her grandson Jack. When Jack can't come, she is lonely but waits faithfully for his return. She was faithful just as Nehemiah was faithful to God. This story might remind us of all the grandparents and grandchildren who can't see each other during COVID19 lockdowns. It's lonely and frustrating right now but we will all see each other again. Here it is: <http://manninghamuc.org/?p=4951>
- **Edward the Emu** is the story of an emu in the zoo who is bored with his life and home and thinks all the other animals are having much more fun than he is – until he tries being them for the day. Here it is: <http://manninghamuc.org/?p=4951>
- **Edwina the Emu** is the story of how Edwina goes out to look for a job whilst Edward stays faithfully on the nest looking after the eggs. Edwina realises where her true home is and there's a surprise at the end. Here it is: <http://manninghamuc.org/?p=4951>
- **Our House** is about a group of children who create a playhouse from a box and the way they work out how they can play in it together with arguing. Here it is: <http://manninghamuc.org/?p=4951>

MESSY SCIENCE WITH MESSY SHARON

Challenge-Which is the strongest shape?

Building paper towers out of different shapes to see which can hold the most weight. Discussing strength of shapes, centre of gravity.

Check out the Messy Science Video: <http://manninghamuc.org/?p=4951>



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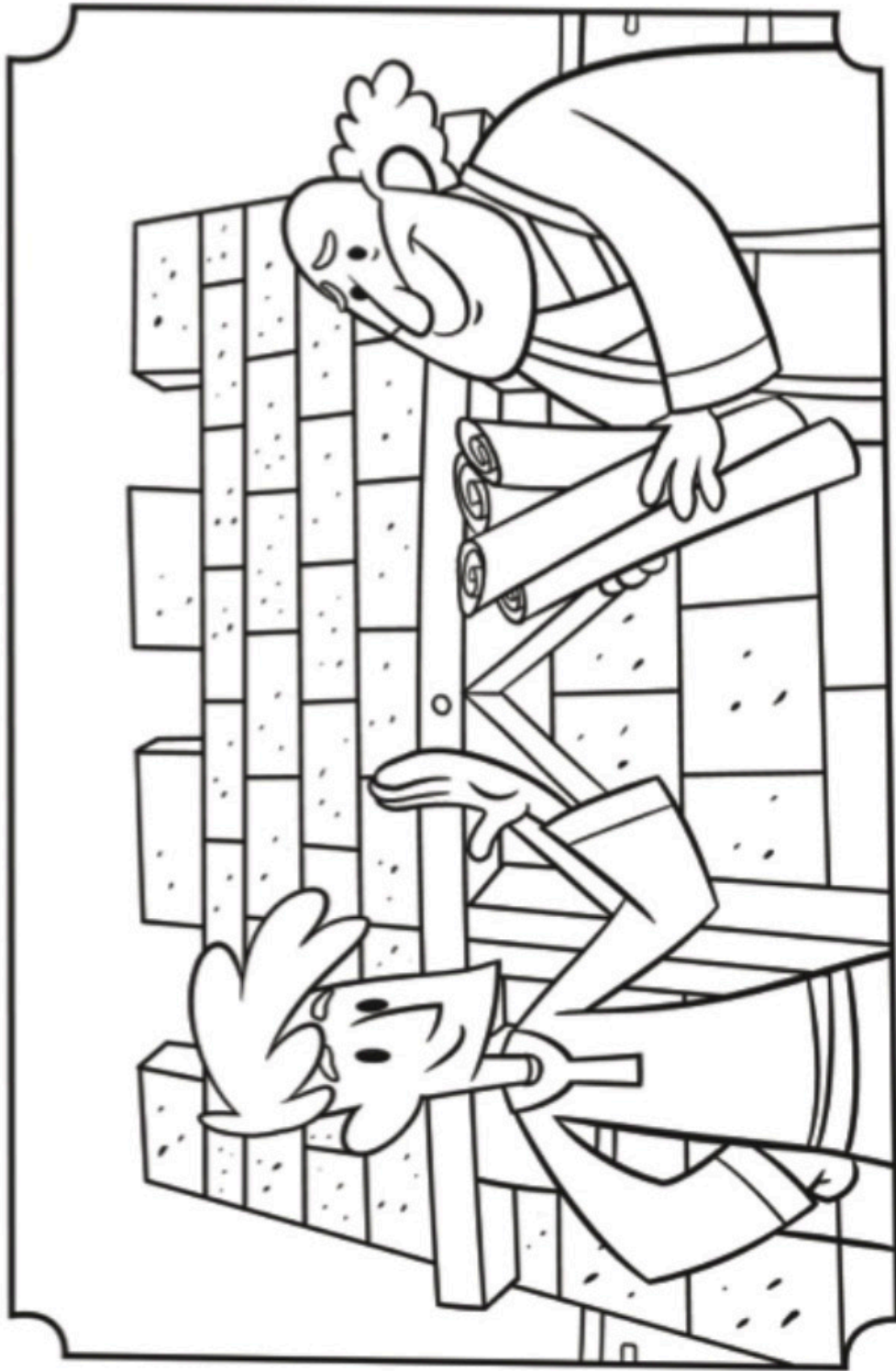
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COLOURING

Do you like colouring?

Once you're happy with it, send it to communications@manninghamuc.org and we'll put it on the website.



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WORDSEARCH

You can print it or find the words on the screen using the text highlighter button.

L	A	U	G	H	J	O	P	S	T
A	H	A	I	M	E	H	E	N	R
U	I	R	O	N	R	E	F	B	A
G	T	Z	B	E	U	Z	U	F	D
N	E	E	R	T	S	R	T	A	I
M	M	A	C	N	A	A	U	I	T
C	P	W	A	L	L	S	R	T	I
C	L	M	A	P	E	Y	E	H	O
E	E	W	S	C	M	I	O	F	N
L	T	C	R	Y	I	N	G	U	J
E	R	F	G	R	N	P	S	L	O
B	P	A	E	O	U	I	A	G	Y
R	H	J	H	T	I	A	F	S	R
A	P	E	R	S	A	E	F	T	T
T	B	E	L	I	E	F	X	M	P
E	E	C	H	J	E	R	U	O	R
X	C	V	O	Y	T	I	C	S	O
A	S	D	P	B	E	L	I	E	F
A	N	C	E	S	T	O	R	S	I
C	U	P	B	E	A	R	E	R	T

Nehemiah
Ezra
story
faithful
belief
future

Jerusalem
walls
faith
hope
temple
joy

cupbearer
celebrate
ancestors
Moses
Persia
past

city
crying
law
tradition
prophet
laugh



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MINECRAFT

Can you build the city of Jerusalem with the new walls on Minecraft?
What would your city have inside the walls? What does a city need?
How would you make it a really good place to live for everyone?
How could it be home for all living things?

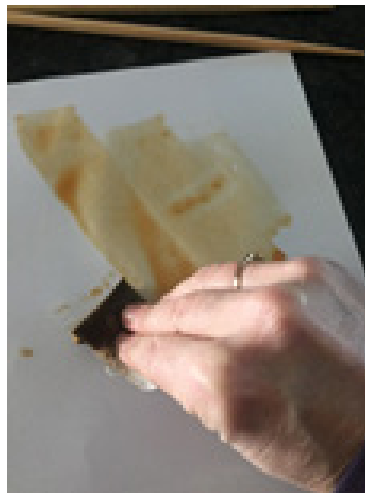
SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Melbourne has been given the title of the Most Liveable City for a few years but what do you think makes somewhere 'the most liveable'?
What makes it liveable for all things?

PARCHMENT SCROLL

Back in the time of Nehemiah important laws or announcements were written on scrolls to be read out at ceremonies. Like when Ezra dedicated the city walls.

So next time someone in your house makes a cup of tea, or you could even offer to make them one, create an authentic looking scroll using the tea bag method. See pics below. If you don't have chop sticks, pencils also work well.



Once you have made your scroll you might either like to write your isolation house 'laws' on it or a list of things that are helping keeping us together at this time. Then gather your household together, unroll your scroll and read out your big announcement.



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PRAYER TIME AT HOME

Begin by lighting a candle if you have one as a reminder that the light of God is always with us and can never be put out.

Now acknowledge the First Peoples of the land on which you are gathering on together.

Why do we acknowledge the First Peoples?

An acknowledgement of country is a way to show respect for the First Peoples. The First Peoples of the Uniting Church have asked that we acknowledge country whenever we meet for worship or in meetings.

Call to worship

This prayer has been adapted from *Children's Liturgy of the Word, First Sunday of Advent Year A*. <http://www.liturgycentre.org.nz/>

Decide who will say which lines.

Jesus said to his disciples ...

Be ready!

Whatever you are doing ...

Be ready!

You could be eating or drinking, just ...

Be ready!

You could be playing or working, just ...

Be ready!

You could be on the computer or Netflix, but ...

Be ready!

You never know what might happen, so ...

Be ready!

Be ready to help others. Are you ready?

We're ready!

Be ready to forgive. Are you ready?

We're ready!

Be ready to be kind. Are you ready?

We're ready!

Be ready to think about others. Are you ready?

We're ready!

Be ready to say you are sorry to those you hurt.

We're ready!

Are you ready?

We're ready!

Be ready to accept people. Are you ready?

We're ready!

Be ready for God's call ...

We're ready!

Story

Can you retell the story of Nehemiah? You can use the things you've made if that helps including the Lego city or Minecraft. Maybe read the story at the top of the sheet whilst you point out the parts of the story in your creation. You could tell the story whilst drawing it as a picture. At the end of the story, ask each other:

What do you admire about Nehemiah?

How did Nehemiah and Ezra work together?

How were the people ready to listen to God?

Can you think of people in your community or your life who remind you of this story?

What do walls mean to you?

Prayer - Act of Commitment

**All: Together, Lord,
we will build a home in a new world.**

One: With the bricks of tolerance

All: we build together a better world.

One: With the bricks of belonging

All: we build together a better world.

One: With the bricks of understanding

All: we build together a better world.

One: With the bricks of sharing

All: we build together a better world.

One: With the bricks of hope

All: we build together a better world.

One: With the bricks of community

All: we build together a better world.

One: With the bricks of love

All: we build together a better world.

One: Together, Lord, With your help, Lord,

**All: we build together a better world,
where everyone will have a home,
where we will be part of one another, part of you.**

Amen

(From the Housing Justice website)



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Can you think of anyone or anything that needs prayer?
You could check this week's notices on email if you get stuck. Share them with each other and then say together the Lord's Prayer:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now
and for ever.
Amen.



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