



Saint of the Month



Saint William of Eskilsoe

April 6

Goal: To provide a lesson for children about a saint or saints who exemplify a deep relationship with God and the ability to share it with others

Materials Needed: This lesson plan, accompanying story, and any necessary materials for follow up activities

Objectives:

1. To assist children in developing the understanding that all of God's people are called to a life of holiness
2. To help children respond appropriately to the question: What is a saint?
One who:
 - lives like Jesus
 - teaches others about Jesus by their example
 - is proclaimed by the Church, after their death, to have lived a life of holiness
3. To introduce one of our Church's saints, Saint William of Eskilsoe telling as much of the story that you feel will interest the children at your grade level
4. To learn that William was a saint because he lived in a way that respected the Gospel of Jesus
5. To learn that we are called by God to share the Gospel with our lives
6. To help the children develop listening skills

Procedure:

1. Prepare the children to listen to William of Eskilsoe's story. (Have map posted or globe available)
2. Read, or have read, the attached story of Saint William. Elaborate/abbreviate as necessary for time constraints or age level of listeners.
3. Use the follow up questions (below).
4. Present follow-up activity below (optional). Any follow-up activity can be substituted.

Saint William of Eskilsoe

Moving to a new place can be intimidating, even frightening. We leave our familiar surroundings and journey to a different location, meet new people, and eventually (we hope) find acceptance and friendship among those with whom we have settled. With all our modern conveniences of telephones and computers, it is even easy to stay in contact with those we left behind, not really totally giving up on our "old" way of life.

Now, put yourself in the place of St. William of Eskilsoe, a French monk who lived in the 12th and 13th centuries. William was born into a well-known Parisian family around 1105. He was gifted with a deep and thorough education and was deeply faithful to God, even as a child. After finishing school, William entered a monastery outside of Paris and was ordained a priest. His holiness and love for discipline was so well known—in a time when communication was difficult, at best—that he was asked to move to Denmark by his bishop to help restore order to several Danish monasteries that were not living according to their own rules. Because William was obedient, he became a missionary, even though he had never expected that his life would take him outside his own little, well-ordered world. He was sent to help his brother monks to proclaim the Good News to those around them in a more orthodox manner. He cut all ties with his former life, as missionaries today often do, and embraced the new society in which he was called to live.

A happy ending, right? Not so fast! William was not necessarily the most welcome character in his new community. His message of order, structure, and fidelity to the rules of the Catholic faith were often hard to hear and harder, still, to follow. Often enough, William found himself as the odd man out, proclaiming the Gospel to those around him that supposedly already believed! Not only did his new brothers not welcome him, he was shunned and made an outcast. One can only imagine how William must have longed for his old ordered life and the comfortable familiarity of his former community.

William obviously believed that God was calling him to a different life – he died in Denmark after spending 30 years there reforming the behavior of monks in religious houses.

His letters and correspondence have survived and given us a great insight into Danish history of that period. William also wrote a genealogy of the Danish monarchy that settled many disputes over territory and marriages.

How often does God throw us a “curve ball” in life? Maybe we are not asked to move physically to a new place as foreign missionaries are, but every day, God gives us the opportunity to “move” for him – to *Go* and be His missionary. Often enough, His plans for us are not the same as our plans for ourselves. It is up to us to respond in faith as St. William did: to follow God’s call with obedience and humility, no matter where it may lead us.

Every day God provides us with a clean slate to leave behind our old ways and embrace a new day of a faith filled existence. We need only to ask through daily prayer for the graces that only He can provide to move in new, exciting directions.

Pray: St. William of Eskilsoe, you modeled the life to which God called you to those around you, even when it was unpopular. Help us to always stand up for our faith and live in obedience to God. Intercede for us when we feel left out or alone, remembering that God is always at our side. Amen.

Follow-up Questions: (add, omit, re-word as appropriate for your grade level)

1. How would it feel to travel to a new place knowing that you probably didn’t speak the language? How much harder would it be to find that the people in that new place didn’t like you? What would you do?
2. How can we be aware of people who are trying to fit in to a new place or situation? How does the Gospel tell us to treat strangers in our midst?
3. Have you ever been the “odd person out”, knowing that you were doing the right thing while others around you broke the rules? What did you do?

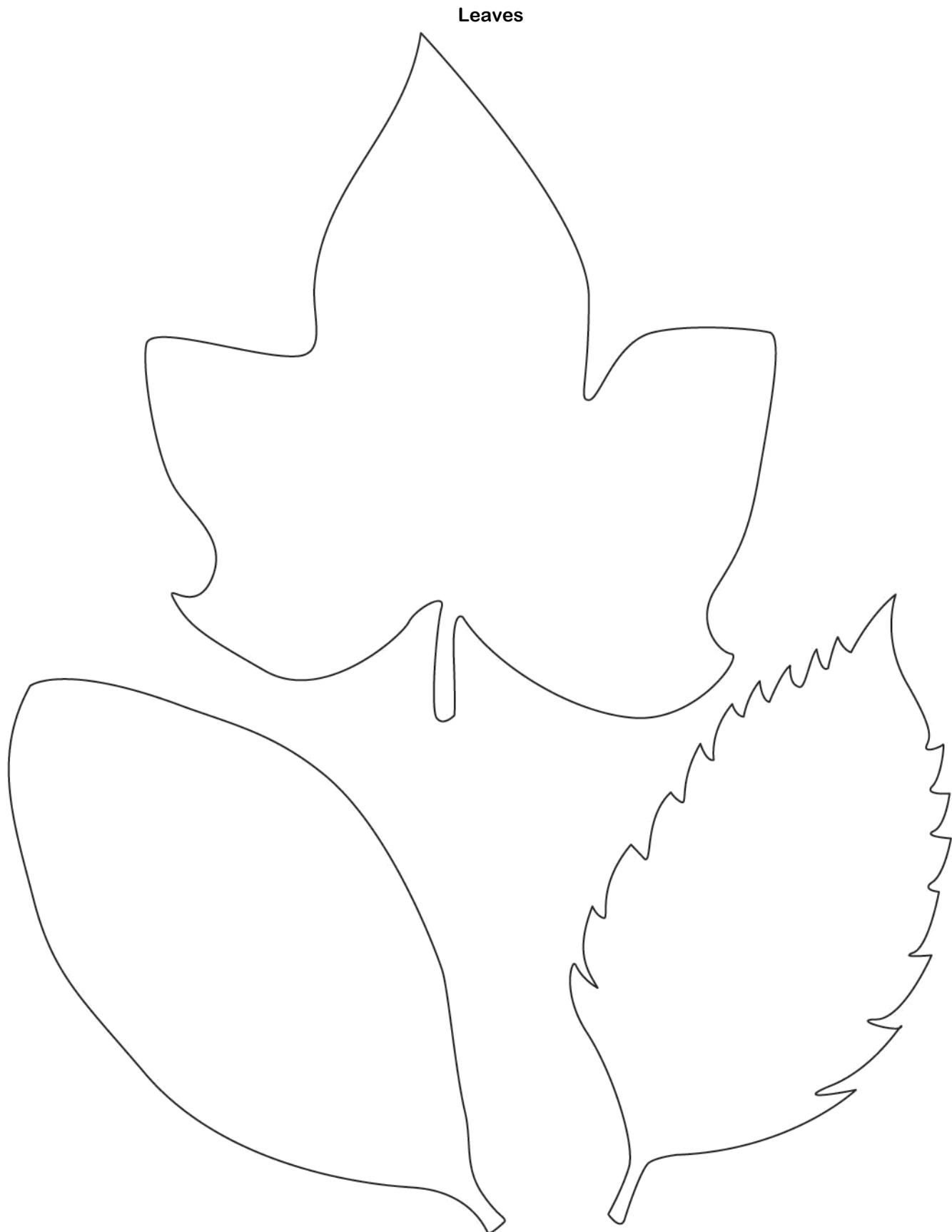
Follow-up Activities:

1. According to Google Map, Saint William traveled approximately 1250 miles from his monastery in Paris, France to his final resting place in Æbelholt, Denmark. During the month of April, challenge your family to collect 1250 pennies each (\$12.50) so that children in the missions will have a chance at a good education like you and Saint William of Eskilsoe. Send those funds, and whatever else you sacrifice this Lent for the missions to MCA at 66 Brooks Drive, Braintree, MA 02184.
2. Present a skit to your class on Zoom or to your family portraying William and a fellow traveler. Think about how they would travel and the length of time they would be on the journey. How would William explain what his vocation was, where he was going, and why he was going there? Discuss the idea of William’s bravery to face uncertain situations with God at his side.
3. Celebrate the month of April and the feast of Saint William by pledging to “grow” a spirit of welcome and acceptance in your home. Using the attached templates, design your own family tree. Invite each family member to write their own words of welcome, friendship, and acceptance on their leaf. Assemble the tree and post it on a much-used door so that the family can stroll through your “William’s Woods of Welcome”.

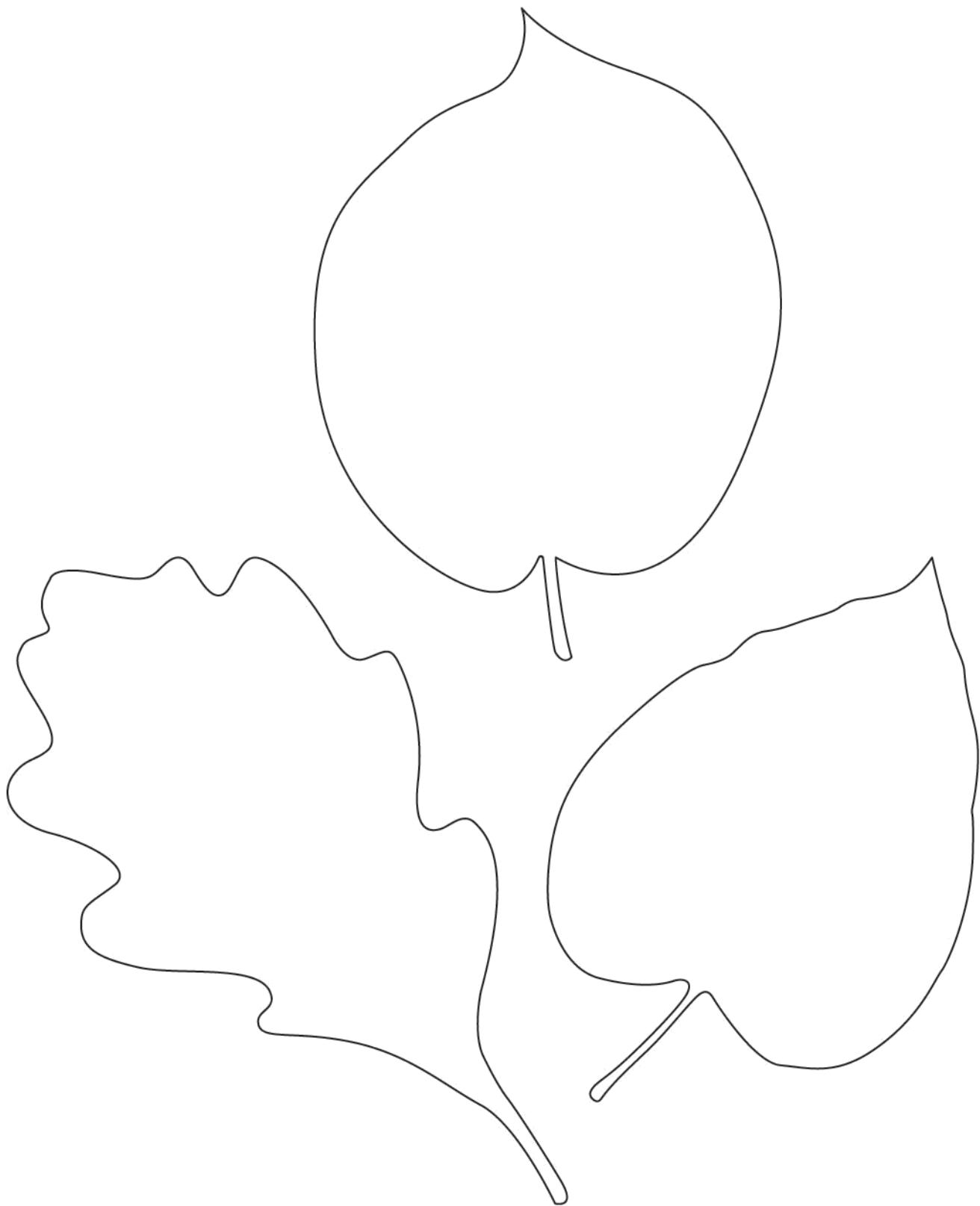
April, 2020

Missionary Childhood presents

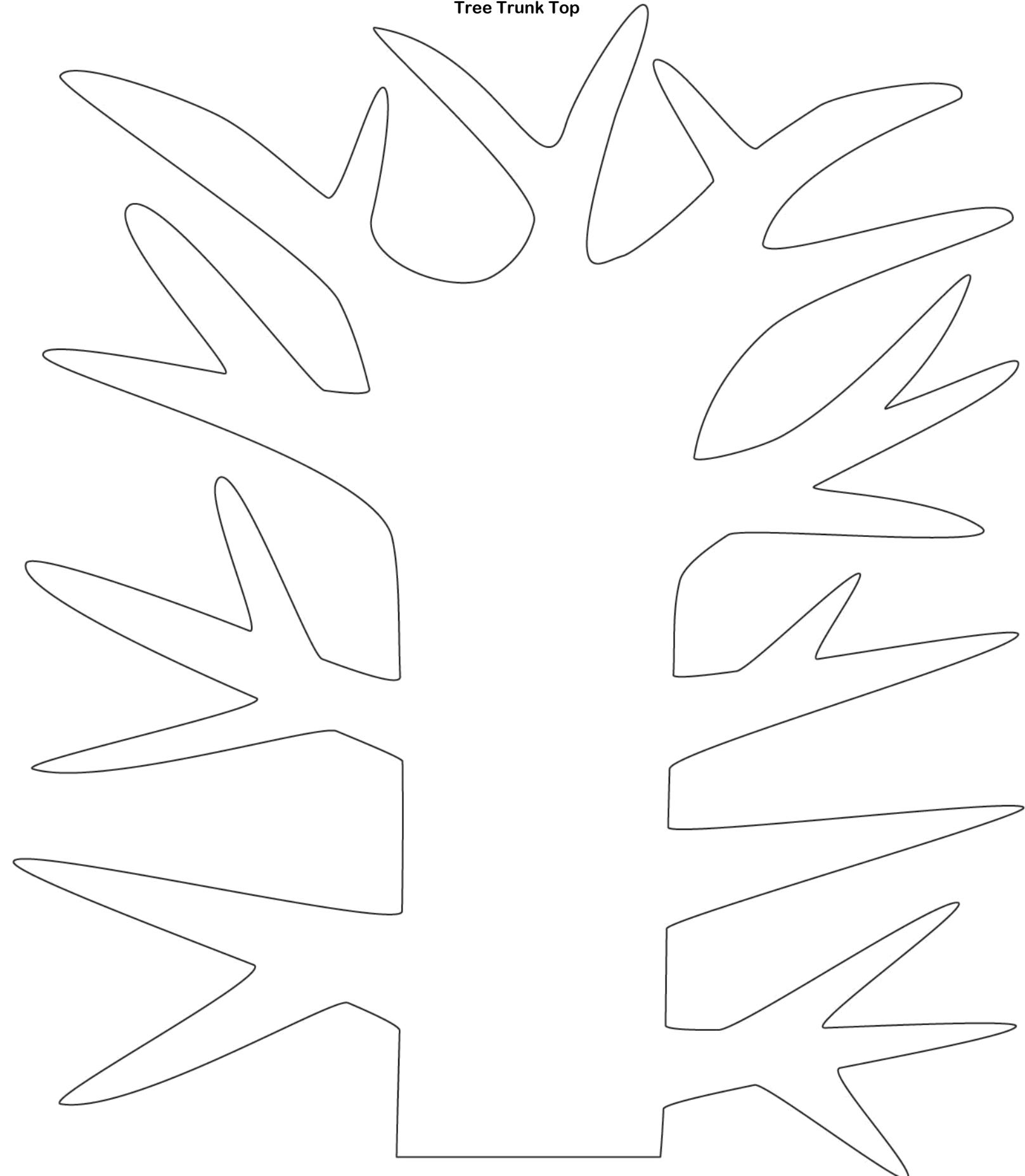
“William’s Woods of Welcome” Templates



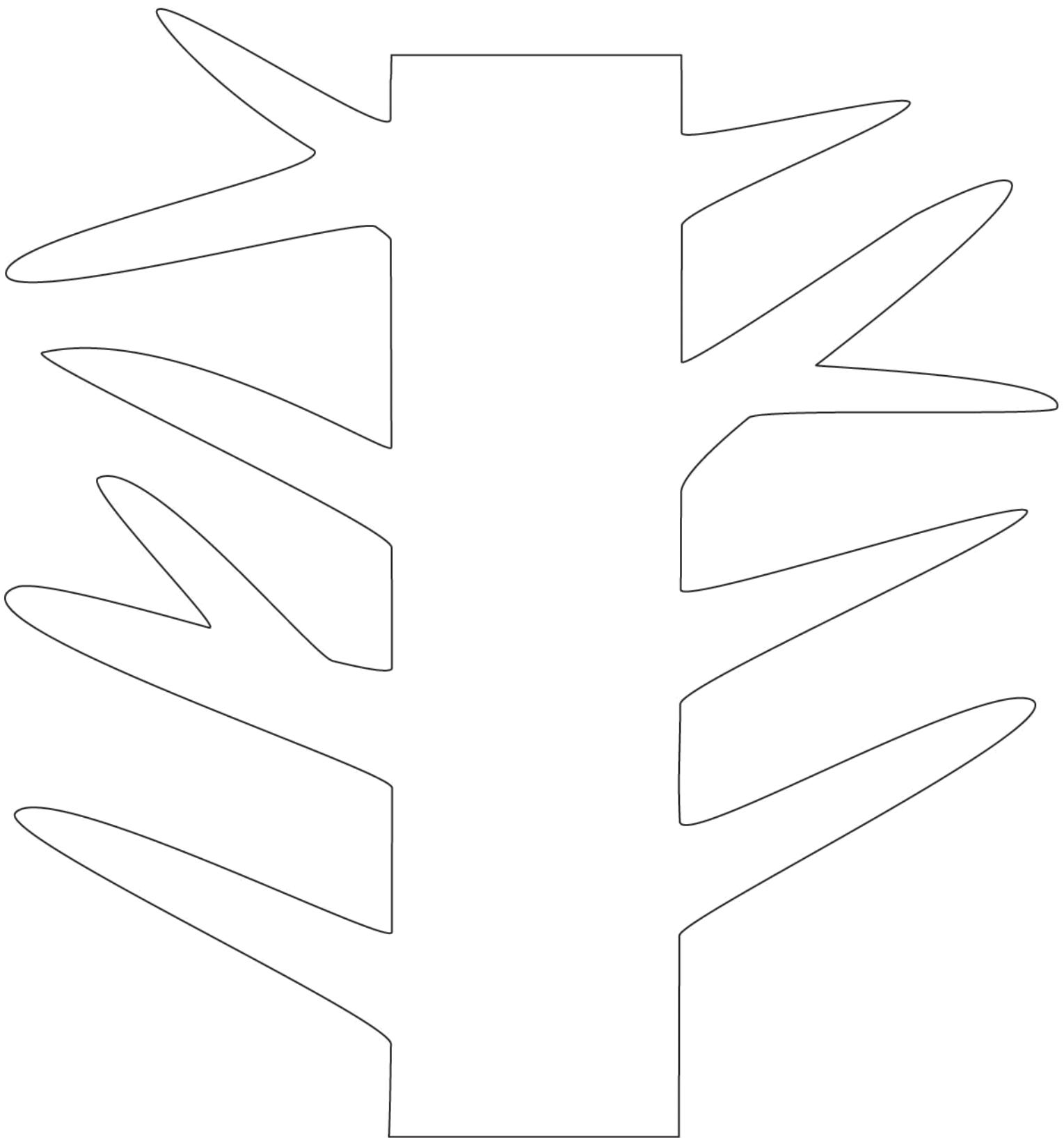
Leaves



Tree Trunk Top



Tree Trunk Middle



Tree Trunk Bottom

