

**Isa. 11:1–10**

**Ps. 72:1–7, 18–19**

**Rom. 15:4–13**

**Matt. 3:1–12**

# God's Peacemakers

## Goal for the Session

Children will hear Isaiah's words about a day when God's peace will fill creation and be invited to help create that world.

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on Isaiah 11:1–10

#### WHAT is important to know?

—From "Exegetical Perspective" by Bruce C. Birch

The vision of harmony in verses 6–10 is often referred to as the vision of "the peaceable kingdom." The image is of a return to Eden when God's reign is finally consummated. When the anointed one described in earlier verses ushers it in, broken creation becomes the completely harmonious creation God intended. The earth will now be filled with the "knowledge of the LORD" (v. 9). This Hebrew term for knowledge is more than cognitive information; it is the full entering into and experiencing of what is known. So the earth will be infused with the reality of God, and it shall be as comprehensive as the waters of the sea (v. 9).

#### WHERE is God in these words?

—From "Theological Perspective" by Noel Leo Erskine

The church is not the kingdom of God, but its relationship to the kingdom signals its mission. The realm of God shines through the witness and mission of the church as the poor have good news preached to them and are judged with righteousness and equity. The Messiah awaits the church in a future of righteousness marked off by the gifts of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of God, beckoning the church to a new future not of its own making but one made possible by YHWH. The challenge is not to be stuck in the traditions of the past but to be open to the new realm in which the proud will be punished, the humble will be exalted, and the practice of justice will be the order of a new day.

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

—From "Pastoral Perspective" by Stacey Simpson Duke

This is how hope gets its start—it emerges as a tiny tendril in an unexpected place. Where are the stumps in our own lives; where do we feel cut off? Can we imagine or believe that even now God might be nurturing the growth of something new and good from our old, dead dreams? Consider what areas of our lives most need the promise of new life, and how we might become open to such newness. Isaiah's promise is not just a future one; even now there are tiny signs of hope and life in places that look dead and discarded.

#### NOW WHAT is God's word calling us to do?

—From "Homiletical Perspective" by Paul Simpson Duke

What of the "little child" who leads them? Shall Christians think of Jesus again? We should not make this move too quickly. Like the calf, lamb, kid, and ox, the child stands for the vulnerable, and is joined by others even younger and more vulnerable, happily playing in a safe world at last. Why is it the child who leads the whole bleating, mooing, yipping, snuffling, roaring, giggling company? The new creation wants a human presence—new, bright, undefended, and free—to love and care for it all.

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

*Isaiah 11:1–10*

## Focus on Your Teaching

We long for the impossible: for our children to live without fear. The biblical prophets of old, including Isaiah, spoke God's word into the human longings and warring realities of their world. Today's imaginative Scripture seems almost like a child's illustration. In children's fantasies, lions aren't necessarily carnivores and impossible friendships are always possible. This is the world God imagines, a world in which children, like the ones you teach, shall lead everyone in the way of peace.

*God of impossibilities, thank you for creating a world beyond my comprehension. Hold me close to your promise of a peaceful day, and hear my prayer as I long for the day when the Prince of Peace will arrive anew. Amen.*

### YOU WILL NEED

- blue or purple cloth
- artificial evergreen wreath
- 4 battery-powered votive candles
- matches or lighter
- Bible
- Color Pack 1, 2, 3, 31
- scissors
- tape
- wooden craft sticks
- Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*; CD player

### For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 1, 2 puppets (any kind)
- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2 on card stock, scissors, paper bag, drawing paper, crayons or markers
- option 3: Color Pack 3, drawing paper, crayons or markers

## LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, arrange the blue or purple cloth in the center of your learning space, using the color your church used in worship during Advent. Place the wreath and four candles on the cloth, along with Color Pack 1. Cut the figures from Color Pack 2 and create stick puppets by taping each one to a craft stick. If you are using option 2 in Responding, make copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Peace Puzzles) on card stock and cut out the puzzle pieces, so that each child will have one piece.

Welcome learners as they arrive and invite them to gather around the Advent wreath. Explain that today is the Second Sunday of Advent. Recall that Advent is the season when we get ready to celebrate Jesus' birthday, and that there is one candle for each Sunday of Advent. When all four candles are lighted, Christmas Day will be near.

Show Color Pack 31 and read aloud stanza 2, asking the children to repeat each line after you. Sing the first two stanzas of "Four Candles" (track 8 on *Singing the Feast, 2022–2023*) as you light two candles. Read together the Advent chant on Color Pack 1, pointing to the words as you do.

Sit in a circle. Give each child an animal stick puppet made from Color Pack 2. Invite learners to name the animals they are holding. Ask the child holding the lamb to look at the other puppets and name an animal the lamb might be afraid of and an animal it might be friends with. Repeat until each child has had a turn. Accept all answers. Ask:

✪ Can you imagine a world in which all kinds of animals would live together peacefully? Why or why not?

Learners who enjoy reading aloud may want to take turns as "Leader" for the Advent Chant.

#### Four Candles

Light one candle, Messiah is coming; wait and watch, for his Advent is near.

He will meet us on God's holy mountain; how shall we prepare for his coming?

One. One candle to light the darkness. One. One candle to light his way.

Light two candles, Messiah is coming; wait and watch for his Advent is near.

He will come from the family of Jesse; how shall we prepare for his coming?

Two. Two candles to light the darkness. Two. Two candles to light his way.



**EASY  
PREP**

If you don't have ready-made puppets, draw faces with washable marker on your hands, small paper bags, or socks. Almost anything can become a puppet!

## EXPLORING

Open the Bible to Isaiah. Say: The Bible tells about a man named Isaiah who lived thousands of years ago. God told Isaiah to deliver a message to the people. God told Isaiah to help people imagine God's world of peace. Read aloud the following verses from Isaiah 11 (Common English Bible), pausing as needed so children can use their puppets to act out the words:



<sup>6</sup>The wolf will live with the lamb,  
and the leopard will lie down with the young goat;  
the calf and the young lion will feed together,  
and a little child will lead them.

<sup>7</sup>The cow and the bear will graze.  
Their young will lie down together,  
and a lion will eat straw like an ox.

<sup>8</sup>A nursing child will play over the snake's hole;  
toddlers will reach right over the serpent's den.

<sup>9</sup>They won't harm or destroy anywhere on my holy mountain.  
The earth will surely be filled with the knowledge of the Lord,  
just as the water covers the sea.

Show Color Pack 3 and read the verse in unison. Ask:

-  What amazes you most about God's world of peace? What would you like best about it?
-  Who will lead the way into this world of peace? (A child.) Why do you think this is the job for a child?

## RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Peace Table** By practicing the "peace table" conflict resolution technique, children can learn how to be participants in bringing God's vision of a peaceful world to life. Introduce the two puppets and invite the learners to imagine a problem they might be having, such as calling each other names or not taking turns. Choose one of these problems and have the puppets demonstrate the peace table steps on Resource Sheet 1 (Peace Table). Ask the children to help choose a peace table (or area) for your classroom, and let them practice the peace table technique with other example problems. Afterward, invite the children to think of where else they could use a peace table. (With their families? With friends? At school?) Give each one a copy of the resource sheet to take home.

- All Things Are Possible** Using Isaiah's vision as a springboard, children will brainstorm how enemies can become friends. Place the puzzle pieces cut from Resource Sheet 2 (Peace Puzzles)—one piece per child—in a paper bag. (If there is an odd number of learners, add a piece for yourself.) Invite each child to draw one piece from the bag. Tell the children to find the person who has the piece to complete their puzzle and to sit next to that person. Explain that in God's world of peace, animals that aren't friends now will be friends. Have partners brainstorm ways that their pair of animals could help each other. Distribute drawing paper and markers or crayons, and ask pairs to draw pictures of their ideas. (Example: A lamb could give a wolf some of its wool to make a bed; a wolf could sing for the lamb.) When everyone is finished, have each pair show its pictures to the group. Wonder together if any of their ideas might help people get along with each other. Ask: How can God's dream of a world of peace come true for people? What can you do to help?
- A Child Shall Lead Them** Prayer is one way to seek God's vision and ask for God's help to bring it about. In this activity, children are invited to create a visual prayer. Ask: What are some big problems in our world today? (For example, family members fighting, hunger, poverty, sickness, war, pollution.) Distribute drawing paper and markers or crayons. Ask each child to make a picture that shows one of these problems. After all have finished, remind learners what Isaiah says about life on God's holy mountain—life in God's world of peace. Read in unison the verse on Color Pack 3. Tell learners to imagine they are inventors. What could they invent to fix the problems they illustrated? Allow a few moments for children to draw pictures of their inventions on the other sides of their papers. Gather the group for a time of picture prayer. Pray aloud:  
*God, we want to live on your holy mountain of peace where there is no hurting at all. (Hold up pictures of problems and keep a moment of silence.) Send your Spirit to help us work with you to bring this dream world to life. (Hold up pictures of inventions and keep a moment of silence.) Amen.*

## CLOSING

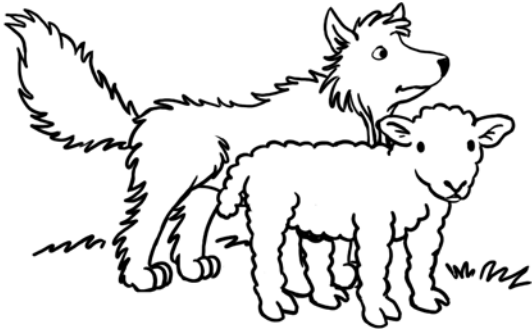
Gather with learners around the Advent wreath. Recall that the two lighted candles are for the Second Sunday of Advent. Invite them to repeat each line of the following chant:

*We count to two. / We wait to see / what God is sending / for you and for me.*

Pray aloud:

*Thank you, God, for your promise of peace. Help us to live in peaceful ways as we wait for Jesus' birthday. Amen.*

Say good-bye to each child by name, offering this blessing, "(Name), God bless you with great peace."



**The wolf will live with the lamb,  
and the leopard will lie down with the young  
goat; the calf and the young lion will feed  
together, and a little child will lead them.**

—Isaiah 11:6, CEB

God calls us to help make the world a peaceful place. When you have a problem with someone, try meeting at a peace table. This can work with friends, brothers, sisters, cousins, moms, and dads!

1. Choose a place to be your peace table. It might be a table in your home or chairs on your porch. Choose a comfortable and safe space.
2. When there is a problem between you and another person, say “We need a peace table!” (Ask someone else to help with the peace table, if you need it.)
3. Say a short prayer, asking God to send the Spirit to guide you in the ways of peace.
4. Take turns talking and listening. Use your words to say how you feel. Use your words to tell where you made a mistake. For example:  
    I felt mad when . . .  
    I made a mistake when . . .
5. Ask the other person to forgive you for your part in the problem. Tell the other person you forgive him or her.
6. Think of solutions to your problem or disagreement. Ask other people for help if you need it.
7. Take turns telling each other what you want to do next to make things better.
8. Thank the other person for being willing to talk at the peace table.

## Peace Puzzles

