



God Makes a Home

Goal: To show gratitude to God for the gracious gifts of creation.

RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

. . . In Genesis 2:4b–9, 15–23

Genesis 2 tells of a lush garden planted “in the east” (v. 8) that is watered from below, in striking contrast to the sparse rainfall of the region. The tree of life (v. 9) confers eternal life while the tree of the knowledge of good and evil confers wisdom. God put in the garden every tree that was both beautiful and could provide food for human beings.

God does not create people to be static; verse 15 says that the human being was put in the garden “to till it and keep it.” The Hebrew word usually translated “man” or “the man” is *adam*, a generic term meaning “human being.” This is also a play on words—*adamah* means “ground” or “soil,” the substance from which human beings are created. The differentiation of the sexes does not occur until verse 23. There the Hebrew words *ish* (man) and *ishah* (woman) are used to show how the two are connected by their very names, as well as by the bones from which they are formed. The story underlines the mutual dependency of men and women.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

God provides a home for human beings that includes everything pleasant both for food and in appearance. The children in your group may ask: “How did God do it?” Some children may be able to compare this to the kind of provisions their parents and caregivers make for them. Others, sadly, will not. Not every child will relate immediately to the image of a garden as a positive place of joy and peace. Be prepared to help them think about the kind of environment that is safe and welcoming for them. Older children, especially, can understand the value of unspoiled natural beauty. They may be eager to make a difference by caring for the environment and helping bring it back to the kind of world God intended.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

One of the aspects of the creation story is the birth of human beings—male and female. Be sure to affirm to children that we all are created in the image of God. Neither gender is more important in God’s eyes. We also are encouraged to be caretakers of the world. These are important messages in a world where nature is often exploited and women are sometimes treated in unfair ways.

Do not underestimate your importance as a role model for the children you teach. How they respond to the issues raised in this lesson may be influenced by the way they perceive you are responding. Do you appreciate the world God has created? Your excitement and enthusiasm for the graciousness of creation may arouse in your children an interest that could become a lifelong adventure for them.

*O God, I pray that the children and I will experience
the love and care that you intend for us. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 1, 14, 15

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

candle

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: small toy
animals, four boxes or
baskets, old magazines

choice 2: old magazines

choice 3: a variety of
fruits and vegetables
with peels of different
shapes and sizes, such
as apples, bananas,
oranges, carrots,
potatoes, and so forth

Exploring

choice 1: **SCM 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d**, paper fastener

choice 2: O-shaped
cereal

choice 3: water play
table (or large tub
of water), plastic
tablecloth or drop cloth,
water toys

choice 4: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

Some SCMs are used repeatedly throughout the quarter. It is a good idea to keep them in an envelope or folder for further use.

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

“Exploring God’s Grace” choices 1 and 2 require more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet children as they arrive and say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt them to respond, “And also with you.” Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time.

Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers. Be sure that they know who will be caring for their children. Explain to them that the children will hear a story about the creation of the world.

Invite the children to choose a guided play activity to start:

1. Matching—Place four boxes or baskets around the room.

Attach a magazine picture to each box that depicts sky, water, mountains, or grass. Each box will represent a different habitat. Have a few toy animals around the room. Invite the children to find the basket or box that shows the place where the toy animal might like to be and to put it there. Have conversations with the children about their choices. Option: Use animal pictures glued on index cards instead of toy animals.

2. Mural making—Provide a large sheet of paper or several sheets taped together. Have magazine pictures of flowers, trees, vegetables, fruits, other plants, leaves, and grass. Invite the children to glue the pictures on the paper to make it look like a garden. Save the mural for “Hearing the Story.”

3. Wondering—Have paper bags, each with one fruit or vegetable inside. Invite the children, without peeking, to handle the vegetables and guess what they are. Have conversations about how God made some plants for us to eat and the importance of them for our enjoyment and nutrition.

T Give the children a signal when it’s time for something new; sing a familiar song or repeat a phrase such as: “One, two, something new.” Expect this to be difficult for some, especially if they are new to your group. It may be helpful to give some children a specific task.



Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Thank You, Holy God”—SCM 15. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

We Are God’s Family

Say the action poem:

You and you and you and you (*point to those in circle*)
Are part of God’s big family. (*hug yourself*)
I stretch my arms to hold you all, (*stretch arms around each child on each side*)
A great big circle we will be.
God’s arms reach around the world (*stretch arms out wide*)
And hold each child in loving care. (*hug yourself*)
For God loves you and you and you (*point to those in circle*)
And all the children everywhere. (*stretch arms out wide*)

Play Guess Who

Sitting in a circle with the children, say, “Guess who has curly hair . . . likes to build with blocks . . . has two older brothers . . .” and so on. Invite the children to guess which child you are talking about. Use the game to emphasize each child’s uniqueness.

Hearing the Story

L

Hang the mural the children made in “Welcoming and Guided Play” on the wall. Admire the mural and highlight the pictures of the wonderful things God has made. Wonder what things the children see in the picture that they like.

Turn on the candle, saying, “God, your Word is our light.” Repeat the phrase, prompting the children to say “light” with you.

Open the Bible to Genesis 2 so the children know that the story comes from the Bible.

Read **SCM 1**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Read the story one more time, stopping at the paragraph that starts, “God created many different kinds of animals.” Wonder what sound an insect, or bird, or animal might make, or “What animal in the garden would you want to sound like?” Ask the children to make the sounds, and then continue with the story. If the children enjoy this, you might want to end by singing a familiar song that uses animal sounds, such as “Old MacDonald Had a Farm.”

Today’s story can be found in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.



Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wonder questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



Say that people like animals, but the best company for a person is another person. God made us to be friends with one another.

Turn off the candle.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE



1. Enjoying the Friends God Made

F B

*Before the session, prepare the game pieces and spinner on **SCM 1a**. Cut out the game pieces, spinner base, and arrow. Fold the game pieces in half so they stand up. Punch a hole in the arrow and use a paper fastener to attach it to the base. Glue **SCM 1c** and **1d** to construction paper. Cut the cards apart.*

Play a game to give thanks for God's creation. Use the game board on **SCM 1b** to play the game. Players take turns spinning the arrow and moving the number of spaces indicated. Allow time for all to take turns playing. Comment on how we enjoy doing things with friends that God has made. As each child reaches the finish space, invite the children to shout out, "Thank you, God!"

Some children may prefer to play a matching game about animals. Turn all the cards facedown and invite the children to take turns trying to match animal pairs. Whenever a match is made, invite the child making the match to say, "Thank you, God, for (animal)." You may choose to use fewer sets if it proves to be too much of a challenge.



2. Feeding the Birds

FA TD

Remind the children that it is fall and that winter is coming. It will be difficult for birds to find food when the weather turns colder. Explain to the children that one way we can help care for God's creation is to provide bird feeders.

Pour O-shaped toasted oat cereal on paper plates for the children to share. Invite the children to select several pipe cleaners. Show the children how to thread one piece of cereal on the pipe cleaner and curl the end to secure the "O." Have them continue threading the cereal until there is about 2" of pipe cleaner remaining. Help the children make a loop at that end. Encourage the children to make several strands.

The children may choose to form circles, hearts, or spirals with the strands. One option may be to string several of the feeders together to make a garland or chain. Help the children tie string or yarn to the feeders. Suggest that they take them home to hang from a tree, deck, or balcony.

Comment that God made people to take care of all the beautiful things that God made. Ask the children what they do to help take care of other people, animals, and plants. Wonder how God feels when we help take care of God's wonderful creation.



Water play is a very soothing activity for young children. Supervise them carefully and remind the children of a few simple rules, such as no splashing.

Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wonder questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

3. Playing with Water TD

Start a discussion about water and how we use it. Explain that God made water so everything could live. Wonder with the children how water helps us live.

- ▼ Place a plastic tablecloth or drop cloth on a low table or on the floor under the water play area.
- ▼ If you use a tub of water, set it on a low table.
- ▼ Put water toys near the water table or tub and invite the children to play with the items and the water.

4. Coloring Page FM

Hand out **GN 1** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “Why did God use Adam’s rib to create Eve?”
- ▼ I wonder, “Why did God create someone to be a helper with Adam?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How can we help God to care for the world?”

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as squeezing your hands or stretching.*

LOVING AND SERVING GOD FA LD

Call the children to snack time, singing “All Creation God Made”—**SCM 14**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Have each child put away one toy or object. Invite everyone to sit around a table or on the floor. Offer a prayer:

Dear God, we thank you for making us and giving us this beautiful world in which to live. Help us to love all people and to care for your creation. Amen.

Enjoy a snack. Take a moment to tell each child something positive about your time, such as: “Thank you for the good job you did by putting things away” or “I’m glad that you and (Name) had fun today.”

Invite the children to talk about ways they can care for God’s creation in their homes and in their schools. As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), the grace of God is with you.”

God Makes a Home



God creates Adam and Eve to care for God's creation.



God's Promise of Peace

Goal: To practice God's message of peace.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Micah 5:2-5

Bethlehem was the family home of the shepherd boy, David, who became the great king (1 Samuel 16:1). Now Micah promises God will send a new shepherd leader who will also come from Bethlehem and who will be a person who brings peace (Micah 5:5).

Israel had many enemies. The nation most deeply longed to live in peace (*shalom* in Hebrew). Leaders who pursued peace were those who carried out God's desire as they ruled on God's behalf (v. 2). The promised leader to come will "stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God" (v. 4; CEB). This means the people can "dwell secure" and live in the peace so deeply desired.

In Advent, we anticipate the coming peace brought by the One who was also born in Bethlehem, Jesus Christ (Matthew 2:5-6; John 7:42). This peace is the justice and righteousness—the right relationships—God desires for people. Jesus brings peace with God and for people with one another. Now we can live in the peace of Christ every day. In grace, God sent Jesus. In gratitude, we live in peace with God and others.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Peace is something we need a lot of these days. Children will be able to name places near and faraway that need peace. They can understand fighting among nations. They also have experiences in their own lives when peace is needed. They may need some help in understanding Micah's concept of peace, which is more than the absence of conflict. It also involves the way we live with others. Invite children to share those places where peace is needed today. This is a good way to help them hear the story about the prophet Micah whose promise of peace is one we remember during the season of Advent.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

What does peace look like? In some ways, that question is what this text and story are about. As you light the first candle of Advent, you can spend a few minutes talking with the children about peace. Ask them, "What does peace look like?" Children are usually very insightful and should be able to describe this abstract concept with some concrete examples. Another question to help them begin to move into the story of the prophecy of Micah is, "What are some ways you can be one of God's peacemakers?" Help the children know that God needs their skills and abilities in making peace as much or even more today than in the time of Micah.

*Holy God, I claim your peace for my life today and
for the children I teach. In Jesus' name. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 1, 18, 19

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blankets or mats

Advent wreath with five
battery-operated votive
candles

snack (optional)

Guided Play

choice 2: pillows,
children's books about
the birth of Jesus,
Christmas music

choice 3: child-friendly
Nativity set

Exploring

choice 1: copies of **Grace
Notes (GN) 1** and **GN 2**

choice 3: copies of **GN 3**,
8-ounce paper cups

choice 4: copies of **GN 4**

Book suggestions:

- *Growing in God's Love:
A Story Bible* by
Elizabeth F. Caldwell
and Carol A. Wehrheim,
www.pcusasstore.com.
- *Something Beautiful* by
Sharon Dennis Wyeth

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used throughout the
quarter. It is a good
idea to keep them in
an envelope or folder
for further use.

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Obtain an Advent wreath with five battery-operated votive candles. This is the first Sunday of Advent, and we celebrate peace.

Welcoming and Guided Play

F **A** **B** **M** **MS**

Greet the children as they arrive and say, “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt them to respond, “And also with you.” Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time.

Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers who you do not know personally. Explain to them that the children will hear a story from Micah's message to the people of God about a child who will be born and who will bring peace to the world.

Invite the children to choose a guided play activity to start:

1. **Blocks**—Invite the children to use blocks to build the little town of Bethlehem where Jesus was born. Invite them to include a stable or barn for Jesus.
2. **Story Corner**—Place pillows on the floor. Have children's books about the birth of Jesus available. Play quiet Christmas music. Invite the children to sit quietly, listen to music, or look at a book.
3. **Playing with a Nativity Set**—Invite children to play with the characters and animals of a nativity set.

T *Transitions can be difficult for children. Do not force reluctant children to join a group activity. Instead, allow them to observe quietly from their own play area or to listen to a story read to them by an adult helper until they are ready to join the group.*



Transitioning to Story Time

When the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Come into God’s Presence”—**SCM 18**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

If You’re Wearing . . .

L MS VI SD

Say or sing the following song to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.” Call the children to the circle with the song. Invite the children to respond when they hear a color they are wearing. Repeat with different colors until all the children have gathered.

If you’re wearing (*color*) today, (*color*) today, (*color*) today,
if you’re wearing (*color*) today, come and sit right here.

Tell the children that it is the season of Advent, a time for getting ready for Christmas. Chant the phrase “Let’s get ready, Jesus is coming.” Clap or use a rhythm instrument to keep the beat. Invite the children to chant with you. Repeat the chant several times, starting softly and becoming louder.

Place an Advent wreath on a table with four votive candles in the circle of the wreath and one in the center. Turn on the first candle. Tell the children that Advent is a time of preparing and waiting for the birthday of Jesus. The candle for today reminds us that Jesus gives us peace.

Where Is Micah?

L

Say or sing the following song to the tune of “Frère Jacques.” Invite the children to respond with the bolded lines.

Where is Micah? **Where is Micah?**
In the Bible! **In the Bible!**
Let us hear his story. **Let us hear his story.**
Tell us more! **Tell us more!**

T *Transitioning from an activity with movement to a quiet or listening one can be difficult for some children. Alerting them of the change in advance, such as saying, “After this we will listen to a story,” allows children time to anticipate the change and act accordingly.*



A listening prayer, used in "Hearing the Story," is an exercise in which you can help the children to notice that God is present with them, even when they don't realize it. Being silent can help them to quiet themselves and to open their hearts to receive the word of God.



Hearing the Story

L

Pray a listening prayer together by encouraging the children to sit comfortably and take a few slow, deep breaths to quiet themselves. They can close their eyes or focus on the lighted candle on the Advent wreath. After a time of quiet, invite everyone to say, "Come, Jesus." After a moment, say, "God is always with us. Amen."

Open the Bible to Micah 5 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about the prophet Micah, a messenger of God, and his message about a ruler who will be born in Bethlehem and bring peace to the world.

Read **SCM 1**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen." After you have read the story, invite the children to repeat after you with the following call and response.

The people were sad.

Boo-hoo!

The message was hope.

Woo-hoo!

Who will come?

A baby!

Where will he come?

Bethlehem.

What will he bring?

Peace.

Amen!

Amen!

Turn off the candle.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Bethlehem Book

C FM

Give the children copies of **GN 1** and **GN 2**. Have the children look at the pictures and tell you about them, if they are able. Explain what the pictures show: 1) the people of God are sad; 2) Micah, a messenger of God, has good news; 3) baby Jesus will be born in Bethlehem and he will bring peace to the world; and 4) the people of God are happy.

Invite the children to color the pictures. When they have finished coloring, help the children to cut apart the pictures and put them in sequence. Staple the pages together.

FM *To help children build fine motor skills, encourage enjoyment in activity participation instead of focusing on a "successful" outcome such as whether a coloring is in the lines or not.*



2. Bethlehem Song



Say or sing the following song to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.” Invite the children to join in with you and follow your actions.

(pretend to bounce on a donkey)

Mary rode a donkey, a donkey, a donkey.

Mary rode a donkey going to Bethlehem.

(walk in place)

Joseph walked beside her, beside her, beside her.

Joseph walked beside her going to Bethlehem.

(pretend to rock a baby)

Mary had a baby boy, a baby boy, a baby boy.

Mary had a baby boy right there in Bethlehem.

(cup a hand beside your mouth as if you are calling someone)

The baby's name was Jesus, was Jesus, was Jesus.

The baby's name was Jesus right there in Bethlehem.

(move your arms in a wide circle)

Jesus brought peace to the world, to the world, to the world.

Jesus brought peace to the world right there in Bethlehem.

3. A King Is Coming



Before the session, make a small cut in the bottom of an 8-ounce paper cup for each child.

Hand out a copy of **GN 3** to each child. Invite them to color the world and the baby Jesus. When the children have finished coloring, help them cut out both pieces.

Remind the children that Micah said a king would come who would bring peace to the world. The king is the baby Jesus. Tape their Jesus to a craft stick and set it aside.

Give each child a paper cup and invite them to tape their world around the cup. Help the children push their craft stick through the cut in the bottom of the cup with the baby Jesus inside the cup. Show the children how to push the baby Jesus up and say, “Micah said, ‘A king is coming who will bring peace to the world!’”



Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wonder questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.

4. Coloring Page

Hand out **GN 4** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of Micah telling about the king that will be born in Bethlehem. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions.

- ▼ I wonder, “Why don’t the people look happy?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What was the little town of Bethlehem like?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How does peace feel?”

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as moving arms in circles, jumping up and down, wiggling fingers, and so forth.*

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

FA

Call the children together, and listen to “He Came Down”—**SCM 19**. Focus on the stanza that says that he came down so that we might have peace. Sing that stanza and encourage the children to create a movement for the word *peace* and make it part of their singing. The movement can be free-form.

Remind the children that Micah had a message of hope for the people of God. He told them that a king would come and bring peace to the whole world.

If you would like to share a snack, now would be a good time. Pray:

God, we give our thanks:
for food that fills our bellies,
for time with friends and family,
for homes where we find love,
we give our thanks for these.
Amen.

As the children leave, invite them to find ways to get along with friends this week. Bless them: “(Name), God’s peace is with you.”



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God's Promise of Peace



Micah tells the people that God's peace will come from Bethlehem.



Who Is My Neighbor?

Goal: To practice being a good neighbor to others.

RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 10:25–37

The parable of the Good Samaritan is a familiar story in Scripture that engages us on many levels. Have we been like those who have “crossed over to the other side” (vv. 31–32, CEB)? Would we have stopped to help a person who was our enemy? Have we experienced someone who is our enemy helping us in a meaningful way? The questions abound.

Jesus told this parable in response to a lawyer’s question: “Who is my neighbor?” (v. 29, CEB). Jesus’ parable breaks outside the traditional view that a neighbor is only one who is near to us. Jesus expands the net to include even our enemies as our neighbors. The world and all its peoples are our neighbors. Our neighbor is anyone who is in need.

Jesus’ ministry demonstrated that way of living. He extended the grace of his love, reconciliation, forgiveness, and peace to all people—Jews and Gentiles alike. He calls us to do the same. We convey the love of God in Christ to all people, regardless of who they are or even what they may have done against us. The forgiving love we receive in Christ leads us, in gratitude, to serve all people.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

The beloved Mr. Rogers always asked children, “Won’t you be my neighbor?” Jesus knew that people needed to understand in a new way what it meant to be a good neighbor. He wanted them to realize that God’s love is very big and that we need to love and help others, anyone, no matter how different they are from us. When children have a chance to learn ways they can serve God by loving others who are different from themselves—with different colors of skin, ages, languages, and abilities—then they are able to live with God’s grace in this world.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Be aware of the differences represented in the children in your care and in your congregation as you prepare to lead this session. This familiar parable provides a great opportunity for children to share their own stories of relating to someone different from themselves, helping someone else, or being helped by someone. Those perspectives are important and will contribute to the children’s growth in confidence in their abilities to love God by serving their neighbors. A good way to end the session would be by inviting the children to respond, “I am a good neighbor when . . .”

God, thank you for the neighbors who have helped me. Help me recognize the neighbors near and far who may need my help. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 1, 18, 19

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: stuffed
animals, dolls, first aid
supplies

choice 3: helper props
or costumes

Exploring

choice 1: a washcloth for
each child

choice 4: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

Some SCMs are used throughout the quarter. It is a good idea to keep them in an envelope or folder for further use.

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the Children Arrive

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG** **T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

Select the activities that will work best for you and your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 1 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

LG **A** **B** **VI** **FM** **SD**

Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace and peace to you.” Prompt the children to respond with the same words.

Introduce yourself to parents and caregivers whom you do not know. Be sure they know who will be caring for their children. Explain to the parents and caregivers that their children will hear a story Jesus told about a man who helped another man in need, the story of the Good Samaritan.

Introduce the activities and invite children to participate.

1. **Caring for Others**—Gather several stuffed animals, dolls, and a variety of first aid supplies, such as bandages, cold packs, adhesive bandages, gauze, and so on. Suggest that the children pretend to care for the stuffed animals and dolls.
2. **Tracing Hands**—Invite children to choose their favorite color of construction paper and trace their hands on the paper with washable markers, write their names on their paper hands, and cut them out. Assist with writing and cutting as needed. As the children work, wonder how we use our hands to help others, such as opening a door for someone, comforting a sick brother or sister, and picking up litter. Put the hands aside for use later in the session.
3. **Helping**—Provide a variety of “helper” props or costumes—doctor, nurse, babysitter, church greeter, church musician, police officer, and firefighter. Encourage the children to try them on and pretend to be that kind of helper. Ask them about how to help other people.

T *Transitions can be difficult for children. Do not force reluctant children to join a group activity. Instead, allow them to observe quietly from their own play area or to listen to a story read to them by an adult helper until they are ready to join the group.*



Transitioning to Story Time



When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing the first stanza of “Jesus Loves Me”—**SCM 18**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

Helper Song

Using the tune “If You’re Happy and You Know It,” teach the children the following song:

If you’re a helper and you know it,
nod your head. (*nod, nod*)
If you’re a helper and you know it,
nod your head. (*nod, nod*)
If you’re a helper and you know it,
what you do will surely show it.
If you’re a helper and you know it,
nod your head. (*nod, nod*)

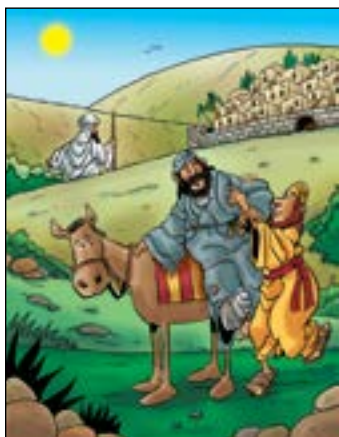
Helping God

Invite the children to follow your motions as you say the poem.

One little mouth to speak, (*point to mouth*)
one little nose, two little cheeks. (*point to nose and cheeks*)
Two little eyes to see, (*point to eyes*)
all my ten little toes. (*point to toes and wiggle toes*)

One, two, three, four, five, (*hold up fingers one at a time on right hand*)
six, seven, eight, nine, ten. (*hold up fingers one at a time on the left hand*)
Ten fingers and two hands, (*hold up both hands and clap*)
we can help God! Yes, we can! (*raise hands in the air and wave them*)

M Children requiring more movement than others can benefit from dynamic activities. Set clear expectations about boundaries for appropriate movement to position these children for success.



Today's story can be found in *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), pcusastore.com and *Who is my Neighbor?* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.



Hearing the Story

M C

Open the Bible to Luke 10 and point out that the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that the story they will hear is a story that Jesus told. Tell them the story is often called "The Good Samaritan," and ask them to listen carefully to find out why it is called that.

Read **SCM 1**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen."

After reading the story, wonder with the children what the word *neighbor* means. Ask if they know any neighbors. Mention that when Jesus told his story about the good Samaritan, he said that the Samaritan was the neighbor of the man who was hurt. Wonder how that can be. Point out that the two men didn't know each other and didn't live near each other. Wonder what makes a neighbor.

Read the story again asking the children to listen for the word *neighbor*. Tell them that each time they hear the word, they should give a "high five" to a neighbor.

Wonder with the children what the man who was hurt said to the Samaritan. Wonder what the man said to God.

Invite the children to name people they want to thank God for. Remember the names or write them down. Then say a prayer thanking God for those people.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Making Boo-Boo Bunnies

LG L TD FM

Explain to the children that sometimes when you bump your head, knee, elbow, or other part of your body, putting something cold on it can help you feel better. Tell them that they will make a boo-boo bunny to use as a small ice pack. Use the following instructions:

- ✎ Hand each child a washcloth and have them fold the cloth in half diagonally.
- ✎ Place the cloth on the table with the fold near them and the corner on top.
- ✎ Roll the cloth as tight as possible, starting at the top corner rolling toward the bottom fold.
- ✎ Fold the cloth in half with both points meeting.
- ✎ Fold in half again, with the center fold meeting under the corners.
- ✎ Place a rubber band about 1" in around the new fold.
- ✎ Fluff the ears up.
- ✎ Using a permanent marker, draw circles for eyes, and draw a small triangle for a nose.
- ✎ Tie a ribbon around the rubber band.





Wonder how they can use their boo-boo bunnies to help someone who is hurt.

Explain that the boo-boo bunnies can be kept in the freezer so they are ready to use when someone needs help. Just put a fresh ice cube into the bunny's tummy. Remind the children to watch for ways that they can be good neighbors to others.

2. Helping Hands Banner

LG A C L FM

Using the hands from "Guided Play," make a banner. Using a marker, write a title in the center of a strip of mural paper, such as "Being a Good Neighbor" or "God's Helping Hands." Invite the children to glue their hands around the title to decorate the banner. If a child did not make a pair of hands during "Guided Play," encourage them to do so now.

As the children work, invite them to name ways they can be God's helper by being a good neighbor with their hands. Write their ideas on the hands or the banner. Tell the children that the banner will remind us to use our hands and work together to be helpers of God every day. Hang the banner in a place where the children and others will see it.

3. Play and Sing Good Neighbor

LG MS

Help children think of ways to care for others as Jesus said to do.

Invite two children to make an arch by facing each other, holding each other's hands, with their arms at an angle in front of them. Others walk underneath their arch in a line. Sing the song below.

When the children who are making the arch hear "neighbor," they lower their arms and catch the person going under. The caught person can name one way to be a good neighbor and then switch with one of the children who was making the arch.

Sing the song to the tune of "London Bridge Is Falling Down."

Jesus said that
we should be, we should be, we should be;
Jesus said that we should be
a good neighbor.

Jesus said that
we should care, we should care, we should care;
Jesus said that we should care
for our neighbors.



Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wonder questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.

4. Color Page

C FM

Hand out copies of **GN 1** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color using the following wondering questions.

- ▼ I wonder, “What were the people thinking who passed the hurt man by?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What did the hurt man think when a Samaritan came to help?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What did the man who asked Jesus the question think about Jesus’ story?”

T *The session plans for Growing in Grace & Gratitude follow a common flow. This helps in planning an effective schedule with transitions to decrease the number of behavior issues.*

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

T FA

Encourage each child to put away one toy or object. Invite the children to sit around a table or on the floor.

Sing the first stanza of “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me”—**SCM 19**—together while you serve the snack. Remind the children that Jesus said, “Go and do the same.” Wonder together ways to be good neighbors this week.

Say a litany and ask the children to respond with “Thank you, God”:

Thank you, God, for Jesus.

Thank you, God.

Thank you, God, for helping us know God’s ways.

Thank you, God.

Thank you, God, for calling us to love you.

Thank you, God.

Help us to share your love with others.

Thank you, God.

Amen.

As the children leave, bless each one: “(Name), show your love for Jesus and for others through your actions. The grace of God is with you.”



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

Who Is My Neighbor?



The Samaritan was a good neighbor.

