



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, 9, 14, 21

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

green blanket

thread or fishing line

candle

rhythm instruments
(optional)

blindfold

Responding

Praying

ball or stuffed animal

Extra

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

small items for bingo
markers

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on 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.

Welcoming and Preparing

Play “Dance and Sing” as children arrive. Welcome each child with “Grace and peace be with you, (*Name*).” Prompt the children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite the children to make a garden scene in your space. The following ideas may be helpful:

- ✦ Place a green blanket on the floor.
- ✦ Make a sun from yellow construction paper and clouds from white paper. Hang them from the ceiling with thread or fishing line or tape them to a wall.
- ✦ Cut out leaf-shaped name tags from green construction paper. Make a name tag for each person, including the leaders.
- ✦ Gather objects from outside, such as sticks, leaves, rocks, and so forth (nonliving items), enough for each child to have one.
- ✦ Create a worship space in the center of the garden with a candle and a Bible.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Singing



Play, listen, clap, and dance to “Dance and Sing”—**SCM 21**. If you have rhythm instruments, have the children play with the song.

Praying

Invite the children to sit in the garden they have made. Have children say their names and share one highlight from their summer. Ask the children to print their names on leaf-shaped name tags. Ask the children to wear the name tags. Make sure the leaders wear name tags too.

Turn on the candle as a reminder of God’s presence. Invite the children to share one glad thing (a happy moment) and one sad thing (something of concern or worry) from their week. Prompt the children to respond accordingly to each thing shared with “Praise God!” or “Hear our prayer, gracious God.” Affirm each child’s response and respect those who do not wish to share.

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



- C** Give children time to respond and to share; for some children, listening and speaking may take longer.

Preparing to Hear the Story

C L

Play a name game. Begin by saying, “God made me, and I am (Name).” Then invite the child on your left to say, “Thank you, God, for (Name—saying the name just spoken). God made me, and I am (Name).” Continue around the circle until all the children have added their names.

Explain that today’s story comes almost at the beginning of the Bible and that it takes place as God is creating the earth. Note that in the story, a person names everything in the world. Wonder aloud what names the children might have chosen for what we call a monkey, a palm tree, a ladybug, a waterfall, and a daffodil.



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.

Hearing the Story

L

Invite one of the children to find Genesis 2 and place the open Bible on the worship space.

Encourage the children to listen to what is created by God in the story. Read **SCM 1**. Use your voice, your expressions, and feelings to make the story more lively. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood.

Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Provide crayons or markers and construction paper. Reread the story, or use the story audio. Invite the children to draw a favorite flower, tree, or item from nature as the story is read. Ask the children to share their pictures, if they would like to do so.

Reflecting on God’s Grace

C MS

Ask a child to draw a face on a paper plate. Place a loop of masking tape on the back of the plate. Draw a person on mural paper, not including a head, and hang the figure on a wall at a child’s height.

Invite the children to finish creating a person by adding the head on the figure using the paper plate. Blindfold one child and spin him or her around once or twice. Give the paper-plate face to the child and point the child toward the figure. After the child attaches the head, take off the blindfold to view the creation.

Wonder how the children would feel if they were the only person in the world. Wonder who else they would want God to create? Invite the children to draw pictures of the people they would want God to create on the mural. Consider providing paper plates for the heads of the people they added.



Singing

Play, listen to, or sing “All Creation God Made”—**SCM 14**—and celebrate how God’s creation is a gracious gift to all people. Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God’s Grace

M SD

As a way to name things in creation and give thanks to God, play a variation of “Duck, Duck, Goose.” Invite everyone to sit on the floor in a large circle.

- ▼ Tell the children to take turns naming a part of creation, with the phrasing, “I am a cat,” “I am a waterfall,” “I am a planet,” and so forth as a person walks around the outside of the circle.
- ▼ Ask one person to walk around the outside of the circle, saying, “Thanks,” while tapping a child’s head after he or she has named a part of creation.
- ▼ Or the child may tap a head and say, “Thank you, God!” Then both children race around the circle to reach the open space. The person who sits in the empty spot first names a way we can thank God for creation.
- ▼ Play until everyone has been tapped with “Thank you, God!”

Celebrating God’s Grace

LG A

Explain that God did not stop creating after the first two people. God even created the children in your group! Ask such questions as:

- ▼ Why do you think God created more people?
- ▼ Some of the people God created are your friends. How do you show your friends that you care for them?

Help the children thank God and celebrate God’s gracious creation by making puppets. Suggest that they can make a puppet of themselves, a family member, or a friend.

- ▼ Cut out the inside circle of a paper plate for the face.
- ▼ Draw faces on the paper circles.
- ▼ Add hair by attaching yarn.
- ▼ Tape the faces to craft sticks.

Children who finish early can use the puppets to tell the story of how God created the first person. Invite the children to play with the puppets, asking one another what they would name other items in creation, as you did earlier in the session, or how they would care for creation. Encourage children to take their puppets home to tell their families about God’s creation.



- A** *Adapt any activity to suit your children’s needs. Ask yourself, “How can I change this activity so this child can do it?”*

Praying God’s Grace

A M

Prompt prayers of thanksgiving to God with a game.

- ▼ While sitting in a circle, invite the children to pass a ball or a stuffed animal from one to another.
- ▼ Play “Dance and Sing” as the children pass the object to the rhythm of the song.
- ▼ Pause the music. The child holding the object names something God created, saying, “Thank you, God, for making . . .”
- ▼ Continue playing until everyone has had a turn.

Wonder together what the children would miss most if God had not created it. Close with a prayer of thanks to God for all creation.

- LG** *Focus on the children as gifted members of your community. Look for opportunities for them to express generosity.*

Extra Activity

L

*Before the session, cut apart a set of game pieces from **GN 2** and put them in an envelope.*

Play a game to reinforce God’s creation and our gratitude for it. Provide copies of **GN 1** and **GN 2**, crayons, scissors, and glue for the children. Allow time for the children to color the Creation Bingo pieces. Have each child cut apart their pieces and glue them as they choose in the spaces on the Creation Bingo board. Note: they will not use all of the pieces.

Describe for the children the patterns that make a Bingo—a traditional horizontal, vertical, and diagonal row and then other configurations such as postage stamp (four together in a corner) or four-corners. Announce one of the configurations for the children to fill. Pull one game piece from the envelope, describe it, and show it to the children. The children will cover their matches with small objects or paper squares. Have the children call “Thank you, God!” when they have a Bingo. Continue playing until everyone has a Bingo. Repeat playing the game with different configurations.



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).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

LG

Ask the children to help clean the space.

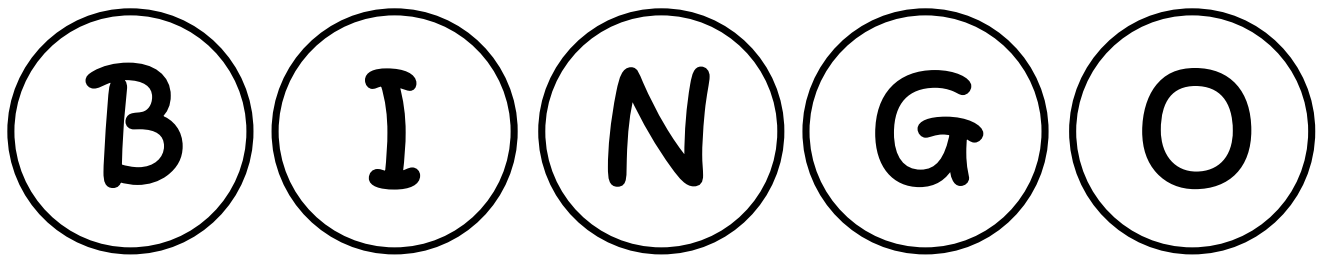
Encourage the children to think quietly about one thing they can do this week to care for the world around them. Invite them to share their ideas as they wish.

If the children gathered natural objects during “Welcoming and Preparing,” invite them to each choose one of the natural objects to take home as a small reminder of God’s creation.

Ask each child to name one thing for which he or she is thankful. After each person speaks, prompt the rest of the group to say, “Praise God!”

Send the children saying to each child, “(Name), take care of God’s creation.”

Remind the children about the free e-book and challenge them to share the story with someone during the week.







God's Promise of Peace

Goal: To commit to be God's peacemakers.

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, 17, 18

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

Christmas music

purple cloth

four Advent candles

Responding

Celebrating

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1, hair dryer
(optional)

Extra Activity

copies of GN 2

GATHERING IN GOD'S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on 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.

Welcoming and Preparing



Greet the children by name and with the words “The peace of Christ be with you.” Prompt children to respond with the same words.

This is the first week of Advent. Play Christmas music as the children arrive. Invite them to help you set up your space. Provide a Bible, purple cloth, and four Advent candles to set on the table. Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities and suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Gather in a circle and play a game about preparing for Christmas. Have the first person complete this sentence: “I’m getting ready for Christmas by . . .” Then have the next person say the sentence again, this time adding something that he or she is doing to get ready for Christmas. Encourage children to help one another remember the growing list of things people are doing to get ready for Christmas. Finish the game by saying, “No matter how we get ready, always remember that God keeps coming to us.”

Singing

Play and sing “Come into God’s Presence”—**SCM 17**.

Praying



Invite the children to gather around the Advent candles. Consider turning the lights out for the prayer. Turn on one candle. Remind the children that the candlelight is a reminder of God’s presence and gift of peace to the world. God shines light in the darkness through the saving grace and peace of Jesus Christ. Invite the children to join an echo prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the prayer today.

Holy God, /
you are good and great. /
You came to the world /
full of grace and truth. /
We look forward to when you will come again. /
Amen. /

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



SD *Some children may be uncomfortable in darkness. Help these children by altering activities to avoid the situation or providing them with a pocket-sized flashlight when lights are dimmed.*

Preparing to Hear the Story

VI

In past sessions, the children heard about Jeremiah and Amos, two prophets of God. Remind the group that prophets are God's messengers who spoke God's words to God's people. Tell them that today's story is about another prophet named Micah, and that Micah's story happened long before Jesus was born.

Show them where the book of Micah is in the Bible. If they have their own Bibles, help them find it there as well. Take advantage of this opportunity to review how to use the Bible's table of contents.



Hearing the Story

L

Hold up **SCM 1**. Invite the children to imagine themselves as someone in the crowd while they listen to the words of Micah.

Invite a child to find Micah 5 and place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 1** or use the story audio. If reading, use your voice, expressions, and feelings to make it engaging. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Explain to the children that when people are scared and feeling alone, it can be described as darkness. Suggest that the children listen to the story again with their hands over their eyes and uncover their eyes when they feel hope or light in the story. Read **SCM 1** again.

Reflecting on God's Grace

After reading **SCM 1**, encourage the children to explain when they felt hope and light in the story. Accept all answers.

Ask the children to share what kinds of things they wonder about in the Micah story. Here are some conversation starters:

- I wonder, "What kind of leader was Micah waiting for?"
- I wonder, "Would God's people have been surprised to hear that God's promised leader would come from Bethlehem? Why or why not?"
- I wonder, "How can Micah's words help us prepare for Christmas?"

Singing

Sing "He Came Down"—**SCM 18**. Invite the children to come up with movements for the key words: *hope*, *love*, *joy*, and *peace*. Use the movements as the children sing the song. Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God's Grace

C

Provide a variety of magazines. Allow time for children to find peaceful and non-peaceful scenes (*for instance, nature scenes, people chatting, children playing, as well as scenes of conflict or destruction*). Invite them to choose two pictures: one they think is particularly peaceful and one that is not peaceful. Ask:

- ▼ What makes the scene peaceful or not peaceful?
- ▼ What might break the peace in the situation shown on their picture or what might bring peace or healing to the scene?
- ▼ What can we do to bring about peace in our day-to-day lives?

Invite the children to brainstorm their ideas. Be sure to affirm that peacemaking is a process that involves many people and that no one person alone can bring about peace.

Celebrating God's Grace

L

Draw a peace sign for the children to see and tell them the origin of the peace sign.

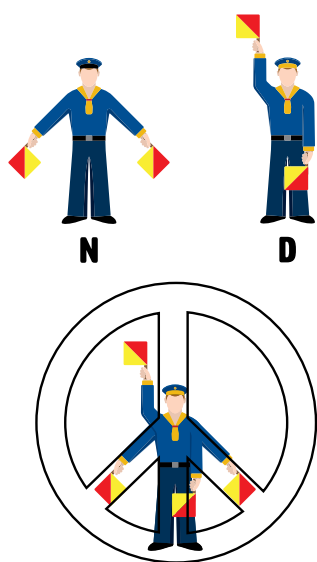
Over sixty years ago, a man created a symbol, a picture to represent his desire for world peace. He said that he used the pictures for the arm movements that sailors used for the letters N and D, for “nuclear disarmament” (getting rid of weapons of war). But he also thought of himself: a person standing with hands downward and outstretched in a gesture of sadness at the world's wars. His outstretched arms also remind us to reach out to one another, for peace is something we all must work for in our own lives, families, communities, and the world. The symbol became a sign for peace around the world.

Remind the children that Micah told the people that God had a plan for peace: Jesus. As followers of Jesus, we are part of God's plan for peace too. Invite the children to make peace signs to remember that each person is a part of God's peace plan.

Give each child a paper plate and tell them to make a peace sign with painter's tape on the front of their plate. Invite the children to paint their plates, covering the whole front of the plate. Set the plates aside to dry or use a hair dryer to speed up the process. Have the children remove the painter's tape to reveal their peace signs.

Have the children write their names on the left arm of their peace sign. Give them a strip from **GN 1** and have them glue it in the right arm of their peace sign.

Invite the children to read their peace signs together saying their names and “is a part of God's plan for peace!” Display the peace signs in a hallway or space in your church where they will be seen.





Praying God's Grace

M LD

Tell the children that they will take a walk around the church as a walking prayer for peace. Begin your walk around your church. After a few steps, pause and ask the children to thank God silently for being with them each step of the way.

Walk to the main entrance. Pause and ask the children to name one place they will go next week. Ask them to pray silently and ask God that they may be part of God's plan for peace in that place.

As you return, pause once or twice to pray for God to give the gift of peace to the other people you see. Back in your room, invite the children to tell how they might pray a walking prayer at home or in their neighborhood.

Extra Activity

LD

Provide copies of **GN 2** and colored pencils or markers. Prompt the children to color only the spaces with even numbers. Some children may need help knowing the even numbers. Consider writing them on a sheet of newsprint.

While the children work, explain that sometimes it takes a lot of effort to do what we are asked to do. This is not an easy puzzle. It will take a great deal of effort to find what is on the paper, but what you find will be worth working for.

Allow time to continue working. Ask the children to be quiet while working and to turn their papers over when they have discovered the hidden word. When all have finished, ask, "What is worth working for?" Invite the children to hold up their papers and answer, "peace."

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Invite the children to gather and lead them in cleaning the worship space.

Recalling the prayer walk in "Praying God's Grace," say a prayer for peace. Offer an opportunity for each child to say a prayer for someone or something mentioned during the prayer walk. Use this format:

"God, bring peace to _____."
The group responds,
"Hear our prayer."

When all have had an opportunity to pray, conclude the prayer with the words, "God, thank you for your love and care."

Remind the children that, like Micah, they too can share God's peace with family and friends.



Ages 5–7

God's Promise of Peace

Year 1, Winter 1



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).

End the session with each child becoming a messenger of good news. Have the children point their hands and fingers in different directions and say, “Peace be with you and you and you!” As they say this, encourage them to point in many different directions to include the whole group in their departing message of peace.

Encourage the children to go out into the world and share the message with others.

is part of God's plan for peace.	is part of God's plan for peace.
is part of God's plan for peace.	is part of God's plan for peace.
is part of God's plan for peace.	is part of God's plan for peace.
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Who Is My Neighbor?

Goal: To explore what it means to be a good neighbor.

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, 21, 27

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

purple cloth

six votive candles
(purple if possible)

Who Is My Neighbor?
by Amy-Jill Levine and
Sandy Eisenberg Sasso,
pcusastore.com

crayons in a variety of
blues and yellows

Responding

Claiming

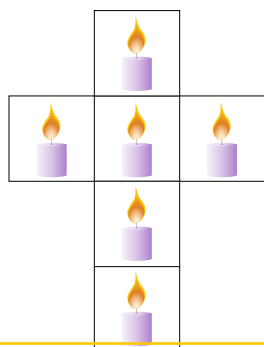
Grace Notes (GN) 1

Offering

copies of GN 2

Extra

copies of GN 3



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, post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on 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.

Obtain a copy of *Who Is My Neighbor?* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), www.pcusastore.com.

Welcoming and Preparing

B M L T

Play “You Are My Own Dear Son” as children arrive. Greet each child by name and with the words “Grace be with you, (Name).” Prompt the children to say the same words to you.

Comment that today marks the first Sunday in Lent. Ask if anyone knows what the word Lent means. Explain that it comes from an old word that means to “lengthen” referring to the lengthening of the days, or springtime. In the church, we observe Lent as a season of preparing for Easter and the promise of new life.

Invite the children to prepare the space for Lenten worship. Ask the children to include a Bible and a purple cloth, the color for Lent. Have them place six votive candles in the shape of a cross in the space. See the sidebar for placement of the candles.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

Singing

Invite the children to gather around the worship table. Admire their efforts to work together.

Explain that during Lent, we hear about stories that Jesus told to his friends and to the people that gathered to hear him. Ask, “How can we listen to Jesus?” Suggest that we too, can listen to Jesus through the stories he tells that have been written in the Bible. Sing “You Are My Own Dear Son”—**SCM 21**.

A Long transition times can cause children act out. Giving children something that they enjoy doing provides a way to deal with these times.

Praying

M L T C

Turn on all the votive candles. Invite the children to repeat after you or ask a volunteer to lead the following echo prayer.

Dear God, /
we thank you for your light in the world: /
the light of day, /

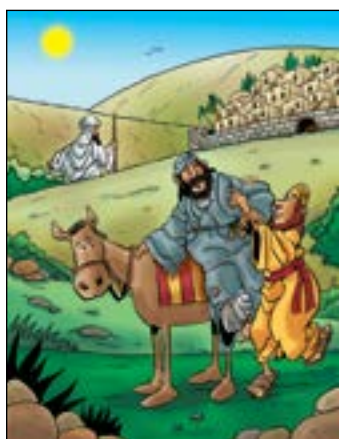


the light in our homes, /
the light of these candles. /
Be with us when there is darkness /
and help us bring your light to others. /
Amen. /

Point out the votive candles. Comment that today marks the first Sunday in Lent. Explain that there is a tradition to extinguish, or put out, a candle each week throughout the six Sundays of Lent. This is to remind us that even though Jesus was teaching and healing and serving people, some people were not happy with his actions. They wanted to put out the light that Jesus brought to the world. Have a volunteer turn off one of the candles.

Seeing where the story is found in the Bible reinforces the importance of this book for the church.

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.



Preparing to Hear the Story

Show the children the picture on **SCM 1**. Comment that last session God's words told us to listen to Jesus. Wonder together what words Jesus might have for us in this story.

Tell the children that they will hear a story that Jesus tells in response to a question from a lawyer or teacher of the Law. Explain that this person, a man in Biblical times, knew the Jewish laws, which were the Ten Commandments and all the laws that were added to them. He knows that the laws tell us to love our neighbor as ourselves, but he wants to know who is our neighbor.

Jesus tells a story about some travelers on a road. One of them is a Samaritan. Explain that a Samaritan would have been a surprising character because some people didn't like Samaritans. Invite them to listen to what the Samaritan does in the story.

Hearing the Story

D

Invite a child to find Luke 10 in the Bible and then place the open Bible on the worship table. Read **SCM 1** or use the story audio. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Tell the children you are going to read an imaginative retelling of the Bible story using blue and yellow figures to depict the different characters in the story. Encourage them to listen for how the blue and yellow figures feel about the colors that are like them and the colors that are different from them at the beginning and then the end of the story.

Read *Who Is My Neighbor?* by Amy-Jill Levine and Sandy Eisenberg Sasso. After reading, hand out paper and crayons in a variety of blues and yellows. Invite the children to fold the paper in half. On the left side of the paper, have them use the crayons to show how the figures felt about each other at the beginning of the story. On the right side



of the paper, have them use the crayons to show how the figures felt about each other at the end of the story. Invite anyone who would like to share their pictures to do so.

Reflecting on God's Grace



Reflect on God's grace together. Ask the children where they saw God's grace, something that happened that was a gift or undeserved, in this story. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- ▼ What do you think Jesus wanted to teach the man who asked, "Who is my neighbor?"
- ▼ Comment that in this story Jesus wanted people to know the "greatest commandment"—to love God and to love neighbor. Who do you think acts this out in either story, the one about the hurt man and the Samaritan or the blue and yellow crayons?
- ▼ How is loving God and loving neighbor shown?
- ▼ How would you answer Jesus if he asked you about being a neighbor? How can you be a good neighbor, according to Jesus' story?

Singing

Listen to "God Loves You, and I Love You (Dios te ama y yo te amo)"—**SCM 27**—and practice the song. Encourage the children to sing the song in English and in Spanish.

Turn off the candles.

T *For children who struggle with transitions, this may be a good time for an adult helper to come close to one or more children to model and encourage appropriate responses.*

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and for the time available.

Claiming God's Grace



Help the children imagine how Jesus' words, "go and do the same," might guide their actions.

Form pairs of children. Give each pair a card from **GN 1**. Read scenes to the children as necessary. Invite them to act out a way to respond. After each group acts out their scene, ask the children who the neighbor was in the scene.

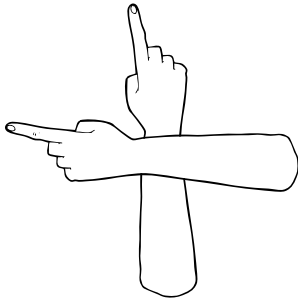
As a group, reflect on how each pair expressed love for God and love for neighbor, as well as other choices they might have made.



Praying God's Grace

M L

Draw a cross on newsprint, and point out how it can remind us of the two parts of what Jesus called the “greatest commandment,” to love God and love neighbor. Show how to cross arms at the wrists, with one hand pointing to a neighbor and the other one pointing to God. Invite children to hold this pose as you lead them in guided prayer. Instruct them to respond, “Hear our prayers,” when you prompt with the word, “Lord.”



Tell God how you can love God with all your heart this week.

(pause)

... with all your soul this week. (pause)

... with all your strength this week. (pause)

Lord, **hear our prayers.**

Think about who your neighbor is.

Ask God to help you show love to that person this week.

(pause)

Lord, **hear our prayers.**

Amen.

L *Children who struggle with attention may have difficulty following directions. Provide specific instructions and time for children to complete each step.*

Offering God's Grace

LG

Talk about ways the children can be like the Samaritan and help their neighbors by doing simple acts of kindness. Invite them to think about who and how they can help in the coming week. Distribute copies of **GN 2** and invite the children to color the icons. As a group, look at the ideas on **GN 2**. Invite the children to add an idea of their own in the blank space. Cut along the dotted lines to create tear-away strips. Invite the children to tear off one or two strips each day during the week and do the simple acts of kindness.

Extra Activity

Distribute copies of **GN 3** and crayons for children to share as they make drawings of their neighbors inside the frames. Talk together about who are our neighbors. Encourage the children to think beyond those who live next door.

Create a neighbor display in a gathering area of your church. Make extra copies of **GN 3** and invite others to add to the display.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD

B

Invite the children to gather and lead them in cleaning up the worship space.

Listen to and sing “God Loves You, and I Love You (Dios te ama y yo te amo)”—**SCM 27**—to celebrate that God’s love and grace are for all people. Encourage the children to clap their hands and move to the music.

Invite children to tell what they will remember about today’s story. Wonder what they will tell their families and friends about the Good Samaritan or the blue and yellow crayons. Ask them to look for ways they can be good Samaritans to their neighbors.

Pray the following prayer or one of your own choosing.

Dear God,
you call us to follow Jesus.
Help us to do as Jesus taught:
to love you with all our heart,
soul,
and strength.
Help us to love others as you have loved us,
especially those who need help
and whom we may not pay attention to.
In Jesus’ name, we pray.
Amen.

Send the children with a blessing, “(Name,) love God and love your neighbor. God’s love 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).



Your friends have come to your house, and your little brother wants to play with them too.



Grandpa wants to go with your family to the amusement park, but he isn't able to walk very well.



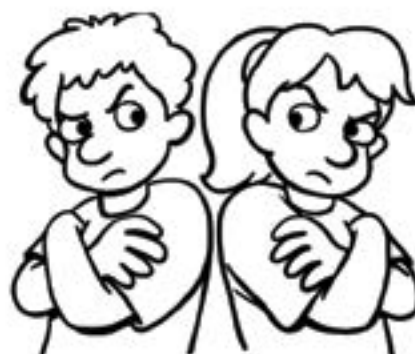
On the school field trip, you get paired up with a new kid who doesn't speak much English and has brought strange food for a snack.



Mom has had a terrible day at work and is too tired to cook. This is the third night this week.



Mrs. Bitterly is an elderly member of your church who lives on the other side of town. At church, she always looks like she is frowning, and you don't like how she smells. Your dad is going to drive you to a friend's house but first he has to drop off a meal for Mrs. Bitterly.



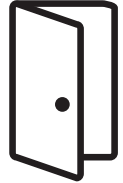
There is a boy at school who isn't very nice to you. On the way to school, you see him drop his lunch bag in a huge puddle. It is soaked through. You have a hot lunch today.

My Simple Acts of Kindness

Smile at someone who looks sad.



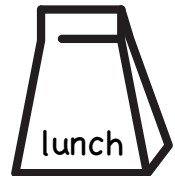
Open the door for someone.



Do a chore without being asked.



Invite someone to sit with you at lunch.



Say hello to a classmate you don't know very well.



Give someone a compliment.



Thank someone for what he or she has done to help you.





