



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, 21

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

green blanket

candle

thread or fishing line

items from nature

Responding

Celebrating

pre-made cookie dough,
sugar, raisins, waxed
paper, rolling pins or
drinking glasses, cookie
cutters in animal and
people shapes, spatula,
cookie sheets, oven

Praying

small object

Offering

blue and green paint

Extra

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

small items for bingo
markers

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, 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.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **A**

Play “Dance and Sing”—**SCM 21**—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 later.
- ▼ Create a worship space in the center of the garden with a candle and a Bible.

Ask a few children to help prepare supplies for today’s activities. Ask two volunteers to practice reading the Bible passage. Invite one or two to prepare to lead today’s singing.

Ask the children—or one or two older children—to print their names on leaf-shaped name tags. Encourage the children to wear the name tags. Make sure the leaders wear their name tags too.

T For children who struggle with transitions, consider a quick physical activity—such as doing chair push-ups and stretching.

Singing

T **SD** **MS**

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 on the green blanket. Turn on the candle as a reminder of God’s presence. Invite the children to share one glad thing and one sad thing from their week. Prompt the children to respond accordingly to each thing shared with “Praise God!” or “Hear our prayer, gracious God.”



Preparing to Hear the Story C

Play a name game. Begin by saying, “God made me, and I am (*your name*).” Then invite another child to repeat the phrase: “God made you, and you are (*and his or her 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, and a daffodil.

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



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. If two children are prepared to read, have them read Genesis 2:4b–9 and 15–23 aloud. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Place the open Bible on the worship space.

Read a retelling of the story on **SCM 1** or use the story audio. Use your voice, your expressions, your feelings, and your body to make the story more lively.

Reflecting on God’s Grace MS

After children have heard about creation and the Garden of Eden, ask them what they wonder about in this story.

Place a chair in the middle of the group. Call it the “wonder chair.”

Invite children, one at a time, to sit in the chair and mention something they wonder about in creation, beginning their comment with the words “I wonder, . . .” The following are suggested starters:

- ✎ I wonder, “What existed before the world was created?”
- ✎ I wonder, “Why did God place special trees in the middle of the garden?”
- ✎ I wonder, “How would it feel after God breathed life into us?”
- ✎ I wonder, “Why did God want human beings to take care of the garden?”
- ✎ I wonder, “How is God active in this story?”

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!”



If you do not have access to a kitchen, prepare the animal and people cookies in advance and have the children decorate them.

Celebrating God's Grace

A FA

Help the children thank God and celebrate God’s gracious creation by making cookies in the shapes of animals and people. Have children wash their hands. Give each a sheet of waxed paper and a portion of cookie dough. Provide enough dough for each child to make several cookies. Tell the children to put the waxed paper on top of the dough and roll it out with a rolling pin or drinking glass, then cut out people and animals with cookie cutters. Suggest that they sprinkle the shapes with sugar and add pieces of a raisin for eyes. Bake as directed. Invite the children to enjoy a freshly baked cookie and take a few cookies home to share with their families as they retell the story of the garden. Supply zip-closure plastic bags for their cookies.

- 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

C M

Prompt prayers of thanksgiving to God with a game. While sitting in a circle, invite the children to pass an object, such as a ball or a stuffed animal, from one to another. Play music as the children pass the object.

Pause the music. The child holding the object names something God created with the words, "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.*

If your group is large, consider making several garlands to hang in different areas of your church.

Offering God's Grace

LG

Have the children create a garland to remind others to recycle as a way of taking care of the earth God gave us.

Cover work surfaces with plastic. Set out watered down green and blue paint. Provide paper from your recycle bin, permanent markers, and brushes.

Have the children write the word "RECYCLE" in large letters with permanent markers on individual sheets of paper. Encourage them to make several sheets. Invite the children to paint over and around the letters with blue paint to represent water. Suggest that they don't need to cover the whole sheet with blue paint. Then tell them to add green paint shapes around, or on top of the blue to represent land. Set the painted paper sheets aside to dry.

When the papers are dry, have the children cut out a shape with the word "RECYCLE" inside each shape. Suggest shapes such as circles (for the earth), hearts, and hands. Tape a length of string or ribbon to the back sides of the shapes to form a garland. Hang the garland in a central area to remind others to care for God's creation.





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 bingo pieces. Have each child cut apart their pieces and glue them randomly in the spaces on the bingo board. Note: they will not use all of the pieces.

Describe for the children the patterns that make a Bingo—traditional straight and diagonal bingo or other configurations such as postage stamp (four together in a corner) or four-corners.

Pull one game piece from the envelope, describe it, and show it to the children. The children will cover their matches with small objects you have provided. Have the children call “Thank you, God!” when they have a Bingo. Continue playing until everyone has a Bingo.



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 each of them to choose one of the natural objects to take home.


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 together, “Praise God!”

Send the children by 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.

CREATION

BINGO





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

Claiming

SCM 1a, 1b

Offering

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1; blue, green,
yellow, and brown tissue
paper; decoupage glue;
wax paper

Extra

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.

“Offering God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

C **L** **LG**

Greet the children by name and with the words “The peace of Christ be with you.” Prompt the 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. Ask for a volunteer to practice reading the Scripture passage.

Gather in a circle and play a game about preparing for Christmas. Have the first person complete the 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

SD

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 candle light 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.

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

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. /



SD *Some children may be uncomfortable in darkness. Help these children by altering activities to avoid the situation or providing them 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 SD

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

Invite a child to find Micah 5 in the Bible. Have a volunteer read Micah 5:2–5. Conclude by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.” Place the open Bible on the worship table.

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** or use the story audio. If reading, use your voice, expressions, and feelings to make it engaging.

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 wondered about in the Micah story. Here are some conversation starters:

- ✎ I wonder, “What kind of leader was Micah waiting for?”
- ✎ I wonder, “Who might come from Bethlehem?”
- ✎ I wonder, “How can Micah's words help us get ready for Christmas?”
- ✎ I wonder, “How does God speak to people today?”
- ✎ I wonder, “When have you heard God saying peace to you?”

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.

The Institute for Peace and Justice, a long-established group that promotes peacemaking in families and schools, has established the Families Against Violence Advocacy Network. One project of that network is to encourage the adoption of a Pledge of Nonviolence. Their motto is “Eliminating violence, one classroom/family at a time, starting with our own.”

Claiming God's Grace

MS L

*Before the session, tape together **SCM 1a** and **1b**.*

Display and draw the children's attention to the “Kids' Pledge of Nonviolence,” **SCM 1a** and **1b**. Ask volunteers to read each of the sections. Have the children form groups of two or three people. Invite each group quietly to choose one of the parts of the pledge and create a short skit to act it out. Give children time to formulate their ideas and skit. Have the groups act out their skits while the others guess which part of the pledge they chose.

After the skits, ask how they could follow the pledge concerning their actions toward one another. Then invite the children who are willing to try to live this pledge to sign the poster. When all who wish to sign the pledge—including leaders and helpers—have done so, pray a prayer similar to this one:

God, help us do what we have promised. Replace our anger with your love. Help us not to be afraid to be people of peace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Display the pledge in your room as a reminder to the children.

Celebrating God's Grace

VI 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 participants 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 of the situation shown in their picture or what might bring peace or healing to the scene?
- ▼ How might peace come again?
- ▼ What can we do to keep or bring about peace in our daily lives?

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

C *Some children may take longer to listen and verbalize their answers or thoughts. Make time for these children to participate in the session, and let them know that their contribution is valued.*



Praying God's Grace

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.



Offering God's Grace

C TD

On this first week of Advent, invite the children to make an ornament to take home or give to a friend to remind others of God's peace for the world.

Provide copies of **GN 1**; construction paper; blue, yellow, green, and brown tissue paper; decoupage glue; scissors; and yarn. Invite the children to follow your directions. The children can follow the diagrams at the bottom of the page. Assist as needed.

- ▼ Carefully cut out the dove and ornament pattern.
- ▼ On the ornament pattern, cut the outer circle first. Then pinch the center of the circle and make a cut to insert the scissors so that the inside circle can be cut out.
- ▼ Trace the ornament on the folded edge of a piece of construction paper and repeat the process to cut the ornament out of the construction paper. When the shape is opened, it should resemble the number eight. Lay it on a piece of wax paper.
- ▼ Cut a circle from the blue tissue paper and glue it to the inside of the bottom half of the ornament.
- ▼ Tear small shapes from the other color(s) of tissue to represent the continents, or land, of the world. Use the decoupage glue to add the small pieces.
- ▼ Add a circle of glue around the border of the bottom half of the ornament and then fold the top down, sealing the tissue in place.
- ▼ Glue the dove to one side and set aside to dry.
- ▼ When the ornaments are dry, punch a hole in the top of the ornament and add yarn as a hanger.

As the children work, wonder together about things they can do to bring about peace at Christmas. Encourage the children to offer their ornament to their family or a friend as a sign of peace in the world.



Extra Activity



Invite the children to make a Christmas ornament to think about today's story about God's peace. Provide copies of **GN 2**. Allow the children to color the pictures as you discuss. Ask: "What might these symbols stand for?" Encourage conversation about how the symbols relate to today's story.

When the children have finished coloring, give each an 8-inch length of yarn. Help them gather the ends and tie a knot or two then set it aside. Have them cut the shape only on the solid lines then fold along each of the dotted lines. Before gluing the tabs, have them turn the yarn loop knot-side down and place it under the two tabs with stars. Show the children how to glue each of the tabs to the inside of the pyramid that folds nearest it.

Have the children take the ornament home and share the story of God's promise of peace with their family.

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 the following 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.

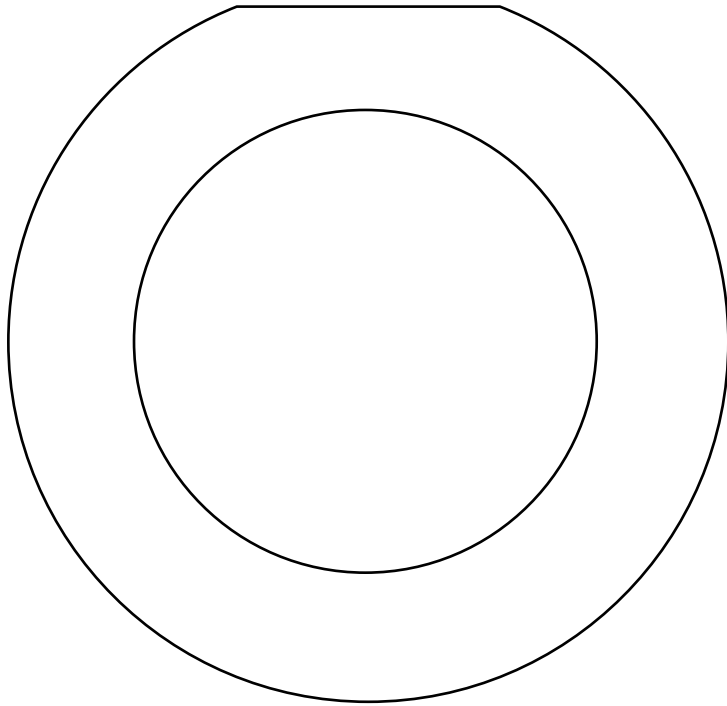
End the session with each child becoming a messenger of good news. Have the children point their hands and fingers in different directions and say, "Peace be with you and you and you!" As they say this, encourage them to point in many different directions to include the whole group in their departing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

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

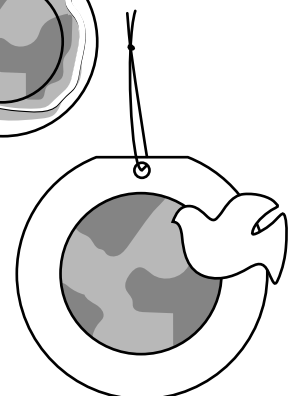
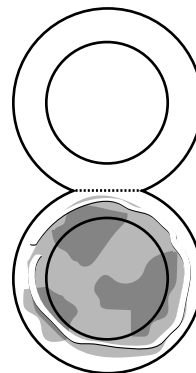
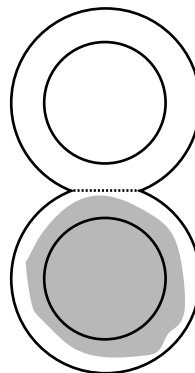
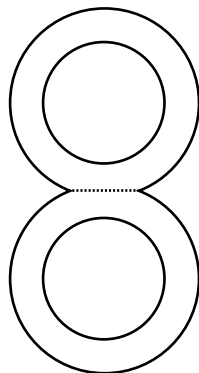
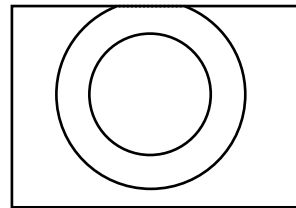
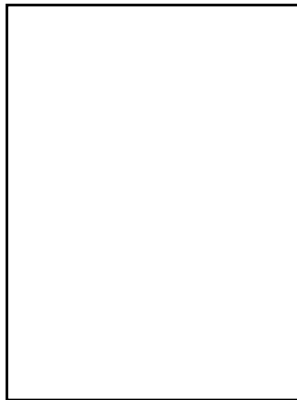
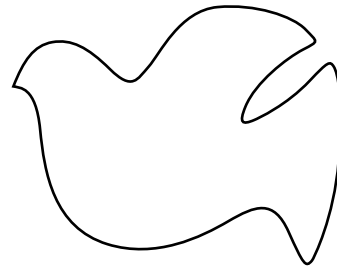


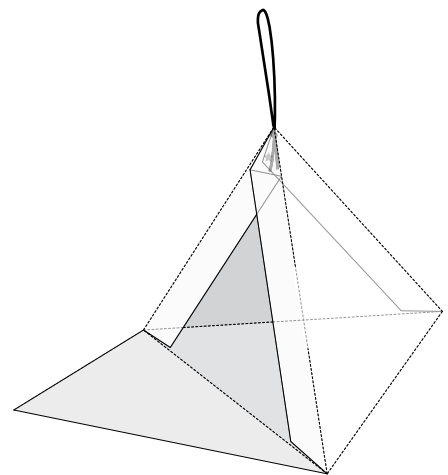
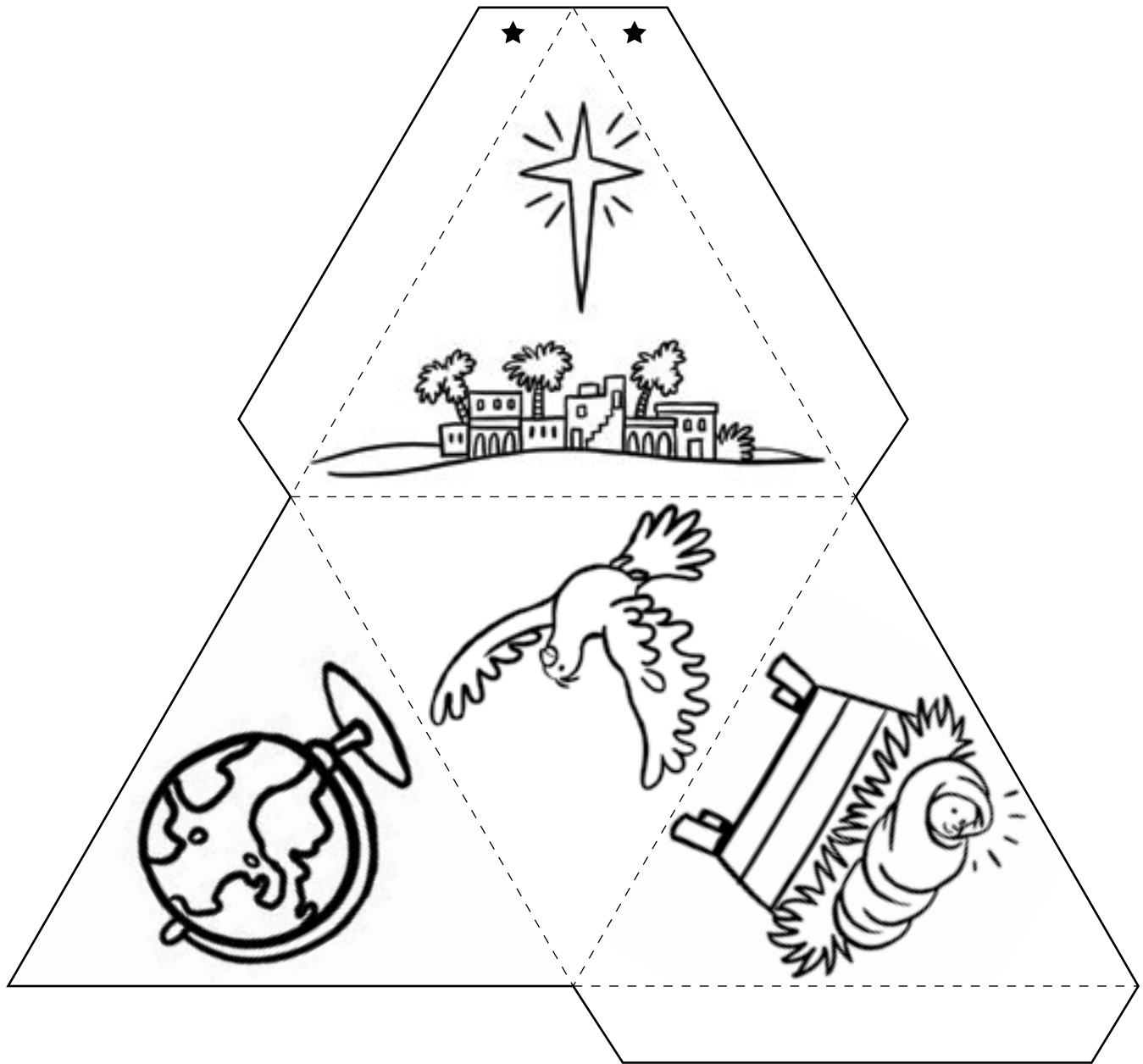
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).

ornament pattern



dove







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)

Grace Notes (GN) 1

Responding

Claiming

Grace Notes (GN) 1

Celebrating

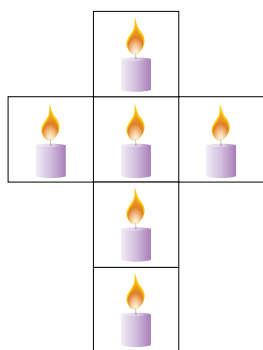
GN 2, strips of fabric or
dish towels

Offering

copies of **GN 3**

Extra

copies of **GN 4**



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.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **B** **T** **MS**

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 the placement of the candles.

Ask two volunteers to write “Leviticus 19:18” and “Deuteronomy 6:4–5” each on a strip of construction paper to use as bookmarks. Have them find these verses in the Bible, place each bookmark, and practice reading the verses aloud. Ask for one or two volunteers to practice reading the Scripture passage for today.

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**.

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.

A *Adapt any activity to suit your children's needs. Ask yourself, "How can I change this activity so that this child can do it?"*

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 told 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 ourself, but he wants to know who is our neighbor.

Jesus told a story about some travelers on a road. One of them was 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

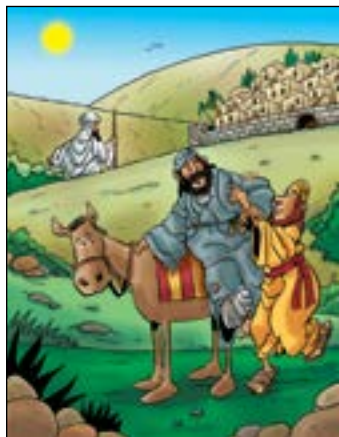
M L

Invite a child to find Luke 10 in the Bible. Have a volunteer or two read Luke 10:25–37. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bible on the worship table.

Explain that the man who was an expert in God's law, the commandments, was raised in the Jewish religion. One of the first prayers he would have learned is the Shema (shuh-MAH). Ask the volunteer with the Deuteronomy 6:4–5 bookmark to read those verses. Jewish people pray those words every morning and night. This man also would have known what we call the Golden Rule. Ask if anyone knows what the Golden Rule is. Have the volunteer with the Leviticus 19:18 bookmark read the verse. Wonder why people call those words the Golden Rule. Ask the children what they think it means to love your neighbor as yourself.

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.





Challenge the children to listen for the Shema and the Golden Rule and who lives it out as you read it aloud a second time using **SCM 1** or the story audio. If reading, use your voice, your expressions, feelings, and your body to make the story more lively. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood.

Reflecting on God's Grace



Reflect on God's grace together. Ask the children where they saw God's grace in this story. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions:

- ▼ How does the story show the Shema, or loving God with all our heart, with all our being, and with all our mind?
- ▼ What do you think Jesus wanted the man to understand about showing love for God?
- ▼ How would you answer Jesus if he asked you about being a good remaining neighbor? How can you be a good neighbor, according to Jesus' story?
- ▼ What do you think it means to love your neighbor as you love yourself?

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 older children with younger ones. Give each pair a card from **GN 1**, and 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.



Celebrating God's Grace

MS LD

*Before the session, set up a relay course. Evenly space seven chairs in a row or seven spaces on the floor. Place a numbered strip from **GN 2** on each chair, numbers 1–7 in order. If you are using the floor, tape the strips of paper so they don't move during the game. Place strips of fabric or dish towels on chair 6.*

Play a game to remember the story, what Jesus calls us to do, and how we can help our neighbors.

Form two teams. Use the following directions:

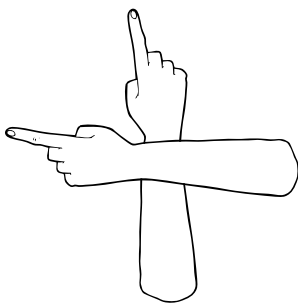
- ▼ Children will take turns participating in the relay by running to the chairs in order, reading the strip of paper, and following the directions. Some children may need assistance with reading.
- ▼ The next person in line may begin when the person before them is at the fourth chair.
- ▼ No one may pass a person at a chair. One coming next may help a person, but then must wait until that person has moved to the next chair.
- ▼ When all the children on a team have finished, they sit down and decide what the memorized words were and the order they were in (*Love God; Love Neighbor*).
- ▼ When all the teams have finished, invite the children to shout out the memorized words in order.

Discuss ways to be good neighbors to others.

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 posture 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.



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. As a group, look at the ideas on **GN 3** and color the icons. 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 4** 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 4** 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. 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 who we may not pay attention to.
In Jesus’ name, we pray.
Amen.

Send the children off with a blessing for a good week and your hope to see them next Sunday.



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.



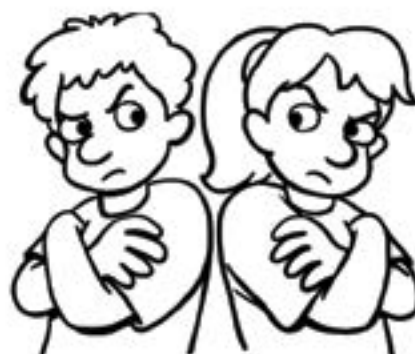
On the school field trip, you get paired up with a new kid who doesn't speak much English and has brought strange food for a snack.



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.

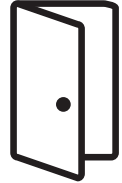
1. Read 1 John 4:8, CEB, and remember the thirteenth word:
“The person who doesn’t love does not know God, because God is love.”
2. Cover your eyes and walk around the chair, saying, “I don’t see anyone.”
3. Read Genesis 1:1, CEB, and remember the second word:
“When God began to create the heavens and the earth.”
4. Run to three people and say, “I don’t have time. I’m so busy!”
5. Read Psalm 59:16, CEB, and remember the twentieth word:
“But me? I will sing of your strength! In the morning I will shout out loud about your faithful love because you have been my stronghold, my shelter when I was distraught.”
6. Wrap the arm of someone from another team in a “bandage” using a strip of fabric.
7. Read Romans 13:10, CEB, and remember the eighth word:
“Love doesn’t do anything wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is what fulfills the Law.”

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.





