



God's Peaceable Kingdom

Goal: To recognize and work for God's peaceable kingdom in the world.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Isaiah 11:1-9

Sometimes the realities of life seem overwhelming. We see the news, with natural disasters, wars, violence, and suffering in so many ways. Personally, our life difficulties can be hard to bear.

We need our faith strengthened by listening to the ancient prophecy of Isaiah. He promises God will send one on whom "the Spirit of the LORD shall rest" (v. 2), who will wear a belt of righteousness (v. 5), and who will bring a blessed kingdom where all nature and all humanity will be at peace with one another.

We may think this vision has no chance of happening, but it does. This is God's grace, expressed as a sure promise. If we hope only in human progress or optimism, we will be disappointed. But there is a better vision. It comes from God. Our true hope is that the faithful God will bring this reign of peace.

In Advent, we hear the promise of God's grace and believe God fulfills this promise in the coming Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus is God's grace in person. Our hearts are grateful because now the promised future is sure and secure. Jesus the Messiah brings peace, now and forever.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children grow up today aware of what's going on in the world. They are not protected from the news of war and violence that are going on all around them. This reading from Isaiah is an excellent reminder for us all—and especially for the children—that even when bad things happen, we have hope.

Isaiah imagined a world where wolves and lambs would live together and a little child would lead them. So, too, today, our children can lead us into the possibilities of God's world of love. God's spirit will rest on us just as it did with the prophet Isaiah.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Think about the children. Are there ones who may be suffering or who need God's word of hope? Keep each child's name and face in front of you as you pray for them this week. What is the hope you see in them? The story for today imagines children responding with their answers of how God's world of love grows by our actions. Your children will be able to add their own suggestions to this list. As you turn on the first candle of the Advent wreath, help children to name their hopes for peace in the world.

*O God, I entrust the children to your peaceable kingdom.
In your wisdom, grant them peace and hope. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023-2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i-iv, 1, 1a, 1b, 20

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

snack

Advent wreath, four
candles

Guided Play

choice 2: stuffed
animals

choice 3: paper plates,
green tissue paper,
yellow tissue paper,
purple construction
paper

Exploring

choice 2: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1,
internet-connected
device

choice 3: card-stock
copies of **GN 2**

choice 4: copies of
GN 3



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 for your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Before the session, cut many 2" green tissue-paper squares and place in bowls for "Guided Play" choice 3. Cut one 2" yellow tissue-paper square for each child. Cut four 6" x 2" strips of purple construction paper for each child. Fold strips in half and then fold each strip an inch from each end, folding the end out as a tab.

Obtain an Advent wreath and four candles to use in "Loving and Serving God," for this and the next three sessions.

"Exploring God's Grace" choice 2 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play



Welcome the children by name as they arrive, and say, "Grace and peace be with you." Prompt the response, "And also with you." Be sensitive to any children who might be visiting for the first time. Tell the parents or caregivers that today's story is about the prophet Isaiah's vision of God's peaceable kingdom. Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity to start:

- 1. Drawing**—Encourage children to draw a picture of an animal from their imagination. Listen for comments they have about the animals. Some may have a story about the pet they are drawing or the wild animal seen in a park. Set aside drawings for "Hearing the Story."
- 2. Playing**—Provide stuffed animals, at least one for each child. Ask the children to identify what the animal is, what it sounds like, how it moves, or where it lives. Bring the toys to "Hearing the Story."
- 3. Counting Advent**—Tell the children that this is the first Sunday of Advent, a time when we prepare for the coming of Jesus. Provide paper plates, glue sticks, and squares of green tissue paper. Invite the children to glue the green squares on the paper plate. Give the children four strips of folded purple construction paper and have them glue the tabbed ends to the paper plate as four candles for the four Sundays of Advent. Give each child a square of yellow tissue paper and have them gently scrunch



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

one side, then glue it to one of the candles for a flame. Put three more yellow tissue paper squares on each child's plate to add a flame for each subsequent Sunday of Advent at home.

T *Giving young children a gentle warning that you will be shifting focus soon helps them mentally prepare for the change. Alerting them calmly makes changes feel like less of an emergency.*

Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing "Praise God, Praise God"—**MM 7; SCM 18**. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

Passing the Peace

SD

Gather in a circle or half circle. Invite the children to take turns shaking hands with the person to their right, saying, "The peace of Christ be with you." Prompt the other child to respond, "And also with you." An elbow bump can be an alternative for children with touch sensitivities. Continue until everyone has said each of the phrases.

Wondering

Direct attention to **SCM 1a**. Engage children in conversation about the picture by asking, "I wonder what you know about these animals." Mention that, in the Bible story, some animals will become friends.



Hearing the Story

B C

Place the children's animal pictures from "Guided Play" choice 1 on the floor in front of the group. Ask the children to show their pictures and to tell what animals they have drawn. If the children have not drawn pictures, ask them to show and identify the stuffed animals they chose in "Guided Play" choice 2.

Explain that today's story is about a *vision*, a picture painted in our minds. The vision was one God gave Isaiah, who was a prophet, a messenger from God. Isaiah knew about many animals—bears, sheep, lions, snakes, wolves, and others. He knew that some animals fight and hurt each other, and some may hurt people.

God showed Isaiah that, one day, all animals will live together in peace and be friends. Say that God also wants people to live together in peace and be friends.

Open the Bible to Isaiah 11 so that the children know 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."



Invite the children to practice showing the emotions and actions of scared, listening, love, happy, and peaceful. Read the story again, inviting the children to express the emotions and actions of the story.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Playing with the Story



Remind the children that the Bible story talked about God's peace-filled kingdom. The story also said that a little child would lead. Invite the children to think of ways to lead others to be peaceful. Help each child make a motion to act out a way to be peaceful, while you and the other children mimic the action, such as:

- ▼ Sharing toys
- ▼ Saying hello to people you meet
- ▼ Delivering food
- ▼ Helping a younger child
- ▼ Letting someone go ahead in line
- ▼ Inviting someone who feels left out to come and play

Be sure every child has at least one opportunity to lead one of the motions. When you finish, tell the children they are excellent leaders of peace.

LG *Look for opportunities for children to practice leadership and generosity, such as offering a blessing to one another and passing kindness to others beyond Sunday worship. Acting out these skills helps the children feel comfortable with them in everyday life situations.*



2. What Is Peace Like?



Ask the children to imagine what peace might be like. Hand out copies of **GN 1** and ask the children to draw what peace smells like, looks like, sounds like, tastes like, and feels like.

Gather the children and watch a Vimeo video "What Does PEACE Feel Like?" (bit.ly/PeaceIs, 2:20). Ask the children if they imagined what other children did. Encourage the children to look for peace all around them.

3. Making Animal Puppets

Hand out card-stock copies of **GN 2**. Let the children choose which animals they would like to color. Encourage each child to make one or two animal puppets. Help children who need assistance cut out their animals. Tape the animals to wooden craft sticks.

Set up a puppet stage. If a puppet stage is not available, you can turn a table on its side.

Have the children make up a puppet play where all of the animals get along. Encourage the children to use their imaginations. Suggest

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.



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

Counting Advent candles gives children a tangible way to mark the season of preparation and quiet reflection.



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

that they name their puppets. Have them pretend to be the animals and make the sounds their animals make.

You may also read the Bible story to the children and have each of the animals enter as you read about it in the passage.

4. Coloring Page

Hand out copies of **GN 3** and crayons. Wonder together about how amazing it will be in God's peaceful kingdom when all animals like each other and all people do too. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “What are the children thinking when they see all the animals together?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How can we help God's vision of this peaceful world happen?”

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

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Call the children to snack time, singing “Sing Thanks to God”—**MM 23; SCM 20**. Invite the children to sing, clap, dance, shout, and praise along with the song.

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

Wonder if the children remember what this time of the church year is called (*Advent*).

Display the Advent wreath with four candles. Count the candles. Ask the children how many Sundays there are in Advent (*four*). Turn on one candle.

Say an echo prayer, such as:

Wonderful God, /
help us be kind. /
Help us take care of others. /
Help us not fight. /
Help us share. /
Help us show your grace and peace to everyone. /
Amen. /

Enjoy the snack.

Turn off the candle. As the children leave, say, “May the grace of God be with you.” Ask the children to respond, “And also with you.” Save the Advent wreath for the next four sessions.

smells like

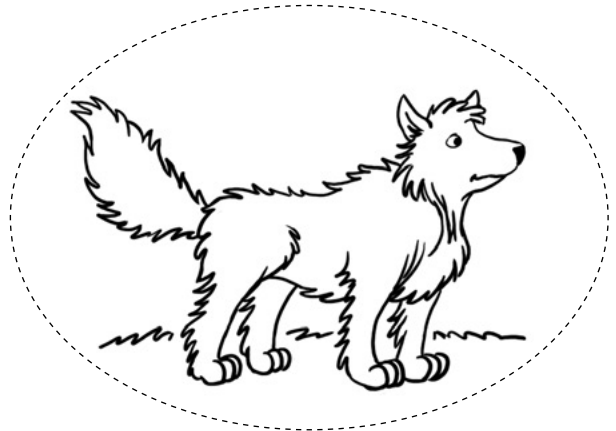
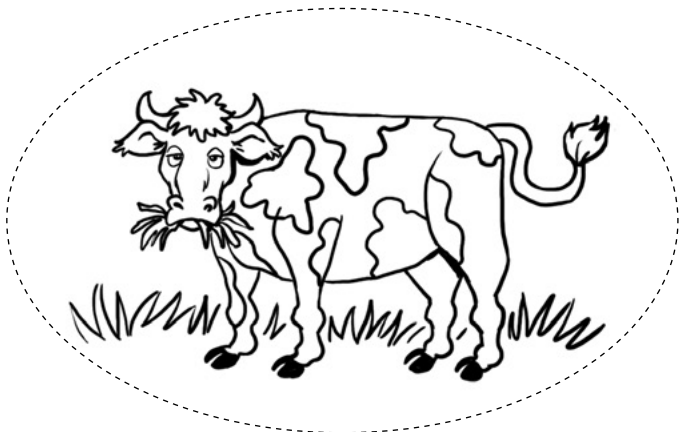
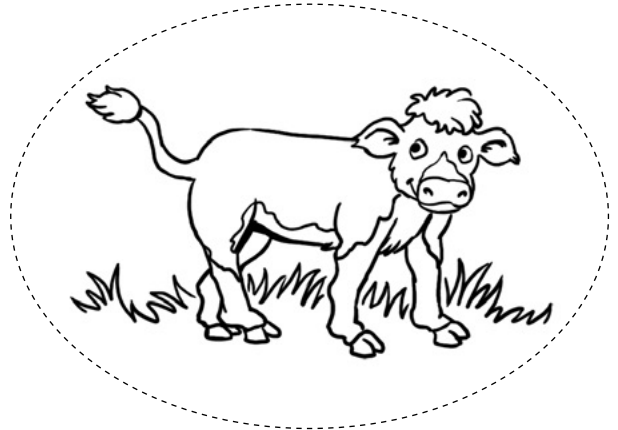
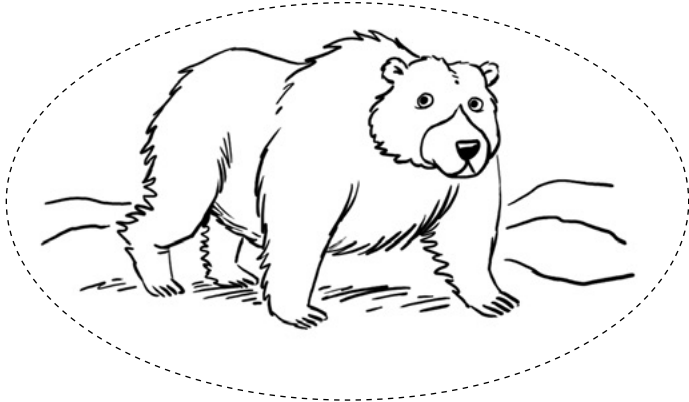
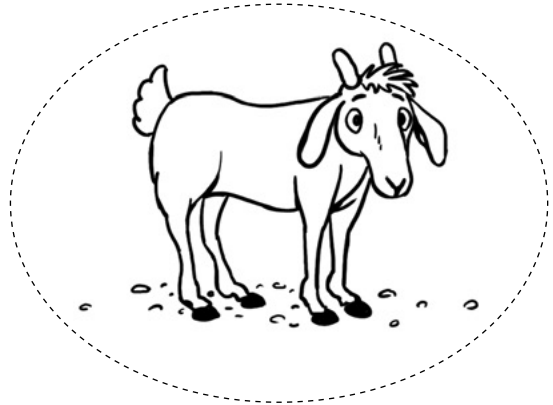
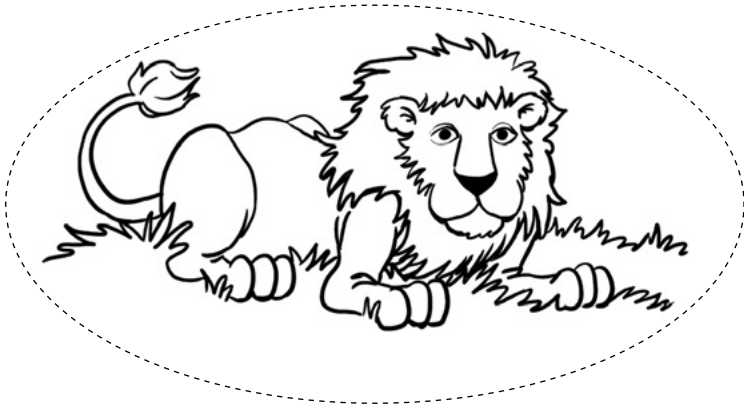
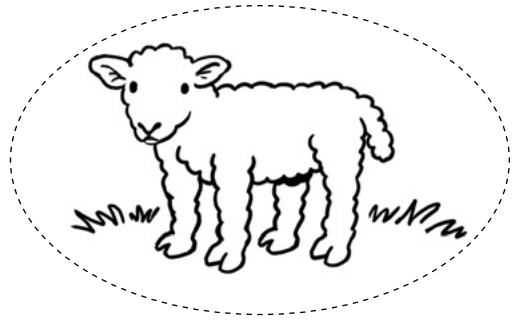
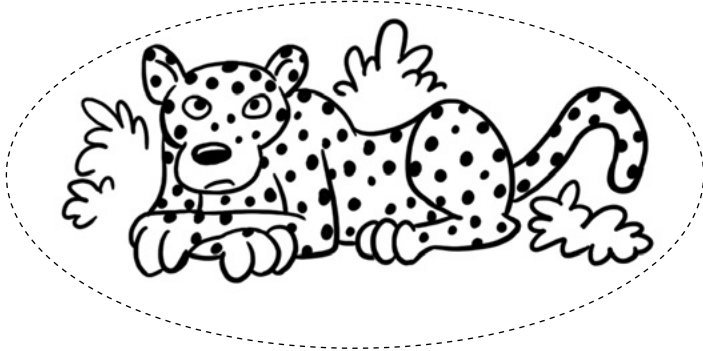
looks like

feels like

sounds like

tastes like

Peace



God's Peaceable Kingdom



God gave Isaiah a picture of what God's kingdom would look like.

