



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, 1c,
17, 18

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

purple cloth

Advent wreath, candles
smartphone (optional)

Responding

Celebrating

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1–3

Offering

milk or juice carton
(not juice boxes) for
each child, acrylic paint,
birdseed

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.

“Offering God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing



Play “May the God of Hope Go with Us (Dios de la esperanza)”—**MM 6**; **SCM 17**—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 help set the scene. On a table, place a purple fabric and a Bible. This is the first Sunday of Advent. Add an Advent wreath with candles. Follow the tradition of your congregation in selecting the number and color of the candles. You will turn on one of the candles at the end of the session.

Place **SCM 1a**, **SCM 1b**, and **SCM 1c** on the table.

Tape mural paper to the wall at the children’s level. Supply crayons and invite them to begin creating a peaceful scene by drawing a river with trees, rolling hills, fields of flowers, and so on. Tell them that you will use the mural later in the session.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Invite a volunteer to practice reading the Scripture passage for today’s reading.

Mix with the group and encourage conversation.

Singing



Gather in the worship space. Sing “May the God of Hope Go with Us (Dios de la esperanza)”—**MM 6**; **SCM 17**—as the children listen. Play the song again and, with the children, clap out the syncopated rhythm.

Praying



Have everyone stand in a circle. Lead a movement prayer, having the children follow your directions:

In Advent, we look back to the birth of the baby Jesus. (*turn to look away from the circle*)

In Advent, we look ahead to a time when Jesus will come to bring God’s glory and peace. (*turn to face into the circle*)

In Advent, we look all around for Jesus because he is with us here and now. (*turn slowly in place*)



Remembering Jesus' birth and looking forward to Jesus' return, we ask the Holy Spirit to lead us. (*reach arms upward and down by sides*)
Amen.

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

Preparing to Hear the Story **C**

Draw the children's attention to **SCM 1a**, **SCM 1b**, and **SCM 1c** on the worship table. Ask the children the following questions:

- ▼ What was your week like—was it more like a green plant or a dried-up one?
- ▼ How are you feeling—more like a lemon or a sweet treat? A teddy bear or a cactus?

Explain that, sometimes when we want to describe how we feel, we use objects that suggest something else. Suggest that Isaiah did the same thing. Isaiah was a prophet, a messenger of God. God asked Isaiah to deliver a message that was filled with symbols, or word pictures. Explain that a good king had just died, and the people were anxious. Everything looked hopeless—wonder which items on **SCM 1a**, **SCM 1b**, and **SCM 1c** suggest hopelessness—and the people were scared and worried. Wonder together what symbols suggest hope.



If the group is large, several children may choose the same animal.

Hearing the Story **L**

Invite a child to find Isaiah 11 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Have a volunteer read Isaiah 11:1-9. Conclude the reading by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Comment that today's story mentions several animals: wolf, lamb, leopard, goat, cow, lion, and bear. Ask the group to come up with movements and sounds for each animal. Invite them to act out each animal when it is mentioned. Read **SCM 1** or listen to the story audio. If reading, use your voice, your expressions, your feelings, and your body to make the story more lively. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood.



When encouraging the children's behaviors, be specific. "Thanks for helping Jon work the puzzle; it helped him clean up sooner" gives a clear message. Give specific ways the children can help one another, show concern, or comfort one another.

Reflecting on God's Grace

A T

Say that Isaiah imagines a world of peace. Wonder what symbols Isaiah used to describe peace in the world. (*new life from a dead tree; animals living together peacefully*)

Ask each child to choose an animal from the story on **SCM 1** and make a mask of that animal's face using the back of a paper plate and craft supplies. Encourage creativity.

Read the story in front of the peaceful backdrop the children created earlier. Ask the children to hold up their masks and reprise the movement that they created. Create a tableau of Isaiah's peaceable kingdom. Prompt the group to say, "This is God's way of peace."

Option: Take a picture of the tableau of Isaiah's peaceable kingdom to share with the congregation.

Singing

Give God an offering of music. Play and sing "Praise God, Praise God"—**MM 7; SCM 18**. This song repeats phrases two times in each verse. Suggest that the children come up with ways to pass the peace to the person on their right, then left for each time. Ways can include a hand shake, fist or elbow bump, bowing down, and waving "hello."

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God's Grace

LG L

Conflict happens when we become angry and frustrated with someone else. It can help us learn how to talk and listen to others. Help children practice ways to foster peace in their relationships. Ask, "When you are in a conflict with someone, what do you do?" After listening to the ideas, suggest steps they could use in conflicts:

- ▼ Let one person tell about the conflict while the other person listens and does not interrupt.
- ▼ Let another person tell about the conflict.
- ▼ After listening to the explanations about the conflict, discuss what to do to solve the conflict. It's not necessary to blame one person or to find out who is "right." Look for a solution to the conflict so all people can get along.

Read each of the following scenarios and invite the children to practice the three steps (*above*). Older children may enjoy taking the roles of the characters and acting out the situations while other children watch.

- ▼ Steve says that Henry has his cap. Steve wore his cap to school on Monday, but he forgot to take it home that evening. On



Friday he saw Henry wearing it. Henry says it's his cap and that it looks just like Steve's.

- Andrea and Patrice enjoy building together with blocks. Patrice also enjoys playing on the swings and slide, and she invites Andrea to go outside and play. Andrea wants to stay inside and play with blocks.

Celebrating God's Grace



One responsibility that God gives human beings is the care of our planet. Based on the message from Isaiah, our goal is to live harmoniously and in peace with all creation.

The children probably have some awareness of endangered species. Ask them to tell you what they know about such animals and plants, including what causes an animal or plant to be on the endangered list. Print the animals and plants they name on newsprint.

Have enough copies of **GN 1-3** for the children to choose one or two to color. As the children color the pictures, talk about the various animals. Ask them to think about the animals: "What message do you think God would give us about these animals?"

Create a poster to share with your congregation. At the top of a piece of mural paper, have one or more children work together to write, "Care for All God's Endangered Creatures." Invite the children to cut out the animals they have colored. Tape or glue the animals to the mural paper. Read together Isaiah 11:9 at the bottom of **GN 3** to talk together about ways they can care for and protect the earth, plants, and animals as a way to work for God's peace. Display the poster where church members can see it.

Praying God's Grace



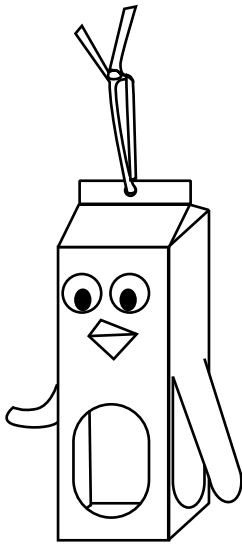
Isaiah said that we can find hope in God's promised peace when we can imagine new life growing from a dead tree. Ask if the children can imagine that scene. Wonder what is hopeful about it. Invite the children to move their bodies, pretending to be a withered-up tree, which then is given sun and rain and begins to grow, first with tiny leaves and branches, and then tall and reaching upward.

Say that Isaiah's dream gives us ideas and hopes about how our world could be. Wonder aloud how the children can help make those ideas grow and become real this week. Invite children to think of one thing they could do this week to help God make Isaiah's vision become real.

Lead the following prayer and invite the children to name their chosen way to help on your prompt:

Dear God, help us to be children of your peace. We can help create peace by (*prompt the children*). Amen.

Endangered species are plants or animals that are in danger of disappearing. There are so few of them in the world that they may die out forever.



Offering God's Grace



Make bird feeders to help care for some of God's kingdom.

Distribute cartons to the children. Have them draw a long U shape on both sides to make wings. On the front panel, have them draw a rectangle or oval for the belly. If the children are old enough, show them how to puncture the shapes, then use the scissors to cut the wing and belly shapes. If you have younger children in the group, you will need to make the cuts for them.

Cut two circles and a diamond from the discarded belly piece. Above the belly, use tacky glue to add the circles for eyes. Fold the diamond in half to make a beak and glue it under the eyes. Encourage the children to use their imaginations to paint the birds with acrylic paint. Set the bird feeders aside to dry.

Once the paint is dry, place birdseed inside. Help the children punch a hole at the top and tie string through to make a 12" length. Tie the ends together and hang outside.

GN 4 Solution:

Follow God's way of love.

For safety reasons, many churches do not allow lighted candles in classrooms. Check with your leadership before using real candles.



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).

Extra Activity

Hand out copies of GN 4 and pencils. Remind the children that Isaiah used animals as examples of the peace that God will bring. Have the children draw lines through the words they discover in the puzzle that are listed in the Word Bank. Once they have finished, ask them how Isaiah said we could enjoy God's peace. Then have them write the letters that aren't crossed through in order (left to right, top to bottom) on the lines below to find the answer.

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Ask the children to help clean the space.

Turn on the first Advent candle. Say, "The first candle of Advent reminds us of Isaiah, who imagined a peaceful world."

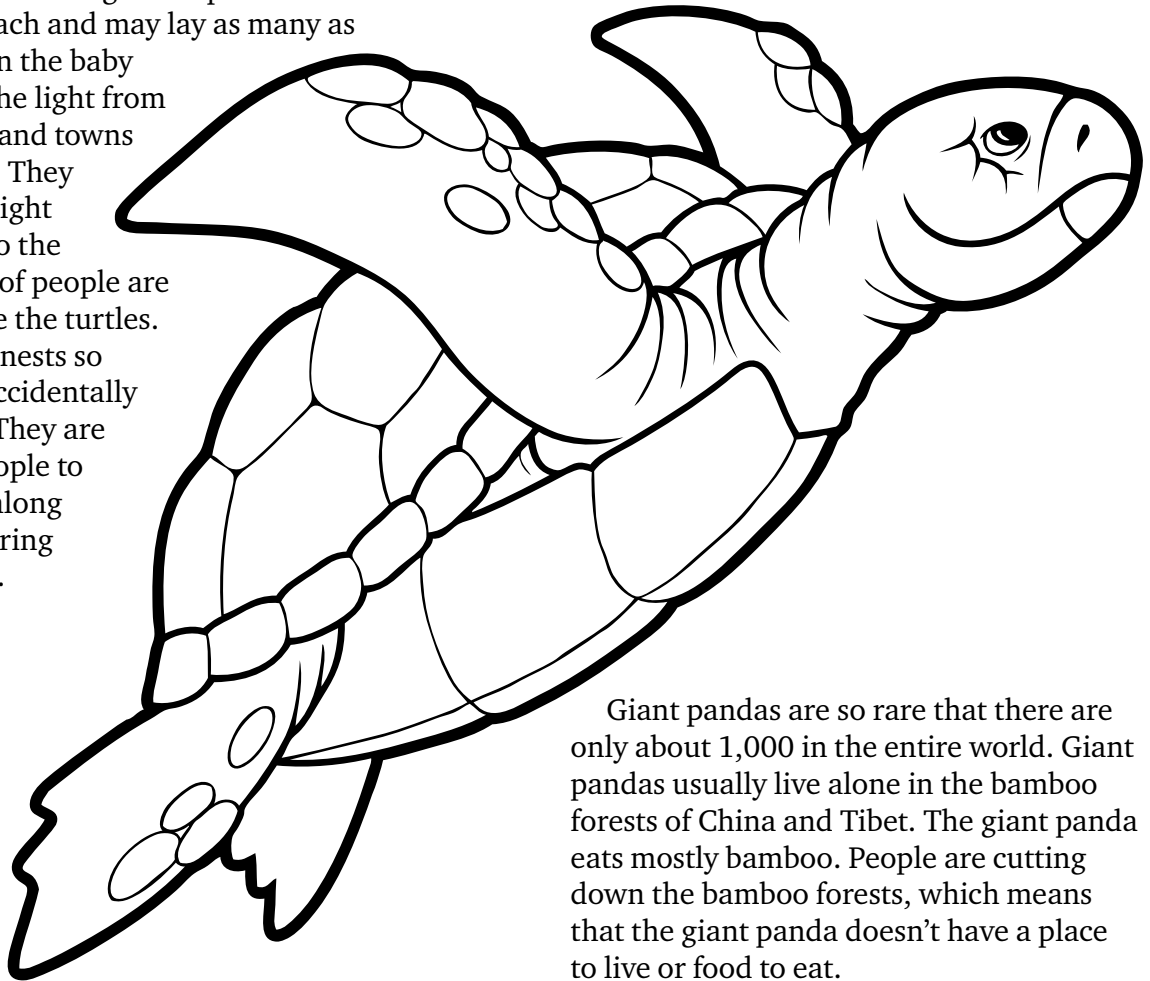
Sing "May the God of Hope Go with Us (Dios de la esperanza)" —MM 6; SCM 17. Encourage the children to try singing in English and Spanish.

Invite the children to think of where they want peace. Lead the group in prayer, giving each child a chance to pray for peace where she or he feels it is needed:

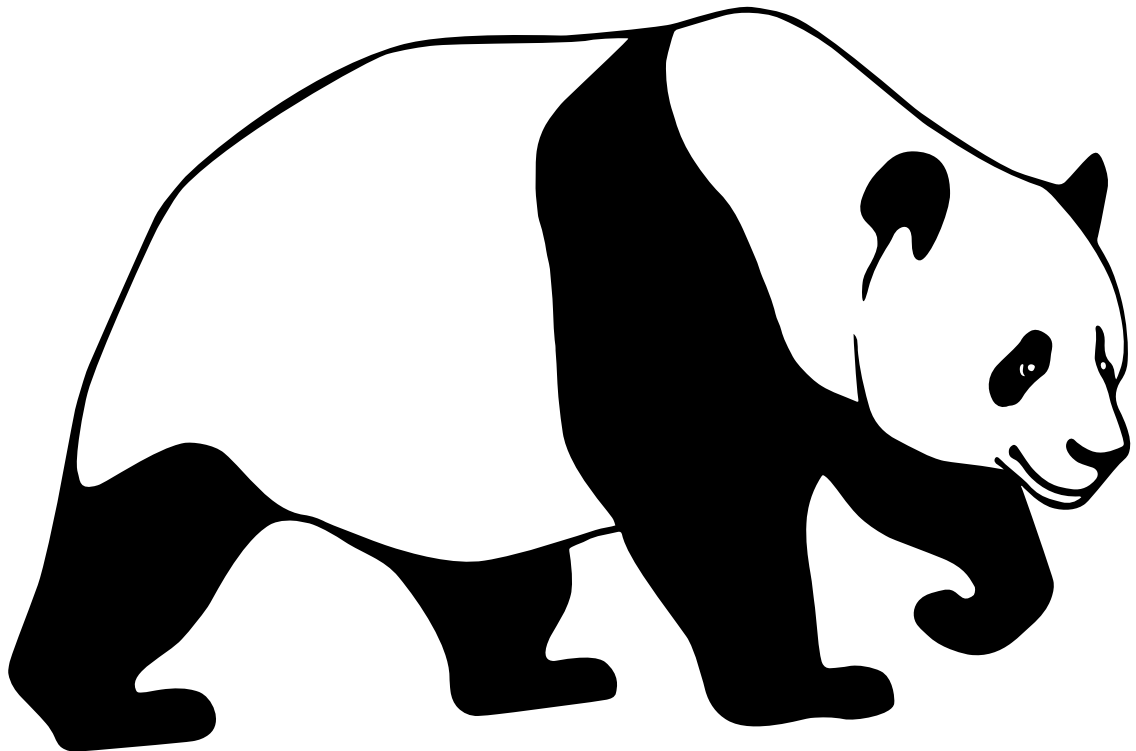
O God, bring peace to the world and in the places we name, peace in . . . (*prompt children to name their ideas*). And may peace come to us. Amen.

Send the children with these words: "Go, be peacemakers and care for God's creation this week. And may the grace of God be with you."

The mother sea turtle leaves the water only to lay eggs. She digs a deep hole in the sand on the beach and may lay as many as 100 eggs. When the baby turtles hatch, the light from nearby houses and towns confuses them. They go toward the light rather than into the ocean. Groups of people are working to save the turtles. They mark the nests so people won't accidentally destroy them. They are also getting people to turn off lights along the beaches during hatching times.

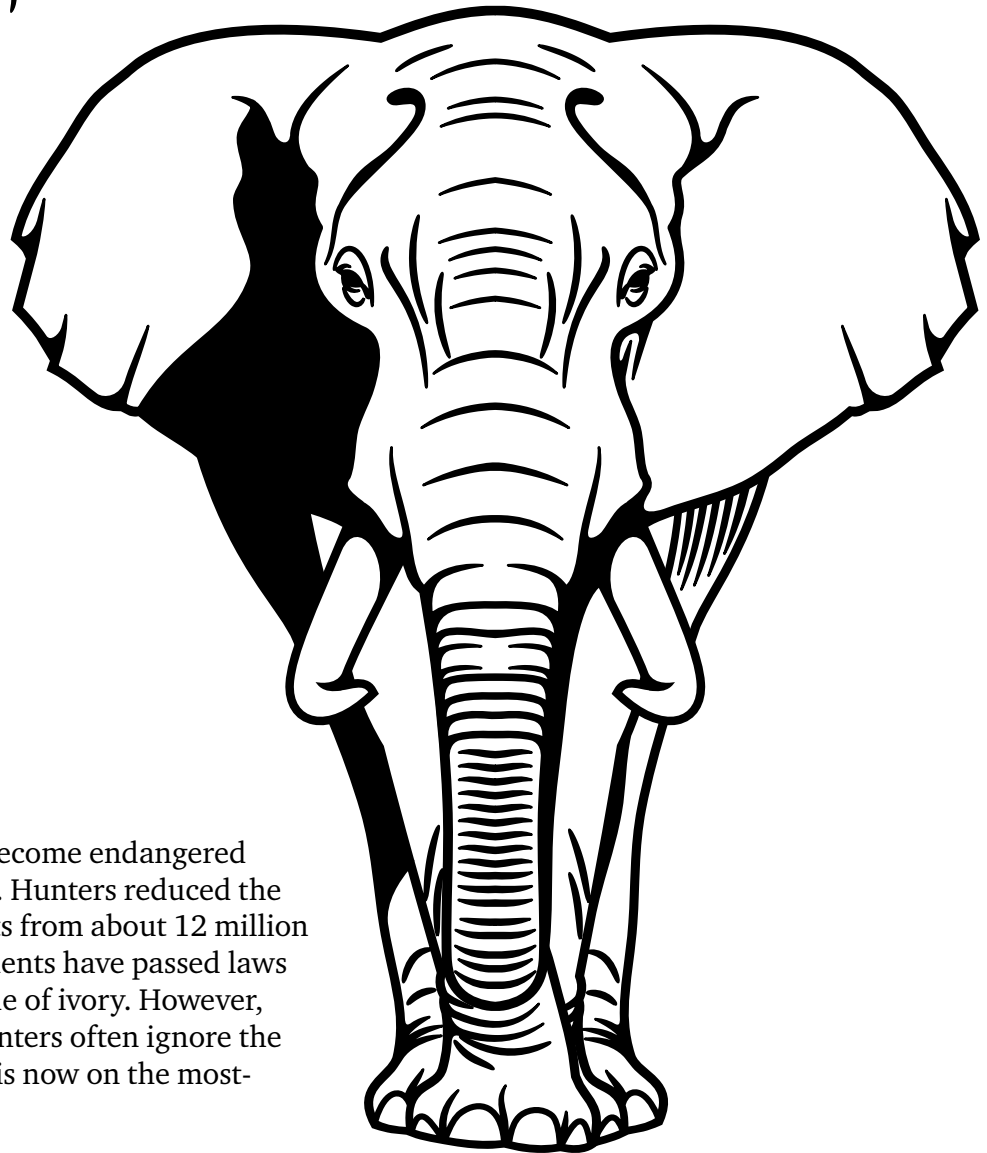


Giant pandas are so rare that there are only about 1,000 in the entire world. Giant pandas usually live alone in the bamboo forests of China and Tibet. The giant panda eats mostly bamboo. People are cutting down the bamboo forests, which means that the giant panda doesn't have a place to live or food to eat.



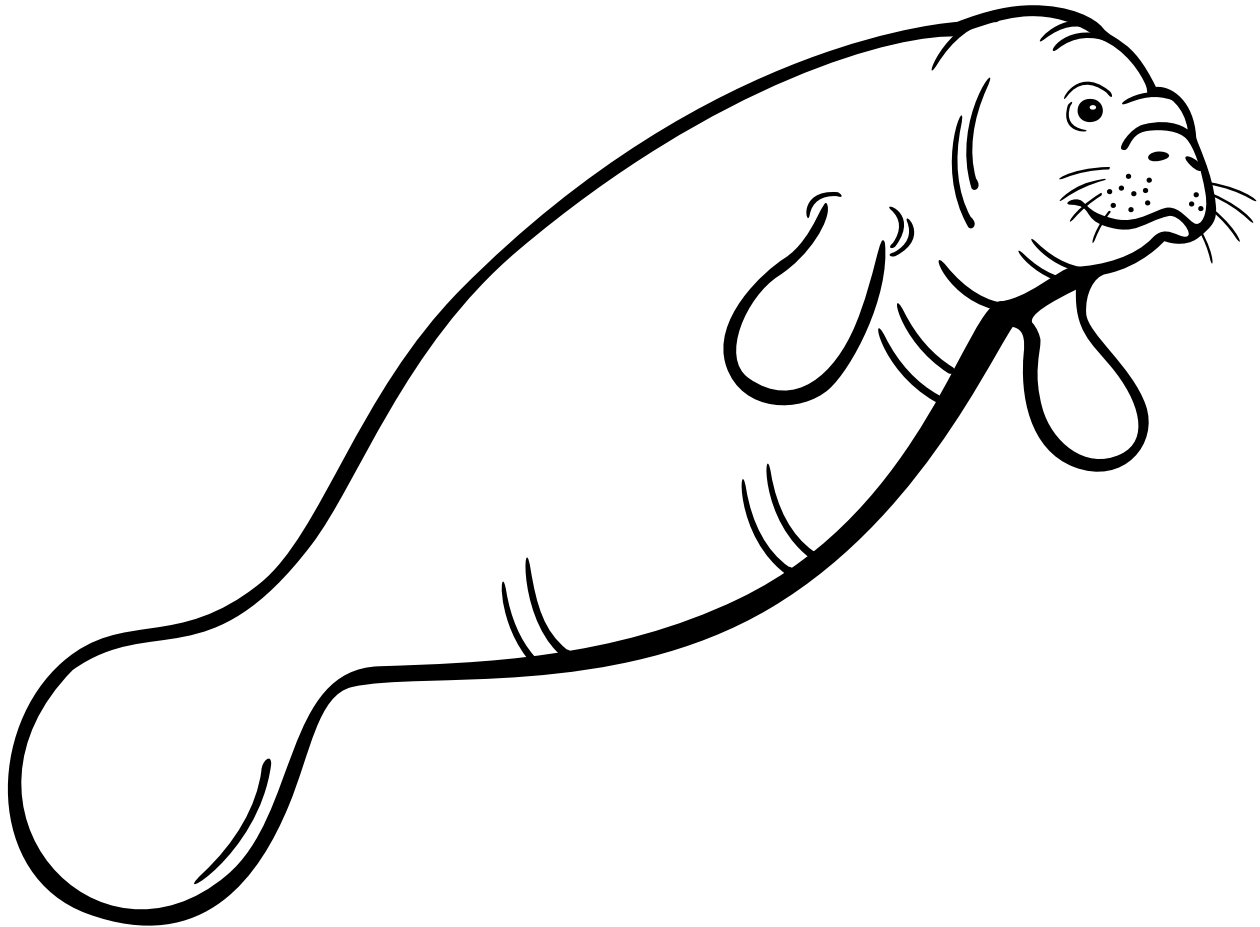


Parrots live in tropical areas. They build nests in the hollows of trees. They use their large, hooked bills to crack seeds. Sometimes they also use their bill as a third foot to help them climb. Parrots eat mostly seeds and fruits. Parrots can live for 30 to 50 years. People have destroyed much of the rainforest areas where parrots naturally are. People also hunt parrots to sell as pets or for their feathers.



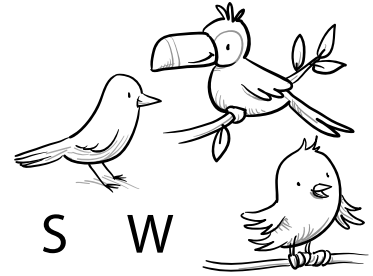
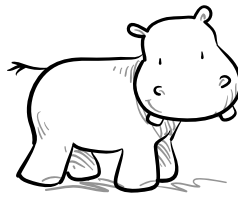
African elephants have become endangered because of their ivory tusks. Hunters reduced the number of Africa's elephants from about 12 million to about 625,000. Governments have passed laws forbidding the sale and trade of ivory. However, because of ivory's value, hunters often ignore the laws. The African elephant is now on the most-endangered species list.

Manatees are slow-moving, seal-shaped mammals that live in shallow coastal waters or rivers. People have hunted them for meat, oil, and hides. Sometimes the manatees become tangled in fishing nets and get sick from polluted water. Boats travel many of the areas where the manatees live. The manatees cannot move fast enough to get out of the way and are often hurt by the boat propellers.

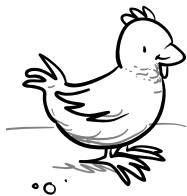


**They won't harm or destroy
anywhere on my holy mountain.
The earth will surely be filled
with the knowledge of the LORD,
just as the water covers the sea.**

—Isaiah 11:9, CEB



F O S H E E P L S W



L G O W L G O F N O

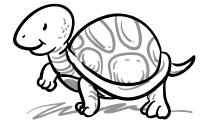


M O N K E Y D O A L

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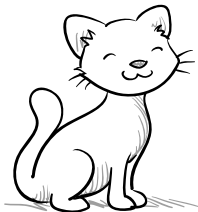


U T S C H I C K E N



S W A C A T G Y O F

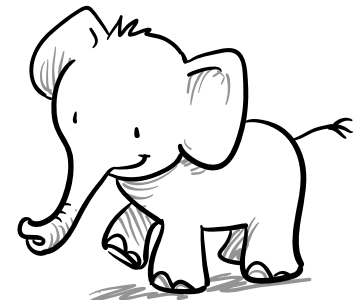
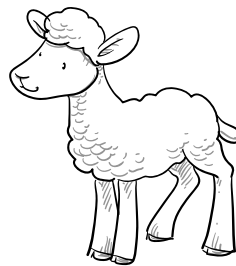
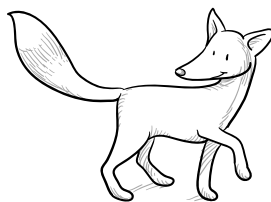
E L O V N B I R D S



W O R M T U R T L E



E S Q U I R R E L S



Word Bank:

BIRDS
CAT
CHICKEN
ELEPHANT
FOX
GOAT

HIPPO
MONKEY
MOUSE
PIG
SHEEP
SNAKE

SQUIRRELS
TURTLE
WOLF
WORM
