



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
(MM) 2021-2022

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i-iv, 1, 16, 17

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

e-book or story audio
(see p. vii)

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

MS C L LG

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"—**MM 16; SCM 16**.

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 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.



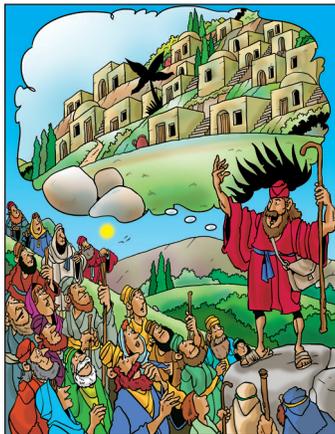
SD *Some children may be uncomfortable in darkness. Help these children by altering activities to avoid the situation or providing them with a pocket-sized flashlight when lights are dimmed.*

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"—**MM 18; SCM 17**. 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.

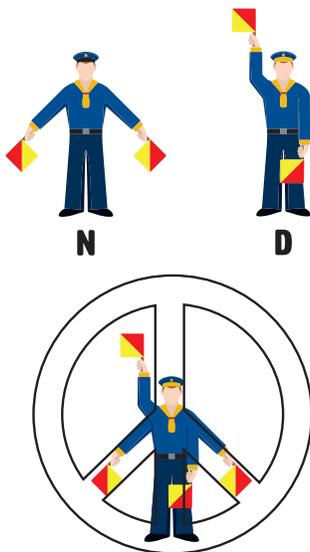
Over sixty years ago, a man created a symbol, a picture to represent his desire for world peace. He said that he used the pictures for the arm movements that sailors used for the letters N and D, for "nuclear disarmament" (getting rid of weapons of war). But he also thought of himself: a person standing 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

December 5, 2021 



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit gracesightings.org. Remind the parents and caregivers about the e-book and story audio (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.

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