



# 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](http://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

thread or fishing line

candle

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, zip closure plastic bags

### Extra

copies of **Grace Notes (GN) 1** and **GN 2**, small objects or paper squares

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



Play “Dance and Sing”—**SCM 2**—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 children to prepare to lead today’s singing.

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

### Singing



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

### Praying

Invite the children to sit 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.” Affirm each child’s response and respect those who do not wish to share.



### Preparing to Hear the Story L C

Gather the children in a circle. Say your first name followed by “and God made me (*an adjective that begins with the same first letter of your name*).” (Example: “I’m Ms. Jones and God made me joyful.”) The person to the right introduces you and himself or herself. (*This is Ms. Jones and God made her joyful. I am Alonzo and God made me amazing.*) Continue until all the children have added their names.

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



Today’s story can be found in *Growing in God’s Love: A Story Bible*, edited by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim (Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2018), [www.pcusastore.com](http://www.pcusastore.com).

### Hearing the Story LD 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. Then place the open Bible on the worship space. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Distribute paper and markers to the children. While hearing the story again, invite them to use their imaginations and draw a picture of a strange animal that God may have created but we never knew about. Suggest that they name their animal.

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. After the story, allow time for the children to share their crazy creations.

### Reflecting on God’s Grace C

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 midst of the group. Call it the “wonder chair.” Invite the children to take turns sitting in the chair and mentioning something they wonder about in creation, beginning their comment with the words “I wonder . . .” Here are some 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 you?”
- ▼ 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 A

Spend some time exploring the joys and responsibilities that we share in partnership with one another as God’s creation and the care we have for creation.

Post a sheet of newsprint vertically on a wall. At the top print “PARTNERSHIP” in large letters. Print each letter vertically down the left side of the paper. To the right of each letter, draw a long line or leave an empty space.

Work together to name some joys and/or responsibilities related to the word *partnership*, using each letter of the word as the beginning letter for the descriptive word. Encourage the children to call out words and add them to the newsprint.

For example, descriptives for *P* could be *partner*, *pal*, *pact*, *parent*, *promise*, or *person*. (If descriptives for any letter are difficult to figure out, leave the space blank and come back to it later.)

Engage the children in conversation about how partnerships and caring for creation are similar or different today. For example, wonder together what responsibilities were shared in the Garden of Eden and then what our responsibilities are today for God’s garden—the earth. Brainstorm ways the children can actively share responsibility for the care of the earth.

Close with a prayer of thanks to God for all creation.

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



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

LG 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.

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

### Praying God's Grace

C

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, from one to another. Play music as the children pass the object.

Pause the music. Invite the child holding the object to name something God created, with the words, "Thank you, God, for making . . ." Continue playing until everyone has had a turn or two.

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.

### Extra Activity

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

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

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



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

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

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

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

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

# CREATION

B I N G O












# 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](http://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

battery-operated  
tealight candles

## Responding

### Claiming

SCM 1a, 1b

### Offering

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

### Extra

copies of GN 2

Inviting a child to pray allows them to become more comfortable with prayer using their own words.

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

**MS 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 the 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

**A 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 a volunteer to say a prayer or have the children 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. /

The children may have difficulty pronouncing some of the names of the prophets. Assure them that it is fine and to do the best that they can.



**SD** Some children may be uncomfortable in darkness. Consider altering activities or providing pocket-sized flashlights.

### Preparing to Hear the Story VI

In past sessions, the children heard about Jeremiah and Amos, prophets of God. Remind the group that the prophets were 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 Micah's story happened long before Jesus was born.

Hand out Bibles and have the children find Micah 5. Use 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 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. Give each child a battery-operated tealight candle. Invite them to cover the candle and uncover it 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 wonder about in the Micah story. Here are some conversation starters:

- ▼ Why do you think the people were afraid that God had forgotten them?
- ▼ What kind of place was Bethlehem?
- ▼ What did God promise the people through Micah?
- ▼ What kind of leader did God promise to send from Bethlehem?
- ▼ What might you expect from a leader who is like a shepherd?
- ▼ Why do you think we are reading this passage during the first Sunday of Advent?

### 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 L

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

Remind the children that Micah spoke about God's promise of peace. Engage the children in a conversation about what peace is and isn't. If not mentioned, suggest that peace can also be understood as wholeness or well-being (the meaning of the Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*).

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 acting 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.

### 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



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 fold the top down, sealing the tissue in place.
- ▼ Glue the dove to one side, and set it 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



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 one 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 side of the pyramid that folds nearest it.

Have the children take their ornaments 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.

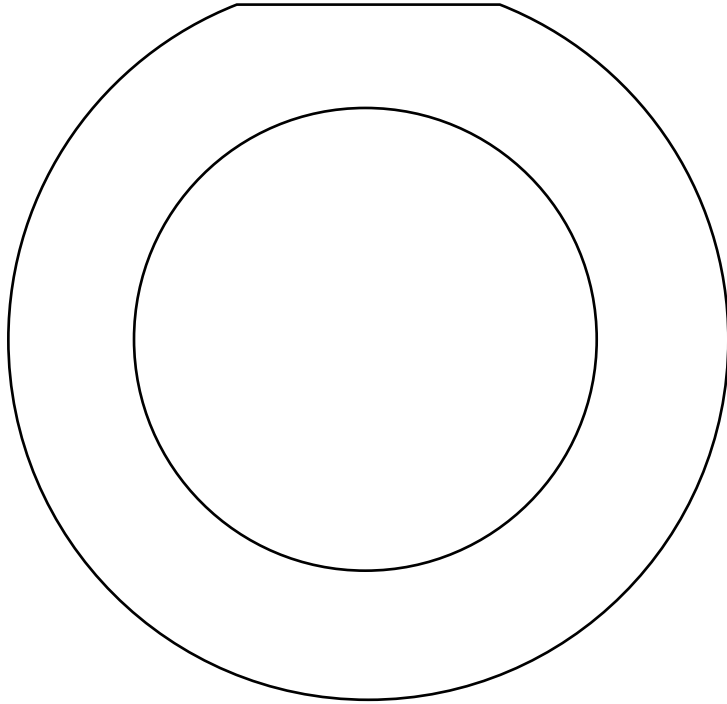
Encourage the children to go out into the world and spread the message with others.



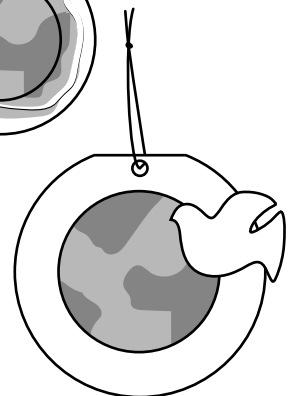
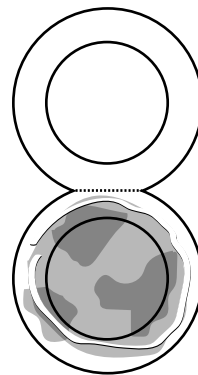
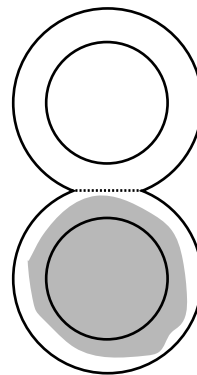
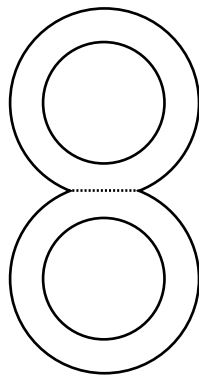
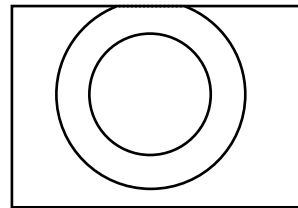
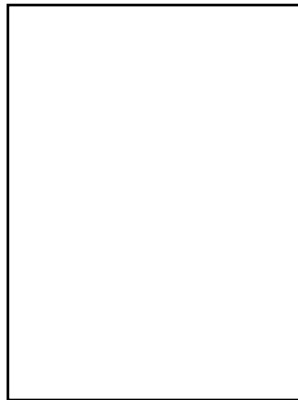
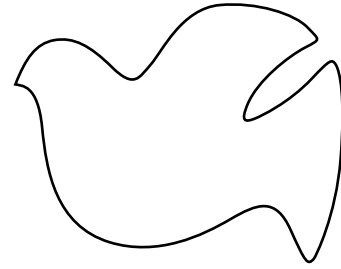
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads), where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).



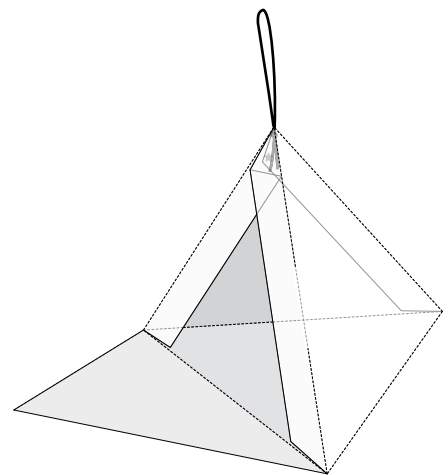
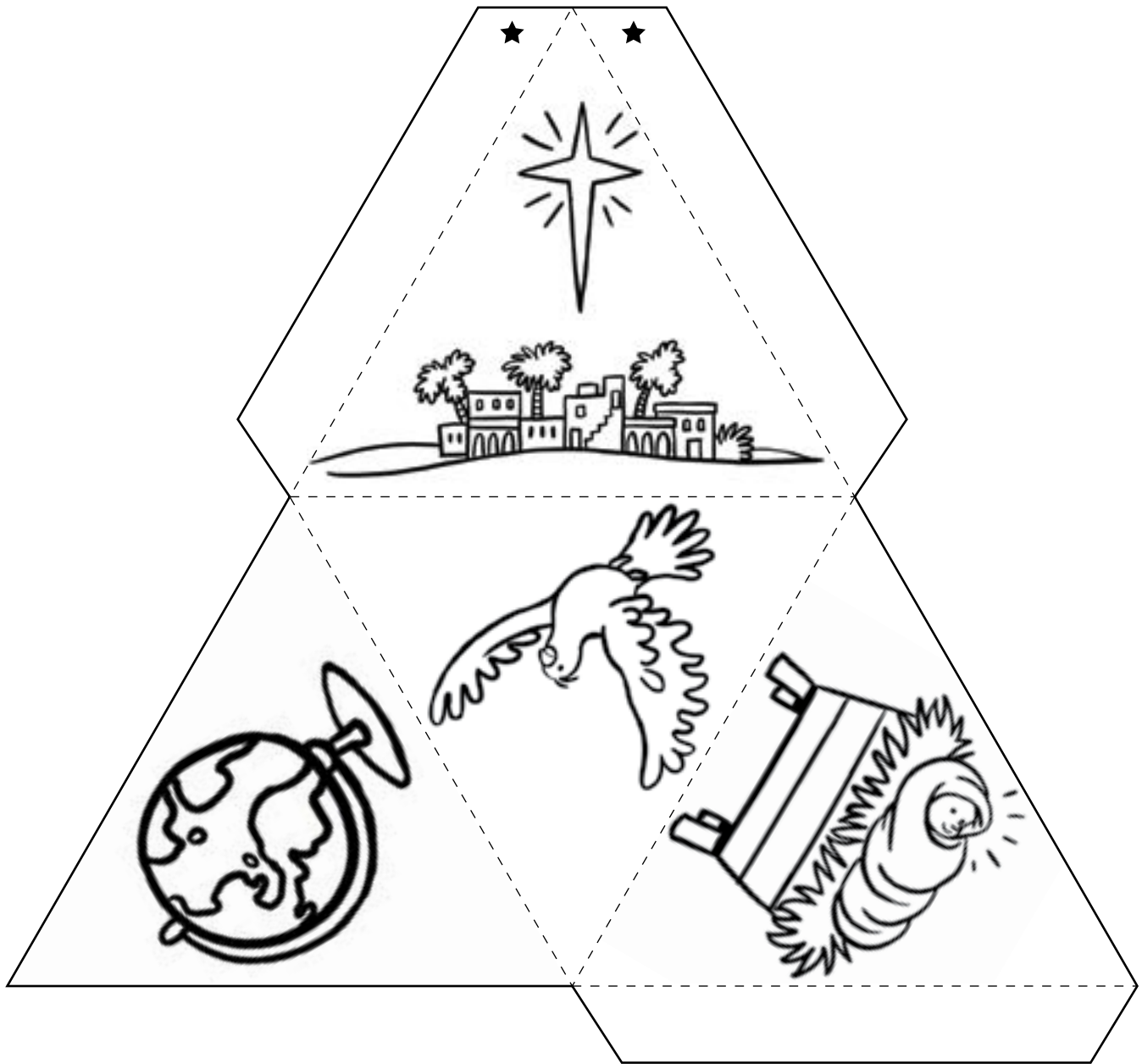
ornament pattern



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](http://bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies)

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 1, 21, 28

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

### Celebrating

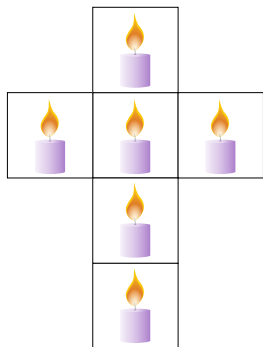
**Grace Notes (GN) 1**,  
fabric strips or dish  
towels

### Offering

copies of **GN 2**

### Extra

copies of **GN 3**



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

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on a clothespin. Use the schedule to provide clear expectations and a visual cue for the group.

See **SCM iii–iv** for the key to icons (for example, **LG T**) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

“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 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 each volunteer find these verses in the Bible, place the 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.

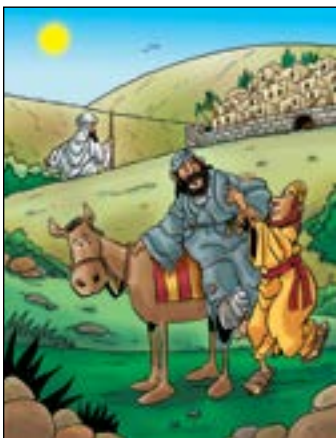
### Hearing the Story

**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 lawyer who tested Jesus was an expert in God's commandments and would have been raised in the Jewish religion. One of the first prayers he would have learned is the Shema (sheh-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 Leviticus 19:18, what we call the Golden Rule. Ask if anyone knows the Golden Rule. 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.



Challenge the children to listen for who lives out the Shema and the Golden Rule as you read the story aloud a second time using **SCM 1** or listen to the story audio. If reading, use your voice, expressions, feelings, and 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 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 28**—and practice the song. Encourage the children to sing the song in English and in Spanish.

Turn off the candles.

 *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.



### Celebrating God’s Grace

*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 1** 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 a long strip of fabric or dish towel on chair 6.*

Play a game to remember the story, what Jesus calls us to “go and do the same,” 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.



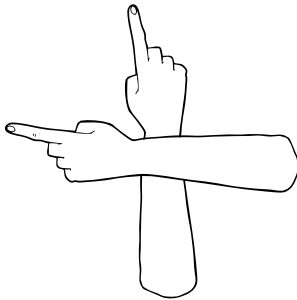
- The next person in line may begin when the person before them is at the fourth chair.
- No one may pass a person at a chair. One coming next may help a person but then must wait until that person has moved to the next chair.
- When all the children on a team have finished, they sit down and decide what the memorized words were and the order they were in (love, God, love, neighbor).
- When all 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

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



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

### Extra Activity

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

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

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD B

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

Listen to and sing “God Loves You, and I Love You (Dios te ama y yo te amo)”—**SCM 28**—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 with a blessing, “(Name), love God and love your neighbor. God’s love is with you.”



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

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 the strip of fabric or dish towel provided.
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.”

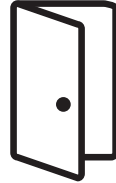


# My Simple Acts of Kindness

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.



---





