



Work for Peace and Justice

Goal: To learn what peace and fairness feel like.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Micah 4:1-8

Micah proclaims a promise for God's universal peace grounded in God's teachings and justice.

Micah believed God will transform the sinful world into a land of peace for nations and individuals. In "the days to come," people will stream to the house of the Lord on Mount Zion (v. 1, CEB). They come to learn God's ways and "walk in God's paths" (v. 2). God will instruct the people in God's law and will "judge between the nations and settle disputes of mighty nations" (v. 3).

An image of peace is captured: "They will beat their swords into iron plows and their spears into pruning tools. Nation will not take up sword against nation; they will no longer learn how to make war" (v. 3). Imagine, war no more! All will live in security with fullness of life (v. 4). Those driven away (into exile) will be restored (v. 6). New life emerges!

This is possible because "the Lord will rule over them on Mount Zion from now on and forever" (v. 7). We work for peace and justice now because God's reign is universal and eternal. God's future pulls us forward.

By God's grace, we receive this promise of a peaceable world grounded in God. We are grateful!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

The story of the prophet Micah and his words to God's people provide a great way to connect with children and their imaginations. Invite them to consider their response to a question such as, "What do you think the world would look like if we lived as God wanted us to live?" Younger children as well as older children will be able to respond with their ideas.

You can use this question and the children's responses as you connect with the story of the prophet Micah and his words from God to the people.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

As you prepare to tell the story of Micah and his words of prophecy to God's people, keep in mind the world in which the children are growing up. What has been in the news recently? Will the children have heard about events of violence? Imagine coming to them as Micah responded to the Israelites. What good news do you have to share? The story you will read to them invites children to hear responses about actions they can take in a world where God's peace is needed.

*O God, help me to work for justice, to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023-2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i-iv, 13, 19, 21

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 1: play kitchen
supplies

choice 2: plastic
tablecloth; tubs of dirt;
hand garden tools such
as hand-held shovels,
spades, rakes; small
pots

choice 3: floor pillows,
children's Bible
storybooks, picture
books, music player,
contemplative music

Exploring

choice 2: blocks, toy
people, toy animals

choice 3: copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1-3

choice 4: copies of **GN 4**

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.

Use **SCM i-ii**, "Your Visual 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!

"Exploring God's Grace" choice 3 requires more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet children as they arrive, and say, "Grace and peace be with you." Prompt them to respond, "And also with you." Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers that you do not know personally. Tell them that today's story is about the message that Micah—who was a prophet, a messenger for God—gave the people about a world of peace and justice. Invite the children to choose a guided-play activity to start:

1. **Making a Meal**—In a kitchen corner, or at a table, invite the children to make a meal for the class. Engage them in conversation using questions about what they are making, how many they are feeding, how many items they will need to feed everyone, how the table is set, and so forth. Don't worry if you don't have a kitchen corner or play kitchen items. Children are very imaginative. They know how to pretend, and kitchen play is very familiar to them. A table is enough for them to imagine a countertop, a stove, and a dining table.
2. **Garden Tools**—Spread a plastic tablecloth on the ground and place one or two tubs of dirt on the cloth. Invite the children to use garden hand tools, such as shovels, spades, and rakes. Provide small pots for them to fill and dump.
3. **Quiet Corner**—Some children need a place where they can learn to quiet themselves. This should be a space where there is little activity and that is designated for calm and quiet. Place pillows on the floor. Have children's Bible storybooks and picture books available. Play quiet music. Invite the children to sit quietly and listen to music or look at a book.



- T *Transitions can be difficult for children. Do not force reluctant children to join a group activity. Instead, allow them to observe quietly from their own play area or to listen to a story read to them by an adult helper until they are ready to join the group.*

Transitioning to Story Time

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, playing “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy”—**MM 22**.

Joy, Peace, and Love



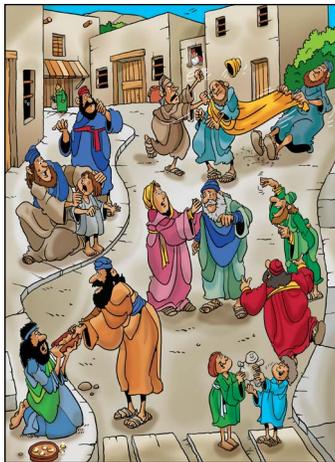
Listen to the song “I’ve Got the Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy”—**MM 22**; **SCM 19**—with the children. Then invite them to create motions for the words: *joy*, *peace*, *love*, and *heart*. Play the song again, inviting the children to sing along and use their motions as they sing each verse.

Follow Me



Invite the children to repeat each line after you and follow your motions.

- I am looking for God. (*cup hands around eyes*)
- I am following God. (*march in place*)
- I am learning to share. (*move both hands away from you with palms up*)
- I am being kind. (*hug a neighbor’s shoulder*)
- I am loving God. (*cross hands over chest*)



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



Open the Bible to Micah 4 so the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about the prophet Micah. Explain that a *prophet* is a person called by God to be God’s messenger. There were many prophets, and each one had an important message from God. Invite the children to listen for the message that Micah had for God’s people.

Read **SCM 13**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Read the story again using **SCM 13**. Invite the children to follow the directions provided in the story.



EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Practicing Peace

L M

Invite the children to sit on the floor with plenty of space between them. Use the following directions, pausing between each one, to lead them in a guided meditation.

- ▾ Close your eyes.
- ▾ Breathe in and out quietly through your nose.
- ▾ Listen to the quiet.
- ▾ With your eyes closed, imagine you are sitting in a field of green grass. There are trees and birds singing.
- ▾ God's creation is all around you.
- ▾ It is peaceful.
- ▾ Another place we can be peaceful is in God's house—the church.
- ▾ People are reading God's story.
- ▾ You hear Micah's message—people can be kind.
- ▾ I wonder, "How can you be kind?"
- ▾ Think quietly to yourself.
- ▾ It is peaceful.
- ▾ Now open your eyes.

Tell the children that this was a time to be peaceful. Tell them that they can do this anytime they can imagine a quiet, peaceful place.

2. Building a Home for All

F LG

Invite the children to use materials such as blocks, chairs, blankets, and pillows to create a home where all could live together peacefully. Talk with the children about their homes, who is in them, and how the people are getting along with one another. Then introduce more people or toy animals to their homes. Invite the children to add to their space to include the newcomers. Talk with them about how they made room for the newcomers and how they all get along.

LG *Providing opportunities for children to welcome others, offer help, and express generosity helps build their confidence. This also helps them learn that they are gifted members of your community.*

Be mindful of children who may not have a good home situation. Do not pressure them to answer. If there are stories that concern you, alert your pastor.



3. A House for All

FM LG

Note: One picture shows a woman wearing a head covering. She might be of a different faith tradition, or Christians in some parts of the world also wear head coverings. God welcomes all people, loves all people, and hears the prayers of all people.

Before the session, on a large sheet of mural paper, draw a simple house shape with a cross on top to represent a church, God's house.

Mix up copies of GN 1-3 and give each child one of the three sheets. Invite the children to color the two people on their page. When they are finished coloring, cut out the simple shapes of the people. Have the children take turns holding up their people to show to the rest of the group. Point out that the people they colored represent people from all around the world. Invite the children to bring their people to the mural of the church building you prepared. Have the children glue their people to the church building. Remind the children that God calls all people to God's house.

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.

4. Coloring Page

FM

Hand out copies of GN 4 and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation, using the following questions:

- I wonder, "Which people are not being kind?"
- I wonder, "Which people are being kind to others?"
- I wonder, "What could we do to offer kindness to others?"

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as pretending to be a tree, dig in a garden, or walk to church.*



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).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

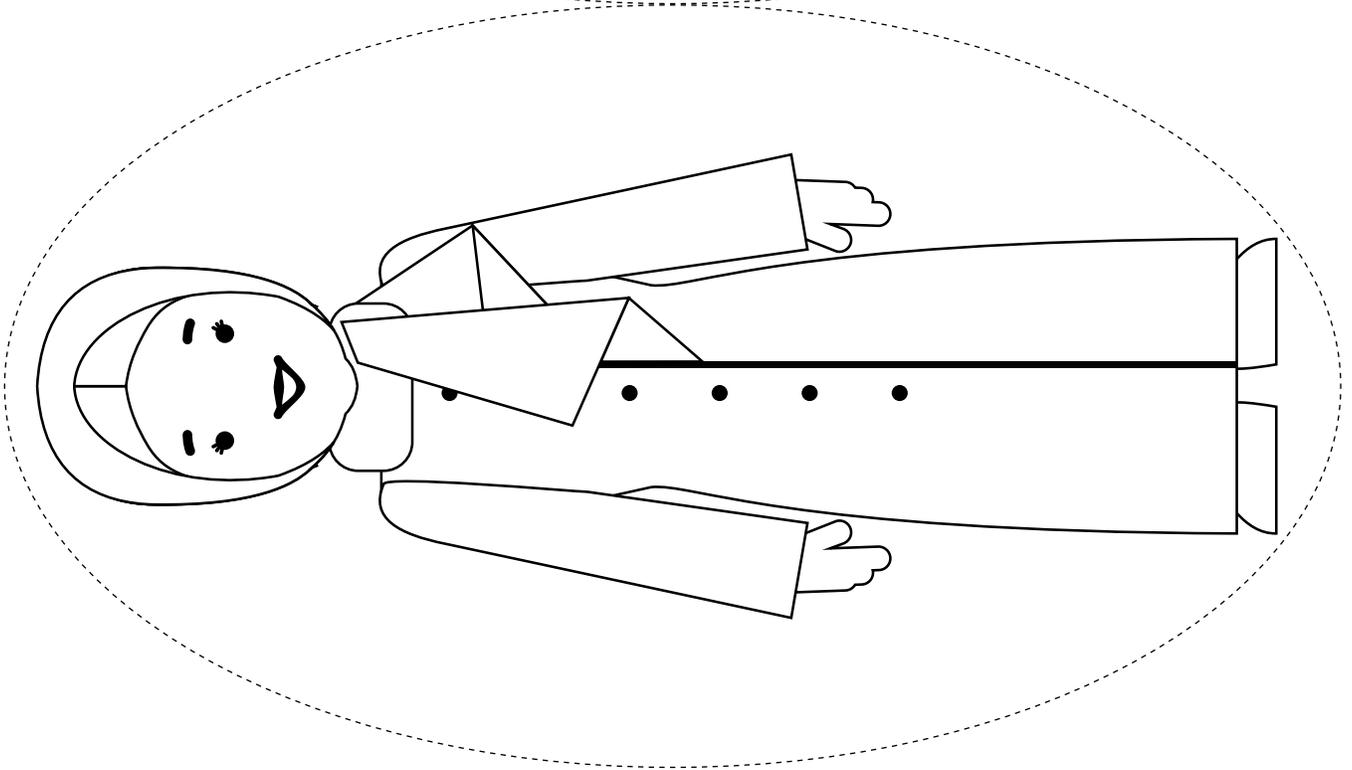
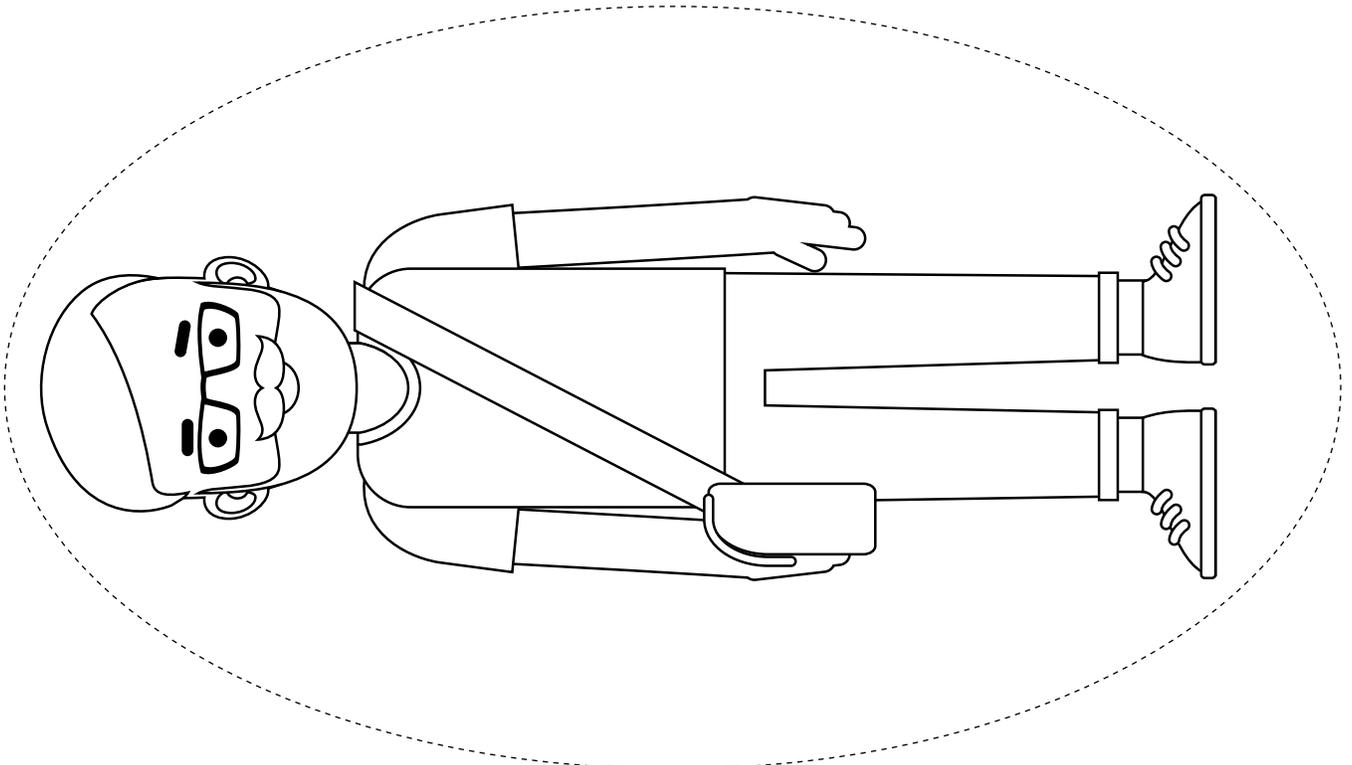
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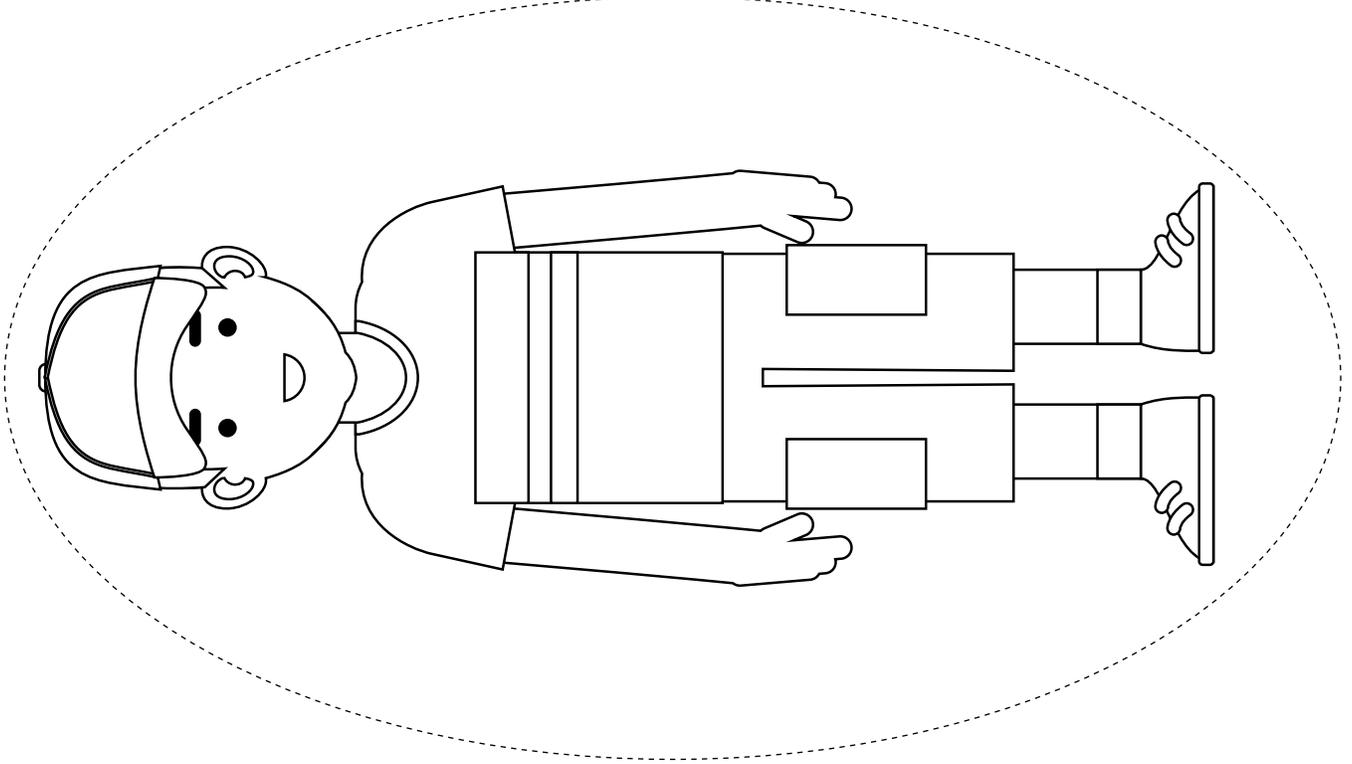
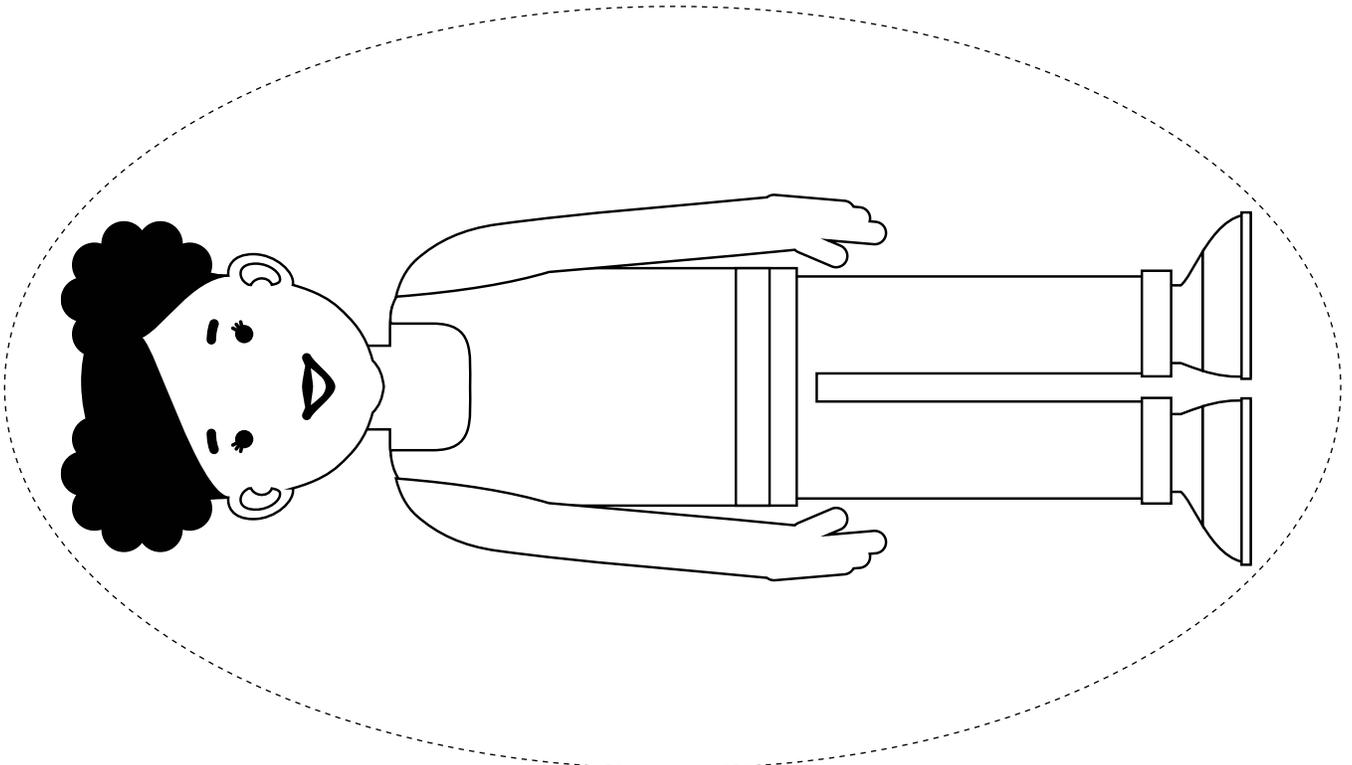
Call the children together, singing "Love"—MM 24; SCM 21. Repeat words and phrases as it seems appropriate. Ask the children how they will be kind today.

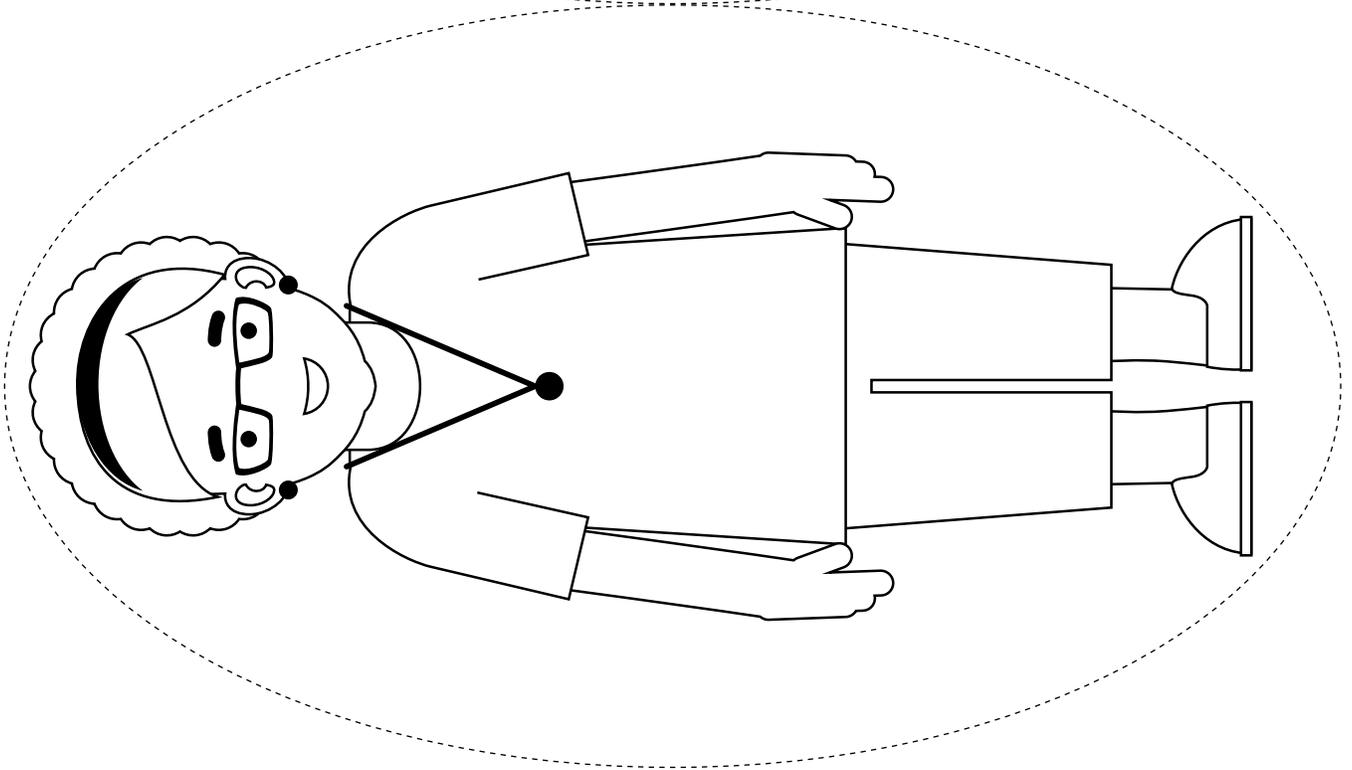
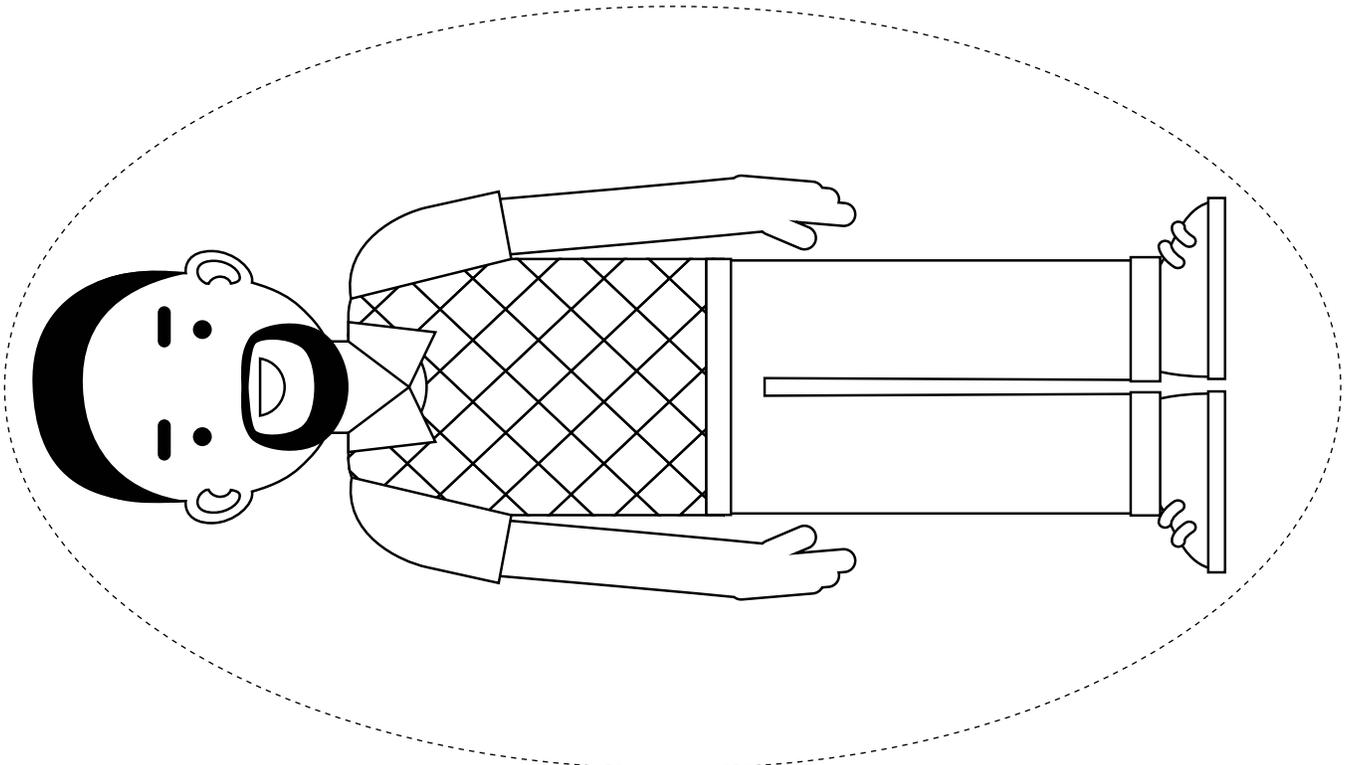
Call the children to snack time. Invite the children to repeat each line of the following prayer.

Dear God, thank you for food. /
 Help us to be kind to others /
 and share with others. /
 Amen. /

As the children leave, bless them. "(Name), follow God and be kind to others! Go in God's grace today."







Work for Peace and Justice



God's people are kind and share with others.

