



# Bring Him Gifts

**Goal: To learn and practice ways of sharing the grace of God in the world.**

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Matthew 2:1-12

The strangers from the East who came to King Herod in search of “the newborn king of the Jews” (v. 2, CEB) had followed a star that was leading them onward. After consulting with Herod, they set out for Bethlehem, where they were told the Messiah was to be born, and “the star they had seen in the east went ahead of them until it stood over the place where the child was” (v. 9, CEB).

The star was a means of God's grace in leading the magi onward, toward being able to worship the baby Jesus. It was God's way of providing direction so those outside the people of Israel could pay homage to the savior of the world. How grateful the magi were for that star!

Symbolically, God continues to provide stars to steer our lives. They are means of grace to help us worship and serve Jesus Christ. They give direction and light our ways. In the church, Scripture and sacraments are means of God's grace. We have the church community and our faith traditions.

We can also be means of grace to others. God's grace can work through us to give light and provide direction to others. We are grateful!

### . . . In Your Children's Experiences

The magi followed a star. The light of the star led them to the child Jesus, and they offered their gifts. Children are eager to both learn and practice ways of offering their gifts and sharing the light of Christ in the world. They respond to spiritual practices and disciplines that illuminate the presence of God in their lives. Their families are committed to raising their children according to the Christian faith and have made decisions about the stars to follow and guide their lives: hearing and responding to God's Word with others in community.

### . . . In Your Relationships with the Children

For children who are back in school and who no longer see the decorations in the stores or hear carols on the radio, Christmas was over days ago. However, in the church the celebration of Christmas doesn't end until Epiphany (January 6). Today, as the children hear the story of magi bringing gifts to Jesus, they will have the opportunity to think about the gifts they can present to Jesus.

As you prepare to meet the children, pray for them. Remember that you are a light in their lives. You are a presence of grace, representing the light of God's love for them. Leaders like you give them support and direction. It is such a simple, yet astounding fact: As children know and experience grace, they then can share grace with others. Light a candle each day this week as you pray for each child.

*God, guide me into the wonders of grace and light  
that I may lead your children into your truth. Amen.*



## Supplies

**Music & Melodies**  
(MM) 2023–2024

**Stories, Colors & More**  
(SCM) i–iv, 5, 5a, 20, 21

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

white cloth

white candle

three boxes

shiny or glittery  
wrapping paper

*Home by Another Way*  
by Barbara Brown Taylor  
(Flyaway Books, 2018)  
(optional)

## Responding

### Celebrating

apples, cutting board,  
knife

### Offering

copies of **Grace Notes**  
(GN) 1 and GN 2,  
ingredients for cookies  
on GN 1, oven, mixing  
bowl, measuring cups,  
mixer, spoons, baking  
sheet(s), parchment  
paper, cooling rack,  
ziplock bags

### Extra

copies of GN 3

## GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Post **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.

If you will be baking cookies for “Offering God’s Grace,” look at the recipe on **GN 1** and determine the amount of ingredients you will need for the quantity of cookies you would like to bake. You may want to start the session with the activity and proceed through the session as the cookies are baking.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” and “Offering God’s Grace” require more prep.

### Welcoming and Preparing



Greet the children by name and with the words “Grace and peace be with you.” Prompt them to respond with the same words.

Invite the children to set up the room. Suggest they create a house scene with a small table and chairs. Have them decorate or wrap three boxes as special gifts and make a star and hang it above the house. Encourage the children to set up a worship space in the house. Include a Bible, a white cloth, and a white candle.

Play “We Three Kings”—**MM 11**—as the group works. Comment that the kings mentioned in the song are called *magi* in today’s Bible story. The Bible does not say how many magi, or wise ones, visited Jesus; however, the song writer imagined three.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing.

**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?”*

### Singing

Invite the group to sit around the house scene. Admire the efforts of the children to create today’s worship space.

Sing “We Three Kings”—**MM 11**; **SCM 21**. As you sing, point out the words on **SCM 21** so the children can sing along. Invite them to create movements for the refrain of the song.

### Praying



Turn on the white candle. Wonder why we light a white candle during the Christmas season.

Invite the children to join an echo prayer. Perhaps a confident reader could lead the prayer today.



Dear God, /  
fill us with your Spirit. /  
Fill us with your light. /  
In Jesus Christ, our Lord. /  
Amen. /

### Preparing to Hear the Story

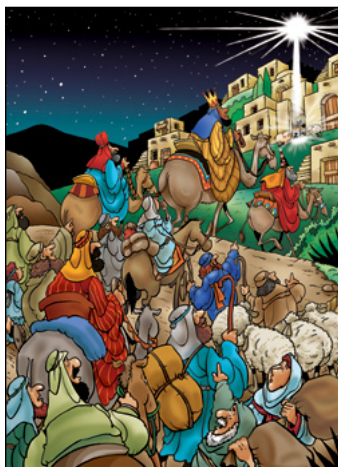
C VI

Play a name game. Indicate the person on your right, saying, “This is my friend (*Name*). Welcome to my home.”

That child turns to the next person and does the same thing. Continue until everyone has a turn. Play a second time, but have each person introduce the person on the left and say their name.

After the game, invite the children to look at **SCM 5a**. Suggest that the picture includes symbols of the visit of the magi, or wise ones, that will be in the story. See if they can identify some of the items: gifts for Jesus (gold, frankincense, or myrrh), camels, star, and kings.

Seeing where the story is found in the Bible reinforces the importance of this book for the church.



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

M L

Invite a child to find Matthew 2 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Read **SCM 5**. Conclude the reading by saying, “Word of wisdom, Word of grace,” and prompt the children to say, “Thanks be to God.”

Read the story again using **SCM 5** or listen to the story audio. Invite the children to do the corresponding actions when they hear the following words:

- ▼ magi—place hands in an L-shape, lower onto head like a crown
- ▼ star(s)—hold pointer finger up on both hands, rub sides of fingers together up and down overhead
- ▼ baby, child, Jesus, or born—pretend to rock a baby in arms
- ▼ gifts—hold hands out as if offering a gift

### Reflecting on God’s Grace

M C

Explain that the visit of the magi is a day in the life of the church called *Epiphany*, which means “manifestation,” a big word to mean that God made Jesus known as God’s gift to the whole world. Comment that, in some countries, people give gifts or do something kind on Epiphany, the twelfth day after Christmas (January 6). They remember the magi who traveled a long way to bring gifts to Jesus.

Encourage the children to think of gifts they can give that would honor Jesus: gifts of service to the church (picking up bulletins after church), to the family (helping clear the dishes), to the community (picking up trash along the sidewalk or road), or to other children (sharing games or toys; offering kind words). Hand out index cards and invite the children to draw a picture of their gift to honor Jesus. Have them put their cards on the worship table as a gift to Jesus.



### Singing

Sing “We Three Kings”—**MM 11; SCM 21**—to celebrate the joy of God’s gift of Jesus. Use the motions created earlier for the refrain.

Turn the candle off.

**T** *For children who struggle with transitions, this may be a good time for an adult helper to model and encourage appropriate responses.*

## RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

### Claiming God’s Grace

**FM**

Give each child a paper bag. Invite the children to decorate the bags with designs that remind them of today’s Bible story.

Punch holes in the tops of the bags. Tie ribbon through the holes to make a handle for each bag.

Invite the children to review the index cards on the worship table and then to put their card in their gift bag.

Encourage the children to take home their gift bags as reminders to give gifts of service that honor Jesus.



### Celebrating God’s Grace

**FA**

God’s creation offers everyday reminders of God’s grace. Invite the children to watch as you cut apples in half crosswise through the center, revealing a star shape in the seed area of the core. Wonder what the star in the apple reminds us of (the star that the magi followed to find Jesus).

Ask a volunteer to pray a prayer of thanks for food before eating the apples. Talk about ways to shine like a star by helping others learn about Jesus. Encourage children to show their families the star inside an apple and tell the story of the magi visiting Jesus.

**TD** *Some children struggle with touch and feeling messy. Give advance warning and provide options such as crayons or markers for drawing. Allow the child to wash their hands often if needed.*



### Offering God’s Grace

**FA TD**

Suggest that, when we learn about God’s grace and know how much God loves us, we want to do something to say “thank you.” We can thank God by giving gifts to others.

Recall from the story that the magi brought gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Jesus. Explain what those gifts were.

- ▼ Gold was offered to Jesus as a king.
- ▼ Frankincense was burned to create a sweet-smelling aroma used in worship.



- ▼ Myrrh was used as an anointing oil—often when someone died—but also as a healing balm. It is thought to represent Jesus’ death and burial that would happen one day.

Just as the magi gave gifts to celebrate the birth of Jesus, the children may celebrate Jesus by making Epiphany cookies to share with others. Use the recipe on **GN 1**.

Set out the ingredients, telling the children what each one represents in the Epiphany story. Invite the children to take turns adding and mixing ingredients, as well as placing the cookie dough on the baking sheet. Give assignments for keeping the baking time and removing the cookies from the baking sheets.

When the cookies have cooled, divide them among the children. Have the children place their cookies in a ziplock bag along with a card cut from **GN 2**. Send home copies of **GN 1** with the children so they can make the cookies with their families as well.

### Extra Activity



Tell the children that they will make a book that looks like a star and tells the story of the wise ones who followed the star to visit baby Jesus.

Hand out copies of **GN 3**. Ask a volunteer to read each panel, pausing for children to draw the responses to the prompts. Have the children cut the two story strips and make one long strip by taping together the end of the first strip tab (the wise ones following the star) to the beginning of the next strip (“They went over mountains . . .”).

When they have finished, show them how to fold their strip accordion-style on the dashed lines beginning with the star on top. Assist as needed. Have the children tape the end of the story tab (“. . . gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”) to the picture of the star. The story now forms a star book!

Encourage the children to take home their books and tell the story of the wise ones following the star to their parents, or caregivers, and families.

## LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Gather the children and lead them in cleaning the worship space.

Invite the children to tell their favorite part of the story about the magi visiting Jesus or read aloud *Home by Another Way* by Barbara Brown Taylor for another telling of the magi story.

Sing “What Child Is This?”—**MM 10; SCM 20**.

Give each child a blessing. Say to each one: “(Name), shine like a star and guide people to Jesus this week. The grace of God is with you.”



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](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads). Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).



## Epiphany Cookies

**Ingredients** (makes approximately 18 cookies)

- ½ cup softened butter and 1 egg—when mixed and fluffy, represent the sheep the magi passed in the fields
- 1 tsp vanilla—represents the sweet aroma of spices
- ⅓ cup packed brown sugar—represents the brown hills of Bethlehem
- ⅓ cup white sugar—represents the snow on the hills on a cold winter's night
- 1¼ cup flour, mixed with ½ tsp baking soda and ½ tsp salt—represent the simplicity of the shepherds in their fields watching their flocks
- ½ cup rolled oats—represent the food fed to the camels that carried the magi on their journey
- ½ cup chopped nuts, walnuts or pecans (optional)—represent the rocky roads the magi traveled
- ½ cup white chocolate chips—represent the stars in the sky
- ½ cup dried cranberries—represent the gifts the magi carried with them

### Directions

Prepare for the journey:

- Heat the oven to 350 degrees and line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

On your way:

- In a medium bowl, beat together the softened butter, egg, and vanilla until fluffy.
- Add the brown sugar and white sugar. Mix until fluffy.
- Add the flour mixture and rolled oats. Mix well.
- Mix in the nuts (optional), white chocolate chips, and dried cranberries.

Almost there:

- Drop heaping spoonfuls on the parchment-covered baking sheet.
- Bake for 8–10 minutes, or until lightly browned.
- Remove from baking sheet and cool on cooling rack.

Give the gifts:

- Place two, or more, cookies in ziplock bags. Tape Epiphany Cookies card to bag.
- Give as a gift to someone!
- Enjoy a cookie for yourself, giving thanks to God for the gift of Jesus.









### Epiphany Cookies

These cookies were made as a gift to you to remind you of the story of the magi visiting the baby Jesus, God's gift to the world.

- ★ The butter and egg, when mixed and fluffy, represent the sheep the magi passed in the fields.
- ★ The vanilla represents the sweet aroma of spices.
- ★ The brown sugar represents the brown hills of Bethlehem.
- ★ The white sugar represents the snow on the hills on a cold winter's night.
- ★ The flour represents the simplicity of the shepherds in their fields watching their flocks.
- ★ The rolled oats represent the food fed to the camels that carried the magi on their journey.
- ★ The chopped nuts, walnuts or pecans (optional), represent the rocky roads the magi traveled.
- ★ The white chocolate chips represent the stars in the sky.
- ★ The dried cranberries represent the gifts the magi carried with them.



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<p>Draw a bright star.</p>	<p>Wise people from far away found a new bright star in the night sky.</p>	<p>Draw the wise ones.</p>	<p>“It’s the birth of a new king!” said one of the wise ones. “We must go meet this king!” said another.</p>	<p>Draw the wise ones following the star.</p>
<p>They went over mountains . . . and crossed rivers . . . and traveled through deserts . . . following the star.</p>	<p>King Herod did not want a new king to take his place, so he tried to trick the wise ones to tell him where this new king was.</p>	<p>Draw the baby Jesus with the gifts from the wise ones.</p>	<p>The wise ones knelt before Jesus, saying words of praise and thanksgiving. They gave Jesus their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.</p>	<p>Draw an angry King Herod.</p>

