



God's Promise of Peace

Goal: To practice God's message of peace.

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

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i-iv, 1, 18, 19

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blankets or mats

Advent wreath with five
battery-operated votive
candles

snack (optional)

Guided Play

choice 2: pillows,
children's books about
the birth of Jesus,
Christmas music

choice 3: child-friendly
Nativity set

Exploring

choice 1: copies of **Grace
Notes (GN) 1** and **GN 2**

choice 3: copies of **GN 3**,
8-ounce paper cups

choice 4: copies of **GN 4**

Book suggestions:

- *Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible* by Elizabeth F. Caldwell and Carol A. Wehrheim, www.pcusasstore.com.
- *Something Beautiful* by Sharon Dennis Wyeth

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

Designate a story corner and lay out a blanket or individual mats for the children so their backs will be to the door.

Post **SCM i-ii**, "Your Visual Schedule." Cut out and glue the arrow marker onto 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.

Select the activities that will work best for you and your children. You do not need to do everything suggested!

Obtain an Advent wreath with five battery-operated votive candles. This is the first Sunday of Advent, and we celebrate peace.

Welcoming and Guided Play



Greet the children as they arrive and say, "Grace and peace be with you." Prompt them to respond, "And also with you." Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time.

Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers who you do not know personally. Explain to them that the children will hear a story from Micah's message to the people of God about a child who will be born and who will bring peace to the world.

Invite the children to choose a guided play activity to start:

1. **Blocks**—Invite the children to use blocks to build the little town of Bethlehem where Jesus was born. Invite them to include a stable or barn for Jesus.
2. **Story Corner**—Place pillows on the floor. Have children's books about the birth of Jesus available. Play quiet Christmas music. Invite the children to sit quietly, listen to music, or look at a book.
3. **Playing with a Nativity Set**—Invite children to play with the characters and animals of a nativity set.

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 the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “Come into God’s Presence”—SCM 18. Repeat words and phrases as appropriate.

If You’re Wearing . . .



Say or sing the following song to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.” Call the children to the circle with the song. Invite the children to respond when they hear a color they are wearing. Repeat with different colors until all the children have gathered.

If you’re wearing (*color*) today, (*color*) today, (*color*) today,
if you’re wearing (*color*) today, come and sit right here.

Tell the children that it is the season of Advent, a time for getting ready for Christmas. Chant the phrase “Let’s get ready, Jesus is coming.” Clap or use a rhythm instrument to keep the beat. Invite the children to chant with you. Repeat the chant several times, starting softly and becoming louder.

Place an Advent wreath on a table with four votive candles in the circle of the wreath and one in the center. Turn on the first candle. Tell the children that Advent is a time of preparing and waiting for the birthday of Jesus. The candle for today reminds us that Jesus gives us peace.

Where Is Micah?



Say or sing the following song to the tune of “Frère Jacques.” Invite the children to respond with the bolded lines.

Where is Micah? **Where is Micah?**
In the Bible! **In the Bible!**
Let us hear his story. **Let us hear his story.**
Tell us more! **Tell us more!**

T *Transitioning from an activity with movement to a quiet or listening one can be difficult for some children. Alerting them of the change in advance, such as saying, “After this we will listen to a story,” allows children time to anticipate the change and act accordingly.*



A listening prayer, used in "Hearing the Story," is an exercise in which you can help the children to notice that God is present with them, even when they don't realize it. Being silent can help them to quiet themselves and to open their hearts to receive the word of God.



Hearing the Story



Pray a listening prayer together by encouraging the children to sit comfortably and take a few slow, deep breaths to quiet themselves. They can close their eyes or focus on the lighted candle on the Advent wreath. After a time of quiet, invite everyone to say, "Come, Jesus." After a moment, say, "God is always with us. Amen."

Open the Bible to Micah 5 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, a messenger of God, and his message about a ruler who will be born in Bethlehem and bring peace to the world.

Read **SCM 1**. Express the emotions of the story in your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, "Amen." After you have read the story, invite the children to repeat after you with the following call and response.

The people were sad.

Boo-hoo!

The message was hope.

Woo-hoo!

Who will come?

A baby!

Where will he come?

Bethlehem.

What will he bring?

Peace.

Amen!

Amen!

Turn off the candle.

EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE

1. Bethlehem Book



Give the children copies of **GN 1** and **GN 2**. Have the children look at the pictures and tell you about them, if they are able. Explain what the pictures show: 1) the people of God are sad; 2) Micah, a messenger of God, has good news; 3) baby Jesus will be born in Bethlehem and he will bring peace to the world; and 4) the people of God are happy.

Invite the children to color the pictures. When they have finished coloring, help the children to cut apart the pictures and put them in sequence. Staple the pages together.

FM *To help children build fine motor skills, encourage enjoyment in activity participation instead of focusing on a "successful" outcome such as whether a coloring is in the lines or not.*



2. Bethlehem Song



Say or sing the following song to the tune of “Mary Had a Little Lamb.” Invite the children to join in with you and follow your actions.

(pretend to bounce on a donkey)

Mary rode a donkey, a donkey, a donkey.
Mary rode a donkey going to Bethlehem.

(walk in place)

Joseph walked beside her, beside her, beside her.
Joseph walked beside her going to Bethlehem.

(pretend to rock a baby)

Mary had a baby boy, a baby boy, a baby boy.
Mary had a baby boy right there in Bethlehem.

(cup a hand beside your mouth as if you are calling someone)

The baby's name was Jesus, was Jesus, was Jesus.
The baby's name was Jesus right there in Bethlehem.

(move your arms in a wide circle)

Jesus brought peace to the world, to the world, to the world.
Jesus brought peace to the world right there in Bethlehem.

3. A King Is Coming



Before the session, make a small cut in the bottom of an 8-ounce paper cup for each child.

Hand out a copy of **GN 3** to each child. Invite them to color the world and the baby Jesus. When the children have finished coloring, help them cut out both pieces.

Remind the children that Micah said a king would come who would bring peace to the world. The king is the baby Jesus. Tape their Jesus to a craft stick and set it aside.

Give each child a paper cup and invite them to tape their world around the cup. Help the children push their craft stick through the cut in the bottom of the cup with the baby Jesus inside the cup. Show the children how to push the baby Jesus up and say, “Micah said, ‘A king is coming who will bring peace to the world!’”

Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wonder questions help a child think aloud. Answers are neither right nor wrong. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.

4. Coloring Page

Hand out **GN 4** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture of Micah telling about the king that will be born in Bethlehem. Engage the children in conversation as they color, using the following wondering questions.

- ▼ I wonder, “Why don’t the people look happy?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What was the little town of Bethlehem like?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How does peace feel?”

T *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as moving arms in circles, jumping up and down, wiggling fingers, and so forth.*

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

FA

Call the children together, and listen to “He Came Down”—**SCM 19**. Focus on the stanza that says that he came down so that we might have peace. Sing that stanza and encourage the children to create a movement for the word *peace* and make it part of their singing. The movement can be free-form.

Remind the children that Micah had a message of hope for the people of God. He told them that a king would come and bring peace to the whole world.

If you would like to share a snack, now would be a good time. Pray:

God, we give our thanks:
for food that fills our bellies,
for time with friends and family,
for homes where we find love,
we give our thanks for these.
Amen.

As the children leave, invite them to find ways to get along with friends this week. Bless them: “(Name), God’s peace 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, where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).







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Micah tells the people that God's peace will come from Bethlehem.

