



# Everything Begins with God

**Goal:** To extend God's gracious welcome to all people.

## RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

### . . . In Isaiah 56:1-8

Isaiah looks to the future. In this magnificent vision, God embraces all nations and extends God's covenant agreement. God says, "My house will be known as a house of worship for all nations." Here is God's gracious love for which we can be grateful!

To people who had returned from exile in Babylon and were unsure about their land and future, the words of the prophet provided hope. A new community will be formed by God and "God's people" will be widened as God's glory is demonstrated to the world. The promises begin with God saying: "Soon I will come to save you; my saving power will be seen everywhere on earth" (v. 1).

The coming glory of God begins with God's actions among the people. God will act to save in the future as God has acted to save in the past. Everything begins with God!

Those who had been outside God's holy people will now come in (vv. 3-7). God promises "to bring together my people who were taken away, and let them join the others" (v. 8).

This wonderful description of God extending grace to all nations brings forth our gratitude to God!

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

Children begin a new school year in August or September each year by greeting old friends from previous years and meeting new children who are in their class. Every year teachers work to help form these children into a new community. Children may experience varieties of abilities, ethnicities, and even languages. The kind of experiences a child has when she or he has a chance to live and learn in a diverse setting provides a great context for hearing this story of Isaiah's vision for the future. Just as God extends grace and welcome to all nations, so we too can extend God's love to all of the people we meet.

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

Be aware of the experiences your children are having with difference or diversity. Perhaps there is even diversity of abilities, or race, or first languages in your class. The story of Isaiah's vision of God's gracious welcome to all people can be explored by inviting children to talk about their experiences of being welcomed or welcoming someone who is different from them. The community that God envisions is not always easy and requires hard work. Invite children to name the good things and the hard things required of living in God's way.

*Thank you, God, for making me and the children givers and gifts.  
Strengthen us to be bearers of hope and joy. Amen!*



## Supplies

### Music & Melodies

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

### Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 13, 17, 22

basic supplies  
(see p. vii)

internet-connected  
device

blanket or mats

snack

## Guided Play

choice 2: puzzles

choice 3: blocks or toys

## Exploring

choice 1: red tissue  
paper

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

choice 3: copies of **GN 2**

choice 4: copies of **GN 3**

Each child taking a turn doing one activity, such as putting together a puzzle, teaches patience and cooperation. It is a way of learning to share.

## 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 option 1 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.” Be sensitive to any children who might be coming for the first time. Introduce yourself to parents/caregivers that you do not know personally. Tell the parents today’s story is about Isaiah, a messenger of God, who gives the people of God a message of hope. Invite the children to choose a guided play activity to start:

1. **Welcome Banner**—Make a banner with large outline letters spelling the word “WELCOME!” Tell the children that today’s story has a message about welcoming people. Invite the children to color the large letters spelling out “WELCOME!” Invite the children to help you tape the banner to a wall in your room or outside your door.
2. **Puzzles**—Put a puzzle out on the table. Give each child a piece of the puzzle. Invite the children to take turns putting in their piece of the puzzle. Repeat with the same puzzle or another puzzle.
3. **Acknowledging Sharing**—Invite the children to play with blocks or toys. Pay attention to sharing as it happens among the children. Acknowledge and praise sharing. Ring a bell and say the child’s name. Children will want to be seen and acknowledged, and will begin to do acts of sharing.

**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

M MS

When you sense the children are ready to move into group time, call them to the story corner, singing “God Is So Good”—**SCM 17**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate.

### We Are God’s Family

Say the action poem:

You and you and you and you (*point to those in the circle*)  
Are part of God’s big family. (*hug yourself*)  
I stretch my arms to hold you all, (*stretch arms around each child on each side*)  
A great big circle we will be. (*all hold hands together*)  
God’s arms reach around the world (*stretch arms out wide*)  
And hold each child in loving care. (*hug yourself*)  
For God gives us all we need each day (*pat yourself on the head*)  
And God loves it when we share. (*hug yourself and then stretch arms out wide*)

### Call and Response

Go around the circle, saying to each child, “(Name), you are God’s messenger. You can tell others about God!” Ask each child to respond, “I am God’s messenger. I can tell others about God.”

Tell them that they are going to hear a story about one of God’s messengers and his message to God’s people.

### Hearing the Story

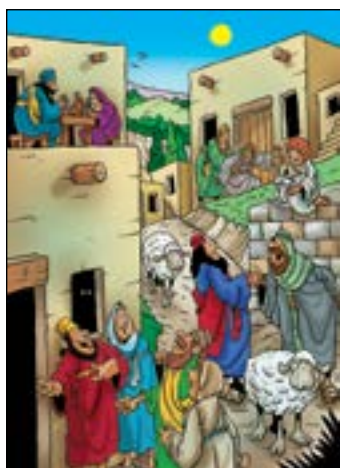
L C

Open the Bible to Isaiah 56:1–8 so that the children know the story comes from the Bible. Tell the children that they are going to hear a story about Isaiah’s message of hope and love.

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. Invite the children to wave their hands in the air and make exclamations such as “Wheel!” and “Yay!” when they hear the word “promise.”

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).





## EXPLORING GOD'S GRACE



Don't feel like you should draw continent shapes and oceans or tell the children where the blue and green colors go. Allow children to paint their world freely with blue and green paint. Their pictures will look like a world to them.



### 1. A New World of Love

FM

*Before the session, cut a heart out of red tissue paper for each child.*

Put a paint smock on each child. Hand the children a sheet of white construction paper and have the children draw a large circle filling the page. Give the children the paper with the circle on it and green and blue paint. Invite the children to paint a world. Tell them they are making a picture of God's world of love. When they are finished painting, give them the red tissue paper heart to lay on the world. The tissue paper will stick to the paint as it dries. Set aside to dry.

### 2. Putting the Puzzle Together

FM

Cut out the puzzle shape from **GN 1** for each child. Give the puzzle shapes to the children and invite them to color them as they wish. Write each child's name in marker on their puzzle piece. Invite the children to bring their puzzle pieces to a wall where you can tape them. Place a rolled up piece of tape on the back of each puzzle piece and invite the children to take turns coming to the wall. Help them to place their puzzle piece to fit together in the puzzle. As each child places their piece on the wall, say, "(Name), you are a piece of our community of love."

### 3. Welcome All

MS

Remind the children that Isaiah's message from God was to welcome all people. Give each child a copy of **GN 2** and invite them to color their paper dolls. Fold the copy in thirds at the wide dashes and then in half again at the narrow dashes. Cut out the paper doll shape making a paper doll chain of three dolls for each child. Go around the church with the children and help them tape their paper doll chains to doors, walls, pews, other places where people will see them. The children are the messengers!

Use “wonder” questions that do not force a child to remember facts. Wondering questions help a child think aloud. They help teach children to speak from their hearts.

#### 4. Coloring Page

Hand out **GN 3** and crayons. Invite the children to color the picture. Engage the children in conversation as they color using the following wondering questions:

- ▼ I wonder, “Who can we invite to come to church?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How can we make people feel welcome here?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How can we show love to others?”

**T** *Transitions can be difficult. This may be a good time for some quick physical activities, such as wiggling toes, wiggling fingers, wiggling all over, and so forth.*

### LOVING AND SERVING GOD

**LG FA**

Call the children together, singing “We Are Growing”—**SCM 22**. Repeat words and phrases as seems appropriate. Remind the children of what Isaiah said: God will bring people together in peace, and when we welcome others, we will start to see God’s promise.

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

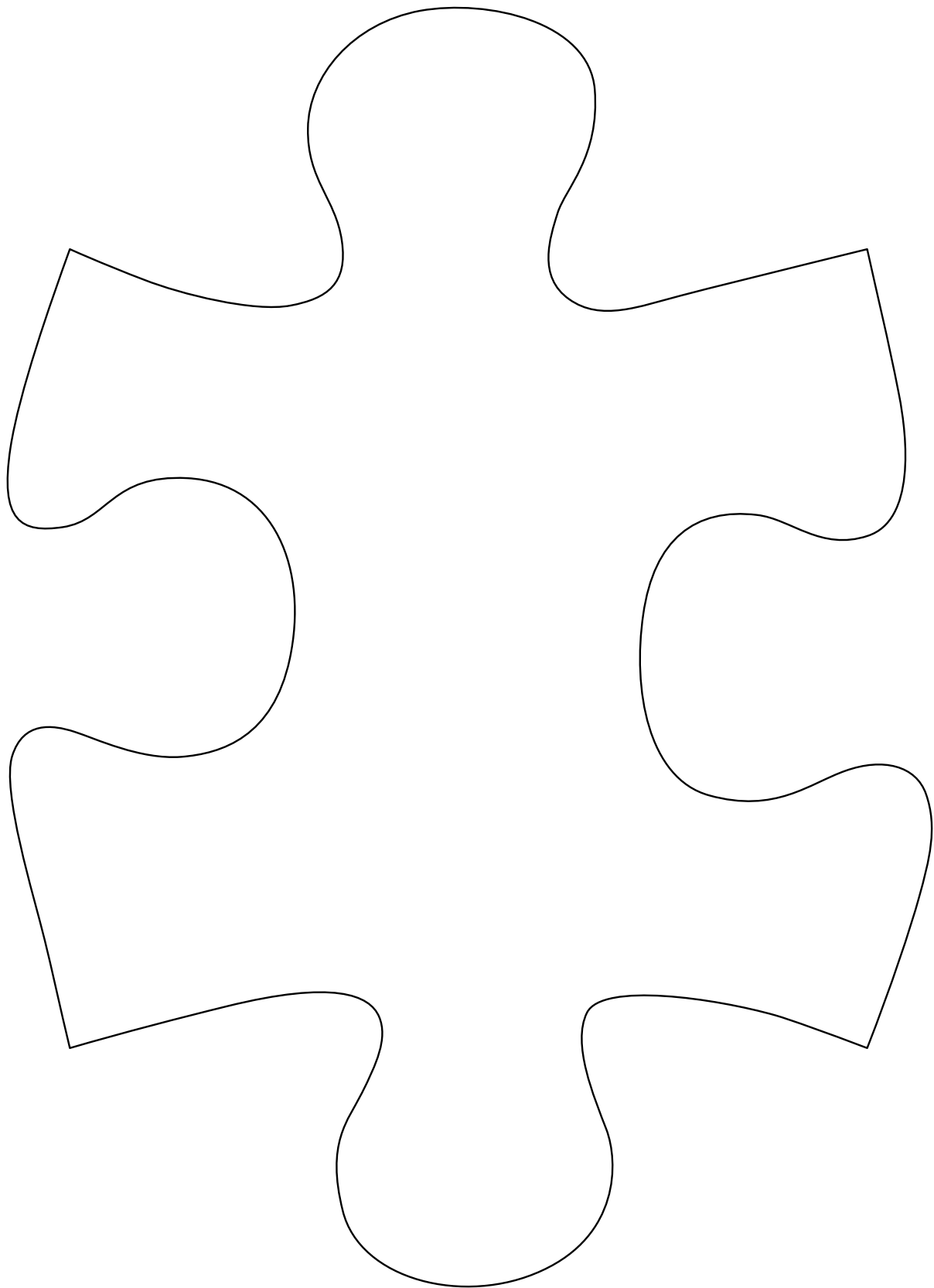
A, B, C, D, E, F, G. Thank you God for feeding me.  
H, I, J, K. Hear us pray.  
L, M, N, O. Here we go.  
P, Q, R, S, T, U, V. Thank you God for hearing me.  
W, X, Y, and Z. Thank you God for loving me.  
Amen!

As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), the peace of Christ is with you.” Prompt them to say, “And also with you.”



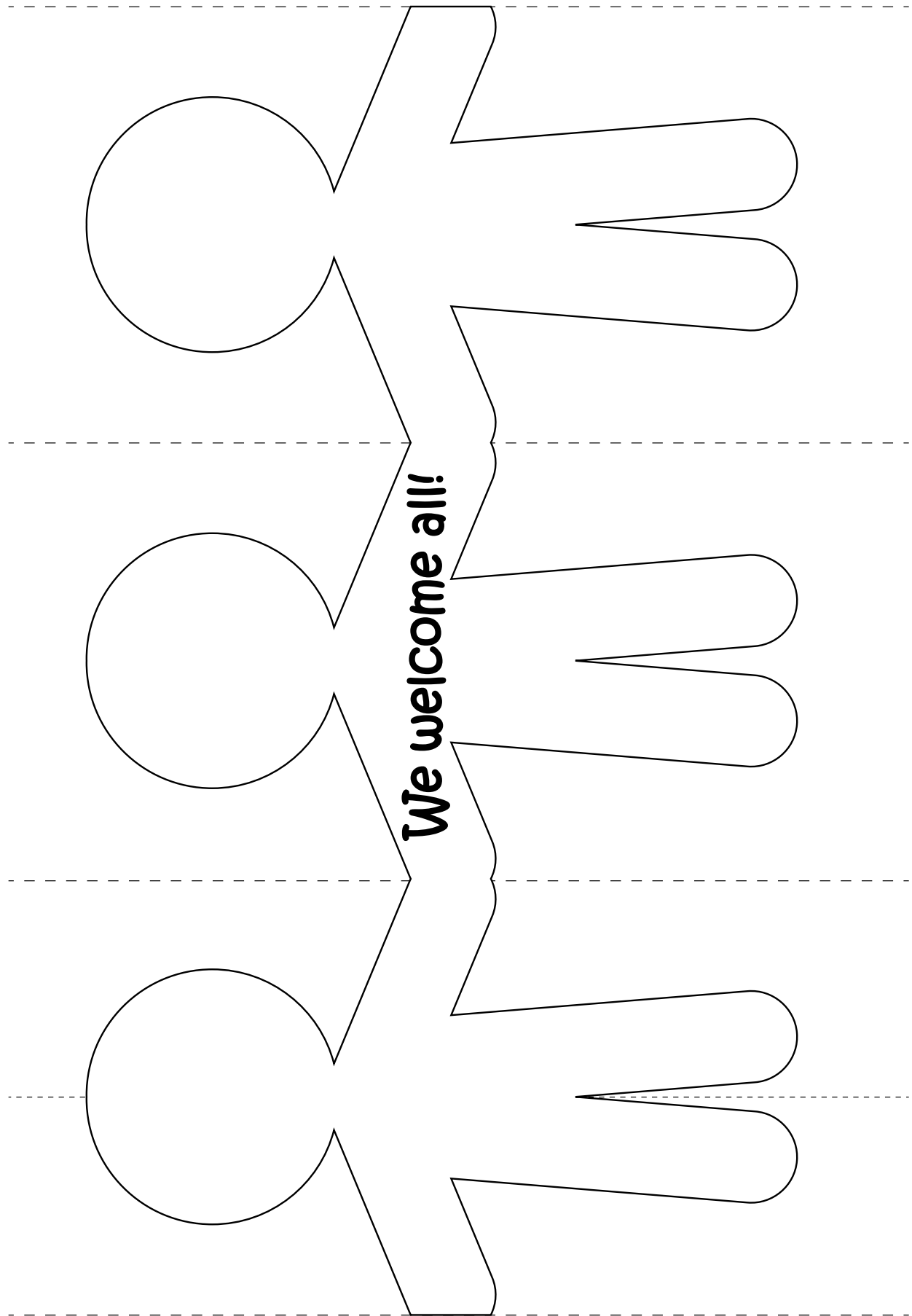
Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so that you can provide them with the link to [www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads](http://www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads), where they can download coloring pages, *Grace Sightings*, audio stories, and songs (see p. vii).













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**Isaiah said, "Things will get better soon and the whole world will see God's promise of love."**