



Praising God

Goal: To praise God for the gifts of creation and practice caring for the earth.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Psalm 8

All around us, we see nature and its beauty. As Christians, our hearts break out in praise to God, our creator. We proclaim with the psalmist: "O Lord, our Sovereign, / how majestic is your name in all the earth!" (v. 1).

We praise our creator and we praise God for caring about us. As humans, we are "crowned" with "glory and honor" (v. 5). So God has blessed us. God has graced us with the wonderful gifts of creation and with the wonderful gifts of God's loving care for us throughout our lives.

Humans have been given a position of responsibility within God's creation. We have powers over the created order around us, given by God. But along with our power also comes responsibility. While we may be "over nature," we are also "under God." We have responsibilities to care for the earth, to be good stewards of the earth and its creatures, using the gifts we have been given to carry out God's purposes and to care for the earth, our home.

God's grace leads to our gratitude. God's care for us leads us to care for the earth and for its people.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Many children today have few opportunities to be outside in God's created world. That's why this psalm is an important one to hear and remember. Praising God is one of the simplest and first ways that children learn to pray. And seeing God's presence in nature is one of the easiest ways to begin to learn how to praise God. Taking time to be outside, to walk, to listen, and to watch for signs of God's creation is an important way for children to connect with the work of God as creator. This psalm reminds us of our connection to God's creation and the ways we can be responsible for our part in taking care of it, the world, the creatures, and the people.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Children are able to learn about praising God when it is modeled for them. Sometimes a spontaneous simple prayer of praise is the best: Thank you, God, for this amazing sunset! The story for this session invites the children's participation in a response of praise to God. It gives them a rubric for their own prayer of praise to God.

Children are also able to learn from this psalm about the importance of their role in God's creation. As they praise God's creation, they will also be able to name ways they can help be God's helpers in caring for God's world.

O God, how majestic is your name in all the earth. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 2, 17, 19

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

blanket or mats

snack

Guided Play

choice 2: magazine
pictures of a wide
diversity of people

choice 3: large
cardboard box,
Christmas lights, pillow
or blanket

Exploring

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

choice 2: recycled
materials (see “Reusing
Materials” on page vii)

choice 3: copies of **GN 2**;
copies of **GN 3**; various
items of garbage,
recycling, and compost
(if needed)

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.

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.

Before the session, create a night-sky box for use in “Guided Play” choice 3. Poke holes in the top of a large box (a box large enough so a child could comfortably sit in or lay both head and shoulders inside). Push one bulb from a string of Christmas lights through each hole. Place the box near an electrical socket, and plug in for a starry view.

“Exploring God’s Grace” choice 2 and choice 3 require more prep.

Welcoming and Guided Play

A B M

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 you do not know personally. Tell them that the children will hear a story about praising God for the gift of creation and our job to care for it. Invite the children to look at the guided play activities and pick one to start:

- 1. Listening**—Play various songs from **Music & Melodies**. Listen to the songs together. Provide rhythm instruments for children to play along with the songs. Ask the children what they like about the songs.
- 2. Making a Collage**—Provide magazine pictures of a wide diversity of people, paper, and glue sticks. Give children blank paper and a glue stick, and ask them to fill their piece of paper with pictures of people. While the children work, mention that God made all people different and loves each one.
- 3. Star Gazing**—Place a blanket or pillow in the night-sky box you created, and plug in the Christmas lights. Encourage the children to take turns sitting or lying in the box and pretending to gaze at the stars.

T *Provide nonverbal and verbal cues before transitions. Using the visual schedule with the arrow, point to it and note, “It’s three minutes until story time.”*



Transitioning to Story Time

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.

We Are God’s Family

M L

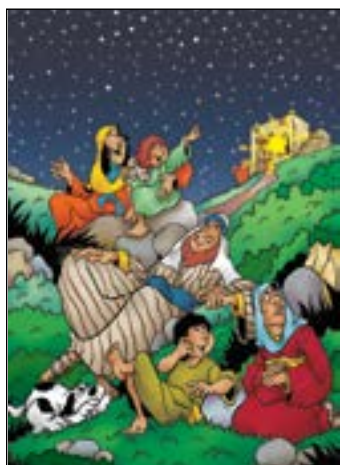
Say together the action poem, inviting children to repeat your words and actions:

You and you and you and you (*point to those in circle*) /
are part of God’s big family. (*hug yourself*) /
I stretch my arms to hold you all, (*stretch arms around child on each side*) /
a great big circle we will be. (*use arms to make a big circle*) /
God’s arms reach around the world (*stretch arms out wide*) /
and hold each child in loving care. (*hug yourself*) /
For God loves you and you and you (*point to those in circle*) /
and all the children everywhere. (*stretch arms out wide*) /

Play Guess Who

L

Play the game “Guess Who.” Sitting in a circle with the children, say, “Guess who has curly hair . . . likes to build with blocks . . . has two older brothers. . .” and so on. Invite the children to guess the child you are describing. Use the game to emphasize each child’s uniqueness.



Hearing the Story

L

Show children where the book of Psalms is in the Bible. Say that the word *psalms* means “songs” and that the book of Psalms is like a songbook. It contains songs of praise to God and other songs and prayers asking God to care for people and all creation.

Open the Bible to Psalm 8 so that children know that the story comes from the Bible. Tell them they are going to hear a story about praising God for the gift of creation and our job to care for it. Place the open Bible in front of you.

Read **SCM 2**. Express the emotions of the story with your voice, gestures, and facial expressions. Conclude the story by prompting the children to say, “Amen.”

Invite the children to respond, “Amazing!” every time they hear the prompt, “O God, you are . . .” as you read the story again. Ask the children if they can name some of the ways God is amazing in this story or in other ways.



Comment that God created the whole world and made each one of us special. Tell the children that God gave us all an important job to do. Ask them if they know what the job is. Suggest that we can care for God’s creation, the world, and the people in it. Wonder together how we can care for God’s world.

EXPLORING GOD’S GRACE

1. Night-Time Sky



As a reminder of Psalm 8, where God’s creation of the sky and stars is celebrated, the children will make a night-time sky picture. Ask the children what they thought about when they were in the night-sky box in “Guided Play” choice 3. Provide copies of **GN 1** and white or yellow crayons. Tell the children that the stars in the picture form a constellation, an arrangement of stars that people saw in the sky and called the “Big Dipper,” because it looked like a big ladle or spoon. Invite the children to count the stars. Suggest that they color only the moon and stars. Provide black, blue, and purple watercolors. Tell the children to paint the whole sky. Notice how the stars appear in their night-sky pictures. Set the paintings aside to dry and encourage the children to take them home and tell their families about the night sky that God created.



2. Make a Recycled Picture



One of the ways we can care for God’s creation is by reusing and recycling. Provide recycled materials, and invite children to create a picture or sculpture using these materials. Assist with glue for sculptures as needed. Encourage children to use only one kind of material (such as all plastic or all paper) so their creations can eventually be easily recycled. Allow for creativity, however, if children want to use a variety of materials.

Wonder together how else we can take care of God’s world. Encourage them to think of things they can do, such as helping to feed or bathe a pet, throwing away trash in the proper place, or planting flowers.

Encourage children to take the pictures or sculptures home as a reminder of how we should all care for creation.

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



3. Recycling Game

F LG A T

*Before the session, find out what the recycling protocol is in your church or neighborhood. Gather garbage, recycling items, and compost items as needed. Make copies of **GN 2**, adding the appropriate word as needed on the copies: Recycling, Compost, Paper, Glass, Plastics. Make a separate sign saying, "Garbage." Gather the corresponding number of boxes to put items in.*

Tell the children that one way we can take care of God's creation is to make less garbage by recycling items that can be used again in other ways. Explain that your neighborhood does this by having bins for recycling items and for garbage (and other forms, if applicable).

Cover a table with newspaper or a plastic tablecloth. Display various garbage, recycling items, and compost items if needed. Tell the children that they are going to play a recycling game to get all the items in the places they belong.

Explain that first they need to make signs for the various boxes. Form the necessary number of groups as you have boxes. Give each group a sign and read the signs aloud. Hand out copies of **GN 3** and invite the children to color the pictures of items that might go in a box with their sign. Cut apart the pictures, and have the children glue them to their sign or box. Tape the sign on a box.

Direct the children's attention back to the display of garbage, recyclable items, and compost items. Have a person from each team take turns choosing an item from the table and placing it in the correct box.

When all the items have been placed in a box, see if the children remembered the table covering! Take the items to the proper bins the church has to dispose of them, or tell the children you will dispose of the items if the church does not have the same garbage and recycling receptacles you used.

Take time to have the children wash hands. Affirm the children's efforts in taking care of God's creation.

T *Washing hands can take time! Waiting in line for the sink may make some children anxious. Devise a routine for your group so they know what to expect. Use a song, movement poem, or physical activity to match the time required.*

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

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

- ▼ I wonder, “What in God’s creation is amazing to you?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What is a way that God cares for you?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What is something you could do to take care of creation?”

LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Invite the children to help you clean up the space.

Call the children to snack time, singing “Make a Joyful Noise”—**SCM 19**. Repeat words and phrases as needed.

Invite everyone to sit around a table or on the floor. Offer a prayer:

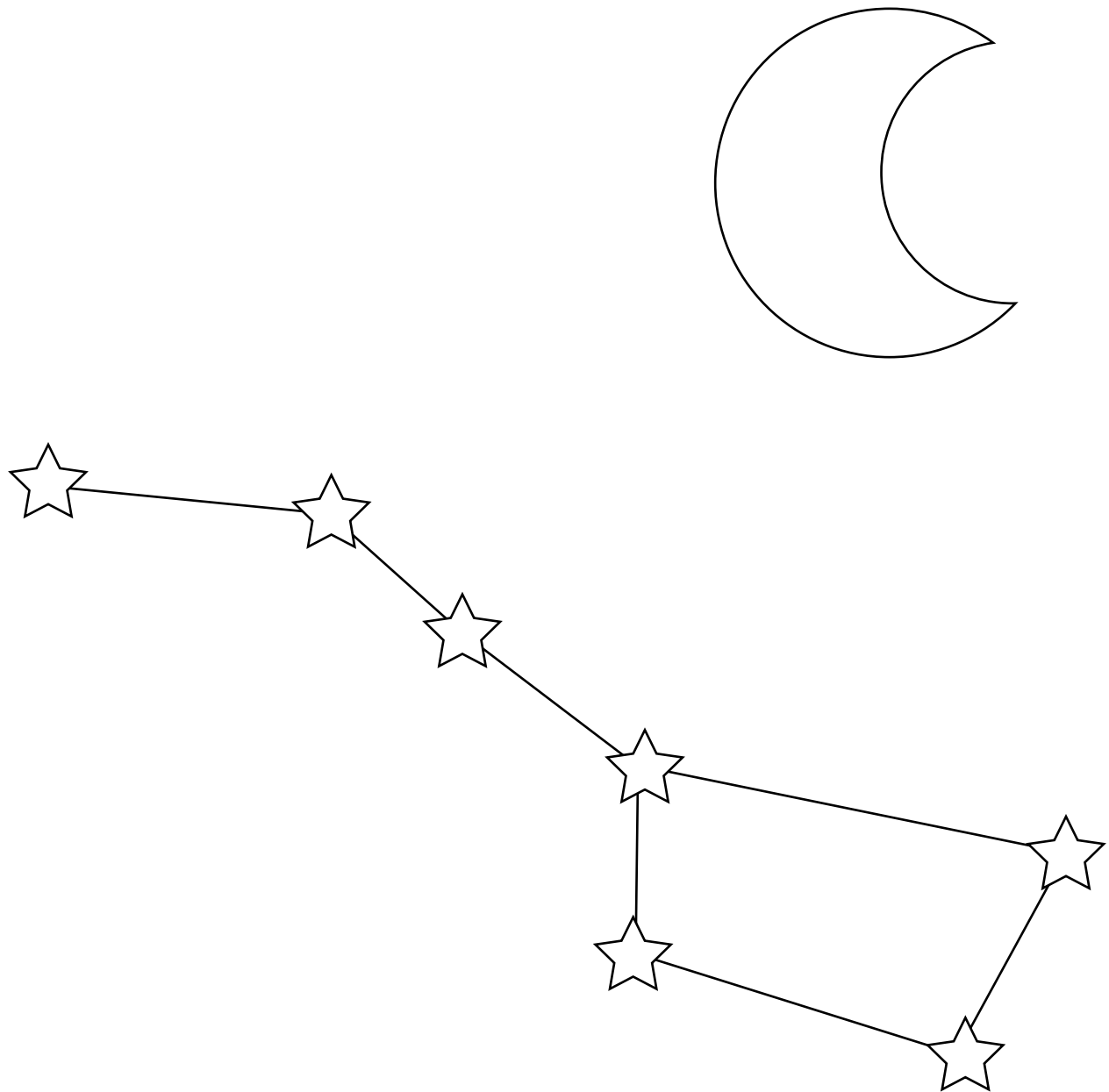
Dear God, thank you for creation and for giving us good things like food. Help us to share these good things with others. Amen.

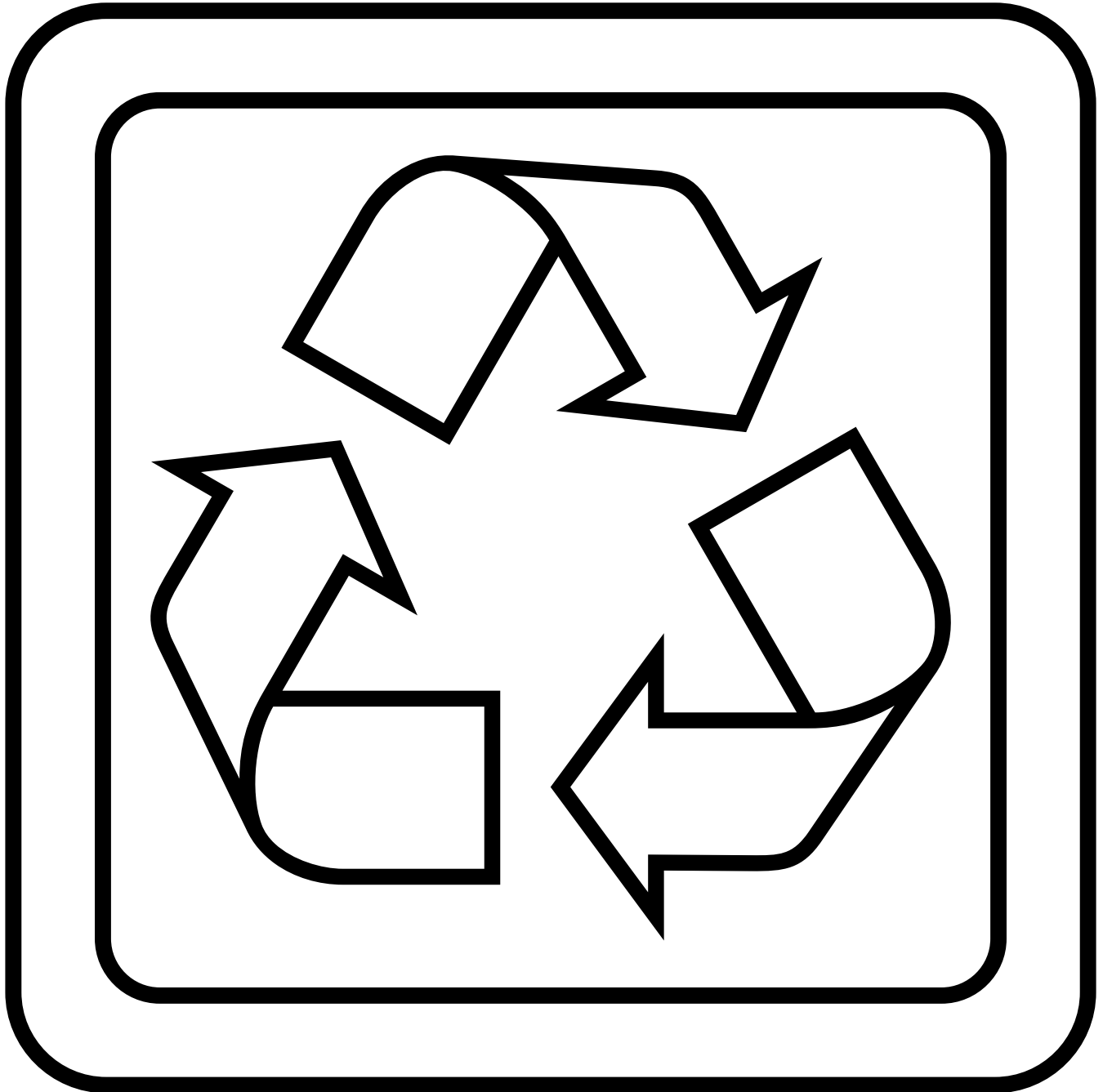
Enjoy a snack.

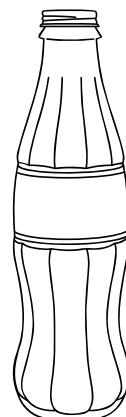
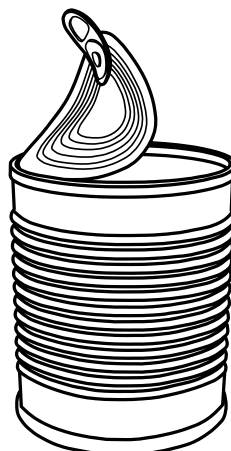
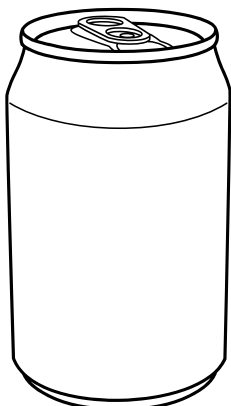
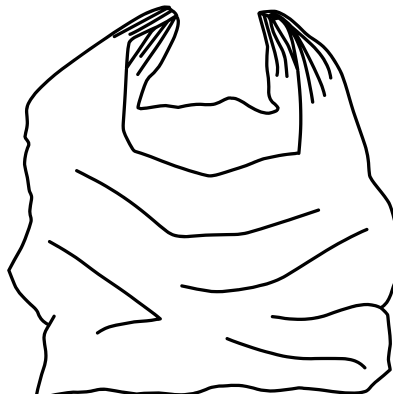
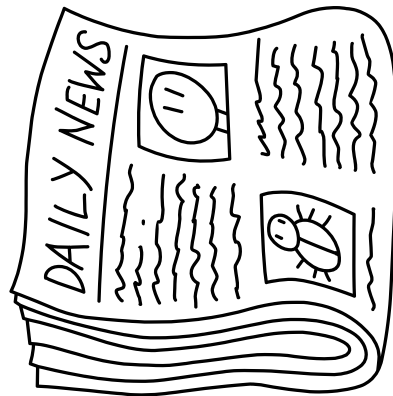
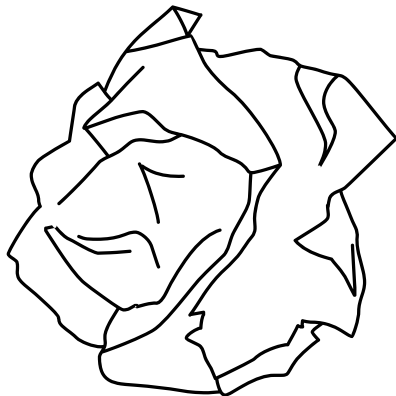
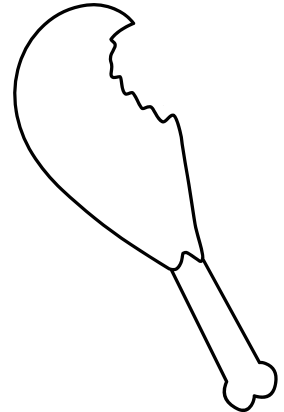
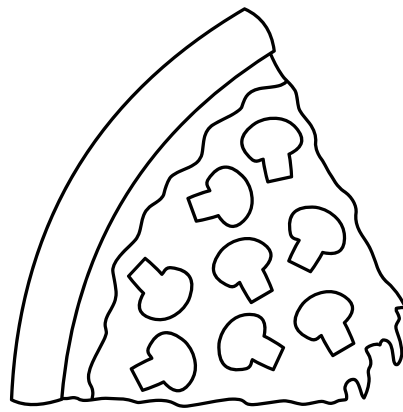
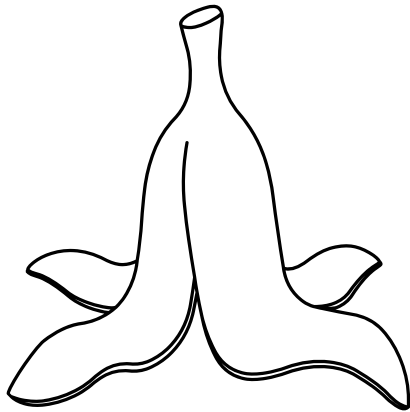
Encourage the children to make less waste at home by recycling. If they are with parents or caregivers, they could pick up litter they see outdoors and dispose of it. As the children leave, bless them: “(Name), show your love for God’s gift of creation. The grace of God is with you.” Encourage them to pick up litter that they see at church, so they can care for God’s creation.



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).







Praising God



Praise God! Creation is amazing.

