



He Is Risen!

Goal: To celebrate and give thanks for Jesus' resurrection.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Matthew 28:1-10

The news on that first Easter morning was almost too good to be true!

Women who had been to the tomb of Jesus breathlessly announced to his disciples that an angel of the Lord told them, "I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised." He is risen! The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed!

This message is the backbone of Christian faith. Jesus' resurrection by the power of God is the spine on which our whole faith depends. Jesus' resurrection assures us that his death has the power to save us, because he conquered the power of death and humanity's sin that put him on the cross. On the third day after his crucifixion and burial, "he rose again from the dead" (Apostles' Creed). This is the greatest message ever proclaimed! Because Christ is raised, we too shall be raised from death. Death is not the last word for us. Our eternal life, which begins now with Jesus Christ as our Lord—continues after death, into eternity, in the presence of God and all the saints!

Great grace is given in the risen Christ. Our gratitude lasts . . . forever!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

The words we say to each other in worship, "The Lord is risen. He is risen indeed," are a greeting that communicates the reality of the end of Holy Week. If children ask about Jesus' death, be prepared to help them understand that, although he died, it was not the end for him. On Easter, we celebrate Jesus' life and all the goodness of God's love. And children can appreciate the story of the women who went to the tomb and discovered he was not there. In meeting Jesus on the road, they were so happy to share the good news with others, just as we are today.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Be ready to greet the children with "Jesus is risen." As you welcome the children on this Easter Sunday, be attuned to what stories and questions they bring with them. Some may be very excited about eggs and baskets and the Easter Bunny. Others may share their own observations and curiosities about this day of celebrating the risen Christ. The story provides an opportunity to engage the children in thinking about what it would have been like for those two women to have discovered that the one whom they thought was dead was now alive. It will help children know that they too can spread the good news of Jesus' life and love.

*O God, I thank you for raising Jesus Christ from the dead
and promising new life in him for all who believe. Amen.*

Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 7, 7a, 7b, 17, 25

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

white cloth

candle

table or chairs

dark cloth

large trash bag

newspaper

biblical costumes
(optional)

rhythm instruments

Responding

Celebrating

balloons; streamers;
cookies; juice; copies
of **Grace Notes (GN) 1**,
GN 2, and **GN 3**

Praying

brown construction
paper, copies of **GN 4**

Extra

copies of **GN 5**, biblical
costumes (optional),
smartphone

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,  ) and ways to adapt for children who have special needs or disabilities.

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

Welcoming and Preparing

Play “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord!”—**SCM 17**—as the children arrive.

Greet children by saying, “Christ is risen!” and prompt them to respond, “He is risen indeed!” If you have many visitors, invite everyone to make and decorate a name tag. Use masking tape to attach the name tags to clothing.

Ask the children to place a white cloth on the worship table. Note that the white cloth means the church is in the Easter season, which lasts fifty days. Invite the children to add a Bible and a candle.

Set the scene for the drama. Invite the children to help you make the tomb with a table or chairs covered with a dark cloth. Make the “stone” by stuffing crumpled newspapers into a large trash bag and covering with another dark cloth.


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

As the children set up, encourage conversation on the ways everyone will celebrate Easter. Some children may have already started to celebrate Easter.

Singing



Gather together. Thank the children for their help in creating the worship space. Play “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord!”—**SCM 17**. Invite children to sing and accompany the song with rhythm instruments.

 *Some children need to move more than others, which makes sitting still a difficult task. Set clear expectations with boundaries for appropriate movement to meet the needs of the child while not disrupting the rest of the group.*

Praying



Turn on the candle as a reminder of Jesus and the light he brings into the world. Wonder aloud what it must have been like for Jesus’ followers after his crucifixion and death. Imagine how they must have felt after their friend and teacher died. Pray aloud, prompting the children to echo after each phrase:



God of grace, /
we are grateful for your Son. /
We are grateful for your loving power. /
We thank you that Jesus lives. /
Amen.

Preparing to Hear the Story

C

Invite the children to imagine times when a person might feel scared and excited at the same time. Offer time for the children to consider as many possibilities as they can.

Show **SCM 7a** and **7b**. Allow the children to comment on which picture shows a child who feels scared and which one shows a child who feels excited.

Say that today's story is full of both fear and excitement when the disciples hear the good news of Jesus' resurrection.

Explain that *resurrection* means that Jesus was dead, but is alive again. Wonder together why Jesus' resurrection might be both scary and exciting.



Luke's version of 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

M L

Invite a child to find Matthew 28 in the Bible. Place the open Bible on the worship center. Read **SCM 7** or listen to the story audio. Use your voice, expressions, and feelings to make the story more engaging. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God."

Ask the children to cover their mouths like the child on **SCM 7a** as you read about people feeling scared, and to raise their arms in the air like the child on **SCM 7b** when you read about people who feel excited. Read the story again or listen to the story audio.

Reflecting on God's Grace

C MS

Invite everyone to re-enact the story. There are guards, the two Marys, angels, and disciples. Let Jesus be a figure in everyone's imagination. Provide simple biblical costumes if the children like to wear them. Invite the children to look around your space for other things that might be used for props or sound effects. As you read the story from **SCM 7**, encourage the children to use movements and facial expressions to tell the story.

Engage the children in conversation, using the following questions:

- ▼ What do you think made the two Marys feel afraid?
- ▼ Why do you think the two guards at the tomb fainted but the two women did not?
- ▼ Why do you think it was such good news that Jesus was alive?



Affirm that the two Marys and the other disciples experienced Jesus alive again. So we can celebrate that Jesus is alive and with us today.

Singing

Invite the children to sing “Hallelujah! Praise Ye the Lord!”—**SCM 17**—with the excitement that they just found out that Jesus is alive! Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.

Claiming God’s Grace




Tell the children that the women at the tomb couldn’t help but share the good news. They went quickly and joyfully to tell Jesus’ friends that he was alive!

Ask the children to consider what they would say to share the good news of Jesus’ resurrection with a friend. Brainstorm ideas and write them down on a sheet of newsprint. Review the ideas so everyone knows them.

Once completed, gather the children into two circles—a larger outer circle and a smaller circle inside it. Play music as the outer circle walks to the right and the inner circle walks to the left. Tell the children that, when the music stops, they are to tell the partner they are facing the good news they have to share by choosing one of the phrases from the newsprint. Play and stop the music several times, encouraging the children to share a different phrase each time the music stops.

If your group is small, have the children walk in one circle while the music is playing and pair up when the music stops.

Comment that the children have now practiced sharing the good news of Easter with one another. Encourage them to share it with others during the week ahead.

-  Give children time to respond and to share; for some children, listening and speaking may take longer.



Celebrating God’s Grace



Ask the children to say why they think Easter is such an important time to celebrate. Invite them to set a celebratory tone by decorating the hospitality area of your church with streamers and balloons. Use white and gold, the traditional liturgical colors of Easter, or other bright, joyful colors.



Show the signs on **GN 1**, **GN 2**, and **GN 3** and read them aloud. Invite the children to choose a sign, then color and decorate it. Tape the signs to the walls or pin them to bulletin boards.

Put cookies and juice on a table for people to enjoy. Encourage others to celebrate this special day with you.

If possible, perform the drama from “Reflecting on God’s Grace” for those who are gathered in the hospitality area.

FA *Some children have food and other allergies such as peanut, milk, egg, wheat, latex, grass, mold, and others. Be aware of all allergy issues the children may have. Avoidance is the best practice. Provide alternate activities or use options to keep children safe.*

Praying God’s Grace

M

Before the session, make a large cross from brown construction paper and tape it to a wall.

The flowering of the cross is a tradition in some churches that represents the transition from Good Friday (the cross) to Jesus’ resurrection and new life (the flowers over the empty cross).

Provide copies of **GN 4**, scissors, pencils, construction paper, and glue. Have the children cut out the tulip pattern pieces on **GN 4**. Allow the children to select a color for their flower and stem.

They will need to trace and cut out four flowers and one stem.

Ask the children to fold each of the flowers down the center and stack them. Help them staple the pieces together in the center fold and fan out the flower petals. Glue the flower to the stem.

If time permits, encourage the children to make additional flowers.

Invite the children to tape their flowers to the cross you prepared. As the children add the flowers, have them pray, “Thank you, God, for raising Jesus from the dead. Thank you for giving us new life. Amen.”



GN 5 Solution:

1b, 2c, 3a, 4c, 5a

If you have permission, consider posting the photos of the tableaux, with a little commentary, on your church’s website.

Extra Activity

B VI

Hand out copies of **GN 5** and colored pencils. Have the children work alone or in small groups to find the one picture out of each set that is different.

When they have finished, assign small groups one or more of the scenes to act out as a *tableau* (a group of motionless figures representing a scene from a story). Provide biblical costumes or let the children use their imaginations using what is available in the room. Use a smartphone to snap pictures of the scenes and send the photos to the children’s families.



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).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Invite the children to help clean up the space.

If you made a cross in “Praying God’s Grace,” gather around it. Invite the children to sing “Thank You, Jesus”—**SCM 25**.

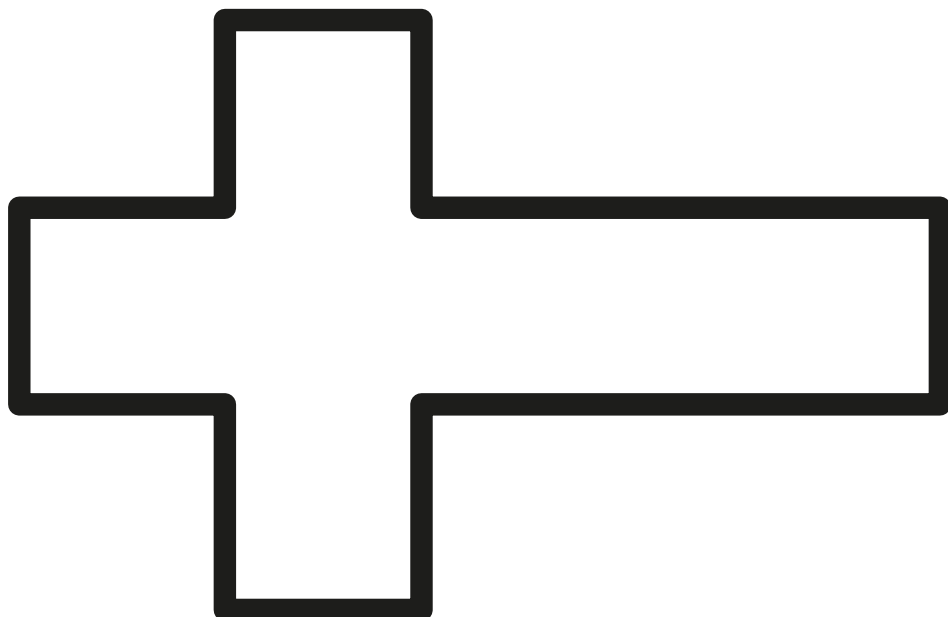
Remind the children that the news of the resurrected Jesus was happy news and that the women couldn’t wait to tell others. Encourage them to share the exciting good news of the living Christ with others this week.

Offer two sentence starters, encouraging the children to finish them:

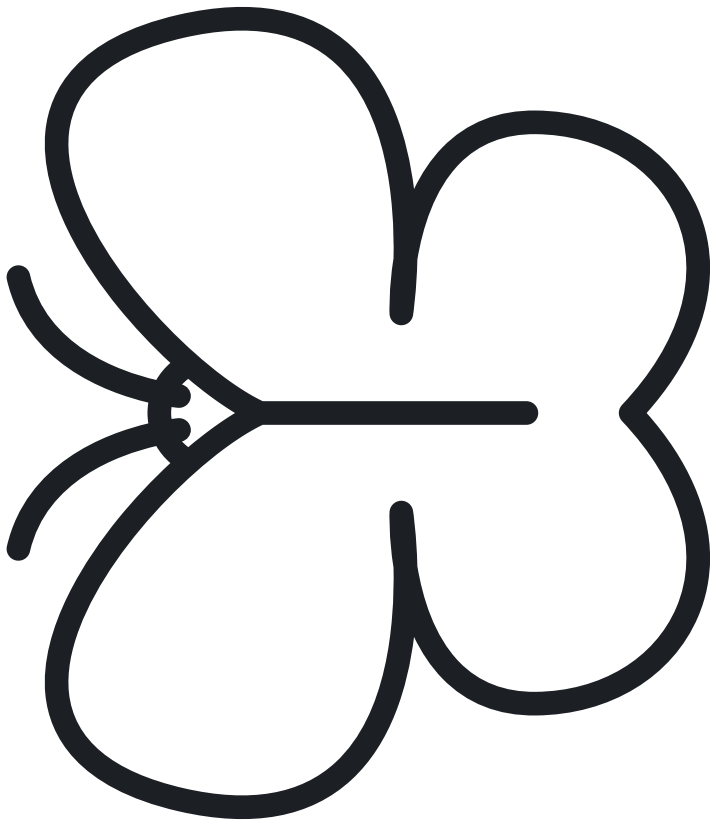
God, help me to share the good news of Easter with . . .

God, we are grateful that the tomb is empty because . . .

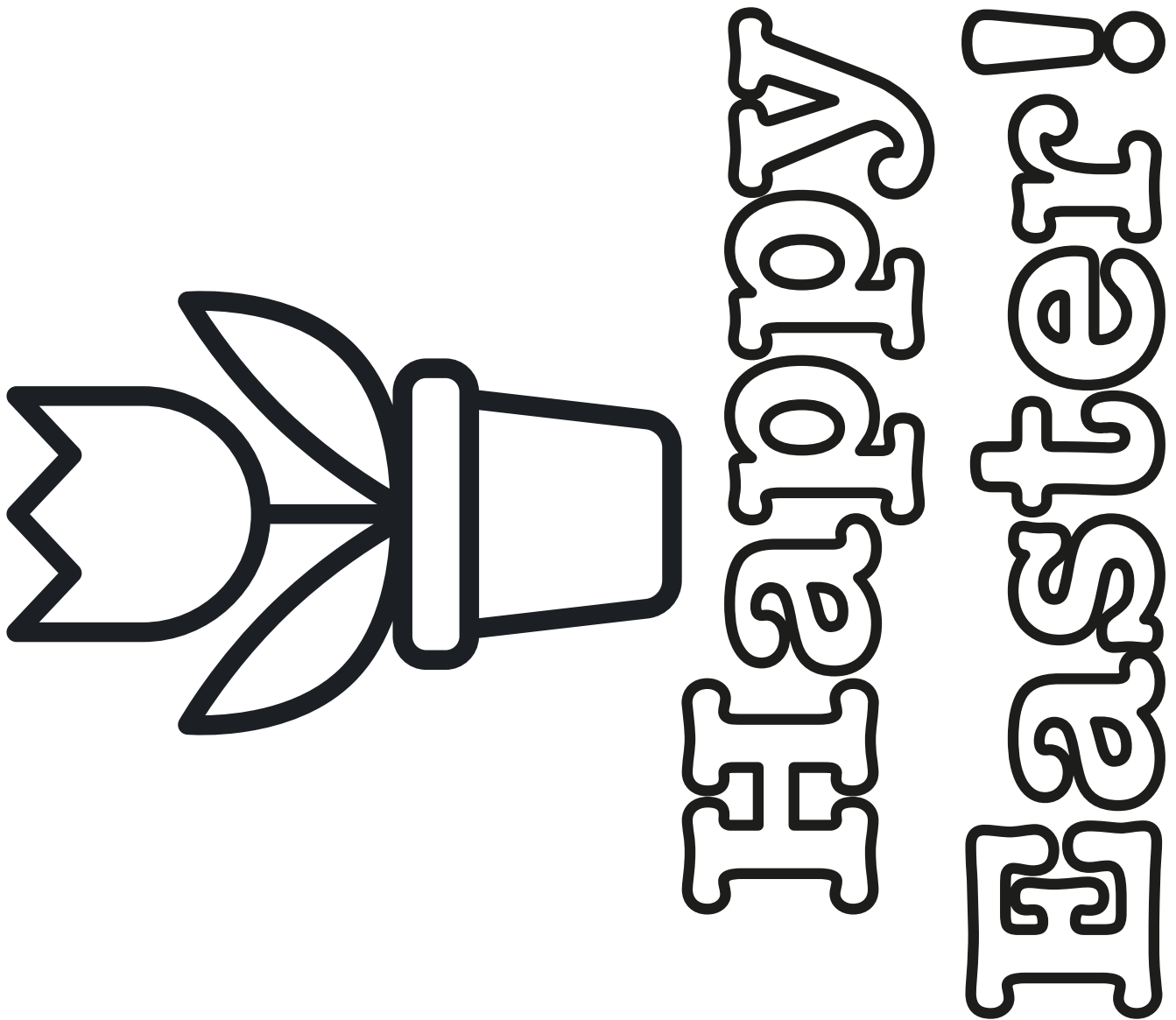
Bless each child as they leave, saying, “(Name), go in gratitude, and share the good news that Jesus Christ is risen!”

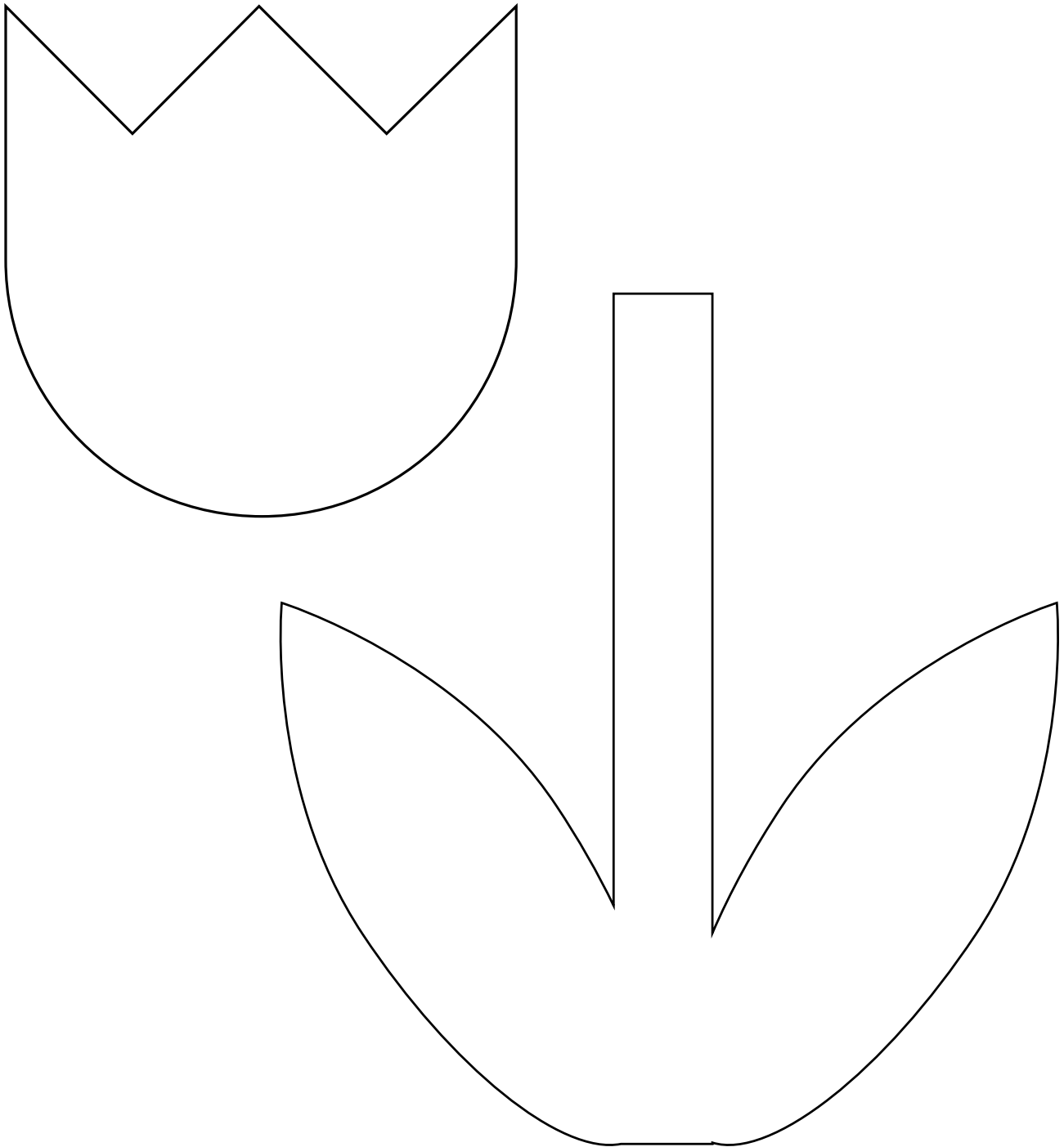


Heavenly Father!



!The Spirit
Glories in







1a



1b



1c



2a



2b



2c



3a



3b



3c



4a



4b



4c



5a



5b



5c

