



A New Disciple

Goal: To imagine what it means to be a church leader today and how we can be leaders.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Acts 1:12-14, 21-26

After the death of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-20), the disciples of Jesus had to find a replacement for Judas. They said the person must have “accompanied us during the whole time the Lord Jesus lived among us” (v. 21, CEB) and must have been “a witness to his resurrection” (v. 22, CEB). Two persons were nominated: Joseph called Barabbas (also called Justus) and Matthias. The disciples prayed and, by casting lots, they chose Matthias, who “was added to the eleven apostles” (v. 26, CEB).

Here we see it is important to have leaders in the church. In the early church, Jesus' disciples became leaders as the church developed. Matthias took his place with the other disciples in serving the church.

Today we also need leaders in the church. No matter who we are, God can use us to help others and provide leadership for the people of God. Leaders help others understand what God wants. They give love and care for others. They help others who are in need. They help others find ways to serve people around them.

We are thankful for God's grace in giving us leaders in the church. We are grateful, and we lead others in following God's way.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children have a lot of role models for what it means to be a leader. They have experiences with teachers, coaches, family members, and church leaders. They see a lot and can share the qualities they see in people that they know. They also soak up what they hear and see in the culture with elected officials. This story offers a great chance to help them name the qualities that are most important for leaders who want to lead in the ways that Jesus taught.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

If you have been teaching the children in this group, then you have a good sense about who the leaders are, the children who have some natural abilities, and those who are the first to volunteer to help or to respond to a question. Pause and consider other children who might be quieter, ones you might not think of as leaders in the class. This story gives a great way to help each child know they can be a leader in the church. All it takes is being willing to share a gift they have.

*O God, give me new eyes to see the leaders among the children.
Help me inspire all of them to good, faithful leadership. Amen.*

Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More

(SCM) i–iv, 13, 13a, 23, 29

basic supplies

(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)

(see p. vii)

internet-connected

device

white candle

white cloth

Responding

Celebrating

2 paper plates per child,

copies of **Grace Notes**

(GN) 1, pea gravel or

beads

Extra

copies of **GN 2**

GATHERING IN GOD’S GRACE

Before the children arrive, post **SCM i–ii**, “Your Visual Schedule.” Cut out and glue the arrow marker on 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.

“Celebrating God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing **LG F**

Play “Praise God, All You Nations (Da n’ase)” as the children arrive. Greet the children with the words “Christ is risen!” Prompt them to say, “He is risen indeed.” Welcome them to the final Sunday of the Easter season.

Invite the children to prepare the space for worship, telling the children that Easter is not just a day; it’s a season. Wonder what the group could add to the worship table to signify the Easter season. Ask them to include a Bible and a white cloth, the color for Easter. Place a white candle, representing the light of Christ.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Ask for one or two volunteers to practice reading the Scripture passage for today.

Ask one or two children to cut out the figures from **SCM 13a** and tape two craft sticks on the back of the eleven disciples and one each on Matthias and Justus, so they can be used as puppets later in the session.

Ask the children to think of people who lead them through the week. Ask: “Who is a leader to you?” (*teacher, coach, parent, friend, principal, president, or others*). Distribute sheets of paper and crayons, and invite them to draw a picture of one or more of the people who are leaders. Add the pictures to the worship space.

Singing **L D**

Gather in the worship space. Play “Praise God, All You Nations (Da n’ase)”—**SCM 29**. Tell the children that this song was written in Twi, one of the languages of Ghana. Invite them to listen to the song and pay attention to the pronunciation. Play it again and try singing the song in both languages.

Praying **LG**

Turn on the candle. Invite the children to share the names and/or roles of leaders in their lives. Pray a popcorn prayer. Prompt the children to say the names of the leaders during the prayer. Pray:

Dear God, we thank you for those who lead us. We pray for . . . (*the children speak names*).



We ask that you give wisdom, courage, and kindness to our leaders. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Preparing to Hear the Story B

Call attention to the prepared puppets from **SCM 13a**. Ask if anyone remembers how many disciples Jesus had before he died and was raised from the dead (*twelve*). Together count the disciples in the group puppet and wonder together why there are only eleven (*Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus and later died*).

Introduce the Matthias and Justus figures and explain that, in addition to Jesus' twelve disciples, he had other followers, both men and women. Invite them to listen to today's story and see how the eleven disciples became twelve again.

Hearing the Story L B

Invite a child to find Acts 1 in the Bible. Have one or two volunteers read Acts 1:12–14, 21–26. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bible on the worship table.

Give the three puppets to volunteers to hold up when the disciples, Matthias, and Justus are named as you read the story again using **SCM 13** or the story audio. If reading, use your voice to express the emotions of the story.

Reflecting on God's Grace F LG A

Invite the child with the picture of the group of disciples to stand in front of the group. Wonder together about why the disciples needed a twelfth person to join them. Invite the holder of Matthias to stand, and then the volunteer with Justus. Imagine together what these disciples might have seen as they traveled with Jesus.

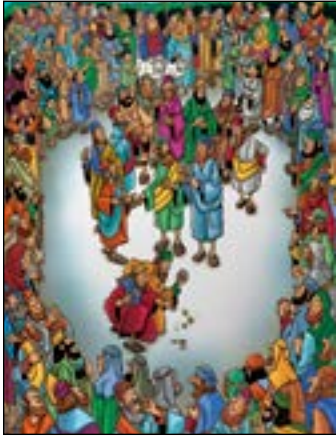
- I wonder, "What gifts and skills do you think Justus and Matthias had that would have made them a good disciple?"

Say that the disciples prayed for guidance in choosing their next member. They also cast lots, or tossed stones, similar to flipping a coin or rolling dice. Wonder together why they cast lots.

Remind the children that the disciples learned from Jesus and followed his example. Matthias now would learn how to be a leader for the church.

Singing MS

Sing "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me"—**SCM 23**—to celebrate how Jesus calls us to be disciples. You can start by singing "I'm gonna live so God can use me," and point to yourselves while dancing, and then add a stanza, "You're gonna live so God can use you," pointing to each other. Turn off the candle.



"Casting lots" in biblical times meant gently tossing specially marked stones or sticks to determine the divine will regarding a problem or question.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God’s Grace



Have the children play a game that has a leader as the main role. Invite them to choose between “Follow the Leader” or “Simon Says,” and let them organize the game together. As they organize, observe leadership skills that emerge among the group.

After they have played the game, sit down together and ask:

- ▼ I wonder, “Who showed leadership skills in organizing the game? What leadership skills did they show?” If they have trouble identifying a gift or skill, suggest one based on your observations.
- ▼ I wonder, “Who led the group more quietly? What leadership skills did they show?”
- ▼ I wonder, “How might the skills you showed be useful for leaders in our church today?”
- ▼ I wonder, “What leadership skills might be important for a follower of Jesus today?”

Identify all types of leadership skills shown and name them as gifts from a gracious God, meant to be used to lead the church. Encourage the children to exercise their gifts to help the church grow.

SD *Some children have strong reactions to different stimuli. Loud noises can trigger different responses. Be mindful to alert children when noises may occur to lessen any negative impacts.*



Celebrating God’s Grace



Tell the children they will make noisemakers to celebrate gifts of leadership. Give each child two paper plates and a copy of **GN 1**. Use the following directions to make the noisemakers:

- ▼ In the circle on **GN1**, write or draw one leadership quality or skill to share for God’s work in the world (for example, include praying for others, serving, inviting others to church, and so on).
- ▼ Decorate the circle, cut it out, and glue it on the back of a paper plate.
- ▼ Put ten–twenty pieces of pea gravel or beads on one plate.
- ▼ Place the other plate, upside down, on the first plate and staple around the rims to make a noisemaker.
- ▼ Place masking tape over the back side of the staples so that the ends of the staples don’t catch on hands or clothes.

Have the class stand in a circle with their noisemakers. Practice making noise when the leader’s hands are open and then keeping the



noisemakers silent when the leader's hands are closed. Go around the circle, inviting each child to be the leader, first calling out the gift they drew or wrote about, and then using hand signals to have the group shake and then silence their noisemakers. For a challenge, the leader can change the position of their hands or the rhythm that the children can mirror. Play until all who wish to lead have had a turn.

Praying God's Grace

On newsprint or a chalkboard, draw blank lines to correspond with words and phrases that describe qualities of a good church leader. For example, "teaching God's word" would look like this:

Example leader qualities:
serving others
showing love
listening for God
praying for others

_____ , _____

Let the children take turns calling out letters. If they choose a correct letter, give them a chance to guess the words. When the phrase is discovered, invite the children to think of one or more leaders they know who display that skill. List the leaders' names on newsprint.

Remind the children that the disciples prayed to find out who God was calling to join them as a leader. Encourage them to talk with God when they are wrestling with big questions in their own lives. Invite the children to hold hands while you pray for the leaders:

Gracious God, we thank you for those who lead by serving . . . (*prompt the children to name those they have identified*). Thank you for those who teach, show love, serve others, and lead our worship. Help us to grow in our abilities to serve and lead. Amen.

Extra Activity



Remind the children that the eleven disciples needed to choose a leader to replace Judas. Hand out copies of **GN 2** to the children. Provide pencils. Ask the children to work alone or in pairs to find the path of things that help make good leaders. This path will lead to the new disciple. In the open area at the bottom of the page, challenge the children to write or draw other ideas that they have about being a good leader.

LG *Look for opportunities for children to practice leadership and generosity, such as offering a blessing to one another and passing kindness to others beyond Sunday worship.*



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

LG

Lead the children in cleaning up the worship space.
Offer a call-and-response blessing. Begin by saying to the person on your right:

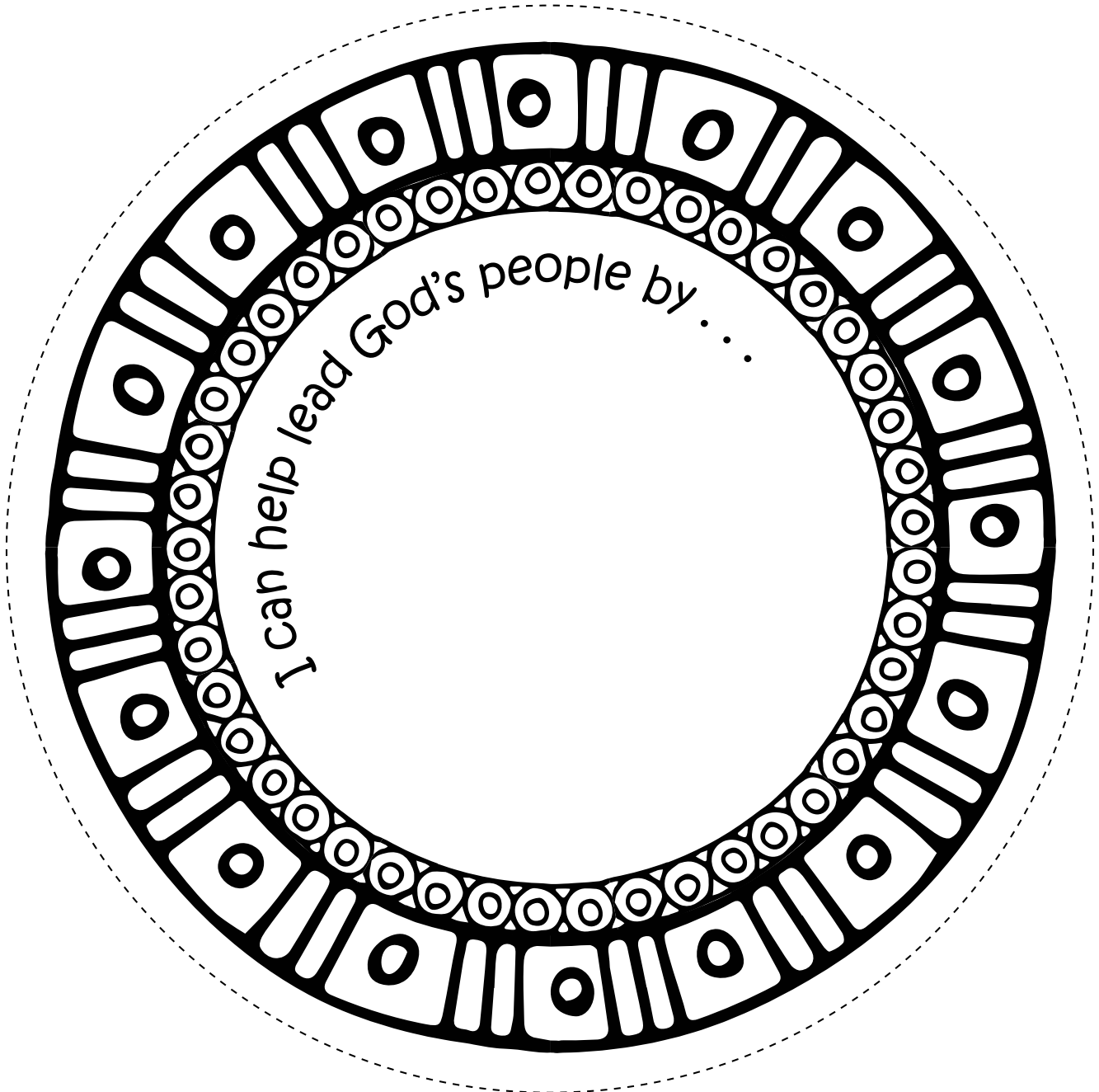
(Name), God has blessed you to tell the story of Jesus.

The group responds:

(Name), be bold and spread the good news.

Repeat until each person has received the blessing.

Invite the children to exchange gestures and words of peace with one another. Tell the children to wear red to church next week for a special day in the life of the church. Say good-bye to the children by name.



Forget people's names.

Provide feedback.

Send information home.

Forget to show up.

Make a way for everyone to contribute.

Have favorites.

Complain to others.

Be on time (or early).

Don't listen.

Pray for guidance.

Help as needed.

Seek input from the people you're leading.

Work hard.

Consider others' safety.

Ignore others.

Gossip.

Listen to others.

Waste people's time.

Waste people's time.

Play with cell phone.

Act angry.

Come unprepared.

Bring your supplies.

Boss people around.



