



God's Promise of Peace

Goal: To commit to be God's peacemakers.

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, 17, 18

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

Christmas music

purple cloth

four Advent candles

battery-operated
tealight candles

Responding

Claiming

SCM 1a, 1b

Offering

copies of **Grace Notes**
(GN) 1; blue, yellow,
green, and brown tissue
paper; decoupage glue

Extra

copies of GN 2

Inviting a child to pray allows them to become more comfortable with prayer using their own words.

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, 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.

“Offering God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

MS C L LG

Greet the children by name and with the words “The peace of Christ be with you.” Prompt the children to respond with the same words.

This is the first week of Advent. Play Christmas music as the children arrive. Invite them to help you set up your space. Provide a Bible, purple cloth, and four Advent candles to set on the table. Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities and suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Ask for a volunteer to practice reading the Scripture passage.

Gather in a circle and play a game about preparing for Christmas. Have the first person complete the sentence, “I’m getting ready for Christmas by . . .” Then have the next person say the sentence again, this time adding something that he or she is doing to get ready for Christmas. Encourage the children to help one another remember the growing list of things people are doing to get ready for Christmas. Finish the game by saying, “No matter how we get ready, always remember that God keeps coming to us.”

Singing

Play and sing “Come into God’s Presence”—**SCM 17**.

Praying

A SD

Invite the children to gather around the Advent candles. Consider turning the lights out for the prayer. Turn on one candle. Remind the children that the candlelight is a reminder of God’s presence and gift of peace to the world. God shines light in the darkness through the saving grace and peace of Jesus Christ.

Invite a volunteer to say a prayer or have the children join an echo prayer. Ask for a volunteer to lead the prayer today.

Holy God, /
you are good and great. /
You came to the world, /
full of grace and truth. /
We look forward to when you will come again. /
Amen. /



The children may have difficulty pronouncing some of the names of the prophets. Assure them that it is fine and to do the best that they can.



SD Some children may be uncomfortable in darkness. Consider altering activities or providing pocket-sized flashlights.

Preparing to Hear the Story

VI

In past sessions, the children heard about Jeremiah and Amos, prophets of God. Remind the group that the prophets were God's messengers who spoke God's words to God's people. Tell them that today's story is about another prophet named Micah, and Micah's story happened long before Jesus was born.

Hand out Bibles and have the children find Micah 5. Use this opportunity to review how to use the Bible's table of contents.

Hearing the Story

L

Hold up **SCM 1**. Invite the children to imagine themselves as someone in the crowd as they hear the words of Micah.

Invite a child to find Micah 5 in the Bible. Have a volunteer read Micah 5:2–5. Conclude by saying, "Word of wisdom, Word of grace," and prompt the children to say, "Thanks be to God." Place the open Bible on the worship table.

Explain to the children that when people are scared and feeling alone, it can be described as darkness. Give each child a battery-operated tealight candle. Invite them to cover the candle and uncover it when they feel hope or light in the story. Read **SCM 1** or use the story audio. If reading, use your voice, expressions, and feelings to make it engaging.

Reflecting on God's Grace

After reading **SCM 1**, encourage the children to explain when they felt hope and light in the story. Accept all answers.

Ask the children to share what kinds of things they wonder about in the Micah story. Here are some conversation starters:

- ▼ Why do you think the people were afraid that God had forgotten them?
- ▼ What kind of place was Bethlehem?
- ▼ What did God promise the people through Micah?
- ▼ What kind of leader did God promise to send from Bethlehem?
- ▼ What might you expect from a leader who is like a shepherd?
- ▼ Why do you think we are reading this passage during the first Sunday of Advent?

Singing

Sing "He Came Down"—**SCM 18**. Invite the children to come up with movements for the key words: *hope*, *love*, *joy*, and *peace*. Use the movements as the children sing the song. Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

The Institute for Peace and Justice, a long-established group that promotes peacemaking in families and schools, has established the Families Against Violence Advocacy Network. One project of that network is to encourage the adoption of a Pledge of Nonviolence. Their motto is "Eliminating violence, one classroom/family at a time, starting with our own."

Claiming God's Grace

*Before the session, tape together **SCM 1a** and **1b**.*

Remind the children that Micah spoke about God's promise of peace. Engage the children in a conversation about what peace is and isn't. If not mentioned, suggest that peace can also be understood as wholeness or well-being (the meaning of the Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*).

Display and draw the children's attention to the "Kids' Pledge of Nonviolence," **SCM 1a** and **1b**. Ask volunteers to read each of the sections. Have the children form groups of two or three people. Invite each group quietly to choose one of the parts of the pledge and create a short skit acting it out. Give children time to formulate their ideas and skit. Have the groups act out their skits while the others guess which part of the pledge they chose.

After the skits, ask how they could follow the pledge concerning their actions toward one another. Then invite the children who are willing to try to live this pledge to sign the poster. When all who wish to sign the pledge, including leaders and helpers, have done so, pray a prayer similar to this one:

God, help us do what we have promised. Replace our anger with your love. Help us not to be afraid to be people of peace. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Display the pledge in your room as a reminder to the children.

Praying God's Grace

Tell the children that they will take a walk around the church as a walking prayer for peace. Begin your walk around your church. After a few steps, pause and ask the children to thank God silently for being with them each step of the way.

Walk to the main entrance. Pause and ask the children to name one place they will go next week. Ask them to pray silently and ask God that they may be part of God's plan for peace in that place.

As you return, pause once or twice to pray for God to give the gift of peace to the other people you see. Back in your room, invite the children to tell how they might pray a walking prayer at home or in their neighborhood.



Offering God's Grace



On this first week of Advent, invite the children to make an ornament to take home or give to a friend to remind others of God's peace for the world.

Provide copies of **GN 1**; construction paper; blue, yellow, green, and brown tissue paper; decoupage glue; scissors; and yarn. Invite the children to follow your directions. The children can follow the diagrams at the bottom of the page. Assist as needed.

- Carefully cut out the dove and ornament pattern.
- On the ornament pattern, cut the outer circle first. Then pinch the center of the circle and make a cut to insert the scissors so that the inside circle can be cut out.
- Trace the ornament on the folded edge of a piece of construction paper and repeat the process to cut the ornament out of the construction paper. When the shape is opened, it should resemble the number eight. Lay it on a piece of wax paper.
- Cut a circle from the blue tissue paper and glue it to the inside of the bottom half of the ornament.
- Tear small shapes from the other color(s) of tissue to represent the continents, or land, of the world. Use the decoupage glue to add the small pieces.
- Add a circle of glue around the border of the bottom half of the ornament and fold the top down, sealing the tissue in place.
- Glue the dove to one side, and set it aside to dry.
- When the ornaments are dry, punch a hole in the top of the ornament and add yarn as a hanger.

As the children work, wonder together about things they can do to bring about peace at Christmas. Encourage the children to offer their ornament to their family or a friend as a sign of peace in the world.

Extra Activity



Provide copies of **GN 2**. Allow the children to color the pictures as you discuss. Ask: "What might these symbols stand for?" Encourage conversation about how the symbols relate to today's story.

When the children have finished coloring, give each one an 8-inch length of yarn. Help them gather the ends and tie a knot or two, then set it aside. Have them cut the shape only on the solid lines, then fold along each of the dotted lines. Before gluing the tabs, have them turn the yarn loop knot-side down and place it under the two tabs with stars. Show the children how to glue each of the tabs to the side of the pyramid that folds nearest it.

Have the children take their ornaments home and share the story of God's promise of peace with their family.



LOVING AND SERVING GOD



Invite the children to gather and lead them in cleaning the worship space.

Recalling the prayer walk in “Praying God’s Grace,” say a prayer for peace. Offer an opportunity for each child to say a prayer for someone or something mentioned during the prayer walk.

Use the following format:

“God, bring peace to _____.”

The group responds,

“Hear our prayer.”

When all have had an opportunity to pray, conclude the prayer with the words, “God, thank you for your love and care.”

Remind the children that, like Micah, they too can share God’s peace with family and friends.

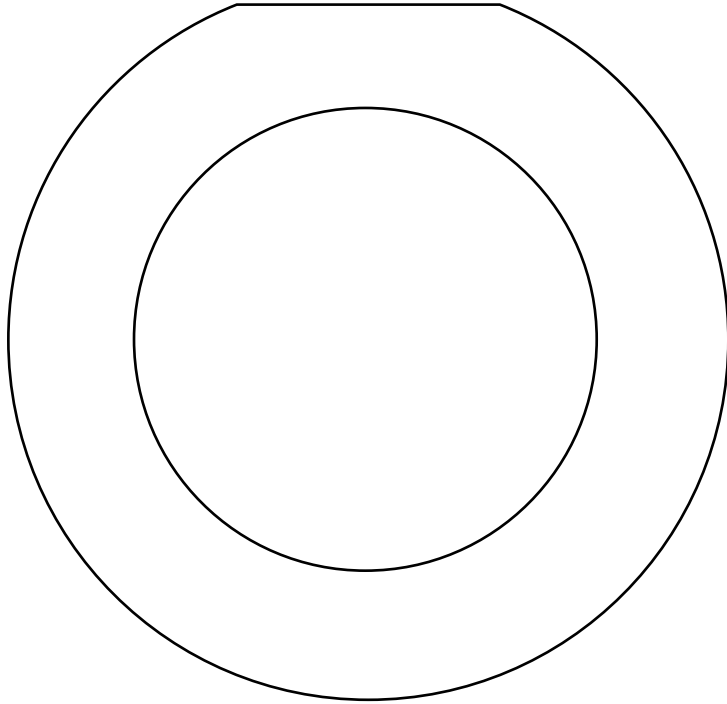
End the session with each child becoming a messenger of good news. Have the children point their hands and fingers in different directions and say, “Peace be with you and you and you!” As they say this, encourage them to point in many different directions to include the whole group in their departing message of peace.

Encourage the children to go out into the world and spread the message with others.



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).

ornament pattern



dove

