



Simeon and Anna Rejoice

Goal: To rejoice, like Simeon and Anna did, as we recognize God's promise in Jesus.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Luke 2:22-40

Mary and Joseph were devout followers of Moses's law, which said that the firstborn son belonged to God. They followed the Jewish customs of their time. Jesus was taken to be circumcised (Luke 2:21), Mary went to be purified, and Jesus was taken to be presented to God in the temple (vv. 22-38).

Anna and Simeon were waiting for a baby who would grow up and restore the nation of Israel as God's chosen nation. Because Luke was writing for a largely Gentile audience, he extended this promise to include Jesus bringing peace and justice for all the nations of the earth.

Set in the context of obeying the law of God in Israel, recognition came. Jesus initiates the coming "redemption of Jerusalem" (v. 38). God's Messiah is now before the people, the one who will save them and redeem from all that binds them and hinders their true relationship with God. Salvation and liberation will come through this "redemption."

Now a new age has dawned. By God's grace, Anna and Simeon beheld the one who would redeem Israel—the Messiah. Their hope for one to redeem Israel was also expressed later by the two travelers on the road to Emmaus after Jesus' resurrection (24:21). Praise and proclamation marked Simeon and Anna's deep gratitude for what their eyes had seen!

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Are children and young people welcomed in your congregation? Are their contributions valued? Does it seem the children have a keen sense of belonging—or not? Pay attention to their responses and see what you can learn about their sense of belonging in your church. You may gain insights that will help you be more welcoming in the future.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Having "eyes of faith" to see God's work in the world, even in small things, is an important practice to nurture. Elders in the faith community are a great resource for this kind of faithful and lifelong witness. When an adult recognizes a child's potential, it gives him or her hope. Encourage all your children to think about how they light up the world with God's love and care for others. Celebrate how amazing it must have been to recognize baby Jesus as the Son of God.

*Dear God, give me a sense of your eternal presence
and peace in knowing your son as Savior. Amen.*

Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 3, 5, 5a, 19, 20

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)
(see p. vii)

internet-connected
device

white cloth

white candle

candlesticks, candles

scented votive candle
(optional)

baby doll and biblical
costumes (optional)

Responding

Celebrating

SCM 5b, 5c, 5d

Praying

gift box with lid, gift
wrap, sticky notes

Offering

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

Extra

copies of **GN 2**

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

“Praying God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

A **B** **LG** **M** **L**

Play “Joy to the World” as children arrive. Welcome each child with “Merry Christmas, (*Name*)!”

Invite the children to create a worship space with a white cloth, a Bible, and a white candle. Explain that white is the color of Christmas.

Encourage their creativity in setting a Bethlehem scene and a temple scene on different sides of the room. For Bethlehem, they could place a table turned on its side for the stable and add stuffed animals, if available. For the temple, they could use two or three candlesticks with candles. It is not necessary to light them, but you might light a scented votive candle during “Hearing the Story” to create more atmosphere if your church allows a lit candle.

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

Singing

Play “Joy to the World”—**SCM 19**—as the children listen. Play the song again and, together with the children, clap out the rhythm. Then join in singing.

Praying

LG

Gather the children in the “Bethlehem” area of the room. Turn on the candle. Take time to show gratitude for God’s gifts. Invite a volunteer to lead the prayer. After each line, prompt the children to respond “We thank you, God.”

For bringing light to the world, (*response*)
for the gifts you share with us, (*response*)
for hope, peace, joy, and love, (*response*)
for teaching us how to live in your way, (*response*)
Amen.

LD *Don’t assume what children can or cannot do with regards to participating in activities. Think of multiple ways children may be able to participate without feeling excluded.*



Preparing to Hear the Story

Ask the children what they remember about Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus. Read Luke 2:1–7 or **SCM 3** aloud before beginning today’s Bible story.

Explain that today’s Bible story begins in the town of Bethlehem. This is where Jesus was born. The story setting will move to the temple in Jerusalem. Explain that Jerusalem was about a two-hour walk from Bethlehem, or about six miles. Give a local reference of something about six miles away. Show **SCM 5a** and have the children find Bethlehem and Jerusalem on the map.



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



Invite a child to find Luke 2 in the Bible. Tell the children that in the story, two people are going to be very happy. They are Simeon and Anna. Invite children to come up with some “happy” movements and tell them to listen for the phrase “was so happy” in the story so they can do their happy movements at that time.

Read **SCM 5** or use the story audio. If reading, use your voice, expressions, feelings, and body to make the story more lively. Vary the tone, speed, and pitch of your voice to indicate changes in mood. 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.

Reflecting on God’s Grace



Invite children to act out Luke 2:22–40.

Distribute Bibles. Ask volunteers to read the story from the Bible in these six sections: vv. 22–24, vv. 25–27, vv. 28–32, vv. 33–35, vv. 36–38, and vv. 39–40. Use the children’s suggestions on how to dramatize it and invite volunteers to take on the roles, using simple costumes and a baby doll, if you have them.

After they read the first passage, walk with the children to Jerusalem and to the temple scene they created at the appropriate time. Continue with the other verses, up to verse 39, as the volunteers act out their parts.

After the drama, invite the children to imagine being Simeon and Anna. Engage the children in conversation using the following questions.

- How might Anna and Simeon have known who Jesus was?
- Why were they so happy to see baby Jesus?
- Which adults in our church make you feel welcomed and loved?
How do they do this?
- What does the story tell us about God?

Read verses 39–40.



Singing

L

Give God an offering of music. Play and listen to “O Child Jesus, You Are So Lovely (Jesucito de mi vida)”—**SCM 20**. Note that this song is in English and in Spanish. Practice both languages, then sing and sway to the song. Turn off the candle.

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Celebrating God’s Grace

FA

*Before the session, cut and tape together **SCM 5b** and **5c** to make the game board. Cut the die and game pieces from **SCM 5d**. To make the die, fold along all dotted lines and tape the tabs to the inside of the cube. Fold each game marker at the dotted line so it will stand.*

Invite the children to choose a game marker and put it at the start space. The children will take turns rolling the die and moving forward the corresponding number of spaces. If a child rolls the blue star, she or he moves to the nearest space with a blue star, forward or backward. If a child lands on a space with words, invite the child to read it to the group, and then move forward the number of spaces indicated. Multiple players can occupy the same space on the board.

Encourage the children to continue playing until all make it home to Nazareth. Play the game again if time allows.

Up to six children may play the game. If you have more children, consider making color copies of **SCM 5b**, **5c**, and **5d**, or form two groups and alternate them between this game and making door hangers in “Offering God’s Grace.”

Praying God’s Grace

L C



Before the session, prepare a gift-wrapped box that can be opened without unwrapping it. Place sticky notes inside.

Show the box to the group and invite conversation about some of the gifts that they have received. Invite them to also think about the not-so-visible gifts that they have received during Christmas (love, joy, peace, and so on). Guide them to think for a few minutes about the greatest gift God could give us—Jesus.

Wonder aloud about who the children know that they would consider wise elders in the church—people who show wisdom, people you can turn to for good advice. Suggest that these wise elders are also blessings (gifts) from God.

Open the gift box and give the children the sticky notes found inside. Invite them to write the names or draw the people that they thought about. When they are finished, ask them to post them on the outside of the box. You could keep it in the room or put it somewhere in the church as a reminder for the children and the adults to pray for their wise elders.



End with a prayer that begins with the children sharing for what and for whom they are thankful. End the prayer by saying:

Fill our hearts with your love, O Lord. We praise you and thank you for sending us wise elders, such as (*children respond*). We ask your blessing on them, through Jesus our Savior. Amen.

T Consider how much time your planned activities will take and adjust transition times according to remaining time available.

Offering God's Grace

LG

Simeon offered a blessing for the baby Jesus and his parents. A blessing is a short prayer that asks for God's care and presence in a person's life. Make blessing gifts for your church to give to parents when there is a birth or baptism.

Give each child a copy of **GN 1** printed on card stock. Provide art supplies to decorate the door hangers: paint, markers, stickers, and so on. Invite the children to decorate them however they want. Give the decorated door hangers to the pastor or other church leader to be given when there is a birth or baptism.

Extra Activity

L LD

Tell the children they will play a game to imagine how they might react to Jesus if they had been one of the people in today's story. Hand out copies of **GN 2** and scissors. Have the children cut out their chatterbox on the top half of their paper. Follow the steps on the bottom half of their paper to make their chatterboxes.

- ▼ Fold along the diagonal lines and open the square.
- ▼ Fold each corner to the middle and crease it.
- ▼ Flip it over and fold the four corners to the center again.
- ▼ Crease along the flap lines.
- ▼ Insert thumbs and pointer fingers into the four flaps and pinch the chatterbox open.

Form pairs to play the game.

- ▼ Have one player choose a person from the four squares.
- ▼ The chatterbox holder opens and closes the chatterbox as each letter is spelled out loud.
- ▼ The other player then selects one of the four visible numbers.
- ▼ The chatterbox holder opens and closes the chatterbox while counting out loud.
- ▼ The other player selects another number.
- ▼ The chatterbox holder opens that flap and reads the question for the other player to answer.

Have children switch places and play again.



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

Ask the children to help clean the space.

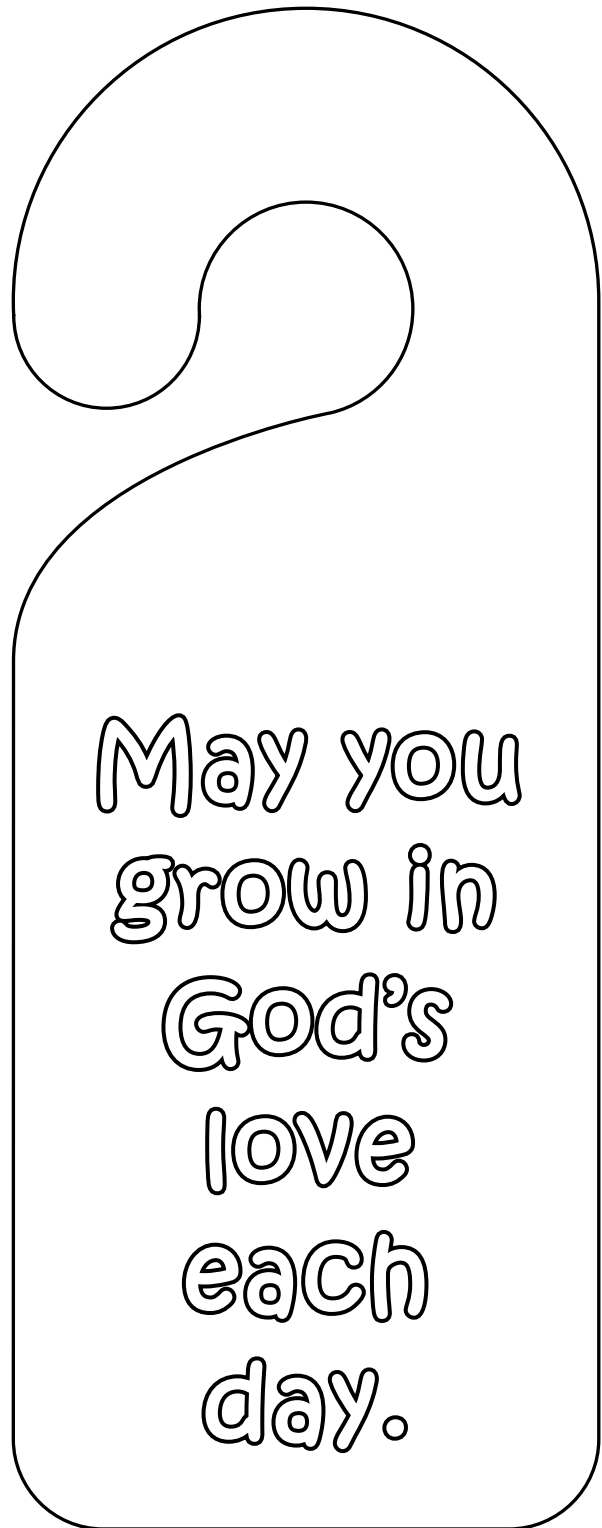
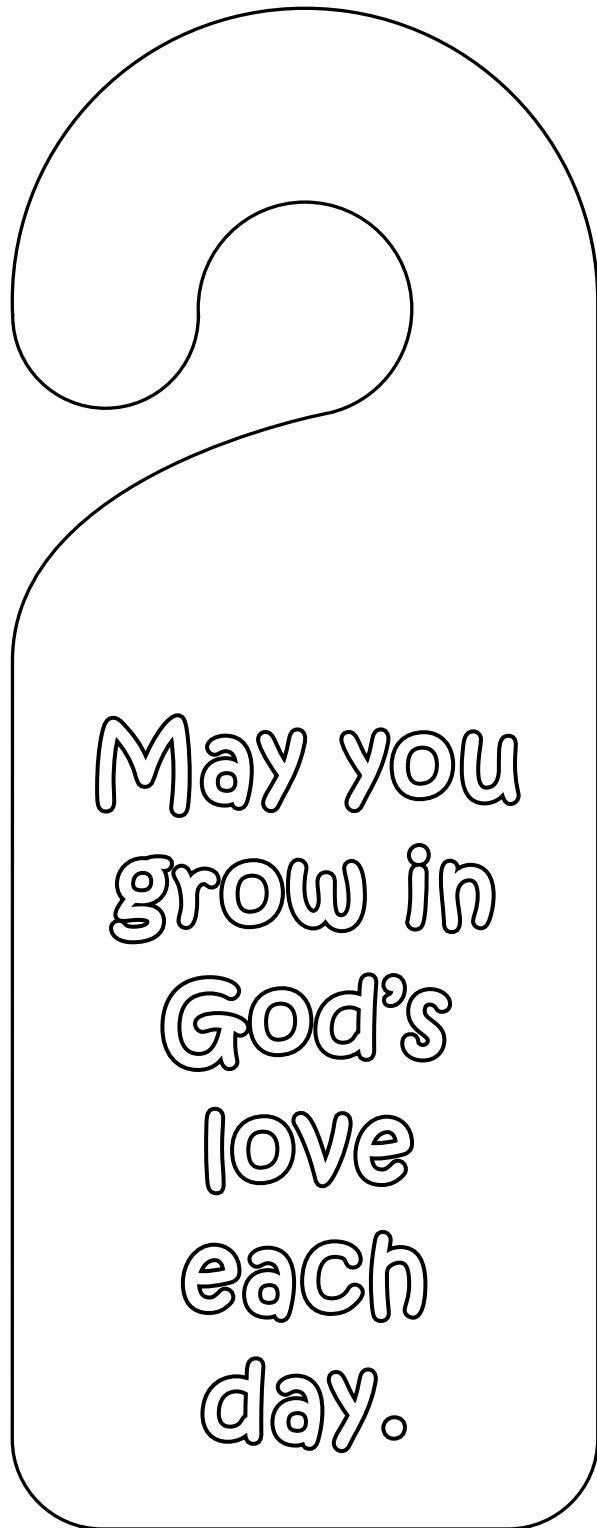
Tell the group that the time between Christmas and Epiphany, January 6, when the visit of the wise men is celebrated, is twelve days called Christmastide. It is a time when we celebrate that Jesus is always with us.

Turn on the white Christ candle. Explain that the white candle represents that Jesus, the Light of the World, has been born.

Sing “Joy to the World”—**SCM 19**.

Explain that just as adults in the church and at home have taught them about Jesus, they may pass on the same stories to others. Send them with a blessing and a charge, “(Name), you are God’s child. Go and share the good news about Jesus!”

Turn off the candle.



Mary

Joseph

7

8

6

5

1

2

3

4

Simeon

Anna

What would you have said to Anna or Simeon when they told you Jesus was God's Son?

How would you have felt if two strangers came and held your baby?

Show what expression you would have had when Anna said, "This is God's child" and explain why.

Show how Simeon would have reacted when he met Jesus after waiting so long.

If you were Joseph, would you have let Simeon take your baby from Mary?

How do you think Simeon knew that Jesus was the one that God had told him about?

Show how you would have held the baby.

Simeon take your Jesus.

Folding Guide:

