



All One Family

Goal: To explore God's welcome and inclusion of all people.

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GRACE . . .

. . . In Acts 10:1-48

This passage is sometimes called the "Pentecost of the Gentile World." Peter proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ to non-Jews, and the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit. As in the account of the earlier Pentecost, the gift of the Holy Spirit led to "speaking in tongues and extolling God" and baptism (vv. 46, 47). This experience led to the conviction that all people can be the people of God by the power of God's Spirit. We are all one family.

It was not easy for some to see the Spirit extending to non-Jews. Today, some are reluctant to see the church reaching out to include persons of whom they might not approve. But God is an inclusive God, extending grace to all types of people in all types of situations.

Peter's vision speaks to God's inclusive love. Peter sees a sheet come down from heaven with a variety of animals on it. A voice tells him to kill and eat what he sees, but Peter protests that he will not eat anything unclean. The voice then says, "What God has made clean, you must not call profane" (v. 14). Later, when Peter preached to Cornelius's household, he said, "I truly understand that God shows no partiality" (v. 34). The Spirit of God reaches out to include all in God's family.

If so, we should reach out to all others as well. We should find ways to welcome all in the church and practice doing so, always.

. . . In Your Children's Experiences

Children are born or adopted into families. The family is usually the first place where they know and experience trust and love. These early experiences are foundational for their physical and spiritual growth and development. At a child's baptism, promises are made to the child and the family. As she or he is brought to church and is known by the congregation, slowly this child learns she or he has another family, the church.

Differences are noticed by children (you're a girl and I'm a boy; your skin is darker and mine is lighter; you like orange and I like green). They do not necessarily exclude others on the basis of such differences. In fact, they can be led to appreciate the differences between persons that make people who they are.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Children know that it is easy being with people who are like us and whom we like. As you tell the story of Peter and Cornelius, be aware of children who may not have a friend. Be aware of a child who may have learning or social disabilities. Helping children be aware of how they can welcome someone into their family of faith is one important way we live with God's grace. Make a strong effort to include every child fully in this session. Keep in mind any disability or other factor that might lead to exclusion.

*O God, give me a heart for people who are different from me.
Send your Spirit to open my heart to all your children. Amen.*



Supplies

Music & Melodies
(MM) 2023–2024

Stories, Colors & More
(SCM) i–iv, 4, 22, 23

basic supplies
(see p. vii)

story audio (see p. vii)

candle

green cloth

bowl of water

white dish towel

card-stock copies of
Grace Notes (GN) 1

small stickers of hearts,
flowers, smiles, and so
forth

Responding

Claiming

Green Eggs and Ham
by Dr. Seuss (Beginner
Books/Random House,
1960) or internet-
connected device;
finger foods, such as
cheese, rice crackers,
pita bread, apples,
grapes, and foods that
may be unfamiliar or
from other countries

Celebrating

streamers

Offering

copies of **GN 2**

Extra

copies of **GN 3**

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.

“Claiming God’s Grace” requires more prep.

Welcoming and Preparing

TD **LG**

Greet the children by name and with the words “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.” Provide paper, crayons, and markers and invite them to draw birds, fish, or animals.

Invite the children to help prepare the worship space. Ask the children to include a Bible, a candle, a bowl of water, a dish towel, and a green cloth. Invite the children to place their drawings on the dish towel.

Ask some children to help prepare today’s “Responding in Gratitude” activities. Suggest that one or two prepare to lead today’s singing. Today’s passage is lengthy. Decide if you will have children read from the Bible or use **SCM 4**. Invite several volunteers to practice the reading for today.

Give each child a card-stock copy of **GN 1**. Help the children cut out the circles and punch a hole where the dot indicates. Attach yarn or ribbon long enough to hang around the neck. Give each person a marker. Invite the children to take turns writing a message of affirmation on each circle—things they like about the person. Younger children can draw something such as happy faces or hearts. Provide small stickers of hearts, flowers, smiles, and so on. Give time for everyone to give and receive messages. Gather in a circle and ask the children to wear their circles. Wonder what messages God would write on our circles of love.

Singing

Gather around the worship table. Invite the children to name people, places, and things for which they thank and praise God.

Play “Sing Thanks to God”—**MM 23**; **SCM 22**. Invite the children to sing along with the song.

Praying

Turn on the candle, reminding the children that the light represents Jesus the Christ and the light he brings into the world. Invite the children to repeat after you as you pray:

Be with us today, God. /
Quiet our minds /
so we can hear your voice. /
Open our hearts /



so we can receive your love. /
Create in us grateful hearts /
that care for your world. /
In Jesus' name, we pray. /
Amen. /

LG *Focus on the children as gifted members of your community. Look for opportunities for them to express generosity, such as passing things out, holding visual aids, helping other children, or serving as the example in games and activities.*

Preparing to Hear the Story

F C

Wonder together if anyone has ever felt left out. Invite children to share experiences of feeling left out or times when they've felt "not as good as" someone else. Remind the children that God doesn't see things that way. God loves and includes everyone, and God doesn't like some people better than others. Everyone is welcome in God's family! Explain that today's Bible story is about two people who changed their minds about who could be part of God's family.

Hearing the Story

L C TD

Invite one of the children to find Acts 4 in the Bible. Invite volunteers to read Acts 10:1–48 or **SCM 4**. Conclude the reading 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.

Read the story again using **SCM 4** or listen to the story audio. When you read about Peter's vision, pause and ask four children to pick up the dish towel with the animal drawings and lower them to the table.

When you read about Peter baptizing Cornelius's family, pause and touch the water and say, "Remember your baptism and be grateful."

Reflecting on God's Grace

L C

Wonder about how Peter and Cornelius changed their minds. Say that food laws about what Jewish people could and could not eat set the Jews apart as God's holy people. Cornelius was not Jewish; he would have served food that Peter was not allowed to eat. A Jew who followed the food laws would never go into a house with such food.

Wonder together:

- ▼ What do you think this story tells us about God?
- ▼ What might God want us to change our minds about?

Ask children to imagine a situation in which there are two groups of people—one group thinks that it is better than the other and that God loves it more. God sends a message to both groups. Wonder what





God has to say to each group, remembering what the story says about God. How can the two groups come together as members of God's family?

Singing



Sing "Love"—**MM 24; SCM 23**—and celebrate how Jesus' grace calls us to love one another. Note that, in the second verse, the word "brother" is used. Have half the group sing "brother" and the other half sing "sister" or all can sing "sibling." Once the tune and words are familiar, you can sing this song in a round with the children.

Turn off the candle.

T *For children who struggle with transitions, consider a quick physical activity—such as doing chair push-ups, squeezing hands together, and stretching.*

RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

Select activities appropriate for your group and the time available.



Claiming God's Grace



Wonder with the children about the connections between people and the food they eat.

Present the foods you have gathered. Give one food out at a time, inviting the children to taste it. It's all right if a child doesn't want to taste something. Wonder together how easy or hard it would be to have a friend who liked to eat food that we didn't like.

Read *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss or watch the YouTube video "Green Eggs and Ham—Animated Read Aloud Book for Kids" ([bit.ly /GGGGreenEggsVideo](https://bit.ly/GGGGreenEggsVideo), 7:48). Ask the children to name similarities between today's Bible story and Dr. Seuss's book.

Challenge the children to create a mash-up of the two stories. Look for an opportunity for the children to report their understandings of Acts 10 and share their mash-up with the congregation.

FA *Many 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 other food options to keep children safe.*

Celebrating God's Grace



Celebrate the way God's grace joins all people in Jesus Christ. Distribute streamers. Invite children to use them in making up motions to go with the song "Love"—**MM 24; SCM 23**.

For example, to show how everyone is included and that no one is better than anyone else in God's eyes, bring children into the middle

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.



of the circle one at a time, adding motions such as standing tall, waving streamers, crouching, and clapping hands with a partner. Conclude with everyone in a circle with arms on each other's shoulders. Sing your action song together. Suggest that children share the motions with their family or a friend to remind them that everyone has a place with God, and God doesn't leave anyone out!

Praying God's Grace

TD

Provide paint smocks to protect the children's clothing. Invite the children to paint pictures of animals mentioned in the story.

The visions Peter and Cornelius received were messages from God about God's love for all people. Wonder what God wants to tell us about loving and welcoming people today. Invite the children to write or draw messages from God to us and our world.

Option: Use string (glued onto the paper) to make a net to hold the finished animals.

Look for a location to display the messages from God in your church's building.

Offering God's Grace

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Hand out copies of GN 2. Invite the children to imagine what the person in their picture may have been left out of. Suggest that they complete each picture by adding themselves in showing a welcoming action. When they have finished, invite volunteers to share one of their stories. Continue until all who wish have had an opportunity to share.

Conclude by challenging the children to look for a situation where someone is feeling left out or alone and offering a way to be welcoming to them this week.

Extra Activity

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Tell the children about a paper-chain project.

Did you know that the world's longest paper doll chain is over five miles long? Two children in New Zealand started a project to make a chain that is even longer! Why? There had been a terrible event in a church near them where many people had been hurt. The two were having a hard time understanding why people would want to hurt other people just because they were a different race or had different religious beliefs. They made their paper doll chain to show all kinds of people holding hands. Other people heard about their project and wanted to help. People from all over the world have sent paper doll chains to show their support.

Go to bit.ly/PaperDollChain to read more about the paper doll project that the two children from New Zealand began.

Note: bit.ly web addresses are case sensitive.



Make a long paper doll chain to display in your church to show how we are all part of God's family.

- ▼ Distribute copies of **GN 3**, scissors, and crayons.
- ▼ Cut the two strips apart, then fold each strip accordion-style along the dotted lines.
- ▼ Cut the doll along the solid line. Do not cut on the fold.
- ▼ Open the strip to see the dolls holding hands.
- ▼ Color the dolls using multicultural-colored crayons if they are available.

Invite the children to tape all of their chains together at the hands. Find a place where your church can see this representation of God's family. It may be on a church door, in your sanctuary, or around the whole building!



Ask parents and caregivers for their email addresses so you can send the Grace Sightings link, or invite them to visit www.pcusastore.com/GGGdownloads. Remind the parents and caregivers about the story audio (see p. vii).

LOVING AND SERVING GOD

Remind the children that, when Cornelius and his family discovered that God cared for them, they celebrated and asked Peter to baptize them.

Touch the bowl of water and remind the children to be thankful for their baptism. Celebrate together by singing "Love"—**MM 24; SCM 23**.

Ask volunteers to name different ways followers of Jesus can be friends with people who are different. Challenge them to do so.

Encourage the children to wear their circles of love home and make a circle for someone who could use words of encouragement.

Bless each child as they leave, saying, "(Name), go out to share the love and grace of Jesus with everyone you meet."





	

