



Let Us Worship

Goal: To worship with praise, thanksgiving, and prayer.

RECOGNIZING GOD’S GRACE . . .

. . . In Psalm 122

The Psalms are the faith community’s conversations with God. Psalm 122 expresses the joy of traveling to and arriving at God’s temple in Jerusalem for worship. This was probably a psalm sung by people on a pilgrimage to the temple. It would have served a similar function to that of a processional hymn in our worship today. The temple was the symbolic place of God’s presence; similarly, Christians refer to their churches as “the house of God.” This does not mean that God is not present elsewhere, but does suggest that a particular place has a sense of holiness about it.

Verse 6 says, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.” “Peace,” *shalom*, is already in the root of the name “Jerusalem.” The pilgrims come to Jerusalem to pray for judgment (Hebrew *mishpat* is when the neediest, the marginalized, those nobody else cares for, are cared for) and to give thanks (something tangible, something precious you offered to God, to demonstrate your immense gratitude to God, and your intense trust that your future was in God’s hands). We give thanks in worship and take it with us when we go back home.

. . . In Your Children’s Experiences

How do the children in your group participate in congregational worship? There are many simple ways to include them, such as inviting older children to read Scripture (be sensitive to those who may have literacy concerns), establishing child and youth choirs, and using songs and hymns that are appealing to young people. Children can be encouraged to play simple rhythm instruments during hymn singing times. Many older children and youth play instruments and can be invited to accompany the choir. Follow up on ways that you can advocate for and affirm the participation of children within congregational worship.

. . . In Your Relationships with the Children

Reflect on the ways in which you worship with the children during your sessions together. Do you set aside a corner of the room for worship time? Are children given opportunities to create their own prayers? How are the experiences of children from diverse cultural backgrounds reflected in your worship? Stories, art, and music often provide opportunities for discussion about who God is, and how God calls us to live. Make a list of ways that you can strengthen and affirm the participation of children in worship during your sessions, and follow through on them.

Praise be to you, O God.

Thank you for the opportunity to learn alongside these children. Amen.



Supplies

Music & Melodies

bit.ly/GGGMusicMelodies

Stories, Colors & More (SCM) i–iv, 10, 16, 20

basic supplies

(see p. vii)

audio stories (optional)

(see p. vii)

internet-connected device

candle

green cloth

chalk

jumbo craft sticks

Responding

Extra

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

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.

Welcoming and Preparing

LG **A** **C** **T** **TD**

Welcome each child with, “Grace and peace be with you, (Name).” Prompt children to respond, “And also with you.”

Invite children to help prepare the worship space. Provide a Bible, a green cloth, and a candle.

Provide chalk and sheets of black construction paper. Invite some children to draw a building in your town or their home. Ask for a volunteer to make a drawing of your church. Display the drawings on the worship table. Give each child a craft stick and fine-tipped markers; invite them to draw their face, hair, and clothes on the craft stick to create their own “stick person.” Have them set aside their stick people until “Preparing to Hear the Story.”

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 today’s Scripture passage.

As the group prepares, engage in discussion about what they like about coming to worship. Share what you like too. Thank them for their efforts in preparing the worship space.

TD *Some children struggle with textures. Chalk is a common trigger and can cause feelings of nausea or anxiety. Provide options such as paint or crayons. Allow the child to wash their hands if needed.*

Singing

MS

Play, listen to, clap, and dance to “Alabad al Señor (Let Us Give Praise to God)”—**SCM 20**. This song is bilingual. Take time to learn the Spanish verse. Consider using rhythm instruments to enhance the song.

Praying

M **L** **T**

Gather the children, and turn on the candle as a reminder of God’s light in the world through Jesus. Have the children sit with their left hand open in front of them. Invite them to use their right pointer finger to begin slowly tracing over the fingers of their left hand—as though their right pointer is going up and down the mountains; when they reach the end of their thumb, they may just go back the opposite direction. Lead them to breathe in when they go up a finger and out when they go down. Then, lead them to imagine God’s peace filling them when they breathe in. Continue in silence for a few moments as they pray and trace their fingers. Pray:



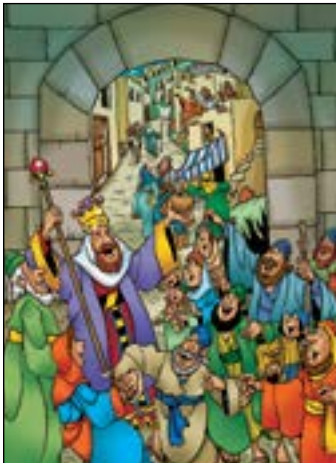
God, for the grace of your presence with us we give you thanks. Amen.

Preparing to Hear the Story

B C T

Hold a ball and repeat this sentence starter: “I was glad when they said to me, let us go to . . .”; toss the ball to a child, speak the sentence starter, and invite them to finish the sentence with somewhere they would be glad to go (*to the park! to get ice cream! to the beach!*). Continue in this way until everyone has received the ball at least once. Exclaim that the places they have spoken would certainly be places you might all be glad to go!

Invite children to add their craft stick “people” to the church they drew during “Welcoming and Preparing.” Comment that, now that you are all gathered in worship, as are their “stick people,” it is time to hear the story.



Hearing the Story

LG A B M L

Invite a child to find Psalm 122 in the Bible. Invite one or two volunteers to read Psalm 122 aloud. Conclude the reading 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.

Encourage the children to listen for where David says he is “glad” as you read a retelling of the story using **SCM 10**. Tell the children to stand when they hear “glad” and march in place as if they were walking with David until he says, “For you, O God, I will do my very best.”

Reflecting on God’s Grace

C

Ask the children to finish the sentence for David: “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go (*to the house of the Lord*).’” Use the chalk to add those words above the church that was drawn on the black paper in the worship space.

Discuss what things about worship David enjoyed; talk about the ways you all enjoy those things too.

Wonder together what it means to “live in peace.” Ask the children how we each contribute to living in peace. Wonder together what this story tells us about worship and about God.

Singing

SD

Worship God by singing and dancing to “Bim Bam”—**SCM 16**. Encourage the children to use rhythm instruments.

Turn off the candle.



RESPONDING IN GRATITUDE

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

Claiming God's Grace



Before the session, write the word Peace in large letters on a sheet of newsprint.

Lay out the newsprint prepared with the title “Peace.” Offer that in some worship services, worshipers “pass the peace,” shaking hands as one says, “The peace of Christ be with you,” and the other responds, “And also with you.” Children may choose to shake hands or put their hands together as in prayer and nod as they speak. Pass the peace among one another now. Ask:

- ▼ How does it feel if peace is “with you”?
- ▼ Where or with whom do you most experience peace?

Think about words or images that have to do with peace or living in peace. Invite children to trace their hand on a sheet of paper, cut it out, and fill their handprint with their peaceful words and or images. Glue handprints to the poster board and display it as a reminder to pass peace and live peacefully with others.

C *Some children don't verbalize quickly. Nod and show them you are listening, giving them time to formulate an answer.*

Praying God's Grace



Re-read the final verse of David's song that begins with, “Pray that Jerusalem has peace. . . .” After reading, read the first line again, but this time insert the name of your city in the place of Jerusalem. Provide sticky notes and suggest that children draw peace symbols on them. Place them on the representation of your town from “Welcoming and Preparing.”

Then read: “Let those who love you have rest.” And invite children to write the name of or draw someone on a sticky note who may need rest because they are ill, grieving, or overwhelmed. Stick those notes on your “town.”

Read: “There will be peace on your walls and in your city gates.” Invite the children to write a prayer of peace for your community, state, or nation on a sticky note. Add those prayers to your “town.”

Close by praying:

We bring our prayers to you, O God, and thank you for your presence with us always. Amen.



Offering God's Grace

LD C A B

Write “Let us go to the house of the Lord!” on a sheet of newsprint. Provide large sheets of light colored construction paper and invite children to make signs that read, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to the house of the Lord!’” Have the children decorate their signs.

Help the children identify a good spot to gather to welcome worshipers as they come to the sanctuary for worship—maybe at an entrance, maybe just outside the entrance (if weather permits), maybe just inside the sanctuary—choose whatever location will work best in your context.

Lead the children in considering ways they could hold their signs and offer welcome to those who gather, helping to create a feeling of “gladness” as worshipers prepare for the service. They may even identify a couple of questions they can ask worshipers about what makes them “glad” to gather to worship.

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

Extra Activity

LD

Re-read the last two lines of today's story: “We were going to praise our God, give thanks, and offer our prayers. We were being called to worship our God!”

Handout **GN 1** and invite the children to color the pictures. Lead them through the three poses for praising our God, giving thanks, and offering our prayers. Tell the children that they are going to decide which pose to take when you mention something that happens during worship. Explain that it is all right if people choose different poses at times. When that happens, encourage children to tell why they chose the pose they did. Use the following suggestions to play:

- ✎ Singing a hymn
- ✎ Asking God to be present
- ✎ Eating bread and drinking juice at Communion
- ✎ Telling God you are sorry for mistakes
- ✎ Putting money in the offering plate
- ✎ Hearing the Scripture reading

Then ask the children for suggestions of times outside of church when they praise God, give thanks, or offer prayers. Ask that, as a child shares an idea, the group responds with a pose (such as “scored a goal in soccer”; the children might pose to praise God or give thanks).



Suggest that the children take the pictures of the poses with them and pay attention both during worship and through their week to recognize times that they praise God, give thanks, and offer prayers.



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

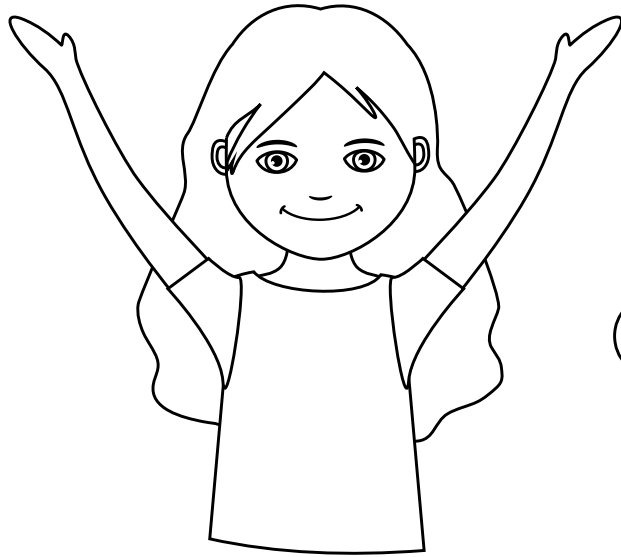


Lead children in cleaning up the worship space.

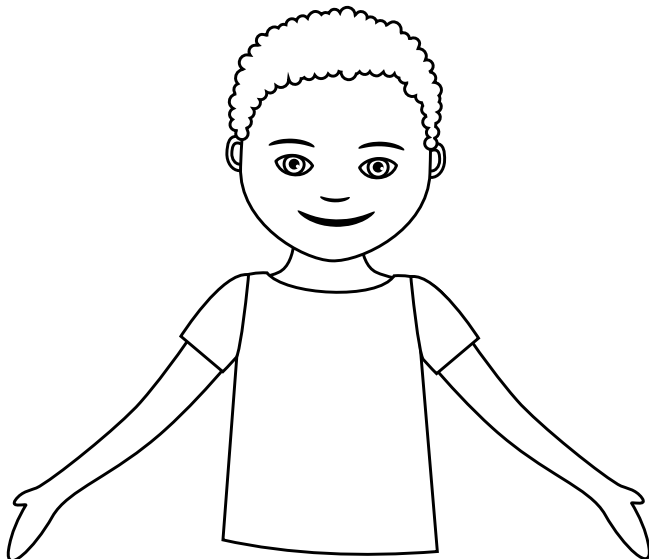
Gather in a circle and toss a ball around the circle, using the sentence starter, “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go to . . .’” and encourage each child when they receive the ball to say, “the house of the Lord.”

Gather around your “chalk town” and invite children to remove their “stick people” and to take them as they leave. Offer that their stick people may now become a place marker in their Bibles so that they are reminded of the gladness David felt in gathering for worship. Offer a prayer of gratitude for the opportunity to honor God with our worship.

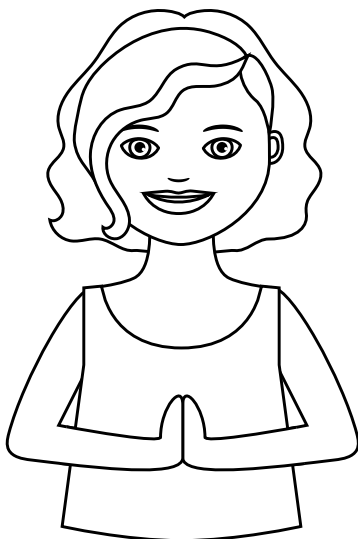
Bless each child as they leave, saying, “(Name), be glad and worship God. May God’s grace be with you.”



Praise
our God.



Give
thanks.



Offer our
prayers.

