

**ITEM D.209  
FOR INFORMATION**

**Introducing a New Denominational Children's Curriculum:  
*Growing in Grace & Gratitude***

...and an abundance of grace was at work among them all. (Acts 4:33, CEB)

About twenty months ago, the editorial staff of Congregational Ministries Publishing was starting to develop a new denominational children's curriculum to replace *We Believe*. Since the development was in the infancy stages, we were evaluating the direction the new curriculum should take. We were certain that it needed to be more than just informational. It needed to be transformational. We were wrestling with how to develop a curriculum that articulates our denominational identity while encouraging young learners to practice Christian community, proclaim the gospel, and work for justice.

When we heard about the idea of "grace and gratitude" from our colleagues down the hall in the Office of Theology and Worship, we knew it was our way forward. We could imagine a curriculum that helps transform the lives of children and those who love them, shaped by grace and gratitude. The result is *Growing in Grace & Gratitude*, set to launch in fall 2015.

The key Bible stories that we want children to know are similar to those in any church curriculum, but how the session unfolds reveals the grace of God and our gracious response. For example, *We Believe* is based on the children's catechism. To shape a session on the creation story, we would use Question 7: "**What did God create?** God created all that is, seen and unseen." Children would learn what God creates, but would they experience transformation?

*Growing in Grace & Gratitude* focuses the session differently. As you read the story of creation, you discover a glimpse of God's grace on the first page, hidden in one little word, spoken repeatedly—*good*. God names creation, including you, "good"; the Hebrew word *tov* means "beautiful, bountiful, cheerful, fine, good, grace-filled." God blesses the creation by pronouncing it good. Through the session, children will experience God's grace as a human being, created in God's image, called to be a partner with God and with others in fulfilling the purpose of creation: to glorify God.

Same story, different emphasis—much more transformational!

We introduced this idea at this year's Association of Presbyterian Church Educators event in San Jose, California. Lib Caldwell, a noted Presbyterian educator and professor at McCormick Theological Seminary, came up to staff afterward and said, "This is the way you teach Reformed faith to children."

We are excited about the possibilities that this new articulation of faith can bring, and we are particularly pleased that it seems to work for even the youngest of Presbyterians. Each session of *Growing in Grace & Gratitude* is rooted in Bible stories that reveal God's grace. Children and their leaders will celebrate the meaning of this grace in their lives as they encounter a living God. Through fun activities, prayer, and singing, children will gather in God's grace and learn to respond joyfully in gratitude.

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Three core values shape the vision of *Growing in Grace & Gratitude*. These core values are that the curriculum:

- Be rooted in the foundation of Presbyterian identity where God's grace and our gratitude are the heartbeat of our faith, life, and worship.
- Extends an invitation to discipleship that inspires children to learn and practice hospitality, generosity, and love.
- Reaches beyond Sunday morning, encouraging children to live their lives as an expression of God's Grace.

In grace and gratitude,  
Clare Lewis