

Jer. 33:14–16

Ps. 25:1–10

1 Thess. 3:9–13

Luke 21:25–36

A Message of Hope

**Goal for
the Session**

Children will learn that Jeremiah brought a message of God’s hope and will thank God that they, too, can be hopeful.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Jeremiah 33:14–16

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Angela Bauer-Levesque

Opening with a formula typical of salvation oracles, “the days are surely coming,” verse 14 introduces divine first-person speech. God is assuring the audience that God will fulfill “the promise,” literally “the good word” with a definite article—not “a” promise, one of many, but a particular one made to both the house of Israel and the house of Judah. Harkening back to Jeremiah 23:5–6, another eschatological interlude, verse 15 reiterates what was promised there, namely, that God will birth a “righteous” (*tsedaqah*) offspring of the Davidic monarchy, who will act in ways that will promote “justice and righteousness” (*mishpat* and *tsedaqah*).

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Jennifer Ryan Ayres

Here we meet the God who promises to protect and restore the people, even as they are in the midst of great suffering and at the edge of despair. It is in precisely this context that God speaks the promise, and it is in precisely this context that despair opens the door to creativity and hope. Calvin acknowledged that the promises of God seem to disappear, but that with faith and patience, we look forward to their fulfillment.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Deborah A. Block

This text insists that covenantal life in all its expressions is characterized by justice and righteousness, allowing no dichotomy of “prophetic” and “pastoral.” Life together is to embody the nature of God, “The LORD is our righteousness.” Jeremiah uses the name first for a promised person (23:6) and again here, intentionally, for a promised place (33:16). The vision of the time to come impugns the time at hand. What leader and what community could claim “The LORD is our righteousness”? The promise challenges our reality, and drives a reappropriation of “righteousness.” The word is uncommon, if not pejorative, in common parlance and unwelcome in the lexicon of many faithful because of its frequent companionship with “self.”

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Gary W. Charles

As I listen to the cries of Jeremiah throughout the scope of his prophecy, I long for the day that is surely coming when God’s future will be a reality beyond the violent boastings of the ruling Babylon of the day. I long for the day that is surely coming when in God’s future the poor are not sent to shelters or forced to sleep on the streets. I long for the day that is surely coming when God’s future has no space for violence, when we will stop producing body bags—because there are no dead soldiers to fill them. I long for the day that is surely coming when God’s future affords no room for rancor, a day when our world is no longer torn asunder by racism and sexism and homophobia.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Jeremiah 33:14–16

Focus on Your Teaching

At this time of year, when children hear the word *hope* they may be thinking of Christmas gifts they hope to receive. It is challenging for these concrete thinkers to consider the broader sense of a hopeful feeling or attitude. Children this age do have a sense of justice and fairness, however, and this may help them to identify with the people to whom Jeremiah brought God's word of hope. Encourage them to stretch their imaginations to the good things God promises for the world and the hope this brings.

God, fill me with hope in the new beginnings you promise. Keep my focus on this holy hope during Advent this year. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- Resource Sheet 1, materials listed there
- Bible
- individually wrapped treats
- Christmas stickers
- small paper bags
- stapler
- Color Pack 1, 2, 34
- adult biblical costume or dish towel, yarn
- sticky notes
- Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 2, scissors, glue sticks, fine-tipped markers or colored pencils, tape
- option 2: Color Pack 37; *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- option 3: painting paper; finger paints; paint shirts; paper towels; newspapers

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, follow the directions on Resource Sheet 1 (Preparing for Advent) to make an Advent wreath. Put a few treats and Christmas stickers in a small paper bag for each child and staple it shut. (Be mindful of food allergies.) Hide these around your learning area. Ask a man to portray Jeremiah. Give him a biblical costume and a copy of the script in Exploring. Cover the new growth on the tree stump on Color Pack 2 with sticky notes.

Gather with learners around the Advent wreath and explain that today is the first Sunday in the season of Advent, the season when Christians prepare to celebrate Christmas. Point out the candles on the wreath and explain the color. Tape a flame to one of the paper candles and say that this first Advent candle is the candle of hope. Invite learners to offer definitions of the word *hope*. Affirm that we have hope because God is always with us. Pray aloud, asking learners to repeat each phrase:

Loving God, / thank you for being with us today. / Help us to learn more about the hope you give. / Amen.

Invite learners to find the hidden treat bags and put them next to the Advent wreath without opening them. Say they will get to open them later, and invite learners to tell what they hope is in the bags. Ask them to describe what it is like to hope for something.

If you do not have a volunteer to portray Jeremiah, put on a biblical costume or a headdress made from a dish towel held in place by yarn and tell the story yourself.

EXPLORING

Show Color Pack 1 and explain this is a picture of a window made out of pieces of colored glass. Invite learners to tell about any stained-glass windows they have seen. Say that the person shown in this window is God's prophet, Jeremiah. Show the book of Jeremiah in the Bible. Introduce your guest to tell the following story:

Good morning. My name is Jeremiah. When I was a young boy, God told me that I would be God's prophet. My job would be to tell people about God's word and to deliver messages from God.

Well, let me tell you about my people. We were called the Israelites. The Israelites were chosen by God to be a special people. God led us and protected us. God gave us the Commandments to tell us how to live. Long before I was born, King David was one of our leaders. He was a good king.

After King David, we had some kings who were not good leaders. These kings did not worship only God. They did not live in God's ways. They treated people unfairly. Soon the Israelites began to forget how to live as God's people. Life was not good in those days.

Even though the Israelites were forgetting about God, God did not forget about the Israelites. The Lord sent me to give my people hope. I reminded them of God's love and God's power. I begged them to turn back to living in God's ways. One day I told them: "God keeps promises. The Lord will send another leader from King David's family, and this leader will be a good king. This new king will be like a new branch from an old stump. When this happens, life will be just the way God plans it to be."

When the people heard this message from God, they were filled with hope that life would get better. They could hardly wait! They put their hope in God.

Dance and Sing

Dance and sing, for God
will be with you,
Glory, hallelujah!
Dance and sing, for God
will be with you,
Glory, hallelujah!

Refrain:
Dance and sing for joy,
Glory, hallelujah!
Dance and sing for joy,
Glory, hallelujah!

*Repeat stanza and refrain
one time
Repeat refrain three times*

Thank the volunteer. Discuss the story:

- ✿ What was going wrong in Jeremiah's country?
- ✿ What word of hope did Jeremiah give to the people?

Show Color Pack 2. Review that Jeremiah said that when God sent the new king, it would be like new branch coming from an old stump. Invite the children to remove the sticky notes.

Ask:

- ✿ How does this photo remind you of Jeremiah's words?
- ✿ How might this be a picture of hope?

Stand in a circle. Invite learners to imagine Jeremiah and the Israelites celebrating with them as they sing "Dance and Sing" (Color Pack 34, [Singing the Feast](#)) and dance around the circle, changing the refrain to "dance and sing for hope."

EASY
PREP

Give Me Joy in My Heart

Give me joy in my heart,
keep me singing,
Give me joy in my heart, I
pray—hallelujah!
Give me joy in my heart,
keep me singing,
Keep me singing till the
break of day.

Sing hosanna, sing
hosanna, sing hosanna
to the King of kings!
Sing hosanna, sing
hosanna, sing hosanna
to the king.

Repeat three times

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Hope Bracelet** Making bracelets will help learners declare that God's people live in hope. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Hope Bracelet), scissors, glue sticks, and fine-tipped markers or colored pencils. Read the directions aloud and help learners as needed. As you tape bracelets to fit, be sure they are big enough to slip over their hands. Invite learners to tell to whom they will give a bracelet as a reminder to have hope in God.
- 2. Dance of Hope** Children will express thanks for God's gift of hope through music and movement. Ask learners to stand in a circle and to move their bodies in a way that tells what it means to hope. Explain that you will change the words in "Give Me Joy in My Heart" (Color Pack 37, [Singing the Feast](#)) to "Give me hope in my heart." As the group sings, have learners take turns standing in the center of the circle and showing a body position or dance step about hope for the others to copy.
- 3. Paintings of Hope** Children will express their understanding of hope through painting. Cover the workspace with newspaper and have learners put on paint shirts. Invite learners to tell what colors hope might be. What shapes or designs seem to explain hope? Give each child a piece of paper. Have each one choose two or three colors of paint and squirt a small amount of each in a corner of the paper. Invite learners to make paintings about hope. Have them use a finger to write HOPE somewhere on the painting. Invite them to take their paintings home and talk with family members about how God gives us hope.

CLOSING

Gather around the Advent wreath. Invite learners to tell what they have learned about hope. Invite them to join in on "Thank you, God, for hope" as you pray aloud:

God, when life seems unfair,

Thank you, God, for hope.

As we wait to celebrate the birth of your Son, Jesus,

Thank you, God, for hope. Amen.

Invite learners to open their bags and enjoy the treats. Lightly touch each child on the shoulder as you say: "(Name), God bless you with hope this Advent season."

Save the Advent wreath
and place mat for use
next session.

Preparing for Advent

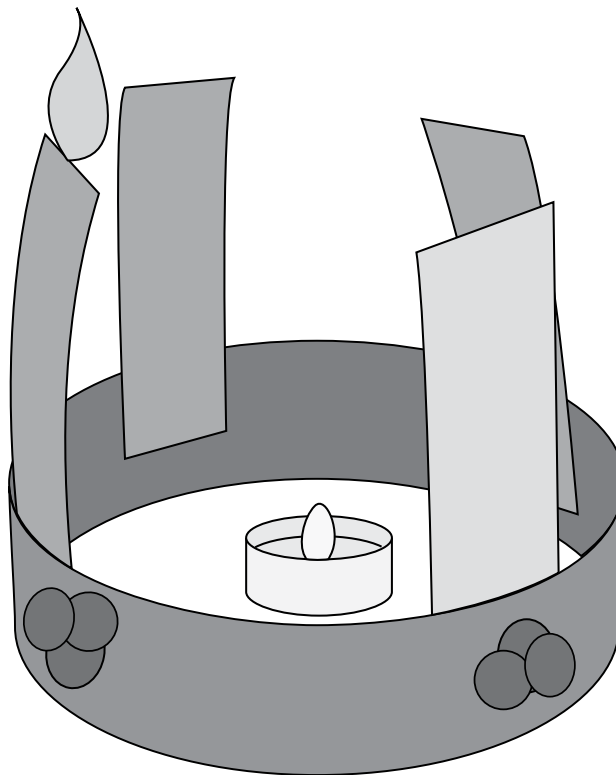
YOU WILL NEED

- purple or blue place mat, napkin, or cloth
- green construction paper
- blue or purple construction paper
- pink construction paper (optional)
- yellow construction paper
- scissors
- stapler
- markers
- tape
- battery-powered candle

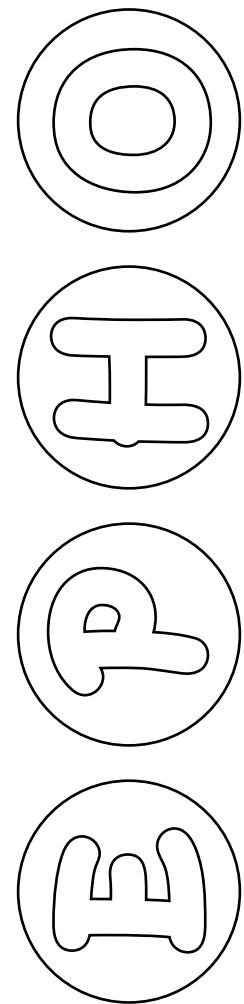
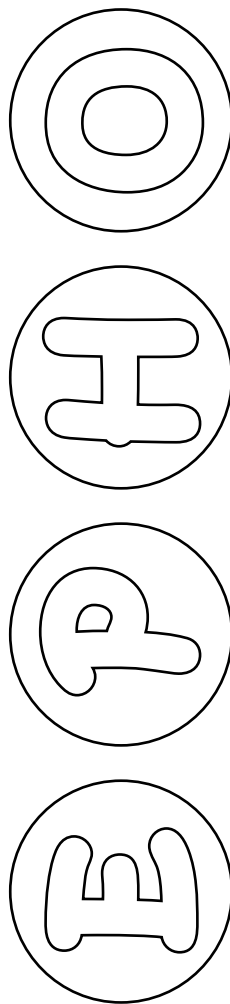
Note: During Advent, some churches use the color blue as a symbol of hope. Some churches use purple, a color of royalty, to honor the coming of our king, Jesus. In your class, use the same color your church uses in worship during Advent.

Directions:

1. Cut two 3" x 12" strips from green construction paper. Staple them to form a circle (to be the wreath).
2. Cut four 2" x 9" rectangles (to be the candles) from purple or blue construction paper, using the color your church uses during Advent. Option: If your congregation uses one pink candle in its Advent wreath, replace one of the purple or blue rectangles with a pink one.
3. Space these four paper candles around the wreath and staple them in place. (See diagram below.)
4. Use markers to decorate the outside of the wreath as desired.
5. Cut four large teardrop shapes from yellow construction paper to be the "flames." You will tape a flame to one candle each week.
6. Choose a place to set the Advent wreath, perhaps in the center of the table where you meet. Put a blue or purple place mat, napkin, or cloth under it.
7. Put a battery-powered candle in the center of the wreath.



Directions: Make two bracelets. Color the letters in each circle, and cut out the circles and the bracelets. Glue the circles to the bracelets to spell the word *hope* on each one. Ask your teacher to help you tape the bracelet fit your wrist. Wear one bracelet and give one to a friend or family member to wear. What will you tell this person about having hope?



Hope Bracelet