

Jer. 33:14–16

Ps. 25:1–10

1 Thess. 3:9–13

Luke 21:25–36

Hope

Goal for the Session

Based on Jeremiah’s message of hope, children will give thanks to God as they begin their celebration of Advent.

■ 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

YOU WILL NEED

- purple or blue cloth
- Bible
- offering basket
- Advent wreath or one made from directions on Resource Sheet 2 or Color Pack 1 and votive lights
- Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- Bible
- Color Pack 2, 38
- Resource Sheet 1

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 3 on light green paper, wall calendar, green construction paper, brown construction paper, scissors, markers, transparent tape
- option 2: white card stock, many colors of markers
- option 3: matte-finish glass ball ornaments, wide-mouthed drinking glasses, small cloths or facial tissues, metallic paint pens
- option 4: Color Pack 38; *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast

Focus on Your Teaching

What does the word *hope* mean to children? “I hope we go to the movies tonight.” “I hope I get a new bike for Christmas.” For children, hope equals *wish*. “I wish we could go to Disneyworld.” “I wish I could stay up later.” Hope in the Bible has a deeper connotation, one that children may not grasp. However, as they mature they will discover the variety of meanings for words, including *hope*. This can begin as they hear of the difficult situation of the people of God and the hopeful message from God through Jeremiah.

God of hope, I pray that my understanding of your hope will be nurtured by Jeremiah’s words. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, place a bookmark at Jeremiah in the worship table Bible. Many churches prohibit lighted candles in the classrooms. If that is your situation, make the Advent wreath described on Resource Sheet 2 (Preparing for Advent) or display Color Pack 1 on the worship table and add a paper flame each week during Advent. This is Thanksgiving weekend in the United States. How might you let children and families know about the Responding option you chose for this session so they can begin their family celebration of Advent?

Invite the first children to arrive to arrange the worship table with the purple or blue cloth (use the color used by your congregation), Advent wreath, Bible, and offering plate.

When everything is ready, gather around the worship table. Greet the children with: “Happy New Year!” Explain that this is the first Sunday of a new church year and the first Sunday of Advent. Point to the Advent wreath. Ask:

- ✠ What can you tell us about the Advent wreath?
- ✠ What can you tell us about the season of Advent?

After the children have told what they know, explain that the first candle to be lit is the candle of hope and that it will be lit at the end of the session. Ask:

- ✠ What does *hope* mean?

Their answers will prepare them to move to Exploring following this prayer:

*Loving God, as we begin a new church year, we give thanks for our church.
We are here to learn more about your Son and the Bible. Amen.*

EXPLORING

Invite a child to retrieve the Bible from the worship table and hold it so the group can see where the bookmark is. After the group has recognized that it is probably in the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament, ask a child to open the Bible to the bookmark and read the name of the book (Jeremiah). Show Color Pack 2. Invite their comments on how Jeremiah is portrayed. Explain that Jeremiah was a prophet of God and tell the story based on Jeremiah 33:14–16 on Resource Sheet 1 (Hope for the People).

Discuss the story with these questions:

- ✿ Why were the people of God so sad and unhappy?
- ✿ Who was Jeremiah?
- ✿ What words of hope did he have from God?
- ✿ What did Jeremiah say about the new king?

Justice: providing fair treatment for all people.

When the discussion includes the name of the new king, define *justice*, using the definition in the sidebar. Ask:

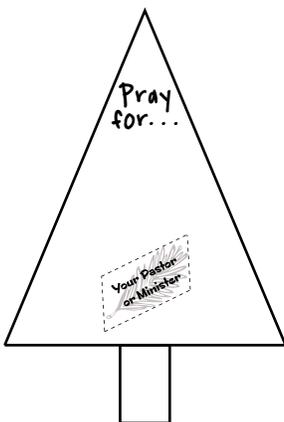
- ✿ Do you think the people had hope after they heard Jeremiah? Why?
- ✿ What do you think the people did?
- ✿ How can we remember to place our hope in God?

The Responding options are about celebrating Advent. For the first Sunday in Advent, the key word is *hope*.

RESPONDING

Offer at least two options so children have a choice. One might be more challenging to interest older children who can work on their own.

1. **Advent Prayer Tree** The group will make prayer trees to use at home during Advent as they pray for justice for others. Using a wall calendar, have the group count the number of days until Christmas. Distribute green construction paper, scissors, and markers. Have them cut two corners on the paper to form a triangle tree shape and write “Pray for...” at the top of the triangle. Give each child a 9" x 3" strip of brown construction paper for the tree trunk. Fold the trunk in half to make a pocket. Tape both sides. Give each child a copy of Resource Sheet 3 (Advent Prayer Tree). Have them cut apart the pieces and place them in the trunk pocket. Invite each child to take one paper from the trunk, tape it to the tree, and pray silently for the place or person(s) on the paper. Explain that each day they can take one paper from the tree trunk, pray for that person or group, and tape the paper to the tree.



EASY
PREP

- 2. Sign for Advent 1** Drawing from Jeremiah's message and the symbol of the first Advent candle, children will make a small poster based on the word *hope*. Give each child a sheet of white card stock. Provide markers of many colors. Have the children print "hope" in the middle of the card stock in large letters. Invite children to use many colors to decorate this poster so they will remember that the hope from God is amazing throughout Advent. They may outline each letter or the word with concentric lines in many colors or print "hope" in many sizes and types of printing around the central word. As they finish, display their posters for everyone to see before they take them home.
- 3. Ornament** Make ornaments for children to decorate their trees at home with this joyful message from God. Give each child a drinking glass, a piece of cloth or a facial tissue to drape over the glass, and an ornament. Explain the process: print "HOPE" on one side of the ornament with a metallic paint pen. Let it dry before turning to write "HOPE," "Advent 1," or the year on the other side.

Be certain the paint is dry before sending the ornaments home.

Alternative plan: Create the ornaments early in the session so they will be dry in time to take home.

God, We Sing

1. God, we sing with praise
to you,
Light the flame of *hope*
anew;
Light this candle, light the
way,
Bring hope into our hearts
today.
Jesus, near us as we pray,
Let *hope* be in our hearts
today.

- 4. Advent Song** The song "God, We Sing" (Color Pack 38, [Singing the Feast](#)) will be sung in Closing during Advent. Focus on the first stanza for this first Sunday in Advent. Read the stanza to the children, emphasizing the word *hope*. Practice singing the song two or three times so the children will be ready to sing it in Closing.

Perhaps this song can be part of the lighting of the Advent wreath during the service of worship.

CLOSING

Gather at the worship center. Light the first candle of the Advent wreath with a paper flame or light the votive light.

Sing the first stanza of "God, We Sing" (Color Pack 38, [Singing the Feast](#)).

Invite the children to think quietly about how God's words to Jeremiah give them hope today. Pray:

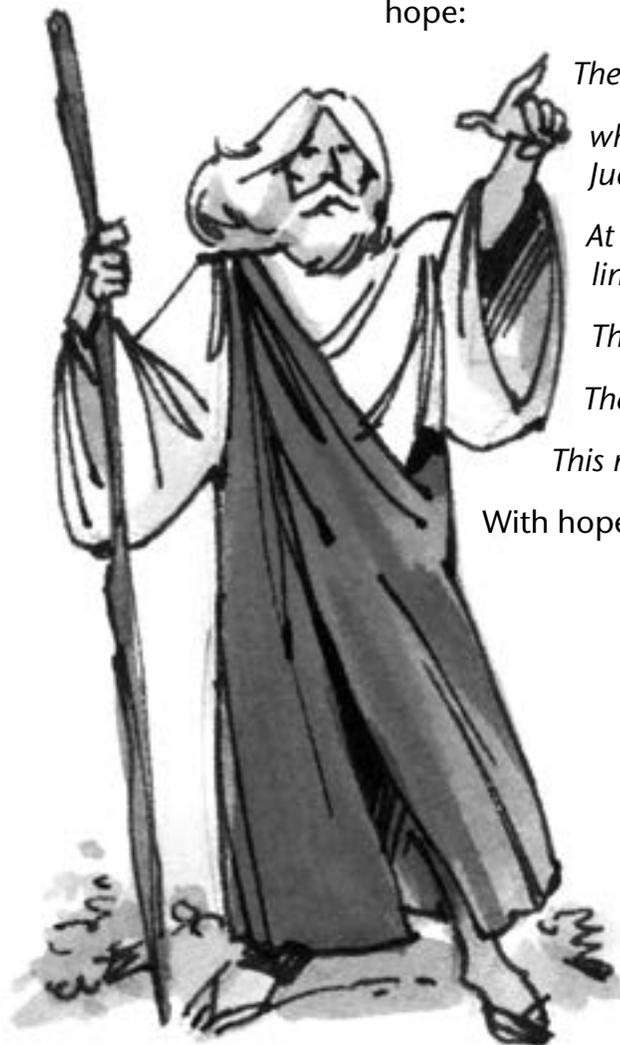
Loving God, as we go through the coming week, we will think of your words of hope to Jeremiah and the people and to us. When we are sad or discouraged, we will not forget your hope. Amen.

To each child, say, "Thank you for coming. See you next week."

Hope for the People (Based on Jeremiah 33:14-16)

The people of Israel had lived through many years of terrible war and destruction. The beautiful temple was destroyed. Many people were captured and taken to Babylon. Some asked, "Why is God letting this happen to us?" Others wondered if they would ever see their homes again.

Among the people was a man named Jeremiah. He was the son of Hilkiah, who was a priest in a small town in the land of Benjamin, one of the smallest tribes of Israel. Not an important man. Not an impressive man. But God called Benjamin to be a prophet, someone who spoke God's word to the nations. The nations? A prophet from a little town in the smallest tribe? But, as in other cases, God insisted. Some messages that God had for God's people were filled with hope. And the people desperately needed hope. This is one message of hope:



The time is coming, says God,

when the promise I made to the nations of Israel and Judah will come true.

At that time, I will give them a new king from the family line of David.

This king will rule with fairness over the people.

Then Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will be safe.

This new king will be called "The LORD is our justice."

With hope in their hearts, the people waited for a new king.

Preparing for Advent

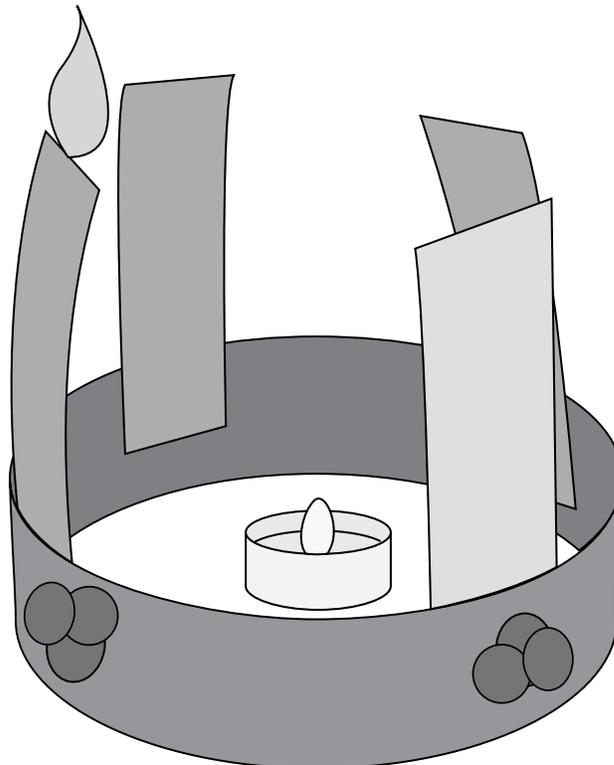
YOU WILL NEED

- 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.





Advent Prayer Tree

Peace in the World	A Friend	A Family Member	Your Church
Someone Who Is Sick	Someone Who Is Sad	Someone Who Is Lonely	People Who Are Hungry
Someone Who Needs Help	A Friend	A Family Member	Your Sunday School Class
Someone Who Is Sick	Someone Who Is Sad	Someone Who Is Lonely	People Who Are Hungry
Our Nation's Leaders	Firefighters	Police Officers	Veterans
A Neighbor	Doctors and Nurses	People Who Have No Home	Refugees
Your Pastor or Minister	Your Teacher		