

Isa. 2:1–5

Ps. 122

Rom. 13:11–14

Matt. 24:36–44

The Light of the Lord

Goal for the Session

Third- and fourth-graders will examine God's promise of peace and enter Advent with thanks for Christ's light and love.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Isaiah 2:1–5

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Bruce C. Birch

This oracle is often called the “floating oracle of peace” because it also appears in Micah 4:1–3. It is apparently part of a general prophetic tradition that was available to both of these prophets as a promise of the eschatological fulfillment of God's kingdom. Presumably this is especially important in times of difficulty when present circumstances seem unpromising; confidence that the future belongs to God gives hope in the present. In Advent we anticipate the birth of Jesus into a world in need of light (v. 5). Every generation needs assurance that the powers of the world—whether the Romans of Jesus' time or the principalities and powers of our present age—do not determine the future.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Noel Leo Erskine

We are promised by God that as God's gift of peace becomes real among us, Jews and Gentiles alike will stream to the mountain of God to be instructed and directed by God. The people who are taught by God will seek peace and practice violence no more. Weapons of violence will be destroyed. To receive divine instruction is to share in a vision of a coming realm of peace in which God will judge among the nations, and nations will not learn war anymore. The way forward is to walk in the light of the Lord.

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Stacey Simpson Duke

In the end, what Isaiah offers is not only a vision of global transformation, but an invitation to live toward that day. “O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the LORD!” However hard it may be to believe that a new and longed-for reality will take hold some day, there is power in walking in God's light now, one step at a time. We may feel cynical or hopeless about the prospects of Isaiah's vision, but in his invitation lies enormous and practical power. The future belongs to God, but the first step toward that future belongs to those who have glimpsed God's light and are willing to trust that enough light lies ahead.

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

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” Paul Simpson Duke

We are in the presence of a mystery. God's own justice and peace will occur among the nations “in days to come.” What days? How? Perhaps all we can say is that the vision describes what God is, in fact, at work in the world to do. It is what Jesus apparently meant by “the reign of God,” which is already present and at work among us, though not yet in fullness. We saw it in Jesus, who converted fear to love, lunacy to sanity, enemies to friends. He died surrounded by swords; a spear stabbed him; nails tore him. They entered infinite love, which “melted them into light.”

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Isaiah 2:1–5

Focus on Your Teaching

Third- and fourth-graders have experienced the comfort that light can bring in a dark place. Whether from a flashlight, a nightlight, or the light of the moon, they know how light can ease the fears that come with deep darkness. While they will be able to understand this concrete interplay between light and darkness, they will be challenged by the abstract nature of the darkness described in today's text. As you listen to their experiences of literal or figurative darkness, reassure them that the light of Christ we celebrate during the season of Advent is for them.

God, shine into the darkness around me and ease my fears. Help me to reflect the light of your love this Advent season. Amen.

YOU WILL NEED

- ☐ blue or purple cloth
- ☐ 4 votive candles in holders
- ☐ lighter or matches
- ☐ copies of Resource Sheets 1, 3
- ☐ Color Pack 1, 2, 36
- ☐ Bible
- ☐ scissors, marker
- ☐ *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast

For Responding

- ☐ option 1: Color Pack 36; *Singing the Feast*, bit.ly/SingingTheFeast
- ☐ option 2: blue or purple construction paper, copies of Resource Sheet 2 on card stock, scissors, pastels or colored chalk, hair spray
- ☐ option 3: copier paper, scissors, copies of Resource Sheet 2 on card stock, staplers, pens, zip-seal plastic sandwich bag (optional)

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, arrange the blue or purple cloth in the center of your learning space and place the four votive candles on it. Cut apart the pictures on Color Pack 1. If you are using option 3 in Responding, cut 1" x 8.5" strips of copier paper, twenty-eight strips per learner. Bring one stapler for each pair of learners.

Greet the children by name as they arrive. Gather the group around the candles. Explain that today is the First Sunday of Advent. This is the first Sunday in the new church year and the beginning of our season of preparing to celebrate Jesus' birthday. There are four Sundays in Advent. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 3 (Advent Litany). Light one votive candle and form groups to read the litany aloud. After the litany, extinguish the candle, if necessary.

Hold up each pictures cut from Color Pack 1. Ask learners to identify the object in each one and what it is used for. Form three groups and give each group a pictures. Ask the groups to imagine that this object is no longer needed or used. What would need to happen for that to be possible? What could the object be used for instead? (Example: If there were no more crime, we would not need jails. Jail bars could be melted down and made into cooking pots.) After a few moments, invite each group to tell its ideas.

Say that today's story is about God's promise to make things new and different.

Some churches use the color blue in worship during Advent as a symbol of hope. Some churches use purple, a color of royalty, to honor the coming of our king, Jesus. When a choice of blue or purple is given in the materials, use the same color your church uses in worship.

EXPLORING

Open your Bible to Isaiah 2, and say that this is where today's Bible reading is found. Explain that Isaiah was one of God's prophets. God chose Isaiah to deliver God's messages to the people. Say you will read Isaiah's words as a choral reading. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Choral Reading). Ask for volunteers for the "Reader" parts. Tell learners that everyone reads the "All" parts in unison.

After the reading, encourage learners to refer to their resource sheets as you discuss:

- ✠ Which phrases in this reading paint a "word picture"—describe something you can visualize?
- ✠ Which of these word pictures give you a sense of hope? How so?
- ✠ Why do you think people "of every nation" will rush to the mountain of the Lord? How might this lead to peace in the world?
- ✠ Do you think that Isaiah's prophecy is coming true in our time? Why or why not?
- ✠ What people or places in the world today seem to be especially in need of God's peace?
- ✠ How might Jesus' followers be part of God's plan for the world?

Show Color Pack 2 and say this figure is the prophet Isaiah. Point out that there isn't room in the speech bubble to write all of Isaiah 2:1–5. How might learners summarize these verses into a single sentence? Brainstorm possible summary statements, referring to Resource Sheet 1 (Choral Reading) as is helpful. Ask a volunteer to write the group's summary in the speech bubble.

Review that during Advent, Christians prepare to give thanks for the birth of Jesus, God's Son, who brings God's peace into the world, now and in the future.

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

1. **Advent Dance** Learners will create a dance to give thanks for the peace of Christ's light and love. Invite learners to read the words on Color Pack 36 as they listen to "Four Candles" ([*Singing the Feast*](#)). Invite children to think about the four candles in your meeting space and the candles in your church worship space. Wonder together why the church has a custom of lighting candles during Advent. Invite learners to work together to make simple dance movements or motions to accompany the song. Ask learners to consider how various motions might depict words. Also discuss the ways that certain motions can be done so that they depict a sense of hope or peace. As a group, perform the dance with the music.

EASY
PREP

Ask the worship leaders in your church if learners might present their Advent Dance during worship, perhaps as part of the Advent candle-lighting.

2. **Live in the Light of the Lord** Learners will create an artistic reminder of Isaiah's call to "live in the light of the LORD" (v. 5). Recall Isaiah's words: "Live in the light of the LORD." Review how the church lights candles during Advent to remember the light of the Lord, and to prepare to welcome Jesus, God's Light in the world. Ask learners to give examples of ways they can live in the light of the Lord. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Pattern). Have learners cut out the candle, cutting off the base. Set out blue or purple construction paper, depending on the color your church uses in Advent; and pastels or colored chalk. Demonstrate how to hold the candle on the construction paper with one hand while outlining it by using the side of a piece of pastel or chalk and pushing out from the pattern onto the paper. Have them create four candle images in this way, overlapping and changing colors as desired. Spray the finished work with hair spray. Ask where they can display this in their homes during Advent as a reminder to live in the light of the Lord while they prepare for Christmas.
3. **Advent Garland** Learners will make an Advent garland to remind them to give thanks for the love of Christ that surrounds them each day. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Pattern), scissors, and pens. Invite learners to think of people who have shown the love of Christ to them or who have helped them learn about living as Jesus' follower, and write these names on the candle. Have them cut out the candle, including the base. Demonstrate how to make a loop from a paper strip and staple it to the candle base. Learners then continue stapling on paper strips to make a chain of twenty-eight links. Tell the children to take the garlands home, remove one link each day beginning today, and say a prayer of thanks for one of the people listed on the candle. When the links are gone, it will be Christmas. Challenge them to find ways to follow the examples of the people they have listed and to touch other people with God's love during Advent.

If time is short, give each learner a sandwich bag or envelope to take their strips home and complete the chain.

Four Candles

Light one candle, Messiah is coming; wait and watch, for his Advent is near.
He will meet us on God's holy mountain; how shall we prepare for his coming?
One. One candle to light the darkness. One. One candle to light his way.

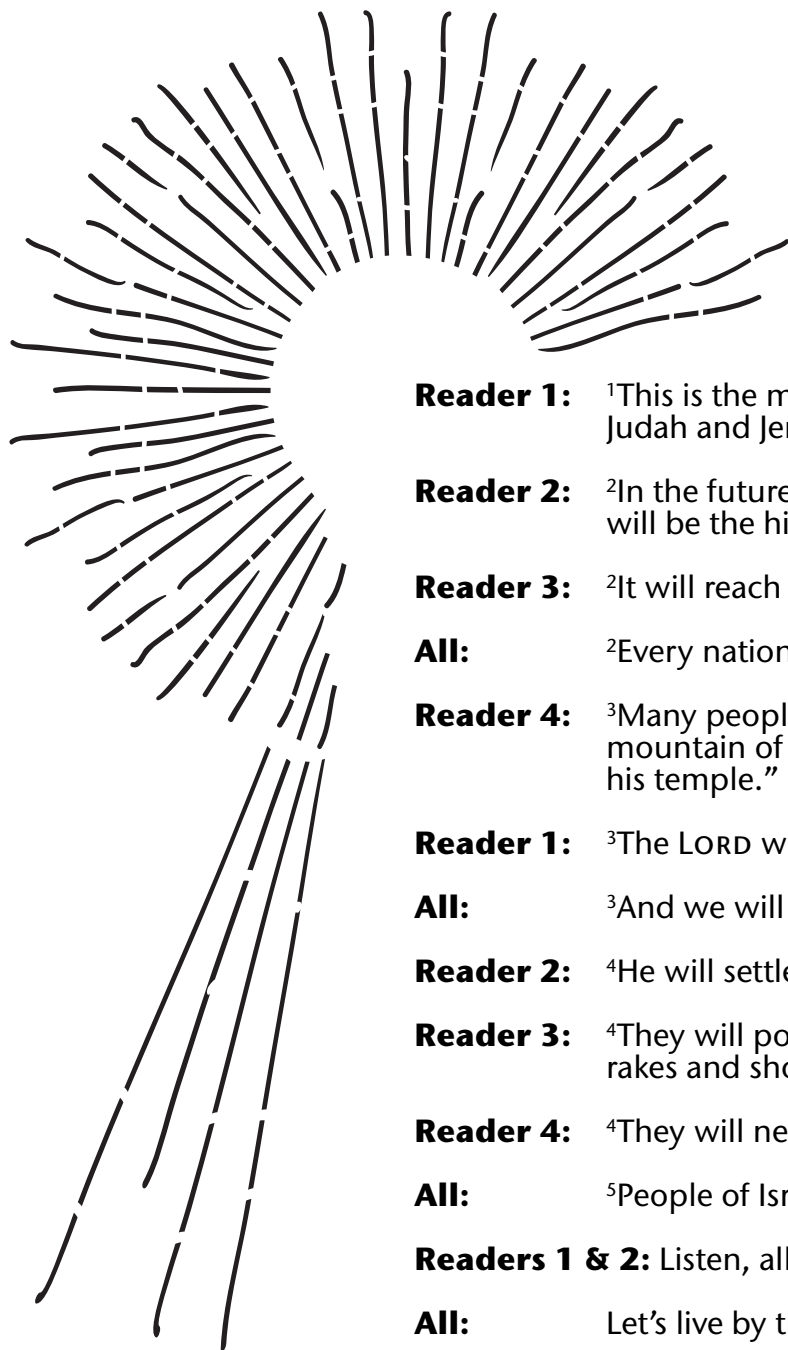
CLOSING

Gather with learners around the candles and light one, if necessary. Show Color Pack 36 and ask learners to sing or read the first stanza of "Four Candles" ([*Singing the Feast*](#)). Review that today's focus scripture is a hopeful message about life with God in the days to come. Ask them to think quietly about their hopes for the future. Tell learners you will pause during the prayer so they can voice their hopes. Pray aloud:

God of light, we long for the day when our world will be ruled completely by your peace. Hear our prayers of hope for . . . (pause for learners to add their prayers). Amen.

Invite learners to exchange high-fives as they bless one another: "God bless you with Advent hope."

Choral Reading
—From Isaiah 2:1–5, CEV



Reader 1: ¹This is the message that [Isaiah] was given about Judah and Jerusalem:

Reader 2: ²In the future, the mountain with the LORD's temple will be the highest of all.

Reader 3: ²It will reach above the hills;

All: ²Every nation will rush to it.

Reader 4: ³Many people will come and say, "Let's go to the mountain of the LORD God of Jacob and worship in his temple."

Reader 1: ³The LORD will teach us his Law from Jerusalem,

All: ³And we will obey him.

Reader 2: ⁴He will settle arguments between nations.

Reader 3: ⁴They will pound their swords and their spears into rakes and shovels;

Reader 4: ⁴They will never make war or attack one another.

All: ⁵People of Israel, let's live by the light of the LORD.

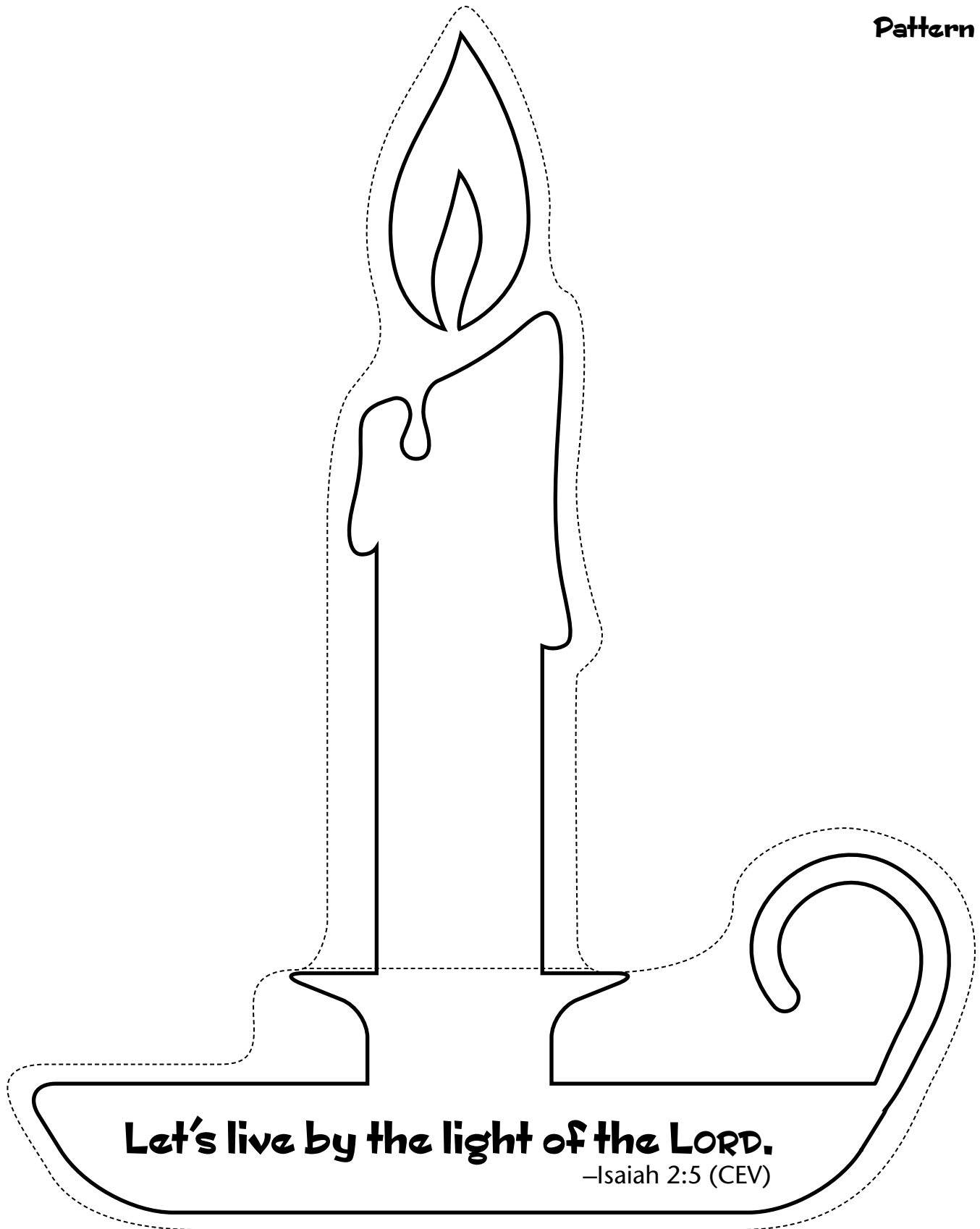
Readers 1 & 2: Listen, all God's people!

All: Let's live by the light of the Lord!

Readers 3 & 4: The light of the Lord!

All: The light of the Lord! Amen.

Pattern



Let's live by the light of the LORD.
—Isaiah 2:5 (CEV)

Advent Litany

Group 1: Advent is a time of hope,

Group 2: God's people long for a savior.

Group 1: Advent is a time of peace,

Group 2: God's people seek the peace of Christ.

Group 1: Advent is a time of joy,

Group 2: God's people rejoice in the gift of Jesus Christ.

Group 1: Advent is a time of love,

Group 2: God's people are given love through God's Son,
Jesus.

All: Let us live in the hope, peace, joy, and love of
our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Note: Save this sheet to use in future sessions.

