



Hopeful Waiting, Active Trust

Scripture
Jeremiah
33:14–16

FOCUS To affirm, with Jeremiah, God’s presence in uncertain times

Gather

Welcome the children as they arrive, introducing any newcomers. Explain that today is the beginning of a new season in the church year, the Season of Advent, when people wait and look forward to the birth of Jesus. Point out the colour in the worship area (blue or purple) which is the symbolic colour for this season of hope and waiting.

Opening ritual

Call to gather Invite the children to gather around the Advent wreath in the worship space. Explain that the wreath is in a circle shape to remind us of God’s never-ending love and the four coloured candles represent each Sunday in Advent.

Sing or listen to, if possible, the song “May Peace Be with You” (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 8;

#24 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 8), using the word “hope” this week.

Advent candles Invite a child to participate in the ritual and prayer.

Leader: It is the Season of Advent, a new year for the church.

Child: Today we light the first Advent candle. It is the candle of hope. (*Lights one blue or purple candle.*)

Leader: We pray, O God, for hope in our world. Amen.

(*Invite the group to repeat this prayer.*)

Receive the offering and extinguish the Advent candle to signify the end of the gathering worship.

Connecting with the focus

Invite children to look at the pictures and name the emotions that they see on the faces. Ask them to name some things that cause people to feel sad, happy, worried, or frightened. Print some of the comments on sticky notes and put aside until after the story. Explain that the story today is about people who felt all these feelings but who were especially worried and frightened.

Engage

Preparing for the story

Invite a child to bring the Bible from the worship area and use the bookmark to open it to the book of Jeremiah. Explain that Jeremiah was a prophet who lived hundreds of years before Jesus was born. Jeremiah lived in a time when there was much sadness in the land. The Hebrew people were scared. There had been a lot of fighting and trouble in the land. Their great city of Jerusalem had been attacked. Food and water were scarce. It was a scary and worrying time.

The Bible story

Distribute sheets of drawing paper and markers or crayons and explain that there will be oppor-

tunities to draw something as the story is told. Use the resource sheet “[God Is Near](#)” to tell the story based on **Jeremiah 33:14–16**, encouraging children to draw their images. Make a display of the images when the story is finished.

■ What was the promise in Jeremiah’s message from God?

Exploring the story further

(*To enable the children to explore the scripture reading further, according to their interests and abilities, explain the two options and have each child select one.*)

Bible research group The children in this group have the opportunity to learn more about Jeremiah. Distribute copies of the resource sheet

“[Jeremiah’s Life](#)”; work in pairs or as a whole group to learn more about the prophet and the times in which he lived.

Chant group The children in this group will practice a chant, using the notes made during the Gather activity.

Leader: When we are worried about... (*read one of the sticky notes*) Jeremiah reminds us that:

Children: God is near.

Reporting Invite the research group to report on their discoveries about the prophet Jeremiah and invite the chant group to present a few lines from their chant.

The Bible story and us

The prophet Jeremiah gave the people a message of hope about a special leader, chosen by God to bring peace, justice, and love to the world. Jesus showed that he was a special leader from the way that he lived his life.

■ **How can we share a message of hope in our world today?**

Respond

Invite the children to select a zone and work with the materials there.

❑ **Poetry zone: Hope poetry** (*for older children*) The prophet Jeremiah offered words of hope to people who were worried and afraid. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[Writing Poetry](#)” (p. 117) and invite children to follow the suggestions for creating “diamante poems” that offer words of hope for people today. Consider publishing these poems in a church newsletter or in the Prayer and Poem gallery in the Library on the *Seasons* website at www.seasonsonline.ca.



❑ **Advent zone: Advent wreaths** Jeremiah’s words of hope shone like a bright light in anxious times. When we light candles on an Advent wreath, we can remember those promises. Provide the supplies and help children create Advent wreaths to use at home. Distribute copies of the resource sheet “[Advent Family Ritual](#)” and encourage children to share this ritual with their families and light the candles each Sunday during Advent and on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

❑ **Art zone: Star spirals** (*for younger children*) God’s promise reminds us that God cares and God is always near. Invite children to make star spirals as a visual reminder of God’s promise spoken by Jeremiah. Distribute the materials and follow the instructions for “Star spiral” on the resource sheet “[Seasonal Resources](#)” (p. 116) to make foil relief spirals. Help children print the phrase “God is always near” and encourage

them to trace the spirals with their fingers and read the words when praying, or at night before going to bed.

❑ **Prayer zone: World prayers** (*for older children*) God’s promise of hope is needed in the world today too. Invite children to look through the news magazines for stories of people and places that are in need of God’s promise of hope. Have each child cut out an image or headline and glue onto a piece of construction paper. Beside their story or picture, invite them to write a short prayer for that situation. Tape these around the edges of the map. Cut lengths of yarn and use the pins to join each prayer to the place on the map where the story originated. Discuss briefly the stories chosen. Encourage them to include these situations in their prayers this week.

❑ **Outreach zone: Advent service** Just as Jeremiah brought a message of hope to the people long ago we too can offer messages and gifts of hope for people who might be having a hard time this Christmas. Explain the project(s) that the group could support. Invite children to use the Christmas paper to cover the cardboard box and design together a poster to place with the box to solicit donations from the congregation. Then have them make gift tags from used Christmas cards to include with the materials collected. Talk about what messages of hope they might include on these tags. Pray together for those who will receive these gifts.

Bless

Gather around the worship area. Invite a child to relight the first Advent candle as you say, “This candle reminds us of hope.”

Sing or listen to again, if possible, the song “May Peace Be with You” (p. 10 in *Seasons Songbook*, Vol. 8; #24 on *Seasons Music CD*, Vol. 8), using the word “hope.”

Pray Thank you God,
that you are always near,
in good times and in bad times. Amen.

Blessing Send children out with the following blessing: “May you be filled with God’s hope this week.”

Distribute copies of the resource sheets “[Letter to Families](#)” (p. 115) and “[Advent Family Ritual](#)” (if not already distributed) for children to take home. Encourage families to participate in Advent candle lighting rituals during this season.

Reflect

What message of hope do you think the children got from Jeremiah? What concerns or worries did they express? What message of hope do you find in meeting with the children?



God Is Near

(based on Jeremiah 33:14-16)

Invite children to participate in the story by drawing the images described in the reading.

Many, many years ago the Hebrew people were very afraid and sad. There was much fighting and trouble in the land. No one knew what would happen next.

"What will happen to us?" the people cried. "Will we have to leave our homes? Where will we live?"

Sometimes the people began to wonder if God had forgotten them; they felt scared and lonely. "Has God left us all alone?" they wondered.

But God had not left them. God sent a message of promise to a prophet named Jeremiah. God put a picture into Jeremiah's mind. It was a picture of an old tree stump. *(Invite children to each draw an outline of an old stump on their papers.)*

"Jeremiah," God said. "Tell my people not to give up. I know it seems as if everything you have ever known has gone. Your lives feel like a dead stump. But I have good news for you!

The stump is not dead; a new shoot is going to grow up out of the stump." *(Have the children each draw a new shoot growing out of the old stump.)*

God said, "I am sending you a new leader, who will be like a new green shoot that grows into a strong branch. *(Have the children each draw a strong big branch growing out of the new shoot from the old stump.)*

"This leader is one who will grow strong and be full of my love," God said. "This leader will live among you and will always do what is right and fair."

Jeremiah was very happy to hear God's message. "We are not alone," the prophet thought. "God really is with us! God has a plan! This is good news!"

So Jeremiah told this good news to everyone he met. The message was passed from one person to another, "God is near." *(Speak this message to the child beside you and invite children to pass the message to each other around the circle.)*

From that time on, whenever the people were worried they would remind each other that a new leader was coming, a new strong shoot was growing. *(Refer to their drawings.)* God's promise moved through the land and it gave the people great hope, for they knew that God would always be with them.



Jeremiah's Life

Jeremiah's life wasn't easy. Find out about Jeremiah and see what you think.

When Jeremiah was a boy

Read Jeremiah 1:4–8.

God called Jeremiah to be a prophet. A prophet is someone who speaks for God. Usually a prophet tells people about what makes God sad and angry. A prophet warns about the troubles a nation might have. And a prophet reminds people of God's promises for peace and justice and wholeness.

The warning

Read Jeremiah 4:5, 7–8.

Jeremiah lived in the small nation of Judah. Judah was located between two big, powerful nations: Egypt and Babylonia. Not good! Today, the country that was once called Babylonia is called Iraq. Egypt and Babylonia were frequently at war and fought battles over some of the smaller countries like Judah and Syria.

Nebuchadnezzar (NEB'-UKH-AD-NEZZ'-AR) was a mighty general who led the Babylonian army. His father was king, but when his father died, Nebuchadnezzar became king. He demanded that the kings of Judah pledge their loyalty to him.

Find Judah, Egypt, and Babylonia on a map. (There may be maps in the back of your Bible.) Who do you think was the lion mentioned in verse 7? What do you think would happen to the kings of Judah – and to the people – if they weren't loyal to Nebuchadnezzar?

Jeremiah's lament, part 1

Read Jeremiah 4:19–20, and 9:1.

A lament is an expression of sadness. What do you think is happening to make Jeremiah so sad?

Plots against Jeremiah's life

Read Jeremiah 11:21, 18:18, and 38:3–6.

Why do you think the people were against Jeremiah?

Luckily for Jeremiah an Ethiopian had him pulled up from the well.

Jeremiah's lament, part 2

Read Jeremiah 20:7b-8, 18.

From the little bit you know of it, how would you describe Jeremiah's life? What do you think were the good parts of his life? How would you describe the situation in Judah at the time Jeremiah lived there?



Advent Family Ritual

Counting the weeks with an Advent wreath is one way to build anticipation for Christmas day, the celebration of Jesus' birth. Traditionally, the Advent wreath contains four blue candles, or one pink and three purple candles. Each Sunday in Advent, a new candle is lit, along with the candle(s) from the previous week(s). In the middle of the wreath is a large white candle (sometimes called the "Christ candle") which is lit on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.

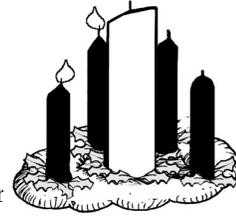
Advent 1

- **LIGHT** the first Advent candle (*blue or purple*).
- **READ** God's promise in Jeremiah 33:14–16.
- **PRAY** Thank you, God, for the promise that you will always be with us. Help us to share this promise with others. Amen.
- **DO** Invite family members to print the words "God is near" on small index cards. Decorate the cards. Challenge everyone to find creative places to leave these reminders. You might slip them into books or lunch bags, place them on pillows, or stick them onto mirrors.



Advent 2

- **LIGHT** the second Advent candle (*blue or purple*).
- **READ** Zechariah's prayer for baby John in Luke 1:76–79.
- **PRAY** Dear God, you send people like John to show us the way of peace. Help us to live in peaceful ways. Amen.
- **DO** Spend an evening as a family looking at photo albums or baby books. Tell baby stories. Put aside a small sum of money for every page of baby photos you have. Donate it to an agency that helps babies and young children, such as UNICEF.



Advent 3

- **LIGHT** the third Advent candle (*blue or pink*).
- **READ** about John the Baptizer from Luke 3:7–18, or from a children's Bible.
- **PRAY** Loving God, as we wait to welcome Jesus, help us to share with others. Amen.
- **DO** John the Baptizer was sent to help the people get ready to welcome Jesus. Think about one of John's suggestions, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none." Go through your cupboards and drawers. Donate any clothes that aren't being used any more to a thrift store.



Advent 4

- **LIGHT** the fourth Advent candle (*blue or purple*).
- **READ** Mary's song (Luke 1:46–55) from a children's Bible.
- **PRAY** Dear God, Mary sang about sharing your love. Thank you for this good news. Amen.
- **DO** Sing a song of joy with Mary as you prepare to celebrate Jesus' birthday. Play or sing some Christmas carols. Thread a pipe cleaner through some jingle bells and shape it into a circle. Use your jingle bell shaker to accompany the music.



Christmas Eve or Christmas Day

Light the Christ candle (the one in the middle of the wreath) and say a prayer of thanks for God's gift of Jesus – the greatest gift of all.

