

## HOPE IN LAMENT/LAMENT IN HOPE

**Handout for talking with children (3-16) about lament and hope.**

**Scripture: Lamentations 5:20-21**

**Time: 40 minutes**

“Why have you forgotten us completely? Why have you forsaken us these many days? Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored; renew our days as of old.”

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### **Opening prayer:**

Dear God,  
Open our minds to understand your Word. Grant us to grow in faith. Bless our PCUSA, our Co-Moderators, Teaching and Ruling Elders, and Commissioners, that they may be guided by your will and wisdom. In the name of Christ our Lord, we pray. Amen.

### **Introduction:**

Talk to children about the General Assembly 224. Share with them how often the GA meets and what it does. Tell them about the previous General Assemblies you attended or are aware of. Explain why the 224<sup>th</sup> GA is different from the previous ones. Ask them what they think about this new format.

### **Objectives:**

- To narrate the story of God’s people in exile;
- To help families talk honestly about slavery and lament;
- To assist families in gleaning hope during these difficult times.

### **The Story:**

Babylonian armies took the people of Judea in 587 BCE to their country. Jerusalem, the city they loved, was destroyed. Some of their family members were taken as slaves abroad. Others were left home in the ruins. What hurt God’s people more than anything else was the sense of being forgotten by God. In this period of despair, God’s people turned to God. They named their feelings, composed laments, and, while lamenting, they found hope in God’s faithfulness. Remind children of Lamentations 3:22-23 which we occasionally use in our Sunday services. “The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to end. They are new every morning, great is your faithfulness.”

### **Instruction for parents:**

- Read Lamentations 5:20-21 (see above).
- During this session, parents should talk to children about loss and help children name their losses.
- Be ready to talk about the pandemic, untimely deaths, abrupt school closures, systemic racism, unemployment, and other topics you think are pertinent to your context.

- Be at ease and graceful while listening.

### Guided discussion:

1. God promised the people (Israelites) to be their God and embraced them as God's own family. The Bible calls it covenant. God respects this special bond with us.
2. When life gets tough, it is okay to complain to God. God understands and accepts our complaints. Ask your child/children to name things in life that they are not happy about and those they wish were different. Talk about COVID-19 and its implications on their school, friends, sports, music lessons, public worship, and other activities. It would also be beneficial to talk about race relationships and economic inequalities in our country.

### Lament Tree activity with children:

Materials needed: Construction paper, scissors, crayons/pencil, dry branch, small plastic or other material container, and glue gun.

- a. Cut construction paper into leaf shapes about 2-3 inches long.
  - b. Write their responses (from guided discussion # 2) on the leaf-shaped colorful construction paper. Please write for the younger children. Let the older children write their own. Drawing pictures is a possibility.
  - c. Take children outside and help them find a dried branch (small or medium) for each child.
  - d. Find a small container for each child and fill with dirt.
  - e. Plant the branch in it and glue the leaf-shaped colorful construction paper to the branches to make each child's very own Lament Tree.
3. The tree symbolizes life, renewal, and new possibilities. Explain to children how new and different each day is and the opportunities God opens up on a daily basis.
  4. Help them to identify silver linings and traces of hope in the present crisis.



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Note: Please feel free to use other materials as substitute for the Lament Tree. Also use your own ideas.

### Closing:

With your child/children, read aloud the laments listed on the Lament Tree. Then close with the following prayer.

**Prayer:** Dear God, we read aloud our laments (list each lament here). Thank you for being our God. Thank you for listening to our prayers and for the possibilities you have in store for us. We trust in you and pray for your help in times of trouble. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.