

## REFLECTION (Accompanying scripture: Isaiah 9:2-4, 6-7 )

Begin this time of reflection by creating a calm and quiet atmosphere. You might want to play some gentle music or light the first candle on your Advent wreath. After reading the scripture, ask the children to close their eyes and think carefully about something they hope for. Not what Christmas gifts they long to receive, but to think about a very special hope they have. Perhaps to become a great singer or footballer, or for a sick relative to get better, or that all people in the world have enough food to eat.

Having allowed time for quiet reflection, invite contributions, then explore the question: 'What is hope?' You may come to the conclusion that hope is the feeling of wanting something good to happen. Ask the children to remember the special hope they have been thinking about, then ask them to imagine what it would be like if that hope was gone? How might they feel?

Tell the class that there are children in this world who struggle to find hope. Some children don't have families and have little hope of finding someone to look after them. Some can't go to school and so have little hope of finding a good job when they are older.

During the first week of Advent we are encouraged to think about how, at Christmas, Jesus, the Son of God, was born into our world to show us how to live in hope. To help us do this, an important lesson Jesus taught was that we should love one another. Today many people choose to follow Jesus' lesson very closely. They try hard to share God's love and hope by making sure children without families are cared for, and that all children are able to go to school. These people are like stars shining brightly in the night sky. They bring God's beauty and light into our world. We too are like bright stars when we let God's love and hope shine through us.

## ACTIVITY

Explain to the class that they are going to make Stars of Hope to help remember children who are in need of our help this Christmas. Provide each child with a star template to decorate; ideally photocopying the stars onto card. On the blank side, ask the children to write down a hope they have for a child close to home (e.g. that someone spending Christmas in hospital may get better soon), or a hope for a child in need overseas (e.g. that child refugees stay safe and warm this winter). After they have written their hopes, ask the children to decorate the other side of their star with bright colours and if possible glitter!

String the stars on a line and use them to decorate your classroom. They are a reminder to pray for children around the world who need support, and to remind us also of our call to bring God's light to those in darkness through helping others whenever we can. End the reflection with the Missionary Children Prayer.

