

SECOND WEEK OF LENT: “ANCESTOR OF NATIONS”

OPENING PRAYER

The leader prays out loud:

Eternal God, you sustained Abraham and Sarah through many years of wandering with the promise of a child and a homeland. Uphold us with the promise that one day you will bring to birth an age of perfect justice, mercy, and peace, and bring all of creation into our eternal home with you. Amen.

GATHERING TIME

Each person responds to one of the following:

- Tell the story of a time when you had to wait a very long time for something.
- Describe a gift you received as an infant: a blanket or a favorite stuffed animal.
- Tell a little bit about your ancestry; how far back can you trace your family?

BIBLICAL REFLECTION

The leader reads the following:

This passage is part of the much longer story of Abraham and Sarah. Following God’s promise, they leave their homeland near Mesopotamia when Abraham is 75 years old and travel south. Over many years and many miles, God keeps promising a homeland and a child. Abraham is 99 when God renews the covenant again.

A member of the group reads the passage:

[God said,] "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you." God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her." (Genesis 17:4-7, 15-16)

The group discusses the following questions, picking and choosing the ones that work best for them:

- God changes both Abraham and Sarah’s name in this passage. “Abram” means “exalted father, while “Abraham” means “father of multitudes”—even though he was childless at the time. Why do people change their names? Why do we honor people’s chosen names, even if they don’t seem to fit?
- This is the first time that God has included Sarah in the covenant as well as Abraham. In the chapter just before this one, Sarah and Abraham try to get the promise to come true more quickly by having Abraham father a son with a slave named Hagar. What are reasons that we try to take shortcuts to God’s promises? Why do you think God sometimes make us wait?
- Who is your “ancestor in faith?” Who helped you learn about God? How might we help others?
- What spiritual practices (if any) have you committed to during this forty-day Lenten journey? How are they going so far? Where do you need God’s help to succeed at them?

CLOSING PRAYER

The leader prays aloud:

God of the past and the future: your promises are trustworthy, but we do get impatient waiting for them. Teach us persistent hope as we seek the coming of your kin-dom. Teach us tenacious faith in times when we doubt that your promise will be fulfilled. Teach us to notice where you are answering prayers in our lives already. In the name of our promised Messiah, Jesus Christ. Amen.