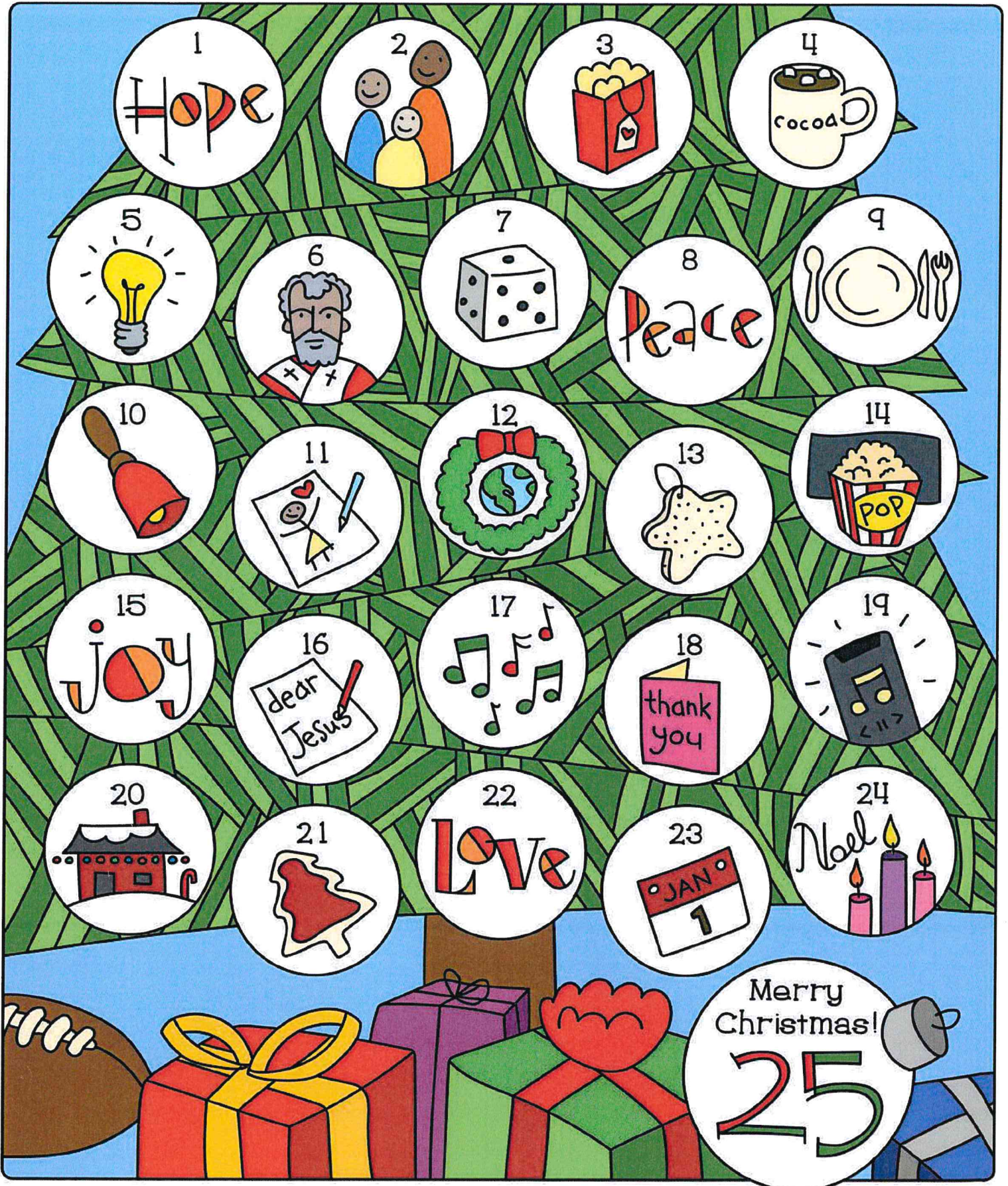


advent activity calendar



Advent Calendar

While many Advent calendars today come with the promise of chocolates or toys behind each of the numbered doors, this Advent calendar is a little different. Our Advent calendar is more of an activity calendar – activities that can help you get into the Advent and Christmas spirit. Some of these activities will be great for your kids to do by themselves—others will require the whole family. And there are some activities that require you to get out of your house and go into your community.

We think these activities will be a lot of fun for your kids and your family and maybe some of the prompts will cause you and your family to get creative and make up other activities on your own.

Many of these activities would be great opportunities to share your photos online using the #anillustratedadvent hashtag. The list of activities is below, and then you can either have your kids color the B&W calendar, or go ahead and use the color version provided.

Each of the weeks of Advent has a different theme and focus, and we hope that this will provide you with meaningful ways to get into the Christmas spirit.

Most importantly - have fun with it!

WEEK ONE

Preparing to Bring Hope

Activity Focus: Spend Time together as a Family

December 1st - Read Week 1 Family Devotional and complete activity sheet to create your Family Covenant.

December 2nd - Spend time together talking about the people who are important in your family. This may be relatives, such as grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, or close friends that have become part of your family. Share stories about past Christmases and the joy you can remember feeling. Tell your children stories about these important people who make up your family story.

December 3rd - Make a gift list for other family members. Talk about what you think different people will want and make a gift list with intention. Make a plan for shopping, or better yet, for creating gifts.

December 4th - Take some time to have a Hot Cocoa Break or Ice Cream Sundae Night. Talk about what the Christmas season means to you as a family.

December 5th - Create a new family tradition. Talk about something new you can do this year to help celebrate the Christmas season. Keep it simple such as watching a special Christmas movie together, hanging a favorite decoration in a special place, or baking a new type of Christmas cookie.

December 6th - St. Nicholas' Day: Perform a Random Act of Kindness! Celebrate by doing something nice and unexpected for a neighbor or friend. Leave cookies or sweets on a neighbor's doorstep, drop off a card to a friend, or bring someone flowers. Take the opportunity to talk to your child/children about different ways to show kindness without spending money (i.e. listening to a friend, playing with the new kid at school or saying thank you to their teacher after class).

December 7th - Have a family game night! Bring out your favorite family board games and spend time playing together.

WEEK TWO

Preparing to Make Peace

Activity Focus: Practice Acts of Peace

December 8th - Read Week 2 Family Devotional and complete activity sheet to prepare your Acts of Peace paper chain.

December 9th - Have children help prepare and clean up after dinner. Talk about how doing little things for others is important.

December 10th - Gather up spare change around your house. Visit a store that has a charity collection box at the register or Salvation Army bell ringer to make a donation.

December 11th - Pray for others who may need to find peace in their lives. As you pray, draw a picture or doodle on a blank sheet of paper.

December 12th - Go to the library and take out books to see how other cultures celebrate Christmas. Talk about how when we understand different cultures, we promote peace in our world.

December 13th - Make a birdseed ornament to hang outside. Use a pine cone or an apple cut in half, peanut butter (or Sunbutter if there is an allergy) and birdseed. Talk about how when we connect to nature we practice peace.

December 14th - Have a Family Movie Night - Pop some popcorn and watch a Christmas themed movie as a family. Some ICM favorites include Home Alone, Polar Express, It's A Wonderful Life, The Star and A Charlie Brown's Christmas.

WEEK THREE

Preparing to have Joy

Activity Focus: Spreading Joy to Others

December 15th - Read Week 3 Family Devotional and complete activity by painting rocks with symbols of joy.

December 16th - Focus on the joys of the season. Have your child/children write a letter to Jesus or draw a picture thanking him for listening to their prayers.

December 17th - Spread some laughter and love by going Christmas Caroling. Visit friends and neighbors and sing a few lines of your favorite songs.

December 18th - Thank someone who has brought you joy this year. Make a simple Christmas card thanking the person for bringing you joy and tell them why it meant so much. If you have time, pay it forward and create another card to bring someone joy who may need it this season.

December 19th - Listen to Christmas music as a family - maybe have a dance party if you feel moved. Talk about your favorite Christmas songs and which ones help spread the joy of the season.

December 20th - Take a drive or walk around your neighborhood to look at Christmas lights. Or venture into your town or city center to see how it is decorated for Christmas. Talk about the different symbols you see in the decorations and what they mean to your family.

December 21st - Bake a batch of Christmas cookies and bring them to your local emergency response department. Thank the people of the department for keeping you safe throughout the year.

WEEK FOUR

Preparing to Embrace Love

Activity Focus: Prepare your hearts to receive God's Love

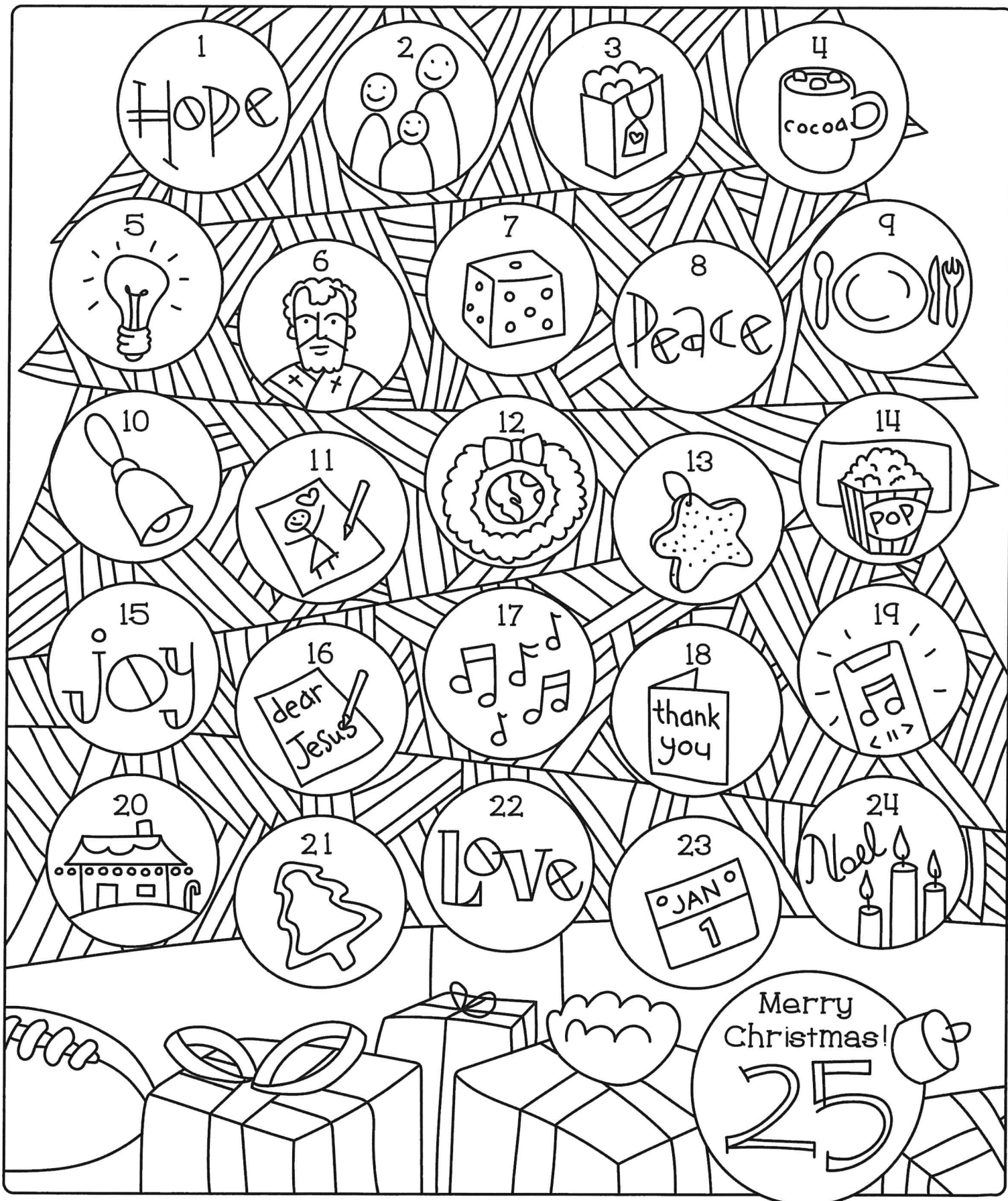
December 22nd - Read Week 4 Family Devotional and prepare your "Love and Affirmation" jar.

December 23rd - Take time to talk about the new year and what you hope will happen. Think about different ways you can spread God's love throughout the year to others. Say a prayer together for the new year.

December 24th - Attend a Christmas Eve service and prepare your hearts for Christmas Day. Take a minute to read the Christmas Eve scripture, reflection and prayer.

December 25th - Take time to read the Christmas Family Devotional. During the week that follows, complete the activity to create a home for Jesus.

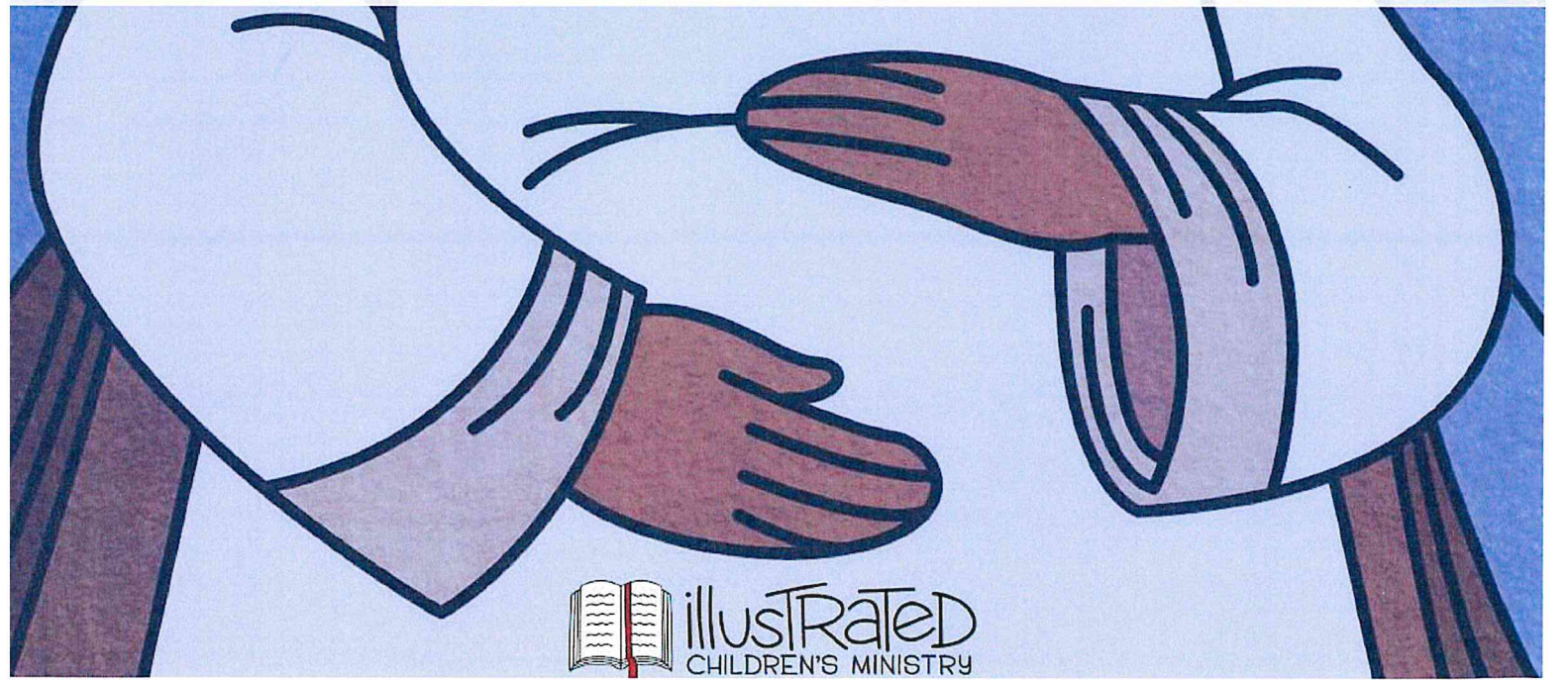
ADVENT activity calendar





an illustrated
advent
FOR FAMILIES

PREPARING the WAY





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Born in Racine, Wisconsin.



advent
DEVOTIONS

an illustrated ADVENT FOR FAMILIES

Preparing the Way: An Illustrated Advent for Families

We are thrilled to be in our fourth year of providing families with a resource for engaging their children in faith formation at home during Advent. Our *Illustrated Lent for Families* and *Illustrated Advent for Families* have been used by thousands of families around the world, and we're excited to share with you this new version for Advent 2018.

This year, our theme for An Illustrated Advent is "Preparing the Way." As we journey through this season of Advent together, we will be introduced to prophets or God's messengers who helped prepare God's people for Jesus' arrival. We will also meet individuals who faced the unexpected and continued to prepare for Jesus, trusting in the promises of God for their lives. And finally, each week we will create time and space to prepare for Jesus through scripture readings, discussions, and activities together.

Our Advent devotions are based on the scripture passages from the Revised Common Lectionary scripture readings and are written so they can be used by children and adults of all ages. We believe you'll find questions and discussion topics in each devotion that will work for your children, no matter the age. At the same time, we invite you to feel free to tweak the content and questions to work for your family. Don't feel like you need to do all the activities for it to be a meaningful experience for you and your family. Each devotion consists of the elements below. We invite you to take a look at the devotionals, see what you think will work best for your family, and find time each week that you can set aside to gather together for the family devotional that works best for your schedule.

Scripture: The scripture passages come from the Revised Common Lectionary for Advent, Year C.

Reflection: A brief reflection is offered for each of the scripture texts. It might make sense for you to read this section to your family, or you may just want to read it for yourself and see what questions or themes might resonate best.

Discussion and Coloring Page: This is a chance for some discussion for your family. Since we love coloring here at Illustrated Children's Ministry, we find that often some of the best conversations happen while coloring and doing something creative together as a family. We

suggest discussing the questions offered while coloring the week's coloring page, which ties in with both the weekly scripture and activity.

Family Activity: The activity provided each week invites your family into a way to prepare your family for Advent and Christmas that is aligned with the scripture reading. As with all our suggestions for spiritual formation, please feel free to adjust for your family that works in your daily lives and also opens you up to mindfully participating in the opportunity for spiritual formation.

Prayer: Finally, each week's devotion ends with a short prayer that you can say, or invite your children to repeat after you. This is a simple ritual that can end your family's weekly devotional time and can also be used as a prayer throughout the week.

As you use these resources in your ministry or your home, we would love to hear what was helpful and meaningful and what suggestions or comments you have for us. It is our desire to create quality resources for children's faith formation and we appreciate your comments and feedback.

You can always reach us at icm@illustratedchildrensministry.com or find us on the following social networks:

Facebook:	<u>facebook.com/illustratedCM</u>
Facebook Group:	<u>facebook.com/groups/illustratedCM</u>
Pinterest:	<u>pinterest.com/illustratedCM</u>
Twitter:	<u>twitter.com/illustratedCM</u>
Instagram:	<u>instagram.com/illustratedCM</u>

We also love to see photos and hear stories about how you are using our materials. When you are posting photos or comments online, please use the hashtag #anillustratedadvent or tag us in the photos so we can see them. That allows us to be part of the conversation and you to be part of our online community. Additionally, checking the hashtag on various social networks is also a great way to get see how other families and churches are creatively using our resources.

Blessings,



Adam Walker Cleaveland
Founder & Illustrator
Illustrated Children's Ministry, LLC.

Illustrated Ornament Set

As you take out your Christmas decorations from storage and set up your Christmas tree, we are thrilled you are making this Illustrated Ornament Set a part of your Christmas decor. An Illustrated Ornament Set provides you with an opportunity read a brief reflection, color different pieces of the ornaments, put the pieces together to make the ornament, and have some conversations about each of the Advent week themes.

We find that some of the best conversations happen when you are just sitting around a table with friends or your children, coloring. We invite you to take time this Advent season to slow down and talk about HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE and how GOD IS WITH US with your family, friends, or worshipping community as you create these five ornaments.

You may choose to make them as a family, in your children's ministries, or as part of an Advent church event. You may choose to display your ornaments on your Christmas tree or place them around your home as reminders of Jesus and the promise of God throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons. There are some instructions and photos on the next few pages, and we hope that you enjoy making your Illustrated Ornament Set.

Instructions

Creating your ornament set doesn't require many supplies. Feel free to get creative when you color/decorate your ornaments.

Supplies needed:

- The print out of the ornament pieces that you will be coloring-we recommend printing them out onto thick card stock paper if you can.
- A pair of scissors
- Tape or a glue stick
- Coloring pencils/crayons/markers
- Baker's twine/string/thread

Steps:

1. We recommend having your child/children color and decorate the ornament pieces first. If you have more than one child, you may want to print out a set for each child to make their own ornament set.
2. Once the ornament pieces have been colored and decorated, cut along the dashed line around each ornament piece.
3. Then fold each piece evenly down the middle.
4. Use small rolls of tape or glue to adhere the inside halves of two of the ornament pieces, making sure they match evenly.
5. With the string, create a long loop, then glue or tape the bottom parts of the string into the center of the two pieces. Knot the loop at the top of the ornament.
6. Glue or tape the third ornament piece to the inside of the other blank halves. There are some photos and additional instructions on the following page.

PHOTO EXAMPLES

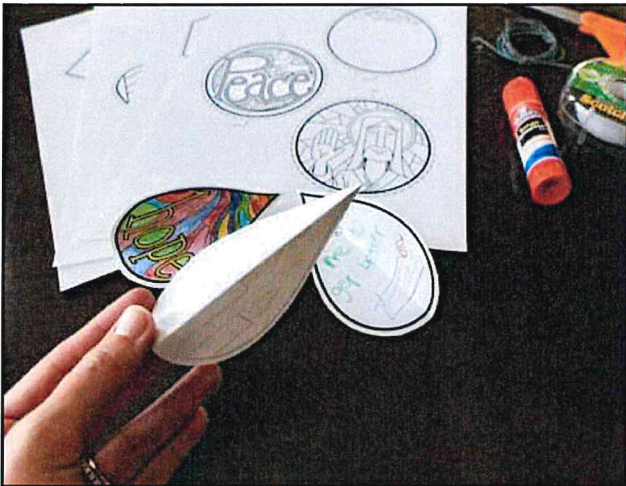
STEP 1



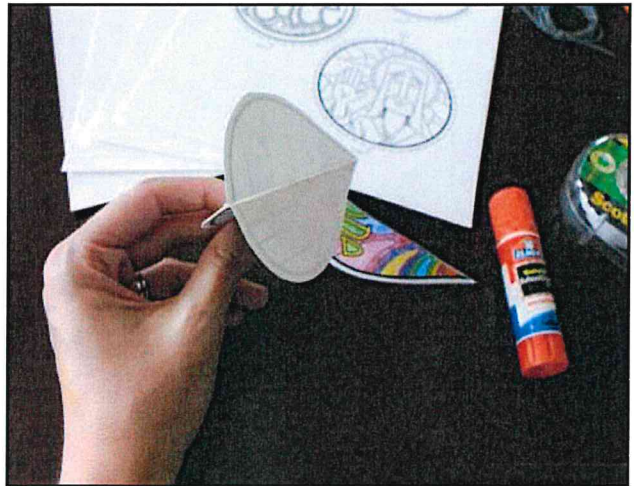
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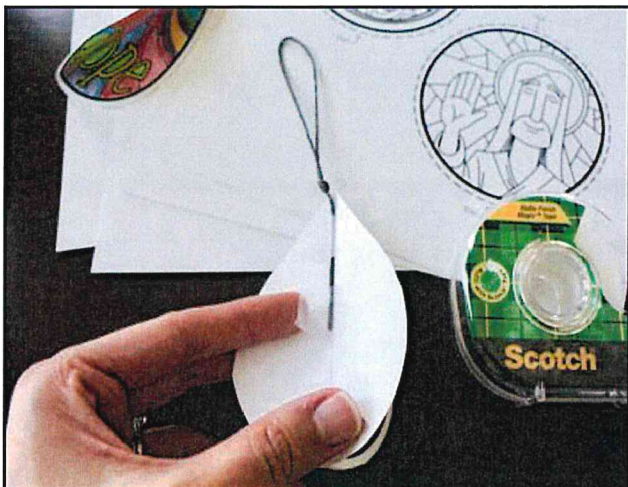
STEP 3



STEP 4



STEP 5



STEP 6





WEEK 1: HOPE

Preparing to Bring Hope

SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 33: 14- 16

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will live in safety. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The Lord is our righteousness."

REFLECTION

Our first advent reading comes from prophet Jeremiah. He spoke to God's people during a time when they were making choices that went against God's ways. Long before, God made a covenant, a promise, to Abraham and Sarah that in their descendants, all the world would be blessed. Some generations were in a great relationship with God, some were not. Here Jeremiah urged God's people to stop doing things that caused them to turn away from God and break their covenant with God. Still, things weren't looking good. The time was drawing near when God's people would be overtaken by a stronger, more powerful nation, and forced to leave their homes and country.

However, in the midst of that difficult news Jeremiah shared, he also included promises of hope and restoration of God's people through a new covenant that God was making. This new covenant is different from the covenant God made with Abraham and Sarah because it is permanent and cannot be broken.¹ Our verses today tell us about that covenant promise.

Why is this an advent text? Jeremiah's words speak about the future promise to God's people. The season of Advent is one of hopeful anticipation. As we wait for the arrival of Jesus on Christmas day, Jeremiah reminds us that we serve a God who helps us hope and promises to bring restoration to our world.

¹ Collins, John J. Introduction To The Hebrew Bible. Fortress Press, 2004, 345.

DISCUSSION

As you color the coloring page together, ponder these questions:

1. This week we learned about a prophet and how he helped God's people prepare for the future. Who in your life helps you get ready? Do you like having someone help you? What is nice about it? What is difficult?
2. A covenant is a promise or a commitment made between two different individuals or an individual and a group of people. Can you think of examples of covenants in the Bible or in life? Have you ever been a part of a covenant?
3. Our Bible passage this week is one that gave hope to a lot of people who were facing hard things. When you are facing something that is hard, where do you go to find help and hope?

FAMILY ACTIVITY

When you became a family, whether through birth, foster, adoption, partnership or marriage, you begin to form patterns or traditions that shape your family's norms and routines.

Oftentimes these norms happen without even realizing it. This week, we invite you to spend some time together as a family and think about the things that are important to you or define you as a family. Use the activity page to write or draw those things and create a visual covenant for your family. Take the page and post it in your home to remind you of the hope you have in your family during the Advent season and beyond.

PRAAYER

Covenant God,

As we enter this season of waiting for your son,
thank you for your promise that you are with us.

Thank you for being a God of justice,
a God of righteousness,
and a God of safety in a troubled world.

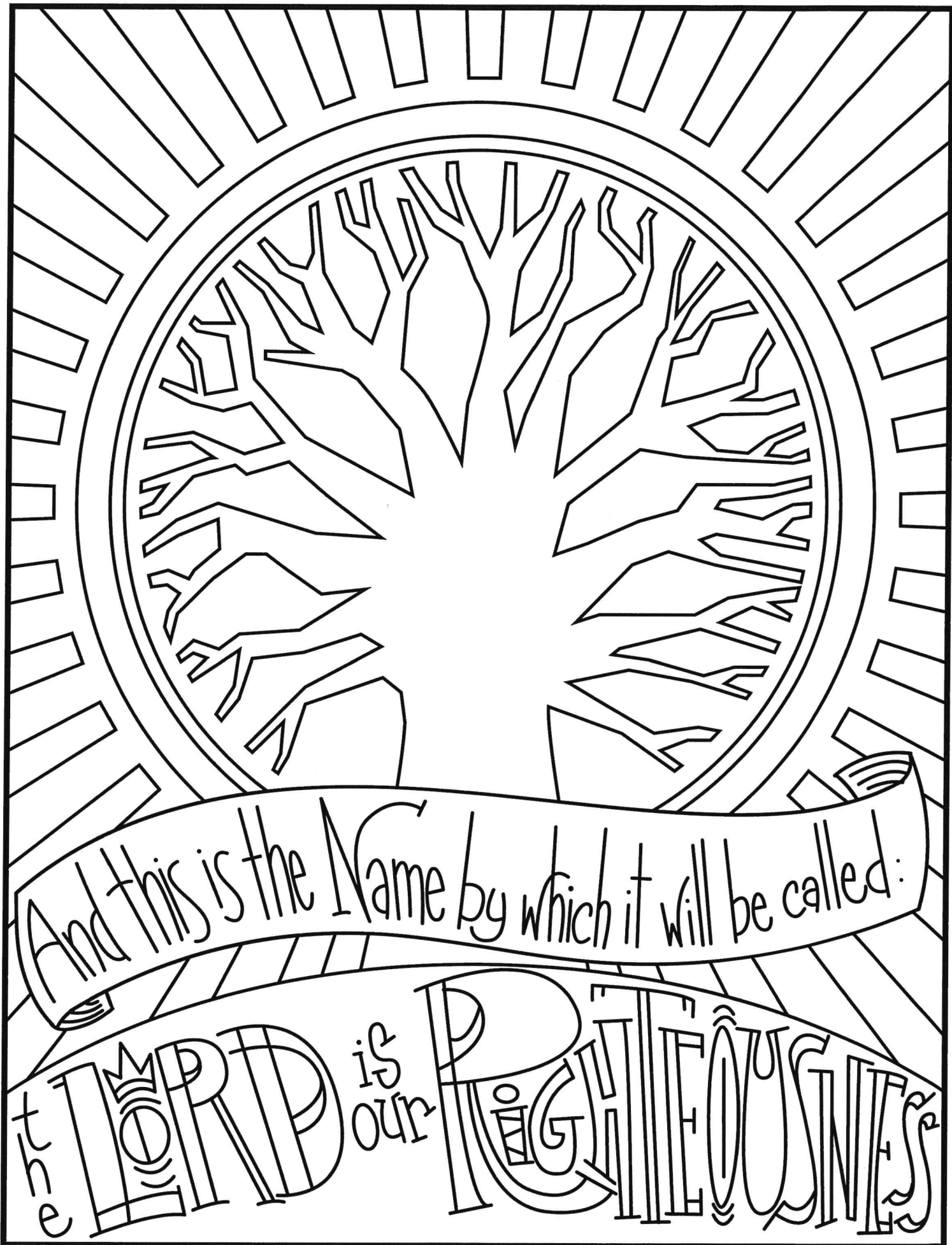
Help us to be a faithful people,
who seek and believe in the hope that you share with us.

In your name, we pray,

Amen.

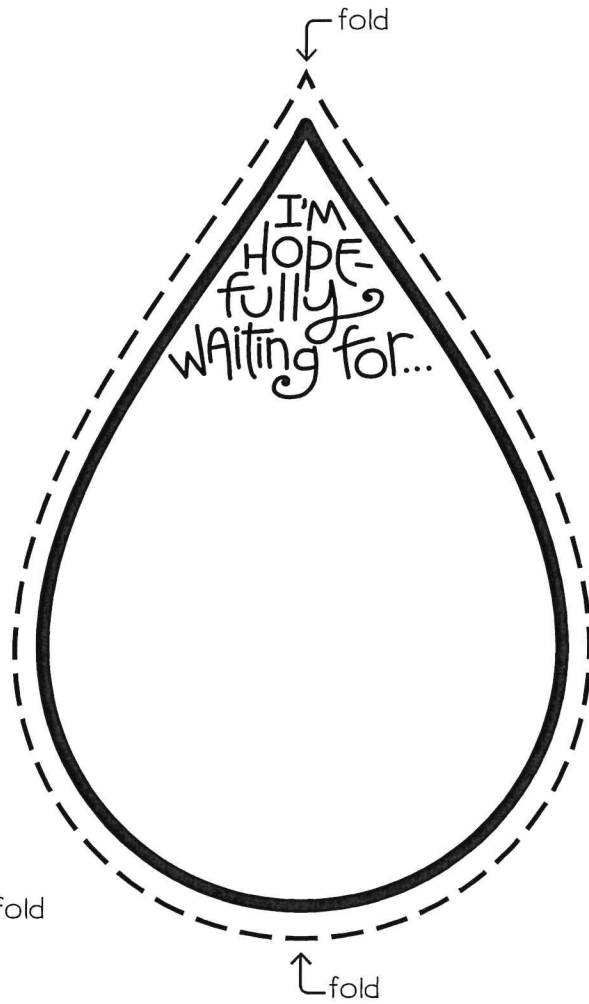
Our Family
Covenant

A large rectangular area with a decorative border, intended for writing a family covenant. The border consists of a repeating geometric pattern of interlocking lines. The central area is completely blank, providing space for the user to write their family's covenant.



And this is the Name by which it will be called:

Best LORD is our RIGHTEOUSNESS





WEEK 2: PEACE

Preparing to Make Peace

SCRIPTURE: Luke 3:2-6

During the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'"

REFLECTION

The Advent and Christmas seasons are filled with traditions. There are probably a handful of traditions that come to your mind when you think of this time of year. One Advent tradition is retelling the life and ministry of John the Baptist.

John was someone who modeled his life and words after the prophets. When he spoke to God's people, he did it in a way that would be familiar to all who heard him. He did this by selecting passages from the Hebrew scriptures and used them in a new way.

What was John trying to tell the people of Israel? John was asking the people to be ready, to prepare for God's promise of Hope that we heard about in our devotion last week. John believed that promise was God's son, Jesus. In this Bible passage today, John paints us a picture of how God promises to make things right in the world.

John's words remind us that we are called to prepare for the promise of Jesus. One of the ways that we can be ready for him is to practice being peacemakers in a world that so often resists acts of peace.

DISCUSSION

As you color the coloring page together, ponder these questions:

1. What traditions does your family participate in during Advent and Christmas? Which one is your favorite? Why?

2. John told the people of Israel that in order to be ready for God's son, they needed to say sorry for the things they have done wrong. When is it easy to say you are sorry? When is it difficult?
3. Even though our Bible passage doesn't specifically say the word Peace, it is one that is read during the Advent week of peace. What does peace mean to you? What does a peaceful home look like? What does a peaceful world look like?

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Items needed: Activity page, markers, tape

Each Advent season, we are invited to practice acts of peace. This week, as a family, we invite you to spend some time together brainstorming ways you can practice peace in your homes, faith communities, schools, and towns. Some examples of acts of peace include helping a friend with homework, sharing with a sibling, helping your grown-up clean up when they are tired, bringing a meal to a new parent or someone who is ill, writing a letter or drawing a picture for someone in the military or in a nursing home, or volunteering to serve a meal at a care facility. During the week, as you complete an act of peace, take a strip of paper, write or draw your act of peace on it, and form it into a link with tape. Take each new strip and create a chain out of the strips. Display the chain in a visible place in your home and watch your acts of peace grow.

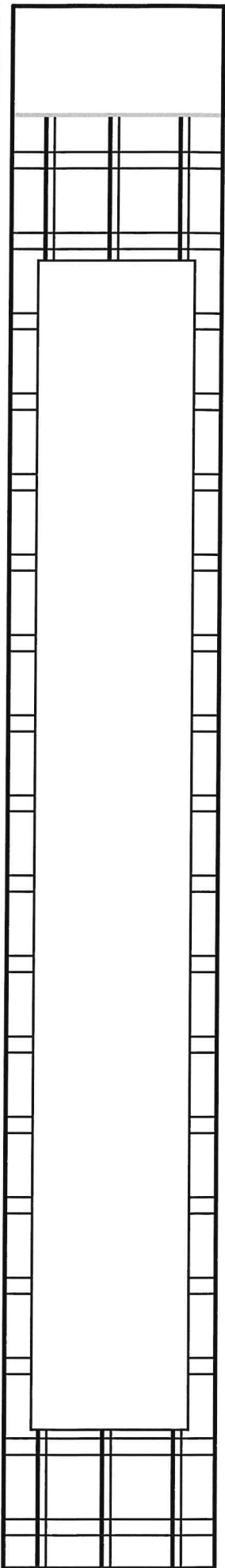
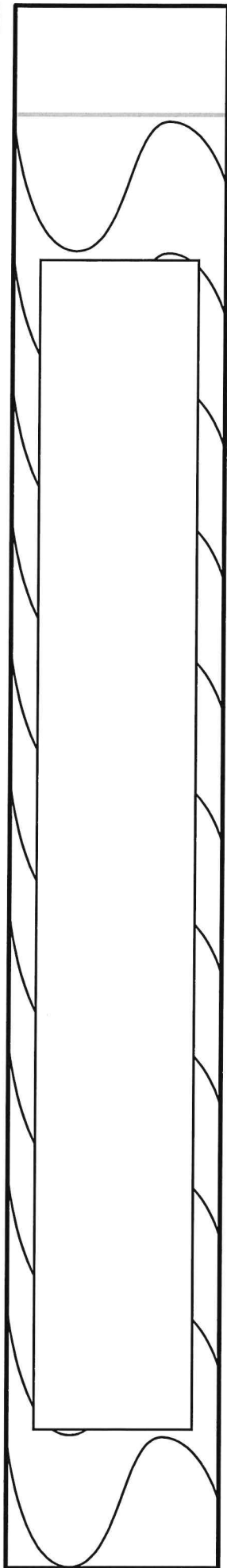
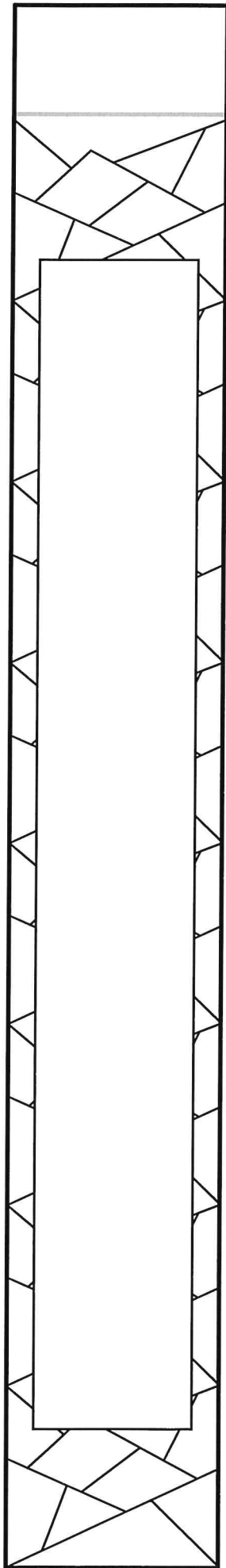
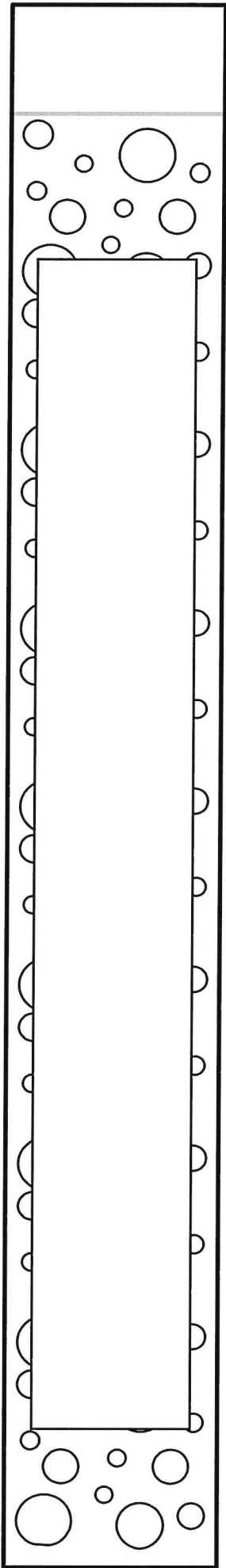
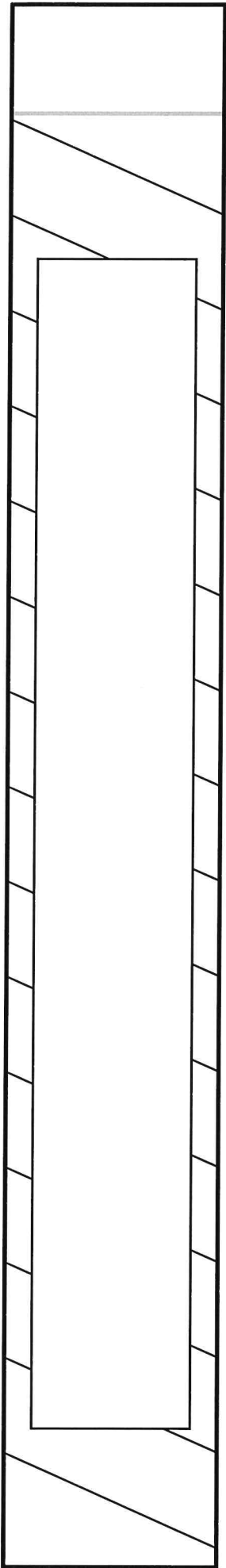
PRAAYER

Peace-filled Creator,

You speak into the wilderness of this world
And the wilderness of our lives
Turning chaos and disarray
Into calm and order

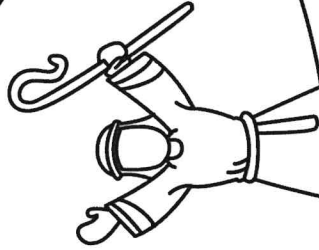
Thank you for modeling peace
Through your son Jesus

Help us to practice peace
Both when it is easy
And when it is difficult.
Thank you for preparing our way,
Amen.



The Voice of the Evening Owl

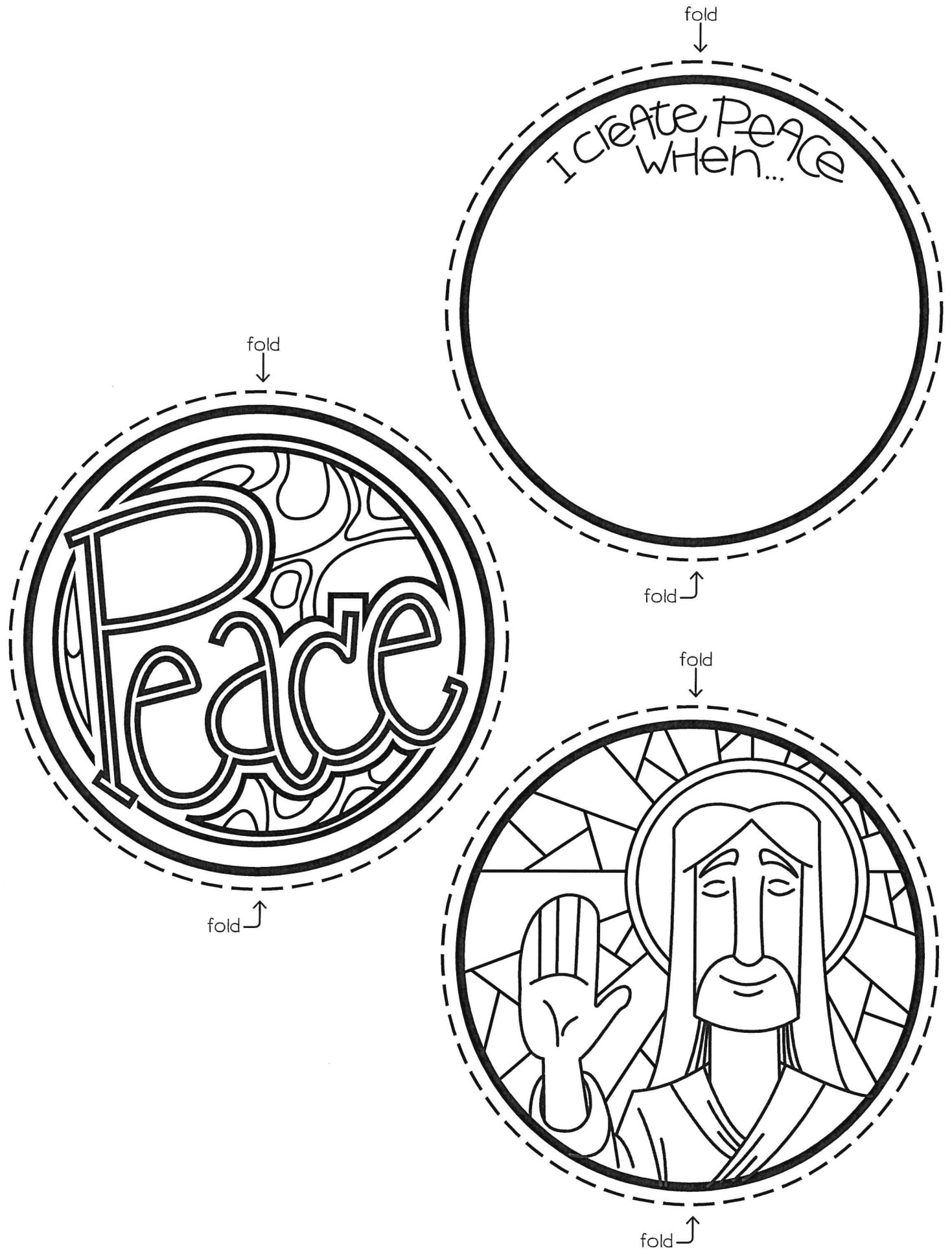
the HILBERTS



PREPARE

the way of the

WISDOM



I create Peace
when...

Peace





WEEK 3: JOY Preparing to Have Joy

SCRIPTURE: Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

REFLECTION

The third week of Advent focuses on the word Joy. So it makes a lot of sense that we would read a passage from Philippians together this week. Paul, the author of Philippians, wrote this letter as a way to encourage one of the first Christian communities.

In this passage, Paul invites the people to rejoice, to not worry, and to be thankful. Seems like pretty reasonable things to do from the comfort of our homes or schools or churches. But Paul is writing to the Philippians from jail! Far from anything comfortable or safe. How can Paul have joy in a situation like that?

What is Joy? In our world today, sometimes we might think that the words happy and joy mean the same thing. But was Paul happy in prison? Probably not.

Sometimes it is hard to be happy during the holiday season. Sometimes the holidays bring us anxiety and pain instead of happiness. But Paul isn't asking us to be happy. He is asking us to have Joy. Joy is a gift that comes from being connected to God and others. When you are connected to others that love you, you can feel joy in your body like a warm hug, even if you might be having a bad day. Joy is something that we can practice and experience together through family conversations, worship services, or helping others. This week we invite you to make connections that will foster joy.

DISCUSSION

As you color the coloring page together, ponder these questions:

1. What are some things that make you feel happy? What are some things that make you feel sad? Is it possible to still have Joy if you are sad? Why or why not?

2. What are signs of Joy during Advent? What are some ways you have seen others share joy?
3. What are some ways we can form connections with God? What are some ways we can form connections with each other?

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Items needed: hand-sized rocks, paint, small bowl

This week, we invite you to practice two things: mindfulness and sharing joy. As a family, take some small rocks and paint pictures or words on the rocks. Examples include: safe, loved, blessed, smiley face, heart, peace, calm, enough. After the rocks have dried, put them all in a bowl. During the week, if you feel anxious, sad, or worried, take a rock in your hand and practice becoming calm. As you breathe in, say, "God loves me." As you breathe out, say out loud the word on the rock. Example: "I am safe." If you notice a family member needs a reminder of joy, gently invite them to share a rock with you and mindfully invite joy back into your lives.

PRAYER

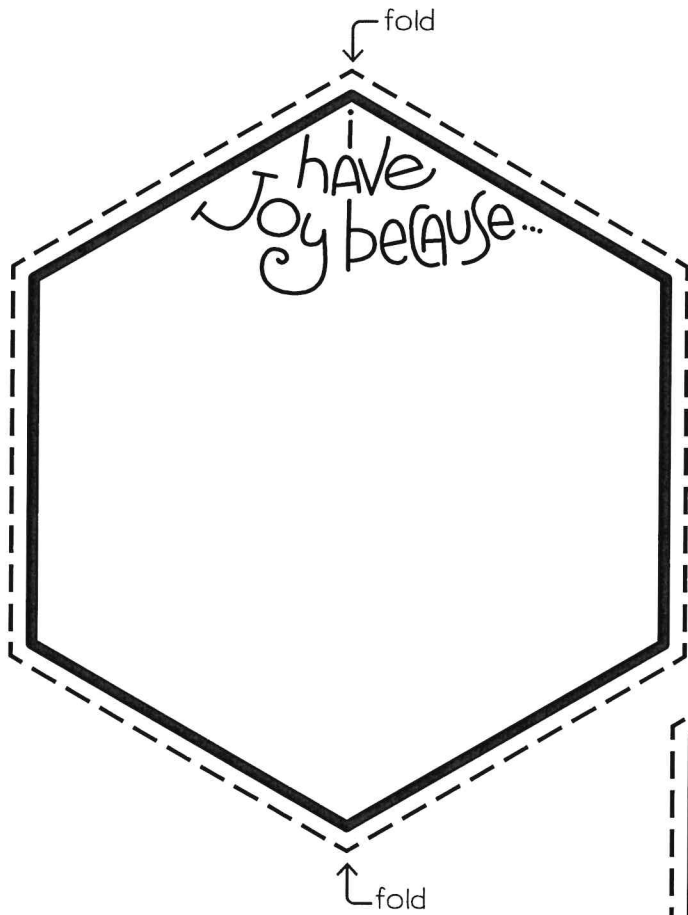
Peace-filled Creator,

God of our whole lives,
We understand that life can bring us
Happy times and sad times,
Calm times and anxious times,
Peaceful times and conflict.

Give us the courage this week to seek
Connections with others and with you.
Help us to find and experience joy
Within ourselves, with you, and with others.
Amen.

illustratedchildreinsenministry.com







WEEK 4: LOVE

Preparing to Embrace Love

SCRIPTURE: Luke 1:39-45

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord."

REFLECTION

At this point in the Advent season, many families have finished their preparations for Christmas. Gifts are purchased, food is prepared, and family gatherings are finalized. With the many familiar traditions and rituals of Advent, it is easy to forget that some of our biblical characters were facing very unfamiliar and unexpected things.

In our passage this week, we learn that Mary and Elizabeth are both preparing to become mothers for the first time. Preparing for an expected baby takes a lot of work, but in a supportive and loving community, you are surrounded by many hands and people who are willing to help. What we learn in the Gospel of Luke is that Elizabeth's and Mary's pregnancies were both surprises to them.

So Mary and Elizabeth did what many people would do when faced with something difficult, they looked to each other for love and support. Look at how they responded to each other when Mary came to visit Elizabeth. Their first words weren't *sad* or *worried*, but words like *filled with the Holy Spirit*, *blessed*, and *joy*! We see that even in the midst of something unexpected, Mary and Elizabeth could choose to prepare by embracing the loving support of each other and the promise that God would be with them. May we seek out ways to support those in our community who may need reminders of God's love and promises this Advent Season.

DISCUSSION

As you color the coloring page together, ponder these questions:

1. How do you know you are loved? What does it feel like? What are some words or actions you would use to describe love?
2. Think of a time you have experienced something that was unexpected or unplanned. What did you do? Who did you go to ask for help? Have you helped someone who experienced something unplanned? What did you do to help?
3. What are some ways we can practice loving others that are facing difficult things?

FAMILY ACTIVITY

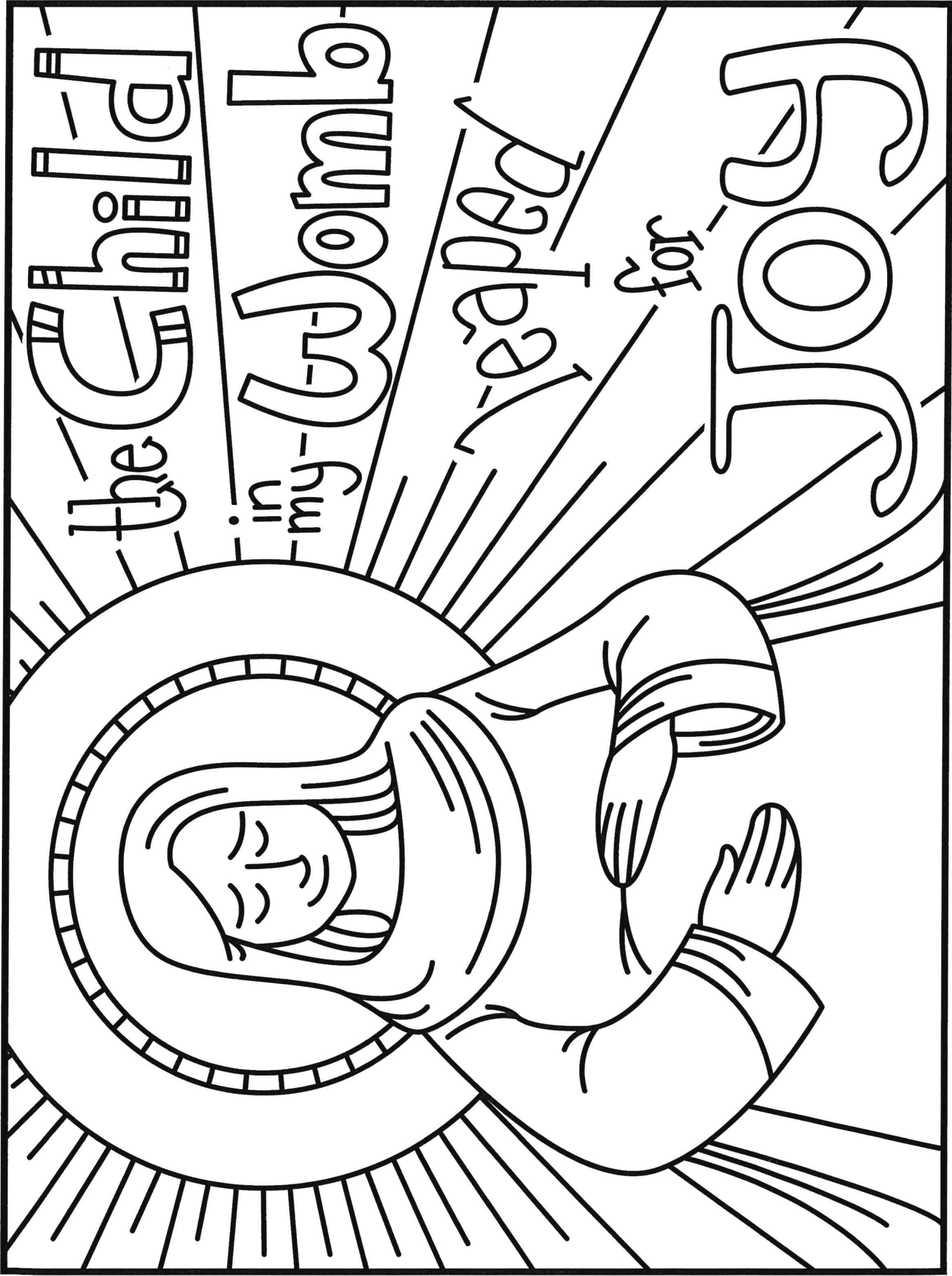
Items needed: Plastic or glass jar, construction paper, markers, tape

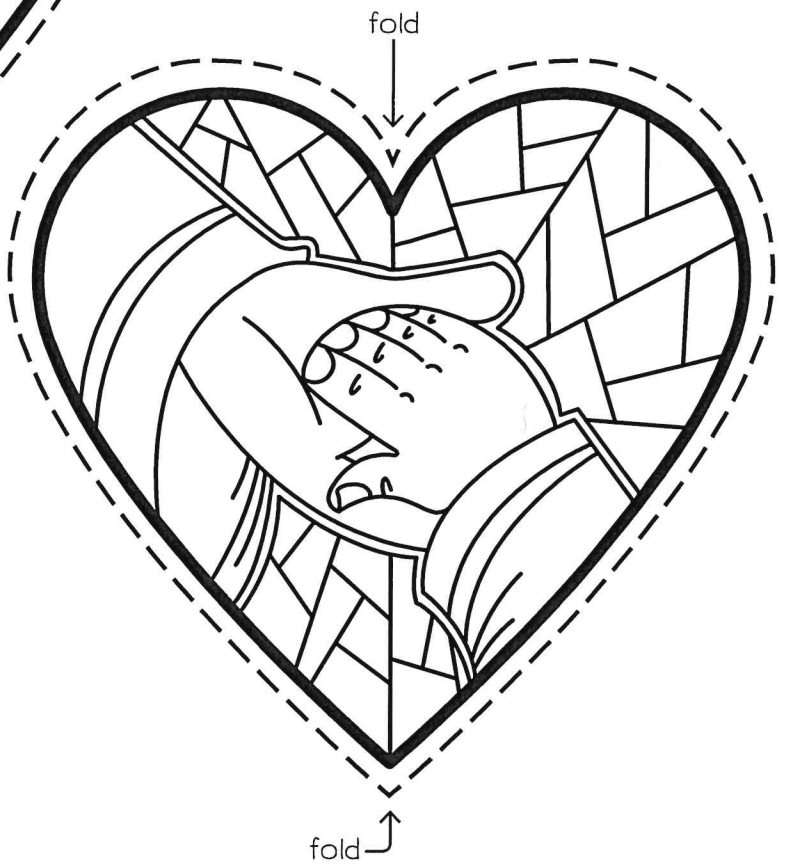
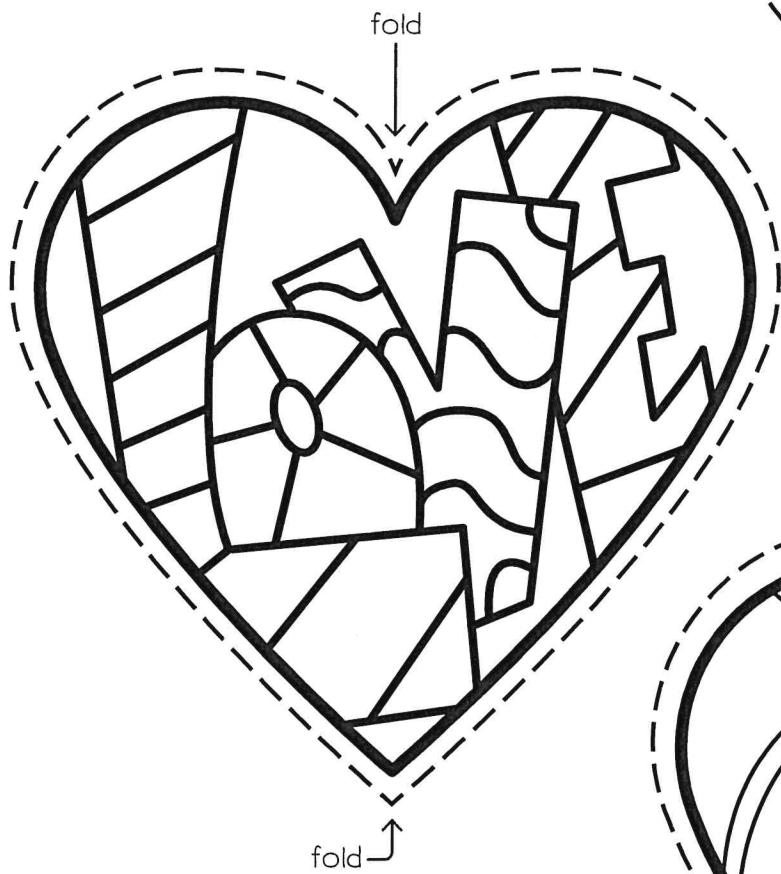
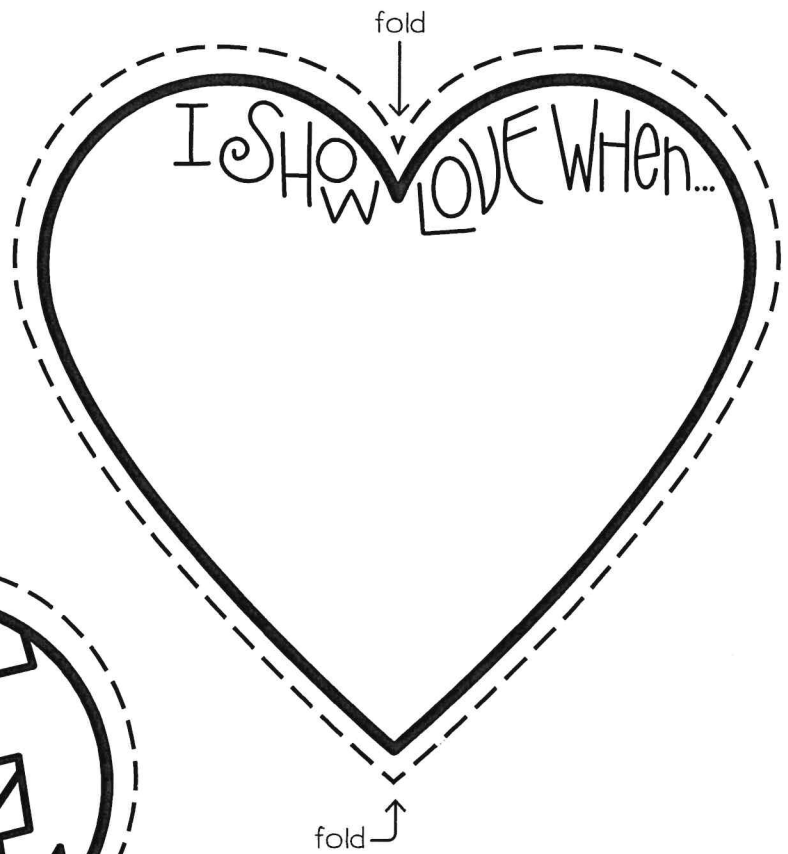
Take some time this Sunday to complete this family activity and return to it during the week. First, find a plastic or glass jar and decorate it with construction paper or paper you color with markers. Label your jar with the phrase "Love and Affirmation" or paste hearts and happy faces on the surface. After you decorate your jar, as a family write down or draw words or pictures of love for each member of your family. Leave some strips of paper and markers near the jar. During the week, as you think of your family, make a point to add new thoughts of love and affirmation to the jar. At the end of the week, take out the slips of paper and read or show them to each other.

PRAYER

To the One who loves us,
Thank you for the lives of
Elizabeth and Mary.
Thank you for giving us
real life examples of people
who faced the unexpected
and modeled for us how to respond.

Help us in unexpected times
to seek those who can help us
learn to love like you
and share your promise of love every day.
In your loving name, we pray,
Amen.







CHRISTMAS EVE & CHRISTMAS DAY Embodying Home

CHRISTMAS EVE

This Christmas Eve, as you return to your home from last minute shopping, family gatherings, and worship services, take some time as a family to read together the following scripture passage and prayer. Each year, on Christmas Eve, we remember that while we make our final preparations to welcome Jesus into the world and into our homes, Jesus' parents found themselves making preparations without their families and comforts of home. Our scripture reminds us to be mindful that Jesus came into the world in an unexpected way and continues to meet us in unexpected ways. That is why it is important for us to remember and be prepared to see him anew each Christmas.

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:1-7

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

PRAYER

Jesus, in the midst of the bustling streets
The chatter of the crowds
The braying of the animals
The swirl of activity
Your time is near.

Into the unknown
The first pangs
The hard work
The pain
Your time is near.

In the darkness of manger
The dirt,
the smell,
the damp
Your time is near.

We witness your borning cry
A gentle touch
A prayer of thanks
A swaddling embrace
Your time has arrived.
We are prepared to welcome you.
Amen.

CHRISTMAS DAY

SCRIPTURE: John 1:1-5, 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

REFLECTION

It's Christmas Day! Jesus is here! Our Gospel passages from Matthew and Luke share similar stories about Christ's arrival on earth, but this year the announcement of "God With Us" comes from the Gospel of John. What do we notice right away? John announces the arrival of Jesus in a very different way than the writers of Matthew and Luke.

In the Christian Faith, we learn at an early age that the Bible, our Scripture, is also called "The Word." This is a shortened way to say "The Word of God" or the words God has shared with us that we now have today in the Bible. The first people to hear and read the Gospel of John would be familiar with that phrase. But the writer of John is giving God's People a new meaning of "the Word."

John wants us to know that "the Word" can also be a name we give to Jesus. Why? Because John believed that God sent Jesus to be with us on earth so that Jesus could teach us how to live as God's people. Jesus became a person so that God could be one of us and be with us in the world, no matter who we are and where we live. The "Word" of God is something and someone who we can welcome into our home and lives every day. Jesus is someone who can be present in our homes but can also "be home" for us because he has the power to be with us, comfort us, and guide us wherever we may go.² What an amazing gift that God has given to us!

DISCUSSION

As you color the coloring page together, ponder these questions:

² Lewis, Karoline M. She: Five Keys To Unlock The Power of Women In Ministry. Abingdon Press, 2016, 49.

1. What are some words that are used to describe Jesus in the Bible? What are some words that we use to describe Jesus at church? Which word or phrase is your favorite? Why?
2. What do you think about Jesus being someone who is always "home" or always with us?
3. Is this something that is comforting? Confusing? Why do you think God had Jesus become a human baby?
4. What are some things we can do as a family, or in our community, that invites Jesus to be with us?

FAMILY ACTIVITY

Items needed: Paper, crayons or markers, scissors, glue, various craft supplies (cloth squares, feathers, sticks, get creative!)

We invite you to find some time as a family either on Christmas Day or in the days following to create a home for Jesus. Knowing that Jesus was born away from his family's home and at a different point in his life lived away from his childhood home, how can you as a family welcome Jesus into his home. Have some fun together discussing and creating a miniature version of a home that you think Jesus would like to live in. When you are finished making this "home," put it under your Christmas tree or in another central place in your home as your gift of welcome to Jesus.

PRAYER

Dear Jesus,
You are here!
Happy Birthday!

We have been planning
And preparing and waiting for you.

Thank you for being God's Word to us
Thank you for being a home for us
Thank you for journeying through life with us

Help us to remember and celebrate your love for us
Today and every day.

Amen.

the
WORLD



Lived among Us.

