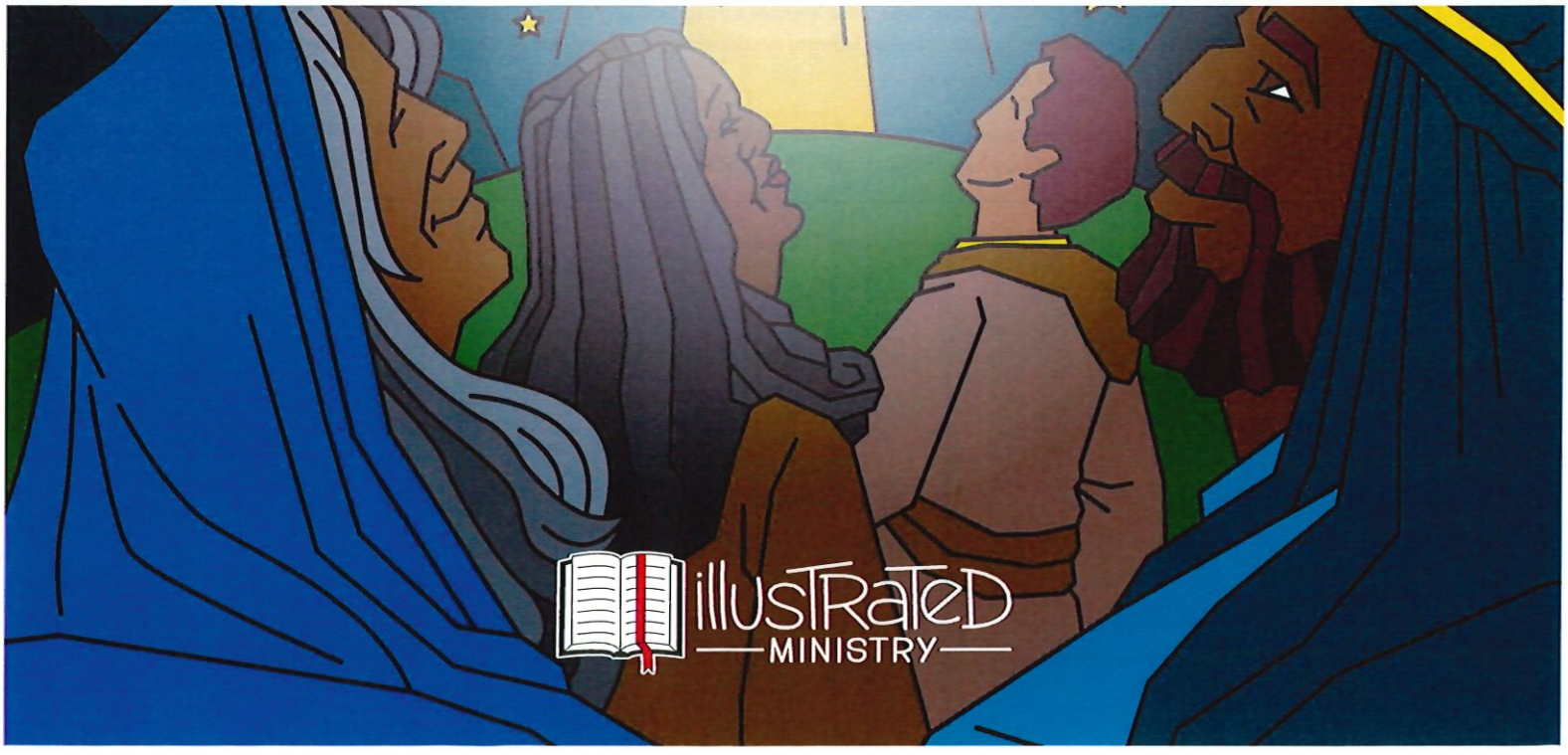



# DO NOT BE AFRAID



# an illustrated advent FOR FAMILIES

## TABLE OF CONTENTS


Welcome to An Illustrated Advent for Families: Do Not Be Afraid. . . . . 1

Devotions . . . . . 5

- Week One: To Hold HOPE . . . . . 7
- Week Two: To Bring PEACE . . . . . 15
- Week Three: To Practice JOY . . . . . 23
- Week Four: To Choose LOVE . . . . . 31
- Christmas Eve & Christmas Day . . . . . 39

Advent Calendar . . . . . 55

About the Contributors . . . . . 63



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an illustrated ADVENT FOR FAMILIES

# AN ILLUSTRATED ADVENT FOR FAMILIES: DO NOT BE AFRAID

Welcome to *An Illustrated Advent for Families: Do Not Be Afraid*, a resource for engaging families in faith formation at home during Advent. Thousands of families around the world have used our *Illustrated Lent for Families* and *Illustrated Advent for Families*, and we are excited to share this Advent resource with you.

The inspiration for our theme comes from the angels' message in the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke: "Do not be afraid!" This phrase is an instruction God gave to God's people throughout their history, and it's a message God continues to give to us today. This Advent, we invite you to explore what it looks like to hold hope when life feels really uncertain, to bring peace in the face of fear, to practice joy when everything seems burdensome, and to choose love, when sometimes, it's just really hard. You'll be invited to wonder more deeply about this classic story, to imagine some of the details that aren't filled in for us, and to make connections to your own context this season.

We hope our Advent devotional will help you share in conversation about fear and how God invites us to not be afraid. The devotions are written for children and adults of all ages. At the same time, feel free to tweak the content and questions to work for your family and community. Don't feel like you need to complete all the activities to have a meaningful experience for you and your family. Each devotion consists of the below elements. We invite you to look at the material, see what you think will work best for your family, and find time each week to gather together for the devotion.

**Scripture:** Look up each scripture and read it out loud together.

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

**Discussion and Coloring Page:** This is a chance for some family discussion. We love coloring here at Illustrated Ministry, and we find 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.

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# DEVOTIONS

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# WEEK ONE:
## To Hold HOPE

## SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 1:26-45

## REFLECTION

Who do you know that has had a baby? Did you get to hold that new baby? We hold new babies with care because they are delicate. Imagine for a minute that you are holding a new baby. How would you feel?

Two women were about to have babies.
Mary and Elizabeth had never had babies before.
They had never been mothers before!
They did not know what it would be like to give birth to a baby. Would they be safe?
Would they know how to be mothers?
Their lives were about to change.
Have you ever faced a change that made you afraid or nervous?

We are thinking about Mary and Elizabeth's story because they were brave and hopeful, even though they did not know what would happen. An angel visited Mary to give her a message about her baby. Mary's baby would change the world. God also chose Elizabeth's baby for important things. But God's plans for baby Jesus and baby John felt so mysterious. How do you think Mary and Elizabeth felt about this big announcement? Nervous? Afraid? Excited?

While they may have been afraid, they held hope that God would be faithful, right by their side, throughout this journey. We know Mary and Elizabeth held hope because the story tells us some amazing things happened when they saw each other. When Elizabeth heard Mary's voice, baby John leaped inside of Elizabeth's womb. Then Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and began to give a blessing to Mary.

Of course, it's possible to feel afraid and hold hope at the same time.

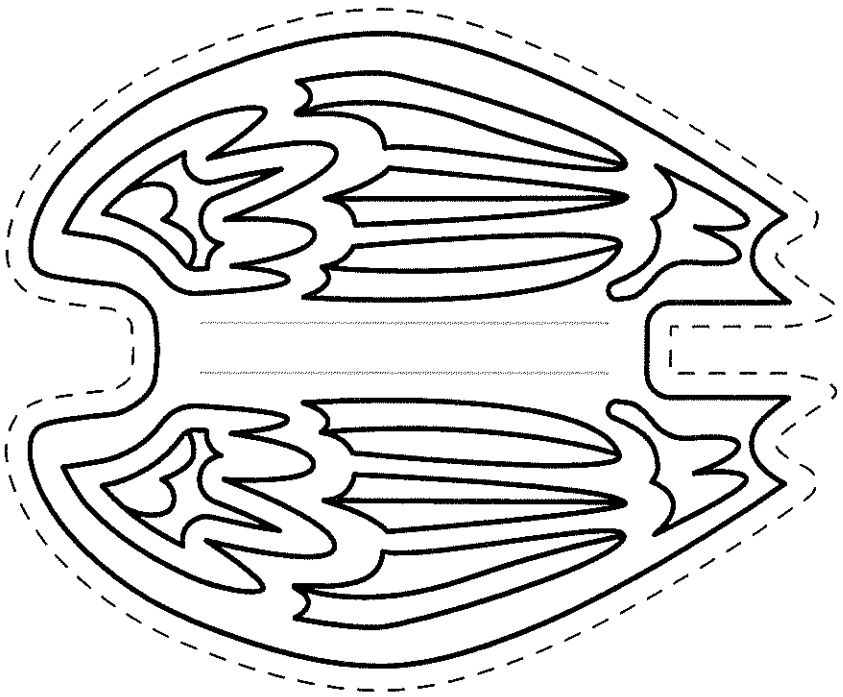
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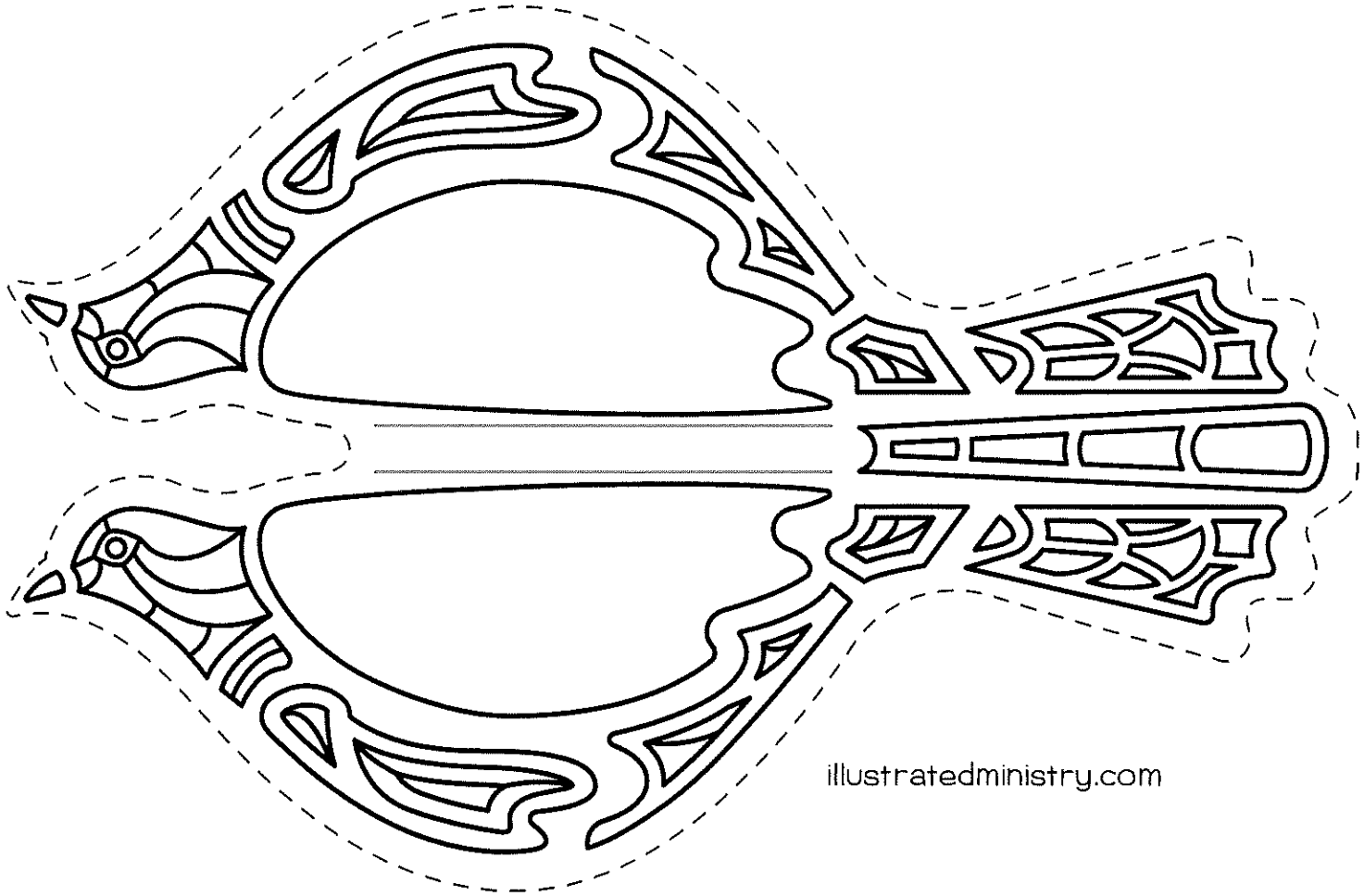
*NOTE:* You can also make this into an ornament using a needle and thread/string/yarn. Open up your finished bird with the decorative side down. Thread your needle, making sure that both ends of the thread/string/yarn are even in length. In the middle of the bird, poke a hole with the needle and pull a bit of string through to the desired length. Tie a knot in the thread/string/yarn on the underbelly side of the bird. You can even tape or glue the knot at the end of the string to make it more secure. Hang your bird ornament with the loop you just made.

## PRAYER

God of Hope,
Sometimes we feel afraid.
Just like the angel told Mary, you whisper to us, "fear not."
When fear grows inside us, help us hold hope.
Help us be brave and share your messages of hope
with our friends and neighbors.
**Amen.**

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BLESSED
is SHE
WHO
BELIEVED




# WEEK TWO:
## To Bring PEACE

## SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 1:46-55

## REFLECTION

When you are afraid, what do you do to know God is with you? One important way the people of God feel peace when they are afraid is to sing songs about God's peace.

As our story begins, Mary has just finished talking with an angel who shared big, amazing news with her. She may have felt afraid or nervous or unsure or excited. Maybe more than one of these big feelings were mixed up inside of her. What happens inside of you when you are feeling a lot of big feelings at the same time?

Suddenly, Mary began to sing a beautiful song about God's amazing love, power, and peace.

My soul glorifies our God!
My spirit rejoices in God, my Savior.
God's mercy is forever...
God fills the hungry...
God reminds all those God loves of God's promises.

As Mary sang, her song reminded her of the peace God brings. Maybe Mary's song brought peace to Elizabeth as she listened. God's peace isn't just the calm of a still river or the silence of a quiet room. God's peace makes sure everyone has enough and knows they belong.

As we read Mary's song, we are reminded it is important to lift our voices and sing. When we sing with our church, our families, our friends, or alone in our rooms, our songs tell the story of the peace God brings to the whole world. As our songs fill our hearts and float out into the air around us, they also bring peace to our lives. When you sing, whether by yourself in your room or with your whole family, remember God is always bringing peace to our lives, our families, and the whole world.

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## PRAYER

Dear God,
Thank you for giving us the language of music.
Give us peace and remind us we are not alone.
We pray for peace in our home, in our community, and in our world.
Help us to be peacemakers, singing a song of peace to the world.
**Amen.**

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Surely, from now on, all generations will call me blessed;
for you, mighty one, have done great things for me,
holy is your name.
Your mercy, God, reaches from age to age for those who fear you.


my Soul MAGNIFIES GOD
& my SPIRIT REJOICES in God




# WEEK THREE:

## To Practice JOY

## SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 2:1-14

## REFLECTION

There is a hymn that says, "Count your blessings, name them one-by-one. Count your blessings, see what God has done." These wise words remind the people of God to look for joy in their everyday lives.

In our story, the shepherds were doing their job in the fields by taking care of the sheep. It is what they did every day. Maybe their job had become a routine. Perhaps they were used to living in the fields, and they had forgotten to notice the green grass or look up at the glittering stars. Suddenly, the angels came to the shepherds to share, "the good news of great joy for all the people." They said, "Jesus has been born. It is a blessing for you. It is a blessing for everyone!"

The appearance of the angels woke the shepherds up. Suddenly, they were surrounded by the joy of the angels. Can you imagine the joy that filled that moment? Joy is always contagious. The angels' joy spread to the shepherds. After the angels left, they were bursting to talk with one another. They decided to journey to Bethlehem and search for baby Jesus.

Just like the shepherds, you probably experience amazing joy in special moments that you want to share with others, too. Even better, we don't have to wait for special days to experience joy. Joy is all around us in our ordinary days. Ordinary joy isn't announced by angels in the sky or by glittering candles on a birthday cake. Ordinary joy happens in the quieter moments of life.

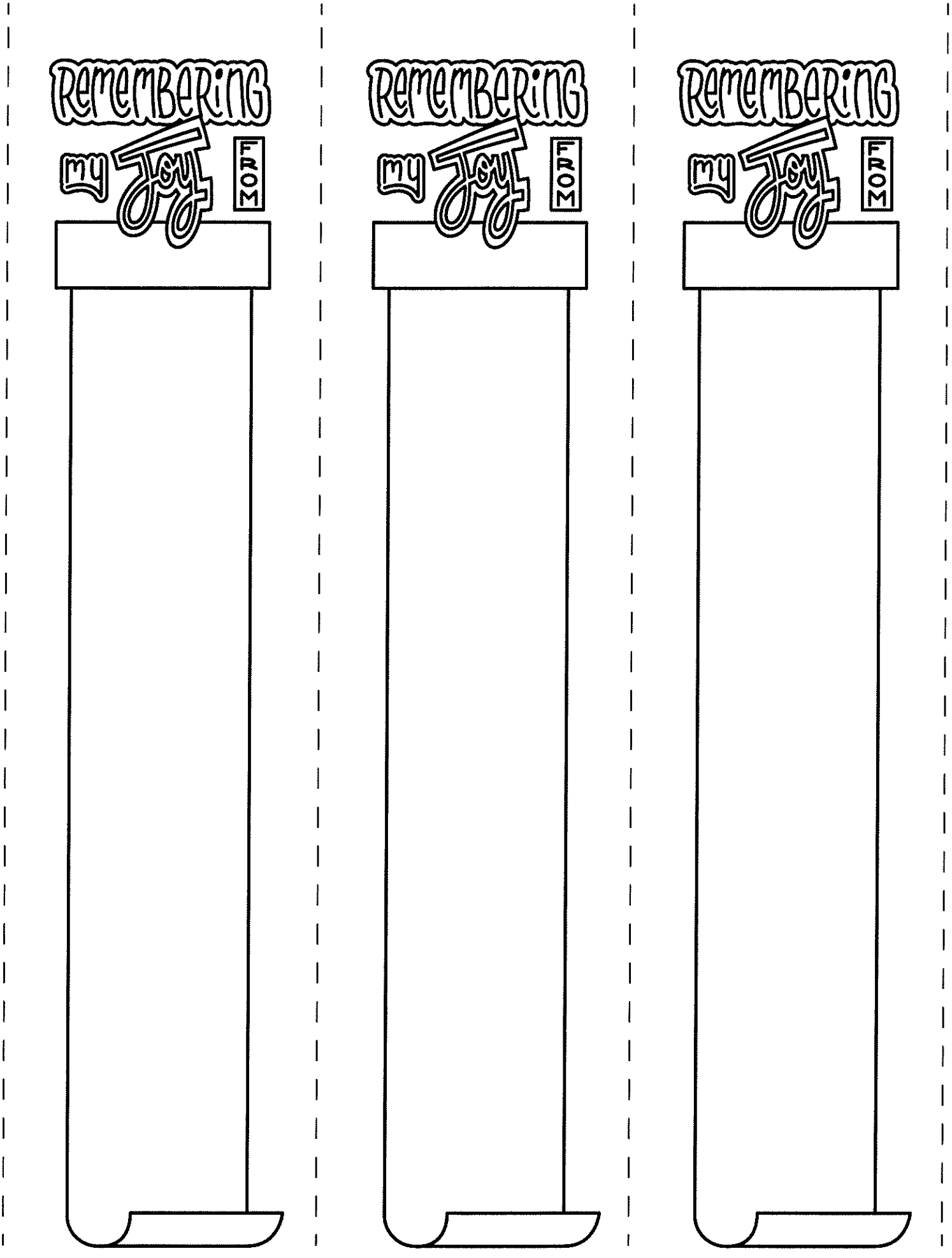
How did you experience joy today? Maybe it was in a video call with a grandparent, a fist bump from your sibling, or knowing you did your very best on your schoolwork. Noticing our ordinary joy and sharing it with our friends and family is the way we practice joy. As we practice joy, it grows in our own hearts. As we share our joy with others, it grows in their hearts.

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## PRAYER

God of great joy,
When fear becomes too loud inside our head,
help us to open our hearts
and feel your presence with us.
We feel great joy when we see you with us.
**Amen.**

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Remembering
my Joy
FROM
Remembering
my Joy
FROM
Remembering
my Joy
FROM


Do not be afraid!
Peace!
Good news!
Great joy!
Praise God!
Glory to God!
the Messiah is born!
for all the people!
a Savior!




# WEEK FOUR:
## To Choose LOVE

## SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 2:15-20

## REFLECTION

Have you ever looked forward to an event for a long time and imagined how it would go, only for it not to happen the way you expected? Maybe it was a family vacation, summer camp, or the first day of school. It is easy to feel disappointed when things don't happen the way you have planned them. You can get lost in your expectations, feel frustrated, and even close your heart to what is happening unexpectedly, instead of noticing the wonderful experiences around you.

In this story, Mary's baby was born and placed in a manger. Animals, hay, and strangers surrounded him. Then, as they were trying to rest, a whole group of sweaty shepherds came traipsing in to meet Jesus and Mary. This is probably not in any way how Mary imagined Jesus being born. She could have looked at the shepherds and said, "No. No. No. Nope!" and sent them on their way. Instead, she chose to open her heart and invite them in. She chose to listen to their amazing story about meeting angels and tell them her own amazing story. And because she chose to be open, the shepherds left to share this good news with everyone, and Mary was able to hold the experiences she could never have imagined inside her heart.

What do you do when things don't go the way you planned, when you feel nervous or afraid, and the ground feels like it is shaking beneath your feet? Do you lock your heart up tight? Sometimes people lock their hearts because they think it will protect them. They lock out strangers who might become friends; they lock out different places that might become places where they belong. The problem with locking your heart is that it doesn't actually protect you; it keeps out all the love you didn't think to imagine. When Mary opened her heart to the unexpected, she chose love. Choosing love transformed her heart, and it also transformed the world. She shared her love with strangers who became friends, and those friends chose to share the message of love with everyone they met. That is what happens when you open your heart and choose love. You can't help but share a message of love.

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## PRAYER

Loving God,
Thank you for loving each one of us, no matter what.
Choosing love is hard,
especially when we are anxious or frustrated.
Give us the courage to open our hearts
and choose love even when it is not easy.
**Amen.**

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CHOOSE
Love


Love
HOPE
JOY
worry
fear




# CHRISTMAS EVE AND CHRISTMAS DAY

## CHRISTMAS EVE

This Christmas Eve, as you finish up all the last minute things on your lists, wrap up your church's Christmas Eve service, or enjoy time with family, take a moment to read the following scripture passage together. Spend some time reflecting on how Jesus entered the world.

## SCRIPTURE

Read 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."*

## CHRISTMAS DAY

## SCRIPTURE

Read Luke 2:20

## REFLECTION

Merry Christmas! Joy to the world! The Lord has come!

The universe is vast, our world is ginormous, and there are plenty of problems to keep us busy. However, on Christmas, we stop and think about the birth of Jesus. We focus our vision on something small, something powerfully tiny, in a small place, in a distant time. This newborn baby has our full attention.

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That is why it is important to focus on the words of our faith like hope, peace, joy, and love to remind us the good news of Jesus is always with us.

Let's make a poster and telescopes to remind us to shift our focus onto these words of our faith on the days when our fears seem extra loud. Fold your blank paper in half lengthwise, like a hotdog. Cut your paper on the fold line and decorate your telescope paper as creatively as you like. This paper will be the outside of your telescope. Let your telescope decorations dry completely before moving onto the next step. Once dry, turn your telescope paper upside down and put glue on the undecorated side of the paper. Then wrap your telescope paper around the toilet paper roll and allow it to dry.

As you wait for the glue to dry, make the poster using the instructions included with the Activity Pages and fill the poster with words that remind you that the good news of great joy is for you, your family, your friends, and the whole world. Color in the rest of the poster and hang it somewhere visible in your home. When you feel overwhelmed with worry or fear, grab your telescope and use it to focus on one of these words at a time and receive the message they have for you. As we move into a brand new year, you can use your telescope to look at your poster to remind you that the good news of the greatest joy is all around you and inside you. Make your poster using the instructions included with the activity page.

## PRAYER

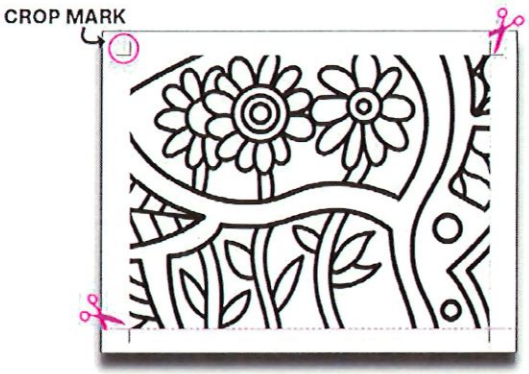
Dear God,
We trust you are with us in this new year and always.
When fears grow in us and around us,
help us to remember we can hold hope,
bring peace,
practice joy,
and choose love.
**Amen.**

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## HOW TO MAKE YOUR POSTER

Follow the directions below, and have fun creating and coloring your poster!

**Printing:**
When you print, select either "Scale" and set at 96% or "Scale to Fit (Print Entire Image)." Each page contains "crop marks" that guide you as you cut margins off around the image. You can get an idea of how they work by looking at the sample image below:




**A4 Mosaic Poster Tiles:**
Download Mosaic Poster Tiles formatted for A4 paper here: http://illstrtdm.in/Advent2020A4

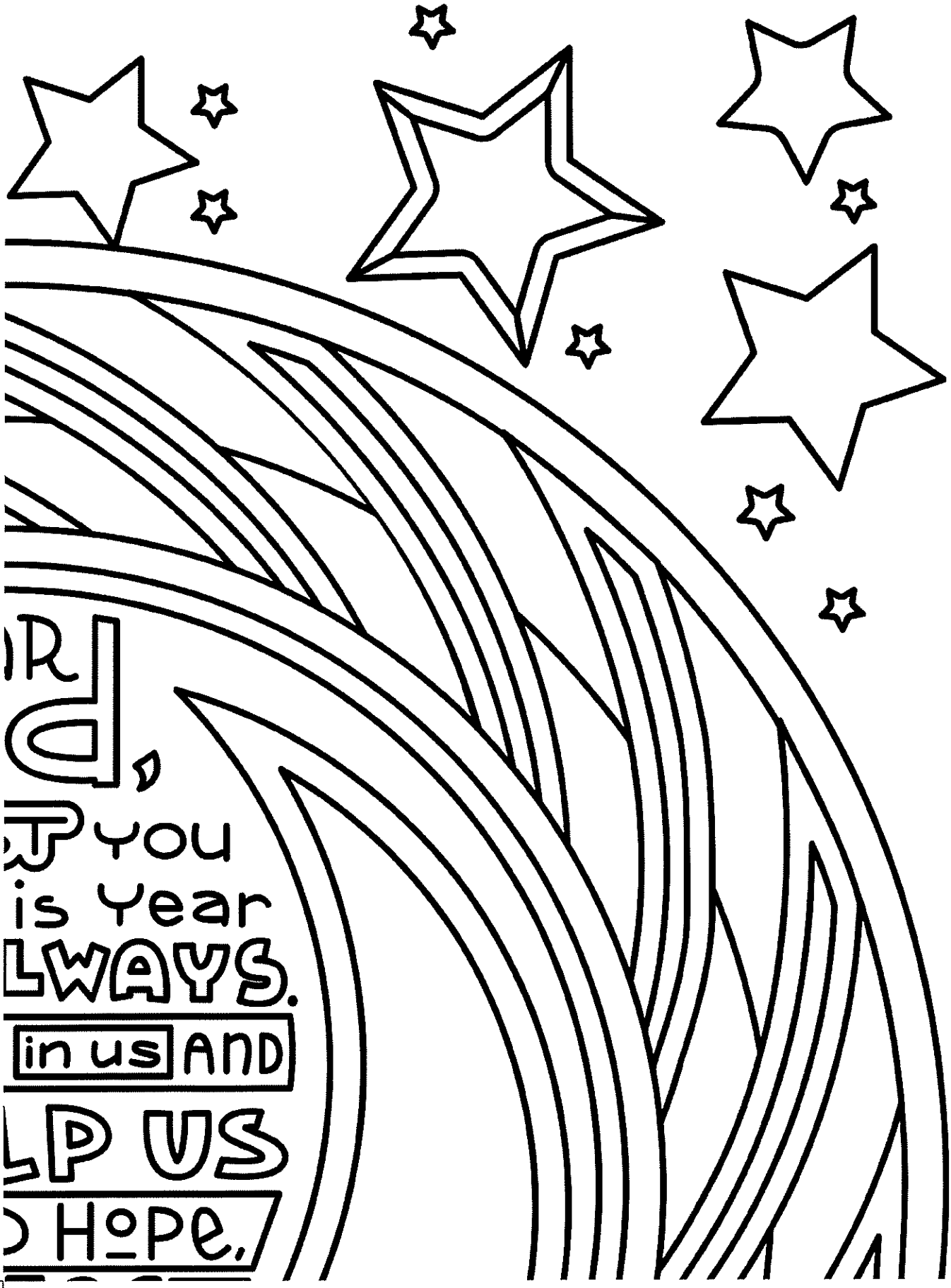
**Assembly:**
**Cut:** When it's time to assemble, use the crop marks to guide you through cutting off the margins. Please be careful not to cut into the image. This format is designed to meet together when placed side by side, and there is no overlap of images on the paper.

**Arrange:** Piece together the poster by arranging the images on a table or floor, as you would a puzzle. Keep in mind you are creating a beautiful, collaborative piece of communal art, not a gallery-ready fine art print (so don't be discouraged if it doesn't line up 100%).

**Tape:** We recommend focusing on one page at a time as you begin to tape the pieces together. When two pages match and line up to your satisfaction, tape them together. Match the next page, line it up to your satisfaction, and tape them together. Continue until you complete taping all the pages together and make a complete poster.

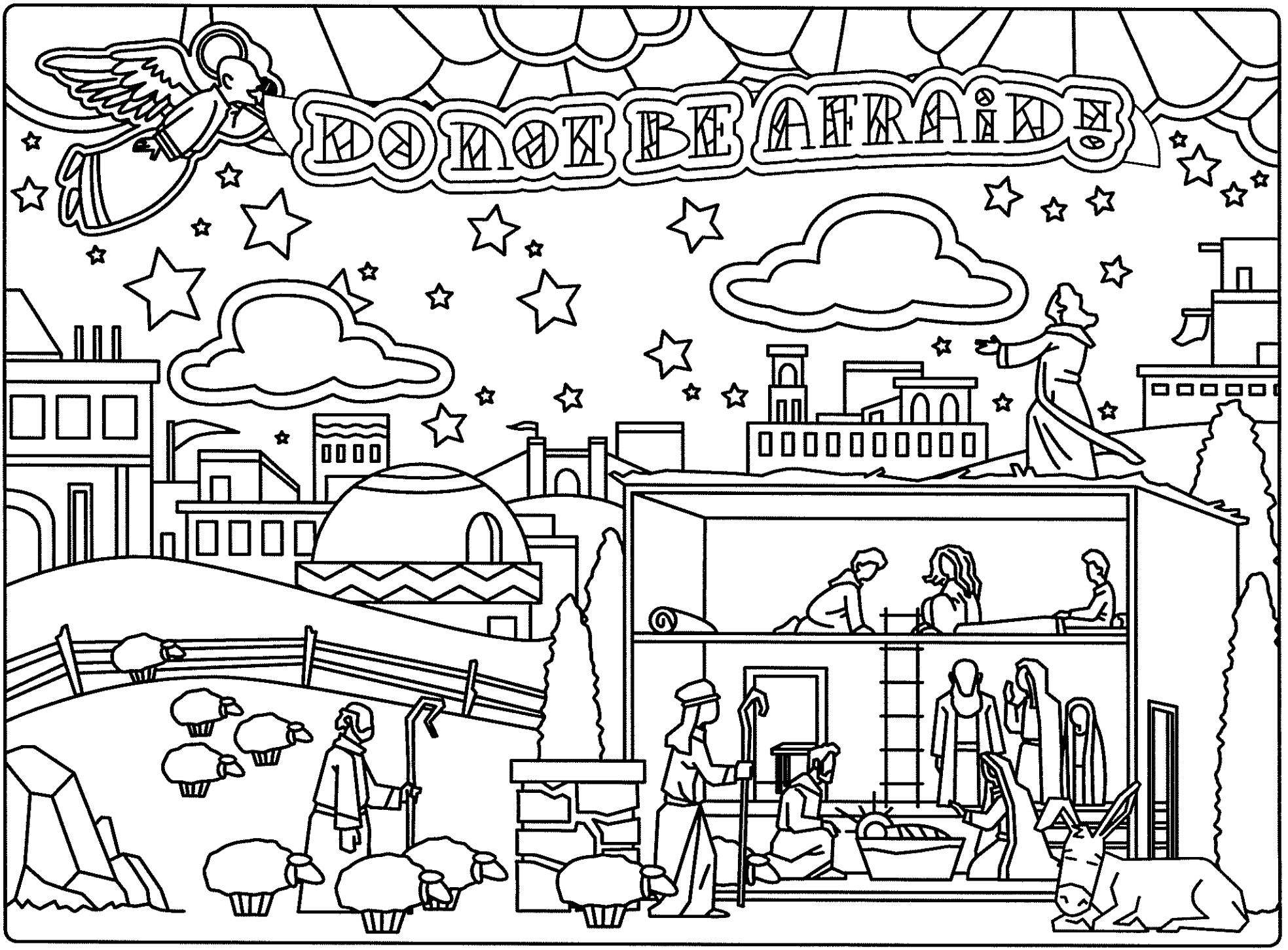
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in us AND
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HOPE.


WE CAN
bring P
PRACTICE
CHOOS
JOY, AND LOVE

PEACE
IN
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DO NOT BE AFRAID




# ADVENT CALENDAR

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## ADVENT CALENDAR ACTIVITIES

**December 1** - Make time to read the Week One family devotion and do the activity. Adapt your nightly routine to include a piece of the Advent devotion, like lighting your Advent wreath and discussing a question about the reflection.

**December 2** - What Christmas songs give you hope when you are feeling down? Take turns singing your favorite Christmas songs together.

**December 3** - Find a food pantry in your area, give them a call, and see if they have any special food needs this season. Help them meet their needs by buying a couple of items on their list.

**December 4** - Many people are fearful of insects. But without insects, there wouldn't be plants and animals on earth! Insects are essential for our survival. They bring us hope! Take some time to research a few insects. Learn about their special features that make them amazing! Bonus: Choose a favorite insect and celebrate them!

**December 5** - Many Christians celebrate Saint Nicholas Day on December 6. He was a priest who lived almost 2,000 years ago and paid special attention to children's care. In honor of Saint Nicholas Day, children worldwide put out their shoes on December 5th and receive treats the next morning. Tonight, write a thank-you note to the grown-ups who take care of you. Leave it in their shoes to find tomorrow morning.

**December 6** - Hope is looking ahead and expecting to find God's faithfulness. When you think about the upcoming year, where do you expect to see God's faithfulness? Write yourself a letter listing your hopes for the upcoming year. Hide it in a place that you will find later. When you reread it, see if your hopes look the same as you thought they would.

**December 7** - Family Game Night! Choose a favorite family game and play it together.

**December 8** - Make time to read the Week Two family devotion and do the activity.

**December 9** - Ancient people found peace by walking a labyrinth. It's like a maze, but with no dead ends. You wind around the labyrinth, breathing deeply, and slowing down your thoughts. Look up labyrinths online. Print or try drawing one. Trace it slowly with your finger and feel the sense of peace.

**December 10** - Christmas Cards are a fun tradition. Make time today to create Christmas and holiday cards to mail to friends or family. Remember to include messages of hope.

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**December 22** - What does love look like? Ask each person in your family to take a photo of something that reminds them of love throughout the day. In the evening, share your photos and thoughts about what love looks like in your home.

**December 23** - It's Christmas Eve Eve! Choose a favorite Christmas movie or book, cuddle up together with some hot chocolate and popcorn, and have some fun family time!

**December 24** - Some families prepare for Christmas by taking figures of Mary and Joseph on a journey around their house through the season of Advent. This symbolizes the journey they took to Bethlehem. Locate your favorite nativity scene. Read the scripture from the Christmas Eve family devotion and take Mary and Joseph on a journey through your house as you imagine their journey to Bethlehem. (Make sure to put baby Jesus in a special place and leave the manger empty today.)

**December 25** - Merry Christmas! Read the Christmas Day family devotion and put baby Jesus into the manger of your family's nativity scene. Sing "Joy to the World" together as you celebrate the birth of Jesus.

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Do Not Be Afraid!
advent calendar
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
SHOP
16
18
19
21
23
25
15
17
20
22
24

an illustrated advent
FOR FAMILIES

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