



an illustrated  
**advent**  
FOR FAMILIES

**DO NOT BE AFRAID**



illustrated  
— MINISTRY —



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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.

**Activity:** Take time with your family to do each week's suggested activity. Each activity offers a way to prepare for Advent and Christmas while connecting with the weekly scripture reading.

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

As you use these resources, we would love to hear what was helpful and meaningful, as well as any suggestions and comments you have for improvement. Your feedback helps us continue to create quality faith formation materials.

You can reach us at [info@illustratedministry.com](mailto:info@illustratedministry.com) or find us on the following social networks:

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We also love to see photos and hear stories about how you are using our products. When you post photos or comments online, please use the hashtag #illustratedmin or tag us in the photos. This will allow us to be part of the conversation and allow you to be part of our online community. Additionally, check out the hashtag on various social networks to see how other families and churches are creatively using our resources.

Peace be upon you,

The Illustrated Ministry Team

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**Posting Online:** We generally discourage posting our files online because they become accessible through Google searches. We do not want the general public to have access to our products free of charge. One option is to put the files on a password-protected page of your website, or use a private Facebook Group. Please remember to take the files down after you've finished using them.

*Note: Please do not post the password in a bulletin or newsletter that is posted publicly online.*

**Print:** Most congregations who purchase our digital files choose to print out the materials. Printing the materials is probably the easiest way to share the resources with your community.

Thanks for understanding, and we appreciate your support!

The Illustrated Ministry Team

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# DEVOTIONS

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## WEEK ONE: To Hold HOPE

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### 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.

Mary and Elizabeth held hope when they were apart, and now that they were together, hope grew even more between them. The Holy Spirit inspired Mary and Elizabeth to hold great hope for the future, even in all the uncertainty. Sometimes when we face challenges alone, we feel overwhelmed and even afraid to hold hope. The Holy Spirit inspires us, too. When we join together, we can hold hope with each other and feel brave and strong together.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Grown-ups, have you ever felt scared about being a parent? What did you hope for? How did hope help you be brave? Tell the story to your children.
- Everyone, describe a time when you have felt anxious or afraid about something. How did you feel hopeful that good things would happen?
- How can we all hold hope for someone when they feel discouraged or nervous?

## ACTIVITY

### Materials:

- This week's Activity Page (we recommend printing this on cardstock)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Art supplies (markers, crayons, paint, glitter, etc.)

The angel shared a message of hope with Mary telling her the Holy Spirit would be with her. Did you know Christians often imagine the Holy Spirit as a bird? The Holy Spirit is like a bird that rests on our shoulders, in our hearts, or on our heads, and reminds us of God's presence. Think about how the Holy Spirit brings us messages of hope, even when we are afraid. Can you imagine the Holy Spirit flying to you with a message of hope? What would that message say?

Let's create some birds to remind us of the Holy Spirit's messages of hope. Take time to decorate your bird and write the message of hope you imagined earlier in the blank space on the bird. You could say something like, "Middle school will get better," "My sibling and I will grow closer this year," or "I will learn to ride a bike."

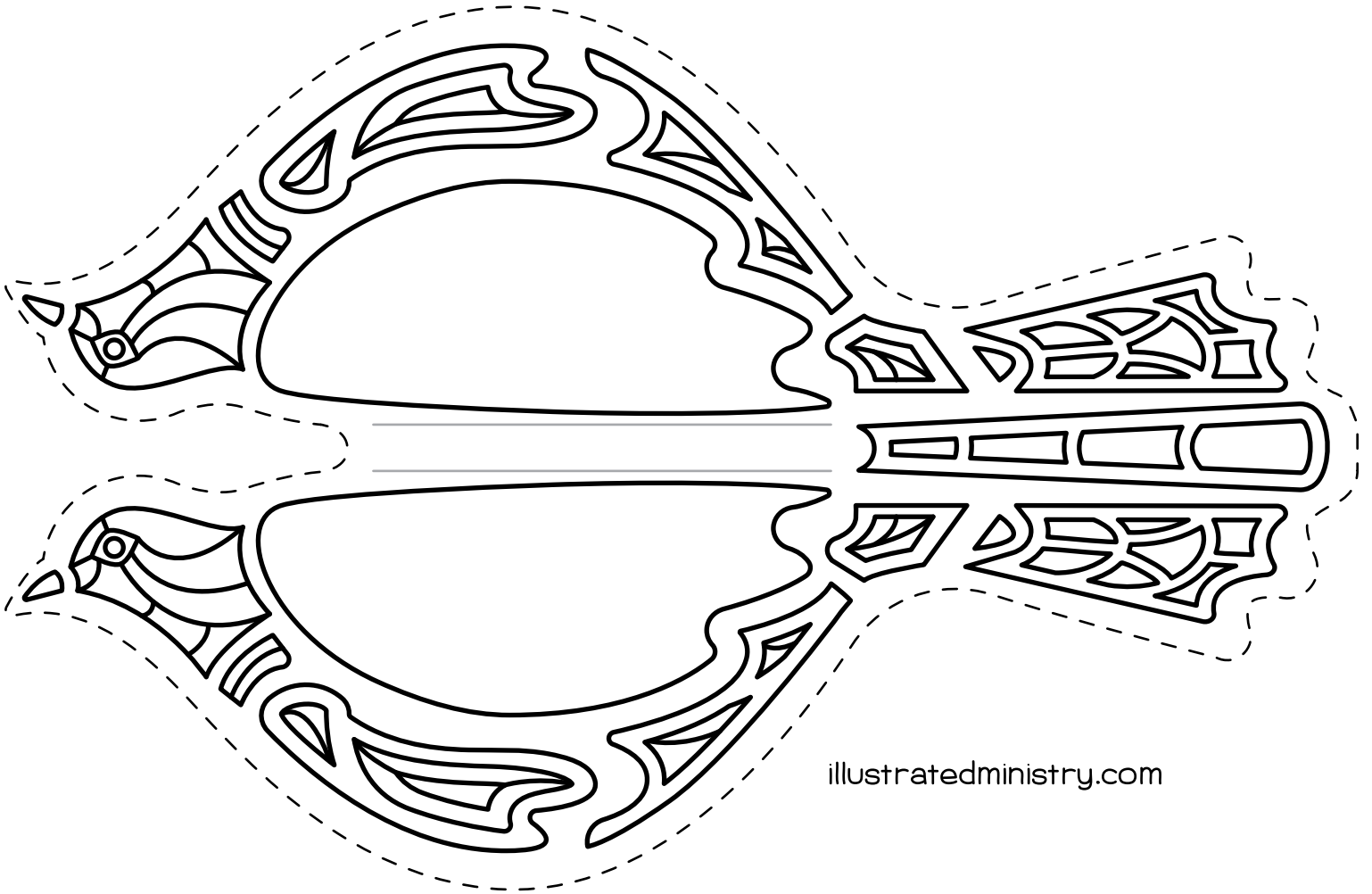
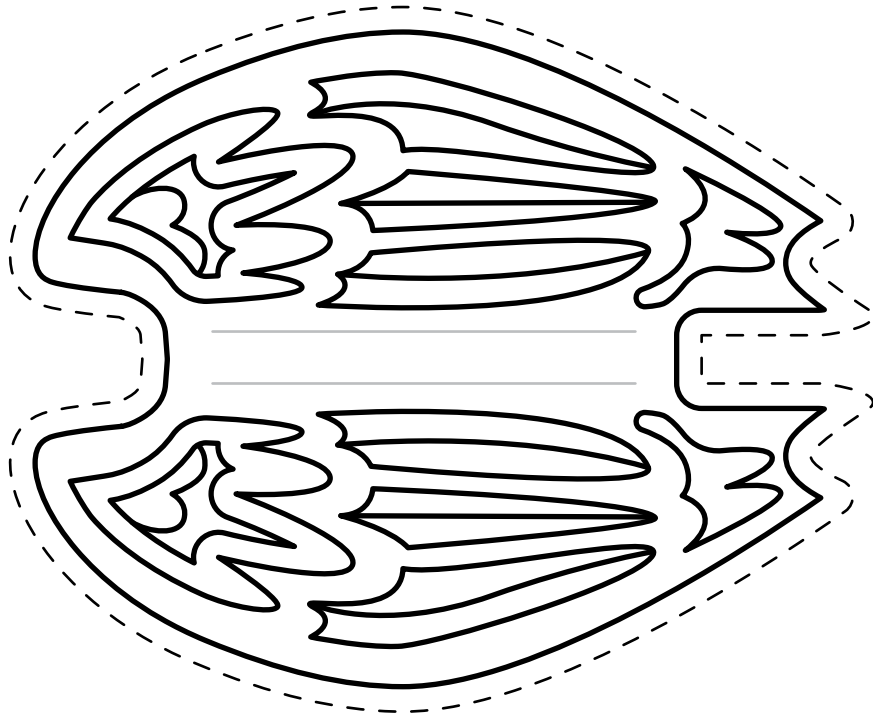
Then cut out your bird and wings along the dashed cut lines. Fold the bird and wings along the gray fold lines. Lastly, glue the flat part of the wings to the flat part of the bird. When you have finished, look at the bird you have made. As you hold it in your hand, close your eyes and imagine it flying to you with a special message of hope. When you have finished, place your birds of hope around your family's Advent wreath or Christmas tree to remind you to hold hope this week.

**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.

## PRAUER

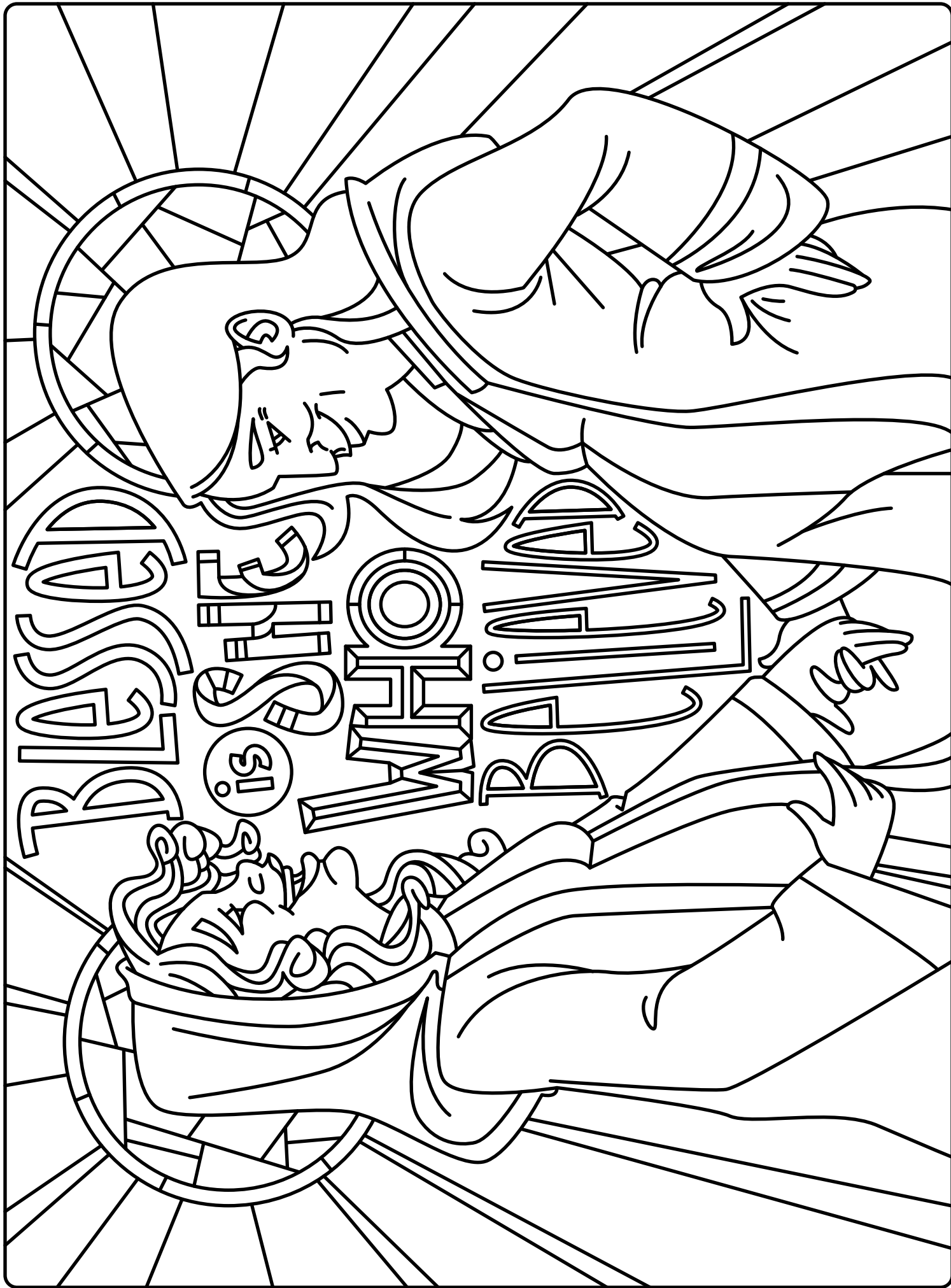
God of Hope,  
Sometimes we feel afraid.  
Just like the angel told Mary, you whisper to us, "fear not."  
When fear grows inside us, help us hold hope.  
Help us be brave and share your messages of hope  
with our friends and neighbors.  
**Amen.**

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## WEEK TWO: To Bring PEACE

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### 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.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can you think of a time you felt several big emotions at once? How did you help bring peace to your body and spirit when you had those big feelings?
- What is your favorite Christmas song as you prepare for celebrating Jesus' birth? Take turns sharing and, if you have time, sing each song together.
- Is there a part of your favorite song that reminds you of the peace God brings?

## ACTIVITY

### Materials:

- This week's Activity Page
- Scissors
- Glue, tape, staples, etc.
- Art supplies (markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.)

Songs, hymns, and carols bring us peace when we sing together or apart. We hear the words and melody, and our heart rate slows down, we breathe deeply, and we feel connected to others. Music can link us together.

Take some time to color the lyrics from Mary's song on the Activity Page. Talk about what they mean and why they are special. Then cut them into strips. Link the strips together to form a chain by taping, gluing, or stapling the ends together, linking them one by one. That is not a very long chain! To lengthen your chain, make more strips by writing out on your own paper lyrics of your favorite songs, hymns, and carols that bring you peace.

"Peace on earth and mercy mild."

"All is calm, all is bright."

"Peace on earth, goodwill to all."

"Faithful friends who are dear to us, gather near to us."

You can use your paper chain as a decoration on your tree, on your Advent wreath (away from the candles!), or hung over a doorway. Remind each other that when we sing, we bring peace to ourselves and our world.

## 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 NON-F A GENERATIONS WILL CALL ME BIASSED!

FOR YOU, have done RIGHTLY, GREATHINGS LOVER, for me,

HOLY, is your KARMER

YOUR REACHES FROM MERRY, for those GOD, WHO FEAR YOU.

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## WEEK THREE: To Practice JOY

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### 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.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Can you imagine how the shepherds felt when the angels appeared with their message of joy? What do you think they looked like? How do you think they sounded? Take turns acting it out.
- Have you ever gotten so caught up in the routine of life that you have forgotten to look for joy? How do you feel on days when you do not notice the moments of joy around you? And on the days you do?
- Name a way you experienced ordinary joy today. Share with your family. Make a plan to practice joy this week by sharing one ordinary joy every day.

## ACTIVITY

### Materials:

- This week's Activity Page
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- Toothpicks, cotton swabs, short dowels, sticks, straws, etc.
- String or ornament hook
- Thin ribbon
- Art supplies (markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.)

One way people practice joy is by telling stories of good times—times of laughter, triumph, and connection. Some families remember joyous times through scrapbooks or photographs. Some people use social media to record their joys. Some people keep journals of all the wonderful things that happen. Even when we are suffering or in pain, we may find ways to practice joy.

Spend some time recording your joys on the scrolls provided on the Activity Page. Write the year at the top, then color and write your joys from this week, this month, this season, and this year. Did some good things happen? What will you want to remember in the future? Practice joy by making a list of joyous experiences or events from the year.

Glue the top part of your paper to toothpicks, cotton swabs, short dowels, sticks, or straws, and roll up your scrolls. Tie a thin ribbon around your scroll. Using string or an ornament hook, hang your scroll on your tree or on your window so that you can recall the memories. Joy does not end. You can unroll your scroll and reread your lists of joy every year during the Advent season. Joy is a gift that keeps on giving!

## PRAAYER

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 MORE



REMEMBERING

my Joy MORE



REMEMBERING

my Joy MORE



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## WEEK FOUR: To Choose LOVE

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### 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.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you think it was like for Mary after Jesus was born? Can you imagine some of the fears or worries she might have felt? What do you think helped her choose love in the story?
- Can you think of a time when things didn't go the way you expected, and you felt afraid? Share your story with your family. Did you choose love? If not, can you imagine what might have been different if you had chosen love?
- What is one way you can choose love this week? Make time to check in with each other later this week and encourage one another to keep choosing love.

## ACTIVITY

### Materials:

- This week's Activity Page
- Construction paper (recommended) or printer paper
- Scissors
- Glue or tape
- Art supplies (markers, crayons, colored pencils, etc.)

When we have big feelings, it is easy to forget to choose love. Let's make some reminders to post in our homes to help us remember to choose love even when it is not easy.

Because we treasure love, we are going to create a 2D treasure chest. Using a piece of construction paper or printer paper in portrait orientation, fold both top corners down toward the middle to create a triangle, like you're starting a paper airplane. Fold the triangle down, the point meeting the bottom edge.

Now color and cut out the elements of your treasure box on the Activity Page. Using glue or tape, adhere the decorated triangle from your Activity Page to the triangle flap on your treasure box. Then adhere your "Choose Love" message inside the treasure box and add any other designs you want. When you flip it open, you will remember to choose love!

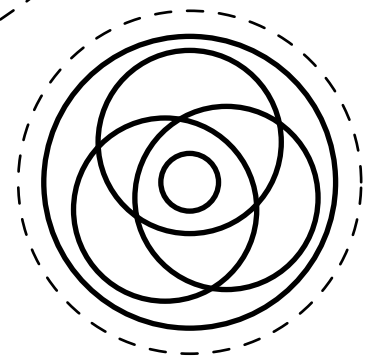
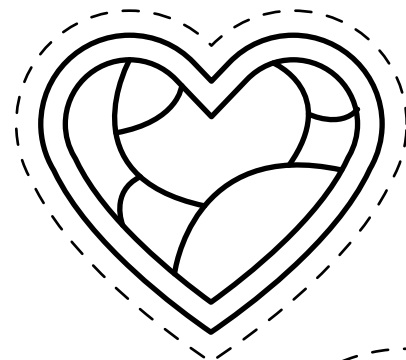
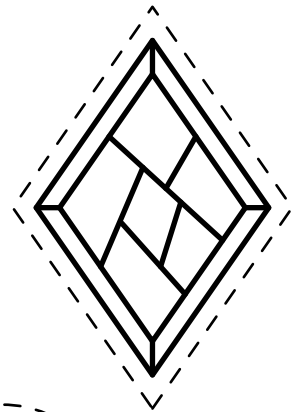
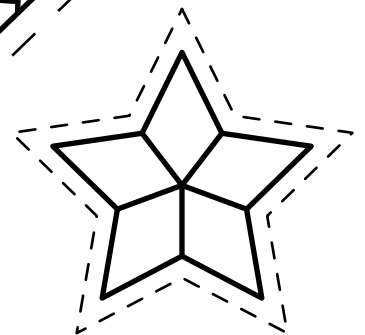
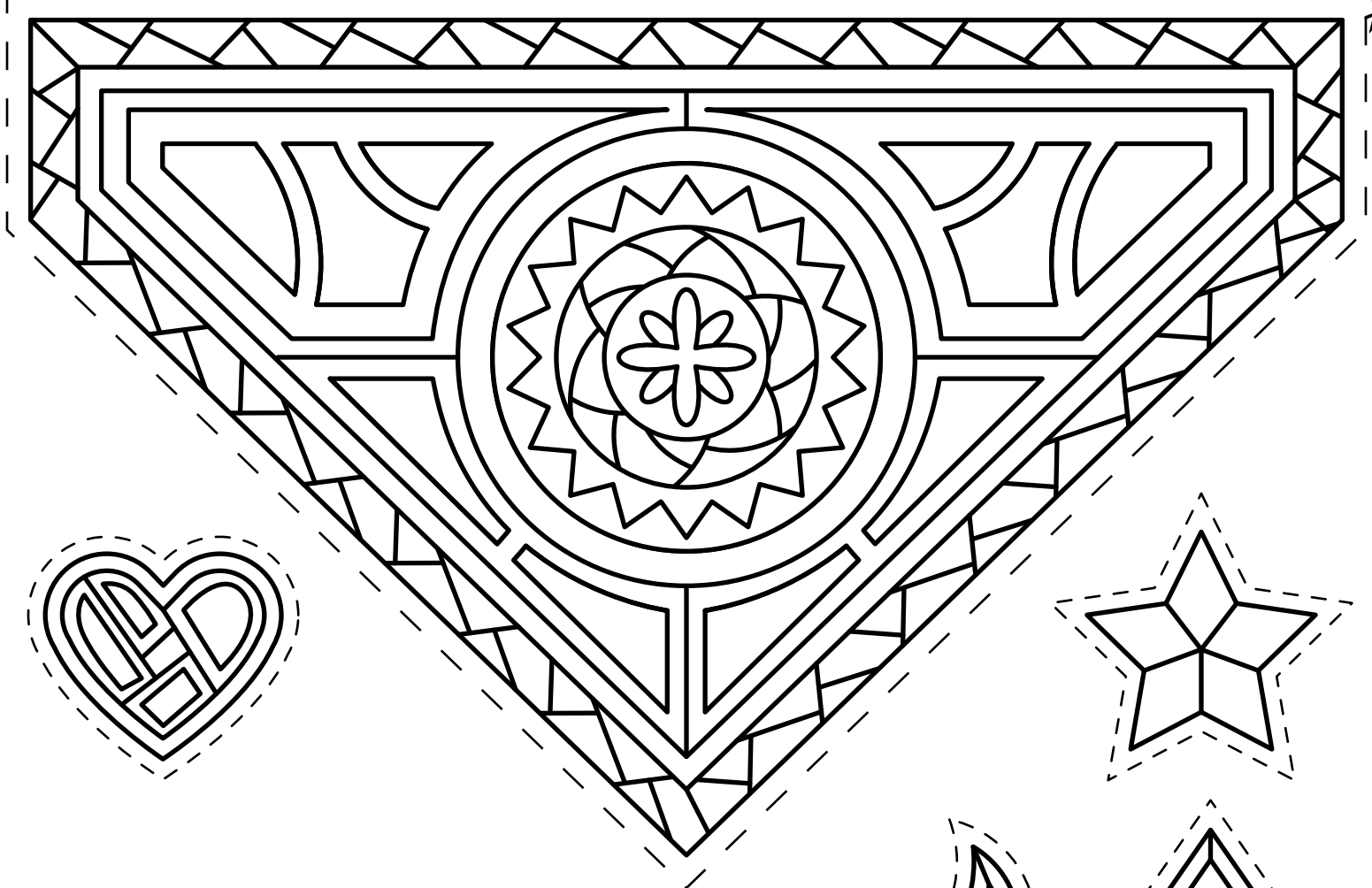
Place your reminder in a place that you often see: the fridge, the mirror, the front door, or on a bulletin board. When you feel frustrated, angry, sad, or selfish, take a moment to breathe and decide how you will respond with love.

## PRAUER

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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## CHRISTMAS EVE AND CHRISTMAS DAY

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### 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.

When we focus on the birth of Jesus, the rest of the world grows dimmer. The volume of the distractions around us decreases. We smell the warm head of the baby and the oil of frankincense. We see the glow of light around his mother as she holds him. We touch the worn hands of the shepherds as they pray and thank God. We imagine ourselves in this cozy place, full of love, joy, peace, and hope. Is there any better place to be? Why can't the rest of our lives feel like Christmas?

The lesson of Christmas is that we can live out love, joy, peace, and hope every day. When the problems of our lives grow too big in our minds, when we are overwhelmed with fears or worries, or when we forget the good news of great joy that has come to all humankind, we can stop and reflect again. Because the Good News is Emmanuel, God with us, we can find ourselves beside Jesus, basking in God's goodness, on any day and at any time.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As you color the coloring page, ponder these questions:

- What else do you see, hear, touch, smell, and taste on Christmas morning? When you close your eyes and imagine yourself with Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, how do you feel?
- How is this day different for your family? What are the important sights, smells, tastes, sounds, and feelings of the day?
- If we stop thinking about all of the worries and stressors for a day, what happens to our minds, bodies, and spirits?

## ACTIVITY

### Materials:

- This week's Activity Pages
- Empty toilet paper roll
- Blank 8.5x11 paper
- Glue or tape
- Scissors
- Tape
- Art supplies (markers, crayons, paint, glitter, etc.)

When you walk outside and look at the stars, can you count them all? Can you pick your favorite star? When we are looking at the whole night sky, it is difficult to see just one star. When you want to see one beautiful, flickering star, you can pull out a telescope to zoom in. The same is true in our lives. When our problems grow big in our minds, and we are overwhelmed with fears and worries, it is hard to see the good news of God's great joy.

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.

## PRAAYER

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.**

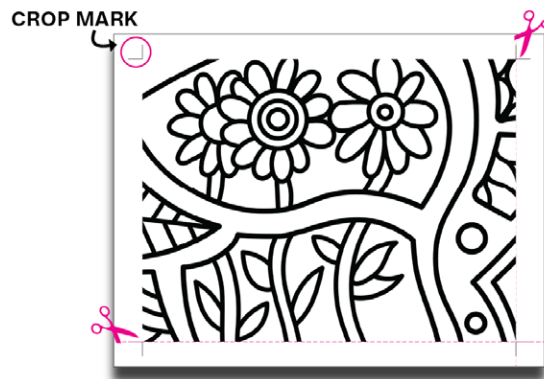
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## HOW TO MAKE YOUR POSTER

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://illustrtdm.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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JOY, AND LOVE



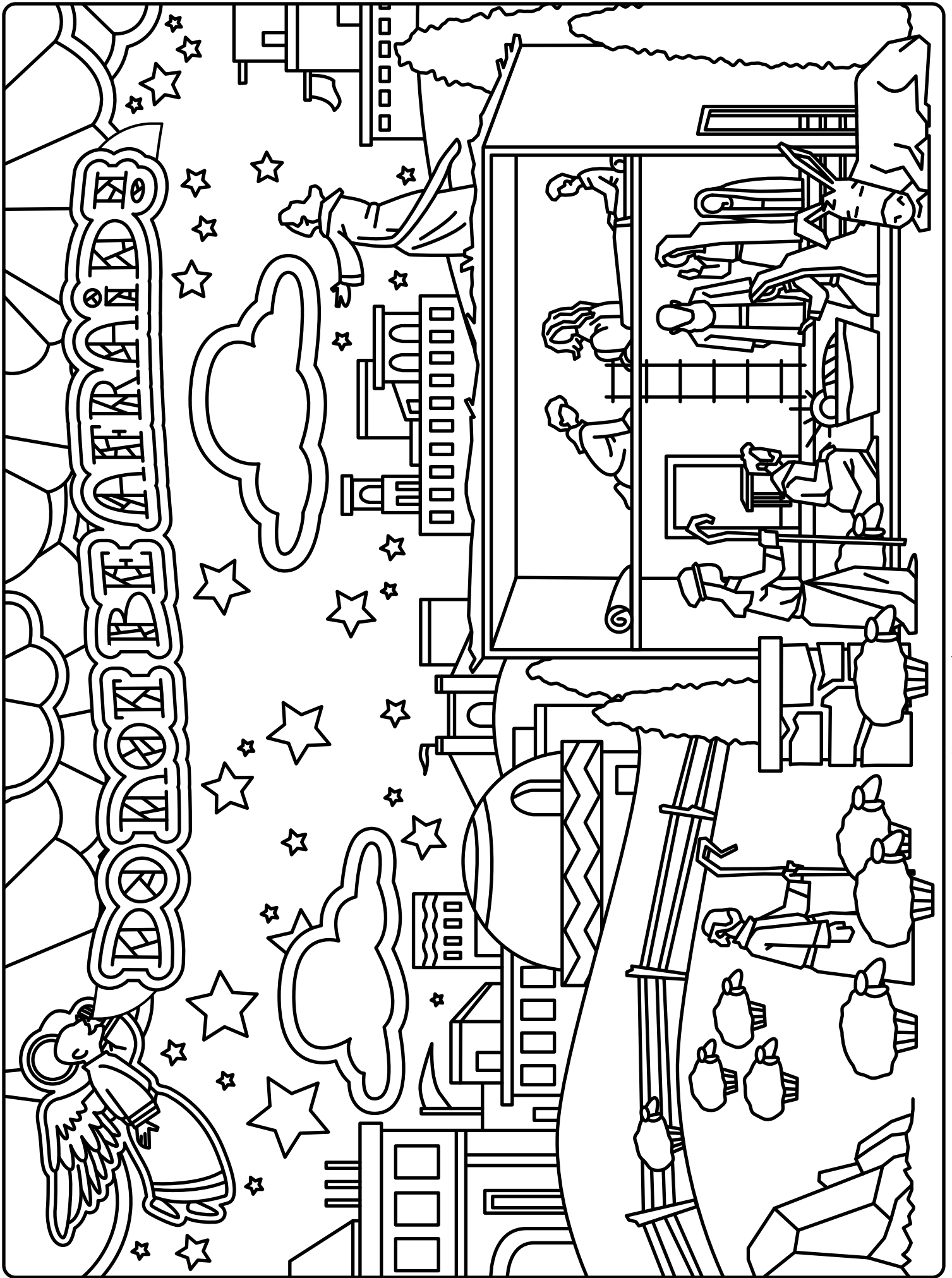
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PEACE  
FOR  
AMERICA



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# 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.

**December 11** – Meditation is an ancient form of prayer. It can help us feel peace. Practice a meditation for loving-kindness today. Place your hands on your heart, take a deep breath, and think of a friend, family member, or stranger. Say: May they be happy. May they be safe. May they know peace. May they be loved.

**December 12** – Make cookies as a family. Be sure to save a few for tomorrow!

**December 13** – Our neighbors in Sweden celebrate Saint Lucy's Day by remembering how the ancient Christian Lucia shared Jesus' love even though the Romans threatened to hurt her. Young girls dress in white and wear wreaths of candles on their heads. Everyone eats a ginger cookie. In honor of Saint Lucy's Day, light a candle and eat your favorite cookies.

**December 14** – Take a silent walk or drive around your block together. What signs of peace do you see? When you return home, gather together and share what signs of peace you saw.

**December 15** – Make time to read the Week Three family devotion and do the activity.

**December 16** – One way to bring joy to your neighbor is to support a small shop owner nearby. Place an order with a locally owned store and send something special to a friend or family member. This brings joy to your neighbor and your friend!

**December 17** – We find joy in art and expression, especially when we can create something colorful! Get out your watercolors, any kind will do, and experiment with large blobs of color. Or paint something specific. While the paint is still wet, sprinkle it with salt and watch what happens as it dries! Salt creates interesting patterns with watercolor. Perhaps frame it and give it as a gift.

**December 18** – Sometimes, we are so filled with joy that we have to dance. Turn up the Christmas music and host a family dance party.

**December 19** – Have a silly night and make pancakes with all your favorite toppings for dinner. While you are eating, share a moment of unexpected joy from your day.

**December 20** – Go Christmas caroling virtually! Using FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, Zoom, or another video platform, call up a friend or family that could use some holiday cheer. "The best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear." (from the movie, Elf)

**December 21** – Make time to read the Week Four family devotion and do the activity.

**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.)

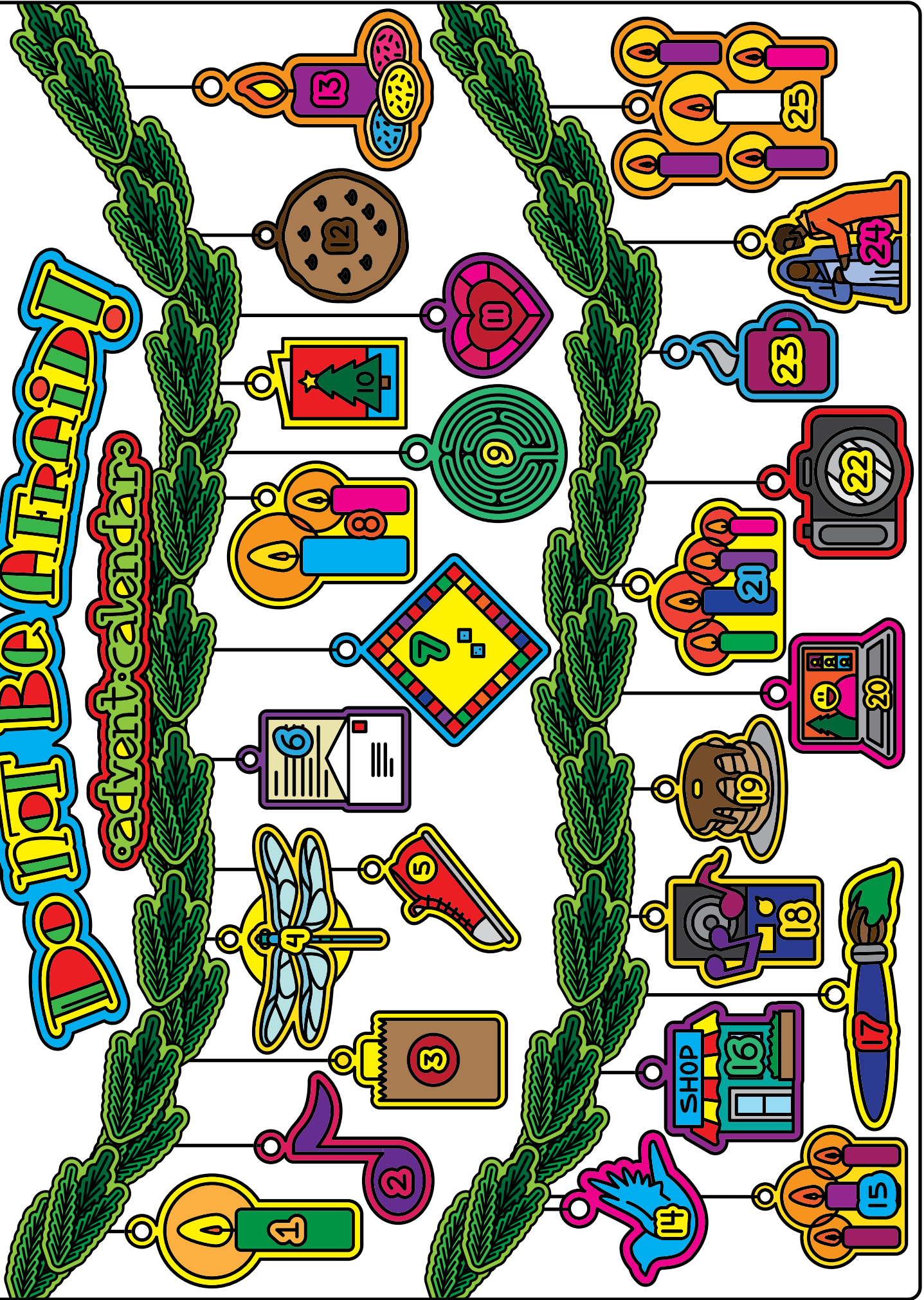
**December 25** - Merry Christmas! Read the Christmas Day family devotion and put baby Jesus into the manger of your family's nativity scene. Sing "Joy to the World" together as you celebrate the birth of Jesus.

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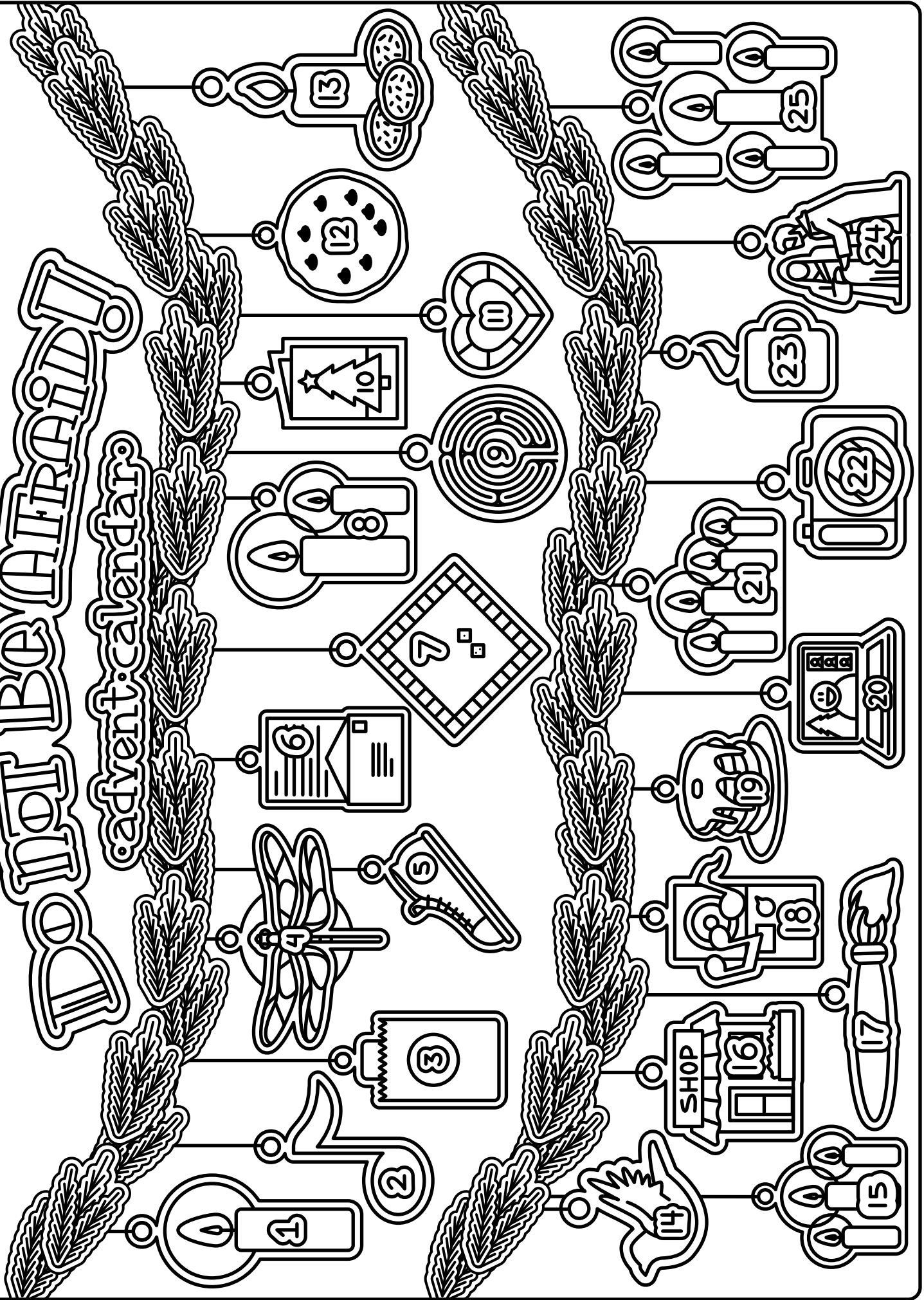
# NOVEMBER!

## advent-calendar



# NOVEMBER

## advent calendar



# an illustrated advent FOR FAMILIES

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