

Advent cards



Worship guides
for celebrating Advent,
Christmas, and Epiphany

Introduction

For a long time, the Church has set aside the four weeks leading up to Christmas to reflect, to wait, and to listen again to the story of the God who makes all things new.

Advent is the beginning of the church year, and it is a season of anticipation as we join God's people throughout time and space, looking back to the first coming of Jesus as a baby, while also looking ahead to the second coming of Jesus in glory at the end of all things.

These Advent cards are designed to give your family space to be with God together. They're simple, easy to use, and designed to engage your family's sense of awe and wonder as you wait and watch together. Perhaps you'd like to get or make an Advent wreath to light each week as you spend time around God's word together.

How to use these cards

These cards are designed to walk your family through Advent. Each card includes a picture of the story for the week. On the back side of the card you will find a Scripture reference where you can read the story together, reflection questions for using the picture to reflect on the story, and reflection questions for talking about the text together.

Families with mostly younger children may prefer to focus on a discussion based on the images, while families with mostly older children may be able to delve into a more in-depth discussion of the text. If your family has a range of ages, why not try choosing a few questions from each section?

Each card also includes a brief prayer, designed to be followed by the hymn for the week, which you'll find on its own card. On the back of the hymn, you will find a suggested practice for the week. Spiritual practices, or rhythms, have been used by the Church since its very foundation, and are ways to help us pay attention to God.



Week 1

Hope

Look in the Word: Isaiah 9:2-7

Look at the picture

Spend 10-30 seconds looking at the picture. Then discuss these questions together.

What part of the picture stands out to you?

What does this picture remind you of?

What parts of the story do you see in the picture?

If you were to create a picture of the story, which part would you choose?

What picture would you create?

Look in your heart

What part of the story stands out to you?

What parts of this story seem hopeful?

What parts of this story do you have questions about?

What do you think it would have been like to hear these words

as you were waiting for the rescuing one, the Messiah?

This prophecy in Isaiah foretells the coming of Jesus.

Which of the names for Jesus (vs. 6) stands out to you?

What would you like to say to Jesus about this name?

Look to Jesus in prayer

Jesus, as we wait for you this Advent season, help us to walk in the light of hope. Hope that you will come again soon. You are the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. With the rest of the world, we cry out for you to rescue us, as you did before. Amen

Finish by singing O Come, O Come Emmanuel together.

Week 1 Hymn

O Come, O Come Emmanuel

Em Am Em G C Am Em Bm Em

1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran-som cap-tive Is - ra - el,
 2. O come, Thou Rod of Jes - se, free Thine own from Sa-tan's tyr - an - ny;
 3. O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer our spir - its by Thine ad - vent here;
 4. O come, De - sire of na - tions, bind all peo-ples in one heart — and mind;

Em Am Em D D G Am G D G

that mourns in low - ly ex - ile here, un - til the Son of God — ap - pear.
 From depths of hell Thy peo - ple save, and give them vic - t'ry o'er — the grave.
 Dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night, and death's dark shad - ows put — to flight.
 Bid en - vy, strife and quar - rels cease; Fill all the world with heav - en's peace.

G D Em Bm G Am D Em D G C Am Em Bm Em

Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el shall come to thee, O Is - ra - el!

Text: Latin Antiphons (8th cen.), translated by J.M. Neale (1851)
 Music: VENI EMMANUEL, Latin chant (c. 1500), adapted by Thomas Helmore (1856)

Public Domain
 8.8.8.8 w/refrain

Week 1 Practice

Silence

This exercise gives you the chance to practice silence in a small, manageable way. You will begin by ringing a bell and then trying to keep a bell quiet, and noticing the difference between noise and silence. Then you will make a few comments to prepare for your time of silence. You can try this practice during the Advent reading each night this week, just once, or at a separate time.

Materials

A bell

Instructions

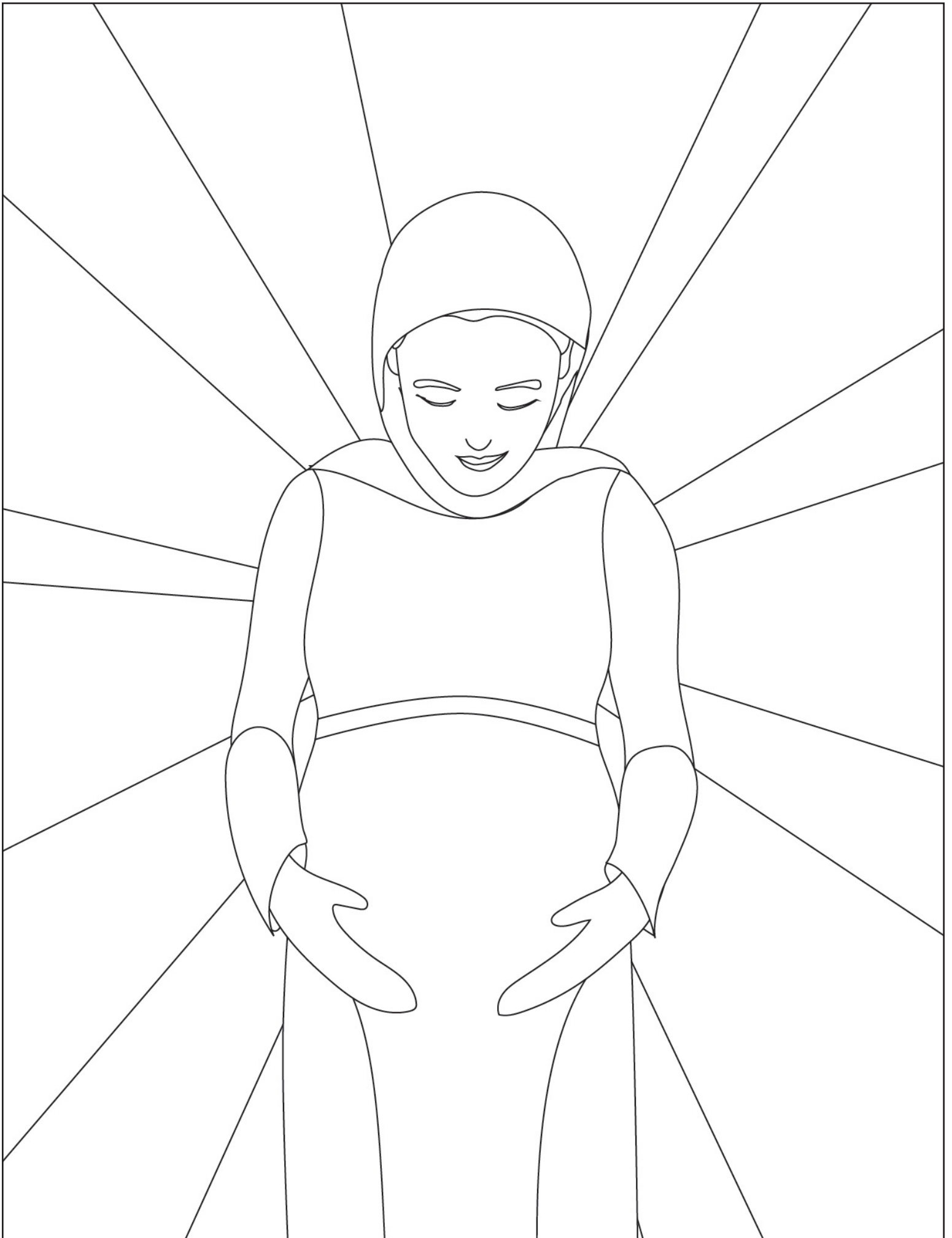
Pass a bell around the circle, giving each person a chance to ring it. Then pass the bell around the circle a second time, trying to keep the bell from making any sound.

Say something like: *It can be nice to sit quietly for a moment or two, can't it? When we're quiet, we have the chance to remember how much God loves us. We have the chance to hear what our own thoughts and feelings are telling us about how our day is going, and we have the chance to notice where God has been at work in our lives.*

Prepare to sit quietly for one minute (feel free to select any length of time that will work for your family). Invite people to choose whether they will lay down or sit up, whether they will close their eyes or keep them open. Young children might like to have a stuffed animal to hold while you practice silence together. If a family member forgets, remind them by placing a finger to your lips.

One family member can begin the silence by ringing the bell, and then end the silence by ringing the bell a second time.

After the silence, share what it was like to sit quietly together. If you are practicing the silence during your Advent reading, continue by singing the song *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*.



Week 2

Peace

Look in the Word: Luke 1:26–38

Look at the picture

Spend 10-30 seconds looking at the picture. Then discuss these questions together.

- What part of the picture stands out to you?
- What do you notice about Mary's face in the picture?
- What parts of the story do you see in the picture?
- Can you imagine what it would be like to be there?

Look in your heart

- What part of the story stands out to you?
- Where do we see peace in this story?
- Why do you think the angel says, "Do not be afraid" to Mary?
- What does Mary say to the angel at the end of the story?
- What does it mean for you to be God's servant?

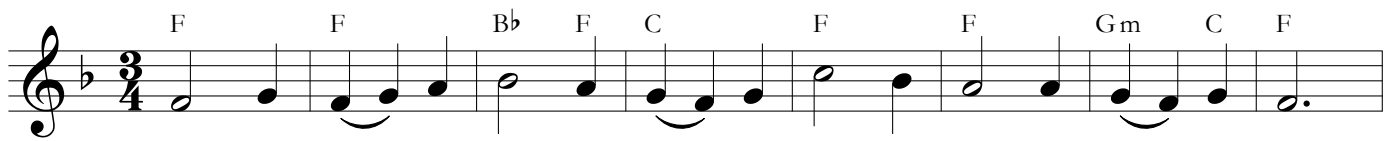
Look to Jesus in prayer

Jesus, as we wait for you this Advent, you give us peace in our hearts. There are so many things we might be worried about, thinking about, or paying attention to during this time. Help us to remember that you are always with us, and that we are God's servants. Make room in our hearts for your peace. Amen

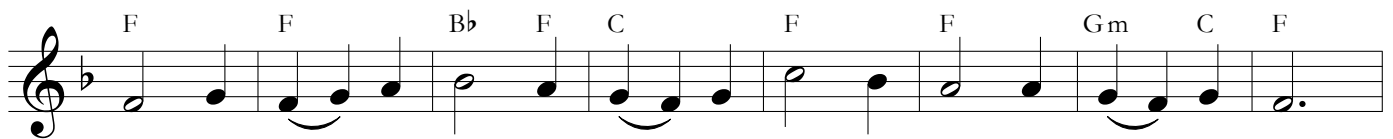
Finish by singing Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus together.

Week 2 Hymn

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus



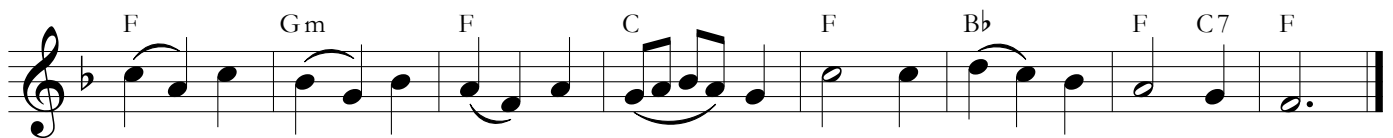
1. Come, Thou long ex - spect - ed Je - sus, born to set Thy peo - ple free.
2. Born Thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a Child, and yet — a King.



From our fears and sins re - lease us; Let us find our rest in Thee.
Born to reign in us for - ev - er, now Thy gra - cious king - dom bring.



Is - rael's strength and con - so - la - tion, Hope of all — the earth Thou art;
By Thine own — e - ter - nal Spir - it rule in all — our hearts a - lone.



Dear De - sire of ev - 'ry na - tion, Joy of ev - 'ry long - ing heart.
By — Thine all — suf - fi - cient mer - it, raise us to — Thy glo - rious throne.

Week 2 Practice

Gratitude

Mary sings a song of thanksgiving to God, praising him for all he has done. As she sings, she notices God's work in her own life, and she looks back at everything God has done from the beginning of time.

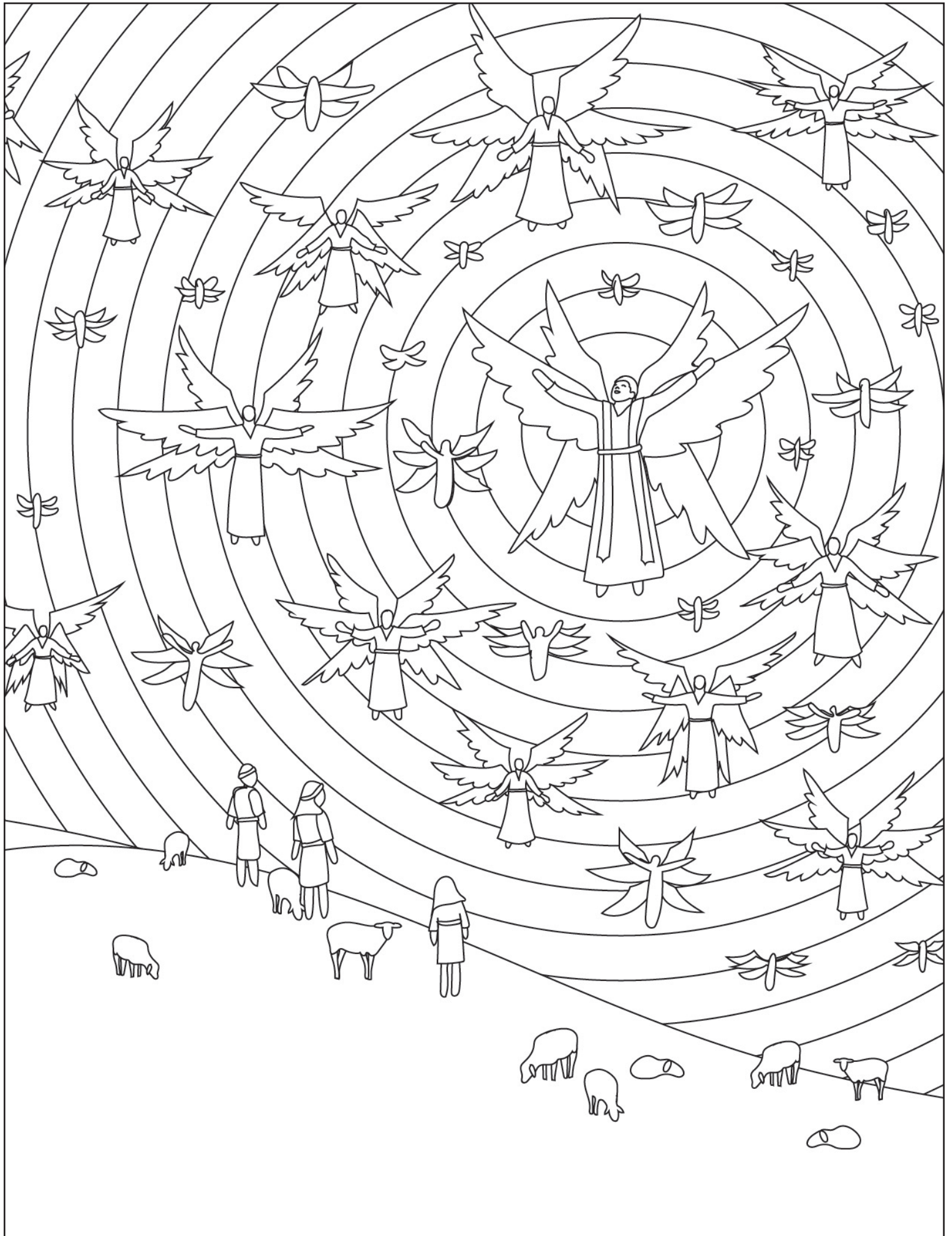
When we pause to be grateful, it is not only very good for our brains, but it is also good for our hearts. Because we know and worship God, being grateful is a chance for us to praise him. This week, with Mary, we are going to practice gratitude with a winter walk.

Gratitude Exercise

Pick a day for a winter walk. Brew a cup of hot chocolate and read Psalm 100 together. Then set out on your walk.

As you walk, notice things you are grateful for and name them, thanking God for them together. The things you notice might also remind you of who God is and what he is like, thank him for these things as well. When you finish your walk, read Mary's Song together from Luke 1:46-55.

If you enjoyed the silence exercise last week, practice silence for a portion of your walk as well. Walk in quiet, paying attention to what sounds you hear. After a few moments, share what the experience was like.



Week 3

Joy

Look in the Word: Luke 2:8-20

Look at the picture

Spend 10-30 seconds looking at the picture. Then discuss these questions together.

- What part of the picture stands out to you?
- What do you imagine the shepherd's faces would look like in this picture?
- What parts of the story do you see in the picture?
- Can you imagine what it would be like to be there?
- Where would you be in this picture?

Look in your heart

- What part of the story stands out to you?
- Where do we see Joy in this story?
- Do you think these shepherds would have been surprised to hear that the Messiah was a baby? Why or why not?
- What did the shepherds do after seeing Jesus?
- What stories about Jesus do you have to share with those in your life?

Look to Jesus in prayer

Jesus, as we wait for you this Advent, give us the joy of your salvation!
Like the shepherds did, help us to eagerly share the good news of your presence
in our lives with those we love and those we meet. You are the wonderful rescuing one!
We rejoice in your presence! Amen

Finish by singing Joy to the World together.

Week 3 Hymn

Joy to the World

1. Joy to the world! the Lord is come; let earth re - ceive her King; _____
 2. Joy to the earth! the Sav - ior reigns; let men their song em - ploy; _____
 3. No more let sins and sor - rows grow, nor thorns in - fest the ground; _____
 4. He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the na - tions prove _____

Let ev - 'ry _____ heart _____ pre - pare _____ him _____ room, _____
 While fields _____ and _____ floods, _____ rocks, hills, _____ and _____ plains _____
 he comes to _____ make _____ his bless - ings _____ flow _____
 the glo - ries _____ of _____ his righ - teous - ness, _____

and heav'n and na - ture _____ sing, and heav'n and na - ture _____ sing,
 re - peat the sound - ing _____ joy, re - peat the sound - ing _____ joy,
 far as the curse is _____ found, far as the curse is _____ found,
 and won - ders of his _____ love, and won - ders of his _____ love,

and heav'n _____ and heav'n _____ and na - ture sing.
 re - peat, _____ re - peat _____ the sound - ing joy.
 far as, _____ far as _____ the curse is found.
 and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

Text: Isaac Watts (1719)
 Music: ANTIOCH, Psalmodia Britannica, vol. 4 (ca. 1831), alt. Lowell Mason (1836)

Psalm 98
 Public Domain
 8.6.8.6 with repeats

Week 3 Practice

Generosity

The Shepherds received the news of Jesus' birth with great joy. Then they quickly ran to share their joy with others. When we give, like the shepherds, we are sharing out of what we have been given.

This Advent and Christmas season, as you prepare gifts to give to teachers, friends, family members, or to others you don't know, invite your children into the process with you and be intentional with your conversations.

Some questions to consider this week

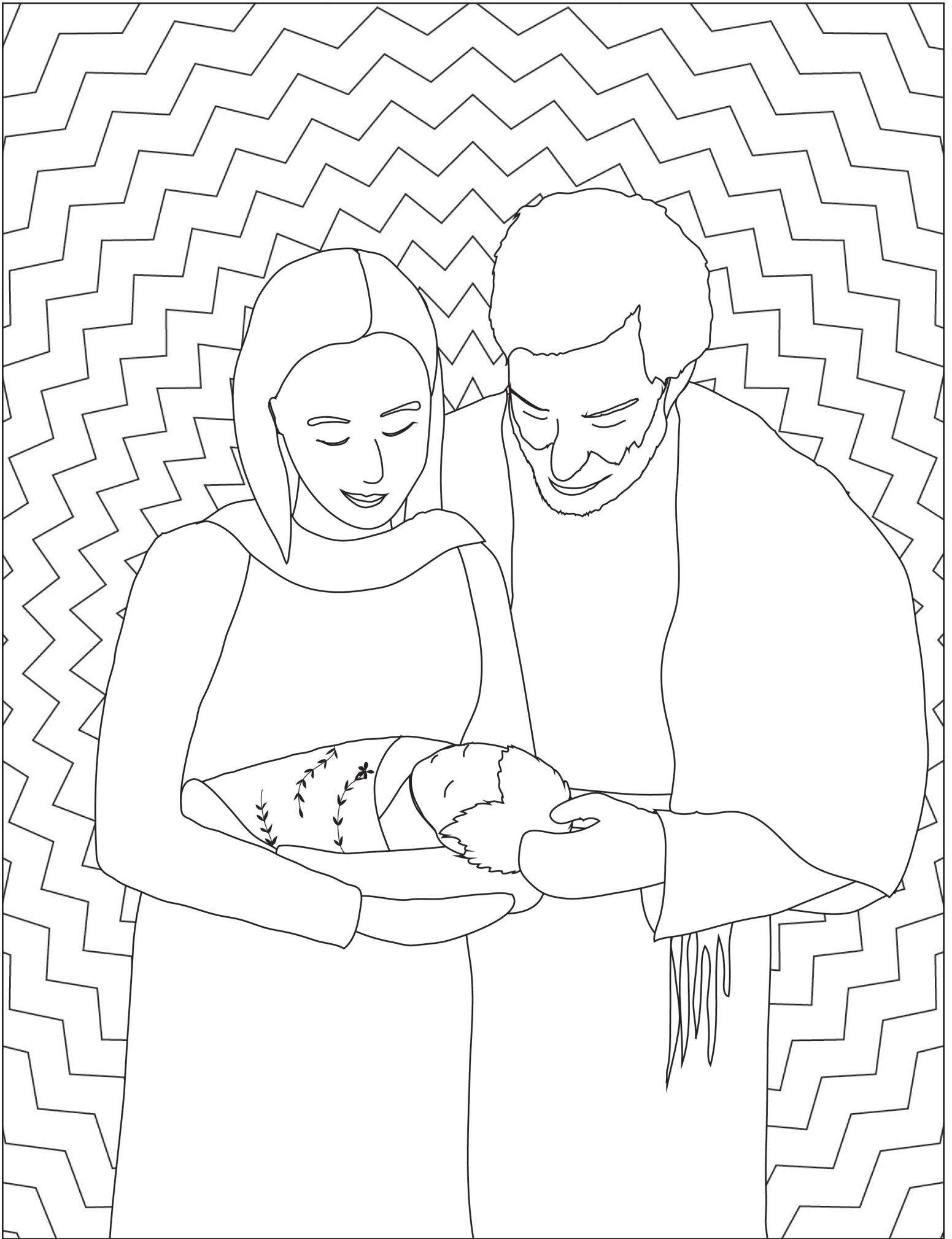
How has God provided for you?

What does it look like for your family to be generous with what you have been given?

Who in your life is God inviting you to be generous to?

Is there something you are being invited to give up for the sake of another?

What would it look like to share the joy that you have in the story of Christmas?



Week 4

Love

Look in the Word: Luke 2:1-7

Look at the picture

Spend 10-30 seconds looking at the picture. Then discuss these questions together.

- What part of the picture stands out to you?
- What do you notice about people's faces in the picture?
- What parts of the story do you see in the picture?
- Can you imagine what it would be like to be there?
- Where would you be in this picture?

Look in your heart

- What part of the story stands out to you?
- Where do we see the love of God in this story?
- Can you imagine what it would be like to welcome a new baby far from your home after a long journey?
- How does it feel to know that there was no guest room available for Jesus or his family when he was born?
- What kind of King will Jesus be?

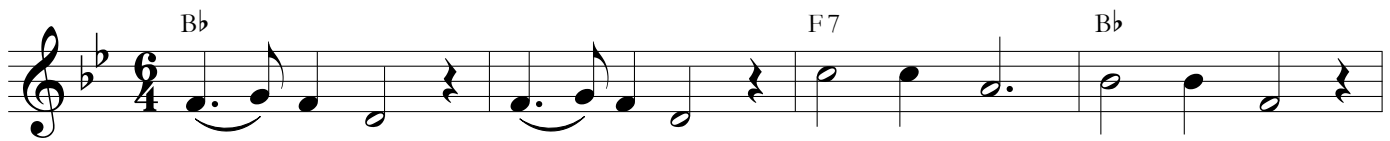
Look to Jesus in prayer

Jesus, as we wait for you this Advent, fill our hearts with your love. As you made your home on earth, Jesus, make your home in our hearts. Fill us with your love, that we may love others like we have been loved by you, the King who came as a baby. Amen.

Finish by singing Silent Night together.

Week 4 Hymn

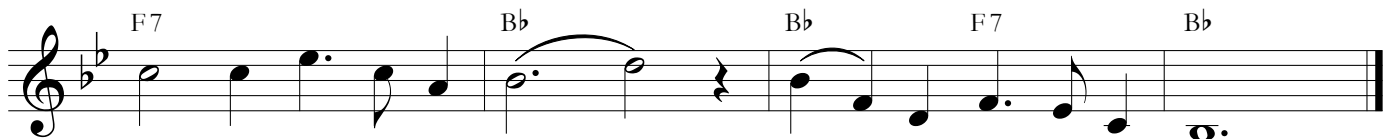
Silent Night



1. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, all is calm, all is bright
 2. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, shep - herds quake at the sight.
 3. Si - lent night, ho - ly night, Son of God, love's pure light



'round yon vir - gin moth - er and Child. Ho - ly In - fant so ten - der and mild,
 Glo - ries stream from heav - en a - far, heav'n - ly hosts — sing al - le - lu - ia;
 ra - diant beams from Thy ho - ly face, with the dawn of re - deem - ing grace,



sleep in heav - en - ly peace, — sleep in heav - en - ly peace.
 Christ the Sav - ior is born! — Christ the Sav - ior is born!
 Je - sus, Lord, at Thy birth, — Je - sus, Lord, at Thy birth.

Text: Joseph Mohr (1816), translated by J. Freeman Young (1859)
 Music: STILLE NACHT, Franz Gruber (1818)

Public Domain
 6.6.8.8.6.6

Week 4 Practice

Creativity

Mary and Joseph both exemplify people whose lives were caught up in God's story. Is your life caught up in God's story? Try one or both of these activities to help you spend time reflecting together.

God's Story Art

During the week leading up to Christmas, take some time to talk about the stories of these people again: Isaiah (Hope), Mary (Peace), The Angels and Shepherds (Joy), and Joseph, Mary, and Jesus (Love.) Use your favorite art materials to illustrate each story and display your artwork in your home until Epiphany on January 6. Then put them away and save them for next Advent.

Wonder Wall

Create a "Wonder Wall" in your house. This can be any space on a wall or door or cabinet where anyone in the family can post their "wonderings." You can make a sign for the wall that says, "I wonder..." Stack some post it notes and some markers or pens nearby. Before you read this week's Scripture together, invite everyone to listen for something they wonder about. Take a few moments after the story to write or draw your wonderings and add them to the wonder wall. You can add to your Wonder Wall at any time!



Christmas Light

Look in the Word: John 1:1-5, 14

Look at the picture

Spend 10-30 seconds looking at the picture. Then discuss these questions together.

What part of the picture stands out to you?

What parts of the story do you see in the picture?

What would you add to the picture to illustrate part of the story?

Can you imagine what it would be like to be there?

Where would you be in this picture?

Look in your heart

In this passage, John uses “the Word” to talk about Jesus.

Try rereading the passage with Jesus’ name in place of “the Word.”

How does hearing Jesus’ name in this familiar passage affect you?

What do we learn about who Jesus is from this story?

Spend a few moments reflecting on the truth of this passage, that Jesus was present with God at creation, that he is light for all people, and that he came to live among us, beginning his life on earth as a tiny baby.

What would you like to say to Jesus?

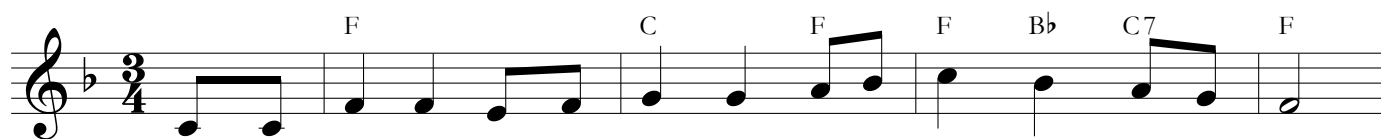
Look to Jesus in prayer

Jesus, we have waited for you this Advent season, and even as we celebrate your birth, we wait for the day when you will come again soon! With the saints through all the ages, we pray, Come quickly, Lord Jesus! We wait for the day when we can say along with John, “we have seen his glory... the glory of the One and Only.” (John 1:14 NIV) Amen.

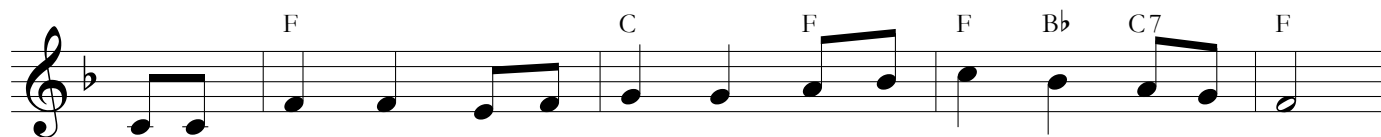
Finish by singing Infant Holy, Infant Lowly together.

Christmas Hymn

Infant Holy, Infant Lowly



1. In - fant ho - ly, in - fant low - ly, for his bed a cat - tle stall;
2. Flocks were sleep - ing, shep - herds keep - ing vig - il 'til the morn - ing new



ox - en low - ing, lit - tle know - ing, Christ the babe is Lord of all.
saw the glo - ry, heard the sto - ry, tid - ings of a gos - pel true.



Swift are wing - ing an - gels sing - ing, no - els ring - ing, tid - ings bring - ing:
Thus re - joic - ing, free from sor - row, prais - es voic - ing, greet the mor - row:



Christ the babe is Lord of all. Christ the babe is Lord of all.
Christ the babe was born for you. Christ the babe was born for you.

Text: Traditional Polish Carol, translated by Edith M. G. Reed (1920)
Music: W ZLOBIE LEZY, Polish melody

Luke 2
Public Domain
8.7.8.7.8.8.7.7

Christmas Practice

12 Days of Christmas

Did you know Christmas lasts for twelve days? Take some time over the next twelve days to reflect on Jesus becoming a human.

Here are some passages you can read to help you reflect:

John 1:1-5; 14

Isaiah 9:6

Philippians 2:5-8

We often think about Jesus being fully God and fully human as an adult, but don't spend much time reflecting on the fact that he lived an entire childhood. Spend some time thinking and wondering about how Jesus came as a baby and grew as a child. Talk with your children about the fact that Jesus was the age that they are now. He understands what it is like to grow up. To have parents. To live in a body that is growing and changing.

After reflecting together, how would you like to respond to Jesus?

Would you like to make art, imagining Jesus at your age?

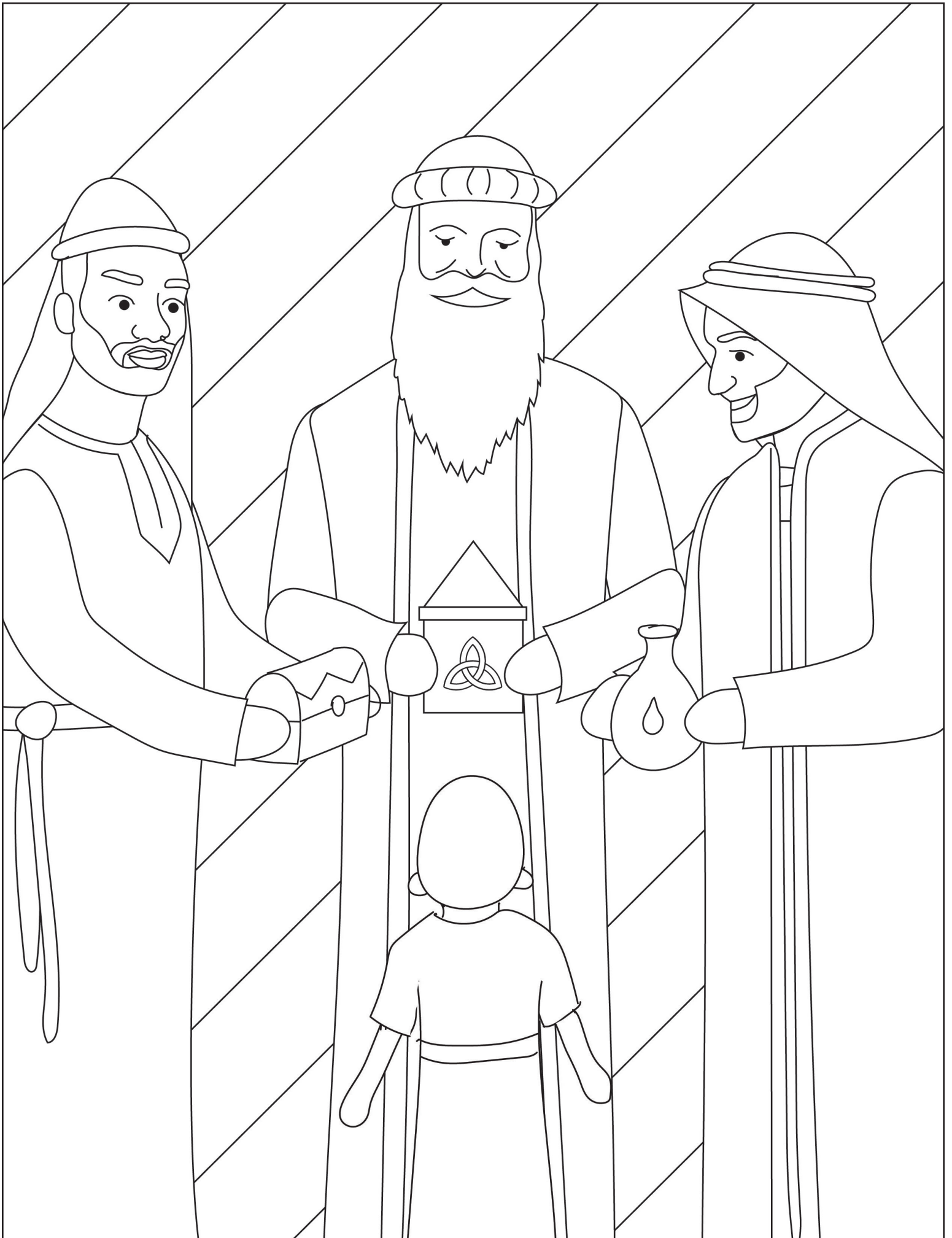
Would you like to write a prayer to Jesus, asking him questions, thanking him, or praising him for who he is?

Would you like to talk with someone about what you reflected on?

Would you like to sing a favorite worship song or hymn or dance?

Would you like to make something to remind you that Jesus knows what it is like to be a person?

Where will you display this artwork so you will remember?



Epiphany

Manifestation

Look in the Word: Matthew 2:1-12

Look at the picture

Spend 10-30 seconds looking at the picture. Then discuss these questions together.

- What part of the picture stands out to you?
- What do you notice about people's faces in the picture?
- What parts of the story do you see in the picture?
- Can you imagine what it would be like to be there?
- Where would you be in this picture?

Look in your heart

- What part of the story stands out to you?
 - Epiphany means, "I get it!" why do you think the celebration of this day and this story are called "Epiphany"?
 - What do you think it means that Jesus will rule people like a shepherd?
 - How would that be different from other kings?
 - Can you imagine what the wise men's journey following the star was like?
- Spend a few moments talking and thinking about what it might have been like.

Look to Jesus in prayer

Jesus, you are the king who rules like a shepherd! Every day as we follow you, we learn more about what this means. You are the good shepherd who guides his sheep, loves his sheep, and leads his sheep. Thank you for being an always-good King.
We love you! We worship you! Amen.

Finish by singing As With Gladness Men of Old together.

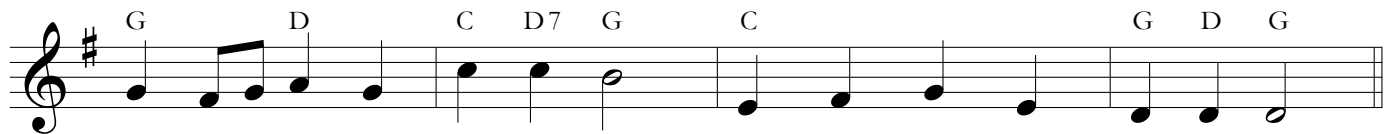
Epiphany Hymn

As With Gladness

Men of Old



1. As with glad-ness men of old did the guid-ing star be-hold;
 2. As with joy-ful steps they sped to his house where they were led,
 3. As they of-fered gifts most rare humb-ly in his pres-ence there,
 4. Ho-ly— Je-sus, ev-'ry day keep us in the nar-row way;
 5. In that glo-rious cit-y bright none shall need cre-at-ed light;



As with joy they hailed its light, lead-ing on-ward, beam-ing bright,
 there to—bend the knee be-fore him whom heav'n and earth a-dore,
 so may we with ho-ly joy, pure and free from sin's al-loy,
 And when earth-ly things are past, bring our ran-somed souls at last
 You its—light, its joy, its crown, you its sun which goes not down;



so, most gra-cious Lord, may we ev-er-more be led to Thee.
 so, may we with will-ing feet ev-er seek the mer-cy seat.
 all our cost-liest treas-ures bring, Christ, to Thee, our heav'n-ly King.
 where they need no star to guide, where no clouds Thy glo-ry hide.
 there for-ev-er may we sing al-le-lu-ias to our King!

Text: William C. Dix (1859)
 Music: DIX, Conrad Kocher (1838)

Matt 2:1-12
 Public Domain
 7.7.7.7.7

Epiphany Practice

Hospitality

With younger children

Put on a play where everyone participates (complete with coffee filter crowns and blanket robes) of the wise men bringing gifts to young Jesus. Read the story from the Bible or from a favorite Bible storybook. Invite someone to share in the celebration with you.

With older children

Invite your children to plan a feast for your family. Explain what Epiphany is—the celebration of the day when the wise men found Jesus, and why Christians celebrate it. Explain that you'd like to make sure that you are taking time after the hustle and bustle of the Advent and Christmas seasons to reflect again on Jesus' first coming as a baby, and to look forward to his second coming.

Work together to select a special meal, prepare a special dessert, choose or create some artwork that helps you think about Jesus' life, and display it for your feast. Create a decorative centerpiece that reminds you of Jesus' life. Choose some worship songs or hymns you would like to sing. Consider inviting neighbors or others to share the feast with your family.

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Shame
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The Gospel Story Hymnal



Keep an eye out for our Kickstarter this spring!

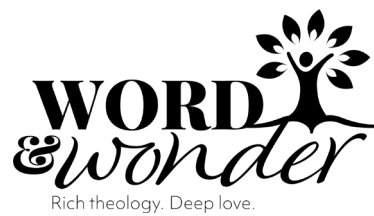
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