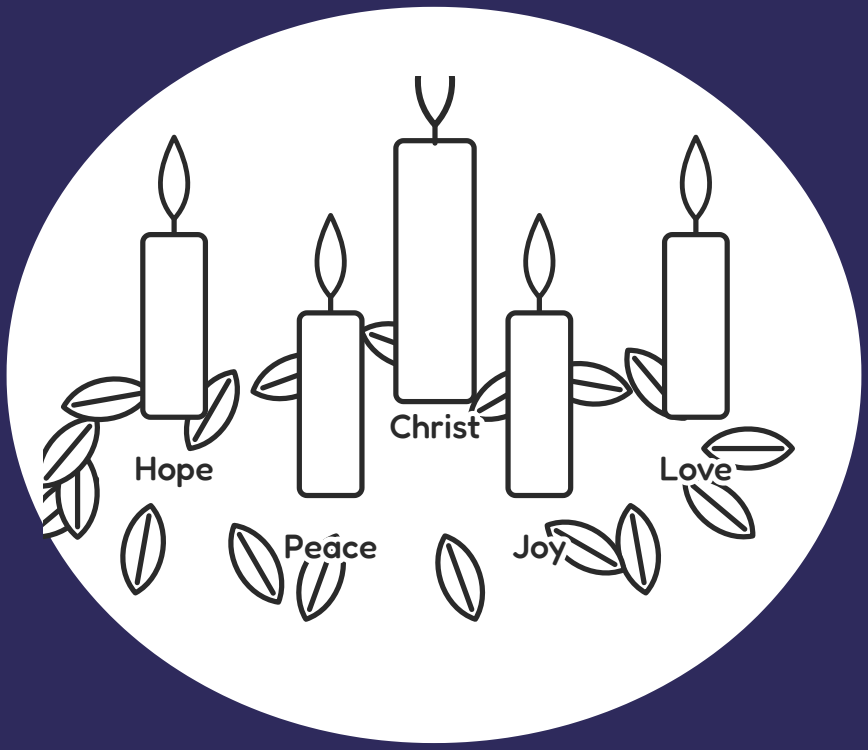
AN ADVENT ACTIVITY BOOK FOR FAMILIES

Still, God Comes Near

Hope · Peace · Joy · Love



Coloring • Puzzles • Bible Verses • Prayers

For kids and grown-ups to share together

Tuckahoe Presbyterian Church · Advent 2026

Dear Families,

Advent reminds us of something important: God does not wait for the world to become peaceful or for our lives to be perfectly arranged before coming near. God comes into the middle of it all. Mary and Joseph did not have everything figured out. The shepherds were simply going about their ordinary work. Yet God was doing something extraordinary.

This book is a family companion to our congregation's Advent devotional, *Still, God Comes Near*. Each day, children explore the same theme the grown-ups are reading about: hope, peace, joy, and love, as gifts we can recognize and practice in everyday life.

You don't need to do every page or arrive at Christmas feeling especially holy. Read a page at breakfast, in the car, or at bedtime. Talk about the questions. Let your children teach you something. Simply come as you are.

Through every season, every change, and every ordinary moment, God is still coming near.

With gratitude and Advent blessings,
Jillian Gatewood
Director of Christian Formation
Tuckahoe Presbyterian Church



How to Use This Book

1. Read the Bible words for the day. Find them in your Bible, too!

2. Think about the short message together.

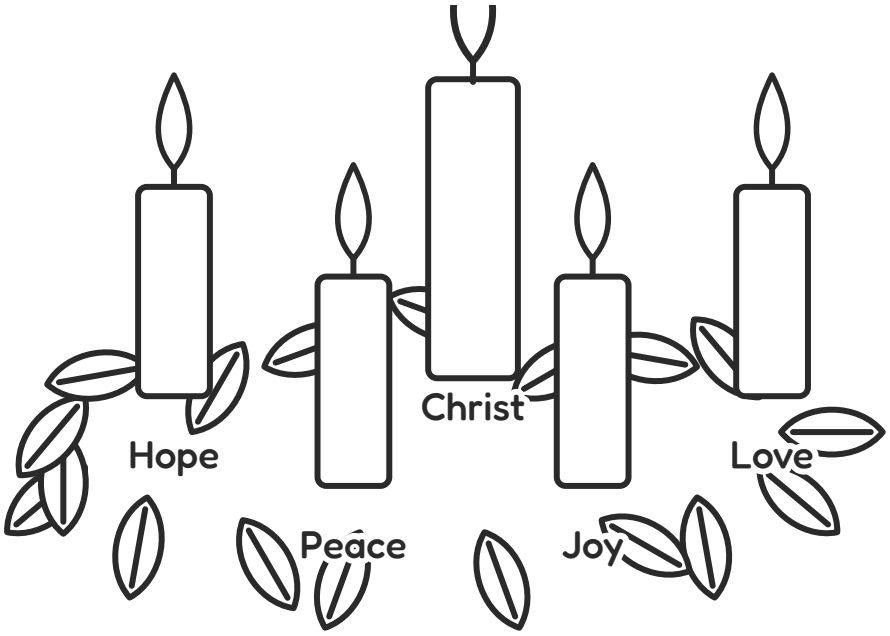
3. Do the coloring, puzzle, or drawing.

4. Try the "Try This" idea during the day.

5. Pray the short prayer together.

My Advent Wreath

Each Sunday of Advent we light a new candle. Color a candle each week, and color the Christ candle on Christmas Day!



Week 1: Hope **Week 2: Peace** **Week 3: Joy** **Week 4: Love**

Hope Begins Here

READ **People walking in the dark saw a great, bright light!**
Isaiah 9:2

Advent begins in the dark, while the world waits for God. Hope doesn't mean everything is fine. It means trusting that God is with us, even in the dark. Sometimes hope starts with one small light.

Color the Hope candle on your Advent wreath on page 3. Then draw bright light shining from this candle!



Try This: Turn off the lights and light a candle (or a flashlight) together. Look how much one small light can do!

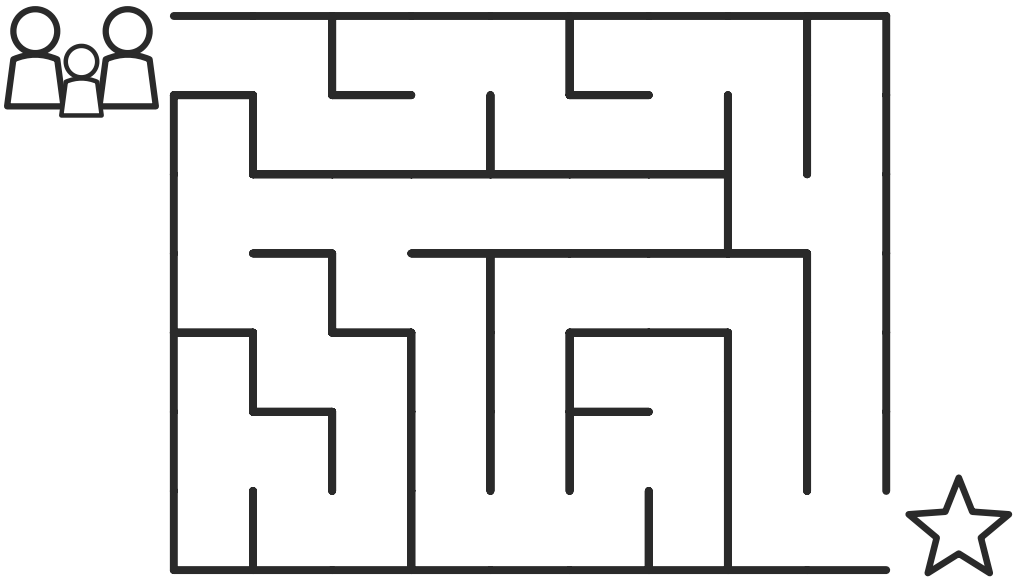
Pray: *God of hope, help us see your light. Amen.*

When We Don't Know What's Next

READ **May God, who gives us hope, fill you with joy and peace.**
Romans 15:13

Sometimes we wish we could see the whole road before we take a step. But we don't have to know everything that will happen. We just need to remember who walks with us: God does!

Help the family find the way to the light. You can't see the whole path at once, so take it one step at a time!



Try This: Tell a grown-up about something you are wondering or worried about. Then pray about it together.

Pray: *God, when we can't see what's next, remind us that you walk with us. Amen.*

Faithful in Small Things

READ **Do what is fair, love being kind, and walk humbly with God.**
Micah 6:8

The world's problems can feel too big for us. But small things matter! Saying hello, sharing a snack, or helping a friend can change someone's whole day. Being faithful often starts small.

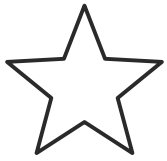
Fill in the missing words from today's verse. Use the word bank!

Word bank: KIND • GOD • FAIR

Do what is _____

Love being _____

Walk humbly with _____



Color me when you've done a kind thing!

Try This: Do one small, kind thing today. Then color in the star below when you've done it!

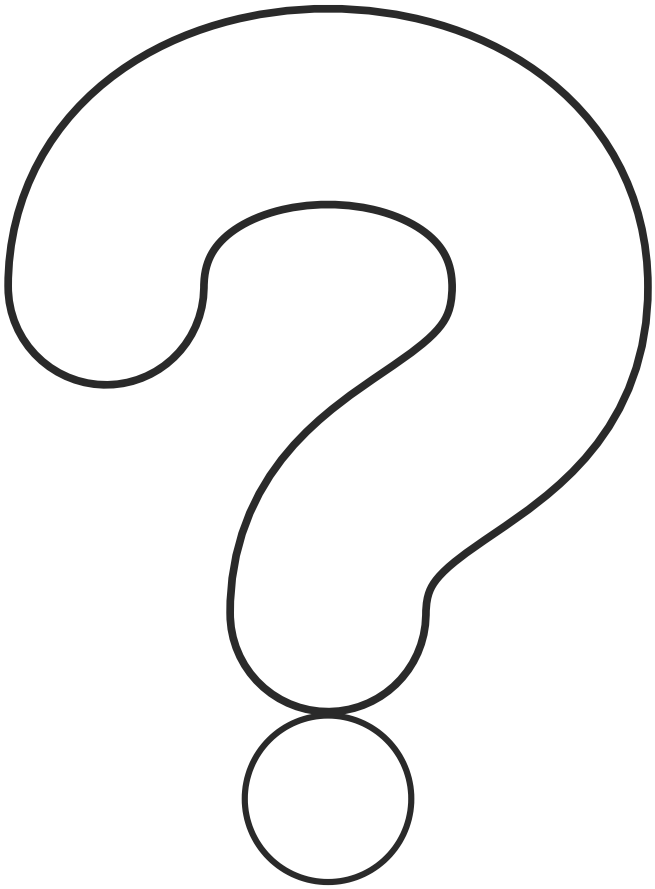
Pray: *God, show us one loving thing we can do today. Amen.*

Questions Are Welcome

READ **Mary asked the angel, "How can this be?" Then she said, "Here I am."**
Luke 1:34, 38

When the angel told Mary she would have a baby, Mary asked a question! Her question is part of the Christmas story. You can bring your questions to God too. Asking questions is one way we learn and grow.

Mary asked a question. What question would you like to ask God? Write it or draw it inside the big question mark.



Try This: Ask a grown-up a question you have about God. Ask them for one of their questions, too!

Pray: *God, thank you for listening to all our questions. Amen.*

Something New

READ **God says, "Look! I am doing something new!"**
Isaiah 43:19

We love our favorite traditions, and new things can feel scary. But God is always making something new: new friends, new ideas, new ways to help. We can love the old and look for the new at the same time.

God is always making something new. Draw a seed, then a sprout, then a beautiful plant!

1. Seed	2. Sprout	3. Something new!

Try This: Try something new today: a new food, a new game, or saying hi to someone new.

Pray: *God of new beginnings, open our eyes to what you are doing. Amen.*

Hope Is Something We Do

READ **Be joyful in hope, patient in trouble, and keep on praying.**
Romans 12:12

Hope isn't only a feeling. It's something we practice! We practice hope when we pray for someone, help a neighbor, or keep being kind even when it's hard. Sometimes hope grows while we're doing it.

Use the code to find today's secret message. Each number stands for a letter.

11	5	5	16		8	15	16	9	14	7

A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5	F 6	G 7	H 8	I 9
J 10	K 11	L 12	M 13	N 14	O 15	P 16	Q 17	R 18
S 19	T 20	U 21	V 22	W 23	X 24	Y 25	Z 26	

Try This: Pray for someone who is sick, sad, or lonely.

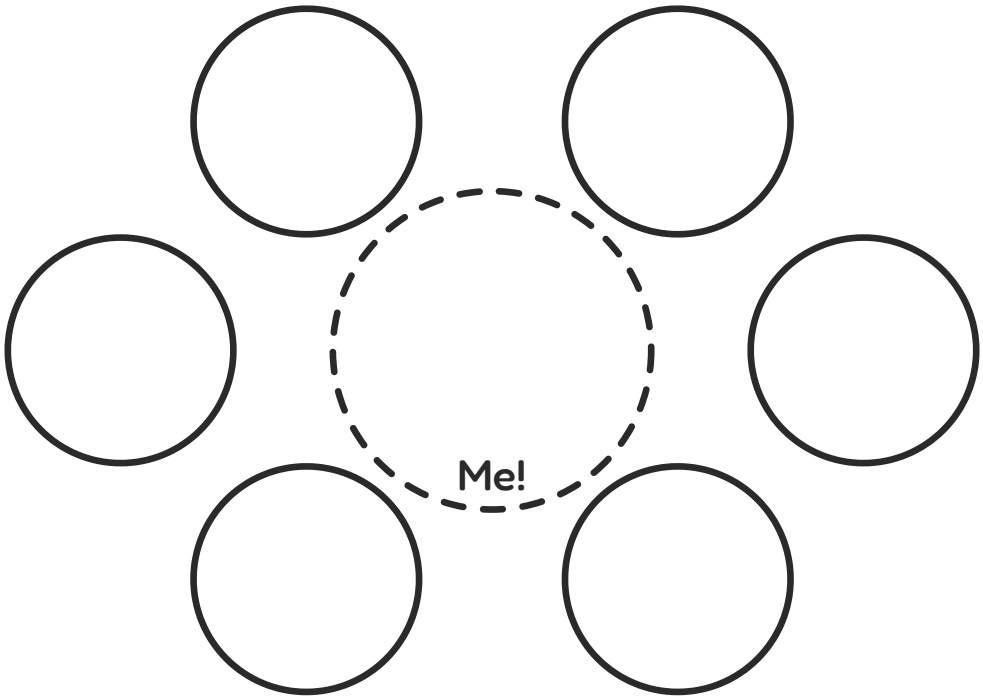
Pray: *God, teach us to practice hope with our hands and hearts. Amen.*

We Don't Walk Alone

READ **Two are better than one. If one falls, the other can help them up.**
Ecclesiastes 4:9–10

Mary didn't make her journey alone. Joseph walked beside her, and her cousin Elizabeth cheered her on. At church we get to walk beside each other too, even when we don't always agree.

Who walks beside you? Draw yourself in the middle and the people who help you belong all around you.



Try This: Make a card or drawing for someone who helps you belong. Give it to them this week!

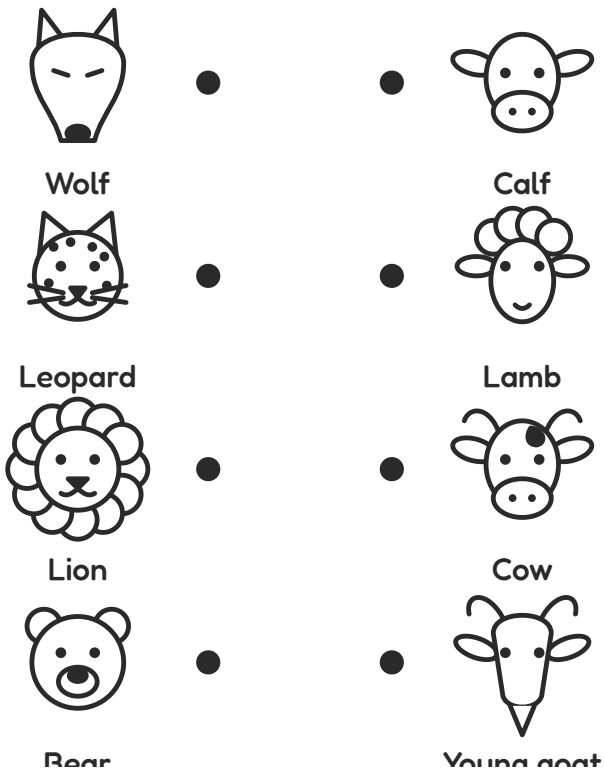
Pray: *God, thank you for the people who walk beside us. Amen.*

A Different Kind of Peace

READ **The wolf will live with the lamb, and a little child will lead them.**
Isaiah 11:6

Isaiah dreamed of a world where animals that usually fight live side by side. God's peace isn't just being quiet. It's making things right and making room for each other. We can start living that way today.

In Isaiah's dream, these animals live together in peace. Draw a line to match each pair. (Hint: look up Isaiah 11:6–7!)



Try This: Light the second candle on your wreath (page 3) and color it in. Name one way you can be a peacemaker this week.

Pray: *God of peace, help us make room for one another. Amen.*

Blessed Are the Peacemakers

READ **Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers. They will be called children of God."**
Matthew 5:9

People don't always agree, at school, at home, or anywhere! Jesus calls us to be peacemakers. That doesn't mean we never disagree. It means we remember that every person is made in God's image.

Circle the words a peacemaker might say.

I'm sorry. Let's take turns. Go away!

Tell me more. You're wrong! Can I help?

I forgive you. That's mine!

Try This: If you have a disagreement today, try saying one of the peacemaker words you circled.

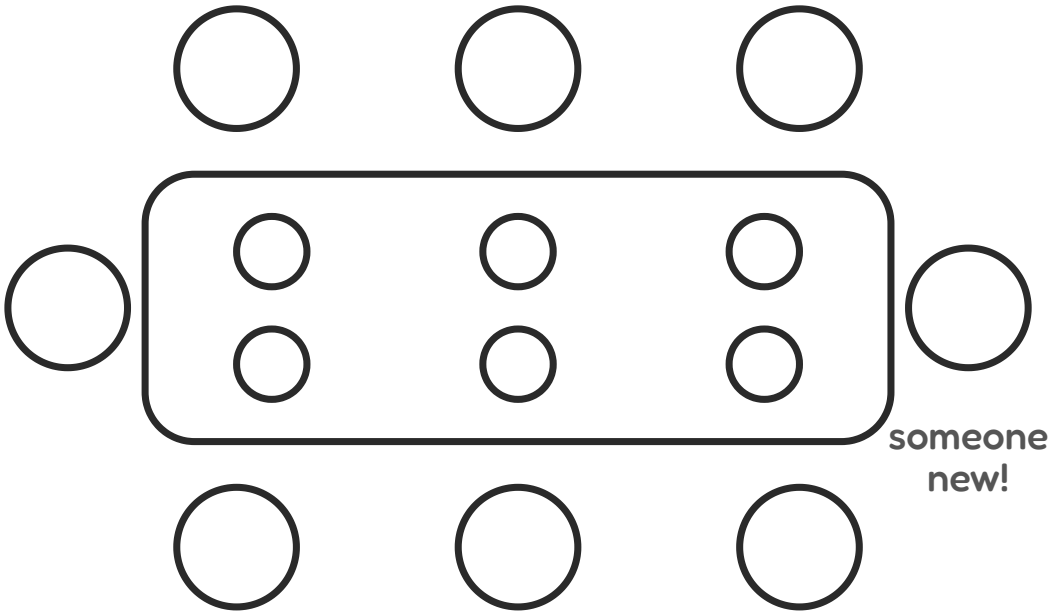
Pray: *God, help us listen, be kind, and make peace. Amen.*

Room at the Table

READ **Jesus said, "When you give a party, invite people who are often left out."**
Luke 14:13

Jesus loved to eat with all kinds of people, especially people others left out. Who sits with you at lunch? Who sits alone? God's love has room for everyone, and so can our tables.

Draw the people you would invite to Jesus' table. Save one seat for someone new!



Try This: Invite someone new to sit with you, play with you, or join your family for a meal.

Pray: *Welcoming God, make our tables and our hearts bigger. Amen.*

There Is Enough Grace

READ **In Jesus' story, workers who started early and workers who came late all got the same pay, because the owner was generous.**
Matthew 20:1–16

That doesn't sound fair, does it? But Jesus is telling us that God's love is a gift, not a prize we earn. When someone else gets grace, it doesn't mean there's less for us. God has enough love for everyone!

Find these words about God's generous love. They go across or down.

C	J	M	I	L	O	V	E	T
K	A	C	S	H	A	R	E	W
D	O	D	K	O	C	A	A	H
H	G	I	F	T	B	S	O	G
O	E	N	O	U	G	H	P	O
C	W	H	J	M	C	K	M	D
A	P	D	E	I	D	A	B	R
S	F	U	H	R	T	H	E	P
O	D	O	G	R	A	C	E	P

GRACE
GIFT
ENOUGH
LOVE
SHARE
GOD

Try This: Cheer for someone else today when something good happens to them.

Pray: *Generous God, thank you that your love is enough for everyone. Amen.*

Peace Starts with Listening

READ **Be quick to listen and slow to speak.**
James 1:19

Have you ever talked to someone who wasn't really listening? Listening is one of the easiest ways to show love. It tells someone, "Your story matters to me." Listening can make peace.

Listening game! Sit very still and be quiet for one whole minute. Check off every sound you hear.

- ☐ A car
- ☐ Someone talking
- ☐ A clock or a beep
- ☐ Wind or rain
- ☐ A bird
- ☐ Footsteps
- ☐ Music
- ☐ My own breathing

Something else I heard: _____

Try This: Ask someone in your family, "What was the best part of your day?" Then just listen.

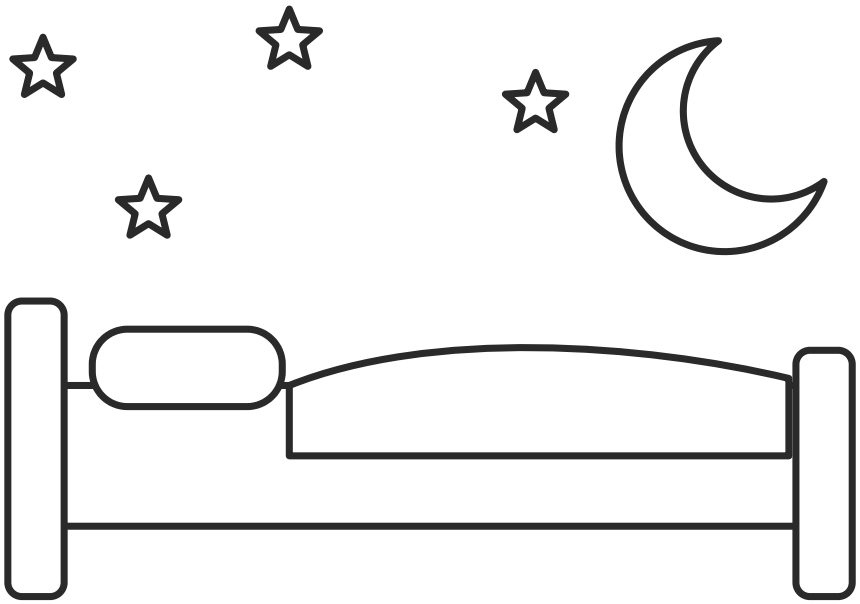
Pray: *God, quiet our hearts and help us listen well. Amen.*

Time to Rest

READ **Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are tired, and I will give you rest."**
Matthew 11:28

December can be SO busy! Parties, presents, concerts, and lists. Even fun things can make us tired. Jesus invites us to rest. Resting isn't lazy. It reminds us that God holds the world, so we don't have to.

Color this cozy, restful night. Then draw yourself snuggled up in the bed!



Try This: Have a cozy family rest time: read a book, cuddle under a blanket, or look at the Christmas lights.

Pray: *Gentle God, help us rest in your love. Amen.*

Peace at Home

READ **Put on kindness, gentleness, and patience like clothes you wear every day.**
Colossians 3:12

It can be hardest to be kind to the people we live with! We get tired and grumpy. But we can choose to be patient, to say sorry, and to forgive. That's how peace grows at home.

Unscramble the words. They're things we can be or do every day!

DKNI _____

TNEPIAT _____

NGLEET _____

GOVFIER _____



Try This: Say "I'm sorry" or "I forgive you" to someone in your family this week.

Pray: *God of peace, help us love the people we live with. Amen.*

Joy Doesn't Need to Be Perfect

READ **Be glad in God always! I'll say it again: be glad!**
Philippians 4:4

Paul wrote about joy even when life was hard for him. Joy doesn't mean everything is perfect. It means noticing God's goodness: a friend's laugh, a favorite song, a yummy dinner. God is with us in all of it!

Color the Joy candle on page 3. Then draw something that made you smile this week!

Something that made me smile

Try This: Light the third candle on your wreath (page 3) and color it in. Share your favorite part of today at dinner.

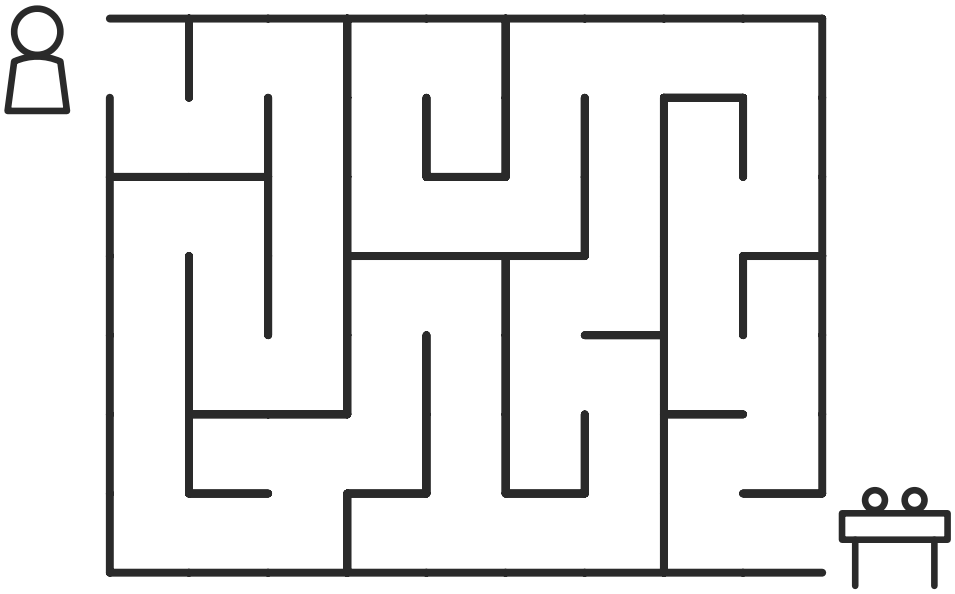
Pray: *God of joy, help us notice your goodness every day. Amen.*

The Gift of Being Together

READ **They ate together in their homes with glad and generous hearts.**
Acts 2:46

The first followers of Jesus shared meals, prayed, and took care of each other. Church is more than a building or an hour on Sunday. It's people who belong to each other. That's a gift!

Help the friend find the way to the shared meal!



Try This: Help get a meal ready, or set the table, and invite everyone to share one good thing.

Pray: *God, thank you for the people we belong to. Amen.*

Kids Can Teach, Too!

READ **Jesus called a child and put the child in the middle of his friends.**
Matthew 18:2

When Jesus' friends argued about who was greatest, Jesus put a child in the middle! Kids belong to the church right now, not just someday. Grown-ups can learn a lot from you about faith and wonder.

Be the teacher! Finish the sentences, then share them with a grown-up.

One thing I know about God is _____

_____

My favorite Bible story is _____

A question I wonder about is _____

_____

Ask a grown-up: "What is your favorite Christmas memory?" _____

Try This: Teach a grown-up your favorite Christmas song, prayer, or Bible story.

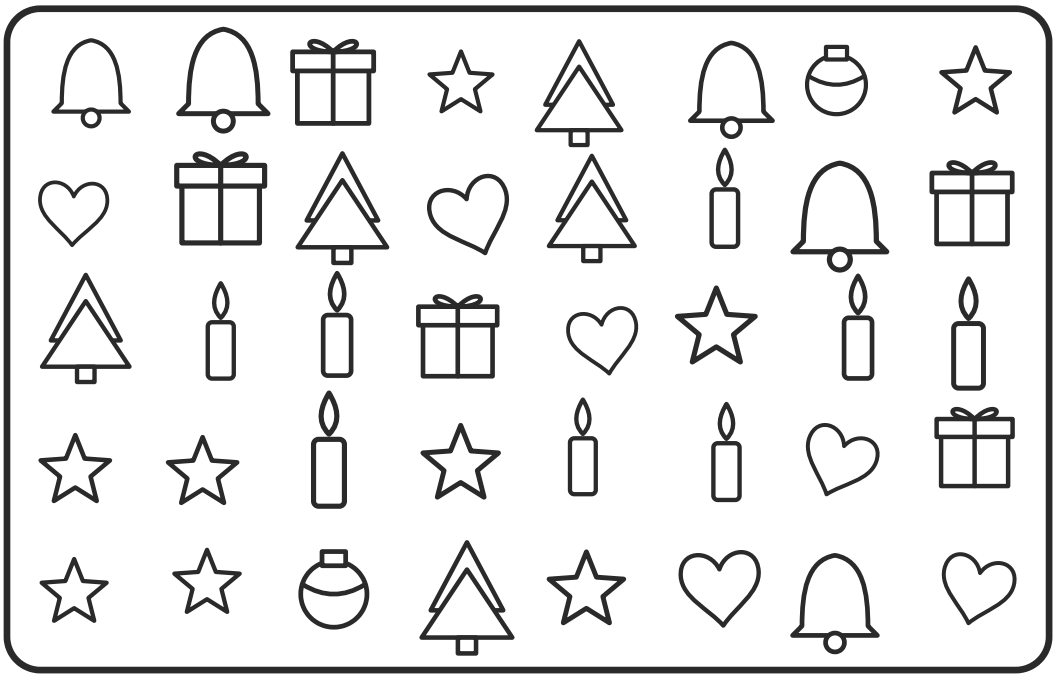
Pray: *God, help grown-ups and kids learn from each other. Amen.*

Joy Along the Way

READ **Elizabeth told Mary, "When I heard your voice, my baby jumped for joy!"**
Luke 1:44

When Mary visited Elizabeth, they were both so happy, even though they didn't know what would happen next. Sometimes we wait to be happy until everything is done. But joy can find us along the way!

Elizabeth's baby jumped for joy! Find and circle all the hearts hidden among the Christmas things. How many did you find? ____



Try This: Jump for joy! Do 10 happy jumps and name one thing you're glad about with each jump.

Pray: *God, help us celebrate your gifts along the way. Amen.*

The Joy of Giving

READ **God loves a cheerful giver.**
2 Corinthians 9:7

Giving isn't only about presents. We can give our time, our help, or kind words. Our church gives clothes, school supplies, and help to neighbors. Every gift helps someone know they are loved.

Some of the best gifts aren't things! Fill in a gift of time or help (like "one hug," "I'll help with dishes," or "let's play a game").

🎁 **A Gift of Love**

To: _____

This coupon is good for: _____

_____

From: _____

🎁 **A Gift of Love**

To: _____

This coupon is good for: _____

_____

From: _____

Try This: Fill out the gift coupons and give them to someone this week!

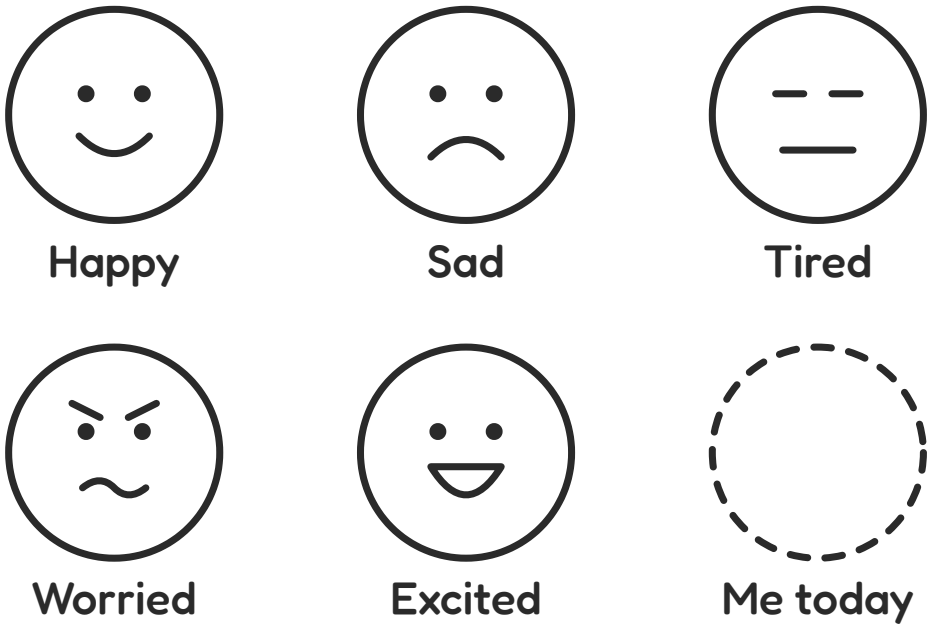
Pray: *Generous God, help us share what we have with happy hearts. Amen.*

When We Feel Sad

READ **God is close to people whose hearts are hurting.**
Psalm 34:18

Not everyone feels happy at Christmas. We might miss someone, or feel worried or lonely. That's okay! You can tell God how you really feel. God comes close when we're sad, too.

All of our feelings are welcome with God. Circle how you feel today. Then draw your own face in the empty circle!



Try This: Talk with a grown-up about how you are feeling. Pray for someone who might be sad this Christmas.

Pray: *Loving God, be close to everyone who is sad or lonely. Amen.*

Notice What Is Good

READ **This is the day God has made. Let's be glad in it!**
Psalm 118:24

Sometimes good things are easy to miss. Today, slow down and look around: a sparkly light, a kind word, a cozy blanket. Saying "thank you" to God helps us see that God is right here.

Draw or write three good things you can thank God for today.

1	2	3

Thank you, God, for _____

Try This: Go on a "thank-you walk" and point out everything you're thankful for.

Pray: *God, slow us down to notice the good things you give. Amen.*

Love Makes Room

READ **Mary wrapped her baby in cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them.**
Luke 2:7

Jesus wasn't born in a palace. He was born in a stable and laid in an animal's feeding box! God's love doesn't need fancy things. God comes right into ordinary life, and invites us to make room for others.

Color the Love candle on page 3. Then color baby Jesus in the manger.



Try This: Light the fourth candle on your wreath (page 3) and color it in. Make room for someone who feels left out.

Pray: *Loving God, thank you for coming near in Jesus. Amen.*

Love God, Love Neighbors

READ **Love God with all your heart, and love your neighbor as yourself.**
Matthew 22:37–39

It's easy to love people who are like us. It's harder to love people who are different, or who bug us! But Jesus says love is the most important thing. Love isn't just a feeling. It's something we do.

Use the code to find what Jesus said. Each number stands for a letter.

12	15	22	5		25	15	21	18		14	5	9	7	8	2	15	18

A 1	B 2	C 3	D 4	E 5	F 6	G 7	H 8	I 9
J 10	K 11	L 12	M 13	N 14	O 15	P 16	Q 17	R 18
S 19	T 20	U 21	V 22	W 23	X 24	Y 25	Z 26	

Try This: Do something loving for a neighbor: a card, a cookie, or a friendly wave.

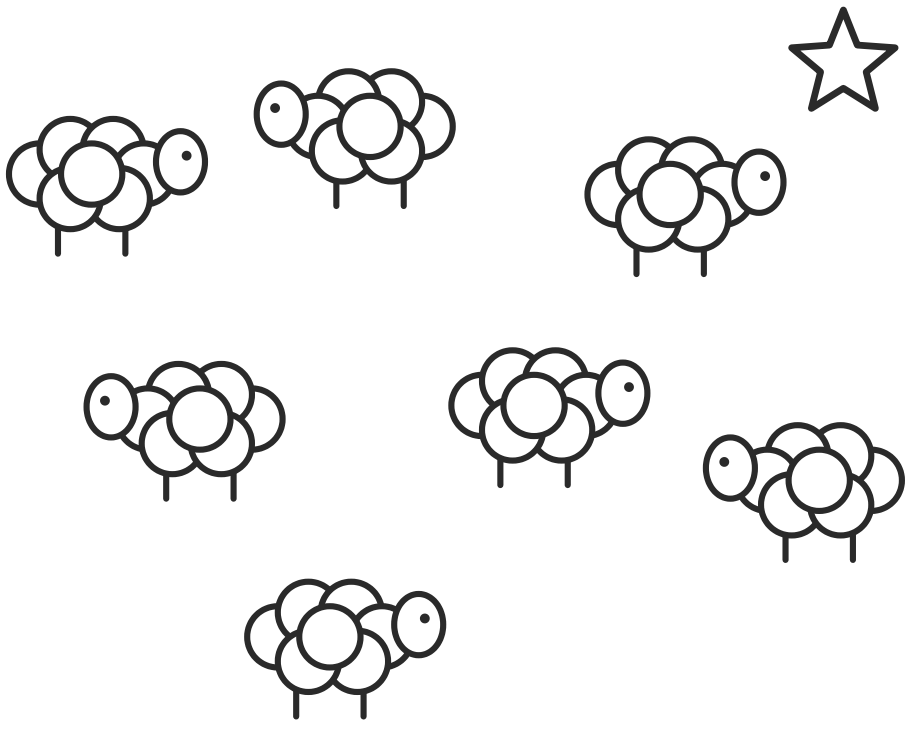
Pray: *God, help us love our neighbors with patience and courage. Amen.*

Noticing People

READ **The angel told the shepherds, "Don't be afraid! I bring good news of great joy for all people."**
Luke 2:10

God told the good news first to shepherds, workers who were often overlooked. Every person matters to God! Who helps you but doesn't get thanked very often? Love can start with noticing.

The shepherds were taking care of their sheep. How many sheep can you count? ____



Try This: Thank a helper: a bus driver, teacher, cafeteria worker, or mail carrier.

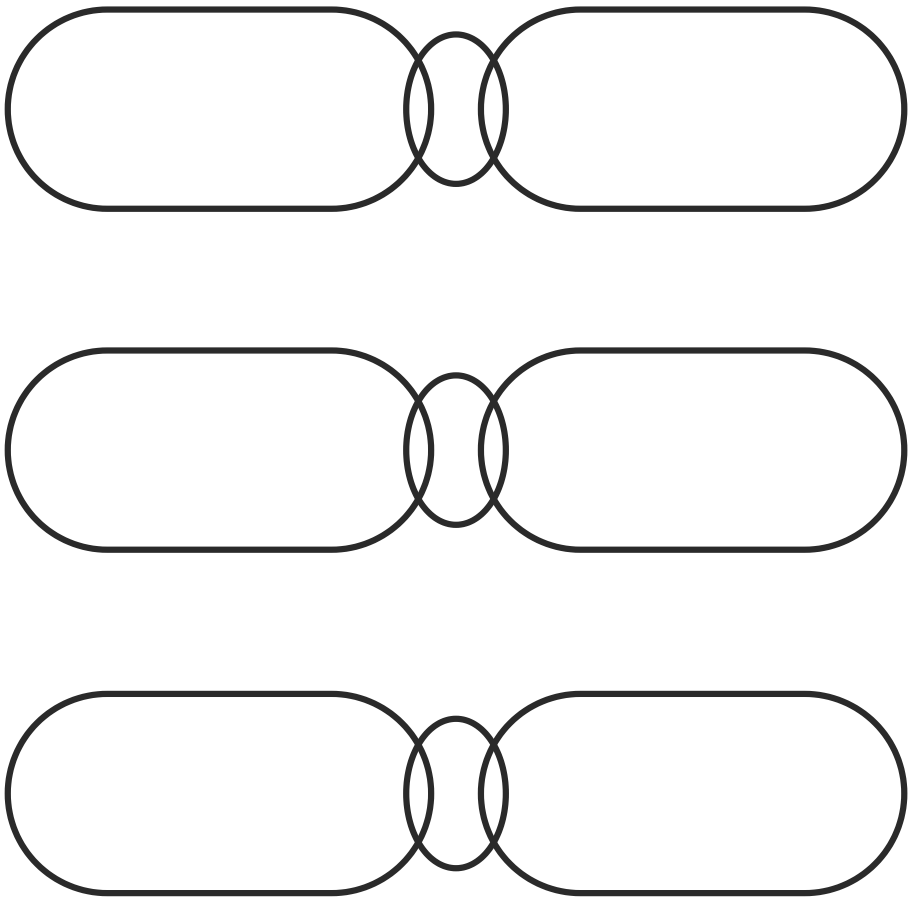
Pray: *God, open our eyes to the people around us. Amen.*

Love We Carry Forward

READ **Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God.**
1 John 4:7

When we love each other, people can see a little bit of God's love. Christmas decorations get put away, but love doesn't! We can keep sharing kindness, patience, and forgiveness all year long.

Write the name of someone you love in each link. Color the chain!



Try This: Make a real paper chain with names of people you love. Hang it up!

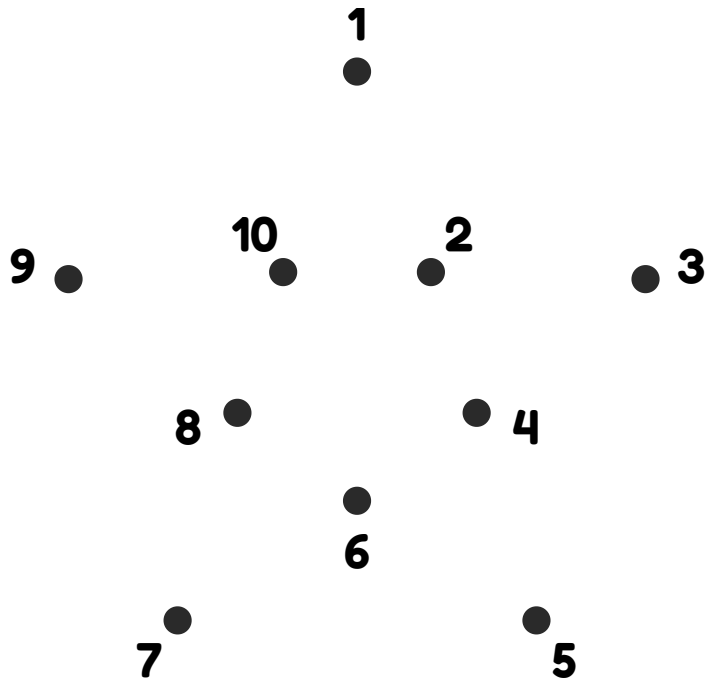
Pray: *God, help us carry your love into every day. Amen.*

God With Us

READ **They will call him Emmanuel, which means "God is with us."**
Matthew 1:23

Tonight we remember the Christmas story: Mary and Joseph, shepherds and angels, and baby Jesus. Emmanuel means God is with us! We don't have to be perfect or ready. God comes near just as we are.

Connect the dots from 1 to 10 to find what led people to Jesus.



Try This: Look up at the night sky tonight. Remember that God is with us!

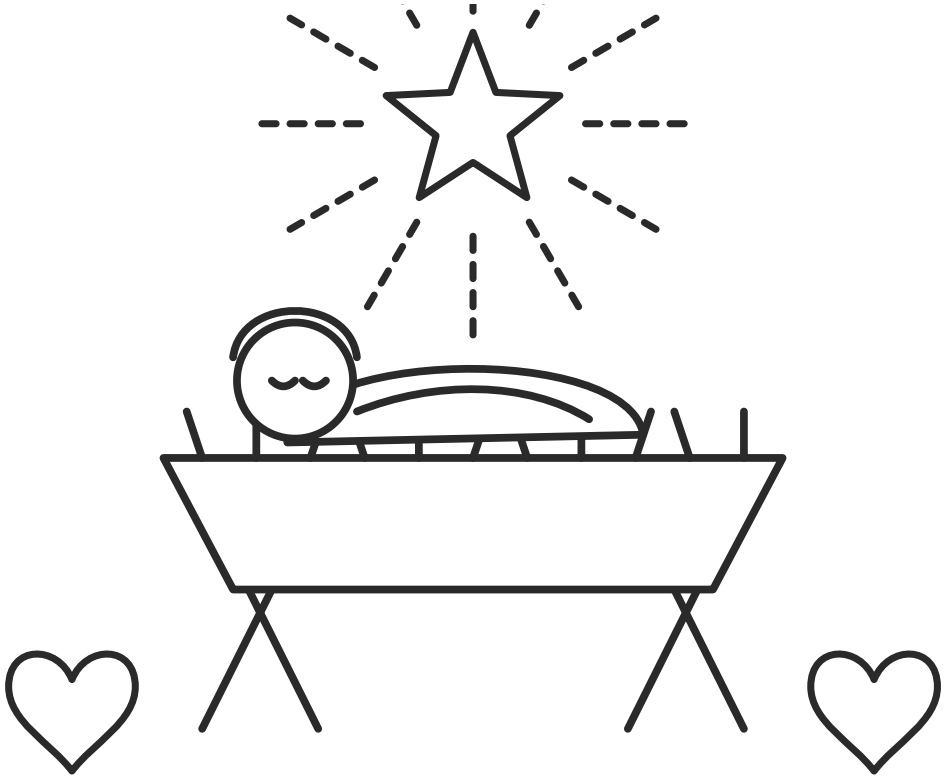
Pray: *Emmanuel, thank you for being with us. Amen.*

Still, God Comes Near

READ **The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**
John 1:5

Merry Christmas! Jesus is born! Whatever today holds, God comes near: when we're happy and when we're sad, when we're sure and when we have questions. God's light is still shining, and it always will.

Color the Christ candle in the middle of your wreath on page 3. Jesus is born! Color the picture.



Still, God comes near!

Try This: Light the Christ candle in the middle of your wreath (page 3) and color it in. Sing "Joy to the World" together!

Pray: *Loving God, thank you for Jesus! Help us share his light. Amen.*

Carry It Into the New Year

Christmas decorations get put away, but hope, peace, joy, and love don't! Draw or write how you will carry each one into the new year.

Hope

One way I can share hope:

Peace

One way I can make peace:

Joy

One thing that gives me joy:

Love

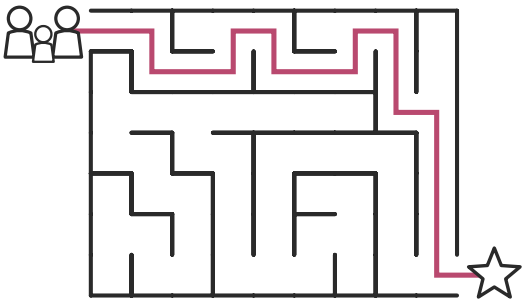
Someone I can show love to:

A Blessing for the Days Ahead

May you find courage when you don't know what's next, peace when people disagree, joy in ordinary days, and love that reaches everyone. Wherever you go, remember: **God is with you.** Still, God comes near. Amen.

Answers

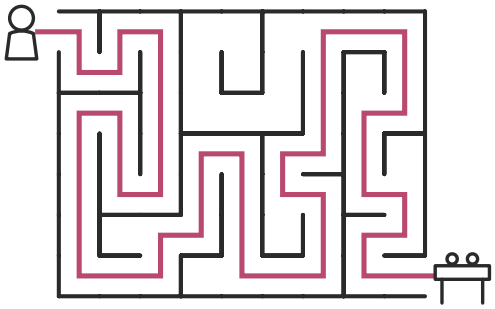
Day 2 Maze



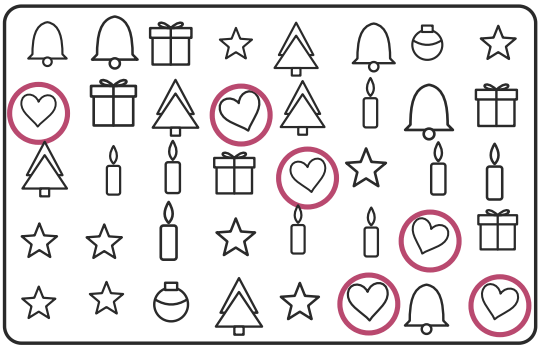
Day 11 Word Search

C	J	M	I	L	O	V	E	T
K	A	C	S	H	A	R	E	W
D	O	D	K	O	C	A	A	H
H	G	I	F	T	B	S	O	G
O	E	N	O	U	G	H	P	O
C	W	H	J	M	C	K	M	D
A	P	D	E	I	D	A	B	R
S	F	U	H	R	T	H	E	P
O	D	O	G	R	A	C	E	P

Day 16 Maze



Day 18 Hearts: 6



Day 3: FAIR, KIND, GOD

Day 6: KEEP HOPING

Day 8: Wolf → Lamb; Leopard → Young goat; Lion → Calf; Bear → Cow

Day 9: I'm sorry., Let's take turns., Tell me more., Can I help?, I forgive you.

Day 14: KIND, PATIENT, GENTLE, FORGIVE

Day 23: LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

Day 24: 7 sheep · **Day 26:** A star