



let there be color

YEAR B ADVENT DEVOTIONAL



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ART & REFLECTIONS TO
JOURNEY THROUGH ADVENT
WITH COLOR & LIGHT



DAY 29
Sabbath

As you prepare to enter into a new year, take a few moments to give thanks for this past year and to set your intentions for the year ahead.

gratitude for the past year

goals for the year ahead



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pray Guide my feet so I may forever walk in your light. Amen.



DAY 28

Sharing the light

journal

Look back on 2020 as a whole, reflecting on the events, circumstances, and people that have shaped you.

How have you seen or experienced light?

How have you shared light with others?

pray Arise, shine, for our light has come. The radiance of God has risen upon us. Amen.



let there be color

YEAR B ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

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DAY 27

read romans 16:25-27

artist reflection

"This text serves as Paul's closing doxology in his letter to the Romans. He wishes them to be strengthened by his words and "the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed" (Romans 16: 25).

In reading this, everything seems so tidy and wrapped up in a bow. It seems almost too simple that God has been revealed through Christ, and the mystery is now disclosed.

For me, the words of Paul ring true. I do believe God has been revealed through Christ.

However, I also believe our understanding of that revelation requires our action. I believe the revelation of mystery is not bound by time, or place, or context. This revelation is ongoing. God continually reveals God's self to us today as God did at the time of Paul's writings.

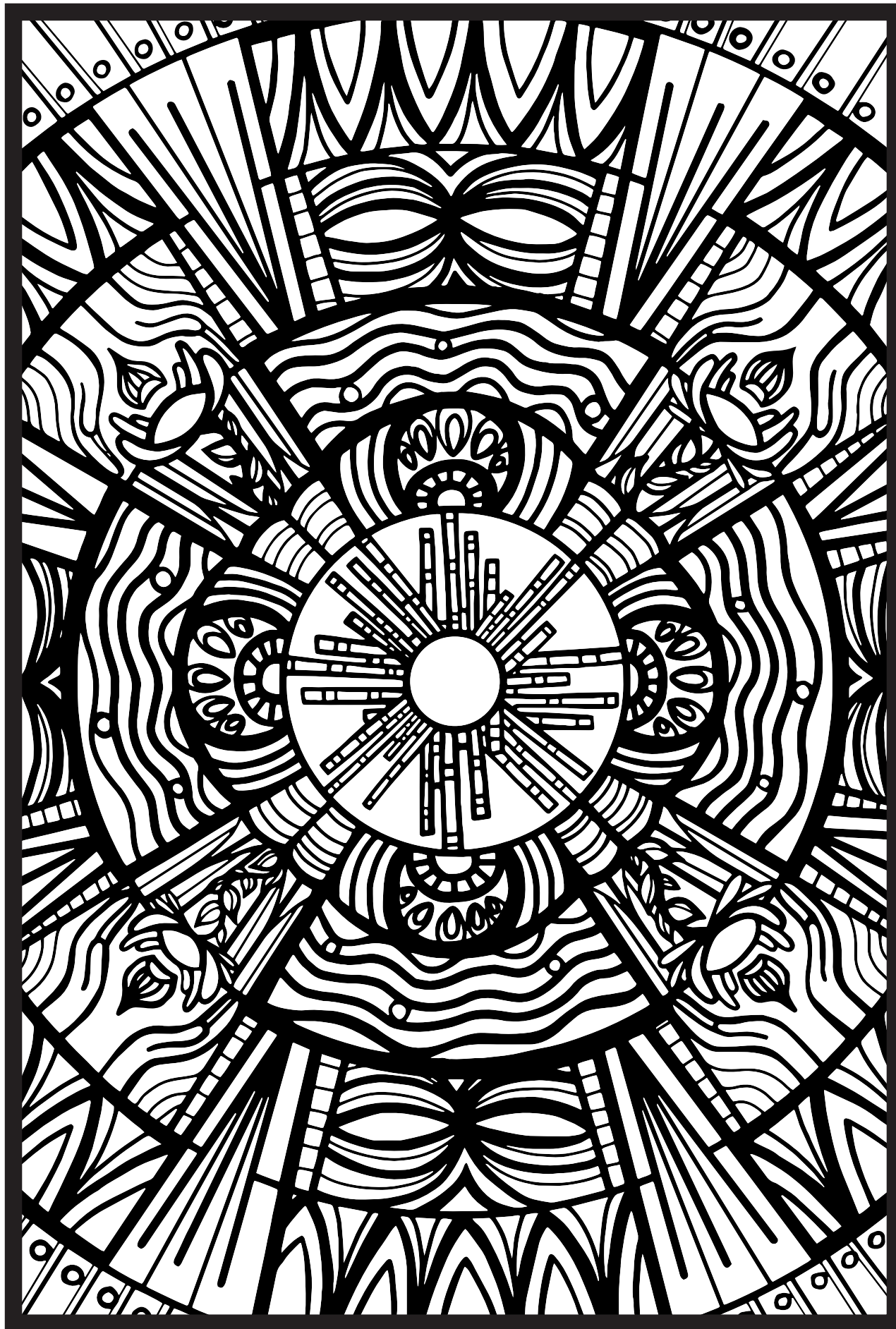
I felt it appropriate to image this text in a radial, mandala design. Mandalas have no end and reveal themselves one layer at a time from the center. As you color this mandala, allow it to focus your heart on this text. Each ring holds imagery pointing to Paul's doxology. Allow the mandala to give you space to reflect on this past year.

As we close this time of reflection and we move into a new year, I hope that we all continue to seek after this revealed mystery. I hope that we do not grow discouraged, weary, or afraid when we do not understand, and that we revel in the beauty of continually reaching out to grasp that which we cannot fully hold. It is a beautiful journey." —*Lauren Wright Pittman*

color

As you color in the page on the left, reflect on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement.

pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



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This world is full of beginnings—a baby's first cries, the light of sunrise, habits retrained, love singing your name, and hope breaking into our day to day. However, before a new beginning, there is always waiting. Thus, this Advent, we wait for the birth of the Messiah—that unfailing light. We'll seek a love that shoves away the shadows of night. We'll follow a star and trust that it shows us the way. We'll proclaim that God has the power to make us new each day.

We hope this devotional might awaken you to this daily promise of newness. Through art and reflections, we invite you to carve out time each day to write, pray, and color your way through this season. In a world where light often seems dim, we encourage you to examine the world through the lens of hope, naming where God's light shines and how you are working to share that light more abundantly. May you walk through each week looking for and sharing light.

We originally created this devotional for Advent 2017, using scriptures from the Revised Common Lectionary, Year B. In this revised version, we have removed the dates so that you can journey through the content any Advent season. We encourage you to begin on the first Sunday in Advent and complete the devotions and prompts daily, hopefully continuing through the end of the year.

This Advent, let there be color. Let there be peace. Let there be new beginnings. Let there be light—as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be.

Artfully yours,

The Sanctified Art Creative team

Lisle Gwynn Garrity
Sarah Are
Hannah Garrity
Lauren Wright Pittman

A Sanctified Art LLC is a collective of artists in ministry who create resources for worshiping communities. The Sanctified Art team works collaboratively to bring scripture and theological themes to life through film, visual art, curriculum, coloring pages, liturgy, graphic designs, and more. Their mission is to empower churches with resources to inspire creativity in worship and beyond. Driven by the connective and prophetic power of art, they believe that art helps us connect our hearts with our hands, our faith with our lives, and our mess with our God.

Learn more about their work at sanctifiedart.org.

DAY 26

read psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

artist reflection

"Why a sense of other? Why a feeling of winning? Why the word exalted? I struggle with this text. If we of the house of David are exalted, does that mean someone in comparison has been pushed down? Is not every human a person of great value?"

As a child, I saw a claymation film called Martin the Cobbler (narrated by Alexandra Tolstoy) where a shoemaker was looking for God in his daily life. God may have even told him that God would show up that day. Each time the shoemaker answered the door of his shop, he was disappointed to find not God, but someone in need of help instead. The shoemaker graciously cared for each person. At the end of the day, the shoemaker spoke to God, perhaps in a dream. I remember it going something like this, "You never came to my shop," said the shoemaker. "I came multiple times today," said God. Flashes of the various people who showed up that day are still seared in my memory. There was a child and an older woman, among others. I watched the replay of the man's day and I realized as a ten-year-old that every person has God in them. For twenty-five years I have seen this in my head. This year, I have thought about it more often and in so many more contexts. What if I looked for God in everyone I met? What if I treated every relationship in my day as sacred?

As descendants of David, I think we can get caught up in this idea of being exalted. I think it is dangerous to perpetuate the idea of being above another. It seems like a selfish interpretation. Our God of selflessness could not have meant this text to be acted on in such a selfish way. In rereading the text now, I think my piece on this helps me to more deeply understand. I really loved my sketch for this, but it did not translate as effective patterning for a final piece. I had drawn a crowd of people from which one person was propelled up a curve to the top of a family tree layout. There was a literal right hand at the top, palm facing down.

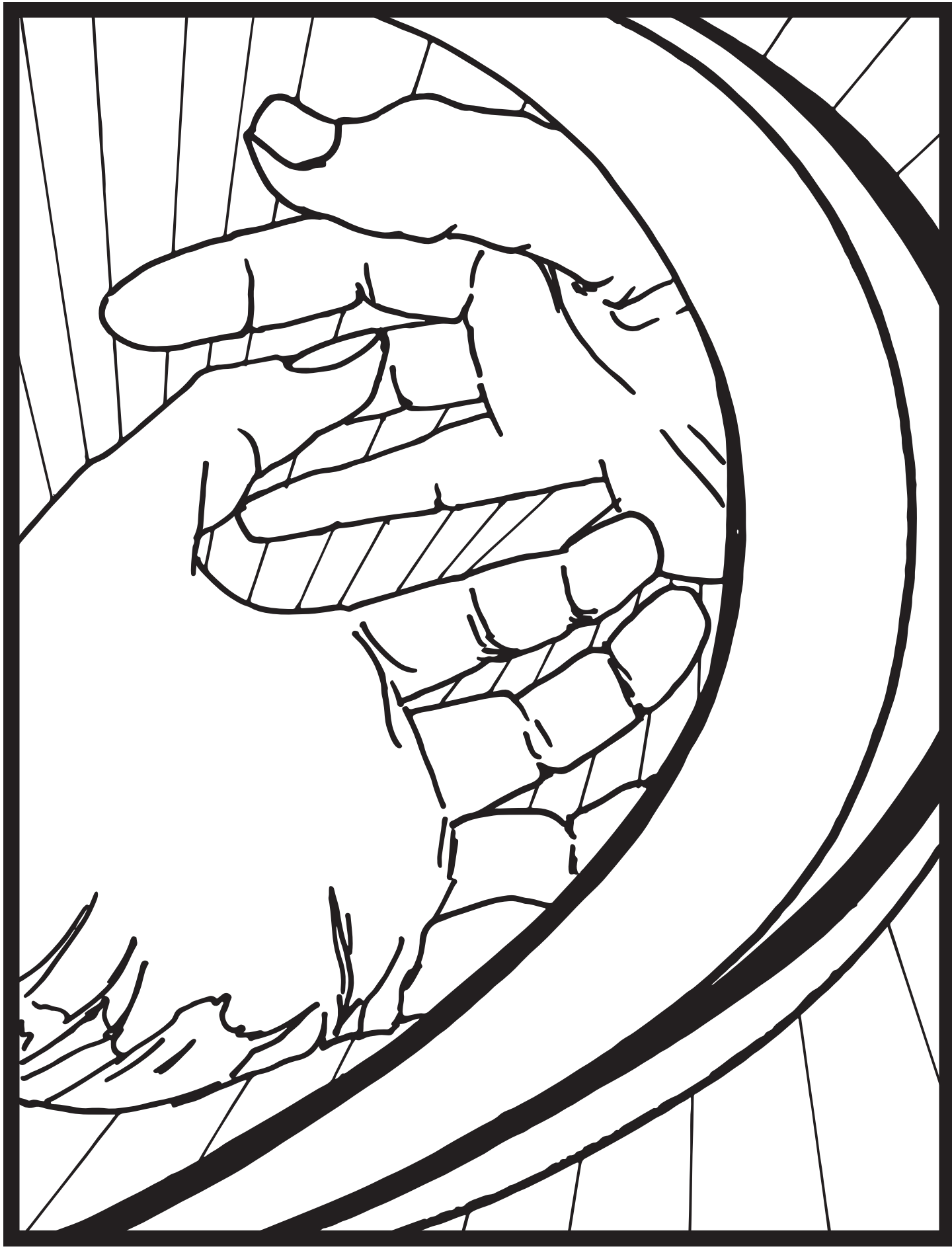
In contrast, the right hand has multiplied in the final piece. These hands remind me that I am on an even plane with all of God's children. They remind me that my job on this earth is to serve God in each person that I meet. Light rays originate in the palms of each hand, imaging the radiance of a life of service. The curved space represents the exalted idea, but perhaps the curve continues in a loop of some kind, a circle with no top or bottom. Maybe all humans have fleeting moments at the top, moments of great clarity during which we can see and understand what God asks of us—moments of exaltation.

Rather than hoping that others will see God in us, what if we searched to see God in each other?"
—Hannah Garrity

color

As you color in the page on the left, reflect on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement.

pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



DAY 1
Sabbath

Conversations with God

*Carve out space for intentional Sabbath today.
Contemplate the following prayer as part of your Sabbath practice.*

Hope

"Creator God, tell me of another world," I said.

"A world where bodies don't fail and all are born healthy, so people dance for days.
A world where grief sets its prisoners free and heartbroken hearts find relief.

Tell me of another world, God. A world where toddlers believe they can and clap for themselves every time they take another wobbly step.

Tell me of the end of war.
Tell me of a church whose walls become windows, and whose faith becomes a magnet—drawing people in with love's pure pull.

Tell me again about the lion and the lamb.
Tell me of another world," I said.

Then God said, "Child, my child. You are my world. You are my heart, and you are my Church. What you speak of is hope. But you should keep speaking, and keep seeking, for it is such a beautiful prayer."

PRAYER BY SARAH ARE



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gratitude LIST

prayers

weekly goals

read 2 samuel 7:1-11, 16

artist reflection

"Jesus' birth narrative seems to unfold entirely on the move—Mary and Joseph are getting registered in Bethlehem when labor begins, Jesus is born in a feeding trough out of sheer desperation, the new family flees to Egypt soon after Jesus' birth for protection from king Herod's threat. There's no time to crown this new baby king, to build him a grand palace or home, to celebrate the promise of his birth with marks of success and materiality. And this is fitting, of course, for a baby king who would later lead a homeless ministry of wandering place to place, seeking out those most in need. His presence—and promises—are uncontainable.

In this text, we're reminded that God has always been on the move. This part of the story begins with rest and safety. The Israelites have finally recaptured Jerusalem as their home, and David has led the ark of the Covenant into the city center with triumphant dancing and full-body praise. God has done a new thing, and now David feels as if they must mark this new promise with materiality and grandeur, building for God a palace like the one in which David himself lives.

But Yahweh proclaims a message of uncontainable promises—God is in the business of going where the people are, not sitting still in a throne in a city's center like the gods other tribes worshiped. God is always on the move—with us, in us, beyond us. A home will come, but David must lead the Israelites to live into that promise, knowing first and foremost that God's presence lives in them.

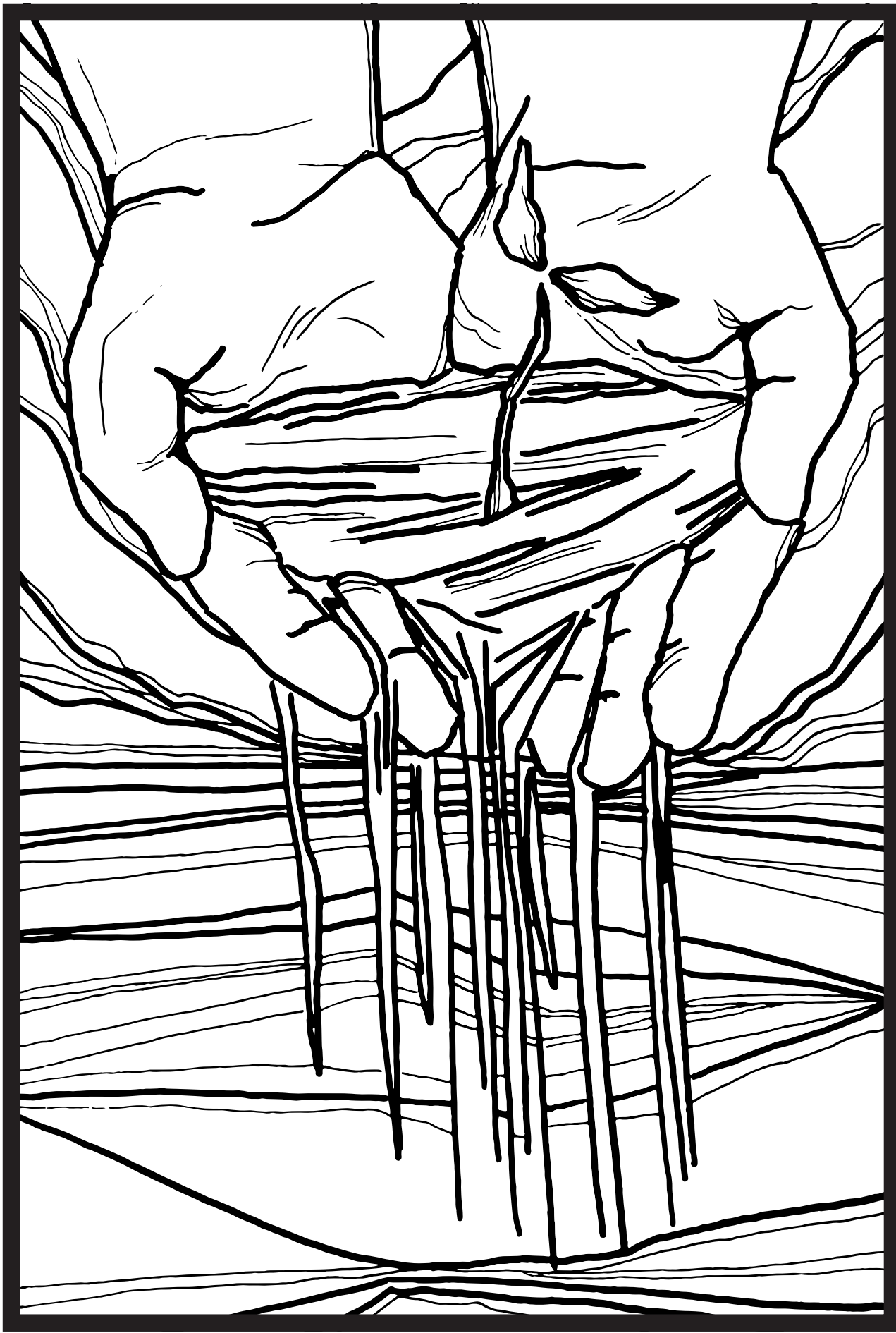
And here we are, about to step into a new year. Looking back, it's tempting to measure the past 12 months with visible, tangible marks of success and progress. Did we finally buy that house? Did I get into grad school? Did I lose the weight? Did I get a promotion at work? Did I make enough money? Did I make sure all the kids got straight A's? It's easy to perceive promises only in these visible, societal successes. But what if we're called to instead look for the ways God's promises are boundless, to measure the ways God is working in us and through us no matter where we are in our journey? As we begin this new year, let us be less concerned with how many homes and thrones we have built, and more focused on blooming wherever we are planted."

—Lisle Gwynn Garrity

color

As you color in the page on the left, reflect on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement.

pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



 *looking for light*

journal

Take a few moments to write and reflect, thinking about what feels relevant at this moment in your life and in the world.

Where is light missing in the world?

Where is light breaking in?

pray *May the light shine in the darkness, for even darkness cannot overcome it. Amen.*



DAY 24

read *luke 2:1-20*

artist reflection

"There are so many beautiful details tucked into the Christmas story—Mary swaddling her baby, the shepherds' surprise, that little town of Bethlehem. It is easy to get caught up in all of those perfect details, and I think we should! However, as much as I love these details, I also love looking at the story with a big-picture lens.

From a big-picture perspective, I think the whole of the Christmas story can be summarized in just one phrase from this text: "Good news of great joy for all people" (Luke 2: 10).

In a day and age where thousands of refugees die a year, Nazis march in our streets, and racial tensions run deep, this promise—that the birth of Jesus is good news for *all*, and is *good* news—is a promise saturated in the gospel message.

In this drawing, I included an abstract star in the top corner of the page—a star whose light cannot be contained. This star reminds us of the star that guided the shepherds and wisemen to Jesus, as well as the ways in which Jesus is our light—particularly in the face of suffering. The repetitive circles symbolize that Jesus came for all—for God's love and mercy are all-encompassing, covering all of creation and unifying us as family. What better news could there possibly be? Great joy, indeed." —Sarah Are

color

As you color in the page on the left, reflect on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement.

pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



read mark 13:24-37

artist reflection

"The first time I read this text, my senses were flooded. My mind was overtaken by flashes of saturated imagery—of the darkened sun and moon, of stars barreling toward the ground, of clouds swirling with glorious light, of people floating on winds. My body felt the wavering instability of the heavens. I could smell and taste the wisdom of the fig tree, and as I neared verse 32, I felt the sharp coldness of uncertainty scale my back.

'But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come' (Mark 13: 32-33). I heard the ticking of clocks grow louder and felt anxiety crawl in my stomach. This text gives me a familiar feeling—it's the feeling of being out of control; a feeling of the looming, almost mocking, unknown.

Recently, I had a very sudden and excruciating death happen in my family. It came out of nowhere and I don't understand it. I'm shattered. It feels as though the whole earth is shaking and everything that offered me comfort is losing its light and is crashing to the ground.

This tragedy, as well as this text, remind me that my understanding of God and the world around me is so miniscule. What am I supposed to do with this tragedy? What are we supposed to do with this confusing text? Are we to anxiously wait around for "the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory?" Are we to sit as though we are in a waiting room with ticking clocks, on the edge of our seats waiting for the alarm to sound? Are we to be immobilized by mystery?

Waiting isn't going to cut it. I need to do something and I desperately need light to break in.

In times of confusion, especially in scriptural texts, I try and find an anchor to hold onto, and often times that anchor is repetition. Repeatedly, in various ways, the text says, keep alert. Keep awake; beware. All I know to do is keep awake—to keep pointing to the miraculous signs of God's love and light breaking into the world, to work to bring more of that light in and break down those things that seek to block the light—until light swallows up the darkness."

—Lauren Wright Pittman

color

As you color in the page on the left, reflect on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement.

pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



looking for light

journal

On this Christmas day, take a few moments to write and reflect, thinking about what feels relevant at this moment in your life and in the world.

Where is light missing in the world?

Where is light breaking in?

pray *May the light shine in the darkness, for even darkness cannot overcome it. Amen.*



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gratitude LIST

prayers

weekly goals

read isaiah 64:1-9

artist reflection

"In the wake of exile, the Israelites find themselves in a strange and liminal space—they are no longer captives, but their temple is not yet rebuilt. They are freed, but not fully restored. And now, the theological weight of their suffering seems to ripple through them like an aftershock. How do they make sense of what has happened? Is God both all-powerful and all-good? Is Yahweh the same God before, during, and after exile? Did human sin warrant and cause God to abandon them? Or were the sins of the Israelites simply a response to divine absence—"Because you hid yourself we transgressed" (Is. 64: 5b)?

These nine verses move abruptly from one extreme to another. Pay attention to the verbs and note how they change tenses from one line to the next. Each verse dances from past to present to future, shifting back and forth from praise, lament, and confession. The prophet seems to be grappling on behalf of the Israelites, jolting from one thought to the next—not so unlike someone struggling to make sense of things in the clouded aftermath of grief.

One verse in particular grabbed my attention as I worked on this visual: "We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away"(Is. 64:6b). The imagery and symbolism of these lines, juxtaposed with the God the potter language soon after, intrigued me. At first glance, I might imagine a leaf blowing away in the wind, disappearing from sight and mind. But leaves don't vanish; they decompose, sinking into the clay of the earth. God the potter is, then, an artist of composted materials, a Holy Regenerator of the muck of the earth.

I think we are often quick to assume that death means God has abandoned us, that we have faded from God's care like a leaf in the wind. And this is a valid response, especially in the face of unthinkable tragedy. But perhaps the beauty of this passage is how it subversively envisions another possibility for how God moves in the midst of suffering. God shapes what has died into a wobbly, messy vessel, one peeling open with possibility." —Lisle Gwynn Garrity

color

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pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



DAY 22
Sabbath

Conversations with God

*Carve out space for intentional Sabbath today.
Contemplate the following prayer as part of your Sabbath practice.*

Joy

"God," I asked, "What brings you joy?"

"Oh, my child," God said. "The list is so long.
Hearing you say my name and seeing you soak in this beautiful creation bring me joy.
When you stand with family, neighbors, and strangers, and sing or work together, my
heart risks overflowing with joy.
When you remember the children, and the quiet, and the hurting—I swear my heart
could take flight."

"And when your heart takes flight," I asked, leaning forward with curiosity, "then what happens?"

And God leaned back and laughed the most musical, heart-filled, soul-reaching laugh I'd ever
heard, and that's when I remembered—joy is contagious, and it is a gift. And then I started singing.

PRAYER BY SARAH ARE



DAY 21

Sharing the light

journal

Look back on your week, reflecting on the events, circumstances, and people that have shaped you.

How have you seen or experienced light?

How have you shared light with others?

pray Arise, shine, for our light has come. The radiance of God has risen upon us. Amen.

DAY 5

read psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

artist reflection

"This year, I have noticed, more than ever before, the tears that are repeatedly mentioned in biblical texts. We cry for God, and God cries for us. Sometimes I imagine the tears flowing down from heaven, flowing through our hearts, carrying our souls along a river of sorrow that we, children of God, have caused in God's heart. Other times, I see tears in our everyday, as part of the wallpaper that surrounds us, as part of the fabric of our moments. In Psalm 80, I hear the psalmist describing tears as sustenance in the form of a punishment handed down to the people. She pleads with God to save us.

As I drew imagery inspired by this text, the psalmist's plea for life (Ps. 80:18) manifested itself in the form of a circle, perhaps a circle of life, or perhaps a state of continuous life. Within the circle, she holds an infant representing a life given. A pattern of tears, bread, and cup weave around her as she makes her requests before God. From above, her poetic refrain shines down: "Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved" (Ps. 80:3).

I cry with the psalmist when I read this. Recently, in my hometown of Charlottesville, VA, people died. My heart aches. "O Lord God of Hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers?" (Ps. 80:4) In my hometown, anger, hate, and pain took the day in national headlines. "You have fed them with the bread of tears, and given them tears to drink in full measure" (Ps. 80:5). In my hometown, two sides could not understand each other. "You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves" (Ps. 80:6). In my hometown, God's tears fell from the sky when authorities called a state of emergency and an early curfew. "Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved" (Ps. 80:7).

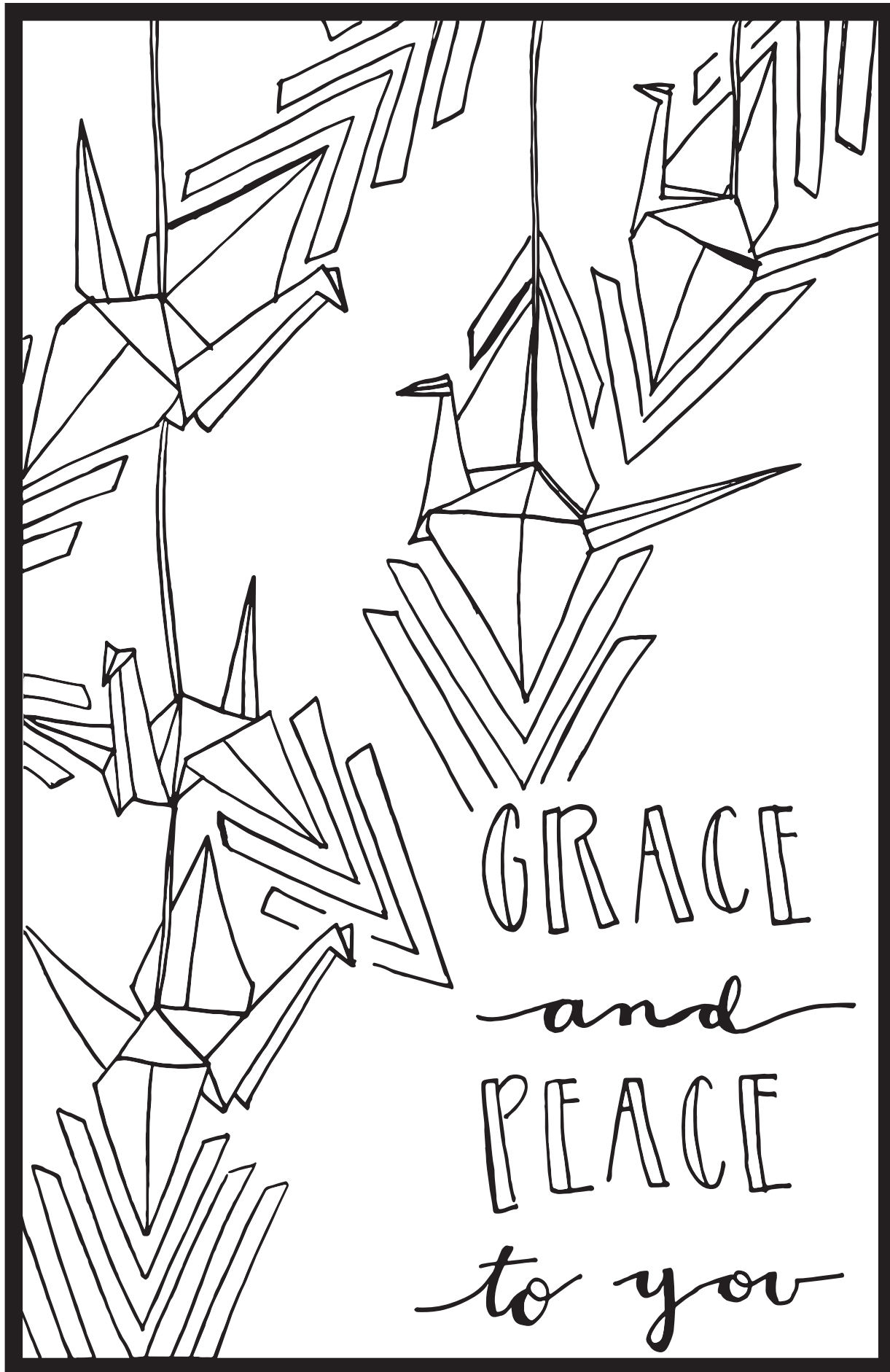
Why? O God, help us." —Hannah Garrity

(Art and reflection crafted in light of the white supremacy rallies held in Charlottesville, VA, August 11-13th, 2017)

color

As you color in the page on the left, reflect on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement.

pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

artist reflection

"This passage from 1 Thessalonians is a beautiful call to discipleship which reads almost like a Christian checklist—pray often, be good, avoid evil, remember God.

All of these commands fit beautifully within our Advent season as we work to prepare our hearts for the birth of the Christ child. However, the phrase that stuck out to me the most was, "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thes. 5:19). At first this phrase stuck out to me because it feels impossible for us to quench the Spirit. The Greek verb for "quench" can also be translated as "extinguish." How could we possibly extinguish the mighty Spirit that moved at the start of creation and again at Pentecost?

As I thought about this phrase in context with the other commands, I began to think about all the times the Spirit is pouring down on us, and how often we might miss that Divine presence by hiding ourselves under an umbrella or behind our own business. In this image, I drew three triangles to represent the spirit, soul, and body (1 Thes. 5:23). The words, "Do not quench the Spirit" rest over and break through all three triangles to represent no part of us going untouched by God's grace.

I then drew a garden at the bottom of the page and vertical lines to represent the movement of the Spirit. Similar to rain, these lines remind us that, when we are open to the Spirit, we may find ourselves growing tall and strong. Thus, on this Advent day, may our prayer be to remain open to the Spirit, and may She fall down on us—washing away all of our brokenness—like nurturing rain." —Sarah Are

color

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pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



DAY 6

read 1 corinthians 1:3-9

artist reflection

"I love that our Advent journey begins with the words, "Grace and peace to you" (1 Cor. 1:3), for those are the same words that Jesus wished upon his disciples in the days after the crucifixion when they hid, fearfully, in the upper room. In some ways, I feel as if this passage is reminding us of the end, and yet, pointing us back to the beginning.

I chose to focus on the word "peace," drawing origami paper cranes, which in Japanese traditions have often been symbols of peace throughout generations. From those paper cranes I drew geometric ripples to acknowledge the ways in which scripture says we are strengthened.

I love the idea that peace could spread like wind in the air, touching us, strengthening us—and growing stronger all the time—just as Christ strengthens us.

Thus, this Advent season, I pray we remember the fullness of the story, and that, even in our waiting, we may be strong enough to spread peace like ripples in the wind. —Sarah Are

color

As you color in the page on the left, reflect on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement.

pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



DAY 7

Sharing the light

journal

Look back on your week, reflecting on the events, circumstances, and people that have shaped you.

How have you seen or experienced light?

How have you shared light with others?

pray Arise, shine, for our light has come. The radiance of God has risen upon us. Amen.

DAY 19

read *luke 1:46b-55*

artist reflection

"I am continually struck by the juxtaposition of Mary's perplexing situation with the certainty of her song. She finds out she is to bear the son of God and also that her barren, older relative Elizabeth is also with child—and all of this comes from the mouth of an angel.

Instead of all the things that I might do, like reject the whole thing as a crazy dream, or beg not to be chosen for such a burden, Mary poses a simple question and then accepts the circumstances.

By her faithfulness, Mary, in a huge way, magnifies the glory of God. She takes these incredibly difficult, shocking—and to put it lightly, inconvenient circumstances—and cobbles together a beautiful song that we still talk about to this day. The strength of this woman to rejoice in the midst of this calling is astounding.

Though the text doesn't hint at Mary's inner wrestling, or even a slight struggle on Mary's part, I imagine none of this was easy. I imagine Mary sang this song, not only to glorify God, but to comfort herself—to remind herself of all that God had done and all that God could and would do to pull her through this too.

I decided to image Mary with her mouth open in song with her spirit glowing. Her whole being shines as she magnifies God. Most importantly, I drew a line in the middle of her brow to show the strength and struggle it took to rejoice in the midst of what must've felt like chaos."

—Lauren Wright Pittman

color

As you color in the page on the left, reflect on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement.

pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



DAY 8

Sabbath

Conversations with God

*Carve out space for intentional Sabbath today.
Contemplate the following prayer as part of your Sabbath practice.*

Peace

"God," I whispered. "What if peace isn't possible? Then what?"

God was quiet for a minute.
Then God wrapped me up in God's arms and told me a story.

God said, "In the beginning, I knit you together. I wove strands of peace into your heart so that you might know and grow love; and your heart was beautiful, wild, and free.

That was a long time ago, but peace is part of who you are. It just gets stuck under fear, doubt, and hurt—like a bird with stones on its wings."

"I don't understand," I fussed. "If peace is part of who we are, then why are we humans so bad at it?"

God held me a little tighter and said, "Little bird, remember how loved you are, and start small. Remove the stones of anger, hurt, and fear one at a time and peace will surely grow."

Then God lifted up my arms and set me out to fly, and I realized that, grounded in God's love, I was beautiful and wild and free, and peace was a part of me.

So I flew home, and stayed up all night writing love letters and tearing down walls so that the peace in me could fly to the peace in you.

Let me know when you get it.

PRAYER BY SARAH ARE



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gratitude LIST

prayers

weekly goals

read isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

artist reflection

"The poetry of verses 2-3 in Isaiah 61 are stunning in every translation. I looked at the original hebrew of these lines and came up with this iteration: "To comfort all of the mourning ones, to appoint to the mourning ones of Zion, to give to them beauty instead of ashes, the oil of elation instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a spirit dimmed; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of Yahweh to show his beauty."

The author of these lines writes to the survivors of Babylon, as exile has finally come to an end. Restoration is at hand, and yet, can they believe it? Can they trust it? Can they even imagine it? Perhaps 60+ years in captivity has robbed them of identity, of imagination, of hope. An entire generation has lived and died without a glimpse of freedom. In these post-exilic times, the prophet's role is to breathe imagination into their souls—to paint a vision for them to see how God is making all things new—especially when they have lost sight of everything but death.

In this piece, oak branches curl into a garland or crown. Most of the branches appear dead and brittle, but a few leaves flourish, signaling that the branches are, indeed, planted in the earth. The oak leaves here contrast the ones you colored in during the first week of this devotional. No longer fading in the wind, these leaves are green with promise.

The oaks of righteousness encircle a hand that holds the light that is slowly and surely breaking forth—for the brokenhearted, for the captives, for the ones too buried in their pain to even imagine the new world in which they now live." —Lisle Gwynn Garrity

color

As you color in the page on the left, reflect on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement.

pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



 *looking for light*

journal

Take a few moments to write and reflect, thinking about what feels relevant at this moment in your life and in the world.

Where is light missing in the world?

Where is light breaking in?

pray *May the light shine in the darkness, for even darkness cannot overcome it. Amen.*



DAY 17

read john 1:6-8, 19-28

artist reflection

'Who are you? Who are you? What do you say about yourself?
I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness . . .' (John 1:19, 22)

John the Baptist arrived to pave the way for Jesus' work, to make the path straight. He baptized with water. He foretold a baptism of the Holy Spirit. He led people toward the work of the gospel. He inspired people to join the path that Jesus would tread—to remove the underbrush, to matte down the grass. He told of what was to come. He was all of these things and more. He was the voice crying out in the wilderness.

How would you answer the questions asked?

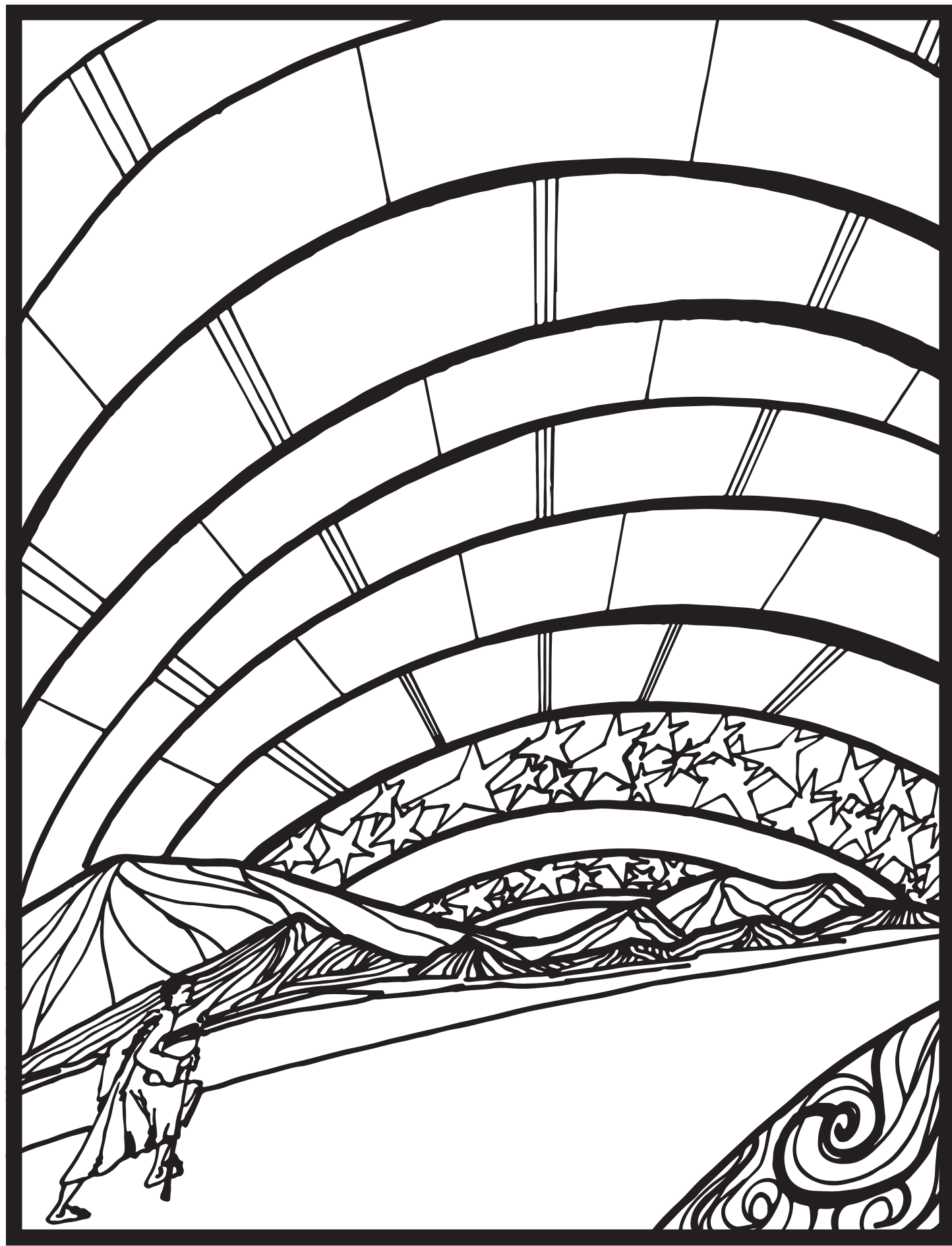
I am an artist. I am a mother and a wife, a daughter and a sister. I condemn hate and profess love. I am not perfect; I seek to understand. I am inspired by the work of the gospel, the mindset of love. I am disenchanted by the contradictions in the bible, in my life, and in the world around me. I aspire to humility. I struggle with my faith, yet I struggle on. I am all of these things and more. I am a voice crying out in the wilderness. I am trying to make the path straight.

Who are you? Who are you? What do you say about yourself?
How are you a voice of one crying out in the wilderness?" —Hannah Garrity

color

As you color in the page on the left, reflect on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement.

pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



DAY 10

read mark 1:1-8

artist reflection

"Throughout our Advent planning and creating process, I've been contemplating the meaning of this ancient command: "Prepare the way, make his paths straight"(Mark 1:3). It's a cry that has sprung from the lips of prophets throughout time—Malachi, Isaiah, and now, John the Baptist. What did these words mean in these ancient contexts? I imagine it was a call to action for all those in a particular city to gather in a great procession to welcome a new prophet, to receive him like royalty. The writer of Mark's gospel begins the story of the good news by intentionally establishing Jesus in line with the Jewish prophets of the past. But why the command to make his paths straight? How do you make one's path straight in the midst of a hilly and often rugged desert? Was this a call to alter the infrastructure of roads leading into the city? Did it imply that someone was to meet the approaching prophet in the wilderness to guide him carefully and swiftly into the safety of the city's gates?

After doing a good bit of research, I'm still not exactly sure of the historical implications of this phrase, but I think that preparing the way, at a fundamental level, necessitates tangible and systemic change. There is surely personal work involved in these preparations, but the effort must be focused on practices, institutions, and communities as a whole. When I think about what this might mean for us now, I think it involves how we each play a role in shaping our policies, churches, families, and local communities. How can we play a part in shifting systems of power and scarcity to truly pave the way for the inbreaking of God to be truly known and shown?

In this piece, I created an open wilderness—the space in which this new beginning emerges. The sky swirls about, swallowed up by billowing clouds. The land converges with angled paths, but they and the sky gradually become straight along the horizon line. As you look at this image, my hope is that your eyes land on the straightened horizon. Perhaps this will remind us that our actions begin with sharing the vision of who is to come, to truly see possibility for all the crooked paths and twisted ways of our world to be made right."

—Lisle Gwynn Garrity

color

As you color in the page on the left, reflect on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement.

pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



looking for light

journal

Take a few moments to write and reflect, thinking about what feels relevant at this moment in your life and in the world.

Where is light missing in the world?

Where is light breaking in?

pray *May the light shine in the darkness, for even darkness cannot overcome it. Amen.*



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gratitude LIST

prayers

weekly goals

read isaiah 40:1-11

artist reflection

"The mountainous terrain of a mother and child's embrace has so many facets. Physically, the curves and corners feel disjointed at times. We must nestle into each embrace to find the best fit. Emotionally, the bond we feel to our mothers as children seems unbreakable. Even as we grow older, our bonds may loosen, but the deep connection never does. We can drift apart, we can even completely disown one another, but we cannot cleanly break away. Our family's opinions and values affect and guide each of us long into our adulthood. But family connection is rocky. It can be thorny. Shared belief and derisive judgment are wrapped up in heart-wrenching love.

How can such things be smoothed out? How can human relationship be normalized, be flattened into sameness? How can deep love not be messy? Isaiah charges us all to make the way straight for God. I think smoothing, normalizing, and flattening cannot be the way to a straight path for God—God of so many facets; God of comfort, penalty, constancy; God of forever; God of fearlessness; God of gathering, feeding, carrying and leading. A God of so many facets must be able to take a road with many bends or breaks.

In this image, the work of our hands surround our sacred relationship with God, Mary's sacred relationship with Jesus, and our sacred relationships in life. We can build them or we can break them. Every relationship is fragile. Every relationship is sacred. Surrounding the work of our hands is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit can fill us with peace in the face of adversity. The Holy Spirit can quell our fears. The Holy Spirit can make each path passable, not by removing the brambles, but by preparing us each to talk about them and figure out how to get by.

Our world is made up of one-on-one relationships. How many of mine did I treat as sacred today? How many thorny corners did I embrace? Did I listen to understand?" —Hannah Garrity

color

As you color in the page on the left, reflect on how the imagery illuminates what you find in the scripture and artist's statement.

pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



DAY 15
Sabbath

Conversations with God

*Carve out space for intentional Sabbath today.
Contemplate the following prayer as part of your Sabbath practice.*

Love

"But what does love look like?" I asked.

God said,
"I love you when I open the shutters to let the light in.
And I love you when I wander through the hallways of your mind, whistling love songs
to keep nightmares at bay.
And I love you when I kneel in your garden and pull the weeds that try to strangle you
so that you can grow nothing but wildflowers for days.
And I love you when I brush the dust off your piano keys and stairwells
so that you can once again open up your heart to another,
and maybe even invite them in to dance."

I whispered to God, "I don't think I'm very good at that."

Then God said, "It's ok. Sometimes your heart is full of dust, and your home is full of
hatred, and the garden soil is so rocky that not a single bit of new life can grow.
But I love you anyhow, and I will never leave you. So when you aren't sure,
listen for my lullaby. Look for the wildflowers. I am there. I am always in the hallways
of your heart. That is love. I just can't leave you alone."

PRAYER BY SARAH ARE



DAY 14

Sharing the light

journal

Look back on your week, reflecting on the events, circumstances, and people that have shaped you.

How have you seen or experienced light?

How have you shared light with others?

pray Arise, shine, for our light has come. The radiance of God has risen upon us. Amen.

DAY 12

read psalm 85:1-2, 8-13

artist reflection

"The psalmist uses rich imagery that sprouts off the page, sowing a beautiful garden and filling my spirit with longing and hope for this garden to come to fruition.

When I began drawing this piece, I found flowers that symbolized steadfast love (myrtle), faithfulness (dandelion), and peace (white poppies and lavender). Righteousness took the form of the sun, looking down from the sky, letting its light unfurl and embrace the flowers below.

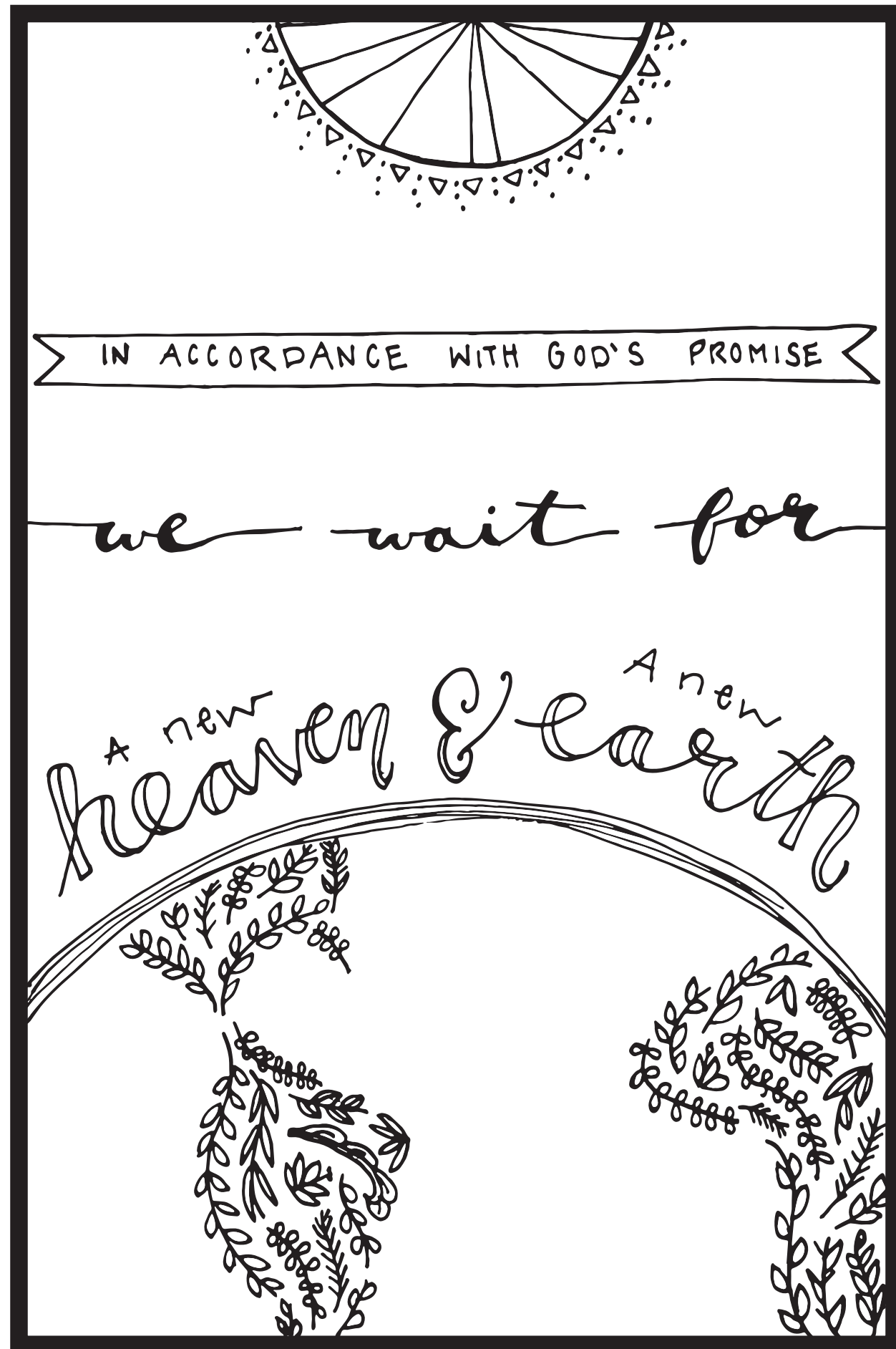
As this garden took shape, I thought about the purpose of a flower garden. Many would say that flower gardens are frivolous and cosmetic, but beyond the purpose of supporting the bee population (which is very important), the truth is we need beauty. Beauty sustains us. Beauty reminds us of the brilliance and mercy of our Creator. Beauty has the power to transform us and call us into the work of making more beauty in the world.

In order to manifest this beauty in the world, I think it would be helpful to hold and cultivate the hope of this garden in our hearts. With our actions, our words, and our prayers, let us image steadfast love and faithfulness springing up from the ground, and righteousness gently holding and kissing peace. Consider what this would look like in your own life and allow those images to transform you." —Lauren Wright Pittman

color

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pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.



DAY 13

read 2 peter 3:8-15a

artist reflection

This passage from 2 Peter strikes me as a bridge between two creation stories—our creation story found in Genesis, and the new creation found in Jesus' birth.

The reference to time in verse 8 drills in that connection, as the creation story found in Genesis uses time as a marker for God's greatness, just as Peter does here.

Thus, the visual for this text is a creation visual. The half circle at the top of the page represents the sun and God's light in this world. At the bottom of the page is a symbolic drawing of the earth—an earth where vines and vegetation take the place of nations' lines and boundaries, reminding us that we are all God's children, unified in creation.

In between these two reminders of creation, I included the words from verse 13, which point to our waiting. For not only in Advent, but in our everyday, we long for something better than the suffering of this world. I found great comfort in the words, "In accordance with God's promise" (2 Peter 3:13), as they remind us that indeed we wait, but we do not wait in vain. We wait for a new heaven and a new earth. We wait for the coming of the Christ child." —Sarah Are

color

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pray Based on your reflections, write a 1-2 line prayer to God.
