

Kids Connection

December 2020



Nativity Star of Light by Leah Newton

December is all about ADVENT!

Advent is a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the birth of Jesus. In this season, we want to slow down, ask questions, have fun, be intentional about how we spend our time, and try new things. In addition to a Zoom meeting on December 6 for all children, we invite families to spend time this Advent using the reflection guides and nativity coloring sheets / cutouts together!

During Advent we will...

1

REFLECT

We will remember the stories of the first Christmas and reflect on how these connect to us today.

2

DISCUSS

We will have conversations about the first Christmas and discuss how it relates to our lives today.

3

PRAY

As individuals and together, we will thank God for the first Christmas and all it means to us today.

About Kids Connection

Kids Connection exists to give children and families a way to focus on a particular component of our faith throughout the month through different types of connections.

Zoom Meeting

On the first Sunday of each month, we'll meet on Zoom following online worship to play games, sing, hear a story, & enjoy a snack (virtually) all together as we introduce our theme for the month.

At Home Activities

Every week there will be several activities - like stories to read, actions to take, prayers to say, questions to discuss - to help children and families dig in to the theme for the month.

In Person Event

Near the end of every month there will be an in person gathering of some kind for children and families to be together - in the safest ways possible - to learn more and share about their experiences with the theme for the month.

Week of Sunday, November 29 - 1st Sunday in Advent

Hope Reflection Guide & Manger Coloring Sheet / Cutout included!

WAYS to CONNECT this DAY/WEEK

- As a family, find time this week to work through the Hope Reflection Guide and begin creating your nativity by coloring and cutting out the manger.

Week of Sunday, December 6 - 2nd Sunday in Advent

Peace Reflection Guide included & Mary/Joseph Coloring Sheet / Cutout included!

WAYS to CONNECT this DAY/WEEK

- Join us for a Zoom meeting following worship. We'll play a game, sing songs together, hear a story about Advent, and share a snack virtually. Zoom Meeting ID: 890 3760 3345
- As a family, find time this week to work through the Peace Reflection Guide and continue creating your nativity by coloring and cutting out Mary & Joseph.

Week of Sunday, December 13 - 3rd Sunday in Advent

Joy Reflection Guide & Angels Coloring Sheet / Cutout included!

WAYS to CONNECT this DAY/WEEK

- As a family, find time this week to work through the Joy Reflection Guide and continue creating your nativity by coloring and cutting out the angels.

Week of Sunday, December 20 - 4th Sunday in Advent

Love Reflection Guide & Shepherds Coloring Sheet / Cutout included!

WAYS to CONNECT this DAY/WEEK

- As a family, find time this week to work through the Love Reflection Guide and continue creating your nativity by coloring and cutting out the shepherds.

Friday, December 25 - Christmas Day

Christmas Reflection Guide & Jesus Coloring Sheet / Cutout included!

WAYS to CONNECT this DAY

- As a family, find time this week to work through the Christmas Reflection Guide and complete your nativity by coloring and cutting out baby Jesus.

Week of Sunday, December 27

WAYS to CONNECT this DAY/WEEK

- Enjoy the beginning of the Christmas season with family and friends - in a safe way! - remembering the first Christmas and the ways it continues to change our lives, and the world, even today.

Hope Reflection Guide for November 29

from *An Illustrated Advent for Families* by Illustrated Children's Ministry

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:1-5

About that time Caesar Augustus ordered a census to be taken throughout the Empire. This was the first census when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Everyone had to travel to his own ancestral hometown to be accounted for. So Joseph went from the Galilean town of Nazareth up to Bethlehem in Judah, David's town, for the census. As a descendant of David, he had to go there. He went with Mary, his fiancée, who was pregnant.

REFLECTION

Today we set the stage for the story of the season. We make space that will be filled as we go through the weeks of Advent – filled with colors and shapes and characters. For now, though, the space is open and empty.

Lots of our spaces look like this early on in Advent – maybe stockings are hung, but there's nothing in them; maybe trees are in place, but there's nothing under them; maybe Advent wreaths are set up, but only one candle is lit. All of the space around us is open, and waiting – filled with expectation, and anticipation.

What fills the space now – the empty nativity waiting for pieces, the empty stockings eager for gifts, the unlit candles soon to hold flames – **what fills all that space now is hope.** The openness is an invitation to imagine what might be.

DISCUSSION

As you color the manger and begin your nativity, talk together:

- In our Scripture for today, Mary and Joseph had to travel back to Joseph's home, to the place where his family was from. How can journeying to be with people who have known us for a long time help us to hope?
- Tell stories of what you think will be coming to fill the nativity scene. What might this space hold by Christmastime? Imagine together: where are those characters now, and what are they doing?
- What do you hope for this Advent – for yourself? For your family? For your community? For the world?

PRAYER

*Holy One,
Thank you for the story that begins here.
Thank you for all the possibility that lies ahead.
Teach us to see empty spaces
as places where hope dwells,
where maybe something wonderful
is about to be born.
Amen.*

Peace Reflection Guide for December 6

from *An Illustrated Advent for Families* by Illustrated Children's Ministry

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:6-7

While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room in the hostel.

REFLECTION

Today we add Mary and Joseph to the nativity scene. They've come on a long journey and Mary's been very pregnant. They finally find a place to rest for the night, but they are alone – except maybe for some animals in the stable – when Jesus is born.

Think about that: the whole world changes in a very small, tucked-away moment. With whatever is happening outside, in the street, or further away in the city, **there is this moment of peace** that happens for these people who have nowhere else to go.

In our world today, many people are forced to make long journeys in search of a safe place to be. Often it is difficult for them to find rest and safety. Moments of fear and chaos can be more common than moments of peace. Give thanks that Mary and Joseph found a safe place, and a moment of peace, and say a prayer that all people on difficult journeys would find the same.

DISCUSSION

As you color Mary & Joseph and add to the nativity, talk together:

- In our Scripture for today, Mary wraps the baby Jesus in a blanket, offering him peace by letting him know he is safe and loved. What helps you feel at peace?
- Have you ever seen someone make peace – maybe at your school, or in your neighborhood, or at your church? What do people do to make peace nearby? What do they do to make peace far away? Share stories about this with each other.
- How can you create peace this Advent – for yourself? For your family? For your community? For the world?

PRAYER

*Gracious One,
Thank you for the promise of peace.
Thank you for moments
where we feel it deep in our hearts.
Teach us to make peace
with our words, with our hands,
for our own place and all places.
Amen.*

Joy Reflection Guide for December 13

from *An Illustrated Advent for Families* by Illustrated Children's Ministry

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:8-14

There were shepherders camping in the neighborhood. They had set night watches over their sheep. Suddenly, God's angel stood among them and God's glory blazed around them. They were terrified. The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master. This is what you're to look for: a baby wrapped in a blanket and lying in a manger." At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir singing God's praises: "Glory to God in the heavenly heights, Peace to all men and women on earth who please God."

REFLECTION

Today the angels enter the nativity scene! At first there's just one, and then a huge angel choir appears. At first the one voice is gentle, comforting, and then the chorus of voices are bold, celebrating. There's so much movement, so much noise, it can feel kind of overwhelming. Even the names for Jesus are complicated... like he can't possibly be all of this at once: Savior, Messiah, Master, and ... baby?!

But all of us are lots of things at once, aren't we? We are friends and classmates and children and siblings and maybe artists or athletes or poets or presidents-to-be. As different as we might be from one another, none of us is just one name, or just one role.

And all of those angels come together to say, in the name of God, who goes by so many names, to all of us, who also do: "Peace." They come together to **sing for joy** that despite all that might seem to separate us, God's desire for all of us, for all the world, is peace.

DISCUSSION

As you color the angels and add to the nativity, talk together:

- In our Scripture for today, the shepherds are feeling a lot of emotions all at once: fear and worry and excitement and finally, joy. Have you ever had lots of feelings at the same time? How did you handle that?
- What is some good news that you've wanted to share with other people? What is it like to be the one who gets to tell it? What is it like when other people share your joy? Tell stories of times you've experienced that.
- Where will you proclaim joy this Advent – for yourself? For your family? For your community? For the world?

PRAYER

Joy-Giving One,

Thank you for the ways you accept and celebrate all of who we are.

Thank you for the many, many ways you live among us.

Teach us to recognize you and to share our joy.

Amen.

Love Reflection Guide for December 20

from *An Illustrated Advent for Families* by Illustrated Children's Ministry

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:15-18

As the angel choir withdrew into heaven, the shepherders talked it over. "Let's get over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us." They left, running, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. Seeing was believing. They told everyone they met what the angels had said about this child. All who heard the shepherders were impressed.

REFLECTION

There are so many ways to show love. Sometimes honoring others just means paying attention to them, listening when they share with us, responding in ways that let them know we heard them, and we care about them, and about what they care about. This is what the shepherds did for the angels.

Listening and paying attention like that is also one way we show love to strangers who have stories to tell. Based on the angels' sharing, the shepherds run to Mary and Joseph, and really see them – that's what it means, right, to say "seeing is believing"? – they make the joy complete by sharing in it. And by telling everyone else when they leave, **they share the love** they found in that small stable with all the world.

DISCUSSION

As you color the shepherds and add to the nativity, talk together:

- In our Scripture for today, the shepherds are feeling a lot of emotions all at once: fear and worry and excitement and finally, joy. Have you ever had lots of feelings at the same time? How did you handle that?
- What is some good news that you've wanted to share with other people? What is it like to be the one who gets to tell it? What is it like when other people share your joy? Tell stories of times you've experienced that.
- Where will you proclaim joy this Advent – for yourself? For your family? For your community? For the world?

PRAYER

*Generous One,
Thank you for all of the ways we are loved.
Thank you for all of the ways we can love.
Teach us to listen closely to each other,
and to our world,
for all of the ways and places love is shared.
Amen.*

Christmas Reflection Guide for December 25

from *An Illustrated Advent for Families* by Illustrated Children's Ministry

SCRIPTURE: Luke 2:19-20

Mary kept all these things to herself, holding them dear, deep within herself. The shepherders returned and let loose, glorifying and praising God for everything they had heard and seen. It turned out exactly the way they'd been told!

REFLECTION

Finally, we turn our focus to Jesus. He's been in this scene for a long time, but other pieces had to be in place, too: the peace of those surrounding him, the joy of those celebrating him, the **love of those devoted to him**. His mother took it all in as she held him close.

It's strange, isn't it, that we wait for Jesus even though he's already come? That each year we mark his arrival as a baby all over again – even though that's not how we mark any other “birthdays.” Somehow our ancestors in faith decided that it's important to remember, year after year, that God comes to us small, and in need of care, and counting on us – on our welcome and our compassion. Why do you think that is?

DISCUSSION

As you color Jesus and add to the nativity, talk together:

- In our Scripture for today, we hear two different reactions to Jesus' birth: Mary holds her joy deep inside, and the shepherds “let loose” with theirs. What do you think these two reactions look like? Sound like? Feel like? Why would Mary respond in one way, and the shepherds in another?
- When have you cared for something small, or fragile? When has someone else depended on you? Tell stories of what that has been like. Are there ways the Christmas story connects with that experience?
- How can you offer welcome, or practice compassion, this Christmas – for yourself? For your family? For your community? For the world?

PRAYER

God-With-Us,

Thank you for sharing our life.

*Thank you for inviting us to journey with you
and with all who love you.*

*Teach us to share welcome and compassion
with everyone*

like we would share it with you.

Amen.

CREATE A NATIVITY

from An Illustrated Advent for Families by Illustrated Children's Ministry

Creating your nativity doesn't require many supplies,
and is pretty explanatory.

Feel free to get creative and use the coloring sheets and cutouts
however you want, but here are some notes
on one way that you could do it.

Supplies needed:

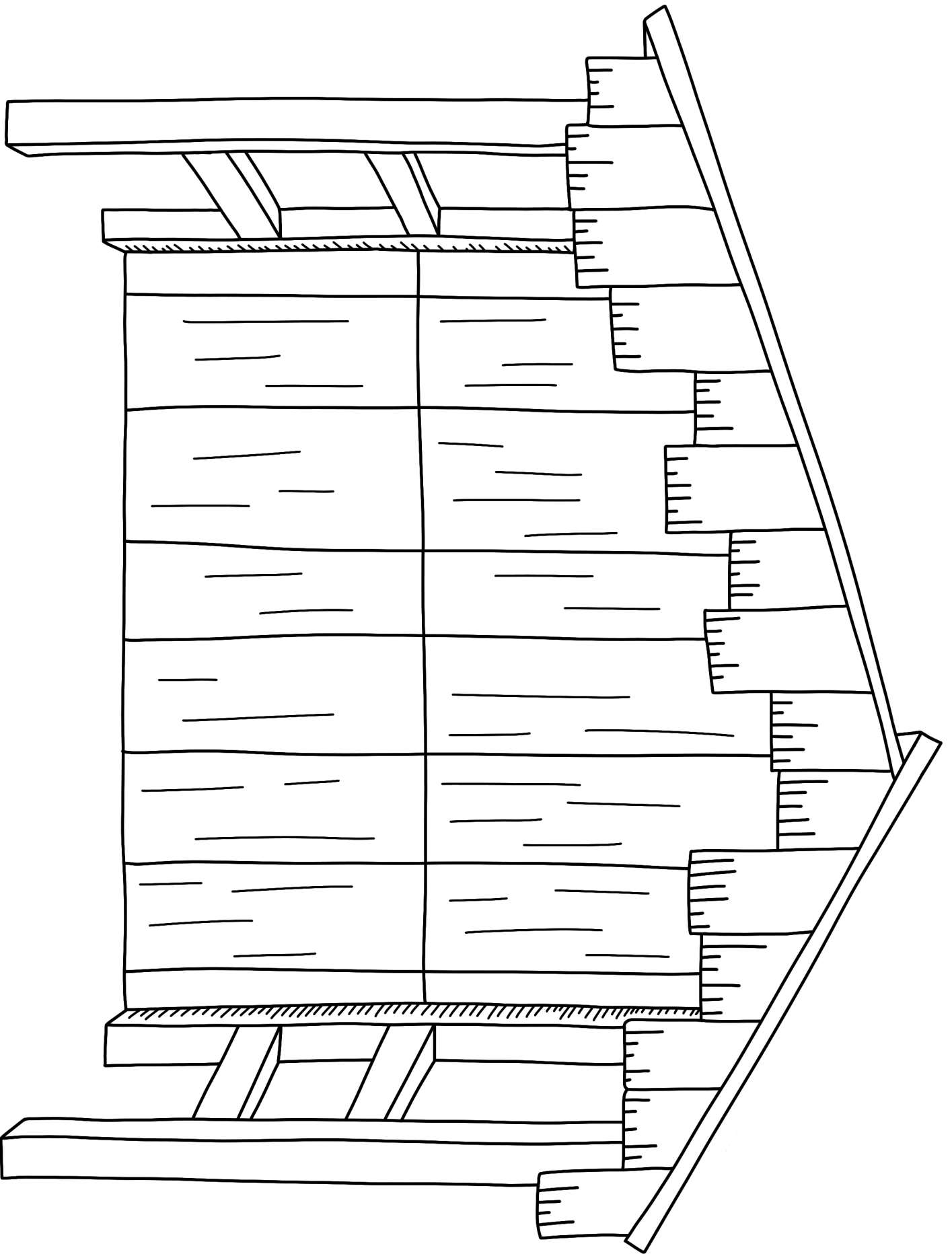
- The print-out of the coloring sheets and cutouts, there is a copy for each child in your family included in the Kids Connection packet. If you want, you can copy/print these on card stock, or a thicker paper, to make your nativity more durable.
- Coloring pencils/crayons/markers.
- A pair of scissors.
- Tape (or glue).

Once you are finished coloring the parts for each week, cut around the dotted lines to cut out each piece. Note: You may wish to cut out the manger and place it on a different color piece of card stock or thicker paper, or you may wish to not cut out the stable at all.

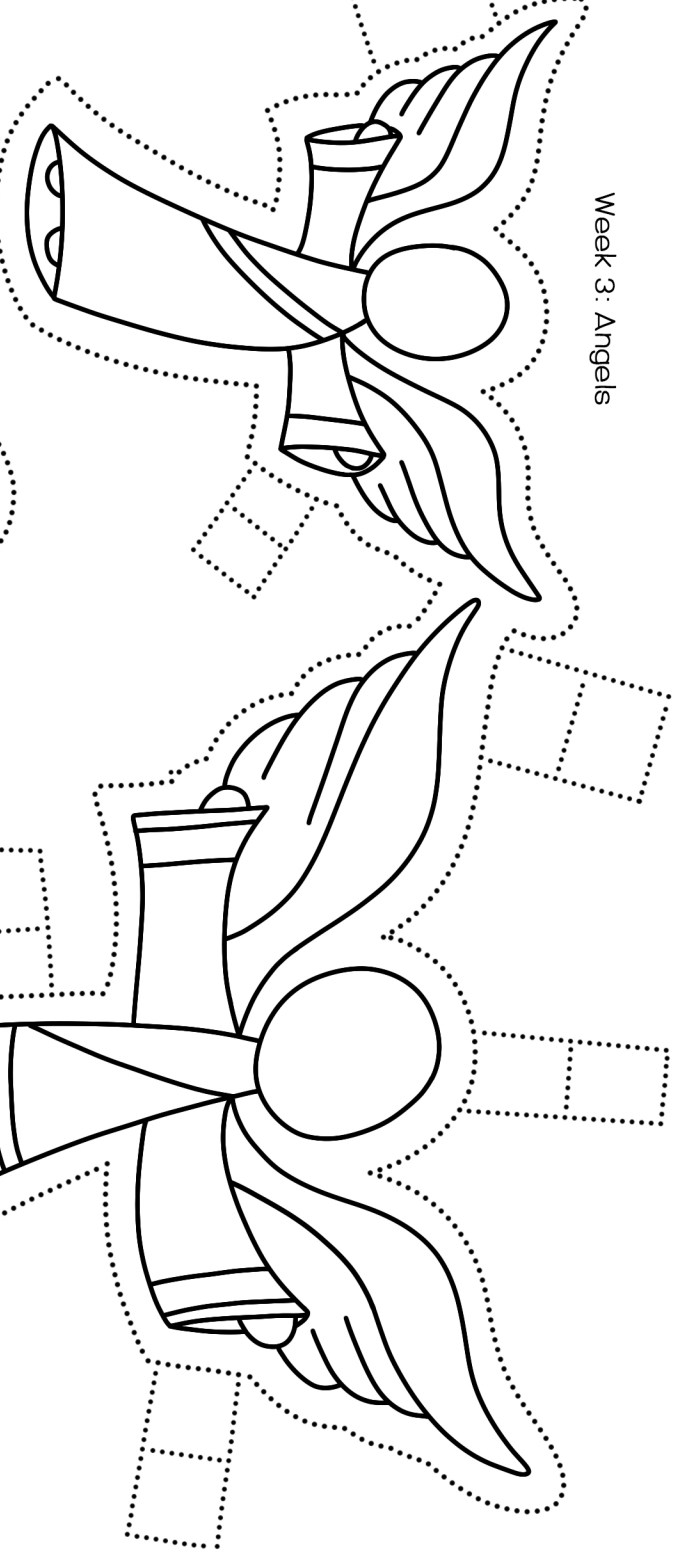
If you wish to have a flat nativity, you can ignore the dotted "tabs" that are sticking out around various points of the pieces.

If however, you would like to make it look a bit three-dimensional, you'll need to find a way to prop up the manger, and cut around the tabs that stick out from the characters. You will then want to fold the tabs on the dotted lines, and place a small piece of tape on the bottom of the tab, so that you can stick it to the stable and the piece will stand out a bit.

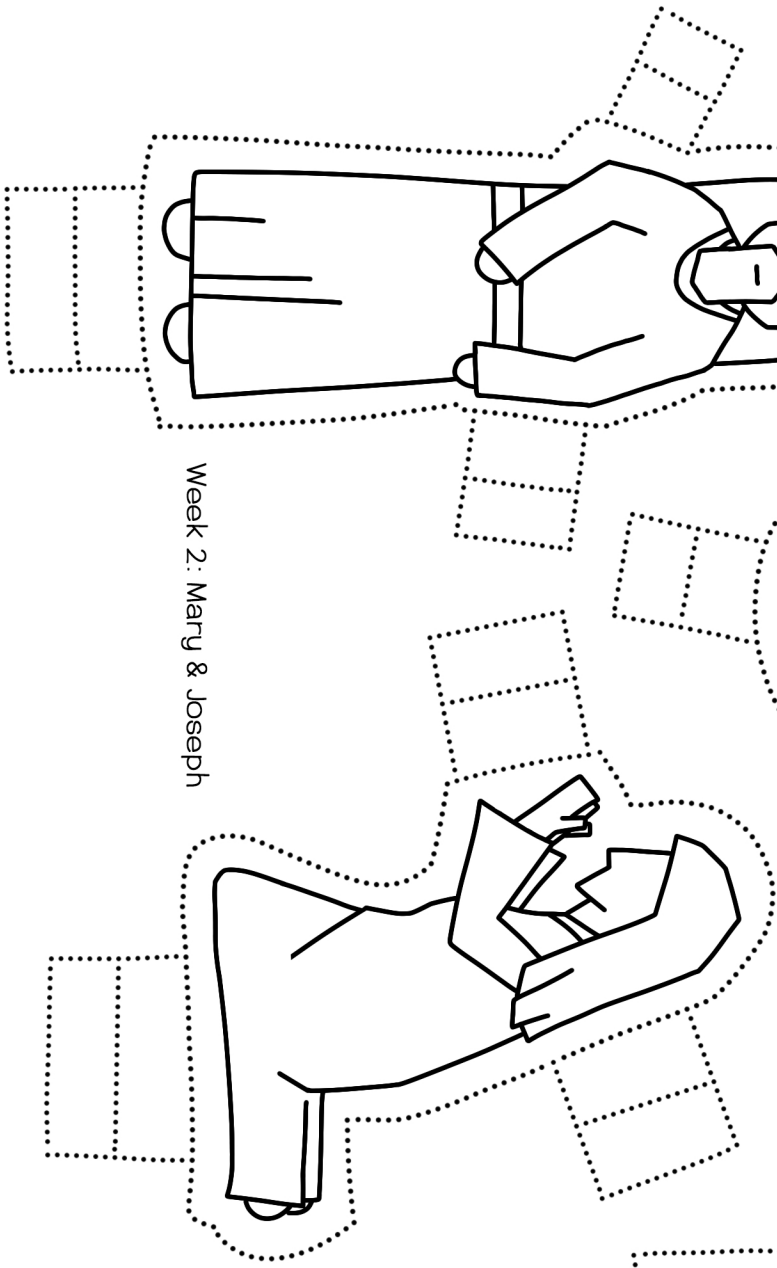
Reach out to Sean P. Williams if you have questions or need any help, and the full Kids Connection packet is available at fbcmac.org/kids-connection if you need extra copies of anything. And please share any pictures you take of your nativity and your family!



Week 3: Angels



Week 2: Mary & Joseph



Week 4: Shepherds

Christmas Day: Jesus

