



Rejoice

TOGETHER ONE AND ALL!

EARLY LEARNING RESOURCE

This Early Learning Resource has been created for Early Learning, Outside School Hours Care (OSHC), playgroup, and other children's ministries to help these groups and programs explore the theme of Rejoice.

This guide has many activities that you can engage with in your community over the next 4 weeks. You can:

- read and think about the theme of the week and how you can Rejoice,
- take time for mindfulness and prayer,
- try some challenges,
- do some colouring, and
- learn about the birth of Jesus.

This resource is also connected with ***The Great Advent Challenge***, ***Advent at Home***, and ***Advent Worship materials*** that will be used in Uniting Churches across Queensland this Advent. These resources used together are designed to connect activities and conversations across church, home, and the community. These materials are designed to help families explore the theme of rejoicing at home and connect what happens in church with the rest of their week.

Your local church might provide your families with copies of the ***Advent Challenge*** or ***Advent at Home***. If you would like copies of these for your families, please reach out to your local Church, or the Mission Accompanying Team. The full suite of resources will be available to download from the Qld Synod Hub at <https://hub.ucaqld.com.au/church-life/discipleship-mission/#seasonal-resources>

We pray that this resource will help you prepare activities and experiences in your setting that connects the children in your community and helps them Rejoice together, one and all this year. If you have any questions about the resources, or how to use them, please contact the Qld Synod Mission Accompanying Team at discipleship@ucaqld.com.au

Our deepest thanks to everyone who has helped to bring together this resource. We are blessed by your gifts, and we couldn't have done it without you and your contributions. Special thanks to Kath Ruhle, Josie Neuendorff, Paul Wetzig, Beth Nicholls, Richard Moors, Neil Storey, Paul Clark and Willie Liebenberg. Graphic design and Illustrations by Tamar Petersen @ Red Box Studios, www.redboxstudios.com.au.

About the Theme, Rejoice!

All around the world people are preparing for Christmas. Some people are buying gifts, some are making special goodies, some are busy planning for guests, some are preparing their houses with special decorations. What are you, your family or community, doing to prepare for Christmas this year?

Advent is the season dedicated to anticipating Jesus's arrival. This season is more than waiting to celebrate; it is a time of actively preparing ourselves to welcome Jesus. This ADVENT (the lead-up to Christmas), we invite you to join us to "Rejoice together one and all!" Together we will use our senses and take time to see, hear and feel the things around us, as we explore what it means to Rejoice.

In some circles the word REJOICE is common. We might hear it at church, in Christmas Carols, and it features in the Bible over 200 times. But when was the last time you heard someone use the word rejoice? What does it mean to rejoice? When do we rejoice? Here are some definitions:

- To feel or show great joy or delight. Oxford Dictionary
- To feel or show that you are very happy about something. Britannica
- To feel joy; to experience gladness in a high degree; to have pleasurable satisfaction; to be delighted. Webster's Dictionary

This Advent let's take in the sights, sounds, feelings and learnings, and find reasons to rejoice. We encourage you to share your experiences with others and let's make the word 'rejoice' a mainstream word again.

Table of Contents

Week One (1 December) Rejoice and See	4
Week Two (8 December): Rejoice and Hear	7
Week Three (15 December) Rejoice and Act	9
Week Four (22 December) Rejoice and Feel.....	11
Advent Candle Liturgy, Rejoice!	13
Coloring Posters.....	21

Week One (1 December) Rejoice and See

How often do you take the time to really look and see all that is around you?

This week, we encourage you to take a good look around and notice things that you may never have noticed before – a newly formed spider web, a plant flowering in your neighbourhood, a new Christmas ornament, someone's earrings, an excited person. Encourage children to do this in your setting, and at home.

This Advent, what gives you reason to rejoice? What makes you stop and reflect?

Maybe you:

SEE the signs of hope.

SEE the burdens carried by strangers and friends.

SEE the uncontained joy of children.

SEE God at work through other people.

Please note:

This week's theme is a very visual one where we actively look around and take in our surroundings. If there are children in your community who are visually impaired, please consider how you may include them. You might do this by using imagination, by describing visuals, or by inviting a visually impaired person to share about how they 'see'.

Activities:

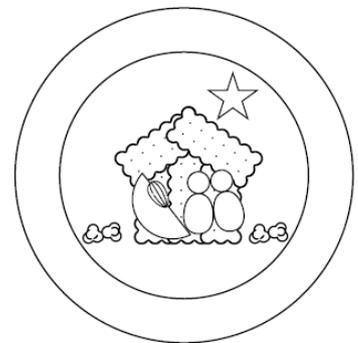
- Collaboratively make a REJOICE picture which can be displayed during Advent. Have the word rejoice in the middle of a canvas and invite participants to splatter (using sponges with different coloured bright paint) on the canvas. Pray for people who are, or might be, struggling to rejoice at this time. Ideas for painting: <https://www.firstpalette.com/craft/sponge-painting.html> and <https://www.teaching-tiny-tots.com/sponge-painting.html>
- Use the SEE poster to talk about the things that we see, and this week's theme. Colour in the SEE word and surround it with pictures of things that you like looking at/seeing.
- Have an art gallery with different pictures of the theme. Allow time to look at the pictures and talk about the following questions:
 - Which picture do you think best depicts the word *Rejoice*?
 - How would you capture the word *Rejoice* in a picture?
 - What makes you rejoice?
- Have an art corner where children can paint, draw or sculpt things that they SEE during the week.
- Set up a table full of 'seeing' resources – magnifying glasses, binoculars, eyes etc.
- Look at photos or videos of Christmas decorations at shops or in people's yards. Talk about which are the favourites? Can you find any that are connected to the Nativity story (Jesus, angels, shepherds)
- Find some Christmas craft ideas that connect with seeing. You might like to try making a baby Jesus Christmas star ornament; <https://www.redtedart.com/popsicle-stick-nativity-star-ornament/>
- Watch a video of the sun rise, or sun set, talk about it, and paint or collage your own.

- Share about the first time you saw something that moved you to rejoice - a new flower forming, a spider spinning a web, amazing scenery, sun setting over water, a platypus in the wild and talk about these.
- Check out the Clever patch Faith Based Christmas eBooks for more craft ideas:
 - <https://nexuspublications.com.au/a10/publications/faith-based-christmas-ebook-2024/1>
 - <https://www.cleverpatch.com.au/article/565//faith-based-christmas-ebook-2023?c=faith-based-christmas-ebook-2023&page=1>
 - <https://www.cleverpatch.com.au/article/461//faith-based-christmas-ebook-2022>
- Look through a Christmas recipe book or online recipe sites. Choose some recipes that you'd like to make this Advent. You might like to try making a baby Jesus snack (below), adding parts as you read the story of Jesus' birth.

Baby Jesus Snack

Ingredients:

- Crackers for the stable
- Peanut Butter or Hummus for "hay" and to help things stick together
- Thinly Sliced Apples for Jesus' bed
- Almonds or Mini Marshmallows for baby Jesus
- Grapes cut in half lengthwise for bodies and some ends cut for heads
- Popcorn for sheep
- Pineapple or star fruit for the star above the stable
- Other items that you'd like to add from the story



In the Bible, we read about the Christmas story - God's ultimate gift to us. The highlight of history. You might like to read the story before and after making the snack and talk about each of the parts as you do. Listen out for all the key words - Jesus, stable, manger, star.

You can find the story in Luke 2:8-16 and Matthew 2:1-2 or read it from a Children's Bible.

Easy to read version <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%20%3A8-16&version=ERV> and <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%20%3A1-2&version=ERV>

- I wonder what part of the story you like the best?

Adapted from <https://www.trueaimeducation.com/cooking-with-kids-nativity-snack-and-activity/>

Books, Songs and Videos

- Read the book **Joy**, by Corinne Averis https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ni_lxS6Xsy8
 - What joyful things would you try to catch?
 - Like the grandma in this book, is there anyone, in your life, who needs a reason to rejoice? How might you be able to help them this Advent?
- Sing and Learn the song **Oh What A Special Night** by Animated Praise <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duzZ-p6rYNI>
 - Also available with actions at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bt0j5ZiktKk>.
 - You could also Learn Auslan signs for key lines or words of the song: This is what they sang, Sheep, Cow, Donkey, Baby Jesus, Born, Thank you, God. <https://auslan.org.au/dictionary/>
- Read **God's Christmas Promise**, by Fern Martins https://issuu.com/biblesocietyau/docs/hr_christmas_story_2023_a5_final
- Warm up your eyes (and brains) by looking at objects and guessing what they are: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WLjZgFjiDfQ>
- Watch this lovely video of a child rejoicing in a music class. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UctRZ91m9XA>

Prayer and Mindfulness:

- Take the time to sit still and watch a candle flicker. Take deep breaths. What thoughts come to mind? Talk to God about them. For safety, consider using a battery operated flickering candle, or watching this video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqBcd0r69Y>
- Invite children to share things that they have been rejoicing about. And use these responses to say a prayer based on Philippians 4:4. For example:

Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice!

Thank you, God, for the cool breeze on a warm day and the chirping of crickets.

Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice!

Thank you, God, for the smile of a newborn baby.

Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice!

Thank you, God, for your ever-present love.

Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice!

- Give each child a piece of rainbow [scratch paper](#). Encourage them to write words, or draw pictures of things they love seeing, revealing the bright colours. Thank God for these things.

Week Two (8 December): Rejoice and Hear

What are you hoping to hear this Christmas? This week, take the time to stop and listen.

What sounds, noises and/or words are loud? What are some of the quieter sounds you hear? What sounds do you hear that you may not have heard before?

This Advent, what gives you reason to rejoice? What makes you stop and reflect?

Maybe you:

HEAR words of encouragement.

HEAR the call of birds.

HEAR God speaking to you.

HEAR the joyful sounds of Christmas.

Please note:

This week's theme invites us to actively listen. If there are children in your community who have auditory impairment, please consider how you may include them. You might do this by using some sign language, by describing sounds, or by inviting an auditory impaired person to share about how they 'hear'.

Activities:

- Use the HEAR poster to talk about the things that we hear, and this week's theme. Colour in the HEAR word and surround it with pictures of things that you like listening to /hearing.
- Share about something that you love listening to.
- Say kind or encouraging things to your family and listen out for kind things that are said to you.
- Find some Christmas Craft ideas that connect with listening, like this **Jingle Bell Door Hanger**

What you will need:

Jingle Bells, Chenille stems, Ribbon, Beads, Glue, Decorative Christmas items such as Sequins, Button, and Beads

- String jingle bells and large beads onto one end of a chenille stem (pipe cleaner). When they are finished make a loop at the other end and wind around the stem to secure it. Tie a ribbon at the top.



Adapted from <https://www.daniellesplace.com/html/christmas-crafts-ring-the-bells.html#bellcup>

Books, Songs and Videos

- Listen to **Sounding Joy** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jthLvNgmFjA&t=13s>
 - What sounds like joy to you?
- Read the book, **The Rabbit Listened** by Cori Doerrfeld
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBjAWkog9n0>
 - What does listening mean to you?
- Play the game: “Name that sound”
 - Record several familiar sounds (or use the video below). Who can guess what the sound it?
- Warm up your ears (and brains) by listening to, and guessing, the sounds in this clip:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EmAe3xMfD0>
- Sing and Learn the song **Oh What A Special Night** by Animated Praise
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dusz-p6rYNI>
 - Also available with actions at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bt0j5ZlktKk>.
 - You could also Learn Auslan signs for key lines or words of the song: This is what they sang, Sheep, Cow, Donkey, Baby Jesus, Born, Thank you, God. <https://auslan.org.au/dictionary/>
- Make or listen to a Christmas music playlist
 - <https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3MEKcTdJRhtz1MagmKjX6w?si=887ccf4366ef469a>

Prayer Ideas

- Foil prayer for Others:
 - Give a piece of foil (6x6cm is big enough) to each person.
 - Place the piece of foil shiny side up: think of the good things in your life.
 - Lightly scrunch the foil into a loose ball: think of people who find life tough.
 - Smooth out the foil again: think of people who help others (smooth things out) – parents, teachers, doctors etc.
 - Make a letter out of the foil: think of something or someone who starts with that letter.

Adapted from <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/2016/04/interactive-prayer-foil-intercessions.html>

- Listening Prayer: Let’s close our eyes and focus on the sounds within, and around us.

As we breathe in and out, listen to your body. What do you hear?

Tune in to what God might be saying to you.

As we expand our listening to the sounds around us, what do you hear?

Tune in to what God might be saying to you.

As we expand our listening beyond this building/area, what do you hear?

Tune in to what God might be saying to you.

Listen and rejoice!

God created the birds that sing, the elephants that trumpet, and the snakes that hiss.

Listen and rejoice!

God created the waves that roar, the breeze that rustles through the trees, and the fire that crackles.

Listen and rejoice!

God created us – people who breathe, laugh, cry, sigh, burp, sing, shout and proclaim.

Let’s come together and rejoice.

Week Three (15 December) Rejoice and Act

What are you doing this Christmas? How are you acting? Where, and how are you spending your time?

Take a moment to think about what you want to be doing this Advent. How do you want to act? Do you need to stop some things so that you can do the things that are important to you?

This Advent, what gives you reason to rejoice? How does this rejoicing make you want to act?

Maybe you want to:

ACT with a sense of purpose.

ACT to serve others.

ACT to make a difference.

ACT to share the good news.

ACT to share God's love.

Please note:

This week's theme invites us to move and act. If there are children in your community who have movement impairments, please consider how you may include them. You might do this by adapting some of the activities or giving alternative movement ideas. You may invite someone with a movement impairment to share about what it means for them to 'act'.

Activities

- Use the ACT poster to talk about the things that we do, and this week's theme. Colour in the ACT word and surround it with pictures of things that you like doing, or how you want to act this week.
- Trace, then colour-in, your hands. As you do, think of all the ways your hands have helped others and the ways other people's hands have helped you.
- Set up stations around the room which encourage people to act/move. You could use a fitness dice.
- Play a Game of Simon Says to warm up our bodies for action.
- Do something practical to show love to others:
 - Pick up some rubbish in your neighbourhood.
 - Say something kind to a stranger.
 - Write a letter or card to a friend or relative.
 - Make a Christmas recipe and give it to someone.
 - Make a Christmas tree ornament.
 - Make paper flowers, biscuits, letters/cards.
- Invite people to share about how they are working through your Church community or wider Christian organisations to actively help others.

Books, Songs and Videos

- Read **Sister Lucy's Great Big Family** by Susie Poole https://koorong.com/product/sister-lucy-s-great-big-family-susie-poole_9781788933193
- Read **The Circles All Around Us** by Brad and Kristi Montague <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kp7viQaaUOg> (see above below for prayers for others idea using this book)
- Dance along with **Give a Little Kindness** by Orange Kids <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VzsQzQPhgWQ>

Prayer Ideas

- Five Finger Prayer: Use your fingers to pray/think about yourself and others.
 - Thumb: Pray for people closest to you – your family and friends
 - Pointer: Pray for teachers and healers – your Teachers, Leaders, Coaches, Doctors and Pastors
 - Middle Finger: Pray for leaders – those in government, business, school and church
 - Ring Finger: pray for the sick, lonely and poor
 - Pinky: pray for yourself and your own needs last
- Reference <https://www.imom.com/printable/five-finger-prayer/>
- Stretch and Pray:
 - Stretch your arms up high for 30 seconds: Focus on who God is.
 - Bend over and stretch down for 30 seconds: Thank God for all that God has done in your life.
 - Stretch your arms and body to the left side for 30 seconds: Pray for your family and friends.
 - Stretch your arms and body to the right side for 30 seconds: Pray for difficult situations around the world.
 - Give yourself a big bear hug for 30 seconds: Ask God to be with you during the day -guiding, helping and supporting.
 - Lego prayer: use Lego or Duplo to pray. This is one way you can use them <https://orchardcc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/lego-prayer.pdf>

If using the book, *The Circles all Around Us*, pause and pray, as the circle widens.

- Pray for ourselves
- Pray for family
- Pray for friends
- Pray for people in our community
- Pray for people who we haven't met
- Pray for people who are ignored or hard to like
- Pray for all people

Week Four (22 December) Rejoice and Feel

What are you hoping to feel this Christmas? It could be an emotion, or it could be something you feel with your body – sand under your feet, a cool breeze, clean sheets, the warmth of an embrace.

This Advent, what gives you a feeling of rejoicing? What moves you beyond your logic and reasoning to stop and wonder?

Maybe you:

FEEL a sense of excitement.

FEEL nervousness before trying something new.

FEEL the warm embrace from a loved one.

FEEL God's presence.

Activities

- Use FEEL poster to talk about emotions and things that we feel. Colour in the FEEL word and surround it with pictures of things that you like feeling
- Set up stations around the room with materials and objects with different textures.
 - As you touch things, does anything make you rejoice?
 - As you touch things, do you hear any unusual sounds?
 - As you touch things, does anything surprise you?
- Make an Advent sensory box and think about the Christmas story as you feel and play:
 - Advent Box <https://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/2015/11/easy-nativity-discovery-box-for-under-5s.html>
- Look at an emotion sheet/ feelings chart and invite children to share how they are feeling during Advent.
- Play 'Pull a Face'
 - Every time the leader claps, people 'pull a face' and freeze with a different emotion.
- Make biscuit dough. As you roll, shape, and cut the dough, think about people who have shaped your life. Here's a Christmassy biscuit recipe you might like to try:
 - Confetti Cookies <https://www.taste.com.au/recipes/confetti-cookies/dd8493f7-cabf-4fc7-8276-e9fa12694be1>
- Guess the Emotion
 - Show a number of (emoji) emotion faces and guess what they are.

Books, Songs and Videos

- Read the Christmas Story. Luke 1: 26-56, 2: 1-20. (You can find some different versions below):
 - What emotions do you feel as you are reading it?
- **The Christmas Story** Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dbp24wZQa3Y>
- **The Big Rescue Christmas** by the Bible Society 2024
[https://issuu.com/biblesocietyau/docs/bsa304 - big_rescue_christmas_story-v25](https://issuu.com/biblesocietyau/docs/bsa304_-_big_rescue_christmas_story-v25)
- **God's Christmas Promise**, Fern Martins
https://issuu.com/biblesocietyau/docs/hr_christmas_story_2023_a5_final
- Easy to Read version: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%20%3A1-20&version=ERV>

Prayer Ideas

- **Prayer for Others**

Set up different tactile 'feeling' prayer prompts around the room. Allow time for children to move around the room, in their own time, to feel, and to pray. Some ideas are:

- Rock – pray for situations that are hard.
 - Water – pray for people who live across the sea.
 - Playdough – make a letter of the alphabet out of playdough to represent someone you'd like to pray for.
 - Rough – pray for people who are having a rough time.
 - Smooth – thank God for people who smooth the way and make life easier for us.
 - Soft – pray for people who need love in their lives.
 - Prickly – pray for people who come across as prickly.
- **Prayer** based on Psalm 80: 1-7
During this prayer, invite children to embrace themselves every time they hear the word **feel**.

Thank you, God, that we are people who **feel**.
We **feel** the sense of excitement as we try something new,
we **feel** angry at the injustice that we see around us,
we **feel** tiredness at the end of a productive day,
we **feel** nervous before trying something new,
and we **feel** loved by the embrace of a friend.

Thank you that you know how we feel, and we know that you always love us.
Amen

Advent Candle Liturgy, Rejoice!

Many churches will use an advent wreath with candles, to count down, and mark each week of Advent. You could set up your own in your room using battery operated candles, or pictures of candles and use this candle liturgy as part of your morning class routine.

What you need:

- 5 candles of any colour – traditionally there would be 3 purple, 1 pink (for week 4), and 1 white (for Christmas Day)
- This script

Advent One: December 1st - Rejoice and SEE

I invite you to close your eyes for just a moment,
notice the darkness, see that there is nothing there.

Light the candle of hope.

As you open your eyes, you can see the candle of hope burning,
like a seed planted in the darkness of the earth,
it is hard to know completely what will come of it,
but we have hope, hope in God's way.

Let us pray...

Lead the body prayer for hope from Advent Unwrapped at
<https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/body-prayers.pdf>

or say...

God of yesterday, today and tomorrow,
help us to be filled with your hope,
and to rejoice in your presence.
Amen.



Body Prayer: Hope

Repeat the following prayer, using the actions to inspire movement as you are able:



Holy One

(reach up and look out)



Grow within me

(hands on heart)



May your hope

(widen arms)



May your hope

(widen arms)



Encircle me

(circle both arms from one side, over head, to the other side)



Reach beyond me

(stretch arms in from of body)



May your hope

(widen arms)



AMEN

(head down, hands at prayer with palms together)

Advent Two: December 8th - Rejoice and HEAR

Light the hope candle.

The psalmist invites us to “make a joyful noise to the Lord”¹,
So, let us free ourselves and rejoice as we make a joyful noise.

Light the candle of peace.

We can celebrate God’s gift of peace,
a peace that crosses all boundaries and situations,
a peace that brings goodwill to all of creation.
Even when we do not fully understand it or experience it,
we can know its power and commit to be instruments of peace.

Let us pray...

Lead the body prayer for peace from Advent Unwrapped at
<https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/body-prayers.pdf>

or say...

God of togetherness,
through Jesus, you have shown us your way of peace-making,
help us to be peace-makers and to rejoice in your presence.
Amen.

¹ Psalm 100:1



Body Prayer: Peace

Repeat the following prayer, using the actions to inspire movement as you are able:



Holy One
(reach up and out)



Work through me
*(use some force to push arms
to sides with fingers up)*



May your peace
(clasp hands over heart)



May your peace
(clasp hands over heart)



Surround me
(circle arms in front of body)



Extend to the world
*(unfold arms in front with
open hands)*



May your peace
(clasp hands over heart)



AMEN
*(head down, hands at prayer
with palms together)*

Advent Three: December 15th - Rejoice and ACT

Light the hope and peace candles.

In Philippians chapter 4, we are reminded to 'rejoice in the Lord always'.

Light the candle of joy.

As we wait in this season of Advent,
we remember that God's gift for us includes joy,
a joy that can fill us completely,
a joy that transcends the ups and downs of life,
a joy we can share.

Let us pray...

Lead the body prayer for joy from Advent Unwrapped at
<https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/body-prayers.pdf>

or say...

God who likes to laugh,
fill us with your joy,
so that we can share it with others
and rejoice in your presence.
Amen.



Body Prayer: Joy

Repeat the following prayer, using the actions to inspire movement as you are able:



Holy One

(reach up and out)



Bubble up in me

(wiggle fingers, bringing over head)



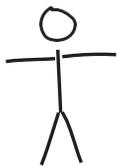
May your joy

(put hands toward centre, wiggle fingers)



May your joy

(put hands toward centre, wiggle fingers)



Sustain me

(reach arms to sides, flexing fingers)



Grow in all of creation

(circle wiggling hands around head)



May your joy

(put hands toward centre, wiggle fingers)



AMEN

(head down, hands at prayer with palms together)

Advent Four: December 22nd - Rejoice and FEEL

Light the hope, peace and joy candles.

For God so loved the world,
that God went to extreme lengths
to share with us all the greatest gift of all.

Light the candle of love.

God's gift of love is more comprehensive than we can imagine,
and there is nothing we can do that will take it away.

Let us pray...

Lead the body prayer for love from Advent Unwrapped at
<https://united-church.ca/sites/default/files/body-prayers.pdf>

or say...

God of world-changing love,
thank you for loving us,
help us to share your love with others
and to rejoice in your presence.
Amen.



Body Prayer: Love

Repeat the following prayer, using the actions to inspire movement as you are able:



Holy One
(reach up and out)



Be in my actions
(touch eyes and mouth)



May your love
(cross hands and lower arms over heart)



May your love
(cross hands over heart)



Be in my head...
(touch head)



Be in all I say...
(touch mouth)



...and heart
(touch heart)



...and do
(extend hands, or in a group, hold hands)

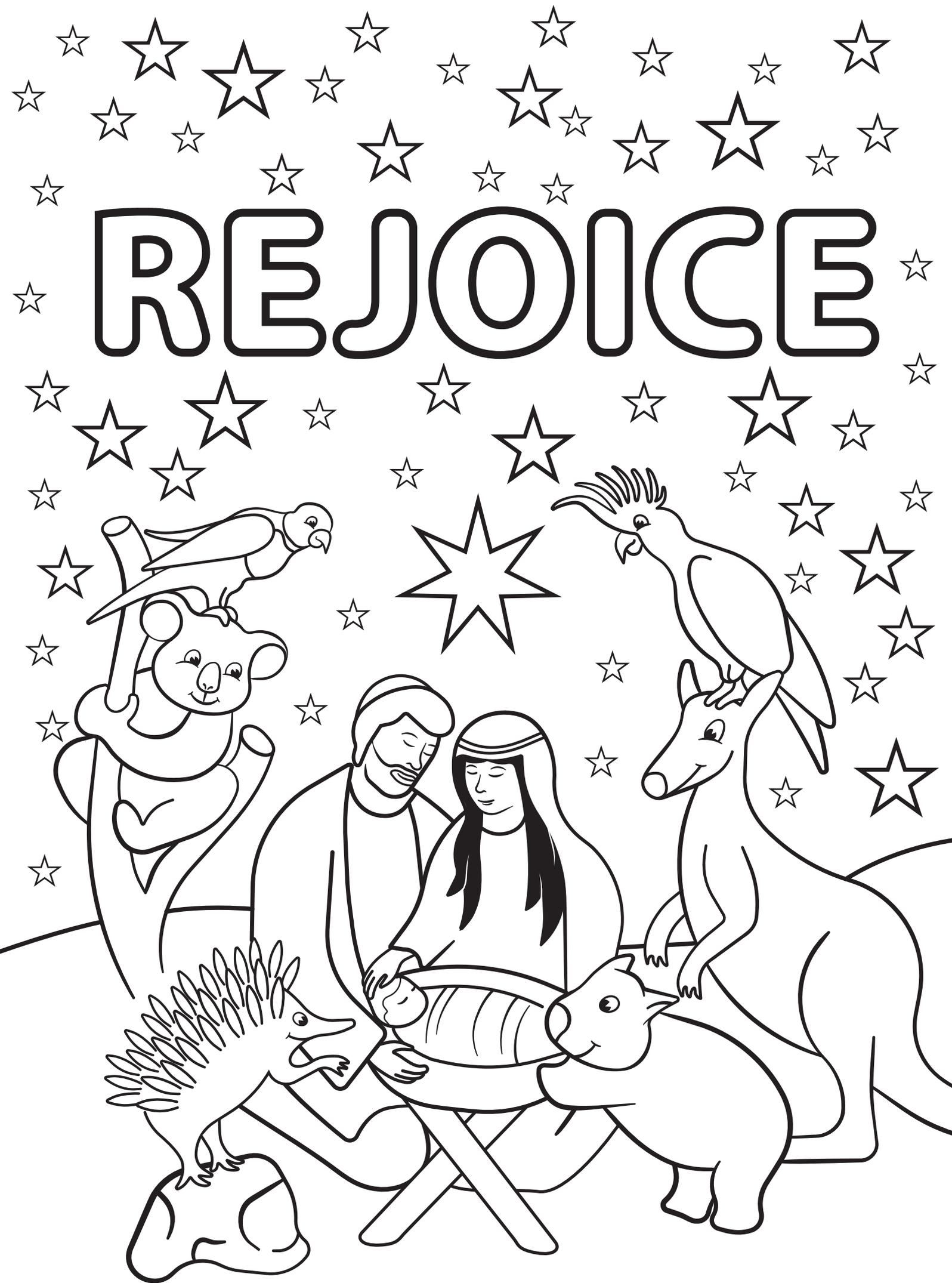


May your love
(keep touching heart)



AMEN
(head down, hands at prayer with palms together)

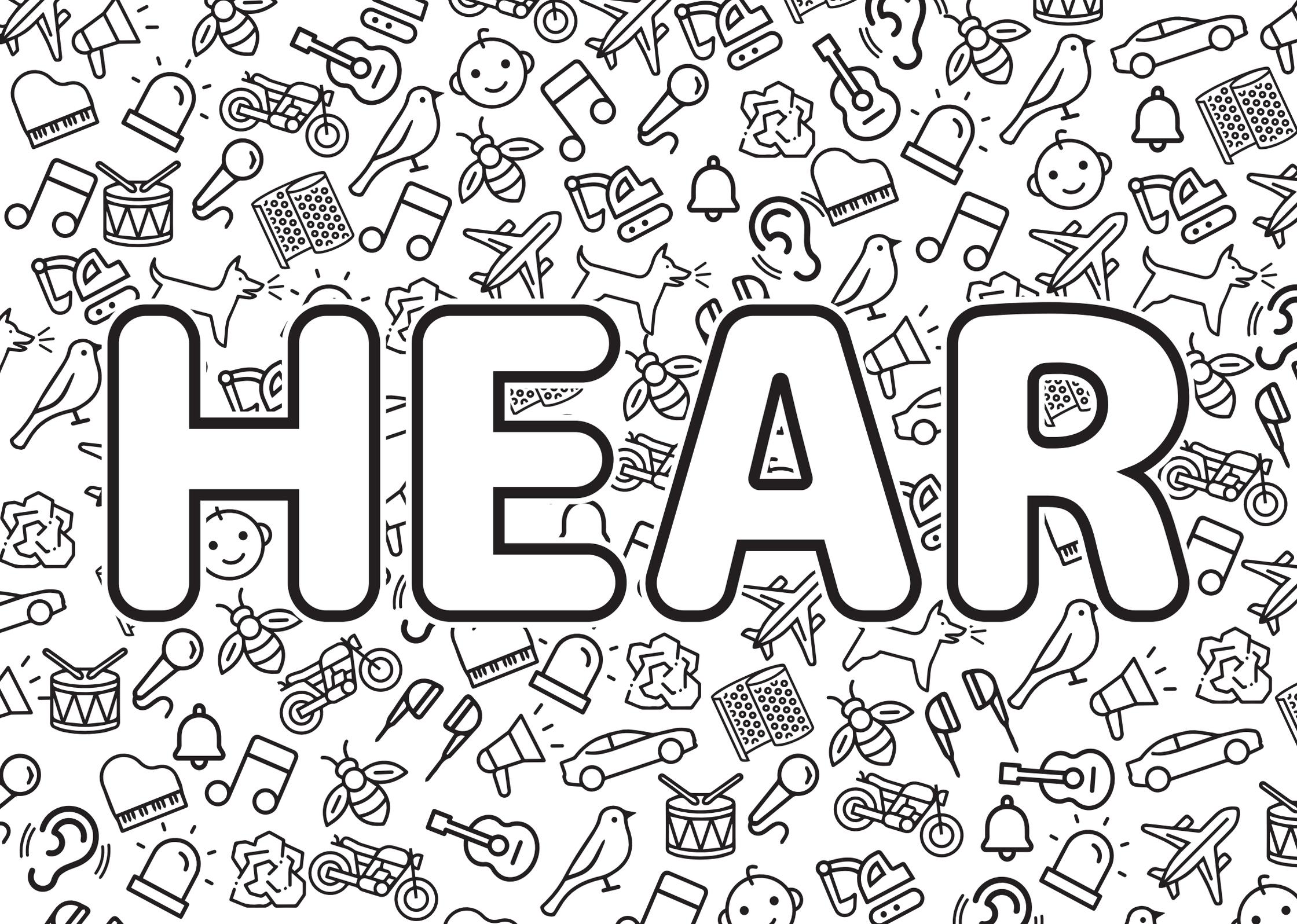
REJOICE



REJOICE

SEE

HEAR



HEAR

ACT

FEEL



FEEL