



WEEK THREE

We have joy because God is with us.

Scripture: Luke 1:39–48

Reflection

- If Mary had visited Elizabeth during our modern times, Elizabeth might have picked her up at the airport.
- Elizabeth would have been waiting with flowers or balloons, watching for her cousin, Mary, to appear.

And when Elizabeth saw Mary walking towards her, pulling her rolling suitcase behind her, Elizabeth's whole pregnant body would have shivered with joy. And baby John inside her would have bounced around, knowing that something exciting was happening.

Mary would have picked up her speed, laughing and jogging to meet her beloved Elizabeth, and they would have hugged and kissed each other. They would have probably been noisy, shouting with happiness. Anyone else at the airport would have seen and heard their contagious joy.

It feels good to watch other people reunite after a long time apart. The joy grows between them, and it inspires onlookers to feel joy too. We can relate when we see this because we know what it feels like to be

with someone we care about and who cares about us. It is like electricity passing between us when we are with someone we love. Maybe you have felt that feeling after a week away at camp, or after months of not seeing your grandparents, or when you return to school after a long summer away.

Some people would call that electric feeling of love between people "the Holy Spirit." When Mary and Elizabeth met each other that day, the Holy Spirit was there, too. And when God is present with us through the Holy Spirit, we are filled with joy! These are some of the feelings people have when they are around someone they love and trust:

Warmth	Wholeness
Comfort	Support
Excitement	Encouragement
Safety	

Elizabeth and Mary show us that when we are with people we love, God is there, too!

For Discussion

- Have you ever felt "butterflies in your stomach" when you were excited to see someone? What does your body feel like when you are with someone you love? What feelings would you add to the list above?
- How does our love for each other bring us joy?
- How does our love for each other remind us God is with us?

Family Activity: Papier-Mâché Bowl

- Have you ever been so overwhelmed by joy that it felt like happiness would explode out of your body? Joy is an amazing feeling, but it doesn't always come easily. Sometimes we need to practice joy, just like we practice cartwheels, violin, or drawing. In this activity, you'll make a papier-mâché bowl to fill with items that help you remember and experience joy.

Blow up a balloon for each person in your family and tie off each end with a knot. Before making your bowls, try playing a game! Can you work together to see how long you can keep the balloons in the air? Don't be afraid to laugh and be silly.

To create your papier-mâché bowl, place the inflated balloon knot-side down inside a plastic cup. Then use tape to secure the balloon to the cup's rim (this will keep the balloon from rolling around).

Mix glue and water in a plastic cup until it looks like runny soup (you'll want more water than glue). Then dip strips of newspaper or tissue paper in the glue mixture and layer it onto your balloon until the top half is covered. Let it dry for a few hours.

When the glue has hardened, gently pop the balloon and remove it from the bowl. Then decorate your bowl with your favorite colors of washable paint. As the paint dries, gather a few small items that help you experience joy (i.e., bouncy ball, fidget toy, polished rock, scented candle, kaleidoscope). Then place the items inside your bowl and put the bowl somewhere you'll see it often to remind you to practice and experience joy each day.

Note: Your bowl might have a round bottom causing it to roll when you place items inside. If you want it to stay still, flip the bowl upside down and gently press the center of the bottom to create a small dent.

MATERIALS

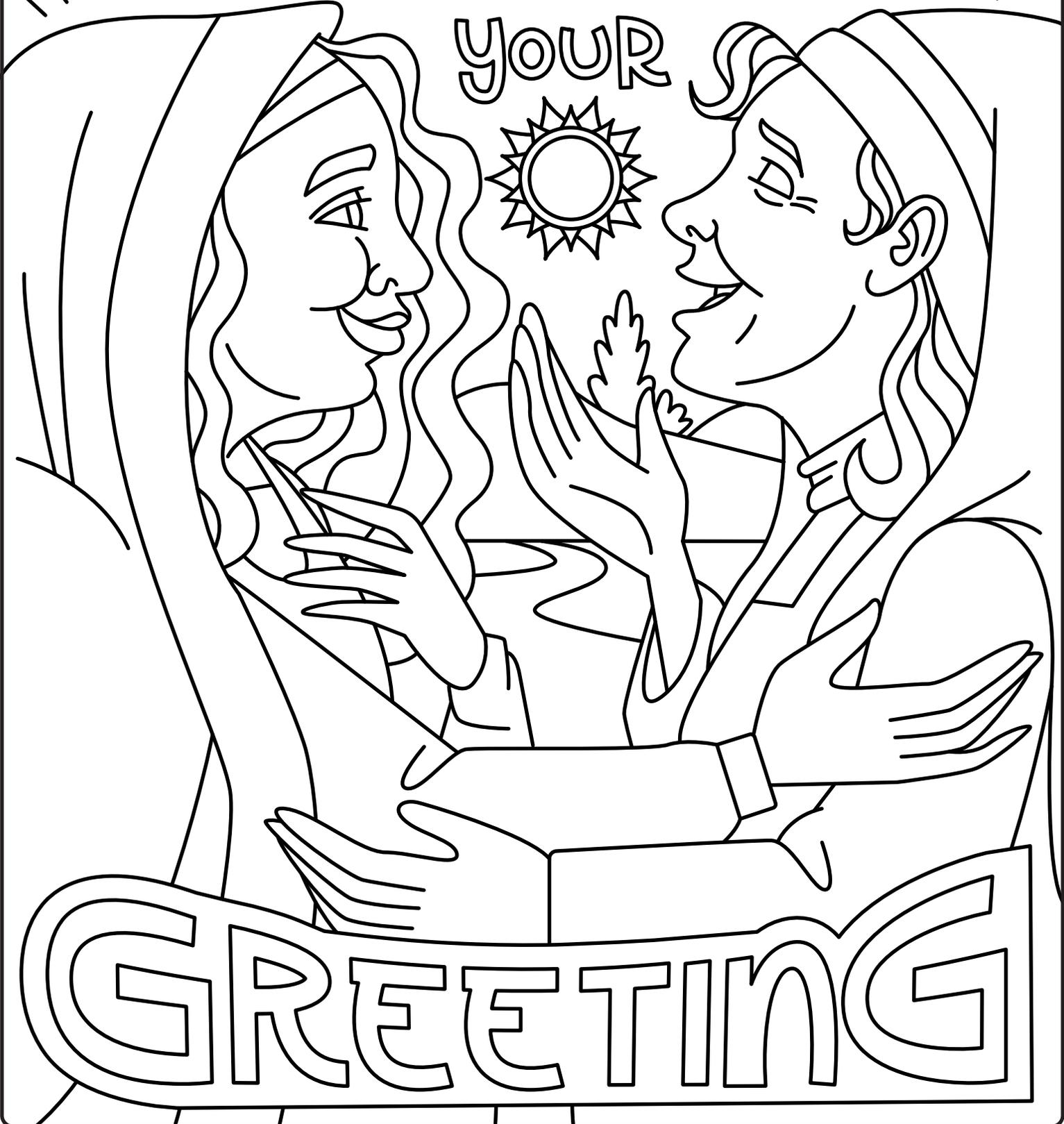
- Balloon
- Tape
- Plastic cups
- Glue
- Water
- Strips of newspaper or tissue paper
- Washable paint
- Paintbrush

Prayer

- Dear God, thank you for the electric love and joy-filled laughter we feel when we are with people we love. When our bodies buzz with excitement, may we remember you are always with us. Amen.

AS SOON AS I HEARD
the SOUND of

YOUR



GREETING