

DRAWING CLOSER

Exploring the Psalms through art



Music and Creative Arts



Family Ministries

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Exploring the Psalms through art

Foreword by Music and Creative Arts Outreach Mission Partner, Dan Elson

THE STORY

In early 2020 I visited a 'Bible journaling' group session at Sale Salvation Army. Gill, the group leader, had selected a Bible passage for us to focus on. She had prepared resources to inspire participants, creating a space where we could come and talk about Scripture in a relaxed way.

In the group there were people from the corps and the community, ranging from ages 9-75+. Some were experienced artists, others total novices.

Some people in the group opened their cases of watercolours, pastels and pens and set to work on their own interpretation of the passage.

Others who needed a little more help, like me, took the resources provided and began colouring or working from a sheet with some ideas for inspiration.

Whatever our ability, we were all able to reflect on Scripture, get to know each other and chat about what the passage said to us. All the while our hands were busy creating something which would remind us of those thoughts.

The session finished with a few group members showing their work or explaining their ideas and a prayer. It was beautiful, simple and made accessible to all because of the resources provided.



HOW TO USE DRAWING CLOSER

This resource seeks to replicate the formula described above. Each of the six sessions focuses on a different Psalm and includes an opening thought and focus verses. Different Salvationist writers and artists have created the content. As a result, a variety of art styles are featured.

For those who have the artistic ability to create their own work, this

may be enough to get started. For those who need a little more structure there is:

- ⑥ A colouring sheet
- ⑥ A sheet with the focus verses printed on it
- ⑥ A sheet of doodles which can be traced, stuck on or used as inspiration

Participants can use the sheets, bring their own sketch books or even draw straight onto the pages of their Bible.



THE SESSION

1. Read the Psalm aloud and then read the thought together.
2. Give participants time to create, using the artistic resources or their own imagination.
3. While creating, encourage conversation and gently discuss what the focus verses mean to participants.
4. At the end of the session, ask participants if they want to show their work to the group, or explain what their thoughts were when creating.
5. Finish with the prayer provided.

Helpful Questions

What image jumps out at you from these verses?

Are there any words/ideas that you don't understand from this Psalm?

What is your favourite part of this passage?

Does anyone have a translation of the passage that is different?

PSALM 89

Art: Gill Parish Thoughts: Dan Elson

**'Your love, God, is my song, and I'll sing it!
I'm forever telling everyone how faithful you are.
I'll never quit telling the story of your love—
how you built the cosmos
and guaranteed everything in it.
Your love has always been our lives' foundation,
your fidelity has been the roof over our world.'**

(Psalm 89: 1-2 The Message)

Where do you look the most?

We look forward most of the time.
Into a mirror in the morning when we
get ourselves ready. Down at
phones, books, magazines or tablets.
At screens of computers and
televisions. But how often do you
look up?

Psalm 89 speaks of two images that
are over us. First it conjures up
images of the immensity of space –
how God 'built the cosmos'. Just
imagine for a moment what it might
be like to be able to see all of space,
every star, moon and planet. Tracing
the path of every comet. Seeing light
travel from thousands of light years
away, the furthest reaches of the
universe.

In Psalm 89 we are reminded not
only that God made all of this, but
that he 'guarantees everything in it'
and uses our second image of
something above us; 'your fidelity
has been the roof over our world.'

As you imagine the immensity of
God's creation, remember that he is
faithful to every living thing. His love
is as big, and bigger, than all that we
can imagine. The Amplified Bible
describes God's faithfulness as
'unchangeable and perpetual', God's
Word translation says God's
faithfulness is for 'every generation'.

Take a moment to consider how,
amongst everything created,
throughout all time and space, God
still has a 'story of love' for you.

PRAYER

Father God, we turn our eyes to you, away from the world around us, and are reminded that you have given us so much. Your creation surrounds us and stands as a reminder that your love and faithfulness for us is all encompassing. We thank you that despite having created the vast and incredible universe in which we live, you still love us, each and every one. Amen.



GOD OF THE ANGEL ARMIES

PS. 89

WHO IS LIKE YOU?

YOU BUILT THE COSMOS AND GUARANTEED EVERYTHING IN IT.

your faithfulness is the roof over our world

your LOVE is our lives' FOUNDATION

LET THE COSMOS PRAISE

YOUR wonderful ways

SEARCH HIGH & LOW, SKY & LAND, THERE IS NO ONE LIKE YOU

THE MOUNTAINS SING YOUR PRAISES

@gillyparishart

YOU PUT THE UNRULY OCEAN IN ITS PLACE

ALL MY LIFE YOU HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL

ALL MY LIFE YOU HAVE BEEN SO, SO GOOD

with every breath that I am able

I WILL SING OF THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

GOD OF THE ANGEL ARMIES WHO IS LIKE YOU?
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God of ANGEL ARMIES,
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@gillyparishart

YOU TAME
THE WAVES



YOUR LOVE
is my song
AND I'LL
SING
IT!

ALL
MY LIFE
YOU HAVE
BEEN
FAITHFUL



I WILL
Sing
OF YOUR
goodness

YOU HAVE BEEN
- SO, SO -
GOOD TO ME

I WILL SING OF
THE GOODNESS
OF GOD



PSALM 91

Art: Jim Ely Thoughts: Rachel Gotobed

'He who takes refuge in the shelter of the Most High will be safe in the shadow of the Almighty. He will say to the Eternal, "My shelter, my mighty fortress, my God, I place all my trust in You." For He will rescue you from the snares set by your enemies who entrap you and from deadly plagues. Like a bird protecting its young, God will cover you with His feathers, will protect you under His great wings; His faithfulness will form a shield around you, a rock-solid wall to protect you.'

(Psalm 91: 1-4 The Voice)

Have you ever been caught in a storm and needed to seek shelter? Sometimes a faithful umbrella will do the trick but there are also times when we find ourselves having to quickly look out for a more substantial place of refuge.

But what about the storms of life that come our way? The doubt, the disease, the disappointment, the discouragement, the debt, death... Can we find a place of shelter that helps us weather them?

In Psalm 91 we find assurance that whatever we face – the snares, traps and deadly plagues – that 'God will cover you with His feathers, will protect you under His great wings'. God's promise is not that we won't have to face such

storms but rather that whatever storms come our way 'His faithfulness will form a shield around you, a rock-solid wall to protect you'.

However, while this place of shelter is freely available, we have to choose to put ourselves within its safety by placing our trust in the 'Most High' at all times.

Take a few minutes to sit quietly and think about where you run to for shelter from the storms of life. Have you found refuge and safety by putting all your trust in God?

How does it feel to know that whatever you are facing at this time – and whatever you will ever face – that there is a place of shelter available for you under his great wings?

PRAYER

Father God, thank you that there is a place for us under the shelter of your great wings. Help us today, and every day, to put all our trust in you, so that whatever storms we face in this life, we know that we need never be alone because we can find refuge and safety in you.

Amen.

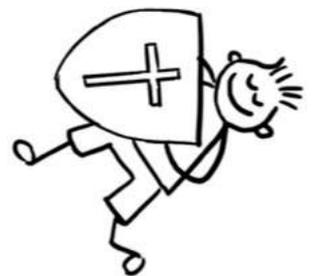
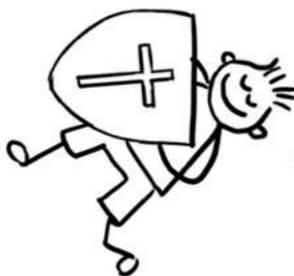
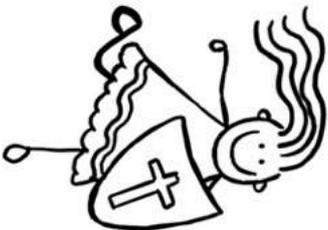
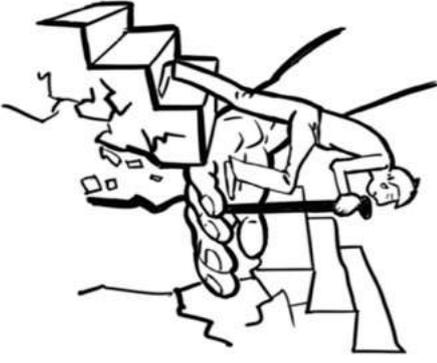


*He who takes
refuge in the
shelter of the Most
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shadow of the Almighty.
Psalm 91:1*



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PSALM 121

Art: Nat Hanchett Thoughts: Ali Thornton-Dean

'I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.'

(Psalm 121:1-4 NIV)

When life is difficult, we have a tendency to look down, yet this Psalm paints a picture of God reaching down and gently lifting our face upwards so that our eyes are lifted towards him. Our help does not come from the mountains, however, it comes from beyond the mountains as our vision is lifted even higher towards Creator God. As you sit quietly, try and lift your head upwards as an act of seeking God's help.

Think for a moment upon the words 'Maker of heaven and earth'. Even though God created the entire world he still wants to reach down and help you. He wants you to know how important you are to him. What things are keeping your eyes looking down? Talk to God about those

things and let him take them from you so that you can look up and receive his help. If you can't look all the way up just try a little at a time until you eventually get the full picture of God's protection, care and love for you.

Now think of the words 'The Lord watches over you'. Sit quietly, close your eyes and imagine God watching over you with loving kindness. You are worthy of his loving kindness. Can you feel that?

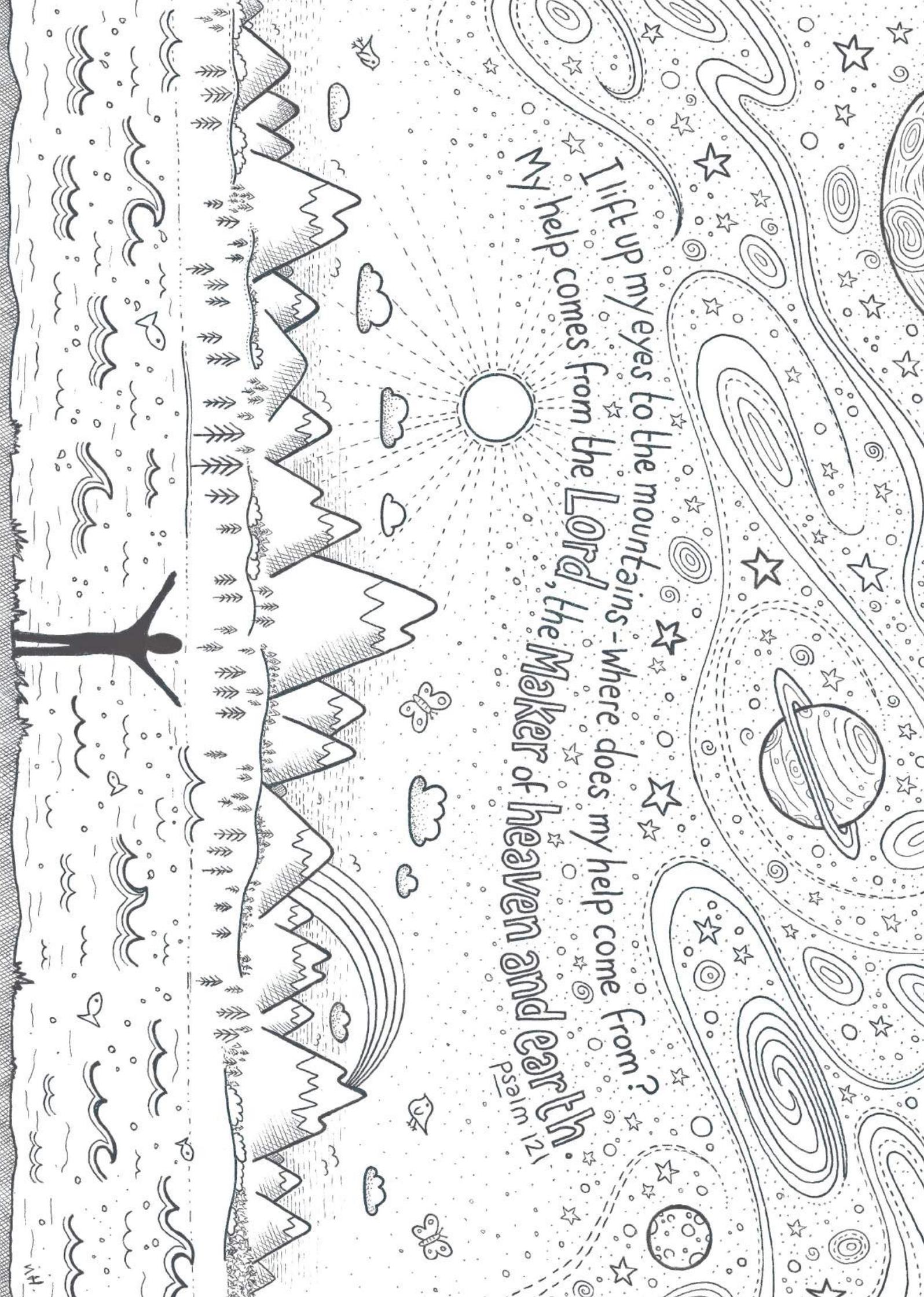
'The Lord will keep you from all harm'. Can you speak these words over yourself? God provides 'soul protection', as our souls are the most important part of each one of us. Thank God for his protection of your soul.

PRAYER

Creator God, when earthly things draw our eyes downwards, help us to look upwards as we seek you and receive your help and protection. At times, life can be difficult and even frightening. We ask that from the darkness of earthly struggles to the technicolour of your love and protection you will fill us with your light, as we rest in the security of your beautiful gaze. We ask that you will walk with us and watch over us until we meet again.
Amen.

I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

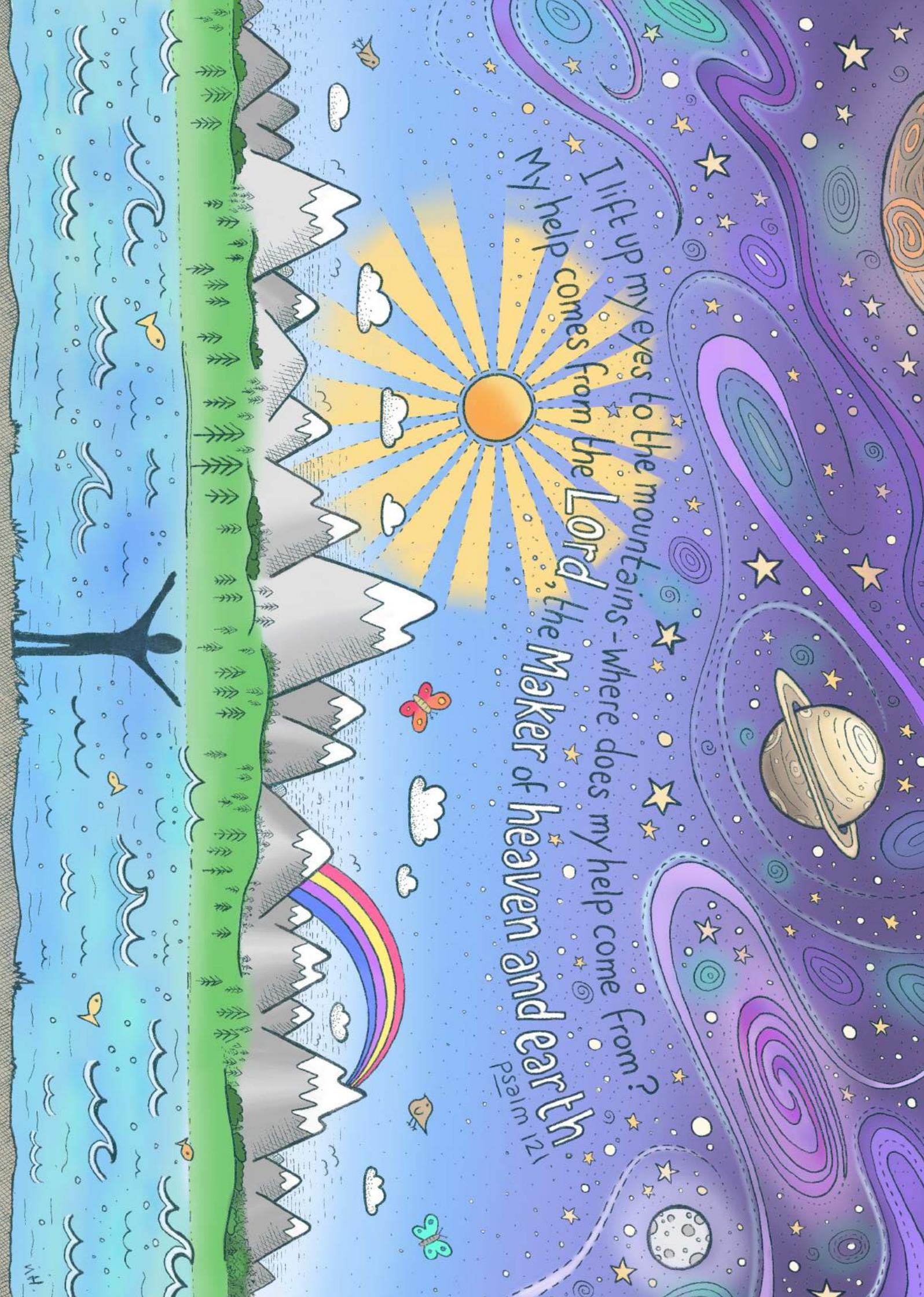
psalm 121

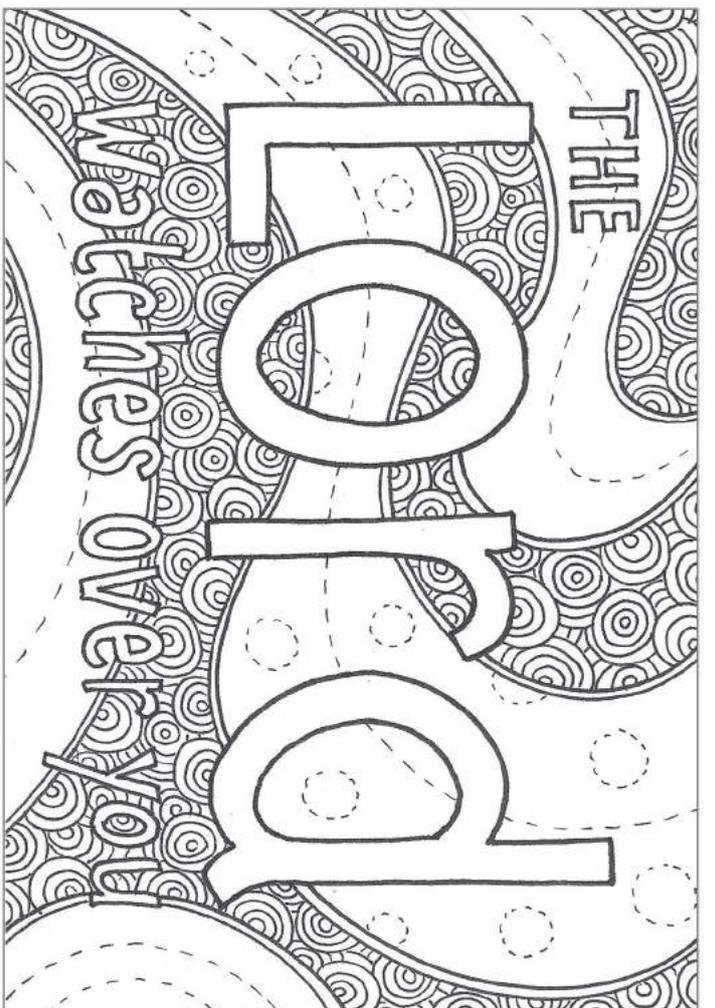
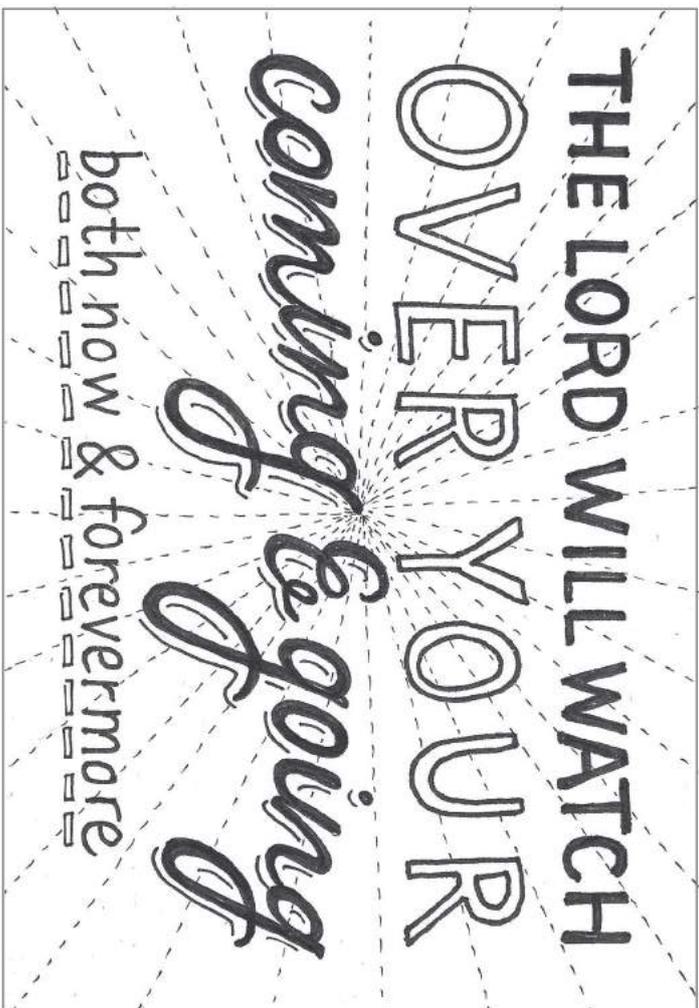


Lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth
Psalms 121

I lift up my eyes to the mountains - where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.

psalm 121





PSALM 150

Art: Darryl Carpenter Thoughts: Stephanie Lamplough

'Praise the Lord.

**Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.**

**Praise him for his acts of power;
praise him for his surpassing greatness.**

Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,

**praise him with the harp and lyre,
praise him with timbrel and dancing,**

**praise him with the strings and pipe,
praise him with the clash of cymbals,**

praise him with resounding cymbals.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord.'

(Psalm 150:1-6 NIV)

Psalm 150 is the final Psalm. It is no surprise that the psalmist both starts and ends the Psalm with 'Praise the Lord' so that it shares the same beginning and ending line as the previous four.

☉ Do you find the psalmist's guide to praising helpful?

☉ Is the reminder a useful one?

☉ Do you like having instruction in your time of praise with God or do you prefer praise to be a personal thing, done when and how you want it to be done?

☉ Does it matter to God which it is?

The next word that speaks to me is sanctuary. Our immediate thought of a sanctuary is a holy place and is therefore most worthy of praise. In

the Old Testament it was most definitely a place that was set apart for God's honour and was thought of as having special recognition of God's presence.

In light of the new covenant, we are introduced to the thought that God's sanctuary is not fixed to a particular building. In 2 Corinthians 6:16 we are told that we ourselves are the temple of the living God and in 1 Corinthians 3:16 that you are God's temple and his Spirit lives amongst you.

☉ How do you feel about this?

☉ Is church more than just a building to you?

☉ Have you found ways of forming your own sanctuary with God?

PSALM 150

Continued

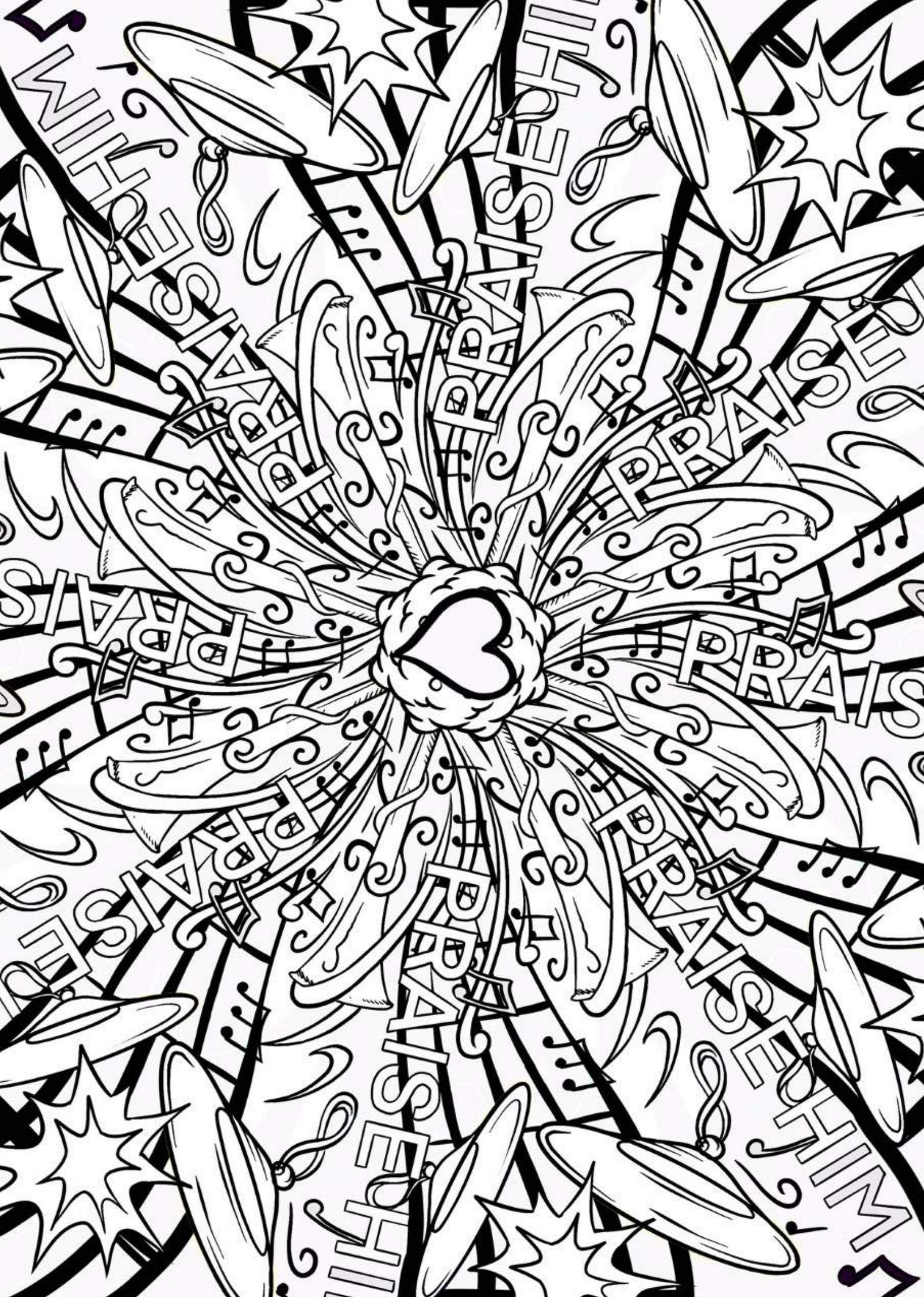
It would be remiss of us to look at this Psalm and not to mention the list of ways to praise God. A list that is often used as a form of encouragement to praise him enthusiastically and often loudly! It is fitting that the list starts with the trumpet as it was the sound that was associated with the grandest and most solemn events, but the list is not all about grandeur. In fact, the broad list of instruments tells us that God wants everyone to praise him irrespective of age, race, gender and class.

One of the original visions William Booth had for The Salvation Army was that everyone, no matter what their social class, would be able to worship God together. Have we realised that vision?

Finally we are told 'Let everything that has breath praise the Lord'. I love the thought that every breath that we take is a gift from God and it is a reminder that we should make the most of each day that we have.

PRAYER

Dear God, we pray that our praise is like the Psalmist's list of instruments, broad and far-fetching, and that we will continue to praise God wherever our sanctuaries with him may be. Until we meet again, may we find peace and love in the sanctuary of God that lives within our heart.
Amen.

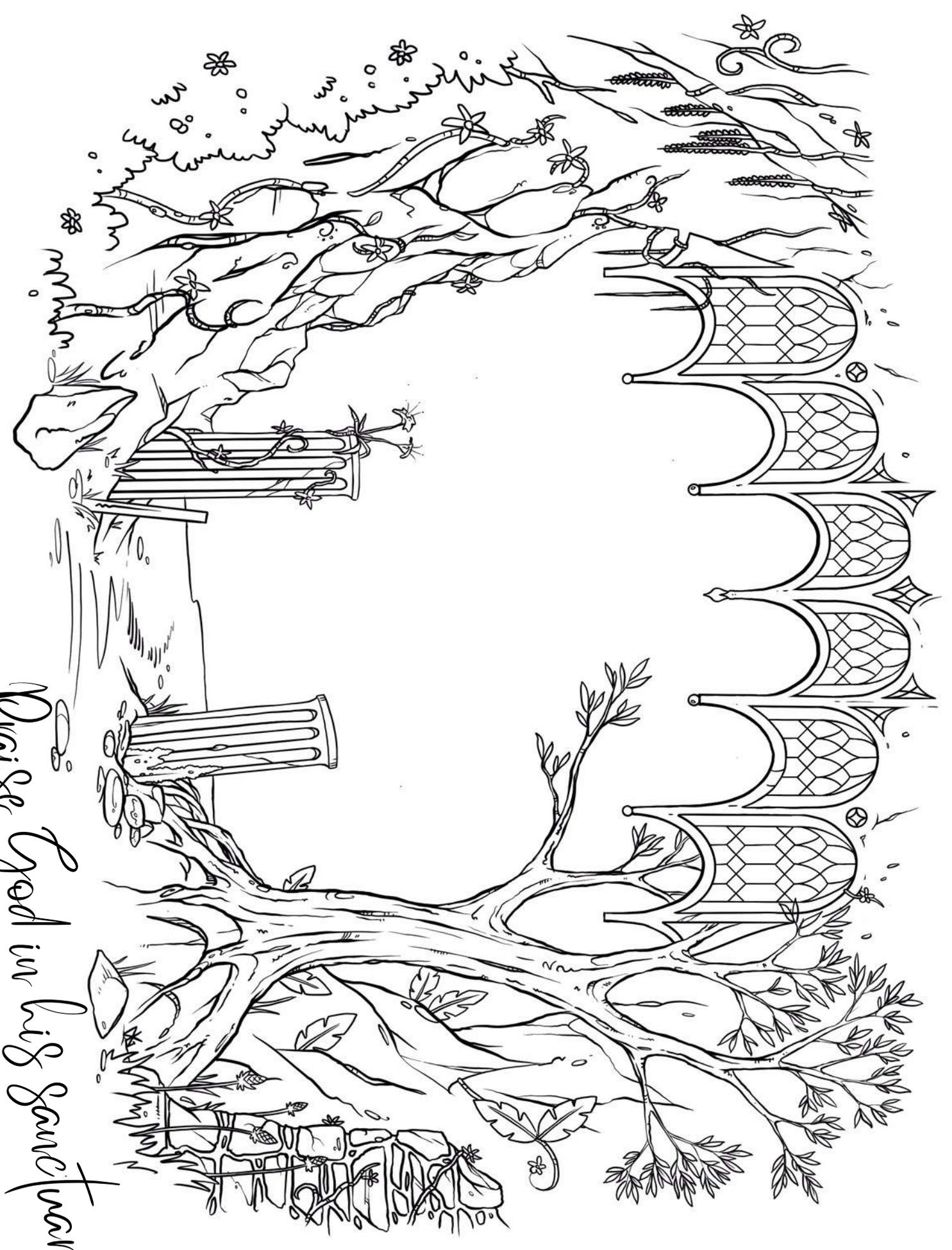


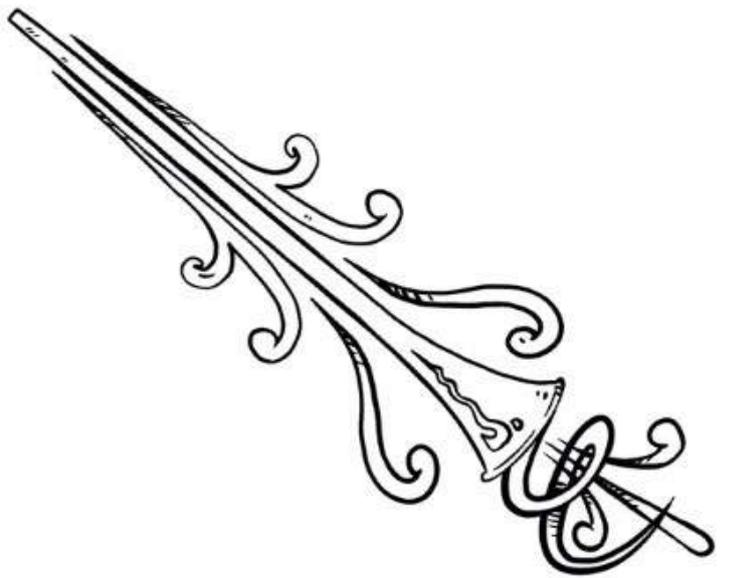
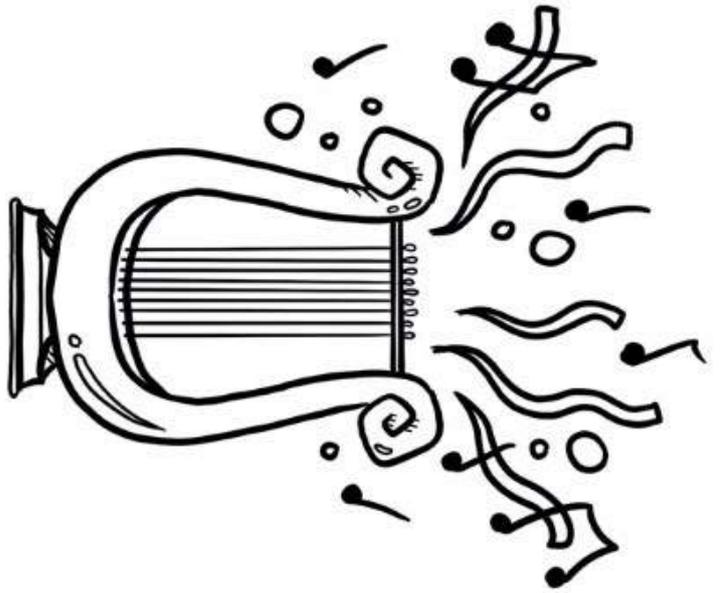
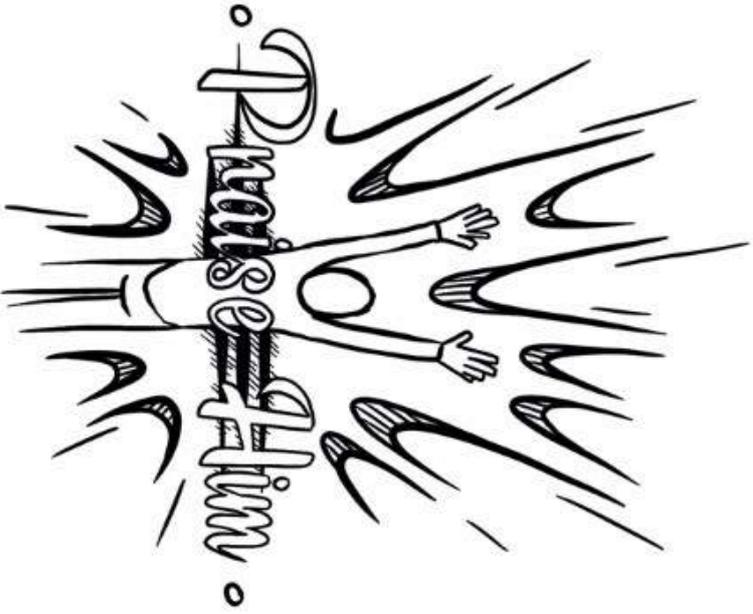
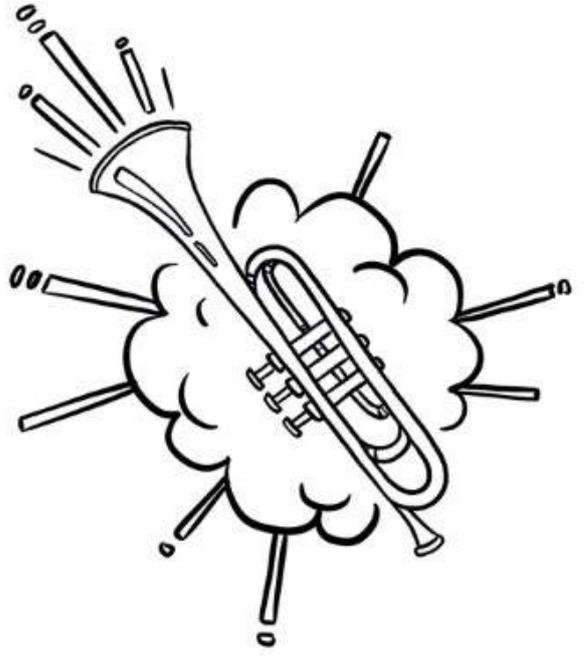
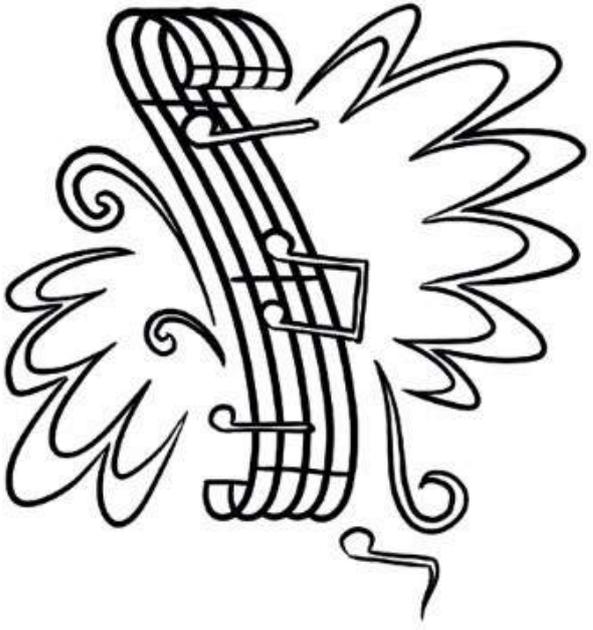


the Lord!
God in his sanctuary
Him in his mighty heavens
Him for his acts of power

Psalms 121
Him for his surpassing greatness

Praise God in his sanctuary





PSALM 23

Art: David Betteridge Thoughts: Hannah Browne

'Yahweh is my best friend and my shepherd. I always have more than enough.

He offers a resting place for me in his luxurious love. His tracks take me to an oasis of peace, the quiet brook of bliss.

That's where he restores and revives my life.

He opens before me the right path and leads me along in his footsteps of righteousness so that I can bring honour to his name.'

(Psalm 23:1-3 The Passion)

Psalm 23 is probably the best known of all the Psalms. The verses written by David assure us that God is always present, both in good times and difficult times.

However the verses of this Psalm are so familiar it could mean that sometimes we overlook and become used to hearing them. We don't always take time to reflect on the words we read. As you read Psalm 23 together take a break between each line to think about what this Psalm means to you in

your life today. Highlight or underline the words that are speaking to you.

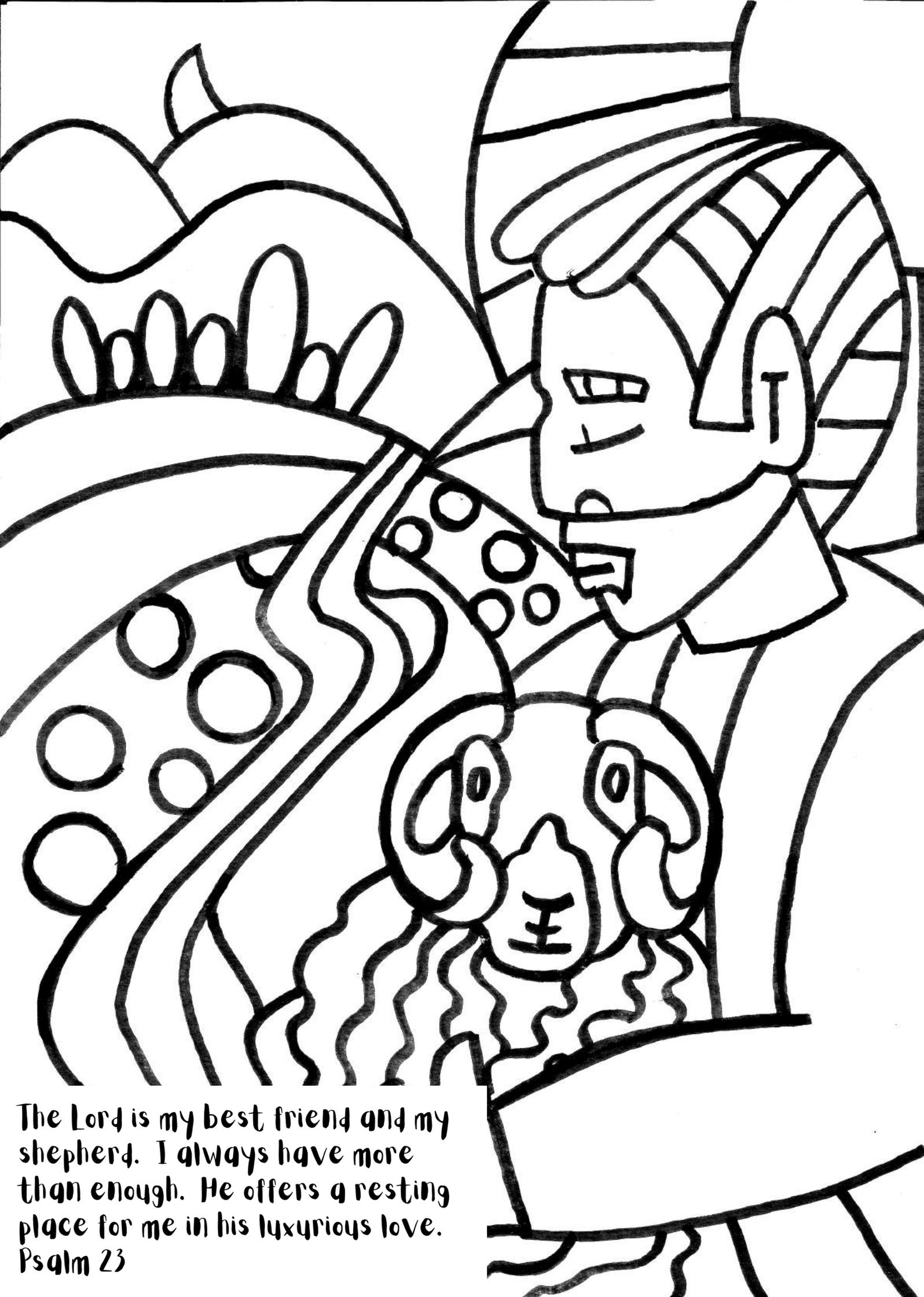
☉ What pictures come to mind when you hear these words from Scripture: shepherd, green grass, comfort, table, still waters, feast, house of the Lord and forever?

☉ What is God saying to you through this Scripture?

☉ What are you saying to God in response?

PRAYER

Father God, thank you for your continued presence in our lives. Thank you that you journey with us not only through the green pastures and the times of great joy but also in the dark valleys when things are not always easy. We turn to you for guidance and renewable strength. Thank you for your goodness and the blessings we are given on a daily basis. Thank you for your unfailing love for us and providing all that we need. Walk with us and guide us in the way you would have us go. Protect us until we meet again.
Amen.



The Lord is my best friend and my shepherd. I always have more than enough. He offers a resting place for me in his luxurious love. Psalm 23

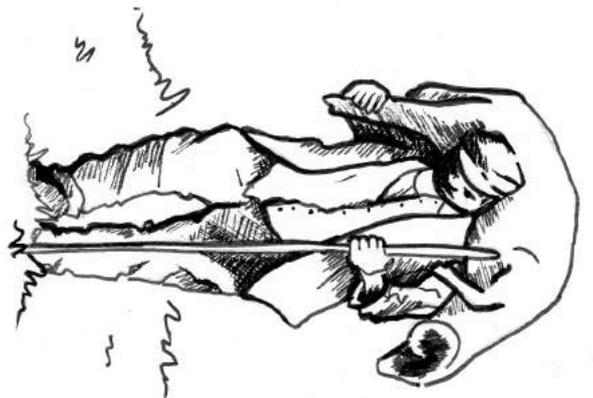
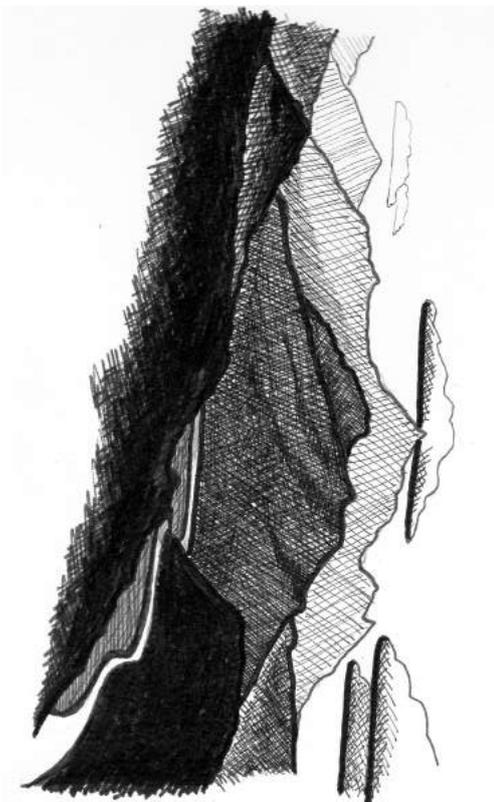
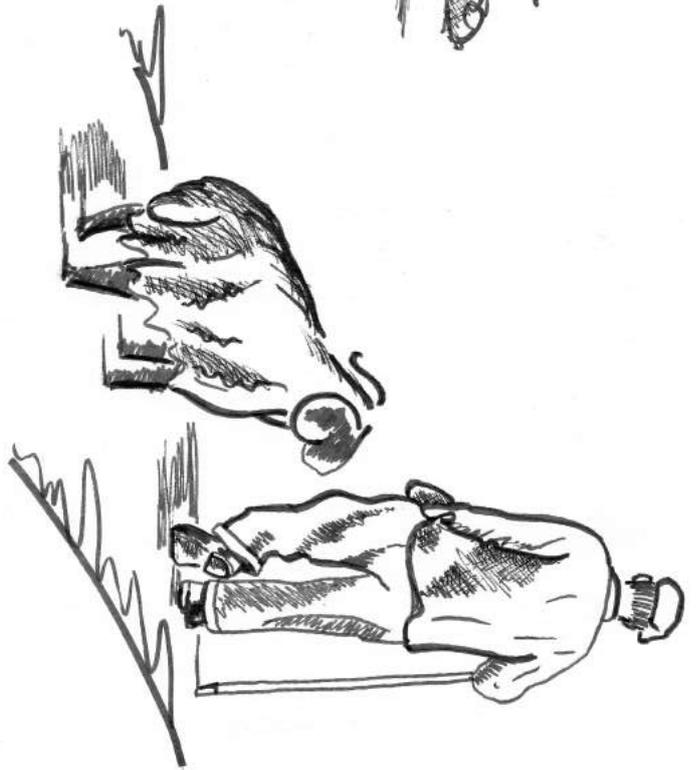
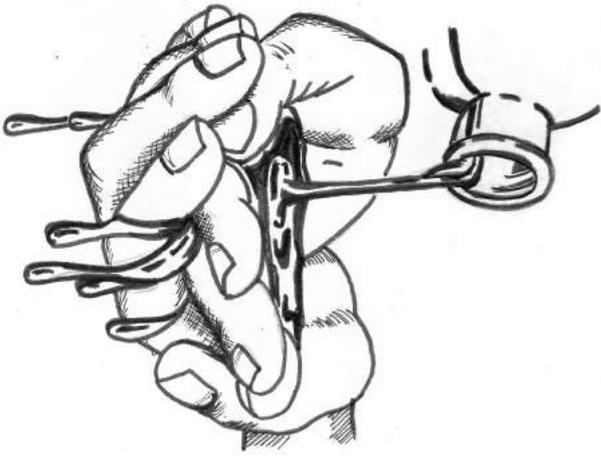


The Lord

is my best friend and my
shepherd.

I always have more than enough.
He offers a resting place for me
in his luxurious love.

Psalm 23



PSALM 8

Art: Elliott Chappell Thoughts: Richard Prescott

'When I look at the night sky and see the work of your fingers—the moon and the stars you set in place—what are mere mortals that you should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and crowned them with glory and honour. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority—the flocks and the herds and all the wild animals, the birds in the sky, the fish in the sea, and everything that swims the ocean currents.'

Psalm 8: 3-9 New Living Translation

What a beautiful Psalm! These are words which speak of God as ruler over everything and yet he created you and me, and we belong to him (see also Psalm 100 and Luke 12:22-34).

The writer of this Psalm points out how remarkably powerful praise is in defeating the darkness, even the praise of little children. In Matthew's Gospel we read about the children in the Temple who recognised Jesus as the Messiah and were calling out to him, even though Jesus' critics failed to see him for who he really was. And Jesus quotes this Psalm to them (Matthew 21:16).

Notice how we have been given authority over all of creation (v6). Surely, that should mean we have a reason to care for our planet?

☉ How does this make you feel?

☉ What might you do about it?

God has made each of us in his image. He has also given us the ability to think, to act, to dream – to be creative! Let's do just that, and let this be our worship to our majestic God.

PRAYER

Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! Please help us to see this. Help us to understand what this means for us in our everyday lives. We see your hand in all of creation. May we be good stewards of the gifts of life that you have given to us. We give you our worship and our praise.
Amen.

O LORD OUR GOD,

YOUR MAJESTIC NAME FILLS THE EARTH

YOUR GLORY IS HIGHER THAN THE HEAVENS
YOU HAVE TAUGHT CHILDREN AND INFANTS
TO TELL OF YOUR STRENGTH,
SILENCING YOUR ENEMIES
AND ALL WHO OPPOSE YOU

WHEN I LOOK AT THE NIGHT SKY
AND SEE THE WORKS OF YOUR FINGERS -
- THE MOON AND STARS YOU SET IN PLACE -
WHAT ARE MERE MORTALS THAT YOU SHOULD
THINK ABOUT THEM, HUMAN BEINGS THAT
YOU SHOULD CARE FOR THEM?
YOU HAVE MADE THEM A LITTLE LOWER
THAN THE ANGELS
AND CROWNED THEM WITH GLORY AND HONOUR

YOU MADE THEM RULERS OVER THE
WORKS OF YOUR HANDS
YOU PUT EVERYTHING UNDER THEIR FEET
ALL THE FLOCKS AND HERDS AND THE ANIMALS
OF THE WILD, THE BIRDS IN THE SKY
AND THE FISH IN THE SEA,
ALL THAT SWIM THE PATHS OF THE SEAS

LORD, OUR LORD,

HOW MAJESTIC IS YOUR NAME

IN ALL THE EARTH!

PSALM 8



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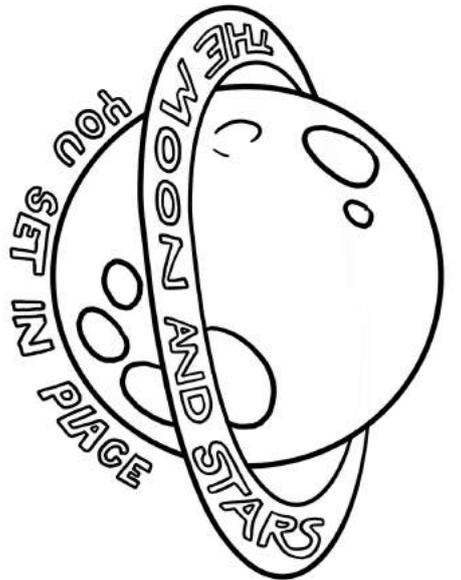
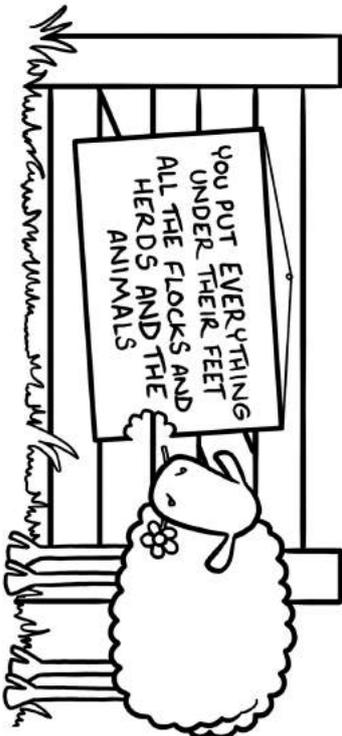
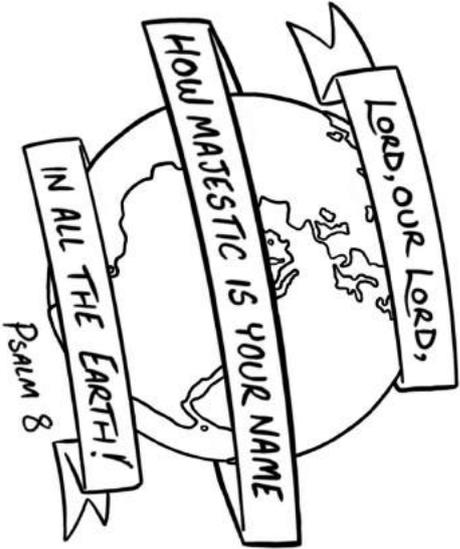
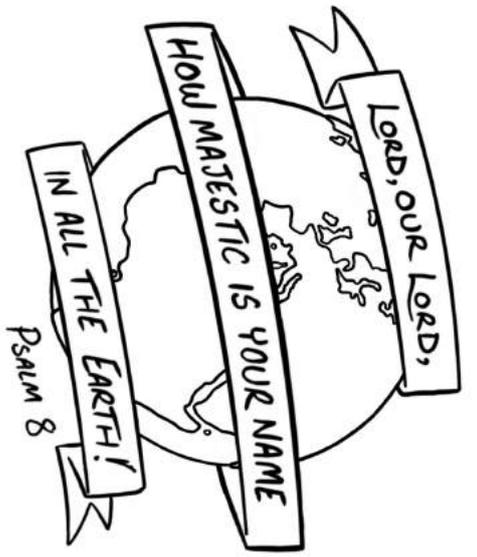
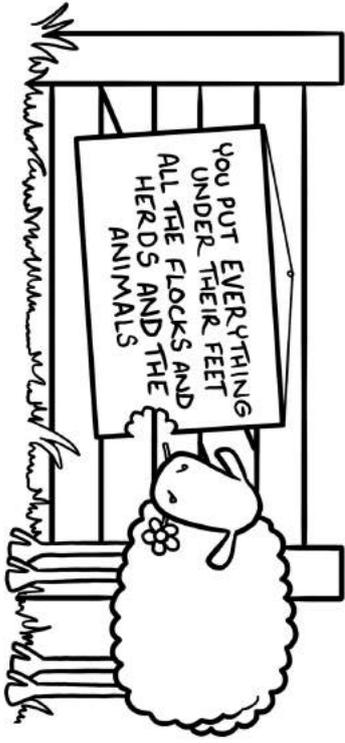
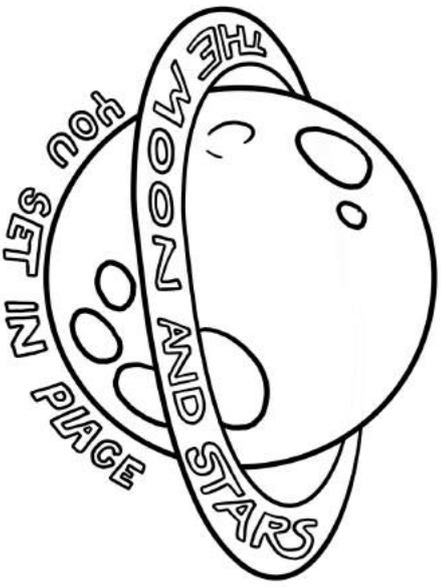
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LORD, OUR LORD,

HOW MAJESTIC IS YOUR NAME

IN ALL THE EARTH!

PSALM 8





SHARE YOUR WORK

We hope you've enjoyed using Drawing Closer and through doing so, God has blessed you. We would love to see the art work produced by groups around the territory. Why not take a photo of the work your group has created to share on social media?

Use the hashtag [#DrawingCloser](#) and include your favourite verse from the relevant Psalm. You'll find The Salvation Army on all major social media platforms.



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