

ENTRANCE

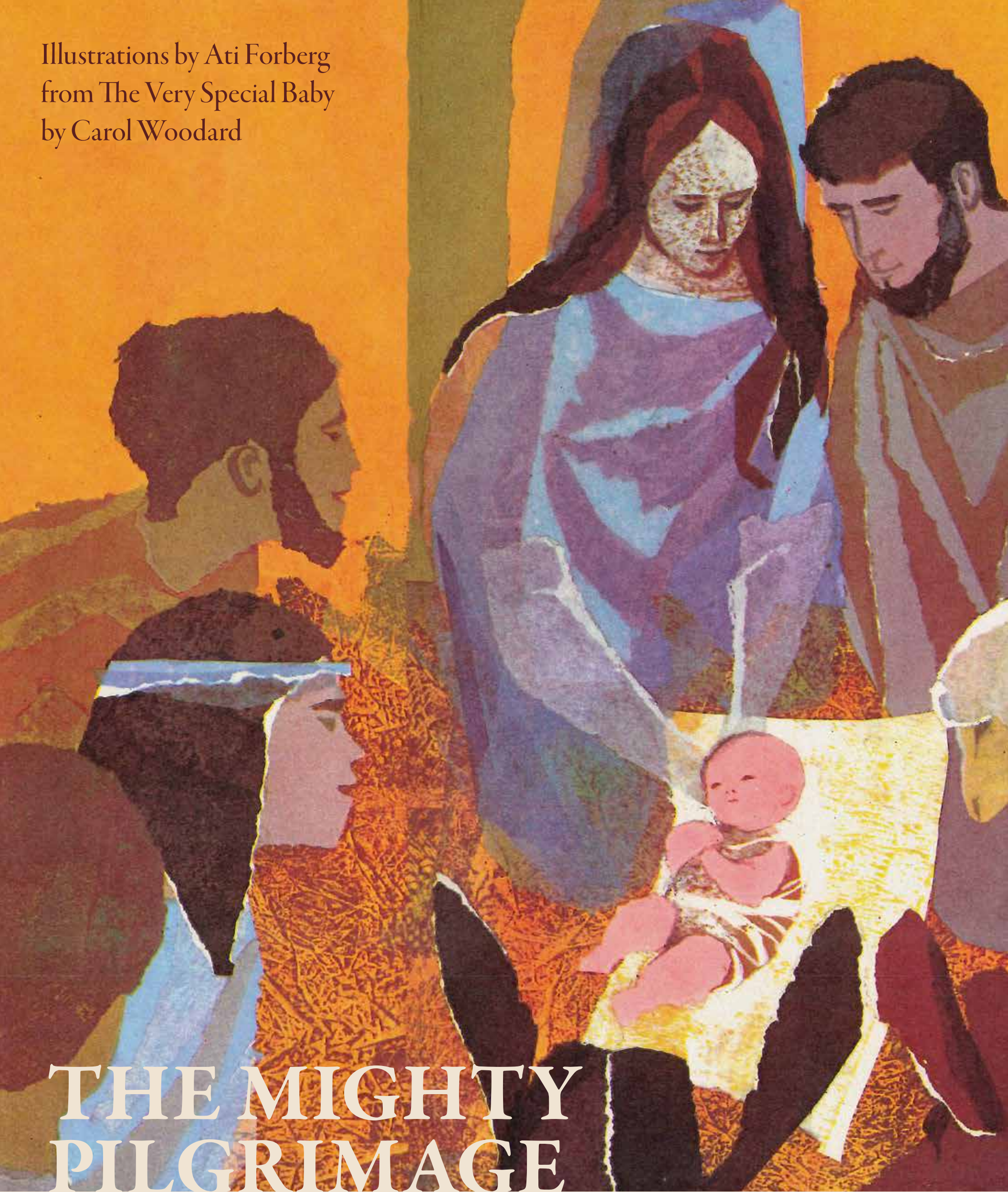
ONE WAY ONLY

If there are others in the labyrinth ahead of you,
please wait to enter until they are far ahead to
maintain social distance.



EXIT ONLY


Illustrations by Ati Forberg
from *The Very Special Baby*
by Carol Woodard



THE MIGHTY PILGRIMAGE

It is time once more to set out taking the light of the one star as our only light following in the footsteps of the shepherds who ran forward with such joy the angel song still shimmering in the air to kneel at the place where even kings fall prostrate – where gifts of gold shine no greater than any other gift – for the greatest gift is love. All who gather here know this – as we place our hearts beside the manger once more.

— From *Upon a Luminous Night* by Christine Rodgers —

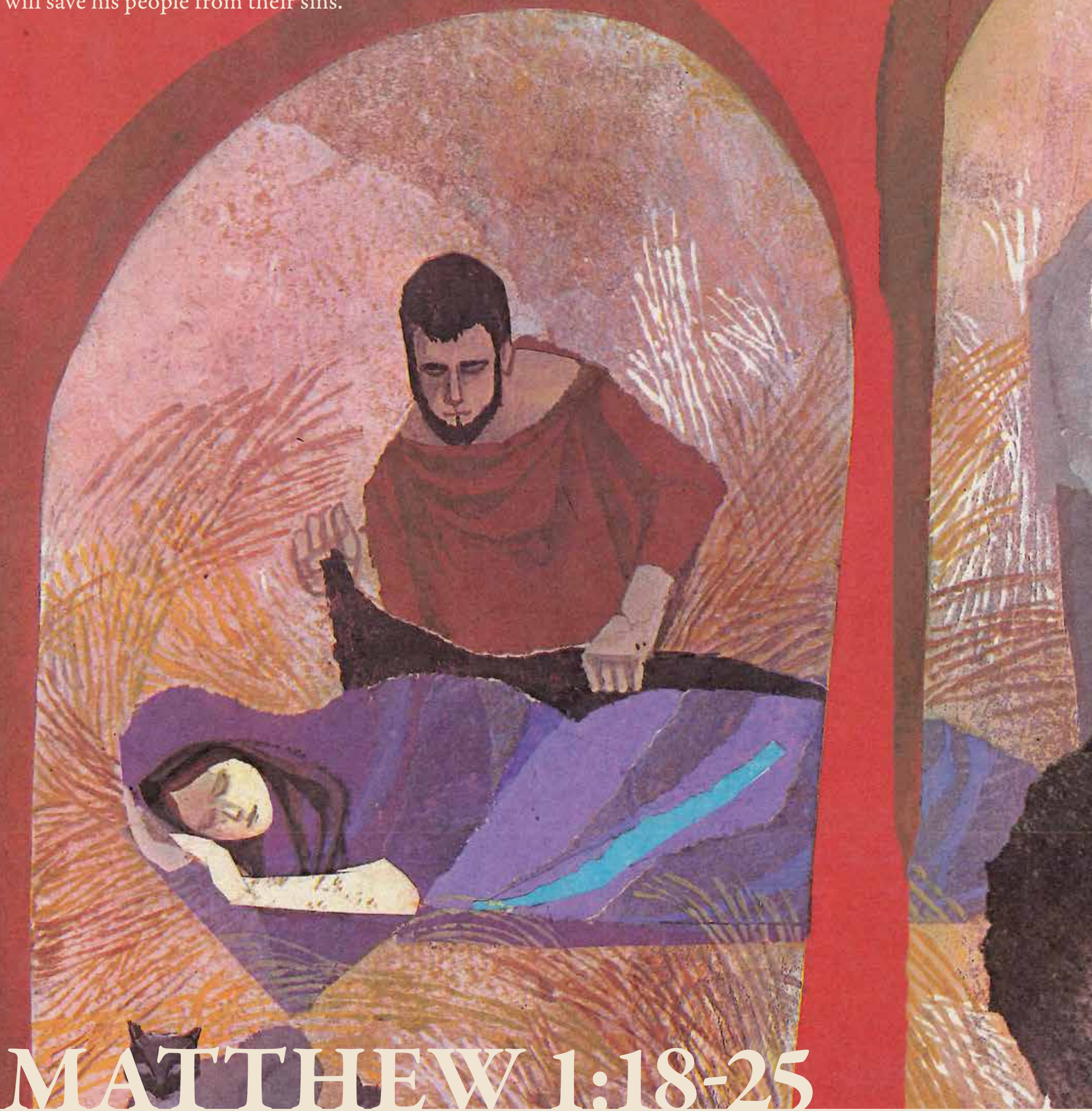


The virgin's name was Mary. And the angel Gabriel came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."


LUKE 1: 26-38

Mary is visited by an angel that says she will bear a very special child who will be a light to the people. She says "may it be so." Are there things in your life that are waiting to be born and all you need to do is say, "Yes?"

Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.”



Joseph is worried about being a father to an illegitimate child. But an angel assures him that this will be the role of his lifetime. Where are you willing to go out of your comfort zone to do an extraordinary thing?



And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty."

LUKE 1: 46-55

Mary visits her cousin, Elizabeth, while she is pregnant. It is there that she makes a bold statement that this child she is carrying will stand up for the outcasts and bring down the unjust mighty from their lofty positions.

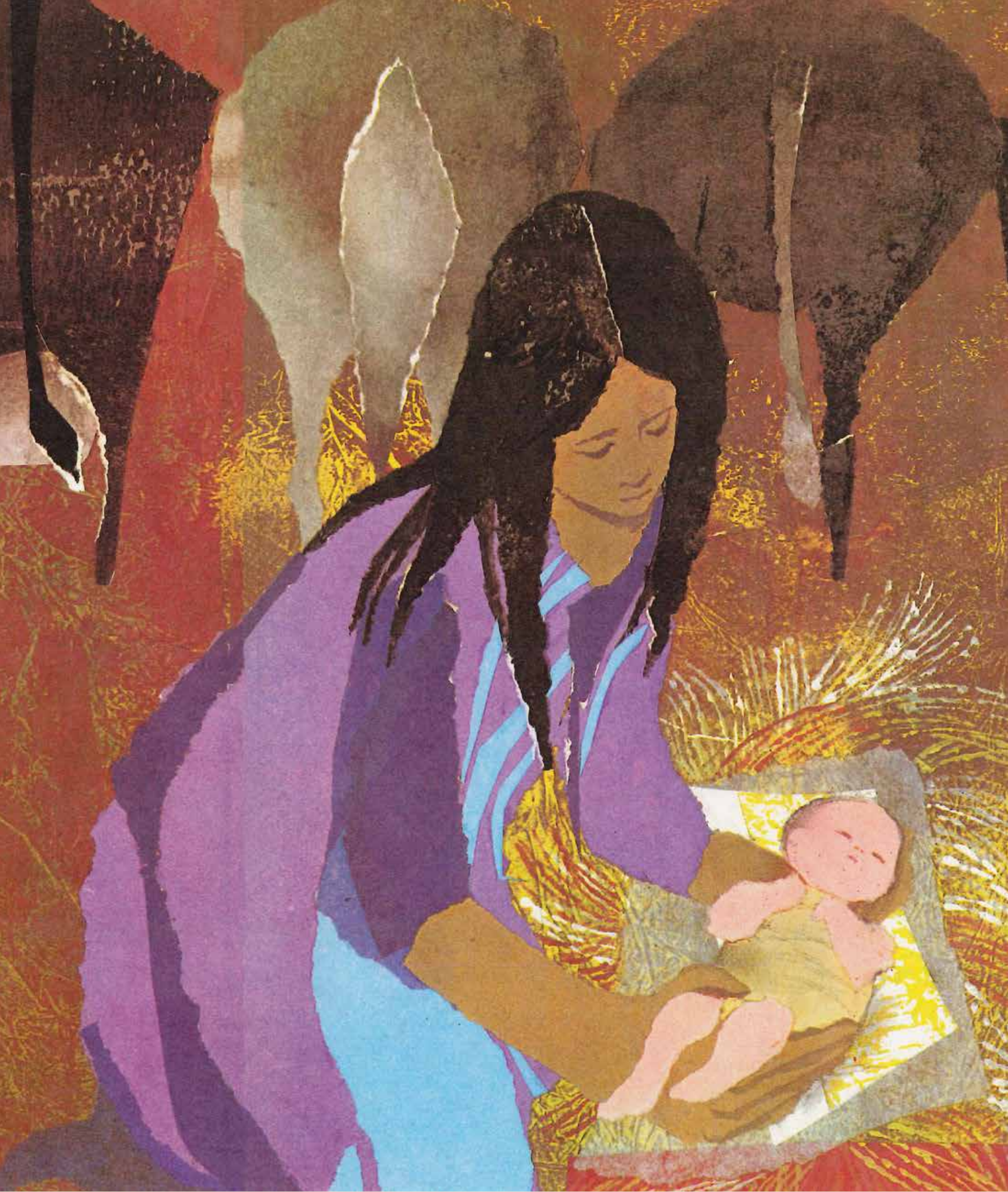
Who needs you to advocate bravely for them?

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.



LUKE 2:1-7

Mary and Joseph make a journey to Bethlehem to be counted in a census. A very pregnant Mary rides on a donkey, and when they arrive, there is no place for them to stay. Have you ever felt panicked about your situation? God is with you.



The child is born in a stable certainly not usually meant for human births. At a time of year when what we “want” seems to get all the attention, what simple things and people do you already have that you are grateful for?



Jesus was “swaddled”—wrapped tightly—and laid in a manger on a bed of straw. Know that God wraps you tightly in love and peace. What can you offer as a way of “wrapping others with love and peace” in the coming year? Like the simple straw that lined the manger, in what simple way can you prepare a place for Christ to be more present in your heart this year?