



*Welcome to our 7th Faith
Formation Encounter!*

We are so glad you are here!!!!

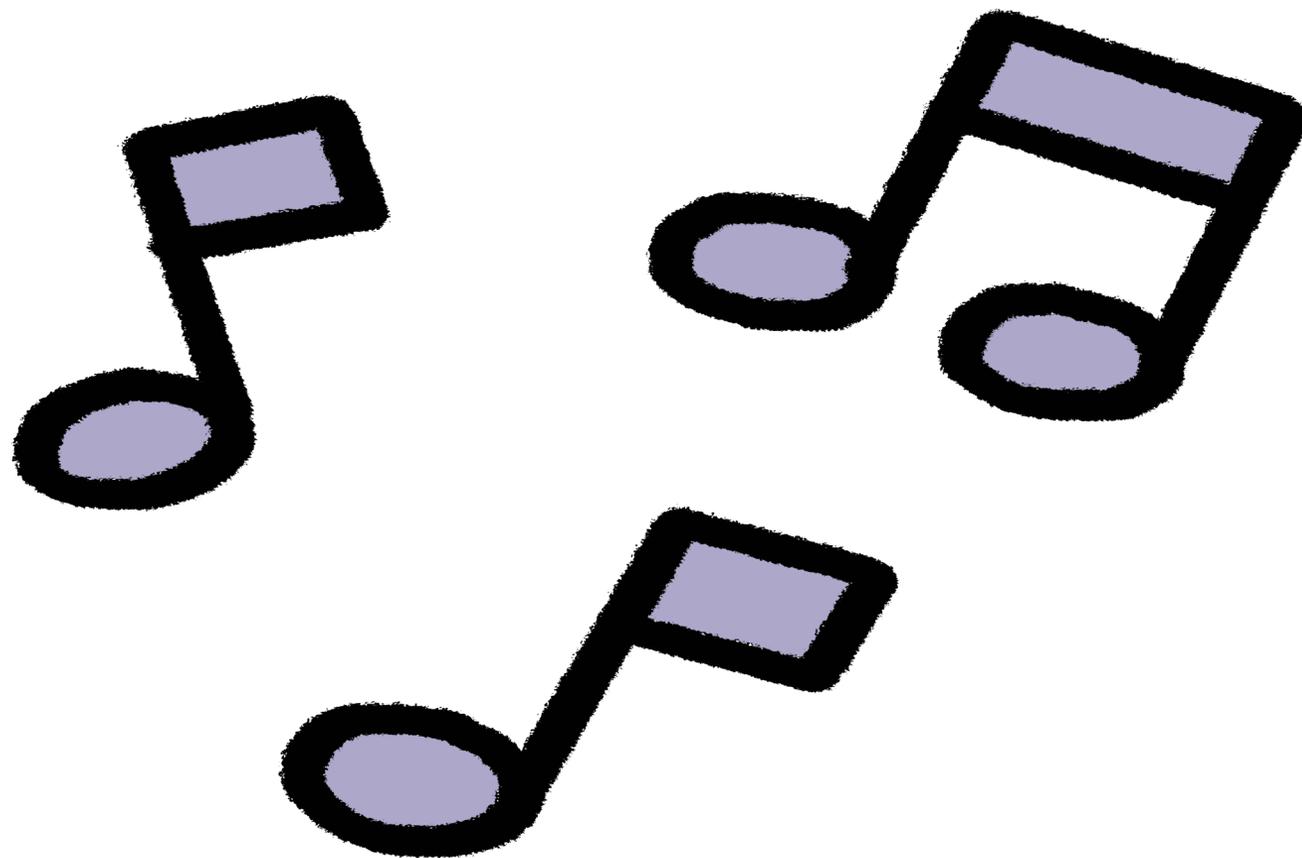
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DENENE MILLNER

Early Sunday Morning



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ILLUSTRATED BY
VANESSA BRANTLEY-NEWTON



*We are so excited about this book!!!
What do you think it might be
about?*

MUSIC



Sunday is the Lord's day, when Mommy, Daddy, my brother, and I go to church. This Sunday is extra special because I'll be singing my first solo in the youth choir.



I sing lots of songs in the mirror when no one is watching. Sometimes, Daddy and I sing loud, silly songs together and giggle at the funny words. Singing with Daddy is when I am happiest of all.



But singing by myself with a microphone in front of a crowd is big. And a little scary. Even at choir rehearsal when barely anyone is watching me practice, my voice gets all trembly.



One day, I heard Angela and Tommy whisper and giggle as I walked back to my seat. "Good grief, Sister Sarah could have just given that solo to a goat. It might not remember the words, but at least it would be able to sing the notes." Their words stung. So did my tears.



Everybody knows I am nervous, and so they all tell me their ideas for how I can sing my song strong and clear. Auntie thinks wearing a new dress will help. "Looking fancy makes you feel brave!" she promises.



Even Mr. Harvey, the barber, adds in his two cents. "See, what you have to do is pretend everyone in the audience has a big ol' watermelon head. You'll be too busy laughing to be scared," he says as he spins my brother, Troy, around in the chair.

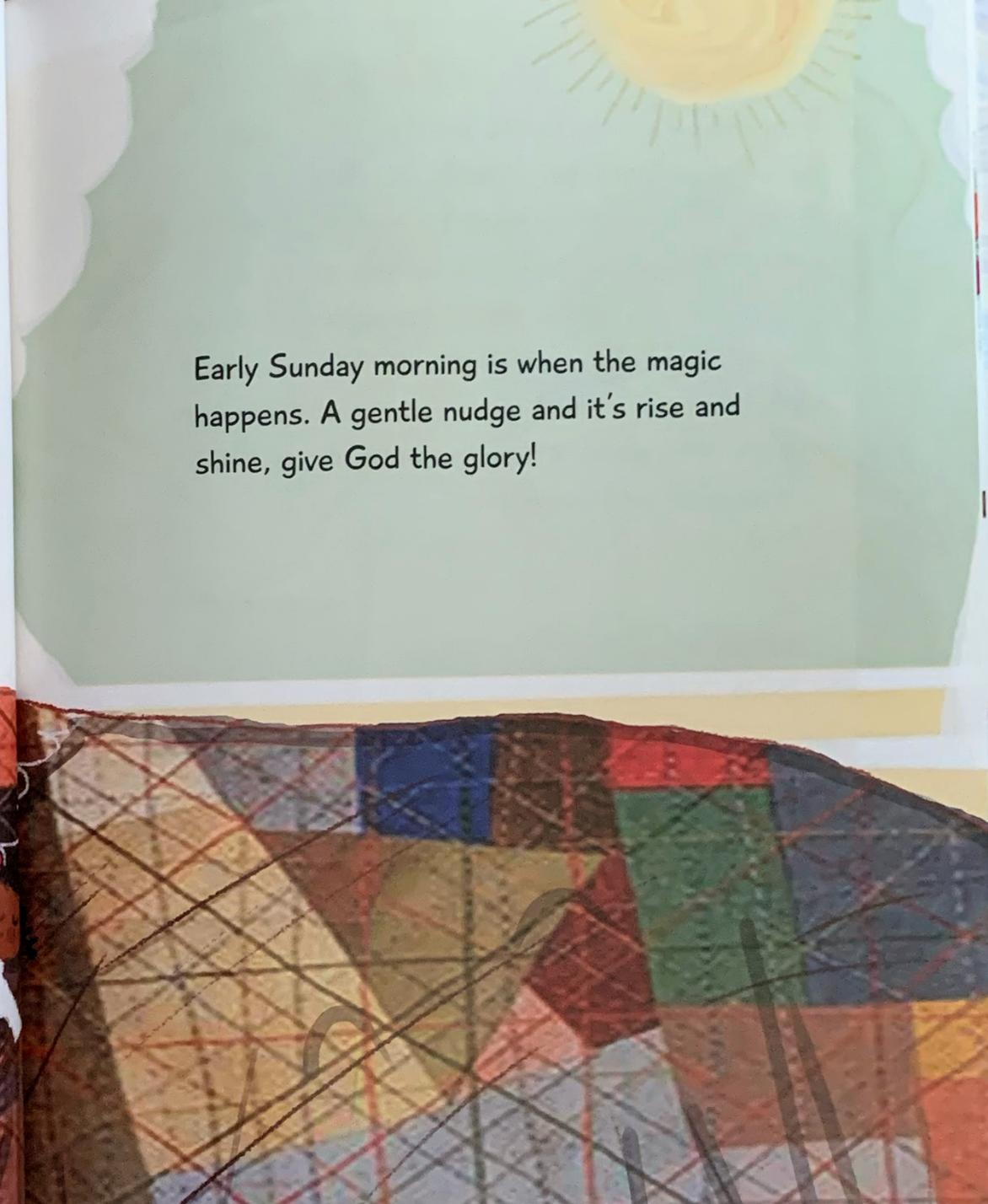
The night before my big solo, Mommy washes my hair with strawberry shampoo and sits me on pillows while she twists it into a beautiful crown. Sometimes, if I sit really still and don't make too much of a fuss, she lets me have a bowl of ice cream. But I am fidgety. "Tomorrow you'll sing your song so pretty, the angels will shout in Heaven," she says. "Believe that with all your heart."

"I will," I say quietly.





Early Sunday morning is when the magic happens. A gentle nudge and it's rise and shine, give God the glory!



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Troy and I wake up to the smell of roast beef, macaroni and cheese, collards, corn bread, and sweet potato pie—my favorite. Mommy always makes Sunday dinner in the morning so we can eat right after church. That's because sometimes, when Pastor Scott gets lost in the rhythm, he can preach on . . . and on . . . and on . . . waaaaay into the afternoon. We eat cereal and toast to hold us over until dinnertime.



After breakfast, I brush my teeth and wash my face and check my hair while Mommy lays out my church clothes: New dress. Tights. And my Mary Janes, shined up like new pennies.



My choir robe hangs from the top of my bedroom door, stretching like a white river almost to the doorknob. A sight to see!

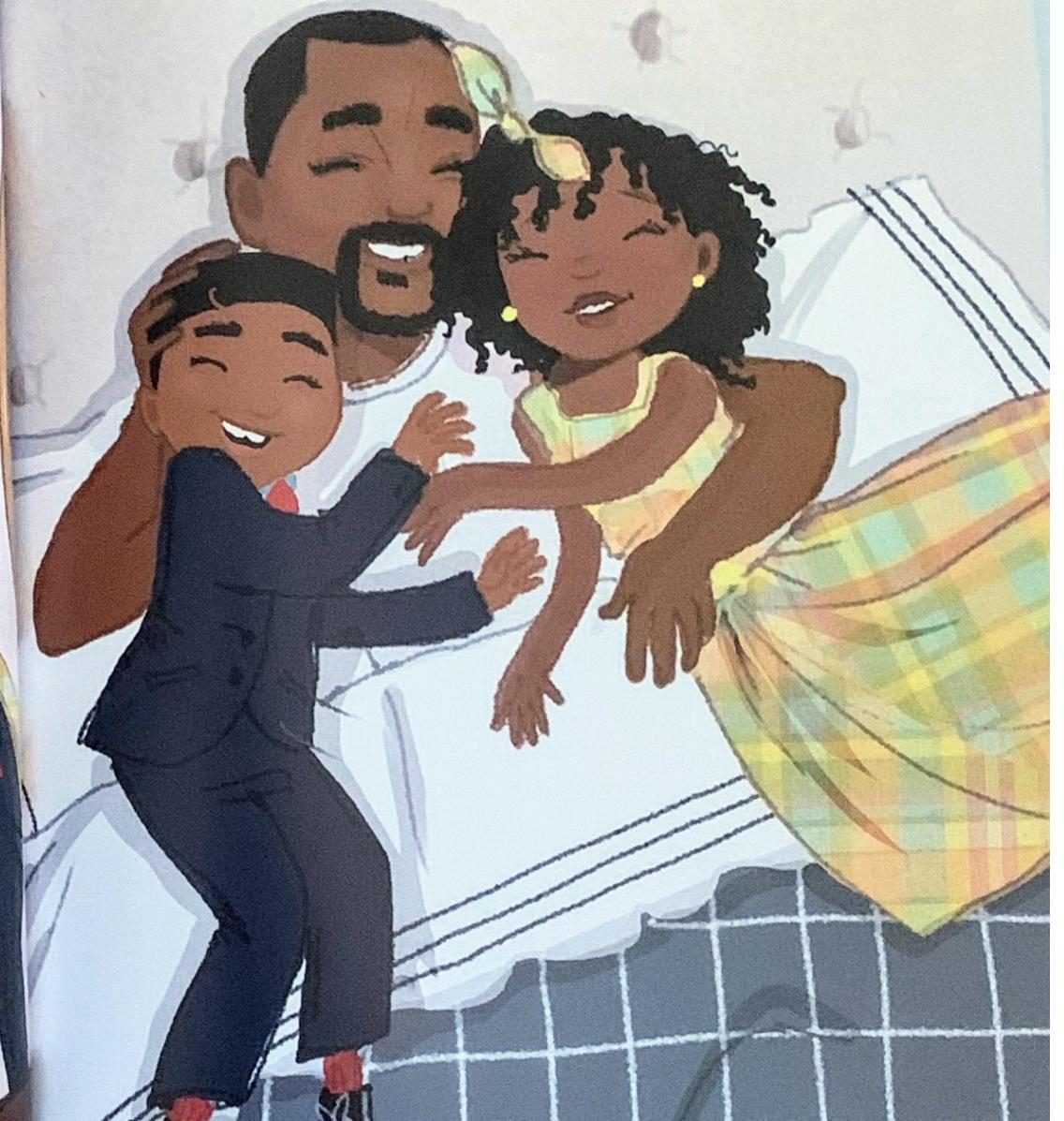
Troy steps out of his room cool as you please in his suit and tie, looking just like Daddy when he takes Mommy out dancing. He giggles when he sees me twirling in my fancy dress.



We both watch Mommy swoosh gloss across her lips.
When she gives a little tug at her church hat and pinches
each of our cheeks, Troy and I know it's almost time to go.



We wake Daddy to hug and kiss him goodbye. He worked an
extra shift at the bakery, so on this Sunday, he will have to rest.
Daddy won't be coming to see me sing. This makes me sad.

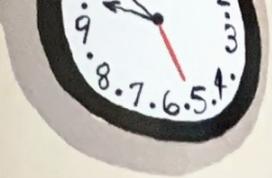


But he gives me peppermints and money for the offering, plus a hug and lots of kisses to help me be brave. "If you get nervous, just pick a spot in the church and sing to it like you do your mirror," he says. "Daddy will be there with you in spirit, singing along with you." Knowing this will have to do.



I can barely keep still in Ms. Ellis's Sunday School class. We're learning about love and how it is patient and kind and never, ever fails. Ms. Ellis's lesson makes me want to hug Mommy and Daddy and Troy and Grandpa Jimmy and Grandma Bettye and Belly, our puffy blue angel fish. But then I see the microphone over by the choir pews, and suddenly, I am scared again.





I watch the hands on the clock as the collection plate is passed . . . and Deacon Claytor reads the announcements . . . and little Kelvin makes the whole Sunday School laugh when he prays for God to make Pastor Scott's sermon end early enough for him to watch the football game.

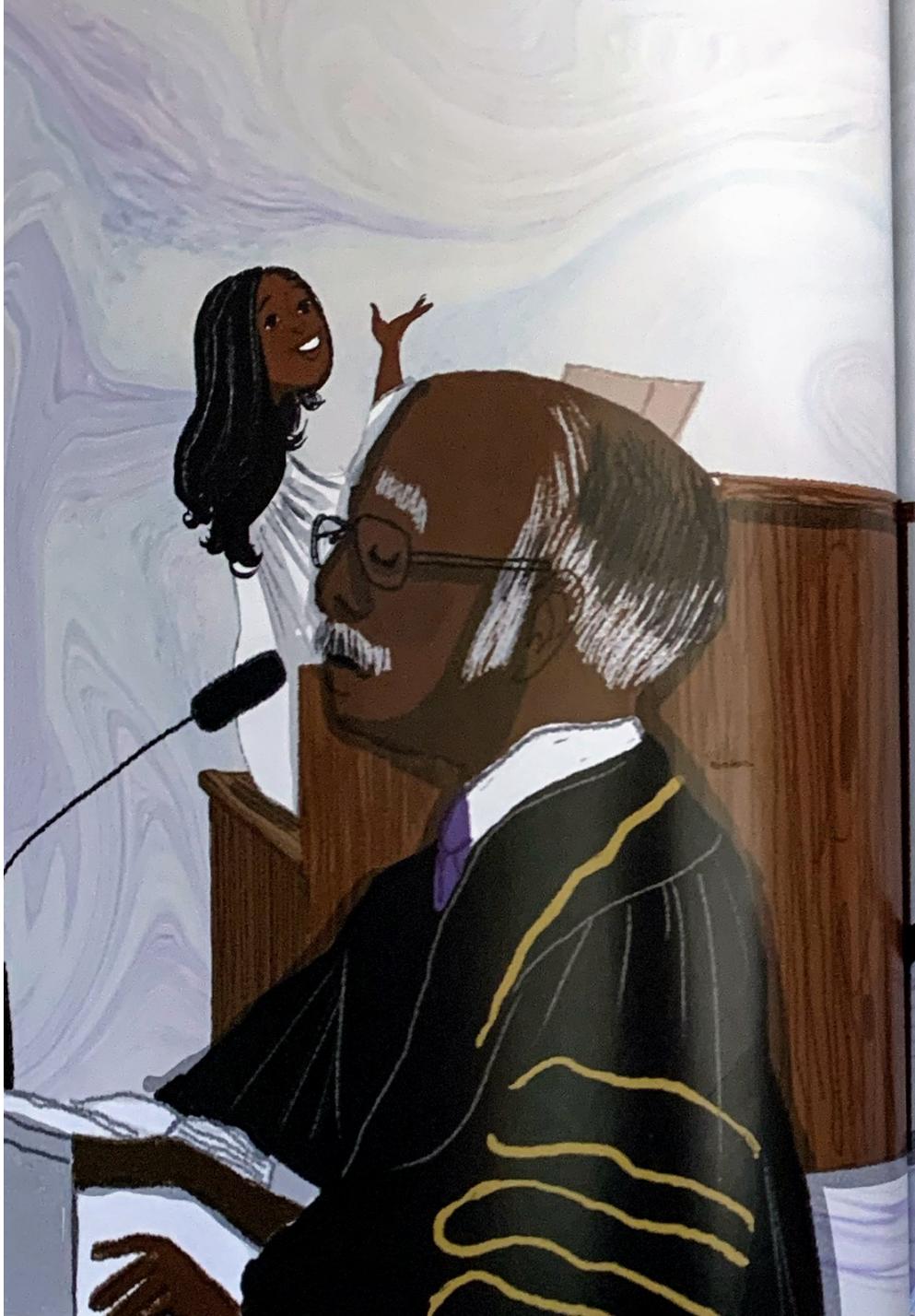


After Sunday School, Mommy helps me into my robe. Then she folds my hands into hers and gives me that knowing look—one that says, "Everything is going to be all right." I want to believe that. At least, I try.

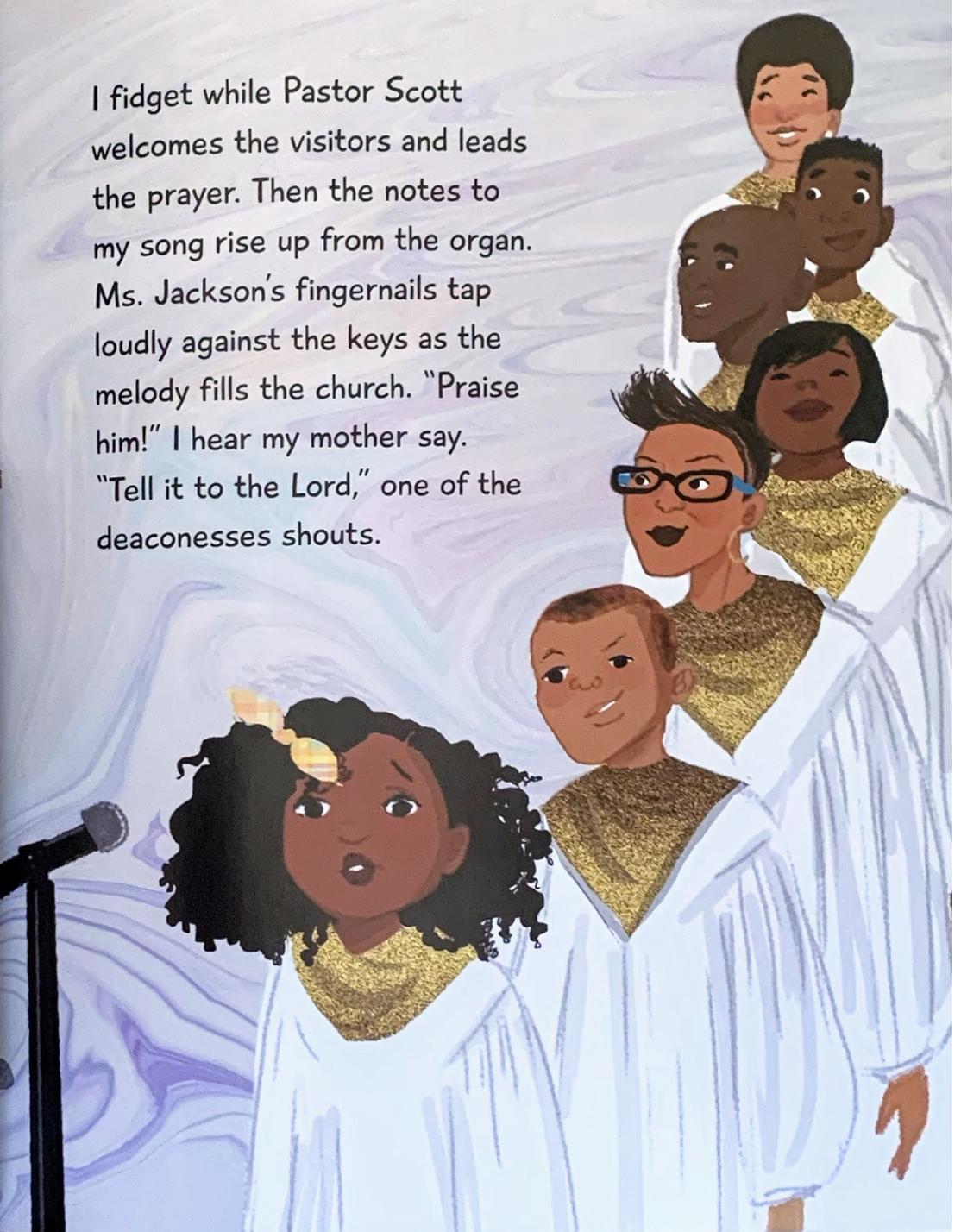


When our youth choir marches through the doors, every eye is on us. We float down the aisle like an army of angels, lifting our voices in praise all the way up to the rafters. And right there at the end of the pew is Mommy, smiling and singing and waving her fan.





I fidget while Pastor Scott welcomes the visitors and leads the prayer. Then the notes to my song rise up from the organ. Ms. Jackson's fingernails tap loudly against the keys as the melody fills the church. "Praise him!" I hear my mother say. "Tell it to the Lord," one of the deaconesses shouts.



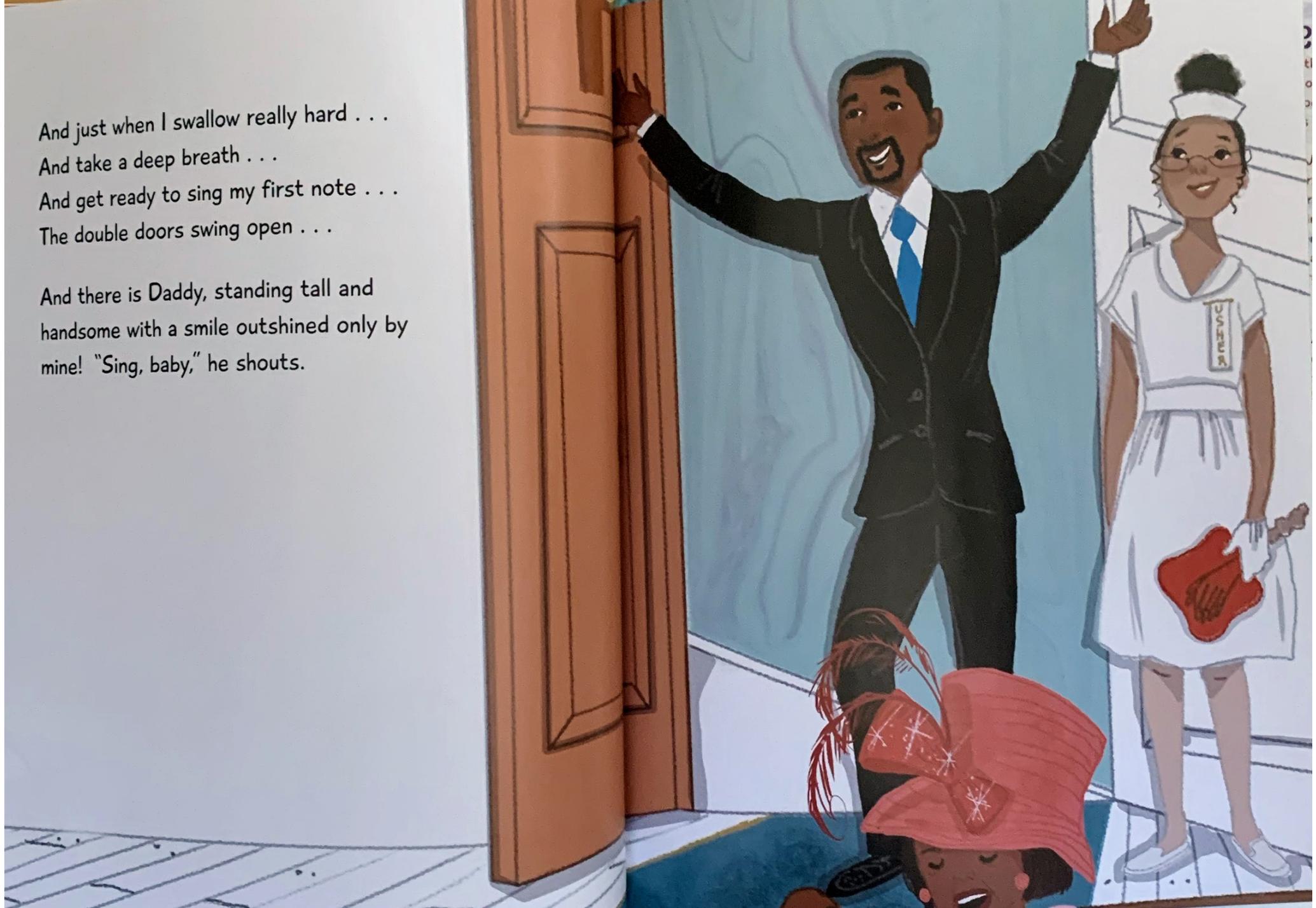


I don't look at the choir director or even my mother. I do not imagine watermelons or remember what my dress looks like. Instead, I pick a spot to focus on, just like Daddy told me to, and I lean into the microphone as I stare at the double doors.



And just when I swallow really hard . . .
And take a deep breath . . .
And get ready to sing my first note . . .
The double doors swing open . . .

And there is Daddy, standing tall and
handsome with a smile outshined only by
mine! "Sing, baby," he shouts.





I lift my voice and sing with the might of
the angels—just like I do when I'm alone in
my room dancing in front of my mirror, and
when Daddy is singing alongside me, too.

And the church shouts, "Amen!"

Let's Chat!



What did you take away from this story?
What did you like?
Can you identify with any of the characters?
How can you praise God and give Him Glory?

Our Memory Verse...

What do you think this means?

Is singing the only way to make music?

What are some other ways?

Who should we make music for?

What can we make our music about?

How does this verse connect to our story today?

SHOUT 
FOR JOY TO THE
L O R D
ALL THE EARTH,
BURST 
into jubilant
SONG WITH MUSIC!

Psalms 98:4



Our Project...

Upcycled/Found Object Musical Instruments

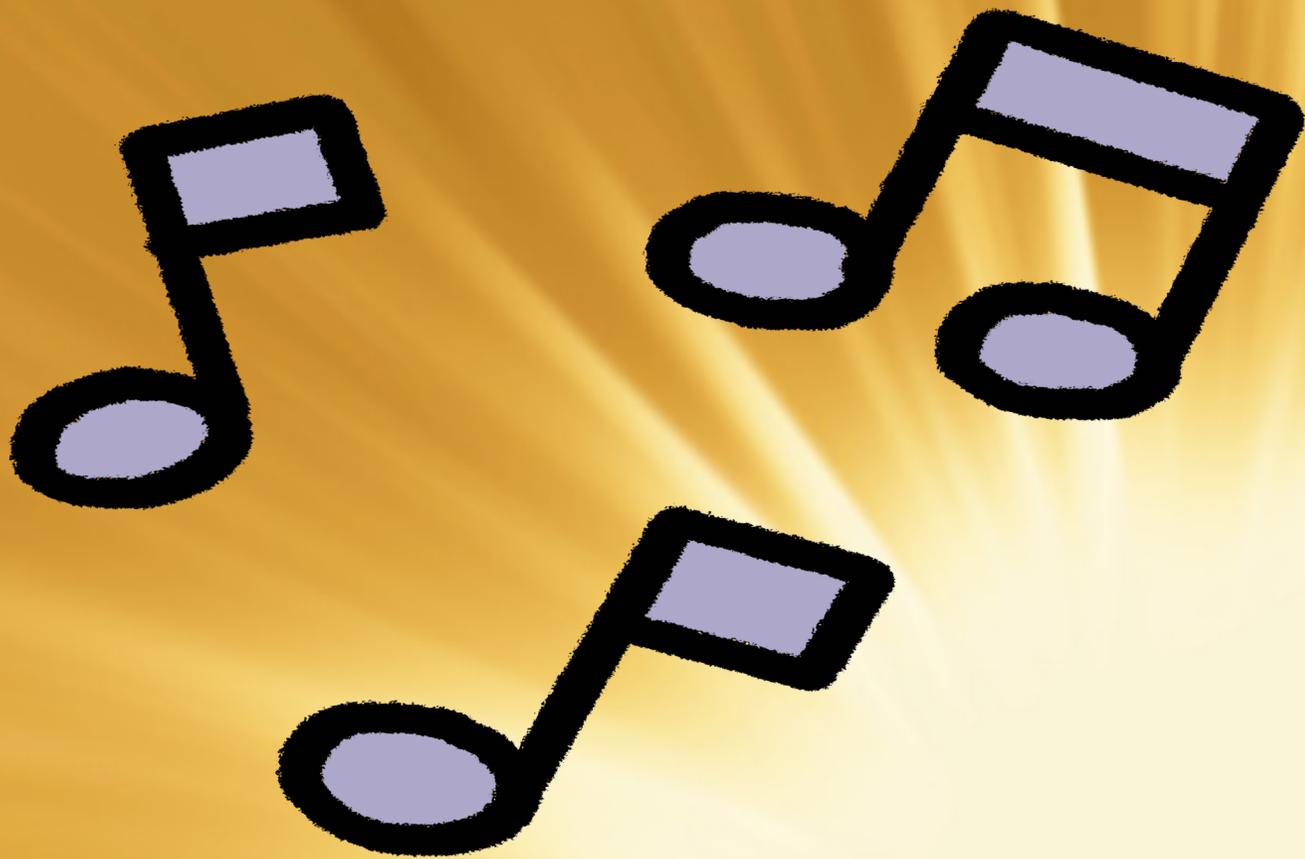
- Go on a musical scavenger hunt in your house. What do you have at home that you could possibly turn into a musical instrument? What can make a joyful noise?
- You really have to think outside of the box. If you already have a few musical instruments at home...that is great...but this morning we would like you to get creative and make your own.
- Anything goes here. On Thursday, it was Earth Day. Could you possibly look in your recycling bin or even your trash to see if you could turn trash into treasure? A water bottle could become a shaker, an empty margarine tub could become a drum...you get the drift.
- Experiment to get it to make the sound you want. You may have to add less rice (for example) to your water bottle so it makes the exact sound you are looking for.
- Now, decorate your instrument...make it your own. Think about the story. Think about the memory verse. Think about God. Think about Jesus.
- Finally, can you play your instrument and record it? Give God your Glory! Maybe you want to play a song you know or maybe you would like to make something up. You decide. Share with us at jhovanec2007@comcast.net
- What ideas do you have?



*Share your instruments
and/or share your
Music/Song and give God
your Glory!*



Let's End with a Sing
after Me Prayer...



Dear God

Dear God

Thank you

Thank you

For the Gift of Music

For the Gift of Music

Help us to make music

Help us to make music

In our hearts and out loud

In our hearts and out loud

That gives You the Glory!

That give You the Glory!

And all God's People said...

AMEN!