

## Christmas Eve Program, 2018 Our Savior Lutheran Church

### Prelude:

O Little Town of Bethlehem  
It Came Upon a Midnight Clear

*Explanation of Stations of Christmas  
(to be read silently by the congregation)*

*During Lent, the Church uses the "Stations of the Cross", allowing us to reflect on the events of Holy Week. Perhaps these "Stations of Christmas" can remind us of the events leading to the wonderful miracle of the Lord's birth.*

### *Opening Prayer*

Lord Jesus, the miracle of Your Nativity has inspired us for generations. Inspire us now with the beautiful story of Your birth. Help clear our minds of the concerns of the day and fill us with the peace and hope of Your Incarnation. **Alleluia and Amen**



### *First Station—The Annunciation*

For centuries, the Jewish people had waited for a Messiah, and their hopes were met with disappointment. Yet they kept faith. At last, in a small Judaeen town, an angel of God asks a young Jewish girl to carry within her the hope of her nation. Mary accepted God's call, changing the course of her life to take on the role of the Mother of God.

*Meditation:* The angel announces to Mary in Luke's Gospel. A suggested way to study Scripture is to put yourself in a story as one of the characters—the prodigal son or the brother; or the Good Samaritan or the Innkeeper. Place yourself in this story as Mary!! You have quite the decision!! You have free will to answer yes or no. What to do? In the Eastern Orthodox Church, Mary is called Theotokos— Greek for "God-bearer". In John's Gospel this baby is called "Logos"— the Word of God. Are we not called to bear the Word—Logos—of God? To bear the Gospel to the people!! We then become Logostokos—Word Bearer (I think I made that up!!) Can we, then, as Mary, answer anything but YES!! When the angel announces to us, we must say YES!! Amen

**Prayer: Heavenly Father, just as Mary accepted life-changing challenges of Your call, so we know we may have to do the same. Help us to remember her courage and be comforted by it. May we always be open to Your challenges. Alleluia and Amen**



*Second Station: The Visitation*

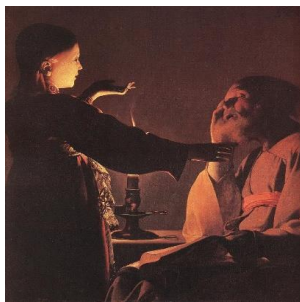
After accepting the Lord's call, Mary finds herself in a lonely situation. She alone knows what has happened, and the magnitude is enough to cause her doubt. God in His goodness gave her comfort. Her cousin Elizabeth has also been blessed by God's grace, conceiving a child in her old age.

Mary sets off to see this miracle. On her arrival, Mary is rewarded with the assurance that God has indeed called her.

**Meditation:** Mary's response to the Lord—Let it be done to me according to your Word—is a perfect response. She could neither understand nor explain what was happening to her, but she knew deep in her soul that God was in charge, leading all to His glory. She embraced the mystery and accepted it in faith. Reflect on your invitations from God to embrace the mysteries of life.

**Prayer: God in Heaven, may we never lose heart. We know that You will give us strength to carry out Your will. Should we doubt our faith, let us be strengthened by the signs and miracles You provide, large and small. Alleluia and Amen**

**Music:**



*3rd Station—Joseph's Vision*

Joseph finds himself in a dilemma. Confronted with this dilemma, he must respond. Like any of us, he responds in a worldly way. He will divorce Mary quietly, but God intervenes. An angel assures Joseph in a dream that this is the work of God. Joseph makes his decision and takes Mary as his wife.

**Mediation:** Joseph's Vision: The angel announces to Joseph in Matthew. Place yourself in the story as Joseph. A decision again—two choices again. Free will again!! Let us hope that we will be as righteous as Joseph. He had to decide—divorce or stay? With either option he chose to do what was right because it was the right thing to do.





#### **4th Station: The Journey**

Joseph and Mary are confronted with another obstacle. Rome has ordered a census, and Joseph must travel to Bethlehem to register his family. They spend their nights outside in the cold desert air. God's presence will guide them. With loving patience, they set out for Bethlehem, the city long prophesied as the birthplace of the Messiah.

**Meditation:** In the midst of the hardships that went with Mary and Joseph's journey, amid the deferred dreams and dashed hopes, God was working to redeem the world. God uses every circumstance, including the oppression of the Roman government, to serve His purpose.

This was NOT a journey Mary wanted to take. She knew Herod would try to kill her child, and she and Joseph would have to flee to Egypt. Thirty-three years later, her journey would be to follow her son to Calvary.

We know we will each have unwanted journeys in life. Life will have its disappointments—its intense pain and overwhelming sorrow. The good news of Scripture is that God not only walks with us on these journeys but redeems them and brings good from them.

**Prayer:** Father, at times we are surprised by the twists and turns of life. Give us the patience of the Holy Family to realize that no matter where our lives lead, You will be waiting at the end of our journey. Amen

**Music:** All is Well



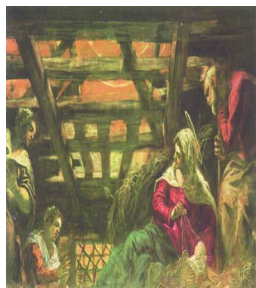
#### **5th Station: Arrival in Bethlehem**

At last Mary and Joseph arrive in Bethlehem, bustling with travelers. Tired and dusty from the trip, they search for lodging. Mary says they must hurry, for her Baby will be born this night, but there are no rooms.

**Meditation:** Arrival in Bethlehem: Bethlehem is a hidden backwater in Judah as Judah is a backwater of the Roman Empire!! Humility of Humilities! Bethlehem is central to both Matthew and Luke. In Matthew, it is to fulfill the Scripture in Micah; and in Luke it is to be registered. It is the City of David and Jesus is to be of the shoot, or branch of Jesse—David's father. Yet, our Lord is called Jesus of Nazareth, not Jesus of Bethlehem.

**Meditation:** Arrival in Bethlehem: Bethlehem is a hidden backwater in Judah as Judah is a backwater of the Roman Empire!! Humility of Humilities! Bethlehem is central to both Matthew and Luke. In Matthew, it is to fulfill the Scripture in Micah; and in Luke it is to be registered. It is the City of David and Jesus is to be of the shoot, or branch of Jesse—David's father. Yet, our Lord is called Jesus of Nazareth, not Jesus of Bethlehem. Some believe Nazareth is a Hebrew pun (which is much used in Hebrew)—Netzer—a shoot or a branch!! Here is the most important translation, however: Bethlehem means House of Bread. Think on that. Amen

**Prayer:** Holy God, disappointments can be difficult. We cannot understand why we must endure hardship, even when we try to do Your Will. Help us remember that even our disappointments can give You glory. Amen



6th Station: The Manger

When it seems there is no place to stay, an innkeeper tells them of a stable where they are welcome, giving Mary a warm, private place to deliver her Baby. They make their way to the stable, where cattle and other animals become their lodging companions. Now all can rest from the journey.

**Meditation:** There were no animals mentioned in the gospels as being present at Jesus's birth. However, if He was born in a stable, in all likelihood, there were oxen and sheep. As it turns out, these were animals worshipped by the Egyptians and Israelites. Now it seems, each of these "animal gods" from the Old Testament is coming before the real God of the New Testament. **Prayer:** Loving Father, may we always be open to Your kindness. Help us accept Your gifts, realizing that You always give us what is best. Let us be grateful for the gifts given in Your love. Amen

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Prayer: Loving Father, may we always be open to Your kindness. Help us accept Your gifts, realizing that You always give us what is best. Let us be grateful for the gifts given in Your love. Amen

### **Music: Away In a Manger**



## 7th Station: The Nativity

As the animal watch, the holy Son of God is born in a stable. The promise of salvation, dreamed of for thousands of years, is accomplished by a loving God and a poor girl in a stable.

**Meditation:** The Nativity: The nativity scene is perhaps one of the two great symbols of Christianity, the other being the cross. The Latin word "nativus" means, (get this!!), "arisen by birth". The first nativity scene is attributed to St. Francis of Asissi in 1223 and set in a stable. The Greek word—*Kataluna*—means stable or inn or cave or house. It could have been any of these---it matters not—it is the humility of our God to be born in so humble an environment!! The baby was wrapped in swaddling—torn rags—and laid in a manger—a feeding trough for animals that would have been brought into the inn, house, or cave with the animals at night—again, it matters not—it is the humility and love of our God!

Amen

**Prayer:** Holy Lord, as we sit in awe of Your blessed Nativity, we are shown the wonder of Your glory and Your humility. Having humbled Yourself, help us refrain from self-importance. Remind us of the great things that are accomplished when we are perfectly submissive to Your will Amen

**Music: Noel**



### **8th Station: The Heavenly Choir**

Unaware of the miracle happening that night, shepherds attend their flock. Suddenly their familiar night sky is filled with glorious angels singing divine praises. The angels assure the shepherds they have come with good news. God has sent them a Savior.

When the angels leave, the shepherds are left in awe. If the Savior has come, why didn't God send His angels to the king or the high priests? They seek to confirm the truth of the angels' words, the strange tale of a Baby in a manger.

**Meditation:** Notice the angels didn't appear to King Herod or the rich and powerful of Jerusalem. Rather, they appeared to ordinary shepherds who were not exactly the upper crust of Israel. They were the ones chosen by God to be the first worshippers of Christ after Mary and Joseph (who were also of a lower class). This points to the fact that, although rich and powerful can be saved, it is meek and lowly who God calls first to come and worship Him.

**Prayer:** Father, the splendor of Your glory is beyond us. What can we possibly give You that compares? May we always be willing to trust, just as the shepherds did when seeking the Christ Child. Amen



### **9th Station: The Shepherd's Visit**

Mary and Joseph look lovingly at what God has entrusted to them. They hear calls of greeting. Going to the stable entrance, Joseph sees shepherds asking to see the Baby. Joseph does not want the privacy or safety of his family invaded. The shepherds tell of the angels, and Joseph's heart is softened. They enter timidly and, upon seeing what the angels had proclaimed, fall to their knees to worship their Messiah.

**Meditation:** Do we need to step back and look at how we celebrate Christmas? It's often filled with stress, not joy. We're glad when it's over! It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from. In God's sight, we are EQUAL! We are obsessed with the concept of equality. Well, it's a fallacy—no 2 people, no 2 days, no 2 of anything are equal. God places value on EACH person! Rather than obsessing over where we stand compared to another, know where you stand in the eyes of God. He loves us with an infinite love. Indeed that's the good news for all—every color, every nation, every race, rich, poor, educated,



illiterate, whether you have or haven't ever read the Bible, whether you have or haven't said a prayer—ALL are invited to the manger

**Prayer:** Dear Father, often we want to be left alone, but the world intrudes. Life is awash with distractions. Help us remember that our purpose in life is not to center upon ourselves but to look outward and proclaim the Word of Your Son's holy mission. Amen

**Music: O, Holy Night**

**Closing Prayer:** Thank you, Lord Jesus, for this time together. Just as the Father used Mary, help us bring You into the world. Let us remember the love You have for us and let us remember to share that love with others as You shared Yourself with us. Amen

**P: The Lord's Peace be with you.**

**C. And also with you.**

**P: Share God's peace.**

**Great Thanksgiving**

**P: The Lord be with you.**

**C: And also with you.**

**P: Lift up your hearts.**

**C: We lift them to the Lord.**

**P: Let us give thanks to the Lord.**

**C: It is right to give Him thanks and praise**



**Prayer:** Loving God, we are humbled to even approach your table knowing we are unworthy. Let us partake of this sacrament of your Son, Jesus Christ; that we may live in Him and He in us. Amen

**The Eucharist**

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **Communion**

#### **Music: What Child Is This**

**Prayer:** All loving God, thank you for sharing the true bread of heaven, Your Son Jesus Christ. Let us forever abide with Him and in Him; and be filled with the power of everlasting life, this night and always. Amen

### **Blessing**

**P:** The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace.

**C:** Amen

### **Candle Lighting**

#### **Music: Silent Night**

### **Love**

#### **Music: Rest of Silent Night**

**P:** And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

**C:** Full of grace and truth.

Congregation brings forward candles

### **Benediction**

**P:** And now, may the light of this night, the light of the incarnation, illumine your life and fill it with hope, peace, joy, and

love; in the name + of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit  
now and forever.

C: Amen

### **Sending**

P: **Go in peace filled with the Light**

C: Thanks be to God

**LOVE**