

OUR SAVIOR LUTHERAN CHURCH OF EL JOBEAN

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Prelude:

95 Little Town of Bethlehem vs 1,2,3

100 It Came Upon a Midnight Clear vs 1,2,3

*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 - Pr. Steve

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 - Pr. Steve



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, don't you? You have free will to answer yes or no. What do you do? In the Greek New Testament, 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 those who need it? To bear the Gospel to the people. We then become Logostokos—Word Bearer Can we then, as Mary,

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answer anything but YES? When the angel announces to us, we must say YES!!

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

Music: 92 Joy to the World, the Savior Comes vs 1,2



Second Station: The Visitation - Pr. Denise

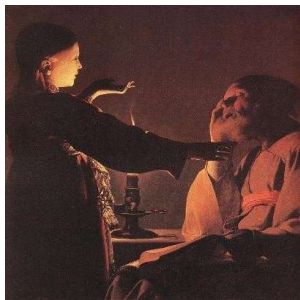
After accepting the Lord's call, Mary finds herself in a lonely situation. She alone knows what has happened, and the magnitude is enough to cause her doubt. God in His goodness gave her comfort. Her cousin Elizabeth has also been blessed by God's grace, conceiving a child in her old age.

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.

Let us pray: **Our Father in Heaven, may we never lose heart. We know that You will always give us strength to carry out Your will. Should we begin to doubt, let us be strengthened by the signs and miracles You provide, both large and small. Alleluia and Amen**

Music: 139 Good King Wenceslas vs 1,5



3rd Station—Joseph's Vision - Pr. Steve

Joseph finds himself in a dilemma.

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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.

Meditation: 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. He would divorce quietly or listen to the angel. The angel explained the situation . Joseph stayed and named the baby Jesus (which means God Saves) knowing the prophecy of Isaiah about Emmanuel (which means God with us.) Joseph saw to it that God would be with us to save us all! God bless you, St. Joseph.

Let us Pray: Lord, many times we feel we are alone in our decision to accept Your Will. Even family and friends may turn away from You. We pray You will remind us that we are never alone, and we ask You to give us faith that You will always help us to do Your Will. Alleluia and Amen

Music: 363 It is Well with My Soul vs 1



4th Station: The Journey Pr. Denise

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

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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 sorry. The good news of Scripture is that God not only walks with us on these journeys but redeems them and brings good from them.

Let Us Pray: **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. Alleluia and Amen**

Music: 103 O Come Little Children vs 1



5th Station: Arrival in Bethlehem - Pr. Steve

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.

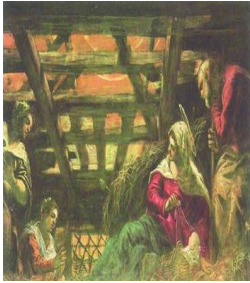
Meditation: Arrival in Bethlehem: Bethlehem is a hidden backwater in Judah as Judah is a backwater of the Roman Empire!! Humility of Humilities! Bethlehem is central to both Matthew and Luke. In Matthew, it is to fulfill the Scripture in Micah; and in Luke it is to be registered. It is the City of David 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. 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. Take a moment to think on this meaning.

Let Us Pray: **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 as you give us joy in our disappointments. Alleluia and Amen**

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Music: 103 O Come Little Children vs 2



6th Station: The Manger - Pr. Denise

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 worshiped 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 in order to worship and venerate Him.

Let Us Pray: **Loving Father, may our hearts be 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.**

Alleluia and Amen

Music: 110 What Child is This? vs 1,2



7th Station: The Nativity - Pr. Steve

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 greatest symbols of Christianity, the other being the cross. The Latin word 'nativus' actually means 'arisen by birth.' The first nativity scene is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi in 1223 and was set in the stable. The Greek word for the place where Mary gave birth is *kataluna* which means stable, inn, cave, or a house. It could have meant any of these - but does that really matter? No

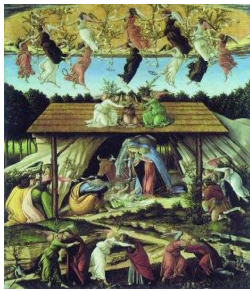
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- it is the humility of the birth of our Lord in the lowest way that He could be born, the sign of the Love God had for us. "For God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son."

Let Us Pray: **Holy Lord, as we sit in awe of Your Blessed Nativity, we are shown the both the wonder of Your glory and the humility of your nativity. Having humbled Yourself, help us to refrain from self- importance. Reminding us of the great things that are accomplished when we attempt to be submissive to Your Will. Alleluia and Amen**

Music: 105 Away in a Manger vs 1,3



8th Station: The Heavenly Choir - Pr. Denise

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.

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 worshipers 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.

Let Us Pray: **Father, the splendor of Your glory is beyond our understanding. What can we possibly give You that compares? May we always be willing to trust, just as the shepherds trusted when they seek the Christ Child. Alleluia and Amen**

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Music: 99 Angels We Have Heard on High vs 1,3



9th Station: The Shepherd's Visit - Pr. Steve
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. As human beings, we are obsessed with the concept of equality. Is this the way God looks at it? No this is a fallacy— no two people, no two days, no two of anything are equal in God's view.

Scripture tells us God places value on EACH person. Rather than obsessing over where we stand compared to another, the important thing is that you know where you stand in the eyes of God because He loves us all 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 of us are invited to the manger.

Let Us Pray: **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. Alleluia and Amen**

Music Solo: O, Holy Night - Dean Carson

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

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remember the love You have for us and let us remember to share that love with others as You shared Yourself with us. Amen

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING – CHRISTMAS EVE

P: The Peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us share the Peace of the Lord with one another.

OFFERTORY: *84 Io How a Rose Ere Blooming - Pr. Steve*

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

P: It is indeed good , right , and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God for in the mystery of the Word made flesh , You have given us a new revelation of Your glory , that , seeing You in the person of Your Son, we may be drawn to the love of those things which are not seen . Therefore with angels and arch angels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name , evermore praising You and saying:

1 Holy, Holy, Holy vs 1

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God, Almighty
Early in the morning, our song shall rise to Thee
Holy, Holy, Holy, merciful and mighty
God in three persons, blessed Trinity**

CONFESSIONAL PRAYER:

Pastor: Lord, we approach your altar with with love for You and our concern for the price you paid for us on the cross. We realize the difficulties that we face, and we confess the poor job we have done with our response to your sacrifice. For that, dear Lord, we make our confession to you this day.

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Most merciful God, **we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by the things we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen**

ABSOLUTION

Pastor: As a result of the love of God, the work of Jesus on His cross , and by the power of the Holy Spirit, I, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, and by the authority of Jesus Christ, forgive you all your sins in the name of the, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In the name of Jesus we pray. **Alleluia and Amen.**

Prayer of the Day: **Our Loving Father in Heaven, 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. Alleluia and Amen**

LORD'S PRAYER

WORDS OF INSTITUTION, DISTRIBUTION, COMMUNION PRAYER

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

Music: Silent Night - Pr. Steve, Bassoon

At the end of the verses, we will sing the first verse again A Capella by candlelight. Followed by Pr. Steve on bassoon.

AARONIC BLESSING

P: Go in peace filled with the light of Christ!

C: Thanks be to God!