

# CHRISTMAS EVE:



## SETUP

- Manger in middle of the tables with the advent candles next to it
- Printed bulletins with lyrics for songs and an order of service will be at each seating
- There will be a candle at each seating
- There will be a RESERVED sign at each seating
- One symbol will be on each:



- Inside each is a picture of the cross as well:
- Hammered Dulcimer for music / others welcome to play too
- Wireless mic set up so that readers can be heard

## OPENING

**PASTOR:** Welcome & Prayer

Jesus was born in a manger. When He came to earth, He was a light to all of us (light advent candle). He showed us the way back to God and the way to heaven where we have a place RESERVED for us. We will begin tonight's service by singing "Away in a Manger".

♪ **SING:** "Away in a Manger" ♪

**PASTOR:** "God had a place reserved at the manger for each person in the Christmas story. Some accepted His invitation and some did not. All the same, God called out to each in a unique and different way to let them know they were invited. He invites us today too in much the same way. We'll begin by considering Mary's story.

## 1) MARY: He invites us when we're a “nobody”

**READER:** Some of you have the symbol of an angel on your reserved cards. God used the angel Gabriel to let Mary know she was invited to the manger. When Gabriel came to her, Mary knew that she was lowly, a “nobody” in the world's eyes. But when she found out she was going to bear Jesus, the Son of God, she knew in God's eyes she was somebody! This is how she responded to the news in Luke Chapter 2:46-53:



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*“My soul magnifies the Lord, How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands.”*

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Sometimes we may feel insignificant like Mary. But God still invites “nobodies” to Himself in the silence of the night to find who they really are!

♪ **SING:** "Silent Night" ♪

## 2) JOSEPH: He invites us when we're stressed

**READER:** Some of you have the symbol of a tax form on your reserved cards. Believe it or not, God used a tax form to let Joseph know he was invited to the manger! The Roman Empire took a census for the purpose of numbering and taxing its people. This is how the story is told in Luke 2:1-5:

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*At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria. All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census. And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, to whom he was engaged, who was now expecting a child.*

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Taxes are a stressful time for many of us, let alone when your fiancée is pregnant and you have to make a difficult journey on foot. But all the same, God invites faithful people to Himself when they are stressed and nothing is going right.

♪ **SING:** "O Come all ye Faithful" ♪

### 3) SHEPHERDS: He invites us when we're working

**READER:** Some of you have the symbol of a staff on your reserved cards. God called the Shepherds to the manger while they were working, tending sheep. Here is how their story is told in Luke 2:8-15:

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*That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord's glory surrounded them. They were terrified, but the angel reassured them. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go to Bethlehem! Let's see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."*

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In the middle of the business of life, God still calls out to each of us, inviting us to Him. Then, we can make our lives about His work which is telling others about Jesus.

♪ **SING:** "Go tell it On the Mountain" ♪

#### 4) KING HEROD: He invites us when we're against Him

**READER:** Some of you have the symbol of a Bible on your reserved cards. God used the Bible to let King Herod know he was invited to the manger. King Herod was a powerful man who heard that Jesus was going to be the new King and so he did not like this news! This is his story from Matthew chapter 2:1-8:



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*Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him." King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?" "In Bethlehem in Judea," they said, "for this is what the prophet wrote: 'And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.'" Then Herod called for a private meeting with the wise men, and he learned from them the time when the star first appeared. Then he told them, "Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for the child. And when you find him, come back and tell me so that I can go and worship him, too!"*

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But really Herod did not want to worship Jesus, he wanted to kill him! God still calls out to people through His words written in the Bible. And, amazingly, God still invites people to know Jesus who are dead set against Him. It's never too late to receive Him as King!

♪ **SING:** "Joy to the World" ♪

## 5) WISE MEN: He invites us when we're lost

**READER:** Some of you have the symbol of a star on your reserved cards. God used a star to let the wise men know they were invited to the manger. These men did not exactly know where they were going. In fact, they had to stop and ask directions from some people who knew the Bible better than they did. But this did not stop them from following the star that led them to the manger where Jesus was born. We can read their story in Matthew 2:9-12:



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*After this interview the wise men went their way. And the star they had seen in the east guided them to Bethlehem. It went ahead of them and stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they were filled with joy! They entered the house and saw the child with his mother, Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and gave him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. When it was time to leave, they returned to their own country by another route, for God had warned them in a dream not to return to Herod.*

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God doesn't just invite people who know a lot about Jesus. He invites all who are willing to find the answers. He invites those who are curious enough to ask, "Who is this Jesus?"

♪ **SING:** "What Child is this?" ♪

## US: He invites ALL of us!

**SPEAKER:** If you open your reserved sign, you will see that there is a cross in each one of them. We have all sinned and none of us are good enough for God.



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*Romans 3:23: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

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But Jesus took our punishment on Himself when He died on the cross.



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*Romans 5:8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:  
While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

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Now, we are all invited to Heaven! We have a place RESERVED for us there! Jesus said:



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*John 14:2-4: There is more than enough room in my Father's home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going."*

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The way to heaven is through Jesus. If you accept that He is the King of your life and believe that He rose from the dead and that He is the only hope for Heaven, you too can be with Jesus one day!

*Give opportunity to pray sinner's prayer here*



**COMMUNION**  
PASTOR AND DEACONS



**CANDLE LIGHTING**

**PASTOR:** Now we proclaim the death of Christ until He comes again. When Jesus came to earth, His light shone to us all. Now we are to spread that light until the day of His appearing.

**Spread Candle Light**

♪ **SING:** ♪

1st Verse of "Joy to the World"

1st verse of "Go Tell It on the Mountain".

**CLOSING WORD**