

# **A Nativity Story**

## ***Intro Music: O Come Let Us Adore Him***

### **Call to Worship from John 1**

Leader: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

### **The Opening Dialogue**

Leader: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel;

People: for he has visited and redeemed his people.

Leader: The One who will bring us salvation is raised up

People: to perform the mercy promised to our ancestors,

Leader: to give light to those who sit in darkness, to guide our feet in the way of peace.

People: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel!

### **The Salutation**

Leader: The Lord be with you!

People: And also with you!

### **The Prayer of the Day**

Leader: Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light. Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory; through your only Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen

# ***The Story of the Nativity***

## **Introduction**

The Nativity brings together Mary, Joseph, the Christ Child, the Shepherds, and the Angels. And even though the wise men probably did not appear at the manger, they are an integral part of the Christmas story. And so we include them tonight in order to tell the full story of the birth of Jesus the Christ

This is the story of how the Creator God became one with those He formed. It is a story of hope because God built a bridge of Divine Love from Himself to us. It is a story that shines through the birth of every child and resonates in the supportive ties of every family.

So tonight we begin our Christmas Season with this Service of the Nativity. Through it we will again tell our story.

It had all began some time ago when Mary and Joseph were making wedding plans. They dreamed of their future together. The love that united them seemed indestructible. Then, unexpectedly, Mary was encountered by a heavenly visitor.

## **Mary's Story**

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you." But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and pondered what manner of greeting this was. Then 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 bring forth 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 Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever and of His Kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have not known a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be the Son of God. . . . For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:26-38)

## ***Song: Mary Did You Know?***

### **Joseph's story**

Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, intended to put her away secretly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." . . . Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. (Matthew 1:18-25)

## ***Song: How Could it Be? (Joseph's Song)***

### **Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem**

It was a crowded city that night, Bethlehem, the city of David. People from all over had returned to the city of their fathers. Here they would register and a census would be taken.

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So everyone went to their own towns to be registered. And Joseph also went, out of the city of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David. He went to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was expecting a child. (Luke 2:1-5)

## ***Song: Breathe of Heaven***

## **The Birth of Jesus**

Joseph and Mary sought a place to stay. An inn. A room somewhere, anywhere. A safe place from the chilly night air. But there was no place, no room in the inn. At the city's edge was a stable, a place where animals could be protected and fed. There, in a stable, Mary and Joseph found warmth and protection. They would stay here until a new day brought light.

So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, wrapped Him in bands of cloth, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.  
(Luke 2:6-7)

## ***Song: Come on In***

## **The Shepherds' Story**

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. Then the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy for all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you; You will find a Child wrapped in bands of cloth, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the heavenly host praising God and saying; "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among all people!" So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the Child, who was lying in a manger. (Luke 2:8-16)

## ***Song: Angels We have Heard on High***

## **The Magi's Story**

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to pay him homage."

When King Herod heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had called together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; For from you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and determined from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and pay him homage also."

When they had heard the king, they departed; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it came and stood over where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had entered the house, they saw the child with Mary His mother, and fell down and paid him homage. Then opening their treasure chests, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way. (Matthew 2:1-12).

**Song: *One Small Child***

Heaven looked down on that Holy Night as a manger became an altar and a stable became a cathedral. History now looks back to that moment in time when God came in Jesus to reveal Himself to people everywhere. The humble shepherds were there. The Wise Men bowed before Him. And tonight you and I join them as we gather around the manger. What a night! A Holy Night! A night of hope for today and tomorrow.

All this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, "A young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means "God is with us." (Matthew 1:22-23)

### ***Song: Emmanuel, God with Us***

“Candle” lighting

### ***Song: Silent Night/The First Noel***

### **Closing Prayer**

O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the illumination of the true Light. You have given us your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon Him to reveal to us your glory and grace. As you have given this gift in love, may we receive it with joy. Grant that we, being regenerate and made your children by adoption and grace may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit. Grant us, we pray, that as we have known the mystery of that Light upon earth, so may we also reflect that light to a darkened world; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### ***Song: Love Has Come***

### **The Benediction**

Leader: May Christ, the bright and morning star, fill you with light and life this Christmas and always. Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit bless you now and forever.

People: Amen

### ***Song: Joy to the World***