

Christmas Signposts

When I was a child, my family and I attended the Christmas meal at church. The basement fellowship hall was transformed with garlands, finely set tables with linens, and candlelight. A feeding trough was placed on display. Everyone would dress to the hilt with green and red embellishments. My friends' families would be there. Dinner was served by caterers in starchy white shirts and black pants. The pastor would offer a blessing, and a small choir would lead us in singing carols. The basement then became my faith home, where I could touch, if just for a moment, the beginning of Christmas. Like a divine finger, this lavish event pointed to the upcoming celebration of the birth of the Christ child.

Scripture says that an angel of the Lord came to the shepherds, saying: *Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.*

We often consider the manger itself as a sign of Christmas. It's a universal symbol in our religion that calls forth Christmas and all the sights, sounds, and places that have personally been associated with this glorious time of the year. When Mary wrapped Jesus in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger, the manger then became a signpost. Like a divine finger, it was meant to point the shepherds toward the Christ child. It's not the manger, or the sights, or the sounds, or the places or traditions we hold dear, that hold the power and mystery of Christmas. Only the glory of the Christ child can fully contain God's love, peace, joy, and hope. Only the Christ child is worthy of these efforts and can provide the rebirth, renewal, and re-centering this world requires.

God has surrounded us with Christmas signposts. May those of us overburdened by holiday busyness slow down to receive the true gift that is both here and still coming. May those of us who carry hurt and sadness this season receive the comforting presence of Immanuel, God with us. May we touch this Christmas season in such a transformative way that we cannot help but rejoice: *Look: I've got good news for you, news which will make everybody very happy. Today a Savior has been born for you – the Messiah, the Lord!*

On the reverse, you will find our Christmas Eve worship times and a description of each service. All will be livestreamed. We look forward to gathering with you, onsite or online, to receive the lavish Good News this Christmas. Glory to God in the highest.

Merry Christmas!

Christmas Eve, Tuesday, December 24

9:30AM Christmas Eve Service with candlelight and soloists. Childcare provided as well as a whole-group activity for children PreK-8th grade.

4:00PM Our Family Nativity service has a new twist, with many beloved traditions embedded in it. It will feature familiar carols with special musicians, the Children's Choir, a Christmas meditation from Pastor Nick, and "A Mary Carol," a "new to us" pageant written by Pastor Katherine. All children present will be invited to participate as a shepherd, angel, or wise person. The service will be approximately 45 minutes long - just right for our younger worshippers. No childcare provided.

8:00 PM Service of Lessons and Carols with candlelight and communion, Sanctuary Choir, instrumentalists, and vocal soloists. No childcare provided.

Thank you for your ministry in 2024. We are blessed to be partners in ministry with you!

Pastor Nick Pastor Katherine Vince Sarah
Josh Nathan Renae Zaina Sheila Siri
Matt BART TOM Pat Mark

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