

Journey to the Stable



HEAR THE STORY OF JESUS' BIRTH ANEW,
WHILE VISITING SITES IN THE ROANOKE VALLEY

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Let us journey to the stable to celebrate the newborn Prince of Peace! As we approach Christmas day, the day we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we are on a journey. Culturally, this season is one of busyness, consumerism, and activity. For the faithful, Advent is a season of hope, waiting, anticipation, and wonder. But Advent can also be a season of activity! We're actively pondering God's gifts of love as we approach Christmas.

Use this resource to be active in the hopefulness, the anticipation, and the wonder as you explore the stories of how God's love is made known in the coming of Jesus. To give opportunity for deeper reflection and new insights from this powerful story, you are invited to visit stations throughout the Roanoke valley listed below. You may complete the stations in a timeframe that makes sense for you and your family. It would be helpful for you to bring a Bible, or look the verses up on your phone, and perhaps something to take notes with as you go about the stations.

Each of the stations are listed below with a coordinating text, short reflection and prayer. As you approach each station, read the scripture passage and see how this new place where you are reading it resonates or conflicts with the scenes of the text. You are then invited to move to the reflection and prayer. Take as long as you need at each station, give yourself time to delve into the story, the setting, and how God is speaking to you through them.

We'd love for you to document your journey with photos!

Post and tag St. Philip Lutheran Church on Facebook or email to pastorlaura@stphilliplutheran.net

OPENING PRAYER

Holy God, as we journey towards the stable, fill us again with hope and expectation for the gift of your love in Christ. Help us to hear and understand the nativity story anew. Remind us that as we journey to new places, we are always called home by your grace and hope made known in Jesus. Amen.

Station One: Genealogy of Jesus

Location: Cemetery or photo of family lineage

Scripture Passage: Matthew 1:1-17

Reflection: As you read Matthew 1, what do you notice? That's a lot of names! But this text reminds us that Jesus was the fulfillment of a long awaited promise by God. The people in Jesus' family tree help teach us about the expansiveness of God's love. Are there family members or important people in your life (past or present!) who taught you about God's love?

Prayer: God of every generation, thank you for a love that is so big and powerful that it expands all time. Thank

you for the people in our lives who have taught us about that great love. Help us to follow Jesus and be examples of your love for others too. Amen.

Station Two: An Angel Foretells Jesus' Birth

Location: Your local post office

Scripture Passage: Luke 1:26-38

Reflection: The angel Gabriel comes to Mary to tell her the good news that she has found favor with God and that she will bring Jesus into the world! Gabriel is God's messenger, telling the good news of God's love. As Jesus' disciples, we need to remember that it's important for us to share the good news too!

Prayer: Proclaiming God, thank you for sending messengers that share the good news of your love and grace with the world. Thank you for the postal workers who work so hard to deliver mailings and packages that share joy with so many people, especially at this time of year. Help us to never miss a chance to proclaim your love in our words and our actions. Amen.

-BETHLEHEM BONUS-

Mail a letter or postcard to someone to remind them of God's love for them.
It can be super simple, but it's a powerful reminder!

Station Three: Mary's Song

Location: Elmwood Park Amphitheater

706 S Jefferson St, Roanoke, VA 24011

Scripture Passage: Luke 1: 46-55

Reflection: Mary is going through a big change! She is going to become a mother, and the mother of the Christ child at that! But through all of these changes, she turns to sing praise to God. Mary's song of praise, often known as the Magnificat, has been sung for ages. How might you sing God's praise, literally or figuratively, in your life?

Prayer: Loving God, worthy of all praise, we thank you for the gift of music and for the many ways in which we can proclaim your glory. Inspire us by Mary's courage, and her faithfulness. May we always remember to praise you! Amen.

Station Four: Joseph's Dream

Location: Grandin Firestation 1742 Memorial Ave SW, Roanoke, VA 24015, or the location closest to your home

Scripture Passage: Matthew 1:18-24

Reflection: Joseph having to make some hard life decisions - ones that he probably never imagined making! But God comes to encourage Joseph through an angel in a dream. Joseph's story reminds us that sometimes we're called to make hard decisions, or do scary things - like run into a burning building to save people!- but God with us- Emmanuel loves and supports no matter where we go.

Prayer: Emmanuel, this world is often filled with hard choices and difficult callings. In the midst of those things, remind us to be still and listen for your guidance. As you directed Joseph, so direct us to live in ways that bring your good news into the world. Amen.

-BETHLEHEM BONUS-

Bring thank you cards and/or pre-packaged treats to the fire station to thank the firefighters for their service!

Station Five: Mary visits Elizabeth

Location: SARA Roanoke (Sexual Assault Response and Awareness)

3034 Brambleton Ave. SW, Roanoke, VA 24015

Scripture Passage: Luke 1: 39-45

Reflection: As Mary reacts to this life changing news she has received, she goes to see her cousin Elizabeth. What a joyful reunion! Both are carrying babies who will be important figures - John the Baptist and Jesus. This passage reminds us of the importance of our support systems - our family and friends who have become family. They show God's grace to us in innumerable ways. SARA Roanoke is a place that seeks to be a safe place and support for those who have been hurt.

Prayer: Holy God, we give you thanks for the supportive people in our lives. In sharing joys and sorrows with one another, may be living examples of your love and grace to one another. We grieve that there are people in this world who have been violated and who lack needed support systems. Move us to act in ways that support the most vulnerable. Amen.

Station Five: Shepherds in the field

Location: Ikenberry Orchard

2557 Roanoke Rd. Daleville, VA 24083

Scripture Passage: Luke 2: 8-20

Reflection: The shepherds were just settling in for a night of routine work when all of the sudden the sky lit up and they heard a chorus of angels! No wonder scripture tells us they were initially terrified! But they are an amazing part of this journey to the stable. They remind us that God doesn't just appear on special days, but that we can see and experience God's grace and love in the midst of the ordinary. In the midst of nature, while we are hard at work or school. As you view the orchard, think about the ways God has shown up for you and how you might look for or name the ways you see God in everyday routines!

Prayer: God of surprises, sometimes we forget that you are always present with us. Even while we're doing everyday tasks, you are with us. Remind us to keep looking for how your grace is present with us - not just on the big days, but always - and surprise us like the shepherds with the wonders of your love. Amen.

-BETHLEHEM BONUS-

Purchase a sweet treat to enjoy from the orchard and remember that Jesus brings joy!

Station Six: No Room in the Inn

Location: Roanoke Rescue Mission

402 4th Street SE, Roanoke, VA 24013

Scripture Passage: Luke 2:1-7

Reflection: It's hard to imagine what it must have been like for Mary and Joseph, heavily pregnant and wandering the streets of Bethlehem with no place to stay. What do you do when there is nowhere to go? While this season centers so much on the gathering of family, the decorating of homes, and the sharing of joy, it is important to not forget those for whom a place to lay their heads and a warm meal are hard to come by.

Prayer: God of Abundance, we're so quick to say no more or there's not enough to share, when so often the opposite is true. Teach us to live in ways that invite people in, share your abundance and spread joy. There's always more room in God's family. Amen.

-BETHLEHEM BONUS-

When you go to the Rescue Mission, bring a donation, either financial or in-kind. The current needs of the Rescue Mission are Compression Socks (Assorted Sizes), Laundry Detergent for Sensitive Skin, Pediasure, Soy Baby Formula, Melatonin 3mg, Cotton Balls & Q-tips, Twin Sheet Sets, and Art Supplies.

As you donate these items, pray that this support will show God's grace and love to someone in need.

Donations can be made at the Main Reception Office, 7am-7pm daily.

Station Seven: The Stable

Location: Angels of Assisi

415 Campbell Ave SW, Roanoke, VA 24016

Scripture Passage: Luke 2: 6-8

Reflection: Without the important work of animal shelters, there would be so many animals lost on the street. We may wonder what Mary and Joseph thought as they welcomed baby Jesus in the midst of animals and laid him in a feeding container (manger.) We give thanks for the faithful work of Angels of Assisi employees and volunteers to show God's care to these animals.

Prayer: God of the nativity, how powerful it is that you chose to be born among us not in a palace but in a stable. Not amongst the rich, but amongst the lowly animals in a stable. Help us to remember that there's no place that your love can't reach us. No place that's too far for your grace. May the birth of Jesus give us new life to love, feed, and serve like you. Amen.

-BETHLEHEM BONUS-

Bring donations to Angels of Assisi when you visit,
or call to set up a time to volunteer to help with the animals!

Station Eight: A Star Guides Them

Location: The Roanoke Star

2000 J B Fishburn Pkwy, Roanoke, VA 24014

Scripture Passage: Matthew 2: 1-11

Reflection: As the magi were searching for the newborn king, God's light in the form of a star guided them. What guides us? How do we trust God's guidance in our own lives?

Prayer: God of starry nights, we often find ourselves searching. Searching for what's next, searching for the right answer, searching for you. As you guided the magi with the light of the star, guide us to you and the ways we can live your grace in the world. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

God of hope and new life, Though it's a familiar story, the story of the birth of Jesus is one that moves us every year. May this nativity story, and the reflections we've done, embed this story of hope and light into our hearts more deeply. Emmanuel, God with us, remind us again and again that you were born into this world to bring about hope, love and joy in indescribable ways. May we witness those things this Christmas and every day. Amen.

We hope that this unique Journey to the Stable experience was a meaningful one for you!
Don't forget to either post your pictures on Facebook and tag St. Philip Lutheran Church or email them to
Pastor Laura at pastorlaura@stphiliplutheran.net!