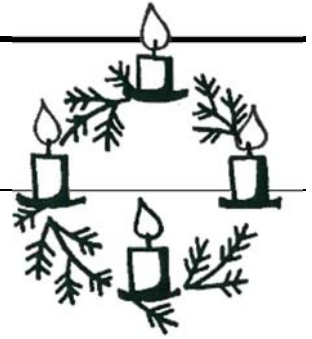

STATIONS FOR ADVENT

A Journey of Reflection . . .



OPENING DEVOTIONS

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed.
And all flesh shall see it together.

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy Name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those
 who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
 and the power, and the glory,
 for ever and ever. Amen.

Our King and Savior now draws near.
Come let us adore him.

Set us free, O God, from the bondage of our sins and give us the liberty of that abundant life which you have made known to us in your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take on our own human nature; grant that we who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST STEP OF THE JOURNEY

– *God's Promise of Salvation* –

1



I will be your God,
And we will be your people.

God gave Abraham an everlasting covenant, to Abraham and his descendants forever. All we have to do is be faithful to God. The message from God was that we are loved and chosen to bring the knowledge of God to all the people we meet. All that is asked from us is that we love God and our neighbors. We may fall short of expectations, but God is there to help us. We may forget God, and do things that displease God, but God is always here to guide us. We continually ask forgiveness and the opportunity to try again. And God is here to give us another chance, always with mercy, protection and love.

This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham
To save us from our enemies and have mercy on us.

Let us pray.

Merciful God, you sent us prophets and leaders to preach repentance and to prepare the way for our salvation; give us grace to heed their warnings and give up our sins, that we may be ready with joy for the coming of your Son. Amen

Revere the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness.
We will serve the Lord, for he is our God and we are bound by his promise of salvation.

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

SECOND STEP OF THE JOURNEY

– *The Angel Gabriel Visits Mary* –

2



Who can stand on the Lord's holy hill?

Those who have clean hands and a pure heart.

The Angel Gabriel told Mary that she was chosen to give birth to the Son of God. She accepted Gabriel's message, knowing very well that being chosen as a servant of the Lord was both an honor and a serious responsibility. The rest of her life would be dedicated to God, in ways she could not anticipate. Yet she was willing to be found worthy of the calling. She knew that however difficult her life would be, God would be at her side. She gave herself over to God, understanding that God trusted her.

The Holy Spirit will come upon you.

Let it be according to your word.

Let us pray.

O God, you have prepared for those who love you such good things as surpass our understanding; give us such love towards you that we may receive you with open hearts. Give us the strength to answer your call to service with the same willingness and faith as Mary. Amen.

Into your hands I commend my spirit.

For you have redeemed me, O Lord, O God of Truth.

Come, thou long expected Jesus,

Born to set your people free.

Let us find our rest in thee.

THIRD STEP OF THE JOURNEY

– *The Angel Gabriel Visits Joseph* –

3



Mary will bear a son, and you will raise him.

Your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Joseph's dream shattered his world. God had chosen him for a purpose. It was an honor and a fearful responsibility. He was asked to take a pregnant woman as his wife, even though she was not bearing his child. Their Jewish faith and the rules of their society would want her killed for what seemed like an act of infidelity. But here is God, asking Joseph to go through with the marriage, and raise the child as his own. Knowing God to be compassionate, Joseph knew that he must do as God had requested. He trusted God to help him fulfill that request. We ask ourselves, are we prepared to do whatever God asks of us, even when it goes against our traditions and society's expectations? Can we trust God to be by our side?

To you O Lord, I lift up my soul.

My God, I put my trust in you.

O God, you raised up Joseph from the house of David to be the guardian of your incarnate Son; give us the grace to be upright in life and obedient to your commands. Amen.

Praise the Lord. Stand in awe of him, O offspring of Israel.

We will praise him and exalt him forever.

The glory of the Lord shall be revealed.

And all flesh shall see it together.

And our trust in the Lord shall never cease.

FOURTH STEP OF THE JOURNEY

– *Mary Visits Elizabeth* –

4



I will rejoice and be glad of your mercy O Lord.

Make your face shine on your servant.

Mary and her cousin Elizabeth, both pregnant come together and share in their miracle: God giving them both children, both of them to bear God's special message to the world. John would be the prophet and herald of Jesus, the savior of the world. The birth of any child is a miracle of God's creative power. How much greater the gift of these two babies! We dedicate our lives to God out of our own desire to do God's will. Offering the life of another, especially our children, requires even greater love and trust. Sharing our commitments and supporting each other in love is God's desire for us.

The Lord has looked favorably on me.

My soul magnifies the Lord.

Almighty God, we thank you for the gift of John and Jesus, born to women of great faith and love; let us show that same love to all who we care for in our daily life and work.
Amen.

The Lord has done great things for me,
And holy is his name.

From heaven above to earth I come,
To bring good news to everyone.

FIFTH STEP OF THE JOURNEY

– *The Birth of John the Baptist* –

5



Blessed be the Lord God of Israel.

For He has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them.

When he became an adult, John took on the calling of a prophet, a messenger of God. John knew that the Savior of the world was about to arrive. He spoke with urgency that everyone should prepare themselves to be ready to receive the Son of God. As with any great event, we must prepare, by becoming the best we can be. John insisted that we turn away from sin, treat each other fairly, and show compassion to all who we meet. Love one another as God loves us. Love prepares us for the coming of the Lord.

Show me your ways O Lord, and teach me your paths.

Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation.

Almighty God, you sent John to prepare us for the coming of your son by preaching repentance. Help us follow his teaching and example of speaking boldly of God's love, and patiently suffering for the sake of truth. Amen.

And you will be called the prophet of the Most High.

To go before the Lord to prepare his way and guide our feet into the way of peace.

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry

Announces that the Lord is nigh.

SIXTH STEP OF THE JOURNEY

– *The Journey to Bethlehem* –

6



You, O Bethlehem, from you shall come forth one who is to rule Israel.

And he shall stand in the majesty of the name of the Lord God.

Joseph and Mary had to go to Bethlehem to be counted in a national census. It was a difficult journey, mostly on foot, but one they had to make. We walk through life with destinations in mind, and even the most direct path has detours and distractions. Even when we reach our destination, we aren't sure of what is next. It just may be a new destination or purpose. We may not be prepared. So, we must begin all over again with a new purpose, always with God as our guide. No matter where we are, physically or spiritually, God is there on our journey, with us as our constant companion.

Show me your way O Lord,

Lead me on a level path.

O Lord, who knows what we need before we ask, gently guide us and make us aware of your plans for us. When we face obstacles, show us the way to remove them. When we face problems, help us to find solutions. Amen.

Send out your light and your truth, that they may lead me.

And bring me to your holy hill and to your dwelling.

The hopes and fears of all the years

Are met with thee tonight.

SEVENTH STEP OF THE JOURNEY

– *No Room at the Inn* –

7



The Lord watches over the innocent.

He who watches over you will not slumber or sleep.

Mary was already visibly in labor. She was frightened and excited about the birth of her first child. Her faith in God was strong, and she knew that all would be well, no matter what might happen. With so many people coming to Bethlehem for the census, Mary and Joseph couldn't find a room. An innkeeper felt compassion on them. Through that innkeeper, we see that welcoming a stranger is so important. There were no rooms available, but there was at least shelter in the stable. It was all he could offer. It was the smallest gesture, but an enormous gift to Mary and Joseph.

And she gave birth to her firstborn son,

And laid him in a manger.

O Lord, you come to us when we are at a loss of what to do, when we need your help and comfort. Remain by our side and open our senses to receive the aid and care we need.

Open are hearts to be truly thankful for the care of others that comes through your gift of compassion and kindness of friends and strangers. Amen.

I was a stranger and you welcomed me.

I was hungry and thirsty and you gave me food and drink.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

EIGHTH STEP OF THE JOURNEY

– *The Angels of the Lord* –

8



Let all the earth fear the Lord.

Let all who dwell in the world stand in awe of him.

Angels as messengers are found throughout the Bible. They are quickly recognized as stand-ins for God, just less fearful than meeting God face to face. They carry news to those who will be God's hands on earth. The shepherds quickly responded to the angels. They visited the new baby and spread the good news to all who would hear it. Can we hear and see angels in our own life? Are they messengers to us? Do they give us assignments through opening our eyes to the needs of others? Do they help us in our daily battles against our enemies? Or do they simply help us glorify the Lord?

Let the heavens declare the glory of God.

And let all creation show his handiwork.

Everlasting God, grant that angels may always serve you and sing your praises in heaven. Keep them as our defense, our guardians, and messengers. Make us watchful for them in our daily lives. Amen.

Do not be afraid. I bring you good news.

To you is born this day, a savior.

Oh come let us adore him.

Christ, the Lord.

NINTH STEP OF THE JOURNEY

– *The Shepherds Welcome Jesus* –

9



We are your people and the sheep of your pasture.

We will give thanks to you forever and praise your name from age to age.

We are like sheep, wandering around, looking for someone to show us what to do. We often get lost if we rely only on ourselves. We need God's guidance and protection, just as shepherds take good care of all the animals in their care.

Jesus knew that his listeners would understand the image of a shepherd, a person with complete attention and loving care for animals, as a comparison to God's care for us. We are never completely lost. We are never without someone watching over us. So of course, the first to hear the good news of Jesus birth were the shepherds who understood that God is their shepherd.

He brought Jesus to be a shepherd over his people.

We know his voice and follow him.

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people. Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads. Amen.

Come and see the works of the Lord.

How wonderful he is towards all his people.

Go tell it on the mountain.

That Jesus Christ is born.

Almighty God, we thank you for the gift of your son, our Savior Jesus Christ. Grant that we may shine forth as a light, showing your mercy and love to the whole world. Amen.

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

And heaven and nature sing!
