

2024 Living Nativity Script

St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church

7720 Goodrich Road, Clarence Center, NY 14032

Dear volunteers,

Below you will find suggested lines that you may use to help tell the story of Jesus' birth. Please be in touch with your team to make final decisions.

Feel free to remain as yourself – your own joyful, or grouchy, or tired self – just step back a couple thousand years in time and help people imagine that there is more to life than what appears at first. There is Jesus, God's great surprising gift to save us.

Joy to the world, and to you! Merry Christmas & Thank You!

- Pastor Zech

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Station 1: Check-in at St. Paul's and Audio url/radio

- a. Ticket taking
- b. Hand out small sheet of paper with qr code.
- c. Thanks for coming to St. Paul's 😊

“Station” 2: The Drive through the Woods (QR code for audio on phones)

“Hello weary travelers, shalom to you who come back to Bethlehem! It has taken a long time for you to come back home, but we are so glad you are making the journey! Yes, yes, I know you are here because Caesar declares you must! You must register for the census in the town of your ancestry. I know that’s why you’re here, but while you are here, stay a while, enjoy the town of your forefathers, enjoy Bethlehem.

O Bethlehem, yes, it is a small little town. I can see why your family left. But you know, it is the town of the great King David! And yes, yes, his kingdom has come and gone, and Rome is here now, but you know the promises – another king is coming, one from God, who will rule for God. He will be born in Bethlehem! And his days are from eternity!

Travel safely on your way to Bethlehem! You never know what God may have planned for you!”

Station 3: Tax Booth & Roman soldiers (at the red shed “check-in” booth)

Tax booth with a tax collector (Zacchaeus) and one or more Roman soldiers. Tax collector sitting at a wooden table, a census roll on the table. The soldier(s) standing and talking to the group.

Basically threaten people that they must be loyal to Roma and must register for the census to be taxed. Use whatever banter below works for your personality. Be expressive!

- Halt! Who approaches the Roman province of Jericho? Where are you going?
- Wait for their reply.
- As you know, a decree has been issued by our Emperor, the Savior Tiberius Augustus Caesar! **Hail Caesar! (Render to Caesar what is Caesar’s)**
 - (wait for their Hail Caesar, if not whole hearted, make them do it again. Verify that they are not zealot scum. Make them visibly demonstrate their loyalty to the Empire... (not that Empire. No chewbakas here.)
- Depending on their answer they may already know they are going for a census, if not then “As you know a **census** shall be taken of all of Caesar’s loyal subjects!”
- You are loyal, right?
- And a loyal subject pays his taxes happily, right?
- So you and your family must be registered and taxed accordingly.
- Where are you going? Bethlehem?...
- You can’t register here! Go through Jerusalem, and turn south to get to Bethlehem.
- I recommend getting a guide, there’s robbers between here and Jerusalem.
- Pay your toll for the road and get going...

This is the gist – try to set the scene and interact the best you can. Try to be loud for those in the back.

Station 4: Guide notes

Gather people and collect a group of roughly 30 people.

The caravan master introduces himself/herself and sets the lead guide. They outline the rest of their journey.

Mostly get people in the mood for going to Bethlehem to register for the census and to watch out for Herod. Below are ideas – use your own words.

1. Shalom! Weary travelers, “I’m glad you left your donkey carts behind...”
2. So where are you going? Ah yes, to the little town of Bethlehem, for the census. Everyone wants to go to Bethlehem!
3. Let’s hope we can bring this caravan up to Jerusalem without much fuss - because the government here is shaking down all travelers
4. Then I’ll help you all get to Bethlehem (Bate-Lachem, house of bread 😊) so you can be a loyal Roman citizen and register for the census and pay your taxes
5. So let’s begin our trip...

Hand off to a guide:

6. ...Right over here is Jerusalem – the city of the Great King David...although for a while it is being ruled by...well, let me show you. And I warn you, don’t say anything, this man has been known to kill even his own family.
7. [After leaving Herod] Let’s get out of here and get you to Bethlehem so you can register. (Perhaps march in place, make it fun for the kids – mention it is a 5 or 6 mile journey – or for you Jews, it’s 7-“sabbath-days’-journey) Watch out for robbers...
8. Stop at the Bethlehem fields – shepherds & angels. Luke chapter 2 or just the “Gloria in Excelsis Deo” will be playing and the curtain to the angels will be pulled back. **Exclaim over how amazing this is!!!!** It is a sign from God...
9. Bethlehem inn: [have a kid ring the bell on the door of the inn...] Innkeeper and guide banter back and forth. Get crowd involved. VERY IMPORTANT: the first of two groups need to take longer at this station than the second group. Please be in communication about whether this is the first long group or second short group).

10. After leaving the inn, go to the Roman Census station outside the Bethlehem market. Heads of households and maybe others if time will sign the census logbook (with Joseph's signature on it).
11. Alright, you've accomplished your task. You are loyal Roman subjects. While you're here in Bethlehem, go to the Bethlehem market...
12. At this point the guide is finished; return to gathering stage.

Station 5: Herod's Palace (Grilling Barn)

- Herod yelling at his servants (what is taking so long? Why isn't my temple finished? Why isn't my desert fortress built, already?...I AM THE King of the great province of Israel of Roman Empire – Even Caesar has declared it...
- Herod: I am a king of law and order - what is all this commotion in my city, these vagabonds...who are these foreigners? (Point to the crowd)
- Magis work their way through the crowd, then knock on the door.
- "O King, there are men from the East who are seeking the King of Israel."
- Herod: "Let them in, if they dare."
- Magi (in unison): Hail Herod, we have come to worship the newborn King of the Jews.
- Herod: *I* am the King of Israel.
- Magi: O King Herod, where is your newborn Son?
- Herod: None of my sons are babies (and some I have killed when they threatened my kingship)
- Magi: We have seen his star when it rose and have come to worship him.
- Herod: You may worship me, but I have no newborn son that you may worship.
- Magi: But we saw his star, telling us he would be born soon. We have heard in your Scriptures that a Ruler of the whole world would come. Maybe your wise men know of this.
- Herod, angrily: Scribes! What do you know of this from your – from our Scriptures? Where is the King of the Jews to be born?
- Scribes: Hail King Herod, we have much in our Scriptures...mumble mumble...you might not want to hear it...
- Herod: Tell me!
- Scribes (unrolling a scroll): O King Herod, this is what the prophet Micah says:
"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah..."
- Herod: Bethlehem! That little house of bread, paw... (Pause) Go on...
- **"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, you are too little to be among the clans of Judah, From you One will come forth for Me to be King in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity."**
- Herod: The King of the Jews, from Bethlehem! And not from Jerusalem?!
- Scribes: Yes, your highest, that is what Micah tells us, if you care to believe it.
- Herod, to the Magi: "Tell me, Magi, have you recently seen his star in the sky?"
- Magi: "O yes, yes, we saw it before we left for our journey. As clear as can be. But now we have not seen it in some time, which is why we are asking you."
- Herod: (To the magi and maybe to the crowds) Go to Bethlehem and search carefully for this baby King of the Jews, and when you have found him, come and tell me...so I can worship him too
- Magi bow, and leave. (Guides instruct the crowds to also bow)
- Herod: (To his soldier) Mark my words, we will kill that baby or die trying.

Station 6: Bethlehem Sheepfold & Angels (in the barn)

Shepherds outside the lean-to barn with a fire.

- Not much talking needed...but feel free to interact with people. They will like the sheep!
- Once people arrive, they can small talk with shepherds for a few seconds and pet the sheep.
- Angels or cast crew will turn on the audio and lights, pull back the curtains, angels will sing “Gloria in Excelsis Deo.”

Station 7: Inn (with no room) & Census Booth (across the way)

VERY IMPORTANT for both groups: If at all possible, the first of two groups need to take longer at this station than the second group. Please be in communication about whether this is the first long group or second short group). Heads of households and maybe others will sign the census logbook (with Joseph’s signature on it).

At the inn:

- Lots of bantering with a grumpy innkeeper, in which a room is not to be found...

At the Census Booth:

- Roman soldier: “**Render to Caesar what is Caesar’s.** Heads of households, be loyal to Caesar, and register! How many in your family? If you lie about your household Caesar will find out and you will be subject to back-taxes at double the rate...”
- Roman Scribe: Genuinely fun disrespectful banter toward “Bethlehemites...”
- Guests will register on a census book. Earlier signatures will include “Joseph, of the line and house of David. Wife, Mary, expecting a child soon.”

Station 8: Bethlehem Market

Every 15 minutes, two groups will be escorted from the Bethlehem Market into the Nativity Barn. The first of the two groups will be there slightly longer than the second group. Previous stations (Bethlehem Inn & Census station) will attempt to spend longer with the first of the two groups, so that they are only slightly staggered.

In general, interact with people and make them feel welcome. Ask them how their journey was – if they made it all the way to Bethlehem safely, etc.

If they have phones, comment on how bright their boxes are, etc. Have fun!

Try to sell your stuff, negotiate on the price, tell them they are way too cheap and you can't lose money on your goods...

Every 15 minutes (on cue from leaders),

SHEPHERDS RUNNING THROUGH THE MARKET, something like:

“Hello, hello, have you seen a baby, a special baby?

We saw angels – TODAY your Savior is born - He is Christ the Lord. We've got to find the baby King! They said he would be wrapped in strips of cloth!

And lying in a manger!

SOMEONE FROM THE MARKET:

“I saw a man and woman, and she was about to have a baby. I saw them go this way, towards the stable.”

SHEPHERDS: “Let's go!”

Station 9: Nativity Barn

(Short version): IN THE NATIVITY, after people come in.

Shepherds lead the people in, and come and reverently adore baby Jesus while the crowds gather around, led in one of the following songs:

O Come O Come Emmanuel – (might be just the music, might include singing)

(1) O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.

Rev. Zech:

“Hello weary travelers..... wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.”

Singing:

Silent night, holy night!

**All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.**

Rev. Zech: “A King, born right here in Bethlehem.....*O Come, all ye faithful*”

O come, all ye faithful,

**Joyful and triumphant!
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;
Come and behold Him
Born the king of angels:**

**O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!**

*Rev. Zech: We thank you for joining us on this most special night.... I am Rev Zech...
(loud interruption on this cue)*

WISE MEN: We Three Kings of Orient are, Bearing gifts we traverse afar,
Field and fountain, Moor and mountain, Following yonder Star.

**EVERYBODY CHORUS: O Star of Wonder, Star of Night, Star with Royal Beauty
bright,
Westward leading, Still proceeding, Guide us to Thy perfect Light**

*One of the Wisemen (sung or spoken loudly): - Wisemen bow down reverently and
present their gifts.*

“Born a King on Bethlehem plain, Gifts we bring to crown Him again,
King forever, Ceasing never Over us all to reign.” **CHORUS AGAIN**

Welcome Magi, wise ones who have come further than any of us, and welcome again...
Merry Christmas! I am REV Zech. We are sorry that there is no room for you here in
Bethlehem, but I hear that there is always room for you, down past Jerusalem, at a place
called St. Paul's. I myself will be there on Christmas Eve at 4:00... I myself am there every
Sunday at 9:30. Maybe I will see you there. For now, go eat a doughnut so you don't get
famished on the journey. God's peace, and Merry Christmas! **JOY TO THE WORLD**

Station 9: Pastor Zech message full version:

(O Come O Come Emmanuel) Hello weary travelers! Shalom! Welcome back to Bethlehem, to the town of your family line. It is so good to see you, back in Bethlehem. You have traveled a long way to get here, yes? And you have traveled through freezing weather, yes? And worst of all, you have signed Caesar's book, yes? I am sorry to hear that. And I am even more sorry to say that there is just no room for you anywhere in Bethlehem. We are normally very welcoming people, but there are just too many of you who have come so far to Bethlehem. Even this beautiful couple we could not put up properly, as you can see. We must send you on your way...

But before you go...maybe God *has* been up to something with all this census business. Did you hear? A report about angels from the Lord showing up to *shepherds*? Well, believe it or not - the Lord's own angels *have* just tonight told our shepherds: I bring you good news of great joy for all the people; for unto you is born in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord. And, this will be a sign for you, you will see the baby, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. Look! Here he is now...but Shhh! This is a holy, and **SILENT NIGHT...**

He IS a holy infant, tender and mild. But he is not just any baby boy. We do have *many* baby boys born here in Bethlehem – ok, maybe not so many – we are small, but we do have baby boys born here in Bethlehem. And when they are born, we wonder – is this the One that our very own prophet Micah has told us about – remember, he said:

But you, O Bethlehem, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From YOU shall come forth for me one who is to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose coming forth is from of old, from eternity.

My friends, did you hear the prophet Micah? This baby boy is the Ruler who *has come* from eternity. As the angels said, the one born here tonight is a Savior, Mashiak, the Lord! This seems like very good news! And I wonder, don't you, how he will be our Savior +? And, I wonder, don't you, how he will be our Ruler -we have so many other Caesars and Herods, how will he overthrow them?

I do not know, I do not know - but I do know, O family, coming back to Bethlehem – you have come on a most holy night – the night when God has sent to us a child, has sent us Himself, to save not just those of us from Bethlehem, but to save, I suspect, the whole world. O weary travelers, let us put our trust in this King. **“O COME ALL YOU FAITHFUL”**

We thank you for joining us on this most holy night... I am Rev Zech... (We three kings...)

Welcome Magi, wise ones who have come further than any of us, and welcome again... Merry Christmas! I am REV Zech. We are sorry that there is no room for you here in

Bethlehem, but I hear that there is always room for you, down past Jerusalem, at a place called St. Paul's. I myself will be there on Christmas Eve at 4:00... I myself am there every Sunday at 9:30. Maybe I will see you there. For now, go eat a doughnut so you don't get famished on the journey. God's peace, and Merry Christmas! **JOY TO THE WORLD**

CUT:

(O Come O Come Emmanuel)

Hello weary travelers! Shalom! Welcome back to Bethlehem, to the town of your family line. It is so good to see you, back in Bethlehem.

You have traveled a long way to get here, yes? And you have traveled through freezing weather, yes? And worst of all, you have signed Caesar's book, yes? I am sorry to hear that. And I am even more sorry to say that there is just no room for you anywhere in Bethlehem. We are normally very welcoming people, but there are just too many of you who have come so far to Bethlehem.

But before you go...maybe God has been up to something with all this census business, and maybe *you* are not the only ones who have traveled from far away. Remember what our very own prophet Micah has told us:

But you, O Bethlehem, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah,
From YOU shall come forth for me one who is to be Ruler in Israel,
Whose coming forth is from of old, from eternity.

Many baby boys are born here in Bethlehem, and one of them is to be ruler, one of them is from eternity! So, how will we know which one? Well, believe it or not - the Lord's own angels have told our shepherds: I bring you good news of great joy for all the people; for unto you is born in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord. And, this will be a sign for you, you will see the baby, wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger. Look! Here he is now...but Shhh! This is a holy, and **SILENT NIGHT...**

Holy infant, so tender and mild. He IS a holy infant, and he has come to make us holy. I wonder HOW he will do it. And he be our Ruler, our King, forever.

This King, this baby, sleeps in heavenly peace - The King! - born right here in Bethlehem. The Ruler who has come from eternity! (I wonder, This is the very One Isaiah spoke of: For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder. And he shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and his peace will have no end.

O family, coming back to Bethlehem – you have come on a most holy night – the night when God has sent to us a child, has sent us Himself, to save not just those of us from Bethlehem, but to save, I suspect, the whole world. O weary travelers, let us put our trust in this King. **“O COME ALL YOU FAITHFUL”** **We thank you for joining us on this most holy night... I am Rev Zech...** *(We three kings...)*

Welcome Magi, wise ones who have come... Merry Christmas! I am REV Zech from St. Paul Lutheran Church. We are sorry that there is no room for you here in Bethlehem, but there is always room for you at St. Paul's. Come anytime. Come on Christmas Eve at 4:00. Come any Sunday morning at 9:30. For now, go eat a cookie so you don't get famished on the journey. God's peace, and Merry Christmas! **JOY TO THE WORLD**