

# Steeple Stories

The newsletter of North Shore Baptist Church

## Christmas Meditation

*We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete. - 1 John 1:3*

Christmas is about the word incarnation. We sing it every year in our Christmas carols, especially in "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." Charles Wesley wrote that, and one line you've sung says, "Veiled in flesh, the Godhead see; Hail the incarnate Deity." If you understand the incarnation, you'll understand what Christmas is about. The Apostles' Creed doesn't use the word incarnation, but it teaches the doctrine of the Incarnation when it says, "conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." Let's take a look at the first two verses. It's frankly doctrinal, and it's boldly historical.

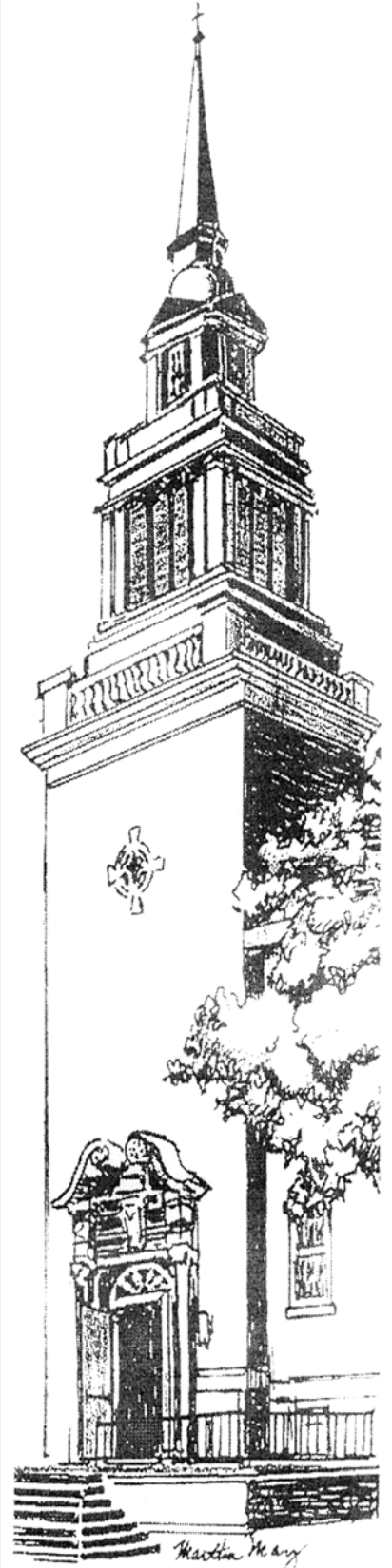
Christmas is frankly doctrinal. The text says the invisible has become visible, the incorporeal has become corporeal. In other words, God has become human. The absolute has become particular. The ideal has become real. The divine has taken up a human nature. This is not only a specific doctrine, but it's also unique. Doctrine always distinguishes you. One of the reasons we're afraid to talk about it is because it distinguishes us from others. But Christianity is unique. It doesn't say incarnation is normal, but it doesn't say it's impossible. It says God is so imminent that it is possible, but he is so transcendent that the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ is an event.

Christmas is not just frankly doctrinal; it's also boldly historical. Look at what John says: We saw it. We heard it. When we give you these accounts of Jesus walking on the water, of Jesus rising from the dead. We saw him do this. We heard him do this. We felt him do this. In other words, the doctrine of Christmas is that God became historical. The manger, the resurrection, the story of Jesus is not just a story. It's true. It happened in history. The doctrine of Christmas is that Jesus came. If he didn't come, the story of Christmas is one more moral paradigm to crush you. If Jesus didn't come, I wouldn't want to be anywhere around these Christmas stories that say we need to be sacrificing, we need to be humble, we need to be loving. All that will do is crush you into the ground. Christmas is not just an inspiring story we can live up to, but it's frankly doctrinal and boldly historical.

First John 1:3 says, "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son." This word fellowship, which is *koinonia*, means that if Jesus Christ has come, if Christmas is true, then we've got a basis for a personal relationship with God. God is no longer a remote idea or just a force we cower before. He's become graspable. If the Son would come all this way to become a real person to you, don't you think the Holy Spirit

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will do anything in his power to make Jesus a real person to you in your heart? Christmas is an invitation to become mystical. Christmas is an invitation to know Christ personally. Christmas is an invitation by God to say: Look what I've done to come near to you. Now draw near to me. I don't want to be a concept; I want to be a friend.

The gospel is that salvation is the kingdom of God coming down into this world. The body is important. Matter is important. This world is important. He took on physical flesh. Therefore, Christians know in the name of Christ we share our faith, but in the name of Christ we also help a poor person get a decent house. That's part of testifying to the gospel of Christmas. The kingdom of God is here to rehabilitate this world, not to save us out into ethereal paradise. The future of traditional religion is paradise. The future of the gospel is a new heaven, a new earth.

John says: I want you to have fellowship with us. I want you to believe what we are saying. I want you to understand the doctrine of Christmas. I want us to be united in a community. I want us to be united in belief. And then he says: I'm doing all this—why?—so my joy will be complete. He doesn't say: I need your lives to be okay so I can have any joy at all. He's already got joy. He says: You need to get your act together for my joy to be complete. There's a balance there. He's got a joy no matter what they do. Christmas gives you a subterranean joy. It's a joy that cannot go out, and it will give you the freedom to get involved in the lives of other people. Christmas makes you free to be emotional. It makes you realize the emotion of grief is not going to take you all the way down, because you have a subterranean joy. If you believe the doctrine of Christmas, it makes you deeply mystical. It makes you happily material. It makes you fiercely relational. It makes you free to be emotional. What else could you want? Think about that the next time you say to somebody, "Have a merry Christmas."

~ Rev. Saw Eh Plo Soe

## Longest Night Service



During December, griefs and pains often grow harder to bear. As families gather, we remember those who are no longer with us, or disagreements that have left family estranged. The season of gift-giving puts strain on those already struggling to make ends meet. The cold and the dark can be hard on our bodies.

It is important, through the various struggles of the season, to remember that we are not alone. On **Wednesday, December 18 at 6:00pm**, we will again be offering a Longest Night Service on in Nambu Chapel. It will be a candlelight service at which we will hold silence, pray, and reflect both on what we have lost in the past year and what has sustained us.

## Cocoa & Carols

Plan to join us on Sunday,

**December 8 at 4 pm.**



for the annual concert of holiday music given by the Chamber Singers of Lincoln Park High School. The program will include selections both serious and light. Seasonal treats will be served and the choir will lead a Christmas carol sing-along.

We request that all members attend

**December 22, 2019 at 11:45AM**

## Congregational Meeting



so that we can present, discuss and vote on the 2020 Church Budget. It is very important that we have all present for this important decision in the life of our Church.

Copies of the proposed budget will be available on Sunday December 15, so you can review it before the meeting on the 22nd.

# What's Up With Our Youth?

In November, **Rev. Emily Heitzman** and the Edgewater Coming Together youth group joined us to share a meal together, sing, and reflect on our mission



trip to Iowa last summer by watching a slide show of pictures from the trip. We finished the night with a game of sardines. We had about 25 people in attendance- thank you to all who came! We also had a special presentation by **Marina Silva** and **Paw Say Ku**, young adult members of NSBC who are both currently interning with ONE Northside. They taught the youth about the city budget, and the youth asked insightful questions and reflected together on how they can make the city a better place for their families and neighbors.



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## Pastor Kathryn on Board of General Ministries



Back at the Biennial Mission Summit in 2017, I was chosen by the ABCUSA Nominating Committee to represent the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago on the Board of General Ministries (BGM). The BGM is like the Church Council, only for the entire denomination- we oversee staff in the Office of General Ministries, approve the denomination's budget, and coordinate with the mission and ministry arms of the denomination- American Baptist Home Mission Societies, International Ministries, American Baptist Women in Ministry, the American Baptist Historical Society, and the World Relief Committee. Because of this new role in the denomination, I resigned from my work as Associate Regional Minister back in February. On November 8-10, the BGM gathered in Valley Forge for our biannual meeting. At this meeting, I was appointed to represent the BGM on the Nominating Committee and the Board of the American Baptist Home Mission Society. Being on the Nominating Committee means I will be part of the team that selects Board members and officers, and I will likely be part of the search for the next General Secretary.

One very important thing that happened at the November meeting is that the BGM appointed **Rev. Dr. Jeff Woods** to serve as Acting General Secretary upon the retirement of **Rev. Dr. Lee Spitzer**. Rev. Woods has previously served as Associate General Secretary, and is well regarded throughout the denomination for his commitment to building relationship. He will be beginning this role in the next few weeks.

~ Pastor Kathryn



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North Shore Baptist Church

"Serving All God's People  
From This Corner"

We're on the Web:

[www.northshorebaptist.org](http://www.northshorebaptist.org)



*More light than we can learn, more wealth than we can treasure, more love than we can earn, more peace than we can measure!*

## CHRISTMAS SUNDAY ~ CHRISTMAS EVE

### SUNDAY December 22nd



Plan to celebrate with us on this final Sunday of Advent as we prepare for the celebration of the Christ's birth. We will follow our normal worship schedule and plan on having a special Fellowship Time immediately followed at 11:45 by our annual Congregational Meeting to discuss and approve our church budget for 2020.

- 9:30 a.m. - Spanish Worship
- 10:00 a.m. - English Worship
- 11:15 a.m. - Fellowship Time
- 11:45 a.m. - **Congregational Budget Meeting**
- 12:00 p.m. - Karen Worship

*Note: there will be NO Adventures in Learning Classes today.*

### TUESDAY December 24th - 9:00 p.m.

**CHRISTMAS EVE** - The English Language Congregation will again share this meaningful opportunity to tell the Christmas story through lessons and carols of the season. As the service culminates in a candlelight singing of "Silent Night, Holy Night," we can experience the birth of Jesus in its full power and humbleness, born in a manger to a poor family, born to transform the world.



If you would like to receive *Steeple Stories* by e-mail (in color!), contact us at [office@northshorebaptist.org](mailto:office@northshorebaptist.org)