

Virtual Children's Christmas Eve Service 2020

Curated, adapted, and written for the Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church by Rev. Kathy Pittenger – kpittenger@michiganumc.org/517.897.4483

INTRODUCTION: This service is fully edited and ready for download, embed, and sharing on social media, or through your local church website. A second version is available allowing local churches to tape and edit on their own customized open and close.

Service Script-Runs approximately 30 minutes

Welcome! Welcome to the Children's Christmas Eve Service!

Today, Christmas Eve, is the meeting place between heaven and earth. God's love comes down. God's love is born today in Bethlehem. In an out-of-the-way place which no one ever thought to visit – there God kept and keeps a promise – there God arrives.

Together we will share the ABC's of Christmas. You may want to have a piece of paper and crayons or markers so you can draw pictures of the words you hear. When you hear a question, take a moment to wonder together. We encourage you to sing or dance during the songs! We will end by singing Silent Night. You may wish to have glow sticks or candles ready or sit near your Christmas tree with only the Christmas lights on as we sing to focus on and remember the light of Christ.

The families in our service are from United Methodist Churches across Michigan. Let us open with prayer.

Opening Prayer (Credit text: liturgy by Rev. Dr. Katie Snipes Lancaster)

God of Christmas Eve, we are here to worship you. Open our hearts to love, open our ears to your story, and open our eyes to see your presence here in this place. Amen.

Let's continue in worship and sing Away in a Manger

Song: Away in a Manger (217, verse 1)

ABC's of Christmas

Introduction:

A is for an angel, Gabriel, who began the story with a greeting,

Scripture Reading - Luke 1:28-33 (CEB)

When the angel came to her, he said, "Rejoice, favored one! The Lord is with you!" She was confused by these words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. The angel said, "Don't be afraid, Mary. God is honoring you. Look! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great and

he will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of David his father. He will rule over Jacob's house forever, and there will be no end to his kingdom."

B is for Bethlehem, where our story takes place. People traveled from far and wide to arrive in the town, it was a very busy place.

C is for Census, which means an official counting of all the people, the reason so many people came to Bethlehem.

D is for David, who was an ancestor of Joseph. Luke 1:32 says, "Jesus will be a great person and God will give him the throne of David." David was a great King, Jesus is the Messiah!

E is for Exhausted, that's how everyone felt when they arrived – tired from all the travelling.

Wondering Question (15 second background music with text on screen): I wonder if you can remember a time when you were exhausted.

F is for Family. Mary and Joseph and their new baby Jesus who was born that night in Bethlehem.

Scripture Reading - Luke 2:1-7 (CEB)

In those days Caesar Augustus declared that everyone throughout the empire should be enrolled in the tax lists. This first enrollment occurred when Quirinius governed Syria. Everyone went to their own cities to be enrolled. Since Joseph belonged to David's house and family line, he went up from the city of Nazareth in Galilee to David's city, called Bethlehem, in Judea. He went to be enrolled together with Mary, who was promised to him in marriage and who was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for Mary to have her baby. She gave birth to her firstborn child, a son, wrapped him snugly, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the guestroom.

G is for the Good News about to be shared with all the earth. This is what was said:

Scripture Reading - Luke 2:8-16 (CEB)

Nearby shepherds were living in the fields, guarding their sheep at night. The Lord's angel stood before them, the Lord's glory shone around them, and they were terrified.

The angel said, "Don't be afraid! Look! I bring good news to you—wonderful, joyous news for all people. Your savior is born today in David's city. He is Christ the Lord. This is a sign for you: you will find a newborn baby wrapped snugly and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great assembly of the heavenly forces was with the angel praising God. They said, "Glory to God in heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors."

When the angels returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, "Let's go right now to Bethlehem and see what's happened. Let's confirm what the Lord has revealed to us." They went quickly and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.

H is for the Hope that Jesus brings. We know that no matter how hard or difficult life may be that Jesus is with us through everything.

I is for Imagine. If we close our eyes and imagine the scene, we can see the beauty and wonder of the angels proclaiming good news to all men and women.

J is for Joy. The excitement and happiness that a new baby, and now, this special night brings. Let's sing the first verse of Joy to the World!

Song: Joy to the World (verse 1)

K is for Kindness, shown by the innkeeper that night, allowing a tired family to stay in the stable when there was no room in the inn.

L is for the Love we share with one another all through the year and especially at Christmas.

Wondering Question (15 second background music with text on screen): I wonder how you know God loves you.

M is for Manger. A manger is usually used to hold food for animals, but this time it held the baby because he had no crib.

N is for Noel. Noel is another word for Christmas. It means new birth, that's what happened in our story, and it happens every year.

O is for Offering. We can offer our gifts to God every day through our time, talents, and treasure. What gifts can you share?

P is for Prayer and praise and pondering, all different ways people reacted the amazing thing that happened. We pray and praise and ponder together:

Prayer:

On this holy night we remember the angels who said, "Do not fear." On this holy night we remember the shepherds who bowed down before the baby. On this holy night we remember Mary and Joseph, who had faith in God. On this holy night we remember Jesus, who came to save us. On this holy night we remember God is with us. Amen.

PRAYER CREDIT: Prayer excerpted from Faithful Families for Advent and Christmas: 100 Prayers, Practices, and Lessons to Make the Season Sacred by Traci Smith (Chalice Press: 2020, All Rights Reserved.)

Q is for Quiet, the deep peace that Christmas brings – knowing that God is with us.

R is for Revelation, God showing us who God is in a little baby born one night.

S is for Shepherd, the ones who were first terrified and then overcome with joy as they heard the good news that Jesus was born.

Wondering Question (15 second background music with text on screen): I wonder what it would have been like to be a shepherd.

T is for Trust, the confidence we have in God.

U is for Unity, people celebrate God's love tonight from places all around the world, including in our homes.

V is for Vulnerable, a little child needs to be cared for and protected – that's our job.

W is for Wonder – our amazement at the beauty of how much God loves us.

X is for Xmas, the x is actually the symbol for Christ – it is the first letter of the Greek word.

Y is for You – celebrating the birth of the baby Jesus!

Z is for Zeal, the passion with which we share the Good News and God's love tonight!

Wondering Question (15 second background music with text on screen): I wonder who you can share God's love with.

Slide or words to get glow sticks/candles/lights ready with Silent Night music background?

“Get your glow sticks or candles ready to sing Silent Night”

Song: Silent Night (239 – verses 1 & 2)

Benediction (Closing Words) (Silent Night background music?)
(Credit text: liturgy by Rev. Dr. Katie Snipes Lancaster)

The angels sang the news.
Shepherds came to see.
They found what we find.
God is with us, in Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, born that Christmas long ago.
The world will never be the same.
Go in peace and tell the world! Jesus Christ is born!

ABC's of Christmas was adapted by Rev. Kathy Pittenger from The ABC's of Christmas Worship from <https://youngclergywomen.org/the-abcs-of-christmas-a-worship-service/#comment-66165> and <https://fatpastor.me/2013/12/19/interactive-christmas-eve-service-the-abcs-of-christmas/>