

Shepherd's Staff

December 2024

We gather to worship, we go to serve our Lord.

"You will be my witnesses...to the ends of the earth!"

Parkersburg Christian Reformed Church

Sunday Worship 9:30 a.m. ~ Church School 10:45 a.m



Merry Christmas!

Source: <https://digitalpastor.org/walking-advent/>

Walking Advent

Welcome to Advent, the holy season of waiting and preparing for the coming of our Lord Emmanuel. So what does it mean for our lives if we say that God became human just like us?

One way to connect our spiritual life in this season with the incarnation is to remember the physicality of that first Christmas.

Mary's Walk

Scripture tells us that while Joseph and Mary lived in the village of Nazareth, they traveled to Bethlehem for the census and it was there that their son Jesus was born (Luke 2:4).

When you think of this story, what do you think of?

If you are like most of us, you imagine Mary riding gently on a donkey while Joseph walked. But is that what happened? Or is that just what we remember from one million church Christmas programs?

I tell you what. Pause reading this, and go look in Luke 2 or Matthew 1 for any mention of a donkey. Go ahead — I'll be here when you get back.



Nope.

No mention of a donkey. Anywhere. Nope. It's not actually in the Bible, we add it.

There MAY have been a donkey, but if Joseph and Mary were as poor as Luke depicts them as being they would be lucky to own a donkey. And if they did own one, it would be better used carrying the supplies for their long journey. The donkey is a pack animal, not transportation.

But even if they HAD a donkey, and didn't need it to be loaded down with all their supplies and food, can you imagine riding a donkey at 36 weeks pregnant??

So Mary walked.

The most direct route from Nazareth to Bethlehem is 90 miles (144 kilometers). That is 30 hours of walking at a pretty good pace!

Ask yourself: In the last trimester of pregnancy, how fast could you walk? How many miles could you walk in a day?

36 weeks into her first pregnancy, Mary walked for 90 miles.

Remember also that Scripture says that Mary and Joseph traveled UP to Jerusalem. The elevation of Nazareth is about 1,000 feet — Bethlehem is at about 2,500 feet. Most of this long walk was uphill.

Imagining Mary's Walk

90 miles. 30 hours.

The fastest I can imagine that journey happening is 10 miles a day. Put yourself in Mary's sandals. How often do you suppose pregnant Mary needed to stop and eat? Or take bathroom breaks? Or just rest?

How much food do you pack for a week-long stroll across Israel? Clothes?

Do you pack supplies for your soon arriving child, or do you count on being able to get what you need when you arrive there?

How much do you worry about the walking causing early labor? Or worse, a miscarriage?

How many times a day does Mary ask Joseph to slow down?

Are there others walking with them to go to Bethlehem for the census?

Did either of them roll their ankle on the way and have to stop for a day?

What toll did that journey take on their bodies? Imagine the aches and soreness they must have had.

Walking Advent

Go for a walk with me!*

I don't know about you, but I don't have three hours a day to commit to walking. So let's dial it back a little. If you walk 3.3 miles a day between now and Christmas, you will have walked the 90 miles from Nazareth to Bethlehem. So let's go for a stroll!

If you don't have the time to walk for an hour or the ability to walk that far, do what you can. Set yourself a daily Walking Advent commitment and stick to it.

As you walk, turn off your music and your podcasts and think about Mary.

Notice the weight of your footfalls over and over and over again.

Notice the way your body sways with each step.

Notice the discomfort in your muscles and joints.

Look around you. What do you see while you are walking that you normally miss?

What sounds do you hear?

How does the temperature change around you and in your body as you walk?

Consider repeating the Magnificat as you walk. (Mary's song, found in Luke 1:46-55)

If you are walking with someone else or with your children, take turns telling the story of Christmas to one another.

Use this time every day to reconnect with your faith, with whoever you walk with, and with your body.

Let's walk to Bethlehem together!

**As you are physically able. If you are not able to walk this far, walk what you can — the distance is not the point! If you use a wheelchair, consider going out for a daily spin if that is feasible. If that is not possible, set aside some time each day to reflect on how God is made known in your body.*

OPERATION Christmas Child



A huge thank you to everyone who gave of their time to staff our drop-off location for Operation Christmas Child, as well as to each and everyone who filled shoeboxes and provided monetary donations this year!

We had a record-breaking year for our location – 926 boxes! We delivered 55 Samaritan's Purse cartons, as well as 7 additional boxes, filled with shoeboxes, to Manchester, the next stop in the shoebox journey. Thanks to your support, many more children around the world will open a shoebox and learn the message of Jesus Christ!



12/6 Darlene Bruns
12/7 Joel Reints
12/7 Delbert Cordes
12/12 Angie Meester
12/14 Clayton Groeneveld
12/17 Rylan Ascher
12/20 Duane Anderson
12/31 John Oltman



12/10 John & Karen Oltman
12/17 Mark & Lanae Kramer
12/27 Irv & Amy Haan



Reminder: If you have anything you'd like included in the Shepherd's Staff, please try to have it to Wendy Armstrong by the 20th of the month. The goal is to have the newsletter in your mailboxes on the last Sunday of the month.



HOLY NIGHT

A D N H P W P J Q B T G F F S Q V
Y D M Q M I A A S T A R R L G F R
F X F A G R D O N K E Y A S Q L J
F S B U G S A V I O R M N F W U W
H H E A X W I X H Z I E K J A C B
E E T M B Y J R S N M V I N Z X I
M P H I N Y R O A E H H N U G L B
I H L B K Y P G S Z B N C Z O Q J
W E E Z M Z N I M E U Q E X L M E
K R H I M Z W F M E P S N P D N S
Z D E R A S K T A B A H S L D Y U
G N M Q J J J S N Y I A E S R V S
V A N F Q F A T G F T G I A Z T X
N J C U R Z Z X E U N O M N G L Z
B K Y M W I H F R A P E A C E G W

ANGEL
ANIMALS
BABY
BETHLEHEM
DONKEY
FRANKINCENSE

GIFTS
GOLD
JESUS
JOSEPH
MANGER
MARY

MYRRH
PEACE
SAVIOR
SHEPHERD
STAR
WISE MEN

