

The ABCs of Christmas Worship¹

We're glad you're here today. We want to share a story with you. It's a story you might know well; one you may have heard before.

Today, we want to tell you this story with something else we all know well, our alphabet.

A is for the angel, Gabriel, who began the story with a greeting for Mary: "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you."²

B is for Bethlehem, where our story takes place. People traveled a long way to reach the city. It was a very busy place.

C is for the census, when the government counted all the people. That's why everyone was headed to the city of Bethlehem.

D is for the donkey that carried Joseph and Mary on their long journey to Bethlehem to be counted. Mary also carried a baby within her.

E is for exhausted. Can you imagine traveling 107 miles along the Jordan River to get from Nazareth to Bethlehem? On the back of a donkey? No wonder they were exhausted!

Carol: *O Little Town of Bethlehem* – first verse

*A reading from Luke:*³ "While they were there, the time came for Mary to give birth. She gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in a blanket and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for him in the inn."

F is for family: Mary and Joseph and their new baby, Jesus. This new little family would bless the whole world.

G is for the Good News to be shared with all the earth. The angels said:

"Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹ Original Script by Rev. Erin Klassen¹, modified by Rev. Mark Molter¹, then adapted for Good Shepherd by Rev. Karen Boda.

² Luke 1:28

³ Luke 2:6-8

H is for Hope. Today on this second week of Advent, we light the candle of hope. Hope is knowing that even when things look bleak, good news is coming. Jesus is the source of our hope.

I is for our imaginations. If we close our eyes and imagine the scene, we can see the beauty and wonder of the **angels** proclaiming good news to all. We can see the **shepherds**, first terrified, but then overcome with joy as they hear the good news. We can see the **sheep** and the cattle surrounding the manger. If we try even harder, we can imagine a world where God's peace reigns, where there is no war or hunger. And if we can imagine it, we can do it with God's help.

J is for joy. Now we light the Advent candle of Joy. Joy is a kind of happiness that comes from God. It is like a light that can never be put out. Joy is always shared. The birth of Jesus gives us joy.

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. Now we light the third Advent candle of Love. Jesus summarized his ministry by saying "Love God..." and "Love your neighbor as yourself."

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

Carol: *Away in a Manger – first verse*

N is for Noel, another word for Christmas. It means new birth. That's what happened in our story, and it happens every year when we decide to follow Jesus.

O is for offering. The **wise ones** gave gifts to the baby, and we can offer our gifts every day. We give our time, our talents, and our treasure to God, and pray that as a Church, we are good stewards of all that is entrusted to us

P is for peace. Next Sunday we will light the last Advent candle, the candle of peace. Jesus is the Prince of Peace and is the source of the kind of peace that goes beyond all of our understanding. (do NOT light the fourth candle)

Q is for quiet and the deep peace that Christmas brings – a peace in knowing that God is with us.

R is for revelation and showing us who God is - a little baby born one night.

S is for one special **star** that shone bright in the night and showed the wise ones the way to Jesus. As it says in the gospel of Matthew:

Instructed by the king, they set off. Then the star appeared again, the same star they had seen in the eastern skies. It led them on until it hovered over the place of the child. They could hardly contain themselves: They were in the right place! They had arrived at the right time! They entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshipped him. Then they presented gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.⁴

T is for trust and the confidence we have in God.

U is for unity. All different people all over the world are brought together to celebrate God's love!

V is for vulnerable. The little child Jesus who was born that night needed to be cared for and protected. That's our job. We are now to care for our neighbors as God has cared for us.

W is for whisper. The stars in the night sky whisper to the world that the savior is here.

X is for X-mas. The x is the symbol for Christ and the first letter of the Greek word Chi. If you look closely, you can find an "X" on our Christmon tree!

On Christmas eve, we will light the last candle on the Advent wreath. It's called the Christ candle, and it symbolizes the light coming into the world. The light is Jesus.

Y is for You! We are so glad that you are here to celebrate and worship the birth of Jesus.

Z is for zeal, the passion with which we share the Good News and God's love.

Carol: *Silent Night, Holy Night – first verse*

⁴ Matthew 2:9-11