

*Mary and Joseph
invite you to join them in Bethlehem
as we celebrate the birth of God's son*

*Kneeling at the Manger
Sunday, December 12, 2021
4:00 p.m.
Hopedale Parking Lot*

Kneeling at the Manger is an Advent tradition at Myers Park United Methodist Church. During this worship service, with music leadership provided by our Children's Choirs, children can witness – and participate in – the nativity story. We hope you will join us for this special service, and, to help you prepare, we share the following information:

- The service begins promptly at 4:00 p.m. and **lasts about 45 minutes.**
- Due to COVID, this year's service is outdoors in the Hopedale parking lot rather than indoors in Jubilee Hall. **Everyone will need to bring his or her own chairs to sit in. Everyone will need to dress based on the weather.**
- **All children are invited to come to the service dressed as a nativity character.** We encourage you to keep the costumes simple by using household items such as bathrobes, pillowcases, paper plates, and even birthday party crowns to outfit your Mary, Joseph, angel, wise man (or wise woman), shepherd, or sheep!

If you are joining us for the first time, you may be wondering how the service proceeds. A narrator reads the Christmas story, and fifth graders, dressed as the main characters, process to the stage at the appropriate time in the story. As the fifth grade characters pass, children in the congregation dressed in costume may leave their seats and follow them to the stage. So, as Mary and Joseph walk toward the stage, all other Marys and Josephs rise and follow behind them. This continues until all characters in the story – the angels, the shepherds, and the wise men – walk to the stage.

- Recognizing that being on stage can frighten younger children (and their parents!); **we are designating a special area at the foot of the stage where children under 4 who come forward during the story can sit and watch the rest of the story.** Parents are welcome to come and sit with their children in this area if needed. Children's Ministries Team members will also be on hand to help keep everyone calm and happy.

Children 4 and older go up the steps to the stage where our pageant directors and others will "place" them until the stage and the surrounding area are full of children – a beautiful sight. Then everyone returns to his or her seats for the end of the service.

This service is a very meaningful part of Advent at our church. Please join us and make this a tradition for your family.

Joyfully,

Amy Jo Alspaugh, Director of Children's Ministries