

Greetings to all those who are expecting a Christmas miracle,

**SCRIPTURE:**

Luke 1:38 (MSG) – Larger reading: Luke 1:26-38

*“And Mary said, Yes, I see it all now: I'm the Lord's maid, ready to serve. Let it be with me just as you say. Then the angel left her. Blessed Among Women”*

**STORY:**

Pastor Clifford S. Stewart of Louisville, Kentucky, sent his parents a microwave oven one Christmas. Here's how he recalls the experience: "They were excited that now they, too, could be a part of the instant generation. When Dad unpacked the microwave and plugged it in, literally within seconds, the microwave transformed two smiles into frown! Even after reading the directions, they couldn't make it work. "Two days later, my mother was playing bridge with a friend and confessed her inability to get that microwave oven even to boil water. 'To get this darn thing to work,' she exclaimed, 'I really don't need better directions; I just needed my son to come along with the gift!'" When God gave the gift of salvation, he didn't send a booklet of complicated instructions for us to figure out; he sent his Son.

**REFLECTION:**

An egg ... A young teenage girl ... a womb ... Spirit of God descending ... a baby is formed ... a holy process ... a miracle takes place ... angels sing ... shepherds fearful ... animals observe ... a stable transformed ... the world transformed ... ta-da takes place ... God is with us.

A simple story ... a story for all ages ... the time and place aren't important ... salvation has arrived is extremely important ... God's Son is among us ... bone-of-bone, flesh-of-flesh ... life is twisted for all time ... the awesome salvation of God has arrived ... could we miss it? ... it is right here in front of us all the time ... God is with us.

Eyes are opened ... ears begin to hear ... lives are transformed ... marriages are healed ... relationships made new ... addictive behavior is left behind ... possibilities made real ... horizons become real ... hope has sprung ... prayers are answered ... God is with us.

God ... the creator ... the power source of the universe ... the all knowing ... the all seeing ... the all powerful ... the reality of life ... is with us ... us ... you and me ... can you believe it? ... dare we believe it? ... no more guessing ... no more wondering ... no more "what ifs" ... God is with us ... and we are different ... our life is transformed ... God has arrived ... and the world received him not ... maybe this time it will be different ...

**QUOTE:**

*“I want to remember...Smelling your newness upon this earth. The baby-Jesus smell as Grandma used to put it. Pure. Unsullied. Like the imagined smell in the twirling air of eiderdown feathers spin-floating around the yard on a new spring day.” – Carew Papritz*

**PRAYER:**

You've come and we did not see you. You've come and we did not welcome you. You've come and we decided to still do it our way. You've come and we were expecting something different. You've come so help us to accept your arrival.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim  
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***Worship this Sunday: In-person in the sanctuary at 10:00 OR via  
FaceBook (Manatee United Methodist Church) – posted by 1:00 OR via  
YouTube by Monday morning.***