



# faith life and learning

## God's Story

By Kris Uppendahl

God's story of salvation for humankind is the overarching theme throughout scripture from Genesis to Revelation. Kris Uppendahl, one of our Financial Aid Counselors here at LAPU, has offered the following thoughts to help us conceptualize how our lives in this season of advent connect to God's story of salvation.

### GOD WITH US

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel. That mourns in lonely exile here, until the Son of God appears." (*Neal, 1851*)

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. With the birth of Christ, God came to us indeed, fulfilling the groans of humanity and setting in motion His plan of redemption. A new chapter in the overarching story of God's salvation for us was begun, and the world was forever changed.

I don't know about you, but sometimes I find it hard to grasp the idea of an Emmanuel, as in the idea of a God *with us*. Especially around the holidays - when it seems every church is reminding me of this fact, while every store is trying hard to let me forget it. People are rushing to get things done, yet stalled in traffic going nowhere fast. It seems holidays have a way of illuminating what we feel dimly the rest of the year. In essence, they show us the state of our heart, and where we are on the journey with ourselves, others, and God.

However, I think that is why this hymn captivates my soul, for it speaks of anticipation and hope in the midst of struggle. The hymn alludes to the people of Israel when they were being held captive (Isaiah 8:8). It was written for people needing a Saviour

to come and break their chains. The chains of slavery. The chains of hopelessness. The chains of exhaustion. Here was a people needing to be set free.

### THEN, THE SAVIOUR CAME.

But what does that mean? Truly, how do we begin to grasp the concept of God coming into our world and our chaotic mess in order to walk with us—that God would give up some of His glory for a time, in order to be among those who are fallen and far from having it all together? Yet, that is exactly what our God did. Through the Incarnation, God became flesh, He came *to us*. Not expecting us to rise to Him, for truly how could we? Rather, **Emmanuel, God with us, wanted more.**

He wanted to be in our lives. He wanted to know our hurts intimately, to celebrate our joys, and to hold us in our sorrows, so that He could love us deeply.

His coming broke the chains of our slavery. The incarnation set us free and began the process of kingdom living. A life marked by freedom, though still painful at times, is a life full of His presence and grace. A life marked with freedom is what brings us hope that we can walk through this moment, because we know we are not alone. For God is truly Emmanuel.

*Kris Uppendahl*