

What might happen if the birth of Jesus were to happen now, in 2009, in our own city of Grand Rapids? A 'contemporary' version of the traditional Christmas pageant will be performed by the children of Fountain St. Church, on Christmas Eve, 2009. Inspired by Fountain Street's Minister of Spiritual Life & Learning, Rev. Matthew S. Cockrum, the script for this modern Christmas story presents a fresh and vibrant take on the message and meanings of the birth story. Rev. Cockrum has long hoped to see the traditional script reworked, and to re-engage the youth of the church in the story and make it more relevant and meaningful to their lives.

In this contemporary story, Mary and Joseph, a young couple expecting the birth of their first child, are moving to Grand Rapids for a fresh start. The joy they feel as soon-to-be parents is overshadowed by the reality that Joseph recently lost his job in the auto industry, and their future is uncertain. When they arrive downtown, Mary is ready to deliver the baby and they go to a nearby hospital. Insurance coverage issues require they go elsewhere, and while walking to nearby hospital the time for the birth is at hand. Joseph finds a sheltered spot in an alley, and late into the cold clear night the baby Jesus is born. With a worn work coat in a crate for his bed, the baby Jesus rests peacefully, surrounded by Mary and Joseph and the small animals of the city, coming closer for warmth on the bitter winter night. City residents are nearby, students leaving classes, late shift workers heading home and the people who make the streets their home. Nearby gang members are edgy, something's 'in the air' but they're not sure what. When an angel appears to them with a message of a newborn leader, the gangs venture out to find the child and see what's happening. Herod, the gang leader, hears all the talk around town and doesn't like the idea of a 'newborn king'. And the 'wise ones', offering compassionate support and gifts most needed, follow the star to find this child and take heart in the hope and promise his birth inspires.

In the tradition of the Fountain Street's mission to 'challenge every individual and our larger community to cultural, intellectual and spiritual growth', this contemporary story of the birth of Jesus is fresh and vibrant and offers the empowering message that everyone has something to give that can change the world. The 2009 contemporary Christmas pageant will take place within the Christmas Eve service at Fountain St. Church, (24 Fountain Street NE) at 5:00 p.m. on December 24th, 2009.