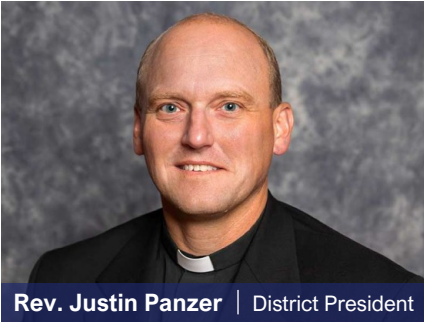


# PRESIDENT'S OFFICE



Rev. Justin Panzer | District President



**"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days...And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth." (Micah 5:2, 4)**

## **Christmas is a season like no other.**

Lights twinkle in the dark winter nights, families gather to celebrate, and friends exchange greetings and gifts. Social media fills with pictures of decorated trees and joyful gatherings, while homes become warmer with traditions and laughter. Yet for Christians, Christmas is not only about atmosphere or family customs. It is, above all, about God's gift—the coming of His Son into the world.

The prophet Micah spoke of this gift long before that first Christmas night. *"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days...And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth."* (Micah 5:2, 4)

These words, given centuries before Christ's birth, point us to Bethlehem, a small and seemingly unimportant town. Yet in that humble place, God chose to reveal His greatest plan. From Bethlehem would come the Ruler, the Shepherd of His people, whose reign would not be limited by borders

or time. He would rule with the strength of the Lord and bring security and peace to His flock. His greatness would extend "to the ends of the earth."

In Jesus, Micah's prophecy was fulfilled. Born of Mary in Bethlehem, Christ took on flesh and became truly one of us, yet without sin. He lived the perfect life we could never live. He walked the path to the cross, where He laid down His life as the full payment to forgive our sins. On the third day He rose again, conquering death and giving eternal life to all who believe. Through Baptism, He makes us His own, and through His Word and Holy Supper, He nourishes and strengthens us as His people.

Faced with such love and grace, what can our response be? Sometimes the simplest words are the most powerful: "Thank you." These words reflect gratitude, humility, and trust. Christians lift their voices in thanks and praise to the living God, who sent His Son to be our Savior.

"Thank you, Lord, for washing me in Baptism and making me new. Thank you for giving me Your Word, which points me again and again to Jesus.

Thank you for Holy Communion, where I receive Christ's body and blood for the forgiveness of my sins and the strengthening of my faith. Thank you for loving me, even though I am unworthy."

Christ is the greatest gift ever given. He is the gift worth worshiping, sharing, and proclaiming. Our churches, schools, and Christian families exist to tell the world about Him. God calls each of us to extend this gift to others—by inviting someone to worship, or by showing Christ's love in our daily words and actions.

**As we celebrate this Christmas, do not rush past the manger or overlook the promise fulfilled in Bethlehem. Instead, pause often to whisper those two words of faith: "Thank you." Thank you, Lord, for keeping Your promises. Thank you for sending Your Son. Thank you for calling us out of darkness into Your marvelous light!**