THE BELLUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

ONE HOLY NIGHT

What we learn of the Savior from Luke's Gospel account.



THE PEOPLE GOD USES

BY DORIS STENSLAND

God has His plans
And hand-picks people to carry them out.

People like Mary.

God wouldn't entrust His beloved Son to just anyone.

She must be loving and humble.

But most of all she must be willing.

... and she was.

She gave up her own rights and plans for His when she said,

"Be it unto me according to Thy Word."

Or like Joseph.

God wouldn't choose just any man.

He didn't need a leader.

To carry out His plans He needed someone sensitive to His leading and quick to obey.

One who would stand in the background and be a support and provider.
... and Joseph was.

He gave up his own ambitions and even left His own country

To carry out God's plans because in his heart he had said, "Thy will be done."

And like the shepherds.

God had special plans for some shepherds that holy night:

They would be the first to hear the announcement of Jesus' birth.

An angel would bring the good tidings of great joy to them as they kept watch over their flock that night.

"A Savior is born!"

The sky became bright with angels, The air was filled with praise.

"Glory to God in the Highest and peace, good will toward men!"

They were given a sign: "You will find the babe lying in a manger."

The shepherds said to one another,

"Let us go right away to Bethlehem and see what the Lord has made known unto us."

They found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger and worshiped Him.

They made known abroad the saying which was told them about this Child.

The shepherds followed God's plan for them as joyfully they shared this good news with their world.

Today God has His plans.

And hand-picks people to carry them out. He still looks for the humble and the willing And those sensitive to His leading.

When He taps you on the shoulder

... or me

and then bends down His ear for our response, If it's the same as Mary, Joseph or the shepherds ...

... then He can use us too!

Stensland, a charter member of Redeemer Free Lutheran, Canton, S.D., lives in Sioux Falls with her husband. Hans.



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soundbites

The incarnation is a kind of vast joke whereby the Creator of the ends of the earth comes among us in diapers ... Until we too have taken the idea of the God-man seriously enough to be scandalized by it, we have not taken it as seriously as it demands to be taken.

—Frederick Buechner

Man's maker was made man that He, Ruler of the stars, might nurse at His mother's breast; that the Bread might hunger, the Fountain thirst, the Light sleep, the Way be tired on its journey; that Truth might be accused of false witnesses, the Teacher be beaten with whips, the Foundation be suspended on wood; that Strength might grow weak; that the Healer might be wounded; that Life might die.

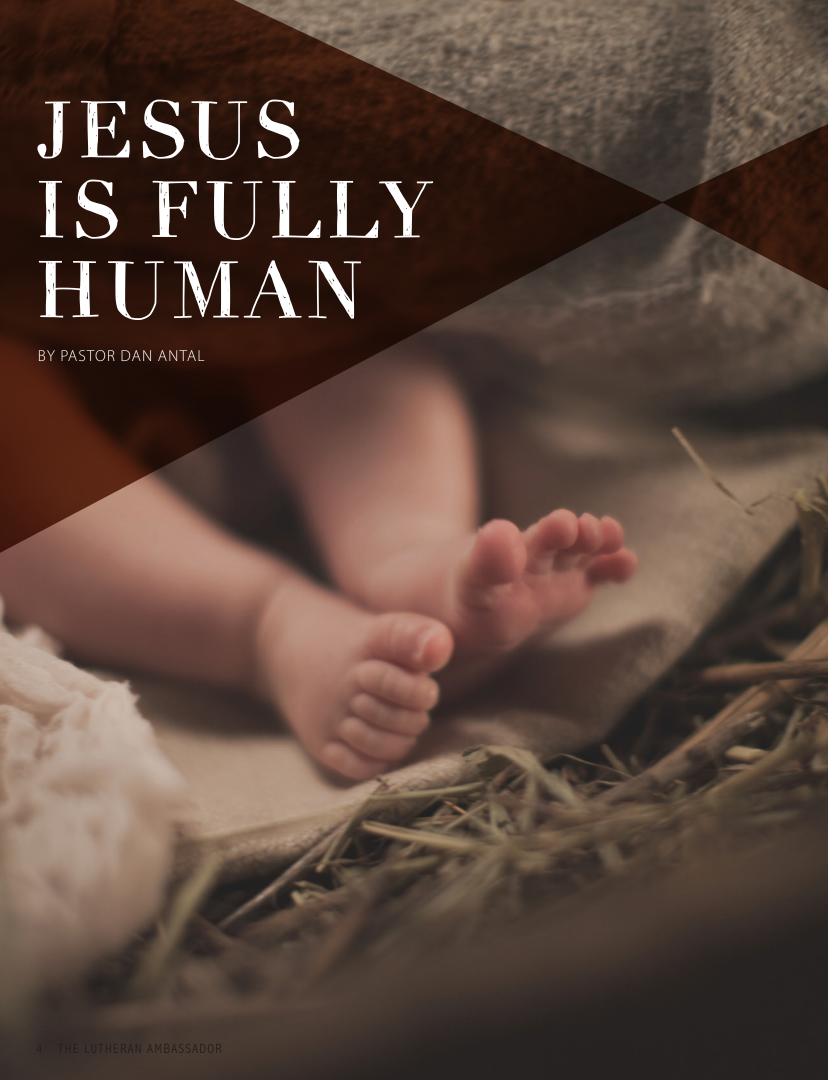
—Augustine of Hippo

Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people; for there is born to you this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. In these words you clearly see that he is born for us. He does not simply say, Christ is born, but to you is born; neither does he say, I bring glad tidings, but to you I bring glad tidings of great joy. Furthermore, this joy was not to remain in Christ, but it shall be to all people.

—Martin Luther

Infinite, and an infant. Eternal, and yet born of a woman. Almighty, and yet hanging on a woman's breast. Supporting a universe, and yet needing to be carried in a mother's arms. King of angels, and yet the reputed son of Joseph. Heir of all things, and yet the carpenter's despised son. Oh, the wonder of Christmas!

—Charles Haddon Spurgeon



t is remarkable how simply Luke reports the birth of God.

"And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7).

It does not sound like anything special. Mary and Joseph were visiting Bethlehem. The time came to give birth. She gave birth. She wrapped Him in cloths. And she laid Him in a manger.

No halo glowing behind Mary's head. No voice from heaven. No angels humming a soft song in the background. The four-legged animals did not suddenly start dancing on two legs. The only remarkable thing about it, is how human it was.

Elsewhere, extraordinary things happened. Glorious angels appeared to shepherds to announce the glad tidings. Wise men in

another country saw a remarkable star and followed it. But in Bethlehem it was just an ordinary night. An ordinary girl was giving birth to an ordinary baby. Everything was

And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger ...

remarkably ordinary, except for one hidden detail—this ordinary baby was God. A virgin was overshadowed by the Holy Spirit, and she gave birth to the eternal, all-powerful God.

This Jesus is the same God who created heaven and earth. This Jesus is the same God who hid His glory from Moses so he would not die (Exodus 33:18-23). And now He hides His glory behind the face of an infant.

This simple scene from the beginning of Jesus' earthly life indicates who He is and what He came to do. Instead of coming in glory and power, the King of heaven and earth came to us in humility and weakness. He came in poverty. He came as a man.

The manner of His appearing reveals what He came to do. He did not come to condemn us. He did not come to place demands on us. He did not even come to receive gifts from us. He needs nothing from us. He came to give to us. He came to give Himself for us. And the manner of His birth indicates this.

Though Joseph and Mary had a place to live in Nazareth, on the night of Jesus' birth, they were essentially homeless. God was taking the place of those He came to save. The King of heaven and earth accepted poverty. He should have been wrapped in fine purple cloths to indicate His royalty and laid in a golden cradle, but instead He was wrapped in plain, ordinary cloths and laid in a manger. God reveals Himself to be remarkably human.

God has a reason for revealing Himself to us in this way. And Luke, being inspired by the Holy Spirit, has a reason for reporting the events this way.

There is another story in Gospel of Luke where Jesus is carried by someone else, wrapped in cloths, and laid to rest. There is a Joseph in this story too, but he was not from Nazareth. He was from Arimathea, and he had his part to play in caring for the King of heaven and earth.

"This [Joseph] went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus" (Luke 23:52).

And notice the parallelism between Luke 2:7 and 23:53: "Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever vet been laid."

The parallelism between these verses is no coincidence. Luke knows what he is doing. He writes his gospel this way so that when we get to the end, we remember the first time Jesus was carried by someone else, wrapped in cloths, and laid to rest in a place He does not seem to belong.

Both of these events are remarkably human. In His incarnation and death Jesus was completely dependent on other people to care for His body.

At the burial of Jesus, Luke intends for us to remember the birth. He intends for us to realize that this was God's plan all along. God became human for a reason. He was born to die, He was born to "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). And He wants us to remember that just as the manger held Him for a time, so the grave must also hold Him for a time, but only for a time.

There is one more place where Luke talks about the cloths. It is when the disciples heard what seemed to be an idle tale (24:11). "But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened"

The human Jesus is alive again.

Jesus was born a human birth. He died a human death. And He lives a human life. The incarnation is permanent. God became a man. God is a man. At the incarnation He became human like we are, yet without sin. At His resurrection He became human the way we were intended to be—the way we will be one day when Jesus comes to renew His fallen creation.

Jesus continues to live as a man. But He does so without the curse of sin and death. This is the whole point of Jesus becoming human in the first place—so that He can restore to us this curse-less humanity.

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And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news ..."

ears ago I read an interesting article stating that often God places a comma—not a period—at the end of our heartaches, disappointments, and trials. What that simply means is God has the final word in our lives and will use our heartaches and disappointments for His glory and good. God's Word reminds us, "And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

We, on the other hand, often tend to view our trials and disappointments from a more human point of view. We can't perceive or understand how God can use the bad stuff of life for anything good. But God is the master storyteller of our lives, and as He writes His story on our lives, He always uses commas, not periods. That is the thrust of what the angel conveyed to the shepherds the night Jesus was born: "for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord."

Jesus is good news! He is good news because He came to earth, fully God and fully man, to give us exactly what we need—"a Savior, who is Christ, the Lord." To those shepherds in the fields, the birth announcement of Jesus was such welcoming news. Shepherds were not exactly the most admired, trusted, or respected people in Jesus' day. Many people in that time didn't like shepherds. They were often simply ignored. If they were to write a sentence about their lives it might read, "My life and circumstances as a shepherd will never change as long as I am misunderstood, unloved, and mistrusted."

We can feel that our individual life circumstances define, limit, and overshadow our purpose. In the past month I have listened to heart-wrenching stories from people I love and care about. Their personal news is not good. One friend recently revealed to me that he grew up with an abusive father. Another person close to me is having a very hard time trying to make sense of his 20-year-old friend who, overwhelmed with her circumstances, earlier this month took her own life. Yet another close friend is grieving the loss of a brother who accidently overdosed on heroin. Another friend recently discovered that his father has a life-threatening illness. This summer, I sat in a neurologist's office and learned that I have multiple sclerosis. One day my legs were fine and healthy and the next day I could not move them. It seems that there is bad news everywhere. None of us are immune from the horror and heartache of life.

Yet God is in the business of placing commas after our bad circumstances—never a period. Jesus said, "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Jesus is good news!

There will always be a steady stream of unfortunate circumstances and bad news while we are alive because of the deadly and spiritual consequences of sin and rebellion against God. Yet speaking of Satan, our spiritual enemy, Jesus said, "The thief comes to kill, steal and destroy, but I have come so that they might have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). That is good news!

Yes the author of evil is Satan. And until Jesus' second coming, Satan will continue to launch his attack on all of us in order to kill, steal, and destroy something within us. But a Savior has been born to us. That is good news! Satan may be the author of evil, but Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. His birth is God's commitment to us to rid us from the permanent effects of sin. Through faith in Jesus, we have a future and a hope. We have a permanent home in heaven. We have a Holy Spirit who has been gifted to us to guide, direct, and empower our lives until the day God calls us home to heaven.

Even after this life, God promises to surprise us afresh. The Bible reminds us in I Corinthians 2:9, "Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it ever been conceived in the mind of man what God has prepared for those who love Him." That is good news.

Have you come to a place in your life where you can trust that God places a comma after your heartaches? There is never a period because a Savior has been born for you, and He is Christ the Lord. Actually, that is God's exclamation point! This is good news of great joy—and it is for you and me.

Ritter serves Faith Lutheran, Shakopee, Minn.

JESUS ISGOD NEWS

BY PASTOR JIM RITTER

"... behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people."

ow I wish I could have been with the shepherds that awesome night so long ago when they received the first intelligence, the first news of the great thing God had done that night. The angel brought them a joyous proclamation that would change the course of history for all time: a good news that would be for *all* people, everywhere and in all times. Let's dig into

Luke 2:10 a bit and examine this tremendously good news the angel brought to the shepherds.

The proclamation began with a very needed reassurance: *Do not fear*. Fear is one of human nature's most gripping sentiments and it can control every aspect of our lives, every decision we make, every belief we hold dear. The angel's message was one to dispel the fears of mankind because he brought good news ... news of the Savior of the world, whom the world had been awaiting since the fall of man at the beginning of creation. God had promised then that He would send the Deliverer, and the angel had the wonderful charge to announce to the shepherds that God had fulfilled His promise. God's great news would save us from our worst nightmares ... from horrific, dark eternity without Him.

It is interesting to note the second part of the message in which the angel explains why we shouldn't fear: *I bring you good tidings*. If you look at the passage in the Greek, the words "bring" and "good tidings" come from the same word from which we get our English word "evangelize." The word basically means to bring good news.

It must have been quite exciting and comforting for the shepherds to hear this concept emphasized and repeated. The angel was serious about the good news he was bringing. And why was it good news? Because it was about Jesus, the Lord of life, coming down to earth to save us from our sins. No news could be better than this, and it is no wonder that the angel gave emphasis to this great truth.

Hence the angel yet again emphasized how truly happy this news was. This was news of *great joy*, he said. Jesus would gain us the victory over the devil, the world, and our own sinful nature. He would grant to us who believe and trust on His name joyous, eternal life that would never be taken away from us. He would restore the broken relationship between God and man. His presence would be with us from here on to eternity. This, indeed, was news of great joy.

Finally, the angel generously spread abroad this good news of great joy to *all people*. It wasn't just for the Jews, as had been previously expected. It wasn't just a temporal, earthly kingdom Jesus was coming to establish, although many people mistakenly believed this to be the case. No, Jesus wanted people from every tribe and nation to be His people. His good news wasn't an exclusive one: He desires all men to be saved. This, indeed, is the best part of the news. Jesus came for all people!

The natural response of this good news, when it has been believed and experienced, is to share it with others. This is exactly what the shepherds did. After hearing the angel's message and the heavenly chorus, they hurried to the stable to see the baby Jesus. After beholding everything just as the angel had declared to them, they worshiped God and spread



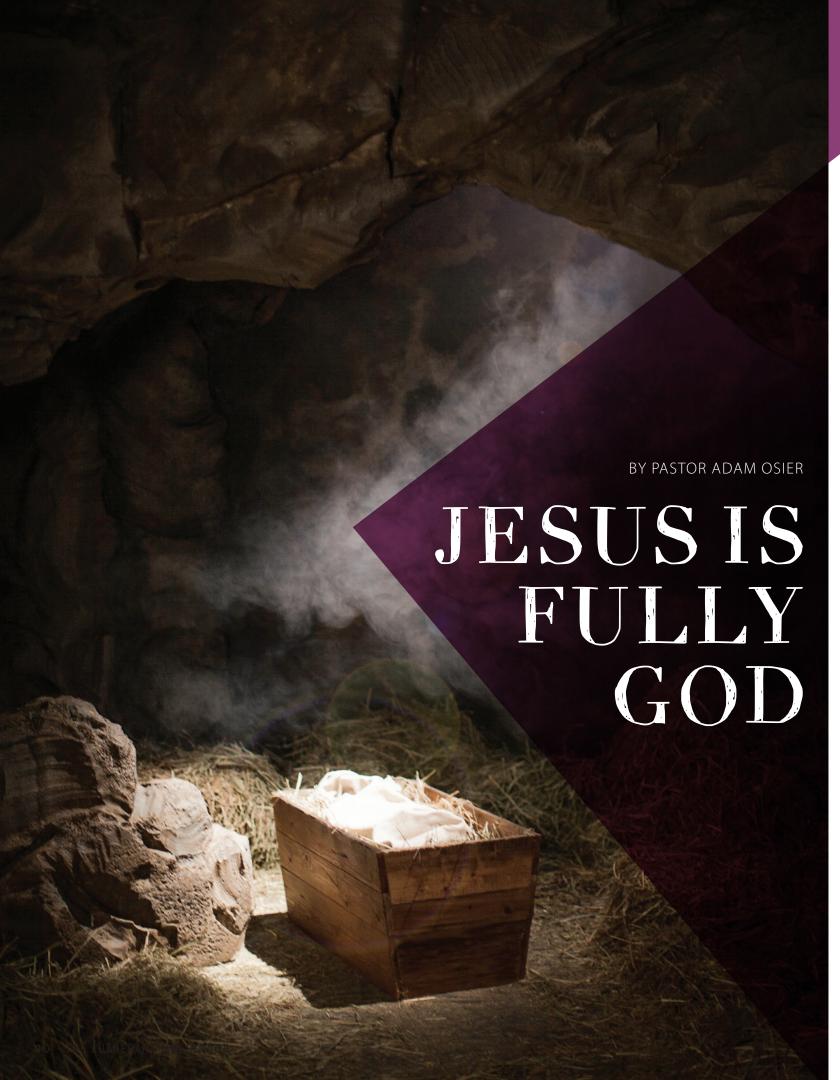
the good news to all in that country round about

When bringing the gospel to different cultures, it can be easy for others to look on this good news and think, "Sounds great for that person, but Jesus is not for me." Nothing could be further from the truth, and this lie is what missionaries, evangelists, and all Christians everywhere must strive to defeat. Jesus wasn't just for the Jews in the ancient world. Jesus is for everyone and everyone needs Jesus. Jesus is for the Muslim who is locked into a dark, hopeless religion where there is no way out except by death. Jesus is for the erudite socialite who ceased to believe in God and is living a life of decadence and decay. Jesus is for the remote tribesman who has little contact with the world at large and lives in fear of the dark spirits that control his jungle. Jesus is for the girl who was

kidnapped and sold into the sex trade and has become a replicating victim. Jesus is for the average suburbanite who thinks he has his life all together and is "good enough." Jesus is for the many millions living in all cultures everywhere, which are filled with hopelessness, pain, depravity, perversity, and despair. And like the angel so long ago, we have a commission from God Himself to go evangelize (share the good news) with them.

This good news (Jesus) is life changing and it (He) must be shared. May God grant each of us boldness to share this wonderful, joyous news, just as it has been shared with us. It is for us and it is for everyone.

Pillman is an AFLC missionary serving in Cuenca, Ecuador, with her husband, Justo.





"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

t was a Saturday morning in early spring. The doorbell rang and, upon answering it, I found two nicely dressed women eager to talk with me about my preparedness for the end of this present age. Still in my Saturday morning attire and somewhat chilly, I embarrassingly admit that I was eager to end the conversation as quickly as I could. I responded abruptly by asking them what they believed about the person of Jesus. "Was He God?" I asked.

Immediately and definitively, they answered no.

At their response, my icy curtness melted into pastoral concern. The question I had asked to end the conversation launched a discussion that sparked several more visits—each focused on the eternal importance of the true divinity of

This was the heart of the message which the angel delivered to the shepherds who were tending their flocks by night in Luke's Gospel. Here they were, presumably minding their own business, tending to their animals, when they were suddenly engaged by an angel of the Lord, and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They responded in a way typical for sinners when confronted with God's holiness and glory. They feared. Yet, what God's holiness should have rendered a ruinous and cataclysmic experience, the angel quickly quelled with the promise of "good news of great joy which was to be for all the people" (Luke 2:10, ESV).

The good news, their reason for hope, is stated immediately in verse 11: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." In this verse we have the entire gospel in a nutshell. The good news offered to the shepherds that night, and by extension to us as well, is a personal hope that the God whom we have offended by our sin has, Himself, come to save us. The One born that night in a stable and laid in an animal's feeding trough was no less than the eternal God Himself.

The message the angel gave the shepherds leaves no doubt concerning it. Twenty five times in the first two chapters of his Gospel, Luke uses the Greek word for "Lord," kurios. In every instance he refers to Yahweh, the one true God. Verse 11 contains no exception. The one born that night, the Savior, "Christ, the Lord," was indeed Yahweh in human flesh. He is the Gospel writer John's "Word" become flesh. He was the One Isaiah promised when he assured God's grieving people, "Behold, your God will come with vengeance ... He will come and save you" (35:4). A mere man, born under Adam's curse, could not have achieved the salvation for which the sin-crushed universe needed.

This God-child born that night was the long-awaited offspring of Eve who would crush Satan's head (Genesis 3:15). He was Abraham's ultimate "seed" through whom the world would be blessed (Genesis 15). He was the guaranteed Son of David's line who would build for God a spiritual house of which He stands as the chief cornerstone, and whose kingdom will have no end (II Samuel 7:11-13).

In the incarnation, the true God made Himself familiar with our weakness. He bore our griefs, and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4). He was tempted in every way, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). On His cross, He endured His Father's wrath concerning our sin, and died the death we deserved (I Peter 2:24). Three days later that dead, physical body that belonged to the Son of God rose again, ensuring all who believe in Him the resurrection of their own dead hearts to newness of life (Romans 6:4) and their dead physical bodies to imperishable, permanent ones (I Corinthians 15:51-58). And now, Jesus, our brother, the truest man, stands before His Father's throne interceding on our behalf as the great high priest, able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God (Hebrews 7:25).

In those visits at my front door, I was able to share with my visitors that I have confidence in facing this world's end because the One who created it became flesh for me. That's what our text promises, doesn't it? It was for us that He came. This Christ child is born "unto us." This is our Savior, our Anointed One, our God. In Christ, God became His own gift to this dying world. As His children through faith, we eagerly await His return, knowing that the God-man, Jesus, comes again to our eternal rescue, and to bring us home to Himself forever. As the hymn writer says, so we too must proclaim with confidence: "Hail, Hail, the Word made flesh!" for all He has done for His people (What Child Is This? by William C. Dix).

Osier serves Ruthfred Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

arly in my life I conceded that I would not have children. Having a condition that was notorious for leaving women infertile, I had decided that was my fate. While I secretly believed God would give me a child, a doctor confirmed my deepest fear and I wore that defeat like a cloak. When my husband and I were dating, we talked about having a family, even though we knew the chances were pretty slim. We started talking about our first child, whom we named Tosten Lee. We

talked about Tosten as if he was real, and we dreamt out loud together about the things we'd do as a family and what our little man would be like. We would laugh ... and secretly mourn.

After we married, a different doctor advised us, and we tried multiple things to make it a possibility. But nothing worked. It wasn't more than two weeks after the doctor advised us to "take a break" from trying to conceive that we actually did. A little short of nine months later, Tosten Lee was born.

Tosten is my miracle child. While carrying him, I remember sometimes stopping in my busy day and just weeping at how God could have fulfilled this deep longing within me. I would often pray, "Lord, this child is Yours. Do what you will with him. You gave Tosten to me, and I give him back to you. May his life glorify You."

Tosten was born to glorify God.

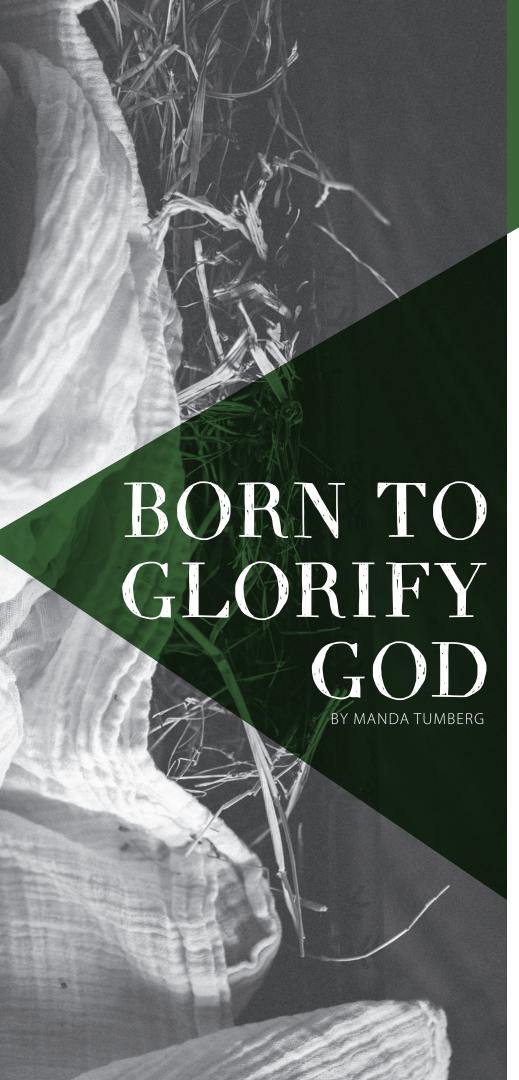
I wonder if my joy over Tosten's birth is a glimpse of how God the Father and all of creation felt at the arrival of Christ. Obviously, the birth of Jesus is incomparable to any other birth, but I can't help but wonder if all of creation, which had bubbled up with anticipation, let out a cumulative exhale when He finally arrived. I am sure the universe felt something shifting that day, something wild enough for myriad angels to appear to shepherds praising God saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:14). The universe and all of mankind would never be the same.

Jesus was born to glorify God.

Throughout Scripture there are many accounts of Christ pointing to His true purpose in coming to earth: to glorify the Father. God had promised a definite action of salvation for His children very early on in His Word. Now Jesus came to proclaim that the day was here. He came to proclaim that the promise of Isaiah (among others) was now being fully realized. Right now, in His life. At each step of His ministry, He consistently pointed to His true purpose: glorifying the Father.

I recall sitting in Ruesch Auditorium as a high schooler at the FLY Convention. The speaker that





night expressed something that blew my 16-yearold mind—God's ultimate purpose in sending Christ to earth was to glorify Himself. What?

In our self-focused society, it's easy to get caught up in the idea that Christ came primarily to save us from sin. Yes, Christ came to die for our sins. But that wasn't His main point in coming to earth. In God's grand plan, Jesus had to die to satisfy His holiness. That was His final plan.

If we stop for a moment to ponder such an idea, maybe you react like I do. It's an exciting thought, but my brain hurts a little as I try to comprehend the depths of His glory. While my ego would love to believe that Jesus came to die to ultimately save me, the end of all ends was that He came to die to keep His Word. He didn't have to bend or settle because of the grand mistake of mankind, but He kept His righteousness and glorified Himself.

In Jesus' High Priestly Prayer found in John 17, it's easy to see this passionate relationship between Jesus the Son and God the Father. Every time I read it, my mind bounces between the truth of Christ being fully man and Christ being fully God, Christ being His own entity and Christ being one with the Spirit and the Father. Whether I contemplate Christ's humanity or Christ's deity, or Christ coming to save the world from sin or Christ coming to glorify God and Himself, it all comes back to one grand truth: Jesus was born to glorify God.

So here I am this Christmas, embracing the fact that Jesus came to earth to fulfill His promises, uphold His plan, and to satisfy His holiness. And if He is willing to go that far, so far that He sent Himself to appease His own righteousness, I know His acceptance and love for me is genuine. Every promise and prophecy He has laid out in His Word is guaranteed.

And while Tosten Lee is my miracle child and stumbling through his fourth year of life, he now has a 2-year-old sister Olivea and a 6-month-old sister Ellenor who are trying to keep up with him. I cannot write any other reaction but, "Glory to

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ome! Jake was going home for Christmas!

He had not seen his family since September when he had left for school. And now he was a different person. He wanted to tell his family about what had happened to him.

Jake had come to Bible school because he didn't know what else to do with himself. After graduating from high school, he knew he didn't want to go to college yet. It was too expensive and he wasn't ready. One day when he was hanging out with some friends, he met a girl who told him about a Bible school in Minneapolis. She had gone there and was, as she said, "changed," and she had found a "purpose for her life."

"Why not try it," she challenged him. Always ready

to jump into something new, Jake took the challenge and wrote to the school.

He'd almost forgotten about it by the time he received an application form in the mail. Not completely sold on the idea, but still not having any other options, Jake went ahead and sent it in, telling his parents that he really didn't care one way or the other if he got accepted.

His mom smiled to herself. Patting Jake on the back, she thanked the Lord for hearing her prayer to show her son some direction. She and his father had been concerned for Jake, their first born. They were surprised at his decision about Bible school. He hadn't been very interested in church for some time now. But his mom was a believer in the power of prayer and knew that the Lord wanted Jake to

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And when they saw it, they made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child.

heard the story of the cross before, of course, but it had never spoken to his heart in such a way. In his New Testament class, the story of Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night and asking how he could be saved echoed Jake's own heart's cry. Hearing Jesus' very own words, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16), Jake received Jesus as his Savior. His professor helped him to understand that it was the Holy Spirit working to open his mind and his heart to believe this truth.

Jake had never known such peace and happiness that the forgiveness of sins brought to him. Now, he was going home to share with his family all that had happened to him. How would they react to his changed life? His dad was a pretty tough guy. Would he think Jake was a sissy? That he was being foolish?

As Jake traveled home, he experienced some mild feelings of fear, but remembered the encouragement he had received at school, that he tell his family and friends all that had happened to him. They were praying for him. He felt strong and determined.

It was a cold, blustery, and snowy day when Jake arrived home in northern Minnesota. It was great to be home. He could smell the chicken soup and the fresh bread the second he opened the door. And the hugs. Everyone was there to welcome him. There were even tears in Dad's eyes. All of Jake's fears melted away.

Sitting around the kitchen table everyone wanted to hear about school. Jake started off by telling about his new friends, and then his classes. As he shared with his family his experience of becoming a Christian, of now understanding the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, his mother wiped tears from her eyes and rising, she hugged him to her heart. Dad, too, was touched and told Jake how happy he was for him. What a wonderful evening it was.

As the days before Christmas went by, Jake had several chances to share his experience with his friends who were home on vacation also. He knew they didn't really understand, but he also knew that the Lord wanted him to tell all that had happened to him.

Now it was Christmas and time for the family to go to church to worship the Lord. Jake's heart was deeply touched as he sat with his parents and brothers, singing the traditional carols. The lighted candles and the beautiful evergreen wreaths brought an added beauty. The pastor read the Christmas story from Luke 2, dwelling on the portion of the shepherds. What an experience they had: seeing and hearing an angel announcing the birth of the Savior and with the glory of the Lord surrounding them, they hurried into Bethlehem, finding their way to Mary and Joseph and the Child. Having seen the Babe in the manger, they went out and told what they had seen and heard.

Oh, but Jake's heart was full as he realized that he, too, had a story to tell.

Gunderson, a member of the Board of Publications and Parish Education, lives in Brookings, Ore.

be His own, and that He had a purpose for Jake's life.

Now, three months later, Jake would be home, telling them all about life in the school and in the big city. The family waited in anticipation.

Actually, Jake had found that life at the school was nothing he had expected. He had met some really cool kids; he had gone out for basketball; he had even tried out for the choir. Everyone went to church on Sundays, there were evening devotions in the dorm, and chapel each day.

Most important of all, Jake's heart had been touched deeply when, studying the Bible, he learned that Jesus had died for *his* sins. He had

here was no little excitement when in the fall of 1916 I travelled up to Karasjok (Norway) to read through the Lapland grammar with one of the teachers at the parish school. These were the people God had called me to work among. How would they receive me? That was the big question. I soon found out that they weren't so different, at any rate, and soon had many friends.

Since Christmas was coming, I became more and more excited about what to expect. I was, of course, far from my own family and in completely different surroundings. A rumor began to circulate that two Laestadian preachers, accompanied by many others, were expected.

Festival time in the mountain town brings much activity with it. There are baptisms of children, weddings, and funerals, so the pastor has busy days. Christmas and Easter are traditionally times of large gatherings. The folk from the mountains, travelers, come to the church headquarters to take care of all their business, and at the same time to gather in the church and *bedehus* (prayer chapel) around God's Word. Rumors of good preaching encourage folks to come. In biting cold ranging from 40 to 50 degrees below zero, people drive in from Polmak in the east, 18 miles; from Kautokeino in the west, 18 miles; from Lakselv to the north, about 10 miles, and from Enarre in Finland to the south.

When Christmas Eve came, there weren't just two preachers who had come to the church, but also 500 visitors, in addition to local people, who also numbered about 500. Are there any of you who live in the south (in Scandinavia) who can recall the same kind of effort made to come to such a meeting? I have my doubts.

For me, these meetings were quite varied. One of the mountain groups caught my attention more than anything else that I saw and heard. When the leader began, he stood up and went back and forth among the benches, and then looked intently forward while he nodded his head and made a soft whisper. Then he went from person to person, tapped each one on the chest and pointed upward. When the encounter was over, he would either shake his head and frown or bow and smile. We could understand the meaning: "saved" or "unsaved."

Among the many he went to, he also came to me. When he stood in front of me and tapped my chest and pointed upward, I thought, "I am going to examine you, too." I looked him in the eye to try and catch his glance, but was not able to do so. His eyes seemed to indicate that he was far away, and I am certain that he didn't see me. I was one of those who got a friendly nod and

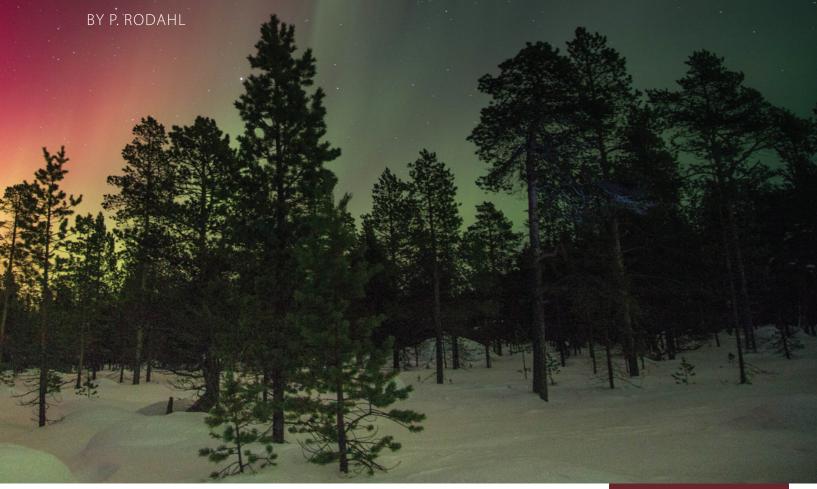


a peaceful smile. One would think that such a method, as described above, would strike me as unpleasant, but no! The opposite. My spirit melted together with his spirit, so that I sensed a holy atmosphere in his presence. It removed all that hadn't felt just right in what had gone before.

Christmas Day in the church made a strong impression on me. The building was overfilled with Laplanders in charming national costumes; it can hardly be described. There were also young mothers with their little ones prettily dressed and in their unique Lap cradles, which were set on the floor under the pulpit. All other seats and standing room were taken up.

I not only became an observer and spectator of everything that was happening during

Christmas in Lapland



the festival days, I also took part in them. I was asked to participate in three weddings. In one I was involved in making arrangements, as if I was a friend of the bride, but more correctly, the bridegroom's friend. It was, of course, a great honor granted to me that I should be the friend to one of the community's most respected girls. She was married to a Finlander from Enarre. The Laplanders hold fast to the old tradition of having many bridegroom's attendants and bridesmaids. We were six pairs in all, three before the bridal couple and three after, in the procession from the church. The rest of the party followed.

When we arrived at their home there wasn't much lacking in the way of food. It was a pleasure to see how the bride went around making sure

that everybody received enough. Yes, even all the children who came and congratulated her. No one must go away empty. As I sat there and watched her, I thought, "You will be a first class housewife, one who will spread light and hospitality in your home, both for husband and children."

Hospitality is a great blessing when it is found in a home. It has God's promise with it. May Jesus, who is the center of Christmas, find a place in every heart and home.

"Christmas In Lapland" was first published in Kriten Jul. *The article was translated from the* Norwegian by Pastor Raynard Huglen, Newfolden, Minn.

Lapland is not a country, but an area in the northern reaches of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The Laplanders' languages most closely resembles the Finnish. Most of them, known today as the Sami, live in Norway, and the fewest live in Russia.



RICH IN CHRIST

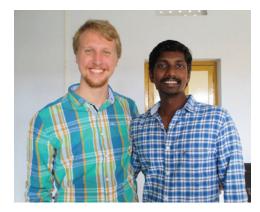


BY ANDREW QUANBECK

am by no means wealthy according to American standards. Being in my early 20s, I am in that spot where money simply comes and goes. I try to save a bit as I am able. But as most people can appreciate, it always seems to leave as fast as it comes in. As

seems to leave as fast as it comes in. As I look toward future paths and career choices, I never expect to be wealthy. Most of the things I think about doing are relatively low-paying jobs.

Yet as I have spent time in India and am now living in Uganda, I am reminded of how blessed I am with material possessions. I have enough money that I don't have to worry about how I will feed myself or pay rent for the next number of months. I have enough money to return to the States at the end of my time here. However, many of the people I have met in India and Uganda have so much less. I am by no means one to make others feel guilty over the things with which God has blessed them. No, what strikes me is where true wealth lies.



As I have chatted with a Ugandan friend over his concerns for providing for his family with food and schooling for his kids, we have been able to encourage each other with Christ. No matter what troubles we have, or what sins we have committed, we know that Jesus remains faithful. God is good. This doesn't mean that we are necessarily given that job we want, or that raise that we were hoping for, but what we receive is something far greater.

With Christ, we are given forgive-

ness of sins and assurance of salvation. We know that because of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, we can become God's children and we can have eternal life with Him in heaven. Forgiveness and adoption into His family is so much greater than any physical thing we could hope for on earth. There will still be troubles that we face, but there is a peace that comes from knowing that they are temporary and will pass away; salvation in Christ, by grace through faith, will last forever.

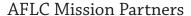
Just today my friend came back from an interview for a better-paying job than his current one. He remains hopeful that he will get it, but knows that even if he does not, God is sovereign and His eternal care is not subject to the world's burdens. Brothers and sisters, be encouraged by the riches we have in Christ.

After serving as an STA in India for two and one-half months, Quanbeck, a 2014 AFLBS graduate, is now in Uganda.



PROJECT: FURNITURE UPDATE

The girls' dorm at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School was built in 1968. At the time, the dorm rooms were furnished with beds, desks, chairs, and bureaus. Though these furnishings have been in continuous use since then, they have held up remarkably well. Pastor Joel Rolf, dean of AFLBS, has asked the WMF to take the lead in replacing these 47-year-old items. The cost to update a two-person room is \$2,400, and a three-person room is \$3,600. (This does not include window treatments or carpet.) A donation of \$10,000 has been given to kick start this project. The total estimate for the entire project is \$122,400. This is a big—but necessary—project. Please pray about what God would have you give. It is fun to imagine what it will be like for new students to move into the girls' dorm and find new furnishings. The Annual Conference is scheduled to be on campus June 2017. Lord willing, by then we will have the opportunity to see what God has provided.







Word of God in its incarnate, proclaimed and scriptural forms, and we apply it to our lives, decisions, communication, and relationships.

History

The vision of LBT developed out of the challenge encountered by missionaries teaching God's Word in Nigeria during the early 1960s. In areas where one language was predominant, work progressed well. However, missionaries were having a more difficult time with other lesser-known languages. Missionary Rev. Morris Watkins recognized that it was almost impossible to reach people's hearts without Scripture in their own language, and he received training while on furlough in the U.S. The Watkins family returned to Nigeria, excited by the prospect of reaching people who would not otherwise hear the gospel. Not long after they arrived, a serious illness struck the family, taking the life of 2-yearold Mary Ann. Two of the other Watkins children were also severely ill. Under doctor's orders, the family left Nigeria.

Watkins and his wife, Lois, brought their family back to the United States, settling in Southern California, still feeling the passion to reach the lost with God's Word. The knowledge of the spiritual needs of Nigerians, coupled with the fact that so few Lutherans were aware of these needs, prompted conversations of a new Bible translation organization for Lutherans. The dream materialized in North Hollywood, Calif., on May 13, 1964, as Messengers of Christ, Lutheran Bible Translators, was formed. Watkins was asked to serve as executive director.

Fields

Liberia, West Africa, became LBT's first field, and missionaries were sent in 1969. Survey trips showed that languages overlapped into other countries such as Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. Plans began for expansion, and in 1974, a field opened in Sierra Leone. Project and missionary numbers grew throughout the 1970s and 1980s. There were setbacks over the years, as unrest and warfare caused evacuations from Liberia and Sierra Leone, but there were also many victories.

Today, LBT serves on five continents with more than 50 different language groups. We have work in Asian countries,



Photo by Ruthie Wagner

BIBLE TRANSLATION

BY JOSH AND RUTHIE WAGNER

Australia, Botswana, Cameroon, Canada, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Mexico, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, Zambia, and the United States. Our missionaries are from Australia, Canada, and the U.S. By God's grace, LBT has helped publish two complete Bibles (Old and New Testaments) and 38 New Testaments.

Most of our missionaries, serving in advisory roles, train and assist national translators and literacy workers. Others serve in support roles, such as mission coordinator or computer specialist. This year, LBT moved its headquarters from Aurora, Ill., to Concordia, Mo.

AFLC Missionaries on Loan to LBT

For the first time since 1997, LBT missionaries returned to live and serve in Sierra Leone. We were sent in November 2013 as AFLC missionaries on loan to LBT. Just 9 months into our first three-year term, Ebola ravaged the country (along with neighboring Liberia and Guinea), and we were evacuated with our 2-year-old and newborn sons. We have been working remotely from Minnesota with LBT and the Themne

Translation Project, waiting for the Ebola outbreak to be controlled and for the birth of our third son in December. We plan to return to Sierra Leone in March 2016.

The Wagners live in Richfield, Minn., as they wait to return to Sierra Leone. Ruthie is a 2005 AFLBS graduate.



To learn more about LBT, consider reading a blog series on LBT core values and perspectives of missionaries, including one on Cultural Sensitivity by Ruthie Wagner. LBT's core values are God's Word, Innovation, Professionalism, Dialogue, Cultural Sensitivity, and Fiscal Responsibility.

http://us.lbt.org/category/core-values/

THE PRIVILEGE OF SHARING

BY PASTOR DEL PALMER

ifty years ago, in 1965, Alvin and Frances Grothe started mission work in Brazil. Their service there was short and came to a tragic end. Frances became seriously ill in 1967 and they had to leave Brazil. She died the next year.

In the few short years that they served, Alvin built the Lar Paraná church, both the congregation and the building. The Lar Paraná congregation has been thriving since that time, although the building has been modified several times to meet the needs of the growing church.

On Wednesday, Sept. 2, 2015, a fire broke out at the church. It started in the ceiling of the sanctuary and spread to the roof. The church would have been completely destroyed, but neighbors saved the building by using their garden hoses to control the fire until the fire department arrived.

When the news of the disaster spread, members of the Brazilian Free Lutheran churches rallied to the cause of their sister congregation. They prayed and took up offerings to help them repair the church. Their actions supporting each other is an answer to our prayers and goals. It shows that they are a mature church. We have a goal that each of our ministries become mature enough to look to God and each other for support and help, rather than AFLC World Missions.

The Sunday following the fire, the churches in Iguaçu Falls stepped up and took an offering for their brothers and sisters at the Lar Paraná church. The next day, Monday, the city of Iguaçu Falls was pelted with softball-sized hail destroying 60,000 homes. One of our churches was destroyed, as well. The destruction was so widespread that building materials were impossible to find. Again, the churches rallied to help each other. Our church in the city of Maringá sent substantial offerings to help the Lar Paraná church. The Curitiba churches loaded up trucks with building materials and men and drove across Brazil to help in Iguaçu Falls.



The construction work is not yet completed, but the response from these congregations reminds us of the New Testament Church. During Paul's missionary journeys, the new congregations were told of the famine in Jerusalem. They were so eager to give that Titus was dispatched to collect and deliver the offering to those living in Jerusalem.

"Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord's people. And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us" (II Corinthians 8:1-7).

Only the gospel of Christ can em-

power this type of giving. It brings great joy to those on the receiving end as they see God supplying their needs through their brothers and sisters. We rejoice also as we observe the maturity of the ministries in Brazil.

Maybe God has laid on your heart the desire to help with these disasters. There are still a few things that need to be done. If so, you can send a gift to the AFLC World Missions office and we'll make sure they receive it to rebuild.

Palmer, Shakopee, Minn., is the director of AFLC World Missions.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Pastor George Lautner has accepted a call to serve the Larimore Parish of Living Faith Free Lutheran and Middle Grove Lutheran, Larimore, N.D. Lautner currently serves Abiding Word Lutheran, Deshler, Neb.

Pastor Perry Bauer, who served Redeemer Free Lutheran, Canton, S.D., for several years, resigned effective Nov. 1, and has moved to Seward, Alaska, where he will be a counselor at a drug and alcohol treatment center.

Pastor Terry Krueger has resigned as pastor of missions and outreach at Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn.

Several congregations have submitted forms to close and will be removed from the congregational roster. Congregations that have closed are:

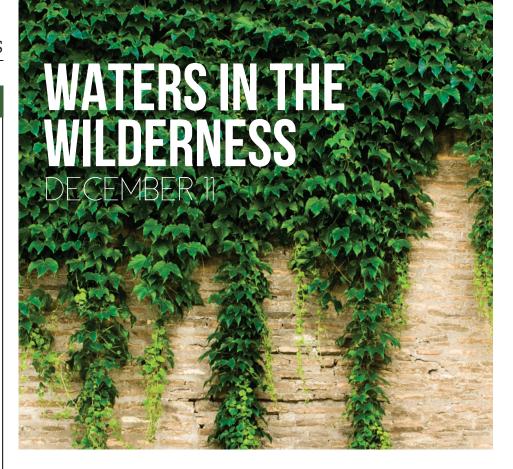
- Trinity Lutheran, Bastrop, Texas
- Living Word Lutheran, Windom, Minn. Congregations that are closing at the end of December 2015 include:
 - Faith Lutheran, Ottawa, Ill.
 - · Grace Lutheran, Buckley, Wash.
 - Maranatha Free Lutheran, Spring Lake Park, Minn.

Correction: Pastor Connely Dyrud is not serving as interim pastor at Zion Lutheran, Silverhill, Ala. Pastor John Sterling will continue to serve the congregation.



Hjermstad installed at St. Paul's

Pastor Micah Hjermstad was installed Sept. 12 at St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., with Pastor Terry Olson, assistant to the AFLC president, officiating. Pictured, from left, are Jim Strom, Tim Nadgwick, Kevin Olson, Pastor Micah Hjermstad, Pastor Terry Olson, Ivar Berge, Jeremy Larson, and Mike Ward.



"Here moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (I Corinthians 4:12).



he word steward means a person in charge of another's affairs, property, finances, and the like. Every Christian believer is a steward, accountable to God. But the text before us today speaks specifically to ministers and teachers of the Word. Christian ministers are givers and administrators of God's truths. They must, therefore, give an account, not to men, but

to God. The faithful steward goes where he is called or sent and gives to others what has been given to him. Faithfulness to his Master is required of him.

He is responsible to God for the giving of the Means of Grace: Word and sacraments, the means through which the Holy Spirit reveals to us and gives us Christ. This entails proclaiming the gospel that Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord, is fallen man's only Savior from sin and Giver of life, righteousness, holiness, power, wisdom, peace, joy, victory, and hope for time and eternity.

Faithful stewardship includes the rebuking of sins, calling sinners to repentance, and searching for the lost lambs and sheep near and far. It means faithfulness in prayer for all God's children and all who are spiritually lost. It means praying for all who bear office in church and state. Faithful stewardship means active participation in and giving liberally to missions—home and abroad. It means being a servant of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. What a privilege!

Pastor Amos Dyrud, now deceased, was the dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary from 1971 to 1981, and acting dean of AFLBS from 1975 to 1976.

Waters in the Wilderness is a daily devotional published by the AFLC Board of Parish Education in 1971 with Dr. Iver Olson, editor. All 365 meditations were contributed by AFLC members from many walks of life. "Here, they offer each a glass of cool and refreshing water each day to thirsting souls," wrote Olson in the preface. Reprinted by permission. The volume is out of print.

lowa congregation celebrates 125 years

embers of Stavanger Free Lutheran Church, Garden City, Iowa, celebrated the congregation's 125th anniversary on Oct. 18. The day of events to mark the anniversary was organized around the theme "Yesterday, Today and Eternity," based on Hebrews 13:8, which reminds us that the message and person of Jesus Christ never change.

The celebration included regular Sunday worship, a dinner, a hymn sing, a dedication service of the new facilities, and a pie and ice cream social. Family and friends of Stavanger from surrounding areas were encouraged to join the celebration.

The dedication service marked the completion of a newly constructed addition which adds significantly to the church's main-level area, featuring additional sanctuary seating, an additional south entrance, six classrooms, a library/study room, new bathrooms, a pastor's office, entry way expansion and fellowship hall expansion.

The Oct. 18 celebration



Members of Stavanger Free Lutheran, Garden City, Iowa, celebrated the congregation's 125th anniversary, and also dedicated an addition to the church facilities on Oct. 18.

concluded the anniversaryrelated events held over the last few months, which included messages from three former pastors and a Heritage Sunday, held Oct. 11. Stavanger Free Lutheran, a member of the AFLC, was founded in 1890 as Stavanger Evangelical Norwegian Lutheran Free Congregation. The church spent most of its years in parish agreements with other area churches, but has enjoyed its own full-time pastor since 1998. Pastor Earl Korhonen has served the congregation since 2005.

OCTOBER MEMORIALS

All Departments Andy Nelson

Ambassador Institute Andy Nelson

Evangelism

Paul Wentzel Pastor Harvey Jackson

World Missions

Judith Wold Ray Pearson Pastor Harvey Jackson Nels Ellertson **Parish Education**

Judith Wold Andy Nelson

General Fund

Phyllis Klemme Andy Nelson

Home Missions

Pastor Harvey Jackson Steve Moen Andy Nelson

AFLC BENEVOLENCES	January	1-October	31, 2015

FUND	REC'D IN OCTOBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$27,516	\$286,256	\$280,244
Evangelism	10,566	114,726	115,977
Youth Ministries	9,951	92,229	107,187
Parish Education	16,914	121,868	110,108
Seminary	24,810	226,330	225,363
Bible School	33,892	441,505	401,869
Home Missions	54,953	387,452	400,569
World Missions	57,310	373,069	392,524
Personal Support	58,987	466,613	370,583
TOTALS	\$294,900	\$2,510,048	\$2,404,425

Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.

THE SONGS OF CHRISTMAS

t's difficult to think of Christmas without some of the songs of season coming to mind, isn't it? We may bring out our favorite CDs at the beginning of Advent, and listen to them over and over, sometimes singing along. There are Sunday school programs to attend, with music always at the very heart of them. And here on campus our AFLC Schools Christmas concerts are a special highlight, drawing family and friends from the Twin Cities as well as from many miles away. There's even

a unique word in our vocabulary: carol, a

religious song of praise and joy, especially sung at Christmas.



Pastor Robert Lee

Did the angels sing? Apparently that's a debate in some circles, and an old radio preacher even delivered a message that seemed to suggest we should sing, "Hark, the Herald Angels Said," For the Bible only says

that they "praised" God (Luke 2:13). Yet the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Vol. 1, p. 177) states that the word denotes the joyful praise of God expressed in doxology, hymn, or prayer. The tradition is strong, dating back to the earliest years of the Christian faith, and that's quite persuasive. So let's leave it alone and keep singing *Angels We Have Heard on High, Angels from the Realm of Glory, It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* and others, without feeling that we must do some editing.

What are your Christmas favorites? Some of the heritage hymns may come to mind, perhaps with a verse or two sung in the language of our ancestors. Those of German background probably sang Stille Nacht (Silent Night). Pastor Gene Enderlein tells how his family sang Gott Ist Die Liebe (God Loves Me Dearly) while marching around the Christmas tree. The Swedish congregations probably sang När Juldagsmorgon Glimmar (When Christmas

Morn is Dawning), and the Norwegians sang Jeg er saa glad hver julekveld (I Am So Glad Each Christmas Eve). Our hymnals usually also include an African-American spiritual, Go Tell It on the Mountain, and Infant Holy, Infant Lowly comes to us from a Polish tradition.

The list is growing: Joy to the World, Away in a Manger, O Come All Ye Faithful, O Little Town of Bethlehem, The First Noel, What Child is This, While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night. I was introduced to an old carol, The Happy Christmas Comes Once More, when my home congregation adopted the new "red hymnal," and it has become one of my favorites. There are the ones often sung as solos, such as The Birthday of a King, Gesu Bambino, and O Holy Night (which Dr. Monseth sang year after year during our Christmas Eve services in the campus chapel.) There are the soul-stirring oratorios of Handel's Messiah. Maybe for you some newer Christmas songs come to mind: Mary Did You Know, One Small Child, Emmanuel, Gloria, or Do You Hear What I Hear.

Music is a means to praise, as the songs of Christmas should make abundantly clear. The carols are not mere academic and poetic compositions; they are expressions of the worshiping hearts of the composers. There is an emotional element to our praise, and that is as it should be, for this is how the Maker created us. To deny it in well-meaning attempts to protect and preserve the objective truths of the faith from emotionalism is to make us less than human. Think of how many times the songs of Christmas mention joy, praise, and even exultation ... "rejoice with heart and soul and voice!"

Music is also a means to teach, as was noted in last month's editorial. At the core of most false teachings is an incorrect answer to the question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" This was the main issue in the controver-

sies of the early church, resulting in the creeds that we confess today, expressing our Christology (teaching about Christ) in such careful detail. This is also the main issue with the current false cults.

So what do the Christmas carols teach us? Here is a sample:

Jesus is Lord! Immanuel!
Incarnate Deity!
Jesus, fully God and fully man, is the virgin-born Son of God!
Jesus is the Christ, the Lord of Glory, who came to be our Savior!

And here is an assignment: Please take your hymnal, dear reader, and locate references to the above teachings in our Christmas songs. You should have no difficulty in finding many of them. Then read

The carols are not mere academic and poetic compositions; they are expressions of the worshiping hearts of the composers.

the results of your search, perhaps looking at some of the familiar carols in a new light, and finally, turn your studies into worshipful praise. "O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!"

Warm wishes to each reader of *The Lutheran Ambassador* for a wonderful Christmas season!

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd. Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

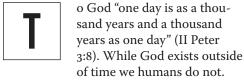
Periodicals

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

something to share

IT'S ABOUT TIME

BY JOAN CULLER



In fact, I have spent a great deal of my life thinking about time. I bet you have, too.

As a child, and even a teenager, I felt I had "all the time in the world." When I grew up, married, had children and a career, there weren't "enough hours in the day" to finish all the tasks that needed to be done. Eventually the children grew up, my parents grew old, jobs changed and "time marched on." A few months ago I turned 65, an age at which I am, at least according to government standards, officially old. Suddenly I realize that "time is short."

I find myself wondering, "What things do I most want to do or accomplish in the time I have left?" Time has become a limited and precious commodity and I must decide how to "spend" it.

In actuality, the Bible tells me that my time on earth has always been brief—"Man

is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow," says the Psalmist (144:4). This means every one of us, regardless of our age, should have a sense of urgency about time and how to use it. We must "work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work" (John 9:4).

Scripture gives us a number of clear instructions about how to do this:

• Be Grateful.

We have no control over the length of our lives (Luke 2:25), so every day is a gift. The Book of Ecclesiastes reminds us that God "has made everything beautiful in its time" (3:11) and "everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil" (3:13). This means we should take pleasure in daily life and give thanks to God for the small and large blessings of each day.

• Be Wise.

"Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:12). In Proverbs, the wise person is described as one who fears the Lord and shuns evil (14:16), is humble (12:15) and wins souls (11:30).

Be Ready.

We should be ready to witness: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have" (I Peter 3:15). We should "be ready to do whatever is good" (Titus 3:1). We should be ready for Christ to come again for "you do not know on what day your Lord will come" (Matthew 24:42)

• Be Trusting.

This is a crucial element in how Christians should approach time. We cannot control time but we know the One who does. He sent Jesus to save us at "the right time" (Romans 5:6). Can't we trust Him with the events of our lives, as well? As a Christian, I can say along with David, "My times are in your hands" (Psalm 31:15a).

Culler is a member of St. Paul's Evangelical Free Lutheran, Leitersburg, Md.