

THE LUTHERAN 

DECEMBER 2011

# AMBASSADOR



SEASON  
OF  
ADVENT

# A heart

BY KAYLA PAIGE

I hate God! If He's even real, His plan is stupid!" Shocked by this vehemence, I glanced at the young atheist speaking, wondering if he realized how arrogant his words sounded. Apparently, the truth of the universe only depended on what he could measure with his mind—if he decided to accept and appreciate it.

Why such a passionate hatred? We were discussing the necessity of the cross. This college student thought that God could just excuse sin without doing something as masochistic as sending Himself to suffer and die. To him the cross and the blood shed there were foolishness—the foolish plan of a violent, nonexistent God.

Every week, atheists and Christians at Madison's local college meet to debate. Usually we're a calm, respectful group, but that day the rage could not be contained. Rarely have I seen Psalm 10:4 demonstrated so clearly: "In the pride of his face, the wicked does not seek Him; all his thoughts are, 'There is no God.'"

I wouldn't naturally apply those words to myself. Yet when preparing to share my testimony recently, I began to realize the immensity of my past pride. Back in that period of silent rebellion, I pushed God away to avoid owing Him anything. I boasted to myself about my grasp of the Scriptures and held in contempt those who knew less biblical trivia. Once I laughed aloud during church, thinking ahead to how Israel would break their promise to follow the Lord. They were going to fail soon, I knew.

Of course, I wasn't like that. While seemingly religious, I lived



# of flesh

in the most practical sense as if God Almighty did not exist. So did the praying Pharisee who thanked the Lord he was not like other men—assuming that God must accept him because of his moral behavior and right doctrine (Luke 18:11). Similarly, the lukewarm church of Laodicea thought, "I need nothing," not knowing that they were desperately "wretched,

pitiable, poor, blind, and naked" (Revelation 3:17).

Yet "those who walk in pride He is able to humble" (Daniel 4:37). I am no longer the same Kayla Paige who lifted herself above the LORD and His people. God has torn out that heart of stone and given a heart of flesh in its place (Ezekiel 36:26). Now pride gives way to thankful humility and childlike trust: "O LORD, my heart is not lifted up; my eyes are not raised too high; I do not occupy myself with things too great and too marvelous for me. But I have calmed and quieted my soul, like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child is my soul within me" (Psalm 131:1-2). The LORD of the universe need not submit His plan for my approval or reveal all mysteries. I rest in Him, knowing that His ways are higher than mine.

Although I still battle smugness, I seek His glory. If not for the grace of God, I would still be living in the pride of my face; in His grace, God can transform even the heart of that young atheist. Let's pray that He does.

*Paige recently finished serving as an AFLC Home Missions parish builder at Good Shepherd Free Lutheran, Madison, S.D.*

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Editor Pastor Robert L. Lee  
rlee@aflc.org

Managing Editor Ruth Gunderson  
ruthg@aflc.org

Editorial Board Oryen Benrud  
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To seek and to save! That was the message wrapped up in the miracle of the manger. That was the mission that lay out from Bethlehem's rude nursery to the ruder cross lifted on Golgotha.

—Paul S. Rees

We who give ear to the voice of John, we who follow the pointing finger of John, that great Advent preacher, can never take Christ for granted, can never grow casual about Him and His mercy. Nor can we who have heard the Baptist's Advent cry ever think of repentance as a placid, pious exercise, a sort of routine religious daily dozen. It is the death of the old man and the creation of the new man as God's own.

—Martin H. Franzmann

We know what it is to want to know. But when we get to the end of knowing, let us stop. Let us draw near to the manger child, with reverence, with awe; let us worship, let us adore; and, perchance, we shall get more knowledge, more truth than we shall by asking too many questions.

—R.E. Golladay

The immense step from the Babe of Bethlehem to the living, reigning triumphant Lord Jesus, returning to earth for His own people—that is the glorious truth proclaimed throughout Scripture. As the bells ring out the joys of Christmas, may we also be alert for the final trumpet that will announce His return, when we shall always be with Him.

—Alan Redpath







# ADVENT

A HOLY SEASON OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, A PERIOD OF EXPECTANT WAITING AND PREPARATION FOR THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

Advent is the Latin word for “coming” and contains a dual reminder of the original waiting done by the Hebrews for the birth of the Messiah, as well as the waiting of the Christian Church today for the second coming of Christ, promised in God’s Word.

This waiting began way back in Genesis after the fall of Adam and Eve when the Lord promised to send a Savior who would “bruise” Satan’s head and who, in return, would be “bruised” on His heel by Satan (Genesis 3:15).

God sent prophet after prophet to call the people to repentance. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, Micah, Amos, and Malachi cried out: He is coming! Hear this! Prepare! Turn back! Your King is coming! A New Testament voice cries also: Prepare the way! Repent and be saved! Behold the Lamb of God!

In anticipation we prepare our hearts for the celebration of the birth of Jesus; in anticipation and hope we look for and prepare our hearts for His return in victory to gather His own to Himself.





# PROPHECY

By Pastor Sam Wellumson



When the God, Who created time, speaks into time, weird things happen—imagine that.

Take Hosea 11:1 for example, “When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son.” Speaking to Hosea, God “remembers” what happened some 700 years earlier. Those words project into the future as Joseph is instructed to bring Jesus back to Israel (Matthew 2:15). The true children of Abraham, believers, are “called out of Egypt” and slavery (John 8:34-36).

A prophet’s job is to speak on behalf of someone else (Exodus 4:14-17; 7:1). God’s prophet receives the Word of God in his mouth (Jeremiah 1:9) and speaks that word from God to the people (Deuteronomy 18:22). God’s Word points to and is fulfilled in Christ (John 5:39), and, therefore, relevant for all believers spanning the millennia (Isaiah 40:8).

God’s Word is effective—past, present, future.

God works through the prophet. Hosea 12:13 says, “By a prophet the Lord brought Israel up from Egypt, and by a prophet he was guarded.”

By Moses, the Lord delivered Israel from slavery. As Moses appeared before Pharaoh, God made Moses “like God” (Exodus 7:1). The words God spoke, the signs God worked, and the glory God

revealed through His servant Moses delivered Israel from bondage.

By a prophet Israel was guarded, kept, protected. Moses, Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, etc., all guarded Israel, fulfilling their divinely appointed work.

Even with this gracious deliverance and protection, the people rebelled against God. In Jeremiah 7:25-28, God “persistently” sent the prophets, but Israel “stiffened their neck” and did not listen. God puts words in Jeremiah’s mouth, knowing “they will not listen to you.”

Persistently God’s Word was rejected. Stiffened necks became more unyielding. They should have known better.

Through Moses, God told the people to be looking for the Prophet, Christ. Deuteronomy 18:15, 18b-19 says, “The Lord

your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to Him you shall listen ... And I will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And whoever will not listen to My words that He shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.”

The Word, Jesus Christ the Son of God, is that Prophet. Christ spoke the prophetic Word of God, which declares the forgiveness of your sins. II Peter 1:19 says, “And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

The dark days surrounding Christmas are a good time to see the Lamp of forgiveness. While the false prophets—those ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15)—prowl, see the fulfillment of all the prophets in Christ. Hear God’s Word declare, “You are forgiven.”

Luther sums up what the prophets say to us. “For the Son has come, and all the promises have been fulfilled. We hear the Son Himself; we have the sacraments and absolution; and day and night the Gospel proclaims to us: ‘You are holy. You are holy. Your sins have been forgiven you. You are blessed, etc.’” (*Luther’s Works*, vol. 5, p. 256).

This Advent season, look

back at the prophecies of Scripture. Hear the oracles spoken thousands of years ago, and see their fulfillment on the Cross.

God placed His words into the mouths of the prophets. And now you receive the Word, body and blood in your mouth in the bread and wine “for the forgiveness of sins.” Thank and praise God as you look forward to the coming promise.

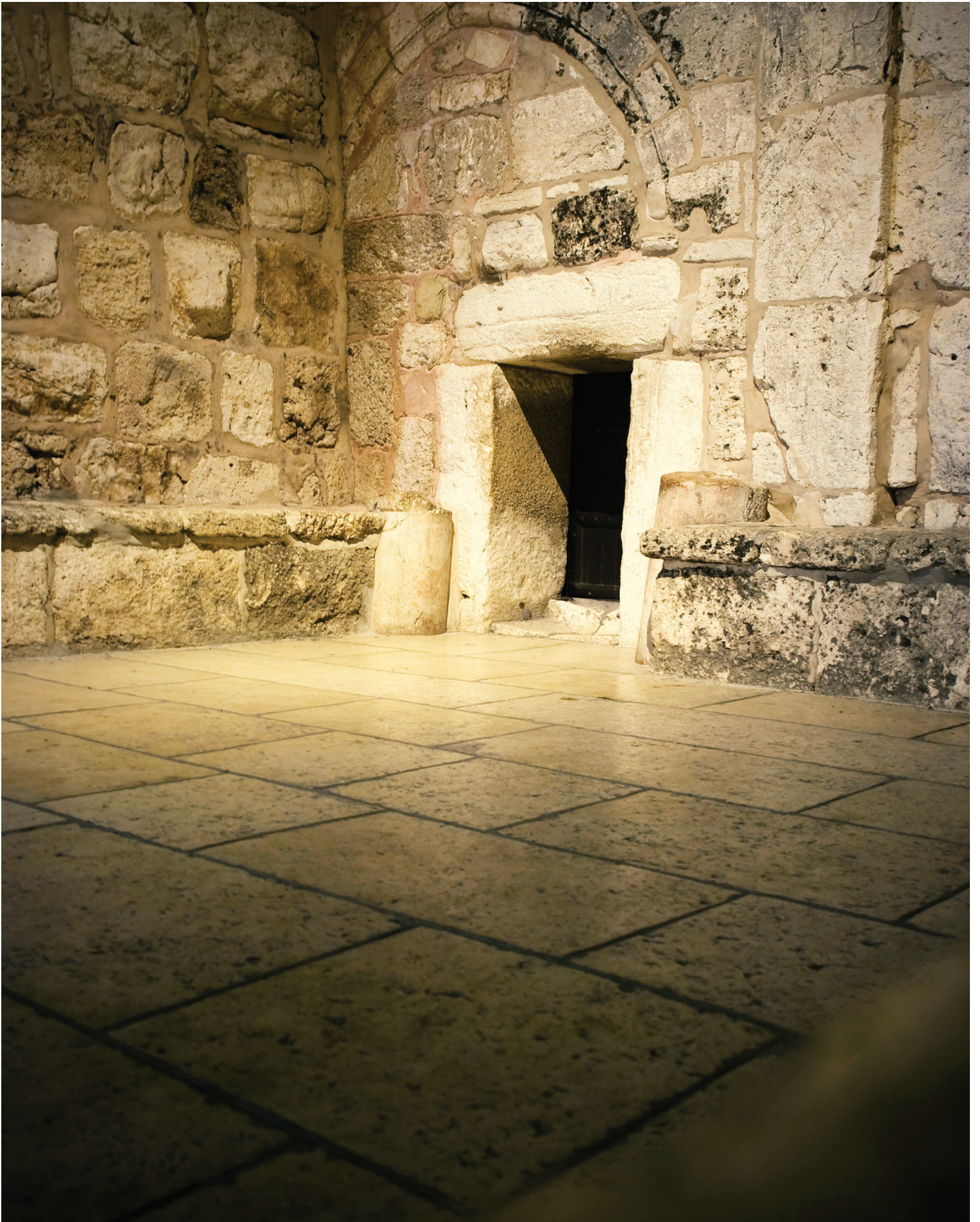
“And he said to me, ‘These words are trustworthy and true. And the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, has sent his angel to show His servants what must soon take place.’ ‘And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book’” (Revelation 22: 6-7).

Keep the words of prophecy; they declare, “You are God’s child.” Hear these words—spoken nearly three millennia ago, fulfilled in Christ, valid for you today, carrying you to eternity:

“And as for Me, this is My covenant with them,” says the Lord: ‘My Spirit that is upon you, and My words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouth of your offspring, or out of the mouth of your children’s offspring,’ says the Lord, ‘from this time forth and forevermore’” (Isaiah 59:21).

*Wellumson serves Christ the King Free Lutheran, East Grand Forks, N.D.*







# BETHLEHEM

By Karen Floan

B

ut as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from

long ago, from the days of eternity" (Micah 5:2).

O LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM  
HOW STILL WE SEE THEE LIE.

As we step off our bus into Manger Square in the center of Bethlehem, an eerie wail greets us from across the street. The *adhan*, a Muslim call to worship, blares over the minaret tower as it is broadcasted through a loudspeaker above the Mosque of Omar. The noise makes it impossible for our guide to begin his presentation. Our tour group waits anxiously for the sing-song call to be finished, which has somewhat overshadowed our excitement of seeing Jesus' birthplace. Together we stare at the mosque, noticing the crescent-shaped symbol on top as the summoning prayer continues. Finally the call to *Salah* is done, our guide sighs with relief and begins his explanation of our visit to the Nativity site.

*Jesus, I am so glad you promise to be with us wherever we are.*

ABOVE THY DEEP AND  
DREAMLESS SLEEP  
THE SILENT STARS GO BY.

Looking around the plaza

it is hard not to notice the huge Christmas tree decorated with stars, red bulbs, and ribbons. It appears out of place in contrast to the Mosque across the plaza and the call to worship we just heard. Our guide explains that this holy area, near the Church of the Nativity, has been fought over by many throughout the centuries. Currently the city of Bethlehem is governed by the Palestinian National Authority and is home to a Muslim majority, but also to a good number of Christian Palestinians.

*Jesus, I am struck with the thought that there are so many people in this city who are in a deep spiritual sleep, unaware of the great gift God gave to all mankind right in this place.*

YET IN THY DARK STREETS SHINETH THE EVERLASTING LIGHT.

Waiting in the square off Manger Street to get a glimpse of where baby Jesus was born, our guide explains that Bethlehem is located just five miles from Jerusalem, and also has significance as being the burial place of Rachel, the home of Ruth and Boaz and the birth-

place of King David. To enter the Church of the Nativity our guide warns that we will need to stoop low to pass through the Door of Humility, since it is only four feet in height. Possibly this was constructed by Muslims to remind Christians to bow low when entering, or perhaps it was to prevent others from storming the church on horseback.

We leave the bright daylight of Manger Square behind as we enter. Hundreds of gilded ornaments greet our eyes as they hang from the ceiling with many chandeliers. Even with such ornaments hanging in the church, it looks dark and feels cold. There is much to see, but the Grotto of the Nativity, a rectangular cavern beneath the church, is the focal point of the church and marks the cave where tradition says Jesus was born. Several individuals light Bethlehem candles in preparation for visiting the holy site. We wait again for our turn go down the stairway of the grotto into the manger cave.

*Jesus, your name is life and you are a light to the nations; You promise that if Your name is lifted up You will draw all men unto You.*

THE HOPES AND FEARS OF ALL  
THE YEARS ARE MET IN THEE  
TONIGHT.

Entering the cave, we find it small and dark with two main floor markers. One marks the manger site and the other

Jesus' birthplace. The ceiling is arched with metal sheeting, which appears tarnished and old. Pictures adorn the walls of various saints, and multiple ornaments hang from the ceiling. Individual silver and gold chandeliers hang a few feet above the Altar of the Nativity, marking the spot where tradition says Jesus was born. On the marble flooring a gilded silver star is set into the floor. In it is an opening where pilgrims can place their hands through and touch the exact spot of Jesus' birthplace. I stoop down and place my hand in the dark hole, and feel the cold rock. It's hard to grasp that this could be the spot of Jesus' birth. Several nuns are visibly praying as we quietly view the stable. Everyone senses this is a reverent moment.

*Jesus, I am awestruck by your love for me, and how you were willing to be born here, and suffer and die for me. Jesus, help me live for you and be ready for your return.*

*Floan, from Plymouth, Minn., and her daughter, Leah, toured Jordan and Israel in January with Dr. Oliver Blosser, a guest lecturer at AFLTS. (Pastor Wayne and Solveig Hjermstad, Bruce, S.D., were also on the same tour.)*

ABIDING WATCHING SEEING

## SHEPHERDS

HEARING TELLING LIGHT GLORIFYING

By Clara Gunderson

C

oaba Farm, high in the Andes mountains of Bolivia, was our home for several years. It doesn't exist anymore as a mission station. We knew it as a working farm with a medical dispensary, a Bible institute and an elementary school, as well as its primary function, that of reaching the neighboring communities with the gospel. The land was good for growing corn and wheat; honey production was of a high quality and satisfied many a sweet tooth. A grinding wheel was kept busy at harvest time, grinding wheat for the mission as well as for local farmers.

The mission employed a shepherd to care for its flock of sheep. Manuel was a family man. Each time we hiked up the mountain to the village of Chejji for church services or visiting, we'd pass his house, which was set off by itself. Perhaps it was because Manuel and his family were "outsiders" in the sense that they weren't from Chejji proper, so he didn't have a sense of loyalty to his employers. Consequently, he was very adept at keeping the flock at about 90 sheep, the amount he was willing to handle in his shortsighted ways.

Our house and the Bible

institute building were at the opposite end of the property from the farm house—not far, but out of view of the workers there. Across the road from us was a large alfalfa field. More than one time someone would have to run and get help because the sheep had strayed into the alfalfa without Manuel's dull eye observing them. Eating the lush green plant caused the animals to bloat, and they didn't know when to stop. In time it became an intolerable situation. The mission paid Manuel the last pesos he'd earn as a shepherd, and he moved to the city, an unsuccessful, trying experi-

ence on both sides.

Well, that's the unhappy story of one shepherd. Meanwhile, back in the hills surrounding Bethlehem, Luke tells us about some shepherds whose response as faithful workers earned them, later in years, a candle named in their honor. The third Sunday in Advent we light the shepherds' candle, or, in another series, it is called the joy candle. These men went from fear, to curiosity, to wonder, expressed in their praise to God. What an experience they had. Knowing what you know about their trip into Bethlehem and what they

would find, aren't you excited for them?

Like the wise men in the story, these shepherds are not named nor numbered. We have to assume it isn't important. They were "in the fields ... keeping watch over their flocks." Using my imagination, I picture the sheep laying down, huddled close by one another. The sky is dark and a shepherd is walking the perimeter of the flock, staff in hand. Having already counted his sheep to assure himself that not one was missing, he settles himself on a rock where he can observe the furthest lamb safe against its mother, and where he







would be able to see a predator approaching. So he's alert, as are his fellow shepherds nearby ... watching ... watching.

Suddenly, instead of a dark, sneaky predator creeping up to prey on his flock, Luke writes that "an angel of the Lord" stands before them and "the glory of the Lord shown around them." What does the "glory of the Lord" look like? Light! Light! How those men must have needed the assuring words the angel spoke: "Don't be afraid. I've come with good news that will bring joy to you, and to all people." These men, part of the Jewish nation, had,

no doubt, been waiting for this good news—the news that the long-awaited Messiah had come at last.

Standing in the field, suddenly seeing the angel and hearing a "multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God" I, too, would have longed to proclaim with them: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom He is well pleased!"

With the night once more darkened with the disappearance of the angels, curiosity and resolve led the shepherds to find out for themselves the truth, the wonder, of the "things the Lord

has made known to us." Quickly, then, they find their way to the Babe, to Mary and Joseph. Seeing the Child even as the angel had said, they must have been eager to tell those around of their startling experience on the hillside. And now it was the shepherds, as they returned to their flocks, who gave glory and praise to God for this special revelation.

Abiding, watching, hearing, glorifying, telling. These are words to lead us into worship as we light the candle on the third Sunday in Advent. The light that shines forth represents the shepherds and the joy they

were given in the knowledge that their Savior, the Christ, was born. For me, the mention Luke makes that the shepherds "went back" (to their fields, their flocks) is meaningful today as we continue to watch and wait for the return of the Christ. Unlike the uncaring and lazy shepherd on Coaba Farm, the growth of God's flock will not be satisfied until His return, and He Himself, the Good Shepherd, seeks the lost.

*Gunderson, from Cambridge, Minn., is a former missionary to Boliva and Mexico with World Mission Prayer League.*





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# REDEEMING LOVE

By Karyn Ballmann



T

he four candles of Advent bring to mind the concluding thought in I Corinthians 13: "So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

God's promise to send a Savior brought hope to an otherwise despairing world. In choosing to believe and act on that confidence, His people prepared for His coming as an act of faith.

In the Christ Child's birth came the fulfillment of our faith and hope—joy to the world! Love is both the composition and culmination of faith, hope, and joy—perfectly summarized in John 3:16: "God so loved ... He sent His son." Love is the reason for the promise, the substance of our faith, and the cause of our joy.

God intended mankind to dwell in unity with Himself. Adam and Eve tragically betrayed that relationship. Yet God's love remained. And thus commenced a great romance, a fervent pursuing by God for the undeserving bride He so passionately loves. Mankind's adultery created a separation. God promised reconciliation. The Christ Child is the consummation of that plan.

Let's zoom in on the Bridegroom's ardent love for a very unlovable bride. Music swells and the doors at the back of the church open. Light pours through, outlining the silhouette of a young bride. Stepping into the spotlight, she begins her procession. Gasps ripple down the pews. She is clothed, not in a beautiful, white gown, but in a bold and revealing dress. She staggers. Her bright red lips are smudged. Her face is hard, her

eyes dark. Eyes quickly turn, following the white carpet up the aisle to the altar. There awaits her distinguished Bridegroom in His pristine, starched tuxedo. Certainly this isn't the bride He chose. Shockingly, His eager countenance reveals an overwhelming joy. He can't wait to enfold her in an embrace. Why? How? Not Him ... to her—she's revolting! She doesn't deserve such a perfect Bridegroom.

Suddenly she seems to know it, because she looks down at herself and blushes. Her bare feet stop dead in their tracks. Who is she fooling? If she were honest with herself, she hadn't ever loved Him—not really. Hadn't it always been all about her—her wants, needs, and desires? Had she ever done anything for Him? No. She used Him like a chess piece to gain advantages. She refused His gifts and certainly never honored any of His requests of her. She criticized and rebuked Him publicly. Truth be told, she rarely even spent time with Him and certainly didn't delight in it.

She looks up and meet His longing gaze. How could He love faithless-her? Didn't He know? Had she really masked herself that well? His eyes plead with her to come to Him.

Running her fingers down her dress she shakes her head, "He deserves so much better."

The Groom beckons, "Come to me. I know who you are and I want you."

Nothing was hid from His knowledge. He knew. He knew, yet He loved and chose to covenant with her. Unfathomable. Humanity is incapable of this depth of love. Man cannot love such depravity.

Repeatedly in Scripture, Israel is referred to as a woman, a bride, a faithless lover (Jeremiah 3:12). "Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel ..." (vs. 6). The chapter goes on to paint a picture of her unfaithfulness. Leviticus 20:10 details God's consequence for unfaithfulness: "If a man commits adultery ... both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death." The New Testament emphasizes that light cannot dwell with darkness, righteousness with lawlessness, or purity with filth (I Corinthians 6). Christ is light, righteous, and pure; we are dark, lawless, and filthy.

If Israel is a picture of you and me, then we obviously have a problem. We are faithless adulteresses standing before a wise and holy Bridegroom. We are absolutely, without question, unlovable. According to God, we deserve death and no association or unity with purity (God).

In our self-wrought darkness is where the Advent candle of love burns most brightly. "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore have I continued my faithfulness to you" (Jeremiah 31:3). Despite the Church's continued unfaithfulness, He remains faithful.

Remember, God promised

reconciliation. And He delivered in the form of an innocent babe. This is why we rejoice with the shepherds in the fields and why we worship with the wise men. Kneeling at the stable we look in the distance to Calvary's mountain. The Christ Child came to accept the punishment for His bride, strip her of her rags, and clothe her in His robe of righteousness—that she might stand before Him, holy and blameless.

Edward Mote said it so beautifully in the words from the hymn, *The Solid Rock*, "Dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne." Through love, Christ made possible the impossible. Jesus designed a way for His bride to escape her death sentence—"Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you ..." and be united with Him, pure and holy, for all eternity—"... and I will clothe you with pure vestments" (Zechariah 3:4).

Man is incapable of this depth of passionate, forgiving, selfless love. This is God's unfathomable love for His completely defiled, degenerate, reprobate bride—you and me.

This Advent, as you light the fourth candle on your wreath, I pray you will remember the redeeming love of your holy Bridegroom, the inconceivable love of a perfectly pure God to unite Himself with a totally unlovable bride. "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you" (Isaiah 62:5b).

*Ballmann, a member of Word of Truth Lutheran, Glen Rose, Texas, lives in Dallas.*

# CHRIST CHILD

## THE GOOD NEWS COME TO US

By Kurt Hein



hristmas is good news. Christmas is gospel. It is very good news.

According to our natural way of thinking, we gain God's favor through the performance of good works. By my own works I go to God. If I want to know God, I need to reform my sinful lifestyle until I'm good enough for God to accept me. I must go to God.

God says differently. "You did not choose me but I chose you" (John 15:16). When you became a Christian, it was not because you came to God, it was because God came to you. *God* came to you. That is the wonder of the gospel. That is the wonder of Christmas.

In Christmas, God came to us. He came to us in the fullest possible way. God became human. God was born into a barn filled with the pungent smell of livestock. He entered the world naked, helpless, slimy, and cold. Like every other human, He screamed with His lungs. His very first breaths come as

Joseph placed Him on the warm chest of His mother, who was laying in the straw. God shared fully in our humanity.

This is completely unexpected. You would think the creator of the universe, if He were to become human, would at least be born into a royal family. He would be a rich, good-looking prince. He would have every comfort the world could offer. But no, God was born amongst domesticated cattle, born to a poor family without even the comfort of a hotel room. He took his first nap, not in a cradle, but in a manger, the animals' feed trough. It seems

to be beneath the eternal God. Isn't God better than that?

And He didn't come to the rich, the accepted or learned. He came to the poor, the outcasts and uneducated. He came to lowly, dirty shepherds. They worshiped Him.

But the mystery of Christmas runs yet deeper. That little baby on Mary's chest is Immanuel, God with us. His little hands, now flailing around unsuccessfully attempting to grasp the air, will one day be stretched over the rough timber of a Roman cross. Nails will pierce through the tender flesh of His wrists, fixing Him there. This baby's side, heaving in and out as He catches His very first breaths, will be plunged through with a spear. His tiny temple, which deserves a crown of gold, will be planted instead with a crown made from razor sharp thorns.

Yes, God came to you, even though it meant He had to come through the disgusting consequences of your sin. God loves you so much that He would rather die than let you get the punishment you deserve. God

loves you too much to let you get what you want. He knows that what you want leads to hell.

Christmas is the good news of God coming to you. God is still coming to you. God comes to you not in the way that you would expect. But He comes to you in the common and in the ordinary. He comes to you in the Bible, the written Word of God. He comes in simple words scrawled on a page. He comes to you in bread and wine, the food and drink of every Jewish meal. In baptism He comes to you in water, the most plentiful liquid on earth. Christmas happens everyday. *God* comes to you.

He doesn't come to those who have everything they need, receive all the human acclaim and have all the answers. He comes to the poor in spirit. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:3). He comes to those who don't have. He comes to you. Let's worship Him.

*Hein, a middler at AFLTS, is from Austin, Texas.*







# LOOKING BACK

Translation by Pastor Raynard Huglen

**T**he first Christmas Eve I remember clearly and distinctly begins with a sleigh ride to Grandfather and Grandmother's farm in Tune. At the church, Brune the horse turned off the road and went on a single sleigh track over the Tune River. Mother and we five children filled the long sleigh; Grandfather and Father walked alongside on the snow crust. The clang of the sleigh bell and the creaking of the horse collar and sleigh have followed with me down through the years like an echo.

The spruce forest stood dark and gloomy on both sides, but flecked with snow. Light from lonely farms lay like fallen stars among the trees. At the northernmost point of the river Tune, the horse began the long gradual climb up the hills by the Holleby estate, which had sparkling lights in all the windows, and further up to Grandfather's more modest farm.

There stood Grandmother in the door and two unmarried uncles who were the most charming elves when it came to being with children—playing tricks, singing songs, doing magic and playing. ...

We marched around the Christmas tree, singing carol after carol, and every verse in all of them. No one needed any songbook or hymnal; everyone, both younger and older could sing without that. And then we went to find a place around the table, festively set with sweet-smelling rice pudding, sugar

and cinnamon and a large lump of butter. And when the last spoonful of pudding had disappeared, Grandfather took down the old Bible. Slowly and reverently he read the Christmas gospel.

I wasn't very old, and I had my chin on the edge of the table. I saw the profile of the large opened Bible and Grandfather's pale face with his large, white beard. "That's what God must look like," I thought.

Such was Christmas Eve on that old Haugean farm in Tune. The young boy saw God's book and God's face.

Then we sang the song which has been with our family as long as any presently living members can remember. We sang all seven stanzas with meaning—fully, slowly, and distinctly.

I thought I was the first to get up on Christmas morning. I snuck out and ran shivering over the yard to the stable to see if the *nisse* (mythological Norwegian elf) had eaten up his portion of the Christmas porridge. And he had. But I got very frightened when I heard a voice in the stable. Was the *nisse* in there?

I couldn't control my curiosity; the door stood ajar, so holding my breath I peeked in. There in an empty stall next to Brune and the colt was Grandfather on his knees praying. Some years later I realized that I had seen Grandfather's secret prayer chamber that Christmas morning.

*By Harald Stene Dehlin*

**I** will be very old before I forget my childhood Christmases.

In my childhood home, which lay 10-12 kilometers from Grimstad, we were eight children. We had to go out to work as soon as possible, especially my sisters, who got work in homes and stores in Grimstad. At that time travel to town was very poor, and the only possibility for staying in contact with them was by using horses. So we saw them very seldom.

But Christmas Eve, that was the day when Father, Mother and the whole family gathered together. I especially remember one Christmas Eve. It was extraordinarily cold and there was a lot of snow. A neighbor had gone to Grimstad to get my three sisters. There was so much snow that the trip to town and back took much longer than we had reckoned. The five of us younger children, ranging in age from 4 to 11 years, went in and out of the door, steadily one or another, listening on the doorstep for the sleigh bells in the terrible cold. ... Finally, at 9 o'clock in the evening, we heard the sleigh bells, and quickly we crowded around three nearly frozen girls who had come home for Christmas.

Preparations in the country were in themselves an experience we looked forward to all fall—slaughtering, baking, chopping wood—and then at last everyone had to get into the bathtub. Mother warmed up water in a large butchering kettle and emptied it into a

wooden tub in which we were to bathe—the smallest with her help, while the older managed for themselves. This was a lesser high point because it took place on the afternoon of Christmas Eve, after Christmas had already begun.

Mother decorated the Christmas tree in the parlor, while we waited with great anticipation, and then she opened the door to all the glorious splendor of the world.

We went to the Christmas table and tasted everything that had been baked and cooked and pickled and roasted. Afterward, Mother or one of the older girls read the Christmas gospel.

Compared to a later time, to be sure, the things that were under the Christmas tree were very small and insignificant. But they gave us such happiness anyway, which the larger gifts of today scarcely can.

I have often thought about Christmas Eve at home as something we cannot find the equal of today. We cannot duplicate the Christmas mood in a short period of time—the Christmas joy and peace from my childhood home is difficult to bring into our modern, technical society. Nor the happiness Mother must have felt in the midst of all her work when she saw the thankfulness shining in her children's eyes.

*By Toralf Westermoen*

*"Two Men Look Back" was printed originally in Norwegian in Familiens Jul, 1969.*







# REST ALONG THE WEARY ROAD

By Joan Culler

**H**ave you ever read a portion of Scripture and found a certain verse or phrase jumping out at you, striking you in a completely new way? Or listened to a sermon when the pastor said something that seemed meant just for you and your current situation? Or had a hymn run through your mind over and over again?

I think most of us have had that sort of experience, and when we do, we should pay attention. It may be that the Holy Spirit is nudging us to a deeper understanding, encouraging us with a word of comfort, or empowering us to take action. Here's a time when this happened to me.

At our church during the Christmas season we always have a service when members have a chance to call out their favorite carols and the congregation sings a verse or two of each one. As we sang "It Came upon a Midnight Clear" last year, I was suddenly and powerfully struck by the words "rest along the weary road and hear the angels sing." Wow, I thought, that's what Christmas should be about. Nobody can deny that life is a weary road. The Bible tells us that "man ... is few of days and full of trouble" (Job 14:1), and that we can expect to experience trials and suffering (John 16:33). All we have to do is look around our congregation to see people mourning the loss of loved ones, others who have lost their jobs, members in difficult relationships or suffering from illness. Christmas is a time to stop, to rest from all that, to remember the day God broke into our human lives with a precious gift, His own son, Jesus, to die for our sins.

Those of us in church know this. The youngest child can tell you that Christmas is the birthday of baby Jesus, and the most theologically sophisticated use a big word to describe it, the "in-

carnation." But what is Christmas *really* about for most of us? Far too often, Christmas becomes a time of frantic busyness instead of rest. We have gifts to buy and wrap, cookies to bake, cards to send, people to entertain, parties to attend, a home and church to be decorated, more evenings out as we practice special music or a Christmas pageant. We stress over whether our presents, our hospitality and our appearance have met the grade. Maybe we spend

more money than we should. Then when the Christmas Eve service arrives, we're too tired out to really appreciate it. It's just one more task to get through on the way to the conclusion of the season, when we can sigh and say, "Thank goodness I got everything done."

None of the things we normally do around Christmas are bad. Giving of ourselves in various ways, getting together with friends and family, spending some extra time at church, or singing Christmas carols, are all good things, especially if we do them in remembrance and thanks for God's great gift to us. But if, like Martha, we become "anxious and troubled about many things" and miss the "one thing (that is) necessary" (Luke 10:41-42), we've lost out on the gift Christ wanted us to have. Jesus Himself said, "Come to me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). This year I'm going to try to be more like the shepherds. I'll think of Christmas as a time to take a break instead of a time to get a million

things done—a time to leave the worries about my life behind and stop to worship the baby King, a time to rest along the weary road and listen to the angels.

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HIS OWN SON,  
JESUS ...

*Culler is a member of St. Paul's Evangelical Free Lutheran, Hagerstown, Md., served by her husband, Pastor Terry Culler.*





## People and Places

**Pastor Edward Strom**, Ottawa, Illinois, has resigned as pastor of Freedom Lutheran Church, and is moving to Appleton, Wisconsin, to be close to family.

**Pastor Joseph Schultz**, Roy, Wash., and **Pastor John Kjos**, Milaca, Minn., have been removed from the AFLC clergy roster at their own request.

**Mission Lutheran Church**, Swink, Colo., served by Pastor Wayne Josephson, is the newest AFLC congregation, welcomed by members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee at their last meeting.

Correction: **Pastor Ebassa Berhanu** is now serving a Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ congregation. He was incorrectly identified in the October issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*.

## ARC to host Christmas Festival event

The Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis., has planned a Christmas Festival event for Friday and Saturday, Dec. 9-10. Featured during the two-day event will be music and the drama, "The Christmas Boy," which will revisit the true meaning of Christmas through the music of Steve Gamble. Performances will be held at 7 p.m. Dec. 9 and 3 and 7 p.m. Dec. 10.

The Christmas Festival will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. in Dec. 10 and will include a holiday bake sale, an arts and crafts festival, games, hayrides and a Christmas praise concert from 6 to 6:30 p.m.

The ARC will open up housing for those who wish to attend both days. The cost is \$25/person with a maximum of \$100/family. Included in the price is breakfast.

All funds raised through this event will be used to support the ministry of the ARC.

For more information on this event, contact the ARC by e-mail at [arcregistration@centurytel.net](mailto:arcregistration@centurytel.net) or call 800-294-2877, or visit the ARC Web site at [www.arc-aflc.org](http://www.arc-aflc.org).



Back row (from left): Joyce (Hovland) and Todd Erickson, Dave Anderson, JoyAnn (Goodman) and Steve Dahl, Kevin Demsky, Linda (Kjos) Hoffman, Patricia (Swanson) Johnson, and Lori (Crestik) and Terry Blaisdell. Middle row (from left): Darrel Haugen, Kevin Gunderson, Scott Knutson, Paul Sparby, Todd Schierkolk, Steve Hanke, Brent Johnson, Marcus Erickson, and David Nelson. Front row (from left): Vicky (Hill) Johnston, Valerie (Hill) Anderson, Shannon (Olson) Knutson, Sarah (Bergstedt) Sannes, Sarah (Skramstad) Nelson, Kelly (Hanson) Kjos, Kari (Lane) Haugen, Sharon (Hinderaker) Gunderson, and Brenda (Momerak) Erickson.

## AFLBS classes of '87-89 enjoy reunion

On Friday, July 22, the AFLBS classes of 1987-89 gathered together at the Association Retreat Center in Osceola, Wis., for a weekend of reconnecting, reminiscing, and renewing friendships.

With 72 people in attendance, we enjoyed times of fellowship, eating, a competitive softball game, more eating, late night sharing and laughing, still more eating, and singing old songs

around the campfire. The weekend concluded with an awesome time of worship together on Sunday morning before we went our separate ways once again.

God has been faithful, and we look forward to meeting again at future reunions in the years to come.

~By Linda Hoffman  
Abbotsford, Wis.

## Barbara Wentzel remembered

Barbara Wentzel, 66, of Edmore, N.D., the wife of Pastor Craig Wentzel, died Oct. 14, 2011, at home.

Born Sept. 24, 1945, in Fergus Falls, Minn., she was the daughter of Kenneth and Helen (Haugrud) Lein. She grew up in the area of Carlisle, Minn., and attended Hedemarken Lutheran Church. She attended eight years of country school and graduated from Fergus Falls High School in 1963. She worked as a legal secretary in the law offices of Rufer, Hefte, and Pemberton in Fergus Falls for 14 years.

She married Craig Wentzel on July 8, 1978, at Hedemarken Lutheran. They served

parishes in Nunda, S.D., Leeds, N.D., and Edmore and Hampden, N.D. She worked as a seamstress and church secretary.

Surviving are her husband, Pastor Craig Wentzel; two daughters, Abby (Joshua) Nimerfroh, and Faith Wentzel; her father; one brother, Keith (Linda) Lein, one sister, Joyce (Verlyn) Calbak and one granddaughter.

The service was held Oct. 19 at Living Word Free Lutheran, Edmore, N.D., with Pastor Dale Finstrom officiating. A burial service was held Oct. 21 at Hedemarken Lutheran Church Cemetery, rural Carlisle, with Pastor David Jore officiating.

# The Christmas gift

BY GLENN MORK

**H**umanity experienced the precious gift of a child—a child so precious He would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

As I look back on my life and memories of Christmas, I see Christmas programs at church. I dressed up as a shepherd, a king and even as Joseph. I see lots of presents under the tree—even if there was only one just for me. With 10 children on a farmer's income, my parents rarely gave individual gifts; toys meant to be shared were wrapped and marked with several names—my name usually was the last of three. Nevertheless, the anticipation of opening a shared gift filled us with excitement. A gift, even shared, was fun to receive. As fun as it was, it didn't take long for the excitement over the gift to diminish as my older brothers would lay claim to it, announcing first and second dibs.

Now, as a grandfather, I love to tell the story of the child, Jesus, who was born for us. I love to share about a Son who was given to us. Christmas is very different now, but it is still about a shared gift. Our Lord gave us Jesus to be shared—a gift so precious, a gift so costly, one gift for all mankind.

In today's world it may be a foreign concept to give a gift meant to be shared. Yet, I find that in the Democratic Republic of Congo, sharing is a way of life. Sometimes it is the difference between life and death. As the Executive Director of Hope Centers for Children of Africa, I work with orphans in eastern DR Congo. The Congolese teach me much about sharing. They teach me much about being the "hands and feet of Christ." Their sharing of homes and food allows us to minister to 700 orphans. So far the Congolese people have opened their homes to 282 of the orphans. Most of the homes are headed by widows. They can barely put food on the table for themselves, yet they opened their hearts and homes to orphans.

Through the working of the Holy Spirit, we hope to open the hearts of orphans to receive the Gift that is meant to be shared: a gift so precious, a gift so costly, the one gift for all to share.

They may have to wait for their turn at the playground. And they wait in line for their turn to receive the gift of food and vitamins. But this one Gift is available to them now. The gift of salvation, through our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, is a gift to be shared. Yet unlike the gifts I had to share with my brothers—and wait for my turn to use—this is a personal gift for each to receive.

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; ... And his name



shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

What a gift to receive. These children, orphaned in war, can come to know a Wonderful Counselor, a Mighty God, an Everlasting Father and a Prince of Peace.

May you have a truly blessed Christmas by sharing the gift with all mankind in your world.

*Mork, a member of Emmaus Free Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn., is a member of the AFLC World Missions Committee.*



## AFLC memorials: October

### AFLBS

Margaret Weston (3)  
Ruth Claus  
Keith Nash (2)  
Norma Hettervig  
Joyce Rognlie  
Harold Snipstead  
Barb Wentzel

### AFLTS

Margaret Weston  
Ruth Quail  
Barb Wentzel

### Evangelism

Selma Nikunen  
Margaret Weston  
Barb Wentzel

### General Fund

Barb Wentzel

### HIS Fund

Barb Wentzel

### Home Missions

Arnie Kooiman  
Barb Wentzel  
Keith Nash

### Miriam Infant Home

Jim Taylor

### World Missions

Selma Nikunen  
Margaret Weston  
Arnie Kooiman  
Barb Wentzel  
Arnie Anderson

... in honor of

### AFLTS

Pastor Phil Haugen

## ARC plans 2012 camps

The Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis., will host a number of AFLC-wide camps and retreats in 2012.

- **SIDExSIDE** (grades 7 through 12)

Dates: February 3-5; Cost: \$90

- **Sno Daze** (grades 4 through 7)

Dates: February 3-5; Cost: \$90

- **Couple's Retreat**

Dates: February 17-18 (19)\*; Cost: \$130

- **Women's Retreat**

Dates: March 23-25

- **Men's Retreat**

Dates: April 20-21 (22)\*; Cost: \$65

- **Fire Up Youth Camp** (grades 4 through 7)

Dates: June 24-29; Cost: \$190

- **Kids' Camp** (grades 1 through 3)

Dates: June 29-July 1; Cost: \$75

- **Family Camp**

Dates: July 29-Aug. 4; Cost: Family rates apply

- **Classics' Retreat** (55+)

Dates: Sept. 14-16

Cost: \$75/person, \$130/couple

- **Prayer Retreat**

Dates: Nov. 30-Dec. 1 (2)\*; Cost: \$65

\* Denotes the option of an extra night stay with breakfast, which is available for an additional cost.

For more information on this event and future camps, contact the ARC by e-mail at [arcregistration@centurytel.net](mailto:arcregistration@centurytel.net) or call 800-294-2877. You can also visit the ARC Web site at [www.arc-aflc.org](http://www.arc-aflc.org) for more information.

## 2012 Ambassador schedule

Volunteer writers are welcome to contact editors

Below is the 2012 schedule for the *Lutheran Ambassador*. Please be in prayer for each issue. Note the deadlines and special emphasis of each issue. If you have an idea regarding a general article, a certain issue or have an interest in writing, please contact the editors. E-mail us at [ruthg@aflc.org](mailto:ruthg@aflc.org) or call (763) 545-5631.

| ISSUE DATE | DEADLINE     | ISSUE THEME          |
|------------|--------------|----------------------|
| January    | November 21  | I remember ...       |
| February   | December 12  | AFLC Schools         |
| March      | January 23   | Lent/Easter          |
| April      | February 20  | Missions             |
| May        | March 26     | Vision               |
| June       | April 23     | Evangelism           |
| July       | May 21       | Christian Education  |
| August     | June 25      | Conference Review    |
| September  | July 23      | Youth                |
| October    | August 27    | Gifts                |
| November   | September 24 | Reform./Thanksgiving |
| December   | October 22   | Advent/Christmas     |

The editors of *The Lutheran Ambassador* will be placing a strong emphasis on the 50th anniversary of the AFLC throughout 2012, starting off with memories of those who were present in 1962. The AFLC has chosen "Jubilee" as a theme to mark the anniversary.

Please note, information regarding the Annual Conference, scheduled for June 12-15 at Thief River Falls, Minn., will be featured in the May issue, with a deadline of March 26. This includes the conference schedule, board and committee nominees, registration and WMF convention schedule and registration information. The conference registration will also be printed in either the March or April issue. Housing information will be printed as soon as it is available.

### AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Oct. 31, 2011

| FUND             | REC'D IN OCTOBER | TOTAL REC'D TO DATE | PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE |
|------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| General Fund     | \$41,169         | \$256,572           | \$263,237          |
| Evangelism       | 17,132           | 102,716             | 106,699            |
| Youth Ministries | 11,195           | 100,845             | 110,755            |
| Parish Education | 19,823           | 110,380             | 89,425             |
| Seminary         | 27,097           | 184,876             | 168,051            |
| Bible School     | 27,542           | 377,498             | 359,601            |
| Home Missions    | 48,132           | 368,887             | 371,772            |
| World Missions   | 40,016           | 346,956             | 249,250            |
| Personal Support | 38,266           | 319,073             | 293,798            |
| <b>TOTALS</b>    | <b>\$270,373</b> | <b>\$2,167,804</b>  | <b>\$2,012,588</b> |

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

# Missing Christmas

**E**benezer Scrooge thought he missed Christmas. Most of us will probably view a version of Charles Dickens' familiar *A Christmas Carol* during the holiday season and sense the excitement of old Scrooge when he realized that he had not missed Christmas after all.

A visit from supernatural guests is not necessary for us to miss Christmas. This does not mean, of course, that December 25 is suddenly removed from our calendars.

It does not take a chronological miracle for people to lose the potential blessing of the season—as if it had never happened.



Pastor Robert Lee

Congregations can miss the opportunity for outreach that Christmas offers. Many church-wide observers maintain that Christmas Eve, more than Christmas Day, is the number one time of the year for contact with the un-churched. Without a doubt it is a great occasion to reach people and their families who want to connect with God, writes one pastor, and who are looking for an opportunity to do so.

My earliest memories include a very late candlelight service on Christmas Eve at our church in Escanaba, Mich., preceded by a drive around town looking at the holiday lights. Congregations today are more likely to have late afternoon services, allowing families to have the whole evening at home. Determine what's best for your congregation and community, but don't miss the opportunity.

You and I could miss Christmas, too, by crowding our December days with too many commitments and preparations.

There is probably nothing intrinsically wicked about the many projects that claim large portions of our time, but, like Martha, perhaps we need to hear Christ's word to the two sisters: "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, and Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42). What was Mary's choice? To sit at the feet of Jesus.

There is nothing trite about the familiar reminder that Jesus is the reason for the season. The true heart of the holiday is worship, not a chestnuts-roasting-on-an-open-fire type of traditionalism, as precious as some of our treasured customs may have become, nor is it family and friends. God has come to us in the Person of His only Son, God Incarnate ... a miracle that ought to take our breath away ... "things into which angels long to look" (1 Peter 1:12).

There is no doubt that some unnecessary items may have crowded our lives this month. How can you know the difference? Let me suggest this question as a guide: Do your holiday activities fill your heart with the song, "Joy to the World! The Lord is Come!" ... or is it more like the verse "Through days of toil when heart doth fail" (from the hymn *God Will Take Care of You*)? If the latter is true, then you may see some things other than a tree that need to be trimmed, or even terminated.

Now, will I practice what I preach? God grant that it might be so. Best wishes

to all. I pray that none of the readers of *The Lutheran Ambassador* would miss "the joy unspeakable and full of glory" that a real Christmas provides.

## The Advent wreath

Most of our congregations mark the four Sundays before Christmas with the candles of an Advent wreath, a custom that has been practiced for centuries in Lutheran churches. Many households use it as a part of family devotions. Each part

*There is nothing trite about the familiar reminder that Jesus is the reason for the season. The true heart of the holiday is worship.*

has significance: the circle of the wreath stands for life without end; the candles remind us that Jesus is the light of the world; the purple colors of the candles speak of repentance, royalty, and expectation. Some use a pink candle for the fourth Sunday, which signifies joyfulness.

The theme articles in this issue reflect two ways in which the candles may be explained. Some call them the Prophecy, Bethlehem, Shepherds, and Angels candles; others refer to them as Hope, Love, Joy, and Peace. All agree, however, that the center candle is the Christ candle, which is customarily lit on Christmas Eve, declaring that Jesus is the heart and center of our Christmas celebrations. May it truly be so for all of us!



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Periodicals

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*something to share*

# Pursuing oneness in Christ

BY RACHEL SCHIERKOLK

I have developed a rather fervid affinity for the idea of hermitage. I don't recall exactly how it started, but for quite some time, I have thought that a solitary life in the mountains sounded like the ideal existence. Unfortunately, no matter how much I try to deny it, becoming a hermit would be a desperately selfish thing for me to do. I have been rescued from having the noose yanked around my spiritual neck by the very God of very gods—one who 2000 years ago, on a frigid Middle Eastern night, compacted His entire being into a human shell, not just for me but for the world. Salvation is not solely a personal experience, but a communal lifestyle. We rescued ones were meant to be a body—a body that lives and breathes oneness for the sake of the One to whom we owe our lives. How do we pursue a oneness with each other that God desires for us?

Consider what it means to be one in heart. We talk about the need for loving people, each other, and God as a body, but too often our idea of love gets pitifully watered down. Paul praised the believers in Thessalonica because "the love of every one of you all abounds toward each other" (1 Thessalonians 1:3). Love actively and relentlessly seeks opportunities to reflect the God who has captured our hearts to anyone at any time. It gives me goose bumps to ponder how heart-stopping the change would be if this love were being lived to the fullest in each of our individual congregations, and in turn in the universal body.

Now think about the idea of being one in mind. This doesn't mean being in absolute agreement with one another. I Corinthians 2:16b says, "But we have the mind of Christ." Having the mind of Christ has to do with our focus as a body. It means wanting what

He wants—specifically those things He has told us He desires. Think of the possibilities if, together, we made a conscious decision to refuse to let our own individual minds rule and sought, instead, to have Christ's mind as a body.

Finally, a unified body is one in purpose. To be unified in purpose, we have to know our purpose. Often, churches come up with well meaning goals that don't involve the whole congregation in much other than financial contributions. Giving can be a wonderful thing. But the primary goal of the body of Christ is to collectively proclaim the stunning news of God's rescue of the world. "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ..." (Matthew 28:19a). There are no qualifiers here; Jesus was speaking to believers. And it doesn't refer to some day in the future, nor is it fulfilled by a single instance of obedience in the past. It is a lifestyle. What would happen if the body strove to accomplish that purpose with the passion that God intended? If that is God's will, which we know it is, then we have the power from Him to accomplish it. Does that thrill you?

Christmas is a time when we marvel more than ever at God's gift to us of His Son. If we choose, however, to settle back in our customarily isolated spheres of life to think about what a lovely gift it is, without letting that wonder propel us to seek His will, then haven't we missed something? I find the more I strive through God's power for unity, the less I am even able to think about myself. That's a really good thing. May God grant us as His body the strength and the determination to strive to live in unity.

*Schierkolk, a senior at AFLBS, is the daughter of AFLC missionaries to Mexico, Pastor Todd and Barb Schierkolk.*