



THE LUTHERAN WITNESS™

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THE
INVITATION

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Providing Missouri Synod laypeople with stories and information that complement congregational life, foster personal growth in faith, and help interpret the contemporary world from a Lutheran Christian perspective.

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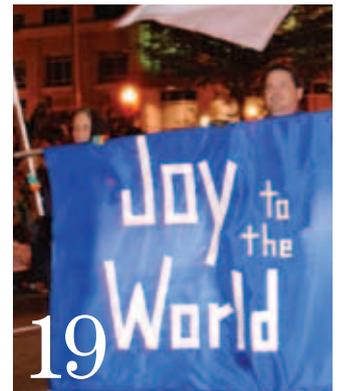
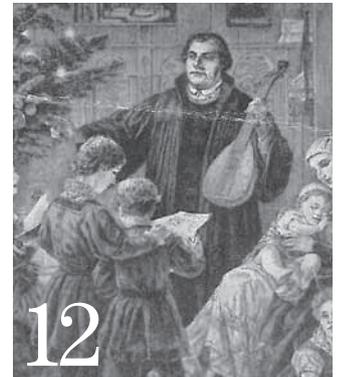
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TO THE READER

By the time you read this, not only Advent but the Christmas season will be in full swing. In the days ahead, many of us will, at one time or another, recall our family traditions and past family celebrations: trimming the tree, tromping through the snow to the children's service on Christmas Eve, the Christmas morning choral concert, exchanging gifts—Christmas Eve or Christmas Day?—alternating between the homes of grandparents and aunts

and uncles for Christmas Day dinner. Yet, at the heart of it all, as so vividly expressed by Luther's famous Christmas hymn, "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come"—the focus of two of our stories this month—is the birth of God's Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. He, as Luther points out, is the cause of our rejoicing, our celebrating, our thankfulness for the eternal life that is ours through Him. "Glory to God" indeed!

From our family here at *The Lutheran Witness*—Carla Dubbelde, Karen Higgins, Vicky Schaeffer, Robert Sexton, Jim Stange, David Strand, and myself—we wish you a Merry Christmas and a blessed and joy-filled New Year.

*James H. Heine, Editor
The Lutheran Witness
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Out of Ashes, *Kindness!*

As I sipped my coffee one morning recently, my thoughts wandered back to a time when we had no cups, no coffee, no chairs to sit on, or even a home. In four hours, we were left with no material possessions except our car and the clothes we were wearing.

It happened on a cold, clear night in January 1969. We were enjoying a choir concert at St. Paul Lutheran Church in St. Joseph, Mo., when a neighbor called the church. We heard the devastating words, "Your home is on fire!"

We drove home in silence, finding comfort in the words of Matt. 28:20: "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

When we arrived, we could do nothing except watch dense smoke spiral from the windows like great black tidal waves as flames destroyed our home. Only the gushing water from the fire hoses and the crackling of ice broke the night's silence.

We stayed with friends until we found a house to rent. Sleep was difficult at first, but we were thankful all of us were safe.

Like a young child, we learned to take one step at a time. The insurance adjuster requested an itemized list of the contents of each room. I entered the desolate structure with a pen, pad, and a flashlight (the windows were already boarded up). The first thing I saw was the huge blackened wall clock Norm, my husband, designed for me. The kitchen was easy to itemize. After all, where else had I spent so much time cooking for our family of eight?

I stepped carefully on the ice-covered floors as I shuffled from room to room. When I glanced around, my vision blurred with tears. The much-used blonde sewing machine had changed to a charred grey. Our children's fingers would no longer play the big piano I had named "the monster." As I touched the

girls' clothing, it fell to the floor in charred heaps. The boys' mattresses had soaked up the water like huge sponges. A memory notebook of the children's antics over the years was forever lost, and I knew it would be impossible to retain all the stories in my personal "memory department."

As each day passed, the sunshine of love broke through to warm our hearts. The generosity of relatives and friends unfolded unbelievably. There were dinner invitations, gas fill-ups, gifts of household items and clothing, hair appointments, sewing essentials, shopping sprees, funds from the PTA that had been collected for the school library, one Sunday's church offerings, and donation of time by workers to roof our new home. How blessed we were!

Out of all the kindnesses bestowed upon us, one special moment stands out. A sweet, elderly, frail friend from church presented us with a used coffeepot with two dollars tucked inside.

"This is all I have to give you," she said sadly. What a wonderful gift! It reminded me of Mark 12:42: "A poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a fraction of a penny. Calling His disciples to Him, Jesus said, 'I tell you the truth, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others'" (NIV).

We moved into our new home on our 25th wedding anniversary. A few months later, two sons were discharged from military service. Thankfulness was rooted deep in our hearts.

Out of ashes came kindness—and the love of our heavenly Father through the generosity and concern of His people. We remain thankful today—for all our blessings.

Susan Walter is a member
of St. Paul Lutheran Church, St. Joseph, Mo.



'This is all I have to give you,' she said sadly. What a wonderful gift! It reminded me of Mark 12:42.

LETTERS

A mighty fortress: comfort multiplied

Thank you for the most salubrious article on Luther's hymn, "Ein feste Burg," by Dr. Albert Collver. I view the church as a MASH unit, so I especially relish that particular hymn as care to those whose fortresses have fallen. When your job is gone, when your home is gone, when all things that you so depended upon are gone, where is your fortress and tower? The Church's foundation is Jesus, and the gates of hell will not prevail. On Him we stand because He stands for and with us.

Many years ago, on a beautiful May day, as I raced 50 miles from my office to the sheriff's department in an adjacent county to comfort a family reeling from the suicide of a child, I turned on my radio. I had listened to my radio before while driving the many miles of my High Plains parish. That day, at that time, on the radio, the otherwise secular drivel was replaced with Bach's rendition of "Ein feste

I want to offer a word of thanks for the article "A Mighty Fortress" by Dr. Albert Collver. How wonderful it was to hear some of the history behind the composition of this great hymn. I was especially intrigued to discover that the hymn was written, not as a battle hymn, but rather as a hymn of comfort for Luther during a time of his life that was marked with great suffering. Is this not what the Reformation was, in its essence, all about? Comfort! The rediscovery of the Gospel by Luther and the Reformers was a rediscovery of the kind and merciful heart of God toward sinners who were and are suffering in a broken world. The article helped to underscore that our remarkable Lutheran heritage is essentially founded in the profound comfort that is ours in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Thanks and great job!

*Rev. Paul Schlueter
St Paul Lutheran Church
Milford Center, Ohio*

personal reflection of what it meant for him growing up, what it meant for the Malagasy Christians who sang it during Lent, and what it can mean for us now in times of trial and testing were well said. Thank you.

*Rev. Derek Roberts
First Lutheran Church and School
Knoxville, Tenn.*

Affirming God's law

We were blessed by President Kieschnick's clear explanation of a biblical stance on homosexuality in his "Our Synod and Recent ELCA Actions" article in the October *Lutheran Witness*.

We have shared this article with church friends confused by headlines about "Lutherans and homosexuals" in the media. It is both a source of "truth telling" and a helpful resource of biblical references.

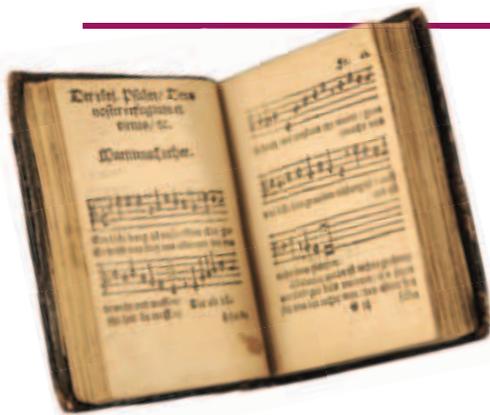
In addition, it was encouraging to know that the 34 churches of the International Lutheran Council agree with the LCMS. President Kieschnick writes that they "unanimously agreed that the practice of homosexuality violates the will of God."

Finally, it is our prayer that everyone will focus on the important injunction in the last three paragraphs, where President Kieschnick reminds us of our "resolve to approach the homosexual with the deepest possible Christian care and concern" and the offer of Christ's forgiveness.

We are blessed to know that the leader in our Synod does not shy away from confronting others in our Lutheran "family" with the truths of sin and grace, and that he reminds us of God's calls to "speak the truth in love" to all who will listen, no matter how unpopular!

*Rev. Tom Krause
Miriam Krause
Overland Park, Kan.*

I was saddened to read in the secular news the ELCA's decision to open their ministry to gay and



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*Rev. Paul Schlueter
Milford Center, Ohio*

Burg." I do not remember the drive, but I do remember the True Fortress, surer than any Bourtonge star fort or Maginot Line, and absolutely unmovable under all attacks. God, indeed, is our Refuge and our Strength, a very Help in all trouble. Ein feste Burg indeed! Thanks be to God.

*Dr. Scott Lemmermann, Pastor
Ascension Lutheran Church
Kansas City, Mo.*

A mighty good article! I enjoyed reading Dr. Albert Collver's "A Mighty Fortress" in the October *Lutheran Witness*. I'm curious: Who doesn't love Luther's battle hymn of the Reformation? I've heard it on TV and at funerals at churches that are not confessing Lutherans. Believe it or not, I even once heard that a Roman Catholic church sang the hymn! Collver's overview of the history behind the hymn and Luther's struggles, as well as his

lesbian pastors. I almost feel ashamed to be called a Lutheran.

It was gratifying to read President Kieschnick's response in the October *Lutheran Witness*. Thank you, President Kieschnick, for your affirmation of the LCMS's position that the Bible condemns homosexual behavior as "inherently sinful." We must not be afraid to call sin what it is.

*Richard E. Schroeder
Las Vegas, Nev.*

I want to thank President Kieschnick for his clear and straightforward response to the ELCA's recent declaration regarding homosexuality. I am grateful to the Lord Jesus Christ and praise His name for our Synod's willingness to follow His Word. Praise the Lord!

*Andrew Cook
Norwood Young America, Minn.*

A song to treasure

I received my copy of the October *Lutheran Witness* today and was skimming through the articles. Seth Long's "Foolish

(continued on page 26)



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Faith, Family, Christmas

'CHRISTMAS

★ A family Christmas tradition offers an opportunity to ponder the amazing miracle of God's grace and rejoice at the birth of His Son.

Already you can hear its whistle, catch a glimpse of its smoke just beyond the bend, above the snow-laden trees. Already there is much anticipation of its noisy arrival. You can feel the excitement. It's the arrival of the Christmas Train, soon to make its annual stop at Christmas Magic Station.

Christmas train? Annual stop? Christmas magic? I should explain.

MAGIC



Year after year when our children were still at home and the time came to decorate our Christmas tree and frost the traditional sugar cookies, it also was time to fill our house with *Christmas Magic*, an album by Fred Waring and the Pennsylvanians. The album likened Christmas to a train loaded with all that we often associate with the season—snow, caroling, exchanging gifts, family gatherings, sleigh rides, bells, decorations, treats—all celebrated with an array of narrations and songs.

Aided by the enhancement of stereo, the sounds of the Christmas Train entered our living room from one side and, after unloading its Christmas freight, departed out the other. As it departed, with whistle blowing and steam engine chugging faster and faster, the narrator's final words, when all else had been said and sung, said it all for our Christmas celebration as a family: "*Christmas is Christ!*"

Christmas Magic was one of our family's favorite holiday treats, played over and over again. And it is still enjoyed over and over again. Several years ago, we provided *Christmas Magic* CDs to our grown-up children for their children to enjoy as they now prepare to celebrate Christmas in their homes.

ALL ABOARD!

The "Christmas Train" never stays around long. In the album, it arrives, unloads, and departs—all in less than an hour. Too often our celebration of Christmas is like that. Each year we anticipate its advent around the proverbial bend and, before long, mark its departure for another year. And it won't be staying long again this year. How important, then, to make the most of its stop at the station!

Unfortunately, it is easy to become preoccupied with all of the other freight that comes with the season. Add to that the many other Grinch-

like goings-on in our lives, and we may never manage to approach the Christmas Train as we should, to take a good look at what it carries, to ponder it in our hearts.

One day when I was a small child, as my father and I crossed the railroad tracks across the street from our house in Shawano, Wis., we were invited by the conductor of a stalled freight train to climb into the caboose for a tour. It was a never-to-be-forgotten experience. In that caboose I remember some pretty rugged conditions for the men who rode the rails.

If we take the time to climb aboard the approaching Christmas Train, it will be memorable also. There we will find ruggedness all right, a rough-hewn stable, a lowly manger, infant Life destined for a rugged cross. But we will also find the Gift that will truly keep on giving, well beyond the final bend in our lives.



Fred Waring and his Pennsylvanians made it possible for our family to climb aboard the Christmas Train each year, to enjoy all of the trappings of the season, but also to have our attention called to that plain but amazing parcel being delivered by the season: “Christmas is Christ!” Fred and company called it *Christmas Magic*, to describe all that the Christmas Train brings with it. But it is far more miracle than magic, the miracle of God’s amazing grace.

BEFORE TRAINS AND CDs

Martin Luther wanted his family to climb aboard the Christmas Train also, except that he and his family predated trains by several centuries. Nor could he rely on the recorded music of others. So he produced and recorded his own “album,” a Christmas hymn complete with the Christmas story’s angel of glad tidings serving as the conductor. The conductor-angel invited Luther’s children and children of all ages to climb aboard, to see for themselves the Christmas miracle, “the joy of all the earth”:

*“From heav’n above to earth I come
To bear good news to every home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
Whereof I now will say and sing:*

*“To you this night is born a child
Of Mary, chosen virgin mild;
This little child of lowly birth
Shall be the joy of all the earth.*

*“This is the Christ, our God Most High,
Who hears your sad and bitter cry;
He will Himself your Savior be
From all your sins to set you free.*

*“He will on you the gifts bestow
Prepared by God for all below,
That in His kingdom, bright and fair,
You may with us His glory share.*

*“These are the signs that you shall mark:
The swaddling clothes and manger dark.
There you will find the infant laid
By whom the heav’ns and earth were made.”*

Taking us on board, our conductor-angel tells us amazing things regarding the Child in the manger: “This is the Christ, our God Most High”! This Child “by whom the heav’ns and earth were made” will “Himself your Savior be!” Still, I don’t always take it to heart. Perhaps you don’t either. Needed is a good long look into that manger to experience what the great Venetian Renaissance painter Tintoretto experienced one day when he was moved to paint the ocean: He set up his easel and went to work, discarding canvas after canvas as he tried to capture what he was seeing. He finally threw it all aside and was heard to exclaim, “The ocean—it grows ever bigger!—no one can paint it!”



THE ‘CHRISTMAS TRAIN’
NEVER STAYS AROUND LONG.
IN THE ALBUM, IT ARRIVES,
UNLOADS, AND DEPARTS—
ALL IN LESS THAN AN
HOUR. TOO OFTEN OUR
CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS
IS LIKE THAT.

The angel in Luther's hymn, echoing the words of the angel in Luke 2, paints with words very well, inviting us to step up and take a good look for ourselves while the Christmas Train is at our station this year. Luther's hymn provides us that opportunity, and what we see grows ever bigger:

*How glad we'll be to find it so!
Then with the shepherds let us go
To see what God for us has done
In sending us His own dear Son.*

*Come here, my friends, lift up your eyes,
And see what in the manger lies.
Who is this child, so young and fair?
It is the Christ Child lying there.*

*Welcome to earth, O noble Guest,
Through whom the sinful world is blest!
You came to share my misery
That You might share Your joy with me.*

*Ah, Lord, though You created all,
How weak You are, so poor and small,
That You should choose to lay Your head
Where lowly cattle lately fed!*

*Were earth a thousand times as fair
And set with gold and jewels rare,
It would be far too poor and small
A cradle for the Lord of all.*

*Instead of soft and silken stuff
You have but hay and straw so rough
On which as King, so rich and great,
To be enthroned in royal state.*

*And so it pleases You to see
This simple truth revealed to me:
That worldly honor, wealth, and might
Are weak and worthless in Your sight.*

May this hymn describe our careful look into the manger this year, such an important look, also for us who have known already for a long time what we will see there.

Yet, in so many ways, we are so much like the committee that met with an artist to commission him to paint a picture of a dying church, a request that he found intriguing. Weeks later he met with the committee again and unveiled his painting.

They were surprised. He had painted a picture of a magnificent church, beautifully landscaped, with the doors wide open. Through the doors he had pictured a large congregation at worship, huge columns supporting a beautifully appointed interior. To the right of the doors he had painted an announcement board, full to overflowing with activities.



NO ONE UNDERSTOOD
BETTER THAN MARTIN
LUTHER THE IMPORTANCE
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INTO THE MANGER. EVEN
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THAT HE PRAYED, EVEN AS
HE TAUGHT HIS CHILDREN TO
PRAY IN THE FINAL STANZAS
OF HIS HYMN.



Finally, a spokesperson for the committee suggested that a mistake had been made. They had asked for a picture of a dying church, not one so obviously alive. “There has been no mistake,” said the artist, calling their attention to a small detail in his picture. To the left of the open doors, lost in some shadows, he had painted a small box identified with the word *Missions*. And over the slot in the top of the box he had painted a cobweb. “There,” he said, “is your dying church.”

Cobwebs happen, not only to mission boxes but human-care boxes, forgive-one-another boxes, all such boxes. When this happens, it requires more than a mere dusting with some sort of pledge to do better. It requires a long careful look into the manger (and beyond it to the cross and empty tomb), a look like that of mother Mary, who “kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.” It is that kind of look that dusts off the boxes and returns them to front and center in our lives.

THE GREATEST OF BLESSINGS

No one understood better than Martin Luther the importance of that meaningful look into the manger. Even he struggled to stay focused upon the grace of God. It was for this greatest of blessings that he prayed, even as he taught his children to pray in the final stanzas of his hymn:

*Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Prepare a bed, soft, undefiled,
A quiet chamber set apart
For You to dwell within my heart.*



*My heart for very joy must leap;
My lips no more can silence keep.
I, too, must sing with joyful tongue
That sweetest ancient cradlesong:*

*Glory to God in highest heav’n,
Who unto us His Son has giv’n!
While angels sing with pious mirth
A glad new year to all the earth.*

We, too, can do no better this Christmas season than to respond to the invitation to come aboard the Christmas Train as it makes its stop at our station, to take a good, long look to see what God Almighty is delivering, nothing less than His own Son. Perhaps the words of Luther’s hymn will help us to take that good, long look.

Rev. Raymond L. Hartwig (raymond.hartwig@lcms.org) is secretary of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.





'FROM

The history of this favorite Christmas hymn is as vibrant and compelling as the hymn itself.

Of the six Christmas hymns and translations most often associated with Martin Luther, none is more beloved than “From Heaven Above to Earth I Come” (LSB 358). Appearing in print for the first time in 1535, it bears the heading, “Ein kinder lied auff die Weinacht Christi” (“A children’s song about the birth of Christ”). It is assumed that Luther wrote this text as a kind of Christmas pageant for his own five surviving children and other members of his household for their 1534 family celebration of Christmas.

HEAVEN ABOVE



Luther's text is actually a *contrafactum*—that is, a sacred text set to a popular folk melody. In this case, Luther chose a “garland song” that had made its appearance as early as the 14th century, yet was still popular with the young adults of Luther's day. A young man would sing the refrain and then pose a riddle to one of a group of girls sitting in a circle. If she could not solve the riddle, she would have to give him her wreath-garland.

A quick comparison (through English translation) shows how Luther deftly adapted this medieval folk song:

Original Garland Song

*Good news from far abroad I bring,
Glad tidings for you all I sing.
I bring so much you'd like to know
Much more than I shall tell you
though.*

—Luther's Works, 53:289

Luther's Stanza

*From heav'n above to earth I come
To bear good news to ev'ry home;
Glad tidings of great joy I bring,
Whereof I now will say and sing.*

Stanza 1 of the garland song is set as if a traveling ballad-singer had come into a marketplace bearing news from afar that he then offers to share with the people in the square. Luther picks up on this picture, using the image of an angel coming “from far abroad” (heaven) into the circle of the shepherds keeping watch, offering to share the good news with them of what has just happened in Bethlehem.

One cannot avoid the sense that the origin of this lovely 15-stanza Christmas hymn is indeed that of an intimate family celebration, rather than a congregational song.

While the editors of *Lutheran Worship* chose to divide this hymn into two sections (“The Angel's Message” and “Our Response”) and omit stanza 12 of Luther's original, the compilers of *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)*, appreciating the unity of the hymn, restored stanza 12.

Although several translations of this Christmas hymn exist, the one included in *LSB* is an alteration of the translation by Catherine Winkworth, first published in her *Lyra Germanica* of 1855.

A HYMN OF JOY

In stanza 1, Luther's adaptation of the garland song invites the children to listen to the “good news of great joy” brought by the angel to the shepherds in the fields near Bethlehem. It is striking that Luther makes nothing of the first words of the angel: “Fear not!” (Luke 2:10). There is no fear in this hymn, only the joy that results from the good news. Note that stanzas 1–5 are clearly meant to be sung by the angel, as indicated by the use of the first person singular and the quotation marks around each stanza in *LSB*.

One can almost picture the Luther family, gathered perhaps around 8-day-old Margaretha's cradle, as 8-year-old Hans, or one of the student boarders who lived with the Luthers, dressed as an angel, invites the family to listen once again to the story of the birth of the infant Lord.

Stanzas 2–5 are an extended paraphrase of the words of the angel from Luke 2:11–12. Luther goes beyond a simple retelling of the story to emphasize the great joy that comes from knowing that Jesus came “from all your sins to set you free.”

In stanza 6, the rest of the family and all others (note the change to first person plural) join with the shepherds (Luke 2:15), expecting to experience the joy that will come from discovering that the words of the angel are all true.

Luther's intention was that individual children would sing stanzas 7–14 in response to seeing that the words of the angel were indeed true. The children invite others to see the Christ Child (stanza 7), and then they begin to talk directly to the little Child, welcoming Him to the sinful world (stanza 8) that He “might share Your joy with me.”

There is perhaps a hint of Phil. 2:6–9 in stanzas 9–12, as the children marvel that the One who deserved riches and luxuries would choose such a lowly birth. The ultimate warmth of the Christmas Eve story is expressed in the invitation in stanza 13 to “Prepare a bed, soft, undefiled . . . for You to dwell within my heart.”

The theme of joy returns in stanza 14, when the children can no longer keep silent but must break forth in praise with the angels. The change to first person plural in stanza 15 indicates that Luther expected the angel to join with the children and everyone

else in the household in his paraphrase of the *Gloria in excelsis* of Luke 2:14. German hymn scholar Ansgar Franz suggests that the last line of this stanza, with its reference to “a glad new year,” may not be so much a reference to the new calendar year (which, in 16th-century Saxony, began with Christmas) as to a new age that has dawned with the birth of the Christ Child.

TUNES OLD AND NEW

When Luther's children's song for Christmas first appeared in 1535, it was not only a textual *contrafactum* of the garland song, it was also coupled with



ONE CANNOT AVOID THE SENSE THAT THE ORIGIN OF THIS LOVELY CHRISTMAS HYMN IS INDEED THAT OF AN INTIMATE FAMILY CELEBRATION, RATHER THAN A CONGREGATIONAL SONG.



the traditional tune of that same medieval folk song "Aus fremden Landen komm ich hier."

Within four years, however, Luther's hymn became so well-known that he must have sensed that it needed its own tune. When the hymn was printed in Schumann's *Geistlicher Lieder* (Leipzig, 1539), it was coupled with the new tune, *Vom Himmel hoch*. Since then, this tune has become the proper tune for Luther's text and is therefore the tune included in *LSB*.

While Luther is not directly credited in Schumann's book, it is generally assumed that he is the composer of this melody. He was certainly musically gifted enough to have crafted this lovely tune, and it exhibits characteristics of other Luther melodies, such as *Ein feste Burg* ("A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"), where he begins on the upper note of the scale and ends on the lower. In fact, the last line of music from *Vom Himmel hoch* is virtually identical with the last line of *Ein feste Burg*.

The tune as used in *LSB* begins with a half note, while Luther's melody, as printed in Schumann's book, originally began with an eighth note.

MANY WORSHIP POSSIBILITIES

Because of the length of this hymn, it lends itself best to singing in alternation between portions of the congregation or choir or cantor. Observing the structure of the hymn may help to suggest possibilities.

- **Stanzas 1–5:** The Christmas angel tells the good news of Jesus' birth, sung by various groups (men, women, children, choir, children's choir, etc.).
- **Stanza 6:** Traveling to the manger, sung by all.
- **Stanzas 7–14:** At the manger, sung by various groups (men, women, children, choir, children's choir, etc.).
- **Stanza 15:** Concluding stanza, sung by all.

Another approach would be to intersperse various portions of the hymn at different points in the service, perhaps even as simple as singing stanzas 1–6 prior to the sermon, and then the remaining stanzas following the sermon. Stanza 7 could work well alone just prior to the reading of the Holy Gospel. Or one could combine both approaches—interspersing the hymn as well as singing in alternation. Of course, this hymn is an ideal choice to sing in alternation and/or interspersed for the annual children's Advent/Christmas service, where the children tell the story of Christ's birth in word and song.

At home today, why not consider using this wonderful hymn as Luther most likely did, as part of a family pageant and a celebration of the festival of Christmas. Make it a Christmas tradition.

Rev. William H. Otte (wotte@charter.net) is pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Rochester, Minn. This article was excerpted and adapted from the *LSB* hymn commentary, *Lutheran Service Book: Hymnal Companion*, forthcoming from Concordia Publishing House in 2011, Jon D. Vieker and Peter C. Reske, general editors; Joseph Herl, project researcher. Also available from CPH is the children's Advent/Christmas service, *From Heaven Above*, order number 35-1342.



Luther's Christmas Hymns

A number of Christmas hymns are associated with Martin Luther. Depending on how one counts these things, here are the most familiar.

HIS HYMNS

- "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come" (*LSB* 358, featured here).
- "To Shepherds as They Watched by Night" (*TLH* 103, one of only two hymns preserved in Luther's own handwriting).
- "We Praise You, Jesus, at Your Birth" (*LSB* 382). Portions of this hymn appeared also in an earlier form (14th century), which Luther appears to have adapted.

HIS TRANSLATIONS

- "Herod, Why Darest Thou a Foe," found in an English translation in Luther's Works (53:302ff). Not found in English in any current Lutheran hymnals. Some would consider it more Epiphany than Christmas.
- "Now Praise We Christ, the Holy One" (*TLH* 104). An English translation of Luther's German translation of Sedulius' Latin. In *LSB* (385), the title is "From East to West," and the text is John Ellerton's English translation of Sedulius' Latin.
- "Savior of the Nations, Come" (*LSB* 332). *LSB* offers a composite English translation of Luther's German translation of Ambrose's Latin. Some consider it more Advent than Christmas.

—Jon D. Vieker

Faith, Family, Christmas



THE INVITATION



If we simply tell 'how much the Lord has done for [us],' wonderful miracles can happen.

Bent over a copy of *Guideposts*, Joe read slowly and carefully while Eleanor, sitting upright in her bed, listened thoughtfully. This scene was a familiar one, part of Eleanor's daily routine of rising early, followed by Folgers coffee and quiet time with the Lord. Joe knew that when he was finished, Eleanor would ask him questions—to see if he was paying attention and to ascertain how the reading made him feel. They would share their thoughts with one another, often trading stories about their families. It was in those conversations that their friendship developed, and through the work of the Holy Spirit, Joe came to know God more fully and deeply.

My great-grandmother, Eleanor Mueller, was 99 years old when Joe began caring for her at Lutheran Hillside Village in Peoria, Ill. The widow of a pastor, mother of three, and grandmother of many, Eleanor had lived a rich and faithful life. At 99, she

still had the same bright eyes, brilliant smile, sharp wit, and no-nonsense attitude she possessed in her earlier years. She was devastated when my great-grandfather passed away at the age of 97 in 2002, and in the days following his death, Eleanor often said how much she wished God would take her home to be with Alvin in heaven.

Yet, God often surprises us with His plans, and as it turned out, Eleanor had more to do in this world before her time would come to be called home.

When Joe Newcomb met Eleanor in March 2006, he was a new employee at the assisted-living center. He had taken the position shortly after his mother's death. It was a difficult time for Joe, and caring for Eleanor was no easy task—she always wanted everything just so. In the beginning, Joe wasn't sure what Eleanor thought of him. Looking back, Joe says, "[Our story] reminds me a little bit of *Driving Miss Daisy*. [Eleanor] thought I didn't like her because I used to call her 'Sunshine.' She straightened that out right away. . . . I felt a little bit like she didn't like me. I was totally new at this."

Eleanor confided to her daughter, Alice, that she felt uncomfortable with the idea of having a male caretaker, but Alice encouraged her to keep an open mind. Yet it took Eleanor some time to warm up to Joe.

And so time passed. As it did, Joe grew accustomed to Eleanor's routine, and she began to trust him. Once they began reading and talking with one another, the tension between them slowly dissolved. Eleanor opened up to Joe about her past: She talked about her love for her parents, siblings, husband, and daughters, and Joe listened intently. In the same way, Joe told Eleanor about his mother's life and the impact of her death, and Eleanor

offered support and guidance. Today, Joe says that Eleanor is the one who helped him in his grieving stage.

As they spent more time together, Eleanor began to talk with Joe about her faith. "She knew he didn't go to church, and that really bothered her," says Alice. Although Joe believed in God, he did not attend services, and he was wary of returning to the church. Concerned for Joe's spiritual well-being, Eleanor often told him, "You need a church family." Sometimes Joe would agree, but he did not act on her advice. Eleanor confided in Alice that she felt discouraged at Joe's reluctance, but Alice would remind her, "Mom, you gotta let the Holy Spirit work."

GOD OFTEN SURPRISES
US WITH HIS PLANS,
AND AS IT TURNED OUT,
ELEANOR HAD MORE
TO DO IN THIS WORLD
BEFORE HER TIME
WOULD COME TO BE
CALLED HOME.

Advent came and went. Early on Christmas Eve, Joe asked Eleanor what her plans were for Christmas Day, expecting to hear about a family celebration. Instead, Eleanor informed him she planned to stay in her room. Joe looked at her in disbelief: He knew how much Eleanor's family meant to her, and he urged her to reconsider. It was no use; she did not want to go, and it seemed to Joe that there was nothing he could say to change her mind. Except . . .



There was one thing Joe knew might make a difference, but he would have to overcome his own reluctance.

“Eleanor,” Joe said, “I’ll make a deal with you. I’ll go to church tonight if you go to your daughter’s house on Christmas Day.” Eleanor sat still for a moment, reveling in what Joe had just agreed to. Sure enough, she accepted his deal.

OFTEN WE MAKE
SHARING THE GOOD
NEWS HARDER THAN
IT SHOULD BE.

That evening, Joe attended Trinity Lutheran Church in Peoria, Ill., for the first time. Joe felt ineffable warmth in the room that night—a feeling he’d never experienced before. “I knew this was where I was supposed to be,” he says. On Christmas Day Eleanor held up her end of the deal. She joined her family for their holiday gathering.

Over the next year, Eleanor’s health deteriorated, and she increas-

ingly relied on Joe for support. He was there for her when she was having a “down day,” and she was there for him when he was grieving. They continued to read and share and connect, even while Eleanor’s condition declined. As her family members visited, it seemed she was saying good-bye to some of them for the last time.

Soon it was Christmas Eve again. When Joe asked Eleanor what her plans were for the evening, she remarked that she would be staying in her room. Joe knew Eleanor was feeling weak, but he felt she needed to spend one last Christmas praising God in the environment she loved. This time, Joe was the persistent one, and he urged Eleanor to attend the service: “Don’t you think it’s time for you to say good-bye to the church?” he asked.

“You know, I think I can do that,” Eleanor replied.

That Christmas Eve, Joe again worshiped at Trinity, this time alongside Eleanor. She was radiant as she sat in church, dressed in a crimson-colored jacket that once belonged to Joe’s mother. Later, as Joe readied Eleanor for bed, he noticed that she seemed completely at peace. Three days later she went home to her Father in heaven. She was 101 years old.

It is always bittersweet when a loved one who has lived a long and faithful life passes away. Our family

was happy that my great-grandmother had joined great-grandpa in heaven, but we will always miss her gentle heart and strong faith that continued to shine until death.

While she was alive on earth, Eleanor did not see Joe become a member of Trinity (as she had hoped), but Joe says that after that Christmas, he knew he needed to become a member for his life to be complete. A few months after Eleanor’s funeral, Joe attended the new-member information class at Trinity. Later that year he was baptized and confirmed. Today, he serves as an usher.

Looking back, Joe says his relationship with Eleanor had a lasting impact on his life—her friendship and guidance was an unexpected gift from God. “There was a reason we got put together,” he says. “When I was with Eleanor, . . . she helped me grow in my faith, and she led me to where I am today.”

It’s easy to forget how powerful it is to simply invite others in our immediate circle to partake in the simple act of devotion or worship. Perhaps it is because we worry about rejection, or we are afraid of stepping outside our comfort zone, or maybe appearing too evangelistic. Maybe it’s because an invitation implies a commitment to hold up “our end of the deal,” following through by answering questions and making our friend feel comfortable.

But the truth is this: Oftentimes, we make sharing the Good News harder than it needs to be. It’s a simple conversation, “full of grace” (Col 4:6 NIV), that can plant a seed; or a simple prayer for the help of the Holy Spirit; or perhaps an invitation, a special deal, that can invite growth. If we, like Eleanor, simply “go . . . and tell them how much the Lord has done for [us]” (Mark 5:19), through the Holy Spirit, wonderful, everyday miracles can happen.

A 2008 graduate of Valparaiso University, Erin Dalpini (erindalpini@gmail.com) is a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Batavia, Ill. She works as an editorial assistant at Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago.





Amid the Glitz: A Christmas Reminder



A trip to a hometown
'holiday' celebration
creates an opportunity to share the
good news of Jesus' birth.

For the past 14 years at the Grand Illumination Parade in Norfolk, Va., there's been a small, humble float depicting the Nativity. Out of some 80 parade units, it's about the only reminder of the real meaning of Christmas and one of the few units to play Christmas carols. It's Trinity Lutheran Church and School's way of proclaiming the Savior's birth to a world that has, in many respects, turned Christmas into a secular holiday.

The parade has been a tradition in Norfolk for the past quarter century. It draws about 100,000 spectators and lots of local media coverage in our metropolitan area of more than a million. It kicks off Norfolk's official "holiday" season the Saturday before Thanksgiving, and it includes the lighting of downtown buildings and other festivities. For 14 years now, the children of Trinity's Sunday and day schools have been a part of that parade with their Nativity presentation.

The idea for entering a Nativity unit came to me while watching the parade in 1994. I realized that not one Christmas carol was being played, and there was no hint of the real meaning of Christmas anywhere. I couldn't believe it. It dawned on me then that if you want to affect the culture in which you live, you've got to do more than complain. Why not have Trinity, my church, enter a unit? We had plenty of children in our day school, which runs through fifth grade, and Trinity has always been about outreach.

Above: Trinity Lutheran day-school students Jewel Williams and Logan Riales participate in Norfolk's Grand Illumination Parade as Mary and Joseph.



The idea for entering a Nativity unit came to me while watching the parade in 1994. I realized that not one Christmas carol was being played, and there was no hint of the real meaning of Christmas.

Rev. Jim O'Connor, who recently retired as pastor of Trinity, became the guiding force for the idea and for Trinity's efforts. "Along with the many exciting events I've experienced in my ministry throughout the world, our participation in the annual Illumination Parade is among my top ten," he says. "It's simplicity writ large; and the message is as clear as a pealing church bell. Amidst the bands, the parading community backers, the strutting horses, the expensive floats, the giant character balloons, and secular Christmas songs that dominate the event, here come the students of Trinity in handmade costumes, led by a made-from-scratch float carrying Mary, Joseph, and the Child."

Most important, O'Connor adds, "The Cross is always in plain view." Trinity's school administrator, Judy Sykes, also welcomed the idea. "As a LCMS elementary school, sharing the Gospel is a primary concern. This special event nurtures the faith of our students, as well as the bystanders at the parade," she observes. "Initially we weren't even sure a Nativity unit would be accepted for participation, but every year our entry has been approved. We applaud our city for that."



No Small Effort

The planning and paperwork begin in the summer. A group of school parents take charge of setting up the float. A member of the congregation owns a DJ business, and he supplies the music and lights.

One of the challenges each year is making the float reflect the parade's theme. Last year (2008), the theme was "Celebrate the SEASON," with emphasis on the sea, since Norfolk is a seaport town. Trinity's entry was "Christ Was Born across the Sea," a line from "The Battle Hymn of The Republic." The lyrics were part of the script Trinity provided for the parade's coverage on local TV: "In the beauty of the lilies, Christ was born across the SEA / With a glory in His bosom that transfigures you and me / As He died to make men holy, / Let us live to make men free / While God is marching on." The words of poet Julia Ward Howe reminded TV viewers that this incredible Christmas event—the birth of Jesus—took place more than 2,000 years ago in the tiny village of Bethlehem, far across the

ocean from the continent that is now North America.

On parade day, it's an endurance test for the children. They have to assemble at the church in the late afternoon and carpool to the parade's starting point at Norfolk's Harbor Park baseball stadium. Then there's a two-hour wait before the 7 p.m. start—and another half hour or so until the unit begins marching. "The children sense we're doing something important," Sykes says. "They know we're marching to put Jesus in the parade."

Sowing Seeds

Trinity is a self-described "traditional" Lutheran church in the heart of Norfolk, home to the world's largest naval base and one of the busiest international ports on the East Coast. In a very real sense, the whole world comes to Norfolk and to Trinity's door.



We have been around for 89 years and have always been a home away from home for our military men and women and their families. We are also the mother church in Hampton Roads, having planted nine mission congregations and started one of the first kindergartens in the area long before kindergarten was a part of the public school system. We host an annual "Oktoberfest" (with a Reformation emphasis), sponsor classical concerts, and regularly seek other opportunities to invite our community to Trinity. In our parade script, we always invite people to our Christmas services, but the most important thing is that we're giving Christ His rightful place out there in the culture.

"No matter how cold it's been on parade evenings, the crowd warmed to the traditional message of the baby Jesus and invariably raised a loud cheer." O'Connor says about his parade experiences. "You may think that might have been out of place, clapping and cheering the way they did, but I think our Lord reveled in the recognition. Our gracious God had moved out of the church doors into the midst of a crowd on a cold winter night; and the people loved it! I suspect that only the Holy Spirit knows what exactly was in their hearts."

As a member of Trinity, I'm always honored to march with Trinity's Nativity float. As we move through the streets of downtown Norfolk, I sense the Lord is smiling.

Sharon Plawin (sharonplawin@cox.net) is a member of Trinity Lutheran Church, Norfolk, Va. This year marked the 25th anniversary of Norfolk's illumination parade. In response to the parade theme "It's Silver." Trinity's Nativity float Nov. 21 featured "Silver Stars over Bethlehem."



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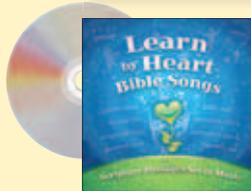
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Note: The "official notices" are published for a single purpose only: giving notice of a result, namely, changes in the Synod's membership rosters by the addition or deletion of the names of individuals and congregations. It is not always appropriate that reasons for the changes be identified in the published notices. Since a change can occur for any of a variety of reasons, no assumptions may be made merely from the fact that a change has occurred.—Ed.

Official Notices— From the Districts

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, Hamburg, N.Y.; and FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH, Newfane, N.Y., were removed as member congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by the district president and the district board of directors. DR. ADOLPH MOLDENHAUER was removed from the Ministers of Religion—Ordained roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by the district president. DCE DWIGHT KARKAN was removed from the Ministers of Religion—Commissioned roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by the district president.—Rev. Chris C. Wicher, President, LCMS Eastern District.

MELINDA GAIL ZOCH, Elgin, Texas, was reinstated to the Ministers of Religion—Commissioned roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod by action of the Council of Presidents at the September 2009 meeting. She is, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Rev. Ken Hennings, President, LCMS Texas District.

Official Notices— Colloquies

CASSANDRA S. McMAHAN, Lincoln, Neb., has submitted an application for the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through CUenet. Correspondence regarding her application should be directed within four weeks after publication of this notice to Dr. William R. Diekelman, Chairman, Colloquy Committee, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

LAURA PAVLOV, Las Vegas, Nev.; THOMAS CRENSHAW, Temecula, Calif.; and EDWARD AMEY, Santa Clarita, Calif., have completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Dr. Becky Peters, Director Colloquy Program, Concordia University, 1530 Concordia West, Irvine, CA 92612-3203.

TRACY PARKER, Menomonee Falls, Wis.; and VICKI VILLANI, Plymouth, Wis., have completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Rev. Albert L. Garcia, Ph.D., Concordia University Wisconsin, 12800 N. Lake Shore Drive, Mequon, WI 53097-2418.

CHAD VAN METER, Fort Wayne, Ind.; ARLYN MEYER, Bloomington, Ill.; JON GRAF, St. Louis, Mo.; and SEAN CHAPMAN, Omaha, Neb., have completed the Director of Christian Education Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore, eligible to receive a call. MEGAN SCHUTT, Waterloo, Iowa, has completed the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and is, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Dr. Stephen C. Stohlmann, Director of Colloquy, Concordia University, St. Paul, 275 Syndicate St. N., St. Paul, MN 55104.

KIMBERLY M. CAIN, Fort Wayne, Ind.; and GARNET M. ADAMS, Marengo, Ill., have completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore,

eligible to receive a call.—Mark A. Waldron, Director of Teacher Colloquy, Concordia University Chicago, 7400 Augusta St., River Forest, IL 60305-1499.

JEFF THORMAN, Dallas, Texas; and CHRISTINE MOOREHOUSE, Fort Worth, Texas, have completed all requirements of the Teacher Colloquy Program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and are, therefore, eligible to receive a call.—Dr. Jim McConnell, Assistant Colloquy Program Director, Concordia University Texas, 11400 Concordia University Drive, Austin, TX 78726.

Official Notice—Audits

The audits and summary budgets of the Lutheran Church Extension Fund and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Foundation have been completed and are available upon written request. Please direct your request to the following:

Lutheran Church Extension Fund
Sunset Corporate Center
10733 Sunset Office Drive
St. Louis, MO 63127-1219

The Lutheran Church—Missouri
Synod Foundation
1333 South Kirkwood Road
St. Louis, MO 63122-7295

Official Notice—Audit

The audit for the year ended June 30, 2009, and the program budget summary for fiscal year 2009/10 of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have been completed and are available upon written request. Requests for the audited financial statements and program budgets of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod should be sent to Charles Rhodes, Accounting Department, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 South Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122.

Official Notice—Audit

The audits and summary budgets of the Synod's 35 districts have been completed and are available upon written request. Write or contact your District Office directly. The address of each district is published in *The Lutheran Annual*.

Official Notice—Audit

The audit of Concordia Publishing House has been completed and is available by contacting the publishing house directly:

Concordia Publishing House
3558 South Jefferson Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63118-3968

Official Notices—Requests for Reinstatement

JOHN THADDEUS COBURN, Henniker, N.H.; DARYL H. ETHERIDGE, Adrian, Mich.; and STEFAN HUPPERT, Cleveland, Ohio, have applied for reinstatement to the Ministers of Religion—Ordained roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. JOHANNA E. BAYLES, Decatur, Ill.; KRISTINE MARIE BLACKWELL, Woodridge, Ill.; DEREK BOHLMANN, Lauderhill, Fla.; RON HEINS, Warren, Mich.; ELLEN R. KERWIN (BAUMANN), Bethpage, N.Y.; and DAWN DIANE OLDENETTEL (KOHLS), Independence, Kan., have applied for reinstatement to the Ministers of Religion—Commissioned roster of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Correspondence regarding

these applications should be directed to the undersigned for receipt no later than Jan. 5, 2010.—Dr. Raymond L. Hartwig, Secretary, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.

Notice to Promote to Continuing-Level (Tenure)

The Board of Regents of Concordia University, St. Paul, Minn., herewith gives notice of intent to grant tenure to DR. MICHELE PICKEL and DR. KAREN MORAZ. Any comments concerning this intent should be addressed to the undersigned within six weeks after publication of this notice.—Dr. Robert Holst, Executive Officer, Board of Regents, 275 Syndicate St. North, St. Paul, MN 55104-5494.

Call for Nominations

Concordia University, Irvine, Calif., seeks nominations for the position of **president**. The president is the chief executive officer of the university and serves as the college's spiritual, academic, and administrative head. The official functions of the office of the president are described in the 2007 *LCMS Handbook*, section 3.8.3.7.

The following qualifications are required of all nominees. They must:

- Be male and be a member of an LCMS congregation, faithful to the Scriptures as the Word of God, and to the theological positions of the LCMS.
- Possess an advanced academic degree and be committed to Lutheran higher education.
- Be a mature Christian with a vibrant faith.
- Demonstrate a passion for the Great Commission and global outreach.
- Possess a powerful affinity for and commitment to the mission, vision, values, and strategic plan of the university.
- Possess a deep commitment to the highest standards of academic excellence.

The President of Concordia University should possess the following desired qualifications and characteristics:

- Possess a deep understanding of Lutheran theology and practice and a solid awareness of the structure and workings of the LCMS.
- Possess a deep sense of calling and vocation to the presidency of Concordia University.
- Possess a love for students, staff, and faculty from diverse backgrounds and a passion to build strong and engaging relationships with them.
- Demonstrate a commitment to support and encourage racial, ethnic, economic, and gender diversity.
- Demonstrate decisive leadership that also values transparency, collaboration, and collegiality.
- Be a humble servant leader, able to inspire and encourage others.
- Demonstrate a strong commitment to and support of faculty as teachers and scholars.
- Understand global trends in higher education and be committed to enhancing Concordia's academic reputation.
- Demonstrate a high level of personal academic achievement, including the completion of a terminal degree.
- Demonstrate a high level of understanding of the financial aspects of a complex organization.
- Demonstrate a successful record of either higher education administration or executive

(continued on page 24)

What's Dispensationalism?

Some TV evangelists and writers of popular religious books promote a view of the end times called “dispensationalism.” What is dispensationalism? How does it differ from how Lutherans understand biblical teaching about the end of the world?

Dispensationalism (or “premillennial dispensationalism”) is a teaching that divides biblical history into seven distinct periods, or “dispensations,” the last of which is referred to as the Kingdom (the millennium). Dispensationalists focus on this final stage and on discerning historical “signs” of approaching last days.

Typically—summarized here in very simplified form—dispensationalists believe that the end will take place in these stages: (1) a secret return of Christ, with a resurrection of the just and the “rapture” (believers “caught up” with Christ and taken to heaven); (2) a seven-year “tribulation” (when the Antichrist reigns and persecution occurs), with military battles leading up to the Battle of Armageddon; (3) a second, visible return of Christ followed by the sheep/goats judgment in Matthew 25; (4) a 1,000-year visible reign of Christ on earth; (5) the resurrection of the unjust and the “White Throne Judgment”; (6) the creation of new heavens and earth.

This system of the end times* relies on a rigidly literalistic method of interpreting the Bible, including specifically books such as Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation—literature requiring Bible students to take seriously the symbolic language contained in them. Dispensationalists commonly believe that God pursued two purposes in His redemptive plan, one related to the restoration of the nation of Israel in the land (original purpose) and the other dealing with the Christian church (unforeseen in the Old Testament and thus called a “parenthesis”).

John Nelson Darby (1800–82), a traveling preacher, was the first to develop and spread a dispensationalist understanding of Christ's second coming. Cyrus Scofield expanded Darby's views and popularized them in his widely influential *Scofield Reference Bible* (published first in 1909).

Lutherans believe that the Scriptures describe one plan of salvation (not two, one involving national Israel and the other, the Church). That plan began when, after the Fall, God promised a Savior who would suffer and die for the sins of all, Jews and Gentiles alike. His eternal plan was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ, who “was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification” (Rom. 4:25 ESV). Through faith in Him, all believers are united in His one holy Christian church, the “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). Christians await with expecta-

tion Christ's second and only coming at the end of time (the 1,000-year reign referring symbolically to the time between His Ascension and His second coming—a position called “amillennialism”). They find comfort, not in law-oriented end-time speculations, but in the Bible's central message, the good news of God's forgiveness, life, and salvation in Christ.

* For details and an evaluation, see the CTCR's reports on *The End Times and A Lutheran Response to the “Left Behind” Series* at: <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=509>.

Until his retirement, Dr. Jerald C. Joersz was an associate executive director of the LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations.



Send your questions to Q & A, *The Lutheran Witness*, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; or send them via e-mail to lutheran.witness@lcms.org. Please include your name and address. While we look for questions that have broad interest among our readers, no question is unimportant. Unfortunately, the volume of questions we receive makes it impossible to answer every question individually.

(continued from page 22)

leadership, with an understanding and appreciation of the nature and goals of institutions of higher education.

- Demonstrate the ability to collaborate with and lead a strong administrative team to manage a complex academic institution.
- Be a visionary leader with the ability to energize and inspire students, faculty, staff, families, alumni, regents, trustees, and external stakeholders.
- Be an effective communicator with the ability to articulate complex ideas in both written and oral forms.
- Possess a proven record of working collaboratively with a governing body.
- Possess the ability to champion the university's advancement efforts and represent Concordia University enthusiastically and persuasively in its donor development and fundraising programs.

According to Bylaw 3.8.3.7.2 of the 2007 LCMS Handbook, nominations may be accepted only from LCMS congregations, the Concordia University Irvine plenary faculty, the Concordia University Irvine Board of Regents, and the LCMS Board for University Education.

Nominations must be postmarked no later than Dec. 31. All submissions must be sent by surface mail and must indicate the date on which the submitting body resolved to make the nomination, and include the nominee's phone or email contact information. Send nominations and any requests for clarification to the Board of Regents' designee, Mr. Craig Olson, Chairman, Board of Regents, Concordia University, 1530 Concordia Drive West, Irvine, CA 92612.

Positions

The Lutheran Witness welcomes notices for positions available at affiliated entities and Recognized Service Organizations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The deadline for receipt of such notices is the 20th of the month two months prior to the publication month (e.g., Dec. 20 for the February 2010 issue). Send notices to karen.higgins@lcms.org.—Ed.

The following institutions of the Concordia University System (CUS) are seeking candidates for positions described below:

Concordia University, Irvine, Calif., seeks to fill the following faculty positions: **Philosophy; Mathematics and Chemistry/Physics; Master of Arts Coaching and Athletic Administration; Music; History; Biology.**

Concordia University Chicago, River Forest, Ill., seeks to fill the following faculty positions: **School Leadership; Curriculum and Instruction; Reading; Chair: Department of Curriculum, Language and Literacy.**

Concordia University Texas, Austin, Texas, seeks to fill the following faculty position: **Director: Healthcare Administration Program.**

Concordia University Wisconsin, Mequon, Wis., seeks to fill the following faculty positions: **Assistant Director: Experiential Education in Pharmacy; English; Spanish; Psychology; Physiology; Exercise Physiology; Biochemistry/Organic Chemistry.**

For more information about these and other CUS positions, including complete job descriptions, qualifications, and application process, visit <http://www.lcms.org/cusjobs> and click on "Positions Available at Our Campuses."

Anniversaries

The Lutheran Witness welcomes notices of no more than 50 words from LCMS congregations about their upcoming "milestone" anniversaries. The deadline for receipt of such notices is the 20th of the month two months prior to the publication month (e.g., Dec. 20 for the February 2010 issue). Send notices to karen.higgins@lcms.org.—Ed.

Shepherd of the Valley, Hastings, Minn., will celebrate its 25th anniversary with a 10:30 a.m. special worship service Dec. 6. Guest speakers include Rev. Victor Fry and Rev. Robert Mundahl. A noon luncheon will follow. Contact the church office at 651-437-7010.

Concordia, Frohna, Mo., will celebrate its 170th anniversary with a 9 a.m. worship celebration Dec. 6. Rev. Ray Mirly, president of the LCMS Missouri District, will be the guest preacher. A potluck dinner celebration will follow.

Ascension, Wichita, Kan., will celebrate its 50th anniversary Jan. 8-10, 2010. A program of music and church history will be held Jan. 8. At 11:30 a.m., Jan. 9, a luncheon will be held, followed by a 1 to 3 p.m. preschool 45th anniversary open house. LCMS Kansas District President Keith Kohlmeier will be guest preacher at the 3 p.m. special worship service Jan. 10. Contact the church office at 316-722-4694 or visit www.ascension-lcms.org.

In Memoriam

Obituary information is provided by district offices to the Synod's Office of Rosters and Statistics. Any questions about content should be referred, therefore, to the appropriate district office.—Ed.

ORDAINED

BRUNIG, ROBERT A.; Feb. 15, 1946, New Orleans, La., to Aug. 31, 2009, Dallas, Texas; son of Rev. Arthur and Marie (Engelhardt) Brunig; graduated St. Louis, 1971. Served 1971–1976, 2001–2009. Ministries/parishes: Vassar, Kan.; Dallas, Texas; Texas District circuit counselor: 2006–2009. Survivors: Mary (Wukasch) Brunig; sons: Adam, Scott; daughter: Jennifer Wright. Funeral: Sept. 5, 2009, Dallas, Texas; cremation.

COOK, EDWIN HENRY; Nov. 20, 1927, Sheridan, Wyo., to Aug. 31, 2009, Lexington, Neb.; son of Henry and Katherine (Pitsch) Cook; colloquy 1977. Served 1977–1990. Ministries/parishes: Sidney, Neb.; Sundance, Moorcroft, Wyo.; Wyoming District circuit counselor: 1984–1988; retired 1990. Survivors: Maxine (Bolinger) Cook; son: Perry; daughter: Teresa Maxcy. Funeral and interment: Sept. 4, 2009, Lexington, Neb.

DRAPER, GEORGE LEONARD; Aug. 9, 1944, Sacramento, Calif., to Aug. 14, 2009, Billings, Mont.; son of George and Nina (Nelander) Draper; graduated Fort Wayne, 1999. Served 1999–2009. Ministries/parishes: Wolf Point, Glasgow, Mont. Survivors: Geraldine (Nanz) Draper; sons: Mark, Edward; daughters: Karin Cowan, Andrea Chamberlin, Katherine Shaler. Memorial service and interment: Aug. 14, 2009, Billings, Mont.

DUTTCHEN, HELMUT ARTHUR; March 29, 1947, Nauen, Germany, to Aug. 15, 2009, Kingman, Ariz.; son of Arthur and Gertrude (Seidler) Duttchen; graduated St. Catharines, 1990. Served 1990–2009. Ministries/parishes: Lacombe, Alberta, Canada; New Westminster, Surrey, British Columbia, Canada; Kingman, Ariz. Survivors: Carolee (McGregor) Duttchen; sons: Robert, David; daughters: Christa, Debra. Memorial service: Aug. 21, 2009, Kingman, Ariz.; cremation.

ELLWANGER, JOHN P.; Nov. 7, 1931, St. Louis, Mo., to Sept. 21, 2009, Cedar Park, Texas; son of Walter and Jessie (Hanger) Ellwanger; graduated St. Louis, 1956. Served 1956–1997, 1999–2009. Ministries/parishes: Melbourne, Fla.; Columbus, Ga.; Austin, Lago Vista, Texas. Survivors: Jane (Taylor) Ellwanger; son: Jeremy; daughter: Jennifer Shropshire. Memorial service: Sept. 25, 2009, Austin, Texas; cremation.

FAJEN, JOHN HERMAN; May 26, 1929, Stover, Mo., to Aug. 31, 2009, St. Louis, Mo.; son of Otto and Magdalena (Wittrock) Fajen; graduated St. Louis, 1955. Served 1956–1994. Ministries/parishes: Nigeria, West Africa; St. Louis, Mo.; Glidden, Wis.; retired 1994. Survivors: Peggy (Thompson) Fajen; daughters: Katherine Morris, Elizabeth Brown, Melanie Linger, Barbara Olson, Pauline. Funeral: Sept. 4, 2009, Affton, Mo.; interment: Sept. 4, 2009, Stover, Mo.

GADE, DWAIN MAYNARD; Jan. 23, 1924, Stratton, Colo., to Sept. 27, 2009, Cedar, Mich.; son of Herman and Betha (Scott) Gade; graduated St. Louis, 1947. Served 1947–1986. Ministries/parishes: Armand, Washington, Mount Clemens, Detroit, Mich.; Michigan District circuit counselor: 1986–1989; retired 1986. Survivors: Marcia (Bluck) Gade; son: Mark; daughters: Shelley, Kim. Funeral: Oct. 1, 2009, Leland, Mich.; interment: Oct. 1, 2009, Good Harbor, Mich.

LOWERY, JOSEPH C.; March 26, 1926, Huntington, Texas, to Sept. 4, 2009, Longview, Texas; son of Jones and Alma Lowery; graduated Springfield, 1970. Served 1970–1976, 1976–1980, 1981–1983. Ministries/parishes: Longview, Hereford, Anderson, Texas; Altus, Okla.; retired 1984. Survivors: Sarah (Crockett) Lowery; son: Alan; daughter: Deborah Smith. Memorial service: Sept. 9, 2009, Kilgore, Texas; interment: Sept. 9, 2009, Longview, Texas.

MUELLER, WILLIARD EUGENE; July 9, 1930, Topeka, Kan., to Aug. 14, 2009, Hickory, N.C.; son of Rev. Theodore and Meta (Ehlers) Mueller; graduated St. Louis, 1955. Served 1955–1984, 1985–1990, 1991–2000. Ministries/parishes: Ottawa, Ontario, Canada; Hoyleton, Alton, Ill.; West Columbia, S.C.; Hickory, N.C.; retired 2000. Survivors: Gloria (Dierker) Mueller; sons: Stephen, Michael, Jonathan. Funeral and interment: Aug. 18, 2009, Hickory, N.C.

PETERSON, H. LEROY; July 8, 1925, Bemis, N.D., to Sept. 29, 2009, Ironwood, Mich.; son of J. Harry and Evva (Norman) Peterson; graduated Springfield, 1968. Served 1968–1982, 1983–1988, 1989–1992. Ministries/parishes: Lewisville, Red Wing, Minn.; Madison, Mercer, Wis.; Ironwood, Mich.; retired 1992. Preceded in death by his wife, Sigrid (Sigurdson) Peterson. Survivors: Dolores (Mattson) Peterson; sons: Jimmie, Robert, Gary, Jeffrey; daughter: Lou Dierks. Funeral: Oct. 3, 2009, Ironwood, Mich.; interment: Oct. 3, 2009, Svold, N.D.

RICHTER, GEORGE J. JR.; June 22, 1941, Milwaukee, Wis., to Sept. 3, 2009, Milwaukee, Wis.; son of George Sr. and Alvina (Jensen) Richter; graduated Springfield, 1968. Served 1969–2009. Ministries/parishes: Dawson Creek, British Columbia, Canada; Mississauga, Toronto, Canada; Racine, Milwaukee, Wis. Preceded in death by his wife, Patricia (Renner) Richter. Survivors: June (Peters) Richter; sons: Andrew, Joel, Christopher; daughters: Amy Pagano, Heidi Green, Heather. Funeral: Sept. 8, 2009, Milwaukee, Wis.; interment: Sept. 9, 2009, Milwaukee, Wis.

SMITH, CHARLES O.; July 25, 1939, Waukesha, Wis., to Aug. 28, 2009, Saginaw, Mich.; son of Orlie and Florence (Merten) Smith; graduated Springfield, 1963. Served 1963–1992, 1993–2001. Ministries/parishes: Clare, Mount Pleasant, Saginaw, Mich.; St. Louis, Mo.; retired 2001. Preceded in death by his son, Matthew. Survivors: Helen (Gadient) Smith; son: Christopher; daughters: Carrie, Sarah. Funeral: Sept. 1, 2009, Saginaw, Mich.; cremation.

THOMACK, ALWIN W.; May 22, 1918, Royalton, Wis., to Sept. 26, 2009, Monroe, Mich.; son of Ernest and Ida (Oppermann) Thomack; graduated Wartburg, 1952. Joined LCMS as Emeritus 1990. Survivors: Ruth (Aamoth) Thomack; sons: Luther, Walter, John, Ernest; daughter: Ruth Phillips. Funeral and interment: Oct. 3, 2009, Litchfield, Ill.

WENTZEL, ERNEST F.; May 12, 1929, Craigmyle, Alberta, Canada, to Aug. 31, 2009, Maryville, Ill.; son of Rev. Karl and Magdalena (Quindel) Wentzel; graduated St. Louis, 1953. Served 1953–1991. Ministries/parishes: St. Louis, Mo.; retired 1991. Survivors: Shirley (Solomonson) Wentzel; sons: Charles, Peter, Paul; daughter: Ruth Bauer. Funeral: Sept. 4, 2009, Collinsville, Ill.; interment: Sept. 4, 2009, St. Louis, Mo.

COMMISSIONED

BURGER, H. EUGENE; June 23, 1920, Fort Smith, Ark., to July 12, 2009, Fort Wayne, Ind.; son of Henry and Minnie (Quoss) Burger; graduated River Forest, 1942. Served 1942–1990. Schools/ministries: Arlington Heights, River Forest, Ill.; Alexandria, Va.; Fort Wayne, Ind.; retired 1990. Survivors: Mildred (Marty) Burger; son: Rev. Mark; daughters: Jean, Ann Hess, Laura. Funeral: July 16, 2009, Fort Wayne, Ind.; interment: July 16, 2009, Albion, Ind.

EICHINGER, DIANE JEAN (MASCHKE); March 28, 1947, Harbor Beach, Mich., to Aug. 23, 2009, Bay City, Mich.; daughter of August and Evelyn (Schave) Maschke; graduated Seward, 1970. Served 1973–2009. School/ministry: Bay City, Mich. Survivors: Rev. Kurt Eichinger; son: Kurt. Funeral: Aug. 27, 2009, Bay City, Mich.; interment: Aug. 27, 2009, Port Hope, Mich.

EIFERT, MARTIN ERICH; May 20, 1927, Port Arthur, Texas, to Aug. 28, 2009, Austin, Texas; son of Paul and Ruth (Moerbe) Eifert; colloquy 1952. Served 1953–1992. Schools/parishes: McAllen, Texas; Miami, Fla.; retired 1992. Survivors: Eleanor (Kramer) Eifert; son: James; daughters: Anna, Deborah McIntire, Paula. Funeral: Aug. 31, 2009, Austin, Texas; interment: Aug. 31, 2009, Pflugerville, Texas.

GANDT, KARL O.; Aug. 10, 1920, Cecil, Wis., to Aug. 13, 2009, Madison, Wis.; son of Ed and Clara (Spohn) Gandt; graduated River Forest, 1945. Served 1945–2001. Schools/parishes: Tracy, Fresno, Calif.; Aurora, Park Ridge, Ill.; retired 2001. Preceded in

death by his wife, Dorothy (Klemm) Gandt. Survivors: son: Karl; daughters: Lois, Eunice. Memorial service: Aug. 18, 2009, Elmhurst, Ill.; interment: Aug. 18, 2009, Oakbrook Terrace, Ill.

GLAESS, HERMAN L.; July 18, 1926, Harbor Beach, Mich., to Aug. 8, 2009, Lincoln, Neb.; son of Arnold and Vincenta (Sandmann) Glaess; graduated River Forest, 1948. Served 1948–2008. Schools/parishes: Detroit, Sebawaing, East Detroit, Mich.; Seward, Neb.; retired 2008. Survivors: Ruth (Bruckner) Glaess; son: Mark; daughters: Anita Batts, Marian Brosig, Lori Scarlett. Memorial service and interment: Aug. 11, 2009, Seward, Neb.

Grieving a Significant Loss



I lost my wife three years ago the week after Thanksgiving. Since then, this time of year has felt empty to me. Friends have told me it's time I get over this, but I just can't. What can you suggest that might make this time less melancholy?

The death of a spouse is a huge loss. Because we are created in God's image and made for relationship with Him and one another, separation by death affects us greatly. The bond with a spouse runs deep, and the

grieving process can take a long, long time. While the passage of time may lessen the pain, its impact will be with you for many years.

There are steps in the grieving process, and they often run a more circular course than a linear one. After the initial shock, which can take days to weeks, people will usually find some semblance of moving ahead with life. The feeling of sadness during this time is much sharper on some days than others. Folks often describe an eventual return of more bearable days than overwhelming ones, but it happens little by little. The ache of loneliness and grief are frequently more intense during significant times of the year, such as birthdays, anniversaries, holidays, and the date of the person's death. Because these days hold so

many memories, both good and bad, our sadness is especially painful. Please know that feeling "empty" during such times is normal, understandable, and to be expected, even for Christians.

While others may mean well in wanting you to "get over it," their words can hurt and leave you feeling even emptier. One of the most helpful ways to walk this journey of grief is to be with others who can respect your feelings, offer compassion, and honor the memory of your wife. I would also recommend that you contact a grief-support group, where you can gather with others who know what loss feels like. One such group is Grief Share (www.griefshare.org), a nationwide resource that offers a Christian perspective on grief and loss.

As Christians, we take comfort in Jesus Christ, whose death and resurrection opens to us the way of everlasting life. And we look forward to the time when God promises to wipe away every tear and "there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain" (Rev. 21:4 NIV).

Theresa M. Shaltanis, M.A., L.P.C., is a marriage and family therapist and a member of St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Falls Church, Va.



Send your questions to Family Counselor, *The Lutheran Witness*, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; or send them via e-mail to lutheran.witness@lcms.org. Please include your name and address. While we look for questions that have broad interest among our readers, no question is unimportant. Unfortunately, the volume of questions we receive makes it impossible to answer every question individually.

LETTERS

(continued from page 5)

Things of the World" caught my eye, and I began to read the story. I got to the line that all understanding is trivial as long as we come to understand those six simple words: "Jesus loves me, this I know." Just as I was reading those words, my 11-year-old daughter began to play the song on her clarinet. Definitely a God moment! She was figuring out the notes so she could play a well-loved song. I believe God was using her to drive home the point Seth was making in the article. As I grow older, I actually treasure that song more than I did as a child. The simplicity does not take away from the Gospel shared so beautifully in this song.

Thanks for publishing such a neat article and an uplifting magazine. I look forward to receiving *The Lutheran Witness* each month.

Connie Bolte
York, Neb.

Mission multiplication at sea

The Lutheran Witness' October stories on "Mission Multiplication" and the Reformation surfaced online on a Norwegian cruise ship during a recent holiday. The ship carried about 2,000 people from 60 countries. After visiting about a dozen countries and historic places such as Ephesus, my wife and I were struck with the pos-

sibilities of doing Christ's work right there, on board and at our various ports of call in both Europe and Asia.

After visiting Ephesus, we often recalled Paul's experiences there as we dined in the ship's restaurants. On one occasion, after inviting our companions to pray with us, they refused. On another, a self-confessed atheist admitted he simply could not be a Christian. Janet, my wife, responded by saying that in spite of being repudiated by Marx or Nietzsche or anyone else, the Christian faith still goes on. A man from Malta had tears in his eyes as we spoke of St. Paul, sang "A Mighty Fortress," and visited his island.

Setting the Record Straight

At a Christmas party for a church's caroling group and hand-bell choir, the following (mostly) true exchange took place between a wise guy and a woman named Carol:

Wise guy: "Are you the 'Carol of the Bells'?"

Woman: "No, I'm the belle of the carols."

—Anonymous

(Or wishes to remain that way, anyway)

Your Order, Please

Good King Wenceslas phoned for a pizza. Recognizing his voice, the salesgirl asked him, "Do you want your usual? Deep pan, crisp and even?"

—Anonymous Again

The Heart of the Matter

Our fifth-grade students have to write their memory verses on Friday. Recently, they were assigned Mark 12:28–31, which tells the story of a teacher of the law asking Jesus, "What is the most important commandment?"

Jesus answered: "The most important one . . . is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one'" (NIV).

One student wrote: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord *has won*."

I think it's a very appropriate proclamation.

Principal David Birnbaum
St. Paul Lutheran School
Serbin, Texas



"So when exactly did Bethlehem get a railroad line?"

Our Lord works from fear to faith and reconciliation. The passengers on the ship, and the people on the land, needed to hear the comfort and consolation of the Gospel, and once again we were given multiple opportunities to share the Good News. In this day of instant communication, multiple mission opportunities come to each of us.

Dr. Albert E. Jabs
Lexington, S.C.

Responsibility: a two-way street

I was disappointed with Dr. Randy Schroeder's response to the

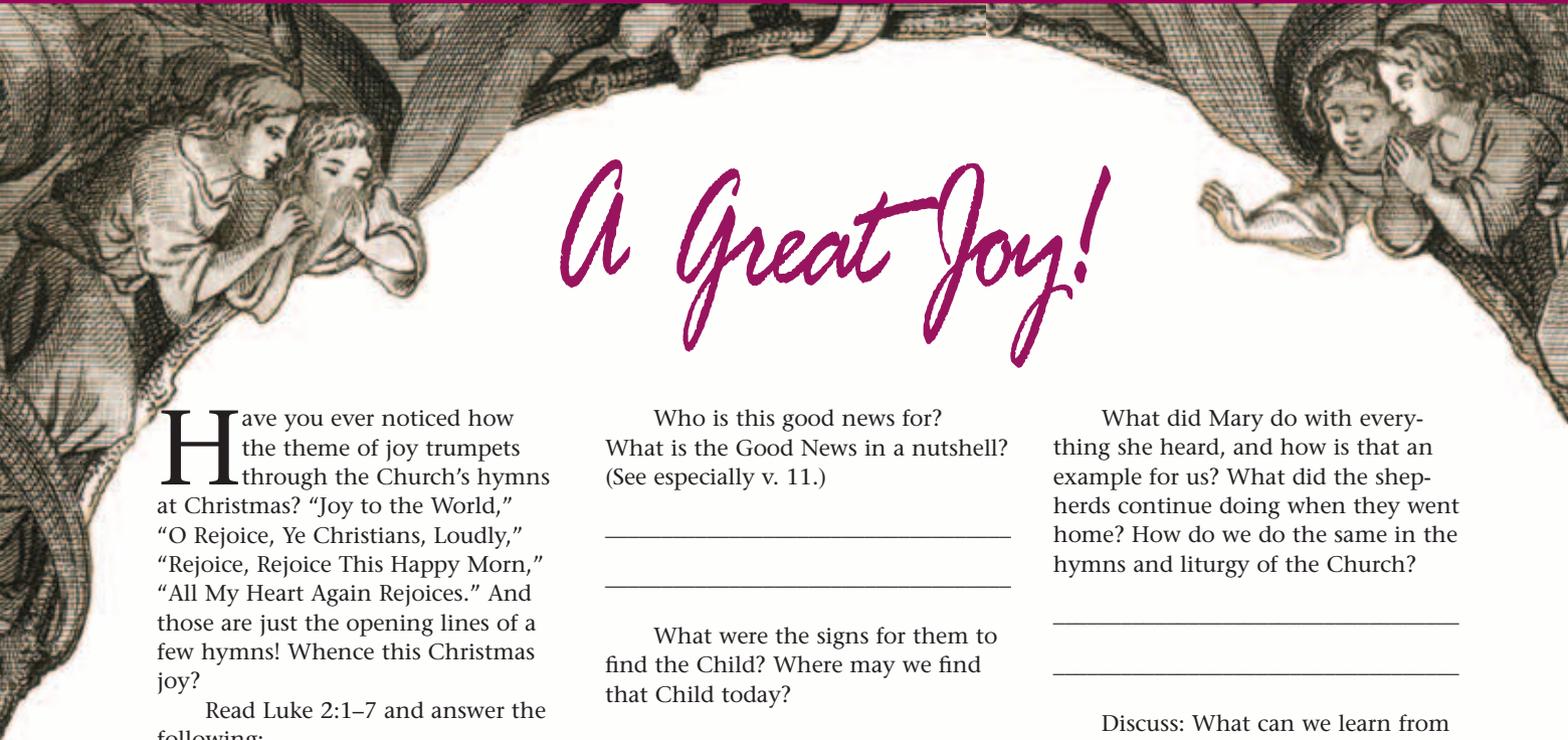
worried wife in the October Family Counselor section of *The Lutheran Witness*. It suggests a sin- and fear-based stance leading to control and limitations. The husband is encouraged to modify and limit his interactions with the opposite sex due to his wife's anxiety. Nowhere is the wife encouraged to examine her own anxiety and fearfulness. She, too, has a responsibility to give "through self-sacrificing love," not just her husband.

With trust, love, commitment, and acceptance, blessings are available to both husband and wife in a thriving relationship. One should marry wisely, thoughtfully, and care-

fully to avoid saying "You can't" or "You shouldn't" after saying "I do."

Barb Foster, LCSW (retired)
Portland, Ore.

Read more letters to the editor at lcms.org/witness. We welcome letters that comment on articles in *The Lutheran Witness*. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Send letters to "Letters," c/o *The Lutheran Witness*, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295; or send them via e-mail to lutheran.witness@lcms.org. Please include your name, postal address, and telephone number. Letters without this information cannot be considered for publication.



A Great Joy!

Have you ever noticed how the theme of joy trumpets through the Church's hymns at Christmas? "Joy to the World," "O Rejoice, Ye Christians, Loudly," "Rejoice, Rejoice This Happy Morn," "All My Heart Again Rejoices." And those are just the opening lines of a few hymns! Whence this Christmas joy?

Read Luke 2:1-7 and answer the following:

Who was the Roman emperor when our Lord was born?

What brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem in time for the Child's birth?

When Mary gave birth to Christ, what did she wrap Him in and where did she place Him?

Why were they there?

Discuss (or think about): Do we ever "crowd" the Lord out of the inn of our souls? In what ways can we ready ourselves to welcome Him during these holy days?

Read Luke 2:8-14. To whom was the good news of the Savior's birth first announced? What did the angel say to them?

Who is this good news for? What is the Good News in a nutshell? (See especially v. 11.)

What were the signs for them to find the Child? Where may we find that Child today?

What did the angel hosts sing that night? How is that song still used regularly in the Church?

Read Luke 2:15-20. What did the shepherds do when they heard the good news? Does the Good News *still* bring people to the places where they find their Savior? What are those places?

What did the shepherds do when they arrived?

What did Mary do with everything she heard, and how is that an example for us? What did the shepherds continue doing when they went home? How do we do the same in the hymns and liturgy of the Church?

Discuss: What can we learn from this account about sharing the Good News? About glorifying and praising God?

Just as the shepherds were told the good news about the Savior in a personal way (*to you* is born a Savior), and where they could find the Child, and this resulted in their witnessing and glorifying and praising God, so during the holy days of Christmas we have a wonderful opportunity to rejoice in the Gospel anew for ourselves, and to invite friends and neighbors to join us in adoration at the manger of the Divine Service, where the One who long ago came to us in Bethlehem comes to us still in the very body and blood He received from blessed Mary and offered up on the cross. How can we *not* be singing:

*O rejoice, ye Christians, loudly,
For our joy has now begun;
Wondrous things our God has done.
Tell abroad His goodness proudly,
Who our race has honored thus,
That He deigns to dwell with us.
Joy, O joy, beyond all gladness,
Christ has done away with sadness!
Hence, all sorrow and repining,
For the Sun of Grace is shining!*

(LSB 897:1)

Rev. William Weedon (weedon.blogspot.com)
is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church,
Hamel, Ill.





Sunshine and Peace

'Jesus came to bring sunshine to a dark world. What a great picture!
Shine on us, O Lord!'

Do you think people 2,000 years ago were different from us?

The times were different, of course. Living standards were different. The issues in society facing the average person were different. And yet, people then, as now, needed food, clothing, and shelter. They lived in families and had friends and neighbors. They had fears and anxieties. And, they wanted security and peace.

Cultures and language differ, but people at their core are people, regardless of when and where they live (or lived).

As we approach the Christmas season, most of us look forward to the traditional reading of that beautiful account of the first Christmas in Luke 2. But months before angels appeared to shepherds saying, "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14), there were other words of joy and praise that ought not be overlooked.

These are the words of the priest Zechariah following the birth of his son, John, known broadly in the Christian faith as John the Baptist. They are recorded by Luke in the first chapter of his gospel:

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath that He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:68-79).

We continue to sing these words still today as part of our liturgy. Zechariah's song is known as the "Benedictus," the Latin translation of the song's first word, "blessed." Zechariah sings powerful words about the fulfillment of God's promise of a Savior, the yet-unborn Son of his wife's young relative, Mary.

Zechariah is excited, and with good reason. He knows that the One who has the power and strength to save—is this the meaning of "horn" of salvation—is coming. He would rescue God's people from oppression and deliver them from their sin.

Referring to Christ Jesus as "the sunrise," Zechariah says that He will "give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." Another translation says that this "rising sun" will "shine on those living in darkness. . . ."

The world is a dark place. Think of all the concerns people face today. Some items on the list have become all too familiar: economic uncertainty, war, and terrorism, to name just a few.

People recognize that the times in which we live are tenuous and uncertain. They have inflicted pain on many people—for example, through unemployment or the death of loved ones in Iraq or Afghanistan. We hear and read news reports of children being abducted and of gunmen killing innocent people. Fear, anxiety, and loss are very real.

We live in the shadow of death. We fall on our knees and pray to the One about whom Zechariah prophesied and sang.

Jesus came to bring sunshine to a dark world. What a great picture! Shine on us, O Lord!

My dear wife, Terry, and I pray that your Advent and Christmas will be greatly blessed with the sunshine that the Holy Infant brings and that you will know the peace that only He can give!

Jerry Kieschnick
John 3:16-17

Lives Transformed through
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