


THE LUTHERAN 

DECEMBER 2013

AMBASSADOR



SING



of Him

The Jesus Revolution

BY JONATHAN ANDERSON

Rebellion and counterculture in the 1960s—evidenced by urban riots, anti-war protests, sexual revolution, hippie subculture, and psychedelic drugs—alienated many American youth from Christianity and dimmed the church's future. But God, in response, "did awesome things for which [His people] did not look" (Isaiah 64:3). In an unexpected manner, He Himself intervened, raising up a radical youth movement known, fittingly, as the Jesus Revolution. Its focus was Jesus; its appeal and fervor were revolutionary; and through it, God reached out to the unreachable, rescued precious souls, and preserved His church by preparing its future leaders.



From autonomous Southern California beginnings in the late 1960s, the Jesus Revolution spread spontaneously across the U.S. for several years through coffeehouses, Jesus bands, and underground newspapers. Comprising hundreds of thousands of unconventional Jesus People and more traditional Straight People, it was everywhere marked by a vital personal relationship with Jesus, insatiable hunger for the Bible, and enthusiastic public witnessing. Simultaneous with but unconnected to the larger movement were many lesser-known localized revivals which, on occasion, affected more than just youth. Following are two stories:

Early in 1970, a young man of sinful reputation from Hendrum, Minn., attended the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement's large Midwinter Youth Conference and surprised everyone by responding to an altar call. This news electrified Hendrum. Shortly thereafter, three high school boys were converted and began a Bible study. Revival spread and the group grew, often meeting spontaneously for fellowship at a church or a farm. Ultimately, 30 teenagers from several communities would gather around a bonfire in the woods to sing, pray, and testify about the reality of Jesus in their lives. Burdened for others, they organized an evangelism crusade for their peers and formed a musical group that sang at

area churches. Numbers of them went on to attend Bible schools, and several became pastors.

In 1969, Rev. Merton Jannusch was serving a Lutheran church in Green Bay, Wis. An eager supporter of the LEM, he invited one of its evangelists for special meetings in the fall. But no one was more surprised during those meetings than Jannusch himself when God convicted him of covering his sin with clean living and substituting biblical conservatism for faith in Christ. Deeply repentant, he asked Jesus to come into his heart. Three days later, an LEM leader called, asking Jannusch to preach at an upcoming conference in Jannusch's former

church in Cleveland, Ohio.

"I want to tell you something," said Jannusch. "I've just received Jesus."

"We thought you *were* saved," came the reply.

"I am now, and I'm ready to preach."

At the February 1970 conference, Jannusch told his former congregation that he had been a lost sinner while serving them, and he challenged them to consider their own relationships to Jesus. The effect was phenomenal. The whole church was stirred. Many were saved, including several elders. At the packed closing service, scores answered Jannusch's appeal to kneel and open their hearts to Jesus. The next night, 50 attended a fellowship meeting for new Christians.

The thousands of Jesus Revolution converts still in our churches today bear tremendous witness to God's power to revive. Can He do it again? Absolutely! "Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down!" (Isaiah 64:1). Send a revival, and start with me.

Anderson, Moorhead, Minn., worships at St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D. (Source: Jonathan D. Anderson, Our Fathers Saw His Mighty Works, 2013. Scripture from NKJV.) Special thanks to Wayne Almlie and Byron Meline for relating the Hendrum stories.

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Let ev'ry gloomy soul rejoice and cast out bitter pain.
A child is born in David's town to make us whole
again. So let us to the Christ child go and sing from
hearts that overflow. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

—Hans Christian Andersen

They all were looking for a king to slay their foes and
lift them high, Thou cam'st, a little baby thing that
made a woman cry.

—George MacDonald

[Love caused Thy incarnation, love brought Thee down to me; Thy thirst for
my salvation procured my liberty. O love beyond all telling, that led Thee to
embrace, in love all love excelling, our lost and fallen race!

—Paul Gerhardt]

Not in that poor lowly stable, with the oxen standing
by, we shall see Him; but in heaven, set at God's right
hand on high; when like stars His children crowned
all in white shall wait around.

—Cecil Frances Alexander

My heart remains in wonder before that lowly bed
within the stable yonder where Christ, my Lord,
was laid. My faith finds there its treasure, my soul its
pure delight, its joy beyond all measure, the Lord of
Christmas night.

—Hans Adolph Brorson




Song of Mary

By Amber Dahl

As I read Luke's Gospel account of young Mary hastening to visit her cousin Elizabeth, I wondered what was going on in her mind during the journey. An angel of God had just given her two life-changing messages: she was chosen by God to carry and give birth to God's only begotten Son, Jesus; and her cousin, Elizabeth, was also expecting a miracle baby in her old age.

When Mary arrived, Elizabeth gave the young virgin cause for much rejoicing when she prophetically expresses that Mary was bearing the Christ child. The two women exchanged greetings, and the babies they carried met in Spirit for the first time. "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! Why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" asked Elizabeth (Luke 1:42-43).

What confirmation to the young mother! She had doubted at first the angel's message asking, "How can this be?" But she had been willing: "I am the Lord's servant."



My
soul glorifies
the Lord and my
spirit rejoices
in God my
Savior.

Now God had given her confirmation that this was God's work from beginning to end, and Mary knew that the Lord's hand was upon her in a mighty way. Whatever she was a part of, she had only to believe and trust that God would work out the details.

What spilled out of Mary's heart as she greeted Elizabeth is now called the *Magnificat*, or the Song of Mary. Her soul must have been singing after hearing Elizabeth's Spirit-filled exclamation: "Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her" (Luke 1:45). Imagine what relief she felt to be able to share this good news with someone like Elizabeth, some-

one who had also experienced a miracle from God. "Impossible" was no longer a word in either of their vocabularies.

As Mary's soul sang, her words tumbled forth in praise and exaltation to the Lord: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant."

Amazing is the thought. Charles Spurgeon noted many hundreds of years later that Mary rejoiced in God her Savior, although her Savior was still in her womb. What a mystery.

Mary is an example of humility for all of us. If anyone had cause to be proud, it was she. Yet, after receiving the greatest gift of all, she still called herself God's servant. It is good to remember that Christ could have picked any woman to be His mother—duchess, empress, queen or princess—but He chose a woman from a modest town and birth. "From now on all generations will call me blessed, for the Mighty One has done great things for me—Holy is his name" (Luke 1:49). There are so many other homes or environments He could have entered that would have been more worthy and would have given Him a better start in His life on earth. But He chose a woman who would lay Him in a manger instead of a crib.

Humility is defined as having a modest or low view of one's own importance. As Christians we should also add one more element to that definition: we should magnify God's strength and what He is able to do! To magnify is to make something appear larger than it is. However, the only thing that needs to be larger, regarding God, is our own personal view of Him. It is impossible to magnify God too much. It is our perception that is off, not God's ability to perform great deeds. In fact, God is so mighty that He is able to do great things—even through us. "We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (II Corinthians 4:7). True humility, then, is not only having a modest view of ourselves but a truthful view of God and what He is able to do through us.

Regarding Mary's song, author and pastor Bo Giertz penned, "True greatness exists in those who expect great things of God and allow Him to do great things with them." One way to practice humility is to do what Mary did in her song: to remember the mighty deeds God has performed from generation to generation. When we exalt God, as Mary did, our faith in God grows and our inflated view of ourselves shrinks. Let us rejoice that Christ will fulfill His promises to us, humbly realizing that God uses even us—jars of clay—to do great things for Him. This Christmas, let us join in Mary's song, magnifying the Lord and rejoicing in Christ our Savior.

Dahl, a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., has been fostering children for more than two years with her husband, Ben.

By Pastor Tim Jones

They waited and wondered for decades if God would answer. Time and again they prayed for a child, especially for a son. Yet the wife's womb was barren.

Both of them had come from the line of priests: Zacharias from the line of Abijah and Elizabeth from the line of Aaron. They had followed God's rules, and were considered righteous.

Though Zacharias had served faithfully as a priest, it seemed their prayers for a child had fallen on deaf ears. Now they were both old and beyond the age to expect a child, or so they thought.

In the beginning of his carefully researched Gospel, the physician Luke recounts their story. Why? Because their prayers would be answered, and in ways they could not possibly have imagined. They would indeed have a son. He would be the one promised by God to pave the way for the Messiah.

Zacharias was lighting incense in the temple of the Lord because the lot had pointed to him as the one God had chosen for this task. While there in the temple, the angel Gabriel appeared and conveyed God's message to him. But the message seemed too good to be true.

Can you blame Zacharias? The message presented by the angel was a bit hard to believe. It was true that God gave Abraham a son in his old age, but that was Abraham, after all. Zacharias was just another of the many priests who rotated serving in the Temple. Why and how could God fulfill their desire for a child since they were old? And how could Zacharias be sure his child would do such extraordinary things?

So he doubted. He asked the angel if the message was really true. Based on his response, it seems Gabriel was not pleased with Zacharias' question.

"And the angel answered him, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. And behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words'" (Luke 1:19-20, ESV).

And so it was. Gabriel's declaration took effect instantly. Emerging from the Temple, Zecharias was unable to speak. A crowd gathered around to inquire why his duties had taken so long. But he could not tell them. He could only act out a primitive version of Charades as he attempted to explain what happened.

As the angel had declared, Zecharias remained mute as his son grew in Elizabeth's womb. Just imagine how many times he must have replayed that encounter in his mind. Pondering each of Gabriel's words, he would remind himself they were God's own message. And what an extraordinary message it was.

On that wonderful day when his son was born, Elizabeth declared his name would be John, just as Gabriel had instructed them. But those assembled for his circumcision argued, because tradition held he should be named after his father. Observing this, Zecharias begs for something to write on. He confirms his wife's proclamation. The baby's name would be John.

With that singular act of obedience, the long period of forced

silence is broken and Zecharias is able to speak. His first words are referred to as "The Song of Zecharias" or *Benedictus*, which is the Latin word for "blessed" (the first word of this passage in the Latin Vulgate version of the Bible).

Zecharias' words reflect the deep contemplation he must have given to Gabriel's words about his son, combined with his own knowledge of the prophets' statements about the one who would prepare the way for the Messiah. But more than his own thoughts, Zecharias prophesied in the power of the Holy Spirit, which had just come upon him.

Zecharias praised God and declared God's plan for salvation, which was about to unfold before their eyes. His son John, the one who would be called the Baptizer, would indeed prepare the way for



Praise
be to the Lord,
the God of Israel,
because he has come
to his people and
redeemed
them.

the Messiah, just as the prophets had foretold.

Through Zecharias, the Holy Spirit provides us with a beautiful overview of the message of the entire Bible: redemption. God would send the One who would save creation from sins and their enemies, so that their relationship with Him could be restored. The Messiah could come. God had not forgotten and was about to fulfill His covenant with Abraham. And John would announce this good news to God's people, so that they could prepare for Jesus' arrival.

Our Redeemer is coming. He is strong and mighty to save us. Praise God for His grace and mercy toward us. During this Advent Season, take time to meditate upon this amazing passage from God's Word in Luke 1:67-79. As you do, ask Him to fill you with the awe and joy of Zecharias.

Jones serves Community Lutheran, Oceanside, Calif.

Song of Zacharias

BENEDICTIONS

“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

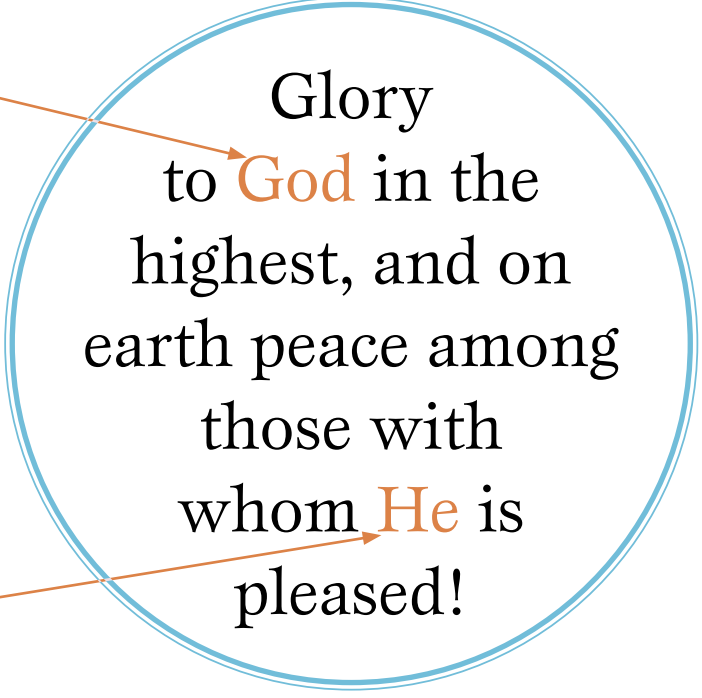
Song of the angels

GLO RIA



By Katelyn Gudim

Reconciled and redeemed are two of my favorite words. They signify a sense of rest, of peace that is completed. The meaning of these words is to be bought back into a right relationship. However, to be bought implies that there was a price. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23) and “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Hebrews 9:22). The price is high, the stakes are raised and out of my reach. Without a substitute, I am without hope. Praise be to God, He sought to bring peace.



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

The story of Christmas is the beautiful unfolding of the plan of salvation that God has been writing since the beginning of time.

Since the fall into sin in the Garden of Eden there has been no peace with the Father. Sin separates us from God in His holiness; we were called His enemies. With the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life—the same sins that Adam and Eve faced on that fateful day—we are waging war against the God of the Universe. We cling to our man-made gods of money, sex, fame; our hearts are filled with lust, pride, hatred, revenge, and apathy. Inward I look and see a never ending sea of filth, sin, death.

But God, in His great love for us, paid the price Himself: “While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). We now enter before the throne of God with a perfect standing before the Almighty Ruler and Judge, just in all His ways. This is the good news that is the sweet gospel.

The angels declared in Luke 2:14 that Christ is to bring peace among those with whom He is pleased. He is not declaring peace to all here, but to those who would call upon His name and be washed in His blood. This peace is with God, and is brought about solely because of His death and resurrection. To those who deny His saving grace, He also denies peace with the Father. This is the law, where we are faced with our sin and are given a choice: ignore it or try to wash ourselves—both of which lead to death and deny peace with the Father—or allow ourselves to be cleansed by Christ, who in turn gives us peace.

God is not pleased with us because of what we bring to His table, because God knows that even our righteous acts are seen as filthy rags to Him (Isaiah 64:6). He is not pleased with us because we have shaped up and cleaned ourselves, because God knows that no amount of scrubbing will erase the stains of sin—only the blood of the Lamb will suffice (Revelation 7:14b). He is not even pleased because we repented in our strength, because God knows that He brought us to the place of repentance. God is pleased with us because of Christ in us.

Maybe you have heard of the term justification. We are declared righteous in our standing with God because of Christ’s work on the cross. That standing does not change with the seasons, our emotions, or whether the sun shines or rain fills the day. Forgiveness was declared that day; redemption was paid in full. Jesus was our perfect sacrifice, our right atonement, the exact price required. We now have peace with the Father through Jesus Christ.

While this life is filled with turmoil, strife, trials, and struggles, we have peace in Him. Our days may be filled with pain and a river of tears, but we have peace in Him. This peace, that surpasses all understanding, is ours in Christ. The toils may still remain for this life, but the peace of God will endure throughout all eternity. This is not to belittle the current struggle, but to magnify the end result.

God was glorified in Jesus’ birth, His life, His death, and His resurrection, because Christ belonged to Him. He alone is worthy of praise, honor, and thanksgiving. He is the giver of all that is good, “every good and perfect gift” (James 1:17), including Jesus.

This is the story of Christmas: Christ came to bring peace. This peace would be at the cost of His very life, but it would be finished and perfected for all eternity. Even at the celebration of His birth, we anticipate the reason for His coming and acknowledge it at the cross, the empty grave, and through His victory over sin and death. With the angels, we can give Him glory and declare His peace.

Praise be to God, He has brought us peace.

Gudim, a member of Grace Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., is a short-term missionary assistant serving in Jinja, Uganda.

By Pastor Terry Olson

“And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him” (Luke 2:33).

Mary and Joseph were amazed. Why? Words spoken to each of them in prophecy had become flesh. Now, 40 days after His birth, their child, Jesus, was again confirmed as the Christ. This time, the prophecy came in the form of a song.

Forty days after the birth of Jesus the Messiah, Mary and Joseph brought their son to the Temple as was the custom. A worshiper was there whose name was Simeon.

“Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it has been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (Luke 2:25-26).

As Simeon held this infant child in his arms, he delivered a heartwarming and beautiful sermon—a hymn of praise. The Song of Simeon (*Nunc Dimittis*, in Latin) that was declared to Mary was the very gospel message of salvation for all. Simeon’s message declared Jesus was the Savior, come by God’s grace to be the Light of the World, the giver of peace and joy. And these words were proclaimed to Mary. Now she stood amazed.

For hundreds of years, God had stilled the prophets’ mouths. The silence been deafening for the people of Israel. Throughout their history, they had suffered greatly, both for their own sin and because of their oppression by others. As God’s chosen people, they had suffered under slavery and lived in exile. They were a people in desperate need of consolation.

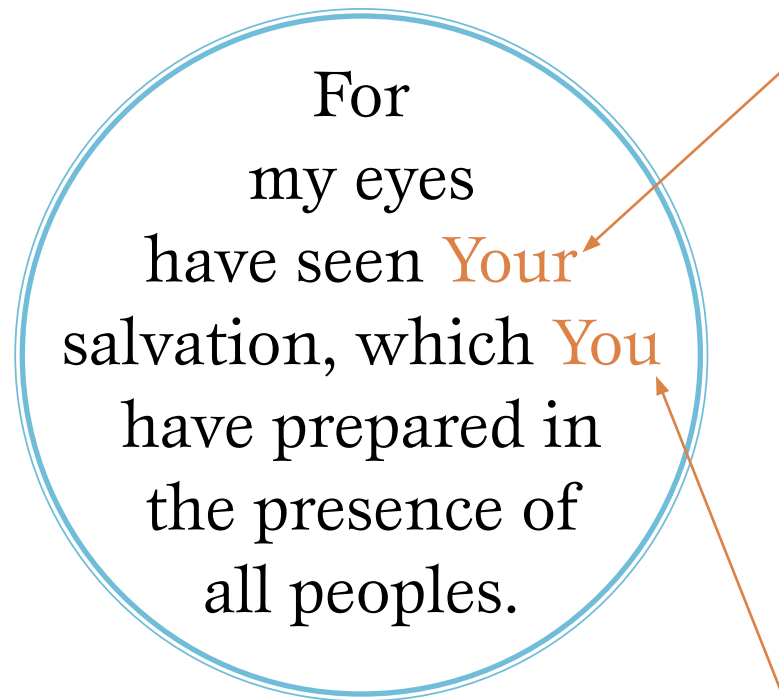
Simeon was in need of salvation, too. He had been promised by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had seen the Lord’s Christ. Now he was holding in his arms this promised salvation. He marveled at the glory of God in the face of the infant Christ. How could this baby be regarded as Savior of all people, the Light of all Gentiles, and the honor and glory of all Israel? The key to understanding comes in the Word of God. Simeon, Joseph, and Mary believed God’s Word by faith. They stood amazed.

As a little child in my home congregation, I remember listening to and participating in the proclamation of the Christmas gospel, my feet barely over the edge of the pew. Recitation and carols always announced with joy, “The angel said to them, ‘Fear not, for behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord’” (Luke 2:10-11). I, too, was looking for the consolation and peace of my own soul, and knew that Jesus was my

Savior. The joyous Christmas message in song and word reaffirmed that good news every year. I stood amazed.

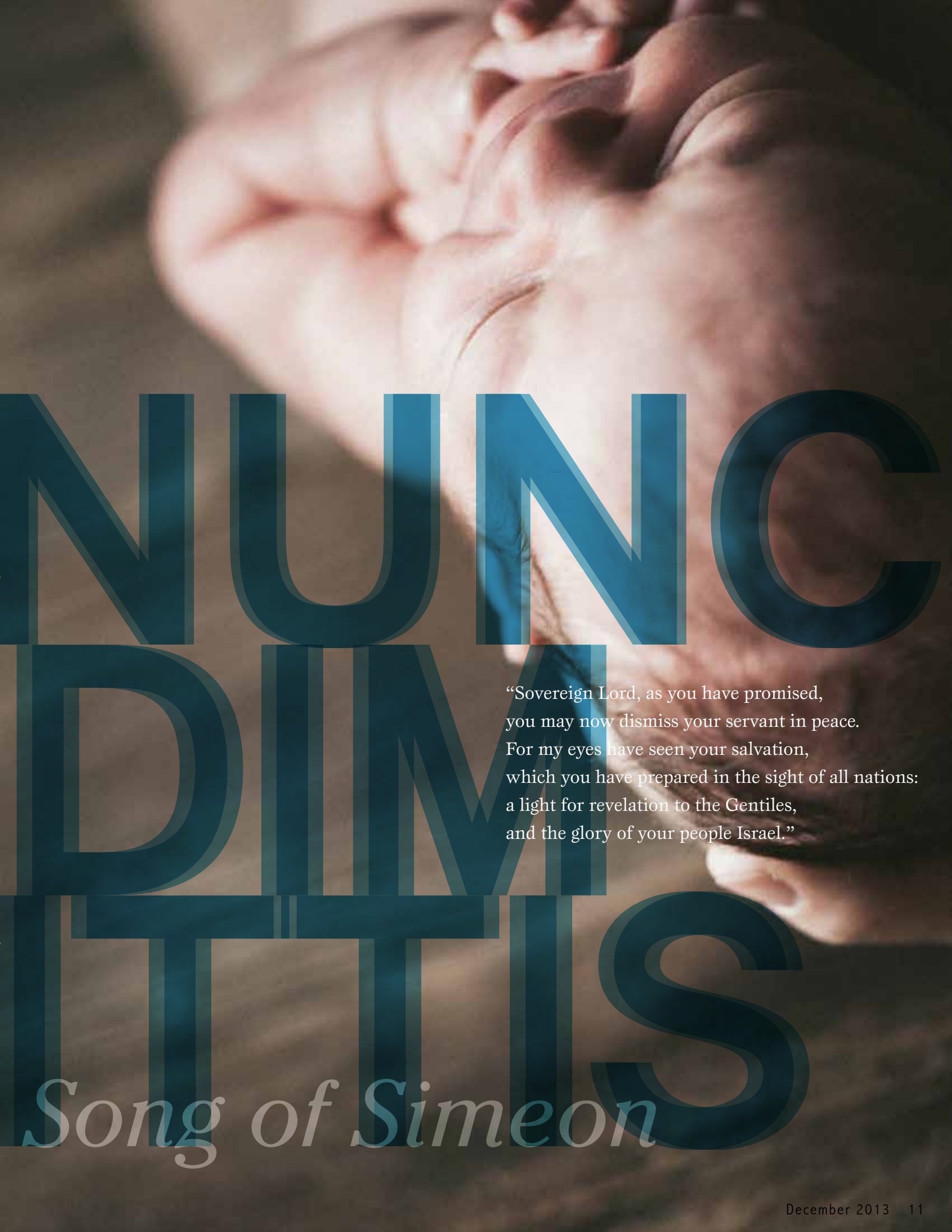
This gracious gift of salvation embodied in that infant child gave Simeon the assurance of heaven. Now he could depart in peace. Now he was ready to die. The gospel of the Savior was in his arms of faith. The light for revelation and for glory to all peoples had not only come to Simeon, but would remain to shine to all generations.

This Christmas—as we find ourselves driven from one sin to another, as we are propelled from one work to another, as we have little security or no assurance of heaven—I challenge you to look for your consolation in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. What



does the Song of Simeon proclaim to us? Let us say with Simeon, “Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your Word, for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all people, a Light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32). May we be amazed this Christmas.

Olson serves Trinity Free Lutheran, Grand Forks, N.D., and Ny Stavanger Lutheran, Buxton, N.D.



NUNO DIMITS

Song of Simeon

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

UNTUNTO

Handel's Messiah

By Elise Hylden

Christmas music before Thanksgiving was outlawed in the Parsley home as I was growing up. To this day I feel a pesky twinge of guilt if I sneak in a little Mannheim Steamroller or Peanuts before that fourth Friday in November. In recent years, however, I've established one exception to this rule in my own household: Handel's *Messiah*.

This world-renowned oratorio debuted in Dublin, Ireland, on April 13, 1742, in celebration of Easter (See Mom? It's not even Christmas music!). Orchestrated by an ambitious George Frideric Handel in just 24 days, the work can be divided into three parts: 1) The prophecies and birth of the promised Messiah, 2) the sacrificial death of the Messiah, and 3) the resurrection and second advent of the Messiah.

The most familiar of the 50 songs that comprise *Messiah* is, of course, *Hallelujah*. But while this celebrated chorus is often sung at Christmas time, it actually belongs to the second part of *Messiah* as a triumphant culmination of Christ as risen and conquering King. A more appropriate chorus for our Christmas concerts would be *For Unto Us a Child is Born*, found in part one.

Handel carefully guides his audience through various prophecies of a Savior for the sin-struck human race. The seventh song of *Messiah* promises that this Coming One shall purify the sons of Levi that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Following this brisk prophecy of the mysterious Coming One, a lone alto reveals his name: Emmanuel, God with us!

Isaiah 7:14, the passage upon which this solo is based, was

US

The
virgin will
conceive and give
birth to a son, and
will call him
Emmanuel.

spoken to the kingdom of Judah with dual intent. The prophet gave Emmanuel first as a sign of judgment on King Ahaz for his failure to trust the Lord. Ahaz relied on men, specifically the army of Assyria, for protection, so God promised to visit him in wrath. At the same time, however, Isaiah's prophecy draws our gaze 730 years forward in time to its ultimate fulfillment, only this time Emmanuel is a Savior for His people.

Four songs later a chorus of baroque strings and voices finally greets us with the cheerful announcement of Isaiah 9:6: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." Imagine. The glory of the Lord is born unto us, the people who are described in Isaiah chapter 9 as stumbling around in darkness.

Once we're introduced to Emmanuel, Isaiah (and consequently,

Handel) imparts four more titles, four more facets, of this child. His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. These names are different from Emmanuel. They are specific, and do not share a secondary fulfillment as in Isaiah 7:14. These titles can only be fulfilled in the ultimate heir of David, Jesus.

During my two years at AFLBS, Pastor Jerry Holmaas insisted on setting the record straight on behalf of Isaiah in verse 6. He declared that Handel inadvertently divided "wonderful" and "counselor" in his musical arrangement of this passage. These are not two separate titles but should be read as one name. The promised Messiah is a wonder of a Counselor. Christ as counselor demonstrates His ability to wisely determine, oversee, and carry out an extensive plan of action that will benefit the entire world. He Himself is the president, the cabinet, and the entire military. Is that not wonderful?

As Mighty God, the Messiah is directly linked to the Father Himself and the strength of His power is on display.

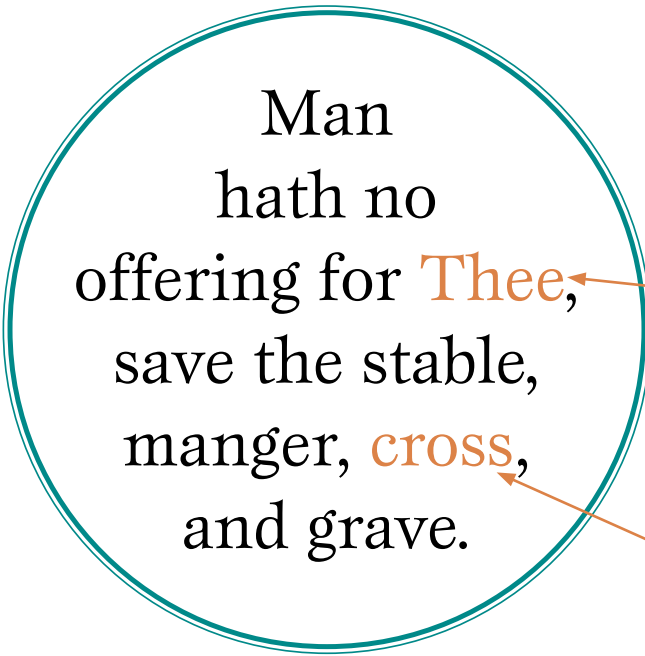
Isaiah's prophecy also promises an Everlasting Father, denoting Christ's eternity and control of time, as well as His paternal love, protection, and provision. This Father will not allow His children to stagger around in darkness, but shines the light of His face upon them.

Finally, the Prince of Peace points forward to Christ's healing of the great divide between Holy God and sinful man. This Prince will bring about true peace and put an end to hostility. He will break down defenses through unexpected vulnerability and weakness from the manger to the cross.

Charles Jennens, the talented librettist who selected the 82 verses used in *Messiah*, hoped that Handel would "lay out his whole Genius and Skill upon it, that the Composition may excel all his former Compositions, as the Subject excels every other Subject."* Today, 270 years later, musicians are still celebrating this finely crafted masterpiece. But even Handel, a devout believer, recognized that his music only served to point to the Subject that excels every other Subject: our Messiah.

Hylden, a 2006 graduate of AFLBS, studied art at Minnesota State University, Moorhead. She currently lives on the AFLC Schools Campus, Plymouth, Minn., where her husband is enrolled at AFLTS.

*Byfield, Ted. *We the People: Democracy, Christendom's Unintended Achievement*. (Society to Explore and Record Christian History, 2011) 235.



Man
hath no
offering for Thee,
save the stable,
manger, cross,
and grave.

By Bill Ogg

Hans Adolph Brorson, in the year 1732, dedicated a new hymn that he had just authored “to the glory of God, and for the edification of Christian souls, especially for my beloved congregation, for the coming joyous Christian festival.” His hymn, titled, “Thy Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We,” became a favorite at Christmas for many.

Brorson, a Lutheran pastor and later a bishop, is commonly referred to as “the Danish poet of Christmas” and he is widely regarded as the first important poet of Danish literature. As the son and grandson of Lutheran pastors in Denmark, Brorson, along with his brothers (also Lutheran pastors), embraced the ideals and thoughts of Pietism during its early stages. It was the same period of time that the Danish author and historian Erik Pontoppidan was writing his explanations of Luther’s Catechism, thus planting the early seeds of the pietistic movement in Norway.

Brorson authored more than 100 hymns, seven of which are included in the AFLC’s *Ambassador Hymnal*. His most well-known book, *The Rare Jewel of Faith*, published in 1739, included both original hymns (more than 80) as well as many translations of German pietistic hymns.

At the beginning his vocation, Brorson served as a pastor in southern Jutland. His hymns, including those he translated, were penned for his congregations’ use. He was appointed bishop of Ribe in 1741, where he lived out the rest of his life.

Brorson’s hymn, “Thy Little Ones, Dear Lord are We,” is not widely known outside of Lutheran circles even to this day. But it became a favorite in Denmark and Norway, and thus a staple among Scandinavians and Germans in America. It also made its way to the Danish West Indies via missionaries from Denmark.

The words to his Christmas hymn are set to a gentle tune composed by Johann A. P. Schultz, of Luneberg, Germany. Schultz was, at the time, director of the Royal Danish theatre, and was largely responsible for introducing musical instruction into the schools in Denmark. The English translation of the verses was done in 1898 by Harriet Krauth Spaeth, daughter of Pastor Charles Porterfield

Krauth, who was a professor at the Philadelphia Lutheran Seminary.

Many young people sang Brorson’s hymn, to the delight of their congregations, during children’s Christmas programs or at family fellowship gatherings. Although it is tucked away in the children’s section of the *Ambassador Hymnal*, it should not be labeled as exclusively for children. The theology is profound.

While we love to sing of the angels, shepherds, the star of Bethlehem and all the special sentiments of the birth of the Christ child, this hymn reminds us of “the love, so wondrous great, that drew Thee down to our estate” (vs. 4). At the same time, the hymn reflects the desire of so many who seek the Savior: “Enlighten ev’ry soul and mind, That we the way to Thee may find” (vs. 1).

The gentle eighth notes that begin the first three phrases of the song create a musical, if not a spiritual, effect of drawing us into the words and mood of the song, and thus drawing our hearts toward our Savior: “Do Thou to us grace accord, True faith and love to us impart, That we may hold Thee in our heart” (vs. 5).

Beginning with the first Sunday of Advent, a time of expectation of Christ’s coming, every day of the church calendar points toward the cross. In verse three we meet head on with the reality of Christ’s mission, “Now welcome from Thy heavenly home, Thou to our vales of tears art come” (vs. 3). Brorson makes very clear humanity’s humble state and need for salvation: “Man hath no offering for Thee, save the stable, manger, cross, and grave.”

Brorson ends his hymn with an intimate picture of the gathering at the manger, which foreshadows another scene, this time set around a triumphant King in glory: “We gather round Thee, Jesus dear, So happy in Thy presence here; Grant us, our Savior, every one, To stand in heav’n before Thy throne.”

A well loved and respected pastor, Brorson died in 1764, but his legacy lives on through his hymns, which ultimately point to his Savior.

Ogg is a member of St. Peter’s Lutheran, Melvin, Ill.

thy little ones

DEAF
LORD

are we



He had never thought of God before. In his 30 years of apparently worry-free life, he had never had a place for such things. People who had any interest in religious affairs were labeled weak, helpless individuals who couldn't stand on their own feet.

But now something had happened which had thrown the self-sufficient Terje Dalen completely off balance.

It all began when he sought a job as office chief in a small, isolated community. Terje (pronounced Tare-yeh) didn't have a family; there was no one who cared, no one to say farewell to when he packed his luggage to travel the 50 miles to his new home. It was the job that lured him. For 10 years he had worked as an assistant in a large firm in Oslo; he was tired of the routine sameness. He would try something new.

Terje was able to rent a small room in a cozy house. After a few weeks at his new job, he felt sure that this was the place for him. His colleagues were pleasant people. And Terje was determined to make himself comfortable with his new working conditions and get acquainted with his surrounding community. He was given several

pieces of advice by his coworkers.

"Be on guard about your neighbors," said two of his closest comrades at work. "They are religious fanatics and they will seize every opportunity to try to bring you in through trickery. They hold their meetings in the prayer chapel, and things get pretty hot in there. Whatever you do, don't have anything to do with them."

Their advice was unnecessary. Terje didn't have any need for religious hysteria. Besides, he had greeted his neighbor, Pedersen, a couple of times. He could hardly be impolite when he met him on the street.

The evenings soon became long and lonely for Terje, especially in the holiday season when a lonesome feeling sneaked up on him. His colleagues had families to go home to. Terje sat alone in his little room.

It was on such a night that he went against all reason, having been inspired to walk over to visit Pedersen. He was lonesome, and his coworkers' advice had created a certain curiosity. It could be fun to meet these folks so nearby, the very people that everyone was so absorbed in warning him against.



Terje crossed the street, went up the two, three steps to the entry and rang the doorbell a little hesitantly. A smiling Mrs. Pedersen answered. “Oh, it is you! This is truly a pleasant surprise. Anders and I have often spoken of you since you came to the neighborhood, and we have looked for an opportunity to become better acquainted with you. Come in and I will put the coffee on.”

Terje was met with a friendliness and warmth he couldn't remember having experienced before. As the coffee cups emptied and were refilled again and again, the three sat and talked of many world events. The furniture was simple and the room wasn't filled with expensive pieces. The house was a picture of simplicity and economy. But the atmosphere was comfortable and fine. It was a good place to be.

“It's curious,” thought Terje, “Isn't the indoctrination going to begin soon? There hasn't been any talk about God at all.”

As the evening wore on, the three began to talk about more personal matters. Terje told them about himself, surprising himself as he revealed to two people he hardly knew that he wasn't really at peace in his life. For, in spite of outwardly successful circumstances,

there was an emptiness within himself.

“We were like that at one time ourselves,” said Anders. “But today we are at peace. That is to say, we have met Jesus. He has changed our lives. We love Jesus and He is the center of our whole existence.”

“There it came!” thought Terje, who changed the subject. No one was going to get him into a religious course of thought. A short time later he stood up and went home.

But a seed had been sown in the young office manager's heart. Again and again, he heard Anders' words in his head, “We love Jesus. He has changed our lives.”

In spite of his coworkers' warning, Terje continued to visit the Pedersens. The three friends had much to talk about, and Terje himself brought up topics that led to talking about God. After a six months, he joined them in a meeting in the prayer chapel.

The gnawing emptiness within Terje grew stronger and stronger. At the same time, he was being drawn toward the cross of Christ. What he had earlier laughed at, scorned, and disdained, now stood before him as the only way to peace. The joy and peace he had experienced at the Pedersens' home and the enthusiasm and great conviction of the young singers at the prayer chapel were an answer to his own longing. He suddenly realized that if his own life would be a happy one, he must come to the place where he could say as Anders, “Today I love Jesus. He has changed my life.”

Many people tried to turn him away from the way he felt he must now go. His coworkers mocked him, and the friendliness they had met him with during the first weeks was wiped away. Was he willing to offer all this up to say yes to Jesus?

Again, Christmas was near and what was normally a time of anticipation and excitement—Advent—now comprised days of struggling between life and death for Terje. Evil doesn't give up the battle easily.

On *Lille Julaften* (the day before Christmas Eve), the last resistance was removed. By the kitchen table in the small rented room, Terje sat and read the Bible. Suddenly it was as though the words in a verse actually struck him: “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but by me.”

“Yes, Lord, then I come to You,” whispered Terje, and dropped to his knees there in the kitchen.

There, humbly kneeling before the living God, he saw his sins and the burden was so heavy to bear. It crushed him to the ground. In his need he called upon the Savior: “Jesus, save me! Take away my sin!”

At once he was filled with a feeling of warmth in his inmost being. Powerfully, a billow of purity flowed in, holiness and divine love, again to his inmost being. Every fiber was touched by the transforming stream. The burden of sin disappeared. In its place his heart was filled with indescribable love.

Once more a soul had found the way from darkness to light. Terje Dalen rose from his knees and proclaimed with deep joy and conviction, as though he stood before a large gathering, “I love Jesus because he has transformed my life!”

For the first time in his life Terje could celebrate Christmas with the good news in his own heart. Together with the Pedersens and other friends from the prayer chapel, he joined his voice in the well-known words of the Christmas carol: “He my Savior is, He my Savior is.” And he could sing that with his whole heart.

Translated from Norwegian by Pastor Raynard Huglen, Newfolden, Minn. Originally printed in “Den Store Glede.”



DECEMBER 28

WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

“I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved” (Psalm 16:8).

David had respect for his Father’s will throughout his life. He gloried in doing so, saying, “I have set the Lord always before me.” What a privilege is ours also to set the Lord before us each day while we are here on earth.

Might we think of the assurance David had of his Father’s presence with him in his sufferings as he says, “God is at my right hand; I shall not be moved.” God is a very present help, and is always on hand in every time of need. With these thoughts in mind David carried on cheerfully in his work for the Lord.

Jesus wishes to go hand in hand with us each day as our guide and friend. What a blessed satisfaction it is to feel His presence and

to know He is near. We need not fear the trials and temptations which come our way.

Once again we have celebrated the birthday of our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Was He always before us during the holidays, and did we put Him first in all things? Or did the busyness of the season crowd Him out?

As we enter the new year, let us continue to walk hand in hand with Him each day; if we do so, we shall not be moved. He who puts God first will find God with him at the last.

Mrs. Birdeen Holt, Fosston, Minn.

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



The gift that never dims

BY LYNN WELLMUMSON

Christmas brings many anticipated joys of church and family gatherings. It also reminds many of us of past days and people who have gone on before us to their eternal reward.

My siblings and I were blessed to have our two sets of grandparents live to see us all become adults. They lived relatively close in proximity and were a big part of our holiday celebrations. One set of grandparents believed in fun. I can remember sitting on Grandpa's lap and pretending to drive even when I couldn't see over the steering wheel. I remember going to their office and playing with all kinds of staple guns, hole punchers, etc. I remember picking strawberries from their garden and eating homemade ice cream.

The other set of equally loved and cherished grandparents had a more serious side. We were taken to factories to see the jobs available for those who didn't take their homework seriously. (I did the same thing to my children, but that's a story for another time.) At family gatherings our great uncle always had a sermon prepared in his back pocket and delivered it with great enthusiasm. Each Christmas this set of grandparents gave us new gloves, mittens, or warm pajamas. As we got older and married, they started sending \$10 per family member in late November so the adults could purchase the needed article of warm clothing.

In November 1983 I opened their Christmas letter to find a check, not for \$40, but for \$1000. At the time this was a whole month's salary for ministerial work. I couldn't contain myself and called my sister. I rejoiced and asked if she could believe it.

She so sweetly replied, "Oh, you only got \$1000?"

My immediate reply was, "Well, how much did you get?"

She started laughing and we rejoiced together over the \$1000 we had all received.

How quickly the elation over \$1000 bottomed out when I thought, even momentarily, that others had gotten more. It

doesn't take much for a gift to lose its luster.

Sadly, familiarity often takes the luster from the gift for which we celebrate Christmas every year. We so easily forget how much we need God's gift of His Son daily. We need to regain perspective when the gift of Christmas is less than our greatest treasure. Jeremiah said, "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness" (Lamentations 3:22-23, NIV).

The shepherds, the lowly of the low, were entrusted with the glad tidings that Jesus had been born. Luke 2:15-20:

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."

So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

It was still fresh and new to them years later when Luke interviewed them as He wrote the Gospel account inspired by the Holy Spirit. May we know our need for this gift so that with the shepherds, we can be "glorifying and praising God" throughout our lives for the things we hear from God's Word.

Wellumson, a member of Emmanuel Free Lutheran, Williston, N.D., is the president of the WMF.



South Central District gathers for annual retreat

Eighty-five people from the AFLC South Central District gathered in Glen Rose, Texas, on Oct. 18–20 for a family retreat. Meeting under the theme, “Growing a Heart for Missions,” the scenic retreat included congregational members from the district and their friends. People seeking to understand the gospel for the first time and new believers were also in attendance. Descriptive

words might include: worship, fellowship, paddle boats, gospel presentations, amphitheater teachings, zip lines, campers and cabins, relaxation, basketball, good food, softball, mission presentations and videos, paint ball, beautiful vistas and views, campfires, games and perfect weather. All who came were encouraged and spiritually refreshed. Thank you, Lord.

People and Places

Pastor Connely Dyrud is serving as interim pastor at Our Savior’s Lutheran, Cannon Falls, Minn., and The Gathering, Hastings, Minn.

Pastor Mark Brophy, who retired from Alsace Lutheran, Reading, Pa., was honored by his congregation with a special celebration service on Oct. 27. Brophy has served Alsace for 28 years, 20 of them as senior pastor.

Members of **St. John’s Lutheran Church**, Schwer, Ill., lost their historic church building to a fire on Oct. 22. The church, which is served by Pastor Matt Steendahl, was 106 years old.

Pastor Nicolaus Nsanganzeli, a former student at AFLTS, is the Bishop-Elect of the Mbulu Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania. His installation will take place on January 19, 2014.



Newark Lutheran installs new members

Newark Lutheran Church, Newark, Ill., welcomed six families into membership on Oct. 27. Pictured are (from left) Jenelle Helland; Joan Bright; Jeff, Lisa, Rachel and Corey Jacobson; Kevin, Tara, Karter, Tanner, and Taylor (not pictured) Kunkel; Richard and Naomi Kunkel; and Joan Jacobson (not pictured).



The precious Word

BY JUSTO PILLMAN

I confess that I often take having the Word of God accessible for granted. The Scriptures have always been available in America and have shaped and influenced every aspect of our society, at least in our history. The situation is somewhat different here in Ecuador. I was recently reminded of the importance of God's Word after a conversation with Blanca, wife of the pastor who serves the church where we work.

To give you a little history, Ecuador was colonized by the Spaniards in the 1500s. Along with the conquistadors came the Catholic monks, who brought pre-Reformation Catholicism to Ecuador. Catholicism was then mixed with the prominent religions of the region, making for some interesting and sometimes quite pagan practices within the Church. Knowing this, I asked Blanca when it was that the Bible was made available to the common people here in Ecuador. Her answer surprised me. Her parents had never owned a Bible, Catholic services were yet held in Latin when she was growing up, and it was still considered dangerous for laymen to interpret the Scriptures on their own when she was little. It has only been in her lifetime, in the last 20 years or so, that the Bible has become readily available here.

Until recently, the Catholic Church still held absolute power over the people. Blanca recalls learning the Ten Commandments

when she was a girl for her catechism class. The fourth commandment, according to the teaching of the Catholic Church here, is not about honoring the Sabbath—it's about keeping the special holidays and festivals of the church. Blanca said she was surprised when she first read Exodus 20 for herself and saw what Scripture really had to say.

My conversation with Blanca just confirmed to us one of the main reasons why we are here: to teach the Word of God. People here are hungry to hear God's Word, because for many of them, it is brand new. John 1:14 declares, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." We work a lot with the youth, and it is our hope and prayer that we can help instill in them knowledge of God's Word and a biblical mind-set that will change their lives and one day shape their society. We are confident that as people learn more about God's Word, they will come to know the Word made flesh (John 1:14). It is truly our joy to introduce our Ecuadorian brothers and sisters to the precious Word of God.

Pillman is an AFLC missionary serving in Cuenca, Ecuador.



Members of Solid Rock Lutheran celebrate 25th anniversary

Members and friends of Solid Rock Free Lutheran Church, Anoka, Minn., celebrated on September 29 God's faithfulness to the congregation over the first 25 years of its ministry.

Guests included charter members Pastor Tom and Linda Schierkolk, Eben Junction, Mich. Pastor Schierkolk brought the message at the morning worship. Numerous greetings from former pastors were shared. Nathan Monseth recalled memo-

ries from the time that his father, Dr. Francis Monseth, served as the congregation's first pastor. Also sharing were former Pastor Jim Johnson, Fergus Falls, Minn., and interim Pastor Richard Gunderson, Cambridge, Minn.

Praise to God was expressed for the great heritage the congregation has in His Word. The congregation is currently served by Pastor Gary Haug.

AFLC memorials: October

AFLBS

Fritjof and Francis Monseth
Ruth Claus
Phyllis Peterson
Nila Grenz
Pastor Dale Mellgren
Edie Gudim

AFLTS

Fritjof and Francis Monseth
Malcolm Tweton
Carroll Hove (4)
Dr. Francis Monseth (2)
Pastor Dale Mellgren

Parish Education

Pastor Dale Mellgren

Evangelism

Irene Gallerson
Edith Gudim

HIS Fund

Pastor Dale Mellgren
Melvin Anderson

World Missions

Carroll Hove
Janet Heieren
Ed Haug
Raymond Soberg
Dr. Francis Monseth
Edith Gudim

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Oct. 31, 2013

FUND	REC'D IN OCTOBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$34,271	\$281,150	\$253,861
Evangelism	13,615	112,150	112,258
Youth Ministries	10,279	87,131	82,664
Parish Education	9,676	127,487	90,761
Seminary	46,845	246,478	183,540
Bible School	35,016	405,822	348,238
Home Missions	61,297	385,963	387,058
World Missions	65,905	340,285	335,361
Personal Support	39,183	373,073	395,019
TOTALS	\$316,088	\$2,359,539	\$2,188,762

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

Christmas gospel lessons

There is perhaps no more familiar Scripture passage to those of us who grew up in the Church than the Christmas gospel in Luke chapter 2. Our children memorized these verses and recited them during our home holiday observances for many years. This year find some quiet moments (yes, you can find a few) to sit down with your Bible and read them again, perhaps considering the following devotional lessons based in

part on an outline in my notes from a Christmas Eve service several years ago at Hope Lutheran Church in north Minneapolis:



Pastor Robert Lee

Verses 1-6

God is in control, not Caesar. The emperor was the most powerful person in the western world at the time of Jesus' birth, and yet God was using the emperor's proclamation for His own purposes. A generation later the Apostle Paul stood before the Emperor Nero to be judged and condemned; almost 2000 years later we name our sons Paul and our dogs Nero, as various writers have noted.

Verse 7

Mary's delivery of her first-born son means that Jesus was fully man. It was a real birth, not a pretend one, with a mother in painful labor and a cord to be cut. Centuries later the Church fathers, in opposition with those who would make Jesus either less than fully God or less than fully human, would declare that the full humanity and full divinity of Christ are both necessary for Him to be our Savior.

Verses 8-9

God is not a respecter of persons. The first ones to whom the good news was an-

nounced were not the rich and powerful, but rather some who might be numbered among the lowest of the lowly, the shepherds.

Verse 9

Angels can appear as very scary creatures, not at all like the cute ones we include in our programs. (I added this one.)

Verse 10

The Christmas gospel is good news of great joy for everyone, and the good news is Jesus. Period.

Verse 11

Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the city of David, a direct fulfillment of prophecy (Micah 5:2). He was born for us, to be our Savior. He is the promised one, Messiah or Christ. He is the Lord. (My notes suggest that this term is used 25 times in chapters one and two, and previously only referred to God.)

Verse 13

The Christmas gospel grants us a glimpse into the unseen world that is around us. The Bible does not tell us much about this realm, but simply takes it for granted and assumes its existence. The writer to the Hebrews describes angels as "ministering spirits, sent to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation" (1:14).

Verse 14

Jesus Christ was born for us, to be our Savior, that we might be "brought near by the blood of Christ," to know Him who is our peace (Ephesians 2:13-14), yet the ultimate reason for His birth was the glory of God, as the praises of the angels proclaimed. Christmas was the revelation of the glory of God for the glory of God.

Verses 15-18

The shepherds recognized by the miracle of faith, not by their own logical

deductions, that the message of the angel host was a word from the Lord to them. They "went straight" (no delays or detours) to Bethlehem; they "made haste" (the first Christmas rush!). And when they had seen the baby Jesus in the manger, they told others about it. Come and see. Go and tell. It's simple, isn't it? And the simple testimony of the shepherds bore fruit, as those who heard it listened and "wondered."

The Christmas gospel is good news of great joy for everyone, and the good news is Jesus. Period.

Verse 20

If you've been wondering and worrying about the sheep, it's good to know that the shepherds did go back to care for them. But they were different men now, recalling the heavenly message that they had been privileged to hear, and responding by "glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen" as a result of the message.

May our Christmas celebrations be much more than family and feasting and the comfort of familiar traditions. The Word of God is a means of grace, and as we ponder it anew, perhaps even praying that our approach might be that of someone who has never heard the good news before, our hearts may be touched again with the inexpressible joy and fullness of glory (1 Peter 1:8) which the angels proclaimed at the first Christmas so long ago.

something to share

Through the ages

BY MOLLY WIESEN

Most people have heard the terms *Renaissance* or *Baroque*. Perhaps you've studied art or visited museums to view some of the pieces from these eras. Because of an amazing opportunity to visit Italy recently, my senses were bombarded with works that came out of those notable periods. Frescoes, paintings, sculptures, tapestries, mosaic works and the like flooded my eyesight each day. The techniques used to produce these venerated structures and pieces were mind-boggling. The heights reached to paint domes and frescoes, the primitive tools wielded, the mass of marble and stone to move, and the months and years to achieve the final product seem impossible, given the times in which these artists created their works.

I was in awe, but I also felt some heaviness in my spirit as our tours of the Sistine Chapel, St. Peter's Basilica, and cathedral after cathedral progressed. The pre-Reformation focus on the Virgin Mary and multiple saints became a little overwhelming for a Lutheran girl like me. Jesus was portrayed as either a child on Mary's lap or a slain body on the cross. Then I remembered a phrase repeated over and over by our pastor in Bible study, "It's all about Jesus." Of course it was. There would be no majestic cathedrals, no timeless paintings, and no frescoes or ornate carvings if it were not for the everlasting God who created us and then gave His Son to take our place in payment for the sin that lives in all people (Ephesians 1:7-8).

What joy the experiences became. Jesus was in my every neck-wrenching upward gaze as I marveled at the Scripture depicted and the salvation story displayed. Praise songs and words of hymns floated through my mind in honor of the mighty Lord. But there

was a sadness that entered in as I saw the masses of tourists who also came there. People from countries and cultures that likely did not recognize the Bible or the God who gave it. Or people who simply rejected the Lord. What did they think these masterpieces were all about? Who was this Man who hung on the cross? I couldn't help but conclude there likely was no real meaning for the majority of people who traveled hundreds or thousands of miles to view this art.

The Lord impressed me with two messages out of those wonderful days. First, I need to remember to look for Jesus in every moment and situation of my life. Once I close my Bible or walk out of church, what perspective am I experiencing things through? Whether it is the little frustrations and challenges of daily life, or something big such as serious illness, loss, or tragedy, who or what do I see in the midst of it? How about you? Is there a darkness or heaviness in your heart because you are not letting the light of Christ in? Jesus says, "... surely I am with you always ..." (Matthew 28:20). Are you asking Him into the minute-by-minute happenings of your life and saying, "Your will, Lord"?

In the fortress town of Montefalco, God reminded me of another assurance. The faded fresco above the altar of a tiny chapel depicted a powerful man with long flowing white hair. He held the world in His outstretched hand. The 14th century artist knew what the Psalmist declared, "For this God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even to the end" (48:14). Let us rest our days in the hand of the everlasting God.

Wiesen is a member of Bethel Lutheran, Grafton, N.D.