

# *The* EVANGEL

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**Editor: Gretchen Baker**

**I**t was a bleak Christmas. Our basement apartment was cramped, the already small windows nearly obliterated by all the snow that winter. Even if there had been room for a Christmas tree, money was tight.

Trying to make the best of things, I noticed a local bargain store advertising a four-foot-tall fake tree—cheap and not too big. I convinced myself that four feet would be like a miniature tree: just fine.

At home, we opened the long narrow box, ready to behold the splendor of our tree. I reached into the box and pulled out... a branch. One single branch with three plastic legs to make it stand upright, thus, filling the description of "tree."

Tears instantly sprang to my eyes. My darling preteen was unphased and happily started digging decorations out.

I made up an excuse about finding more lights and buried myself in the hall closet to try to pull myself together.

I was so disappointed. What kind of Christmas was this? How had I fooled myself into thinking a four-foot-tall tree was anything different than what it was?

Oh, Christmas time. It's supposed to be the best time of the year, but the contrast of the burdens and the weariness of the year's trials makes it so much harder sometimes.

What I didn't know while I was crying in the closet over my silly Christmas branch issue was that at that same time, God was preparing a place for us somewhere else. Just a month later, my husband received a call to a church, and within six months, we had moved to a little house in smalltown Iowa. While the house isn't huge, I could fit multiple full-sized Christmas trees in it, if I wanted to (*Don't worry, dear, I won't*).

The point of my little story is this: when life seems bleak to us, God is still working. He is still doing what He has promised to do: drawing us to Himself, forgiving sins, healing wounded hearts, providing for our needs.

If this season finds you weary, rest in Jesus. He came for you on the first Christmas and continues to be active on your behalf.

Here are just a few examples: He makes intercession (Heb. 7:25), answers and delivers (Ps. 34:4), knows what you need (Mt 6:8), called you out of darkness (1 Peter 2:9), lifts up those who are bowed down (Ps. 146), carried your sorrows (Is. 53:4).

Whatever state you're in as you read this, I pray these pages will remind you of our great God and His awesome actions in your daily life.

During this Advent and Christmas, may God's peace be with you.

The Editor  
Gretchen Baker



# Christmas Carols Old & New

by *The Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins*

One of the oldest hymns to be found in any Lutheran hymnal is the Christmas carol, “Of the Father’s Love Begotten.”<sup>1</sup> It was written in or around the year 405 AD. Its author was Aurelius Prudentius, an erudite Spanish lawyer and renowned poet of the Latin Church.

Eighty years earlier, in the year 325 AD, the emperor Constantine had called a council in the city of Nicaea. Its purpose was to deal with a heretical teaching known as Arianism. Arius had falsely taught that Jesus was not of the same being or substance as God the Father. Arius erroneously declared that Jesus was not God, but a creature! This heresy threatened to destroy the Christian faith! So, the emperor called together over 200 bishops from around the world. The primary result of this council in Nicaea was the initial formulation of the Nicene Creed.

Unfortunately, that was not the end of Arianism. During the years that followed, Arianism became popular once again. Therefore, a second council was called in 381 AD. This time, it met in the city of Constantinople. The strong Anti-Arian emperor, Theodosius, presided over the council, the product of which was the completed statement that we now know as the Nicene Creed.

That should have ended the false doctrine of Arianism, but it did not. Arianism raised its head one more time. A missionary, Ulphilas, was sent to evangelize the Goths, north of the Danube. He was responsible for translating the Greek Bible into the language of the Goths. Unfortunately, his teaching also included a weak version of the Arian heresy. So, just when it appeared that the Arian heresy was all but gone, it reemerged when the Visigoths, Ostrogoths, and Vandals invaded Spain, Italy, and Africa respectively.

It was in the face of this third wave of Arian heresy that our ancient Christmas Carol was written. Prudentius penned a “fighting hymn.” He was fighting for the true and orthodox understanding of the divinity of Jesus Christ. In opposition to Arianism, that claimed that God the Son did not exist from eternity and was not co-equal with God the Father, Prudentius glorified



God the Son, who was not made, but was “Of the Father’s Love Begotten.” Below are verses 1 and 4 of this ancient hymn:

**Of the Father’s love begotten Ere the worlds began to be,  
He is Alpha and Omega, He the source, the ending He,  
Of the things that are, that have been, And that future years shall see  
Evermore and evermore.**

**O ye heights of heaven adore Him; Angel hosts, His praises sing.  
Pow’rs, dominions, bow before Him And extol our God and King,  
Let no tongue on earth be silent, Every voice in concert ring.  
Evermore and evermore.**

One of the most recent Christmas carols to be found in a Lutheran hymnal is, “A Stable Lamp is Lighted.”<sup>ii</sup> It was composed in 1958 by Poet Laureate Richard Wilbur. The poem was first published in 1961 under the title, “A Christmas Hymn.”

Wilbur used, as a recurring motif, the Word of Jesus at the time of the Palm Sunday procession: “I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!” You recall that on Palm Sunday, the people greeted Jesus with the proclamation, “Blessed is the King who comes in the Name of the Lord. Peace in Heaven and glory in the highest!” Some Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke His disciples. Christ responded (Luke 19:40) that if they were silent, “[T]he stones will cry out!” Wilbur provides the worshiper with four verses, each including the powerful refrain, “And ev’ry stone shall cry.” Here is the opening sentence of the first verse:

**A stable lamp is lighted Whose glow shall wake the sky;  
The stars shall bend their voices, And ev’ry stone shall cry.**

You may be wondering how it is that a poem by a Poet Laureate has been included in a Lutheran hymnal. Wilbur served as Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in Middletown, Connecticut, from 1985-2000.

Both of these wonderful and creative hymnodists served as messengers to the world in their own time and culture. They each faced the opposition of human and spiritual adversaries that denied the Lordship of Jesus.

Though you and I may not be poets like these Christian brothers, and though our hymns of praise may never be published, we still bear the same responsibilities that they did. We, too, must face a world that is opposed to the Lordship of Jesus. We, too, must use all of our creativity and faithfulness to share with our time and culture the message of the Father’s love begotten. We, too, must join the song that all the angels and ev’ry stone shall cry, the Christmas carol of Jesus Christ that will go on, evermore and evermore!

**The Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins serves as Presiding Pastor of The AALC.**

<sup>i</sup>Aurelius Prudentius Clemens, “Of the Father’s Love Begotten,” *Lutheran Service Book* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), #384.

<sup>ii</sup>Richard Wilbur, “A Stable Lamp is Lighted,” *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978), #74.





# MUSIC IN CHRIST'S CHURCH

by *Rev. Steve Klawonn*

Few people, if any, would deny the power of music in the lives of people throughout history. Great melodies and rhythms are very “catchy” and just the suggestion of certain tunes will cause them to swim around in your head for days. The words resonate within us and can cause us to reflect upon the message that is projected in that music.

The very value of music that is seen in secular advertising and on the radio with popular music that reflects the culture of today, is also of great value in the Christian church in our liturgy. We all have favorite hymns that we love to sing, at least like to hum the melodies during the day, even when we can't always remember the words, all the while knowing deep down that it is the words themselves that proclaim Law and Gospel, that are of the utmost importance.

Fortunately for most people, music is easy to learn and recall because of the way our minds work. Our challenge then is to focus our attention on the words of hymns that are used during worship, allowing the melody to appropriately accentuate the meaning of what is being sung. Mismatched words to style of music can greatly alter the effectiveness of the message and even the attention span of those who are participating in the worship experience.

Within the Christian church, we have seen through the centuries a continued development of hymns from the evolution of music to that present day. As congregations come together, everyone has their favorite style of music and favorite hymns/songs, such that we are constantly aware of our differences and try to be considerate of others. This has caused the development of blended worship or alternating styles of worship, at least in the music that is shared, trying to be acceptable to all ages.

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There are three characteristics of a hymn or contemporary song that should be examined for its appropriate use in worship in the church. First, the melody should be singable by the majority of the people. Secondly, if the song does not praise the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, it really isn't a church hymn/song. Thirdly, the text must always put Jesus as the primary focus and what He has done for us. If we instead make it all about the individual, then it might not be the best piece of music to be used.

We sing hymns because it is through this music that the Word of the Lord springs to life within us. We are taught and encouraged through the Word, and it helps to guide us on our Christian journey each and every day. Hymns provide a valuable way of doing that very thing for us.

It is safe to say that Christian hymns have an important place in worship and in our lives. Whatever style or type of hymn that speaks directly to you, they come from thankful hearts that are directed to God, and through them we encourage one another in the faith.

In the spirit of Christmas, we will look at the hymn "O Little Town of Bethlehem"<sup>1</sup>, examining what the hymn text is saying to us and how it draws us to Jesus any time this delightful hymn is sung.

This hymn was written in 1865 as a reflection of the memories that Phillips Brooks, an Episcopal clergyman who lived from 1835 – 93, had when he took a sabbatical journey to the Holy Land. It just so happened that while visiting Jerusalem that year on December 24, a Sunday that year, Brooks traveled on horseback from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. This event made a huge impression on him and he later reflected:

*"Before dark, we rode out of town to the field where they say the shepherds saw the star. It is a fenced piece of ground*

*with a cave in it (all the Holy Places are caves here), in which, strangely enough, they put the shepherds.... As we passed, the shepherds were still 'keeping watch over their flocks,' or leading them home to fold."<sup>ii</sup>*

His observance of Christmas eve that year found its conclusion at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. The five-hour service spoke to his heart in a profound way, and he never would forget how much it spoke to him and changed his life of faith.

Three years later, Brooks wrote this special carol about the "little town" he had visited, and he included it in a children's program that Christmas at the Holy Trinity Church in Philadelphia. The organist of that church, Lewis Redner, took the words and put a new tune to them just in time for it to be performed on Sunday, December 27, for the very first time.

The text of this carol presents to us a vivid, verbal picture that is drawn of the night of Jesus' birth as it reminds us of the importance of the incarnation, the holy birth itself, and its association with the city of Bethlehem. Read the first stanza:

**O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep, the silent stars go by;  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.  
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.**

Brooks re-creates in the first stanza, the scene at Bethlehem, recalling the eternal significance of Jesus coming into the world, with Jesus being our Everlasting Light who has come to guide us. This causes us to recall the prophecies of Isaiah that proclaimed that God would, through the birth of the Messiah, bring light into places of darkness (Isaiah 9:2-3; 60:1-2).



In the second stanza, Brooks' poetic portrait describes the voices of the angels at the first creation when "the morning stars sang together" (Job 38:7). Both heaven and earth are given cause of great joy in the birth of Jesus at Bethlehem. As you read this second stanza, I bet you are singing along with it!

**For Christ is born of Mary, and gathered all above  
While mortals sleep and angels keep their watch of wond'ring  
love.  
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,  
And praises sing to God and King and peace to all the earth!**

It is in the silence of Jesus' arrival on earth in that little town of Bethlehem, that is presented in stanza 3. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, came from heaven to make His home among the children of men and to dwell with them, bringing salvation to all who would believe (Luke 1:76-77). That indwelling continues to this day as Jesus remains in our hearts. Paul wrote in Ephesians 3:17, praying for the people of Ephesus; "Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith." It is at this starting point in human history, when God dwelt among His creation in this obscure "little town", that the promises of the Messiah were starting to become a present reality. (John 3:16).

**How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is giv'n!  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His heav'n.  
No ear may hear His coming; but in this world of sin,  
Where meek souls will receive Him, still the dear Christ enters in.**

The fourth and final stanza is written as a prayer. Within it, we make our requests once again to receive the promises of old: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My

word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (John 14:23). It is the "wondering love" of the angels that will ultimately be the fully realized love of God presented to us through the birth of "our Lord Immanuel."

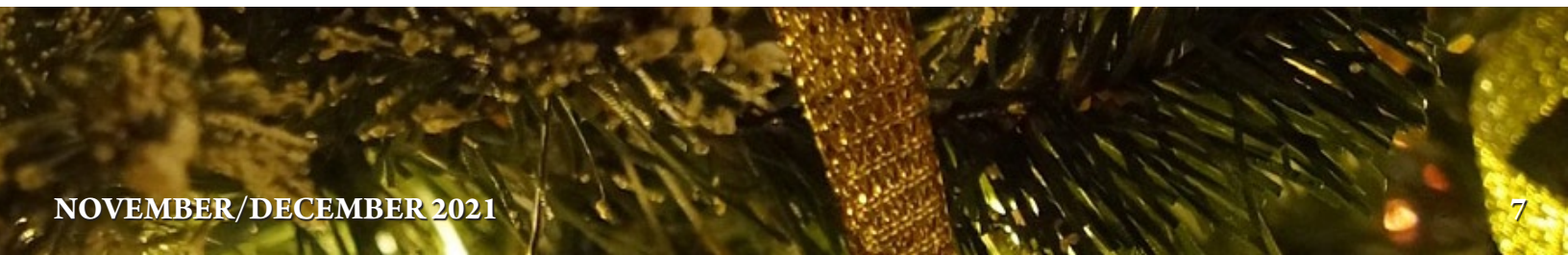
**O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;  
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today.  
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!**

It is within such wonderful and cherished hymns of the church that we are reminded of not only the history that is found in the holy Scriptures, but also the glorious Gospel of what God has done for us in His faithfulness to His Word, to a sinful and faithless creation out of great love and mercy. I encourage you to use hymns in your daily devotions. You can just sing them, yes, without a doubt, but in pausing to pray and meditate over the text, you will experience the richness of God's Word presented and be guided by the leading of the Holy Spirit to praise and worship our mighty God in humble devotion to Him.

**Rev. Steve Klawonn serves Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Evansdale, IA, and is the newly elected Assistant Regional Pastor for the Greater Heartland Region.**

<sup>1</sup>Phillips Brooks, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," *Lutheran Service Book* (Saint Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2006), #361

<sup>2</sup>Phillips Brooks, "Letter to his father," December 30, 1865, in *Letters of Travel*, Phillips Brooks (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1893), 69.





# Advent:

## A Season of Preparation and Anticipation

By Rev. Benjamin Baker

**W**hat is Advent? It seems to me that for many people, Advent is either regarded as a “pre-Christmas” Christmas season, or it gets ignored altogether. It certainly doesn’t help that when Advent rolls around each year, many of our retail stores have had us basically locked in on Christmas since September. So what is Advent?

Advent is the first season of the Church’s liturgical year. It consists chiefly of the four Sundays prior to Christmas Day, and the season often will include midweek services. The liturgical color for Advent has typically been violet, but blue is often used as well. Many churches also make use of an advent wreath with four candles around the outside and a white “Christ” candle in the middle. During Advent there is a significant liturgical change in that the *Alleluia* verse and the *Gloria in excelsis Deo* (“Glory to God in the Highest”) are absent from the Divine Service, not to return until Christmas Eve/Christmas Day. In this way Advent parallels the season of Lent.

That parallel is quite appropriate and intentional. Some may find it surprising that the focus of Advent is not so much looking ahead and counting down to the events of Luke 2 and the Incarnation of our Lord (it is

there, but not the chief emphasis), but rather Revelation 14:14-20, which says in part,

*Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, “Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe.” So he who sat on the cloud swung his sickle across the earth, and the earth was reaped.*

What we have in this text of Revelation is the fulfillment of the parable that Jesus told about the wheat and the weeds (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43). It is the harvest at the End of the Age. Indeed, it is also the fulfillment of the parable Jesus told of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13). The Father has told the Bridegroom it is time to go get His bride. The chief focus of Advent is on the *Second Advent*, the *Parousia* (Appearing) of our Lord for the Final Judgment. In this way, Advent is contrasted with Lent in that the focus of Lent is on repentance in view of the suffering and death of our Lord on account of our sins, whereas in





Advent the focus is on repentance in view of the appearing of our Lord and the final judgment on sin and unrepentant sinners that comes with Him.

This emphasis on repentance in Advent is also seen in that the primary preacher in the Gospel texts is John the Baptist, who called the people of God to repentance because of the nearness of the kingdom of God (Matt. 3:1-3; Mark 1:1-3; Luke 3:1-9). John the Baptist still preaches that same message to the Church today. It is true that the kingdom of God came with Jesus' incarnation and is present in the world now (Luke 17:21), and God's kingdom comes without our help and without our prayer—though we pray that God's kingdom would also come among us also (*Small Catechism*, 2nd petition of the Lord's Prayer), there is a final sense in which the kingdom of God is yet to come. The fullness of the kingdom of God comes with the appearing of our Lord. Then comes to pass the words of Revelation 11:15, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever." Because this is true, John the Baptist's preaching of repentance on account of the nearness of the kingdom of God is an enduring present reality and call.

And so the season of Advent is a season of preparation for the imminent coming of our Lord. Indeed, we seek through repentance and faith, to "Stay awake" and to "be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect" (Matt. 24:42, 44). How is it that we can be ready and stay awake? Through repentance. Repentance is helpfully defined in the *Augsburg Confession*, article XII, as having two parts: contrition and faith. AC XII: "Now properly speaking, true repentance is nothing else than to have contrition and sorrow, or terror about sin, and yet at

the same time to believe in the gospel and absolution that sin is forgiven and grace is obtained through Christ."<sup>1</sup>

This emphasis on repentance and faith is not limited to the season of Advent, but rather it is the daily life and existence of the Christian. We should also note that part of this preparation for our Lord to come is that good works and improvement in our lives as Christians and the refraining from sin should follow such repentance and faith (AC, XII, 6). In this way we are the faithful servant who is found to be about his master's business when his master arrives unannounced (Matt. 24:45-51). That this should be the daily reality of the Christian life is seen in the Church's liturgical year in that the focus of the Last Sunday of the Church Year and that of Advent are the same. This is also seen in Luther's Morning and Evening Prayers. In the morning prayer we pray that all our doing and life may please God, and in the evening, we ask for forgiveness for all of our sins.

There is also in Advent the aspect of anticipation of our Lord's return. Being so prepared for His coming through repentance and faith, we can lift up our eyes, for our redemption draws near (Luke 21:28). This fits with the reality of the Christian life as well: repentance over our sin in view of our Lord's appearing, and the anticipation and hope of faith that our full redemption comes with that same appearing. Indeed, living in repentance and faith, we can say with St. John, "Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22:20)

**Rev. Benjamin Baker serves St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church in Traer, IA.**

<sup>1</sup>AC, XII, 3-5. *Kolb and Wengert*.



# The MESSAGE in the MUSIC

*By Scott Strosahl*

**A**dvent and Christmas are seasons full of music. We hear Christmas music everywhere we go—on the radio, synchronized with light displays, in stores (sometimes for months!), from roving gangs of carolers, and of course, in church. Some Christmas music is so well-known that kids even write alternate lyrics for the songs. (Batman smells, anyone?)

And Christmas music is a wonderful tradition. In fact, even the annual reading from Luke that is popular in many churches includes four songs—Mary’s Song (Luke 1:46-55), Zechariah’s Song (Luke 1:68-79), The Angels’ Song (Luke 2:13-14), Simeon’s Song (Luke 2:29-32). But sometimes we are so inundated with Christmas music, it’s easy to miss the meaning behind some of the lyrics. So, here are just a few that stand out to me:



**Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus** – “Dear desire of every nation, joy of every longing heart”<sup>i</sup>

The first verse focuses on Christ as the fulfillment of Israel’s longing for a Messiah, but concludes with the fact that Jesus came to bring salvation to the entire world, and He alone can bring joy to everyone.

**O Come, O Come, Emmanuel** – “Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.”<sup>ii</sup>

This final line of each verse instructs us to rejoice in the promise to come. It doesn’t say “rejoice because Emmanuel IS here,” but instead “rejoice that he WILL come.” And likewise, we can rejoice in the knowledge that Jesus will return again one day.

**He Shall Reign Forevermore** – “Here within a manger lies the one who made the starry skies, this baby born for sacrifice”<sup>iii</sup>

The contrast of a helpless baby in a manger being the creator of the whole universe is a striking image, as is the knowledge that His whole purpose in coming to earth from the start was to be a sacrifice.

**O Holy Night** – “Long lay the world in sin and error pining, ‘til He appeared and the soul felt its worth.”<sup>iv</sup>

The incredible, humble sacrifice made by God in sending His one and only son to the earth shows just how much each and every soul is worth to Him.

**Hark, the Herald Angels Sing** – “Peace on earth, and mercy mild; God and sinners reconciled.”<sup>v</sup>

Peace is a common theme at Christmas time, but Jesus primarily came to bring us peace with God. We have all broken the commandments and made ourselves enemies, but as Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 5, “In Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them.”

**Joy to the World** – “No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground. He comes to make His blessings flow far as the curse is found.”<sup>vi</sup>

Jesus came to end the curse of Genesis 3 when God told Adam and Eve that the ground itself would be cursed as a consequence of their sin.

These are just a few examples of the many wonderful lines we sing every year and often don’t give much thought to. This year as you hear “the old familiar carols play,”<sup>vii</sup> take time to think about what Christmas really means, and not just “Jesus’ birthday,” but the arrival of God Himself in the flesh, and the first step toward the pain and sacrifice of Good Friday and the joy of the empty tomb three days later.

As it says in an alternate verse for “What Child is This,”<sup>viii</sup> “Nails, spears shall pierce Him through. The cross He bore, for me, for you. Hail, hail the Word made flesh, the Babe, the Son of Mary.”

**Mr. Scott Strosahl is the Music and Youth Director at Ascension Lutheran Church, Ames, IA, and serves on the planning team for the National Youth Conference.**

<sup>i</sup>Charles Wesley, “Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus,” *Lutheran Service Book*, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), #338.

<sup>ii</sup>*Psalterium Cationum Catholicorum*, Koln, 1710; tr. John Mason Neale, “O Come, O Come, Emmanuel,” *Lutheran Service Book*, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), #357.

<sup>iii</sup>Chris Tomlin, “He Shall Reign Forevermore,” *Adore*, (sixstepsrecords, 2015) accessed Sept. 29, 2021, <https://www.worshiptogether.com>

<sup>iv</sup>Placide Cappeau, tr. John S. Dwight, “O Holy Night,” accessed Sept. 29, 2021, via [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org).

<sup>v</sup>Charles Wesley, “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” *Lutheran Service Book*, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), #380.

<sup>vi</sup>Isaac Watts, “Joy to the World,” *Lutheran Service Book*, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), #387.

<sup>vii</sup>Henry W. Longfellow, “I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day,” accessed Sept. 29, 2021, via [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org).

<sup>viii</sup>William C. Dix, “What Child is This?” *Lutheran Service Book*, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), #370

# Singing the Good News at Christmas!

By Sue DeSha

**“Get you up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, ‘Behold your God!’” Isaiah 40:9**

It’s November already! Stand up and get thee to a high place. Light your lamps and lift them high. Gather the musicians and singers. It’s time to sing and make music. It’s time to celebrate the birth of our Savior and soon coming King, Jesus the Christ.

Yes, every saint is called to be a herald, an official messenger for the King of Kings who brings important news, and many hymns of the season are brimming with good news. Consider, dear carolers, this favorite: “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.”<sup>1</sup> I know...the melody is already ringing in your heart.

Hark, the herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King;  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
God and sinners reconciled!”  
Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
Join the triumph of the skies;  
With the angelic host proclaim,  
“Christ is born in Bethlehem!”  
Hark, the herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King.”

This first verse extols the good news of reconciliation to God and salvation through His Son. People all around us do not know God through Jesus Christ. They are in bondage to sin and self-worship; they are enemies of God and don’t know they can become His friend through repentance and faith. “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of

his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life” (Romans 5:10).

As the angels gathered in the sky over the manger, they proclaimed in song the glories of the Word of God in flesh newly born, and we are reminded to join them in this song of proclamation as ambassadors for Christ making the same appeal, even imploring our family members, friends, and neighbors on behalf of Christ to “be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

**Christ, by highest heaven adored;**

**Christ, the everlasting Lord!**

**Late in time behold Him come,**

**Offspring of the Virgin’s womb:**

**Veiled in flesh the Godhead see;**

**Hail the incarnate Deity,**

**Pleased as man with men to dwell,**

**Jesus, our Emmanuel.**

**Hark, the herald angels sing,**

**“Glory to the newborn King.”**

The second verse reveals the mystery of Jesus who is truly man and truly God with triple declarations of both realities hinting at the most Holy Trinity.

**Regarding His humanity:**

1. Jesus is the “Offspring of the Virgin’s womb,” born a human baby into a family of simple means with all of the needs and vulnerabilities common to man.
2. Jesus is “veiled in flesh” who sympathizes with our weakness, being tempted as we are yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).
3. Jesus is “pleased as man with men to dwell”



“who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:6-7). He came down to walk among us preaching “the Kingdom of Heaven is come.”

### Regarding His Divinity:

1. Jesus is the everlasting Lord, announced by the angel in Luke 2:11, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”
2. Jesus is the Godhead: “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell” (Colossians 1:15-19).
3. Jesus is the “incarnate Deity.” We read in Colossians 2:9-10, “For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.”

**Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace!**

**Hail, the Son of Righteousness!**

**Light and life to all He brings,**

**Risen with healing in His wings.**

**Mild He lays His glory by,  
Born that men no more may die,  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.  
Hark! The herald angels sing,  
“Glory to the newborn King.”**

Now it’s your turn. Take a moment to sing verse three out loud. Did you hear yourself proclaiming great truths from the scriptures? Consider each line carefully. What verses or gospel themes come to mind? Dig into your Bible using a concordance or Bible study app to seek out the scriptural truths that have been memorialized in poetry and melody. The time you spend in these moments with the Holy Spirit and God’s Word will give this Christmas carol new life that will resonate in you every time you hear or sing it in the future.

Here is a final challenge. Seek an open door throughout the Holidays to lift up your voice in song as a herald of the King; before the Lord in prayer, in twos or threes, in a choir simple or grand, maybe even a flash mob at in the marketplace with friends. Let’s all herald the Good News with great joy and heavenly-minded anticipation this Christmas!

*“And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).*

**Mrs. Sue DeSha is a member of Christ Lutheran Church,  
Duluth, MN, and is married to Pr. Gary DeSha.**

‘Charles Wesley, “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing,” *Lutheran Service Book*, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), #380.

# The Life of the Church - Hostility

by Rev. Dave Spotts

I was asked some months ago to give a presentation for a conference which featured discussions of hostility. When I was asked to make this presentation, it was to be in the context of campus ministry. There was a foregone conclusion, perhaps, in the mind of the organizer, that people engaged in campus ministry deal with hostility a lot.

It is true that a campus pastor, and, for that matter, a parish pastor, ends up dealing with hostility. But frankly, it isn't the way you might think. Granted, I have had the occasional protestor regale me with screams, and that has not been limited to life on campus. It has happened in church committee meetings. There's some hostility floating around.

But the greatest challenge for a pastor is not when people direct their anger toward the pastor. It may be a cringe-worthy incident, but we all know how to deal with that kind of display. We treat others with kindness and respect. We try to remember they are by nature bearers of God's image (Genesis 1-2), and we love and bless them (Matthew 5). It isn't rocket science.

What's more troubling to me is the fact that we are surrounded by people who are unhappy, who feel alienated, who give in to that sense of abandonment by becoming angry and hostile. When trying to deal with hostility, whether in campus pastor or parish pastor mode, my goal is to help others become less hostile.

2 Chronicles 7:12-22 describes people who have departed from God's Name and who become a curse and a laughingstock. Their ideas and behaviors have led them to ruin. Verse 20 says, in part, "this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples" (NKJV). I fear that this is an accurate description of much of our current American society. It has become an object of ridicule.

How did this happen? The simple answer is that our world has departed from God's Word and is reaping the wind. Yet there's a more nuanced answer that I would propose we think about.

Classical rhetoricians identified three different modes of appeal, ways that we could make a persuasive argument. One they identified as *logos*, an appeal to reason. Another was *ethos*, an appeal to what is right. The third was *pathos*, an appeal to emotions. It's significant that these great thinkers considered that all three were necessary.

Let's take an example from a great spiritual classic, the local fire codes. A public building, such as a church building, normally is required to have smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, or possibly a sprinkler system. Why would this be?

An appeal to *logos* says that there is a certain amount of protection necessary to notify people to evacuate the building and to try to contain a fire until additional help can arrive. An appeal to *ethos* says that we love and serve our neighbors in the church building by preventing them from enduring life-threatening conditions such as a fire. An appeal to *pathos* says that we would feel terrible letting our brothers and sisters in Christ perish in a fire. If we pay attention to all three appeals, we will very likely have an environment which is quite safe in case of a fire.

What if some of the modes of persuasion are missing? We end up with reason, ethics, or feeling in charge of our decisions, not informed by the rest of the tools of persuasion. The arguments become unbalanced and weak. Our conclusions, likewise, are unbalanced and weak.

Our culture, fed by a dependence on *pathos* over the last several decades, has a weak foundation. It may have some appropriate conclusions along with some inappropriate conclusions. But they are not conclusions that can be counted on. When we are not sure that our reasoning is solid, it's very easy to become uncertain. We then want to be right, so we may become defensive. Here comes the hostility!

How can we recover sanity? Through use of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos*. By having good reasons for our conclusions. By helping others build their life and philosophy on a solid foundation. This alone will breed confidence that we are living a consistent life in a world that makes sense. It breaks down the defensiveness and hostility.

As we who are confident in Christ help others find the same confidence, we must make it not merely about feelings, not merely about ethics, not merely about reason, but about all three. Reason, ethics, and feelings all point to the reality of the Christian life, the security of redemption, the hope of resurrection.

In the end, the Christian helps others deal with hostility by loving and serving our neighbors. Only as we do that will our neighbors be able to break their hostility down and learn the perfect love of Jesus which casts out fear (1 John 4).

**The Rev. Dave Spotts is a missionary campus pastor to the college communities in Columbia, Missouri. He teaches at the American Lutheran Theological Seminary. He is also currently serving as a vacancy pastor in the parish of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (LCMS) in Centralia, Missouri.**



# *In Memoriam*

## *The Rev. Wayne E. Bohling*

*December 8, 1926 – August 1, 2021*



The Rev. Wayne E. Bohling, Pastor Emeritus, entered the Church Triumphant on Sunday, August 1, 2021, at the age of 94. At the time of his passing, he was in hospice care in Detroit Lakes, Minnesota.

Born in Hebron, Nebraska, Wayne followed his love for Christ and passion for ecumenical study, attending Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. He was ordained in June of 1951. He was commissioned as a Circuit Rider Pastor in The AALC in October 1988.

Throughout his career he pastored Lutheran churches in Iowa, Nebraska, Washington, California, Oregon, and New Mexico. Pr. Bohling and his wife of 53 years, Carol, also served as ministry staff for Gray's Harbor County Seamen's Center.

Pr. Bohling loved music and travel. He led his young family on cross country singing tours, driving long hours, and sightseeing along the way. He was always full of energy and ready to help in any circumstance. He stayed healthy and active through his final years. He is laid to rest beside his wife at Camano Lutheran Cemetery, Camano Island.

## PRAYER BOOKMARK

### NOVEMBER 2021

1. Prayer of Thanksgiving for all the saints who have gone before
2. Rev. Leon L. Knitt
3. Unity in the church
4. Those grieving during the holidays
5. Poplar Lake Lutheran Church *Fosston, MN*
6. New congregations
7. Ascension Lutheran Church *Waterloo, IA*
8. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church  
*Evansdale, IA*
9. Commission for American Missions
10. Bethel Lutheran Church *Rowland, PA*
11. Redeemer Lutheran Church  
*West Union, IA*
12. Rev. Bruce Ritter
13. Shepherd of the Mountains Lutheran Church *Frazier Park, CA*
14. Rev. Rich A. Eddy
15. Wittenberg Door Campus Ministry
16. National and Local Governments
17. Rev. Carl Bengtson
18. Seminary professors
19. Bible Lutheran Church *Dodge Center, MN*
20. Calvary Lutheran Church *St. Paul, MN*
21. Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church *Sidney, MT*
22. Holiday travels
23. Christ Lutheran Church *Ellis, KS*
24. Rev. Orlando K. Hash
25. Sonland Lutheran Church *Casa Grande, AZ*
26. Rev. Carl Groh
27. St. John's Lutheran Church *Pocahontas, MO*
28. St. Luke the Evangelist Lutheran Church *Jurupa Valley, CA*
29. Seminarians
30. Rev. LeRoy Holmes

# PRAYER BOOKMARK

DECEMBER 2021

1. Rev. Richard G. Hueter
2. For the sick
3. Rev. Wayne Wilken
4. American Lutheran Church *Mandan, ND*
5. Rev. Richard T. Day
6. Ascension Lutheran Church *Ames, IA*
7. Evangelism Commission
8. Christ Lutheran Church *Chetek, WI*
9. For the Youth
10. Rev. Robert M. Dennis
11. Protection for the unborn
12. St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church  
*Traer, IA*
13. For those who are homebound or in  
nursing facilities
14. St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church  
*Augusta, KY*
15. Rev. Robert Ross
16. St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church  
*Otis, CO*
17. Nominating Committee
18. Commission for Women
19. St. Peter's Lutheran Church *Elk Grove, CA*
20. Rev. Robert Salge
21. St. Paul Lutheran Congregation *Tripoli, IA*
22. AALC Board of Trustees
23. Rev. William H. Van Duzer
24. The Barn Again Lutheran Church  
*Cedar Crest, NM*
25. The Rev. Steven Wadle
26. Our nation's leaders
27. Clergy Commission
28. Christ Lutheran Church *Chippewa Falls, WI*
29. St. Paul's Lutheran Church *Napoleon, OH*
30. Prayer of Thanksgiving for God's  
blessings during this past year
31. Protection for our military



## Nigel Brown Ordained at Hope Lutheran

Nigel Roy Brown was ordained on August 29, 2021, at Hope Lutheran Church, Hampton VA. The Rev. Dean Stoner served as liturgist, and The Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins served as officiant. After the ordination, The Rev. Nigel Brown was installed as Pastor of the congregation and served as Celebrant for Holy Communion in the Divine Service. Nigel was a student at the American Theological Seminary (ALTS) and recently completed all the required courses for his M Div degree. God's blessings on Pr. Brown and his ministry.

**Pictured below: The Rev. Dean Stoner, The Rev. Nigel Brown, The Rev. Abraham McNally, and The Rev. Dr. Curtis Leins.**





# A Camera from CAM

(Commission for American Missions)

*By Rev. Gary DeSha*

Our story began in March of 2020, when the announcement came from the Governor of Minnesota: We are in lock down. No going outside. No visiting. No movies. No going out to eat. No church.

With the governor's mandates, I had to think out of the box. What about worship? What about the Word of God? What about the preaching of the Word? What about Holy Communion? I prayed and asked God for direction. What can I do to keep the people engaged with each other and worship together?

The Lord provided the answer in my hand: my Samsung Galaxy S9+ smartphone. The old camera the church owned could not support live streaming. So, I figured out how to live stream our worship services on my phone, using a camera tripod and a special holder for the phone. We moved an extra television from our home into the church and set it up, so that people could see the Power-Point presentation my wife created. We used the church microphones and set up a monitor by my phone for sound. We named our time of worship "Christ Lutheran Church Worship and Livestream." This was the first time ever that Christ Lutheran Church had broadcasted its worship services.

We created a Sunday Worship outline that was mailed and emailed to our members. When we began to meet in person again, we used it and continue to use it during worship in the sanctuary.

For the Sundays where we celebrated Holy Communion, after worship and the Word, we began with a drive-through service where I performed the Liturgy of Holy Communion with a speaker and mic setup, and then, with mask and gloves, handed out Holy Communion to those who rolled down their car windows as they drove up.

In June of 2020, the governor said churches could open once again at half capacity, and people still remained



in their homes. I used my phone to live stream worship for my congregation for about a year. I questioned the fact that if I should have to leave or become ill, how would the church still live stream our worship services?

Then I inquired with the church council and made a suggestion to purchase a new digital camera that could accommodate live streaming. I found an option; however, the camera, streaming

software, microphone, and other attachments came to over \$3,000 dollars. This is high quality equipment.

Then I remembered about CAM. Pastor Dean Stoner once told me that CAM (Commission for American Missions) was all about helping churches financially and in other ways, so I gave Pastor Stoner a call. He directed me to Rev. Joseph Christina, the AALC National Home Mission Developer. I submitted my request to CAM. Pastor Christina and I talked, and after a few meetings, the CAM board approved \$2,000 toward our new camera. The church could afford the rest, and we ordered the new camera and everything needed to make the new camera work.

We at Christ Lutheran Church are very grateful for the help from The AALC through CAM. Now we do not have to use my phone, and every Sunday we live stream our services for our church members and for anyone else who would like to tune in.

Our worship has been viewed from all over the country. We are so pleased and give all the glory to God for the opportunity to share the Gospel and worship God together in the sanctuary and live stream at the same time. Christ Lutheran Church will continue to live stream its services as a means of outreach to our community, our state, and across the country.

**The Rev. Gary DeSha serves Christ Lutheran Church in Duluth, Minn.**

# The Cult of Anti-Racism at War with Christian Values and Beliefs

by Rev. Dr. Duane Lindberg

In his book *Fault Lines*, Rev. Dr. Voddie Baucham, Jr., (nationally known Black theologian) points out, “The Antiracist movement has many of the hallmarks of a cult, including staying close enough to the Bible to avoid immediate detection and hiding the fact that it has a new theology and a new glossary of terms that diverge from Christian orthodoxy.”

This Cult, says Baucham, “comes complete with its own cosmology: original sin (racism); law (antiracism); gospel (racial reconciliation); martyrs (Saints Trayvon, Mike, George, Breonna etc.); means of atonement (reparations); new birth (wokeness); canon (critical social justice social science); theologians (DiAngelo, Kendi, McIntosh etc.) (*Fault Lines*, p. 67).

But this new Cult offers no salvation – only perpetual penance in an effort to battle an incurable guilt for an “original sin” which has never been atoned for. According to the Antirace Cult, the “original sin” of racism has infected only the white race. But in Christian theology, original sin is manifest in all people, in every age. In other words, racism – the unequal treatment of others and the presumption of their inferiority – are sins which have infected every human being since the Fall (Romans 3:9, 10, 23).

Contrary to this Cult, the sin of racism is not only the result of systems or structures of American culture but a matter of the human heart. Scripture points to all human beings when it says, “Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man” (Matthew 15:19, 20).

The Gospel assures us that the dividing wall of racism cannot be removed by any amount of human reparations, but only through faith in what God in Christ has done. Many (including John Adams, George Washington, and James Madison) believe that our nation was founded and built on this Faith:

“But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ, for he is our peace, . . . . and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, that he . . . . might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby bringing the hostility to an end” (Ephesians 2:13 – 16).

However, Antiracism, Critical Race Theory and Critical Social Justice are all aspects of a new religion which rejects the Gospel of forgiveness, promotes a condemning spirit, and is totally law-directed with an endless requirement of works (reparations to be paid).

The “war” metaphor is appropriate to describe the racial conflict promoted by Critical Race Theory in American government agencies, schools, universities and activist organizations.

Our nation is engaged in a deadly Civil War, but it is not between the Races. Our warfare is against “cosmic powers” – against spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12). As Dr. Baucham testifies: “I am (not at war with people, but) at war with the ideology of Critical Race Theory, critical social justice and their antecedents – Marxism, conflict theory, and critical theory as ‘cosmic powers over the present darkness’” (ibid., p.210).

In this warfare, our weapons are spiritual (II Corinthians 10:4). The most powerful weapon in this spiritual warfare against the forces of the Antiracist Cult is **forgiveness**.

Forgiveness is powerful and the only thing that will heal the deep wounds of racism; because forgiveness is founded on God’s forgiveness of human sin.

“Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice, and be



kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:31, 32).

In response to this apostolic admonition, Dr. Baucham confesses: “Who am I to tell a white brother that he cannot be reconciled to me until he has dredged up all of the racial sins of his and his ancestors’ past and made proper restitution? Christ has atoned for sin!” (*Fault Lines*, page 229).

But, the Cult of Antiracism rejects the atoning sacrifice which Jesus Christ has made for all sin. Therefore, specific concepts taught by this Cult, which are rooted in the rejection of faith in Jesus Christ, must be condemned. These include the following:

- That only certain human lives matter.
- That a person’s sex (gender) is a matter of personal choice.
- That an individual, solely because of his/her race or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously.

- That an individual’s moral character is necessarily determined by the person’s race or sex.
- That an individual, by virtue of his/her race or sex, bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race or sex.
- That the United States of America is fundamentally or systemically racist or sexist.

These teachings, which are a denial of Biblical truth, are a warning to all Americans of the Cult of Antiracism which is being promoted through the acceptance of Critical Race Theory in government programs, in our public education systems, and even in some evangelical churches.

**The Rev. Dr. Duane Lindberg is Presiding Pastor, Emeritus, of The American Association of Lutheran Churches.**

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# Eastern Region Meets in Fayetteville, NC

*By Rev. Dean Stoner*

The AALC Eastern Regional Conference took place August 9-11, 2021, at Christus Victor Lutheran Church in Fayetteville, NC. Congregation members and clergy had the option to attend this gathering face-to-face or via Zoom. The Conference began with worship Monday evening. The business of the Region took place Tuesday, beginning with an opening devotion and a welcome by Pastor Joe Christina.

Dr. Curtis Leins, Presiding Pastor of The AALC, brought forth his state of The AALC via Zoom, with other members of the National Office staff contributing. Most of the clergy attending the Conference gave a brief report about their congregations. A slate of candidates was then presented to the Conference with additional nominations for positions that needed to be filled. The following were elected within the Eastern Region:

- Chaplain Tom Jahr: Board of Trustees
- Rev. Neil Cadle: Commission on Parish Education
- Mr. Jim Daman: Association Council (re-elected)

- Rev. Nigel Brown: Commission on American Missions (re-elected)
- Rev. Joe Christina: Nominating Committee
- Mr. Kris Johnson: Commission on Youth Activities

Tuesday’s business meeting adjourned in the late afternoon, followed by worship, fellowship, and a cook-out with Pastor Christina on the grill.

Wednesday’s morning activities concluded with a wrap up and review of the prior day’s business, followed by prayer. The group then took a tour of historic downtown Fayetteville, including a visit to the Airborne and Special Operations Museum, and finally concluded with lunch.

We are grateful to God for the fellowship, the work accomplished, and the safe travels.

**Rev. Dean Stoner serves as the Administrative Assistant to The AALC.**

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Mar/Apr Theme: Developing and Maintaining Men's Ministries  
(Content deadline Nov 30)

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- Anniversaries of clergy ordination or installations
- Church activities or celebrations
- Men's and women's events
- Youth and children's activities
- Outreach or community events
- AALC clergy obituaries

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