



A Word from Pastor Schielke

The Mystery of the Incarnation

The incarnation, that is, God becoming human in the person of Jesus Christ is a most profound mystery. When we think about Christmas, we may consider the difficulty it must have been for Mary and Joseph travelling so far while Mary was pregnant. We think about the fact that there was no proper place for the Holy family to stay upon entering Bethlehem. We think about how unpleasant it must have been for Mary to give birth amongst the cattle. We celebrate with the angels and shepherds as they behold the Savior. But the truly amazing part of Christmas is God lowering Himself and allowing Himself to be born at all! Think how remarkable that is. God created human beings, and then our God became human in the womb of Mary and was born. He who has no beginning and no end, the creator of the universe and Divine sculptor of humanity, Himself becomes human. The king of the universe is born in a lowly cattle stall in an unimportant town to unimportant parents.

God did all of this for you. He lowered Himself so that he might elevate you so that you would be

His child. Jesus was born so that He could die for our sins. As profound as it is that the eternal God could be born, it is equally profound that God could die. But so, it is. Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension assure us that we, too, though we die, will live forever with him.

It's no secret that Satan hates humanity—in the Garden of Eden he was the instigator of mankind's rebellion against God. Surely, given such rebellion, God would forsake the crown of His creation, human beings. But exactly the opposite occurred. God entered into His creation as a baby to restore



humanity to Himself, to make peace between us and Him. Satan could not thwart God's plan to reunite us with God for all eternity.

St. Athanasius, for whom the Athanasian Creed is named, had this to say about Christ's incarnation. "You know how it is when some great king enters a large city and dwells in one of its houses; because of his dwelling in that single house, the whole city is honored, and enemies and robbers cease to molest it. Even so is it with the King of all; He has come into our country and dwelt in one body amidst the many, and in consequence the designs of the enemy against mankind have been foiled and the corruption of death, which formerly held them in its power, has simply ceased to be. For the human race would have perished utterly had not the Lord and Savior of all, the Son of God, come among us to put an end to death."

Let us rejoice this Advent season that God became one of us in Jesus in order to bring us back to Himself.

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."
1 Corinthians 15:57

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The Smalcald Articles - On December 11, 1536, John Frederick commissioned Martin Luther to prepare a statement of faith in the form of confessional articles, The Smalcald Articles (SA), for presentation to a meeting of Lutheran theologians and lay leaders on February 7, 1537, in Smalcald, Germany. While working on the SA, on December 18, Luther became seriously ill and was convinced he was near death. The SA were considered Luther's "last will and testament." Over the next months, you will find the articles of the Smalcald Articles in our newsletter. It's good for all of us to have at least some familiarity with this important doctrinal statement.

Article II: Of the Mass - Of the Invocation of Saints

²⁵ The invocation of saints is also one of the abuses of Antichrist conflicting with the chief article, and destroys the knowledge of Christ. Neither is it commanded nor counseled, nor has it any example [or testimony] in Scripture, and even though it were a precious thing, as it is not [while, on the contrary, it is a most harmful thing], in Christ we have everything a thousandfold better [and surer, so that we are not in need of calling upon the saints].

²⁶ And although the angels in heaven pray for us (as Christ Himself also does), as also do the saints on earth, and perhaps also in heaven, yet it does not follow thence that we should invoke and adore the angels and saints, and fast, hold festivals, celebrate Mass in their honor, make offerings, and establish churches, altars, divine worship, and in still other ways serve them, and regard them as helpers in need [as patrons and intercessors], and divide among them all kinds of help, and ascribe to each one a particular form of assistance, as the Papists teach and do. For this is idolatry, and such honor belongs alone to God. ²⁷ For as a Christian and saint upon earth you can pray for me, not only in one, but in many necessities. But for this reason I am not obliged to adore and invoke you, and celebrate festivals, fast, make oblations, hold masses for your honor [and worship], and put my faith in you for my salvation. I can in other ways indeed honor, love, and thank you in Christ. ²⁸ If now such idolatrous honor were withdrawn from angels and departed saints, the remaining honor would be without harm and would quickly be forgotten. For when advantage and assistance, both bodily and spiritual, are no more to be expected, the saints will not be troubled [the worship of the saints will soon vanish], neither in their graves nor in heaven. For without a reward or out of pure love no one will much remember, or esteem, or honor them [bestow on them divine honor].

²⁹ In short, the Mass itself and anything that proceeds from it, and anything that is attached to it, we cannot tolerate, but must condemn, in order that we may retain the holy Sacrament pure and certain, according to the institution of Christ, employed and received through faith.

Article III: Of Chapters and Cloisters

¹ That chapters and cloisters [colleges of canons and communistic dwellings], which were formerly founded with the good intention [of our forefathers] to educate learned men and chaste [and modest] women, ought again to be turned to such use, in order that pastors, preachers, and other ministers of the churches may be had, and likewise other necessary persons [fitted] for [the political administration of] the secular government [or for the commonwealth] in cities and countries, and well-educated, maidens for mothers and housekeepers, etc.

² If they will not serve this purpose, it is better that they be abandoned or razed, rather than [continued and], with their blasphemous services invented by men, regarded as something better than the ordinary Christian life and the offices and callings ordained by God. For all this also is contrary to the first chief article concerning the redemption made through Jesus Christ. Add to this that (like all other human inventions) these have neither been commanded; they are needless and useless, and, besides, afford occasion for dangerous and vain labor [dangerous annoyances and fruitless worship], such services as the prophets call Aven, i.e., pain and labor.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 Christmas Decorating 3:00 p.m. Women's Bible Study 4:30 p.m. Choir Practice 5:30 p.m. Advent Dinner 6 p.m. Advent Service 7 p.m.	4	5	6 Men's Bible Study 8:30 a.m.
7 Divine Service 10 a.m Bible Study / Sunday School 11 a.m. Lunch noon Youth Confirmation 12:30 p.m.	8	9	10 Women's Bible Study 4:30 p.m. Choir Practice 5:30 p.m. Advent Dinner 6 p.m. Advent Service 7 p.m.	11	12	13 Children's Christmas Program Rehearsal 3:00 p.m.
14 Divine Service 10 a.m Christmas Program 11 a.m. Lunch noon	15	16	17 Women's Bible Study 4:30 p.m. Choir Practice 5:30 p.m. Advent Dinner 6 p.m. Advent Service 7 p.m.	18	19	20
21 Divine Service 10 a.m Bible Study / Sunday School 11 a.m. Lunch noon	22	23	24 Christmas Eve Service 7 p.m.	25 Divine Service 10 a.m.	26	27
28 Divine Service 10 a.m Bible Study / Sunday School 11 a.m. Lunch noon	29	30	31 New Year's Eve Service 7 p.m. New Year's Eve Party			

Future Church Cleaning:

Dec. 6 Crutcher, Foltz, Mitchell,
and Morgan

Dec. 20 Richardson and Kymberly,
Scott, and Tim Rohloff

Jan. 3 Elledge

Jan. 17 Higby and Metoxen

December Birthdays:

2 Melinda Mitchell

11 Brian Schwiesow

13 Kymberly Rohloff

15 David Layson

25 Bo Hill

27 Deena Strang

December Anniversaries:

15 Elledge

18 Higby

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victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Corinthians 15:57

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In 2026, I would like to challenge every member of this congregation to read or continue reading through the Bible in one year. The Bible readings for December and part of January are listed below.

Dec. 1: 1 Corinthians 9-11	Dec. 14: 2 Thessalonians	Dec. 27: Revelation 4-8
Dec. 2: 1 Corinthians 12-14	Dec. 15: 1 Timothy	Dec. 28: Revelation 9-12
Dec. 3: 1 Corinthians 15-16	Dec. 16: 2 Timothy	Dec. 29: Revelation 13-16
Dec. 4: 2 Corinthians 1-4	Dec. 17: Titus, Philemon	Dec. 30: Revelation 17-19
Dec. 5: 2 Corinthians 5-9	Dec. 18: Hebrews 1-6	Dec. 31: Revelation 20-22
Dec. 6: 2 Corinthians 10-13	Dec. 19: Hebrews 7-10	January 1: Genesis 1-3
Dec. 7: Galatians 1-3	Dec. 20: Hebrews 11-13	January 2: Genesis 4-7
Dec. 8: Galatians 4-6	Dec. 21: James	January 3: Genesis 8-11
Dec. 9: Ephesians 1-3	Dec. 22: 1 Peter	January 4: Genesis 12 -15
Dec. 10: Ephesians 4-6	Dec. 23: 2 Peter	January 5: Genesis 16-18
Dec. 11: Philippians	Dec. 24: 1 John	January 6: Genesis 19-21
Dec. 12: Colossians	Dec. 25: 2-3 John, Jude	January 7: Genesis 22-24
Dec. 13: 1 Thessalonians	Dec. 26: Revelation 1-3	January 8: Genesis 25-26



Advent



Christmas

VIC Happenings

Advent Dinners - We will be serving dinners on Wednesday nights at 6 p.m.

Advent Services - We will be having Advent services on December 3, 10, and 17. These services will begin at 7 p.m.

Christmas Eve Service, 12/24 - We will have our annual candlelight Christmas Eve service on December 24, at 7 p.m.

Christmas Day Service, 12/25 - We will have our Christmas Day service at 10:00 a.m. This service is a celebration of Christ's coming to redeem his lost creatures.

New Year's Eve Service, 12/31 - We will be having a New Year's Eve service on December 31, at 7 p.m., followed by games and snacks.

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1 Corinthians 15:57

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LCMS Stewardship Ministry

“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

Have you finished your Christmas shopping yet? Do you have a person or two on your list that you just don't know what to give them? While I know you are running short of ideas...dad doesn't really want another tie, and your kid's teacher doesn't need another coffee mug. It can be nothing short of maddening to try to figure things out in the middle of this busy season!

As stewards of all of life and life's resources, we know that life is more than giving gifts. We stewards never want to take anything the Lord provides for granted. During this season of Advent and Christmas, it is a great idea to do whatever you can to be a faithful steward of your pastor. Even more so than the rest of the year, the demands on their time, their presence and their stewardship of the Gospel in the congregation become heightened.

The demands on pastors can wear them down and wear them out. How does the steward in the congregation serve as a faithful steward of the treasure that is their pastor? Here are a few ideas:

- Put them at the top of your prayer list. – Pray that the Lord guards them against the weariness that makes them susceptible to the work of the devil.
- Make worship a priority – St. Paul admonishes the Thessalonians and us to respect those who labor among us. There is no greater way to steward your pastor than to respect him enough to show up and receive what he has been sent to offer in the proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the Holy Sacraments.
- Be receptive to his work – If your pastor is tasked with calling you to repentance or encouraging you to be in worship, know that he is only caring for your soul.
- Esteem him highly – Take the time to thank him for his faithful service to Christ, the congregation and your family.
- Be at peace – This is an easy time for even minor annoyances to get blown out of proportion and become full-blown conflict. This not only spoils the season of Advent and Christmas, but it also spoils our stewardship of the Gospel and those who serve us in that Gospel. Remember that Jesus came into the world to be the Prince of Peace. This is an act of grace and mercy. The steward seeks to reflect this toward their pastor and their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Stewardship at Christmas can be a challenge. Stewardship of your pastor during this time of the year is critical to our shared stewardship of the Gospel at a time of year when many are more open to hear and receive it.



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