



/ DECEMBER 2019

MID-SOUTH LUTHERAN



Our mighty Conqueror and Savior *(NOT DISNEY'S KIND OF SUPERHERO)*



Rev. Dr.
Roger Paavola
District President

I am amazed by what the world of fantasy and fiction portrays as superheroes. They can fly, stop speeding bullets, use X-ray vision, and even transform themselves from one appearance to something quite different. I'm somewhat relieved that I don't have to explain those qualities to my grandchildren, who can't quite figure out how all of that is possible. But that is the kind of explanation we face every time someone is puzzled about the birth of God in flesh, Jesus the Christ.

As good Lutherans, we're still faced with the question, "What does this mean?"

But Christmas is about God, who chose not to come in majesty, but in weakness. He came in the most unexpected ways.

He is different from all of the superheroes our imaginations

could dream up. Their glory is in the power they possess. But throughout His ministry, and especially beginning in His Incarnation, Christ hid His divine powers and used them only to fulfill divine purpose throughout His ministry.

Jesus desired victory over the powers of evil through His humiliation, coming from His heavenly throne in His incarnation in a most mysterious way. He presented Himself to a cold and dark world to offer His life for the sake of our eternal life. His sole (soul) purpose was for our salvation when He took God's wrath against our sinful nature on the cross. He is most definitely not Disney's kind of superhero!

His death on the cross was not a sign of weakness, but is a sign of grace and mercy toward us. We wouldn't script it that way, but Christmas merely acknowledges the almighty power of God for us and God with us. The Child's cries of hunger and thirst from the manger were repeated three decades later from the cross: "I thirst." The Christ Child who was wrapped in swaddling cloths would 33 years later be wrapped in burial linen when His lifeless body was placed in the grave. King Herod's pretense to worship the newborn Child would be punctuated with the pretentious homage, jeers and assaults on the Person of Jesus as He struggled along the Via Dolorosa.

The chiasmic comparison could continue forever, but we shouldn't question the birth of Christ to a poor, young girl in an obscure and insignificant

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CHRISTMAS

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

farming town. It's the way God fully completed His promise to deliver a Savior to the world — hiding His glory for our sake so that He could be our Redeemer and Lord.

Yes, that tiny Baby is your Savior! He is our Mighty Conqueror and Savior for all of the world. But don't let His feed-trough bed distract you. Don't let His conception to a virgin mother lead you to come to the wrong conclusions. Don't misunderstand His cruel death on the cross that He would suffer for your sake. It is all the way God planned it, instead of the way Disney or even we would have created our own superhero.

The angel Gabriel explained His mother's confusion of how she, a



virgin, would give birth to the Christ:

"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you."

— Luke 1:35

And in fulfilling that promise given to Adam and Eve, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ joined Himself to our fleshly nature and willingly took on our battle against sin and evil — a battle we could never win by ourselves.

Going beyond our most vivid imagination, the angel of the Lord didn't broadcast this great miracle over Fox News, CNN, NBC or any other network. It was an angel who brought the Good News of the birth of Christ the Lord — the Savior of the world — to mere shepherds!

St. Luke records the event, saying:

"In the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And 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. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and

**"Inexplicably,
a virgin bears
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evil."**



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

— Luke 2:8-14

Sometime later, Magi came to worship this Child. Scientists and astronomers have tried to explain it. But in the end, it was a celestial sign — given by God's great design — that brought men to the Baby Jesus, kneeling before Him and offering lavish gifts. They knew what the alignment of the stars and the mysterious natal star meant — the King of Creation was born!

We've all read it before.

We can almost do it from memory. But stop and let this mystery of God's grace, peace and mercy sink in: He is born in a most improbable way to a virgin mother. His birth was accompanied with a chorus of angels, proclaiming the promised Messiah to a bunch of unnamed sheep herders. His entrance on to this stage on this insignificant blue ball in a far-off corner of the cosmos was highlighted with a new light, reminding us of the uncreated Light who would restore mankind to a right relationship with God.

Inexplicably, a virgin bears a Child — God in human flesh! And she calls His name Jesus (Yeshua) because He has delivered us from sin, death and evil.

Savor this mystery as God once again delivers His Christmas blessings to you and yours.

“There are some of us ... who think to ourselves, 'If I had only been there! How quick I would have been to help the Baby. I would have washed his linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger!' Yes, we would. We say that because we know how great Christ is, but if we had been there at that time we would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem. ... Why don't we do it now? We have Christ in our neighbor.” — Martin Luther





Educators meet in St. Louis

The Mid-South District was well-represented at the Lutheran Education Association (LEA) convocation held Oct. 10-12 at America's Center in St. Louis. Both current and retired teachers from as far east as Knoxville, central Memphis, and as far west as Fort Smith, Ark., were provided opportunities for professional growth, fellowship and worship.

DISTRICT SCHOOLS RECEIVE ACCREDITATION



Allen Piepenbrink, Mid-South District executive director for Schools and Early Childhood, recently presented National Lutheran School Accreditation certificates to **Christ Lutheran School, Little Rock**, and **Belvoir Christian Academy, Chattanooga**. Top, Piepenbrink presents certificates to Cara Steely, Christ interim principal (also pictured is Rev. Dan Hauser, Christ pastor); and right, Joyce Enloe, Belvoir School Board chairperson.



Congregation mission commitment receipts

as of Sept. 30, 2019 (9 months)



Anticipated amount (75% of budget)	\$1,149,206
Actual receipts	\$1,157,788
Over (under) anticipated amount	\$8,582

Use of mission commitment receipts

Allocated to Synod for world missions	\$328,586
Allocated to Tanzania	\$18,750
Retained for district ministry/mission support (70% of receipts)	\$810,452
Total receipts	\$1,157,788

Mission commitment receipts comparison

Actual receipts as of Sept. 30, 2019	\$1,157,788
Actual receipts as of Sept. 30, 2018	\$1,139,424
Over (under) prior year receipts	\$18,364



By Rev. Robert Portier
Pastor, St. Paul, Sevierville, Tenn.

ADVENT EXAMPLE #1

Sometime between 740 and 686 B.C., the prophet Micah was warning Israel of the coming onslaught of the Assyrian empire, which came to pass for Samaria in 722 B.C.; and Judah about the conquest by Babylon in 587 B.C.

But like many other prophets, he has things to say about the coming Messiah. Here is a little of what he wrote:

"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days." — **Micah 5:2**

Then over 700 years later, Matthew wrote:

"Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, saying, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him.'" — **Matt. 2:1-2**

ADVENT EXAMPLE #2

In the same way, between 740 and 681 B.C., the prophet Isaiah penned these words:

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign.

hold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." — **Is. 7:14**

Many people of Isaiah's day thought him mad, as did those in Mary's day:

"When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit."

— **Matt. 1:18**

ADVENT EXAMPLE #3

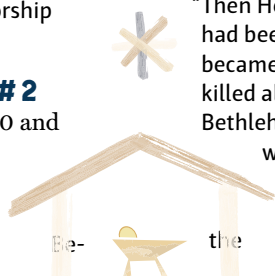
The prophet Jeremiah (628 to 580 B.C.) also warned in vain as the siege of Jerusalem loomed in its future. He speaks of terrible events surrounding the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah:

"A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more."

— **Jer. 31:15**

The evil king Herod brought this to pass just over 2,000 years ago, as recorded in Matt 2:16:

"Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, became furious, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had ascertained from wise men."



AS WE PREPARE FOR THE ADVENT OF OUR LORD, these initial events of the arrival of God in human flesh are just three of more than 300 known prophecies that Christ fulfilled in His lifetime.

It is hard to believe that Isaiah, who lived 700 years before the events that took place on Golgotha, could describe those terrible events in such detail. While faith and the Holy Spirit make these things clear to us, recorded history, archaeology, and the rules of written language make dismissing these fulfilled prophecies a foolhardy proposition which requires a different kind of faith — faith in man's understanding over the revealed word of God. It seems to me a little easier to accept the preponderance of evidence that affirms God's revealed truth.

Simple math and science have something to say about this as well. The statistical impossibility of anyone fulfilling so many prophecies is mind-boggling.

In his book *Science Speaks: Scientific Proof of the Accuracy of Prophecy and the Bible*, mathematician, scientist and professor Peter W. Stoner concludes that the probability of one person fulfilling just eight of these prophecies was one chance in 10²⁸ that is one followed by 28 zeros. And the chance of one person fulfilling just 48 is one chance in 10¹⁵⁷. That's a lot of zeros and way beyond what could be called a statistical possibility.

These numbers are so big they are hard to comprehend. So maybe you say this can't be considered true statistical science. But consider that the American Scientific Affiliation gave Stoner's work their stamp of approval.

Enough dabbling in science. Let's just appreciate that we get to celebrate again the anticipation of the Advent season, cut through the facts and figures of the age of reason along with the garland, bobbles and shiny decorations of the commercialized holiday season, and be still and know that God came into human flesh to redeem all.

Take time to enjoy the season with a daily devotion that helps you to focus on the wondrous gift of the Christ Child.

The Mid-South District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Ordained ministers celebrating anniversaries in 2019



70 Years

Rev. Norman Groteluschen (em)
Germantown, Tenn.

60 Years

Rev. Stanley Jones (em)
Bella Vista, Ark.

Rev. Roy Bingenheimer (em)
Concordia, Mo.

55 Years

Rev. Marvin Otto (em)
Kingsport, Tenn.

50 Years

Rev. Clifford Herd (em)
Chattanooga, Tenn.

Rev. Robert Mader (em)
Clarksville, Tenn.

Rev. Herbert Swanson
River Valley Grace, Lamar, Ark.

Rev. Louis Trebus (em)
Sevierville, Tenn.

45 Years

Rev. H. Chris Powell (em)
Nashville, Tenn.

Rev. Albert Quoss (em)
Bella Vista, Ark.

40 Years

Rev. Richard Elseroad
Grace, Knoxville, Tenn.

Rev. Martin Nutter
Faith, Tullahoma, Tenn.

35 Years

Rev. Duncan Cox (candidate)
St. John, Fayetteville

Rev. James Dunn
Immanuel, Murray, Ky.

Rev. Donald Hefta (em)
Hot Springs, Ark.

Rev. Robert Kellerman (em)
Casa Grande, Ariz.

Rev. David Rubke (em)
Tullahoma, Tenn.

30 Years

Rev. Richard Graves
Naval Air Station Sigonella, Sicily

Rev. Mark Kophamer
Redeemer, Elizabethton, Tenn.

Rev. LeRoy Leach (em)
Conway, Ark.

Rev. Michael Miller
Redeemer, Harriman, Tenn.

Rev. Brian Pummil
Peace, Cherokee Village, Ark.

25 Years

Rev. Daniel Hawkins
GracePoint, Munford, Tenn.

Rev. David Krause (em)
Bella Vista, Ark.

Rev. Nathan Jansen
St. John, Burns, Tenn.

20 Years

Rev. Fasil Alemayehu
Faith, Thompson's Station, Tenn.
Hope, Smyrna, Tenn.

Rev. Timothy Henning
Trinity, Mena, Ark.

Rev. Hiram Nunez (em)
Granbury, Texas

15 Years

Rev. Joshua Willadsen
Bethel, Fort Smith, Ark.

10 Years

Rev. Ronald Bacic
First, Little Rock, Ark.

Rev. John Easterling
Redeemer, Mountain Home, Ark.

Rev. James Glowinski (candidate)
Pottsville, Ark.



Rev. Timothy Matthew
Prince of Peace, Dayton, Tenn.

Rev. John Merrill
First, Fort Smith, Ark.

Rev. Edward Rosser
Good Shepherd, Chattanooga, Tenn.

Rev. Michael Schleider
Zion, Alexander, Ark.

Rev. Emil Woerner
Friends in Christ, Bryant, Ark.

5 Years

Rev. David Appold
St. Paul, Paducah, Ky.

Rev. Eric Phillips
Concordia, Nashville, Tenn.

*Well done, good and faithful
servants!*

CTK celebrates LWML Sunday

By Genie Swan

Coordinator, CTK Community Relations

On Oct. 6, Christ the King (CTK) Lutheran Church, Memphis, observed LWML Sunday as the women of CTK's LWML chapter participated in various roles throughout the service.

They prepared coffee and served in the nursery. They served as ushers and lecturers, in the Altar Guild, as Sunday-school teachers and greeters, as handlers for Job Comfort Dog, as acolytes, crucifers and musicians. They also served in a number of roles behind the scenes to create an atmosphere of Christ-centered worship that gave glory to God.

Cindy Jurgensen, CTK LWML president, and Denise Doyle, vice-president, pinned purple corsages on all the women, and the congregation saw a sea of LWML purple in the pews.

CTK's members give thanks to our heavenly Father for His gracious gift to us through the steadfast faith and witness of the women of our congregation.



All photos on this page courtesy of Caroline Johnson.



From left, Valarie Boston, Cindy Jurgensen, Beth Ward, Denise Doyle, and Jackie Brotchner invited new members to find out more about the mission, service and fellowship opportunities.

Job, the CTK Comfort Dog, greeted children wearing his purple LWML bandana.



From left, Becky Kuykendall, Grace Howell, Caroline Johnson and Lindy Stephenson — decked out in LWML purple — served as ushers and greeted people with smiling faces.

Sharon Hyde has her hands full as she prepares to deliver the children's message on LWML missions and "faith like a mustard seed."

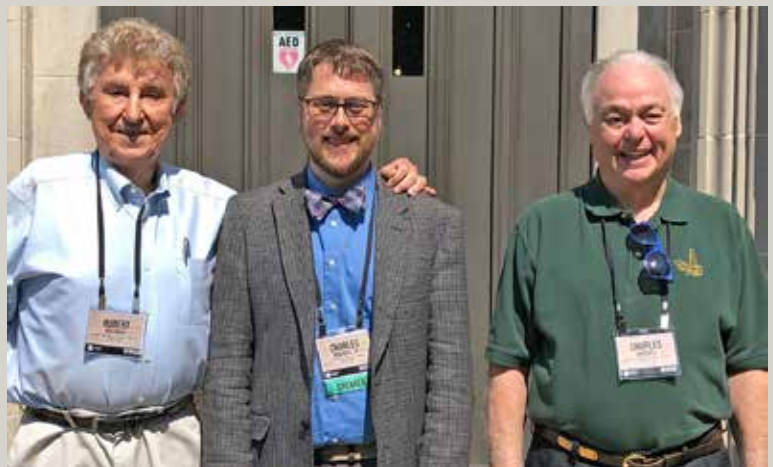


Another LWML article appears on page 8.



Anderson installed at Grace, Knoxville

Rev. Danny Anderson was installed as associate pastor of Grace, Knoxville, Tenn., on Sept. 22. Rev. Anderson previously served at Christ Memorial, Houston. From left, (front row) Revs. Ray Kreig, Lane Reuter, Dr. Roger Paavola (district president), Anderson, Rich Elseroad, Roger Reckling, David Callies (district president emeritus); (back row) Robert Portier, Derek Roberts, Phil Bohlken, John Schultz, Gordon Smith and Steven Skov.



CTK members attend symposium

Dr. Hubert Dellinger and Chuck Ransdell, members of Christ the King, Memphis, attended the 30th Annual Theological Symposium at Concordia Seminary Sept. 18-19. The theme was "Devoted: (Re)forming the Devotional Life."

It was Dellinger's 26th symposium, made special this year as Ransdell's son, Rev. Dr. C. J. Ransdell, pastor of St. John's, Dover, Del., was honored to be a presenter. The presentation, "Confirmation as Spiritual Formation," addressed the need to share resources to help incorporate a spiritual practices element into confirmation ministry and congregational life.

More than 400 attended the symposium — the largest attendance in recent history.

Dellinger described the presentations, devotions and fellowship as especially memorable, and the chapel services inspiring. An outdoor buffet and shorter breaks also offered welcome chances for fellowship.



Dr. Hubert Dellinger (left) and Chuck Ransdell (right), visited with Ransdell's son, Rev. Dr. C. J. Ransdell while attending the 30th Annual Theological Symposium at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in September.





Thank you for your service!

By Rev. David Graves

Pastor, St. Paul, Wartburg, Tenn.

On Sept. 29, the feast day of St. Michael the Archangel, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Wartburg, Tenn., held a thank-you service and meal for local law enforcement personnel. Sheriff Wayne Potter of the Morgan County Sheriff's Department and Chief Teddy Bales of the Wartburg Police Department brought 30 of their deputies and officers for the service.

Since St. Michael the Archangel has a long connection with law enforcement, the day was chosen to celebrate and support our sheriff's department and police. At the conclusion of the service, Sheriff Potter and Chief Bales were each presented with a print of St. Michael by Edward Riojas, an LCMS member and artist. A meal was held for all in attendance to celebrate our guests and the congregation's love of the community.



From left, Rev. David Graves presided at St. Michael's feast day services at St. Paul, Wartburg, Tenn., which included the presentation of framed prints of the Archangel Michael to Wartburg Police Chief Teddy Bales and Morgan County Sheriff Wayne Potter.

'Wait for the Lord!'

By Frances Bacic

Media/Marketing,
LWML Mid-South District

Do you like waiting? No, I don't think I know anyone who has ever said, "I'm so excited to wait for..." And yet, through the Bible we witness people waiting — Abraham waiting for a son, the Israelites and other captives waiting to be freed, all mankind waiting for the promised Savior.

Here we are again in the season of Advent: We are waiting for Christmas, the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ. The first Christmas night, the angels announced to poor shepherds our Savior's birth:



"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. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger." — **Luke 2:10-12**

Can you imagine?

Yet we are still waiting:

"...We wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

— **Titus 2:13 (NIV)**

May you find joy this season as we wait for the Lord.

February issue deadline is Dec. 15

Digital files, sent via e-mail, are preferred. Our submission deadline is the 15th of each month, two months before publication.



Send email submissions to:
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or send by postal mail to:

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