



# Reformation History #2: 95 Theses

by Pastor Glenn Huebel

*Note: October 31, 2017 will be the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation of the Church through Martin Luther. I will devote my newsletter articles during this year (November 2016-October 2017) to Reformation history and its theology. The world will be focusing upon the Reformation this year. Lutherans ought to be able and willing to articulate why we are Lutherans today. It is a magnificent witnessing opportunity.*

Today, one would have to be a real nerd to write ninety-five theses for academic debate of one issue, but Martin Luther was just a product of his culture and time – a very intelligent one to be sure. This work, formally titled, *Disputation on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences*, made Luther immediately famous and secured his spot as a major figure in world history.

Yet, the famous 95 theses do not even come close to representing the best of Lutheran theology. They were intended to be a protest against the selling of indulgences (See History #1), not against the theological system of Rome. Luther had not yet come to a mature understanding of the Gospel at this point in his life. He just knew a scam when he saw it:

- Thesis #46 *Christians are to be taught that, unless they have more than they need, they must reserve enough for their family needs and by no means squander it on indulgences.*
- Thesis #50: *Christians are to be taught that if the pope knew the exactions of the indulgence preachers, he would rather that the basilica of St. Peter were*

*burned to ashes than built up with the skin, flesh, and bones of his sheep.*

- Thesis #65: *Therefore the treasures of the gospel are nets with which one formerly fished for men of wealth ...*
- Thesis #66: *The treasures of indulgences are nets with which one now fishes for the wealth of men*

The 95 theses do show that Luther understood the spiritual nature of genuine repentance. He argued against the prevalent notion that repentance is just doing some outward work or buying piece of paper signed by the pope:

- Thesis #1: *When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent", he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.*
- Thesis #39: *It is very difficult, even for the most learned theologians, at one and the same time to commend to the people the bounty of indulgences and the need of true contrition*

This notion of substituting payment for contrition was leading people into false confidence:

- Thesis #49: *Christians are to be taught that papal indulgences are useful only if they do not put their trust in them, but very harmful if they lose their fear of God because of them.*

Indulgences were also undermining the  
*(Continued on page 2)*



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*That you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name. —John 20:31*

value of works of mercy:

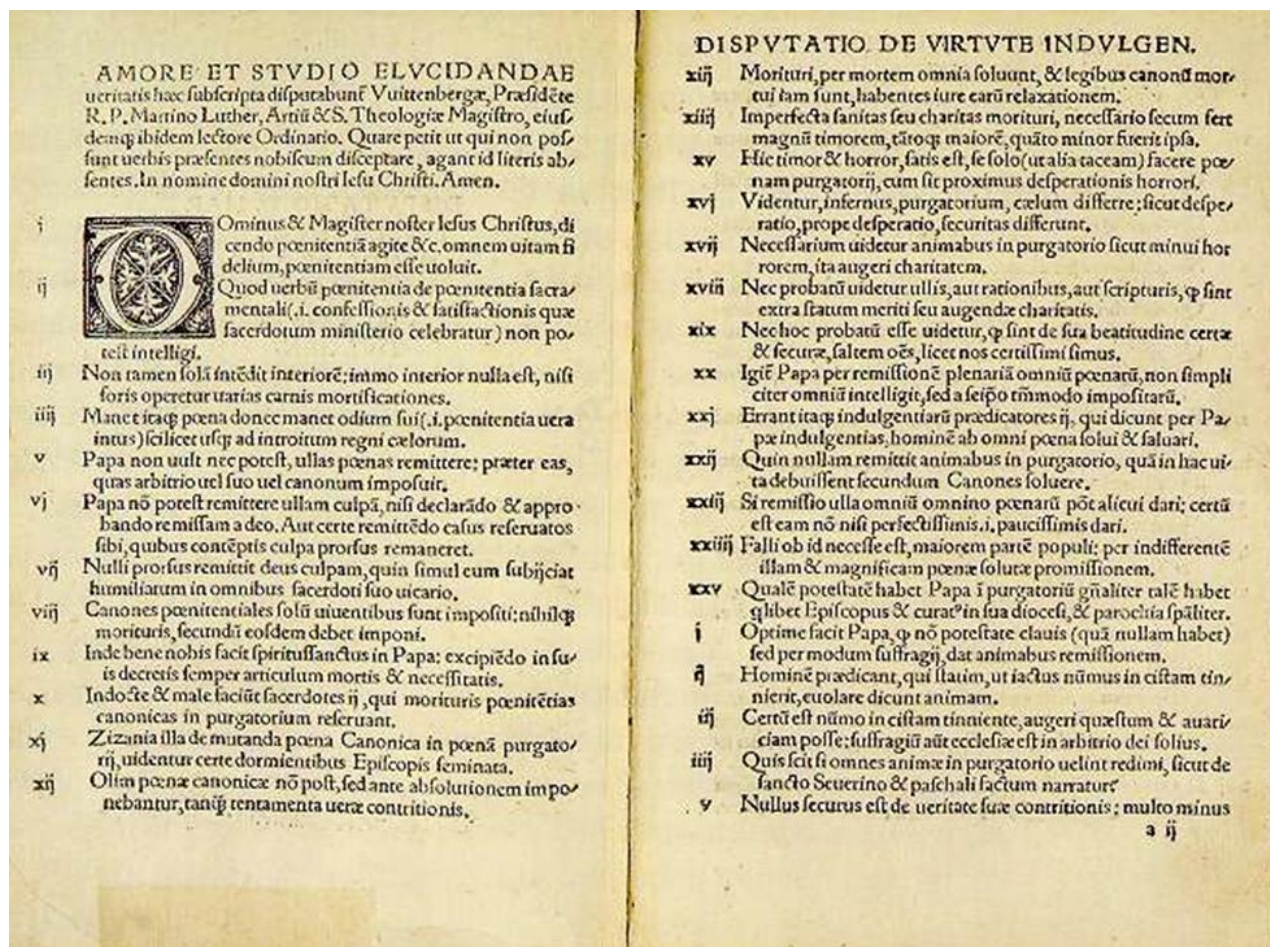
- Thesis 41: *Papal Indulgences must be preached with caution, lest people erroneously think that they are preferable to other good works of love.*
- Thesis 42: *Christians are to be taught that the pope does not intend that the buying of indulgences should in any way be compared with works of mercy*
- Thesis 43: *Christians are to be taught that he who gives to the poor or lends to the needy does a better deed than he who buys indulgences.*

Luther knew also that the Pope did not have power to forgive sins after

death, or to remit sufferings of those in purgatory. He knew that the idea itself was *making it difficult for learned men to rescue the reverence which is due the pope from slander* (Thesis 81). Even laypeople were rudely asking, *Why does not the pope empty purgatory for the sake of holy love and the dire need of the souls that are there if he redeems an infinite number of souls for the sake of miserable money with which to build a church?* (Thesis 82).

At the writing of the 95 theses, Luther had not yet come to an articulation of the doctrine of justification by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Nor did he even reject the concept of purgatory, but these errors were soon exposed after Luther was forced to defend

himself with Scripture. Luther discovered from Scripture that God's forgiveness is not merited by any works of law, much less the buying of indulgences. God's forgiveness has been won entirely by Christ and His atoning life, death and resurrection. Our sins were punished (purged) on the cross, once for all. Faith alone receives the work of Christ and the righteousness of the Gospel. The beauty of this Gospel is declared far more clearly and distinctly in later writings of Luther, but without the 95 theses those may never have been written. If the Pope had known what a storm was coming through the catalyst of indulgence selling, I'm sure he would have avoided Germany as a marketplace. Thank God he did not.



Martin Luther's 95 Theses, which sparked off the Reformation in a print edition from 1522. Within the span of only two years, Luther's tracts were distributed in 300,000 printed copies throughout Germany and Europe.



# “Maranatha” — by Pastor Tom Chryst

That is, **“Come quickly!”** It is a prayer that Paul inscribes by his own hand at the end of his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16:22).

*“Come quickly, Lord Jesus!”* is a prayer that dates to the early church, and yet is prayed by many Christians today. It is a prayer echoed by some of the very last words of the Christian Bible: *“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Yes, I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”* (Revelation 22:20) It is, of course, a good and fitting prayer for Christians to pray at any time, though some may not think so.

If you fear the Second Coming of Christ, you obviously don't want it to “come quickly”. If Jesus is returning in judgment for YOUR sins, then you have reason to fear. If you haven't grasped or don't believe the many Gospel promises of Christ which assure us that our sins are forgiven, remitted, and separated from us as far as East from West... then you won't be praying “Come quickly, Lord Jesus!”



But faith knows better. Faith looks forward to his promised return with all sorts of eager expectation. We know that for the elect, those who are being

saved, Jesus' return is the day of victory! It is the day he finally, once and for all, puts all His enemies (and ours) under his feet. It is the day of the final judgment on the devil. It is the final passing away of this fallen world. And it is the day when you are either resurrected into a glorious body like his – or, if you haven't yet fallen asleep, the day you are changed “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet”. We see dimly, now, as in a foggy mirror. But then we will see it all so clearly, Jesus Christ as he truly is. Face to face.

We look around at the world as it is now, groaning in the birth pangs, and we see distress on every front. Wars and rumors of wars. Nations rising against nations. Natural disasters. Calamities. Tragedies. Unspeakable horrors. How can all this evil continue if there's a God in Heaven that loves us? How can the Devil seem to run roughshod over the earth, and even have seeming free reign in the church, if Jesus really reigns upon his throne?

But faith looks past all of this, toward the horizon. Faith knows that what we see with our eyes isn't the ultimate reality. Yes, we do suffer now, for a time. But these present sufferings aren't worth comparing to the glory

that is to be revealed in Christ when he comes again in glory. We know that a better day is coming, and will soon be here. For He himself has promised.

The Christian martyrs and those persecuted for the faith knew it well: Christ's return will be the final vindication of his people. Whether put to the Roman cross or devoured by lions in the first century, or beheaded or ravaged by Islamic Jihadists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the prayer of the faithful is the same. May we follow in their faithful example, no matter what challenges to our faith we might face. And may our faith join theirs in the great chorus of prayers before Christ's throne:

“Come quickly, Lord Jesus! Save us from this world of sorrow, this vale of tears. Lead us through the valley of the shadow of death into your eternal green pastures. Remember your promises, and bring your promised reward. Come quickly and save us, Lord Jesus!”

Advent, that season of the church year that leads up to Christmas, is also the season of “Maranatha”. Advent reminds us that the Christ who came once as a baby, will come again as victorious Lord of all. And Advent reminds us that THAT is a very good thing. It's certainly worth praying for.



# God's Faithfulness — by Pastor Huebel

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In the seasons of Advent and Christmas we focus upon the fulfilled promises of God to send His Beloved Son into the world to save us from sin, death, and devil. While this act of grace exalts the attribute of God's mercy it also shows His faithfulness. God does not lie, nor can He be prevented from fulfilling His Word. The promise that He would crush the devil through a miraculous incarnation was first spoken in Eden before Adam and Eve were cast out of the garden. It was reaffirmed and greatly expanded through the ages, especially through Abraham and his chosen descendants. The line of descent was progressively narrowed from Abraham to Isaac to Jacob and his 12 sons. Though all 12 sons of Jacob were included in the promises, the line of descent was narrowed to Judah, and many centuries later to David. The throne that God gave to David and his descendants was the Kingdom promised to the future "Messiah", the Anointed One. The prophet Isaiah clearly foretold the miracle of incarnation by announcing the sign of a virgin conception and birth (Isaiah 7:14). He also gave the virgin born child divine names (Isaiah 9:6). He prophesied both the glory of the Messianic Kingdom and the sufferings of the King. He also foretold the coming of Gentile nations into the Kingdom. Micah

pinpointed the place of birth as Bethlehem, David's city.

Though neither Israel nor the House of David remained faithful to God through these centuries, God remained faithful to them, and to His Word. All of these promises and more were referred to by the angel, Gabriel, when he appeared to Mary of Nazareth to declare that she was the favored one of the Lord and would give birth to the promised heir of David. Thousands of years of promises came to focus and fulfillment in one single life, Jesus, the Son of Mary, the Son of God. This is the ultimate demonstration and proof that God is faithful. Heaven and earth will pass away, but God's Word will never pass away. A promise from God is more certain than the stars of the heavens and the mountains of the earth.

As we consider these promises of God through the prophets, and their fulfillment in the conception, birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, let us also consider the virtue of faithfulness in our lives as God's children through baptism. We have not only seen God's promises fulfilled, but are the recipients of all the benefits of those promises. Furthermore, our hope for eternal glory is founded upon the promises yet to be fulfilled, so we rest upon the virtue

of God's faithfulness day by day. We know that darkness cannot extinguish the Light of Christ no matter how hopeless it appears.

Through faith in the doing and dying of Jesus we become the children of God (John 1:12). We are reborn into new creations after the image of God. As beloved children we begin to imitate God in our thoughts and actions. Imitation includes such virtues as love (John 13:34-35), forgiveness (Eph. 4:32), humility (Phil 2:5-8), and *faithfulness* (Rev 2:10). I would like us to focus this Christmas especially on that last virtue because it is so contrary to our present culture.

Commitment is not an American strong suit today. We don't like to make long-term promises because we don't want to be bound to them. When we do make promises, or even vows before God, we forget them quickly, or find a multitude of ways to justify breaking them. When an unfaithful person makes a vow or promise, does it mean anything? Will a bank loan you money on the basis of your word alone? Would it be safe to do so? Obviously the credit report industry is necessary today. Even so, I frequently see billboards and TV ads denigrating creditors who expect their loans to be paid back, and promising to protect the "right" of debtors to pay back pennies on the dollar. Do we really think that people who expect us to fulfill our promises are ogres and oppressors? Did I not AGREE/PROMISE to pay back the money fronted for me to drive a new car off the lot, or take a TV or furniture out of a store? Who is really the transgressor here?

Things are probably no better in our relationship with God. Through baptism and confirmation vows we renounce the devil and his works and ways and promise to be faithful to God and His Word, but if remaining faithful to the Word means that we have to suffer in some way, or deny ourselves



## God's Faithfulness, cont.

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something, do the vows still count? What if faithfulness to God is detrimental to my career goals, my social relationships, my wealth, my worldly success ... my HAPPINESS! Obviously, God does not want me to be unhappy – does He??? Ditto the above on marriage vows.

The necessity of hiring lawyers to protect our interests in virtually every non-cash transaction, the necessity of the credit report industry, the necessity for character references, the instability of marriage, the widespread abandonment of spouses and children, the silly justification of sins, the eagerness to gather teachers in the church who scratch our itching ears, the general neglect of our duty to God and neighbor cry against the simple dictum of Jesus to "let your yes be yes and your no be no. Anything

more comes from the evil one."

The virtue of faithfulness is repugnant to our self-centered flesh. When we stand before the cradle of Jesus and behold the faithfulness of God in the face of our persistent and willful rebellion, we are convinced that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. The new nature begotten in us by this sacrificial love mirrors God's own saving attributes. The Holy Spirit kindles faithfulness in our hearts. We begin to see the vital importance of remembering and keeping our promises, backing up our words with actions, living consistently with our confession of faith, and keeping His Word. We remain true to our spouses, our children, our fellow workers, our authorities, and to the responsibilities we are apportioned by the Spirit in the body of Christ. We fulfill our vocations faithfully,

even when it costs us something, whether that be money, pleasure, peace, or happiness. We become dependable people, the kind of people others trust because our yes IS yes, and our no IS no. Most importantly, we remain true to Him who fulfilled His Word to us by sending His own Son to bear our sin and to make us God's beloved children. The greatest Christmas gift you can give to your loved ones and the most pleasing sacrifice of thanksgiving you can give to your God is faithfulness.

Lord, take this flimsy reed  
and make me a pillar  
in your Kingdom  
that I may finally hear the  
commendation of my Savior,  
"Well done, good and  
faithful servant!"

AMEN.



WHEN  
THE RIGHT  
TIME CAME,  
GOD SENT  
HIS SON.

GALATIANS 4:4, NLT



# SERVING THE LORD IN GHANA

NEWS FROM THE MCDERMOTT FAMILY



November 2016

[Mcdermottsinghana.wordpress.com](http://Mcdermottsinghana.wordpress.com)

## "God Is Our Refuge and Strength"



### TWI TIDBITS

Here are a few bits about the Twi language, which we are working to acquire:

- Twi does not have the consonants C, J, Q, V, X, and Z. It does have the added vowels ɛ and ɔ.
- Twi does not use the blends ST or PL. However, it does have HY (sh) and KY (ch), among others.
- The verb "give" can work both directions, but "take" only works from giver to recipient.
- Twi does not have a native word for garlic.
- The Twi word PAPA has four distinct meanings, depending on the tone pattern.
- The Twi word for "radio" is AKASANOMA, which literally means "the bird that talks."



To be added to or removed from this mailing list, send an email message to [ryan.mcdermott@lcmsintl.org](mailto:ryan.mcdermott@lcmsintl.org) with the word ADD or REMOVE in the subject line.



A photo from **Ryan's** installation as a missionary for the ELCG by Rev. Dr. Paul Kofi Fynn, Sunday 9 October at St. **Paul's** Church, Accra

*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. (Psalm 46:1-3 ESV)*

We are once again closing in on the Festival of the Reformation, and the words of Psalm 46 come to mind: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

What a comfort it is to have a God who is our refuge and strength! He has defeated the old evil foe, and He has won salvation for us by His cross and passion.

We need God to be our refuge and strength, because we have no strength in ourselves. The devil would only strengthen his hold over

us. And our sinful nature does not do anything to stop him.

But thanks be to God that He has sent Jesus to be pierced for our transgressions. Now, the river whose streams make glad the city of God flows from the pierced side of Jesus. These streams flow out into the font and chalice in every Christian congregation.

Now, the devil is defeated! His might is unraveled, and his accusations are meaningless. "Scowl fierce as he will, he can harm us none! He's judged; the deed is done. One little word can fell him."

And that little word is any word that falls from the mouth of the Lord, which serves to save us from our sins. Thanks be to God!

*Are you receiving this in print, and you could get it via email? Or could your church print copies for you? Please help us save postage and resources, and send an email to the address to the left. Thanks!*





#### PLEASE PRAY FOR:

- Our missionaries in West Africa, that God would keep them safe and strong
- Bishop Paul Kofi Fynn, the pastors and evangelists, and all the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ghana
- The missionaries and students in our seminaries throughout Africa
- Recovery from an illness going through the house

#### GIVE THANKS FOR:

- Receiving our residence permits
- Our vehicle, due to arrive soon
- Opportunities to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ

#### PRAISE GOD FOR:

- The wonderful network of family, friends, and loved ones who support and encourage us
- All the small, daily, minute things and kindnesses that have come along to get us to where we are today

## News this month



### A Big Day

Sunday, 9 October, was a big day for our family!

In the Divine Service at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Accra, Ryan was officially installed by Bishop Fynn as a missionary of the ELCG. What an opportunity to make a good, thorough confession of the faith!

Then, after the service, some of our missionaries and some leaders of the ELCG joined us at a local restaurant, where Bishop had arranged a luncheon for us to celebrate in the installation, and also Joshua's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday.

We enjoyed the chance to share the occasion with our friends and colleagues! Oh, and Joshua enjoyed cake.

### We got our permits

This past week, we received our residence permits. So now, we have legal status in Ghana, at least for the next year. This is good, because it means that we have our passports back in hand and can travel more freely.

### Check our blog!

We thank you for the support and gifts that have allowed us to get to this point. We have not lacked for being able to set up our household. However, because of so many large start-up expenses, our budget going forward is low. Please check out the blog post we have written about this, and prayerfully consider how you might help.



*Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the Word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you. — 2 Thessalonians 3:1*

- The McDermott Family

Ryan	Emily
Rhys	Evangeline
Joshua	Kaj



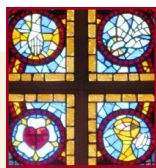
There are many opportunities to serve as short-term or GEO missionaries. Check out the current list and download an application at [lcms.org/service](http://lcms.org/service). Click on "Service Opportunities."

To support the LCMS through the work of Rev. & Mrs. Ryan McDermott, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod  
P.O. Box 66861  
St. Louis, MO 63166-6861

Mission Central  
40718 Hwy E16  
Mapleton, IA 51034

Make checks payable to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Mark checks "Support of McDermotts - Ghana." Gifts can also be given securely online through the LCMS website, on my online giving page at [lcms.org/mcdermott](http://lcms.org/mcdermott).



### Messiah Lutheran Church & School

*The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*

1308 Whitley Rd. Keller, TX 76248

Church Office: (817) 431-2345

Academy Office: (817) 431-5486

Sunday Worship: 8:00 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.

Sunday School & Adult Bible Class: 9:30 a.m.

Rev. Glenn Huebel, Senior Pastor

Rev. Thomas Chryst, Associate Pastor

[www.messiahkeller.org](http://www.messiahkeller.org)



## JOY TO THE WORLD

### Christmas Eve Candlelight Services:

5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.

*Special pre-service music begins 30 min. prior to each service.*

### Christmas Day with Holy Communion:

10:00 a.m.

### New Year's Day with Holy Communion:

10:00 a.m.

(Please note: Christmas and New Year's fall on Sundays this year. We will hold one service only, and Sunday School will not be held.)

## Miscellany (/ˈmɪsəˌlānē/) noun. —a mixture or collection of different things

### Help our Library!

Order from [schwans.com](http://schwans.com) and use campaign # **29877**



The library fundraiser continues through December 21. Messiah will receive 20% of every food purchase made from Schwan's, either by phone or online, using the **code 29877**. Gift card purchases (one per customer) will give us 40%! This includes new and repeat customers. Funds will be used to purchase new books. Please consider giving Schwan's a try! Visit [Schwans.com](http://Schwans.com) to get started. Or, purchase through, our campaign page: <https://www.schwans-cares.com/c/29877>

**Help wanted!** The library needs help with covering books and preparing them for cataloging, shelving books, and shelf-reading. No experience necessary—we will show you what to do. Some jobs can be done at home. If you would like to help in the library, please see Marcia Huebel.

**Recycle Here!** Here's a short list of thing we need here that you may be throwing away at home:

### Newspapers and other paper:

There is a paper recycling bin just off the fire lane by the shed. Once it fills, Messiah gets a few dollars. You can help by dropping off your



newspapers, office paper, etc., but not cardboard boxes or phone books.

### Plastic grocery bags

are a hot commodity at Messiah! Save them for the Braille Center for packaging, the Bags Mat-ter group, which turns them into sleeping mats for the homeless, and/or Swaddling Clothes, for our "shoppers."

**Foam egg cartons** are used in our MLCA art room for disposable paint palettes.

**Pop tabs from soda cans:** these little tabs are collected and taken down to the Ronald McDonald Home in Fort Worth. They recycle and use the money to provide some food items and necessities for their guests.

**Box Tops and Labels:** Before disposing of your soup cans and cereal boxes, check the labels. The school collects "Box Tops for Education" and Campbell's Soup labels.

**Amazon Smile:** If you shop on [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), you can donate to our church or school every time you shop. Go to [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com), and choose Messiah Lutheran Church or Messiah Lutheran Classical Academy as the charity you would like to support. Then shop as you normally would. Your charity designation is saved, so you do not have to repeat that step each time. The dollars add up, but if we all did this, it could be significant fundraiser. Since November, MLCA has received \$300 and the church has received \$50 from amazon.

**Come to the MLCA Walk Through Bethlehem on Thursday, December 15, at 6:30pm.**