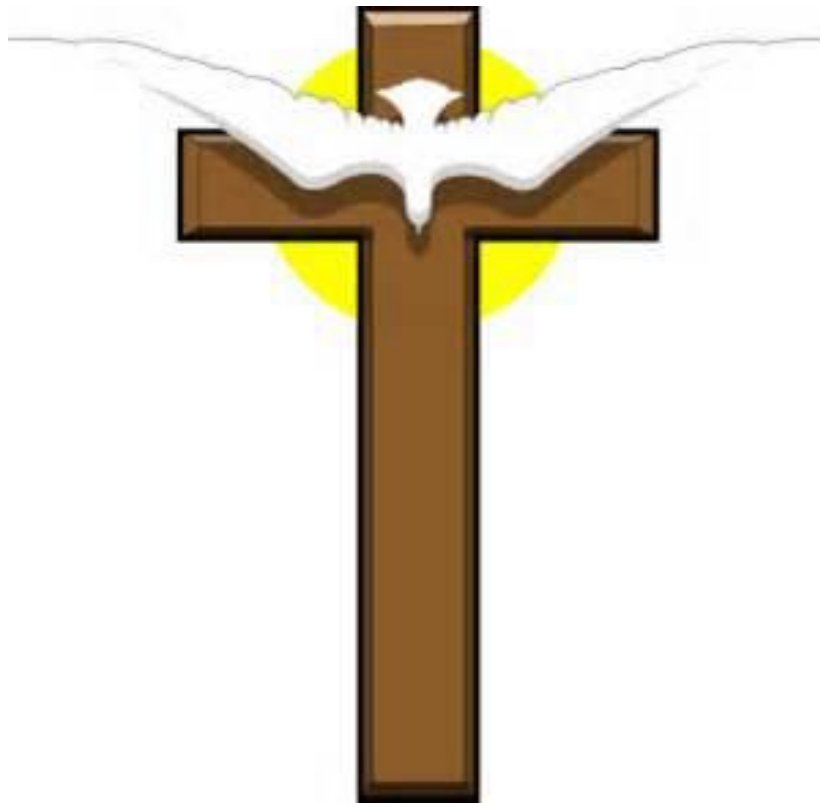


The Spirit of St. John's



*... how beautiful are the feet of the messenger who brings good news
Romans 10:15*

At Christmas - The Glow of Anticipation

By: Pastor Richard J. Boeck, Jr.

"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His Word I put my hope. My soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning." (Psalm 130:5, 6)

It amazes me, when I stop to think about it, how different Christmas is for me as an adult. When I was a child I couldn't wait for Christmas to come. I looked forward to participating in the Christmas programs at church, the Christmas parties we had at the Lutheran school I attended, the music and caroling, putting up the Christmas tree, seeing the lights put up on the house, visits to and by family and friends, and chomping at the bit to find out what gifts I was going to receive.

As I got older and got a job, my anticipation of Christmas began to change. I still anticipated the Christmas music and caroling, putting up the Christmas tree (now without my father's help), helping to hang the lights on the house, and worship on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. I still waited eagerly to visit with my grandparents and other family, but I began to lose my interest in going to visit my parents' friends. While gift-receiving was still high on my list of great things to await on Christmas, the giving of gifts became a "requirement" because I had a job and thus a chore. No matter how much I wanted to give Mom a really great gift for Christmas, shopping for it was another matter.

When I left home for college, my anticipation of Christmas also changed. I couldn't afford to come home from school too often, so Christmas break was a great opportunity to come home, see my family, see my friends, and enjoy the celebration of Christ's birth with those I loved and cherished in my life. Christmas gift-giving was no longer a chore but an anticipated way of letting my family know that I hadn't forgotten them and how much I loved them. I can remember how numb and angry I felt the year I had my car broken into in the parking lot of the restaurant at which I was at work and all the gifts I had for my family stolen. It was my last year at the seminary and I didn't have any money to replace them. I was headed home right after work (from Indiana) and had everything packed and ready to go.

As a parish pastor and single I remember anticipating the special worship services we would hold at the small parishes in Montana and North Dakota. After my Susan and I got married the anticipation of Christmas took on a whole new meaning. I remember the second Christmas of our marriage when I told her we couldn't "go home for Christmas" because I couldn't get leave (I was then on active duty in San Diego). She looked me squarely in the eye, put her arms around my neck, gave me a big kiss and said, "Home is wherever we are." Anticipation at Christmas changed for me once again. (This was especially poignant for me when I was away for Christmas during Desert Shield/Storm).

As our children grew, the anticipation of Christmas came to full circle. Watching their eyes light up as the Christmas tree and the decorations were set up was worth waiting for each year. Their eagerness to see what gifts they were receiving at Christmas was a glowing light of anticipation for me as well. Going to church as a family to worship our newborn King Jesus was a precious gift to be awaited with eagerness each year, even in the years when, as a parish pastor, I was struggling with worship planning for multiple services and other church activities. As our children grew, their outlook and anticipation of Christmas grew with them.

Again, in the present, life for me has changed, and so is how I will experience Christmas. I don't know how long I will still be living. I am not certain when I might retire. In the New Year I will be enrolling in Medicare and in a year be eligible for Social Security. Life changes. Even though many of our children will be with us for Christmas, I no longer expect them "home" because as they get older "home" will be where they live, work, and play. Their friends are new, their experiences are new, and their opportunities are new. As you know, Jonathan lives with us for now, but the rest are spread from New York to California. Susan and I have three grandchildren living in New Jersey with our daughter-in-law, Devin while their father, SSgt Matthew Boeck, USMC is stationed in California awaiting medical

discharge, and we don't see them often. If and when the rest of the six get married, they will be establishing their own families and homes, and, perhaps, God-willing, we'll be traveling to visit with them. At this time in my life, my anticipation of Christmas, while filled with Advent services and Christmas worship preparation, is no longer focused on the things or even places, but the wonderful opportunity to observe once again the solemn feast of Christmas along with my brothers and sisters in Christ the world over.

Simeon, in his old age, rejoiced that he had the precious opportunity to see His Savior, the Messiah, before he died - according to God's promise to him. Simeon lived in anticipation of God's fulfillment of that promise, his soul waiting for the Lord as the Psalmist himself wrote (*Psalm 130:5*). Simeon lived with eager, but patient, anticipation that God would fulfill His promises to Israel, filled with a longing for the appearance of his Savior that was even more eager than "*watchmen wait(ing) for the morning*" (*Psalm 130:6*). Simeon's prayer of rejoicing reflects the joy of his anticipation in the Messiah fulfilled and being, finally, at the doorstep of eternal life (*cf. Luke 2:29-32*).

At Christmas the Holy Spirit fills us with the glow of anticipation - anticipation that awaits the final coming of Jesus on the Last Day. We rejoice with Simeon that our "*eyes have seen Your salvation*" as we give thanks to God for His gift of His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As we live our lives of faith, the things we anticipate during the Christmas season will change as our lives change. Yet, the one sure and certain reality is that our anticipation of Jesus' coming and return according to God's promises will never change because God's promises are sure. What a wonderful blessing to be able to bask in the glow of anticipation at Christmas as we give thanks for His coming and look forward to His return.

Prayer: Father, I thank You that You fill me with the power and presence of Your Holy Spirit so that I might never lose sight of Your grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness in Jesus. By Your Spirit, in the power of my Baptism, You fill me with anticipation as I approach the celebration of Jesus birth and look forward to His return to take me home forever. Father, I pray that You would fill me with a powerful sense of anticipation in Jesus, just as You filled Simeon, so that Your promises will always be at the forefront of my life and witness to others in Jesus' name. Fill me with the glow anticipation at Christmas so that I might be a beacon and light to the world and glorify You with my life. In Jesus' precious name I pray. Amen.



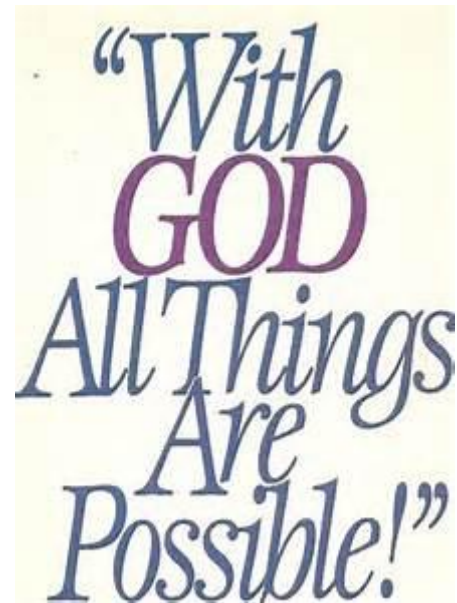
New Life

By: Jacob Ludeman

As Christians we are familiar with the phrase of being "born again." But, this is one of those phrases that we often use or hear without really thinking of what it means. Of course the phrase itself comes from Jesus's conversation with Nicodemus in John 3. But how are we born again of the Spirit?

Often in some denominations of Christianity being a "born again Christian" has the connotation of "making a decision to follow Christ" or "having an experience that leads someone to faith." But being born isn't a decision that we make or something we choose. Similarly, becoming a follower of Jesus means being led to that faith by the Spirit, not by our own doing. For "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." (John 3:6) This blessing of the Spirit is freely given to us in Holy Baptism, as pointed out in the previous verse when Jesus instructs that we must be reborn "of water and the Spirit." Indeed, Paul clarifies further that not only are we reborn in Baptism, but through our Baptisms our sinful self is killed, extinguished, and born again into a new holy life on a recurring, regular basis. "Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life." (Romans 6:3-4) In this new life and God's forgiveness we are given new opportunities, new chances, and the ability to live without guilt or regret. Our sins are completely washed away and dead

forever in Jesus's death and all we have to look forward to is our resurrected life ahead with Him.



“With
GOD
All Things
Are
Possible!”

December, 2016 - LCMS Stewardship: Newsletter Article

edited by: Pastor Richard Boeck

Every Christmas present that sits wrapped under your Christmas tree will wear out. It will break or go out of style. This fact was there, somewhere, in the back of your mind as you bought the gifts, but you bought them anyway. Ultimately, what is most important is that you love the person for whom you bought the gifts, and you really are looking forward, once again, to see that look of joy which the gifts bring to the face of your loved one.

In fact, that's how God gives to you, yet in a still greater way, for His gifts are supremely unique. His gifts to us will never wear out, break down, or go out of style. For what He gives is His eternal and only-begotten Son, wrapped in your flesh, and placed upon the tree of the Cross. He gives His Son for you. He gives that you may have everlasting joy. He gives because He loves you. This is why the Word became flesh to dwell among you.

And that is who is given to you. The Word who is God yet was with God from all eternity. The Word through whom all things were made. The Word who is the only-begotten Son of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, being of one substance with His Father. The One who called all things into existence, the One who spoke to Moses from the bush that burned yet was not consumed, the One whose glory filled the tabernacle to dwell among His people, God Himself, has taken on your flesh.

Even though the Word is made flesh, even though God became Man, His Divinity is not lessened. His Divinity is not changed. His Divinity remains, pure and unchanging, but your flesh, your human nature, is exalted. Your flesh and humanity is assumed into God. God became man so that you would become like unto God—holy and righteous, without sin, without death.

And so it is that the Son given to you wrapped in your flesh is placed upon the tree of the Cross. And no tree was ever adorned more beautifully. Its ornaments were nothing less than the Blood of God, poured out as an atoning sacrifice for your sins. Its garland the Body of God, hanged in death that you may have life. Its light the incarnate Light of the world, strung up to call you and all men unto Himself, to enlighten you, to make you His own. He gives you His life, He gives you joy and peace—peace with God in heaven and peace with one another on earth.

And from the tree of the Cross the Lord Jesus places another gift for you upon the Altar. It is the Fruit of the Cross, His crucified and risen, living Body and Blood, the Fruit of the Tree of Life, wrapped in bread and wine and given to you. He fills you with His Glory. He makes your mouths and your hearts His manger. He abides in you and you in Him.

The Word became flesh to be placed under the Cross for you. You are forgiven. This is why we give. We give because He has first given to us. And just as it was a joy for Him to give all He had to us. It is a joy for us to give to one another and His church so that this message of forgiveness, life, and salvation may be proclaimed.



The Lutheran Home, Wauwatosa, Wis.

RECOGNIZED SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS

Serving in the Name of Christ



Volume 1, Issue 4 • October 2016



THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod

Recognized Service Organizations

To extend its mission outreach, education and social ministry, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod works with independent Recognized Service Organizations (RSOs) that agree to ensure their programs are in harmony with the doctrine and practice of the LCMS.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

November 17, 2016

LCMS Rural and Small Town
Mission Webinar • "Using Technology
for Ministry"

calendar.lcms.org/event/webinar-using-technology-for-ministry/

January 4-6, 2017

LCMS National Campus Ministry
Liberty Conference

calendar.lcms.org/event/2017-lcms-campus-ministry-conference/

January 27-29, 2017

LCMS Life Conference

calendar.lcms.org/event/2017-lcms-life-conference/

January 2017

Association of Lutheran Mission
Agencies Annual Conference

alma-online.org/conference.htm



The Lutheran Home, Wauwatosa, Wis. WRAPPED IN LOVE



In July the residents of the Lutheran Home in Wauwatosa, Wis. received several warm hugs from some kind and talented friends. The hugs came in the form of lovely handmade prayer shawls from members of Redeemer Lutheran Church in DeRidder, La. During a trip to Milwaukee, Deaconess Dorothy Krans, director of Recognized Service Organizations from the LCMS Office of National Mission, personally delivered two gigantic bags of beautiful shawls to the Lutheran Home. No two prayer shawls were alike. The variety of styles, colors and exquisite craftsmanship made beautiful gifts. Each prayer shawl also had a tag letting the resident know it was handmade with love just for him.

The prayer shawls were put to work immediately by the dedicated staff of the Lutheran Home's sewing room. In addition to giving the prayer shawls to individual residents, some of the shawls were also made available to any resident who stops by the sewing room for a visit and to "shop." The sewing room is open weekly for resident shopping and offers a variety of wonderful donated items, including tops, pants, jewelry, handbags and accessories. The residents can get new attire and items to suit their needs, and their purchase price is always the same: a smile.

Several of the prayer shawls also grace the chapel of the Lutheran Home during weekly Sunday services. Chaplain Derek Wolter loves to keep a supply of prayer shawls on hand for residents who come to worship. When a resident has a chill, a prayer shawl draped around her shoulders is a welcome hug, instantly providing warmth and comfort. Chaplain Derek also uses the prayer shawls to provide comfort and reassurance while visiting one-on-one with residents.

"The talented members of Redeemer Lutheran Church have wrapped our residents in love, and we are so grateful. Thank you for sharing your talents, prayers and loving kindness," said Heidi Mayer, Lutheran Home Foundation executive director.

For more information about the Lutheran Home, please visit thelutheranhome.org

Reaching Rural America *for Christ*

A Newsletter of LCMS Rural & Small Town Mission

Volume 7, Issue 12 • Newsletter

December 2016



Our "Life Together"

- To follow the core beliefs of the LCMS
- To equip rural professional and lay leaders
- To support congregations in community engagement

Remember: RSTM is eligible for Thrivent Choice Dollars!

Please Pray for These Important Dates

Dec. 8 - Webinar

"Enhancing Your Congregation's Educational Efforts" with Dr. Mark Blanke, Concordia University, Nebraska, Seward 1-2 p.m. CST

Jan. 12 - Webinar

"Teaching the Faith: Youth" with Rev. Todd Kollbaum, director, RSTM 1-2 p.m. CST

Jan. 21

Engaging the Wandering event St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Humboldt, Kan., with Kansas District 10 a.m.-2 p.m. CST

If you have an idea or story for Rural Outreach, contact Amy at the RSTM office.
Phone: 888-463-5127
Email: amy.gerdts@lcms.org

Mission at home!

Over 160 pastors and lay leaders gathered Nov. 3-5 at the Wichita Hyatt Regency in historic downtown Wichita, Kan., overlooking the Arkansas River and the Spirit of the Prairie for the 2016 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference. Excitement, Faithfulness, Hope and Commitment were the words of the day at the



fifth Synodwide Rural & Small Town Mission Conference. Repeat attendee Rev. Luke Brown said, "This is always one of the highlights of the year, and I don't know if it's just my situation or if the speakers were exceptionally good, but this was the best yet. Every session has been outstanding, and I've enjoyed visiting with sharp people from across the state and country." There were in attendance congregational leaders from coast to coast and all points in between. Over the course of three days, the attendees were impacted by inspirational plenary speakers, practical sectionals, time together in worship and study of the Scriptures and time to encourage and support each other.

In keeping with the theme of "Mission at Home: Standing Where You Are Planted," those in attendance considered such things as: Christ's presence in rural and small town areas, pastor and congregation's role together and within the community, and carrying our ministry with patient perseverance in an impatient world. Rev. Kevin Robson lead the Bible study that grounded the entire conference and spoke about our Master Gardener who has planted us in the setting He wished us to bear fruit. Rev. Dr. John Mehl explored the huge mission fields just outside our doors and how our congregations can reach out in service to God where He has called us in rural America. Dr. Michael Rodewald discussed living as missionaries to encourage the lost. Senior research fellow Benjamin Winchester opened eyes with positive demographics in the rural and small town "Brain Gain." Mrs. Adriane Heins encouraged participants to live out their vocations. A huge variety of breakout sessions were well received as participants explored such topics as strategic planning, outreach, youth, mental health and more.

On the heels of this wonderful conference plans are being made for the 2017 National Rural & Small Town Mission Conference. The 2017 conference will be held at the Kansas City Airport Hilton with the theme "Standing On Our Heritage: It's Still All About Jesus."

Thank you to all who attended the 2016 national conference. RSTM looks forward to seeing you next year. To keep up-to-date with developments for the 2017 conference, go to lcms.org/rstm or contact the RSTM office by emailing rstm@lcms.org or by calling 888-463-5127.



StewardCAST

A monthly e-newsletter of LCMS Stewardship Ministry

lcms.org/stewardship



Stewardship and Mission: An Essential Partnership

Stewardship without mission is pointless. Mission without stewardship is impossible. Stewardship and mission are inseparable. There is no way the church can be faithful and effective without a commitment to this critical union. It is important, too, that the church understand that this statement has very little to do with any kind of funding the mission concept. To limit the partnership of stewardship and mission to simple fundraising sells both the theology of stewardship and mission far short of what the Lord envisions.

For too long the church has functionally separated these two sub-headings of

practical theology. One has been seen in a negative light. The other has been revered. Stewardship has been regarded as a subject that is uncomfortable and even undesirable. At best, stewardship has been regarded as a necessary evil and the cost of doing the business of ministry. Mission, on the other hand, has been the darling of the church. Over the last century, mission has expanded our horizons in our neighborhoods and around the world. Mission festivals and mission speakers have rightfully been regular events in most congregations. In attitude, understanding and practice, these two concepts could not be regarded in any more distinct light.

Understanding Direction to Lessen Separation

From where does this separation arise? The real answer may be more nuanced, but a contributing factor may come from a misunderstanding of the direction of both mission and stewardship. In attitude and practice both mission and stewardship seem to be directed toward the altar, but primarily seen as the work of man. Because stewardship has been reduced to financial support of ministry in the form of offerings that are dropped in the plate and laid on the altar in the middle of the worship service, this direction can be understood. But the church has also functionally made mission an action that moved toward the altar as well. While it may have been called

“Stewardship and mission are inseparable. There is no way the church can be faithful and effective without a commitment to this critical union.”



Senior Moments

By: Coni Kroncke

I recently found out that I was going to be a great- Oma. A baby is coming into my life. Everyone's life is about to change. All the fuss and frills (it's a girl) that surround a *new life* is almost unbelievable. All the holding and cuddling, singing and playing, the happiness when things are going right and all the sadness and concern when things are going awry, is a wonderful experience.

I think about Mary and Joseph. A first child to experience all the ups and downs with, but as happy a *new life* is, it brings with it an unknown future. As you are rearing your child you can't help but want the best life for him. I know that they knew that Jesus was the Savior of the world, but did they really know what that all entailed?

Just as my *new life* will change everything, so will theirs, but mine will grow up in a world with a bright future. Theirs will grow up to carry a heavy burden and have a terrible future here on earth.

Yet with all this sadness comes a wonderful *new life* for us. How grateful and thankful I am for Mary's *new life* in that stable. Without Him, *new life* in heaven would be impossible.

**Be near me Lord Jesus, I ask Thee to
stay,
Close by me forever and love me I pray,
Bless all the dear children in Thy tender
care,
And take us to heaven to live with You
there.
GOD BLESS**

THE SONG OF THE PSALMS

Psalm 39:7

And now, O Lord, for what do I wait?
My hope is in You.



THW WISDOM OF THE PROVERBS

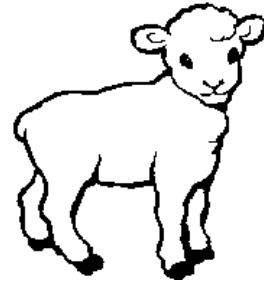
Proverbs 30:5

Every word of God proves true;
He is a shield to those who take refuge in
Him.

All We Like Sheep

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6 (KJV)

Words are taken from Isaiah 53:6-7 (NIV).



E Q R B K W J S Y Y A X O Q P
 P O X G G X B K H N M L I K E
 I J Y J M Y C O U E X O Z S Y
 U S P G A H E R B Y A A U W K
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 Q F T I N I Q U I T Y F E L H
 U S T D J F S L E D H L V R Y
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 E X U D T Y E I C O O O P L I
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LIKE
 SHEEP
 GONE

ASTRAY
 EACH
 TURUNED

WAY
 LORD
 SHEARERS

INIQUITY
 OPEN
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LAMB
 MOUTH
 SILENT

JANUARY’S THEME: A TIME TO RENEW YOUR FAITH

STAFF:

Pastor Boeck ... Publisher

Coni Kroncke ... Editor

ATTICLES BY:

Pastor Boeck ... At Christmas- The Glow of Anticipation

Jacob Ludeman ... New Life

Coni Kroncke ... Senior Moments

LCMS Stewardship Article

Steward Cast – The Lutheran Home, Wauwatosa

Rural & Small Town Mission – Family Shield Ministries

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SOMETHING TO READ

Matthew’s account of Christmas:

1: 18-24

2:1-12