



The Beginning of Hope: Love of Christ

By Bob Dymond

Welcome to Advent, Beloved!

Just as Advent marks our anticipation of the coming of our Lord, the four-week Advent season also marks the beginning of a new church calendar year. And yet, in the midst of all this Promise, we don't know what tomorrow holds beyond knowing that sunrise and the continuing of a new day will dawn.

Not knowing what's over the hill can be cause enough to hold some back from fully living. If we are held back then our question becomes, 'How can we be God's faithful servants, the agents of change we wish to see in the world around us, neighbors who let the Light of Christ shine forth?'

The imagery that is light and dark is appropriate at this time of year - the further into this last month we go, the shorter the days actually become with the nights becoming longer. And in a world where some struggle with making ends meet, that darkness brings with it a real sense of dread. And still, we don't know what tomorrow holds.

As we look forward to the close of Advent and the beginning of Christmastide, we also look forward to the close of 2022 and the beginning of 2023. I love this time of year - there are so many beginnings! And that's the same with HOPE! When we face trials and tribulations, invariably there is someone through all the darkness we face that we know will be there for us.

Back to that question from earlier, we don't know what our neighbors are facing and they'll try their best to put on a brave front and a smile...but the struggles continue. We are Called to be Beacons of Light as Children of God. That's how we let the Light of Christ shine, by being present for all who surround us.

We may not know what tomorrow holds, but Beloved, the Beginning of Hope remains: we know Who holds tomorrow!

Happy Advent, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year;
- Bob.



Advent is Coming

On the first Sunday of Advent, we learned that Advent means Coming. To many of us, this means that we are getting ready to celebrate that miraculous day when our Savior, Jesus Christ was born. Even though we celebrate his birth daily, and witness what his birth means to us daily, we still look forward to celebrating Christmas.

Why do we look forward to this special time of the year for reasons other than the birth of Christ. I believe the reason is due to all the special memories we have accumulated over the years of Christmas that we spent with family and friends. We remember asking for and receiving that special gift from Santa. I can vividly remember how excited I was when I asked Santa for a Red Ryder BB Gun and I found it under the Christmas tree. I was just as excited for my sister when she got a new bicycle for Christmas.



But not all memories were happy ones. I can remember how sad I was when our family celebrated our first Christmas after the loss of a Grandparent. I cried and I can vaguely remember my grandmother telling me that my grandfather was still looking after me and would not want me to cry.

I also remember thinking about friends that I knew were not having a good Christmas. Friends that lost a parent; friends that were not getting Christmas presents; and friends that did not understand the true meaning of Christmas. As I think back to these memories, I now truly regret that I never tried to make Christmas better for these friends. These are now memories that I wish I could forget.

Good memories or not so good memories;

we all have them and will have them until the time when we too will become a memory for a loved one. These memories have shaped our lives; they have guided us on that journey we have been on; and they will continue to lead us in a life that celebrates the reason for the birth of Christ.

So, as we move forward towards the day we Celebrate the Birth of our Savior, do the following for me:

Use your memories, both good and bad ones, to guide you to a life where you ask yourself daily, "How can I help someone lead a better life."

Be active and build even more memories of how marvelous this advent season will become for you,

Remember that Christmas is to celebrate the birth of Christ and is not for the commercialization that it has become for far too many.

Merry Christmas to all of You.
Bob Chaloupek



CHRIST CARE...

Reflecting Christ's love in our community of faith! His inspiration! Please, if you...or someone you know... could use some Christ care, some concern, some prayers, or some expression of the love of Christ in his/her life, **LET US KNOW.**

You may do so by calling:
the church office (956) 447-1337
We at LOC want to care for you, for your friends, and for all who want to know the love of Christ in their life.

PRAYER SHAWL MINISTRY

Prayers are offered while shawls are created. Then the shawls are given to the sick and those needing comfort. Shawls have been distributed to many within the community and they have been mailed to numerous locations within the United States and Canada as requests for those needing prayers and comfort are filled. We are pleased to fill requests. Contact Betty Bentson 701-371-6631 or email bettybentson@aol.com

THE SPRING FLING POLKA FEST-
mark your calendars for Thursday,
March 2, 2023. It will be held at the
Villa de Cortez.

PRAYER SQUARES

We have a "Prayer Squares" project. A square is quilted and tied with loving strings of embroidery thread. Then when one of our members of Love of Christ (or a friend) is having surgery or is in a hospital, each of us say a prayer, tie a knot, and then give the patch to them. We want our prayers with them. Contact Betty Bentson 701-371-6631 or email bettybentson@aol.com



THE FEAST OF THANKSGIVING 2022

Recently Love of Christ celebrated the 24th annual, Feast of Thanksgiving. Due to covid the Feast had not been celebrated in two years. But for a few seconds we gathered around the serving tables. There was turkey, gravy, potatoes, veggies, salads, bread, and gobs of desserts. My, wasn't that a feast to remember?

But let's look around at the other tables which were beautifully decorated. There were short, tall, thin, less than thin, young and old people. Was this not the Feast of Thanksgiving? Our sisters and brothers gathered in perfect harmony, enjoying food, fellowship, and God's love.

None of us have the promise of tomorrow, but for a few special moments, we were together enjoying the **FREEDOM** and the **LOVE** that is only possible through the **GRACE** of our **LORD** and **SAVIOR**.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

—2 Peter 3:18





December Birthdays

- 2 Lois Tanula
- 13 Wayne Winter
- 14 C.B. Shields
- 18 Joyce Klindt
- 19 Gene Hasselquist
- 19 Wendy Haught
- 23 Ed Haught

January Birthdays

- 1 Mike Jensen
- 3 Helen Lamson
- 5 Gary Rhodes
- 10 Lee Nelson
- 10 Betsy Sutton
- 10 Ellie Scott-Meyers
- 13 Gloria Jaegler
- 22 Jon Schwartz
- 24 Bob Chaloupek

February Birthdays

- 6 Marilyn Rounds
- 14 Mary Nelson
- 22 Ken Tanula
- 28 Lorraine Harrell

North Bridge Elementary has a need for **wrapping paper** to wrap gifts for the students. Love of Christ will be collecting wrapping paper or donations until December 13th. A bin will be in the Narthex to gather the wrapping paper.

December Anniversaries

- 2 Bob & Jo Degener
- 23 Gene & Marian Johnson

January Anniversaries

- 1 Ernie & Lorraine Harrell
- 3 Helen & Gerald Lamson
- 28 Gloria & Mike Jensen

February Anniversaries

- 4 Ann & Harlan Thompson
- 20 Adeline & Rodger Olson

Drop a personal note to one of your brothers or sisters in Christ at LoC who celebrates a special occasion this month and let them know how much their presence in our family of faith at LoC means to you.

READING MACHINES

If you, or a loved one, have a vision difficulty that could be helped by the use of our reading machines, please contact Julie Knutson at the Church office (956) 447-1337. Three reading machines are available to be used by anyone in need of help. The machines are “checked out”, much as a library book and returned to the office when no longer needed, or if the user does not remain in the Valley during the summer months. There is no charge for this use. If you have a problem picking up the machine from the church office, please make it known to the secretary at the church office, and the machine will be delivered to you. This is another ministry of the Love of Christ Church!

Love of Christ has some items that are for sale:

Thirty-two white choir robes with 2 sets of reversible collars, and wooden cross neck pieces. Do you know of a church or school or organization that may be interested in these robes? Our contact person is Jon Schwartz, phone 712.540.3555.

Thank you.

THE LIBRARY

Come and check out the Love of Christ Library! Folks have donated some great reading, videos, and audio tapes. Come and browse or come and bring your donation to the Library, and be an encouragement to the folks at Love of Christ church. The Library is located in the church

THE "W" IN CHRISTMAS: A Mother's Story

Anonymous

Each December, I vowed to make Christmas a calm and peaceful experience. I had cut back on nonessential obligations - extensive card writing, endless baking, decorating, and even overspending. Yet still, I found myself exhausted, unable to appreciate the precious family moments, and of course, the true meaning of Christmas.

My son, Nicholas, was in kindergarten that year. It was an exciting season for a six year old. For weeks, he'd been memorizing songs for his school's "Winter Pageant." I didn't have the heart to tell him I'd be working the night of the production. Unwilling to miss his shining moment, I spoke with his teacher. She assured me there'd be a dress rehearsal the morning of the presentation. All parents unable to attend that evening were welcome to come then. Fortunately, Nicholas seemed happy with the compromise.

So, the morning of the dress rehearsal, I filed in ten minutes early, found a spot on the cafeteria floor and sat down. Around the room, I saw several other parents quietly scampering to their seats. As I waited, the students were led into the room. Each class, accompanied by their teacher, sat cross-legged on the floor. Then, each group, one by one, rose to perform their song.

Because the public school system had long stopped referring to the holiday as "Christmas," I didn't expect anything other than fun, commercial entertainment songs of reindeer, Santa Claus, snowflakes and good cheer.

So, when my son's class rose to sing, "Christmas Love," I was slightly taken aback by its bold title.

Nicholas was aglow, as were all of his classmates, adorned in fuzzy mittens, red sweaters, and bright snowcaps upon their heads. Those in the front row- center stage - held up large letters, one by one, to spell out the title of the song. As the class would sing "C is for Christmas," a child would hold up the letter C. Then, "H is for Happy," and on and on, until each child holding up his portion had presented the complete message, "Christmas Love."

The performance was going smoothly, until suddenly, we noticed her; a small, quiet, girl in the front row holding the letter "M" upside down - totally unaware her letter "M" appeared as a "W". The audience of 1st through 6th graders snickered at this little one's mistake. But she had no idea they were laughing at her, so she stood tall, proudly holding her "W". Although many teachers tried to shush the children, the laughter continued until the last letter was raised, and we all saw it together.

A hush came over the audience and eyes began to widen. In that instant, we understood the reason we were there, why we celebrated the holiday in the first place, why even in the chaos, there was a purpose for our festivities. For when the last letter was held high, the message read loud and clear:

"CHRISTWASLOVE"

And, I believe, He still is. Amazed in His presence... .humbled by His love.

**HAVE A BLESSED
CHRISTMAS
SEASON!**



A Prayer for the New Year

"I believe

That I enter a glorious new year
To be filled with prayer and praise.
With service to God and mankind,
With inspired creative activity.

I believe

That God's presence goes with me
Wherever I shall go this year,
By train or Ires or car or boat,
Slowly paced on foot, or high in air.

I believe

His love is shining in my body,
His wisdom guides my mind,
His peace fills me with poise,
His strength is ever at my call.

Oh I believe

That this is God's new year."

— Elizabeth Searle Lamb

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Let us pray especially for:

Leola Anderson

Carrie Andersen (Cousin of the Garnett's)

Reb & Heather Baker (son and daughter-in-law
of Will & Anne Baker)

Bill & Gail Brandt (Faith Lutheran Church)

Arlys & Harold Buland

Renate Chamberlain

Bruce Chaney

Jo Coyle

Arlene Crawford

Pastor Sylvia De La Garza

Dean Garnett

Marilyn Garnett

Jerry Gieseke

Marian Johnson

Jean Karaba

Nancy Karg

Rod Karg

Maria Mendoza

Tom Newcomer

Evelyn Nelson

Gene Nielsen

Sue Nielsen

Betty Piper

Ed Puder

Ross Rounds

Jerry Shields

Regan Simpson

Betsy Sutton

Staff and children of North Bridge

Elementary

Amy Van Deest

Don Van Deest

Barbara Wilkinson

Elaine & David Wisely (daughter and son-in-
law of Lou Vitek)

Cecilia Young

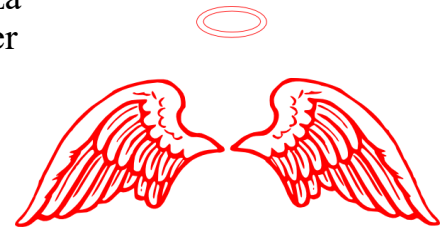
Tom Young

people experiencing violence in their lives,
all the men and women of the police, fire,
EMS, and all the men and women of the
Armed Forces and their families.



A Reminder:

We Lutherans and Presbyterians
continue to work
together to provide warmth to
ALL students in the WISD
(pre k through high school)
by providing clean
repaired coats, jackets, sweaters.
Drop your donations off at church
and we will deliver them.
Thanks for your support.



Farewell to Alleluia

Some congregations choose to keep the ancient practice of fasting from singing or speaking *alleluia* during Lent. If this is a brand-new practice for you or one you have kept for years, it is helpful to consider the *whys*, *whens*, and *hows* of this practice.

Why bury the Alleluia?

Based on the Hebrew word, *hallelu yah*, meaning “praise the Lord,” *alleluia* has been a word of great praise to God in the life of the church. Because of the penitential character of the Lenten season in the Western church, singing or saying the word *alleluia* has historically been suspended during Lent’s forty days. The omission of *alleluia* during Lent goes back at least to the fifth century in the Western church. The custom of actually bidding it farewell, however, developed in the Middle Ages. The hymn “Alleluia, song of gladness” (ELW 318) contains a translation of an eleventh-century Latin text that compares an *alleluia*-less Lent to the exile of the Israelites in Babylon. The text then anticipates the joy of Easter when glad *alleluias* will return in all their heavenly splendor.

Alleluia, Song of Gladness



1 Al - le - lu - ia, song of glad - ness, voice of joy that can - not die;
2 Al - le - lu - ia you are sound - ing, true Je - ru - sa - lem and free;
3 Al - le - lu - ia can - not al - ways be our song while here be - low;
4 In our hymns we pray with long - ing: Grant us, bless - ed Trin - i - ty,



al - le - lu - ia is the an - them ev - er dear to choirs on high;
al - le - lu - ia, joy - ful moth - er, bring us to your ju - bi - lee;
al - le - lu - ia our trans - gres - sions make us for a while for - go;
at the last to keep glad Eas - ter with the faith - ful saints on high;



in the house of God a - bid - ing thus they sing e - ter - nal - ly.
here by Bab - y - lon's sad wa - ters mourn - ing ex - iles still are we.
for the sol - omn time is com - ing when our tears for sin shall flow.
there to you for - ev - er sing - ing al - le - lu - ia joy - ful - ly.

Text: Latin hymn, 11th cent.; tr. John Mason Neale, 1818–1866, alt.
Music: PRAISE, MY SOUL, John Goss, 1800–1880

Along with a sung farewell to *alleluia*, some congregations have embraced the practice of physically burying the *alleluia*. A banner or other visual presentation of the *alleluia* is crafted and then buried. This ritual practice can be especially delightful and meaningful for children.

When do we bury the alleluia?

Alleluia is appropriately bid farewell on the Sunday preceding Ash Wednesday. This is the last Sunday when *alleluia* will be used until the Vigil of Easter, or Easter Sunday for those congregations not holding a Vigil. The burial of the *alleluia* could otherwise be the culminating activity at a congregational carnival (also known as Mardi Gras or Shrove Tuesday) celebration just before Ash Wednesday.

How do we make an alleluia to bury?

A Sunday school, confirmation class, or children’s choir could be invited to construct an *alleluia* using a long sheet of good quality paper. Pairs of students could be responsible for designing and creating each of the word’s eight letters. Alternately, a congregational sewing group might consider creating a fabric *alleluia* banner. Such a creation might be carried in procession, but might just as effectively be designed to resemble a table runner in length and width so that it could be rolled rather than folded when put away.

How do we bury the alleluia?

If a simple suspension of the *alleluia* during Lent is all that is desired, the burial, or farewell might simply consist of singing “Alleluia, song of gladness” (ELW 318) as the Sending hymn on the Sunday preceding Ash Wednesday. If a fuller ritual is desired, consider:

- Carrying an *alleluia* banner as part of the Sending rite. If a physical burying of the *alleluia* is desired, the recessional would move to that location outdoors. Otherwise, the banner could be placed in a suitable container inside the worship space.
- If you are burying the *alleluia* outdoors, the banner/poster could be placed in a sturdy box. If the banner can be rolled, a sturdy decorated cardboard mailing tube wrapped in protective plastic makes a fine container.

• Remember that if this is a new practice for your congregation, you will need to introduce this with careful teaching in newsletters, website, or in the worship folder.

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Embracing the New Normal

By Laurie Strawbridge

“When is everything going to go back to like it was before Covid?” I’ve heard this question so many times now that I can finish the question for the person speaking. I understand the feeling of frustration driving the asker to broach this subject with church staff, but as a member of the church staff I have my own question, “why would we want to go back when we have a chance to go forward?” Let’s not waste this opportunity to revise, re-vision, and reinvent what we could do.

I get that change is hard. The Israelites thought it was hard too. Even though they were rescued from slavery they thought going back to bondage in Egypt was the answer to their need for food and water. God had a different plan. Again, when they were in captivity in Babylon, Isaiah had to remind the people that God’s plans don’t include replicating the past.

Isaiah 43: 18-19, “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.”

While it’s true we haven’t been carried off to a foreign land, we are navigating foreign territory. The number of people attending Sunday worship and Sunday school every Sunday has diminished drastically during Covid. But we can’t expect everything to go back exactly like it was before March 2019. We are different now.

Great news though, recognizing a need and thinking of a creative solution is exactly how Sunday School started. Children were working six days a week in factories in England in the 1780’s. Sunday was a free day for worship. One man, Robert Raikes, saw it as an opportunity to gather children and teach them to read. Ninety years later the Education Act of 1870 passed in England and children were sent to school instead of factories. Sunday school changed to become more religious in nature, preparing children for baptism or confirmation. The 1980’s and 1990’s saw a rise in video curriculum. The 2000’s saw an emphasis on Contemporary Christian music that sounded just like what the kids were listening to on other radio stations. 2010’s went digital with CD-ROMs and links to websites for more information. The 2020’s have offered us ZOOM, online worship, and even subscription boxes. Sunday school has never stayed the same. It’s always changed with the times.

We can’t ignore change. We must embrace it. How that should look in your church should be a matter for prayer and discernment. Does it need to look like February 2019? Maybe. Does it need to look like something totally new and unrecognizable? Maybe. Should the Holy Spirit be driving the plans? Definitely.

Pray for the church staff. Support the church staff. Volunteer to help the church staff. Be flexible and have a teachable spirit. Watch the Lord do something new.

Laurie Strawbridge is the Children’s Ministry Director at Palm Valley Lutheran Church in Round Rock, TX. Laurie has twenty-six years of experience working in youth and children’s ministries.



Farewell to Alleluia

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When and how do we resurrect the alleluia?

If the alleluia was buried as part of worship on the Sunday preceding Ash Wednesday, the resurrected alleluia may appropriately be carried in a festive procession during the hymn of praise or as part of the gospel procession (if used) at the Vigil of Easter or on Easter Sunday. Accompany this by joyful singing of hymns/songs replete with alleluias.

If the congregation buried the alleluia during a parish carnival or Mardi Gras celebration, the

congregation’s Easter breakfast (if it holds one) might provide the best parallel venue for resurrecting it. Several youth could be enlisted to carry the resurrected alleluia among the breakfasters as those gathered sing a familiar Easter hymn containing multiple alleluias. If the alleluia was physically buried in the ground, provision should be made to have the burial container unearthed a day or two in advance so that the alleluia itself can be easily removed when needed.

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There were seven constipated men in the Bible, the book of Moses.

The first constipated man in the Bible was Cain - he wasn't Abel. (Genesis 4:2)

The second constipated man in the Bible was Noah - he went for forty days and forty nights and passed nothing but water. (Genesis 7:17)

The third constipated man in the Bible was Moses - he took the tablets. (Exodus 32:15)

The fourth constipated man in the Bible was Balaam - he couldn't move his ass. (Numbers 22:27)

The fifth constipated man in the Bible was Samson - he brought down the house. (Judges 16:31)

The sixth constipated man in the Bible was David - he dropped the big one. (I Samuel 17:40)

The seventh constipated man in the Bible was Solomon - he sat for forty years. (II Chronicles 9:30)



Q: What kind of Christmas music do elves like?

A: "Wrap" music

Q: What did the peanut butter say to the grape on Christmas?

A: "'Tis the season to be jelly!"

Q: Where do you find reindeer?

A: It depends on where you leave them!

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

- Ball Gown
- Boyfriend
- Cards
- Chocolate
- Crush
- Date
- Diamond
- Fairy Tale
- Girlfriend
- Heart
- Love Song
- Pink
- Proposal
- Red
- Romantic
- Serenade
- Slow Dance
- Strawberry
- Sunset
- Tuxedo
- Valentine

Chicken Scratch NY



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



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**
God's work. Our hands.



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