

# LIFE IN CHRIST

Receiving God's Gifts — Sharing God's Gifts

*The Newsletter of Christ Lutheran Church, Jackson, MS*

+ Christmas 2023 +

On the Cover:

*Madonna of the Plane*

Dagnan-Bouveret

1885

Composed by a painter of the school known as ‘Naturalism,’ Dagnan-Bouveret, this painting is a most unusual work from him. As a Naturalist, he emphasized realism and the simple, material look of his subject matter. He found that what was most beautiful was what was most mundane. Most of his works consist of simple paintings of daily scenes, depicted in unextraordinary ways. Vanishingly few of his paintings focused on religious or even mythological topics, which were very common among artists of his time. Yet, he made an exception in this piece showing the Virgin Mary nursing the Christ Child. However, in so doing, he was not betraying his ‘Naturalist’ roots. Rather, from his point of view, he was depicting what he saw as the most mundane, and the most beautiful thing: a mother feeding her child. For him, this was the perfect confession of the Incarnation, for it was everything divine, yet clothed in meekness.■

*Life in Christ*

is the monthly publication of

**Christ Lutheran Church, LC-MS**

4423 I-55 North  
Jackson, MS 39206

(601) 366-2055

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

Rev. George Fields  
Sr. Sara Fields



## Table of Contents

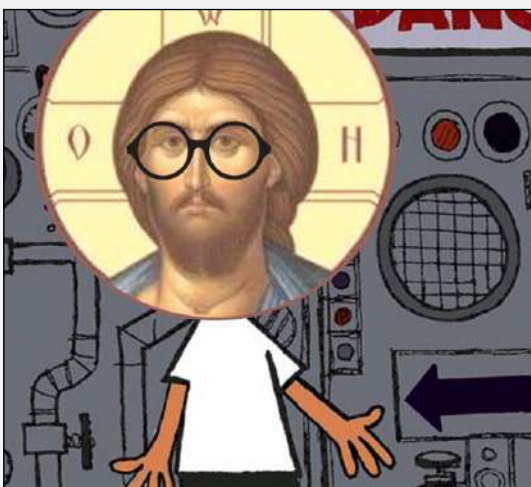
4 The Beginning of Things

6 Hymn of the Month

9 Canticles of Christmas

10 The Wayback Machine

21 This Month at Christ Lutheran



It is a funny thing how we measure that passage of time. We generally use a sequence of numbers based on a seemingly arbitrary date that we call '0.' Nothing much happened at '0,' but every event we think of is noted as how many years before '0' something happened (BC), and how many years after '0' something happened (AD). 'BC' stands for 'Before Christ.' 'AD' stands for 'Anno Domini,' Latin for 'The Year of Our Lord.' This is in reference to the year of the birth of Christ, which is to say, the first Christmas.

It may seem strange, but prior to Christianity, there was no calendar worth speaking of. People did not have a general reference for when something happened. Rather, every nation dated the history of their people in relation to who was ruling and at what point during their rule. Even in the Bible we read that John the Baptist began to preach in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar.

This should not seem strange to us at all. In fact, it feels quite natural. Rarely, when we recount events, do we give an exact date and time. Rather, we tend to say something like, 'When Clinton was

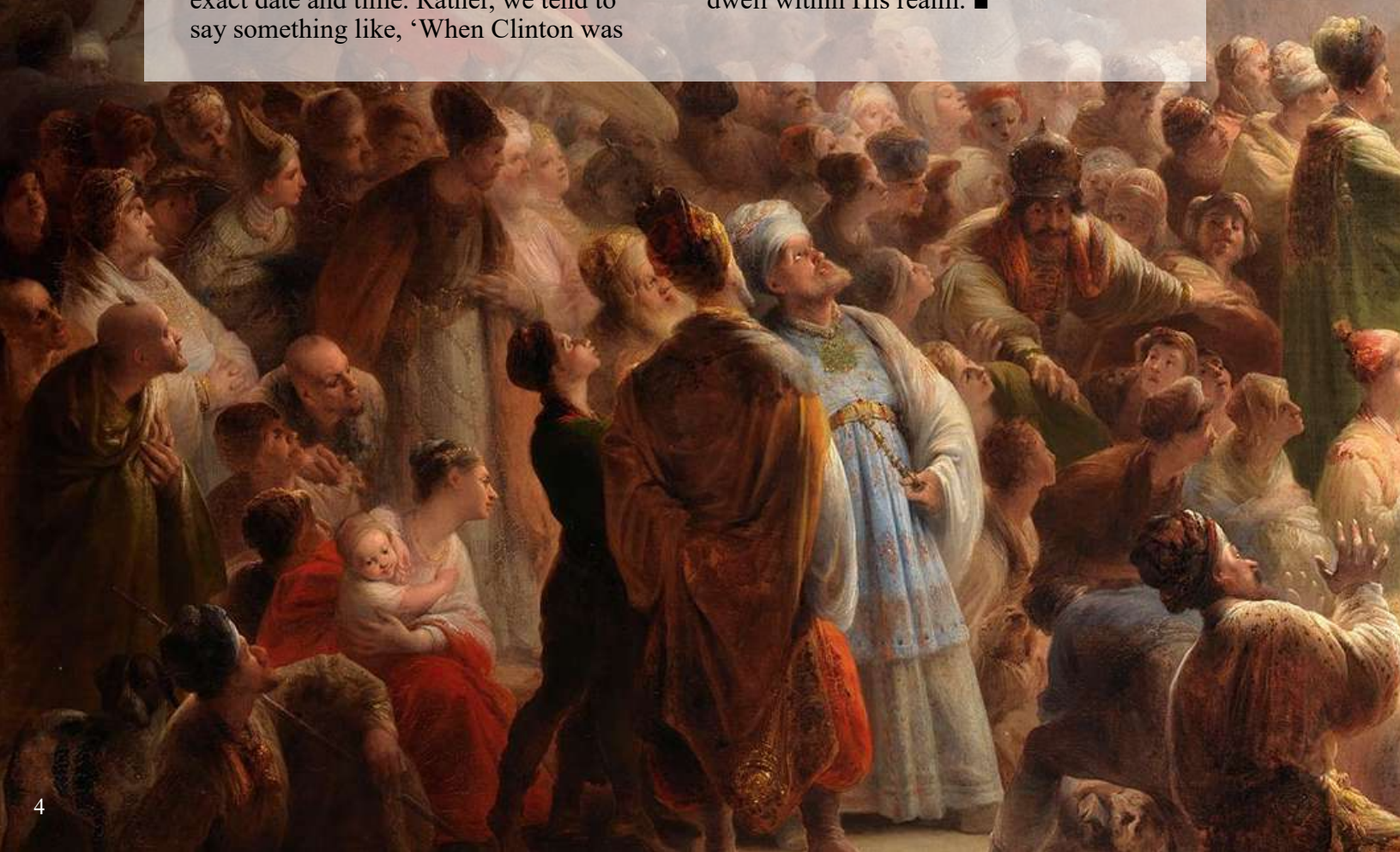
president,' or 'Back when Nixon was in office,' or, if we choose to speak of foreign countries, 'during the time of Napoleon,' or 'King Henry VIII.'

We naturally seem to delineate time in terms of who was in power.

And we still do.

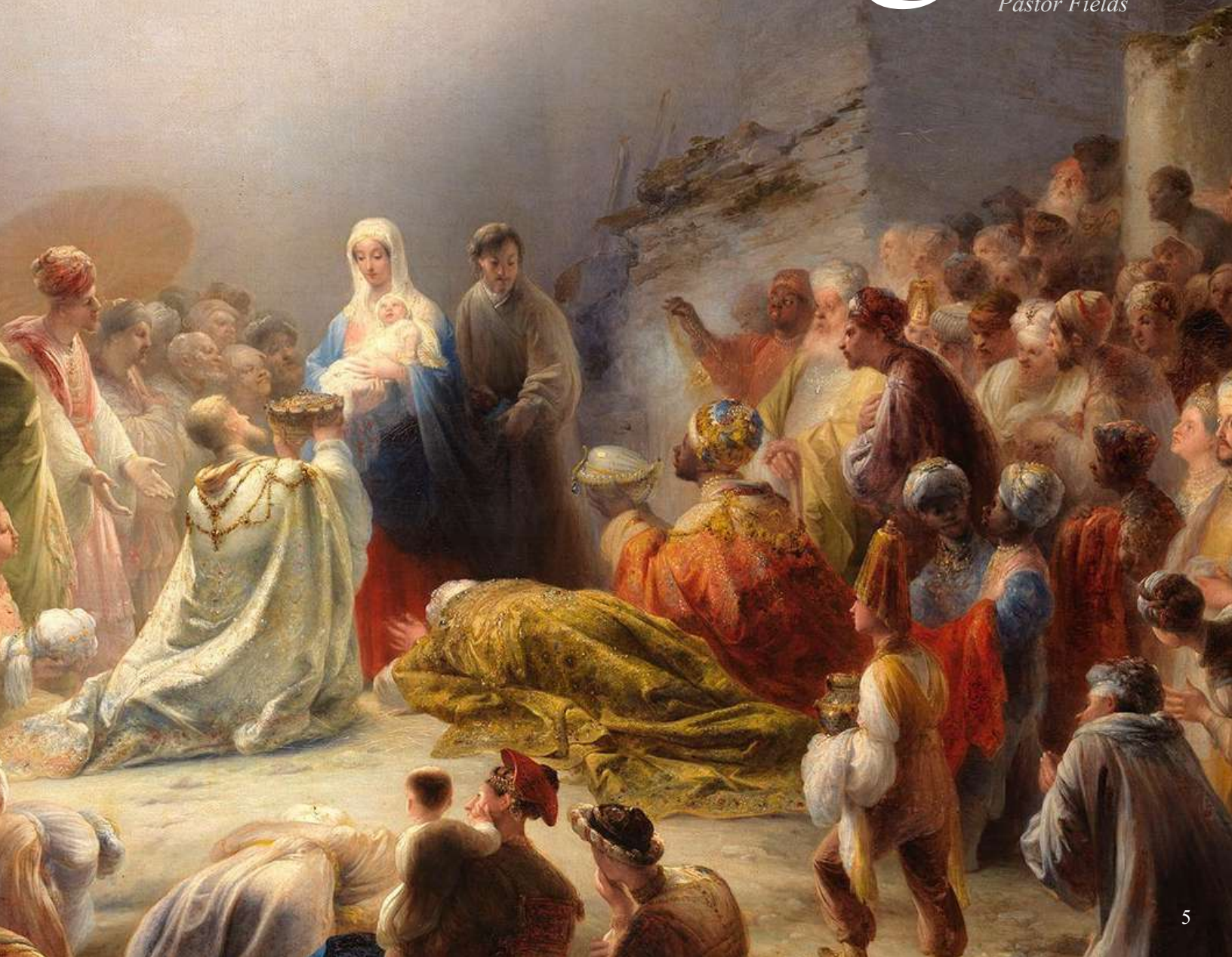
For when we speak of something happening in the year 1066 AD, such as the Norman Conquest of England, or the year 1945 AD, the date which ended the Second World War, we are saying simply, 'In the 1066<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Christ, the Son of God,' and 'in the 1945<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of Our Lord,' we are, even now, speaking, quite naturally, the time during the rulership of a king. It just happens to be the case that the king we are speaking of now is God made Man.

We now live in the Year of Our Lord 2023, soon to be 2024. But as the Great Holiday approaches, we celebrate the year '0.' For Him who is the reference for all dates and all times, for all events in history is about to be born, for Christmas is upon us. For He is the king, who rules over all creation, and we dwell within His realm. ■



the  
Beginning  
of  
things

*Pastor Fields*





# Hymn of the Month

*Sister Sara*

December—

Savior of the Nations,  
Come

LSB 332

St. Ambrose of Milan (AD 339-397) is famously remembered as the “father of Latin hymnody,” with this month’s hymn as the best-known of his musical contributions. The simplest elements of modern hymnody, without which our own church service would be unrecognizable—meter (a regular rhythm of syllables), rhyme, objective and Scriptural subject matter, congregational accessibility (i.e., they’re singable for normal people)—these we owe to none other than our dearest Ambrose.

“Savior of the Nations, Come,” has long been regarded as the Advent hymn *par excellence*; even to this day, it is the Hymn of the Day appointed to the first Sunday in Advent. A brief overview of the text will leave no doubt why, as it weaves prayer, narrative, and poetic imagery together in masterful and majestic song.

We begin in the first stanza with a deeply vivid prayer, imploring the Son to make His home among us. Interestingly, the singer addresses Jesus as ‘Savior of the *Nations*,’ a specifically gentile reference to the Jewish messiah. Already, in the first four words, we confess here the covenant made Abraham, that through his seed the Almighty would bless *all nations* (Genesis 22:18-19). Reminiscent of the psalms, we then bid all creation to marvel with us at the humble advent of our God.

Stanza two invokes the language of John 1, that the “Word became flesh,” not by “the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (1:13, 14). It ties this New Testament mystery back to its prophecy in Genesis 3:15, that the *woman’s offspring* would be the salvation of mankind.

A hushed tone of wonder shrouds the next stanza: “Here a maid was found with child, yet remained a virgin mild.” This is a direct answer to our prayer in stanza one (“Virgin’s Son, make here Your home!”). Isaiah’s messianic prophecy is fulfilled in the lowliest of vessels, in the most secret of places: a young girl’s womb. But rising from the whisper of the nativity roars the last phrase of the stanza: “In her womb this truth

was shown: **God was there upon His throne**”!

Stanza four unveils the cosmic reality unfolding in the simple delivery of this peasant girl in a stable: “Then stepped forth the Lord of all From His pure and kingly hall; God of God, yet fully man, His heroic course began.” (If that’s not epic, I don’t know what is). In addition to being an awesome stanza, it is extremely creedal: it confesses that the Son is “God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God... being of one substance with the Father.” And yet, this God, “for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven... and was made man.” As an historical note, Ambrose made a pretty gutsy move to include this line, because the big controversy of his time was with the Arians, who denied Jesus’ divinity. In fact, the Nicene Creed was written explicitly to condemn the Arian heresy. Ambrose included this poetic punch as a direct assault against Arius and his heretical ilk.

Stanza five continues the assault with more Nicene language, claiming the Son’s source is the Father Himself; further, the stanza traces the story of Christ’s descent into hell and ascension to the right hand of the Father, just as the creed does. But boy, does Ambrose do it with panache! Jesus is depicted as an athlete, like in St. Paul’s letters, the one who has *fought the good fight, finished the race, kept the faith*, that He might attain the *crown of righteousness* (2 Timothy 4:7-8): “Back to God He ran His course. Into hell His road went down, Back then to His throne and crown.”

Suddenly we break from this robust narrative, offering a prayer in the next stanza, directly addressing the Savior. ‘You are the one who won the victory *in our own flesh*, because we could not. You came into us, and took us into You; by Your mighty power, make whole our brokenness of body and soul.’ We have witnessed the Son’s heroic feat, and we call on Him as that Mighty One to save us. (Echoes of “hosanna” come to mind...).

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

—John 1:14

## Fun Facts

St. Ambrose is famously known as the teacher of St. Augustine. Originally interested in Ambrose for his rhetoric and oratory, Augustine found himself drawn to Ambrose for his preaching of the Scriptures. Finally, at the Easter Vigil in 387, Ambrose baptized Augustine, who later became known as one of the single most influential Fathers of the Western Church.

The seventh stanza recalls the Johannine language (i.e., from the Gospel of John) with which the hymn began, but this time it focuses instead upon *light* imagery (“I am the Light of the world,” John 8:12): “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5). That Light emanated from a manger stall in Bethlehem, and it pierced the darkness forever. “Darkness there no more resides; In this light faith now abides.”

The last stanza is a doxology (a hymn of praise) to the Trinity: to the Father, who sent His Son into the world; to the Son, who fulfilled the Father’s will by taking on our flesh and vanquishing sin, death, and the devil; and to the Holy Spirit, by Whom the Son was incarnated (see stanza two and the Nicene creed).

“Savior of the Nations, Come” is indeed the greatest Advent hymn—imploping our Savior to come, foreshadowing the mystery of His incarnation and victory, and setting these Scriptural prophecies and their fulfillment in the finest poetic raiment. And decking the heretics in the meantime.

Happy Advent, and may the Savior of the nations come! ■



## Fun Facts

When the bishop of Milan died in 374, a 35-year-old Ambrose went to the church where the election of the new bishop was to take place, hoping to help dissipate a brewing uproar...

Arianism, a heresy that questions the divinity of Christ, was quite popular at the time, and its adherents posed a genuine threat to the Scriptural fidelity and the stability of the Western Church; and Milan’s Arians were not going to let a new bishop be chosen without their consent. In attempt to keep things calm, eloquent Ambrose addressed the rowdy crowd. The Christians knew he believed the Nicene Faith (i.e., he wasn’t a heretic!), and the Arians thought of him as relatively inoffensive, so both listened—until shouts arose in the middle of his speech: “Ambrose, bishop!” The whole crowd took up the chant, demanding that Ambrose become the new bishop of Milan.

There was only one problem... Ambrose wasn’t even baptized yet! Indeed, he was still a catechumen being instructed in the Faith. Yet the crowd would have none of Ambrose’s protests, forcing Ambrose to flee to a friend’s house and hide. Eventually, his friend was forced to give him up, and Ambrose was subsequently baptized and consecrated as bishop on the same day.



# Canticles of Christmas

advent vespers



This Advent, we eagerly anticipate our Lord's Incarnation with the "Canticles of Christmas," the songs of the New Testament which we sing in the liturgy.

In the *Magnificat*, we are taught by the Virgin Mary what it means for God to create out of nothing; in the *Benedictus*, Zechariah shows us what it is for God's Light to shine in the darkness; and in the *Nunc Dimittis*, we learn from Simeon what it means for God to be the Life of all things.

Join us as we wait and learn, for,  
"Behold, He is coming." ■

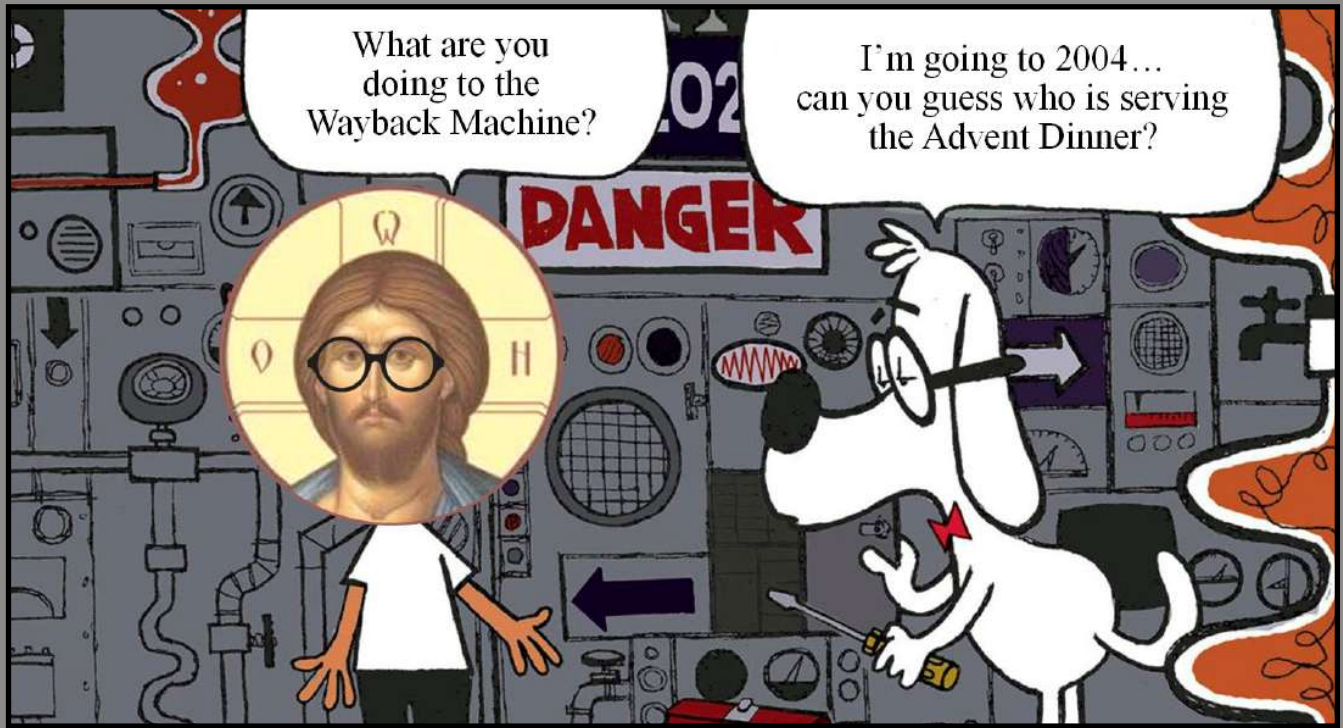


## Feast of Christmas

December 24 | 10 p.m.  
Midnight Mass

Due to Christmas's unique timing this year, we will celebrate our Lord's nativity with a Midnight Mass (rather than separate Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services). Join us as we greet our Lord at His birth!

# The wayback machine



Nancy and Gloria set the table... yum!



Glamour shot of the cooks:  
Gloria Pedersen and Merina Hansen. ♥



Bob, ever the faithful servant!

Once upon a time, a long time ago...

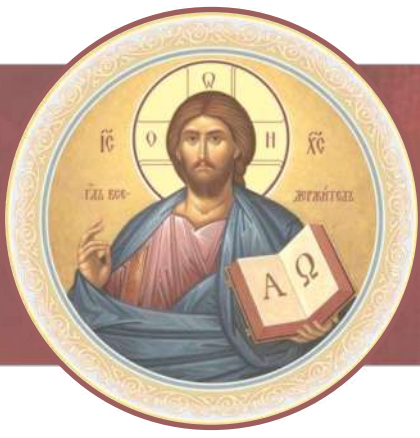
Yes! We are delving into the archives of Christ Lutheran's history books!

In defense of the photos (and those featured in them), they are not from *that* long ago, but [almost] two decades is longer than some of our kiddos remember. So let's just open those scrapbooks and see what's there...

Back in 2004, Pastor Holowach was shepherding the people of Christ Lutheran. Featured in this month's photos are the cooks (or servers) of Advent suppers past: Bob and Gloria Pedersen, Merina Hansen, and Nancy Teal! If you see them, thank them for their faithful service to the Body of Christ (and for the yummy food!).

If you have good, notable, or otherwise history-worthy memories of Christ Lutheran, tell Sister Sara (anonymity optional) for future articles... ☺ ■





# THIS MONTH

*At Christ Lutheran*



HAPPY NEW YEAR  
DECEMBER 3

## VOTERS' MEETING December 3

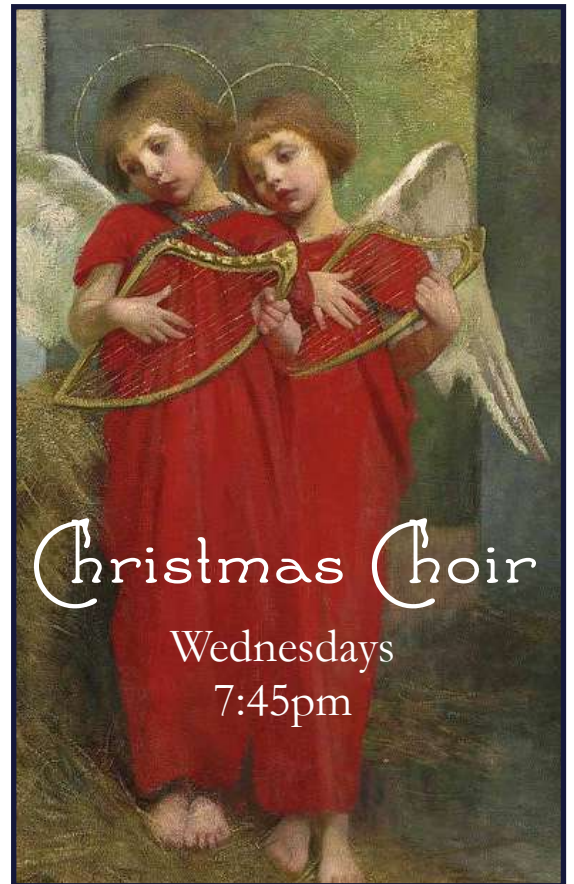
The regular bi-annual Congregation Voter's Assembly will convene immediately following the worship service **Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023** to approve the 2024 Budget Work-plan. All members are encouraged to attend.

# VESPERS

ADVENT AT CHRIST LUTHERAN

Wednesdays | 7 p.m.

*Canticles of Christmas*  
advent vespers



Christmas Choir  
Wednesdays  
7:45pm



WE WILL CELEBRATE THE  
12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

AFTER THE 4 WEEKS OF ADVENT.



*christmas poinsettias*  
 \$18 each  
 Sign up at the narthex table to provide poinsettias for the chancel on Christmas.  
 Take yours home after the service.

**Issues, Etc.**

Christ-Centered Cross-Focused Talk Radio  
[www.issuesetc.org](http://www.issuesetc.org)

**Christmas Work Day  
 & Decoration Day**

Help us spruce up the grounds and decorate the church as Christmas draws near!

Come ready for coffee, cocoa, and Christmas cheer!

**Saturday, December 16  
 8:00 a.m.**



Join us for a

# COMMUNIO

## CHRISTMAS

Sunday  
December 10  
Held Home

Come for supper and bring a gift  
for a game of Unsanctified  
Santa!



### Decoration Day: Kids Edition!

Join the fun  
on  
Saturday,  
December 16  
9:00 a.m.

**ACTSFW**  
CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY  
FORT WAYNE, INDIANA



## Symposia Series 2024

**39th Annual Symposium on Exegetical Theology**

*Courage and Encouragement: Exhortation  
from the Prophets and Apostles*

January 16–17, 2024

**47th Annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions**

*Seminex at the Half-Century*

January 17–19, 2024



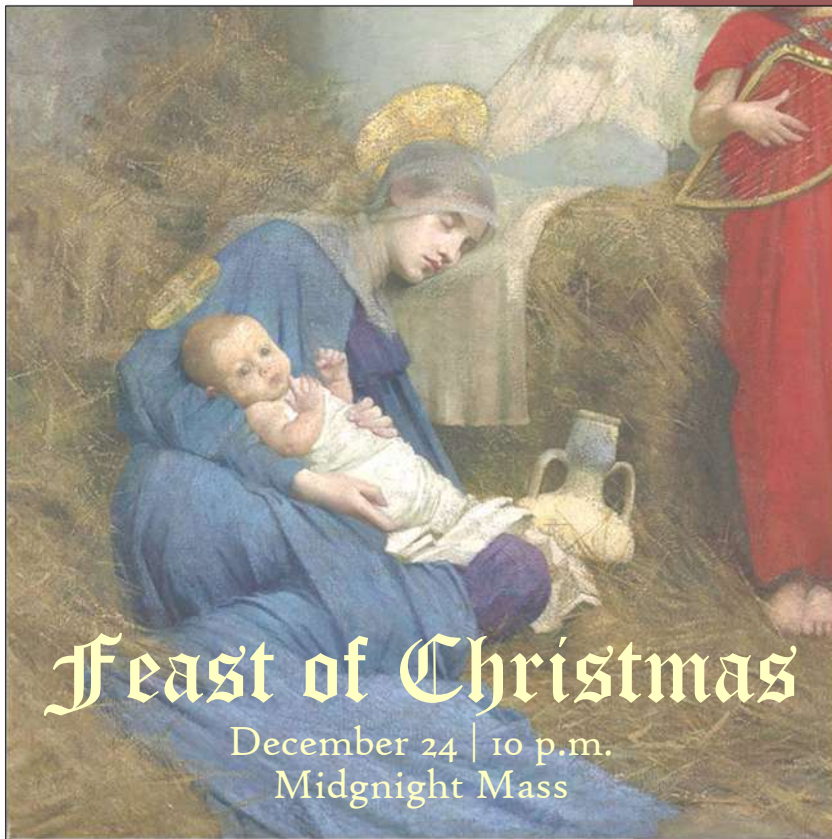
*The Lutheran Witness* magazine

Subscribe today at [cph.org/witness](http://cph.org/witness)



### Saints' Days in December

- 4 St. John of Damascus, Confessor
- 6 St. Nicholas of Myra, Bishop & Confessor
- 7 St. Ambrose of Milan, Bishop & Confessor
- 13 St. Lucia, Martyr
- 17 St. Daniel the Prophet & the Three Young Men
- 19 St. Abraham, Patriarch
- 20 St. Katharina von Bora Luther
- 21 St. Thomas, Apostle
- 24 Sts. Adam & Eve
- 25 Feast of the Nativity
- 26 St. Stephen, Martyr
- 27 St. John, Apostle & Evangelist
- 28 The Holy Innocents, Martyrs
- 29 St. David, King of Israel



# Feast of Christmas

December 24 | 10 p.m.  
Midnight Mass



Christ Lutheran  
Christmastide  
Recital  
January 6



### Artwork in This Issue:

Cover: *Madonna of the Plane*, Dagnan-Bouveret, 1885.

Page 4: *The Adoration of the Magi*, Domingos Sequeira, 1828.

Page 12: *Design for an Organ*, Johann Georg Dirr, 1700s.

Page 18: *Sts. Augustine and Ambrose*, Fra Filippo Lippi, 1400s.



Page 10-11: Cartoons from “Peabody’s Improbable History,” *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show*, 1960s.

# March for Life 2024

January 19  
Washington, D.C.  
[www.lcms-life.org](http://www.lcms-life.org)



# December 2023

PRAYER FAMILIES and BIRTHDAYS	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Chuck &amp; Margaret Haynes</b> 3—Nathan Hansford 3—William Hansford 5—Leslie Riddlehoover 8—Bob Pedersen 9—Allison Agent	<b>ADVENT I</b> 3 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:30 a.m. Divine Service 11:30 a.m. Voters Meeting	<b>4</b> <i>St. John of Damascus</i>	<b>5</b> 6:15 p.m. Elders Mtg.	<b>6</b> <i>St. Nicholas</i> 6:00 p.m. Dinner 7:00 p.m. Vespers 8:00p.m. Choir	<b>7</b> <i>St. Ambrose</i>	<b>1</b> 6:30 a.m. Bible Study <b>8</b> 6:30 a.m. Bible Study	<b>2</b> <b>8</b>
<b>The Held Family</b> 11—Savannah Kettler 13—Bill Cookston 14—Gloria Pedersen 14—Natalie Rudenske 16—Lori Held 16—Margaret Haynes	<b>ADVENT II</b> 10 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:30 a.m. Divine Service 5:00 p.m. Communion Christmas	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> <i>St. Lucia</i> 6:00 p.m. Dinner 7:00 p.m. Vespers 8:00p.m. Choir	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 6:30 a.m. Bible Study <i>St. Ignatius of Antioch</i>	<b>16</b> 8:00 a.m. Work Day/Decoration Day 9:00 a.m. Decoration Day: Kids!
<b>Terry Hubmann</b> 17—Curt Dickens 19—Chuck Rubisoff 21—Jo Rudenske	<b>ADVENT III</b> 17 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:30 a.m. Divine Service <i>St. Daniel &amp; the Three Young Men</i>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> <i>St. Abraham</i>	<b>20</b> <i>St. Katharina von Bora</i> 6:00 p.m. Dinner 7:00 p.m. Vespers 8:00p.m. Choir	<b>21</b> <i>St. Thomas</i>	<b>22</b> 6:30 a.m. Bible Study	<b>23</b>
<b>Steve Jeffcoat</b> 27—Joshua Bowman 28—Wyatt Cote 29—Eddie Gallarno 30—Allen Goodlett	<b>ADVENT IV</b> 24 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:30 a.m. Divine Service <b>CHRISTMAS EVE</b> 10:00 p.m. Midnight Mass <i>Sts. Adam &amp; Eve</i>	<b>25</b>  <b>FEAST OF THE NATIVITY</b>	<b>26</b> <i>St. Stephen</i>	<b>27</b> <i>St. John</i>	<b>28</b> <i>The Holy Innocents</i>	<b>29</b> 6:30 a.m. Bible Study <i>St. David</i>	<b>30</b>
2—Larry Bowman 3—Christa Kettler	<b>CHRISTMAS I</b> 31 9:00 a.m. Sunday School 10:30 a.m. Divine Service	<b>1</b>  <b>FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION &amp; NAME OF JESUS</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>Serving this month:</b> Elder—Glen Hansford Ushers—Bruce Bodkin, Mark Ochs			