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BREAKING NEWS!

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# The Evangelical Protestant The Magazine of the Lutheran Evangelical Protestant Church

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Matthew 7:22-23 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name? Didn't we force out demons and do many miracles by the power and authority of your name?' (23) Then I will tell them publicly, 'I've never known you. Get away from me, you evil people.'



Watson Lake after winter storm, Prescott Arizona



Evangelical Protestant Church (GCEPC)® Inc.,

Lutheran Evangelical Protestant Church (LEPC)®,

# We Believe

**1. The Holy Scriptures**, in the original tongues, is the inspired and inerrant word of God. (Matthew 4:4, 2 Timothy 3:16,17)

**2. There is one God**, eternal and self-existent, Creator and Ruler of the universe, and manifested through the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (John 1:18, Matthew 3:16-17) We are Trinitarian.

**3. Jesus Christ** is truly divine and truly human having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. (Matt.1: 18)

**4. Jesus Christ** died on the cross and shed His blood as a Sacrifice

for our sins; He arose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on High. (1 John 2:2)

**5. Humankind** was created in the image of God, but fell into sin causing separation from God. (Gen. 3:1-24)

**6. Salvation** has been provided through Jesus Christ for all; and those who repent and believe on Him are born again of the Holy Spirit, receive the gift of eternal life and become the children of God. (John 1:10)

**7. Water baptism** identifies us with the death and burial of Christ and that we should arise to

walk in newness of life (Matthew 28:19-20)

**8. We believe in the ministry of the Holy Spirit** to glorify Christ, to convict of sin, to enable the believer to live a godly life, and to empower the Church to carry the gospel into all the world. (Matthew 12:31, Acts 1:8.)

**9. In the personal and visible return of Jesus Christ** for His Church. (Matthew 24:30, Rev 1:7)

**10. In the bodily resurrection** of the just and the unjust, the everlasting blessedness of the saved and everlasting separation from God of all those who reject Jesus Christ. (John 1:10-13, Rev 20:11-15)

*GCEPC "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2: 8*

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## The Apostle's Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

AMEN.

The Evangelical Protestant Journal "Kirchenbote" (Church Messenger) was established in 1885,

Gustav Schmidt became editor. In 1917, the German Evangelical churches in the Pittsburgh area began publication of a monthly entitled The Evangelical Protestant. (Archives Smithfield UCC)

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Editor Rev. Steve Bacon

# Bishop's Desk



Greetings to all! I have been thinking and pondering on the magnificence and simplicity of the Word of God. Believing and teaching the truths of our faith found in the Bible is a great gift to give to all generations. Every generation can benefit from such a precious gift of faith. We have been focusing in the EPC/LEPC on "going deeper." "Launch out into the deep" the Lord has said to us. We have been exploring the many ways we can go deeper and how launching out into the deep can manifest in and through us.

**God desires his people the called out ones, the church, to recover the lost art of hearing God**

While it may seem old hat and something that we already know to be true we must never let the thought become hackneyed but commit afresh and anew to God's Word. Going deeper into our Bible is something that we need to embrace with passion in order to see the fruit of it's transforming effect in our lives and then in the lives of those around us. We must pray for the Holy Spirit to open the scriptures to our understanding and give us revelation without which we cannot have depth and be solidly

rooted in the scriptures. The scriptures must become part of us, who we are and how we live.

Jesus said, "You must hear and you must do these teachings that I give you." We must always hear and then put into practice what we hear from the heart of God. We must seek to gain understanding. There are times in my own life where the Holy Spirit suddenly implants into my heart something from His word. When this happens, that word becomes a part of me and lives its truth out in my life. It is revelation because it has been revealed from the Father.

**Let this be written  
for a future generation,  
that a people not yet  
created may praise the  
LORD**

When the word of God becomes part and parcel of who we are, we teach it with new understanding because we are sharing the life that is in it. This life that exists in the Word of God seeps deep into us like clear pure water and we become wells for others to drink from. The woman at the well could drink from Jesus because He is the word of God that never runs dry. The word of God forms and shapes us in our hearts and minds to bring us into the image of Christ from the inside out. If we neglect

this truth we will flounder in our way and in our relationship with Christ.

The truths of the Bible will hold us steady. They will keep us from detouring into doctrine's that come along to temporarily take us away from God's purposes and our relationship with Him. Such detours leave in their wake destruction and remorse that has to be worked through to return to a place of steadfastness. We must believe and absorb into our deepest parts the life that is in scripture for ourselves. Then we must teach these life giving scriptures to every generation so that they will be strong in their faith and protected from evil.

*My greatest desire for all of our ministers is that they would have a close walk with Our Lord, learning His ways, hearing His voice, knowing Him.*

God's blessings and peace to everyone as we look forward to the upcoming holidays and festivals.

*Bishop Nancy Drew*



# ENEMIES OF A STRONG SPIRIT\*

By Bishop Jessica Johnston, Spirit Soul and Body Ministries



*My prayer and blessing for you is that you will discover and uncover the mysteries of God in His ways and His word. I pray for you a revelation of His grace in your life and that all lessons imparted to you through your message will become revelatory teaching for the flock of God.*

“The strong spirit of a man sustains him in bodily pain or trouble, but a weak and broken spirit who can raise up or bear?”

**PROVERBS 18:14, AMP**

The Lord says in His word that He will strengthen your spirit, you will receive power on high from the Holy Spirit, but did you know that you must maintain that strength through wisdom, understanding and discipline?

This scripture in Proverbs has been important to me as I have shifted into a new assignment in the last four months. The assignment is intense, stressful and a battlefield daily. The Lord began to show me that I was operating in a weakened spirit. As the scripture above says a strong spirit sustains us not only in physical pain but in “trouble”. I was experiencing trouble on a daily basis. I turned the TV on one day and there was a familiar minister teaching on this very topic. I knew the Lord was speaking to me. He had continually spoken to me to “stay the course” through this assignment. My question was why was I struggling so much? One of the things that I caught hold of and thought I would share with you is a teaching on the enemies of a strong spirit.

We start with the scripture Hebrews 12:1-2— Verse 1 (AMP): “Let us strip off and throw aside every encumbrance, (un-necessary weight) and that sin which so readily (deftly and cleverly) clings to and entangles us, and let us run with patient endurance and steady and active persistence the appointed course of the race that is set before us.”

So what are the encumbrances, the sins that entangle us? Here are five that I submit to you are areas that need constant awareness, prayer and action to stay the course:

## Worry

Ezekiel 21:7 (AMP): “And it shall be that when they say to you, Why do you sigh? that you shall answer, Because of the tidings. When it comes, every heart will melt and all hands will be feeble, and every spirit will faint and all knees will be weak as water.”

The tidings of that day would cause spirits to faint. The tidings today cause many to faint. If we are not strong in our spirit we will succumb to this same fainting. Fear and anxiety will drain you and take your strength.

What do we do instead?

Psalm 55:22 “Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall.”



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# ENEMIES OF A STRONG SPIRIT\*

By Bishop Jessica Johnston, Spirit Soul and Body Ministries

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1 Peter 5:6-7 (AMP): “Therefore humble yourselves...under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you, casting the whole of your care [all your anxieties, all your worries, all your con-cerns, once and for all] on Him, for He cares for you affectionately and cares about you watchfully.”

Roll that care over onto the Lord.

## **Yielding to the flesh**

Psalm 31:10 (NLT): “Sin has drained my strength.”

“Sin will take you farther than you ever wanted to go, keep you longer than you ever wanted to stay, and make you pay a higher price than you ever wanted to pay.” We are to guard our hearts at all times, seek His forgiveness and humble ourselves. Samson’s sin of sleeping with the enemy caused him to lose His supernatural strength and become weak.

What do we do instead?

1 Peter 2:11: “Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.”

James 5:16 “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

II Chronicles 7:14 “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

## **Overloaded Life**

It’s too easy today to let other things take up our time and focus. Sometimes even the ministry set before us can become a distraction from our first priority – spending time with Him. We have too many irons in the fire, projects, we are overcommitted.

Luke 10:40 (AMP): “But Martha [overly occupied and too busy] was distracted with much serving.”

What do we do instead?

The first thing we have to do each day is spend time with the Lord and in His Word. Make the Word of God first place and final authority. This time with the Lord is the essential and center of a strong spirit.

We must also be selective as to how we expend spiritual energy. Sometimes the enemy uses our desire to serve or be merciful, making it religious rather than relational with Christ to keep us entangled. We must also fight the temptation to embellish on what

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# ENEMIES OF A STRONG SPIRIT\*

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God wants us to do. Stay focused, seek Him for every detail and only do what Jesus says.

## Relationship Problems

Genesis 26:34-35 (NLT): “At the age of forty, Esau married two Hittite wives: Judith, the daughter of Beerli, and Basemath, the daughter of Elon. But Esau’s wives made life miserable for Isaac and Rebekah.”

What do we do instead?

It is a blessing when relationships in our life are a blessing, lift us up and encourage us. However, there may be some that make us miserable, steal our focus and drain our strength. Wisdom and discernment is required for any relationship in our life. We must know if the relationship is God’s will, if it is the type of relationship it is called to be for us, the timing and season. We must know when to let go of relationships and when to fight to keep them.

Be watchful for those who are angry and love to argue. Arguments will drain you of spiritual strength

## Spiritual Leeches

The following are things that we may participate in or may be done to us. Both or either way they are spiritual leeches, sucking our emotional and spiritual energy. Stealing from us. Guard your heart from:

- Condemnation
- Jealousy
- Offense
- Bitterness
- Strife
- Unforgiveness
- Judging others

# ENEMIES OF A STRONG SPIRIT\*

By Bishop Jessica Johnston, Spirit Soul and Body Ministries

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Scriptures on Strength:

## Ephesians 6:10

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.

## Isaiah 40:29-31

He gives strength to the weary, And to him who lacks might He increases power. Though youths grow weary and tired, And vigorous young men stumble badly, Yet those who wait for the LORD Will gain new strength; They will mount up with wings like eagles, They will run and not get tired, They will walk and not become weary.

## Acts 1:8

but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

## Ephesians 3:16

that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,

## 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace, comfort and strengthen your hearts in every good work and word.

## 1 Timothy 1:12

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because He considered me faithful, putting me into service,

## 2 Timothy 1:7

For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

## Joshua 1:9

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# ENEMIES OF A STRONG SPIRIT\*

By Bishop Jessica Johnston, Spirit Soul and Body Ministries

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

## Deuteronomy 31:7-8

Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. "The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."

## Psalm 119:28

My soul weeps because of grief; Strengthen me according to Your word.

## Isaiah 41:10

'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

## Jeremiah 1:8

"Do not be afraid of them, For I am with you to deliver you," declares the LORD.

## 2 Timothy 4:17

But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth.

## 2 Timothy 2:1

You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

\*Content from *Developing a Strong Spirit Study Guide* by Gloria Copeland and George Pearsons.



*My prayer and blessing for you is that you will discover and uncover the mysteries of God in His ways and His word. I pray for you a revelation of His grace in your life and that all lessons imparted to you through your message will become revelatory teaching for the flock of God.*



# ‘I’m an Evangelical’: Rescuing the Term

By Stephen Nichols



Dr. Stephen Nichols is president of [Reformation Bible College](#), chief academic officer of Ligonier Ministries, and a Ligonier teaching fellow. He is author of many books, including [For Us and for Our Salvation](#), and hosts [5 Minutes in Church History](#). He is on Twitter [@DrSteveNichols](#).

“Modern evangelicalism was born in a joke told by George Whitefield during the First Great Awakening. The joke goes that a man dies and meets St. Peter at the gates of heaven. He asks St. Peter if there are Anglicans in heaven. “No, sir,” replied St. Peter, “there are no Anglicans in heaven.” That always got a laugh. Then the man asked if there were Presbyterians. Same answer. Then the man asked about Baptists, people “of the Methodist Way,” and Congregationalists. He gave the same answer for them all. Exasperated, the man asked, “Then tell me, St. Peter, who is in heaven?” “Christians, sir, Christians are in heaven,” St Peter said.

Thus began what we call evangelicalism. The idea of there being a broader term that encompasses a whole range of Protestants quickly gained traction. The church historian David Bebbington offered a definition for evangelicalism. The “Bebbington quadrilateral” identifies four things that mark evangelicalism:

**Biblicism:** a high view of the authority of Scripture.

**Crucicentrism:** a view that gives central place to Christ’s atonement on the cross.

**Conversionism:** a view that prioritizes the necessity of the new birth.

**Activism:** a view that emphasizes the gospel as being lived out in discipleship.

Evangelicalism comes from the Greek word euangelion. This compound word means “good news.” When Jesus entered the synagogue at Nazareth and was handed the scroll of Isaiah, He declared that He was there to proclaim the “good news” (Luke 4:18). As Jesus continued His earthly ministry, He continued His singular focus on proclaiming the “good news.”

The question is, What is the good news? Recently, former pastor Rob Bell has contended that the term evangelical has been hijacked by the Religious Right and represents that particular political and social agenda. Bell asserts that good news is not about being anti-gay, anti-science, or anti-immigrant. Instead, according to Bell, the good news means “loving your enemy and standing in solidarity with everybody who has been kicked to the edge by the empire.” It means serving the thirsty, the hungry, the homeless, and the socially marginalized. Bell also speaks of the original intent of Jesus’ message of good news, “which is the good news of God’s love extended to everybody who has ever felt the boot of the empire on their neck.”

Jesus speaks similarly in Luke 4:18–19 (quoting from Isa. 61:1–2). The full statement reads: “The Spirit of the

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# ‘I’m an Evangelical’: Rescuing the Term

By Stephen Nichols

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Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

But we need to keep reading. We learn something crucial in Luke 5. When confronted with the paralyzed man let down through the roof by his friends, Jesus said to him, “Your sins are forgiven you” (Luke 5:20). That was probably not what either the paralyzed man’s friends or the paralyzed man himself had in mind as their greatest need. Jesus would indeed go on to take care of the need they wanted him to address. Jesus healed the man, and he got up and walked out. But the greater thing that happened that day was not the healing of the man’s paralyzed body; it was the raising of the man from spiritual death. It was the forgiveness of sins.

The bad news is not primarily hunger, thirst, oppression, and marginalization. Those are all forms of bad news, but they’re not the bad news. They’re merely symptoms of the bad news. The truly bad news is this: we are sinners and under the wrath of Holy God. The bad news is death. If you are hungry and then find nourishment, you will still die. If you are oppressed and then liberated, you will still die. Let’s not confuse the symptoms with the disease.

If that’s the bad news, then the good news is this: Your sins are forgiven. You are no longer under God’s wrath, but you have been reconciled to Him and are at peace (Rom. 5:1). Death no longer reigns. You have eternal life. All of this is the good news and is available to anyone who trusts in Christ through faith and repentance. An evangelical is one who not only has been brought to believe this good news, but is also one who lives to proclaim it. We preach the good news of Jesus Christ, not simply the good news of happy circumstances. And, in proclaiming it and making disciples, we love and serve others. We help the weak, feed the starving, and welcome the marginalized. The good news has its own “symptoms.”

## **WE PREACH THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST, NOT SIMPLY THE GOOD NEWS OF HAPPY CIRCUMSTANCES.**

The irony of Bell’s claim of the hijacking of the term is that he himself hijacks it and co-opts it. He claims loudly, “I’m an evangelical,” all the while having no sense of the gospel. He confuses the gospel with the benefits of the gospel. Sadly, he’s not alone. Many people want peace and joy while at the same time rejecting the Jesus of Scripture. But you cannot have life while at the same time rejecting the giver of life.

Nevertheless, evangelical is still a helpful term, if rightly understood. It’s not a term that moves us away from theology (or moves us to a bad theology), but rather it moves us right to theology—right to the core of theology by remembering who Jesus is and what He did. To be an evangelical is to be about the gos-

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# ‘I’m an Evangelical’: Rescuing the Term

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pel, and the gospel is ultimately content-rich.

We need to return to that rich content of the gospel, to the full-orbed story of Jesus’ message of good news—not just select passages. As chapter after chapter of Scripture unfolds before our very eyes, we see all the richness and all the dimensions of Christ’s work and what He accomplishes for us. We also see that Jesus Himself was never selfish with the message. Jesus never thought anyone too low for His good news. He also never thought that any were too high for it either. Even Roman centurions, swords at their side, heard and believed His message of good news. The gospel is for Jew and Greek, the Religious Right and the Secular Left, the city and the country, the banker and the mechanic, the rich and the poor—for we are all under the curse of death. “Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Rom. 7:24–25).

*Thanks to Rev. William Hemsworth, LEPC for sharing this article.*

PREACH *THE* GOSPEL  
 AT ALL TIMES  
*& if necessary,*  
 USE WORDS.  
 OPPORTUNITIES TO DO  
*so are all around us.*

# It Ain't' Over until Jesus Says It's Over!

## An important word from Presiding Bishop Nancy Drew

Abortion, it's the law. No! Not until Jesus says it's law. It ain't over until Jesus says it's over.

Gay marriage, it's the law. No! Not until Jesus says it's law. It ain't over until Jesus says it's over.

America is going under. No! That's what some are saying. No, it's not. It ain't over until Jesus says it's over. We are in process and righteousness will prevail. God is not finished with America.

I have a vision. I want God to look from heaven to the United States and then all over the earth and see His people praying. I want Jesus to look and see His light shining all over America. I want Him to see His light shining through all EPC/LEPC ministers, their ministries and all who they come in contact with. I want Jesus to look and see every EPC/LEPC minister praying to Him wherever they are, whatever they are doing by the Spirit of God. We can pray anywhere no matter what we are doing. We can look up and raise our voices and our hearts to Our God. He is listening for us to speak. It is the voice of His people that God wants to hear. We are the ones who have His ear. We are the ones who have influence with the



King of Kings and Lord of Lords. The naysayers do not have influence with our God. What they say does not go. It is what we say that counts. It is up to us to make sure that we are staying in faith and with hearts of trust call out to Him. He will answer us.



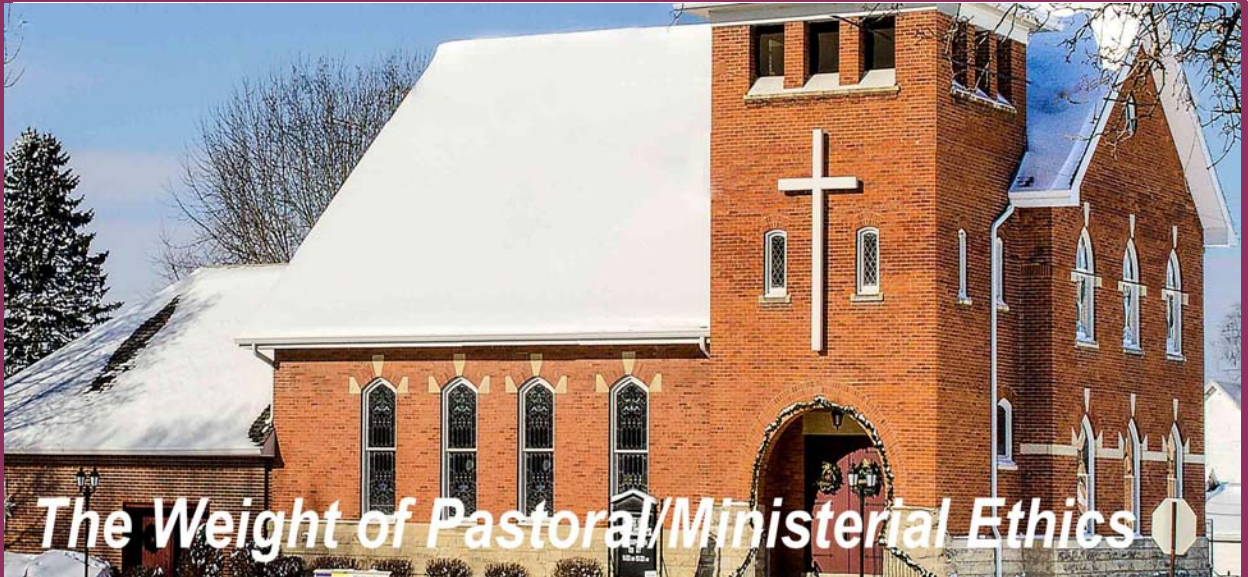
This is a message I have been preaching. See also on our web page, on our FB pages, on my own personal FB page. I ask you to take up the message. I ask you to catch the fire of what God wants to do in America with America, with us, with you. God's intent was and is to have a nation that will share the Gospel of the Good News, of the Kingdom of God around the world. America has been that nation. America is that nation. I believe our prosperity and our future as a nation is tied to God's desire. He has not let go of us. He is calling us to prayer. He is calling us to be who He said we are to be and we are going to be that, we are going to be a house of prayer. "My house (family, body, temple) will be called a house (family, body, temple) of prayer for all nations." Isaiah 56:7 And we, the EPC GCEPC/LEPC will "Go therefore and make disciples

of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Matt. 28:19 And why is it that we can do this? Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."

Matt.28:18 So, you see nothing is law until Jesus says it is law no matter how things might appear. Believe what Christ has said He has all authority not only in Heaven but on earth as well. It ain't over until Jesus says it's over. The end of the age is not over so let's Go! Start with prayer. This is the simple message: wherever you are, whatever you are doing, pray. Remind others to pray. Go, preach the kingdom and heal the sick.



Dennis Hollinger is president and the Colman M. Mockler Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Previously, he served as president and professor of Christian ethics at Evangelical Theological Seminary in Myerstown, Pennsylvania. Hollinger received a B.A. from Elizabethtown College, an M.Div. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, an M.Phil. and Ph.D. from Drew University, and did post-doctoral studies at Oxford University. SUMMER 2012 (The Weight of Pastoral Ethics adapted for the EPC



Ministers are called by God to proclaim the Word, provide visionary leadership and nurture spiritual growth for the flock under their care. However, all of these tasks are tarnished and discredited if they are not undergirded with ethical behavior and Christ-like character.

All believers are called to live and embody God's designs in every sphere of life. But ministers and Christian leaders have a special responsibility, for as the Apostle Paul cautioned, "We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited" (2 Corinthians 6:3)

Ministerial ethics, like all of Christian ethics, should encompass both actions and character. What we do and who we are authenticates the Word we proclaim, the leadership we provide and the pastoral care we extend. Pastoral ethics includes such characteristics as integrity, trustworthiness, purity, accountability and fairness. These qualities are not merely a professional ethics standard, but are the embodiment of biblical commitments.

As ministers and Christian leaders we have been given a trust and, "It is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:2). Ethics codes can never guarantee faithful being and doing. But a ministerial code of ethics can provide a clear direction, a system of accountability and a constant reminder of our responsibilities before God, our congregations and a watching world. With such parameters and guidelines in place, it is then the empowerment of God's Spirit that ensures fidelity to the high and holy calling of shepherding the flock for God's glory.

Dennis Hollinger is president and the Colman M. Mockler Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Previously, he served as president and professor of Christian ethics at Evangelical Theological Seminary in Myerstown, Pennsylvania.

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# The Weight of Pastoral / Ministerial Ethics

*(Continued from page 13)*

Hollinger received a B.A. from Elizabethtown College, an M.Div. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, an M.Phil. and Ph.D. from Drew University, and did post-doctoral studies at Oxford University. SUMMER 2012  
(The Weight of Pastoral Ethics adapted for the EPC GCEPC/LEPC)

## CODE OF ETHICS FOR EPC GCEPC/LEPC MINISTERS

Ethical success or failure can make or break a ministry. With a desire for ministers to make sound ethical decisions and to flourish, the National Association of Evangelicals developed the NAE Code of Ethics designed to provide a consistent code of ethics that crosses denominational and organizational lines if the NAE Members choose to use it. This Code of Ethics is being adapted for EPC GCEPC/LEPC use and will be added into our application packets to supplement and update our current ethics statement.

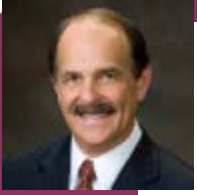
## Code of Ethics

We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. (2 Corinthians 6:3)

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. (Philippians 1:27)

All who are called by God to the ministry of the gospel solemnly commit to a life of joyful obedience and selfless service in order to glorify God and enrich His people. "And so Christ Himself gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer

*(Continued on page 15)*



## The Weight of Pastoral / Ministerial Ethics

Dennis Hollinger is president and the Colman M. Mockler Distinguished Professor of Christian Ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Previously, he served as president and professor of Christian ethics at Evangelical Theological Seminary in Myerstown, Pennsylvania. Hollinger received a B.A. from Elizabethtown College, an M.Div. from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, an M.Phil. and Ph.D. from Drew University, and did post-doctoral studies at Oxford University. SUMMER 2012 (The Weight of Pastoral Ethics adapted for the EPC

*(Continued from page 14)*

to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. Therefore, a minister of the Gospel will:

### **Pursue Integrity**

I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things I have given willingly and with honest intent. (1 Chronicles 29:17)

**in personal character.** Exalt Christ, not self. Be honest, not exaggerating or overpromising; peace-loving, not contentious; patient, not volatile; diligent, not slothful. Avoid and, when necessary, report conflicts of interest and seek counsel.

**in personal care.** Care for the spiritual, mental, emotional and physical dimensions of your person, for “your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19).

**in preaching and teaching.** Interpret the Bible accurately and apply it discerningly: “In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned” (Titus 2:7-8). Speak the truth in love. Give due credit when using the words or ideas of others.

**in leadership.** pursue servant shepherd leadership following the example of Christ. "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets," ((Matt 7:12) "But the greatest among you shall be your servant. (Matt: 23:11)

*(Continued on page 16)*

## The Weight of Pastoral / Ministerial Ethics

Dennis Hollinger

*(Continued from page 15)*

**Be Trustworthy.** It is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. (1 Corinthians 4:2)

**in leadership.** Model the trustworthiness of God in leadership to encourage and develop trustworthiness in others. Use power and influence prudently and humbly. Foster loyalty. Demonstrate a commitment to the well-being of the entire congregation. Keep promises. Respond sensitively and appropriately to ministry requests and needs: “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much” (Luke 16:10).

**with information.** Guard confidences carefully. Inform a person in advance, if possible, when an admission is about to be made that might legally require the disclosure of that information. Communicate truthfully and discreetly when asked about individuals with destructive or sinful behavior patterns. Tell the truth, or remain discreetly silent: “A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy person keeps a secret” (Proverbs 11:13).

**with resources.** Be honest and prudent in regard to personal and ministry resources. Refuse gifts that could compromise ministry. Ensure that all designated gifts are used for their intended purpose: “If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” (Luke 16:11).

**Seek Purity.** Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. (1 Timothy 4:12)

*(Continued on page 17)*





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## The Weight of Pastoral / Ministerial Ethics

**in maintaining sexual purity.** Avoid sinful sexual behavior and inappropriate involvement. Resist temptation: “Among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality” (Ephesians 5:3a).

**in spiritual formation.** Earnestly seek the help of the Holy Spirit for guidance and spiritual growth. Be faithful to maintain a heart of devotion to the Lord. Be consistent and intentional in prayer and scriptural study: “Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

**in theology.** Study the Bible regularly and carefully to understand its message, and embrace biblical doctrine. In forming theology, consider biblical teaching authoritative over all other sources.

**in professional practice.** Identify a minister/counselor who can provide personal counseling and advice when needed. Develop an awareness of personal needs and vulnerabilities. Avoid taking advantage of the vulnerabilities of others through exploitation or manipulation. Address the misconduct of another clergy member directly or, if necessary, through appropriate persons to whom that member of the clergy may be accountable.

**Embrace Accountability.** Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:2-3)

**in finances.** Promote accepted accounting practices and regular audits. Ensure that church funds are used for their intended ministry purposes.

**in ministry responsibilities.** Ensure clarity in authority structures, decision-making procedures, position descriptions, and grievance policies. Model accountability at the highest organizational levels.

**in a denomination or a ministry organization.** Ensure compliance with denominational or organizational standards and expectations, including regular reports.

**Facilitate Fairness.** Believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favorit-

# The Weight of Pastoral / Ministerial Ethics

Dennis Hollinger

*(Continued from page 17)*

ism... Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? (James 2:1-4)

**with staff.** Follow approved church and denomination practices in staff selection processes. Advocate for equitable pay and benefits for staff. Provide regular staff team building, affirmation, training, evaluation, and feedback. Be honest with staff regarding areas to celebrate as well as those needing improvement.

**with parishioners.** Ensure appropriate access to staff by parishioners. Preach and teach to meet the needs of the entire congregation. Assume responsibility for congregational health. When asked for help beyond personal competence, refer others to those with requisite expertise.

**with the community.** Build God's Kingdom in cooperation, not competition, with other local ministries. Provide Christian ministries to the public as possible. Encourage good citizenship.

**with a prior congregation, organization or ministry.** Do not recruit parishioners from a previous church without permission from the pastor or leader. Avoid interfering in the ministry of a previous congregation, organization or ministry.

As a minister of the gospel, I commit to abide by the standards set forth in this Code of Ethics.

## Trauma Beyond the Event Itself



Rev. Dr. Thomas  
Peavy Board Certified  
Crisis Chaplain

As I think of the recent terrorist events in France and the daily diet of death and cruelty experienced in our country, I recall the academic understanding that has developed surrounding trauma and its aftermath. As much as we would like to believe these events are at a distance and don't influence us, the reality is that when exposed to these events they are lived vicariously. Our neighbors, friends and family see these terrors and respond emotionally. We absorb the sights, sounds and emotional content of the victims and imagine ourselves as if we are there. Though we live in relative safety, we respond in an emotionally programmed way. We live the fear, anger, confusion and terror in our emotion. The images, sounds, and feelings are unimaginable yet we are confronted with a reality that is undeniable. In time these may fade from consciousness; however, the experience has been lived and is a part of our emotional content.

Some years back when our daughter was in high school she became a part of the experience of war surrounding the Desert Shield, Desert Storm/Persian Gulf War. Her response to my call to active service was to write several poems over a period of time. Interestingly, these poems dealt not with my call to active duty but with the Vietnam Veteran she knew as her father. Unknown to me, she had vicariously lived my experience as a young man as she grew up. With the possibility of another war, her vicarious living of another's experience found voice in poems. Let me share one of her writings to emphasize the point of vicarious traumatization.

A Soldier walked tall today with medals hanging on his broad chest and tears running down his pale white face. It seems as if he has seen a ghost but deep inside he knows pain. The pain, punishment and memories have built up for so long and here he is with this, his day, and his alone. He is proud to say he went to war but in the eyes of most people he did nothing more. How could they know how he felt inside? They were not on the ships or diving to the ground. This is his day and belongs to no one else but standing in front of this wall he falls to his knee in tears. Why he asked, why me? Why did you take someone with a wife, children and

*(Continued on page 20)*

# Trauma Beyond the Event Itself.

*(Continued from page 19)*

people to love? Why him and not me? I have no purpose, you can't tell me I do. My life will be spent in anguish. I will never die too soon. He will go home and every day deal with the ones who died. He will always remember the look in their eyes.

Let us remember that as His Shepherds we are called to bring comfort and care. In our busy world and the events that are all too many times chaotic, let us remember others live the events in their way either directly or vicariously and both are realities that influence them and how they encounter the world. As believers we have faith, hope and assurance. Let us share these Gifts of God in troubling times to comfort and care for our Brothers and Sisters and live God's Message to "Love One Another."

Rev. Thom



**LOVE** one another, As i have **LOVED** you.  
*John 13:34*

# The Discipline of Prayer

Bishop Nancy Drew



Bishop Nancy  
Drew

*Prayer is a matter of life and death. None of us are prepared to approach the Holy except by the blood of Christ. He gave us His life through His death and resurrection. His life lived out in us includes prayer. None of us has an excuse not to pray. We come as we are. He does the rest.*

*Jesus said, "My house (family, body, temple) will be called a house (family, body, temple) of prayer for all nations." Isaiah 56:7. God's vision spoken prophetically by Isaiah and repeated by Jesus. It is ours to fulfill. Jesus took prayer seriously as does the Father who made it our criteria.*

There is something that has bothered me for some time now and that is, the Church at large seems to consider prayer as only an option. Even at times as the last resort as in "Now, we can only pray." However, in studying scripture and looking at the life of Christ, the Apostles and the Prophets this is not the case. For them, prayer was a must. The title of this article "The Discipline of Prayer" by no means is to indicate that this is a work that we must labor upon and force ourselves to do. It is not a superficial attempt to keep God from being mad at us nor is it us trying to extricate from the hand of a hard task master God what we need. Rather prayer is used by Christ to move us beyond the surface waters of our spiritual life to the deeper things of Himself and the mysteries of our faith. Christ in us prays often even without ceasing by the Holy Spirit. Prayer is meant to be a characteristic of the family of God, of the body we live in and the temple of the Holy Spirit that we are. It is part of our spiritual DNA for those born of the Spirit.

It is for the "ordinary" Christian to have an extraordinary relationship with their God. Prayer is a conduit of God's grace into our lives; a conduit we should run to so we can drink from it often!

Jesus taught us we must go BEYOND the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. (Matt 5:20.) They focused on the externals and on legalism that included manipulating their surroundings and other people. Jesus, however, focuses on the internal. Jesus focuses on the heart. We can know how far we are moving past external righteousness by the internal work of God on our hearts. The work that He does is a hidden work that radiates from the inside out and shows in our external spiritual walk through life. We must seek to move "beyond" to where "deep calls to deep" being aware not to make prayer a matter of law but of relationship. Jesus has promised to be our guide and teacher. He who prayed so well in His earthly life continues to pray now. He will show us the way and He will prevent the "leaven of the Pharisees" from entering in if we just trust Him with us and trust us with Him. His voice is not hard to hear. His instruction is not hard to understand. If we get on a "rabbit trail" He will get us back on track.

In his Book Celebration of Discipline, Richard Foster states, "...prayer itself brings us into the deepest and highest work of the human spirit. Real prayer is life creating and life changing."

The world is in need of transformed people. It does us or the world no good if we only do the externals of our faith but experience no transformation internally. If we are to be living water we must drink from the One and follow the One who is Living Water. To pray is to change; if we abandon prayer it may be because of unwillingness to be transformed. The more we come close to the heartbeat of Christ, the more we will realize our need of Him. We will become more conformed to His image because of being in His Presence through prayer.

# WHAT'S IN YOUR HEART? LISTEN TO YOUR MOUTH!

The four examples of evil in Proverbs 8:13, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate." which always end up doing harm, were manifested in Satan, and all of his children continue to exhibit them (see John 8:38, 41, 44). A progression is shown: Pride and arrogance are conditions of the heart, which is where it all starts. Where there is pride in the heart, it will come out in "the evil way," that is in action.

Evil also emerges in words, though it may not always be obvious. Jesus cautions in Matthew 12:34, "**Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.**" When evil resides in the heart, it will be exposed in perverse speech, language contrary to the truth of God and to love. James 3:8 declares that "no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison." He also says, "If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man" (James 3:2). We can only reach that perfection with God's intervention and help, which, thankfully, we have.

The apostle Paul essentially says that the foundation of good works—particularly within the church of God—is humility or lowliness: "**I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.**" (Ephesians 4:1-3) However, if works are done with pride or arrogance, or for the sake of appearance rather than truth and righteousness, (the pharisacal way) they will cause harm. They may also produce some good, but the account of the Two Trees in the Garden of Eden teaches that, in the context of eternity, a mixture of good and evil is really only evil. (David C. Grabbe, Hating Evil, Fearing God)

Sanctification will be seen and heard "for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

If the heart has been impregnated by the Spirit of God the mouth will begin to speak like God does!

A person's works produce the fruits, and the heart then is known by what it produces. This produces a peculiar effect within the converted person.

While good fruit is showing, the converted person sees himself thoroughly encompassed by weakness.

For instance, whenever Moses came down from the mount, after being with God, his face radiated the reflected glory of God. But he was not aware of it that his face was glowing!

"For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. (45) A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh." Luke 6:44-45

There is a New Testament equivalent of this in Matthew 25. In the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, Jesus separates the sheep on one side and the goats on the other. What do the sheep say to their lord and master? "When did we feed you? When did we clothe you?" They were not aware that they were producing the right fruit and reflecting God's glory in their lives. (John W. Ritenbaugh, The Covenants, Grace, and Law (Part 9)

Source: Studies from: <http://www.bibletools.org> , Nov.17,2015

## Allow Me to Introduce Myself



**Rev Sue Rhodes**

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord Jesus! I am Sue Rhodes, a chaplain in the greater Milwaukee area. I am married and have two grown children. I worshipped as an ELCA Lutheran for over eighteen years, having come to Christ in that denomination. In the last years of my affiliation with the church, I struggled with the direction the denomination was heading, and so I joined a large non-denominational evangelical church, attending and volunteering there for over ten years.

My ordination journey began after having heard God's calling to be a pastor one Christmas season while busy at my sewing machine. Soon after, I began attending seminary in the Atlanta area, attending Candler Divinity School (Methodist), Interdenominational Theological Center (a consortium of four black seminaries), and Columbia Seminary (Presbyterian). I received my MAR in 1999, and while hoping to enter full-time ministry, life circumstances pulled me to the Milwaukee area, working in the secular workforce in supply chain management. However, I never gave up on serving God, or forgot the Voice I heard that day. I continued volunteering in a variety of ways within the church, knowing that at some point in the future, God would make plain how that calling would manifest and require a response of me.

It was after being down-sized from my last position in 2008 I began attending career networking groups, gaining support for myself and looking to discern God's next steps for my future. It was there that a fellow networker approached me, asking if I would consider healthcare chaplaincy. He had had a highly positive experience with the chaplaincy staff while hospitalized for heart transplant surgery, and he indicated he could see me doing this work. In fact, he could recommend me to those who do the training! I saw God's hand in this invitation, leading me to pursue chaplaincy training, and so completed two demanding years in a Milwaukee hospital system.

Upon graduation, there were far more newly minted chaplains than there were jobs. However, within three weeks of completing CPE, I was working in one of the largest full-continuum senior care facilities in the state, and have been ministering there now for four years. I serve at The Village at Manor Park in independent living; and skilled nursing units, which includes those living with dementia and those who breathe by means of a ventilator. I teach Bible studies, officiate in various worship services and visit with "God's oldest friends" in their apartments and rooms. I also minister to staff--they are the front-line caregivers on a day to day basis--who have demanding responsibilities in providing care to the elders who live there.

I also pursued chaplaincy certification through the APC, and after rather rigorous paper-writing in which I looked at myself with some reflection, I now am board certified as of 10/14.

I felt the next step then in more fully answering God's calling on my life was to finally seek ordination. God spoke once again through a person sent my way at the time I was most ready to hear. It was at a chaplaincy conference where I met a woman who had recently been ordained by the LEPC, and she suggested that it might be where I find a place as well. At that point, I was still in-process towards board certification. However, she'd planted a seed in my heart that I treasured and held on to. Several years later, after accomplishing board certification, I researched the LEPC and felt it was a good fit. And so on a Sunday in late September 2015, hands were laid on by flesh-and-

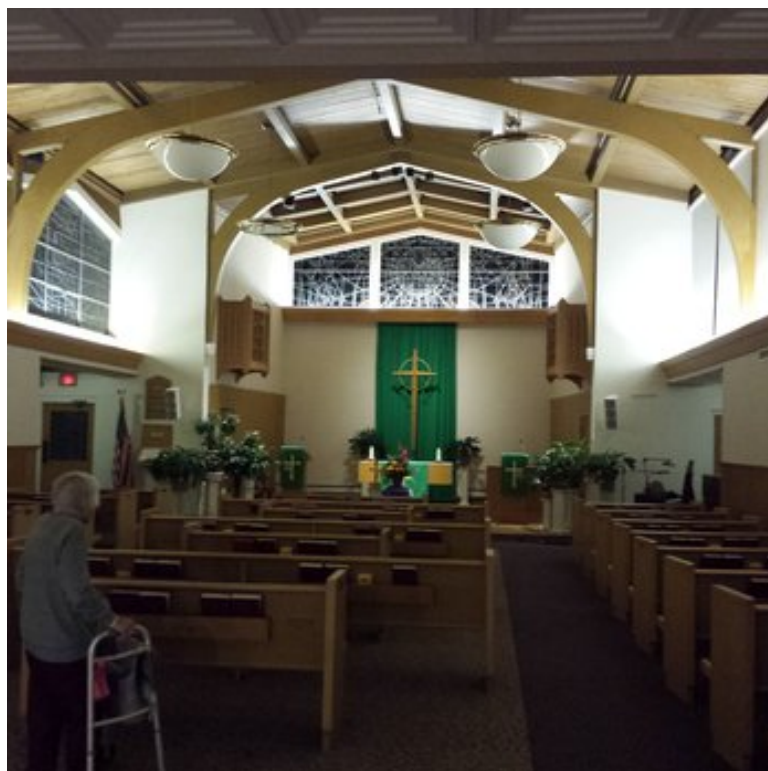
*(Continued on page 24)*

## Allow Me to Introduce Myself

*(Continued from page 23)*

blood persons who stood in a long line dating back to the original apostles, confirming the calling I heard years ago, and including me in their fellowship. The ordination completed for me a process that was welcoming and joyful. My heart needed what I got from the three bishops who drove down to welcome me with hospitality into their church—some along with their wives—and I am grateful.

And so, in my current placement where God has planted me, I have found a home, learning from those who have become my grandmothers and grandfathers and aunts and uncles. This is my “congregation,” and I am thankful for the lessons learned at the feet of my elders, and for the privilege to serve them.





# Faced with the Attacks: Let Us Pray for Our Country and Its Authorities

November 14, 2015

Facing the bloody Paris attacks that have mourned France on the night of 13 to 14 November 2015, the National Council of Evangelicals of France (Conseil National des Évangéliques de France, CNEF) wishes to express its compassion and solidarity with the wounded and the families of the victims. It invites all its members to support them and to pray for them as well as for our entire country and its authorities.

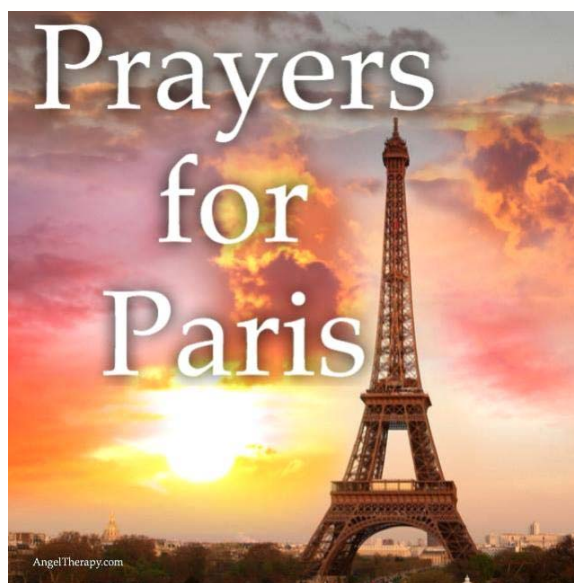
The despicable jihadist violence that just hit our country must not prevail. Let us refuse to allow panic and hatred. Let us tightened the links of national solidarity in these times of adversity.

France is not alone! At this time, millions of Christians around the world are praying for our country.

Because of the Gospel, CNEF will stand alongside all those who want to defend life and liberty, the precious assets of humanity scorned today.

The National Council of Evangelical Churches of France (CNEF) was established on June 15, 2010. As a representative body, it brings together more than 70% of the evangelicals and more than one hundred para-church organizations. CNEF is a member of the European Evangelical Alliance and the World Evangelical Alliance. (NAE/WEA)

The General Conference of Evangelical Protestant Churches  
EPC and LEPC stand with Evangelical Protestants in France and around the world  
in prayer for Paris and all of France.



"fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand." Isaiah 41:10 ESV

## Thanksgiving It's Not About the Turkey

Prayers of thanks and special thanksgiving ceremonies are common among almost all religions after harvests and at other times. The Thanksgiving holiday's history in North America is rooted in English traditions dating from the Protestant Reformation. It also has aspects of a harvest festival, even though the harvest in New England occurs well before the late-November date on which the modern Thanksgiving holiday is celebrated. In the English tradition, days of thanksgiving and special thanksgiving religious services became important during the English Reformation in the reign of Henry VIII and in reaction to the large number of religious holidays on the Catholic calendar. Before 1536 there were 95 Church holidays, plus 52 Sundays, when people were required to attend church and forego work and sometimes pay for expensive celebrations. The 1536 reforms reduced the number of Church holidays to 27, but some Puritans wished to completely eliminate all Church holidays, including Christmas and Easter. The holidays were to be replaced by specially called Days of Fasting or Days of Thanksgiving, in response to events that the Puritans viewed as acts of special providence. Unexpected disasters or threats of judgment from on high called for Days of Fasting. Special blessings, viewed as coming from God, called for Days of Thanksgiving. For example, Days of Fasting were called on account of drought in 1611, floods in 1613, and plagues in 1604 and 1622. Days of Thanksgiving were called following the victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588 and following the deliverance of Queen Anne in 1705. An unusual annual Day of Thanksgiving began in 1606 following the failure of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 and developed into Guy Fawkes Day.

In the United States, the modern Thanksgiving holiday tradition is commonly, but not universally, traced to a sparsely documented 1621 celebration at Plymouth in present-day Massachusetts. The 1621 Plymouth feast and thanksgiving was prompted by a good harvest. Pilgrims and Puritans who began emigrating from England in the 1620s and 1630s carried the tradition of Days of Fasting and Days of Thanksgiving with them to New England. Several days of Thanksgiving were held in early New England history that have been identified as the "First Thanksgiving", including Pilgrim holidays in Plymouth in 1621 and 1623, and a Puritan holiday in Boston in 1631. According to historian Jeremy Bangs, director of the Leiden American Pilgrim Museum, the Pilgrims may have been influenced by watching the annual services of Thanksgiving for the relief of the siege of Leiden in 1574, while they were staying in Leiden. Now called Oktober Feesten, Leiden's autumn thanksgiving celebration in 1617 was the occasion for sectarian disturbance that appears to have accelerated the pilgrims plans to emigrate to America. In later years, religious thanksgiving services were declared by civil leaders such as Governor Bradford, who planned the colony's thanksgiving celebration and fast in 1623. The practice of holding an annual harvest festival did not become a regular affair in New England until the late 1660s

Thanksgiving proclamations were made mostly by church leaders in New England up until 1682, and then by both state and church leaders until after the American Revolution. During the revolutionary period, political influences affected the issuance of Thanksgiving proclamations. Various proclamations were made by royal governors, John Hancock, General George Washington, and the Continental Congress, each giving thanks to God for events favorable to their causes. As President of the United States, George Washington proclaimed the first nationwide thanksgiving celebration in America marking November 26, 1789, "as a day of public thanksgiving and prayer to be observed by acknowledging with grateful hearts the many and signal favours of Almighty God".



# Advent Guide

PREPARING TO CELEBRATE CHRIST'S BIRTH

# ARRIVAL

BY BILLY GRAHAM



ADVENT MEDITATIONS

*The Birth of Jesus*  
they were there, the days were  
accomplished that she should  
delivered.  
And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger.

## Advent Guide

The word

**ADVENT**

means

**ARRIVAL,**

and it refers to the arrival  
of Jesus Christ into the world.

The “Advent season” usually starts four weeks before Christmas and concludes with the celebration of Christ’s birth.

Some churches emphasize the Advent season more than others, but all Christians look forward to celebrating Christ’s birth during this season of the year. Why was Jesus’ birth so important? The reason is because slightly over 2,000 years ago, God stooped down from Heaven and became a human being: Jesus Christ. As the Bible says,

*“The Word became flesh and  
made his dwelling among us.”*

— John 1:14, NIV

Think of it: God became a man! He did it because He loves us—and that’s what we should celebrate as Christmas approaches.

Take time between now and Christmas to reflect on this great truth. This pamphlet provides a reading for each week as you prepare to celebrate the coming of the Christ child.

# Advent Guide

## *Week One* READ ISAIAH 9:6

In this Scripture we find the message and meaning of Christmas. Isaiah the prophet gave five awe-inspiring names of our Lord that encourage us, thrill us, and fill us with hope at this Christmas season.

1. **Wonderful.** When He did His many miracles, the Scripture says, “*The people wondered*” (Luke 11:14, KJV).
2. **Counselor.** The people said, “*No one ever spoke the way this man does*” (John 7:46, NIV).
3. **The Mighty God.** He is the God-Man. He said that He and the Father are one (John 10:30).
4. **The Everlasting Father.** It was by Him, the living Word, that all things were created. He is the designer of the whole universe (John 1:3; Hebrews 11:3).
5. **The Prince of Peace.** There will never be lasting peace on earth until He comes again to reign in righteousness. But He is also the Prince of Peace in other ways. None can have peace with God apart from Him and the peace that He made through the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20).

The full meaning of these words from Isaiah should give us enough strength, hope, and joy to face any crisis, endure any sorrow, and meet any temptation.



How has Jesus shown you recently that He is “Wonderful, Counselor ... the Prince of Peace”?

# Advent Guide

*Week Two*

READ MATTHEW 1:19-21

We're given just a little glimpse of Mary and Joseph before Jesus was born. They lived in the hill country of Galilee. Joseph was a religious man. Mary gives every evidence of having a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures, even though she was a teenager. The Bible teaches that God was so pleased with her that He chose her to be the mother of Jesus. Mary and Joseph weren't married, and yet Mary became pregnant.

I've often put myself in Joseph's place—imagined his thoughts, his aspirations about the girl to whom he was engaged. But Joseph decided to break the engagement privately.

While he was thinking about these things, God's angel appeared to him in a dream to give Joseph an explanation of the situation. All Joseph's suspicions were put away. He accepted what God had said through the angel, and he was immediately married to Mary.

Both Joseph and Mary followed the call and plan of God, and through their obedience the way was prepared for Christ to come and bless us.

Are you seeking to follow



God's call on your life?

Are you actively responding to Him?

# Advent Guide

## Week Three

READ LUKE 2:8-10

On that first Christmas night, the angels appeared to shepherds on a hill near Bethlehem. Alfred Edersheim, the great 19<sup>th</sup>-century Jewish-Christian scholar, wrote in his book *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* that the shepherds and the sheep to whom the angels appeared near Bethlehem were no ordinary shepherds and sheep. The sheep were those bound for the temple sacrifices. The shepherds were outcasts because of their necessary isolation from religious ordinances. And their manner of life rendered legal observances unlikely, if not absolutely impossible.

How wonderful that in God's wisdom and love the angels should appear to them—the doomed and the outcast—that night.

Today we can declare to the world that the Good Shepherd cares for all people and wants to give them peace. Christ came on that first Christmas for one great purpose—to die on the cross for our sins. Now God offers forgiveness, inner peace, and eternal life to all who will repent and believe in His Son. This is the Christmas message!

**Do you know people who need to hear about God's love and forgiveness?**



**Will you share the true Christmas message with them this year?**

# Advent Guide

## *Week Four*

READ LUKE 2:11, 13-14

The greatest sermon ever preached was delivered by angels on this historic night. It has always been interesting to me that this message was delivered at night. It wasn't night because the sun had gone down. It was night because the world was surrounded in spiritual and moral gloom. People were driven by greed, intolerance, and lust for power. Religion had become a device for the rich in the exploitation of the poor. Men robbed and swindled and profiteered under the cloak of religion; they even fought wars in the name of religion. In every arena of life, it was night when Jesus came.

Things haven't changed. Today, there seems to be a moral night that has settled over our world—sexual immorality, pleasure-mad people, lusting for money and power—the same as it was in the days when Jesus came 2,000 years ago.

It is in the darkest hour that Christ often comes. He brings the joy, the thrill, the peace, and the glory such as you have never known—when you and your loved ones give your lives to Him.



**How has Jesus shown Himself to you in your darkest hour?**



# Advent Guide

*Week Five*

READ JOHN 3:16; 5:24

## Christmas Eve or Christmas Day

The word *Christmas* begins with Christ: the virgin-born Christ child, our Savior. The babe of Bethlehem was not merely a remarkable child but the Son of God. In His infinite grace, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was born into this world as a man, yet He never ceased to be God.

Jesus Christ in His infinite love did not begin when He was born in a stable and laid in a manger; He left Heaven's best to come to this world to be the Savior of mankind. He was offered as a free gift.

God's gift to the world was despised and rejected 2,000 years ago. In the life of every person who has rejected Him since that time, there has proved to be a fatal defectiveness. Only when we accept the free gift of eternal life through Christ can we know the true meaning of Christmas, the forgiveness of sin, and life everlasting.

God gave His *all* for you. By giving Him *your all* this Christmas, you will reach others with the Gospel that they, too, may receive God's gift.



**In what tangible ways can you give Jesus your all today and in the coming year?**



# Advent Guide

**BILLY  
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# Graham Library



Bishop Nancy  
Drew

If you are in the area near Charlotte, NC during Advent I would like to encourage you to visit the Billy Graham Library. Bishop Jessica Johnston and I had the opportunity in the fall to visit this wonderful tribute to the Gospel of Jesus Christ as seen through the eyes and life of Billy Graham. This is me in front of the Library entrance. One of the highlights for me was to be able to stand in a pulpit from which Dr. Graham preached for many years. The Library, grounds and boyhood home are beautifully decorated now for Christmas. There is no charge to tour and walk around the grounds and enjoy the Lord's Presence that is so evident. There is a restaurant for when you get hungry You can see more pictures and information here. <http://billygrahamlibrary.org/>

I am using Billy Graham's Advent Guide this year as part of my devotionals during this Christmas Season. It is included here for you to see. You can download it at <https://billygraham.org/secure/advent-resource-page/> or order copies for your ministry.



Merry Christmas to all!

*Bishop Nancy Drew*

# "Good News"

## October 21, 2015

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials. 1 Peter 1:3-6*

This week, while searching my news sources for Daily Devotion topics, I came across one website that had a number of high-priority stories. Here are the top-five headlines they listed:

1. "Pastor Attacked in Bangladesh by Muslims Who Claimed to be Interested in His Faith"
2. "Public School Choirs (in Portland, Oregon) Banned from Singing in Area Christmas Show after Atheist Group Takes Action"
3. (Wichita State) "University Removes Chapel Pews to Accommodate Muslim Students. Critics of a university's decision to make a chapel 'faith neutral' are being called 'Islamophobic'"
4. "Islamic State Threatens to Kill Christians in Syria in Video Showing Executions. The terrorist group Islamic State (IS) killed three Assyrian Christians late last month, presumably in Syria, according to an execution video released Wednesday" (October 7)
5. "Officials Defend Prayer in Public Schools in Oklahoma and Arkansas. In Oklahoma and Arkansas, effort is being taken to keep prayer a part of public school sporting events"

Looking at that list I found myself getting pretty depressed. Each of those stories tells how the Savior's message of salvation is being attacked. Some of those stories (1 and 4) speak of the physical violence being experienced by our brothers and sisters around the world. Other headline news articles explain how, in our nation, freedom of speech (2, 3 and 5) and freedom of religion (2, 5) are being challenged. I encourage you to note how, in number 3, authorities are encouraging Christians to be open and accepting by calling them names.

It's enough to make a person wonder if there is any "good news" left in this sad, sinful world.

If that's what you're thinking, then I encourage you: *be at peace*. The Gospel of Jesus Christ -- the story of salvation which tells of God's Son coming to earth to save us -- is still alive and well. That story, which finds its greatest fulfillment in the death and resurrection of God's Son, is still able to bring light into darkness.

The apostle Peter, speaking to Christians who were living in a time not unlike ours, wanted them to know God's mercy has given us a living hope. Because of the Savior's successes in defeating sin, death and devil, all who are brought to faith in Him are given a future which cannot be *bent, folded, spindled or mutilated*.

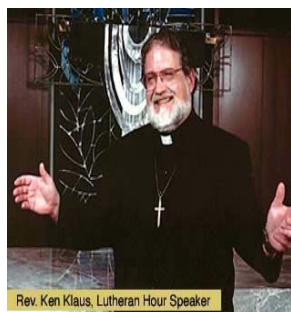
Yes, we may suffer through trials like the ones listed above, but we still have the Good News!

**THE PRAYER:** Dear Lord, may the Good News of the Redeemer dispel the darkness of this world and the depression and doubt that wishes to discourage me. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

In Christ I remain His servant and yours,



Pastor Ken Klaus  
Speaker Emeritus of [The Lutheran Hour](#)®  
Lutheran Hour Ministries



## Ordination



**Bishop of  
Chaplaincy  
Dennis  
Overlien**

From Dennis Overlien, Bishop of Chaplaincy: I am keeping busy here at the Christian Home and feel blessed to be able to serve our Lord here. We have a beautiful Christian Living Center with assisted living apartments. The assisted living apartments are attached to the Nursing Home. We also have a large Memory Care Center across town where I conduct services each week and pastoral visits. Our chapel is located in the Nursing Home/ Assisted Living Center where I do my bible studies and worship services. Our local Catholic Church is serving communion in the chapel as I write this. We also filled the chapel last week with veterans and their families as we held a special veteran's day ceremony and presented certificates to our military veterans with a luncheon to follow. I feel so blessed to be able to have a part in the ordinations of our new pastors. God Bless the EPC GCEPC/LEPC!!!



Rev. Debra Winterhack and Rev. Sue Rhodes were ordained and consecrated in a Service of Laying on of Hands on September 27, 2015 at St. Mary's Episcopal Church, in Dousman, Wisconsin with Bishops of the EPC GCEPC/LEPC officiating. A fellowship of celebration for the new ministers followed the Service. Left to Right-Rev Dennis Overlien, Bishop of Chaplaincy and Wisconsin Region, Rev. Debra Winterhack, Wisconsin, Rev. Sue Rhodes, Bishop William Dorn, Wisconsin, GCEPC Board of Advisors, Rev. Pat Pierce, Ecumenical Bishop, Wisconsin and All Regions.

# The Christmas Season

Dennis Bratcher

## The Origin of "Xmas"

The abbreviation of "Xmas" for Christmas, long reviled by many conservative and Low Church Christians, is not nearly as blasphemous as many contend. Rather than a sacrilegious removal of "Christ" from Christmas and replacing him with an unknown, as some claim, the "Xmas" abbreviation has a long history in the church. In Greek, the language in which the New Testament was first written, "chi" (χ or X), which is almost identical to the Roman alphabet "X," is the first letter of the word "Christ" (ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ, or as it would be written in older manuscripts, ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ). In fact, the symbol of the fish in the early church came from using the first letter of several titles used for Jesus (Jesus Christ Son of God Savior) that when combined spelled the Greek word for fish (ΙΧΘΥΣ, *ichthus*).

In the early days of printing when typesetting was done by hand and was very tedious and expensive, abbreviations were common. The church began to use the abbreviation "X" for the word "Christ" in religious publications. From there, the abbreviation moved into general use in newspapers and other publications, and "Xmas" became an accepted way of printing "Christmas." Some people seem to get worked up easily about things that are either largely irrelevant or incidental, or that they do not really understand. This seems to be the case with some religious folk when the topic is an aspect of Christianity that is personally important to them.

For example, around Christmas each year there are always those who loudly decry the use of the abbreviation "Xmas" as some kind of blasphemy against Christ and Christianity. This concern has been elevated recently with the public debates about manger scenes and the substitution of "holiday" for Christmas in stores and government venues. Among religious folks, the objection to Xmas is usually along the line that people have taken Christ out of Christmas and replaced him with an unknown (since the Greek letter *chi*, [X,χ] which looks like the English letter x, is the symbol for an unknown quantity in mathematics).

For example, on the "Voice of Prophecy" web site is an article entitled "You Can't 'X' out Christ."

You've heard the classic story about the little boy who noticed the huge red-and-green sign spray-painted on a department store: "Happy Xmas." And he wondered aloud about the X. Why was it X-mas? And finally, in a forlorn voice, he asked his dad: "Did they cross Christ out of Christmas, Daddy?" And the father had never thought of it that way before, but finally nodded. "Yes, Son, I guess they did." And it makes you think.

Well it certainly does make one think. It makes one think how uninformed or misinformed, and unnecessarily militant with that misinformation, so many Christians are concerning their own Faith. The story illustrates what could have been a marvelous opportunity to teach a child about some of the important symbolism of the Christian Faith. But it was an opportunity lost, in this story at least, because many Christians do not understand their own iconography and symbolism. The results are often battles waged against windmills while far more consequential issues for the Faith are neglected (a modern example of Matt. 23:23).

Now, in all honesty, the article on that web site focuses on the secular commercialization of Christmas, something to which most Christians I know would object or at least with which they are uncomfortable. But the fact that the use of "Xmas" can be associated so easily with crass commercialization rather than locating it within the Christian tradition itself reveals a lack of understanding of heritage and history.

# The Christmas Season

Dennis Bratcher

(Continued from page 38)

The same perspective is obvious in this response to a BBC broadcast on the meaning of Christmas:

The time has come to separate the religious festival of Christmas from the trading season of "xmas."

It is as if the term "Xmas" used anywhere in public is part of some diabolical grinchy plot to subvert Christmas. This is implied in other places as well. A 2005 poll on the website *bible.com*, a popular biblical resource site, has this question: "What concerns you the most about how the world is attacking Christmas, a Christian holiday?" The four choices given in order are:

- 1) Using an "X" to replace Christ's name in Christmas - *i.e.* Xmas;
- 2) Banning manger scenes from public places;
- 3) Substituting "Happy Holidays" for "Merry Christmas";
- 4) Emphasizing Santa Claus over Baby Jesus.

Certainly, the question does not imply what the web site itself thinks of the answers. But the fact that this issue can still be included with the other fears that people have about Christmas illustrates a continuing and significant level of misinformation mixed with people's concerns. And the less than neutral language of the question ("world," "attacking," "Christian") certainly leaves the impression that using "Xmas" is part of some worldly plot to overthrow Christendom.

This misunderstanding and fear mongering about the use of "Xmas" is not a new phenomenon. I heard the same kinds of comments in sermons many years ago. It was especially prevalent among those Christians and church leaders who wanted or needed to see the world in negative and threatening terms (see [The Jonah Syndrome](#)), or who tended to see everything in society as part of some grand conspiracy of Satan or the inexorable working out of God's own predetermined plan, without really knowing all the facts or complexities of the situation (see [Christians and Urban Legends](#)).

I have no doubt that some people write "Xmas" because they are too busy or too lazy to write out the whole word. And no doubt some secular people, who are just as uninformed as Christians, see "Xmas" as a way to avoid writing "Christ." And certainly there are secular and commercial motives in the fact that "XMAS" appears in ads and signs because it can be larger and more attention getting in the same amount of space (more bang for the buck). But those factors do not take away the thoroughly Christian origin of the word "Xmas." In this instance, all of the hype and hysteria over supposedly taking Christ out of Christmas by writing "Xmas" instead of spelling out "Christmas" is both uninformed and misdirected.

Abbreviations used as Christian symbols have a long history in the church. The letters of the word "Christ" in Greek, the language in which the New Testament was written, or various titles for Jesus early became symbols of Christ and Christianity. For example, the first two letters of the word Christ (χριστος, or as it would be written in older manuscripts, ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ) are the Greek letters *chi* (χ or X) and *rho* (ρ or P). These letters were used in the early church to create the *chi-rho* monogram (see [Christian Symbols: Christmas Ornaments](#)), a symbol that by the fourth century became part of the official battle standard of the emperor Constantine.



(Continued on page 40)

# The Christmas Season

Dennis Bratcher

Another example is the symbol of the fish, one of the earliest symbols of Christians that has been found scratched on the walls of the catacombs of Rome. It likely originated from using the first letter of several titles of Jesus (Jesus Christ Son of God Savior). When combined these initial letters together spelled the Greek word for fish (ἰχθῦς, *ichthus*).

The exact origin of the single letter X for Christ cannot be pinpointed with certainty. Some claim that it began in the first century AD along with the other symbols, but evidence is lacking. Others think that it came into widespread use by the thirteenth century along with many other abbreviations and symbols for Christianity and various Christian ideas that were popular in the Middle Ages. However, again, the evidence is sparse.

In any case, by the fifteenth century Xmas emerged as a widely used symbol for Christmas. In 1436 Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press with moveable type. In the early days of printing typesetting was done by hand and was very tedious and expensive. As a result, abbreviations were common. In religious publications, *the church* began to use the abbreviation X, or simply X, for the word "Christ" to cut down on the cost of the books and pamphlets. From there, the abbreviation moved into general use in newspapers and other publications, and "Xmas" became an accepted way of printing "Christmas" (along with the abbreviations Xian and Xianity). Even Webster's dictionary acknowledges that the abbreviation Xmas was in common use by the middle of the sixteenth century.

So there is no grand scheme to dilute Christianity by promoting the use of Xmas instead of Christmas. It is not a modern invention to try to convert Christmas into a secular day, nor is it a device to promote the commercialism of the holiday season. Its origin is thoroughly rooted in the heritage of the Church. It is simply another way to say Christmas, drawing on a long history of symbolic abbreviations used in the church. In fact, as with other abbreviations used in common speech or writing (such as Mr. or etc.), the abbreviation "Xmas" should be pronounced "Christmas" just as if the word were written out in full, rather than saying "exmas." Understanding this use of Christian symbolism might help us modern day Christians focus on more important issues of the Faith during Advent, and bring a little more Peace to the Christmas Season.

## The Meaning of Christmas

What is the true meaning of Christmas? It is a perennial question. It is a question heard often during the Christmas season year after year, from pulpits, TV personalities, newspaper writers, and just ordinary people bewildered by the hectic pace of the season. It seems a little strange that as popular as this season seems to be, we should continually have to ask that question. The meaning of Christmas seems to be forever in danger of being obscured by all the commotion and promotion of the season. Perhaps we continue to ask the question for fear that the answer will be lost, or already is lost, in the shuffle.

So, the search for the true meaning of Christmas is a recurring one. And yet, too often the answers we provide, even from the church, are more sentimentality, comfortable traditions, or "warm fuzzies" than they are any deep reflection on the significance of the Incarnation for humanity. As much as those things are a part of the season, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus" is not the meaning of the season. It is not about the "spirit of giving" or the quest for global peace, or the importance of family, or the beauty of a snow-decorated "silent night."

Certainly we can immediately say that Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus. But exactly why is that fact so significant beyond the affirmation of a historical fact or a creedal confession? How does, or how should, the meaning of Christmas impact our lives on a daily basis as the people of God?



# The Christmas Season

Dennis Bratcher

*(Continued from page 40)*

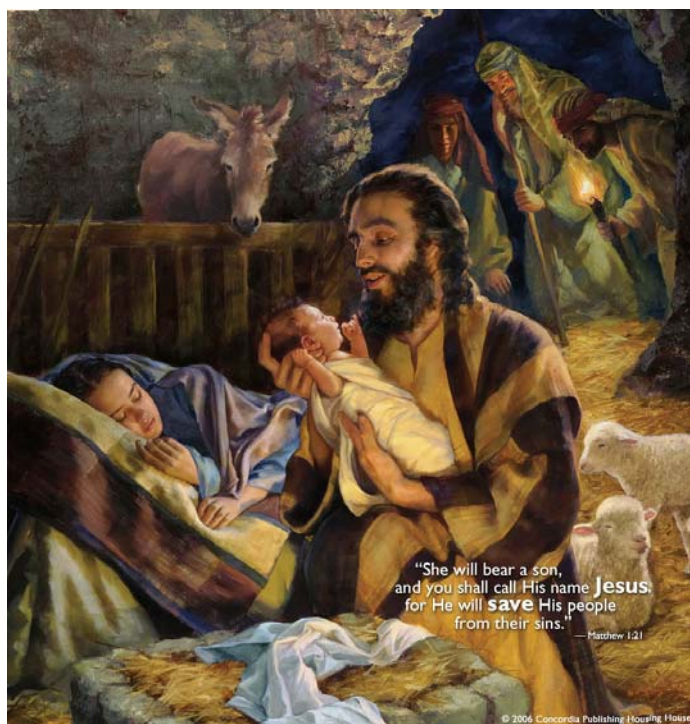
Perhaps for an answer, we need to return to the biblical narratives, apart from all the traditions that we have heaped around them to make them more entertaining and more coherent to modern ways of thinking. At the heart of the nativity narratives in both Matthew and Luke, is a simple fact: amid the struggle of a people who had longed for 500 years for God to act in the world in new ways, God came to be with them in a way that totally identified himself with us, as human beings. Amid the most unlikely of circumstances, to the most unlikely of people, God became a human being to reconcile all peoples to himself (2 Cor 5:18-19).

I think that the true meaning of Christmas is about possibility in the midst of the impossible. It is not the kind of possibility that comes from a confidence in our own skill, knowledge, ability, or a positive mental attitude. It is possibility that comes solely from the fact that God is God, and that he is the kind of God who comes into our own human existence to reveal himself and call us to himself. It is a possibility that is so surprising at its birth that we are caught unaware, and so are left with wonder at the simplicity of its expression in this infant child. It is a possibility that is easily symbolized by a helpless infant that has nothing of its own by which to survive; yet an infant that, because he is Immanuel, God with us, will forever change the world and all humanity. It is this same God who has promised to be with us, with his people, with the church and with us individually, as we live as his people in the world.

It is not just hope, as if it were wishful thinking that things will get better when they cannot. It is hope incarnated into flesh, a hope that can be held in a mother's arms, a hope that expresses a reality that will live beyond endings and death itself. It is the hope, the possibility, that springs from impossible and insignificant beginnings, infused with the power of God through the Holy Spirit, that will blossom into a light to the nations.

It is this possibility, this God, that we celebrate at Christmas. And we do so with a confidence born, not of our own desire for it to be so, but from the birth of a child over 2,000 years ago, a child who was the Son of God!

To see the full text go to <http://www.crivoice.org/cyxmas.html>



# The "Back Page"

## Now Thank We All Our God

### Now Thank We all Our God

1 Now thank we all our God  
with heart and hands and voices,  
who wondrous things has done,  
in whom his world rejoices;  
who from our mothers' arms  
has blessed us on our way  
with countless gifts of love,  
and still is ours today.

2 O may this bounteous God  
through all our life be near us,  
with ever joyful hearts  
and blessed peace to cheer us,  
to keep us in his grace,  
and guide us when perplexed,  
and free us from all ills  
of this world in the next.

3 All praise and thanks to God  
the Father now be given,  
the Son and Spirit blest,  
who reign in highest heaven  
the one eternal God,  
whom heaven and earth adore;  
for thus it was, is now,  
and shall be evermore.

Psalter Hymnal (Gray), 1987

*Martin Rinkart, a Lutheran minister, was in Eilenburg, Saxony, during the Thirty Years' War. The walled city of Eilenburg saw a steady stream of refugees pour through its gates. The Swedish army surrounded the city, and famine and plague were rampant. Eight hundred homes were destroyed, and the people began to perish. There was a tremendous strain on the pastors who had to conduct dozens of funerals daily. Finally, the pastors, too, succumbed, and Rinkart was the only one left—doing 50 funerals a day. When the Swedes demanded a huge ransom, Rinkart left the safety of the walls to plead for mercy. The Swedish commander, impressed by his faith and courage, lowered his demands. Soon afterward, the Thirty Years' War ended, and Rinkart wrote this hymn for a grand celebration service. It is a testament to his faith that, after such misery, he was able to write a hymn of abiding trust and gratitude toward God.*

1 Peter 2:1-12 So get rid of every kind of evil, every kind of deception, hypocrisy, jealousy, and every kind of slander. (2) Desire God's pure word as newborn babies desire milk. Then you will grow in your salvation. (3) Certainly you have tasted that

the Lord is good! (4) You are coming to Christ, the living stone who was rejected by humans but was chosen as precious by God.

(5) You come to him as living stones, a spiritual house that is being built into a holy priesthood. So offer spiritual sacrifices that God accepts through Jesus Christ. (6) That is why Scripture says, "I am laying a chosen and

precious cornerstone in Zion, and the person who believes in him will never be ashamed." (7) This honor belongs to those who believe. But to those who don't believe: "The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, (8) a stone that people trip over, a large rock that people find offensive." The people tripped over the word because they refused to believe it. Therefore, this is how they ended up. (9) However, you are chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people who belong to God. You were chosen to tell about the excellent qualities of God, who called you out of darkness into his

marvelous light. (10) Once you were not God's people, but now you are. Once you were not shown mercy, but now you have been shown mercy. (11) Dear friends, since you are foreigners and temporary residents in the world, I'm encouraging you to keep away from the desires of your corrupt nature. These desires constantly attack you. (12) Live decent lives among unbelievers. Then, although they ridicule you as if you were doing wrong while they

are watching you do good things, they will praise God on the day he comes to help you.

I wish I could write like that. I can't, so I place it here for you to read and to know that whatever happens in this world nothing can ever separate you from God's love.

Now thank we all our God for all that we have and all that we do.

Pray for our enemies that the Holy Spirit will enter their hearts and show them Jesus.

*Pastor Steve*



Steve & Teddy 9/28/1951

### From the Editor

Thanks for all of your contributions. Remember, for this magazine to be a success you must be the reporters and the photographers. I will try and put it together in the best light and we will all praise God in the process.



Is he done yet?

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