

# MISSION & MINISTRY CONNECTION

**Renewal** *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...”*

*Romans 12:2*

## 2020 - REstoring

### The Agnus Dei

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world,  
have mercy upon us.  
O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world,  
have mercy upon us.  
O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world,  
grant us Thy peace. Amen.

The Agnus Dei is the fifth and final great hymn of the Divine Service. The words, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” were first spoken by John the Baptist in the public announcement of Jesus’ ministry. These words are the sum and substance of what our Lord came to do. The threefold petition is “trinitarian” in shape as the people of God cry out for mercy. The mercy for which the “beggarly” people of God cry out in the Kyrie at the beginning of the Divine Service is anchored in the person and work of Christ. His death for our sins as the Lamb of God is the only reason for and source of God’s mercy for all people. The Agnus Dei fixes our eyes upon Jesus, not as judge and sovereign ruler, but as the Savior who bears in His body our sin. The death of the Lamb becomes the life of His sheep. We come to the Lord’s Table hungry and thirsty and He feeds us with His body and refreshes us with His blood. He is the true Passover Lamb: “See, His blood now marks our door; faith points to it; death passes o’er, and Satan cannot harm us. Alleluia!” (Luther’s Easter hymn, LSB 458). In the body and blood of Christ His entire work becomes our own in order that we might be set free from our sins and receive life and salvation. The resurrection of the Lamb of God means that His sacrifice upon the cross will have eternal value before the throne of God. The ancient Easter hymn, “Christians, to the Paschal Victim,” LSB 460, puts it this way:

Christians, to the Paschal Victim  
Offer your thankful praises!  
The Lamb the sheep has ransomed:  
Christ, who only is sinless,  
Reconciling sinners to the Father.  
Death and life have contended  
In that combat stupendous:  
The Prince of Life, who died,  
Reigns immortal.

It is fitting that the Agnus Dei is the final great hymn of the Divine Service. It fixes faith where faith alone must rest: in “my dear Lord Jesus Christ” who “died for me and shed His blood for me” (Christian Questions with Their Answers). Our only safety against our own sin, the fear of death, the punishment of hell, and the deceitful assaults of Satan is the death of Jesus for our sins. The apostle Paul expressed how faith in the Lamb of God was the center of his whole life, and indeed, the life of every Christian: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain” (Galatians 2:20-21)

May the Lord of the church continue to bless our worship!

Pastor Below

Bender, Peter c.. Lutheran Catechesis, Catechist Edition (Kindle Locations 3985-4008). Concordia Catechetical Academy. Kindle Editio

### **A Message from our Preschool Director**

Advent Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ from all the staff, teachers, and families of Lord of Life Preschool! The month of December always goes quickly and this year was no exception!

During December, we turned our attention to Christmas and the birth of our Savior Jesus! The bulletin boards, crafts, experiments, books, and even snacks reflected the Christmas season. We are also singing Christmas hymns and songs!

Many of us enjoyed going through Return to Bethlehem (as a class or with family over the weekend) and learning more about the first Christmas. Thank you for all the hard work done before, during, and after this busy weekend; it was such a great witness to our families and our community!

On December 15<sup>th</sup>, we sang in church! We worked hard on learning the hymns for this Sunday and for our Christmas program. It was also delightful to have the “International tasting” event after church! Thank you for staying and enjoying food and fellowship with our school families! We are building relationships and growing together as one church and school.

Finally, our Christmas program (and final day of school before Christmas break) was Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup>. Each of our classes learned different hymns and plays to perform for our families. The oldest students performed a play about the first Christmas. Our preschool classes sang many great songs. Even our youngest students (only 18 months or 2 years old) cheerily rang bells to contribute to the festivities!

Thank you for your support, encouragement, love, and prayers! We are delighted to be part of such a loving and giving congregation. As we look to the New Year and place our focus on Renewal and Restoring our relationships, our sanctified life, our joy, our outreach...may we turn to our Savior for grace, strength, and abundant love.

In Christ,  
Deaconess Sarah Longmire

## **Kids' Day Out**

We are all so excited as we enter the Christmas season! Our Kids' Day Out children love to hear the story about the birth of Jesus!! We will tell the story many times in the next few weeks and we especially love to hear them repeat it back to us! Although December is a short month for us, it is a very happy time for the children! They are excited to do all of the fun crafts we have planned (angels, trees, stars, etc.) but most of all they love to make their parent gifts...which, of course, is a surprise!!?

The year has been going great!! We have a new teacher; her name is Ada Pelham...she has been a wonderful asset to our class! Her son, Karev, also joins us each day as well as my grandson, Max! We help each other out in a number of different ways. She loves the little ones as much as I do. We have children in our classes ranging from 18 months old to 3 years old. They seem so young when they start but we love to watch how they grow and mature so quickly!

We keep a very structured schedule in our class and boy, do these little ones learn fast! Sometimes they remember better than we do and if we do need to change something, it really does confuse them! Every day we have a craft or do art, have play time, outside time, circle time, music time, snack time, lunch, and their favorite time is Jesus Time!! Everything is based around the theme, color, shape, and season of that month. We read many books and love to sing songs and do fingerplays!

We also spend a lot time teaching the little ones how to use their manners, follow directions, share, use kind words, to wash hands and to sit quietly. Many parents are amazed at how well they do at school...so I guess we are doing something right!

This year we have quite a few children that stay for naps. It is so sweet to see as many as 9-10 children sleeping at the same time! They are tired and as I said before, we keep to a routine which is what we think works best!!

The year is flying by and most of the challenging behavior has passed. The children love to come to school now and Ada and I look forward to getting to know them even more and teaching them the Word of the Lord.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!  
Ms. Ada (Pelham) and Ms. Cathy (Dailey)

## **Lay Ministry**

Lord of Life has enjoyed God's many blessings on our ministry efforts in 2019. Most recently, Pastor Mark and our talented musicians led us through meaningful Advent worship services. The 27<sup>th</sup> year of Return to Bethlehem served as a witness of our blessed Savior not only to our own congregation but also to nearly 700 of our neighbors. We enjoyed fellowshiping and caroling with our homebound Lord of Life families. Finally, we gathered to exalt and worship our new

born Savior, Jesus on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Like scripture, all of 2019 pointed us to the “Child who is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” Isaiah 9:6b.

Now as we look to 2020 with perfect vision, the scripture calls us to “Forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead, to press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” Philippians 3:13-14. The Lord admonishes us to “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets so he may run who reads it” Habakkuk 2:2. Let us continue in 2020 to submit ourselves first to the Lordship of that Wonderful Counselor, Jesus. Let us humbly submit to the godly leadership of Lord of Life Church and partner with the Lord of Life Preschool to cast a broader net of witness to a more diverse segment of our community. And help us to run the good race with perfect vision in 2020.

Be encouraged to consider what gifts the Lord has given you. Pursue the vision the Lord has for you to serve others and proclaim Him in 2020.

For His Glory,  
Board of Lay Ministry

### **RETURN TO BETHLEHEM.....was it worth it?**

For 27 years Lord of Life has been re-telling the story of our Savior's birth. Many know, it takes a lot of work, by lots of people during the hectic Thanksgiving and early Christmas seasons.....so, was it worth it? Here are just some of what we heard from our visitors, this year.

*"It was wonderful, thank you for having this." "18 years ago I and my son were the Holy Family. It meant so much to us that we Return to Bethlehem every year. It is our family tradition." "This is what Christmas is all about." "It is hard to imagine just how much work and time you must put into this. The cast members were so good in their parts they made it so realistic." "Superb", "Beautiful!", "Wonderful", "Inspiring"*

Besides re-telling the miracle of the first Christmas virgin birth, we had a couple of smaller miracles this year during RTB. As you may know we did not have an abundance of baby's to portray Jesus this year. During Saturday's performance a young woman with her three older children and her newest 3 month old son visited Bethlehem. At the conclusion she was asked if she would consider coming back on Sunday, but this time in costume and with her 3 month old portraying Jesus. She said yes and our prayers were answered.

The entertainment in the sanctuary was well organized and good quality listening for our visitors who were waiting for their turn to enter Bethlehem. Even well organized plans sometimes go off track, as this year we were left with an hour of no musical entertainment for the last and busiest day of RTB. Once again, our prayers were answered. A lady who visited Bethlehem on Saturday told us that she was a part of a string quartet and inquired on how they could perform in the future. Well as you might expect, the future came the next day as she filled that empty hour slot with not 4 but 9 string musicians and are willing to perform in the future.

**SO.....was it worth it? Our visitors said enthusiastically YES. The cast said YES. Many hands made the set up easier, so the workers said YES and the last minute solutions to our problems were the answer to our prayers, that sounds like another YES. Guess we have our answer..... It was worth it! See you for RTB in December 2020.**

## **Stewardship**

Our God is a God who works through means. He can and has worked immediately without agency, as the Bible testifies, but primarily, on the whole and for the most part, our God works through means. He does this not only for all of our earthly needs but also for all of our spiritual needs. And He does this for our benefit.

He provides for all our needs of this body and life through means. He gives us fathers and mothers to care for us when we are young. Through them, God provides house and home, food and clothing, education and training in the arts and work of this world.

He gives us good government to protect us from harm and danger; He gives us faithful neighbors and good friends to help in times of need and lack. He gives us employers who trade our work for income so that we may acquire the needs of the body. He gives us brains and brawn so that we will have something to trade with those employers for that needed income. This work, which we are able to do only because of what God has provided to us, redounds to the benefit of others. And so, the cycle of God giving through means continues.

He provides for all our needs of our souls. He sent His Son into the flesh to be our Savior. In that body, our Lord Jesus Christ lived the life that God demands of us all – a life we have failed to live because of our sins – and, in that body, He made payment for those sins on the cross, once and for all.

God delivers this forgiveness through the means of His Word and Sacraments. He calls pastors to proclaim, in His stead and by His command, that our sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake. Through these same pastors, God Himself claims us as His own in Holy Baptism, placing His own name on us in water and Word, igniting faith by the gift of the Holy Spirit. And He gives us His life-giving body and blood to nourish us in this same faith until the end. Our God is a God who works through means.

This is true also of stewardship. This is what St. Paul wrote in Philippians:

“I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:18–19).

The gift St. Paul received from the Philippian church is a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. They gave to God. God provided for St. Paul through the Philippians. And the God who loves both Paul and the Philippians will supply their every need according to the riches in Christ Jesus. Our God is a God who works through means.

“For all the promises of God find their Yes in [Jesus Christ],” St. Paul tells us in 2 Cor. 1:20. This is true also of you. Trust in the God who provides for all that we need in body and soul through means. And not only will you find His “yes” to you, but others will find it, too, through you. “But as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you – see that you excel in this act of grace also” (2 Cor. 8:7).



**January Circle of Concern Needs:**

Condiments  
 Peanut Butter & Jelly  
 Dinner Helpers  
 Cereal  
 Canned Vegetables (carrots, peas,  
 potatoes)  
 Body Wash  
 Shampoo

The Yellow Meal-A-Month Bags are on the Circle of Concern barrel in the entryway. Please take one, bring your items in those bags or a paper bag, and place them in the barrel. Circle has informed us that they can no longer reuse plastic grocery bags. They can only accept brown paper bags.

**Our goal is 500+ cans each month. Thanks for your support!**

***January Baptism Birthdays:***

Mary Churchill	1/1
Sharon Delmore	1/1
Ed Goza	1/1
Margie Jacob	1/1
Krista Reed	1/1
Brian Tampow	1/1
Patty Tampow	1/1
Jim Urban	1/1
Cindy Young	1/1
Craig Young	1/1
Joseph Young	1/1
Sheila Zeigler	1/1
Austin May	1/6
Alice Pragman	1/6
Donna Bremer	1/9
Steve Mueller	1/17
Marty Schamber	1/23
Katherine Peck	1/25
Lola Peck	1/28
Ruth Haussels	1/29

***Happy Birthday To:***

Katherine Peck	1/7
JoAnn Erselius	1/8
Lola Peck	1/8
Elisabeth Smith	1/11
Tyler Schmiderer	1/12
Lynne O'Connell	1/15
Shirley Rathert	1/15
Ruth Haussels	1/16
Darrell Schelp	1/21
John Dye	1/27
Cody Dickinson	1/28
Bob Krause	1/31

***January Wedding Anniversaries:***

Mark & Janet Kammeyer	1/11
Marty & Jackie Schamber	1/11
Ernie & Lola Peck	1/16
Milton & Norma Fehrenbach	1/28

**Serving Teams**

Jan 5	8:00	Team 3
	10:30	Team CAAN
Jan 12	8:00	Team 7-11
	10:30	Team 4
Jan 19	8:00	Team 2
	10:30	Team 9
Jan 26	8:00	Team 1
	10:30	Team 6

**Lay Readers**

Jan 5	8:00	Tracy Heaton
	10:30	Tom Churchill
Jan 12	8:00	Diane Wolf
	10:30	Regan Reed
Jan 19	8:00	Mark Bossi
	10:30	Marty Schamber
Jan 26	8:00	Diane Wolf
	10:30	Craig Young

**Counting Teams**

Jan 5	Ken Rosemann Marilyn Evensen
Jan 12	Linda Rosemann Dennis Oneal
Jan 19	Joe Delmore Richard Barigela
Jan 26	Jean Urban Sue Andrew

**Lay Ministers**

Jan 5	8:00	Justin Langrehr
	10:30	Craig Young
Jan 12	8:00	Ted Greer
	10:30	Joe Delmore
Jan 19	8:00	Mark Kammeyer
	10:30	Brian Andrew
Jan 26	8:00	Nehemiah Langness
	10:30	Donnie May

**Altar Guild**

Team #2  
 Beth Bossi  
 Kristin Dye  
 JoAnn Erselius  
 Linda Rosemann  
 Jackie Schamber  
 Cindy Young