

Keeping Christ in Christmas is hard enough, but how can we keep Christ in our lives throughout the year. Learn how Jesus comes to us in His flesh and blood in the Lord's Supper and blesses us with Christmas the whole year through.

by MIKE BURDICK

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . .The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:1, 14).

Dan is nineteen, a Private First Class in the Army, and he wishes he was home in Illinois this Christmas. His family wants him home too, enjoying the familiar foods and traditions they have established together, from the candy to the candlelight service at church. It's not going to be possible though, so Dan sends a video greeting to the television station near home, and they broadcast it during Advent along with a hundred others. "I wish I could be with you. Merry Christmas!" It helps, but it's not the same. Dan can't be in two places at once, so he'll be with them in spirit.

Is that the way it is with Jesus? Do you have to settle for having Him with you in spirit? Of course not! He's with you for real. John in his Gospel declares that "the Word became flesh" (John 1:14). Jesus was in Mary's womb and was born in Bethlehem. For real. That same Jesus still dwells with His people as they gather and



**"Please as Man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel!"**

hear His words, "This is My body, . . . this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:26, 28).

All of us have some wishes or dreams for Christmas this year—perhaps that Mom were still alive, or that Dan could be home, or that we had not brought injury and heartache to people we love. Something's missing. But Jesus isn't.

He was born into a world tragically similar to ours: political problems, confused sexual ethics, fractured families and weary travelers. Into this fallen world—the very world He made—the eternal Word of God came in the flesh and was laid in a manger. Immanuel. *God with us.* God for us.

Christians prepare throughout Advent and celebrate through Christmas because they know this to be true. That's why we might say, "Keep Christ in Christmas." We want our Christmas programs, cards, ser-

CHRISTMAS ISN'T A BREAK FROM THE HARSH REALITIES OF THE WORLD. IT IS THE ASSURANCE OF GOD WITH US IN THIS BROKEN WORLD, CLEANSING US OF PRIDE, NEGLECT AND REBELLION. SO, TOO, THE LORD'S SUPPER.

mons and services to take people to the historic events of Jesus' death and resurrection, because salvation was accomplished then and there. Christ in Christmas is essential, and we want others to know this too.

But wait. There's more! We can keep the "mass" in Christmas too. Long ago, the Lord's Supper was a shadow of itself. The laity would watch the priest conduct the service,

and only he would receive the elements of Holy Communion. At the celebration of the Nativity, however, it was the "Christ Mass," when the people, too, would receive the Lord's Supper.

"This is My body . . . for you," Jesus said. We take Him at His Word. He comes to us in His body. God is not with us merely in spirit or in our dreams. The apostle Paul wrote, "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). Yes, it is! This is real. The same flesh and blood laid in the manger in Bethlehem is truly present wherever Christians are gathered around the Sacrament of the Altar according to Jesus' institution.

Stressing the reality of the presence of Jesus in the Lord's Supper, our Formula of Concord states,

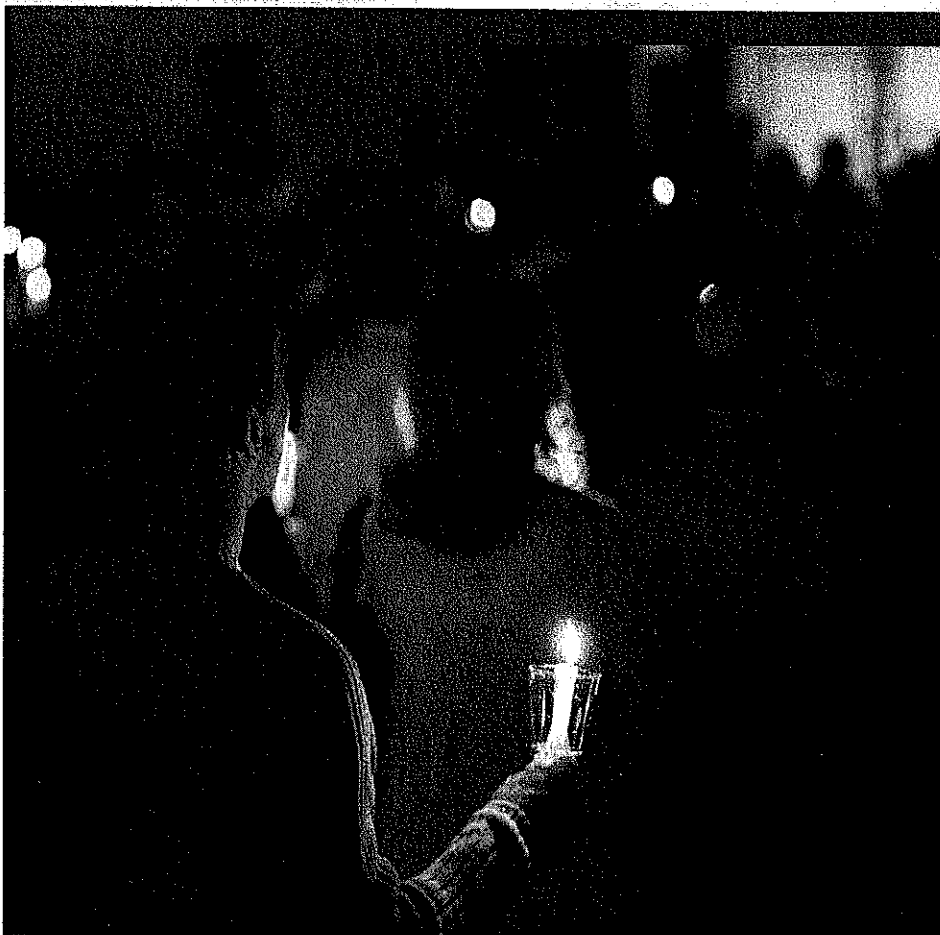
In the same way, the expression "the Word became flesh" [John 1:14] is repeated and explained by the equivalent expressions "the Word . . . dwelt among us" [John 1:14]; likewise, "in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily" [Colossians 2:9]. (FC VII. 36)

At Holy Communion, God, in Christ, dwells with us. The same Jesus of the lowly manger, the cross and the resurrection is present on Christmas morning in our churches. The Lord's Supper was the *mass* in Christmas. You don't have to call it that, but you can be sure Jesus is there for you.

In our congregation, the pews are usually full on Christmas Eve. There's great joy in the truth and grace of the Nativity. The people gladly sing Stephen Starke's hymn, "O Sing of Christ!"

Lord Jesus Christ, You deigned to dwell

*Among us here on earth
As God with us, Emmanuel,
To bring this holy birth.*



*Though rich, You willingly became
One with our poverty,
That we might share Your wealth
and name*

For all eternity! (LSB 362:4)

Later, candlelight spreads through the nave. The people sing "Silent Night," pray and rejoice to know that God has established the peace that the world can't give.

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On Christmas morning, the congregation gathers again, and the pews aren't quite as full. The aroma of candles is gone, but you might be able to smell the wine in the cup on the altar. The words of our Lord are lively and active, and Jesus will be present, for real, in, with and under the bread and wine. The same flesh and blood of the manger is here. We sing the *Gloria in Excelsis* again and "The Infant Priest Was Holy Born" (LSB 624) during distribution. It is glorious.

PFC Dan can't be in two places at once, so he can only be home "in spirit." In Illinois, his dad hears Johnny Mathis on the radio lamenting, "I'll be home for Christmas but only in my dreams," and he misses his son. In church, though, he sings words that help immensely:

*Velled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the incarnate Deity!
Pleased as Man with man to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel! (LSB 380:2)*

Dad can picture his son in the chapel on base singing some of the same

hymns, receiving Communion from his chaplain. He's glad to know that God is dwelling with—and uniting—His people at His table.

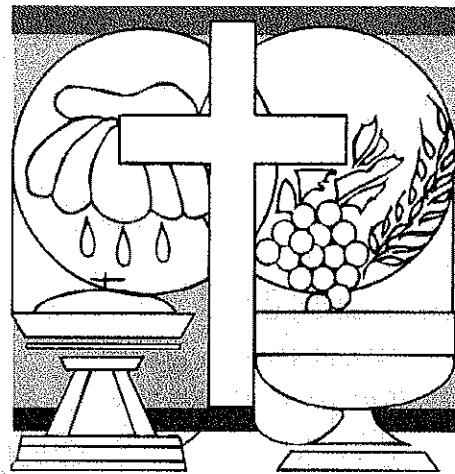
The nativity of our Lord makes the Lord's Supper possible. During a Martin Franzmann hymn festival, David Schmitt reflected on a Communion piece the seminary professor penned ("Lord, We Will Remember Thee"). Schmitt's words connect Christmas and Communion, as they should:

*Here the Lord of heaven comes
to us in earthly form. His
body and blood, in, with, and
under bread and wine. This is
a mystery that surpasses our
comprehension: Jesus Christ,
high and holy, yet at the same
time meek and lowly. Jesus
Christ, risen, ascended and
enthroned in heaven, present
with us now, held in the hand
and taken on the tongue. Jesus
Christ, who died because of
our sin, gives life to us who
killed Him. Jesus Christ, the
infinite, chooses to be so inti-
mate as to touch our lips in
bringing forgiveness.*

* * *

Christmas isn't a break from the harsh realities of the world. It is the assurance of God with us in this broken world, cleansing us of pride, neglect and rebellion. So, too, the Lord's Supper. "This is the true body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, shed for you for the forgiveness of your sins." It's good to reply "Amen," but I wouldn't mind if a person instead uttered a quiet "Wow."

In the Lord's Supper, we see God's glory, whether we're in a full sanctuary with our family or in a hospital preparing for surgery. At Christmas or in the days of summer, there is glory at the altar, "glory as of the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). **Come to the feast!**



All for You

Dear sinner, the Lord's Supper is for you!

- ✦ The Sacrament of the Altar is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink.
- ✦ The benefit of such eating and drinking is shown us in these words, "Given for you" and "shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." This means that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are given us through these words.

Two answers in the explanation of our Catechism call us all to repentance and joy in knowing that the blessings of the Lord's Supper do not depend on us:

- ✦ Do all communicants receive the body and the blood in the Sacrament, whether or not they believe? Yes, because the Sacrament depends on Christ's Word, not our faith (Q292).
- ✦ Forgiveness, life and salvation are truly offered to all who eat the Lord's body and blood in the Sacrament, but only through faith can we receive the blessings offered there (Q298).

— excerpts from *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation*.
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Wishing you and your family a blessed and healthy New Year,
Your Pastor Jim

I want to thank all the members of St. John for your many expressions of sympathy at the passing of my mother, Mildred Marie Herbolsheimer. While it was rather sudden, I was comforted by the fact, using the lines from one of the poems sent me:

*"Please do not shed for me any tears,
I am spending Christmas with Jesus this year!"*



**HERBOLSHEIMER,
MILDRED M.
Bay City, Michigan**

Millie was taken to heaven to be with her loving Savior on December 8, 2014 at the age of 88 years old. Mildred was born to the late Andrew and Mary (Meyer) Wirth on May 17, 1926 in Bay County, Michigan. She grew up in Amelith having been baptized, confirmed and married at St. John Lutheran Church, Amelith, of which she was a lifelong member. She was also a Charter member of the LWML and Ladies Aid. Millie enjoyed her hobbies of knitting, sewing and quilting for World Relief. Surviving is her loving husband, Norbert of 68 years and their marriage was blessed with

four children: Rev. James (Andrea) Herbolsheimer of Cleveland, OH; David (Nancy) Herbolsheimer of Reese, MI. and John Herbolsheimer, one daughter-in-law Peggy Herbolsheimer of Bay City; 7 grandchildren: Christopher (Melissa) Herbolsheimer, Scot (Judy) Herbolsheimer, Susan (David) Meier, Brian (Molly) Herbolsheimer, Jeni, Michael and Becki Herbolsheimer and 10 great grandchildren. Millie was predeceased by one son, Philip Herbolsheimer and her 4 sisters: Luette Weber, Leona Engerer, Anita Herbolsheimer and Marion Kloha:

Funeral and Committal services will take place at 11:00 AM on Friday, December 12th at St. John Lutheran Church, 1664 Amelith Rd., Bay City, MI with Rev. Stephen Starke officiating. Burial will follow at St. John Lutheran Cemetery. Friends are welcome to visit with the family at St. John Lutheran Church from 2:00 until 5:00 and from 6:00 until 8:00 PM on Thursday, December 11th, and again from 10:00 AM until time of service on Friday, December 12th. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be given to St. John Lutheran School Mortgage or the Lutheran Hour.

In Loving Memory Of

Mildred M. Herbolsheimer

Date of Birth
May 17, 1926

Date of Death
December 8, 2014

Funeral Service
11:00 a.m.
December 12, 2014
St. John Lutheran Church Amelith

Officiating
Pastor Stephen Starke

Organist
Mr. Warren Scheiwe

Interment
St. John Lutheran Church Cemetery
Frankenlust Twp., Michigan

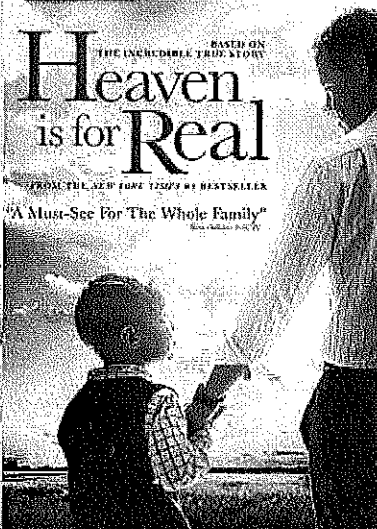
Coming Sunday Evening Teaching Events

You've read the book, now watch the movie!

Based on an incredible true story of a four year old who went to heaven and came back to tell about his trip.

On Sunday, January 18th at 7 PM, Pastor Jim will show the movie.


We will have popcorn!



Movie poster for "Heaven is for Real" with text: "BASED ON THE INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY", "FROM THE #1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER", "A Must-See For The Whole Family".

- On Sunday evening, January 18th, Pastor Jim will show the movie "Heaven is for Real." This is a must see movie for every Christian that you will fully enjoy. Popcorn and drinks will be provided.

- On Sunday evening, February 15th, Pastor Jim will show the movie "God's NOT Dead." As you and I deal with people who claim "God is dead," how are we to answer. This movie gives you a wonderful way to approach this important topic. You will thoroughly enjoy this movie. Popcorn and drinks will be provided.



Movie poster for "GOD'S NOT DEAD" with a person holding a sign that says "NOT".

On Sunday, February 15th at 7 PM, Pastor Jim will show the movie "God's NOT Dead." This is a must-see movie for all Christians living today!

100 Proofs for the BIBLE

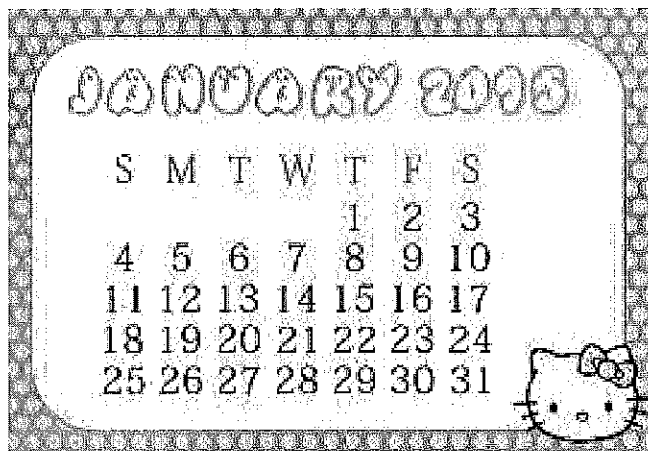
On Sunday, March 15 th @ 7 PM, Pastor Jim will present the 50 Proofs for the Old Testament.	On Sunday, March 29 th @ 7 PM, Pastor Jim will present the 50 Proofs for the New Testament.
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- On two evenings, Pastor Jim will give you one hundred extra-Biblical proofs for the truth and accuracy of the Bible. These two classes will give you many resources to witness to the historical evidence that the Bible is trustworthy and true. You won't want to miss this two-night session.

There is no cost to attend these Teaching Events and you don't have to register in advance. These one night sessions would be something great to invite your friends and neighbors to come and join in the study of God's Word.

Walk through the Bible Class for the New Year

Come along for a trip through the Bible, book by book and learn new insights and meanings you may never have seen before. Pastor Jim gives you a thorough over-view of each book, and identifies any connection that Book has with the New Testament. He also shares with you how each book and its prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.



The handout class material will become your personal commentary to that book, along with the extra reading that Pastor Jim provides, will provide insight and understanding for years to come.

Class Schedule – 2nd & 4th Tuesdays of the Month

January 13th – 1 pm or 7 pm – Finish the study of Isaiah and begin the Book of Jeremiah

January 27th – 1 pm or 7 pm – Continue our study of Jeremiah

February 10th - 1 pm or 7 pm – Finish Jeremiah and begin the Book of Lamentations

February 24th - 1 pm or 7 pm – Continue our study of Lamentations

March 10th - 1 pm or 7 pm – Finish Lamentations and begin the Book of Ezekiel

March 24th - 1 pm or 7 pm – Continue our study of Ezekiel

April 14th – 1 pm or 7 pm – Finish Ezekiel and begin Daniel

April 28th - 1 pm or 7 pm – Finish Daniel and begin the Books of Hosea, Joel and Amos

May 12th - 1 pm or 7 pm – Continue with Hosea, Joel and Amos

May 26th - 1 pm or 7 pm – Finish Hosea, Joel and Amos

Break for the Summer