



December, 2020

## SLOW GROW CHRISTMAS

Last year my December newsletter article was entitled, "Slow Christmas." In it I wrote: "We need to take time to slow down and really focus on what God, our Father, is giving us this Advent and Christmas season." I then mentioned that in order to help time slow down it helped to learn a new skill or start a new practice every day. Little did I know when I wrote this in December 2019 how much things around the world would slow down in 2020.



Amid the chaos, one area I have grown in is my ability to assist Melina in the garden and, as a result, my knowledge of plants has improved. One of the most amazing things I have learned about them this year is that beautiful blooming flowers exist even in the winter! The most beautiful flower of winter, in my opinion, is the hellebore. The pictures used here are of varieties Melina has growing in our garden.

The hellebore is also known as the Winter or Christmas Rose. (Even though it is not a close relative to the rose.) The reason I am sharing it with you is that it gives us a good visual for Advent. Taking the time to garden slows us down and allows us to appreciate God's creation. The hellebore reminds us that even in less than ideal conditions, beautiful things can still bloom and flourish in this world. This is an important reminder for us in 2020!

This leads me to the second way I have been slowing down and that is by listening to more Advent themed music before jumping right into Christmas music. The song that ties both gardening and Advent together better than any other is, "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming." There is a beautiful version of it by Sufjan Stevens I have been listening to. (Here is a link to it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0-xrLqEaek>) As you listen to it, look at the images of the Christmas Roses and then think about the Tender Rose that is shooting up for all people in the midst of the ever-changing chaos of this world. And while he doesn't sing this verse in this version, then ponder these words from the song, "This flower, whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air, dispels with glorious splendor the darkness everywhere. True man, yet very God, from sin and death he saves us and lightens every load." This flower, our Christmas Rose, Immanuel comes with fragrance tender to dispel with glorious splendor the darkness everywhere! Yes, a lot of 2020 has stunk, but let the fragrance of Jesus dispel your darkness.

Amid the bad and ugly of life, God is there. God is here with us. God is here with us. He is Immanuel. We might not always see what he is up to as his tender shoot slowly grows amongst us, but rejoice this Advent and Christmas, because the Christmas rose has been slowly growing! It will soon bloom in all its beauty, and its fragrance will overwhelm sin and death, and it will lighten every load of 2020 and beyond! Let our Christmas Rose's beautiful fragrance and melody fill your houses, your lives, and let it waif over into your neighborhood and our community this Season!

In Immanuel's Love,  
Pastor Matt

### Inside this issue:

- Slow Grow Christmas, 1  
by Pastor Matt
- Brief Advent Devotion 2  
for the Family Table
- Brief Advent Devotion 3  
for the Family Table,  
cont.
- To Us a Child is Born: 4  
Wonderful Counselor  
by Kelsi Klembara
- To Us a Child is Born: 5  
Wonderful Counselor  
by Kelsi Klembara ,  
cont.; A Christmas  
Concert of Comfort &  
Joy by David Harsh
- Church Balance Sheet 6  
10/31/2020
- LCMS Stewardship 7  
Ministry December  
2020 Newsletter
- Christmas Candle, by 8  
Joan Thomas

## BRIEF ADVENT DEVOTION FOR THE FAMILY TABLE

The Advent wreath is lighted, adding the lighting of one candle for each week in Advent. If a rose candle is used, it is lit at the beginning of the third week.

### Hymn

#### Week 1

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,  
Who ord'rest all things mightily;  
To us the path of knowledge show,  
And teach us in her ways to go. *Refrain*

#### Refrain

Rejoice! Rejoice!  
Emmanuel  
Shall come to thee,  
O Israel!

#### Week 2

O come, Thou Branch of Jesse's tree,  
Free them from Satan's tyranny  
That trust Thy mighty pow'r to save,  
And give them vict'ry o'er the grave. *Refrain*

#### Week 3

O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,  
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight. *Refrain*

#### Week 4 (Sunday only)

O come, Thou Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heav'nly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery. *Refrain*

#### Week 4

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear. *Refrain*  
LSB 357:4–6,1

### Prophecy

Family members can take turns reading the prophecy for each day.

---

**Nov. 29** – “Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths.” (Ps. 25:4)

**Nov. 30** – “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.” (Gen. 3:15).

**Dec. 1** – “The scepter shall not depart from Judah” (Gen. 49:10).

**Dec. 2** – “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers” (Deut. 18:18).

**Dec. 4** – “He shall build a house for my name” (2 Sam. 7:13).

**Dec. 5** – “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given” (Is. 9:6).

**Dec. 6** – “And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace” (Is 9:6).



**Dec. 7** – Say to the daughter of Zion, “Behold, your salvation comes” (Is. 62:11).

**Dec. 8** – “Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end” (Is. 9:7).

**Dec. 9** – “There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse” (Is. 11:1).

**Dec. 10** – “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb...and a little child shall lead them” (Is. 11:6).

**Dec. 11** – “The LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you” (Is. 60:2).

**Dec. 12** – “Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down” (Is 64:1).

**Dec. 13** – “[Rejoice,] O heavens, and exult, O earth... for the LORD has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.” (Is 49:13).

**Dec. 14** – “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch” (Jer. 23:5).

**Dec. 15** – “And this is the name by which he will be called: The LORD is our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6).

**Dec. 16** – “[His] coming forth is from of old, from ancient days” (Micah 5:2).

*The O Antiphons of Advent (See LSB 357)*

**Dec. 17** – “I came forth from the mouth of the Most High and covered the earth.” (Ecclesiasticus 24:3).

**Dec. 18** – “The LORD is our judge; the LORD is our lawgiver; the LORD is our king; he will save us.” (Is. 33:22).

**Dec. 19** – “In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.” (Is 11:10).

**Dec. 20** – “I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.” (Is. 22:22).

**Dec. 21** – “I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts.” (Hag. 2:7).

**Dec. 22** – “I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts.” (Hag. 2:7).

**Dec. 23** – “For you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness shall rise with healing in its wings.” (Malachi 4:2).

**Dec. 24** – “When all was still and it was midnight, Your almighty Word, O Lord, descended from the royal throne” (Wis. 18:14,15). (See Introit for Christmas Midnight.)

Grace

*All pray together:*

**Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest**

**And let these gifts to us be blessed. Amen.**

or

**Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us and these Your gifts which we receive from Your bountiful goodness; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.**

*The advent candles may be extinguished after these prayers or after the meal.*

*At the conclusion of the meal, the family may return thanks:*

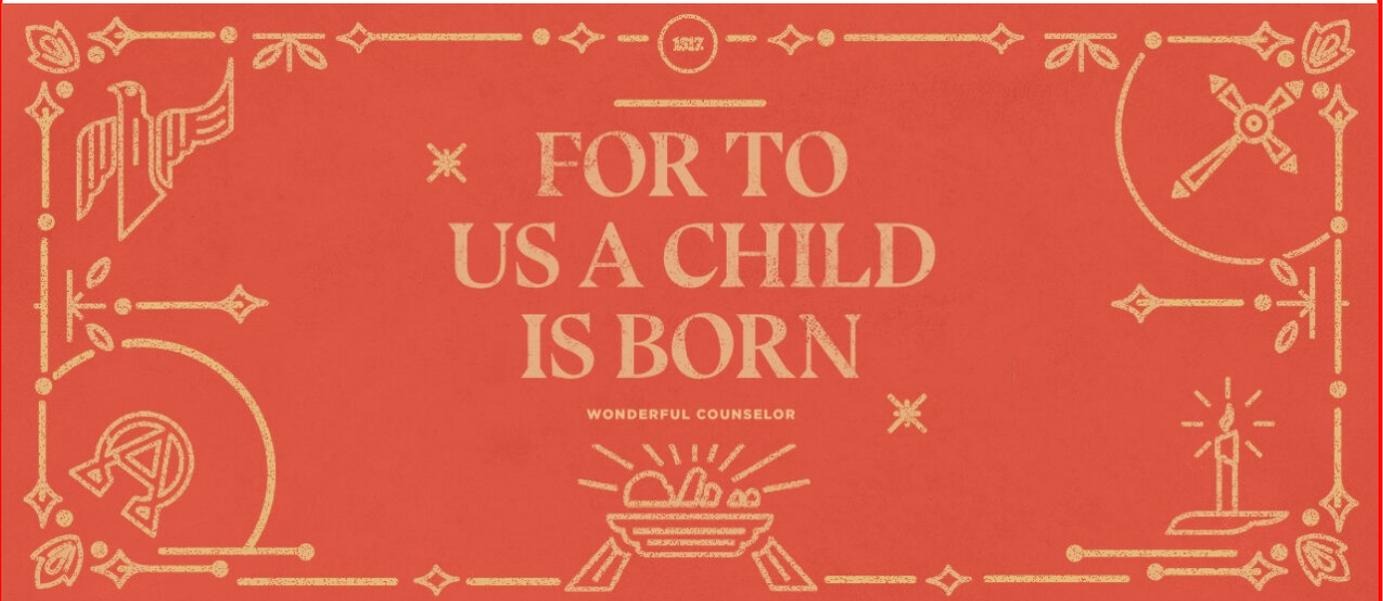
O give thanks to the Lord for He is good

**And His mercy endures forever.**

or

**We thank you, Lord God, heavenly Father, for all Your benefits; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

**TO US A CHILD IS BORN: WONDERFUL COUNSELOR** by Kelsi Klembara  
@ [1517.ORG/ARTICLES/TO-US-A-CHILD-IS-BORN-WONDERFUL-COUNSELOR](https://www.1517.org/articles/to-us-a-child-is-born-wonderful-counselor)



**Pastor Matt's Note:** This is part one of what will be a four part series. I recommend you check back @ [www.1517.org](https://www.1517.org) to read the rest of the series over the coming weeks.

Wonderful Counselor. Those certainly aren't two words I expect to see next to one another. I've been through plenty of counseling, both good and bad. I readily praise the mental and emotional benefits of therapy, and I will be the first to encourage anyone in psychological or mental need to see a therapist. So is counseling often necessary? Yes. Sometimes helpful? Yes. But wonderful? No.

I'm really good at presenting my best self in therapy: I start by showing that I am aware of my flaws, then move on to exhibiting my capacity to reason through how and why I've acted irrationally. Then, for good measure, I always throw in my willingness to change. And yet, despite my best attempts, most of the time, I leave a counseling session feeling, in some way, (maybe even minutely) wrongly judged. Perhaps this is from the time constraint or the current impediment of a computer screen between parties. Maybe it's even because the act of judgment, no matter how accurate, simply doesn't feel good. Regardless, even when counseling is helpful (and it often is), I frequently find myself thinking, "if only they really knew me."

And yet judgment is the job of a counselor or a therapist. Even taken in the strictly legal sense, the role of legal counsel is to prejudge their client so that they might advocate for them in a winning way in the court of law. A good lawyer will have defined their client's flaws, perhaps even before identifying those of their adversary.

This judgment can be helpful, it can be necessary, it can be completely accurate, and it can come with a good dose of gracious deliverance. A good counselor should offer to help you work through your problems, and they should empathize and support their clients in ways that lessen burdens. But one thing they can't do is take those burdens away completely. In this sense, they are, at most, good and kind guides to the rules and regulations that can lessen our suffering but never wholly heal our pain.

Why then does Isaiah name Christ not just a counselor but a wonderful counselor? Is he simply the best at doling out words of advice, moral support, and the necessary judgments meant to lead us down a path of self-discovery? I have to admit that I've often considered him in this role. I've spent many years praying to therapy Jesus, who knowingly stares out above his wired-rim glasses with pen and paper in hand. Therapy Jesus is always gracious enough to listen to my complaints and concerns, carefully noting each on his pad as he nods along. And yet, I can never shake the feeling that I'm paying him for his time, and he would much rather be somewhere else - perhaps playing tennis.

Thankfully this year has, in a very unwanted way, rid me of this manicured vision of Jesus. In early March, as our country and world faced the threat of a pandemic, I also found myself a few weeks into being a new mom. I was beyond anxious, entirely exhausted, and isolated - along with my husband and baby boy - from the typical help and support we would otherwise have found during this time. Like so many, the threat of an unknown virus was debilitating to me. For one of the first times in my life, I didn't have any sense of control, and I didn't have the will or energy to present my best self to therapy Jesus.

Prayers like, “Jesus I don’t know what to do. Jesus heal this person or that person. Jesus thank you for our health. Jesus give me rest,” became automatic not because I was really diligent in practicing them, but because I finally realized I needed the gift of speaking them. And as I prayed, often quietly, while I nursed my baby in the dark and silent hours of the night, I was reminded that I was speaking to a counselor who did more than just listen.

When we go to Christ as our counselor, we expect him to respond with the tired out wisdom of the world - a wisdom bound to what we do, how we do it, and the judgment that comes when we fail. We expect him to listen because, well, that’s his job. We don’t expect that as our counselor, Jesus not only listens and cares, but that he takes our place. He steps into our shoes. We aren’t paying him for his time. He isn’t sitting across the room, daydreaming about his next tennis match or his lunch break. And he doesn’t condemn us - no matter how accurately - on account of either our most polished prayers or our desperate pleas. As counselor, he fully knows us and loves us all the same. He understands our anxieties and our despair as his own. And in turn, he doesn’t give us the right words of advice; he gives us something far better: his righteousness.

He is our advocate before the Father, which means that he both gives us his righteousness and takes on our sins (1 John 2:1). And all the while, he draws near to us. “An advocate doesn’t simply stand in between the two parties but steps over and joins the one party as he approaches the other,” Dane Ortland says in his book, *Gentle and Lowly*. His wonderful counsel doesn’t merely tell us what to do but does what we can’t. It’s through the wisdom of his word that he gives us his glory, righteousness, and peace.

You may be entering this advent season tired and weary from what continues to feel like the never-ceasing events of this year. Perhaps you are unsure of where you stand with counselor Jesus. What’s more important is where he stands with you. He stands beside you, upholding you, comforting you, and saving you. He’s not here just to give you sage advice. He wonderfully, most wonderfully, gives you himself.

### ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

Kelsi Klembara works as editor-in-chief for 1517. She is the co-editor of *Theology of the Cross: Luther’s Heidelberg Disputation & Reflections on its 28 Thesis*, and is currently pursuing her MA in Reformation Studies from Concordia Irvine. Kelsi contributes to both *Christ Hold Fast* and 1517. She lives with her husband, Doug, in Dallas, Texas.

## A CHRISTMAS CONCERT OF COMFORT & JOY by David Harsh

Our dear friend and brother in Christ David Harsh reached out to me with an update and a way to celebrate this Christmas season. Please read what he is up to and consider enjoying this great concert!

Here is what David had to write, “Here’s what I’m up to – and this is brand new, as of today...As 2020 draws to a close, I’m choosing to fight for joy. Our world is hurting, but our Lord is sovereign. I’m resting in His promises. I’m comforted by remembering what He has done and what He has promised to do, and I want to sing about it.



Right about now, I would normally be kicking off my 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Christmas Tour, but with current restrictions related to the pandemic, I’m not able to share my concerts in a live setting (my last public concert was March 1, 2020.) But there are songs to sing.

Please consider joining me for a digital house concert of 100% *Christmas* music. You can watch it by donation, on demand (anytime), until **December 31, 2020**. Would you take a moment to see what I’ve prepared for you? Just follow this link: [www.davidharsh.com/christmas](http://www.davidharsh.com/christmas) I hope you are able to enjoy this special concert – 17 years in the making! In Christ, David Harsh”

## Resurrection Lutheran Church Balance Sheet 10/31/2020

<b>Assets</b>				
Assets				\$178,664.36
Current Assets			\$77,480.23	
Checking Account	\$51,914.68			
Savings Account	\$21,478.35			
Facilities Account	\$3,287.03			
PayPal	\$800.17			
Investments			\$101,184.13	
LCEF Steward Account	\$95,692.33			
LCEF Supplemental	\$5,491.70			
Schwab Account	\$0.10			
<b>Total Assets</b>				<b>\$178,664.36</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>				
<b>Total Liabilities</b>				<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>Equity</b>				
Operating Accounts				\$175,365.15
Operating Accounts			\$175,365.15	
General Fund	\$47,017.96			
Sinking Funds			\$106,646.82	
Local Impact Giving	\$2,124.97			
Workers Comp	\$1,790.11			
Piano Organ Maint	\$1,777.67			
District Conv	\$624.02			
Short-Term Maint	\$7,680.79			
Landscape	\$872.59			
Long-Term Maint	\$36,246.85			
Surface Water Mgmt	\$636.82			
Property Insurance	\$871.92			
Parsonage Maint	\$7,655.96			
Emergency Fund	\$46,365.12			
Special Funds			\$21,700.37	
Congregational Emergency Fund	\$1,818.89			
Kitchen Fund	\$4,760.60			
Memorial Fund	\$13,446.54			
Concordia Publishing	\$(10.64)			
Social Action Fund	\$1,684.98			
<b>Retained Earnings</b>				<b>\$3,299.21</b>
<b>Total Equity</b>				<b>\$178,664.36</b>

## LCMS STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY December 2020 Newsletter Article



Christmas is coming. It is a joyous time of feasting. The Church feasts upon the Word of God in sermon, song, and sacrament.

We hear the proclamation of the message of the angels: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). We mingle our voices with theirs as we sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased" (Luke 2:14)! We receive the proclaimed Savior, Christ the Lord, not wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in manger but wrapped in bread and wine placed into our mouths for the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. We feast in great joy indeed because of this great blessing from our Lord and God.

God's people in ancient Israel also feasted with great joy. The Lord showered His abundant blessing on His people. And He commanded them to feast upon it (Deuteronomy 16). The people were to go to the place appointed, where the Lord would make His name dwell, and give offerings, each man as he was able, according to the blessing of the Lord that He had given them (Deut. 16:10, 15, 17).

And there the Lord would bless them with joy as they feasted upon what the Lord had provided. They ate of the choice parts of their offerings. They enjoyed the company of all the people of God as they together heard His promises of blessing, sang of His bountiful goodness, and partook of what He gave.

We feast on the Word who became flesh to dwell among us, not just during Christmas but throughout all the year. We feast not just on the salvation He has wrought for us in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, but we feast also on all the temporal blessings that God gives out of His fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in us. We enjoy the rich bounty that God provides, not only in Word and Sacrament, but also in house and home, property and income, family and friends.

Let us then, as did our brothers in the faith from ancient Israel, give as we are able, according to the blessing of the Lord our God that He has given us. Let us, like them, give generously of the first fruits of our income, which He gives, so that all may know and enjoy the salvation He gives and the joy we have in the Savior born in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord.



134 S. 206th St.  
Des Moines, WA 98198

Phone: 206-824-2978  
Fax: 206-824-2979  
secretary@resurrection-lcms.org  
www.resurrection-lcms.org  
www.facebook.com/rlcdesmoineswa

## CHRISTMAS CANDLE

My Christmas Candle burning brightly  
Welcomes lost souls with its glowing rays  
Shining from my window in the night  
Like the Christ Child, the Ancient of Days

Jesus, God's Son, who came to this earth  
A baby, yet a King, Prince of Peace  
To teach us how to love so hate would cease  
And to save and give us a rebirth

The Light of the world, King of Kings  
Grace and forgiveness Jesus will impart  
When we confess all our sins and invite  
Him into our broken, contrite heart

Then you shall not walk in darkness  
But become a living, vibrant flame  
So come, follow Him in righteousness  
And proclaim His glory, love, and name.

By: Joan M. Thomas, Author and Illustrator

*Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."*

John 8:12

