What can one possibly say about a 2000 year old story that hasn’t already been said? What might one write concerning this old story that might hook the reader, encouraging them to read on? These are a few of the questions I struggled with as I prepared my Christmas newsletter article.

I came to realize, there’s really nothing new that I could say about the Christmas story, nothing that hasn’t already been said. My thoughts turned to the Christmas story as it comes to us from the gospel of John. No shepherds, no angels, no star in John’s Christmas story. Instead, John takes us back to the story of creation:

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (John 1:1)

Dr. Karoline Lewis, Associate Professor of Biblical Preaching at Luther Seminary, points to the threefold claim of this short verse. She writes, “The verse reveals where Jesus came from, Jesus’ relationship with God and his identity as God.”

The gospel writer John echoes Genesis 1:1, making it clear that Jesus is the Word that was with God in the beginning. That Jesus is one with the Father. That Jesus is the Word of God that became human flesh. That Jesus came to bring life and light to all people.

John’s Christmas story may not be “breaking news” but it’s certainly not “fake news.” John’s gospel is astonishing good news, news of God’s steadfast love for all people. Nothing I could write could possibly top that.

Scholars relate to the first eighteen verses of John’s gospel as the prologue, these eighteen verses set the theme of John’s gospel. Jesus is the light in the darkness, he is Word made flesh. Dr. Lewis goes on to point out that after the prologue, Jesus as the “Word” will not be used again in the gospel because God’s word has become human flesh.

The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible translates John 1:14 as “And the Word became Flesh and lived among us” but the Greek word for “lived” (skenoo) might also translate as “tented among us,” “dwelt among us,” or “took up residence among us.” Although not exactly true to the Greek, Eugene Peterson in his translation The Message, paints a clear picture: God “moved into the neighborhood.” No matter the translation, the theme is crystal clear... Word became flesh wasn’t a onetime event.

John’s gospel is a continuing story, a story that is new daily. It’s the story of God who walks with us at Christmas time; it’s the story of God who walks with us all of the time. The gospel of John isn’t old and dated news. It’s new every single day.

Christmas peace and blessings,

1. John Fortress Biblical Preaching Commentaries, Karoline M. Lewis, pgs. 13-14
Have you ever had one of those moments in life that you wanted to capture and remember forever? A memory so precious that you wanted to bottle it up and save it?

It’s interesting to think about how revolutionary it would have been to be around when the photograph was invented. People might have thought that there was finally something to help them capture their most important achievements.

But look at where our culture is with pictures. We take more photos than we can count, most of them are extremely choreographed, and often they are quickly forgotten.

Photographer Christoffer Relander tries to hold onto his past by using double exposure photography to keep these special memories in jars. Many of them are of places he remembers fondly while growing up in Finland. His art resonates with the words we will hear from the prophet Isaiah during Advent,

“‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... to provide for those who mourn in Zion— to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, to display his glory.’” - Isaiah 63:1-3

Some people put ashes in jars to remember loved ones, others put oil in jars to make memorable meals, but Christoffer Relander puts oak trees in jars! Something about his childhood experiences calls Christoffer to hold onto these images in jars. Sometimes I wonder how long Mary & Joseph held onto the containers of frankincense, gold, and myrrh. Christoffer writes,

“Reality can be beautiful, but the surreal often absorbs me.”

My prayer is that in welcoming the Christ child this Advent season we can be absorbed by the surreal. Jars crumble and photographs fade, but we can always hold onto Jesus Christ.

Jason Fisher
Youth Events

Bethlehem Walk

Sunday, December 3
4-7pm
Middle and High School Families

We will all meet at the Cunningham Children’s Home in Urbana at 4pm. Once there we will dress up in costumes and help kids play games, serve them food, and reenact a live nativity scene.

Parents’ Night Out

Friday, December 8, 5-8pm

Drop the kids off and enjoy a night out on the town. Games and food are always provided and any donations made go towards future youth trips.

Lutheran vs. Methodist Broomball

Sunday, January 7
6:30-8:30pm
Illini Ice Arena

Winter Wonderland Lock-in

Thursday, December 28-29, 7pm-7am

Celebrate the Christmas season with lots of fun games and Christmas cheer. We will have plenty of activities outside and inside the church so dress warmly. Contact Jason to sign up.

ALL FAMILY Winter Retreat

January 12-15, 2018
Montello, Wisconsin

Kids 5 years—12th grade

This event is open to kids, parents, friends and members of all ages. We will enjoy skiing, fellowship, and devotions while staying at Sky Lodge Christian Camp in Montello Wisconsin. Costs vary depending on your family’s desired activities.

$100 deposit per person is due on December 17th

Kids 12 and under get a free lift ticket at Cascade so the only cost would be the $40 ski rental. Kalahari Water Park is open to youth and adults who would like to remember their baptisms. This is a great chance for family or friends to retreat for a weekend. Contact with any questions.
This & That

Bible Studies

Women’s:

Anna Circle meets the first Wednesday of the month in the choir room. On Wed., December 6, at noon, Anna Circle will host the 60-Something Luncheon in the fellowship hall. Anyone age 60+ is welcome to join us!

Ruth Circle meets the third Tuesday of the month. Next meeting: Tue., December 19, at 9:30am, in the GSLC choir room. (Please see details to the right.)

Rachael Circle meets the fourth Monday of the month in the choir room. Next meeting: Tue., December 19, 9:30am, choir room (helping with Christmas cookies).

Men’s:

Men’s Bible Study meets every Friday at 7:00am at The Original Pancake House.

All men and women of Good Shepherd are welcome to join any of the Bible study circles.

Ruth Circle NEWS

Ruth Circle meets Tues., December 19, at 9:30am in Good Shepherd’s choir room.

First agenda item will be an assembly line to place donated cookies in tins to be delivered to members/friends of GSLC age 80+ plus. Please plan to make time this busy season to bless someone with your personal touch by baking and/or taking them cookies.

Next, Devotional - "Joy to the World" - in Gather magazine’s Dec. issue, pages 24 - 28, will be discussed. Copies are available at church in the WELCA display. You may stay or join in to grow together looking at verses in Luke along with reflections on giving, the gift of presence, light and room for our celebration, for our sorrow.

NOTE: In January, Ruth Circle resumes meeting at Windsor of Savoy.

Special Christmas Offering

The special offering received at Christmas will be divided between empty tomb and Restoration Urban Ministries. Thank you for your generosity in support of these organizations!

December 14 at 9:30am, in the Choir Room

December book: A Dog’s Way Home by W. Bruce Cameron.

A classic story of unwavering loyalty and incredible devotion. Lucas Ray is shocked when an adorable puppy jumps out of an abandoned building into his arms. He lives in an apartment with his mother, a disabled veteran that doesn’t allow dogs. However, he can’t resist taking Bella home. It is a charming tale that explores the unbreakable bond between us and our pets.

A sneak peek at January: The Rent Collector by Cameron Wright.

Contact: Jan Nuss at jannuss3@sbcglobal.net or 356-1298. New members are always welcome!
EL SALVADOR TRIP 2018  
July 28—August 5  
We have been approved by Thrivent Worldwide/Habitat to go to El Salvador again to help our friends build better homes and lives. This will be our eighth trip to come back as changed people. Why? You receive much more than you give when working with these folks. The trip this year is going to be a little different in that we will need to register by May 1st. The cost of the trip this year is a small increase from last year. The cost for a Thrivent member is $660.00 and for a non-Thrivent member is $1160.00. We hope we can raise enough money from our fundraising events to pay for the airplane tickets. They keep increasing, too. Our first trip we paid $450.00 per ticket and last year it cost us about $900.00 per ticket. It is our hope to be able to pay for the tickets so more people can have the great experience that some 60 people have enjoyed so far. We have been working with Habitat on a number of ways people can do fundraising.

We are planning to have a Sunday Brunch in January following worship to show pictures and talk about our past trips. We will be giving more details about the 2018 trip. Perhaps some of our past participants will share their experiences and what it meant to them.

I personally want to thank all the folks who have supported the ministry in El Salvador the last seven years. THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

— Jim Hack

From the family of Pastor David Nelson:  
We want to thank you for your memorial gift to Wartburg College in David’s memory. Your kindness, thoughts, and prayers are so much appreciated. We had 15 wonderful years serving Good Shepherd, and have many fond memories of those years. May God continue to bless the people of your church!

From Marge Lange:  
I want to thank the Good Shepherd crew of men that helped me move to Autumn Fields of Savoy on October 5th. It was great to be with old friends I haven’t seen for some time and those new folks who took their time on a Saturday to help. I appreciated it so much!

From Doreen Woodworth and family:  
The family of Thea Franzen would like to thank you for your expressions of sympathy through prayers, cards, and memorials in our time of loss. Thank you to Pastor Tom for his calls and prayers. We thank God for giving Mom/Oma to us for 100 years. Your concern and support are greatly appreciated!

From Betty Frerichs:  
This is a two-fold thank you. First, for the beautiful prayer shawl for the Prayer Shawl Ministry. I love the color, and it is soft and warm. I will be thinking of the person who made it and the love that was put into it. Second, for the beautiful fall colored bouquet Barb Hack brought to me. It is nice to be remembered!
GETTING TO KNOW THE WILDING-MARTIN FAMILY

QUESTIONS FOR VANCE MARTIN:

Where were you born?
Springfield, IL.

What book are you currently reading?
A Game of Thrones.

If you could meet anyone, living or dead, who would you meet?
Julius Caesar.

What is your favorite ice cream?
Vanilla.

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do?
Find and purchase a Mark I Barnes foot-powered mortise.

What is the farthest you have been from home?
Singapore.

When you have 30 minutes of free time, how do you pass the time?
Woodworking or videogames.

QUESTIONS FOR ERIN WILDING-MARTIN:

Where were you born?
Jacksonville, IL.

What book are you currently reading?
Invisible Man by Ralph Ellison.

The best part of waking up is?
Coffee!

What is your favorite ice cream?
Double chocolate with hot fudge.

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do?
I’m a math teacher—we don’t play the lottery because of probability and statistics :)

What is the farthest you have been from home?
Germany.

When you have 30 minutes of free-time, how do you pass the time?
What’s free time?

QUESTIONS FOR RHONWYN MARTIN, AGE 5:

What do you want to be when you grow up?
A superhero ballerina.

If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?
To control my super powers and not hurt people.

What was a time you were really excited?
When I turned 4 and my Grandma made me a cake with Frozen on it.

QUESTIONS FOR KEAGHAN MARTIN, AGE 3:

What do you want to be when you grow up?
A firefighter astronaut.

If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?
To do a cartwheel.

What was a time you were really excited?
When I went to the park.
GETTING TO KNOW THE BARRETO FAMILY

QUESTIONS FOR SUSAN

Were you named after anyone?
My middle name (Louise) is for a family friend whom I believe was a nurse who lived next door to my grandmother’s family in rural Kankakee County near the river. It’s my mom’s middle name, too.

Where were you born?
Freeport, IL (just west of Rockford)

What book are you currently reading?
His Bloody Project, a historical thriller by Graeme Macrae Burnet which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize.

What is the #1 most played song on your iPod?
I no longer own an iPod, but I stream a lot of Pharrell Williams via Spotify with a mix of oldies (70s, 80s and 90s) and even a little Johnny Cash occasionally.

What is your favorite month of the year and why?
December. I love the snow and enjoy having a little down time with the family over the holidays.

The best part of waking up is?
First cup of coffee and walking the dog.

What is your favorite ice cream?
Chocolate, of course.

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do?
Would first quit my job and then probably would set up a publishing company with a focus on telling unique stories relating to living in the rural Midwest.

What is the farthest you have been from home?
Salzburg, Austria, for a choir trip in college.

When you have 30 minutes of free-time, how do you pass the time?
Reading.

QUESTIONS FOR LUCAS (AGE 5):

What do you want to be when you grow up?
A train driver.

What is your first memory of being really excited?
Going to see Thomas the Tank Engine at the train museum.

If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?
Learn how to play piano.

If you could throw any kind of party, what would it be like and what would it be for?
Thomas party for fun and for presents! (aka birthday party).
GETTING TO KNOW THE WISDOM FAMILY

QUESTIONS FOR JONATHAN:

Were you named after anyone?
I have my dad's middle name, Lee, and so does Ethan.

Where were you born?
Bitburg, Germany, on an Air Force base.

What is the #1 most played song on your iPod?
Beat it. (Ethan loves Michael Jackson.)

What is your favorite month of the year and why?
August because we usually take a vacation and travel.

The best part of waking up is?
I'd have to say coffee... I'm kinda a caffeine addict.

If you could meet anyone, living or dead, who would you meet?
Any of my grandparents when they were young, or also my wife's grandparents.

What is your favorite ice cream?
Hazelnut mixed with pistachio.

What is the farthest you have been from home?
Changsha, China, for a friend's wedding.

Do you have a special talent?
I wish I did...

When you have 30 minutes of free-time, how do you pass the time?
That doesn't happen often, when it does I like to spend time with my family, just relaxing and hanging out.

QUESTIONS FOR ETHAN (AGE 6) AND IAN (AGE 4):

What do you want to be when you grow up?
Ethan: Soccer player.
Ian: Engineer like daddy.

What is your first memory of being really excited?
Ethan: When I went to the St Louis children's museum.
Ian: The first time going on the climbing wall.

If you could learn to do anything, what would it be?
Ethan: Learn how to throw the football in a really good spiral.
Ian: How to be a soccer player.

If you could throw any kind of party, what would it be like and what would it be for?
Ethan: Pokemon card trading party, everybody has to bring their cards.
Ian: Same answer.
Our children’s young eyes are taking in all kinds of media and messaging with little skill on how to make sense of what they are seeing.

A major survey of youth age 8 to 18 found that of the total amount of time youth spend on screens the majority is spent watching stuff (movies, TV, Netflix, YouTube videos). That makes up 40% of their time on screens. Meanwhile, another 30% of kids’ screen time is spent playing video games and scrolling through the internet. That is a lot of imagery, messaging and subject matter being passively delivered to and consumed by our children. (The last big chunk, 30% is spent on communication, i.e., social media and such).

Growing up in the 70s and 80s there was a lot of discussion about media literacy classes, but surprisingly I never came across one until I was attending Stanford Medical School. While there, I ventured beyond medicine to take a fantastic media literacy class at Stanford University where I learned to decode media messages. The teacher showed us magazine clips of women in ads who were lounging on couches and being idle while men in the ads were doing things like sailing boats or other active pursuits. We were asked to think critically and ask questions such as “How might people interpret the message?” or “How can this message help or harm a group of people?”

I suggest starting a conversation with your kids about media literacy at the dinner table. The National Association of Media Literacy’s downloadable free guide for parents is a great resource. Talk to them about questioning what they see when they view ads and social media posts, watch YouTube videos, play games and more. For more discussion ideas, you can peruse past Tech Talk Tuesdays. Stay in touch with the Screenagers community on Facebook, Twitter and at www.screenagersmovie.com.

Warmly,
Delaney Ruston, MD
Screenagers' Filmmaker
www.screenagersmovie.com
Church Staff
Pastor…………………………………...Thomas Hillertz
Pastor Emeritus...............Edward D. Schneider
Youth & Family Minister.........Jason Fisher
Office Manager…………………..Yvona Vlach
Office Assistant………………...Nancy Olson
Treasurer…………………………Dana VanDeveer-Jones
Organist…………………………….Linda Pein
Choir Director…………………...Patrick Murray
Parish Nurses……………………...Sandy Rueter
                           Elizabeth Kakoma
                           Celeste Coverdill

Office Hours
Mon-Thu:  7:30 am to 3:30 pm
(lunch hour:  noon—1 pm)
Fridays:  8:00 am to Noon

Scroll Deadline
The deadline for the January Scroll is Friday, December 15, at noon.

Bulletin/Announcements Deadline
Wednesday at noon, each week.

Come Worship the Lord!
Weekly morning service:
Sundays at 9 am
(with Holy Communion)

Monthly evening (Evensong) service:
Sunday, Dec. 10th
5:30-6:30pm  Fellowship supper
6:30-7pm  Evensong Service

Sabbath Sundays:
Sunday mornings following worship
FAITH5 Sunday  (Cross-Generational):  December 10th

Mark Your Calendar!
➢ WELCA Christmas Brunch
   Saturday, December 2, 10am, fellowship hall
➢ Nativity Walk
   Sunday, December 3, 3 to 6pm
➢ Bethlehem Walk
   Sunday, December 3, 4-7pm, Cunningham Child. Home
➢ 60-Something Luncheon
   Wednesday, December 6, noon-1pm, fellowship hall
➢ Workshop Wednesdays
   December 6, 13, & 20, 6pm, GSLC library
➢ Children’s Christmas Program
   Sunday, December 17
➢ 80+ Cookies (Ruth Circle)
   Tuesday, December 19, 9:30am, choir room
➢ National Youth Gathering Meeting
   Tuesday, December 19, 9:30am, youth room
➢ Christmas Eve Worship
   9am—4th Sunday in Advent Service
   5, 7, & 11pm—Christmas Eve Candlelight Services
➢ Church Office Closings
   Monday, December 25, and Monday, January 1

SUNDAY EVENING POTLUCK
Please join fellow Sunday evening worship-goers for a POTLUCK MEAL on Sunday, December 10th! No RSVP is necessary! However, you can use the following link to sign-up to help with the event and make these fellowship opportunities possible. The sign-up sheet is also available in the Narthex. http://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F0E4DADAF23A7FD0-sunday