

Tomorrow I Will Come

By Pastor Justin Vetrano

Last Sunday we began a new Bible study that looks into the Christmas story through the songs and carols we sing this season. We started with an in-depth study of the song, O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL. Growing up in church I remember singing this hymn, with ALL of its verses. I recall knowing that Emmanuel means “God with us.”

The more I studied the more I was drawn into discovering the hymn’s history, correlation to the scriptures and deep meaning. The origin for the hymn we sing begins sometime in the sixth century when early Christians would sing one of the O Antiphon verses appointed for that day in Advent. Each of the seven verses reference a name that is given about the coming Messiah in the early prophecies, mostly Isaiah.

All of God’s promises are fulfilled in the one about whom we sing: Wisdom, Lord of power and might, Root of Jesse, Key of David, Dayspring, King of the nations, Emmanuel. Each name and corresponding verse are sung from Dec 17 to 23, counting down the days to the fulfillment of the promises of God in Christ Jesus.

Here is something a bit mind-blowing. If you take the first letter of the Latin name, the original language in which the antiphons were sung, for each of the seven names of the Messiah and order them backwards from Dec. 23, it spells out a Latin phrase, *Ero Cras*. In Latin this means, *Tomorrow I will come*. Scholars disagree whether this was intentional or coincidental. Regardless, it’s a remarkable sign pointing us to the One who saves.

The hymn, O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL, as we know it, uses these seven names for the Messiah and was written sometime in the early 1700s, with the tune for the music written in 1851. The setting of the song in a minor key expresses longing deep within the soul. This longing connects us today with the longing of Israel in millennia past. As Israel faced uncertainty, threats, sorrow and despair, God promised a savior providing hope to those dwelling in darkness.

For us today as we sing the words:

*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.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to
thee, O Israel.*

We draw strength and peace from the continued promises of God, among us. This is our hope as we await the advent of the Christ child. During the longest and darkest days of the year the symbolism of the season in the church is that of contemplation and expectation. The world around us is swirling with holiday blitz. We as the church wait, and anticipate the joy of our savior.

Some light the candle(s) in their Advent boxes which adorn the tables of their home. Others utilize the Advent devotions that are available through the church. As we gather these weeks in church we hear from Saint Nicholas and Saint Lucia and how the promises of God in Christ Jesus influenced them in their lives as children of God. We will watch with joy as the children of the church proclaim the Christmas story, and we will gather as a church community on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

For now, however, we wait. Much like Israel waited with only the hope of the promises of God. We too now wait, holding onto those promises in prayer, softly and confidently proclaiming O COME, O COME, EMMANUEL.

Blessed Advent,
Pastor Vetrano 

Join us for your time of THE LIFE!

Sundays	Worship with Communion, 10am Children’s Sunday School, 9:45am
Mondays	Alpha Bible Study, 7pm
Tuesdays	Bible Study, 11am
Thursdays	Dinner, 6:15pm Worship with Communion, 7pm
Dec 7	Tree Lighting, 3-6pm
Dec 8	St. Nicholas Visits THE LIFE, 10am
Dec 15	Santa Lucia Visits THE LIFE, 10am
Dec 16	Men’s & Women’s Ministry, 7:30pm
Dec 22	SS Christmas Pageant, 10am
Dec 24	Christmas Eve Services, 4, 5:30, 7pm
Dec 25	Christmas Day Worship, 10am
Jan 8	Men’s Ministry, 7:30pm
Jan 9	Burning of the Greens, 7pm
Jan 13	Women’s Ministry, 7:30pm

Getting to Know ... Melissa and Phil Essigman

By Elisa Bruno

Be sure to introduce yourself to Phil Essigman and Melissa Essigman. As you will read about them, they are an inspiring couple!

Tell how you first got involved with THE LIFE?

Melissa: I first got involved in THE LIFE because my family was searching for a new church home, and a few of our close friends had begun attending THE LIFE. We tried it, and I immediately fell in love with the palpable strength of God's presence in the church community.

What's your first memory of THE LIFE?

Melissa: I love music, so my first memories were about how deeply the music in church had a positive effect on me. It is one of the reasons I began listening to K-Love, and now I listen to little else on the radio.



Commissioning Celebration at THE LIFE: (from left) Lucas Essigman (son), Phil and Melissa, Ryan Essigman (son), Jessica Parodi (sister), and friend Debbie.

What do you wish other people knew about THE LIFE?

Melissa: THE LIFE is about GOOD NEWS. Pastor Vetrano is so intentional and genuine about his message of good news - which is not the way many people traditionally have viewed pastors and the message of the church.

What's the best thing to happen since you started working at LuHi?

Melissa: The best thing that happened since working at LuHi was becoming a commissioned Lutheran teacher. It was a great deal of hard work, but an honor to stand in front of the school community and fulfill what God has purposed me to do.

What do you do for work? What do you do when you aren't working?

Phil: I am a Physical Education teacher and coach in Hicksville Schools. When I am not working, I am attending my boys' soccer and lacrosse games. I am also an avid runner and quite frequently, I use it as a mode of transportation around town!

What might someone be surprised to know about you and or Melissa?

Phil: I think people would be surprised to know that we actually got together when I was looking for a running partner. Together, we participated in almost every running race on Long Island back in the day, and even ran a half marathon together in Atlantic City!

What do you think is most challenging about raising your kids in the Christian faith?

Melissa: The world around us is polarized, angry, and driven by the immediate gratification and false sense of control that technology provides. True connection and faith seem to have less and less place in the world, which is frustrating.

Do you have a favorite Bible verse?

Melissa: I have a tattoo on my ankle that says, "be still." It is taken from my favorite verse, Exodus 14:14: "The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still." It reminds me to breathe and remember that God is present and in control at all times. **L**

the **LIFE**

LUTHERAN CHURCH
& DAY SCHOOL

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Thanks Be To God

By Harry Packman, President

With Thanksgiving in the rear-view mirror, I wanted to share some reflections on just how thankful I am for

THE LIFE:

THANKS BE TO GOD for our amazing Pastor and the remarkable ministry he has built in such a short time. Everywhere you look, churches are shutting down and closing their doors. Our doors burst open each Sunday with record-setting numbers of congregants.

THANKS BE TO GOD for our Deacons; Paulina, Harry, Nancy, Larry and Melissa, who are beacons (of light) as much as deacons of the Church. They do more for THE LIFE than any of us fully realize,

but hopefully they realize how grateful we are for all of them.

THANKS BE TO GOD for our Vicars; Adam, Brian and Dan. Pastor had a dream of expanding his ministry, and each of you is living proof that dreams can come true with hard work, devotion and faith.

THANKS BE TO GOD for my fellow members of the Church Council. In addition to making me laugh and smile each month, each of you has taught me so much these past few years. Your commitment to Pastor and THE LIFE and your willingness to share the many talents God bestowed upon you are truly inspirational.

Finally, THANKS BE TO GOD for all of you. Everything discussed above is great, but it would not really matter much without our incredible congregation. All of you play integral roles at THE LIFE, whether it is in the various ways you help out at the church or before, during and after services, but more importantly, just by being yourselves and being so welcoming to everyone. Thanks to all of you, I have never felt more comfortable at a church. Thanks to all of you I have never felt more at home in a church. Thanks to all of you I have never felt more grateful for a church and so, THANKS BE TO GOD for THE LIFE Lutheran Church and all of you. 🇺🇸

Children's Choir Sings for the Babe of Bethlehem

The sound of children singing Christmas songs can be music to your ears ... and it's surely pleasing to God.

Lisa Dettling, pianist and choir director at THE LIFE, also enjoys hearing children sing Christmas songs, as she leads this year's Children's Christmas Choir. Rehearsals are underway on Sundays, with around ten children, ranging in age from kindergarten to fifth grade.

We asked Lisa about her experience preparing music with the children.

How do you choose the music?

Every year I try to choose music for the kids that is easy to learn but fun to sing. I have two main goals for choir. The first goal is for choir to be an activity that every child can succeed at, no matter their

age or musical ability. The second goal is to use the voices of our youngest to spread the good news!

What music are you preparing for this year?

This year the kids will sing a piece called "Sing We Nowell" by Terry D. Taylor. We will be singing it at the 4 p.m. service on Christmas Eve. Over the years I don't know that the kids have had a favorite, but I hope they have enjoyed singing the pieces we've done.

Describe your rehearsals.

Rehearsals are usually short and sweet! I like to focus on a page or two each rehearsal. We focus first on the words, since some words in the pieces can be difficult for beginning readers (Emmanuel, Wonderful Counselor, etc.). Once we can say the words, then we

repeat, repeat, repeat until everybody is comfortable!

It's always cute and validating for me when I ask the kids, "Okay, are you ready to sing this part nice and loud?" And someone responds with an excited "YES!" I don't always get those passionate responses, but they are so appreciated when they come.

What encouraging comments have you heard from the parents?

Parents are great! Some kids are shy or reluctant to sing in front of a crowd, but the encouragement from the parents definitely helps get them to practice. Once they learn the songs and sing with all the other kids they're usually excited to perform. 🇺🇸

Christmas Miracles at the Day School

By Lisa Dennyly, Day School Director



Day School Christmas Carolers

Bam! And just like that we are in the Christmas season. With Thanksgiving landing on one of the latest dates it could possibly be, put Christmas into overdrive.

Yes, that means we have one less week to decorate, shop, and cook; and cook. But look at it from the perspective of the pre-school world: one less week to make Christmas presents for the parents, to make decorations for the class, to learn about baby Jesus' birthday and to learn Christmas songs for their Christmas programs!

Christmas miracles do occur at the Day School with a dedicated staff who put all their love and attention into making the Christmas season the best for the children and the school.

The three & four-year-old classes will perform their songs for parents and loved ones in the church. After the performance there is a party in the Fellowship Hall with food, music and a visit from Santa.

It's a fun and festive time at THE LIFE Lutheran Day School! 

Devotion: Thank God for the Church

By Vicar Adam Schoepflin

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

Matthew 18:20

“Church” is a word weighted with many meanings. Is it a building where people worship, or a specific congregation? Is it a denomination, or a hierarchy of pastors and bishops? Sadly, while the word “church” is often used to describe all these things, none are what Scripture describes as “the church.”

When Paul wrote his epistles, he addressed them to “the saints who are in Ephesus” (Eph. 1:1) and “to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints

together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:2). The way Scripture uses the word “church” is to describe the Lordship of Christ and the faith of the people. The church is the living body of Christ, His believers, wherever and whenever they are assembled.

When we worship as the “church,” Christ’s body of believers, we gather around God’s Word and sacraments. These are the “marks” of the church, the means of grace through which God has promised to deliver forgiveness and new life—the Gospel, baptism, absolution, and Holy Communion.

At THE LIFE, we are blessed with beautiful facilities, stained glass, furnishings, an organ and a praise band, and so many other wonderful things. But ulti-

mately, what makes us “church” is the people, who come to receive the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which He delivers to us through the Word and Sacraments. Even if we were just two or three gathered in His name, He would be with us, and we would be the church.

Though it would be sufficient, thanks be to God that we are not just “two or three.” THE LIFE is growing, our facilities are improving, our youth group is exploding, and our fellowship is becoming even more lively every week. Every week, God delivers His grace to us as we gather in His name, and as our church grows, more and more people are touched by the Gospel.

Thanks be to God that he has called each of us to The Life. And thanks be to God that He has made our church, THE LIFE, part of His eternal church! 