



*For He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden ... and has exalted the lowly*  
(Luke 1:48a, 52b; LSB 231-232, 248-249)

Many of us sing the *Magnificat* in midweek Vespers or Evening Prayer services during Advent and/or Lent. We might also hear it read on Advent 4, the Feast of St. Mary, and the Feast of the Visitation. The words of the *Magnificat* were first spoken (or sung) by Mary when she visited Elizabeth, very early in the first trimester of her pregnancy. Mary's words are our words and proclaim how precious we *all* are to God even from the time of fertilization!

Consider that our Lord, "begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of Very God ... of one substance with the Father," became lowly Himself, taking on human flesh in the form of a one-cell zygote in the womb of a poor young woman who had not yet lived together with her betrothed husband, to be born into a feeding trough for animals, and to go on to suffer and die a shameful and extremely painful death on the Cross to atone for our sins and those of the world, and rise again to declare us right with the Father. For no matter how proud, mighty, and rich we might think we are, none of us has the ability to save him/herself. We are all counted among the lowly! And it took the Mighty One's becoming lowly to exalt each of us.

In turn, we regard *all* of our neighbors as ones for whom Christ died and thus precious to us, from the time of their conception in the fallopian tube into eternity. This holds true regardless of their lineage, the color of their skin, the state of their health, their physical and their mental capacity. After all, salvation is not dependent on ancestry (Revelation 7:9). Furthermore, the weak among us are indispensable to us (1 Corinthians 12:22). We demonstrate that by reaching out to those who are shunned and dehumanized by society due to weakness or any other reason, taking their burdens upon ourselves and sharing God's love with them. We pray that God will use us to bring those among them who are unchurched, to the font and into His Church, making us brothers and sisters in Christ. (If you haven't yet done so, please read Deaconess Schumann's piece on mercy care in the Dominican Republic in the November 2025 *Lutheran Witness*!) And when we find ourselves in a weakened or compromised state for any reason (examples might include surprise pregnancy, severe chronic illness, approaching the end of life, among so many others), we are free in Christ to allow others to take our burdens upon themselves as they share His love with us.

As we sing the *Magnificat*, we thank God for His having regarded our lowliness and exalting us. We thank God also for His gift of our neighbors and the privilege of serving them, that they might share in the bounty with which He has gifted us.

Blessed Advent from the English District Lifeline Team!