

## *The Word became flesh and dwelt among us even before Christmas.*

March 25 marks the Christian Festival of the Annunciation. **“And the angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus’”** (Luke 1:31). Nine months in advance of our Lord’s birth, He first entered our world as a human being. And already ahead of our seeing and meeting Him, He was sanctifying every member of our race with His embryonic body.

**“Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things”** (Hebrews 2:14). Indeed, just as each one of us does, **“the child grew and became strong ... increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man”** (Luke 2:40, 52). Thanks to the innovations of science and technology, we can actually trace and date our Savior’s gestation alongside us and on our behalf.

**March 25** – In an instant, one-celled microscopic Jesus comes into being with His very own 46-chromosome distinctive genetic signature. He metabolizes, undergoes respiration, and reproduces by cell division. He reacts to stimuli, adapts to environmental variations, balances functions and allocates resources, and directs His own development toward maturity. Hidden within His mother’s belly (the size of the dot over this “i”), the Lord God Almighty has become a living human being.

**April 1** – Embryo Jesus has progressed through the morula phase and into the blastocyst stage of His life. Having traveled into Mary’s womb, gently moved along by the cheerleading cilia of the fallopian tube, He nestles Himself into the uterine lining and implants. As a gracious guest, He has even brought along the beginnings of His own placenta as an interpreter and personal assistant.

**April 8** – Without the angel Gabriel’s greeting, Mary may not have even known of her pregnancy yet. But Jesus has oriented Himself with an irreversible top and bottom, front and back, left and right.

**April 11 & 12** – Little Jesus has begun to produce His own blood cells, and the cardiac cells that will make up His heart have started to pulse.

**April 17 & 18** – The gestating Lord has formed His primitive brain and spinal cord structures, and the heart of God in human form has found its rhythm that will beat until His crucifixion for us.

**April 22** – His four-week-old miniature body has differentiated and positioned all the vital organs.

**May 15** – Now in His seventh week—when most mothers are first becoming certain of being with child—Jesus exhibits a complete skeleton (we can count all ten fingers and toes), electrical brain wave patterns, pain and pressure receptors, and muscle reflexes.

**May 21** – All of our Savior’s organs are operating, and His sensory cells are sending messages along the nervous system network. About this time we may accurately refer to Him as fetus.

**June 6** – At week ten, Jesus’ unique fingerprints have appeared. His size equals that of an olive.

**June 17** – Twelve weeks on, He has grown larger than a lime. His permanent teeth and fingernails are emerging. His sex—a boy—has become evident as well.

**June 25** – Jesus has learned how to swallow and likes to suck His thumb, with a preference for one or the other that will last a lifetime (and influence which hand He writes with).

**July 10** – Mother Mary may be feeling Jesus’ first fetal movements (quickening) in this fifteenth week.

**July 18** – He who holds the whole world in His hands can grasp at objects like His umbilical cord.

**July 31** – Jesus opens His eyes for the first time, and His vocal cords can cry out. He wakes for about four hours a day.

**August 18** – Now twenty-one weeks along—a little more than halfway through the pregnancy—unborn baby Jesus can hiccup, smile, and laugh. He blinks instinctively at loud sounds and experiences the rapid eye movements associated with dreaming. If delivered prematurely, and with intensive care and support, He could survive outside the womb.

**September 1** – God’s Son wrinkles His nose at odors and sticks out His tongue to taste what mom eats. He is maintaining a heart rate twice as fast and a core temperature a degree higher than hers.

**September 11** – In this twenty-fourth week, Jesus can wriggle away from certain ultrasound echoes. He has gotten about as big as an ear of corn.

**October 5** – His eyes, adorned by adorable brows and lashes, react to bright light.

**October 17** – His brain forms memories (though new ones will soon replace them). The third and final trimester of His internal residency has commenced.

**October 23** – At thirty weeks, Jesus can scratch His own itches. He sleeps in half-hour stretches.

**October 31** – He has turned upside-down for His descent among us.

**November 4** – The Christ child’s quick kicks and punches extend into wiggles and rolls.

**November 24** – He is adding about half an ounce a day in weight (mostly fat) preparing for birth.

*And it makes every moment of our lives—and those of our neighbors—special, precious, priceless!*

Cover image: Kevin Carden via Lightstock

Booklet text: Pastor Michael Salemink

Inside artwork: Jeff Bolzman

Artist note: “My wife, Sondra, is a homebirth midwife and has assisted in over 600 births. We are both Concordia Seward grads and have taught in Lutheran schools. Sondra stayed home when we began having children, and then we decided to homeschool. God blessed us with nine children. The last five were born at home with a midwife. Then Sondra was asked to assist in homebirths, and she began an apprenticeship. Sondra now averages about 55 homebirths each year. To be a midwife means to be ‘with women.’ She educates women in health and diet and monitors their growth through pregnancy. She believes that pregnancy and birth are not medical events as such, but that a woman’s body was created to carry and deliver a baby. It is a natural and healthy function. I made the art piece for Sondra’s midwifery office here at home where she meets regularly with her pregnant mamas and their husbands. The artwork depicts the growth of a baby through each of the nine months of pregnancy. The verse is taken from Psalm 139:14. The DNA strand depicts how God knits us together (from two strands) in our mother’s womb.”



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Item LFL101B • 2023

*I praise you because ...*



*... I am fearfully and wonderfully made*

For You created my inmost being;  
You knit me together in my mother's womb.



I praise You because I am  
fearfully and wonderfully made.