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# *a thrill of* HOPE

This 50-minute DVD presents the familiar story of Christmas as told in the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. Each passage of scripture is illustrated and interpreted by the beautiful artwork of John August Swanson and commentary from members of the faculty at Candler School of Theology.

The DVD is divided into sections, or “chapters,” each one featuring a passage of scripture, commentary by the scholars, and a Swanson work of art based on that passage. Each chapter is approximately eight minutes long.

CHAPTER	SCRIPTURE	ART
1 ( <i>with intro</i> )	Luke 1:26–38	<i>A Visit</i>
2	Luke 2:1–7	<i>The Nativity</i>
3	Luke 2:8–20	<i>The Shepherds</i>
4	Matt. 2:1–12	<i>Epiphany</i>
5	Luke 2:21–40	<i>Presentation in the Temple</i>
6	Matt. 2:13–15	<i>Flight into Egypt</i>

## IDEAS FOR VIEWING THIS CHRISTMAS DVD

**Here are some ways that you can use this DVD in your congregation or group:**

1. It can be enjoyed by viewing it in its entirety. The length of the DVD makes it ideal for use in church school classes or as a special Christmas program.
2. It can be viewed chapter by chapter. By using the “menu” button on your DVD, you can select individual chapters for viewing. Perhaps one or two chapters could be shown each Sunday in Advent during church school classes or in worship.
3. It can be used as a study resource. The remaining pages of this booklet feature reproductions of the John August Swanson artwork shown in the DVD, along with thought-provoking questions to spark fresh insights into the familiar biblical passages depicted in the art.

## FACULTY PRESENTERS

The producers would like to extend special thanks to the Candler faculty members who offer their commentary in this DVD:

Dr. Michael Joseph Brown  
*Associate Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins*

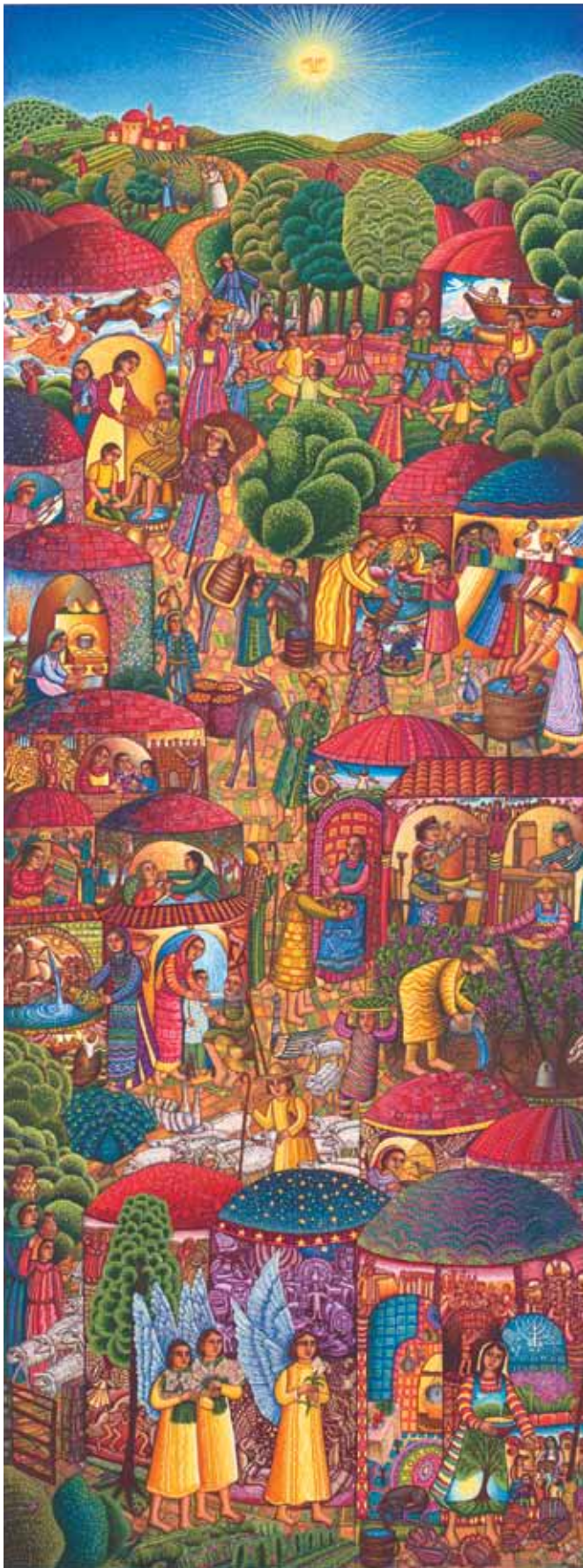
Dr. Thomas G. Long  
*Bandy Professor of Preaching*

Dr. Luke Timothy Johnson  
*R. W. Woodruff Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins*

Dr. Carol A. Newsom  
*C.H. Candler Professor of Old Testament*

Dr. Steven J. Kraftchick  
*Assoc. Professor in the Practice of New Testament Interpretation*

Dr. Gail R. O’Day  
*A.H. Shatford Professor of Preaching and New Testament*



## 1. A VISIT

Based on Luke 1:26–38

*Limited edition serigraph, hand printed, 1995,  
38½ x 14½ inches*

### FOR DISCUSSION

1. Notice how many details can be found in the artist's depiction of this story, how "busy" the picture is, and how difficult at first it may be to even find the scene described in Luke. Why do you think the artist has portrayed it this way?
2. In *A Visit* there are over twenty scenes of people doing ordinary work, like baking bread, and there are also over twenty scenes taken from other stories in the Bible. Identify as many of these as you can and discuss what you see the art conveying by this interweaving of everyday life and biblical events.
3. The art depicts Mary feeding chickens as she is visited by the angels. What do you think the artist is saying by this detail? What do you think about this portrayal of Mary?
4. The biblical passage indicates that when the angel Gabriel greeted Mary with the words, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you," that Mary "was much perplexed by his words..." (NRSV). Why do you think Mary's reaction was perplexity?
5. The artist has depicted a tree on the front of Mary's dress. Why do you think this is so?



## About the Artist



Los Angeles artist **John August Swanson** is noted for his finely detailed, brilliantly colored paintings and original prints. His works are found in the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, London's Tate Gallery, the Vatican Museums' Collection of Modern Religious Art, and other prestigious venues. The largest collection of Swanson's work—fifty pieces—is displayed at Emory University's Candler School of Theology in Atlanta.

The son of a Mexican mother and a Swedish father, Swanson is influenced by the folk art traditions of those two countries. He also is interested in the way Byzantine and medieval works of art, such as mosaics and stained glass windows, communicated the stories of the Old and New Testaments to people of different times and places. Many of his works are visual narratives consisting of numerous panels, each panel showing a scene from the story.

Swanson describes his art as “my most social act.” All of his works combine a richness of detail that conveys the diversity of the human experience with an emotional simplicity that evokes the transcendent unity of the human spirit. Optimistic but rarely sentimental, they offer a fresh perspective that prompts viewers to reexamine their perspectives of familiar scenes and stories.

Most of Swanson's works are serigraphs, which are made with a screen of fabric stretched tightly across a rectangular frame. Designs are created in stencil form on the screen, allowing ink to be moved through to the paper below. A separate screen must be made for each of the colors printed on the serigraph. Swanson's serigraphs are unusually complex, not only in their detail but also in the number of stencils used. *A Visit* (page 3), for example, required 61 stencils.

## About Candler School of Theology



Candler School of Theology at Emory University is among the world's premier university-based theological schools. An intellectually vital, internationally distinguished, and intentionally diverse community, Candler is committed to its mission of educating faithful and creative leaders for the church's ministries in the world. Candler is dedicated to expanding knowledge of religion and theology, deepening spiritual life, strengthening the public witness of churches, and building upon the breadth of Christian traditions, particularly the Wesleyan heritage, for the positive transformation of church and world. It is one of thirteen United Methodist Church seminaries, and its enrollment includes more than five hundred students from more than fifty denominations.