



# Boar's Head

by Mel Machemer

**"For unto us a child is born ...  
the Lamb of God, which taketh  
away the sin of the world."  
(Isaiah 9:6, John 1:29)**

It may have been an evening not unlike the brisk evenings of a Michigan December that a student, while walking the forest path to class with book in hand, heard among the few rustling leaves that still clung to the tree's branches the distant rushing and snarling of what he feared most. Charging toward him was a wild boar, the most ferocious beast of the forest, prepared for attack. With only his book in hand for protection, the student thrust it into the wild boar's mouth as it lunged toward him. The hard metal cover of the philosophy volume hit the beast with such force that it killed the animal; the student was spared. This event, so legend says, was the origin of what we now call The Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival, a celebration of praise and thanksgiving to "the King of Bliss" for His divine protection of not only this student, but of all His people from their most ferocious enemy, sin and death.

Since its 14<sup>th</sup> century beginnings, this festival has developed and evolved, taking on a distinctly spiritual focus, and over time has traveled from England to colonial America and beyond because of its unique means of communicating the most familiar and beloved event in Christian history in a way that still connects deeply with Christians today, nearly 700 years later.

In many ways our lives are similar to that of the student attacked in the woods. We still face the same ferocious enemy, an adversary that is given substantial power because of the world's willingness to let him roam and devour with little resistance. For many, the message of Christ's birth is totally disconnected from the influence of this adversary. It is simply an endearing story accompanied by beautiful music that provides, at best, a focal point for family gatherings and traditional celebrations. But Christ's birth is connected to this adversary ... this helpless Child is indeed the Hero who has slain sin and death. The lifeless boar garnished on a platter is a vivid reminder to all — the result of the atoning work accomplished by this humble Child we now view in a manger.

The life-changing message of Christ's birth and saving work had new impact for nearly 200 members of Saint John who participated in the

church's first Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival last year, and for the hundreds from the community who attended. As those portrayed in this 14<sup>th</sup> century festival left their everyday life in the world behind to worship at the feet of the Savior, so must we today. The members of Saint John invite you to leave behind the hectic pace and anxieties of the season to join with them, as together we celebrate anew through this festival the impact Christ's birth has for all of us.

*Mel Machemer has been Director of Music at Saint John, Fraser for 20 years where he currently directs grade school and adult choirs and handbell ensembles and teaches Music Education in the upper grades. For 13 of those years, a portion of his time was spent as Choral Director and Dean of Chapel at Lutheran High School East in Harper Woods.*



**Saint John, Fraser's  
Boar's Head and Yule Log Festival**  
will be presented on  
Thursday, December 11 and  
Saturday, December 13 at 7:00 p.m.,  
and Sunday, December 14 at 5:00 p.m.

Free admission tickets are required for each performance and may be requested beginning November 9 by visiting Saint John's website at [www.stjohnfraser.org](http://www.stjohnfraser.org). A freewill offering will be received following each performance.