

The Lutheran Ambassador

THE MAGIC OF CHRISTMAS

Religious News Service Photo

by Bob Taylor



MEDITATION MOMENTS

BORN KING OF THE JEWS

“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?” (Matthew 2:2).

Born King of the Jews! Most Kings are born as potential heirs to the throne held by their fathers. Kings of earthly kingdoms are born in palaces, surrounded by luxury, servants and all the material benefits of this world. How strange that He who was born not just as a king, but **THE KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS** was not even permitted to be born in the inn. He was born in the humblest of circumstances, among the animals, in a manger, “because there was no room for them in the inn.” No room for the One by which all things were made that were made? No room for Him who is “before all things, and in Him all things hold together” (Colossians 3:17)? Such is the paradox and irony of the birth of Christ. King of Kings and Lord of Lords, yet He was born in a stable.

Have you ever thought of how incredible, yes, even impossible, for man in his rational mind to believe that this little Child, born in a manger, could be not only a king but **THE KING OF KINGS**? These men who came from afar were wise, intelligent, educated men. Such men are not usually the ones who fall down and worship any man even when a man may earn such respect. Yet these Magi came from afar because they had seen an unusual thing in the sky and believed it was the sign of the birth of a King. When they came to

Jerusalem the chief priests and scribes looked into the book of Micah and told them he was to be born in Bethlehem. The star continued to go before the Wise Men and they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

The amazing thing is that when they got to Bethlehem and found Him in a manger and not in a palace it seemed to make no difference to them. We read simply, “And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him.” They even offered Him expensive gifts.

The matter of the position and authority of Jesus has been the question of men down through the ages. Some, like the Magi, accept Him as the Son of God and the King of Kings by faith in spite of the lack of outward trappings as men are accustomed to see for important and powerful people. Others reject Him even after seeing signs and wonders and every testimony given to them of His true power and authority.

Think of Simeon who came into the temple when Jesus was circumcised and blessed God in words of praise which we call the *Nunc Dimittis*. Anna, too, saw Jesus in the temple and gave thanks to God and told of Him to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem. The centurion, a man under authority, was used to giving commands. He told Jesus to simply say the word and he believed his son would be healed. The Syrophenician woman said she

was willing to accept whatever crumbs may be given to the dogs.

There were others who asked for signs (Matthew 12:38, 39) in order to believe in Him. Jesus answered, “An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign shall be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet.” The resurrection of Christ, witnessed to by the Scriptures, is the only sign we need. The Rich Man in Luke 16:27-29 told Abraham to send Lazarus to his five brothers who were still on earth so that if one came back from the dead to witness to them they would believe. The answer comes, “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.”

We have God’s Word that tells of the finished work on the Cross. By grace we can have the witness of the Spirit in our hearts to believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior. What more do we need this Christmas to really accept Jesus into our hearts and lives? Do we also need signs and wonders? The Word of God tells us we do not need these because we have the complete witness of the Word and the Spirit in our hearts by faith.

Think of the Magi, who, when they saw Jesus in the manger, fell down and worshipped Him and offered Him expensive presents.

Will you do less than that this Christmas for Him?

—Laurel M. Udden

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From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

by Mr. Don Rodvold, Music Director, AFLBS



Luther wrote this song for his son Hans and it was at their family Christmas Eve service that it was first sung.

With the evening supper eaten and the dishes and all the other sundry chores out of the way, the family gathers for the Christmas devotion. Music, lots of music, is in order in this home. Flute, lute (Luther's favorite instruments), harpsichord, pianoforte, lap organ and vocal renderings make up this fiesta prelude, with each child having a turn to make his own special offering to the Child.

Luther felt very strongly about the powers of music and they were all very positive thoughts. He spoke and wrote thousands of words about its virtues and strengths. Most notably: "Music is the fair and lovely gift of God and second only to the Word of God; I give to music the highest place and the greatest honor." A lofty second place, indeed, and this from the father of evangelical hymnody, no minor source.

The Luther family sobers in dignity for the portion of their service which follows the music. Awe is the natural feeling when one speaks to God or listens to Him through His Word. And perhaps especially as He unfolds His miracle in the form of the Babe in a manger. The children listen quietly as the senior Luther reads the Christmas Scripture, just as his parents did with him, also, since they were a pious peasant family.

He reads in Latin first, then Greek and, finally, German. The children understand them all but the Greek and have a distinct preference for German. For Luther the lyric Latin presents the greatest beauty and meaning. It's the language of his training and most pious years and it calls to mind the peace and joys of earlier Christmases.

The German words seem somehow heavy and awkward compared to the flowing Latin in relating

the events of the Nativity. To Luther *Ehre sei Gott in der höhe* doesn't sound as good as *Gloria in excelsis* but he is thankful as he thinks of other homes which, for the first time, have the Word of God, printed in German.

Now Luther has a surprise for his family. As planned, one of the men from the church choir, garbed as an angel, enters the room and sings as Luther accompanies:

From heaven high I come to earth.
I bring you tidings of great mirth.
This mirth is such a wondrous thing
That I must tell you all and sing.

A little Child for you this morn
Has from a chosen maid been born,
A little Child so tender, sweet,
That you should skip upon your feet.

It is the Christ, our God indeed,
Who saves you all in every need.
He will himself your Savior be
From all wrongdoing make you free.

He brings you every one to bliss.
The heavenly Father sees to this.
You shall be here with us on high.
Here shall you live and never die.

Look now, you children, at the sign,
A manger cradle far from fine.
A tiny Baby you will see,
Upholder of the world is He.

What a tremendous way to reiterate and expound God's Word, not only for a child but for the most intelligent and discerning adult. The language is simple but not simplistic. It is childlike without being childish. What a superb way to ponder the profound events of the first Christmas. How constantly new

and refreshing, time after time, are the same poetic thoughts and phrases.

As the angel finishes the last verse he hands copies of additional verses to the children while Martin and Katharina continue to play. The children have learned the tune listening to the angel sing and are prepared. They sing

How glad we'll be if it is so.
With all the shepherds let us go
To see what God for us has done
In sending us His own dear Son.

Look, look, my heart, and let me peek.
Whom in the manger do you seek?
Who is that lovely little one?
The Baby Jesus, God's own Son.

Be welcome, Lord, be now our guest,
By you poor sinners have been blessed.
In nakedness and cold you lie.
How can I thank you, how can I?

O Lord, who made and moulded all,
How did you come to be so small
That you should lie upon dry grass,
The fodder of the ox and ass?

And if the world were twice as wide
With gold and precious jewels inside,
Still such a cradle would not do
To hold a Babe as great as you.

The velvet and the silden ruff,
For these the hay is good enough.
Here lies a Prince and Lord of all,
A King within an ass's stall.

No one can speak the words of the heart better than a poet. He can say what we feel but cannot conjur up from our innermost being. For example, Luther here describes the thoughts that have occurred in the hearts and minds of all of us. He has painted an exquisitely delightful picture of dimension and beauty without sacrifice to mature taste and intelligence. He has not reduced the Divine but increased our awareness and thereby brings the truth home to the hearts of the common people.

Luther tells Hans that this song is especially for him this Christmas, that it was inspired and composed out of a father's tremendous love for his son, a love that only a father can have for his children. He tells them that although he loves them so much,

God loves his children even more and each of them, including Mama and Papa, is God's child. It's a great love. It's so great he can love each of us as if there were only one. Even though divided, His love is multiplied.

The children are visibly moved. They reflect on the activities and contents of the evening and are quite overcome by the hymn-carol that Papa wrote.

Their hearts are particularly touched by

You wanted so to make me know
That you had let all great things go.
You had a palace in the sky.
You left it there for such as I.

O, dear Lord Jesus, for your head
Now will I make the softest bed.
The chamber where this bed shall be
Is in my heart, inside of me.

When he composed this hymn Luther probably felt the same spirit of Christmas that touches us all. He recalled his youth and home and that imagery became this song. His heart softened and opened as his mind was diverted from the woes that plagued him. He allowed God's love to penetrate and it flooded his heart with tender love and compassion for Katharina and the children.

For us, too, it's a family time, a time of physical and spiritual togetherness, a time when confessions of love are not embarrassing.

It's a time to molt the shell that, on one hand, protects us from the daily onslaughts of just plain living, but on the other hand, prevents our being approached in the spirit of love and gentleness.

A sudden peace spreads through the Luther family as all discomfort is thrust aside. The atmosphere resembles a serene joy, an unspeakable thankfulness and it arouses them from their muse. They want to sing again Papa's, the whole song.

My heart for you is ever gay,
I'm always glad to sing and play.
I'll sing a "Baby, go to sleep."
And sweet the tone and tune I'll keep.

And, finally, Papa, Mama, the angel guest and all the children sing:

To God who sent His only Son
Be glory, laud and honor done.
Let all the choir of heaven rejoice,
The new ring in with heart and voice.

Hymn translation by Roland Bainton



A Manitoba Prairie Christmas

by Susan M. Nordvall,
Ross, Minnesota



The joy of a childhood Christmas encompasses my memory and my heart glows as the warm light of Christmas brightens again.

"How many more days is it, Mom? Is it?" Always this line would start, most likely when Mother would start cutting her thick dark molasses dough into wonderful shapes rather than just big rounds. She'd hang them in sacks in the entry where their ginger fragrance lessened the chill.

Seven from our house attended the prairie school whose enrollment was fourteen! So for the Christmas concert we were all in many parts. By concert time we all knew each other's lines and our hand-written dialogues hung precariously together from many unfoldings. The concert was an exciting thing and the tree somehow transformed since we'd seen it just hours earlier in daylight! The heavy curtains hung for a stage by the slender teacher were sure to all fall to the floor at least once and at this concert I had my only encounter with Santa Claus.

The church program took us into town and among less familiar children. Here, too, we'd have gifts and goodies. The town lights, simple strings of colored bulbs through the business section, fascinated me most. How dark the road seemed when we'd leave them. But in this treeless, flatland, we'd soon see the merry twinkle of other prairie towns.

When the programs were over, my excitement was not. There was a

chamber in my heart that would be flung open only on Christmas Day!

Upstairs and to bed early on Christmas Eve, I was much too excited to sleep. I would strain to hear. Perhaps just once, amid all the good things, the reindeer's hoofs would nick our housetop as they leaped through the starry sky! We were Mennonites so I knew they wouldn't stop at our house. We didn't even believe in Santa. Mom said he was just Bill Braser at the concert, but as often as I'd seen him I knew he could never be the funny fantastic Santa that scared me half to death as he danced across the desks and kissed the flushed teacher! But I was sure of Christmas Day.

Did we really eat the same simple porridge on Christmas morn? Perhaps more quietly, surely faster. When he was ready, Dad would reach for the sack leaning against the door. Without looking into the bag, he'd reach in and after a glance at Mother, would hand the unwrapped, unmarked treasures to their new owners.

The gifts were precious but for me there was more.

After the morning worship service in town, we'd return home for our Christmas dinner of roast goose and baked apples. It was a wonderful meal but the waiting was getting impossible. Did Father really have to do chores on such a day? Would the car stretch wide enough so we could all go along? Christmas at my grand-

parents' was the essence of my joy. At last Dad would go out to crank the car. My face pressed harder and harder against the frosted pane as he rubbed his stiff cold hands between attempts. At last the car would shudder to life and the yard would fill with wonderful noise and steam.

Going at last, we filed out the door, Johnny, too, snugly dressed but barefoot. Where could he have taken his shoes off this time? We'd fly in circles searching and Mother would find them.

Stacked in the car, we rolled out of the yard, westward over miles of whitened, wind-swept Manitoba prairie. Oh, it was broad and bold. The spirit of Christmas alone could rival such grandeur. I was entirely at peace. Passing the landmark nearest home, a batch of happy leaves skipped out from the newly planted grove to greet us and hurry us on our way.

I knew we'd soon be there; the old red elevator was rising to meet us. It flashed its white and green letters at us as the sun lit up its side. It was contented and full of plump wheat this Christmas Day.

How I adored my grandparents, he a Mennonite country preacher and she a great "hen" who gathered us all to her. Their home was built in the European Mennonite tradition, the dwelling and barn actually being one building. What a delight to pass the barn section, and see it turn into an inviting house complete with tidy

sidewalk and summer kitchen. My grandparents would always stand there together when we arrived, he with his head tilted back a little, rocking on his heels, peering at us from under his glasses, or bent forward, hands behind his back, smiling at us from over his glasses, and Grandma assuring us in her mellow, raspy voice that she was glad we'd all come again.

At last we were there! And so many other cars! You see, Grandfather was a widower when he married my grandmother. He needed her so much for his ten young children. She was also a widow and her ten children would make fine company for his. Yes, there were many cars but ours now was the fullest. Grandpa always formally shook hands with each of us. Somehow I always gave him my left hand and he would laugh with great merriment and say, "Mericha, Mericha," and I'd draw away feeling sure I was the only Mary in all the world.

In the door, and before parents and children parted company, we were looked over and fussed over by ladies who looked like Mom and men who looked like Grandpa. I was sure to be flattened back to back with at least one cousin to see who'd grown the most since we last met. These trifles over with, we found the gathering place of the cousins, the upstairs center room.

Recovering from initial shyness, we'd consider and compare our ages, sizes, teachers and favorite uncles. Usually before any feuds could develop it was time to go downstairs.

We'd wind our way through the kitchen filled with ladies with babies on their arms. The living room was encircled with men cracking roasted sunflower seeds in a style I could never imitate. Occasionally an older cousin would sweep up the spilled shells. In the tiny bedroom off the end of the room a few ladies talked quietly with Grandmother. Now they, too, came out. It was time to gather in the inner room. Every corner, every doorway and window overlapped with family gathered together to share the love and the great story. What grand company I was in! My heart was running over.

The great German hymns and car-

ols sung together in full harmony by clear children's voices, loving women's voices and deep rich men's voices transformed the aging parlor into a trembling cathedral. Here we, the children, would speak again the many verses we'd learned and Grandfather, in a central place, would listen, his shaggy head bowed and eyes closed. In those moments as he absorbed our fervent voices it seems he thrust us all to the very heart of God in his silent prayer. He would read the Scriptures also and he read them as if they were a new thing we'd never heard before. We pressed round him, not so much to hear as to see. His glasses were so thick. He'd hold the Bible to his eyes, alternating eyes, also reading from under or over the lenses. All the while a smile would play on his face.

Before returning home we would eat the meal prepared by Grandma. The men first surrounded the large table, then the children, and lastly the ladies. Our holiday foods were simple so the festive day never became a cooking day. Best of all were the heaps of buns with their fresh fragrant flavor of wheat. There was a great crock filled with creamy prune and raisen fruit soup, cheese, sugar cubes, large white cookies and rich molasses cookies, lean salted spare-ribs, served cold, and coffee for grownups. I never dreamed that anything more could be added to a Christmas meal.

Homeward bound at last, stars gathered above. They seemed to ignite each other as in wild rhapsody their rays reached down to me, picking up the song in my heart.

"O thou joyful Day, O thou blessed Day,
Gladsome, peaceful, Christmas-tide."

We had no gifts at my grandparents' house, no fancy lights or much candy, yet that place is the center of my Christmas memory.

Where bitter winds whistled, where snow grasped at rooftops, and large prairie spaces stood severe and chill, there burned an eternal flame. They strengthened and fortified us with the greatest gift, a buttress of God-inspired love, cheering our hearts.

A CHRISTMAS PRAYER

O Lord Jesus, blessed Christ-child, by Thy Spirit we open our souls and our homes to receive Thee. We are not worthy that Thou shouldst come and abide with us; yet Thy love will not cast us off, and Thy mercy will be renewed every morning. O come, then, blessed Jesus, come to us with Thy forgiving grace, Thy radiant light, Thine strengthening hope, Thy blessed promise of heaven! Come to us, abide with us, bless us, now and forever, Thou Christ of endless compassion. Amen.

Walter A. Maier

WINDS THROUGH THE OLIVE TREES

Winds through the olive trees
Softly did blow
Round little Bethlehem,
Long, long ago.

Sheep on the hillside lay
White as the snow,
Shepherds were watching them
Long, long ago.

When through the azure skies
Angels bent low,
Singing their songs of joy
Long, long ago

For in His humble bed,
Cradled, we know,
Christ came to Bethlehem
Long, long ago.

Author unknown
(from *God's Song in My Heart*)



A Christmas Greeting from the President of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

Eager Messenger

The angels were happy servants of God that first Christmas. God had errands for them, and obedience to God's every wish was their chief joy. The messages they were to bring also made them eager. The messages were so wonderful. They were messages of peace and grace, not of threat and judgment.

The world needed grace and peace. There was rampant sin, great physical need, cruel domination, and open suspicion and hatred. People needed a message of hope. How joyous the angels must have been as they entered time with their message. "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." It was the most relevant message possible.

The message announced the birth of a Savior. Because man's needs were beyond human remedies, they needed a Savior Who loved, and was almighty and eternal. That kind of Savior was announced to the world.

And what glorious deeds this Savior did for those who received Him. "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). Yes, those who received Him were given power, and the right to become sons of the Eternal God who watches over His children.

Our world today is no better than the world of that first Christmas. There are hosts of reasons to believe it is worse. Our world is busy rejecting the Savior who has been preached with the power of the Holy Spirit for soon two millennia. This rejection is the greatest sin of all.

Nineteen Hundred and Seventy Four has not been a good year for our world. There is fear and foreboding on every hand. Things have gotten out of control. Famine, war, and pestilence are hardly news. Sin in high and low places is no longer shocking. Multitudes have lost hope.

Thank God, the Christmas message is the same this year. A Savior has been provided by God. With Him nothing is impossible. This is good news, great joy.

We must receive this Savior that we might be sons of God, not children of judgment. But will we? Will you? There is no other hope.

We greet you with the prayer that all of us, in humble repentance over our sin, might receive the Savior given. May the spiritual awakening so desperately needed in our world grip each of our congregations and homes. May we all become more eager as we bear the message of the Savior given to a needy world. That is our task as individual Christians, and as a church.

Thank you for the continuing fine support for our work together as an Association. May God give you a most joyous Christmas.

"As with gladness men of old
Did the guiding star behold;
As with joy they hailed its light,
Leading onward, beaming bright;
So, most gracious Lord, may we
Evermore be led to Thee."

Pastor John P. Strand

UNTO US A BOY IS BORN

Unto us a boy is born!
The King of all creation,
Came He to a world forlorn,
The Lord of every nation.

Cradled in a stall was He
With sleepy cows and asses;
But the very beasts could see
That He all men surpasses.

Herod then with fear was filled:
"A prince," he said, "in Jewry!"
All the little boys he killed
At Beth'lem in his fury.

Now may Mary's Son, who came
So long ago to love us,
Lead us all with hearts aflame
Unto the joys above us.

Alpha and Omega He!
Let the organ thunder,
While the choir with peals of glee
Doth rend the air asunder.

Percy Dearmer
(from **The Pilgrim Hymnal**)

HOW FAR TO BETHLEHEM?

"How far is it to Bethlehem Town?"
"Just over Jerusalem hills adown,
Past loving Rachel's white-domed
tomb—
Sweet shrine of motherhood's young
doom.

It isn't far to Bethlehem Town—
Just over the dusty roads adown,
Past Wise Men's Well, still offering
Cool draught from welcome wayside
spring;
Past shepherds with their flutes of
reed
That charm the woolly sheep they
lead;
Past boys with kites on hilltops fly-
ing—
And soon you're there, where Beth-
lehem's lying,
Sunned white and sweet on olived
slopes,
Gold-lighted still with Judah's hopes."

And so we find the Shepherd's Field
And Plain that gave rich Boas yield;
And look where Herod's villa stood.
We thrill that earthly parenthood
Could foster Christ, who was all-good:

And thrill that Bethlehem Town today
Looks down on Christian homes that
pray.

It is not far to Bethlehem Town!
It's anywhere that Christ comes down
And finds in people's friendly face
A welcome and abiding place.
The road to Bethlehem runs right
through
The homes of folks like me and you!
M.S.M.

WITH HUMBLE HEART THAT NIGHT I CAME

With humble heart that night I came
To the Eternal One.
His mother held Him in her arms,
Our very God's own Son.

I dared not lift my sinful eyes
Up to His holy face,
But He reached out His hand to me
And clothed me with His grace.
Marlene Moline



CHRISTMAS TREE, PULPIT AND POINSETTIA
Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.

What Does Christmas Mean to You?

by Rev. Marvin S. Undseth,
Salem, Oregon

Someone has said that the Christmas season for many is a time of getting. The familiar refrain from children this time of the year is, "What am I gonna get for Christmas?" As you have sorted through your Christmas cards, how many of you have not made these remarks, "We didn't get a greeting from the Olsons this year." "We didn't get the usual check from Aunt Mary." "We didn't get a Christmas turkey from the boss this year. I wonder why?" "The carolers from the church didn't sing for us this year." In the meantime there has been the mad scramble in the stores and on the streets—people shoving and pushing in order to get first in line. Yes, Christmas for so many has become a time of grabbing and getting instead of giving. So often we become more obsessed with what people give to us than what we give to them.

The Christmas Gospel, in contrast, is a story of giving. "God so loved the world that He gave—" The greatest men in history are known to be those who gave themselves for a cause. The smallest people are those whose names are forgotten because they lived only to get. Henry Van Dyke has written: "Are you willing to forget what you have done for other people, and to remember what other people have done for you: to ignore what the world owes you, and to think what you owe the world?"

And so we ask: What should Christmas mean to me? Is it just a time for people to get together and celebrate? Is it a time for people to go on a spending spree and spend beyond their means? The daily cash sales in one New York department store exceeded one million dollars. The question that comes to mind as one contemplates this excessive spending is: What does Jesus think of the way that most people celebrate His birthday? Not only do most people celebrate

Christmas wrongly, but they also forget to give to the One whose birthday they celebrate. How much does Jesus receive from you as a birthday present each Christmas? This becomes a real soul-searching question, doesn't it? What He wants from you and me more than anything else is our hearts. "My son, give me thine heart," the Scriptures inform us.

When we are confronted with the truth of the Christmas message our human reason objects and asks, how can this be? How can God be manifest in the flesh? How can God be born of flesh and blood? Now the fact is that no man, not even the most profound scholar is able to tell how the Son of God could become the Son of man, but this in no way changes or reduces the wonderful truth that the Christ Child is our Immanuel—our God with us. When we look about us we are surrounded by unnumbered realities in this physical, everyday world which are far beyond our knowledge or analysis, and we accept them without question.

Science has found answers to many mysteries, but science cannot explain the Virgin Birth. Science penetrated the molecule and found even more worlds called atoms. Then a key appeared that unlocked the atom and new worlds of electrons and neutrons greeted us. And every new world frees us for bigger ones. Now man has traveled to the moon and back. What is to be next, we ask? Despite all our knowledge, no man (without Divine direction) can tell us how our world or the universe came into existence. Dr. Bade, astronomer at Mt. Wilson, admits, "Since not a single one of the many theories to explain the origin of our solar system has withstood the subsequent critical tests, we do not at present know how the earth was formed." Yet no one is foolish enough to say there is no earth, because no one can explain how it got here. And we ask: Why then should anyone question our Savior's deity when our re-

stricted reason cannot understand this great mystery?

Let us investigate still further into the most minute forms of matter; listen to a physicist's claims that the average diameter of the atom is not more than one three-millionth of an inch and an electron one one-hundredth thousandth that of an atom, that is, one three-sextillionth of an inch. No one has ever seen an atom and certainly not an electron, but no one in their right mind would ever deny their existence. Why then should anyone doubt that the Christ Child is the Lord of Lords when He has left evidences of His Divine power on every page of history?

The incarnation, the transfiguration, the resurrection and the ascension of the Lord Jesus are, without doubt, the greatest of all miracles; and the believer reverently meditating upon them, thankfully says to the Lord, "I know that thou canst do all things" (Job 42:2).

Yes, Jesus Christ did what only God could do: He changed the whole course of history. Even unbelievers daily pay tribute to this truth, for when they read or write the day they count time, not from the beginning of the world, not from the reign of a Roman emperor, but from the year when Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, He has changed human lives, as sinners become saints and atheists agents of the Gospel. Because He was and is God He can change and still changes human souls from hatred to love, from death to life. Not only was His work divine but His life was divine. Our Lord never made a mistake. Throughout the centuries His works and deeds have been attacked with unparalleled hatred—yet skeptics have never found a single sin in His life. Not one of our Lord's statements has ever become out-of-date—not one of His teachings obsolete and unnecessary. He lived perfectly, taught

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Women For Christ

LESSONS FROM MARY

by Mrs. Harvey N. Carlson
Grand Forks, N. Dak.

"And Mary said; 'My soul exalts the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior'" (Luke 1:46).

I believe it would please our Father in heaven if we could make this song of Mary in Luke 1:46-56 our own genuine heart response to the Lord this Christmas season.

Mary exalted the Lord. By nature we are only interested in exalting ourselves. We crave compliments and recognition but the grace of God can work in our hearts so that we can truly love to be unknown if our wonderful Lord can be exalted. Our heart's desire can be or should be the same as John the Baptist's, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Mary rejoiced in God her Savior. Mary confessed that she was a sinner and needed a Savior. The Holy Spirit had been able to make this young woman realize her sinfulness, her complete depravity. She knew her only hope was the great mercy of a Savior. She had a true spirit of repentance "that brings no regret" (II Corinthians 7:10). The older I grow, the more I appreciate that word "Savior" and can more sincerely say, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all" (I Timothy 1:15). I value highly the truth that I am saved from condemnation of past sin, that today's sin is blotted out and I am washed clean as snow in the blood of the Lamb of God and that I can

set my hope for the future on the grace that is coming to me at the revelation of Jesus Christ (I Peter 1:13).

Mary had humbled herself. She regarded herself as a bonds slave. She believed God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble and because she took a low seat, God exalted her, and every generation since then has been blessed because of her repentance and obedience. The normal Christian wants to be a channel of blessing for others. We know our Father is glorified if we "bear much fruit" (John 15:8). Mary has shown us the way to let rivers of living water flow from our lives.

Mary saw the Lord doing great things for her and she worshipped Him for this. She realized His mercy because she feared a holy God. She knew she couldn't have hope if it were not for His mercy. She saw the strength of His mighty arm, v. 51. She saw that she did not need to judge the proud and the mighty. He did the judging and "brought down rulers from their thrones" (v. 52). Mary had observed that He filled the hungry with good things. She did not envy the rich because they were sent away empty-handed. It is a rich experience if the "eyes" of our hearts (Eph. 1:18) can be opened to see the Lord doing great things for us, both in the everyday, sometimes menial routine, and in the deep, dark valleys of temptation, trial or sorrow that we must pass through. It is victory in Christ if we can realize He is a God of deliverance, able and very willing to deliver us from all our fears; that He does provide all our needs according to His

riches and is able to do far beyond our expectations.

Mary studied the Scriptures and encouraged herself by the fact that God helped the children of God in the past. She mentions Israel (Jacob) and Abraham and recalls that "He spoke to our fathers" (v. 55). She implies that as He communicated with them so He would be faithful to speak to His seed forever! Mary's secret of a heart of praise and humility, no doubt, was her daily, faithful communication with her Lord. He spoke to her!

Let us pray for one another that God would bless us women this Christmas season with the same sweet, quiet spirit that Mary had. Can you think of anything more wonderful than if the Lord could say to you, "Oh, favored one—the Lord is with you . . . do not be afraid, for you have found favor with God" (Luke 1:28, 30)?

I would like to suggest we memorize the song of Mary this Christmas (Luke 1:46-55).

"Ah, dearest Jesus, holy Child,
Make Thee a bed, soft, undefiled,
Within my heart, and let it be
A quiet chamber, kept for Thee."

—Martin Luther



WMF REMINDERS

The project for December is General Fund. This is such a busy fund serving in so many areas, such as administrative expense, promotional literature and helping WMF projects which do not reach their projected goals.

January is our last chance to reach our goal in Church Extension. This project is so important as there are so many areas that need help right here in our own beloved United States. Let us pray much for this project.

Be planning now to attend the WMF Workshop at the Winter Bible Conference in Dalton, Minnesota, February 7, Friday, at 4:30 p.m.

Mrs. Robert Dietsche
WMF President

Musings of a Mother at Christmas

by Mrs. Amos Dyrud, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Light snow was covering the foot-deep mantle left from yesterday's storm. From her cozy apartment Maria could see folks hurrying to pick up last minute groceries from the corner store. Some little children were playing with a sled in the yard across the street—Mom maybe needed a little quiet to finish up the preparations for Christmas Eve! The bell of the Salvation Army couple on the corner reminded her of those who were facing a bleak Christmas.

For Maria, this was not to be a typical Christmas Eve. None of the children could come home for Christmas. Being Maria had to work on Christmas Day (at the nursing home two blocks away) she decided to spend a quiet Christmas Eve at home alone instead of trying to get away and going to the home of one of the children.

It was 4 o'clock. The lefse was made and the lutefisk was ready to heat. All else was ready. Even if she was to eat alone, Maria wanted a few traditions of Christmases past—even for just herself!

"Four o'clock is a bit early to think of eating my supper," she thought, "so I will just sit here by the window and rest awhile." She turned on the radio to hear Christmas music, snapped on the lights of the little Christmas tree and sat down in her favorite easy-chair rocker with a quiet contentment and inner peace.

"Hark! the herald angels sing,
Glory to the newborn King;

Peace on earth, and mercy mild

God and sinners reconciled," sang the joyful choir over the radio. And Maria's heart and mind drifted on to think—"This is my 64th Christmas. It doesn't seem too long since my own childhood. How awesomely holy Christmas Eve was to us as children. EVERYTHING had to be done and finished by Christmas—the butchering and canning of meat, housecleaning, baking for big family reunion din-

ners and neighborhood visitors; EVERYTHING had to get done. I wonder how they did it! Then Mother would tell of her childhood—how Grandma, who was in very poor health, would think out loud, 'I wonder who will bake for you children next Christmas' . . . but Grandma lived to a ripe old age. She was such a good old soul. She loved us so and all the young folks in the neighborhood loved her, too.

"And then, Mother and Father, how they worked and how well they took care of us. The precious memories of wonderful times together through all the years—when we were little and when our children were little—bless their memory, Lord. Thank You for the Christian up-bringing and the loving home.

"I wonder if our children feel this same holy awe of Christmas. Or have times changed? . . . No, I think they do feel it, too. Yes, You have been so good to us.

"When Hans lived and the children were small, how happy we all were. The gifts at Christmas were not so big. We struggled to make ends meet but we had a home and enough to eat and clothes to wear. You fulfilled your promises, Heavenly Father. Oh, how I have missed Hans these twelve years! But You have given strength for each day. He is Home with You; I must not wish him back.

"But, oh, how my heart aches for Andrew! For two years now I have not heard from him directly. Why did he go so wayward? Andrew, Andrew, I feel toward you like Jesus felt toward Jerusalem when He said, 'How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!' Oh, Andrew, 'There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.' O dear Lord, have mercy on Andrew and save him. I plead the blood of Jesus to protect him and to save his soul. I claim your



promises for answers to prayer, Heavenly Father. 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.' And then this one that I come back to so often from Phil. 4:6: 'Have no anxiety about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.' Again I pray, Lord, save Andrew's soul—cost what it may. Help me to cast this anxiety on you, Lord, AND LEAVE IT THERE . . . yes, 'leave it there,' that is what is so hard for me to do! But then, I see in this verse: 'by prayer and supplication'—that means constant and continuous prayer, doesn't it? So, just what is Your will in this? Leave this burden with You or continue praying for him? Yes, You say 'pray without ceasing.' I guess it all means to keep praying but to trust You will answer in Your own time and way . . . And then Your Word says 'with thanksgiving'—yea, Lord, I do thank and praise You for each of my children. What blessings they are!

"Thank you, too, for Andrew, and the childlike faith he had as a little lad. How loving he was! Wherever he is tonight, have mercy on him. Surely, he must remember tonight is your birthday, Lord Jesus . . . Oh, if that phone would ring or the knocking on the door could be Andrew! Dear Lord, in Your time and Your way. Help me to be patient. May this burden work in me what you want to accomplish in me. Cleanse me and forgive me all my sins and shortcomings. Make me into the vessel for You that You want. And again, I plead the blood

of Jesus Christ to protect Andrew from all harm and danger—from sin and death—from eternal death. Thank You, Lord.

“And there is Jasper. He was only 19 when he took over the home farm. He was a good son to me and a good big brother to Andrew and Sylvia the years we worked there together after Hans died. Carrie is a good wife for Jasper and their two boys are fine little fellows. Bless them much tonight and always, Lord. Thank You for them. It will be so good to see them when I go there for New Year’s Day. But, Lord, I have concerns for them, too. They are active in church there—our home church. But they have such a liberal pastor—and this liberalism has come upon them there in such a subtle way that Jasper and Carrie don’t seem to realize the dangers. When I saw Tad and Jimmy’s Sunday School books and what they are learning . . . Lord, I must bring this anxiety to You again, too. WAKE THEM UP, LORD. Jasper and Carrie don’t realize that even though they themselves may be ‘established in the truth’ and will maybe never have doubts about Your Word as being Your true and holy Word from beginning to end in the Bible—but what about Tad and Jimmy? What kind of solid faith can they get from what they are learning? I plead with You to save and keep them true to You.

“Sylvia! What an evening for her! Tonight she is meeting Jack’s folks. How happy she sounded when she called and told me she received her diamond during Thanksgiving vacation. This is the first time Sylvia has been away from home for Christmas Eve. . . . It seems such a short time ago when we were driving to church for the Sunday School Christmas program. Andrew was telling that his teacher said that if they spoke their pieces loud and good they would get a present. Sylvia piped up, ‘My teacher did not say that. I don’t even have a piece! All we do is sing!’ To comfort her and admonish her, Andrew said to Sylvia, ‘If you sing good and sing loud maybe you will get something, too.’ And I don’t remember when I have so suddenly gotten so warm as then—those little pre-schoolers got up to sing and one voice stood out louder than all the rest and led the group

faster and faster, came to the end of the song and started over, sang it through again—one voice above all the rest—and would have gone through it again had not their teacher helped bring the song to a close! I, too, can chuckle now like the whole church did then.

“My dear little Sylvia! Thank You for answers to prayer for Sylvia, Lord. She and Jack have surrendered their lives to Christ and are humble, growing Christians. They plan to be married after she finishes college next June. . . . For some time many were the moments of concern for her, too. How I feared that Satan would win a victory there. It is unbelievable to hear some of the things that are taught and being accepted as truth in the schools now. Things so absolutely unBiblical! Some of these things have crept in so stealthily—and then now they come out so strongly and boldly as to make them seem to be truth and make the Bible a lie! Truly, these must be the last days we are living in—when people can become so gullible for what is so against your teachings, Lord. Oh God, I plead the blood of Jesus to protect our young folks from these wrong teachings. . . . I continue to commit my children and grandchildren to You.

“And Sophie’s children are dear to me, too. Sophie and Charles are Home with You. The children don’t have their parents to counsel them and intercede for them. So, Lord, I commit them to You. All of them, Lord; help them to surrender completely to You when they are young. You have a perfect plan for each of them. Don’t let them spoil Your plan. They may have to settle for Your second or third best if they will not surrender to You early enough in life. Oh, if they only knew how Your way is the best way—the joyful way, even! Help them to give You a chance to speak to them, Lord. Help them to turn off their rock and roll music and tune in to You so You can be heard! Help them to realize that You will not always strive—that the day may come upon them unawares—as in the days of Noah—and like the Ten Virgins where five were not ready for the Bridegroom. . . .”

“What’s that?” Maria went to open the door to hear better. In his booming voice and through an amplifier, the

“Salvation Army man” was singing “The King is Coming.” Shivers of joy and excitement ran up Maria’s spine as she listened and thought of Christ’s return—joy for herself and all the redeemed—but joy mixed with sadness as she thought of the many who would be caught unawares—especially her own unsaved loved ones. “O Lord, have mercy!” To renew her strength and courage, Maria quoted to herself and to her Lord some Bible promises again:

“All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt. 21:2 KJV).

“If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7 KJV).

“The Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear” (Is. 59:1 KJV).

“Call unto Me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not” (Jer. 33:3 KJV). “Truly, Lord, You do give victory! I praise Your Holy Name. Thank you, Lord Jesus.”

A church bell was heard in the distance. It was ringing in the Christmas Eve. Softly, a children’s choir was heard singing:

“Away in a manger
no crib for His bed,
The little Lord Jesus lay down
His sweet head;
The stars in the sky
looked down where He lay,
The little Lord Jesus,
asleep on the hay.”

Maria joined in with
“Be near me, Lord Jesus, I ask
Thee to stay
Close by me forever, and love me,
I pray.
Bless all the dear children in Thy
tender care,
And fit us for heaven to live with
Thee there.”

“Ah, yes,” mused Maria, “that first Christmas—how quiet and simple. Quiet, like in here tonight. What peace must have settled on the earth then as the angels sang ‘Peace on earth, good will to men.’ And, Lord Jesus, I have that same peace in my soul. Through all these years the phrase from the chorus we sang at
(Continued on page 23)

editorials

THE SHEPHERDS IN THE STORY

In this editorial we are to focus our attention on the shepherds who kept watch on the Judaeen hillside that first Christmas night and to whom the angelic announcement came, "for to you is born this day . . . a Savior!"

First, we are to notice that the shepherds went to see this thing which had come to pass in Bethlehem, David's town. This indicates that they were men and boys who were waiting for Israel's hope. The Spirit of God was working within them and the word of the angel, even though a wondrous one indeed, was not an impossibility to them. To many it would have been, because the eyes of their hearts were blinded. The shepherds, however, believed God and acted.

In the stable they found the Babe lying in a manger. We are not told that this seemed to them a strange setting for One sent from heaven, but there must have been some wonderment in their hearts about it. Nevertheless, they received Him for what He was. So also it is necessary for us today to receive Jesus the Christ. There must be the kneeling before Him in reverence, the humble submission to His will.

In the next place, we observe that the shepherds told the news to others. Therefore, it is correct to say that they were the first evangelists. To whom did they noise the amazing events of that night? Perhaps to the innkeeper, who so recently had had to show Joseph and Mary the "no vacancy" sign, perhaps to inn guests who were still up and to late wayfarers on the streets. They may have shared the "good news" with other shepherds and with their own families before they went back to their flocks to wait out the night watch.

What an accurate description this is of the Christian believer. He has great treasure and desires to share it. He is not content to hoard it, to hide it or to bank it, but rather wants to give it out, to pass it on. And the Lord God sends His people, those who have believed the Gospel of Christ, out into all the world to be witnesses, first by their lives, then by their words. But as He sends His children forth to this task He follows them with the

great promise—"Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." And the thought is just as true, He is with His witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Finally, the shepherds went back to their posts "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen." They came back different men. To hope and faith had been added a greater measure of joy. Likely they spoke among themselves of the great things which had happened. We know how it is when we are extremely happy. How long did their happiness last? We don't know, but we trust that they kept it all through life and that when Jesus came later as a preacher of God's truth that the shepherds were among those who believed in Him.

It is our prayer that you are among those who believe in the Christ Who came that first Christmas night. Not just a believer in a nice and good story, but in the fact of incarnation, God come in human form, God come in Jesus to be the Savior. Then let those who so believe share that Good News with all mankind. No one person can reach everyone, although he can pray for all. But every Christian can reach out to those near by and by means of his offerings support the work of evangelizing the world's billions which is being done by others.

Ours is a needy world, a fast-moving world, a world which oftentimes seems just beyond our grasp. But we say again, it is a world Christ can help. He's the only One Who can help it. Let's rejoice and praise God that His Son is here. People can know peace and fulfillment. May great things happen also at this Christmas as the news of the Savior is sounded forth in the tradition of the believing, willing shepherds of old.

The Lutheran Ambassador wishes for all its readers, wherever you are, a most joyous and blessed Christmas and a very good new year.

WELL DONE, SISTER MILLA

Sister Milla Pederson has entered into eternal rest. The words of Jesus in a parable He told seem to fit well as we speak of this veteran soldier of the Cross: "Well done, good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master." Her work day had been long and it had been marked by faithfulness and a willingness to work.

The several of us from the Association who were among those in attendance at her funeral in Our Saviour's Lutheran Church (ALC) on November 20, heard those who had been close to her in the last ten years describe her as one who kept doing things for the Lord also in the later years of her life. She was home from the beloved mission field in Madagascar, but she was always an advocate of missions. She was set forth as a woman who had a great sense of humor and this no doubt stood her in good stead on the mission field where, as for many a single missionary lady, it was necessary to be handy at many tasks.

Others who knew her better than I, describe her as a very forthright person. She spoke her mind, yet, I am sure, in an inoffensive way, when all was said and done.

While visiting at Ebenezer Home a few weeks before

her death, I had stopped in to greet her. She wasn't feeling very comfortable that day, but we visited a few minutes. She was a reader of the **Ambassador**. Among the letters and notes I've kept over the years is one from Sister Milla in which she expressed appreciation for our paper and her interest in our AFLC work.

In the beautiful memorial service at Our Saviour's, two events were especially touching to me. As her last number in the prelude, the organist played the haunting strains of "In Christ There is No East or West, in Him no South or North" and I thought how fitting that was as we were remembering this woman who spent a lifetime among another people, seeking to win them for Christ, Who is Lord of all people.

"Join hands, then, brothers of the faith,
Whate'er your race may be.
Who serves My Father as a son
Is surely kin to me."

The other moments of special meaning were when the chorus of student nurses from the Lutheran Deaconess Hospital came forward to sing the songs, "The New 23rd Psalm" and "How Great Thou Art!" Here were girls from the same school of nursing where Sister Milla had trained, and whose garb of sisterhood she had worn so humbly and proudly for so many years, singing the songs of faith and hope at this elder sister's funeral. In their freshness of youth they were honoring one whose earthly remains lay in the simple cloth-covered casket before them and in her life they have a beautiful example of selfless service to Jesus Christ.

Some of you have never heard of Sister Milla before. For others of us her name at least has been a lifelong part of us. Therefore, we take this time to remember her and to thank God for her.

—Raynard Huglen



THE FARM IN WINTER

Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.

Seeing Jesus

We are all familiar with the glorious message that comes to us each Christmas, telling of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Has this become a living experience for us, or is it simply a story?

We think of Simeon in the temple, who, inspired by the Spirit, took the Child in his arms, saying, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people." When John the Baptist saw Jesus, as a man, coming toward him, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." Peter, James, and John were with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. They saw His glory, and heard the voice from heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And looking up, "they saw no man, save Jesus only."

After His crucifixion, death, and resurrection, He was seen by many, but even some of those who knew Him and loved Him could scarcely believe that He was alive. Many were sad those days, when it seemed that all hope was lost. But those who saw Him were glad when they had seen the Lord. We read of Mary Magdalene that after she saw Him at the empty tomb, she said to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord."

Friend, have you seen the Lord? Have you heard Him speak to you? Do you know Him as your Savior and Lord? Are you walking with Him, talking with Him, trusting in Him? He meets you in the Word, and reveals Himself there.

When we have seen Jesus we are not the same any more. Our eyes are opened to see our own unworthiness and nothingness in ourselves. Other things are not so important any more. We long to be more like Him, and to have more real love and concern for others. He understands and is able to help us in our weaknesses, and through Him there is forgiveness, mercy, and grace.

What is Christmas without Jesus? What is life without the Savior? May this Christmas bring a deeper experience of the joy and victory and hope that only Jesus can give to each one of us.

I share a personal experience. I awakened early in the morning while it was still dark, on Christmas Day a year ago. I felt lonely.

Suddenly there appeared a brightly shining vision of Jesus, so beautiful and real that I wept. Into my heart came the comforting words, "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by name; thou art mine" (Is. 43:1).

Then came the promise and assurance, "Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt. 28:20 RSV).

By faith we see Him now, but one day we shall see Him face to face.

Mrs. Laura Norum
Clear Lake, Wis.

Now we see why the angels sang their glad Christmas anthem over Bethlehem's plains on the night of Christ's nativity: "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will to men." It was because the only-begotten Son of God had reunited God and man in His own person and so could work out in human conditions a perfect righteousness for man and bear for man the punishment of sin, and thus bring peace on earth. So He is the Prince of Peace, the great, heavenly Peace Maker. Thus He says to us: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." And so Paul keeps up the sweet refrain: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

L. S. Keyser



ASSOCIATION OF FREE LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS

3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55441

BUDGET RECEIPTS

February 1—November 30, 1974

	<u>Total Proposed Budget</u>	<u>Current Budget</u>	<u>Received during Nov.</u>	<u>Total Received to Date</u>	<u>% of Current</u>	<u>% of Total</u>
General Fund	\$ 56,000.00	\$ 46,666.70	\$ 5,528.78	\$ 32,486.97	69	58
Schools	82,830.00	69,025.00	5,191.21	41,728.43	60	50
Home Missions	50,000.00	41,666.70	8,851.19	39,076.83	93	78
Foreign Missions	57,370.00	47,808.30	8,690.65	42,782.98	89	74
Praise Fund	18,000.00	15,000.00	1,022.64	8,437.78	56	46
Total	\$264,200.00	\$220,166.70	\$29,284.47	\$164,512.99	74	62

Budget, 1973-74 \$236,202.00 \$196,835.00 \$148,074.34 75.2 62.7

Legacies—\$80,094.46

Dorm Fund

(Includes cash receipts since the initiation of the fund)

Cash Received through October \$167,854.06

Cash Received during November 2,949.65

\$170,803.71

Unpaid Pledges 16,725.50

\$187,529.21

the Legend of the Pine



When the cold winds of winter come
And blow the dry leaves down,
The pine tree still wears summer's dress,
Yet once it, too, stood brown
Upon the desert earth,
When the soldiers came marching,
 marching, marching, marching,
The men of Herod came marching
At our dear Savior's birth.

For jealous Herod feared the Child
Of whom the Wise Men told,
And so he put upon His head
A price of devil's gold.
Thus his great legions went,
Thus the soldiers came marching
 marching, marching, marching,
The men of Herod came marching
To slay the innocent.

The sky arched up a burning blue,
The sun was molten brass.
The road lingered upon the plain
To lose itself at last
In the wild waste below.
And the soldiers came marching,
 marching, marching, marching,
The men of Herod came marching
Row after awful row.

The light burned upon their breastplates.
It sparked across their shields.
It impaled their cold dark shadow
Upon the fallowed field,
Upon the lifeless land,
As the soldiers came marching,
 marching, marching, marching,
The men of Herod came marching
With death fast in their hands.

The light split upon their lance tips,
It flashed across the plain.
Joseph saw it as it faded
Only to flash again.
How far across the hill
Where the soldiers came marching,
 marching, marching, marching,
The men of Herod came marching,
Onward and onward still?

Onward and onward still they came
With steady measured tread,
Nothing before to bar their way,
Nothing behind but dead,
Nothing behind but slain,
For the soldiers came marching,
 marching, marching, marching,
The men of Herod came marching
From bloody Bethlehem.

Joseph, Mary and Jesus, Child,
No refuge could they see.
Around them stretched an endless waste
With but a barren tree.
Such a poor place to hide,
But the soldiers came marching,
 marching, marching, marching,
The men of Herod came marching
And death marched by their side.

The pine tree had a hollow trunk
Much like a shallow cave.
The pine bent its bare branches down;
A better shelter gave.
But yet they were not safe,
For the soldiers came marching,

 marching, marching, marching,
The men of Herod came marching
Right to their hiding place.

Then God reached out a mighty hand,
Each sleeping new bud stirred
To spring forth a protective veil
To hide the new-born Lord,
Thick as in summertime.
And the soldiers came marching,
 marching, marching, marching,
The men of Herod came marching
Straight past the greening pine.

The pine still glistens green and bright
In memory of that one
That in the midst of winter's reign
Gave refuge to God's Son.
Tree green with summer's grace,
When the soldiers came marching,
 marching, marching, marching,
The men of Herod kept marching,
It kept our dear Lord safe.

—Poem and Illustration
by Marlene Moline

Say It in Swedish

Carl Graden slammed his empty beer glass on the kitchen table and swore. Just because he'd buried his dad the day before didn't mean he was in any mood to talk to a preacher. But there, coming up the front walk of Carl's Rockford, Illinois, house, was his pastor.

The doorbell rang. Carl shuffled toward it. He knew what the preacher would say—and he didn't want to hear it.

It was more "stuffed-shirt" that Carl expected. "My boy, I trust you'll profit by your father's drinking."

Carl slouched on the sofa. "Profit by it?" he repeated.

"Exactly. You've seen what your father's drinking did to him—to your mother. Don't let it happen to you. Drink can ruin a man's life. I remember a true story I heard about a man in Chicago who—"

Carl couldn't stand any more of that twaddle. What did this parson know about life anyway? He cocked his head. "Have you ever had a drink, Reverend?"

The other man flushed. He murmured something about thanking God he'd been saved from such temptation. However, Carl hadn't squelched him.

"And this man in Chicago. He wandered into a Skid Row mission there. The Pacific Garden Mission, it was—"

"Funny name for a mission—Pacific Garden—" Carl tried to interrupt.

But the story went on. Some derelict had wandered into the mission, left his name and a sealed envelope with the man at the door. "If I don't show up here again and anybody ever asks about me, open it," he had said. The mission folks never saw him again, and when they opened the envelope weeks later, the note inside said he was then on his way to jump in Lake Michigan. "All because of the demon rum," the pastor finished.

"Well, well, you don't say," Carl

said flatly. He stood up. His pastor stood up, too, put his hand on Carl's arm. Carl edged away, toward the front door. He couldn't get the man out of the house fast enough—to open up another bottle.

Nursing his drink in the kitchen later, Carl snorted to himself, "Profit by your dad's drinking." The parson didn't know half the story. He's profited by Dad's love of the bottle all right.

Eight years old he'd been when he had his first drink. It was Christmas Eve; his Dad had given him a small bottle of Swedish liquor.

"Come on, Carl, my boy, have another little drink with your father," the Senior Graden had roared.

Mom sniffled. "Don't you give that child another drink."

The stuff burned the throat of the boy the first two times: he didn't like it. "The big ones don't burn any more than the little ones," his dad insisted, so Carl choked down another drink.

"You'll wreck his life." Mom started to cry. "He's just a baby."

"Getting him started being a man early, that's all," Dad tossed off the explanation to Mom. "He's going to be able to hold his liquor like a man and get confirmed at church in Swedish. He'll be all right then, no matter what happens to him."

Carl's throat stopped burning. A cozy "bonfire" glowed inside him; he liked it. "Hey, Dad," he said. "It's pretty good stuff. Pretty good stuff."

"Learn to hold your liquor like a man, get confirmed at church in Swedish, and you'll be all right." Next thing, Dad shouted at Mom, "Come on, have a little fun with your husband. It's Christmas, woman, don't you know what that means?"

Profit from Dad's drunks? Sure.

Every time Dad got drunk, he had blasted at Carl about learning Swedish, about getting confirmed. There was nothing to do but obey, to spoil his summer vacations with

grammar study and vocabulary. It was dull stuff, but he enlivened the days by sneaking liquor from Dad. Secretly he gloated over the burning, the glow, the kicks.

"You get confirmed in Swedish and you'll be all right, my boy," Dad reminded him over and over.

Then Dad got sick from so much drinking. "You'll never make confirmation in Swedish. Do it in English before I die."

"God is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient," Carl recited in church one Sunday when he was fifteen.

"S fine, my boy," Dad praised him. "You're all fixed up now; you're all right."

Carl forgot confirmation in a hurry. God to him was somebody who liked Swedish better than English. Carl Graden was all right—especially when he had a bottle handy.

Dad hung onto life and his bottle for nine more years. Doctor called it "acute alcoholic poisoning" at the end, but Carl shrugged. He wasn't going to be scared onto the "water wagon." As for the pastor's warning... Carl hit the bottle harder than ever.

"It's all because of Mom," he explained himself to the fellows down at Sam's Place. "She looks so—sad—when she knows I've been hanging one on. I've just got to come down here and forget about that look on her face."

One Saturday night, three years after Dad died, Carl fell in at the front door, blind drunk. He focused his eyes on Mom standing in front of the fireplace, sobbing.

He grabbed the nearest chair, smoothed back his rumpled blond hair and tried to ask distinctly what the matter was. Then he fell across a chair.

Mom's sobs became wilder. Over and over she screamed at him. "You're drunk again. I can't stand it any more. For twenty-five years, your father—and now you. You're drunk, you're drunk. God, come and take me. Oh, God! God, God!"

The old lady's hysterical, she'll

calm down tomorrow, Carl thought, then he "passed out" in the big chair.

But Mom was worse the next day. The day after that, they called it a nervous breakdown. In six months she was dead.

"It was all the drinking around here that killed her," Carl muttered to himself over a solitary beer the day of the funeral.

And he kept on drinking. Soon he lost his job. He found another and lost that. "You'd think they'd give a fellow a break," Carl told his pals at Sam's. "What's a hangover once in a while?"

He didn't have both feet in the gutter yet. "And I won't have, either," he vowed. "I'm still a man. I still go to church, still put money in the collection plate. I'm going to leave town. I'll get out of Rockford. Maybe new friends, new surroundings, maybe a real break with a good job. I'll go to Chicago. I'll pull myself up—I've got to."

So in 1928 Carl landed in Chicago broke, begging for a new start, and thirsty.

He tried a good job, then another. He lost them both. Then he tried a lot of bad jobs. He lost them, too.

There was a hospital on the South Side that guaranteed a "cure." It failed the week after they let him out. He tried another cure. It failed, too.

He lay in gutters, he wrapped himself in newspapers and slept on park benches, he was "rolled" in back alleys. On the coldest nights, he stood in front of hotel hot-air vents to keep from freezing.

At the end of fifteen years, he knew he was a Skid Row bum, just crawling from one bottle to the next, but he didn't care any more. He was forty-three years old, sick, scared, and alone, except for a bottle.

Christmas Eve, 1943, Carl stumbled along a Chicago street. His shoes didn't fit or even match. His blond hair was matted.

Was that a Christmas carol? On South State Street? He looked up, saw a loudspeaker and spat. "Let Heaven and nature sing"—let 'em sing their heads off. I haven't got anything to sing about. Shut up with that stuff." Then he fell down.

When he got his balance again and started to weave on down the street, a tall young fellow, clean and in a

pressed suit, touched his arm. "Can I do anything for you?" he asked.

What's the deal, Carl wondered. He'd seen the fellow come out of that building with the loudspeaker. "Leave me alone," Carl told him. Then he swore. "Yes, there is something you can do. Can that lousy music."

The young fellow shook his head. "I'm afraid I can't do that. It's Christmas. A lot of folks like to hear those carols. They're coming over the mission loudspeaker."

Carl meant to tell the fellow to shut up. He meant to move on. But he didn't.

"Mission?" he asked.

"The Pacific Garden Mission," The young fellow explained. "Say, why don't you come into the meeting?"

Pacific Garden Mission—he'd heard that name before. There'd been a drunk—a drunk in Chicago. He'd jumped in Lake Michigan and left a note for his pals—at the Pacific Garden Mission.

Hey, wait a minute, Carl thought; I'm not that far down yet. I don't want to jump in Lake Michigan.

"Pacific Garden Mission. That's a laugh," he told the young fellow beside him. And he shuffled off. He turned around when only halfway up the block and shouted, "I'll see you again, but not till I want to leave my name with the nice people at the Pacific Garden Mission."

He wanted a drink after that, so he staggered down State Street to bum one from somebody. He had luck, and he bummed two, then another. Then everything went black.

Next thing he knew, he was sprawled in a dirty, littered snow bank. Someone was tugging at him, telling him to get up, wake up, get moving. He writhed into consciousness. All he wanted to do was to sleep, to forget, to die.

To die? In Lake Michigan. That was it. "Oh, God!" he screamed. "Please God. If there is a God in Heaven—come down here and help me."

That afternoon, when Carl hitched in the Pacific Garden Mission door, the same young fellow he had shouted at before caught his arm, asked him to sit down in the chapel, and said the service would not start for an hour.

Carl sat down. "Look," he said. "I'm not kidding anybody any more.

I'm here for one of two things. Either I get some help or I leave my name for future reference after they've pulled me out of the lake.

"Don't bother to tell me to trust in God, either. I heard about that in the catechism. I don't trust anything but a bottle. A full bottle. And I hate that. I'm on the level. Whatever you've got to offer, in the name of God, give it to me!"

When the young fellow answered, it sounded like the catechism all over again, but he made it come alive.

He told Carl that God was omnipresent. He was a Friend, right on the spot when Carl needed Him.

He said He was omniscient, too. That meant He knew Carl inside and out, better than Carl knew himself.

And he told Carl He was omnipotent, too, that He had power to free Carl from the drink habit which was killing him. Carl was to truly turn to God and receive Him as his Saviour.

The man even quoted a Scripture verse. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name," then added, "Until God has your will—even His omnipotence (power) cannot work."

Carl had to grab something, and this was solid. Could God do anything with a drunk like him? He didn't know, but he'd let God have a try. Right there, he said Yes—to God and Jesus Christ. He heard more from the Bible, God's Word.

Carl Graden turned over the reins of his life, such as it was, to God. At last, he knew he was right.

He moved to Washington for a new start. He found a job, and he held it. Then he got married. He hasn't had a drink in nine years.

Can God do anything with a drunk like Carl Graden? Carl knows the answer is Yes.

He says Ruth, the girl he married, proved it to him. "Carl," she told him one day, "I've spent my life trying to imitate Christ, trying to develop the natural good I thought was in me. All of a sudden I know that theory is no use. Carl, if Jesus Christ, the Person, can change a man the way you've changed, I want Him in my life, too."

UNSHACKLED: Courtesy, Pacific Garden Mission, Chicago, Ill.

SO GOD INVITES. HE HAS INVITED. HE WILL YET INVITE.

The invitation is to the thirsty, to the one who is tired of trying to find satisfaction and peace in circumstances and people. The invitation is to the one who longs for a feeling of cleanness within, the one who needs another power to take over in her everyday life. And the invitation is always, "Come." Come if you have never come to God for salvation—come and receive the Son, Jesus Christ, Who is Life Eternal. Come if you are a child of God—come for cleansing again, for renewal, for comfort, for knowledge, for a new nearness to the heart of the Father. Come.



WOMEN Bible Study



GOD IS FOR WOMEN . . . GOD IS FOR YOU

A study, based on Ephesians, of God's will and working on behalf of the female of the species.

LESSON 1

January, 1975

GOD LOVES YOU! (Ephesians 1:1-14)

This has become an almost trite phrase. It is much overworked by those who themselves have never really considered God's amazing love toward His creation, His image-bearers. but . . . **GOD DOES LOVE YOU**

NOT BECAUSE YOU ARE A WOMAN: NOT IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT YOU ARE A WOMAN: NOT BECAUSE YOU ARE GOOD OR INTELLIGENT OR PRETTY OR SCANDINAVIAN. GOD LOVES YOU AND ME BECAUSE IT IS THE NATURE OF GOD TO LOVE.
In Ephesians 3:18, Paul speaks of the dimensions of God's love.

1. "Breadth" is the dimension of encompassment. How wide, how inclusive, is the love of God? (Please refer to a Scripture portion in making your answer.) _____

2. "Length" is the dimension of duration. When will anyone come to the "end" of God's love? _____

3. "Depth" is the dimension of lowliness, of reaching down. How far down does the love of God have to go to reach and redeem fallen ones such as you and I? _____

4. "Height" is the dimension of loftiness, of purity. According to Romans 5:5 and 5:8, how does God demonstrate this love in practical terms? _____

5. Read I John 3:1. Here God, through John, exclaims over the love which He bares toward those who are His. What, according to this word, is the great evidence of God's love to us? _____

6. Memorize I John 3:1

BECAUSE GOD LOVES YOU, HE INVITES YOU TO COME

And, as John Bunyan has written, sometimes, maybe often, perhaps always, if I am wanting to come to God, I must do it in chains. I must come, clanking the chains of unbelief, of indifference, of anxiety, or perhaps chains of social position, of family, of status. But, as John Bunyan also has urged, Let us COME! Clanking chains or not, let us not set aside (even for this one moment) the gracious invitation of so loving a God. Write briefly what God's invitation in each of these references means to you. Write briefly what God's invitation think it might mean to someone else.)

7. a. Isaiah 55:1 _____

b. Matthew 11:28 _____

c. John 6:37 _____

d. Matthew 22:4 _____

e. Revelation 22:7 _____

IN EPHESIANS I

Paul gives us many evidences of God's love for the saints—those who are redeemed, born again, in Christ, saved.

He begins his listing of blessings by saying (v. 3) that God has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Let's look at that again. God the father has blessed (a completed thing) us (who believe) with every spiritual blessing (did you notice the fullness there? Every blessing) in the heavens (seemingly an impossibly alien place) in Christ. We live here in this life with our feet firmly planted in the dust, but at the same time are seated in the heavens with Christ. Mind-boggling proposition! Yet Paul speaks of it as a **completed transaction**.

Then he goes on in Ephesians I with a soul-stretching ledger of those blessings already bestowed:

8. a. verses 5, 11 _____

b. verse 7 _____

c. verses 8, 9 _____

d. verse 14 _____

e. verses 22, 23 _____

Pick out and underline the phrases "to the praise of His glory" and "according to the kind intention of His will." It is according to the kind intention of the gracious will of God, and to bring praise to His own glory, that He gives into our hearts the Holy Spirit of God as a down payment on our inheritance. In other words, the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer is God's own Guarantee of final and perfect and eternal redemption. So God gives His children awesome tangible evidence of salvation—His Own Spirit. And He places this Evidence in that ultimate of private and individual places—the heart of the believer.

9. According to Ephesians 1:13, what two actions distinguish those who are sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise? a. _____
b. _____

14) Why is He called the Holy Spirit of Promise? Promise of what? (v. 13, 14)
10. (See also Romans 8:23) _____



Introducing our Seminarians GOD LED US TO BRAZIL

This will be a means of introducing myself to those of you whom I have not yet had the privilege of meeting. This is a bit of a sketch of how God has called, led and is each day guiding me.

I am a native North Dakotan (Flickertail), born near a town called Oakes in southeastern North Dakota. It was there that I attended school, and became active in 4-H work, as well as the work of the church, at that time being Methodist.

It was through the 4-H work that I met the girl (Helen Loucks) God had prepared as my life partner. We became acquainted at the 25th annual 4-H Club Congress in Chicago.

After our marriage in 1948 we settled on a farm near Fort Ransom, N. Dak., and attended church at High Prairie Lutheran Free Church nearby. At the time this seemed the life God had laid out for us and we were happy in it.

However it wasn't long till God spoke to our hearts and through the ministry of Rev. Harold Schafer we felt called to more definite and full-time work, especially on the mission field of Brazil, as lay missionaries. So, relying on God's promise as in Psalm 37:5: "Trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass," we, in 1958, made our plans to move to Brazil, with the four children we then had, Karen, Charles, Halvor and Calvin. We now have three more, Cida, Carol and Carlos. We booked passage on

a ship leaving May 23rd, then had our farm sale and, lastly, sold the farm, and we were free to do His work in Brazil.

We worked in various aspects of mission work, Bible school construction, as house parents, in evangelism, with evangelism being a day to day witnessing among these people.

After the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations opened work in Brazil very close to the area in which we were working, and having known Pastor John Abel from former years, we became interested in our own Free Lutheran work. In 1968 the call was given by the Foreign Mission Board and we accepted. We returned to the U.S. for a 6-month furlough, and one semester of study at the AFLC Seminary.

In February, 1969, we returned to Brazil for a 5-year term on our mission field, working in the Bible School and Seminary in Camp Mourao, and in the total outreach of the mission work in the State of Parana.

We returned to the U.S. in January of 1974 and are taking an extended furlough so that I can take more studies in the Seminary. This is where you may find me five mornings a week!

I do thank the Lord for the Association and the Seminary where I may better prepare myself for my return to Brazil and the AFLC work there. Luke 14:23: "Go out into the highways and hedges, and constrain them to come in, that my house may be filled."

George W. Knapp

On Wednesday, Dec. 4, third day of the new quarter, a day of prayer was held. Following the regular morning devotions, led by Cheri Carter, Lake Stevens, Wash., Rev. Francis Monseth gave a presentation to the whole student body. The next hour was devoted to private prayer and meditation. A time of sharing occupied the morning's third hour. The morning closed with the weekly joint chapel service with Missionary Paul Edstrom of Africa (World Mission Prayer League) as the speaker.

Rev. Luther Larson, pastor of Oak Hill Lutheran Brethren Church in the Cities, was the chapel speaker on Nov. 20.

Registration for the 2nd quarter finds a total of 101 students, 99 of them being full-time. Sixty-one of them are juniors and 40 are seniors. There are 55 new girls and 46 boys. In the fall quarter 95 were registered.

The new students are Sheri Gertzen, New Brighton, Minn., the lone girl; Kim Erickson, Badger, Minn., Duane Haugen, Canby, Minn., Larry Olson, Tioga, N. Dak., Gene Froelich, Kenyon, Minn., Jim Odland, Eau Claire, Wis., Mike Rudebusch, Ortley, S. Dak., Paul Jore, McIntosh, Minn., Dave Johnson, Upsala, Minn., Bob Nelson, McVille, N. Dak., Louis Valdez, San Antonio, Tex., Dave Russum, Grafton, N. Dak., and Doug Erickson, Roseau, Minn. Duane, Paul, Bob and Dave Russum have attended AFLBS at some other time previously.

There was a power outage at AFLBS the night before Thanksgiving vacation and during test week. It lasted for nearly three and one-half hours. Most of the students had to eat supper by candlelight. Since it had snowed a little that day, many of the students enjoyed a snowball fight while they waited for the power to come on again. Some of the more diligent went to a public library later to cram for exams.



SISTER MILLA PEDERSON

Sister Milla K. Pederson, long-time missionary to Madagascar under the Lutheran Free Church, and now retired, passed away on Nov. 17 in Minneapolis, Minn. She was 86.

Sister Milla was born in northern Norway on Oct. 9, 1888. She and her family came to America, settling in the Minot, N. Dak., area. Milla Pederson took nurses' training at the Lutheran Deaconess Hospital, Minneapolis, and also entered the diaconate. In 1916 she went to Madagascar as a missionary, retiring from active service in 1951. Since then she resided first at the Lutheran Deaconess Home and later at Ebenezer Home.

In Madagascar she centered her work at Manasoa, being matron of the Girls' Home there. For part of that time she assisted Dr. J. O. Dyrnes in his medical practise. The "My Missionary for a Day" program was begun in the LFC during the Great Depression as a means of getting support so that Sister Milla could return to the field after furlough. She was the first recipient of this individual support program which is still being used by the Women's Missionary Federation in the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations.

Funeral services were held for Sister Milla at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church (ALC), 2315 Chicago Avenue, on Wed., Nov. 20. Rev. Warren A. Sortheberg officiated. Chaplain Marlin Stene of Lutheran Deaconess brought the meditation. A greeting was brought by a representative of the World Missions department of the American Lutheran Church. The organist was Mrs. Ruth Fardig and the Student Nurses' Chorus of Lutheran Deaconess sang two songs.

Pallbearers were Mr. Ward Edwards of Lutheran Deaconess, Rev. Sheldon Torgerson, Mr. George Michaelsen, Rev. Morris Vaagenes, Jr., Rev. Lester Dahlen and Rev. Oliver N. Pederson of the Our Saviour's staff. Interment was in Lakewood Cemetery.

In attendance at the service was Sister Judith Madland, who had returned from Madagascar two days before and will not be returning to the field.

Sister Milla is survived by three sisters, Mrs. Dena Lavelly, Dearborn, Mich., Mrs. Dora Holmes, Redlands,

Calif., and Mrs. Kaia Olson, Yucaipa, Calif.; a sister-in-law, Mrs. Ida Pederson, Minot, who was the only close relative at the funeral; five nephews and two nieces.

Lunch was served at Anna Bergeland Hall at the Lutheran Deaconess following the committal service at Lakewood.

Blessed be her memory.

BRILLE BIBLE AVAILABLE

Victory in Christ Lutheran Church, St. Paul, Minn., has a Braille Bible available for someone who can use it. If you are interested, or know of someone who is, please contact Pastor Francis Monseth, 401 30th Avenue North, Minneapolis, Minn. 55411. Telephone: 612-522-8410.

NEW TELEPHONE NUMBER FOR EDITOR

The new telephone number for the Editor of *The Lutheran Ambassador* is 612-546-6053. Kindly make a note of this.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

Not many welcomed Thee to earth,
Thou great incarnate Word,
And Bethlehem in blindness failed
To own her new-born Lord.

'Twas in a stable—for no inn
Would ope its doors to Thee—
Thou wast received a welcome guest
By utter poverty.

Thou cam'st to men of humble heart—
For they had need of Thee—
And made them rich with joy and
peace
In Thy nativity.

Come now to us with peace and love
To banish doubt and fear,
And bring to naught the power of sin
That often grieves us here.

We hail Thy coming, Prince of Peace,
This happy Christmas Day.
Our hearts we give to be Thy Throne,
And gladly own Thy sway.

P. K. Lawrence Bueide
(from *The Dial*, February, 1930)

(Continued from page 9)

perfectly, and this alone makes Him more than human. Yes, He is God manifest in the flesh. And the Word—Jesus Christ—became flesh and dwelt among us. This is what Christmas means to the Christian. This is the Christmas miracle.

In the Gospel of John there are two words on which the Gospel is built. They are the words Life and Light. John develops and expands on these words throughout the Gospel account. The Gospel of John begins and ends with life. At the beginning of the Gospel account he reminds us that Jesus is Life. It was Jesus' desire that you and I might receive Him so that we could have eternal life. Jesus, speaking to His contemporaries in His day, said: "You refuse to come to Me that you may have life" (John 5:40). Just as they had no room for Jesus in the first Christmas, so over the centuries many have had no room for Jesus in their hearts or homes. Until you and I accept Jesus and take Him as our Savior and enthrone Him as King we cannot say that we have life but only an existence. "He Who has (possesses) the Son has (eternal) life" (I John 5:12). He must possess us and we in turn must possess Him. How is it with you? Have you personally appropriated as your Lord and Savior the gift of God's Son? For those who have not done so the invitations of John 1:14 and Revelation 3:20 are for you to personally appropriate for yourself. For only when you do this can Christmas be what it should be for you, a blessed Christmas.



"But when the time had fully come,
God sent forth His Son, born of woman,
born under the law, to redeem
those who were under the law, so that
we might receive adoption as sons."
Galatians 4:4, 5

"And the Word became flesh and
dwelt among us, full of grace and
truth; we have beheld His glory, glory
as of the only Son from the Father."

John 1:14

Christmas Eve in a Malagasy Village

by Roger Ose

Rain had been falling off and on for a week. Roads were bad, and I knew the logging road into the mountain village of Tanitsara would be particularly bad. I left home at 8 a.m., in order to get to the village for the 11 a.m. service. It took a full three hours to go the 20 miles into the village with the Jeep.

When I got there I sat down on straw mats on the floor with the local chief and several town elders. They decided that we should not have a service in the morning because of the rain. Rather, we should go around and visit people and invite them to the Christmas Eve service.

So that afternoon we visited folks and also helped decorate the church. The children tied several tall palm branches together to make their Christmas tree. The "tree" was placed in front of the small church building and they tied on a hundred or more little bunches of blue and orange flowers. The women brought straw mats to lay around the floor of the church so people wouldn't have to sit in the mud.

The church was filled to capacity half an hour before the Christmas Eve program. People were sitting packed in like sardines in a can. Another two dozen or so stood at the windows looking in. I counted those inside and there were 150 people in a church no larger than our living room. The noise level during the program was not bad at all. Most of the babies slept on their mother's backs. Once in a while a baby would cry. The mother would nurse him awhile and he'd go back to sleep.

The program began with the children walking in procession down the center aisle singing "Silent Night." One of the children led in Scripture reading, another led in prayer. A group of very small children sang "O Come, All Ye Faithful." One of the church elders read the Christmas story from Luke 2. They had an offering for the work of the church. Then there were more recitations and songs.

I was getting a bit tired by 10 p.m., but I noticed that we had gone through only 40 of 53 different items on the program. So I tried to share the enthusiasm of the parents as they watched their children tell the story of the birth of the baby Jesus.

The last item on the program was candy distribution. Most of these families were too poor to have a gift for each child. But the town elders bought several bags of candy for the children. They had a rousing time over that candy affair. It is a part of Christmas that all the children await. Even small ones got their fair share—seven pieces of candy wrapped in cellophane paper.

Near midnight the candy distribution was finally over. As families returned to their little palm leaf huts, they took with them the warm glow of the Christmas carols and the story of the birth of Jesus. Nearly all of the people would have stayed later if there had been more songs, poems, recitations, or Scripture readings. They didn't mind being squashed in together. This was Christmas Eve.



ON CHRISTMAS EVE

There come to my soul
A peace—a calm—
That floods the being with joy.
The sweet bliss that it brings,
The content that is mine,
Are His gifts on this Christmas Eve.

There comes to my heart
A warmth—a light—
A feeling beyond compare,
And the hope that it brings
Spreads its glow through and through
As it kindles the flame of love.

There comes to my home
The Babe of God,
The Star shines within my heart,
The angels re-echo
The glad tidings of peace—
"Good will to men on earth."

Alice Elody Bredesen
(from *Christmas Echoes*, 1938)

(Continued from page 12)

Bible Camp when I was in my teens rings in my heart: 'I have the peace that passeth understanding down in my heart'—I thought I knew all about that peace then... how much more I feel it now... and it will grow, that wonderful peace that only Jesus can give when we are sheep of His fold. Thank you, Lord, for the forgiveness of sins, for the finished work of redemption. Cleanse me, wash me, keep me—and all my children. Thank you, Jesus. And all those dear old folks at the Home—comfort and cheer them tonight, and undertake for each one of them. Bless them, Lord."

With that, Maria buoyantly left her chair and lustily sang "Joy to the World, the Lord is come" as she went to the kitchen to prepare her supper.

The telephone rang. "Could it be..." she thought as she eagerly reached for the phone... She hung it up carefully as she slowly returned to open the package of lutefisk. "Wrong number," she sighed.

"Andrew, Andrew, what about Andrew?"

"The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep
darkness
on them has light shined.

Isaiah 9:2



OUR WRITERS IN THIS ISSUE

Already identified, **Don Rodvold** is director of music at Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Minneapolis... **Rev. Laurel Udden** is acting director of the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement and an AFLC pastor... **Susan M. Nordvall** is the wife of Gustav Nordvall, lay pastor of Badger Creek and Oiland Churches in northern Minnesota... **Rev. Marvin S. Undseth**, an AFLC pastor, lives in Salem, Oregon... **Mrs. Harvey N. Carlson** and **Mrs. Amos Dyrud** are pastors' wives and **Mrs. Laura Norum** is a pastor's widow (Ingvald Norum)... **Marlene Moline**, a housewife, is a frequent contributor of poetry to the **Ambassador**... **Roger Ose** is an ALC missionary in Madagascar, whose parents live at Thief River Falls.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minn. 55427

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