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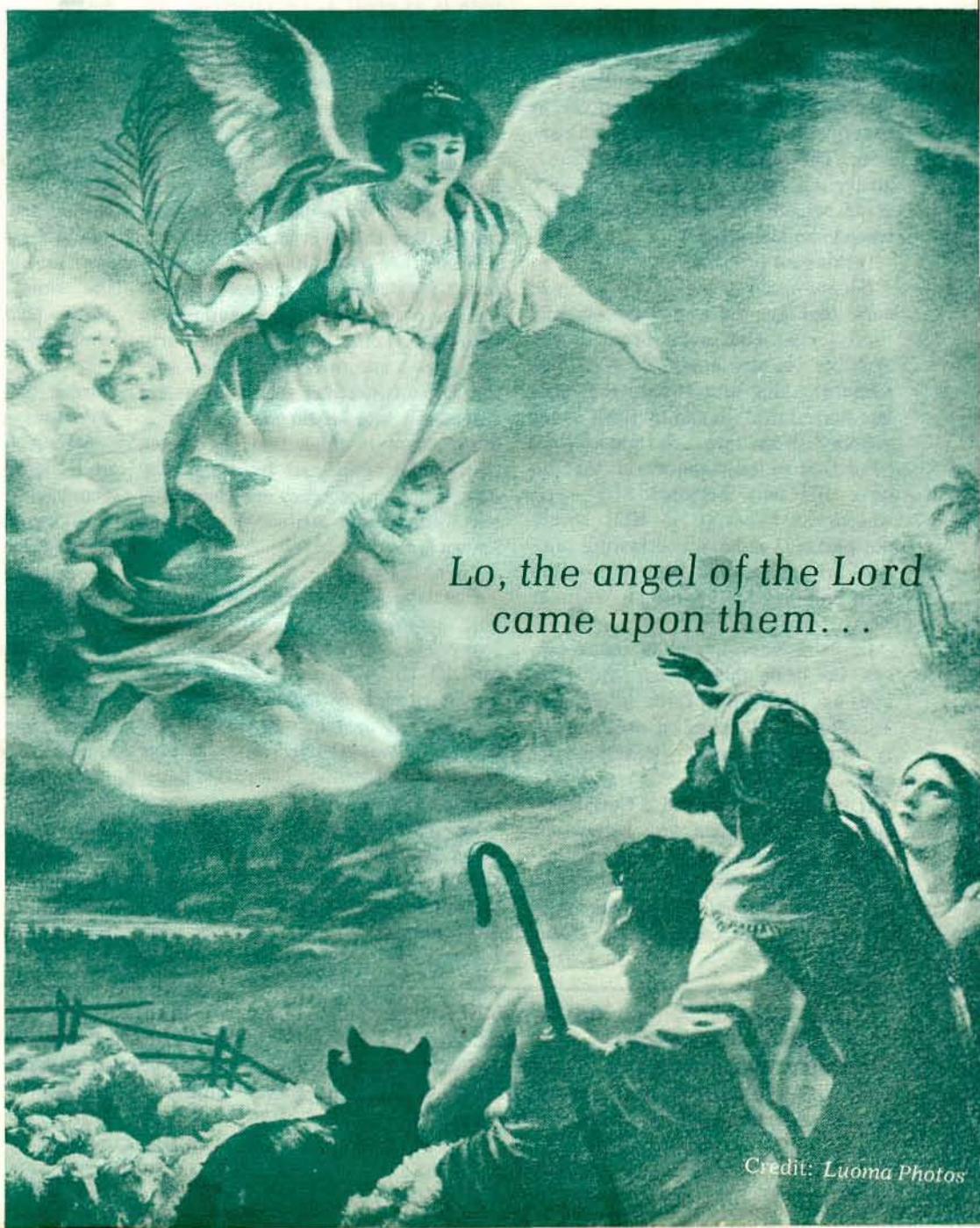
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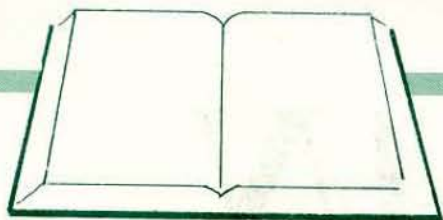
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*Lo, the angel of the Lord
came upon them...*

Credit: Luoma Photos



According to the Word

THIS ALONE

If we ask, What is the condition for being saved? most people would at once answer, we must have faith.

In one sense this is true, and yet, in practice it is very often the wrong answer. This can be seen among honest, struggling souls who sigh, "Oh, if I could believe! But where shall I turn when I can't believe?"

Is this your problem?

Let me ask you a question, are you sure that you have understood correctly what God says about **faith**? Possibly you are mistaken. Have you found anything in Scripture that tells you that "faith" in and by itself saves anyone? What does Scripture say? "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten SON, that whosoever believeth in HIM should not perish, but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16). "He that believeth on the SON hath everlasting life...." (Jn. 3:36a).

In these verses, and in many others, the basic thing is not "faith" in and by itself, but faith in JESUS. Therefore faith takes on meaning only when faith makes JESUS its object.

If you ask, when am I a Christian?, God answers, when you believe on Jesus. And when you ask, how do I become a Christian, God answers, by believing on Jesus. Placing your faith in Jesus is the condition for being saved.

The difference in these two kinds of faith is as great as the difference between darkness and light, and as between death and life. It is hardly possible to exist without having faith. The astronauts who these days walk on the moon have professed "faith" in the "hardware" that brings them to the lunar surface. Also, many various faiths claim to be saving faith, but faith in Jesus alone is saving faith.

What then does it mean to have faith? First, let us imagine that people have no faith. For example, a farmer who does not believe his farm will grow a crop would not do any sowing. Or, a fisherman who believes the fish won't bite would not go fishing. Many seem to think that the known FACTS determine our lives and conduct. No, what decides our conduct is our faith in and attitude toward the known facts.

Let us illustrate.

One day a lady came to the train depot, asking when the train would leave. She was given the exact time, but did not believe the information. So she came back to take the train at a time SHE thought was correct. But the train was GONE! She had the facts but her attitude toward them determined her action.

Or let two people see the same thing and hear the same thing, i.e., they have the same set of facts exactly. But if these two people have opposite views of life they will react differently, for not the facts, but their

faith in the facts will determine their action.

What you really believe is what you live.

Now, what is saving faith?

Soren Kierkegaard, the renowned Danish philosopher, once wrote, "It is easy to believe that a rope will hold 200 lbs. Simply fasten the rope to the ceiling and hang 200 lbs. on the other end and you can see that it holds 200 lbs. But along comes a man who takes the same rope, ties it around your waist, leads you up into the tallest church steeple in Copenhagen and lets you hang outside the steeple. It is harder now to believe the rope will hold, for your life depends upon it."

Saving faith is not the same as giving assent to what the Bible says about Jesus.

Saving faith is not the same as seeking Jesus' help in an overwhelming crisis, such as sickness, sorrow or financial problems.

Saving faith is not the same as to let God "use" you, while you have not received Christ; nor is saving faith the same as having religious feelings.

You cannot cross a chasm by doing it in two separate jumps.

But saving faith is to take your REFUGE IN JESUS. Let Him take your sin; let Him forgive you; let Him give you new life—eternal life—a wonderful life.

Saving faith is nothing else, nothing less and NOTHING MORE.

Karl Stendal

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Memories of a Boyhood Christmas



by Henry T. Quanbeck

My father homesteaded an 80-acre piece of land on the Sheyenne River in Nelson County, North Dakota. There I was born in 1887, as were also my brother John and my sister Hilda.

However, we did not live on this particular place very long. I believe it was in 1891 that my father sold this place and bought another 80 acres about one mile further east, but in the same river valley in Nelson County. This place had on it a small one-room house with a low attic that was used as sleeping quarters. There was a cellar under the house. My father added a one story lean-to on the south side of the house for a bedroom, and he also built a shanty over the front door. I was so small when we moved to this place that I have hardly any memories from the spot where I was born. I was the firstborn in what became a large family, eight brothers and four sisters.

The barn facilities consisted of a low

stable built mostly of logs hewed from the trees along the river. On the north, back of the buildings, were high hills that provided a good windbreak and much fun for both young and older people on sleds and skis in the winter-time. East and south of the buildings, was a low flat hay meadow and along the south edge of this hay meadow meandered the Sheyenne River on its early way to the sea. On both banks of this river were large trees of elm, boxelder, oak, ash and basswood, as well as bushes of wild plums chokecherries, highbush cranberries, gooseberries and raspberries. The trees provided the pioneers of the area with fuel, material for log cabins and stables and other useful articles, such as bobsleighs and skis. The wives made sauce, jelly and jam from the plums and berries.

My father had a bobsleigh that he had made from oak trees and with this sleigh and a team of horses he hauled home the firewood and hauled the little grain we raised to the nearest towns, and they were about 25 miles away. The grain came from

small patches of land that had been broken up with a walking plow pulled by a team of horses or a pair of oxen. For Christmas in 1896 my father had made a pair of skis for each of us two brothers, John and me. We surely made good use of the skis that winter as it turned out to be the biggest snow winter we have had in North Dakota during my lifetime.

Christmas was a very important festival for the pioneers and their families. I can remember how Mother scrubbed, cleaned and baked for Christmas and Father would prepare a good supply of firewood to last over the holidays. Then he would hitch the team of horses to the bobsleigh and take a few bushels of wheat to town and bring back an extra supply of food, such as lutefisk, apples, etc., and also a few gifts for the family. "Lille Julaften" was the day before Christmas Eve and on that day everybody was real busy cleaning and preparing for the days ahead. All the children had to have a bath for Christmas and Mother would take us one by one and put us into a wash tub of

warm water and give us a good scrubbing. The kerosene lamps and lanterns all had to be cleaned and shined so that they would give as bright a light as possible on Christmas Eve.

Father had been working for many days in the woods on our neighbor's farm as there were very few trees on our land. The neighbor had given him permission to split all the stumps he wished in their woods without any charge. This made very good and cheap fuel; but lots of very hard work.

After several days of hard labor my Father had a nice pile of wood at every stump where he had been chopping, enough to fill a wagon box heaping full. I recall that in the afternoon of this particular Christmas Eve day my dad hitched Dick and Charley to the bobsleigh and went to bring home a load for the holidays. My brother John and I were just big enough to go along and help throw the chunks of wood into the box and we thought this was great fun. It was a beautiful and quiet afternoon. A few large fluffy snowflakes floated slowly and silently down to earth. With our load we had to go through our good neighbor's yard, the yard of Torger Mikkelson. On the front steps of her log cabin we saw Mrs. Mikkelson busy scouring and cleaning a lamp. She gave us a smiling Christmas greeting and we called back to her, "Glade Jul" (merry Christmas).

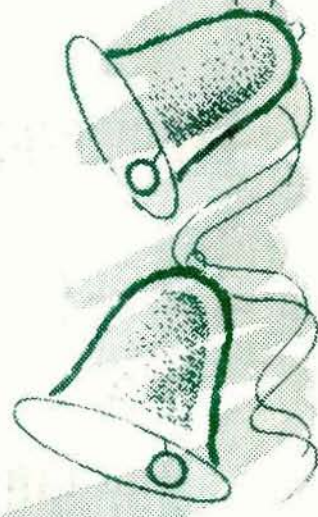
We got home with our load and soon had put it in a nice pile near the house and we felt that now we had both good and sufficient firewood for over the holidays. We put the horses in the stable and did our evening chores. Then we rushed for the house, John and I running ahead of Dad. In the house we found Mother putting the finishing touches to the Christmas Eve meal. Our everyday fare was very plain and humble, but we never went hungry. Our father and mother had come over from Norway to begin a new life in America. They had no worldly possessions; but they had courageous hearts, strong and willing hands, and faith in a living, merciful and almighty God. So far, the Lord has helped and provided for our needs.

As I have already stated, our everyday meals were humble, but the

Christmas Eve meal had to be different. For this meal we had rømmegrød (cream pudding), lutefisk, lefse, flatbrød (flat bread) and other baking and trimmings. Around the table sat a very happy family. We all bowed our heads and folded our hands while Father said grace and thanked the Lord for His wonderful love and mercy.

After the meal we all gathered around a candlelit Christmas tree that had been decorated by Mother, with a little help from the children and especially sister Hilda. Father then read the Christmas story from the Holy Book, made a few appropriate remarks and offered prayer. We sang some of the old beloved Christmas hymns and several of the children recited short poems about the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. It was a holy moment! The center and theme of our family gathering was the birth of our Savior. We learned to know the true meaning of Christmas and the Christ Child seemed to be in our midst. Ever since those early days, Christmas has been to me, as well as to my brothers and sisters, a season of joy and happiness because of our Savior's birth. When we grew up and established our own homes the same spirit of Christmas prevailed. May it ever be thus! Thanks to a Christian father and mother for the heritage they left us. At the close of the program, gifts, apples, peanuts and candy were distributed to the happy group.

I cannot close these reminiscences without giving a personal tribute to a grand father and mother, Mr. and Mrs. Thor S. Quanbeck. They struggled through these hard pioneer years, raised a large family and, with the help of God, gave us the necessary food and clothing and a humble, but good home as well as an education. Above all, they brought us up in a Christian home, a home the center of which was God, the light of which was the Holy Bible, and the strength of which was the Altar of Prayer. Mother died April 27, 1924, only 61 years old. Father died on New Year's Day, 1945. He was a little over 89½ years old. Blessed be their Memory!



CALM ON THE LISTENING EAR OF NIGHT

Calm on the listening ear of night
Come heaven's melodious strains,
Where wild Judaea stretches forth
Her silver-mantled plains;
Celestial choirs from courts above
Shed sacred glories there;
And angels, with their sparkling lyres,
Make music on the air.

The answering hills of Palestine
Send back the glad reply,
And greet from all their holy heights
The Dayspring from on high:
O'er the blue depths of Galilee
There comes a holier calm;
And Sharon waves in solemn praise
Her silent groves of palm.

"Glory to God!" the lofty strain
The realm of ether fills;
How sweeps the song of solemn joy
O'er Judah's sacred hills!
"Glory to God!" the sounding skies
Loud with their anthems ring:
"Peace on earth; good-will to men,"
From heaven's eternal King.

This day shall Christian tongues be
mute,
And Christian hearts be cold?
O catch the anthem that from heaven
O'er Judah's mountains rolled,
When burst upon that listening night
The high and solemn lay,
"Glory to God; on earth be peace":
Salvation comes today.

Edmund Hamilton Sears
(from *The Hymnal*)

PREPARED =

FOR WHAT?

A SERMON FOR CHRISTMAS

by Pastor Laurel M. Udden



"Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us" (Luke 2:15).

This is a season of hurried and frenzied preparations for many special events. Each of them takes time, effort and money if they are to be held successfully as we have come to expect each year. We get so involved in these activities that the end result of the season may be merely exhaustion and relief that they are over with, rather than the spiritual blessing and renewal that should be the lasting impression of this joyous season. What are we prepared for in this busy holiday season? Is the problem that we have a feeling of being impoverished rather than uplifted because we receive exactly what we prepare for? Prepared for what? That should be a question we should keep before us every day this year in this season of preparation for Christmas. This is the question we should ask ourselves as we plan and work out every special event of this Holiday season.

The shepherds heard an angelic choir that first Christmas night long

ago. This led them to go into Bethlehem to see what this was all about. What they saw and heard at the manger was so wonderful they went out to tell everyone all they had seen and heard about this child. It was the birth of the Christ Child that caused their joy and happiness. There were no outward trappings to distract them from the real event, the birth of the long awaited Messiah.

A story is told of a party that was held to celebrate the birth of a child into a family. Many friends and relatives were invited. There were many good things to eat. There was much visiting and rejoicing over the new born child. The guests were enjoying the evening immensely. Suddenly someone asked where the child was. In the midst of the rejoicing they had forgotten the child. To their horror they found the child had been brought upstairs and laid in a bed well covered to keep warm. In the process of laying their coats on the bed they had not seen the child and the one that was the honored guest of the party was found smothered to death. The life they had gathered to honor had been smothered by their neglect and preoccupation with other things. I am afraid this is what happens too often in our celebration of the birth of Christ. Our outward activities and busy preparations smother out the true worship of the new-born Christ in whose honor all these things are done. What place does Christ have in our hearts and lives at Christmas? How genuine is our worship of Christ in our programs, family gatherings, gift-giving and receiving and other events of the season?

PREPARED FOR WHAT? This is the real question this Christmas. What is it that we really prepare for in all that we do?

What can we do to let Christ have His rightful place during the season in which we honor His birth?

First and foremost we must prepare ourselves for Christmas? This is the time of year when we have so many special events, most of them in the church, that we may neglect our personal preparation for the coming of Christ. The shepherds saw and heard something that brought a spontaneous response of joy in their lives. They were never the same again after seeing and hearing these things. It is always more difficult to capture the spontaneous joy of our first personal experience with Christ with each succeeding year we celebrate the birth of Christ. It is true we have heard about this so many times it can lose this spiritual blessing from the mere fact of familiarity.

However, the Christian who walks with the Lord in repentance and faith will find that there is something new and fresh each day in the experience of reading God's Word, meditating upon it, and then talking with God in prayer. We lose this spontaneous joy in our Christian life only when we fail to keep the lines of communication open to God. There is a true experience of joy each day when again through His Word and prayer we see Him as He really is, a holy God who hates all manner of sin, yet a loving and merciful God, always holding out His hand to forgive us if we see our sin, repent and ask Him to fill our lives with His peace and joy. This is new and fresh each day, not because of what we are but because of our daily personal need that is satisfied only in Jesus Christ.

If our preparation for Christmas and the celebration of Christ's birth is only that of outward activity and special events, then, of course, we will lose this spontaneous joy because this comes only by the presence of Christ in the cleansed and forgiven heart. Any preparations that do not prepare the heart will have as their final result only physical weariness with no uplifting blessing. Only Christ can give this when He is allowed to bring this inner spiritual renewal in the heart.

We would need to take a long look at many established traditions that we

have at Christmas and put each one to the test as to whether it is only a pleasant outward activity or if it really helps us experience the joy of Christ in our hearts and lives. Christmas traditions are wonderful and many have much spiritual blessing. At the same time I think we can all think of other traditions that really add no spiritual dimension to our busy holiday season and could be left out with no spiritual loss. Think about this in your own life, your home, and even in your church. Are there activities which, while being nice, really add nothing spiritually to Christmas?

In this day of the secularization of Christmas we cannot afford many activities and events that do not lift Christ up to His rightful place in this season. "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing—which has been made known to us." Let's spend our time and effort in those activities that will bring us closer to Christ and in so doing will give us the joy and peace found only in Him.

The Church has the greatest mes-

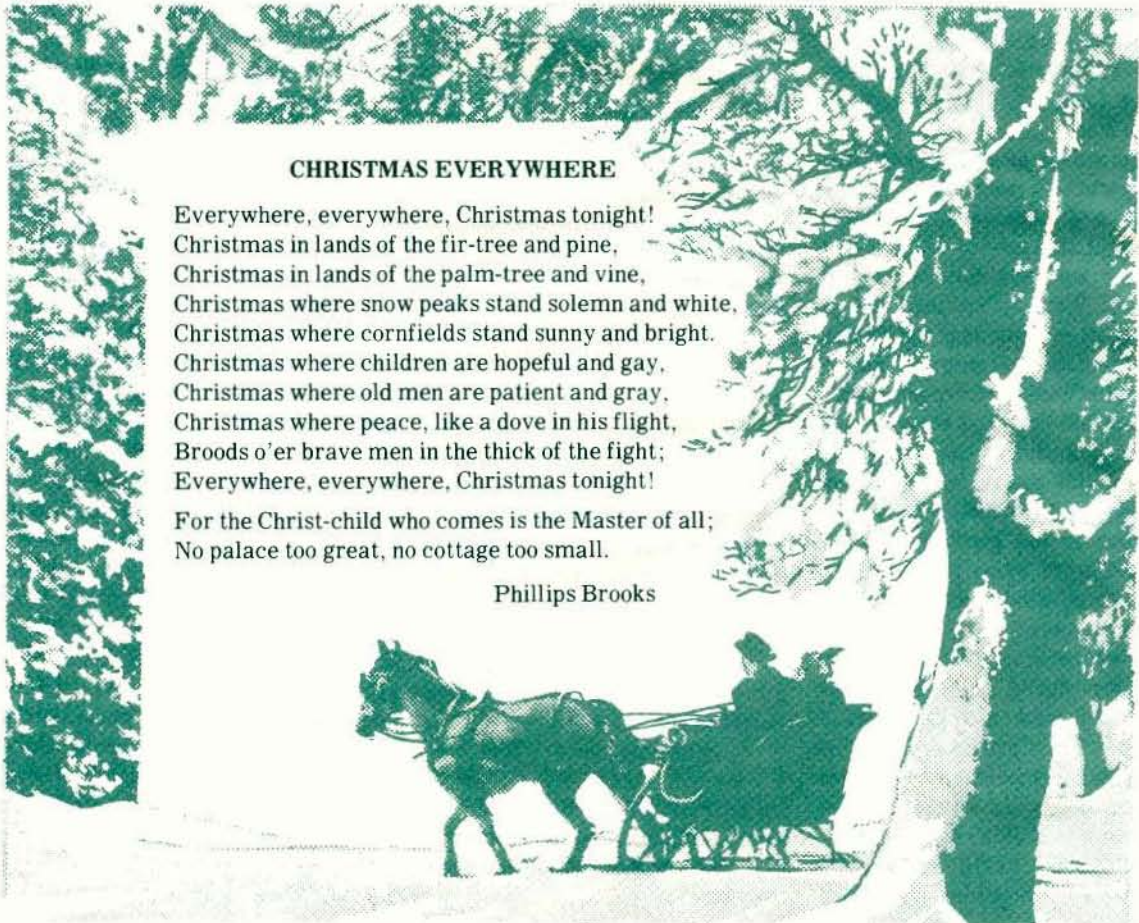
sage and task the world has ever known, to tell about Him who alone is the Prince of Peace. In this day when there is so much strife and hatred abroad everywhere let us prepare ourselves in this season so we can bring the light of Christ to a dark world and point to Him who alone can bring a permanent solution to the ills of the world. We can't afford to spend our time in useless activities that do not count for Christ when the world is burning around us and dying for lack of a genuine witness of His saving Gospel. Let us prepare for the Lord's coming by making sure there is room in our heart and life for Him—to let Him truly be our Savior and Lord.

Christmas is a wonderful time to be reminded not only of His first coming in weakness and as the Savior, but also to think of His Second Coming as the Lord of lords and King of kings. Paul reminds us that this "Crown of Righteousness" is laid up not only for him but also for all those who "love His appearing." Are we really looking forward to the imminent return

of Christ? If there is ever a message the world needs to hear today it is that the Lord is coming soon, not in weakness but in power. His birth as a small child in Bethlehem can and should remind us of His coming again. John tells us that "everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure" (I John 3:3). Again, we get so lost in the gifts and activities of Christmas, we hardly have time to think that He could come back at any moment. Nothing must rob us of this blessed hope.

Prepared for What? Are we really prepared for His Second Coming by being found IN HIM, walking in the light as He is in the light? Let us ever be ready for His Coming so the door will not be shut and we be found outside the fast-closed door.

PREPARED FOR WHAT? Yes, what are we prepared for in this Christmas season, that is the question. "Therefore you also must be ready; for the Son of man is coming in an hour you do not expect" (Matthew 24:44).



CHRISTMAS EVERYWHERE

Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas tonight!
Christmas in lands of the fir-tree and pine,
Christmas in lands of the palm-tree and vine,
Christmas where snow peaks stand solemn and white,
Christmas where cornfields stand sunny and bright,
Christmas where children are hopeful and gay,
Christmas where old men are patient and gray,
Christmas where peace, like a dove in his flight,
Broods o'er brave men in the thick of the fight;
Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas tonight!

For the Christ-child who comes is the Master of all;
No palace too great, no cottage too small.

Phillips Brooks



A Christmas Greeting from Our President

CHRISTMAS IS AN EXPERIENCE

Luke 2:20 "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them."

Christmas does not mean much for many people. Oh yes, it may mean more work, bills, a holiday, some programs, etc., but not something that changes a person. This was not how it was with the shepherds.

An angel told them of the birth of the Savior. They made haste to Bethlehem to see if it was as the message said. The announcement was true; they found the Savior. It was an experience they could never forget. It caused them to glorify and praise God. Will we really experience Christ by faith so we glorify and praise God this Christmas? If we do, it will not be by accident. We must listen to God's message, as the shepherds did, and bestir ourselves to go to find Jesus as the Word would lead us. We will never find Him going our own way. We may have to leave our "way," our "flocks," before we can experience Christ.

Christmas also meant for the shepherds a wonderful message. That which they heard, saw, and experienced could not be kept a secret. It had to be told. Not only did their world need the message, but they themselves could not contain it.

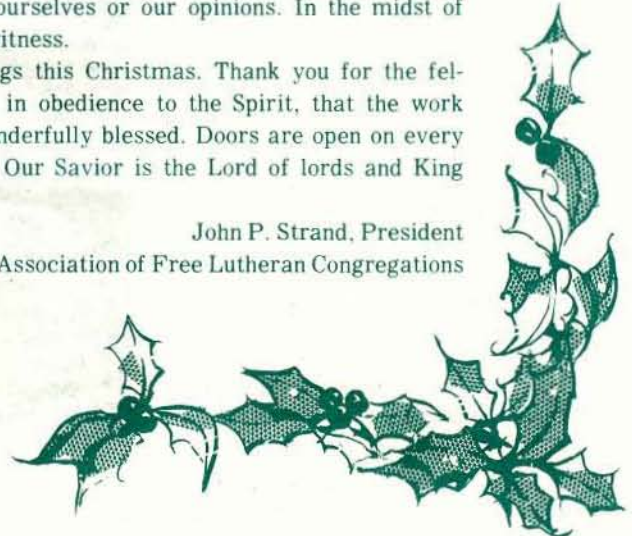
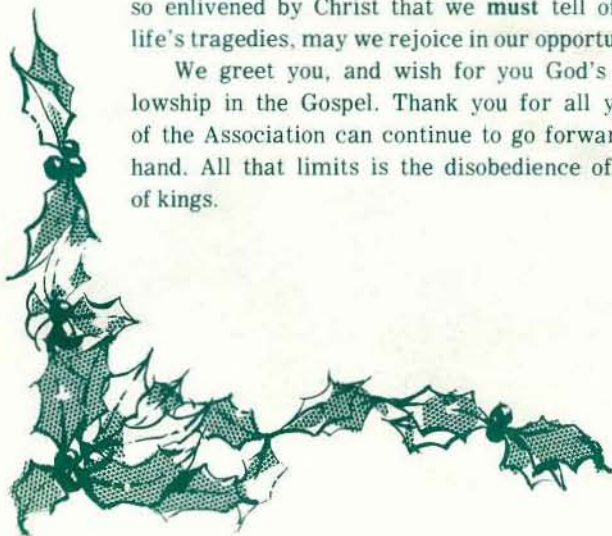
The world, 1969 version, needs the Gospel as never before. We live in what is now being called the biggest mission field in the world, the U.S.A. No thinking person can doubt the need. Christians have no doubt concerning the remedy. The Gospel is still the power of God for salvation. There is no other power that can save. May we be compelled to tell the world about Jesus, because our Christmas experience is so wonderful. May we have a great haste about the telling.

That first Christmas opened up a whole new opportunity for the shepherds. As shepherds they had very humble opinions of their place in life. But after seeing the Savior, they had an opportunity to be in the greatest work of all, finding lost sheep for the Chief Shepherd. To glorify God, to tell others about the Savior Who had come, was a precious opportunity they had entered in upon. That opportunity is with us today.

Let us be still and quiet enough so we can by faith experience Christmas this year. May we be so enlivened by Christ that we **must** tell of **Him**, not of ourselves or our opinions. In the midst of life's tragedies, may we rejoice in our opportunities to bear witness.

We greet you, and wish for you God's richest blessings this Christmas. Thank you for the fellowship in the Gospel. Thank you for all you have done, in obedience to the Spirit, that the work of the Association can continue to go forward. God has wonderfully blessed. Doors are open on every hand. All that limits is the disobedience of God's people. Our Savior is the Lord of lords and King of kings.

John P. Strand, President
The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations



Christmas Ducks, With Love

CHRISTMAS DUCKS, WITH LOVE

by Avis Hoel Dyrud

I was five and Sharon was seven, but she seemed much older than me because she didn't ask so many questions. I figured she already knew all of the answers. But how did she know that I was giving her duck pins for Christmas? All I remember is that when I lost to her in Chinese checkers, I was pretty disgusted and shouted, "I'm not going to tell you that you're getting duck pins for Christmas!" I didn't see why she laughed so hard. My mother had let me pick out a Christmas present for Sharon at Sears, and I had been attracted to a set of little duck pins: a father, a mother and a baby duck. They were happy ducks with brightly painted hats and clothes. Sharon will really like these, I thought.

Sharon and I almost always got along without fighting. When she first got sick, I felt bad that she had to stay home when I got to go to school. But I always told her about the exciting days I spent in kindergarten—tasting paste for the first time and singing a solo for the rest of the class even if I didn't know the words of the song.

I knew all the time that something was wrong from the day Sharon showed me where they had taken a bone marrow test on her. But I didn't really understand. When she got too weak to walk and Daddy had to carry her wherever we went, I just thought she was sick now but would eventually get better again and would roller-skate with me and show me how to skip.

It was Christmas, 1947. Early in the day of Christmas Eve, Sharon had dressed in her new Christmas suit. I surprised her: "Here's your Christmas present early. You can't guess what it is!" Of course, she already knew what it was, but she acted surprised anyhow.

"I'll just pin them here to my new suit," she said, fastening the lock on the mother duck.

"I'll wear them to the hospital."

She was at the hospital most of that day getting blood transfusions, made

necessary by the undefeatable leukemia. But she got to come home by Christmas Eve.

"Isn't it time to open the presents yet?" I asked.

"Wait 'til after supper," was the answer I got.

No other night of the year held as much suspense, delicious smells and pure joy as Christmas Eve. After lute-fisk, lefse, and meatballs (for those who were only 90% Norwegian!), Sharon and I listened wide-eyed again to the story we had heard so many times before: the story of a God who loved us little people, too, so much that He sent His only Son to be born as a tiny human baby in an old barn in Bethlehem. "Swaddling clothes"

sounded so cozy that we would have liked to cuddle that baby the way we did our dolls. We listen to the familiar parts about the humble shepherds and the mysterious wisemen from the Orient. But we knew this wasn't really the end of the story: that baby didn't stay tiny in the manger, but grew up to be a man, who died on a cross to pay for our sins, the sins of little people and big people, too. Then we lustily sang "Away in the Manger" and "Silent Night."

When the dishes finally got done (it took at least twice as long to do them on Christmas Eve, it seemed), we got to open our presents. The cost of each gift didn't matter to us; we treasured every one. Sharon got more gifts than I did that Christmas. That seemed strange to me, but, for once,

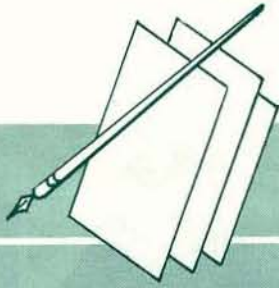
[Continued on page 17]



LIGHTING THE ADVENT CANDLES

Notice the Christ candle in the center

Luoma Photos



EDITORIALS

GOD'S EARTH WALK

At approximately 9:56 p.m., Central Daylight Time, on Sunday, July 20, 1969, Neil Armstrong of the United States of America became the first person to set foot on the moon. In connection with that historic moment, he said, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."

Eighteen minutes later he was joined by Col. Edwin (Buzz) Aldrin. The two men set up a plaque on which were printed the words: "Here men from the planet earth first set foot upon the moon July 1969 A.D. We came in peace for all mankind."

Since that time, and only last month, two more U.S. astronauts, Charles Conrad and Alan Bean, have walked on the moon's surface. Throughout the world the feats of these four men, of Michael Collins and Richard Gordon, and of the host of men and women in other roles in man's space ventures are being hailed. These have been truly momentous years. Man has walked upon the moon!

Now that we are in the Christmas season, it is particularly appropriate that we remember the earth walk which God made in Jesus Christ over 1900 years ago. To humble shepherds watching their flocks on Judaeen hills, an angel of the Lord announced that a Savior had been born and His name was Christ the Lord.

The Apostle John graphically declared the fact of Incarnation by stating "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The Word, John explains, is the eternal God, maker of all things.

This holy Visitor did not only come to take a few tentative, uncertain steps on this planet. He truly became one of us. He "lived awhile in our midst" (Jn. 1:14, Weymouth). And in those possibly thirty-three years He ran the gamut of human experience, stopping short of sin, although He felt Satan's strongest thrusts. Finally, He met and tasted the last great enemy of man, death. But that was not the end. This Man was also the one by whom resurrection of the dead came (I Cor. 15:21). His story is one of victory and triumph after all. He is the first-born from the dead.

Christmas is a joyous, happy time. How much more so for the one who truly believes in the Jesus who came, who was God in a great earth walk among men. May we,

in the midst of all that Christmas has come to mean in our time, seek to keep central the meaning of these days.

It is all right for man to step on the moon's surface and proclaim that he comes in peace, but the important thing is to remember that in Jesus there is peace and that this is a message that needs to be announced more and more right here on earth.

OUR CHRISTMAS ISSUE

This issue of **The Lutheran Ambassador** is already our seventh one for Christmas. Time has a way of getting by.

It is an enlarged number, something we've had for several years. We hope that you will enjoy and appreciate the stories, articles, poems and pictures that have been assembled, most of them submitted at our request. But all of them, and we are thinking of those pertaining specifically to Christmas at this point, show not only an ability for writing, but also a heart caught by the meaning of this holy season. Our thanks goes to all those who are sharing their talent and insight with us in this Christmas edition of the **Ambassador**.

Some of you readers are seeing **The Lutheran Ambassador** for the first time, perhaps the recipient of a copy from some friend or relative. It is our pleasure to be introduced and to be able to hopefully add something beneficial to your Christmas.

To all of you, old friends or new, may we extend our best wishes for a joyous Christmas season. Jesus, the great gift of God's great love, has been given. It is that event we are to celebrate. We do that only as our hearts are opened wide to Him. May it be so.

Merry Christmas!

TO THE LEAST OF THESE

Without apology we say that we cannot let Christmas go by without mentioning that this is also a season for sharing with the unfortunates of the world. Some of them are close at hand, others are in far-off places.

Recently it has been suggested that individuals and families give a special gift to the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations at this time. That is right and good, and necessary. But have you made any provision to share with the materially needy this Christmas? Do not neglect to do good for some worthy charity which you know about that gives food to the hungry, clothing to the ill-clad, shelter to the unwed mother, or friendship to the mental patient or prison inmate. In assisting any of these we are honoring Christ.

For many, many church people the work of charity is confined to one or two dollar contributions to five or six charitable or relief causes in a year. That isn't very much. Seek for other ways to help lift the burdens of your fellow men.

And if there is a situation near at hand where the personal touch would mean so much, don't neglect that act of kindness. A gift sent 100 or 1000 miles away will lose some of its blessing if kindness has been failed at one's doorstep.

Have you forgotten someone this Christmas?

The story of how a pastor was able to help an elderly man feel useful in his congregation.

He Wanted Something To Do

by Gerald F. Mundfrom

It took me a while to learn who Paul R— was. As a pastor coming into a new parish, it takes a little time to associate the names on the membership list with the faces as you see them from the pulpit on Sunday morning.

However, as time goes on this changes, and when a visitor or stranger comes, you do notice them. They stand out from the known faces, and you make a special effort to meet them.

Paul was one of the last of the regular members whom I came to know to the extent that I was able to associate his name with his face. There was that about him which explains this. He was not one to push himself forward. Yet he was not shy or bashful.

Paul was over 80 years old, a widower whose wife had died a number of years before. He was a retired farmer and had sold his farm to a neighbor. The neighbor had no use for the little house on the farm and so he was allowed to live on the farm which once was his, doing his own housekeeping.

Paul was a Christian and unless sick or traveling (he did like to travel) and weather permitting, he never missed church. An old pickup truck was his means of transportation. He was one of the few pioneer members of the church and had helped to build and support it from the beginning.

As time went on I visited most of the members in the parish, but as yet had not gotten around to Paul.

Then he missed church one Sunday and word came to me that he was sick. Up to this time I had had little

fellowship with Paul.

I felt somewhat guilty that I had not made an effort to visit Paul and get better acquainted as I drove out to see him. He was very happy to see me and appreciated the fact that I was now taking time to call on him. When I told him that I was sorry I hadn't come sooner, he seemed to understand, realizing that as a new pastor it did take some time to get around to see everyone.

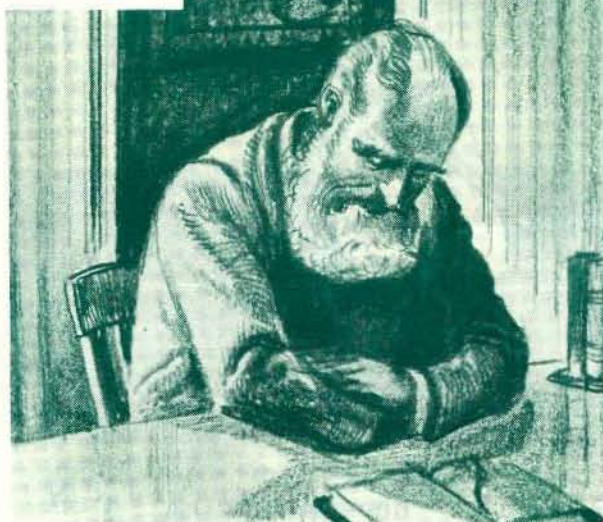
We had a very fine visit that afternoon. I learned that Paul was of German descent. He was born in Germany and had immigrated here as a young man. He had a German Bible and made good use of it. He wondered because of my name if I, too, might not be of German descent. I assured him that I was.

I then opened my Bible, read a portion of Scripture and made some comments on what I had read. Paul listened with great interest. Then I led in prayer, and I asked God to bless Paul and to restore him to health.

I spent quite a while with Paul, longer than intended.

Finally I got up from my chair and made ready to leave. At that point Paul made a remark I shall never forget, and which caused me to think and pray a great deal in the days that followed.

"You would think," he stated, "that after a man had helped build the church and supported it for many years, that there would still be something he could do when he is old."



It was quite obvious that Paul felt that he had been put on the shelf. For the first time I sensed a loneliness in him that I had not been aware of before.

I was at a loss as to what to answer him, but as I drove back to town and back to the parsonage, this last remark of Paul's kept ringing in my ears. It touched my heart. What could be done? What job in the church could be found for Paul so that he could still feel he was needed, wanted, and that he was still a definite part of the church? I couldn't think of anything.

I told my wife about my visit with Paul and what he had said. I thought of making him an honorary deacon. We had no such office in our church, but wondered if we could not have such an office for such as Paul. But somehow this didn't seem to be the answer.

At the next meeting of the church council, I presented Paul's case to them. I asked for some suggestions, but no one had any. For lack of a better suggestion, I suggested making him an honorary deacon. But this idea did not go over. If they so honored Paul in this way, they would also have to so honor some others. So the matter was dropped.

In the days that followed I thought about Paul and his problem, and I prayed about it. Surely there must be something that he could do.

I remembered Paul and his Bible. Paul knew his Bible. I remembered his love for Jesus and His truth—this

was very obvious with him. I remembered again how very much he wanted to help and be of service.

Then it came to me, how I could use Paul. I truly believe God helped me to see how Paul could be used. I would ask him to go calling with me. Not only would I ask him to go calling, but I would teach him and encourage him in the art of pastoral visitation. I was delighted at this idea and looked forward to speaking to Paul about it.

As soon as I had a chance, I again drove out to see Paul. Again he was glad to see me. He very seldom received company. I was given a warm welcome. To begin with we carried on a general conversation about weather, health, parish news, etc. Finally I came to the point and told him that I had a definite reason for paying him a visit. Immediately he became interested and wondered what I had in mind.

"I have a job for you, Paul," I said, "in which you can be of a big help in the work of the church."

Paul was not one to greatly show his emotion. As an old man he did not become overly excited, but was definitely interested in what I had in mind.

"I would like you to go calling with me," I continued, "but I don't want you to just ride along for the ride. I will be your teacher and teach you something about making pastoral calls. I will expect you to also take part."

"But," said Paul, "I am not that familiar with the English language. I know the German language better. I find it hard to express myself in English."

"That sounds much like Moses' excuse," I answered. "When God asked Moses to lead His children out of Egypt, he, too, said he had trouble speaking. God never accepted Moses' excuse, and I am not sure that He is pleased with yours either."

"Let's give it a try, Paul," I pleaded. "To begin with I will take the lead when we call. I will read some Scripture, make some comments on what I have read, and offer a prayer; and you just observe. And we will see how God leads. We will take one step at a time. Would you be willing to go with me to do some calling? To begin with you need do nothing but go along and observe."

Paul did not hesitate. He would be glad to go calling with me. Although he didn't say much, I could see that he was thrilled with the idea.

We then set a day on which we could go calling together. We made several calls. Paul did nothing but ride along and observe. We were both made welcome wherever we went.

After making the last call for the day, I said to him, "I want you to go calling with me again in a few days. At that time I want you to be prepared to read the Scripture. You pick a portion that is familiar to you, and that you particularly would like to read. Also, feel free to make some comments on what you read. You can read the same Scripture every place we go, if you wish."

Paul agreed. He would read the Scripture portion, but he didn't know about commenting on what he read. However, he agreed to try. I assured him it didn't need to be very long and if he became lost for words, I would come to the rescue.

In a few days we went out again. I shall never forget the first call we made. Paul had done some homework. He had picked a portion from one of the Gospels. He had practiced reading it.

Paul read the Scripture portion very well. It was easy to hear him. And when he finished, he forgot all about the fact that he couldn't express himself in English. He truly began to expound Scripture like a veteran. I am sure he surprised himself. After he finished, I led in prayer.

We made several calls that day. Paul became real excited about his new work in the church now. Every place we went he found a listening audience. He was bringing spiritual blessing to others, but even more so, it was very obvious that Paul was receiving a real blessing himself. He was experiencing the joy of speaking and witnessing for his Lord, whom he greatly loved.

Yes—a great change now took place in Paul, as a result of this. This change was also noticed by other members of the congregation.

It was as if Paul had come to life again. He now felt that, even as an old man, he had something that he could give to his Lord and to his church. He came out of his shell, so to speak, and

was less withdrawn. He expressed himself more freely and took an active interest in the affairs of the church.

Sometime later Paul and I made plans to go calling again. "This time," I said to him, "you can lead in prayer. I will read the Scripture and make the comments and you lead in prayer."

"Oh," said Paul, "I can't do that. I can pray best in German."

"Well," I said, "you can pray in German if you like. There would be nothing wrong with that. Or if you like you can write out your prayer, and read it as you pray it. You can use the same prayer at each place, if you like."

"You make me think I can do anything," said Paul, smiling. He agreed to try.

On the appointed day, I knew that he had again made some preparation. He had a prayer prepared which he wanted me to review before we started out. He had left some blanks where he could insert the names of the parties we were to call on.

All went well. We made several calls. Again Paul was blessed.

Soon I heard reports that Paul was doing some witnessing on his own. Paul told me of contacts that he had made, of opportunities that he had had to witness for Christ, and to invite people to come to church.

In my ministry I have made a practice of encouraging the Christian laymen to meet with me in the sacristy for a brief period of prayer before the Sunday morning worship service. I now invited Paul to so come for prayer. I told him he need not feel self-conscious about preparing his prayer beforehand and reading it as he prayed it.

He became very faithful in this. Often he was the only one who so came to pray with me. I can still see him as an old man coming into my office on Sunday morning with his worn Bible.

After exchanging greetings, we would go about the business of prayer. Paul was an old man and moved slowly. He would slowly kneel beside a chair in my office. From his pocket he would take out the prayer which he had prepared. He would carefully lay

it on the chair before him. It was never a very long prayer, but it was his own prayer. He always prayed for me and for the message that I was about to preach. This time of prayer was serious business with Paul. After we had both prayed, he would shake my hand and take his place in the pew. Somehow I felt he was still praying even while I was preaching.

After the worship service I would shake hands with the people at the door. At that time I would thank Paul for his part. He knew what I meant. It was as if he had had a part in the message I preached. Paul would then nod his head and smile. I can still see him leaving the church with a smile on his face. He definitely felt that he had a very important work in the ministry of the church now. And he definitely did.

At this time our church fellowship, and having a drive for a dormitory and classroom for our Bible School. Some had given \$1,000 gifts. A "One Grand Fellowship" was begun. This fellowship was made up of those who gave \$1,000 toward the building of this dormitory.

One Sunday morning as Paul entered my study for prayer, he was very excited and had a big smile on his face.

"I've got something to show you," he said.

I became interested and asked him what it was.

He gave me an envelope and asked me to open it. Upon opening it I saw a \$1,000 cashier's check made out to the Bible School.

"I was planning on doing some more traveling," he said, "but decided to give the money to the Bible School instead."

He asked me to send it in for him, which I gladly did.

About a week later, Paul showed me a special certificate which indicated that he was now a member of the One Grand Fellowship.

"I want you to make me a promise," he said.

"Tell me what it is," I said. "I will certainly do it if at all possible."

"I want you to promise me that you will take me along to the Bible School when they dedicate it."

"I certainly will, Paul," I answered.

"I don't believe plans have yet been made for dedicating it (the building of this building had not yet started at this time), but we certainly can work that out. I will gladly take you with me."

"You know, Pastor," he declared, "this certificate which states that I am a member of the One Grand Fellowship means more to me than the \$1,000 which I gave ever did."

Again Paul was blessed. Again he had had a definite part in building God's kingdom. This time it was not the local church, but he had had a part in building a Bible School which was to be a blessing to young men and women for years to come.

But Paul never got to go see the Bible School dormitory-classroom building dedicated. God had different plans for him. He became sick and was taken to the hospital. As I visited him, he told me that he would not be going back to his little house on the farm. I could also tell that he had no desire to go back. He was waiting for Jesus to come for him. He wanted me to pray that He would come soon.

Jesus didn't keep Paul waiting long. I preached at his funeral. It was not a sad funeral. He had completed his work. His witness had been felt by all within the congregation, in the community, even beyond the community in which he lived, and in the church at large.

I greatly missed Paul, especially on Sunday mornings just before the worship service. But I did not wish him back.

I know that I shall meet him again. I expect he will be waiting for me, and welcome me when the time comes for me to leave this world and make my home in heaven, even as he always welcomed me in his home on the farm.

I thank God for permitting me to know and be a friend to Paul.

"But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law." Galatians 4:4

"For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him." John 3:17



THE ANGEL WITH THE PEANUT SHELL ARM

The following is the story of the angel we will place again this year on our Christmas tree at Redeemer Lutheran Church in Ontonagon, Michigan. The first year this angel was used, Christmas, 1967, our congregation had been in existence for only four months after going through some very trying times and we did not have a full-time pastor yet. The miners were on strike and it was a lean Christmas for many families. Since this story has a lot of meaning for the members of our congregation I would also like to share it with you.

A few years ago I was given to a cute little girl at Christmas. My, how she loved me and played with me! I went just everywhere with her. One day my little arm came loose and fell off and soon the little girl forgot about me. My spirits brightened one day when she took me to her friend's house; but, on the way home she dropped me.

I lay on the ground through sunshine and showers; and then one day, along came a teenage girl. Oh! she spotted me; she's picking me up, and away I go to her house. But woe is me, her little sister doesn't think much of a doll with one arm, so up in the attic I go, forgotten again.

Several years pass and one day, I heard the attic door opening, and to my surprise, the mother is taking me downstairs! What's all this talk about an angel for a tree top at a church? Could it be me? Out of remnants of

[Continued on page 23]

Thirty Years of Parsonage Christmas Memories

Mrs. Arvid Hokonson

"Sweeter as the years go by—richer, fuller, deeper; Jesus' love is sweeter, sweeter as the years go by." How blessedly true! And precious, too, are the memories associated with His houses of worship in eleven congregations in the Midwest and on the West Coast, as well as all the heart-warming Christian fellowship in churches, homes and parsonages through the years.

Christmas snapshots taken in South Dakota, Oregon and Washington enrich memory's chest for us as we see faces of family and guests, decorated dining room tables, living room scenes, our flannelgraph board with the colorful Christmas Bible Story figures on it which we have used many years at our candlelight home worship service before gift-opening. We see, too, a happy boy holding an immense gift-wrapped package, or a new puppy, or kitten among the gifts, as well as snow scenes out West in the mountains, on Luther League hikes and outings. Memories of the time in Oregon when we cut our own Christmas tree one year in the snowy dusk of a winter afternoon (at the invitation of friends) cheer us even now.

Memories of Sunday School programs, choir practices and cantata concerts, candlelight Luther League services, hospital and school and church and fireside fellowships are cherished memories and blessings from the heart of God these past thirty years. We recall evenings of carolling, candlemaking, gift-buying and wrapping, Christmas letter-writing, hours of baking, decorating, cooking, and gay (often hectic!) meals being assembled and enjoyed. Christmas parties and ministering at old folks' homes and nursing homes in every parish. We have shared in the rejoicing of many who year by year commemorate the birth of our Exalted

Savior and Coming King, even Jesus Christ. All Glory to His Holy Name, and God our Father, and His Holy Spirit!

Through the years, too, kind parishioners and friends have showered us with their choicest gifts, hospitality, delicacies, and Christmas baking—leaving us free to minister to the sick, the sad, and the lonely on their behalf, as well as our Master's and our own.

Holiday decorating of the parsonage began early in December as my husband's birthday came then, and sometimes parish meetings or choir practices were combined with a birthday cake-affair. One event in particular I recall from our first parish at Pukwana, S. Dak., Christmas 1941. The country church ladies brought in a farewell dinner and our newly-formed choir from there put on a Sunday afternoon choir concert in our humble basement-church in town which now has been replaced by a beautiful house of worship. Before and after the concert there was much happy fellowship at the parsonage to take the edge off the sadness of leaving our first parish and home. We left on January 2nd for Spokane, Wash., in 22 degrees below zero weather, pulling a 9-foot homemade trailer which was loaded as high as the car. That Christmas week, too, one of my brothers living in Northern Minnesota, and his fiancée, came to bid us goodby and Godspeed. We appreciated that visit, too.

Our moving to Spokane, Wash., through a world of ice and snow and hazardous driving conditions was undergirded with the protection of God, and the prayers of His people, plus the hymn "I have an Anchor that keeps the soul, steadfast and sure while the billows rool—". And the Anchor **did** hold even when the trailer slid into a ditch and tipped in central Montana, but it was soon righted by



some kind railroad laborers whom I think our Heavenly Father had placed in that isolated area that day to clear the tracks of ten inches of newfallen snow. Yes, I'll always recall the Christmas-New Year weeks of 1941. For many reasons. After years of drouth and depression our beloved country had just been plunged into World War Two and details of packing and travelling with canned goods in an unheated car through 40 degrees below zero weather in Montana was of small moment, as we see it in retrospect.

Two Christmases especially, in Spokane, are etched sweetly in memory—1945, when we shared it with our dear eight months' old Stephen Clair whom the Lord had sent to us in April. His first Christmas! Snapshots taken with his dad and mother and the Christmas tree reflect the very great joy and delight of us all! A parishioner whose wife had gone to Florida to welcome a first grandchild spent Christmas Eve with us that year. Then, one year our choir became a "Robed Choir" and we had an early 6 A.M. Christmas candlelight service at Bethany for which we practiced early and late, and also pressed choir robes early and late. Music and song—especially sacred music, how it refreshes the soul and body and mind!

During the war years we had servicemen with us often from the Christian servicemen's center, and nearby Navy and Air Corps bases. Sorrow came to our people—deep testings, too,—one family lost two sons overseas in one month. We drew near to God, and one another, in prayer and sharing those years of trials and testings.

Bellingham, Wash., Christmases, 1946-49, were shared with new, esteemed friends year by year in our three congregations and churches nestled along the Mt. Baker highway fairly close to the Canadian Border. One year we met folks who had a sick child in the hospital—they were from Wisconsin and had found the "War-Work West Coast" a lonely and sad place at Christmas. Stephen was very glad to share a new tricycle with their little girl, and we all had a happy time together. Sickness came, and surgery for Mother later that year, and

Stephen and I spent from August to December, 1949, recuperating with the beloved family in Southern California coming home by train just before Christmas. That January we had our "big snow" and unusually low temperatures, but our hearts were warm with gratitude for numberless mercies and blessings.

Our rich five years in Silverton, Oregon, 1950-56, brought more "firsts" to us—Stephen's first five years in school and church Christmas programs—sacred in nature—thanks to a Christian principal and staff. Our first and only time to cut our own Christmas tree and bring it home, and our only time when dear Grandpa Swanstrom from San Diego made his home with us for a year and a half and gladdened our days with his kindly helpful ways and humor during the hustle and bustle of busy days and activities. Friendships and labors shared through the years with our people in every parish gladden and rejoice our hearts more every passing year.

Our next move was back up to Washington in February, 1956. Junior high and high school years for Stephen at Everett, with increased interests for us all. Pastor Hokonson served as president of the Bethany Home Board during part of the building of an expensive four-story addition, and completing of the same, plus another building, as well as acting as pastor of Calvary congregation there during the strenuous merger years.

At Everett one year, a dear missionary girl friend of mine home from Costa Rica was our house guest, and shared worship services and Luther

League mountain hikes our youth and sponsors will long remember with joy, plus a holiday trip for our guest and us to the top of the Space Needle on Seattle's World's Fair Grounds.

The past five interesting, challenging years here in South Dakota (Faith, Eagle Butte, and one year at Opal) have meant new, deep spiritual experiences for us, and heartwarming relationships to carry with us to our new "Call" to Minneapolis in January, Lord willing. Stephen and Susan, our cherished daughter-in-law, have shared some of our Christmases here. Now, as pilgrims on the "King's Highway" we journey on under the banner of the Cross, finding our all in "Him Who loved us and gave Himself for us." Eager, too, for others to know and experience His great salvation in the day of Grace.



WRITERS IN THIS ISSUE

Henry T. Quanbeck is a retired farmer at McVile, N. Dak... Rev. Gerald F. Mundfrom serves the AFLC parish at Grafton, N. Dak... Mrs. Amos Dyrud is the wife of a teacher at the Association schools in Minneapolis, Minn. The couple spent many years as missionaries to Madagascar... Mrs. Arvid Hokonson is the wife of the AFLC pastor at Faith, S. Dak., and shortly, of the Medicine Lake Lutheran Church in Minneapolis... Pastor Laurel Udden is a teacher at the Association schools... Mrs. Avis Hoel Dyrud is a housewife in Minneapolis and is a schoolteacher... The Dyruds, Connely, Carolyn and Shannon, are getting adjusted to life in the land of Brazil, where they are missionaries... Mrs. Orville T. Olson is the wife of the AFLC pastor at McIntosh, Minn... Mrs. Marlene Moline, Lansing, Ia., and Mrs. Toivo Keranen, Ontonagon, Mich., are homemakers, while Miss Jane Thompson is a teacher in Paynesville, Minn... Rev. Karl Stendal is the AFLC pastor at Pukwana, S. Dak.

A Missionary's Christmas In Madagascar



by Mrs. Amos Dyrud

November! We know Christmas is approaching. Not by decorated streets and stores. Not by advertisements, "Do your Christmas shopping now." Not by snow and cold, blustery winds. No, it is getting very hot and dry. From our home at noon we hear the young volunteers from the congregation, who have a talent for music and are willing, beginning the two-month practice for the Christmas programs. Volume instead of quality is what they seem to draw out from the little ones, and the song echoes throughout the town as they sing. Frequently there is the interruption of the loud pounding of the stick on the wooden church bench to stop them so the leader can make a correction. Day after day in the heat of the day we hear this. From after school hours till dusk we hear the young people of the congregation practicing their choir songs. As the weeks go by, the singing becomes

more "masaka" ("ripe," or ready for usage or performance.)

How else do we know Christmas is nearing? The catechists from the country churches come in to town and ask for trimmings for their tree and we give them prepared packets of used Christmas cards and religious calendar pictures. Letters from our children at the American Mission School over 200 miles away give the weekly count-down—"only 4 more weeks till you come down"—"3 more weeks till you come, I just can't wait"—"only 2 more weeks till we can come home"—"what day are you coming?"

Committee meetings are usually scheduled in Fort Dauphin just before the time of the program, being the parents will be there to get their children. This is fortunate for the mothers who need an extra day or two to check on the Christmas dresses and outfits of the children. This may mean sewing a dress or hemming a new one

sewed at home based on a fitting several months before. For the boys it means checking to see if the trousers are much too short since they last saw them!

Tension mounts for the children and teachers as the day of the program nears. Besides the intense practicing, there are the semester tests and extra curricular activities associated with the end of a semester of school. (Schedules, rush and tension are not limited to people in the U.S.A.)

As parents, we look forward with great anticipation to the program given by the American School. It is held in the large beautiful Fort Dauphin church and is also open to the Malagasy, French, Chinese and Indians who wish to attend. The program is entirely Christ-centered—as a Christmas program must and should be. We have been blessed through the years by having good musical training for our children. Much of this credit goes to the wife of one of the doctors who is music teacher and freely gives of her time to come in several days a week for piano lessons, orchestra and choir. Other missionaries in the area, too, give of their time to assist in this way, so there are two regular choirs—and sometimes three—in the American School for missionary children (which school includes children from grades 1 through 12.) The program is a highlight of the year as proud parents enjoy seeing and hearing their children. Cameras flash and tape recorders are at work so they can be enjoyed throughout the year also.

For the children, though the program is a highlight, their main anticipation is the ride home the next morning (usually starting out before day-break) to their homes—to their Malagasy friends—to their pets—to a month or so of vacation!!!

When we get home we have one or two days to get ready for our family Christmas which we have on the eve of the 23rd before all the activities of the churches begin. The rainy season has begun so we may or may not get home in one day. Rivers rise above their cement crossings and sometimes we must sit for hours (sometimes days) waiting for the water to recede. Usually we do make it home in one day, however.



Children at the Christmas Eve Program in Betsioky, Madagascar, 1968



Samuel Dyrud and a cactus
top Christmas tree

Our "Christmas Eve" (the 23rd) is patterned as much as possible after our own childhood memories of Christmas. We have the decorations in our homes with either an artificial Christmas tree or a live tree which, in our area, was the top of a cactus. Food-wise, we had our fancy Christmas cookies, and we HAD to have felse to make it seem like Christmas—but otherwise it was a bit more simple than is customary here in America. Often we would invite some single missionary to spend Christmas with us. Not only would this enliven our festivities, but for her, too, it made Christmas seem more the family affair she grew up in. The festive supper followed by the reading of the Christmas Story from the Bible by Daddy, prayers, songs and carols, preceded the opening of the gifts. Then, instead of apples and nuts, we would enjoy the tropical mangoes which are in full season at Christmas time.

The next day, December 24, we enter into the activities of the final preparation for the festivities of the church. The Malagasy children and young people are up bright and early to go to the woods to chop down a high tree. Carrying the tree, they would come marching back to church singing Christmas carols. They trim the tree with Christmas cards, tinsel and

candles. At our home we are busy making several hundred cookies to give as treats with the candy bags prepared by the ladies of the congregation to be distributed to each child in church that evening.

Christmas Eve—the 24th—begins the festivities for the Malagasy! The church is packed and even the open windows and doors are filled with on-lookers. The building almost vibrates with the volume of the opening song by the children! It sends chills of excitement down our spines. The shiny dark faces and bright eyes and pearly teeth, plus the joy and eagerness written on their faces, touch our hearts as we think of the contrast of their and our joy and hope as compared with that of the many heathen surrounding us. "Joy to the world, the Lord is come!" permeates the entire evening.

Afterwards, when we walk to our homes under the starry skies late at night, all is quiet. "Silent night, holy night, all is calm, all is bright" repeats itself in our hearts and minds. The setting is like that of the first Christmas in Bethlehem where the shepherds were out watching their flocks. No longer do we feel that we must have white crisp snow to get the full impact of the "Christmas Spirit."

Christmas morning dawns before five o'clock. We carry extra chairs to church (as do many Malagasy also) because the church will again be overcrowded. All come dressed in their finery—many with new clothes and jewelry. Often all the children of one family will have shirts and dresses made of the same cloth. On this morning it is not unusual to have a service lasting over three hours. They like to have their babies baptized on festival days, so there are apt to be many baptisms of both babies and adults plus the communion services and the offerings around the altar. There are usually several offerings because special thank-offerings are given by relatives and friends of the baptized.

Christmas Day afternoon services consist of a free program—that is, families, groups or individuals can sing, play instruments, speak, read poetry (usually original) or share whatever they desire. In the evening the youth of the congregation give

their musical concert. Second Christmas Day also has full morning worship services.

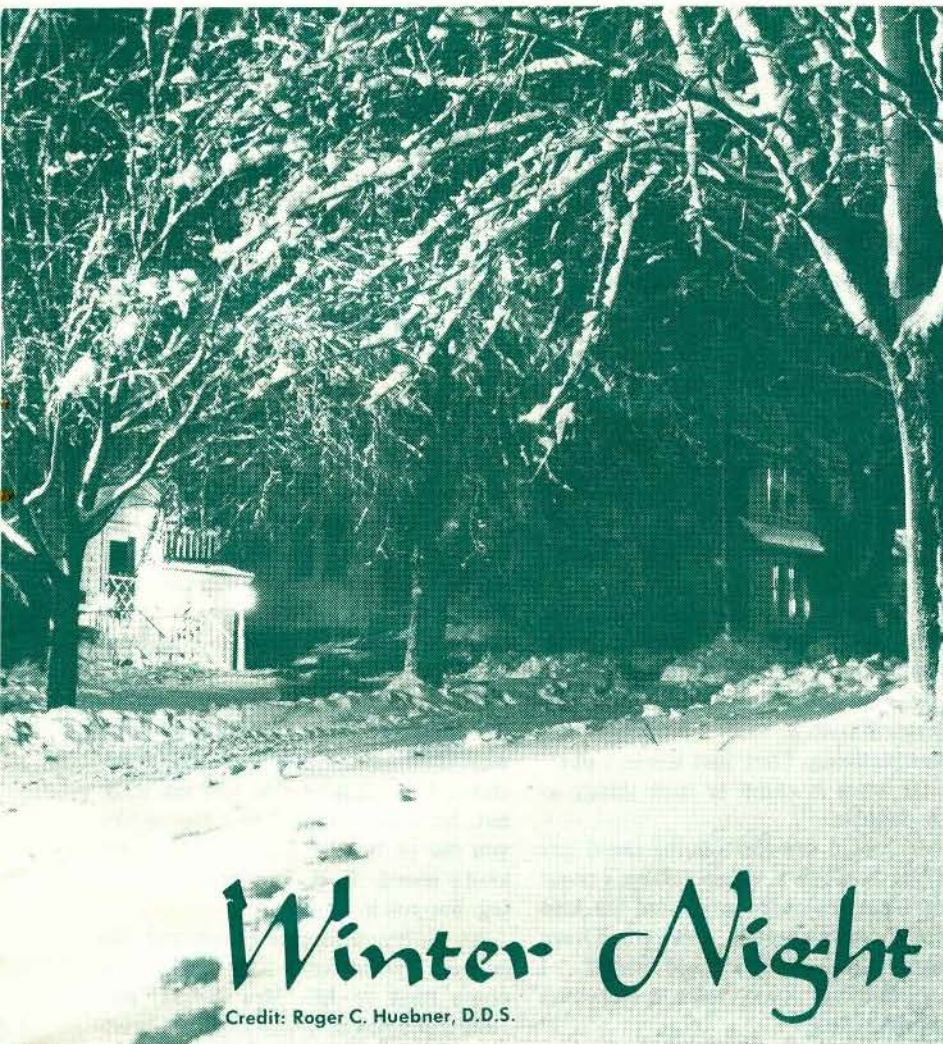
The missionary pastor, during these days, has been traveling to as many country congregations (served by resident catechists) as possible—morning, afternoon and evenings, conducting Christmas and Communion services.

Christmas in Madagascar! May the message ring forth:

"Hail, the heav'n born Prince of
Peace!

Hail, the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all He brings,
Ris'n with healing in His wings.
Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth
Hark! The herald angels sing,
'Glory to the newborn King!'"





Winter Night

Credit: Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.

[Continued from page 8]

I didn't ask why. She got a little marzipan doll that I remember especially; it got touched and held so much that it wasn't fit to eat. And she got many books, toys and paints—gifts I later learned came from caring



friends who knew this was Sharon's last Christmas.

A week later, on the day of New Year's Eve, Sharon was very sick. She stayed in bed all the time. Daddy went to get Grandma and my aunt (a nurse) and her fiance, to visit for the evening; at least, I thought they had just come to visit. Mommy was with Sharon all evening and finally, she called me into the bedroom and said, "Sharon is very sick and she'll never get well again." I cried hard, burying my head in the bedclothes. But then Mommy said I should go and play with my baby brother Brian and I did. I also looked at some of my picture-books. I still remember staring at one of the pages and wondering if I'd remember much in later years of this strange, sad evening.

Some time later, Mommy called me again and told me that Sharon said she had seen Jesus.

"He told me I can walk again," she said, but, too tired, she sank back on the pillow. She fell asleep.

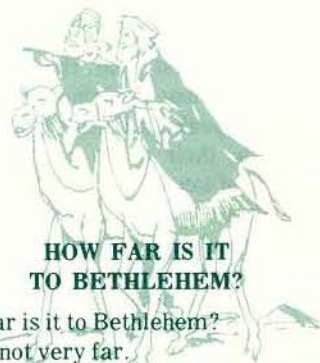
The New Year's bells were already striking and I counted: "seven, eight, nine, . . ." But before I got to twelve, I knew and felt what had happened in the bedroom. It was a New Year's celebration for Sharon now, too—with Jesus, her Savior.

" . . . she leaves to mourn her passing her parents, one sister and one brother . . ." the minister read.

When I found out that to mourn meant to feel sad, it just didn't seem right to say that. Sharon's last Christmas, I later realized, was a precious "extra" the Lord gave us and we still praise Him for it.

Now the three little duck pins are broken and much of the paint has chipped off, but they are a reminder of the last, loving gift of a little girl to her older sister who got the greatest gift of all that Christmas season: the beginning of eternal life in heaven with Jesus Christ, the Lord of Christmas.

" . . . the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:32).



HOW FAR IS IT TO BETHLEHEM?

How far is it to Bethlehem?

It is not very far.

The Wise Men went to Bethlehem
By following a star.

How far is it to Bethlehem?

Hear how the angels sing!
The shepherds went to Bethlehem
To fall before our King.

How far is it to Bethlehem?

We, too, can worship there.
Across the miles, across the years,
Yet it is near as prayer.

—Marlene Moline
Lansing, Iowa



Luther League Activities

Edited by Jane Thompson

ONE THING NEEDFUL

Christmas was in the still night air on the mall; there was no doubt about it. It was after shopping hours and most of the mad rush had disappeared into well-lit homes where extravagant presents were being wrapped and disguised as gaily colored square shapes with satin ribbons.

Only a few were left on the cold December street, heading for bottle shops, late movies and hot mugs of coffee. Jill took one last yearning look at the stereo console in Musicland. She could almost hear the beautiful Christmas music pouring from the two large speakers if its rich mahogany sat in their living room on the north side of town.

"If only I could talk Jean and Bobby into pooling their money with mine, we could make the down payment for the stereo and have music all year around for the whole family. And they could use it when they come home on weekends, too," thought Jill as she pressed her pug nose against the cold plate glass window. The dark brown wood beautifully matched their television set and their woodwork in the living room. But both Jean and Bobby were working to pay off college loans and didn't see the value of her parents having a stereo yet.

"The monthly payments wouldn't be so high and Mom and Dad would be glad to finish them off if we could not, I bet," she thought out loud. As soon as she'd said it, she knew that wasn't true. Her parents were really

buggy about wise spending and probably would make her take it back. They'd probably even suggest she give her down payment to the new Bible School if they knew what she was planning. They just weren't practical when it came to such things as good music.

Jill could see the albums she'd buy if she only had a stereo. "Why, I could have parties every week and the kids would really enjoy it. And I could have music on when I study and I could..."

A familiar male voice interrupted her dreaming.

"Exciting, isn't it? Christmas, I mean." The voice belonged to Barry, who sat behind her in English.

"Yeah, it sure is. What are you doing downtown so late? Stores are closed, you know," she teased.

He smiled his disarming, but uncertain smile, and replied, "I know. I had to get a look at the windows for ideas before I come and unload my loot. You're not planning to buy one of these, are you?" he asked as his mitted fingers pointed to the display of stereos.

"Well, not exactly. I'm hoping my brother and sister will help me make a down payment on that one over there for my parents. Isn't it beautiful?" she asked, as she pointed to the Mediterranean-styled stereo with a red Santa perched on top.

"Yes, but did you look at the price? I didn't realize you had that kind of money, Jill."

"Oh, we don't, but I'd like Christ-

mas to be very special this year. Haven't you ever wished that?" Jill's tone sounded almost as if she were pleading for Barry's support.

"Sure, I've done that a couple times—gone and spent more than I had in my account. Once I had to get an extra job to pay off my debts and last year I even had to return my dad's tool set and get cheaper ones. My eyes are always bigger than my wallet. That's not going to be my problem this year.

"Your parents must be music lovers if you'd buy them that."

Jill paused for a moment, but said enthusiastically, "Well, not really, not yet, but I'm sure they will be. Just think of how we'd enjoy good music all the time without commercials and all the parties I could have. I've already figured out which albums I'll buy."

"Your parties...you'd buy...sounds like your folks will have a swell time with their gift. Maybe I shouldn't say this since I don't know you too well, but, for a girl who wrote a theme like you did yesterday, you're actions are kinda wierd. Well, I've gotta get going. See you in English."

As Barry disappeared around the corner, yesterday's English class came back to Jill. Mrs. Buckley had read Jill's theme to the class. "Christmas is the celebration of Jesus' birth. Gifts are a remembrance of God's gift to us and our receiving Him. Gifts need not be expensive to show our love, but only needed or appreciated by the receiver, just as we needed Christ."

Jill turned slowly and walked down Hennepin Avenue, fingering her unusually large gift for the Bible School building fund.

—Jane Thompson



16. Here, too, He makes His first open profession. What was it (26)?

17. How does this startle her? (verse 28)

As soon as Jesus opens the living spring within our hearts, we abandon our water pots.

18. Upon their return, why didn't the startled disciples ask any questions?

19. What blessed truth did Jesus reveal to His disciples in verses 32 and 34?

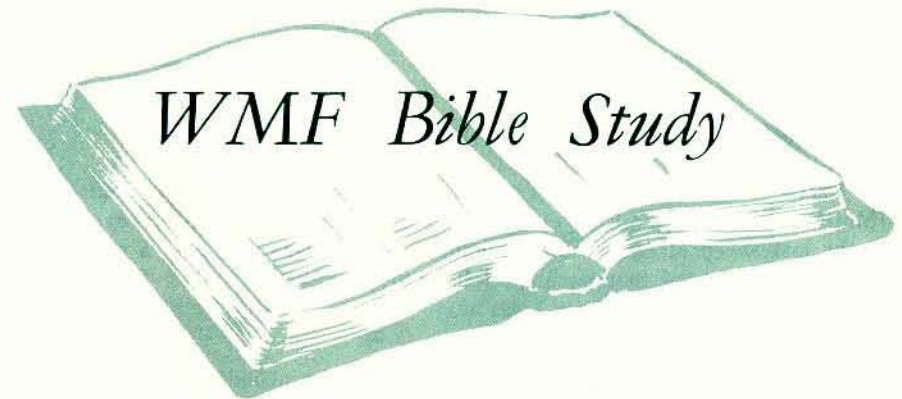
The mind may be so absorbed in doing the will of God so as to forget all other things. Intent on this we rise above fatigue, and hardship and want, and bear all with pleasure in seeing the work of God advance. Job 23:12

20. What great avenue of Christian service did this woman attempt (29, 30; 39-42)?

21. What is one result of faithfulness? (35-38)

It's a united work. It matters little whether we sow the seed, or whether we reap the harvest. It is part of the same work; and whatever part we do, we should rejoice.

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Behold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one,
Stoop down and drink and live.
I came to Jesus, and I drank
Of that life-giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
And now I live in him."



JANUARY, 1970

A Divine Moment ...

... With The Master

Introduction

Many of the great utterances of Jesus were made in conversation with individuals. Maybe the things we remember best in His teachings were spoken in personal interviews with men and women. These "divine moments" provide us with that personal word and that personal touch from Jesus. In our studies we should like to consider some of these personal interviews that Jesus had with men and women.

THE SAMARITAN WOMAN

Wells have occasionally been drawn to our attention in the Scriptures. Hagar, Sarah's handmaiden, despaired having been driven into the desert. God brought comfort to her and showed her a well of water, a well of providence (Genesis 21:19). Jacob met Rachel at a well, the well of romance (Genesis 29:10). The pursued David longed for a drink from the well of Bethlehem, the well of memory (I Chronicles 11:17).

Now Jesus comes to a well, Jacob's Well (John 4:3-42).

1. Why had Jesus come here (4-6)?
2. What evidence is given here that Jesus was a true man?

Christ charged His disciples not to enter into any city of the Samaritans (Matthew 10:5), nor did He preach publicly, or work any miracle, His eye being **to the lost sheep of Israel**. What kindness He did here was only a crumb of the children's bread that casually fell from the master's table. It was fortunate for Samaria that it lay in Jesus' way.

3. Why did the woman come in the heat of the noonday, the sixth hour (6, 7)?
4. Why was it necessary that the disciples leave (8)?
5. Why did Jesus request the woman to give him water?
6. In what way does John 4:10 remind us of Matthew 7:7, 8?

"If thou knewest the gift of God." All things in life are gifts of God; but the supreme gift of God, which men so disregard and ignore, is eternal life, that everlasting life about which Jesus spoke to the woman. As the apostle said, "The gift of God is eternal life." This was her divine moment!

8. How did this startle the woman (11)?

"The woman keeps referring to the well, but Jesus to the spring in the well. That alone can satisfy. Not the word, but the spirit in the word. You first drink for your own need, then you help to meet the needs of others." —F. B. Meyer in **Devotional Commentary**.

Jacob's well is not mentioned in the Old Testament. It was called Jacob's well probably either because it was handed down by tradition that he dug it, or it was near to the land which he gave Joseph. It was thought to be one hundred feet deep. Today this well is reported dry, perhaps because the water has been diverted by earthquakes.

9. Why didn't Jesus answer her question (12)?
10. What was His reply (13, 14)?

The Twentieth Century New Testament words it this way: "The water that I will give him shall become a spring welling up within him—a source of Immortal Life" (14).

"Thirst again! That is true of all waters, of all things in this life. They leave the soul with its deepest thirst unquenched. There is nothing in this world for the soul, and those who try to get out of the world lasting satisfactions for the soul are trying to get out of the world more than there is in it. The world cannot satisfy the soul because God has set eternity in the heart, and man is so constituted, that he has an interminable longing after higher and greater things which only immortality itself and the greatest of immortality can satisfy. Only God can quench our thirst, the thirst that from the soul doth rise." Clarence Macartney in **Great Interviews of Jesus**.

11. Why did she make the request in verse 15?

12. What has verse 16 to do with the water of life and with this woman's thirst?

Compare this with Mark 2:17.

Christ was there not to enter into an argument but to awaken the dormant conscience and save.

13. Why did she call Him a prophet?

That God knows all and sees all is both a disturbing and comforting thought. When we talk with Christ there can be utter frankness on our part, for He knows all.

14. Her remark in verse 20 revived a long dispute between the Samaritans and the Jews. Maybe she thought He could settle the dispute. But her reason for bringing up this subject might have been more subtle than that. Why?

Jesus very skillfully diverts her thinking. Some differences are best healed by avoiding all occasions of entering into dispute about them.

15. Jesus uttered one of His greatest sayings when He said the words of verse 24 to her.



NEWS of the Churches

FERNDALE CHURCH DEDICATED

Triumph Lutheran Church, AFLC, Ferndale, Washington, served by Pastor J. G. Erickson, dedicated their beautiful new house of worship on

by the choir from Calvary Lutheran Church of Everett. A musical number was presented by Mrs. Robert Rieth of Kirkland. Following the dedication service refreshments were served by women of the church and visitors were given an opportunity to view the facilities.

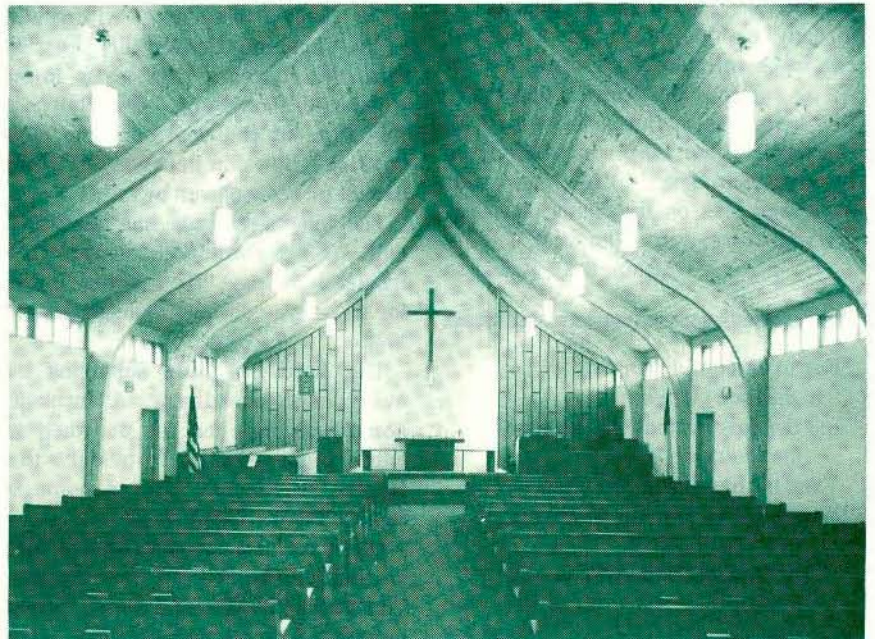
Triumph's new church building, of brick and block construction, is situated on a picturesque slope overlooking the city of Ferndale and faces majestic Mount Baker, in the distance. The four-acre site is located in a rapidly developing area of new homes and businesses. The lovely sanctuary, with its inverted wooden arches, is finished in natural color and adorned with multi-color windows just below the roof-line. Floors are carpeted in green tweed and pews are fully upholstered in a gold-color nylon fabric. The attractive altar furniture, in solid oak, was made possible through a single memorial gift in the amount of \$5,000, given by a local family in memory of their departed teenage son. Other furnishings given as memorials, included the baptismal font in memory of a recently departed member of the congregation. The sanctuary accommodates approximately 300 persons, with folding doors opening to an overflow area directly to the rear. Other facilities include a spacious fellowship hall, a library, a fireplace, and a well-furnished kitchen. The unit also houses 14 individual Sunday School rooms, a nursery, a spacious foyer and a pastor's study. The sanctuary, nursery, and fellowship hall are equipped with a Bogen Sound System, a project of the Men's Brotherhood. The well-



Triumph Lutheran Church in Ferndale

The nave of Triumph Lutheran Church

Sunday, September 21, 1969, at 3:00 p.m. The president of the Association, Rev. John P. Strand, delivered the sermon and conducted the rite of dedication, with some 400 persons in attendance. Pastors of our West Coast District, neighbor pastors of other communions, and the president of the Ferndale Evangelical Ministerial Association shared in the impressive service. A former interim pastor and a former pastor's widow also spoke briefly. There were greetings read from congregations, and pastors who were unable to attend. Floral tributes in honor of the occasion were given by local churches and sister congregations of the District. Choral numbers were presented by the local choir and



designed kitchen is a project of the Dorcas Society. While the Church building was under contract by the Kealiher Company of Wheat Ridge, Colorado, some of the finishing work was done by members of the congregation. Total cost to date is approximately \$160,000. Some work remains yet to be completed, particularly in the parking area and the church grounds.

Triumph Lutheran was formed in 1967 by a merger of two former AFLC congregations: First Lutheran of Ferndale and Golgatha Lutheran of rural Blaine. Due to growing industrialization in this area at the present time, the two congregations sold their former properties and constructed this fine new edifice. There is a steady influx of new people in the Ferndale area and new faces appear in the Sunday School and Worship Services almost every Sunday.

Concerned that the keynote of our new church be "evangelism," the congregation sponsored a two-week series of evangelistic services directly following the day of dedication. Beginning September 23rd, the Windahl brothers (Arnold and William) were with us for a period of two weeks, with services nightly except Saturday. Their dynamic messages in spoken word and in song left indelible impressions upon our hearts. A spiritual renewal was felt throughout the church and we rejoice in at least one known conversion. The board of deacons is already making plans for a similar two-week mission some time in 1970. As we consider the growing opportunities before us in this area, we recall the words of our Lord when He passed through Samaria... "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already unto harvest."

Pastor J. G. Erickson

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"For to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given;  
and the government will be upon  
his shoulder,  
and his name will be called  
"Wonderful Counselor, Mighty  
God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of  
Peace."

Isaiah 9:6



Caixa Postal 6227,  
Sao Paulo, Brazil, S.A.

### CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER

Dear Co-workers in Christ:

"And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

With hearts filled with adoration and thanksgiving we again celebrate the greatest love gift ever given to this world; that being Jesus Christ, the Son of God, given to a lost creation in order to save it from sin. This is the **good news** we proclaim to a sinful generation. This is the **glad tidings** that moves men to leave homeland and friends and share Christ with the sin-sick. This is "The Balm of Gilead" that these people are waiting to hear about.

Our fondest thoughts go with you into the Christmas Season this year. We miss the churches back home in our wonderful homeland, especially at this time of the year, but the close bond of fellowship between Christians cannot be broken even by miles.

The language study has been difficult. We are coming along with many frustrating times. We ask you to pray for us as we continue through August, 1970.

The Lord has been supplying our every need abundantly. A furnished home was supplied for us when we came to Sao Paulo. It belongs to a Baptist missionary who is home on furlough to the U.S.A. for a year.

Our barrels arrived in Santos, Brazil, unaccompanied, on Oct. 4th and a "despashante" brought them through customs without any duty for which

we are very thankful. They arrived at our place twenty days later, with just nominal trucking, despashante and translation fees. We would like to thank again all the churches and individuals who sent clothing and materials to Brazil for the Brazilians. They will be put to good use.

We are getting adjusted to Brazil and find it very interesting and challenging. The people are so friendly and understanding here. There seems to be a bond of friendship even without speaking. Just the expression on their faces and gestures suggest that we are "amigos" (friends).

I read in a missionary magazine recently that Brazil sells more Bibles than any other country in the world, except the U.S.A. The doors here are wide open for the truth, the Gospel, and the people are eager to hear and read the Word. The question is, can we do our part in supplying their spiritual needs, with our prayers, personnel and means?

"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe on Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent?" (Rom. 10:14-15).

This Christmas Season, may we each prayerfully do our part to supply the spiritual food to the hungry souls in Brazil.

Thank you so very much for your support in every way. We have sensed the prayer support in many ways. Continue on faithfully. God is blessing our churches both here and there.

Your missionaries in Brazil,  
The Dyruds

# WOMEN for Christ

## PREEMINENCE

Mrs. Orville T. Olson  
McIntosh, Minnesota

Such a busy time! I just can't see my way through. Will I ever get ready? Our Christmas greetings? No, I haven't even begun. Baking? Well, I have made a few goodies. And it's no simple matter to find a nice tree. The trimmings, too, need to be replaced. All the children have grown so rapidly that new clothes for the festivities are a necessity. And I almost forgot, they need costumes for the cantata. I had hoped to be able to give them an extra special gift this year.

Shopping wouldn't be such a problem if we could follow the example of a Florida millionaire. Several weeks ago he bought a London taxicab for each of thirty-two friends and to a special friend he will give a 1932 London fire engine, complete with bells and ladders. Isn't this typical of the conversations voiced these days before Christmas?

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." If we follow her example, there will be a reflection in our daily lives. In a revised version we read, "Mary quietly treasured these things in her heart and often thought about them."

Can we find more beautiful words to treasure than Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called

Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace"?

Think back — when is your earliest recollection of these beautiful words? The majority of us can never recall a time when we haven't known them. His name shall be called "Wonderful"! There are over two hundred names for the Lord Jesus. He was infinitely more than any one name could express. Is His name known to all people?

Death had intervened in a neighboring family. As we visited the bereaved wife, she reminisced and memories took her back to one of the few church services she had attended. "Oh, them was beautiful words," she said. Her grammar was incorrect but we got the message. Little did she realize those beautiful words were for the poor, the brokenhearted, the captives, the blind, and that she was one of them. Materially she was a wealthy woman, but spiritually—a pauper.

Have you ever spent Christmas in a foreign land where His Wonderful Name has scarcely been uttered? Huge decorated trees boldly display MERRY XMAS in neon lights. Ignorance has led them to leave out the Wonderful Name, Christ. And it's disheartening to see that Santa, too, has made his way across the ocean. The trip must have been strenuous as he was much thinner than in our homeland. Gift exchanging has become more prevalent but only a small minority realize that the Gift of Gifts, eternal life, is through the bearer of that Wonderful Name, Jesus.

What is preeminent in our thought and daily walk? Are we following the example of the innkeeper or is there room for Him in our heart and life? Can we be likened to the shepherds who went with fear but returned with a song of praise making known what they had seen and heard? Is our expression as Mary's, with a soul to magnify the Lord, and a spirit to rejoice in God our Savior?

Take my humblest adoration,  
While on earth below I dwell;  
Let my songs in exultation  
Of Thy boundless goodness tell,  
Till in heav'n above, my King,  
Endless hymns of praise, I sing.



[Continued from page 12]

cloth and lace curtains she fashions me a dress. The girls make me a halo and a pair of wings; but, how can I be an angel with just one arm? More hurrying and scurrying, and what's this? Now just what do they think they're doing with that peanut shell? I'm to have an arm? Carefully they fasten the peanut shell to my body and put on a pair of 'gloves' so to speak, the small fingers removed from a pair of gloves outgrown by a child.

Before I knew it, I was placed on the top of this beautiful tree, here in your church. I hear that this is your first Christmas as a congregation; this is your first children's Christmas program. I see such happy faces; the love of Christ shines in young and old, and I'm so happy you chose me to be your angel.

May God bless you, each and every-one this Christmas Season. Even as I have been transformed, so you, too, may be transformed by the love of Christ, whose birth we proclaim tonight.

Your Angel with the  
Peanut Shell Arm

Written by Mrs. Toivo Keranen  
Ontonagon, Michigan



## THERE HAS TO BE A WINTER

There has to be a winter  
Before there can be a spring,  
The joys of life are heightened  
Because of days of suffering.

In all there is a reason  
Though often we cannot see;  
Good Friday had to happen  
So Easter morning could be.

God's plan is for the future,  
I know not what 'twill bring;  
But that the hardest winter  
Precedes the loveliest spring.

—Poem and illustration by  
Marlene Moline, Lansing, Iowa

W-1  
STANLEY HOLMAAS  
NEWBOLDEN MN 56738

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