

December 12, 1978

The Lutheran Ambassador



**“ALONG THE OLDEN CHRISTMAS ROAD
WE’LL JOURNEY ONCE AGAIN”**

—Dorothy L. Sumerau

Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.

MEDITATION MOMENTS

GOD'S GREAT GIFT

Jesus once talked about one feature of God's gifts, "If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!" (Matt. 7:11). All that God gives is good and true, the genuine article. The most valued gift is that which comes from self-sacrifice, and this the Father has also given.

"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" (II Cor. 9:15).

God so loved the world that He gave His beloved Son (Jn. 3:16) in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins (Col. 1:14). This was the life Jesus offered to the Samaritan woman when He remarked that if only she knew the gift of God (Jn. 4:10) she would receive the living water and never thirst. It is a salvation by grace, not of our own doing, a gift of God (Rom. 3:24, Eph. 2:8), for the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:23). And there is then no condemnation to the one who is in Christ (Rom. 8:1). Then, since God delivered His Son up for us all, "how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). On and on it goes.

"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"

A young man was engaged to be married and bought his girl a diamond. It was not very large, but it was bril-

liant. One day a jealous and cynical friend said to her, "That's not a genuine diamond; it's merely an imitation." The lady was upset. Had her fiance given her a cheap ring? Her father took it to the jeweler and had it appraised. It was of the highest quality, a pure diamond. The lady's confidence in her lover was restored. She knew that he would not give her anything which was not genuine.

Would God give something that was not genuine, that did not measure up to the expectations? Was Jesus less than God, or only a man? Was He worthy of adoration and worship? Matthew says He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a woman. She was to call His name Jesus, for He would save His people from their sins. This was to fulfill the prophecy spoken by God through the prophet Isaiah. Unlike any other child, this one would be "God with us" (Matt. 1:20-23).

Is He real? Many know the reality and to them He is everything. He is the First and Last (Rev. 1:17), the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2), the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:32), Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God (Is. 9:6), Holy One of God (Mk. 1:24), Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29), Lord of Lords and King of Kings (I Tim. 6:15), God (Jn. 20:28), Son of God (Matt. 2:15) and the Word (Jn. 1:1). He is the Light of the world (Jn. 8:12) and He is truth (Jn. 1:14).

He is, in the words of a hymn, "Jesus, priceless treasure, source of purest pleasure, truest friend to me."

He is Mary's Son, but He is also the Son of God. The world may wonder and question, perhaps out of jealousy. A world looking for the truth, the light, and the way may not be willing to recognize Him who is the way, the truth and the life. They may not be willing to give up their own filthy rags of righteousness to be clothed in His righteousness, not willing to turn over the sinful heart to be given a new one. After all, sin can be pleasant for a time (Heb. 11:25). Unfortunately, many do not realize the genuine gift or what they are losing. But even the demons must openly acknowledge Jesus (Matt. 8:29), Mk. 1:24; Lk. 8:28). He is real to them, yet it does them no good. And at that final moment on the cross, one of the soldiers who helped crucify Christ could not help but exclaim: "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matt. 27:54).

We are sinful, dead and dying. This gift includes pardon for sin and a new life that lasts forever. We are alone, God gives us One who will never leave us or forget us. What more could God have given to hopeless and condemned sinners than hope and freedom from condemnation?

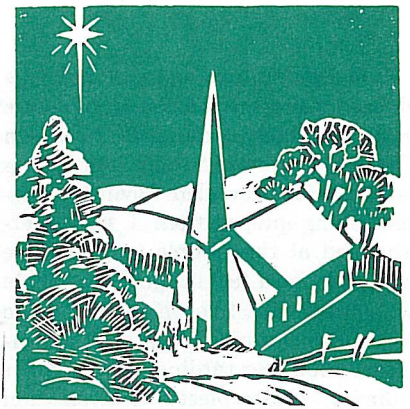
"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"

—Wesley Langaas

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The Christmas Solitaire

by Mrs. Michael Brandt



The plastic evergreens and silver-glittered bells seemed entirely out of place against the smog-tainted sky of Los Angeles. As I hurried to my job at May Company, I wondered how it could possibly be Christmas Eve day. Having spent all of my previous 17 Christmases in Minnesota, the contrasts of this Christmas were all too obvious. The air that now filled my lungs was a far cry from the brisk, cold, clear air of winter to which I was accustomed. There was not even a hint of a snowflake around; in fact, my trench coat was almost too warm. Were it not for the carols being played over the department store loudspeakers, and the tinkle of the Salvation Army's bell outside the decorated store windows, one might even deny that it was Christmas. Perhaps that was exactly what I was trying to do.

In my zeal to study the Word and have a growing up experience away from home, I was fully aware before I left for Bible school that a trip home at Christmas time would be unreasonably expensive. Very few students from the Midwest could afford that luxury. Although several of my classmates had invitations to homes of relatives and friends in the California area, there were several like me who would stay near school. Most of our employers could not allow all of their student help a Christmas vacation, especially when their regular help deserved time off more. Somehow these facts were not especially comforting—I was lonely.

Family togetherness and Johnson tradition were more important to me than I had realized. Our extended family had celebrated the same way for years, Christmas Eve being the focus of family festivity: a Scandinavian dinner together, Christmas devotions,

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gifts exchanged and the candlelight service at church. My dear mom had made special efforts this year to ease our separation, sending several gifts well in advance so that I could anticipate their surprises and look at the packages under our little apartment tree, which itself was decorated with special ornaments from our traditional home tree. Mom was warmly sentimental and thoughtful in these little touches. Even familiar Christmas records from our home collection filled our rooms with melody, easing the quiet of

“Though I felt a bit like an intruder, my homesickness exceeded my pride and I gladly accepted the invitation.”

absent roommates. But somehow the hope-for result was not being achieved. My homesickness had upset my usual optimistic and adventuresome attitude and that, in turn, my spiritual devotion. Though I had not come to see my miserable self-centeredness that day, I recognized that something was amiss if I could not rejoice in the true meaning of Christmas and was actually wishing these two days would hurry by so we could get on with the school year. How could this possibly be a meaningful Christmas to me?

I shook myself out of that moment of self-pity. After all, I did have something enjoyable to look forward to that evening. The faculty had carefully noted those of us who had no invitation for Christmas and had divided us into groups to share in their own celebrations. Though I felt a bit like an intruder, my homesickness exceeded my pride and I gladly accepted the invitation. After work six of us would be driving together to Pastor Petrusen's

home to observe Christmas Eve.

Disciplining my total concentration to the filing of charge slips and C.O.D.s, the afternoon fairly flew by and the sky was now dusky as I waited for my classmates to pick me up. We would have to hurry if we were to make it to south L.A. on time, and we all needed to freshen up first. Of course, the unexpected had to happen that night. The freeway traffic was heavy, none of us had traveled that way before, and we became annoyingly lost. There was no way to get off the freeway maze to notify our host, so we just kept second-guessing until finally we found the correct street. An hour late we made our way to the appropriate doorstep.

That moment began the Christmas observance that was to change my attitude forever. It all started with a tearful look of mingled joy-relief-surprise on the face of Pastor Petrusen when he opened the door and found us outside, all six stammering an explanation at once. The expression on his face became a picture indelibly and eternally inscribed on my mind. I quickly analyzed the thoughts that may have been going through his mind as he and his wife waited for their delayed guests: worry over our welfare, concern that we misunderstood the hour, or possibly even that the invitation was not as important to us as it obviously was to them. Could it be that this was not just a kindly gesture of hospitality for lonely students? Could it be that our presence with them that Christmas Eve was crucial to the meaningfulness of their Christmas celebration? He flung wide the door and welcomed us with the open, loving arms of a father receiving his prodigal, coupling this tender gesture with a blushing grin of boyish delight and utter joy at our appearance. I felt entirely welcomed and genuinely loved.

Our evening together combined the elaborate and the simple. Our hostess had prepared a delightful Danish Christmas dinner spread out on a long table which revealed loving, time-consuming preparation. I was overwhelmed at the trouble to which she had gone for a few insignificant Bible school students. She waited on us like a tireless nursemaid with nary a complaint about our tardiness spoiling her culinary masterpiece. Conversation was warm and relaxed. I noticed a "family" feeling coming over me as the six of us, still somewhat strangers after only four months of school, let down our classroom barriers and honestly began to cling to one another as children needing siblings. Pastor guided us gently in relating comfortable, happy topics, like a wise father loosening up and including each child.

After dinner we were led from the table to the living room where we gathered around the simply decorated Christmas tree as families usually do. A spark of the expected tradition pricked at me for a moment as I noticed a strange void—there was not a single package under that tree. Rather, we all focused on a typical manger scene displayed there, a solitary attraction. My heart was increasingly warmed by the view. My self-centeredness had become gradually more apparent to me throughout the evening and suddenly I was face to face with Jesus, my Lord. Repentance flooded my being.

"Lord, what am I trying to celebrate," came my self-examination? "Truly, You are the singular attraction this night! How can I be so full of self when I realize the very reason we are gathered together here is because You emptied yourself, took the form of a servant and were born in the likeness of men. God became flesh—Immanuel! And all of this preparatory to Your ultimate, supreme sacrifice, death on a cross for my sake. It is *Your* birth we uphold tonight, the timely beginning of God's redemptive plan. Lord! How could I have been so selfish as to think this holiday should revolve around my needs? Again, I see my wretched sinfulness, my ugly self-interest. Forgive me as I focus on You alone and thoroughly celebrate the single joy of Christmas from this moment on. Like a precious gem deserves a setting all

“... but tonight the messages in each song seemed like a first-time exclamation from my heart of hearts.”

alone, You are the Christmas solitaire.”

My inner musings took place in a few moments as we sat silently around the tree. None were the wiser as to the miraculous transformation that had just occurred in my being. After joyous moments of carol singing, Pastor led us in a "gift exchange" by asking us to respond one by one to a dual question: "How would you be celebrating Christmas if you had been home tonight, and what has Christmas meant to you this year because of the difference?" I wished to explode with my immediate discovery, but the sharing did not begin with me. To my amazement, others began to explain a similar awareness occurring in their own lives. Perhaps not at that very moment, but over the recent days each one had experienced in some way a sincere recognition of the purity of Christmas: Jesus only. We remarked how the trinkets of the commercial and social world had been gradually overemphasized, crowding Christ Jesus to the periphery of Christmas altogether. Similarly, we admitted that even our well-meaning, godly, family celebrations had at times subtly de-emphasized the Lord in our desire to create a "Merry Christmas" for our loved ones. This was one of those times of sharing where the Spirit aided us in honestly relating our innermost thoughts—"communion of the saints" as Pastor Petrussen liked to explain it—genuine fellowship. Closing our exchange in prayer, each of us felt certainly richer, though not a single package had been unwrapped!

Pastor Petrussen had been saving a surprise. Together we drove to the Petrussen's home church to share in their candlelight service. Never did the simple Christmas sermon sound more wonderfully sweet. The carol-singing was much like ours at home, nothing musically dramatic to simply stir our senses. The melodies and harmonies came easily to my lips, even the words I knew by heart; but tonight the

messages in each song seemed like a first-time exclamation from my heart of hearts:

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Hail the Incarnate Deity!
Pleased as man with men to dwell,
Jesus, our Immanuel.
Hark! the herald angels sing,
"Glory to the newborn King!"

As if our hostess' dinner hospitality had not already sufficed, and although the hour was late, again the table was spread with Danish pastries and delicacies when we stepped in the door. "A little dessert," said she! The traditions of others were worth examination, I thought. With childlike glee and a pleasant feeling of familiarity, I slipped into my chair and spied the hot chocolate topped with real whipped cream.

Doorway farewells and the drive home were a blur to my tired mind already overstuffed with thoughts and lessons which would last for a lifetime. I was so humbled to realize my expectations for passing the Eve had been surpassed beyond my imagination. The Lord had given me eternal gifts for life that could not be measured materially, nor wrapped in a colorful box. Though I honestly missed my family this minute, I knew I would never again be lonely at Christmas time. Jesus, my Redeemer, would always be the singular attraction, the purest joy at the heart of my celebration, no matter who accompanied me. Any hint of loneliness or self would forever be a signal to worship only Christ.

I had also learned a priceless lesson through the example of our hosts. The Family of God is not such a trite expression. No matter how dear and blessed our Christian families are, God has family for us wherever we may be if we are open enough to allow it, even seek it. Because God became man at Christmas time, He forever opened the door for a spiritual kinship among all believers. No one is an intruder. All are thoroughly welcome guests . . . no, real family. As the heaviness of sleep settled upon me, I hoped that I would have many opportunities to be a Christmas family for someone. And when I did, I planned it would be with doors flung wide, open arms, boyish grins and hot chocolate with real whipped cream!

Mexican Christmas

by Pastor Samuel R. Flores

- Christmas, the universal festival known as the Vigilia de Navidad or simply Christmas Day. In harmony with the culture of the people, it is celebrated with crass paganism, or, on the other hand, with genuine Christian joy, the sublime message of the mystery of the incarnation of the eternal Word become flesh.

In Mexico the festival of Christmas began in the 16th century during the Spanish Conquest when, in the interior of the convents and monasteries founded by the Augustinians, Carmelites and Franciscan monks, they celebrated the medieval custom of observing nine days, ending on Christmas Eve, December 24th. In following years this was called "Dias de Posadas," during which time they commemorated the trip which Mary and Joseph made from Nazareth to Bethlehem to be registered according to the edict of Ceasar Augustus, during which time Jesus was born.

In these pilgrimages, Mary and Joseph, the holy pilgrims, are represented by statues held high, each night

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advancing one station further in the nine steps necessary to reach the inn.

With each step the "Litany of the Virgin" was sung as the participants walked to the next station. An army of children dressed as angels was part of the procession. Their costumes included white plumes adorned with pearls and diamonds. Young men dressed as shepherds also formed part of the procession, in the beginning just a few and their numbers growing as they went along. On Christmas Eve the principle part was the adoration of the Holy Child, represented by a small statue of the Babe. At this time Mary and Joseph were represented by a young man and young lady dressed appropriately in white robes, she with a blue shawl decorated with stars over her head and he with a turban.

These celebrations, in colonial times, were carried out in the churches and later in the haciendas and ranches that always made available their chapels for use, only now, with the participation of the day laborers and local young people, guided by the nuns and priest under whose jurisdiction Christmas Eve was celebrated, preceded by the "Posada."

Years later Christmas Eve was celebrated in the homes of wealthy families, each year substituting that which

was profane for that which was religious, until finally at the dawn of the 19th century, in what was now an independent Mexico, there was such confusion and it degenerated each year more and more to such a degree that the religious meaning of the festival was considered old-fashioned.

When the 20th century began, Christmas festivities were celebrated in neighboring houses, in the poor sections and even in the streets, giving importance to the profane rather than the religious. In these same convents they began to celebrate the famous "Mass of the Christmas Box," in which they permitted the use of popular music and dances instead of quietness and seriousness with sacred music as in past centuries. And if they had a folklore program it would be mixed with the giving of Christmas boxes, dances, games, liquor and piñatas, with only a little praying and singing of the litanies.

In Mexico, in places where the message of salvation hasn't been preached, Christmas festivities have developed in more or less the following way: In each house where there will be a celebration, they put up a creche. This consists of a miniature hut by a hill. Within the hut is a manger with the Baby Jesus and Mary and Joseph looking at Him. The



manger and hut are surrounded by lambs, donkeys, bulls, and doves in the branches of the make-believe trees. On the hillside one sees shepherds coming to find the Baby. Further on the other side of the hill are the three wisemen, coming toward Bethlehem looking for the King of the Jews, recently born. And the star is on the top of the hut. The elegance or simplicity of the creche depends on the financial status of the family, but they are all made of clay or of a plastic material. The hill is covered with moss, grass and rocks.

Upon arriving, the guests gather around the manger, kneeling in position, depending on if they are children, youth or adults. When all are present, including the couple who will represent Mary and Joseph, one sees their use of traditional ancient apparel. They go out of the house and stand at a considerable distance, anywhere from 30 to 100 yards, where, with everyone holding a lighted candle, they begin the procession toward the house where they will ask for room to rest. At the head of the pilgrimage go Mary and Joseph; behind walks the orchestra, playing for the singing, and then a large number of boys, who are to burn rockets and firecrackers.

The walk is then begun by singing the Litany and the singing continues until they arrive in front of the house indicated. They then form two groups, one entering the house, the other remaining outside singing:

From long journey
Exhausted we come;
We ask lodging
That we may rest.

And from inside comes the answer:

Who is at our door
On this miserable night?
Who is imprudent
And molesting?

Both groups then sing various stanzas—the group outside singing with stubbornness and the group inside with egotism until the group inside is moved to give the pilgrims asylum:

Well, come in, husbands and
wives
pure and innocent;
Come in and accept
Reverent worship.

This is now the most important moment of the program and unanimously they sing with all enthusiasm:

Open the doors,
Break the candles;
The King of Heaven
Comes to rest.

Entering they gather around the Holy Family, kneeling. After the prayer is done and the singing, they terminate with seven Ave Marias.

When this is all over, the clamor surges forth with rockets, firecrackers and couples dance to popular music. The host gives out Christmas boxes to all present and the children enjoy themselves with piñatas. It isn't unusual that liquor is sipped. After all this "joy," which at times ends in fights, disorder or even murder, all go to their homes. It isn't unusual to be invited to a "Posada" which is very beautiful and animated but where there is no creche, no praying nor singing.

Since the initiation of evangelical work in Mexico more than a century ago (1872), general Christian customs have changed little by little. The Christmas tree has been substituted in perhaps 40 percent of the creches. The Posada is traditionally celebrated in very few homes, except among Roman Catholics. However, it is sad to refer to it, that after so much time the customs created around the Christian festivities gave rise to the popular Posada that had nothing to do with religion. They are simply amusements where licentiousness and vice prevail, in which the prayers and singing have disappeared.

In evangelical churches things are very distinct. However, in many homes of recent converts it is sometimes difficult to see a difference in their customs and of those who are not believers. It is interesting that the evangelical church doesn't celebrate the Posada. The major portion of churches, in the nine days preceding Christmas Eve, have a series of Christmas worship services called "winter nights," attended by mostly children and youth, along with some adults. After the service there is a social hour where group games are played and with much laughing and animation piñatas are broken and Christmas boxes are given out. These happy moments last for two hours and then everyone goes to his own home.

On Christmas Eve a large group of children and youth assemble and a pastoral music presentation, a drama or Christmas cantata is given. At the

closing there is the same noise and clamor of the previous nights with piñata and Christmas boxes.

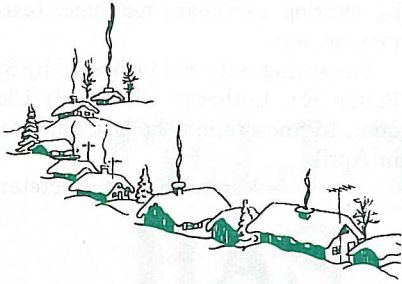
On Christmas Day evening there is nothing happening as the previous nights. On this day the church has a solemn worship service, assisted by all the congregation and in some churches the choir presents a concert. In some churches they baptize children and adults, confirm members or have some other special act.

In the homes where they didn't have the Christmas Eve supper, they have it on Christmas Day. The house is adorned with Christmas motifs. The Christmas tree is surrounded with gifts according to the economic possibilities of each family and is the center of attention and happiness. This joy is culminated with the singing of Christmas hymns by the children and adults and the receiving of gifts from under the tree.

Christmas in Mexico is celebrated, as we have seen and can summarize, in three ways, according to the religious culture of the people: 1) the faithful Catholics with the Posada and Christmas Eve with customs and traditions both profane and religious; 2) the evangelical Christians with "winter nights" and the commemorization of the only Son of God, with genuine joy in the church as well as in the home; and 3) the pseudo-Christians, whose only interest is to give occasion for moral depravation and even crime. Here the creche and Christmas tree will be joined by the liquor bottle or some other drink prepared for the occasion. The nine days of celebrating Christmas for the Christians is a great benediction, but for the unbelievers there is condemnation.

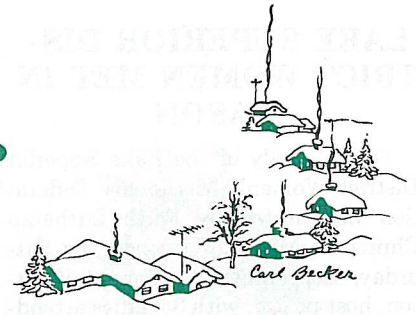
The eternal Word of the Father, the Light that shines in the darkness, may it light this world in its darkness. To God be the glory.





What Treasure Lies There Still?

By Susan M. Nordvall, Roseau, Minn.



It's December 23rd and I must finish all this! The shopping, of course, is done.

Done?

But I must hurry! I must get into the village again. Again? Why? I really can't say, you know . . . but this urgency will not die. Let's go just one more time!

The hardware stores, the grocery, dime and doll stores, all still play the music. Softer now perhaps. The gay lights still flood out but the shelves are ravished and bare. People are still searching, perhaps like me, not knowing for what. Is there sadness here?

I walk faster now up the darker end of the street where an old gasoline sign swings and creaks in the wind, back and forth, clanging in the cold. I stand still a moment, remembering how often I've heard that creak in other places, in other times. I'm cold.

I've found the little shingled shop again; a pharmacy, the only place which seems to keep its dignity at all times. . . . The only place with unusual things.

The soft yellow light warming heavy dark beams invites me in. Immediately I'm in back and the rack of Christmas cards blurs before me as I search, search, putting each back.

Each card goes back!

Oh, but there it is! I see it! My heart leaps for joy. I pull it out. Oh yes, this is the one and I hold it to my breast. And in that instant I hold it all again. I hold them all again. I have found them all again.

I must buy this card.

But they are all dead and tears spring to my eyes as I realize I have no one to send it to.

In my childhood I'd learn long German poems to say to Grandfather who listened to me so lovingly. Before I'd learned to send cards to friends, I'd always find a German one to send to my grandparents. But they died. Then I sent my cards to other aging relatives who loved that language. But this year all are gone.

Oh, I've sent a hundred cards or more this season, but to whom belongs this one! "Frohliche Weihnacten, Gottes Segen, Freude, Friede allerwegen." Who will read these few simple words and grasp the volumes in my heart? Are they really all gone?

Suddenly I know I'm groping backwards. Homewards.

This homeward look—how does it happen again and again? Each year after common days, after days of floundering and despair, the spirit of Christmas stirs and engulfs me as nothing else can. I feel loosed somehow. Driven homeward? Do the traditional carols played again and again so beautifully do it to me? Or is it the sparkling tinsel and the zillion enchanting snowflakes? Or could it be the other way around?

This something in my heart; does it give depth to the carols? Does it make the tinsel shimmer in silent song and the diamond snowflakes burn and dance? And why does this longing go back to childhood? What treasure lies there still?

Oh, is it the peace which seemed to be my natural gift then? All this restlessness and longing, is it the incompleteness we all possess, beckoning us to the heavenly home? Is Christmas the most powerfully awakening force I know?

Is that why I have searched again for the cradle of my faith, the place where first I knew the love of the Father and the awe of the Son?

I reach for another Christmas card and inside read, "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the

heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth goodwill toward men!' The words thrill me so and it seems I hear all the elders together with the angels singing it around the world, assuring me once more that all is well.

I'm about to put both cards back. But I buy the simple German card . . . just for me. The other I buy, too, and mail there, to someone I've never reached out to before.



A CHRISTMAS BALLAD

It was a cold and lonely way
A little donkey trod,
And on his back rode Mary,
The mother of our Lord,
The mother of our Lord.

Up spake her good spouse Joseph then,
"Give us a room I pray."
But all the doors were closed to them,
All hearts were turned away,
All hearts were turned away.

Then spake the Babe within her womb,
"Dear Mother, do not cry.
'Tis for them I will be borned,
And for them I will die,
And for them I will die."

Marlene Moline
Lansing, Ia.

"Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh" (Matthew 2:11b).

"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).

Susan M. Nordvall is the wife of Lay Pastor Gustav Nordvall, who serves Oiland and Badger Creek Lutheran congregations, Badger, Minn.

LAKE SUPERIOR DISTRICT WOMEN MET IN MASON

The fall rally of the Lake Superior District Women's Missionary Federation was hosted by Faith Lutheran Church at Mason, Wisconsin, on Saturday, September 30, Ronald Knutson, host pastor, with 33 ladies attending. The theme for the rally was "Service," using Ephesians 6:7 as a Bible reference.

After being welcomed by Martha Hanson, we were led in devotions and prayer by Christine Hanson. Two very interesting studies on women in the Bible were given: Gertrude Iwasko gave a sketch on Hannah, the mother of Samuel, and Evelyn Emberson told

us about Lois, the grandmother of the Scriptures.

Aili Siltanen was elected district secretary.

The offering was received for My Missionary for a Day after which a very interesting Bible Study was given by Nancy Hitchcock on serving the Lord, not man.

Rev. Herbert Franz brought the afternoon message, also based on serving Christ, not man. Some of the things he mentioned that we can do to serve God are: giving up time for ourselves to serve others; we need love and action in order to demonstrate to the world God's saving grace through faith; and there is joy in serving the Lord when it is done in love.

There were many who participated

by sharing in songs, readings, testimonies, etc.

The spring rally will be hosted by St. Paul's Ev. Lutheran Church at Cloquet, Minnesota, on the last Saturday in April.

Verona Krohn, Secretary

During all this Christmastide and as the old year passes be Thou an abiding presence in our homes, ministering unto us Thy peace and power, and receiving from us the praise of our lips and the adoration of our hearts. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Rev. M. H. W. Heicher

May this Christmas festival so enlarge your faith in Christ as your Savior that in the spirit of holy joy, sincere gratitude, and genuine love you grasp every opportunity to make Christ known unto others as their one, only, and all-sufficient Savior!

Martin Walker

THOUGHTS AT CHRISTMAS

Christmas time is here once more,
Are we forgetting what it's for?
Why are we rushing to and fro?
Where are we going, do we know?
What shall we buy for Dad and Mom?
What did we get last year for Tom?
What shall we eat and whom invite?
Be sure to trim that tree tonight.

In the Christmas rush, do we remember
What really happened that cold December?
As we celebrate the Christ Child's birth,
When the Son of God came down to earth
In the form of a human baby boy,
Doesn't that fill your heart with joy?
I think the greatest Gift of all
Came from God in that manger stall.

That baby Boy, God's only Son,
Was born to die for everyone—
Do we take time to count the cost?
Would we give our child to save the lost?
As we gather our loved ones close once more
Our Savior knocks at our heart's door.
Are we too busy with worldly things
To open our hearts to the King of Kings?

Verna L. Kammen
Badger, Minnesota



WINTER SCENE IN YELLOWSTONE PARK, WYOMING

Roger C. Huebner, D. D. S.



And the Word Was Made Flesh

“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we . . .” (John 1:14a).

The Bible tells us that it was in the fulness of time, at the right moment in history, that the tremendous event of God becoming man took place at Bethlehem. The lives of all men were to be affected by the mark of humiliation that was put upon the Lord Jesus. He was born into the stream of humanity that men might live. He was born to die for mankind. The incarnation of our Lord was a glorious reality, a wondrous fact, apart from which there could be no salvation for sinful men.

“The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we . . .” How did men respond to such wondrous condescension, such love? Though He was the Desire of the nations, yet His coming into the world was little observed and little taken notice by it. The Gospel writer tells us, “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not” (John 1:10). A world that failed to recognize its own Creator, also failed dismally to recognize its Redeemer. The grace and Truth that the world so sorely needed were overlooked and scorned.

So much for men in general. How did His own nation respond to Him? “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11). The long expected Jesus did not come with the pomp and glory that the Jews had felt would introduce their Messiah. Their rejection of the lowly Jesus cost them eternal sonship in the Father’s Kingdom.

This is but a quick evaluation of how men responded to Him 2,000 years ago. And we, the world of today, what is our response? Christmas activities began the week after Thanksgiving. A casual observer might conclude that we, 20th century Americans, have recognized Him, that we have received Him. But the recognition of Christ is surely not in the commercialism, the gay wrappings, the colored lights, the lavish entertainments, or the lovely gifts. The glory of Christmas is a Person—the Word made flesh. If we have missed Him, we have missed the center, the meaning, the preciousness, the beauty and glory of Christmas. We 20th century Americans, with all our sophistications, have little room for Christ, at Christmas or any other time of the year. Even when going through the motions of the festivities this Christmas there is emptiness and longing and fear gnawing at the hearts of the majority. We are shocked as a nation over the events in Guyana. But its tragedy is only symbolic of the emptiness and frustrations of that cult and others who have no Savior.

Yes, there is a beauty in the Christmas manger, the stars, the candles, the tree and the carols. But we do not see the glory of Christmas until we see what God did for us. He sent His Son to rescue us from sin and death.

The world into which He came knew Him not. His own nation received Him not. But there were a very few who took notice of what transpired in the little town of Bethlehem. The shepherds—folk humble enough to respond to the angelic message—“unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour.” There were Anna and Simeon, godly servants who spoke of Him to all who would listen. Then there were the Wise Men, men wise enough to know that He who was born King of the Jews deserved their worship, their gifts; and their most important task was to find Him.

And we, have we the humility to receive the message? Have we the wisdom to seek Him above all else? He, God’s Son, accepted all the physical limitations of growth, hunger, thirst and fatigue in order to bring us God’s grace and truth. As God’s truth, He is the only way to the Father. As God’s grace, He is the all-sufficiency for our sin and guilt.

“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” May our inmost being be gripped with the marvel of God’s Son being made flesh. May we truly behold His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. May we truly have room in our hearts for Him. In receiving Him, we have the right of sonship. Because of that sonship, we have the joy that “when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is.” That is the glory of Christmas.

With sincere wishes for a blessed Christmas,

Pastor Richard Snipstead



THE LITTLE STRANGER

by Mrs. Arnold McCarrison



The doorbell was ringing. Not just one small ring but long, loud sounds that sent Mrs. Johnson hurrying to the door. Actually she knew who'd be there but she must act surprised . . . for that was expected of her.

Quickly unlatching the door, she exclaimed, "Why Troy, I didn't expect to see you so soon; your mother called about 15 minutes ago."

"Oh, hi! Cheryl, I'm glad you could bring him home." Cheryl smiled in her usual whimsical manner and held out a sheet of paper. "Here's Troy's Christmas piece. We started to learn it but he should have some more help with it."

"Oh, thank you, and can't you come in a while?" Mrs. Johnson helped Troy with his parka. Then she handed him his favorite toy. By this time Cheryl had made herself at home and was looking at her Sunday School Christmas program book. "You see our theme this year is 'The Little Stranger' and Troy's piece is:

'Low in a manger,
Dear little stranger,
On a bed of hay
His sweet head lay,
His mother Mary smiled
At her Precious child.'"

As Cheryl finished reading the verse, Troy looked up, saying, "Grandma, I thought the Baby Jesus was in the manger . . . not a stranger. Why don't they say 'baby Jesus,' not little stranger?"

Mrs. McCarrison is a homemaker as well as a teacher. She has taught in the interracial school at Eagle Butte for some years. The summer address of the McCarrisons is Grenville, S. Dak.

Mrs. Johnson answered Troy's question with a smile. "Well, Troy, Jesus was a stranger to most everyone when he was born on Christmas Eve. Only the shepherds, angels and Mary and Joseph knew He was special."

Unconvinced, Troy looked at the ladies and with great determination said, "He's no stranger to me. Jesus is my friend and helper."

Both ladies nodded and said, "Yes, Troy, we know He's your friend and helper." They didn't have to repeat the happenings of a few weeks earlier. They only remembered.

Troy was only six years old, but out of those six years had worn leg braces for four years because of Legge Perthes disease in the hip. He also had hearing problems and last winter had only 40 percent of his hearing in one ear. His doctor had said he would have to have ear surgery in six months. Troy was aware of this. He had deep faith and love for His Savior. Every day he prayed for healing of his ears and legs without surgery.

So when the time came and the specialist in Minneapolis was examining his ear, the doctor very surprisingly said, "Your hearing is 100 per cent." Troy looked at him and with a smile said, "I know, the Lord does my work." The doctor was amazed and the nurse said, "Young man, I hope you will always have that faith."

Although he still had to wear his braces another year, Troy still had faith and realized that some prayers take longer for an answer. But we read in Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose."

Cheryl then explained that "The Little Stranger" was a heart-warming play about a group of people who on Christmas night took a little stranger into their home, gave him food, shelter and clothing, and came to realize before the night was over that in taking him in, they had taken into their hearts and home THE ONE for whom the Christmas night was named. She said so often that the Little Stranger in

our midst is not recognized. Then she added, "It ends with the LITTLE Stranger saying,

'I was a stranger and you took Me in. I was hungry and you gave Me food. I was cold and you warmed Me at your fire. I am the Child who brings Christmas with peace and good will to all the world.'"

After coffee and cookies, Cheryl left and Troy was busy with his toys. Mrs. Johnson, besides being a grandmother, was a local teacher. Her thoughts wandered to her classroom. How true that one didn't always recognize the Little Stranger in their midst!

It's possible, isn't it, that he sits before me today in my classroom, his small soul aching for recognition, his eyes large with longing to be taken into my heart?

What about the squirming youngster in the back row who has been misbehaving and causing a disturbance? Can he possibly be the Little Stranger—this little "nuisance" who makes such a fuss to obtain attention? Does he ever get the recognition he craves?

There's a neat little miss in the front seat who always does everything correctly, who never demands attention but who touches me gently whenever I pass by. Can it be that she brings me affection that I haven't recognized and a need that I don't know?

Then the overgrown lad whose pencils are always chewed and he doesn't care how his work appears, or whether the other youngsters are always ahead of him in school or not. He long ago gave up trying. He can't be the beautiful, shining Little Stranger—or can he? Would a bit of unexpected praise, or an unbelievable chance to succeed at something, put a "Hallelujah" in his heart that I wouldn't expect?

At Christmas time no word is more often used than LOVE. This year, let's look deeply into the needs of those around us and give abundantly of the love of which we are capable that we may take each Little Stranger into our hearts without reservation in honor of Him.



Christmas Among the Papels of Guinea Bissau, West Africa

By Valborg Esping



"What is Christmas?" I asked a group of dusty, naked children who had gathered to watch us give an injection to their grandfather. The only response was giggles, except for the answer of one boy who truthfully said, "I don't know."

Neither did the elderly man know, though he had seen many rains come and go and was now obviously near the end. Life had been hard, but he was happy in the thought that he had ten cows lined up for sacrifices at his funeral. Also, he had enough rice stored away for his funeral activities, even though this hoarding limited his family to only one meal a day during the rest of that season. After all, there is nothing more important to a Papel than a good funeral.

However, there are Papels who revel in another festival—Christmas. About 200 Papels had gathered to watch the Christmas Eve program. The auditorium was a clearing under the stars and the stage the veranda of the mission house. From there the entire Christmas story was presented scene by scene. Some of the rehearsals had been hilarious. Because many of them could not read, they simply improvised lines.

The first scene was Anna and Simeon in the temple discussing the prophecies of the coming of the Messiah. An elderly widow played the part of Elizabeth, singing her praise to God. As 18-year-old Mary sang the Papel version of the Magnificat, my eyes filled with tears. Then there were the angels—surely African women are the most beautiful of all angels. Their costumes were only nurses' uniforms covered with mosquito netting and tinsel, but their jet black faces shone brilliantly.

Before the angels appeared, the shepherds were in deep discussion. "How would the Messiah come? Why would He come? When would He ap-

pear?" The chief shepherd, the pastor, sought to satisfactorily answer these questions and to convince the doubters.

The grand finale was the presentation of Jesus to God with Anna and Simeon present in the temple, ending with another appearance of the angels for good measure!

The audience had certainly participated—singing, laughing, sometimes discussing, or sitting in awed silence. None were any longer in doubt of the meaning of Christmas, the wonderful Gospel message.

The following day the Christians enjoyed Christmas Day dinner together. They had all saved their money to be able to buy a pig. This was very special as they don't usually eat meat, not because they don't like it, but because meat was usually saved to be offered in sacrifice and they considered it wrong to eat meat which had been sacrificed to idols. The men got up about 4 a.m. to butcher the pig. Then shortly afterward the women began cleaning the rice so everyone would be free to attend the morning worship service in the church.

By around 11 a.m., everyone was arrayed in his best clothes. One woman appeared in a full-length bright orange nightgown. The pastor's five-year-old daughter created quite a sensation in her maxi dress. Little boys strutted proudly in their first pair of grown up shorts or pants. There were no set hours, just a free time of singing, worship and a few testimonies, followed by a message. It was a happy time!

When the dinner was finally ready about 3 p.m. everyone's appetite was ravenous since no one had eaten since the previous day. The pig had been stewed in all its fat in a huge cauldron. It was served hot, spicy and greasy to about 120 adults besides hordes of children. It took about an hour to serve, with men and women all shouting instructions at the same time. But eventually everyone was satisfied, even the dogs, pigs and chickens.

In the evening the games brought great excitement. One team game with a balloon was enjoyed for a solid hour

and caused more shouting than a football game. Finally the special treat was served—lime juice, one small slice of bread with peanut butter per person with a tiny piece of cake. They eagerly held out two hands to receive it, which is the Papel way of saying. "Thank you!"

I, too, say "Thank you" for the joy and simplicity of our Papel Christmas. I think, too, of the heathen all around us whose only festivities are the drunken funeral dancing and wailing. I think, too, of the many like the old grandfather and his family who will never know what Christmas is unless somebody goes to tell them.

LOVE

O Lord, You lived in golden halls
And walked in golden streets;
Why did You come down to be born
Amidst the cows and sheep?
Why did You leave Your Father's house?
Why did You leave Your throne?
It could not be for wealth and power—
Was it for love alone?
You who did speak the worlds in place
And bend them to Your call,
Could You love us so very much
To be a baby small,
To come to an uncaring world
In sinful struggling lost?
O Lord, You knew the manger bed
Would soon lead to a cross;
You knew the sorrow and the hurt,
You knew the awful pain,
You knew that we deserved not love,
Yet, knowing that, You came.

Marlene Moline
Lansing, Ia.

The eternal Light to us descends,
Its brightness to the earth it lends,
And purely shines upon our night,
To make us children of the light.

Hallelujah.

Martin Luther

Valborg Esping served as a missionary in Portuguese Guinea, West Africa, for 19 years before she returned last year. She is a sister of Mrs. Raymond Jacobson, Medicine Lake Congregation, Minneapolis, Minn.

POEM FOR CHRISTMAS

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem
In the days of Herod the king,
An angel appeared to shepherds at
night
With a glorious message to bring.
The glory of the Lord shone 'round
about
And they were filled with fear;
"Fear not," said he, "I bring good
news—
I'll make my message clear;
I bring good news of a great joy
That soon the world will hear.
If you will go to Bethlehem
You'll find there in a manger,
A tiny Babe in swaddling clothes
Who to us is not a stranger."
And then a heavenly host appeared;
Their anthem rang so loud.
"Glory to God in the highest," they
sang
And then disappeared in a cloud.
The shepherds made haste to see the
Child;
Could it really be Christ the Lord?
They found Him—innocent, meek,
undefiled,
As proclaimed in God's own Word.
You, too, can go to Jesus
If you open up your heart;
He is always there and waiting
His message to impart.
With cooking, baking, gifts to wrap,
And taking things in stride,
Worldly pleasures become a trap—
We put Jesus off to one side.
What's more important?
What's Christmas about?
"Happy Birthday, Dear Jesus,"
We should sing and shout.
One of these Christmases—only God
knows when —
His saints will celebrate with Jesus
and then
We'll see the magnitude of God's
great love,
When He sent us His Son from heaven
above.
May peace and joy be yours all year,
With Christ as our leader we have no
fear.
Love one another as Christ loves
you—
And a blessed Christmas to all—
Happy New Year, too!

Mrs. Bud Haugen
Lake Stevens, Wash.

Perhaps I was DREAMING

CHRISTMAS—WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Christmas does not mean the same to all.

To some it means a boisterous, blustering, whirligig day, with a lot of food and a jolly good time for the flesh.

To others it means an unusual rush of business, an incoming tide of profits, a golden harvest of money, a swelling sense of "prosperity."

To some it means a tremendous load of extra work; days too short and half the night added thereunto still insufficient. And day by day the work piles higher and higher, until when the Great Day finally comes, their one desire—and need!— is to stay in bed and make up for lost time.

To others it means hope—hope of a square meal for once; perhaps a pair of "new" shoes (nearly worn out by someone else); some equally new clothes to make the body less cold; and perhaps a bag of coal to bring a little cheer into the one poor, dingy living room.

To some it means a good supper at a table covered with snowy linen, a Christmas tree twinkling with tiny electric lights and bending under the burden of dainty bundles while it fills the rooms with the fragrance of the forest.

To others it means unutterable loneliness, or dull indifference, behind the cold, unyielding iron bars of the penitentiary—fit symbol of the spirit of the world that knows not God.

And there are still others. To them it means the coming of the Christ—not only on that "Holy Night" long, long ago, but now; not only in far-off Judea, but here in our own country—in their own hearts. Inwardly, through the Word of God, they behold the great light, hear the angel song of peace on earth, and hasten to worship at the Manger. To them it is a day of holy stillness and deathless hope.

Friend, what does it mean to you?

—C. A. Wendell

editorials

GOD WAS HERE

During World War II an interesting sidelight appeared in the midst of the grimness of the conflict. Three words began showing up, scrawled most any place all over the world. They were "Kilroy was here." He wasn't actually in all those places, of course, but others caught the idea and made a simple diversion well known.

On Jan. 17, 1912, after a gruelling trek across Antarctic wastes, the intrepid Englishman Robert Scott and his party reached the South Pole, thinking they were the first to gain it. Alas, they found the Norwegian flag planted there, testimony to the fact that Roald Amundsen had been there over a month before. Then, greatly disappointed, the Scott party began the desperate race to get back to their base camp before the winter set in. It is one of the great tragedies of exploration history that they didn't make it. All perished.

In more recent history, American astronaut Neil Armstrong became the first human being to step on the moon. He and Edwin E. "Buzz" Aldrin set up a plaque to let it be known for those who may come later—"America was here."

Everywhere man leaves traces behind him. Visitors in our homes sign their names in our guest books to indicate "we were here." All too often careless mankind leaves debris behind him as mute reminder that "I was here."

What this all leads up to is the thought that what Christmas is all about is that *God was here*. God, in the person of Jesus Christ, has walked this earth. "The Word," present at the creation, "became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). This is the great message and mystery of the Incarnation.

Jesus didn't leave a scrawled message like the often mythological Kilroy, but He left a stable in Bethlehem and a wonderfully beautiful story of His birth, the memory of a marvelous life, an empty cross and tomb, a Book filled with the recounting of His work and words, and the promise that He will return bodily some day. And all of these testify to the truth that "He was here."

The great question is often why? and that is the case here. Why did man go to the moon? Why did Amundsen and Scott go to the South Pole? Much more importantly, why did God come to earth in the person of Jesus?

The answer is found even in the name which was given that remarkable Child. Call Him "Jesus" for He will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). And that leads us to what we called in an editorial last year the "prince of verses," John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He have His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." He came, therefore, for salvation, for good for mankind.

Writers have stated the purpose of God's coming in other ways, too: He became poor that we might become rich; He gives sonship to those who receive Him and believe in His name; He gave His life as a ransom for sin; He was the atonement for sin; He was one great sacrifice for all sin for all time, as the Lamb of God. This is why God was here.

We are not writing to people ignorant of these things. But it is still important to state it one more time, the key which unlocks the blessings of God, through Christ, for us is that we are willing to receive what He will so generously give. Surely no one will set himself against the blessing of salvation. Yet many do. Don't you be among them.

God was here. Every year thousands visit the lands of the Bible to see the places where Jesus lived and walked. They come away with a new feeling of His story. The Bible takes on new vividness for them and for others with whom they share their experiences.

But now we say another truly remarkable thing. God *is* here. Of course, it is in an invisible way, but nonetheless real. To His friends He said, "Lo, I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). He still says that today. In what ways is He present now? In His Word, the Bible. In prayer, for He is "only a prayer away." In a godly life which we observe in someone else and in the presence of His kingdom on earth, found in people who believe in Jesus and the work they do to extend that spiritual kingdom.

The thought of His presence now brings comfort. This confidence is expressed in these Bible statements: "I can do all things in Him who strengthens me" (Philippians 4:13); "Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you" (1 Peter 4:7); "For to me to live is Christ" (Philippians 1:21a); and "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psalm 46:1). No sentiments about something that was, these, but present reality. God is here.

And the Lord Jesus will step into history once again. Then He will come not as Savior, but as Judge. All who trust in Him in this life are safe, for their sins are already judged in the great Sin-Bearer. Be ready for the Lord when He returns.

God was here. He is here. He will be here. Wondrous truths at this Christmas-time.

OUR ANNUAL GREETING

It is a pleasure to bring you our annual Christmas issue. Again this year, we feel that we have some good things for your reading enjoyment. All of us who have worked to provide this issue for you will feel rewarded enough if some

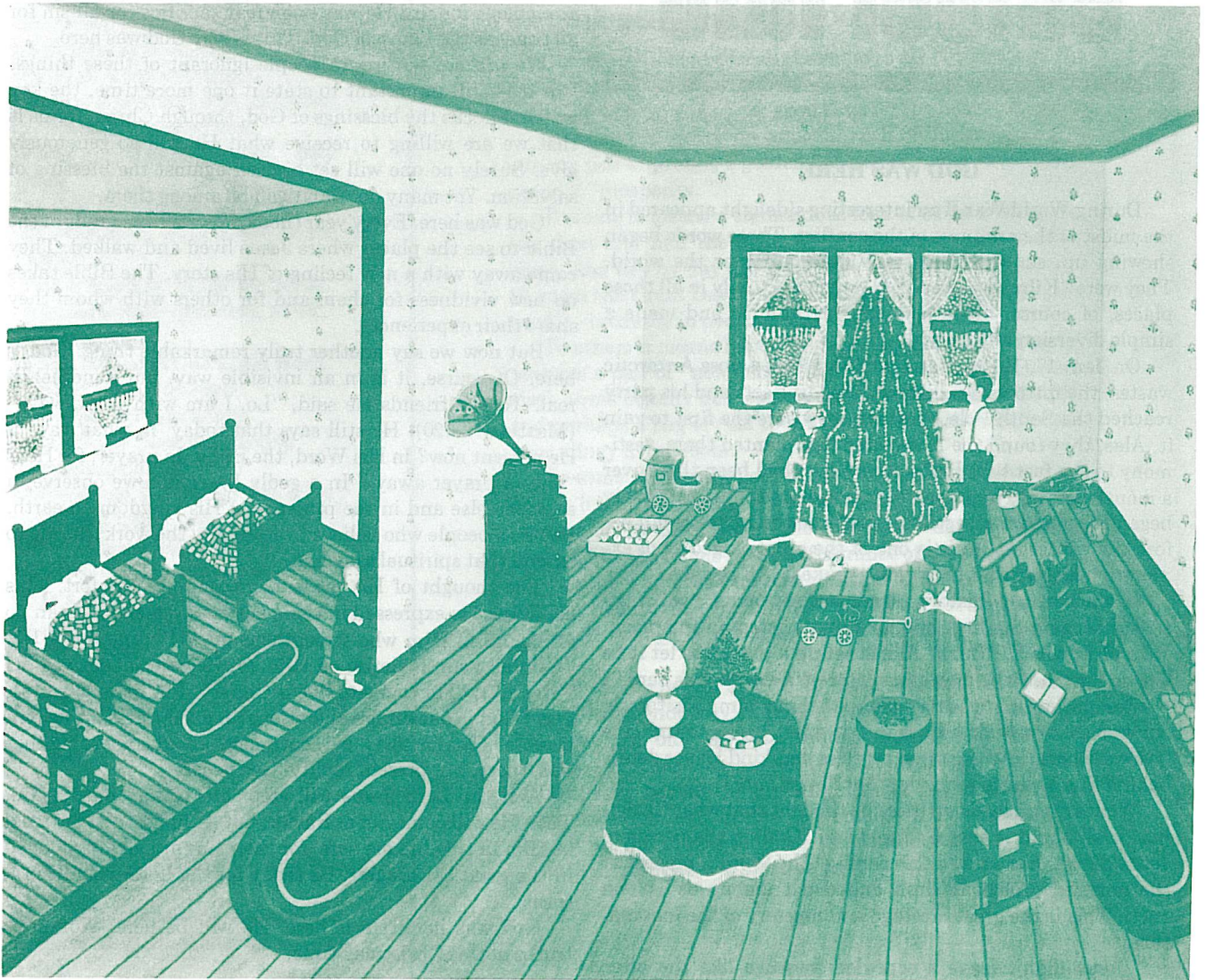
uplift, some blessing comes into your soul through something or all of what is contained in these pages.

A blessed Christmas to all of you. Some of you are reading the *Ambassador* for the first time. Some of you are looking at your 16th Christmas issue. Others are somewhere in between. To all of you, wherever you are, a most joyous yuletide season.

This Christmas *Ambassador* will go out to over 4,000

homes, counting our subscribers and individual gifts of this issue. Our subscription list itself goes up and down, but more up than down. We are grateful for that in a day when there is so much competition in the Christian periodical field, to say nothing of that which comes from secular publications and television.

Again, all the best to you at this Christmas season and continuing on into 1979.



NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

by **Fannie Lou Spelce** (American, 20th Century)
(Picture abridged)

Reproduced courtesy Kennedy Galleries, New York.
RELIGIOUS NEWS SERVICE PHOTO

HIS FIRST CHRISTMAS IN AMERICA

by M.E. Helland

It was Christmas Eve. The sidewalks on both sides of Nicollet Avenue in Minneapolis were swarming with people of all classes of society, from the millionaire in his fine attire to the poor laborer in his work clothes. All seemed to be in great haste. Some of them turned and disappeared into side streets. Other emerged at the intersections and melted into the stream of humanity. The bustle of business reached also into the huge department stores—in and out through the doors swarmed the people, all in feverish haste. And no wonder; it was, to be sure, the last opportunity a person had to shop for Christmas before the stores were closed. Many things had been forgotten; now it depended on whether or not one could remember what they were.

Along the sidewalk long rows of handsome automobiles stood in elegant order. In the store windows were displayed goods of every kind; the poor stopped to look but had no money and so had to move on; the rich stopped, made their choices and went in and bought.

Up in the mezzanine above the first floor in the magnificent Donaldson's store a young man sat slouched in an easy chair lost in his own thoughts. He didn't think of noticing the milling humanity around him, but stared straight ahead. He didn't look as if he were an American. His shoes and the holes in his clothes revealed that he was an immigrant. He had fair features and clear blue eyes. The pointed jutting jaw and the firm set of his mouth told of strong will power. The high broad forehead spoke of clear thinking and sound judgment. In build he was short and broad shouldered.

Around him at the desks sat women and men busy at their work; they wrote

letters, addressed packages, mailed them, used the telephone and hurried back and forth without stopping; but the man in the easy chair didn't notice it. Clearly, one or another remembrance of Christmas back in the old country had overcome him and taken possession of all his thoughts and fantasies. Now and then the clear blue eyes became moist—a tear trickled down the pale chin. Some women came up the stairway, noticed him and looked at him with understanding. The man in the easy chair felt that he was the subject of their conversation, got up, buttoned his coat and went down from the mezzanine in order to go back to his place.

The young man was Johan Nyhus, a student at one of the Norwegian-American church schools in the Twin Cities. This was his first Christmas in America. It wasn't quite a year yet since he had left Norway. In a sheltered cove in one of the West Coast's fjords lay his home, where he had celebrated Christmas together with his parents, brothers and sisters so many times.

Conditions at home were difficult and Johan's parents were badly off. Therefore, he couldn't think of going home to stay; he had to go out in life and make something of himself. Even when he was only 12 years old he had gone to sea and had had the opportunity to follow his own desires. As soon as he had been confirmed he had gotten a job aboard a ship which sailed back and forth along the coast with general freight. The companionship which Johan received there wasn't the best and because he had always had a deep respect for holy things and, after all, was strongly inclined toward the religious, he soon became tired of sea life. It didn't attract him any longer.



He decided to go to America.

That was in the fall. On a gray, rainy day the next March one of the "Wilson" boats steamed out on the Pudde Fjord and swung seaward past Kvarven. Johan Nyhus stood on the upper deck and looked back on the Norwegian mountains. When he had taken his mother's hand and said farewell, two large tears had run down her cheeks, and she had told him that he must take Jesus with him on his journey; he had responded by mumbling something about that he would try to do that, but he couldn't remember exactly how the words had come out. And now he stood alone in his loneliness, as the Wilson boat steamed steadily onward—further and further toward the ocean, until the last island in the rocky Norwegian reefs had been passed and the open sea spread itself before him as far as the eye could see.

* * *

In the beginning of October the following fall we find Johan Nyhus sitting in a little room on Lincoln Avenue in Minneapolis absorbed in the study of English grammar. He had worked on a farm in North Dakota the whole summer. And there, at a mission meeting, he had been converted and found peace with God. A yearning to bring the news of salvation to others had awakened in him and when the fall came and he was through with his work, he went to Minneapolis with the intention of preparing himself to be a worker in God's vineyard.

Johan Nyhus worked hard through-

out the fall. The worst problem was learning English; it wasn't the grand English that he could talk when he came to school. He had to put up with a lot of criticism for his butchering of English pronunciation. He was often tempted to give up the whole study, but his desire for knowledge and his strong willpower helped him. Little by little he began to get orientated also in English and the work gradually became much easier.

And then Christmas came. Most of the students travelled home to celebrate Christmas with their parents. And some few who had their families back in the old country had to stay at school. Among these was Johan Nyhus. The time could easily get to be long, but he was able to read some good literature as a pastime. He had, of course, the whole school library at his command. He had already read, to be sure, a few of Jonas Lie's sea stories in his spare time, but there was always so little time for such reading. Of course, one's lessons were what a person must take care of first of all. But now it was a holiday—now he had time to read. And so he took the opportunity and read the most important books of Bjørnson, Jonas Lie, Alexander Kielland, Arne Garborg, Kinck and Hamsun.

But Christmas Eve came, and then it didn't work for Johan Nyhus to sit inside and read. He had to get out and see how life went on downtown. After he had pushed his way out of the stream of humanity in front of the large department stores, he found his way at last up to the mezzanine above the first floor in Donaldson's, where he found himself an easy chair and sat down to observe the Christmas rush. But then as his thought began to dwell upon Christmas and the meaning of Christmas, memories from home began to flood in upon him—Christmas memories—childhood memories. He was overwhelmed, he forgot everything around him.

When Johan Nyhus came home that evening he had lost all desire for reading literature, at least for the moment. It was the Christmas back home in the little red-painted house which occupied all his thinking. It was the old Christmas songs which Father used to sing on Christmas Eve night which rang in his ears. He brought out the hymnbook and New Testament which he had received from his pastor for confirmation. He read the Christmas Gospel, thanked God for his salvation through Jesus Christ and prayed that He would watch over and bless those

back home and give them true Christmas joy, and that He would also be near him, who was out among strangers, and help him to be faithful in all until death. After the prayer he sang:

"Seal my heart with Thine impres-
sure,
Jesus, King and God of Grace,
That no pain or earthborn pleasure
Shall Thine image there efface.
Let this imprint, Lord, abide:
Jesus Christ, the Crucified,
Is my life, my firm foundation,
All my glory and salvation." *

A while later Johan Nyhus lay in sweet sleep. But outside the stars twinkled in glorious beauty. It was Christmas night in Minneapolis.

*This song was substituted by the translator for one which has not been translated into English.

(Ed. note: I have translated the above article from the publication *Julehelg* which was printed in 1914. It was written by the late Pastor M. E. Helland, 1887-1978, during his own student days in Minneapolis.)



TELL THEM HE HAS COME!

by Pastor J. G. Erickson



From palaces and populous cities of the East they came on an extensive journey in search of a child. "Where is the Child who is born King of the Jews?" they inquire. "For we saw His star rise and have come to worship Him." These are the Wise Men, as known to us in Scripture, probably representing the scientific community of that day. Not much information is available concerning their origin. Astrologers, perhaps, coming from Persia or Mesopotamia. In Persia, we're told astrologers built the world's first observatories where they studied the courses of heavenly bodies. Yet the precarious journey that motivated these men on toward Bethlehem touched off an inquiry that resounds to this day . . . "Where is the Child born King of the Jews?" or, "Please tell us, where does one find Christ?" By some strange compulsion they had come, across the Euphrates and the Tigris, over rugged mountain passes and across wind-swept deserts. Now at last they have reached the long-sought city—Jerusalem.

The persistent inquiry of the Magi soon reached the attention of the King. Herod set in motion a full-scale investigation. Religious experts were called in. Messianic prophecies were carefully examined. Directed at last to Bethlehem, scene of the event, according to the Prophet Micah, King Herod said to them, "Go and search for the young child, and when you have found him, bring me word. . . ." The Wise Men

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continue their journey. The inquiry goes on.

The New Testament calls to mind numerous examples of this on-going inquiry. In John 12:20, certain Greeks come to Philip and inquire of him . . . "Sir, we would see Jesus." In John 9:12, neighbors of the man born blind, whose eyes Jesus had opened, inquired concerning Jesus, the healer . . . "Where is He?" We're told of a day when the disciples came excitedly to the Master, saying, "All men seek after Thee."

We believe the Wise Men, however, manifest characteristics of a true seeker after Christ. We find, first of all, that they came by a divine revelation. God's Holy Spirit, the Divine Illuminator, had revealed to these men something of God's plan of salvation. Their inquiry seems to indicate some knowledge of God's Word. They based their search on the prophetic Scriptures. They knew there had been a royal birth. "Where is the Child who is born King of the Jews?" Furthermore, led by a divine light they began the journey that led them to Christ. Knowledge of Him, alone, was not sufficient. Many today are content with a knowledge about Christ, never coming to an experience *with* Christ. Knowledge of Christian truth is basic, yet it can never save. We note here, the Holy Spirit led them in their inquiry into the very presence of Christ. Here faith finds fruition. Here the seeking soul finds rest. Here, in His presence there is exceeding great joy!

Not all who inquire concerning Christ, or who express an interest in His coming, experience the joy of personal discovery. Some are forever

searching but wonder if, indeed, He can be found. Robinson expresses the lament of one who seeks and cannot find in his poem. . . .

"I cannot find my way, there is no star
In all the shrouded heavens anywhere."

The best news of Christmas, however, is that HE HAS COME TO US! Frustrated and lost, unable to find our way, He came to seek and to save. When all my searching ended in futility and gloom. "When there was no star in all the shrouded heavens," when I discovered the depths of the "horrible pit" from whence there appeared to be no deliverance, He came to redeem and to rescue. Should you, dear reader, be among the struggling, searching souls, who find yourself no closer to God, you may turn in your agony to JESUS. Fix your eyes on Him. Kneel at His manger. There is still room at His manger and at His cross.

"Thou shalt call His name JESUS, for He shall save His people from their sins." Having found Him, go out and share the Good News. TELL THEM HE HAS COME!





A PAGE FOR CHILDREN

Happy Acres



THURSDAY EVENING AT HAPPY ACRES

It was Thursday evening, and the Johnsons settled around the big round dining table to enjoy their "missionary hobby." Ever since Dad's best friend, Paul Clifford, had gone to India as a missionary, the Johnsons had realized more and more the many blessings they had at Happy Acres that the poor people in non-Christian lands did not have.

First of all, the Johnsons had the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They were never starved for the Bread of Life because they had their Bibles to read. Nor were they hungry for daily bread to eat. But there were thousands and thousands of people in heathen lands who were starving for food, and thousands and thousands who had never heard the Gospel preached.

The Johnsons were a healthy family, but even if one of them did get sick, there was a doctor and hospital close by. But great numbers of people in foreign lands had only witch doctors who could give them no real help.

The Johnsons never suffered from the cold because they had warm clothes and a warm home. Many families in India and Africa and Madagascar had no homes at all. Such families hid in fear of enemies and from wild animals and from the terrible evil spirits and demons in which they believed.

So, because they had so many blessings, the family at Happy Acres Farm had decided to help—as much as they could—the missionaries who went to help those who were sick or hungry or in need of the Gospel. Many such missionaries went to faraway lands; some

of them worked right in America. Mom would gather clothes the neighbors no longer needed, and the Johnsons would have a merry time packing boxes of clothing to send to those who needed clothing. One winter they had managed to send six big boxes of clothing away.

The Johnson children would collect old Christmas cards and birthday greetings. These they would send to a mission school in Zululand. There the mission teachers gave the brightly colored cards as prizes to the little children. Once, a teacher had sent the Johnsons a snapshot showing the dark-skinned youngsters happily holding the Christmas-card prizes.

Every week, as regularly as Thursday evening came, Mom would get out her missionary address book and the missionary magazines that listed the birthdays of faraway missionaries. Each of the Johnsons would help to write birthday greetings to those who would soon have a birthday. They would write letters to the missionaries and to native Christians who liked to get letters from the Johnsons. All of them had to have a part to write in the letter to Josefa.

They had finished writing letters to most of the missionaries when Mom said, "Now I think we should all write something to Mr. Haglund."

"But Mr. Haglund isn't a missionary," objected Mark.

"Oh, that is true enough," agreed Dad. "But—if you think it over—you'll find we write to several people who aren't really missionaries. Mostly,

we've been writing these letters because we want to be of help to those who get these letters. Surely, Mr. Haglund needs any help that we may be able to give him."

Pen tops were chewed and fingered before Mark and Stephen could think of what to say in a cheer-up letter to "Gramps" Haglund. But Ann had no trouble getting started with her letter to the old man in the hospital. Somehow, the more she had prayed for him, the more friendly she felt toward Mr. Haglund.

MEMORY VERSE: Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people. Psalm 96:3

FAMILY DISCUSSION

1. Do you think that you can keep praying for a person and not learn to like him?
2. What, then, is the best thing for us to do, if we find we do not like somebody?
3. If we are Christians, we cannot be content just to know salvation for ourselves. We want to tell the good news about Christ to others. In so doing, we are following Christ's missionary mandate. (Matthew 24:14; 28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47)
4. How many missionaries can you name? What can you do to help the missionaries sent out by our church?

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9. From your reading of this entire letter, where is Paul as he writes it? _____
- A. What kind of picture do we get of Paul's thinking and concern? _____
- B. Which is easier—to be concerned about your circumstances or others' welfare? _____

Discuss: Write down several specific ways that you might use to show a Christ-like concern for others.

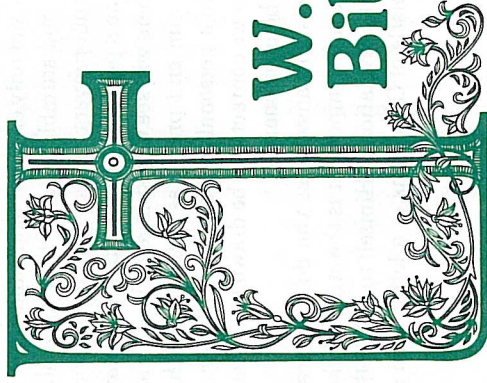
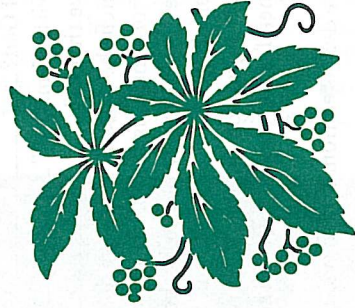
From the Project Calendar:

January: *Church Extension*

The women of the WMF pray for and share so that additional Home Mission churches can be constructed.

February: *Praise Program*

The women of the WMF are much concerned for the over-all debt retirement on all the real estate held by the Association. Pray and give!



January, 1979

Study Assignment: Colossians 1:1-14.

Colossae was an important city in Asia Minor, not far from Laodicea and Hierapolis. The church there had been planted by Epaphras, perhaps during Paul's residence at Ephesus. The Apostle, apparently, had not visited it himself (2:1), but was deeply interested in it through the report of his friend.

This Epistle was written during Paul's imprisonment at Rome (1:24, 4:18) and apparently about the same time as those to the Ephesians and Philemon, for the three letters were sent by the hands of the same persons, Tychicus and Onesimus (4:7, 9; Eph. 6:21, 22). The Church was suffering from the teaching of a false

philosophy which combined Oriental mysticism with Jewish ritualism and turned the disciples from simple faith in Christ. The object of this Epistle, therefore, is to set forth the majesty and glory of our Lord's person and character (*Through the Bible Day by Day* by F. B. Meyer).

In our study of Colossians we want to see "Christ Our Life." Be certain to memorize Col. 2:6, 7. These are the theme verses of this book. May we suggest that you read the entire Epistle to Colossians, not only once but again and again.

We have many Christians who are weak and stumble because they have not been encouraged to "grow up" in Christ. It is our prayer that as we study this portion of God's Word, and let that Word become a part of us, that we together may "grow in Christ." As we grow spiritually, others will see Christ in and through us and be drawn to Him. This should be our aim and prayer as members of the W.M.F. First of all, each of us must come into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is then that our families and others we contact will be drawn to Christ. We are not only to be mission-minded but to be missionaries.

Don't be too concerned about correct facts and answers as you do these lessons. The answer sheet is only a guide. Much more important is the study of the Word, sharing together and praying for Christ's revelation of Himself to us by His Holy Spirit through the Word. Read the Epistle of Colossians as a letter from a good friend.

1. Paul, the author, had a special concern for the group at Colossae. What was it? Col. 1:1-14 _____
2. Are we faced with similar situations today? What might they be? _____
From where do these attacks come? _____
3. Note v. 2. To whom is this letter addressed? _____
Discuss: Is there ever the peace of God without first peace with God? _____
4. What are we admonished to do for one another in v. 3? _____

5. How do verses 4 and 5 correlate? _____

What three spiritual graces in the Christian life are mentioned here? _____

6. According to v. 6, what happens when we have the love of Christ in our hearts? _____

Could it be that even in our congregations and groups we see so little love for one another because of this very thing? Loves brings many blessings to our spiritual lives. Not just a "love those who love us" attitude, but we have a real love for God's children and also for the unsaved. How about your own life?
Read again verses 2, 4 and 5.

What is laid out upon believers in this world is much, but what is laid up for them in heaven is much more. The more we fix our hopes on the recompense of reward in the other world, the more free shall we be of our earthly treasure upon all occasions of doing good.

7. Note carefully the prayer in vs. 9-14.

A. What does it mean: to "be filled with the knowledge of His will?" _____

Our knowledge of the will of God must be always practical: we must know it in order to do it.

B. to lead a life worthy of God? _____

C. to "be strengthened with all might?" _____

D. For what are we to give thanks? _____

The particular point which the Apostle here says demanded thanksgiving was that they had been called from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. This had been done by the special mercy of the Father, who had provided the plan of salvation and had sent His Son to redeem them.

Isn't this a model prayer to pray for one another? When we have this kind of concern for ourselves and then for one another, we will see great things happen in our local congregations.

8. "In Christ"—what are we delivered from and to (vs. 13, 14)? _____

What does this mean to you? _____

NEW WORKERS IN MISSIONS

The Board of World Missions of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations is pleased to announce the appointment of Rev. David Abel and Rev. Charles Kvanvig to serve as missionaries in Brazil.

Tentative plans are to have the Abels leave for Brazil in late January or as soon thereafter as possible. The Kvanvigs will remain in the U.S. indefinitely until a medical problem is cleared up.

Rev. David Abel and Rev. Charles Kvanvig, both graduates of Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, were ordained into the Christian ministry and commissioned for missionary service in Brazil on Sunday, Nov. 19, at Medicine Lake Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The Board of World Missions commends them to the church and asks for the prayers and support of the church as they prepare to serve as our missionaries in Brazil.

THE CHARLES KVANVIGS

The Psalmist in Psalm 16:6, says, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage." How true that is of us also. God HAS directed our ways. While we have grown up in different localities of the country, God has had His eye on us, as His Word declares.

Susan grew up in Astoria, Oregon, and graduated from high school there. It was the faithful preaching of the Word by Pastor R. S. Persson and the Christian example of those at Bethany Lutheran Church and especially the prayers for her by friends and family that brought her to the foot of the cross for salvation, and gave her a challenge to a holy life, pleasing to God. Upon high school graduation she attended and graduated from our Bible School in Minneapolis.

Charles grew up in Sebeka, Minnesota. It was the preaching of the Word at Bible camp and in the home congregation, and the faithful prayers of parents, grandparents, and friends that led him first to the foot of the cross for salvation and then, by God's grace, into the ministry. After high school graduation he also attended and graduated from our Bible School.



The Kvanvigs

While Charles and Sue were at Bible School, a mutual love for foreign missions and a regular desire for prayer meetings were used of the Lord to draw them together and in the fall of 1971 they were married. Two years later they were blessed with a baby girl, Bethany Lynn. Charles finished his four years at Bemidji State College and proceeded to our seminary and in the spring of 1977 graduated from the same. During their college and seminary days, they have served the congregations in Bemidji and Granite Falls, Minn., and the Dalton, Minn., parish. For the past year and a half, Charles has served as dean of men and Christian services director at our Bible School.

"Not only has God given us a burden for Brazil, but he has also granted us the privilege of seeing the great need at the congregational level, at the schools, and, yea, the whole world is a field that is white unto harvest."

THE DAVID ABELS

David Abel is the eldest son of missionaries John and Ruby Abel. He was born in Minneapolis and at the age of two moved with his parents to Brazil. Growing up in Brazil gave him the opportunity to learn Portuguese and participate in many of the activities of missionary life, including Sunday School and youth camp work, as well as the management of the Lutheran bookstore in Campo Mourao.

At an early age David received the assurance of his salvation and a desire to one day serve the Lord in full-time service. With this goal in mind, he returned in 1968 to the States to finish high school, graduating from Hillcrest

Lutheran Academy at Fergus Falls, Minnesota, in 1969. Four years later he completed his work on a History major at The King's College, in Briarcliff Manor, New York. A short trip to Brazil in 1972 served to strengthen his commitment to missions.

While at King's, David met Janet, a graduate from Hampden DuBois Academy in Zellwood, Florida, and the eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hilsmeier of Cleveland, Ohio. Janet was born in Jasper, Indiana, and during her early years moved often because of her father's job in automotive parts sales. After living in Ohio, Kentucky and North Carolina, the family finally settled in Cleveland when they acquired a Tupperware distributorship.

Janet came to know the Lord at the age of eight through the ministry of a Good News Club which her mother was teaching and at 16 she sensed a call to missionary service. Through the years her Christian parents have been very supportive of her interest in missions.

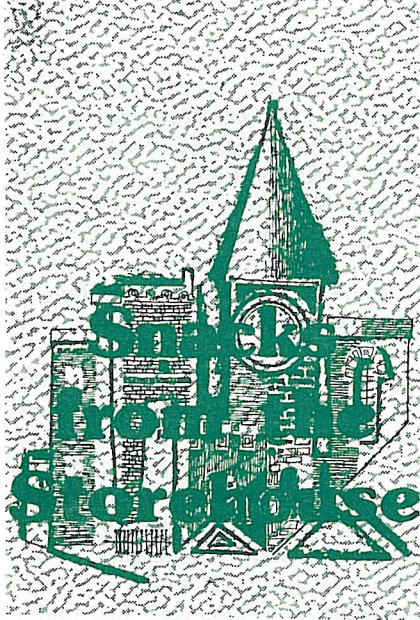


The Abels

The Abels were married in 1973 and moved to Minneapolis where Janet completed her work in music at the University of Minnesota. Besides directing the Medicine Lake Lutheran Church choir, Janet also taught elementary music in the Minneapolis school system for two years while David attended the Association seminary. In 1977 they were blessed with the birth of a daughter, Tamara Joy.

David graduated from Association

(Continued on page 24)



A GIFT OF LOVE

"And the shepherds returned—with JOY." (Luke 2:20) These shepherds returned from a Christmas program about 2,000 years ago and they saw and heard things that made a deep impression on their lives. Even today the Christmas season is a season of joy. There is the receiving of gifts, a full table of delicious food, and then the old, old story, still new, of the Babe in the manger.

May I take the privilege of changing the focus somewhat this year. As we rejoice in this great and wonderful Gift, shall we take a look at God's side of Christmas? Have you tried to imagine the anguish in His heart as He places the most precious thing He possessed into that filthy manger back there so long ago? And as He places that little bundle of His into the care of Joseph and Mary He can hear the words of Isaiah: "But He was wounded for our transgression, He was bruised for our iniquities—." He can hear the hammer blows, driving those cruel nails into the hands of His Son. Yes, He saw and heard all of that. But even so, He turns over His Son to a world of sinful men, to die.

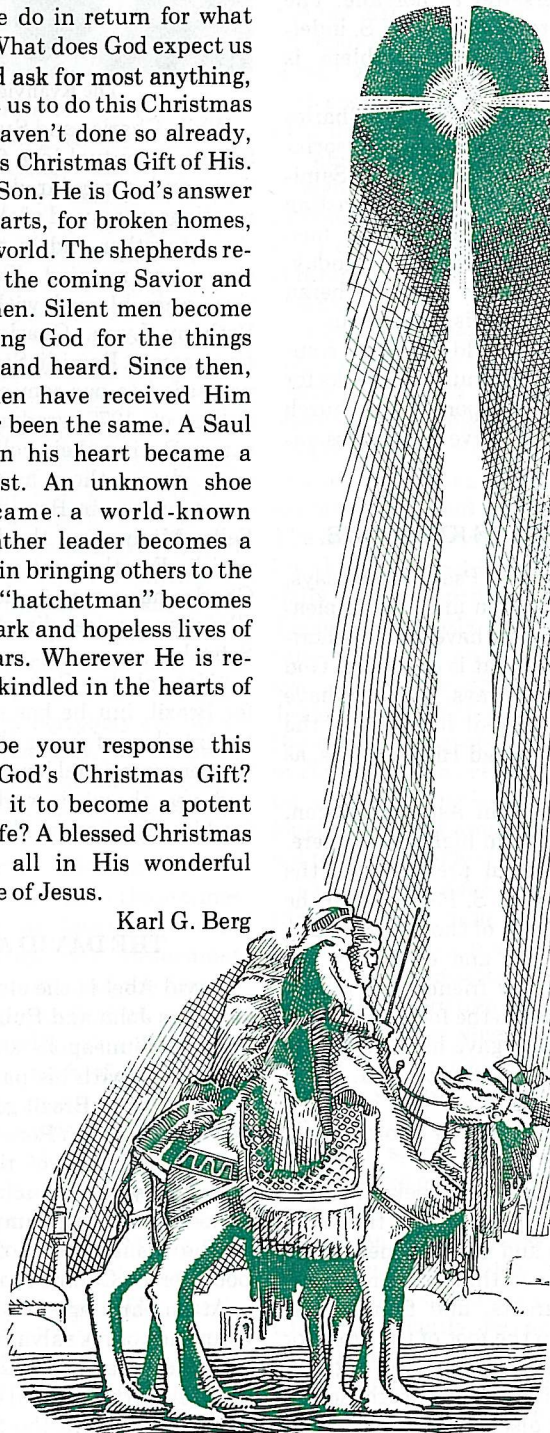
None of us would be willing to do such a thing. And if we did, we would want the whole world to know of *our sacrifice*. Is that the way God delivers His Gift to the world? Isaiah lets us have a little glimpse of the heart of God at the time. "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him—." God is love and He loved His Son with an eternal love and still He gave Him up for us gladly. How

could He do such a thing? The Son answers that question for us: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son—." That means that He loved you and He loved me so much that He couldn't withhold His Son since it was the only way to LIFE for us. That's why there was a child, His Child, in the manger back there in Bethlehem. A Gift of love for you and me.

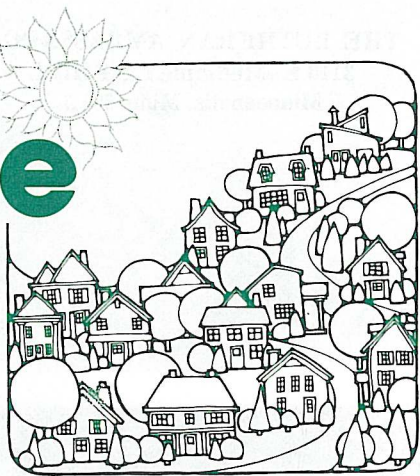
What can we do in return for what He has done? What does God expect us to do? He could ask for most anything, still all He asks us to do this Christmas season, if we haven't done so already, is to *receive* this Christmas Gift of His. To receive His Son. He is God's answer for troubled hearts, for broken homes, for a war-torn world. The shepherds received Him as the coming Savior and left different men. Silent men become vocal in praising God for the things they had seen and heard. Since then, men and women have received Him and have never been the same. A Saul with murder in his heart became a slave for Christ. An unknown shoe salesman became a world-known Moody. A Panther leader becomes a servant of men in bringing others to the Light. Nixon's "hatchetman" becomes a light in the dark and hopeless lives of men behind bars. Wherever He is received hope is kindled in the hearts of men.

What will be your response this Christmas to God's Christmas Gift? Will you allow it to become a potent factor in your life? A blessed Christmas season to you all in His wonderful name, the name of Jesus.

Karl G. Berg



Life on the Edge of Town



Immigrant's Christmas

I enjoyed reading and working with the late Pastor M. E. Helland's article about the immigrant's first Christmas in America. In the Norwegian it was called "Hjemlengsel," which means "longing for home."

Light is thrown on several aspects of the immigrant experience through the article, no matter the country from which he came. (One wonders, too, how much of it was Pastor Helland's own story.) First, he likely came to America for economic reasons. There was no future at home, although in his mind he probably hoped to go back to live after making some money here. Few of them ever did go back to the old country to stay, however.

Second, Pastor Helland portrays the struggle of the immigrant to learn English. Of course, most of them made it eventually, but it was hard. We can imagine the added burden placed upon the immigrant as he studied for the ministry, for instance, as over against the young man who had been raised in the U.S. and had learned to speak English at least by first grade.

Third, there was the loneliness, the longing for home, especially at Christmas time. Having been virtually alone on campuses during holiday times myself (though not right at Christmas itself), I know how quiet they can be. And we have heard that my father spent at least one Christmas somewhat

as Johan Nyhus did, for he sat alone in his room on Christmas Eve in Old Main at Augsburg Seminary with a lighted candle and the Bible, trying to re-live Christmas back home in Norway.

Yes, "His First Christmas in America" tells us something about a by-gone day, a day through which our parents, grand parents or great grandparents lived, even as Mrs. Ordella Walker Arneson's article "John's First Christmas in America" did so well last year.

Our lead article, "The Christmas Solitaire," by Mrs. Michael Brandt, tells of the lonesomeness of a modern day student at Christmas and how through her experience the meaning of the holiday became more real to her. It is a story well done and has some similarities to the story of Johan Nyhus. A further thought, I do believe that the Pastor Petrussen Jeanne Brandt mentions is the man I once knew over 20 years ago. He was a UELC pastor in North Dakota then and joined us LFC pastors for our annual tri-district pastors' retreats in Minot. Good to hear of him again.

We Feed the Birds

We're not feeding a dog this winter, here on the edge of town, but we are feeding the birds, the first time we've ever done it in an official way. They've certainly scavenged enough over the years in the scraps we've thrown out.

But I gave Mother a bird feeder last Christmas and a few weeks ago I finally got it put up. In addition to a sparrow-type bird, we had a visit from what was likely a flock of Evening Grosbeaks. They were quite nervous about coming to the feeder, though, and didn't stay long. We may see them again this winter as they are not afraid of the cold.

And before them there was a group of what I determined (with the aid of my bird book) were Wilson's Warblers, a yellow bird. If my judgment was correct, they were on their way to spend the winter in Mexico. They had a thousand miles and more to go and we were glad to give them a little lunch on the way. Isn't the migration instinct in birds a marvelous part of God's creation?

Christmas Gifts

It's easy to get nostalgic about Christmas, isn't it? And a lot of that centers around the presents we got as children. I've already written in the past about books as gifts and the pleasure they give.

Games are a wonderful part of family life or at least they could be. In our time, with television giving strong competition, there can hardly be the opportunity for games that there used to be.

I remember when Chinese checkers were popular. My brother and I spent hours at it on winter evenings. We liked to play three sets each at one time, that is, have the whole board full.

We got anagrams in the family one Christmas. This is a captivating game but not played much any more, unfortunately. It is a word game, but with quite a different idea than Scrabble. Now a game called Boggle is becoming popular, emphasizing speed in picking out words in a given time.

So much could be mentioned about games. There is such a variety of them, so many concepts. It could well be said that not only the family that prays together, stays together, but also the family that *plays* together.

Christmas Preaching

A pastor who is not in parish work never misses the opportunity to preach

as much as on the festival days of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. Somehow the Gospel takes on greater glory on those occasions and it never seems quite right not to be along in proclaiming it on those days. This must be a special adjustment for retired pastors, to not be preaching at Christmas, for instance, after doing so for 40 or 50 years.

And so I am glad that I will be preaching at a Christmas service also this year, God willing. For some weeks now I've been conducting Sunday services at Telemarken Lutheran Church, east of Thief River Falls, Minn. I much appreciate this opportunity for Sunday by Sunday preaching.

The world needs the Christmas message of God's love through Jesus as much this year as ever. And sometimes we think maybe even more so. Pray for us who preach. Pray for all who hear.

—Raynard Huglen



(Continued from page 21)

Free Lutheran Theological Seminary this past spring and did some graduate work in Missions at Wheaton College in Illinois in the summer. He and Janet have been richly blessed through their internship in the Newfolden, Minn., parish in 1977, and at Medicine Lake Lutheran this year. They look forward to the ministry which God has for them under the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, holding fast to the promise from God's Word to be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).

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