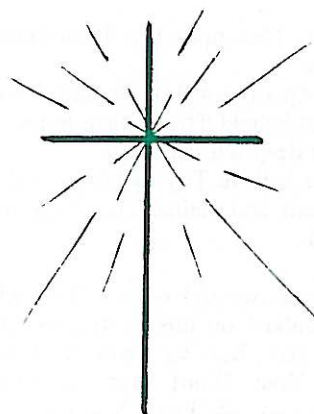


THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

December 7, 1982

For
unto you
is born this
day in the city
of David a Saviour,
which is
Christ the
Lord.



Luke 2:11

Calligraphy by Cary Dietsche

AT THE MASTER'S FEET



Rev. John Strand

Then You Spoke Again

We saw Thee not when Thou didst come
To this poor world of sin and death;
Nor yet beheld Thy cottage home
In that despised Nazareth;
But we believe Thy footsteps trod
Its streets and plains, Thou Son of God.

Master, we did not see You when You walked on this earth soon 2000 years ago. But we know You were here. Your Word says so. Others also say so. We know You came.

People had waited a long time for You. Some were doubting if You would ever come. They began to question Your Word. Yes, You had

spoken many times of Your coming. But that was hundreds of years before.

But then You spoke again. You spoke in a most wonderful way. You spoke by fulfilling Your Word. God the Father spoke by sending His Son into the world to be our Savior. The years of waiting were over. Now You were here. At Christmas we celebrate Your coming. At Christmas we celebrate Your message to our world. What You had said through Isaiah and all the prophets came to pass. By Your coming You spoke again.

Isaiah hath foretold it
In words of promise sure,
And Mary's arms enfold it,
A Virgin meek and pure.
Through God's eternal will
This Child to her is given,
At midnight calm and still.

You came speaking salvation for mankind. This is what makes Christmas joyous.

Now sing we, now rejoice,
Now raise to heav'n our voice;
Lo! He from whom joy streameth,
Poor in a manger lies;
Yet not so brightly beameth
The sun in yonder skies!
Thou my Savior art!
Thou my Savior art!

Master, help me not to doubt Your Word. Your Word tells me of Your love and mercy towards me. This can become commonplace. In a world so unconcerned, it is easy to not believe

that You love me. But You have spoken. Perhaps the next time You speak so clearly will be when all eyes will see You as You return.

Savior, I am often hard of hearing. Oh, I hear so much, but not all that I should really hear. I hear this world's clamor. I do not hear so clearly Your voice as You speak in Your Word. But I must not look to You for a hearing aid. I must act on what I know, what You have said. Help me not to depend on something more contemporary. It will lead me astray.

As You kept Your Word and came that first Christmas, so You keep all Your promises. You love. You forgive as men repent. You save to the uttermost. You never change. The one who comes to You, You will never cast out! Thank You! Thank You!

Savior, how great is Your concern that all hear You. The heavenly hosts bore witness at Your first advent. The shepherds were overwhelmed. Grant that I be overwhelmed this Christmas by what You said and are saying. Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound! Grant that men hear and believe.

Come from on high to me,
I cannot rise to Thee:
O cheer my wearied spirit:
O pure and holy Child,
Thro' all Thy grace and merit,
Blest Jesus! Lord most mild,
Draw me after Thee!
Draw me after Thee!

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

is published biweekly (except the second issue in August) by the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minn. 55441.

All communications concerning contents of this magazine should be addressed to: Rev. Raynard Huglen, Editor, Newfolden, Minn. 56738.

Layout design: Mrs. Wayne Hjermstad. Editorial Board: Mr. Sheldon Mortrud, Rev. Francis Monseth, Rev. Robert Lee.

Send \$10.00 subscription to THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minn. 55441. Second-class postage paid at Minneapolis, Minn.

Volume 20 Number ~~23~~ 24
USPS 588-620

*Near Ft. Dauphin,
Madagascar*

In those years the elders in the little country church at Anka were Rangahy and Ramatoa Paulie. They owned a grove and a garden some ten miles north of Fort Dauphin. Several times weekly they would walk in to our mission school to sell pineapples, papaya and leeches or wild raspberries. Up early, early, they would arrive on our veranda by 6:30 in the morning and were we tardy in greeting them, they would never knock, but after a time begin to cough or clear their throats as a way of saying, "Come on, let's get going in there." They brought good fruit. They impressed us with their industry, honesty and pleasant manners. Personable, cheerful, open, they perhaps spoke more clearly to us of the Lord than we did to them.

Paul and his wife were the first from a country church to invite our family to come for Christmas Eve service. It sometimes rained hard during late December and this made the drive over the red dirt, washboard roads and the little foot-

paths through the valley and over the log bridges a rather exciting excursion. A lot of water, a little mud, maybe a time for Dad to get stuck and then exclaiming, laughing, helpful Malagasy to help in pushing him out of a rut and back to solid ground.

The church, perhaps 12 by 20 feet in dimension, was of bark walls, thatched roof, and the ground covered with clean reed mats. No pews, no benches, a lectern in front and a chair for the catechist, a cross, a table, and on it a small bush decorated with Christmas cards. No lights, save for one or two little kerosene lamps fashioned out of sweet milk tins.

The catechist would announce the hymn: "Number 62," and from over in the village where they had assembled, the children would begin to sing of going to Bethlehem and then, winding their way into the church, they would crowd together, damp from the drizzle outside, perspiring from the closeness and the shoulder-swaying of their procession. Their faces were radiantly aglow; with full throated voices they sang of the angels, the shepherds, and the incarnation. White shirts, white shawls, white teeth, and happy voices—these were the colors of their Christmas.

The old catechist would proceed to the lectern to read the Christmas Gospel and lead in a fervent and rather long-lasting prayer, after which there would be song after song after song. Over in a corner sat Paulie, face expressionless, balding head bowed in quiet dignity. In another corner sat Mrs. Paulie, holding up one of those little kerosene lamps. Holding it up now in her right

hand, and after that getting tired, transferring it to her left.

There was a short meditation by the old catechist: "Jesus is born . . . the Savior is come . . . now . . . right here at Anka . . . born for you and for me . . . and for all the people in the whole wide world . . . if only we will allow Him to come in . . . Then will follow the Redeemer's forgiveness, and joy, and peace, and life everlasting. . . . To Him be glory and honor and praise, forever and ever, Amen." Then a shorter greeting from the mission in town, some not altogether perfectly rendered cornet duets, more songs, and the offering given, immediately counted and the total amount announced. By then, at least, two of our boys and several of their Malagasy counterparts would be asleep in their parents' arms. After the last song of the heavens and the old catechist's benediction there would be the time for the boys to pass out the bonbon that Mom had brought along. And then the home-going amid much, "Congratulations that Christmas has met us on the way," and "Thank you, indeed, for coming to us at Anka." In the soft and steady rain, we would head back for town, remembering mostly how Mrs. Paulie had, throughout the evening, held the light aloft in her corner.

Ted Berkas
Minneapolis, Minn.

(Ted Berkas is a student at Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary.) He and his family lived in Madagascar for a few years when he served as a teacher in the mission school at Ft. Dauphin.)

In a Lutheran parsonage

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES



CHRISTMAS IN THE YEARS GONE BY

My heart stirs with joy as I recall Christmastimes of my childhood. My thoughts are especially directed to my years in the parsonage at Westby, Montana. It may be of interest to tell you that Westby is a small town in the very northeast corner of Montana. Part of Westby is in North Dakota, as it is located on the state line between North Dakota and Montana, with Canada very near to the north.

My father, Rev. J. H. Dordal, accepted the call to Westby in 1926 and moved from Ada, Minnesota, with my mother and six children. This call was on home mission help and my parents saw an open field of work for the kingdom. Their goal was to serve God and His people faithfully. Mother added much to the work with her gift of music by organizing and directing adult and children choirs. Dad preached the Word with all the power he had been given from God. This congregation grew in Christian growth and in numbers during Dad's ministry, and at this time the sanctuary was built. Before this it had been a basement church. The parsonage was adequate and comfortable. The people were warm and friendly and would often shower us

A Centenarian Remembers

Christmas is with us again for us to commemorate the birth of our dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who was born in Bethlehem almost 2,000 years ago.

The Christmas tree in all its glory points to Him. When I was a child there were no evergreens to buy, so a small common tree from outside was brought in. I covered the branches with tissue paper, made some paper flowers, so together with strings of popcorn and wax candles the tree was trimmed. The farmers had no electricity at that time, so we had no electric lights. When we started our own home, evergreens were on the market, so one of them

with food and clothing to add to Dad's salary.

My father also served two other congregations some miles from Westby. One was Lone Tree congregation, so named because there was only one tree in sight. Trees were very scarce in this part of Montana, but caragana bushes grew well. The other congregation was in Comertown, Montana.

Winters on the prairies of north-eastern Montana were very cold and one remembers the many snowstorms and blizzards that would rage for days, blocking the roads. Afterward it took a long time before regular travel could be resumed. During these times, Dad traveled to the outlying congregations by horses and bobsleigh. I recall we would beg to go along, so quite often my father consented to this. The bells on the horses' harnesses would jingle merrily, adding to the gleeful singing of us children. When we felt cold, we would jump off the sleigh and run alongside, then on again, wrapping ourselves in quilts. We were accustomed to the outdoors, as our only entertainment was skiing and sliding on the hills.

I recall one of Dad's Christmas messages from the second chapter of Luke. He urged all to make room for

Jesus in their hearts, that He came to be our sin-bearer. It is Jesus who forgives and cleanses our lives from sin and destruction and brings joy and peace to all who receive Him as Lord and Savior. This is the true meaning of Christmas.

Christmas was a very important festival for us. I can remember how Mother cleaned and baked to be ready for Christmas. She was a busy mother as she made all our clothes. We always knew that there would be a new dress for Christmas. We would help trim the tree and our home and, oh, it was beautiful! Most of the trimmings were homemade or paper or popcorn and the like.

My parents had a full day Christmas Day bringing the message of Christmas to all their parishioners. Often we children were home alone and since I was the oldest girl I was left in charge of my brothers and sisters. May Louise and Roland Angelo were born at Westby, so our family grew to ten members. I helped care for them from infancy, often walking the floors to quiet them until Mom and Dad returned. The Christmas Eve dinner was our specialty, including lutefisk and lefse and a table spread with goodies. Dad would ask the blessing and then we all prayed "I Jesu navn gaar vi til bords" (In

Jesus' name we sit at meat). After the candlelight dinner we met in the front room around the candlelit Christmas tree. Father read the Christmas Story from the Bible and prayed. We would sing many Christmas carols, including the Norwegian song "Jeg er saa glad hver julekveld." After this song Dad would smile and say to us, "Gladelig Jul" (Merry Christmas)! Usually each one of the family would share a poem or a song for the program. Then we had our gift-opening and that usually meant one gift for each one, as other expenses were great for a family of ten. We were so happy with our one gift.

Our spiritual blessings brought joy to our young lives, exceedingly above temporal things. We were never taught of Santa Claus. Christmas was Christ and that left an indelible print on my life, and so we brought up our children with the same teachings. Likewise they have continued in the same pattern with their children, so it goes from generation to generation.

Mrs. Chester Galland
Wadena, Minnesota

(Mrs. Galland is the mother of Rev. Leslie Galland, Thief River Falls, Minn.)

was trimmed about like the former, still with candles until 1949.

The children always looked forward to Christmas with anticipation, perhaps for something new to wear, or some Christmas goodies. Christmas was very special to us. After enjoying our supper, including lutefisk and lefse, we all gathered around the Christmas tree and lit the candles. First, Dad read the Christmas Story from the second chapter of the Gospel of Luke, followed by prayer and we sang, "Jeg er saa glad hver julekveld" (How Glad I Am Each Christmas Eve). Eyes had been on some packages under the tree, so now the time came to hand out the gifts. They were not expensive, but the children enjoyed what was given them and were happy. After a glori-

ous evening together we all departed into slumberland.

Another highlight of the Christmas season was the Sunday School program. As a rule, we had snow, so the bobsled was used going to worship services, and also the program. The wagon was placed on the sleigh with some hay or straw in it and some blankets.

We had a large warm fur robe to cover us. We called it "Charlie," as it had been made from one of our horses by that name. I still have the robe. Dad, of course, drove the horses. We enjoyed hearing the children speak and sing by the large Christmas tree in church, that also had wax candles on it for many years. Some had the job to watch it carefully. After the program apples

and candy were handed out. These are glorious remembrances.

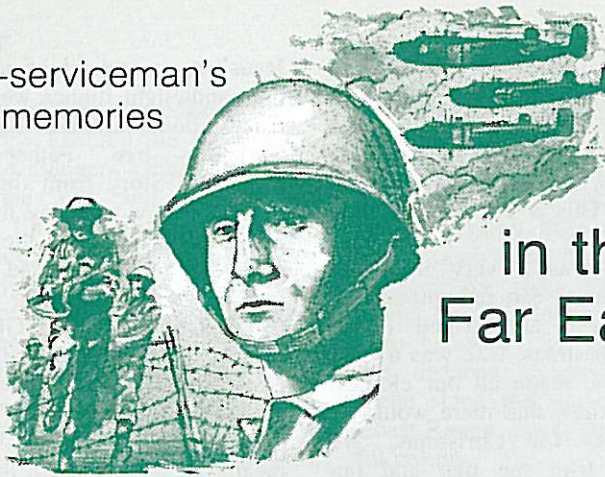
The children are all scattered and have their own homes, except Ruben, who is here with me on the farm. Some have already departed from this life into their home with the Lord Jesus Christ, where we all hope to meet some day.

May you all have a blessed Christmas and a joyous New Year.

Mrs. Laura Jergenson
Donnelly, Minnesota

(Mrs. George Jergenson, who was 100 years old on Nov. 23, lives in her farm home with her son Ruben. She still shares in the work of house-keeping. The above article was written for her Christmas greeting to family and friends a year ago.)

An ex-serviceman's memories



in the Far East

I was inducted into the United States Army on May 5, 1942. I had committed my life to Christ a dozen years before this and was confident that God would bring me back safely. I spent three Christmases in the service, one of them in the States. The only outward thing they had in common was the lack of snow, which seemed strange to us who came from the north country.

We went overseas in January, 1943, to Australia. From there we began "island hopping," first to Lae, then to Finschafen, New Guinea, where we spent our first Christmas overseas. The battle for this place had been over for almost two months. I will always remember that Christmas Eve. We crossed a narrow bay by boat to Finschafen peninsula to join a large group of soldiers to sing Christmas carols. We gathered under the palm trees. (Moonlight on palm trees is one of the most beautiful sights I have ever seen.) As we sang we could sense the longing for home and family and this emotion grew as we continued singing into the night. (We had been away from civilization for 18 months.)

I remember some of the thoughts that came into my mind, memories of Christmas at home. They were especially precious because we were a closely-knit family. The bringing in of the tree; trimming it. The evening meal with everyone present. Gathering around the tree to sing carols. Dad reading the Christmas Story and offering prayer. The distribution of gifts. Then, too, remembering the Christmas program and service at church and having fellowship with friends and neighbors. Picturing what it would have been like to be home that night.

Christmas 1944 was much more spectacular. We continued our island hopping: to Hollandia, New Guinea, to Lyte, in the Philippines, then to Mindoro Island on December 11. It seemed that toward Christmas enemy activity intensified. There wasn't time for, or thought of, celebration. The following is quoted from my diary:

"Dec. 23. This was a peace day. Enemy planes very active that night. Besides the other bombings, two phosphorous bombs were dropped in mid-air; they fan out over quite an area. (They also lit up the coun-

tryside for many miles. I remember thinking that the enemy was furnishing fireworks for Christmas.) The morning of Dec. 24 one bomber was shot down and crashed into the sea. It still had its bomb load so made quite an explosion. That evening two enemy bombers reached the airstrip with their bomb loads. More planes were over throughout the night.

"Christmas morning about daylight two planes bombed the airstrip. About 8:30 a.m., two more planes bombed it. One plane was shot down by anti-aircraft guns. The rest of the day was fairly peaceful, but that evening enemy planes came in to bomb the airstrip. One was shot down by night fighters and crashed into a fuel tank, setting it afire. Another was shot down by PT boats. One managed to drop its load on the airstrip. Another was shot down and crashed into the sea. About 20 planes came in during the night and many of them managed to get to the airstrip."

During this time and in the following months in combat there was a thankfulness in my heart that even though there was not "peace on earth," there was a quietness and peace within because of the Savior's birth and because He dwelt in my heart. The afternoon before we went into combat, for the first time I had opened my New Testament to John 14:27b: "Let not our heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Those words continued to echo in my mind throughout those months.

Mr. Joe Jacobson
Wannaska, Minnesota

(Mr. Jacobson is the lay pastor of Poplar Grove Lutheran Church, Strathcona, Minnesota.)

**HIS
LOVE / OUR
LOVE**

The beautiful story of God, who so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have life everlasting, is not fully told until it has transformed us till we, too, love so we give our dearest and best for the salvation of mankind.

T. O. Burntvedt
(Christmas Echoes, 1935)

It came as a balm
on old wounds

Letter of Healing

by Mrs. Avis (Philip) Dyrud
Middle River, Minnesota

NEWS REPORT: (Indianapolis, Indiana) Local postal authorities report that two sacks full of undelivered mail which should have been delivered in 1920 were found this week in the process of remodeling the old post office. Jim Hanson, manager of the Dead Letter Office, said most of the letters did go through when put into the regular mail. "Only a few have been returned to us," he commented.

Anna's gloved hands clutched the mail she had just picked up as she

came home from the ladies' Bible study at her neighbor's home. As she climbed the stairs to her apartment, she thought about how busy people already were, planning and talking about Christmas, although it was early December. Once inside the door she looked at her mail. There were circulars advertising Christmas sales, the electric bill and some letters. Well, Anna sighed, at least there's no telephone bill since that's one luxury I can't afford. Thankful that there was only one bill, she tore eagerly at what seemed to be her first

Christmas card of the season. It came from the daughter of her high school classmate. Strange that it's not from Marie herself, mused Anna. The letter inside explained that Marie had had a stroke and was now in a nursing home. Not a day passed without some reminder like this one of how life was quickly moving by for Anna, too.

Then she turned her attention to the other letter. The faded envelope had a two-cent stamp on it and a postmark which seemed to read: "Indianapolis, Indiana, March 1920."

Something about the letter made a chill go through her and made her twisted fingers begin to shake. Feeling unsteady, she reached for the kitchen chair and collapsed onto it. She turned the letter around several times in her hands before making any movement that would indicate she planned to open it. Thoughts and memories came rushing together and threatened to take over her emotions. It was the kind of feeling a drowning person has—a blur of memories and the feeling of futility of surviving the waves. The last she had heard, John had lived in Indianapolis the last months of his life.

Finally, her immobile hands came to life and she reached into the silverware drawer for a tableknife with which to open the letter. Carefully she made a slit at one end of the thin, yellowed envelope. Her fingers shook as she withdrew the single piece of folded paper. Seeing the familiar handwriting made her sight blurry. She read:

March 4, 1920

Dearest Anna,

I am sorry that I have not written sooner. Life has been hard for me here, and money has been scarce.

I'm sure your heart is full of hatred for me, and I understand that. When I left you that night in January, I fully intended to communicate with you before this. I



A voice from the past

CHRISTMAS IN SYRIA

Christmas in Sidon in Syria twenty-five years ago! It was not my first Christmas away from home, but never before had I spent the day commemorating the coming of Christ to earth under conditions so strange.

Sidon in the land so near to Bethlehem, in age older than the cities of Judah, in secular history far richer and more powerful, at present a small city in an almost forgotten place, is peculiarly fascinating. The influence of Mohammed still held sway there. The Western civilization was apparent only when the coast steamers stopped for their cargo of oranges and in the presence of a few missionaries and their work of education.

The Near East ruled supreme in the street life with the colorful oriental shops and the coffee booths. The picturesque groups gathered about the coffee pot, the water-pipe, and the town gossip. Here the news was discussed and the strange tales of the

east told by master storytellers.

To live the thoughts and comfort of our western Christmas in such surroundings was impressive. The thought of the coming of the little Child to bring world blessing to hearts of men so different from one another in almost every way clothed the truth of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God with a fresh reality.

A Christmas without snow, without a Christmas tree! And yet the same warm spirit of divine love and grace, and the same message of peace and goodwill came ever so much closer. What seemed to be a lack became the means of deepening the consciousness of fellowship with the eternal love of God open under any environment and richer by the experience of the nearness of God in Christ in every place and in every time.

George Sverdrup,
1879-1936, writing of
Christmas, 1906.
The Lutheran Messenger

HEALING . . .

couldn't bear the sight of you, Clara and Bill suffering so much because I didn't earn enough to buy more food and clothing for you. No matter what well-meaning friends have told you, I did not desert you for some other woman. I just felt I should get out of your lives until I could earn enough to be able to support you. Well, jobs aren't plentiful here in Indianapolis, either. The job I first got as a night watchman at the Hamilton Building was fine until I got in with the wrong companions and started drinking on the job. After I lost that job, all I have had are short-term positions that have not paid well. I wish I felt better so that I could work longer hours, but I have very little energy for anything.

But, dear Anna, there is a bright spot. I have left the bottle alone ever since I had a long talk with my new employer, George Hawkins. He didn't scold me for the life I was leading, but he seemed to have real understanding and kindness for me. In short, he showed me that I need to trust in someone other than myself. And now the Lord Jesus is real to me and I've learned to trust Him. No, things aren't rosy; that's for sure. But now I see that God has a plan for me and He loves me, no matter what my past has been. So it shouldn't be too long before I can be home with you and the children again. Will you forgive me for leaving you, Anna, with no word of explanation?

Please write to me here. I love you.

Lovingly yours,
John

Tears spilled over as Anna's thoughts rushed back to that January day in 1920. The scene was in the kitchen the day after John left. Clara and Bill, just toddlers then, looked so dejected when Anna told them,

"Your dad has gone. I don't know where or why, but we have to go on anyhow."

Bill questioned, "Why did he have to go? Where is he?"

"I don't know, Bill. I don't know."

The rest of that day was a blur in Anna's memory.

Life had to go on, so Anna went to work cleaning offices to raise her family. That first year was a long, hard year. The hardest of all was to face up to people's looks and questions. Even her friends suggested why he left. Anna was bitter. John had left with no explanation, no apology, no hint that he would ever come back.

"The old wounds had been re-opened and were bleeding again."

Finally, word had come to Anna through John's brother, Robert, that John had died penniless in November, 1920. Anna chose not to go to his funeral because of the shame she felt. Robert, who lived near Indianapolis, handled the arrangements, and the company John last worked for had paid the funeral expenses. Many years later, Bill had done some checking. He found out that his father had not run off with some other woman, as people had led his mother to believe. He found out that John had held several low-paying jobs before he got sick with pneumonia and died in November, 1920.

Now it was almost Christmas again and Anna was old and alone. Gaiety and excitement that seemed to be everywhere were a mockery, a real sham, Anna mused. Her bitterness had been keener these days, probably because of the stark contrast it made with the mood of everyone around her. But this letter! The old wounds had been re-opened and were bleeding again.

In the Bible study from Colossians that morning, Anna had realized she had been alienated from God most of her life. How could she really forgive John for what he had done? It was too late for her; life had passed her by. God seemed so far away. But Colossians 1:20 came back to mind: "And, having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by

Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven."

Things in heaven? Anna thought, John is in heaven. He found peace with God in 1920, and now he's in heaven. but God said that Jesus came, born as a human baby at Christmas time, to reconcile all things, whether in earth or in heaven. Here I am on earth. I need that reconciliation, that forgiveness that only Jesus gives. Thank You, God, for this letter which came today. Thank You for putting healing balm on these old wounds. Things are finally straight between us, and I want to be reconciled with You.

With her coat still on, Anna left her apartment, muttering, "Got to get to a phone. Got to call them." Clara and Bill needed to know right away that their father had become a Christian before he died, and that for Anna, the healing had finally come.

CHILD IN THE MANGER

*Child in the manger,
Infant of Mary;
Outcast and stranger,
Lord of all!
Child who inherits
All our transgressions,
All our demerits
On Him fall.*

*Once the most holy
Child of salvation
Gently and lowly
Lived below;
Now, as our glorious
Mighty Redeemer,
See Him victorious
O'er each foe.*

*Prophets foretold Him,
Infant of wonder;
Angels behold Him
On His throne;
Worthy our Saviour
Of all their praises;
Happy for ever
Are His own.*

Mary MacDonald (from
The Church Hymnary)

Our President's Christmas Greeting

THAT WE MIGHT BE RICH

Greetings to our *Ambassador*
Readers:

"... though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor..." (II Cor. 8:9).

We have come again to the anniversary of the greatest miracle in the history of the world—of God coming into the world as a babe in human flesh. It was with the exquisite tenderness of the Babe in the manger that God took the first step toward reconciling the world unto Himself in His Son.

Recently in England, a baby prince was born. He was born in a beautiful palace. He was placed in a beautiful bed. How different it was with the Baby Jesus, who was King of kings and Lord of lords.

"Out of the ivory palaces,
Into a world of woe,

Only His great, eternal love,
Made my Saviour go."

We can only marvel at so great a condescension. We cannot comprehend the meaning of the fact that "He who was equal with God" would willingly become poor by entering the state of humiliation in order to work out our redemption.

God's love alone can answer the questions that arise in pondering the method God used to break in upon humanity and draw us to Himself. Surely, at this Christmas season, we rejoice in such love that is "greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell."

Our marvel is greater still as the Scripture states the reason for Christ's becoming poor. It was so that we through His poverty might become rich. Those riches are not, nor can they ever be, measured by

the standards of material riches. In Christ Jesus we become rich in the love of God, rich in the blessings of the New Covenant, rich in the hope of eternal life.

For each believer, for each new day, here is "grace for grace," in an ever new and endless stream.

Christ came that, after having revealed God in utter love and redeeming grace, He might say to men, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the age."

Because of Jesus, God is real to us in actual, living, loving, guiding, understanding and upholding presence in our lives. He knows our fears, our sorrows, our infirmities and our thorns in the flesh. Because Christ is within us, He shares the crushing load. He guides our stumbling feet. He breaks open the Word and allows to beam forth the rays of eternal hope and glory.

The riches and blessings of Christ do not descend automatically upon an individual. Nor do they mysteriously become a part of him as by some process of osmosis. Christ's coming into the world was a demonstration of unselfish love. Christ gave, He yielded Himself; so, too, we need to be ready to give. Let us not think only of the receiving and giving of gifts. There surely needs to be in our hearts and spirits the willingness and desire to give up sin and self in order that there may be room in our hearts for the Savior. There can be no room for Him if we persist in our own sinful desires. Surely, the most fitting exercise of our lives at this Christmastime and every day is a repentance for our sins and the seeking of God's gracious forgiveness, so that our hearts will be clear of those things that would keep Christ out.

Our thoughts go out to the people of our Association this Christmas. We thank God for you and your faithful support of the work we are doing together. Our prayer for each of you is that the world with its tinsel and commercialism will not be permitted to rob any of you of the true joy of knowing personally the Christ who became poor that each of us might know the riches of God. Because of Christ, "Peace on earth, Good will to men."

Pastor Richard Snipstead
President, AFLC

Bringing Home the Christmas Tree. Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.



THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS



Pastor W. M. Jackson
Wallace, South Dakota

The spell of Christmas descends once again on God's world. Old memories are rekindled. It is as though a miracle recurs each year at this time. The Incarnation of our Lord, the "Word made flesh," is miraculous enough in itself, but add to this the birth of a child in a remote corner of the world, under the most humble and simple circumstances, with power to influence a vast segment of the world's people, and you multiply the wonder. The influence of this Child would provide the greatest impact ever known on the human mind and spirit. He would become the divider of men: "He that is not with Me is against Me." He would divide families: "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." The Christ divides even today the peoples who corporately acknowledge Him but their heart is far from Him: "Ye call Me Lord, Lord, but do not the things I say." Many are divided concerning their allegiance, with the

popularity of the Christmas season increasing steadily while the pronouncement of a Savior goes relatively unnoticed.

Christmas, to many, has come to be thought of as the season when good will finds its most obvious expression. This expression is most apparent on Christmas Eve, when the numerous gifts, which have reposed under the gaudily trimmed tree, and the number of which has been steadily growing the couple of weeks preceding the Great Day, at last are opened. Mention Christmas, and immediately a reaction and response are drawn. Images of custom and tradition, warmly familiar, surface again, year after year. All expect a "merry" Christmas.

The Influence of Antiquity

The celebration of Christmas, as we know and practice it, did not become reality until the first recorded celebration of the Nativity on December 25, 336 A.D., in Rome. Until then, the birth of Christ was not even commemorated, apparently due to the uncertainty of the date of His Incarnation. For a time under Oliver Cromwell's Puritan dictatorship, Christmas observances of all kinds, both in England and America, were outlawed as sinful and classified as relics of the past. December 25 became an ordinary working day.

"The influence of this Child would provide the greatest impact ever known on the human mind and spirit."

Fortunately, after the Restoration in 1660, the joyous event was again celebrated.

That there has been considerable pagan influence on the Christian world concerning external practices relating to Christmas is known by everyone. The idea of exchanging gifts, for example, which apparently much of Christendom engages in with some delight, can be traced to the ancient Romans and their Saturnalia, a unique festival in honor of the god of sowing. To a large extent

the early Church fostered the heritage passed on by its Roman neighbors. Realizing that there was considerable attachment of the people to their ancient rituals, attempt was made to give these pagan customs a Christian meaning as opposed to their abolition.

Among the most ubiquitous and omnipresent symbols of Christmas today are the holly, ivy, spruce and pine. Doubtless these have been incorporated into the Christian atmosphere because of their "evergreen" nature, and thought of as symbols of enduring life, as opposed to other flora which slumps into dormancy each autumn. Christmas trees derive from Germany, where, originally, the oak was revered as an image of a pagan deity. Not until the eighth century, when the missionary Boniface persuaded the Teutons to transfer the worship of Odin's sacred oak to an evergreen, did this become a symbol of the Christ Child. Christmas trees found their way to the United States with the first wave of German immigrants in the year 1700. It took some time but the idea did catch on with their neighbors and the custom has now become firmly entrenched and socially accepted. Candles and, more recently, electric lights festoon the evergreen branches symbolizing the Light of the world. Add to these the rotund, jovial, mythical "usurper of attention" from the North Pole who emerged out of the Dutch tradition of a visit on Christmas by St. Nicholas, a fourth century bishop in Asia Minor, who became a patron saint of children, and you add greatly to the possibility of detracting from the central Figure of Christmas.

Enthusiasm traditionally runs high at Christmas. The celebrations, ceremonies and festivities which attend the season are alive and doing well. A quick glance at Main St. and the shopping malls confirm well enough the commercial impact of the holiday. Have times really changed? The Elizabethans were so impatient for the Christmas merriment to begin that they began preparation as early as November 1, All Saints Day. Sound familiar?

Typically, American attention focuses on these external aspects of Christmas. It appears both contradictory and curious that the One whose



birth we celebrate should, in the maelstrom of confusion which attends the celebration, be shunted into some obscure corner while the revelry goes on. In this day of competition at every level must it be that He, whose birth we celebrate, be outshone by the very celebration He lent cause to by His birth?

We must thank God that the true Church of Christ remains, at least partially, unaffected by the subtle influences that tend to deprive Christ of His rightful place in the celebration.

The Voice of God in History

God has invaded time and history a number of times in a number of ways. Heb. 1:2 states, "God hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son . . ." "The Christ has come," said Dr. W. Graham Scroggie. Then he added: "I speak quite reverently when I say that God has exhausted His vocabulary. He has spoken His last word; if there is any hope for this world it is to be found in Christ. If it cannot be found in Christ, it cannot be found at all."

God has made no apologies for the method He chose for bringing fallen man back to Himself. He makes no apology to the scientist who dogmatically maintains and tenaciously holds to his convictions that the Virgin Birth is an utter impossibility. Nor does He find it necessary to offer explanation to the skeptic, whose raised eyebrows react to his statement of

"Ultimately we are brought to a determination of what constitutes our personal approach to Christmas."

faith. That Christ has come is an undeniable fact. That He has accomplished His mission is equally certain. That He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh and became our atonement for sin blesses the soul of the one whose ears are attuned to the divine message of Christmas.

Our concern is that Christ can be rightly honored and glorified as the Savior born unto us that happiest day in the history of mankind. Certainly our cherished traditions are here to stay and any serious attempt to abolish them would meet with the stiffest resistance. Ultimately we are brought to a determination of what constitutes our personal approach to Christmas. The ideal is to seek compatibility between *what* we hold dear in the way of commemorating the birth of Christ and the *One* we hold dear, which is Christ Himself.

The Spirit that Complements the Spirit of Christmas

(1) A Singing Spirit

Luther loved Christmas. Over a 30-year span he preached thousands of sermons on it. He composed many hymns, cradle songs and a number of Christmas carols. Of the possibly 36 songs of the Great Reformer we still have, several were about Christmas. "From Heaven Above to Earth I Come" could well be the most beloved to us. Christmas is not complete unless our hearts and voices are lifted to God in praise for His "glad tidings of great joy." Let us not allow the world to monopolize the realm of music. "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God" (Ps. 40:3). In Christ we have that song!

(2) A Childlike Spirit

Luther said, "If we want to train our children, we have to become children with them." He had five of his own at the time. No matter our age in years, we can be and need to be young in spirit. We must not outgrow Christmas. Christmas has forever captured and held the fancy

of children. It is a time of wonder and amazement. The miracle of Christ's Advent, the star, the angelic chorus, all combine to excite and stimulate our spirits. Christ's reference to becoming "as little children" refers primarily to conversion, passiveness, submission and childlike faith, yet may also take on added meaning in this context.

(3) A Loving and Giving Spirit

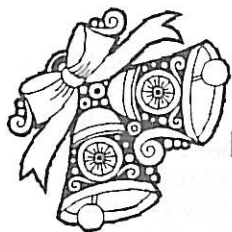
Surely this, too, is a part of the spirit of Christmas. We need have little regard for the ancient Romans and their Saturnalia, when in honor of Saturn, god of sowing, they ceased work, were caught up in a Mardi Gras spirit and with much delight and extravagance, exchanged gifts. We may look rather to God, the Giver of "every good and perfect gift" who in tenderness and love has given helpless, guilty mankind His "Unspeakable Gift," the Lord Jesus Christ. That we exchange gifts is only the natural outgrowth of love. More searching is the question: Does God ask too much when He makes His loving appeal, "My son, give Me thine heart?"

(4) A Receptive Spirit

It may seem ludicrous to even suggest that we need to possess a receptive spirit at Christmas time. Where would one find such a "Scrooge" class of individual whose Bah! Humbug! attitude would not, at the very least, be open to the goodwill of others and receive, as graciously as possible, their gifts? Certainly the most calloused soul is willing at such a time to lay aside pomp, pride and prejudice long enough to utter a shy if muted, "Thanks!" Everyone knows that to be unreceptive and ungrateful is socially unacceptable and produces only discord and disharmony.

Still, are not many who realize that such flagrant abuse of another's generosity washes out friendship, even so, as regarding God's generosity, "slow of heart to believe" and receive His most gracious Gift? One need not search the distant climes to locate those whose conscience is not amenable to the refusal of a friend's gift, and yet, curiously and tragically, have a conscience which remains unperturbed, year after year,

◇



COME, CHRISTMAS BELLS

Come, Christmas bells, ring out the words

That angels sang and shepherds heard

**On that far off Judean morn—
Christ is born! Christ our Lord is born!**

**In joyous tones from steeples high
Sing out the good news through the sky,**

The good news that a star once told

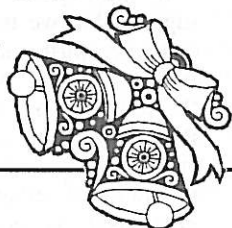
To men who brought incense and gold,

**That all who seek will truly find
God's saving grace for humankind,
That He who made the universe
For us became a Child on earth.**

Come, Christmas bells, ring with delight

**That God has come to us tonight,
And we may sing the angel song—
Christ is born! Christ our Lord is born!**

**—Marlene Moline
Lansing, Iowa**



SPIRIT . . .

as they continually reject the one thing needful—God's great gift of salvation. Their soul suffers the dire consequences and God is offended.

When all is said and done, it will be our personal attitude and response in this that matters. That Christ's arrival as the God-Man to save a lost world be not overshadowed by commotion, confusion and celebration, however well meant, goes without saying. What needs repeating is that we do not worship a tradition but the Christ who has given rise to the tradition.

Gust says it's 10 below here on Minnesota Hill this morning. That's about the coldest it's been in the Northland and we are spoiled. Something seems to be making the Pinecreek pulse very quiet, haven't had a call about news for some two weeks! Well, if it's like around here you haven't time to think about it.

This coldness now, though, reminds me of something. When my parents were older, they moved to Thompson, Man. Many of you know that is the mining town some 600 miles north of here and has a population of about 30,000. Yes, it does get cold up there! Sometimes even colder than Roseau County. My parents had bought a house and rather enjoyed that far north frontier. They had rented out all the bedrooms in the house. My mother tells of the most bitter cold night there she can remember.

Dad was working nights so wasn't home. She had let out every bed in the house. (My parents raised a very large family so were not overwhelmed by a house full.) Sometimes they also called from the motels when they were full. It was late, that very cold night and the motel called. "Mrs. Thiessen, do

you have room for two?" She said, "No, I do not; all my beds are let out." The voice at the other end was disappointed. A while later they called again. "Mrs. Thiessen, there isn't a place in all of Thompson this night for these people. Can't you think of something?" Well, my mother always had to think of something. She said, "Okay, send them over."

Mother went to the living room and made up the couch into a bed for two. It was to have been her bed. Or, let me see, she just remembered a certain young working girl she had promised the bed to a day ago if she found nothing else. Well, Mom dismissed that thought. The girl had probably found another place. There was a knock on the door. The two from the motel arrived. It was the youngest couple my mother had ever seen and they had just been married. They were glad for a warm place to spend the night.

Mother took her quilt and arranged herself in the rocking chair which she had pulled into the kitchen. She dozed. A knock on the door! It was the girl she had promised the couch to. The girl didn't mind not having a bed. She took a quilt and rolled up in it, sleeping underneath the kitchen table. My mother went back to her rocking chair and waited for the morning.

During Christmas we hear of another place that had No Room. We look at ourselves and ask, "Do I have room?" I must say about my mother, she had room. Perhaps I should say she made room. When every obvious thing was filled or taken, she had room for another place at her table, another child, another duty, another lesson, another reaching out, another willingness to forgive and grow and amazing readiness to believe in people even after many disappointments. I'm not sure just how she got to be that way.

Well, Christmas is next week. Ready or not, it comes.

Susan M. Nordvall

The Badger (Minn.) Enterprise

(Ed. Note: Mrs. Nordvall is the wife of Lay Pastor Gustav Nordvall.)

"What needs repeating is that we do not worship a tradition but the Christ who has given rise to the tradition."

editorials

THE MAGIC, THE MYSTERY AND THE MIRACLE

"Everywhere, everywhere, Christmas tonight." So wrote the poet of that wonderful time of the year. Outward conditions may vary, but the universality of Christmas overcomes all obstacles. Neither the prison cell nor the concentration camp nor the tropical sun can destroy the fact that it is Christmas.

There is a *magic* to Christmas. Not in the sense of what a magician does, performing tricks by sleight of hand, but in the sense of extraordinary power or influence. For instance, we speak of the magic of love, that indefinable influence which two people in love have over each other.

Think of the magic of Christmas to a little child. Notice the wide-eyed amazement at the lights and decorations and toys of Christmas. His parents find joy in his happiness. There is a magic which affects society in general. An aura of good will prevails. People do favors for one another; they exchange gifts; they may give to the poor. Even the reserved venture a "Merry Christmas!" to acquaintances. It's Christmas. And changes are worked in hearts even apart from true spiritual change. Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* dramatizes this so well. An Ebenezer Scrooge has his attitude changed and a happy ending results. The magic of Christmas.

Next, we notice the *mystery* of Christmas. And the mystery is the Incarnation. "For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). A mystery can be one of two things. It can be a "whodunit?," that is the unsolved. Or it can mean that which is not understandable. The Incarnation is the latter, it is something we don't understand.

The mystery of the Incarnation is God in human form and flesh. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that by His poverty you might become rich" (II Corinthians 8:9). "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law" (Galatians 4:4). We know well the words of Paul in Philippians 2, also, to the effect that Jesus emptied Himself, took the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men.

We know these statements and yet there is a mystery.

"I know not how that Bethlehem's Babe
Could in the Godhead be;
I only know the Manger Child
Has brought God's love to me."

Harry Webb Farington

Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and Bethlehem's townspeople didn't fully grasp the significance of the events within and around them that fateful night. There was

mystery, but they had faith.

Lastly, we must take cognizance of the *miracle* of Christmas. And this has two aspects to it. First, *how* did God become man? Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit. He was born of woman, but He had no earthly father. He was born of the Virgin Mary. This gave Him His humanity. Because of this He could suffer and die.

The second part of the miracle of Christmas is the possibility for you and me to have new life through Jesus. He came to be the *Savior*. Notice again Luke 2:11. In order to be the Savior He must die, but Jesus did not hold back. He didn't try to *save* His own life.

Through repentance and faith we can lay hold of God's salvation; this is the only way He has outlined for us. It is a simple way, but a hard way for self must be put to death. However, the alternative is to die a thousand deaths in eternal separation from God. The better choice is obvious, but will you make it? The miracle of Christmas. A Savior came to do what we couldn't do ourselves.

The magic, the mystery, the miracle of Christmas. We wish for all our readers a most blessed and joyous season.

PASTOR SAUGSTAD'S LEGACY

The name of Rev. Christian Saugstad has appeared in *The Lutheran Ambassador* a number of times of late, including this issue, in the article "A New Home in the West," on page 19.

Apart from the boldness and adventure inherent in the story of a troupe of people setting out to make a new home for themselves in the wilderness of British Columbia, the man Christian Saugstad enters the history of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. In the book the Lutheran Free Church put out in the early 1940s, *Faith and Fellowship*, Christian Saugstad is listed and pictured among the "Founders of the Lutheran Free Church." The others shown are Georg Sverdrup, Sven Oftedal, Ole Paulson, Peter Nilsen, E. P. Harbo and E. E. Gynild. That is high company. Pastor Saugstad is called there: "Pioneer Home Mission Pastor. Strong Leader."

In what ways did he show his leadership? Christian Saugstad's seminary years were the first three years of Augsburg Seminary, 1869-72, then in Marshall, Wis. The school's beginning was a rocky one. In the second year, in cramped attic quarters, the president, August Weenaas, felt that maybe the young school would have to give up, and told the assembled students so. "Finally, one of the older students, Christian Saugstad by name, spoke up. 'It must not be,' he said. 'Augsburg Seminary is needed. God will help us. We *must* carry on!' Stirred by his words, others of the students echoed the note of hope and courage" (Dr. Bernhard Christensen, "They Named a Mountain After Him," *The Lutheran Ambassador* Dec. 13, 1977). ◇

EDITORIALS...

To tell the story briefly, Augsburg Seminary survived, was moved to Minneapolis, Minn., in 1872 and had a notable history until it was merged with Luther Seminary in 1963. Because there was an Augsburg, there came to be a Lutheran Free Church. In 1893 friends of Augsburg Seminary, agreeing that their trustees not turn the school's property over to the young United Church, formed an association called the "Friends of Augsburg." Rev. Christian Saugstad was the president. But by the time the Friends had organized a Lutheran Free Church, in 1897, Pastor Saugstad had died in British Columbia, Canada, where he had led Norwegian-American Lutherans in founding a colony.

But to follow our train of thought, because there was a Lutheran Free Church there is an Association of Free Lutheran Congregations today. At least, that's the way it seems to us. And Pastor Saugstad is a part of that background, that history.

He wasn't only a man involved in Augsburg's history, but he was also a home mission pastor. Most Minnesota pastors in those days were home mission pastors. His name is to be found in the history of a number of AFLC congregations. How many we don't know yet. This writer finds it interesting that Pastor Saugstad helped organize Folden Lutheran Church, southeast of Newfolden, Minn., his mother's home church and hence his grandparents knew Rev. Saugstad.

Why did Pastor Saugstad leave Minnesota in the midst of the struggles for Augsburg Seminary? We don't know at this time. Obviously he didn't consider himself indispensable in the Lutheran Free Church movement. There was plenty of good leadership without him. But he didn't give up his interest and the congregation which he took along with him to British Columbia would be in fellowship with the congregations and co-workers he left behind him. From a letter from Rev. Ole Paulson to him at Bella Coola we know that he was kept informed on what was happening back east.

Just prior to his departure for British Columbia, Augsburg Seminary celebrated its 25th anniversary, Oct. 9-12, 1894. At the festival day on the 10th, Pastor Saugstad was among those who gave talks that afternoon. About 700 were served supper in the school's dining room. That evening Professors Oftedal and Sverdrup were speakers in nearby Trinity Lutheran Church. A cantata was also sung. So it was a full evening. The

memories of all these things and more Pastor Saugstad carried with him as he went back to Crookston to make final preparations for his departure for Bella Coola on the 17th. Of those he had seen in Minneapolis, it is unlikely he ever saw any of them again. He would die less than three years later.

Pastor Saugstad is a part of our history. He believed in free and living congregations. We do that also and work toward that goal.

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

The memories of childhood Christmases are dear to our hearts. Mrs. Chester Galland's recollections of such memories in a Lutheran parsonage in Westby, Mont., (page 4) were of special interest to me because I have them, too, from another parsonage, about a block away, in that town and about 12 years later.

Christmas was preceded by preparations on four fronts, at least. At home there was all the bustle associated with housecleaning, baking and giftwrapping. At school there was a program to prepare with lines to memorize and the room party to anticipate. Uptown there was a veritable wonderland to revel in as we eyed the toy displays at our two hardware stores and the drugstore. The local grocery stores took on new attraction, too, with their assortments of nuts and candies for the holidays. And in the church there was a program to present, in the same church Mrs. Galland's father had built, to a packed church with a gift and treat to receive afterwards.

And Christmas itself was wonderful in its fulfillment. The programs always went better than expected. The celebrations at home were warm and happy even though after the first of our three there we weren't all together again.

Westby wasn't Christmasy in the way that Minnesota, Wisconsin and Upper Michigan can be, due to the lack of trees, but it was great for sledding and the town fathers provided an outdoor rink for our skating enjoyment. For cold weather and unprogrammed evening hours, books could be checked out at the NYA library in the south end of the Ford garage showroom.

You all have Christmas memories, too. Like mine, they probably have grown in endearment with the passing years. May your Christmas this year provide happy memories for the years to come, memories of a Christ-honoring Christmas.

—Raynard Huglen

VERSE OMITTED

The last verse of Mrs. Verna Kamen's poem "God's Seasons" was unintentionally omitted when the poem appeared in our Nov. 9th issue, on page 4. We are printing it here to complete the message of the poem:

The purpose of our summer
Is to guide lost souls to God:
To plant His Word in every heart
So it may grow in fertile sod.
We can all be one in Christ
Though seasons come and go.
There's an Eternal Spring in Heaven
For all who trust him here below.

The Wonder Of Christmas



19. In the parable of the sower and the soil, what truth do we learn, in Mark 4:20? _____

20. Why is there such a difference? Galatians 4:19; Philippians 4:17 _____

21. The way to "abide" is to _____ (John 15:10).

22. Is it possible to obey God and His commandment and still not "abide"? _____

23. Whose fruit is being spoken of in Galatians 5:22? _____

24. Who is glorified by the fruit? John 15:8. This "fruit" must not be confused with works we do to prove our faith nor with gifts or talents we are given.

As we close this first study, will each of you sincerely search your heart, allowing the Holy Spirit to show you through the Scriptures where you are today.

1. Psalm 110:176a: Gone astray—lost; or

2. John 12:24: Dead to the old sinful life; or

3. Mark 4:28: Blade—new life beginning to show.

Ear—the beginning of fruit bearing.

Full corn—the maturing Christian life.

"Thou art the VINE. And I, O Jesus, am the branch of Thine;

And day by day from Thee, New life flows unto me.

But all my strength is drawn from Thee alone.

As severed from the tree, the branch must die, So even I

Could never live this life of mine apart from Thee, O living VINE:

But Thou dost dwell in me, and I in Thee!

Yea, Thine own life through me doth flow,

And in Thyself I live and grow."

Author Unknown

Suggestion: Song—"Nothing But Leaves"

Mrs. Robert Dietsche

January, 1983

WMF

BIBLE STUDY

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION

The verses we will be centering our Bible study on this year are found in Galatians 5:22, 23. These verses list the fruit, and notice it is not "fruits," but fruit—one well-rounded cluster of nine graces—that Christians are to bear. Let us name them together.

Before we begin our study about the fruit of the Spirit, however, we must realize there can be no fruit unless we have accepted Christ as our Savior. God does not force anything upon us. He offers all that we need for life and salvation in His Son, the Savior of the world. The sinless Son of God, Jesus Christ, took upon himself all the terrible sins of mankind and shed His blood on a cruel cross to reconcile the holy God with sinful men. God's holy Word makes it clear that anyone who does not believe this is "dead in sins" (Ephesians 2:5). Read Romans 5:8-11. It is so wonderful we don't have to be "dead in sins" but that we can be "quickened"—made alive—and have all our sins forgiven if we believe that Christ died to save us and ask Him to be our Savior! Read Romans 7:4. It is up to each one of us to decide whether we shall "abide" in the vine and be living, fruitful branches, or be dead-wood—dead in trespasses and sins.

Read John 15:1-8. Have you ever noticed, as you have driven along through the countryside, a vine-covered house? Perhaps you have vines growing by your house. Have you ever tried to break off a branch from the main vine? This is almost impossible. The fibers of the branches go deeply into the stalk itself. A sharp instrument is usually needed to sever the branches from the main stalk.

1. At what time in Christ's ministry here on earth did He speak the words in John 15:1-8? _____

The Savior must have been heavily burdened as He sought to teach His disciples the most important lesson of their oneness with Him. The example of the relationship between the vine and the branches was a very familiar and meaningful figure to the Jews. They were aware of the fact that the same vital juice or sap which flows in a vine flows in its branches. The roots of the vine have a two-fold purpose. The one is to anchor the plant in the soil and the other is to reach out for and absorb life-giving minerals and moisture from it. The sap travels from the roots up through the vine to the branches and leaves. The force that causes the sap to rise in the vine is the evaporation of water from the leaves which exerts a strong pull from above. The Christian, too, feels a strong pull "from above."

2. What must happen to each one of us according to John 3:3? _____

3. What other "pull from above" do we experience in Romans 8:34? _____

4. What specific lesson is Christ trying to teach His disciples in John 15:4, 5? _____

5. Who is the true vine? v. 1 _____

6. Who is the husbandman? v. 1 _____

7. Who are the branches? v. 5 _____

8. What two kinds of branches are there? Why is there a difference? In a fruitbearing vine, some branches may be very fruitful because there is a vital connection between the vine and the branches while other branches are barren because there is no vital connection. We may also draw such a comparison in the Christian life. Some Christians are spiritually fruitful because they are vitally and spiritually connected with Christ while others are barren because they are only externally and mechanically attached to Christ. Read Luke 13:6-9.

9. Who is the "certain man"? _____

10. Who is the dresser of the vineyard? _____

11. Where do we find ourselves in this parable? _____

12. What was the certain man who came to the vineyard looking for? v. 6 _____

13. What was his reaction to what he found? v. 7 _____

14. Read Isaiah 5:1-7. In your own words, tell what these verses mean to you. Note who is doing all the work, and yet is rejected. _____

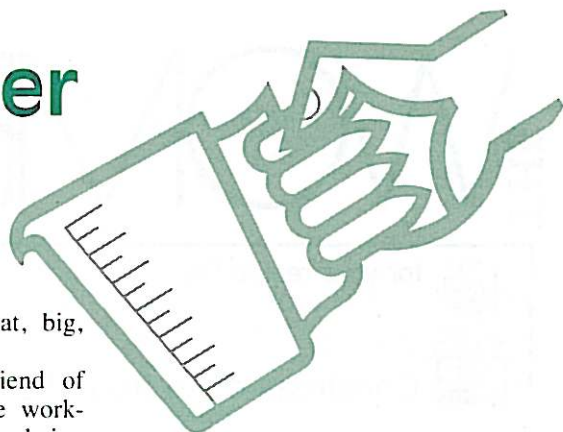
15. What happens to the branches which do not bear fruit, in John 15:6? _____

16. In Matthew 7:15-20 Jesus is warning us of false prophets, but what lesson can we learn from these verses? _____

17. Why did Jesus curse the fig tree, in Mark 11:12-14, 20? _____

18. What is sometimes necessary in the lives of Christians? Why? John 15:2b; Hebrews 12:11. Discuss things that would hinder growth in our spiritual lives. _____

My Cup Runneth Over



It was a pleasant Sunday afternoon in early December. Mrs. Johnson had anticipated just such a time to start making a craft item she planned to include with her Christmas cards. The idea had lingered in her mind since last May when the local WMF had attended the spring rally in Faith, South Dakota.

After all, how could she forget? There it was stuck right on the front of the refrigerator, a white cup with gold trim and blue design to indicate that it was overflowing! How thoughtful the ladies had been to paste a magnet on the back so that we were reminded of the goodness of the Lord. "My cup runneth over."

Mrs. Johnson's thoughts went back to the many blessings the Lord had bestowed upon the family this year. It was in mid-April that her grandson Troy, age 10, had been hit from behind when he was riding his bike. A drunk driver swerved and he was thrown on the hood of the car, receiving cuts in his head and mouth, and other injuries. But he bounced off onto the hard-surfaced road. The bike was dragged many miles under the car as the driver did not stop.

Through it all they relied on their faith in Jesus Christ and His healing power. He worked miracles and ten days later Troy was in church testifying by singing his favorite song, "To God Give the Glory." Also, he said, "On my birthday in March my Sunday School teacher gave me a chain with a cross which I was wearing." The nurses who got him ready for intensive care said that everything on him was bloody except his cross. Troy said that he held onto it day and night after the accident as it was his point of contact with the Lord.

Then in August her oldest daughter, Ann (Troy's mother), a bookkeeper in a milling company, was overcome by a poisonous gas while at work. Someone had misread the directions on the poison and the mill should not have been open to employees. This is what the lady who accompanied her in the ambulance told:

I must share this testimony with you to once again encourage your

hearts that we have a great, big, wonderful God.

Aug. 17 a precious friend of mine inhaled poison while working at her job. As she was being taken by ambulance to a hospital, the spirit of death tried to take her life. After a period of time my friend once again opened her eyes. In the emergency room I heard the doctor state on the phone, "We have a bad case of poisoning here." I and all the people who were in prayer knew that only the Almighty Father could restore this damaged body, due to the inhaling of poison.

My night was spent at the hospital where I could pray and read the Bible to her. I praise God for the power of His Word which drives back every circumstance that we may face. Each day there were new battles to face. But each day brought forth victory as God's Word was proclaimed and stood upon. Today this individual is back on her feet proclaiming, "My God still does miracles today. I know, because He has healed me."

We have a God who sees our tears and answers our prayers. Once again we have living proof that God does miracles and we've never seen the righteous forsaken and we never will. Praise be to the Lord!

(Colleen Buechler)
Again they left it all in God's

hands. They were overwhelmed how quickly friends and relatives contacted prayer groups and all joined in asking the help of the great healer Jesus Christ. Indeed, their cup ran over for again prayer was answered and every day Ann experiences more healing, by the grace of God.

Then a few weeks ago the district WMF president, from Tabor Church, was taken ill two days before the fall convention. She stated later that while she was a patient in intensive care the day of the rally she could feel the power of intercession from the prayers of the ladies and pastors at the rally. Again the "cup runneth over."

So at this Christmastime, when we are celebrating the birth of our Savior and we show our love to friends and relatives, it was with this in mind that Mrs. Johnson wanted to include with her Christmas greeting cards a refrigerator reminder of a "cup which runneth over." Not because there were only blessings (there was also sadness during the year), but by the grace of God we can say with David in Psalm 23, "The Lord is my shepherd."

Mrs. Arnold McCarlson
Eagle Butte, S.D.

The Fulness of His Grace and Truth

The Christmas appeal asks us to behold in the Christ-child not only our God but also our Savior; to understand that Jesus, the Word, "*was made flesh and dwelt among us*" so that He could fulfill the Law we had broken, pay the debt incurred by our sins, and in our stead satisfy divine justice. That is what our text implies when it says that Jesus was "*full of grace*" (John 1:14).

Dr. Walter A. Maier, Sr.

THE WOMEN'S PAGE

"The word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth" (1 John 1:14).

THE WORD BECAME FLESH

When the Son of God
became the Son of man
He was as man was intended to be

the image of God
embodiment of love
personification of truth

Stripped Himself of
all privilege
all title
all advantage

In obedience
Being born a mortal man
"The Word became flesh"
grace
truth

Our birthright
Our escort
Our conduit
of God's richest favor

That silent, holy night

In
cloistered
unassuming
Bethlehem

As angels filled the night with song

The Word came
He is here, He is here
God's grace
Unto you is born
the Savior

God's truth
Unto you is born
Christ The Lord

The Word
He is the way

Not to nostalgic Bethlehem
But to The Father
Jesus Priceless Treasure
God's grace
God's truth
God!

Amen

Mrs. Betty Lou Jensen
Valley City, North Dakota

for your recipe file



Christmas cake from the Bible



- 1c. Judges 5:25 (last clause: butter or margarine)
- 1³/₄c. Jeremiah 6:20 (sugar)
- 1/4c. Proverbs 24:13 (honey)
- 6 Job 39:14 (eggs)
- 1 Kings 10:2 (spices:
 - 1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon,
 - 1/2 tsp. cloves,
 - 1 tsp. allspice,
 - 1 tsp. nutmeg)
- 3 tsp. Amos 4:5 (baking powder, plus 1 tsp. baking soda)
- 1 tsp. Leviticus 2:13 (salt)
- 3³/₄c. 1 Kings 4:22 (unsifted all purpose flour)
- 1c. Genesis 24:11 (water; substitute cold buttermilk)
- 2c. 1 Samuel 30:12 (second clause: raisins)
- 2c. Revelation 6:13 (cut-up dried figs)
- 1c. Numbers 17:8 (chopped nuts, almonds)

Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Heavily grease and flour 10-in. tube or bundt pan or two 9x5x3 in. loaf pans. In large bowl, with electric mixer at medium speed, beat butter until smooth. At low speed, add sugar gradually; beat in well. Blend in honey at low speed. Add eggs one at a time, beating at medium speed after each addition.

Combine spices, baking powder, soda, salt and flour. Add blended dry ingredients to batter alternately with buttermilk. Toss reserved 1/2c. flour with raisins, figs and nuts. Gently fold into batter.

Pour batter into pan. Cut through batter with knife to distribute evenly. Bake about 1 1/2 hours, or until cake tester poked into center comes out clean. Let cool in pan 30 min., then turn out on rack to cool completely.

Happy baking and happier eating.
Grace-Rice Lutheran Parish
Bagley, Minn.



Astoria Ore.

Bethany Lutheran Church recently gave Honorary Membership pins to Viola Johnson, Virginia Johnson, Jenny Thompson and Freda Englund.

news from . . .

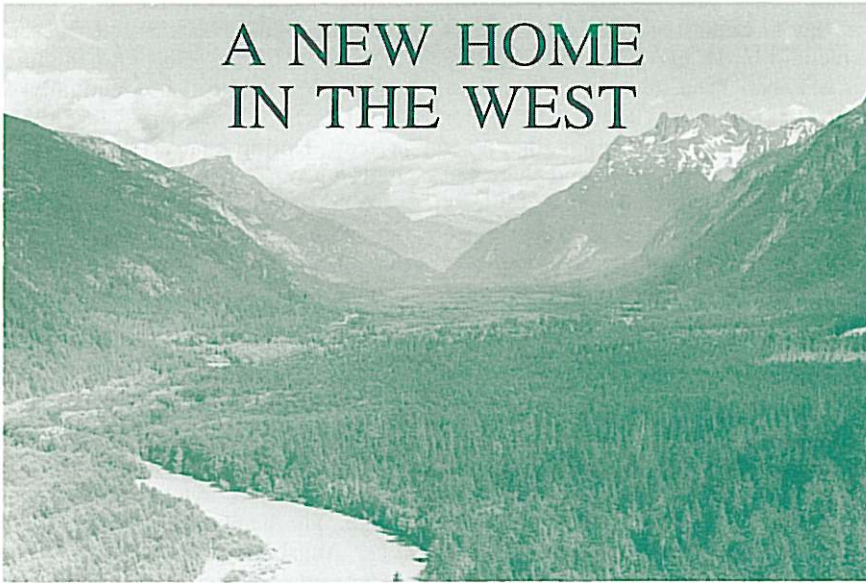
Ishpeming, Mich.

Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran recently graduated Angelia Kangas, Melissa Kohtala, Melissa Nash and Nicole Racine.

Welcomed into the cradle roll were James Minard, David Cody, Corey Treunick, Kristin Murray, Charles Petto, Andrew Kohtala, Jarad Maki and Jolene Jonas.



A NEW HOME IN THE WEST



The Bella Coola Valley, looking eastward

Photo by Cliff Kopas

by Raynard Huglen, Editor

Introduction

What makes men and women move on to new frontiers? Why not be satisfied with the bird in the hand and leave the two in the bush alone? Why would a pastor, a spiritual leader in a congregational movement among Lutherans, pull up stakes at a crucial time in history and isolate himself with others in a remote, though extremely beautiful, area on the west coast of British Columbia, Canada?

No one knows the answers to those questions fully, but we shall take a look at the very interesting background and development of the Bella Coola Colony.

Background

Rev. Christian Saugstad, immigrant from Norway in 1858 and ordained as a pastor in 1872, was situated at Crookston, Minn., in 1894, when our story begins. He had been there since 1886, after pastorates at Holmes City and Neby, both in Minnesota. The record reads that he served 16 congregations while at Holmes City. There is every reason to believe he served that many from the other two places. It is known, for instance, that he did work near Newfolden, Minn., while at Crookston, a distance of about 60 miles. And that, of course, with horse and buggy.

So he was no stranger to work. He

is described as strong and well-built and having had practical and varied experiences, including work in the pine forests of Wisconsin.

But we must move on. In the spring of 1894, Pastor Saugstad and one A. Stortroen, moved partially by poor economic conditions in the midwest, made a trip west to look over possible sites for new settlement. Such a trip could then be made with ease on the relatively new trans-continental railroads. They visited the Yakima and Sumas valleys in Washington. They had their attractions, to be sure, but a secluded valley about 250 miles up from Vancouver, B.C., held a strange fascination for the pastor and that was the option he promoted on their return to the midwest. It should be noted that the B.C. government would give 160 acres of free land to each family, providing that at least 30 families came, and a wagon road would be built. The die was cast. A colony would be started in the valley of the Bella Coola River.

Word was sent out to Norwegians in the United States inviting them to

“Why not be satisfied with the bird in the hand and leave the two in the bush alone?”

The Bella Coola Colony

be a part of the venture. A party of some 80 people was gathered, nearly all men. Most of the women and children would have to come later. They came from places like Badger, Ia., and Eau Claire, Wis., but by far the most came from Polk County, Minn.

On to Victoria

On Oct. 17, 1894, the group left by train from Crookston for Winnipeg, Man. There they changed trains for the Coast. At Sicamous Junction, B.C., the Governor-General of Canada and his wife boarded the train to give an official welcome to the colonists. Pastor Saugstad responded with appropriate remarks. At Vancouver the entourage went aboard a ferry or boat for the ride to Victoria, provincial capital. The immigrants spent a week in that beautiful city, taking care of business and securing needed supplies. There was one incident of unpleasantness at Victoria. One of the men became intoxicated and had to be dismissed. All of them had agreed to a constitution for the colony which included a pledge of total abstinence from alcoholic beverages by all the members.

The trip from Victoria to Bella Coola was made on the steamer *Princess Louise*. After several days the group arrived, on October 30, hardly two weeks after leaving Crookston.

Arrival

The *Princess Louise* shuddered to a stop that late October afternoon toward the end of a long fjord or channel, well out from land. There were no docks and no sign of human habitation. Before them, beyond the tidal flats, lay a rather narrow, heavily wooded valley, with mountains rising six and seven thousand feet from the valley floor, their tops shrouded in fog.

No doubt some of the immigrants felt a sense of loneliness and questioned their wisdom in having come. After all, this was quite a change from the Red River Valley of Minnesota and even from the woods

◇

WEST . . .

around Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

The crew lowered the lifeboats to take the passengers ashore. But they were dried out and immediately began to fill with water. The ship's whistle sounded and soon a number of long, heavy canoes appeared from out of the woods, manned by dark-skinned people. The apprehensions of the Norwegians was lessened when they saw, in one of the craft, a blonde young girl of about 12 who called out to them, "Velkommen, velkommen til Bella Coola!" (Welcome to Bella Coola). She was the daughter of a Captain Thorsen, who was making his home there after a career on the sea. They were two of a handful of whites already in Bella Coola, another being a John Clayton, who operated a store and trading post and had once been the Hudson's Bay factor in that place.

By nightfall all the colonists were on land, settled in tents on the north side of the river, where the Indians also had their homes. The *Princess Louise* left the harbor and the newcomers felt a strong sense of isolation. They knew that another ship would not be coming for two months and then only if the weather was good.

Naturally, with daybreak and in the succeeding days the more adventurous of the men began to push back into the valley to see what this new land of theirs looked like. The reports they brought back were generally unfavorable. One man, Iver Fougner, who would become the first schoolteacher in the colony, later wrote that it seemed madness to settle in a place where there were no natural meadows and heavy timber covered the valley. A gargantuan task of clearing land lay ahead of them.

Furthermore, the river, high when they came, rose higher with the fall rains. Slides of snow and rock came down the mountain sides. The Indians saw, in these upheavals of nature, the displeasure of their gods because of the arrival of these white people.

Some of the Norwegians would gladly have left, but the great majority stood firm. They would carve homes out of this virgin wilderness

with the Lord's help. Mr. Fougner, some years later, wrote, "After half a day's climb up the mountain a splendid bird's eye view of the valley is obtained. The treetops seem a vast level expanse of lighter or darker green; through this winds the river like a silver cord. Here and there the blue smoke rises from a settler's home, but the clearings, except those right below us, are barely visible at this distance. Around this peaceful scene stand the grand giants of the Coast Range, silent guards of a hopeful colony."

The Colony

After two weeks the colonists were able to proceed eastward up the valley. While still aboard the *Princess Louise*, it had been decided that the men would divide up into groups of fours. Each group would live on the same section of land. One of them would draw the section to be lived on and then the four would decide among themselves which quarter section each would take. The whole drawing must have been quite a venture of faith. The land was covered with trees, some of them giant cedars six to eight feet in diameter. Furthermore, the river in flood season might easily cut a new channel, ruining acres for any practical purpose.

But somehow the land was divided and part of it eventually cleared. Some of the men, as in any community, got into other lines of work than farming: fishing, lumbering, business. Or they both farmed and did other work. As has been mentioned, Iver Fougner became the

schoolmaster and later was appointed Indian agent when the government set up an Indian agency in present-day Bella Coola. His is an honored name yet today in that community.

The school was started in 1895 in a tent. During that winter a school building was erected.

While we can be sure that Lutheran church services were held from the beginning, the congregation, which took the name Augsburg, after both the Augsburg Confession and Pastor Saugstad's seminary, was not organized until June 9, 1895. At first it met in the tent also and perhaps wherever it could. The church, which still stands, wasn't built until 1904, during the pastorate of Edward A. Hage. The names of the first officers of Augsburg are: Christenson, Odegard, Nordschow, Carlson, Hanson, Bonkind, Elg and Severinson.

It is true some colonists left Bella Coola as soon as they could. But on May 6, 1895, 60 more people came, mostly wives and children of the men who had come in October. The following November 45 others arrived. Others were to join them over the years, but all who came after 1894 had to bear the name "newcomers." Only the originals are known today as the "old-timers." Today, too, at Bella Coola, Hagensborg, etc., it is not uncommon to meet people who were born in Norway and emigrated to this place, which for all the differences, still has much likeness to their native land.

Pastor Saugstad Dies

In February of 1897, Pastor Saugstad made a business trip to Victoria to buy machinery and horses for his people. He was struck by a kidney infection and died on March 17, the day after his return. He was only 58 years old. He was the first of the original colonists to die. We can well imagine the grief which seized the colony for he had been the leader, the strong man, and the pastor of the people as well. He was laid to rest in the acre cemetery which had been set aside. A good many years later the province of British Columbia honored this man by naming a 9,500-foot mountain, visible at two points from the valley, after Pastor Christian Saugstad.

Continued on p. 22



Augsburg Lutheran Church

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

How may we acquire complete trust in God?

It is passing strange how prone men are to try to get along without God. Satisfied with and relying upon their own wisdom, power, or material possessions, they give God little or no place in their lives. This is true not only of so-called worldly people but also of many who bear the Christian name. In ordinary daily affairs God is given very little consideration. It is only when some great emergency arises that they turn their thoughts to God.

Why is this?

The basic reason is lack of spiritual-mindedness. The soul is so submerged in the things of sense, and so steeped in the spirit of materialism, that God is crowded out of consciousness. Earthly interests and activities completely fill the mind during all the waking hours. God is forgotten.

Now God's supreme thought for us is our spiritual welfare. That explains Jesus' arresting question: "For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" (Matt. 16:26). That is the reason, too, for those striking words in the Sermon on the Mount: "Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:31-36).

In order to tear men's hearts and minds loose from the deadening influence of material things and in order to save us from putting our trust in ourselves or the things we

possess, God finds it necessary at times to plunge us into some experience that reveals to us how foolishly we are acting. It may be the failure of a bank that wipes out the savings of a lifetime; it may be an accident that brings us face to face with death; it may be an illness that places us helpless upon a bed of pain; it may be some grave mistake that reveals the frailty of our thinking. Whatever it be, God's purpose is to direct our thought from self to Him. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."

And why?

Because in right fellowship with God rests the basis of all true wisdom, power, safety, happiness, confidence, peace and salvation.

This truth it seems very difficult for us human beings to see clearly and lay hold on effectually and consistently. We catch a glimpse of it now and then and rest our souls upon it, but all too often we lose it again in the mists of materialism.

But Scripture is full of events and utterances by which the Lord seeks to teach this great trust of the blessings of trusting dependence upon and vital fellowship with Himself.

Perhaps nowhere is the idea so clearly expressed as in Jesus' categorical declaration: "Without Me ye can do nothing."

The truth was set forth before Moses in the well known episode: "And Moses said unto Jehovah, Oh, Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant; for I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And Jehovah said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh a man dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? is it not I, Jehovah? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou

"Earthly interests and activities completely fill the mind during all the waking hours. God is forgotten."

shalt speak" (Ex. 4:10-12).

Another striking illustration occurred in the reign of King Jehoshaphat. Being sorely pressed by hosts of enemies the king appealed to the Lord who answered through His prophet: "Fear not ye, neither be dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the ascent of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the valley, before the wilderness of Jeruel. Ye shall not need to fight in this battle; set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of Jehovah with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them: for Jehovah is with you" (II Chron. 20:15-17).

The next day the enemies were thrown into utter confusion and defeated without a single blow being struck by Jehoshaphat's men.

To Zerubbabel the secret of success in a difficult situation was revealed in these words: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith Jehovah of hosts."

After Paul had prayed most earnestly for the removal of his thorn in the flesh, the Lord made answer: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My power is made perfect in weakness." And Paul could say: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weakness, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distress, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (II Cor. 12:9-10).

The spiritual peril of being submerged in materialism and the remedy for it are most clearly set forth in the Revelation message to the Laodiceans: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked: I counsel thee to buy of Me gold re-

◊

LIFE . . .

finied by fire, that thou mayest become rich; and white garments, that thou mayest clothe thyself, and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and eyesalve to anoint thine eyes, that thou mayest see" (Rev. 3:17-18).

These illustrations, and many others that could be cited, make it abundantly clear that God would have it to be a normal daily experience with us to recognize our utter dependence upon Him and to draw constantly upon the resources of power in Him. Not only in emergencies, but constantly, should our minds and hearts be turned to Him for guidance, strength, poise and peace.

Just because we are not living in close fellowship with God, but trying to get along without Him, He finds it necessary at times to use drastic measures with us.

The present seems to be a time when God would compel us to "stop, look and listen" spiritually. He has so thoroughly shaken the structure of our material prosperity in which we have trusted that we stand aghast. Throughout the world the keenest economic minds are bewildered. Man's self-sufficient sureness has tottered into ruin.

Plainly the Lord would lead us to look elsewhere for the ground of our trust, to think of other values. He would draw us back to Him and to the realms of the spiritual.

In our own church body the difficulties we are facing should compel us to self-examination. Has materialism gripped our souls? Has worldliness been permitted to creep in upon us to such an extent that we have lost the sense of the presence of God? Have we trusted in the might and power of organization rather than in the Spirit of God? Is it necessary for the Lord to jar us out of a deadening complacency with ourselves? The evidences seem to point that way.

"But every meeting of every congregation should be a spiritual-life conference."

We have had a number of special Spiritual Life Conferences in recent years and surely God has been permitted to use them for great good to our people. May there be many more of them. But every meeting of every congregation should be a spiritual-life conference. It should be an occasion when pastor and people alike face the sublime truth that in the final analysis the only things that really count are spiritual values; that only then does life possess real significance when it is related to the purposes of God; that we shall succeed in anything we attempt for Him only when we are completely consecrated to His will and willing to be used by Him.

If we thus present ourselves as living sacrifices upon the Lord's altar, there will be no trouble about funds for the Lord's work. For having given ourselves in devotion to God who first loved us so greatly, we shall find true joy in giving of our entrusted goods for the uses of Christ's kingdom.

May our present extremity bring us into a sincere conviction of our sins of self-sufficiency, show us our desperate need of the Savior, and unite us by a more vital faith with the triune God, in whom is all grace, wisdom and power. And may we not slip back, but continue to live on the higher levels where spiritual values shall be more real to us than the things we see and handle.

May God be permitted to lead us to look to Him for everything.

—From *Problems of Young Christians*

by Martin Hegland,
Augsburg Publishing House.

Next Time: How May We Train for Right Thinking?

If Every Day Were Christmas Day

If every day were Christmas day
And hearts were open wide
In joyous invitation for
The Christ to come inside,
Then we could hold the wonderment
To keep the whole year long,
Our minds and souls and hearts
entuned

WEST . . .

His was not the first death among Norwegians in Bella Coola. The records of Augsburg Church show at least two before that. The first was that of a boy 10½ years old, Ingebreth Liveltun, Feb. 24, 1896. Cause of death: *gal*. Now *gal* in Norwegian means rabid. Was young Ingebreth a victim of rabies? And Ane (Anna) Svisdahl, age 34, died on June 4, 1896, of *anomia* (translation unavailable). Of course, there were no doctors to minister to the sick.

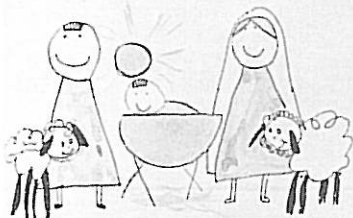
The congregation which Pastor Saugstad began at Bella Coola carried on the normal activities of a Lutheran Free Church congregation of that time, and maybe even more. The church records for 1899 show that in addition to the church services, there was a weekly prayer meeting, confirmation instruction, ladies aid and fellowship meetings. We also know that in the first years there was a youth society and a choir. At least later there was a girls' society, a mission society and a temperance organization. The picture is one of a vigorous, active and living congregation.

There is no Lutheran congregation in the Bella Coola Valley today, but it is not the only Lutheran church to discontinue in the last 35 years. Augsburg Church still stands and it is a landmark. It speaks of the faith of those first colonists who opened up a beautiful British Columbia valley for settlement. We can be sure that in many different places the faith of those fathers is living still.

To the eternal song,
How senseless is the bickering,
The jealousy and greed,
The selfish love of human ways
When Christ is all we need.
If every day were Christmas day
Then peace would come to all,
For love is still the conqueror
Within a manger stall.

Marlene Moline
Lansing, Iowa

THANK GOD
FOR
GOD



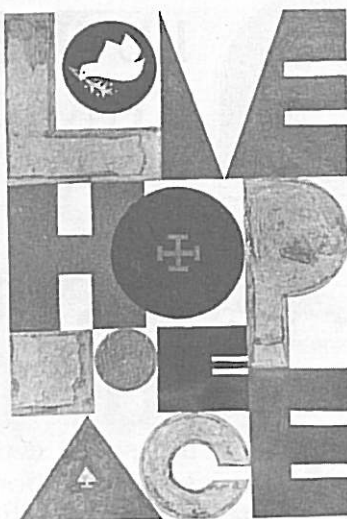
WHAT MORE CAN



I GIVE HIM ?

Christmas by Young Artists. Beginning in the upper left corner, the young New York artists are Janet Nelson, Cory Don Dero, Jean Shea and Peter Bentel.

Religious News Service Photo



I Remember A Christmas

I will never forget Christmas Eve, 1947, in the prison camp Nikolajew. Even on this day we had to work in an industrial plant. When we got back to camp, weary and hungry, there was a small package lying on my mattress. Carefully I unwrapped the package. It was wrapped in a paper from a cement bag. Inside I found half a slice of bread. It was a Christmas present from a young fellow prisoner, who was trained as an artist for the press. This piece of bread meant more to me than a festive meal today. But most wonderful was a small note alongside the present. It was written with elaborate letters and read: "I want to do to others what God has done for me." This Christmas sermon I recall again and again. It was a beam of light from the splendor of Bethlehem in the merciless darkness of prison. Somebody who had realized that he was cared for by God's grace—for the Child in the crib.

—Paul Deitenbach
Newsletter, Immanuel
Lutheran Church
Tel Aviv, Israel



ASSOCIATION OF FREE LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS 3110 EAST MEDICINE LAKE BOULEVARD MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55441

AFLC OFFICERS

President

Rev. R. Snipstead
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minn. 55441

Vice-President

Rev. Leslie J. Galland
404 Kendall Ave. So.
Thief River Falls, Minn. 56701

Secretary

Rev. Hubert F. DeBoer
Rt. 1, Box 429
Colfax, Wis. 54730

Treasurer's Office

Miss Linda Butterfield, bookkeeper
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minn. 55441

Budget Receipts Feb. 1 - October 31

	TOTAL BUDGET	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% of TOTAL (Ideal 75%)
General Fund	\$170,000.00	\$ 94,618.79	56
Schools			
AFLTS	86,381.00	49,192.47	57
AFLBS	154,162.00	68,987.55	45
Home Missions	254,380.00	107,148.89	42
World Missions	218,880.00	116,644.41	53
Praise Fund	30,200.00	22,098.47	73
TOTAL	\$914,003.00	\$458,690.58	50
1981-82	\$809,206.00	\$412,057.58	51

What Does Christmas Mean to Me?

What does Christmas mean to me?
Is it just a star, a tree?
Is it singing joyous songs?
Is it brothers righting wrongs?

What does Christmas mean to me?
Is it not a mystery?
How could God enter a womb . . .
then in Bethlehem find no room
to start His life on planet earth
with unassuming small-town
birth?

What does Christmas mean to me?
Is it more than history?
Is it abstract theory fine
or is the gift of Jesus mine?
Have I welcomed God's own Son
or hasn't Christmas e'en begun
within my deepest, private
heart?
Oh God, enter my inmost part.

Might this most sacred Christmas be
not merely ancient history
or even complex mystery.
Might this year's time of Christmas
be
my prime and first reality.
I come to You with all I have and
hope to be.

Caress my soul with Christmas joy.
Oh Father, God, I'll be your boy
I'll be your girl, your woman,
man—
Just make me Yours, then I can
plan
a real Christmas. That's it Lord.
At last it's You I have adored.

I worship You at Christmas time.
Each nerve and sinew that is mine
eclipses time and soars to
heav'n . . .
and longs to love You. Purge
the heaven.

Ring the bells. You're mine. I'm
yours!
Earth welcomes Christ. Emmanuel!
God's with us now, and all is well!
Amen.

Dale Stone
Brooklyn Park, Minnesota

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR
3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minn. 55441

Second-class postage
paid at Minneapolis, Minn.



LUTHER'S CHRISTMAS SONG

Delightful were the social evenings, when Luther would forget all the worries of his labors, and the children would gather about their parents, together with the other members of the family. These evenings were spent with singing and cheerful talk. For one of the many happy Christmas evenings that the family spent together with Melanchthon and others Luther had composed our glorious Christmas song "From Heav'n Above to Earth I Come." Some days before he had been in deep meditation over this wonderful event, when his wife Kate had asked him to mind the baby a little, as it was impossible for her to attend to all her duties. Still having his mind on the Gospel story, he began to rock the cradle. The mechanical swing of the cradle went back and forth, while in his mind he saw the events of Bethlehem's field pass before it. The child rested quietly. It reminded him of the Child in the manger and the song of the angles. Unconsciously his musical nature was moved; he began to hum to the time of the swinging cradle; he finally began to sing, and his song was our well-known "From Heav'n Above to Earth I Come." On Christmas Eve he sang it to the children, and soon they, too, learned it, and all sang it to the glory of the new-born Babe, while Luther furnished the accompaniment to it on his lute.

—Arthur H. C. Both,
Four Hundred Years,
Concordia Publishing House, 1916