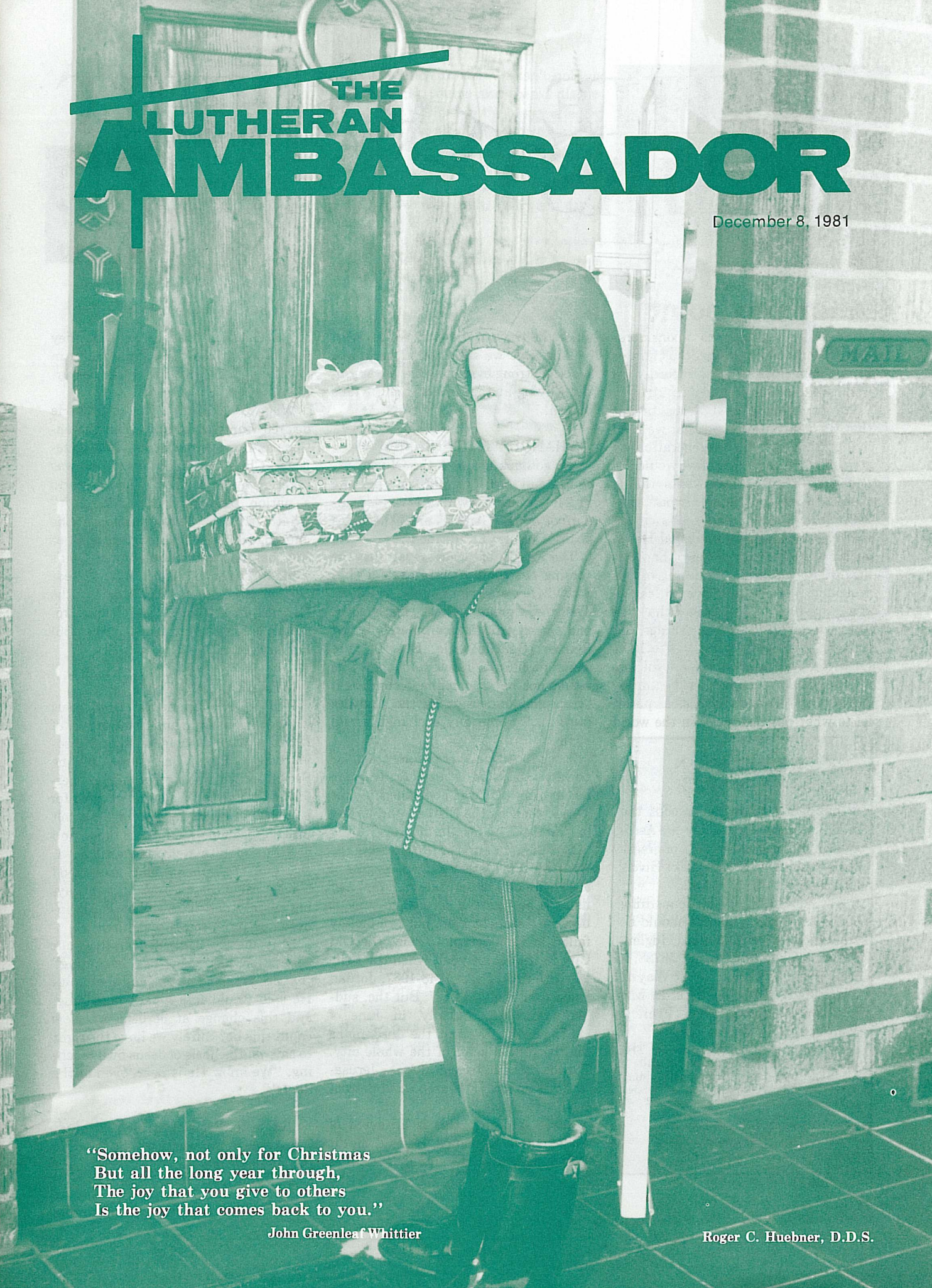


THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

December 8, 1981

A black and white photograph of a young child, likely a girl, standing in a doorway. The child is wearing a dark, hooded winter jacket and dark pants. They are smiling and holding a large stack of wrapped gifts. The gifts are wrapped in various patterns, including floral and geometric designs. The child is standing on a tiled floor. The doorway is framed by a wooden door and a brick wall. A small "MAIL" slot is visible on the brick wall to the right.

"Somehow, not only for Christmas
But all the long year through,
The joy that you give to others
Is the joy that comes back to you."

John Greenleaf Whittier

Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.

AT THE MASTER'S FEET

by Pastor Harvey Carlson



A turning point

We return yet again to a consideration of some of the things Jesus told us in the Olivet Discourse, recorded in Matt. 24-25, Mk. 13 and Lk. 21.

We have noted that Jesus taught that we could be assured that we were living in the period (the generation) in which He would return, if we would see a certain sequence of events taking place. "When you see . . . know" (Lk. 21:31).

We have further observed that He revealed that a combination of happenings would mark the beginning of this sequence of events that would lead to His coming again and we saw that this very combination of happenings did occur in the decade from 1914 to 1923. Last time we looked at what Jesus disclosed would follow this beginning (Matt. 24:9-14) and saw a clear parallel to what has happened in the world

since the time of the first World War.

This time we will look at one more piece of strong evidence that we are indeed living at the time of the Savior's return.

CHANGE AT JERUSALEM

We go back again to the Olivet Discourse and to the word of Jesus in Luke 21:24: "Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

The words of Jesus regarding the coming destruction of Jerusalem (Lk. 24:20-24) were completely fulfilled. There was great distress, many died, and the city did fall completely under Roman (Gentile) rule. But, in that same prophecy, Jesus said that this would not be a permanent condition: "trampled underfoot by the Gentiles until . . ." Some day a change would come.

After 70 A.D. a succession of Gentile powers controlled Jerusalem. In more recent times, it was controlled by the Turks, then by the British, and (starting in 1948) by the Jordanians.

But then, in June of 1967, during the Six-Day War, Israel gained control of the entire city of Jerusalem. Israel had had the new part of Jerusalem since it became a state in 1948, but completely failed in its attempt to seize the Old City in that same year, when the British withdrew. From 1948-1967, Jordan ruled over the Old City. But the, suddenly and dramatically, in June of 1967, Israel drove out the Jordanians and became master of the whole city. For the first time since 70 A.D., Jerusalem was no longer "trampled underfoot by the Gentiles."

Jesus said that this is an event of very great significance. He said that it would show that the end of "the times

of the Gentiles" had come, that they are now "fulfilled." A turning-point in God's dealings with the world has arrived.

When God did not get the fruit He desired from Israel, and when the nation, as represented in its leaders, rejected Christ, the kingdom of God was taken away from (them) "and given to a nation producing the fruit of it" (Matt. 21:43). That "nation," the church, which is predominantly Gentile, has had the leadership in God's work in the world since. But, a great change is at hand. "The times of the Gentiles are fulfilled." The time to "restore the kingdom to Israel" (Acts 1:6) has arrived.

MERE COINCIDENCE?

Was it only accidental that Jesus was born of a virgin and of the family of David and in Bethlehem, that He sojourned in Egypt, ministered by the Sea of Galilee, was a great teacher, performed miracles, was betrayed, sold for 30 pieces of silver, rode a donkey's colt into Jerusalem, died on a cross and was buried in a rich man's grave, as the Old Testament had predicted? Never! All of these things unite in saying plainly and loudly that He is indeed the promised Messiah!

Is it merely coincidence, that our generation has seen the "beginning" that Jesus talked about, and the things He said would follow that beginning, and this change at Jerusalem? How could this be? Surely we have the right to say, on the basis of Jesus own teaching, "We know He is near, even at the doors!" †

(Ed. note: Pastor Carlson's concluding article in this series will be found in our January 6th issue.)

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 annual \$6.00 subscription to THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minn. 55441. Second-class postage paid at Minneapolis, Minn.

Volume 19, Number 24

USPS 588-620



*memories of the past—
hopes for the future*

*by Pastor Edwin Kjos
Culbertson, Montana*

"Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18, NAS).

Since the fall in the Garden of Eden man has been at odds with God. We have been self-centered and worldly-minded. We have been by nature children of wrath and under condemnation. We have not been "at home" with God. By His coming into the world Jesus has made it possible to come home to God, not only for Christmas, but for all eternity.

Back in the early 1950s I was with a group of Christians from northern Minnesota working to erect Gospel signs along our highways as a witness to travelers. Most of this time I traveled to various localities in the West and Midwest contacting individuals who might be interested in sponsoring these signs in their home areas. One day I called upon a family in southern Wisconsin, in an area where most of the people were of Norwegian ancestry. A sister of the wife in the home was visiting from Norway. In the course of our conversation I learned that this sister would be leaving for Norway again the next week. It was early in December when I visited these folks. I can't speak Norwegian very well but I heard this visitor was soon going back to Norway, I said, "Du skal gaa hjem for Jul, da" ("You are going home for Christmas, then."). Her eyes almost popped out of her head as she blurted out, "Nei, kan

Home for Christmas

du snakke Norsk? ("Why, can you speak Norwegian?") Then for the next few minutes she poured forth her feelings of joyous anticipation of being at home with her family and friends and in her church to celebrate the first advent of our Savior.

Home for Christmas! There's something very special about being with family and friends for this festive and sacred season. Children come home from colleges and Bible Schools to enjoy the warmth and love of those who are closest to them. Young married people often pack up for a trip "home" during the holidays. Something is

"There's something very special about being with family and friends for this festive and sacred season."

missing if we can't make some contact with our loved ones during the Christmas season.

This year, for the first time in many years, Yvonne and I and our family are going to be able to be "home" for Christmas. Parish activities usually keep a pastor close to the parish at Christmastime, but this year our daughter Karen will be getting married on December 27th in Minneapolis. We will be taking a vacation at this time to attend the wedding and also to spend a little time with our families in Minnesota and Western Wisconsin. It's going to be good to be home again for Christmas.



Christmas at home brings back some pleasant memories. I remember the excitement as Mother would start baking lefse, flatbread, fattigmann and other Christmas goodies. My, they were good. Many times we wished the Christmas season would last all year.

We didn't get the multitude of gifts many youngsters get nowadays, but we looked forward with keen anticipation to the gifts we hoped we would receive. The gifts were usually received on Christmas Eve after a supper of the Christmas goodies mentioned above, along with spareribs and, of course, lutefisk.

Lutefisk wasn't my favorite to begin with, but I learned to like it. After all, you can't be a Norwegian and reject lutefisk. However, a few years ago I do remember buying some lutefisk that, for some reason was absolutely unpalatable. I mentioned to a friend that we had gotten some bad lutefisk, and he, who was obviously not a lutefisk-lover, kidded me with the question, "How can you tell when lutefisk is spoiled?" I guess he had not yet learned to appreciate the finer things in life!

Christmas at home also included extensive trimming inside the house and, of course, a Christmas tree. For many years we used real candles on the tree,

HOME . . .

which we lit and watched carefully. However, one year our tree caught fire and that was the end of candles on the Christmas tree. The tree always remained up in our home until Epiphany and we still observe that custom in our home.

Christmas at home also reminds me of my grade school years which were spent in a one-room country schoolhouse. After Thanksgiving we started practicing for our school Christmas program. Usually the program included several short plays and skits and we were nervous and excited as we worked to learn our parts. We always sang many of the good old Christmas carols honoring Christ and His coming. Parts of the program were more like a Sunday School program than a secular school program. It was there in our little country schoolhouse that I first heard the old English Christmas carol, "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen." Especially impressed on my mind was the statement concerning the purpose of Christ's coming: "to save us all from Satan's power, when we had gone astray." Certainly this was "tidings of comfort and joy."

We also had our Sunday School programs and Christmas services. They were mostly in Norwegian to begin with and then Norwegian and English and finally all English. It still touches a warm spot in my heart when I hear the Norwegian Christmas carols such as "Glade Jul, Hellige Jul," and "Her Kommer Dine Arme Smaa," "Silent Night, Holy Night" and "Thy Little Ones, Dear Lord, Are We". What wonderful news these carols bring to a sin-sick world and to weary souls. God loves us. God wants us to be His children. He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). The fact that Jesus loves us and came to save us was impressed on our young souls and was used by the Holy Spirit later in life to bring assurance of salva-

When I think of being home for Christmas these memories come back and make my heart beat with the anticipation of being able to spend some time with our parents at that time.

The purpose of this reminiscing is to illustrate that there is a nostalgic longing for home and the things home represents. The same is true for us spiritually. We have been created in the image of God. Even though through the fall of man that image has been corrupted so that our old nature is hostile to God, there is an unfulfilled longing in our hearts that can only be satisfied when we have come home to our heavenly Father.

Isn't this the whole purpose of Christmas? I don't mean going to a different place geographically, but coming home to God. By nature we are not at home with God. We are "by nature children of wrath—separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:3, 12). Jesus was born in Bethlehem, lived a perfect life, bled and died and rose again that He might bring us home to the Father. God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ (II Cor. 5:18). "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53:6).

In His gracious love and mercy God "lays it on the line" and "tells it like it is" so that we may see our lost condition and like the prodigal son may come home. Through His Word the Holy Spirit convicts us and calls us to God through Christ.

St. Augustine once prayed, "Thou, O Lord, hast created us for Thee; and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee." Jesus came to give us that peace and rest. "Come unto Me—and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

If you have never done so, won't you come *home* for Christmas? Won't you say in the words of the song, "I've wandered far away from God, now I'm coming home; the paths of sin too long

Coming home, coming home, nevermore to roam, open wide Thine arms of love, Lord, I'm coming home."

Yes, it is good to be home for Christmas.

As we think of going home for Christmas we are also reminded of our eternal home. From conception we are eternal beings but we are not destined to live forever on this earth in our present state. Our bodies get old, deteriorate and die. But we are not only bodies. We are living souls and though the body may die our souls will continue to live on forever. Then some day with perfect, resurrected bodies we will

**"We are living souls
and though the body
may die our souls will
continue to live on
forever."**

spend eternity with our Savior and Christian loved ones in the glories of the new heavens and the new earth. Jesus said, "I go to prepare a place for you . . . I come again, and will receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jn. 14:2, 3).

James wrote in his epistle that we are as a vapor that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away (Jas. 4:14). Hebrews 13:14 tells us, "We have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come."

The hymn writer expressed it well when he wrote:

"I'm a pilgrim, and I'm a stranger,
I can tarry, I can tarry but a night.
Do not detain me, for I am going
To where the fountains are ever
flowing.
I'm a pilgrim, and I'm a stranger,
I can tarry, I can tarry but a night."

The Old Testament saints, looking forward to the fulfillment of Messianic promises, realized that "they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." (Heb. 11:13). We also who are Christians are looking forward to that day

" . . .there is an unfulfilled longing in our hearts that can only be satisfied when we have come home to our heavenly Father."

when we shall be absent from the body and at home with the Lord (II. Cor. 5:8). With the song writer we say:

"This world is not my home,
I'm just a-passin' through.
My treasures are laid out
Somewhere beyond the blue.
The angels beckon me
From heaven's open door,
And I don't feel at home
In this world anymore."

Just a few years ago a Christian friend of mine and his family were traveling to their home area to visit their loved ones at Christmastime. On the way, this man had a heart attack and passed away. In a very real way he went "home" for Christmas.

Yes, this is what Christmas is all about. If Christ had not come we would forever be without hope. We would forever be under the wrath and condemnation of God. Fear and hopelessness would engulf us. But Christmas brings us the wonderful news, "Be not afraid—there is born to you this day in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk. 2:10, 11).

The Christmas Story is beautiful and heart-warming but Jesus did not

come simply to provide us with a beautiful story of His nativity. He himself said, "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

Unless we see our sin and need, the Christmas message will be little more than a beautiful, sentimental story to us. But if we truly see what we are really like, sinners in need of God's mercy and grace, then we will quickly open the door and let Jesus in. We will want to come home to our Heavenly Father not only for Christmas, but for all eternity.

How great and unfathomable the love of God is! We are by nature sinful and unclean and have sinned against Him in thought, word and deed. Yet He loves us and calls us to receive Him, to be forgiven and become His children.

There is in our hearts a longing for peace with God, to be at home with Him. He, too, longs to have us come home to Him. If you have never done so, won't you come home for Christmas this year?

Softly and tenderly Jesus is calling,
Calling for you and for me;
See, on the portals He's waiting
and watching,
Watching for you and for me.

Come home, come home,
Ye who are weary, come home;
Earnestly, tenderly, Jesus is calling,
Calling, O sinner, come home!

"Because Christ also suffered for sins, once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God—" (I Pet. 3:18).

(Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version of the Bible.)

The Poem of the Wise Men

Across the blackened sky we watch
The stars move into place
We know that God has called to us
To cross the desert waste.
Our ancient scrolls, they do not lie.
We see His message in the sky.
And we must go in haste.

We leave our pleasant palaces.
We leave our loved ones all.
We leave without a backward glance
To answer to His call.
To seek a tiny Child, a King,
Gold, frankincense and myrrh we bring
Unto a manger stall.

The world may deem us foolish men;
We are wiser by far
Than all the sages' arguments—
We follow God's own star.
More precious than earth's richest
gold.
It is God's kingdom that we hold;
It is God's that we are.

—Marlene Moline



THE WISE MEN

RNS Photo

THE CHRISTMAS MIRRORS

Christmas memories
from childhood in
Saskatchewan

by Dr. Iver Olson,
Minneapolis, Minnesota

My earliest recollection of Christmas goes back to 1910. I had then passed my fourth birthday and we lived in the homesteader's sod house on the prairie. My Christmas present that year was a small oval mirror glued to a cardboard backing. On the rim of the cardboard, which extended beyond the rim of the

mirror itself, were glued a number of tiny white seashells, to accentuate whatever one might see in the mirror itself. I thought I had never in my whole long life seen anything more beautiful than this mirror; my folks must have paid a pretty penny for it.

The prices that small-town merchants had paid for—and charged for—items they had for sale in their stores were usually indicated on the back side of the item itself, or on a small tab fastened to the object for sale. This was done in two ways; I early learned that my parents had paid 10¢ for this mirror, for that was written with an indelible pencil on the back side of the cardboard backing. But for a long time I was mystified by the capital letter “L” impressed right over the 10¢. I thought that this might represent what the merchant had paid, but I had no way of determining what this might be. Years later my boyhood friend had a sister who worked as a clerk at this store: she knew that a ten-letter word was used, each letter representing a number indicated by the position that each letter had in the code word. “L” was the third letter in this word, and represented the number 3. Three cents was ostensibly the cost of the mirror the merchant had paid. He had made a tremendous profit by selling it for 10¢, but I was well pleased that my parents did not think the cost was too exorbitant a price to pay for such a Christmas present. I had a small five-cent piece myself and who knew that if I were given time enough I might acquire another, though I was not too sure that five and five would add up to ten.

My mother permitted me to have a secret hiding place for the mirror; it was in the top shelf of her dresser drawer—among her own secret possessions. My older brother had likewise received an identical mirror to the one I was given; he, too, was accorded the privilege of secreting his mirror in the same place as I did. As the drab days of the rest of that winter wore away and dribbled into spring, we would ask Mother if we might take out our mir-

“I thought I had never in my whole long life seen anything more beautiful than this mirror . . .”

rors to amuse ourselves with them. Invariably she permitted us to do that, but always with the warning to be careful so as not to break them. This advice was really superfluous. No soldier in the king's army fondled his rifle with finer felicity than we our mirrors. We staged many battles through the rest of that winter with our mirrors as the weapons. When the winter sun sent a horizontal shaft of light through the south window of the sod house we would take up positions along either side of this broad shaft of light and wage warfare by deflecting the rays of sunshine into each other's faces. The one who was thus attacked would have to duck, dodge or move to keep the sunlight out of his face.

At other times we would turn our mirrors to more peaceful uses, and which may have been the prime purpose for which these mirrors were made in the first place. I could sit what seemed to be by the hour, though I have later learned that a child's attention span is much shorter than that, and admire myself. I had really not known before how handsome I really was. The mirror was really too small for me to see the entirety of my face at one and the same time. When I held the mirror longitudinally I could see only the western hemisphere of my face, and moving it slightly to the east I could observe the eastern hemisphere; similarly, if I turned the mirror laterally, I could observe only the upper or the lower halves of my face at one time. To get an adequate image of my appearance I had to take several views of myself, one-fourth of a face at one time, remember what I saw, move the mirror up or down, to the right or left, and then in my mind piece these parts to a composite whole in order to

“But when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.”

get a complete picture of what I looked like. I had not realized before how handsome I really was! I was positively attractive. At the time I had not yet learned of the stepmother who used to step up to the mirror on the wall with the question about who was the most beautiful of all, but her question was rapping on my consciousness for attention.

For the Christmas that was at hand these two mirrors became part of the Christmas tree decorations. Fear replaced equanimity in my mind! What if the mirrors should fall? They never did, though they formed a part of the Christmas tree decorations for several Christmases thereafter.

My younger brother considered himself more fortunate than his older brothers; in 1910 he was given no mirror as a Christmas present. Instead he received a candy rooster made of solid chocolate. It was also equipped with a fine wire loop to facilitate its hanging on the Christmas tree as decoration. On Christmas Eve the tree was moved from its corner nearer the center of the room so that we could march around the tree. He was not too steady on his

the cord the man at the store had used to wrap grocery packages, used a darning needle and strung these cranberries on the cord; she had a long enough cranberry chain to reach several times about the tree. How it colored up and enhanced that otherwise sparse tree. After Christmas we had cranberry sauce for days thereafter and we children salvaged the cords, braided them together into suitable lengths for shoelaces; we were the only children that Christmas that flashed red shoelaces at the Christmas gatherings.

As the days became years, the memory of the mirrors faded from our memories. Both father and mother passed away in 1944. A younger sister was left to bring order to the home place. She wrote to me asking the question: What do you know about two mirrors left in mother's top dresser drawers?

Each of us received a mirror, a choice part of the inheritance from childhood.



“... we were the only children that Christmas that flashed red shoelaces at the Christmas gatherings.”

feet, having just passed the age of three. As we marched around the tree he seemed to stumble a little and bump into the tree when he was on the dark side of the room. Later in the evening we discovered that the head and tail of this chocolate rooster had been bitten off.

Mother had to make the rest of the Christmas tree decorations herself. She wove little paper baskets to be hung on the tree. In these were placed small pieces of candy, shelled peanuts or other goodies. Father had come home from town a couple of days before Christmas in 1910 with about a couple of pounds of cranberries. Mother took

*In the fields with their flocks
abiding,
They lay on the dewy ground,
And glimm'ring under the
starlight
The sheep lay white around,
When the light of the Lord
streamed o'er them,
And lo! from the heaven above,
An angel leaned from the glory,
And sang his song of love;
He sang, that first sweet
Christmas,
The song that shall never cease,
'Glory to God in the highest,
On earth good-will and peace!'*

*'To you in the city of David
A Saviour is born today.'
And suddenly a host of the
heavenly ones
Flashed forth to join the lay.
O never hath sweeter message
Thrilled home to the souls of
men;*

*And the heavens themselves
had never heard
A gladder choir till then;
For they sang that first
Christmas carol
That never on earth shall cease,
'Glory to God in the highest,
On earth good-will and peace.'*

*And the shepherds came to the
manger,
And gazed on the Holy Child;
And calmly o'er that rude
cradle
The virgin mother smiled;
And the sky, in the star-lit
silence,
Seemed full of the angel lay,
'To you in the city of David
A Savior is born today.'
O they sang—and I ween that
never
The carol on earth shall cease,
'Glory to God in the highest,
On earth good-will and peace!'*

Frederic William Farrar

under the law, to redeem those

Gal. 4:4-5



A DRIVE IN THE NIGHT

by Susan M. Nordvall, Roseau, Minnesota

Every muscle in Dave's weary body tightened as he realized that the car following them was a Highway Patrol.

"What have I done wrong?" he groaned. "Hope the tail lights are working!" The car drew nearer steadily and Dave froze at the wheel.

It pulled by. Dave couldn't believe it. He hadn't been stopped! He began to breathe again as the glaring red lights disappeared into a soft glimmer down the road.

He glanced over at his mother. Had she noticed his fright? Her eyes were closed. In the back his three sisters slept peacefully.

Dave felt the ache in his heart again. This was the season of peace. Why was there no peace for him?

He noticed that his mother had fallen into a deep sleep. She'd told him to keep her awake because for one thing Dave only had a learner's permit to drive. She just meant to relax a bit. Dave told himself he might as well let her sleep because he'd better be getting used to the idea of being the man about the place. How could everything have

"This was the season of peace. Why was there no peace for him?"

turned out so wrong when it should have been so right?

"Guess I'd better just concentrate on keeping this old bus on the road," he sighed, as he continued down the wide white New Mexico road.

But the events of the past few months crowded his mind again.

His stepfather's asthma had caused him to be hospitalized over a month in their little home town back in Illinois. Instead of getting better, he grew worse. Then came the emergency flight to a hospital in dry Arizona and how quickly he had recovered. They had

prayed for his recovery. He came back home feeling so good! But the Illinois climate just didn't agree with him any more. He had to be rushed back to Phoenix. The doctor had said Mr. Comer would have to stay in Arizona . . . perhaps the rest of his life!

There was only one thing to do. The family had to move. Dave, an enthusiastic, popular sophomore, couldn't imagine leaving his school, his friends and wonderful Illinois! And all just a few days before Christmas!

"Can't we at least spend Christmas here?" Dave begged his mother. "How can you celebrate Christmas in the desert? No snow . . . I can just see us decorating some prickly cactus!"

"But . . ." his mother began sadly, "What will Christmas be for your dad without any of his family near?"

"Dad!" Dave retorted. "I have no dad! God didn't answer that prayer either. My dad is dead, remember?"

Immediately he'd been sorry he'd said those ugly words. What was getting into him? How could he be so bitter? He knew he had the best stepfather anyone could wish for and that he scarcely even remembered his own. This was supposed to be the season for special love and kindness and all it held this year was illness, tearing away from friends and even bad tempers! He knew he'd hurt his mother very deeply.

"I'm sorry, Mom," he said softly.

She brushed away a tear and said, "I understand Dave . . . I really do . . . how hard it has all been for you. With Dad having been in the hospital so long now, our money is gone . . . in fact, we're in debt. I meant to tell you sooner . . . I've sold the house and many of our things. I got a good deal. I want to get to Phoenix for Christmas. I want you along, Dave. I don't know if I can make it without you. . . ."

It was that bad. Nothing he could do!

So here he was on Christmas Eve in a strange state he'd only read about. He opened the window for a little fresh air.

The trip was taking longer than they had planned. This was the longest day they'd put in. With a new baby to arrive in just two weeks his mother just got too tired. The thought of a new baby stirred Dave's interest for a moment. Would he have a brother at last? Not likely. He didn't get things he wanted!

Just then the bus lurched clumsily. Dave worked to bring it to a stop.

His mother awakened with a gasp.

"Somehow he was going to get his mother to Phoenix for Christmas!"

Another flat tire and no more spares! Dave was sick with disgust. Somehow he was going to get his mother to Phoenix for Christmas! It was the only decent thing he could think. Quickly he removed the flat and headed down the road.

He could see the lights of a small town . . . fifteen minutes away? Dave walked and ran. He didn't know how misleading those hills and valleys could be. When had he ever been so exhausted? Dave stopped short as something hurled itself across his path. He felt afraid as he peered into the unfamiliar darkness. The wind had started to blow. What a relief to realize it was just a large tumbleweed. There were many now and Dave laughed as he thought they reminded him of sheep on a hillside. From somewhere the words, "Fear not," entered his mind and he was excited in spite of himself that this was Christmas Eve. The wind grew more chilly. Was there snow in these higher hills? Dave pulled his light jacket closer and hurried along. At last he reached the town.

Looking for a garage he ran faster now. He found one! But how could he have been so stupid, he thought. Who

but he was out on the streets so late on Christmas Eve. The garage was dark. He sobbed aloud. He checked himself quickly. From somewhere came music . . . singing. It came nearer and there they were . . . a group of young carollers, Dave's age. They stopped at the house next to the garage and sang, "O Holy Night." Soon a man appeared in the doorway and before Dave knew it, the carollers were off! He stared after them.

"You there! You in trouble, boy?" the man from the house was calling to him. Quickly Dave made his way over to him.

It turned out the man owned the garage and that he willingly repaired the tire, gave him another for a spare and drove him back to the stalled bus. The kind stranger stayed until they were ready to move again and assured them they'd easily get to Phoenix by morning since they were now on the New Mexico-Arizona border.

Dave could hardly believe his good fortune. The song of the carollers ran through his mind and the kindness of the man warmed his heart. The miles rolled by steadily, swiftly. Daybreak

"He felt thankful . . . even for that last flat tire."

found them entering the slumbering city.

They drove to the hospital and were greeted by a cheerful nurse who led them all up to Mr. Comer's room. Had he been waiting up for them all night? It was a cheerful room with a Christmas tree all lit up! And there were friends! New friends Mr. Comer had made. They had waited with him . . . waiting for his family for a Christmas together.

Dave noticed that his little sisters had found packages with their names on, under the tree. He just stood there, with a strange kind of peace. They were all together. Christmas is everywhere, love is everywhere, he was thinking. He felt thankful . . . even for that last flat tire.

He noticed then that his mother had left the room and a nurse was talking to

his dad. They had put her in another room in the hospital.

Shortly Mr. Comer's new friends, the Holt family, took Dave and the little girls to their home. Later on Christmas Day they would return to the hospital to visit their mother, father, and yes, a baby brother!

They named him Joel.

In a week the entire Comer family was settled in a little house in sunny Arizona. Dave was quite surprised at his peace about the whole thing! What made the difference? True, the Holts had a lovely daughter, 15; true his dad was completely well again, and yes he had a brother . . . but there was something else.

Somewhere, somehow in the drive in the night, his faith had been restored. Dave thanked God. ✚

President's Christmas Greeting 1981

He Brings Peace

Greetings to our Ambassador Readers:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

A story is told from World War I days, from a battlefield in northern France. The fog was so thick that no one could see more than a few yards from the trenches. As the fog lifted, it revealed a farm house standing between the two lines. As the sun came out, the guns began to boom. Then suddenly on both sides the firing ceased. A strange silence came. There, in the green meadow by the farm house, was a little baby crawling on its hands and knees. The baby seemed unafraid and totally unaware of the presence of the opposing armies. For a time at least his presence brought peace to the battlefield.

The coming of the Baby Jesus brought peace into the world, peace to tired and troubled hearts, peace to

every sin-stricken soul who would trust in Him as Savior.

In the Old Testament times, God had revealed Himself in various ways—a burning bush, a thundering voice, on tablets of stone called the Ten Commandments. All these forms of communication were effective. But there needed to be a warmer, more meaningful, more personal appeal. So God chose to present His final message to man in a way that every race, every creed, and every age could understand. He sent a baby into the world!

Not just another baby. But a unique baby. A baby to be called "Immanuel," meaning "God with us." A baby that would grow up to live the only sinless life ever lived, and die the only death that could ever provide redemption for man.

Two friends were walking in the fields one day. They were discussing the mystery of God's doings. One of them was an intellectual man, but he had as yet not experienced the enlightenment of God's Spirit in his life. He said, "How can a man of finite mind

know God? How can he discern what God is doing? How can we understand God's will?" Then he pointed to an anthill where thousands of insects were busy at their toil. He asked, "How can those ants understand what is in my mind?" Like a flash the answer came: "There's only one way—by your becoming an ant and declaring it to them!" God became a man in the person of His Son, that we might know His will for all mankind, and be able to share in the riches of His grace.

God extends His invitation to us, "Come on my terms, and I will make peace with you, for I have given my Son to be your Savior." He has made peace for us with God by the blood of His cross. Within the hearts of all who receive the Christmas message, the Word made flesh, there should be peace today.

At this Christmastime listen to what our Savior tells us about His peace. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be

[Continued on page 12]

the unforgettable Christmas dinner

I shall attempt to retell very briefly the story of this unforgettable Christmas dinner as Father told it as breakfast on his 81st Christmas morning. He was reliving the days of his early childhood in Norway. That Christmas dinner impressed him so deeply that he remembered it clearly after the passage of 75 years. He remembered it because he and his brothers and sisters had looked forward to that dinner with great anticipation and desire; they had eagerly watched it in preparation; they never tasted it because . . .

But let us begin at the beginning. It all happened in a humble, peasant cottage which knew the direst poverty; an ever empty larder and so a continual state of hunger in the family of nine. The cottage itself had but one room. There the family slept, cooked and lived during winter months. The furniture was meager: a rickety old stove, a homemade bed and table, each in its corner, and a couple of benches for chairs.

However, there was a real mother in that cottage. She loved her children and strove to make a home for them in the midst of poverty. That particular Christmas she had somehow provided a large piece of bony meat for their Christmas dinner. In order to get the "most out of it," Mother had decided to cook it up into a "mess" of soup, for thus there might be a second helping for her hungry brood.

And so the meat was set "a-boiling" on the old, sputtering stove. It boiled and boiled for hours. Soon the house was filled with the pleasant odor of cooking beef. The aroma satisfied the nostrils, but only whetted the appetites.

The children stood about waiting impatiently for the feast to begin. At long last it was ready, for Mother picked up the large, pewter bowl, moved to the stove and poured the savory contents of the kettle into the



BERGEN, Norway — On a fjord island near Bergen, Norway, a grandmother prepares to serve "rømmegrot," the traditional Christmas Eve dessert, to her guests. The night before Christmas is the high point of rural yuletide celebrations as Norwegian families gather—often in folk dress—to feast and exchange gifts.

RNS Photo

bowl. The children rushed to the table to enjoy that unusual Christmas feast. Their eyes were fixed on Mother as she lifted the great bowl off the stove to set it on the table before her children. Then to the indescribable horror of the children and mother the old bowl broke under the unusual strain, and the soup . . . their delicious Christmas dinner went to the earthen floor instead of to the table. And so that Christmas dinner was finished before it was even begun.

Here Father's story, like the dinner, ended abruptly and painfully.

However, I understood better why Father had labored so hard through the long years to give his own children bread.

J. S. Melby

(from *The Lutheran Messenger*)

"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 Cor. 8:9



CHRISTMAS IN INDIA

by Pastor B. Rao Dasari,
Minneapolis, Minnesota

We all know that Christmas is the most desired festival of the Christian world, especially in this country. Everyone will have her best out during that day or that season. Starting from Thanksgiving Day, we see all the shops resounding with the soft and melodious Christmas carols to attract people so they might have their best business of the year. Every home will enjoy the gifts either given by family members or friends along with greetings. It is the most colorful season for everyone. Of course, believers really thank God for their Savior and Lord who incarnated for their salvation.

India is a land with 667 million people, with many cultures, religions, languages and other differences. India is the land of religious festivals, etc. Festival days are special to every religion and Christians are no exception in loving their festivals. In India only three festivals are observed among Christians: 1) Christmas, 2) New Year's, and 3) Easter. Though the Church reverently observes Good Friday and the Lenten days, they are not observed with jubilation. Festivals like the Advent, Epiphany, the Ascension of our Lord, Pentecost, etc., are simply mentioned by the pastors of those churches that follow the liturgical calendar. Others don't even recognize that they are Christian festivals. Generally, common men do not observe these festivals.

Christmas comes in the best season of the year in India. The rainy season will be over and the hot summer will not have yet begun. The crop which is the only hope of sustenance for many millions of agricultural laborers will be ready for harvest. People who spent more than nine months in the year without labor will be fully occupied and earn well in this season. So this is the best season of the year. There are some Christmas celebrations with prayer every morning between 4-6, be-

ginning on November 25th. Of course, the people live in such close vicinity to the church that walking to the church is not a problem. The whole Advent season, though they are expected to meditate more upon the second coming of our Lord, they mostly concentrate on the message of Christ's first advent.

Christmas is the best season for the receiving of gifts for the support of the Church. Since the crop comes home, many Christians will have family prayer meetings at everyone's house. The hosts serve new rice with coconut pieces in it, and brown sugar especially. They also pledge for support of the Church in the shape of rice as thanks-

ladies cannot think of a Christmas without a new saree.

The Christmas Day service is very noisy. Many of the villages including nominal Christians (some Hindus will come to the church with their thank offering), and you can be sure that you cannot listen to the pastor's message in the church with the neighbors talking to each other, which makes it very hard. Many congregations use P.A. systems on that day which helps all to hear the message more clearly. They put the loudspeakers in the windows to project the noise to outsiders. Special singing and special programs are common on Christmas Day.

"Festival days are special to every religion and Christians are no exception in loving their festivals."

giving offering. In some villages the preacher has to conduct more than 15 cottage prayer meetings during one night. Young men generally do not sleep on the night of December 24th. In the urban congregations Christmas Eve is celebrated on the pattern of the West. But in the rural areas the night of the 24th is fully devoted to the decoration of the prayer houses or churches and setting up temporary structures with bamboos and palm leaves, decorating them with green leaves, banana trees (if available) and colored paper cuttings. Since there is no snow or cold weather like in this country, people can freely walk outside in this season. Christmas processions are seen with all Christians singing hymns throughout the villages, giving the Christmas message in the streets, especially in the non-Christian areas, wishing Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, inscribing this on the compound walls, some villages using firecrackers, etc. In these processions are the typical scenes of the 24th of December. Generally, all the people somehow try to wear new clothes on Christmas Day. Of course,

In many villages congregational people will have some kind of celebrations in the form of a drama, Christmas nativity scene or some kind of Bible story-telling with the help of some musical accompaniment. Christmas night people will sleep very late in the night. Sometimes young people spend the whole night with these performances.

At the homes there is no traditional turkey dinner with pumpkin pie, etc. Some people make rice with spices and chicken and other sweets. Some people

"Of course, ladies cannot think of a Christmas without a new saree."

eat lamb with rice, etc. Some people eat lentils with melted butter (ghee) and some people cook rice with milk. In India there are some people who do not have a Christian experience but who are nominal Christians. Some of these people drink during this day.

THE WOMEN'S PAGE

Wise Men Still Seek Him

*O Wise Men from that land afar,
Who searched for HIM by twinkling star,
You sought a babe so pure and white,
to give HIM gifts that would delight;*

*To worship and adore a king,
Who from their sins, His people brings.
Your hearts were filled with singing joy
When eyes beheld that baby boy.*

*On knees you humbly gave a bow,
and worshipped HIM with murmurs low.*

*How can it be that you, with minds so great,
could bow to this One of such low estate?*

*Could you have known that One so pure,
would one day hate and pain endure?*

Cold you have known?

How can it be

*That He left a way for you and me
to seek His face and be set free,*

*from hearts of hate and lust and greed?
A love for Christ would fill your need!*

*Oh people, will you seek HIM, too?
He wants to live and reign in you. . . .*

*But you must make the first request;
Your heart must make the Lord its guest.*

*Your mind shouts, No! . . . your heart
pleads, yes . . .*

Our pride must fall to willingness.

*The mind of man can't comprehend
this easy way to make HIM "friend."*

*On being smart earth's men do prize,
But find the LORD and you'll be WISE!*

*Mrs. Dennis Christopherson
Amery, Wis.*

INDIA . . .

This is not an acceptable thing in the society and such drunkards are very much despised.

Christians will make some native sweets and enjoy them a week or two during that season. We see greater fellowship in the society in doing things together. You do not see the Christmas trees as in this country, either artificial or natural pine trees. But some sort of pine tree with natural candles are used in the churches and in the homes. Of course, you do not see wooden floors or carpets in India which makes less concern regarding fire accidents.

Of course, Santa Claus is not a popular association in Indian Christmases. Many people will make a star with thin pieces of wood and cover it with colored paper and place a bulb in it and hoist it to the top of the house (if they are not thatched roofs) on a pole. Christmas and Good Friday are paid holidays throughout India for all employees in public and private sectors.

Maybe it would be best for the most interested people to celebrate at least one Christmas in India with our Bible Faith Lutheran Church of India to enjoy an Indian Christmas! ✠

GREETING . . .

troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

"Let not your heart be troubled. Peace!" A bishop of the Methodist Church in China was preaching on the above theme. After the message he asked a Chinese friend what the words would mean in Chinese: "Let not your heart be troubled." The friend replied, "You do not know Chinese, and I cannot tell you in English." "But," said the bishop, "Tell me in English how it sounds in Chinese." Finally, his friend said, "As nearly as I can approach it,

Bishop, the Chinese version says, 'Rest your heart.' " How can you or I better express the meaning of inner peace? "Rest your heart! Rest it in the Lord!"

As we have opportunities to receive gifts this Christmas, let us be glad recipients of God's unspeakable gift, His own precious Son. His gift to you will cause you to know that "rest in the Lord" and rejoice to sing: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men."

—Pastor Richard Snipstead
President, Association of
Free Lutheran Congregations

editorials

THE OLD, OLD STORY

We know the beloved Christmas Story so well, But because that is so, have you ever tried to read it as though you had never heard it or read it before? Not so easy to do, but it is interesting to try anyway. And then to notice each part of the account as a first-time reader would.

Yes, it is an old, old story to us, We know it well. Some years ago a Christmas greeting card carried this verse: "Unshaken in a troubled world, unchanged in the midst of change and strife, the birth of Christ remains throughout the ages, God's gift to man of power and life."

We love some things because they are new, and some things because they are old and true. May the latter be true of all of us in regard to the Christmas Gospel.

Three main figures tower over others in the Story. First, there is God the Father, guiding the events, sending His Son out of His great love for the world. It was His angels who brought the good news and it was He to whom the glory and praise were directed.

Second, we see Mary, mother of the Son of God, humble handmaid of the Lord. And in a lesser sense, Joseph, devoted husband, bearer of a spirit akin to that of John the Baptist. These were human channels through whom God could work and almost without exception He works through human agents today.

Third, there is the Child Jesus. it was His birth which changed the world's course. The very lowliness of it caused some to wonder whether that little One cradled on hay and in swaddling cloths could be the Messiah of God, but the heavenly light flooding the stable walls testified that it was so. Here was One both God and man, the Savior, Christ the Lord.

All of this is what is called the Incarnation. It is a great mystery. Who can fully understand it? Even the philosophers come short of completely grasping the full depth of meaning. The Apostle John put it this way: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (1:14). The prophet Isaiah wrote of one who would be called Immanuel, that is, God *with* us. Paul, that nonpareil of theologians, and more than that, a man with special revelation from God, years after the events of Calvary, wrote, "God was *in* Christ reconciling the world to Himself" (II Corinthians 5:20a). And Jesus would testify, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30).

God stepped into the breach caused by sin. Are there any good parallels in human experience to the incarnation? We might think of a king or some other leader dying for his people. In a sense he becomes a sacrifice. But such a leader dies as a mortal man and the consequences of his death are not long-lasting. But in Christ we have God standing where guilty man ought to have stood.

Do we understand how this can be? No, but there is much we don't understand. Do we comprehend the instantaneous transmission of pictures and sound to our television sets? Do we grasp the speed with which our spaceships hurtle through space? Do we understand how the mighty oak grows from the little acorn? Joyce Kilmer, killed in action in France on July 30, 1918, at the age of 31, did not live long but he left a lot of theology in that famous couplet in his poem *Trees*:

"Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree."

There is much we don't understand in the natural world about us and yet we accept them. It would be foolish of us not to do so.

And we should accept the incarnation—God became man—and the salvation which Jesus accomplished by His death and resurrection. The act of throwing oneself at His mercy and trusting in His redemption has brought peace and joy to countless people through the centuries and will do so today also.

The Christmas gift of God, His own Son Jesus, is for all. But it is where "meek souls will receive Him still" that the dear Christ will enter in., And the meek are those who see themselves as sinners, who confess their sins and believe the work of Christ is for them.

It is an old, old story, this Christmas one. It's very familiarity may cause us to be careless with it. May the Lord help us to see the Christmas Gospel anew this year and catch its power and glory. For all who can approach it with childlike simplicity and faith there is life, in the Savior who was born.

CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

Christmas mornings seem almost always to have been quite decent days. Oh yes, it may have been 20 below zero, but often that has happened more at New Year's. Christmas services are festive ones. Usually there are poinsettia plants in evidence. The music is joyous. Many of the people, especially the children, are wearing something new which they received that morning or on Christmas Eve.

The pastor's message carries a special vibrancy that day, for, after all, it's Christmas. Following the service the handshakes are friendlier and there is an aura of good feeling. People adjourn to the homes as hosts or guests at bounteous dinners.

In my own experience, holding services on Second Day Christmas also, no matter what the day of the week, worked well. I suppose that almost without exception I had one or two services on Dec. 26 over a period of 19 years. These were in country churches. It would not have worked out so well in town churches. But in this way each church in the parish had a Christmas service.

Writers in this issue

Harvey Carlson, Edwin Kjos, Richard Snipstead (president), Iver Olson (emeritus), and B. Rao Dasari are pastors or professors in the AFLC . . . Susan Nordvall is the wife of a lay pastor in the church . . . Mrs. Palmer Haugen, Mrs. Dennis Christopherson, Mrs. Oscar Folden, Mrs. Arnold McCarlson and Marlene Moline are housewives, Mrs. McCarlson also being a teacher. . . . Out of the past comes the poet Frederic William Farar and the theologians Ludvig Hope, J. H. Blegen and J. S. Melby.

Personalities

Rev. Bruce Dalager, pastor of the Winger, Minn., parish since 1977, has resigned in order to accept the call to Trinity Lutheran Church in Grand Forks, N. Dak. He will begin his work there on February 1.

Rev. Harvey Carlson, former pastor in Grand Forks, has accepted the call to Victory in Christ Lutheran Church in St. Paul, Minn., and has begun his ministry there. The address of Pastor and Mrs. Carlson is 169 N. McKnight Road, Suite 201, St. Paul, Minn. 55119.

OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FREE LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS

President—

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

Vice-President—

Rev. David C. Molstre
818 Heart Drive
Dickinson, N. Dak. 58601

Secretary—

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

Treasurer's Office—

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.
Minneapolis, Minn. 55441

No AMBASSADOR next time

As announced in our previous issue, there will be no December 22 issue of *The Lutheran Ambassador*. As an economy measure that number will be omitted.

Anyone wishing to secure a mimeo-

graphed copy of the Index for 1981, may order one from our office at a nominal cost. Please write to The Lutheran Ambassador, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minn. 55441.

The next Ambassador will appear under the date of January 6, 1982.

EDITORIALS . . .

The Sunday School programs are highlights of the year. The large trees attractively decorated either with Christmas or more traditional things add so much to the occasion. Often the lights are turned off and the program proceeds with only the tree lights and candles for illumination. One can almost predict some of the songs and words that will be heard no matter what the program title is, and yet it is all wonderful. Maybe someone forgets his lines and someone gets embarrassed, but most of the people won't remember that for long.

And when the program is over and the lights are back on, it is time for apples to be passed out to everyone and there are bags of candy and peanuts for the children, and maybe one for the pastor. Gifts and greeting cards are distributed. What a happy and enjoyable time it is. Some of the people may have friends over after the program at the church for visiting and coffee and Christmas baking.

What a pleasant and enjoyable time is Christmas. Best of all if we know its meaning and the Christ of Christmas.

The Lutheran Ambassador extends to you best wishes for a joyous and blessed holiday. Our readers are found from coast to coast and from border to border. They are in Canada, in Norway, in Brazil and Mexico, and a few other places as well. It's good to have you along, whether members of the Association or not. God bless you all. Christ the Savior is born!

Raynard Huglen

Christmas Bells

Come, Christmas bells, ring out the words
That angels sang and shepherds heard,
The good news that a star once told
To men who brought incense and gold
On that far-off Judean morn
Christ is born! Christ our Lord is born!

Let the cold crystal air of night
Resound with chimings of delight
Through field and meadow, forest still,
O'er every hummock, every hill,
Until the whole world know the song—
Christ is born! Christ our Lord is born!

Marlene Moline
Lansing, Ia.

13. What did Naomi do about her sons' marriages? _____

One sin invariably leads to another. God had commanded that the Israelites were not to intermarry with the heathen, but Naomi was in the wrong place herself.

14. What were the three steps downward?

a) _____

b) _____

c) _____

Backsliding is always a gradual process. We need to seek the Lord's guidance continually. Although the sojourn of this Jewish family in the Moabite country did not prove productive of the blessings which they had anticipated, as the undertaking evidently was not in accordance with the will of God, yet the result was highly beneficial to at least one of the Moabite women, so that, by God's merciful kindness, it served a great end.

15. How do you apply this to your own life as we journey here? Ps. 90:1 _____

How we need to "pray without ceasing" for obedience to the Lord and put Him first. It is so easy to be caught in the rapid pace, until we become complacent women. PRAY! PRAY! PRAY!

—Mrs. Palmer Haugen
Portland, N. Dak.

JANUARY'S PROJECT is Church Extension. Our home mission congregations are very dependent on these funds in order to begin new congregations within the Association. Through these funds money is loaned to congregations who need to expand their facilities. As loans are repaid monies are again available to assist other congregations. The needs are great! Remember that as we have new congregations coming into the Association we can look forward to new WMFs being started. Let us give with a cheerful heart! Mrs. Grace Syverson—President of the WMF.

WMF Bible Study

Ruth

January 1982

Introduction

"No one can pride himself that he earned the love of God. The fact is that what we are we owe to the Hand of God upon us" (Eph. 2:9, Phillips). In this short book we have "the Idyl of David's great grandmother, Ruth the Moabitess, who lived in the days when the Judges ruled Israel. Even in the blackest time God has men and women who love and serve Him. In Boaz we see his deep faith in God. In Ruth we have modesty and patience. In Naomi a very good woman whose religion shows a fidelity in all her duties" (Sell). This book is a beautiful commentary on the words of the apostle Paul. "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. 13:13).

The primary reason for acquainting ourselves with this book is not its literary appeal, but because it is a part of God's inspired Word. There are many lessons which the Spirit of God will teach us if we will submit our minds to the wisdom and truth which it contains.

Also read Judges. It is the setting for the Book of Ruth.

ELIMELECH AND NAOMI IN THE COUNTRY OF MOAB

Read the first chapter of Ruth, vs. 1-5.

1. Why was there a famine in the land? Deut. 28:22-24; Judges 1:28; 2:3; 21:25. _____

Judges 21:25 is the key to the background of the book of Ruth. "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes," but over 20 times in the same book it says that God saw them doing what was displeasing in His eyes. We can't run away from God; He sees all things.

2. What is the meaning of "Bethlehem"? _____

Sometimes famine comes for a testing. We are all so prone to seek relief from difficulties rather than profit from them. When trials come our way, our first thought should not be, "When wilt Thou send relief" but rather, "What wouldest Thou have me learn?"

3. What does the word "sojourn" mean? _____

4. To what does the name Moab refer in Scripture? _____

For us, too, there is the temptation to go our own way, and definitely so when we cease to feed on the Word of God and continue in prayer.

5. What does the name Elimelech mean? _____

Elimelech saw his possessions melting away and decided that until the famine was over he must seek refuge in the well-watered fields of Moab. This was breaking the covenant blessing he had inherited from his father, Abraham. The real proof of a man's faith is how he reacts when he is put under trials.

6. What do the names Naomi, Mahlon and Chilion mean? _____

Strange names, indeed, to give to one's children! It may well be that these names were descriptive of their physical condition at birth, especially in light of their early deaths, reported in v. 5. The faith of the parents could not have been strong or they never would have left their land.

7. What had God said to them about going to Moab? _____

Are we ever tempted to leave the place where God has put us when difficulties arise? _____

8. In what way is this an example of our desire to do it our way and the results? _____

9. Did they continue in the country of Moab? _____
When we do only that which is right in our own eyes, we suffer the consequences.

10. What are the implications of the first three verses on Elimelech's biography? _____

11. Did Naomi decide to return to Judah after the death of her husband? _____
We see how God chastened Naomi with the rod of His correction in order that He might bring her back into a loving fellowship with Himself. Heb. 12:6 says: "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Apparently death overtook Elimelech rather suddenly and not long after he had come to the land of Moab. Though it is appointed unto men once to die, yet death is the one thing men never take into their plans.

12. What did her two sons do? Deut. 7:3, 23:3 _____
As we see here, as Naomi was in the wrong place, so were her two sons. How important is the example we set for our children. Do not expect that your children will not do wrong things if you are living for the world. Look up II Cor. 6: 14, 15.

Journey of a Lifetime

A visit to "relatives" in China

For Mrs. Oscar Folden of Minot, North Dakota, a member of Bethel Lutheran Church, it was a long and sentimental journey to China, beginning March 1, 1981, to meet four women she had never seen before. The story started 60 years ago when Rev. Warren Winter, then a young clergyman, and his wife Jennie, were commissioned missionaries by the Cicero Bible Church of Cicero, Illinois.

They were sent as boat missionaries to minister to the throngs of Chinese people living and dying on the tiny boats on the rivers over a hundred miles north of Canton.

Their home was a large houseboat approximately 70 feet long by 25 feet wide. The upper deck had a peaked roof with open side walls. This big deck was the church. An old picture shows it flying both Chinese and American flags.

According to reports from the missionaries, leprosy was a most dreaded disease in China. Afflicted children often lived alone in a tiny shelter located as far as possible from the family dwelling. Food was brought daily, but only after the family delivered the food

was the child leper allowed to come out and get it. Sometimes these unfortunate children were put in a small boat, given a little chicken for good luck and put out on the river. They could survive only as sympathetic boat people tossed them pennies or food. Food vendors plied up and down the river selling hot soup, rice, etc., to those wanting it. Many adult lepers also had to live alone on a little boat. Many times their lifeless bodies were seen drifting down the river to the sea. Mrs. Winter said her hardest task in China was learning to use and drink that water even after boiling it.

Often these lonely lepers would row their boats as close as they could to hear Rev. Winter's messages. Had they been allowed on the church boat, all other Chinese would have been afraid to ever attend. This fact prompted Rev. Winter to build a chapel boat for leper services. Many with hands or feet partially destroyed by the disease found it difficult to climb onto the chapel boat. In spite of much opposition, Rev. Winter was able to secure land on which to build a leper colony, little cottages with garden space for each leper. Rev. Winter learned how to treat leprosy from his friends, two missionary doctors. Tragically, one doctor died of illness and the other was shot by bandits. Rev. Winter carried on with the treatments and care of lepers. For this the Chinese government conferred on him the title of Doctor.

**"Many with hand or feet
partially destroyed by the
disease found it difficult to
climb onto the chapel boat."**

Having no children, the Winters adopted babies they rescued from foundling homes. Baby girls were unwanted in China and often brought to those homes where as many as six would be put into an oblong clothes basket and covered over and left to die. Of all the babies the Winters tried to save, only three lived. They were given the names Grace, Ruth and Esther.

Often, too, a mother who had nothing in which to wrap her newborn child, would stand on the shore and hold out the baby, hoping the Winters could take her little one also.

Ah Saam was the faithful lady who came to work for and live with the Winters in the very early years of their ministry. It was she and her sister Ah Li who cared for the children when the Winters went on furlough.

In 1941, during one of the very few furloughs ever taken, Mr. and Mrs. Folden spent some time with the Winters and Rev. and Mrs. William McCarol in Chicago. Rev. McCarol, a boyhood friend of Warren Winter, was pastor of the Cicero Bible Church for some 40 years. At one time there were 29 missionaries supported in part or whole by this church.

At that time, 1941, the Winters' plans to return to China very shortly were interrupted by World War II. Thus only Rev. Winter was permitted to return. Mrs. Winter, Jennie, lectured throughout the United States until 1946, when she was granted leave to return to her beloved China. After reaching mainland China, she traveled 29 days on a small boat through mosquito-infested swamp before she reached the inland region to which her husband and family had been forced to flee during the Japanese invasion of China. That family flight was an ordeal!

While Mrs. Winter was in America, a ten-day-old baby had been placed along the pathway to the leper home, obviously so that she would be found and cared for by the missionaries. Since the child was still there the second day, Rev. Winter took her into their family. The mother had died of starvation. Rev. Winter, being a foreigner, an American, realized his plight should he be captured. Therefore he bought canned milk and fled, carrying the baby he had named Rachel. (Today Rachel is a nurse and is studying to be a doctor and is married to a doctor.)

On that flight he was robbed. His money and even his shoes were taken. The rest of the journey over rough terrain was made barefooted. When he had established himself in a mountainous region and had begun a new work among lepers and orphans, he was

"The first intimation the Winters had of approaching trouble was when the night school children failed to report."

joined by his family. Details of this were learned now on Mrs. Folden's visits. Ruth told of how Ah Saam, Ah Li, Grace, Ruth and Esther tied their few remaining earthly possessions on their backs and walked for 11 days and nights to be reunited with Rev. Winter and baby Rachel. Some time in this period, Mrs. Winter later wrote, that he had been very, very ill with pneumonia, his only shelter being an unused granary. At the close of World War II, that part of China had a period of peace.

In the interior, after Mrs. Winter's return, they built another leper home, an orphanage for mountain children and a night school. The girls were young ladies by then, with the exception of little Rachel.

When the Communist take-over reached that area, the Communists lulled the Winters into a false sense of security by telling them they had nothing to fear because of their good work, particularly with lepers. The first intimation the Winters had of approaching trouble was when the night school children failed to report. Investigations revealed that the people had been warned to have nothing to do with the missionaries because they were Americans. Discouragements were not new for the Winters. They had lost their first leper colony and mission boat from Japanese bombings and now the Communists had taken over.

Rev. Winter was arrested January 21, 1951. His daughter Grace, then a medical student, was with him at that time and when she wept, she, too, was arrested for being his daughter and having sympathy for an American. They were confined in separate areas in the same prison. A few days later, Mrs. Winter, Ruth, Esther, and another missionary serving with them were arrested and all placed in solitary confinement. In the cement prison cell there was no furniture and they slept on boards.

Because she believed it a righteous protest and a directive from the Lord, "Don't eat," in answer to her prayers, Mrs. Winter ate very little of the

brought to her. At the end of two months, in April, 1951, when she was weakened by this scanty diet, two Russian soldiers with guns took her from prison to a train. She believed she was being returned to her home. But when morning came, she saw the bridge between China and Hong Kong. She was forced to walk over it into freedom. She was heartbroken at leaving China, her home, her husband and family, none of whom she ever saw again. Years later, through the Red Cross, it was learned that her husband, who was a well man when arrested, had died in prison on February 27, 1951, only one month after his arrest. Mrs. Winter, thin and frail, with shabby old clothing, shoes without laces (which had been taken from her), as was her comb (thus her hair was unkept and matted), was first thought to be a Communist spy as she came to Hong Kong. After an illness detained her for a time in Hong Kong and at which time she was cared for by missionaries in free Hong Kong, she returned to Cicero.

Besides lecturing on Communism and again visiting the Foldens, Mrs. Winter continued to minister to the aged Chinese in Cook County Hospital in Chicago. She brought them sandwiches, cookies, etc. They loved her as she also brought them the Gospel message in their own Chinese language.

In 1959 the Pacific Garden Mission of Chicago decided to portray the life of



A leprosy boy. This one was a Christian.

Little Children, Wake and Listen!

**Little children, wake and listen!
Songs are breaking o'er the earth;
While the stars in heaven glisten,
Hear the news of Jesus' birth.
Long ago, to lonely meadows,
Angels brought the message
down;
Still, each year, through midnight
shadows,
It is heard in every town.**

**What is this that they are telling,
Singing in the quiet street?
While their voices high are swelling,
What sweet words do they repeat?
Words to bring us greater
gladness,
Though our hearts from care are
free;
Words to chase away our sadness,
Cheerless though our hearts may
be.**

**Christ has left His throne of
glory,
And a lowly cradle found;
Well might angels tell the story,
Well may we their words resound.
Little children, wake and listen!
Songs are ringing through the
earth;
While the stars in heaven glisten,
Hail with joy your Savior's birth.**
Author unknown

the Winters in three taped programs on the series of Unshackled. Mrs. Winter assisted in the production for the first and second programs. During the week prior to the final Saturday program, Mrs. Winter collapsed and passed away at the foot of her apartment stairs. She was returning from her visit to her dear Chinese friends in the hospital. Her faithful mission labors of

[Continued on page 20]



Rev. and Mrs. Warren Winter, ca. 1940.

The Lutheran Ambassador

A PAGE FOR CHILDREN

A Miracle of a Baby

by Mrs. Arnold McCarlson
Eagle Butte, South Dakota

Mrs. Johnson was opening the morning mail. There was an invitation to be present at their grandson's baptism, Todd Olaf, the following Sunday. Of course, they would attend even if it were several hundred miles away. There was no greater joy than seeing a loved one brought to Christ in the sacrament of Baptism.

The Johnsons had been doubly blessed this year as a few weeks before they had attended the baptism of Michael Scott, the son of their youngest son.

Leaving early Friday they visited with other family members enroute. That evening the Johnsons visited with four of their young grandchildren. As usual all wanted to show and tell. "Grandma, Christmas is coming soon," said Stacy. This year you'll have two more grandchildren to buy gifts for, but they have already have so many things."

"Oh," as if she suddenly remembered, "in Sunday School we studied about Zacharias and Elizabeth. They were real old and had never had any children. One day the angel came and said that Elizabeth would bear a son. But Zacharias didn't believe it and he was struck dumb, until after the son was born and named."

"Yes," said Grandma, "babies are a miracle gift from God. And did you know that in the same year that Elizabeth was expecting her son—another lady, named Mary, was also visited by an angel? Elizabeth was her cousin."

"Really, what happened?" echoed the other grandchildren. Well, let's read from Luke chapter 1, verses 26 through 56. (You may read the passage from your Bible).

"In Luke 2, we read the wonderful story of Jesus' birth," said Grandma Johnson, but that's to be read another evening. You've heard how Jesus was born in Bethlehem on Christmas Eve.

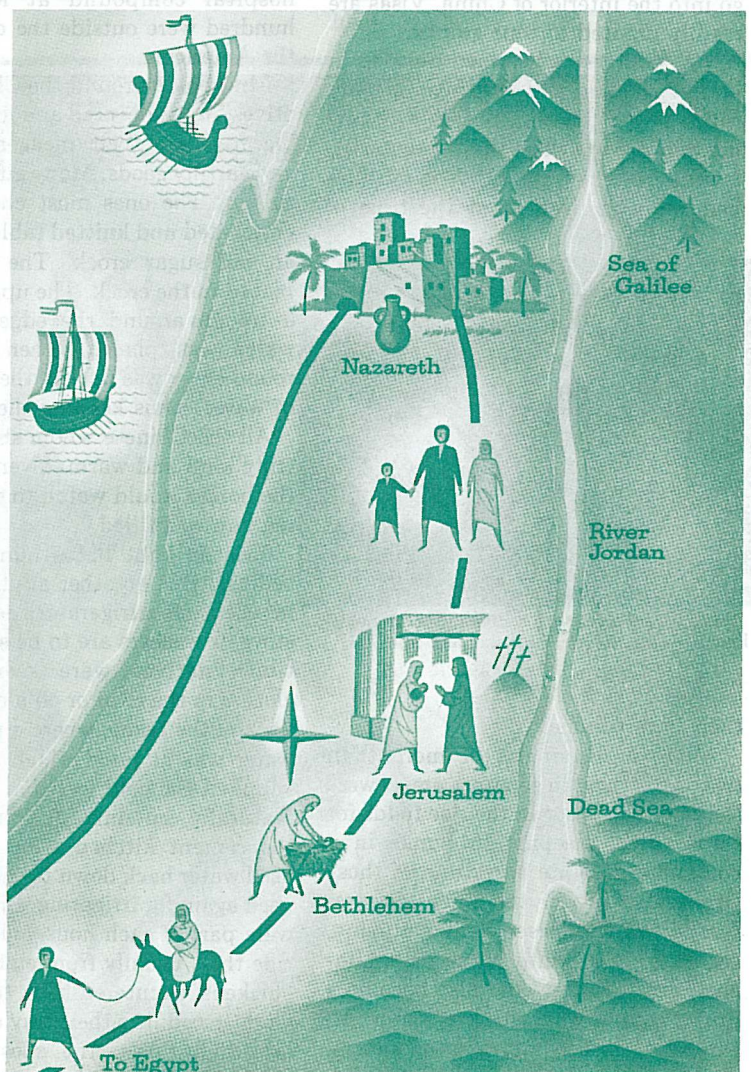
This was prophesied in the Old Testament, in Isaiah 7:14: "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

"Oh, said Stacy, "Then John and Jesus were cousins just like we are to Todd and Michael."

"Yes," said Grandma, "and do you

know that Todd has already been miraculously blessed? When he was only five days old he was healed of a heart ailment. He was brought to church on a Sunday evening and prayer was offered for him. No longer was one side of his face a bright red and the other side white. Right away his mother began to tell people, 'My baby is healed,' and he was. She didn't say this from her head, but from her heart."

With Christmas season here, let us all rejoice that when God sent His Son to be born in Bethlehem, it was to save us from eternal death and punishment. Let us live for Him. So that all we say and do may be a reflection of Him through us. For there is no greater joy.



The Children's Holy Land. "Reproduced with permission of Lutheran Brotherhood—a fraternal benefit society."

JOURNEY . . .

love continued until the moment of death. The Foldens were guests of Pacific Garden Mission during the making of the final episode of the life of the Winters.

For 30 years the Foldens wondered if they would ever hear from the Chinese girls, Grace, Esther and Ruth, who had written to them as children.

In 1980 the good news came by way of former missionaries and the Cicero Bible Church. Knowing that these four orphan girls had no known relatives, and also knowing how the Winters would have gone to them if they were living, Mrs. Folden accepted their urgent invitation. The China Embassy granted her one of the very few visas ever given to individual Westerners to go into the interior of China. Visas are readily granted to tour groups.

The Winters had trained the girls in both speaking and writing English. Much of this knowledge was lost during the 28 years when they were not allowed to speak English. Their Bibles had been confiscated at the time of

parts. All have children of their own.

In Canton, and in the northern regions visited, Mrs. Folden saw no other American, one, as they said, with "yellow hair and different eyes, round like coconuts." In fact, it is doubtful if those thousands of Chinese had ever seen a foreigner. They stopped whatever they were doing and just looked.

The beds were enclosed with attractive white netting to keep the mosquitoes out.

The thick, clean, warm bed coverings were always neatly folded on the bed. Most of the chairs and other furniture had been made by hand but were of good quality and nicely finished. In one home was seen a library consisting

"... Mrs. Folden saw no other American, one, as they said, 'with yellow hair and different eyes, round like coconuts.'"

While visiting at Esther's home, there were as many as six to nine always coming to the doorway to see the foreigner. When they left the home in the hospital compound at least three hundred were outside the door, to see the American.

Mrs. Folden found the Chinese "relatives" to be devoted and loving, wishing to share their meager allotment and earthly goods. Many gifts were given her. The ones most cherished are crocheted and knitted tablecloths and an old sugar crock. The sugar was placed in the crock. The upper rim has a trough around the edge, in which water was placed. Then when the round cover was put on, the edges were in water—thus keeping the ants out!

All the Chinese whom she met were truly kind and warm. Even visitors in the homes would watch to see that her tea cup was filled.

Electric light bulbs hung from the ceilings. But no other appliance could be used, no refrigerator, deep freezer, stove or washers are to be seen. Sometimes natives were seen washing clothes in the river or on a cement slab back of the home, where a pipe of cold water was at hand. Such a pipe also supplied the cold water in the homes. Naturally, no sinks. A trough around the cement kitchen floor carried the used water back down to the field to be used again for irrigating. Live chickens were part of each household. At eventide they, usually from eight to twelve chickens, sauntered back to the kitchen door and into their tiny quarters for the night. Yes, the rooster crowed early! The beds with boards instead of springs, with a "not too thick" pad on, were a bit of an ordeal for Mrs. Folden.

of many Chinese books. But any visitor would note the complete absence of current newspapers and magazines such as *Good Housekeeping*, etc.

The cement or plastered walls of the homes were usually decorated with large colorful calendar-type pictures tacked to the walls. These gave a cheery atmosphere to the otherwise drab gray, so characteristic of China today.

There is no private ownership of cars or trucks, all are government-owned or by factories. Of course, they are government owned, too.

In China, one walks, takes a bus that is very old, or rides a bicycle. Our people did not have bicycles: "Too many money." Yet Grace's husband was influential enough that his factory sent the jeep to meet Mrs. Folden at the train and again when she left.

The peasant trudges along bearing his yoke over his shoulder, from which hangs the heavy load. It may be vegetables or even refuse or waste from the apartment that is carried to the fields for fertilizer. Many women, some with babies on their back, chop, hoe and plant in the rice fields, wading in water to their knees. Ladies and even young girls help by pushing wheelbarrows laden with gravel for cement work and for many lines of work that Americans consider a man's work. In China they have the "E.R.A.," at least an equal opportunity to labor.

It is noteworthy that our Chinese relatives have, in spite of the terrible stress and suffering of their early womanhood years, brought themselves up out of the peasant class, possibly due to the advantage of their early training. They have little of this world's goods in



Mrs. Oscar Folden with her family, left to right, Rachel, Grace, Esther, Ah Saam and Ruth.

their imprisonment.

After imprisonment of more than two years, they, in separate areas, were sentenced to labor in the rice fields for three years, sleeping in bunks in a commune. Despite the strain of those five years, two of the three girls returned to their chosen field of nursing, the other going into office work. Rachel, the youngest one, also became a nurse, studying now to be a doctor. All three nurses are married to doctors. Grace, who works in a government office is married to an accountant in a large factory that makes car and truck

their homes but will always say, "We are well and happy in China now." They do not know what America has in abundance, yet they dream of a time when they, too, can travel at will and can live in America.

As Mrs. Folden continued her journey aboard a Korean 300 B Jet back to the "land of milk and honey," her own U.S.A., her thoughts reverted to the seven loyal, loving Chinese relatives returning to their homes on, not a "tourist" train, but a Chinese peasant train, which Mrs. Folden, though a foreigner, had been privileged to ride on her journey to the interior country of China. When authoirites learned that Mrs. Folden was seated among the peasants, she and her party were removed to the first-class coach. This coach, with no privacy, though less crowded, was primitive in comparison with American first-class rail service.

Mrs. Folden, enroute from Hong Kong to Seoul via Taiwan and Japan on a wide-bodied 300B French jet, was treated royally. The attendants periodically brought sterilized white, wet wash cloths to the passengers to use to refresh themselves, served cold drinks and during that flight served two full meals, attractively arranged. The needs and comforts of the passengers were of great concern to the Korean flight crew. This was also true of the Seoul to Los Angeles flight on a Boeing 747 jet.

"They have little of this world's goods in their homes but will always say, 'We are well and happy in China now.'"

In contrast to this luxurious mode of transportation, her homeward-bound Chinese people were on a train carrying about 1000 people on a seven-hour ordeal, on a trek of some 120 plus miles. The sights, sounds and smells of

that train linger in Mrs. Folden's memory.

The regular coach had wooden seats with passengers crowded together and many standing. The first-class coach had bunk beds three high on each wall of the open-ended, so-called roomette. No doors or curtains provided privacy as Americans know it. A pad softened the wooden bunks and blankets were provided.

A walk through five coaches had afforded Mrs. Folden sights unseen in the U.S.A. Men and women of all ages were crowded on the wooden seats, others standing wherever they could. Baggage of every kind had been brought on the train, some pails of vegetables, bundles of cane, baskets of chickens, ducks and frogs, almost clogged the filthy aisles. The Chinese usually wore the ubiquitous blue jackets and trousers.

Sometimes the "stewardess" pushed an old galvanized cart down the aisle. On it was an old, old, old basket filled with cooked duck eggs. These were sold for a few pennies. As they were relished, the egg shells fell to join the banana peelings and other trash on the floor, or were tossed out an open window. Even walking in the aisles one's instinct warns that ones shoes are now untouchable!

In spite of the rubbish found everywhere, many Chinese, while contributing to that rubbish, attempted to be clean. Out of a plastic bag would be brought a wet cloth to clean their hands occasionally. The humid air slows the drying process, hence one of Mrs. Folden's party, who had washed some personal clothing the night before, availed herself of the opportunity to "hang out the wash" on the rod above the window in our aisle.

The diner was not like the ones the Folden family had so often enjoyed on the Empire Builder, formerly owned by Great Northern Railway and now a part of Amtrak. Crude tables covered with oilcloth, old folding chairs, dirty windows and floors made up the scene. Yet the bowl of rice with vegetables and a cup of tea rewarded the hungry rider.

The rest-room fixtures were simply a hole in the floor outlined by a once white basin and flanked by a foot rest on each side. The lower parts of the

soggy walls of the tiny room had long ago yielded their paint to the elements.

Reflecting on her experiences on that train, and realizing that it wasn't what American transportation offers, Mrs. Folden recalled from her teaching years a favorite story in one of the readers. A rabbit riding in a bunny wagon continually mumbled and grumbled about the rough stony road until the rabbit driver put the complaining rider off to walk. A short time later, he was heard to mutter, "Tired old bunny, glad to ride."

Mrs. Folden, too, realized the great privilege that was hers when she was a passenger on a train meant for only the use of the natives.

China has and is changing. The multitude of people are a problem and yet an asset as they perform the tasks machines in America do. China now is struggling to modernize after the years of the Mao regime that all realize was a detriment to all.

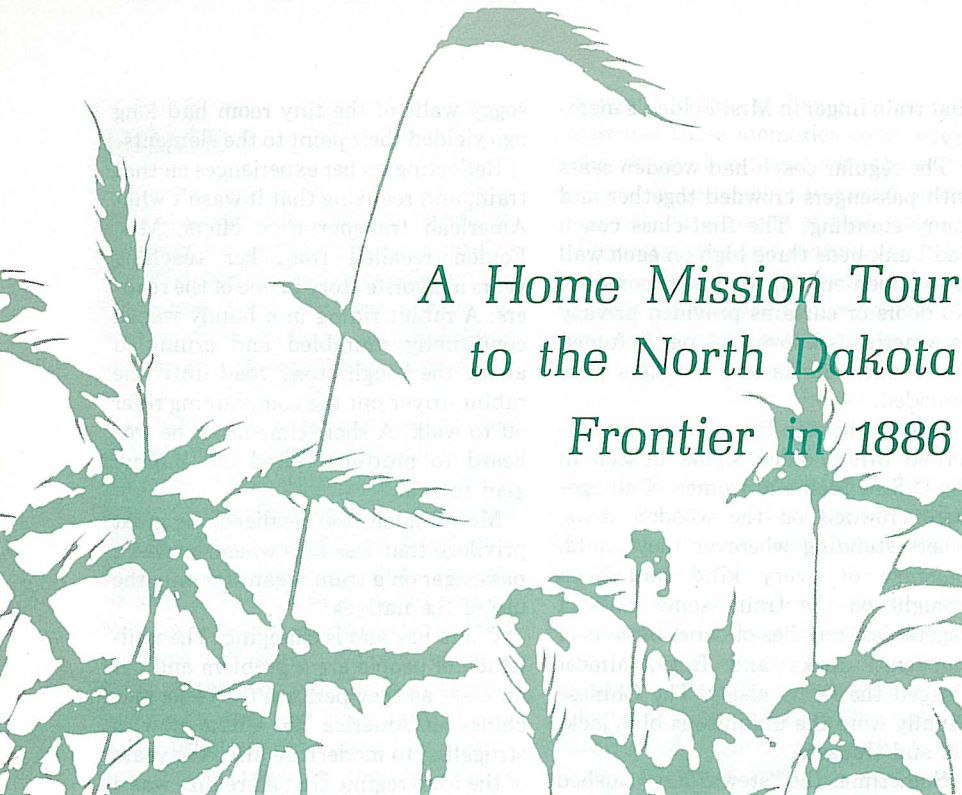
Though still not free as we Americans know freedom, the Chinese are grateful for the new opportunities granted to them. They are so quick to say and to say emphatically, "China good now."

—Mrs. Oscar Folden

Mrs. Folden found the two women, Grace and Ruth, to be Christians. It was her joy to be able to help a daughter of each into the faith while she was in China. Grace, in a letter after Mrs. Folden returned home, states that her other four daughters and her husband have all now become believers in Jesus Christ. For this we thank God with them.

From Grace's letter, let us hear this quotation: "Your kind appearance and tender voice have once more kindled the memory of our beloved and lost parents.

"Truly speaking, we take you for our parents. Here we express to you our love. We feel very sorry that you couldn't stay long with us. After your departure our hearts grew heavy and weary and we shed tears as if we lost our kind mother. Your appearance will never fade away in our memory."



A Home Mission Tour to the North Dakota Frontier in 1886

by Prof. J. H. Blegen

The first of three parts

(Prof. J. H. Blegen, who had just put in his first year of a 30-year career as a professor at Augsburg Seminary, and who was a member of the Mission Committee of the Norwegian-Danish Conference, undertook a trip in 1886 into central North Dakota on behalf of the Committee to determine how many Norwegian settlers were living out there and where it might be feasible to start congregations. His interesting account of his experiences follows in this and two succeeding issues. Prof. Blegen's son Theodore was dean of the graduate school of the University of Minnesota and a renowned chronicler of Minnesota history.)

The First Problem

The mission department tour was undertaken as a result of the annual conference's resolution, "Mouse River and surrounding area," which was described in the previous issue. If there were any Norwegian settlers that far west, I didn't get any clear understanding from the conference, but I was given the responsibility of finding that out. I was given the name and address of only one person, where I could have a point of departure or connection for my

operations in those regions, and therefore the whole trip would be very much like a voyage of discovery. I had been told that one of our pastors had begun mission work as far west as Devils Lake. I think it was Pastor (Martin J.) Waage, at that time the pastor of congregations by Goose River, who had attempted to begin mission work in the city of Devils Lake. Perhaps someone had also been as far out as Churchs Ferry.

The first difficult problem was how I should get there because the railroad hadn't come that far west yet. To go by foot couldn't even be considered. I had to have horses and where would I get them? Pastor Ibraim Lundebry came to my aid. He had recently settled by the Sheyenne River in Nelson County, North Dakota, and was doing mission work in that area. We were well acquainted and good friends from our school days and he offered me the use of a nice new buggy and a dandy team of ponies if I could furnish him with an old buggy to use in the meantime. He would even use an old horse till I returned. I was fortunate enough during

the annual conference to be able to buy an old buggy from a merchant not far away for a small price. Pastor Lundebry towed it home with him (apparently from Climax, Minnesota, where the annual conference had been held that year). Some days later I took the train to Lakota, where Pastor Lundebry, according to our agreement, met me and took me to his home and equipped me for the trip. I stayed at his place for a few days, preached in a couple of his congregations and celebrated the 4th of July with his parishioners. With that opportunity I had to also be the festival speaker, all this as compensation beforehand for the help he was giving me.

July 6

After we had held a communion service and partaken of the Lord's Supper together, I left the pastor's place on the morning of July 6, a home where, by the way, it wasn't the most convenient to have guests because the family was living in a half-finished house and the doors hadn't even been put in.

The goal for the first day's journey was Devils Lake City. The way went over uninhabited, mountain-like stretches. At dinner-time I came to a house where a Norwegian man named Christofferson lived. I ate dinner there and there I met a young man from Jerusalem; not the Jerusalem in Palestine, to be sure, but right there in the neighborhood of the place where I stopped for dinner. I had a longer talk with the young man. He was very religious, but not of my faith, and I left him with the suspicion that he was so pious that he couldn't find his place among the ordinary people and had withdrawn to the life of a hermit on a lonely place near Devils Lake and there he would build a new Jerusalem.

But I had to go on. It was a hard day's driving from the pastor's place to Devils Lake City. But I had gotten a splendid team of horses and the weather was good, so I arrived at my destination at 8 o'clock that evening. The town was a little prairie town which was growing up under the mea-

"I had been told that one of our pastors had begun mission work as far west as Devils Lake."

"I met a young man from Jerusalem; not the Jerusalem in Palestine, to be sure. . . ."

ger circumstances of a pioneer settlement. The location was fair. I got a roof over my head in a very plain hotel—they called it a hotel, at any rate. Any enlightenment about conditions further west I did not get.

July 7

The next day's goal was a place called Dunseith near the Turtle Mountains. But by Churchs Ferry I took a wrong way, going to the right instead of to the left and came that night to a little stopping place called Cando. There I met a family with the familiar name of Olson, newly arrived from one of the Conference's congregations by Battle Lake, Minnesota. The man wasn't home, but the lady thought it was like a visit from home to meet a home mission pastor from the Conference. There followed then an enjoyable and edifying evening and I had a good night's rest after a tiring day. That was due especially to an event that day which had taxed my strength and caused me to fear. Near a small lake a tremendous swarm of insects, large as a cloud, descended all over me and the horses; they were so thick that it became dark around me. I stopped the horses and grabbed my raincoat and lashed out at them all I could to defend myself. For a while it looked bad, but finally the swarm flew away again and then the buggy was so covered with slaughtered insects that it was a mess. That battle with a swarm of insects was a unique experience of the trip.

July 8

The next day I was to attempt to get on the right way again by heading out over a prairie which had no roads. It is true that I had both a map and compass along. But well into the day I no-

ticed by the sun that I wasn't holding to the right course and then I discovered that the iron in the buggy affected the compass needle and threw me off course. From then on I realized that I had to go out a couple steps from the buggy when I wanted to read the compass, if I were to keep in the right direction.

At last I reached the government trail which, according to my travel plan, I was to follow. And in the afternoon I found a shack along the way where a solitary Canadian lived, who had taken a claim on a piece of land there. I was by then very hungry and asked if he had any food. No, his situation was such that he didn't have any other food than a little milk. But that was also a good help, of course. In the meanwhile he advised me that it was just a few miles further to the next stopping place, where a man could buy food and that was good news. And from that stopping place I continued the trip

"That battle with a swarm of insects was a unique experience of the trip."

with renewed strength. That evening I came to the shack of a homesteader, where a man from Satersdal (a district in Norway) had settled. There I could spend the night. But it turned out to be a restless night because the house crawled with bedbugs. However, I was fortunate that I had been so careful as to take some insect powder along. That was brought out from the emergency bag and spread in the bed and wasn't without effect.

The next morning I was on my feet early in order to survey the surroundings before the frugal breakfast was to be served. From the Satersdal man's shack there was an open view of the Turtle Mountains. It was a grand view and a welcome change for the eyes from the flat, monotonous prairies. Before me, lighted by the morning sun, there lay a large valley with an apparent plain several miles wide with slopes on both sides. On the one side there were hardly any trees, but on the other

Like a Benediction

Christmas comes to us again with its blessed message of wonder and glory and joy. It falls upon our anxious hearts in these troubled times like a benediction. Like the radiance of the rising or setting sun, or the beauty of returning spring, it is always lovely—it is ever new. How eagerly and hungrily our hearts should receive it!

A. S. Berg (*Christmas Echoes*)

side the highest ridges were crowned with woods. In the Norwegian meaning of the word, the Turtle Mountains were not a mountain range, but only a tree-covered ridge whose highest point reached 750 feet above the prairie. The length was about 40 miles and the breadth 30 miles, I was told. The soil was fertile and well suited for farming. Along the slopes the land had already been taken up by Canadians, Frenchmen and "halfbreeds." The woodlands, on the other hand, hadn't yet been surveyed and the southern part of them is being used as an Indian reservation.

The man from Satersdal had found himself a beautiful place, but there was no influx of Norwegian people yet.

(To be continued)

—Translated by the Editor.
Reprinted from *Folkebladet*,
April 14, 1926

How far to Bethlehem?

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

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

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

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

It is not far to Bethlehem Town!
It's anywhere that Christ comes down
And finds in people's friendly face

A welcome and abiding place.
The road to Bethlehem runs right
through
The homes of folks like me and you!
—M. S. M.
(from *The Lutheran Messenger*)

Thy Kingdom Come

"There was no room for them in the
inn" (Luke 2:7).

There has always been a scarcity of
room for Jesus in this world, and no
change for the better in sight either;
quite the contrary. All men know in-
deed that He is good, but He is too
good: He does not suit the self-
sufficient generation that chooses to
live according to its own lusts. We can
build churches and altars for Him, and
on festival days and at a grave we can
sing, too, about Him and His heaven,
but then that will have to be enough.
The aim of our life is to live as we
please, without having anything to do
with Jesus. But when we die He is ex-
pected politely to have a door open for
us right into heaven. We are about

ready to dare Him to fail us there.

That is the way most people think
and live. During life they want nothing
to do with Jesus, but when they die
they must at all costs go to Him. He
who must stand outside the door of
your heart, home, business, parties,
and the whole course of your life, He
must have a place for you in His heav-
en, because you want to get in there.
What are you going to do there? You
will not get a new mind in death; you
must get that here. No; the Jesus that
you have no room for, He has no heav-
en for you. If you wish to find room
with Jesus when you die, then you
must have room for Him while you are
living.

But you and I who once gave Him

No room at the inn

room, let us be on our guard, and keep
away from everything that would make
the place of Jesus smaller in our lives.
It is hard to find room for Jesus with
many of us Christians, too. This world
deceives and draws so many of the
Lord's little ones, also.

Come, Jesus, glorious heavenly
Guest,
Keep Thine own Christmas in our
breast;
Then David's harp-string, hushed so
long,
Shall swell our jubilee of song.

—Reprinted from *Thy Kingdom Come*
by Ludvig Hope,
Augsburg Publishing House.