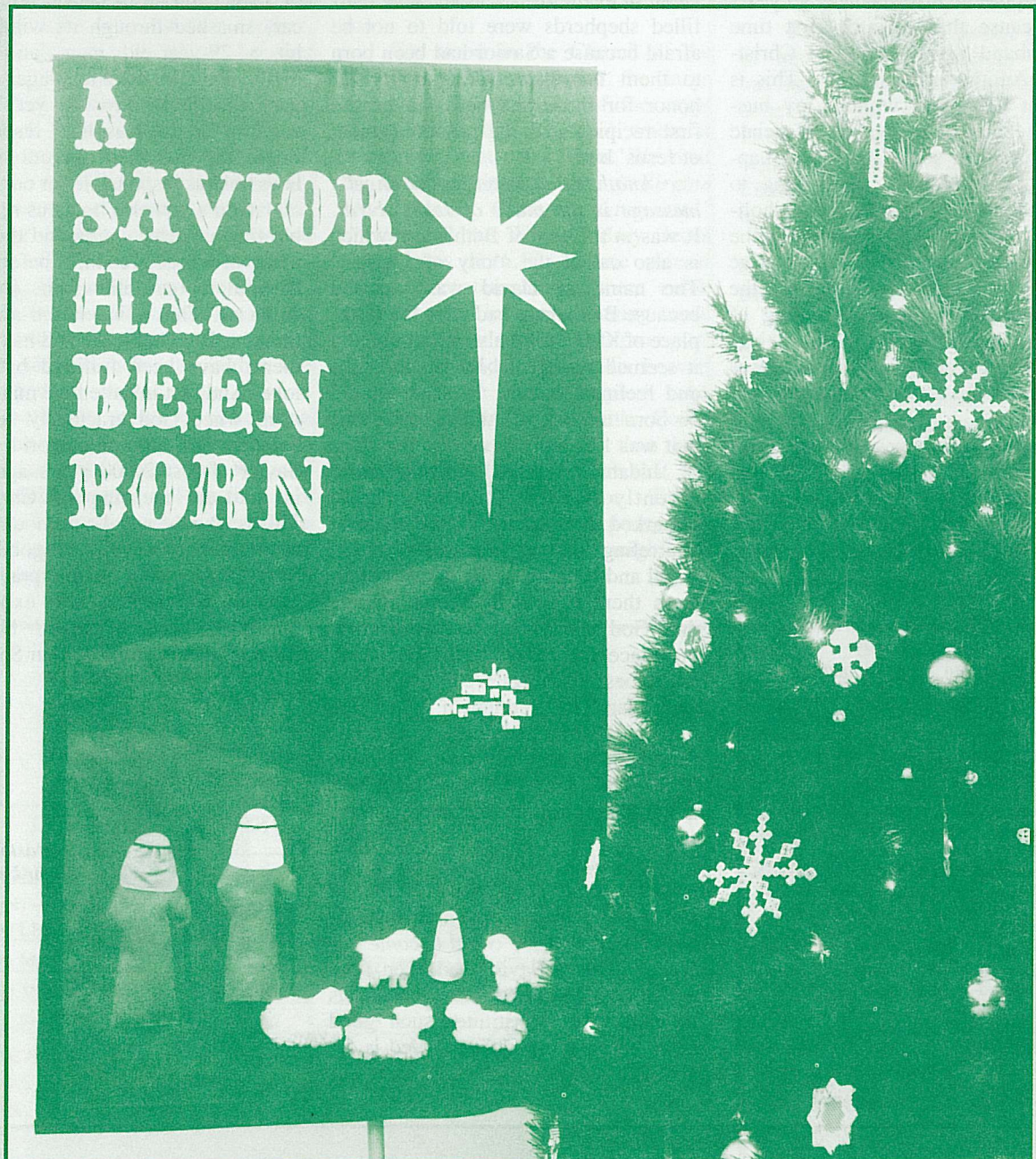


THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

December 3, 1985



"A Savior Has Been Born"—Roger C. Huebner, D. D. S.

at the MASTER'S FEET

The meaning of Christmas

Luke 2:10-11

"What does Christmas mean to you?" This is the question that a radio station asked of its listeners a few years ago. One lady replied, "My happiest Christmas was 20 years ago because that was the first time my husband wasn't drunk at Christmas." Another lady stated, "This is the first Christmas without my husband." Thus many people associate Christmas with some significant happening in their lives. According to the dictionary, Christmas is, "A holiday on December 25 celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ." So the true meaning of Christmas is that it's the birth of Jesus, it is the coming of God into this world as a human being. In Luke's Gospel the birth of Jesus was announced by God's special messengers.

Luke 2:10 gives us the pronouncement of Jesus' birth. It was pronounced to watchful shepherds by an angel of the Lord. God's angels are holy, heavenly beings who faith-

fully serve Him. On that first Christmas night God's angel was accompanied by God's glory shining around the shepherds. It has been said that heaven and earth seemed to mingle that night for the announcing of the greatest event of all time. The fear-filled shepherds were told to not be afraid because a Savior had been born to them that day. What a singular honor for those shepherds to be the first recipients of the pronouncement of Jesus' birth!

Another fact stated in the angel's message is the place of Jesus' birth. It was in the city of Bethlehem which is also called the "city of David." The name of David was attached because Bethlehem had been the birthplace of King David also. Undoubtedly it seemed strange to Jewish thoughts and feelings that the Messiah should be born in such a humble town, one that was "little to be among the clans of Judah." Friends of mine who recently visited the Holy Land remarked that because of the constant quarreling among the residents of Israel and because of the untidy conditions there it actually seems strange that God should select that land as the place for Jesus' birth. But God, who does all things well, led Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem when the fullness of time had come so that His Son could in that city take on human flesh. The place of Jesus' birth was a significant part of the angel's message.

However, that which made the message such good news is that it stated the purpose of Christ's birth, namely, so that He could become our Savior. That a Savior had been born is that best news ever borne by angels to men. This constitutes such good news because our greatest need is for a Savior who can save us from our

sins. God says, "Your iniquities have separated you from your God." God holds us responsible for our sins.

Several years ago an 18-year-old man in Wayne, Michigan, threw a 13-pound, ten-ounce bowling ball out of a car window. It landed on another car, smashed through its windshield, hit a 29-year-old man, and killed him. Though that teen-ager didn't intend to hurt anyone, yet by his careless act he was held responsible for killing that man, for our nation's laws hold us responsible for our acts.

God's law also holds us responsible for our acts, words and thoughts, many of which are sinful before God, harmful to our fellowmen, and condemn us. This is indeed an awesome thought. But God's law and its requirements have been fulfilled by God's love. And that infinite love manifested itself when God graciously sent His beloved Son into this world as our Savior almost 2,000 years ago. This is the real meaning of Christmas. This is why the angel's pronouncement to the shepherds was such good news. This Christmas it is my prayer that each of you readers will experience the good news of Jesus' birth by trusting in Him alone as your Savior.



by Pastor
Einar Unseth

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What if he hadn't forgiven the boy?

by Gracia Christensen



the Christmas Watch

Christmas Eve! And all the deep miles of the great Ocean between himself and home! With unseeing eyes, the young immigrant Norwegian surveyed the familiar four walls of his narrow one-windowed Brooklyn room. He saw instead the "stue" at home, with the family gathered about the organ, singing. He saw again the far-stretching snow-covered fields, with their stone-fenced boundaries, and the hills beyond. He smelled the conglomerate odors of fresh-baked julekake, of melting butter in the julegrot, of sputtering home-made tallow candles. He heard the deep tones of his father's voice, reading the age-old Christmas Gospel. He bowed his head, as memories assailed him — the memories of twenty-five years at home. He wondered if the heart could survive such loneliness as his, just now.

Rising abruptly from the bed where he had been sitting, he stood by the little square-topped table and slowly began to open the package which for several days had been awaiting this moment. One by one the treasures were lovingly unwrapped: a hand-woven scarf from sister Guri; a clumsily-carved box from little brother Karl; a leather-bound copy of Landstad's hymnal from Mother (bless her!); and from his father — what was this? He held the little box gently in his large strong hands. He turned it unbelievably from side to side before opening it. It couldn't be! But there it lay, The Watch! The watch he had set his heart on when he first saw it in a Kristiansand store, just before he left for America. The watch he had told his father he would someday purchase, when he had earned enough money to pay the almost incredible price asked for it. And here it lay in his hand — the watch of all watches!

He snapped both outer and inner covers and regarded the face as one would the face of a friend. He pressed a little lever near the stem and for

*"And here it lay in his hand
— the watch of all watches!"*

the first time set the hands: it was just five o' clock. With the sense of performing an historic act he wound the watch, and his own heart seemed to beat faster at the responding tick-tick-tick.

"How did Father manage to purchase you?" he mused. "He must have cut much extra timber. He must have saved every poor dollar I have managed to send home these months. But mostly I guess his love has worked another miracle! And now I shall never feel quite so lonely again, for you shall always be a symbol to me of home, of Norway, of love."

A loud knock shattered his musing, and his door was unceremoniously thrown in.

"Could you take this one in to share your bed?" The landlady spoke the question sharply, in a tone which brooked no negative reply. "I need his room for my brother from Hoboken for a few days."

She was gone immediately, and in the rather dim lamplight stood a tousled-headed youth of about 16, also Norwegian, carrying in hand a battered suitcase.

"I can try to get a room somewhere else, if I disturb you too much," he smiled apologetically. "She just told me to get out of my room because she needed it. I guess I'm her youngest roomer."

"You don't know how glad I am to have you share mine. It is not good to be alone on Christmas Eve. And the first Christmas Eve in America at that."

* * *

It was like a desecration of a

holy thing to have to work on the day after Christmas. But such were the orders. There were so many things one had to get used to in the roughshod life of those who were building, in the fast-growing America at the turn-of-the-century. But what would it really retard the world, now, if one day were kept quiet after the great feast of the little Babe's birth?

"Perhaps I am only lazy, and afraid to get up in the icy coldness of this room," thought the young immigrant. And then, in the early morning dimness, he became suddenly aware that his bed-partner was already gone. Strange — the boy had said nothing about arising so early. What time could it be, anyway?

*"The watch was gone! The boy
and the suitcase were gone!"*

Oh the anxious feeling around of a hand for something it cannot find! The watch was *not* under the pillow. It was *not* under the mattress. It was *not* under the bed. With a growing feeling of sickness the young man frantically searched the room. The watch was gone! The boy and the suitcase were gone! Oh, dear God, why did this have to happen to me? Why? Why?

* * *

It was hard to lay the bricks straight and fast that day. Thoughts were more chilling even than the cold of the winter hours. Could this be some kind of sign from God? What could be its meaning? There was surely nothing sinful in valuing so highly so precious a gift from one's own father?

At the close of the long day he went up to the foreman.

WATCH . . .

"Someone took my watch. It was a Christmas gift from my father. What shall I do?" He spoke haltingly. English was hard to learn. It would be hard to say these things in *any* language.

"Now ain't that just a sorry shame," sympathized the kindly Irishman. "You come right along with me. We'll see what we can do."

And that was how he found himself, almost before he knew it, telling the story to a large, ruddy-faced policeman with very small blue eyes. He didn't like those eyes. And though he himself stood straight and slim, over six feet tall, he felt strangely small, speaking of a young Norwegian's theft to a cold Irish "cop," who carefully made notes of his stumbling words.

It was two weeks later the word came for him to report to the precinct station. He had hoped against hope that the boy would return, and with him the watch. But no. As he hurried now against a piercing mid-January wind, he was torn between hope of recovering his prized possession, and fear of the visit to the station — associated in those days more with evil and force than with helpfulness and kindness. Never knowingly would he have brought things to this stage, he thought, in confusion and anxiety.

A rank tobacco smell hit him as he opened the door. Rough voices. Then all else was blotted out by the sight of the boy, sitting alone, his face utterly white, his eyes large and lost.

The policeman with the small blue eyes greeted him triumphantly: "We found him! This yours?" — and there on the table lay the Watch.

(Yes, it is the watch, the wonderful watch. But there sits the boy, white and frightened and alone.)

"Well, what are you staring at? Is it your watch?"

"Yes, thank you, yes."

"Then you must sign these charges against the thief and we'll take care of him."

(Thief? That boy, Oh, *what* made you do this?)

"You said you took him in and gave him a bed — and this is how. he thanked you? We know how to

treat the likes of him!"

(Christmas Eve, it was. . . Who could understand God's great gift of love? How had men taken *Him* in? How had they treated *Him*?)

"Yes, it's my watch. But you can let him have it."

(Those eyes in the white face! He's wondering if this is some kind of trick.)

"Whatsa matter with you? What kind of fool are you?"

"I'm sorry I have caused you trouble. But I just cannot sign those charges against him. If I can't have my watch then, it's all right. He can keep it."

(You wouldn't mind, my father so far away. You would say this is right to do.)

"Now look here. You must be a fool, but you don't need to think *we are*. We don't catch a thief and then just let him escape again!"

"But if I *give* him my watch, he isn't a thief, is he?"

(My wonderful Watch! But, oh, the Boy!)

"You dumb Norwegian! Get out of this place! And don't you ever come asking for help from us again!"

* * *

Outside, the wind had reached blizzard proportions, and snow was falling thickly. The two immigrants struggled against the weather, side by side, for a while, and then stepped into a doorway to draw breath.

"Here is your watch," said the boy simply. "I want you to know that when I give this back to you I am also giving myself back to God. I am going away now. Someday I hope to meet you again."

He was gone in an instant, swallowed up by the storm.

The Watch ticked, quietly, warmly, in its owner's trembling hand.

* * *

Second by second, minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day, week by week, month by month, year by year. . . Thus the watch ticked. Such a tiny task, so faithfully performed, with such amazing results. Seconds became years.

After five years, the young immigrant eagerly revisited the land of his birth. God had been good to him. Health had been vigorous. Work had been plentiful. Helpful friendships had

"It was very soon afterward, on the ship returning, that he met her."

been multiplied. Industry and thrift had been greatly blessed. He was confirmed in his conviction that America was for him the land of the future, where his contribution should be made. But how good and sacred an experience to walk and talk again with loved ones in the beloved land of Norway!

"My son, you are 30 years of age now. You should have a wife and a home," counseled his wise old father. Father and son prayed together for the guidance of Almighty God in every aspect of the son's life, to be lived permanently now so far away, in strange and wonderful America.

It was very soon afterward, on the ship returning, that he met her. She was making her first crossing, thinking just to visit friends in Boston for a year. But her laughing brown eyes were not to see her native shores again for a quarter of a century.

And soon, on the heavy gold watch chain, there hung a miniature locket, shrouding the face of a golden-haired baby boy. Life was blessed and good.

* * *

It was six years later as he returned home at the close of a long hard, cold day, *he was greeted grimly by the doctor: "George is very ill. There is nothing I can do. You must not go in to him. It is the black death."*

(The Black Death? What is this you are telling me? The boy was at school yesterday! Of course, he complained about not feeling so well last night, — but the black death! — It is only two weeks until Christmas! The desk he so much wanted is already standing in the store room! The Black Death! —)

Instinctively the toil-hardened hands reached for the faithful watch, crushing it in a grip of anguish. Strong men must not cry out, however much the heart screams in pain.

All during that fateful night the Watch ticked away the unsleeping moments, until the black finger of the dreaded Death pointed noiselessly,

and another beautiful young soul winged upward. . .

Desolation settled upon the father. In vain did even his grief-stricken wife remind him of his many blessings, of his other children. By the great sea wall of Narrows, stung by the cold salt spray, he walked alone, night after night, stunned, bereft, unbelieving.

During the daytime he was laying brick on one of the mushrooming skyscrapers of New York City. The work which he had heretofore entered with the zest of creation was now only an appalling hardship. The incessant, dinning noises of a great piece of construction work, usually music to his ears, now grated on his nerves, almost beyond endurance.

About a week after the funeral, he steeled himself to his duty more and reported for work as usual. It was a bitterly cold day. The men could be outside on the scaffolding only for brief periods of time, and would then take an inside shift while a relief team replaced them outside. He noticed a new man on his relief team this morning, and was juggling his memory to place the familiar face when the man approached him, held out his hand in warm greeting, and said simply: "I am glad to see you again."

A glow seemed to come over the father's heavy heart. It was the Boy, — older, heavier, and with a wonderful serenity in his eyes.

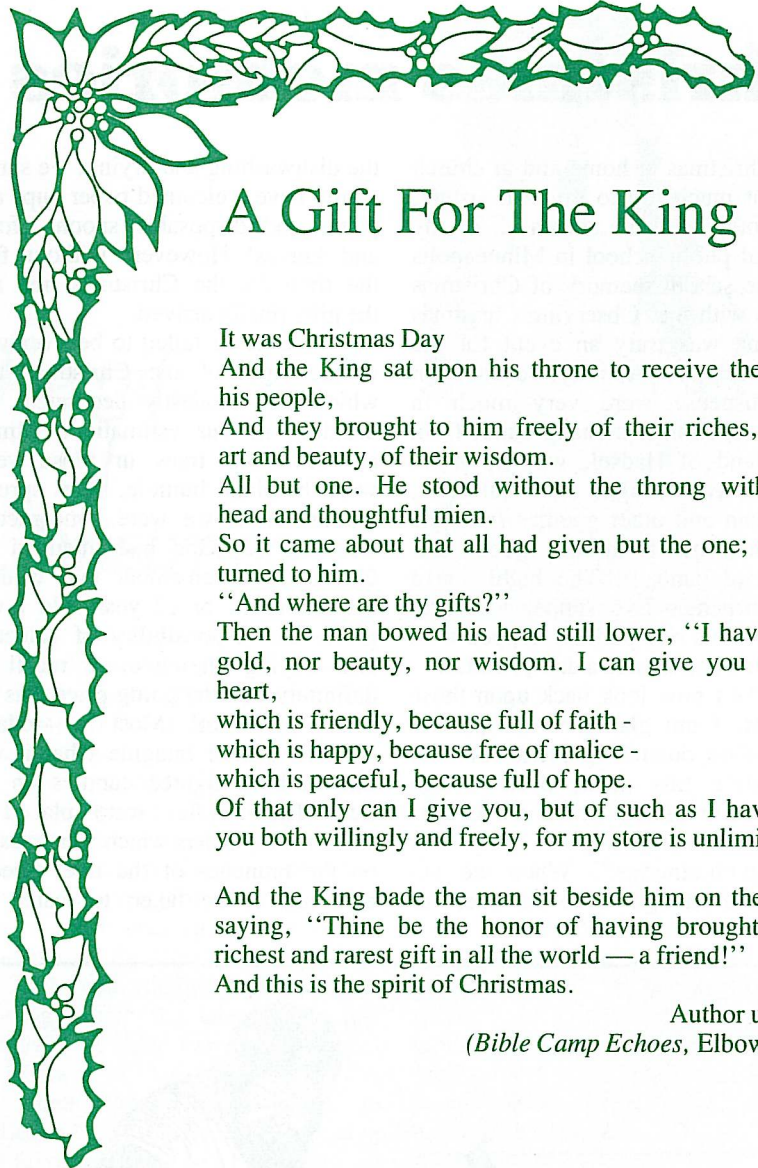
They met during the lunch hour, around the kindly warmth of the fire.

"I came from Bridgeport not so long ago," began the boy. "I have asked for you at several of these large building jobs here in lower Manhattan. I thought that you would be in on something like this. Do you remember how you told me once that it was thrilling work, to see these huge masses of stone and steel and brick pushing into the sky? I have found it so, too. Now I hope we may build together."

"I have thought often of you," replied the father. "I didn't know you planned to be a builder, too."

"It was because of you I learned this trade. . . But you seem so burdened today. Have you known sorrow?"

(Continued on p. 8)



A Gift For The King

It was Christmas Day

And the King sat upon his throne to receive the gifts of his people,

And they brought to him freely of their riches, of their art and beauty, of their wisdom.

All but one. He stood without the throng with bowed head and thoughtful mien.

So it came about that all had given but the one; the King turned to him.

"And where are thy gifts?"

Then the man bowed his head still lower, "I have neither gold, nor beauty, nor wisdom. I can give you only my heart,

which is friendly, because full of faith -

which is happy, because free of malice -

which is peaceful, because full of hope.

Of that only can I give you, but of such as I have I give you both willingly and freely, for my store is unlimited."

And the King bade the man sit beside him on the throne, saying, "Thine be the honor of having brought me the richest and rarest gift in all the world — a friend!"

And this is the spirit of Christmas.

Author unknown

(Bible Camp Echoes, Elbow, Sask.)

It Was To Shepherds

Neither did the angels find princes or the mighty, but the untaught lay-people and the lowliest on earth. Might they not have brought their message to the high priest, the scholars at Jerusalem who have so much to tell about God and the angels?

No, not they, but the poor shepherds were found worthy of such great grace and honour from heaven, they, who on earth have no honour. Yea, verily, God casteth out all that is lofty.

Martin Luther

Christmas memories

Christmas at home and at church brought much joy to my two sisters, my brother and me. From all of my years of public school in Minneapolis not one school memory of Christmas lingers with me. Observing Christmas at home was truly an event for the entire family. Activity, excitement and suspense were very much in evidence. Mother's background, from the island of Hadsel, way up north in Norway, brought forth julekake, fattigman and other goodies from the kitchen (and from the good old-fashioned pantry!). The highlight of our Christmas Eve supper was grot — delicious rice pudding topped with sugar, cinnamon and a dab of butter.

As I now look back upon those suppers, I am glad that our parents insisted on our taking plenty of time for eating this meal, even though anticipation of the tree and the gifts made us children want to hurry over the "preliminaries." When we became old enough to do our share of

the dishwashing and drying, we surely would have welcomed paper cups and plates and disposable spoons, forks and knives! However, without fail, the time for the Christmas tree and the gifts finally arrived.

We never failed to be overawed at the sight of the Christmas tree which was modestly decorated, but dazzling in our estimation. Almost all Christmas trees in those years were the plain, humble, black spruce, but as far as we were concerned it was *the* tree God had intended for Christmas. I remember that when I was about 11 or 12 years old I was given the responsibility of selecting and buying the tree. I recall so definitely that the going price was ten cents per foot! Most of today's children cannot imagine what it was like to have lighted candles on the tree. The candles were placed in small metal holders which were clasped on the branches of the tree. Special care had to be taken to fasten the

candleholders not too close to the decorations nor the tree needles. Great caution had to be exercised around the tree when the candles were lighted. However, these lights had one advantage over our present day electric light bulbs. Our trees then did not have to be set in a corner of the room nor near an outlet in the wall.

Before our gifts were distributed, the tree was moved into the middle of the living room so that all of us, including our parents and any relatives with us, could march around the tree.

Holding hands and forming a circle, we walked around our tree singing the "good old" carols. No one had to fear tripping over an electric cord, but we did have to be careful not to bump into the tree. First we marched around the tree in one direction; then we reversed our direction as we sang the next carol.

I remember only one special decoration which Mother brought out every year. It was a large red tissue paper bell which could be unfolded and hung from the ceiling.

Then came the gifts; our parents always managed to have one special one for each of us — not costly, but always appreciated. Following that the remainder of the evening was spent in showing one another our gifts and spending the time together as a family until bedtime for us children. One activity at this time — and I must not forget it — was to use Mother's set of a nutcracker and nutpicks to "attack" the bowl of nuts. I am sorry to say that as we children grew older the spiritual part of our Christmas Eve faded out.

Years later when Christmastime came to my own home, my wife, our children and I put the emphasis on Jesus Christ the Savior first. All our children participated in a little program or service — with carol singing, hearing the children's Christmas pieces, their playing of their instruments, and always the Christmas story from Luke 2 and prayer. And we have lived to see this format used at times for our grandchildren also.



a shepherd's memories

"Christmases long past" were very closely associated with the former Rosedale Lutheran Free Church, especially with the Sunday school programs. That was a most marvelous occasion for us. Our church in south Minneapolis was always packed for the event. Many friends of the congregation and visitors would be present. And only God knows how many hearts were touched at the hearing of the good news that Jesus the Savior had come to save young and old. Mother tried to have a new dress (or one newly retouched for the occasion) for my sisters; my brother and I usually would have a new shirt or pair of knickers. (no long trousers for young boys in those days!) An unforgettable part of the Christmas program was the time for the love offering for the pastor and his family.

Everyone walked up to the altar to place his or her gift in the collection plate at the end of the altar and returned to his/her place by walking around the back of the altar. Memory of this special procedure was revived for me during Christmas, 1984. We attended the Christmas service at the Satersdal Church, a few miles north-east of Thief River Falls, Minn. Only two services a year now are conducted at this church — on Memorial Day and at Christmas. Most of the folks from this church now attend Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Thief River Falls. With the Christmas tree lighted by candles, we walked around the altar for the offering, just as we did at Rosedale many years ago.

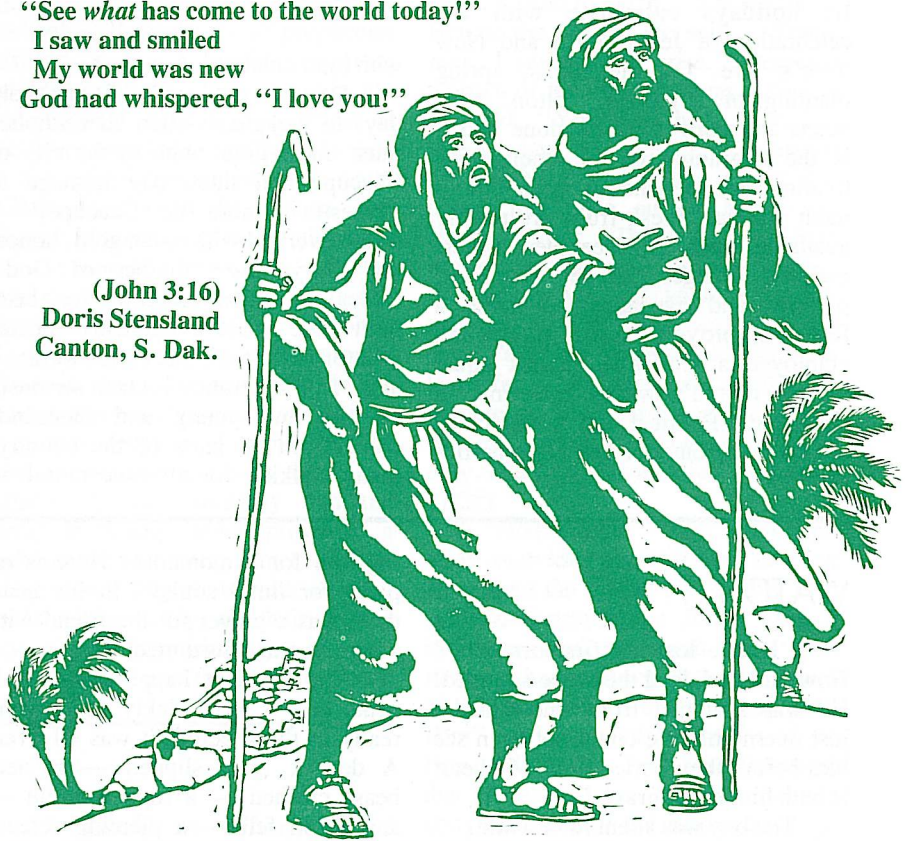
By now, I'm sure, that everyone who ever participated in a Sunday school Christmas program, be he or she a youngster or an "oldster," and is reading this article, is certainly waiting for me to mention the treats which always came at the conclusion of the programs. A really well-filled sack of candy and nuts, plus a delicious apple, was given to each child in the program and among the visitors. And there always were two or three pieces of ribbon candy!

At Rosedale during those years there was another "big" program at Eastertime. Whatever happened to those programs which helped to herald forth the good news, "He is not

**I sat and brooded at end of day . . .
What was the world coming to, anyway?
the price of sheep
our land oppressed,
God had forgotten us, I guessed.**

**But then I heard an angel say,
"See *what* has come to the world today!"
I saw and smiled
My world was new
God had whispered, "I love you!"**

**(John 3:16)
Doris Stensland
Canton, S. Dak.**



here; for He is risen"! The picture accompanying my memories of "Christmases Past" was taken in the front of Rosedale Lutheran Free Church about 1916-18. Today that church has a new name, Faith. Close scrutiny of the sign on the building reveals that then the name was Pillsbury Ave. Lutheran Church. It was located on 44th Street South and Pillsbury Avenue (hence the name.) I never remember having heard that "old" name. Nor do I know the reason for changing it to Rosedale. However, I well remember that one block north of the church was an elementary school called Rosedale. (My first year in school was spent there.) The lady on the picture was the pastor's wife, Mrs. Carl Nordberg. My sister Agnes was second from the left in the front row. The writer was in the middle of the back row, the lad with

a tie. To the readers' right are Adrian Ellefson (back) and Edward Hustad (front). I think one of the older boys was the pastor's son. And, if I remember correctly, the first boy in the back row at the left was a Landskov. (Early in the 1920s the Rev. James R. Gronseth became pastor at Rosedale Church.)

How wonderful to have many memories about the great event which annually — and daily, too — reminds people everywhere, "For unto you is born this day a Savior, which is Christ the Lord!"

(Mr. Grimstad is a lay assistant in Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, Thief River Falls, Minn)

*by Mr. J. A. Grimstad,
Thief River Falls, Minn.*

by Pastor and Mrs. Charles Knapp,
Karlstad, Minn.

Christmastime in Paraguay

December in Paraguay, South America, starts and ends with a bang. School summer vacation, soccer championships and a whole series of Catholic holidays culminate with the celebration of Jesus' birth and New Year's Eve. On the farms, spring planting of soybeans, cotton, rice, beans and corn is nearly done and it is the beginning of the hoeing-cultivating time, depending on the equipment one has. Fresh fruits are readily available, such as pineapples, watermelons, oranges, grapes, bananas, papayas and avocados, to name a few. Employers must pay each employee a Christmas bonus equal to one month's wages sometime in December. Political and social clubs put on many outdoor late night parties

with loud music.

December 8 and 15 are holy days in Paraguay, when all Catholics must make pilgrimage to the city of Caacupe and there pay homage to "Nuestra Senora de Caacupe," a statue overlaid with much gold, honoring Mary, the "mother of God" (Jesus). A great cathedral has been built there where a legendary appearance of Mary took place, and miracles also. This veneration is taken seriously by old and young and thousands come from all parts of the country, many walking for a whole month to

get there, seeking some spiritual or physical help from a dead idol, not realizing that help is readily available in the living Son. A whole series of Catholic masses precede these events and Christmas Day, so the whole month is full of much religious fervor.

Christmas Eve festivities in small villages still include a neighborhood

"December in Paraguay . . . starts and ends with a bang."

WATCH . . .

"I have lost my firstborn son." How dull and dead the voice sounded! He was snatched from finest health just overnight. We could not even see him before they buried him. My heart is with him in the grave."

The boy was silent for a while.

"It must be very hard for you," he answered slowly, "but I am so glad you are a believer. You probably never knew before what the real grace and strength of God could be."

They talked desultorily of other things. As he was questioned, the boy told of his own wife, and their two little ones. Soon the whistle blew. The father took out the now-worn watch and checked the time. He noticed that the boy winced, and he quickly replaced it. "It's just a habit of mine," he said gently. And the two men shook hands, gratefully and warmly.

At three o'clock that afternoon the crews changed again. Looking out a few minutes afterwards, the father saw the boy, working with energy and joy, at almost the same spot where the father had stood before. "How frail a thing a suspended scaffold seems, 17 stories above a busy street," thought the father, watch-

ing him for a moment. "Here is no place for timid souls!" In his heart there was a prayer for the friend with whom he was now united.

The accident happened as accidents do — too quickly for anyone really to think before it was all over. A derrick hoist slipped — a steel beam crashed — a rope was cut — a scaffold fell — a piercing scream ripped open the cold afternoon — and by the time the father could race to the spot on the street below a heavy canvas already covered the place where three bodies lay. Three bodies — and one was the boy's.

In an involuntary gesture of helplessness despair the father drew out the Watch. It was 3:15. As helplessly he replaced it. Just 15 minutes, this time, between himself and death. . . The boy had taken his place. . . And tomorrow was Christmas Eve! Unable to control himself longer, he leaned against a heavy girder and wept, unashamedly.

"I am so glad you are a believer. You probably never knew before what the real grace and strength of God can be." Over and over again those words came, as a message from the dead to the living, to the father, to the young widow with her children. For the father they marked a turning point. Henceforth even the bitterness

of grief should fire his new determination. He would, by that grace of God, himself become a builder of great buildings. He would do what he could to blaze a new conscience for protecting the lives of the men who build. And if tragedy came, as it must at times, in every walk of life, the men and their families should be cared for, adequately, generously. To these aims he dedicated himself that Christmastime so long ago, when sorrow brooded heavily over his heart and home.

* * *

During the 35 busy and fruitful years which God gave him thereafter, the Watch was his almost constant companion. How many, many stories of adventure, of failure, of success, of determination, of perseverance, of faith, it could tell! And, for that matter, so could I. For he was *my* Father, too. . . I like to think that we cherish his memory together, — I, his daughter, and the sturdy worn old Watch, which ticks unflinchingly still on my desk as I write.

Christmas Echoes

(Gracia Christensen is the widow of Dr. Bernhard Christensen, who was for 24 years the president of Augsburg College and Seminary, Minneapolis.)

gathering for a feast of fried meats, corn meal specialties, and topped off with a large fruit cake. In larger towns, families gather in this way. Christians usually gather at church for a Sunday school Nativity pageant followed by a feast. At midnight, all over the villages and towns, people shoot off firecrackers! Loud, earth-shaking ones! We do not know if it is for joy that a Savior was born or if this comes from some other custom. It is the only place we have been where Christmas is celebrated with firecrackers. For a while, one would think a war was in progress. Well, there is a spiritual battle in progress and the Savior's birth played an important part in the victory that is ours.

Christmas Day is a time for visiting, family gatherings and more feasting. There is some gift exchange, although they view Epiphany, the coming of the Wisemen, as the time to give gifts, especially toys and candy to the children. This is more appropri-

ate, for it was the Wisemen who brought gifts.

New Year's Eve is characterized by parties and more firecrackers. Christians gather for services, prayer meetings and to enjoy some good food. Everyone looks forward to a new year with great anticipation and the Christian more so, for now is his salvation nearer than when he first believed.

Our first Christmas on the field was spent in Campo Mourao, Brazil. We went to the Christmas Eve service at the Lar Parana Church. On Christmas Day, we had turkey dinner at Charles' parents', George and Helen, and gift exchange, with special presents from Joyce's parents. We were unable to contact Joyce's parents by phone because of a letter mix-up. They thought we were going to call and we thought they were going to call. Some tears were shed in sadness over this, since it was the first year away from loved ones.

"We listened all night to cats and rats chasing each other between the layers of veneer."

The November before our second Christmas, we moved into the house we built in Hernandarias. We went to Christmas Eve service at the Free Brethren Church in Stroessner, followed by a feast. We tried to call Joyce's parents but the operator forgot to place the call, in the midst of shooting firecrackers. When we called one hour later to cancel it, he placed it about 20 minutes later (1 a.m.). We were too sleepy to talk so hung up and disconnected the phone. In the morning we placed the call but the cord became disconnected, so lost call. After tears and pleading by Joyce, Charles placed the call again. This time the call went well. Then we went out to the Steenland farm and orphanage for a turkey dinner and visit. Charles' parents came to our home the next day for a ham dinner and gift exchange.

On our third Christmas Eve we went out for supper at "Super Burger" in Stroessner, than had gift exchange at home. Christmas Day we left early for Bertolino Westphal's farm. We had a barbecue dinner and watermelon. We went swimming and later had a service and played our harps for the first time in public. There were a few minor bee stings that day. We stayed overnight in their simple house made of the veneer sheets that are used to make plywood. We listened all night to cats and rats chasing each other between the layers of veneer. There was no bathroom, not even an out-house. In the morning we had devotions and sang Christmas carols after breakfast. We had some car trouble on the way home near a repair shop and were back on the road in short order. Our gardener and wash lady were waiting at our place, wondering and worried about our late arrival.

On our fourth Christmas we had our first good Christmas phone call from Joyce's parents. On Christmas Eve we had a ham supper, read the

♢

THE VISIT OF THE SHEPHERDS Religious News Service Photo





a greeting from our president

The best gift of all

"Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (II Cor. 9:15).

Since the beginning of history, God has demonstrated His love and mercy upon mankind. His gifts at the various times of history have been just right for the occasion. In the Old Testament, Israel received a continuous diet of manna that sustained them through the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Their clothes and their sandals did not wear out. Then hundreds of years later, God gave a tiny Baby to a world torn by strife, poverty, injustice and greed. It seemed like such a common gift, yet what

Paraguay . . .

Christmas story, took family pictures, and exchanged gifts. On Christmas Day, we went to Foz do Iguassu and had a barbecue dinner at the da Silva home. The meat was tough but the other food was good. A drunken neighbor was around giving his opinion all day. That evening we had a service at church with some new people attending. We gave out jars of home-roasted peanuts to each family. We returned home rejoicing about those who had heard the Gospel that evening. And that is what Christmas is really all about.

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. . . And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men'" (Luke 2:11, 13-14).

far-reaching effects that gift had for the world -- for you and for me. What could it have been that motivated a holy, righteous God to send His own Son as a gift to the world, to redeem it unto Himself?

It was grace that sent us the Savior. While the word "grace" receives many definitions in our dictionaries, there is only one definition that fills our needs in spiritual matters. It is this: "The unmerited, but freely given love and favor of God toward men."

While man was still in the state of perfection in the Garden of Eden, he had the assignment to subdue the earth, to work its soil and to rule it. But when man fell into sin, a great many things changed. His spiritual condition changed. He was no longer perfect. He could no longer fulfill the Law of God. He could no longer be what God demanded of him, when He said, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy."

Man was in a hopeless state. Here is where God's grace toward man came clearly to the fore. Hardly had man fallen into sin when God was ready with a remedy for all of man's deep problems. God said to Satan, who had tempted man, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

This was the first promise God made to sinful man. He did not have to do it; it was pure, unmerited grace. God fulfilled that promise with the unspeakable gift of His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are in utter helplessness without that gift of marvelous, infinite, matchless grace. If we were to receive justice from God, we should be hopelessly lost. Our hope lies only in the atonement for which Christ came into the world.

As we allow these truths to be impacted in our minds at this season of the year, Christmas will be much more than radiant lights, beautiful music, rich traditions, friendly cheer and the exchanging of gifts.

It is true that gifts bring us joy. The apostle Paul found his greatest joy "in the Lord," God's unspeakable Gift. You and I, too, can find our greatest joy in God's great Gift to us. Whatever this day brings, and despite the unfinished tasks that must be completed before Christmas, let our rejoicing be in Jesus.

God's unspeakable Gift also assures us of the peace of God that passes understanding. What good news it is that the separation from God, caused by our sins, has now been bridged. All the hostility created by our rebellion against God has been overcome; reconciliation is effected.

God delivered the message of peace through His only begotten Son. It is a peace so great, so real, so lasting, that Paul declares that it "passes all understanding." What better gift to receive from God this Christmas?

There are undoubtedly people in this world of ours, with its twisted values, who would prefer a pocketful of money this Christmas. It would provide them with the opportunity of securing many earthly luxuries. But all of these could bring only temporary joy. When the money was gone, and the earthly goods used up or worn out, all that would be left would be dissatisfaction and emptiness.

It was not for naught that Jesus said "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

God's unspeakable Gift to us provides for our soul's salvation. Its treasures are eternal.

The beloved Son of God represents the costliest, the finest treasure that the heavenly Father could give a world of ruined sinners. As we think of that this Christmas, how can we withhold anything from our Lord? At this very special time of the year, may we each one renew our commitment to the One who gave His Son, and to the Savior who gave His all.

A Blessed Christmas to all of our *Ambassador* readers. May your Christmas truly be enriched with the joy and peace of God's unspeakable Gift.

Pastor Richard Snipstead
President, AFLC

A Christmas Service in Tanzania

by Rev. Timothy Strommen

The 7 a.m. service was over and now Pastor Delemu and I relaxed a bit before the service at 9 would begin. I was hungry and so the chapatis* and orange soda that one of the elders had managed to find in a local tea shop tasted good. I had come early on this morning to the Kariakoo Lutheran Church. It was a beautiful Christmas Day, with a blue sky and a temperature of about 80 degrees. It would get hotter; indeed it was already fairly warm, so much so that the fans had been going strong even for the 7 o'clock service. This was the first time I had preached in this particular church, although in my five years here I have preached many sermons in the Swahili language in other congregations. Kariakoo Church is located in the heart of the busy African trading section of Dar

es Salaam. It is in an area crowded with shops, buses and thousands of people. The common form of dwelling for the people here is the Swahili house, a rectangular building with an open hallway right through the middle and three rooms on each side. A family lives in each room. There are only dirt roads; one must constantly watch out for the many potholes, along with the goats and chickens. The church is almost too large for the plot on which it stands. In fact, it looks like it could have been dropped from a helicopter on the only lot that could possibly accommodate it! The seating capacity must be between 800-1200, depending on how much the people want to squeeze together. The actual area is heavily Muslim, but still there are more than enough Christians to fill this church to overflowing.

As I waited, I decided to have another chapati. When I had come into the church a little before 7, there appeared to be about 30 people. I knew this was normal. More would keep coming, and they did. But I knew the main service would be at 9. The church was decorated in typical Tanzanian fashion. Several wires were stretched across the church and on them hung a varied assortment of decorations. Some were homemade and resembled stars and similar designs; others didn't look like anything I was familiar with, but they were colorful. It is difficult to get full, stately Norway pines here, so spindly trees resembling cedar were erected, again decorated with various kinds of colorful objects. The first service had been very meaningful. I felt my Swahili had gone well, and as is customary here, we sang the last hymn while filing out of the church. The final blessing was given outside, and then everyone had greeted one another with "heri ya kristmasi."

Now several parents were coming

into the church office to make arrangements for their children's baptisms. Rev. Delemu already had about 15 baptisms lined up and now here were more! They filled out the necessary forms and received last-minute instructions.

The church bells rang and shortly after 9 Pastor Delemu and I walked into the church, proceeded to the altar, knelt and prayed. The church was now almost full and I knew that soon it would be overflowing.

"Rev. Delemu already had about 15 baptisms lined up and now here were more!"

Note: Pastor Timothy Strommen, a nephew of the editor, served under World Missions of the American Lutheran Church for five and one-half years. In June of this year he and his wife and three children returned to the States and Tim has now begun work in his new pastorate at Waukegan, Illinois. While in Tanzania, Tim served as pastor of the International Lutheran congregation which met in Azania Front Church. He also taught New Testament in eight public schools of the capital city. Students ranged in age from 17-25. In this article, written for the Ambassador just after Christmas, 1984, Tim tells of visiting a large native church in Dar Es Salaam. His own service, he wrote, had been on Christmas Eve, a combined service with the Scandinavians. The service was both in English and Swedish, the largest Scandinavian population. (The Swedes actually have a congregation of their own.) He wrote: "I did manage to get some Norwegian in, though. 'Jeg er saa glad' was our offering hymn."

December 3, 1985

Pastor Delemu began the service, chanting the liturgy. This church has no organ so he just started on a note of his choice. When he came to the place where the psalm was to be chanted, he did as he had done at the first service, chanted it with no known melody. The congregation had no idea how to respond. This problem was compounded by the fact that hymnbooks and liturgy books are at a very short supply. In the States, everyone would be embarrassed, but not here. No one gets bothered, one just proceeds until things get more familiar. Soon everyone was singing with enthusiasm. (Note: The first missionaries to this area were Lutherans from Germany, so all mission churches "grew up" singing the liturgy and hymns from that land.)

After the liturgy, latecomers who were standing in the back were invited to find a seat. The squeezing-in began and now the church was *really* full.

◇

TANZANIA . . .

The youth choir began to sing, accompanied by their electric guitars. The mood in the church was becoming quite celebrative, for during loud choruses by the choir, several women began "vigelegele"-ing. This sounds roughly like an American Indian war whoop and is always done here in Tanzania during times of celebration.

Then it was time for the baptisms. I walked to the front to read the baptism liturgy but had to wait a while because it was difficult for all those children, parents and sponsors to gather in front under the crowded conditions. After our Christian faith was professed and the baptismal promises were given, Pastor Delemu moved to the font. An elder tried to organize the group, having cards in hand with the names of the children. Suddenly I noticed that the mood changed in the children. As the line formed I suppose many of the smaller ones had a hard time distinguishing this from another common experience in their lives - the line at the hospital for injections. Many children began to scream. Actually, it became quite chaotic and very noisy. Yet it was strangely moving to witness the Church of Christ growing as these children were brought to the font by their parents to receive baptism in the name of the triune God.

At about 10:30 I approached the pulpit. Being the church had continued to take in more and more people, the children had been asked to leave their seats for the adults, and come and sit on the floor near the altar. The pulpit was literally surrounded with these "watete," and I had to ask several to kindly move a bit so I could get up into the pulpit. I preached on Luke 2: 1-7, emphasizing the fact that Jesus was born where there *was room*. The issue was not whether or not it was clean, for there was a clean guest house nearby. No, the issue was whether or not there was *room*. Christ was born where there was *room*. Likewise, Jesus wishes to be born in our hearts. Again, the issue is not whether we have cleaned it up enough for him, but *is there room?* As I looked out upon this sea of black African faces, I thought of how in

Europe (according to my European friends) many churches are close to empty, churches that are beautiful and clean, filled with stained glass windows and cushioned pews. But Jesus is born where there is room in the hearts of the people. If not one place, then another. There is room in Africa. I know that.

"As I looked out upon this sea of black African faces, I thought of how in Europe....many churches are close to empty..."

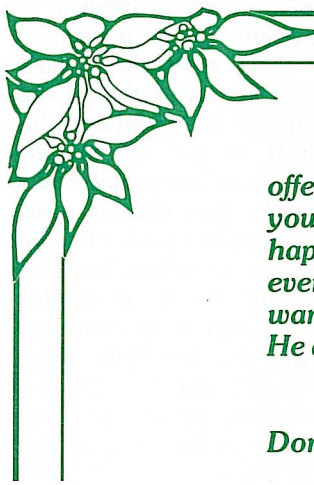
Following the sermon it was time for the offering. Now, as is customary in most Tanzanian churches, the plate is not passed. Instead a basket or two is placed up in front on a table and everyone, young and old, is to march up and put his offering in the basket. I suppose that after sitting for two hours already this is a very good way to stretch the legs. But it takes a long time for 1500 people to get a chance to place their offerings in this basket. It took one-half hour. I watched the people as they came forward. Kariakoo Church is made up of the "common" Tanzanian. Nobody drives a car to this church. All the women wear the traditional khangas. The footwear ranged from tennis shoes to thongs. All would slightly bow or curtsy when they put their offering in and place their left hand on the wrist of

their right. The choirs were singing as they came, alternating with songs from the congregation. Women breast-fed their children in the pews as need dictated. No one was in a hurry. This was *the* main event of the day. Perhaps a service less than two and a half hours would not seem like a special Christmas service.

In a brief exchange of conversation with Pastor Delemu I discovered to my slight alarm that after a few more songs there was to be yet another offering. "You mean," I asked "that everyone will come up in front again?" I was prepared for a long service but not that long. My family and I had been invited out for Christmas dinner by a member of my congregation. I mentioned this to Pastor Delemu. He said, "No problem. I will just announce that you have another 'mkutane' with your parishioners and everyone will understand." This seemed to solve the problem, so shortly after that he made this announcement. I gathered up my books and papers and at about noon walked out to my motorcycle as the congregation began to file forward with another offering to the work of their church.

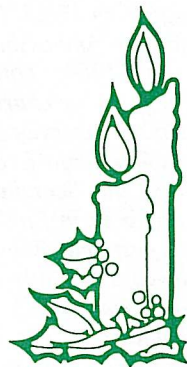
"Heri ya kristmasi!," I said to the women and children who were sitting on the steps in back. "Heri ya kristmasi!," they responded. It had been a good Christmas service at Kariakoo Lutheran Church in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

* Chapati is an East Indian bread made of a stiff flour and water dough, rolled out like a pancake and baked on a griddle.



If you take the present God offers, and if you will give Jesus your heart, you will have the happiest Christmas you have ever had. Then, too, you will want to make others happy as He did.

Doran's Ministers Manual



editorial

"ARE MET IN THEE TONIGHT"

Last year while listening to my brother (Rev. Erling Huglen) speak over the radio from his church in Roseau, Minn., I heard him quote a stanza from Phillips Brooks' beloved and timeless carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem." Although I had heard and sung them countless times, the words of the last two lines in the first stanza struck me anew;

"The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in thee tonight."

What a fine outline those lines give for the message of Christmas.

The *hopes*. The dreams, the ambitions, the optimism of mankind; there's some of that abroad in the world. We have all known people who usually look on the dark side of life. They aren't the most fun to be around. Others are optimistic. They reason, "Things could be worse; they'll get better." Of course, we have to be realistic, not too pessimistic or optimistic.

Phillips Brooks speaks of the "hopes." He was once pastor of Trinity Episcopal Church in Boston. In one of my two times in that historic church, I had to sit in a room to the side of the chancel because the nave was filled. There I found, next to me, a bust of Phillips Brooks. What are the hopes of the world? Man wants a good life, the necessities and a little bit more. He wants a free life. He wants a say in how he is governed. This underlies the ferment in South Africa today. And certainly man wants God. Oh, it isn't always, maybe not even often, a defined goal, but it's there. This is the restlessness of which St. Augustine wrote. The hopes of the world.

The *fears*. There are many of them and there always have been. In some ways there seem to be more than ever. Strange, isn't it, in a world which has seen so many discoveries and advancements, with a bettering of life in so many areas?

The fear of *failure*. There is a desire to succeed, to make good, in order to please a parent, a spouse, an employer. Some will go to any length to avoid failure, sometimes resorting to dishonesty and ruthlessness. Fear of *ill health*. Maybe this or that illness will overtake and overcome and one will die before the "allotted time." Fear of *war*, mostly *nuclear war*. Mankind has the where withal to blast this marvelous civilization to pieces. The desire for self-preservation acts as a restraining force, but the capability is there. Coupled with the fear of nuclear war is the fear of *annihilation*, thus having no future. No more need be said.

The hopes and fears of *all the years*. The hopes and fears of the centuries, of the ages, are gathered there in Bethlehem. Phillips Brooks had great insight as he wrote. It wasn't just a narrow provincial happening that took place some 2,000 years ago when the cry of a newborn infant broke the quietness of a humble stable. No, what happened then gathered the hopes and fears of the generations back to Adam and Eve and the ancient Fathers up to the Flood. It gathered those of the Patriarchs, the

Kings and the Prophets, and of the years between the Testaments.

And what happened in Bethlehem in the days of Herod the king and Augustus the Caesar gathered the hopes and fears of centuries to come, the age of the Martyrs, whose blood was the seed of the Church, and of the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages, the Reformation period, of the modern world, and of whatever time is yet to be. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

Ah, Bethlehem! You were little and insignificant until that momentous day, but not any more. Today New York, Moscow, London, Tokyo, Washington, Mexico City and all the great world cities pale into insignificance before you. Something terribly important happened in Bethlehem. God's Son became incarnate there; God became man.

What does it mean: the hopes and fears of all the years *are met in thee*? It means that the hopes are fulfilled and the fears are removed. Hope can become reality and fears are conquered. This doesn't mean that there are no problems any more, but it means that there is victory in and through the Savior who was born. There is always a future for those who trust in Him. That future isn't in this world ultimately, but beyond. This is why it is wrong to despair, however much cause the world gives for that. In Christ there is hope!

We must put our faith and trust in Jesus. He has come! He is here! He answers the sin problem. He came to die for us. The shadow of the cross looms over Bethlehem's cradle. The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Him.

Dear *Ambassador Reader*: believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. May you all have a joyous and blessed Christmas.

Raynard Huglen

NEVER TOO OLD

Let me tell you about a wonderful Christmas experience I had last year.

I had heard about Christmas pageants and programs at rest homes before but had never attended any. Nor was I sure I would like them, I mean, having elderly folks dressed up as characters in the nativity scene. But the opportunity came for me to be at one of these programs in a nearby town last year and I went.

And I thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated the evening. It was just a new experience and we can all stand some of those. We have all gloried in the enjoyment of children's programs at Christmas. We have seen the simplicity of children, their self-consciousness before an audience, sometimes their "unconsciousness" of spectators. We have loved their songs and recitations, the story of the Savior who came.

But now the characters were grandpas and grandmas, and people of their age, taking the places of Mary, Joseph,



EDITORIALS . . .

the shepherds, the angels and wise men. How reverently they played their parts. It seemed true to life to see mature people in the roles of the shepherds and wise men, especially. Weatherbeaten faces which had faced much wind and sun seemed very much in place.

Interspersed with the scenes and as background music were songs by a chorus made up of other residents.

In all, it was a fine evening, a blessed evening. I am sure there may be Christmas programs attempted at rest homes that I wouldn't enjoy. But here was something tastefully done and in which every participant preserved his or her dignity.

Now it can be said, a person is almost never too old to have the opportunity to take part once again in a Christmas nativity pageant.

If possible, I want to take in the Christmas program at the rest home again this year.

Raynard Huglen

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

We take pleasure in presenting this issue of the *Ambassador*, another in a long series of enlarged special editions for the season.

Our feature article, "The Christmas Watch," is one some of you have read before, in the Christmas publication of the Luther League Federation of the Lutheran Free Church. But all of you will find inspiration in Gracia Christensen's telling of a true story from her father's life.

Another LFC-oriented article is the vignette, "The Way It Was," of an early Christmas Eve at Augsburg Seminary in a building, Old Main, which some of us remember. That a professor and his wife came to share the evening with lonely students, some of them likely only boys yet, well, it brought a whole new dimension to the festive occasion.

And there's much more. Pastor Snipstead has written his annual message to the church for Christmas. There are memories of Christmases shared by several writers. A glimpse is given of a festive worship in far-off Africa. But you are invited to look over this whole issue and we hope you'll find many things that will enrich your Christmas reading.

Thank you to everyone who has had a part in producing the *Ambassador*. Many talents, many gifts have entered into its production. May the Lord bless you all.

Now the staff of *The Lutheran Ambassador* prays for you a wondrous Christmas.

Peace
on Earth

Paradise Lost and Regained

Rustling winds, what whisper ye?
Is it thoughts of happiness?
Or perchance ye do foresee
Deeds of sin and dire distress?
Can a blissful Eden bloom -
Choicest home in man's possession -
Only to go down in doom
With the sin of his transgression?

Why should man, so richly blessed,
Listen to the tempter's guile
And at this seductive fest
His pure soul with sin defile?
Now behold him crushed with guilt
Leave this blessed habitation,
Ever more to cringe and wilt
At the words of condemnation.

On the barren mountain slope
Man and wife are left forlorn,
Yet the penal words give hope
Of a new and better morn.
Far away the flaming sword
Gravely speaks of grievous error.
While the promise of the Lord
Shines throughout the night of terror..

Came the morn when eastern skies
Once again were flaming bright,
When the sun from Paradise
Broke the long and dismal night.
Shepherds on the mountain slope
Were the first to hear the favor,
Which fulfilled their cherished hope
Of the long awaited Savior.

Guided by the Christmas Star
Countless hosts, with joy unfeigned,
Harten to their home afar,
Which was lost and now regained.
On the slope of Calvary
Stands the cross that brought salvation,
which forever is the key
To that blessed habitation.

Rev. P. C. Paulsen

6. We can and should be more certain of the things which God has promised us than if we were already holding them in our hands. He has promised the forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven with Jesus. How can we know for sure? II Cor. 1:18-22

Truth is tolerant. It can have no communion with error, no more than light has communion with darkness (II Cor. 6:14). Those who turn away from Him choose to live in error. "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I Jn. 1:8,9).

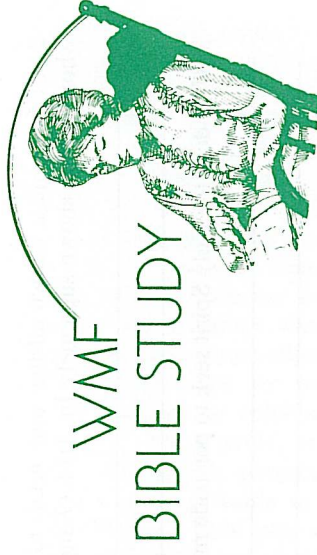
Hymn No. 97 (Concordia) — "O Lord, Our Little Ones to Thee"
Mrs. Herbert Presteng
Grafton, North Dakota

Women's Missionary Federation Project for January

Church Extension (Home Missions)

Through this fund money is loaned to new congregations and those who need to expand their facilities. As the loan is repaid, the money is reloaned. The need is great.

January, 1986



Lesson one

KEY WORDS FROM GOD'S WORD

TRUTH

Hymn No. 214 (Concordia)- "Thou Art the Way, the Truth, the Life"

The Bible is God's message to us and there is no substitute for our study of the Bible itself, no matter how many Bible helps we have. The Bible is a library rather than a book. Therefore, it is good for us to study this library which God says will "give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:15).

The Bible teaches the way, the purpose and the goal of salvation. There is much confusion about this today. There are many who have an uncertain knowledge of salvation and therefore of Christ.

We need the truth necessary to spiritual life and growth. We need help in understanding these great truths and God has provided this help for us. It is God's Spirit who is our teacher. His Sword is the Bible.

Let us think of **TRUTH** as a key word as we begin our study for this year.

1. What is the basic primary truth of the Word? II Cor. 5:19,20

2. God has made known all that man needs to know for life and salvation. In whom is truth shown supremely Jn. 1:14,17 and 15:6 _____

3. How does the Holy Spirit seek to persuade man? Jn. 17:17 and 8:32 _____

4. How does the true Church carry out its mission of being an ambassador of this truth?

A. Mk. 16:15; II Tim. 4:1-5 _____

B. Matt. 28:18-20; I Cor. 11:24,25 _____

What is the truth concerning baptism? Mk. 16:16 _____

Acts 2:38,39 _____

Rom. 6:3,4 _____

Gal. 3:26,27 _____

I Pet. 3:21 _____

(See Luther's Small Catechism on the Sacrament of Baptism.)
What is the truth concerning the Lord's Supper? I Cor. 11:23-29 _____

C. This promise of salvation is given to our children. We baptize them into Christ and they are grafted into Him. What is the duty of parents in teaching children the truth so that they may be kept in their baptismal covenant?

1. Prov. 22:6 _____

2. Prov. 20:11 _____

3. II Tim. 3:14,15 _____

4. I Tim. 3:4 _____

D. What is the solemn warning concerning little ones? Lk. 17:1,2 and Mk. 9:42? _____

5. What is the truth concerning the final goal of salvation? Jn. 14:1-6 _____

We love His birthday

by Pastor Lawrence C. Dynneson
Nogales, Arizona

Luke 1:37: "For nothing will be impossible with God."

Matthew 19:26: "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Near the beginning, Luke pens the word "impossible," but not impossible with God. In the midst of great things to come to pass, John the Baptist, Joseph and Mary were encouraged to have real faith in God's mighty power. Good will was to be relied upon. People need to take God at His word today as they fumble with ideas of creation, not knowing, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." By a word, the world and the whole great universe came into being. It is hard, if not impossible, for us to comprehend, but it is possible with God. A greater task, yet, lay before our mighty, loving God - to save mankind, dead in trespasses and sins. Dr. Ole Hallesby gives us the thought that God couldn't just speak the word and it would be so, but God, in Christ, had to leave the glorious throne and come to earth and become as man in form - be born, live and die - to save us from sin and eternal death.

Great inspired prophecies foretold many of the events concerning Jesus' coming and His deeds. Who could foretell that? Who could believe it? It is possible only with God. Isaiah 9:6 relates: "For a Child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders: and His name will be

called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of peace." Then there were the events immediately surrounding His birth: the angel's message, the miraculous conception, the birth at Bethlehem - all prophecies fulfilled. It was a humble situation, but tremendous! There weren't too many people around to celebrate at that time, but God no doubt celebrated as the angels announced and sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." If we had only the prophecies and the story of His birth, this would be great reason to celebrate Christmas! But we have much more than Jesus' birth. We remember George Washington's and Abe Lincoln's birthdays, not because of prophecies or great events on their birth dates, but because of their integrity and the period in history which presented a challenge to test every ounce of their beings, including their faith in God and the well-being of their fellow men. So on their birthdays, we talk of their deeds and the notable words

"...God, in Christ, had to leave the glorious throne and come to earth and become as man in form..."

spoken.

Ephesians 1:4 says: "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love." God had us in mind, no doubt as to our place in life, and He provided salvation for all. Thus the story of Jesus. Oh, the many words and deeds recorded in the Gospel stories! Little wonder His birthday should be celebrated and remembered year after year through the centuries. "The spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to

proclaim the favorable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18). To demons He could say, "Be quiet and come out of him!" In the wilderness temptations, he said to Satan, "It is written!" Before the coffin, He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." Before a woman of the city who was a sinner, He said, "Your sins have been forgiven" and to another, "Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me." and He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well, go in peace." "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My load is light" (Matthew 11:28).

"God is love." Yes, He is, and never such love demonstrated as when He neared the end of His earthly life. He was betrayed by Judas, denied by Peter, had an unfair trial, was mocked, had a crown of thorns, sweat blood, and had cries of "Away with Him" and "Crucify Him" said to Him. Why? No evil had He done that He should bear our sins in His body. He carried the heavy cross up Calvary's hill and then was nailed to it. It was I who deserved the death, and eternal death at that. So, then, what difference does it make in our lives? If we are truly patriotic to our flag and country, we will appreciate the birthdays of our country's great leaders more because we know what they did. And so, knowing what Christ has done and is still doing because He lives, we, too, are living and loving His Birthday.

What, then, has He done for me, for you?

"I saw Him in childhood with eyes brightly beaming,
At home in the hills where the sunlight was streaming;
We played with the stars, on the clouds swiftly riding,
And saw not the cross which its woodlands were hiding." (V. Birkedal)

Christmas Day and Christmas Eve were very special in childhood, too.

◇

BIRTHDAY...

"I recall...jumping up and down in joyous anticipation of older brothers and sisters coming for the Christmas Eve supper."

I recall standing before one window and then another, jumping up and down in joyous anticipation of older brothers and sister coming for the Christmas Eve supper. There was the meal together, then the Christmas story, and singing and gifts and candy. Also, there was the huge Christmas tree in the church as we children said our poems and Bible verses. But, did we see the cross for all these things? Surely we enjoyed God's goodness. May the goodness of God lead us to repentance. Over the door between the kitchen and the dining room, Mother kept a little green switch, a piece of a broken buggy whip. It had a part in teaching repentance. I saw Him in childhood, in His Word. Just the word "God" or "Jesus" were awesome words and not said or read lightly. His name demanded reverence.

Then: "I saw Him in youth when my soul was unfolding, my spirit flew high when His glory beholding; He beckoned my soul, and He filled me with gladness, His glory lent brightness to life's gloom and sadness." I rejoiced as youths gave their testimonies at youth conventions and Bible camps. And there was more joy as I was given strength to overcome shyness and testify to the living Christ in my life. It gave joy to others, too, as I recall Pastor-missionary Joe Girtz of Santal, India, burst out in the audience. "It's Lawrence!"

Here in Nogales, Arizona, and Mexico, a great number of children and others have enjoyed great Christmas programs. Gifts and food baskets have been distributed to poor families. God has been so good. And the area is great for the good hot tamales and Christmas lights and firecrackers, even. In Mississippi, where I served a three-point parish, there were firecrackers,



FESTIVE CHRISTMAS LIGHTING

Roger C. Huebner, D. D. S.

too, and a rather fine parade, and all the special southern preparations.

So I was especially interested in a story I read recently entitled, "Christmas Memory." It told of a family with nine children who were fairly well-to-do and often busy doing all such things a family has to do, also in preparation for Christmas. There were exciting work days with all co-operating, like shaking down the pecans in late fall. And when nights became chilly and the days cool it was hog-killing time. The whole family and a few neighbors would help put everything away in one day. There were no deep freezes or refrigerators. Family devotions were part of the family life. The two youngest girls could only lisp, "Jesus wept" and "God is love." The first World War

passed and the family was now well into the hard years that followed. The two youngest girls were still at home. Christmas came around again. The father invited 48 prisoners and the guards for dinner. This included all kinds of hard criminals. A great dinner was served, the Christmas story read, and lively and friendly conversation followed. Late in the evening, when the parents had gone to bed, the two youngest girls, now quite grown up, sat re-reading greetings from the older nine, now in many parts of the world. They laughed together, too, as the fire before them blurred. One sister said, "It was a large Christmas." "Which one?" the other said. "All of them," the first replied.

by Jeanette Sansgaard Larson,
Story City, Iowa

at Grandma's

Grandma Durby clearly understood what Christmas was all about. She loved her Savior, and as Christmas was His birthday, we celebrated! Her humble little farmhouse overflowed with love each Christmas as she graciously and prayerfully reigned as queen over her large clan.

Each was greeted with a hug as we arrived to share Christmas dinner with her and it wasn't long before wall-to-wall laughter and happiness filled Grandma's house. Cousins scurried upstairs to play together, anxious to fill every minute, and the women laughed and talked as they unpacked their baskets of specially prepared food.

The kitchen table stretched to accommodate a dozen people. The piano bench and boxes served as seats for more people at a smaller table in the dining room. We ate in shifts, with the tables being set over and over again, for sometimes there were over 60 to be fed.

Our mouths watered as pungent aromas filtered into every room and when we finally sat down to eat and rolled our "beta" and feasted on lutefisk, lefse, turkey, salads, vegetables, haringe kake, pies and other Norwegian Christmas delicacies, we were certain no one anywhere had a more tasty Christmas dinner.

Uncle Ben, who lived with Grandma, served as foreman of the dishwashing crew. The young male relatives, eager to assist, assembled around the dishpan in the small entryway. Their laughter left little doubt

the gift of Christmas

that this was truly the season to be jolly. Enthusiastically, they scrubbed the dirty plates and cups that they knew would be cycled back to them again and again.

When everyone had eaten beyond their capacity, we gathered around the Christmas tree in the parlor. The gliding rocker in the front row was always reserved for Grandma. We sang a Christmas carol, one of the cousins read the Christmas story from the Bible and younger cousins spoke or sang, using the talents they had displayed at their various Christmas programs.

Then it was Grandma's turn to participate. How she loved to sing her favorite Christmas hymns for us in both English and Norwegian! She witnessed of her great love for her Savior until tears rolled down her cheeks. "Each of you is precious to me," she told us, "and every day I pray for each child, grandchild and great grandchild. It is my prayer that some of my descendants will go into full-time work for the Lord." (Her prayer was granted!)

She was grateful for each family member who came to share the day with her. Some were necessarily absent, but she pleaded that no one would be absent at that great reunion in heaven. "Christ can come for us at any time," she said. "My desire is that not one of you should be lost."

Grandma's love reached out to other people, too. The little red wooden basket decorated with rosemaling was



Grandma Durby

taken from its shelf each year and we dropped in our coins as it was passed around the room. Christmas was the time to remember less fortunate children with a gift.

Grandma presented boxes of animal crackers to the small children, but a gift exchange was discontinued years ago. Material gifts were not necessary. We had the greatest gift of all — the Christchild, and a grandmother who showed us how beautiful life can be when that Christchild lives in our heart every day. What a glorious heritage she gave us!

"She witnessed of her great love for her Savior until tears rolled down her cheeks."

After more conversation and feasting, we donned our heavy wraps and bid our good-byes. The sky was dark and the brisk wintry air stung our cheeks as we stepped outside, but we carried with us the glow and warmth of happy Christian fellowship.

After spending 90 Christmases on earth, Grandma left us to join the heavenly host. Christmas will never be quite the same for those of us who remain, but we have the blessed memories of a grandmother who truly shared the gift of Christmas with us.



Our hymn study

Concordia, No. 114
Elisabeth Cruciger, 1524
Tr. Arthur T. Russell, 1851

Tune: German, 1524



The Only Son from Heaven

Elisabeth Mesertiz was a descendant of Polish nobility. During the days of persecution of Protestants, her parents fled to Wittenberg. There she married Caspar Cruciger, a favorite student of Martin Luther's. Three years after completion of his studies Casper was called to join the faculty at Wittenberg as a teacher of philosophy, but in accordance with the strong desire of Dr. Luther, he was made a professor of theology instead. Elisabeth Cruciger and Katherine Luther became fast friends, a companionship that ended too soon with Elisabeth's early passing at age 35.

As a devoted wife and mother, Elisabeth had little time to write. As far as we know she wrote only three hymns, two of which are in the *Concordia*, and both are highly regarded. ("Now Hail We Our Redeemer," 122, as ascribed to Ambrose but more recent findings trace it to Cruciger.) Notice the number of doctrinal points she makes in this hymn.

*The only Son from heaven,
Foretold by ancient seers,
By God, the Father, given,
In human shape appears;
No sphere His light confining,
No star so brightly shining
As He, our Morning Star.*

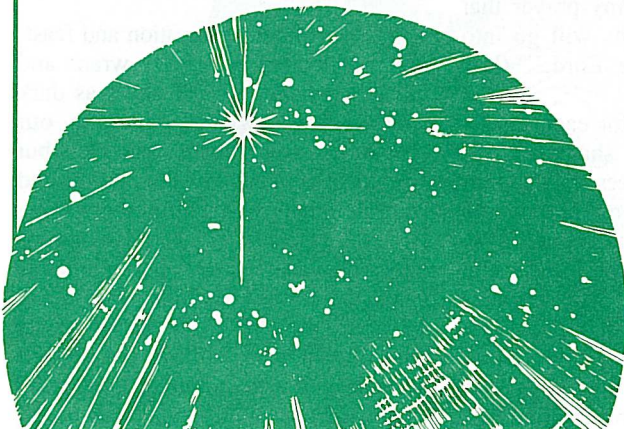
*O time of God appointed,
O bright and holy morn!
He comes, the King anointed,
The Christ, the virgin-born;
His home on earth He maketh,
And man of heav'n partaketh,
Of life again an heir.*

*O Lord, our hearts awaken,
To know and love Thee more,
In faith to stand unshaken,
In Spirit to adore,
That we still heav'nward hasting,
Yet here Thy joy foretasting,
May reap its fullness there.*

Don Rodvold

Author Unknown
The Lamplighter,
Minnewaukan, N. Dak.

Christmas Eve



Not all darkness in the world,
can ever dim the light,
Of one small Christmas candle
Shining bravely through the night.

Not all the earth's loud clamoring
Can silence the refrain,
Which echoed centuries ago
Above Judea's plain.

For carols still ring out across
The countryside and town,
While over candle-lighted homes
The Christmas stars shine down.

And still a wondrous peace transcends
Life's turbulence and din,
As hearts once more unlatch the door
And let the Christ-Child in.



The Way It Was

From the Files of *Folkebladet*: An
Augsburg Christmas Remembered

by A. M. Arntzen

(The Christmas pictured here was
one in the years 1873-75.)

It was getting close to Christmas. A mild fever had seized the students and many of them insisted that it was contagious, but the doctor wasn't called. It wasn't reported to the health authorities. The sickness wasn't dangerous and a person became well as soon as money for a ticket came so he could travel to his home.

Thus it was that students reported their intention to the president and then left, one after the other; first the theological students, who took their leave even two weeks before Christmas. President August Weenaas had corresponded with the pastors, so schedules had been arranged for most of them; they must make the best use of their time, while they had vacation, and the seniors must, in addition, be seeking a parish for when they graduated.

The head table in the dining room was left empty so we underclassmen were invited to move up and we didn't have anything against that because there was a kind of promotion involved in getting to sit at the head places at the table.*

Christmas Eve came. The seminarians and college students were gone and some of the lower ranks, but the rest of us remained behind with a kind of reluctance and maybe a little particle of envy because we didn't get to go home, but there was nothing to do about it. And we had no need where we were and we had food and beds.

The head cook, Mother Sidsel, had in some way or other baked some lefse, made some pickled pigs' feet, and cooked rice porridge and wonderful lutefisk, which all sat upon the table when we came down to eat our evening meal. We were about 20 students, so there was room for all at the two first tables. At the center of each table there stood a little Christmas tree decorated with paper flowers and strings of popcorn together with some glass beads and colored candles.

The old sexton, Ole Hansen, who was also the janitor in Trinity (Lutheran) Church** had secured some hardwood ash and helped Mother Sidsel prepare the lutefisk so it was good and soft and shook on the platter like "jelly-pudding" when it was served and placed on the table. There was also Christmas cake (julekake) with raisins, ham, cheese and melted butter, together with fattigmand and other kinds of baking. We forgot our lonesomeness and disappointment when we saw so many delicious foods upon the table.

One of the older students was chosen to lead the devotional time. First we sang the familiar song "Silent Night" (some even sang the bass part) and then we read the angels' announcement to the shepherds (in unison). If it was by chance I do not know — we had a visitor, but in spite of that we sang Grundtvig's beautiful Christmas hymn:

"Ring, O ye bells, O ring out ere
the daylight advances!

Gleam, O ye stars, sending forth
like the angels your glances!

Peace upon the earth heralds the
wonderful birth'

Glory to God in the highest!

Christmas has come, with its sun-
light our fears all dispelling,
Come with the Child of whom
voices angelic are telling,
Come from above, bringing glad
tidings of love;
Glory to God in the highest!"

The visitors were Prof. S. Oftedal and his wife, who came to see how the students were managing at Augsburg when they couldn't go home for Christmas. Our cook, Mother Sidsel, found a small table in a hurry

and placed it at the end of the head table, with two chairs: "The professor was not free to leave before he had tasted of the Christmas fare." The professor expressed thanks and sat down.

Then we sang "Vor Disk og Duk Er Alt Bered" (a table grace) and then we went at it with a will as hungry fellows especially have a reputation for doing. Voices and Christmas joy increased by many decibels at the delicious food and even more by the visit of our guests, but most of all when we prevailed upon the professor to give a little talk for us.

He told about all the millions of children born to the poor in the world and then there was only *One* of them who became the world's Savior, and from that small beginning in poverty we received the greatest treasure the world has ever seen.

I cannot repeat his talk because I can't find my notes from that evening, but I remember this, that he stirred up enthusiasm in us young men so we wished to hear more when he quit. We sang a stanza of a Christmas song and then the temporary "boarding boss" expressed thanks for the visit of blessing.

One by one we went up to Professor and Mrs. Oftedal, shook their hands, thanked them for the visit and wished them "A Joyous Christmas!"

Folkebladet, Feb. 3, 1932
Translated from Norwegian

*The Augsburg Boarding Club, as it was called, had a strict caste system in those days.

**Trinity Church had a close relationship to Augsburg. Later it was located two blocks from the school, on 9th Street and 20th Avenue South.

Announcement

The AFLBS Annual Christmas Concert, Dec. 15, 4 p.m. at the campus chapel.

More on Christmas next time

Our next issue of the *Ambassador*, Dec. 17, will have some more material on Christmas. Watch for it.

by Mrs. Arnold McCarlson
Langford, S.Dakota

The snow was gently falling and stillness filled the air. It was the time of the year, amid the rush of the fast-approaching Christmas season, when one could appreciate the quietness of a gentle snowfall.

As I was returning home from the post office, a handful of Christmas cards in my hand, the anticipation made me eager to read the messages from friends and relatives.

Once inside, I opened and read the cards and letters. My grandson Troy, who was spending the weekend with us, watched with great surprise.

"Grandma, why are you so excited? Don't you get Christmas cards every year?" "Sure, Troy, but so many of these are special, like this one from my cousin's wife. Her note says: 'Thanks for sending *The Lutheran Ambassador* Christmas issue to me last year. I read your article, "Let It Shine," and then gave it to my daughter who read it to her Sunday School class, after which we took it to the Manor so that your aunt and uncle could read it and share it with others.'"

Troy smiled and nodded, while I continued to read. "See, this one says, 'May you have a blessed Christmas.' 'God bless you at Christmas and always' is from another friend. All of us are sharing blessings!"

Troy shook his head in amazement but thoughtfully added, "Bless is a small but mighty word. It is used often in the Bible. Jesus blessed many people. Bless means divine favor, to feel gratitude toward others, or to worship, glorify and to praise His holy name." Suddenly, he began to sing, "Count your blessings, Name them one by one; Count your many blessings, See what God hath done!"

Seeing Troy sitting there so calm and singing about blessings reminded me of several months earlier. He had come to go to the Pickerel Lake Bible Camp. He was all excited about his new contact lenses. Now he could play basketball! It had been three years or more since his bike accident

COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

when a drunk driver hit him from behind and he landed on his head on the hood of the car, bouncing miraculously off to the pavement. The driver dragged the bike for several miles, never realizing he had hit Troy. Eye problems developed.

Several weeks after Bible camp, Troy was rushed to the University Hospital with a detached retina on one eye and torn retina in the other. Four surgeries followed and sight on one eye was lost. Still Troy was a believer in God's goodness and grace. "Grandma, God blessed me by restoring sight in one eye." The Bible says, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." "That's what Christ meant when he put five dollars in my get-well card and told his grandmother that he was blessed with all his senses," said Troy.

Troy and I talked about blessings, mentioning how God gives us a new day each morning, friends to love, families who care about us and, most of all, an assurance in Christ of God's constant and unending love.

In Bible times Jesus blessed little

children when they were brought to Him. One time He was speaking to the multitudes and there was no food. One boy had five loaves of bread and two small fishes for his lunch. Jesus blessed the food and fed the multitudes. How happy this must have made the lad! Even the little becomes great when blessed by God.

You know the familiar words in the benediction which we hear after each service, from Numbers 6:24: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee." The Bible also says, "Blessed are those who are chosen and called by God." Mary was a virgin chosen by God to be the mother of Jesus. The blessed event was the birth of Jesus on Christmas Eve.

During this Christmas season, let us count our blessings and thank God who provides them. Let us also live our lives so that we may become a blessing to others by living under Him in His kingdom to serve Him and receive His daily blessings.

May you all have a blessed Christmas and continue to rejoice throughout the New Year.



A CHRISTMAS STAR

I stand tiptoe in a chair
And stretch my arms to place it there,
Upon the tree top, high in air,
A star so bright.
Though other ornaments are gay
And make a wondrous fair display,
Until the star above holds sway
Nothing looks right.

And as I view that star of gold
Within my mind strange scenes unfold,
The happenings of days of old,
In lands afar —
On that first Christmas Day
When Jesus in a manger lay
And wise men came from far away,
Led by a star.

Elsa Gorham Baker
(*Child's Christmas Chimes*)

What out Christmas cost Jesus

by Martin Hegland

On Christmas Eve we sit in our warm, comfortable homes surrounded by all the conveniences of modern civilization. The beautifully decorated and lighted Christmas tree, the joyous songs, the good things to eat, the abundance of gifts all combine to make a happy occasion.

Then Father reads the Christmas story which tells us that Mary "brought forth her first born son; and she wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for Him in the inn."

I had never realized with any degree of fullness what it meant to be born into a poor family in Palestine before I visited that land last summer. There were, no doubt, comfortable hotels or inns in Bethlehem, where money could have bought a comfortable lodging for an expectant mother, but Joseph and Mary could not afford to go there. They must seek out a humble place which was within the reach of their slender purse. Such a place, no doubt, a one-room building in which people and animals are housed under the same roof. We saw many such houses in Palestine this summer. The part in which the people live, eat and sleep is on an elevation a few steps above the section where

the animals are kept together with the straw and food intended for their use.

When Joseph and Mary came to such a humble inn there were already so many guests ahead of them that there was no room for them in the part of the house intended for the people, but having no money to go elsewhere, they were permitted to share the lower area with the donkeys or whatever animals there may have been. There, on the straw, the weary Mary found a resting place and there she gave birth to Jesus, her first-born son.

We stood in the Church of the Nativity and gazed upon the large silver star in the floor of the crypt which marks the very spot where it is believed Jesus was born. We read the Latin inscription: "*Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus natus est.*" ("Here of the Virgin Mary Jesus Christ was born.") As we paused there in contemplation, there came over my heart an overwhelming sense of the transcendent love that prompted the Son of God to leave His heaven of glory to be born a helpless babe into the poverty of the earth. Could there be any greater contrast than this? And He did it all in order that He might become our Savior. Truly, though rich, He became poor, that we, through His poverty, might become rich.

On a beautiful night we stood on the shepherd's field where the heavenly messengers brought to humble men the wondrous news of a Savior born. In the marvellously clear Palestinian sky, the stars seemed to hover close to the earth as if to bring heaven nearer to us. Fitting, indeed, ◇

Personalities

Rev. Palmer E. Sevig, formerly of the American Lutheran Church, has been received on the fellowship roster of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations and has accepted a call to Calvary Lutheran Church, Wallace, S. Dak., and began his ministry there in later October.

New address for **Rev. David Barnhart** is 1483 Auburn Ct., Eagan, Minn. 55122.

And for **Rev. Paul Nash** it is Box 468, Warroad, Minn. 56763. Pastor Nash is beginning a Home Mission work at Warroad.

Rev. Walter Johnson, formerly of the ALC, has been received on the fellowship roster of the AFLC, and is serving Faith Lutheran Church, Shakopee, Minn., a congregation which has been accepted as a member congregation of the Association.

ASSOCIATION OF FREE LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS 3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard Minneapolis, Minn. 55441

CHURCH SUBSIDY February 1-October 31

FUND	TOTAL BUDGET	REC'D IN OCT.	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	% of TOTAL
General Fund	\$ 213,910.00	\$ 13,292.24	\$109,107.41	51
Schools — AFLTS	108,041.00	9,131.73	41,471.56	38
AFLBS	179,198.00	12,244.76	70,304.37	39
Home Missions	271,233.00	22,487.16	104,377.19	38
World Missions	307,000.00	34,665.21	173,966.43	57
Praise Fund	30,000.00	1,465.78	14,272.08	48
TOTALS	\$1,109,382.00	\$ 93,286.88	\$513,499.04	46*
1984-85	\$1,003,095.00	\$ 91,418.65	\$510,048.53	51

*Goal 75%

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COST . . .

in such a hallowed place where the angel chorus brought heaven's joy to needy men. Spontaneously we burst into song:

*"Hark the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King;
Peace on earth, and mercy mild,
God and sinners reconciled!
Joyful, all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies;
Universal nature say,
Christ the Lord is born today.
Hark! the herald angels sing
Glory to the new-born King."*

The cost of our Christmas to Jesus did not end, however, with His birth in poverty. It involved a life-long sacrifice. When we visited some of the humble homes in Nazareth and observed how bare they were, how lacking in the most ordinary comforts of life, how drab and colorless in their atmosphere, we obtained some idea of how the sensitive soul of Jesus must have felt starved in its earthly environment. But this, too, He was willing to endure that He might bring fullness of life to the poor of every nation.

At every turn of His earthly career Jesus suffered poverty, misunderstanding, persecution, agony and the cross. All of this our Christmas cost Him.

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd.

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Second -class postage
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The door of entrance to the Church of the Nativity is so low that the visitor must stoop to enter. Fitting this for sinful men who by their transgressions made necessary the tremendous cost of the redemption wrought by the King of glory. And may the bowing of the head be emblematic of the humility of heart which acknowledges its needs and seeks the grace of Him who came to save.

So when on Christmas Eve we rejoice with one another in our pleasant homes, may there rise from our hearts an incense of gratitude to our Redeemer God for all the blessings of a Christian

civilization which His sacrifices made possible. And, most of all, may we thank Him with our worship and our work for the possibilities of a life cleansed by Him and patterned according to His perfect example. May the contemplation of the cost of our Christmas move us to glorify our Savior King.

*Lutheran Herald and
Lutheran Voice*

(The late Dr. Martin Hegland was a teacher at St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn., for many years. He also wrote a number of books and articles.)

Marlene Moline
Lansing, Iowa

While Christmas Shopping



While Christmas shopping one wintry day

I saw to my dismay
Santa Claus and reindeer,
Mistletoe and toys,
Pretty ribbons and big boxes
covered with bright red foil.
Candycanes and Christmas cards
filled the big store windows,
But where I couldn't find
A simple little manger.
Baby Jesus is a stranger now
To little girls and boys,
Who, instead of singing with happy eyes,
"Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,"
Sing of Old Santa and the things that he has said.
As I walk through the tinsel-filled aisles
I hear a concerned little whisper-
"Mommy, how come Baby Jesus isn't here?"