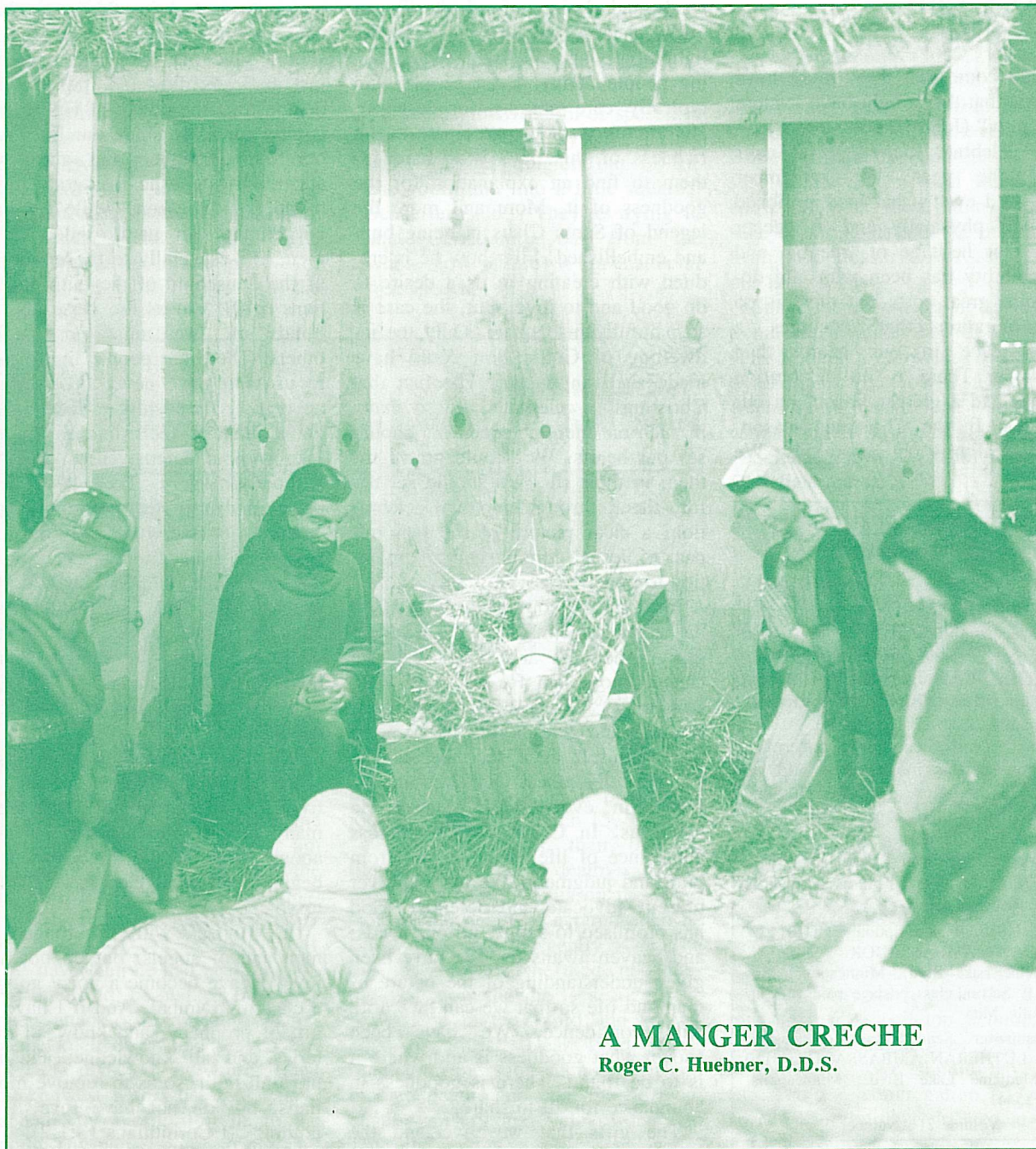


# THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

December 6, 1983



**A MANGER CRECHE**

Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.



# AT THE MASTER'S FEET



*Pastor Philip Rokke*

## God's Gift: our gifts

"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).

We celebrate many special days during the year. We remember people and events that have enriched our lives physically and in deeper ways. Our heritage of freedom and responsibility has been won and defended at great cost. But there is no commemoration that occupies a dearer place in our hearts than Christmas. There is no celebration that has had a greater impact on our attitudes. In the Christmas season, charity really is on our minds. We

actually do give consideration to the needs and desires of others. To an extent at least, we experience the delight of giving and loving and making people happy. Even people who typically care nothing for Jesus or His church want to participate in the richness of this day. It is hard for them to find an explanation for the goodness of it. More and more the legend of Santa Claus is being built and embellished. Somehow he is credited with creating in us a desire to do good and to love. But, the case is so painfully inadequate. Only the indwelling of God's Son could have made such an impact. The fact that Christmas is celebrated by so many in such an unenlightened way should stir our hearts. We should grieve for them in their sin. We should set before them, through our own celebration, a clear picture of the real impact of Jesus' coming and an invitation to experience it in reality.

Through the coming of Jesus, God has given us Himself. Jesus dwelt in glory, goodness and honor that we cannot know, but He left it to walk among us. He came to befriend us, teach us and give us life. He came to offer Himself as a sacrifice, to die for our deliverance. Our lives are enriched in every way because He loved us. In Christ we do possess abundance of life. We are free from guilt and judgment. We have an ever present advocate and defender. God has promised to supply all our needs, and heaven awaits us. We have been given understanding of the nature of man and life so that we can face both with confidence. We have been shown what goodness is and where it is to be found. There is goodness in abundance for all to share.

The gifts that we give and the

greetings that we send should serve in some way to bring this same abundance to others. With each gift we should give our love and ourselves just as Jesus did, and thus we will demonstrate the power of His love. It is easy for us to share our lives with our fellow believers and others who are dear to us. And it is good for us to do so. "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all men, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Galatians 6:10). But as the verse also reminds us, we must not neglect others. There are people living close to us who have never been offered anyone's friendship. They don't know what it feels like to share a joke without defensiveness or a task without drudgery. They have never been made to feel welcome anywhere. "For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:7-8). God took the initiative toward us. Let us do likewise.

We have so many good things to share: special foods, special activities, a special friend. There are so many people who need to be cared about. Now is the time for us to begin to do what God has called us to do.

"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing" (I Corinthians 13:1-2).

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## The Christmas service must be held

by Doris Stensland,  
Canton, S. Dak.

The pioneer pastor loosened his grip on the reins. His hands were beginning to stiffen from the cold. It was a frigid December day in the year 1878. No snow had fallen as yet on the enormous reaches of prairie out in Dakota, but today a raw north wind was blowing and it was difficult to keep warm in the buggy.

The pastor tied the ends of the reins into a knot and slid the loop over his shoulders. With his hands free, he swung his arms across his chest and slapped his hands against his shoulders. This exercise improved the circulation of both hands and body. He pulled the collar of his big fur coat up around his face and tucked his mittened hands under the heavy horsehide robe that lay over his lap. "Yes," he muttered, "these trips to Bethlehem seem twice as long when it is below zero weather."

The Bethlehem congregation was located in the outposts of civilization, about 30 miles northwest of the Lutheran parsonage. Primitive conditions still existed and the new settlers living there in the Jim River Valley had no church building, not even a schoolhouse where they could meet. Their services were held monthly on weekdays in the various homes. Usually the pastor arrived the evening before and stayed overnight. He would assist with the preparations for the service. Benches, boxes and planks had to be set up in every possible space so the members would have a place to sit. Sometimes in summer, people stood at the open windows and doors to listen to the service. This pastor could honestly say that these people appreciated his monthly trips and he knew these trips were very satisfying to him.

The pastor gave the reins a good shake and at the same time prodded his team on with a commanding "Giddap!" He was proud of his half-blood ponies who were very fast and willing to run and today was a good day for them to show their speed.

## FINDING THE WAY TO BETHLEHEM



The sooner they arrived at their destination the better. The days before Christmas were very short and the afternoon was quickly passing.

This pastor was not known as a "buggy prest," (pastor), but he did spend much time traveling the roads and trails, making long trips to serve his large parish of four congregations. Like today, driving thirty miles with horse and buggy. There weren't many who would undertake that on a cold winter day. His time on the road was used to the best advantage and he often worked on his sermons as he traveled along. Christmas was only a few days away and tomorrow he would give his first Christmas message of the season out here at the Bethlehem congregation.

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"He pulled the collar of his big fur coat up around his face and tucked his mittened hands under the heavy horsehide robe that lay over his lap."

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The pastor's heart warmed as he thought of that little group. There was no pomp and circumstance there. The sod and log huts with dirt floors often weren't much better than the stables of the people in his older congregations. These settlers were poor in worldly goods but they had something that was missing in the older congregations. He had noticed the willingness to help one another and it reminded him of the verse in Romans: "Outdo one another in showing kindness," and they did it without any thought of repayment. In the older settlements this helpful attitude was present only when there was sickness. Otherwise they would say, "Let him hire help. He can afford it." Is it so that when one has riches, one's heart gets smaller? Sometimes it looked like it.

According to the pastor's estimation, he should soon come to the Louis Pederson place where he planned to stop and ask directions. He understood that the home where the services would be held tomorrow,

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## BETHLEHEM . . .

the Mattias Johnson's, was farther out on the prairie than he had ever been before. Out there the land lay flat as a tabletop and barren of trees. Houses were few and far between and roads non-existent.

It was late afternoon when the buggy pulled up to the Pederson's. The silhouette of the sodhouse stood out against the flat prairie. One of the pastor's horses gave an impatient whinny and soon Mrs. Pederson opened the door. She motioned the pastor inside. "Aa du, aa du!" she exclaimed. "It is too cold to be out on an afternoon like this. Hurry in where it is warm."

The aroma of coffee greeted him as she herded him over to the warm stove. It was good to get his mittens off and warm his hands. He rubbed them together briskly.

"You are a hardy man to come out on such a cold day," Louis stated.

Mrs. Pederson soon came with a cup of steaming coffee and a plate of fattigmand. The pastor took the coffee and that, too, helped to warm him. Mrs. Pederson's fattigmand was delicious and he ate while she stood by and again extended the plate with a "Vaer saa god!" (if you please). Her eyes twinkled and her face beamed. Today she was privileged to serve the pastor. How fortunate that he had come on the day she had done her Christmas baking!

Pastor questioned Louis about the location of the Mattias Johnson home. He was not happy to hear he still had a number of miles to travel.

"Don't you think it would be better if you spent the night here?" Louis suggested. "Darkness is coming on and it is very cold. Tomorrow in the daylight traveling will be much better."

"I appreciate your offer, Louis, but I know Mattias is expecting me. Perhaps he may even go out and search for me if I don't come to-night."

"Yah, yah. That could be. But it isn't good to travel on such a cold night. And with it soon darkening."

Finally Louis arose and got his heavy coat, adding, "But if you insist on going, I will accompany you at least part of the way." Pastor bun-

dled up again, and he and Louis went out into the cold. Louis rode ahead on horseback. Darkness was beginning to fall. When Louis left, he instructed him to follow the path northward.

The pastor traveled on for a time, but after several turns he could no longer see the faint signs of what was supposed to be a road. Now night had come in earnest and wherever he looked there was not a light to be seen. It was as if he had been swallowed up in blackness. He had lost his sense of directions. North could be in front of him, or behind him, or to his right or left. He really didn't know. He wasn't only chilled from the cold, but a fierce chill raced through him as he realized that he was lost. He listened for the sound of a dog or cow that would tell him there was a house nearby, but everything was quiet, and cold, and dark.

After staring into the night for some time he seemed to see a glimmer of light. It was almost as if a door had been opened. He drove in that direction and found a little house, but it was dark and there were no signs of life.

The pastor sat and considered his situation, all the time searching the darkness for a light. There was not even a star. Finally it seemed he could faintly make out a bright spot. As he kept his eyes upon it, it almost seemed to twinkle. But it was far

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"Yes, the Johnsons had been worried. They had placed a lamp in the window so he could find his way."

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away. He headed his ponies in that direction. Guided by this light he drove towards it—across plowed fields and sticks and stones, making a straight line for the light, always keeping his eyes on it, afraid to lose sight of it. As he came nearer it became brighter and soon he drove up to the door of a house. The pastor almost wept as he saw it was Mattias Johnson who came out to meet him. Mattias welcomed him, helped him in and took care of his ponies.

Yes, the Johnsons had been worried. They had placed a lamp in the window so he could find his way.

## THEY SAW THE LIGHT



by Rev. Philip  
Featherstone,  
Pukwana, S. Dak.

"There were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord

Mrs. Johnson had hot porridge on the stove and he soon had warm food in his stomach. That night as he fell asleep he was very thankful, but it was hard to forget that dreadful feeling of being lost in the darkness.

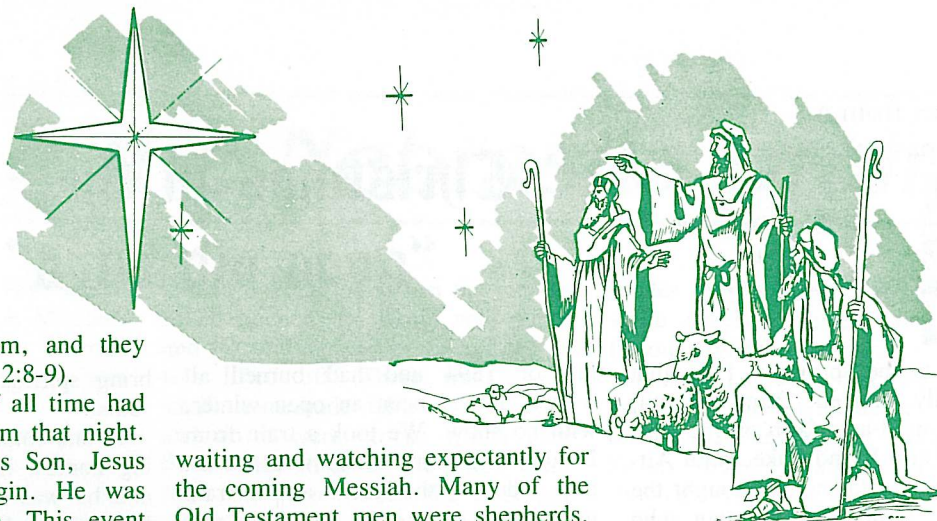
The next day the little Bethlehem congregation gathered at the Johnsons for their Christmas service. In both young and old there was an inner excitement and anticipation of the holy day that lay ahead. The pastor read Matthew 2:2: "For we have seen His star in the east and have come to worship Him." Together they sang "Oh come, let us adore Him" with hearts and voices lifted in praise.

That day, Christmas was very real to both pastor and congregation as the pastor preached to his people about the "Light of the world" who had been born that first Christmas to bring men out of darkness into His marvelous light.

The pioneer pastor never forgot the Christmas he worshiped the Christ Child with the humble people of the Bethlehem congregation. And he never forgot the journey that forever impressed upon him the terribleness of being lost in the night, and the wonder of being guided by a light to Bethlehem.

(Doris Stensland is the author of the book *Haul the Water, Haul the Wood*, a faith-encouraging book about Norwegian homesteaders in southeastern South Dakota.)





shone round about them, and they were sore afraid" (Luke 2:8-9).

The greatest event of all time had taken place in Bethlehem that night. God had sent forth His Son, Jesus Christ, born of a virgin. He was clothed in human flesh. This event was prophesied in the beginning of Scripture and the promise threaded its way through the Old Testament. As this prophecy was fulfilled, light came upon a sin-filled world.

How did the sin-filled world receive this news? John 1:5 says: "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." We know that a great light shown on the birthplace of Jesus. So great was the light that the Magi from the east, thousands of miles away, saw the light. They followed this light during their long journey to Jerusalem. The region of Bethlehem, crowded with travelers who had come home to register for taxation, seemed to pay little attention to this light. Bethlehem is only a short distance from the holy city of Jerusalem. This was the home of Herod, the Jewish king, the headquarters of the Jewish church with all its theologians, and the city of the great temple. The church leaders did not notice the light, or they chose to ignore it. At the same time, out in the field and keeping watch over their flock, was a group of shepherds. It was to them that God revealed the blessed event. They were visited by the heavenly host and an angel with the special message of the birth in Bethlehem.

Why were the shepherds told? Why not the leaders in the holy city? God used the weaker things to confound the mighty. Shepherds were simple people, living a simple life, separated from the glamour of the city, and not preoccupied with the things that draw people away from God. They needed the protection and provision of God's hand and learned early that they could depend on God's help. The shepherds had been

waiting and watching expectantly for the coming Messiah. Many of the Old Testament men were shepherds. God seemed to have a special place in His heart for the shepherd.

Abel was a shepherd, while his brother Cain raised crops. When they brought their offerings to God, Cain his grain, and Abel his lamb, it was Abel's offering that was acceptable. The difference was not between grain and lamb, as both were used for offerings. The difference was in attitude. Abel had an enlightened heart and Cain walked in darkness. One of our Advent songs asks, "O how shall I receive Thee?" How would you receive Him, like Cain or Abel?

Abram and Lot were both shepherds. When their flocks became too large for the area, they were forced to separate. Abram, being fair in his dealings, gave Lot first choice of the land. Lot was greedy, thinking only of himself, and his greed was his downfall. He was filled with darkness. Abram was full of faith and was blessed accordingly. He saw the light. Do you need to have the darkness of greed removed from your heart so that you can see the light?

Jacob was a shepherd, but he was interested in personal gain. Through trickery and unethical practices he became a wealthy man, but wealth brought him no peace. He had a meeting with the Lord and wrestled with his sins until he saw the light and became God's shepherd. Is there unconfessed sin in your life that keeps you from seeing the light?

Moses spent 40 years in the desert caring for sheep. He was satisfied with his place in the desert, but God had chosen him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. When God spoke to him from the burning bush, Moses saw the light and followed God's

command. Are we unwilling to see the light because we are satisfied with our lives and don't want to change?

David was a shepherd boy. He learned at a young age that his strength was given by God. He had been able to ward off wild beasts that attacked his sheep and had triumphed over Goliath, the Philistine giant. The Bible gives us many more examples of shepherds who saw the light and responded.

In Luke 2:15, we read: "It came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, 'Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.'" The action of the shepherds was positive. They believed the words of the angel, then followed the light to the place where the Savior lay.

The invitation is still going out today into a world not too different from the one 183 years ago. The light is shining in the darkness and the darkness comprehends it not. Much darkness persists in our world today. History has a way of repeating itself. Communist nations are mostly in darkness, and even in our own country the light is unknown in many hearts.

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"The invitation is still going out today, into a world not too different from the one 183 years ago."

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## Memories from a pioneer pastor's home



by Rev. Trygve F.  
Dahle,  
Spicer, Minn.

# Christmas in the "good old days"

It was in the spring of 1895 that our family moved from Duluth, Minn., to a 78-acre farm on the west shore of Farm Island Lake, rural Aitkin, Minn. My father had bought the homestead rights from a man who had failed to "prove up" his homestead. This was the spring after the "Hinckley Fire," which started in the

fall of 1894 and had burned all winter. It had been an open winter, with no snow. We took a train from Duluth to Aitkin. There was fire on both sides of the tracks as the train went west. At Aitkin, we were met by a man with a team of horses and a lumber wagon with a double box on it. They put our mattresses and quilts in the wagon and we children sat on them. As we drove along to go to our log cabin on the lake, we were surrounded by heavy smoke and burning trees. The closer we got the thicker the smoke became, so it was decided we could go no further and instead we turned around and went back to the home of the man who was doing the driving. We stayed there that night and during the night God sent a heavy rain that put out the fire so that by morning the air was clear except for a few smoldering stumps and fallen trees. We were then able to proceed to our new home.

At this time our family consisted of Father and Mother and six children, Anker, Astrid, Ragna, Trygve (myself, 3½ years old), Borghild, and Viggo, who was a baby. I was too young to remember our trip from Duluth to Aitkin, but Mother told us about it many times. It was a hard experience for her.

My father, Ole, who was a pastor, was doing home mission work. This was before the Lutheran Free Church was organized. He organized a congregation from former parishioners of his church in Duluth. They had moved out from Duluth and taken homesteads, as they had lost their jobs during the depression which was called the "panic of the 90s." He travelled extensively among the homesteaders of Scandinavian descent. He had many preaching places in schoolhouses and homes. Many of these later became congregations. He also visited lumber camps, where he would hold services. He was able to

bring spiritual help to many needy souls.

In one community, as he was visiting homes, he stopped at one place and he was met at the door by the lady of the house. After he had introduced himself as a Norwegian Lutheran pastor; she burst into tears and said, "You are the first pastor, I have seen since I left the 'old country'!" Could you have a meeting tonight? I will send the children out to invite the neighbors."

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"As we drove along to go to our log cabin on the lake, we were surrounded by heavy smoke and burning trees."

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Needless to say, he was happy to do that, and the house was filled with people, mostly women and children, as their husbands were away working in the lumber camps. After the service, he baptized several children, started a confirmation class and a Ladies Aid. This group later formed a congregation.

This was a time of economic hard times. Money was almost an unknown commodity. Pioneer work was hard, but the people were open to the Gospel. There was one preaching place, where my father had been going for several months and he had never received any remuneration, simply because the people had no money. The women began to talk among themselves. "The pastor has been coming here now a long time, and we have given him nothing. Let us get together and each donate a little milk and let us make a cheese for the pastor. He will be here next Sunday." So that is what they did. The next Sunday the happy women presented him with a large cheese that they had made, which he graciously and thankfully received, and he was able to take it home to his family.

My father travelled mostly by

## LIGHT . . .

Christmas, the day we commemorate the blessed event of Christ's birth, has been largely turned into a pagan holiday with emphasis on self-centered gratification with all types of worldliness. Attempts are being made to eliminate from public places reminders of Christ's birth, such as nativity scenes, Christmas pageantry and music. The time has come for us, as Christians, to put the light of Christ back into Christmas.

From the story in Bethlehem we learn that the shepherds did not stay at the manger. We read, "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." They let the light shine through them.

Lest we become self-satisfied with our Christ-centered Christmas, let us remember that the forces of darkness have not yet been destroyed. The conflicts still go on and the only weapon against them is the light. As we allow the light to pour into our hearts and lives this Christmas, let us be as the shepherds of old, humble before God, dependent on God, watching and waiting for Christ's return, publishing abroad the good tidings of great joy. If you find yourself caught up in the darkness of the worldly celebration, do as the shepherd Jacob did, confess Christ and return to Him. He is waiting. Have a Christ-filled Christmas.



horseback in the summertime. There were no roads, only trails, which followed the ridges and highlands, bypassing the sloughs and lakes. The winter roads followed the valleys and crossed the lakes, thereby avoiding the steep hills. These were sleigh roads and it was here the men hauled their heavy loads of cordwood, railroad ties and logs for lumber. All the heavy hauling was done in the wintertime.

When the snow got too deep for horseback riding, my father used these trails to travel on with skis. It was a familiar sight to see him start out on Saturday with his briefcase strapped on his back and his skis on his feet. He had a light rope tied to the point of each ski, so he could pull the skis along when he was going up hill and help him to keep his balance going downhill. It gave us children a lonesome feeling to see him go as we knew that he would be gone for several days.

My mother did a very good job of being both father and mother for us while he was away. We had a very happy home. My mother had a special concern for each one of us. She would carry on the family devotions the same as when Father was home. Every evening she would gather us around her and give each one a Bible or Testament. We would all take turns reading, from the oldest child to the very youngest. I can remember my sister Ragna was reading when she was four years old. Mother had a heart for missions and I can remember her weeping as she prayed for the poor people who did not know the Lord. We children also prayed, especially for our father who was out preaching the Gospel.

The Christmas season was a very busy time. Every community had a Christmas program. These were mostly in the schoolhouses. The young people would go to several of these programs. The Christmas holidays began about two weeks before Christmas. Every school had a program and for the most part they were of a religious nature, almost like the Sunday School programs. There was no electricity in those days so kerosene lamps were used, also lanterns. The Christmas trees were decorated with homemade decorations:

paper chains, cranberries and popcorn strung on strings, paper angels, etc. Wax candles were used on the trees and were always lit during the program. The candles were always placed on the tree in such a way that they would not catch fire. One time a paper angel caught fire from a candle and a big quick-thinking lumberjack, who was sitting in a front seat, stood up and grabbed it with his big

hand and quenched the fire, averting what could have been a tragedy in the crowded schoolhouse.

At nearly all of my father's preaching places there was a Sunday School and each Sunday School had a Christmas program. I will tell about one such program, which would be typical of them all and that was at the Hamlet Lake schoolhouse, which was between our place and

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Not to the king the Star,  
Flaming in light afar;  
Not to the king on his throne apart,  
With fear and hate in his evil heart,  
Speaking smoothly with lying ruse  
To find the new-born King of the Jews;  
Not to the king the flame,  
The light and the glory came.

Not to the seers the Star,  
Shedding its beams afar;  
Not to the seers with their downbent looks,  
Poring over their ancient books,  
Searching where and pondering when,  
He should be born who is Saviour of men;  
Not to the seers the flame,  
The light and glory came.

Not to the sword the Star,  
Glowing and bright afar;  
Not to the sword that sought where He lay,  
Callous and cruel and eager to slay;  
Never were bearers of swords so led  
Where helpless and innocent blood was shed;  
Not to the sword the flame,  
The light and glory came.

But to the wise the Star,  
Lighting their path afar;  
Unto the wise who truly sought,  
With reverent worship and  
loving thought  
These to the Child the Star  
could bring,  
To lay their gifts at the feet  
of the King;  
Unto the wise the flame,  
The light and glory came.

## THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM

"And the star went before  
them till it stood over the  
place where the young child  
lay" (Matthew 2:9).

Annie Johnson Flint



## OLD DAYS . . .

Deerwood. In almost every community there was a young man with a husky team of spirited horses and he would go around and pick up all those who wanted to go to the program. He would have a sleigh with a double box and have hay placed on the bottom, covered with horse blankets. In preparation for the trip we had rocks 8-10 inches in diameter which were heated all day in the oven or on top of the stove. These were then placed among the blankets in the sleigh to keep us warm. We also had blankets and quilts. Sleighbells were put on the horses' harnesses a couple weeks before Christmas and they were left on until after New Year's. The merry tinkling of the sleighbells added to the enjoyment of the ride. We drove the winter road, across the lake and the slough, and through the spruce and tamarack swamps. There was a very fine group of Christians at this place and they had large Sunday School and had a fine program of recitations, readings and much singing. My father would also have a meditation on the Christmas Gospel. At the close of the program bags of candy and nuts and one apple were given to each child. There was also an exchange of gifts among the children and also the parents. These gifts were nearly all homemade items.

In our own home Father always reserved Christmas Eve to be home with us. The week before Christmas we would go behind the barn in our own spruce swamp and choose the nicest tree we could find, cut it down and drag it home. We would cut it off to the proper length and set it up in the living room so that the tip reached to the ceiling and it was placed so that we could march around it and sing. On Christmas Eve all outdoor chores had to be done by 6 o'clock, including carrying in the wood for all the stoves.

The Christmas meal was at 6:30 and on this special occasion we ate in the dining room. Roast pork was our meat and, besides that, we had potatoes, rutabagas, carrots, cranberries, homemade rye bread, home-canned wild blueberries and wild



O Tannenbaum! O Tannenbaum!

Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.

strawberries, also Christmas baking, etc.

After eating our meal the table had to be cleared and the dishes washed and then again we gathered in the living room. Now we had our family program. We started out by singing many of the Christmas hymns and songs that we loved. This was all in Norwegian, of course, and we sang, "Glade Jul, Hellige Jul," "Jul aften du er skjøn," "Jeg er saa glad hver Julekveld," and many others. Then we all gave our recitations that we had learned for Sunday School. Father read the beautiful Christmas Gospel and he would sing a hymn without accompaniment. He had a sweet tenor voice. After this we all

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"On Christmas Eve all outdoor chores had to be done by 6 o'clock, including carrying in the wood for all the stoves."

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took part in prayer, praying especially for our uncles, aunts and cousins in Norway, whom we had never seen. We also prayed for our mission fields.

The last event of the evening was the distribution of our gifts. This is what we children had been waiting for. All of our gifts were homemade items: mittens, socks, mostly clothing. I don't remember that we ever got any toys. (Oh, yes, we did have a homemade sled and I remember once a neighbor gave us two pair of skis that he had made.) We children would get the gifts from under the tree and hand them to Dad and then he would call the name and that person would go up and get it from him. We were always happy with whatever we got. Mother had a sewing machine and was a good seamstress, so she sewed for us all, both girls and boys.

Rolf, Ernst and Dagny were born while we lived on our farm by the



## CHRISTMAS PRAYER

*O Lord, I do not truly celebrate  
Your holy birth  
until I've knelt  
in humble shepherd-style  
to worship and adore.*

*O Lord, I do not truly celebrate  
Your holy birth  
unless it makes me imitate  
the wise men who returned  
another way,  
for seeing You must alter my  
ways, too.*

*O Lord, let me so truly  
celebrate  
Your holy birth  
that I have Mary's song  
rejoicing in my heart  
and know You are beside me,  
too,  
and I am in Your will.*

*—by Doris Stensland,  
Canton, S. Dak.*

shore of Farm Island Lake. Now our family was complete, five boys and four girls, beside Father and Mother. It is a joy to think back to my childhood days. The air was fresh and clean, we had pure water from the lake to drink; as yet we had no well. We had food to eat, most of which we had raised in our garden, and berries that we had gathered out of the woods during the summer. Our nearest neighbor was a mile and a half away, so we had no temptations from the outside world. There was little money, but we had the things that money couldn't buy: a happy home, loving parents, contentment, peace and joy, and peace with God. We lived secure in the knowledge that God was our Father and Jesus was our Savior.

a greeting from our president

## Christmas, God's message to man



"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1, 2).

An awesome and wonderful fact of history is that God has spoken to me. If sinful man was to find his way back to God, only God Himself could reveal the way. Our Scriptures tell us that God has raised up spokesmen to declare His truth, to reveal His will and purpose to men.

The writer of Hebrews notes a difference between the Old Testament revelation and its fulfillment in Christ. The Old Testament revelation came in different ways and different manners. It was also a progressive revelation. Not all was revealed at once, because not all could be understood at once. God spoke what each generation needed to know. Moses in the wilderness, Elijah on Mount Carmel, and Ezekiel in Babylon were representatives of the "sundry times" of the Old Testament revelation.

God also had many means through which His revelation was mediated. He spoke through the dreams of a Joseph and a Daniel. Moses and Abraham saw Him "face to face." Ezekiel received apocalyptic visions. These are some of the "divers manners" God used in revealing Himself to the fathers.

The Old Testament revelation, though progressive and a revelation of God's will and purpose, was, nevertheless, an incomplete revelation. God spoke again in one adequate final revelation. He did so in the person of His only begotten Son.

The revelation God gave in His Son consisted not merely in what was said, as in the case of the prophets, but in what the Son *was*. God's final message to mankind came through a Personality. It was a revelation made by One who in all that He is and all that He says reveals the Father. Jesus declared, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9).

As we observe Christmas again, we mark the event of the completion of God's revelation to you and me. God is desirous of speaking to our hearts afresh at this Christmas season.

How does He speak to us? It was through the pens of the holy writers that He spoke to the Old Testament saints and preserved to all future generations His message. It is again only through the Word, the Old and New Testaments, that we learn to know Jesus and through Him come to understand God's purpose and desire for our daily lives.

How precious that Word should be to us this season as we experience that God is speaking to us again through His Son!

What is it that God is desiring to communicate to us through His Son this blessed season? We cannot improve on the words of Romans, chapter 5:

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly" (vs. 7).

"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (vs. 8).

"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (vs. 10).

The Gospel message sounds forth just as clearly in 1983 as it did when Jesus walked the sands of this earth. God says to you and to me, "I love you, I love you so much that I gave My only Son to die for your sins."

Dear reader, may God speak to your heart today and imprint His message so clearly that your heart may respond in repentance and humility to so great a message sent to us through Jesus, His Son.

A Blessed Christmas to all!



Mrs. Kaufman kept a neat, spotlessly clean house. Her manners were cool and correct. She moved with a quiet, confident bearing. Everything in her house was tastefully functional, her wardrobe elegant.

For weeks Mrs. Kaufman had felt strangely out of sorts. Not depressed exactly, still not quite up to standard. Christmas was approaching, yet she took no interest in the annual ritual of removing the silver candelabra from its tissue, polishing and fitting it with slim white tapers. The great pine cone wreath to be hung on the oak door at the entrance still lay on its shelf in the closet.

Mrs. Kaufman pondered the reason for her strange lack of direction. Had she left something undone at the church? (An unwritten law decreed Mrs. Kaufman overseer of the church interior.) No, she had checked every detail at the last Sunday service. The linen at the altar was exquisitely white. The hardwood floor gleamed with its usual rich hue. The great windows had not a smudge on them, not even the north ones which were set low enough to attract children's finger prints.

Perhaps she needed a new occupation for her spare time. Last winter had been quite nicely taken up with the alterations on the public library. Asked by the town council to plan the decor for the new reading room, she had received due comments on her choice of quiet colors and tasteful furniture.

On the other hand, the loss of friends with whom she had exchanged little kindnesses through the years might still be affecting her. Mrs. Steele, the wife of the church council president, had passed away suddenly last April and Lottie Harington, a retired school teacher, had moved to another state to be near her relatives. Mrs. Kaufman had made a halfhearted and unsuccessful attempt to form new friendships.

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"Come to think of it, Mr. Kaufman had appeared a bit listless lately."

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## Mrs. Kaufman's Christmas party

by Ceta Rude, Lake Alma, Sask.

Could the problem lie with Mr. Kaufman? Not that he had changed perceptively. His habit of going to his drugstore at 8 o'clock every morning and returning at 5:45 each evening had altered little in 27 years. They depended much on each other for company since their son had grown up and was now living in Australia.

Come to think of it, Mr. Kaufman had appeared a bit listless lately. Had she unconsciously caught her mood from him? This brought her thoughts again to the church. Here and there, imperceptively at first, a family had disappeared, just weren't in their usual place on Sunday morning. Most were people with whom Mrs. Kaufman had not gotten beyond a nodding acquaintance. Mr. Kaufman, however, was on the Council and had fussed a bit over the absenteeism.

The church service had grown even more imposing and the hymns, though more difficult to catch on to, Mrs. Kaufman decided had a more classical sound. The missing members had probably moved away or lost their jobs, she concluded. Church membership did carry a monetary responsibility.

Though she could not put her finger on the reason, Mrs. K grew quietly more distressed. Even the sound of Christmas carols could not lighten her mood.

Three weeks before Christmas the situation was abruptly interrupted by



the sudden collapse of Mr. Kaufman as he readied himself for bed. Mrs. Kaufman called the ambulance as well as the family physician and three hours later heard the diagnosis. Mr. Kaufman had suffered a stroke. His right side was partially paralyzed and he had lost the power of speech, neither of which, the doctors were quite sure, would be permanent.

Mrs. Kaufman stationed herself at the bedside of her husband, took over his feeding and found new ways of communicating with him. The vulnerability of her usually independent husband effected in her a new sensation of tenderness.

One evening Mrs. Kaufman was returning from a solitary meal at the hospital cafeteria when someone's arm slipped gently around her shoulders and a voice asked, "What is the trouble, Mrs. Kaufman?"

It was Susan Peters, whom Mrs. Kaufman recognized as a young woman who used to attend her church. When she explained her husband's condition Susan responded in a decisive voice. "You look all used up for today, Mrs. Kaufman. I am going to take you home, make you a hot cup of tea and tuck you into bed. But first I have some calls to make. Perhaps you won't mind if I take a long route home."

Mrs. Kaufman was relieved for once to have someone directing her. She stopped long enough in Mr. Kaufman's room to say good night



and tuck his blankets around him, then surrendered herself into the care of Susan Peters.

The air was crisp and clear as they drew up in front of a small, plain, church building.

"It's the children, Mrs. Kaufman," Susan explained. "I bring them here once a week to practice for their Sunday School Christmas concert."

Mrs. Kaufman followed Susan into the church and watched as she subtracted children from the group in the entrance, bundling them into coats and boots. From the door into the sanctuary the sound of organ music and children's voices blended with the chattering in the vestibule.

When Susan had secured four children, Mrs. Kaufman followed them back to the car where, as she stowed them in the back seat, Susan introduced each child. They drove to a drab section called Old Town where the little passengers were deposited in sad grey houses.

"Good-bye," Susan called to each one. "I'll see you Sunday morning."

"How did you find them?" asked Mrs. Kaufman, when they were alone.

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"They drove to a drab section called Old Town where the little passengers were deposited into sad grey houses."

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"I canvassed the neighborhood, told the parents who I am and asked if I could take their children to Sunday School."

"It's a lot of trouble," ventured Mrs. Kaufman.

"The trouble," said Susan, "is finding someone to help with their problems." She went on to explain. "Jamie's mother has found a job, the first one since her husband deserted them. It's in a nice cafe from 5 to 11 at night but she doesn't make enough money to pay a baby sitter. She needs someone to keep Jamie. I work at the library at nights so cannot help her.

"Tina's father is an alcoholic," she went on. "I've seen suspicious bruise marks on her. Perry's and Tracy's parents aren't home very much but they are a little older and they have each other."

When they reached her house, Mrs. Kaufman found that she was not so tired after all. She made tea for both of them and heard more about Susan's little friends. After the young woman left Mrs. Kaufman decided that Susan Peters was making an impact on her world in whatever way she could. After some reflection she made the decision to keep Jamie herself in the evenings, temporarily, of course, as she was coming home to an empty house at night anyway.

Susan picked them both up the next evening. Jamie soon learned his boundaries in the big house and found the room which had belonged to Mrs. Kaufman's son a fine place to nap until his mother picked him up after eleven.

The new turn of events gave Mrs. Kaufman vastly more interesting stories to tell her husband during the day and she was gratified to see him smile his first smile since the stroke.

The night of the Christmas concert arrived. Mrs. Kaufman accompanied Susan and the four children along with Tina's mother, a pale, uncertain young woman. As she heard again the story of God's love in sending His own Son to a world unworthy to receive Him, something awakened in Mrs. Kaufman, something known but forgotten through the years. She brushed away tears with a tiny scented handkerchief and let the joy not only of Christmas but of Christ Himself flood her heart. She decided to invite Susan and her friends over to her house immediately after the Christmas concert.

Still singing carols they tramped past the great wreath on the oak door into the warmth. Jamie led the chil-

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" 'You have shown us again this Christmas that it is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

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dren on a tour of his room and boasted of his doings in the big house while Susan and Mrs. Kaufman made popcorn, toast and egg-nog, serving them from crystal glasses and a crystal bowl.

The three women settled themselves comfortably before the fire. Tina's mother forgot her shyness, sitting between chatty Susan and kindly Mrs. Kaufman who knew how to draw her out without pointed questioning. When the children gathered around them and Perry's nose had been wiped for the eighth time, Susan suggested they give thanks to God for the evening. Agreeing, they bowed their heads together.

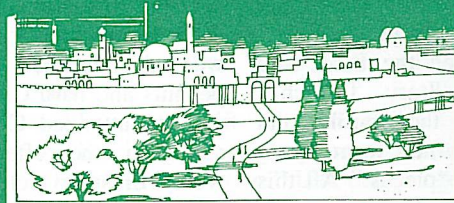
"Dear Father God, You have made this evening special by giving us to each other as friends," Susan began. "You have shown us again this Christmas that it is more blessed to give than to receive." In the soft glow of the fireplace she prayed for the safe recovery of Mr. Kaufman, for Perry, Tracy and their parents. She asked God's help for Jamie's mother at work, for Tina and her parents. Finally, she thanked God for Mrs. Kaufman and the pleasure of sharing her home.

In the blessed silence that followed Mrs. Kaufman knew that each one mentioned was being touched by God through Susan's prayer.

"Thank You, God," she whispered, "for showing me the way."

*With humble heart that night I  
came  
to the Eternal One.  
His mother held Him in her  
arms,  
Our very God's own Son.*

*I dared not lift my sinful eyes  
Up to His holy face,  
But He reached out His hand  
to me  
And clothed me with His grace.*





The year was 1912

# Selma's Christmas Memories

by Norma Johnson,  
Eden, S. Dak.



The week preceding Christmas was a happy time for the Soren Bendickson family. Mother would start her baking. There would be all kinds of cookies, large white sugar cookies, the dark tangy molasses cookies, peppernus (Louise was Danish) and lefse (Soren was Norwegian).

In December Father would make a trip to nearby Waubay, S. Dak., and purchase little presents for the six daughters and one son in addition to the hard candy and a small Christmas tree.

A few days before Christmas the children started practicing Christmas songs and recitations.

Then the day before Christmas Eve Father and the children would set up the tree and the family would decorate it with the white popcorn and red cranberries that the children had strung on a long white cord. Next, the colored candles would be placed in the tiny candleholders and securely fastened to the tree limbs. An angel was fastened to the top of the tree after Mother had made the necessary annual repairs to the faded gown.

At last Christmas Eve arrived and a simple supper was served—nisse grøt (rice pudding with raisins), lefse and a glass of milk. Then the supper dishes were washed and put away.

Father would open the Bible and read the Christmas Story. The children would sing the carols and hymns they had learned from memory and recite their "pieces." All this was in the Norwegian language.

Then the gifts were handed out. Mother had knit the scarves and mittens for each of the children. Father had purchased a rubber ball for his son and dolls for the girls. The Minerva dolls had tin heads with the faces painted dainty colors. Their bodies were homemade and attached to the boughten heads.

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"Mother had knit the scarves and mittens for each of the children."

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Then there was more singing. On the last song, the parents would join hands with the children and walk around the Christmas tree.

Then Mother would heat some hot chocolate and bring out the cookies for lunch. By then the children were tired and happy but ready for bed.

Father always said, "Be sure to hang up your stockings." They always did hang those woolen stockings on the nails behind the cookstove. Going to bed meant trudging upstairs to an unheated, chilly room.

In the morning there was a wild scamper to see what had been left for them in their stockings. Each year it was the same, an apple, some peanuts and hard Christmas candy.

They attended Christmas Day services in the afternoon. Everyone wore dress-up clothes to go to church, a small country church

called Saron, about six miles away from home in northern Day County in South Dakota. This meant a ride in a bobsled pulled by a team of horses wearing sleighbells. All the people put sleighbells on their horses at that time of year.

The children snuggled under a heavy quilt on the straw-covered floor of the sled. This same quilt kept the horses warm while the family was in the church.

The Christmas tree at Saron was much larger than the one at the house. The decorations were the same except this one had large shiny ornaments for decoration.

First there was a sermon by Rev. Carl Nestvold. The choir sang and then the children in the congregation got up and each one said his "piece." The only practice they had was at home and they spoke whatever pieces their parents taught them for this informal, but important occasion.

One of the Bendickson daughters, Mrs. Selma Valnes, vividly remembers that men from the church, Adolph Storley, Richard Storley, John Stianson, Henning Storley and others took turns standing by the candle-lit tree. The tree was beautiful when the candles were lit but could be dangerous if the needles caught fire. Each dainty candle flickered and its light was reflected by the nearby colored ornaments creating a beauty that was etched in the memories

*Continued on p. 14*



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# editorials

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## GOD'S WONDROUS GIFT

Christmas Day is before us, only days away. "How many days 'til Christmas?" What parent of small children hasn't heard that question over and over again as the day draws near? We have warm and pleasant thoughts of childhood Christmases. We think back to the unbroken family circle. Now some are gone.

In our mind's eye we picture the old church of childhood and the Christmas programs we were in. Or we think of programs our children have been in. Presents, carols, vacations, decorations. Ah, this is a time of memories.

But the central fact of Christmas! We all know it—a Savior was born: "For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

We call this time *Christmas*. A better name would be the Festival of Incarnation. God became one of us. No one has put it better than John the Apostle who said, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). Paul phrased it this way: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor so that by His poverty you might become rich" (II Corinthians 8:9).

It was all in the fulfillment of prophecy. Perhaps that can be summed up in the word recorded by Isaiah: "You shall call His name Immanuel" (which is by interpretation, *God with us*) Isaiah 7:14.

Our theme this year comes from the old, beloved carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem." In our third verse, Phillips Brooks wrote, "How silently, how silently the wondrous gift was giv'n." The "wondrous gift," that's it. God's "unspeakable gift" (II Corinthians 9:15, Am. St.), "indescribable gift" (NIV), "His gift beyond words" (NEB.)

Let us think of gifts in general and God's Gift. What are the marks of a good gift?

First, a good gift will have utility or usefulness. Did you ever get a gift you were puzzled by and you asked, "What is it?" What does it *do*?" (It's exquisite, but what is it?) Some things don't even make good knickknacks. Or perhaps you knew what something you had been given was, but it wasn't useful to you, as when a husband gives his wife a chain saw or she gives him a sewing machine.

God's gift of Jesus was needed and useful to mankind. "The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin." Isaiah foresaw the Savior coming to "the people who walked in darkness" (9:2). "Darkness" well describes the condition of mankind today, too, without Christ. There is a lostness about people trying to live outside the fellowship with God for which they were created. The god of this world has blinded eyes and hearts.

"But when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem

those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4,5). As one song writer has put it, "In times like these you need a Savior." That Savior is here, "for while we were yet sinners Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). God's Gift has utility or usefulness.

Second, a gift should fit the recipient. In our family we have now and again laughed, albeit ruefully at first, over the time my brother, younger than I, was given a man's necktie for Christmas while still a young boy. He was rather woeful standing there with the tie hanging almost to his knees. A gift should fit the recipient. It should be suitable and appropriate. The giver should take the person to whom he gives into consideration, so that the latter won't have to say of his gift, "This isn't me." Some of us don't have the knack of buying for others. Our purchases look like they were bought for someone else.

God's wondrous Gift fits all, however. "Unto *you* is born . . . a Savior." There is a universal need. "All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6). "None is righteous, no not one" (Romans 3:10). "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (John 3:6). Christ died for all. "For *our* sake He made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21). This is the objective truth about God's Gift, but you and I must receive the gift, otherwise it lies unopened as far as we are concerned. And that is or would be tragic.

Third, a gift should cost something to the giver. I should pay for it, or I should make it, investing time and money, or I should give something precious to me, as in handing on an heirloom. Otherwise the gift without the giver will be bare.

God's Gift was costly. God sent His Son into the world. Jesus was His only Son and God knew what lay ahead for Him. It was costly for Jesus, too. He emptied Himself and took the form of a servant (Philippians 2). "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree" (I Peter 2:24). The cost was His life.

Dear *Ambassador* readers, let me say two more things about gifts. One, a gift which goes on giving has added value, such as a bank deposit, a bond, a subscription or an heirloom which appreciates in value. Some gifts are disposable, such as food, toys that break and clothing we wear out and outgrow.

But some gifts last a lifetime. God's gift of Jesus is like that. Jesus is *God with us*, as noted above. Please realize, however, that the real significance of this is found in those who are *in* Christ Jesus, those who have called upon Him. "Lo, I am with you always," Jesus said.

Two, the gift of God endures forever. Salvation reaches its greatest glory beyond this life. It is true that "the best is yet to be." Life can get pretty difficult in this

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## "MEMORIES."

of many a youngster of that era for a lifetime.

Then the men brought in large shiny milk pails filled with red apples and passed them out to everyone. Next came a man passing out handfuls of peanuts, dumping them into waiting, cupped hands. There were no paper bags for the goodies at that time.

Too soon it was all over. There was the sound of sleighbells, the crunchy sound of snow under the bobsleds, the neighing of the horses and the voices calling "Merry Christmas" drifting off as all headed for home.

The ride home may have been long and cold but it is the warmth of family and friends and the excitement of that time that lingers in the Christmas memories of Selma Valnes today as she recalls the Christmas of 1912.

—Reprinted with permission  
from the book, *Wagon  
Wheels*, Vol. III

## *Forever shines that light*

God's holiness did come to earth,  
It came in human form,  
When Jesus came by humble birth  
To earth's dark sin and grime—

The God of spotless purity  
Did come to earth to set men free.

The sinless One has joined our race  
He saw our low estate,  
O what matchless love and grace,  
Was ever love so great?  
Who knew no sin yet took our form  
To save mankind from curse and harm.

Now many centuries have passed  
Since angels sang that night;  
Their message will forever last,  
Forever shines that light.  
Eternal burns salvation's flame,  
God's Word forever stands the same.

I. E. Mork  
Bottineau, N. Dak.

Noël



## EDITORIALS . . .

world, also for the Christian, but he has a glorious hope.

The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem was really a great event. Use any superlative adjective you wish. What if Jesus had not come? That is a fearful thought. But He did come. We pastors have Good News to bring our hearers. Every Christian has good tidings to share with others. Thank You, Lord!

May I take this opportunity to wish all our readers of *The Lutheran Ambassador* a most blessed Christmas.

—Raynard Huglen

### REMEMBER THE NEEDY

We have sometimes used our Christmas issues to put in a word for the materially needy of America and the world. Our awareness of the problem this year has been heightened by our recent reading of the book *Bread for the World* by Arthur Simon. Written a few years ago now, the hunger and poverty problem probably hasn't gotten much better since then.

The statistics about our situation as over against the rest of the world—you've heard them before—are convicting. New York City has an annual budget almost equal to India's. India has over 600 million people. The per capita income in the U.S. is about 50 times greater than in India. Air conditioners in the U.S. use as much energy as the whole nation of China does for everything. China has 800 million inhabitants. The rich 30 percent of the world consumes about 50 percent of the available food. Millions in the other half live on the edge of starvation. Even more would die of starvation in our world than do, but disease kills many in weakened condition before they can die of starvation.

Enough of that for now. Let us simply make a plea for compassion for the world's needy at this Christmas time. Don't forget them. Contribute to the World Relief Commission through your congregation and to other worthy help organizations you may know about. The world's hungry seem far away, but they are there. Believe us, they are there. Do what you can to help. God bless you.



11. Jesus left no room for misunderstanding. If the people did not understand His claims, He made them absolutely clear, in John 8:56-58.

- What was He saying in these verses? \_\_\_\_\_
- What response is given by the people in v. 59? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is your response? \_\_\_\_\_

12. How old is God? \_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 102:27)

13. When we see a circle we cannot find the beginning or the ending. It is an imperfect symbol of the Alpha and the Omega. What do we find without end in the following verses?

- Psalm 72:17-19 \_\_\_\_\_ d) Romans 6:22-23 \_\_\_\_\_
- Hebrews 7:25 \_\_\_\_\_ e) Isaiah 35:10 \_\_\_\_\_
- John 13:1 \_\_\_\_\_ f) I Peter 1:5; John 10:28 \_\_\_\_\_

### III. I AM A CHILD OF THE GREAT "I AM"!

14. God says: "I am the Lord thy God" — Jesus says: "I am the Alpha and the Omega." Where do you stand in your relation to Him? Can you truly say: "I am a child of the Great I AM, the Alpha and the Omega"? \_\_\_\_\_ (If your heart is right with God — praise His Name! If you are searching for this joy of salvation, ask Him in! He, the great I AM, wants to reign in our lives (I John 1:9; Isaiah 55:6-7).)

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank Thee that Thou art the GREAT I AM, the Creator, Redeemer and Giver. Yes, the Source of all things! Thou art the first and the last, who seest and knowest all things. Lord, hold us by Thy hand and help us to daily "Be still, and know that Thou art God" that we might grow more intimately in Thee.

HYMN: "Come, Thou Almighty King" (Concordia #237, vs. 4-5)

Mrs. Gerald Knudsvig, Buxton, N. Dak.

January, 1984

## WMF BIBLE STUDY



### Lesson I

#### The "I AMs" of Jesus

At the beginning of a new year we find ourselves making new resolutions. In many cases they may be as the world says: "Be concerned with bettering our lifestyle; be busy; be industrious." But God says, in Psalm 46:10: "Be still and know that I am God."

This is an opportune time to re-evaluate our lives in the light of the future. How are we going to use this year? For our own interests or for God's glory? Do we have our priorities in right perspective? Are the things we are doing the most important in the light of eternity?

"Be still, and know that I am God." Ask yourself, "How well do I really know God?" "Is He only an acquaintance, or a dear, intimate Friend?" Perhaps our greatest need this year is to deepen our friendship with Him. The more time we spend with a person, the better we get to know him. Yes, we need a quiet time, a "Be still" time, each day, alone with the Lord. May we make the study of God's Word our first and most important priority as we cross the threshold of this new year.

My personal prayer for each one of us is that we will know Him more intimately and be willing to be melted, molded and used of Him as He so desires. As we begin the first of eleven studies on the "I AMs" of Jesus, let us look at six brief rules for Bible study:

1. Pray it open (Get your heart open — Psalm 139:23; Proverbs 4:23).
2. Read it through (Get something definite — Psalm 119:105; Proverbs 4:5-7).
3. Pray it in (Apply it — James 1:5; Psalm 119:18).
4. Write it down (Mark your Bible — Psalm 119:11; II Timothy 2:15).
5. Work it out (in daily life — Proverbs 3:6; Proverbs 16:3; James 1:22).
6. Pass it on (Tell others — Matthew 28:19-20; Colossians 3:16; John 21:17b).



## I AM THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA

### I. I AM

Before we begin our study on the "I am's" of Jesus and about Jesus Himself, we must understand the distinction of one special name of God. There are many names God carries in the Bible. The one most notable in the Hebrew language is "I AM." Let us refresh our memory of what is stated in the Word and Luther's *Small Catechism* concerning the great "I AM."

1. What is the introduction to the Ten Commandments? \_\_\_\_\_
2. We cannot see God but we know there is a God. The Bible states simply though grandly, "In the beginning God . . ." According to John 4:24, who is God? \_\_\_\_\_
3. The only true God is the Triune God. In this one divine essence give the three separate persons: \_\_\_\_\_
4. List two or three imperfect examples of the Trinity. (Example: three letters form one word, G-O-D. Be creative!)
  - 1) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2) \_\_\_\_\_
  - 3) \_\_\_\_\_
5. What does the Triune God command by the first Commandment? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What sin is a person guilty of who worships other gods? \_\_\_\_\_  
One is also guilty of the same sin if he rejects Christ as God!

### II. I AM THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA

When Jesus used the term "I AM," He chose the sacred name for God that God used to identify Himself to Moses. Read Exodus 3:1-15.

7. What did Moses ask, in Exodus 3:13? \_\_\_\_\_
8. How did God respond to Moses? (Exodus 3:14-15) \_\_\_\_\_
9. What do you think He wanted Moses and all the people to know about Him forever? Psalm 135:13 \_\_\_\_\_

## A Ω

Alpha and Omega — the first and the last letter of the Greek alphabet, used to express the Eternity of God and the all comprehensiveness of Christ. The monogram refers to Rev. 1:8.

10. Following, we will find many verses in Scripture that explain the Alpha and the Omega. Match the references on the left to the quotation of that verse on the right. (Use KJV)

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|--|--|
| <p>_____ Is. 41:4b      a) "... which is, and which was, and which is to come."</p> <p>_____ Is. 44:6b      b) "... I the Lord, the first, and with the last; I am He."</p> <p>_____ Rev. 1:4      c) "... which art, and wast, and art to come..."</p> <p>_____ Mic. 5:2c      d) "... I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty."</p> <p>_____ Rev. 11:17b      e) "... I am He; I am the first, I also am the last."</p> <p>_____ Jn. 8:58b      f) "... I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."</p> <p>_____ Rev. 1:8      g) "... whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."</p> <p>_____ Is. 48:12b      h) "... Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am."</p> <p>_____ Col. 1:17      i) "... And now, O Father, glorify thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."</p> <p>_____ Rev. 4:8b      j) "... And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist."</p> <p>_____ Is. 43:13      k) "... Yea, before the day was I am He. . . ."</p> <p>_____ Jn. 17:5      l) "... Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come!"</p> |  |
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Jesus did not speak Hebrew in everyday life. He spoke Aramaic. We believe, however, that He was able to read Hebrew or He would not have been invited to read the Scripture in the synagogues (Luke 4:16). When Jesus conversed with the Jews He was well versed in the Old Testament and many of His responses were from Scripture. This upset the Jews, to think that an uneducated Galileean could stand up against their knowledge. Jesus was having a very heated conversation with the Jews when He not only referred to the most sacred Name of God but claimed the title for Himself (John 8:48-49).



by Horst Eicke

## No homeland, no peace

It has already been 42 years since that winter of 1941 in the vicinity of Rshev, Russia. The biting wind from the Volga whistled stridently across the white landscape, hitting our faces like thistles. We were warmly bundled up, but that wind sent the frost right through our wraps to our bare skin.

We who were there can still visualize the horror. By day a fearful, mangling war raged between the two fronts which, in the snow, were like two forsaken islands. It got as cold as 60 and 70 below zero. Ice became encrusted in the corners of our eyes and in our noses. Still we had to march on. At night we always pulled back to the west. By night the villages were burning. Many of us would fall asleep, totally exhausted, and awaken with frozen arms or legs.

I think it was Franz to whom something suddenly occurred. He actually said it, but who among us would have had enough strength to be frightened or gladdened by it? "Fellows," he said, "today is Christmas!"

That little mound with the black houses and a crouching windmill was called Matyukovo. We were supposed to take the place. They were firing at us from there. A handful of Russians had fortified themselves and were hindering the retreat of our regiment. We just had one single road we could use. To our right and to our left lay hip-deep snow. And all the while we were being shot at from the houses in the village.

The wind had whipped up huge drifts in a slough through which a frozen brook ran. It was early noon. We set out. My company plodded its weary way through the woods while the handful remaining behind rearmed itself.

For the next three hours we fought, while the bulk of the regiment marched on. We suffered four dead and six wounded. I have often asked myself since then why they were shooting at us. There were scarcely 20 of them; we were a

whole regiment. One regiment on its retreat to winter position!

We took three prisoners but let all the rest lie in the snow, in the ice, on the rock-hard earth near Matyukovo.

One of the three prisoners stayed with my company. He came along behind us, dragging the ammunition chests. He had felt boots and wore a warm uniform made out of some sort of roughly-woven cloth. He said nothing. He must have been 20 years old, and handsome. Sergeant Pribil, who understood Russian and could

"Many of us would fall asleep, totally exhausted, and awaken with frozen arms or legs."

read the wilderness of those Cyrillic characters, looked at his papers and read the name of Valodya Illovitch. "From Gluchovo?" he asked. The prisoner nodded.

"Well, let's get going!" he said presently. "Keep pulling those chests—this ain't no stroll!"

Perhaps you can guess how we felt toward our young prisoner. An hour ago he had been on the other side of that firing line and we had had four killed among us and six wounded.

Or maybe we didn't have any feelings about him. He was marching; so were we. He was dragging the heavy chests; we were bearing other heavy chests with those terrible handholds. He said nothing; neither did we. It was bitterly cold.

I have forgotten the name of the village in which we stopped. About four in the afternoon, when we arrived, it was already dark. We warmed ourselves at a burning house. Maybe we could stay here for the night and not have to march for once. We entered some of the houses. The people had abandoned their village.

In one fireplace we found some warm embers. We kindled the fire, toasted some of our frozen bread,

roasted potatoes and dried out our head wraps. No one took off his boots; he might not be able to put them back on. The rest lulled us to sleep.

We all lay hither and yon, astride or on top of or leaning against each other, sleeping without dreams, without thoughts, and without hope. Valodya was in the middle of the heap, wide awake. He stared at us, saw our hatred, stared through the walls, and saw the night and the winter outside, clear on into the distance.

All of a sudden the sirens screamed, jolting us awake and to our feet. Two sleds had come from the front lines with wine, brandy, cigarettes, canned goods and small packages. The wine was frozen; the bottles had burst open inside their packages; the red crystals of ice between fragments of glass tasted strangely but looked like works of art.

Then Danner said it: "Fellows, today is Christmas!" Christmas. For altogether too short a time a deep yearning swept over us for rest, for peace, for our homeland and our families. But we were hungry and tired; our stomachs were shrivelled and our feet hurt.

Suddenly Sandhuber, a comrade from the group out in the marsh, said a few words which seemed to come from so far away that it was as if no one had spoken. But the one who spoke was Johann Sandhuber, 24, a former student in Kremsmuenster—and it was the next to the last day of his life. Thinking back on it later, we called him "our vicar" and honored him. For with us, everything he should have been and could have been had come to pass.

"I just thought of something," he said in his quiet, slow way. For a few seconds he closed his eyes. We smoked and chewed, tried to warm ourselves, hearing him perhaps only as one heard the wind outside or the

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Festive Christmas Altar

Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.

## Telling it like it was

by Mrs. Tarkel Ose  
Thief River Falls, Minn.

Over 100 years ago immigrants from Scandinavia and northern European countries began carving out new homes in the form of sod houses and dugouts on the fertile and untamed lands west of the Missouri River in central United States. Indians were sometimes sighted but were considered peaceful. Prairie fires were a greater hazard, but as land was turned by the plow the area became less vulnerable to this menace. Fire breaks were often plowed.

Lars Swenson came to America shortly after the Civil War, then returned to Sweden and later brought his family to settle in Nebraska. Charles Peterson came to Varne, Illinois, then sent money back for his sweetheart to come. They were married in Illinois but later came also to the Nebraska prairie. A Lutheran

## NO PEACE . . .

beat of one's own heart.

"And it came to pass," Sandhuber recited, "that there went out a decree from the Emperor Augustus . . ." He spoke on. We listened, almost subconsciously. And Valodya, our prisoner, also heard it, his mouth partly open. Sandhuber told the whole story. "Fear not, for unto you is born this day a Savior!" Then Sandhuber paused for a long time. He looked around at his aching comrades and finished: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will." And when he had finished, nothing seemed to have changed.

We had no candles, no tree, no songbook—just a few flares. We had no homeland and no peace. Only one thing happened: someone suddenly reached in his pocket, nudged the strange young prisoner Valodya and, without saying anything, gave him a few cigarettes. Someone else gave him an apple: a third gave him a

small piece of chocolate. Valodya stammered some, but his eyes had a warm glow. He was so young. He buried his face in his hands.

Our hopes for a night of sleep were disappointed. Already, at eight in the morning, we had to march away once more. Valodya and the two other POWs were brought to the commander of the battalion. He looked at us gratefully as he went away.

The wind still whistled up from the Volga. It had become colder but was completely clear. Above us stood a plenitude of stars.

We kept marching westward. We were tired and frozen. Franz Danner said it once more: "Fellows, today is Christmas!"

And that is how it was on that

"Franz Danner said it once more: 'Fellows, today is Christmas!'"

Christmas of 1941, deep inside Russia.

And then we had a way to go to reach our homeland. Many never made it at all. And how much of human greatness emerged out of all the desolation, the boundless pain, the deepest helplessness? Many found new hope and took fresh courage.

One thing is quite sure: We, the victims of war, carry as do no others the yearning for peace in our hearts.

(Horst Eicke is a German pastor and district official in Bitz, West Germany, and leader of a West German group of disabled veterans and survivors of World War II. This article was translated from *Kirchliches Monatsblatt*, monthly publication of the German Interest Conference of the Lutheran Church in America, by Pastor Edward A. Johnson of Dalton, Nebraska, and is reprinted with permission.)



# Settling the Nebraska prairie

church was organized in 1882 called Westlanda congregation. A Missouri Lutheran church for the German settlers, several miles away, was called Hope Lutheran.

Mrs. Hannah Swenson was a mid-wife and greeted many pioneer babies. On one such occasion twins arrived. Their father was on a drinking spree and Lars Swenson drove many miles with horses and wagon to find him. His greeting to him was, "Kom hem nu; du har familie hemma" (Come home now; you have a family at home). He came at once. Pioneer families were usually large. One dear mother said gratefully, "Jag har haft nio väl skapta barn" (I have had nine perfect children).

Charles and Anna Peterson (my paternal grandparents) lost five of their eight children in infancy, so sorrow had its part for the early pioneers. Weddings were usually held in the bride's home. Dr. C. J. Sodergren, Sr., was their pastor in the 1890's. He and his wife are buried at the county seat of Holdrege, Nebr.. My father showed me their graves many years ago. He had high regard for this fine pastor's family.

After Frank O. Peterson and Betty Swenson (my parents) were married, they lived in a combined sod house and small wooden house. The frame house contained kitchen, dining room and living room all in one, and the sod house had two bedrooms. There was a dirt cellar under the house, which was very convenient. The door to it was outside, lying flat, a little higher than the surface of the ground. The clay walls were straight up and down and I can still remember the spade marks on them. Here potatoes and other vegetables were kept. Shelves contained space for jars of canned fruit. Before there were glass jars, these were of crockery and were sealed by putting a heavy string around the crockery lid. Hot sealing wax was poured on the string. One end of the string ex-

tended beyond and when the jar was to be opened the string was pulled and the sealing wax broke and the lid was lifted off. There was also a small homemade table in the cellar and on it were crocks which were filled with milk as the pails came from the barn. When the milk had stood two days or more the cream was skimmed off and churned and the butter brought to the grocery store in exchange for sugar and flour and other items. The skim milk was carried out and given to the pigs.

Mother was stricken with arthritis at a young age. It was called rheumatism then. She would warm blanket pieces on the oven door of the cookstove, not quite closing it, then put them on her knees when she sat down to peel potatoes or mend or do other household chores. We burned corn cobs for fuel, so sometimes the stove became quite hot. If the blanket began to smoke we would put it by the door which had

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"Mother was stricken with arthritis at a young age. It was called rheumatism then."

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space under it because of the worn threshold. This would stop the smoking quickly.

One day my father was visiting his parents and younger brother a half mile away. Mother and their two little girls five and three years were in the sod house. The three-year-old came into the frame house, saw smoke coming from the oven, put the blanket by the door and went back to join her mother and sister. A little later Mother saw through a side window of the sod house that the frame door was on fire. A rolled up rug had been placed over the crack and had caught fire. Our winter wraps were in that room so she opened the storage chest and took out three shawls and wrapped them around us and tied and pinned them. One was

shades of gray, the other black and white checked paisley. We set out for our grandparents' house.

I knew I had set that fire and my heart was filled with terror. My feet took wings and outran Mother and Sister. When I arrived there and shouted, "Der är eld hemma, der är eld hemma" (there is a fire at home), Grandfather, Uncle and Father got into Uncle's first car and were on their way quickly. They picked up Mother and Sister on the way to the fire. Grandmother unwrapped the shawl and listened to the pounding heart. She picked me up and held me close and began crooning, "Stackars liten, stackars liten" (poor little one). This continued for some time. She would stop only long enough to listen to the beating of the heart. She told someone afterwards that she was afraid it would explode or stop altogether. Finally she left me on the rocker long enough to go and get cookies from her stone jar in the pantry. This was sheer delight. The rocking then slowed down. Later she went to get some of Grandfather's peppermints with XXXXs on them. When the fire had been put out and the car returned to take me home, I was almost disappointed, for all the attention had been very wonderful.

Father hung binder canvasses over the gap where the door had been. A section of the roof had also burned. I remember the half moon of new shingles when repair work had been done. A carpenter was hired and he and Father built a sun porch along the south side of the frame house. In the far end beyond the cellar door was space for a spare bed, closed off by a curtain. The cellar door, now inside, was made level with the floor. A strong pipe bannister prevented us from falling in when the cellar door was open. On the other side there were storage shelves, and later a hand-powered washing machine and a separator with a crank. There was also a bench for

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## A martyr's Christmas

In October, 1931, time was running out for Christian missions in China. If the Gospel of Christ was to be preached to every creature there, then missionary strategists would have to come forward with a bold new attack upon the convulsive movements fomented by the God-denying Communists infiltrating the nation. So it was that the famous "Two Hundred" missionary volunteers marshalled by the China Inland Mission invaded China "to preach the Gospel to every creature" in the fall of '31. But it was "too little and too late" to defeat the hordes of recruits already rallied around the Red flag. Three years later not only this raw corps of "Two Hundred" but every veteran missionary company working among China's millions would be either executed or deported by the conquering Chinese Communists.

Perhaps none of the accounts of those dark days is better known than the tragic martyrdom of John and Betty Stam. Both were beheaded by the revolutionary forces in December of '34 at Miao Sheo, Anhwei. They had served the Chinese people with warm devotion and selfless dedication for only three years, yet they left the Christian Church a legacy of faith to challenge all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth.

On their first Christmas in China, Betty Stam wrote this little poem,

### NEBRASKA . . .

separated milk and cream containers.

After the repairs and addition were about completed it was Christmas. We had a wonderful Christmas for our family in that year 1909 but I could not figure out why I was never punished or even scolded for setting fire to the house. I still have a terrible fear of fire.

calling it quite simply, "Christmas." Her parents found it after her martyrdom, "a rough sketch penciled on an old envelope." Evidently her thoughts on that night raced through her heart and mind like hot lava. The pressure was unbearable and there was no time to hunt for pen and ink. A stub of pencil, a torn cast-off envelope would do; her martyr spirit must give its testimony to Christ now!

No sheep in the folds,  
No star in the west,  
No Babe lulled to sleep  
On His young mother's breast.

But sheep of God's flock  
Straying far from His love,  
And a glorified Man,  
Interceding above.

No gold and no myrrh,  
No sweet frankincense,  
But the gift of the heart  
When the sinner repents.

No music on earth  
From the angelic bands;  
But the praise and the prayer  
Of the saved of all lands.

Apart from the Christ—  
No joy at His birth,  
Though merry and gay  
All the feasting on earth;

The candles burn out,  
And the feasting is done;  
But the Glory of Heaven  
Shines forth in God's Son.

Time has not stanchd the flow of hate and human misery since the fateful year of Betty Stam's martyrdom. If anything has changed it is that the moral deterioration is far more pronounced today. The face of the whole earth erupts with outbreaks of violence so that timid souls despair over angels singing of "peace on earth among men of good will," and greet with undisguised impatience the shepherds' tale of the Babe "lying in a manger and wrapped in swaddling clothes." Such things appear so remote, so irrelevant in their fruitless search for some meaning or

purpose in the life they must live here and now.

Betty Stam understood such people. She knew it was not the story of Christmas that satisfies the heart of men. That is why she says there truly are "no sheep in the fold," "no star . . . no Babe," no "mother's breast" nor "sweet frankincense." These all belonged to that first Christmas, to the men and women entrusted with the Child. God had something more for us.



She shows us "other sheep" who have "strayed from His Love," and a "glorified Man" risen from the dead and "interceding above" that all those straying lambs might also be brought into His fold. In short, our Christmas scene is that of a multitude of folk "scattered like sheep without a shepherd," lost because they are strangers to the Good Shepherd of the sheep, who "died for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world."

She shows us, too, wise men who bring, not their gifts of gold and scented things, but a life for the



Saviour to receive. Only those who give their life away to Christ can really sing, and their songs drown out the sweetest refrain angels ever sang, for God has turned them from their sin to sing with "the saved of all lands." Our Christmas joy expands to take in all our brethren in every land; we are members of a great company of people, the holy Christian Church of our Lord Jesus Christ and His apostles.

Yet there is more that Betty Stam shows us on this joyous Christmas Day. The martyr-poetess warns us that there can be "No joy at His birth, though merry and gay all the feasting on earth," unless we see that "the Glory of Heaven shines forth in God's Son." She understood the profound truth undergirding all our Christian missionary effort; to bring the glory of heaven into the lives of sinful men. Her testimony was like that of the great Apostle who wrote: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." There is no greater gift anyone can receive at Christmas than this Light which shines forth from the face of Jesus Christ. To see Jesus, to discover all the glory of Heaven that shines forth from His face, to receive the gift of Life and Liberty from His nail-pierced hand—this makes our Christmas an everlasting joy, a perpetual song of praise.

The scattered sheep and their searching shepherd, the saved of every land and their songs of praise, the glory of heaven and God's beloved Son—these filled the martyr's life with faith, hope and the greatest gift of all, love. She served the Lord with uncluttered mind and soaring

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"Betty Stam had fought her way back through confusing theology and contradictory traditions to drink at the very fountain of Christianity."

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## THE FAITH of the SHEPHERDS

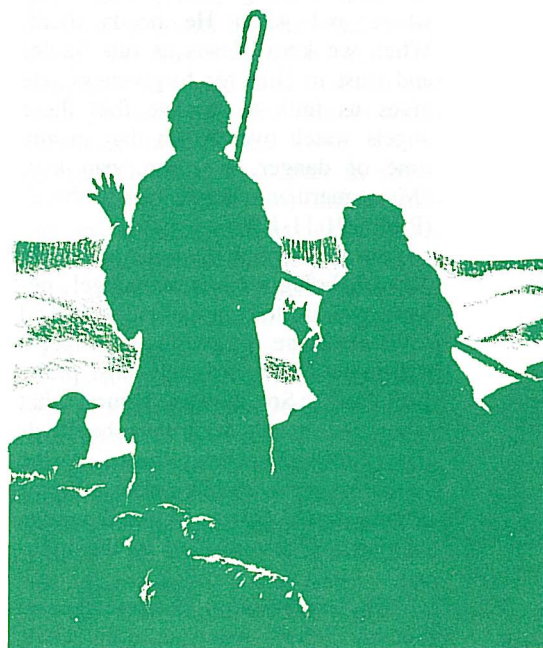
spirit because everything was so simple, so profoundly beautiful. She understood with unclouded clarity the role of the Virgin and all who paid homage to "her first-born Child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." Highly favored of God, they were blessed among men, sharing with all their brethren a common faith in "the only wise God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." Betty Stam had fought her way back through confusing theology and contradictory traditions to drink at the very fountain of Christianity. She had found the secret of Life itself and with that secret she sought to "set the prisoners free," and to bind up the wounds of "souls by sin oppressed."

To peel away the outward shell of our Christian profession of faith and expose the everlasting fruits of our Lord's birth is a rare gift indeed. We are so pompous—so impressed by the splendor of external things, that outward profession of Christ is almost smothered to death by the very symbolics we employ in our worship of the Lord. Liturgy nearly snuffs out the life of most Christians and dulls their senses to the merciful appeals of their risen Saviour. Nevertheless, at all cost let us press through to all that is basic and essential to a life of faith. Let us recover, by God's merciful help, the simple vision of the Savior's love for all His creatures and His lavish preparations for the full and complete salvation of all who will put their trust in Him.

—Source unknown

What a miracle the childlike trust and faith of the shepherds was! When the angel of the Lord said to them: "And this is the sign unto you: Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger," this was a sign which many would have reasoned thus: "The fact that a little child lies in a manger does not prove him to be the Saviour of the world. Such a Saviour should be born in a palace." A cradle "beset with gold and jewels rare," as we sing in Luther's Christmas hymn, were none too good for Him. But it has always been true that faith and reason must settle the controversy between them at the lowly manger. We must remember that if God's love, the greatest of all gifts, has been given us in Christ Jesus, then many things connected with this gift must remain strange and inexplicable to us. We must not delay to accept the gift until we are able to comprehend it with our understanding.

F. Hammarsten







## The Christmas Angel

by Mrs. Arnold McCarlson, Eagle Butte, S. Dak.

It had always been a tradition in our family to place a star on the top of the Christmas tree. But this year I had bought a unique ornament which was an angel with a star in the center. The light shone brightly in all directions giving one a sense of peace as it spread its gleam out over the Christmas tree and into the surrounding areas.

As I stood admiring it, I could hear my two grandchildren, who were visiting me, talking. Andy said, "I wonder if that is my guardian angel on the tree?" while Lucy answered, "Of course not, that's the Christmas angel who sang, 'Glory to God in the highest to the shepherds when Jesus was born.'"

As usual they turned to me for an answer. So sitting down in the big chair with Andy and Lucy beside me, we talked about angels. I told them that angels are the spirits that God created to serve Him and care for His children. There are millions of them in heaven ready to do the Father's bidding. They are sent where and when He needs them. When we know Jesus as our Savior and trust in Him for forgiveness, He gives us faith to believe that these angels watch over us so that in any time of danger, we, too, can say, "My guardian angel was there" (Psalm 91:11-12).

"But, yes, Lucy, you are right about it being a Christmas angel, because we are told in Luke 2:13: 'And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.' So it was natural that when the angels told the shepherds that God's Son was born as the Savior of the world, a whole army of angels should fill the sky and join in singing, 'Glory to God in the highest!'"

"Oh," said Andy, "I remember in Sunday School when an angel came

to bring to Zechariah the good news about his son John."

"Yes," said Lucy, "Angels brought good news to many people—to Mary about Jesus . . . and remember when Daniel faced the lion! He said, 'My God sent His angel and shut the lion's mouth!'"

Andy was deep in thought and I knew he was remembering his Bible stories. Then all at once, "Lucy, remember when Peter was in prison and an angel awakened him, led him past the guards and through the gates that opened into the streets? Peter couldn't believe it at first but finally said, 'The Lord has sent His angels.'"

"Andy said, 'I wonder if that is my guardian angel on the tree?'"

So the talk became more personal as the children and I related many experiences in our lives about how our guardian angels are always there to help us when we are obedient to Him.

We decided that some folks call it "luck" but those who are God's chil-

dren by faith in Jesus Christ have the special promise that God uses His angels to protect and guard them from evil. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?" (Hebrews 1:14).

Now, during the Christmas season as we sing songs like "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" or "Angels From the Realms of Glory," let us remember that angels announced the arrival of our Savior, Jesus Christ, on earth. By the same token it tells us in Matthew 24:31: "He will send out His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." He will come again!

Let our prayer be at this Christmas time that we may have faith through Jesus to trust that His holy angels will take us one day to heaven.

## Little children, sweetly sing

Little children, sweetly sing,  
On this birthday of our King;  
Now a joyous anthem raise,  
In glad notes of grateful praise.

See, He leaves His Father's throne,  
Lays aside His starry crown,  
And to save the sons of men,  
Christ is born in Bethlehem.  
Hark! a new song rends the sky,  
"Glory be to God on high,  
Peace on earth, good will to men,  
Christ is born in Bethlehem!"  
Children, catch the wondrous sound,  
Let it peal the earth around,  
Till all nations, tribes, and men,  
Love the Babe of Bethlehem.

Author unknown



## AFLC people meet Francis Schaeffer

World-renowned theologian and author Doctor Francis Schaeffer met with members of the Association Free Lutheran Congregations and AFLTS seminarians in a two-and-a-half hour visit last month.

Schaeffer, author of *The Christian Manifesto*, *How Shall We Then Live?*, and 23 other books, met with the AFLC representation, October 25, in his Rochester, Minnesota home.

During the meeting, Schaeffer underlined what he feels are the six most vital issues the evangelical church faces today. They are:

- The battle for the Bible. "The Scripture issue is the biggest issue of our day," Schaeffer said. "The Bible is true in all its parts—for that I would be willing to fight the

battle of my lifetime. The Scripture question is that important to me."

- The battle for human life. "Abortion is not the issue," he said, "it goes beyond that. There's a lack of respect for human life."
- The battle for the family. "So many are falling for the alternative lifestyle (live-in relationships without marriage)," Schaeffer said.
- The battle for freedom of speech in the public school system. "They want to shut religion out of the classroom and into a little square," Schaeffer said. "They're trying to shut Christianity out from the whole flow of life. It's a matter of free speech."

- The battle for the protection of the Christian schools. "We need to protect the rights we have," he said.

- The battle for compassionate use of accumulated wealth. Christian businessmen need to make their money honestly, Schaeffer explained, and use that money "wisely" for a world that needs help.

Schaeffer ended the session by making clear that "we evangelicals need to show solidarity in these times."

"I know what's happening in the Lutheran church today," said the Presbyterian minister, "I have followed the news in the Lutheran church. We who believe in the Bible's inerrancy are on the same side of the chasm, and we need to show unity in these times, for the sake of the Bible and for the sake of truth. We conservatives can't sit in our little shells."

Schaeffer is founder of an international study center known as L'Abri (The Shelter) Fellowship. He lives in Switzerland, but owns a home in Rochester, where he undergoes cancer therapy at the Mayo Clinic.

Schaeffer's wife, Edith, also is a Christian author.



*Martin Luther*

Martin Luther:  
500 years

### Luther's ailments

A man was complaining to him one day of the itch; said Luther: "I should be very glad to change with you, and to give you ten florins into the bargain. You don't know what a terrible thing this vertigo of mine is. Here, all today, I have not been able to read a letter through, nor even two or three lines of the Psalter consecutively. I do not get beyond three or four words, when, buzz, buzz! the noise begins again, and often I am near falling off my chair with the pain. But the itch, that's nothing; nay, it is rather a beneficial complaint."

One day when he had been preaching at Smalcald, he had, after dinner, a severe attack of his malady, whereupon he knelt down and prayed fervently: "O my God, my Lord Jesus! Thou knowest with what zeal I have preached Thy Word; if it be to the glory of Thy name, come to my suc-

cour; if not, close my eyes."

"My head is so weak, so unsteady, that I can neither read nor write, especially when fasting." (February 9, 1543)

"I am feeble and weary of life. I would fain bid adieu to the world, which is now given over to the Evil One. God grant me a favorable hour for my departure and a prosperous journey. Amen." (March 15, 1543)

... Little wonder, then, that the thought of an early death was ever present with him. Thus on the occasion of the death of a pious man he said: "This man fell gently asleep; he did not know that he died, and does not yet know that he is dead; for he fell asleep in the Word and knowledge of Christ. Dear Lord Jesus, grant unto me soon such a quiet and blessed death, and take me also out of this misery and vale of tears to Thyself." E. Haertel

### IN MEMORIAM

Key: The name of the town is the address of the deceased. Following that is listed the name of the deceased, age, date of death, and the church in which she held membership.

WASHINGTON  
Everett

Mrs. Annaliese Gruber Fish, 27,  
Oct. 24, Calvary

### CORRECTION

In our Oct. 25 issue, page 2, the congregation which gave the Luther bust to the Association Schools was incorrectly identified as St. Paul's congregation. We should have said St. Peder's congregation. We are sorry. The church is located at Dannebrog, Nebr..



## AFLC officers

### President

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### Vice-President

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GLORY  
to God in the  
Highest, and on  
earth Peace,  
Good Will  
toward men

Luke 2:14