Bible study – Wednesday 6:30
Worship Service at the Methodist Church at 10:30.
Listen to Pastor Briggs on Sunday morning at 10:05 on KRWS FM 100.7 or 94.5
The Food Bank needs tuna.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY
December 7 - Elizabeth Byron
December 9 – Tami Melville
December 18 – Karen Briggs

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY
December 19 – Lori & Rob Byron
December 22 – Geraldine and Harlan Anderson
December 30 – Bill & Marde Morris

December 5
Malachi 3:1-4
Luke 1:68-79
Philippians 1:3-11
Luke 3:1-6

December 12
Zephaniah 3:14-20
Isaiah 12:2-6
Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:7-18

December 19
Micah 5:2-5
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45

December 26
I Samuel 2:18-20, 26
Psalm 148
Colossians 3:12-17
Luke 2:41-52

December 31
Ecclesiastes 3:1-13
Psalm 8
Revelation 21:1-6
Matthew 25:31-46

Christmas Eve
Isaiah 9:2-7
Psalm 96
Titus 2:11-14
Luke 2:1-20

Dates to Remember
December 5 – Friends of Faith meeting at 9:30
December 15 – choir practice
December 19 - Choir will sing
December 19 – The Methodists will hold their district meeting.
December 25 – Christmas Eve service
December 26 – no church
The food bank needs tuna this month.

More Than Coincidence

I walked through a cemetery late at night. Even by the light of the full moon, the names on the tombstones remained shrouded in darkness. Then lightning zigzagged through the sky and illumined the headstone before me. Wes Smith. My heart stopped. I knew that name.

I awoke with a start. It was only a dream, thank goodness. Still, I was unsettled. Why had I dreamed of Wes? Sure, we’d liked each other as sixth graders. We met in the fall of ‘72 and clicked right away. He was so handsome, with his soft brown eyes and sweet smile. But then he moved away. I hadn’t really thought about him in the four years since. It was just a strange dream, I told myself. It doesn’t mean anything.

But over the next few days I couldn’t shake the feeling that I had to tell Wes what I’d seen. I tracked down his address and wrote him a letter about the dream. But I didn’t hear back. Eventually Wes, the dream and the letter slipped from my mind.

One day, four years later, I dropped by the college dorm suite next door to borrow a book. “Hang on,” my neighbor said. “I’ll grab it from my backpack.” While I was waiting, I glanced around and noticed her high school prom photos. I looked closer. Her prom date. Those soft brown eyes. That sweet smile. He was bigger and taller, but I recognized him instantly. Wes.

My neighbor came back with the book. I told her how I knew Wes and that I’d love to catch up. She put us in touch. As it turned out, he remembered me too. He was coming to town and wanted to meet.

On Friday night, Wes and I found ourselves a college hangout, catching up over chicken wings. We filled each other in on the past eight years. Then Wes’s tone turned serious. “Donna,” he said, “I want to thank you for sending me that letter.”

Wes explained that he’d gotten into drugs as a teen. But then he got his letter. It scared him into seeing that the way he was living might make my dream a reality. “That letter you sent was the turning point. After I got it, I stopped doing drugs. It’s been almost 40 years since that day. I never saw or heard from Wes again. But I’ll never forget how we reconnected and the strange dream that turned out to be so much more.

Donna Aroisa
Santa Miracle

David Oester

As is true of many of us, David Oester learned about Santa’s miracles as a youth. This is his story:

Let me give you some background. I attended the first six years of school in a two-room building; the first room held the first through fourth grades and the second room was for the fifth and sixth graders. The schoolhouse was located at Deer Island, Oregon, a campsite used by Lewis and Clark on their journey to the Oregon coast on November 5, 1805. In the 1950s it was a wide spot on Highway 30 that followed the Columbia River to Astoria.

It was during this time that my dad, Raleigh Oester, got a job as a rural mail carrier for the Deer Island area. These were hard times for many people. I remember one of my classmates would not come to school one day a week and it was always the same day each week. It turns out that that particular day was wash day at his home and he only had one shirt and trousers to wear.

Another friend never wore shoes during the summer, as had to same them for the school year.

I didn’t realize while growing up that an economic depression had caused severe poverty. I had food to eat and a shelter over my hear and never gave it another thought. I never knew that it was hard on my mom and dad who struggled to keep us clothed and fed. Recently my mom told me that a few days before Christmas she would hide some of our old toys and then wrap them up so we would have something under the Christmas tree to open.

My most vivid childhood memory is when my brothers and I would accompany my parents on Christmas Eve to spread some holiday cheer. Dad would put on his red Santa suit, complete with padding and a fake white beard, load up the car with presents, and deliver gifts to some of the children on his mail route who he knew would not have a Christmas because money was too tight.

I did not realize at the time that many of the homes we visited were not much more than shacks. Dad knew the names of everyone in each household. He knew the hardships they suffered, as he too experienced them in the past. He would park the family car away from the driveway so the occupants would not recognize it was the mailman’s car. Then, my dad would call out the names to my brothers, mother, and I, and we would retrieve the presents and stuff them into his white bag.

When the family answered his knock on the door he would greet the parents and children by name. They had no idea how this man dressed in a red Santa suit and a white beard could possibly know their names. The children’s eyes would shine with a brightness that is hard to explain, and the parents’ mouths would drop open in shock.

I remember the last stop we made. Dad walked up to the dairy farm, passing the main house, and stopped at the hired hands’ cabin. He knocked on the door, and when the children opened it, he greeted them with a “Merry Christmas!” and handed out the wrapped gifts.

While Dad was delivering the presents, I asked my mom why he gave away all the presents. I was thinking of how nice they would have been for our own Christmas. Mom looked at me and said, “Those children will not have a Christmas; their parents are too poor to buy their children anything. You will have a Christmas, and now so will they.”

“But why does Dad dress up as Santa,” I asked. My mother told me it was so not to embarrass the families. They must not think it is charity, but a miracle on Christmas Eve.

I never forgot the kindness that my parents showed for those who were less fortunate than we were. My dad never attended church, but he lived the higher spiritual law of “love thy fellow man,” a lesson that has stuck with me.

Years later, as a husband and father, when my oldest son was working on his Eagle Scout badge, he chose a “sub-for-Santa” project. He collected newspapers and soda cans, held car washes, and created other money-making projects to raise money for a family with two children who could not afford Christmas presents, and together we hauled the dinner, presents, and tree to the family’s home.

When my son told the woman who answered the door what he was doing there, she was shocked – especially when she saw the tree, dinner, and gifts my son brought into the house.

Even after he set up the tree and delivered all the gifts, the family had no idea who this young man was or why he performed a miracle for them on Christmas Eve.

I was so proud of my son for carrying in the tradition begun by his grandfather.
Santa Mom
by Karen Moon

I have to give my mother credit for so many things. In my book, she definitely wins the Best Mother award in the 1950s, especially at Christmastime. I never appreciated all she did for us until she passed away in 1978 at the age of 61.

My mom divorced my father in 1952 and then found out she had chronic lymphatic leukemia and would not be receiving any child support. My sister and I were 8 and 6 years of age respectively. Mom found temporary employment in corner stores and school cafeterias until a more permanent position came available with the Lockport Felt Company in Newfane, N.Y. She tried her best to make a life for us. I remember someone telling me what my mother always said: “I’m not letting anyone else raise my daughters.” And she stuck to that.

At times it was hard having a “divorced mother.” In those Good Old Days, prejudicial and bullying attitudes existed too. I often heard comments like “You don’t have a daddy” and “My mom won’t let me stay overnight because you don’t have a daddy there.” Though they hurt, I remember just ignoring their comments and thinking it wasn’t nice to talk to me like that or talk about my mother like that either.

At Christmastime, though, I never felt different from other kids my age. My mom always made our Christmases special. My birthday is in mid-December, and one year, when money most had been tight, she asked me if I would like one big or two small presents— one for my birthday and one for Christmas. In other words, if I chose the “big present, I would get it on Christmas and nothing on my birthday. Boy, this choice was a tough one for me!

My mom must have thought that strategy was working. However, after a few years, I caught on to the fact that my sister’s birthday is in August and no one ever asked her if she wanted one big or two small presents. I teased my mother about that for many years. I might have been upset in the earlier years, but that wouldn’t have lasted long because my mom always had a way to make each of us feel special.

Christmas season 1953, my sister and I asked for a bicycle. We didn’t get it as we had hoped. We did receive some wonderful surprises that year anyway.

But then the next Christmas came along in 1954, we got our wish. Christmas morning came and my sister and I ran out to the tree. Our eyes, I know, were as big as saucers. There they were—our new bicycles, loaded with baskets! We didn’t get anything else that year, but we didn’t care. We felt we had found gold. (I guess that year I chose one big present or someone chose for me. Either way, it was a good choice!)

Years later, I learned my mom had paid a local retailer, L. E. Pettit Company, $1 a week from December 1953 to December 1954 so she could give us those bicycles for Christmas.

Living north of Buffalo, N.Y., in the rural town of Newfane, my sister and I had to be patient until there was a clear day to try out our bikes. Cold weather, snow and ice storms were prevalent that time of the year. The waiting seemed forever.

I remember the day we ran home from school together. We had been antsy all day in school, knowing the weather had cleared a bit. We ran upstairs to our apartment, grabbed our bikes, and prepared for the cold by bundling up in our hats, mittens and boots. It seemed like we rode for hours, and I’m sure it was probably only 20 minutes! We were so proud of those bikes.

We definitely learned patience waiting for the next nice day. We were just so thankful and happy to have our own new bicycles. Most of all, though, we were especially thankful that our “Santa Mom” was able to give them to us.
All of us kids knew what we had seen, and when we get together now, we still talk about the night we saw Santa Claus. It didn’t matter how much our parents and Grandpa and Grandma teased us; we knew that for some unknown reason we were blessed — singled out if you will — to have seen Santa.

I have thought long and hard about our vision over the many Christmas Eves since that very special one. Santa Claus is a supernatural being, and maybe as a spirit, he really can project his image to thousands, maybe millions, of kids who truly believe in the idea of a kind, benevolent gift bearer. Or perhaps the spirit of Christmas itself can manifest to the hearts and minds of young children however they may best receive the message of love and sharing.

Christmas Recipe

by Eve Reis

Take a bit of cheerfulness,
A pinch of laughter, too,
Next take a cup of thoughtfulness
And stir them through and through.

Add to this tranquility
A verse of “Silent Night,”
That ever quiet we may be
When God sends His holy light.

Gently fold in some tenderness,
A handclasp or smile will do.
Perhaps it could be a fond caress,
Or a rose with a drop of dew.

Set aside a moment while you go
For spices, herbs, a scent of pine...
For music and fun, a candle’s glow,
And a star that was the sign.

Now mix and stir and fold again,
Then add some mistletoe,
A bit of faith, and love, and then
Into the oven your cake must go.

Where warmth and affection will combine
To make this cake come true.
Garnish with happiness, truth so fine,
Enough for you and you!

Cut a piece, but save some too
For every day of the year.
Serve with a prayer for peace on earth,
And a heavenly kingdom near.

‘Tis the season for kindling the fire of hospitality in the hall,
the genial fire of charity in the heart.
Another Santa Miracle

Jacob white is completely convinced that he saw Santa Claus when he was eight years old. No one will ever convince him otherwise. Here is Jacob’s story:

I grew up in a small town in Idaho, not terribly far from Boise City, and every Christmas the entire White family would drive to the old home place outside of Nampa where Grandma and Grandpa White still lived. Everyone—my mom and dad, my two uncles, my aunts, and us five cousins—would try to arrive two or three days before Christmas Eve. We’d attend Christmas Eve services at the little country church that my father and his two brothers had attended as kids, and then we’d head back to our grandparents’ bit, old farmhouse for a fantastic dinner.

Grandpa White always had a Christmas tree set up in the living room, and on the first day that all of us cousins would arrive, we would have the honor of decorating the branches with the same lights, colored balls, and streamers that had served the White family for at least thirty years. I remember that some of the wires for the lights had electrician’s tape wrapped around the worn spots.

On Christmas Eve, after Grandma white read “The Night Before Christmas,” the kids were sent up to bed. Since it was a large house, there was plenty of room for everyone. My brother John and I got one room with a double bed, and our three cousins—Grace, Judy, and Margie—got another with two single beds. Since Grace, at eleven, was the oldest, she claimed a bed all to herself, while Judy and Margie had to snuggle up in the other bed. John and I could hear the girls whispering and giggling, and we lay there talking about what we were going to get From Santa on Christmas morning.

Grace, who thought she was so smart and grownup, had tried to spread doubt earlier that evening when she said that she didn’t believe that there really was a Santa. She got shushed pretty quickly by her parents, because she was upsetting Judy and Margie, who were both five years old and firm believers in Santa Claus.

I had heard rumors myself from some kids at school who no longer believed in Santa, but Mom said that they were certain to get lumps of coal in their stockings on Christmas morning. I didn’t repeat the negative whispers to John, who, at six, had no doubts about the reality of the big guy in the bright red suit.

Grandma White had replaced the usual night light in the hallway with one shaped like an angel in honor of the season. Both the bedrooms where we cousins lay trying to fall asleep faced the hallway, and as I was lying in bed looking at the light, my eyelids grew heavier. Johnny was just drifting off. At least two of the girls were still whispering.

Suddenly, the night light was blocked by the shadow of a very big man. The adult men in the white family were all tall and quite thin. The man was extremely rotund. I shook Johnny awake, and I could hear the girls beginning to talk out loudly.

From above his head, a reddish light shone on the man. We could all clearly see the image of Santa Claus. He wore a red suit, black boots, and his white beard came down to the middle of his chest. He stood there for about ten seconds or so, smiling and waving at us. Then he disappeared.

All five of us kids ran screaming down the stairs. It was a wonder that one of us didn’t trip and break a boy part or two. We scampered into the living room, shouting at the top of our lungs that we had seen Santa Claus. Grace—the scoff—er, the disbelief—er, was screaming the loudest.

It took a long time for the adults to get us kids quieted down. We had all seen the same thing: A fat, jolly, bearded man in a bright red suit. Of course, all the grownups laughed at us. Grandpa wondered if we had sneaked down the stairs and sampled some of the cider from the big glass bowl while they weren’t looking.

Since Grace and I were the oldest, we were singled out for false accusations of having told the younger kids ghost stories and having managed to scare them—and ourselves—with our spooky tales.
*President Dwight D. Eisenhower is given credit for sending the first “official” Christmas card from the White House. An art print also became the standard Christmas gift for the president’s staff, a practice continued to this day.

Here Comes Santa Claus...
*The first department store Santa was James Edgar, who, during Christmas season beginning in 1890, would wander about his store (the Boston Store) in Brockton, Massachusetts, dressed as Santa Claus, talking to the children of customers.

Other Christmas Customs
Ever wonder how the custom of giving Christmas gifts originated?
*The ancient Romans gave each other gifts on the calends (first day) of January, and the practice spread throughout the Roman Empire.
*Eventually, Christians moved the custom to December 25, although many Christians still give gifts on January 6, the feast of the Epiphany, commemorating the manifestation of Jesus’ diving nature to the Magi.

As many mince pies as you taste at Christmas, so many happy months will you have.

Treasured Traditions of the Season

The tradition of gift-giving is rooted in the Magi’s act of bearing gifts to the infant Jesus and in the realization that Christ was a gift from God to the world.

In England, Victorians exchanged gifts on New Year’s Day until the late 1800s when the custom shifted to Christmas Day. The thought and creativity behind the giving became far more important than the gift itself. This story by Gerald Horton Bath illustrates the Christmas tradition of giving.

The African boy listened carefully as the teacher explained why it is that Christians give presents to each other on Christmas Day. “The gift is an expression of our joy over the birth of Jesus and our friendship for each other,” she said.

When Christmas Day came, the boy brought to the teacher a seashell of lustrous beauty. “Where did you ever find such a beautiful shell?” the teacher asked as she gently fingered the gift.

The youth told her that there was only one spot where such extraordinary shells could be found. When he named the place, a certain bay several miles away, the teacher was left speechless.

“Why...why, it’s gorgeous...wonderful, but you shouldn’t have gone all that way to get a gift for me.”

His eye brightening, the boy answered, “Long walk part of gift.”

Treasured traditions shared with others can be a tremendous blessing at Christmas. Time is measured, lessons are learned, and memories are made by cherished family customs centered on the celebration of Jesus’ birth.

Treasured traditions shared with others can be a tremendous blessing at Christmas. Time is measured, lessons are learned, and memories are made by cherished family customs centered on the celebration of Jesus’ birth.
Winter Trivia and Tips

What is the Winter Solstice

Winter solstice is the day with the fewest hours of sunlight during the whole year. In the Northern Hemisphere, it always occurs around December 21 or 22. (In the Southern Hemisphere, it is around June 20 or 21.)

The word solstice comes from the Latin words for “sun” and “to stand still.” In the Northern Hemisphere, as summer advances to winter, the points on the horizon where the Sun rises and sets advance southward each day; the high point in the Sun’s daily path across the sky, which occurs at local noon, also moves southward each day.

As the winter solstice, the Sun’s path has reached its southernmost position. The next day, the path will advance northward. However, a few days before and after the winter solstice, the change is so slight that the Sun’s path seems to stay the same, or stand still. The Sun is directly overhead at “local noon” on winter solstice at the latitude called the Tropic of Capricorn.

Winter Driving Tips for Car Safety
*Keep your gas tank filled above halfway to avoid emergencies in bad weather.
*Stuck on the ice without sand or cat litter? In a pinch, you can take the mats out of your car, place them next to the tires, and slowly inch the car onto and across the mats.
*Gently run a small, moistened, clot bag of iodized salt on the outside of your windshield to prevent the ice and snow from sticking.
*Fog-proof your mirrors and the inside of you windshields with shaving cream. Spray and wipe it off with paper towels.
*Avoid driving when you have the flu, which can reduce your reaction time almost six times as much as moderate alcohol intake.

Christmas Traditions

Christmas Trees
*The first American Christmas tree can be credited to a Hessian soldier by the name of Henrick Rodmore, who was captured at the Battle of Bennington in 1776. He then went to work on the farm of Samuel Denslow in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, where for the next 14 years he put up and decorated Christmas trees in the Denslow family home.

*The first retail Christmas tree lot was established in 1851 by a Pennsylvanian named Mark Carr, who hauled two ox sleds loaded with Christmas trees from the Catskill Mountains to the sidewalks of New York City.

*The first president to set up a Christmas tree in the White House was Franklin Pierce, and the first president to establish the National Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony on the White House lawn was Calvin Coolidge.

*In 1882, the first tree lights were sold in New York City.

Christmas Cards
*The first American to print and sell Christmas cards was Louis Prang of Roxbury, Massachusetts, who began publishing cards in 1875.
Have ‘holidays’ outrun Holy Days?

By A. James Rudin

December is the month of the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah and the Christian festival of Christmas.

But a third event known simply as “the holidays” is upon us, a happening that may in fact be more widely celebrated than either Hanukkah or Christmas.

The religious significance of the first two observances is in sharp contrast to the secular roots of the third.

Hanukkah is the Hebrew word for dedication. The celebration calls the biblical story of the Jewish struggle against the Greco-Syrian empire in the years 168-165 before the Christian era.

The Maccabees, a group of Jewish freedom fighters, rebelled against the cultural, political and religious uniformity that the empire’s ruler, Antiochus, sought to impose upon his captive subjects.

Commentary

After three years of warfare, the Maccabees reclaimed the Temple of Jerusalem, cleansed it of Greco-Syrian elements and dedicated the sacred area to the worship of God.

The holiday commemorates one of the first recorded instances of a successful challenge by a minority to large imperial power.

The military victory was only a minor defeat for Antiochus’ proud empire, but for Jews and, ultimately, for Christians, it was an event of transcendent importance.

Some historians have claimed that because the Maccabean victory assured Judaism’s survival, it also assured the emergence of Christianity less than 200 years later.

In modern terms, Hanukkah represents a victory for religious pluralism, the right of a minority to remain distinct. Today Hanukkah is generally celebrated in the home and lasts eight days. Families and friends light candles, exchange gifts and recite prayers of deliverance and thanksgiving.

Christ’s Mass, or Christmas, is a major religious festival that recalls the birth of the Jewish teacher who became the Christian messiah.

For centuries, the Christmas story of Jesus of Nazareth has inspired great music and art as well as special worship services. The holiday’s theme is one of peace and good will.

Like Hanukkah, Christmas is a time for family activities.

While both Hanukkah and Christmas convey authentic religious messages, they are often overwhelmed by “the holidays.”

This third festival actually starts in November with intensive advertising campaign urging us to buy expensive presents for family and friends.

A guilt trip awaits laggards, who are warned that spending during “the holidays” is an important step in our nation’s economic revival.

Heavy alcohol consumption especially at “holiday parties,” is a staple of the season, along with an increased number of automobile fatalities. Movie ads boldly announce that a new horror film will be released “in time for the holidays.”

With “the holidays” comes the relentless pursuit of merriment, along with a rise in the suicide rate. Tragically, many lonely people experience a sense of failure because they don’t share the artificially created bonhomie.

Perhaps during “the holidays” Jews and Christians can somehow recapture the powerful messages of their two festivals of faith. But it will be a battle.

Christmas is more than a gift-laden tree,
It is caring and sharing unselfishly.

By Laura Baker Haynes
The Way in a Manger

by Billy Blackwood

God has an amazing way of choosing the undesirable things of earth and placing His beauty there. The presence of God changes our perceptions. It opens our eyes from the physical into the spiritual. It illuminates our vision. God takes the ordinary and makes it extraordinary; the natural, supernatural; the worthless, priceless. So, it was that first night in Bethlehem. Only the God of the universe would have chosen a manger as the place to bring His son into the world, a feeding trough for Mary and Joseph to lay the Word made flesh; certainly not a place of splendor or a palace for a king.

For many people that night, thoughts were anywhere but directed towards a stable in Bethlehem. How different today. Now (nativity scenes) are found in homes or front yards of families right in your neighborhood. The manger today has been transformed into a thing of beauty and holiness.

But the beauty of the manger is not because of what it is, but because of Who resided there. When we see the manger, we see Jesus. And it makes it beautiful.

Far from the material extravagance of Christmas today, the first Christmas was born of humility. And humility is the great extravagance, even to the death on the cross.

That first night probably found many people staring down wrong paths and dead-end street. But I have a feeling that on that same night all of heaven had their eyes fixed on a tiny manger.
Outside, the atmosphere may have been noisy, but I wonder if all heaven was suddenly silenced as the Son of God came forth from the womb of a virgin. There were no scents of cinnamon or potpourri that evening, but surely Mary and Joseph breathed the very fragrance of God as they cradled the Savior in their arms. No sparkling lights hung from the exterior of that little manger, but the Light of the world filled the interior. And although there would be no decorated Christmas tree in the corner, God would choose another tree for His Son; the cross.

The manger seems such an unfitting place for God to have chosen for His only Son. And yet even today God still looks to place His beauty in undesirable places, dirty and unlovely mangers that now take the form of you and me. It is the love of God to look down from heaven and say, “There is another manger, and I would love to dwell there, too.” And so He knocks to see if we will let Him in. And if we do, He takes our manger and transforms it. And over time it becomes a beautiful and a holy thing.

But the beauty of our manger is not because of what we are, but because of Who resides in us. And I pray that when others see our manger, they will see Jesus. For He alone can make a manger beautiful.

A man in Scotland calls his son in London the day before Christmas Eve and says, “I hate to ruin your day, but I have to tell you that your mother and I are divorcing; forty-five years of misery is enough.

“Dad, what are you talking about?” the son screams. We can’t stand the sight of each other any longer,” the father says. “We’re sick of each other, and I’m sick of talking about this, so call you sister in Leeds and tell her.”
Frantic, the son calls his sister, who explodes on the phone. “Like hell they’re getting divorced,” she shouts. “I’ll take care of this.
She calls Scotland immediately, and screams at her father, You are NOT getting divorced. Don’t do a single thing until I get there. I’m calling my brother back, and we’ll both be there tomorrow. Until then, don’t do a thing, DO YOU HEAR ME?” and hangs up.
The old man hangs up his phone and turns to his wife. “Okay,” he says, they’re coming for Christmas and they’re paying their own way.
Affirmations of Christmas

I believe that Christmas is more than a time for parties and ornaments; it is a time for remembering Christ and the incarnation of God’s love in human flesh.

I believe there are gifts more important than the ones under the Christmas tree, the things we teach our children, the way we share ourselves with friends, and the industry with which we set about reshaping the world in our time.

I believe that the finest carols are often sung by the poorest voices; from hearts made warm by the wonder of the season.

I believe in the angel’s message that we should not be afraid – that the Child of Bethlehem is able to overcome all anxieties and insecurities.

I believe in prayer and quietness as a way of appropriating Christmas – that if I wait in silence I will experience the presence of the one born in the manger, for he lives today as surely as he lived then.

I believe in going away from Christmas as the wise men went: “another way.” I want to be different when these days are past – more centered, more thoughtful, more caring.

And I believe God will help me. Amen.

A Candy Maker’s Witness

A candy maker in Indiana wanted to make a candy that would be a witness, so he made the Christmas Candy Cane. He incorporated several symbols for the birth, ministry, and death of Jesus Christ.

He began with a stick of pure white hard candy. White to symbolize the Virgin Birth and the sinless nature of Jesus, and hard to symbolize the Solid rock, the foundation of the Church, and firmness of the promises of God.

The candy maker made the candy in the form of a “J” to represent the precious name of Jesus, who came to earth as our Savior. It could also represent the staff of the “Good Shepherd” with which He reaches down into the ditches of the world to lift out the fallen lambs who, like all sheep, have gone stray.

Thinking that the candy was somewhat plain, the candy maker stained it with red stripes. He used three small stripes to show the stripes of the scourging Jesus received by which we are healed. The large red stripe was for the blood shed by Christ on the Cross so that we could have the promise of eternal life.

Unfortunately, the candy became known as a candy cane – a meaningless decoration seen at Christmas time. But the meaning is still there for those who “have eyes to see and ears to hear.” I pray that this symbol will again be used to witness to the wonder of Jesus and his great love that came down at Christmas and remains the ultimate and dominate force in the universe today.

What did one angel say to the other angel?
Halo there!
Keeping Christmas

There is a better thing than the observance of Christmas day, and that is, keeping Christmas.

Are you willing...
- to forget what you have done for other people, and to remember what other people have done for you;
- to ignore what the world owes you, and to think what you owe the world;
- to put your rights in the background, and your duties in the middle distance, and your chances to do a little more than your duty in the foreground;
- to see that men and women are just as real as you are, and try to look behind their faces to their hearts, hungry for joy;
- to own up to the fact that probably the only good reason for your existence is not what you are going to get out of life, but what you are going to give to life;
- to close your book of complaints against the management of the universe, and look around you for a place where you can sow a few seeds of happiness –

Are you willing to do these things even for a day?

Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing to stoop down and consider the needs and desires of little children;
- to remember the weakness and loneliness of people growing old;
- to stop asking how much your friends love you, and ask yourself whether you love them enough;
- to bear in mind the things that other people have to bear in their hearts;
- to try to understand what those who live in the same home with you really want, without waiting for them to tell you;
- to trim your lamp so that it will give more light and less smoke, and to carry it in front so that your shadow will fall behind you;
- to make a grave for your ugly thoughts, and a garden for you kindly feelings with the gate open

Are you willing to do these things even for a day?

Then you can keep Christmas.

Are you willing to believe that love is the strongest thing in the world –
- stronger than hate, stronger than evil, stronger than death –
- and that the blessed life which began in Bethlehem nineteen hundred years ago is the image and brightness of the Eternal Love?

Then you can keep Christmas.

And if you can keep it for a day, why not always? But you can never keep it alone.

What is Christmas? It is tenderness for the past, courage for the present, hope for the future. It is a fervent wish that every cup may overflow with blessings rich and eternal, and that every path may lead to peace.

Agnes M. Pharo
Helping Hands Food Bank

From all of us at

Thank you!

December 24: Oatmeal
December 23: Diced tomatoes
December 22: Rice
December 21: Chili
December 20: Pancake mix

Canned tuna
Cornbread
Spaghetti sauce
Tomato soup
Canned corn
Applesauce
Macaroni noodles

Cereal
Macaroni & cheese
Spaghetti noodles
Canned chicken

Beef stew
Beans
Chicken noodle soup
Saltine crackers
Peanut butter
Mixed fruit
Canned green beans
Instant potatoes

Revere Advent Challenge
Helping Hands Food Bank
It is that time of year again to think about giving. The First Baptist Church of Hardin challenges you to the Reverse Advent food drive. We had a huge success with this last year and thought what a wonderful way to give this time of year.

Often an Advent calendar is used to count down the days until Christmas by opening a box and discovering an ornament or something that helps you focus on the Advent journey. A reverse Advent calendar focuses on giving something instead of receiving – a Christ centered idea indeed – since Christmas is all about God giving himself to us as a baby.

The idea behind a reverse Advent calendar is simple. Pick out a sturdy basket, box or bag and fill it with food donations for our local food bank – one item for every day in December.

The reverse Advent calendar encourages us to think of others as we wait to celebrate Jesus' birthday. What a great way to serve this Advent!

So, we challenge all churches, businesses, organizations, families, and individuals to participate in the 2021 Reverse Advent. We have enclosed the letter which shows what to add each day. We can pick up your box/boxes at the end of December or you may drop them off at our local food bank.

You can call Judy Nelson at 665-2049 or Teri Wagner at 665-5395 and we will pick up your items and deliver them to the food bank.