

Christmas religious holy day — clergy Be fire conscious during Christmas

The God of miracle, compassion and grace

by Rev. Andrew McKenzie
Knox Presbyterian

Christmas, to me, has been for a long time, a very special and precious time of the year, when a host of cheering and elevating thoughts flood my mind and make me grateful to my Creator for those uplifting messages about God which a humble manger-cradle in Bethlehem of Judea "broadcasts" to a world still

desperately needing comfort, care and courage.

A lady complained to a minister about the Christmas carols being "so dreadfully theological", only to hear him reply: "Well, my dear lady, Christmas was a rather theological event." In other words, Christmas tells us some glorious news about God Himself, that is almost too good to believe.

It insists, in the first instance, that He is a God of Miracles. Really, what could be more miraculous than the story we can only partially absorb at best that "Love came down at Christmas, Love all lovely, Love divine" (Christina Rossetti), and that the Baby Jesus, born in the stable of an inn, was really God breaking dramatically and personally into history? Is it any wonder the angels

sang hallelujahs, and a herald proclaimed: "The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born tonight in Bethlehem!" (Luke 2:11, Living Bible). God became man in this event, and henceforth, the enlightened of all nations will regard Jesus as the God-man, empowered by The Lord of All, The Most High, to mediate salvation to those who believe and to bring them into reconciliation with His purposes and intentions for His world.

Christmas also emphatically affirms that God is One who stoops to comfort and sustain us in our need. And this is the basis of all ministry in His name. At Bethlehem we find "The High and Holy One who inhabits eternity" humbling Himself to the degradations and filth of this world, symbolized so realistically by a "rude stable" in order to show that His Son, born in such a place, will evermore be the source of our peace and salvation, in the midst of grief and pain and the heartbreak of broken hopes, and that His Divine Word will be heard in the accents of His human voice. Here is the utmost assurance that the God of endless time and of eternities, which we simply cannot comprehend, is touched and affected by the trials and sufferings which His children from time to time undergo.

Above all, Christmas, as described first in Scripture, and emphasized anew each year in the lives of reflective Christians, proclaims a God of amazing grace. A beautiful and meaningful name given to the Babe of Bethlehem was "Emmanuel," which means "God is with us." It says that God loves you and me so greatly that He wants to share our human lot, and that He will do so, unless we refuse and reject His presence.

It is what we hope for or imply whenever we say: "Good Bye", which is a simple contraction of the wish: "God be with you!" No matter how desperate or dreary our circumstances are, we must endeavor to believe that we are not alone, and that "if God is on our side, who can be against us?" (Romans 11:31). And it is of His infinite grace, we must constantly remind ourselves, that God accepts us, not on the basis of moral goodness or rightness that we may suppose we have amassed, but on the basis of His own perfect goodness which He exchanges for our "unrighteousness", of which each of us has far too much, and which, in our most honest moments, we will surely admit.

So Christopher Fry, the poet and playwright, was expressing something very true, when he wrote of the God of Christmas, whom we claim is a God of Miracle, Compassion and Grace, and in 1978 we can rejoice and give thanks that we do have: "More light that we can learn, More wealth that we can treasure, More love than we can earn, More peace than we can measure, Because one Child is born."

R.S.V.P. - December 25

by Rev. Brian Rennie
Evangel Pentecostal
Tabernacle

Amid the hustle and bustle of life in a small Canadian community a young pastor leaves the very first goodbye waves of his infant daughter, and the tender smile of his loving wife to trudge across a snow-covered schoolyard to the secluded basement office

of his church. There sits a large and unusually cluttered desk, and in it a bulky file of secret assignments, indexed — "Unfinished." Among these many ominous commitments is the task of preparing a Christmas message that will inspire in the hearts of its readers something that has not been initiated by the literally dozens of Christmas seasons

preceding him. He seeks to be profound, but what more is there to say about this festival of holidays? He seeks some new revelation, only to be reminded that the Word of God is complete and final in its revelation to mankind.

He is tempted to put his pen down, yet is captivated by the realization that so many people in his "enlightened" society are not aware that the Babe in the Manger is now that living Christ whom the Apostle John describes as "knocking at the door of our hearts." (Rev. 3:20). If Jesus came to your house to spend a day or two if He came at Christmas I wonder what we'd do...

My apologies to the original author for a few alterations, but this is my Christmas message; simple as it may seem. If Jesus were to visit your home this Christmas, just how would He be received? Perhaps His unexpected arrival would be an inconvenience in your busy schedule. It may be that you would not even care to have Him show up. However, for some today, a visit from the Savior of the world would be the only ray of hope in a life of total darkness and despair.

Is there something missing in your Christmas this year? Do the people, the parties, and the presents fail to wipe away the pain in your life? It may be financial struggles, death, family or marital problems, or any number of human difficulties. But regardless, a visit from Christ this Christmas can bring joy to your home, meaning to your celebration, and to you — the ability to herald that song of old: Glory to God in the highest and on earth... Peace... Goodwill toward men. This message is yours. This Christ can be yours. R.S.V.P. — TODAY!

Not alone

by Rev. Das Sydney
Acton Baptist Church

Finally after much waiting and procrastination, I pulled out of a chest of treasures, a gift from my brother—a creche of the Christmas scene. The figures were sombre and delicate carvings from a thorn tree in Nigeria. Out they tumbled from the bag. There was Mary and Joseph and the cradle; the wise men and their gifts, and a lonely shepherd boy with a crook and sheep. An angel was there and also a thoughtful looking cow. I put them all on my stereo, and behind them arranged my camel carvings, for some depth of field. Hurrriedly I placed them in order for I had yet to answer the phone, then erect my little silver Christmas tree and write more cards.

Like me, perhaps you have sat down and wondered, "Where in all this is Christmas?" Is it in a creche where shepherds and wise men synchronized their watches for a simultaneous visit? Is it that magic moment when Santa comes down that soot-filled chimney, or is it in putting up a Christmas tree and many colored lights?

One girl illustrated Christmas this way. She drew an airplane containing a man, woman, baby and a pilot. When the teacher asked her about the picture, she explained they were Mary, Joseph, the child Jesus and

Pontius the Pilot! What is the essence of Christmas?

A few nights ago, I received a phone call from Amsterdam. It was my brother Sam. He was coming home for Christmas, after a year of studies abroad. You can imagine my excitement. I could hardly sleep. I was not going to be alone for Christmas.

"Not Alone"—that is the message of Christmas. That is the excitement that ignited the shepherds and captivated the wise men.

Christmas declares that we have not been deserted as on a lonely island. Even if it seems there is an impenetrable casket around the world, it is not so. God is there, and behind that frowning providence, is his smiling face.

We do not pray in vain. Our tears have not gone unnoticed. Life is more than the routine existence. In fact, God is so interested in the affairs of men, he has sent his only Son, Jesus Christ. This is the crowning argument to drown all others.

At the deepest level, the essence of the Christmas message is, "We are not alone."

Board hires finance officer

Halton Board of Education named a career woman as its new area superintendent of finance during last Thursday's meeting at Burlington.

Barbara Moore, Waterdown, was selected from 25 candidates, according to director of education Em Lavender. Seven candidates were interviewed and Moore was the best person for the job, stated Lavender.

Moore is married. She graduated from Burlington High School.

"She has been deliberately following a career plan since 1970 which is designed to achieve a supervisory officer's status by 1980," Lavender informed trustees.

Moore's experience includes preparation of the annual board budget, financial statements, administration of the board's benefits plans and other duties.

TOWN OF MILTON RESIDENTS:

Wishing you and yours a very Merry Christmas and all the best in 1979.

G. Brad Clements
Councillor



Best wishes for old fashioned Christmas joys... and thank you for the pleasure and privilege of serving you, our valued friends.

MANAGEMENT AND STAFF

Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce

it's Christmas!

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LOVELL BROS. Meat Market
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a Joyous Time

At this blessed Yuletide season we rejoice and give thanks as we welcome the Heavenly King. In celebration of His Birth we extend heartfelt wishes to all.

Marg Wilson — manager
family & staff
Beckers - Acton

All the clergy in Acton were invited to submit a Christmas message for this issue of the Acton Free Press. The preceding are from those who responded.

St. Alban's winners

Winners at St. Alban's A.C.W. Christmas Euchre were: Ladies first Mrs. Jean Leishman, second Mrs. Mae Fountain. Men's first Cam Sinclair, second Willard Britton.

Special Christmas door prize was won by Mrs. Christina Bailey of Milton.

a note of cheer

at Christmas to you and those you love.

HALTON HILLS ELECTRICAL CONTRACTOR
Lyle Prueter 853-2572

A happy Christmas can change in a few moments into a family tragedy, warns Fire Prevention Officer Larry Brassard, in homes where fire safety precautions are neglected. Such precautions should head the list of every sensible family's preparations for Christmas, he says. Mr. Brassard urges the public to exercise special care in the setting up and decorations of Christmas trees, and draws attention to the following important points:

If plans call for a natural tree it should be bought fresh and green, and kept outdoors or in an unheated garage before being brought into the home for decorating. Then, one or two inches should be cut diagonally from the butt, and the tree should be set up with the butt in water which should be maintained above the level of the cut. Check strings of electric lights carefully for worn

insulation, broken plugs or loose bulb sockets. Only CSA-approved lighting sets and only non-flammable decorations should be used. Declare the tree a no-smoking area and keep matches out of the hands of children.

Do not allow discarded gift wrappings to accumulate under the tree. Dispose of them as soon as the gifts are opened. Even a green tree will burn if ignited by burning paper around the base. Set up the tree away from

heat sources such as fireplaces, TV sets or radiators. Do not allow it to block access to doors or windows in the event of fire. Switch off tree lights at bedtime or when leaving the house. Have a fire safe Christmas.

EYESERVICES

In Lesotho, Southern Africa, the Unitarian Service Committee of Canada is supplying equipment for an Israeli doctor to extend eye services to children in outlying villages where eye care is unavailable. USC headquarters is located at 56 Sparks Street, Ottawa.

HOLIDAY GREETINGS

May every glowing moment of your holiday be filled with all things bright and beautiful. Thanks to our devoted patrons.

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