

The Gospel News

December 2020

International Headquarters in Monongahela, Pennsylvania

And the angel said unto them,

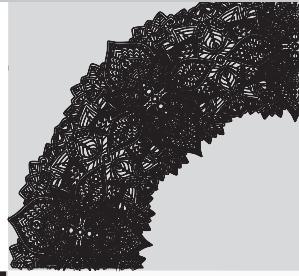
Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great *Joy*
which shall be to all people.

*For unto you is born this day in the city of David
a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*





Joy
to the world!
The Lord is come;
Let earth
receive her King;

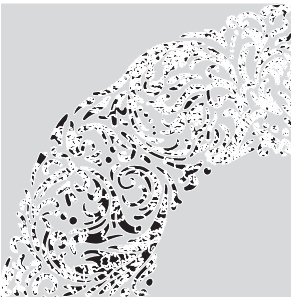


Let
every heart
prepare him room,
And heaven
and nature sing.

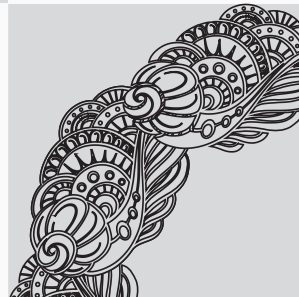
Joy
to the earth!
the Saviour regins;
Let men
their songs employ;



While
fields and floods,
rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the
sounding joy.

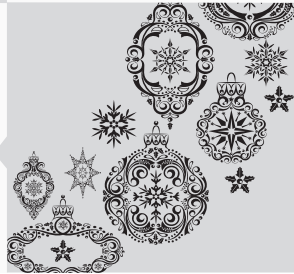


No
more let sins
and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns
infest the ground;



He
comes to make
His blessings flow
Far as the
curse is found.

He
rules the world
with truth and grace,
And makes
the nations prove



The
glories of
His righteousness,
And
wonders of His love.



BFTP Blast From The Past

By Sister Kellie Speck

Approximately ninety years ago this month, in the 1930s, the hymn "The New Star" was composed by Sister Sadie Cadman:

A new star did appear in the ninety-second year of the judges who reigned on this land.
For a sign had been giv'n from the great God of heav'n that the time of His birth was at hand.
While in Palestine fair to the shepherds over there, Lo, the heavenly host did appear.
They, announcing His birth unto those on this earth, saying, "Fear not but be of good cheer."
A day was set apart by the wicked of heart for believers of Christ to be killed.
But the signal was giv'n from the Father in heav'n that the time of His birth was at hand.
For the sun it went down and no darkness did appear. It was light as if it were midday.
Wicked men, how they feared for they knew Christ was born by the sign of no night and a day.
How the saints did rejoice when they heard the Lord's voice, saying, "Fear not but be of good cheer."
For this is the night of no darkness but night and great signs of His birth will appear.
While in Palestine fair to the shepherds over there, Lo, the heavenly host did appear.
They, announcing His birth unto those on this earth, saying, "Fear not but be of good cheer."



IT IS ALWAYS GOOD TO KNOW THE WAY

Life is a journey, in fact, a series of journeys. On any journey, it's always good to know the way.

As children, we stayed close to home and gradually learned the neighborhood, venturing a little farther from home as our confidence built. Each time we went a ways out and found our way back home, we unconsciously grew more willing to go a little farther the next time. The trips we took with our parents—to the store, to church, perhaps to school for the first few times—really expanded our knowledge and our range of travel. Eventually, we were ready to go solo. But it was always helpful when Mom or Dad would remind us of our past successes and give us a little coaching on what to expect as we ventured forth on the next journey. We didn't always tell them, but it was good to have been prepared by their directions and to complete each trip.

In maturity, physical journeys usually take a back seat to emotional and spiritual journeys through life. Amulek said it well: *...this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors (Alma 34:32)*. In this life the spiritual journey is the most important one. The choices we make can impact that spiritual journey. Without preparing with good guidance, it can be very easy to get lost. It's always good to know the way.

The Word of God is full of examples of how the Lord has prepared and provided direction for His servants on many spiritual journeys—some combined with significant physical movements, some with tremendous challenges. It is clear that He is very willing to do that because His desire is for every one of us to be successful in our spiritual journey.

- God spoke directly to Noah preparing him for his role in God's plan, and Noah obeyed (Genesis 6:13-17).
- God spoke to the brother of Jared and promised to lead his people to a promised land (Ether 1:40-43). Having abandoned their journey and not called upon God for four years, the brother of Jared encountered the Lord who spoke to him from within a cloud and chastised him for three straight hours. Tough, but merciful as it got the people back on track (Ether 2:13-16).
- The Lord visited Abraham and covenanted with him (Genesis 17). God later sent messengers to confirm His promise as a legacy to Isaac, Abraham's son-to-be (Genesis 18).
- The angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in a burning bush, and God called out to Moses from the bush and recruited him and instructed him for his role in God's plan (Exodus 3 & 4).
- The Lord led the children of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land in a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night (Exodus 13:21).

- God sent an angel to recruit Gideon and to prepare him for his role (Judges 6).
- Reacting to prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem, Lehi prayed to the Lord with all his heart. A pillar of fire appeared to him, and he saw and heard much to the point of being overcome with the Spirit so that he received a tremendous vision of the throne of God and the wonders of the future in preparation for his role in God's plan (1 Nephi 1).

This list could go on and on. Notice that, in every case, the UNKNOWN was vast. There was no way to know all the obstacles that would be encountered or how shortfalls in human capacity would be overcome until God actually provided.

For our benefit, examples of God's interaction with mankind to prepare and direct them by speaking, or through manifestations, angels, messengers, visions, dreams, etc. saturate the Old Testament, the *New Testament*, and *The Book of Mormon*. Such examples also bear witness that the great journey of life is made up of many segments, all of which are opportunities to align with God in preparation to receive His blessings and to ultimately meet Him. On any journey, it's always good to know the way. God shows us the way.

One beautiful example, a model of God's ways, is the Ball or Director—Liahona. The account is in 1 Nephi 16. As Lehi had been commanded to begin the journey into the uncharted wilderness, he finds at his tent door a brass ball of curious workmanship with two spindles, one indicating the direction they were to go. There were also messages on the ball that changed from time to time. The pointers on the ball worked according to their faith and diligence, as did the content of the messages. Alma elaborated on the Liahona while instructing his son Helaman (See Alma 37: 38-46): *And it did work for them according to their faith in God; therefore, if they had faith to believe that God could cause that those spindles should point the way they should go, behold, it was done; therefore they had this miracle, and also many other miracles wrought by the power of God, day by day. Nevertheless, because those miracles were worked by small means it did show unto them marvelous works. They were slothful, and forgot to exercise their faith and diligence and then those marvelous works ceased, and they did not progress in their journey; Therefore, they tarried in the wilderness, or did not travel a direct course, and were afflicted with hunger and thirst, because of their transgressions. ...these things are not without a shadow; for as our fathers were slothful to give heed to this compass (now these things were temporal) they did not prosper; even so it is with things which are spiritual. ...For just as surely as this director did bring our fathers, by following its course, to the promised land, shall the words of*

(Continued on page 4)

Purpose Statement • To fulfill the plan of God by bringing salvation through Christ to all people.

Mission Statement

- The Church of Jesus Christ will teach the Gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things commanded by Jesus Christ, while working to draw Israel to Christ through efforts focused on the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America

Vision Statement

- Living and worshipping in unity and righteousness will result in the fullness of God's Spirit and power among the Saints, culminating in continuous growth of the Church and fulfillment of Christ's promises concerning His Kingdom on Earth.

IT IS ALWAYS GOOD TO KNOW THE WAY

Continued from page 3

Christ, if we follow their course, carry us beyond this vale of sorrow into a far better land of promise. Notice the importance of faith and diligence. No skill, no knowledge, no human attribute could have substituted. On any journey, it's always good to know the way.

In our current time, events and circumstances present many parallels to being in a wilderness. We know that God wants us to stay on the course He sets for us and to avoid going off course because of distraction, frustration, anger, or fear. How do we find our way through our wilderness? Faith in God! Heeding the words of Christ! Diligence in our beliefs! All these are essential to enlist the power of God and maintain the way forward to God's promises. As in times of old, God directs His church today. Like previous groups who journeyed to their promised lands, we are repeatedly reminded that we must prepare and remain in a state of preparedness—readiness—throughout our journey in order to benefit from His power to reach our destination.

God has spoken to the Church in ways analogous to our youth when the encouragement given by our parents reinforced earlier efforts while supporting confidence to stay the course into the future. A recurring theme has been that God will soon restore Israel and is calling out to His servants to prepare for the harvest. He tells us that the

fulfillment of His promise is about to rise before us just as the sun rises on the horizon. The Church will see His Kingdom being established upon this land today. His eyes have been upon the remnant of the house of Israel for many years, and His hand is moving to fulfill His covenant to restore them starting with the House of Joseph. His Spirit has moved and has planted seeds of love throughout this House; now fruit will begin to be borne through this House of Joseph. He tells us that a great day is before US! He is crying out for us, His servants, to continue to seek His favor as we labor among His chosen people. He promises us that His Spirit will be upon us! And if our hearts and our eyes are focused on Him and His glory, His power will flow through us! He promises that we will see great healings and that great words will come from our lips and touch the hearts of those who are seeking the truth now at this time! He promises we will see it, and we will know it, not just hope. He is urging us to prepare ourselves today!

Along our way through uncharted "territory," such experiences, underpinned by related scriptural contexts, give us assurance telling us of the times we are living in. Rather than reacting to circumstances and being taken off course, we are reminded to rest upon the Word of God, including prophecies such as Nephi's (1 Nephi 22) and others which describe the great Gentile nation that God raised upon the

land of America, God's marvelous work among the Gentiles which is of great worth to the seed of Joseph and to all the house of Israel, the preservation of the righteous, and the confounding of their enemies. While we read of turmoil, we are promised that the righteous need not fear, for they are those who will not be confounded. These scriptural prophecies match contemporary experiences: Continuing in God's work, the mission of our Church, and keeping focused on Jesus Christ will sustain us by the power of God and we will build His kingdom. This is the journey we are on today. On any journey, it's always good to know the way.

Jesus said to his disciples: *And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.* Later in that same conversation, He added: *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid* (See John 14). Jesus means for us to rejoice while on this life's journey because we know His promises and we rely on His Spirit to keep them in our remembrance to help us follow Him through life and to eternity. It is REALLY good to know the way.

In the love of God,
The Quorum of Twelve Apostles
James Crudup, Joel Gehly, John Griffith, Paul Liberto, Thomas M. Liberto, Leonard A. Loyalvo, Frank Natoli, Paul A. Palmieri, Peter Scolaro, Jerry Valenti

Rejoice! *By Evangelist Mark Kovacic*

The birth of a child is a wonderous and joyous occasion. Even more so when the birth is a miracle and a sign from Heaven. There are five such babies that mark major eras in the Bible. Let's take a look at the births and the period they ushered in.

The first of these was the birth of Isaac from Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 21). Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90. Not only did the birth of Isaac begin the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham, but because of his and Sarah's advanced age, the birth brought joy and laughter. It was the start of the era of the Patriarchs.

Next was the era of the Judges in Israel with the birth of one of its main characters—Manoah's son Samson. Manoah's wife (her name is never given) had been barren (without child) for many years. The angel of the Lord appeared to her announcing she would give birth, but she was to follow a strict regimen as to how she and Samson should live (He as a Nazarite. Judges 13).

Ending the era of the Judges and ushering in the era of the prophets and monarchies was the birth of Samuel to Elkanah and Hanna. Hanna had been barren and pleaded with God and made a vow. Samuel was born and was used of God as a prophet (1 Samuel). But the day came when the people of Israel wanted a king, like the other nations. Samuel complained to God that the people had rejected him, but God responded that they had not rejected Samuel, but had rejected God Himself. So began the era of the kings (1 Samuel 8).

Fast forward several centuries to the days of Zacharias and Elisabeth, who in their old age gave birth to John the Baptist. In this case, the angel Gabriel told Zacharias that many would rejoice at his birth, and he would turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. We know he was the forerunner of Jesus. This was the start of the era of preparation (Malachi 3).

Finally, there was the birth of Jesus to Mary, which was more miraculous than all the other births, not due to her age, but because she was highly favored of the Lord and she conceived by the Holy Ghost (Luke 1 and Alma 7). Not only were Zacharias and Elisabeth involved in the birth story, but wise men from the east came seeking him born a king who had his own star, shepherds forsaking their sheep to search and find the baby king after a host of angels announced Jesus' birth to them, and then in the temple a prophet and a prophetess, one promised to see the salvation of Israel and the other the redemption of Jerusalem. The excitement of Jesus' birth could be summed up in the statement of the wise men as they, "Rejoiced with exceeding great joy" (Matthew 2:10). And thus the era of mercy, forgiveness, and salvation was ushered in.

So, how do you feel about the birth of Jesus? Is it just another holiday to celebrate? Do you act like the shepherds, the wise men, the prophets, or maybe a combination of all of them? Do you testify of God's goodness; do you witness to others that Jesus is King and Savior; do you bring the best gifts you have? Regardless of which it is, let us all **rejoice with exceeding great joy that God has come into the world to bring salvation for our souls!**

...the birth of Jesus to Mary...was more miraculous than all the other births...

These are the words to the song that Brother Mark chose for the Christmas playlist (pg 6).

A King is born

In a little town of Bethlehem,
many long, long years ago
A Child in God's own image was sent
here on earth below
While the shepherds watched their flock at night,
a stillness all around
When off in the distance afar came

Wisemen to follow a star;
A King is born!
Immanuel A Prince of Peace!
Wonderful
Let us honor Him, Let us hail Him,
Let us praise Him and adore
Him for a King Is Born Today

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Christmas Joy

While this Christmas may seem a little different than previous years, we hope that you still experience the JOY and Blessings it brings and feel the love that God has for each and every one of us. Enjoy these photos of past Christmas programs and our Gospel News Team playlist. We are also taking an opportunity to honor our essential workers and the JOY they have as they serve their communities during this challenging time.



Gospel News Playlist

Music can make the soul sing.

We pray these songs are a blessing and bring you JOY this holiday season. ~ *With love, The Gospel News*



Scan the QR code to listen to each song on YouTube. ↑

Sister Carolynn O'Connor

O Holy Night

by Celine Dion

Brother Ken Lombardo

Casanova Italian Christmas Song

Brother Chuck Maddox Jr.

We Need A Little Christmas

by Percy Faith & His Orchestra

Sister Jan Bork

Do You Hear What I Hear? by Bing Crosby

Sister Dianne Maddox

Christmas Everyday

by Kenny Rogers

Brother Anthony Scolaro

Hark! The Herald Angels Sing by Amy Grant

Sister LuAnn Carson

Mary, Did You Know?

by Pentatonix

Sister KarenJo Pandone

Mary Did You Know? by Go Fish

Sister Christine Martorana

Little Drummer Boy

by Carrie Underwood

Brother Mark Kovacic

A King is Born

by Sister Ester Dyer

Brother Jerry Valenti

Mary's Boy Child

by Boney M.

Brother Doug Obradovich

Do You Hear What I Hear

by Pentatonix and Whitney Houston

Question of the Month

To all teachers, medical professionals, and essential workers: What gives you joy in your job as you work to support your communities during this challenging time?

I get joy from the fact that even though our classroom looks very different, my students are still silly, innocent kids who love school and want to learn. *—Sister Alyssa Maddox, Lake Worth, FL Branch*

The knowledge that we are trying to make a positive difference in people's lives. By God's grace, if we've done our very best, our clients, patients, and students leave our care, our classrooms, and every interaction better off than when they first arrived. *—Brother Darin Trelka, Lake Worth, FL Branch*

My joy, especially as a Pediatric Nurse, is when I see the smiles on the faces, and the relief that I can bring (with God's help) to the patients and their families! When a child smiles and says, "Mommy, look at her hair, it's a rainbow!" and I hear their excitement; or when I have prayed with a mom who's sending her child to a possibly life-threatening surgery, and she cries on my shoulder; and when God answers MY prayers to speak up for "my kids," and the physicians not only listen to me, but discover a subtle problem that they wouldn't have noticed without my persistence—THEN I smile and repeat my favorite "nurse verse," Mosiah 2:17, "when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God"—and my joy is full. I have the best job in the world!! I get to save/enrich lives, and serve God every shift I work!!! Thank you, Jesus!!! *—Sister Lori Kimmel, Lake Worth, FL Branch*

JOY—something that has been in short supply for many of us during the pandemic. As a healthcare worker during this challenging time I believe that what I am doing is impactful and meaningful. The joy in my job

is seeing my patients make a full recovery with no complications. *—Sister Jasmine Hippolyte, Treasure Coast, FL Branch*

Knowing I can be a light of hope to others, create positivity, and help my staff stay calm; and sharing God's love while the world is in chaos. I still have to do my job daily and it's even more important to care for others right now, to be an example of someone who trusts God is in control of everything. *—Sister Erin Light, Irvine, CA Branch*

Knowing that I am a part of a team that helps patients overcome the worst time in their lives. This brings me joy and allows me to be the best version of myself in this time of such uncertainty. *—Sister Alyssa Morle, Atlanta, GA Branch*

As a teacher I get to be someone's light during this dark time to my kiddos and their families. That brings me so much joy. That's what got me out of bed before and especially now because kids need to feel comfort and joy during all the uncertainty. *—Sister Kristina Calabrese, Columbus, OH Branch*

That feeling when someone feels better, and their life is a little easier because of me. *—Sister Juliette Coppa, Monongahela, PA Branch*

Knowing that I can help ease some of the anxiety that the patients I take care of are experiencing—especially the ones who aren't able to have any family members present with them while they are in the hospital. *—Sister Kim Morle, Atlanta, GA Branch*

I am so thankful, blessed, and honored that God has granted me the privilege to work and care for our United States Veterans. *—Sister Marie Rea, Lake Worth, FL Branch*

I find joy knowing that I am able to provide my students some stability in a time where everything is uncertain. *—Sister Sophia O'Connor, Farmington Hills, MI Branch #2*

I love seeing my 8th grade students happy to be back in school. I find joy in being an adult they can laugh with and trust during this unprecedented time we are living through. *—Sister Shannon Hamet, Farmington Hills, MI Branch #2*

It is still fun to teach kids through Zoom! Every morning I log on and get to watch kids



come alive through the music we are learning together. Their faces light up and their energy gives me joy. *—Sister Carolyn Gross, Farmington Hills, MI Branch #2*

My son's smile, my family's laughter, the sunshine, taking walks, and absorbing the beauty of nature that surrounds. Being able to stay connected with the students and their families with the amazing technology that we have. All of those things bring me joy. *—Sister Celeste Gentile, Farmington Hills, MI Branch #2*

I am a Math Interventionist at a Title I school serving grades K-5th. I work in a low socioeconomic community where many of my students rely on us to meet many of their basic needs. I get joy when I see a smile on a child's face who was sad yesterday...I get joy when I see a child understand a lesson that previously frustrated him. I get joy in the little notes that I receive telling me how much they love me. But most importantly, I get joy working at a school where we are able to talk about God and how thankful we are that He sent His Son to save us all...no matter who we are, we are all His sons and daughters and He loves us equally! *—Sister Miriam Trelka, Lake Worth, FL Branch*

I feel joy when I am united with other teachers while meeting the needs of our children. *—Sister Darlene Lovalvo, Farmington Hills, MI Branch #2*

I am a Reading Specialist. It has been challenging, to say the least, to deliver instruction. I am teaching synchronously, which means students are virtual and in person at the same time. Whether it is brick or click, I find joy and value in the amazing process of teaching reading and getting kids excited about the world. The Lord has blessed me with wisdom in using creative ways to reach ALL kids, and I can only accomplish this with God's help. *—Sister Linda Scolaro, Mesa, AZ Branch*





“Men Are That They Might Have Jesus”

By Elder Doug Obradovich

**“That my joy might remain in you,
and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11)**

When JOY is viewed as an acronym prioritizing love, Jesus Others You, it fulfills its intended purpose. In a Christmas season following a year of disturbance and confusion, this sentiment feels more needful than ever before. I find myself clinging to the succinct message within II Nephi 2:25, “Men are that they might have joy.” If we were created to experience joy, and Jesus is God’s heaven-sent source, then clearly, “Men are that they might have Jesus!” Maybe the more direct acronym is, Jesus Only You.

Consider the absence of joy; and please be certain not to simply view this as momentary, but a condition of life. When younger, my children loved the movie “The Neverending Story,” which featured the antagonist, “The Nothing,” an evil force that destroyed individuals one by one by absorbing them. Isn’t this how joylessness accomplishes the same? One by one. Overcoming. Washing over. Absorbing. Hollowness. Hopelessness. Emptiness. No joy. No anything. A nothingness, defining the absence of joy. The absence of Jesus Christ.

(Continued on page 11)

GMBA News

Christmas Reflection: Whose presence do you walk in?

By Sister Kayla Smith

When thinking about the holiday of Christmas, the fondest memory I have is going to Church as a child and singing the Christmas hymns. The hymns that told us about Christ being born and the small baby He was. This always made me wonder, why did God with all His power place His only Son into the world first as a baby? God could have allowed Christ to appear as a man, but that was not His plan.

While preparing to write this little article, I prayed for guidance in what to write. The more I prayed, the more it became evident as to what it meant to me about Christ being born as the small babe. In many eyes during that time, Christ was looked upon as a nobody: “How could the Son of God come forth as a son of a carpenter?” However, Christ was brought into the world to do great things in the name of His father.

me that it is not who you are or how you are looked at that matters. It is how you hold yourself and Whose presence you walk in. The current song that God has placed in my heart is “Who You Say I Am” – by Hillsong Worship.

Who am I that the highest King
Would welcome me?
I was lost but He brought me in
Oh, His love for me
Oh, His love for me
Who the Son sets free
Oh, is free indeed
I'm a child of God
Yes, I am...
...I am chosen
Not forsaken
I am who You say I am
You are for me
Not against me
I am who You say I am

because you are HIS child. In this world, many things have changed, you cannot go around as easily and profess your love of God. Maybe you feel like you can't tell people about how He has worked in your life for fear of offending someone or being accused of “pushing” your beliefs on others around you. But this should not keep us from doing what is right. Romans 12:1-2 tells us that we should not conform to the world but remain the person that God has sent us to be. When we are looked at as the outlier of the world, we should not feel sad, but special. God has chosen you for something great, and in His time, it will come forth to present itself to you.

So, if you are feeling small, just remember Christ came to this world as a small child. Remember Whose presence you walk in. As the year comes to a close, I challenge you to reach out to the people who have made a difference in your life, not only naturally, but spiritually as well. We need each other now more than ever. The world will progress, but if we stand together as the army of the true and living God, we will prosper. Who can stand against us when we have our almighty God with us? Stay by His side, holding on to the rod, and you will not wander. God Bless you this holiday and in the new coming year.

So, during this Christmas season, it just reminds

This song sings of how God has a plan for you



The Joy of Christmas *By Apostle Jerry Valenti*

For various reasons, Christmas is considered to be one of the most joyful seasons of the year. Here are 5 amazing facts that identify 5 things that potentially bring us joy at Christmas and how they relate to the original Christmas story from the scriptures.

1 Lights – Most neighborhoods have at least a few houses that go all out with decorations at Christmas, providing something of a light show as you drive by at night. This is a favorite sight of the season. The first Christmas had its own light show with a new star appearing in the sky (Matthew 2, III Nephi 1)—“When [the wise men] saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy” (Matthew 2:10).

2 Giving Gifts – Those who participate in gift giving at Christmas experience what is commonly referred to as “The Joy of Giving”. When the wise men first visited the Christ child, they experienced their own joy of giving as “they presented unto him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matthew 2:11).

3 Being with Family – Many of us make a special effort to spend time with family at Christmastime. Some even travel long distances to do so. Jesus spent His first Christmas surrounded by His earthly family. When the shepherds were told where He was, “they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger” (Luke 2:16).

4 God with Us – For followers of Christ, the primary source of joy at Christmas time is noting that it commemorates the time when God sent His Son to earth such that humans could experience “God with us”. “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his

name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:22-23).

5 Peace on Earth, Good Will toward Men – If you look at what’s happening in today’s world, you’re probably not seeing too much peace on earth or good will toward men—at Christmas or at any other time. That’s because too many people are not looking to the Lord for this condition but are claiming it can be achieved in other ways. The general attitude seems to be, ‘If you agree with me, we can have peace between us; otherwise, we’re enemies.’ This is hardly a recipe that will bring peace on earth. The only way we can have peace on earth is to be united in Jesus Christ—that’s why when the angels announced His arrival, they proclaimed, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14).



Ladies' Uplift Circle News

By Sister LuAnn Carson

I remember a Christmas when my son opened a giant wrapped gift jumping up and down and joyfully screaming, “It’s a Super Duper Double Looper!!!” His joy was contagious and instantly my daughters were jumping and screaming along with him. Although they got hours of fun from that gift, I couldn’t tell you what eventually happened to it. That toy has long since been forgotten.



When my first child was born she was received with great joy. My family and friends rejoiced with us. Same for my other children and grandchildren. I’m sure you’ve experienced this in your family. And we

continue to celebrate their birthdays each year. But oddly no one in Texas or Ohio or Africa cared much about the birth of my babies and grandbabies. I guess it didn’t really matter to them. I’m sure there was

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Who Saved Baby Jesus?

Dear Friends,

When most people think of Christmas they think about getting gifts for themselves and others. But we also read in the Bible about wonderful gifts that Wise Men from far away in the East brought to Bethlehem for Baby Jesus.

These Wise Men had been studying God's word and knew that a marvelous thing had been prophesied. God had sent His only begotten Son to earth to be born as a baby! This little child who was going to grow up and teach us all how to serve God and love one another was here! He would teach us how to be forgiven of all our sins and not fear death.

The night He was born, there were shepherds outside of Bethlehem watching their sheep in the night. An angel of God appeared and told them "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. Then thousands of angels appeared praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (See Luke Chapter 2). Prophets and people of God had been waiting hundreds of years for this miracle! The shepherds went and saw this baby.

Wise men from the East had read that this baby, Jesus, would be born in the city of Bethlehem of Judea (See Matthew 2:1-12). They travelled following a new star.

We also know that in the faraway land of the Americas the sign of the birth of Jesus was a bright star that shined so much that when the sun went down, there was still light (See Helaman Chapter 14).

These wise men went first to see Herod, the terrible King of Judea. When they asked him if he knew where this baby was, they called Jesus

the King of the Jews. Herod was furious, but he pretended he wanted to go see this baby and worship Him too. But really, Herod wanted to kill baby Jesus. He told the wise men, "Go and find Him, and then come and tell me where he is so I can see Him."

The wise men left and followed the bright star, which went before them until it came and stood over where the young child was. "When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy!"

And when they came into the house, they saw the young child with His mother, Mary. They fell down and worshipped Him. Then they opened their treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh (fabulously expensive resins used in incense and perfumes). They gave them to Mary and Joseph to honor baby Jesus.

And being warned in a dream by God that they should not go back to Herod, they left for their country in another way.

And after they had left, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream telling him, "Get up! Take the young child and His mother and flee into the land of Egypt. Stay there until I let you know it's safe. Herod will hunt to find the young child and destroy Him!" Joseph listened. He got up, took Mary and baby Jesus, and left there in the night!

Herod was waiting for the wise men. When he realized they were not coming, he was again furious and sent his soldiers out. They murdered all the children two years and under that were in Bethlehem and all the coasts around. There was terrible sorrow in Judea.

Can you imagine how hard it would be to leave your country and language and go far away to another place?

Yet, we also see that God had prepared very well for the little family to go far from home—they had the extremely valuable gifts and gold from the wise men to live on. They stayed in Egypt for several years.

And when Herod was dead, an angel of the Lord came to Joseph in a dream in Egypt telling him "Return to the land of Israel, for Herod is dead." Joseph arose and took the young child and His mother and came into the land of Israel. He was afraid when he heard Herod's son was the new king, and being warned of God in a dream, he went into a city called Nazareth in Galilee, which was not a big, important city, and there raised baby Jesus in safety.

Joseph listened to the warnings of God and saved this wonderful Baby that was born to be the Savior of the world. He grew up to teach us all about loving others, forgiving others, serving God, and at the end of our lives, living in heaven for eternity.

With love, your friend, *Sister Jan*



Color the page and send a picture of your artwork to Gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org



BB Earlier this year, we had received news about my unborn niece's health. My faith was not shaken by this. I fasted and prayed and grew closer to God. He gave me an experience where I saw the test results came back negative. As time passed, the results were revealed the same way I had previously experienced it. This made me see that God heard and answered my prayers. After being given this experience and seeing how God continued to bless me, it made me realize I wanted to serve Him for the rest of my life. While watching the Conferences in Mexico and hearing many Brothers preach, I decided I couldn't wait another second and decided to ask for my baptism, I felt in my heart and soul that I wanted to serve the Lord because there is no other path than being on the path of the Lord. – *Sister Esmeralda Calvillo, Tijuana, Mexico Branch*

BB During my childhood, my grandmother took me to church to praise the Lord and learn His teachings and the fundamentals of His Church. I was taught to respect His principles and to put God above all things. Now as an adult, my need to belong to the Church has grown greatly and I can see the great blessings that one receives when following in the footsteps of the Lord. The first time I asked for something from the heart was for a wife to establish my home and my life according to His commandments. Without much thought and relatively quickly I was blessed with a wonderful wife who is also my best friend. I know that the Lord knew what I needed and that is why He gave me such a wonderful companion. For that and many other things I feel blessed. – *Rene Calvillo, Tijuana, Mexico Branch*

BB Back in March, it was like the world went out from under me. Not only because of COVID-19, but because everything I thought my life would become, and the dreams I had built, were suddenly gone. However, especially in the valleys, God is good, even when he uses darkness to guide us toward His perfect light. In doing so, He reminded me of my purpose. Eight months later, I am enrolled in graduate school without ever having officially applied, met the GRE requirements for my PsyD applications on the first try, and, most especially, I am learning about the perfect love of Jesus Christ. This has been the greatest blessing. If you had asked me in March what this blessing felt like, I would have told you it felt like a smack in the face, but, since turning my eyes, God is showing me what I was made to do. – *Nicolette Zillich, Mesa, AZ Branch*

Send us your Blessing Bits by contacting Sister Zarella Scolaro at zarellamosqueda@gmail.com [in approximately 150 words].
Answers to Question of the Month to gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org.

Ladies' Uplift Circle News

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joy when my great great great grandmother was born also. But now no one thinks of her birth; no one celebrates her birthday. But there was a birth over 2,000 years ago that we still think about and hopefully, that birth still brings joy.

2 Nephi 2:25 tells us, "Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy." A short, simple statement but a profound one. Is this joy to come from Christmas gifts or happy life occasions? Is it fleeting? The joy that Nephi writes of is the joy we find because not only was Christ born, but He died and resurrected. His resurrection brings about salvation for all mankind. The joy we find in Christ is the joy we are meant to experience in God's great plan. This joy is enduring and full unlike the joy in receiving a gift or the joy that we feel from happy life events. The birth of the baby Jesus is still being celebrated throughout the world, bringing joy to many.

So regardless of circumstance, "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice." (Philippians 4:4)

Men Are That They Might Have Jesus

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But this is not a retelling of a children's fable, this pivots to a moving, historical account of how this orb shifted in the twinkling of an eye, transforming from nothing to "great joy!" This extraordinary change was ushered in when the sky exploded in light ("the glory of the Lord shone round about them"), with breaking news sent from God. The announcement was delivered by a citizen from heaven, purposed in informing citizens of Earth that something overwhelming was being presented in an underwhelming occurrence. "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. This shall be the sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke 2:10-12). God's exclamation point? "A multitude of the heavenly host praising God!" (v 13).

Overwhelming = The Savior of all mankind had just been born!

Overwhelming = The Savior of all mankind was trumpeted in by a choir of God's messengers!

Underwhelming = The Savior of all mankind was lying in an animal stall!

Mankind had been granted immediate access to all-encompassing joy! This offering was presented as the single greatest opportunity to have and to hold joy forever. It was given to all, but could only be opened by "whosoever believeth in Him!" (John 3:16). Like Jesus' birth, it would be missed by the unbelieving, the disinterested, or those not willing to search for the exceptional hidden amongst the unexceptional. Jesus always delivered in natural plain sight, which demanded spiritual insight, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of heaven, but to them it is not given...because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand" (Matthew 13:11-13).

Access to joy does not guarantee its discovery. If one searches for joy in financial gain and comfort, power and prestige, or some type of natural status, their pursuit will prove fruitless; like overlooking a manger housing the King of Kings. But if one understands joy is sourced in Jesus Christ, then this Christmas season trumpets the news of Jesus' birth, a real "Joy to the World," and a genuine "peace on earth." All because, men are that they might have Jesus!

Merry Christmas to All!



The Angel Appearing to the Shepherds
Thomas Cole, 1834