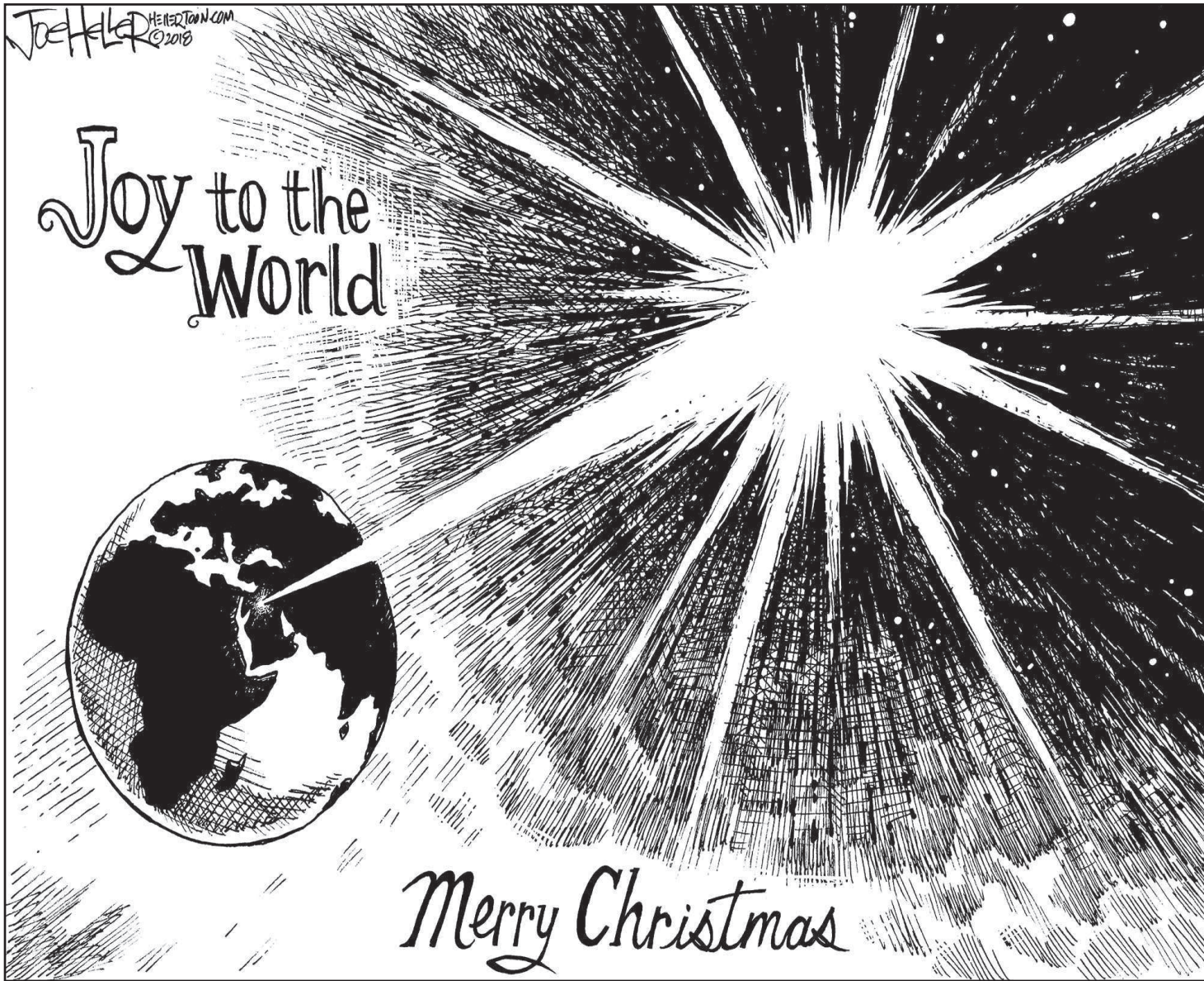


OPINION

The First Amendment

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition their Government for a redress of grievances.



Letters to the Editor Policy
 The Sentinel welcomes letters to the editor as part of a community discussion of issues on the local, state and national level.

Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed. All letters need to include full name, address and phone number; only name and city will be printed. Letters should be limited to about 300 words. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity. Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received.

Letters that are anonymous, libelous, argumentative, sarcastic or contain accusations that are unsourced or without documentation will not be published.

Letters containing poetry or from outside The Sentinel readership area will only be published at the discretion of the editor.

Political/Election Letters:

Election-related letters must address pertinent or timely issues of interest to our readers at-large.

Letters must 1) Not be a part of letter-writing campaigns on behalf of (or by) candidates; 2) Ensure any information about a candidate is accurate, fair and not from second-hand knowledge or hearsay; and 3) explain the reasons to support candidates based on personal experience and perspective rather than partisanship and campaign-style rhetoric.

Candidates themselves may not use the letters to the editor column to outline their views and platforms or to ask for votes; this constitutes paid political advertising.

As with all letters and advertising content, the newspaper, at the sole discretion of the publisher, general manager and editor, reserves the right to reject any letter that doesn't follow the above criteria.

Send letters to:

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Yes, Virginia, this 121-year-old editorial remains relevant in the heart of childhood

—Virginia O'Hanlon
 115 West Ninety-Fifth St.

The following editorial was first published Sept. 21, 1897, in the *New York Sun*, written in response to 8-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon's poignant question: Is there a Santa Claus?

The thoughtful and heartfelt response from then editor Francis Pharcellus Church was printed as an unsigned editorial and has since become history's most reprinted newspaper editorial.

More than 100 years later, its relevance remains, not just in the lessons offered regarding the heart of childhood, but also in the wisdom that we recognize easily as children but risk forgetting in adulthood — unless you “continue to make glad” your own heart of childhood.

Dear Editor,

I am 8 years old. Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus. Papa says, “If you see it in The Sun, it's so.” Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except what they see.

They think that nothing can be which is not compre-

hensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours, man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy.

Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were

no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence.

We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The external light with which childhood fills

the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if you did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove?

Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see.

Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's

no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart.

Only faith, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond.

Is it all real?

Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God! He lives and lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10,000 years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

“Is There a Santa Claus?”
 reprinted from the September 21, 1897, edition of *The New York Sun*.

From the Managing Editor's Desk

Ned Hickson

