

Christmas is...

(Editors note: In the spirit of the Christmas season, local clergy have been invited to share their reflections this Christmas 1980.

Friendship Baptist Church

ARE WE READY TO RECEIVE HIM?

As we think of this Christmas season, we cannot help but think of cards, both giving and receiving, family reunions, presents, feasts with all the trimmings, joyful yuletide hymns and songs, and just a good feeling of peace on earth.

Yet, as I reflect upon this birthday of Christ, I am left wondering if we are any more ready for this anniversary than when He was born two thousand years ago. Foretold by prophets, the world knew of the coming of the Messiah even to the year. Yet they were not ready to receive Him, for to accept Christ, was to admit that man in his own efforts had failed to bring peace to the earth, or even come close to being what God wanted him to be.

Are we ready this birthday of Christ to be confronted with the real message that came that first night in Bethlehem? That night God came to earth to bring His message of love to a lost world. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

As we enjoy ourselves this Christmas season, may we also take time to reflect and be challenged by this message of love, for without the messenger we would not be celebrating Christmas.

The Rev. Dick Bigelow

St. Patrick's and St. William's Roman Catholic Churches

RECEIVE OUR LORD ON CHRISTMAS

To you and your loved ones every happiness at Christmas and in the New Year. Through Mary and Joseph, may all of us be one in the new born Christ, the Savior of the World, and may our lives reflect His Presence to all we meet in this life.

Participate in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and receive Our Divine Lord in the Holy Eucharist on Christmas Day. Remember, doing for others is the best guarantee of having a happy Christmas.

Yours in our Lord,
The Rev. John A. O'Brien

CHRISTMAS SCHEDULE

Confessions

HEPPNER — Christmas Eve: 3 to 4:30 p.m., 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Masses:

Heppner - 12 midnight, Christmas Day, 11 a.m.

IONE - Christmas Day, 8:45 a.m., confessions before Mass.

All Saints Episcopal

CHRISTMAS: RADICAL SURPRISE!

Close your eyes for a moment and think back to those Christmas moments of your childhood—moments filled with an infinite excitement surrounded by poetry and song, twinkling lights and fragrant ferns. There was an expectancy which was electric and stirring, pushing us to stand on tiptoe waiting in wonderment for the radical surprise.

While the wonder of Christmas never completely leaves us, we run the risk as we "grow up" of losing that sense of expectancy and excitement which marked our childhood. Many things contribute to this—difficulties in life which shatter dreams and hopes, our own need to be "in control" of our lives without any help from God or neighbor and, unfortunately, a nagging pessimism about life which seems to be reinforced by daily headlines.

One great religious thinker has said, and I agree, that some of the worst things that can happen to us are to lose the capacity to be surprised—to lose the sense of wonder which marked our early years—to lose our ability to be expectant and hopeful. If we lose these gifts, we lose our opportunity to respond to God.

God is, I believe, a God of surprises! God surprised the ancient Israelites by giving them law which ordered their lives and lifted them to a higher sense of justice. God surprised the people by sending prophets who called them to a deeper relationship with God and all humankind. And, some 2,000 years ago, God offered Himself in Jesus of Nazareth. Born to peasants, raised in an obscure province of a great empire, gathering insignificant persons to be disciples, Jesus brought the Kingdom of God to us through a life filled with surprises. Indeed, Jesus was God's radical surprise for us.

If we are to receive Him as Lord—as Savior—we must have within us an expectant openness which is willing to be surprised. So, when you see a child standing on tip-toe, face flushed with excitement, waiting eagerly for what Christmas brings, let your prayer be: "O God, so let it be for me!"

The Rt. Rev. Rusty R. Kimsey,
Bishop, The Episcopal Diocese
of Eastern Oregon

Christian Life Center

GOD IS LOVE

All the universe is keyed to the processes of love. It was love that prompted God to offer his Son that we might have peace with him. From the time that God announced to the humble shepherds the birth of the saviour in the city of David, love was introduced as the motivating power behind all good courses of action.

The quality of our gifts is always determined by the quality of our love. If we love little we give little. If we love

much we give much. God is love, and he has organized the universe to that end. It is only through love that is born of God that goodwill can be established among the nations of the world. Only through hearts that have been redeemed by the Savior of men can human relationships be lifted to a level of brotherhood and peace. All things work together for good to those who love.

The world was perishing when Christ came. It will continue to perish where great love does not abound.

The Rev. Doug Thomas

Lexington Christian Church

CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22,23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.

Meekness, temperance: Against such there is no law. We're living in a time when it seems like everything is governed by laws, rules, regulations, and requirements. Some of these seem to do nothing but frustrate us in our attempts to achieve success. We've all heard the old saying "laws were made to be broken." If there's a law against something, that's the very thing we want to do.

There seems to be a certain Spirit about Christmas time that we notice or even take for granted. We express love to one another in greetings and giving. It's a happy time of year. Things that would ordinarily upset us we overlook when we remember it's Christmas time. We get joy from getting gifts to give to others.

Families are brought together again for the festivities. There's laughter and singing.

Yes, there's a certain Spirit about Christmas that we expect to be part of Christmas. But the best part is "against such there is no law."

A good New Year's resolution would be that in the 80's we will do more of the things that there are no laws against.

May the Spirit of Christmas be with you all through the year.

The Rev. Bob Nash

United Methodist Church

A THOUGHT FOR CHRISTMAS

Too often, I think, we become so involved in the busy-ness of Christmas that we forget what Christmas is all about, or even why we celebrate Christmas. And what concerns me is that for too many people today Christmas has come to mean making merry without a Savior. And yet the word Christmas literally means "Christ-mass."

There is a story that speaks very well to our need as human beings in 1980. The story tells of a man and his wife who lived a long time ago in a simple little cottage with their only child. It seems that one winter the little boy became very ill and it appeared that without some kind of miracle he would surely die. So the father said, "Why don't we seek the help of the king with the healing touch? Folks say that he lays his hands on sick people and they get well."

So the father set out to seek help for his son. He did not know where he would find the king, but he began his journey anyway. Along the way he asked several people how to find this king. One man scoffed at him for daring to think "the king with the healing touch" would see him in his tattered old coat. Another cruelly told him, "You're going to see the king in those worn-out old sandals? Have you no carriage? It's a long way over the mountains and plains. You'll never get there." Still another told him the king was so pure that he knew the sins of all who stood before him. "Whatever gave you the idea he would see the likes of you?" asked that man.

The father, despairing at what others had told him, turned back toward his humble home. After a long journey he came into sight of his little cottage and was surprised to see a large crowd gathered there. He could see a very beautiful carriage in front of his home and a man stepping out of it. When the father asked who this stranger might be he was told, "Why that's the king with the healing touch."

"...But how can this be...?" asked the simple man as he came into the presence of the visitor. "...Your majesty..." he said, "...I never dreamed of such a thing. We are but poor people, full of many faults, and we have no gift we can give you. This old coat and these worn-out sandals are all I have. I tried my best to come to your country to tell you about my son..."

The king interrupted him saying, "You could never have found me by yourself, but I heard of your need, and have come to help you. TAKE ME IN!"

That is the meaning of Christmas and that is why we celebrate it still today. We celebrate the coming of a KING—a KING who comes to us even though we are not worthy...and who reaches out to you and me with LOVE to lift us up and set us back on our feet once more.

The Gospel writer John put it this way, "...God loved the world so much that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life..." (3:16)

Have a very Blessed Christmas!

Yours in Service,
The Rev. S. Michael Sheridan

Hope and Valby Lutheran Churches

CHRISTMAS—FORM AND CONTENT

" 'Tis the season to be jolly..." "We wish you a merry Christmas..." "Joy to the world..."

"Christmas should be a time of great cheer!" Everything about the season shouts it out. The people in the turkey ad are all so happy around their table. Their turkeys are never dry. All our children look so happy during the programs. Santa is always laughing. The TV programs all end with warm, meaningful relationships.

And every Christmas more people kill themselves than any other time of year.

We've bought the myth. We've fallen victim to our own creations—made up TV stories, carefully rehearsed happy children, perfect situations manufactured to sell us products. And Santa has always been what we wished, never what really was.

We're so surrounded by tissue-paper images of happiness that normal human feelings of weariness, irritation, sadness and those other unjoyful emotions leave us feeling even worse about ourselves.

"It's Christmas! Everyone's happy. So what's wrong with me?"

We have made the form—smiles and parties and cookies and gifts—the most important thing. The new law we've

passed is, "Thou shalt be successfully happy." And successful happiness is defined by dream makers, not by realities or flesh and blood.

What a shame. What a waste. For the content of Christmas is the One who comes that we may have abundant life, not guilt. The One who is the center of Christmas is a gift for living, not a law for guiltiness.

God loved the world, so He gave. And the One He gave comes with the message, "Come unto me all of you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." It is we who have passed the expectation that we must be happy at Christmas by doing everything properly. He came because He knows we can't do everything properly and He wants us to know that He loves us anyway.

Christmas is a time of joy. Because God looks at us realistically and finds us acceptable—weariness, irritability and sadness included. His love is a gift. Jesus is for free.

Christmas is a time of joy. But the joy doesn't depend on our ability to do all the right things at the right times in the right ways. That inner joy of Christmas depends on God who has released us from "you ought to," to "you are Mine just as you are, and here is the proof, I give Myself to you."

Joy to the world, the Lord is come.

The Rev. John Maas

Ione United Church of Christ

THE DRAMA OF CHRIST

The drama of Christ's birth unfolds: which part will you play? Which role fits you most comfortably?

There's Joseph: humble, patient, perhaps puzzled. He's a very sensitive person; he was willing to divorce Mary quietly rather than shame her publicly to clear his own name. Once he was informed of the importance of his part in the birth of the Messiah, he was willing and obedient. Joseph is for us an example of humility and integrity.

There's Mary: young, trusting and obedient. Her life was marvelously changed, and she responded humbly and without a moment's doubt. She faithfully served God from start to finish—her dedication to Jesus from his humble birth to his death and resurrection grew from her powerful faith. Mary is for us an example of obedience and trust.

There are shepherds: fearful, hopeful, and incredulous. On what started out to be an ordinary night of work, the world was changed and these humble peasants became the first of millions to worship Jesus Christ. They set the stage for the Messiah's salvation of the common people. They responded with awe and joy and praised God, for their lives were changed. The shepherds are for us an example of the universality of the Good News, and the joy of receiving it.

There are Wise Men: curious, confident, and generous. The star drew them, led them, and assured them that they were on the path of something worth the trip. They traveled many miles, not knowing exactly what they were seeking, but trusting in God. Their gifts were among the finest of the day, and meant for a king. Imagine their surprise at the rude stable and tiny babe! The wise men are to us an example of faith and generosity.

Where are you in the drama? There's room for everyone in this story, and the stable will easily accommodate us all. The Good News of the Messiah's birth catches us wherever we are, and changes our lives. Let us all join to worship the Christ!

The Rev. Cathy Barker

Church Of The Nazarene

WHAT WILL YOU GIVE FOR HIS BIRTHDAY

"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." Luke 2:10,11

What an exciting time of the year, the Christmas Season is! We decorate our house, stores, businesses, schools, and churches. Everyone has been planning for the big day. Shopping, mailing, baking, decorating, caroling, and doing things for others that we only do once a year. Before the rush is over, let's take a few minutes to stop and enjoy the season and really know why we celebrate.

May every bow and ribbon, candle and light, decoration and tree, remind us of Jesus Birthday. Everyone likes to get something for their birthday. By the way, what will you give Jesus for His birthday?

Merry Christmas
The Rev. Floyd Wilks

Seventh-day Adventist Church

GOD IS WITH US

"Behold, a virgin shall be with child and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emanuel, which being interpreted is, 'God with us.'" Matt. 1:23. Jesus not only chose to leave the splendor of the courts of Heaven to come to this earth to die that you might live, but He came to dwell among men. "To this sin darkened earth He came to reveal the light of God's love—to be God with us." "Desire of Ages," p. 19.

When we hurt, when all seems to go wrong, and nothing goes right, God is with us. There may be times when we are misunderstood, when our motives are misinterpreted, when we feel all alone, but God is with us. Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. 11:28. May the joy and serenity of this Christmas bring the Christ Child near to all.

The Rev. Dan Adels

All Saints Episcopal to hold Christmas Eve service

On Wednesday, Dec. 24, at 8 p.m., a Christmas Eve service, "Candles and Carols," will be led by all three of All Saints' lay readers.

On Sunday, Dec. 28, at 10:30 a.m., the Reverend Dick Thew from Cove will hold Holy Communion.

Ione United Church of Christ plans two Christmas Eve services

The Ione United Church of Christ will hold two Christmas Eve Candlelight services this year, at 7 and 10:30 p.m., in contrast to the usual single service.

"With an early service as well as a late one, we hope to include more families with young children," said the Rev. Cathy Barker, pastor. "The precious experience of celebrating Christ's birth in worship, with others, is not just for adults."

The two services will have some features in common. Both will center around the reading of the Christmas story from the Gospels of Luke and Matthew. The congregation will join in singing carols, and special music will be offered. An offering will be received for the Christmas Fund. The Christ candle will be lighted, symbolizing Christ's light

coming into the world, and then each participant will light a candle, to show the spread of that light to all people.

The first service, at 7 p.m., will be family-oriented. Children will have an opportunity to view the creche (manger scene), and to sing "Away in a Manger." The mood will be informal as well as worshipful.

The second service, at 10:30 p.m., will include the celebration of Holy Communion. The church choir will sing an anthem directed and accompanied by Marilyn Rietmann, and Wilma Cheney will sing a solo. The meditation will be a song, "Choosing Christmas," by Bob Fitzgerald, sung by the Rev. Cathy Barker.

Everyone is welcome to attend either service, or both, on Christmas Eve.

Give the perfect holiday gifts to your children

by Birdine Tullis, Morrow Extension Service

The following is a reprint from "Family Circle" magazine. The formula for a perfect gift for all children seemed so timely that I share it with you as a special holiday message from your county 4-H staff:

Besides the toys, the sweaters, the new TV games, give children these gifts for Christmas:

- Give the gift of acceptance. Teach those around you that they are loved for what they are, not for what they do, or even how much they please you. Give this gift with a kiss.
- Give the gift of self-confidence by helping them understand and accept that no one can be approved of all the time, and that when one encounters disapproval he need not feel immobilized or upset, that he must trust himself, not the opinion of others. Give this gift with a hug.

- Give them the gift of possibilities. Don't let them label themselves as intellectuals, athletes, little ladies, macho men, or whatever. Give them an example of a person who is not slotted into any one compartment and tell them a boy or girl can sew or play football, can cry or be brave, can cut the grass or do the dishes. Give them the gift

- Give them the gift of help. Help them to find happiness in virtually all circumstances. Give them this gift as they go out the door. These are the gifts that will last forever.

Happy Holidays to All
OREGON'S DIVERSE AGRICULTURE

A slide-cassette tape program "Oregon's Diverse Agriculture" is available at the Extension office for use by any group or individual. The program is provided to each county by the E.R. Jackman Memorial Fund through the OSU Foundation. The lovely pictorial and narration do an excellent job of showing the many varied agricultural aspects of Oregon from the coastal portion on through Eastern Oregon. Call 676-9642 to reserve the program.

Helpful holiday bulletins available

Helpful holiday bulletins are now available through county Extension offices, reports Extension home economist Molly Saul.

"Care and Handling of Poinsettias," FS 162, lists factors to consider when buying a poinsettia, in addition to the daily care of the plant. Instructions are included for transplanting outdoors when warmer weather comes. The cause and treatment of leaf problems and wilting are discussed in detail.

"Preserving Cut Holly," FS 154, describes the treatment required to keep holly fresh

from the time it is cut until it is used in the home.

"Reduce Christmas Fire Hazards," FS 27, explains the many ways to keep a home safe from fire during the holiday season. Directions are included for making fire retardant coatings for trees and greens. Precautions for the use of decorative indoor and outdoor lights are listed. A Christmas tree safety check list summarizes the fact sheet.

Mrs. Saul states that these bulletins are available at no charge at all county Extension offices.

BMCC registration set Mon., Jan. 5

Registration day for winter term classes will be Monday, Jan. 5, on the Blue Mountain Community College campus.

According to registrar, Truman Baily, 756 full time students have pre-registered for classes. This compares to 706 registrations last year at the same time. Baily pointed out that the figure reflects the fact that more students are registering early and does not necessarily point to an increase in enrollment winter term.

Returning students planning to register Jan. 5 will begin the process in the admissions office in Morrow Hall. New students should report to the counseling center for placement test information on that day.

Part-time students interested in taking a class or two may register by mail using the form on page 16 of the winter term schedule. The schedule has been mailed to every local postal patron in the two-county area.