

Braman Foundation of Charities REVIVE MAGAZINE

The Magazine of The Braman Foundation of Charities
including Biblical Studies and Discipleship

December 2023/ January 2024





BFC
Featured Corner

The coming of Christ,
Hanukkah.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

– 1 John 5:4-5

It is this time of year when God's spirit seems to be most active. Whether Christian or Jewish, we witness a time of anticipation of the coming of the Lord or new beginnings.

So whether you are struggling or life is great, or somewhere in between, use this time to plan through seeking how you might be of greater use to those around you.

Perhaps you are struggling with addiction, negative thinking, or depression. Make a decision to "get out" of this way of thinking or behavior, and then act on this.

God's Grace will support you all the way. Come to depend on that truth.

*Praise the lord,
BFC*

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BFC Editorial

Dear Friends,

We at BFC have been very busy with several new mission projects as well as the VBS as Asapalli and updated news concerning the relief effect in Manipur.

Locally, the Holy Comforter ministry continues to grow as its Rectory construction is completed and we are working on completing the church renovation. We hope to have the church renovations complete and our new organ installed by December 20th.

Allow your heart to be softened by words of God in Isaiah 7:14, “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel.”

In this season, put down the world and grow in the focus of the Lord Christ’s birth and meaning. So often we look at this season with difficulty for all the various worldly reasons.

At the Braman Foundation we encourage you to take some time to examine your year. Set aside some time to look at what opportunities may lie ahead for 2024. Try to stay away from the constant bombardment of negative news cycles.

May you and your family have a blessed Christmas season as you enjoy the festivities and celebrate the coming and birth of Christ our King.

With Warm Wishes
Yours in Christ
BFC
Dec 2023/Jan 2024



HOLY COMFORTER
ORTHODOX CHURCH

Join us for

Discipleship | Tuesday 7pm

Bible Study | Thursday 7pm

Prayer & Meditation | Sunday 7pm

The 2023 Scripture:

“Lord, I thank you that no weapon formed against me shall prosper and every tongue that accuses you in judgment will be condemned. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their vindication is from me, declares the Lord.”

Isaiah 54:17

BFC Revive Magazine

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God's Gifts Bring Joy to All

"I bring you good news of a great joy"

- Luke 2:10

Was there ever a day that we needed some word of joy more than ours?

What is this joy of which we read the Gospel of Luke? Apparently there is something very distinctive about it. It is in the parables of Jesus over and over. It is also in the events of the New Testament. It is clearly stated that when the seventy went out at Jesus' command to preach, they, "returned with joy."

And most amazing of all are the words in Hebrews, where it speaks of Jesus, "who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross."

What on earth is this Joy? It stands in contrast to our ways. We use at least three words that seem alike but are vastly different. Sometimes we speak of pleasure; but do we really know what pleasure it is? Or, we speak of happiness; but I doubt if we know exactly what we are talking about. But joy of the Christian faith is deeper than either of these. It comes not in escaping from the realities or being protected from the shocks of life. You know we try to amuse ourselves in many ways to escape the realities of life. And today, of course, the most common is the cocktail before dinner in the evening. We say this is a fine way to relax after a hard day at work. And we say we need to relax and

relieve our tensions so we go bowling or we do something else to take our minds off our problems. Many of us as parents try to protect our children right up to the very end from the hard knocks of life. We say we want our children to have the opportunities that we could never have in our childhoods. Wouldn't it make more sense to prepare them for the shocks in life, so when they came, they would know what to do and how to handle them? You know, it's true for us to realize that we cannot possibly face this life alone, by ourselves. We cannot divert our lives and the lives of our families around something, nor can we escape from life. Sooner or later we are going to have to face life and the better prepared we are, the better we will come out of it. Joy is looking at life full face, head on and finding the countenance of God in it.

Sometime sit down and think of the times when you have seen real joy. I've tried that this week. I have seen joy and so have you. It is in the moment when a child growing into a life passes another milestone of achievement and looks at you with a light on his face. It is in the moment when after anxiety about a loved one you hear the word that all is well. It is in the return of someone who has been away. It is in the hour when a guilt long carried has been lifted. It is in

those times of life when fulfillment has come. It is given when one discovers that he has a power, which God needs for him to use. It is in the times when we know we are loved. This is joy and it surely is the gift of God.

There are gifts that come to all of us in Jesus Christ, which brings joy into our lives.

First, there is the gift of knowing. Because of him we know what we do not know. You see, whenever we speak of Christ as the Son of God we thereby confess that it is through him that we know about God. Doesn't the very word give us a picture? Suppose a man appears one day to you and says, "I am the son of one who wants you to know him. I want to tell you about him, his will and his ways, his love and his compassion. More over I am like my father. If you see me, you will see what he is like." Isn't this what Christ is saying to us? Isn't this what he said to his disciples?

All of this seems so clearly implied in our belief in Christ as Son of God. You want to know what God is, what he wills and what he wants for us. Then we have a way of knowing. When Christ comes we know what we did not know, namely, the nature and love of God. Surely, this gift of knowing God through Jesus Christ brings us great joy.

Second, we have the gift of becoming—More over, we become what we have not been. The gospel of John says that, "to all who received him he gave power to become the Son of God." Now that power to become is one of the greatest in the world. Through God we have the power to become anything and

everything he intends for us to become. We have power at our hand and we are discovering more. We have a power to hurl satellites into the sky, the power to destroy a city with the dropping of a single bomb. We often have power to heal our bodies. But there is no other power that can be discovered that can help us become the sons of God. That was only given to Jesus Christ. It is given to all who received him. All kinds of power is available waiting for us through Jesus Christ. Certainly this is one gift that cannot be wrapped in Christmas paper and ribbon. It is too big for that but what joy we experience in our lives when through Jesus Christ we have the gift of becoming.

The most amazing gift that God has given us is the power to become, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God. And it does not yet appear what we shall be." We are here this evening because we believe that it is possible to be better than we are, to have more of God in our lives, to possess a faith that is both radiant and relevant.

Certainly all of us realize we are sinners. We know that God does truly forgive us, if we repent and promise to lead a better life. We realize we can become a better Christian by reading his word, by prayer with him, in witnessing in his name. As Christians we realize that we need to worship God in his house regularly with other Christians. That's why we are here for we intend to try to lead a better life. Here we know that we do belong for Christ is with us and God has given us the power to become a better person.

Third, Jesus Christ brings to us the gift of hoping. Again, we hope where we had lost heart. Hope does not come easily for

us. We have had it in earlier years of our century. But the shocks have been great, and our hopes have been shattered often. Can we hope again?

A friend of mine related the story to me. "One Sunday morning some years ago we walked down the ruins of the street which once had been a great Boulevard In Europe, the Unter den Linden. We passed the rubble of a great building where but a few years before Hitler had had his headquarters. It was almost literally true that not one stone was left standing on another. Here was the mark of an era of violence, hatred and destruction. One felt that the hand of God had reached out in judgment. But for a moment there was a passing scene. Walking toward the rubble, I saw, a mother with a small child holding her hand. It seemed a symbol. Here in the face of a terrible pass was life beginning, again. The wonder of our hope is that life always begins anew.

Here, on the one hand, were the rubble and destruction of our hatred and violence, and then a child, a new generation of life, begins all over again with all the possibilities for good and evil, with all the choices that make up the future."

Regardless of how bad the situation, how low we may feel, there is always hope through Jesus Christ. Life can be started a new. We have the hope that someday all men will live in peace and harmony. We have the hope that regardless of the color of our skin we all will be treated equal in the sight of man as we are in the sight of God. We have the hope that Christ will come to earth again and that we will be ready for him. We have

the hope of eternal life with God, our father in heaven. Christmas is a time to remember that in the gift of a child God reminds us that life always starts over and so there is hope. What a wonderful gift hope is.

Too profound in its simplicity, too wonderful in its holiness, Christmas is truly God's gift for all mankind. Only childlike eyes - trusting, wondering, and believing - can see the real meaning of Christmas for it is not fiction or fantasy, it is a fact and it is a faith. At Bethlehem there is an open invitation to worship and to adore, by which the fires of faith are rekindled and life is made new. Hear great words like incarnation, redemption and eternity come alive and are made real for all men and to all ages.

And finally we have the gift of belonging. We belong where we have been alone. There are so many things that separate us from one another in our world. We let things that really do not matter separate us. Socially we are separated and usually wealth goes along with this. Most assuredly the color of our skin separates us and our religion in many cases also separates us. In many cases the type of occupation we are engaged in separates us one from another. We do not have anything in common. But there is one thing all of us have in common and that is Jesus Christ and being a Christian. This will surely bring us together regardless of all the rest of the reasons I have mentioned. Christ brings us together and gives us a sense of belonging.

Some years ago there was a lad who was spending his first Christmas away from home, and a long way he had come. He left his family in Nigeria and days later

stood for the first time as a stranger in the heart of an American city. Everything was different. The faces were strange. The way of life was like another world. He had on his face the tribal markings that identified him, but there were no other faces marked like that. How could a man endure so far from home in so strange a setting? It was just one great hope. The greatest hope of all. He was a Christian. And when he went into his church he was at home again. It saved him from the weighty loneliness. Alone in many ways but still belonging to Christ he belongs to all others who love Christ too.

Is it surprising that the birth of the Christ was the news of a great joy?

Think of all that came to us in Jesus Christ. We know what we did not know. We became what we had not been. We hope where we had lost heart and we belong where we had been alone. Small wonder that we can hardly think of him without breaking into song, "Joy to the World, the Lord has Come." Yes, we experience real joy in our lives by the presence of Jesus Christ. The gifts he gave to us cannot be measured and added on an adding machine. None of them have been wrapped in fancy paper and placed under the Christmas tree. Nor are they gifts that are soon forgotten and discarded. These are true gifts and if we accept Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior, they will be from everlasting to everlasting. Accept Christ, let him come into your heart and experience real Christmas joy.



HOLY COMFORTER
ORTHODOX CHURCH

Operation Blessing Bag

Blessing Bag Ministry is going well and needs your support!

Blessing Bags are a way to come to the aide of those in need and using this time to evangelize with people in their community; come along side them, and bring them to the Lord.

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Grow in the Lord with *Daily Reflections*

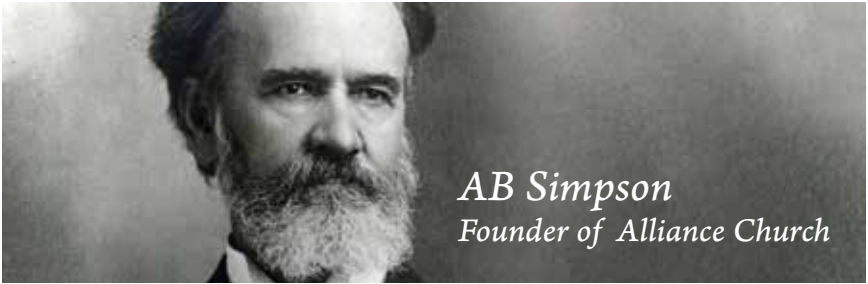


Braman Foundation of Charities is pleased to offer to you a “Daily Reflection” for every day of the year. It is vital to use a strong, spiritual based, Christ centered reading to help start your devotion or to end your devotion.



bramanfoundation.org

A Daily Devotional



"I bring you glad tidings"

- Luke ii 10

A Christmas spirit should be a spirit of humanity. Beside that beautiful object lesson on the Manger, the Cradle, and the lowly little child, what Christian heart can ever wish to be proud? It is a spirit of joy. It is right that these should be glad tidings, for, "Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people."

It is a spirit of love. It should be the joy that comes from giving joy to others. The central fact of Christmas is the Christ who loved us, and came to live among us and die for us, and he or she has no right to share its joys who is living for himself or herself alone.

Love is always sacrificial, and so the Christmas spirit will call us to a glad and full surrender, first to God, and then the joyful sacrifice of what we call our own for His glory and the good of others.

The Christmas spirit is a spirit of worship. It finds the Magi at His feet with their gold and frankincense and myrrh. Let it find us there, too.

The Christmas spirit is a spirit of missions. Its glad tidings are for all people.

Biblical Studies

Forgiveness:

Matt 18: 21,22

Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say for you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

Colossians 3:13

And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on the heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another forgiving each other, just as the Lord Christ has forgiven you.

Denial of Self:

Matt 16:24

Then Jesus said, "If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

Thomas Kempis "The Imitation of Christ" Book 3, Chapter XXXII

"Of self denial, renouncing every evil appetite."

Putting on Christ, Casting Aside the Oldself:

Ephesians 4:21-24

"In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."

Colossians 3:10

"And have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him."



BFC Commentary

Forgiveness

Matt 18: 21,22

Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say for you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

And so Jesus is saying always be ready to forgive regardless of how you are hurt. Always, on this side of heaven be ready to let go.

Hurt can come in expectations. It is best to live with no expectations. This is very difficult to understand as many live in dependency of one another. Yet the Lord says, "Me, me, and only me." Love me, love thee.

When you can walk in forgiveness you are always ready to restore love with one another. It is not the divine nature that is hurt, but your illusioned sense of self or what we refer to commonly as ego. This is your pseudo soul. Most, remain in this state, carry out in this state, and rarely comprehend their divine nature. And so great levels of limitation ensue. Hurt compounds, and the hurt is stored in the memory and as current events unfold the pain is relived as if it just happened.

And this is the human condition called "normal". An acceptable fragmented form of consciousness in which many walk in

hurt, resentment, bitterness, and never achieve a true divine nature experience.

We just do not believe, and then blame this darkness on the "end times". As if someone, somehow we are in the end times. As if you know?

Reflect on the turmoil in your mind as you lack forgiveness from past hurts. And so ask yourself, "Is it God's will for me to be bitter, hurt, and to walk in such a fragmented state?"

Honestly, why would you be attached to that brand of Christianity? For we are taught that the Christian is brought out of bondage, chains are gone, and only love ensues. Friend, learn to forgive and forget. Christ remembers not your sin, why do you recall the pain of the past?

Colossians 3:13

"And so, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on the heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another forgiving each other, just as the Lord Christ has forgiven you."

You have within you the power to forgive all past hurts. Yet, you are comfortable in your struggles with bitterness, hurt, and pain. Frequently, we enjoy visiting self-help groups, and when it's our turn to share, love to recall the pain, to identify with past sin, darkness, as if we find solace in the recollection. Scripture

suggests, over and over, to forget your past. Let it go and move on, “can you not feel or see that I am trying to do a new thing?”

Christ is saying to you put on the heart of love, compassion, and characteristics of the Holy Spirit. Practice this art of “putting on the characteristics of Christ”, own its heart of compassion. Learn to weep when you witness a man or woman down and out in homelessness, instead through pride, you decide not to help a brother or sister. Why not love them and speak with them? Are you better than they? All are here to work out a salvation. Weep and have compassion for those around you. You know living here on earth is an experience of salvation learning to come back to Christ and so it is hurtful for many. So be gentle with others as Christ is with you. Open your heart to deepen understanding.

Much of the time you just are not going to “get” your way with others, so practice patience. Wait on the Lord to move into the heart of others. Then watch that unfold. Practice patience with others shortcomings for Christ has been patient with you. Practice holiness and being peaceful to others and even in the face of ridicule. Learn to be Holy as this is part of your divine nature. In holiness you must learn to be set apart from the world. Be blessed, but more importantly, bless others.

Self-Denial

Matt 16:24

Then Jesus said, “If anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross

and follow me.”

So what is your cross to bear? Can you renounce yourself and serve only Jesus? What is self? The characteristics that are contrary to Christ’s likeness. You are made in divine nature. All persons are and putting off self is their sanctification. These characteristics are contrary to love. So with that said it is not okay to say, “I am a disciple and continue to sin, in selfishness, and all the worldliness of human nature. We are to set ourselves apart and be a light unto the world. This is to be done 7 days a week and all day long. It is not acceptable to live in self.

What mansion in heaven are you going to when you make your transition? Do you just want “to get by” and live in a hut in heaven or do you want to walk the road with golden bricks, and talk with Moses, Paul, and David? Come on get on with it. Renounce those tendencies that are holding you back. Can’t figure out your flaws, then ask Jesus to reveal them and watch out. Because if you are sincere in your relationship and ask that question, oh boy! You are in for a real lesson. Get prepared. “On self denial, and renouncing every evil appetite.”

The Imitation of Christ, Book 3, Chapter XXXII Of Self-denial, and Renouncing every Evil Appetite Thomas Kempis

“My son, says the Lord, you cannot possess perfect liberty unless you wholly renounce yourself.

Bound in fetters are all they who seek their own interest, and are lovers of themselves—covetous, inquisitive, wandering in a circle, seeking ever soft and delicate things, not the

things of Jesus Christ, but oftentimes devising and framing that which will not stand. For it shall perish altogether, whatever is not born of God.

Keep this short and perfect word: Let go all, and you shall find all; leave desire, and you shall find rest. Weigh this thoroughly in your mind, and when you have fulfilled it, you shall understand all things.

O Lord, this is not the work of one day, nor children's sport. In this short word is included all the perfection of religious persons.

My son, you ought not to turn away nor be cast down when you hear the way of the perfect; but should rather be stirred up to higher things and at least in desire to sigh after them.

I desire that it be so with you and that you were no longer a lover of yourself, but that you stand merely at My bidding, and at his whom I have appointed over you. Then you would exceedingly please Me, and all your life would pass away in joy and peace. You have yet many things to part with, which unless you wholly resign to Me, you shall not attain the world and yourself.

I said that you must buy mean things instead of things that, among men, are precious and exalted. For true heavenly wisdom seems very mean and small and almost given up to forgetfulness, because she has no high thoughts of herself nor seeks to be magnified upon earth. Many indeed praise her with their mouths, but in their lives they are far from her. Yet she is the 'pearl of great price', which is hidden from many."

Putting on Christ Casting Aside the Old Self

Ephesians 4:21-24

"In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."

You know that the old self must be cast aside and the new self, which is in Christ Jesus put on. This is done through a renouncing of your old ways and taking on new. Shed your defects of character and your shortcomings through surrender. Get on your knees and ask Christ to reveal your sin nature and now promise Christ that you will overcome and not only will He forgive, but Christ will help you with a new nature, your true nature of divine love.

For many believe there is no effort needed, yet the saints of old have told us that these take time to put in the light of Christ. Grow in your relationship and learn to let go of the self. Thank God for this opportunity.

Practice Righteousness, Holiness, and Truthfulness. These characteristics can come out of you as you put on the likeness of Jesus. It is in your relationship with Christ that you put off your self nature and put on Jesus. In our sanctification, this process continues, yet as some of these self, egotistical desires are mastered through grace, what showed forth is love of others, love of self, and a respect for who you and others are in Christ, in God.

For most, in this realm, what we believe to be so real is not permanent. There is a fabric woven, a deceit that overshadows the truth of who you are and what is meant by “being a light to the world.” Its roots are in desire of ego gratification, avoidance of lessons learned, and ignorance. What is real is that all souls that incarnate to earth come here to work out their salvations in God.

It is not a matter of religion, rather an understanding that to put on Christ, a conversion must ensue of what is commonly referred to as “being born again”. Only then does this Holy Spirit reside to take hold and reveal the process of sanctification. Putting on the real and removing and overcoming the lie.

Colossians 3:10

“And have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.”

This process of sanctification will only occur when the soul comes into the realization that it is He and He alone in Christ that the relationship must unfold. A process of continual repentance of the lie, the illusion that this realm and

even our lives here on earth are real and unending. In this realm we are here to first come back to the Lord through the process of being “born again”. The process of sanctification begins and in this are the methods being taught to put on your new self. Therefore, grow in this process, accept the pull of the Holy Spirit to work in you and through you to protect and renew your mind.

Finally, friend, make the effort. Stop believing that all you need to do is show up to a church, or religious service, place your tithe in the offering, attend a weekly bible study, and yes these are useful and helpful, yet it is the relationship in which you are developing with Jesus, your teacher, in the sanctuary of silence in your home in which your greatest strides will be made with His grace and mercy.

As we close this short study, always remember your main purpose for this incarnation is to learn how to come home to Christ. Work to overcome all the trappings or illusions of this realm and know His ever-present love, joy, and peace!

Always in divine friendship,
BFC



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The screenshot shows the 'Inspire' newsletter layout. At the top is the Braman Foundation of Charities logo with the tagline 'Inspire'. Below this is the 'BFC Thanksgiving Greetings' section, featuring a 'Thanksgiving' header and a quote from 1 Corinthians 13:12: 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you by His poverty might become rich.' This is followed by a paragraph of text and a small image of a Thanksgiving dinner. Below this is a 'Thankful' section with a quote from Psalm 92:1: 'I will give thanks to you, Lord, with all my heart, I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.' This is followed by another paragraph and a small image of a Thanksgiving dinner. Below this is a 'Thankfulness Leads to Witnessing' section with a quote from Philippians 4:5-7: 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in every anxiety, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving present your requests to God.' This is followed by another paragraph and a small image of a group of people. At the bottom is an 'Inspirational Quotation' section with a quote from 1 Corinthians 10:31: 'And whatever you do, whether in word or in deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.' The newsletter footer includes navigation links: Home | About BFC | Prayer Requests | Literature | Registration, and social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube.

“Lord, I thank you that no weapon formed against me shall prosper and every tongue that accuses you in judgment will be condemned. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their vindication is from me, declares the Lord.”

Isaiah 54:17

Notable / Quotable

President Lincoln's Favorite Poem

OH! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,
Man passeth from life to his rest in the grave.
The leaves of the oak and the willow shall fade,
Be scattered around, and together be laid;
And the young and the old, and the low and the high
Shall molder to dust and together shall lie.
The infant a mother attended and loved;
The mother that infant's affection who proved;
The husband that mother and infant who blessed,--
Each, all, are away to their dwellings of rest.
The maid on whose cheek, on whose brow, in
whose eye,
Shone beauty and pleasure,--her triumphs are by;
And the memory of those who loved her and
praised
Are alike from the minds of the living erased.
The hand of the king that the sceptre hath borne;
The brow of the priest that the mitre hath worn;
The eye of the sage, and the heart of the brave,
Are hidden and lost in the depth of the grave.
The peasant whose lot was to sow and to reap;
The herdsman who climbed with his goats up the
steep;
The beggar who wandered in search of his bread,
Have faded away like the grass that we tread.
The saint who enjoyed the communion of heaven;
The sinner who dared to remain unforgiven;
The wise and the foolish, the guilty and just,
Have quietly mingled their bones in the dust.
So the multitude goes, like the flowers or the weed
That withers away to let others succeed;

So the multitude comes, even those we behold,
To repeat every tale that has often been told.
For we are the same our fathers have been;
We see the same sights our fathers have seen;
We drink the same stream, and view the same sun,
And run the same course our fathers have run.
The thoughts we are thinking our fathers would
think;
From the death we are shrinking our fathers would
shrink;
To the life we are clinging they also would cling;
But it speeds for us all, like a bird on the wing.
They loved, but the story we cannot unfold;
The scorned, but the heart of the haughty is cold;
They grieved, but no wail from their slumbers will
come;
They joyed, but the tongue of their gladness is
dumb.
They died, aye! they died; and we things that are
now,
Who walk on the turf that lies over their brow,
Who make in their dwelling a transient abode,
Meet the things that they met on their pilgrimage
road.
Yea! hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
We mingle together in sunshine and rain;
And the smiles and the tears, the song and the
dirge,
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.
'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of
death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the
shroud,--
Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?

This Christmas & That Christmas

“And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased”

-Luke 2:13-14

The Christmas when Jesus was born - about A. D.1; this twentieth century Christmas - 1977 - how different they are and still, how similar they are. We will try to stress similar points in the two Christmases by asking four questions of that time and of this.

First, what was the universe doing in A.D.1? The sun was rising and setting. The moon was waxing and waning. The planets were turning in their courses. The stars were shining, visible by night, invisible by day. The waters were running toward the sea. The canyons were deepening. The trees were blossoming and bearing fruit, each after its own kind. The grass was sprouting after rain. The wild beasts were gathering at night at the water pools. The creature called man was spreading upon the face of the earth. What is the universe in 1977? I would say it is doing approximately the same as A.D. 1.

Second, - what was the nation doing in a D1? What was Caesar, “the August, the Sublime, the Royal, the Regal,” doing in Rome.? What was Herod, who appropriated the title of “Great”, doing in Jerusalem?

Luke gives the answer: Caesar was taxing the people. Death and taxes are known as the inevitables. What difference did it make if a young carpenter named Joseph had to go without a new tool? What difference did it make if Mary had to put off buying the coveted garment for her expected baby? What difference did it make if they had to make the long journey to Bethlehem, with Mary great with child? Taxes must be paid! Caesar’s roads, armies, palaces, court, must be supported.

“And of all that Augustus Caesar did with the taxes of the whole world, there remains nothing but crumbling and half burned ruins.

And what was Caesar’s underling doing? Committing terrible atrocities. Herod was engaged in Operation Slaughter. And all the things that Herod did - the building of the temple, the construction of cities, the creation of palaces, the taking to himself of the name. “Great” - it seems that nothing remains. Herod grew old. His last days were embittered. The word. “Great” is ironic - Herod belongs to a line which includes Nero, Tamerlane, Hitler, Mussolini. What was the nation

doing? Taxing and slaughtering.

Suppose we could look back from A.D. 3954 to this Christmas, as we look back from 1977 to that Christmas, what might we observe? The nation was taxing. All of us can vouch for that. Taxes keep going higher and higher because we as a people are demanding more and more services, because there is corruption in government which we have and are allowing. The nation was using taxes in preparation for what might be called Operation Killer. It is strange, isn't it? That Christmas actually means peace, peace to all people everywhere. And still the many billions of dollars are tax dollars that are spent each and every year on defense preparedness. We seem to talk out of both sides of our mouths at the same time. We say we want peace and still we prepare for war. Perhaps we need to be prepared. I cannot answer that question, but there certainly are a good many places that money could be used to do much more good. If truly the spirit and true meaning of Christmas could enter each and everyone's heart, there would be peace and happiness in our world. I do not believe there will be peace until this happens. Getting back to our comparison of the two Christmases, the nation is doing about the same today as in A.D.1; taxing the people and preparing for war. Or perhaps we should say building up our defenses.

Third, what were the people doing in A.D.1? Their shekels were going into Caesar's coffers; at least some of their sons were going into Caesar's armies.

But the people, what were they doing? Luke suggests an answer. He writes: "And there were shepherds abiding

in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night." The shepherds were tending their flocks. The farmers were tilling their fields. The carpenters like Joseph, were building houses. Artesians were making furniture. Merchants were buying and selling grain, clothing, rugs, jewelry. The people, the great masses, were working. How can they pay taxes if they don't work?

Then too, the people were worshipping. Some were worshipping Jehovah. Some were worshipping Diana. Augustus Caesar was demanding that the people worship him, and many obliged, Others worshiped the sun.

There you have what the people were doing in the first Christmas – paying taxes, working, worshipping. The Jews still worship Jehovah. Multitudes still worship the goddess of pleasure and lust. Men receive his acclaim. The state is exalted. Men bow down to gods of their own contrivance and manufacture. Today everything is measured materially and even though we think we do not, many of us have placed the greatest importance on the acquisition of material things,

But now! A tremendous point of difference! Myriads worship the Babe that was born on that first Christmas. This Christmas, he is the joy of the world, and the hope of the world, In fact, the only hope the world has is Jesus Christ. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light." Jesus, said, "I am the light of the world." We need never walk in darkness with Christ at our side. Many millions of Christians have found this light that came at Christmas time, A.D.1. Have you seen this light?

Fourth, what was God doing in A.D.1? He was sustaining the universe. Since that first Christmas, the sun has risen over 22,000 times. It has never failed to rise. The moon has waxed great and illuminated the earth by its fall-reflected loveliness about 24,000 times. We know its movements and its modes. There have been 1977 spring times with flower, and as many summers of fruitage. The water is not erratic, it still runs towards the sea. All is in order. God is sustaining the universe now as then. What was God doing? God was overruling the nations. In the face of what nations, kings, parliaments, presidents do, what does God do? Much of what he does is beyond our knowledge. We do not presume to know his way with the nations. But he does enter on into history. Is it too much to say that God overrules? God is overruling the nations!

When Speaking of the Constitution of the United States, which has recently been framed, and expressing his disapproval of many provisions in the document, Benjamin Franklin said: "I can hardly conceive a transaction of such momentous importance to the welfare of millions now existing and to exist in the posterity of a great nation should now be suffered to pass without being in some degree influenced Why? So guided and governed by that omnipotent, omnipresent, and beneficent Ruler, in whom all inferior spirits live and move and have their being." Franklin was affirming his faith in the overruling of God and historic event.

At the first Christmas, God made a Caesar's decree the occasion to follow out his own plans.

In A.D.1 he seems to overrule by ignoring Augustus Caesar and Herod the Great. God's

Son is born in the litter of a stable, not in the glitter of the palace. Herod's City is passed by in favor of the village of Bethlehem. God ignores the proud, but let's the proud make the circumstances.

Pharaoh reduces the family of Jacob to virtual slavery; God uses the occasion to the make them a great people.

Again, in the Exodus story, the Jews are carried away into a foreign land; they returned to Jerusalem, and by that experience in captivity they are given a great spiritual experience and endowment.

Let Caesar the Augustus decree that each man must be taxed in his own city. That means that Joseph and Mary must go to Bethlehem. This offers the occasion to fulfill the prophecy of Micah. Christ is born in Bethlehem. What is God doing in the face of what the people are doing? He is fathering his people. He is doing this by sustaining the universe. He is doing this by overruling the nations. He is doing this through the wonderful birth - keeping a promise, exalting the common people, giving a Savior, shepherding their souls, revealing himself, giving eternal life, giving all the right and privilege and power to become sons of God. What was God doing on that first Christmas? He was keeping a promise written out by ancient prophets on parchment. He was keeping a promise written out on living tissue in the hearts of the people.

He was exalting men of low degree. He

was placing a halo above the head of Mary motherhood, above the heads of shepherds, common folk. As Doctor Jewett wrote: “the very birth hour of Christianity irradiated the humble doings of humble people.

God was revealing to the world what he himself, was like that the child grown to manhood would say, “He that hath seen me have seen the Father.” He was kindling a light in a dark World.

He was saving a dying world.

What is God doing now? Sustaining the universe, overruling the nations; fathering his children.

In a little book by Charles L Wallis and Charles L Allen, “When Christmas Came to Bethlehem,” they quote Will Durant’s “The Story of Philosophy.” Durant writes of another kind of deity: “Aristotle’s God never does anything. He has no desires, no will, no purpose. He is actively so pure that he never acts. He is absolutely perfect. Therefore, he cannot desire anything. His sole employment is the contemplation of himself. Poor Aristotelian God. He is a do-nothing King. The King reigns but does not rule. “But it is not so with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What should we be doing this Christmas? We should be exercising faith in his sustaining. We should be putting our hope in his overruling. We should be responding to his fathering in love toward God and in love toward our fellowmen. Christmas truly is a time for accepting Jesus Christ into our lives, a time for letting his peace come into our hearts and letting it spread to all people everywhere. I would like to conclude by reading a poem entitle “Christmas”.

Christmas is wonder in an infant’s clear eyes;
Source of the thoughts in the mind of the wise.

Christmas is gladness, true mirth, and real joy,
Songs in the air at the birth of the Boy.
Christmas is goodwill in the heart of a friend,
Promise of peace to the world’s farthest end.

Christmas is love, in your heart and in mine,
Kindled by Jesus our Savior divine.
Christmas is giving; God’s gift to the earth,
Giving Himself in a Babe’s humble birth.



Holy Comforter Church

Drivers needed to pick up people for Bible Study, Discipleship Study, and Church.

For more details please call:
845-471-2286

BFC Corrections / Prison Behind the Walls Program

“... I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

Matthew 25:36



Life Line

An inmate's most vulnerable time, whether they know this or not, is when they are released from incarceration. Months and years, depending on one's sentencing of forced incarceration, are now dissolved. An individual is now "FREE", or at least they may think they are free; however, New York state statistics show that out of approximately every 100 inmates that are released, 78 come back into the prison system in some form. What can be done for the individual who wishes to change? The individual must truly have a change of heart. We can extend our hand and help with that change of heart.

Behind the Walls

In 1985, Braman began to witness his recovery from addiction in the New York State Correctional Facilities. Braman has presented programs since that time in many facilities including: Greenhaven, Fishkill, Downstate, Summit, and several local and county jails. It is a thorough program using the 12 step method of recovery, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Meditation techniques as well as a program for dealing with violent behavior. In addition, our program helps to provide clarification concerning the negative learned behavior that is unfortunately associated with some families.



News: We are working with Green Haven in Stormville, NY.

These are trifold materials that are used in the program of Behind the Walls.



The Holy Comforter

The Holy Comforter continues to grow despite the remodeling. Upon this writing, our slate roof is going to be completed, our new organ has been delivered, and speakers were installed. We also began laying marble and granite on the floor of the altar, aisle, and entrance.

The Lord has opened the door for us to work with those in Dutchess Care Facility on Washington Street. In addition, we have been blessed with several new folks from the neighborhood.

Our weekly Discipleship and Bible Study meetings continue to grow and we have started another Bible Study which is led by one of the Parish members, Erik.

Recently, Archbishop Bondi has given us more bibles to supply into our Blessing Bags to be used in the Evangelism program.

The church's coffee hour continues to grow as we socialize in the unity of the Holy Spirit. We are forming a close bond with one another. We are very grateful for this unity.

Now that the Rectory is complete it is so nice to be able to share such a beautiful home with others.

The parish has been attending Vespers at the Holy Cross Monastery on Friday evenings at 5pm. On most Fridays, we also have dinner with the monks.

The Holy Comforter anticipates a busy 2024 as we implement more of the BFC community programs and move into our community center.

We praise God.



The Holy Comforter Rectory is **READY FOR CHRISTMAS**





HOLY COMFORTER
ORTHODOX CHURCH

845-471-2286 | holycomforterny.org

Join us at the Holy Comforter Church for Worship

SUNDAY | 10:30 AM

Our worship service is a time to meet to praise, worship, pray to God and receive a teaching (sermon) based on the Bible along with a weekly communion.



The Rectory provides

Guest rooms for missionaries & church members.



Discipleship Study

TUESDAY | 7PM

Bible Study

THURSDAY | 7PM

Prayer / Meditation

THURSDAY | 7PM

13 Davies Place, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

Our Tears Orphans

Missions: Sierra Leone

BFC was able to meet with Pastors in early November to review programming for “Our Tears Orphans”. Below are some updated pictures.



We welcome Fudia as she helps in organizing our BFC mission work.



Elderly Care Program

Missions: Kenya

Mama Sarah and Jomo will have a dinner for the elders on Christmas Day. Jomo thanks all of you for your support.

But meanwhile elders are still the same as shown below:

1. Simeya Songa Nyambura age 87 years old (blind).
2. Alice Atieno Odegi age 89 years old
The above two are the senior most since the program started
3. Samuel Otieno Nyangoye aged 79 years old and having difficulty in walking
4. Maria Auma Ogunyo aged 80 years old
5. Maria Auma's grand son. Calvin Otieno 12 years old a class 7 or grade 7 who is an orphan
6. Maria Oketch Arogo age 82 years old, husband died 30 years ago and her two sons died 7 years ago
7. Benta Akongo Odhacha 79 years old. The husband died 25 years ago.



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Uganda / CEF

Missions: Africa

Jacques Masiko is featured here as several students have completed all of the CEF training that began in January 2019. We thank god for Jacques and Pastor John.



The Greatest Miracle of the New Testament

“Unto us a child is born.”

- Isaiah 9:6

If our minds are not too dull to wonder, if our hearts are not closed to divine love, and if our souls are not impervious to beauty and to grace, then we shall discover the great miracle of the New Testament.

The miracle is wrapped up in a sentence of six words, “unto us a child is born.” Or to put it in another wrapping, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.”

As you go to town, you meet several persons in the stores and on the streets; every single one of them was once a baby. None of us can disagree with that. A baby is not a miracle. And yet we might disagree. With such a negative statement - for I believe a baby is a miracle!

The word. “miracle” is difficult to use. The dictionary says miracle means, “any occurrence that cannot be explained by the laws of nature; a marvel.” Perhaps instead of saying, “it’s a miracle,” sometimes we might better say, “I do not understand.” And yet, at other times, for what we do understand, - or might understand if we went to some trouble, - we may as well use the word miracle. Hold in your hand an acorn while looking at a great oak in its autumn glory. Life and growth, though we know so much about them, still hold our minds and enthralls. Perhaps the dictionary meaning of miracle is not complete enough. For even though things can be explained from the natural laws, it is still miraculous to us.

Miracle is rooted in the mystery of God. The man of faith knows God; he cannot explain him. The man of faith believes that God created the world; the miracle is described only in poetry. The man of faith accepts life from the hand of God and returns life into his hand. All this is wonderful and indescribable.

“Unto us a child is born.” - This is the great miracle of the New Testament. Not only the miracle of every child or any child, but the miracle of that child. We bow in awe. This is marvelous in our eyes.

Really, what is this miracle? It is God going out of bounds. This is the kind of thing that God is doing all the time. He is, at least from our point of view, always going out of bounds, not the bounds that he has set for himself. (He never exceeds those bounds) but the bounds that we have set for him: the bounds of our expectations, the bounds of our past experience of what is possible and what can happen, the bounds that we have arranged in patterns that sometimes become so fixed that even God himself finds it almost impossible to break them. He is always going out of those bounds into brand new fields, opening up vistas that we have never dreamed of seeing. That is what God is always doing. That is what he did, especially on Christmas. He performed a miracle.

The real miracle of Christmas is Jesus himself - not just the wonder of his birth, but much more. The wonder and glory of all that went before and all that followed after.

We marvel before the cradle of the child because he is a child of promise. That scene in Bethlehem is promise - fulfillment. Truly, Jesus Christ came to earth to be our Lord and Savior, our Redeemer. Let us note that our text, "unto us a child is born," was written some 700 years before the child coming. These words, and the words that immediately follow them, though they may have been written as an oracle to celebrate the ascension of a Judean king, could not be held to that occasion. These are words of prophetic poetry. They are burdened with hope that burned in the heart of the Jewish people. The Exodus miracle is not enough to satisfy the hearts of men; it looks forward to a greater miracle. And so "in the fullness of time" "unto us a child is born," a child of promise, of prophecy, of poetry, of hope. Is not this a miracle?

One miracle is enough. This miracle is beyond all other miracles, and this one miracle is enough. If in any way, we respond to this, finding in Christ the image of God, the way to God, the life of God flowing into ours, then we don't need to be much concerned about any other miracle in the Bible or elsewhere. For truly this one miracle is enough for all of us for all time. If we really and truly do come to know Jesus Christ, we will most assuredly find God is him because Jesus said, "the Father and I are one," and indeed they are. As Christians, Jesus Christ is our only way to God and this is one reason why Christ came into the world.

"A child is born." He shares the miracle of every child's birth. To every good mother, the newborn child in the crib is wonderful. There is not a more satisfying feeling, one of pride, one of joy and happiness, then the sight of your very own child for the first time. Fathers, I'm sure, as well as mothers, agree that this experience is unequal to any in the world. And thus, I believe, God knowing this sent Jesus Christ in the same manner, so this feeling could be experienced by all people. I might add that a very similar experience

and feeling is felt when Jesus Christ is truly accepted by us into our lives. We experience joy, happiness, peace beyond knowing, and truly this experience is one of a miracle, likewise. It cannot be fully told but must be felt by the individual to really understand and appreciate. Certainly, every newborn child in the crib is wonderful to a mother. I said to a mother, intending to bring humor into the occasion as we look at her baby. "I suppose he will be a great man!" Her returned remark was deeply serious. "I wouldn't be surprised!"

"A child is born." By every parent he is destined to become a great man. The great miracle of the New Testament is the fulfillment of that potential. The story of his life becomes a great miracle. Look at Jesus' ministry; even though it was short, - 3 years, look at all the good he did; healing people of disease, of infirmity, of sickness they had endured for many years. Look at the training his disciples received. Look at the power he possessed. Men were willing to leave everything to follow him. Look at the impact his life has had on the whole world for nearly 2000 years. Look at the results across the world. Billions of Christians, building many, many churches to worship God. This gospel story is now being told to all people everywhere. There could not possibly be any greater miracle.

There are many thoughts and questions raised about the birth and childhood and manhood of this Jesus. How this baby became a man gathers great mystery! In him, there are great mysteries which occupy the minds of men. Was this child Pre-existent? Did he reveal God? Was he God upon the Earth? How could he be both God and man? And through the centuries, the questions are repeated. And all of the answers can be found in the Bible. Perhaps you cannot just pick this book up and start reading and find the answers to those questions and others immediately. It does take effort and time and study on our parts, but then too, God is willing to give us guidance as we read and study his word.

We, ourselves definitely need to consider the real meaning of Christmas. We desperately need to know this ourselves so we can explain it to our children. It has to mean more than bright lights and the exchanging of gifts. Suppose someone should come up to you as you leave the church after this service and say, "I am a stranger in this part of the world. Where I came from, no one has ever heard of Christmas. Can you tell me what it involves? I have never seen anything like it."

What would you say? Where would you begin? Would you begin, perhaps, right here with what and how we celebrate Christmas? Or would you go further back, to Bethlehem? If you wanted to tell the person what Christmas really means, you would have to go back even farther than that, perhaps not so much back of that as beyond that. You would have to begin with God. And I will tell you why. Christmas is the day on which God did something and unless you start from that, all the things you see happening on the streets and in the schools; in the houses and in the churches, make no sense. For Jesus Christ was truly the son of God and was born into this world for a specific purpose. We should think about what Christmas really is, and really means so that this time of year can be meaningful in our lives and the lives of our families.

"Unto us a child is born." "Unto is a dynamic and a directive word. It might be applied unto

the life of the child period from Bethlehem, unto Nazareth, unto Galilee, unto Samaria, unto Judea, unto Calvary, unto the whole wide world, even unto us, here, in this church and community. The whole New Testament record is one of miracle. The whole New Testament becomes a gospel; a gospel for us to live by, a gospel for us to spread to everyone in this world of ours. On out into the world, the miracle of the Christ goes marching on in grace and power.

From our youth up we have heard about the decisive battles of history. But now Christmas comes again, engaging the thought and warming the heart of multitudes around the globe, and it concerns not a decisive battle but a decisive baby. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." Christmas suggests how much more decisive a baby can be than a battle. That is the miracle. Of Christmas - that a baby can be so decisive. "Unto us a child is born." It is true, is it not? The words of the ancient century are fulfilled in your hearts and in mine. Is this not a miracle?

After prayerful consideration, I/we have decided to support the Braman Foundation of Charities.

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THE CHRISTIAN & MISSIONARY ALLIANCE OF INDIA
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 (P.T.R. No. F57/Ahmedabad)



•શ્રીશાન સંદેશો-૯•

"ગુજરાત સંઘસંસ્થાની મંડોલીઓમાં સુધાર્તા પ્રચારના કાર્યમાં સક્રિય રીતે કાર્ય કરવા ઉત્તેજન આપી જાગૃતિ લાગવી તથા શુદ્ધપૂજા વાળેડાવેલા મેટેવી સોમ કસી સુધાર્તા પ્રચાર દ્વારા સંઘસંસ્થામાં રહેલા લોકોને પ્રભુ ઈસુના આધારક્રમ પ્રકાશમાં લાવીને મંડોલીઓ સ્થાપવી."

1) We visited 5 different war affected relief camps in Manipur and chunchupar have distributed warm winter clothes and children's eatables. As well we gave a short encouragement message to those people whose houses and prosperity were lost and being burnt down in this communal war.

2) we have called 100 meitei Christian families from different districts of Manipur, whose houses and properties were lost and gave them warm blankets, as the winter has arrived we were at need hour for those warm clothes. Most of them gave a word of gratitude with a joy of tear as they received those things.

3) The communal war which started from the 3rd of may 2023, brought a tragic event to lost of 256 christian meitei / kukies Churches by being burnt down and dismantled. Now we Meitei Christian and kukies don't have any Church building left for gathering Physical worship. Even recently some extremist group of meitei came and had beaten the Pastor and Church leadership for having worship service at their own home. So among these affected pastors, we have selected 46 pastors and gave them a help of Rs 1500 to each one them.

They gave a heart of gratitude for getting such a help at this time of need. These pastors don't get any monetary help or salary for this last 7 months because of closing down the worship services.

In Him
 Rev Yakub Christian
 ACMM, CO ordinator of Gujarat Synod 2023

C&MA

Missions: India



Asapalli

Missions: India

BFC is supporting the Annual Asapalli VBS: December 12th - 16th. Look for updated pictures in our next issue.



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL				
11 th - 16 th December 2023				
Asapalli School, Silchar				
TIME/DATE	12 th December (Tuesday)	13 th December (Wednesday)	14 th December (Thursday)	15 th December (Friday)
08:30 - 09:00 AM	Devotion			Testimonies from students & CLOSING PROGRAM
09:00 - 09:45 AM	Learning new Songs			
09:45 - 10:00 AM	Continental Breakfast			
10:00 - 11:00 AM	Class Session 1 & Activity	Class Session 2 & Activity	Class Session 3 & Activity	
11:00 - 12:00 PM	REFRESHMENT			
12:00 - 12:30 PM	Missionary Lesson 1 & 2	Missionary Lesson 3 & 4	Missionary Lesson 5 & Missionary Challenge	
12:30 - 01:00 PM	Choreography			
01:00 - 02:00 PM	Class Session 2 & Activity	Class Session 4 & Activity	Class Session 6 & Activity	
02:00 - 03:30 PM	Games & Fun Time			
03:30 - 04:00 PM	Announcement & Dismissal		Behaviour for closing program Fellowship	
6:00 PM	Fellowship			

SCHOOL MAGAZINE CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS



Dear Students,
We are excited to announce that Asapalli English School (Senior Secondary) is currently accepting submissions for our upcoming school magazine! If you want to showcase your creativity and talent, read the following guidelines.

Content

All submitted pieces and content must be original. Copying of other's work from online or offline sources will be immediately rejected.

Eligibility

All students and alumni of Asapalli English School (Senior Secondary) are invited and eligible to submit their work.

Topic

Your submissions can be any topic and genre. Feel free to express your ideas through your chosen medium while following the official guidelines of the school.

Language

All submissions may be submitted in English, Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Urdu, and Khmer. We encourage you to seek feedback and proofread your work before submission.



Format

- Word limit: Prose articles, short stories, opinion pieces: 500 words max.
- Poetry: Subnet: 4 maximum, 27-2 poems.
- Artwork: Submit original copies of your artwork to your class teacher.

Submission Procedure

Submit your work to your respective class teacher with the subject line: "Magazine Submission - (Your Name) - (Grade/Class)" in an envelope.

Submission Date

Submit all pieces and content by **19th August, 2023**.

The Editorial Committee

School Magazine
Asapalli English School
(Senior Secondary)

Date: 0th June, 2023

If you would like more updates from the school, request a copy of the Asapalli School Magazine. BFC will happily accommodate your request.



PO Box 5148
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SPURGEON'S CORNER

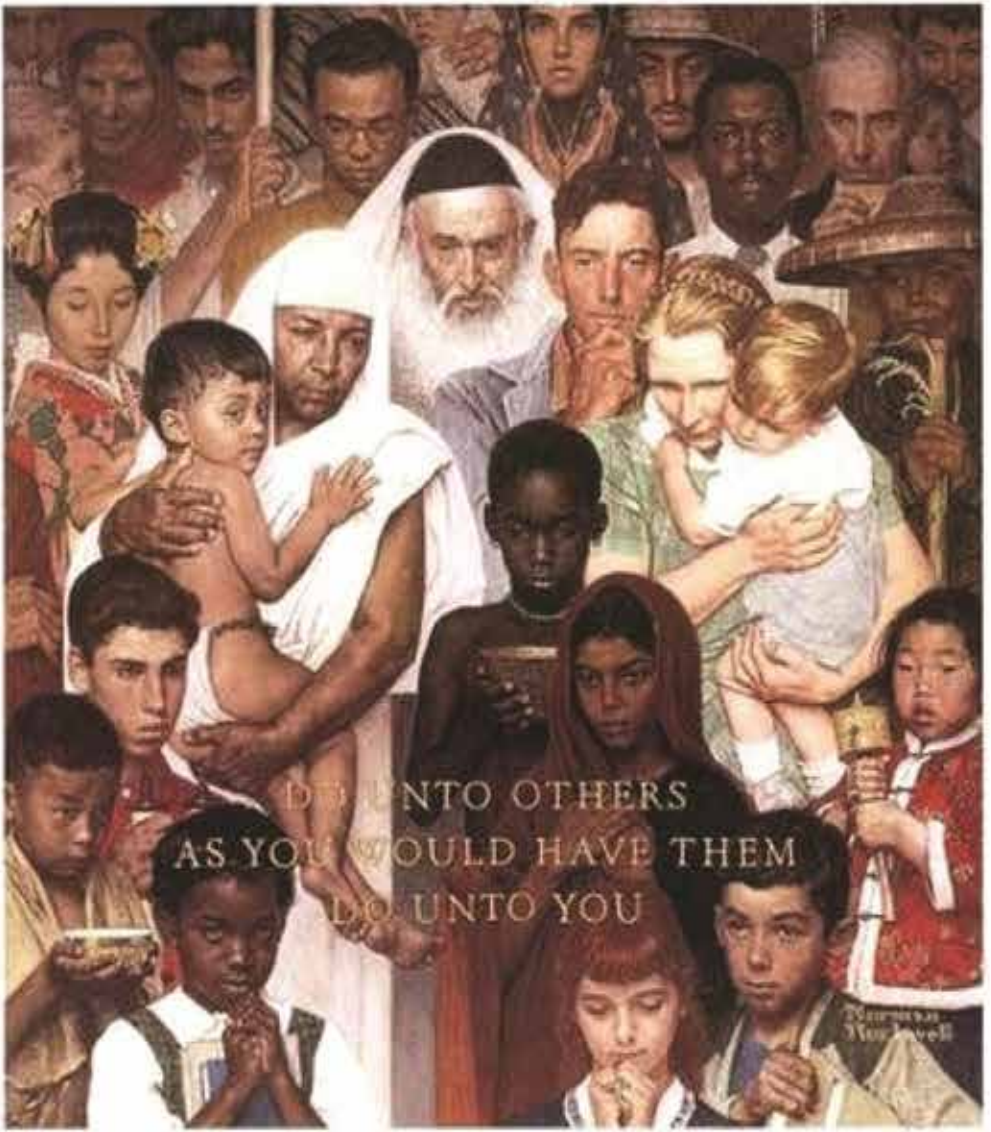
*Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son,
and shall call his name Immanuel*

Matthew 7:14.



Let us today go down to Bethlehem, and in company with wondering shepherds and adoring Magi, let us see him who was born King of the Jews, for we by faith can claim an interest in him, and can sing, “Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.” Jesus is Jehovah incarnate, our Lord and our God, and yet our brother and friend; let us adore and admire. Let us notice at the very first glance his miraculous conception. It was a thing unheard of before, and unparalleled since, that a virgin should conceive and bear a Son. The first promise ran thus, “The seed of the woman,” not the offspring of the man. Since venturous woman led the way in the sin which brought forth Paradise lost, she, and she alone, ushers in the Regainer of Paradise. Our Saviour, although truly man, was as to his human nature the Holy One of God. Let us reverently bow before the holy Child whose innocence restores to manhood its ancient glory; and let us pray that he may be formed in us, the hope of glory. Fail not to note his humble parentage. His mother has been described simply as “a virgin,” not a princess, or prophetess, nor a matron of large estate. True the blood of kings ran in her veins; nor was her mind a weak and untaught one, for she could sing most sweetly a song of praise; but yet how humble her position, how poor the man to whom she stood affianced, and how miserable the accommodation afforded to the new-born King!

Immanuel, God with us in our nature, in our sorrow, in our lifework, in our punishment, in our grave, and now with us, or rather we with him, in resurrection, ascension, triumph, and Second Advent splendour.



NORMAN ROCKWELL
"DO UNTO OTHERS"

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