



Reflections

Hillview Baptist Church

Volume 2, Issue 10

Newsletter Issue -- December 2023

Something to Celebrate

By: Pastor Norm Bleick

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Christmas! Literally, the celebration of Christ. And what are we celebrating? We are celebrating the incarnation of God. John 1.14 puts it like this: **“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.”**

This is not the first time God dwelt with his people. In Exodus, God tells Moses that a tent is to be built and God also tells him how to build it. The directions are specific because this is where God plans to reside from time to time. We know this tent as the Tabernacle, which is the same word John uses when he says **“God dwelt among us.”**

God “tabernacled” with His people in the desert, until the construction of the Temple which was completed under Solomon. Later God moved because the Temple got destroyed



by the Babylonians. It was rebuilt under the Persians, and finally destroyed again under the Romans in 70AD.

So where does God live now? Many people would say, “Heaven” while others might say everywhere. Neither answer is wrong, but there is one more possibility. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul asks, **“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”** Paul repeats the sentiment in chapter 6. In Ephesians, Paul says the Church is the Temple. The point is this: you are the Temple, the place where God lives.

What we celebrate on December 25 is a truth, a reality, that extends beyond a manger, beyond a cross, beyond an empty tomb. We celebrate the incarnation, we celebrate Immanuel – God with us - because He truly is with us. More than that, He is in us, transforming us, saving us until that great and glorious day when Jesus returns. **“For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”** 1Corinthians 13.12. That is indeed, something to celebrate.

A Prayer, an Alley and a Tree

By: Gloria Swain

GOD LOVES CHRISTMAS TREES

- It was December 1993 and I had just been informed that my job as Executive Assistant (EA) to The Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) would be coming to an end. The present CEO was retiring and the replacement was bringing his own EA. I would eventually receive a pay out and be considered for other jobs, if and when they became available. At that time I was a single mom, and had to figure out how to survive Christmas and make it the best possible Christmas for my son David. David was 16 years old and this would be our first Christmas since his dad, my husband, died.

On December 23, I was almost ready for Christmas. I say almost because the tree was still missing. When we lived in High Level, getting the Christmas tree was a family event. We would go on ski-doo's, with a sleigh, and select the best tree, have a wiener roast and bring the tree home. But this year was going to be different. We were living in Edmonton and David's dad was not with us to participate in the traditional Swain Family Christmas Tree Search. This year I would have to buy a tree and, for David's sake, it had to be a real tree.

As I left the grocery store I came across a tree lot. I

pulled in and asked the man what tree could I get for \$23? That was all the money I had left until I received my pay out cheque. The man looked at me like I was from outer space and told me he had no trees for under \$50. Further down the road there was another tree lot.



Same story. I kept driving and then, close to my home, there was another small lot in a corner. I pulled in and told the man my story and he had no pity either. I did see a small broken tree leaning up against a building and asked the lot owner if I could purchase that one. He said it wasn't for sale. I reminded him that it was only two more days until Christmas and he had a lot full of trees. What was he going to do with all those leftover trees? He told me that I would be surprised at the number of people who

came tree shopping on Christmas Eve.

I left that last lot very dejected, broken in spirit and so alone. I started to cry so hard I had to pull over to get myself together for the drive home. As I sat there I had a real talk with God. "How can you let this happen to us"? Do you forget that I taught Sunday school for all those years, I went to Russia for nine months and worked with kids?" I listed all my good deeds until I was drained. Now I had to go home and tell David we would not be having Christmas tree.

Usually when I brought groceries home I would park in the front street. But in my confusion I ended up driving down our back alley. Just as I got two doors from our home there, sitting in the middle of the alley, was a beautiful, real Christmas tree. I could not believe my eyes. I was so excited I almost ran the tree down. Jumping out of the car and running to the tree I noticed it had a tag on it that read, "FREE TREE". Wanting to know where it came from I followed the footprints in the snow to the neighbours home, two doors away. By the time I got to the back door and knocked on the door, I

I left that place
very dejected,
broken in spirit
and so alone.

A Prayer, an Alley and a Tree

By: Gloria Swain

(Continued from page 2)

wasn't crying, I was bawling. The man came to the door and thought something had happened to me because of my blubbing. Finally, I calmed down enough to hear the tree story. He and his son had been out to their farm a few days ago to get their tree. As they were leaving the farm, a little voice told the man to get another tree. He didn't know why or who it was for, but he listened to the voice and brought home two trees. He said he forgot about the tree until about ten minutes ago and decided to go and put it out in the alley. You guessed it, I'm bawling again.

I couldn't thank that man enough for listening to that little voice. Running back to the alley, I grabbed the tree and ran home, opening the back door and yelling to David, "Look at the tree that God gave us". It truly was a memorable Christmas!

To this day I have the tag off that tree. Every year, even though David is no longer with me, I hang that tag on the tree to remind me of how much God cares about every detail of our lives. "For unto you is born this day in the City of David, a Savior which is Christ the Lord". Amen.

David was killed at the age of 40 in a motorcycle accident. He was just 6 miles from home. In spite of many trials, Gloria is a faithful stalwart at Hillview. She is on the mission committee, a deacon and a prayer warrior. She laughs easily and apparently is willing to assist with almost any aspirational project the church dreams up. Ed.



... yelling to David, "Look at the tree that God gave us".

CHRISTMAS TREE QUIZ

Complete the Christmas tree using Luke 2 (answers somewhere in the newsletter, hopefully. Ed)



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. And Joseph also went ___ from Galilee... | 1. _ _ _ |
| 2. ...and ___ went to be taxed. | 2. _ _ _ _ |
| 3. ...on earth peace, good ___ toward men. | 3. _ _ _ _ _ |
| 4. And they came with ____, and found Mary... | 4. _ _ _ _ _ _ |
| 5. ...there went out a ___ from Caesar Augustus. | 5. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ |
| 6. ...find the babe wrapped in swaddling _____... | 6. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ |
| 7. ...when Cyrenius was ___ of Syria. | 7. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ |
| 8. ...there was with the angel a _____ of the heavenly host.... | 8. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ |
| 9. And the shepherds returned, ___ praising God... | 9. _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ |

The Goats ate Christmas

By: Ardath Effa



joined us as the children dramatized the Christmas story in the gym. Several of the children formed a choir and others took part in the drama. They used one of the indoor goal cages to create a "barn scene" covered with leafy branches and containing a manger.

There were some goats on the property to "mow" the grass; someone got the idea to use them in the drama so, with difficulty, the children managed to direct the goats to the manger. But when the goats got there, they began eating the greenery that was decorating the "barn." Not only that, one goat decided to relieve himself right on Joseph's foot! It was really quite funny. Eventually the goats were returned to the outside where they belonged.

At the end of the Christmas story, the children in the drama came and knelt in front of the manger. It was very moving. It was even more moving when the children left the stage and moved into the audience. They took the hands of some of the team members and visitors and brought them to kneel before the manger too. That was one Christmas I will never forget!!

Chain of Love is a ministry supported by Hillview Baptist Church. This ministry is for abused and abandoned children. It was begun by Ardath's daughter and her husband, Ken & Jerilyn Bayer. Recently, Josh Bleick spent a couple of months there and is returning soon. Ed.

**It was even
more moving
when the
children ...**



Answer to tree quiz --- up, all, will, haste, decree, clothes, governor, multitude, glorifying

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,
 I just want your readers to know that over 140 shoeboxes from Hillview will be delivered to an "Operation Christmas Child" collection centre. A record number! You far exceeded all of our expectations. This just goes to show what can happen when we all work together to lift up the name of Jesus through gifts of love.

Unfortunately, we forgot to pray for the boxes

and the children during the service on Sunday. I recognize it was a challenge to honour both Remembrance Day and the shoebox collection Sunday together. I felt bad for those who had to move the boxes to arrange the November 11 display. I had not thought of that when I moved the boxes into the sanctuary.



Finally, a massive thanks to everyone for all the effort and support (eg packing boxes, money for shipping and prayer for the receiving families) that you have given to this

once a year ministry. I appreciate it so much and just imagine how the children must feel receiving our boxes.

We do it for the children!
 Donald Nelson

Dear Editor,
 I wanted to take a moment to give the biggest form of gratitude and thanks that I could possibly give to this wonderful congregation.

I have had the privilege of calling Hillview home for the past 7 years, and have been given the opportunity to serve this church as their secretary for the

past two years. Time sure does fly when you are having fun. I truly enjoy working in the office, where I am able to connect more with people throughout the week, rather than just on Sunday mornings.

The truest blessing that I have received is all the support and love that everyone has shown me. From the

words of encouragement to the chocolate bars that Bill Holmes leaves me in my mailbox. Serving Hillview as their Secretary has been one of the greatest gifts that God has blessed me with, and I hope to serve you all in this way for many more years to come.
 Sincerely,
 Katie Bleick

Time sure does fly when you are having fun ... and get chocolate!



Nativity Misconceptions

By: Bill and Joy Holmes



Three years ago, in a burst of possibly misplaced enthusiasm, some Hillview men thought the church should celebrate Jesus' birth by displaying a nativity scene. I was part of that group and we were all expecting a traditional image of the manger, Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The artist had a totally different idea. The "painting" we received was a shock, a surprise, but after some deliberations, we realized this was an opportunity to reassess and contemplate what we actually understood about Jesus' birth.

According to the artist, he undertook some intensive research and, based on that research, created the above nativity scene. The image was, and is, a challenge to some of our traditional thoughts and Biblical understanding regarding that birth some 2000 years ago. Obviously, the artwork has some controversial aspects. I thought it might be interesting to reexamine the artwork and identify some of the many misconceptions surrounding the most important historical event in the annals of the world. Please note, I am not even remotely a Biblical scholar. I received most of the following insights from my nephew, Jonathan Anderson, the pastor of Redemption Church in Olds, Alberta. Ed.

Let's start with the angels located above the "stable". There is nowhere in the Bible indicating that angels have wings. In the Old Testament angels seem to appear as men. A common reaction to angels is fear and trembling. If you look through scripture carefully, you will notice that angels never "sing"! They are only ever recorded as speaking. The angels around the throne "say" holy, holy, holy - not sing it. The angels appearing to the shepherds are never said to be singing, only speaking. Perhaps only humans have been given the ability to sing as a specific gift meant to be used to worship God. I wonder if that means that Keith may have to change the name of the women singing with him on stage? He calls them the "angels".

The "stable" was most likely not a barn or a cave. The houses in that time usually had a stable attached to the home of the family. Sorta similar to a mother-in-law suite!

(Continued on page 7)

Nativity Misconceptions

By: Bill and Joy Holmes

(Continued from page 6)

In the painting Joseph is depicted as quite old. It is very likely that Joseph was older than Mary, but how much older is a point of speculation. It often took a man into his mid-20's to mid-30's to pay a dowry and support a wife and family. Mary could well have been 13-15. Of course scripture is silent on these things, but those would be cultural norms. It is interesting that Joseph never appears again after Jesus' visit to the temple at the age of 12. This gives rise to justified suspicions that Joseph probably died early in Jesus' young adulthood and also supports the notion that he was much older than Mary.

The halos (often called a nimbus) were a part of early Catholic art and the Orthodox Church. In general, they are not part of evangelical doctrine. They signify deity or holiness, and relates with the Catholic/Orthodox idea of saints. Saints are considered people who lived with such holiness that they actually earned a place of 'merit' before the Lord and are in that position even after death. They can dispense grace towards us 'normal' folks. This explains why Catholics pray to Mary. In Luke 1:28 the angel says that Mary is "highly favoured" and that is why she is considered some kind of special super saint. Actually, Mary was simply a faithful young lady who clearly trusted the Lord and was humble before Him; putting a halo on her (and/or Joseph) is a distraction from the Biblical story.

The letters in the Halo are also Orthodox tradition. O W N (οωv =Omicron, Omega, Nu) are usually written in all capitals. The root of it, however, comes from an orthodox interpretation of Exodus 3:14. It literally means "the existing one" in Greek. The one who is. The Hebrew of Exodus 3:14 is perfectly repetitive, the Lord says "YHWH ESHR YHWH" - I Am who I Am. So it is, in a way, identifying Jesus as YHWH. This is beyond my comprehension. We probably need Wayne Baker to explain.

We assume there were three wisemen because there were three gifts. However, there were probably more than three, and they were most likely travelling with a large entourage. Matthew 2:1 tells us the wisemen arrived after Jesus was born but still during the reign of Herod. Apparently the wisemen were relaxing at home when the miraculous star appeared and motivated their trip. If the star appeared on the day of Jesus' birth, they would need time to prepare. Their journey from 'the east,' probably would take at least 3-6 months. They returned home without reporting to Herod and, as a result, Herod kills all the male babies in Bethlehem under the age of 2. (Matthew 2:16). Herod never explained his rationale for the two year timeframe. Perhaps the wisemen told Herod that the Jesus star arose two years ago. Another possibility is that Herod simply decided to kill older babies to ensure all his bases were covered. There is lots of speculation, but scripture is mostly silent. The significant aspect is that even the rich, educated and powerful came to worship Jesus.

There are also some interesting theories as to where the wisemen originated from. Daniel was in Babylon and started an order of wisemen (Daniel 5:11). It is possible that the wisemen knew of Daniel's propesies and were probably awaiting the coming Messiah. As far as their ethnicity, Isaiah 49:6 speaks of the Messiah coming as a light to the nations; Revelation 5 talks about people around the throne from every language, nation, tribe and tongue. Theologically, this is an interesting point, but the wisemen were likely of middle eastern descent. However, the artwork reminds us Jesus came to save everyone and the artist, by including different ethnicities, is attempting to illustrate that fact.

The artwork remains in storage. Ed



Jesus's Birth was Predicted

By; Wayne Baker

The Old Testament has many prophecies concerning the birth of Jesus.

Lineage Prophecies:

Isaiah 7: 14-16 The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel. Obviously there is only one historical person that I am aware of who meets this criteria.

Ancestral Prophecies:

Genesis 3:15 says the messiah will be from the "seed of Eve". Obviously, everyone is her descendant.

Genesis 9:27 says the seed (i.e. Jesus) will be from one of Noah's sons. Eve is the mother of all humanity and Noah's three sons are the father of all humanity following the flood.

Genesis 12:23; 28:14. Jesus has Abraham in the Messiah's lineage. **Genesis 17:19; 21:12, Psalms 89:3-4,19,27-29;35-37.** The Messiah will be of the tribe of Judah and Son of David. These prophecies restrict who could be the Messiah.

Another group of the prophecies predicts that Christ would be born in Bethlehem (**Micah 4:1-8**), fulfilled in (**Luke 1:33**), and be a blessing to the nations. These are fulfilled in **Galatians 3:8,16; Hebrews 6:14.**

The Star:

We are told the Star of Bethlehem appeared and led the wisemen (**Psalm 72:10**) to Jerusalem and from there to Bethlehem. Apparently, the star appeared two years before Jesus' birth because Herod (**Jeremiah 31:15**) ordered children two years and younger to be killed. Assuming they took a few days to determine the meaning of the star, then time to prepare for the journey, it still gives the group plenty of time to arrive in Bethlehem. It would be less than three months to travel from Babylon, Assyria, or the Medo - Persian empires to Jerusalem. This prophecy is part of the reasons behind the tradition that the wisemen came from Babylon or Medo Persia. Daniel was influential in both kingdoms and his prophecies would have been kept. It is thought that the wisemen consulted the writings of Daniel (**Daniel 9 24-27**). However, one could travel from India and possibly even China within the 2 year period. If this is so, then the blessing to the nations may be even seen in the birth narrative, as God announced Christ's birth where even foreigners could "read" the news of Christ's birth.

Final Thoughts:

Some skeptics suggest that Jesus read the Scriptures and decided to fulfill the prophecies, and even arranged for his followers to help him in completing those prophecies. However, the reality is the number of birth prophecies are so numerous that no one but Jesus could have fulfilled all of them. Furthermore, some of the prophecies contain elements that would not be easily accepted by Jews. For example, the blessing through Abraham would include all nations, such as Samaria, and even Rome. The Jews hated the rule of Rome.

There are over 300 prophecies concerning Jesus in the Old Testament. The mathematical probability of Jesus fulfilling them without being part of God's plan is astronomical. For you numbers people, Peter Stoner, Chairman of the Department of Mathematics at Pasadena College, calculated that for Jesus to fulfil even 8 Old Testament prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17th power. Jesus fulfilled all of the prophecies outlined in the Old Testament. He is without a doubt God's son and our personal Saviour and indeed Saviour of all peoples of the world, if we accept him as Lord. Ed.

... the number of birth prophecies are so numerous that ...

Packing Christmas Shoeboxes

By: Gloria Swain

On October 20 at 6pm, in our fellowship hall, Russ and Donalda Nelson hosted a Samaritan's Purse Shoe Box Packing Party. Items for the shoe boxes were collected throughout the year and this evening was an opportunity to come and fill the boxes. Obviously, a lot of work went into organizing the toys into age groups prior to the packers' arrival.

Ten eager volunteers showed up with hearts full of love to pack the boxes with the love gifts so many from Hillview had donated. Two and a half hours later, including a yummy coffee break, we had packed up 53 boxes! A note of encouragement will be included into each box and they are ready for shipment to the Calgary Distribution Centre. A ten dollar administration charge

is needed for each box. Most of this fee has been covered by a few generous donors from Hillview. Some people would rather give a donation than shop. In the end things work out so that all costs are covered. Before the evening concluded, we gathered in the stairwell where the boxes are stored and prayed over the shoe boxes, the recipients and the donors.

Donalda did an amazing job this year to keep the shoe box program alive all year long. She had displays set up in the entryway and was always around to eagerly answer questions and encourage participants. Thank you, everyone, for your support and especially to Russ & Donalda for their compassion and hard work related to this ministry.

Laura-Megan Ippolito, working diligently



Mike Dolezal, Russ Nelson, Virginia Werstuk, Noreen Wourms - trying to be as diligent as Laura-Megan



Garden Plot Party

By: Gloria Swain

We held our end of the year debrief on October 28 for our Garden Plot Holders. There were nine of us in attendance. We got some excellent feedback from the gardeners on how well the gardens produced, the quality of the soil, the height of the boxes and the availability of water. There had been a few instances where non-gardeners helped themselves to some of the

produce. And another incident where kids were throwing carrots around. Discussion was held on how to avoid these incidents for next year. We were also able to provide produce from three of the plots to the Edmonton Food Bank. These plots were designated specifically for that purpose.

All in attendance were on board for next year and returned this year's deposit to be used by

the Missions Committee. A great discussion followed on various items to plant, how to plant them, seeds, trees and all things garden.

Coffee and donuts were plentiful along with words of thanks and encouragement to go forward next spring.

The raised garden beds are just one example of God moving in our midst. If you want to

know more about our community outreach or to become involved with Hillview's various mission projects, contact the Missions committee or talk with one of these people - Jonathan Snook, Gloria Swain, Brian Worobec, Uma Masih, Jo Legaspi, Yvonne Aben, or Mo Worobec to hear amazing stories of how God's love is reaching and affecting the community. Ed.

Sieg gets 90th Birthday Wishes

By: his children



Sieg getting a special birthday kiss from another "dear". Ok'd by Chris!

What can I say about my dad? The thing that I know most about him is that he is a man of God. We were taught at an early age about Jesus our Saviour. He loves with a full heart. As a family we feel that and see it demonstrated in his relationship with mom. He loves his children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren deeply. They are a great source of pride to him. My dad is talented, his abilities at woodworking, car repairs, machining and even baking are remarkable. Daddy, I love and respect you so much. You are a shining example of how we are to live our lives. I am so blessed to be able to call you dad.

Love deine Doddy (Doris Walker)



Sieg with his wife Chris and brand-new great grandchild Quin.

And the other great grandchild Charlie.



I didn't feel like I had a Father growing up? Dad was more like my big brother, we were always getting into stuff. He nurtured my creativity, we built lots of things together. We tried string control planes, later enjoyed radio controlled planes, model rockets (Dad designed his own and even created the nosecone and some wing tip tanks for it, out of wood.) We designed and welded up a 2 1/2 horsepower chainsaw to power a go-kart! We built a couple double garages. Hot rodded our 1970 GMC pickup with 1963 Buick Wildcat drivetrain and parts. Welded a Nova front frame into my 1947 Plymouth Coupe, drove that to the Banff Car Show with him for Father's Day in 1999. And that is not even the full list!

Dad raised us in a good Christian home. He "inspired" my Christian beliefs! He was baptized the year I was born, whether my birth "inspired" him or he just felt he would need all the help he could get? I'm not sure?

He is a man of many skills and trades, most of which I tried to absorb. But I do think my Dad's strongest trait is his compassion. An extremely loving and humble man, never too busy to help wherever he can. The man who inspired my personal saying: "Average anyone can do!" "Integrity demands I do what is right, even if it is unpleasant or unpopular."

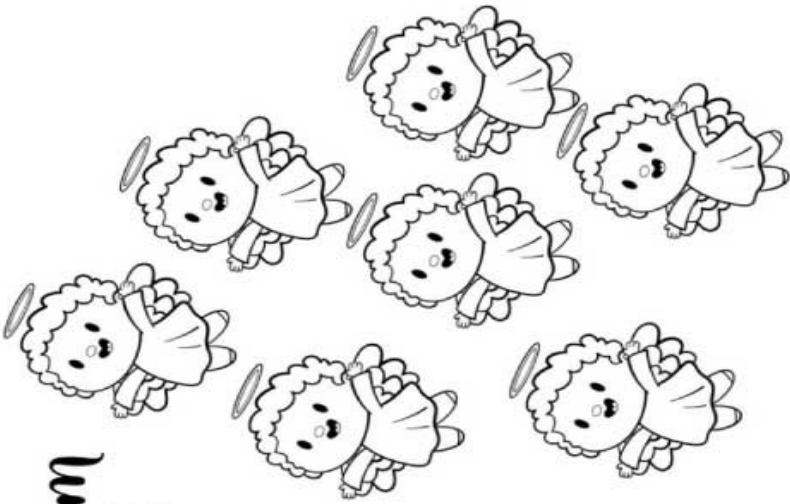
Happy 90th Birthday Dad! Love Ya Bro!
Dan

Just for Kids

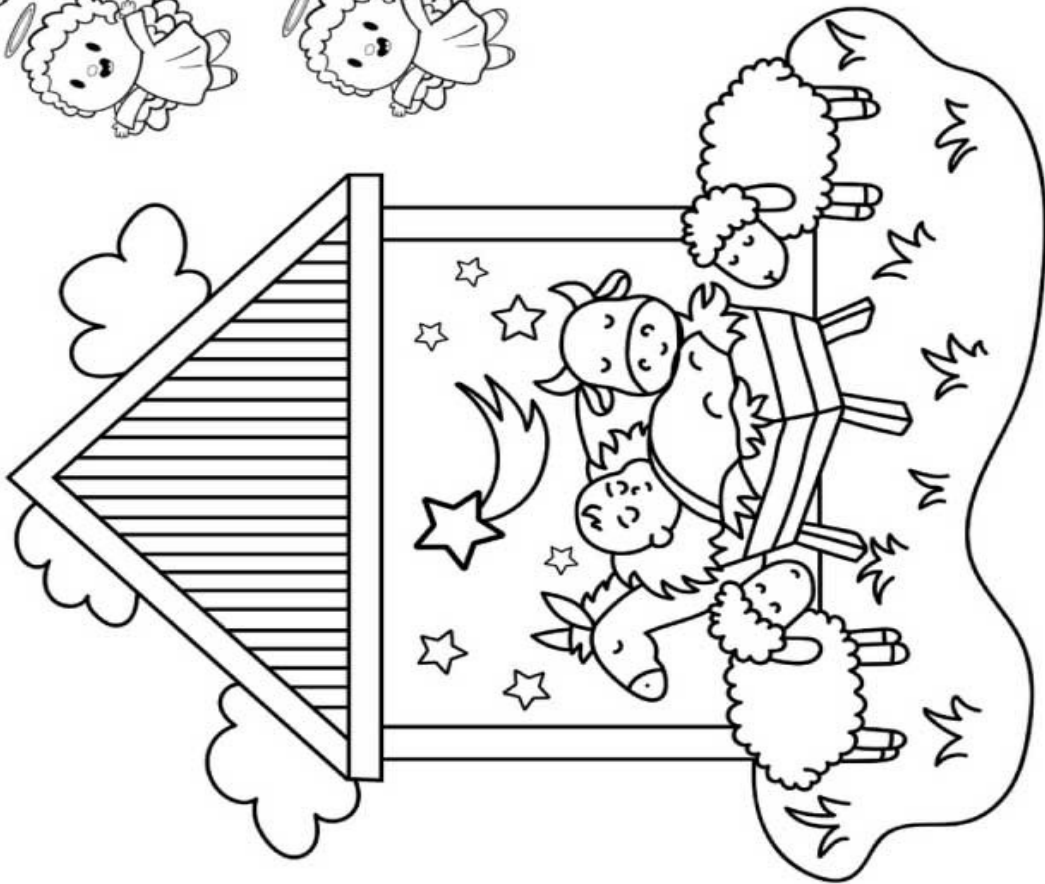
By: Bill Holmes

O Come Let Us Adore Him

_____ 's Christmas Coloring Placemat

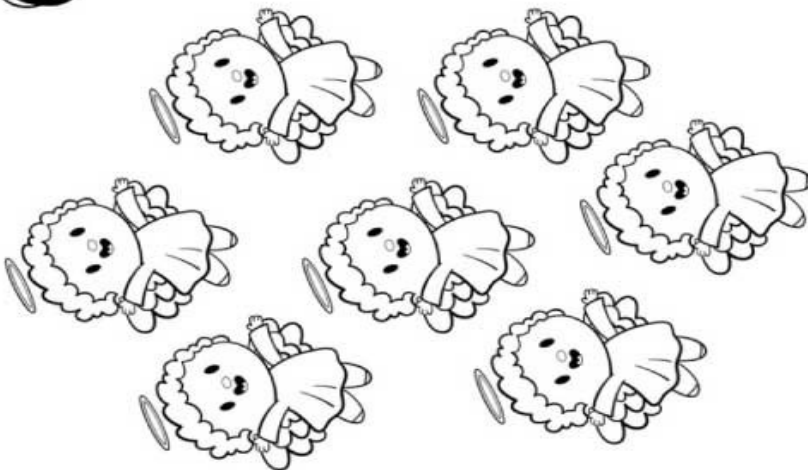


There are _____ angels on this page

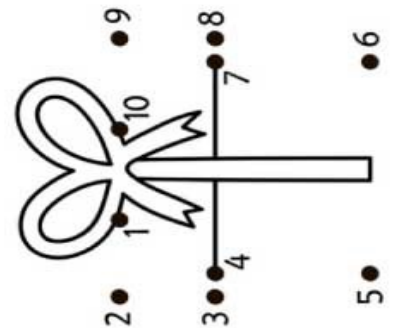


Fill in the blanks (2 Corinthians 9:15)

Thanks be to _____ for His indescribable gift



Connect the dots



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Top Ten Reasons Why Donating Blood Is The Perfect Christmas Gift:

10. Nobody will ever try to exchange your gift. No re-gifting either.

9. Everyone knows someone who is just impossible to buy for. Donating blood is gift giving made easy.

8. Wrapping is not an issue - Canadian Blood Services provides the gift bags.

7. Giving blood doesn't have any calories.

6. Your credit card gets a holiday too.

5. Forget making countless trips to the mall. Giving blood takes only an hour - and they give you a cookie.

4. You can certainly claim you made your gift - and it's a gift that truly comes from the heart.

3. You can give blood every 56 - 84 days. That's like giving a holiday gift/miracle many times per year.

2. Your gift will help a hospital patient within 5 days.

1. By giving blood you could give someone else the gift money can't buy... time. To a hospital patient in need, time is everything—time with family and friends and time to live and time to love.

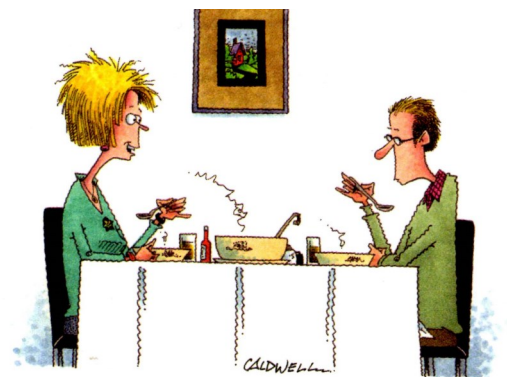


Editorial Comment

By: Bill Holmes

Unlike most of my editorial comments, I am going to attempt to be brief and to the point.

1. As most of you know, Pastor Norm is on medical leave as he deals with a cancer diagnoses. My prayers and thoughts are with him as he takes time away from being our Pastor and focuses entirely on getting better.
2. Reflections will be on sabbatical for January and February. It might return for March, not sure, it depends if there are any Hillview and related stories to be told.
3. To everyone - **Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!** An unfashionable phrase that is still the best way to describe the season.



"It's an old family Christmas tradition, googled down from generation to generation."