



The Journal

A SHEPHERDESS INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE FOR MINISTRY SPOUSES

A boy, just about to enter his teens, sat contentedly in the coach of a train traveling through the dry belt in the West. It was a miserably hot day, but always he showed a smiling countenance.

Others complained of the heat and the dust. Some found fault with the equipment of the railroad. Most of the passengers seemed out of sorts. It surely was not very comfortable, and traveling was tiresome and uninteresting.

The boy, however, with a contentment which, it could be seen, had its source far beneath the surface, seemed to be enjoying the dried-out country, which to others had become monotonous.

An inquisitive motherly soul in the seat behind the boy was wondering what made the little fellow so cheerful. When she could curb her curiosity no longer, she leaned forward and asked, "Sonny, aren't you tired of this heat?"

"Yes, ma'am, I am a little tired. But I don't mind it much." The lady was about to ask why, when he finished his sentence, "Because, my daddy is going to meet me when we get to Winnipeg."

What a beautiful philosophy! Our Father will be waiting for us also at the end of the journey. The road is rough at times; life seems almost unbearable. There are trials, troubles, heartaches, burdens, disappointments. But what of it? Our Father is at the journey's end, waiting to welcome us!

—By C. L. Paddock, *Signs of the Times*

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Editor's Musings

Traditionally, our fourth-quarter issue has had a holiday theme. Again this year, you will find articles written for your inspiration and meditation on thankfulness and the celebration of the first coming of Jesus.

Speaking of thankfulness, my last few days have been filled with anything but circumstances that lend themselves to thankfulness.

With the new airline carry-on regulations, I had to check my camera and a bottle of liquid on my way home. How the liquid made it through two Zip-lock bags is a mystery, but the digital camera was soaked and ruined. Good news—the disks had been removed, and my pictures were saved.

I arrived home to find my laptop very sluggish. After two days of running at turtle pace in the presence of those who nurtured it most, it sputtered its last and the hard drive died. Good news—in June, Shelly had backed up weeks of extensive revisions on my sermons and seminars. The slow death of my computer was a major loss of time but a minor loss of data.

Jim left town for an itinerary, and the brakes went out on the car. Good news—no one was hurt in an accident.

There were more minor incidents—thorns in the flesh that scratched and itched. But all of this brought me back to Paul's admonition: *"Always be joyful. Keep on praying. No matter what happens, always be thankful, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus"* (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

So why am I thankful? Because I belong to Jesus Christ. How in the world could any of us endure what Satan throws at us if we didn't belong to Jesus? Therefore, I will be joyful (my sister says this is hereditary!). I will keep praying (sometimes just for relief!), and no matter what happens (and it will), I will try to be thankful. Why? Because I belong to Jesus. He came the first time to buy me back, so now I am His.

The Thanksgiving season and the Christmas holiday will bring their own unique stresses and messes. But through it all, remember that, praise the Lord, we all belong to Him.

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Taking the Hassle Out of Christmas



Delores Bius

Delores is the author of more than 2,100 articles and stories that have been published in the 31 years she has been writing. An instructor for American Christian Writers, she teaches writing courses through the mail. A speaker, she speaks at mother-daughter banquets, retreats, and gives seminars on writing at writers' conferences. When she is not writing, Delores enjoys listening to classical music. She is an avid reader of history, biography, humor, and the classics, and still, at the age of 75, walks several miles every week.

Don't let the guilt gremlin hassle you this Christmas! Holiday guilt is an annual syndrome that can strike you down if you let it. Most of us have finally acknowledged that we aren't perfect, so why do we succumb to the fallacy that we have to organize and orchestrate a perfect Christmas every year, practically singlehandedly?!

Should you still think you are not doing your best, begin to ask what you do accomplish, not what you leave undone. For example, who buys Christmas gifts for your husband's parents, you or your husband? If you shop every year for a gift for your in-laws, you are among the 99 percent of wives who do. Why do our husbands assume that we can pick out the perfect gift for their parents, when they have known them so much longer than we have?

One woman I know discovered that her husband knew better than she did what to get his mother. After much questioning and prodding to discover what her mother-in-law really wanted, Kathy finally confided to her husband, "I guess the only gift we can give your mother is a check or a gift certificate."

"That will never do," her husband protested. "No matter how many times she says she doesn't want anything at all, the real message from Mom is that she doesn't want to be a bother. However, if we gave her a check or gift certificate, she would incorrectly assume that we didn't care enough for her to select a gift. What she would really like is a new handbag. I know just the kind she prefers, too, so I'll pick it out."

What about the gifts for your children? The majority of wives buy these, too. Ed complained every year about the amount of money his wife spent on toys for their children. Exasperated one Christmas, she said, "All right, then, you go shopping for them!"

Ed ended up spending three times the amount his wife usually did on gifts for the children. (This kept him from complaining on the amount she spent in future years, though!) He purchased gifts that were not only educational but also stimulating to their minds, and the children were thrilled. "Dad, you chose really neat gifts," they universally proclaimed.

The two above situations are exceptions to the general rule that husbands and fathers expect their wives to do all the planning and shopping. It is up to us women to establish ground rules for ourselves. If we are realistic about our own expectations, then we will be able to relax and not expect too much of ourselves. After all, we cannot singlehandedly conjure up a perfect Christmas. Thus, by observing some of the following tips, we may save ourselves a lot of aggravation!

Shortcuts are viable options.

It is not engraved in stone that everything has to be made from scratch. You do not have to sew all your children's clothes yourself. It is permissible, and maybe even more practical, to order from a catalog or visit the discount store for some items. Likewise, baking can be made easier. After

years of baking Christmas cookies from mixed and rolled-out dough, my granddaughters and I discovered frozen cookie dough! Not only is it easier to use, but the containers give illustrated directions on how to make angels, Santas, and Christmas trees from it, as well as the regular cookie-cutter design.

In visiting bake sales around Christmas time, I also discovered some very original and easy ideas for the baked goods I take to my own church's children's parties. I discovered that children love cupcakes with candy canes stuck on top and plain round cookies with faces made out of candies. They also like green wreaths made out of Rice Krispies and marshmallows, studded with red cinnamon candies.

Keep your priorities straight.

We all have favorite holiday traditions. Finding a reasonably-priced yet perfect gift for everyone on my long list is especially important to me. That is why I keep a big box in my closet, into which I put Christmas gifts all year. Whenever I am shopping, I keep an eye peeled for something someone in my family would like. For example, one member of my family has a hippopotamus collection. Such figurines are few and far between; therefore, I am constantly looking for them and have thus far managed to find one per year: at garage sales, flea markets, specialty gift shops, or in catalogs.

Another priority for me is sending notes or letters with my Christmas cards. Since there are more than 100 people on my list, I begin this project a month before the holiday. Many times I have been tempted to forego this annual tradition; however, I hear from most people only once each year. Receiving a Christmas card with just a signature and no note is very depressing to me. So I try to write at least a few lines on most of my cards.

Remember your husband's Christmas traditions, too.

We used to think my husband was the original Scrooge. Most Christmas celebrations seemed to leave him cold. Then one year we were astonished when he suggested having a taffy pull on Christmas Eve. We spent the evening pulling taffy and getting it all over ourselves and the floor. But it resulted in such merriment that we are still talking about it years later.

In one family that we know, the husband writes the Christmas cards. He has beautiful penmanship and takes a real interest in shopping for unique cards each year.

In another family, no Christmas would be complete without stew on Christmas Eve and cornbread dressing on Christmas day. These are the husband's favorite foods, and he prepares them both, too, thus helping his wife with her cooking.

Remember to enjoy the holiday.

You will need a break during the busy holiday season. Treat yourself to a leisurely afternoon at the beauty salon, getting a manicure or facial or new hairdo.

If your husband is not a good gift-giver and your children are too small to buy you special gifts, you might do some shopping for yourself. A friend of mine always buys herself a few small gifts and wraps them up and puts them under the tree. This curious habit began after her mother died. Before then, her mother would always send her several lovely little gifts at Christmas. Her first Christmas after her mother's death was terribly depressing. So now she includes herself on her shopping list. Fortunately, her son recently married and told his wife about his mother's habit. Unknown to my friend, her new daughter-in-law intends to buy her several little gifts every Christmas from now on.

Provide nourishment for your spiritual life.

The busier you are, the more you need to come apart with your Lord before you come apart emotionally or physically. Take time to recharge your spiritual batteries.

A candlelight church service will provide a wonderful boost, as will a live presentation of Handel's *Messiah*. Carols around the twinkling Christmas tree will help, too. So will a quiet walk in the snow while the stars twinkle overhead. If there is no snow, you might drive around and look at people's outdoor Christmas decorations.

We all have unrealistic expectations of what the ideal Christmas should be like. We want the perfect decorations, the perfect menu, and joyful guests. Yet life is far from perfect. Curiously enough, my most imperfectly planned Christmas celebrations usually turned out to be the most spiritually uplifting.

For example, one of my grown sons was seriously ill nearly the whole month of December. He required round-the-clock nursing on my part for two weeks before Christmas. Thus I did not have either the time or the energy to devote to my usual Christmas preparations. Fortunately, I had bought and wrapped all the gifts ahead of time.

When my teenage granddaughters inquired if I would have to call off the Christmas celebration at our house, I promised them we would manage it somehow. Thereupon they came over and baked many of our traditional Christmas goodies—without my help. They also trimmed the Christmas tree and decorated the house.

My husband spelled me in caring for our son one evening so I could go out to dinner with a female friend. Just getting out of the house for a few hours was a break.

Fortunately, he recovered two days before the holiday and was even able to go out for a couple hours with his brother on Christmas Eve to do some belated Christmas shopping. That Christmas we all thanked God for his recovery and his being able to enjoy the festivities. Having him on the road to good health again was the best gift any of us could have received.

No matter what the holiday season brings your way, focusing on the Christ of Christmas will help you to avoid the hassle that so often accompanies the holiday season!



I Can't Work on Christmas Eve



Cheryl Long, as told to Audrey Carli

Audrey Carli, a widow with four grown children, has written books and articles for more than 30 years. Each Christmas since her childhood, her immediate family and other relatives have gotten together to enjoy a Swedish smorgasbord, each family contributing a favorite ethnic food. Audrey lives in Michigan's scenic Upper Peninsula. This article originally appeared in Women of Spirit, November/December 2002.

Anxiety gnawed as I walked into the post office to mail one last package four days before Christmas. My inner peace was shattered, for my boss had told me I had to work on Christmas Eve. He had no idea I'd planned to go to my parents' home for dinner or that my aunts and uncles and cousins would be there in their bright clothes and brilliant smiles. Many of them would have come a long way to join us, and I simply *had* to be there too.

Instead of catching up on the family news, I'd be delivering last-minute packages for the parcel company that employed me. This was not unfair; I had the least seniority. And the job paid my living expenses while I finished my last year at the university.

Waiting in line while the postal clerk weighed packages, I didn't feel as sorry for myself as much as I felt sorry for my mom. Mom was still limping a little from her broken leg a few months before, and I knew she wished I could help her in the kitchen. I loved seeing Mom sigh with relief when I insisted she sit down so I could finish the dishes or cooking.

Then a tiny part of me wished to be a young girl again so I could be free of responsibilities for an hour on Christmas Eve.

My thoughts scattered when the smiling red-haired young man behind the desk greeted me.

"Hi," I returned his hello. "You seem cheerful in the midst of this last-minute rush."

"Cheer helps people forget their worries, at least for a few minutes," he said, and his grin grew wider. "What about you, miss? Need cheering?"

"Well, I was sort of glum, but you seem to enjoy work-

ing."

"Once I *had* to work on Christmas. Now? I want to. And I'm single, so I have more time than those with families."

His vibrancy got to me. When I turned to go, I almost felt glad I'd be working the holiday.

My last delivery

Snow was falling Christmas Eve, whitening the sooty banks along the side of the road. I saw candles in windows and families walking into churches as I drove around making deliveries.

Then, tired and ready to call it a night, I walked up to a country house with my last delivery. The house sagged under peeling paint; a crooked front porch had slanting steps. Through the front window I spotted a Mason jar holding bare evergreen branches. Somehow this bleak, brave attempt at a Christmas tree tugged at my heart.

Footsteps clattered toward the door even as I knocked. The door opened and a girl about 6 years old, peered at me with wide brown eyes. "A lady is here, Grandma," she called. "With a *package!* Will we have Christmas now, Grandma? Come and see!"

A fragile woman hobbled to the door, leaning on a cane. "Come in, girl, it's cold outside," she rasped. "You must be chilled to the bone."

I stepped into a house warmed by a radiant heater in the middle of the floor. Tears blurred my vision at the child's eagerness before I blinked them back. My one package seemed to be the answer to their holiday prayers.

Grandma squinted at the return address. "It's from your Aunt Marcella."

“She’s so, so nice,” the child said dreamily.
My aching legs and feet were forgotten. I felt relieved that my working brought joy to this little home.
“Thanks for the warm-up,” I said, turning to leave. “Merry Christmas!”
The little girl rushed over and wrapped her arms around my legs. “Don’t go. Have a party with us!”
I glanced at the grandmother, who shook her head. I knew the party was the clinging child’s hope.
“I’ll tell you what. I’ve got to go now, but I’ll try to stop by and say hello someday when I’m delivering things in the neighborhood.”
“Goody!” the child piped, still clinging.
I took tiny steps toward the door. The little girl didn’t loosen her grip. It was all I could do to keep from crying. Then I had an idea.
“Look here, I have a present for you.” I reached into my pocket for a candy bar I carried in case my energy lagged.

Brightness lit the girl’s dark eyes. “Grandma! We can split this for a treat.” She gazed at me as though I’d just handed her a beautiful doll. “Thank you. Thank you!”

Opening the front door, I called a teary-tight “Merry Christmas.”

After finishing my work, I stopped at an all-night deli and bakery, then drove back to the child’s house. Quietly I crept up to the door, leaving a box packed with rolls, sliced cheese, blueberry muffins, fruit salad, and a note that read “Merry Christmas.”

Then I got into my car and drove it near a large tree where no one from the house could see me. There were no neighbors, so I felt free to honk the horn until at last I saw light pouring through the open front door and a form bending over the box.

“Merry Christmas,” I whispered. “May God bless you now and always.”



Thank God for His Blessings

Claudine Curtis

Community Services Director at the Warwick Seventh-day Adventist Church in Bermuda.

As the world looks upon me, as I travel along,
They say I have nothing, but they are so wrong.
'Cause in my heart there is rejoicing I wish they could see.
I thank you, Lord, for your blessings on me.

There’s a roof up above me and a good place to sleep,
There’s food on my table and shoes on my feet.
You gave me your love, Lord, and a church family.
I thank you, Lord, for your blessings on me.

I know I’m not wealthy; my clothes are not new.
I may never have much money, but, oh Lord, I have you.
And to me that’s what matters; I wish they could see.
I thank you, Lord, for your blessings on me.

You have the hope of tomorrow, blessings of sunshine and rain,
The joy of salvation, good health without pain.
Meeting with brothers and sisters, joys the world cannot see.
I thank you, Lord, for your blessings to me.

A Child of God is Born



Jean Coleman

Jean Coleman is a pastor's wife from Laurel, Maryland, and the editor of The Pastor's Helpmate, a newsletter for pastoral wives. This story appeared in The Pastor's Helpmate.

I'll never forget the first time I saw Karen.* It was in the final moments of the Christmas musical. In the closing scene, the actor portraying Jesus was to descend from his throne and walk slowly to the front of the stage. Everything was moving right on schedule. As the music swelled to a crescendo, our pseudo-Jesus stretched forth his arms to the people in the audience as the choir with lifted voices sang, "Come unto me! Come unto me! All ye who labor, come unto me!"

There was a powerful anointing in the church as the musical reached the carefully rehearsed climax. Several actors and actresses were placed strategically in the audience, and the script called for them to leave their seats at predetermined times and go forward in response to the invitation being issued by Jesus. The pre-set musical cues were perfectly timed to allow each person to climb the stairs up to the stage and receive a blessing from the man playing Jesus. What could possibly go wrong?

Sitting in my seat on the front row, I watched the final scene being played out before me. Everything was going perfectly. There went the first actor onto the stage to receive his blessing. Great! Then came the second—right in time with the music.

And then to my utter amazement, an unknown woman rose from her seat, came running down the aisle, and darted up the stairs onto the stage. Throwing herself down at Jesus' feet, she cried out, "Oh Jesus, please save me! My life is such a mess! I need you!"

Although the choir looked surprised, they continued to sing. And the young man portraying Jesus didn't miss a beat. He reached down and helped the anguished woman to her feet and wrapped her in his arms, holding her briefly as she sobbed against his shoulder. Then he placed his hands upon her head, and I could see his lips moving as he prayed a blessing upon her.

The anthem was rapidly drawing to a close, and I really had no idea what was going to happen next. But I had no need to worry because "Jesus" had everything under control. With the unknown woman's hand in his, he gently assisted her down the stairs, and they walked together up the aisle to the back of the church.

As the congregation rose to its feet, giving the choir a standing ovation, I quickly left the sanctuary, eager to meet the unexpected addition to the Christmas musical. Karen was there in the lobby, tears still streaming down her face. The miracle of Christmas became reality as Karen prayed with me, accepting Jesus as her Savior. Christ the Lord was born that day in her heart.

It was probably one of the most exciting things that had ever happened in the church! For a Christmas present, the Lord had given us a most wonderful gift—a precious soul. Karen was filled with overflowing joy as she received hugs from many in the congregation. Everyone showered her with words of encouragement. She had become a part of the family of God.

As Karen left the church that night, her parting words were, “I just love this church! From now on you’re going to see me, my husband, and my son here every time the church door is open. I never really knew what love was all about before tonight.”

I can remember putting my arms around her and sensing the love of God welling up within me. “This is your family now. Just as you are precious to Jesus, you are also precious to us. We want to see you grow strong in the Lord, and you can always count on us. Whenever you need us, we’ll be there.” Little did I know when I made that statement that she would need us nearly 24 hours a day for the next three years.

Yes, the church was excited over this miracle child! Of course, everyone is always excited when a new baby is born. But the birth of the baby is only the beginning. It’s the next 18 years or so that takes a toll.

Do you remember when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead? At Jesus’ instruction, the stone was removed from the entrance of the cave. Then the Lord cried out with a loud voice, “Lazarus, come forth!”

To everyone’s utter amazement, Lazarus emerged from the tomb. It seems logical to assume that he “hobbled” out of the tomb because it is recorded that Lazarus was bound hand and foot with graveclothes. Perhaps he was so tightly encased that those who were nearby had to help him walk away from the place of burial.

Finally Jesus turned to His disciples and commanded them, “Loose him and let him go” (John 11:44). Although it was Jesus who raised Lazarus from the dead, He gave the disciples the responsibility of removing the graveclothes and setting Lazarus free. Who in his right mind wants to be around someone encased in graveclothes with the stench of death still clinging to him? This had to be a most unpleasant task.

And we were called to that same unpleasant task with Karen. Jesus had raised her from the dead, calling her forth to new life, but she came to us still bound in stinking graveclothes, fouled by the many years spent in the darkness of the tomb. Karen had life in Jesus, but the graveclothes she had worn for so long were putrid. Within a very short time, we knew it was going to take the grace of God to strip the remnants of death away from Karen.

To make matters worse, Karen wasn’t the only one wrapped in graveclothes. Her husband and son also arrived at the church wearing them too. In all my years, I have never encountered a family that had more problems than this one. Think of any problem, and it was either buried in their past or active in their present.

I just love this church!

When Karen had cried out to Jesus during the Christmas musical that her life was a mess, she had accurately described the situation. To use the modern-day vernacular, a dysfunctional family had been added to the family of God and to our church. The husband was out of work, Karen was fighting tremendous emotional problems (manic-depressive with seizures), and

their four-year-old son was completely out of control. Their car didn’t run, there was no food in their house, and they had no money to pay the rent. They stood on the brink of bankruptcy. I really wasn’t sure whether we had received a blessing or a curse. There were so many problems in this family that we hardly knew where to start. But God is faithful and His grace is always sufficient.

I am convinced that no one person could have possibly removed all the graveclothes, but the family of God is not made up of one member, but of many. A special anointing for “gravecloth removal” came down on the church members, and we saw the Lord orchestrating a miracle of mercy where everyone played a role in sharing the love of God.

Just as our on-stage Jesus stretched out his arms to embrace Karen, many arms were stretched out to embrace the troubled woman and her family. When one member became weary of unwinding the graveclothes, another took over. Someone was always available to help Karen and Bill with transportation or shopping. Sums of money would turn up for them at just the right time in mysterious envelopes marked, “From your Friend, Jesus.” Invitations to dinner and encouraging telephone calls were constant reminders that they were accepted in the Beloved.

Their little boy, who came to us screaming, biting, and throwing temper tantrums, began to respond to the ever-present love of “aunts and uncles” who reached out to him in love. He started coming into the church with his arms open wide, ready to receive the hugs of those who loved him.

Here a gravecloth, there a gravecloth. First one arm unwound and then another; strip by strip, the reminders of the tomb are being removed and cast aside. An easy task? Definitely not! But we will not give up, for from out of the graveclothes we are seeing a beautiful child of God who shows tremendous promise for the kingdom. We are still patiently unwrapping Karen’s legs, believing that she will soon be able to walk unassisted in the Spirit.

Three and a half years have passed since that miraculous Christmas when a child was born at our church—a child who is teaching us how to love. 

** Name has been changed.*



Finding Christmas

Carol Albrecht

This article originally appeared in the November/December 2000 issue of Joyful Woman.

I never knew Ruth as a child, but I've heard all the stories. Today she would probably be labeled as having Attention Deficit Disorder, but back in the 1940s, her first-grade teacher simply tied her in her chair. Even as an adult, Ruth never seemed to be still. I often thought she packed more into a day than I could comfortably fit into a week.

Ruth was short and fair, "almost scrawny as a child," her mother would say. Maybe that's why the big laugh that exploded from Ruth at unpredictable intervals always came as such a surprise.

It is her laugh I remember most. Ruth laughed with all of her being, exuding huge waves of joy that rippled across a room. The sound was so big that it often embarrassed her husband and always embarrassed her children; yet it never embarrassed Ruth. "I miss her laugh," Owen said to me one day. I understood his pain. There was no quietness about Ruth, and the silence echoed our loss.

Ruth loved people, and they quite naturally loved her back. She was as comfortable with the elderly as with her kindergarten students. She accepted everyone as a special gift from God. Hugs and Ruth were synonymous. In her classroom, there was no "naughty" children—only children who needed a little more help from her and the Lord.

Ruth was a diamond in a gray-pebble world. With her sparkle and glow, her love for God touched lives. The world glittered with her laughter. Then one day, Ruth was gone.

The accident happened quickly. Her little car skidded sideways across the icy highways, right into the path of an oncoming pickup truck. She died instantly, the same way she had rushed through life.

It seemed fitting that Ruth should die at Christmastime. It seemed fitting that snow fell softly while Christmas carols played at her funeral. More than 1,000 people came, a testimony to her unselfish love and caring. In a moment, death had taken away "a song of praise," words her pastor used to eulogize her life. Owen and their four sons would miss her. I would miss her.

I couldn't seem to get through the long December days following the funeral. All the holiday preparations and frantic shopping were hollow and empty. With Ruth gone, Christmas was wrong somehow, and I didn't know how to make it right. What had happened to my joy in Christ's birth? Where could I go to find the Child? How could I

reclaim the celebration of what had been my favorite holiday?

I didn't expect to find my Christmas in the discount store where I was shopping with my teenage daughter Kristie. She was looking for something special and inexpensive for her dad, a challenge with so few days remaining until the holiday. I sighed as we looked through hardware and software, up one aisle and down another. We were both becoming discouraged.

I saw the handwritten sign before Kristie did: "Christmas Ornaments, Half-Price." We hurried over and scanned the few ornaments remaining on the shelf. Nothing seemed to be left but elves and smiling Santas. Kristie had already turned away when I spotted one lone ornament pushed back into a corner. It looked different from the rest, and I picked it up.

"Look how dark blue the sky is!" Kristie exclaimed when I showed it to her. "And the shepherds and sheep look so real. I know Dad will like it."

Holding the ornament in my hand, I read the words circling its top: "And man shall live forevermore because of Christmas Day." Reading them stirred something inside me. It was the answer I was seeking.

Suddenly I began to understand about Baby Jesus and Ruth, life and death, sadness and joy. They were all part of the same thing. Christmas was not just a celebration of Jesus' birth; it was also a celebration of His death. That death would bring eternal life to all who believed in Him. Somehow I had missed the Cross, so obviously shadowed in the manger.

I hummed quietly as I walked beside Kristie to the check-out. Inside I sang, putting new words to the phrase on the ornament: "And Ruth shall live forevermore because of Christmas Day."

Eternal life! What a Christmas gift! Of course, I would miss Ruth. I needed to cry over a friend who left so quickly. However, the wrong kind of sadness was gone, and the joy of Christmas was seeping through me as I stood there in the store.

I wished Ruth would come back for just a moment and see me. She would understand. She would laugh her big laugh and give me a quick hug. "Some people," Ruth would say, "just need a little extra help from the Lord."



God Came Near: Prepare Your Heart for Christmas

Max Lucado

Excerpted from the book God Came Near by Max Lucado (Multnomah Books, Questar Publishers 1987).

Contemplate one text and thought each day before Christmas.

1

The magical dust of Christmas glittered on the cheeks of humanity ever so briefly, reminding us of what is worth having and what we were intended to be. *Matt. 22:34-40*

2

If He can do so much with such timid prayers lamely offered in December, how much more could He do if we thought of Him every day? *James 5:13-16*

3

God goes to those who have time to hear Him—so on this cloudless night He went to simple shepherds. *Luke 2:8-20*

4

In becoming man, God made it possible for man to see God. *John 14:1-14*

5

After a nation of chosen ones had ripped His incarnated flesh, He still died for them. It is that very irrationality that gives the gospel its greatest defense. For only God could love like that. *Rom. 5:6-8; 8:13-17, 31-39*

6

God became earth's mockery to save His children. The only thing more absurd than the gift is our stubborn unwillingness to receive it. *Luke 14:15-24; 1 Cor. 1:13-31*

7

Little heart . . . holy heart . . . pumping the blood of life through the universe: How many times will we break you? *Micah 7:18-19; Eph. 2:1-10*

8

Joseph knew that the only thing worse than a venture into the unknown was the thought of denying his Master. *Matt. 1:18-24, 2:13-15*

9

Jesus didn't have to go. He could have ignored the call, or at least postponed it. *John 10:11-18; Matt. 26:36-54*

10

He saw your face aglow the hour you first knew Him. He saw your face in shame the hour you first fell. *Ps. 139:1-18; Heb. 4:13*

11

There was not one person who was reluctant to approach Him for fear of being rejected. *Mark 2:13-17; Matt. 8:1-4*

12

Remember, it is man who creates the distance. It is Jesus who builds the bridge. *Rom. 8:5-17; 5:6-8*

13

I'd thought of God as one who commands, one who weeps. But a God who sighs? *Mark 7:34; Mark 8:11-13*

14

In the agony of Jesus lies our hope . . . That holy sigh assures us that God still groans for His people. *John 17:1-26*

15

Only God can deal with our ultimate dilemma—death. He has to be God in the face of death. If not, He is not God anywhere. *1 Cor. 15:12-28*

16

Jesus was born crucified. Whenever He became conscious of who He was, He also became conscious of what He had to do. *Luke 9:51; John 10:17-18*

17

Had Jesus been forced to nail Himself to the Cross, He would have done it. It was not the soldiers who killed Him: It was His devotion to us. *Eph. 2:1-5; 1 John 4:9-10*

18

Would you like to see Jesus? Do you dare to be an eye-witness of His Majesty? Then rediscover amazement. *Job 9:4-10; Ps. 104*

19

Hope is a zany, unpredictable dependence on a God who loves to surprise us out of our socks and be there in the flesh to see our reaction. *Rom. 15:4; Heb. 6:13-20*

20

Eternal instants remind us that love is still the greatest possession, and the future is nothing to fear. *Ps. 27:1-5; 1 John 4:18*

21

We are presumptuous not when we marvel at His grace, but when we reject it. *Heb. 10:24-25*

22

We should stand in the quiet company of Him who saved us and weep tears of gratitude and offer words of thankfulness. *Rom. 7:24-25; Titus 3:3-8*

23

Christianity in its purest form is nothing more than seeing Jesus. *Heb. 11:6*

24

Christian service in its purest form is nothing more than imitating Him who we see. *Eph. 4:17-5:21*



Thanksgiving

Lillian Carol Russel

From the Arizona Conference Shepherdess newsletter

On the breath of autumn's breeze,
the leaves float gently down from gaily colored trees.

There are so many blessings to be thankful for this time of year,
as the special day set aside for thanking God draws near.

Let us not limit our thanks to just one day but always be thanksgiving,
praising and thanking the Lord for every day we're living.

Thank Him for the butterfly that floats on velvet wings,
for every plant, and every bird that sings.

Thank Him even for the bad times, for they help to make us strong;
it seems sometimes we learn the most when everything goes wrong.

Even though my children won't be with us Thanksgiving day,
I'm thankful that they're happy, well, and safe, though far away.

There are so many memories of Thanksgivings past when the kids were small,
though I'll be a little sad this year, I have happy memories to recall.

When the frost has spread its diamond dust
and the green colors change to crimson, gold, and rust,
we know by the signs Thanksgiving is here,
and we praise thee, oh God, for our bountiful year.



Remembering Your Shoes This Christmas

Ellie Kay

Ellie Kay is a bestselling author and radio commentator for “Money Matters.” Her latest release is The New Bride Guide: Everything You Need to Know For Your First Year of Marriage. She is married to an Air Force fighter pilot and they have five school-aged children and two young-adult children. The Kays live in New Mexico.

Daniel?” I yelled upstairs to our oldest son as I put backpacks by the garage door—so the kids could grab them on the mad dash to school. “Yes, Mama?” Daniel called back.

“Could you *please* help Joshua find his shoes before we’re late?”

I stuck my head in the kitchen, where three of the children were finishing breakfast. “Hurry up, kids, it’s time to leave!” I grabbed the five lunches I had made earlier and hurried down the hall to put them with the backpacks. As I did, I heard the living room clock sound the top of the hour—it was our “red alert” indicator.

“We’ve gotta go NOW!” I yelled. I passed out the backpacks and scooted the kids out to the Suburban. The oldest four scrambled in, their paraphernalia filling the large vehicle to capacity.

“Where’s Joshua?” I asked. We were going to be late again. Joshua, our youngest at 6 years old, always seemed to be missing in action. Finally, Joshua made his appearance.

“Seatbelts on? Everyone have their jackets? Hair combed? Teeth brushed? Got your musical instruments? Backpacks? Lunches? Milk money? Gym clothes?”

By the time I finished our daily checklist, we’d driven the 20 miles to school. I pulled into the drop-off lane, and everyone bounded out of the car.

Except Joshua.

I needed to get to my women’s ministry board meeting, and we were 10 minutes behind schedule as it was. I looked at my normally very active little guy, sitting perfectly still.

“Joshua,” I said in my best “mom-means-business” voice, “why are you just sitting there?”

“You forgot to remind me,” he responded quietly in a “I-know-I’m-going-to-get-it-now” voice.

I glanced in my rearview mirror at the line of cars behind me. Hadn’t I thoroughly exhausted our reminder checklist? “What did I forget to remind you about?”

Joshua whispered, “My shoes.”

His shoes? How does a child forget his shoes? On the way back to get his shoes, I grumbled in the car, wondering how in the world a child could forget his shoes, when a small voice spoke to my heart. Sometimes you forget too—about Me.

Another thing to remember

Just as it seems obvious that shoes are important, so is walking with God every day. During the holiday season, it’s especially easy to remember the reason for the season while forgetting that He can help us through it. One of the times when many families are likely to “run off without shoes” is during holiday spending. It’s as if we say,

“Hey, I’ve got to buy these gifts. I don’t have time to stick to a budget and shop for bargains!”

Did you know it takes the average American family five months to pay off holiday credit-card bills? Surely there’s a cheaper, better way to buy gifts without having to go barefoot.

Busy families should be able to run through the holidays in a way that doesn’t feel like the school-morning dash.

Pray

I have to admit that our holiday pace is usually so frenetic that I rarely even think about asking for God’s help. But when I do, it’s amazing how God delights in providing just what we need, just when we need it. Specific prayer gives God the opportunity to answer specifically, and our faith is increased. If our children see us model this principle, they’ll learn to trust God for provision, not only at Christmas, but year-round as well.

Three gifts

My hubby, Bob, and I had five babies in the first seven years of marriage and moved 11 times in 13 years. (He’s in the Air Force.) We had a hard time financially those first several years. I even made a cross-stitch wall hanging that said: “Blessed Are the Poor, For They Be Us.” That’s when we came up with the three-gift rule. We decided to model our gift-giving after the three gifts brought to the Christ child. We couldn’t afford the equivalent of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, but we could choose to limit our gifts to three simple, yet nice, presents per child. Even though God has blessed us financially in recent years, we still hold to this family tradition. Much to our surprise, we received additional benefits from this gift-giving standard:

- ▶ The children know what to expect, and the focus remains on Christ.
- ▶ The children decide what they really want rather than listing everything they see in the latest commercials.
- ▶ Our holiday gifts are paid for in December rather than the following May.

The tradition also gives our kids an opportunity to tell others about the Christ child and the three gifts He received.

Stick to your guns!

We all face the temptation to keep buying even when we’ve already conquered our lists. Merchandisers are so good at placing irresistible bargains right where they’ll catch our attention. Remember: You can go broke saving money. So make your list at home, where slick commercials, displays, starry-eyed children, or nostalgic Christmas carols cannot put you in a purchasing trance.

Steal it!

Okay, bear with me here. Save some money in your budget for the after-Christmas sales. You can often get all kinds of nonperishable gifts for next year’s list at anywhere from 50 to 75 percent off. Now that’s a steal!

Baking for busy moms

Some of us who have too few hours in our days automatically assume we can’t give homemade gifts for the holidays, but that’s not true! For several years now, I’ve started baking large batches of holiday breads early in the season and freezing them. Most quick breads can be baked in empty, greased coffee cans. Just bake them and

let them cool for 10 minutes, and the bread will pop right out of the tins. When the time comes to give gifts to teachers or friends, we tie the breads with raffia, glue fresh cranberries on the wrapping, and—voilà! A gift that takes less time to prepare and costs about a quarter of the price of a store-bought gift.

The other day we were making

our mad dash to school again. As usual, we were running late when the red-alert siren sounded. I stuffed all the kids and their essentials in the car and started the usual checklist. This time, as we were leaving the driveway, I had this mom’s intuition to ask one more question?

“Does everybody have their shoes?”

Do you think a family can get through the holidays and stay on a gift-giving budget? You bet your shoes they can!



Room At the Inn

Carol Parks

This article originally appeared in the November/December 2000 issue of Joyful Woman.

George and Mary Jean Parks bundled their three little ones into the car: Lee, the only one in school; Roger, the all-boy middle child; and Nina, still a bassinet baby. Loaded with luggage, packages, and food for the road, they were heading south from Minnesota. It was Christmas Eve. They were expected in Bradford, a central Illinois farming community, that evening.

In Bradford, Cathy and Sandy tried to stay awake, sometimes pressing their noses to the glass of the front window, hoping their little cousins would hurry up. Mary and Alvin left the porch light on and kept vigil all night for their family who never arrived.

Far away, the Parks were knee-deep in troubles of their own.

Everyone wishes for a *Currier and Ives* Christmas scene complete with snow and frozen ponds and plenty of wood for the fireplace, provided, of course, they're already at home. When traveling through that snow and ice, the scene becomes less idyllic.

George and Mary Jean were driving in the worst blizzard they had ever seen, and they lived in Minnesota!

George literally inched his way along the two-lane farm roads, struggling to see through the windshield, guessing whether or not he was on the road. Unexpectedly, through the dark and the fierce snow, they spotted the lights of a distant farmhouse and knew they could go no further. George pulled the car beside an accumulating snowdrift and trudged up the lane toward the inviting lights.

The quiet farmer hardly seemed surprised to see a stranger at his door. Inviting him in, the farmer listened while he explained the situation. Soon George was ushering his family into the house. The farmer's wife welcomed them into their home and found a place for their wet boots, hats, and overcoats.

The two families got acquainted around the table while the farmer's wife fixed something for the travelers to eat—leftover pot-roast sandwiches. Soon there was a knock at the door; another family needed sanctuary from the storm. Again, they were welcomed and the pot roast was stretched to feed a few more.

Guests that night slept everywhere—a sofa, an easy chair, and every floor space available. Somehow there were blankets enough to go around.

The next morning, Christmas Day, dawned with a house full of strangers who had been drawn together by the surreal Christmas Eve and a set of lights. They shook hands, said their good-byes and

hearty thanks, and continued on their journeys, each to his own delayed Christmas celebration with a story to tell.

The Parks family saw the farmer and his family twice more; always in the summertime and always with a jar of Grandpa's honey. They corresponded at Christmas for a few years, but their names have since been lost to time.

The story, however, remains. Lee, Roger, and Nina have told it to their children, no doubt. Now, remembering that Christmas Eve, they remember finding room at the inn. 🍪



The Beast

Tom Dowling

He was the ugliest of men, and he had a request that seemed completely unacceptable.

He came to my desk holding the job application in his huge hand. I asked him to be seated, and his giant bulk filled the chair. Here was the ugliest man I'd ever seen, and his presence made me uneasy. I had never seen anyone so physically repulsive, and to think that he was applying for a job at the department store seemed completely unacceptable. In my ten years as personnel manager, I'd seen all kinds of applicants, but this was extraordinary, to say the least.

But, in response to my questions, his voice was surprisingly gentle, more sincere than most, and at the same time, more anxious. His application stated that he was employed by a carnival which was presently set up on the outskirts of town.

"You're already employed," I said to him, "so why is it that you'd like this temporary job at the store?"

"Well, sir," he replied, "it's just the kind of job I've always wanted."

"There are many applicants for the job," I told him. "The competition is very keen."

"I know that," he answered, his beady eyes searching mine. "But I'm willing to take the job without pay, and the hours won't conflict with my job at the carnival."

"Well," I said finally, "if you should get the position, you'll be paid at the advertised rate."

He shrugged his gigantic shoulders. "I'd still want it if it paid nothing. I've never wanted anything more, sir—never in my whole life."

I dismissed him then, advising him that he would be considered fairly along with the other applicants. At the door he turned and thanked me, his great ugly face sending shudders through me, and for the rest of the day I could not forget him. When sheer repulsiveness comes into your life, it is not easily forgotten. But there was more to this man than his pitiful, frightening features. His sincerity, his desperation, clung to my memory, and I was determined that he, as one of God's creatures, was entitled to a fair opportunity. Perhaps I was being foolish, reckless even, to consider him, but there was nothing else I could do and still call myself a human being, just as he was.

All that night I couldn't sleep; I kept thinking about this poor unfortunate creature who must have experienced great hardships in his lifetime because of his ugliness. I kept trying to imagine how disappointing life must have been for

him, how frustrating, how loveless. Just the sight of him incurred loathing and banishment. He had to be an outcast, a target for ridicule to the apathetic and the uncompassionate of the world.

The next day I decided I had to see him in his own environment, so I went to the carnival grounds feeling like a spy. It was something I had to do before I decided which applicant would get the seasonal job. I had to see for myself what type of work this man with the beast-like features and the angel-like voice did.

After some searching and questioning, I was directed to a tent over which hung a sign reading: "THE HUMAN (?) BEAST." Not wanting to think much about this distasteful announcement, I bought a ticket, went inside, and stood in the back row of a large group of curious people.

At last the lights dimmed and a spotlight played on a crudely built stage. In a few minutes he emerged from behind a curtain, and gasps of horror rose from the crowd. Children screamed, and mothers who should have known better than to bring them there in the first place, hugged them to their breasts.

He was painted unearthly colors, and his great bulk was bent under the weight of chains which surrounded his massive body. Back and forth across the stage he writhed, uttering deep guttural groans and the snarls of a caged animal. He was indeed the beast he played, and my heart ached for this man who had sat before me only yesterday and pleaded for an escape, no matter how brief, from this agonizing role he played before a jeering and ridiculing mob of thrill-seekers.

The only time he seemed to break out of the frightening character was each time someone hustled a child from the tent. His sad eyes followed the children with sheer, unmistakable anguish.

I waited until the tent was emptied, then made my way inside the curtain, and found him. He looked at me in shame.

"I wish you hadn't come here," he said in that soft voice. "I wish—"

"If you still want the job," I said to him, "it's yours."

His giant head nodded in disbelief. "Oh, yes. Yes, I do."

"Then be at the store tomorrow afternoon at four," I said.

Again the great head nodded, and I left.

Next day, because of other duties, I wasn't able to be at the store when he started on the job: I arrived at six o'clock and went directly to the toy department.

And there he was, surrounded by a great multitude of delighted children. The expressions on their faces told me that I had not made a mistake. The face which had brought jeers and hoots from so many others, so many times in his life at the carnivals, was now hidden behind a white beard, and his huge frame was clothed in a red and white suit.

The eyes which had chilled people to the bone were no longer sad but filled with tears of joy as he took one child after another onto his lap, playing for them the wonderful, jolly Santa Claus they all loved and trusted.

Note: We were not able to contact the author of this article. 

What Seniors Really Want As Gifts

Delores Bius

If you are shopping for a gift for a senior citizen, whatever the occasion, then pay attention to these hints. As a senior myself, and hearing from my contemporaries, I can give you a long list of gifts seniors do and do not want!

Let's begin with the things we do NOT want. First on the list is probably one of those newfangled kitchen appliances. Just because you are a gourmet cook and would love to have a pastamaker, breadmaker, or such, does not mean a senior would. Most of us are tired of years spent in the kitchen making everything from scratch. We eat less now and prefer doing things the way we have for years rather than switching to a new "time-saver." Oh yes, most of us have welcomed a Mr. Coffee, a microwave, and an electric can opener, but that's about it!

Second, our homes are already overflowing with knick-knacks, and we are tired of dusting them. We would love to put them in a garage sale, but we are afraid our loved ones will notice their absence. Collections have become tiresome to most of us. How many candy dishes, figurines, etc. can we really use or find room for?

Now to the things most seniors DO like to receive as gifts. Gift certificates are always welcome. One of my grown sons went to the beauty shop where I have my hair done and gave them cash to apply to my hairdos for several weeks. "Tell her a secret admirer arranged for it," he told the owner. When I heard that, I figured out by the process of elimination that the giver was my son and thanked him heartily.

Another son gave me a gift certificate for an oil change and car wash. One year he gave me a gift certificate from the telephone company for the long-distance calls he knew I loved to make to my grandchildren. A daughter-in-law gave me a ticket to a dinner theatre for a play and dinner and then went with me, too! Another son and daughter-in-law gave me a box of items from the supermarket. The items were things I loved but seldom got for myself—macadamia nuts, gourmet coffee and tea, jam, a particular brand of cookies, and all sorts of delicacies!

Taking me at my word when I told her I needed them, a granddaughter gave me a set of dishtowels and dishcloths. Another bought me a roll of postage stamps along with a box of stationery, a pack of ballpoint pens, and a box of assorted greeting cards.

One son installed sensor lights in the back of my house and decorative floodlights on the front lawn to thwart burglars.

A friend of mine received similar gifts. A daughter offered to take her shopping at the mall once a month. A son told her he would come over once a month to fix any dripping faucets, change the furnace filter, or do any little repairs. (This was in addition to being on call for real emergencies, such as the furnace going out.) A granddaughter gave a subscription to a magazine she knew her grandmother liked.

Sometimes seemingly odd gifts are real winners. For example, last Christmas my five sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren were all together opening our gifts. When I opened an extra one from a son who had already given a set of videotapes about the Bible, I was shocked—the second gift was a pair of men's wool socks. "I think this is a mistake, Rog—it must be for someone else," I said. While everyone laughed, Rog explained, "No, Mom. I wear a pair while working on airplanes (he is an airline mechanic), and my feet stay warm that way. I knew you complained that your feet get cold. These will be great for cold nights in the house!" He was right!

If all else fails, a check or cash is a fine gift. Most seniors are frugal, whether by necessity or choice, and may be reluctant to spend money on themselves unless it is so earmarked. They love to order things they have seen in catalogs or go shopping with the money. One year my sons and I made up a scrapbook for my own mother, filled with pictures of items she might like to buy and attached currency on every page. She was shocked by the generous gift and later wrote delightedly about all the things she had purchased.

All it takes is a little thought to come up with a gift your senior will like. 



Shepherdess International News

INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION

The Cayman Chapter of Shepherdess International recently held its quarterly meeting at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel, Seven Mile Beach, Grand Cayman. Mrs. Bertha Thompson-Kelly presented the devotional message, which was entitled “Giving Thanks.” She invited the ministers’ wives in attendance to participate in the devotional exercise by giving their testimonies of God’s goodness to their ministries and families. Meanwhile, Mrs. Zoraida Powell announced that the Cayman’s Shepherdess Association will be making a monthly monetary gift to needy members of the Cayman community.



From left: Mrs. Zoraida Powell, Mrs. Jennifer Thompson, Mrs. Denise Thompson, Mrs. Bertha Thompson-Kelly, and Mrs. Rose Dracket.



NORTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION

The Korean Union Conference (KUC) Ministerial Association held a nationwide Women Pastors’ Husbands and Wives Retreat with the Women’s Ministries Department on May 20–22, 2005, at the Deer Mountain Retreat Center. Approximately 20 people attended. Pastor Hong SungSun, Ministerial Secretary of KUC, and Lee SeonMi, Women’s Ministries Director served as speakers.

The lectures focused on the mission of the Adventist Church and the Adventist position in the history and married life of women pastors. They shared various ideas of women’s pastoral work. At present, 2.5 percent of all Adventist pastors in Korea are women. Following are pictures from this event:

SOUTH AMERICAN DIVISION

From October 31–November 9, 2005, in the city of Iguassu Falls, Paraná, Brazil, an advisory for department directors of the South American Division (SAD) and the 11 unions in the territory was held to study and plan for the 2006–2010 quinquennium.

Under the leadership of SAD AFAM coordinator Evelyn Nagel, a series of meetings was held with the AFAM coordinators from the division fields to plan work for the next five years. One of the objectives is to more efficiently help ministers' and church elders' wives.

There are approximately 4,500 ministers' wives and more than 40,000 church elders' wives in the SAD. During the meeting, coordinators expressed their desire to help wives feel happy, motivated, and accomplished to participate in this ministry.

Since some coordinators assumed their positions recently, the SAD prepared a file of useful information, including how Shepherdess was established, the structure of the work, and articles regarding disclosure and words of inspiration.

“As Shepherdesses, we are concerned with the educational formation of the ministers' wives and also with that of the wives and fiancées of theology students. In this direction, SAD Shepherdess has encouraged the system of continuing education and seeks, in partnership with the Education Department and with Seventh-day Adventist universities, to offer various options so that youth who have financial difficulties and women whose husbands have not finished their theology courses may have an opportunity to receive a superior education. We want them to be well prepared when they reach the work field,” stated Evelyn.

With the Education Department, Shepherdess is studying the possibility of operating a long-distance, superior-level course with a more affordable price so that ministers' wives who did not have this opportunity may accomplish their dream of earning a college degree.

Evelyn continued, “All of the AFAM Coordinators in the 11 unions of the South American Division—Evelyn, Françoise, Tânia, Debora, Soledad, Luz Myriam, Olinda, Rosecler, Denise, Meriviana and Meibel—went back to their fields inspired to work on the projects for this quinquennium and hasten the return of our Lord Jesus.”



SOUTHERN ASIA DIVISION

Chennai is one India's high-tech metropolitan cities. There are colleges, schools, professional education centers, and multinational companies in this city. The metro-statistical report shows that approximately 7.6 million adults live in Chennai, but including children, the number rises to almost 10 million. Nearly 40 percent of the population is still illiterate. North Madras is considered the most illiterate. This area is known for murders, gangsters, and high crime rates. Most of the people are slum-dwellers, and parents are unable to send their children to school. Parents want their children to go to school but don't have money for education.

When the Shepherdess department of SUD planned an Adult Literacy Program in the city, most thought it would not work. But one local pastor said, “Start adult literacy classes in the churches. You will have great success.” With earnest prayer, the teachers led by the Section, Union, and Division Shepherdess Coordinators and Dr. Johnson, project coordinator, started to teach reading and writing in those areas.

In one year, nearly 285 people attended the classes. Graduation was held on July 14–15, 2006. Bibles and certificates were presented to those who completed the course, and 20 people were baptized. Some people had attended

church regularly but never been baptized, while others had attended church without their spouse's knowledge.

There are hundreds waiting to read and write and receive a spiritual blessing.

We want to thank the donors, directors, and teachers who supported this program. It has encouraged the local pastors and believers to start new congregations around this area. We have selected four of the twelve bases and started the groundwork for evangelistic meetings. Keep this event in your prayers.



Children led the Sabbath School on graduation day



Church service in Vyasarpadi, Chennai



Dr. Johnson (left), project coordinator



Ladies with the certificates they earned in the adult literacy program



Facilitators with Shepherdess Coordinator, Jean Sundaram (left)



Facilitators with Shepherdess Coordinator, Jean Sundaram (left)



Adult literacy baptism in Chennai

Below are some pictures from a few of the advisories:



SOUTHERN ASIA-PACIFIC DIVISION

Helen Gulfan, Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) Shepherdess Coordinator, reports that the Shepherdesses in SSD gave inspirational reports during the SSD Ministerial/Shepherdess advisories in the following Unions:

☐ The first advisory was held in NPUM under the leadership of Dr. Ellen Roque, with six local mission/conference Shepherdess coordinators.

☐ The next advisory was in WIUM with Poppy Lubis, Union Shepherdess coordinator, and 10 shepherdess coordinators.

☐ Another advisory was held in EIUC with Thresye Sepang, Union Shepherdess coordinator, and eight Shepherdess coordinators. After the advisory, retired pastors and their wives were honored at a program for active pastoral couples. The retirees, happy to be recognized, shared some of their pastoral experiences with the group. The younger pastoral couples were encouraged by these testimonies. The retirees urged them to remain faithful in the ministry until retirement or until Jesus comes! The Union and local mission/conference administrators attended and were satisfied with the results. We praise God for this success!

☐ The fourth advisory was held in CPUC with Glenda Catane and six Shepherdess coordinators from the local missions/conferences.

☐ The last advisory was held in MYUM with Sohila Shine and five Shepherdess coordinators.

Thus far, the union coordinators are very enthusiastic about their planned programs and activities for the next five years.

Bangladesh Union Mission: On May 24-27, 2006, the North Bangladesh Union Mission held a Shepherdess training seminar. Attendance and participation were wonderful. The Shepherdesses are willing to do extra work for the Lord, and they are encouraged and very active. Below are some pictures of their events:



Shepherdess Training Seminar held at North Bangladesh Union Mission



A group of shepherdesses praying for bereaved families



Ladies rendering special music during a Shepherdess training seminar



Shepherdesses with their husbands

Malaysia: Mrs. Leong Fai reports that she conducted a Vacation Bible School in Julau, Sarawak. She taught women how to sew and to conduct evening worship in their homes. Below are pictures from her trip:



Philippines: Joy Mamac recently shared a pictorial report of her travels and ministry.



The first graduates of SDA Child Development Training Center: Kindergarteners with their parents



Parents Classes



The tiny harbor of Sitangkai, situated in the midst of the sea



Joy and Nil with a church member having a wonderful time harvesting "agar" (seaweeds) at Sitangkai.



Serving at Simunol Island



A smiling Badjao girl sharing her newly caught fish.



Medical Outreach at La Island—"The Pirate Sanctuary". The commander is standing second from the left, wearing a white long-sleeve coat.



Baptismal candidates at Kinatal Island

Indonesia: The East Indonesia Union Conference held a Shepherdess Convention with Women's Ministries July 3-8, 2006. About 2,000 women's ministries ladies and shepherdesses attended the meeting. Mrs. Helen Gulfan, SSD Shepherdess and Women's Ministry director, led the convention. Thresye Sepang shared a pictorial report below:



WEST-CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION

Below is a pictorial report from the Babcock University Shepherdess Chapter:



Shepherdesses with the families of Pastor and Mrs. Boateng and Pastor and Mrs. Dada.



Pastor and Mrs. Dada receiving a gift from Mrs. Rachael Bablola during the send-forth party.



Pastor and Mrs. Boateng receiving a gift from Mrs. Rachael Bablola during the send-forth party.



*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS:
for he shall save his people from their sins.
Matthew 1:21*