

Monthly Update

December 2017

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As in the recent past, we have declared a moratorium in this December Update on the news of what is happening in our church, the nation, and the world – and will focus on Christmas and all that it signifies. We shall defer the other usual issues to the January Update. I shall, however, address one that seems to be on people’s minds at this time.

“You can’t pray before the football game.”

Leave it to West Virginia football players to stand for Christ: after atheist complainers banned public prayer over the loudspeaker at games, the teams prayed aloud together anyway. “All it took was one person’s complaint,” reports *The Blaze*. Toward the end of last year’s football season at West Virginia’s Clay County High School, someone apparently didn’t like the tradition of a prayer said over the loudspeakers before games – and told the school board so. With that, the district decided that a moment of silence would be observed instead. “This is a situation that is, unfortunately, out of our hands,” Clay County Schools Superintendent Joe Paxton said [misinformedly].

“And the Sept. 1 game between Clay County High School and Braxton County High School marked the first time the ban on prayer over the loudspeakers was in effect,” the [local radio] station said. Of course, if students decide they want to pray, that’s a totally different story.

And that’s exactly what players – from both teams – had in mind.

“When the moment of silence was announced, the opposing teams rushed to the center of the field, took a knee and prayed aloud, joined by many in the bleachers,” WSAZ said. “Some fans even wore ‘I’m gonna pray anyway’ T-shirts... There was nothing that a detractor could do to prevent the student-athletes from expressing their faith.”

Ironically, the ban on prayer over the PA system only bolstered the desire of many in Clay County to pray in public and – given how far-reaching their reaction to the ban has been – you might say prayer is more popular than ever.

“Praise God for the courage of these students who realize they have 1st Amendment rights too.”

– Chaplain Gordon James Klingenschmitt, PhD

Each December, we make our annual request for donations. Please pray and ask the Lord as to how you might support Concerned Methodists. We use our financial resources as efficiently as possible: none of us take a salary, we minimize overhead, and we often pay for our own personal travel expenses when we participate in conferences. This year we: have been active in “contending for our orthodox Christian faith” within the United Methodist Church in conferences from North Carolina to Wisconsin, advocated for Wesleyan doctrine, spoke in churches, and advised the “A Way Forward” commission.

From all of us here, we wish you a joyous Christmas season and a hopeful 2018 as we “fight the good fight” in the way we are called to by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

In His service,

Allen O. Morris
Executive Director

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December 2017 Update

As we do in December, we are having a moratorium on the serious information of what is happening in our church to offer this to you. We hope it will help to make your Christmas brighter, happier, and more appreciative of all the good things we enjoy. When we think back to what happened 2,000 years ago and what it means to us, it helps us to put in perspective the challenges we face today. – AOM

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+ A memory from Dr. James Dobson:

Dear Friends,

It's Christmastime again, and to help us get into the spirit of the season, I want to share something that will warm your heart. It has been my tradition for many years to send a carefully chosen story to all our friends and supporters, and this year's selection is one of the best. It can be found in Joe Wheeler's superb anthology, Christmas in My Heart: Volume 2. It is titled "Delayed Delivery," and was written by Cathy Miller. They gave us permission to share their wonderful story, for which we are grateful.

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There had never been a winter like this. Stella watched from the haven of her armchair as gusts of snow whipped themselves into a frenzy. She feared to stand close to the window, unreasonably afraid that somehow the blizzard might be able to reach her there, sucking her, breathless, out into the chaos. The houses across the street were all but obliterated by the fury of wind-borne flakes.

Absently, the elderly woman straightened the slipcovers on the arms of her chair, her eyes glued to the spectacle beyond the glass. Dragging her gaze away from the window, she forced herself up out of her chair and waited a moment for balance to reassert itself. Straightening her back against the pain that threatened to keep her stooped, she set out determinedly for the kitchen.

In the doorway to the next room she paused, her mind blank, wondering what purpose had propelled her there. From the vent above the stove, the scream of the wind threatened to funnel the afternoon storm directly down into the tiny house. Stella focused brown eyes on the stovetop clock. The three-fifteen time reminded her that she had headed in there to take something out of the freezer for her supper. Another lonely meal that she didn't feel like preparing, much less eating.

Suddenly, she grabbed the handle of the refrigerator and leaned her forehead against the cold, white surface of the door as a wave of self-pity threatened to drown her. It was too much to bear, losing her beloved Dave this summer! How was she to endure the pain, the daily nothingness? She felt the familiar ache in her throat and squeezed her eyes tightly shut to hold the tears at bay.

Stella drew herself upright and shook her head in silent chastisement. She reiterated her litany of thanks. She had her health, her tiny home, an income that should suffice for the remainder of her days. She had her books, her television programs, her needlework. There were the pleasures of her garden in the spring and summer, walks through the wilderness park at the end of her street, and the winter birds that brightened the feeders outside her kitchen picture window. Not today though, she thought ruefully, as the blizzard hurled itself against the eastern wall of the kitchen.

"Ah, Dave, I miss you so! I never minded storms when you were here." The sound of her own voice echoed hollowly in the room. She turned on the radio that stood on the counter next to a neatly descending row of wooden canisters. A sudden joyful chorus of Christmas music filled the room, but it only served to deepen her loneliness.

Stella had been prepared for her husband's death. Since the doctor's pronouncement of terminal cancer, they had both faced the inevitable, striving to make the most of their remaining time together. Dave's financial affairs had always been in order. There were no new burdens in her widowed state. It was just the awful aloneness...the lack of purpose to her days.

They had been a childless couple. It had been their choice. Their lives had been full and rich. They had been content with busy careers, and with each other.

They had many friends. Had. That was the operative word these days. It was bad enough losing the one person you loved with all your heart. But over the past few years, she and Dave repeatedly had to cope with the deaths of their friends and relations. They were all of an age – the age when human bodies began giving up. Dying. Face it – they were old!

And now, on this first Christmas without Dave, Stella would be on her own. Mable and Jim had invited her to spend the holiday with them in Florida, but somehow that had seemed worse than staying home alone. Not only would she miss her husband, but she would miss the snow, and the winter, and the familiarity of her home.

With shaky fingers, she lowered the volume of the radio so that the music became a muted background. She glanced toward the fridge briefly, then decided that a hot bowl of soup would be more comforting fare this evening. To her surprise, she saw that the mail had come. She hadn't even heard the creak of the levered mail slot in the front door. Poor mailman, out in this weather! “Neither hail, nor sleet...” With the inevitable wince of pain, she bent to retrieve the damp, white envelopes from the floor. Moving into the living room, she sat on the piano bench to open them. They were mostly Christmas cards, and her sad eyes smiled at the familiarity of the traditional scenes and at the loving messages inside. Carefully, her arthritic fingers arranged them among the others clustered on the piano top. In her entire house, they were the only seasonal decoration. The holiday was less than a week away, but she just did not have the heart to put up a silly tree, or even set up the stable that Dave had built with his own hands.

Suddenly engulfed by the loneliness of it all, Stella buried her lined face in her hands, lowering her elbows to the piano keys in a harsh, abrasive discord, and let the tears come. How would she possibly get through Christmas and the winter beyond it? She longed to climb into bed and bury herself in a cocoon of blankets, not emerging until her friends and spring returned.

The ring of the doorbell echoed the high-pitched, discordant piano notes and was so unexpected that Stella had to stifle a small scream of surprise. Now who could possibly be calling on her on a day like today? Wiping her eyes, she noticed for the first time how dark the room had become. The doorbell sounded a second time.

Using the piano for leverage, she raised herself upright and headed for the front hall, switching on the living room light as she passed. She opened the wooden door and stared through the screened window of the storm door in consternation. On her front porch, buffeted by waves of wind and snow, stood a strange young man, whose hatless head was barely visible above the large carton in his arms. She peered beyond him to the driveway, but there was nothing about the small car to give clue to his identity.

Returning her gaze to him, she saw that his hands were bare and his eyebrows had lifted in an expression of hopeful appeal that was fast disappearing behind the frost forming on the glass. Summoning courage, the elderly lady opened the door slightly and he stepped sideways to speak into the space.

“Mrs. Thornhope?”

She nodded affirmation, her extended arm beginning to tremble with cold and the strain of holding the door against the wind. He continued, predictably, “I have a package for you.”

Curiosity drove warning thoughts from her mind. She pushed the door far enough to enable the stranger to shoulder it and stepped back into the foyer to make room for him. He entered, bringing with him the frozen breath of the storm. Smiling, he placed his burden carefully on the floor and stood to retrieve an envelope that protruded from his pocket. As he handed it to her, a sound came from the box. Stella actually jumped. The man laughed in apology and bent to

straighten up the cardboard flaps, holding them open in an invitation for her to peek inside. She advanced cautiously, then turned her gaze downward.

It was a dog! To be more exact, a golden Labrador retriever puppy. As the gentleman lifted its squirming body up into his arms, he explained, "This is for you, ma'am. He's 6 weeks old and completely housebroken." The young pup wiggled in happiness at being released from captivity and thrust ecstatic, wet kisses in the direction of his benefactor's chin. "We were supposed to deliver him on Christmas Eve," he continued with some difficulty, as he strove to rescue his chin from the wet little tongue, "but the staff at the kennels start their holidays tomorrow. Hope you don't mind an early present."

Shock had stolen her ability to think clearly. Unable to form coherent sentences, she stammered, "But...I don't...I mean...who...?"

The young fellow set the animal down on the doormat between them and then reached out a finger to tap the envelope she was still holding.

"There's a letter in there that explains everything, pretty much. The dog was bought last July while her mother was still pregnant. It was meant to be a Christmas gift. If you'll just wait a moment, there are some things in the car I'll get for you."

Before she could protest, he was gone, returning a moment later with a huge box of dog food, a leash, and a book titled *Caring for a Labrador Retriever*. All this time the puppy had sat quietly at her feet, panting happily as his brown eyes watched her.

Unbelievably, the stranger was turning to go. Desperation forced the words from her lips. "But who...who bought it?" Pausing in the open doorway, his words almost snatched away by the wind that tousled his hair, he replied, "Your husband, ma'am." And then he was gone.

It was all in the letter. Forgetting the puppy entirely at this sight of the familiar handwriting, Stella had walked like a somnambulist to her chair by the window. Unaware that the little dog had followed her, she forced tear-filled eyes to read her husband's words. He had written it three weeks before his death and had left it with the kennel owners to be delivered along with the puppy as his last Christmas gift to her. It was full of love and encouragement and admonishments to be strong. He vowed that he was waiting for the day when she would join him. And he had sent her this young animal to keep her company until then.

Remembering the little creature for the first time, she was surprised to find him quietly looking up at her, his small panting mouth resembling a comic smile. Stella put the pages aside and reached down for the bundle of golden fur. She thought that he would be heavier, but he was only the size and weight of a sofa pillow. And so soft and warm. She cradled him in her arms and he licked her jawbone, then cuddled up into the hollow of her neck. The tears began anew at this exchange of affection and the dog endured her crying without moving.

Finally, Stella lowered him to her lap, where he regarded her solemnly. She wiped vaguely at her wet cheeks, then somehow mustered a smile.

"Well, little guy, I guess it's you and me." His pink tongue panted in agreement. Stella's smile strengthened and her gaze shifted sideways to the window. Dusk had fallen, and the storm seemed to have spent the worst of its fury. Through fluffy flakes that were now drifting down at a gentler pace, she saw the cheery Christmas lights that edged the roof lines of her neighbors' homes. The strains of "Joy to the World" wafted in from the kitchen.

Suddenly Stella felt the most amazing sensation of peace and benediction washing over her. It was like being enfolded in a loving embrace. Her heart beat painfully, but it was with joy and wonder, not grief or loneliness. She

+ Inviting a Guest for Christmas.

Bring Joy To Someone In Need by Including That Person In your Christmas Celebration.

“Jim’s dad, James Dobson Sr., died three weeks before Christmas after suffering a massive heart attack in September. It was a devastating loss for our little family but especially for Jim’s mom, Myrtle. We will always regret not having that last Christmas season with Jim’s father, which would have been filled with love and laughter, children, and wonderful food from my mother-in-law’s kitchen. Instead we struggled to cope with our loss. Three things sustained us during that time: the love of one another, the support from caring friends, and the precious promise of eternal life.

Having been through this experience, I am even more aware that Christmas can be an especially lonely time for those who do not have family nearby. As members of the body of Christ, we must be willing to open our homes and hearts to people in need. That is precisely what we did one Christmas Eve when we invited an elderly woman who needed a loving family to join us. Her name was Mamie Hendricks. She was in her eighties and the widow of a missionary. Mamie bubbled over with joy when we asked her to join us. At the dinner table that evening, she was the center of attention. All the conversation focused on this wonderful lady as she shared her experiences with us.

After dinner Mamie opened several scrapbooks she had brought. Apparently no one had been willing to look at them for years, but there was meaning for her on every page. She told us about her deceased husband and how much she loved him. She described her life on the mission field and talked about the people they had introduced to the Lord. Then she talked about her husband’s death and how she missed him. Story after story poured out. Our two children sat enthralled as they listened to Mamie’s recollections of a lifetime.

We had thought that evening with our friend would be our gift to her, but Mamie contributed much more to each of us. She is gone now, but I cherish that evening we spent together.

As we all look toward our holiday plans, may I encourage you to invite a lonely person, someone who is older, or a single adult to join you? I believe you will recognize that it is, indeed, “more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers. (Galatians 6:10)

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A popular Christmas carol

A popular Christmas carol in World War II was “I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas,” written in 1942 by Irving Berlin. Berlin, a Russian Jewish immigrant to America, had served in the U.S. infantry during World War I – and wrote some of the country’s most popular songs, including: “God Bless America.” His “I’m Dreaming of a White Christmas” was featured in the 1954 movie White Christmas, starring Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, Vera-Ellen and Rosemary Clooney, aunt of actor George Clooney.

“I’m dreaming of a white Christmas
Just like the ones I used to know
Where the treetops glisten,
and children listen
To hear sleigh bells in the snow

I’m dreaming of a white Christmas
With every Christmas card I write
May your days be merry and bright
And may all your Christmases be white.”

On CHRISTMAS EVE, December 24, 1944, President Franklin Roosevelt had told the American people: “It is not easy to say ‘Merry Christmas’ to you, my fellow Americans, in this time of destructive war...We will celebrate this Christmas Day in our traditional American way...because the teachings of Christ are fundamental in our lives...the story of the coming of the immortal Prince of Peace.”
– William Federer. Published courtesy of Mr. Federer; permission granted.

The Legend of The Candy Cane

According to the legend of the candy cane, this candy was first created back in the 18th century. At that time, in certain areas of Europe, there was said to be a ban on public displays of Christianity. Christians were oppressed and no Bibles or crosses could be owned at the time. One man found this oppression distressing and wished he could share the love of Jesus and the joy of Christmas with the rest of the world. When Christmas came around, children didn't get to see nativity scenes or enjoy learning about the truth of Christmas. As a candy maker, this man prayed to find a way that he could offer local children a Christmas gift that would allow him to communicate the real story of Christmas. His prayer led to an idea: The Candy Cane.

The Shepherd's Staff: He chose to make the candy cane in the shape of a shepherd's staff; Jesus is the shepherd to his followers and the Bible notes that the "sheep" would hear His voice and follow him (Psalm 23:1, John 10:11, John 10:27-30, Isaiah 40:11).

The Letter J for Jesus: Not only was the candy cane in the shape of a staff, but when held upside down, it formed a "J," which stood for Jesus (Luke 1:31, Matthew 1:21).

He is A Rock: The candy maker chose hard candy for the candy cane, which was done to remind children that Jesus was our "rock," dependable and strong (Psalm 31:3).

By His Stripes: Stripes were added to the candy cane, representative of the crucifixion and the blood Jesus shed for our sins.

Red-His Shed Blood: Through his blood, we are given salvation and life (Revelation 1:5, John 3:16, Luke 22:20).

White-Purification from Sin: There are also white stripes on the candy cane, which represents the holiness, and purity of Jesus, who was sinless (I John 1:7).

Sweet Fragrance of Christ: Peppermint was the flavor the candy maker chose for the candy cane. Peppermint was very similar to hyssop, which was used for sacrifice and purification in the Old Testament, reminding us of the sacrifice that Jesus made for us. It also reminds us of the spices brought by the Wise Men when they came to visit Jesus (Psalm 51:7, John 10:29, Matthew 2:11).

Broken For Us: Of course, when the candy cane is eaten, it is often broken, which the candy maker meant as a reminder that when Jesus was crucified, his body was broken (I Cor. 11:24).

Love of Christ: The candy cane was made to be given as a gift, representing Jesus' love when he gave us the gift of salvation.

Although no one is quite sure if the legend of the candy cane is really true, the beauty of the legend is such a reminder of God's love for us around Christmas. In this legend, it was a way that the candy maker could tell the children the story of Christmas and still today, we have candy canes as a reminder of the real reason we celebrate Christmas. – From Denise

A Christmas Tradition

[Note: This has been used before but I believe has value in reviewing it again. – AOM]

I recently read of a custom in times past called "burning of the greens" done on Twelfth Night or Epiphany, which celebrated the coming of the Wise Men to the stable to pay homage to the Christ Child. Evidently, celebration of Epiphany dates back to the third or fourth century A.D. Ms. Lillian Elders of St. Louis, Missouri wrote of an old family custom of burning the Christmas tree in a celebratory way. This included inviting people to:

1. Take pen and paper, find a peaceful place to sit and meditate. Let your mind go back over the past year, but don't dwell on disappointments; rather, write down the five most pleasant memories of the year.
2. Then, write down your plans and goals for the new year.
3. Finally, consider the burning of the tree itself. If you can burn your tree without violating fire ordinances, do so. Otherwise, burn some branches of it in your fireplace or other safe place. As they burn, think of it as burning away the unwanted "residue" of unpleasant memories from the past year. Remember the fragrant smell that is left. Let that be the memory you keep.

Wildlife Advisory – Reindeer Alert!

According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game at North Pole, Alaska – while both male and female reindeer grow antlers in the summer each year, male reindeer drop their antlers at the beginning of winter, usually from late November to mid-December. Female reindeer retain their antlers until after they give birth in the spring. Therefore, according to every historical rendition depicting Santa’s reindeer, every single one of them, from Rudolph to Blitzen had to be a girl.

We should have known. Only women, while pregnant, would be able to drag a fat old man in a red velvet suit all around the world in one night and not get lost.

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Naughty or Nice Retailer List

Which stores recognize Christmas in their advertising...and who's the Scrooge?

As the Christmas shopping season begins full swing, the American Family Association (AFA) has prepared its annual “Naughty or Nice” retailer list. We have taken the top national retailers and reviewed their websites, media advertising and in-store signage in an effort to help you know which companies are Christmas-friendly.

There are secular forces in our country that hate Christmas because the word itself is a reminder of Jesus Christ. They want to eradicate anything that reminds Americans of Christianity. That is why it is important to remind governments and companies to keep the word Christmas alive. AFA wants to keep Christ in Christmas and Christmas in America.

Criteria – AFA reviewed up to four areas to determine if a company was “Christmas-friendly” in their advertising: print media (newspaper inserts), broadcast media (radio/television), website and/or personal visits to the store. If a company’s ad has references to items associated with Christmas (trees, wreaths, lights, etc.), it was considered as an attempt to reach “Christmas” shoppers. If a company has items associated with Christmas, but did not use the word “Christmas,” then the company is considered as censoring “Christmas.”

– The American Family Association

Association

+ **An AFA “5-Star”-rated company that promotes and celebrates Christmas on an exceptional basis: AFA Online Store**

(<https://www.afastore.net>), Hobby Lobby, Kirkland’s, Lowe’s, Michael’s Stores, and Wal-Mart.

+ **Nice.** Company uses the term “Christmas” – we consider that company to be Christmas-friendly: 1-800-Flowers.com, Academy Sports + Outdoors, Ace Hardware, AFA Online Stores, Banana Republic, Bass Pro Shops, Bath & Body Works, Bed Bath & Beyond, Belk, Big Lots, Books-A-Million, Cabela’s, Cracker Barrel, Dick’s Sporting Goods, Dillards, Do-It-Best Hardware, Dollar Tree, Fred’s, H.E.B. Stores, HSN.com, Hallmark, Harbor Freight, Harris Teeter Stores, Hobby Lobby, Home Depot, Hy-Vee Stores, J.C. Penney, JoAnn Fabrics, Kirkland’s, K-mart, Kroger, L.L. Bean, Lowe’s, Macy’s, Marshalls, Meijer, Menard’s, Michael’s Stores, Neiman Marcus, Pier One Imports, ProFlowers.com, Publix, QVC.com, Rite Aid, Sam’s Club, Scheels Sporting Goods, Super D Drug, TJ Maxx, Toys R Us, True Value, Wal-Mart, and Zappos.com.

+ **Marginal.** Company refers to Christmas infrequently, or in a single advertising medium, but not in others: Amazon.com, CVS Pharmacy, Dollar General, Kohl’s, Old Navy, Safeway, Sears, Starbucks, and Walgreens.

+ **Naughty.** Company may use “Christmas” sparingly in a single or unique product description, but as a company, does not recognize it: Barnes & Noble, Best Buy, Family Dollar, Gap, Inc., The Limited, Maurice’s, Nordstrom, Office Depot, Max, Pet Smart, Staples, Stein Mart, Supervalu, UncommonGoods.com, and Victoria’s Secret.

Note: AFA does not list local or regional companies, but only nationally-recognized companies. This list only reflects a company’s “Christmas” advertising and does not take into account other corporate policies AFA may not agree with.

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+ ***The Birth of Jesus.*** In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while[a] Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child...While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them,

and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,
“Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let’s go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.” So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. Mary treasured up all these things...them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for the things they had heard and seen, which were as they had been told. On the 8th day when it was time to circumcise the child, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he was conceived.

When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.” Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:

“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.”

[Joseph and] the child’s mother marveled at what was said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him. – From the Bible, Luke 2:1-40; NIV. Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission.

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Courage is contagious – and when a brave man takes a stand, the spines of others are stiffened. – Reverend Billy Graham