

# Monthly Update

## December 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Unfortunately, we will not do what we have in past years of: “holding a one-month pause on the unpleasant news of the problems in our church, nation, and world” as we have in recent December Monthly Updates. The challenges that we face now are simply too serious to postpone or ignore, so we are briefly stating some of them and ask that you earnestly pray. Also included is what I had given to the Fayetteville Police force.

To help in that, we are presenting some good quotes on the power of prayer. This year’s “Naughty or Nice Retailer List” information was taken from 2019, so please use this advisedly to guide how you buy presents for others: “spend your values”!

We believe that we are at a pivotal time in the history of our country. Decisions made in the next two months will determine the future of the United States of America. That is a realistic analysis and the reason that we wanted to lay out some of the “ugly stuff” happening now, not only in our country but also in our United Methodist Church. One core issue to pierce through the turbulence of our society is that those who are causing turmoil see us as “deeply flawed and beyond repair” – so they want to dismantle our nation and rebuild it based on a “socialist” model; many have a Marxist outlook.

Even though the 2020 General Conference (GC2020) in Minneapolis, Minnesota was postponed until next year, we were prepared to go forward this year with our “game plan” in the fight for the future of our denomination. We see what has happened as giving us time to better prepare for this momentous event. I have learned that when a “problem” is thrown into my life (and situations), that is something that can work to our advantage; it may be an unseen blessing. So it is with this. I had my accommodations reserved when everything broke loose. If we had gone through with GC2020 as planned, I would have been in the riot area and probably affected by it. I thank God for this delay.

Each December, we make our annual request for contributions. We ask that you pray and seek the Lord’s leading as to how you might support the ministry in which Concerned Methodists is engaged. We make the most efficient use possible of the money you entrust to our work. Since we have no paid employees, minimize overhead, and use cost-cutting measures, we translate the maximum amount of your donations into our ministry of informing people about what is happening within our United Methodist Church. In addition we are focused on the 2021 General Conference which will be held in Minneapolis (if there is still a city) and have a precise plan to move into the future with confidence in God’s plan for our United Methodist Church. We reiterate that we stand firmly on our Wesleyan teachings and heritage that have extended back for over 200 years. May we ask for your continued help through your gifts and your prayers?

From all of us here, we wish you the very best in this Christmas season and throughout this coming year. Let us continue to pray....

In His service,

Allen O. Morris,  
Executive Director

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## December 2020 Update

### **Bits and Pieces from across the United Methodist Church**

A Republic must either reserve its Virtue or lose its Liberty

~ Reverend John Witherspoon, Signer of Declaration of Independence

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#### **The Good Stuff**

+ **The Power of Prayer:** An older pastor got into the habit of challenging his congregation by quoting Jeremiah 33:3: “Call to me and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.”

– God is bigger than any problem you face. ~ Dr. Charles F. Stanley

– Prayer is the most powerful tool a believer has; nothing compares to it. ~ Dr. Stanley

– I tell my congregation that the distance between success and failure and victory and defeat is about six to twelve inches, or whatever the distance is for you to drop to your knees and pray for your wondrous Lord and Savior. You never stand taller or stronger than while on your knees! ~ Dr. Stanley

– My challenge to you is simple: Whatever you’re facing, trust God with it. Ask him to take away the anxiety, fear, and feelings of frustration. When you trust the Lord, you rest in His care. ~ Dr. Stanley

+ **The Little White Envelope.** “It’s just a small, white envelope stuck among the branches of our Christmas tree. No name, no identification, no inscription. It has peeked through the branches of our tree for the past ten years. It all began because my husband Mike hated Christmas. Oh, not the true meaning of Christmas, but the commercial aspects of it – overspending and the frantic running around at the last minute to get a tie for Uncle Harry and the dusting powder for Grandma – the gifts given in desperation because you couldn't think of anything else. Knowing he felt this way, I decided one year to bypass the usual shirts, sweaters, ties and so forth. I reached for something special just for Mike. The inspiration came in an unusual way. Our son Kevin, who was 12 that year, was on the wrestling team at the school he attended. Shortly before Christmas, there was a non-league match against a team sponsored by an inner-city church. These youngsters, dressed in sneakers so ragged that shoestrings seemed to be the only thing holding them together, presented a sharp contrast to our boys in their spiffy blue and gold uniforms and sparkling new wrestling shoes. As the match began, I was alarmed to see that the other team was wrestling without headgear, a kind of light helmet designed to protect a wrestler's ears. It was a luxury the ragtag team obviously could not afford. Well, we ended up walloping them. We took every weight class. Mike, seated beside me, shook his head sadly, “I wish just one of them could have won,” he said. “They have a lot of potential, but losing like this could take the heart right out of them.” Mike loved kids – all kids. He so enjoyed coaching little league football, baseball and lacrosse. That’s when the idea for his present came. That afternoon, I went to a local sporting goods store and bought an assortment of wrestling headgear and shoes, and sent them anonymously to the inner-city church. On Christmas Eve, I placed a small, white envelope on the tree, the note inside telling Mike what I had done, and that this was his gift from me.

Mike’s smile was the brightest thing about Christmas that year. And that same bright smile lit up succeeding years. For each Christmas, I followed the tradition – one year sending a group of mentally handicapped youngsters to a hockey game, another year a check to a pair of elderly brothers whose home had burned to the ground the week before Christmas, and on and on. The white envelope became the highlight of our Christmas. It was always the last thing opened on Christmas morning, and our children – ignoring their new toys – would stand with wide-eyed anticipation as their dad lifted the envelope from the tree to reveal its contents. As the children grew, the toys gave way to more practical presents, but the small, white envelope never lost its allure.

The story doesn’t end there. You see, we lost Mike last year due to dreaded cancer. When Christmas rolled around, I was still so wrapped in grief that I barely got the tree up. But Christmas Eve found me placing an envelope on the tree. And the next morning, I found it was magically joined by three more. Unbeknownst to the others, each of our three children had for the first time placed a white envelope on the tree for their dad. The

tradition has grown and someday will expand even further with our grandchildren standing to take down that special envelope.

Mike's spirit, like the Christmas spirit will always be with us."

– A true Christmas Story by Nancy W. Gavin, December 2015.

#### + **Saved – at the last minute!**

Brothers and sisters, God is good. He answers prayers and is in full control no matter what the situation or what is going on. A guy who used to be friends with some of my old friends before I was saved ended up in the hospital at Cape Fear Valley very ill. He was released after a...stay, then a couple of days later was re-admitted for heart, brain, and organ problems! He was in ICU, and they said it wasn't looking good so I was trying to get in to witness to him the gospel but couldn't. I prayed for God to send someone to bring him the gospel before he died. Maybe a week went by and I heard the news that he passed. A few days went by and last night I saw [that] the news did a story on his death. In the video they showed a picture of him and one of his nurses...They said he was baptized in his hospital bed before he died. I was blown away! Praise God! I was so moved and excited. Don't know what to say other than God is amazing; He answers prayers. [Note: The nurse is a "niece" of mine, Jessica; she is sold out to the Lord and wants to do all she can for Him. – AOM]

– Randy L. [last name withheld for privacy]

#### + **Hunters help feed hungry.**

VIENNA, Ga. – The food ministry at Vienna United Methodist Church has freezers full of venison, courtesy of deer hunters. Hunters in Georgia and around the country work with organizations such as Hunters for the Hungry to help with food ministries. – Kara Witherow, *South Georgia Advocate*, United Methodist News Service (UMNS), as reported in the UMNS Weekly Digest; Nov. 20, 2020.

#### + **Churches keep faith with Thanksgiving tradition.**

KATY, Texas – Three Texas Conference churches are part of the Katy Thanksgiving Feast, an ecumenical effort that since 2003 has provided Thanksgiving meals to needy families. COVID-19 has forced changes, but the feast will go on. Katy First United Methodist Church has assembled 1,000 cans of cranberry sauce and 500 jars of turkey gravy.

– Lindsay Peyton, Texas Conference, as reported in the UM News Weekly Digest; Nov. 20, 2020.

#### Of Interest.

+ **With deep concerns.** Why is it that the country, China, who started this pandemic, has some of the lowest numbers of deaths? Is it that they are lying about their numbers or possibly were ready before releasing it on the world? Reports say the lab was partially funded by a program under the Obama regime, can't find evidence of that, but do know that they are ecstatic that Biden won and will overturn Trump's tariffs, as is Iran who will be happy that their embargos will be lifted, as well as in the communist countries of Cuba and Venezuela. In this we get what the majority of our inhabitants, can't say citizens, now vote for. Used to be American citizens decided our elections. Welcome to the 11 to 13 million illegal immigrants to our shores as well as countless more coming in the next 4 years. Will America and the Constitution survive? God only knows, Lord please help us.

– Facebook Post by Gary Auen, Nov. 24, 2020.

#### + **Planning for a more "inclusive" church.**

CENTENNIAL, Colo. (UM News) – United Methodists held a virtual Inclusiveness Conference that focused on church efforts to dismantle racism, welcome LGBTQ people and cross international boundaries. One bishop said the church could lose more members over the issue of race than LGBTQ inclusion. [Note: If we focused on the issues of paramount importance – bringing people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and obedience to the teachings of the Bible as God's Word – and kept these at the main center of what we do, peripheral problems would shrink into the background. In addition, we must observe that their view of "inclusive" does not include those who adhere to Biblical morality. – AOM]

– Heather Hahn, as reported in the UM News Weekly Digest; Nov. 20, 2020.

**+ Dean resigns after post about Biden supporters.**

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. – A dean at United Methodist-related Virginia Wesleyan University has resigned after a Facebook post that said supporters of President-elect Joe Biden are “ignorant, anti-American and anti-Christian.” The school announced that Paul Ewell, a professor of management, business and economics...stepped down. [Note: I wonder: would he have been made to resign if he called Trump supporters “ignorant, anti-American and anti-Christian”? – AOM]

– David K. Li and Caitlin Fichtel report for NBC, Virginia Wesleyan, as reported in the UMNS Weekly Digest; Nov. 20, 2020.

**+ Why there were no fears of post-election riots in Montana.** Our Montana activists show why things remain calm there! When hundreds of fanatical BLM demonstrators descended on [a] Montana park, some of the citizens came to make sure that it really was peaceful! In cities and towns across America on Nov. 3, people braced for post-election riots and destruction by Black Lives Matter (BLM) and Antifa – a continuation of the violence those groups had been committing for months – which had been threatened by top Democrats. Store owners boarded up their windows. Police were put on alert, and in some places the National Guard was called up. But not in Montana. Earlier this year, Black Lives Matter and Antifa got a clear message that their brand of intimidation and violence would not work there! Here’s just one story. On June 6, hundreds of agitated BLM-allied leftists converged on Depot Park in the center of Kalispell, Montana for a so-called “protest.” Kalispell, a small city north of Missoula in the northwest corner of the state, had not seen anything like this before. Many locals feared that a mob would attempt to deface or destroy the Flathead County Veterans Memorial in the center of the small downtown park, as BLM activists had done to other monuments (particularly those involving military figures) across the country. And neighborhood businesses were on edge. But when the BLM supporters arrived, the area around the monument was surrounded by dozens of well-armed local citizens. (Montana allows open-carry of firearms without a permit.) And the locals were prepared to also protect the nearby local businesses if necessary. As a result, everything was peaceful. The leftists got the message! The virtue-signaling local people were surprisingly restrained. They stayed on the side of the street with their signs and banners and didn’t even block traffic. Even the more surly rabble-rousers held back. There were a lot of mindless virtue-signalers. When we asked a woman about her sign that said “Against Fascism” she couldn’t explain what fascism is.

And the word got around. There haven’t been any Black Lives Matter or Antifa problems in Montana. How civilized life was intended. This is, of course, what the founders of America intended. Regular citizens who have a stake in the community are supposed to be able to protect themselves, in civil unrest. For most of our history, that’s how things were.

Unfortunately, in most of the country people now continue to live in fear of uncontrolled, lunatic mobs burning and looting buildings, tearing down monuments at will, and even attacking (and sometimes killing) bystanders. People living in fear and insecurity gives power to the Left and elected officials. And to make things even worse, the fake-news media viciously distort legitimate self-defense by citizens. But it’s not what America is all about.

Montana is quite civilized and normal. This is largely because most citizens are serious about preserving their Constitutional rights. And it’s much more than just self-protection. They have maintained fair elections: At the polls, voters always had to show their photo ID to cast their ballot. Although this time most counties opted instead to go to mailed-in ballots, local election offices still kept the process clean. (It helped that many Montanans hand-delivered their ballots to election offices, rather than trust the US Mail.)

As a result of having a legitimate process, President Trump won Montana with 57% of the vote, and Republicans won the races for Governor, US Senate, US House, and all the major statewide offices.

We’ll see what happens in the rest of the country...

– Report and commentary by MassResistance; November 8, 2020. PO Box 1612, Waltham, Massachusetts

+ **Covid-19.** To offer other perspectives on Covid-19 at a personal level for your consideration, I am repeating this from the August Update, simply because it is a continuing problem: I have read about several medical doctors and medical personnel from New York to Florida to California on the efficacy of this “cocktail” daily to treat this dread illness: 200 mg 2x Hydroxychloroquine, 500 mg 1x Azrithomycin, and 220 mg 1x Zinc Sulfate. This is the treatment I would try to get if I had Covid-19. To maximize my own immune system against this virus, on a daily basis I try to walk in sunlight for 30 minutes, take 100 mg. of zinc, a multiple vitamin, Vitamin D3 complex, and Vitamin C at 4 times the normal dose.

Vitamin D supplementation, Dr. Joseph DeStefano. Vitamin D supplementation is slow and cumulative to become therapeutic. For example, my vitamin D level was 16 in Dec 2018, I went on 50,000IU of D3 3x weekly, level was only up to 38 in July 2019, so upped to 50,000IU 5x weekly, and just last month finally topped out at 100, and am back to 50,000IU 2x monthly for maintenance. It can take a long long time for someone as chronically low as I was to achieve therapeutic levels that would be helpful in this context. But, better late than never. (As narrated by Dr. DeStefano)

Masks: When outside, I never wear a mask (which is of disputed efficacy) but breathe in the fresh air (since sunlight is effective in killing the virus). A Danish study shows that there is no difference in wearing a mask and may actually be detrimental. I’d heard one lady testify that her brother, a crane operator working alone inside an enclosure high above the ground, was forced by his company to wear a mask; over the space of five months, he lost 18% of his lung capacity.

Here are other perspectives: *Face masks, not so effective.* It really doesn’t make any difference except in the way we feel. “After one month, 1.8% of the people wearing masks had been infected, while 2.1% of the people in the control group had tested positive,” a Copenhagen University Hospital said in a press release. “The study does not confirm the expected halving of the risk of infection for people wearing face masks,” it said. “The results could indicate a more moderate degree of protection of 15-20%, however, the study could not rule out that face masks do not provide any protection.”

Not being an epidemiologist or scientifically trained myself, I took the liberty of asking someone who was – about this and what they pointed out was helpful. Here’s the paraphrase, “Surgeons wear masks because they want to do what they can to prevent bacteria from their mouth and nasal cavities entering open wounds and causing infections. However, viruses are much smaller than bacteria and aren’t stopped by a surgical mask. That’s why when a surgeon has a virus, he stays home so he doesn’t spread it through the hospital staff.” They went on to say, “I won’t say surgical masks are useless, because they can help to stop the spread of bacteria or limit the projection range of a sneeze or a cough, but if two people are together in a closed environment and one has a particularly contagious virus, like COVID-19, then they might as well be trying to stop its transmission with mosquito netting as surgical masks.” [Posted by Rev. Andy Webb]

Social distancing: The whole area of “social distancing” (WHO recommends 3 feet) and “masks” is also debatable. Several studies have proven inconclusive. It is instructive that in Taiwan where this would be impossible because of a limited area – yet their infection rate is relatively low: if they did practice it, many people would be in the Pacific Ocean.

Lockdowns: This has been shown to be counter-productive. The Barrington Declaration by doctors and epidemiologists contends that lockdowns are detrimental and lead to the killing of more people than the disease itself: suicides, drinking and drug problems, mental problems, domestic abuse, economic hardship, et. al.; they are calling for an end to lockdowns. A high number of Covid-19 cases come from homes where the families have stayed in “lockdown” and infected each other. In Sweden which did not lock down, death rates are lower due to “herd immunity” as they theorized as key to the problem. In the past there was never a lockdown because of a disease or plagues more deadly than Covid-19.

Observation: In Hawaii which has had some of the most restrictive rules regarding wearing of face masks, “social distancing” and others – but their infection rates are spiking, yet in South Dakota that did not shut down, theirs are better.

The reaction of some of those in leadership to this is also instructive. As narrated in the August Update, Dr. Anthony Fauci was seen at a ball game – not wearing his mask and not “social distancing” as he had instructed others to do. Since then, there have been other examples of: New York’s Governor Cuomo, California’s Governor Gavin Newsome, and the mayor of Denver, Colorado violating their own edicts that they had

pronounced for their people. In other words, they did not follow the same standards that they had demanded of others in their rules and orders. In the case of the Denver mayor, he had told the people in his city to “stay home” – and then was found to have flown to his daughter’s home in Mississippi to celebrate Thanksgiving with her family. “Do as I say, not as I do” is reflective of poor leadership. – AOM

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When the religion of a people is destroyed, doubt gets hold of the higher powers of the intellect and half paralyzes all the others. Every man accustoms himself to having only confused and changing notions on the subjects most interesting to his fellow creatures and himself. His opinions are ill-defended and easily abandoned; and, in despair of ever solving by himself the hard problems respecting the destiny of man, he ignobly submits to think no more about them. Such a condition cannot but enervate the soul, relax the springs of the will, and prepare a people for servitude. Not only does it happen in such a case that they allow their freedom to be taken from them; they frequently surrender it themselves.

~ Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, chapter 5 of volume II. As quoted in the book *Praying for America* by Dr. Robert Jeffress, pages 149, 150

## Global Outlook

Isn't it staggering when you think that one sermon on the day of Pentecost produced 3,000 people? And we had some cities...where 3,000 sermons were preached and nobody was saved. And it doesn't even faze us.

~ Leonard Ravenhill, in his commentary on Acts 2:41

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### **World Council of Churches. Keeping resolve to end gender-based violence.**

GENEVA – Nov. 25 marked the start of the “16 Days” campaign that focuses on the elimination of violence against women and on human rights. This year, the World Council of Churches is highlighting the links between the household of God and the fundamental need to make our homes safe and loving spaces. In a unified statement, the WCC’s 17 “Thursdays in Black” ambassadors reflect on why it is so important to protect those who are vulnerable and abused.

[Note: The best way to help resolve this is to reemphasize the importance of Christian families. Studies have shown that women and children are safest in a home headed up by the biological husband/father. Also, when Christianity is spread across our country and world through the authentic evangelism in bringing people to Jesus Christ, this will do more than anything else through changed lives to bring a greater degree of peace. – AOM] – UM News Daily Digest; Nov 24, 2020.

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### **The “Christmas Truce of 1914” during WWI – and Presidents’ Christmas Messages**

[Note: This was included in a past “December Update” but needs to be repeated again during this troubled time. – AOM]

When the First World War began, British women suffragists sent an Open Christmas Letter “To the Women of Germany and Austria” imploring peace as the first Christmas of the war approached. Pope Benedict XV, December 7, 1914, begged for a truce, asking: “that the guns may fall silent at least upon the night the angels sang.” They were rebuffed. Nevertheless, on Christmas Eve, December 24, 1914, an estimated 100,000 British, French and German troops near Ypres in Belgium along the Western Front, ceased fighting. The thunderous booming of artillery fell silent that night.

German troops started decorating their trenches with Christmas trees and candles in their branches. They began singing “Stille Nacht” – “Silent Night.” As this was one of the Christmas carols that soldiers on both sides knew, English, French and German troops began to sing along across the battle lines. “Silent Night” was written a century earlier by the priest Father Joseph Mohr, with the melody composed by Austrian headmaster Franz Xaver Gruber. The song came to be on December 24, 1818, at St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf bei Salzburg, Austria. The organ had broken for their Christmas eve service, so they quickly composed the song to be accompanied by guitar. “Silent Night” has been translated into over 44 languages.

“Silent night, holy night,  
All is calm, all is bright  
Round yon virgin mother and child.  
Holy infant so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace,  
Sleep in heavenly peace.”

Silent night, holy night,  
Shepherds quake at the sight,  
Glories stream from heaven afar,  
Heavenly hosts sing alleluia;  
Christ the Savior, is born,  
Christ the Savior, is born.

Silent night, holy night,  
Son of God, love's pure light  
Radiant beams from thy holy face,  
With the dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth,  
Jesus, Lord, at thy birth.”

The 1914 unofficial Christmas Truce continued as soldiers from both sides started shouting Christmas greetings to each other. C. Ernest Furneaux of the British Rifle Brigade wrote in a letter to his parents: “About five o’clock on Christmas Eve the Germans started lighting up Christmas trees in their trenches. We took no notice of them until they began to sing. Then we began to cheer them and talk to one another as we are only about 80 yards apart. So by the light of their searchlight our officers went across halfway and their officers came to meet them. They shook hands and conversed for a while. It was agreed that we should have a day off and they would fire the first shot to start again. So from five o’clock on Christmas Eve until ten o’clock this morning (December 26th) neither side has fired, only walked about. Some of the Germans came across to us and we shook hands and had some chocolate and cigars from them.”

Venturing across “No Man’s Land,” they recovered bodies and held joint burial services. Lance-Corporal Imlah of the Gordon Highlanders wrote in a letter to his father: “Our padre then gave a short service, one of the items in which was Psalm XXIII. Thereafter, a German soldier, a divinity student I believe, interpreted the service to the German party. I could not understand what he was saying but it was beautiful to listen to him. The service over, we were soon fraternizing with the Germans just as if they were old friends.” The *Hertfordshire Mercury*, January 9, 1915, published a letter, January 9, 1915, from British rifleman C. H. Brazier: “All through the night we sang carols to them and they sang to us... On Christmas day we all got out of the trenches and walked about with the Germans, who when asked if they were fed up with the war said ‘yes, rather.’ They all believed that London had been captured, and that German sentries were outside Buckingham Palace. They are evidently told a lot of rot. We gave them some of our newspapers to convince them.” Soldiers even played soccer together; the Germans won 3-2. Bruce Bairnsfather, who served during the First World War, wrote: “I wouldn’t have missed that unique and weird Christmas Day for anything... I spotted a German officer, some sort of lieutenant I should think, and being a bit of a collector, I intimated to him that I had taken a fancy to some of his buttons... I brought out my wire clippers and, with a few deft snips, removed a couple of his buttons and put them in my pocket. I then gave him two of mine in exchange... The last I saw was one of my machine gunners, who was a bit of an amateur hairdresser in civil life, cutting the unnaturally long hair of a docile Boche [slang word for German soldier], who was patiently kneeling on the ground whilst the automatic clippers crept up the back of his neck.”

In *Christmas Truce* by Malcolm Brown and Shirley Seaton, they recorded: “There was general handshaking; the dead were buried; cigars, cigarettes and newspapers were exchanged and a general celebration ensued. Then

the Frenchmen suggested that we shoot no longer, promised that they themselves would not resume hostilities in that event.”

When General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, commander of the British II Corps, heard what was happening, he was irate and issued strict orders forbidding friendly communication with the opposing German troops. Someone else who was opposed to the truce was a young corporal in the 16<sup>th</sup> Bavarian Reserve Infantry named Adolf Hitler.

World War I went on for four years...

After World War I ended, President Woodrow Wilson gave an appeal, December 8, 1918, for support of the American Red Cross: “One year ago, twenty-two million Americans, by enrolling as members of the Red Cross at Christmas time, sent to the men who were fighting our battles overseas a stimulating message of cheer and goodwill...Now, by God’s grace, the Red Cross Christmas message of 1918 is to be a message of peace as well as a message of good-will.”

Presidents continued to acknowledge Christmas. On December 23, 1921, President Warren G. Harding stated the U.S. delegation drawing up the 4-Powers Treaty, that he: “...is more than gratified over their efforts, because they are working out the greatest contribution to peace and goodwill which has...marked the Christmas time in all the Christian era.”

President Calvin Coolidge wrote: “Christmas is not a time nor a season, but a state of mind. To cherish peace and goodwill, to be plenteous in mercy, is to have the real spirit of Christmas.”

On December 22, 1931, President Herbert Hoover stated: “I have received requests from Federal employees...that they should be given two periods of holidays... Christmas and...New Year’s Day...While I see little objection to the day following Christmas in order that Federal employees may have an opportunity to join their families... I do not feel that we should extend the holidays at New Year’s.”

President Franklin D. Roosevelt stated in his Christmas Message, December 24, 1942: “It is significant that Christmas Day our plants and factories will be stilled. That is not true of the other holidays. On all other holidays work goes on – gladly – for the winning of the war. So Christmas becomes the only holiday in all the year. I like to think that this is so because Christmas is a holy day. May all it stands for live and grow throughout the years.”

On December 24, 1946, President Harry S Truman stated: “We shall find strength and courage at this Christmas time...He whose birth we celebrate tonight was the world’s greatest teacher. He said: ‘Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.’ Through all the centuries since He spoke, history has vindicated His teaching. In this great country of ours has been demonstrated the fundamental unity of Christianity and democracy...” President Truman continued: “We have our unique national heritage because of a common aspiration to be free and because of our purpose to achieve for ourselves and for our children the good things of life which the Christ declared He came to give to all mankind... The progress we have made gives hope that in the coming year we shall reach our goal...the benediction of the Master: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God’... I say to all my countrymen: Merry Christmas!...and may God bless you all!”

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### **Naughty or Nice Retailer List**

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



+ **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, Dillard’s, 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, Toys R Us, True Value, Wal-Mart, and Zappos.com.

+ **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, Dick’s Sporting Goods, Family Dollar, Foot Locker, Gap, Inc., Kohl’s, The Limited, Maurice’s, Nordstrom, Office Depot/Max, Pet Smart, Staples, Stein Mart, Supervalu, UncommonGoods.com, and Victoria’s Secret, Walgreens.

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 very first end of the Law [is], namely, convicting men of sin; awakening those who are still asleep on the brink of hell... The ordinary method of God is to convict sinners by the Law, and that only. The gospel is not the means which God hath ordained, or which our Lord himself used, for this end. ~ John Wesley

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November 23, 2020

Dear members of the Fayetteville Police Department,

When I was in Germany, Becky, the sister of a fellow Army soldier, sent him a short comic strip she had clipped from a newspaper and told him to give it to me with a note “Do you think Al would appreciate this?” After he gave it to me, I looked at it, noting what she had written on it – reflective of my native state of Texas.

+ The first frame of the comic strip shows two Texas state troopers arresting one of the baseball players (who had been handcuffed) from the visiting team while still on the field during a game in the Houston Astrodome. His coach had stormed out onto the field and asked, “I know that Texas is a weird place, but you can’t arrest one of my players for stealing second base!”

+ The second frame shows the coach saying, “That makes about as much sense as arresting me because I gave him the signal to do it!” The two Texas state troopers are shown in the background expressing shock.

+ The third frame shows the coach of the visiting team who has been handcuffed with his hands raised over his head and one of the Texas state troopers saying, “You have the right to remain silent...”

It is true that Texas used to be a “law and order” state. I do remember growing up, if the police told us to do something, we did it – especially if the person were a Texas Ranger. We never showed disrespect in any way.

Indeed, I remember after I was drafted into the Army during the height of the Vietnam War, I was stationed at Ft. Monmouth, New Jersey. One time another couple, my wife and I had gone into New York City to see a play. As we got off the bus at Grand Central Station in New York, and walked toward the theater district, we got to Times Square and saw all traffic was stopped with cars crowded together. It was an anti-war protest with the demonstrators standing in the roads blocking traffic. A bus pulled up close to where we were. The door opened and members of the New York City police department got out dressed in riot gear. The guys lined up and then the person who appeared to be in charge looked up and down the line, and asked, “Are you ready?” When the guys nodded “yes” he then said, “Let’s go!” They went out through the protestors not asking questions but they cleared them from Times Square. I do not like to mention race or skin color, but all of the protestors were white. The protest was ended and life returned to normal in the city. I admired New York’s “finest” and their actions.

Then years later when I was again stationed at Ft. Monmouth, I wanted to go into New York City to watch the St. Patrick’s Day Parade (I learned to appreciate my Irish heritage from a fellow draftee from Chicago; I have

always cherished my Cherokee heritage). At the St. Patrick's Day Parade, I watched the events and enjoyed talking with members of the police force. As I spoke with them (some of the largest guys I have ever seen), I read their name tags – with many such as “O'Malley” “Houlihan” “Donaghue” “O'Reilly” “Flanagan” and others. They were all jovial (no one was drinking) – but if ever one told me to “move along” I would want to do exactly what he said. Having grown up in Texas, I learned of the stereotype of the Irish cop; but it is not just an image, it is a reality. With many it is generational: grandfather, father, and son/daughter becoming policemen.

All of this is to say that I am still very much a “law and order” person and support first responders. In addition, during my military service in the Vietnam War, we fought the guerrillas in a “shadow war” since we didn't always know who were “good guys” and our enemies; in some ways, that is what you all face with your going into a situation not sure where any potential threat is. I very much support what you do. These are reasons that for the last few years, I have offered a Christmas card to each member of the Fayetteville Police Department.

In addition, I don't know that if it would ever come to this, but if there is ever an “emergency situation” where an officer needs help and I am nearby, call on me; I will do all that I can to help.

Finally, enclosed please find “A Shining City on a Hill” – that speaks to how many of those living in other countries admire America – and many strive to come here; we need never be ashamed of our country, but recognize that it offers so much freedom & opportunity. Also included is something you have seen before, about two children in Charlotte who miraculously received a late Christmas present – and provides insight into the power of a child's faith; this actually happened in 1949.

In His Service,  
Allen O. Morris, Major, U. S. Army  
(Retired combat veteran: Vietnam through Desert Storm – and a lot of things in between)

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### **A Shining City on a Hill**

President Ronald Reagan once said that the United States was like a Shining City on a Hill. We fail to appreciate the many blessings that we enjoy by living in this country. In the days of the Soviet Union we remember the lengths to which people would go to try to escape to the West and freedom – often at the cost of their lives. We also learned of people fleeing Cuba on almost a daily basis, even to the extent of trying to get across the ninety miles of water separating that country from ours. In Bill Clinton's presidency, we remember the controversy over the forced return of Elian Gonzalez to his father in Cuba, even after the boy's mother brought him to this country at the cost of her life.

Our country is held up as a “beacon of freedom” to other people all over the world. I once heard a talk given by the late Richard Wurmbrand, the Romanian pastor imprisoned by the Nazis in the 1930s then by the communists because he refused to compromise his message of freedom and Jesus Christ. With his over fourteen years' experience of being in confinement, he said, “A prisoner who is being tortured in the remotest jail cell focuses on one thing to give him hope: that of the shining light of freedom that exists in the United States. At times, that is the only thing that keeps him fighting to survive.”

More recently we have the example of the people in Hong Kong, common citizens, who are standing for freedom. We have seen pictures of them bravely carrying the American flag knowing that they will suffer consequences from the Chinese Communist Party, one of the most brutal entities on earth. They serve as examples to all of us. Let us so conduct ourselves that we live up to the image they have of us as a country – and are paying the price. Our freedom is a precious gift – and we must never forget that.

In doing research for a book I am writing now, I checked into what had happened to another person that I remember from years past – Eldridge Cleaver. If you will remember he was involved in committing felony attacks on behalf of the Black Panther Party, spent time in jail – and then fled the United States to avoid prosecution. He went to Cuba, Algeria, and then France, spending a total of seven years abroad. He then returned to the United States – knowing that he faced prosecution of his crimes. It is interesting that America which was “so terrible” offered far more than he knew. It took a “stay abroad” to educate him as to the importance of the freedoms in our country. He later became a conservative speaker (not speaking politically but

truthfully), became very patriotic, came to love our country, a nation he once hated – and later spoke out on behalf of the United States of America.

Recently we have just celebrated the Thanksgiving holidays: One summary is – Squanto was kidnapped by Spaniards, taken to Spain, and sold as a slave. He was bought by some monks who later freed him. He made his way to England where he learned English during the time of Shakespeare. He talked a ship’s captain into letting him go with the ship to America as a translator in exchange for free transport back to the area of his birth. He made his way to Patuxent, Massachusetts – only to find out that the people in his village had all died of a plague. By “chance” he made his way to where the Puritans had just survived their first winter, having lost half of their people. Squanto went on to broker a deal with the surrounding tribes for the Pilgrims that resulted in peace for the next fifty years. He also taught the Pilgrims how to fish, plant corn, and fertilize crops so they would grow. He was key to their learning how to survive and thrive in the “New World” to which they had come. John Winthrop observed that “in their need, they had prayed to God imploring His help” and He provided Squanto. “He is an answer to our prayers.” Without the Pilgrims, there would have been no Massachusetts Bay Colony, which turned out to be the cradle of liberty. Without Massachusetts there would have been no independence.

Our country was founded on the knowledge that God in His providential ways provided the help needed at every turn on the road to forming our nation. On October 3, 1789, by way of proclamation, George Washington wrote: “It is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favour... I do recommend and assign [this day of public Thanksgiving], to be devoted by the people of these States to the service of that great and glorious Being ...; that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection.”

With the problems going on in our country, and if our country is “so bad” – why do people still strive to come here? Please focus on what we do have here – and continue to make it better! One of the many advantages is that we have our freedoms, to include the freedom to work to correct problems

Truly we live in interesting times, but remember that our sure foundation is on the Rock that is Jesus Christ, our Lord. Stand for Him & our country!

+ + + +

## Christmas

### **The Faith of a Child**

Herman and I finally locked our store and dragged ourselves home to South Caldwell Street in Charlotte, North Carolina. It was 11:00 P.M., Christmas Eve of 1949. We were dogged tired. Ours was one of those big old general appliance stores that sold everything from refrigerators and toasters and record players to bicycles and dollhouses and games. We’d sold almost all of our toys; and all of the layaways, except one package, had been picked up. Usually Herman and I kept the store open until everything had been picked up. We knew we wouldn’t have woken up very happy on Christmas morning knowing that some little child’s gift was back on the layaway shelf. But the person who had put a dollar down on that package never appeared.

Early Christmas morning our twelve-year-old son, Tom, and Herman and I were out under the tree opening up gifts. But I’ll tell you, there was something very humdrum about this Christmas. Tom was growing up; he hadn’t wanted any toys – just clothes and games. I missed his childish exuberance of past years. As soon as breakfast was over Tom left to visit his friend next door....Herman disappeared into the bedroom, mumbling, “I’m going back to sleep. There’s nothing left to stay up for anyway.”

So there I was alone, doing the dishes and feeling very let down. It was nearly 9:00 A.M., and sleet mixed with snow cut the air outside. The wind rattled our windows, and I felt grateful for the warmth of the apartment. *Sure glad I don’t have to go out on a day like today,* I thought to myself, picking up the wrappings and ribbons strewn around the living room....And then it began. Something I’d never experienced before. A strange, persistent urge. “Go to the store,” it seemed to say.

I looked at the icy sidewalk outside. *That's crazy*, I said to myself. I tried dismissing the thought, but it wouldn't leave me alone. *Go to the store*. Well, I *wasn't* going to go. I'd never gone to the store on Christmas Day in all of the ten years we'd owned it. No one opened shop on that day. There wasn't any reason to go, I didn't want to, and I wasn't going to.

For an hour I fought that strange felling. Finally, I couldn't stand it any longer, and I got dressed. "Herman," I said, feeling silly, "I think I'll walk down to the store." Herman woke up with a start. "Whatever for? What are you going to do there?"

"Oh, I don't know," I replied lamely. "There's not much to do here. I just think I'll wander down."

He argued against it a little, but I told him that I'd be back soon. "Well, go on," he grumped, "but I don't see any reason for it." I put on my gray wool coat and a gray tam on my head, then my galoshes and my red scarf and gloves. Once outside, none of these garments seemed to help. The wind cut right through me and the sleet stung my cheeks. I groped my way along the mile down to 117 East Park Avenue, slipping and sliding all the way. I shivered, and tucked my hands into my coat to keep them from freezing. I felt ridiculous. I had no business being out in that bitter chill.

There was the store just ahead. The sign announced Radio-Electronic Sales and Service, and the big glass windows jutted out onto the sidewalk. *But, what in the world?* I wondered. In front of the store stood two little boys, huddled together, one about nine, and the other six. "Here she comes!" yelled the older one. He had his arm around the younger. "See, I told you she would come," he said jubilantly. They were little black children, and they were half-frozen. The younger one's face was wet with tears, but when he saw me, his eyes opened wide and his sobbing stopped.

"What are you two children doing out here in this freezing rain?" I scolded, hurrying them into the store and turning up the heat. "You should be at home on a day like this!" They were poorly dressed. They had no hats or gloves, and their shoes barely held together. I rubbed their small, icy hands, and got them up close to the heater.

"We've been waiting for you," replied the older. They had been standing outside since 9:00 A.M., the time I normally open the store. "Why were you waiting for me?" I asked, astonished.

"My little brother, Jimmy, didn't get any Christmas." He touched Jimmy's shoulder. "We want to buy some skates. That's what he wants. We have three dollars. See, Miss Lady," he said, pulling the money from his pocket.

I looked at the dollars in his hand. I looked at their expectant faces. And then I looked around the store. "I'm sorry," I said, "but we've sold almost everything. We have no ska---" Then my eye caught sight of the layaway shelf with its one lone package. I tried to remember...could it be...? "Wait a minute," I told the boys. I walked over, picked up the package, unwrapped it and, miracle of miracles, there was a pair of skates!

Jimmy reached for them. *Lord*, I said silently, *let them be his size*. And miracle added upon miracle, they *were* his size.

When the older boy finished tying the laces on Jimmy's right foot and saw that the skate fit – perfectly – he stood up and presented the dollars to me. "No, I'm not going to take your money," I told him. I *couldn't* take his money. "I want you to have these skates, and I want you to use your money to get some gloves for your hands." The boys just blinked. Then their eyes were like saucers, and their grins stretched wide when they understood I was giving them the skates and I didn't want their \$3.00.

What I saw in Jimmy's eyes was like a blessing. It was pure joy, and it was beautiful. My low spirits rose.

After the children had warmed up, I turned down the heater, and we walked out together. As I locked the door, I turned to the older brother and said, "How lucky that I happened to come along when I did. If you'd stood there much longer, you'd have frozen. But how did you boys know I would come?"

I wasn't prepared for his reply. His gaze was steady, and he answered me softly. "I knew you would come," he said. "I asked Jesus to send you." The tingles in my spine weren't from the cold, I knew. *God had planned this*.

As we waved good-bye, I returned home to a brighter Christmas than I had left. Tom brought his friend over to our house. Herman got out of bed; his father, "Papa" English and sister, Ella, came by. We had a wonderful dinner and a wonderful time.

But the one thing that made that Christmas really wonderful was the one thing that makes every Christmas wonderful – Jesus was there. – Elizabeth English, *The New Guideposts Christmas Treasury*, pp. 57-59; Guideposts, Carmel, NY

### Christmas Traditions

I read of a custom 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. The celebration dates back to the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4th century A.D. Ms. Lillian Elders of St. Louis, Missouri wrote of their custom of burning the Christmas tree in a celebratory way. It 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.

**Christmas carols.** The birthplace of the true Christmas carol was Italy. In the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, Saint Francis of Assisi was the first to introduce the joyous carol spirit, which soon spread all over Europe. Saint Francis wrote a beautiful Christmas Hymn in Latin, Psalmus in Nativitate, but there is no evidence that he composed carols in Italian. It is said that he was so overcome by joy that he spontaneously broke out in singing. From there the custom of singing carols spread over Europe – and around the world.

The singing of Hymns and Carols can be a way for families and neighbors to reflect on the wonder and joy of Advent and Christmas. “Good King Wenceslas” and “Twelve Days of Christmas” are examples of carols for Christmas that are not sung in Church services but carry strong Christmas messages and have interesting historic origins. King Wenceslas was a king who ruled Bohemia in the 10<sup>th</sup> Century. It is a hymn about Christian charity (a virtue) and his efforts to give food to poor families.

**The Twelve Days of Christmas** originated as a Hebrew hymn which began: “In those twelve days”. In the Middle Ages the song was rewritten in Latin with Christian images, and by 1645 an English version had appeared. By the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, it had, in turn, become the carol we know today. Another author described it as “a catechetical mnemonic device that Catholics used to teach their children the truths of the faith during the years that the Catholic faith was suppressed in England” and goes like this:

Partridge	The One True God
Two Turtle Doves	Old and New Testaments
Three French Hens	Three persons of the Trinity (or the Three Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob)
Four Colley Birds	(“colley” means black) The four Evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John
Five Gold Rings	The first five books of the Bible, believed to be written by Moses, called the
Pentateuch	
Six Geese	Six jars of water turned to wine by Jesus at the wedding at Cana.
Seven Swans	Seven Sacraments
Eight maids a milking	Eight Beatitudes
Nine Ladies dancing	Nine Choirs (or ranks) of Angels
Ten Lords a leaping	Ten Commandments
Eleven Pipers	Eleven faithful disciples (not including Judas) or the eleven stars seen in the Old
	Testament account of Joseph’s dream
Twelve drummers	Twelve Apostles or the twelve tribes of Israel.
	* * * * *

**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.

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– From the Bible, Luke, chapter 2; New International Version (NIV). NIV®; ©: 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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**With all good wishes to you for this coming year**, Allen O. Morris, P.O. Box 2864, Fayetteville, NC 28302.