

Christian Methodist Newsletter

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November-December 2006

The Reason for the Season

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

(The Bible, Luke 2:1-20, KJV)

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The War on Christmas

The War on Christmas is a struggle that has been going on in our country for several years. The "American Civil Liberties Union" and the organization "People for the Separation of Church and State" are two groups that have led the effort to try to remove the reality that Jesus Christ is the foundation for the holiday season. Attempts have been made to replace greetings of "Merry Christmas" with "Happy Holidays" or similar secular greetings. This negates the reality of the meaning for this season. Joe Newman, one of the men in my own church, expressed this concern and urged our members to take a stand for Christmas by answering "Happy Holidays" with greetings of "Merry Christmas." I agree.

The city officials of Chicago have made attempts to turn what has been a traditional celebration into a "Non Christmas" event. This is meeting with opposition – and justifiably so. Some nationwide retailers that have attempted this in the past have relented under the threat of boycott: Macy's, Sears, Wal Mart, Target, et. al. One retailer that is adamant in it position is Best Buy. We have this communication from Don Wildmon, the United Methodist pastor who heads up the American Family Association:

November 10, 2006

Best Buy Bans Use of Merry Christmas In Advertising

Dear Concerned,

Best Buy has announced they will be using "Happy Holidays" this coming Christmas shopping season, and they will not be using "Merry Christmas." While many other retailers have decided to return to the traditional "Merry Christmas", Best Buy will not be among them. Best Buy considers the use of "Merry Christmas" to be disrespectful. But while Best Buy, the largest consumer electronics company in the nation, will not be mentioning Christmas, they sure do want the shopping dollars from those who remember the Reason for the season.

Take Action [Take a stand for Merry Christmas, not Happy Holidays] Send an e-mail to Best Buy telling them of your disappointment at their decision to ban Christmas in their advertising. (You may receive an auto-reply. If so, that is ok. Don't worry about it, your e-mail has been received.) Forward this to your friends and family so they can learn of Best Buy's decision. Send your e-mail to Best Buy to: <http://www.afa.net/petitions/issuedetail.asp?id=222>.

Mailing Address: The American Family Association P O Drawer 2440 Tupelo, MS 38803.

Telephone number: 1-662-844-5036

Sincerely,

Donald E. Wildmon, Founder and Chairman, The American Family Association

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Recounting our manifold blessings

What is the nature of gratitude, of true thankfulness? Acknowledgment of receiving a gift that is undeserved, then joy appropriately suffusing that knowledge, overflowing into recognition of indebtedness to the giver. In truth, we are not really giving thanks—we give nothing—we are only responding with properly grateful hearts that are due the Gift Giver.

That is the spirit in which Thanksgiving was first celebrated on our shores—and then persisted as a joining thread of our nation’s character. The Pilgrims set us on the path to become a country humbly acknowledging the thanks we owe to Almighty God as Creator of life and Author of liberty. At Thanksgiving nowadays, we’re often invited to “count our blessings.” Similarly, The Patriot’s holiday tradition is to recount the origins of our blessings of liberty. Indeed, Thanksgiving is an indispensable part of the foundation of our nation.

The Pilgrims left Plymouth, England, on 6 September 1620, sailing for a new world that promised opportunities of religious and civil liberty. For almost three months, 102 seafarers braved harsh elements, arriving off the current-day Massachusetts coast, in November 1620. On 11 December, prior to disembarking at Plymouth Rock, the voyagers signed the Mayflower Compact, America’s original document of civil government predicated on principles of self-rule. Governor William Bradford described the Mayflower Compact as “a combination... that when they came a shore they would use their owne libertie; for none had power to command them...”

Starvation and sickness during the ensuing New England winter killed almost half their population, but through prayer and hard work, with the assistance of their Indian friends, the Pilgrims reaped a rich harvest in the summer of 1621.

The bounty, however, was short-lived. Under pressure from investors funding their colony, the Pilgrims had acceded to a violation of Christian prescriptions for honoring the laborer as “worthy of his hire,” and for certifying property ownership rights for individuals and families—acquiescing to a ruinous financial arrangement holding all fruit of their labors in common, so as to send back a quickly accounted half to their overseas backers.

Making matters worse, by the spring of 1623, Plymouth was in danger of foundering under famine, blight and drought. Governor Bradford wrote that the drought “continued from the third week in May, till about the middle of July, without any rain and with great heat for the most part, insomuch as the corn began to wither away... [The Pilgrims] set apart a solemn day of humiliation, to seek the Lord by humble and fervent prayer, in this great distress. And He was pleased to give them a gracious and speedy answer, both to their own and the Indians’ admiration that lived amongst them... For which mercy, in time convenient, they also set apart a day of thanksgiving.”

Colonist Edward Winslow noted the Pilgrims worshiped thus: “[W]e returned glory, honor, and praise, with all thankfulness, to our good God, which dealt so graciously with us...” So, the original American Thanksgiving Day centered not on harvest feasting (as in 1621) but on gathering together for public thanksgiving for God’s favor and provision.

Bradford recorded in his history of the colony that moment in which Plymouth’s leaders gave up their failed communal economy in favor of the free market: “At length, after much debate of things, the Governor (with the advice of the chiefest amongst them) gave way that they should set corn every man for his own particular, and in that regard trust to themselves; in all other things to go in the general way as before. And so assigned to every family a parcel of land, according to the proportion of their number.”

By the mid-17th century, the custom of autumnal Thanksgivings was established throughout New England. Observance of Thanksgiving Festivals spread to other colonies during the American Revolution, and the Continental Congresses, cognizant of the need for a warring country’s continuing grateful entreaties to God, proclaimed yearly Thanksgiving Days during the Revolutionary War, from 1777 to 1783. In 1789, among the first official acts of Congress was approving a motion for proclamation of a national day of thanksgiving—again acknowledging the importance of a day for citizens to gather together and give thanks to God for our nation’s blessings.

On 3 October 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 who is the beneficent author of all the good that was, that is, or that will be; that we may then all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country.”

It was 155 years later, at the onset of another war to preserve our liberty, that Congress permanently set November's fourth Thursday as our official national Day of Thanksgiving.

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A Reason for Thanksgiving

Sunday night, October 15th, as Pritchard Adams III ("Prit"), his wife Dana, and a Haitian Brother Cola (pronounced as in "Pepsi Cola") groundskeeper were leaving the church that Prit and Dana had founded the Centre de Formation Chretienne in the northern city of Cap Haitien in Haiti and were walking toward the Rehoboth Ministry's jeep, four Haitian bandits with pistols burst into the yard and demanded the jeep. (Kidnapping Americans or Europeans for ransom is common in Haiti, but not usual around Cap Haitien. In July alone over 40 people were kidnapped.)

They put Prit, Dana, and Cola into the back seat and took off. They were driving so erratically that Prit suggested they pray. The three did so, praying out loud and singing hymns.

After quite a few miles they came to a river. The four Haitian bandits then started arguing about who they would keep as a captive since they could not keep all three. Prit said, "Take me." They did so.

Dana and Brother Cola were able to make their way to a town and call for help. They were then taken to other missionaries where they were able to start calling others: the embassy, the Rehoboth Ministry personnel, and Prit's parents in North Carolina. The jeep was later recovered.

The bandits took Prit across the river, up the jungle-covered mountain, to a mud hut near the top. The bandits told Prit, "We have killed 12 men and 2 policemen, and we can kill you." Not intimidated, Prit said (pointing to them), "If you kill me, I know where I will go, but do you know where you will go?"

Every chance he had, he ministered and witnessed to them. He prayed constantly.

Throughout his capture, they never tied him up, gagged him, blindfolded him, nor tortured him.

Pritchard and Lucy Adams (their parents) said they were overwhelmed by the prayers they received from: a United Methodist Church in Little Washington, NC, Baptist churches, someone in South Georgia, and all over the USA – as far west as California. They said that they received prayers even from as far away as England, Canada, and China. An article appeared in the Fayetteville Observer with a picture of Prit and Dana on the front page. Churches all over Fayetteville prayed for him.

At first, the bandits wanted \$90,000 US as ransom, but there was no way they could pay that. After negotiations they settled on \$5,000 US and \$10,000 Haitian (around \$1200). After working out details of paying the ransom, they released Prit.

As they did, one of the bandits told Prit as he gave Prit his wristwatch, "Pahstor [the way they pronounce 'Pastor'], I cannot go into the city because they will kill me for what I have done. I cannot go into the countryside, or the people will kill me. Pahstor, take my watch. When you look at it, pray for me." One of the other bandits took some money out of his pocket and, giving it to Prit, said, "Here, Pahstor, put some gas in your jeep."

As soon as he had a chance, he called his parents and left a message. His father said that Prit's first words were, "Dad, I've been in the mountains for a few days."

Asked if he plans to stay, his response is, "Of course. The Lord has work for me to do yet."

I've known Prit and his family for years, and have supported their ministry since it does such good work. Early on in his ministry when he was thinking about building the church that would later become "Centre de Formation Chretienne", he had the planned building staked out on the ground when another Pentecostal missionary came by. The other missionary said, "The Lord told me that you need to build the church larger." He then proceeded to tell Prit how large he believed the church needed to be and moved the stakes to reflect the larger building. Prit did not believe him, but went ahead and built the church anyway believing that it would be too large for their needs and they would never be able to fill it up with people. At this time (December 2006), the church is packed and needs to be expanded.

Physically, Prit stands about 5 feet 8 inches tall, weighs about 160 pounds but is a giant for the Lord – just as John Wesley was. As we know, physical size is not a determinant of spiritual vitality.

Please continue to keep him in your prayers and pray for the approximately 8 million Haitians – that they will come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

- Allen O. Morris

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Of Interest

The nineteenth century reinterpretation of the 1621 festival has since become a model for the U.S. version of Thanksgiving, but it was an established tradition before the popularization of the Pilgrim [experience].

The tradition of thanking God for the year's harvest at autumn was already a well-developed practice in Europe during medieval times. In some countries a part of this practice included lighting up bonfires, and dancing and eating so as to be fit for the winter to come.

The first known thanksgiving feast or festival in North America was celebrated by Francisco Vásquez de Coronado

and the people he called “Tejas” (members of the Hasinai group of Caddo-speaking Native Americans) on May 23rd, 1541 in Palo Duro Canyon, Texas, to celebrate his expedition's discovery of food supplies. In the sense of a feast in gratitude to God celebrated by Europeans in North America, this has a claim to be the true first North American Thanksgiving. The next was apparently celebrated a quarter-century later on September 8, 1565 in St. Augustine, Florida. When Pedro Menéndez de Avilés landed, he and his men shared a feast with the aboriginal peoples. Later, the aboriginal people called themselves “apple-tangerines” (which may or may not indicate those fruits were on the menu at that “Thanksgiving”). Another candidate for the first true Thanksgiving in territory now part of the United States is the feast that the party of Don Juan de Oñate celebrated April 30, 1598 near the site of San Elizario, Texas with the Manso Indians (Adams and Kendrick).

Thanksgiving is related to Harvest festivals that had long been a traditional holiday in much of Europe. The first known North American celebration of these traditional festivals by Europeans was held in Newfoundland by Martin Frobisher and the Frobisher Expedition to find the Northwest Passage in 1578, and Canadians trace their Thanksgiving to that festival.*

- From Wikipedia on the internet

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Worth Remembering

“Christians, keep the faith...but not from others!”

“To belittle is to - be little.”

“God answers kneemail”

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Jesus Wood – Ministry

All of our products are unique. Each piece of wood and each cut are hand crafted. Each gift is unlike any other. These pictures are representations of what we have done. Your product will be unlike any other product.

We have both been led by the Spirit, each Jesus Wood piece is crafted with His majesty and the beauty of God's creation. Each individual piece is unique and one-of-a-kind. We use many local and exotic woods which vary to their growing environment; graining and color are a direct reflection of soil, water and temperature.

All of our crosses are hand-cut, hand-sanded, hand-rubbed, hand-buffed and prayed over. Many people pick-up a cross and while holding it they immediately know who the cross is for, others are simply inspired to have an easy way to spread the gospel and can't wait to see how the Spirit will lead them.

Wonderful stories of how our necklaces and the Spirit have affected people when placed around them or given to them. Our crosses are not responsible for these experiences, it is the Holy Spirit moving them. Both the giver and the receiver are moved in the Spirit. The testimonies give the glory to our Father.

Jesus Wood, Inc.

Brent, Melissa and Kiley Cohick

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Spiritually Speaking

Can Prayer Really Change Lives?

The prayer I am passing on to you is what I use as a daily reminder of my surrendering to God so that my flesh does not take over and steal what I've promised to God.

Lord,

You are the maker of all things. You have made time and space. You made me to love and worship you. I come to you in prayer. This day you have made, and this vessel are yours. Show me how to use your time to best glorify you Lord. I ask today where do you need me to go? What do you need me to do? Who do you need me to talk to? Give me the words to say and all the gifts you need me to use to get done what you have planned for me to do today. I turn myself over to you and your ways. I pray at the end of this day to be a better representation of your son Jesus than when I woke up this morning. Mold me minute by minute and hour by hour into what you need me to be and to do your will in the Kingdom of God. Amen.

After praying this I spend time listening in quiet meditation on what I've just done. I've given this day to God, It's His to do with as he pleases.

Guide me Lord moment by moment.

- Brent Cohick

Jesus Wood, Inc., 814 Westminster Lane, Kokomo, IN 46901

(765) 457-2969

website: www.jesus-wood.com

Jesus Wood, Inc. is a nonprofit organization

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Thought for the Month

Truth is anything that corresponds to reality. As such, truth is not determined by the popularity of a book like The Da Vinci Code. Nor is it a matter of preference or opinion. Truth is true even if everyone denies it, and a lie is a lie even if everyone affirms it. When deceptive reasoning, sensationalism, and superstition undermine the truth, our view of reality is seriously skewed.

- "The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction?" by Hank Hanegraaff; (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004).

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Kids' Stuff

True Story. A mother was sick in bed with the flu. Her little daughter wanted to be her nurse. She fluffed the pillows and brought Mommy a magazine to read. And, she even showed up with a surprise cup of tea.

"This is so sweet," the mother said as she drank the tea. "I didn't know you even knew how to make tea."

"Oh, yes," the little girl beamed "I learned by watching you. I put the tea leaves in the pan and then I put in the water and boiled it, and then I strained it into a cup. But I couldn't find a strainer, so I used a flyswatter instead."

"You what?" sputtered the mother as she spat out the tea. Seeing her mother's alarm and wanting her approval, the little girl said, "Oh don't worry, Mom. I didn't use the new flyswatter. I used the old one."

- *Everlasting Laughter*, by
Dr. Terry Swan, p. 217.

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