



Dear Friends,

Greetings in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We are now celebrating the birth of the Christ child – God’s precious gift to us. Emmanuel – God with us – it is almost too much to understand – how the creator of all, the God of the universe, should come to us in the form of a new born baby, who would live and teach, minister and serve, die for us and rise again, that we might have a restored relationship with the Father and the gift of eternal life. The greatest gift that we will ever receive is the gift of our Lord and Saviour. Have we thanked God again for that special gift – do our words and our actions demonstrate how grateful we are for that precious gift? Are we sharing our gift with others – do those we work with, play with or meet in our daily routines even know that we have received that special gift – and that God wants them to have it too? We have something so special to share. What a wonderful opportunity to lead others to the stable and to present the baby born for all on that first Christmas.

Angels from the realms of glory, wing your flight o’er all the earth;

Ye who sang creation’s story, now proclaim Messiah’s birth:

Come and worship, come and worship. Worship Christ, the newborn King.

THE SHEPHERDS CAME

Have you ever thought about what it meant to the shepherds to visit the Christ child on that first Christmas day?

Read again the familiar Christmas story in Luke 2: 1 – 20. specifically on the shepherds.

What were they doing? What time was it? How might they have been feeling? What happened? What did the angel say? What must they have thought? What did they do? How did they do it? What did they find? Imagine how they must have felt when they saw the baby. What might their behavior have been? What did they do? After they left the stable? What was the result?

Now think of yourself this Christmas – What were you doing? How were you feeling? Did you hear the song of the angels? Did God speak to you? What did He say? What did you do? Did you go to the stable?



Did you see the baby? Really see Him? How did you behave? What were your feelings? What did you do when you left the stable? Did anyone know you had been there? What was the result? We do not have to wait till Christmas to visit the stable – God wants to present His gift to us each day – let us start each day with a visit to the stable – let us bow before the precious gift that our God has given – let us abide in the presence of the baby given for us, let us dwell in the love of that first Christmas, let us share our experience with those who might never have known the joy of really seeing and understanding the great gift of God. May God draw us daily to His stable and there fill us with His presence so that we might overflow with love and joy and so that others might receive of His abundant grace.

ARE YOU HURTING? ARE YOU ALONE? ARE YOU BURDENED WITH CARE?

Have you suffered hurts this year? Are you feeling wounded? Have you lost family members or close friends – people that used to be there for you to give comfort and a listening ear? Are you weighed down with care for a certain situation or person? Remember that Christ early in His ministry went to the synagogue in Nazareth and began to read - “The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.” That passage from Isaiah goes on to include – “to comfort all that mourn, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;”

Do we really believe these words? They are the words of the child born for us at Christmas, the one who gave His life for us, the one who calls us to be His own and wants to give us His healing, His deliverance, His comfort. He wants to pick us up and hold us tightly when we are too wounded or tired to walk, he wants to comfort and restore us and bring us to a renewed sense of joy and peace in the place that He has for us. If you are feeling burdened at any time, bring it to Him, give it to Him and leave it with Him. He has died to take our burdens, our brokenness, our loneliness, and exchange them for His wonderful caring. His compassionate, gentle, tender arms are there – we have only to call out to Him, and if we are unable to do even that, remember that the Spirit will pray for us and set us gently in the loving arms of God. He is able



to do more than we could imagine, to give us of His love to comfort, hold and restore, and to keep us in His care each day of our lives and then to bring us home to Him to the place that He has prepared especially for us. What a wonderful God – the God of ALL comfort! If you are hurting this Christmas season, if you are alone, if this year things are very different than in the past, remember that in God’s time all the joys and wonders, all the beauty and excitement of past years are here in this moment. Happiness once experienced, joy once felt, peace once obtained, are yours forever. Bring them forward and hold them dear as you celebrate the birth of the Christ child once again. May the blessings of the babe of Bethlehem fill your hearts to overflowing with love so deep and enduring, that you will experience anew the closeness of a relationship with your God that passes all understanding, and may this relationship sustain you in the year ahead in all that you do.

MY LORD’S LOVE

I see a wonderful kind of love! Thy Highness lieth in the straw;
The hands that made the world make tiny gestures in a Mother’s arms:
the eternal Wisdom, of His own will, is powerless to speak, to think.
*Whoso is wise will ponder these things
And understand the loving kindness of the Lord.*

I see a love no less dumbfounding, The King of Kings cursed and cast out:
Thy Highness’ head is bowed, thy feet and hands fastened with nails, thy blood drops:
the Author of life is done to death in the place of skulls,
the Holiest laid with the lowest and worst.
*Whoso is wise will ponder these things
and know the salvation of God.*

I see a glory of love more dazzling yet,
Thy Highness on the throne of light reigning, almighty, eternal;
yet reaching out sleepless hands to the weak and sinful children of faith,
and feeding them on thine own Body and Blood.
This is the Bread which comes down from heaven, which only if a man eat shall He not die;
and this is the Life given more and more abundantly yesterday, to-day, and forever.
*Whoso is wise will ponder these things
And adore the Lord of Lords.*

The above poem was written by Eric Milner-White



PRAYER REQUESTS

Please pray for

- a new year filled with the love and joy that comes from spending time with our Lord, abiding in Him and allowing the Spirit to fill us and guide us daily in our walk.
- new opportunities to share our experiences with those who may be hurting, those who are in need, those who have never known the love of Jesus. -boldness to demonstrate the love of God in all that we do.
- the many students in nursing programs throughout our country – may they experience joy in learning and ministering to others, may they find Christian fellowship and support and may they grow daily in the love of the Lord.
- graduates providing care in hospital, home, community – that they may have strength and courage, patience and wisdom as they deal with daily issues – and that most of all they may know the love of God and work in His strength.
- remember that our God is always waiting to meet with us – He wants you to come to Him to bring your praise, your thanks, your requests, He wants to answer your prayer – He will give us of His riches in glory – there is nothing we cannot lay before Him in prayer.
- healing for those who are suffering in mind body or spirit.

Prayer is the soul's sincere desire, Uttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire, that trembles in the breast.
Prayer is the burden of a sigh, the falling of a tear;
The upward glancing of an eye, when none but God is near.
O thou by whom we come to God, the Life, the truth, the Way,
The path of prayer thyself hast trod, Lord teach us how to pray.

Betty Hitchcock was the former provincial Chair of the Atlantic Provinces. She was the author and editor of Atlantic Link-a newsletter about God working among nurses in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. It also included a Bible study and prayer guide for NCFC.