

CoLaborer

November - December 2003

A Free Will Baptist Magazine for Women

The World at Home

PreThanksgiving Week of Prayer

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

A practical study of the Model Prayer

Who Are You?

2003 WNAC Convention review

A Christmas Worldview

Missionary Christmas customs

Lifting Our Eyes to Pray

CoLaborer

November-December 2003
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*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the King James Version.

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Labor of my heart

Sarah Fletcher

Got the message?

"Mom, why do you have to keep talking about it?" my daughter questions. "I got the message. You don't have to tell me twenty times."

A typical parent-teen brush with conflict. Something requested. Something not accomplished. Mom comes home. Action (in this case, non-action) now meets with consequence.

Why *have* I spent the past moments speaking to this up-until-now silent, expressionless face? My mind probes my heart. I know the reason. Love. I so desperately want her to learn this lesson. It's important. She'll need this principle for life. Unfortunately, my zeal has overcome my wisdom.

Yet, this is not the first time we've had this conversation. Rewind. Same issue. Same response. "I got the message." "I *got* the message." Then why the lesson of this day?

Thankfully, God is a perfect parent. The source of all wisdom, He knows just how to deal with each of His daughters. And my daughter is one of His. But so am I. His motivation for teaching is the same. Love. How His heart must yearn when so often I get the message, but do not fully learn the lesson.

In Psalm 119, the author continually cries, "Teach me." "Teach me thy statutes"(12, 26, 33, 64, 68, 124, 135), "thy judgments and knowledge" (66,108).

"Lord, teach me the lessons you want me to learn," I began praying when my family faced some hard trials. God revealed time and again His love, and I experienced a new level of closeness and commitment to the God of all grace. Like the Psalmist, I too declared, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes" (119:71). Yet, as the trials subsided and life became more "normal," my request became, "Lord, help me not forget the lessons I have learned."

Our November feature, "Lord, Teach Me to Pray," outlines the Model Prayer. Most of us have read or even memorized these Scriptures, but have we learned its lessons? Are there principles or messages that we need to get again? People around the globe recognize and celebrate snippets of the Christmas Story. Sadly, millions know nothing of God's eternal plan of salvation, realized with the incarnation.

We never stop learning. Thankfully, God never stops teaching. Right now, He's teaching me to see all people as souls. He's teaching me to live a more generous life. And, as the above scenario reveals, He's also teaching me to be a better parent, albeit one conflict at a time.

Have you got the message?

Have you learned the lesson?

What is God teaching you?

Lifting Our Eyes to Pray

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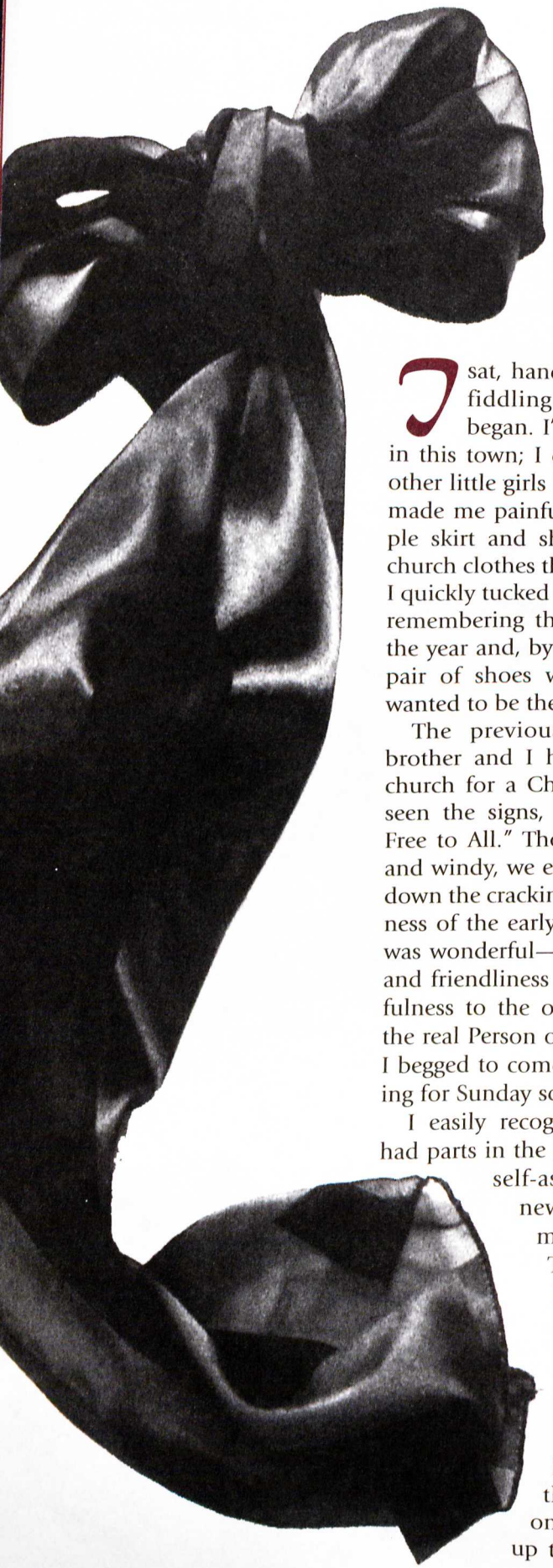
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The Sunday School Present

by Cheryl Akers

I sat, hands in my lap, nervously fiddling as Sunday school began. I'd never been to church in this town; I didn't know any of the other little girls in the class. One glance made me painfully aware that my simple skirt and shirt were not the frilly church clothes that others were wearing. I quickly tucked my feet under my chair, remembering that this was the end of the year and, by now, my one and only pair of shoes were very worn. Still I wanted to be there.

The previous night, my mother, brother and I had come to this little church for a Christmas program. We'd seen the signs, "Christmas Program—Free to All." Though the air was chilly and windy, we enjoyed the simple walk down the cracking sidewalks in the dimness of the early evening. The program was wonderful—full of joy, with smiles and friendliness and an air of thoughtfulness to the occasion. We evidenced the real Person of Christmas that night. I begged to come again the next morning for Sunday school.

I easily recognized the girls who'd had parts in the play and I envied their self-assurance. Being "the new girl" so often had made me terribly shy. The teacher handed out song sheets, but there weren't enough to go around. I didn't mind. The singing was marvelous. Christmas carols! I knew every word of the more common ones and quickly picked up the extra verses of the less familiar ones. How great to be celebrating Christmas in church!

Shy as I was, I actually participated in the preliminary discussion of Christmas traditions. And I paid close attention to the special Bible lesson. Christmas was only one day away, yet gifts were not really on my mind. I only wanted to be accepted—an odd request for one so young. The other girls chattered away about the many presents they thought they'd receive; my thoughts were more on the wonder of Christmas, the beauty of the season, and how the baby Jesus fit into the picture.

At the end of the lesson, the pretty teacher told us all to be very quiet so she could give out presents. I was glad I'd sat in the back since those presents were no doubt intended for the Saturday drama and choir participants. That was okay. I was excited just to observe something so good and generous. I sat on my hands and leaned forward a bit, as did all the girls, wondering what the teacher might have chosen as gifts. One by one, she called the names. Each girl went forward to receive her present, then turned to politely thank the teacher. Each returned to her seat carrying a small, white, tissue-wrapped box with a gold bow affixed on top.

Then, wonder of wonders, the smiling teacher called my name. I froze in my chair. She waited a moment, then looked straight at me. "That is your name, right?" The teacher smiled, "Well, the last present goes to you." Nervously stumbling across the room, I mumbled a barely audible, "Thank you, Ma'am," and darted back to the safety of my seat. It seemed that gold indeed lay perched in my lap. Such a beautiful present! I was not left out after all! Something had

prompted this teacher to bring an extra gift just in case an extra child attended her class that day. I blinked as if in a daze, but no, it was true. I gingerly cradled the puffy white box. The friendly teacher, seeing smiles all around, sighed with joy, then instructed her students to go ahead and open their presents.

Carefully removing the shimmering ribbon and undoing the tape, I lifted the square, white top and unfolded the pale, inner tissue. A delicate aqua blue met my eyes. I glanced around to make sure this wasn't a mistake. But all the girls were unfolding similar, soft fabric squares. "A silk scarf," I sighed with pleasured disbelief, slowly caressing the fine texture between my fingertips, then suddenly closing the box and sliding my fingers back and forth across my rough skirt, not wanting the scarf stained if my hands happened to be dirty.

Class dismissed, the students filed noisily out of the room and down the hall to the church service. I followed the group, but lingered at the door for a moment, looking back with a shy smile. The teacher caught my silent gesture of thanks and waved a short farewell. We never met again. My family moved soon afterward. But I kept and wore the special present for many years. Finally, I tucked the scarf away for safekeeping, but the memories have remained. Of a friendly person who took the time and forethought to include a stranger. Of a woman who went the extra mile to make her class a safe haven for a child unfamiliar with the institutions of church and Sunday school. Of someone who gave with no possible hope of ever receiving. How appropriate that this someone was a Sunday school teacher. What a living example of Mark 9:37, *"Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me."*

Ten years passed before I found eternal life through the loving Christ of Christmas. In those interim years, the unique memories of a special gift and a loving teacher's acceptance kept me searching for God's truth. I treasure those memories still. My thanks and appreciation go to this unknown but precious, godly woman who reached out with gift in hand, but spoke volumes with her heart. Amazing, isn't it, how such a small gesture can mean so much.

Cheryl Akers lives in Jacksonville, FL, where she attends the Immanuel FWB Church. This article won first place in the 2003 Creative Arts Contest.

WNAC'S 2003 BRANSON RETREAT attendees pledged their prayer support for U.S. President George W. Bush and military personnel serving in Iraq. WNAC recently received this response.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

July 22, 2003

Ms. Marjorie Workman and Friends
Executive Secretary Treasurer
Women Nationally Active for Christ
Post Office Box 5002
Antioch, Tennessee 37011-5002

Dear Ms. Workman and Friends:

Thank you for your kind words of support and for remembering me in your prayers.

At this time of great consequence for our Nation, I am honored to lead our country. We pray for the safety of the men and women who serve around the world to defend our freedom. We also pray for God's peace in the affairs of men. And we thank God for our Nation's many blessings. I appreciate knowing that I can count on your support as my Administration continues to work on issues that are important to Americans.

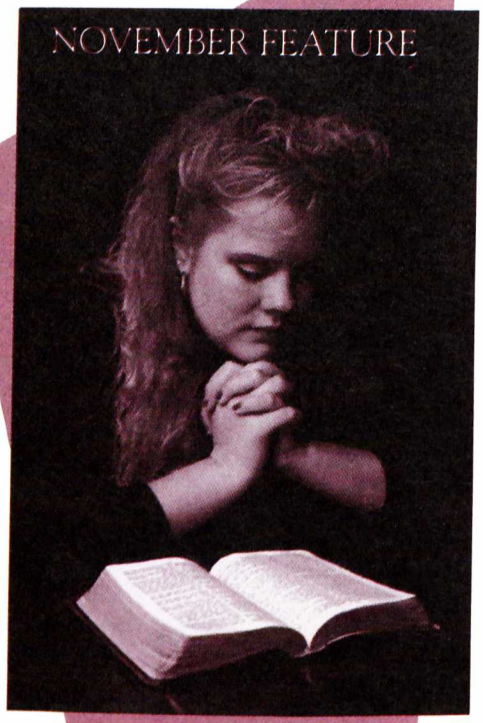
Laura joins me in sending our best wishes.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

For specific requests (updated weekly) or to join the Presidential Prayer Team, go to: www.presidentialprayerteam.org

NOVEMBER FEATURE



Lord, Teach Us to Pray

by Anne Worthington

Priority Principles

DO YOU WANT close communion and intimate spiritual fellowship with God? Jesus' disciples did. When you kneel to pray, do you sense a feeling of inadequacy and uncertainty? The disciples did, too. They asked Jesus to teach them to pray.

Jesus responded, giving the Lord's Prayer, a complete model and guide for all believers. Every truth about prayer can be found in embryonic form within this model prayer.

The Lord's followers recognized the priority of prayer in His life and in the life of John the Baptist. The disciples knew that spiritual power and wisdom resulted from intimate communion with God. They realized that if John, the greatest of prophets, and Jesus, the perfect Son of God, depended on prayer, how much more should they. Did the disciples learn to pray? A read through of Acts 1-6 reveals the answer.

Andrew Murray in *With Christ in the School of Prayer,* said, "Prayer is the highest and holiest work to which man can rise. It is through prayer that we take hold of God and His strength."

Prayer giant E. M. Bounds called prayer "intimacy with God" and outlined the Lord's Prayer into three stages: Communion—focusing on God Himself; Petition—focusing on myself; and Intercession—focusing on others. William Barclay divided the prayer into two sections. The first three petitions concern God and His glory. The second three focus on needs and necessities to maintain life, forgiveness for sins, and help in times of temptation. We could outline the Model Prayer even more minutely by dividing it into eight principles.

Adoration

Adoration is worship and praise. Prayer begins by focusing on God, His person, presence, position, power, greatness, majesty and love. The words, *"Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name"* acknowledge who God is and where He is.

"Our Father" signifies a personal relationship and fellowship with God. Relationship is the key to all prayer. *"Our Father"* suggests the name and heart of a loving parent who comforts and protects. He is an approachable Father who delights in supplying needs.

"Which art in heaven" denotes God's holy and lofty abode, prompting holy reverence. Not only is our Father loving, He is also holy and righteous. Jesus addressed Him as *"O righteous Father."*

For presentation helps, see the 2003 Program and Plan Book, pp. 46-47.

"Hallowed be Thy name" or "let Your name be held holy" captures the purpose of adoration—to honor and glorify the One to whom we pray. Reverence His name. Give Him the unique place He deserves and demands.

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is our response to God's goodness and graciousness. We first focus on who God is (adoration), then on what He has done (thanksgiving).

Affirmation

When we pray, *"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done,"* we ask to know God's will for our lives, then we submit ourselves to it. Prayer is insisting that God's purpose for our lives and for the earth be accomplished as it is perfectly accomplished in heaven. This first section reminds us of the key to prayer, constant fellowship with God; the basis for prayer, obedience to His commands; the object of prayer, His work on earth accomplished; and the purpose of prayer, His name glorified.

Petition

Petition involves focusing on ourselves and our needs. *"Give us this day our daily bread"* asks God to provide our personal needs. However, before we ask for our needs, we must give God the reverence and glory due His name.

Andrew Murray in *With Christ in the School of Prayer* said, "When we first give God His supreme place and we live for His honor and work, we have full liberty to ask for ourselves."

E. M. Bounds said, "If my one controlling desire and purpose in life is to do the things that please Him, then I may ask for what I will, and it shall be done." What personal needs are you experiencing? Will you ask God's help in prayer?

Intercession

When we truly pray, our petitions will include the spiritual and physical needs of others. People, nations, and situations are changed through intercessory prayer. Satan's work is hindered. "Talking to men for God is a great thing," E. M. Bounds said, "but talking to God for men is greater still."

Confession

Confession comes in response to God's holiness. God is holy, and we are to be holy as He is holy. Ephesians 1:4 says that God chose us before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless. Anything short of that is sin. Sin is failure to live up to God's standards—not being what we should and could. Our hearts are cleansed from sin when we seek forgiveness. The process begins when we ask God to search our hearts and try our thoughts to reveal our sin (Psalm 139:23-24). Then we ask forgiveness. Psalm 66:18 makes it clear that God will not hear our prayers if we keep sin in our hearts and lives.

In order for our prayers to be effective, not only must we be in fellowship with God, but also with our fellow man. Confession includes forgiving others. We ask God to forgive us, and we in turn forgive others. The two go hand in hand. The Apostle Peter asked Jesus how often he should forgive. Jesus answered him through the parable of the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:21-35). Debt is the motivation for forgiveness. We forgive because God has forgiven us. God's forgiveness is also conditional. Only as we forgive others will God forgive us. Forgiveness may require us making things right with someone.

WHEN YOU PRAY...

OUR DESIRE	OUR DECLARATION
PRAY TO GOD	Our Father which art in heaven
PRAISE AND WORSHIP	Hallowed be thy name.
REQUEST HIS WILL	Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
TELL MY NEEDS	Give us this day our daily bread.
ASK FORGIVENESS	And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
ASK FOR HELP	And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
ACKNOWLEDGE HIM	For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Direction and Protection

Direction and protection from evil become our requests. *"Deliver us from evil"* and *"lead us not into temptation."* James 1 says that outward trials will come to test our faith. If allowed, Satan will use those trials to tempt us to sin. Temptation is not sin; yielding is. Jesus is the prime example of a victor over temptation. James 1:14 says that God never tempts, but we are tempted when, by our own evil desires, we are dragged away and enticed to yield. This principle asks for God's guidance to keep us in His will and away from situations of temptation and sin.

In the words of Andrew Murray, "All our personal needs are summed up in: our daily bread, pardon for sins, and being kept from the devil and the power of sin."

Amen

Prayer ends as it begins—with adoration, praise and worship. This elevates the Lord and leaves us with the proper perspective. *"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."* So be it. May everything we pray be done.

Persistence

The Lord's Prayer models all that we ought to pray in God's presence. However, two additional prayer principles are found in Luke 11:5-13. The secret of effective praying is to keep on praying. Persistence brings answers and blessings when petition is made according to His will by His child who is rightly related to Him.

If an unwilling, reluctant neighbor can be persuaded by persistence, how much more will God supply our needs. However, God doesn't have to be coerced, nor is He unwilling. He is more ready to answer than we are ready to pray. Ever generous and loving, He delights in supplying our needs.

Promise

With persistence comes promise. We who persistently ask, receive. We who persistently seek, find. As we persistently knock, it shall be opened. It's a promise. Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking—that's the human aspect of prayer. We will receive, we will find, it shall be opened—this is the divine.

What will we find or receive or what will be opened? His Holy Spirit, dwelling in us, will teach, comfort, convict and empower us. The hypothetical father who gives a child a stone, a serpent, or a scorpion is not our loving heavenly Father. He gives the very best gifts, far more than we could ever ask or think.

Anne Worthington is a member of Liberty FWB Church, Ayden, NC, where she teaches the women's Sunday school class. Married to FWB Executive Secretary Emeritus, Dr. Melvin Worthington, Anne enjoys reading, sewing, gardening, and walking.

Putting Principle into Practice

Follow these suggestions for group or personal meditation and reflection.

Adoration: Read 1 Chronicles 29:11-13. Sing all four verses of "Holy, Holy, Holy."

Thanksgiving: Fill in the blank. Today, Lord I thank you for _____.

Affirmation: Pray seeking God's will, coveting to do it. Pray also for the nation. Pray that God's purposes will be accomplished through her leaders.

Petition: Pray for personal needs.

Intercession: Form a prayer triangle. Corporately pray for the needs of others.

Confession: Read Psalm 139:23-24 aloud. Silently confess any known sins. Ask God to reveal any unforgiving spirit that may be hindering your prayers.

Direction and Protection: Pray for victory over a specific temptation.

Amen: Pray Psalm 150 back to the Lord, making it personal. (Praise You...) End with a hearty amen.

★ 38.8 million Hispanics sit on the doorsteps of America.

★ God has sent these people to our Jerusalem. We are responsible to reach them with the gospel.

★ Free Will Baptist Home Missions is presently planting solid, Bible-believing churches in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria so that we may reach the world for Christ.

★ Your involvement in Operation Saturation and short term mission trips helps our Free Will Baptist home missionaries minister to those from every background.

What Can I Do?

— **Be prayerful.** Will you daily intercede for missionaries and for the internationals they seek to win?

— **Be generous.** God loves a cheerful giver. Consider a special offering for cross-cultural ministries.

—**Be observant.** See the multitudes of people from other countries now living in the United States. Whom has God placed in your neighborhood, workplace, or marketplace?

— **Be obedient.** What will you do to reach the world that God loves?

The World at Home

"...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

–2 Peter 3:9

WNAC PreThanksgiving Week of Prayer

November 17-21



1 HMONGS

HMONGS are a hard-working, gentle and conscientious people native to the mountains of Laos and surrounding regions. Because the Hmongs supported the U.S. during the Vietnam War, many were persecuted and killed when our troops pulled out. Thousands left the tyranny of communism and resettled in the United States. Hmongs have large families who typically group together. Most Hmong children are refreshingly obedient. Any Sunday school teacher would be thrilled and pleasantly surprised to teach these kids who are so very eager to hear and learn about the Lord. California, Wisconsin, and Minnesota have a growing Hmong population. Presently, the Midwest offers an open door for ministry among this group.



2 SLAVICS/ RUSSIANS

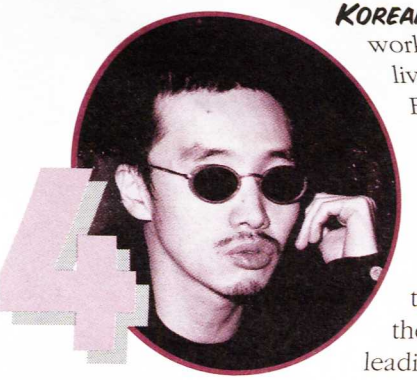
With their own newspapers, **SLAVIC/RUSSIAN** people are well networked throughout the United States, relying upon each other for help. Hundreds of thousands live in the Chicago area alone. As with other ethnic groups, older family members usually speak the native language exclusively. Those of moderate age are bilingual, while the young are almost totally English-speaking.

In their native country, believers faced much persecution. Many suffered imprisonment. Today in America, they work very hard to reach others for Christ. Russian believers practice persistence in prayer, often praying all night, continuing until they have direction, guidance, and peace. Persecution has taught them to really spend time with God and lean on Him. Slavic people possess a very strong work ethic. They will do anything necessary to take care of their families and friends and to win the lost. Free Will Baptists have three Slavic/Russian mission churches, one each in North Carolina, California and Illinois.



3 ISLANDERS

The church and school ministry in St. Croix, **VIRGIN ISLANDS**, a U.S. Territory, reaches people from many ethnic backgrounds. The Christian school alone includes Hispanics from Puerto Rico, native Cruzan people from St. Croix and surrounding islands, Arabs, Jews, Egyptians, and Greeks. Other students hail from Trinidad, China, Japan, and India. The ministry in St. Croix is extensive because of the work in the church and the ongoing outreach and training in the Christian school.



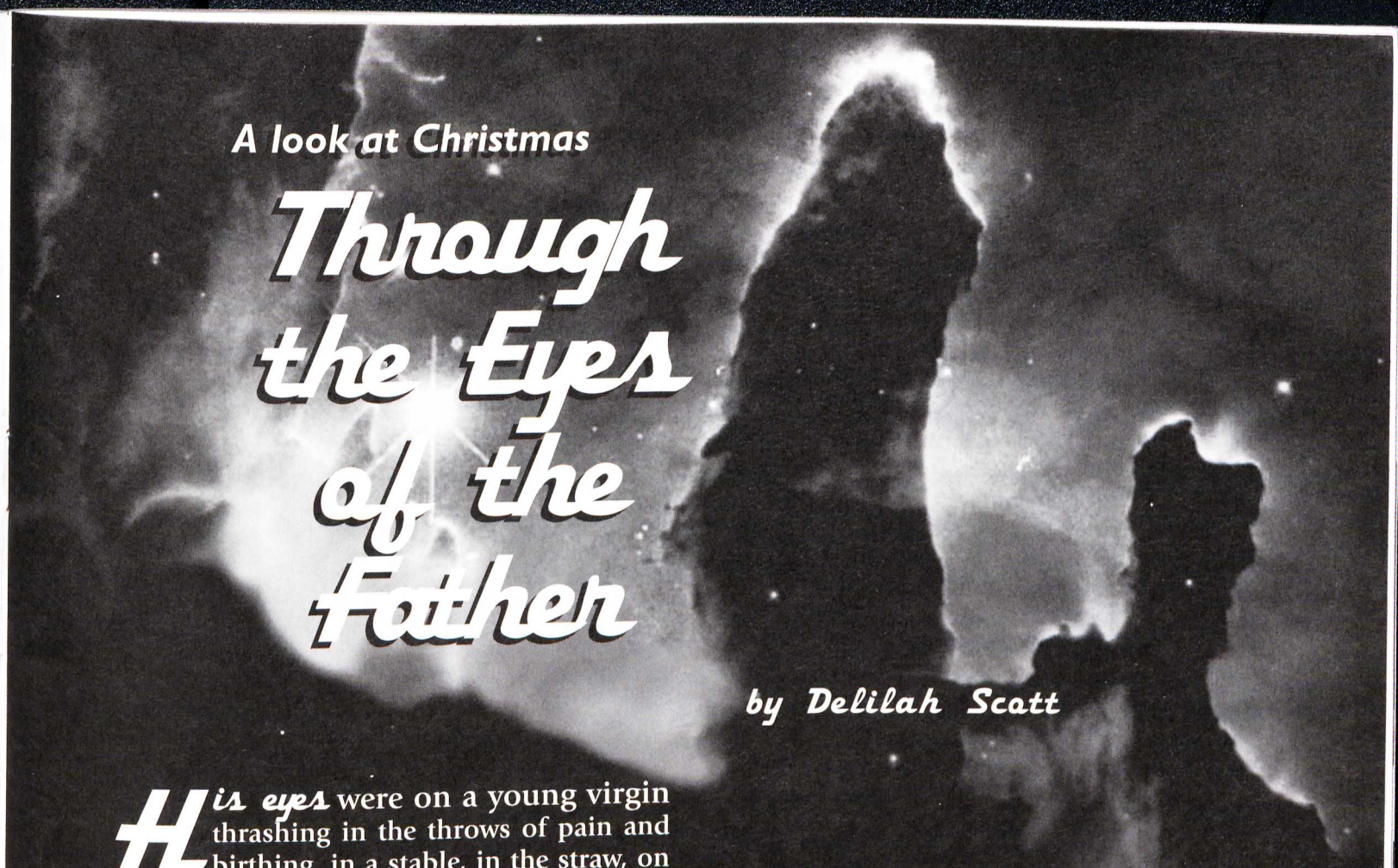
4 KOREANS

KOREANS are a very proud people with a tremendous work ethic. Large concentrations of Korean people live in California, Arizona, Texas, Alabama, Florida, Washington, D.C., North Carolina, South Carolina, Ohio, and Tennessee. Our Korean Free Will Baptists minister in various ways. Some work in the inner city, confronting gangs, drugs and broken homes. Others work in mountain areas where farming and raising livestock are the jobs of the day. From medicine to gardening, these proficient pastors lend a variety of skills. Yet, leading families to the Lord is their primary goal. Much can be accomplished with the help of fellow Free Will Baptists. Koreans are a people of prayer.



5 HISPANICS

Free Will Baptists are just beginning to tap the ministry potential of this nation within our nation. America's largest minority, **HISPANICS** arrive daily from Mexico, Cuba, Santo Domingo, Honduras, Guatemala, Chile, Panama, Puerto Rico and Nicaragua. Hispanic people are a close knit group. They work hard, while they tend to be more relaxed in their way of life. Helping each other is of prime importance. This includes leading others to Christ. Time is not a factor in worship. Though services are lengthy, Hispanics enjoy singing, praying, and preaching for the glory of God. Sharing God's message and showing compassion—these are the driving forces characteristic of these wonderful, warm and loving people. Free Will Baptist Hispanic ministries exist in Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Missouri, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee, with more springing up everywhere. Hispanic ministry is also flourishing in Puerto Rico.



A look at Christmas

Through the Eyes of the Father

by Delilah Scott

His eyes were on a young virgin thrashing in the throws of pain and birthing, in a stable, in the straw, on the earth, in Bethlehem. He had sent His Son to her womb knowing full well the reception and rejection His beloved would face.

God closed His eyes to the betrayal, the blood, the torture, the thorny crown, the three nails and a cross awaiting His Son on a rocky hill, and lifted one foot toward the precipice as He reached His hand toward the descending rail.

He halted, knowing full well that for the sake of His creation, the work of His own hands, He must. They, now fallen, held captive, enslaved in their sins and sentenced to eternal damnation, were awaiting the redeeming bloodletting ransom.

He could not thwart nor negate the sacrificing of His Son. For the sake of the sinful, He could not. Love would not let Him.

Slowly He turned, lifting His hand from the rail, and, with back toward His Son, He walked away. Faint cries of a newborn baby echoed softly from star to star to star.

Imagine all the eyes which have, by faith, seen the Christ, this God of glory Who, having left golden streets, eternal domains and glorious angelic praise, made His residence in a virgin's womb, was delivered to the sounds and stenches of cattle and barn, and chose to live among the foul and scandalous, saliva-spitting-sin-embracing squalor of a debauched Eden.

We have become eyewitnesses of His birth and His mission on this earth. We have witnessed His miracles of healing and His resurrecting of the dead. We have witnessed His wrath on merchants befouling the temple and we have witnessed His pause and tender touch with the children. We have witnessed His tears on the mountain and His tremors on the cross. We have witnessed His death, burial, resurrection and ascension. We have become witnesses of His gift of salvation to this world and we shall be witnesses of His return and of His eternal kingdom and His eternal throne. Praise be to the Father and to the Lamb.

Delilah Scott lives in Harrisburg, NC. She attends Laurel FWB Church, Charlotte, NC, where her husband Ron serves as pastor.

A Christmas Worldview



Mistletoe and holly or fireworks and tamales?

How's your Christmas worldview? Have you ever wondered about Christmas customs in other countries? How do our missionaries spend the holiday? No passports, plane tickets, or high-tech equipment—just open your eyes. Glimpse a holiday world that desperately needs to know the Christ of Christmas.



Panama—Without a Claus

ALTHOUGH CHRISTMAS IN Panama is hotter than Christmas in most parts of the States, the day shares some similarities. Shoppers still crowd the stores and fight for a parking space looking for the perfect gifts for their family members. Santa Claus, however, holds little importance. Panamanian children do not write letters to Santa or sit on his lap to share their requests. I've never seen anyone here dressed as Santa Claus.

Christmas is a special time for families in Panama. The whole family meets together on *Buena Noche* (Christmas Eve) for a late supper. Everyone stays up until midnight to welcome in Christmas, much as we would for New Year's in the States. At midnight, children are allowed to open their Christmas presents. Many Panamanians shoot off fireworks. We see as many fireworks on Christmas Eve as most Americans see on the 4th of July.

Tamales are a very common Christmas food. Most families also serve either ham or turkey (or both) at Christmas. *Arroz con pollo* (rice with chicken), a typical dish served at almost all Panamanian celebrations, is usually part of the Christmas dinner. Although apples and grapes grow here year-round, these two fruits are eaten especially during the Christmas season. A favorite treat of ours is *rosca*. Bakeries start making this ring-shaped, braided bread a few weeks before Christmas. *Rosca* comes plain or with almonds or dried fruits on top.

—LaRhonda Bowerman

Japan—X's and Outreach



"WHAT? NO CHRISTMAS TREES? What kind of country *is* this?" That was our reaction in 1983, when my daughter and I set out to find a tree to celebrate our first Christmas in Japan. We had no car at the time, so we walked all over town,

from store to store, with 'nary a Christmas tree in sight. No one, it seemed, celebrated the holiday in Japan. We finally located a small lime-green plastic shrub, dragged it the two kilometers home, and proceeded to decorate it with some of our two-year-old son's superhero figurines, a tradition we continue to this day.

In recent years, retailers have learned they can make money by "importing" Western holidays. Christmas trees and ornaments can now be found in almost every neighborhood store. Most Japanese see the holiday as a time to celebrate Santa Claus and to hear the many choirs around the country sing Christmas praises to a Savior they do not personally know. Many of the decorations this past year used "X" in the spelling of Christmas. This gave us an opportunity to explain the *true* meaning of *Christ*mas.

For the unsaved, the main thrust during this time is *Oshogatsu*, the New Year's holiday. All are expected to go to the temple, make an offering to the gods, do cleansing of water and smoke to purify themselves, and pray for good luck in the coming year.

For Japanese Christians, however, December becomes a time of major outreach. People are eager to attend a special Western-style Christmas with us foreigners and the Japanese Christians. We try to share our good will and joy with unsaved friends, Sunday school kids and English classes. Through the years, the majority of unsaved who've attended these special meetings have made decisions to follow Christ, or to learn more about Him.

—Judy Bailey



Cuba—La Navidad Cristiana

LIKE BELIEVERS in almost all countries of the world, Cuban Christians celebrate Christmas. The days of Christmas hold special meaning for the church. We decorate our church buildings as best we can with the means we have. We prepare Christmas posters for both children and adults. Churches prepare and present Christmas dramas. In spite of the fact that our nation does not recognize these Christian holidays, the Christian people of Cuba have always celebrated the birth of Christ.

—Margarita Piño

**Margarita Piño is active in the ministry of the FWB Women's Association of Cuba. Her husband, Ramón Sánchez, is president of the FWB Convention of Cuba.*



France—Chocolate in Your Shoes

CHRISTMAS IN FRANCE has its origins in the celebration of the birth of Jesus. (However, Santa Claus is now very popular.)On Christmas Eve, families often go to midnight mass. Afterwards, the family eats the holiday meal consisting of several courses and lasting for hours. The traditional main dish is turkey with chestnuts, although nowadays many types of game are available during the holidays.

Depending on the region, different specialties compliment the main dish. In the coastal region where our missionaries are located, a platter of raw oysters often holds an important place at the beginning of the meal. The traditional dessert is the yule log, made of either ice cream or cake.

Each family member places one shoe (a nice, clean one) near the fireplace or under the tree. Typically, shoes will be filled with chocolates during the night. Gifts are not set out until Christmas Eve and are opened either very early Christmas morning after the holiday meal or later Christmas morning after a night's sleep. Chocolates are often given as gifts. Chocolate truffles, a French specialty, are plentiful along with dried fruits or nuts filled with colored almond paste.

Those who attend our churches (rather than the Catholic Church) prefer the Christmas Eve service early in the evening. The big day for all of us is the annual Christmas Service some time before Christmas. This service may include a play, skits, music, a meal or a snack. Church members are encouraged to invite non-churched friends and families as a means of evangelism. Many people who would never come to a regular service will attend these special celebrations.

Our missionary families get together on Christmas afternoon to sing, exchange gifts and enjoy a traditional American meal.

—Carol Teague



Puerto Rico—Presents and Parandas

CALLED *Navidad* in Puerto Rico, our Christmas is much like the holiday in the States. Puerto Ricans love to decorate their houses, put up Christmas trees and shop. Families gather together for big meals and celebrations. Churches offer Christmas programs and special services.

One big difference is *double* the presents. Children receive gifts

For presentation helps and suggestions, see the 2003 Program and Plan Book, pp. 48-50

not only on Christmas Day, but also on Three Kings Day, January 6. Most children receive more on Three Kings Day. The Christmas season lasts a lot longer here. Celebrations start early in December and continue until January 13.

One custom that Puerto Ricans enjoy is the *paranda*. During a *paranda*, friends show up on a person's doorstep in the wee hours of the morning, playing musical instruments and singing loudly until the person serves them food. Only then will the friends leave. It's quite an experience.

Puerto Ricans eat special holiday food. Christmas dinner favorites are *pernil* (roasted pork) and *arroz con gandules* (rice with pigeon peas). Both are extremely tasty. One traditional dish, *pasteles*, looks like a tamale but has no spice. Made of plantains or yucca, *pasteles* are stuffed with a variety of meat and vegetables.

Christmas and Three Kings Day are both religious and cultural holidays. Almost everyone celebrates in some form or fashion. Feliz Navidad.

—Connie Roy

Korea—Come and Worship



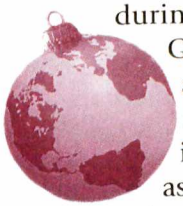
FOR BELIEVERS IN KOREA, Christmas centers in worship. Churches meet on Christmas Eve for a worship service and a children's performance for Jesus.

Since December 25 is a national holiday in Korea, churches conduct Christmas Day services. Early Christmas morning, usually around 5:00 a.m., the church meets for a celebration worship service. Later at 11:00 a.m., congregations once again gather for their main Christmas worship service.

Gift giving is also a very common Christmas custom among both Christians and non-Christians.

—John Chang

Côte d'Ivoire—All Night, All Day



NOEL EN AFRIQUE comes during dry season. Grass is brown, the air is filled with smoke from burning fields, sooty ashes and a multitude of air-borne germs, making it high season for pneumonia, meningitis and such. Keeping the house clean is an impossible task. No need for note pads—just write a message in the dust on any piece of furniture. Even breathing can require thought and effort during this drab, dreary, can-be discouraging part of the year. *Sniffle, sniffle. Cough, cough.* Yet, I'm so glad to be in Africa for Christmas.

True, in the larger towns, the stores are stuffed with battery-operated plastic toys; young eyes appear even larger than normal as children dream of obtaining such gifts they most likely will never hold in their hands. But believers celebrate Christmas as it should be, thanking God for His Son Immanuel-God with us.

Normally, Christians gather at church on Christmas Eve. We sing, pray, give testimonies, hear sermons, sing, pray, give testimonies, hear sermons. Then the process is repeated...such a wonderful all-night affair of sharing joy.

In true Baptist tradition, most churches delegate a committee of women to spend the two days before the holiday gathering and preparing food for the meal together on Christmas Day. What a difficult, time-consuming process. The African ladies take pride in making wise choices for the sauce. Making sure the tropical drinks made from dried leaves, pineapples and other fruits are just right, they pour the liquid into small plastic bags and store them in the missionary's refrigerator until the meal.

After spending all night at church, almost everyone is already present for the *big* service on Christmas Day. Still, many invited guests arrive for this special time together. Benches crowded, churches packed; the air is filled with singing, praying and preaching. It is hot. Sunday school kids—sometimes with new outfits—nervously repeat Bible verses. After the final amen, everyone gathers around the huge pan of rice and sauce with a slice of bread on the side. The plastic bags of cooled drinks are distributed. Yummy.

Christmas in Africa is a time for being together, praising God for His Gift—the Gift that is eternal, that cannot be stolen; a gift available for everyone, everywhere.

—Carol Pinkerton

Spain—Visit from the Kings



TRADITIONALLY, the most important day during the Christmas season is Epiphany or Three Kings Day (called *Reyes* in Spanish). Spaniards often refer to this time of year as *Reyes*. Epiphany, the twelfth day, or

January 6, is celebrated in remembrance of the wise men from the East who came with gifts for Jesus (Matthew 2). On the night before Reyes, children set out their shoes on the living room floor before they go to bed. During the night the three kings supposedly visit all the living rooms in the world. If the children have been good during the past year, the wise men leave them gifts. If they have been bad, the kings leave them a lump of coal.

Culturally, Christmas is a time for families to see one another and simply to be together. Most Spanish families eat together on Christmas Eve *(Noche Buena)* and on New Year's Eve *(Noche Vieja)*. We missionaries understand and respect these family times. We get together and go downtown (Madrid) to see the decorations and the Nativity scenes or *Belenes*. We celebrate by eating squid sandwiches. (Don't say yuck until you've tried them!) At this time of the year, people are more open toward spiritual things. We try to take advantage of every opportunity to remind them of the real reason for the season—the birth of Emmanuel, God with us.

—Jeff Turnbough



North India—Lighted Stars and Love Feasts

WE ARRIVED IN INDIA soon after she was granted independence from England. For this reason, people knew it was a day in which foreigners celebrated. We celebrated Christmas only within our home. During our early days, we presented a drama of the Christmas story to several villages. We did not decorate or have a Christmas tree. When our children were old enough, we decided to decorate a tree for them. This remained our custom throughout the 1950's and 1960's.

Today, we have many churches and believers who celebrate Christmas. With only thirteen ordained pastors, each man shoulders responsibilities for several churches. Every church in North India wants its pastor present on Christmas Day. Since this is not possible, we hold celebrations with our people from the middle of December until the end of the month.

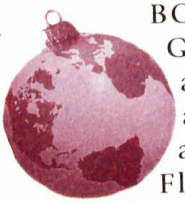
Our people are poor and do not have money to spend. If possible, they will get new clothes for Christmas. Most of our churches share a Christmas feast of goat curry and rice. (Having meat at any meal makes it a feast.) Termed a love feast, the meal provides a wonderful time for sharing together. Our special Christmas services sometimes include drama or the *Daya Sagar* "Jesus" film. In Sonapurhat, we host a Christmas Tea Party and invite all the local leaders. We give them tracts and provide Bibles and books for those who need them. Always wonderful, this annual event (we've done this for many years) gives us an opportunity to share the gospel with all who come.

These days, we decorate. Now that we have electricity, we hang colored lights and huge lighted stars over our churches and houses. Still, our home has the only Christmas tree.

We give a pair of navy blue pants and a white shirt to each of our fifty hostel boys. This is their school uniform which they would need regardless. The greatest gift is the One our Father gave. It has been our joy to share this news with India for so many years and to see the people worship Him.

—Carlisle Hanna

Brazil—Season for Summer



BOXES OF PURPLE GRAPES, mangos of all sizes, peaches and pineapples adorn the stores. Flamboyant trees burst with red flowers. Christmas is near in Brazil! Everyone is in the Christmas bustle. Shoppers looking for just the right present. Students preparing for final exams, dreams of summer vacation in their heads. 'Tis the season for summer vacations.

It's not the season to bake cookies. 'Tis the season for diets. It's not the season to stay warm and cozy in the house. 'Tis the season for ice cream, taking walks, and viewing Christmas lights. 'Tis the season to feel the spirit and climate of Christmas—a tropical Christmas, that is.

The climates may be different, but the traditions are similar. The celebration begins as families decorate their Christmas trees, smaller ones than we are accustomed to seeing in the U.S. On Christmas Eve, families gather together to celebrate Christmas in their own tradition. Some attend the Catholic mass. Other traditions include a bountiful evening meal at midnight, visiting with family and friends, and exchanging gifts (on a much smaller scale than in America.) With the windows open, the familiar tunes of "Silent Night" and "Jingle Bells" can be heard throughout the neighborhood, but the words are

in Portuguese, of course. On Christmas Day, after sleeping all morning after the very late night before, families gather once again for lunch.

For some in North America, Christmas brings cold weather and white snow. Be assured, Christmas in Brazil brings the beauty of a warm rainy climate, a harvest of fresh fruits and flowers, and the beginning of a hot summer.

—Mary Holland





LEFT: Christmas in Moscow, Russia. RIGHT: Princess Snowflake and Grandfather Frost.

Russia—Snow Princesses and Parties



SNOWFLAKES floating past the frosted window, ground and trees covered with snow... what a beautiful Christmas setting. A quick glance at the calendar reminds me it's December 31. What happened to Christmas?

The major holiday in Russia is *Novy God* (rhymes with road) or New Year. Novy God begins late afternoon December 31, and continues until morning comes on January 1. This is the time when *Ded Moroz* (Grandfather Frost) and *Snegoruchka* (Snow Princess) make their appearance and give small gifts and fruit and candy to the children. Families celebrate and enjoy special food together around a yule tree decorated with lights and ornaments.

For unbelievers, this is a time to party and let the liquid spirits flow. For believers, it's a family time. Church youth groups often plan a party. Last year our church youth held a masquerade party, enjoying good fun and fellowship while still focusing on the real reason for their time together.

Russians celebrate Christmas on January 6, in traditional Orthodox fashion. No gift giving or celebrating of traditions to which we are accustomed, Christmas is strictly a holy day. Since the early 1990's, some Protestant believers have begun to also observe December 25 as a holiday. Russia is a country going through many changes; Christmas, as we know it, is one of those changes. The meager decorations and Christmas displays in Russian stores seem very strange. I'm so accustomed to the commercialism that bombards us as Americans. On the other hand, how very refreshing to be able to realize the true meaning of Christmas and its significance to us as Christians. Without Christmas there could be no Easter. Without these events, where would we be?

—Cathy Corley

Canada—Sleigh Rides and Snow



CANADIANS celebrate Christmas much the same as people in the United States—with only a few differences. Of course, we're almost always guaranteed a white Christmas.

Unlike the States, Canada doesn't begin its Christmas season on Thanksgiving Day. That would be a bit early since we celebrate Thanksgiving in October. Depending on individual customs and traditions, families decorate Christmas trees anytime between the end of November and Christmas Eve.

Christmas in Canada means outdoor ice skating and sleigh rides. Picture yourself riding through the woods in a horse drawn sleigh under a moonlit sky (especially beautiful if it happens to snow). After the sleigh ride, you'd enjoy hot cider or hot chocolate and some type of square, similar to brownies but in many different flavors. After some sleigh rides, you'd be offered a delicious supper of homemade baked beans, potato salad and homemade brown bread. Churches serve this traditional New Brunswick Saturday night supper quite often at quarterly meetings.

Christmas festivities include an annual Christmas parade and the lighting of the Federal Christmas tree with the ceremony in both English and French. Many Canadians attend midnight Christmas Eve services. In some homes, meat pies are a Christmas Eve treat. Goose, duck or lamb may be served along with the traditional ham or turkey. However, Canadians are just like Americans when it comes to gift giving. They love it.

—Donna Crabtree



Mexico—Posadas and Piñatas

SHEER DIVERSITY of culture makes describing Christmas in Mexico difficult. Dozens of indigenous cultures still practice their own customs and celebrations. One unifying theme is joy. In all of Mexico, Christmas is a very joyful time.

Every village and city celebrates the *posada*, or lodging. This Spanish custom commemorates the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem and their nightly search for a place to stay. A group forms a procession. Two people play the parts of Mary and Joseph who knock on the doors of homes and businesses along the posada route. They are turned away from every door until they reach the designated area where a large crowd waits to celebrate Jesus' birth with piñatas, food and games. Many families do not give presents until January 6, the Epiphany, commemorating the Magi's visit to the baby Jesus.

Since the posadas are so often connected with Catholicism, our Free Will Baptists in Mexico usually choose to celebrate the Christmas season with special services and activities within their churches. Congregations meet for services, Christmas dramas, poetry recitations, food, fellowship and always the traditional piñata for the children. Gift exchange is not emphasized within the church.

The ladies of each church meet together to make the traditional tamales. These are steamed and served hot with fresh salsas, rice, and beans at church Christmas parties. Always happy occasions, the parties are filled with laughter and teasing. After the meal, the children take turns hitting the piñata until it breaks. Candy and small toys fall to the ground. Encouraged by the adults, the kids make a wild, hilarious scramble for its contents.

This time of fellowship is very important to our Free Will Baptists believers in Mexico. Many of them face estrangement from their families because of their conversion to the evangelical faith. Being with like believers strengthens their bond and their determination to remain faithful to God.

—Mitzi Munsey



Uruguay—Good Night and Good News

FIREWORKS, flashes of light, whistling explosions. Uruguay's unique contribution to the character of Christmas makes Montevideo a citywide fireworks display.

A seemingly nonending explosion of fireworks begins just at midnight on Christmas night and continues for more than an hour. Who takes part? Just about everybody. In streets, on houses and apartment buildings, on the beaches; Montevideo boasts one of the greatest free displays of fireworks in the world.

Second to fireworks, Christmas is characterized by family. It's not Christmas morning or December 25, that sparks interest with everyone. It's the family meal and vigil most families continue in the spirit of "The Good Night" *(Noche Buena)*.

Our churches in Uruguay celebrate before Christmas Day, leaving room for the family meal. Yet our family of believers gets together for Sunday service with a play or music special. This is our family time in Christ and the most special time of year for the churches.

The weather is hot, the months of heat are just beginning. Snow is never an item. Decorations? Some, more and more. Yet the season is captured by believers. Believers who look up at the stars and recognize the God who placed blazing lights in the night, lights which do not explode and fade in an instant or an hour. Believers who know a family in Christ and regularly celebrates together the Holy meal remembering our Savior's bodily sacrifice. Believers who know not just one quick "Good Night," but a life bright and beautiful because of the Good News which has changed all of their days and nights.

—Dennis Owen

From all your missionaries:

Boas Festas e Feliz Ano Novo

Joyeux Noel et Bonne Année!

Shub Naya Baras

Shinnen omedeto Kurisumasu Omedeto

Sung Tan Chuk Ha

Pozdravlyau s prazdnikom Rozhdestva i c Novym Godom

Feliz Navidad y Prospero Año Nuevo

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

SPRINGBOARD
memos for WAC officers

Prayer Chairman:

Lead your group in a PreThanksgiving Week of Prayer for Home Missions. Don't have time? Consider a Saturday morning brunch, a Wednesday night prayer service, or pray daily by phone.

In December, let each woman select a mission field and pray specifically for Christmas outreach there. (Use "A Christmas Worldview" as a resource or personally contact missionaries for special Christmas program dates and details.)

Study Chairman:

Share the review on p. 30. Prepare now for next year's FORWARD challenge by obtaining these titles: *Becoming a Woman of Prayer,* by Cynthia Heald. *Reaching Your World: Disciplemaking for Women* by Beth Mainhood, *How to Study Your Bible* by Kay Arthur or *Understanding and Applying the Bible* by Robertson McQuilkin.

Correction:

The suggested Scripture for the December feature, "A Christmas Worldview" should be Luke 2:1-20, not Luke 11:1-13, as listed in the *PROGRAM AND PLAN BOOK.*

Coordinators and Assistant Coordinators:

Consider using the November feature as part of your PreThanksgiving Week of Prayer.

December offers two options: a humorous skit (*PROGRAM AND PLAN BOOK,* pp.48) ending with "Through the Eyes of the Father" *CoLaborer*, p. 11; or a "Christmas Worldview." If the Worldview program is too lengthy, choose to highlight a few of these fields.

Need ideas? Be sure and order *Great Expectations*, the 2004 *PROGRAM AND PLAN BOOK,* available from WNAC ($6 plus S&H).

Missions/Service Chairman:

Consider sending Christmas gifts to a Korean, Slavic, or Hispanic home missionary family. Most of these international workers only receive designated support.

Help fund the new Hispanic Bible Institute, Inman, SC, named in memory of Gwen Hendrix, longtime WAC state president.

Read the FOCUS article on pp. 24-25. Share with music lovers or others in your church who might support this ministry.

Offer free babysitting for a Christmas shopping day or night for young families in your community. Share gospel stories or videos with children who come.

Looking for a Cookbook?

WNAC is considering a reprint of its *Fruit of Our Hands* cookbook. If you would like a copy, please complete and mail the form on p. 30 or contact the office by phone (1-877-767-7662) or email wnac@nafwb.org to reserve yours. WNAC must have a guaranteed number of sales in order to cover reprint costs.

Provision Closet Needs:

Gift or phone cards

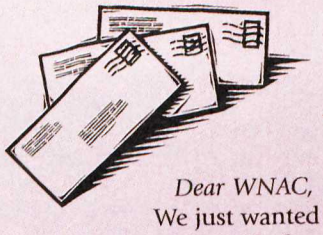
We're on the Web!! Check us out @ www.nafwb.org/wnac

Special Offerings

Celebrate the season through special gifts to FWB ministries.

November is Home Missions Month with its Lizzie McAdams offering.

December's focus is FWBBC with its annual Paul J. Ketteman Memorial offering.



Letters to WNAC

Dear WNAC,

We just wanted to thank you for the work you do on behalf of our ministry here. Your help has been valuable, and we pray God's richest blessings on each of you.

Eric Thompson family
Bend, OR

Dear WNAC,

Our WAC at Shiloh FWB Church used the May program, "What's in the Bag" to help our president pack items for her daughter's upcoming summer drama team tour. We had fun doing it...and would like to use this again to help young people planning trips or going away to college. Thank you for the wonderful job you do in the home office.

Jackie Johnson
Bratt, FL

Dear WNAC,

Just a note to let you know how much I enjoyed the WNAC (Convention)... I received a great blessing. The program, luncheon, and reception for state presidents were all enjoyable. It was a good experience to go to Tampa...Thanks again for all you and your staff do.

Peggy Outland
Illinois

Dear WNAC,

Thank you very much for the donations you've made toward our kitchen here at Southeastern. This was an answer to prayer that has helped us tremendously in our efforts to purchase a new stove. It is exciting to see God working through those, like you, who support the college with prayers, monetary gifts and donations such as yours.

We ask for your continued prayers... as we work to train men and women for the ministry. Again, on behalf of the students and staff, we sincerely appreciate your investment in the lives of students for our Lord.

Michael T. Morris
Southeastern FWB College, NC

Dear WNAC,

We thank you for your support of the Doropo Hospital ministry. Doropo FWB Hospital services have not been interrupted, even during this time of civil war. Our greatest concern is to find adequate funding to be able to help those *(Ed: much of the staff)* who are currently displaced and laid off to go back to work once conditions return to normal. Our second prayer request is that God will provide a lasting peace for all our country...We count on you to help us with (these needs) so the Doropo hospital will remain a vehicle that God can use for evangelization and for showing the love of Christ through concrete good works.

Tchoukite Kambire,
Vice-chairman of the Board of Administration
Doropo, Cote d'Ivoire

HELP! I'M A MOM

bright ideas for mothers from mothers

Q A

How can you celebrate Christ in a Santa Claus world?

Tired of Santas and shopping malls? Make this year's Christmas a Christ centered holiday.

Devote: Plan special family devotions. Many wonderful advent devotionals are available from Christian publishers.

Anticipate: For preschoolers, make a nativity calendar. Each December day, place a nativity figure or object on the calendar to mark the date, with Baby Jesus on Dec. 25. For older children, make a corresponding Christmas Challenge box. Inside, place slips of paper detailing 25 activities. (i.e. donkey—carry someone's packages or books today; angel—share good news with someone, etc.) Choose one per day.

Decorate: Use Christian themes. Check your cards and ornaments. Do they honor Christ or Claus? Join with other families and stage a children's living nativity

Give: Let children choose one gift they receive to give to someone less fortunate. (Be sure to check with givers first.)

Limit: Downsize Christmas gifts. Choose a family project in lieu of personal gifts.

Recount: Study the life of Nicholas of Alexandria (tradition's Saint Nick). A wonderful story resource for children is *Santa are you for Real?* by Harold Myra.

Delight: Your attitude and enthusiasm will keep your Claus-less Christmas a privilege rather than a punishment for your children.

Caution: Beware of the "better than" spirit—"Our family doesn't do Santa Claus."

Capture: Take plenty of pictures or videos to record these Christmas memories.

NEXT ISSUE: How can you instill in children the importance of a daily quiet time?

Send us your input and questions. sarah@nafwb.org or P. O. Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002.

LABORS OF LOVE

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father:" *I Thessalonians 1:2,3*



Thirty-seven women from four villages attended the Southern Women's Camp at Agnibilekrou, Cote d'ivoire. The camp was totally organized by African believers. The event included singing, food, fellowship, and speakers Mrs. A. Paul and Mrs. Theophile. Mrs. Pascal gave her testimony about the evacuation. Pastor Jerome also shared concerning his recent imprisonment by the rebel forces there. Missionaries Pam West and Carol Pinkerton attended.

PICTURED: 1. Women at the Southern Camp in Agnibilekrou, Cote d'Ivoire. 2. Treasurer Annette Tomlinson, State Line District, AL presents a basket to speaker, Sally Cash. 3. Pat Loomis, Doshie Brill, and Frances Harvey, Pleasant Home, MO, man their WAC booth at a community picnic.



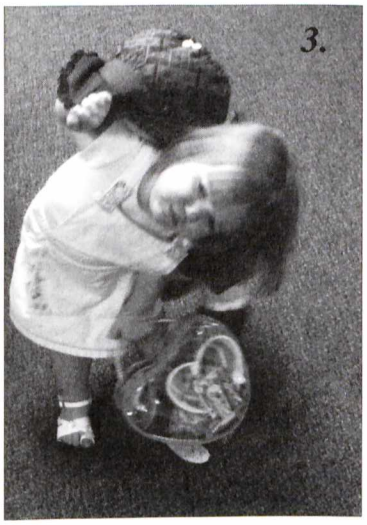
Alabama's Florida State Line district held their annual convention, March 2. Sally Cash, wife of Alabama State Promoter Rick Cash, shared about their recent trip to Russia. A 2002 Christmas project netted over $1000 to purchase clothing for shepherds in Mongolia. This year's plans include another Christmas project, a cookout for the Acts 1:8 program and giving to the Provision Closet.



Pleasant Home WAC, Mt. Grove, MO, recently adopted a young lady in the Teen Challenge program. As a *Labor of Love*, they have become sisters, mothers, and grandmothers in the name of the Lord, writing her, sending cards and gifts, and encouraging her in her walk with the Lord.

For nearly twenty years this group has participated in its community's annual 4-H picnic in July, selling funnel cakes and homemade goods, sharing Christ and inviting people to their church, only a block away from the picnic site.







PICTURED: 1. Barbara Lee, Jeanette Dalton, Debbie Beck, Linda Hall, Diana Anderson, Lee Ann Wilfong, Shirley Jackson, Judy Ruble, and Reva Baker—Missouri's winners in "Who Wants to be a State Officer." 2. Louise Richmond, Jean Deeds, and Nadine Hood at First Mission District Retreat,OK. 3. MK Sophia Warren carries a heavy load from her recent visit to the Provision Closet.

❁ "Keeper of our Heart and Home" served as the theme of the 2003 Missouri State WAC Convention in Lebanon. Installation of officers took a twist as Missionary Carol Pinkerton hosted a game show spoof, "Who Wants to be a State Officer." Shirley Jackson serves as State Coordinator.

❁ "If it's to be, it's up to me," quipped Jean Deeds, Oklahoma City. The former missionary to Brazil for 34 years challenged women at the First Mission District Retreat, OK, to be missionaries in their own cities, state, and country. Fifty-six registered for this annual event, August 1-2, in Stillwater.

Is your group involved in a
Labor of Love?
Send us your news and photos today.

Save for St. Croix

ARE YOU A SAVER? Now you have something to save for. Box Tops for Education...It's a new program we're doing here in your mission school on St. Croix. We have a chance to earn up to $20,000 dollars a year. But we need your help in saving these coupons. You'll find them on everything from cake mixes, flour, to cereal—any General Mills product.

All you and your women's group need to do is clip the square coupon from the back or top and send these to us before March 1, 2004. Mailing can be a little on the slow side (USPS here operates on island time) so make sure you ship them in February. But don't stop saving. We plan to continue this program so we'll welcome your box tops at any time of the year.

Who knows? Maybe you'll be responsible for funds to hire a music teacher. Of course, this also involves praying that God will burden someone's heart to come and minister here with us while teaching music to our school kids. It is a ministry here and you can be part of it with your coupons and especially with your prayers. So pray and clip.

Send to:
Dawn Real
P. O. Box 6265, Sunny Isle
Christiansted, St. Croix, VI 00823-6265



DEBE'S DELIGHTS

"thy commandments are my delights."
Psalm 119:143b

by
Debe Taylor

WNAC President

THE WONDER OF CHRISTMAS

won·der: *n.* **1.** a person, thing or event that causes astonishment; marvel; the feeling of awe aroused by something unexpected, incredible; to be filled with amazement.

WONDER

...for the maiden, the mother of Jesus. Upon her visit to her cousin Elizabeth, Mary proclaimed, *"My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior"* (Luke 1:46-47). The wonder of Christmas was dawning in the heart of Mary. As the events of her child's birth unfolded, Mary *"kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart"* (Luke 2:19). Mary experienced the wonder of Christmas.

...for the mere commoner, the shepherds. The night sky lit up like never before and the angelic concert was definitely a first. The event was so spectacular that the shepherds left their flocks (a real no-no), went to town (a little bit of a journey) and searched for a little baby (in the middle of the night). *"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen..."* (Luke 2:20). The shepherds saw the wonder of Christmas.

...for the mature saints, Simeon and Anna. Upon their visit to the temple, Joseph and Mary were met by Simeon, a just and devout man, who had been waiting for the "consolation of Israel." When he saw Jesus, he took him in his arms, blessed the Lord and said, *"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation"* (Luke 2:29-30). The prophetess and widow, Anna, entered the temple and *"in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord"* (Luke 2:38a). Simeon and Anna recognized the wonder of Christmas.

...for the magi, the wise men. Following a star, these learned men made a deliberate and determined search to find the King of the Jews. *"When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they...fell down and worshipped him"* (Matthew 2:10, 11a). The wise men found the wonder of Christmas.

In the book, *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever,* the meanest kids in town, the Herdmans, decide to be the star cast of the church's Christmas pageant. The closing chapter gives a glimpse of a young lady who discovers the wonder of Christmas. "Everyone had been waiting all this time for the Herdmans to do something absolutely unexpected. And sure enough, that was what happened. Imogene Herdman was crying." Imogene discovered the wonder of Christmas.

THE WONDER OF WONDERS,
OH, HOW COULD IT BE
THAT GOD BECAME FLESH
AND WAS GIVEN FOR ME?
—Bill Gaither

The wonder of Christmas is not in the sights, the sounds or the scents of the season. The wonder of Christmas is in the Savior. Do you know the wonder of Christmas?

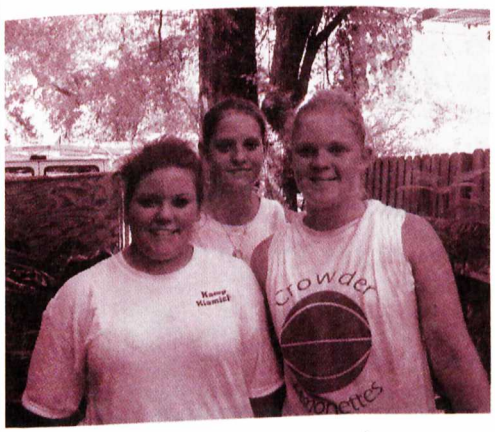
Life! Action

a column for teens

Rake That Yard, Reach That Guy

Ever wanted to go on a mission trip? No extra funds? Not eligible for TEAM? Youth group too small? Summer too crowded? Say hello to Reach That Guy. Reach That Guy, sponsored by FWB Student and Children's Ministries, gives young people attending the National Youth Conference a variety of inner-city ministry opportunities. Feeding the homeless at a soup kitchen, helping the elderly with chores, working with children at a day camp...Reach That Guy is real-life ministry.

Reach That Guy requires no application or references, only willing hands and heart. Once a teen registers for NYC, the only extra cost is a van ride. Church size or location doesn't matter. Even a rural youth group of one can make a difference. NYC and RTG—it's two trips in one. Consider catching a RTG event each morning or afternoon, then joining hundreds of tweeners or teens for worship and activities every evening. That's what the teens from Crowder FWB Church did this past summer in Tampa, Florida.



A small town in Northeast Oklahoma, Crowder seems far removed from urban life. With only 455 in their town, 100 in their church, and just 25 seniors in their school's graduating class, it's unlikely these teens would meet this opportunity otherwise. Yet, their youth leader, Adam Newman, a local high school teacher, took them to Tampa and sent them out each day to serve. This was their first trip to NYC, but they all agreed it won't be their last. I met up with them on Wednesday, headed for a morning of yard work for the elderly.

Many elderly and disabled people face a dilemma—unable to do the work themselves, too poor to hire someone. Yards continue to grow, often leaving persons in danger of city codes violations that carry hefty fines.



One look at our supplies convinced us this would be no simple mow and trim. The Center for Women, the local organization in charge, provided insect repellent, gloves, rakes, shovels, chain saws, and rolls of huge garbage bags. We were tackling a back yard that resembled a jungle.

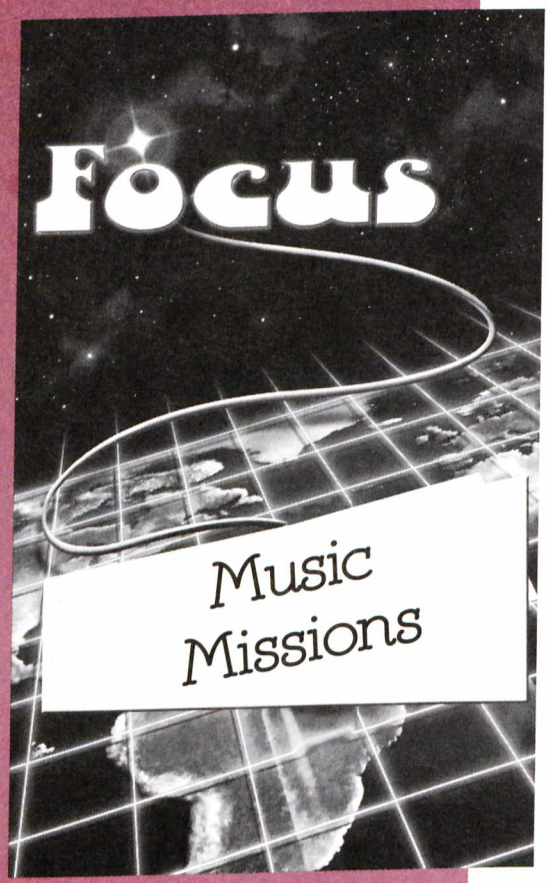
Together our group cleared a fence, pulled vines, raked leaves, sawed limbs, dismantled an old swimming pool, collected trash and hauled off over 600 pounds of debris. Girls in the group got a chance to talk with the woman living in the house.

In spite of the Florida heat, I heard no complaints, only comments of, "This is fun." "It's the best project so far." "I'm so glad we could do this." Workers from the Center also made positive comments about our group and our work. One employee remarked, "It would have taken us two weeks to accomplish what your group has done this morning." When we loaded the van to leave, a second shift of Reach That Guy participants arrived to help. What a privilege to serve in the name of Christ.



Though SCM steers this annual program, WNAC encourages all its Convention attendees to participate. Maybe a WAC member in your church would be willing to go with you or help sponsor your way. Plan now to participate in Reach That Guy, Kansas City, July 2004. Who knows what kinds of service opportunities this city will provide? But don't wait until then. Look around. Examine the possibilities in your own community. Go ahead. Rake that yard. Reach That Guy.

—Sarah Fletcher



Pray:

—for needed support allowing arrival in Japan in time to participate in Christmas outreach events.

—for a good renter for their present home.

—for strength and stamina to share their vision.

—for personal financial needs for outstanding medical expenses.

—for preparation of hearts in Japan to receive the Word through music.



Jonathan, Teresa, David, Elizabeth and Anna Snow



Puzzle pieces. That's how Jonathan and Teresa Snow describe their life. Longtime missionary senders and supporters, they have recently watched God fit the pieces together into a ministry opportunity custom-designed for them.

MISSIONS. Jonathan and Teresa's heart for the world came naturally, instilled in them by godly parents. Even as a child, Teresa says she cannot remember a time when she wasn't involved in WAC projects, mission walk-a-thons, and missionary support. Jonathan's family lived and breathed missions. He is the third Snow sibling to serve under FWB Foreign Missions. Yet Jonathan and Teresa always viewed themselves as supporters. They've hosted countless missionaries and even planned for a missionary apartment in their home. Jonathan has worked heavily with E-TEAM since its inception, arranging and coordinating its music program. In 1994, the Snows led a team to Japan. For many years, Teresa organized a churchwide WAC missionary toy drive, providing educational toys and resources for MK's.

MUSIC. Piano teachers by profession, together Jonathan and Teresa offer over 60 years of keyboard experience. Through the years, both have ministered faithfully in their local church, Jonathan as keyboardist, pianist, organist and choir member, Teresa as pianist, choir member, and preschool choir leader. Jonathan holds a master's degree in piano performance. His strengths include composing and arranging. However, not just two, but five Snows touch the ivories. This past year, David, Elizabeth, and Anna all represented Tennessee at the NYC Music and Arts Competition.

HOSPITALITY. By design God brings people into each of our lives. In the past eight years, thirteen Japanese guests have



Music: a large piece of the puzzle.

found a welcome at the Snow home. (Was that not a hint of God's plan?) One of those guests, a Japanese believer and musician shared his passion for communicating the gospel through community choirs, the very ministry the Snows plan to spearhead for Free Will Baptists.

HOMESCHOOLING. The Snows have homeschooled since their oldest son, now an eighth grader, started kindergarten. Teresa feels this puzzle piece will make the transition from one culture to another much easier for the whole family.

MINISTRY. The Snows have been given a two-year assignment to enhance the church planting and evangelization efforts in Japan through a unique Music Missions role. Their responsibilities will include developing worship music that is relevant to the Japanese in their culture. (Japanese hymns, not just American hymns translated into Japanese.) They will be teaching the biblical basis of music in worship and training Japanese musicians for music ministry. They plan to reach out into the community by developing choirs of various ages, establishing children's handbell choirs, and hosting instrumental and choral concerts in community centers. Combining current interest in American gospel music with a love for learning English opens the door to present the gospel to the Japanese by sharing the words and meanings of the songs.



Children's handbell color cards transcend language barriers.

SUPPORT. How frustrating to almost complete a puzzle, and discover that one piece is missing. The Snows' Music Missions ministry depends on the prayers and financial support of others. Are you a music listener or music lover? Do you sing in the choir? Are you a homeschooling mom? Would God have you help complete this piece of the Snow's puzzle? Will you fill their place as senders and supporters?

Other Prayer Concerns



—Pray for safety of chaplains and military personnel serving in Iraq. Pray for their families, separated during the holidays.

—Pray for holiday outreach events in our mission works within the U.S. and abroad.

—Pray for political stability in Cote d' Ivoire enabling missionary staff to return. Pray for continued growth among believers during the unrest.

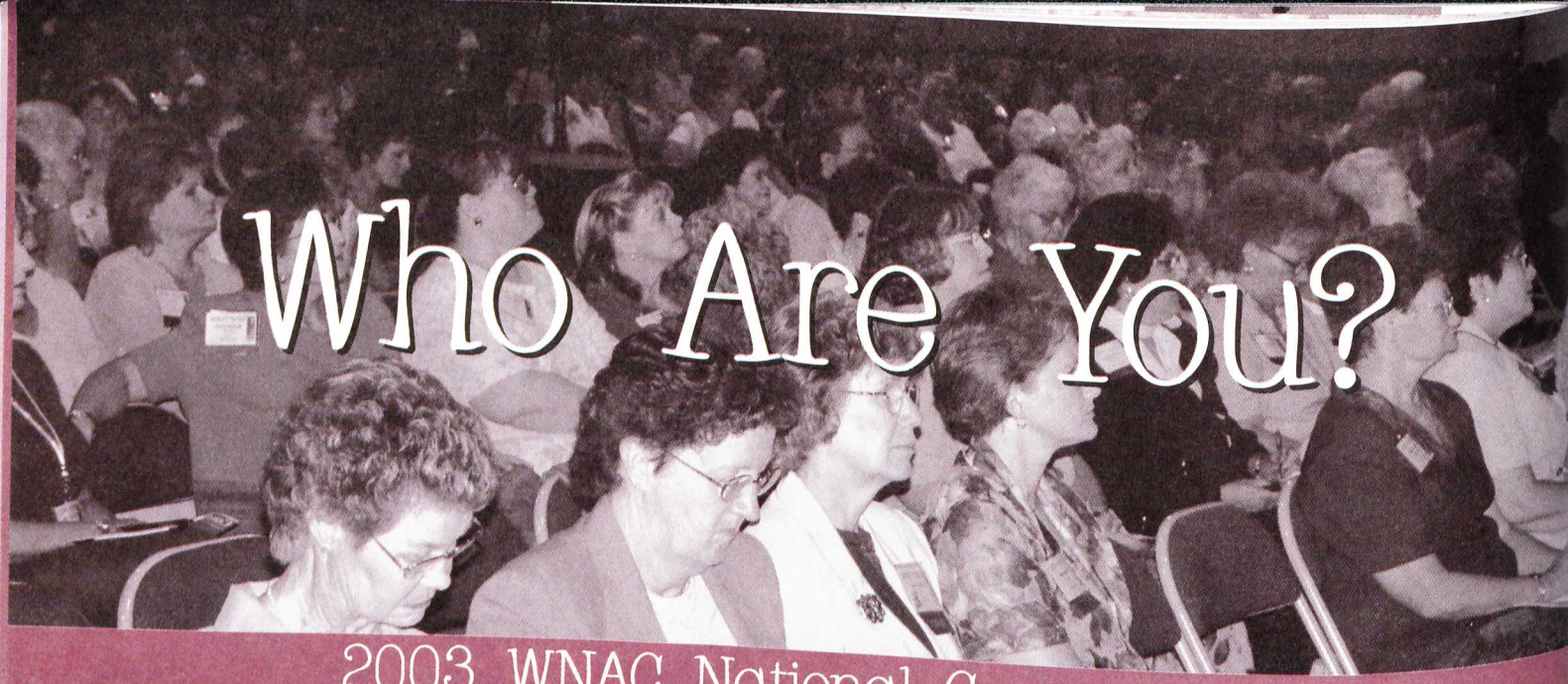
—Pray for Ron and Linda Calloway as they transition from missionary life into a teaching role at Free Will Baptist Bible College.

—Pray for Juan Carlos, a Cuban seminary graduate now living in Spain who desires to start a FWB work in the town of Colmenar Viejo.

—Pray for Enrique Duarte, a young man in the San Luis, Mexico church who has answered the call to preach.

—Pray for the peace of Jerusalem and an end to continued violence in Israel.

—Pray for the persecuted church around the world.



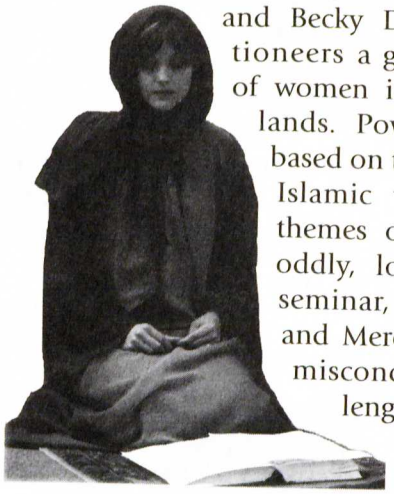
Who Are You?

2003 WNAC National Convention

Who Are You? That's the question Executive Secretary Marjorie Workman presented to the 2003 WNAC Convention body. Her feature PowerPoint outlined the purpose, program, position, plan and prayer of Women Active for Christ. Yet this same question surfaced throughout the convention.

Who Are You?

I am a woman of Islam. French M Team wives Jill Warren, Dana Portell, Di Keener and Becky Derby gave conventioneers a glimpse into the lives of women in Muslim-controlled lands. Powerful monologues, based on true accounts of three Islamic women shared the themes of fear, shame, and, oddly, loyalty. The Monday seminar, "Mystery, Mothers and Mercy" lifted the veil of misconception and challenged listeners to reach out in their own communities.



I am a woman who is learning to follow God's principles. Pastor's wife Karen Owen shared biblical financial principles and examples of God's faithfulness in her family's life during the seminar, "Developing a Financial Green Thumb."



I am an invited guest. State presidents and field workers were invited to a Monday evening after-service reception sponsored by the WNAC staff. In this large living room setting, leaders found time to fellowship, share ideas, relax, and refresh.



I am a Woman Active for Christ. 6577 strong, representing 19 states, three districts, and three local groups, Women Active for Christ seeks to help each woman find her place in the Great Commission. Convention reports stated that together, women gave $480,598 to mission-related causes in 2002. Women voted to award three $1000 scholarships from the Cleo Pursell Foreign Student Scholarship Fund. The 766 who registered for the convention encouraged women to be active in other ways as well. Delegates affirmed their biblical stance against same-sex marriages and urged all women to contact political officials regarding this issue.

RESOLUTIONS OF THE 2003 WNAC NATIONAL CONVENTION

1) that scholarships be given from the Cleo Pursell Foreign student Scholarship as follows:
   a) to continue the $1,000 scholarship for Paul and Robert in Côte d'Ivoire.
   b) to continue the $1,000 scholarship for the Cuba Cedars of Lebanon Seminary.
   c) to provide a first time scholarship of $1,000 for the FWB Marie Wright Hanna Bible Institute in Conoor, Tamil Nadu, South India.

2) that WNAC, as a body, stand against same sex marriages and that we make every effort as individuals of the body, to contact our Senators, Congressmen and others in political positions informing them of this stand.

I am a new executive committee member. Delegates elected officers for the next two years, including three new executive committee members: Phyllis York, KY, as secretary, and Linda Harvey, AZ, and Shirley Jackson, MO as members at large. Debe Taylor, AR, will continue to lead as President, Joanne King, NC, remains Vice President, and Carolyn Hendrix, AL, was reelected a member at large.



I am an answer to prayer. "I stand before you as a living answer to your prayers, " stated Deleen Cousineau as she recounted her recent experiences in war-torn Côte d'Ivoire. In July 2002, her husband was pistol whipped, kidnapped, and fired upon by rebels. Two months later, their situation gained international attention as rebels surrounded the International School in Bouake where she and her family minister. Deleen shared how God gave her peace through the turmoil. God taught her not to trust Him to keep her family safe, but simply to trust Him. She specifically thanked attendees of the WNAC National Retreat at Ridgecrest who "went to their knees" during the crisis. "I am amazed at His grace," she concluded. Several came forward to pray for needs. Others came to give thanks for God's protection of the Cousineaus, the students at the school, and all missionaries serving in the Ivory Coast.





I am a woman of opportunity. A new opportunity awaited women at this year's gathering. WNAC, in partnership with Reach That Guy, gave women opportunities to actively serve the Tampa community. Stocking food banks, serving in soup kitchens, doing yard work for the elderly, and spending quality time with the handicapped, women and youth worked side by side sharing God's love. *(See related article on p. 23.)* Look for future opportunities such as these at the 2004 Convention in Kansas City.

I am an unlikely servant. Rosalie Ranquist, WNAC Luncheon guest, detailed her abusive childhood and troubled past as a testimony that God can use anyone. This "ordinary" person with less than an eighth grade formal education, became a New Tribes missionary to New Guinea and an international linguistics specialist. "Where are all the qualified people?" she asked and challenged luncheon attendees to share the message that God loves the world.







I am a woman with great expectations. This upcoming year offers each woman opportunities to find her identity, her mission, and her hope in God, the source of all expectation. Who are you? Discover yourself through Women Nationally Active for Christ.

Where Are You?

You who are the fortunate enough
To know what it means to be saved—
Where are you who have been washed
In the blood of Jesus Christ?
Where have you been?
Can't you see that we are in agony?
Didn't Christ command you to come to us?

The world is perishing in its darkness;
Thousands are dying in the flames of hell.
Have mercy and come to us.
We beseech you to come.

We are clad in the rags of ruin
Totally bankrupt: Only God can help us now.
But will we also have a chance to hear His voice
His peace and His salvation—
Will we also have access to them?

Where are you—
Where are you bearers of the light?
We call out to you, but there is no answer—
Have you perhaps fallen asleep?
Where are you?

—Central Asian Girl—

(from the seminar, "Mystery, Mothers,and Mercy," WNAC 2003 Convention)

Beauty Spots

Being a farm girl from Illinois, I think there's nothing more beautiful than a field of corn or soybeans, wheat or even hay. Ground is tilled; seed is sown. Weed control is applied and good weather conditions are hoped and prayed for. There is a special beauty in the precious rain that encourages growth. Eventually, the green carpet turns to gold as grain reaches maturity. Harvest produces seed for next year's crop as well as fruit for this year's consumption. Jesus illustrated the beauty of spiritual growth in the parable of the sower and the soils. This makes Illinois all the more beautiful...an earthly view of a divine life cycle.

—Paula Hayes

Due to a computer error, this article was not included in our last issue.

SOMETHING'S NEW AT RIDGECREST

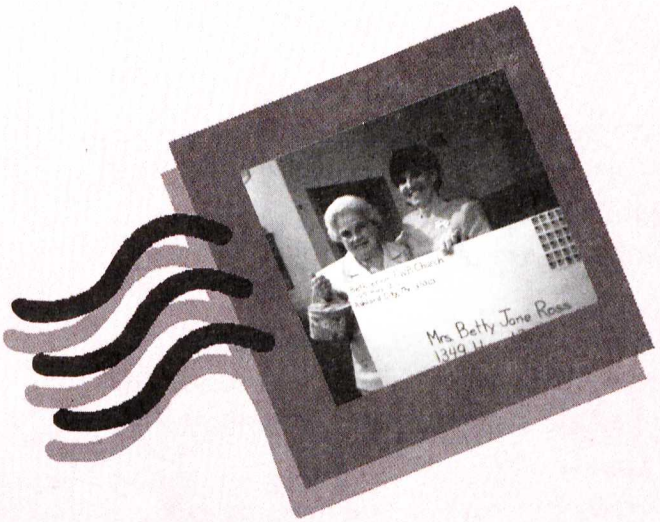
NEW DATES: October 29-30

NEW FORMAT: Two day conference allows more mothers and working women to attend.

NEW SPEAKER: Carol Kent, nationally known speaker and author will lead the sessions.

NEW PRICING: Shorter, more compact conference makes it more affordable.

MAKE PLANS NOW TO ATTEND THIS ONE-OF-A-KIND CONFERENCE.



Special Delivery

as told by Joy Corn

Tuesday mornings in Ashland City, Tennessee, locals know what's in the mail. Through the years, they've come to expect this weekly treasure—a hand stamped, sometimes hand delivered letter from Betty Jane Ross.

More than a decade ago, as Mission Action Chairman of her WAC, Betty Jane began mailing the Bethlehem FWB Sunday bulletin to shut-ins and absentees. One week she added a note. This received rave reviews, so she began writing a weekly letter, giving details of the services along with other church news. Later she added a page of stories and jokes to the weekly mailer. Today, both young and old alike look forward to her news, encouragement, and chuckles.

Betty Jane's mailing list has also grown. Nearly 60 people now receive her weekly publication. Except for an occasional donation from a reader, Betty Jane personally finances the mailing, often buying stickers and extras to "dress it up."

Recently, her congregation honored her for this ministry. In the weeks before, church members secretly donated rolls and books of stamps. Pastor Randy Corn presented her with 700 stamps and a huge thank-you postcard "stamped" with yet another sheet of postage stamps.

Betty Jane's newsletter project is only a small portion of her ministry to others. A former Registrar of Deeds, she knows just about everyone in the county. She regularly takes meals to shut-ins, serves as a chauffeur for doctor and shopping trips, balances checkbooks for illiterate acquaintances, and shares from her garden bounty. She even buys produce from other locals just to give away. Betty Jane champions support for missionaries. She's always ready to meet a need. Her pastor's wife calls her "generous to the core."

A long-time member of Bethlehem FWB Church, Betty Jane holds deep ties to WNAC. Her Aunt Fannie Polston served as WNAC's first Field Worker. Betty Jane remembers attending "auxiliary" meetings as a child when women contributed a set portion of their hard-earned egg money (a few cents) to pay dues. Today, she still faithfully attends WAC, usually providing a ride for at least one other person.

ABOVE: Betty Jane Ross with her pastor's wife, Joy Corn. BELOW: Copy of the postcard message given at the presentation.

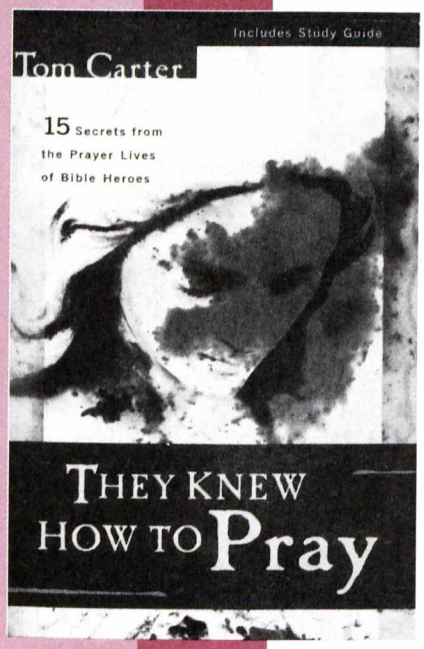
Dear Betty Jane,

This morning we want to recognize the labor of love you have been involved in for more than 10 years now. The weekly mailer you have written and largely financed on behalf of our church has been a blessing to scores of shut-ins and others who just want to keep up with Bethlehem.

We honor you today for this ministry, and our public thank you comes with 700 stamps which you may use to mail your newsletter. By our estimation, that should keep you going for the next four months or so. Thank you for your time, effort, and diligence in this ongoing project.

Love,

Your Bethlehem family



They Knew How to Pray
by Tom Carter
Kregel Publications
$11.99

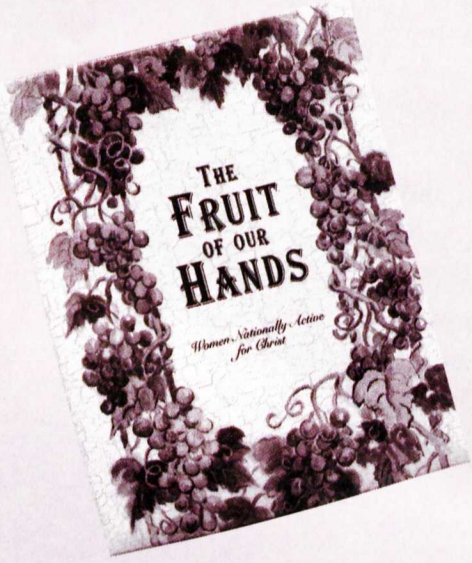
"Every Christian needs a mentor in prayer," writes Tom Carter, " someone who knows God intimately and can say, 'Follow my example' and 'Here are some mistakes I've made in prayer that I want you to avoid.'"

"Maybe you don't have a seasoned saint who will take you under his or her wing to mentor you that way, but you can still enjoy the ministry of a prayer mentor–or many of them..."

They Knew How to Pray highlights the lives of fifteen Bible heroes, revealing their strengths and weaknesses in prayer. From Hannah to David to Paul, the author invites readers "to listen to their cries to God, to feel their spiritual passion, and to allow their hearts to mold yours."

Though the book centers on Bible personalities, the author also cites current events and contemporary examples to illustrate the various prayer principles. Chapters end with action steps or ideas and suggestions for putting the principle into practice.

The book is suitable for both personal reflection or for small group study. Each chapter contains a study guide with questions and related Scripture passages. *They Knew How to Pray* complements WNAC's November program and the PreThanksgiving Week of Prayer.



DID YOU MISS OUT?

WOULD YOU STILL LIKE TO PURCHASE A COOKBOOK?

WNAC is reprinting its *Fruit of Our Hands* cookbook, but quantities are limited. Don't miss out again. Complete and mail the form below or call 1-877-767-7662 to reserve yours today.

Yes. Please reserve _____ cookbook(s) for me at $20 each
(plus $3 each book for shipping and handling)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Church _____:

❒ I am prepaying the total amount of _____

❒ Please bill me when the books arrive.

Words for Women



Executive Secretary-Treasurer
Marjorie H. Workman

Two Gifts

The front door slammed. I peeked around the corner of the bathroom where I was refreshing my makeup. "It's about time you got home," I piped to my husband, "You know we're going to be late.""Yes," he retorted as he yanked off his tie in favor of comfort over looks. "Are the gifts wrapped?" he asked. "Oh, no! I forgot all about them," I confessed. "But, don't fret, I'll find something."

The task at hand couldn't be too difficult. Surely in my stash of gifts, (I shop year round.) I could come up with two gifts—two generic gifts—one for a man and one for a woman. The only consideration was cost. Ten dollars was the limit. Now, that could be tough. The rules were a little fuzzy here. Were we to spend ten dollars or must the value be ten dollars? Oh, well, it didn't really matter; our names wouldn't be on them. Besides, the gifts would be lost in the pile of presents tagged, *Woman* or *Man*.

I pulled out a twenty-dollar gift, looked at it, saw the marked down $7.50 sticker. This is great, I thought. Whoever gets this is really going to get a bargain. Or, maybe this odd colored scarf would be better. It's been here for two years and this would be a good way to cycle it out of storage...or perhaps this...

In a very short time, I had two meaningless gifts stuffed into two gift bags, and we were on our way to the Christmas party. Later that evening, we returned home with two gifts received from two nameless persons. One gift was actually cute, *but* I don't collect chickens.

Why do we do this? We had just experienced giving and receiving in its truest commercial sense. Clever, skilled, commercial publicity has exploited us into believing that presents are the main objective of Christmas. Give and get anyway you can. You've been there. We've all heard the announcements, "Everyone is invited and don't forget to bring a five-dollar gift." We are almost made to forget all the many other beautiful and significant aspects of the season.

Is this the meaning of Christmas? There's nothing wrong with present giving and present receiving. In *The Book of American Traditions,* Dorothy Canfield Fisher says, "To give well, generously, thoughtfully, to receive with pleasure, delicacy and gratitude—those are beautiful arts which every child should learn by practice."

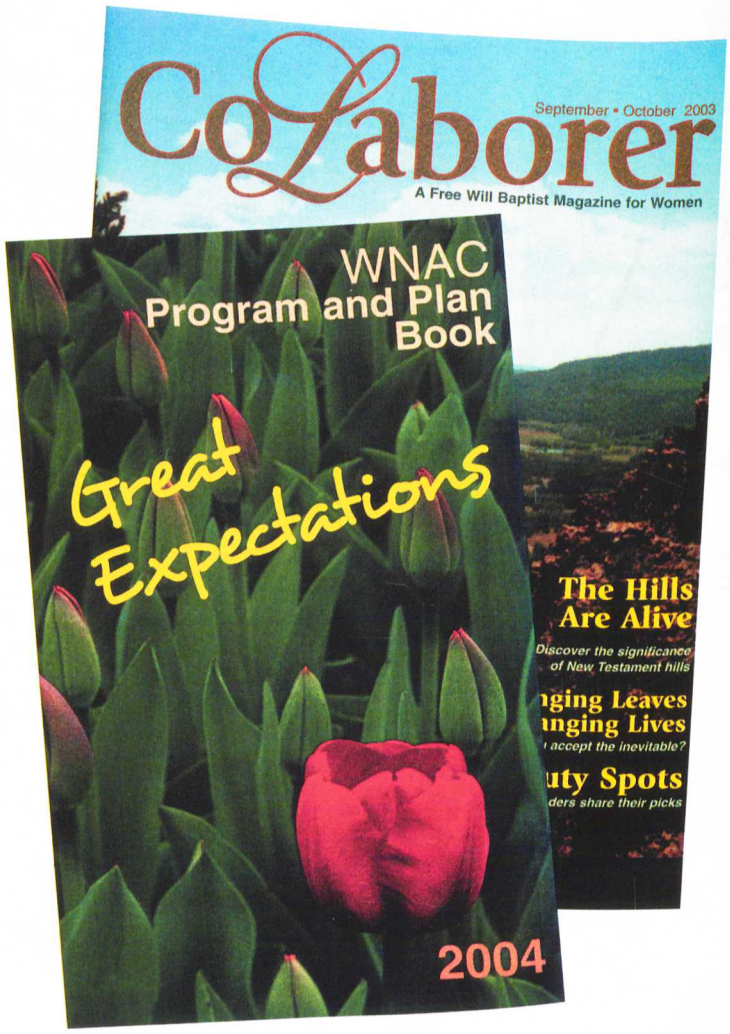
Gift giving is a wonderful thing. After all, the wise men in Matthew 2:11 "*...fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.*" God, Himself, gave the greatest gift of all, "*...but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 6:23b). "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...*" (John 3:16a).

Oh, that we would put into practice Jesus' words, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" With this attitude, we would delight in giving gifts to those who could not reciprocate—gifts to children in children's homes, families in poverty stricken neighborhoods, refugees, those in nursing homes and homeless shelters. I know one family whose Christmas tradition is to give a blanket to a homeless person. Each year they get in their car, drive around town looking for a homeless person curled up on the street without any protection from the weather. Finding one, they present him/her the blanket. What a lesson in giving. What an example.

Imagine pooling all of our generic gift giving. What a real difference we could make for others. Food. Clothing. Joy. Opportunities abound at Christmas and all year. We do our family a disservice if, on Christmas Day, we give them nothing but presents.

Got Programs?





CoLaborer and the 2004 Program and Plan Book. Like milk and cookies, it's hard to imagine one without the other. Get your copy today.

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