

The Gospel News

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Who Were the Wise Men?

By Elder Duane Lovalvo

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him." - Matthew 2:1-2

Biblical scholars have speculated for hundreds of years who these "wise men" or Magi were and where they came from. These three travelers are often described as kings, magicians, astrologers, educated princes, and Persians, that had cleverly taken note of a new star and followed it westward. Clearly, they were determined to find the Lord and deliver their precious gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. More impressive, however, was their humility and recognition of Christ's greatness. *"And when they came into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him:"* - Matthew 2:11.

So, what exactly did propel these men to embark on a quest of hundreds or perhaps thousands of miles to find a small child and worship Him? The Book of Mormon sheds a lot of light on this very subject. In the year 6 B.C., Samuel the Lamanite stood upon the walls of Zarahemla proclaiming, *"And behold, this will I give unto you for a sign at the time of his coming; for behold, there shall be great lights in heaven, insomuch that in the night before he cometh there shall be no darkness, insomuch that it shall appear unto man as if it was day."* He also told the Nephites that a new star would arise at the time of the Messiah's birth and that there would be many signs and wonders in heaven. - Helaman 14:3-6

Samuel's words began to be fulfilled a few years later. The scripture tells us that *"...there were great signs given unto the people, and wonders... And angels did appear unto men, wise men, and did declare unto them glad tidings of great joy;"* - Helaman 16:13-14. Thus, we see that there were other "wise men" besides those mentioned at Bethlehem. This additional information could lead us to the conclusion that perhaps angels appeared to the Magi as well. Such a powerful spiritual experience could certainly motivate them to find the Son of God.

So, what made these men so wise as to be called "wise men"? Job defines wisdom for us, *"... Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."* - Job 28:28 Certainly, the men to whom angels appeared feared God and exhibited great faith. Thus, the shepherds in the country surrounding Bethlehem might also be called wise men. After all, the angels declared to them *"good tidings of great joy,"* after which they rushed to Bethlehem to see the baby Jesus.

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
November 2012 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30	January 2013 S M T W T F S 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	27	28	29	30	1 SILENT NIGHT Gaze up at the sky and wonder at His Majesty
2 WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCH THEIR FLOCKS- Pray for your branches	3	4 DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR? Listen to God's prompting voice	5	6	7 WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE Give gifts to those in need	8
9	10 JOY TO THE WORLD Spread joy to those who may be down this season	11	12	13 GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN Tell others of God's love for them	14	15
16 OH COME ALL YE FAITHFUL Attend Church often	17	18	19 AWAY IN THE MANGER Be humble as was our Savior's birth	20	21	22
23	24 OH HOLY NIGHT Praise God for sending His Son	25 We Wish You A Merry Christmas- from The Gospel News Staff	26	27	28 LITTLE DRUMMER BOY You are never too young to serve	29
30	31 LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH Pray for peace	1				

December 2012

"...Fear not...For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."
 Luke 2:10,11

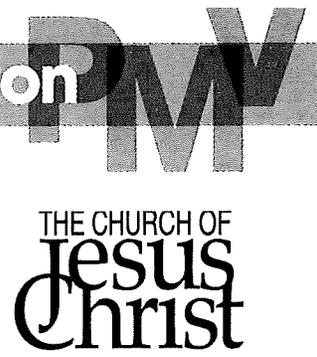
BTP Blast From The Past

Popcorn Balls

For Sister Leata Ford—66 years ago this month—the experience of making popcorn balls as Christmas treats for the Native American children at Six Nations would recapture one of the simple joys of her youth. *"We...were all stuck up with the syrups, and our hands were hot at times from rolling the balls."* Yet, the Christmas gaiety she had felt that evening was followed two days later by 200 miles of hazardous road conditions for the saints making their way from Windsor to the reserve. *"(I)ce was all over the road, and we saw many cars in the ditch, at times we could hardly go ten miles an hour,"* she tells. However, nine hours later the tired travelers arrived at the Christian Aid Hall to a full house and shortly thereafter began the Christmas program with an enthusiastic group of children, songs, readings, and skits.

Sister Leata Ford ▶





Purpose Statement

- To fulfill the plan of God by bringing salvation through Christ to all people.

Mission Statement

- The Church of Jesus Christ will teach the Gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things commanded by Jesus Christ.

- To draw Israel to Christ through an effort focused on the Native Americans of North and South America.

Vision Statement

- The full manifestations of God's Spirit and power among the Saints, resulting from living and worshipping in unity and righteousness, stimulate continuous growth of the Domestic Church—even at a rate of doubling over a five year period—while strengthening the International Church.

THE CHURCH OF
**Jesus
Christ**

The Importance of the Christmas Program By Sister Karen L. Progar

When I was a kid, there were lots of children in the Aliquippa Branch and we looked forward to learning our little parts and singing our songs for the Annual Christmas Program. In those days, the program was held on Christmas Eve and we all dressed in our new dresses and suits to make the best appearance possible. It was a very big deal!

These days, there aren't as many children there, but the brothers and sisters do their part to make the program an important event anyway. Now our choir consists of mostly adults and those of us who were those children nearly 50 years ago. Indeed things are different, but the Christmas Program is still important to the branch and every year we advertise in the local newspaper in order to attract someone who is looking for a little spiritual uplift on the holiday.

As a child I thought the program was intended to show off our talents to the adults in our branch. As an adult I now realize it has so much more potential. The program can draw someone seeking Christ and a church family.

We now normally hold our program on the Sunday morning before Christmas. Last year we had a little play with the children. In the play a mother and father told their children the story of Jesus' birth when some carolers (the choir) showed up at the home. The program included the traditional Christmas carols and the story told in an interesting way; with the kids asking questions about the information they are being given. The program was a lot of work for the brothers and

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150th Anniversary Celebration By Sister Carolynn O'Connor

The 150th Anniversary Celebration was held at the World Conference Center in Greensburg, Pennsylvania, on October 13-14, 2012. With over 900 people in attendance the building was filled to near capacity. The saints came from all over the country to be together, fellowship, strengthen bonds of love, and review the history of the Church over the past 150 years.

The celebration commenced with a catered lunch provided by the Church. With tables set up around the building and outside to accommodate the large group, the buffet was served and the saints enjoyed starting the celebration in fellowship. We were given commemorative pins with the 150th Anniversary logo on them and cups and posters were made available for sale. The October commemorative issue of *The Gospel News* was also passed out and many members took copies to send to their families not in the Church.

The afternoon meeting began with a presentation of current and historical events in the Church starting with the recent domestic growth of the Church in Levittown, Irvine, Erie, and Homestead. Next was a historical account of the conception of the Church and William Bickerton all the way through current days. It was a blessing to see how the Church was established and how it has grown from a handful of people in 1862 to over 15,000 members in 21 countries today.

Sisters Karen Progar and Lisa Champine shared the history of the Ladies' Uplift Circle and asked the members of each branch Ladies' Circle to stand as their circle name appeared on the screen. Sister Karen was also acknowledged for her nine years as the General Circle President. Sister Lisa Champine has taken over that role and Sister Gelsa Staley is now the Vice President.

Brother David DiBattista gave a presentation on the role of the Trustees in the Church, which is to oversee the physical structures and property of the Church. Following was a presentation on the Evangelist work and the growth of the Church including the establishment of the Church in foreign lands. Brother Joe Benyola gave a presentation on the Humanitarian Foundation of the Church and then Brother Larry, Sister Rosanne, and Sister Jennifer Champine sang "The Blood Will Never Lose Its Power."

Brother Tom Dorazio concluded the presentations sharing the history of the GMBA and the role it has played in the Church including over 500 baptisms in 50 years of campouts.

The night meeting was a concert worthy of high pay as many different performers sang praises to God in various ways.

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Domestic Church - Spartanburg, S.C.



The Spartanburg, South Carolina Branch was established on January 6, 1985. Brother Nathan Peterkin had a desire to bring the Gospel to his home state of South Carolina. Brother Nathan lived in Somerset, New Jersey, for 32 years before returning to South Carolina in 1978 along with his wife, Sister Carmella, and youngest daughter, Sister Ruth Hill. Ruth was one of the first to be baptized here.

The first church building was a small bungalow in the backyard of Brother Nathan and Sister Carmella's house. Many fundraising events and contributions allowed us to build a new building which was dedicated in 1993. We currently have 28 active members and 10 children.

During the years the Spartanburg Branch has sponsored and promoted many outreach programs for missionary work and orphanages both domestically and in India, Guatemala, Colombia, Africa, and Dominica with trips to foreign missionary fields by some of our elders and members. The local Ladies' Uplift Circle has been active in promoting the Church by supplying monthly food baskets and other essentials for those in need within the Church as well as for those in the community. They also provide food and other supplies for local nursing homes and children's homes during the holidays and school year.

We have MBA every second and fourth Wednesday of the month with a separate class for the children, Fast and Prayer the first and third Saturday of the month, and visit a nursing home once a month and sing to them. Spartanburg has also sponsored the Youth In Action several times in the past with trips to Cherokee, North Carolina, where there are many reservations of the seed of Joseph as well as other field trips for the children and members.

Spartanburg's doors are always open and all are welcome to come and visit or stay awhile with the saints. Just drop in and say hello—we will leave the LIGHT on for you! God bless.

International Church - Mexico



The Church started in Mexico in the late 1950s when Brother Eddie and Sister Evelyn Perdue moved to Tijuana through several experiences, and with the support of their daughter, Sister Norma Kennedy. They worked among the people full time for several years and spent their own money buying rice and beans for the poor, while simply spreading the love of God through kindness, love, praying for the sick, and baptizing many. The Church grew rapidly from the love of the Perdues.

There are three missions located in Tijuana with another ten located throughout Mexico totaling over 800 members. The missions span approximately 2,500 miles and are attended by many children, young people, and adults with some being third and fourth generation members. In Tijuana, where there are over 300 members, the building is occupied almost every day of the year with meetings and has become a focal point for the community.

Members from California support the missions near the border of California, especially at Christmas. For over ten years many have traveled at Christmas to Vicente Guerrero and Mexicali missions providing gifts and piñatas for the children and food baskets for community families as an outreach for the Church.

On New Year's Eve in Tijuana, not only does the Church gather for a "watch service," they stay at the church all night long. They have a bon-fire, sing all night, eat, and sleep at the church. They enjoy each other's fellowship, and worship together as a large happy family.

The Purpose-Driven Christmas

By Evangelist Jerry Valenti



The published Purpose of The Church of Jesus Christ is "To fulfill the plan of God by bringing salvation through Christ to all people." Is there anything we can do during the Christmas season to help accomplish this purpose? I would like to offer a few suggestions of activities specifically related to Christmas that can serve as a form of outreach as we strive to share Christ with all people.

As the redeemed of the Lord, we should consistently carry with us the joy of salvation in Christ. During the Christmas season, it is often tempting to complain about the commercialism surrounding the holiday, about the pressure of having to buy gifts for everyone, or about having to battle crowds and stand in long lines. Rather than allow these very real circumstances to dominate our conversations, how much better would it be to say how much we love this time of the year because it causes us to reflect on the birth of the Savior? Someone who is able to rise above all of the hustle and bustle of the season and mention the Lord or actually demonstrate love and kindness to others is certain to stand out and be noticed. We often hear testimonies from members of the Church who say that people ask them why they are different and how it opens the door to share their faith. Take advantage of the opportunity to be different during the Christmas season and be ready to share your faith when the opportunity presents itself. If your branch or mission devotes a specific meeting to Christmas, that would be a great meeting to invite someone to attend.

If your branch or mission doesn't devote a specific meeting to Christmas, I would strongly encourage that as another way to take advantage of the Christmas season to help accomplish the purpose of the Church. Many people like to attend Christmas services so scheduling and promoting a specific Christmas-themed meeting (including if possible a program involving the children) creates a golden opportunity to draw visitors to the Church. Some branches have used this as a "warm list" activity, sending actual invitations to friends and relatives and people who used to attend the Church. When the visitors to your meeting feel the love of Christ from the brothers and sisters and experience spirit-filled preaching and testimonies, they hopefully will have a desire to return (before next Christmas).

A favorite outreach activity that is used to promote the Church in the community of Levittown is Christmas Caroling. Using the master list of names and addresses of people who have expressed interest in the Church during various Youth in Action tours, the brothers and sisters go to those neighborhoods during the Christmas season, knocking on doors and singing Christmas Carols. The looks on the faces of the people make it all worthwhile as it invokes pleasant memories of a time far past when people would actually go around their neighborhoods singing "Joy to the World" or "Silent Night". Some will actually come out of their house and join in with the singing! This type of activity depicts our Church as one that retains old-time values as opposed to changing with the times. It is actually a great lead-in to being able to present The Church of Jesus Christ as a Restored Gospel that includes many activities that have been phased out or altered elsewhere.

During last year's Christmas Caroling, the group had just finished singing at one house and was crossing the street when a man burst out of the house, exclaiming, "Did I just miss Christmas Caroling? I was upstairs on the phone!" Even though he was still on the phone, the man followed the church group across the street to listen to them sing at the next house. He explained to his insurance agent on the phone that he was listening to Christmas Carolers and then said, "You should listen too!" and held up his phone toward the singing! Those same words can be used to summarize what each of us should be trying to convey to people we come in contact with—we have been blessed with the opportunity to hear and accept the message of salvation and "You should listen too!"

Let's take advantage of the unique opportunities that the Christmas season offers to help accomplish the purpose of The Church of Jesus Christ. Even if we don't go Christmas Caroling or organize a Christmas program, we can still offer people an alternative to viewing Christmas as just a hectic time of the year and show them that there are still people who want to celebrate what God did in sending His Son to earth to put the plan of salvation in place. It's something we can offer to people at any time of the year but people are a little more open to it at Christmas time.

Wishing God's blessings to you and your family at Christmas time and throughout the New Year.

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150th Anniversary Celebration

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It started with a beautiful rendition of "My Redeemer" sung by Sister Jennifer Champine with Detroit Branch #1 choir as back up. Brother Pete Giannetti played the piano and sang "Trust and Obey" and the General Church Choir led by Brother Jameson Staley sang four selections. The members had practiced in their branches and came together with only one joint practice. It was wonderful to see members of many regions come together to unite their voices. Brother Ron Mazzeo played guitar and sang a beautifully melodic song called "Daystar." The young people representing the future of the Church completed the presentation by singing a few hymns.

On Sunday we were greeted by President Paul Palmieri once again. He acknowledged Sister Cathy Gentile for her 37 years of service running the Print House.

We were treated to a presentation of the Apostles past and present. Each Apostle was represented and the Presidents of the Church were shown in consecutive order.



Banners on the rostrum at the 150th Anniversary

Apostle Paul Palmieri, President, followed speaking on the time when Jesus called twelve disciples as related in Luke Chapter 6. He spoke about the order of the Church and from Matthew 16:18 where Jesus prepared His disciples for His departure. He reminded us like in Moses' time how important it is to remind the children of what God has done for us and how we should share our experiences with those around us.

Apostle John Griffith talked about how we are the Kingdom of God and how looking around the room was like viewing heaven and he shared a dream he had about

heaven. He encouraged us to work together and stay united in our service. He then informed us that Apostle Dick Christman has retired as an apostle due to health issues. We stood in acknowledgment of his many years of service to the Church.

Apostle John Griffith spoke about Brother Joel Gehly as we prepared for his ordination as an apostle. He briefly shared an experience that while the apostles were discussing about Brother Joel, a vision was given of Brother Joel. When he was asked to come in and meet with the Apostles, he walked in with the exact same demeanor as was seen in the vision.

Brother Joel's feet were then washed by Apostle Paul Liberto. Following the apostles knelt as Apostle Peter Scolaro prayed to ask God to choose one among them to ordain him. Apostle Phil Jackson stepped forward and anointed Brother Joel's head with oil and pronounced upon him the ordination of apostle of The Church of Jesus Christ.

Brother Joel spoke about the humbling feeling and about the weight he now felt that he did not know existed until that moment. He asked for prayers that together we might move the Kingdom of God forward in marvelous ways. He reminded us also that unto whom much is given, much is required. Brother Joel shared his favorite verse, Revelations 14:6, "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

The service was concluded with a soulful rendition of "If You Would Labor in Zion," sung by all of the elders in the congregation.

For those who were able to attend this great event, the weekend will live on in our minds for years to come. For those of you who did not attend, know that you were in our prayers and hopefully through this and other communication, you too will feel a part of the celebration. Together we make up The Church of Jesus Christ today and through the vast number of brothers and sisters who labored before us, this Gospel has moved forward. In the words of our President, Apostle Paul Palmieri, "Now is our time." It is our time to carry on this great work so that years from now, our labors will build on the foundation of the Restored Gospel and the Great Work of the Lord.

Never Alone *By Sister Rose Palacios*

The Lord has been blessing the saints in Lorain, Ohio. There have been many experiences and healings. Below is a recap of His tender mercies toward us.

- Lorain is grateful to have two members added to our branch. Sister Katherine Cocco had shared her testimony to Linda Blackwood and she began attending our branch. She was baptized a few years ago. Her husband began attending church with her and is now one of our newest converts! At Brother John's confirmation, the Spirit spoke comforting words to both of them.

Our other new member is Sister Kristi Johnson's grandson, Nathan Barnett. He is a young man who was baptized in June. He is currently in military boot camp. An experience was given for him. There was a door and Jesus was on one side of it (this side of the door had no knob); Brother Nathan was on the other side which had a doorknob. He opened it and Jesus smiled at him. Please remember our young brother in prayer.

- While I was at a department store, there was a young lady paying for her items. The cashier there was a friend of hers. The young lady started crying and the cashier asked, "What's wrong?" She said she had just come from the doctor and the doctor found cancer on her body; she didn't know what to do. She said she was going out of town to her parents' house for Thanksgiving knowing she had bad news to tell them. She asked the cashier, "Will you pray for me?" The cashier replied, "How can I pray for you, I can't even pray for myself." When I heard this, I nudged the young lady's shoulder. When she turned to me, I said, "We are having a prayer service tonight at church. We will pray for you." Her reply was, "But you all don't even know me." I told her, "But God knows you." I normally don't do this, but I told her, "Come with me for a minute," and we walked over to where the fitting room was. I took her hands and said a little prayer, "Lord have mercy on this young lady." She hugged me and I gave her one of my husband Frank's business cards which had our church's name and phone number on it. Three weeks after Thanksgiving, she called me to say she had gone for two more doctor opinions and they found no cancer on her body. I then said, don't forget who (meaning, the Lord) helped her.

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Southern Revival *By Sister Eva Ziegler*

So happy were we, our slightly scattered group from the Mid-Tennessee Mission, that were all in attendance on Sunday, July 15, 2012, including our visitors, Evangelist George and Sister Jill Kovacic and Evangelist Nephi and Sister Lorraine DeMercurio. We enjoyed a congregation of about 30 - a novelty for our faithful few.

The air buzzed with excitement as we made our way down to the riverside. We sang and prayed and looked on as Evangelist Ken Staley baptized Jennifer Gipson, who went down to the muddy waters of the Duck River and rose up anew out of God's cleansing tide. She was confirmed by Evangelist George Kovacic, who interestingly also blessed Sister Jennifer as a baby.

After the baptism, we gathered in an outdoor pavilion at the Henry Horton State Park, where we regularly meet indoors. It felt like an old-fashioned camp meeting, not because of the heat or bugs, but because we enjoyed a revival. It was a day of feasting! First, we were fed by the Word, specifically concerning repentance and baptism, and were instructed by Brother Nephi to study II Nephi and Alma. Brother George also encouraged us to study the Word and testified of how

his dad used to stress the importance of the Book of Mormon, sweetly saying, "Son, this is a good book."

Following our meeting, we fellowshiped as we dined on lots of true southern fare. For us and our visitors, this Sabbath day was a day of renewal, rebirth, fellowship, and praise. We thank God!



Evangelist Ken Staley baptizing Jennifer Gipson

Southeast Area MBA

By Sisters Alicia Draskovich and Dianne Maddox

The enthusiasm among the young people in the Southeast Region has been great since the Hollywood Branch hosted a week long GMBA Youth In Action this past summer. Our young people are determined to keep this momentum going and under the Southeast Area MBA, have created "Dare 2 Move". The purpose of "Dare 2 Move" is to keep YIA alive year round in the Southeast Area. The first event of "Dare 2 Move" took place at the Forest Hills Branch. At 9 a.m. on Saturday, August 18, 15 young people came together, anticipating a full schedule of events for the day including spiritual seminars, community outreach and, of course, fun and fellowship. They started off the day making signs and attaching folded flyers about the Church to water bottles. Once these tasks were completed, they went into the sanctuary to find the seating rearranged in the form of a semicircle. They had previously requested to be surprised with a special guest, seminar, and topic. Brother John and Sister Carolyn Griffith lovingly complied by preparing and facilitating a discussion on "How to Become an Effective Contributor of The Church of Jesus Christ".

To say this seminar was effective and successful would be an understatement. The youth were asked to fill out questionnaires that asked "What does it mean to be a member?", "How do my actions reflect

my relationship with God?", and "What is one question, about any topic, you may have concerning the Church or scripture?" As the discussion progressed, many important topics were brought out and addressed informally. We all realized that no matter what age we are, the spirit of God works the same, and God wants to intervene in our lives on a daily basis. Towards the end of the seminar, Brother John and Sister Carolyn were brought into the middle of the circle. The young people then surrounded them and offered many heart-felt prayers on behalf of our brother and sister. As the prayers concluded, the Gift of Tongues was spoken. The message was of how the good shepherd died for His flock to show His love, and now the flock must display that love. It was a sobering and beautiful way to end our morning.

After lunch, the young people went to the intersection of State Route 54 and Little Road in New Port Richey to pass out the water with attached flyers. They held signs that read, "Free Water", "Honk for Jesus", and "The Church of Jesus Christ: Come and See". Approximately 500 flyers were distributed and the youth

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Never Alone *Continued from page 7*

Sister Aileen Calabrese took a fall in Florida and injured her shoulder. Upon returning back to Lorain, she went to see her orthopedic surgeon. He told her she would need to have surgery. As she went forth to get anointed, the Spirit spoke, "Thus saith the Lord, My child, fear not, I am with you. When you go under the doctor's hand, saith the Lord, I will be there and your recovery will be swift." After Sister Aileen's surgery, the doctor told her it would be 2½ months before she would be able to use her arm. She came to church after 2½ weeks having full rotation of her shoulder. Praise the Lord!

- In one of our Sunday meetings, Sister Dora Armstrong went forth to get anointed because the doctor had found an issue with her eyes. I had a dream that night where Apostle Frank Calabrese came and anointed Sister Dora. Before he left, he said, "Sister Dora, everything will be fine." That week, she returned to her doctor and he told her, "I don't need to see you anymore."
- Sister Iva Davis had a lot of blisters on the palm of her hand. She said she had already been anointed twice but they were still there. I told her, "When you get anointed, whichever elder anoints you, tell him to put a little oil on the palm of your hand." Brother Frank Palacios put a little oil on the palm of her hand not knowing what was said earlier. By Wednesday, she was showing everyone that her blisters had dried up.
- Sister Mary Jo King testified the past couple of weeks that she had been having work done on her house. One of the remodeled walls of her house collapsed outward. Not wanting to let this trouble her, she left it alone and went to work. While there, a man approached her, pointed a finger at her and said, "Everything will be alright, it will be taken care of." She was puzzled as to who he was because no one knew what she was going through. That night, when I came home from church, I fell asleep and in a dream, I saw myself praying, asking who was this man who came to Sister Mary Jo. The Spirit spoke, "I have sent my servant, Nephi, to her." Sister Mary Jo's home was indeed taken care of after this.
- After our Sunday service, we formed a circle to close the meeting. Brother Len Nardoizzi told everyone that the branch was going to begin fasting and prayer every Monday for the teens and little children throughout the Church. The Spirit spoke, "If you do what you have said, saith the Lord, you will see My hand move and I will move it greatly for you, saith the Lord."
- On a Wednesday night meeting, Brother Tony DeCredico had asked for prayer as his wife, Sister Shelby, was going to be having surgery for a growth on her thyroid. The following day, I called her and told her that the branch was praying for her. When we hung up the phone, she heard a voice say, "Touched by the Master's hand." Sister Shelby did not need to have surgery at all.

The Lord has told us many times that we are "Never Alone" as long as we keep His commandments and stay close to Him. God Bless everyone in the coming year.

The Christmas Magi

By Brother Kerry Carlini

Of the marvelous things Simeon said of Jesus when he blessed him in the temple was that he would be “a light to lighten the Gentiles.” And although Simeon’s prophecy was to extend into the future, a quite literal fulfillment was taking place as the Magi—priestly Gentiles from the east — followed the new star to the infant Jesus. Here are 5 amazing facts regarding their visit:

- 1** Because of the Jewish captivity into Babylon, followed by the Persian conquest, the Magi, or wise men, from Persia would have known of the prophet Daniel and his accurate timing of Christ’s birth.
- 2** It was a Gentile — the sorcerer, Balaam — who had given the clue to look for the new star, prophesying, some 1,450 years prior, that “there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel.”
- 3** Of the 3 gifts brought by the wise men, their symbolism is prophetic: the gold speaks of Christ’s kingship, frankincense — a spice used in priestly duties, and myrrh — an embalming ointment anticipating His death.
- 4** The wise men came to the home of Jesus, not the actual birth site, possibly up to two years later.
- 5** Although we sing “We Three Kings” every Christmas, the scriptures do not stipulate the actual number of wise men.

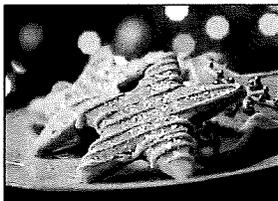
Numbers 24:17

Daniel 9:24-25

Matthew 2:1-12

Luke 2:21-35

Ladies’ Uplift Circle News



The True Meaning of Christmas

By Sister Angela Yoder, General Ladies’ Uplift Circle Editor

I don’t think I’m alone when I say that one of the best times of the year is Christmas. I love shopping through department stores with Christmas songs playing in the background, watching the snow fall quietly to the ground, the ringing of the Salvation Army kettle bells, beautiful Christmas lights displayed on homes in the neighborhood, the smell of cookies baking as I open the front door, and watching Christmas specials on television with the kids. Every year, I look forward to the ‘All Christmas, all the time’ radio stations, the children’s Christmas programs/musical concerts at school and church and the annual Christmas dinners that many of our local Ladies’ Uplift Circles hold. I call these my “Christmas perks.”

Sure, the juggling of those December calendars might be tough. Is there

really enough time to attend those children’s Christmas concerts, go caroling at the local hospital, bake a million cookies for your family and friends to enjoy, shop for gifts which you will use to shower your friends? Can you squeeze in one more Christmas brunch?

While I go about my month, I enjoy these things but I sometimes find myself asking the question, “Isn’t there ANYONE who knows what Christmas is all about?!?” I am somewhat comforted at this time of year, that at least many people get the chance to be reminded about the following well known Christmas scripture, “*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, ‘Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings*

of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.’ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’ Luke 2:8-14

With all the hustle and bustle of the season, it may be easy to lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas... celebrating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

This year, let’s try to remain focused on the reason we celebrate the season by keeping JOY in our hearts. Remembering Jesus first, others second, yourself third.

Merry Christmas!



The Birth of Jesus

... multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God, and saying 'Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men.'" (See Luke 2: 1-20) Can you imagine hearing and seeing something like that?

When the angels left, the shepherds decided to go into Bethlehem and see this thing that had happened that the Lord had shown them. They followed the star and found baby Jesus. They told people afterwards, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen as it was told to them by the angels!

While all this was going on in Bethlehem, there were others around the world watching the bright star shining on the manger. There were people in the Americas and there were wise men from far in the East coming to see the new baby Jesus, too. They were bringing costly gifts of gold, frankincense (resin from a tree burned as incense), and myrrh (made from the sap of a tree and used in perfume and medicine). On their way, they stopped at wicked King Herod's palace to ask where the new baby born King of the Jews could be found.

Herod was angry and called his advisors. They did not know, so he tried being tricky and told the wise men to tell him when they found the baby so he could worship Him, too. The wise men were not fooled. They followed the bright star and worshipped the baby Jesus when they found Him. They gave their treasures and decided to leave without letting King Herod know what was happening.

The Lord sent an angel to Joseph and told him to take his family and leave their country. Herod was searching for baby Jesus. They quickly headed for Egypt while evil King Herod sent soldiers throughout the land.

The family stayed away for many years until God sent another angel telling them it was safe to return to their country. They returned to the city of Nazareth. Jesus lived with his family, a young Jewish boy, living, learning, and growing.



Joseph and Mary had other children, and the Bible lists at least six brothers and sisters (See Matthew 13:55) so He also knew what it was like to be part of a big family. He understands everything that we go through, every pain, every fear, and every worry. You can pray and ask Him for help. We can trust in Him, the one who came from heaven, lived as a man, and sacrificed for us. Jesus hears you, forgives our sins, and loves you. Trust in Him.

With love, Your friend,
Sister Jan

WORD SEARCH

Luke	Tidings	In
Chapter	Of	The
Two	Great	Highest
Angel	Joy	On
Said	For	Earth
Fear	All	Peace
Not	People	Good
I	Glory	Will
Bring	To	Toward
Good	God	Men

F	O	R	W	I	L	L	C	P
G	O	D	L	U	K	E	M	J
S	T	O	J	O	Y	B	E	A
G	S	O	F	R	P	R	N	L
N	E	G	O	T	E	I	E	L
I	H	L	O	T	O	N	C	E
D	G	N	P	F	P	G	A	G
I	I	A	K	E	L	T	E	N
T	H	T	R	A	E	W	P	A
C	T	A	E	R	G	O	O	D
S	A	I	D	R	A	W	O	T

Dear Boys and Girls,

From the beginning of time, God, our creator, knew how hard it was to be human. And God loved us so much that He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, (who was human like us) to love us and teach us and give us eternal life when we died. (See John 3:16 in the Bible) Jesus was born of Mary, and taught each of us how to be loving and kind to one another.

Mary was a young Jewish girl who loved the Lord and was very good. (See Luke 1: 26-36) She was going to marry a carpenter named Joseph. The angel Gabriel came to her and told her, "...the Lord is with you, blessed are you among women... Fear not, for you have found favor with God. You will conceive (have a baby) and call him Jesus. He will be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest... Son of God"

In those days, the government decided to tax everyone. It was three days travel from their home in Galilee to the city of Bethlehem and Mary was very pregnant. When they got there, all the rooms were taken by other travelers. But the owner of an inn told them they could sleep in his stable (a barn). That night the precious baby Jesus was born!

In the fields, there were shepherds taking care of their flocks. An angel of the Lord came to them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were very afraid. And the angel said to the shepherds, "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good news of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born, this day, in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; you shall find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes (blankets), lying in a manger. Suddenly there was with the angel a mul-

Who Were the Wise Men?

Continued from Page 1

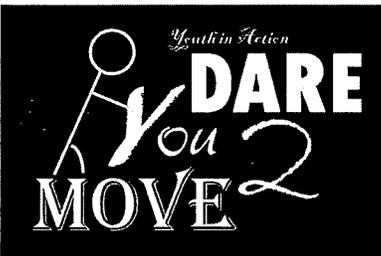
Alma gives us even more understanding about the role of the wise men. Eighty-two years before Christ's birth, Alma prophesied of His coming. "... Now is the time to repent, for the day of salvation draweth nigh; Yea, and the voice of the Lord, by the mouth of angels, doth declare it unto all nations; yea doth declare it, that they may have glad tidings of great joy; ..." - Alma 13:21-22

How merciful is the Lord who has made the Plan of Salvation available to all mankind, both Gentile and Jew. We see that the glad tidings of Christ's coming were proclaimed among all the nations of the earth through faithful men, wise men. Since that time, many years ago, all men and women have been made free to choose between the foolishness of man and the wisdom of the Lord. May God bless the world with peace as we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior.

Southeast Area MBA

Continued from Page 8

had a blast in the process. As they cooled off back at the branch, a few more young people arrived. After everyone enjoyed pizza, they went to the beach to play capture the flag until the sun set. It was a very fun, active, yet relaxing way to spend time with each other. When they returned to the branch, they did not want to go home. The day proved to be a great opportunity for the young people to take spiritual steps forward and solidify their bonds with each other.



The Christmas Program

Continued from Page 3

sisters who wrote and learned the parts, the pianist who practiced and played all the music, the brother who made our set, and all the brothers and sisters who dedicatedly showed up for the practices.

The labor intensity is offset by the joy of being together, the opportunity to get to know the children, and the hope that our efforts will touch someone's heart in a meaningful way. Add to all of that the blessing to the members of the branch who become the audience and see that even though there has been a change in the make up of our branch in the past 50 years, there is no change in the desire to service each other and the community.

If you don't have enough talent in your branch to do a full program, think about having a Singspiration Night at which the congregation can sing their favorite Christmas carols, after which the group can spend some time in fellowship. The blessings are worth the effort.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

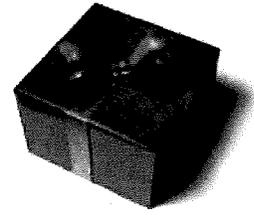
We would like to thank you for your generosity and wonderful response to our call for help. The Church of Jesus Christ is growing daily around the globe and you have been an asset to make that happen. Through your efforts, we have raised more than \$100,000 that will go towards Book of Mormon translation and printing. Your donations will go directly into the hands of your brothers and sisters in the form of the written Word of God.

As your efforts have created many opportunities, even greater blessings await us in this generation! Our goal of \$195,000 has come within sight and we encourage you to continue donating until we have accomplished it. Only through your generosity and prayers can we move this work forward.

On behalf of those who have benefited directly from your donations, we express the deepest gratitude and love. When Christ commanded His disciples to "GO," He knew our day and what we can accomplish when we are united in purpose. Let us continue to strive together in unity and labor diligently in the great work of the Lord!

Thank You.

May God richly bless you,
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Blessing Bits

B A Belated Christmas Gift

In January 2012, I had to move to Memphis, Tennessee, for my job. Before Christmas, I was seeking a job in Atlanta, Georgia, with a company that I very much wanted to work for, which would also allow me to reunite with a wonderful group of saints. Not knowing the outcome of the job in Atlanta, I moved to Memphis. On January 5, I arrived in Memphis and by January 11, I had the job offer for Atlanta. I moved to Atlanta on January 31 and on April 1, the company I had worked for in Memphis announced they were filing for bankruptcy. God knew what was going to happen and He spared me the burden of being unemployed in a city I did not know, removed from both my spiritual and natural families. I thank God every day for blessing me how He does. - *Sister Gretchen Dietz, Atlanta, Georgia*

BB The Power of Prayer

On July 15, 2012, when I awoke I thanked God for giving me another day and prayed for those in need. As I was getting dressed for church, I began to have chest pain and shortness of breath. I have had three heart attacks so I prayed again and asked God to bless the sick and said "what about me Lord?" Experiencing some

relief, I went to church. Toward the ending of church I began to feel ill. I was anointed and began to feel a little better. At 9 p.m. I went to bed but at 10 p.m. I began to feel different. I said "Lord the brothers and sisters are going to bed and they are praying for me. Hear their prayers." The Lord heard their prayers! I have arthritic hands and fingers but they are now pain free and my chest pain is gone. God is so good all the time, all the time God is good. - *Sister Dorothy Pastorelli, Lake Worth, Florida*

BB Angels Among Us

A new sister asked to speak privately to the ministry after a Sunday meeting at Levittown. She shared with us that when she looked around the church building, she saw angels in the empty seats. Not having experienced anything like this before, she was somewhat disturbed at seeing this. The ministry prayed for her and asked God to give her peace, comfort, and understanding regarding this wonderful gift. She thanked us and left.

The next Sunday, as we began our testimony meeting, one of our seasoned sisters stood and said that

during the preaching that day, she had looked around the room and saw angels sitting in the empty seats. The new sister was sitting across the aisle and her eyes widened. She then jumped up and crossed the aisle to embrace the sister, saying, "I'm so glad you see them too!" God had answered the prayer from the week before. - *Evangelist Jerry Valenti, Levittown, Pennsylvania*

Send us your Blessing Bits [in approximately 150 words] and answer the Question of the Month by contacting us at gospelnewsinfo@gmail.com

Question for this month: Do you have a spiritual routine or workout or is there something that you do to start your day off right spiritual speaking?

Answer from last month: The most frequent answer to the Favorite Scripture was Romans Chapter 8. "Without question my favorite scripture is Romans 8:28 'And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.' This verse epitomizes the requirement to keep a positive attitude." -- Sister Alicia Draskovich

Do you enjoy the Question of the Month section? If so, please send in your answer each month. We need increased participation to keep this section going!"



Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. Psalm 119:105