

# The Gospel News

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## A Message from the Quorum of Twelve Apostles

### RECOVERING GOD'S LOST CHILDREN

To most people, family is a very important concept. If you're a parent, it would surely be your desire that you would always have a close relationship with your children. However, there are times, for whatever reason, that families become divided. Grown children may go their own way and not desire a relationship with their parents. When this happens, it's typically a cause of great sadness for the parents who live each day longing for a reconciliation and a return to a time when they enjoyed a close relationship with their children.

In this way, God is similar to earthly parents. Many of us, His children, grow up and have no desire for a relationship with Him. And, just as you or I would, He desires for each of them to return to Him and enjoy that close relationship—in this case, a relationship that will last for all eternity.

One category of God's lost children is those who, at one point in their lives, took the steps of repentance and baptism, and began a relationship with God, only to find themselves later wandering astray and losing that close relationship with Him. Jesus addressed this situation in Matthew 18, encouraging His disciples to retrieve followers who have gone astray since "it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:14).

However, there is another category of God's lost children—people who don't know the Lord and are thus classified as sinners. Jesus was very familiar with these types of people, which was why He often spent time with people who were known to be sinners. On one such occasion, some Pharisees noticed this, and they were immediately critical of Him, saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them" (Luke 15:2). Jesus responded to this criticism by relating three parables, which illustrate how God views sinners—as lost children with whom He would love to have a relationship.

#### Parable of the Lost Sheep

*"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?"*

(Continued on page 4)



Walk thru the Christmas story scriptures with us:

Isaiah 7:14

A prophecy foretold of Jesus' birth long before it happened.



Luke 1:26-33

A young woman receives news that would change the course of history.

Matthew 1:20-23

Mary's betrothed makes the choice to embrace God's plan after a heavenly visit.



Isaiah 9:6-7

We're promised this child—the King to come—is trustworthy.



Luke 2:1-6

Leaders of the day issue a requirement that means Mary and Joseph must travel and they begin their journey.



Helaman 14:5

III Nephi 1:21

Matthew 2:2

A new star is prophesied, appears, and brings exceeding great joy.

Luke 2:8-11

Shepherds are the first people to hear the glorious news. They go see for themselves and come away believing.



John 3:16

We are all given the chance to believe.

When was Jesus born in your heart?

\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
(Enter month/day/year)



# BFTP Blast From The Past

By Sister Kellie Speck

## “Worship of Yesteryear”

A cold, steady rain led into the weekend. But with temperatures rising into the 50s, Saturday, December 2, was blessed with unseasonably warm and sunny weather on what would become a perfect day for the Annual Saline Christmas Parade – forty-two years ago this month. It had been a busy time for the Saline Mission saints, spending many evenings in the neighbor’s barn working into the night preparing their float on the theme of “Worship of Yesteryear.” The morning itself began hours earlier with an integral part of the entry, a horse-drawn buggy, making a 5-mile trek from outside of town to the parade’s start on Michigan Avenue. The float – set in a wintry environment with a small, country church, the saints dressed in nineteenth-century attire, and two high school students trumpeting the carol “O Come, All Ye Faithful” – managed to win second place and \$150.00 in prize money. For the new mission, it had been a wonderful experience. Mission Elder Frank Morle recalled, “Everyone worked very hard, stayed up late, and felt good in the knowledge that the mission was going to be seen in public.”





## 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, while working to draw Israel to Christ through efforts focused on the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America



## Vision Statement

- Living and worshipping in unity and righteousness will result in the fullness of God's Spirit and power among the Saints, culminating in continuous growth of the Church and fulfillment of Christ's promises concerning His Kingdom on Earth.



### **"Raised Up" By Brother Doug Obradovich** **"Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43)**

Arriving, Lazarus' sister, Martha, confronted Jesus and told Him her brother would not have died had He been there. Jesus was unfazed by her accusation, and again prophetically claimed victory, *"Thy brother shall rise again"* (v. 23). He expounded, *"I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though He were dead, yet shall He live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die"* (v. 25, 26). He had nearly an identical exchange with Lazarus' other sister, Mary. After these conversations, Jesus saw Mary and others crying, which caused Him to *"groan in the spirit"* (v. 23) and soon after, *"Jesus wept"* (v. 25). Many have interpreted this as His sadness over Lazarus' death. He was clearly *"troubled"* because of His compassion, and was possibly weeping for the pain of others. Remember, He already prophesied Lazarus would resurrect, so sadness for Lazarus' condition is difficult to rectify.

Lazarus, dead for four days and wrapped in grave clothes, lay unsuspecting in his tomb. Jesus, unflinching, stood just outside the opening and *"cried with a loud voice,"*

*Lazarus, come forth!" And he that was dead came forth!"*

This story still astounds, bringing chills. But why are we, who have similar testimonies, so amazed? We, too, have been raised from the dead. Hasn't He raised you up from your sinful state of spiritual death? Hasn't He resurrected your spirit from the depths of discouragement or depression? Hasn't He brought life back into your relationships and/or situations when they seemed hopeless? He still stands confidently just outside our proverbial tombs, ready to *"cry with a loud voice."* Haven't we all arisen from such circumstances, unraveling the effects of these moments in our lives, like Lazarus still in his *"grave clothes?"*

The Savior could easily have been addressing your condition when He said, *"Though he were dead, yet shall he live!"* So, lay claim to His affirmation, arise, and *"come forth."* Once resurrected, shake off your *"grave clothes"* and tell others of the good news that Jesus Christ still possesses the resurrection power, and will do for them just as He has for you!

**T**hese three words, along with this incredible account, have been shocking people for over 2,000 years, as the story of Lazarus captivates on many levels. When Jesus first heard Lazarus had died, He utilized the opportunity to claim victory, *"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God"* (v. 4). However, this news created no urgency from Him, as He knowingly lingered for two more days before sharing His intentions, *"I go that I may awaken him out of sleep"* (v. 11). When His disciples didn't comprehend *"sleep,"* He explained bluntly, *"Lazarus is dead."* He confidently clarified, *"I am glad for your sakes that I was not there to the intent ye may believe"* (v. 14). He was saying, *"Just wait till you see what I'm about to do."*

## (Recovering God's Lost Children - continued from cover)

***And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” (Luke 15:4-7)***

How can a sinner coming to Christ be the same as a lost sheep returning to the flock? When was the sinner who doesn't know the Lord ever a part of the flock?

In order to answer that question, we must understand that every human child who is born anywhere in the world is born into the family of God. It doesn't matter who the parents are or what their beliefs are—every child is innocent and belongs to the Lord (see Moroni 8). If someone were to die as a child, they would immediately go to the paradise of God and dwell with God for eternity (just like any other member of the family of God).

When children reach the age of understanding (early teens for most), assuming that they don't give their lives to Christ at that time, they begin to sin and thereby become “lost sheep.” So, the process of bringing sinners to repentance can therefore be viewed as bringing lost sheep back to the fold, back to the family of God.

When we understand that God views the entire human family as His children and that everyone starts life as part of the family of God, then it makes sense why Jesus spent time sharing the gospel with the sinners (and why we should do the same). Every sinner who repents is a lost child of God returning to His family. That's why Jesus states at the end of the parable that “joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.” God is reunited with one of His children!

## Parable of the Lost Coin

***“What woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” (Luke 15:8-10)***

This parable is similar to the previous one, with something lost and found, representing a sinner repenting and causing joy in heaven. There is one basic difference: **A silver coin cannot wander away on its own and get lost** (as a sheep can). The only way that a coin can get lost is if someone is careless in some way and causes the coin to be lost.

So, a second message of this parable is how to move forward to recover a lost child of God when one or more of us (as church members) have contributed in some way to that person becoming lost from the Church.

How can this situation arise? What kinds of things might we do (even unknowingly) that might cause someone to not be a part of the Church? Here are a few examples:

**Allowing Offenses to Remain Unresolved**—Problems between people that are not resolved often result in one or both separating from the Church. Right after Jesus shared the first version of the lost sheep parable in Matthew 18, He outlined the “Law of Offense” which provides a guideline for resolving offenses and keeping everybody together in the flock. See Matthew 18:15-17. Not following this can result in a lost coin.

**Living Two Different Lives**—People who are considering becoming part of the Church are typically seeking to be part of a group of people who are doing their best to be sincere followers of Christ. If these seekers see church members acting one way in church and a totally different way (worldly) outside of church, that is a huge turnoff and will result in them moving on to seek sincere followers of Christ somewhere else. Another lost coin.

**Being Unwilling to Spend Time with Sinners**—This is, of course, the one that most applies to the situation that Jesus was in when He shared this parable. For us today—If a stranger walks into church who doesn't know the Lord and who is obviously leading a sinful lifestyle, do we try to connect with that person or do we stay far away? While we all have a desire to fellowship with our brothers and sisters and loved ones in church, recognize that each person who comes and goes without connecting with the Church represents another lost coin.

What do we do when a coin is lost? What's the recovery process? In this parable, the woman **immediately** began searching, even continuing into the night (with a candle lit) until she found the lost coin. She treated the situation with urgency and diligence, not giving up until the coin was found.

How can we apply this approach to the situations described above? When you know you've offended someone, immediate action is always the appropriate next step. If someone has left the Church (or even has become discouraged) because of something you did, light the candle, go find the person, and do your best to get it resolved.

In other cases, where someone is perhaps considering the Church and becomes a lost opportunity, there may not be the same opening to try to recover that particular person.

**(Continued on page 6)**

## God's Purposes: Christmas Sizzle & Steak

By Brother Mark Kovacic

**W**e've heard the various jingles (excuse the pun) about Christmas, such as "Jesus is the reason for the season." As with most quaint sayings, they don't carry much information or explanation. Who has the time to fully explain the plan of salvation, especially to people who are in a hurry to wrap gifts and plan parties?

Let us start with some theology of the **steak**. Our God is alive! At the right time and place, he chose to leave his heavenly abode to come to earth and to take upon himself the form of a baby, delivered by a virgin most pure. (1 Nephi 11:13-20) The Prophet Abinadi, who lived about 125 BC, preached and prophesied about the coming Messiah, had this to say:

***"And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—And they are one God, yea, the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth."*** (Mosiah 15:1-5)

The Apostle Paul added the following explanations:

Galatians 4:4—But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.

Ephesians 1:10—That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.

That's the theology of Christmas. Now for the **sizzle**—the part we are initially drawn to:

- Shepherds, on the night watch, were visited by the angel of the Lord announcing the good tidings of the birth of Jesus. The angel was joined by a host of angels glorifying God. The shepherds were told to go to Bethlehem and they would find the baby.
- Wise men from the east were directed to Bethlehem by a new star, and after conferring with King Herod and his adviser, they found the baby and delivered their gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense. Then they were warned of God to take a different route home.
- Simeon, an aged devout man, upon seeing Jesus at the temple praised God and confirmed God's plan and Jesus' role in it.
- Anna, an 84-year-old prophetess, came to the temple and thanked the Lord for witnessing His salvation through Jesus, and told all those in Jerusalem about the redemption through this child.

**Side orders** – Adding to the points above, there are prophecies and evidence of Jesus' birth found in the **Book of Mormon**. Similarly, there are modern stories, such as Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, that make us think about our relationship with God and mankind, where we came from, and where we are going. Focus and meditate on the following:

- Our God came down to earth from His heavenly dwelling to be among the children of His creation as was prophesied for over 4,000 years, from the days of Adam to John the Baptist.
- He was **born** a king, not needing to wait for a relative to die and then be crowned.

(Continued on page 8)

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## (Recovering God's Lost Children - continued from page 4)

If there is, act immediately before the opportunity is gone. But even if that person is not recoverable, use the episode as a learning experience. If you find yourself living two different lives, correct that immediately—live one life as a servant of God. If you're not trying to connect with people who need the Lord, correct that immediately—you may be the person the Lord wants to use to bring someone to Christ.

### Parable of the Prodigal Son

In the third parable told to the Pharisees (see Luke 15:11-32), a man has two sons living with him. The younger son takes his inheritance from his father, leaves home and proceeds to waste all the money until there is none left (thus, he is traditionally referred to as the "prodigal son").

Now broke, the prodigal son gets a job feeding pigs and is so destitute that he wishes he could even eat what the pigs are eating. Having hit bottom, he remembers how much better it was in his father's house where even the servants were better off than he is now. He decides to return to his father and just ask to be his servant. However, when the father sees his son returning, he runs out and hugs him, welcomes his son home, and throws a huge party to celebrate. When questioned by his older son about this greeting for the selfish, wasteful son, the father replies:

***"It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found" (Luke 15:32)***

The prodigal son in this parable is basically the same as the lost sheep and the lost coin from the previous two parables. However, since the prodigal son grew up in the father's house and experienced what it was like to be part of that household, he would represent someone who has grown up in a godly home—perhaps part of a church family—and then has made the decision to go a different way.

We all know people who are currently in this situation, perhaps even in our own families. They're familiar with the teachings of Jesus and the Church—perhaps they grew up as part of the congregation. Perhaps they were baptized, perhaps not. They now are no longer associated with the Church and are presumably living a life of sin. Is it too late for them now or is there something we can do to try to draw these people back into the family of God?

Alma found himself in a similar situation—his son Alma was definitely a prodigal. Young Alma took everything he learned growing up in his father's home and used it against the church, rather than applying it to himself. One day, everything changed when an angel appeared and spoke to young Alma with a voice of thunder, causing him to be

converted into a great servant of God. Why did this angel appear to young Alma? The angel explained it to him:

***"Behold, the Lord hath heard the prayers of his people, and also the prayers of his servant, Alma, who is thy father; for he has prayed with much faith concerning thee that thou mightest be brought to the knowledge of the truth; therefore, for this purpose have I come to convince thee of the power and authority of God, that the prayers of his servants might be answered according to their faith" (Mosiah 27:14)***

According to what the angel said, God sent him to young Alma in order to answer the prayers of faith offered by his father Alma. This should be an example to us that praying with much faith is the primary approach to take to try to bring the prodigals back to the family of God. We can pray that these dear loved ones have their own conversion experience, as Alma did. Or that what they were taught as a child finally sinks in one day, as happened to Enos (see Enos verse 3). Or even that they hit bottom as a result of living in sin, as happened to the prodigal son, causing them to realize that life is better when living it with the Lord. Just continue to pray for them and trust the Lord to draw them back to His family in His own way.

### He Knows Them All

Keep this 3-part message of Jesus in mind when considering the importance of outreach to sinners. God doesn't view sinners as terrible people—He sees them as His children who have gone astray. He wants them back in His family. That's why He set up a plan of salvation to rescue His lost children from eternal destruction.

As members of the family of God today, we have the unique opportunity to share the fullness of the Gospel with God's lost children (whether they be lost sheep, lost coins or prodigal sons) and perhaps be instrumental in bringing some of them home. We must make it a personal priority (as Jesus did) to share the gospel with those who have not given their lives to Christ. **They may not know God, but He knows them**—they are His children who have gone astray. Let's make it a goal to trigger a series of celebrations in heaven by helping God's lost children to repent and find their way home to be reunited with their heavenly father.

In the love of God,

### The Quorum of Twelve Apostles

James Crudup, Joel Gehly, Pete Giannetti, John Griffith, Scott Griffith, Paul Liberto, Thomas M. Liberto, Leonard A. Loyalvo, Frank Natoli, Paul A. Palmieri, Peter Scolaro, Jerry Valenti

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[www.thechurchofjesuschrist.org](http://www.thechurchofjesuschrist.org)



## Christmas in Two Circles

### Christmas Outreach and Festivities by Sister Gelsa Staley

The sisters of the Forest Hills Ladies' Circle held their annual Christmas party on December 15th. In years past we brought an ornament to exchange or played a white elephant gift game. This year we asked the sisters to bring a toy/gift based on a list we received from Metropolitan Ministries. For Thanksgiving we did a food drive for the same organization that feeds, clothes, and houses the homeless and those needing a helping hand. Sister Missy Dulisse (Vice President) started our festivities with a beautiful devotion, a portion of which follows:

*"A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,"—this song verse talks about a world wearily waiting for a promise to be fulfilled. Are we weary at Christmas, or filled with thrill; a thrill of hope for the promises made in the latter days? The thrill that comes with accepting and knowing Jesus, the very real, tiny, crying, breathing baby who was born into this world knowingly to be a sacrifice on our behalf. We stand today in the promise of knowing the Counselor and Prince of Peace personally.*

*At Christmas as women, expectations and reality crash together as we attempt to orchestrate beauty and tradition in our families. All of this can result in busyness this season. Jesus in Mark 7:13 says "Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye delivered." This means you miss what is important when*

*we go through the motions. Let's not let business of schedule reflect business of the heart, overshadowing the thrill of the spirit.*

We don't need to be perfect or deliver the perfect Christmas. We need to create space in our hearts, minds, speech, fellowship, and homes for rejoicing in the baby who was born perfect. Let's rejoice in His birth and live with thrill, serving our Jesus, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

We also were blessed to have four young ladies attend our party. We felt to make them feel special by sitting them at their own table and presenting them with a special gift in addition to the totes with scripture-based verses presented to all those that attended.

Our games were fun and changeling. One was figuring out Women in the Bible based on emojis. Another was Spiritual Mad Gabs. I have to say that I was very impressed by the knowledge of our young newly baptized sisters who knew the majority of the answers.

I believe the smiling faces of all that attended indicate the blessings we share in the fellowship of our sisters.



## An Aliquippa Christmas by Joyce Jumper

For over 50 years The Aliquippa Ladies' Uplift Circle has enjoyed a special Christmas Celebration. Over the years we have been blessed to have family members and friends share the evening with us.

Normally a committee of two or three manages all the arrangements, but in 2023 it was decided to do something a little different. Many of the sisters chose to handle one or more

assignments. We enjoyed a wonderful luncheon because of everyone's efforts. From selecting the venue, menu, and date, to sharing a special Christmas scripture, everyone did a great job. The restaurant selected for our gathering had a dining room and tables beautifully decorated and, on each table, the sisters provided special chocolate treats. Someone was responsible for ordering and providing the delicious cake for dessert.

**(Continued on page 9)**

## Christmas Gifts *By Sister Sydney Lovalvo*

For most people across the world, this time of year is filled with excitement and joy. In a natural sense, it is the Christmas season, which means, school is out, there is time to spend with friends and family, people seem genuinely happier and full of joy. All over the world, the holidays tend to bring many people together and this time of year seems just a little bit brighter. In a spiritual sense and as followers of Christ, however, Christmas marks an occasion bigger than all of those things, celebrating the birth of Jesus.

His birth marks the start of an extraordinary life that changed the world. All of us have a personal relationship with Christ, and it's because of this occasion. When thinking about His birth, I was led to ponder about the many miracles that spanned throughout the short life of Jesus.

I think of occasions that I would've loved to witness: changing water into wine, feeding the 5,000, resurrecting Lazarus from the dead, or when He healed the woman with the blood disease by just one touch of His garment. I know I am naming just a few in a never ending list, but those always strike me as truly special moments. While I feel thankful to be able to learn about these moments in Jesus's life, I feel a ping of jealousy of those who were alive and witnessed them. To have been able to see the things we have read and learned about our whole lives would be indescribable. I can't even comprehend how or what I would feel, but I know that I would be in complete awe.

To me, these miracles represent gifts that were given to those who witnessed them, but also gifts for us, as His followers, to look back on and learn about.

After reminiscing on the gifts He gave others throughout His life, I began to reflect on the miracles in my own life that I

consider to be major gifts:

1. The simplest one, being born and raised in this wonderful Church to godly parents and being surrounded by my wonderful family and brothers and sisters. While it may be simple, it has led me to the life I have now, which may be the greatest gift of all.
2. The healings he performed in my life. When I was unable to hear, ran out of options medically, and told there was nothing more that could be done, He made a way. I can now say my hearing is normal, which I know is only because of Him.
3. The extra three years I got to spend with my grandmother. We clung to hope that we would at least get one more year with her after her diagnosis, but we were blessed with three.
4. My wonderful friendships with the Saints are such precious gifts to me. They are the people I can go to and rely on, who show me love, compassion, and wonderful friendship.

While this is just a small snapshot and just a few gifts I have received throughout my life, I am filled with immense gratitude. This time of year, we focus on the birth of Christ, and our lives are full of blessings because of His birth.

Christmastime can be full of holiday fun and material gifts, which is truly wonderful. But I encourage all of you to take a moment to ponder your favorite scriptures where Jesus performed mighty miracles and gifted people with healings. Additionally, reminisce about the miraculous gifts that have been provided to you in your own lives. These "Christmas gifts" are the ultimate blessing, and a reminder that our bountiful lives are all due to His miraculous birth.

### (God's Purposes: Christmas Sizzle & Steak - continued from page 5)

- He walked among His people teaching them His Gospel and taking on their sins and infirmities. (And He will take yours, too.)
- Jesus was crucified by evil men, but resurrected after three days, and was then lifted to heaven where He is today as our advocate before our Heavenly Father.
- Finally, He brought those outside of God's covenant with Abraham (Gentiles) into the People of God. And now in the latter days, He will regather his long scattered and dispersed people of Israel.

This is not a short, "elevator" testimony, but when we think of Christmas, let's take a little extra time to meditate on all that has happened before us (steak, sizzle, and sides) and thank God for His timeless and well executed plan of salvation for mankind. And let's especially share with the unbelievers, who may not know of Jesus Christ and His redeeming love for all mankind.

*Merry Christmas!* 



**(An Aliquippa Christmas - continued from page 7)**

Every year someone chooses games to entertain our sisters and friends. The "Left/Right Game" is one of our favorites. Each table has a gift on it. As the story is read using the words left or right, the gift is passed to the person on the left or right and the person with the gift when the story ends, wins. Our sisters provided some great prizes. A grab bag was organized for anyone who wished to participate, and we set aside time to sing Christmas Carols. At the conclusion of our time together we formed our traditional circle, and, holding hands, we closed in prayer.

What a successful celebration because everyone was involved in the work!



**B**rothers, Sisters and Friends,

During the 2024 October General Church Conference, at the direction of the General Church Presidency, the Operations Support Committee announced that effective 2025, only those who donate (or have someone donate on their behalf) to the Gospel News effort, will receive a printed and mailed copy of the Gospel News. Please note, the digital version of the Gospel News will still be available and accessible to everyone on the Church website.

To receive a printed and mailed copy of the Gospel News in 2025, you must submit (on behalf of yourself or someone else) or have submitted a \$30 donation between January 1, and December 31, 2024. If you do not donate by the end of 2024, you will not receive a printed copy of the Gospel News in 2025. Any donations made in 2025 will go towards the 2026 printing and mailing cycle. The digital version of the Gospel News will still be available and accessible to everyone on the Church website. The OSC is also investigating ways to make the digital content more readily accessible.

**There are two ways to submit your donation:**

1. Donate online by navigating to this website:  
**[thechurchofjesuschrist.org](http://thechurchofjesuschrist.org)**

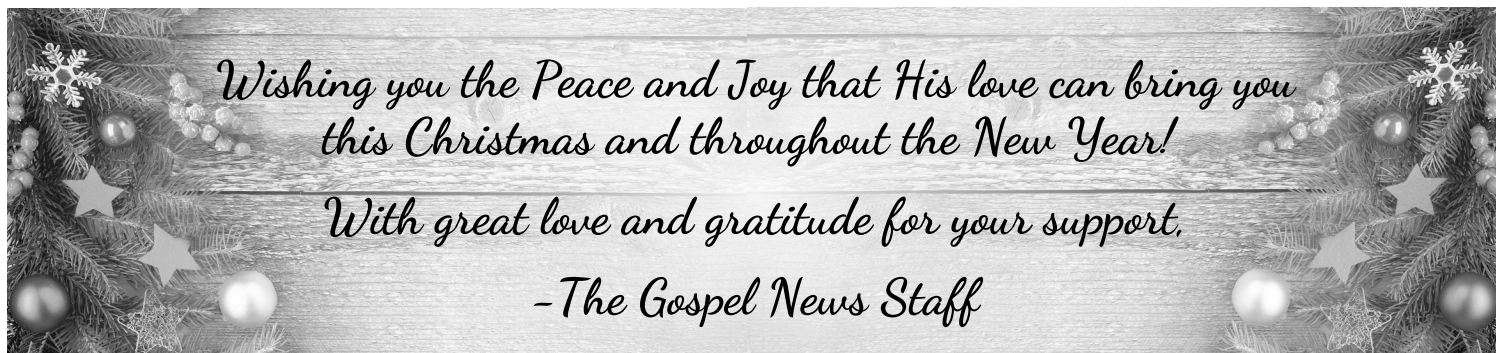
2. Donate by check made payable to The Church of Jesus Christ. Checks can be mailed to Sister Dianne Maddox at 6899 Bayshore Dr. Lake Worth, FL 33462.

If you are unsure if you donated in 2024, please contact Sister Dianne Maddox at **[diannemaddox29@gmail.com](mailto:diannemaddox29@gmail.com)** or by calling/texting 937-545-5786. If you would like to receive a printed copy of the Gospel News but need financial assistance, contact Sister Dianne to express your need.

Donations to the Gospel News effort should be over and above any standard tithing.

God bless you,  
The Operations Support Committee

*Thank you to all who have  
already donated this year!*



*Wishing you the Peace and Joy that His love can bring you  
this Christmas and throughout the New Year!*

*With great love and gratitude for your support,*

*- The Gospel News Staff*



## Angels Around Us

Dear Friends,

I love learning about angels. This time of year we read the Christmas stories of Jesus' birth and they are full of angels! Did you know that the Bible does not ever say angels have wings? That's just something we humans imagined because we do not understand how heavenly angels can move as they do or be seen in the heavens singing the night of Jesus' birth. But we know they are spiritual beings with huge power!

The scriptures are full of stories of God sending His angels to help people. An angel came to young Mary to tell her she was going to be pregnant with a baby from the Holy Spirit (See Luke 1:26-56). When Joseph, the man who planned on marrying her, was afraid to do so, God sent another angel to tell him not to fear (See Matthew 1:20).

After the baby Jesus was born, the shepherds in the fields saw skies filled with angels singing (See Luke 2:18-20) about Jesus' birth. Can you imagine how glorious this would have been? The shepherds immediately went to find this new baby, Jesus (See Matthew 2:13-16).

But when the evil, jealous King Herod heard that this baby who was going to be a great leader was born, he sent soldiers out to murder every boy child under the age of two in the whole country. How terrible!

Again, God sent an angel to wake up Joseph in the middle of the night. The angel warned him to pack up quickly and go far away to Egypt because King Herod was trying to kill baby Jesus.

And God has used His angels many times just to help, to protect, to guide, or to warn regular people like you and me.

When my uncle, Brother Chuck Giles, was a young married man, he got out of the Army and returned to Kansas. This is a state with many flat roads and highways. Brother Chuck was a trained diesel mechanic who could really fix and handle huge machines. He got a job working with big road equipment. He wasn't worried about being out there alone, working with the big road machines.

People did not have cell phones in those days. At the end of one day, Brother Chuck was working steadily in the hot Kansas sun on a deserted stretch of the highway. The sun was setting as he returned to the big county garage, far away. All of a sudden his huge machine stopped right over a little rise in the road! It was broken down.

He tried one thing, and then another. He also was worried that with no lights on his huge machine or on the highway, some other car could smash into him in the dark! He began praying. Desperate, he decided to hop out and just try and push that giant equipment off the road!

As he prayed and cried out to God, the big road machine started to slowly roll! He jumped in and steered it off the highway, calling on God with great joy! Leaving the

big machine, he made it back to town and planned to get a tow truck out there the next day.

But early in the morning his phone rang. It was my other uncle, Brother Alex Robinson, who lived in faraway Modesto, California. Brother Alex told Brother Chuck, "I am calling for a reason. I had the strangest dream last night, Chuck. I saw you pushing a huge, huge road machine out on the highway and a line of angels were beside you pushing as well!"

How beautiful! It worked! His faith in God and crying out for God's help brought heavenly angels to his side. He did not get to see them, but he felt their presence and with their assistance, they got the job done! They conquered the danger!

That's who our God is. He hears our cries and delivers us. He sends us help when we are in danger. We just must listen and follow His guidance! If needed, God may send us a line of invisible angels to help us.

With love,

Your friend and Sister in Christ,

*Sister Jan*

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# Blessing Bits

## BB Greater Things

In August 2024, Brother Steve Kerby paid a visit to the Simi Valley Mission. He gave an awesome presentation of "The Greater Things" we look forward to as God's people. As I looked up at him, I saw Jesus Christ standing behind him. He had his arms outstretched, and His eyes were both compassionate and piercing. I felt really blessed—this was my first vision. Later, when I was writing the vision down, I heard these words in my head, "Come to me! Lean on me! I have overcome the world, and I will see you through all your trials." - Sister Sharon Church, Simi Valley, CA Mission

## BB He Answered My Prayer

On Wednesday night I was looking forward to the General Church Conference and I had a great desire to sing, but I felt hopeless. My mom told me I should just pray and so I prayed that night instead of worrying about it. The very next morning, while I was at school,

I received a text from a brother asking me if I'd like to sing "Stand Up For the Restoration" with the kids during the Sunday service. It was an incredible blessing to be able to do and it brought me such peace and joy to know that God took the time to answer my little prayer. Praise God!- Sister Anna Maria Mott, Columbus, OH Branch

## BB Cleansed and Set Free

Sunday morning at this past October General Church Conference, Brother John Griffith gave an inspired talk preparing the congregation for Communion. After the ordinance was completed, an experience had by a brother was shared: "I felt a great spirit of repentance as the bread was being broken. As the prayer was being offered for the bread, I had a vision of a large white wave of water washing over the congregation, cleansing every vessel." I definitely felt that wave; after I partook of the bread, I found myself weeping, almost to the point of sobbing, as I

experienced the washing of the Spirit of God over me and remembered our Savior's sacrifice for my sins. This is just one of countless blessings we had at the Conference.- Brother Anthony Scolaro, Mesa, AZ Branch

Send us your Blessing Bits by contacting Sister Elizabeth McDonnell at [eksanchor@gmail.com](mailto:eksanchor@gmail.com). [in approximately 150 words].  
Answers to Question of the Month to [gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org](mailto:gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org).



## Question for this month:

Share a moment of Joy you had in 2024. It can be an experience, a time where you felt close to God, a meeting or event that you enjoyed, or anything that comes to mind that brought you Joy.



## Answer from last month:

What brings you Joy over Christmas?

"I love the carols, getting together with loved ones, the sense of gratefulness you feel around the birth of Christ, & feeling that people are more kind around Christmas." -Sister KarenJo Pandone, Farmington Hills, MI Branch

*Turn to page 11 for more answers.*



*Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. Luke 2:10*