

# The Gospel News

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### *The Gift of Jesus Christ!*



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## A Message from the Quorum of Twelve Apostles **THE GREAT JOY OF CHRISTMAS**

The celebration of Christmas is rich in tradition, culture, and festivity, but at its core lies a profound spiritual truth of great joy—the birth of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world. For the followers of Jesus Christ around the world, Christmas represents more than a historical event; it embodies the manifestation of God's love, the fulfillment of divine prophecy, and the beginning of humanity's redemption. Both the Bible and the Book of Mormon offer inspired accounts and prophecies that emphasize the divine nature and great joy of Christ's coming. By examining the spiritual dimensions of Christmas through these sacred texts, we gain a deeper appreciation for the divine mission of Jesus Christ and the eternal hope His birth brings to all people.

### Prophecies and Divine Preparation

The spiritual significance of Christmas is rooted in ancient prophecy. Long before Christ's birth, the Old Testament prophets foretold His coming with remarkable clarity. Approximately 750 years before His birth, Isaiah prophesied, ***"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel"*** (Isaiah 7:14). This name, meaning "God with us," points to the miraculous nature of Christ's birth and His divine mission. Likewise, Micah even prophesied that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem: *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting"* (Micah 5:2).

The Book of Mormon echoes these prophecies with parallel power and specificity. Nephi recorded his vision of Mary and the Savior's birth almost 600 years before the event occurred. In 1 Nephi 11:18-21, he saw a *"virgin, most beautiful and fair,"* who would give birth to *"the Son of God."* King Benjamin declared to his people, *"The time cometh... that the Lord Omnipotent... shall come down from heaven among the children of men"* (Mosiah 3:5). These testimonies reveal that the birth of Jesus was not a random occurrence in history, but the long-promised and prophesied intervention of God; a manifestation of divine love and purpose.

(Continued on page 4)

*Every good gift cometh of Christ.*

Since the most obvious and most precious gift is the gift of God's Son, let's do a deeper dive and examine what Moroni has to say about other gifts.



Moroni 10:9  
For behold, to one is given by the Spirit of God, that he may \_\_\_\_\_ the word of wisdom.

Moroni 10:10  
And to another, that he may teach the word of \_\_\_\_\_ by the same spirit.



Moroni 10:11  
And to another, exceeding \_\_\_\_\_; and to another the gifts of \_\_\_\_\_ by the same spirit.



Moroni 10:12  
And again, to another, that he may work mighty \_\_\_\_\_.



Moroni 10:13  
And again, to another, that he may \_\_\_\_\_ concerning all things.

Moroni 10: 14, 15  
And again, to another, the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ and ministering \_\_\_\_\_; And again, to another, all kinds of \_\_\_\_\_.



Moroni 10:16  
And again, to another, the interpretation of \_\_\_\_\_ and of divers kinds of \_\_\_\_\_.



## BFTP Blast From The Past

### Popcorn Balls

For Sister Leata Ford—79 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, 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.



## "Absurd Love" By Brother Doug Obradovich

***"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."  
(John 15:13)***

He walked away from the game and the multi-million-dollar contract. When asked about him, ESPN commentator Dan LeBatard said, "He threw away everything we value—money, cheering, and celebrity. Was that him being mentally ill, or the only sane person out there and the rest of us worshipping all the wrong things?" When asked why he left football for solitude, Ricky Williams said, "For someone to come from purely a place of love will be the most misunderstood person in the world." Oddly, Jesus Christ has rarely been described as "misunderstood" as a main label, but it might be the most accurate.

Christ began preparing His followers for their independence, provided sadly by His crucifixion. He explained how His father's love taught Him to love them, and His love would in turn, empower them to love others. He told them

keeping His commandments would maintain this love and their joy. He then elevated their relationship by calling them "friends" for the first time, explaining friends share causes and do for one another (John 15:9-15), elaborating, *"Greater love hath no man than this; that a man lay down his life for his friends."*

This prophetic statement came "from purely a place of love," so most likely, was misunderstood. A song by Casting Crowns, "Your Love Is Extravagant," speaks to His unexplainable love. Extravagant has been defined as lacking restraint (e.g., spending money), exceeding what is reasonable or appropriate, or simply absurd. Exactly; His love is absurd! Jesus has never exhibited any evidence of restraint in His generosity, and exceeded any reasonable or appropriate exchange for what He has received from us. His love is truly absurd.

Born into the knowledge of His purpose to save mankind, He was resolute in facing His undeserved, cruel death, despite understanding those He was saving were unwilling to save themselves

from their sinful condition. How could the creation repay the Creator and convey their gratitude and show genuine appreciation? By accepting His intended honor to be His friends and returning His statement back to Him and laying down their lives for Him. It's quite natural to desire money, public praise, and attention, but clearly, this is "worshipping all the wrong things." Lay down that life and choose absurd love, which involves loving the unlovable, the undeserved, and those who could never repay such kindness.

Assignment: Consider someone in your life who does not "deserve" your love; someone that either torments you daily or has attacked your heart for much too long (days, weeks, months, years). Let them be the target of your love, which would be absurd. What can you do to show them a love equal to the love Jesus Christ extended to you when you least deserved it? This is how you can *"lay down your life for your friend"* (Jesus Christ).

This is how you can love absurdly!

## The Humility and Glory of Christ's Birth

One of the most spiritually compelling aspects of Christmas is the contrast between the majesty of who Jesus is, and the humility of how He came. The Gospel of Luke provides the most detailed biblical account of Christ's birth: *"And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn"* (Luke 2:7). The Savior of the world was not born in a palace but in a stable, surrounded by animals and shepherds. This setting exemplifies God's intent to reach all of His children, especially the humble, the poor, and the lowly.

In Luke 2:10-11, the angel proclaims to the shepherds, ***"...Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."***

The announcement of Christ's birth to ordinary shepherds underscores a profound spiritual truth: the Savior came for all people, regardless of status, wealth, or social position. He came to heal the brokenhearted, to give strength to the sick and weak and to call the sinner to repentance.

The Book of Mormon contains its own powerful testimony of the birth of Christ. In Helaman 14, Samuel the Lamanite predicted several signs that would accompany Jesus's birth, including *"great lights in heaven,"* a *"new star,"* and *"a day and a night and a day"* without darkness (Helaman 14:3-5). When these signs were fulfilled in 3 Nephi 1, the righteous rejoiced, and their faith was confirmed: *"And it came to pass that there was no darkness in all that night, but it was as light as though it was mid-day. And it came to pass that the sun did rise in the morning again, according to its proper order; and they knew that it was the day that the Lord should be born, because of the sign which had been given"* (3 Nephi 1:19). These miracles confirmed to the people in the Americas that the Messiah had come, proving that Christ's influence was not confined to one land, but was global in scope.

## Christ As the Eternal Gift

Perhaps the most spiritually profound element of Christmas is the recognition that Jesus Christ is God's greatest gift to humanity. John 3:16 declares, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." This verse captures the very essence of divine generosity and grace. The giving of

Christ was not only the offering of a baby in a manger, but the offering of His life that would be sacrificed as an atonement for the sins of the world.

The Book of Mormon reinforces this concept in Alma 7:11-12, which describes Christ's suffering and mortal ministry: *"And he shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind; and this that the word might be fulfilled which saith he will take upon him the pains and the sicknesses of his people. And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities, that his bowels may be filled with mercy, according to the flesh, that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities."* Through His mortal experience, beginning with His birth, Jesus became intimately familiar with the human condition. He is not a distant God, but a compassionate Redeemer who knows each of us personally and offers healing through His atonement.

The symbolism of gift-giving at Christmas can therefore be viewed through this sacred lens. While many focus on material exchanges, the true model of giving is Jesus Christ Himself. His life was a continuous offering: of service, mercy, teaching, and ultimately, His own life. As followers of Christ and members of The Church of Jesus Christ, we are invited to reflect His generosity by giving love, time, forgiveness, and compassion to others: not only during the Christmas season but as a way of life.

## Christmas As a Spiritual Invitation

Beyond remembrance, Christmas is also a call to action. It's an invitation to come unto Christ and live according to His teachings. The message of "peace on earth, goodwill toward men" (Luke 2:14) is not just poetic sentiment; it reflects the actual fruit of following Jesus. He is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6), and His gospel offers peace not as the world gives, but as only God can provide (John 14:27).

In the Book of Mormon, the resurrected Christ appears to the people and invites them personally: ***"Arise and come forth unto me, that ye may thrust your hands into my side, and also that ye may feel the prints of the nails in my hands and in my feet, that ye may know that I am the God of Israel, and the God of the whole earth, and have been slain for the sins of the world"*** (3 Nephi 11:14).

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## A New Hope, the Only Hope *By Brother Brett Gibson*

The opening scroll of the movie bears the title: "A New Hope."

"You're our only hope!" the princess pleads in the holographic image, a desperate attempt to reach a person that she thinks can help her. Three generations are familiar with the sci-fi genre that I am referencing here. The princess knew that if her message didn't get to the intended recipient, there was no hope. Even if it did reach the person, chances were slim. Death was almost a certainty.

Any military strategist would tell you that hope has no place in a plan for battle. Hope is not a course of action, especially in a life-and-death scenario. But those same generals do recognize that hope is the basis for endurance, and endurance can help win a battle. The word of God tells us that if we are faithful and endure to the end, we will be saved.

Consider Ahaz, king of Judah. Jerusalem was threatened by the powerful Syrian army and their allies. Bear in mind that this is 740 years before Christ would be born. Isaiah was sent to Ahaz by God to tell him to have hope (Isaiah 7:14): "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." This was God's answer to Ahaz in the face of certain death. If Ahaz would just believe this prophecy, they would be spared. He likely didn't even need to completely understand what it meant; he just had to believe it. If he (and we) understood the full meaning of the prophecy and that Jesus was coming to save us from sin and the enemy of our souls and not just our natural enemies, how much greater a blessing!

There are many instances in the scriptures of people bringing "tidings" to someone. A 'tiding' is more than just a greeting; there is a message in the words that are being delivered. In Luke 2:10-11 it is recorded: "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." What made the 'tidings' both good and joyful? The angels were delivering the message that the prophecy from Isaiah 7:14 was now fulfilled, and Hope had been brought into the world by the birth of Christ!

A boat without an anchor will drift wherever the randomness of the sea takes it. Without an anchor, our souls will drift away from Jesus. We will drift away from Jesus without even trying to do so purposefully. Being anchored is active, not passive. The believers on this land in 3 Nephi 1 were active in being anchored through the hope in the coming of Christ. They faced natural death at the hands of those who had lost hope. Because they held to their unwavering faith and hope, the sign of Christ's coming was given, and the evil plan of those who had lost hope was thwarted.

It's easy to get caught up in the drift of the "holiday season" and miss the message of hope in the miraculous birth of Christ. Ether put it thusly in chapter 12 verse 4: "Wherefore, whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world, yea, even a place at the right hand of God, which hope cometh of faith, maketh an anchor to the souls of men, which would make them sure and steadfast, always abounding in good works, being led to glorify God." My prayer is that this Christmas season finds your soul anchored in the hope of Jesus Christ and sharing the same message of hope and salvation to this world that so desperately needs Him.

## ***The Greatest Gift There Is***

***By Sister Sydney Lovalvo***

**T**his time of year affords me plenty of time to reflect on the goodness in my life that the Lord has supplied me with. Since my articles are usually specifically GMBA and young people related, I reflect on the last year's events and the wonderful times we've collectively had.

Since the beginning of the year, there have been many times the Church has gotten together where the young people have been able to spend time together. In January, at our Winter Gathering, there was a Youth Summit at the Mesa branch. Additionally, at the General Church Conference in April and October, there is always guaranteed to be a wonderful Youth Summit hosted by the GMBA and Q70. This is an awesome opportunity for the young people to get together, learn more about the Church and God's word, and to fellowship. And to top it off, an ice cream social that never disappoints. The summertime was jam packed with events as we had Youth In Action events and GMBA Campout. These experiences are often transformative for our young people. They are times where the youth of the Church can fully shut out the world, dedicate focused time to the Lord, and grow closer to one another. To me, these church events where we are able to fellowship and strengthen our relationship with God are precious gifts.

When thinking about this a little deeper, I end up going back to the thought that Jesus Christ is truly one of our greatest gifts, if not our greatest one. Without Jesus Christ and His sacrifice, we would not be able to experience the precious things in our lives, especially not the time we spend together!

God gave Jesus out of true love for all of us. It is simple, but John 3:16 says it all: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son..." He loves us so much that He gave us Jesus so that we could experience the many blessings throughout our lives. I have fond

memories of going to see Handel's Messiah every year around Christmastime, and one of my favorite parts is when they sing Isaiah 9:6: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Not only is Jesus one of our greatest gifts, but He provides us with other things that enrich our lives: peace, love, compassion, purpose, rest, and so much more.

Perhaps the biggest "gift" that we get through Jesus Christ is the opportunity for eternal life. If you have read some of my previous articles, you know that salvation has been a topic of mine in the past, and I truly believe it is the greatest gift, honor, and privilege. Romans 6:23 even calls it a gift: "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." How privileged are we that we might have the opportunity to spend eternity with Him? It is such a simple concept, but also immense and hard to grasp. I feel overwhelmed but also have an immense sense of gratitude when I think about how much God loves me that He would give us His Son so I could have eternal life. Truly the greatest gift there is.

I truly hope that each and every one of you have a wonderful holiday season filled with love, family, joy, peace, and happiness. Like I mentioned at the beginning of this piece, I feel so thankful for our Church and the way we are able to spend time together as a body, but also how the young people have time together to strengthen their bonds with one another; a very wonderful gift! And that gift would not be possible if it wasn't for our Lord and Savior who gave us the most wonderful gift of salvation. The saying is simple, maybe a little cliché, and it's been said a million times, but it really does ring true... Jesus is the reason for the season!

## **(The Great Joy of Christmas - continued from page 4)**

His invitation was both physical and spiritual; to touch the nailprints and know for certain, believing in His divine nature. In the same way, Christmas is a yearly call to spiritually “come unto Christ” — to renew faith, to repent, and to commit more fully to walking in His light.

Christmas also offers a reminder of the latter-day promises, the gathering of a remnant of Israel and Gentile alike, as we look forward to the kingdom of Zion and ultimately the second coming of Christ. Just as ancient prophets looked forward to His birth, the building of His kingdom and His return becomes our hope.

### **The Great Joy of Christmas**

In both the Bible and the Book of Mormon, the spiritual aspects of Christmas are profound, sacred, and deeply transformative. Christmas is not merely a holiday, but a day of remembrance

and celebration of the great joy of God’s willingness to send His Son into the world for us. It is a time to remember the fulfillment of prophecy, the humility of Christ’s arrival, and the eternal gift of salvation He offers to all. As we participate in the traditions of the season, let’s not lose sight of its true meaning associated with Christmas. This great joy of Christmas is found not under a tree or in the many decorations, but in the light of our Savior, Jesus Christ: “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

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. Lovalvo, Frank Natoli, Paul A. Palmieri, Peter Scolaro, Jerry Valenti

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The World Operations Center for world-wide missionary efforts is in Greensburg, PA.**

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As we celebrate the joy and hope of this blessed season, we would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to you, our faithful readers, for your continued support and engagement. Your prayers, kind words, and the many times you have shared with us your blessings, experiences, and answers to our monthly question have truly made the Gospel News an uplift to all who read.

This December issue holds special meaning as it marks the final printed edition of the Gospel News. Over the years, your contributions have brought this publication to life and helped it become a source of unity, faith, and education for so many. We are deeply grateful for all who have been part of this ministry and for every reader who has welcomed these pages into their homes and hearts over the years. Our hope is that you stay connected as we transition to a digital format—that you may continue to read and be blessed.

We also encourage you to continue sharing your testimonies and blessings with one another and with us! Together, may we keep spreading the Good News of Christ’s love and goodness in all that we do.

May the peace and joy of our Savior fill your hearts this Christmas and throughout the coming year. Thank you for being part of the Gospel News—past, present, and always.

With love and gratitude,

*The Gospel News Committee*





## ***What part of Christ's birth story speaks most to you, and why?***

"There's a contemporary Christian song that says 'You could've saved us in a second, instead You sent a child.' This lyric has changed my perspective of the Christmas story into a story about patience, waiting, and believing that God has greater things planned than we can ever imagine." - Sister Alyssa Maddox, Lake Worth, FL, Branch

"It's hard to pick one thing because His birth brought 'hope' to all of us. But my choice would be the incredible gift God gave Mary to be Jesus' mother, and the faith shown by both Mary and Joseph in this journey." - Sister Janet Offet, Bell, CA, Branch

"Matthew 1 verses 18-20 show us that the birth of Jesus Christ was by no means an ordinary birth of an ordinary man; it was the extraordinary incarnation of God Himself. The birth of Jesus was the birth of a God-man, a wonderful Person who was both divine and human. Isaiah 9:6, 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon us shoulder: and his name shall be Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.' This sums it up for all followers of Christ." - Brother Michael McGuire, Cape Coral, FL, Mission

"Luke 2:10-11, when the angel appeared to bring the good tidings that a savior is coming. This verse speaks to me because it is the beginning of God's plan to save His creation from their sins." - Brother Michael Zaino, Edison, NJ, Branch

"Isaiah 9:6, 'For unto us a Child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.' Jesus was born to Mary and Joseph, but also 'unto us'—the spiritually empty, the lost and broken, longing for a savior. Had He been an ordinary child, the words would simply say, 'unto Mary and Joseph a child was born.' I John 4:19, 'We love him, because he first loved us'" - Sister Rebecca Martorana, Mesa, AZ, Branch

"How His mother and Joseph were treated and told that there was no room in the inn for them to stay. His parents were rejected even before His birth, but it did not delay His coming into the world. He had a humble beginning, but a triumphant ending." - Sister Sharon Sloan, Forest Hills, FL, Branch

"I love walking in the early morning hours before sunrise. A starlit sky that is on the verge of dawn fills me with great wonder and hope. It humbles me to know just how small I am in the grand scheme of things and reminds me that there is so much more to God's sovereignty and His creation than meets the eye. I think that is why I especially love the account of the shepherds in the Christmas story. On the windy and chilly hills of Bethlehem, the shepherds spent long nights tending and protecting their sheep which birthed lambs that were subsequently sacrificed during Passover. They had a tremendous responsibility to ensure that newborn male lambs were wrapped in strips of cloth to protect them. They would then place them into stone feeding troughs where they were kept until they could be examined by the priests. If the lambs met the strict regulations of the Jewish faith, the shepherds were accountable for raising them in protected conditions until they met the one-year requirement for sacrifice.

Out of darkness the angels appeared to the shepherds and the heavens were filled with the Glory of God and the pronouncement was made of Christ's birth. We also know that in the land of America the glory was so brilliant that it dispelled the darkness on the night of His birth. Immediately, the shepherds left in search of the babe that was wrapped in swaddling cloths lying in a manger. They knew, without a shadow of doubt, that they were eyewitnesses to the fulfillment of the prophecy of the coming forth of the long-awaited Messiah. And within their hearts, I can only imagine the humbleness they must have felt knowing that the very work of their hands was so symbolic of His birth. Such wondrous glory...such unspeakable hope..." - Sister Ruth Gehly, Erie, PA, Branch

**(Continued on page 11)**

## **The Gift** By Sister Marty Jumper

The gift is Jesus Christ. From this generous gift from the Father, how many gifts has Jesus given to us? More than we could ever list. I think this gift is expressed best in an epistle from Mormon to his son Moroni, stating that we should be “continually praying unto God the Father in the name of his Holy Child, Jesus, that he, through his infinite goodness and grace, will keep you through the endurance of faith on his name to the end” (Moroni 8:3). Through Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, we have obtained faith in His teachings, hope for eternal life, and charity toward others.

In our Ladies’ Uplift Circle, we strive to reflect these very gifts through our fellowship and service. When Circle sisters work together, a richer fellowship with greater unity of spirit and purpose naturally follows. That unity shines whenever our sisters extend the pure love of God, charity, to others in need.

One touching example was shared by Sister Gelsa Staley in a previous Christmas article. The Forest Hills Ladies’ Circle chose to transform their annual holiday party into an opportunity for giving. Instead of exchanging ornaments or white elephant gifts, they brought toys and gifts for an

organization that feeds, clothes, and shelters those in need (Metropolitan Ministries). The same spirit of generosity continued through a Thanksgiving food drive supporting the same ministry.

Likewise, at every Penn Mid-Atlantic Area Ladies’ Circle conference, we come together to collect items for local causes. Our most recent collection supported The C.A.S.H. Club, led by Brother Panfilo DeCenzo, as well as the Crime Victims Unit in the Vanderbilt Branch area.

All these acts of kindness reflect the true spirit of the gift. As a verse from “The Greatest Gift,” a poem by Patricia Grantham, reminds us:

***Many showers of blessings and joy to another,  
Love for each other like those from a mother.  
Be like an Angel to someone that’s in need,  
Food for the hungry or some other kind deed.***

This Christmas, may we each strive to share the gift—the love of Jesus Christ with others, through faith, hope, and charity in action.





## God's Big Plan

Dear Friends,

When God created this world and made people, He knew all the hard things, the mistakes and problems we each would have to face. He wanted us humans to be strong inside, to love people who were mean to us, to forgive others and to be safe following His simple and powerful laws of loving each other. So God's wonderful plan was to send His son, Jesus, to come to earth as a baby, to grow up and teach everyone the right ways from wrong ways! Good men of God knew this baby was going to come in the future. In the Bible and Book of Mormon they preached about it many years before it happened (See Isaiah 7:14 and Helaman 14).

It happened this way: A special girl named Mary was visited by an angel who told her not to be afraid and that she was going to have a baby named Jesus. She did not have a husband but the angel told her that The Holy Ghost, the power of the Highest (God) would come on her and the child born of her would be called the Son of the God (See Luke 1:28-38).

She was supposed to marry a good man named Joseph, the carpenter. When he found out Mary was going to have a baby, he was upset and was going to make her leave. Again God

sent an angel who told him not to be afraid to marry this good girl (See Matthew 1:18-24). The angel said this special baby will grow up and (His teaching) would save all people from sin. Joseph married Mary.

At that time the Roman Emperor made a law that everyone in their country had to go back to the place they came from to pay taxes. It was 65 long miles for pregnant Mary and Joseph to travel to Bethlehem. There were no cars or trains. When they got to Bethlehem, the city was so crowded there was no place to stay! They ended up in a stable where this important, precious baby was born. That night there were shepherds outside the city taking care of their sheep. The angel appeared unto them saying, "Don't be afraid! I bring you news of great joy for all people!"

And then a sky full of heavenly beings appeared praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (See Luke 2:1-15).

The shepherds rushed to the city and told everyone what they had seen. Then they found baby Jesus and worshipped him! Not long after that, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem. They were following a star which would lead them to find this new baby who would be called the King of the Jews. They went to the wicked King Herod first to ask where this new baby was. They were bringing expensive gifts with them for the baby. King Herod was jealous, full of hate, and determined to find Baby Jesus and kill him. He lied to the wise men and said, Go find the baby, then come and tell me so I can worship him too!

(Continued on page 11)

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**(Question of the Month - continued from page 8)**

“When Christ appeared to Nephi in the first chapter of Third Nephi. He came to cheer up Nephi and give him hope, just as Jesus appears in our sorrows and trials to uplift and support our needs today! It is also here where Jesus explains the Godhead in a way I can comprehend the best out of all scripture: and it says in verse 14: ‘Behold, I come unto my own, to fulfill all things which I have made known unto the children of men from the foundation of the world, and to do the will, both of the Father and of the Son—of the Father

because of me, and of the Son because of my flesh.’ What a huge blessing to see how the will of God is always for us, and He came to earth to one day be sacrificed for our sins. Christmas is a great reminder of His First Love for us all!” - Sister Gabriella Cihomsky, Mesa, AZ, Branch

“He didn’t just show up as God’s son. He started right at the beginning as a baby born of a woman.” - Sister Anita Znoy, Creekside, MI, Branch

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**(God’s Big Plan- continued from page 10)**

The star led the wise men to the house where baby Jesus and family were. They knew baby Jesus would grow up to be our wonderful Savior and they worshipped him. They gave their valuable gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Mary and Joseph before departing. God warned them in a dream not to believe King Herod (See Matthew 2:12).

When King Herod realized he hadn’t tricked them, he made a terrible order for his soldiers to kill every child aged two years old and under, hoping that would include the new baby Jesus. But in the night, an angel came to Joseph and warned him to get up and leave because wicked King Herod was hunting for Baby Jesus and would kill him. Joseph got up, helped Mary to pack, and left that very night for faraway Egypt where they could live in safety until King Herod died. So many babies were killed by evil King Herod, but they escaped and no doubt used the gifts brought by the wise men as a way to survive in their new country! Wasn’t God wonderful! He prepared a way for the little family to be safe

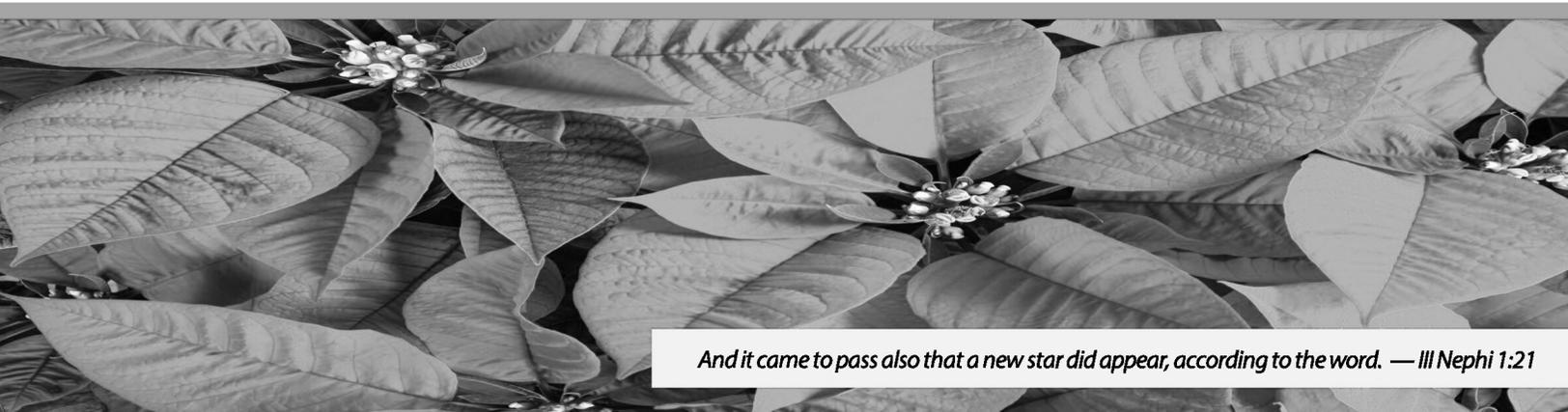
and far away from danger. Can you imagine how grateful Mary and Joseph felt? We worship that precious baby who grew up to be our Savior Jesus.

God had it all planned; just as He knows each of us. He knows our hearts too and will help us change if we want Him to. In Jeremiah 29:11-12, God told his people “For I know the thoughts that I have towards you... thoughts of peace, and not of evil,...and you shall call upon me, and go and pray unto me, and I will listen to you.” Just as He had plans for Mary, Joseph, and Jesus, He has plans and protection for us. Call on God using the name of Jesus. He will hear you!

With love and care,

Your friend and Sister in Christ,

*Sister Jan*



# Blessing Bits

## **BB** Wise Man #1 - The Bearer of Gold

I brought gold, a gift for a king. Having stood before thrones, bowed to royalty, and walked in wealth, still nothing prepared me for this moment. As I knelt in the dirt beside a child in His mother's arms, I took in His tiny form. He had no crown. No guards. No palace. Yet, He radiated a peace I had never known. I offered my gift in that lowly manger, and in return, I received a gift that only Heaven could give!

## **BB** Wise Man #2 - The Bearer of Frankincense

I carried frankincense, sacred and pure, fit for worship. It had been my duty to study the stars and the scrolls. I had witnessed the signs in the sky. But when I saw that child, I didn't need the stars to tell me: Heaven had come to earth! I offered incense to honor

divinity, but the moment I knelt, I knew—I was the one receiving the gift. He was more than a child. He was the answer to longing, and the fulfillment of prophecy. I returned home changed. Not because I gave something holy, but because I met the Holy One!

## **BB** Wise Man #3 - The Bearer of Myrrh

I brought myrrh—an offering of sorrow and sacrifice. Though He was just a child, I sensed the shadow of His purpose—and laid the myrrh before Him with trembling hands. I had come expecting to honor greatness—I didn't expect to be changed! Nothing was uttered as I laid down my gift, yet I understood this truth deep in my soul: The greatest gift in all the world is nothing that we could give, but what He has given to us.

Praise be to God! *Jesus is that gift!*

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:**

**What is one spiritual habit or goal you want to grow or strengthen in the new year?**



**Answer from last month:**

**What part of Christ's birth story speaks most to you, and why?**

*Turn to page 8 for more answers.*



*And it came to pass also that a new star did appear, according to the word. — III Nephi 1:21*