

**Vždyť se nám narodilo dítě,
byl nám dán syn; na jeho ramenou spočine vláda
a bude nazýván: Podivuhodný rádce,
Mocný Bůh, Otec věčnosti, Kníže pokoje.**

(Izaiáš 9:5)

**Lebo dieťa sa nám narodilo,
syn nám je daný, a kniežatstvo bude na jeho pleci,
a nazovú jeho meno: Predivný, Radca,
Silný Bôh, Udatný Hrdina, Otec Večnosti, Knieža Pokoja.**

(Izaiáš 9:6)

Glorious Hope Slavná naděje

Vol. 46, N° 3-4, December 2020
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**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called Wonderful Counselor,
Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.**

(Isaiah 9:6)



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Convention Mission Statement

The Czechoslovak Baptist Convention of USA and Canada exists 1) to assist in extending the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in lands of central and eastern Europe, particularly the Czech and Slovak Republics; 2) to support the work of Baptists and other evangelical churches in North America that minister to persons of Czech and Slovak descent, and 3) to provide a Christian context for worship, fellowship, teaching, and appreciation of heritage among those in the United States and Canada who bear interest in the nationalities we represent.

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Československá baptistická konvence Spojených států a Kanady byla ustanovena za účelem: 1) napomáhat v šíření evangelia našeho Pána Ježíše Krista v zemích střední a východní Evropy, zvláště v České a Slovenské republice; 2) podporovat práci baptistů a jiných evangelikálních církví v severní Americe, které slouží českým a slovenským potomkům; 3) předkládat formu bohoslužby, obecnství a učení, vážít si dědictví těch, ve Spojených státech a v Kanadě, kterým leží na srdci národy, které reprezentujeme.

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*God is our refuge and strength,
an ever-present help in trouble.*

Psalm 46:1



To Everything There Is a Season

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven...” (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

Wise words from the book of Ecclesiastes. They make sense. Practical life confirms them. In times of trial, they provide relief. Yes, everything has its time. A certain way of life with its various phases has become the norm. Without special restrictions, it maintains an ordering of society, with advantages and disadvantages. Each person could organize their life as they saw fit.

Suddenly certain restrictions have been implemented. It is something that invades the privacy of each individual, and disturbs their stability and mutual relationships with others. How to orient oneself? Adapt? Complain? How does one come to terms with the situation?

Each person perceives the situation differently. How do Christians perceive it? *“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.”* (Psalm 46:1). Yes, Christians perceive the world with the knowledge that God has the whole world in his hands.

The year 2020 brought with it a strange set of circumstances that affected the entire world. No one can predict

Continues on page 5

Všetchno má svůj čas

„Vše má svou chvíli, každá věc pod nebem má svůj čas.”
(Kazatel 3;1)

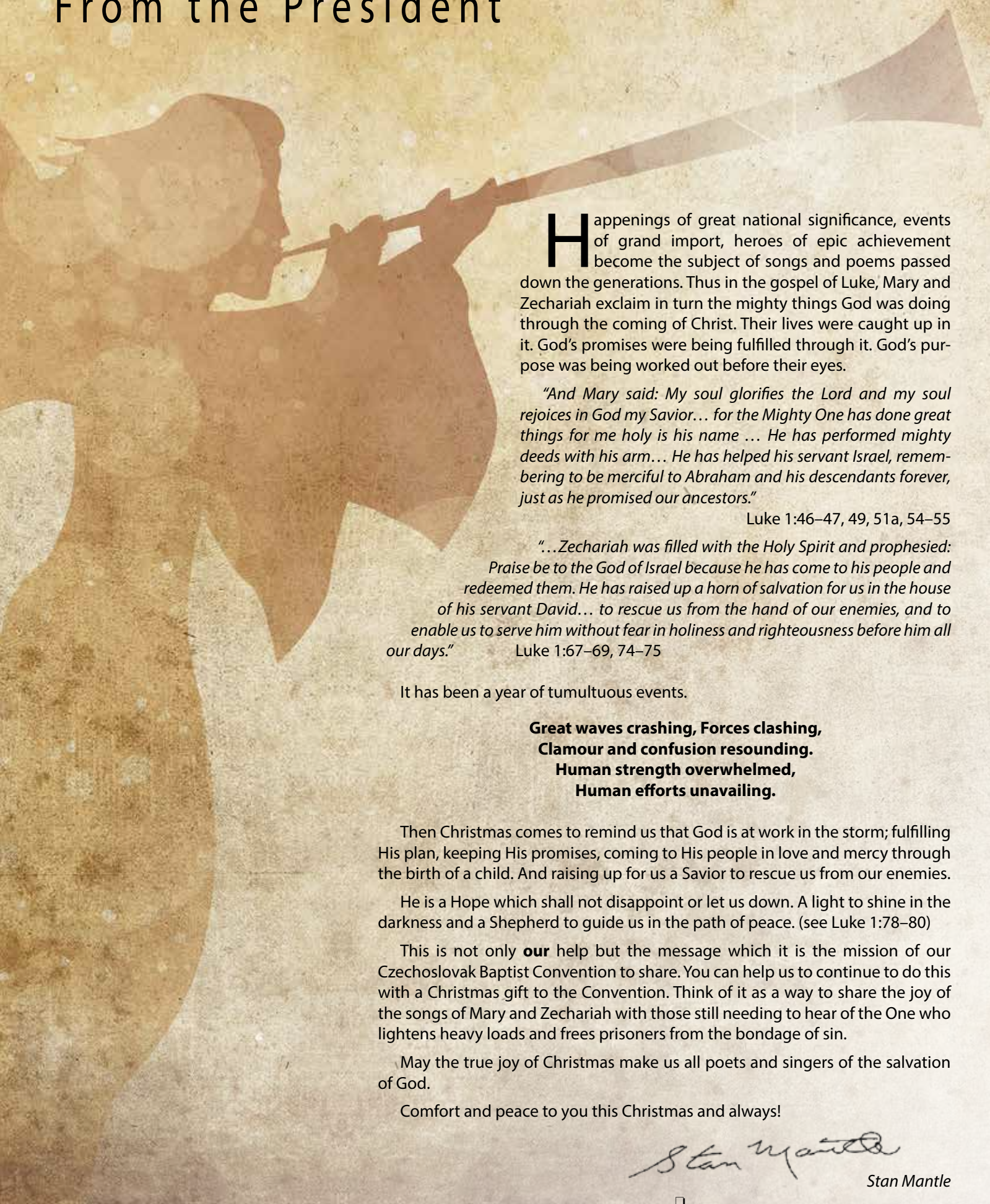
Moudrá slova z knihy Kazatel. Dávají smysl. Praktický život je potvrzuje. V době zkoušek poskytují úlevu. Ano, všechno má svůj čas. Určitý způsob života se svými fázemi se stal standartem. Bez zvláštního omezení, podřízen určitému řádu společnosti se svými klady i záporů. Každý si život uspořádal podle vlastních představ.

Najednou přicházejí různá omezení. Něco, co citelně zasahuje do soukromí každého člověka a narušuje ustálený řád a vzájemné vztahy s okolím. Jak se v tom zorientovat? Zvyknout si? Reptat? Jak se s celou situací vypořádat?

Každý člověk vnímá tuto situaci jinak. Jak ji vnímají křesťané? *„Bůh je naše útočiště i síla, pomoc v úzkostech stále přítomná.”* (Žalm 46;2) Ano, křesťané vnímají svět s vědomím, že Bůh má ve svých rukou celý svět.

Rok 2020 přinesl zvláštní zkušenost, která se dotkla celého světa. Její následky nikdo netuší. Před dvěma tisíci lety svět také zažíval zvláštní období: narození malého dítěte způsobilo masové vraždění nemluvňat a batolat. Něco nepohoditelného. Rodiče s narozeným Ježíšem musí uprchnout

Pokračuje na straně 5



Happenings of great national significance, events of grand import, heroes of epic achievement become the subject of songs and poems passed down the generations. Thus in the gospel of Luke, Mary and Zechariah exclaim in turn the mighty things God was doing through the coming of Christ. Their lives were caught up in it. God's promises were being fulfilled through it. God's purpose was being worked out before their eyes.

"And Mary said: My soul glorifies the Lord and my soul rejoices in God my Savior... for the Mighty One has done great things for me holy is his name ... He has performed mighty deeds with his arm... He has helped his servant Israel, remembering to be merciful to Abraham and his descendants forever, just as he promised our ancestors."

Luke 1:46–47, 49, 51a, 54–55

"...Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied: Praise be to the God of Israel because he has come to his people and redeemed them. He has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David... to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days."

Luke 1:67–69, 74–75

It has been a year of tumultuous events.

**Great waves crashing, Forces clashing,
Clamour and confusion resounding.
Human strength overwhelmed,
Human efforts unavailing.**

Then Christmas comes to remind us that God is at work in the storm; fulfilling His plan, keeping His promises, coming to His people in love and mercy through the birth of a child. And raising up for us a Savior to rescue us from our enemies.

He is a Hope which shall not disappoint or let us down. A light to shine in the darkness and a Shepherd to guide us in the path of peace. (see Luke 1:78–80)

This is not only **our** help but the message which it is the mission of our Czechoslovak Baptist Convention to share. You can help us to continue to do this with a Christmas gift to the Convention. Think of it as a way to share the joy of the songs of Mary and Zechariah with those still needing to hear of the One who lightens heavy loads and frees prisoners from the bondage of sin.

May the true joy of Christmas make us all poets and singers of the salvation of God.

Comfort and peace to you this Christmas and always!

Stan Mantle

*Bůh je naše útočiště i síla,
pomoc v úzkostech stále přítomná.*

Žalm 46:2



Editorial... Continues from page 3

its consequences. Two thousand years ago, the world likewise experienced a strange period: the birth of a child caused a massacre of babies and toddlers—something incomprehensible. With the birth of Jesus, his parents had to flee and hide. The Christmas story reminds us of this historical truth each year. With time, connections have emerged that today make sense.

The time for service and education had come. The mission of Jesus Christ was to bring humanity closer to God the creator, and was completed by his death on the cross.

Then came the time of his disciples. This period is seen as a time of mercy, applicable to every individual.

Independently of current times and events, during Christmas it reads again:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." (John 3:16–17).

Editor-in-Chief *Natasha Laurinc*
Translated by *Elizabeth Jane Fields*

□

Editorial... Pokračování ze strany 3

a skrývat se. Vánoční příběh tuto historickou skutečnost každým rokem připomíná. Časem vyplouvaly souvislosti, které dnes dávají smysl.

Přišel čas služby a vyučování. Posláním Pána Ježíše bylo přiblížit lidstvu samého Boha Stvořitele, které bylo dovršeno jeho smrtí na kříži.

Potom přišel čas jeho učedníků. Toto období je vnímáno jako čas milosti, vztahující se na každého člověka.

Nezávisle na událostech a dění dnešní doby, v čase Vánoc znovu zní:

"Neboť Bůh tak miloval svět, že dal svého jednorozného Syna, aby žádný, kdo v něj věří, nezahynul, ale měl věčný život. Bůh neposlal svého Syna na svět, aby svět odsoudil, ale aby svět byl skrze něj spasen." (Jan 3:16–17)

Nataša Laurincová, šéfredaktorka

□

Mary, Mentor to Many

Luke 1:26–35; 46–55

When in this season of the year we arrive at Luke's telling of what preceded the actual birth of Jesus, we are basically dealing with the wonderful personality of Mary, who accepted the role of human mother to our Lord with tremendous grace. She shows up in Matthew's and Luke's gospels as quiet, reflective, and tender of spirit—just a wonderful human being!

After listening to the message the Angel Gabriel had (Luke 1:26–34), how could Mary not have had pressing questions about what was going to be expected of her in the remainder of her life? But any of those issues she lay to the side in order to faithfully respond to what was being asked of her in the angelic announcement of Jesus' soon coming birth.

Mary—so youthful and inexperienced as we meet her in Luke, Chapter One. Yet by the time her visits with Gabriel and her cousin Elizabeth ended, she was well on the way to learning about what was in her own heart, and to discovering the marvelous peace and calm borne of obedience to the Lord.

All this was taking place as she was figuring out the steps of life transition from youth to maturity. Then too, she was preparing for marriage to her fiancé, Joseph, as well as pursuing the normal round of activities common to a person of her age. Her peaceable, trusting inclinations must have flickered from time to time to recall those strange words with which the Angel Gabriel had left her:



*Mary, you have found favor with God!
Mary, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son!
Mary, he will be called the Son of the Most High.*

(Luke 1:30–32)

Why was Mary chosen for this ever so intimate mother-and-son family relationship? God only knows! It is not a question appropriate for us to pursue. It just isn't. But are we not delighted that it was she, indeed, who became the point person whom God worked with in sending Christ our way?

I absolutely love it that once Mary knew the scope of things being asked of her she did not go rushing off to the media (whatever form that might have taken in those days) to build up to some sort of celebrity status. Not the Mary whom God chose!

Indeed, by contrast here is the key to the genuineness of her character, spoken by Mary herself: *Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.* (Luke 1:38) Which means, "I'll live by your decisions, will, and plans, Lord." What larger faith could anyone demonstrate than to leave with God the working out of his or her personal life's details, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. This is exactly what Mary committed herself to do.

With that as the chief sentiment arising from her heart, she declared an affirmative response to Gabriel on the day he came bringing his news that Messiah was even then preparing for appearance in our parts.

The Holy Spirit seeks to steer you toward the same great personal conclusion which Mary reached. Are you able to make it your own equivalent commitment, then carry it through life? More or less like this: "I am in the Lord's hand. Let go, let be, let things fall out, as surely they will, according as You, Lord, see fit."

This is what Mary did. She vowed she would take what the Lord might send her way, mysterious and difficult though that might turn out. She would get ready for more than her share of trouble, pain, and sorrow. Just think, for example, how excruciatingly difficult it had to be for her to watch some of the torturous things her son Jesus experienced later in his life. She was his mother! And a mother watches out for her child's safety, health, and welfare long after he ceases to be small. Mary went even through the Valley of the Shadow of Death on his behalf when enemy authorities came to take his life away from him. She was there! When she took on responsibilities for birthing and raising Jesus, she promised and lived out virtually total loyalty to him. "I will be the person you require of me." And so she was ready to introduce the infant child into a world of hard edges and evil stresses, then to "go with him, with him, all the way," as the old invitational hymn expressed itself in "Where He Leads Me, I Will Follow."

You encounter God in this world not as a notion, concept, or idea, but a living Presence who invites you and sometimes fights you into his family, wishing above everything else that you shall be a son or daughter of God. And you, once having opted for this relationship with him, get some rhythm and spirit in your days. Your heart sings a song, even if your vocal cords cannot carry much of a tune.

Mary came up with the song she needed before departing Elizabeth's house for her own home in Galilee. I don't know where she picked up the music, but it came to her at the right moment as she was learning to think of herself as an instrument in the hands of God. (Wouldn't you have loved to hear her singing it?) She sang these words, which the church from age to age still cherishes as "The Magnificat". It begins:

*My soul magnifies the Lord.
My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.
He has looked with favor on me.
The Mighty One has done great things for me.
Holy is his name.* (Luke 1:46–49)

Take the message to yourself. Make it yours this Christmas season. You will have a rich time with your family, friends, self, and God. Then give it to the world as your life's story.

Mary was a great mother to her son. Mary is a great teacher to our souls.

*Robert Dvorak,
Past President
Czechoslovak Baptist Convention*

□

A Christmas Alphabet Poem

Author Unknown

A is for Angels, appearing so bright, telling of Jesus that first Christmas night.
Luke 2:13.

B is for Bethlehem, crowded and old, birthplace of Jesus by prophet foretold.
Micah 5:2.

C is for Cattle, their manger His bed, there in the trough where He laid His head.
Luke 2:7.

D is for David and his ancient throne promised forever to Jesus alone.
Luke 1:32.

E is for East, where shone the bright star which Magi on camels followed afar.
Matthew 2:1,2.

F is for Frankincense, with myrrh and gold, brought by the Wise Men as Matthew has told.
Matthew 2:11.

G is for God, who from heaven above sent down to mankind the Son of His love.
John 3:16.

H is for Herod, whose murderous scheme was told to Joseph in a nocturnal dream.
Matthew 2:13.

I is for Immanuel, "God with us," for Christ brought man back to the Father's house.
Isaiah 7:14.

J is for Joseph so noble and just, obeying God's word with absolute trust.
Matthew 1:24.

K is for King. A true king He would be, coming in power and authority.
Zechariah 9:9.

L is for Love that He brought down to earth God enfleshed in lowly birth.
1 John 4:9.

M is for Mary, His mother so brave, counting God faithful and mighty to save.
Luke 1:38.

N is for Night, when the Savior was born for nations of earth and people forlorn.
Luke 2:8.

O is for Omega, meaning "the last;" He's eternal present, future and past.
Revelation 22:13.

P is for Prophets, when living on earth foretold His redemption and blessed birth.
Numbers 24:17.

Q is for Quickly, as shepherds who heard hastened to act on that heavenly word.
Luke 2:16.

R is for Rejoice. The sorrow of sin is banished forever when Jesus comes in.
Luke 1:14.

S is for Savior. To be this He came; the angel of God assigned Him His name.
Matthew 1:21.

T is for Tidings of joy, not of danger, telling of Him who was laid in a manger.
Luke 2:10.

U is for Us, to whom Jesus was given to show us the way and take us to heaven.
Luke 2:11.

V is for Virgin, foretold by the sage, God's revelation on prophecy's page.
Matthew 1:23.

W is for Wonderful, His works and His words, the King of all Kings, the Lord of all Lords.
Isaiah 9:6.

X is for Christ. It's X in the Greek, Anointed, Messiah, mighty, yet meek.
Acts 10:38.

Y is for Yes, called God's Yes in His Word; God's answer to all is Jesus the Lord.
2 Corinthians 1:20.

Z is for Zeal as it burned in Christ's heart. Lord, by thy Spirit to us zeal impart.
John 2:17.

□

Three Christmas Carols that Tell the True Christmas Story

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

An Advent song based on the Old Testament prophecies of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 7:14). Isaiah spoke of the Messiah's birth around 740–680 BC. The first verse of the song speaks of the Son of God appearing:

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.

Centuries later, Matthew recorded these words: "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us") (Matthew 1:23).

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

"The First Noel"

"Noel" derives from the Latin verb *nasci*, to be born. The very word "Noel" is synonymous with Christmas. The song retells the story from Luke 2 of the angels telling the shepherds in the field of the Savior being born, and the wise men bringing Him gifts.

The first Noel the angel did say
Was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay a-keeping their sheep,
On a cold winter's night that was so deep:

They looked up and saw a star,

And by the light of that same star,
Three wise men came from country far;
To seek for a king was their intent,

[They] offered there in his presence,
Their gold and myrrh and frankincense

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel
Born is the King of Israel.

"Joy to the World"

Joy to the World; the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King!
Let ev'ry heart prepare Him room,
And Heaven and nature sing.

This is the beautiful truth of what Christmas is really about. It is a repetition of God's promises.

"And so, let the heavens resound in gladness! Let joy be the earth's rhythm as the sea and all its creatures roar. Let the fields grow in triumph, a grand jubilee for all that live there. Let all the trees of the forest dig in and reach high with songs of joy before the Eternal" (Psalm 96:11–12).

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love.

We need to repeat that to ourselves far beyond
the Christmas season. □

Jesus Christ is real

There is historical, archaeological and Biblical evidence supporting the reality of Jesus Christ.

The life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ are all historical facts with eye-witness accounts telling us in great detail that speak of the genuineness of the accounts.

There are thousands of manuscripts—each verifying the others—that agree about the details.

Historical accounts outside the Bible back up what it says about the life of Jesus Christ.

There are prophecies that state very clearly who the Messiah would be. Jesus fulfilled them by being born in Bethlehem and by living a perfect and sinless life, suffering death for all mankind, and rising triumphantly from the grave.

Santa Claus is a legend

The legend is based mostly on the real life of Saint Nicholas, historical follower of Jesus Christ – a man who gave generously to those in need and fulfilled the Biblical command to love your neighbor.

Nicholas of Myra lived from 280–343 A.D. He was a kind bishop of the church in Myra (modern-day Turkey). Nicholas of Myra had become orphaned when a plague swept through his town. He received the estate of his well-to-do parents, and he used this wealth to make the lives of many other people better. Nicholas was very well loved for all of his kindness. He was jailed under the eight-year persecution of Christians by Roman Emperor Diocletian, but was released by Constantine, the next Roman Emperor.

Nicholas lived out his days serving God and helping others, thereby fulfilling the words of Jesus Christ himself when he said "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." There is no commandment greater than these." (Mark 12:30–31)

Nicholas was so well loved, and his legend spread so rapidly, that people everywhere wanted to claim him as their own. He was "adopted" by cities from Russia (King Vladimir of Russia made St. Nicholas the patron saint of Russia) to Germany and other countries, and came to be known as Saint Nicholas or Saint Nick.

The stories of Nicholas of Myra's fine citizenship and abundant generosity were embellished over time as his legend grew. He took on god-like traits of omniscience (knows if you've been good or bad), omnipotence (delivers presents to every house in the world in only one night) and



omnipresence (he sees you when you're sleeping, he knows when you're awake).

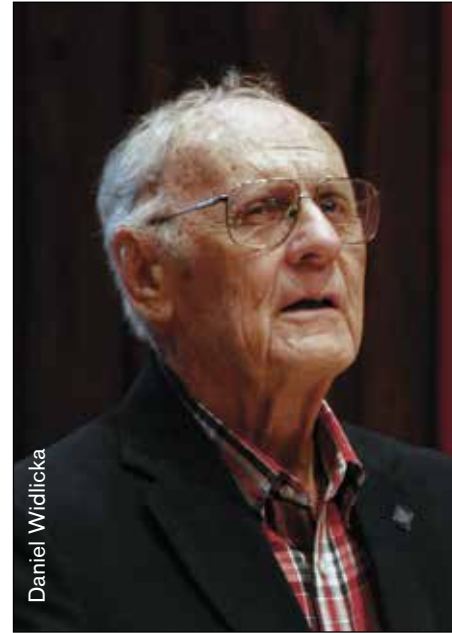
The first anglicizing of the name to Santa Claus was in a story that appeared in a New York City newspaper in 1773. Washington Irving in his satiric 1809 book *A History of New York* described Santa as a portly, bearded man who smokes a pipe and also marked the first time Santa slid down the chimney. Much later, he moved to the North Pole and acquired reindeer and a sleigh! Then he hired elves to make the toys, and married Mrs. Claus (first mentioned in the 1849 short story *A Christmas Legend* by James Rees). In 1890 (Massachusetts) a Santa Claus costume was used as a marketing tool. The modern image of Santa Claus as the jolly man in the red suit was seared into American pop culture in 1931. Artist Haddon Sundblom artist illustrated him that way for a campaign for Coca-Cola, and a tradition was born.

Saint Nicholas was a real believer in Jesus Christ who was persecuted and imprisoned for his faith. He used his worldly possessions to advance the kingdom of God. He could have done many things with his wealth, but he was a believer in the living, eternal God, who chose to glorify God by serving Him and his neighbor.

Saint Nicholas set the example for us that led to Christmas gift-giving. But in doing so, he was merely reflecting the greatest gift of all: The gift of eternal life found only in Jesus Christ.

"...but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

God's Greatest Gift



Daniel Widlicka

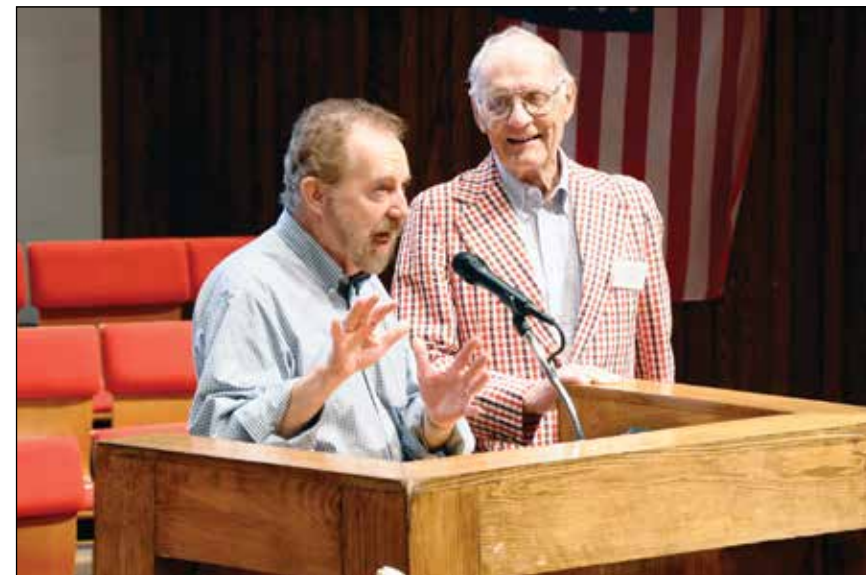
birth of the baby Jesus and the presentation of their gifts to the Christ Child is one of the things which initiated the traditional custom of exchanging Christmas gifts among loved ones and friends today.

I would like to point out that some characteristics of this first great gift of God which He gave to the whole world.

First of all we see that this gift of gifts was a LOVE GIFT (For God so loved...) The little two letter word "so" reveals the unfathomable depth, the unlimited breadth that characterized God's act of love when He sent the saviour into a world lost in sin. Although God hates sin, He loves all sinners. Such love transcends all human comprehension. Little wonder that well known hymn writer, Charles Wesley penned these familiar words;

*Love divine all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down;
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown.*

Furthermore see that this gift of God was a UNIVERSAL GIFT ("God so loved the world"). Instead of condemning the entire human race to eternal punishment and destruction, God in His infinite Love, Mercy and Grace, provided a Saviour for ALL mankind. His plan of redemption through the gift of



Robert Dvorak and Daniel Widlicka

It has been said that John 3:16 presents the Gospel in a nutshell.

This familiar portion of God's Word has been translated into more languages and used by the Holy Spirit to bring more souls to a realization of their need of a saviour than any other verse in the bible.

As we approach another holiday season, when we traditionally commemorate the birth of our Saviour, the only-begotten Son of God, it seems to me that this precious verse reveals in a very significant way just what Christmas is all about.

I want to share some thoughts that have blessed my soul as I have pondered this wonderful verse and related it to that wonderful event that transpired in the little town of Bethlehem some 2000 years ago.

As we think of the yuletide season the first thing that comes to mind is GIFTS. This is the central theme of John 3:16. The coming of the wise men from the east sometime after the

Jesus was not limited to any select group, but to the entire human race — the whole world. That was the declaration of the angel, that Christmas Eve, when He announced to the shepherds, "fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be TO ALL PEOPLE" (Luke 2:10). What a tragedy that 2000 years after that angelic announcement there are still millions living in darkness having never heard this "Good tidings of great joy".

We see thirdly that this Gift of God is a PERSONAL GIFT. (God so loved the world — that He gave His only Begotten Son) Contrary to the liberal concept that all human beings are sons of God, the Bible declares that God has only one, only-begotten Son who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. In the natural state we are all sons of Adam and through him condemned under God's righteous law to judgement for our sins. Only by being born again through personal faith in God's love gift, Jesus Christ, can anyone become in fact a son of God. (Galatians 4:4, 5-3:26—John 1:12).

Furthermore we see from this verse in John 3:16 that God's forgiveness and salvation is an INDIVIDUAL GIFT (that whosoever believes on Him should not perish). While salvation is universal in its offer and scope (to the whole world) it can only be appropriated by an act of faith on the part of each individual privately and alone. "Whosoever" means all may be saved but it also means each must be saved.

Becoming a Son of God is an intensely personal, individual matter of faith, repentance, acceptance and surrender.

Again we see in this verse that this Gift of God is an IMPERATIVE GIFT. (...that whosoever believes in him should NOT PERISH). This word "not" occurs six times in John 3:16, 17, 18 and 36. I John 5:11-13 stresses the seriousness of the acceptance of this gift. Eternal life or eternal death is at stake in the matter of this gift. To reject God's love gift Jesus Christ and the salvation He offers to everyone is to PERISH eternally. On the contrary, to receive Christ as personal saviour guarantees the believer that he or she will NOT perish but have everlasting life.

All of which brings us to the last characteristic of this gift of God. It is an IMPERISHABLE GIFT (that whosoever believes on Him shall not perish but shall have everlasting life).

Continues on page 19



The Boubeliks and Daniel Widlicka

Neuveriteľné narodenie

Jan Franka

Izaiáš 65:11-25

Sme vo vianočnom období a názov tohto článku môže niekoho zviest', že budem písať o Vianociach, článok však bude hovoriť o inom narodení. Sme v predposlednej kapitole Izaiáša. Pozrime sa, o aké narodenie ide.

Kapitoly 60–66 opisujú slávne kráľovstvo, ktoré ustanoví Ježiš pri svojom druhom príchode, aby kráľoval na celej zemi. O ňom sa hovorí ako o tisícročnom kráľovstve. Slovo „sláva“ sa spomína až 23-krát v posledných šiestich kapitolách. Už v 6. kapitole Izaiáš naznačuje, že Božia sláva bude opúšťať chrám, lebo vo videní Hospodin už nebol v chráme, ale nad ním, a iba Jeho rúcho sa dotýkalo chrámu. Na konci 6. kapitoly sa hovorí o vernom zostatku,

lebo Božia sláva odišla z Božieho domu.

Určite nebolo slávy v období ukončenia babylonského zajatia, keď sa zbožný zostatok vrátil späť do krajiny. Ezdráš píše o nadšení, ktoré vládlo u navrátilcov, ale aj o chudobe. Aké depimujúce to muselo byť vrátiť sa do vojnou zruinovanej krajiny, mestské múry boli čiastočne v ruinách, mestské brány spálené a na mieste, kde stál predtým chrám, nachádzala sa kopa kameňov, ktoré kedysi tvorili krásnu stavbu. Hoci chrám znovu postavili, už nikdy v ňom nebol pôvodný nábytok. Truhla zmluvy zmizla za čias Jeremiáša, tesne pred babylonským zajatím, a dodnes sa nevie, kde je. Izaiáš sa pozerá cez tieto neslávne udalosti do budúcich dní, keď prejde trest, o ktorom hovorí v 6:11–13:

„Nato som povedal: *Až dokedy, Pane? I odvetil: Pokiaľ nespustnú mestá bez obyvateľov a domy bez ľudí, kým rola nespustne na púšť. Hospodin ďaleko odvedie ľudí a mnoho bude opustených miest v krajine. A ak ostane v nej ešte desatina, i tá bude znova na spálenie ako cer a dub, z ktorých po zvalení ostane peň. Sväté semeno je jej peň.*“ Izaiáš sa prorocky pozerá na mesto, v ktorom bude znovu stáť slávny chrám, a to nie ten druhý, Zorobábelov, či neskôr Herodesov, alebo ten tzv. tretí. Hradby mu budú vystavané cudzozemcami. Vhodné je poznamenať, že dnešné jeruzalemské múry sú postavené Turkami v 15. storočí. Izaiáš na niekoľkých miestach hovorí v minulom čase o prítomných a budúcich veciach. To mu umožňujú dve veci: hebrejská gramatika má nejasný prítomný čas, väčšina udalostí sa opisuje v minulom a budúcom čase a čiara medzi minulým a budúcim časom je veľmi tenká. To nám hovorí, že minulosť a budúcnosť u Boha nie je taká, ako to vidíme my. Izaiáš sa v Božom Duchu pozerá na veci nie iba na také, aké sú, ale aké budú. Vieme sa takto pozeráť na Božie pôsobenie v našom živote? Veci, za ktoré sa modlíme, akoby sa už boli uskutočnili. Boh nemá budúcnosť, on je mimo času. Minulé a budúce veci máme iba my v lineárnom chápaní času.

Ako sa blížíme ku koncu knihy Izaiáša, naša téma sa stupňuje od slávneho svitania (60), cez radostnú svadbu, keď On obráti pohrebný smútok na svadobnú radosť (61–62), potom nás cez spravodlivé víťazstvo (63–64) doveďie k *neuveriteľnému narodeniu* (65–66).

Teraz je vhodná otázka: Čie narodenie? Predsa Božieho kráľovstva. Niežeby Božie kráľovstvo doteraz nebolo, ale teraz sa zjaví vo svojej plnosti a sláve. Prečo je dôležité o tom hovoriť? Pretože trvalá a zabezpečená budúcnosť ovplyvňuje našu prítomnosť. Kresťan spoliehajúci sa na Božie kráľovstvo, ktoré sa uskutoční v plnej sláve, už dnes žije v očakávaní jeho príchodu. Keby sme neočakávali to slávne, čo má prísť, potom by sme vnímali to, čo máme ako trvalé riešenie. Keď národ Júdov vyhnaní do Babylona, mali dojem, že ich Hospodin vráti späť v priebehu niekoľkých mesiacov. Hospodin im však poslal proroka s odkazom: modlite sa pre mesto, v ktorom žijete, zabývajte sa. Aj keď sa zabývali, Babylon sa nestal ich trvalým bydliskom. Aj my sme zodpovední za krajinu a mesto, v ktorom žijeme. Keď prišiel čas odísť z Babylónie, väčšina sa rozhodla ostať a iba verný zostatok sa navrátil do Jeruzalema.

Pred nami je budúce slávne kráľovstvo, Mesiášova ríša. Tešíš sa z toho? V slávnej Mesiášovej ríši nebudú dlhé cirkevné bohoslužby, ako si niektorí predstavujú, ale skutočný život. Mali ste už niekedy túžbu žiť v pokoji a blahobyte, kde vaša námaha bude uznaná? Ľudia budú normálne pracovať, tentoraz v pokoji, práca nebude zotročným, ale pôžitkom a šťastím, tak ako to bolo na začiatku v edenskej záhrade. Budú vidieť výsledky práce svojich rúk v naplnení a šťastí. Nie je to túžba aj dnes, keď odchádzame do roboty?

Je tu ešte jeden príznak slávneho kráľovstva. V druhom Žalme sa národy búria voči Pomazanému a On sa im smeje. Božie kráľovstvo je teraz na dosah. Prorok pripomína národu jeho hriech, že nehľadali Pána úprimne, no On sa im predsa dal nájsť—aj tým, čo ho celkom nehľadali. Pre ich hriech Boh dal šancu pohanom a v 65:1 vidíme náznaky spasenia pohanov. Pavel tento verš uplatnil tak, ako mu teraz rozumieme: „Potom Izaiáš má odvahu povedať: *Dal som sa nájsť tým, čo ma nehľadali, a zjavil som sa tým, čo sa nepýtali na mňa.*“ (Rim

10:20) Pavel hovorí, ako sme my pohania vlastne zaštepni do Božieho stromu. Niektorí sú v pokušení hovoriť, že cirkev sa stala Novým Izraelom. My sme však nezamenili Izrael, iba sme zaštepni do Božieho ľudu.

Tretia známka slávneho kráľovstva je príroda. Ekológovia už dlhšie hovoria o ničení prírody, a nám sa zdá, že to bude ešte horšie. Dnes aj príroda vzdychá pod ťarchou kľatby hriechu. Pozrime sa do Rím 8:19–23: „*Stvorenie zaiste s dychtivou túžbou očakáva zjavenie synov Božích. Lebo márnosti bolo podrobené stvorenie, nie dobrovoľne, ale skrze Teba, ktorý ho podrobil v nádeji, že aj samo stvorenie oslobodené bude z otroctva skazy do slávnej slobody detí Božích. Ved' vieme, že všetko stvorenie spoločne vzdychá a spoločne znáša pôrodné bolesti. A nielen ono, ale aj my, ktorí máme prvotiny ducha, aj my vzdycháme v sebe, očakávajúc synovstvo, vykúpenie svojho tela.*“ V slávnom kráľovstve aj príroda bude v súlade, a to nie pre snahy „zelených“, ale preto, že bude riešený kľúčový problém—hriech. Nevie si predstaviť, že Hospodin stvoril svet, kde sa dravé zvery delili o potravu so slabšími. Aj zvieratá budú vedieť, že na tento svet prišiel nový poriadok a budú žiť v súlade. Dnes je nemysliteľný nasledovný scenár: „*Vlk a baránok sa budú spolu pásť, lev ako vlk bude žrať slamu, ale pokrmom hada bude naďalej prach. Nebudú robiť zlé a nebudú ničť na celom mojom svätom vrchu,*“ hovorí Hospodin. (Izaiáš 65:25)

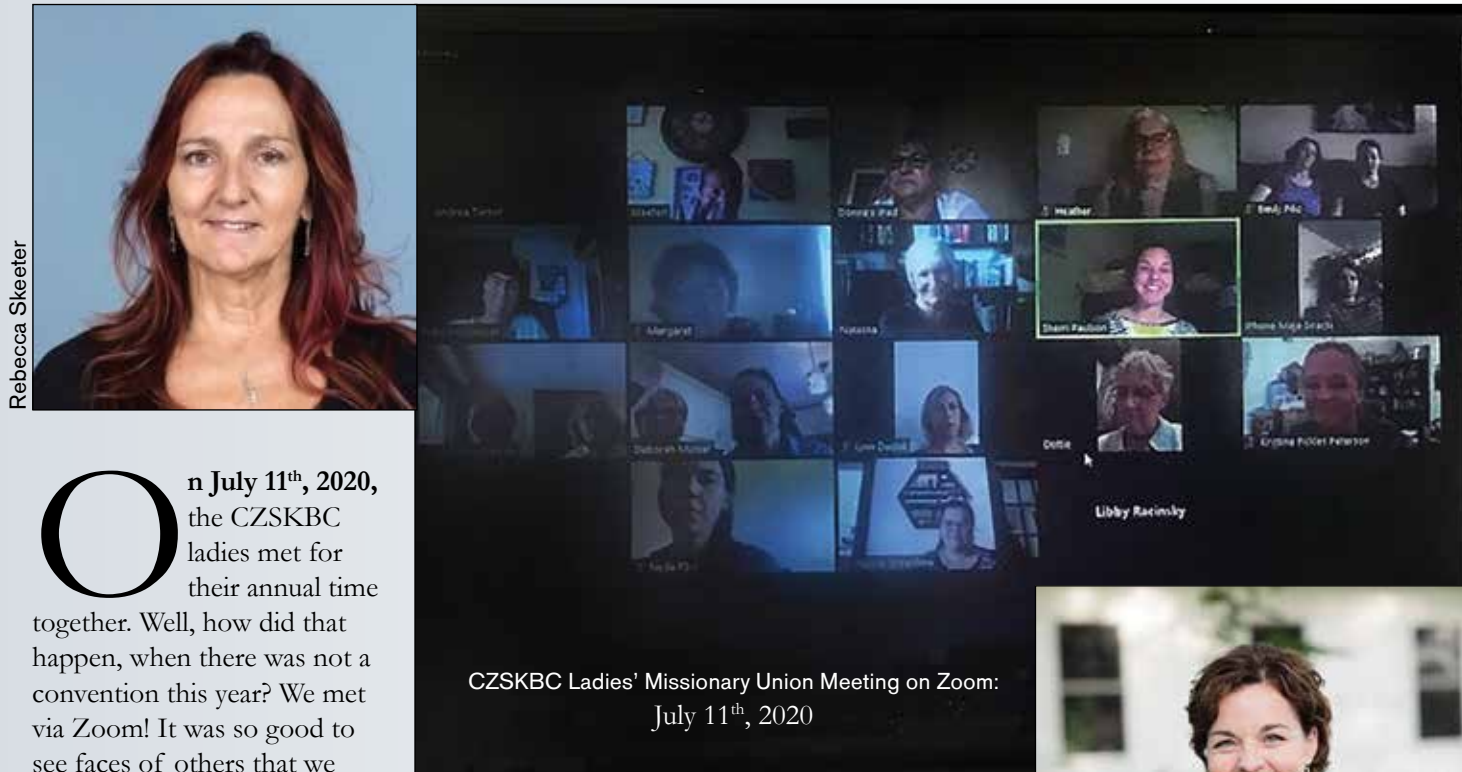
Nestrácaj nádej, pred nami je neuveriteľné narodenie Božieho kráľovstva. V Božom Duchu sa vieme pozeráť na veci nie iba na také, aké sú, ale aké budú.



Tento oddiel nám zjavuje aj poslednú vlastnosť, ktorú chcem spomenúť—dočasnosť tohto kráľovstva. Had predsa bude jesť prach, ale 1000-ročné kráľovstvo je len dočasné. Následky hriechu ešte stále nie sú vymazané. Smrť stále vládne, „*mládencom bude ten, kto zomrie ako storočný*“ (Iza 65:20) a had stále nemá nohy a plazí sa na bruchu.

Keď sa dnes pozrieme na svet okolo nás, máme dojem, že všetko smeruje iba k horšiemu; skracujú sa nám slobody, medicína nemá odpoveď na mnohé choroby, klamstvo je na každom kroku a tento zoznam nemá koniec. Nestrácaj nádej, pred nami je *neuveriteľné narodenie* Božieho kráľovstva. V Božom Duchu sa vieme pozeráť na veci nie iba na také, aké sú, ale aké budú. □

CZSKBC Ladies' Missionary Union Meeting:



Rebecca Skeeter

On July 11th, 2020, the CZSKBC ladies met for their annual time together. Well, how did that happen, when there was not a convention this year? We met via Zoom! It was so good to see faces of others that we mostly see only once or twice a year. Andrea opened in prayer for us. We then heard from Kristina Vlasic Petersen, Lynn Dudok and Dottie Kvasnica Moreland, who shared about trials and blessings happening in their lives.

Our special speaker this year was Sherri Paulson. Sherri is a missionary in Ghana working under SIM in a town called Tamale. Sherri started her time in Ghana alongside Ruby, who also happens to be her aunt, realizing this is where God wanted her to be. Sherri spoke from her heart describing how her days are spent as she is learning the language of Dagbani, which is spoken in Tamale. She told us of her desire to share God's message with the people in this town, but also the difficulties and trials that are real and often discouraging for her. Speaking with others about Christianity in Tamale is tough as the population is 90% Muslim. However, despite the struggles, Sherri is returning to Tamale, in January 2021. She will continue with her language studies as well as work alongside the church in evangelism, and will be ministering to widows and the poor. There are also plans for literacy and sustainable income projects for this community. Sherri asked for our prayers and monetary support. Our offering this year will be going to Sherri to help with necessary expenses, as she returns to Tamale in January. If you would like to learn more of her work, she has a video you can watch at www.sherripaulson.com.

She would also love to hear from you with questions or just to say hi: sberri.paulson@sim.org. If you are willing to send a love offering to support her work, please send a check to CZSKBC Women's Missionary Union (or just CZSKBC ladies) to Rebecca Skeeter at 5760 S Racine Ave, New Berlin, WI 53146 for US ladies, and to Donna Nesvadba 138 First Line, Elora, Ontario L0P 1S0 for Canada ladies.

Andrea closed with prayer and words from Psalm 1:3. She encouraged us to read God's word, pray, sing, and check in with our sisters during these difficult times. She thanked everyone for the sweet time of fellowship and said she would continue to pray for the day we would meet together once again.

Thanks,
Rebecca Skeeter



Sherri Paulson



Christmas in Ghana

What Does Christmas Mean to You?

Ruby Mikulencak



We in North America love Christmas. It is a beautiful time of the year. There is holiday cheer. There are Christmas carols to sing. There are presents to buy, to wrap, and to put under the tree. There is the tree to decorate and the Christmas programs and cantatas to sing, to hear and to see. I guess for me the best part

of Christmas is being with family and friends celebrating the birth of our Saviour.

Have you ever wondered what Christmas is like in other countries? Do they celebrate Christmas like you do? I was amazed to find that many people in Ghana have no idea what Christmas really is.

Here is a conversation I had with an older man in the Kasena society: "Akela," I asked, "why do we have Christmas? What do you do on Christmas Day?"

"Ruby, we really don't know why there is this holiday called Christmas. Traditionally we did not celebrate Christmas. We learned from the white man that Christmas is a day of feasting and drinking."

The Kasena Bible Church of Africa is trying to change the thoughts and ideas of the Kasena people about Christmas. What do the Christians now do to celebrate Christmas?

We have done a variety of things, but they usually involve the body of believers gathering together to worship and celebrate the coming of our Saviour. One year we had the Christmas story portrayed in Kasena style. The drama was presented at night under the moon and the stars. It was a wonderful way to announce to the community that Christmas comes around each year because Jesus came one night so long ago.

One Christmas Eve day we did a march for Jesus. We marched about three miles singing and dancing praises to the Lord. We ended up in a chief's house, giving a Christmas message to him and his household. On our way there, we stopped

in several places to pray and to ask God's blessing on the coming new year.

One Christmas all twelve churches in the Kasena area came together around 10 p.m. We sang, we danced, we read the Christmas story and people gave testimonies of their love for the Lord. This went on until two in the morning. What a wonderful witness!



On Christmas Day itself, there are Christmas services in the individual churches, and then people have a special meal together of chicken and rice, Kasena style. There are no gifts given, no decorations and not many Christmas songs. Their testimony in celebrating Christ's birth in their communities is helping people to know and realize the true meaning of Christmas.

I was shocked and surprised to learn that many people in northern Ghana had no idea why we celebrate Christmas. You can see that the Kasena Christians are trying to change this.

By the way, have you forgotten the real meaning of Christmas? Are you caught up with the hustle and bustle of Christmas, forgetting its true meaning? Do your friends and neighbors know the real meaning of Christmas? What are you doing to help people know the true meaning of Christmas?

Reprint from the Glorious Hope, Vol. 24, No.6, November 1998

Just a Little Donkey

Author Unknown

Just a little donkey,
but on my back I bore
the one and only Saviour
the world was waiting for.

Just a little donkey,
but I was strong and proud;
I gladly carried Mary
through the chaos of the
crowd.

I brought her to a stable
where she made a tiny bed...
A place for Baby Jesus
to lay His little head.

I pray the world remembers
that special Christmas night,
when just a little donkey
carried Heaven's precious light.

□



Bruce Bohush Mateika



Bruce Bohush Mateika, 89, of Kelowna, British Columbia, entered into the presence of the Lord on September 11, 2020. He was born on a farm north of Minitonas, Manitoba, and grew up as one of five brothers in an immigrant community of Czechs, Germans, and Ukrainians who settled in the Swan River Valley. It was actually one of his school teachers that gave him his English name, Bruce. After finishing school, and spending a year as a teacher in a one-room school near Swan River, Bruce moved west to Coquitlam BC to complete a B.Th at Northwest Baptist Bible College (NBBC). It was also at NBBC where he met his wife, Helen. Bruce and Helen served churches together from 1956 to 1992 in Barriere BC, Smithers BC, Maple Ridge BC, Fort McMurray, Alberta, and Armstrong BC. During these years, Bruce also served as camp director at Sunnybrae Bible Camp (Tappen), Camp Driftwood (Smithers), and Camp Nee Chee Wogan (Ft. McMurray). It should also not go without mention that many of the years in northern BC and AB were bi-vocational for Bruce, which meant that he held other jobs to supplement his salary. Some of those jobs included green chain at a local sawmill, post office clerk, school bus

driver, truant officer, returning officer for Alberta elections, regional commissioner for Census Canada, and crisis counsellor for Preventative Social Services. He also provided denominational leadership for FEB-CAST, FEBBC, and served on the Board of Governors for Northwest Baptist Theological College in Vancouver. Despite all this activity, though, Bruce was known as a passionate preacher of the Word of God and a caring minister to people in the communities in which he lived.

From 1993 to 2001, Bruce held chaplain and administrative roles for the Baptist Housing Society of BC in Qualicum Beach, Ladysmith, Salmon Arm, and Vancouver. Bruce and Helen retired to Summerland BC in 2001, but still maintained supportive roles in Peachland Baptist Church.

After a brief return to Armstrong in 2014, Bruce and Helen moved to Kelowna in 2016 for their final years in the Village at Mill Creek (Baptist Housing) and Mission Creek Landing.

Bruce was predeceased by his parents, Vladislav and Emilie; three brothers, Tony, Milton, and Bill; two nieces, Janice and Beverly; a sister-in-law, Rosie; and his wife, Helen. He is survived by his children, Sherri (Phil), and Merle (Lisa); grandchildren, Kimba, Willow (Cliff), Belle (CJ), Abram (Hannah), Zakkai, Gideon, Karel, and Caroline; and great-grandchildren, Joseph, Bennett, and Theophilus. He is also survived by brothers Harold (Ruth) and Wallace (Ann); sister-in-law, Olga; and many nieces and nephews.

□

God's Greatest Gift... Continues from page 13

In John chapter four in the encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman Jesus said in verse 10, 14, 15, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that says to you 'give me to drink', you would have asked of Him, and He would have given you living water. But whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." ... The woman said to Him, "Sir give me this water that I thirst not, neither need to come to draw."

On the Cross of Calvary the Saviour, God's Only begotten Son, born in Bethlehem's stable, poured out His own lifeblood and thereby completed God's plan of redemption

when He cried, "It is finished". The Apostle Paul sums it up when He says in Ephesians 2:28 and II Corinthians 9:15, "For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God". "Thanks be unto God for His indescribable gift".

Let us not fail in doing our part in sharing the news of this Gift with those who have not heard of it at this Christmas Season.

Pastor *Dan Widlicka*
Scranton Road Baptist Church Cleveland, Ohio

□



Gretchen with her mom in snowy Minnesota



Behind the scenes at the mission thrift store

Our 2-week trip to Minnesota is coming to a close, and we are grateful that with various protocols in place we were able to participate in a global missions conference, church services, small groups, personal meetings with church leaders and some individual supporters as well as spend time with our Minnesota family.

We even volunteered at a thrift store which donates some of its proceeds to church planting in the Czech Republic.

Please PRAY that our trip back will not be quite as adventurous as the trip to Minnesota, and that our 2-week quarantine in Canada will be a productive yet restful time.

From the photos we've been receiving from our kids at home in Windsor, it looks like the new office in our garage is coming along nicely, and we'll be able to use it through the winter months! We are looking forward to connecting with many churches and individuals by phone, Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, and by other electronic means. Please let us know what is a good time to connect with you virtually or personally! We're lining up some more trips within Ontario during the next few months. Please PRAY

for health and safety in travel and for good connections—in person and online!

Our hearts are heavy for all those affected by the second wave in the Czech Republic, which has been hit the hardest of all European countries. Two of our elders and two families in the church are sick with COVID and one elder's father has been on life support. All locations of our church have been physically shut down once again, but they continue to meet online. Please PRAY for the sick and dying as well as for those caring for them, and for Christians to make the most of every opportunity in these evil days (Eph. 5:16).

Recently a new Mongolian family joined the Mongolian church in Prague, which was a great encouragement for everyone. Pastor Munkhuush is also rejoicing that God has already provided 30% of his support to begin his first year of full-time outreach and pastoral ministry to Mongolians in Prague, the Czech Republic, and across Europe.

Mark & Gretchen
Luke Naomi Ben Elise



Gretchen worshipping in the shadow of the Czech flag



Czech elders meeting during the second wave



A new family joining the Mongolian church

"...the DAY of the LORD will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, Peace and SAFETY... But you...are not in darkness for this day to surprise you like a thief.... For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1. Thess. 5:2-9)

Each month we learn more, experience more, and adapt more to life in Serbia. Churches were open for worship from mid-August until mid-November. The street literature evangelism in Kladovo in mid-October was the most exciting event for us. It happened so spontaneously. Two young Baptist pastors came to know each other and became friends. They decided to do an open-air outreach in Kladovo (East Serbia, on the very border with Romania). We knew one of the pastors from before, and after arriving in North Serbia, we wanted to meet him. So, we went to Kladovo to meet him and to participate in this street evangelism.

On the first day, we were getting acquainted with each other, sharing our personal testimonies, sharing visions for ministry, and praying. On Saturday, we went out to the city square, placed a stand with New Testaments for Free written on it, and put books on it and around it. Pastor Boban was serving people at the stand; Pastor Dragiša was walking up and down the plaza greeting people, witnessing about salvation in Christ, giving them New Testaments with tracts; and we walked up and down the main street, greeting pedestrians, talking to them, giving out the New Testaments with an explanation of why it is so essential to read it. It was a fantastic opportunity to talk to people and find out their troubles, religious position, interests, struggles, and similar. Some people were open to talking and took New Testaments; others were just raising hands indicating no—probably identifying us as Jehovah's Witnesses. Almost at the end of the day, we approached one couple, asking if they had ever read the Bible, and to our big surprise, they said yes. The man asked about God's real name, and we knew who we were talking to. He wanted to know who we were and why we were doing this because he had never seen anybody except their members doing such outreach. Since April 2020, Jehovah's Witnesses have had no gatherings and have not been witnessing on the streets. The conversation lasted for more than half an hour in a friendly mood. By answering his questions, we could witness from the open Bible that Jesus is incarnated God, the promised seed of a woman, from Genesis 3.

Through this experience, we learned:

- 1.) About 50% of people are willing to stop and talk.
- 2.) It is possible to evangelize even Jehovah's Witnesses.
- 3.) There are two significant groups of people: A) Orthodox-Atheists—former communists who converted to Serbian Orthodoxy due to the national identity; B) Orthodox-New-Age believers—spiritual—syncretism of Christian-Orthodoxy, Hindu-Buddhism, and Serbian paganism.

On Sunday morning, we visited the Baptist Church in Kladovo and worshiped with them. Jan helped with leading worship, played his guitar, and introduced our call to ministry. The Church is renting one tiny entrance hall of a closed furniture store, and they meet there on the Lord's Day. Our hearts were overwhelmed with joy that God has eight saved souls in that city.

These are the marvelous works of our AWESOME LORD. In His Service, until He comes,

Jan and Ana Franka



Kladovo



The church worship

