



**HOLYTOWN PARISH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND  
CHRISTMAS 2015**

Dear Friends,

Sitting in my study yesterday morning I suddenly felt the whole room go dark around me - I did have two lights on in the room as I always do when working there, but still I was aware of the darkness almost seeping around me and pervading the room - it felt cold and chill and the darkness gave you a sense of foreboding.

When I looked out the window I saw the sky was black and indeed it looked almost like night out there rather than mid-morning. It seemed the storm named Abigail had indeed arrived and with it not just the hailstones, wind and rain but the chilling darkness too.

It seems to me that as we leave behind our time of Remembrance where we focused on the darkness of war and head rapidly towards the shortest day with its long, long night and short, dark day that darkness is already all around us at the moment.

Yes, we have the darkness of those late afternoons since the clocks have changed but we also have the darkness of stormy weather; the darkness of Sharm-el-Sheikh; the darkness of the atrocities in Paris.

Sadly, so much darkness of so many different kinds in our world at this time!

So much darkness needing light to come into the world and overcome it!

Diwali, the Hindu festival of light, has recently been celebrated

taking place in November this year; Hanukkah, the Jewish festival known as the Festival of Lights and the Feast of Dedication begins on December 6<sup>th</sup> and of course, we as Christians, await the 'Light of the World' - in Jesus - born to us on Christmas Day.

However, first we have to go through that period of waiting once more - we have to go through Advent which begins for us on November 29<sup>th</sup> and in the waiting time we prepare ourselves anew for the 'Light of the World' to come not only into our world but also into our hearts and minds.

Why - and why us too?

Well the 'Light of the World' came to banish the darkness - but in our world today Jesus needs us too to shine as lights so that in all times of darkness in our time we might be able to bring light to others.

That is something we can do in a myriad of ways and sometimes very simple ways - with an encouraging word, with a prayer, with a moment spent with someone, with a hug, with a donation to help others across the world.

However, no matter how we shine in our world of darkness, to be a strong beacon of light we have to remind ourselves anew of Jesus' coming as the 'Light of the World' - we need to refresh our hearts and minds as to why he came - and recollect what he did to bring light - and in so doing we do prepare ourselves to be light!

So, as you wait for Jesus once more, perhaps as the Christmas lights go up around you during the period of

Advent, you could use them as a little reminder of just how much one little light can light up the darkness around it, even more so when there are lots of little lights working together, often bringing great joy too.

Then, look to yourself and reflect on how much light you might bring to someone's darkness!

Advent is a time of waiting, a time of preparing, a time to think of the coming 'Light of the World' - I hope you will take time during Advent amid all the secular busyness of the season of Christmas to reflect on the Jesus and how you can be his light in the world today.

Advent and Christmas Blessings  
Caryl

## FLOWER LIST

December 13	J Shaw
20	D Paterson
27	C Boyd

## FLOWERS IN THE CHURCH

We should like to thank everyone who has placed flowers in the Church. They have added beauty and have also brought cheer to those who are housebound or indisposed. Your thoughtfulness is greatly appreciated.

We also wish to thank Christine Bell, the Flower Convener, for arranging the distribution of the flowers and helping some of the donors. This is all such a worthwhile service to everyone.

## **NEWS AND INTIMATIONS**

**Flower List:** The new Flower List for 2016 is now in the Vestibule of the Church. If you wish to place flowers in the Church please write your name in the space opposite the date of your choice.

**Magazine Distribution:** We should like to thank the Magazine distributors for their part in spreading news of the Church throughout the village. We also thank the Magazine Convener, Isa Hinshelwood, for her part in the distribution.

**Thanks:** I wish to thank Caryl for her visit during my recent stay in hospital. It was much appreciated.

Eddie Sinclair

## **WELCOME**

We give a warm welcome to Mr Graham Macconnachie who will be with us for the next few months. Graham is a Trainee Reader. We trust that the experience he gains will be beneficial to him and also that he enjoys being with us.

## **FRIENDS OF HOLYTOWN PARISH CHURCH**

A group of us from the community are hoping to get together and form a new group called 'Friends of Holytown Parish Church' early in the New Year.

With the increasing costs of repairing and maintaining Churches, making them Disability Compliant etc, many concerned individuals are joining together to set up Friends Schemes. Such a scheme can enable a wide group of people to help share the burden of ensuring that the local Church is in

a reasonable state to hand on to the next generation.

Whilst the Aims and Objectives have still to be finalised, the main purpose of this group would be to assist in the maintenance and upkeep of Holytown Parish Church for the benefit of all who value Holytown Parish Church not only for the present, but for future generations.

The main aim will be to raise funds which can then be disbursed to Holytown Parish Church as the 'Friends Group' sees fit. In the first year of the Group's formation we would wish to raise at least £5,000 and in doing so, we may then also enable Holytown Church to be able to access additional funding for grants etc, to assist with their maintenance and making their Church Disability Compliant.

Membership will be open to anyone who would like to join and is prepared to support the objectives of the group. We hope to draw people from a wide circle within the community. Individuals would include, for example:-

- People who wish to see the building there for future generations for whatever reason.
- People who want to have the church available for family occasions or have been pleased to use the services offered, for example, weddings, baptisms or funerals, but do not worship regularly in that church.
- People who see the Church here in Holytown as part of the community and who wish to see its continued use and existence.

- People who have family ties within Holytown or have used the church in some way, but who themselves have moved away.

We very much hope that through various social events, we can raise money to support Holytown Parish Church in the challenges that they face.

Please spread the word, that your community needs you. The Church needs your support. More information on how to join will be given in the New Year.

## **BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE**

Despite the weather conditions being rather wild and windy it was wonderful to see how many had gathered to remember loved ones who had passed away. The two churches, Holytown and Wrangholm Kirk, New Stevenston shared a very moving and tranquil Service of Remembrance.

The congregation took time, as the hymn describes it to "Come and find the quiet centre in the crowded life we lead" and think about the fact that "We cannot measure how you heal or answer every sufferer's prayer". They also sang of Christ being beside, before and behind them as well as being within, below and above them.

After the service there was an opportunity to join together in the Church Hall for refreshments.

*Where there is peace, God is.*

*Anon*

*Kindness is the true revealer of a person's greatness.*

*Anon*



# CHRISTMAS CALENDAR

**Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> December:** The Joint Christmas Party for the Boys' Brigade, Girls' Brigade and the Sunday School will be held in the Hall from 2.00 pm to 4.00 pm. Santa is expected to arrive at 3.40 pm.

**Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December:** Communion will be celebrated at both 10.00 am and 6.30 pm.

**Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> December:** Christmas Gift Service at 10.00 am  
You are invited to bring a gift suitable for a boy or a girl. Please write 'boy' or 'girl' and an idea of the age group for which it is suitable. The gifts in past years have been much appreciated by the recipients.

**Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December:** Nativity Service at 10.00 am  
We look forward to hearing the children telling the story of Christmas in words and song.

6.30 pm Evening Service in the Hall.

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> December:**

7.00 pm Crib Service in Wrangholm Kirk  
11.00 pm Watchnight Service in Holytown Church

**Friday 25<sup>th</sup> December - CHRISTMAS DAY**  
10.00 am Christmas Day Service in Holytown

**Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> December:** Nine Lessons and Carols at 10.00 am



## **CHRISTMAS MAIL**

On Sundays 6<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> December you will have an opportunity to place your cards for addresses in Holytown in a box for delivery by the Boys' Brigade. A donation for the BB funds would be much appreciated.

## **THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS**

There is one Christmas Carol that has always baffled me. Have you ever wondered about "The Twelve Days of Christmas?" What in the world do leaping lords, French hens, swimming swans, and especially the partridge who won't come out of the pear tree have to do with Christmas?

Today, I found out how that strange song became a Christmas Carol.

The partridge in a pear tree was Jesus Christ.

Two turtle doves were the Old and New Testaments.

Three French hens stood for faith, hope and love.

The four calling birds were the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The five golden rings recalled the Torah or law, the five books of the Old Testament.

The six geese a-laying stood for the six days of creation.

Seven swans a-swimming represented the sevenfold gifts of

the Holy Spirit: Prophecy, Serving, Teaching, Exhortation, Contribution, Leadership and Mercy.

The eight maids a-milking were the eight beatitudes.

Nine ladies dancing were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control.

The ten lords a-leaping were the Ten Commandments.

The eleven pipers piping stood for the eleven faithful disciples.

The twelve drummers drumming symbolised the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed.

## **CHALLENGING THE FAMILY**

*Advent was one week away, so a family thought they'd see what the children remembered from the previous year's celebrations.*

*Who can tell me what the four candles in the Advent wreath represent?" the father asked.*

*His son jumped in with 7-year old wisdom, saying, "There's love, joy, peace and . . ."*

*At that moment the daughter interrupted, "Peace and QUIET!"*

## FOR THE YOUNG FOLKS

What are you going to put on the Christmas tree? Here are some ideas but they are all mixed up. Can you find the answers?



LEANG  
ARTS  
SINLET  
SILTGH

LABSUBE  
FIGST  
SLELB  
OLDL

Here is a list of what you will be able to find in the word search. There is one item not listed. Can you find it?

Angels, Caesar Augustus, baby, Bethlehem, census, clothes, fields, glory to God, Jesus, Joseph, Judea, manger, Mary, Saviour, pondered, shepherds, town of David, wise men

CLOTHSNEMESIWG  
SARWOJRLSHIPL  
ALEDEUYBABGOEC  
NYFSORPJMERNAB  
GXUIAOSYOYIDRU  
ESVMLROOTDCEBS  
LARAMNAOTIGRAD  
SUSNECGUPVQEER  
OOJGHOSHGTUDDE  
WOOEDDJLOUITUH  
YYARLASHPESOJP  
OCBETHLEHEMTYE  
LWIDWCUPTRBDUH  
AFD I VADFONWCTS

## **IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS**

Christmas is indeed the 'time for giving' but we've all heard stories about inappropriate or unappreciated presents. In light of this, I feel the need to share the following sad tale with you.

Choosing a gift for an elderly mother . . . •

Three sons left home, went out on their own and prospered. Getting back together, they discussed the gifts they were able to give their elderly mother.

The first said, "I built a big house for our mother." The second said, "I sent her a Mercedes with a driver." The third smiled and said, "I reckon I've got you both beat. You remember how mum enjoyed reading the Bible? And you know she can't see very well. So I sent her a remarkable parrot that recites the entire Bible. It took elders in the Church 12 years to teach him. He's one of a kind. Mum just has to name the chapter and verse, and the parrot recites it."

Soon thereafter, mum sent out her letters of thanks:

"David," she wrote one son, "The house you built is so huge, I live in only one room, but I have to clean the whole house."

"John," she wrote to another, "I am too old to travel, I stay most of the time at home, so I rarely use the Mercedes. And the driver is so rude!"

"Dearest Jeffrey," she wrote to her third son, "You have the good sense to know what your mother likes . . . . .  
That chicken was delicious."

## **LESSONS OF THE MANGER**

**"No, mustn't touch," I insisted as I removed the sheep from my granddaughter Malea's small hand. She had a hard time resisting the Christmas decorations I had carefully placed around the living room, and she was especially drawn to the creche.**

**I returned the lamb to the fold and attempted to explain in words an eighteen-month old child could grasp. "See Baby Jesus." I pointed to the manger child.**

**"Baby," she echoed - a word she knew well. She loved babies, little people like herself.**

**"Pretty," I said. "But we just look at Baby Jesus. We don't touch."**

**She seemed to accept my adult babble and turned away after awhile to play with her toys. A moment later, however, she plopped her baby doll right in the middle of the holy scene.**

**The impact of Malea's baby sent two of the smaller angels flying into all three wise men, who landed facedown at the foot of the manger. The whole flock of sheep skittered across the table, while Joseph wobbled but remained upright beside Mary.**

**A day or two later, the symbolism of that moment sank into my mind: A Baby had struck our earthly scene, as well - and that heavenly impact brought men of earthly wisdom prostrate before God's Son. The flock spread out into the world. Earthly fathers wavered, but they continued to hang on.**

My hands-off-the-Christ-Child attitude changed. after all, Malea had simply brought her baby to the manger to be with the holy Baby. And God comes to us in terms everyone can grasp, in a form that draws all people - even little people like Malea. (Glenda Emigh)

## **ST NICOLAS DAY (December 6)**

In Curacao, the story which has been passed down for generations, tells a tale supposedly from the sixteenth century when St Nicolas was a bishop in Spain, famous for his kindness towards all children, and also his compassion for the poverty stricken Moroccan and Turkish people living in his parish. These Moroccans and Turks often made their living by cleaning chimneys, as a result after a hard day's work they were as black as the soot they were cleaning. Thus, his helper's name, Zwarte Piet (Black Peter). Every year these men covered in soot helped St Nicolas deliver gifts to poor children on his birthday (December 6). Nowadays Curacao children fill their shoes with grass and carrots and leave water for St Nicolas's horse on the eve of December 5<sup>th</sup>. The children who had behaved well all year find a gift when they get up in the morning: those who had not are afraid that Zwarte Piet will take them away back to Spain with them in a sack.

Saint Nicolas, d.c.350, was a Christian bishop of the church of Myra in Lycia (a self governing country from 169 B.C. to A.D. 43), which was located on the Mediterranean coast in the area where Turkey is now situated. His remains were supposedly shipped to Bari, Italy, in 1087 to rest there as their patron saint. One of the only buildings of Bari to have survived World War II is the 11<sup>th</sup> century San Nicola Romanesque Basilica,

Junior Section boys Noah Gardner, Isaac Gardner, Louis Taylor, David McDonald and Ben Stacey took part in the battalion general knowledge competition and we are delighted to report that the boys won in a close fought competition with nine other companys. They also took part in the battalions Bible Knowledge and Safety competition and we await the result early next year. Good luck boys







Company Section boys Ross Baillie, Colby Grant and Jack Stacey enjoyed a great evening with the rest of the battalion at M and Ds where the ten pin bowling took place. Overall the boys came third in the team game and Ross achieved the third highest score in the first game. Well done boys.

built in honour of St Nicolas and complete with authentic relics.

## **TITANIC**

**(A story of the tragedy that is less well known)**

John Harper was born to a pair of solid Christian parents in the village of Houston in Renfrewshire on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1872. It was on the last Sunday of March 1886, when he was thirteen years old that he received Jesus as the Lord of his life. He began to preach about four years later at the ripe old age of 17 years by going down to the streets of his village and pouring out his soul in earnest entreaty for men to be reconciled to God.

As John Harper's life unfolded, one thing was apparent . . . He was consumed by the Word of God. When asked by various ministers what his doctrine consisted of, he was known to reply "The Word of God!" After five or six years of toiling on street corners preaching the gospel and working in the mill during the day, Harper was taken in by Rev E A Carter of Baptist Pioneer Mission in London. This set Harper free to devote his whole time of energy to the work so dear to his heart. Soon, John Harper started his own church in September of 1896 in Paisley Road, Glasgow (Now moved to Craigiehall Street and known as the Harper Memorial Church). This church which John Harper had started with just 25 members, had grown to over 500 members when he left 13 years later. During this time he had gotten married, but was shortly thereafter widowed. However brief the marriage God did bless John Harper with a beautiful little girl named Nana.

Ironically, John Harper almost drowned several times during

his life. When he was two and a half years of age, he almost drowned when he fell into a well but was resuscitated by his mother. At the age of twenty-six, he was swept out to sea by a reverse current and barely survived, and at thirty-two he faced death on a leaking ship in the Mediterranean. Perhaps, God used these experiences to prepare this servant for what he faced next . . .

•

It was on the night of April 14, 1912. The RMS Titanic sailed swiftly on the bitterly cold ocean waters heading unknowingly into the pages of history. On board this luxurious ocean liner were many rich and famous people. At the time of the ship's launch, it was the world's largest man-made moveable object. At 11.40 pm on that fateful night, an iceberg scraped the ship's starboard side, showering the decks with ice and ripping open six watertight compartments. The sea poured in.

On board the ship that night was John Harper and his much-beloved six-year old daughter, Nana. According to documented reports, as soon as it was apparent that the ship was going to sink, John Harper immediately took his daughter to a lifeboat. It is reasonable to assume that this widowed preacher could have easily gotten on board this boat to safety; however, it never seems to have crossed his mind. He bent down and kissed his precious little girl; looking into her eyes he told her that she would see him again someday. The flares going off in the dark sky above reflected the tears on his face as he turned and headed towards the crowd of desperate humanity on the sinking ocean liner. As the rear of the huge ship began to lurch upwards, it was reported that Harper was seen making his way up the deck yelling, "Women, children and unsaved into the lifeboats!" It was only minutes later that the Titanic began to rumble deep within. Most people thought

it was an explosion; actually the gargantuan ship was literally breaking in half. At this point, many people jumped off the decks and into the icy, dark waters below. John Harper was one of these people.

That night 1,528 people went into the frigid waters. John Harper was seen swimming frantically to people in the water leading them to Jesus before the hypothermia became fatal. Mr Harper swam up to one young man who had climbed up on a piece of debris. Rev. Harper asked him between breaths, "Are you saved?" The young man replied that he was not.

Harper then tried to lead him to Christ only to have the young man who was near shock, reply no. John Harper then took off his life jacket and threw it to the man and said "Here then, you need this more than I do . . ." and swam away to other people. A few minutes later Harper swam back to the young man and succeeded in leading him to salvation. Of the 1,528 people that went into the water that night, six were rescued by the lifeboats. One of them was this young man on the debris. Four years later, at a survivors' meeting, this young man stood up and in tears recounted how John Harper had led him to Christ. Mr Harper had tried to swim back to help other people, yet because of the intense cold, had grown too weak to swim. His last words before going under in the frigid waters were "Believe on the Name of the Lord Jesus and you will be saved." Does Hollywood remember this man? No. Oh well, no matter, it's not really surprising. This servant of God did what he had to do. While other people were trying to buy their way into the lifeboats and selfishly trying to save their own lives, John Harper gave up his life so that others could be saved. He was only 39 years of age.

**"Greater love hath no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends . . . " John Harper was truly the hero of the Titanic!**

Sources for this article: "The Titanic's Last Hero" by Moody Press 1997, Scriptures are quoted from the King James Bible.

## **AN INVITE TO A SPECIAL PARTY**

As you well know, we are getting closer to my birthday. Every year there is a celebration in my honour and I think that this year the celebration will be repeated. During this time there are many people shopping for gifts, there are many radio announcements, TV commercials, and in every part of the world everyone is talking that my birthday is getting closer and closer. It is really very nice to know, that at least once a year, some people think of me. As you know, the celebration of my birthday began many years ago. At first people seemed to understand and be thankful of all that I did for them, but in these times, no one seems to know the reason for the celebration. Family and friends get together and have lots of fun, but they don't know the meaning of the celebration. I remember that last year there was a great feast in my honour. The dinner table was full of delicious foods, pastries, fruits, assorted nuts and chocolates. The decorations were exquisite and there were many, beautifully wrapped gifts. But, do you want to know something? I wasn't invited. I was the guest of honour and they didn't remember to send me an invitation. The party was for me, but when that great day came, I was left outside. They closed the door in my face and I wanted to be with them and share their table.

In truth, that didn't surprise me because in the last few years most folks close their doors to me. Since I wasn't invited, I

decided to enter the party without making any noise. I went in and stood in a corner. They were all drinking; there were some who were drunk and telling jokes and laughing at everything. They were having a grand time. To top it all, this big fat man all dressed in red wearing a long white beard entered the room yelling Ho-Ho-Ho! He seemed drunk. He sat on the sofa and all the children ran to him, saying: "Santa Claus, Santa Claus" as if the party were in his honour! At midnight all the people began to hug each other; I extended my arms waiting for someone to hug me and do you know no-one hugged me. Suddenly they all began to share gifts. They opened them one by one with great expectation. When all had been opened, I looked to see if, maybe, there was one for me. What would you feel if on your birthday everybody shared gifts and you did not get one? I then understood that I was unwanted at that party and quietly left. Every year it gets worse. People only remember the gifts, the parties, to eat and drink, and nobody remembers me.

I would like this Christmas that you allow me to enter into your life. I would like that you recognise the fact that almost two thousand years ago I came to this world to give my life for you, on the cross, to save you. Today, I only want that you believe this with all your heart. I want to share something with you. As many didn't invite me to their party, I will have my own celebration, a grandiose party that no one has ever imagined, a spectacular party. I'm still making the final arrangements.

Today I am sending out many invitations and there is an invitation for you. I want to know if you wish to attend and I will make a reservation for you and write your name with golden letters in my great guest-book. Only those on the guest list will be invited to the party. Those who don't answer

the invite will be left outside. Be prepared because when all is ready, you will be part of my great party.

See you soon. I love you!

Jesus

## A FEW THOUGHTS

Off to one side sits a group of shepherds. They sit silently on the floor, perhaps perplexed, perhaps in awe, no doubt in amazement. Their night watch had been interrupted by an explosion of light from heaven and a symphony of angels. God goes to those who have time to hear him - and so on this cloudless night he went to simple shepherds. (Max Lucado)

Take time to be aware that in the very midst of our busy preparations for the celebration of Christ's birth in ancient Bethlehem, Christ is reborn in the Bethlehems of our homes and daily lives. Take time, slow down, be still, be awake to the divine Mystery that looks so common and so ordinary and yet is wondrously present. (Edward Hays)

Christmas was going to be different this year. The father called a family conference and challenged them to be more disciplined in the management of time during the busy Christmas season and to curtail excessive visiting relatives and a more congenial atmosphere around their home. He brought his speech to a crescendo with his final rallying cry, "Let's make this the best Christmas EVER!" His little son countered the big motivational speech by noting, "But, Dad, I don't see how we could ever improve on the first Christmas."

Christ is revealed only to a few witnesses, and that at dead of



night. Further, while God has at hand many of rank and high ability as witnesses, He puts them aside and simply chooses shepherds, of little account with men, of no reckoning . . . If we desire to come to Christ, we must not be ashamed to follow those whom God chose, from the sheep dung, to bring down the pride of the world. (John Calvin)

The first nativity scene dates back to 1223, when Francis of Assisi recreated the scene of Christ's birth in the town of Greccio. St Francis was worried that ordinary people had no real grasp of what had happened at Christ's birth. So he secured the assistance of a rich patron and set about recreating the original scene. He used a life-size figure of the Christ-child, live animals, a manger, straw and so forth. He and his friends played the parts of Joseph, Mary, the shepherds, and the Magi. Worshippers flocked to this nativity scene. St Francis had managed to portray the birth of Christ in all its humility rather than with the pomp and splendour of his day.

(Excerpts from "Stocking full of Christmas, Compiled by Mark Stibbe and J John)

## **THIS IS THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD**

All the world has heard the story  
of the little Christ Child's birth,  
But too few have felt the meaning  
of His mission here on earth.  
Some regard the Christmas story  
as something beautiful to hear,  
A lovely Christmas custom  
that we celebrate each year,  
But it is more than just a story

told to make our hearts rejoice -  
It's our Father up in heaven  
speaking through the Christ Child's voice,  
Telling us of heavenly kingdoms  
that He has prepared above  
For all who trust His mercy  
and live only for His love . . .  
And only through the Christ Child  
can man be born again,  
For God sent the Baby Jesus  
as the Saviour of all men.

Helen Steiner Rice

## **SHEPHERDS**

Shepherds are familiar to all of us but being a shepherd in the area around Bethlehem was rather different from being a shepherd here in Scotland.

We are going to take a few moments to think about the shepherds. They were ordinary people just like you and me. Normally they would lie down beside their sheep in order to protect them from any dangers which might occur. This was a regular everyday occurrence but on one night their world was turned upside down.

*The moon had set; the silent stars  
Were shinin hard an clear  
When aa the sky was lichted up;  
The shepherds turned in fear.*

*An awesome and a wondrous sight,*

*Siclike they'd never seen:  
An angel, shinin like the sun;  
The brichtness hurt their een.*

They must have been mesmerised. Perhaps they doubted if what they were seeing was real. It was beyond their comprehension. Their hearts would have been racing, their minds would have found all of this almost impossible to take in; this was something truly spectacular.

The shepherds were all huddled together after hearing the announcement from the angel. They talked among themselves. What should we do? Is it really true? In the end they decided to investigate and went off to Bethlehem to see for themselves what had taken place. There was only one way to solve the problem, and so it came to be that the shepherds, hard-working men, used to looking after their sheep were the first to see the new baby who had been born.

*They chappit at the stable door  
An Joseph lat them in;  
They saw the baimie lyin there,  
An fell an worshipped Him.*

Isn't it intriguing that God revealed what he had done to the shepherds rather than to powerful people or to royalty? God entrusted the shepherds with this news - Good News.

(I found the words quoted in a friend's book.)

*He who knows others is worldly, but he who also knows  
himself is wise.* *Arabian Proverb*

## **A CHRISTMAS LEGEND**

It happened centuries ago, before the white man ever put foot on the shores of North America. The exact locale is no longer known. How much is legend, and how much is fact, would be difficult to prove.

Around their winter campfires, the old men of the tribes often told the story of the Good Indian. His name has long been forgotten, but what took place that Christmas Eve will always be remembered.

The Good Indian was believed to possess powerful medicine, to be able to commune with the Great Spirit. In tribal councils when he spoke for the good of the tribe, he always said he was speaking on behalf of the Great Spirit. He insisted that he heard His voice in the trees, low and whispering when the pines were stirred by gentle breezes; loud and angry when the storm clouds gathered and high winds tore at the maples, the sycamores, and the oaks. He said the Great Spirit spoke to him in the music of nature. Some laughed at him, many believed in him.

The winter was cold and harsh that year. The fish hid in the deepest part of the water and were hard to lure through holes in the ice. The snows were deep and game scarce in the woods. The young men of the tribe and the hunters wanted to raid and pillage neighbouring tribes while they still had the strength to do it. But the Good Indian opposed this. He pleaded with them to have patience. He promised to go into the woods where he knew the Great Spirit would guide him to game. Armed with bow and arrow the Good Indian did go into the forest. Where none had seen as much as a rabbit track

before, he found deer trails through the snows. Night fell, but the moon was bright. It was close to midnight when he came upon the deer. Then he could hardly believe his eyes.

Never had he seen such a beautiful clearing. The snow did not cover the boughs of the pine trees. Instead, huge snowflakes seemed to hang from them like bright stars. And the deer did not run when he approached. They were all on their knees facing the East. The Good Indian laid aside his bow and arrow. He, too, looked East. High in the heavens he saw a beautiful star, bigger and brighter than any star he had ever seen before. And through the trees came the sound of beautiful voices singing songs he had never known around the campfires. Then he heard a voice which he was certain was that of the Great Spirit. It told him that in a far-off land a Babe was born who would one day teach that all men are brothers. We are not to take from one another, but to share with one another. All hatreds between men of different tribes must go, and love of one for the other must take its place. This night was to be the beginning of peace on earth and goodwill to men.

When the Good Indian returned empty-handed to his village, he was met by joyous hunters who had found new game to feed their people. And they talked, not of raiding a neighbouring tribe, but of taking them food for their women and children. And when they lauded him as being a friend of the Great Spirit, he told them what he had seen and heard - that the Great Spirit had sent his Son into the world to be a friend to them all.

Some say that even today a knowing Indian will slip off into the woods alone on Christmas Eve, hoping to see once again

the deer kneeling toward the East.

## **THIS PAST YEAR AND NEXT**

As the year draws toward its close, we might look back through the months and take a sort of inventory. There were some days we had fears, but most of them never materialised. There were some days we suffered physical discomfort and on other days emotional hurts. We failed in some efforts, we were disappointed in some people. In moments of trouble the outlook always seemed much darker than it later proved to be. These were the losses of the year. Let's write them off, wipe them out and forget them.

Then let's take a fresh look back through the same months. We can count so many more days when we were free of any kind of fear. We can remember that on most mornings we woke up vibrant and healthful and eager for the day's activities. There were more compliments than affronts; more notes of appreciation than words of criticism. We can be proud of our many successes, happy over the people who pleasantly surprised us. We shared in much more happiness than we realised at the time. These are our profits for the year. Let's write them into our hearts and remember them, for they will help us meet the New Year with confident courage.

Happy is he who at the end of the year has something beautiful to remember from his yesterdays, and something good to hope for from his tomorrow; who has a friend he wants to copy, and a friend who wants to copy him; who has the courage to attempt great things all by himself, and the wisdom to ask help; who gives thanks with a whole heart for present blessings, and is already at work with plans for the