

# The Herald

·OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH OF SRI LANKA·

## HERALDING FOR HALF A CENTURY !

The Revd: Charles Jansz ( C.N.J), marks an extraordinary milestone with the publication of this issue, completing fifty years of dedicated service as Editor of "The Herald", since his first appointment in 1973 (to 1980), at a time when Editors were changed annually.

After a brief stint overseas necessitated by further studies (1980-81), he was re-elected in 1982 as Editor and has continued faithfully to this day.

Grateful to the Lord for language and writing skills, he remains ever mindful of the many individuals, who have contributed towards the editorial content through these five decades, including efficient Printers and publishers, who have tirelessly sustained this publication and its many pages.



What began as a monthly publication later became bi-monthly and today – due to rising printing costs and limited resources – is published quarterly. Now produced and shared largely through technological means, the Herald continues to serve as a vital organ for spiritual nourishment, the promotion of Reformed truth and the sharing of Denominational and Congregational news with members and readers, near and far.

*( Contributed by Tamara Rebeira).*



"DISCOVERING CHRISTMAS" - SEE INSIDE  
ALSO INSIDE - "A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS"

# A “TRIXIE FLAGSTON” CHRISTMAS ??

Things can surely be confusing at Christmas time. In the hustle and bustle of the season, we can easily become confused about what Christmas is all about. That is why the theme like “Rediscovering Christmas” is very timely for the times we live in !

In the popular Hi and Lois Cartoon strip, the writer often puts into words what is in the mind of the little girl who is the pride of the family. During a strip that appeared during the Christmas season, Trixie the infant daughter of Hi and Lois,(Flagston) is pictured as thinking, *“I sure do love Christmas. I don't know what it is all about yet, but I sure do love it!”*

Many people find themselves in the same situation every Christmas. They love Christmas. They look forward to it, but they just don't know what it is all about. Just think how much joy it would bring them if they understood the full significance of it all.

It is also amazing that almost everyone with some exceptions celebrates this event. And it is even more amazing to know that very few have any intention of honouring the person of Jesus or recognize any allegiance to His cause. The bottom line is that Christmas has basically provided a holiday even for those who do not worship Him.

The response to Christmas , even from those who flood the Churches on this day,(many of them only on this day!) is nowhere near to that of those who witnessed the first Christmas, as recorded in the Scriptures.I am thinking mainly of the shepherds in that field that first Christmas. It must be realized that our celebration of Christmas should be different from the unbelieving segment, but how do we demonstrate this difference. So “ Rediscovering Christmas” in terms of its true significance must be priority as we seek to commemorate another Christmas event.

The story of the shepherds - those who were among the first to hear the good news of Christmas , as recorded by St Luke in Chapter 2, can help us on that road to rediscovery. Amongst the many things that stand out in the story, one important thing is the need to stay in perpetual amazement of the facts of Christmas. In Luke's record, we are told that the people were *“amazed”* at the message they had heard from the shepherds. (St. Luke 2: 18). This indicates that the people took the Shepherds seriously, although they did not know what to make of the events described. And even though the Shepherds were considered the most unreliable of sources!

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It seems today that many have lost that wonder and amazement when it comes to the significance of the Christmas event. I remember a Christmas Cantata, we were blessed with once. It was entitled "The Wonder Of Christmas." But it seems the "wonder" has faded and "grace that appeared" is no longer amazing! We need to rediscover and recapture that amazement and wonder if Christmas is to be what it should be to us.

And when it comes to wonder and amazement, we could also learn from the children! Have you ever enjoyed the amazement and wonder of children on Christmas morning? It is a delight to watch children who are caught up with the wonder of it all. True, they are mostly caught up with the wonder of the decorations and gifts than the meaning of Christmas but their sense of wonder is not inappropriate. And from such children we face a two fold challenge. Firstly, our task as adults would be to channel their wonder to Jesus and into what Christmas is really all about. And secondly, we need to learn from them to recapture and rediscover our amazement at Christ at Christmas.

And if we are to truly rediscover what Christmas is all about, in a world and at a time when confusion confounds, then I propose that there is good reason for each of us to stop and to consider that the God of Heaven would deem us worthy, to step down from the glories of Heaven and take on human form, become the Son of Man, so that we could become sons and daughters of God.

So the question remains, is It time to rediscover Christmas in a way that Christ and the purpose of His incarnation becomes part of our faith and life? If that rediscovery happens then the real season for this wonderful season would be back on track for us, even though there would be those, like Trixie Flagston, who still love Christmas but do not know what it is truly all about! So, this Christmas lets leave Trixie behind and settle for a Christmas with Christ at the Center of our faith and living!



By Vanessa Labrooy

## Rediscovering Christmas

### Something old something new

For many years past I've done the usual ; 'christmas chaos'

- The many edited to-do lists
- Last minute gift shopping
- The family lunches and menus
- The family photos
- Colour schemes and tree décor

And the pressure to 'make it magical'

Christmas was a to-do list in many ways. A season I just tried to get through, and often failed to enjoy. But now the season feels different ...

Maybe I'm done with all the superficial glam and glitter, the noise and artificial cheers that don't quite reach the soul, the playlists, the endless forwarded E greetings from people I don't even know anymore.

I've learned to listen to the quiet whisper "slow down , look deeper , remember the reason..."

Christmas didn't begin in comfort. It began in a forgotten corner of the world , no décor, just straw. No gift bags, just gifts laid at feet. No fire works , just Gods heavenly host; a multitude. No perfect dinner, just whatever Joseph could find. And yet; heaven touched earth that night!

The wonder of God coming to this world of ours ,not as a mighty king, but as a helpless baby. To ordinary people just as they were, people just like me.

Christmas isn't about having it all together, its about opening our hearts to receive this wondrous gift of love. Because christmas doesn't ask for perfection, it asks for presence.

So again this year, I'm choosing to stop chasing a feeling, but instead to sit with the simple truth.

God came near ,

To be with us,

To be with me,

And that's more than enough.

**And they will call Him,  
Emmanuel, which means.  
'God with us'.**

*(Vanessa is a member of the CRC Dehiwela and is also one of the Superintendents of the Dehiwela English Language Sunday School).*

# DISCOVERING CHRISTMAS



## Are we ABLE TO FIND JESUS IN THIS FESTIVITY OF Christmas...?

by Pastor Andrew Cottling

Christmas is always a wonderful time of the year. People seem to be on their best behavior, full of cheer, and often become religious during this time. But what is the meaning behind Christmas?

From the First Christmas to the present, we should understand that 200 decades have passed. Within these long periods in different times, many changes took place. There were cultural, economic, and religious changes in this celebration of Christ's birth. Through these changes, many things were added, some shaded, and some totally away from the real meaning of Christmas.

For example, Christmas trees, snowballs, snow deer, Santa Claus, Christmas décor, Christmas cakes, Rudolf, Christmas lanterns, Bell, etc.

The saddest point is that the real meaning and purpose have been obscured by the unnecessary addition of this event. And we have brought those to the front line and become extremely focused on keeping Guinness World Records. Without these additions, the world will not be able to feel Christmas. Are you in that boat? So, we Christians have lost and failed to witness the purpose and real blessings to find JESUS in this festive Christmas.



LOOKING AT THESE IMAGES, WHAT IS MOST FAMILIAR TO OUR SOCIETY IN UNDERSTANDING CHRISTMAS...?

The question that we should ask ourselves is, do they (Societies of Cultural, Traditional, Traders, and Travelers) have blinded us, or have we opened their site to see the clear picture of Christmas...?

When we observe Christmas in the Christian realm. we have dropped the values, reason,

and the cost... who partook to bring the great joy to the world... and displayed this great truth...

Jesus left everything and came to our world to save us, but today we celebrate Christmas without Jesus and have added many things not related at all. Sad to see we spend money, time, strength, and effort to bring the feeling of the season, even the words we used for wish each other's "compliment of the Season..." and Happy 'Xmas.' Where is the name of Jesus...?



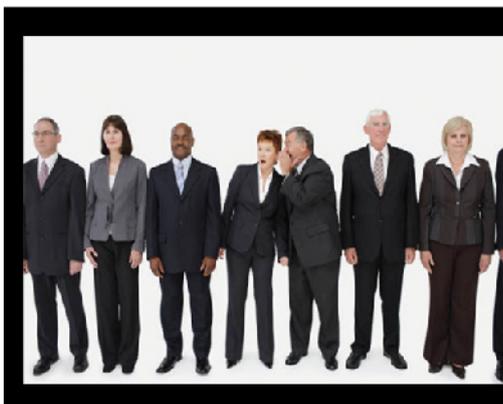
Don't forget Satan knows the truth cannot be destroyed but can be hidden. so, he opposes God and His kingdom in two main ways: through open persecution and through subtle deception by adopting and corrupting the Christian message through adding new things to hide the real truth from the world...

## WHY WE SHOULD REDISCOVER CHRISTMAS

Christmas is always a wonderful time of the year. People seem to be on their best behavior, full of cheer, and often become religious during this time. But what is the meaning behind Christmas?

Today's culture has missed the reason and the true meaning of Christmas why God sent His Son to Earth in the first place: that is, to reconcile humanity back to Himself.

Christmas is truly a miraculous incident. A virgin gives birth to a boy who will save humanity from their sins. So, this is the message that all must come to grips with and, in hope, believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah who will redeem humanity.



Chinese whispers is an internationally popular children's game in which messages are whispered from person to person and then the original and final messages are compared.

Do we continue the same game or trying to discover the true meaning of Christmas...

**“Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”**

Isaiah 7:14:

**Today what we see as Christmas or the outcome been similar to this Chinese whisper game, far away from the original truth.....**

## **The Bible has Revealed the Picture of Christmas**

The story of Christmas is more than just a historical event or what we celebrate; it's a divine invitation. As we read in Colossians 1:15-20, Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. Everything was created by Him and for Him. This passage paints the perfect picture of Christmas: God showing up in the form of Jesus to reconcile us to Himself.

## **Don't Forget while celebrating Christmas...**

**“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”** Isaiah 9:6:

Jesus didn't come to establish a religion filled with rules and traditions. He came to offer a genuine relationship based on Love and hope, and He showed us God's heart through His actions, attitudes, and availability... So we should accept and be followers with loyalty to this great invitation of relationship. Then we will be able to give thanks and praise to the Almighty GOD while we celebrate a meaningful birth of Jesus.

## **Conclusion**

Simeon said...

“For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.” Luke 2:30-32

Christmas isn't just about celebrating only a historical event; it's about experiencing the presence of Jesus in your life. So, what steps will you take to make room for Him in this Christmas?

Come, let's remove the external labels pasted by various groups that have covered the real meaning of Christmas and embrace the relationship He offers.

## **Prayer**

○ Lord Jesus, help us to understand and accept the truth by giving room for you in our hearts and lives, and may we experience your peace and presence in a new and transformative way. Guide us to live every day under Your love and compassion. Amen.

*(Pastor Cottling pastors the English language congregation at Wolvendhal and the Sinhala language congregation of Regent-Street).*

## Rediscovering Christmas: Finding Jesus in the Middle of Everything

Church choirs practicing. Christmas trees at your favorite shopping malls. Hot chocolate. Brand-new clothes that still have the price tag hanging like a tiny brag. There is excitement everywhere: blinking lights, busy stores, epic selfies, Christmas plays, and the grand finale...a mountain of gifts.

Nothing wrong with joy, fun, and celebration. After all, the birth of Jesus is **the biggest celebration in the universe.**

Yet something sneaky can happen every December. We can get so wrapped up in the wrapping paper that we forget why we're celebrating in the first place. Jesus easily becomes part of the background, like the nativity scene sitting quietly under the tree while the loud stuff steals the show.

The first Christmas wasn't loud at all. It was a quiet stable in a tiny town. No neon lights. No Christmas sale. No choir with matching robes. Just a newborn King lying in a stable. The most important event in history arrived so silently that most people missed it.

### The True Christmas: God Came Close

Christmas means **God didn't wait for humanity to fix itself.** He didn't shout from far away, "Try harder!" He came down. He stepped into our mess, our world, our struggles, our search for meaning.

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son..."

—John 3:16

Jesus came to give us more than a holiday. He came to give **Himself.**

### Maybe It's Time to Rediscover Jesus

Rediscovering Christmas means rediscovering Jesus. Not just baby-Jesus-in-a-manger for a month, but **Jesus the Savior**, Jesus the Friend, Jesus the One who changes everything.

Christmas says:

- You are seen
- You are loved
- God came here for you

Christmas invites us to pause...catch our breath...and notice the One at the center of the nativity scene and the center of our lives.

## The Greatest Gift Still Unopened

Imagine getting the most life-changing, hope-filled gift ever...and never opening it. That's what happens when we enjoy Christmas without Jesus. Every other gift eventually breaks, fades, or gets lost under the bed. Jesus brings forgiveness...peace...joy...purpose...and a hope that doesn't expire.

"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

—Matthew 1:21

This is why Christmas matters.

This is why we celebrate.

This is why angels filled the sky singing that first night.

## How You Can Rediscover Christmas

Try something different this year:

- Read the Christmas story (Luke 2) before the gifts
- Spend a moment praying for someone who's hurting
- Invite a friend to church or youth group
- Give generously to someone who can't give back
- Worship with wonder like the shepherds and wise men

The more we focus on Jesus, the more Christmas becomes a celebration of God's love, not just a season of stuff.

## Final Thought

Christmas is God shouting into history:

"You matter. I'm here. I love you."

Rediscover Christmas. Rediscover joy. Rediscover hope.

Rediscover Jesus.

# Youth Page

**Edited By: Joshua Aldons**

## Dig Deeper

The shepherds & the wise men worshipped Jesus with wonder. When was the last time you revisited the Christmas Story (Luke 2) & truly felt the amazing message that the God of Universe came down to meet us as a baby & that he genuinely wanted to be together with us ?



# Just For Laughs

**Why did the shepherd get promoted?**

He was outstanding in his field!

**What's a missionary's favorite Christmas carol?**

Go Tell It on the Mountain!

**What do you call a group of musical sheep on Christmas Eve?**

A baa-thlehem choir!



### **\*The Christmas Pageant Surprise\***

During the church Christmas pageant, the three Wise Men proudly brought their gifts to baby Jesus.

The first said, "Gold!"

The second said, "Frankincense!"

And the third, a nervous little boy, announced loudly, "And I bring you... Murray!"

The whole church burst out laughing — and from that year on, the Nativity always included a little sign reading: Gold, Frankincense, Myrrh... and Murray.



# Children's Page

Edited by Amanda Fraser.

Hi kids,

Its my favourite time of year again! Lights, decorations, gifts, yummy food, parties and fun with family and friends.

One of my favourite traditions is putting up the Christmas tree and every year I want it to be different and better than the last!

Christmas is a big, fun celebration huh? It's loud and filled with Christmas Carols and songs and loads of laughter.

More than 2000 years ago though, on that first Christmas night, it looked very different. It was probably very noisy and smelly.

I mean stables are not the cleanest place to have a baby huh? And Mary and Joseph were probably exhausted as they welcomed baby Jesus. And then to top it all off, the already crowded stable was filled with shepherds and sheep causing even more noise!

And yet everyone knew the most important thing of all was that little baby who would one day become the saviour of the world!

Its hard to remember the real reason of Christmas when its so noisy but I hope this year you'll take some time to stop and say thank you Jesus and happy birthday!

Merry Christmas!

Lots of love,  
Aunty Mandy.



# Barry's Big Night

Barry the donkey was having a miserable night. First, the "five-star inn" Joseph had promised turned out to be a drafty stable shared with a grumpy cow named Bessie. Second, he was still annoyed about the journey. "I carried the Son of God, and all I got was this damp hay?" he grumbled to himself.

The baby Jesus finally arrived and everything went quiet. Barry was just starting to doze off when the roof seemed to explode with light.



"BEHOLD!" boomed the angel Gabriel, who had clearly misjudged his landing and now stood awkwardly trying to regain his balance atop a wobbly water bucket. "I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY!"

Gabriel managed to hop down, knocking over a stack of feed bags. "Pardon me," he muttered, dusting glitter off his shimmering robe. "The celestial GPS is glitchy tonight. Long-haul flight. Wings are stiff."

Joseph, tired but happy, just nodded. "The message is appreciated, Gabriel. Thank you."

"Anytime," Gabriel whispered back. "But hey, just a warning: you're about to have company. A large contingent of shepherds. They are very enthusiastic, and they smell terrible."

Sure enough, minutes later, a group of shepherds burst in, tripping over each other's staffs and smelling distinctly of wet wool, damp soil, and nervous excitement.

"We heard the choir!" yelled the first shepherd, narrowly missing a collision with Bessie the cow. "They said the Savior was here!"

"Look!" cried the second shepherd, pointing at the manger. "A baby!" Barry the donkey sighed a deep, dramatic sigh that scattered dust in

the air. This was going to be the most famous night in history? He hoped someone, anyone, would remember to fill his water trough before anyone else showed up.

Smelly shepherds, clumsy angels, and damp hay? He was about to complain again when the baby in the manger made a small, soft sound and opened his eyes.

Barry froze. He watched as Mary gently touched the baby's cheek, and Joseph looked on with a gaze so full of love it seemed to warm the whole stable. The rowdy shepherds were suddenly silent, kneeling with expressions of pure wonder.

The donkey looked back at the tiny baby, who seemed to be staring right at him. In that instant, Barry's grumpy mood, the drafty stable, and his empty water trough felt incredibly small. A strange, quiet warmth spread through him. This wasn't just a baby. This was the baby.

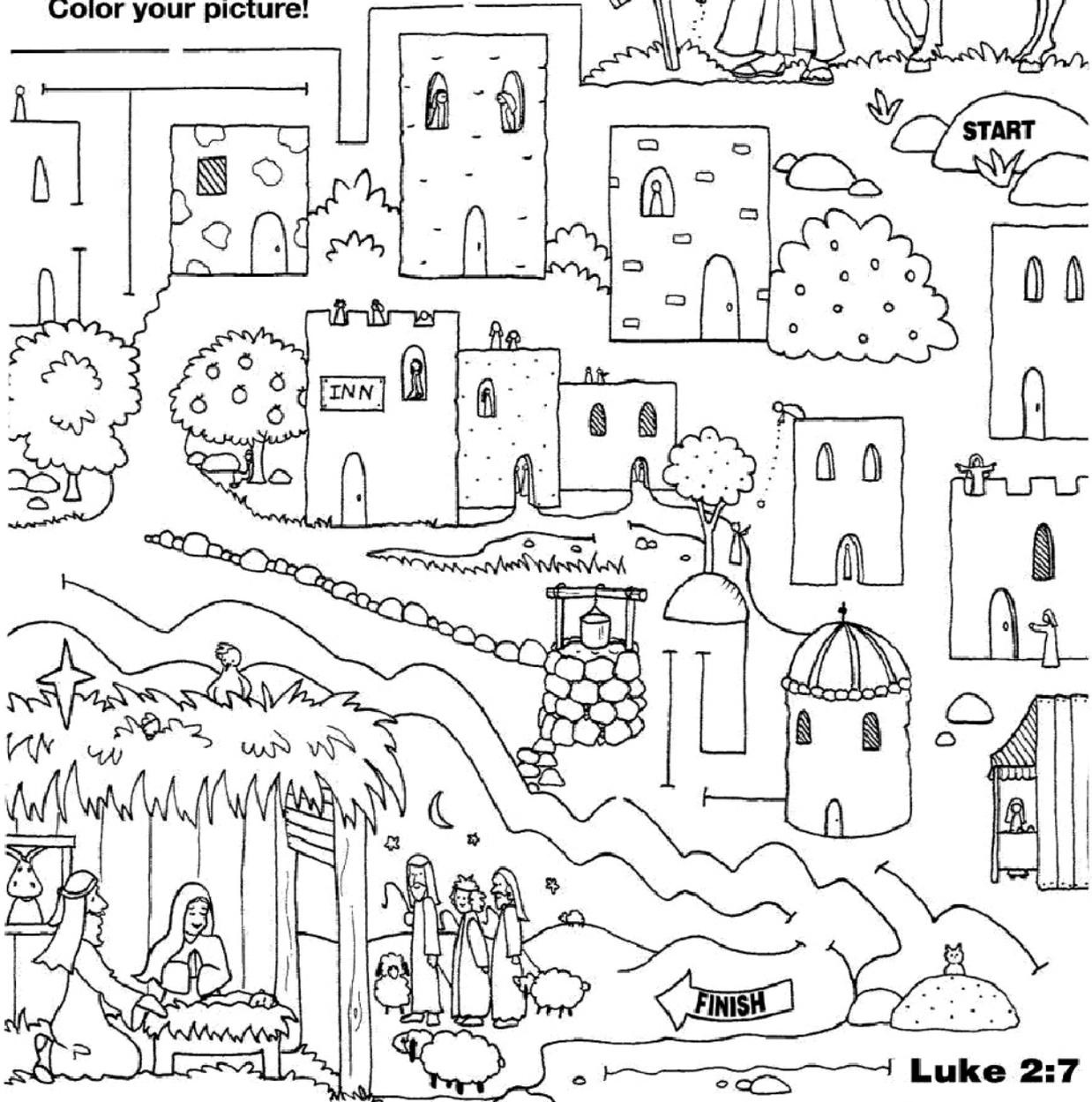
And suddenly, being a small part of this moment, even as a tired, overlooked donkey, felt more important than any five-star inn. He let out a soft, quiet huff out of wonder rather than annoyance, and shuffled a step closer to the manger. Somewhere deep in his heart Barry knew this was the best place to be.



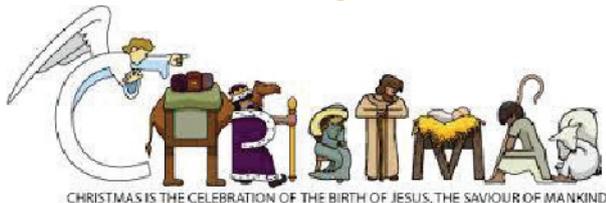
# WORK THE MAZE

*Fun Activity Page*

Mary was ready to have baby Jesus, but there was no room for them at the inn. Work the maze to get them to the stable. Color your picture!



**Luke 2:7**



## is a time for teaching!

By Marsha Navamanie

We are going to take a break from our parenting series to focus a little on Christmas and the great opportunity we have to build spiritual lessons into our children's lives during this season. A year ago we started this series by looking at Deuteronomy 6:5-9. This passage, called the *Shema* by the Jewish people, tells us we need to teach our children by our talk, our routine, and our decorations. What better time to teach our children to "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength?"

The *Shema* highlights three areas that we need to focus on with our children: **Spiritual** - Faith is caught, not taught. We need to integrate God's truth into our everyday experiences. They need to understand why we do what we do. Do our children see us living the faith everyday, even during the stressful Christmas season?

**Emotional** - We need to pass on security and love. What a great opportunity to spend time as a family reinforcing our love for each other.

**Social** - Our children also need to know how to relate to other people, how to treat others with respect and show compassion. Christmas gives us many opportunities to do this, from caroling and acting in the Christmas musical, to sharing goodies with the neighbors and giving special gifts to those who are less fortunate than us.

We have been sharing how we need to be intentional (diligent) in sharing our Christian faith with our children if we expect them to follow Christ. Christmas is a great time to reinforce our faith in fun and exciting ways, like the Jews did.

Of course, as parents we **are** teaching our children by our talk, our routine, and our decorations. The question at Christmas-time is, "What are we teaching?" Are we teaching them to covet? Are we teaching them that expensive things are important? Are the Christmas tree decorations, the table arrangements, and the fancily wrapped packages a constant source of tensions and comments of, "Don't touch"? Are we teaching our children that giving is stressful, a real hassle, and to be done according to what we will get in return? Is it really more blessed to give than to receive?

Christmas is a busy time, but can we slow down and think intentionally about how to help our children develop positive attitudes towards our faith. One way is to develop family traditions that help them understand the meaning of Christmas.

Tradition is defined as "the action of handing down stories, beliefs, and customs from one generation to another in order to establish and reinforce a strong sense of identity."<sup>1</sup> Identity is very important for our children. They need to learn that our primary identity is rooted in who we are in Jesus Christ, and then in who they are as members of our family, both our past and present, then who we are in relation to the church and other groups. Christmas is an excellent time to do this and reinforce many spiritual principles in the lives of our kids as well.

For example, what is the first thing you do when you know Christmas is approaching? Many Sri Lankans use this time to "clean house", whitewash, get things ready for guests. This is a tradition, but do we understand where it comes from, and even more important, can we use this tradition to teach something to our children?

God gave the Hebrew people various festivals and traditions to help them remember what God had done for them. They were to tell young children why they celebrated and later explain what these things meant (see Exodus 13). The Passover was one of the most interesting festivals. Before the Passover Feast they had to completely clean the house and remove any yeast or "leaven". This was because during the first Passover, they left immediately and on the road there was no time for dough to rise. Later Jesus related yeast to sin in our

*"On the seventh day **you must explain to your children**, 'I am celebrating what the Lord did for me when I left Egypt.' This annual festival will be a visible sign to you, like a mark branded on your hand or your forehead. Let it remind you always to recite this teaching of the Lord: 'With a strong hand, the Lord rescued you from Egypt.' So observe the decree of this festival at the appointed time each year.*

*"And in the future, your children will ask you, '**What does all this mean?**' Then you will tell them, 'With the power of his mighty hand, the Lord brought us out of Egypt, the place of our slavery.*  
**Exodus 13:8-10, 14**

lives. Can we relate our house-cleaning to the way we need to keep our lives clean and free from sin for Jesus to live in us? If Jesus came to our house on Christmas Day would he be happy with what he found there? Are there things we need to get rid of? Can we prepare our hearts in the same way that we prepare our houses?

We also eat certain foods, like the Jews did. Each had a meaning, many of them pointing to Jesus coming. We can find symbols or meaning in foods we eat at Christmas that would explain our faith in ways that children can gain understanding.

The Jews also had ceremonies for telling the story of God's deliverance from Egypt. Do we take time to tell the stories of Christmas, to remember God's goodness, or to tell stories from our own families of Christmases in the past? These are opportunities that the Jews understood.

Edith Schaeffer explains why this is important in *Christianity is Jewish*.

*There was meant to be not just an outward observance of some "religious rites" but as generations went on, people were meant to discuss, talk about, explain, give understanding, to their children and their children's children all that they had been told, and all that they had experienced... Children are meant to be considered important, significant human beings, made in the image of God. They are meant to be communicated with, in great sections of time when parents are walking with them, sitting with them, eating with them, and continually discussing, answering questions, being interested.*<sup>2</sup>

When I was growing up, my mother always had a Christmas project for us to work on, some craft project that would add to our Christmas decorations. It is still fun when we hang those decorations up. My parents were not very consistent with family devotions during the year, but we always did an Advent Wreath with devotions in December. We always told the Christmas story from Luke 2 on Christmas Eve.

I have tried to continue some of those traditions in my own family, combined with those from my husband's family. The biggest family project for them was the making of the Christmas cake. Because we lived on three continents, we added a new tradition of getting Christmas tree ornaments from each place we visited. It is fun to remember our trips as we put them on our tree each year. We have also used an Advent Calendar with our daughter since she was small, many with spiritual lessons and extra activities to build suspense and help her understand the significance of Jesus coming to earth. One year we highlighted all the important stories of the Bible starting in Genesis to show how the Bible is really ONE STORY.

After you read this article, sit down with your family and give each one a piece of paper. Ask

them to write down their favorite Christmas activities. Then go through the lists and put a cross by every activity that could teach a spiritual truth. Plan your events this Christmas and add elements that will make them more meaningful for children's spiritual growth. If your list isn't very long, you can try to incorporate some of the suggestions below.

### World-wide Christian Christmas traditions

#### 1. Advent Wreath - 4 Sundays before Christmas

The idea is to be prepared for Jesus coming, relate it to the second coming. Wk 1 Hope, Wk 2-Peace Wk 3-Love, Wk 4 - Joy

#### 2. Advent Calendar -

counting down the 25 days to Christmas in December. You can find these available in bookshops or find ideas online.

**3. Nativity Scene** - For small kids, get wooden or plastic figures so they can put them up and talk about the story of Christmas. You could make your own if you don't have one, look online.

**4. Read Christmas Story Books** - (The Tale of the Trees, The Littlest Angel, A Christmas Carol) Watch Christmas movies and talk about them.

**5. Love gifts.** Instead of buying gifts for each other, pool your money and do something to bless those who are less fortunate than you, a children's or elder's home perhaps.

**6. Happy Birthday Jesus box.** Wrap an empty box and put a slot in the top. Put money or promises of time gifts in it during the season.

**7. Birthday Cake for Jesus.** Make part of your family celebration a party for Jesus, including singing Happy Birthday to Jesus.

**8. Christmas Cake:** Make your cake with your family. Let the kids participate as much as possible, cutting fruits, separating eggs, etc. Talk about what ingredients could symbolize.

For details and examples of these activities, see our website: <http://www.crsl.org/> or email me, [m.navamanie@yahoo.com](mailto:m.navamanie@yahoo.com). Please share things that work well with us, and have a Christ-centered Christmas season.

<sup>1</sup> J. Otis Ledbetter, Tim Smith, *Family Traditions*, (Colorado Springs, Chariot Victor, 1998) p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Edith Schaeffer, *Christianity is Jewish*, (Wheaton, IL, Tyndale, 1975) p. 60.



## +++ CHURCH NEWS+++



### ❖ The CRC Kohuwela at 75 !

The Diamond Jubilee of the CRC Kohuwela Church Building, was commemorated on the 27th of September, 2025 with an Open Air Thanksgiving Service in the Church premises, on the theme, “75 Years Of God’s Ongoing Work In Us,” based on Phillipians ch 2 vs 13. Over 250 members, past and present, invitees, and well wishers participated. The Mayor of Dehiwela-Mt.Lavinia, Mr Parakum Shantha was the Chief Guest whilst many of the Ministry workers who had served the three congregations were felicated. The Sermon was preached by the President of the CRC SL, Pas Lakmal Wijeratne, whilst all the Clergy present joined in prayer to rededicate the refurbished Sanctuary for the continuous work of the Lord. A fellowship dinner followed.



### ❖ Ordination – Pas Christian Jeshuran.

The Ordination of Christian Jeshuran as an Associate Pastor of the CRC SL took place on Sunday 28th September, 2025 at a bilingual service. at the CRC Bambalapitiya., with the participation of Pastors Lakmal Wijeratne, Rickson Anthony, Chaminda Ratnayake, Sunil Gunasekera and Elders Steve Schubert, Bevin Mack, Thulitha Piyasena, Alex Duckworth

and Dinesh Kanagaratnam. Dr. Ivor Poobalan, led in a prayer of commissioning. Revd: Charles Jansz preached the Sermon entitled, “A Baptist Profile For Pastor And People.,” which was interpreted into the Sinhala Language by Pastor Lakmal Wijeratne. Associate Pastor Jeshuran proclaimed the Benediction and a time of fellowship over light refreshments followed. A representative gathering from CRC congregations together with family members and friends of Pas Jeshuran were present.



### ❖ Ordination – Pas Palsamy Vijayakumar.

The Ordination of Bro. Palsamy Vijayakumar, as an Associate Pastor of the CRC SL took place on Sunday the 12th of October, 2025 at Wattala, with the participation of Pastors Lakmal Wijeratne, Rickson Anthony and Elders Dinesh Kanagaratnam and and Richard Fernando. The Sermon was preached by Pastor Rickson Anthony. A representative gathering of family and Church members were present.



### ❖ The CRC Regent-Street Day Out...!

The Regent Street WMU of the English Con-

gregation held their Annual Day Out at the Sence Pavilion, Horana on Saturday 13th September, 2025. Altogether 24 members of the WMu together with their spouses had a great day of fellowship, fun, games and singing Karaoke.. A Bible Quiz was also part of the programme. The buffet lunch, and cakes and tea at Tea time was also enjoyed by all.



❖ **Ceylon Bible Society Sale of Work...**

The Annual Sale of work of the Ceylon Bible Society took place once again in the premises of the CRC Wellwatte. Many stalls representing many Churches, offered a multitude of items from household items to games and good food. With good numbers visiting, it was a productive day financially, to further sustain and complement the Bible Ministry in Sri Lanka.

❖ **CRC SL Website Re-launched.**

The CRC SL officially Re-launched its official website, crcsl.org on October 6th, 2025, marking a new milestone in the Church's journey of faith and outreach. The Website serves as a digital home for the Church, designed to reflect on the Church's core values of faith, service and community, whilst connecting believers across Sri Lanka and around the world.

For centuries, the CRC has been a place where people gather to worship, learn and serve. The relaunched website captures that same warmth and spirit online. The purpose goes beyond information – it is a platform of connection and inspiration. At its heart, the site embodies the church's purposes – to connect people with God's Word, inspire discipleship and extend

compassion through service. It provides a rich collection of content, including the church's history, mission and ministries, along with updates on worship services, Youth programs and Outreach initiatives that serve local Communities. This helps visitors understand the CRC's deep roots and its ongoing Mission across Sri Lanka.

The inclusion of details church locations and contact information serves a greater purpose than convenience – it opens doors. It ensures that anyone seeking fellowship, guidance or a place to belong can find their way easily. From Sunday worship to upcoming events and gatherings, every section reflects an open invitation to experience the Church's living faith. The Website also highlights ongoing community outreach projects, including child scholarship programs, relief aid and rural development initiatives which stand as a testament to faith in action and offers regular updates on future events fostering continuous engagement.

Through this digital presence, the CRCSL now reaches the world beyond its physical walls, breaking geographical barriers, bringing together people of faith under one virtual roof. Sermons and updates are accessible to anyone with internet connection, making the Gospel message available across continents. Adding even more value to its digital ministry, the Website now makes the Church Magazines available in all three languages. This broadens access to spiritual insight and community news, extending the Church's message of hope and unity to every believer.

The Site becomes a bridge – connecting hearts, uniting prayers and amplifying acts of service. Each page feels like a window into lives being changed and faith being lived out in action, uniting believers, sharing hope and carrying forward its Mission to serve God and humanity in a changing world. This relaunch isn't just a technological step forward; its a reaffirmation of purpose – to bring light, love, and the message of Christ to the world, in a modern and meaningful way. – *(Melissa Grero).*

❖ **Visit to South Africa.**

Pastor Rickson Anthony visited South African, following an invitation extended by Helderberg Outreach of the DRC South Africa. Pastor Rickson had the opportunity to attend worship services and present reports on the ministries involving Kalpitiya, Hatton and Rakwana, which are all supported by Helderberg Outreach. In addition there were several meetings with Pastors and leaders and a special gathering organised with individuals who have a deep burden and passion for the ministry in Sri Lanka.

❖ **Commemorating our Reformed Heritage..**

An United Service to commemorate our Reformed Heritage was held on the 31st of October, 2025 at 5.30 p.m, at the CRC Wellawatte. It was organised by the Leadership of the CRC SL and the Presbytery of Lanka, bringing together congregations with a Reformed legacy. Pastor Lakmal Wijeratne, Revd: Ravin Caldera, Bros Rodney Nugara, Dinesh Kanagaratnam, Pastors Clement Yogarajah, Rickson Anthony, Revd: Shirley Faber, Revd: Roshan Mendis and Revd: Charles Jansz, participated whilst the worship team of the CRC Bambalapitiya led a bilingual time of Praise and Worship. with Revd: Saman Perera preaching the Sermon. Members of the CRC SL and Presbytery of Lanka Congregations attended. A time of fellowship over light refreshments followed. A Committee with the acronym RAPID (Reformed And Presbyterians In Dialogue) are involved in discussion how the CRC SL and Presbytery of Lanka can further work and walk together.

❖ **Wellawatte Sunday School News.....**

As part of the Annual Community Outreach Project the English language Sunday School collected and donated Stationary Items, Childrens activity and story books to the Children of the Salvation Army Child Development Center at Dehiwela, on Sunday the 26th of October, 2025.



On this same Sunday, to commemorate the 508th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, the children of the Sunday School presented a skit which was appreciated by all present.



A Parents day combining Mother and Father's days, Childrens day and Pastor appreciation day was held on Sunday 12th October. Mrs. Ruba Weerasinghe was the Guest Speaker, who shared valuable advice for parents and children on how to manage daily challenges, keeping God at the forefront. A blessed time of fellowship, games, food and fun was experienced by all present.

❖ **CHURCH REGISTER**

❖ **Deaths.**

*"For ever with the Lord"*

Charmaine Jayasinghe, on Sunday 21st September, 2025, of the Dehiwela Congregation.

Mahinda Hettiarachchi, on Tuesday November 4th 2025, of the Wolvendhal Congregation.

❖ **INFANT BAPTISM.**

*"For the promise is unto you and your children..."*

Leah, infant daughter of Larissa and Danushka Liyanage, on Sunday 16th November, 2025 at the CRC Dehiwela.

❖ **In Memoriam**

❖ **CHARMAINE JAYASINGHE (Nee Oorloff)**

Charmaine Jayasinghe was called to her eternal rest on Sunday 21st September, having struggled with health issues for the last couple of years. A member of the Dehiwela Congregation, she served the Church as an Organist for the morning Services in addition to her generous financial support and participation in

the life and ministry of the Dehiwela Congregation.

For years her delicious home made chutneys and pickles adorned the CRC SL Chutney and Pickles stall at the Annual Sale of the Ceylon Bible Society. ❖

Charmaine was the music teacher at Holy Family Convent and Bishops College in addition to privately teaching musical skills to many young people from her home, many of whom are accomplished musicians in their own right. Charmaine had the reputation of a “no nonsense” teacher, to whom discipline and hard work were top priorities, which she sought to drill into all her students.

Prior to serving the Dehiwela Church as an Organist, she was also involved with the Kohuwela Church and also for a time with the Church of the Servant Lord at Maya Avenue.

Her musical skills and service were complimented by her husband – the late Tissa Jayasinghe, as well as her daughter Shaumya and the

Dehiwela Congregation was blessed with both of them on their violins, whilst Charmaine was at the Organ or Piano, on the festival days of worship.

On a personal note, my first encounters with Charmaine, was as a Theological Student at the CRC Seminary at Kohuwela, when Charmaine also rode a Zundapp Scooter (one of the very few ladies at that time to ride a motorized two wheeler!) – and I was privileged to be given a lift from time to time !

In the later years I served as her Pastor ministering to her especially during the last couple of years when physical limitations crept upon her, which affected her mobility and other areas of her physical life. It was certainly sad to see the physical decline of a once vibrant and energetic lady who gave so much of herself to her family, the Schools, the Church, other Musical Organizations and the many fourlegged friends that were so very much part of her home and life.

We do thank God for all the good memories and legacy she has left behind and the assurance that she is now safe in the arms of Jesus.

### **BRYAN DRIEBERG.**

Bryan Driberg passed away in Melbourne on Thurs 25th of September, following a brief illness. Bryan was part of the Driberg family who were very much part of the Dehiwela Church, whilst some were members of Maligakande, before they all decided to emigrate to Australia.

Bryan served as an Elder of the Dehiwela Local Consistory and represented the Dehiwela Local Consistory at my Ordination at the DRC Woldendhal in 1971.

On our first visit to Australia in 1981, and when the time came to leave, Bryan and Electra organised a farewell get together in their home in Mitcham that brought together many former DRC members who were domiciled in Melbourne during that time. The “Junghans” wall clock that they presented to us, on that occasion, still serves us, keeping time to the very minute, even though it is said that “time and tide wait for no man!”

On emigration to Melbourne, Bryan and his wife Electra, were involved with the Reformed Church at Boxhill in Melbourne, which was the home Church of many former DRC SL members who emigrated to Australia during those early years.

A gift that Bryan had and many did not know, but discovered later, was his skill at the piano. I do recall when on a visit to Sri Lanka, Bryan entertained the Dehiwela congregation on the Piano, complimented by his sister Marjorie (Melder) on the Harmonica !!

Bryan by nature was always soft spoken and prim and proper when it came every day life. Very much a family man, he carried those characteristics into the Churches where he was involved. He together with Electra, continued to be interested in the work of the CRC SL, especially of the Dehiwela Congregation and supported its endeavours whenever that was possible.

A couple of weeks after he was called to his Heavenly Home, his eldest son joined him in that Heavenly abode, after an intense battle with Cancer. These are the mysteries of life, we cannot understand. The questions surface and remain, until the Lord makes things clear in His time and way.

We do thank God for Bryan – and for the all the “saints who from their labours rest !

#### ❖ MAHINDA HETTIARACHCHI.

Mahinda Hettiaratchy passed away on Tuesday the 5th of Nov, after some health issues of a few years, that finally took its toll.

A top ranking Police Officer – a DIG – in his day, he served in many areas of the force for 38 years, distinguishing himself with many awards. He was also an Elder of the DRC Wolvendhal for decades. Actually, other than his family, and his duties as a Police Officer, his life revolved around the church especially the English language congregation at Wolvendhal. He was passionate about building up the congregation and went out of his way to invite relatives, friends and others to the worship services and be involved in its life and work. He loved Wolvendhal and the ministry there with a passion and would never hear of the ministry being curtailed in anyway, when at times, there was talk about that.

Irrespective of who was pastoring, Mahinda took the lead, sometimes in unconventional ways, that could have caused misunderstanding and always

made sure that worship, visitation, and the other ministries were well sustained. He went more than the extra mile to see these happen.

For many years he also served as Administration Manager of the GC Office. He was also part of the General Consistory Executive Committee, serving for a few years as the Vice-President for Administration. His presence at meetings increased the sound levels at times, but after all was said and done, and the lights were turned off, he remained the “Mahinda” who was accessible, amiable and relational.

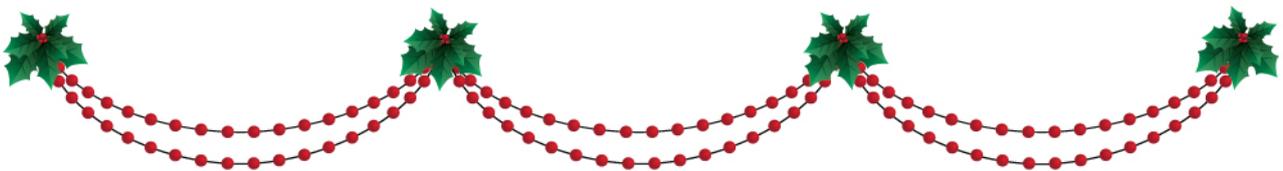
Many of the CRC SL can also testify how he went out of his way to help those in distress with the Law and who needed some assistance in dealing with the Law, or authorization from the authorities of the law.

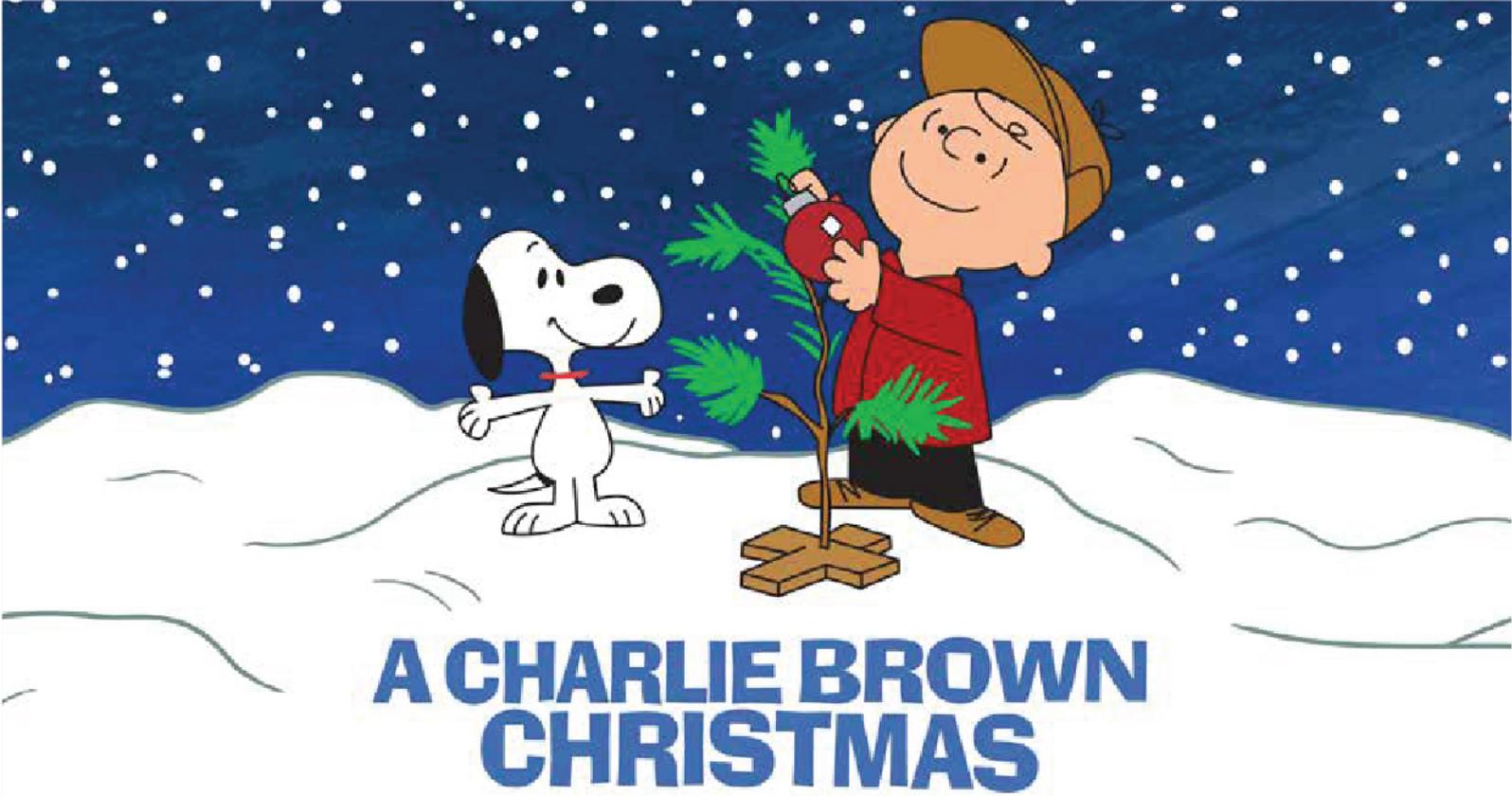
In his younger days he was a member of the Wolvendhal Quiz team that literally swallowed the book of the Bible, assigned for the Bible Quiz and almost every year carried away the “Shield of Faith” at the then DRC Youth Conferences.

His love for the D/CRC remained fervent right to the end. No “ring around the churches” for him. Wolvendhal and the CRC SL has lost a stalwart, but Heaven has gained another, who “kept the faith, and finished the race”.

He was a Policeman who distinguished himself with rank and rewards. But he was also a good soldier, who fought the good fight of faith and took hold of eternal life. To God be the glory !

*(The “News” in these pages is gathered from the Bulletins published by the respective local churches and available in the Church office. Any other news of events or involving the membership could be sent directly to the Editor of “The Herald,” for publication according to the established criteria. – Ed.)*





# A CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS

## Searching for Christmas

By Sam Gutierrez

**T**he 1965 animated special *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, developed by Charles M. Schulz, was predicted to be a flop.

The sponsor of the special, The Coca-Cola Company, was nervous. Reasons for a potential ratings disaster included bare-bones storytelling, a slow pace, no laugh track, religious references, children singing off key, a jazz soundtrack, and a main character (Charlie Brown) struggling with doubt and depression.

Charles Schulz, however, was determined to tell an honest and heart-felt story about the true meaning of Christmas.

With elbows firmly planted on a snow-covered stone wall, Charlie Brown says to Linus, "I think there must be something wrong with me, Linus. Christmas is coming, but I'm not happy. I don't feel the way I'm supposed to feel. I just don't understand Christmas, I guess. ... I always end up feeling depressed."

Feeling distraught and searching for answers, Charlie Brown finds his friend Lucy and sits down at her five-cent psychiatric help booth. After he expresses his feelings and tries to name his fears, Lucy is quick to give her advice. She concludes that the best medicine for Charlie's depression is a good dose of activity. "How'd you like to be the director of our Christmas play?" she asks him.

Taking Lucy's advice, Charlie heads to the auditorium, bumping into Sally and Snoopy on the way. They both offer him their thoughts about how to be happy at Christmas. Sally shares her wish list full of greedy demands for Santa. Snoopy enters a holiday competition and decks his doghouse with glitzy decorations. Both approaches to Christmas increase Charlie's sadness.

### Advent

Advent is a season of waiting, a season that anticipates the fulfillment of

promises of a Savior. In his book *Living the Liturgical Year*, Bobby Gross says that our Advent waiting is powerfully formative because it has a dual nature: it invites us to both groan and sing. Both practices are needed to get us ready to receive the work God is doing throughout the biblical narrative, culminating in the most special gift ever given.

First, let's consider the practice of Advent groaning.

After Charlie Brown shares with Linus about his depression, Linus responds, "Charlie Brown, you're the only person I know who can take a wonderful season like Christmas and turn it into a problem." But Charlie Brown has stumbled onto something essential about Advent. It's not that Charlie's looking for problems; rather, he's searching and straining to see past the tinsel, past the lights, beyond the activities and activism to get a clearer view of the important and real. In the same way, in the weeks leading up

To sing with real joy, we must get clear about what we want for Christmas.

to Christmas we are encouraged to take a long look at the brokenness all around us and inside of us. In Advent we stop, look, and weep over illness, poverty, chronic pain, estranged family relationships, abuse, injustice, political corruption, war, and the tragedy of another mass shooting. When we pause and peer through the sentimentality of the season, the clarity of sin we see evokes a deep sadness that stirs something inside—a longing in the depths of our spirit for intense goodness, beauty, healing, and wholeness.

But groaning for redemption is not the only practice Advent invites us into. Bobby Gross reminds us that practicing joy is equally powerful and important. To sing in Advent, however, is hard. To sing with real joy, we must get clear about what we want for Christmas.

Later in the story, Lucy identifies with Charlie Brown's depression, and in a moment of surprising vulnerability she says, "I know how you feel about all this Christmas business—getting depressed and all that. It happens to me every year. I never get what I really want. I always get a lot of stupid toys, or a bicycle, or clothes, or something like that." Feeling understood for the first time, Charlie responds hopefully, "What is it you want?" To his dismay, however, Lucy says, "Real estate."

Later, after some disastrous attempts at directing the Christmas play, Charlie Brown quietly leaves and goes searching for a stage decoration that will help focus the production. In a Christmas tree lot, he finds the only real tree among a dozen artificial ones and brings it to the theater. When his friends see it, they mock him, but Charlie intuitively knows he has found something that speaks of the true meaning of Christmas: a humble and weak tree, overlooked by

most, disdained by others, but beautiful to those with eyes to see and hearts hungry for the real.

Almost every modern seasonal song tells us directly or indirectly what we should want for Christmas. Although Charlie is never asked what he wants, his heart's intuition is fleshed out when Linus pauses in the middle of rehearsal and takes center stage. As the theater darkens, a spotlight illuminates Linus and his blanket as he recites the angelic message spoken to the shepherds in Luke 2: "Fear not, for behold, I bring you tidings of great joy that shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

The liturgical practices of groaning and singing are deeply biblical, described in passages such as 1 Thessalonians. Numerous verses from this short letter are often read during Advent because the situation to which they speak so closely mirrors our own. The author writes to a suffering church, waiting patiently in the middle of two promises. While they groan under the weight of sin, they are instructed to "rejoice always, pray continually, (and) give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thess. 5:16-18). It can seem like a paradox to groan and rejoice at the same time, but it becomes possible when we get clear about what we want for Christmas and embrace with confidence the generosity of a God who "did not spare

his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32).

#### **Hope Fulfilled**

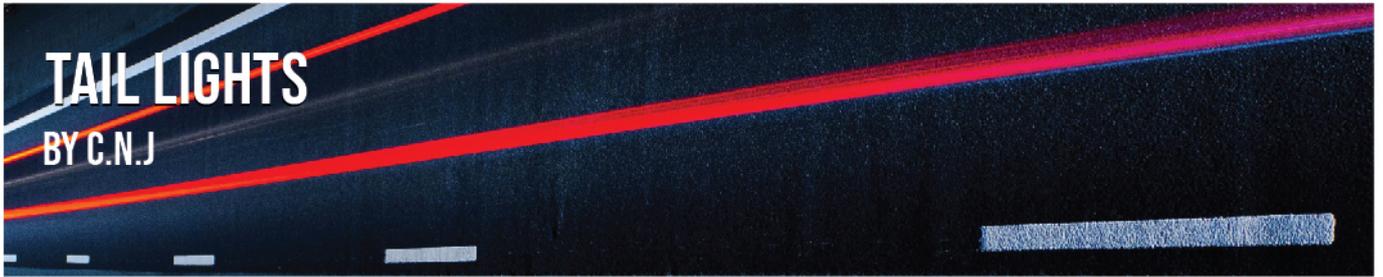
When *A Charlie Brown Christmas* aired Dec. 9, 1965, it was viewed by an impressive 45% of those watching television that night. Immediately it received universal critical acclaim and became a yearly broadcast on network television until 2022—a remarkable 57-year run for a simple cartoon about a depressed boy straining to see past the superficial, searching for the true meaning of Christmas.

There is no right way to feel in the weeks leading up to Christmas. Like Charlie Brown, it's normal to want to feel happy, but the Advent practice of groaning and rejoicing means that while we wait in pain between two wonderful promises, we can rest in the knowledge that God will be present with us this year and every year until the sadness of sin is wiped from our eyes and our divisions are done away with once and for all.

On that day of promises fulfilled, flowing from our hearts will be rivers of joy as we rise, join the triumph of the skies, and with the angelic host proclaim, "Peace on earth and mercy mild—God and sinners reconciled!"



Sam Gutierrez is the associate director of the Eugene Peterson Center for the Christian Imagination at Western Theological Seminary. More of his creative work can be found at [printandpoem.com](http://printandpoem.com).



## **PUT ON YOUR SHOES !**

The other day I came across an interesting sentence in a Media Editorial. It focused on the promises made by the Rulers, which most of the time are empty and broken. It read, "before saying and doing, many a pair of shoes are worn!" The bottom line was whilst talk comes easy the walk is not so !

I thought of how many pairs of shoes we have worn out in the light of that statement! I also thought of the many references in the Bible to shoes and its symbolic uses. Shoes, symbolize reverence, humility, mourning, legal transactions etc. But there is a symbolical use that we must consider at Christmas time ! The New Testament uses a metaphor we must consider at this time of the year. It is about having "one's feet fitted with readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."(Eph 6:15) It's a call to be ready to spread the good news of Salvation.

The Christmas story involving the Shepherds gives us some practical insight. After they had seen the child, "they spread the word" and all who heard it were "amazed!"(St Lk 2: 17/18). That is also our call this Christmas, especially, when the real reason is buried under rubble that has nothing to do with the Christ child, the Saviour or Immanuel ! In the light of this, it is time to put on our shoes to make the real reason for the season known, by talk and walk !

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