



FAITH



"Bethlehem, . . . one will come from you that will be ruler over Israel for me" (Micah 5:1-2).

Painting by A. L. Currao

A Christmas Story by Pastor Caleb

Max arrived early at the breakfast table. He couldn't believe his eyes. For the first time in his life, he saw his parents in their bathrobes and slippers on a weekday. Max sat down quietly. When his parents saw him, their animated conversation fell silent, and they each gave Max a mischievous grin. For most of Max's life, they were not there for him. They were making their fortune at their law firm. But his thirteenth birthday was one week away, and they announced they were taking the week off to plan him the biggest party imaginable. Max was a shy boy, but his excitement overcame him.

"Well, Max," his father said. "I hope you are as excited as we are. Tell us anything you want, and it's yours. Tell us any friends you want to invite. Any special activities. Anything. The sky's the limit! Actually, there is no limit. Max squirmed in his seat. This sort of attention was unfamiliar to him.

"Whatever you want to give me will be great," Max said. "But the best thing is that I get to hang out with you guys for a whole week."

"See, Honey." Max's dad looked at his wife with a huge smile. "I told you he would like whatever we did."

As soon as breakfast was over, the party-planning began. Max asked if he could help. However, his parents said it would spoil all their surprises, so they sent him off to spend his time elsewhere.

For Max, the next few days dragged on and on. His parents were so busy with the party that they may as well have been working. Strange packages arrived daily, and the

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entire estate resembled a construction zone. People were building wooden dance floors and rearranging the inside of the main house to accommodate many guests.

Two days before his birthday, huge tents lined the entire estate lawn. Max snuck inside one and saw workers building a large stage.

"What's that for?" he asked a man.

"It seems the owner has booked some top label band to perform for his kid's birthday. I heard they were writing special songs for him, too." Max wondered how anyone could write a song about a person they had never met, but he kept his thoughts to himself. He went off to look inside the other tents. He didn't believe what he saw and couldn't wait for the big day.

One tent held a small-scale roller-coaster, another, a go-cart track. There was a miniature golf course, a huge arcade, an artificial pond with bumper boats, a laser tag arena, and a gigantic outdoor movie theatre. There also was a giant waterslide next to the already bedazzling pool. Max knew he could never experience everything in one night, but it didn't matter. The most exciting event would be spending time with his mom and dad.

The big day arrived. At 5 o'clock, he darted out of bed and rushed downstairs. "Happy birthday," the butler said. "Your parents have been up all night finalizing everything for the party. Oh, and the staff is busy out and about on the grounds, so Cook left breakfast for you.

Max gulped down the cold pancakes, rubbery bacon, and warm orange juice. He was accustomed to eating alone, but today it was okay. After all, his parents were doing this for him.

Max's anticipation made it impossible to get quickly dressed and ready for the day. On the few other holidays he had spent with his parents, they told him to wait in his room until he was sent for. So, Max sat on the edge of his bed and waited and waited. He heard the commotion outside and imagined riding the roller coaster with his dad and playing miniature golf with his mom. After hours of anticipation, he decided it must be time to go to his party.

He ran from his room, ready to join the fun. But as he reached the top of the stairs, his gait slowed. He looked around, confused. There were people everywhere, but he didn't recognize anyone. He descended the stairs, anxious to find his parents but in the sea of tents and people, Max soon lost his way. Finally, he saw a gate in front of the main tent. There was a long line of guests going inside with nothing and coming out with something.

Max noticed that each person was getting an unbelievable gift. One little boy had an iPad Pro, another a Nintendo Switch. Some were holding a one-hundred-dollar bill. Max was astonished. *If these are the party favors, I can't wait to see what my gifts are.* Max ran to the gate, still looking for his parents.

"Who are you?" the guard asked.

"I'm Max."

"Yeah, right. Every kid here wants to be Max. This is an exclusive party, so if you're not on the list, kid, get lost."

Yeah, so exclusive, not even the guest of honor gets inside. Max walked away. He wandered around until he heard music booming from one of the tents. He thought he'd find his parents there since the concert was about to begin. The ushers told Max the auditorium was packed, but that he could stand outside and listen. He edged around the tent and listened to songs about himself, songs that glorified him for being special.

He heard people talking inside the tent. They were excited to make Max feel good, but they forgot to let him into his birthday celebration. The irony made him cry.



Discover the Messiah
this Christmas!

—*Pastor Caleb*

"Jesus went out with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the road, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?'

They answered him, 'John the Baptist; others, Elijah; still others, one of the prophets.'

'But you,' he asked them, 'who do you say that I am?'

Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah'" (Mark 8:27-29).



"The [Samaritan] woman said to him, 'I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will explain everything to us.' Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am he'" (John 4:25-26).



FCC Advent readings are from *The Dawning of Indestructible Joy* by John Piper. You can purchase the book from the church office, or download it free from desiringgod.org, and search Advent.

Continued next page

The party was over, and the guests gone. Max went into the tent and found his parents on the stage. They didn't notice him at first.

"Max. How ya doin' buddy?" his dad asked, his face filled with pleasure.

"I'm okay, just a bit tired."

"How'd you like your party?"

Max paused, not knowing what to say after his big day. "Well, now that the party is over, do you think I can just hang out with you guys?"

"Max! We have spent the last seven days exhausting ourselves for you." His father's furrowed brow and stern voice made it clear. He was not happy with the question. "Tomorrow, your mother and I must go back to work, Son. We have done everything for you this week to give you the biggest party of any 13-year-old, and you want more? No, Max. We cannot spare any more time for you. Now go to bed!"

Max slowly shuffled up the stairs with his head bowed. He whispered, "Last year's birthday was better when my parents promised me nothing and gave me nothing. This year was difficult. They promised the most incredible birthday celebration, and I still received nothing. I was on the outside looking in."

THE KUEHLS



Tim and Luann serve in South Africa with the Zion Evangelical Ministries of Africa. They administer and teach at Zion Evangelical Bible School and visit local amaZioni churches to assist in preaching, teaching, and discipling. (AmaZioni is the Zulu word for the "people of Zion.") In addition, the Kuehls administer correspondence and hold training camps and conferences. Tim is the ZEMA field director and serves as the administrative officer of ZEFA, the amaZioni church organization. Luann ministers with women and children and is active in the promotion of amaZioni Sunday schools. Their highest priority is to reach and train the pastors of the independent churches so that they can reach their congregations with the true gospel message.



H2O Backpacks Hope to Others



Faith's Christmas 2021 Missions Project is backpacks for the homeless. Your monetary gift will provide backpacks with H2O and many necessities for those struggling on the streets. After backpacks are filled, the people of Faith are invited to pick one up, deliver it to someone, and engage in conversations.

With your gift, you receive a beautiful wooden ornament, provided as a love offering from Art Powers, a member of Fellowship Crosspoint, Chesterfield, New Jersey. This past summer, Jessica Smith went there as a short-term missionary with ABWE in summer 2021.



Advent

Hope – Nov. 28

Love – Dec. 5

Joy – Dec. 12

Peace – Dec. 19

WORSHIP THE KING

Les Counts

God is the Creator of diversity, of people and cultures, every tribe and tongue. He created us to praise Him! Out of His Being comes a medley of choir anthems, contemporary songs, hymns, vocal jazz, Irish melody, driving percussion, dense harmonies, classical and baroque pieces, chant, gospel music, and much more. This variety results in continuous avenues of exploration for His children to learn.

Through George Fredrich Handel, God established a particular Christmas cantata, *Messiah*. It was conceived as an Easter work and premiered April 13, 1742. Its three-fold themes span the nativity and its prophecy, the crucifixion, and the redemption of mankind. It also comments on the Christian soul and its victory over death. The first part of *Messiah* focuses on the Incarnation, and so it became synonymous with Christmas. But the victorious "Hallelujah Chorus" ends the section on the Passion of Christ, not the birth. The devotion and work that went into creating this two-and-a-half-hour piece humble me. Handel composed it in about twenty-four days after an extended time of prayer and reflection.

Our Christmas preparations at Faith begin in summer. Choir anthems are chosen and arranged, instrumentals

scored, and vocal ensembles assembled. Rehearsal times are placed on the calendar, rotations for musicians put in place, and extra rehearsals completed. Hearts are ready to glorify God. By His providence and grace, everything comes together, and we celebrate together the greatest gift ever given—God with us, Emmanuel! We genuinely see Him in the diversity of His gifts.

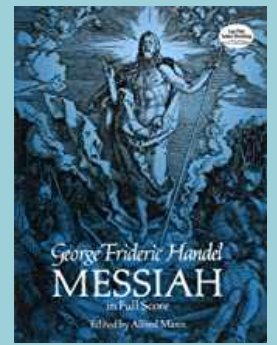
In our homes, families prepare. We read Advent stories and gather gifts to distribute. Baking, cleaning, traveling, and writing fill the days. People draw together and hopefully look to God who created them.

However, in the past few years, our society has splintered, making the pursuit of unity difficult. Conversely, in the Body of Christ, we have a picture of diversity and acceptance that the world desires but cannot achieve.

So, may God's love touch our hearts again, and may His love flow to a world seeking identity, purpose, meaning, and compassion. May the Incarnation of Jesus remind us how much God gave to fallen humanity. He loves us and is the perfect Father.

We do not find our identity in gender, race, or politics. We discover our true nature when we come to Him as children in humble dependence.

Enjoy the season, enjoy each other, and enjoy Christ! —Les



The Hallelujah Chorus

Our Christmas celebration may be enhanced as we listen to the Royal Choral Society's rendition of the Hallelujah Chorus (YouTube). The Hallelujah Chorus is based on three Bible verses: Revelation 19:6, 11:15, and 19:16 (KJV)

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS!"

Enjoy watching, listening, or singing along.



Christmas Cultures at Faith

Polynesia

Christmas with Polynesians is a wonderful celebration. My mom cooks all day and after the Christmas Eve midnight service, we have a feast. All the family, and I mean all the family, gather to celebrate and eat. Polynesians love their meat and carbs. Two special dishes include Oka, which is raw fish served in a coconut cream and tomato sauce, and Fa'alifu, a favorite dessert. It's made by boiling green bananas, not plantains, draining them, adding coconut cream, and letting them cook a few more minutes. Yum!

—Leilani Heather-Ritchson

England

I grew up in a Christian home and our celebrations began Christmas morning with our church service. Afterward, we gathered for presents and food. One of the favorite foods of the day is Mince Pie—originally made in the shape of a crib to commemorate baby Jesus' manger. Of course, Christmas in England is a two-day celebration, the second day being Boxing Day. This day traditionally began with the wealthy people making food "boxes" and delivering them to the poor. Oh, by the way, I don't like Mince Pies.

—Kate Larsen

Philippines

Christmas star-shaped lanterns called "parole" made from bamboo and brightly colored paper are handmade in Filipino homes. Christmas is rooted in family—coming home for the holidays. One of the most anticipated celebrations is Noche Buena, a "good night" of feasting at midnight on Christmas Eve. Favorite food dishes include Bibinka, a cake made of rice flour, coconut milk and egg served on banana leaves; and Puto Bumbong, a rice cake served with grated coconut, brown sugar, and butter. Gifts and parties are ongoing and include "aginaldo," where the children receive special gifts from Godparents.

—Eryln Naguiat

El Salvador

Early Christmas morning, it was off to the forest to find a branch to make our Christmas tree. We brought it home, painted it gold, and filled it with handmade ornaments. Christmas night we attended mass and when it finished at midnight, the sky filled with loud and glorious fireworks. It was grand! Once they ended, the streets filled with everyone hugging and wishing each other a Merry Christmas!

—Carmen Ludwig

Meet AJ Currado



I've been a working artist for 17 years. My husband, various books, and God's creation influence my philosophy and my art.

I use a variety of drawing and painting media depending on a particular piece or series. Many of my paintings hold a deeper meaning than a surface glance shows.

The drawing at the top of this newsletter depicts Mary and Joseph on their trek to Bethlehem to be counted in the census. You see Joseph's and the donkey's dusty feet dragging along the road. I am focused on the travelers, leading the viewer's thoughts to how such a journey on foot would feel. From before His birth, our Savior began to live a fully human life, even the weariness of a long, rough travel.

As followers of Christ, we ourselves are sojourners, traveling through this world toward our true home with the Lord. Although there are pleasant enough times in our life's journey, we can become worn down during the bumpy patches. In this drawing, I wanted to remind viewers of Christ's own life on earth and that we can be sure of His sympathy for our weakness and weariness.

(Look for AJ's and other artists' works on display during Advent at FCC.)



THE TRUTH SET ME FREE

George Vellios, an as told to story



How does one write 94 years of life in 300 words?

It is not an easy task. But when talking with

George Vallios,

one realizes his mind still holds and quickly articulates memories, and he discovers and engages in the Lord's ministries every day. He looks forward to more years of celebrating the Truth of our Savior.

Born in Kozani, Greece, this aircraft electrician's life has led him on many adventures—including in his faith.

George lived in Greece during the German occupation. He grew up in the Greek Orthodox Church, whose authority rests with the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople. The Patriarch doesn't hold as much power as the Catholic Pope but is considered "first among equals." The church venerates the Virgin Mary but does not believe in her immaculate conception because it doesn't believe in original sin. George attended mass, prayed to Mary, made confession to a priest, and crossed himself daily.

George moved to El Paso, Texas in

1958. Shortly thereafter, he married his beloved Helen. In 1961 he took a job at Boeing in Washington State. When the company laid him off five years later, he came to Palmdale, Calif. to work at Lockheed. He and Helen raised their son Thomas here.

Fortunately for George, a friend invited him and his wife to church to hear a Messianic Jew speak. George realized at that time that Jesus was the only mediator needed between man and God and that Jesus wants a personal relationship with His children. The Holy Spirit opened their hearts to the truth of Christ, and they committed their lives to the Lord. George left the Greek Orthodox Church, and in 1970, he was baptized into the Kingdom.

Family and friends continually challenged George for leaving the "church," but he regularly brought them to John 18 (at the right). "What is truth?" he'd ask.

Helen now resides in heaven, but George still serves the Lord. He shares the Gospel with neighbors and fills his days with Bible studies, prayer, and meditation on the Word.

When you see him, be sure and strike up a conversation. He is amazing!

Holding Fast

When challenged about his faith, George Vellios asks, "What is truth?" pointing to John 18.

"You are a King then?" Pilate asked.

'You say that I'm a king,' Jesus replied. 'I was born for this, and I have come into the world for this: to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.'

'What is truth?' said Pilate" (John 18:37-38a).

ANTHEM
GROWTH
YEAR

Tell your friends!

The AGY helps young men and women, ages approximately 18-23, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

The experience will help the participants deepen their faith and understand God's Word through daily lectures, discussions, and study sessions. It will also include a mission trip to Asia and a teaching tour of Israel.

The experience is for one year. Faithtoyou.com/info



Nātīvitās

Pastor Saúl A. Hernández

In early December in the 60s, I'd walk along the riverbank in El Salvador looking for semicircular dried tree branches. At home, these were pruned, painted white, and adorned with handmade figurines and small toys to bring life to our "Christmas tree." This symbol announced the coming of the Child of God—the expected Messiah.

The Hebrew word for Messiah is Mashiach, which means anointed or chosen. The Greek equivalent is the word Christos, and Spanish, Cristo. Therefore, the name Jesus Christ equals Jesus the Messiah. In biblical times, people were anointed with oil when they were set apart for a particular role or purpose ordained by God. In the Old Testament, examples include Elisha the prophet (1 Kings 19:16), Aaron, the first high priest of Israel (Lev. 8:12), and David, king of Israel (1 Sam. 16:13). The OT also predicted a coming Deliverer who would redeem Israel (Isa. 42:1; 61:1-3). The Jews called this Liberator the Messiah, and God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit to announce His ministry (Luke 3:22).

The New Testament proves that Jesus of Nazareth is the prophesied Messiah (Luke 4:17-21; John 4:25-26). It records His miracles to help the reader believe in His name and have eternal life (John 20:31), and it provides eyewitness accounts that He is "the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16). But Jesus' resurrection from the dead is the ultimate proof that He is the promised Messiah, the

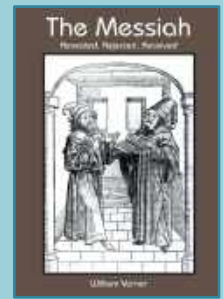
one whom God appointed as "judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:39-43).

There is much religious significance to Christmas in Latin America. But as a Roman Catholic culture, it isn't easy to differentiate between the commemoration of Jesus Christ and that of the Virgin Mary. However, Navidad, a word derived from the Latin "nātīvitās" or birth, is one of the major Christian holidays that marks the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Its first occurrence was December 25, 1492. The Nativity scene in Latin America is what most directly celebrates Jesus. Saint Francis of Assisi desired to recreate the Lord's birth in the stable. On Christmas Eve in 1223, he staged the first known living Nativity in a cave located in the forest of Greccio, an Italian village.

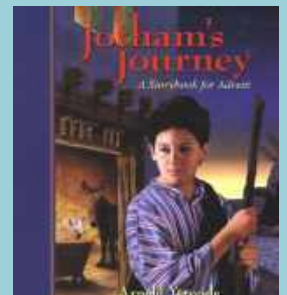
The word "family" is synonymous with Christmas in Latin America. Although it doesn't represent the reality of Christ in the life of the people, it does show a genuine foundation that emphasizes the family union and the importance of a superior being known as God. Many may not know Him personally, but they can still adore and give devotion amidst a pagan way of biblical ignorance. Christmas in Latin America becomes perhaps the most noble, nostalgic, personal, generous, and religious day. There is joy, love, tears, sorrow, and a hope for a better tomorrow.

— Pastor Saúl

READ ANY
GOOD BOOKS?



Will Varner's *Messiah* opens the Scripture to provide a readable, clarifying look at Jesus, the Messiah of Israel and Savior of the world. Jesus once asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" (Mark 8:27). That is still the most urgent question – "Who is Jesus?"



Jotham's Journey
by Arnold Ytreeide

This family advent devotional will encourage your hearts as you read it together. Ten-year-old Jotham travels across Israel in search of the family he's been separated from. Though he faces thieves, robbers, and kidnappers, the young boy also encounters, wise men, shepherds, and innkeepers until at last, he finds his way to the Savior born in Bethlehem.





"Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, through our Lord Jesus Christ and through the love of the Spirit, to strive together with me in prayers to God on my behalf" (Romans 15:30).

Please pray as the Spirit leads.

*Lynn Grandinetti is bedridden with lung and heart issues.

*Nick Ford has stage 4 cancer and is choosing to not do chemo.

*Charles Groth is recovering from a stroke.

*Sheila Carle's family member Barry Smith has heart issues.

*Natalie Lewis' continued success.

*Roxie Reinholdson continued healing from knee surgery.

*Jeanette Hill's mother's recovery from colon surgery.

*Sheila Carle's grandson Josh needs prayer.

*Robert has stage 4 lung cancer.

*Baby Jordan Ludwig has ongoing health challenges.

*Dee Anne Jones' cancer surgery recovery.

*Baby Emmerit Porter continued healing.

*Caesar's dad has liver cancer.

*Kalli Reader with extensive injuries from auto accident.

*Dianna Romero's family who lost brother and son a motorcycle accident.

*John Isles is on hospice.

*Cindy had surgery on her right leg.

*Sara Butler's begins radiology and chemotherapy in two weeks.

*Natalie Kidman's husband David has a brain injury from bike accident. He needs salvation.

*Sharon Dison recently had a brain tumor removed.

*Ben Spaulding is in the hospital with a brain bleed and drug addiction. He was raised with truth and needs to come Home.

*David Akers' mother has metastasized breast cancer.

*Stephanie Tarez has end stage heart failure waiting for a heart transplant.

*Bob and Linda Schuman have medical needs.

*Six-year-old Brynnley has a rare tumor on her brainstem and is in the hospital with COVID and pneumonia.

*Lu Andrews asks for boldness to witness to her friend Judy.

*Many may lose and have lost jobs over the required Covid vaccine.

*Help Awana leaders to successfully lead the children to the Lord through the memorization of scripture.

*The Supreme Court case of Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health begins Dec. 1.

* Praise God for many answered prayers.

If you would like your prayer needs to immediately go out to church members contact Laura Cox:

chozengr17777@aol.com

UPCOMING*

Sunday, Nov. 28
First Day of Advent

Sunday, Nov. 28 thru
Saturday, Dec. 6
Hanukkah—Jewish
Festival of Lights

Wednesday, Dec. 1
Day of Prayer
6 a.m.–6 p.m.
Supreme Court Case
Dobbs vs. Jackson
Women's Health

Fridays, beginning Dec. 3
Video Production Class
4–5 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 4
Christmas Craft Boutique
8 a.m.–2 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 11
Women's Christmas
Banquet
Bev@faithtoyou.com

Tuesday, Dec. 21
Primetimers Christmas
5:30 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 24
Christmas Eve Services
3 p.m.; 4:30 p.m.; 6 p.m.
Also, Living Nativity on the
front lawn of FCC.

Saturday, Dec. 25
Christmas Day
Remember to invite the
Messiah to your
celebrations!

Saturday, Jan. 1
Happy New Year!

*For more information:
Faithtoyou.com/info

The Christian Standard Bible is used
unless otherwise indicated.



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