



# Church of Jesus Christ Mount Ayr Restoration Branch



# NEWSLETTER



HAPPY NEW YEAR!

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## News & Notes



### Locked-In!!

11 MARB Youth & friends held their first overnight lock-in at the church Dec. 10th; enjoying movies, games, food and fellowship. Thank you Steve Smith!!!

### Caroling Party

Approximately 35 braved the frigid temperatures to bring a little warmth and cheer to several homes and the care facilities in Lamoni. Afterwards we met and warmed ourselves with some singing, eating and lots of laughing.

### Mo Schussing

(Pun Intended) Sixteen gathered on the glistening slopes of the Barber Ranch for some good old fashioned sledding and in general: wintry frolicky fun. Hearts and

hands were warmed with soup and muffins afterward for the young and old alike.

### Church Service Day

Saturday Jan 8th at 8:30 at the Mt. Ayr Record News to help re-insulate the ceiling.

### Fasting Weekend Planned

Jan 14-16. See the Calendar page for more details.

### MARB gets Social

Photos of activities and scheduled events are now online. Come and join us on:



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Happy New Year!  
Welcome 2011



“Therefore if any man live in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become *new*.”  
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

## From the Pastor



As we approach another year, I am reminded that time is measured only unto man (*Alma 19:38*), not God. While I have often expressed (and will continue to do so) my belief that we are living in the “last days,” I am also aware that all things are present before God (*D&C 22:4b*) and known to Him (*D&C 38:1b*) without regard to time. While we do not know what lies ahead in this year, the Lord does. He knows what challenges, what disappointments, what changes, what expressions of His power are before us. He sent each one of us to this time and this place for specific purposes. This is not to disregard our agency which He gave us at the time of our creation (*D&C 36:7b*), and which is essential to our ability to come back into God’s presence (*D&C 90:5-6*) with joy (*D&C 51:5b* and *2 Nephi 1:115* but read *2 Nephi 1:61-121* for the context and for edification).

Where I am going with this is to point out that while it is interesting to study and know the history that precedes us and to have some understanding of what is yet to come, the real call is to become – **today** – an obedient people. This has always been the call. God has sought such a people down through all the ages. How many times must He tell us to set in order our own houses (*D&C 90:6f*)? How many times must He scatter and destroy the strongholds of His people in order to get their attention and call them unto remembrance of the fact that He alone is God (*Isaiah 41:4*), and it is only His words that will guide us safe home.

It is my hope that in whatever time each of is allotted, that we will study His word and obey it and that we will love one another (*John 13:34-35*). Read *D&C:1* as a starting point then Sections 56, 58 and 59.

Remember that God never changes (*Isaiah 29:25*). If any people will hear His word and turn unto Him, He will be there. If we will truly turn unto Him each day the results will speak for themselves. No contention. No offenses, given or received. No insistence on our own ways. No pride of place, etc.

Let us say, like the people to whom Joshua spoke in Joshua 1:16, ‘All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go.’ Hear the word of God when He says, ‘Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.’ (Joshua 1:9)

Let us not procrastinate the day in which we truly turn to the Lord and submit ourselves unto Him and His word. (*Alma 10:27-30*). The signs and gifts will follow, if we will do this, and be a great blessing to those who share the places where each of us occupy (*D&C 128:8b, c*)

Please – let it be so for each one of us beginning today.

~ Sherman Phipps

## SIN NO MORE



Priest Jim Barber  
*Bethany, Missouri*  
December 5, 2010

High Priest Rob Rolfe presided over the Communion Service stating, “This is the time that we celebrate the birth of Christ. We celebrate His coming into the world. The Book of Mormon has a lot to say about Christ’s coming. In fact, one of the interesting things about it is that they knew of Christ’s birth and coming many hundred years before He was born. There are a lot of people today who think that Christ wasn’t heard of until He was born. I am going to read the first six verses of the third chapter of Jacob because it talks about what they knew and what they believed in terms of Christ’s coming. Nowadays He’s come and now we’re waiting to see Him come again; at least some of us are. We are hoping that we’ll be there when that happens.”

*Now behold, it came to pass that I, Jacob, having ministered much unto my people, in word, (and I can not write but little of my words, because of the difficulty of engraving our words upon plates, ) and we know that the things which we write upon plates must remain; But whatsoever things we write upon anything save it be upon plates, must perish and vanish away; but we can write a few words upon plates, which will give our children, and also our beloved brethren, a small degree of knowledge concerning us, or concerning their fathers. Now in this thing we do rejoice; and we labor diligently to*





engraven these words upon plates, hoping that our beloved brethren, and our children, will receive them with thankful hearts, and look upon them, that they may learn with joy, and not with sorrow, neither with contempt concerning their first parents: For, for this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory, many hundred years before his coming, and not only we, ourselves, had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us. Behold, they believed in Christ, and worshipped the Father in his name; and also, we worship the Father in his name. And for this intent, we keep the law of Moses, it pointing our souls to him; and for their cause, it is sanctified unto us, for righteousness, even as it was accounted unto Abraham in the wilderness, to be obedient unto the commands of God, in offering up his son Isaac, which is a similitude of God and his only begotten Son. (Jacob 3:1-6)

“I am happy to be here this morning. I hope that all of you are happy to come unto the Lord today also. I have chosen several scriptures to use. I would like to read from the Doctrine and Covenants Section 18:2f-o, a revelation actually given to Martin Harris. He had been doing some things that he wasn’t supposed to and this was God’s response to the things that he had been doing. *Wherefore, I command you to repent, and keep the commandments which you have received by the hand of my servant Joseph Smith, Jr., in my name; and it is by my almighty power that you have received them; therefore I command you to repent--repent, lest I smite you by the rod of my mouth, and by my wrath, and by my anger, and your sufferings be sore--how sore you know not! how exquisite you know not! yea, how hard to bear you know not! For, behold, I, God, have suffered these things for all, that they might not suffer; if they would repent; but if they would not repent, they must suffer even as I; which suffering caused myself, even God, the greatest of all, to tremble because of pain, and to bleed at every pore, and to suffer both body and spirit, and would that I might not drink the bitter cup, and shrink; nevertheless, glory be to the Father, and I partook and finished my preparations unto the children of men; wherefore, I command you again to repent, lest I humble you by my almighty power, and that you confess*

*your sins, lest you suffer these punishments of which I have spoken, of which in the smallest, yea, even in the least degree, you have tasted at the time I withdrew my Spirit. And I command you that you preach naught but repentance, and show not these things unto the world until it is wisdom in me; for they cannot bear meat now, but milk they must receive; wherefore, they must not know these things, lest they perish. Learn of me, and listen to my words; walk in the meekness of my Spirit and you shall have peace in me. I am Jesus Christ; I came by the will of the Father, and I do his will.’* We come this morning to renew our covenant with Christ which is a form of repentance. If we don’t repent we know what’s going to happen: we are going to suffer as Christ suffered. We know how Christ suffered because He was in great agony and great pain. We don’t want that to happen to us but He gives us a promise that if we will follow His commandments and if we will ask God to forgive us of our sins, then He will bless us over and over.

“This past week we took a little vacation down to Branson [Missouri]. It’s a very neat place to go especially at Christmas. A lot of the entertainment has Christmas themes, and it seemed like the people in all of the shows we went to were not afraid to express their love for Christ. The singing was beautiful. They sang ‘O Holy Night’ in one particular show that we went to, and it was just absolutely beautiful.

“On the lighter side I have to tell you that I have always wanted to go to Yacov Smirnoff’s show. I was a little leery. I don’t watch most comedians that you can watch on TV because they are pretty vulgar. I assure you though that you can go to Yacov’s show, and it is very uplifting. He has a great love for this country. He is a Russian immigrant and a lot of his jokes are related to how it was in Russia and how it is in the United States. It’s just really a good show.

“I could tell one of the stories that he told. I don’t want to offend anybody up here (Rob Rolfe and Sherman Phipps -both judges- were up front with Jim). It seems that this gentleman was asking a group of angels questions. He had asked several questions and they had answered. Finally he asked one of them, ‘Can you sue anybody in heaven?’ He thought for a minute and said, ‘Well, yes, but it’s

awfully hard to find lawyers.’

“We come at the first Sunday of each month and examine our lives. We look at things that we have done and need to improve upon. This is the last communion Sunday that we will have this year. (There’s nothing that says we can’t have another one, but I don’t know of any that are planned, so this is probably the last communion we will have this year.) I was looking back over this year. I am a farmer and I raise cattle. I feel like we were really blessed this year. I think that a lot of farmers probably were blessed because corn, bean and cattle prices were high. Linda and I talked about this some on the way down to Branson and both feel that we have been blessed. I think a lot of it has to

“...every one of us is a sinner, and we need to ask God to forgive us, and start our life anew.”

do with the fact that we’ve filed our tithing statement. We are promised that if we do these things that we will be blessed, and I feel that God has blessed us. This time of year farmers look back, and if they have made a lot of money, they go and buy new machinery or upgrade their machinery. This is a good tax write off. Hopefully they will because my son sells farm machinery and this would be good for him. Through this year I know I have witnessed joy in our life with things that have gone on in the church and things I have been involved in with the church. There’s also been some sorrow. It seems like there is always the opposite. There’s sorrow along with the joyful. But we need to look at these things and evaluate them and look at ways that we can improve in the coming weeks and years.

“I call chapter 13 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> book of Nephi the gospel chapter. It would be good if you would go home today and read this chapter because there is a lot in it. I thought it was very interesting that Nephi wrote this 550 years before Christ was born. I will read part of it. *And now I, Nephi, make an end of my prophesying unto you, my beloved brethren. And I can not write but a few things, which I know must surely come to pass; neither can I write but a few of the words of my brother Jacob. Wherefore the things which I have written, sufficeth me, save it be a few words which I must speak, concerning the doctrine of Christ; wherefore I shall speak*



unto you plainly, according to the plainness of my prophesying. For my soul delighteth in plainness: for after this manner doth the Lord God work among the children of men. For the Lord God giveth light unto the understanding: for he speaketh unto men according to their language, unto their understanding. Wherefore, I would that ye should remember that I have spoken unto you, concerning that prophet which the Lord shewed unto me, that should baptize the Lamb of God, which should take away the sin of the world. And now, if the Lamb of God, he being holy, should have need to be baptized by water to fulfill all righteousness, O then, how much more need have we, being unholy, to be baptized, yea, even by water. And now, I would ask of you, my beloved brethren, wherein the Lamb of God did fulfill all righteousness in being baptized by water? Know ye not that he was holy? But notwithstanding he being holy, he sheweth unto the children of men, that according to the flesh, he humbleth himself before the Father, and witnesseth unto the Father that he would be obedient unto him in keeping his commandments; Wherefore, after he was baptized with water, the Holy Ghost descended upon him in the form of a dove.' (2<sup>nd</sup> Nephi 13:1-10)

I thought it was very interesting that Nephi knew exactly how Christ was to be baptized. He went into the water and then up out of the water and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him and baptized Him by the Spirit. I had read that before but it hadn't really stuck in my mind that it was 550 years before He was even born. I feel that Nephi was definitely a prophet because he saw these things.

"In my notes I have written, 'Why do we need to repent?' You know we come to church every Sunday. We try to live a good life. Do we need to repent? I guess in order to answer that question you have to think about what sin is. We know the Ten Commandments. Probably not too many of us break those Ten Commandments but there are other commandments that we need to think about. Sin can be anything that can keep you from serving God or thinking about God. It can be anything from trying to build something and hitting your finger with a hammer. That kind of makes you not want to think about God but about other things. It can be not sharing your testimony. It can be not being thankful.

There are so many things that we have done wrong, so every one of us is a sinner, and we need to ask God to forgive us, and start our life anew. When we entered into the waters of baptism we told God that we would follow His commandments. We made that covenant and if we don't do those things then we have to ask God to forgive us. None of us is perfect and if we wait until we are perfect to be baptized, we will probably never be baptized. God will accept us as we are. Then we need to go on and strive to be better.

In the Bible it says, 'And Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken an adulterer; and when they had set her in the midst of the people, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground. And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst of the temple. When Jesus had raised up himself, and saw none of her accusers, and the woman standing, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more. And the woman glorified God from that hour, and believed on his name.' (John 8:1-11)

I guess the easy part is repenting of the sins and asking God to forgive you. The hard part is going and sinning no more. That's what we have to keep in mind to be able to come back to God and say, God, I am not perfect and I need your forgiveness and I need you to accept me and help me to become a better person.

"I got a couple of e-mails that I thought were pretty good that I wanted to share with you this morning:



'One Sunday morning, an old cowboy entered a church just before services were to begin. Although the old man and his clothes were spotlessly clean, he wore jeans, a denim shirt and boots that were worn and ragged. In his hand he carried a worn-out old hat and an equally worn, dog-eared Bible.

The church he entered was in a very upscale and exclusive part of the city. It was the largest and most beautiful church the old cowboy had ever seen. The people of the congregation were all dressed with expensive clothes and fine jewelry. As the cowboy took a seat, the others moved away from him. No one greeted, spoke to, or welcomed him. They were all appalled by his appearance and did not attempt to hide it.

As the old cowboy was leaving the church, the preacher approached him and asked the cowboy to do him a favor. "Before you come back in here again, have a talk with God and ask him what he thinks would be appropriate attire for worship in church." The old cowboy assured the preacher he would.

The next Sunday, he showed back up for the services wearing the same ragged jeans, shirt, boots, and hat. Once again he was completely shunned and ignored. The preacher approached the cowboy and said, "I thought I asked you to speak to God before you came back to our church."

"I did," replied the old cowboy. "And what was his reply?" asked the preacher.

"Well, sir, God told me that he didn't have a clue what I should wear. He said he'd never been in this church."

"I thought that was pretty good. We tend to look at people and think they are not fit to be here, but God doesn't think that way at all. He loves everyone. It doesn't make any difference what you wear."

The Silent Sermon.

'A member of a certain church, who previously had been attending services regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks, the preacher decided to visit him. It was a chilly evening. The pastor found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his preacher's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a comfortable chair near the fireplace. . .and waited.





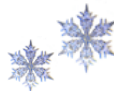


The preacher made himself at home but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the dance of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the preacher took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone, then he sat back in his chair, still silent.

The host watched all this in quiet contemplation. As the one lone ember's flame flickered and diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and dead. Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. The preacher glanced at his watch and realized it was time to leave. He slowly stood up, picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow, once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.

As the preacher reached the door to leave, his host said with a tear running down his cheek, 'Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I will be back in church next Sunday.'

"I quit going to church back when the [RLDS] church split up, and I can testify to you that the fire goes out. You need to get back to church to restart that fire. I hope that some of the things that I've said this morning will help you in your life as you desire to help others."



## WAKE UP! BE PREPARED FOR HIS COMING



High Priest Sherman Phipps  
*Lamoni, Iowa*  
December 12, 2010

Our worship this day consisted of the reading of scripture and the singing of Christmas hymns. Brother Alan Smith presided and Brother Sherman Phipps gave a short message during which time the congregation viewed a short video of the Story of Jonah.

Brother Smith led our hymns and worship with the Call to Worship from Isaiah 11:1-6, *'And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots; And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the*

*lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.'*

The congregation sang Hymn 255 in the maroon hymnal, 'Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming.'

Brother Smith continued, "This is from the prophecy found in 1<sup>st</sup> Nephi 3:54-62, *'And it came to pass that I saw the heavens open; and an angel came down and stood before me; and he said unto me, Nephi, what beholdest thou? And I said unto him, A virgin, most beautiful and fair above all other virgins. And he said unto me, Knowest thou the condescension of God? And I said unto him, I know that he loveth his children; nevertheless I do not know the meaning of all things. And he said unto me, Behold, the virgin whom thou seest is the mother of the Son of God, after the manner of the flesh. And it came to pass that I beheld that she was carried away in the Spirit; And after she had been carried away in the Spirit for the space of a time, the angel spake unto me, saying, Look! And I looked and beheld the virgin again, bearing a child in her arms. And the angel said unto me, Behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Son of the Eternal Father!'* We sang Hymn 325 'O Thou Joyful, O Thou Wonderful.'

"Angels from the realm of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth, ye who sang creation's story now proclaim Messiah's birth. Come and worship, Come and worship, worship Christ the newborn King. Let's sing Hymn 231.

"Have you ever thought what it must have been like to be a shepherd out on the hillside on the night when the angels came? That had to be quite a surprise. We don't have any record that they were prepared in any way particularly for the angels coming and singing and sharing with the them the good news. I always wondered if the shepherds thought, Wow, how did we get to be so lucky? Maybe they were the only ones awake at that time. It must have been quite a sight and quite an experience. We know that they shared the message that they received with all those that they came in contact with according to the scriptures. Let's turn to Hymn 236 'While Humble Shepherds Watched Their Flocks' and sing that story.



“One of the newer Christmas hymns is Hymn 234, ‘Joseph, Kind Joseph’. I have always enjoyed the points of view of three of the participants in the Christmas story.

“I wrote a little poem that was chosen for the Lyric Iowa Anthology this year. I wish I had it with me, but I will just tell you the story before we sing ‘Silent Night’ because it kind of makes me think of what the German author might have been thinking about. When Valle and I got to visit Germany we went to the area where ‘Silent Night’ was written. A German winter would probably have been a cold, snowy one. I think of a silent night I had one time. I lived in Red Oak before Valle and I were married in an apartment above a three-car garage. I was supposed to take pictures at a basketball game one night in the dead of winter. It was one of those very cold nights but it was very still. I grabbed a speed graphic camera which was a big camera that used two pieces of film. You slid one piece in and shot one side and then flipped the film around and shot a picture on the other side. Since you could only get two pictures on each piece of film, I had to carry a big bag with the film in it as well as the camera which was much bigger than the cameras of today. I had a camera bag hanging down from each shoulder. I had to walk half a mile from my apartment, past the nursing home and then there was a big field between me and where the gym was. Instead of walking around on the roads, even though the snow was pretty deep, I thought that I would just walk across the field. You know how after it has snowed and it is really cold, there is a crust on top of the snow, kind of an icy crust. It was cold but it was a beautiful cold and it was silent. I was just alone there, all by myself. I started walking across this field and all of a sudden I thought, ‘wow, this is really neat.’ I ended up just kind of dancing my way across the snow, going around in circles and just jumping up and down until I had crossed the field to the gym. In my poem I just have a little line something like, ‘*No one saw except the creator who had made it all.*’ That’s how I think it must have been for the person who wrote ‘Silent Night.’ He was trying to think how it must have been for Jesus’ birth knowing that He wasn’t in the snow or the cold to the degree that a German Christmas would have been.” We sang ‘Silent Night’.

“Let’s sing another favorite Christmas hymn 233, ‘Away in a Manger’ and then Brother Sherman is going to share some thoughts with us.

Brother Phipps then began his remarks, “I am not sure what to say this morning. Don’t take that wrong. I am very grateful to be here and I am grateful to have the opportunity to share just a few thoughts with you. Alan spoke briefly about the shepherds out in the field and how they must have been surprised. The story that I always think of is Nephi in the Book of Mormon. His people, the people that he apparently worshipped with and loved, and who loved Christ, had been told by the rest of society, ‘We’re sick of this.

*“No one saw except the creator who had made it all.”*

We’re not listening to it anymore. You’ve claimed Christ was coming. We’ve picked a date and when He doesn’t come that day, all of you who believe are going to be put to death.’ Nephi’s reaction was to go out, bow down before the Lord and pray for his people. Now I don’t know if he prayed that Christ would come by that day but he prayed for his people. ‘*And it came to pass that he cried mightily unto the Lord, all that day; and behold, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, Lift up your head and be of good cheer; for behold, the time is at hand, and on this night shall the sign be given, And on the morrow come I into the world, to shew unto the world that I will fulfill all that which I have caused to be spoken by the mouth of my holy prophets.*’ (3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi 1:12-13)

“That’s what happened. That night at the going down of the sun there was no darkness, just as the prophets had foretold. While these people didn’t get to see Christ as did those in Jerusalem, they knew that He had been born. Many of those who had planned on putting Nephi’s followers to death repented. Their repentance didn’t always last a long time but they did repent at this time. There were many who turned to God and believed when they saw this sign; when the sun went down and there was no darkness all that night and through the next day. It says, ‘. . . *they knew that it was the day that the Lord should be born, because of the sign which had been given. And it had come to pass, yea, all things, every whit, according to the words of the*

*prophets.*’ (3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi 1:22-23)

“I want to tell you this morning that as I think about the birth of Christ and what that means, one of the things that I am very grateful for when I look at you is the fact that you have had the privilege of knowing Christ. I am very grateful for how that has affected your lives and how you have allowed Christ to work in your lives.

“This is probably a good time to share this with you. I wanted to be sure and tell you while I was up here today. When I got here this morning I went in the back room to check to see if the repairman had been here to work on the furnace yet. I found that the back room was full of snow just from blowing under the door. I wanted to get that snow out of there before it melted. I went back and got a snow shovel and went around and scooped that room out and as I was coming back around the front of the building, some of you were pulling in. I came in and put the shovel away and thought that those who saw me carrying the shovel are going to think that I got up and came over early to scoop out the walk. Of course, that wasn’t true because when I got here Gordon and Alan were the ones who were shoveling the walk off. They were the ones who did all the work. I wanted to be sure that any of you who saw me walk in with the shovel knew that I didn’t scoop out the walk. When I look out here and see you people and interact with you and I understand all the things that you do for the people around you, I am so appreciative for the fact that Christ came to the earth. He didn’t just come for a people a long time ago but He came for every one of us. He knows everyone of us.

“I wonder what Christ thought as he prepared to come upon the earth as the Son of God to be sacrificed as an eternal sacrifice for each one of us. Surely He must have looked out and seen us. He knew what He was doing, I believe.

“There’s another thing about His coming that I wanted to be sure and mention this morning. Some of us from time to time struggle and think that if Christ came and if He is and was resurrected and He loves me like I keep hearing, why do these things happen in my life. I want to propose to you this morning that whatever happens in our life may not be the way the Lord wanted it to happen for us. It may be because of our own choices, our own sin and our own failure to respond to Him as He would like us to. No





matter what it is if we learn to look to Him, if we repent and humble ourselves and try to learn to obey Him, that experience can be turned to good, and it can be used by God as a training ground for us. I don't know if this will fit together for anybody else, but I thought about Jesus preparing to come to the earth knowing what He would have to go through for us. When I say I mean all the generations but each one of us particularly too. Surely He didn't like the idea of being beaten and having nails driven through his hands and feet but, He was willing to do that so that we might have eternal life, so that we might have the opportunity for forgiveness, resurrection, salvation and redemption. He knew what He would have to go through but He still had to go through it. It didn't make it any easier but He was willing to do that for us.

"When you struggle with things in your life and maybe things aren't like you want them to be or you have had a bad experience, don't look at that as something that should cause you to give up or to quit trying. Think of it as something that can bring you experience, understanding and learning and enable you then to allow God to work with you and use you for the sake of those who follow you. As I thought about it this morning, I thought about all the people that I appreciate; people, who through all kinds of struggles, came to know Christ and then turned their life over to Christ and allowed Him to use them as an instrument. They allowed Him to use all those experiences in their life as a training ground from which they could then understand those around them and be an instrument in the hands of God.

"When I think about the birth of Christ I think it is probably foolishness for us to celebrate the birth of Christ without thinking about repentance because His birth really doesn't have much effect in our life until we learn to repent and open our lives up to Him and let Him come in and be a part of our lives.

"There's another thing I thought about as I thought about His birth. I thought about the wise men who came to Him bringing gifts. I think that probably all of us would agree that they didn't come on the night of His birth. The scriptures would indicate that Jesus was two or three years old by the time the wise men arrived. When I think of His birth I wonder what could be our gifts to Him. Then when I read the scriptures it becomes pretty clear to me that the acceptable gifts we bring to

Him all start with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Here is a scripture from 3<sup>rd</sup> Nephi 4:49-50, '*... and ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost,*' (which bears witness of Christ. It doesn't say that but that's what the Holy Ghost does.)

"I wonder as we approach this Christmas season will we be wise men. Will we bring to Him the only gifts that He really desires from us, a broken heart and a contrite spirit? If you go through the scriptures you find there are other gifts that we could probably give to Him, the gift of thanksgiving, the gift of song as we are doing here today. Instead of dwelling on what will we receive, what will we give? When I think about the wise men I think about something else too. Of course we have the advantage of the Book of Mormon and so I'm convinced that at least one or more of those wise men that are referenced came from Central America. Can you imagine at the time of Christ's birth getting from Central America to Jerusalem? How did they do that? Apparently it took them several years because I think they left before this incident that I just made reference to with Nephi and his people. They had to know with no doubt that Christ had been born and they wanted to go and worship at His feet and to leave their gifts with Him even though they were worldly gifts. Surely first they must have given their hearts or they would never have taken that trip. When I think about the birth of Christ I wonder what kind of a trip am I willing to make for Him? A lifelong trip? And what would I be willing to accept along the way in terms of struggle. Surely they didn't get on a plane and fly from Central America to Jerusalem at the time of Christ's birth. They must have had to really work to get there. Are we willing to do that? Christ was willing to give everything for us. What are we willing to give for Him?

"This might be a good place to play a video for you of a little girl telling the story of Jonah. I hope you don't think of

this as just a cute little blip but that you think about some of those who have gone before us. First, He had to get their attention. Then what were they willing to do once He got their attention.

(If you wish to view this video this is the address for the website where it can be found: <http://vimeo.com/16404771> )

"I also thought about how the scriptures say you will be led by a little child. There are a lot of things in that little video that we could talk and think about but probably the one thing I wanted to mention is what happened when the people on the ship went down to wake Jonah up. He was asleep when everyone else was in a panic. That's what I would like to have you think about this year as you consider the birth of Christ. He's done all this for us. He's prepared the way and He has promised that He is coming back. Let's wake up and be prepared for Him. He is coming back just surely as He was born in Jerusalem.

"Let's turn to Hymn 247, 'Newborn of God'





## WHAT DO YOU WANT FOR CHRISTMAS?



Priest Rodney Bastow

Mounty Ayr, Iowa

December 19, 2010

*And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, an angel of the Lord appeared unto them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. But the angel said unto them, Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this is the way you shall find the babe, he is wrapped in swaddling clothes, and is lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest; and on earth, peace; good will to men. (Luke 2:8-14)*

Lynda Rolfe sang "Oh Holy Night". In response to her singing, Rodney followed with, "Thank you Lynda. I appreciate that. Sometimes I sing parts of that song when I'm out choring, but I don't sing it nearly so well.

"I appreciate this opportunity to be here this morning. It's always good to speak around Christmas time because you've got a built-in topic. It makes it a

lot easier for someone like me. This has been a busy week. We've gone through the week and checked off things from the to-do list. One weekend Patrick called and asked what I had done that day. I thought---well, what did I do other than chore. It seems like all I ever get done anymore is chore and go to wrestling practice. I'll chore all morning, and if the tractors don't start it lasts a little longer. If the waterers are frozen it lasts a little longer. If the cows are out it takes a little longer. Wrestling usually takes the afternoon, and if I have a meet or a tournament it will last a little longer. Right now this is what I enjoy doing. That's why I do it. If the cattle market drops suddenly or we get a big snowstorm right now I may not enjoy it quite so much. If the wrestlers don't keep winning I might not enjoy it so much either.

"I thought I was the only one who was really busy. I listened in the other night at prayer meeting and heard people talking about deadlines they had to meet or jobs they had to get done. Someone didn't get home from work until 6:15 and then went to the meeting. I forget how busy all of you are too. There are all sorts of jobs to do, deadlines to meet, papers to be graded, and places to be. I enjoyed going to the ballgame the other night. I went to see Teegan play. I saw George walk in. Suddenly these long arms started reaching out over everyone else and I knew it was Akila. It was good watching him play too. I realized that our young people are very busy too. There are activities they are involved in that take long hours after school. There is still homework to do when they finally get home.

"For some of you it took a special effort for you to be here this morning. Some of you come long distances. I appreciate that. I appreciate that all of us who made an effort to be here might be blessed and I pray that God's holy spirit will reach out to us and that we will feel that love. I pray that when we are finished we will give him the praise and the glory for what we have experienced here today.

"Well, it's Christmas time---only five shopping days left. Aren't you glad that Wal-Mart and the other retail stores remind us of Christmas earlier and earlier every year? It used to be we didn't see the Christmas ads or displays until after Thanksgiving. Some of you aren't old enough to remember that. Now we see them before Halloween. Before you know

it they will remind us about Christmas all year round. Just think---only 370 shopping days until Christmas 2011. Back when I was growing up you couldn't count it like that. There would be days when you couldn't go shopping (Sundays, for example). Just think how that has changed. This brings me to the question---what do you want for Christmas? I thought about going around the congregation and asking everyone what they wanted. I guess I won't do that.

"I've been thinking a lot of what Christmas used to be like. When I was younger I remember how special Christmas was. We had an air register on the stairway where you could stare down into the dining room. You could quietly go there and see if mom and dad were up yet. When you saw the lights come on you knew you could go on down. It was such a fun time. We would get down there and find the stockings pinned on the back of the sofa. They would be full of things like oranges, apples, lifesavers that unfolded like a book, our favorite candy bar, and maybe a book. Sometimes a small toy or item we wanted was there. Then it would be on to the presents, with everyone opening at the same time. Herb and I usually knew what all our presents were because we had already checked them out. We would get underwear, socks, and shirts that were to last us all year. Then there would always be that special gift---that special item that you had been wanting since the previous Christmas. That's the way it used to be. After breakfast was over and the chores were done we cleaned things up. Then we would load up the car with the seven of us and make the trip to Papa Herbert's (my Grandpa Bastow). Everybody would be there, all five of my dad's family, as well as their kids. We had a big meal. All these women were used to fixing meals for farm hands, so there was plenty to eat. In the afternoon we would sit around and play cards, especially rook. Mainly though we would sit and listen to Grandpa's stories or his boys' stories about what he had been doing. He might have run into someone or put the car in the ditch for some unknown reason because he was fox hunting. Grandpa was like that. It was always laughing and telling stories with Grandpa and the aunts and uncles and cousins. Earlier, before I came upon the scene, he would give out silver dollars to each kid. After I came along he didn't do that anymore. We didn't expect things---





that wasn't important. It was just fun all of us being together, and all the love that was there in that group.

"After Grandpa passed away we didn't meet much with the cousins and aunts and uncles. We still got together at mom and dad's as a family, even though my older brother and sisters had grown up. They would come back and spend time there. By that time I had some nephews and nieces that had shown up. We enjoyed watching them entertain us. We would spend the day eating since mom and my sisters were such good cooks. She would always have our favorite desserts, candy, and other favorites. We also had a great big jigsaw puzzle that was more challenging than the year before. Usually we got it done in one day. It was important to mom and dad that their children were gathered together on Christmas.

"Once I got married there was another get-together to attend. There was a lot of food there too. There were a lot more nephews and nieces. I came in at the end of the line on that group. There was more sharing together as a family and more good time. There was no card playing or puzzles but they talked and enjoyed what was going on.

"Before long our children were born and we began our own Christmas celebration, as well as going to our parents' places. We used to film our Christmases. We would spend the time opening presents and filming, and then we would watch it over and over and laugh. We might watch the previous Christmases.

"I don't know how it is for you, but now that the parents are gone and the kids have left home it's not quite the same. We have a difficult time getting all the boys together. With one in St. Louis it's hard to be there on Christmas for him and the granddaughters. Other things have changed. It seems like when we were growing up you got the things you needed. If there was something special you wanted it had to wait until Christmas time. What makes Christmas such a special time is to be with loved ones, to love and to be loved. What mom and dad most wanted for Christmas was to have their family together, to share that love once again as a

family. I can understand that more now. Some of you probably do too. What do you want for Christmas?

"Valle asked me the other night if farming is a hobby or if I could really make money doing it. It was hard to know how to respond to that. It's hard to think of it as a hobby. I got audited once and they said I was a hobby farmer. I didn't like that very well. You can make money at it if you don't buy a new tractor or if you don't spend money on things you don't need like fertilizer and weed spray--- if you don't buy newspapers or have any healthcare. Last year John Deere had 0% financing on tractors. Now how can you pass that up? I had farmed almost 40 years and never had owned a new tractor. I remember my dad buying one when I was 4 or 5 years old. He bought a tractor and a whole line of equipment for around \$2000. I thought if my dad could afford a new tractor surely I could after 40 years. I found one that I thought was in my price range. I started thinking up ways I could justify it to Debbie. Well, I bought it. When I started using it, the things I needed it for it didn't work very well. My big old tractors worked better. That tractor wasn't what I needed. When I was a child I would be disappointed at Christmas if I didn't get that special toy or game that I wanted. The underwear and socks just weren't appreciated. I look back and realize that it was the clothes that I really needed. They had to last me until the next Christmas. Christmas was a time when we got school clothes. Easter was when you got the good stuff---the new pair of shoes and the suit. I still don't appreciate clothes as much as I should. I still want that latest scientific technology type thing. It's not always what I need. What gift do we really want for Christmas?

"This week I heard on the radio about letters children had written to Santa. A lot of the letters were asking for things other than toys.

They asked for things like-- I want my dad home,-- my brother brought home safely from Afghanistan,--I want my dad to get a job,-- I want my mom to get well. What do we want for Christmas? Do we need someone to come home safely from

the war---do we need someone to find a job---do we need someone to get well? What is important to us?

"I shared this scripture at prayer meeting a couple weeks ago. It's from II Peter 1: 2-7 *'Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue;*

*'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.'*

"God has given us the traits that we need to be happy and to be Christ-like. Through his holy spirit we have the ability to love, to share, to be patient, to persevere, to be kind, the ability to be good, to be as God wants us to be. We just have to do it.

"As a coach and a teacher I tell my kids that if they want to be good at something they have to practice. They have to practice those skills that are needed to be good. They can want to be good and I can want them to be good, but if they don't practice the skills and make them come automatically to them they won't be. We have to practice. If we want the gift of love we have to be more loving, and we have to practice being more loving. If we want to be more charitable we have to share more. If we want more self-control we have to practice that. More patience takes practice. More forgiveness takes practice. God wants us to build more qualities in our lives. What do we want for Christmas?

*"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

*Old things are done away, and all things have become new; therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect. ~ 3 Nephi 5:92*



*And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.*

*If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.*

*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

*And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever;*

*Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.' (John 14:12-17)*

“Jesus has already given us an important gift, a comforter to guide us and direct us, to help us to do his will—a comforter when we feel like we are alone or if we are in need. Is this important to us? As members of the Church of Jesus Christ we have been given the gift of the love of Jesus Christ. We know what joy this brings to us. It’s a gift we need to share.

“December 2<sup>nd</sup> was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my dad’s birth. On that day I was reminded again of how much I miss my father. Not only did I remember it, but my sisters called and I knew they were thinking about dad and how much they missed him. How often I think of how he and mom would have admired the latest calf crop. I can hear them saying, ‘This is the best calf crop ever.’ This new building project that we have up, dad would have looked at it, gone over it, and said we really needed that. He would have given us his approval of it. The new pond that was built this fall would have given him great satisfaction. It would have been so much fun to have been able to share my granddaughters with my folks.

“I also remember my dad when I start to have those pains in my elbows, knees, and my back. I probably didn’t realize how much pain he felt in his later years. I remember the first time I saw him in a wheelchair. It almost made me cry. The greatest gift we could ever receive was the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Because of his life, and because of his sacrifice he made for us, my dad is with him now. He’s probably talking to him about the calf crop, the new building, the new pond, and about the grandkids. My dad has been made whole again. The aches and pains are gone; the tremors that he suffered with are no more. What do we want for Christmas? I believe Jesus will soon return. I believe he will restore his

kingdom on this Earth. What a gift that will be.

“I am going to close with a reading. It is entitled ‘Christmas Time’:

*It’s Christmas time once more  
Let’s praise the king we adore  
Raise our hands, loudly sing  
Praise and honour to the King.*

*Jesus Christ is born today  
Our light, our life, our way!!  
Step back from the busy crowd  
Take a breath and say out loud.*

*All praise all honor all glory to you  
Saviour Jesus we love you  
The greatest gift to give this time  
Is to share this joy this Glorious time.*

*The most perfect gift to give  
Is the touch of HIS love, HIS life, you live  
More precious than expensive scents and gold  
Just capture the Christmas Spirit of old*

*Let the Spirit of Christmas fall all around  
Let The name of the King be the only sound  
Let everything Praise HIM so  
Jesus “we love you so”*

*Reach out, touch that lonely hand  
Let them feel you care, let them know  
You can make a difference, spread the glow  
Of our Savior’s love you show*

*LORD! fill us with your love, your light!!!  
Following you, life is so right  
Let your Spirit fall on us from above  
Let us all spread and spread “Christmas Love”*

*Singing Alleluia Christ is born  
Alleluia it’s Christmas morn  
Praise and Glory to the KING*

*The Angels of Christmas appear  
Oh how your Glorious Spirit is so near!!!  
Your Precious Spirit spreads Glory from above  
And YOUR LOVE, surrounds us, so awesome, such love.*

*Spread HIS LOVE to everyone  
Show HIS LOVE this day  
Let them know HE IS THE ONE!!!!  
WE LOVE, WE FOLLOW EVERYDAY!!!  
And raise your hands and proudly say,  
“WE LOVE YOU JESUS” HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!*

“To God be the Glory in Jesus name... AMEN. May God Bless You and keep you in HIS care.”

‘For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called *Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.* GOD BLESS YOU.”



## THE GIFT



Priest Ed Anderson

*Lamoni, Iowa*

December 26, 2010

Brother Sherman Phipps presided over the service and used the following from Psalm 31 and Isaiah 35 as a Call to Worship. *‘In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed; deliver me in thy righteousness. Bow down thine ears to me; deliver me speedily; be thou my strong rock, for a house of defense to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name’s sake, lead me, and guide me. (Psalm 31:1-3) Into thine hand I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. (5) I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy; for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities; (7) But I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said, Thou art my God. My times are in thy hand; deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; save me for thy mercies’ sake.’ (14-16) And our response and responsibility then is ‘Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a*





*recompense; he will come and save you.* (Isaiah 35:3-4)

Brother Anderson then began his remarks with, "I have selected a scripture from Romans. So far the songs and the service this morning have pointed to what I want to talk about. *'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God is.'* (Romans 12:1-2)

"When I knew I was going to speak, there's always the question of what am I going to talk about. You have to have some starting point. I normally don't put a title to my talks but I did this time. My title is 'The Gift.' I noticed that Cessaries Galusha's song was entitled the Holy Gift. If anybody has lost track of time, this is the day after Christmas which leaves you thinking about New Year's and about New Year's resolutions. In my life, once Christmas is past I start thinking about New Year's resolutions. I think, at least in my life, that I've left out the most important part and that is that Christ is alive. He was born a baby, the gift is here. The Wise Men took two years after Christ's birth to get where He lived. Our lives, our busyness, what we involve ourselves in, our focus should still be on The Gift. As I was saying, for two years at least three individuals were concentrating upon The Gift and getting where He was; worshipping and bringing gold, frankincense and myrrh to lay before the king.

"We need to start on that journey to The Gift. No matter how we reach The Gift - barefoot, with sandals, tennis shoes or dress shoes on; by horse, four-wheeler, car, on an airplane, or space shuttle if you work for the government, -we need to come and worship The Gift. Christmas is year round thing.

"When I was fourteen, my Christmas gift was a super ball and a bat. The super ball didn't last very long. My brother and I went out in the yard to play ball with my new super ball and bat. It was a very warm Christmas Day. He hit the super ball (he was probably 20 years old) and I never did find it. December 4<sup>th</sup> was the start of our Christmas. It was my brother's

birthday. We didn't go to the store to buy a Christmas tree. We would wander out into the pasture (which happened to be the neighbor's at the time) and get our Christmas tree. Then we would take it home to decorate. Our decorations were perennial. The paint was coming off the glass balls we used year after year. I'm surprised we didn't use them even when they were broken but we didn't, we threw them away. Our life was kind of like life during the depression. We went to the county and got our food, one winter at least. We got peanut butter in large tubs, flour, eggs, blocks of cheese and butter. The memories of my Christmases were of my Mom and Dad teaching us about Christ, teaching what The Gift really meant. I have a story and even though it's kind of long, I thought it was important to read, and I have a couple of points from the story that are maybe a little different than what you might expect.

*'Pa never had much compassion for the lazy or those who squandered their means and then never had enough for the necessities. But for those who were genuinely in need, his heart was a big as all outdoors. It was from him that I learned the greatest joy in life comes from giving, not from receiving.'*

*It was Christmas Eve 1881. I was fifteen years old and feeling like the world have caved in on me because there just hadn't been enough money to buy me the rifle that I'd wanted for Christmas. We did the chores early that night for some reason. I just figured Pa wanted a little extra time so we could read in the Bible.*

*After supper was over I took my boots off and stretched out in front of the fireplace and waited for Pa to get down the old Bible. I was still feeling sorry for myself and, to be honest, I wasn't in much of a mood to read scriptures. But Pa didn't get the Bible, instead he bundled up again and went outside. I couldn't figure it out because we had already done all the chores. I didn't worry about it long though, I was too busy wallowing in self-pity.*

*Soon Pa came back in. It was a cold clear night out and there was ice in his beard. "Come on, Matt," he said, "Bundle up good, it's cold out tonight." I was really upset then. Not only wasn't I getting the rifle for Christmas, now Pa was dragging me out in the cold, and for no earthly reason that I could see. We'd already done all the chores, and I couldn't*

*think of anything else that needed doing, especially not on a night like this. But I knew Pa was not very patient at one dragging one's feet when he'd told them to do something, so I got up and put my boots back on and got my cap, coat, and mittens. May gave me a mysterious smile as I opened the door to leave the house. Something was up, but I didn't know what.*

*Outside, I became even more dismayed. There in front of the house was the work team, already hitched to the big sled. Whatever it was we were going to do wasn't going to be a short, quick, little job. I could tell. We never hitched up this sled unless we were going to haul a big load. Pa was already up on the seat, reins in hand. I reluctantly climbed up beside him. The cold was already biting at me. I wasn't happy. When I was on, Pa pulled the sled around the house and stopped in front of the woodshed. He got off and I followed. "I think we'll put on the high sideboards," he said, "here, help me." The high sideboards? It had been a bigger job that I wanted to do with just the low sideboards on, but whatever it was we were going to do would be a lot bigger with the high sideboards on.*

*After we had exchanged the sideboards, Pa went into the woodshed and came out with an armload of wood - the wood I'd spent all summer hauling down from the mountain, and then all fall sawing into blocks and splitting. What was he doing? Finally I said something. "Pa," I asked, "what are you doing?"*

*"You been by the Widow Jensen's lately?" he asked. The Widow Jensen lived about two miles down the road. Her husband had died a year or so before and left her with three children, the oldest being eight. Sure, I'd been by, but so what? "Yea," I said, "Why?"*

*"I rode by just today," Pa said. "Little Jakey was out digging around in the woodpile trying to find a few chips. They're out of wood, Matt." That was all he said and then he turned and went back into the woodshed for another armload of wood. I followed him. We loaded the sled so high that I began to wonder if the horses would be able to pull it. Finally, Pa called a halt to our loading, then we went to the smoke house and Pa took down a big ham and a side of bacon. He handed them to me and told me to put them in the sled and wait. When he returned he was carrying a sack of flour over his right shoulder and a smaller sack of something*



in his left hand. "What's in the little sack?" I asked. Shoes, they're out of shoes. Little Jakey just had gunny sacks wrapped around his feet when he was out in the woodpile this morning. I got the children a little candy too. It just wouldn't be Christmas without a little candy."

We rode the two miles to Widow Jensen's pretty much in silence. I tried to think through what Pa was doing. We didn't have much by worldly standards. Of course, we did have a big woodpile, though most of what was left now was still in the form of logs that I would have to saw into block and split before we could use it. We also had meat and flour, so we could spare that, but I knew we didn't have any money, so why was Pa buying them shoes and candy? Really, why was he doing any of this? Widow Jensen had closer neighbors than us; it should haven't been our concern.

We came in from the blind side of the Jensen house and unloaded the wood as quietly as possible, then we took the meat and flour and shoes to the door. We knocked. The door opened a crack and a timid voice said, "Who is it?" "Lucas Miles, ma'am, and my son, Matt, could we come in for a bit?"

Widow Jensen opened the door and let us in. She had a blanket wrapped around her shoulders. The children were wrapped in another and were sitting in front of the fireplace by a very small fire that hardly gave off any heat at all. Widow Jensen fumbled with a match and finally lit the lamp.

"We brought you a few things, ma'am," Pa said and set down the sack of flour. I put the meat on the table. Then Pa handed her the sack that had the shoes in it. She opened it hesitantly and took the shoes out one pair at a time. There was a pair for her and one for each of the children – sturdy shoes, the best, shoes that would last. I watched her carefully. She bit her lower lip to keep it from trembling and then tears filled her eyes and started running down her cheeks. She looked up at Pa like she wanted to say something, but it wouldn't come out.

We brought a load of wood too, ma'am, Pa said. He turned to me and said, "Matt, go bring in enough to last awhile. Let's get that fire up to size and heat this place up." I wasn't the same person when I went back out to bring in the wood. I had a big lump in my throat and as much as I hate to admit it, there

were tears in my eyes too. In my mind I kept seeing those three kids huddled around the fireplace and their mother standing there with tears running down her cheeks with so much gratitude in her heart that she couldn't speak.

My heart swelled within me and a joy that I'd never known before, filled my soul. I had given at Christmas many times before, but never when it has made so much difference. I could see we were literally saving the lives of these people.

I soon had the fire blazing and everyone's spirits soared. The kids started giggling when Pa handed them each a piece of candy and Widow Jensen looked on with a smile that probably hadn't crossed her face for a long time. She finally turned to us. "God bless you," she said. "I know the Lord has sent you. The children and I have been praying that he would send one of his angels to spare us."

In spite of myself, the lump returned to my throat and the tears welled up in my eyes again. I'd never thought of Pa in those exact terms before, but after Widow Jensen mentioned it I could see that it was probably true. I was sure that a better man than Pa had never walked the earth. I started remembering all the times he had gone out of his way for Ma and me, and many others. The list seemed endless as I thought on it.

Pa insisted that everyone try on the shoes before we left. I was amazed when they all fit and I wondered how he had known what sizes to get. Then I guessed that if he was on an errand for the Lord that the Lord would make sure he got the right sizes.

Tears were running down Widow Jensen's face again when we stood up to leave. Pa took each of the kids in his big arms and gave them a hug. They clung to him and didn't want us to go. I could see that they missed their Pa, and I was glad that I still had mine.

At the door Pa turned to Widow Jensen and said, "The Mrs. wanted me to invite you and the children over for Christmas dinner tomorrow. The turkey will be more than the three of us can eat, and a man can get cantankerous if he has to eat turkey for too many meals. We'll be by to get you about eleven. It'll be nice to have some little ones around again. Matt, here, hasn't been little for quite a spell." I was the youngest. My two brothers and two sisters had all married and had moved away.

Widow Jensen nodded and said, "Thank you, Brother Miles. I don't have to say, May the Lord bless you, I know for certain that he will."

Out on the sled I felt a warmth that came from deep within and I didn't even notice the cold. When we had gone a ways, Pa turned to me and said, "Matt, I want you to know something. Your ma and me have been tucking a little money away her and there all year so we could buy that rifle for you, but we didn't have quite enough. Then yesterday a man who owed me a little money from years back came by to make things square. Your Ma and me were real excited, thinking that now we could get you that rifle, and I started into town this morning to do just that, but on the way I saw little Jakey out scratching in the woodpile with his feet wrapped in those gunny sacks and I knew what I had to do. Son, I spent the money for shoes and a little candy for those children. I hope you understand."

I understood, and my eyes became wet with tears again. I understood very well, and I was so glad Pa had done it. Now the rifle seemed very low on my list of priorities. Pa had given me a lot more. He had given me the look on Widow Jensen's face and the radiant smiles of her three children.

For the rest of my life, whenever I saw any of the Jensens, or split a block of wood, I remembered, and remembering brought back that same joy I felt riding home beside Pa that night. Pa had given me much more than a rifle that night, he had given me the best Christmas of my life." (Author unknown)

The Gift is for everyone. When I worked for the government and we lived in Indiana and Wisconsin off and on, I did a

### **Fun Fact:**

Mt. Ayr was named after the birthplace of the poet, Robert Burns: Ayr, Scotland ('Inbhir Air' in Gaelic). While Ayr was founded in 1205 by King William 'the Lion', Mt. Ayr was founded in 1855, with the 'Mount' added because it was thought to be the highest elevation between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers.





The Hebrew New Year 5772 begins at sundown on September 28, 2011 and is called Rosh Hashanah (head of the year). Also called the Feast of Trumpets, it begins with the blowing of the shofar, a trumpet made of a ram's horn.

lot of traveling. When I was traveling I would drive by cemeteries. Have any of you ever gone by a cemetery and couldn't resist stopping? I would stop and look around. I would look at the headstones and would think that Christ died for these individuals. The Gift was for them. I would look on the headstones. You would find the little ones with no names on them except for an "S" or "D". A baby not named or at least the family did not have enough money to write the name on it. It was just a son or daughter. In those cemeteries there are headstones for a lot of children two and under and a lot of young mothers who probably died in childbirth ages 24 to 35. There were very few headstones for older people but The Gift was for them. They had run their race. The Gift is also for us.

The event, the birth of Christ, His life and His living now, everything we do is dependent on this Gift. If you go to the store, your decision comes back to The Gift. I'm hoping everybody is with me here. Accepting and rejecting The Gift affects your decision of what store to go to and what to buy. Obedience and disobedience also plays into The Gift. Those four things, accepting, rejecting, obedience and disobedience guide every decision you make. What I mean is some of those things like obedience and disobedience could be related to stewardship. We talked a little bit about stewardship in Rob's class. It takes a decision- a daily reflection of The Gift. I believe that our lives are guided by The Gift, acceptance, rejection, obedience and disobedience. We can accept The Gift but yet be disobedient. We can reject The Gift but yet be obedient.

His spirit is working with those who have sometimes rejected The Gift, those who have refused to be baptized even though they have known the gospel and yet rejected it. Yet they can be obedient to the leadings of the spirit. I remember we had someone come and visit our house one day and my Mom was embarrassed to death. The person who came to visit sat in one of our fluffy chairs. The sun was shining in the window and he kept pounding his arm on the arm of the chair. Every time he did there was a puff of dust. We got all of our neighbor's second-hand furniture when he

bought new furniture. When our family was down, this neighbor provided meat for us. He never accepted the gospel. My Dad took seriously the commission to tell your neighbor. I don't think there was a house in the neighborhood where he didn't take the 'Go Ye and Teach' slides. He had taken the slides to this individual but he chose never to be baptized.

I have enjoyed this Christmas. We have had all of the kids home. This is a good memory and God has blessed us that we were able to share and bond as a family. As a response to The Gift we gathered and we worshiped. We didn't necessarily talk of Christ but we don't have to talk about Christ in everything we do. We have to be willing to step outside of ourselves and be bold about what we do. The Gift is nothing to be ashamed about. What's the worst thing that could happen for being bold? That somebody would laugh at you? That's happened before and it wasn't about The Gift either so why would I care if they laughed at me about The Gift or not? We seem to be reluctant to put ourselves out on the line for our beliefs for the most important thing in this world. He is still alive. Have we gotten on our horses? Have we gotten on our four-wheelers? Have we gotten on our tractors? One way to come and see The Gift is to come and worship before Him and bring our gifts, our talents. Multiply the talents and create more of them. Isn't that what the scriptures tell us to do to multiply our talents and lay them before Him? All of the decisions that we make tie into The Gift, whether we go to school and better ourselves and become more employable. The decision that we make about the money we earn or the profession we choose can better the world or can make it worse depending on rejection and disobedience. Hopefully we are being obedient and hopefully we are accepting The Gift and hopefully all of our decisions are tuned to bring others to The Gift.

I don't have a tractor but I have a horse (Mustang) that I can get into and whichever direction I go by the leadings of the spirit, I can take the message, The Gift. You can put on your sandals, your tennis shoes, your track shoes or your snow skis whatever you want to wear, or whatever

you want to get on and be about His business. Not only do we have all of these options to use to get there, we can get on the internet or on the phone. Probably seventy-five percent of you have a phone on you right now or at home. Stand on the rooftops to tell others about The Gift, and if we don't have any other way, let's get a tin can with a string and share the gospel. Let's bring our gift to Him and worship Him and worship and fellowship with one another and unite in sharing to make the world a better place, to make individual lives, including ours, better."

✦ Following Brother Anderson's message, Brother Phipps left us with the following remarks, "I think what Ed has shared with us this morning was interesting to me because as I thought about this morning, I said to myself, "OK now we have spent some time celebrating Christ's birth but like Ed, I was thinking what do we do with that, where do we go from here? How's that going to affect us in the year that lies ahead, in our families and here in our congregation. There are some things yet that the Lord wants to do with us. I would say as a people, but I want to be careful with that because I don't want to pretend that we are God's people just because we are blessed. Somehow that makes us special but I want for us as a congregation to be God's people. I want for us to learn to be truly humble and repentant and to be obedient so that He can use us, not so we are something special but so He can use us as Ed has shared to go wherever it is He gives the opportunity to go and to always be sensitive to His presence so that somehow we can be an instrument in His hands that other people might know of this Gift too. We haven't accomplished what we have been sent to accomplish. Zion is yet to be.

As I was getting ready this morning, Ed, I read a bunch of those scriptures about Zion and how it is no closer nor any further away than our spiritual condition which I think simply means, do you want it or not? If you want it, I'll give it to you but do you want it? Are we willing to accept The Gift like Ed was talking about and really do something with it, not just for ourselves but for our neighbors, friends and



family, people we don't even know but who the Lord brings into our lives?

I appreciate, Ed, what you shared and I think it is really important that we consider what he has said because as a congregation we're looking at a new year and we need to decide what we are going to do with this New Year. Hopefully it will be something worthwhile and we won't end up like this epilogue that was read in class this morning where we decide to abandon the very things that Christ has called us to be and to do just so we can fit in. We don't need to fit in, we need to be up on the rooftops shouting out the gospel."



**December Caroling and Sledding Parties.**







# January 2011



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

## Sunday Schedule

DATE	JAN 2nd	JAN 9th	JAN 16th	JAN 23rd	JAN 30	FEB 6
<b>SPEAKING</b>	Elder Steven Smith	Elder Gordon Winkler	Seventy Ron Smith	High Priest Rob Rolfe	Sharing Service	Elder Alan Smith
<b>PRESIDING</b>	High Priest Rob Rolfe	Elder Alan Smith	Elder Steven Smith	Elder Steve Cunningham	High Priest Rob Rolfe	High Priest Sherman Phipps
<b>PIANIST</b>	Cessaries Galusha	Pat Bolingbroke	Jan Jordison	Pat Bolingbroke	Jan Jordison	Pat Bolingbroke
<b>SPECIAL MUSIC</b>	Alan & Valle Smith	Michael Jordison	Ron & Di Smith	Amy Friend	Sharing Service	Rob Rolfe
<b>FAMILY DEVOTIONS</b>	Ron & Di Smith	Steve Smith	Gordon Winkler	Ed Anderson	Jim Barber	Sue Beck
<b>GREETERS</b>	Rodney & Debbie Bastow	Sue Beck	Pat Bolingbroke	Jan Jordison	Steve Cunningham	Michael Jordison
<b>CUSTODIANS</b>	Jim Barber	Rodney Bastow	Jordison Family	Sherman Phipps	Rob Rolfe	Bob Rowland
<b>SUNDAY EVENING</b>	Rob & Lynda Rolfe's	Bob Rowland's	Ron Smith's	Steve Smith's	Rob Rolfe's	Bob Rowland's

## Wednesday Prayer Service Schedule

DATE	JAN 5th	JAN 12th	JAN 19th	JAN 26th	FEB 2nd	
<b>LOCATION</b>	Ron Smith's (Lamoni)	Steve Smith's (Lamoni)	Gordon Winklers (Mt. Ayr)	Jan Jordison's (Leon)	Rob Rolfe's (Lamoni)	
<b>PRESIDING</b>	Ron Smith	Sherman Phipps	Gordon Winkler	Rob Rolfe	Steve Smith	

## Special Events & Activities

**Sunday January 2nd:** Priesthood Meeting at 8:30AM - Potluck following Communion service

**January 8th:** Church Service & Work Day from 8:30 til it's done. Where: Mount Ayr Record News  
Removing and replacing fiberglass insulation in the ceiling. Bring long sleeves, gloves and helpful hearts. Cloth masks & a lunch will be provided. The more help, the quicker it'll go.

**January 14th-16:** Fasting Weekend. 6PM Friday thru 6PM Sunday. Break our fast at Sunday evening gathering.

**Youth Activities:** None scheduled so far for January. See Tanner Rowland or Steve Smith for suggestions.

**\*Notes:** To reduce scheduling conflicts, **please** let Sherman or Linda know prior to 15th of the month if you will not be able to serve on a particular day. Also, please remember to find your own substitutes if you cannot fulfill your scheduled responsibility.

**Birthday's this month:** James Clisby, Corey Akers, Orlin Thomas, Patrick Bastow, Todd Thomas, Gable Galusha, Jowett Bastow

**Anniversary's this month:** Ed & Diane Anderson (Jan. 1), Michael & Julia Jordison (Jan. 7)





**Church of Jesus Christ  
Mount Ayr Restoration Branch**

c/o Cheryl Phipps  
15581 270th St  
Lamoni, IA 50140

**New Year's Eve Party**

Over twenty gathered at Rob and Linda Rolfe's home Friday, December 31st to bring in the new year together. Games were played and snacks munched as a few brave souls made it all the way to Midnight.

George Galusha, aka-Eddie Felson (played by Paul Newman in 1961's "The Hustler") proved his prowess with a cue stick as he mowed down the competition. Watch out George, Ben has vowed redemption next year!



 CHURCH OF JESUS

CHRIST - MT AYR RESTORATION BRANCH JANUARY

**Thoughts**

**"120"**

That's the number of meals that you might be missing out on. Brother Rob Rolfe has often said that one of the things he appreciates in the scriptures is the fact that after Jesus' resurrection, He always seems to be eating. If Jesus likes to eat... well it can't be bad thing for us either. And so in this branch of the church of Jesus Christ we take that 'not-in-so-many-words principle' of food and fellowship to heart. Consider this:

- At least one potluck on the first Sunday of the month (12)
- Sunday evening get-togethers (52)
- Wednesday night prayer service snacks (52)
- Special potlucks, Holiday dinners, New Year's Eve Snacks, etc (4+...)

One might be tempted to say that if the Spirit won't fill you, maybe our food will. We certainly like to eat together it seems.

But it's not all about the food. As great as

it might be (we have a lot of good cooks), the truth is that we enjoy our fellowship together; and that's what holds this congregation together. We might disagree on a few things now and then, perhaps rather passionately at times, but the fact is we love one another - with all our quiriness and stumbles on life's way. In his sermon Rodney quoted Jesus' counsel, that if we loved God we would keep His commandments (page 10). One very important commandment was to "love thy neighbor as thyself". That's one of the things we are trying to do at Mt. Ayr. Eating together in fellowship helps to draw us in as a family.

We're not perfect, but maybe with your help we'd get closer to that goal. If you don't have a church home we'd love to have you come and worship with us as we try to live out the Gospel of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. And if where you live won't allow for that why not consider joining us on the days that we fast as a congregation. The Spiritual food gained is actually more filling and lasting to your soul. Either way, the invitation is there!

**OFFICERS**

**PASTOR/PRESIDING ELDER:**  
High Priest Sherman Phipps  
Elder Alan Smith (Counselor)  
Elder Gordon Winkler (Counselor)

**BISHOP'S AGENT**  
Elder Gordon Winkler  
Cheryl Phipps (Stewardship Coord.)

**HOME MINISTRY**  
Priest Rodney Bastow  
Priest Ed Anderson

**SECRETARY/RECORDER**  
Julia Jordison

**FELLOWSHIP COORDINATOR**  
Jan Jordison

**WORSHIP COORDINATOR**  
Linda Winkler

**MUSIC DIRECTOR**  
Jan Jordison

**WOMEN'S LEADER**  
Linda Barber

**YOUTH LEADER**  
Steven Smith

**SERVICE PROJECTS**  
Kent Clisby

**HISTORIAN**  
Linda Winkler

**NEWSLETTER**  
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