

Christmas in Pennsylvania--Vol. 9, No. 1--January 2, 2015

Christmas anywhere is special, but being at home with family and friends is the best of all. This year, as in the past, Linda and I were blessed to celebrate the holiday season in central PA where most of our family resides. The festivities for us this year began the Thursday before Christmas in Boonsboro, MD where we attended a noontime house party. The combination of food, fellowship, and good-natured fun, not to mention the colorful and interesting decorations, made the occasion especially delightful.



Eleanor, our hostess, restores period dollhouses and collects antique children's toys. She also displays at this time of year a number of classic crèches from Italy, Germany, France, etc. Visiting her home is like experiencing the delights and joys of Christmas past all at once. Every piece is special and has a story, but the total is beyond comprehension. I like to immerse myself in the overall experience as there's no way to see everything in an afternoon.

The next couple days had three priorities: 1) Get the cards in the mail; 2) Write the annual family newsletter; and 3) Deck the halls, inside and out! Of course these tasks always take more time than one thinks they should, but by December 24th they were all completed. We prefer to create our own card, so this year we chose a plate I made as a Christmas gift for Linda in 1972 to use as our illustration. It depicts the holy birth in the stable at Bethlehem.





Linda produces our newsletter, so she may disagree with this next statement, but I think the decorating outside and in is the most intensive preparation task. It includes the live tree (No artificial tree will do!) and all the exterior greens and interior trimmings. I always think this part of our Christmas celebration ties the past to the present. Each ornament and decoration comes with a memory, like our miniature town which includes houses that graced the tree skirts in my mother's home and our own. I particularly enjoy setting out our crèche collection which includes examples from around the world. They remind me of the international scope of the good news announced to the shepherds.



Crèche from China



Mexican pottery nativity scene



Olive wood crèche from Israel



Doubling Gap Church on Christmas Eve

A traditional part of Christmas present is the evening candlelight service on the 24th. We attended at Doubling Gap First Church this year where our daughter Emily goes regularly. This is not a complaint, but serving the CGGC as we do, Linda and I have no church home, no one place where we regularly worship. We miss having a community. Looking ahead to Christmas future we anticipate settling in to a local congregation and being part of a home church once again. After two decades of serving in an administrative capacity I have an even greater regard for the merits of the local church.



Pastor Don and Tammy Snyder light the Advent wreath on Christmas Eve



Christmas morning with the Rosenberry family

The Sunday after Christmas we returned to Doubling Gap for the morning service. Pastor Don and Tammy Snyder were away on vacation, so we got to hear Rick Egolf preach. That afternoon Linda and I led the chapel service at the Churches of God Home in Carlisle (pictured below).



Rick Egolf preaches at Doubling Gap



We've done this for several years now on the last Sunday of the year. This was the second Christmas since mother's passing, and I noticed others missing too whom I'd seen last year. I had to think what better place to be for Christmas than with the Church Triumphant. And yet, as I shared with the residents, it's essential that we, the Church Militant, keep sharing the good news of Jesus' birth, message, death, resurrection, ascension and return.



A new kitchen shelf--Ed's Christmas gift to Linda



One of the things I like to do during my holiday time is to watch the 1984 version of Dickens' "A Christmas Carol" that features George C. Scott in the role of Scrooge. In my opinion it's the best dramatization of this Victorian classic. After a night of revelations when confronted with his gravestone, Scrooge repents his disdain for Christmas and Christian benevolences pledging to keep Christmas past, present, and future while not forgetting the lessons they each teach. So may it be for us all, and in the words of Tiny Tim, "May God bless us everyone!"

ONE Mission together,
Ed
Soli Deo Gloria!

Operation Christmas Child Shoebox List

Region	Church	# of Boxes	Volunteers
ERC:	Brunswick First	42	
	Camp Hill	100	
	Carlisle	121	
	Central Manor	133	
	Country Meadows Retirement Community	60	
	Doubling Gap	101	
	Eberly's Mill		X
	Elizabethtown First	156	X
	Germantown	98	X
	Hanover First	1009	
	Kennedy's Valley	110	
	Mechanicsburg	104	
	Mt. Holly	20	
	Mt. Pleasant	60	
	Newburg	228	
	Newville First	252	
	Shippensburg First	480	
	Shiremanstown First	77	
	Swatara	41	
GRC:	Catalyst	75	
	College First	253	X
	Mt. Carmel	100	
	Mt. Tabor		X
	Pathway Community	26	
	Shawnee	25	
	Union Chapel	12	
	Vanlue Community	8	
ARC:	Buchanan	300	
	Center Bethel	352	X
	Garman	550	
	Indian Head	146	
	Kennerdell	47	
	Orchard Ridge First	314	
MRC:	Berreman & Pleasant Valley	240	
	The Crossover	924	X
	Mt. Pleasant	121	
	Zanesville		X
Total		6685	