

Amwell Echoes

**EARLY WINTER BLESSINGS
2002**

Volume 2 Issue 8

Amwell Church of the Brethren
40 Sandbrook-Headquarters Road
Sergeantsville, N.J. 08557

PHONE:
(908) 237-1454

FAX:
(609) 397-9445

Pastor:
(609) 397-4842

E-MAIL:
contact@amwell.org

We're on the Web!
See us at:

www.amwell.org

Leadership at Amwell

- **Pastor Robert DiSalvio**
(609) 397-4842
- **Deacon Chairman George Hettman**
(609) 466-3554
- **Deacon John Caimano**
(908) 284-2258
- **Deacon Robert Hughes**
(732) 780-3398
- **Deacon Jeff Kiskurno**
(215) 968-5584

From The Pastor's Pen . . .

by Robert DiSalvio, Pastor at Amwell COB



GOD'S LEADING HAND

2003 is just weeks away. It marks the 270th birthday of the Amwell Church of the Brethren. What a rich heritage. Preparations are underway to mark the year with a series of events looking back on our history and thank God for His hand of Provision and Protection. We will also be looking forward to God's vision for the days ahead.

Surely we stand at a pivotal point in history. The world around us is changing rapidly, information (for what it's worth) is expanding by the minute.

The church in America wrestles with how best to communicate the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The challenge is not the Gospel... it doesn't change! The challenge is how to communicate the Gospel. To me, Communication means 'ensuring understanding'. We know people learn in different ways... some by hearing, others by seeing, still others by touch. God has opened a door for me to preach using multiple modalities. Here's what I mean:

As I prayed for wisdom and vision to lead Amwell into the 21st century. He showed me that power point was a way to reach visual learners.

I began preparation by putting sermon notes on the back of our new bulletin with spaces for you to fill in missing words.

I never 'pushed' for the power point system to be a budget item nor made a call for the congregation to donate to procure the system.

But God was already at work - in a casual conversation over a church lunch I explained my vision to a new friend of Amwell. Within a few weeks he anonymously donated the complete system to the church.

(Continued pg 8)



BLANCHE'S CORNER ...by *Blanche Carl*

'Twas the Night before Jesus Came

Revelation 19:11-16

'Twas the night before Jesus came and all through the house
Not a creature was praying, not one in the house.
Their Bibles were lain on the shelf without care
In hope that Jesus would not come there.

The children were dressing to crawl into bed,
Not once ever kneeling or bowing a head.
And Mom in her rocker with baby on her lap
Was watching the Late Show while I took a nap.

When out of the East there arose such a clatter,
I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter.
Away to the window I flew like a flash
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash!

When what to my wondering eyes should appear
But Angels proclaiming that Jesus was here
With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray
I knew in a moment this must be THAT DAY!

The light of His face made me cover my head
It was Jesus! Returning just like He said.
And though I possessed worldly wisdom and wealth
I cried when I saw Him in spite of myself.

In the Book of Life which He held in His Hand
Was written the name of every saved man.
He spoke not a word as He searched for my name;
When He said "It's not here" my head hung in shame.

The people whose names had been written with love
He gathered to take to the Father above.
With those who were ready He rose without a sound
While all the rest were left standing around.

I fell to my knees, but it was too late;
I had waited too long and thus sealed my fate.
I stood and I cried as they rose out of sight;
Oh, if only I had been ready tonight.

In the words of this poem the meaning is clear;
The coming of Jesus is drawing near.
There's only one life and when comes the last call
We'll find that the Bible was true after all!



MEET ...THE REASON FOR THE SEASON!!!

Do you know he cried? When?

He never traveled very far in his life

He was a Jewish carpenter by trade

His first miracle was -water to wine

He had an inner circle - Peter- Andrew- James -John

**His ministry didn't start until he was about 30.years old.....and only last
about 3 years....**

His prayers were so intense that they lasted for several hours at times

He was tempted in person by Satan

**He humiliated Peter at the last Super, because he loved him most.(He asked
him that question as well, Peter Do you Love me?)**

**He loved long intense conversations and he loved to be alone as well, often
he fell into deep periods of rest even during storms**

**He felt the touch of a leper and he loved the smiles of children, the touch
of the ill, and the presence of the poor**

**He taught the Disciples to Pray in Matthew.....many call it the
Lord's prayer, but it was the Disciples' prayer**

He loved long meals with his friends

Do you know Jesus? Do you know your Savior?

✝ Missionary Outreach ✝

Amwell Church of the Brethren supports many Missionaries. Not only do these people and organizations count on our financial support they greatly depend on our prayers and encouragement. Please send them a card or letter to let them know you care.

**Rev. Leon & Lorraine Dillinger
C/O UFM International
Box 306
Bala-Cynwyd, PA 19004**

**Rev. & Mrs. Edwin Martinez
C/O OC International
PO Box 36900
Colorado Springs, CO 80936**

**Rev. & Mrs. Benjamin Meney
Box 87
Williamsburg, KY 40769**

**Mrs. Ruby Simek
Box 71
Ferguson, KY 42533**

**Word of Life
Dave & Jane Van -
Camp
1233 Meryln St
Lakeland, FL 33813**

*THE GREAT COMMISSION MEANS
YOU (AND ME)*



**Word of Life
Dave Huizing
401 N. Howell Ave.
Riverhead, NY 11901**

Indonesian Extremists Warn Against Christmas Celebrations

(BP) -- Christmas may be canceled in Indonesia's Maluku Islands if Muslim extremists there have their way. Threats are circulating against the use of Christmas bells or candles in the islands, particularly on Ambon, Baptist Press reported. Anyone who displays such symbols of Christmas or Christianity reportedly will be subject to punishment.

Muslim radicals seem to have stepped up their efforts to rid Indonesia of Christianity. Tensions are heightened in part because a major Muslim holiday occurs just three days after Christmas this year. As many as 500,000 Christians have been driven from their homes and more than 4,000 have been killed by Muslim "jihad" paramilitary warriors who have publicly declared they will push all Christians off the island or kill them. The fighting has forced aid organizations to leave. Food, clothing and medical care are in short supply. Christian leaders in Ambon have said they feel the world is ignoring the crisis.

Recently Muslim fighters targeted a water taxi that was transporting 12 people. All 12 passengers were shot. No information is available on their conditions.

This attack follows a raid by jihad warriors on a village in Maluku during the week of Nov. 27. 50 people, both Muslims and Christians, were killed in the bloody attack. The Associated Press reported that a national police spokesman confirmed the killings, while local government officials said they had no information about the clash.

In addition, Muslim extremists forced 700 Indonesian Christians to recant their faith under threat of death. Ninety-three Christians were murdered after they refused to convert to Islam. Jihad warriors also blocked hundreds of Christians from boarding rescue ships waiting to take them to safety.

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ABSENCE MAKES THE HEART GROW FONDER

Helen Marauda
140 West Pennsylvania Ave
Downingtown, PA 19335
610-269-7462



Christian Emery
29 Timber East Drive
Apt 201
Lynchburg, VA 24502
804-237-8958



Mike & Zina Simon
4325 Mule Deer Trail
Darby, Montana 59829

"HE DIDN'T SEE JESUS"

Read John 12:21

A little boy started to cry one Sunday while leaving church. "What's wrong?" asked the preacher.

"He said he didn't see Jesus," answered his father.

Does anyone ever come to your church and go away without seeing Jesus? Does anyone ever come into your presence without feeling the presence of Jesus?

Your responsibility, as a born again believer, is to reveal the loveliness of the Lord by your life and lips. In touching your life, others should receive a lift.

One said of Phillips Brooks, "When I met him I was looking down. When I left him, I was looking up."

Prayer: Father, I thank Thee for Thy salvation. Give me the love that was in Thy heart; and the purity that was in Thy soul; that in seeing me, others will want Thy salvation: in Christ's name.

Amen

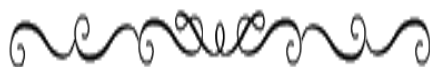
**From the Recipe File of ... MARGARET HUGHES
LITE TURKEY BURRITOS**

- 1 pound ground turkey
- 2 (7 ounce) cans spicy tomato sauce
- 1 (15.25 ounce) can whole kernel corn, drained
- 1/2 small onion, diced
- 1 (16 ounce) can fat-free refried beans
- 1 (16 ounce) container fat free sour cream
- 3/4 cup shredded reduced-fat Cheddar cheese
- 6 (10 inch) flour tortillas



Directions

- 1 In a large skillet over medium high heat, brown ground turkey. Stir in tomato sauce, corn and onion. Reduce heat to medium and let simmer, stirring occasionally, until liquids reduce (about 20 minutes).
- 2 In a separate medium skillet, heat beans over medium-low heat. Prepare sour cream and cheese for sprinkling into burritos. One by one, heat tortillas over stove burner for 1 to 2 minutes, flipping a few times. Top with beans, then meat mixture, then sour cream and cheese. Fold over and serve while still warm



YOUR DEACONS DESIRE TO COMMUNICATE MORE DIRECTLY WITH EACH MEMBER OF THE CONGREGATION. WE HAVE THEREFORE ASSIGNED OUR DEACONS TO THE CONGREGATION BY ALPHABETICAL BLOCKS AS FOLLOWS. DO FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ANY DEACON

A-G	George Hettman Sr	609-466-3554
H-M	John Caimano	908-284-2258
N-S	Jeff Kiskurno	215-968-5584
T-Z	Robert Hughes	732-780-3398





Artifact Could Be Earliest Relating to Existence of Jesus

By JOHN NOBLE WILFORD

An inscription in stone, found in or near Jerusalem and written in a language and script of 2,000 years ago, bears the words "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus. This could well be the earliest artifact ever found relating to the existence of Jesus, a French scholar has concluded in an analysis of the inscription being published October in the magazine *Biblical Archaeology Review*.

If the inscription is authentic and indeed refers to Jesus of Nazareth, it would be the earliest known documentation of Jesus outside the Bible. Scholars are reacting with caution, calling the find important and tantalizing but saying it will probably be impossible to confirm a definite link between the inscription and any of the central figures in the founding of Christianity.

Fraud cannot be ruled out, they said, though the cursive style of the script and a microscopic examination of the etched surface seemed to diminish suspicions. An investigation by the Geological Survey of Israel found no evidence of modern pigments, scratches by modern cutting tools or other signs of tampering.

Although James (Jacob or Ya'akov), Joseph (Yosef) and Jesus (Yeshua) were common names of that time and place, it would have been highly unusual to have them appear in the combination and kinship order found in the inscription.

The words, in Aramaic, "Ya'akov bar Yosef akhui diYeshua," were carved on a 20-inch-long limestone burial box, known as an ossuary, which once presumably held the bones of a man named James who died in the first century AD.

Several times the New Testament mentions that Jesus had a brother named James, who became leader of the nascent Christian community in Jerusalem after the crucifixion. This James was the first of the apostles to whom the resurrected Jesus is supposed to have appeared. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus recorded that James was executed by stoning around AD 63.

This James could have been one of many Jameses. The rest of the inscription significantly narrows the possibilities. First, in the common practice, his father is identified, in this case a Joseph. Rarely would a brother of the deceased have been added to the inscription, unless the brother was prominent. James the apostle might have wanted to proclaim one last time his kinship with Jesus.

Dr. André Lemaire, a researcher at the Sorbonne in Paris, son of a respected specialist on inscriptions of the biblical period, calculated the statistical probability of the three names' occurring in such a combination as extremely slim. Probably over two generations in first-century Jerusalem, no more than 20 people could have been called "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus". Few of them might have been buried in inscribed ossuaries.

In his article he acknowledged that "nothing in this ossuary inscription clearly confirms the identification" of this James as the one known in Christian tradition.



Before this, *Biblical Archaeology Review* reported, the earliest mention of Jesus was in a piece of papyrus containing a fragment of the Gospel by John, written in Greek in about A. D. 125. Most of the existing early texts for the New Testament date from 300 or more years after the time of Jesus. The first Gospel, by Mark, is thought to have been composed around the year 70.

Parishioner's Potpourri



December, 2002

- Morning Star Craft Group Meets Every Tuesday @ 9:30 AM
- Every Wednesday: Dessert & Bible Study starting 7 PM.
- Olympians and Teen Youth Group Friday Evening
(See Michelle DiSalvio)
- Men's Prayer Breakfast Every Other Saturday 7:30 AM @Amwell Church of the Brethren **OR** First Brethren Church of Sergeantsville (See Jeff Kiskurno)
- Saturday Morning Women's Bible Study (See Carol Hettman for Time & Place)
- 5th Busy Bees @ 7:30 PM In The Annex
- 19th Thursday Noon Group @ 11 AM (Place TBA)
- 15th Mission Sunday
- 15th Children's Christmas Program at 10:45 AM
- 22nd KLEIN MEETING HOUSE SERVICE (also) Evening Christmas Caroling (Meet at church)
- 31st New Year's Eve Night Watch at Church Annex

January, 2003

- Morning Star Craft Group Meets Every Tuesday @ 9:30 AM
- Dessert & Bible Study Wednesdays 7 PM.
- Olympians and Teen Youth Group Friday Evening (See Michelle DiSalvio)
- Men's Prayer Breakfast @ 7:30 AM Every other Saturday at Amwell Church of the Brethren **OR** First Brethren Church of Sergeantsville (See Jeff Kiskurno for schedule)
- Women's Bible Study Every Other Saturday Morning (See Carol Hettman for Time and Place)
- 2nd Busy Bees @ 7:30 PM In The Annex
- 19th Mission Sunday
- 16th Thursday Noon Group @ 11 AM Place TBD

A BRETHREN PASSING

(Taken from NEWSLINE at www.brethren.org)

Dean Meyers, a member of the Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren, was shot and killed Oct. 9 at a Manassas gas station. Police later linked the murder with a series of sniper attacks in the Washington, D.C., metro area, according to CNN.

Meyers, 53, worked for an engineering firm in Manassas. Originally from Pennsylvania, he was baptized in the Manassas congregation in 1977. He was later transferred and worked in Gaithersburg, Md., then was transferred back to Manassas three years ago but continued to live in Gaithersburg.

He continued to periodically attend worship at Manassas, however, and was there recently, according to pastor Fred Swartz. Meyers also played on the church softball team. "He was as nice a guy as you'd want to meet," Swartz said. He said that the church community there had been "deeply affected" by the shooting.

Meyers, who was single and had no children, had finished several hours of overtime at his job before stopping for gas Wednesday. The attack occurred at about 8:15 p.m.

Funeral services were held Oct. 19 at the Coventry Church of the Brethren in Pottstown, Pa., where Meyers' brother Larry and sister-in-law Donna, a member of the Atlantic Northeast District board, attend.

"It's really a severe blow to the family, really startling," Coventry pastor Sandford Christophel said. "It's quite a challenge as far as trying to do a funeral."

The shooting came just days before the Mid-Atlantic District conference, held at Manassas Oct. 11-12. The church received some calls asking about safety, but the conference went on as scheduled

From The Pastor's Pen

(continued from page 1)



AMWELL CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN COMMUNICATION SERVICES



**Carrying the Gospel as
far as the World can
Receive It**

We are on the Internet at:
www.amwell.org

The Church of the Brethren
Website:

<http://www.brethren.org/>

We also broadcast sermons on:

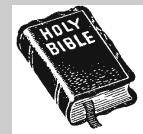
WDVR 89.7
Each Sunday at 7:30 A.M.

We Sponsor the Ravi Zacharias
radio programs:

"Let My People Think"

and

"Adventures in Odyssey "



**But how would we get Praise Hymns,
Announcements, and the Sermon Outline into
the system and then displayed in a beautiful and
interesting and reverent manner? No Problem -
God had already prepared Steve Harclerode with
all the skills to make this vision a reality.**

**Do you see those as coincidences? I see these as
God incidents. His affirmation and confirmation
that our ministry of Hugs, Music, Praise,
Prayers, and Preaching of His word to a new,
complex, seeking and lost generation is right on
God's track.**

**It is imperative that we stay on our knees in
prayer seeking God's wisdom, listening to the
Voice of the Holy Spirit so that God can use us to
reach those outside the walls of Amwell.**

Paul said it this way:

**"... I am made all things to all men, that I might
by all means save some" I Corinthians 9:22**

Answers to Puzzle

NO EARLY PEEKING!

- 1) Shepherds
- 2) Cattle Shepherds
- 3) Cattle Shepherds
- 4) cateshehrdste
- 5) thecaeshrdste
- 6) thecahameshrdste
- 7) thecamaheshrdste
- 8) theycamaheshrdste
- 9) theycamatheshrdste
- 10) theycamtiaheshrdste
- 11) theycametiahshrdste
- 12) theycametiahshwdste
- 13) theycametiahhwste
- 14) theycamewiahhtste
- 15) theycamewithhaste
- 16) They came with haste

IN WHOSE HANDS?

from THE DOVE (Everett Church of the Brethren Publication)



A basketball in my hands is worth about \$19; in Michael Jordan's hands it is worth about \$33 million.

A baseball in my hands is worth about \$6; in Mark McGwire's hands \$19 million.

A tennis racket is useless in my hands; in pete Sampras' hands it is a Wimbledon Championship.

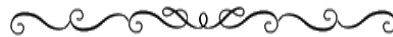
A rod in my hands will keep away a wild animal; in Moses' hands it will part the Red Sea.

A sling shot in my hands is a kid's toy; in David's hand it is a mighty weapon.

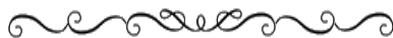
Two fish and five loaves of bread in my hands are a couple of sandwiches; in God's hands they feed thousands.

Nails in my hands might produce a birdhouse; in Jesus Christ's hands they will produce salvation for the entire world.

So put your concerns, your worries, your fears, your hopes, your dreams, your families and your relationships in God's hands because as you can see ... it makes a BIG DIFFERENCE whose hands it is in.



Remember the elderly and shut-ins of our congregation with a card or call!



POSTAGE NOT DUE!

The Busy Bees sponsor the Card Exchange on the Back table. Use the slots to send and receive Christmas Cards with the Congregation.

Save a stamp! Hug a bee!



TRACTS AND READING MATERIAL

We have an abundance of tracts and reading material available on the tables at the back of the Church. THE DAILY BREAD, Brethren magazines and other reading items are offered and you are encouraged to read and share them with your family and friends.



Take your time and see if you can change the word SHEPHERDS into an important message.

Read Luke 2:16 to check your work.

TIP: Consider doing the answers in CAPS it will make it a little easier for you!

1. Write the word SHEPHERDS. _____
2. Add the word CATTLE at the front. _____
3. Take out the 4th and 7th consonants. _____
4. Move the 4th and 10th letters to the end of the letters. _____
5. Move the 3rd, 6th, and 7th letters to the front. _____
6. Add the word HAM after the 5th letter. _____
7. Switch the 6th and 8th letters. _____
8. Add a Y after the 3rd letter. _____
9. Add IT after the 8th letter. _____
10. Switch the 8th and 10th letter. _____
11. Place the 12th letter after the 7th letter. _____
12. Put a W in place of the R. _____
13. Take out the 13th and 16th letters. _____
14. Switch the 9th and the 14th letters. _____
15. Switch the 11th and 14th letters. _____
16. Put spaces between the four words in the message. _____



For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Isaiah 9:6



Like Easter, Christmas is one of two Holy Days of the year that have two completely different meanings depending on who you ask.

Ask the younger children and the chances are you will be told all about the Santa Claus. How he delivers presents and candy to all the boys and girls in North America and in most parts around the world.

If you ask the same children how much did you have to pay for Santa Claus to come to the house with the sleigh full of presents: They would look at you as if you lost your mind and say "It's FREE and we Love it !!!".

Now, let's ask the older children and adults what they think Christmas is about? Most, out of Love or Guilt, will say it's when Jesus was born of course. Then ask them, how much did they have to pay God the Father to send His son to earth as an infant ? Unless they happen to know Him as Savior and Lord, they would also look at you as if you lost your mind and say, "What do you mean Pay!!!" If you ask those that know Him as Lord and Savior they should also look at you like you have lost your mind and say, "He did it for FREE and we Love Him for it !!!"

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name
JESUS:

for he shall save his people from their sins.

Matthew Chap. 1 Verse 21

U.S. Sees Improvement in Religious Freedom Abroad

Reuters News Service

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - The United States, in its annual report on religious freedom around the world, found improvements in Afghanistan, Egypt, Laos and parts of southeastern Europe but little change in countries, such as China, where religious worship is most severely restricted. It criticized state and local government officials in India for failing to protect Muslims from Hindu fundamentalists but did not change India's status as an offender



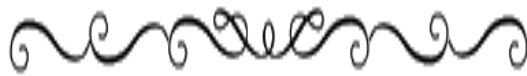
nvtech.com

The Deacons sponsor cassette recordings from Sunday Sermons and Wednesday Night Bible Study. See George Hettman Sr. if you would a tape to listen to and share with your family and friends. Sunday Sermons are also available for easy listening on our web-site at www.amwell.org

WTH APPRECIATION, PASTOR

By *Ruth Schneider*

During Bible Study one Wednesday evening, Pastor Bob was asked if he would visit our sister-in-law Shirley at the Hunterdon Medical Center. Pastor Bob said he would be happy to. Shirley never went to Church and did not even like to talk on that subject. A day or two went by and I received a phone call from Pastor Bob saying he had indeed visited Shirley. He had prayer with her and also talked to her about The Lord. Shirley had accepted Christ as her Saviour at that visit! Praise God! When we visited Shirley she wanted to know who was the man we sent to visit her. We told her it was Pastor Bob from the Amwell Church. She said "Boy, did he help me!". That was all she would say about that special visit. Shirley was called home that August. I asked her daughter if her mother had ever told her that she had given her heart to The Lord. Her immediate reply was "Yes! Mom said she had gotten her life all straightened out". Thank you Pastor Bob, from Shirley's family. Thank you for helping her to know The Lord.



A FRIEND IN DISGUISE

Submitted by *Sister Grace Affleck*

Many years ago a great monarch, Shah Abbas, reigned in Persia. The Shah deeply loved his people; but in order to understand them more clearly, he would mingle with them in various disguises.

One day he went as a poor man to the public baths, and there he sat beside the common man who tended his furnace. At meal time he shared the commoner's coarse food, talking with the lonely man as a friend. Again and again The Shah visited the commoner until the man grew to love him. Some time later The Shah revealed who he really was. The Shah waited, expecting the man to ask for some great gift or favor. But the commoner simply gazed in wonder.

Overcome with amazement, the man spoke at last: "You left your palace and your glory to sit with me in this humble place, to partake of my coarse food, to care whether my heart was glad or heavy.

On others you may bestow great riches; but to me you have given a much greater gift-yourself. I pray thee only that you may never withdraw the gift of your friendship".

On Christmas we celebrate The King of Creation coming down from Heaven's Glories to be born in a crude stable- to share our lowly existence. Yet this humble birth fulfilled a promise given centuries earlier: "Behold" the prophet Isaiah had proclaimed, "A virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His Name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God With Us".

Imagine! Jesus Christ, God With Us- born as a babe in Bethlehem; sharing our joy and suffering; knowing what it is to be fully human.

But why did God become man? Why should He care about us? God sent His Son to reveal His unlimited love for each of us; to show us that He loves us more than we could imagine. For Jesus Christ is not only The Babe in the Manger, nor simply a Great Teacher, nor only the One who healed the sick and gave sight to the blind. Jesus came to be Our Saviour... to die on The Cross of Calvary for you and me. He came to break the curse of sin and death so that we, through the power of His resurrection, might have life both now and forever more.

HOW YOU VIEW THE RAIN



She had been shopping with her Mom in Wal-Mart. She must have been 6 years old, this beautiful red haired, freckle faced image of innocence. It was pouring outside. The kind of rain that gushes over the top of rain gutters, so much in a hurry to hit the earth it has no time to flow down the spout.

We all stood there under the awning and just inside the door of the Wal-Mart. We waited, some patiently, others irritated because nature messed up their hurried day. I am always mesmerized by rainfall. I got lost in the

sound and sight of the heavens washing away the dirt and dust of the world. Memories of running, splashing so carefree as a child come pouring in as a welcome reprieve from the worries of my day.

Her voice was so sweet as it broke the hypnotic trance we were all caught in. "Mom, let's run through the rain," she said.

"What?" Mom asked.

"Let's run through the rain!" She repeated.

"No, honey. We'll wait until it slows down a bit," Mom replied.

This young child waited about another minute and repeated: "Mom, let's run through the rain."

"We'll get soaked if we do," Mom said.

"No, we won't, Mom. That's not what you said this morning," the young girl said as she tugged at her Mom's arm.

"This morning? When did I say we could run through the rain and not get wet?"

"Don't you remember? When you were talking to Daddy about his cancer, you said, 'If God can get us through this, he can get us through anything!'"

The entire crowd stopped dead silent. I swear you couldn't hear anything but the rain. We all stood silently. No one came or left in the next few minutes. Mom paused and thought for a moment about what she would say.

Now some would laugh it off and scold her for being silly. Some might even ignore what was said. But this was a moment of affirmation in a young child's life. A time when innocent trust can be nurtured so that it will bloom into faith.

"Honey, you are absolutely right. Let's run through the rain. If GOD lets us get wet, well maybe we just needed washing," Mom said.



Then off they ran. We all stood watching, smiling and laughing as they darted past the cars and yes, through the puddles. They held their shopping bags over their heads just in case. They got soaked. But they were followed by a few who screamed and laughed like children all the way to their cars.

And yes, I did. I ran. I got wet. I needed washing.

Circumstances or people can take away your material possessions, they can take away your money, and they can take away your health. But no one can ever take away your precious memories...So, don't forget to make time and take the opportunities to make memories everyday.



A DIFFERENT PRAYER

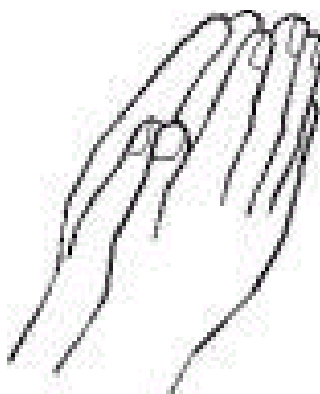
Heavenly Father, Help us remember that the jerk who cut us off in traffic last night is a single mother who worked nine hours that day and was rushing home to cook dinner, help with homework, do the laundry and spend a few precious moments with her children.

Help us to remember that the pierced, tattooed, disinterested young man who can't make change correctly is a worried 19-year-old college student, balancing his apprehension over final exams with his fear of not getting his student loans for next semester.

Remind us, Lord, that the scary looking bum, begging for money in the same spot every day (who really ought to get a job!) is a slave to addictions that we can only imagine in our worst nightmares.

Help us to remember that the old couple walking annoyingly slow through the store aisles and blocking our shopping progress are savoring this moment, knowing that, based on the biopsy report she got back last week, this will be the last year that they go shopping together.

Heavenly Father, remind us each day that, of all the gifts you give us, the greatest gift is love. It is not enough to share that love with those we hold dear. Open our hearts not just to those who are close to us, but to all humanity. Let us be slow to judge and quick to forgive, show patience, empathy and love.



THE MEANING OF CHRISTMAS

By Vernie Buck Donham

All the world would walk in darkness
Had our Saviour not been born;
Had the Shepherds found no Christ-child,
There would be no Christmas Morn;
And no hearts would be rejoicing,
But be filled with hate and scorn.



No compassion for the sinner
For no sins could be forgiven,
For without the Cross of Calvary
There could be no hope of Heaven;
And no light would shine in darkness
For no light would then be given.



If no star shone o'er the manger
Where the Son of God did lay,
Were the Wise Men's journey futile
There would be no Christmas Day.
Only through God's tender mercy
Was there ever made a way.



All of life so bleak and dreary
Without hope, for now or then,
But God sent His Son to love us
With a love beyond our ken;
And He died in pain and sorrow
To redeem earth's sinful men!

-John 3:16



*THANKSGIVING BLESSINGS, MERRY CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEARS GREETINGS FROM
EVERYONE ON STAFF OF THE AMWELL ECHOES!*



JUST A LAST MINUTE THOUGHT...

Submitted by *Lorraine Caimano*

BROWNIE RECIPE

A father of some teenage children had the family rule that they could not attend PG-13 or R rated movies. His three teens wanted to see a particular popular movie that was playing at local theaters. It was rated PG-13.

The teens interviewed friends and even some members of their family's church to find out what was offensive in the movie. The teens made a list of pros and cons about the movie to use to convince their dad that they should be allowed to see it.

The cons were that it contained ONLY 3 swear words, the ONLY violence was a building exploding (and you see that on TV all the time they said), and you actually did not "see" the couple in the movie having sex - it was just implied sex, off camera.

The pros were that it was a popular movie - a block buster. Everyone was seeing it. If the teens saw the movie then they would not feel left out when their friends discussed it. The movie contained a good story and plot. It had some great adventure and suspense in it. There were some fantastic special effects in this movie. The movie's stars were some of the most talented actors in Hollywood. It probably would be nominated for several awards. Many of the members of their Christian church had even seen the movie and said it wasn't "very bad". Therefore, since there were more pros than cons, the teens said they were asking their father to reconsider his position on just this ONE movie and let them have permission to go see it.

The father looked at the list and thought for a few minutes. He said he could tell his children had spent some time and thought on this request. He asked if he could have a day to think about it before making his decision.

The teens were thrilled, thinking: "Now we've got him! Our argument is too good! Dad can't turn us down!" So, they happily agreed to let him have a day to think about their request.

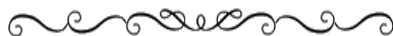
The next evening the father called in his three teenagers, who were smiling smugly, into the living room. There on the coffee table he had a plate of brownies. The teens were puzzled. The father told his children he had thought about their request and had decided that if they would eat a brownie then he would let them go to the movie. But just like the movie, the brownies had pros and cons.

The pros were that they were made with the finest chocolate and other good ingredients. They had the added special effect of yummy walnuts in them. The brownies were moist and fresh with wonderful chocolate frosting on top. He had made these fantastic brownies using an award-winning recipe. And best of all, the brownies had been made lovingly by the hand of their own father.

The brownies only had one con. He had included a little bit of a special ingredient. The brownies also contained just a little bit of dog poop. But he had mixed the dough well - they probably would not even be able to taste the dog poop and he had baked it at 350 degrees so any bacteria or germs from the dog poop had probably been destroyed.

Therefore, if any of his children could stand to eat the brownies which included just a "little bit of crap" and not be affected by it, then he knew they would also be able to see the movie with "just a little bit of smut" and not be affected.

Of course, none of the teens would eat the brownies and the smug smiles had left their faces. Only Dad was smiling smugly as they left the room. Now when his teenagers ask permission to do something he is opposed to, the father just asks **"Would you like me to whip up a batch of my special brownies?"**



No matter who you are or where you are, God has a purpose for you...
and that purpose is to be a witness for Him.

-Andy Chap