

**A Sign Unto You**  
**By William Kenney**

St. Luke described in Lk. 2:8-18 the fear and awe which a hard-scrabble group of ignorant

shepherds felt when they encountered the intimidating power of the heavenly host sent directly to them from God.

According to common Jewish expectation at the time, this encounter because of its majestic, stunning splendor, would qualify as a long-sought sign from God for the arrival of His promised Messiah.

Instead, the angel spokesman pointed the shepherds elsewhere to seek the intended sign. The Messiah, the Christ, the Savior had indeed finally arrived. But He had arrived not in the setting of the stunningly majestic Temple, nor as an awesome, fearsome, powerful leader. On the contrary, he had finally arrived as a helpless new-born, was housed in an animal shelter nearby, and was resting there in an animal manger.

This odd sign of arrival for the Messiah seemed outrageously inappropriate, almost a joke in poor taste. What a departure from the common Jewish expectation of a stunning sign, a sign reflecting God's majesty!

But, then again, how perfectly appropriate for certain purposes it was that unwashed, ignorant shepherds straight from the fields were directed to a carefully prepared place where they were not at all intimidated. They were completely at home in a barnyard setting that looked, sounded, felt and smelled like the other animal shelters they were used to. In that lowly setting where they truly belonged, they saw their

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Savior, bereft of His power, sharing fully in their lowliness.

Praise God for the good news for all of sending His Messiah, His Savior, into the world. But praise God also for sending His Savior first to nobodies so well prepared to appreciate with gratitude his lowliness.

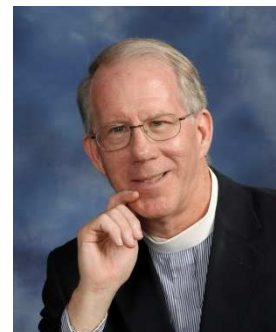
*Bill*

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**Baker Library Book Brief**  
**By Ken Cook**

May God bless you and your family as we celebrate the coming of our Savior from eternity with God his Father to Bethlehem's manger! Jesus is the reason for the season and for each day of each year! For "he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to



reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Colossians 1:17-20). In this season in which it has become nearly universal to give gifts, it is very appropriate for us to reflect wholeheartedly upon the gift of God's Son and upon the life he freely bestows on us as we trust and obey Him. Likewise, it is natural and desirable for us to want others to know Christ as their Lord and Savior. As we consider the opportunities for evangelism which are available to us, it might be worth our while to read a book on the subject even as we seek to communicate our most holy faith to others on a regular basis (1 Peter 3:15).

There are a number of books in your church library on evangelism. I want to commend two in particular to you. The first is God-Centered Evangelism by R.B. Kuiper. He was for many years the professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary. His basic but thorough introduction to evangelism is a great cure-all for the timidity that many Christians experience when they consider their call to share their faith with others in our relativistic culture. This is so because this reader-friendly volume is God-centered (and scriptural) rather than man-centered. Kuiper reminds us that God is the author of evangelism and that the Holy Trinity's love for folks like ourselves is infinite. [We would probably be less timid if our love for others matched that of God, but compare Romans 5:5 for encouragement, hope and direction with regard to prayer.] Thankfully, evangelism is not about the personal and communication "skills" of those who would follow Jesus and "be made fishers of men" (Matthew 4:18-19). Kuiper covers his subject by means of 19 God-centered chapters.

Also consider How to Give Away Your Faith by Paul E. Little. Dr. Little was an evangelist for Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship and professor of evangelism at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in suburban Chicago. It was my privilege to meet him in 1972. His zeal for Christ and for the Gospel was transforming. His introduction to evangelism is based on the same convictions as Kuiper, but aims to prepare and equip evangelists like you and me by means of the teaching of Scripture and decades of personal experience. It might be fair to say that Kuiper and Little represent two sides of the same coin. Little is especially good at surmounting social barriers, sharpening our focus on the essential Gospel message, considering why people believe and the perpetual relevance of Christ for those around us.

*Ken*



Thank You

From The Staff at St. John the Evangelist  
Anglican Church

Thank you for your thoughts, prayers, and gifts this Holiday Season. And Blessings to you and your families as we continue our Journey with Christ in 2012 and beyond.



*Annual Parish  
Meeting -  
February 12th*



COME AND WORSHIP  
@2006 Linda Barrett\*

I  
In the middle of the black night,  
Shepherds watch the sheep  
Out in the blackness came the angelic light  
Awakening them from their semi-sleep  
"Come and Worship" the angels sing  
"Come and Worship" they loudly cheer  
"Come and Worship" the Shepherd King"  
The ragged lot went to the Stable to hear

II  
On the road to the lowly city Bethlehem  
Three wise seekers came from countries afar  
Upon their camels, these three wise men  
Followed the darkness piercing star  
"Come and worship " they all said  
"Come and worship" they would proclaim  
"Come and worship the one who will raise  
the dead  
"Come and worship he of the anointed name  
Yet, King Herod was filled with dread

III  
Atop of his palace, the Judean king raged  
with jealousy  
While he lived in God- given wealth and  
power,  
King Herod turned his gold heavy head from  
the prophecy  
For he knew that his reign would only last an  
hour  
"Come and worship" he said with intense  
scorn  
"Come and worship" he curled his lip in a  
derisive sneer  
"Come and worship" he planned to kill the  
King who was born  
He wanted to be the only ruler in Israel here

IV  
Though Satan in Hell did tremble at the news  
The Angels and God in Heaven did rejoice  
From above their joy they could not diffuse  
Because God was going to bring Salvation  
through one voice  
"Come and worship" they all cried out  
"Come and worship the one who yet is to be  
"Come and worship the man who will dispel  
our doubt  
The God-man who will liberate many from  
sin's captivity

V  
While this great event happened 20 centuries  
ago  
Many try to hide its impact by cleverly  
designed lies  
However, even the stones will even know\*  
That the evidence of Christ's birth is open to  
all eyes  
Even the church bells still clang as they sing  
At this time, a gentle quiet fills the earth on  
this day  
"Come and worship" the whole world will  
proclaim  
"Come and worship" and many will kneel to  
pray  
"Come and worship" and some praise His  
name  
For Heaven and Earth were united by Christ  
the King

### Church Office News:

Yes, you are seeing this newsletter in color!

Our old Ricoh Copier has been replaced  
because the manufacturer stopped making  
replacement parts for it. The new copier can  
do all sorts of things to improve our  
publications, productivity, efficiency and  
reduce expenses.

Thanks to the Vestry, especially Ralph Gentles, who helped coordinate the arrangements.

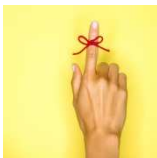
Your **Offering Envelopes** are still available for pick-up. If you do not have envelopes and you would like to start using them for your contributions, we have some extras on hand. Please call the Church Office or send an email to [cindy@toknowchrist.org](mailto:cindy@toknowchrist.org).



Saturday, January 21<sup>st</sup>  
Altar Guild Workshop @ 10am

Monday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>  
March for Life @ 7:30am

Wednesday, January 25<sup>th</sup>  
Annual Reports for 2011 are due.



Saturday, January 28<sup>th</sup>  
Trivia Night @ 6pm

Saturday, February 4<sup>th</sup>  
Faith in Action Quarterly Project  
at Sunday Breakfast Rescue Mission

Sunday, February 12th  
Annual Parish Meeting after 9:30 Service

## Looking Ahead.....

Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup>  
Women's Retreat Day

### **Birthdays and Anniversaries:**

We would like to recognize these important dates in *The Evangelist* newsletter. We now have a monthly calendar in the office to write down this information.



If you are interested, please call the Church Office or email the month, day, and what you are celebrating to [cindy@toknowchrist.org](mailto:cindy@toknowchrist.org).

*Cindy Kamm*

## Rector's New Year's Letter

Dear brothers and sisters:

We sometimes say about the coming New Year, “out with the old, in with the new.” Sometimes there is also a note of longing, as in, “I sure hope that 2012 is nothing like 2011!”

What kind of year did you have in 2011? What stands out for you as you look back over the year?

- Fatigue? Perhaps it has been a strenuous year. We don't need Ph.D. economists or the Government Accounting Office to tell us that it has been a very difficult economic season. Just keeping the household afloat is hard enough and if you are responsible for a business, the constant labor of that work can wear anyone down beyond normal stresses.
- Pain? This can include either your body in sickness or injury, or figuratively, in your emotions, suffering the loss of a person or a relationship. As is the case with many, any one of those losses might be challenging but manageable. But other stresses together with pain can seem like constant body blows from a superior opponent in a boxing match.
- Fear? When you think of 2011 gone by and 2012 in the future, does next year promise to be harder than the last?
- Hopelessness? Did you begin 2011 full of hope and expectation and end it farther away from your goal than when you started? Do you feel farther from God now than you did 12 months ago.
- Or perhaps you have had what appears to be the best year of all, with nothing of the above, accomplishing everything you set out to do in 2011.

Any of these extremes do test our faith.

With success and comfort comes great responsibility. When everything is perfect – “when the Lord your God brings you into ... houses full of all good things ... when you eat and are full, then take care lest you forget the Lord” (Deut 6.10–12). To remember the Lord is to remember his commands to strengthen and encourage others, give freely, and serve unreservedly.

And when everything is terrible, we may want to say with Job, “Let the day perish on which I was born” (Job 3.3)! You may know this prayer well: “my God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest” (Ps 22.1–2).

The recent sermon series “Back to the Basics” has been an exhortation to go back to first principles, to devote ourselves “to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2.42).

But note carefully! As important as those things are, they are merely tools that lead to something deeper. Devoting ourselves to those tools ultimately means to devote ourselves to our first love, Jesus.

Jesus’ warning to the church of Ephesus was to a church that had forgotten to stick with the basics. “I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first” (Rev 2.4). Contrarily, going back to the basics means “the love of Christ controls us” (2 Cor 5.14).

Here’s the best part. Returning to our first love is also a return to possessing an ever increasing measure “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5.22–23). These are the things that overcome fatigue, pain, fear, hopelessness, and forgetfulness! “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt 11.28–30).

I remember commenting to a friend “the Christian life can certainly be hard.” He paused for a moment and responded, “I don’t agree – not when you consider the alternatives.” Touché!

Whether your faith is being tested by hardship or tested by great ease and success, join with the Psalmist in saying:

“The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident. One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple”  
(Ps 27.1–4).

Lord – let us seek and find you this year!

Ever your servant in the Lord,