

December 20th

WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

We wish you a Merry Christmas, we wish you a Merry Christmas
We wish you a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

When I was a little girl my family moved into the Appalachian Mountains of northern Pennsylvania. Envision driving deep into the woods by means of winding country roads hidden by layers of ice with a beautiful umbrella of snow covering the thick trees above. As you turn the corner stands a little brick church with a steeple housing a bell that was rung on Sunday mornings. This was the first church my dad pastored and where a sweet Christmas memory was created. Poverty was high in this mountain community, some still without the luxury of inside plumbing, and many more interested in keeping their traditional ways and superstitions than hearing about God's love.

During the Christmas holiday our small church family created its own tradition of traveling to these families' homes to sing Christmas carols. This little girl with bright red hair covered in freckles was so excited to sing! I hardly was able to contain my excitement as my momma struggled to keep me still long enough to bundle me up tight to fight off the bitter air. Our little caravan of vehicles drove into the frozen winter night to share God's love as we sang at homes of all diversity. Sometimes we were met by lovely people who were overjoyed by the visit, thanking us with cookies and hot cider. Other times we were met by glares through the window, words encouraging us to leave, or no lights at all. We still sang and always ended with "We Wish You a Merry Christmas..."



As I look back at these memories, it brings tears to my eyes, now understanding the depths of why caroling was so important. Jesus our Savior came into this dark and cold world to be a warm and brilliant light to all, no matter if they welcomed Him or cursed Him. Because Jesus is alive in us, we are children of Light (Ephesians 5:8) and we are to let Light shine through us before others (Matthew 5:16). Jesus is Light and not just a splendid brightness that breaks through darkness, but healing and protective warmth on those bitter winter nights.

As we approach this holiday season and consider the year to come, let's remember God's precious gift to us, Jesus His Son – The Light of the world. God will place a variety of individuals in each of our lives, some for just a moment and others for longer, but always for a specific purpose. We never know when we will meet someone facing their own bitter winter storm. These are the priceless opportunities given to us to allow the Redeemer for all to illuminate through us, sharing His joy, peace and hope to those in desperate need of His healing and protective warm love.

Contributed by Tricia Jantz

