

December 18<sup>th</sup>



The reason for the season. To me that phrase conjures up a whole lot of thought, anticipation and hope. Without the reason there would be no season. Going beyond the commercialism and into the core of the reason for the season is like an adventure and looking at something with awe and wonder.

It is not just the celebration of a moment in time when a baby was born, but also looking to the moment when Jesus will come again- the Parousia. When he will come in power and might.

Celebration of Christmas plays where children portray the Christmas story, carols old and new sing out the birth story of the child of Bethlehem. As a child I participated in School Christmas plays and became even more involved as an adult. One such celebration of Christmas came about when I was involved in Churches Together.

One year in particular stands out when at a meeting of the Churches Together group a Christmas party was suggested as a way of involving the townspeople.

The planners organised everything, they organised the hiring of the hall. Publicity was high on the agenda. Members of the Churches took fliers and posted them through the doors the area. The great day dawned. Half an hour before things were due to begin no one except the team had arrived. We were all a little fearful as Santa Claus, gifts, the decorated hall, Musicians and a live crib were all ready and waiting for the guests to arrive!! Santa Claus with his helpers were in position at the door. It reminded me of the wedding feast-begging them to come in. Suddenly the Ho, ho, ho's and bell ringing came closer-

The hall began to fill up and the party was about to take off. It was going to be a party with a difference. Instead of Santa Claus coming at the end - He was already here. It had been decided that we would start with a game of musical chairs. The chairs were already in position in the middle of the floor there were not enough. Another row was quickly assembled and the children lined up beside each chair. The game began - music stopped and all scramble for a seat !! wow. Noise and laughter but "Surprise! Surprise!" The child eliminated was escorted to Santa's grotto. Imagine that surprise. On entering the Grotto where Santa was each child was given gift and special instructions not to open the gift until everyone had received theirs -

what a wait that first child and others following had until the winner finally emerged. Thunderous noise and exclamations echoed around the hall. Delight and shouts of laughter as the gifts were opened.

After a quick clean-up of wrapping paper, the carol singing began and the live crib began to form. We had 2 sheep, 3 dogs, 4 cats and a donkey. Mary, Joseph and Jesus (the baby, Simon, was one week old), he hardly had a look in. Ned the donkey made his presence heard when "Little Donkey" was being sung. His bray had to be heard to be believed. His owner quickly led him out.

Between each carol or Christmas Song the words; "THE REASON FOR THE SEASON" was flashed onto a large screen and shouted out. Everyone shouted in response "JESUS".

The Churches together have over the years tried to get this message across.

"JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON".

Advent is a spiritual journey that we take through Scripture, through song, pointing to the birth of the Messiah, to a reaffirmation that he has come. He is present in our world today and will come again in glory. It mirrors the commitment we make on our journey of faith when after that moment of realisation and acceptance of who Jesus is, we walk the road of faith and increasing our understanding we look forward to our final destination to be with him forever.

YES! "JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON".

We are an Advent people- we sing Emmanuel -God is with us. Maranatha- Come Lord Jesus.

