



Trinity United News



'Twas the week before Christmas...

Welcome to the Advent/Christmas edition of the Trinity United News. When I first asked for contributions for this edition, it was just after Remembrance Day, and I was watching around the neighbourhood to see who would be the first household to put up their lights. Now here we are with a little more than a week until Christmas Day. How time flies!

Firstly, I want to give a big thank you to all the people who shared stories whether about their families' traditions or a Christmas story that has inspired or amused them over the years. I was particularly impressed by Jean Sproule who has saved the poem 'Countdown to Christmas' from the December 20, 1972 edition of the Chicago Tribune. Yes, you are right with your math—it was indeed 45 years ago. I've scanned some of the pictures from that original newspaper to go along with the text. I hope you enjoy them as much as I did when I received them.

You also be able to read about the thought behind a new 'program' Trinity Gives—Arts and Community which is a new project spearheaded by our Choir Director, Alison Dalton. The first concert is on the afternoon of December 31.

My apologies if your submission didn't make it into this edition. I ran out of space, so anything which was more 'timeless' will be in the next edition.

Enjoy reading.
Merry Christmas everyone!

Paula

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- December 31 Concert
- Christmas tradition from David German
- History behind poinsettias and Christmas lights

A Christmas Reflection: At the Start of a New Year

Foster Freed

An Advent Prayer

Who are we , O God,
that you should come
to us?

Yet you have visited
your people

And redeemed us in
your Son.

As we prepare to cele-
brate his birth,

Make our hearts leap
for joy at the sound of
your word,

And move us by your
spirit to bless your
wonderful works.

We ask this through
him whose coming is
certain, whose day
draws near, your Son
Jesus Christ.

Amen

(from Voices United)



Back in November, I was invited to share a January 1st reflection, as part of a series of Christmas reflections that will be offered online by the United Church based renewal group: Cruxifusion. Here, by way of Trinity's Advent newsletter, is a sneak peak at my submission. A blessed Christmas to you all!!

A Christmas Reflection At the Start of a New Year

There is no more profound a question a “person of faith” can ask of God, than the question posed by the psalmist: *what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?* (Psalm 8)

Please note that it is, indeed, the “person of faith” who asks this question, a truth underlined by the psalm's subsequent affirmation of human beings as *a little lower than God, crowned with glory and honor*. Such an appraisal of humankind, far from being accessible through empirical measures, is the domain of those who have come to view the problematic human creature in light of its exalted Creator.

Also worth noting is the close connection between the psalmist's question and the implicit question asked by none other than the Adversary in the opening chapters of Job. The perplexity with which Satan views humanity—the bewilderment with which he regards God's care for the human race—clearly drives Satan's attempt at undermining God's affection by undermining the integrity of a representative human figure, namely Job.

While it is often claimed that God, in the course of that lengthy book, succeeds in answering neither the psalmist's question nor Satan's challenge, what ought to be affirmed is that God—at Christmas—effectively “double-downs” on Satan's challenge. At Christmas it can, indeed, be said that God chooses not so much to **explain** having chosen the human being, but instead places an exclamation mark next to that choice, insisting upon its indelible nature. How?

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

May the good news of Christmas—the scandalous news of God's incarnation—comfort, challenge and inspire us throughout this joyous season, and forever more. Amen.

Foster



Why the Nativity Scene is Displayed 365 Days of the Year in the Bordal Household

On May 27 of 2003, after retiring, we purchased a house in Nanaimo. Knowing it was not a good idea owning 2 properties, we had to sell in Port Alberni quickly. We listed our home June 06.

Someone told me how Saint Joseph could help sell our home. I needed a St. Joseph statue. Ah, I had one in the nativity scene.



I buried the statue in the front flower garden facing the real estate sign June 10th. Every day I prayed to St Joseph to help sell our house. We went to Victoria for the weekend. When we returned on the Monday 16th, we had a call for a viewing the same day. By the 20th, our Port Alberni home was sold.

Now I had to give St. Joseph a place of honor in my new home. Which I proudly did and told was all too happy to tell others the story.

In November 2005, 2 of my sisters came to visit and were not impressed with my story. They accused me of making Mary a single mother and leaving her and Jesus in the cold shed. So, I went to the shed and brought, Mary, Jesus, the cattle, the Shepherds and their sheep, the Wise men and their camels, and of course the Angels, into the house.

Now the Nativity Scene is displayed 365 days of the year except leap year when it is displayed 366 days of the year.

A little food for thought...

Married, divorced or single here, it's one family that mingles here.
Conservative or liberal here, we've gotta all give a little here.
Big or small here, there's room for us all here.
Doubt or believe here, we all can receive here.
Gay or straight here, there's no hate here.
Woman or man here, everyone can serve here.
Whatever your race here, for all of us grace here.
In imitation of the ridiculous love Almighty God has for each of us and all of us,
let us live and love without labels.

PHILIP YANCEY "VANISHING GRACE"

Health News

With Parish Nurse

Lori Amdam RN, MSN

Did you know that January is "Alzheimer's Awareness Month" in Canada?

To mark this important event, Parish Nurse Lori Amdam invites you to attend an educational session on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias.

The discussion will focus on how to support quality of life for a loved one or friend.

We will meet on January 15, 2018 in the church lounge. The program runs from 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 noon but please plan to come at 10:00 a.m. for a cup of tea and a goodie.

There is no cost, and to register for this program, call Sarah at the church office, 250.390.2513.

Hope you can join us for a positive dialogue about what is possible and how we can make a difference.



Christmas Lights

The Christmas lights of today can light up trees and window frames with tiny twinkling lights of many colors—or cause frustration with their long and tangle-prone cables. But the first such lights, introduced to the holiday world in 1882 by Edward Johnson, a friend and partner of light-bulb inventor Thomas Edison, were a different story.

Johnson didn't introduce the idea of using light to celebrate the holiday; the tradition of making the winter festive with the light and warmth of fire is much older than electricity. For many years, those who could afford to would express their Christmas spirit by lighting candles on trees.

Edward Johnson's idea was to replace the candles with a string of colored electric lights, which he did with eight bulky, pear-shaped bulbs on a single wire. Several publications covered his lighting of the first tree, which rotated as the red, white and blue lights dazzled spectators. But the idea didn't catch on widely in the U.S., as many Americans didn't entirely trust electricity and the bulbs were too expensive to be practical: an early set of eight bulbs would have cost a buyer about a week's wages.

Musical Musings

Alison Dalton

In a previous newsletter I started to talk about some aspects of music and of being a musician. As we begin the Advent journey in church the secular music world is already well into Christmas concerts and other events and I feel like this is a good time to talk about performing as a musician and about what we're trying to create in our upcoming Christmas concert and the following recital series.

Musicians need to perform. Without frequent opportunities to get up in front of a live, hopefully appreciative audience performers can easily stagnate and atrophy. Especially when you are no longer in regular lessons taking exams or juries in a music school. If you are so fortunate as to be content in a musical discipline that involves playing in a large ensemble such as a band or orchestra or choir you may get some chances to perform in concert, but most amateur ensembles only play two or three concerts in a year, but if you are a soloist or a chamber musician in small groups it can be difficult to find even that many opportunities to perform.

“Historically, the church has been one of those places that appreciates the talents of the community...”

Historically, the church has often been one of those places that appreciates the talents of those in the community, but I saw a recent social media post from one of my colleagues who is having a hard time finding a church community that welcomes their talents and has a musical style that suits this particular musician's taste. From the responses of other colleagues I could tell that this wasn't just one person having this issue. So it would seem that churches in general could do a better job of welcoming and encouraging musicians.

There is also a balance that musicians who aspire to make a career out of performing, and indeed musicians who just do it for the love of music, have to find. The balance between performing what an average audience would like to hear with the music that really moves us as performers and artists. Especially at Christmas time, there is an expectation to hear a certain set of carols, if you're in a symphony you will inevitably play a number of pieces from *The Nutcracker* (which Tchaikovsky regrets, by the way), in a choir you'll probably be singing *The Messiah*, etc... and it's not so much that this isn't wonderful music, but artists require novelty and innovation and we can get rather fatigued from playing the same stuff every year. If we don't play the “old chestnuts” we lose audience, if we play nothing else, we lose our enthusiasm.

What we're hoping to create at Trinity through these concerts and recitals are opportunities for performers and audience to explore and experience together, hopefully strike a certain balance, inviting in the greater community to enjoy musical performances in an accessible “pay what you can” format and casual atmosphere, a low-pressure environment for musicians to perform and to indeed be paid for their very tangible hard work. I hope you will see this as I see it: a very exciting opportunity for Trinity and for Nanaimo, and to see you there for our first concert.

Trinity Cares - Arts & Community presents
On the Seventh Day of Christmas...

*Seasonal music from Byrd to Rach-
maninoff and Charlie Brown*



*Featuring local artists
and Heart's Ease early
music ensemble*

December 31

1:30pm Refreshments

2:00pm Concert

Admission Free - Donations welcome

Trinity United Church
6234 Spartan Rd., Nanaimo

250-390-2513

<http://trinityunitednanaimo.ca>

A Christmas Story by Rian B. Anderson

Pa never had much compassion for the lazy or those that squandered their means and then never had enough for the necessities. But for those who were genuinely in need, his heart was as big as all outdoors. It was from him that I learned that the greatest joy in life comes from giving, not from receiving.

It was Christmas Eve 1881. I was fifteen years old and feeling like the world had caved in on me because there just hadn't been enough money to buy me the rifle that I'd wanted so bad that year for Christmas.

We did the chores early that night for some reason. I just figured Pa wanted a little extra time so we could read in the Bible. So after supper was over I took my boots off and stretched out in front of the fireplace and waited for Pa to get down the old Bible. I was still feeling sorry for myself and, to be honest, I wasn't in much of a mood to read scriptures. But Pa didn't get the Bible; instead he bundled up and went outside. I couldn't figure it out because we had already done all the chores. I didn't worry about it long though; I was too busy wallowing in self-pity.

Soon Pa came back in. It was a cold clear night out and there was ice in his beard. "Come on, Matt," he said. "Bundle up good, it's cold out tonight." I was really upset then. Not only wasn't I getting the rifle for Christmas, now Pa was dragging me out in the cold, and for no earthly reason that I could see. We'd already done all the chores, and I couldn't think of anything else that needed doing, especially not on a night like this. But I knew Pa was not very patient at one dragging one's feet when he'd told them to do something, so I got up and put my boots back on and got my cap, coat, and mittens. Ma gave me a mysterious smile as I opened the door to leave the house.

Something was up, but I didn't know what.

Outside, I became even more dismayed. There in front of the house was the work team, already hitched to the big sled. Whatever it was we were going to do wasn't going to be a short, quick, little job. I could tell.

We never hitched up the big sled unless we were going to haul a big load. Pa was already up on the seat, reins in hand. I reluctantly climbed up beside him. The cold was already biting at me. I wasn't happy. When I was on, Pa pulled the sled around the house and stopped in front of the woodshed. He got off and I followed. "I think we'll put on the high sideboards," he said. "Here, help me." The high sideboards! It had been a bigger job than I wanted to do with just the low sideboards on, but whatever it was we were going to do would be a lot bigger with the high sideboards on.



When we had exchanged the sideboards Pa went into the woodshed and came out with an armload of wood – the wood I'd spent all summer hauling down from the mountain, and then all fall sawing into blocks and splitting. What was he doing? Finally I said something. "Pa," I asked, "what are you doing?" "You been by the Widow Jensen's lately?" he asked.

The Widow Jensen lived about two miles down the road. Her husband had died a year or so before and left her with three children, the oldest being eight. Sure, I'd been by, but so what? "Yeah," I said, "why?" "I rode by just today," Pa said. "Little Jakey was out digging around in the woodpile trying to find a few chips. They're out of wood, Matt."

That was all he said and then he turned and went back into the woodshed for another armload of wood. I followed him. We loaded the sled so high that I began to wonder if

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(Continued from page 6)

the horses would be able to pull it. Finally, Pa called a halt to our loading, then we went to the smokehouse and Pa took down a big ham and a side of bacon. He handed them to me and told me to put them in the sled and wait.

When he returned he was carrying a sack of flour over his right shoulder and a smaller sack of something in his left hand. "What's in the little sack?" I asked. "Shoes. They're out of shoes. Little Jakey just had gunnysacks wrapped around his feet when he was out in the woodpile this morning. I got the children a little candy too. It just wouldn't be Christmas without a little candy."

We rode the two miles to Widow Jensen's pretty much in silence. I tried to think through what Pa was doing. We didn't have much by worldly standards. Of course, we did have a big woodpile, though most of what was left now was still in the form of logs that I would have to saw into blocks and split before we could use it. We also had meat and flour, so we could spare that, but I knew we didn't have any money, so why was Pa buying them shoes and candy?

Really, why was he doing any of this? Widow Jensen had closer neighbors than us. It shouldn't have been our concern. We came in from the blind side of the Jensen house and unloaded the wood as quietly as possible, and then we took the meat and flour and shoes to the door. We knocked. The door opened a crack and a timid voice said, "Who is it?" "Lucas Miles, Ma'am, and my son, Matt. Could we come in for a bit?"

Widow Jensen opened the door and let us in. She had a blanket wrapped around her shoulders. The children were wrapped in another and were sitting in front of the fireplace by a very small fire that hardly gave off any heat at all. Widow Jensen fumbled with a match and finally lit the lamp.

"We brought you a few things, Ma'am," Pa said, and set down the sack of flour. I put the meat on the table. Then Pa handed her the sack that had the shoes in it. She opened it hesitantly and took the shoes out one pair at a time. There was a pair for her and one for each of the children – sturdy shoes, the best, shoes that would last. I watched her carefully. She bit her lower lip to keep it from trembling and then tears filled her eyes and started running down her cheeks. She looked up at Pa like she wanted to say something, but it wouldn't come out. "We brought a load of wood too, Ma'am," Pa said, then he turned to me and said, "Matt, go bring enough in to last for awhile. Let's get that fire up to size and heat this place up."

I wasn't the same person when I went back out to bring in the wood. I had a big lump in my throat and, much as I hate to admit it, there were tears in my eyes too. In my mind I kept seeing those three kids huddled around the fireplace and their mother standing there with tears running down her cheeks and so much gratitude in her heart that she couldn't speak.

My heart swelled within me and a joy filled my soul that I'd never known before. I had given at Christmas many times before, but never when it had made so much difference. I could see we were literally saving the lives of these people. I soon had the fire blazing and everyone's spirits soared. The kids started giggling when Pa handed them each a piece of candy and Widow Jensen looked on with a smile that probably hadn't crossed her face for a long time.

She finally turned to us. "God bless you," she said. "I know the Lord himself has sent you. The children and I have been praying that he would send one of his angels to spare us." In spite of myself, the lump returned to my throat and the tears welled up in my eyes again. I'd never thought of Pa in those exact terms before, but after Widow Jensen mentioned it, I could see that it was probably true. I was sure that a better man than Pa had never walked the earth. I started remembering all the times he had gone out of his way for Ma and me, and many others. The list seemed endless as I thought on it.

Pa insisted that everyone try on the shoes before we left. I was amazed when they all fit, and I wondered how he had known what sizes to get. Then I guessed that if he were on an errand for the Lord that the Lord would make sure he got the right sizes.

Tears were running down Widow Jensen's face again when we stood up to leave. Pa took each of the kids in his big arms and gave them a hug. They clung to him and didn't want us to go. I could see that they missed their pa, and I was glad that I still had mine.

At the door Pa turned to Widow Jensen and said, "The Mrs. wanted me to invite you and the children over for Christmas dinner tomorrow. The turkey will be more than the three of us can eat, and a man can get cantankerous if he has to eat turkey for too many meals. We'll be by to get you about eleven. It'll be nice to have some little ones around again. Matt, here, hasn't been little for quite a spell." I was the youngest. My two older brothers and two older sisters were

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Poinsettia history



An ornamental shrub, the poinsettia is native to Mexico and Central America, where it was known as *Flor de la Noche Buena* or "Flower of the Holy Night". It is believed to have been used as a Christmas decoration as early as the 17th century when Franciscan monks near Taxco, Mexico incorporated the plant in their Nativity processions.

According to Mexican legend, a young boy (or young girl named Pepita in some versions) was on his way to visit the village Nativity scene. En route, he realized he had no gift for the Christ child. He gathered pretty green blooms from along the road and brought them to the church. He was ridiculed and mocked by the other children for his humble gift. Yet when laid at the manger, a beautiful, red, star-shaped flower appeared atop the green leaves.

In 1828, Joel R. Poinsett, then U.S. ambassador to Mexico, was introduced to the plant and brought it back with him to America. In the U.S., the plant was later christened the 'poinsettia' in honor of the first American to discover it.

A Christmas Story contd.

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all married and had moved away. Widow Jensen nodded and said, "Thank you, Mr. Miles. I don't have to say, 'May the Lord bless you,' I know for certain that He will."

Out on the sled I felt a warmth that came from deep within and I didn't even notice the cold. When we had gone a ways, Pa turned to me and said, "Matt, I want you to know something. Your ma and me have been tucking a little money away here and there all year so we could buy that rifle for you, but we didn't have quite enough. Then yesterday a man who owed me a little money from years back came by to make things square. Your ma and me were real excited, thinking that now we could get you that rifle, and I started into town this morning to do just that. But on the way I saw little Jakey out scratching in the woodpile with his feet wrapped in those gunnysacks and I knew what I had to do. So, Son, I spent the money for shoes and a little candy for those children. I hope you understand."

I understood and my eyes became wet with tears again. I understood very well, and I was so glad Pa had done it. Just then the rifle seemed very low on my list of priorities. Pa had given me a lot more. He had given me the look on Widow Jensen's face and the radiant smiles of her three children.

For the rest of my life, whenever I saw any of the Jensens, or split a block of wood, I remembered. And remembering brought back that same joy I felt riding home beside Pa that night. Pa had given me much more than a rifle that night: he had given me the best Christmas of my life. He taught me to:

*LOVE PEOPLE AND USE THINGS —
NOT LOVE THINGS AND USE PEOPLE.*

Christmas Tradition - David German

My family had a tradition of setting aside one evening during the Christmas season to listen to readings of Christmas stories. That was long ago, but I haven't forgotten what the experience was like, as we gathered in the living room with a warm fire giving off the pleasant, flickering light, and hearing wonderful readers of equally wonderful stories. So, not having the recordings myself on the old 45 and 33 1/3 RPM vinyl records, I searched through YouTube and found many of those stories, and some that were new to me, too!

I thought some of our congregation might also enjoy listening to this little collection, so here it is at the following Link:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnTebIvcWSLCAe6AYYyTQaY_q6u-4q0vv

Or you can use the link below(*) to see all my playlists and select the one of the 3 Christmas lists from there. They are DG016A[(Christmas Stories), DG016B (Christmas Stories And Music) and, DG017 (Christmas Music - 8 Hours). Get comfortable, listen, and let your imagination fly away with you to Christmas Land.

(*) my YouTube: **<http://www.youtube.com/user/ccdg1066/playlists>**.

Unified Christmas Appeal

This year Trinity United is pleased to announce the 2017 Unified Christmas Appeal. This appeal is a united appeal for charitable funding for three causes:

- ◇ Angel Tree Fund
- ◇ Loaves and Fishes Fund
- ◇ For the Life and Work of TUC

Let's begin by describing at the onset this Appeal is about providing funds for the less fortunate of our community while, at the same time, enabling our Church to continue with a sustainable future so that we can continue with the Good Work God has enabling us to do.

Prison Fellowship Ministry; Angel Tree

The Angel Tree provides the Prison Fellowship Ministry with funds where the children of prisoners are not forgotten and can be united with a parent in prison at this time of the year. According to the website www.prisonfellowship.org, since 1982, the Prison Fellowship Ministry founded by Chuck Colson has become the largest national outreach for children of prisoners.

Loaves and Fishes; Nanaimo Foodbank

As many of the Trinity United congregation know, Loaves and Fishes Community Food Bank of Nanaimo provides food hampers for those in need year-round. However, at Christmas and immediately after, this is a time that is especially important. Again, for more information visit www.nanaimoloavesandfishes.org.

Funding Details

At Trinity United Church, it has been decided by our Board and the Unified Appeal Committee to provide funds to the above as follows: of the first \$550 raised, \$250 is designated to the Angel Tree Fund and \$300 to Loaves and Fishes Foodbank. Funds received over-and-above the \$550 benchmark will go toward supporting the Life and Work of Trinity United Church.

Launching the Appeal

Special envelopes will be provided in the Sunday Bulletins during December 10th. The Appeal ends on December 31, 2017. However, the envelopes will also be available at the front office or donations can be made through the Trinity United Website for those who are going to be away during the Christmas Season. The website is www.trinityunitednanaimo.ca.

Giving to the Appeal

This Unified Appeal is intended to support those charitable causes as best we can, without taking away from our normal donation basket. The funds that go toward Life and Works at Trinity United financially enables the Church to continue with supporting our congregation as well as supporting the community around us.

Summary and Prayer for this Appeal

TU is a Church with a heart for those in our congregation and community who feel especially challenged at Christmas. Jesus provides us with the path and guidance to fulfill His Ministry for all people regardless of their circumstance. Let us pray for Trinity United Church and this Unified Appeal to fulfill our obligation to the teachings of Jesus Christ.

God Bless this Appeal, Amen

Christmas Prayers

Generous God,

You gave your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born of your chosen one, Mary.

Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen.

Eternal God, in Jesus Christ your light shines in our darkness, giving joy in our sorrow and presence in our loneliness.

Fill us with the mystery of your Word made flesh, until our hearts overflow with praise and joy, for he is the beginning and the end of all that exists, living forevermore. Amen.

Alpha Update

Our fall Alpha film series has reached its conclusion. We have had a wonderful 12 weeks together sharing food, fellowship, and the fundamentals of the Christian faith.

We are already formulating plans for our next Alpha outreach which will begin on **Tuesday, February 20th**.

We encourage you to consider inviting a friend or neighbour and come out to the introductory dinner. Please watch for more details coming in January

From the Board of Governors...

We, as a faith community, are now having to address an urgent need to deal with effectively and efficiently heating this huge building. We must not only address the furnaces themselves, but also the electrical service and gas water heating. In addition, there the matter relating to the quality of fresh air being brought into our building.

Proposals and budgets have been evaluated. Trinity United Council has approved an initial expenditure of \$30,000 towards the cost of new furnaces. The total is estimated to be \$60,000. There is some concern within our congregation that we may not be able to raise sufficient funds. However, any shortfall will be advanced by the Catholic Diocese in the form of a low interest loan. While the funds to address the heating of our building are significant, it is important that we consider the energy cost savings. It is estimated that we could see a reduction of some \$4,000 in annual electricity costs. Hence, in a few years, the furnaces will have paid for themselves just by lower Hydro bills. Another important - ***and critical benefit resulting from the new furnaces*** - is the significant improvement in air quality. *It has been noted that some people are severely impacted by our poor air quality. Our new furnaces, equipped with modern filtration systems, will alleviate this problem significantly. So not only will we see dramatic reduction in our utility bills, but also real improvement in air quality.*

The electrical challenges in our kitchen required evaluating the electrical load demand serving the lower level. What was happening was that the demand overheated the breakers and caused them to shut off.

This situation has now been corrected. With this new information on the electrical service, we are able to address other related matters. Technological improvements such as changing lighting to LED's would free up electrical capacity that may be then used elsewhere resulting in significant utility cost savings. Planning is now being done.

We are grateful to our congregation for the understanding and support expressed for these complex and important issues. The steps taken have moved us forward indeed.

An Advent Prayer of Confession

God of stable, stars and surprises, of light and hope and new life: open our eyes and hearts to your presence in our world; forgive our obsession with property and possessions; forgive our compromises and narrowness of vision. Open us to your grace, that we might hear again the song of angels, and respond with a song in our hearts, and in our lives. Amen.

Voices United

Countdown to Christmas by Bill Peet

From the December 20 1972 edition of the Chicago Tribune

'Twas countdown to Christmas, the 14th of December,
Way back in the '60s – 'twas the jet age remember?
And the Jolly Old Santa Toy Corporation,
An old-fashioned factory with no automation,
Was going full blast, full tilt and full swing
With the toy-making elves all doing their thing.

“Cool it,” cried Santa, “Like that’s enough!
Tomorrow we’d better start loading the stuff.”
And he hauled his old leather sack off the hook,
Held it up to the light, and then after one look,
Santa exclaimed, “What a beat up old rag!
What a sad sack, it’s all shot, it’s a drag!
It’s a worthless old relic, one total loss.”
And he opened the window and gave it a toss.
The wind caught the sack, it took off like a kite,
Then in no time at all, it had sailed out of sight.
Then away Santa went to explain to his wife
How he’d tossed out the sack he had used all his life.
“What I need right now is a new one,” he said.
“And since you’re so sharp with a needle and thread,
Could you dream up a sack that’s more fantastic?
A real far-out sack of nylon or plastic?
“Real groovy,” cried Santa. “That’ll be great!
Now I must brighten my old sleigh up to date.”
And with cans of spray paint, all colors but red,
He rushed out to the sleigh where it stood in a shed.
Then in a frenzy the frantic old fellow
Cut loose with a blast of synthetic yellow –
A blurp of bright purple, a scriggle of green,
A splotch and a zigzag of ultramarine.

“That’s what you call mod,” he said with a smile.
An up-to date sleigh, at least for a while.
Next year I’ll convert this old sleigh to a jet
With twin jet engines and a pair of wings yet.”
What brought Santa down was the synthetic sack.
When it was ready and time came to pack
The elves discovered there was little room in it –
They had filled it with toys in less than a minute.
And when Santa tried to cram in a few more
The toys tumbled out to end up on the floor.
“There’s no doubt,” said Santa, “that old sack was great.
I’ve just got to find it before it’s too late.”



Star-Giving by Anne Weems

What I'd really like to give you for
Christmas is a star...

Brilliance in a package,
something you could keep in the pocket of
your jeans
or in the pocket of your being.
Something to take out in times of darkness,
something that would never snuff out or
tarnish,
something you could hold in your hand,
something for wonderment,
something for pondering,
something that would remind you of
what Christmas has always meant:
God's Advent Light into the darkness of
this world.

But stars are only God's for giving,
and I must be content to give you words
and wishes
and packages without stars.
But I can wish you life
as radiant as the Star
that announces the Christ Child's coming,
and as filled with awe as the shepherds
who stood beneath its light.
And I can pass on to you the love
that has been given to me,
ignited countless times by others
who have knelt in Bethlehem's light.
Perhaps, if you ask,
God will give you a star.

Up there on the snow-swept top of the world
The wind played mean tricks, it swooshed and it swirled.
Which meant the sack could have sailed anywhere-
It might have been tossed 10 miles in the air.

I've had it, groaned Santa, I've done all I could.
There's no doubt about it, the sack's gone for good."
Then he tripped in a ditch, he staggered and stumbled,
He lost his footing and over he tumbled.
And flat on his whiskers old Santa flopped
And into a snowdrift his flashlight had plopped!
What happened next was more like a weird dream.
Just a few yards away in
the light's golden beam
He spotted a walrus with
a cap on his noggin,
A faded brown baggy beat
-up old toboggan.
"Can't blame you for star-
ing," a huge walrus said.
"This cap is 10 sizes too
big for my head."
"So I'll trade you," said
Santa, "Try this cap is
mine.
It has a fur lining and
should fit you just fine."



The instant he leaped through the toy factory door,
And plunked his magical sack on the floor,
Old Santa's army of hard-working elves
Got busy hauling the toys off the shelves;
Cramming them down with in the sack by the ton,
Taking care not to break even one.
After the packing was well under way
Santa decided to repaint the sleigh.
"They can't call me square," he said with a grin,
"not while these big bushy beards are still in."
"No one," said his wife, "is more up to date, dear.
You set the style, at least this time of year."
With the crack of the whip and a jolly, "Right on!"
They took off like a shot, they were really far-gone.
As they faded from sight Santa called loud and clear,
"A cool Christmas to all. And a groovy New Year!"