

4 AN ANGEL AT THE DOOR?

By Ruth Bryan

Hopes for a Norman Rockwell Christmas filled with presents and delectable treats looked bleak for a young missionary family on furlough. Had God forgotten them?

5 A SPECIAL GIFT

By Jeff Tyler

Not realizing it would be their last Christmas together, one family receives an incredible gift.

6 HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

By Pearl Griffith

Feeling at "home" for Christmas can seem like a cruel illusion for someone whose loved one has gone "home" to heaven. Find out how one couple copes with their loss.

7 A CHRISTMAS TO FORGET REMEMBER

By Gary Emery

"Santa" saves the day for one teenager whose highest expectation for Christmas is that it would pass by quickly.

8 NOT GOING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

By John Simmons

An air force chaplain would spend Christmas away from his family at one of the coldest, most isolated places on earth. How would he minister to the troops when he is just as lonely and miserable as they are?

Plus Much More!

The Perfect Christmas



ANDREA JOHNSON/Editor

"You know, if I didn't have to buy presents for all these exchanges, I might actually have enough money to buy presents for my own two kids," I grumbled

to myself. Besides gift exchanges for relatives, school, church, Sunday school, and Wednesday night church, the kids needed gifts for the groups' charity projects.

This year the kids' dad was gone. It would be our first Christmas in our tiny upstairs furnished apartment. Having imposed on friends for the past several months, it felt great to have a place of our own and we felt safe. Still, it was a far cry from last Christmas, when we were still "a family" with a house and a yard. Memories of picking out the "perfect" Christmas tree were still fresh.

Now, a borrowed artificial tree sat on an end table in the corner of the room. A single strand of lights wrapped it from top to bottom. I looked everywhere, but couldn't find our Christmas ornaments. Were they with the rest of the things stored in my brother's basement – and lost

in the flood? The collectibles, given to us by family and friends, symbolized yet another loss.

"God, I don't understand," I said. But God was giving us a new beginning, and that meant out with the old.

I shouldn't have worried about gifts. Coming back to my receptionist's desk at the church one day after lunch, I discovered someone had sneaked in and deposited a bundle of presents. Tucked in was a large, soft brown teddy bear wearing a big bow. To us he was a huge hug.

Then my car broke down. A friend took me to a trusted mechanic. When I went to pay the bill, I was told it had already been paid. Knowing I hadn't paid it, I questioned the mechanic further. He simply replied, "Merry Christmas." Another gift from my church family.

One evening the kids and I decided to make our own decorations. We strung popcorn and cut out snowflakes, sprinkling them with gold glitter. I turned off the lamp and plugged in the Christmas lights. We oohed and awed as magically, the tiny, white lights caught the glitter and a peaceful, twinkly glow lit the room. Peace – what a gift. We were going to be ok.

Andrea

Andrea Johnson, Managing Editor

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