



FEDERATED CHRISTIAN CHURCH
22-1-D
HUNT, IDAHO

Dec. 16, 1944

Dear Friend:

Greetings from Hunt, Idaho! The days fly by so quickly; soon, our third Christmas will be upon us. From the business of our daily tasks we pause to think again of the birth of the Christ child and the Angel tiding of joy: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." The Angel message seems ironical in the face of the diabolical warfare destroying humanity.

In reading again Henry Van Dyke's story of "The Other Wise Man" I came across the following lines: "Religion without a great hope would be like an altar without a living fire." Our Christ offers us the only hope for the world. He is the only hope for the recreation of a new society. In Him lies the salvation of those in either physical or spiritual bondage to the forces of sin and evil. Christ is still pleading with us to live as one human family in God's world. At this happy season we can give thanks to God for the immortal story of salvation which had its inception at the birth of Jesus.

My greatest joy at this Christmas time is to witness the birth of the Christ spirit anew in the hearts of youth. Beneath the noise and chatter of "teen-age" enthusiasm the seeds of God's Kingdom are quietly being laid. I wish you could meet personally some of our youth. We've lost practically all of our college-age group but there still remain with us hundreds of the younger group. They're living in that happy age of dates, gabfests, group loyalties, and of questioning regarding life values. One day someone is in the valley of despondency and the next day he is on top of the world again!

I asked Calvin Oba, a high school Junior, to share with you something of his feelings regarding religion. He is one of the "gang" enjoying life immensely in the Church, in scouting, and in model aeroplane construction.

"Christianity has meant to me a variety of things. Although it is less than a year ago that I was "reborn" my life has been changed radically through Christianity. It has opened to me a new field in life which I never dreamed I would possess. My spiritual rebirth has worked a remarkable change in my way of doing things; my mind became much more imaginative. My grades in school have shown a decided improvement. These are all small things but they show in a big way the improvements Christianity has brought into my life.

I see now a definite purpose in life. I have more of a sense of responsibility now than I have ever had. When before I was either too stupid or too calloused to extend sympathy, I am much more sympathetic and understanding. As I repeat, these are small things, but I have learned to appreciate God in these simple things. Christ has an effect on the soul as no other factor has.

Christianity has given me confidence in the future. I believe only a Christian can have such complete confidence. When I venture into anything, I feel the assurance of God behind me. I believe that if I lost the Christian religion I would almost immediately become irresponsible, egotistical, selfish and an intemperate person. Christ has meant to me as much as water to a flower."

One of our boys, Teddy Takaya, was elected president of the Twin Falls subdistrict of the Methodist Youth Fellowship. He is a sophomore in high school. Teddy expresses his appreciation of the Christian faith in the following statement:

"Although in my pre-evacuation days I had many Caucasian friends, my conception of how I would be received by the people in the towns near the center was pessimistic. However, my first personal contacts with Christian groups in this locality was greatly strengthened by faith in the effectiveness of Christian teachings.

The best symbol of Christianity which I have been shown is the spirit of friendliness which seemed to dwell perpetually among my outside Caucasian friends. Their congenial faces, friendliness, and sincere acts of hospitality made my visits outside extremely pleasant. Every church group which I have contacted has shown me this gracious welcome.

To me this Christian attitude of brotherliness is the only effective way of bringing about a permanent world peace. No political, economic, or social reform can match the deep, sincere, and non-rejudiced mind with which Christians are bridging the gaps of misunderstanding among people."

I wish you could meet some of the handicapped people in the center. Their faith and fortitude under such circumstances are admirable. One girl, Martha Higashida, who has been confined in the hospital for the past year and a half shares her Christmas greeting:

"Our third Christmas in camp! What a wealth of meaning there is in that phrase for each of us here! For me Christmas this year is a bright marker pointing out the road to a deeper understanding and richer appreciation of the spirit and central message of Jesus. My family background is Christian, and I grew up within the Church. Yet, it was not till the chaos and soul shaking disillusionments of evacuation that I came to realize fully how truly timeless, dynamic, and spiritually creative is Jesus' message of love and reconciliation.

My appreciation of Christian fellowship, too, has deepened. I know I will be grateful all my life for the never-failing friendship and inspiration those Christians I have met whose characters are lighted up from within with the eternally radiant spirit of Jesus. My hope is that in the years to come I can convert into constructive service my gratitude to them and what I have begun to see of the potentialities for the individual and for society of faith in Christian ideals."

Christmas is a reminder of the one Hope of the world. It is a heart-warming experience of fellowship with God and with one's fellow men. It is an all inclusive fellowship which transcends national, cultural, and geographical barriers.

The advent of Jesus was like the coming of Light into darkness. That Light is still shining in human hearts. I like these thoughts by Thomas R. Kelly:

The Light for which the world longs is already shining.
It is shining into the darkness, but the darkness does not apprehend it.
It is shining into the darkness, but the darkness is not overcoming it.
It is shining in many a soul and already the new order has begun within the kingdom of the heart.
It is shining in many a small group and creating a heavenly earthly fellowship of children of the light...
Our fellowship groups are small, but they can be glorious colonies of heaven, cities set on a hill.
It is a great message which is given us - good news indeed - That the Light overcomes the darkness.
But to give the message we must also be the message!

With hearts filled with gratitude for the message of the Christ whose advent we observe this Christmas season, let us look toward the unknown future with faith, hope, and renewed courage. In the words of Ebenezer Scrooge in Dicken's "Christmas Carol" let us live a life of perpetual Christmas cheer in our hearts: "I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present and the Future. The Spirit of all three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach."

In Fellowship,

Tsutomu Fukuyama

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