



# HOUSTON VISITING CHRISTIAN SCIENCE NURSE SERVICE, INC.

Our mission is to heal through practical, operative Christian Science.

December 2023

## The Significance of Christmas

The approaching Christmas season brings with it a wide variety of perspectives.

Young children, taught to believe the myth imaginatively captured in [a now-famous poem](#) by an obscure poet, gleefully await the December 25th dawn, when they can open their longed-awaited presents left by Santa.

Procrastinating 'til Christmas Eve, frazzled parents hurry scurry from one jam-packed store to another in hopes of finding toys that Santa will carry down the chimney later that night. Some may prefer getting an early start and avoiding the madding crowds by simply shopping online.

Whoever is caught up in the commercialism of Christmas instead of contemplating the meaning of the meek infant's birth long ago in a distant manger may end up feeling let down or lost in a swirling sea of busyness.

Certainly, the spirit of love and joy and peace should predominate when families and friends gather to celebrate this occasion, whether they think of it as sacred or secular. How, though, does their holiday cheer uplift the rest of the world—especially those who are bereft of loved ones, who

are perhaps living alone or whose spouses are in the armed forces stationed at faraway postings? How do their laughter and hugging and gift-giving and gratitude reach the many who are subsisting hand-to-mouth on the streets?

Recently we saw a YouTube Short featuring a generous stranger giving a young homeless woman a meal and some money. She looked at him with tears in her eyes and asked for only one thing: a hug. She received a warm embrace, along with gentle words assuring her she was valued and loved.

Photo by YouTube



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We so support the sincerity of that kind man. At the same time, we maintain that the recipient of his affection and all her temporarily houseless brothers and sisters need not see themselves as victims of loneliness and despair. Bleak beliefs such as these are no more valid in God's kingdom than are any other extreme mortal moods during holidays or on any other day.

Is one answer to human woe to welcome a lonesome, maybe houseless, person into your home and celebrate the spirit of Christmas with them? Of course, if the offer is inspired by divine Love! Is another answer to send Christmas goodie boxes to shut-ins? Of course. Or to military men and women far from home? Of course. These are all lovingly motivated forms of human giving.

Yet even the best intentions and warmest, widest outreach cannot extend to all, whereas silent acknowledgement that we all live in God's perfect habitation *can* and *does* extend to and bless each and every man, woman, child, and creature of His making.

I learned a bit about the difference between human goodness and divine bestowals when I was a youngster.

A Christmas Eve tradition we had on my grandparents' farm was to shake corn kernels in a long-handled basket that we waved back and forth over a crackling fire in the living room fireplace. After the kernels popped, my sister and I threaded them onto popcorn strands for the tree. They varied in length depending on how much of the decoration each of us ate! Then, before heading to bed, we lay on the floor watching the fire and listening to Gram read aloud *What Christmas Means to Me* by Mary Baker Eddy. Mom was on the sofa next to Gram, Pop sat in his easy chair, and the dog slept nearby.



Photo by iStock

Our Leader's words in that slim volume both soothed and stimulated me. In retrospect, I realize they offer the universal answer to all human misfortunes—the solution to our eternal quest for God's goodness and our own immortality. I realize anew, too, that limited human perspectives and resources are never sufficient to satisfy our spiritual longings.

One of the articles, "The Significance of Christmas," which Mrs. Eddy originally wrote for *New York World*, presented ideas I loved—especially:

In Christian Science, Christmas stands for the real, the absolute and eternal, — for the things of Spirit, not of matter. Science is divine; it hath no partnership with

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human means and ends, no half-way stations. Nothing conditional or material belongs to it. Human reason and philosophy may pursue paths devious, the line of liquids, the lure of gold, the doubtful sense that falls short of substance, the things hoped for and the evidence unseen.

The basis of Christmas is the rock, Christ Jesus; its fruits are inspiration and spiritual understanding of joy and rejoicing, — not because of tradition, usage, or corporeal pleasures, but because of fundamental and demonstrable truth, because of the heaven within us. The basis of Christmas is love loving its enemies, returning good for evil, love that “suffereth long, and is kind” (*What Christmas Means To Me and Other Christmas Messages*, 43:3-21, and *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, 260:9-23).

Patient love that “suffereth long, and is kind” describes Houston’s *Journal*-listed Christian Science nurse, Susie Petersen, who gently, compassionately supports each of her clients.

We board members and Susie share with you Mrs. Eddy’s 1909 Christmas Day benediction from the last page of *What Christmas Means To Me*: “Beloved: — A word to the wise is sufficient. Mother wishes you all a happy Christmas, a feast of Soul and a famine of sense. Lovingly thine, Mary Baker Eddy.”

## Financial Assistance Available

Any Christian Scientist relying upon the services of a Christian Science practitioner and/or a *Journal*-listed Christian Science nurse may obtain financial support by applying to the [National Fund for Christian Science Nursing](#) (NFCSN). You may contact The Principle Foundation, which manages this fund, by emailing [info@nfcsn.org](mailto:info@nfcsn.org) or by calling (800) 873-2843.

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*Christian Science Hymn 324*