

FROM THE PULPIT

Having relationship with Jesus is natural state

Brad Bryant
FOR THE PANTAGRAPH

Who is Jesus to you? Nativity scenes, Christmas carols, family traditions, Sunday school and occasional TV specials have helped nearly everyone be familiar with the Christmas story of Jesus' birth, and his entry into this world.

Most people also know at least something of his life and ministry, while he lived physically here in our human situation. Nearly everyone could point to a Bible somewhere in their home, and indicate that book as a place where a person could go to learn about the man who was Jesus — some 2000 years ago. The Bible is a powerful testimony of who Jesus was — through the eyes of those who were closest to him.

Their testimony helps us to understand what his life was all about, and the impact he had on those who chose to be around him.

But who is Jesus to you? What difference does his continued life and presence have in your life today? "Knowing about" the historical Jesus of Nazareth is vastly different than "walking with" the living Jesus of today.

Jesus came into this world as "God with us" and continued to reflect that presence throughout his mortal life. Ever since the earliest days in "the garden," God wanted to be found by us, his human children. Yet we, in our world-focused view of "reality," often overlook the many signs and blessings that he provides in

our lives daily. God's still, small voice, quietly, patiently invites you to seek out a new level of relationship with him.

He generally will not impose himself upon us, but rather, makes himself available to be found, allowing us to choose to enter into a faith-based relationship of trust and obedience to rules and guidelines that are designed to help us grow into the people he wants each of us to become. When we find ourselves lacking a relationship with Jesus, it is only because he is still waiting for us to answer the call.

Relationship with Jesus is a natural state. That is why you were created — to spend eternity with God. God chose to come into our world, in the form of baby Jesus, to show

himself to us, to grow up and live life in our situations, to experience temptations, and to show us that it is possible to choose to live a sin-free life. Sure, he was physically killed. But the story doesn't end on that crucifixion Friday. Jesus was resurrected, leaving his Holy Spirit to guide us, encouraging us to seek him out, and to build that trusting relationship.

So what does Jesus offer in this relationship?

Jesus wants to be your constant partner in life — to be there with you in all situations — times of sickness, health, joy, hope, depression, loneliness, success. He wants to be invited to help in every decision that you face, every day. How do you start that relation-

tism of the Holy Spirit, laying on of hands for the sick, marriage, ordination, life blessing, blessing of children and the Lord's Supper. The worldwide Community of Christ congregations offer all of these sacraments to help you grow in your relationship with Jesus.

As we begin this new year, we invite you to journey with us. Together, we travel through life, and each of us grows daily in our relationship and understanding of Jesus, who calls us toward lives of peace, reconciliation and healing of the spirit.

May you find new blessings through the gift and power of God in 2004.

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ship? It all begins with a desire to believe, and then acting on that desire. As you move toward Jesus, he reaches out to you, encouraging your search, and helping to grow the relationship.

As you engage with Jesus, you'll also find it helpful to enter into a faith community that is Christ-centered, and allows your life's situations to come into regular contact with the sacraments — those activities that God has put into the church, in which we use "everyday" items to help us come closer to him. Each time we engage in one of God's eight sacraments, we invite and allow Jesus to bless us in a new way.

The available sacraments include baptism in water, bap-

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