

Spend your new year finding way to Christ

FROM THE PULPIT

By Brad Bryant
FOR THE PANTAGRAPH

Christmas 2002 is now history. Soon we'll be taking down the ornaments, lights, trees, and all of those physical "reminders" of the joy and hope that we each want to experience during this special holiday season. They will all go back into their boxes, and won't be thought about for another 11 months. Sad.

The good news is that the love that God has for you never goes back into a storage box, is never stored away in the attic and that you are never forgotten. God's love for you is greater than you could imagine. You may try to "hide" from God, and He will allow you that freedom to try. You may choose to rebel against Him, and He allows that, too. Because of His love for you. However, this mor-

tal life can be a very difficult, lonely path on which to walk if you choose to travel it alone! And God does not want you to face it alone!

God's desire is to travel with you along your life path, providing you with friendship, direction, encouragement, healing, forgiveness, joy, hope, love and peace. These are gifts that God has in great supply, but that our everyday world rarely offers. Because of His great respect for your ability to choose, God won't force Himself upon you. He patiently waits for you to choose to invite Him into your life. Once you do, you have a dependable partner to help you with every decision and challenge you face!

Spirit of God is reaching out to numerous souls even now, inviting you and others into a new and deeper relationship. Sometimes this invitation comes in the form of this feeling of a "void," longing to be filled. Many people in today's world are bruised and broken-hearted, enmeshed in sin, longing to repent and find the cleanness and new start that can come through baptism and support that comes with that new "family" relationship. If this void or brokenness is your experience in the spiritual journey you're on, then perhaps it's time to evaluate your journey, and see if you are truly journeying with God, or just learning information about Him. To the reader of our September article, please contact me, so we can

find ways to help. Jesus does want to bless you!

As we prepare to enter into this new year, I challenge each of you to seriously review the past year(s), and your personal relationship with the living Jesus Christ. He is not merely a historical figure from 2,000-plus years ago. Rather, He is the creator of the Universe, and of you. He knows you individually, gave you your gifts and talents, placed you into this world at this time and place, and calls you in this life to seek Him out and invite Him in. Have you allowed Him to have an active role in your life? Or have you kept Jesus comfortably in that miniature manger, where we can put him away until next Christmas? Consider what your community could be like, if each person — family, friends, co-work-

ers, classmates, neighbors and strangers, were all actively seeking to know the mind and will of God in their daily lives, and act upon that knowledge. Think of the blessings we could be for each other, and for the world.



Your friends and neighbors, who are local members of the worldwide Community of Christ, have committed their lives to proclaiming Jesus Christ as the living Son of God. We work together in His name to promote communities

where the spiritual gifts of joy, hope, love and peace can be experienced by all who seek them. If you are seeking to know Jesus better, or to be introduced for the first time, we invite you to journey with us.

Working together for His purposes, we support each other in our ongoing relationships, life experiences and in service to our communities and world.

Bryant is pastor at Community of Christ, Bloomington.

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