

The house is cluttered with Christmas packing boxes, branches of the artificial tree, candles, strands of lights, and cupboards stuffed with holiday goodies from family and friends. Our home is also filled with the memories of a full family celebration of Advent (anticipation and heart preparation for Christ's coming and coming again), Christmas-tide (the Twelve Days of Christmas, spreading out one gift each day and thinking on God's gift of Jesus), and Epiphany (remembering the arrival of the wise men to see the Christ Child). Scott, Krista, and Alizabeth have enjoyed three lovely long weeks off from school (though much of the holiday included the stomach flu being passed around!) Now the old European custom of Boxing Day (boxing up the leftover plenty from Christmas Day) comes into effect in our home, as we go through drawers and shelves to evaluate what to keep and what to pass along.

It sure takes a lot of extra work and planning on the parents' part to put together these vehicles of the faith, but it is so worth it when we see even small results. Our older girls demonstrated how they were thinking of others when they carefully put together gifts for each member of the family. One wrote a letter of encouragement to her younger sister to keep trusting in God through hard times. Another designated her Sunday offering for the North Koreans. The third was generous enough to help the toddler in her toileting while Mommy and Daddy went out on a date. Here it is! Jesus living through our children.

The meaning of these holidays comes through in surprising ways. When I (Christine) went to our local stationery shop to purchase some decorations, I picked up an item labeled "Christmas decoration." When I opened it up at home, I was surprised to find a "happy birthday" banner instead. At first I chalked it up to some ESL problems on the part of the packager, then I thought twice. Why, of course! This is the perfect Christmas decoration. So I hung it up above our Christmas tree, and we enjoyed singing happy birthday to Jesus, blowing out candles, and eating fruitcake on Christmas Day.

Just yesterday I was trying to explain to our Christian household helper why we were having special foods and celebrations for Epiphany. The realm of Thai vocabulary needed to explain "wise men visiting Jesus" was beyond me, so I ran for the Thai-English Bible. I told her the story was from the book of Matthew, and opened up to some verses for her to read in Thai. We both struggled to sound out the words---she has only a fourth-grade education, and I have little experience in reading Thai script. "Oh, yes!" She smiled and nodded her head knowingly. "The visit of the Buddha to Jesus. Yes, you know there are many foreigners who come to pay respects to the Buddha on this and that road and temple." What??? What was she reading? I went back to help her sound out the word again. Oh, now things were different. I showed her the wise men who brought gifts to Jesus. She smiled and nodded, but I think she went home that night believing that Buddhists came to worship Jesus with chocolate gold coins. My respect for Bible translators has increased many-fold!

My heart has been touched repeatedly by Zechariah's pronouncement that Jesus was a light for revelation to the Gentiles. For us! The kingdom of God opened up to us! And so many here in this land who depend on bigger spirit houses (our neighbors), more

gadgets (all the people on the sky train), and making merit to the Buddhist monks. So many millions in this huge city of Bangkok don't know Jesus' name. It is a challenge to me to continue praying for revival in Thailand, and to make Him known. That is the spirit of the Epiphany season.