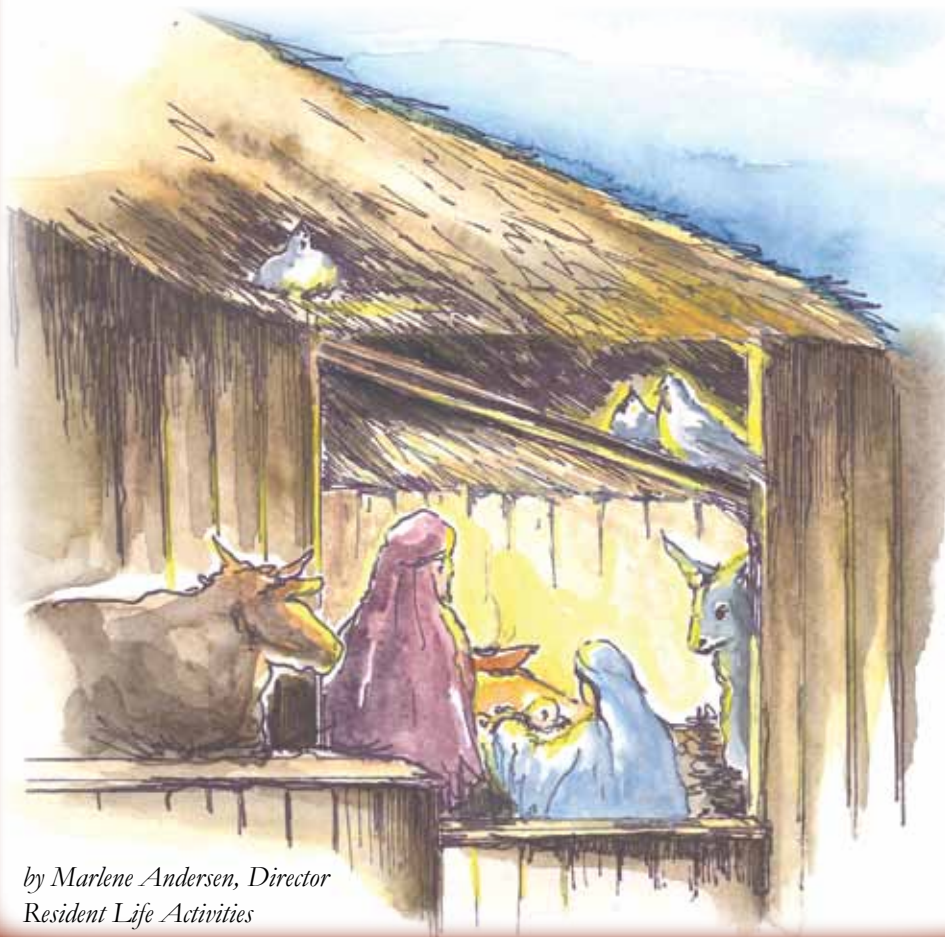


## *We Remember Each Christmas Morn*

by Larry Harris, CEO

*Sweet little Jesus boy,  
They made you be born in a manger.  
Sweet little holy child,  
We didn't know who you were.*

Robert MacGimsey



*by Marlene Andersen, Director  
Resident Life Activities*

On a starlit night long, long ago, an old weathered stable in the village of Bethlehem was pressed into divine service. It was to become a stage for the singular watershed miracle of all human history – the birth of the promised Christ child.

Years earlier a Judean herder, perhaps aided by a helpful neighbor or a conscripted son, had employed crude saws and mallets and spikes to construct that sheltered feeding bay for his sheep and cattle. He could not have known then of the high and holy end his handiwork would serve.

As the final step in his project, he assembled a feeding crib from coarse, hand-hewn lumber scraps. He was crafting a cradle for a newborn king, but he didn't know it. If its future

*continued on page 2*

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use had been revealed to him in a dream, say, or by a sign in the midnight sky, would he have taken pains to plane away the splinters? Would he have braced it better to prevent an inadvertent collapse? Would he have offered up a prayer of consecration?

But his only interest was in feeding his animals, so he filled the manger with hay. The hungry beasts gathered. The holy birthplace was ready.

That rickety outbuilding stood barely visible in the faint light of a clear, moonless sky, but something was amiss this night. The little barn was defined by fine vertical stripes of dim yellow light that leaked out between its sideboards. An oil lamp glowed within. But the animals had never known a nightlight. Something indeed was afoot. Beyond the usual sounds of shifting hooves and an occasional oxen snort, a muffled male voice spoke in hushed, comforting tones.

Then a woman's cries pierced the night. Cries of great pain. The cries of birth. Attended only by a timid Joseph and some curious livestock, a child came into the world. And so it came to pass that in a birthing venue of last resort – an old barn laced with dusty cob webs and reeking of leathery animal stink – the newborn Savior drew his first breath and cried in his mother's arms. The promise of old, at last, was fulfilled.

In the sweet afterglow of the night's trauma,



*Larry Harris, CEO*

shepherds appeared out of the dark, pausing in wonder at the stable's entrance. Then slowly venturing in, they bent low in reverence and awe, and fell on their knees before the swaddled baby that now lay sleeping in the

*Love  
came down  
to a hateful  
world that  
night.*

animals' feeding trough. A startled Mary and her Joseph wondered how they knew.

Love came down to a hateful world that night. Improbable as it seemed to all but the few who were let in on the divine plan, the Jesus of that lowly birth became a guiding star for the wandering masses, a vision of hope for a doomed world given over to cruelty and greed and wars and vain pursuits. He lent a future to all people of all time, for without that child, none of us would possess even a whisper of assurance that we might somehow avoid our assigned fate.

The child Jesus became the man Jesus. Never ranging more than a few miles from the stable of his birth, he trod the dusty roads of Judea and Galilee, gifting sight to the blind, infusing the limbs of the lame with fullness and strength, restoring life to the dead, presenting the poor and the outcast with a reason to live, driving the money-trading thieves and swindlers from the temple, teaching us of mercy and forgiveness by shaming a circle

of hypocrites into dropping the stones they were about to hurl at a woman of the night, and bathing all he met, and all generations to come, in his holy light of love.

But he proved too good for us. Thirty-three years after his birth in that Bethlehem barn, we killed him. He willingly lay down on his cross, stretched out his arms, and accepted the executioner's spikes as they were driven through his innocent hands. His death was a trademark Roman execution – slow and tortuous as could be.

In reality, though, the killing was no execution. Cold-blooded murder is what it was. Murder by blind, misguided fools.

That dark afternoon as he hung abandoned on the cross, his precious lifeblood dripping into Golgotha's dust, I imagine the humble stable of his birth, just a morning's walk to the east. Maybe it was now fallen to disrepair, in the way old things are prone to do. Maybe the roof had caved in. Maybe the manger was crushed and broken. Maybe no one had cared enough to sort the rubble and restore things as they were on that wondrous night.

Now twenty centuries down the line, that primitive stable most surely is gone to dust. Not a trace remains. It exists only in sacred text, on Christmas cards, and in the imaginings of believers' hearts. But the child born beneath its sheltering canopy lives on. He changed the world, he brought us love, and it is his birth we remember each Christmas morn.

*Larry can be reached at  
lharris@willow-brook.org*

## Christmas Gifts

Throughout the pages of this Christmas issue of *Reflections* you will find photos, paintings, and an essay crafted by Willow Brook residents. Their creativity reminds us every day how fortunate we are to have such talented neighbors among us. We share their talents as our holiday gift to you.



*painting by resident George Wood*

## Peace?

*by resident Tom MacLaughlin*

Once again, Christmas approaches. We search for greeting cards expressing “Peace.” Peace as in absence of war, terrorism, violent conflict. Every year we do this. A different card, with different design, but bearing the same message, *Peace*.

“Hope springs eternal.” A common expression. Is it realistic? Is real peace - laying down all arms, dismantling all atomic weapons, outlawing war - possible? Can people of diverse ethnicities, religions, nationalities, financial status, get along peaceably? Or are we kidding ourselves, wishing for an unattainable future?

We occasionally see a sign on someone’s lawn: “War is not the answer.” So true. But what is the answer? Is anyone seeking an answer? How hard are they trying?

As the winter solstice draws near, we bundle against the cold, seek the warmth and comfort

of our homes and the glow of the yuletide season envelops us. Peace on Earth. What beauty in that yearning. Yes, just as the days begin to increase in length, our spirits lift and embrace the long-expressed desire.

On the evening of December 24th we who are Christians sing “Silent Night” in candlelit churches.

And servicemen and women, along with unfortunate noncombatants, continue to die in far-off places of conflict. When will it end? *Will* it end? Can we every really “love our enemy?”

Christmas reminds us of our most fervent desire. *Peace*. But it also asks, what can be done to promote peace? Anything? Or is it a quixotic quest?

**Can we ever really  
“love our enemy?”**

*photo by resident Ken Fischer*



## A Sprague Family Dynasty

*Seven of the 11 Sprague progeny who currently call Willow Brook their work home are, in the back row left to right, Stacey Wheeler, nursing assistant; Janie Wheeler Jordan, LPN; and Bob Wheeler, maintenance man, all of whom are based at The Village. Front row: the retiring Reva Sprague Ross, nursing assistant at The Village; LeVonne Sprague Shaffer, scheduler at The Home; Diana Sprague Renner, scheduler at The Village; and Dorothy Sprague Wheeler, housekeeping manager at The Home. Not pictured are Sherry Boggs, Brad Jordan, Zach Wheeler, and Tim Wheeler.*

This began as a story about Reva Ross, a nursing assistant at Willow Brook Christian Village who is retiring after 26 years of service. But then the story grew into something more.

Reva is one of 14 children born to Roxie Bailey and George Sprague of Obetz, Ohio. Their father was a preacher for 40 years and they lived two houses away from the church in Obetz, just south of Columbus. “We had our own baseball team,” laughs LeVonne Shaffer, another Sprague sister.

The Willow Brook connection began when Dorothy Sprague was married to Bill Wheeler, who

lived down the street from a Worthington-area nursing home which later became Willow Brook Christian Home.

Dorothy Wheeler began as a housekeeper and is now the head of the housekeeping department at The Home. Over time, eight of her siblings joined her. If you add second and third generations, the total comes to 21, eleven of whom are on today’s employee roster.

Why are so many of them at Willow Brook, and why do they stay here for so many years?

“Larry (CEO Larry Harris) is why,” says Diana, “He has always been there for us.” LeVonne

believes it is because “Larry treats everybody equally, no matter their job, their education, or their religion.”

“I’m amazed how many names he remembers with more than 300 people working here,” agrees Dorothy.

“This family has certainly enhanced the staff of Willow Brook – and I don’t mean by sheer numbers,” says human resources director Janis Frey. “Not only are they supportive of each other, but they truly embody the Willow Brook spirit of care, service and love.

“I am privileged to know and work with this wonderful family.”

## Board Members bring Variety of Talents in Service

As a not-for-profit organization, Willow Brook Christian Communities is governed by a voluntary board of trustees who serve without compensation.

They donate their time, their expertise, and their treasure to further the mission of this organization.

They travel many miles, from across the state, and one from out of Ohio, to attend board and committee meetings. They spend untold hours reviewing finances, keeping up with our changing health care payment and delivery systems, and guiding this three-campus organization with keen minds and caring hearts.

And they bring vital expertise to their positions. Among them are experts in banking, securities, Social Security and Medicare, managed care, insurance, law, education administration, medicine, and restaurant management, all skills needed to guide an organization that provides services in a healthcare and housing setting.

We are grateful for their gifts.



*New board member Roger Pickens, DDS, and Terry Irwin, MD, both of metropolitan Columbus.*



*Secretary/treasurer Corinna Owens, vice president Phil Barth, and president Carl Ward at the November board meeting.*



*photo by resident Nancy Townley*

# Gifts of Love

## Memorial Contributions

September 8 - November 30, 2012

**Dorothy Ahonen**  
Dale & Josephine Bichsel  
Corinne D. Esau  
Jean L. Flahive  
Charlotte A. Gallant  
David & Rosalie Miller  
Arlene W. Palenshus  
Lois K. Smith  
Myra Weber  
Village Residents' Advisory Council  
Phyllis M. Wood

**Eugene Bianchi**  
Barbara J. Ekelberry

**Betty A. Brown**  
William Owen & Carol O'Brien

**Mary E. Burgess**  
David & Joan Maril

**Mary M. Cooper**  
Gary D. Cooper

**Philip Cooper**  
Fifty Plus Group, Forest Hill  
Church of Christ

**Ruth Deitch**  
Lynn M. Cline

**Mary Louise Dieck**  
Delaware Run Residents' Council  
Gerald & Norma Lunney  
Bruce & Barbara Reierson  
Jacquelyn A. Sibley

**Mary Dinovo**  
Anthony & Carol Dinovo

**Arlene Earich**  
Claudia J. Wells

**Barb Eberhard**  
Don & Yvonne Campbell

**Joan Fletcher**  
Randy & Judith Mobley

**Lawrence Fletcher**  
Randy & Judith Mobley

**Mary C. Gaybud**  
Tony & Judy Black

**Charles Gerhart**  
Corinne D. Esau  
Charles & Grace Lang

**Billie Gillespie**  
Fifty Plus Group, Forest Hill  
Church of Christ

**Audrey and Alberta Harris**  
Larry & Janet Harris

**John T. Hayes**  
Karen S. Hayes

**Frank Herbon**  
Thomas & Shirley Griffin

**James E. Jackson**  
Mitchell & Dyana Welch

**Grace Jones**  
David & Connie McNeal

**Thomas J. Lasley**  
Kathryn Brod

**Steven D. Leader**  
Edward & Rhonda Nice

**Clara Main**  
Thomas & Patricia Muter

**Norma "June" Miller**  
Samantha Staton

**Carvel Mullins**  
Thomas & Shirley Griffin

**Charles D. O'Dell**  
Martha A. O'Dell

**Virginia Orrison**  
Delores V. Lallathin

**Richard Petty**  
Corinne D. Esau

**Wilfred Potts**  
Fifty Plus Group, Forest Hill  
Church of Christ

**Florence Poulson**  
Thomas & Sara Poulson

**Emma "Maude" Prince**  
Rebecca L. Harris

**Gene and Maude Prince**  
Larry & Janet Harris

**Mary Kathryn Rank**  
Helen J. Reppart  
Lois K. Smith

**Don Rost**  
Thomas & Sara Poulson

**Terence J. Ryan**  
Mark & Teresa Ryan

**Herman Slonecker, Jr.**  
American Electric Power  
Ian & Jean Davidson  
Kurt & Lonni Dieck  
Jim & Rose Mary Sinning  
Marvin & Sophia White

**Shirley Swanson**  
Randolph W. Southwick

**Grover "Jack" Thomas**  
Ag Credit, ACA  
Mr. & Mrs. James P. Bruner  
Cardington-Lincoln Public Library  
Corinne D. Esau  
Jean L. Flahive  
David & Terri George  
Jessie Kerr  
Arlene W. Palenshus  
William T. Pratt  
Howard & Mariruth Seubert  
Gregory & Carol Siebenaller  
Lois K. Smith

**Grover "Jack" Thomas, *continued***  
Village Residents Advisory Council

**Kathryn J. "Jane" Tillett**  
Bruce & Barbara Reierson

**Alice N. Warner**  
William & Jan Warner

**Herman "Gene" Weber**  
Claudia J. Wells

**George F. Wellman**  
Donnie & Sherry Akers  
George & Margaret Alexander  
Geneva B. Connor  
ECS Billing & Consulting, Inc.  
Max & Patricia Evans  
Walter & Susan Fleak  
Thomas & Vicki Jasper  
Gary & Dana Kinsey  
James & Pauline Kossow  
James & Erma Lanier  
Jayne W. MacKay  
Eugene & Terry Martini  
Helen J. Reppart  
Roy & Eunice Rogers  
Roger & Jane Sagar  
Ronald & Jill Stickdorn  
Arthur & Billie Thorne  
Frederick & Susan Vierow  
Paul & Lynn Zizzo

**Max Wildermuth**  
Jayne W. MacKay

**Elaine S. Williamson**  
James & Pauline Kossow

**Harry E. Williamson**  
James & Pauline Kossow

**Mary Williamson**  
James & Pauline Kossow

**Clyde E. Wooley**  
Corinne D. Esau  
Jean L. Flahive  
David & Rosalie Miller  
Arlene W. Palenshus  
Lois K. Smith  
Phyllis M. Wood

A gift was made  
to honor **JoAnne**  
**Skipton** by Bruce &  
**Barbara Reierson**



Willow Brook was proud to sponsor with the *Delaware Gazette* the second annual “Beyond Golden” anniversary celebration of love and marriage in October.

Nearly a hundred couples enjoyed an afternoon of delicious food, wonderful music, great conversation and prizes.

Music was provided by vocalist Dwight Lenox, photography by ang-iLouie Photography, and the wedding cake was donated by Enticing Icings, Ltd., of Powell, Ohio.

*A photographer captured shots of each couple for a special supplement to the newspaper.*

*Delaware Run residents Ruth and John Hay, above, and Mary Lea and Warren Bailey, right, and every couple there, received copies of the photo as a memento gift from the photographer.*

## Willow Brook Christian Communities

Delaware, Ohio

### Willow Brook at Delaware Run

100 Delaware Crossing West  
Delaware, Ohio 43015  
Phone: (740) 201-5640  
Fax: (740) 201-5740

- Independent twin-single homes & apartments
- Assisted living
- Memory care
- Corporate offices
- The Water's Edge Restaurant

[www.willow-brook.org](http://www.willow-brook.org)

### Willow Brook Christian Village

100 Willow Brook Way South  
Delaware, Ohio 43015  
Phone: (740) 369-0048  
Fax: (740) 369-7034

- Independent twin-single homes & apartments
- Assisted living
- Memory care
- Skilled nursing
- Rehabilitation
- Adult day care
- The Courtyard Restaurant

Worthington, Ohio

### Willow Brook Christian Home

55 Lazelle Road  
Columbus, Ohio 43235  
Phone: (614) 885-3300  
Fax: (614) 885-8476

- Skilled nursing
- Rehabilitation
- Assisted living
- The Grapevine Grill

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*Teri Ryan, designer, writer & editor*  
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# REFLECTIONS

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Delaware,  
Ohio

A watercolor illustration of a snowy forest. The scene is filled with tall, thin trees covered in snow, with a thick layer of snow on the ground. The colors are muted, with soft blues, greys, and whites, creating a serene and quiet atmosphere.

*"His law is love and His gospel is peace."*

*John Sullivan*

*watercolor by  
resident Janet Schwab*