



The Breath of Christmas

Larry Harris, CEO

A Christmas candle is a lovely thing; It makes no noise at all, but softly gives itself away; While quite unselfish, it grows small.

Eva K. Logue
1905-1997

Last Christmas, who knew? What sage among us could have foretold a Christmas 2020 marinated in a malicious germ that has seeped into every rift and crevice of our lives? These invading microbes are unimaginably small. One thousand threaded like a Christmas popcorn string

would just span the width of a human hair.

Yet these microscopic intruders have sickened millions, and shoved 280,000 of our fellow citizens into their graves. That means 280,000 families will be celebrating Christmas this year through salty tears.

Our 2020 Christmas icons are masked carolers singing at measured distances; reluctant family gatherings that run a risk of sickness or worse; and a majestic cathedral silhouetted against a moonlit winter sky, standing empty of its pilgrims

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Illustrations for the Harris and MacLaughlin pieces were created by Adrienne Rumschlag, Cherith activities director at The Village.



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on Christmas Eve.

Millions of workers who have been dismissed to unemployment lines and food banks are wondering now how they are going to make a Christmas for their children. *Presents under the tree? We can't even put food on the table!*

I am proud to tell you that Willow Brook has been able to support our full workforce through this madness. No one has lost hours. Paychecks are whole. I see the darkened restaurants and empty storefronts and thank God that Willow Brook is shining strong for her 500 workers.

COVID has slathered a bitter icing of gloom on our holiday this year. Who knew?

This microbe invasion begets shades of a Norman Rockwell wartime home front. I've heard tell of Christmases during World War II where families clasped hands around the tree and prayed for the safety of their soldiers in far-off fields, not knowing how it all would turn out.

And so today we may yield to despair over a loved one snared by the virus. Odds favor recovery, but we don't know. We pray. We search for scriptures of hope – *"Let not your hearts be troubled..."*

But my heart is troubled.

This bully virus has picked on Willow Brook since March. Each of our three communities has come under its assault. Seventeen of the people entrusted to us have died; that's 17 times my heart has been broken. Dozens of our battle-weary workers have fallen ill. Still each day staffers steel themselves for the fight that has come to them. We have watched moral giants rise up from their ranks – staff members who have put the welfare of residents above their own safety concerns. I have seen them each day gird up and bravely march straight into the battle. They don't flinch, they don't pause, and they have my undying admiration and gratitude.

Yes, Christmas is different this year. We may mask up before we head off to Christmas shop, we maybe have sworn off family hugs for the duration of the siege, we may have scrubbed what was left of youth from our hands, leaving sandpaper where once there was supple skin. The Christmas spirit flickers and sputters as it struggles to amp up to full brilliance. I just know, though, that as the day draws near, the breath of Christmas will sweep away the dark clouds of despair and bring hope to our troubled hearts.

We maybe are finding hope this Christmas in Pfizer and Moderna and AstraZeneca. The smart scientists

of their employ have promised vaccines that, after a few more months of torture, may deliver us from this plague. Stay on task, gentlemen and ladies in the white coats. I long for the day when your enchanted needle pierces

my arm and delivers its elixir of hope to my worried soul.

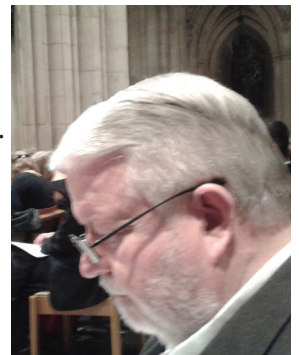
But far beyond a temporal hope for our times, we look back two thousand years to the village of Bethlehem in Judea, and there find reason for eternal hope. Return with me now to a cold, starlit night on the outskirts of that unassuming hamlet, where we come upon a rickety livestock feeding shed that shelters a straw-filled crib for hungry cattle. There in that manger, of all unlikely places, lies a wrapped newborn, shivering in the cold, crying into the night for the assignment that has been laid on him. This child, this Jesus, was sent by God to save humanity from itself and offer a path to endless love.

So this Christmas, let us remember that one day the pandemic will lift, but the little child in that manger will shine on for eternity.

Merry Christmas my friends.

... the breath of Christmas will sweep away the dark clouds of despair and bring hope to our troubled hearts.

Larry Harris, CEO
lharris@willow-brook.org



A Christmas Memory

This year, Delaware Run resident Ila Phillips is celebrating her 105th Christmas. Born on Nov. 4, 1915, Ila was raised on a Nebraska grain farm with her parents and sister in a community reminiscent of “Little House on the Prairie.” Ila took time to share with us her memories of Christmases long ago.

1. How did you celebrate Christmas when you were a child?

Christmas was very simple. We didn’t put up a tree, but my sister and I made crepe paper chains to decorate the windows. On Christmas Eve, we went to church, and if it was snowy, we’d ride in a sleigh with horses and bells. It was cold, but I loved it. When we got home, my sister and I hung our stockings over the corn box which we kept by the fireplace.

You might not know what a corn box is, but that’s where we put the scrap cobs after the corn was stripped off. We used the cobs as fuel for the cook stove.

Back to the stockings... we always got something small like a toy, a piece of fruit or a bit of candy. It was simple, but it was a treasure for my sister, Geraldine, and me.

2. Was there a special Christmas memory you have from childhood?

Yes, indeed. When I was eight years old, I got my last doll. My mother had told me, “We’re asking Santa for another doll, and that will be your last one.” That’s because I was very hard on my dolls. I’d play with them, and they’d lose their hair, so my mother would have to order doll wigs from the Sears & Roebuck catalog. And the dolls were pretty fragile. They had glass or ceramic heads, and something always happened to kill them, as I called it. My sister and I would have full burials of my dolls. Anyway, my mother said that would be my last doll.



Ila Phillips, 105, hugs the doll she got for Christmas in 1913. Marjorie, the doll, resides with Ila at Willow Brook at Delaware Run.

Photo by Kelly Frentsos

3. Can you tell us about the doll you got when you were eight?

Her name is Marjorie, and I still have her all these years later, so you know I took good care of her. She had bright yellow hair when I got her, but over the years, I’ve bought new wigs for her. I always dressed her nicely. Right now she’s wearing clothes that my mother made for me when I was a baby. The dress and shoes, they were mine once. She really is a very special doll that I’ll always cherish.



Tribute Gifts

Memorial Contributions

August 28 – November 18, 2020

Robert Allman

Uleta M. Allman

Richard C. Atkinson

Carol A. Roden

John & Jo Ann Bill

Brent & Nancy Bill

Linda Bill

Julie & Dave Duff

Harriet M. Bracken

C. Lee Bracken

Vada Brown

John & Sue Dickman

Margery D. Burkhart

David & Carol Camp

Paul Busche

William & Patricia Busche

Frances Carlton

April L. Jackson

Mary Ellen Cerrato

William & Marianne Burke

S. Frank & Betty Chappell

Anonymous

Larry & Janet Harris

Karen Susenna

James Crowley

John & Sue Dickman

Nancy DeTray

Lisa Mack

Frank DeWitt

Jerry & Cathy Amato

Donna Dunn

Sharlet Pettit

Barbara England's birthday

Judith England

Homer England

Uleta M. Allman

Tim Flahive

Judith England

Michael & Judith England

Anita Shively

Jean Gingrich

Corinne D. Esau

Douglas & Elaine Palmer

Helen J. Reppart

Martha J. Seelenbinder

Barbara Ulrich

John & Mabel Grandy

Sharon Mathias

Audrey & Alberta Harris

Larry & Janet Harris

Betty Hawvermale

James & Kathleen Bowser

David & Marceil Hanshew

John T. Hayes

Karen S. Hayes

Louise Herndon

Elinor Heingartner

Geraldine Hobbs

Thomas & Caroline Andrews

Fred & Amy Bollinger

Samantha Evans

Kathe Goff

James Hofmeister

Patrick & Laura Holden

Amy Knupp

Fred & Mary Ellen Lancie

Gary Wallberg

Mary Jo Humes

Bradley Humes

James E. Jackson

Mitchell & Dyana Welch

Johanna "Joedy" Jenkins

Joyce Barker

Hilda Koenig

Mariella C. Dunnan

Corinne D. Esau

Helen Nally

Douglas & Elaine Palmer

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Paula Korpieski

Thomas J. Lasley

Thomas & Kathryn Brod

Thomas & Janet Lasley

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Josephine G. Bichsel

Myles Nelson

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Elizabeth Moon

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Christina Chen

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Robert Pierce

Corinne D. Esau

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George P. Strohm

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Margaret Strohm

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Andrew & Gail Angel

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Nicki V. Zanetos

Lisa Mack

Tribute Gifts
made to honor the living

Corinne D. "Davie" Esau

Judith England

William & Judith McCartney

Carol Woodruff



**Hope and Healing
In Time for Christmas**

Judy Podolski is overjoyed to be back home for the holidays after a successful experience with short-term rehab at Willow Brook Christian Home. She's walking again and planning to put up her Christmas decorations.

Columbus resident Judy Podolski, 80, feels like she got an early Christmas miracle.

In August, Podolski broke her wrist and hip in a bad fall. She was in a lot of pain. "I was worried I'd never walk again. And I was afraid I'd lose my independence."

But after spending two weeks in short-term rehab at Willow Christian Home, she regained some strength and mobility. She continued with in-home therapy for two months at her son's house. And now Podolski is walking again and back in her own home.

The blessings came with a lot of hard work and daily physical therapy. At first Podolski worried she couldn't keep up. But staff at The Home put her at ease.

"The therapists treated me with so much kindness and compassion. They were so gentle with me. And the nurses – well, I couldn't have asked for better."

One other plus: her granddaughter, Claudia, works at The Home as a nurse in assisted living.

She liked the food at The Home so much, she wants to bring a friend to the restaurant there, after the pandemic passes.

Meanwhile, she's staying busy. She takes a daily walk, and she's preparing for the holidays. "I'm going to put up my Christmas decorations myself," she said. "I'm blessed to have another day of life and my independence. Christmas will be extra special this year for me."



Thank you to Annette Schackne, who donated her grand piano from the 1930s to Delaware Run. Her daughter, Lisa Martin, stopped by to see the piano's new home in the Summit Room.



We're grateful to Leah Schaad, personal care attendant at Delaware Run, and all of those who sanitize our communities during this time of COVID. Leah always serves with a smile.

75 Years Ago

A short story by Tom MacLaughlin

"Everything is all packed, Dave," Clara said.

"Good! I'll put the suitcases in the car."

"Meanwhile, I'll get supper ready." She teared up.

"It's been so long. Thank God the war is finally over. I hope Brian and Susan are okay."

"They would have told us if they weren't."

"Yes, I suppose so. I'm just so glad Brian is back home safe."

Dave finished loading the car. He and Clara had purchased a new 1940 Ford sedan five years ago, and it still served them well.

Early the next day, on Dec. 23, they left Troy, New York, driving on Route 2 into Massachusetts. "If all goes well, we'll be there in four hours," Dave said.

But all didn't go well. A sudden blizzard blew in from the West. Very quickly, snow covered the road. The car slid off the road, down 15 feet into several trees.

"Are you OK?" Dave asked Clara, who nodded. He opened the door, intending to flag down a vehicle, but the wind was too strong. There were no other cars on the road.

Dave turned off the engine. The car grew cold. He reached into the back seat for the car robe and covered them both.

Two hours passed. Dave started the car's engine until they felt warm, then he turned off the engine. They huddled closer and pulled the robe tighter.

Shortly after midnight, the snow abated, and snowplows began clearing the road. Whenever Dave heard a plow, he sounded his horn, but he soon realized the drivers couldn't hear him with their windows rolled up. The couple huddled for hours, periodically turning the engine on and off.

Finally, as daylight approached, a truck slowly approached, the driver's window wide open, and its horn sounding.

Dave caught on immediately. "Clara! That must be Brian!"

Dave honked the horn and turned on his rear lights. The truck stopped, and Brian and Susan climbed out of the vehicle carrying snow shovels. They shoveled a path down to the car. Brian opened the door and helped Clara out. He hugged his mother, who cried with joy.

Together, Brian and Susan helped Clara up the embankment and into the warm truck. Susan stayed with Clara and opened a bag of sandwiches and a container of coffee. Brian helped Dave climb up the embankment and into the truck with Clara.

As Dave and Clara warmed up, Susan and Brian shoveled the snow from behind the car and tied a heavy rope between the car's rear bumper and the truck's rear bumper.

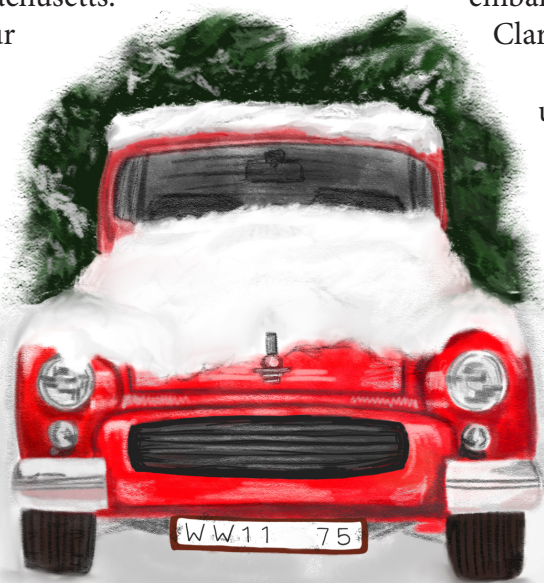
"Say a little prayer, Mom and Dad," Brian said. "Let's hope this works!" He stood near the car while Susan eased the truck forward.

"Good, so far!" shouted Brian. "The car is moving!"

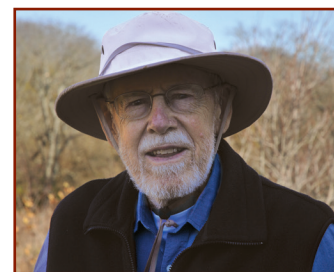
Very slowly, the truck eased the car up onto the road. Brian got into the car, and it

started immediately.

Dave and Clara in the car, and Brian and Susan in the truck, drove to Needham for their first family Christmas together in five years after having celebrated the end of World War II on Sept. 2, 1945. Peace and joy filled their hearts. Nothing could keep them apart.



T. MacLaughlin



Tom MacLaughlin, resident of Willow Brook at Delaware Run

Merry Christmas from The Home!
 Pictured left to right are: Edith Tenaso,
 STNA; Deborah Hayden, RN; Rhoda
 Sekyi, STNA; and Anisa Aman, STNA.



Peace reigns at Delaware Run when you take time to enjoy a lovely snowfall and a beautiful view of the lake from the Garner Garden.



Jordan Moyer, culinary staff at Delaware Run, served up beef tenderloin for Ann May.



Carmella Mitchell honored her father, Major Thomas, by hanging an ornament on the Memory Tree at The Village last year. Each campus holds a Memory Tree Service to memorialize our residents who have passed away that year.

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Willow Brook at Delaware Run

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Reflections is published quarterly by
Willow Brook Christian Communities
 Erin MacLellan, Editor
 Joel Hornsby, Designer

Assisted Living • Independent Living • Short-Term Rehab
 Adult Daycare • Transitional Living • Memory Care • Long-Term Care

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A STILLNESS THAT COMES WITH SNOW

Marilyn Schroeder, Delaware Run resident

Bright festive ribbon draws the eye,
Reminders of warming flames in a fireplace,
Of cardinals winging through the sky,
Colorful reminders of God's bounty.

Contrast to trees feathered with white,
Soft pale sky above blanketed earth.
There's a stillness that comes with snow,
Shelter and rest for the green and growing.
A time to slow, reflect, a time for patience.

Now, a poem, a prayer – God's gift
Of wonder and beauty, His grace
and gentle blessing.

