

The Open House

All those who were true believers in Christ took upon them, gladly, the name of Christ, or Christians (Alma 46:15).

Alison listened eagerly as the bishop announced that their ward would be having a Christmas open house this year. “We want it to be a special evening,” he said. “It will be a wonderful opportunity to invite friends and neighbors.”

Alison loved the Christmas holidays. She liked shopping for presents for her family and friends and singing Christmas carols. And she loved reading the story of Jesus’s birth and thinking of Him as a small baby.

The bishop’s next words caught her attention. “Because of the open house, we won’t be having our traditional ward Christmas party this year.”

Alison frowned. “No party?” she whispered to her mother. The ward Christmas party was one of her favorite parts of the season.

Mom put a finger to her lips.

“Some of our friends and neighbors do not understand that we are Christians,” the bishop continued. “We want them to know that we believe in Jesus Christ.”

Alison thought about that. She remembered when her best friend, Erica, had said that Mormons weren’t Christians. She didn’t understand what Erica meant, so she had asked her parents about it.

“A lot of people focus on the name ‘Mormon’ or ‘Latter-day Saints,’” Mom had explained. “They forget that our Church is named for Jesus Christ.”

The next day at school, Alison had told Erica the first article of faith: “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.”

But Erica had just shrugged. “Then why don’t people call you Christians instead of Mormons?” she asked.

Alison turned her attention back to the bishop.

“The open house will focus on Jesus Christ,” he said. “We’re asking families to bring nativity sets, and we will have a live reenactment of the Nativity scene.”

As the time drew near for the open house, Alison started getting

excited. Mom and Dad invited an elderly neighbor to go to the open house. Alison invited Erica.

The night of the open house, Alison helped Mom wrap both of the family’s nativity sets in newspaper. Then Mom and Dad drove her to pick up Erica.

When they got to the church, Alison and Erica looked at nativity sets from Japan, Austria, the Philippines, and many other countries.

Then the girls went outside where the young men and young women were acting out the Nativity. There were live cows, sheep, and even a nanny goat. “Everything but a camel,” Alison said.



"As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, you are a Christian."³

Elder Gary J. Coleman of the Seventy



The bishop asked everyone to gather in the chapel. Alison and Erica sat with the Primary children. The children sang "Picture a Christmas" and "The Nativity Song," and the ward choir performed parts of *Messiah*.

"That was really great," Erica said on the ride home. "I wish my parents could have come."

"Maybe next year," Alison said, smiling. She thought about the open house and realized she hadn't missed the Christmas party after all. ♦

