

FROM THE FIELD

SERVING BREAKFAST

THE REAL CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

“Giving, not getting, brings to full bloom the Christmas spirit. . . . The spirit of Christmas illuminates the picture window of the soul, and we look out upon the world’s busy life and become more interested in people than things. To catch the real meaning of the ‘spirit of Christmas,’ we need only drop the last syllable, and it becomes the ‘Spirit of Christ.’”

President Thomas S. Monson, “The Best Christmas Ever,” *Ensign*, Dec. 2008, 5.

I was a newly arrived full-time missionary in Connecticut, and my companion and I were serving in a small ward during the first round of holidays I spent on my mission. I hadn’t yet learned the dietary value of becoming friends with a few of the members, and my first Thanksgiving resulted in no invitation and no dinner. Our mission president took pity on us, and we ended up being the only missionaries to spend Thanksgiving at the mission home. We were grateful but a little embarrassed.

We started putting ourselves out there early for the coming Christmas. Our shameful solicitations landed three full meals at three different homes. Pancakes for breakfast, Lithuanian food for lunch, and a Jamaican feast for dinner. Our stomachs were bursting. I was still an inexperienced missionary and thought that was what Christmas on a mission was all about.

During the next year, however, the Lord was able to teach me how to keep the spirit of Christmas. We served among a humble group of people living in nearly abandoned milling towns scattered along small rivers. And we loved serving among these people immensely.

We decided to share our Christmas with an investigator, Alice, and her family. Alice supported her three teenage boys, a daughter, and a granddaughter all with her income working at a fast food place. Needless to say, her budget was tight. So instead of focusing on ourselves at Christmas, we decided to serve someone else.

BY JACOB S. FULLMER

My first Christmas on my mission was all about me, but the Lord taught me how to serve in time for the second Christmas season.

My companion at the time, Elder Werner, felt there were basically two things that would bring joy into the world: the gospel and good food. When we showed up on Christmas morning to cook a simple breakfast, we were hailed like Old Saint Nick himself. Her extended family was there, and everyone was laughing, joking around, and wanting to help us cook. Since our families were allowed to call on Christmas, Alice and my mom were able to talk on the phone together. Watching her speak with my family was far more of a gift than the three meals I participated in the year before. It connected someone I was serving to my family and helped my family share my mission with me. The morning was filled with a feeling of familiarity that was almost tangible. I knew I was where I was supposed to be.

During that morning, I came to appreciate the true spirit of Christmas. And it has everything to do with the example of our Savior and the teachings of the gospel. The excitement wasn’t about us as missionaries; it wasn’t even about our gesture of making breakfast. That morning was about sons and daughters of God simply sharing with one another. I wasn’t given a feast of food, but my soul was full of joy.

Christmas is a time of giving and receiving. While it is always fun to be on the receiving side, I learned that the teaching “it is better to give than to receive” (see Acts 20:35) may be an over-rung bell, but it will never fail to sound true. **NE**

