

# PONDERINGS ALONG THE PATH

By Nadine Boyd

Dear Compassionate Friends:

Christmas time is a time for childlike wonder, childlike trust and childlike anticipation. Part of the joy of parenthood is experiencing those same feelings of your childhood through the eyes of your child. Do you remember the fascination your child had seeing the Christmas tree for the first time, or bundling up the family to drive around town to see the Christmas decorations and lights?

Do you remember calling ten different stores to make sure you got the only gift your child had asked Santa for? And standing in line for an hour so your child could sit on Santa's lap?

I remember one year when my son Luke was about four or five years old and he was really listening to the lyrics of some of the Christmas songs from Sunday school. He asked me what a stable was; I replied it was like a barn and went on to explain that Baby Jesus was born in a barn because there was no room in the hotel. He studied me for a few seconds with those serious brown eyes and finally said "No sir, Mom!" He evidently thought at the time that was a little too unbelievable. It made me experience all over again the magic and wonder of the Christmas story.

I remember so many years helping with the children's Christmas service at church. It was a bittersweet joy; each time I heard the children's choir singing I felt my Aaron should be singing with the other children. I remember my children's joy when they were able to participate and dress up for the Nativity story.

Christmas time I think is an especially lonely time without your child. I think of all the years we have missed Christmas with Aaron, and I wonder what kind of teenager and what kind of man he would have become. Would he have enjoyed reading and playing music? Would he have had his dad's quick wit? He was very kind as a little boy; I'm sure he would have been a kind man as well.

My other sons' lives have been shaped around losing their older brother as well. I think it has made them more aware of life's fragility and how vulnerable you are when you love someone. They have expressed sadness at a very early age that they never got to really know their brother. Chase asked his dad once (he is our adopted child) if Aaron hadn't died if he would still have been our son. My husband said he felt very strongly we were meant to be his parents, and he was meant to be our son. I always say that all children come from Heaven, but I had to pray extra hard for Chase! I know the Lord got so sick and tired of the prayers He said "All right, all right! I will send you a baby! Just quit praying for that!"

My sons have grown up with our Compassionate Friends tradition of donating a gift for a needy child in memory of Aaron, and often took joy in picking out a gift for that child. We always put several little ornaments he made in pre-school on the tree, along with those his brothers made. Aaron's Christmas stocking always goes on the fireplace with the others. I can't imagine putting these precious memories away forever and never looking at them again; nor can I imagine taking his pictures down. When you lose a child at such a young age you don't have as many pictures, precious little things they made or were special to them or memories, so those items or memories are especially treasured.

This Christmas and holiday season find a quiet place. Find the soft still place in your heart, and feel that wonder and trust. Write a letter to your child telling them how much you love them, and how much joy their life brought you. Write down a happy or funny memory and put it in their Christmas stocking. Make your child's favorite cookies. Come to the Christmas memorial service, light a candle for your child and have a message read aloud. Volunteer to help at a school or church or shelter. Honor your child's life and your love for one another. Give thanks for the joy he brought you.

I wish you comfort and healing in this season of wonder and light.

In friendship,

*Nadine*

