



Evangelism
In The
Prophetic
Spirit

The Kimball Boyd Coburn Ministry

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Issue 181

A Coburn Family Christmas Story



It was the year of 1978, when Christmas Eve came on a Sunday ~ actually, a good day to stop the madness of last minute shopping and take time to be still and truly prepare for the Babe's birth.

The sanctuary was decorated with fresh greenery, holly and ribbons of red ~ the Chrismon Christmas tree stood in beauty 'neath the choir loft. The Advent Candles flickered above the manger scene where only the animals had gathered. The Children, Youth and Sanctuary choirs sang with joy as they led us into stillness, an almost silent moment. Kimball stood in the pulpit of our church, El Monte First UMC. His Christmas message was powerful yet tender, as he touched the core of our hearts. *He challenged us to welcome the Christ child with gifts wrapped in patience and servanthood as we reached out to welcome strangers in our midst.* He told us to ribbon the gifts with the peace, joy, hope and love in our hearts.



Earlier that evening, Kimball was gathering his things together for the Christmas Eve Service when the phone rang. I was putting out leftovers from lunch for our supper when I heard Kimball say, "Yes, I am Rev. Coburn, how may I help you?" The man calling sounded weak and weary and may have been crying. "Can you help my wife and me get to Phoenix to see our son and his family for Christmas?" Kimball asked him where they were. "We are at the El Monte Bus Station" the man said. Kimball told him he would be there in a few minutes.

Having just hung up the phone, Kimball said, "My goodness, I forgot to get the man's name! How will I know who to look for?" But as he pulled up to the curb he noticed an older gentleman with his arms wrapped around an older woman. Seeing their weary faces, he asked them if they were the ones who called about needing help to get to Arizona. "Si, Senor, we are!" they said excitedly. With a warm smile, Kimball invited them out of the cold and into the car. The gentleman told Kimball his name was Joe and his wife was Mary. Their son was very sick, and they knew they must see him and his family. They wanted so badly to go but their car was too old for that kind of trip. Their plan was to ride the bus from East LA to the El Monte Bus Station and catch a Greyhound Bus to Phoenix. However, when they

got there, they realized they didn't have enough money for the bus tickets. But they knew they must find a way. After praying together for an answer, Joe looked through the phonebook hanging in a phonebooth for the only place he thought might help them – the churches. El Monte First UMC was the only church that had a home phone number for the pastor and that's why he called him.

Since the bus they had planned on taking had already left, Kimball invited them to our home for dinner and to come to our 11:00 PM Christmas Eve Service. He explained that he had to get back to the church to finish plans for the service but assured them that the children and I were looking forward to having them in our home. And that we were. The boys put more wood in the fireplace and a favorite Christmas album on the record player. The girls set the table for supper and cut a bouquet of flowers to make it special. They arrived to find a warm welcome, complete with hugs, from our entire family and our dog who was named Christmas Angel. After washing up, the kids invited them to the table for supper. It was most humbling to listen to them tell us about their only son and his family. Joe and Mary had two little granddaughters, ages 3 and 4, who they had never seen. More than anything they wanted to be with their family this Christmas. They asked about our family, and when the children spoke, they listened to their chatter with smiles. Mary offered to help me wash dishes after supper and Joe helped the boys bring in more logs for the fireplace.

Kathy and Cari went to their room in hopes of finding something for Joe and Mary to give to their granddaughters for Christmas. On the top shelf of their closet they found a couple of Holly Hobby rag dolls they had outgrown. They wrapped them in tissue and put them in a Christmas bag with ribbons and cards for Mary to sign. Kimball Jr and Collie found a stocking hat and gloves for Joe and I found a scarf and gloves for Mary, plus a box of goodies and an Upper Room book of Christmas meditations for their trip to Phoenix. The children filled extra Christmas stockings with candy and fruit and hid their gifts in a box in the back of our station wagon. It had been an unexpected evening of sheer good will as we drove off to church for more memory making.



Joe and Mary seemed a little embarrassed that they might not look good enough to sit in church with us, but our children quickly grabbed their hands and introduced them to folks. They were surprised to see little children in their PJ's and mamas, daddies and grandparents in their work clothes. As the organ began to play "O Holy Night" they scooted right in with us feeling very much at home. In his message simply titled "Hope" Kimball shared that Christmas had come to us early with a phone call from strangers in need. I couldn't help but notice tears in the eyes of those around us, especially Joe and Mary.



A Christmas Eve tradition at our church was to close the service with the lighting of candles and singing "***Silent Night***". As we sang, we moved out of the sanctuary and into the courtyard to represent going into the world with the light of Christ. We encircled our little garden and sang at the top of our lungs, "***Joy to the World***" to let our community to know that Christmas was here!

While folks wished each other Merry Christmas, our children and I slipped into one of the Sunday school rooms and took the little Christmas tree that was decorated and put it in the station wagon.

Kimball took Joe and Mary into his office and told them he had vouchers for them from the El Monte Ministerial Association for a night's stay at a motel and breakfast in the morning. Some of the folks from church chipped in to buy two round trip tickets to Phoenix and back to Los Angeles. Kimball arranged to pick them up and see them off in time to be in Phoenix by 2:00 in the afternoon for Christmas with their family.

"It is Christmas!" all eight of us exclaimed, as we crammed into the station wagon and took them to the motel. While Kimball was helping Joe and Mary check-in, the children and I quickly ran the big box from the car to the room the motel had left unlocked for us. Out came the little decorated tree! Gifts were scattered beneath it and the stockings were hung from the dresser knobs with care! And as Joe and Mary opened the door, the Christmas tree lights clicked on! Smiles, tears, hugs, kisses, thanks and Merry Christmases were shared by all.

A tired Coburn family drove in the parsonage driveway around 2 AM. Our children got into their PJs, Kimball stoked the fire, and I brought out mugs of hot chocolate and Santa's plate of homemade Christmas cookies. We gathered around our tree and were warmed by the glow of the fireplace as we talked about this Christmas Eve. Kathy questioned her dad, "This morning you told us we are to welcome strangers in our midst. Daddy, do you think God sent Joe and Mary to us?" Children have a wonderful way of seeing things that cause us to ponder their questions. Although we never heard from Joe and Mary again, we hoped they felt welcomed and loved this Christmas Eve and that it was truly a Holy Night for them, as it was for us.

**This year Christmas Eve falls on Sunday like it did years ago for the Coburn Family ~ wonder if there will be strangers in our midst?
If so, how will we welcome them on this Holy Night
when the Christ of our lives was born?**



Just a reminder that this newsletter is now available online, as well as sending it through the Post Office. If you prefer to receive it in your email box, let us know at kbcministry@integrity.com. To continue receiving **The Call** via the US Postal Service you don't need to do anything unless you have a change of address. You can email your new home address to us or write a note to the Kimball Coburn Ministry – PO Box 633, Claremont, CA 91711-0633. Thank you for Circuit Riding with us these past 38 years through The Call. It is a privilege to share our journey with you.



Kimball Boyd Coburn Ministry
PO Box 633
Claremont, CA 91711-0633

Service Return Requested



**A VERY MERRY THANK YOU
FROM: KIMBALL AND PAM**



We are in our early days of Advent and your cards and letters are beginning to arrive. Pictures of your growing families, Alternative Christmas gifts, homemade goodies and generous gifts for the ministry warm our hearts. ~ We love this time of the year to visit with you once again, feel your joy and hear your stories of the past year. ~ There have been births, illnesses, and deaths in the families we have come to know and love. We hold you especially in our prayers. ~ We humbly thank you for your many expressions of love, not just in this season, but throughout the years. ~



Enjoy Kimball's Christmas songs by going to kimballcoburn.org. It is his gift to you ~ Yes, you may download and share with others.



A precious memory of sharing God's love with one of his children with special needs. We have the wonderful privilege of sharing his love with all of his children.

Merry Christmas, Dear Friends.