

## As I See It by Joan Barnett

### Nativity

Isaiah 9:2. KJV. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. They that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

As Christmas is on the horizon, once again, I find myself taking a look back over the years to Christmas events with which I have been involved.

As a teenager, I well remember suggesting to the members of our church youth fellowship group that we could go around Rustington carol singing and raise money for the Daily Mirror Old Codgers Christmas appeal. This was agreed with enthusiasm. We went out on Christmas Eve and the evening before, finishing at the home of a group member for refreshments. Christmas Eve, we went along to the Parish Church for the Midnight Communion service. The church was always full. Walking home we looked up into the sky wondering if we would catch a glimpse of a certain sleigh whizzing across the horizon. I still have those age-old childhood thoughts. Why not imagine we are still young?

Christmas at the Church of the Holy spirit reminds me of my days with Junior Church and the Nativity presentation, the Sunday before Christmas. Everyone would have a part providing they were happy to be involved. You could even find yourself dressed as a holly berry, a very important part if you are three years old! I do not remember any occasion where an angel had an argument with a shepherd or the innkeeper allowed Mary and Joseph to come in because there were plenty of rooms available.

Over the years the Church of the Holy spirit and other local churches involvement with together in Christ would find us joining up for Lent Groups, services, occasionally in the summer these would be out of doors. We got to know the members of the other churches very well.

One Christmas the idea was suggested that we could consider performing an adult nativity play. Interesting, I thought, assuming I would simply be a member of the choir. How wrong can you be? Never assume! For some strange reason I found myself assigned to play Mary, this has always baffled me. My friend could be very persuasive! She was the one who had come by the play but kept us all in order with her excellent director's skills.

As this was well over 30 years ago, I hope I can be forgiven for a hazy memory. I do not remember how many rehearsals we needed to be word perfect. I cannot even remember what we all looked like in our costumes. One member of the cast, an expert with a sewing needle and involved with the local dramatic society was a great help in this department.

The first performance was in the catholic church where all went well. These are the times when we appreciate how necessary rehearsals are in order to concentrate and improve our diction. Pronouncing our words correctly is very important. God should not come out sounding like guard! I managed to make everyone laugh at my error. The following year we performed once again, this time at the Methodist Church. I got my own back by refusing to play Mary again and took the part of Elizabeth, my persuasive friend played Mary. Far better than me, of course! After all, she knew exactly how to pronounce God!

Since my sight loss, watching nativity plays of any kind now require audio description for me. Not that I have seen one for many years. Instead, we are fortunate at the Drop In to be entertained with Christmas carols and songs by members of the local primary school choir. Some of us happen to be celebrating our birthday around this time and enjoy extra renditions of Happy Birthday by the young people.

The verse from Isaiah takes me back to Primary School, I had to read the passage at a Christmas presentation. Whenever I hear this passage, I am transported back to those childhood days once again.

My friend moved many years ago and we have remained in regular contact. Maybe these thoughts will bring back those happy memories for her as well.

I wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year.