

January 2017

Happy New Year!

Dear *Friends & Family*,

CABOOSE! **END OF YEAR REPORT FOR 2016**



This week will mark the completion of **31 years** of full-time ministry, and 17 years less a month of living-by-faith itinerant ministry as an **Elim Fellowship** home-missionary. Once again, as in previous years, **2016** encompassed traveling thousands of miles to minister in various states: **DE, PA, NJ, NY, OH, & COSTA RICA**. I preached/taught *47X {& traveled approximately **9,055 miles** just for preaching ministry [this included approximately 5,000 air miles to Costa Rica, where I preached while visiting our daughter & family who are missionaries there]. This did not include many more miles for non-preaching ministry-related meetings & events. Venues of ministry included Sunday morning whole-family services, a whole-church Sunday School Rally service, youth services, 2 youth retreats, children's services, 4 youth & children's camps, a men's retreat, a young adults' home group, Christian school chapels, a Camp fund-raising banquet, an inner city mission for women & children, & a 5-night "Passion of Christ" drama [*this annual production for which I play a considerable part re: setup, acting, directing, costuming, etc. forced me to turn down a # of preaching invitations during that season of the year, given its scope, time-consumption, intensity, energy-expenditure, etc]. Expressions of the **Body of Christ** I ministered to were **Elim Fellowship, Hopewell Network, Italian Pentecostal, Assembly of God, American Baptist, Independent Pentecostal, Charismatic, Methodist, Mennonite, [formerly, but now independent] United Church of Christ, Costa Rican, & Evangelical Chinese**. Once again, I could not help but notice the Father had me share "the basics" [Heb.6] to His people, i.e., the gospel in great detail, the doctrines of grace, the supremacy of Christ versus idolatry in His people's hearts, the nature of the Word of God, the Incarnation, the exclusivity & indispensability of the gospel, & The Person of Christ. As with 2015, this past year showed occasional involvement in worship leading for adults.....

“THE WIDOW’S ‘MIGHT’”



12/31 If you are one of those who takes the time to read this, you’re most likely aware that Kim & I live entirely by faith. We have since 2000. One of the most beautiful aspects of living-by-faith for us is that of the corpus of supporters that we do have, so many of them are or have been widows [meaning they’re in glory now], with occasional widowers included as well. One of them called us the other night. Kim wasn’t home & typically when I hear one of them calling our home phone & leaving a message I usually leave it for Kim to attend to since she typically converses with them. However, when I learned it was one of them calling re: my recent bout with GBS, I felt to take the call. It was **“Ma” Margavage, “Ste. Beatrice”, or “Aunt Bea”** as I most often fondly refer to her. My GBS was & has been “over” for some weeks now & I am back in full-swing physically, but emotionally & spiritually I was in a very down season. In fact, I was in & out of prayer quite a bit that afternoon before Aunt Bea called. I was very distressed again re: my sanctification & lack thereof. Through the past several days with the busyness & stress of the Holidays upon me & with our daughter Laura & her family of 6 here & all that that entails {it was a delight to have them-they’re not typically here for Christmas}, I found myself “shutting down”, short-circuiting, coming to the end of myself rather quickly, etc. It was not pretty. My poor Kim has to ride this roller coaster of emotions with me. When she tells me she loves me, it’s obvious she really does. As I poured my heart & struggles out to Aunt Bea, I was amazed, despite her being in her late 80’s, of the sharpness of mind, of the soundness of her faith from walking with Jesus for decades, of her replies to my doubts which built my faith & comforted my troubled soul, of her strength of spirit-hence, her “widow’s ‘might’”. She, like so many of the other widows who have given Kim & me their “mites” over the many years, are *in themselves* invaluable to us. It causes me to take seriously what we do with the donations & offerings God’s people send us to continue His work more seriously than I already do.....

“IRONGUERTIN’S ‘IRON CHARIOTS’”



Once again, if you're reading this newsletter you most likely noticed it came via my email address, viz, "ironguertin@gmail.com". When switching my email account from Juno [gasp!] to Gmail a # of years ago, I was surprised to see "guerty@gmail.com" was already taken! "Ironguertin" via "Iron Curtain" came to mind & it stuck. Yes, it was a play on words re: the Iron Curtain but not to intend that that "travesty" of history was to be taken lightly. In addition, given how very weak I am in myself, I long for the Lord Christ to make me strong like **iron**-like Him. May it be so. In the season of discouragement I was facing mentioned above, that our Lord sent Aunt Bea to console me, I was once again endeavoring to drive out "the Canaanites" from "the land" of my heart-you know, the sins, weaknesses, strongholds of thought, etc. that all of us struggle with & just can't seem to beat. Jud. 1:19: *"The LORD was with the men of Judah. They took possession of the hill country, but they were unable to drive the people from the plains, because they had chariots fitted with iron."* Through the years, whenever I've read this text, I've often thought to myself, "C'mon guys-after all the Lord has shown & done for you since the Exodus, & you can't trust Him to clear the land completely?!" Now, I'm not so quick to condemn them. Praise our Father, He is making us more like Jesus each day, & one day He *shall* "perfect that which concerns us" [Ps.138:8].

"PREACHING THROUGH THE PAIN"



While in this season, I was scheduled to preach. Of all things-to preach! "How can I, Lord? It hurts so badly." Welcome to the Christ, Michael. While shredded, pierced, bruised & fastened by nails to a rough, splintered cross, Jesus *kept ministering to people!* His persecutors-forgiving them, His mother-ensuring she was cared for in His "absence", one of the thieves nailed next to Him-assuring him of eternal life. In the light of this my "pain" seemed trivial-at best. Father, forgive me.....

"STATIONED AT THE INCARNATION"



Over the past few years, from time to time, I have studied, meditated, memorized, & preached re: the Incarnation of the Son of God. Two theologians I have been greatly helped by re: this are William G.T. Shedd & E.H. Gifford. I delved deeper into the intricacies of the pre-existent, eternal, co-equal to the Father & Spirit *Logos/Son* entering into & becoming "part of His Own creation", of His partaking of a sinless human nature & body. My spirit would sink in awe under the weight of the glory of God re: His unfathomably humbling Himself & condescending to become a man. The omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, immense, immutable One becomes "microscopic" in the Virgin's womb. And this happens on one of virtually countless celestial bodies, the Earth, that in itself *is microscopic* in the vast canopy of the universe! The Logos, viz The Word, would partake of Mary's seed & substance, which would be sanctified by the Holy Spirit overshadowing her & causing her to conceive. But the soothsayers of the prophet Daniel's day exclaimed so dogmatically, "But the gods don't dwell among men!" [Dan.2:11]. They were wrong. The Word not only dwelt among us, but inhabited one of us in the flesh, viz, Mary of Nazareth, for 9 months. As if these divine mysteries & marvels were not enough for us to contemplate for the rest of our lives, there is more: the Eternal Son would *eternally retain* His human nature & body [both glorified since the resurrection], never returning to what He once was in eternity past, viz, eternal divine Spirit *solely* [Jn.4:24]. This bespeaks His condescension to identify & be united with His Bride, the Church. By retaining His glorified human body, it will also forever display, via His wounds for Her, His indescribably high "bride-price" paid for her....

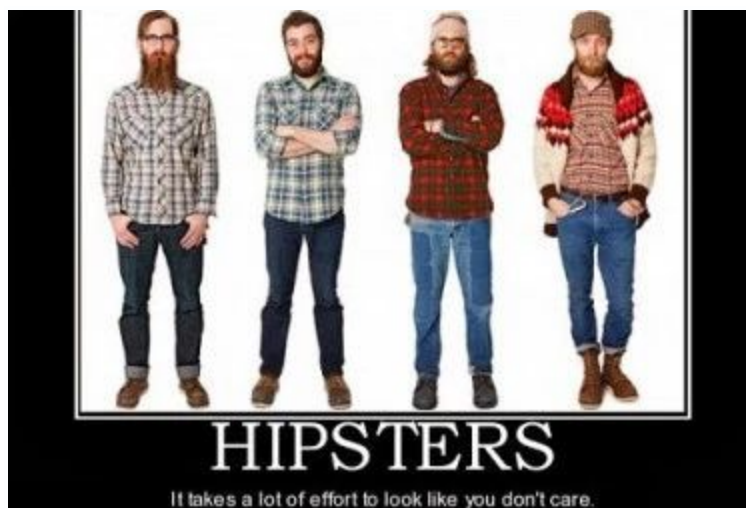
“PITY FOR THE NATIVITY”



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And yet, and yet, despite all of this, we humans, both sinners & saints, have proven once again we cannot be trusted with divine things. I had the great misfortune to view a video presentation of the Nativity, so-called, on Facebook in early December, that unfortunately, went viral. It was produced by a mega-church, & I would dare say most assuredly a seeker-sensitive one. “Why so, Michael?” They endeavored to try to portray the Nativity story as told & seen through the eyes of **children**. The depiction was comedic throughout-silly, goofy, flippant, “light”, irreverent. The producers of it obviously believed that this tragic depiction of this most awe-inspiring historical sacred event would be what was in the minds of the children. Like the soothsayers of Daniel’s day above-they were wrong. This sad depiction is what *these adults inserted into the minds of the children*. The kids themselves would never think of it this way. And I can guarantee you this-if the adult producers & actors & the children were actually present at **THE Nativity**, they wouldn’t think or behave in this way. The shepherds were “sore afraid” at the sight of the **angels**. When they beheld the Lord Christ, the Creator of the vast angelic host in infantile form lying in a manger, there wasn’t one drop of levity in their minds or hearts! Oh God. Oh God. When I saw this video the first thing I wanted to do was lie down on the floor in a fetal position & weep. I truly believe this flippant mindset of taking the things of God so lightly is a fruit of “BibleBeltism” & seeker-sensitivity. I have observed for decades that when one is around “the holy things” all of the time, it almost impossible not to take them lightly & to lose “the awe”. Such is human nature. Tragically, so many of these churches are huge, which makes it easy for the leaders & members to believe that God’s blessing & favor is upon them. Church size *is not* a guarantee of Divine favor. As I type I’m reminded of words that Judson Cornwall spoke at a chapel at Elim Bible Institute in a series of messages he did on the prophet Hosea: “A popular message is rarely a divine message”. He then said it again with emphasis: “A popular message is *rarely* a divine message.” Oh God.

“GENERATIONAL IDENTITY TRUMPS INCARNATION NATIVITY”



It gets worse, Beloved-much worse-as if it could get any worse. Not long after I beheld the “Christianity-lite” version of the Nativity above, a friend of mine from decades ago in another state posted, yes, once again, on Facebook, “The Hipster Nativity”. Oh God. It depicts a “modern-day” Nativity, viz if Jesus was born in 2016. Mary’s blouse is off of her shoulder, showing one of her bra straps & part of her bra; she’s showing the “peace sign” with her fingers; “Joseph” is taking a smartphone “selfie” of them. The Magi are on Segways carrying Amazon boxes wearing suspenders & sunglasses. Forgive me, but I can’t go on & describe anymore. Yes, of course, this went viral too. The devil loves anything that breeds “No Fear” of God. It’s being touted as “Jesus reimagined in the age of iPhones & manbuns”, a “modern twist” re: the Nativity, an “updated Christmas staple”, It’s the “creation” of two “entrepreneurial” brothers. And they’re making a lot of \$ from it at \$130/set. Oh God-in this age where we are “drunk” with ourselves, our selfies, our particular generation’s identity, etc., we stop at no expense to God to demean & even blaspheme His holy things for the sake of our “identities”. There is no fear of God before their eyes. [Rom.3:18].

“EVEN DOWN TO THE CHILDREN”



I wish I could say it stops here, Beloved. It doesn’t. In this same time frame a well-meaning friend sent me a video of a puppet rendition of the Nativity. He meant well & he knows I’ve

worked with children for decades. I've done puppeteering for all those years too, & my daughter & son-in-law bought me a marionette for Christmas. So, I'm not against such means of ministering to children by any means. However, I couldn't watch all of it. Once again, the awe-inducing event of the incarnation of God's Son was reduced to human invention & silliness. The song played in the background sounded like a song from the ungodly rock band "Queen". I have noticed for years this demeaning & belittling handling of the things of God with children even in their Sunday School curriculum & Bible books. Jesus & other Bible characters are artistically depicted as unrealistic goofy-looking people. They have big bug-like eyes with tiny pupils, big lips, etc. What is wrong with us, dear friends? What is wrong with us?

"YOU'RE NOT 'EVEN CLOSE'"



I can tell you the problem, fellow Christian. In every one of these cases, the producers of these travesties discussed above have not exposed themselves to the whole counsel of God in His Word-to His kindness & *severity*. Doctrinally-light churches produce casual non-God-fearing "Christians". They have not begun to know Him. Exposure to the awe, holiness, & severity of God as well as His unfathomable love produces a holy fear in one that drives them to their knees, to their faces, to *Him!* It wasn't until the Psalmist entered God's sanctuary, where His presence was, where His Word was encased in the ark, that he really saw things the way they really were. It was after such "entrance" that the Psalmist became sensitive to the heart & things of God. [73:17] A line from the 1977 miniseries Jesus of Nazareth comes to mind. It was spoken by one of the Magi as they discussed the Star of Bethlehem's significance re: the Messiah. "Melchior" retorts, "Some of their [Israel's] holy men have been close to Him." Oh God. And we all know what happens when that occurs, Beloved. Down they go! Like dead men! **Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Manoah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, the Apostle John.** ALL were in "holy shambles" when they encountered the Living God of Israel. But nowadays we produce "funny, cute videos", thinking they're an aspect of the divine. May He help us, Beloved. Oh, may He help us this new & coming year, to see Him for Who He really is. Please, O Father, please. Please do so, O Lord, & we'll magnify Your Name. Amen.



Ministry/Events for *JANUARY* & those not listed in last month's newsletter:

Dec. 11: IC, Wilmington, DE: Preschool class: puppeteering & worship leading

Dec. 13: Neifert home, N. Wilmington, DE: Immanuel Church Young Adults' group

Dec. 14: IC, Wilmington, DE: Tabernacle of David: worship leader

Dec. 25: IC, Wilmington, DE: "The Magi" drama: director, sound editing, costumer, actor

Dec. 31: IC, Wilmington, DE: New Year's Eve Service: worship leader

Jan. 3: Petra Church, New Holland, PA: hsc board mtg.///Network pastors' mtg.

Jan. 3-22: Daughter Laura and family of 6 in town from Costa Rica

Jan. 11: Maranatha Christian Fellowship, Moorestown, NJ: youth group mtg.

Jan. 15: Maranatha Christian Fellowship, Berlin Campus, West Berlin, NJ: Sun. a.m. service

Jan. 18: New Covenant Community Church, Audubon, NJ: Elim Fellowship area pastors' mtg.

Jan. 29: Hopewell Christian Fellowship, Telford, PA: Sun. a.m. family service

*Michael is an ordained [Elim Fellowship](#) itinerant Stateside missionary & is also licensed to preach the gospel by the local church he attends, [Immanuel Church](#). *Caboose!* is also an affiliate ministry of [The Hopewell Network of Churches](#). For 14 years he served on various local church staffs as their children's pastor. Since 2000 Kim & he have lived by faith, having no set salary, retirement, etc. to speak of. Yet-this is their calling at this season of their lives. Michael preaches God's Word & systematic theology, using both drama & visual aids, to all age groups, from children to senior citizens, either separately or combined. To help support this work, please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: [Elim Fellowship, c/o 1703 Dalton Rd., Lima, NY 14485](#), marking it "[Preferred-Michael Robert Guertin](#)" or you may click on the link below to give directly:

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