



WITNESS SEASON

MINUTE FOR MISSION

February 1, 2006

Emmanuel—God with us



Aboriginal children gather around a fire to hear about the angels, shepherds, and the Christ-child who came in a simple way.

I joined the aboriginal students at our seminary on a December evening to share the Christmas story with other aboriginals living in the city. We drove through a light rain along the highway, got off at an exit, and then parked along the underpass.

Surrounding the bridge were wood shacks. It was a cold night, and folks were gathered around small fires outside of their homes. Children were bundled against the cold, although most wore flip-flops. Adults had just returned from their jobs, building luxurious new apartment buildings for city dwellers. Their hands were calloused and their faces looked tired as they gathered to eat and relax.

Some of our students built a big bonfire under the bridge for warmth and light. The rest of us went from shack to shack to invite the children to come to the bridge for songs and dance and to hear the Christmas story. Since a few of our students were from the same tribe as those who lived near the bridge, we were warmly welcomed.

When we got back to the bridge, a large group of children had gathered. Our students led them in singing aboriginal songs and dancing around the bonfire. Sparks flew, but no one seemed to notice. For that moment the children were



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delighted to sing and dance with our students. After the singing, we huddled together while I told of Christ being born in a place similar to the place where we were standing. I told them that if Christ came tonight, he might come to their neighborhood. The wind whistled under the bridge. The cars roared above us. But the children focused on the angels and shepherds and the Christ child who came in a simple way.

After the story, we prayed. The children repeated each sentence with their heads bowed and hands folded. Our students shared small gifts with each child. The children then took off into the darkness to return to their homes.

We then went from home to home to sing carols to each family. As we stood in the doorway of one home, a father and his two daughters welcomed us. One daughter told us that on December 18 the government would tear down all of the shacks. We asked the father where they would go, but he didn't know.

I thought about our Lord who had no place to lay his head. And I gave God thanks for the opportunity for our students to stand with these folks on this cold, dark night.

Throughout our world this scene is repeated each night. While we turn up the heat and pull up the blankets, many go to bed cold and hungry, insecure about what next week would bring.

Emmanuel. God with us. Our hope and our calling. To be the presence of Christ wherever we are. This week under the bridge, I felt the presence of God, who knows the pain of and hope for each person.

O little town of Bethlehem . . . the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

Wishing you the hope of the Christ-child.

John McCall
PC(USA) Mission Worker, Taipei, Taiwan

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For more information on the Witness Season mission education emphasis contact Billie Healy, Associate for Mission Education Resources (888) 728-7228, ext. 5689, or Bhealy@ctr.pcusa.org.

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