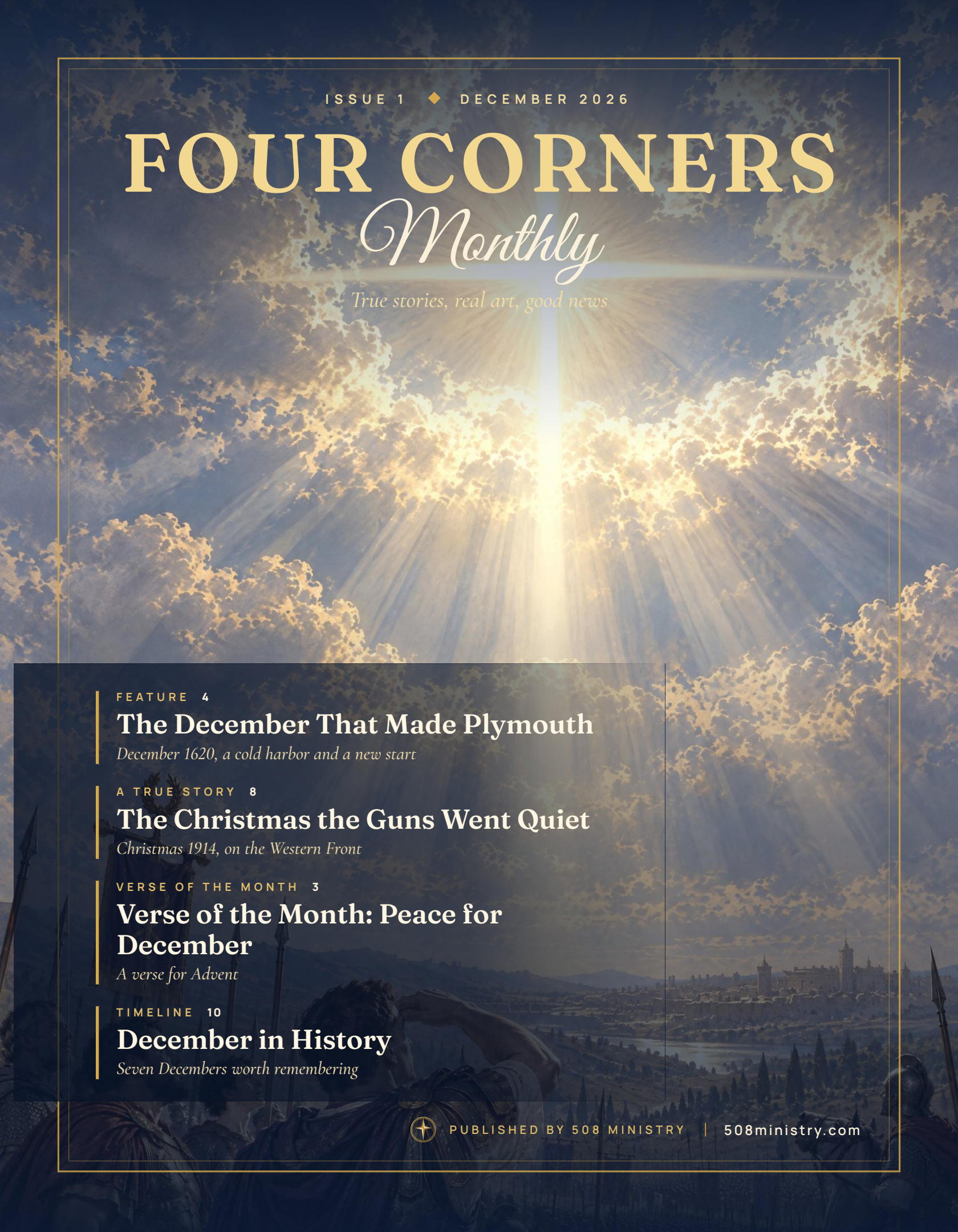
ISSUE 1 ◆ DECEMBER 2026

FOUR CORNERS Monthly

True stories, real art, good news



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WELCOME

Welcome to the First Issue

A note from Corey and Allie Pearson

Welcome to the first issue of Four Corners Monthly. We are Corey and Allie Pearson. This magazine is published by 508 Ministry.

Each month, we hope to share true stories from the history of the faith, along with one verse to carry with you.

This first issue is for December. Inside, you will read what the Pilgrims faced in Plymouth Harbor in December 1620. You will read about Christmas in 1914, when soldiers in some places on the Western Front paused the fighting. You will also find a verse for Advent and a timeline of Decembers past. And we would love to hear your own story.

We checked every date and name in this issue against a source we opened and read. Where we could not be sure, we kept it general, with words like "about" and "many."

We write at a level the whole family can read out loud, because good news should be easy to read.

Thank you for being here at the very start.

Corey and Allie Pearson

508 MINISTRY

VERSE OF THE MONTH

Peace for December

A verse for Advent



KING JAMES VERSION

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

JOHN 14:27

Jesus offers peace in the middle of trouble.

December can be loud. The shops are full. The news can feel heavy. The year is ending, and we feel its weight.

Advent is the season before Christmas in most Christian churches. It lasts four weeks. It is a time of waiting. We remember that Jesus came once. We also wait for Jesus to come again. In many churches, the second week of Advent is a week to think about peace.

Jesus spoke these words to his closest friends. He had just told them he would be with them only a little while longer.

The world gives peace when things go well. Jesus offers peace in the middle of trouble.

So when December feels heavy, stop for a moment. Breathe. Read his words again. This peace is a gift. It is meant for you.



By day they built houses. By night they slept on the ship.

ILLUSTRATION FROM OUR HOLY LEAGUE SERIES



FEATURE

The December That Made Plymouth

December 1620, a cold harbor and a new start

FEATURE

The December That Made Plymouth

In December, most of us stay warm. We turn up the heat and sip hot cocoa.

Now picture a different December. The year is 1620. A wooden ship sits in icy water. Aboard are 102 people. They have been living on it for months. They have no house on land.

The ship is the Mayflower. It reached Cape Cod on November 11. The trip took 66 days. The families had hoped to settle near the Hudson River, far to the south. Instead, they were far to the north. No town was waiting for them.

ALONG THE WAY

1620 — The Mayflower reaches Cape Cod on November 11 after 66 days at sea

1620 — The Mayflower anchors in Plymouth Harbor in December

That same day, 41 men signed a short agreement. We call it the Mayflower Compact. It begins, "In the name of God, Amen." The men agreed to live under laws that were "just and equal."

Not everyone on board shared one faith. Some were Separatists, who had left the Church of England. Others still belonged to it.

On shore, the women washed clothes after weeks at sea. Soon the scouting began. Small groups went out to look for a good spot to build. A small boat had been stored in pieces on the ship. The men put it back together to explore the coast.

On December 6, ten passengers, a pilot and six sailors set out in it. The ship's pilot, Robert Coppin, remembered Plymouth Harbor from an earlier trip. Later, a storm hit. Rain and snow fell. The mast broke in three pieces. That night the scouts took shelter on a small island. It froze hard after midnight.

The next morning was sunny. The scouts dried their gear and rested. Then they went ashore at Plymouth, about December 11. They found cornfields and little brooks. They decided it was the best place they could find.

About a week later, the Mayflower sailed in and dropped anchor.

1620 The Mayflower anchors in Plymouth Harbor in December

Plymouth was not empty land. Wampanoag people had lived there. Most of them had died from a sickness before the ship came. The settlers built their town where that village once stood.

That December brought sorrow. Dorothy Bradford was the young wife of William Bradford. She fell overboard in Provincetown Harbor and drowned. She was the first woman from the ship to die.

On December 22, Mary Allerton gave birth to a son in Plymouth Harbor. The baby did not live. Mary died in February. Her husband and their three children lived.

Not all the news was sad. Three women were expecting babies when the ship left England.

While the ship lay off Cape Cod, Susanna White had a baby boy. The baby was called Peregrine, a word that means pilgrim. Her husband, William, died that first winter. A cradle that she is said to have brought from Holland still survives.

People got sick from the cold and the wet. By spring, about half of the 102 people had died.

DID YOU KNOW?

Eighteen grown women sailed on the Mayflower. Only five were still alive by spring 1621.

Women who lived took in children who had lost their parents.

Women who lived took in children who had lost their parents.

By March, there were enough houses on land. Everyone could move off the ship. The Mayflower sailed for England on April 5. The settlers did not go with it.

Then help came. An Abenaki man named Samoset spoke English. He helped the settlers make friends with the Wampanoag. The Wampanoag showed them how to grow corn and gather shellfish. Without that help, the town might not have lasted. In March, the settlers made a peace agreement with Massasoit, a Wampanoag leader. In the fall of 1621, they shared a three-day harvest feast with the Wampanoag.

Later, William Bradford wrote about their small town. "As one small candle may light a thousand," he wrote. He meant that their small light had reached many people.

Our December worries are real. Still, most of us have heat and light. They had a cold ship and a hard winter. Even so, when they reached land, Bradford wrote, they fell on their knees. They thanked God for bringing them over the ocean.



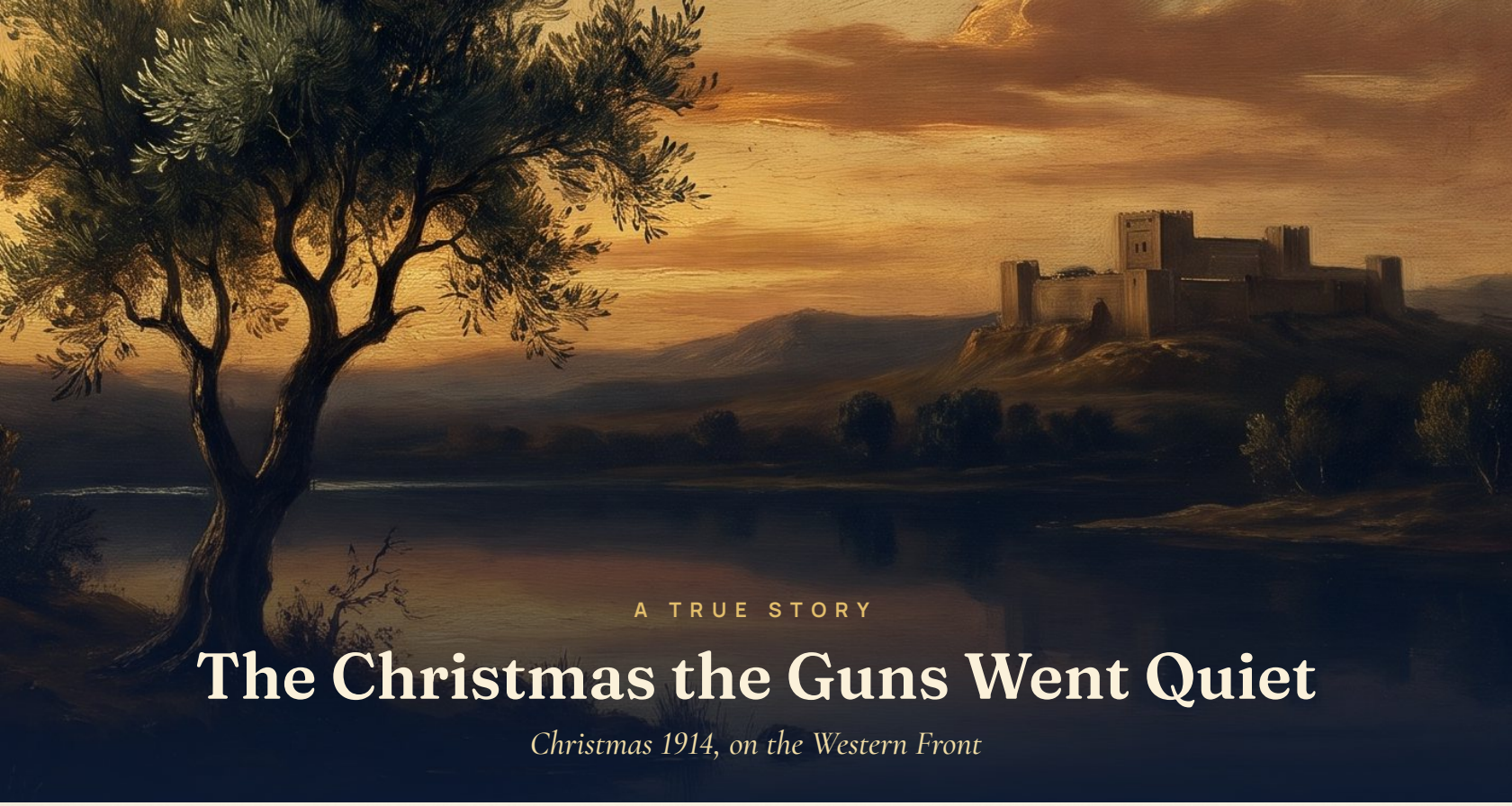
KING JAMES VERSION

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

PSALM 46:1

Think about it

Their hardest winter became the first chapter of a story we still tell. When your own December feels long, what small light could you give to someone else?



A TRUE STORY

The Christmas the Guns Went Quiet

Christmas 1914, on the Western Front

The first winter of the Great War was hard. Soldiers lived in trenches. A trench is a long ditch cut into the ground. There was a lot of rain and frost. Life there was very hard.

At the start of the war, many people thought it would end by Christmas. By December, that was clearly wrong. Many families would spend Christmas apart.

British and German soldiers faced each other across a strip of land. We call it No-Man's Land. In some places, the trenches were only 30 yards apart.

Late on Christmas Eve, British soldiers heard singing. It came from the German trenches. The Germans were singing carols and other songs. The British could see lanterns and small fir trees along the German line. Soon, men began to shout messages across the mud.

A soldier named Marmaduke Walkinton described that night in an interview. His group was about 300 yards from the Germans. Both sides had been singing carols. They had also been shouting to each other. Some of it was rude. Most of it was joking. Then a German called out, "Tomorrow you no shoot, we no shoot."

A German called out, "Tomorrow you no shoot, we no shoot."

On Christmas Day, men from both armies came together in No-Man's Land. They traded gifts and took photographs. Some of them played football. One photo, taken at Ploegsteert in Belgium, shows both sides together.

In some places, the pause had a sad purpose. Soldiers buried the men who had died. They also fixed their broken trenches.

ALONG THE WAY

1914 — **Soldiers from both sides meet in No-Man's Land on Christmas Day**

1818 — "Silent Night" is sung for the first time on Christmas Eve in Austria

The truce did not happen everywhere. In other places, the fighting went on. Men were killed on Christmas Day. Some officers did not like the truce. They worried it would weaken the fighting spirit. The truce also did not last.

The truce did not happen everywhere. It also did not last.

DID YOU KNOW?

In January 1915, newspapers at home began to print soldiers' letters about the truce. Photographs followed.

Boxing Day is the day after Christmas. After that day, the meetings faded away. The war went on. Leaders on both sides tried to stop another truce like it. Later in the war, there were a few short pauses. None was as big as this one.

Here is another Christmas Eve story. It starts with a song called "Silent Night." A priest named Joseph Mohr wrote the words in 1816.

On December 24, 1818, a teacher named Franz Gruber wrote the tune. That night, the two men sang it at church near Salzburg, in Austria. Mohr played a guitar.

1818 "Silent Night" is sung for the first time on Christmas Eve in Austria

By 1914, the song was 96 years old. The museum page we read does not say which carols the soldiers sang. So we do not know if it was this one.

Why tell this story? The Imperial War Museums point out a clash between war and Christmas. How can men fight a war and also keep Christmas, a time of peace and goodwill? For one day, in some places, men on both sides put Christmas first.

We may not live in trenches. But we know what it is to stay dug in, sure that we are right.

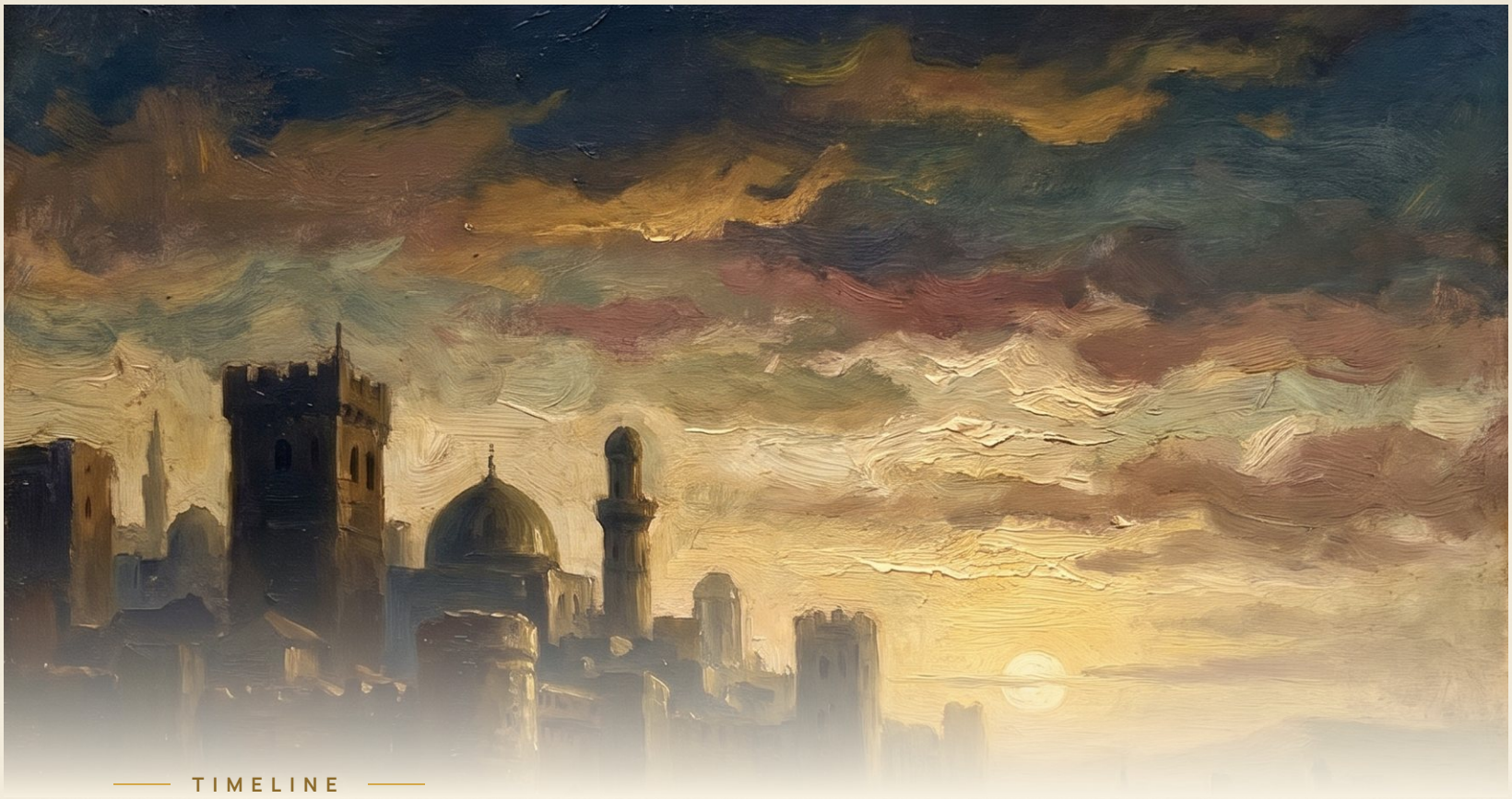
KING JAMES VERSION

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

LUKE 2:14

Think about it

Those soldiers had many reasons to stay where they were. Some did stay. Others stepped out first. Who could you reach toward this December, before anyone asks you to?



TIMELINE

December in History

Seven Decembers worth remembering

336

The first recorded Christmas celebration, in an old list from Rome

A list of Roman bishops, put together in the year 354, names December 25 in the year 336 as the day Christ was born. No one knows for sure which day Jesus was born.

800

Charlemagne is crowned emperor of the Romans on Christmas Day

Pope Leo III crowned the king of the Franks. Historians date the Holy Roman Empire from about that day until 1806.

1223

Francis of Assisi sets up a living Nativity scene at Greccio, Italy

Francis asked a friend to prepare hay, a manger, an ox and a donkey. People came with torches and candles.

1517

Martin Luther's 95 Theses reach Rome in December

Luther wrote them as questions for a debate. They were printed in Latin and German and spread fast. By December they had reached Rome.



December has seen many turning points. Here are seven Decembers worth remembering.

1620

The Mayflower anchors in Plymouth Harbor in December

The families lived on the ship through the cold months while the first houses rose on shore.

1818

"Silent Night" is sung for the first time on Christmas Eve

A priest, Joseph Mohr, and a teacher, Franz Gruber, sang it at church in Austria. Mohr played a guitar.

1914

Soldiers from both sides meet in No-Man's Land on Christmas Day

In some places, they traded gifts, buried the dead and paused the fighting for the day.





THE ART OF THIS ISSUE

A Sign in the Sky

The art of this issue, from our Constantine series

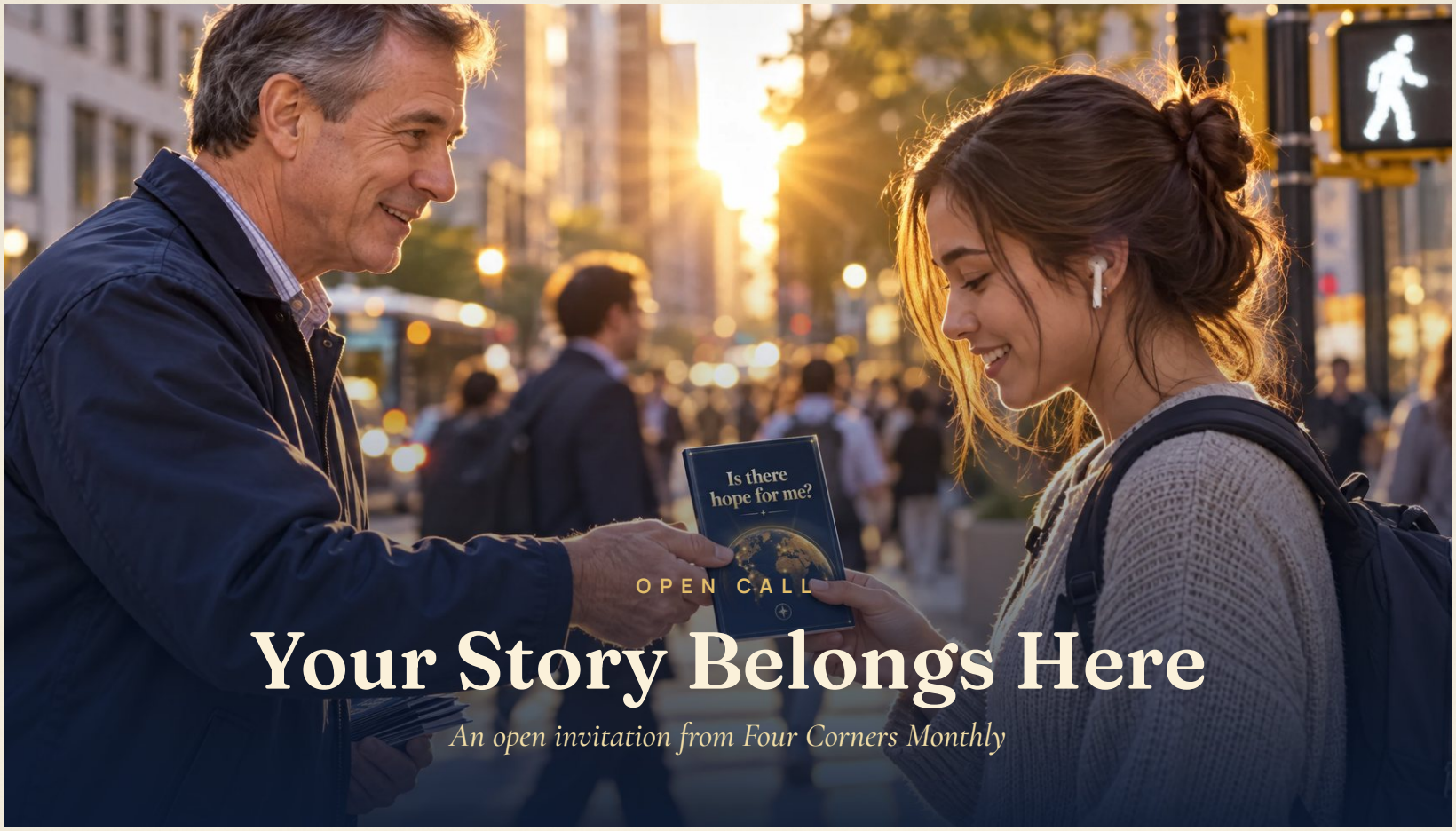
Look at the sky first. A cross of light shines through the clouds, and a whole army looks up. This picture is from our Constantine art series. It imagines a moment from the year 312. It is an imagined scene, not a photograph or an old painting. Look closely at the banners. They show a Christian sign, but in the old story Constantine had that standard made after the vision. The picture shows it early.

An early writer named Eusebius told the story. He said the emperor Constantine described it to him later in life. According to Eusebius, Constantine and his army saw a cross of light in the midday sky. Historians still debate the details.

Constantine won a battle near Rome on October 28, 312. The next year, he and another ruler agreed to a policy of toleration for religions. It is called the Edict of Milan. Many sources say it ended the ban on Christianity.

We chose this picture for December. In many places it is the darkest month. It is also when we remember the light of Christmas.

In many places December is the darkest month. It is also when we remember the light of Christmas.



OPEN CALL

Your Story Belongs Here

An open invitation from Four Corners Monthly

Every family has a story of faith. A grandmother who prayed. A neighbor who showed up with soup. A moment when God met someone in a kitchen, a car or a hospital room.

Four Corners Monthly would like to hear yours.

Send us your true story. It can be short. A page is plenty. Tell us who it happened to, where it happened and what changed.

We read every story that comes in. If yours fits a coming issue, we will ask your permission before we print anything.

We cannot promise that we will publish your story. We never promise income or sales. We can promise an honest read and a kind reply.

Write to us at outreach@508ministry.com. You can also find us at 508ministry.com/four-corners/.

Your story matters. Someone needs to hear it.

We cannot promise to publish your story. We can promise an honest read and a kind reply.

SEND US YOUR STORY
508ministry.com/four-corners/
outreach@508ministry.com



FEATURE

By the Numbers

The first winter, counted one fact at a time

Numbers can hold a story still. A big tale can feel hard to hold in our hands. A plain count helps us see what took place. Every number on these pages came from a source we opened and read. We did not guess. We did not round the counts up or down to make them sound grand.

We start with 66. That is how many days the Mayflower spent on the open sea. The ship set out on September 6, 1620. It reached Cape Cod on November 11, 1620. Think of 66 days on a small wood ship in the fall. There was no engine. There was no radio. Rain and cold wind beat on the hull day and night. Before the trip even began, a second ship called the Speedwell leaked. The ships had to turn back twice. So the trip began late in the year, when the sea was rough and the air grew cold.

Next comes 102. That is how many people rode on the Mayflower. Men, women, and kids packed into a tight space below deck. Some of them had left the Church of England. They were called Separatists. That core group had moved to Leyden in 1608. Other folks on board still stayed in the Church of England. All 102 people shared one wood ship and one hard trip. They had hoped to live near the mouth of the Hudson River, far to the south. Instead, they wound up far to the north at Cape Cod. No house stood on shore. No town waited for them.

ALONG THE WAY

1620

The Mayflower reaches Cape Cod on November 11 with 102 people aboard

Now look at 41. On November 11, 1620, the ship lay off Cape Cod. That same day, 41 men signed a short paper. We call it the Mayflower Compact. It starts with these words: "In the name of God, Amen." Those 41 men promised to live under "just and equal" laws. They wrote that promise before they built one wall on land. When folks are cold and scared, it is

easy to fight over who leads. Those 41 men chose order and peace.

Numbers can hold a story still so our whole home can see what took place.

Then come three smaller counts from December. On December 6, a scout team went out in a small open boat called a shallop. Ten passengers climbed in. With them went a ship pilot named Robert Coppin and six sailors. That made 17 people in one small boat looking for a town site. The boat had been stored in pieces on the big ship. The men put it back together on shore. On that cold trip, a storm hit. Rain and snow fell. The mast broke in 3 pieces. The men spent a cold night on a small island. It froze hard after midnight. The next day was sunny. They dried their gear and went on. About December 11, they went on shore at Plymouth. They found cornfields and small brooks. They said it was the best spot they could find. About a week later, the Mayflower sailed in and dropped anchor.

Now we reach the hardest counts of that winter. Eighteen grown women left England on the Mayflower on September 6, 1620. Three of those women were with child when they got on board. One mom, Elizabeth Hopkins, had a baby boy named Oceanus out on the sea. A second mom, Susanna White, had a boy named Peregrine while the ship lay off Cape Cod. That name comes from a Latin word that means pilgrim. Her husband, William White, died that first winter. A cradle she is said to have brought from Holland still rests at Pilgrim Hall Museum. A third mom, Mary Allerton, gave birth to a son on December 22 in Plymouth Harbor. The baby did not live. Mary died in February. Her husband and their three kids lived. Another young wife, Dorothy Bradford, fell off the ship at Provincetown Harbor in December and drowned. She was the first woman from the ship to die.

DID YOU KNOW?

Eighteen grown women sailed on the Mayflower. Only five were still alive by spring 1621.

By spring, the cold and the wet took a dark toll. About half of the 102 people died that first winter. One source counts 50 dead out of 102. Of the 18 grown women who left England, only 5 still lived in spring 1621. Those 5 women did not shut their doors. Women who lived took in kids who had lost their moms and dads. Each number on this page is more than ink. Each count stands for a real person who loved a home and prayed for day.

KING JAMES VERSION

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

PSALM 46:1

The next counts show how the small town held on. By day, people rowed to shore to build homes. By night, they went back to sleep on the ship. By March 1621, enough homes

stood on land for all to move off the ship. On April 5, 1621, the Mayflower set sail for England. The people stayed on shore. Not one turned back.

Help came that spring too. An Abenaki man named Samoset spoke English. He helped the folks make friends with the Wampanoag. In March, the town made a peace deal with Massasoit, a Wampanoag chief. The Wampanoag taught them how to hunt, pick up shellfish, and grow corn, beans, and squash. Without that help, it is likely none of them would have lived.

Our last two counts come from the fall of 1621. Between late September and mid November, the town held a harvest feast. It went on for 3 days. Massasoit came with about 90 Wampanoag men. Edward Winslow wrote that the guests outnumbered the hosts two to one. After a winter when half the ship had died, those counts feel like pure grace. Three days of food. Ninety guests at the meal. A small town still here.

We count our own days in December too. We count days till Christmas. We count seats at a meal. We count bills on a desk. Some days, the counts feel too heavy. We wish the cold days would pass fast. Then we look back at 1620. Sixty-six days at sea. One hundred and two people on one wood ship. Forty-one men who signed a peace pledge at Cape Cod. Eighteen moms and wives who got on board, and just five left in spring. Three days of thanks in the fall with ninety guests. Small counts can hold deep grit and steady faith. William Bradford wrote, "As one small candle may light a thousand." One small lamp, one warm meal, one kind act can reach more folks than we can ever count.

Each count stands for a real person who made it through a cold night and prayed for day.



Think about it

Which count from 1620 stays in your mind today, and what one small help can you give this week?



THE ART OF THIS ISSUE

The Work on the Table

A photo essay from our own shelf

Most of our work is quiet. It takes place at a wood desk, with a warm lamp on. There is no loud crowd here. There is no bright stage. We sit down with open notes, clean art, and plain words. We set a page. We fix a line. We move one box down so the eye can rest. Then we read the page out loud. We want to hear if a child can read each line with ease.

Then a book or a page goes out. Someone else opens it at home or at church. They sit down and share a true tale with their kids. That is the good part. That is why the slow hours at our desk mean so much to us.

We want to be plain and true about each picture on these pages. These views come from our own work files. They are mockups made at our desk. They are not real shots of a finished print run. We always tell our readers what they are looking at. Truth is part of our craft, right down to the small note under a frame.

First, look at our open spread mockup. It shows two pages side by side on our desk, laid out well before ink hits paper. We build each spread as a pair of pages, left and right. A left page and a right page should feel like two good friends. One side can hold a rich scene or a verse box. The other side holds short, clear lines of type. We do not want dark walls of gray words that wear out a reader. We want white space and calm on each page.

> *Most of our work is quiet. It takes place at a table, with a lamp on, one page at a time.*

Second, look at our front cover mockup. This file shows the look of our monthly magazine before the December words were set on top of it. A front cover makes a clear vow to the reader. It tells you what kind of room you are about to step into. We picked deep navy, warm gold, and cream tones. Those tones feel calm and steady. December is full of bright ads and fast screens. We wanted a front cover that asks you to sit down, take a breath, and rest for a while.

Third, look at our church book table view. This picture is a mockup too. It shows what we hope to see after church on a Sunday. People stand in the hall and talk with friends. A long table holds neat stacks of books, small booklets, and copies of this issue. A mom picks up a street booklet for a friend at work. A granddad grabs a comic tract for a young boy. A teacher finds a true tale from the past to read in class. Pages are made to move from hand to hand. They are not made to sit shut in a dark box.

DID YOU KNOW?

Four Corners is the book and print arm of 508 Ministry. We make four kinds of things: books, a monthly magazine, street booklets, and comic tracts.

Fourth, look at our comic house style sheet. Before we draw a single comic tract, we build a style guide first. That way each face, coat, and sky looks like it lives in the same world. A comic can hold the exact same good news as a thick book. It just puts that truth into bright frames and short speech lines that young readers love. Some kids will walk right past a big book with small type. Yet those same kids will read a comic from page one to the end twice in one day.

We make four kinds of things at Four Corners, the book and print arm of 508 Ministry. We make books, a monthly magazine, street booklets, and comic tracts. Each one has its own job on our desk. Each one is made to travel far from our room.

A book can hold a long, true tale of faith from long ago. You can read one part a night with your home and tuck a slip of paper inside. Soon our desk will share a full-color book for homes. It begins with the ship you read about in this issue, the Mayflower. Every date and name is checked against a page we opened and read.

A monthly magazine holds one month at a time. It brings history, art, a verse for the month, a kids page, and a note on a friend in ministry into one thin book. You do not have to read it all in one night. You can fold it, set it by a mug of hot cocoa, and pick it up on a cold night.

A street booklet is small. It fits right in a coat pocket or a bag. You can hand it to a clerk, a friend on a walk, or a neighbor down the block. It asks a plain question and points a tired heart to hope.

A comic tract tells a true story in bright art. Each box leads your eye from left to right. Whether a reader is eight or eighty, clear art helps the words stay in the mind.

KING JAMES VERSION

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

PSALM 119:105

There is one more thing on our work desk that does not show up in a mockup. That is our source list. Each printed code we set on a page opens our site on the web, where our source list lives. We open and read each source before we set a date or a name in print. When we cannot be sure of a day or a count, we say so in plain words.

We also check each Bible verse word for word against the King James Version. We read each story at a level the whole home can read out loud. Good news should feel warm, not hard.

None of this work is fast. All of it is meant to travel from our table to yours.

Doing print work this way takes time and care. We cut extra words. We check each fact against a page we opened. We look at every spread to make sure it reads well for a child and a granddad alike. None of it is fast. All of it is made to travel from town to town and house to house. When you hold one of our pages in your hands, you hold the fruit of many quiet nights at a lamp-lit table.

Think about it

When you are done with this issue, whose table or coat pocket could these pages go to next?



OPEN CALL

The Storm That Went Quiet

A true story for young readers, from Mark 4

This page is for young readers, and for grown ups who love to read out loud with them. Pull up a chair at the table, or sit close on the couch. We are going to step into a wood boat on a dark, windy night. We are going to hear three short words that made a huge storm stop.

It was evening by the lake. Jesus had been with crowds near the shore all day long. Now the sun was going down. He told his friends it was time to cross over to the other side. So Jesus and his friends got into a boat. Other small boats went out on the water too. They pushed off from the shore and set out across the lake.

Jesus was very tired from his long day. He walked to the back of the boat and lay down. There was a pillow in the back. Soon he was fast asleep on that pillow. Even while the boat rocked up and down on the water, Jesus slept in peace.

Then the wind came up. It was not a soft breeze. It was a great storm of wind. Dark waves rose high and crashed over the wood sides. The waves beat into the boat again and again. Cold water filled it up fast. The friends tried to hold on and keep the boat up. They could feel the water rising around their feet.

Some of those friends knew boats well. They had fished on that lake for years. Even so, this big storm scared them. The wind roared in the dark. The waves shook the wood boards. And right there in the back of the boat, Jesus was still fast asleep on his pillow.

His friends were afraid. They ran to the back and woke him up. They said, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" They felt sure the boat would sink. They felt sure they were about to die, and they wanted Jesus to wake up and see the storm.

DID YOU KNOW?

Jesus slept on a pillow in the back of the boat. He slept right through the storm until his friends woke him up.

Jesus stood up in the wet, rocking boat. He did not panic. He did not shout for ropes or oars. He looked right out at the dark night. He spoke to the wind. He spoke to the sea. He said just three short words. "Peace, be still."

Right away, the wind stopped. It did not fade bit by bit over an hour. It stopped right then. The high waves dropped down. The water went flat like glass. Everything went quiet across the whole lake. There was a great calm.

KING JAMES VERSION

And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

MARK 4:39

Then Jesus turned to his friends. He asked them why they were so afraid. He asked them about their faith. Why had they lost heart when he was right there in the boat with them? When Jesus rides beside us, fear does not have to win.

Jesus spoke to the wind and the sea. Right away, everything went quiet.

His friends sat in the still boat and looked at one another. Now they were full of awe. They were amazed at what they had just seen. They said to each other, "What manner of man is this?" Even the wind and the sea obey him. No plain man can tell a storm to stop and watch the waves lie flat. Jesus is the Son of God. All of the earth and sky know his voice.

That true story took place long ago on a lake. Yet it feels close to our home today. Storms do not just blow out on big water. Some storms blow right inside our own house or inside our own head. Maybe the lights go out at night, and shadows on the wall look big. Maybe a kid at school says a mean thing that hurts. Maybe December feels loud and fast, and grown ups look tired. When our heart feels like a small boat in tall waves, we can call to mind who is in the boat with us.

We can call out to Jesus just as his friends did. We do not have to hide our fear. We do not have to act brave when we feel small. The friends woke Jesus up and told him the plain truth about how scared they felt. Jesus heard them. He stood up, spoke three words, and brought a great calm.

Even the wind and the sea obey him.

Now let us slow down and do a few fun things right here on this page. Take your time. There is no rush at all.

COPY THE VERSE.

Here is the heart of the verse again. Say it out loud two times, nice and slow. "Peace, be still." Now grab a pencil and a clean sheet of paper. Copy the whole verse from Mark 4:39. Take your time. Make each letter neat and make it your own. Reading a verse with your eyes is good. Writing it with your hand helps it stay in your heart all week long.

DRAW THE BOAT.

Get crayons or colored pencils. Fold a sheet of paper in half. On the left half, draw the wood boat in the storm. Draw the tall dark waves and the fast wind. Draw Jesus asleep on a pillow in the back. On the right half, draw the boat after Jesus spoke. Draw the flat lake, the calm sky, and the wide eyes of his friends. Tape your art on the fridge or near your bed to help you recall the great calm.

TALK ABOUT THE STORY.

Ask each person at the table three short questions. First, what part of the boat ride would have scared you most? Second, how did Jesus sleep while the waves hit the wood? Third, what storm in our week do we want to hand to Jesus tonight?

ACT IT OUT.

Young kids love to move. Sit on the rug as if it is a boat. Make wind sounds with your mouth and rock side to side. Then let one child stand up and say, "Peace, be still." Everyone freezes and goes quiet as glass. Do it twice and smile together.

A PRAYER FOR A SCARED HEART.

Say this short prayer out loud together. "Lord, you are in the boat with me. Help me to trust you tonight. Amen."

FOR THE GROWN UPS.

This story is Mark 4:35 to 41 in the King James Version. Read the whole scene out loud at bedtime tonight. Keep your voice slow and warm. Let your child say the words Jesus said, "Peace, be still." Small bedtime habits build deep peace in a child's heart.

Small bedtime habits build deep peace in a child's heart.



Think about it

When have you felt scared in a storm, and who did you call for help?



A TRUE STORY

The Singer Who Leaves the Door Open

A gospel singer in the 508 family

Some singers want a loud crowd. Mitchel Jon wants an answer from the heart.

He has sung for thirty years. He has sung on radio, in big halls, in large churches, and in small ones too. Yet if you read his site today, one clear goal shows up again and again. Every service ends with a call to come to Jesus.

That is the part we wanted to write about this month. The rest is just the road that led him here. The real story is why he still steps up to sing and leaves the door wide open when the last song ends.

The road began in gospel music. Mitchel was the lead singer of a group called Three Bridges. With Three Bridges, the group had seven Top 10 songs. Three of those songs hit number one on radio. One of those songs is "Cooling Water." Years later, it is still the song folks ask him to sing when he visits a church.

In 2006, Three Bridges sang on a big arena stage. Thousands of folks heard them sing in one huge room. Big stages can make a singer chase fame. Mitchel kept his heart on the truth in the songs.

ALONG THE WAY

2006	2010	2010	2027
Three Bridges sings on a big arena stage	Sings at the Gaither tent revival at the Billy Graham Library	Hosts the Christmas program at First Baptist Atlanta	Books a limited number of church dates

Then came the Gaither Homecoming stage. Mitchel was featured on "How Beautiful Heaven Must Be." Gaither Music put it out. That song took his voice into living rooms and small churches far past any one hall. Folks who had never set foot in a big arena heard him sing of heaven right at home.

First Baptist Atlanta came next. He was a steady guest at Dr. Charles Stanley's church. In 2010, he hosted the Christmas program there. That same year, 2010, he also sang at the Billy Graham Library. That event was the Gaither tent revival. Two huge rooms in one busy year.

Both drew crowds of folks who came to hear of hope and grace.

2010 Sings at the Gaither tent revival at the Billy Graham Library

2010 Hosts the Christmas program at First Baptist Atlanta

After thirty years of singing on radio and big stages, Mitchel did not slip into a cold routine. Now he picks just a few church dates each year. He does not rush in for one short set and drive off down the road. He gives each church the whole day.

Here is how he works when a church calls him in. First, he talks with the pastor. That order means a lot to him. He says God is already at work in that church long before a guest gets there. By talking with the pastor first, Mitchel learns what the church needs most. He joins the work God is doing in that room. He does not try to take over.

God is already at work in that church before a guest singer gets there.

Then, when the service starts, he follows the Spirit in the room. The songs carry Bible truth straight to the ear and the heart. The words he shares between songs stay short and plain. He does not turn a church night into a slick show. There is no loud hype. There is no rush to sell things in the hall.

And then comes the part he never skips. The call to come to Jesus. Simple, clear, and never left out. Whether a church holds forty people or four hundred, he makes room for anyone who wants to step forward and say yes to Christ.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mitchel Jon sang with Three Bridges for years, with seven Top 10 songs and three number ones, before he began leading his own services.

KING JAMES VERSION

Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

ISAIAH 26:2

A pastor in Tennessee put all of this into one plain line. "Mitch is not a performer. He is a minister." That line sits right on his site, with the pastor's name beside it. Pastor Ron Wood leads Fayetteville Church of God. When a local pastor calls a singer a minister and not a showman, folks pay mind. Pastors know the gap between the two right away. A showman wants claps and cheers. A minister wants to serve the room and point every soul to Jesus.

ALONG THE WAY

2006	2010	2010	2027
Three Bridges sings on a big arena stage	Sings at the Gaither tent revival at the Billy Graham Library	Hosts the Christmas program at First Baptist Atlanta	**Books a limited number of church dates**

We put this profile in our December issue for a clear reason. December is a month of open doors. Folks drive home to sit with moms and dads. Families who have missed church all year walk back in on Christmas Eve. Some sit near the back with quiet hurt or hard questions in their chest. They do not need a slick show. They need warm truth and an open door.

A singer who ends each night with a plain call fits December well. He does not shut the gate when the song fades out. He leaves the door open so any tired soul can walk right in.

Mitch is not a performer. He is a minister. He leaves the door open.

Mitchel Jon is part of the 508 Ministry family. His ministry site is built and shared under 508 Ministry. On that page, pastors and readers can read about his work, his church nights, and why he does what he does. His public words stay clear and plain. Every line points back to Christ and the local church. We are glad to stand with folks who keep the gospel clear and put souls ahead of bright lights.

When a church has a singer who cares about the pastor and the flock, the whole room feels it. Folks do not sit back as if they bought a seat at a show. They lean in. They sing along. They hear the Scripture inside the songs. They feel safe to walk down the aisle when the plain call goes out at the end.

If your church wants to pray about a date, his site lists 2027. Since he talks with each pastor first and gives each church the whole day, he takes only a small number of dates each year. You can find him at mitcheljon.508ministry.com. Look up his page, read his words, and share it with your pastor this week.

Every song ends when the last note dies down. Every big hall goes dark once the crowd walks out to the cars. What lasts is the man, woman, or child who heard a plain call and stepped into new life. Thirty years of singing have taught Mitchel Jon to keep first things first. Open the gates. Sing the truth. Leave the door wide open for one more soul.

When we talk with pastors, we hear the same wish again and again. They want guests who love the church and lift up Jesus. Mitchel Jon fits that hope. He comes in peace. He sings the Bible. He lets God move in the room. Then he invites folks home to Christ.



Think about it

Who in your own town needs an open door this December, and who can you ask to sit by you at church this week?



FEATURE

A Letter from the Editors

From our table to yours

Dear friend,

Thank you for opening this first issue of Four Corners Monthly. We are Corey and Allie Pearson. We made this magazine with 508 Ministry because we wanted one good, warm thing to land on a family table each month. We pictured a home with a lamp on, the way folks used to sit close around a warm fire on a cold night.

A magazine is a good and rare kind of gift today. It is not a thick book you feel bad about if you do not finish it in one week. It is not a phone screen that scrolls on and on with no end in sight. It is a clean set of pages you can hold in your hands, fold in half, set down by a mug, and pick up again later.

We picked December for our first issue on purpose. December is loud and full of errands. Stores stay packed. Roads fill up. News feels heavy as the year comes to a close. Yet December is also quiet and full of waiting. A child waits for Christmas morning. A home waits for folks to drive in from far away. Most Christian churches keep Advent for four weeks before Christmas. In those weeks we look back to when Jesus came once, and we wait for him to come again. We made this first issue for that season of waiting.

December is also a month of small lights. A candle on a kitchen table. A lamp in a front window. A string of lights on a cold porch. We wanted this magazine to be one more small light you can set down and pick up when the days feel short.

Inside these pages, you will meet real people from long ago. You will step onto a cold wood ship in Plymouth Harbor in December 1620. The Pilgrims had no houses waiting on land, yet when they reached shore they fell on their knees and thanked God. You will meet soldiers in the rain and frost of 1914 who laid down their guns in some places on Christmas Day. You will read how Francis of Assisi set up a living Nativity scene in Greccio, Italy, in December 1223, starting a practice that has

lasted about 800 years. You will read how a song called "Silent Night" was first sung on Christmas Eve 1818 in Austria, with a guitar. You will also meet a gospel singer in the 508 family who still leaves the church door wide open at the end of every night.

ALONG THE WAY

1223

Francis of Assisi sets up a living Nativity scene at Greccio, Italy

We did not make any of these stories up as we went. That is our firm rule on this desk. We checked every date, name, and count against a page we opened and read. Where two sources did not agree, or where no source named a day, we kept it general. You will see plain words like "about" and "many" on our pages. We would rather be honest and say we do not know than dress up a tale with a guess.

We also wrote at a level a young child can read out loud and a grandparent can love. Good news should not hide behind big, stiff words. Good news should be easy to read at the kitchen table.

Good news should be easy to read at the kitchen table.

Here is our hope for this issue. Read it slow. Read one page out loud after supper. Pass it on to a friend or leave it on a church book table. Then, when you feel ready, write to us and tell us your own true story of faith.

Read it slow, read it out loud, and pass it on.

We cannot promise to print every story that comes to our desk. We never promise pay or sales. We do promise an honest read and a kind reply. If your story fits a future issue, we will ask your permission before we print a single word.

DID YOU KNOW?

Four Corners makes four kinds of things: books, a monthly magazine, street booklets, and comic tracts.

Each of those four things is made for the same table. A parent and a child can read the exact same page side by side. A book holds a long, true tale of faith. A monthly magazine holds one season at a time. A street booklet slips into a coat pocket. A comic tract puts good news into clear pictures. Every printed code we place on our pages opens our ministry page on the web, where our source list lives.

Here is a verse we are holding close to our hearts this December, from the King James Version.

KING JAMES VERSION

Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

ISAIAH 26:2

We want this magazine to be an open gate, not a shut room. If you have an honest question, send it to us. If you have a true story from your own home or church, share it with us. If you just want to sit by a lamp and read one calm page before bed, that is plenty too.

Our names sit on the front, yet a magazine belongs to the folks who open it and read it. That is how good print works. A writer puts ink on paper, and the reader brings the page to life at home.

Think about what a small light can do in a dark month. William Bradford wrote about Plymouth, "As one small candle may light a thousand." We do not have to shout to bring light into a room. One true story told well can warm a whole house. One clear Bible verse can calm a scared heart. One shared page can remind a tired friend that God is near.

This first issue is our warm hello to you. We hope it feels like a steady lamp on a cold night. Some nights in December feel long. Kids get tired. Grown ups carry heavy lists. Sit down for five calm minutes with a mug of cocoa and open one page. Let a true story from the past remind you that God has brought his people through cold months before. He will bring us through this one too.

Thank you for making room for Four Corners Monthly on your table. We are glad to walk into this new work with you. Write to us any time at outreach@508ministry.com, or visit us on the web at 508ministry.com/four-corners/. We would love to hear how your family read this first issue. Share it with a friend at church, and come back next month for more true stories.

With warm thanks,

Corey and Allie Pearson

508 Ministry

One true story told well can warm a whole house on a cold night.



Think about it

Who in your home or church could sit beside you tonight and hear one page of this issue read out loud?



FEATURE

The Man Who Built the First Nativity

A ministry that began with hay, a manger, and a donkey

Each December, small scenes show up on shelves and church tables. You have seen one. Maybe one sits in your own home right now. There is a wood manger and soft hay. Mary and Joseph stand near the baby Jesus. Farm beasts stand close by. We call it a Nativity scene. Have you ever asked who made the first one?

The word Nativity means birth. The scene points right to the birth of Jesus. It shows the night God came close to us in a small town. We hear that story each year. Yet our minds run fast in December. Setting up a small scene helps us stop, look, and remember.

The man who began this custom was Francis of Assisi. He lived in Italy about 800 years ago. He loved the tale of Jesus' birth. He did not want folks to just hear words float by in a dark hall. He wanted plain folks to see the night of Bethlehem with their own eyes.

In December 1223, Francis came to a small town in Italy called Greccio. About fifteen days before Christmas, he went to a friend named John Velita. Francis asked his friend to help him set up a living Nativity scene. He asked for a wood manger, real hay, an ox, and a donkey.

ALONG THE WAY

1223

Francis of Assisi sets up a living Nativity scene at Greccio, Italy

Before that night came, Francis took one careful step. An old book called the Life of St. Francis, by Bonaventure, tells us what he did. Francis asked Pope Honorius III for leave first. He wanted to be sure his plan was right and allowed. Good work for God does not have to break rules to touch hearts. At times it asks in peace and builds with meek hands.

When Christmas night came in Greccio, the plan came to life. A second old writer, Thomas of Celano, wrote down what took place. The

manger was set in place. The hay was carried in. The ox and the donkey were led right up to the spot. Folks from the town walked through the cold dark with candles and torches in their hands. Warm gold light fell on the straw and the beasts. Mass was held right there beside the manger. For one still night, the story of Bethlehem stood right in front of them.

For one night, the story of Bethlehem stood right in front of them.

DID YOU KNOW?

We do not know if Francis used a live baby or a carved figure that first night at Greccio.

We checked our sources with care on one point. Folks often ask if a real baby lay in that hay in 1223. The plain truth is that we do not know for sure. The old records do not say if a live child or a carved form was used. What we do know is that the scene moved the crowd who came with candles in the dark.

KING JAMES VERSION

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

LUKE 2:14

After that cold night in Greccio, the plan did not die out. Folks told friends what they had seen. Towns and homes began to set up their own small scenes. Year after year, moms and dads took out small wood or clay figures and set them on a shelf while kids looked on. About 800 years later, homes all over the earth still put out a manger scene each December. That is a long, warm life for one plain act done with hay and a wood box.

Francis did not make up the tale of Christmas. That good news came straight from the Bible. What Francis did was find a plain, warm way to show it. That is what true ministry does. It does not invent a brand new word. It takes the old, true word of Jesus and makes it clear enough for a tired friend or a small child to see.

Ministry is not only a loud talk from a tall stage. At times ministry is laying clean hay on a cold floor so folks who work hard all week can stop and see God's love. At times ministry is asking a good friend like John Velita to pitch in and help. At times ministry is just showing up in a small hill town with a plain plan that points straight to Christ.

Today, we can tap a phone glass and see a thousand bright shots in one minute. Yet we forget most of them by dusk. Francis had no phone and no bright screen. He had cold winter air, fresh straw, an ox, a donkey, and warm torch light. Folks who stood in Greccio that night kept the sight in their hearts for life. Real things reach deep in a way a fast screen does not.

Not every ministry starts with a big stage or a loud crowd.

It is easy to rush right past the Christmas story each year. We hear a song in a shop. We wrap a box in red paper. We drive from one stop to the next. Francis did the reverse. He slowed down fifteen days before Christmas. He worked with his own hands. He called neighbors out into the cold night with candles to stand still by a manger.

When you set up a Nativity scene in your home this month, call Greccio to mind. Think of Francis and his friend John Velita. Think of the two old books by Thomas of Celano and Bonaventure that kept this tale safe for 800 years so we could read it today. Think of how small, true deeds can live long past our own days.

A plain wood box of hay in a small Italian town still speaks to millions of homes each December. We do not need huge funds or a loud name to serve God well. We do not need bright stage lights. We only need willing hands, a kind heart, and a true story worth showing to a friend.

When kids look at a small manger on a table, they ask good questions. Why did Jesus lie in a feed box? Why were farm beasts so close? Those plain questions open the door to tell them about God's love. That is just what happened in Greccio long ago. One small scene turned a cold night into a warm lesson of grace.

You can do the same thing at home this week. Sit near your manger scene for five quiet minutes after supper. Read Luke 2:14 out loud. Let each child hold one small piece and tell what part of the night they see. Good memories grow in warm, unhurried rooms.

One small scene turned a cold night into a warm lesson of grace.



Think about it

What small, real thing could you build or set up this December so a child or friend can see Christmas with fresh eyes?



FEATURE

The Reading Room

What to open and read out loud this December

Here is our reading shelf for December. Each page we name here is one we opened and read while we checked this issue. You can find each one on the web, or right in your own Bible at home. We picked these pages since they are true, clear, and easy to read out loud with the whole home.

Every page we point to here is one we opened and read.

Reading out loud is a warm act of love. It slows the whole room down after a long day. It lets a small child and a granddad hear the exact same tale at the exact same time. You do not need a fancy voice or a huge shelf of books. Just a soft lamp, a chair, and five calm minutes. We hope this short list gives your home a good place to start.

Start small with your Bible. Turn to Mark 4 and read verses 35 to 41. Jesus and his friends get into a boat to cross the lake. Jesus is tired and sleeps on a pillow in the back. A big wind comes up. Waves hit the boat and fill it up. His friends wake him in fear. Jesus stands up and speaks to the wind and the sea. He says, "Peace, be still." Right away, the wind stops and all is calm. Reading those seven verses out loud takes one short minute. Even a young child will keep those three words close all week.

KING JAMES VERSION

And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

MARK 4:39

Next, turn to Isaiah 26 and read verse 2. It is one short, firm line on opening the gates so truth can walk right in. We love to read this

verse in December, when homes and churches greet guests who have been far off all year.

KING JAMES VERSION

Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

ISAIAH 26:2

You can also read John 14:27 and Luke 2:14 this month. In John 14:27, Jesus gives his own peace, not the thin peace the world gives when life goes well. In Luke 2:14, the angels praise God and speak of peace and good will toward men. Reading those four Bible lines across the four weeks of Advent makes an easy, warm plan for any home.

For a slow winter night, read the true tale of the Mayflower. Two fine spots on the web helped us check our facts for this issue. Plimoth Patuxet Museums has a clear page on the ship and the Mayflower Compact. Pilgrim Hall Museum has clear pages on the landing and on the women and girls of the Mayflower.

Read those pages right beside our story in this issue. You will see how 102 folks rode one wood ship for 66 days on the sea. You will read how 41 men signed the Compact on November 11, 1620, and vowed to keep "just and equal" laws. You will read of the cold scout trip on December 6, when a storm broke the boat's mast in three pieces. When they reached land, no house and no town stood waiting. Yet William Bradford wrote that they fell on their knees and thanked God.

ALONG THE WAY

1620

The Mayflower reaches Cape Cod after 66 days at sea with 102 people

DID YOU KNOW?

The Mayflower held 102 people, and the trip on the sea took 66 days.

One hundred and two people on a small wood deck for 66 days is a long wait. Reading their true words makes our own busy week feel light and helps us give thanks for a warm roof and a hot meal.

A lot of waiting on a small wooden deck.

On December 24, read how the song "Silent Night" began. The Silent Night group in Austria keeps a clear page on the web. You can read how a priest named Joseph Mohr wrote the words as a poem in 1816 in Mariapfarr. Two years later, on December 24, 1818, a school teacher named Franz Xaver Gruber wrote the tune in Arnsdorf. That very night, they sang it at Christmas mass in the St. Nicholas church in Oberndorf near Salzburg. Mohr sang tenor and played a guitar. Gruber sang bass. More than two hundred years later, we still sing their quiet song by warm light.

If your home likes true war history, read on Christmas 1914. The Imperial War Museums keep a plain, careful page on the Christmas Truce. It tells how British and German troops lived in wet, frosty ditches during the first winter of the Great War. Late on Christmas Eve, British troops heard songs and saw lamps and small fir trees on the German line. On Christmas Day, in some spots, men walked out to No-Man's Land. They traded small gifts, took shots with a camera, played football, and laid the dead to rest. Yet the page is clear and true too. The truce did not take place in all spots. Fighting went on in other parts on that same day, and after Boxing Day the war went on. It is a hard tale and a bright tale at the exact same time.

For young kids, turn back to our kids page in this issue. Read the Mark 4 boat tale out loud. Then sit at the table with paper and crayons for the copy box and the boat art. Writing a Bible verse by hand helps a child keep it in mind far more than a fast tap on a glass screen.

You do not need to read this whole shelf in one week. One page a night is plenty. Let the words rest in the quiet room. Start right where you are. If you have just two short minutes before sleep, read Mark 4:39, shut the book, and turn off the lamp.

December hands us phones and feeds that never stop. A good book list hands you pages that come to a calm end. An end is a real gift. When a page ends, you can close the cover, breathe slow, and sleep in peace. A warm quilt, a soft lamp, and one true page beat a loud screen each night of the week.

Keep a pen near your reading chair too. Write down one line that gave you peace. Share that line at breakfast the next day. Small words read out loud can warm a cold week.

If you have young kids at home, let them pick which page to open first. Kids love to turn the pages and point to the bright art. Let a child read one short sentence out loud while you hold the lamp close. You can also trade pages with a grandparent or a friend down the block. When two homes read the exact same story in the same week, good talks start right away. Reading together turns a cold December night into a warm memory that stays long past the holidays.



A warm quilt, a soft lamp, and one true page beat a loud screen each night.

Think about it

Which page on this shelf will you open first tonight, and who will sit by you while you read it out loud?



FEATURE

Ask the Pastor

Honest, plain answers for December

We hear honest questions from readers and families every month. Some questions are short. Some come from a heavy week. Here are real questions that come up in December, with our plain, honest answers. We do not claim to be the last word on every topic. We just want to sit beside you, open the Bible, look at true history, and point to what is steady.

Why does December feel so heavy when it is meant to be full of joy?

First, it is okay that it feels heavy. You are not broken if December makes you tired or sad. December holds two things at once. The shops are loud, the ads never stop, and the news feels full. At the same time, the year is ending. We think about people we miss and hard months we walked through.

The very first December we wrote about in this issue was heavy too. In December 1620, the Pilgrims anchored in a cold harbor at Plymouth. They had no houses on land. They slept on a cramped ship while winter froze the shore. People they loved died that winter, including Dorothy Bradford and Mary Allerton's newborn son. By spring, about half of the 102 people were gone. Still, William Bradford wrote that when they reached land, they fell on their knees and thanked God for bringing them over the ocean. Joy in the Bible does not mean pretending pain is not real. It means thanking God right inside the cold month.

ALONG THE WAY

1620

The Pilgrims reach land and fall on their knees to thank God

What is Advent, and why do churches talk about it?

Advent is the season before Christmas in most Christian churches. It lasts four weeks. The word points to waiting and coming. During Advent, we look in two directions at once. We look back and remember that Jesus came once

as a baby in Bethlehem. We also look ahead and wait for Jesus to come again, just as he promised.

DID YOU KNOW?

Advent is a four-week season before Christmas in most Christian churches, often marked by hope, peace, joy, and love.

Many churches mark the four weeks with four simple words: hope, peace, joy, and love. The order and pick of words can shift from one church to the next, yet the heart stays the same. Advent teaches us that waiting is not wasted time. God meets us while we wait.

How can we hold on to peace when our whole month feels loud?

Jesus gave us a clear picture of peace in a small wood boat in Mark 4. A big wind hit the lake. Waves crashed over the sides. Water filled the boat. His friends thought they would sink, so they woke him up. Jesus stood up and spoke to the wind and the sea. He said, "Peace, be still." Right away, the wind stopped and there was a great calm.

Peace does not depend on things going well around us.

KING JAMES VERSION

And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

MARK 4:39

In John 14:27, Jesus also told his friends that he gives his own peace, not the kind the world gives. The world hands out peace only when the sky is clear and the bills are paid. Jesus offers peace right in the middle of the storm. When your week gets loud, stop for one minute. Put your phone down. Read Mark 4:39 out loud and ask Jesus to calm your heart.

What if our family has nothing big to give this Christmas?

You do not need something big or pricey to bless someone. William Bradford wrote a line about their tiny town at Plymouth that still warms us today. "As one small candle may light a thousand," he wrote. One small flame in a dark room changes the whole room.

One small candle may light a thousand.

A five-minute phone call to someone who lives alone. A short card written by hand. A pot of warm soup dropped off on a porch. A kind word to a tired clerk in a long line. Those are small candles too. The Pilgrims had almost nothing that first cold winter, yet their small light is still remembered four hundred years

later. In 1223, Francis of Assisi had no stage or budget, only hay, a manger, an ox, and a donkey in a small Italian town, yet families still set up Nativity scenes 800 years later. God loves to use small gifts offered with love.

Do we know for sure that Jesus was born on December 25?

No, we do not. Honest sources tell us that no one knows for sure what exact day of the year Jesus was born. An old list of Roman bishops put together in the year 354 records December 25 in the year 336 as the first known celebration of Christmas. Churches have kept December 25 for centuries to remember his birth, even though the exact day is not written in the Bible.

Why do we print the King James Version in this magazine?

The King James Version is the Bible text we quote across our English pages. In the United States, it is in the public domain, so any home or church can read it, copy it, and share it freely without red tape. Its clear, steady words have carried the good news from parent to child for hundreds of years. We check every single quoted verse word for word so nothing is changed.

Why do we keep saying we checked our facts?

Because we write for homes, and trust counts. When we put a date, a name, or a count in print, we want you to know it came from a real source we opened and read. If a point is unsure, we say so in plain words. You can see our source list in this issue, and you can write to us if you want to check any line yourself.

Can a family use this magazine for church groups or home school?

Yes, you can. Read one short page out loud, then ask the "Think about it" line at the end. Let kids answer first. Good talks grow from small, plain questions. You can also turn to our Sources page and open one real link together to show kids how we check dates and names.

These are our honest answers for December. When we do not know a thing, we say so. No question is too small for this desk. Send us your own question at outreach@508ministry.com, and we may answer it in a future issue. We keep a list of what readers ask each month. Bring your own question next time, and read along with us each month.

No question is too small for this desk. Good talks grow from small, plain questions.



Think about it

What honest question about faith or history has been sitting on your mind this December?



FEATURE

A Prayer List for December

Small, plain prayers for a loud month

Prayer does not have to be long. It does not need fancy words or a quiet church building. It can be one plain line said at the kitchen sink, in the car at a red light, or right before you close your eyes at night. Here is a simple list of prayers for December. You can pray one a day through the week, or read them all together with your family after supper.

Prayer does not have to be long.

We do not have to wait until our house is spotless and silent before we talk to God. We can pray while the dish water runs. We can pray while we stand in a long line at the store. We can pray when the house is noisy and kids are running down the hall. God is not far away. He hears a short, honest whisper just as clearly as a long prayer from a pulpit.

Each short prayer on these two pages borrows a true picture from this December issue. A wood boat in a storm. A cold harbor in 1620. A frosty trench in 1914. A humble manger in Greccio. Four weeks of waiting in Advent. An open door at a church. Let each picture give your heart a warm place to begin.

You can pray these lines just as they are printed, or put them into your own plain words. The exact phrasing is not the point. Turning our heart toward God is the point.

Start with calm. Our children's page this month tells the true Bible story from Mark 4 of a storm that went quiet. Jesus was asleep on a pillow in the back of a boat while waves crashed in. His friends woke him up in fear. Jesus stood up and spoke to the wind and the sea. He said, "Peace, be still." Right away there was a great calm. We can ask him to speak that same calm over our busy week.

Lord, you said peace, be still to the wind and the waves. Speak that same peace over our loud thoughts and hurried hearts today. Amen.

Next, pray for the ones we miss. In December 1914, during the first winter of the Great War,

many folks had thought the fighting would be over by Christmas. Instead, soldiers sat in wet, frosty trenches, and many homes spent Christmas apart. Even today, many families sit around a table with an empty chair because of distance, service, or grief. We can lift every one of them up to God.

Lord, be near the people we miss this Christmas. Bring comfort to homes with an empty chair, and bring loved ones near in your good time. Amen.

ALONG THE WAY

1914

Soldiers in wet, frosty trenches face Christmas apart from their homes

Next, pray for steady trust before we see the answer. In November and December 1620, the Pilgrims reached New England with no house and no town waiting on shore. Before they raised a single wall on land, William Bradford wrote that they fell on their knees and thanked God for bringing them over the ocean. It takes deep trust to give thanks before the roof is built.

DID YOU KNOW?

When the Pilgrims first reached land in 1620, William Bradford wrote that they fell on their knees and thanked God before they built anything.

Lord, teach us to thank you before the house is built and before we see how the hard winter will end. Amen.

Next, pray for patience while we wait. In most Christian churches, Advent is the four-week season before Christmas. Many churches mark those four weeks with four steady words: hope, peace, joy, and love. Waiting feels hard in a month when everything moves fast. We can ask God to meet us right inside the wait.

Lord, we wait for you this Advent. Fill our home with hope, peace, joy, and love while we wait. Amen.

Next, pray for courage to take a hard step toward someone. On Christmas Day in 1914, in some places along the Western Front, British and German soldiers stepped out of their trenches into No-Man's Land. They traded small gifts and met face to face between the lines. We may not live in trenches, yet we all know how easy it is to stay dug in and cold toward a neighbor or relative. We can ask God for grace to step out first.

Lord, help us step across the mud toward someone we have been avoiding. Give us warm words and a humble heart. Amen.

Next, pray for humble hands that point others to Jesus. In December 1223, Francis of Assisi used hay, a wood manger, an ox, and a donkey in Greccio, Italy, so neighbors could see the birth of Jesus clearly. We can ask God to use our small, ordinary work this month to help someone see Christ.

Lord, take our small hands and our plain gifts this December, and use them to point our neighbors to Jesus. Amen.

Next, pray for open doors and for our own story of faith. Every home has a story of how God met someone in a kitchen, a car, or a hard season. Maybe a grandmother prayed for years. Maybe a friend showed up with warm soup. We

can ask God to open our eyes to where he has walked with us this year.

Lord, show us where you have met us this year. Open the gates of our heart, and help us share our story with grace. Amen.

KING JAMES VERSION

And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

MARK 4:39

Use one short prayer a day, or read them all together with your family.

A phone buzzes and pings from morning until night. It asks for our eyes every five minutes. A short prayer does not buzz or rush us. It waits quietly right beside us until we speak it. God is always ready to listen.

Prayer is not a school test. There is no wrong way to talk to God from an honest heart. Short is good. Honest is even better. This list is a friendly doorway, not a strict rule book.

Take a pen and write one short prayer line of your own in the white space at the bottom of this page or in a notebook. You do not need the right words. You just need to start. Praying one short line each day for one week is a fine goal. If you miss a day, do not feel bad. Just pick it back up the next day and keep going.

You can also pray with a child right before sleep. Ask them to name one good thing from the day and one thing that felt hard. Thank God for the good thing, and hand him the hard thing in one plain line. God hears kids just as fast as he hears grown ups.

Short is good. Honest is even better. God is always ready to listen.



Think about it

Which one of these short prayers does your heart need most today? Start right there.



FEATURE

The Map of the Month: Where December Happened

One cold month, six real places on the map

Each true story takes place in a real spot on earth. Faith does not float up in the air. It walks on cold sand, wet roads, stone streets, and frost on the grass. December is full of real spots like that. We laid a world map flat on our desk and traced each place in this issue. Six spots stood out right away.

A map holds many spots at the exact same time. On one flat sheet, it keeps a cold bay, a town by a stream, a hill town, a great old city, a German town, and a strip of mud in Belgium. It holds them side by side in calm. Let us drop one pin in each of those six spots and trace the map together.

Our first pin drops in Plymouth, in the part of our land we now call Massachusetts. In December 1620, a wood ship named the Mayflower sailed into Plymouth Harbor and dropped anchor. The 102 folks on board had crossed the sea for 66 days. They left England on September 6 and reached Cape Cod on November 11. They had hoped to live near the mouth of the Hudson River, far to the south. Instead, they came ashore far to the north in cold air. A scout team of ten passengers, pilot Robert Coppin, and six sailors found Plymouth about December 11. A storm had hit their small boat and broke the mast in three pieces. On shore, they found cornfields and small brooks where Wampanoag folks had lived before a sickness took most of them. No house stood there, just bare ground and a fresh start.

ALONG THE WAY

1620	1818	1223
The Mayflower anchors in Plymouth Harbor in December	"Silent Night" is sung for the first time in Oberndorf, Austria	Francis of Assisi sets up a living Nativity at Greccio, Italy

Our second pin lands across the sea in Oberndorf, a small town near Salzburg in Austria. Look close at the map and you will see two close towns too: Mariapfarr and Arnsdorf. In 1816, a priest named Joseph

Mohr wrote a quiet poem in Mariapfarr. Two years later, on December 24, 1818, a school teacher named Franz Xaver Gruber wrote a soft tune for it in Arnsdorf. That same Christmas Eve, the two men sang the new song at mass in the St. Nicholas church in Oberndorf. Mohr sang tenor and played a guitar. Gruber sang bass. That song was "Silent Night." From one small Austrian church, a quiet song went out to homes all over the earth.

1818 "Silent Night" is sung for the first time in Oberndorf, Austria

Our third pin goes south past the peaks to Greccio, a small town in Italy. In December 1223, fifteen days before Christmas, Francis of Assisi came to Greccio. He had asked Pope Honorius III for leave first. In Greccio, Francis asked his friend John Velita to set up a living Nativity scene. They made ready a wood manger and carried in clean hay. They led an ox and a donkey right up to the spot. Folks from the town walked through the cold dark with candles and torches in their hands. Mass was held right by the hay. Two old books, one by Thomas of Celano and one by Bonaventure, kept this tale safe for us.

1223 Francis of Assisi sets up a living Nativity at Greccio, Italy

DID YOU KNOW?

We do not know if a real baby or a carved form lay in that first manger at Greccio in 1223.

Our fourth pin sits in Rome, Italy. That old city holds two key December dates from our list. First, an old list of Roman bishops made in the year 354 names December 25 in the year 336 as the day Christ was born. That line is the first known record of Christmas. Still, no one knows for sure which exact day Jesus was born. Second, on Christmas Day in the year 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne, king of the Franks, as emperor of the Romans. Historians date the Holy Roman Empire from about that day until Francis II ended it in 1806, more than a thousand years later. Rome also sits close to the Milvian Bridge, where Constantine won his fight on October 28, 312, one year before the Edict of Milan in 313.

Our fifth pin drops north in Wittenberg, a town in Germany. In 1517, Martin Luther wrote 95 Theses there as questions for a debate. Old tales say he nailed them to the castle church door on October 31, yet historians say he more likely hung them to call a debate. Printers ran them off in Latin and German. They spread fast through Germany and Europe. By December 1517, those sheets had gone all the way south from Wittenberg to Rome.

Our sixth and last pin lands on a cold strip of mud in Belgium, near Ploegsteert. In December 1914, in the first winter of the Great War, British and German troops sat in wet, frosty ditches. In some spots, the lines were just 30 yards apart. Late on Christmas Eve, British troops heard Germans sing carols and saw lamps and small fir trees along the line. On Christmas Day, in some places, men walked out to No-Man's Land. They traded small gifts, took shots with a camera, played

football, and laid the dead to rest. One known photo taken at Ploegsteert shows British and German troops standing side by side on Christmas Day 1914.

KING JAMES VERSION

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

MATTHEW 5:16

Six places. One month. Plymouth, Oberndorf, Greccio, Rome, Wittenberg, and Belgium sit far apart on land and sea. Yet each one holds a true December tale. A cold bay. A guitar song. A box of hay. A crown and an old date. A set of debate sheets. A brief Christmas truce. Six small pins on one wide map.

Today we can pull up all six spots on a phone glass in one short minute. We zoom in with two fingers and look down at roofs. The folks in these tales had no phones and no fast jets. They crossed a cold sea for 66 days in a wood ship. They walked dirt roads in Italy. They bore sheets of print from town to town. They stood in frost and mud. The map was the exact same earth. The hands that held it were not the same. We tap glass. They moved a cold hand along a line.

The map was the same. The hands that held it were different.

Pull out a map or a globe at home this week. Let your kids put one finger on each of these six spots. Tell one short fact about each place. Trace the sea from England to Cape Cod, then hop over to Rome, Greccio, Wittenberg, Oberndorf, and Belgium. History comes alive when a child can touch a spot on the map and say, "That really took place right there."

We tap a screen. They moved a finger along a line.



Think about it

When you look at a map of your own town or the earth this December, which spot needs a small light from you?



FEATURE

From the Field: A Small Boat in December

The scouting notes of December 1620

Long before there were phones, maps on glass, or voice memos, there were field notes. People carried paper, ink, and sharp eyes. They wrote down what they saw, mile by mile and day by day. The folks who went out to scout new land kept a plain log of the trip. Years later, those quick notes turned into the history we still read.

Some field notes were long. Many were just one plain line. Yet one short line written by a cold hand can shape where a whole town rises.

This month we opened the old scouting notes from one December trip. They did not come from a warm study. They came from a small open boat tossing in icy coastal water in the year 1620.

Picture the scene at the start of December 1620. The Mayflower lay at anchor near Cape Cod after 66 days on the open sea. One hundred and two people were packed on board. They had aimed for land near the mouth of the Hudson River, far to the south, yet wind and sea had brought them north to Cape Cod on November 11. That same day, 41 men signed the Mayflower Compact, promising to live under "just and equal" laws. Soon after, on November 13, Mourt's Relation tells us the women went on shore to wash clothes while the men began fixing a small boat.

That small boat was called a shallop. During the long crossing from England, there was no room on deck for a whole spare boat. So the shallop had been taken apart and stowed in pieces below deck. Once they reached Cape Cod, the men had to rebuild it, plank by plank and piece by piece. A boat lying in pieces in the dark cannot carry anyone to a home. A boat put back together with patient hands can search a whole coast.

On December 6, 1620, the scouting crew climbed into that rebuilt shallop and pushed off from the big ship. Ten passengers went along. With them rode a ship pilot named

Robert Coppin and six sailors. That made 17 men in one open boat, facing winter wind along an unknown shore. Robert Coppin was a key man on board. He remembered Plymouth Harbor from an earlier voyage along that coast. Even without a printed chart, a steady pilot carries a helpful map right in his head.

ALONG THE WAY

1620 Ten passengers, pilot Robert Coppin, and six sailors set out in the shallop on December 6

1620 The scouts step ashore at Plymouth about December 11 and find cornfields and brooks

The winter trip soon turned rough. The wind rose and a fierce storm hit the small open boat. Rain and snow poured down on the men. The icy wind pushed so hard that the shallop's mast broke into three pieces. Imagine sitting in an open wooden boat in December, soaked to the bone, watching your mast snap in three while the sky goes dark.

The men did not give up. They steered the damaged boat toward a small island and pulled ashore to shelter for the night. That night, the air turned bitter. The old record says it froze hard after midnight. Cold water turned to ice on coats and ropes. That is a hard night to live through, and a hard night to write down.

The mast broke in three pieces. They spent a freezing night on a small island.

Then morning came, and the next day was sunny. Sunlight on winter water changes everything. The cold men spread out their wet gear to dry in the bright air. They rested and gained their strength back. Notice what is missing from the old notes. The record does not fill pages with angry gripes or panic. It stays calm and plain. It simply tells what they faced and what they did next.

Once their gear dried, they pushed on toward the mainland. About December 11, 1620, Old Style, the exploring crew stepped ashore at Plymouth. They walked the land and looked closely at what lay before them. They found cleared cornfields and clean little brooks of fresh water. Wampanoag people had lived in that village before a sickness had killed most of them. Looking at the harbor, the brooks, and the cleared fields, the scouts made their call. They decided it was the best place they could find.

1620 The scouts step ashore at Plymouth about December 11 and find cornfields and brooks

DID YOU KNOW?

Robert Coppin, the ship's pilot, remembered Plymouth Harbor from an earlier trip along the coast.

That field note was short, yet the choice was huge. About a week later in December, the Mayflower sailed across the bay and dropped anchor in Plymouth Harbor. All through the freezing months, men rowed ashore by day to raise the first houses on the land those scouts had walked, then returned to sleep on the ship

by night. By March 1621, enough houses stood on land for everyone to move ashore. A short page of field notes became a real street of homes.

KING JAMES VERSION

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

PSALM 46:1

Today our field notes look very different. We snap a photo on a phone or send a quick text in two seconds. Our photos pile up by the thousands and vanish into cloud apps we barely open again. Their field notes were kept on real paper after a freezing storm in an open boat. Those pages survived four hundred years so we can still read them at our kitchen table today.

Still, the heart of the work has not changed at all. When you face a cold month or a hard choice, do what the scouts did in December 1620. Put the small boat back together. Step out and look closely. Write down what is true. Dry your wet gear when the sun comes out. Then choose the best ground you can find and begin to build.

Those 17 men in the shallop did not know that half the group would die before spring. They did not know a town named Plymouth would still stand four hundred years later. They only knew their task from December 6 to December 11. They did that work well, one cold mile at a time.

We can learn from their calm pace. When life feels cold and dark, we do not need to map out the next ten years at once. We just need to fix our small boat, look with clear eyes, and take the next true step in front of us. God meets folks who step out in faith and do the plain work of the day. Write down one true step on a small card tonight, set it on your desk, and start there in the morning with a steady heart. Keep it plain and keep it true.

Go look. Write it down. Choose the best place you can find.



Think about it

What small, steady step could you take this December that might grow into a warm home or help for someone else?



FEATURE

Kids Corner: Build a Paper Manger

A craft and a true story for young hands

This page is made for young hands. You can make a small paper craft right at your table. You will learn a true tale from 800 years ago at the same time. Ask a mom, dad, or granddad to sit by you and read each line out loud if you like.

Our true story is on the first living Nativity scene. A Nativity scene shows the night Jesus was born. At the heart sits a manger. A manger is a wood feed box for farm beasts. Soft hay fills the box. Close by stand an ox and a donkey. They look right at the baby.

Long ago, in the year 1223, a kind man named Francis lived in Italy. Many folks know him as Francis of Assisi. In December of that year, about fifteen days before Christmas, Francis came to a small hill town called Greccio. He had asked Pope Honorius III for leave to make a scene for Christmas night.

Francis went to a friend named John Velita and asked for help. He did not ask for gold or bright silk. He asked his friend to get a wood manger, clean hay, a real ox, and a real donkey. He wanted the folks of the town to see the birth of Jesus with their own eyes.

On Christmas night, the manger sat in place. The hay was carried in. The ox and the donkey were led right up by the box. Folks from Greccio walked out in the cold dark with warm candles and bright torches. Gold light fell on the hay and the farm beasts. A church service was held right by the manger.

ALONG THE WAY

1223

Francis of Assisi sets up the first living Nativity at Greccio, Italy

DID YOU KNOW?

We do not know if a real baby or a carved form lay in that first manger at Greccio in 1223.

Two old writers, Thomas of Celano and Bonaventure, wrote this tale down so we would not lose it. Since that cold night in Greccio, homes all over the earth still set up small manger scenes each December, about 800 years later.

Now it is your turn to make a paper manger at home. Clear a spot on the table. Get four easy things:

plain paper, kid-safe scissors, crayons, and a small roll of tape.

Step one: Make the roof. Take one sheet of paper and fold it right in half like a small tent. Stand it up so it makes a roof. Lay it flat first and color the roof warm brown like barn wood, or dark blue like a night sky.

Step two: Draw the wood manger. On a fresh sheet of paper, draw a small wood box with X-shaped legs. That is the manger. Color it light brown like old planks. Cut it out with care. Tape a small paper fold on the back so it can stand right under your roof.

Step three: Draw the baby Jesus. On a clean spot of paper, draw baby Jesus wrapped snug in a small cloth. Color the soft cloth any warm tone you like. A soft wrap keeps a baby warm on a cold night. Cut out your art with care. Ask a grown up to help with small cuts.

Step four: Make paper hay. Cut thin strips of yellow paper. Lay those bright strips right inside your wood manger. Set the baby gently on top of the hay.

Step five: Add the beasts and the star. Draw a brown ox and a gray donkey on your paper. Cut them out and stand them right by the manger, just as Francis and John Velita did in Greccio. Next, draw a bright gold star and tape it on top of your roof. You can cut out one more star and hang it in a front window so friends on the street can see it.

Step six: Count the candles. On the inside walls of your roof, draw warm candles with bright tips. Count how many you drew. Think of the folks in Greccio who walked out in the dark with candles and torches to see the manger.

You can make a small thing and learn a true story at the same time.

KING JAMES VERSION

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

LUKE 2:14

Step seven: Count down Advent with your home. In most churches, Advent is the four weeks before Christmas. In many churches, those four weeks hold four plain words: hope, peace, joy, and love. Cut four small slips of paper. Write one word on each slip: Hope, Peace, Joy, Love. Fold them and set them right by your manger. Each week of Advent, open one slip and talk on what that word means in your house. By the last slip, Christmas is right at the door.

Set your craft in the heart of your table. Before you put the crayons back, say one kind thing to someone in your home today.

A note for grown ups: Read the Greccio tale out loud at bed time tonight. Set the paper manger on a shelf where your child can see it each day. Ask your child what the ox and the donkey might think as they stand by the box of hay. Plain crafts and warm night talks stay with a child long past a loud toy.

Set your paper manger on a table and say one kind thing to someone in your house.

Think about it

Francis built a plain scene that helped his whole town see Christmas. What small, kind thing can you make this week to help someone at home feel loved?



FEATURE

The Book Desk: Four Old Books

The old pages behind this December issue

Each issue of Four Corners Monthly starts at one plain desk. Before we draw a line or set a title, we sit down with real books and checked pages. On our desk this month sit four old books and records. They are why we can tell you these winter tales with full trust. Before we write one line for your home, we open them and check each fact.

Four old books on one calm desk. That is how a true print page gets made. It is not fast. It takes slow work and clear notes. It is quiet work, yet it is worth each hour when a mom or dad reads a page out loud and knows the dates are true.

The first old book on our desk is called Mourt's Relation. It is a very old book on the Pilgrims at Plymouth. It tells what they did day by day through their first cold months. From Mourt's Relation, we know that on November 13, 1620, the women went on shore to wash clothes while the men fixed a small boat called a shallop. From it we also know the sad day of December 22, 1620. On that day, Mary Allerton had a son in Plymouth Harbor who did not live. That book also tells of the December 6 scout trip. Ten passengers, pilot Robert Coppin, and six sailors hit a bad storm, broke their mast in three pieces, and spent a freezing night on a small island. Small, true facts kept safe for four hundred years.

The second old book is the work of William Bradford. Bradford rode on the Mayflower and kept a clear pen in Plymouth. He wrote what the folks did when they first reached land after 66 days on the sea. They fell on their knees and thanked God for bringing them safe over the water. Bradford also wrote a warm line we love to quote: "As one small candle may light a thousand." He meant that the small light lit in Plymouth had reached many people across the land. A man who kept a pen close in a cold bay gave us true words we still share today.

ALONG THE WAY

1620 — **William Bradford writes that the Pilgrims fell on their knees when they reached land**

1223 — Francis of Assisi makes ready a manger with hay, an ox, and a donkey at Greccio

The third old book on our desk is older still. About eight hundred years ago, a man named Thomas of Celano wrote down the life of Francis of Assisi. From his old book, we know how the first living Nativity scene looked in Greccio, Italy, in December 1223. Thomas wrote that the manger was set up, the hay was brought in, and the ox and the donkey were led

to the spot. Folks came in the dark with candles and torches. Mass was held right by the hay.

The fourth old book is called the Life of St. Francis, by Bonaventure. It tells that same 1223 Greccio tale in its own words. Bonaventure notes that Francis asked Pope Honorius III for leave first. Then he made ready a manger with hay, an ox, and a donkey in that small town in Italy. Two old books, from two pens, telling one true tale. When two old books match on the core facts, we can trust the tale even more.

1223 Francis of Assisi makes ready a manger with hay, an ox, and a donkey at Greccio

DID YOU KNOW?

Two old books tell the same 1223 Greccio Nativity story. One is by Thomas of Celano, and one is by Bonaventure.

We keep one more old list close on our desk too. A list of Roman bishops made in the year 354 names December 25 in the year 336 as the first known record of Christmas. And Eusebius wrote the Life of Constantine, telling how Constantine spoke of seeing a cross of light in the sky in 312. Old ink lasts far past wild talk.

Why do we keep old books so close when we write for homes today? Because those books were set down while these events were still fresh. They let us check each date, each name, and each count. We do not have to guess. We do not make up fake quotes. When two sources do not match, or when an old book does not say a thing, such as if Francis used a live baby or a carved form at Greccio, we tell you in plain words. That is the firm rule of our desk.

Old books let us check every date and name so we never have to guess.

KING JAMES VERSION

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

PSALM 119:105

Old books are not the only books on our mind here. Four Corners, the print arm of 508 Ministry, makes new pages too. We make books, a monthly magazine, small street booklets, and comic tracts. Each one passes these tested tales on to a new home. The old books on our desk are the seed. The new pages in your hands are the green shoot.

So our desk holds old and new side by side. The old books feed the new ones. The new pages bring true tales and exact King James Version verses into living rooms and church halls. Nothing is lost. Nothing is made up. The exact same lamp-lit desk that opens a book from 1620 sends a clean new page out to your table this month. Keep one notebook on your own desk this year too. Write down the dates you never want your family to lose.

The old books feed the new ones, and the new pages carry true stories on.

Think about it

Someone long ago sat down to write a true moment so their kids would not forget it. What true home story or answered prayer should you write down on paper this month?



FEATURE

Next Month

What we carry from December into the new year

This was our very first issue of Four Corners Monthly. Thank you for walking through these pages with us. Before we close the cover and set this issue on the shelf, let us look one step ahead together. A monthly magazine is not a one-time finish line. It is a warm habit, like setting clean plates on a kitchen table each Sunday night.

Next month is January. The calendar turns a fresh page. All around us, people will make loud plans and big New Year promises. Many of those big plans fade by the second week of the month. The real people you met in this December issue knew a deeper kind of fresh start. Their fresh starts did not come from hype. They came from steady faith in cold weather.

Look back at the Pilgrims in Plymouth. They began a whole town from bare winter ground. After 66 days on the Mayflower, 102 people lived on that cold wood ship for months. By day, they rowed to shore to build homes. By night, they slept back on the ship. By spring 1621, about half of the 102 passengers had died, and only 5 of the 18 grown women were still alive. Yet they kept going. By March 1621, enough houses stood on shore for everyone to move off the ship. On April 5, when the Mayflower sailed back to England, not one settler got on board to quit. Their fresh start cost far more than any New Year list ever will.

ALONG THE WAY

1621

By March, enough houses stand on land for everyone to move off the Mayflower

Look back too at the soldiers of Christmas 1914. After Boxing Day, the quiet meetings in No-Man's Land faded away. Leaders on both sides tried to stop another truce like it, and the Great War rolled on through long, hard years. The truce did not happen everywhere, and it did not last. Yet for one Christmas Day, in some places along the Western Front, men from both armies stepped out into the mud, traded small gifts, took photos, buried the dead, and chose peace over shooting. We can carry that quiet courage into January. A small peace in a home or a neighborhood often starts when one person steps out first.

DID YOU KNOW?

The 1914 Christmas truce did not happen everywhere. Fighting went on in other places on that exact same Christmas Day.

Both the Pilgrims in 1620 and the soldiers in 1914 lived through bitter winter weather. Neither group had an easy road. Yet both remind us that a good new year does not require a grand speech. It takes one honest, steady step taken with care.

Think about Advent too. In most Christian churches, Advent fills the four weeks before Christmas with four quiet words: hope, peace, joy, and love. Christmas morning brings the season of waiting to a joyful crest. Still, the hope of Christmas does not pack away into a cardboard box with the tree lights. Hope, peace, joy, and love can walk straight into January right beside us.

Christmas ends the waiting, yet the hope it brings can walk straight into January with us.

Our verse of the month in this issue was John 14:27, where Jesus promises his own peace and tells us not to let our hearts be troubled or afraid. Keep that verse on a slip of paper on your kitchen counter next month. January mornings are short and cold. The bills arrive. Work starts back up. Peace is not only a December word. We need the peace of Jesus on a plain Tuesday in January just as much as on Christmas Eve.

KING JAMES VERSION

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

JOHN 14:27

And do not forget the small light. In the artwork spread of this issue, a cross of light breaks through winter clouds. William Bradford wrote that one small candle may light a thousand. Francis of Assisi carried hay and candles into Greccio in 1223 and lit a spark that has warmed homes for 800 years. You can be a small light in January too. A warm phone call to someone who sits alone. A hot meal dropped on a porch. A ride to church on a cold morning. Peace and light are easy words to read in December. January is where our hands live them out.

So next month, on our work desk at 508 Ministry, we hope to keep the very same promise we made in Issue 1. Open the old books and real sources. Check every date, name, and count. Quote exact King James Version scripture. Write at a plain level a whole family can read out loud. Share true stories, clear art, a kids page, and a look at the good work happening in the 508 family. Our desk stays steady. More true stories are on the way, along with our coming full-color family history book that starts with the Mayflower.

Open the old books. Check every date and name. Share true stories that last.

You can help this magazine grow too. Read one page of this issue out loud to someone you love. Pass it on to a friend or neighbor down the block. Write to us at outreach@508ministry.com with your own true story of faith or a question for our table. Tell us what part your kids liked best. A magazine comes alive when readers write back, and a new year grows strong the exact same way.

Think about it

The Pilgrims did not know their town would stand for four hundred years. The soldiers of 1914 did not know their one-day pause would still be told today. What small, kind start will you make when January opens?



FEATURE

A Steady Home for Ministry

Inside the 508 work with Mitchel Jon

When God calls a man or woman to serve, the call does not start with a big desk. It does not start with a huge staff. It starts with one heart that loves Jesus. It starts with a wish to help neighbors hear good news. Still, even a small work needs a clean, steady spot on the web. Churches and homes need a plain place to find them, read their story, and write to them.

That is why 508 Ministry does what it does. We want to show you how a steady home helps a real voice stand firm. Earlier in this December issue, you met gospel singer Mitchel Jon. Now let us look one step closer at how his page under 508 Ministry serves both him and the churches he visits.

For thirty years, Mitchel Jon has sung gospel songs for crowds big and small. He has sung on radio. He has sung in big halls. He has sung in large churches and in small town rooms too. As the lead singer of Three Bridges, he sang on seven Top 10 songs. Three of those songs hit number one on radio. One of those hits, "Cooling Water," is still a song folks ask for today. In 2006, Three Bridges sang on a big arena stage. He also sang "How Beautiful Heaven Must Be" on the Gaither Homecoming stage. Gaither Music put that song out. He was a steady guest at Dr. Charles Stanley's church, First Baptist Atlanta. In 2010, he led the Christmas show there. That same year, 2010, he sang at the Gaither tent revival at the Billy Graham Library.

ALONG THE WAY

2010

Mitchel Jon hosts the Christmas program at First Baptist Atlanta and sings at the Billy Graham Library

After thirty full years on the road, a singer's story can get lost in old web links and mixed flyers. A local pastor hears a name and wants to know three plain things. Who is this man? How does he work with a church? Does he care about souls?

When Mitchel Jon's page went up under 508 Ministry at mitcheljon.508ministry.com, the aim was not bright flash or noise. The aim was plain truth. On one clean web page, a pastor or a church mom can read Mitchel's true past. They can see how his church nights work. They can read his clear goal. Every night ends with a plain call to come to Jesus.

A clear home on the web helps a pastor see a singer's heart in one minute.

Look close at what that plain page tells a pastor right away. It shows that Mitchel takes just a few church dates each year. His site lists 2027 dates. That way he can give each church the whole day. It tells how he talks with the pastor first. He knows God is already at work in that church long before a guest pulls up to the curb. It shows how he follows the Spirit in the room. His songs carry Bible truth. His talk between songs stays short and plain. He never makes church a slick show. Right there on his page sit the real words of Pastor Ron Wood of Fayetteville Church of God in Tennessee. "Mitch is not a performer. He is a minister."

DID YOU KNOW?

Mitchel Jon's site at mitcheljon.508ministry.com is built under 508 Ministry. It shows his work, his church nights, and his goal in one plain spot.

See how well that fits the heart of Four Corners, the print arm of 508 Ministry. Four Corners makes books, a monthly magazine, small street booklets, and comic tracts. Each code we print on a page opens our site at 508ministry.com/four-corners/. Folks can check our sources there and read more. When we build a site for a gospel singer or set a December page for your table, our rule stays the same. Tell the truth. Keep it easy to read. Leave the door wide open to Christ.

KING JAMES VERSION

Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.

ISAIAH 26:2

When a gospel work has a clean home on the web and in print, good things take place out of sight. A busy pastor does not lose an hour hunting for a live link. A church friend can text one clean web spot, mitcheljon.508ministry.com, to a church board in two ticks. A home that reads of Mitchel in Four Corners Monthly can open his page that same night and read his own words.

That calm help frees a minister to care for souls instead of fighting dead links. Mitchel does not have to act like a loud ad man all week. He can pray for the next town on his list. He can call the next pastor on the phone. He can get ready to sing good news to hearts that need hope.

Quiet, steady help frees a minister to care for souls and keep the gospel clear.

December shows us why quiet help counts so much. In 1620, the Pilgrims could not have lived through their first year without help from Samoset and the Wampanoag. In 1223, Francis of Assisi asked his friend John Velita to get hay, a wood manger, an ox, and a donkey in Greccio. In 1818, Joseph Mohr asked Franz Xaver Gruber to write the tune for "Silent Night" on Christmas Eve. Few good works for God were ever done all alone. God loves to set a friend right beside the voice with the song.

At 508 Ministry, Corey and Allie Pearson built this work so small and faithful ministries do not walk all alone. When we help tell a true story in print or on the web, we help open one more gate so plain folks can walk in and meet Jesus.

Think about it

What faithful pastor, singer, or small church work in your town needs quiet help behind the scenes this month?



FEATURE

Scenes of Light

Five frames from our art shelf and the true tales behind them

Good art slows down a fast eye. In December, our eyes jump past bright ads and quick phone screens all day long. A calm frame asks us to stop. It asks us to look close at light and dark. It asks us to think on what took place long ago. In this photo and art essay, we open five pieces straight from our art list. We show how each one ties to this December issue.

First, we keep our plain desk rule right up front. Each scene in our Constantine and Holy League art sets is an imagined picture made for our books and pages. None of them is a real shot from a camera. None is an old museum canvas. Our table views of books in a warm room are mockups too. We tell you that right up front. Truth counts in art just as much as in dates and names.

Frame one comes from our Constantine art set. Earlier in this issue, you saw the sign in the sky in our big art spread. Here we step to the next scene. Men are making the Christian flag right after that vision. An old writer named Eusebius told the tale in his Life of Constantine. He wrote that Constantine told him late in life, with an oath, what he saw. While on the march against Maxentius in 312, he and his men saw a cross of light in the noon sky above the sun.

ALONG THE WAY

312 — **Constantine beats Maxentius near the Milvian Bridge on October 28**

313 — Constantine and Licinius agree to the Edict of Milan, lifting the ban on Christians

Our sources note that this new flag, called the Labarum, was made at dawn after the vision and a dream that came next. Historians still debate the exact facts of the vision. We say so in plain words. Looking at hands shaping that sign in warm light helps us see how fast one deep turn of heart can change a whole crowd.

Good art slows down a fast eye and asks the whole home to look close.

Frame two steps one year ahead in that same art set. It shows the Edict of Milan in the year 313. On October 28, 312, Constantine beat Maxentius near the Milvian Bridge by Rome. Then a big shift came the next year. In 313, Constantine and another ruler named Licinius

agreed to a rule of toleration for faiths. We call it the Edict of Milan. Many sources say it ended the ban on the Christian faith across Rome. Look at the calm gold light in that scene. After hard years when believers met in fear, one clear rule changed church life for ages.

313 Constantine and Licinius agree to the Edict of Milan, lifting the ban on Christians

DID YOU KNOW?

Both Constantine and Licinius agreed to the Edict of Milan in 313. Many sources say it ended the ban on Christians.

Frame three takes us out on wild sea water. It comes from our Holy League art set and shows the wind turning over wood ships on dark waves. In this issue, we set this ship scene next to our Mayflower story and our December 1620 scout notes. We say right in our notes that we do not yet have a painting made just for the Mayflower in snowy Plymouth bay. Until that new art is painted, this storm-tossed wood ship helps kids and grown ups feel what 66 days on cold fall waves felt like for 102 folks headed to Cape Cod.

Look at the full sails, the dark clouds, and the bright break of sun past the storm. When we see a wood ship on tall waves, we think of two true tales in this issue. We think of the Mayflower in 1620. We also think of the small wood boat in Mark 4. There Jesus stood up and told the wind and the sea, "Peace, be still."

KING JAMES VERSION

I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

JOHN 8:12

Frame four opens our Daily Verse art shelf. All through this issue, you have seen warm verse frames behind our pages. John 14:27 stood behind our Verse of the Month. Psalm 46:1 sat by the Pilgrims' cold winter. Psalm 46:10 topped our 1914 Christmas Truce tale. Psalm 48:14 crossed our December timeline. Psalm 33:12 led By the Numbers. Luke 18:16 opened our kids page. Each square piece pairs warm gold light with deep shade. That way a well-known King James Version verse feels brand new when a home reads it out loud.

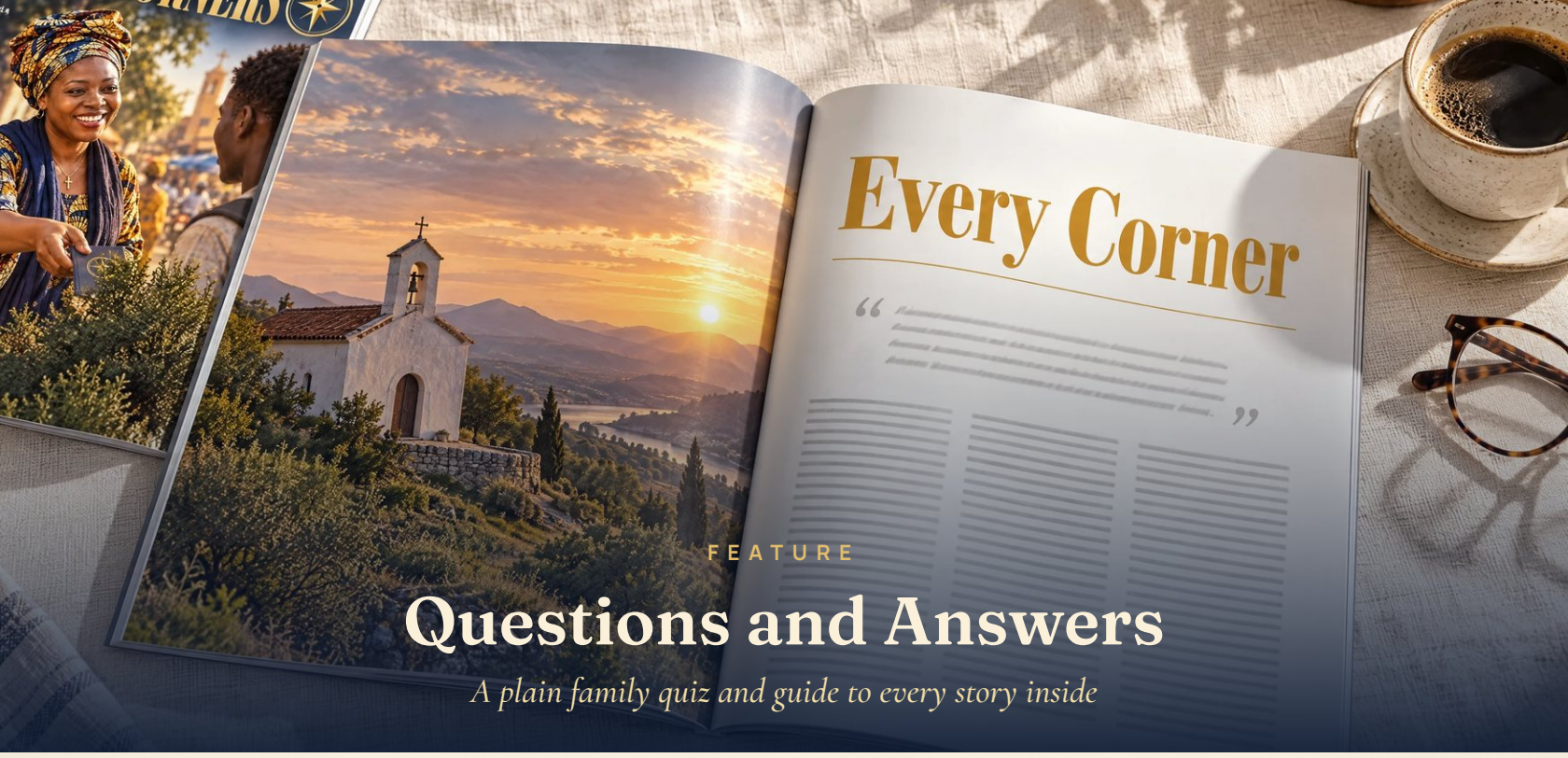
Frame five brings the whole art essay straight to the living room. It is our mockup of a book resting on a warm coffee table. Good art is not made to hide in a dark file on a desk. It may show Rome long ago, a ship on dark waves, a calm verse scene, or a comic page for a child. Each piece in our art list has one plain job. It is made to lie open in a warm room. There a child, a mom, a dad, and a granddad can point to the sky in the art and talk on God's care.

Each piece of art on our desk is made to lie open in a warm room where homes talk together.

Next time you open Four Corners Monthly, take two quiet minutes just to look at the art first. Do not read a single line yet. Ask your kids what they spot in the clouds, in the faces, or out on the sea. A child often spots a small ray of light that a rushed grown up walks right past. That slow look is a gift all by itself.

Think about it

Which picture in this December issue caught your eye first, and what true story does it help you keep in mind?



FEATURE

Questions and Answers

A plain family quiz and guide to every story inside

Good stories stay with us far longer when we talk them over out loud. This page holds twelve plain questions from this December issue. Each one draws straight from the true tales, Bible lines, and folks inside. Read them out loud after supper like a fun quiz. Or use them with kids to look back at what you read this week. Each answer comes right from a source we opened and checked.

Question 1. How many folks rode on the Mayflower? How long was the trip?

One hundred and two people rode on the Mayflower. The ship left England on September 6, 1620. It reached Cape Cod on November 11, 1620. The trip on the sea took 66 days. Before they left, a second ship called the Speedwell leaked. Both ships had to turn back twice.

Question 2. Where did the Pilgrims hope to live? What did 41 men sign on November 11, 1620?

Their first plan was for land near the mouth of the Hudson River, far to the south. Instead, they wound up far to the north at Cape Cod. No house or town waited for them. That same day, November 11, 1620, 41 men signed the Mayflower Compact. It opened with "In the name of God, Amen." They vowed to keep "just and equal" laws.

ALONG THE WAY

1620

Forty-one men sign the Mayflower Compact off Cape Cod on November 11

Question 3. How many grown women rode on the ship? How many lived to spring?

Eighteen grown women sailed on the Mayflower. Three were with child when they got on board. Elizabeth Hopkins had a boy named Oceanus out on the sea. Susanna White had a boy named Peregrine off Cape Cod. Mary Allerton had a stillborn son on December 22 in Plymouth Harbor. Mary died in February, though her husband and three kids lived. By spring 1621, about half of the 102 folks had died. Only 5 of the 18 grown women still lived.

Women who lived took in kids who had lost their moms and dads.

Question 4. Who helped the small town stay alive in 1621?

An Abenaki man named Samoset spoke English. He helped the folks make friends with the Wampanoag. In March 1621, the town made a peace deal with Massasoit, a Wampanoag chief. The Wampanoag taught them how to hunt, pick up shellfish, and grow corn, beans, and squash. That fall, they held a three-day harvest feast with Massasoit and about 90 Wampanoag men.

Each answer on this page comes straight from a source we opened and read.

Question 5. What took place on Christmas Day 1914 on the Western Front?

In the first winter of the Great War, British and German troops sat in wet, frosty ditches. In some spots, the lines were just 30 yards apart. Late on Christmas Eve, British troops heard Germans sing carols. They saw lamps and small fir trees on the line. A soldier named Marmaduke Walkinton told how a German called out, "Tomorrow you no shoot, we no shoot." On Christmas Day, in some places, men met in No-Man's Land. They traded small gifts and took photos, such as one at Ploegsteert, Belgium. Some played football. Some laid the dead to rest. The truce did not take place in all spots. After Boxing Day, it faded out.

Question 6. Do we know if troops in 1914 sang "Silent Night"?

No. The museum page we read does not say which songs were sung. So we do not claim it was "Silent Night." We do know the song was 96 years old by 1914. Priest Joseph Mohr wrote the words in 1816 in Mariapfarr. Teacher Franz Xaver Gruber wrote the tune on December 24, 1818, in Arnsdorf. They sang it that night at St. Nicholas church in Oberndorf near Salzburg, Austria. Mohr played guitar.

DID YOU KNOW?

"Silent Night" was first sung on Christmas Eve 1818 in Oberndorf, Austria. That was 96 years before the 1914 truce.

Question 7. When is the first known record of Christmas on December 25?

An old list of Roman bishops from the year 354 names December 25 in the year 336 as the day Christ was born. That is the oldest known record of Christmas. Still, no one knows for sure what exact day Jesus was born.

Question 8. What two other key December dates sit on our timeline?

First, on Christmas Day in the year 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne. He was king of the Franks. He was crowned emperor of the Romans. That old empire lasted from about that day until Francis II ended it in 1806. Second, Martin Luther wrote his 95 Theses in Wittenberg, Germany, for a debate. Printers ran them off in Latin and German. They spread fast and reached Rome in December 1517.

Question 9. Who built the first living Nativity scene, and when?

Francis of Assisi set it up in Greccio, Italy, in December 1223. That was fifteen days before

Christmas. He asked Pope Honorius III for leave first. Then he asked his friend John Velita to get a manger, hay, an ox, and a donkey. Folks came with candles and torches. The old books by Thomas of Celano and Bonaventure do not say if a live baby or a carved form lay in the hay.

Question 10. What took place in 312 and 313 in the tale of Constantine?

Eusebius wrote what Constantine told him late in life. He said he and his men saw a cross of light in the noon sky in 312. Experts still debate those points. On October 28, 312, Constantine beat Maxentius near the Milvian Bridge by Rome. In 313, Constantine and Licinius agreed to the Edict of Milan. Many sources say it ended the ban on Christians.

Question 11. What three words did Jesus say to calm the storm in Mark 4:39?

Jesus stood up in the wet boat and said, "Peace, be still." Right away the wind stopped, and there was a great calm.

KING JAMES VERSION

And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

MARK 4:39

Question 12. Who is Mitchel Jon? How can folks reach our desk?

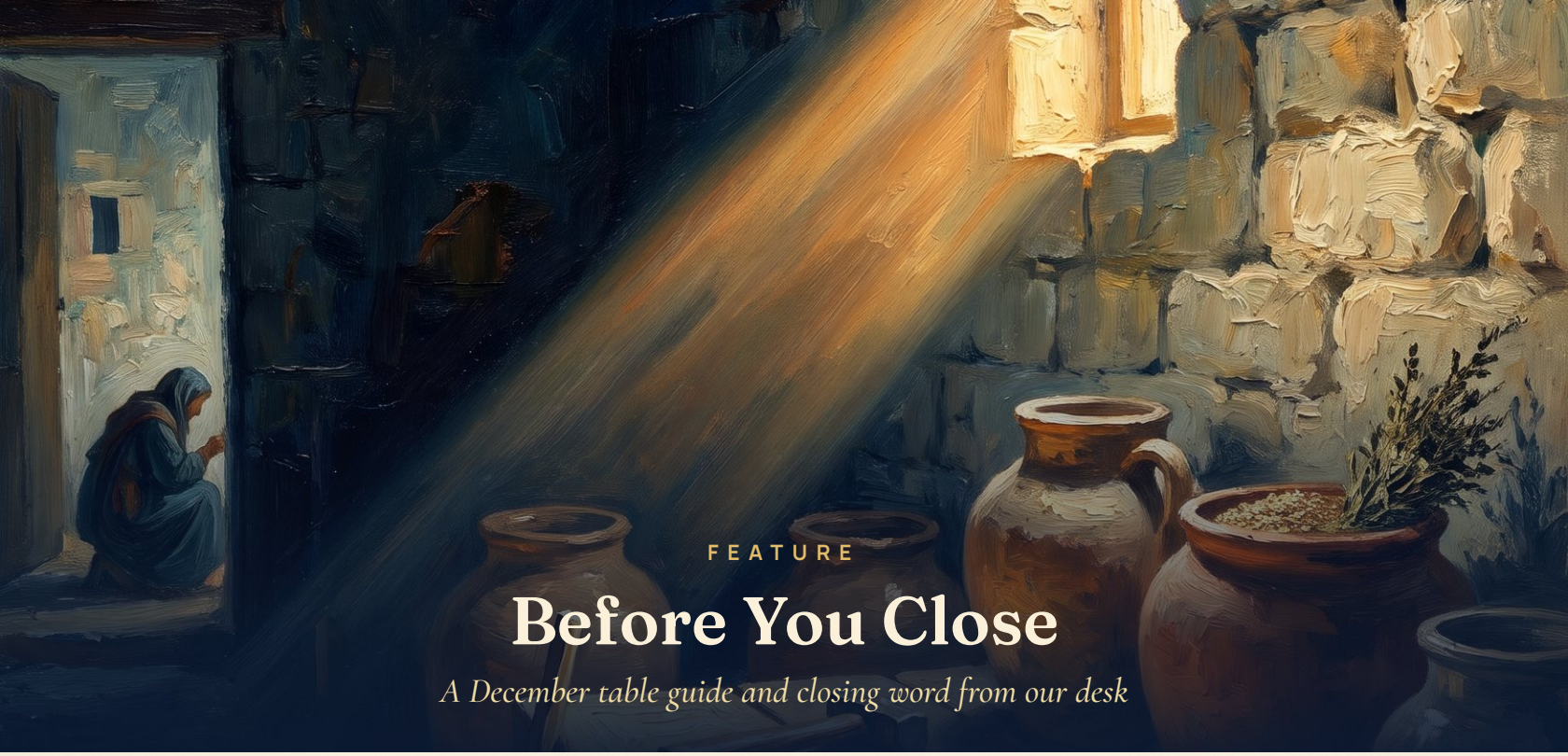
Mitchel Jon is a gospel singer in the 508 family. He has sung for thirty years. He led Three Bridges and sang on the Gaither Homecoming stage. In 2010 he served at First Baptist Atlanta and the Billy Graham Library. Now he visits a few churches each year. He talks with each pastor first. He ends each night with a plain call to Jesus. Find him at mitcheljon.508ministry.com. Reach Four Corners Monthly any time at outreach@508ministry.com, (615) 728-5082, or 508ministry.com/four-corners/.

Good stories stay with us far longer when a whole home talks them over at the table.



Think about it

Which answer on this page taught your home a new fact, and which tale will you read out loud again?



FEATURE

Before You Close

A December table guide and closing word from our desk

You have reached the closing pages of Issue 1 of Four Corners Monthly. Right behind these two pages sit our Sources page and our Back Cover. Before you shut the cover and lay it on the couch, we want to leave you with one plain plan. That way this issue keeps serving your home all month long.

Most magazines get flipped through once and tossed in the bin by Friday. We did not make this issue for the trash bin. Corey and Allie Pearson and the team at 508 Ministry made it for your kitchen table. We made it for your soft lamp and your night talks across all four weeks of Advent.

Here is one easy four-week plan to walk through this issue with your home. Take it one calm night at a time.

Week One of Advent is Hope. Open our Welcome note and our story on the Pilgrims in December 1620. Read how 102 folks crossed the sea for 66 days. Read how 41 men signed the Mayflower Compact on November 11. Read how they fell on their knees on cold ground to thank God before one house stood on shore. Read Psalm 46:1 out loud. Ask each person at the table to name one spot where they need hope this week.

Week Two of Advent is Peace. Open our Verse of the Month, John 14:27, and our true tale on the Christmas Truce of 1914. Read how troops in wet, frosty ditches paused the guns in some spots on Christmas Day. They traded small gifts and kept peace for one day. Then turn to our kids page on Mark 4:35 to 41. There Jesus speaks "Peace, be still" to the wild lake. Let the kids copy the verse and draw the calm boat.

ALONG THE WAY

1818

Joseph Mohr and Franz Xaver Gruber sing "Silent Night" on Christmas Eve in Austria

Week Three of Advent is Joy. Open our note on Francis of Assisi and our Kids Corner craft.

Read how Francis and his friend John Velita built the first living Nativity scene in Greccio, Italy, in December 1223. They used hay, a wood manger, an ox, and a donkey. Build the paper manger craft at your table. Then sing "Silent Night" together. Keep Joseph Mohr and Franz Xaver Gruber in Oberndorf, Austria, on Christmas Eve 1818 in mind.

Week Four of Advent is Love. Open our profile on gospel singer Mitchel Jon, our Prayer List for December, and our Questions and Answers quiz. Talk on what it means to leave the door wide open for a friend this Christmas. Pray one short line from the prayer list out loud. Ask God to show your home one person to ask to church or bless with a hot meal.

We did not build this issue for a quick glance. We built it for your home table all month long.

Every page inside this issue rests on four plain vows. We mean to keep all four in each issue of Four Corners Monthly.

First, exact Bible text. Each verse we print in English comes word for word from the King James Version. In the United States, it is in the public domain. We never bend a verse or change its words to fit a tale.

Second, checked history. Each date, name, and count in these pages came from a real source we opened and read. Right behind this section sits our Sources list with true titles and web links. When a date is not fixed across sources, or when an old book does not say a thing, we tell you in plain words. We never guess.

Third, plain words for the whole home. Good news should not hide behind big, hard words. We write short, warm lines so a young child can read out loud right next to a granddad.

Fourth, an open gate. Each code we print in our pages opens our ministry site at 508ministry.com/four-corners/. Our source list lives there. You can also see our books, monthly magazine, small street booklets, and comic tracts there.

DID YOU KNOW?

Coming soon from our desk is a full-color history book for homes. It starts with the Mayflower, the ship you read about in this issue.

KING JAMES VERSION

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

LUKE 2:14

Before you shut the back cover, keep our open call in mind too. Each home holds a true story of how God met someone in a kitchen, a car, or a hard month. Write to us at outreach@508ministry.com and send your short true story. Tell us who it took place for, where it was, and what changed. We cannot vow to print each note we get. We never promise pay or sales. We do vow an honest

read, a kind reply, and your clear yes before we ever print one word.

You can reach 508 Ministry any day on the web at 508ministry.com, by email at outreach@508ministry.com, or by phone at (615) 728-5082. Visit 508ministry.com/four-corners/ to read this issue on the web, pass a link to a friend, and watch for news on our coming full-color history book for homes.

William Bradford wrote that one small candle may light a thousand. That warm line fits each home holding these pages tonight. You do not need a bright stage to share the light of Christ this December. A clean table, an open Bible, a true story, and a kind word are more than enough.

Thank you for letting Issue 1 of Four Corners Monthly sit on your table. May the peace of Jesus hold your heart calm through December and right into the new year. Keep this issue near your lamp all month long. Read one page to a child at bedtime. Share one true story with a friend over warm coffee. See you next month.

Pass this issue to a neighbor, read one page aloud tonight, and carry a small light into the new year.



Think about it

Who is the one friend, neighbor, or kin you want to hand this issue to once your home is done reading?



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FOUR CORNERS *Monthly*

THE BACK PAGE

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Read this issue and find more of our work at 508ministry.com/four-corners/.

Scripture in this issue is from the King James Version, which is in the public domain in the United States. Every date and name in this issue comes from a source we opened and read. Write to us if you would like the list.

Coming soon: a full-color history book for families. It begins with the ship you read about in this issue. Watch 508ministry.com/four-corners/ for news.

Thank you for reading. See you next month.

