



“A Kittery Corners Christmas:

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Down at the Old Church Tonight!”

By Dr. Michael J. Peck

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The power was out all across town. How dark it was at the McCarthy home! The huge ice storm two days ago had brought down tree branches along with the electrical lines, and Westfield had been without power for two days. The McCarthy family had a good supply of candles and kept warm in front of their fireplace.

Nine-year-old Jennifer snuggled next to her daddy and said, “Please Daddy. Will you read me one more story? I like it when you read by candlelight.”

“Well, I guess we could read one more. Not much else to do. You pick it out,” Dad told her. Jennifer shuffled through the pile of books stacked on the coffee table and pulled out *A Kittery Corners Christmas*. Dad took the storybook and moved the candle closer so he could see the words.

This was an exciting time for Jenny. How she loved listening to Daddy as he read! As Dad took the book, Jenny moved so she could see the pictures and read along. Turning to page one, Dad began to read.

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The cold wind blew long and hard. Older folks in Kittery Corners knew that when the wind blew out of the northeast at this time of year it would be a cold day. The few leaves swirled in fancy circles high into the air. Marjorie, who often is called “Margie girl,” and Matthew, the eleven-year-old twins of Pastor and Mrs. Elijah Kenward, laughed and ran chasing the few leaves left over from raking the past month. A sudden gust of bitterly cold wind caused “Margie girl” to squeal as she was being chased by her twin brother.

Mother stepped to the door of the little parsonage provided by the church and called, “Come in here at once, you two. You’ll catch your death of pneumonia yet!” Seeing that her children were on the way, she stepped from the doorway and returned to the counter to slice the large loaf of bread she had baked earlier in the day. The wonderful smell of fresh baked bread filled the little kitchen. They would enjoy it for supper.

Pastor Kenward looked up from his newspaper which was dated December 16<sup>th</sup>, 1884. It took almost a week for the paper to arrive in Kittery Corners. The newspaper was printed twice a week and came from what folks in Kittery Corners called “The Big Town.” It was now December 23<sup>rd</sup>, only two days away from Christmas. Father folded the paper and chuckled quietly as he spoke with his dear wife.

“Sweetheart, according to you, everyone in the world is going to catch their death of pneumonia. The children are well bundled and are fine, very fine,” the good pastor said to his wife. He quietly laughed at the way his beloved Susanna worried about her children. His words of reassurance didn’t work with her. She was sure they had to come in.

“Nonsense,” said Mother. “And it will be me who will be up with the youngsters at night while you are snoring louder than Johnny Cartwright’s cows. The children are delicate. I want them to be warm,” Mother said with that special tone of voice.

The children were not nearly as delicate as their mother thought. In fact, the eleven-year-old twins were really big for their age. Already Matthew came up to his mother’s shoulders, and Margie wasn’t far behind. Pastor Kenward saw that it was no use discussing the matter any further. Nothing was going to change the mind of dear Susanna, the mother of the twins. Truly she loved her children.

*“How the Lord has blessed me with such a good wife,” thought Pastor Kenward. “What would I ever do without her? How am I going to explain to her about my deep discouragement about our church? It’s just not growing. I thought surely the townspeople would respond to the preaching of God’s Word and our friendliness in the community.*

*But Kittery Corners is not responding. Maybe it's time for another pastor to come and take my place. Maybe a new man could reach this community,"* Pastor Kenward thought.

He was deep in his thoughts until the little room was filled with the sounds of the eleven-year-old twins coming inside much against their will. They knew the sound of their mama's voice meant business and in they marched. Papa folded his paper and chuckled as he watched his dear wife commanding the little army of two who were complying with orders! Mother had moved from the door back to the counter where she was well into slicing the freshly baked and wonderfully smelling bread. How Pastor Kenward loved his family.

The little five room parsonage was a pleasant house. Even though it was not very large, it was very welcoming! Located near the church, it had three little bedrooms, a kitchen, and the living room. Mother always decorated the home so specially. They didn't have a lot of money, but mother was great at making beautiful decorations in spite of their near poverty. It was a warm and happy home filled with the sounds of love.

The twins were only four years old when the family moved to Kittery Corners. This was the only home they really remembered. Over the fireplace up on the mantle rested the family's clock. The old Seth

Thomas clock chimed once at the 4:30 mark. The soft ticking of the old clock and the crackling of the fire in the large fireplace were delightful to hear. The twins' cheeks were bright red from playing out of doors and even though neither wanted to come in, both admitted that the fire felt very good.

The round oak table in the little kitchen was a special place. Not only did the family eat their meals at the table, this was the place where they would meet late afternoon for prayer and Bible reading. This was what their dad called, "the family worship meeting." Here Pastor Kenward would gather his family and not only read the Bible, he would talk to them and explain what the Scriptures meant. He often shared his thanksgiving for the Lord's blessing as he would remind them of the many good things they enjoyed. They were poor, very poor! But Matthew and Marjorie never realized it. Their parents were filled with thanksgiving, and they felt like some of the richest children in the world.

But times were very difficult in Kittery Corners. Not too many families lived there, and several of them were very elderly. The church where Pastor Kenward served as the minister was one of the few buildings to escape the tornado last spring. Many of the buildings of Kittery Corners were damaged on that May 2nd afternoon. Wilbur Ahrens' Feed Store was greatly damaged. Ken Quibble's Blacksmith Shop lost the roof. Clifford and Anne Hodgins's Mercantile was hit the

hardest. Several of the homes of the townsfolk were also damaged. Two families moved into the church for almost three weeks as their homes were being rebuilt. But Kittery Corner's Baptist Church stood totally undamaged.

The tornado and the destruction along with the church being undamaged seemed to make an impression on the townspeople at first. In fact several promised that they were going to begin to faithfully attend the church. That first Sunday after the tornado many did come to the service. Several even said that they enjoyed the service and would surely be back. But those promises did not last very long. Soon everybody became very busy rebuilding their properties, and by the first Sunday of June, only the typical handful was present at the old church building.

Matthew's coat fell off the hook by the door and landed on the family cat who yowled in a deafening screech. Matthew jumped, and Mother called out, "Hurry now you two, your father will have Bible reading in a moment." Lovingly she swatted in Matthew's direction as he and the old cat ran by.

As the children moved toward the table, Matthew touched Margie's shoulder and hollered, "You're it. You can't catch me." With that he tore through the house as fast as he could run with Margie on his

heels. Mother, without seeing Matthew running back into the kitchen, stepped back from the counter carrying the loaf of freshly baked bread which she had just finished slicing. Matthew was flying so fast he couldn't stop! Kaboom! He crashed right into his mother with such force that the bread flew from her board and right onto Father's lap.

"Matthew Edward Kenward!" sounded the stern very loud words of his father.

Matthew Edward Kenward stood paralyzed, awaiting his punishment. He didn't move a muscle. Poor Mother landed against the wall. Father was sitting in his chair but was now wearing the bread on his lap. Margie walked past her motionless brother, tapped him on the shoulder and said, "You're it now!" She also whispered, "Are you ever in trouble!" smiling all the while.

Father roared, "Matthew, if I have told you once, I've told you a thousand times not to run in this house. I have a good mind to..." Matthew waited to hear his father's voice. Instead there was a long pause. First there was silence. Then Father's voice broke as he tried to speak. "Matthew, I..." Then there was quiet. And Father coughed, choked, and tried to speak again. He tried to keep from laughing. Soon Mother was laughing at the top of her voice, and Father was not far behind. Matthew couldn't believe it. His parents were laughing!



Matthew looked again at his father and saw the sight of the sliced bread from his lap to his chin. It was quite a picture indeed. Before anyone could say anything more, Matthew quickly said, "Oh Father, Mother, I am so sorry. I didn't see you, Mama."

"Boy, you are only eleven, but I thought you were going to make a new door in the wall of the kitchen which would be the exact shape and size of your mother as you nearly rammed her through!" exclaimed Father. "Now stop your running, and come here and help me gather the bread!" choked Dad as his stomach bounced with laughter. In fact, he laughed so hard that the bread nearly fell on the floor.

As Mother was collecting herself, Dad and Matthew pieced the bread back together. Father got up from his chair and stepped outside to brush all the crumbs from his shirt. Returning inside, Dad motioned for the family to gather. It was time for "the family worship meeting."

The giggles of Matthew and Margie stopped as Father pulled from the shelf the well-worn family Bible. Dad signaled to Margie to come and sit beside him as Mother and Matthew gathered nearby. Dad said, "Well my family, I am not sure which was the biggest entertainment of the day. That was quite a wind outdoors blowing the leaves around,

but I must say there was quite a whirlwind indoors as well.” Smiles were seen all around the table.

“Now let’s think about our wonderful Lord and quiet ourselves before Him,” Dad said. The Kenward family listened carefully.

Old Henry, the family cat, walked past, stopping to stretch. Moving a little nearer to the fire, the old gray cat rubbed his back on the leg of the chair. He looked up at the family, took two more steps and collapsed before the warm fire.

*“What a life,”* Matthew thought. *“That cat does nothing but sleep, eat, and catch a few mice. Must be nice to be a cat! Nice, except catching the mice part,”* he continued thinking.

By now Father had opened the Bible and said, “Today we come to Luke chapter two in our Bible reading.” The Christmas story was one of the favorite places of Scripture for both Matthew and Margie. Several years ago both of the twins asked the Lord Jesus to be their personal Savior. While they had much to learn about the Lord, both wanted to serve God and be the kind of Christians that would please Him.

Father cleared his throat and read the wonderful Christmas account:

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed everyone into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and lineage of David. To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country, shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night. And lo, the Angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the Angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you, ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the Angel a multitude of the Heavenly Host praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

With that, Father closed the big family Bible and spoke quietly to his family. “You of course remember that tomorrow night is the Christmas Eve service at our church. I want us to pray that God will work in a special way to touch the hearts and lives of the people of Kittery Corners. You may not know this, but I have invited every person in town to come. I know there are not too many families that live here, but still I have gone to their homes and places of business and personally invited them to come,” Dad told his family. “I know that Grandma Peters will be here. Certainly Mrs. Clark will come, and I can always count on the Thompson family. But wouldn’t it be wonderful to have all of our townspeople come?” Pastor Kenward said to his family.

Father suggested that the family pray. Margie went first, then Matthew, and then Mother. Matthew's prayer was not too lengthy. Margie's was a little longer. Then Mother prayed. The twins loved listening to their mother as she prayed. She spoke very quietly with the Lord. Matthew and Margie loved their Mother very much. They could tell that she was tearful as she spoke with the Lord about the townsfolk. This time Matthew opened one eye and peeked at his Mother and saw a tear running right down her cheek.

*"I wonder why these people don't come to church?"* Matthew thought to himself as Mother prayed. *"My dad and mom love them so very much. And my dad is such a good preacher, why is it they don't come?"* Matthew wondered. He was starting to get angry at the people of Kittery Corners. His thoughts quickly stopped as his father began to pray.

One by one Pastor Kenward prayed for every single family in Kittery Corners. The twins could not help but sense how special Father's prayer was as he prayed for family after family in the town. Matthew thought his father was crying but didn't dare peek. Then he heard the funny sound that happened every time Dad blew his nose. He knew for sure that his dad was crying. Margie turned and looked right up into her father's face and saw his tears. She wrapped her arm around his and squeezed it tight.

On he prayed for the Ahrens family, and the Quibbles, and the Hodgins. He prayed for the Bush family, and then for the Marble

family. He asked God to help them to not be bitter about the tornado last spring. He prayed that God would continue to show him how to help the neighbors in Kittery Corners who never came to church. He closed the prayer by saying something that made his family tremble.

He prayed, “And Lord, if you need to send a better pastor who would be able to do what I have not been able to do, well just move me out of the way and send the better man, I pray, in Jesus’ name. Amen.”

No one said anything for a moment. The old clock on the mantel chimed five times as Margie looked up into her father’s eyes and said, “Daddy, you are the best pastor I ever did know. God will help us.” With that, the family didn’t speak very much as they prepared for supper and a quiet evening home together.

As the twins awakened the next morning, they were excited about the Christmas Eve service. Both Matthew and Margie were looking forward to going to church that night. Even though they enjoyed playing with their friends, the day seemed to be dragging by so slowly. Even they were becoming discouraged. After talking with each of their friends, they discovered that not one of their families planned on coming to the service that night.

Later as the twins came inside, Matthew asked his father, “Dad, why wouldn’t people want to come to church on Christmas Eve?”

Old Henry, the cat, greeted them and wrapped around Margie’s foot. “I don’t understand it, Daddy. / can’t wait!” exclaimed Margie as she picked up the family cat and hopped up beside her mother.

“Well my children, we need to pray for our friends,” Dad said as he looked in the direction of his wife. “I so want them to come to hear about the Lord Jesus and what He wants to do in their lives,” Dad continued.

“But we can’t make them come,” Mother said with a little tone of sadness in her voice.

It was time for the afternoon Bible reading and prayer. Each of the Kenward family earnestly prayed for their friends in Kittery Corners. It was such a very special time. Margie concluded her prayer with, “Thank you for coming into this world to be our Savior. I just can’t wait to see what You are going to do tonight, dear Lord.”

The service was set to begin at 7 o’clock. The pastor and his family had been in the old church for well over an hour. Pastor and Matthew were busy getting the fire just right in the big potbellied stove in the

middle of the church room. Mother and Margie quickly dusted off the pews and touched up several of the Christmas decorations. It was now just fifteen minutes before the service was set to start, and only the pastor and his family were there. Then it was ten minutes before the service was to start and only Mrs. Clark had arrived.

“Pastor, I am afraid the Thompson family will not be here tonight. I spoke with Agnes this morning, and the whole family is sick. Took them some soup, I did,” said Mrs. Clark. Matthew silently thought, *“I wonder why Mrs. Clark always finishes most of her sentences with, ‘I did?’”*

No one else was in the church building. Not even Grandma Peters. She always came to church. In fact, usually she was the first one there waiting for Pastor Kenward to start the fire.

Mrs. Clark continued, “I told the Thompsons that we would miss them tonight, I did. In fact, I told them that I would tell you that they were sick, I did.” Matthew nearly burst out laughing with the last of the “I did”!

Father was sorry that they were sick, and of course he was disappointed that they were not going to be there. It was now 7 o’clock, and the only people in church that night were his family and Mrs. Clark. The church room was silent now except for the ticking of

the wall clock in the back. Matthew turned around to check on the time, and sure enough, by now it was 7:01, and no one else was there.

Margie looked at Father and then at Mother whose eyes were closed. She was praying. Matthew saw his sister looking at Mother, and he turned just in time to see his mama brush a tear away from her eyes. Turning around to check the time again, Matthew saw that it was now 7:02.

Hearing a noise in the front of the church, both twins looked up to see their father checking his pocket watch and comparing it with the clock on the wall. Father cleared his voice and pushed his lips together and then out. He always did that when he wasn't sure just what to say. Matthew usually giggled when his father did this because it looked like Dad was getting ready to make a gigantic kiss happen. Tonight it was not funny, however. Matthew surely did not giggle. Father did not know what to say. Never had the Christmas Eve service been so poorly attended. How very disappointing!

*“Just our family and Mrs. Clark,” thought Margie. “We prayed so hard for everyone to come, and now no one is coming. I told the Lord that I just could not wait to see what He was going to do in the service*



*tonight. I wonder what poor Father will do now,*” young Margie wondered.

Father stood up in the pulpit and looked at his watch again. The silence was broken as Margie carefully said, “Father, may I ask you a question?”

Pastor Kenward looked startled but answered, “Sure sweetheart, what do you want to know?” His lips were back to normal now with a little smile on them.

“Daddy, I would like to know how many shepherds there were who came to see the baby Jesus,” Margie said.

Father was really startled now. Back went the lips to the gigantic kiss-looking expression. “Well, no one knows for sure, Honey, but probably not too many. Why?” Father asked.

Margie answered before Father could finish speaking. “Daddy, I know there are not many here tonight. I am so sorry for that. But Daddy, probably there were not many at the first Christmas service when baby Jesus was born. But it must’ve been a grand time, Daddy. Even though there weren’t many, the shepherds must’ve been so happy. Daddy, please let’s have church tonight. It will be grand!” Margie said

with the enthusiasm of an eleven-year-old very dramatic little girl who loved her Daddy more than words could tell.

Mrs. Clark quickly added, "Well bless your heart, Sweet Margie. I would say that was the best little sermon I ever did hear. I'd say I couldn't say it any better myself, I did!" shouted Mrs. Clark, clapping her hands.

Matthew could not hold it a second longer. A huge muffled giggle escaped and then stopped immediately because of a look from Mother!

Father looked at Margie and a whole change of expression came over his face. "Sweet Margie girl," Father said. "Thank you for that reminder. You are right. Probably there were not many at the first Christmas service. And while there are not many here tonight, we will have a grand service indeed."

Father opened the service with prayer and thanked the Lord that Mrs. Clark could join the service with his family tonight. "And Lord," he continued, "You are the reason we are here, and we pray that You will be honored by this handful tonight. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen."

Father reminded the handful of people on the front row, "Singing is an important part of worship. So tonight, we're going to sing," Pastor Kenward said. "Yes indeed, we are going to sing!" he continued.

The music didn't sound very great as the little group sang "Silent Night," but it came from their hearts. Margie thought to herself, "*We sang 'all is calm, all is bright.' It is a little too calm here tonight, I think, Lord. But it is still grand to worship You. Please help my daddy and mother not to be disappointed because no one has come other than Mrs. Clark,*" Margie continued thinking and praying.

Her thoughts were broken as she heard her father say, "Well, we are doing our best. Let's sing the last verse." In the middle of that verse, suddenly the door of the church flew open and the whole Thompson family walked into the service. Mother and Father Thompson and their children, Charles, Henry, Maude Amy, who was carrying Esther Sue, Charlotte, and little Frankie entered the service. The singing stopped, and Father welcomed them.

Mr. Thompson took off his big cat and said, "Pastor, I'm a-sorry we be a little late, but my family was a-coughing all day long. But we got to saying to each other, if we set in the back and a-held our coughing to ourselves, maybe, ah, maybe it would be all right for us to ah, to

come to church tonight,” Mr. Thompson was famous for saying “ah” frequently whenever he spoke.

Pastor looked at his wife with joy on his face. Before he could say a single word, Mrs. Thompson spoke up and said, “Pastor Kenward, Grandma Peters has been busy tonight. I think you will have quite a surprise in just a moment,” as she helped her younger children with their coats.

Just then the church door flew open again. “Sorry we’re late, Pastor Kenward. But better late than never!” Grandma Peters called.

Believe it or not, behind her followed almost all of the people of Kittery Corners! In came the Ahrens family, the Quibble family, and all of the Hodgins family. There were people that Matthew and Margie didn’t even know! Folks from “The Big Town” were visiting the Hodgins and even they came! Others were there too. In came the Smiths, the Marbles, the Dansens, and even the Whipplés. Every pew was full, and several of the men had to stand in the back.

Father was silent. He looked stunned. Margie was thrilled, and Mother was crying. Matthew summed it up for the whole family when he hollered right out loud, “Wow! Look at all these people!”

There went Father's lips again. Another huge kiss-looking push of his lips and then Father finally spoke. "I-I just don't know what to say," he stuttered. "I invited every one of you," he continued, "but you didn't sound very interested. I am very happy to see you friends and neighbors, but I am somewhat confused!" the shocked pastor said.

Before he could speak another word, Granny Peters took over. "Pastor Kenward, I kind of... well, I sort of..." She put her finger up beside her cheek and finally said, "Well, I told them there was big news down at the old church building tonight and that they better come a-running, quick-like!"

Everyone looked at each other, but it was Wilbur Ahrens who spoke first and said, "What's going on here? We left supper on the table thinking that something big was happening, and we wanted to hear the news."

"Wilbur Ahrens," Granny spoke sternly. Turning around to face him she said, "Now you listen to me. I was the one who delivered you, young man. And you, Harvey Dansen, Doc Adams couldn't get through the snow to deliver you, but I did. And about half of you in this room, why, I was there when you came into this world. As one of the oldest women in this town, I want you to know how much I love

you and how special you are to me. There *is* big news happening in the old church building tonight! Our pastor has the biggest news you ever heard, and it's about the Lord Jesus and how He came to this earth. ”

Granny then folded her arms and took her seat. She then turned around and said, “Now please, sit down and listen to the big news. Go ahead, Pastor Kenward. We're ready!”

An amazing thing happened. The townspeople looked at each other, shook their heads, several smiled, and everyone agreed that since they were already there, they might as well stay for the service.

Pastor Kenward looked at the packed room and said, “Friends, I had no idea what Granny Peters was doing, but bless her heart. She actually did tell you the truth. There really *is* big news at the old church tonight. And that news is just what every single one of you needs to hear. It's great news. It's the biggest and most important news ever.”

With that Pastor Kenward turned in his Bible and said, “According to Luke 2:10 and the 11, the Scriptures tell us, ‘And the Angel said unto them, fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which

shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.’ That’s amazing news, isn’t it, friends?”

Placing the Bible down on the pulpit he continued, “Dear friends, here is the big news. In fact it is the biggest news that could ever come to Kittery Corners.

Let me give you a little outline to remember. First, this big news came with *suddenness* according to Luke 2:9. The shepherds were out in the fields watching their flocks when the Angel of the Lord came upon them suddenly. Second, this big news came with *sweetness* according to Luke 2:10 as the Angel calmed their fears. He said, “Fear not.” Last, this big news came with *sureness* according to Luke 2:11. The Angel explained that the Savior surely had come.”

Pastor Kenward explained the meaning of this wonderful verse. He said, “The Lord Jesus came to this world to be born in Bethlehem. He went to the cross to die for our sins and to shed His blood for us.” He explained to the townsfolk how the Lord Jesus rose the third day from the grave. He reminded them that all are sinners and helpless before a holy God. He shared how that the Lord Jesus never sinned and explained how He took our sins upon Himself. “That’s why we need to ask Him to be our Savior,” the Pastor said with kindness in his voice.

He reminded the church family, “The Lord Jesus is the only way to the Father, according to John 14:6. Kittery Corners neighbors, my family and I love you dearly, and we are so glad to be part of this community,” he continued.

Everyone listened politely. Then a wonderful thing took place. Pastor Kenward spoke to them about the tornado that had come through last spring. He told them how the Lord Jesus cared for them and how He understood how they felt when many lost all of their possessions.

Pastor Kenward spoke tenderly as he said, “Do you realize that one of the only things in the entire world that the Lord Jesus owned was His robe? Even though as the Creator God He owns everything, when He came to this world the only possession that He had that we know of was His robe. You will be amazed to learn that when He died on the cross for our sins, the soldiers gambled for the one piece of property that was His very own. They gambled for His robe. So please remember dear neighbors, when that tornado roared through town, the Lord Jesus deeply cared for each of you and understood how every one of you felt.

We all remarked how incredible it was that no one was injured. We all remarked that buildings could be replaced. But I fear that some of you



are angry and bitter about the storm. Perhaps the Lord allowed that storm to really get our attention, dear Kittery Corners friends.”

Pretty soon there was a sniffing noise. Then someone else blew his nose. Soon several were crying. Pastor Kenward explained the Gospel and how they could ask the Lord Jesus to become their Savior. It was amazing that night in Kittery Corners!

The service went on for nearly two hours as many of the people stood and thanked the Lord for becoming their Savior that night. It was a service long remembered. At a little past 9 o'clock Pastor Kenward announced that they would close the service with the song “Joy to the World.” Never has a congregation experienced more joy than Kittery Corners Baptist Church did that night!

On the way out, several spoke to Granny Peters and said, “You were a little sneaky in getting us here, but the more we thought about it the more we knew you were telling us the truth. This really IS big news at the old church building tonight. Thanks, Granny!”

As the congregation stepped out of the church building to go home, something had taken place during that service. It started to snow. It really snowed. The children laughed and jumped and ran in delight.

Margie took her daddy's hand and said, "Daddy, remember I told you that it would be a grand service? Well, it was a grand service!"

Father hugged her as they walked to the little home on that Christmas Eve 1884. Matthew came running up behind his sister, touched her shoulder, and screamed, "You're it!" as they both ran into the snowy town square.

Watching their children run on up ahead, Mother took Father's arm and whispered, "You know how the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for the things they had seen? Well, I think it could be said that the Kenwards returned, glorifying, and praising God for the things that they had seen and heard. Do you suppose this is how the shepherds felt?"

Pastor Kenward hugged his wife as they walked to their little home on that Christmas Eve 1884. Never had Kittery Corners seemed as beautiful as it did that night.

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Closing the book, Daddy said to his daughter, "So my little Jenny girl, the most important thing to remember is that Jesus came to this earth to be our Savior. It's not how many presents you will get at

Christmas. It is that you always remember that the Lord Jesus is your very best present,” and with that he tapped his finger on her nose.

Suddenly the lights came back on, and everyone in the family cheered! It was great having lights and heat once again. Soon it would be Christmas, and while the McCarthy children enjoyed their presents, no one in the family forgot about the message of Christmas celebrated in Kittery Corners that Christmas long ago. The Lord Jesus would be the reason for the season at the McCarthy’s home as well.