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Kings Mountain Herald

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Photo by Gary Stewart

HELPING HAND—Al Wright, right, drops some money in the bucket to aid the Kings Mountain Ministerial's Helping Hand Fund, which helps the needy in the area at Christmas and other times of the year. Ringing the bell to solicit donations is Rev. Dwight Edwards of the First Wesleyan Church.

Local People Giving Christmas To Needy

Kings Mountain's Spirit of Christmas giving is transcending the familiar pattern of purchases for families and friends.

No estimate was available or comparable on the amount of gifts which will go to indigent families and their children, as most all churches in the community and civic groups, plus individuals, are playing Santa Claus during the next few days. The totals will be large.

Kings Mountain Firemen, under the leadership of Chairman Pete Peterson, will be distributing toys to the area needy on Dec. 23-24 at the Fire Department Headquarters. Needy families will receive cards from their ministers to present to firemen upon presentation of the toys. Firemen will also be calling on shut-ins in the community Christmas Eve to present gifts

of Christmas fruit baskets.

Kings Mountain ministers in the Greater Kings Mountain Ministerial Association are ringing bells in the shopping districts this week and all proceeds are earmarked for Operation Helping Hand, a year-round project that provides staple foods, fuel, and clothing to area needy, not only at this holiday but throughout the year. Representatives of the Ministerial Association will be at Harris-Teeter, at West Gate Plaza and Kings Mountain Plaza every day this week and on Saturday from 11 a.m. until 7 p.m.

Kings Mountain Lions Club members will distribute gift baskets to the blind this evening (Thursday) in their annual Christmas-giving project. Proceeds from the White Cane promotion and holiday fruit cake sale are used for this project.

Christmas Eve Services Planned By Area Churches

At least three Kings Mountain churches plan Christmas Eve Candlelight services - Monday.

The traditional Candlelight Communion service will be held at 11 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church and traditional Candlelight services will be held at 11 p.m. at both Resurrection and St. Matthew's Lutheran Churches.

"Expectations and Reality", a dialogue by Rev. Gary Bryant and Dave Lee, will feature the First Presbyterian church service. The 30-voice choir, under the direction of Mrs. Darrell Austin, will sing "Burn Candle Burn", featuring Dave Lee as soloist, and "A Thousand Candles." Mrs. Kathy Rhea

Bumgardner will sing "What Child Is This?"

The Presbyterian sanctuary is decorated with Christmas wreaths and a Chrismon tree.

Senior and Junior Choirs, under the direction of Mrs. Richard McGinnis, will present special music at the St. Matthew's service, which is a service of scripture reading and carols. Rev. Harwood T. Smith will lead the service.

The Lutheran sanctuary will be decorated with poinsettias and candles.

Donald Deal will direct the special music by the choir of Resurrection Lutheran Church and Rev. Gerald Weeks will lead the meditation. Each worshiper will light a candle.

With few exceptions, Kings Mountain citizens looked forward this week to some surcease from work during the Christmas season.

And, most industrial employes could look forward to holidays—with pay.

Plant vacations - varying from three days to 17 days - will begin this weekend for most

industrial employes. Shortest holidays will be observed by Burlington Industries, Park Yarn Mills and Spectrum Fibers, Inc. and longest holidays will be observed by Neisco Mills, Pauline Mills and Eaton Corporation.

Neisco and Pauline Mills vacation schedule starts with closing of the second shift

Friday with reopening date of Jan. 7th. Turkeys will be presented to all employes on Friday and members of the office staff and supervisors will hold the traditional dinner-dance Friday night at Kings Mountain Country Club.

Spectrum Fibers, Inc. will be closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Dec. 26th.

Bonuses will be paid to all employes, based on length of service, and \$15 gift certificates will also be presented to employes.

Park Dale Mills will close for the holidays at 11 p.m. Dec. 22, reopening at 11 p.m. Dec. 26th. Christmas bonuses will be paid

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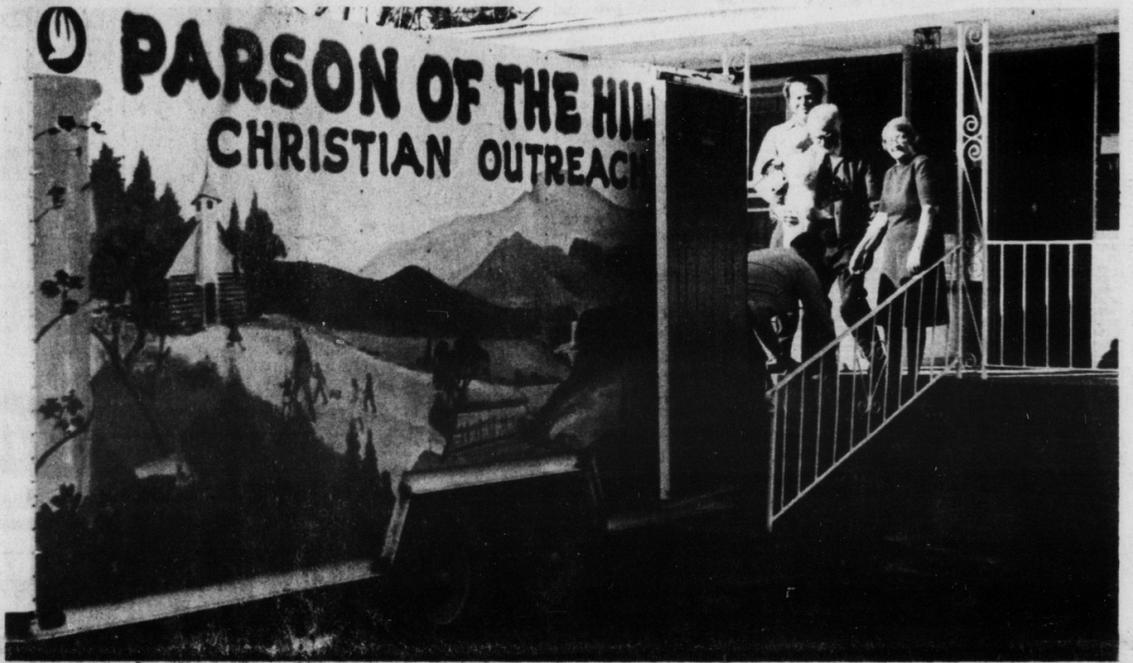


Photo by Gary Stewart

LOADING UP—Rev. Charles Keyes and Mrs. Sunnie Greene, on porch, and several of Rev. Keyes' helpers load toys, clothes and candy on the Parson of the Hills' truck from Mrs. Greene's

home on West Gold Street. The parson for the past 43 years has been feeding and clothing the poor in the backwoods mountain areas of North Carolina, West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee.

Rev. Charles Keyes Tends To Needs Of Poor

The Parson Of The Hills

By GARY STEWART
Co-Editor

The first time Rev. Charles Keyes preached a sermon, he was in a hen house and his congregation was a flock of hens. He was five years old at the time.

"I was standing on an egg crate and preached for about two hours," he recalled. "When it came time for the altar call, I threw some corn around the egg crate and I had a flock of converts."

That was about 50 years ago in the small backwoods of the Appalachian mountains near West Jefferson, N.C. That region now knows Rev. Keyes as the "Parson of the Hills."

The parson came to Kings Mountain Tuesday to pick up a van full of toys, clothes and food for his annual Christmas caravan through the mountains of North Carolina, Tennessee and Kentucky. Sunnie Greene collected supplies from her neighbors and filled up two bedrooms and the living room of her small West Gold Street home.

The parson, headquartered in Hickory, spends most of his time ministering to the needs of the poor people of the Appalachians and from November until March each year takes his caravans to distribute clothes, food and toys to children and old people who otherwise would not have a Christmas.

He takes supplies in by the tractor-trailer loads, all of it donated by people like Mrs. Greene, and also tends to the people's medical and spiritual needs.

His ministry actually began at the age of 12 when he sold peanuts on the streets of West Jefferson to buy suckers for some poor children.

"I was born and raised in the mountains," he recalled, "and all my life I've been in homes where there's no Christmas at all and kids wondered why there was no Santa Claus."

After his first project of selling peanuts, he walked in snow waist-deep to mountain cabins, delivering sack fulls of suckers. From that moment, he knew he would spend the rest of his life ministering to his people.

Rev. Keyes takes no credit for the success of his mission, but instead gives the praise to God, whom he says has "provided every need every year." Every year means 43.

The parson can cite a number of examples when there was a need and no means to supply it except prayer. In every instance, he says, the need has

been filled.

"A good example," he says, "was when we came here to pick up this truck full of gifts from Mrs. Greene," he said. "We were coming into Kings Mountain and were just about out of gas and had little money...not enough to fill up the tank. I told the guys with me that the Lord would make a way for us to get gas."

"We passed by three stations and something told me not to stop there," he added, "and we came to a station on up the road and pulled in. The man (later learned to be Otis Falls of Falls Exxon) filled it up and told us it was free. Then one of his employes gave me five dollars. I continue to be astounded at how God operates."

The parson also cited an example of a need for 3,000 boxes of crackerjacks to put in children's treat bags last week. Crackerjacks, he said, are not to be found in the regions of his mission.

"I just prayed for 3,000 boxes of crackerjacks," he said. "I didn't advertise it at all. Believe it or not, a couple of days later a big truck from PTL drove into our parking lot with 3,000 boxes of crackerjacks."

Though the parson is perhaps best known for carrying Christmas into the mountains, he says the main purpose of his ministry is to bring the people to God.

"We had two parties last Sunday in Tennessee," he said, "and as our caravan moved along the road, hundreds of people were lined along the side of the road. After the party, I preached to them for about 20 minutes and five were converted. They said 'all we want for Christmas is to be saved.'"

Rev. Keyes organizes churches wherever and whenever possible. He's an ordained Methodist minister and studied

at Duke University, but said he doesn't preach any one doctrine but a love for Christ and others.

"These people have no religious training," he said. "We go into homes and have Bible study and prayer meetings and before long the people get enthused about a place to worship. We convert chicken houses into churches. I've had chicken houses jammed with people wanting to worship. In one place right now, there's a chicken house that is a beautiful Baptist church. When people get involved together, something's going to happen."

The parson often takes doctors with him on his trips. Former Governor Bob Scott once accompanied him. When hospitalization is necessary, if there's no hospital willing to offer free treatment, the parson foots the bill himself.

Rev. Keyes does not draw a salary for his work but instead makes his living selling ceramics. He has published one book from which he receives a royalty. His wife and son help him make and sell his ceramics. His son, David, is an expert

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Herald Will Publish Once Next Week

The Herald will publish only one paper next week, on Thurs., Dec. 27.

Our offices will be closed on Christmas day so our employes can celebrate the holidays with their families. We will close at 12 noon on Monday, Christmas Eve.

Advertising deadline for the Thursday paper is Friday at 5 p.m. News deadline is 9 a.m. Wed., Dec. 26.

The Christmas Story

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 first-born 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 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 tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour 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 heavenly hosts praising God and saying,

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

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

And they came with haste and found Mary, Joseph and the babe lying in a manger.

And when they had seen it they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

And all that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

St. Luke 2:1-8