

Making Room for Christmas

By Jane McBride Choate

(Based on a true story)

"Picture the little baby Jesus.... Remember Him, as you picture Christmas this year" (*Children's Songbook*, 50-51).

Can your family come caroling with us on Thursday night?" Sarah asked. "We'll sing at a nursing home and have hot chocolate and cookies afterward."

Caitlyn shook her head. "I wish we could! But our family's going to an ice-skating party that night."

Caitlyn liked ice-skating, but she was tired of having every night in December filled. After school she talked to Mom about it. "I really want to go caroling with Sarah, but every night is so busy. I feel like there's not even time to think about Christmas!"

Mom nodded. "I know what you mean." She ticked off items on her fingers. "Ice-skating party. School program. Service project."

"All those things are good," Caitlyn said with a frown. "How do we decide which ones to do?"

"I'll talk to Dad," Mom said. "Maybe we should have a family meeting about this."

After dinner that night, Mom brought the family calendar to the table. "Caitlyn and I have been talking about how busy December is," Mom said. "We've decided that we're going to unschedule Christmas!"

"But we have to have Christmas!" seven-year-old Ben said. "That's when we celebrate Jesus's birth."

"I don't mean getting rid of Christmas," Mom said with a smile. "We just need to clear out some of the things leading up to it. We're so busy these next few weeks that we haven't made time to focus on Christ and family."

Dad opened up the family calendar. "So let's talk about what will really help us focus on Christ this Christmas season. First off, the ice-skating party or caroling with Sarah's family?"

"Skating sounds fun," Caitlyn said, "but I'd rather go caroling. I bet singing at the nursing home would really help us all focus on Christ."

"Sounds like a good choice to me," Dad said with a smile. "We can go ice-skating another time."

"Yay! I love caroling!" Ben said.

"OK," Mom said. "That's four votes for going with Sarah's family." She put an X through the skating party and wrote in "caroling."

One by one, the family went through each item on the calendar, crossing off some and writing in others. They marked some nights as family nights to stay home and do

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things together. Other nights they made sure that what they had planned would focus on Christ.

"Can we make a gingerbread house?" Ben asked. "The old-fashioned kind?"

"I think that can be arranged," Mom said.

"And let's act out the Nativity! We can't forget that," Caitlyn said.

Mom wrote it on the calendar. "This way we'll be sure we made room for it."

Thursday night, Caitlyn and her family went caroling with Sarah's family. "This is so neat," Caitlyn said to Sarah as the families sang song after song at the nursing home. "Everyone looks so happy to see us."

The families made a plan to come sing next month. And maybe next Christmas too! ♦

The author lives in Colorado, USA.

ILLUSTRATION BY GUY FRANCIS



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