



A Christmas Surprise

By Jane McBride
(Based on a true story)

"Have a happy fam'ly Christmas! . . . Wrap your hearts in love this year" (Children's Songbook, 51).

Anna's heart sank as she walked into the room and saw the Christmas tree. The water heater in their house had burst, and water was all over the floor. Dad was still trying to clean up the mess. The few presents under the tree were completely soaked.



Anna and her little brothers grabbed some towels and tried to dry the presents. But it didn't really work. They were a soggy mess.

Anna's family was going through a hard time. Her dad didn't have a job right now. Her mom was going to have a baby soon, and she felt sick a lot. And now they wouldn't have any presents for Christmas.

That night as Anna got ready for bed, she could

hear Mom and Dad talking in the kitchen.

"What are we going to do?" Mom asked. It sounded like she was crying. "We don't have enough money for the house payment, and now we don't even have presents for the kids." Anna had an empty, twisty feeling in her stomach.

"We'll figure something out," Dad said.

Anna walked into the kitchen. Mom reached out and gave her a big hug. With her arms around Mom's tummy, Anna felt the baby move. She smiled. "We have a new baby coming. You always say that a baby is a miracle."

Mom smiled back. "That's right. We have a lot to be grateful for."

"We have each other," Dad said. He kissed the top of Anna's head. "It'll be OK."

On the way to her room, Anna heard her brothers crying. She sat down on David's bed.

"Everyone is so sad," David said quietly.

"And we won't have any presents," Robbie said, sniffing.

"It'll be OK," Anna said again. "You'll see."

Before she got into bed, Anna knelt and asked Heavenly Father what she could do for her family. She didn't have any money to buy presents, but she still had a warm, comforting feeling in her heart.

The next morning, she stayed in bed thinking for a few minutes before getting ready for school. Then an idea came to her! That afternoon she hurried home and did her chores and homework. Then she found some paper and string and a few markers and stickers she had gotten for her birthday. She took them all to her room and closed the door.

Anna almost laughed when she thought about how surprised her family would be. First she folded the paper and tied it together with string to make four booklets. She chose a star sticker to put on Mom's booklet and a planet for Dad's. She put a dog for David's booklet and a rocket for Robbie's.



Then Anna started drawing. For Mom she drew a picture of herself sweeping the floor. She drew a picture of herself cooking dinner with Dad, one of her playing football with David, and one of her reading a book to Robbie. It took her several days to fill each booklet with pictures.

Finally it was Christmas Eve, and Anna carefully placed her booklets under the tree.

The next morning, she gave each person in her family a booklet. "I like these pictures," David said. "I like playing football."

"They're not just pictures," Anna said with a sparkle in her eyes. "They're coupons! The pictures all show things I'll do for you."

"This is the nicest gift you could have given us," Mom said as she looked through her booklet. Anna was thankful that Heavenly Father helped her think of making Christmas coupons. A new baby was coming, and with Heavenly Father's help, everything really would be OK. ●

The author lives in Colorado, USA.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHRIS DANGER; PHOTOGRAPH OF SCISSORS FROM GETTY IMAGES

