

Ultimately, for believers, that may be the secret blessing of loneliness. In our loneliness, we're once again reminded through prayer that God's been there all along—as he promised.

Christmas Day for Lonely People

Since time immemorial the most approved method of extending goodwill and good cheer and of celebrating the festival of Christmas has been to invite one's friends and relatives to Christmas dinner.



In the 10 years that we have lived on the farm we have endeavored faithfully to live up to this old-time custom and in addition have endeavored to invite one or more people who would otherwise be forced to spend a lonely day. Our farm living room is large, the farm dining table capable of special extension, and we have one of the most welcoming features of all, a big open fireplace built from rocks found on our own land and in which burn huge logs from the hills around all winter long.

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This custom of inviting lonely strangers to share our Christmas dinner is the result of one Christmas day that might have been very lonely and sad for us, the Christmas immediately following the Armistice, when my husband returned unexpectedly from France to find that all his own relatives as well as mine were out of London.

To our delight and surprise on Christmas morning at our hotel there arrived an invitation from their Majesties, the King and Queen, inviting us to a reception, concert and dance to be held at the Royal Albert Hall. It was being given by the King and Queen for all those officers, their wives and sweethearts,



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whose homes were abroad and who had not come to England with organized units but who had proceeded voluntarily to join up in the British forces.

Practically all the Royal family were present, including the King and Queen, Princess Mary, the Royal Princess, the Dowager Queen Alexandra and others, all of them entering in a wholehearted manner into the fun and happiness of the occasion and striving at all times to see that their guests had an enjoyable and memorable day.

The entertainment ended with an informal and very enjoyable dance, in which everyone, including members of the Royal family, indulged. Several of the younger members of the Royal family made it a special point to dance with as many of their guests as possible.

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So happy were we that night when it was all over, and so great was the contrast between the day we had enjoyed and the dull and lonely day we had anticipated, that we there and then made up our minds that each forthcoming Christmas day we would make our own small effort to do something similar for any British people whom we might discover to be lonely and far from home.

This we have faithfully endeavored to do and have entertained for 10 Christmas days past, a succession of interesting, delightful and amusing strangers.

I recall, for instance, one young bachelor from the elevator in a nearby town who turned out to be a Cambridge fellow who had taken the very highest of mathematical honors. Another out-of-work young man we picked just before Christmas on the streets of town, lonely and altogether disheartened, turned out to be member of one of England's oldest families. He was also a university graduate, out in Canada in an endeavor to make good. He told us he was always losing his jobs because he could not resist stopping

whatever job he was doing to compose poetry when the inspiration seized him! Another man, who was regarded by many people as a grouch and a very silent and unapproachable individual, was transformed by two glasses of port, into a most delightful dinner table companion and an intimate of the very best literature. Another guest we had to keep for several days and send for a doctor on account of his falling violently sick. It turned out to be a case of simple indigestion, but we later discovered that it was the first square meal the poor lad had eaten in several weeks. One of the very earliest of these lonely strangers we entertained has since attained

no small success in farming. His appreciation of our slight hospitality for many years passed, has taken the form of presenting the farm every Christmas with an assortment of English delicacies that contributes to a real English Christmas dinner.

When the lights are turned low and the logs blaze warmly, and we are all sitting round the fireplace, many are the enjoyable and happy stories that pass back and forth, of adventures in curious parts of the world, and it is usually the stranger guests who contribute most to the success of the occasion.

Our thought has been to give a little happiness to others, but on looking back over the Christmas days that have passed; we are at one in thinking that we ourselves have probably had most of the pleasure. We have met some delightful and interesting people and have made many friends who have lasted through the years.