

Down Home: Christmas in stages this year

December 12, 2013

Christmas is arriving in stages this year.

Well, not exactly, but sorta.

Of course, we celebrate Christmas Dec. 25 this and every year. But because of complicated family logistics, we're Christmasing together at various times.

If you've raised children who married and doubled the size—and multiplied the complexity—of their extended families, you've probably experienced this, too. (Actually, if you've married, you've probably experienced this. But maybe you didn't notice. Parents and grandparents who loove to gather all their chicks in their nest feel the pain of separation most acutely. For everybody else, logistics are just a hassle.)

Couldn't sync our travel plans

For the first three Christmases after both our daughters were married, our family synced with their husbands' families. We all gathered at our house on Christmas day a couple of years and Thanksgiving the other. But this year, thanks to a major move and various other obstacles, we couldn't work it out.

So, we're declaring "Christmas" within the circle of each other's company whenever Joanna and I can be with them.

Our older daughter, Lindsay, and her husband, Aaron, and our grandson, Ezra, drove up to see us at Thanksgiving. Since Jo and I won't be with almost-3-year-old Ezra in December, and since we wanted to play with him

playing with his presents, we sat beside the Christmas tree and exchanged gifts shortly after they arrived.

Mother and Daddy trekked down to our place for Thanksgiving, too, and they celebrated with Lindsay, Aaron and Ezra. But since they're passing through to catch a plane to visit my brother and his family in a few days, Jo and I will celebrate with them the night before they fly away.

The Great Ice Storm

The Great Ice Storm of '13 messed up the birthday celebration planned for Jo's dad. We don't know if we'll see him before Christmas. But we're all flexible by now, and we'll see what happens. It's a Christmas mystery.

And that leaves our younger daughter, Molly, and her husband, David, who moved to Nashville this year. The confines of David's medical residency program don't allow time to visit Texas for Christmas this year. So, we're traveling to them, and we particularly look forward to attending their new church on Christmas Eve.

All this moving and switching about reminds me of Mary and Joseph and the first Christmas. Pregnancy is unpredictable, so even they didn't know when Christmas would come. But Caesar decided to levy a tax, and everybody had to return to their ancestral hometown to register. That meant great-with-child Mary and understandably nervous Joseph hit the road from Nazareth to Bethlehem.

It seems journey and the unknown shadow Christmas. The first time around, God knew exactly where to find Mary and Joseph and dispatched angels and shepherds to celebrate.

God knows where to find us

More than 2,000 years later, God knows both where and when to find us as

we stop to remember and rejoice over Jesus' birth. Wherever—and whenever—glad hearts gather to worship the Savior, God arrives to sanctify the celebration.

The parent/grandparent in me still loves to see our daughters' faces in the same room, surrounded by their guys, my parents, Jo's dad and as many other family as can show up. But celebrating Christmas from late November through December has been a blessing, too. It's multiplied our opportunities to rejoice and be exceedingly glad.