

1944

Christmas at Glade Cross Mission was a very joyous one because of the Church Schools, Auxiliaries, Merchants around Everglades, and other friends who helped to make it so.

Soon after Dec. 1st the Christmas spirit was felt at the Mission House in the Town of Everglades. Nearly every day Indians came asking, "How many days Christmas?" Packages came daily - and such joy in opening them. There were gifts for the children of the white fisher folk on the Island of Marco, children on a cattle ranch out from Immokalee, isolated Church children, colored children under the Church's influence, the County Jail, and the Seminole Indians.

On Christmas Eve the Mission car was seen going over the bridge to Caxambas on the Island of Marco. Deaconess Bedell conducted a short service with talk and Carols, followed by a programme arranged by Mrs. M. Must a resident who has charge of the Church School - the children telling the Christmas Story in different ways. There was a beautiful Tree and gifts from the Church to the children of the Church School but also for every child who came from the fish camps among the Ten Thousand Islands; the Woman's Guild gave gifts to each other; and families made the Mission Tree their family Tree.

On Christmas morning a little portable trimmed Tree was taken to the County jail in Everglades where a short service was conducted with gifts for all. Carols were sung by the white prisoners and Spirituals by the Negroes.

We could not go to the cattle ranch on account of results of the recent storm, so a group came to the Mission and packages with messages of Christmas were sent, also to the isolated Church people in and around Everglades.

At the Mission Indian Village on the Tamiami Trail 156 Indians gathered. A pretty tree was erected and the boys and girls had a merry time throwing tinsel, etc over it, then all gathered around the Tree. Indian songs were sung - songs without words that they sing when they are happy - followed by prayer and the Christmas Story interpreted by Chestnut Billy.

Mothers with babies in arms were called to come around the Tree, and a baby blanket was given to each one, then the tots about five years old were called and it was a joy to see their little expectant faces. Each received a toy and bag of candy.

Next the girls and women came. Pretty bags containing many things they like were given. The older boys and young men received belts, checkers, games, etc. The older men were designated with shells for the shot guns and packages of groceries were given to heads of families. There was more singing and Christmas 1944 was over.

We could not have had the happy Christmas that we did if the Church and other friends had not contributed so generously. With much appreciation from us all for your wonderful help I am

Faithfully yours,

Deaconess Bedell