

CHRISTMAS, 1947

If the Church Schools of South Florida, Auxiliaries, and other friends who so generously helped us could have been at our several celebrations they would have seen what their gifts meant.

On Christmas Eve the Mission car laden with gifts was seen going 20 miles on the Tamiami Trail, then 14 miles over the bridge to Marco Island (Collier City) where the Church ministers to the white fisher folk, Mission of Our Saviour.

Mrs. Wm. Wust who lives there and is a volunteer helper had arranged a short programme, - carols, and the children telling the Christmas Story in different ways. The Tree beautifully decorated for the public school programme was left for us in the Community Hall. It was the regular moving picture night but Mr. Johnson gave way for us and operated his electric power for lighting. A short service with carols and Christmas message was conducted by Deaconess Bedell.

The Mission Christmas is truly a community Tree; families and friends bring gifts for each other, the Guild draws names for gifts, and every child had a gift from the Mission. The offering is not for ourselves but is divided between two institutions decided upon later.

Christmas morning I drove back to Everglades, and a short service with gifts was held at the County Jail. They acknowledged that being there was one of God's stop signs. One said, "We are happy that we were not forgotten for Christmas because we are in jail".

Negro work, that among isolated Church folk, and among the white cattle ranch people is individual and group work. Visits were made with the Christmas message and gifts for the children.

INDIAN For several days before Christmas the Indians asked, "How many days Christmas?" One showing me a calendar said, "You mark which day."

On St. John's Day about 200 Indians gathered at the Mission Village. They were very attractive in their colorful costumes and the tiny tots given balloons and balls added to the scene. The children trimmed the Tree and had a merry time throwing the tinsel over the branches, etc.

Soon all were gathered about the Tree for a short service and the Christmas Story interpreted by Cory Osceola, one of the councilmen. Mothers and babies in arms were called forward and each received a blanket; next children about five years and their little expectant faces were a joy to see as they received their toys; the girls and women were delighted with their bags containing thread, combs, and things they like; the men and heads of the several villages all had gifts; and there was candy for all the children.

Very soon different fires were started for the feast. The clan system must be considered as all cannot eat together. There was beef, grits, Indian bread, and coffee..

Without the splendid boxes, help from the Collier Corporation, nearby traders, and individual friends we could not have had the joyous time that we did. The Indians working in logging camps, tomato farms,

saw mills, etc. are seeing more of the "white man's" ways and are letting down the bars of their tribal isolation and now without delay the Church must be ready to help them and bring them into the Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We have several "households" ready for Baptism when the Indian Council gives consent for the tribal acceptance of Christianity. All we do, the industrial work, individual and group work make contacts for winning them for Christ and His Church. Your prayers, and your gifts help much and we hope we may have your continued interest.

Gratefully yours,