

Lancaster Farming

OPINION

The Christmas Story

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

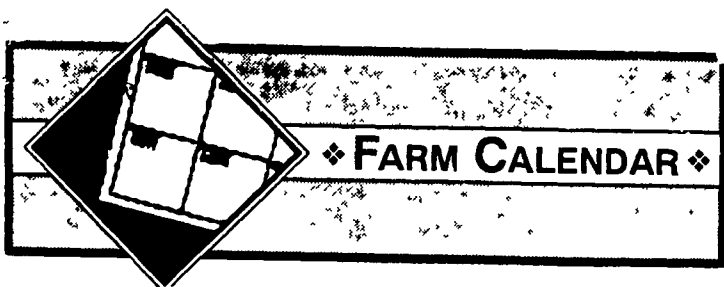
And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning the child. All they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Holy Bible



Saturday, December 19	Thursday, December 31
Sunday, December 20	1999
Monday, December 21	Friday, January 1
Act 6 Nutrient Management Certification and Plan Writing Seminar, Schuylkill County Ag Center, Pottsville, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.	Happy New Year!
Tuesday, December 22	Lancaster Farming office closed.
Act 6 Nutrient Management Certification and Plan Writing Seminar, Gratz Community Center, Gratz, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.	Saturday, January 2
Wednesday, December 23	Sunday, January 3
Thursday, December 24	Monday, January 4
Friday, December 25	Tuesday, January 5
Merry Christmas!	Solanco Young Farmer Pesticide Recertification, Solanco High School, 7:30 p.m.
Lancaster Farming office closed.	Eastern Pa. Turf Conference and Trade Show, Valley Forge Convention Center, King of Prussia, thru Jan. 7.
Saturday, December 26	Wednesday, January 6
Sunday, December 27	Bucks-Montgomery Dairy Day, Family Heritage Restaurant, Franconia.
Monday, December 28	Farm\$Risk\$ and Management Seminar, Penn State Campus, Forelsville.
Tuesday, December 29	Thursday, January 7
Wednesday, December 30	Mercer County DHIA Banquet,



Now Is The Time

By John Schwartz

Lancaster County
Agricultural Agent

To Increase Alfalfa Stands Life

Persistence is important to alfalfa growers. The longer a field is productive, the less it costs to grow, according to Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent. Many things affect the longevity of an alfalfa field. These include variety, weather conditions, soil fertility, harvest management and pests.

Some variables affecting the alfalfa plant, the farmer cannot control. The farmer cannot control severe temperature changes which adversely affect the stand as it gets ready to go into winter dormancy or break winter dormancy.

Winters without snow cover coupled with extremely cold weather and wind will reduce the plants winter survival rate. Prolonged periods of standing water or ice during the winter will reduce the atmospheric gases which reach the plant and reduce the alfalfa's ability to survive.

To help stands last as long as possible, farmers must control those variables within their control. These include weed and insect pests, fertility and harvest intervals.

To Close Credit Card Accounts

Dr. Robert Thee, Lancaster County Extension Financial Management Agent, asks if you have ever opened a credit account at a store to receive a 10 to 20 per cent discount? Have you ever accepted gifts with your favorite team logo on it for just completing an application for a credit card while attending a game?

Do you have credit cards you are not using? Review your credit card accounts and close any accounts you do not need after making sure you have paid the account in full.

Contact the company and ask them to close the account because you do not plan to use it in the future. Ask for written confirma-

Mercer County Extension, 11:30 a.m.
Schuylkill County DHIA Banquet, Dairy Days.
Franklin County Dairy Day, Kauffman Community Center, 9 a.m.-2:45 p.m.
Dairy Facilities Tour, Dave Stuck Farm and Irvin Hostetler Farm, 10 a.m.-Noon.
Northeast Tomato Growers' Meeting, Thompson's Dairy Bar, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Vegetable Growers' Association of Delaware 1999 meeting, Jan. 7 Kent County Cooperative Extension, Dover, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Jan. 8 Carlisle Fire Company, Milford, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; Jan. 9 Laurel High School Auditorium, 8:30 a.m.-Noon.
Computer Basics for Farmers, Ful-

tion that the account has been closed.

Why should you close these accounts? Cutting up the card does not close the account. Unused credit accounts may prevent you from receiving a desired loan. As long as the account is open, you may make charges on the account.

Most lenders do not automatically close accounts that are paid in full, even when they have not been used for a long time. You must request that credit accounts be closed if you do not plan to use them anymore. After closing accounts, order a copy of your credit report to check its accuracy.

To Reduce Soil Erosion

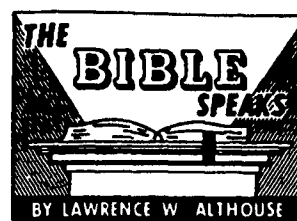
According to Robert Anderson, Lancaster County Extension Agronomy Agent, there are many ways to reduce soil erosion. One of the most significant ways is to keep the amount of bare soil to a minimum especially during winter months.

The use of cover crops and

having no land plowed during the winter months are economical ways to protect soil from erosion during winter months. In addition, buffer strips along roads and water courses helps to keep soil from farm fields getting into streams. Buffers work the entire year to reduce the amount of soil which gets into streams.

Environmental stewardship should be a business goal of a farm family who wants to stay in farming. For that family, conserving soil makes good business and environmental sense. Properly seeded cover crops and buffer areas will reduce sediment in runoff up to 75 per cent while removing nutrients from the runoff. Cover crops and buffer strips protect people, crops, livestock, wildlife and roads from the effects of erosion.

Feather Prof.'s Footnote
"Nothing is so embarrassing as watching someone do something that you said could not be done"



THE STAR ABOVE
THE FREIGHT TRAINS
December 20, 1998

I have read that James V of Scotland would from time to time lay aside the royal robe of king and put on the clothes of a common peasant. In this disguise he moved around his realm without anyone recognizing him, making friends with the common people, sharing their difficulties and concerns, appreciating their handicaps and obstacles, and sympathizing with them in their sorrows. When again he sat upon his throne, he was able to rule over his kingdom with a fatherly compassion and mercy.

Isn't that what the birth of Christ means to us, too: the almighty, omnipotent God taking upon himself human form so that he might walk among us in the most humble of circumstances? The late Howard Thurman in his book, *Deep Is The Hunger*, writes, "It is profoundly significant to me that the Gospel story in Luke reveals that the announcement of the birth of Jesus came first to simple shepherds, who were about their appointed tasks . . . the birth of Jesus remains the symbol of the dignity and inherent worthfulness of the common man."

HUMBLE CIRCUMSTANCES

Perhaps we sometimes glamorize the nativity story and we forget that it is the story of a king born in the most humble of circumstances. His mother and father lived in a poor hill town of dubious if any distinction. Although later, Luke traced Jesus' lineage back through King David to Adam, Joseph's family tree was an undistinguished branch and Joseph was a carpenter, a reputable but run of the mill vocation. Because the Bethlehem inn was overbooked, Joseph and Mary had to place their newborn son in the feeding trough of field animals. His birth was attested by a visit, not of prominent authorities, but simple shepherds who saw an angelic vision while tending sheep.

If God was going to send his only Son to earth, don't you

think he would have planned it a bit more grandly? Two humble peasants—are these fit parents for the King of Kings? A common manger—is that anywhere for the Savior to be born? Smelly, simple shepherds—what kind of a reception committee is that? A helpless child in swaddling clothes—is that any way for the Messiah to make his grand entrance? Yes, it is God's way.

If we were writing the script, we would write it differently, wouldn't we? We'd have his parents coming from somewhere a little jazzier than Nazareth. We'd take over the whole inn for Mary, Joseph and their baby. We'd bring delegations of the most important people.

SIMPLE, COMMON PEOPLE

But God involved only the most important people—simple, common people. The Incarnation did not, does not conform to the norms and structures of society, neither the one into which Jesus was born, nor the one in which you and I live today. The Incarnation was consistent only with the Kingdom of God. So, the angelic chorus that startled shepherds made that quite clear: "Be not afraid; for behold I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people" (2:10). I added the italics above to highlight to all the people, not the rich and powerful, the cultured and educated, the nobly born and celebrities.

In his novel, *The Harbor*, Ernest Poole tells of a lad in Brooklyn Heights, NY, who frequented a secluded spot that gave him a glorious view of the harbor. Almost at his feet were the tracks of the harbor railroad terminal. Sometimes these heavily laden freight trains obscured his view of the harbor. Then one night he discovered by lifting his eyes ever so slightly he "could see the stars above the freight trains."

If we lift our Christmas gaze ever so slightly above the chaos and clatter of the season, we can see the Star of Bethlehem above the freight trains.

Lancaster Farming

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— by —

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