

## SPECIAL DELIVERY

*Thanks to my friend and colleague, Pastor Fred Anderson for sharing this recent experience he had. The Cedar Crossing Chamber of Commerce has no Annual Costume Ball, so I don't think there is anything similar we need to worry about in our small town.*

*Pastor Arnie*

*The Lord works in mysterious ways—a familiar saying often used for explaining the unexplainable. I'm afraid I must call upon it in trying to explain this story. I have spent the greater part of my adult life in the study of God, and there are times when I know no more about God than the little child down the street.*

*Pastor Fred Anderson*

The Annual Profitville Chamber of Commerce Costume Ball returns this coming Saturday night. In the event you are wondering why this would interest me, let me explain. Though the Church's mission comprises winning and keeping people for Christ, there is much in the administration of that goal that is business oriented. From office equipment and supplies to publicity to property maintenance to accounting, it behooves us as leaders to make the business aspect as efficient as possible. We owe it to those who sacrifice every week with their gifts, to make sure we spend every dollar wisely.

It is with those thoughts in mind that the Church Council invested in a membership in the Chamber. When I'm not able to make a meeting, I have several retired business executives in the congregation that I can call on to take my place. Our presence in the Chamber has proven to be beneficial for both us and the other Chamber members. Not only have we built a good rapport with the business community, but we often harvest new knowledge on efficient business practices. We've built up an extensive contact list of businesses and

people that we can call on when something arises in the church that needs outside experience. Since we are the only church on the member list, we have many opportunities to offer spiritual guidance within the Chamber halls. It has been a win-win relationship.

Getting back to the Annual Costume Ball, I've struggled with homemade costumes over the last few years. This year, I decided to rent one from the costume shop in town. My wife is content with making her own again, but I want something different. Of course, I had to establish parameters—no devil suits or zombies or such. It needed to be something with some dignity, and if spiritually themed, all the better.

On Tuesday, I called upon fellow Chamber member, Trace Bell, the owner of Snuggly's Costume Shop. After an hour or so of searching the racks of costumes, I noticed a ray of light shining on one in the corner.

“Now, that's a great costume, Pastor,” said Trace. “It's a little more complicated, but I don't think you'd find a better theme.”

“I would have to agree with you there, Trace.”

An hour later, I walked out of Snuggly's Costume Shop with an elaborate but refined costume. When I walked through the front door of my house carrying a package as big as me, my wife gave me a curious look.

"What in the world did you get, Fred?" asked Becky, my wife.

"It's my costume for the ball."

"I figured that. What is it?"

"In due time, my dear. In due time. I want the effect to be more ... dramatic, so I'm not going to show you until Saturday."

"O ... kay."

In another part of town, a young boy got ready for school, but only after he asked his mom when they were going to get a dog. The little boy's name was Jimmy, and he was as cute as a button, but he inherited his father's penchant for persistence.

When he was all ready for school, he asked the question again, “Mom, are we going to get a dog today?”

“No, we can’t today, Jimmy.”

Unfortunately for his mom, Jimmy asked that same question every morning for a month. Then, when he got home from school, he would ask, “Mom, is Dad going to bring home a dog today?”

At bedtime, he didn’t ask the same question, exactly. It rather took the form of, “Mom, can we get a dog tomorrow?”

Exasperated by her son’s persistence, she finally said, “Okay, Jimmy, I’ll make a deal with you. If God brings us a dog, then we can keep it.”

Jimmy got a big grin on his face and ran up to his room. His mom wondered if the deal would end the wearisome questions. Jimmy did not ask her the question at all the next day.

When nighttime came, his mom said, “Come on, Jimmy. It’s bedtime. Let’s go say your prayers.”

“Okay, Mommy.”

Kneeling beside his bed, Jimmy began, “Bless Mommy and Daddy and Suzy and Gina.

Bless Aunt Sophie and Uncle Bill and bless Calvin. Amen.”

“Jimmy, who’s Calvin?”

“That’s the name of the dog that God is going to bring me.”

“Oh.”

For the next three weeks, Jimmy included Calvin in his prayers, morning and night. His mom wondered if she had done the right thing with her deal. At his age, his sisters, Suzy and Gina, would have moved on to something else quickly. Not Jimmy. She hoped she hadn’t set him up for resentment of God when Calvin never arrived.

Saturday afternoon, Pastor Fred unwrapped his costume and showed his wife.

“An angel. Seems dignified and within your parameters.”

“Yes, but this is no ordinary angel. The wings move in and out with a little electric motor. It has a halo made from a bright, circular fluorescent light.

Another switch turns on a little pump that emits a foggy mist. And there are four other things it does.”

“Wow! Sounds complicated.”

“A little bit, but it’s worth it. I feel it is in concord with my professional status in the Chamber.”

“Uh, huh.”

“There is one minor problem, but it’s not insurmountable.”

“What’s that, Fred?”

“It takes about an hour to put it on and get everything hooked up.”

“Okay. Let me get my costume on, and then I’ll come out and help you.”

“You are a fine woman.”

“Not magnanimous?”

“That too.”

An hour and a half later, Angel (aka—Pastor) Anderson and his wife were ready to head to the ball. As they walked out the front door, Pastor Anderson stopped.

With a sheepish grin, he said, “Uh, I’m afraid with these wings folded in front like they are, I won’t be able to drive.”

Becky held out her hand and Fred gave her the keys.

With the passenger seat pushed back as far as it would go, Fred managed to get his seat belt on underneath the wings.

“This would obviously not be the preferred means of transportation for angels,” he commented.

“Really?” said Becky.

“According to my watch, we should arrive at the ball with plenty of time to spare.”

“Do you think angels wear watches, Fred?”

“Uh, that’s a good question. Perhaps I will leave it in the car.”

“Slow down, Becky. It looks like a little puppy is getting close to the road up there. He looks lost. Pull over on the right.”

Pastor Anderson got out of the car and walked over to the puppy who immediately put his paws up on the pastor. Fred started to bend down



to pick up the puppy, but he found he couldn't bend over with his wings folded in front of him. He pushed the button to open the wings, and the puppy backed up with an uncertain look on his face.

With wings fully extended, Pastor Anderson picked up the puppy and said, "It's okay little fella, I'm not going to hurt you. Let's see what we have here. No ID tag and no collar."

By then, Becky had joined him on the roadside with the puppy.

"What do we have, Fred?"

"I don't know. No ID or collar. Maybe we should check with some of the neighbors to see if anyone's missing this little guy."

"Okay. I'll take the left side and you can do the right."

About fifteen minutes later, they regrouped at the car.

"Any luck?" asked Fred.

"Nobody's missing a puppy."

"Well, there's one more house at the end of the cul-de-sac. I'll try there."

“Okay. I’ll stay by the car and watch to see if anybody comes along looking for a puppy.”

Fred walked up the front sidewalk to the house, carrying the little puppy in his arms. Coincidentally or not, Jimmy looked out the front window when Fred approached the front door.

“Mommy! Mommy! He’s here!”

“Who’s here, Jimmy?”

“The angel that God sent with my puppy.”

“What?”

Just then the front doorbell rang.

For a moment, Jimmy’s words didn’t sink in and then it hit her. If whoever’s at the door has a puppy, she’s doomed. She made a deal. She couldn’t go back on her word. But she did say if God brought a dog, didn’t she? She walked over to the front door and looked out the peephole. All she saw was a blinding light. Perhaps it should be noted that when Pastor Anderson was trying to maneuver his way to the front door with his fully extended wings, he accidentally hit the switch that turned on his bright, fluorescent halo.

Jimmy’s mom knew she had to open the door with Jimmy standing next to her saying, “Boy. Oh

boy. Oh boy.” She slowly opened the door. Perhaps it should also be noted that when Fred moved the puppy to his left arm so he could push the doorbell, his right arm accidentally bumped the switch that operated the mist pump of his costume.

Jimmy, of course, was oblivious to the light and the mist. He exclaimed, “Calvin!” and then took the puppy from Fred. Running upstairs with the puppy, he joyfully said, “I knew God would bring you to me, Calvin.”

With the puppy now headed up the stairs, Jimmy’s mom stood at the front door shielding her eyes from the light. Through the mist, she thought she made out the form of a huge angel standing in front of her.

“Uh ... thank ... thank ... you ... uh ... for ... uh ... for delivering ... uh ... Calvin.”

“You are quite welcome,” replied Fred. As he fiddled with the switches on his costume, he started to apologize for the light and mist, but Jimmy’s mom had already closed the door.

“Oh, well,” said Fred to himself. “Mission accomplished.”

When he got back to the car, Becky noticed he no longer had the puppy.

“Find his home?”

“Yes, there is one happy little boy in there. It was a little odd, though. His mother seemed at a loss for words, almost like she was in awe.”

As Becky looked at Fred from head to toe, she continued watching him fold in his wings. She then said, “Yes, I can imagine she would be.”

“Well, let’s get to the ball.” Taking off his watch and checking the time, he continued, “I guess it never hurts to be fashionably late once in a while.”

“How could they think any less of an angel for it, dear.”