

Shedding a tear

By Reverend R.A. Shackles

A week or so ago, in the evening, after giving up on TV football (too much of it these days!), I joined my wife as she was watching a Christmas movie on her TV. Mostly, I am not a movie watcher, but I quickly found myself enjoying the film. It was an old "tear-jerker" — a broken family, an abandoned boy, an unemployed mother losing her home, etc. — all the "stages" in a classic tear-jerker. As the film went on, I was engrossed — even though, of course, I knew just about perfectly how it was going to end — tears and joy all around as Christmas worked its magic. Everyone happy, even the "meanie" got his just desserts.

The conclusion proved me a liar in insisting I never cry at "these things," let alone watch them. I was indeed all dewy-eyed, as was my wife. We laughed self-consciously to each other as we wiped our tears away. I acknowledged to my wife that I certainly knew the ending, but even so, it "got to me." She agreed it had gotten to her, too. I added, "Yes! You know the ending, but what a relief to have pleasant emotional reactions rather than the usual disgust with virtually pornographic sex, mayhem and unearthly weirdness!" She agreed.

Thinking about it, I decided there is a lot to be said for "tear-jerkers." They may be, often are, overly melodramatic. You can reject them as cheaply sentimentalist. You can ridicule them. But they have about them a genuine quality that, in fact, is the substance of Christianity, surely of Christmas itself. And do we ever get tired of the Christian story of God so loving the world that He gave His Son, as a precious baby, to guarantee to us, that, indeed, there is a happy ending to the story; that such a sure hope is the essence of the story?

Do these tear-jerkers take advantage of our emotions of Christmas? Do they make money on them? Of course, they do. But so what? Regardless of such concerns, does not Christmas call us to sing with the angels? To praise God that in His gracious love He promises us a happy ending to earthly life — and then makes it real by drawing us all in all the joys of Christmas. And isn't that the point of these Christmas tear-jerkers? Don't they reflect the ultimate story of Christmas hope? Doesn't the story of Christmas warrant our tears of sorrow and joy in all that the incarnation, the Nativity of Christ, means? It is the story of a beautiful baby boy born in less than aristocratic plenty. It is the story of all the hope that the Babe of Bethlehem ultimately makes good!

The tear-jerkers, in their way, are all playing varying tunes on the fundamental orchestral theme Luke portrays in his especially beautiful version of first Christmas, a fact that is repeatedly "first" every year! Seen in this way, we say enjoy the tear-jerkers! And thank God there are still some film makers who understand how Christmas does "play out" in human experience. They are worth tears, just like the ones in my eyes and heart every time I hear read the Lucan Gospel at Christmas worship. So bring them on and I'll shed my whole bunch of tears. It will make my Christmas all the more understandable — better yet filled with tears. A grown man crying over a Christmas movie? You bet! Join me! I'll always have plenty of tissues waiting. Have a thrilling Christmas! Shed a tear!•

New pastor welcomed at Edgewood Lutheran Church

(Submitted by Edgewood Lutheran Church)

Edgewood Lutheran Church, ELCA in Fruitport, is excited to welcome Reverend Jessica Rivera-Walker as their new pastor.

Pastor Rivera-Walker received her Masters of Divinity from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota and was ordained into the ministry of Word and Sacrament in January, 2006. Pastor Rivera-Walker and her husband (also a Lutheran pastor) come to Michigan from Omaha, Nebraska where she served as an associate pastor for a small suburban congregation.

On transitioning to Edgewood, she says, "I am so excited to be here at Edgewood. This congregation is alive with love and hospitality and has so much to share with the community of Fruitport and beyond. I can't wait to see where the Spirit leads us!"

You can find Pastor Rivera-Walker leading worship every Sunday at 10 a.m. and every Monday between 9 a.m. and noon in the church office at 2525 Pontaluna Road in Fruitport; by phone at (231) 865-3300 or by email at revirw@gmail.com.•

Open position on library board

By Fan staff

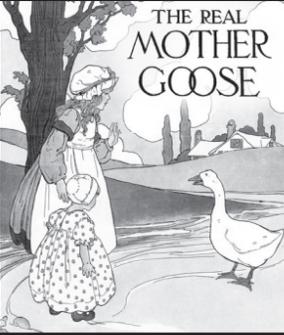
Due to the resignation of Anne Nichols, a position is open on the Fruitport District Library Committee, which oversees the Fruitport branch of the Muskegon Area District Library.

The position must be filled by a Fruitport Township resident. If you would like to apply for the position, please submit a letter of interest to Rose Dillon, chairperson at the Fruitport Township Hall, 6543 Airline Road, by January 8, 2013.•

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Mariann Cooper - Manager

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