

I'll Be Gone for Christmas

by Scott Kennaugh

The government issued the order, and of course they had to go. It didn't matter that it was a bad time for their family – the baby was due any time! They packed what they thought they'd need and headed out. Convenient travel? Don't believe it! But they made the journey over what had become a familiar route. Yet once they arrived, so many people were crowded in and living on top of each other that they had to stay in a wood-board shack. Oh, and then the baby! The baby was born in that shack. News issued from the angels to the shepherds, then from shepherds to the villages throughout the region: Peace on earth through this newborn child! As it turned out, lives were forever changed because this couple was gone from home for Christmas.

The government issued the order, and of course we had to go. It didn't matter that it was a bad time for our families – babies due any time, children growing up too fast, ailing spouses and aging parents. We packed what we needed and headed out for the war. Convenient government travel? Don't believe it! Although the journey's become familiar to many, the conditions remain austere. We're crowded in on an operating-base village, and the fortunate ones live in wood-board shacks (the rest are content with tents). This barren and mountainous land is as remote as any the holy family traveled long ago not far from here. And we'll be gone for Christmas.

Yet there is still a place for the baby. The Son of God came to us in a shack in the hills. Honestly, our FOB (Forward Operating Base) chapel is not much more than that. But it is no less a place where men and women under orders, far from home in a land where peace is a foreigner, can gather to sing and pray and hear again their chaplain issue the news of that holy baby who came to bring peace on earth between mankind and God. As it turns out, lives will again be forever changed while we're gone for Christmas.

Scott F. Kennaugh is a US Army chaplain. He is currently deployed on his second tour to Afghanistan with the 1st Squadron, 91st Cavalry Regiment (Airborne), of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, US Army Europe. His wife Krista and their five sons are living in Germany where the unit is stationed. Scott graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from Michigan Theological Seminary in 2003, and is ordained in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.



Scott provided us with a journal during his last deployment. This story is the first journal entry during his second. Check our alumni story page often to read Scott's journal.