Story Behind the Song
“Now Thank We All Our God”

Song written by Martin Rinkart, 1586-1649
Translated by Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878

Upon hearing the hymn, one would never realize that this poem of praise was forged during times of tragic experiences. From some of the most severe human hardships imaginable during the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) came this stately hymn, often called the national hymn of Germany because it has been sung on many occasions of national rejoicing.

Martin Rinkart, born on April 23, 1586, in Eilenberg, Saxony, Germany, was the son of a poor coppersmith. He was for a time a boy chorister in the famous St. Thomas Church of Leipzig, Germany, where J.S. Bach was later musical director. There Rinkart worked his way through the University of Leipzig and was ordained to the ministry of the Lutheran Church. At the age of thirty-one he was called to be the pastor in his native town of Eilenberg. He arrived there just when the dreadful bloodshed was starting. Because Eilenberg was a walled city, it became a frightfully overcrowded refuge for political and military fugitives from far and near. Throughout these war years several waves of deadly pestilence and famine swept the city as the various armies marched through the town, leaving death and destruction in their wake. The Rinkart home served as a refuge for the afflicted victims, even though it is said that Martin Rinkart often had difficulty in providing food and clothing for his own family. The plague of 1637 was particularly severe. At its height Rinkart was the only remaining minister, often conducting as many as forty to fifty funeral services daily. Yet, amazingly enough, he was a prolific writer of several different dramatic productions on the events of the Reformation as well as a total of sixty-six hymns.

During the closing years of the war Eilenberg was overrun by invading armies on three different occasions, once by the Austrian army and twice by the Swedish army. During one of the occupations by the Swedish army, there came the demand that a large payment be made by these already impoverished people. Rinkart interceded with the leaders of the army with such purpose, supported by the prayers of his people, that the tribute demand was finally reduced to a much smaller amount. It is said that when the Swedish commander would not at first consider Rinkart's request for a lowering of the levy, the pastor turned to his humble parishioners and said, "Come, my children, we can find no mercy with man; let us take refuge with God." One his knees Rinkart led his parishioners in prayer and in the singing of a familiar hymn. The demonstration of spiritual fervency so moved the Swedish commander that he reconsidered and finally lowered the demands of the tribute payment.

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Germany is the home of Protestant church music, and no hymn, with the exception of Luther's "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," has been used more widely in German churches than has this hymn.

The first stanza of this hymn is a general expression of gratitude to God for His "countless gifts of Love." The second verse is a petition for God's continued care and keeping, with perhaps just a suggested hint of Rinkart's own personal hardships, "Guide us when perplexed, and free us from all ills." The final stanza is a grand doxology of praise to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit - "the one eternal God."

**Lyrics for “Now Thank We All Our God”**

Now thank we all our God, With heart and hands and voices, Who wondrous things hath done, In whom this world rejoices; Who, from our mothers' arms, Hath blest us on our way With countless gifts of love, And still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God Through all our life be near us, With ever joyful hearts And blessed peace to cheer us; And keep us in God's grace, And guide us when perplexed, And free us from all ills In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God The Father now be given, The Son, and Him who reigns With them in highest heaven, And The one eternal God, Whom heav'n and earth adore, For thus it was, is now, And shall be evermore.

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**A Visit from the Pastor**

A member of the church, who previously had been attending services regularly, stopped going. After a few weeks, the pastor decided to visit him.

It was a chilly evening. The pastor found the man at home alone, sitting before a blazing fire. Guessing the reason for his pastor's visit, the man welcomed him, led him to a comfortable chair near the fireplace and waited.

The pastor made himself at home but said nothing. In the grave silence, he contemplated the dance of the flames around the burning logs. After some minutes, the pastor took the fire tongs, carefully picked up a brightly burning ember and placed it to one side of the hearth all alone then he sat back in his chair, still silent.

The host watched all this in quiet contemplation. As the one lone ember's flame flickered and diminished, there was a momentary glow and then its fire was no more. Soon it was cold and dead.

Not a word had been spoken since the initial greeting. The pastor glanced at his watch and realized it was time to leave. He slowly stood up, picked up the cold, dead ember and placed it back in the middle of the fire. Immediately it began to glow, once more with the light and warmth of the burning coals around it.

As the pastor reached the door to leave, his host said with a tear running down his cheek, "Thank you so much for your visit and especially for the fiery sermon. I will be back in church next Sunday."

We live in a world today, which tries to say too much with too little. Consequently, few listen. Sometimes the best sermons are the ones left unspoken.

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Submitted by Pastor Del

Submitted by Joy
Prodigal Son in “F”

Feeling footloose and frisky, a feather-brained fellow forced his father to fork over his farthings. Fast he flew to foreign fields and frittered his family's fortune, feasting fabulously with floozies and faithless friends. Flooded with flattery he financed a full-fledged fling of "funny foam" and fast food.

Fleeced by his fellows in folly, facing famine, and feeling faintly fuzzy, he found himself a feed-flinger in a filthy foreign farmyard. Feeling frail and fairly famished, he fain would have filled his frame with foraged food from the fodder fragments.

"Fooey," he figured, "my father's flunkies fare far fancier," the frazzled fugitive fumed feverishly, facing the facts. Finally, frustrated from failure and filled with foreboding (but following his feelings) he fled from the filthy foreign farmyard.

Faraway, the father focused on the fretful familiar form in the field and flew to him and fondly flung his forearms around the fatigued fugitive. Falling at his father's feet, the fugitive floundered forlornly, "Father, I have flunked and fruitlessly forfeited family favor."

Finally, the faithful Father, forbidding and forestalling further flinching, frantically flagged the flunkies to fetch forth the finest fatling and fix a feast.

Faithfully, the father's first-born was in a fertile field fixing fences while father and fugitive were feeling festive. The foreman felt fantastic as he flashed the fortunate news of a familiar family face that had forsaken fatal foolishness. Forty-four feet from the farmhouse the first-born found a farmhand fixing a fatling.

Frowning and finding fault, he found father and fumed, "Floozies and foam from frittered family funds and you fix a feast following the fugitive's folderol'? The first-born's fury flashed, but fusing was futile. The frugal first-born felt it was fitting to feel "favored" for his faithfulness and fidelity to family, father, and farm. In foolhardy fashion, he faulted the father for failing to furnish a fatling and feast for his friends. His folly was not in feeling fit for feast and fatling for friends; rather his flaw was in his feeling about the fairness of the festival for the found fugitive.

His fundamental fallacy was a fixation on favoritism, not forgiveness. Any focus on feeling "favored" will fester and friction will force the frayed facade to fall. Frankly, the father felt the frigid first-born's frugality of forgiveness was formidable and frightful. But the father's former faithful fortitude and fearless forbearance to forgive both fugitive and first-born flourishes.

The farsighted father figured, "Such fidelity is fine, but what forbids fervent festivity for the fugitive that is found? Unfurl the flags and finery, let fun and frolic freely flow. Former failure is forgotten, folly is forsaken. Forgiveness forms the foundation for future fortune."

- Submitted by Pastor Ike

Wayumi Missions Retreat
February 28-March 1
held at New Tribes Mission in Jersey Shore, PA
Trip organized by Josh Miller and Pastor Chris Knight
Sign-up NOW!!!
As of January 20th we have 31 people registered to attend from CGBCI churches. If you are still interested in attending, please talk to Josh Miller ASAP.
Funny New Years Resolution Quotes & Sayings

My goal for 2014 is to accomplish the goals of 2013, which I should have done in 2012, because I promised them in 2011 and planned them in 2010.

Tomorrow is the first blank page of a 365 page book. So write a good one.

The new year will be like the old one if you keep on doing the same old things.

My resolution is to decipher the hidden meaning in your resolution.

It's time to renew that gym membership we're never going to use again.

My New Year's resolution is to stop hanging out with people who ask me about my New Year's resolutions.

I probably shouldn't be making any new resolutions this year...mainly because I'm still working on the ones from last year.

I hope one of your New Year's resolutions is to stop tagging me in New Year's photos.

My excuses for already failing my New Year's resolution are more complicated than the fiscal cliff deal.

Dear God, my prayer for 2014 is a fat bank account and a thin body. Please don't mix these up like you did this year.

A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one Year and out the other.

“An optimist stays up until midnight to see the new year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves.”

Now there are more overweight people in America than average-weight people. So overweight people are now average which means, you have met your New Year's resolution.

“Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.” –Colossians 4:5

"Youth is when you’re allowed to stay up late on New Year's Eve. Middle age is when you’re forced to.”

“People are so worried about what they eat between Christmas and the New Year, but they really should be worried about what they eat between the New Year and Christmas.”