



Christmas, for many people this year, may be more like Christmasses-past, because there's an energy crisis.

We can hope for a greater use of candles instead of electric lights. Take special care, of course, to use them safely.

Aside from the danger of fire, candles are a beautiful Christmas symbol and may add more Christmas atmosphere than colored electric bulbs ever did or ever could.

As a matter of fact, there's nothing Christmassy about strings of lights tacked in rows along eaves of houses or outlining window frames. These look like nothing more than advertisements for bars and grilles.

For most people, sights and sounds and smells of Christmas bring alive this season's spirit. When the house rings with happy voices, music of carols and laughter of children, we hear Christmas.

When kitchens steam with savory and spicy odors, the living room is pungant with green boughs and a burning fireplace, we smell Christmas.

When candlelight glows and flickers across smiling loving faces, reflects from baubles and tinsel on the tree, illuminates gifts, all carefully chosen, wrapped and bedecked with bows, we see Christmas.

These, all combined, make us feel Christmas, not strings of various colored electric lights. Christmas lives in our hearts or not at all.

Churches, windows candlelit, hushed with worship, resounding with hymns celebrating the birth of Christ: that's really what Christmas is all about.

The gifts, the feasting, the homecomings and cheerful gatherings are but symbols expressing joy and love.

Like many others whose letters to various editors have expressed disappointment that Christmas lights will be discouraged this year, I've often enjoyed seeing them twinkling in the cold darkness of pre-Christmas nights. They aren't necessary, however.

More important that each family may keep warm through the icy months of January, February and March than that electric Christmas lights burn for a week or two in December.

There's only so much energy available this year; it should be conserved for necessities, not wasted in display.

We might give ourselves a gift of heated homes for all if every other streetlight bulb were removed and if fifty per cent of store lights were turned off.

When driving through the villages at night, I see many shops fully illuminated, in spite of requests to conserve energy. These lights burn all night. In the name of those who may suffer cold, later this winter, I protest this energy waste.

True, adequate lighting provides some pro-

tection from crime, but leaving every light on, every night, is overdoing a good thing. And what will happen to the crime rate if poor people can't buy fuel?

Whether we're in sympathy with the reasons for the requests to conserve, some consideration should be afforded those people who will be first to suffer -- older people, living on fixed incomes, who find it difficult to buy fuel and electricity at today's prices -- little children in young families already overburdened with the rising cost of living.

It should be the concern of every Cape Codder, every New Englander, every American, to do everything possible to help meet this emergency. The laws of supply and demand are visible in spiralling costs for fuel oil and electricity. The more each uses, the less there is to go around. The less there is available, the more everyone must pay for what they get.

So far, in our country, there's enough food to go around; we don't hear about Americans starving to death because of famine.

This isn't true of many other countries, however; there's no guarantee it will always be true in the United States.

At this Christmas season, when we're thinking of loved ones and planning joyously for their happiness, let's remember the gift of warmth is one each of us can make to all of us. It costs nothing but thoughtfulness.

For my own part, I'm keeping the heat turned off in my bedroom and enjoying sleeping in a cool, yes, even cold, room at night. Unused rooms are closed off.

I'm not using my dryer; instead I'm hanging my wet laundry in the cellar. I'm letting dishes air dry instead of running the dishwasher through the automatic drying cycle. The thermostat on my hot water heater has been turned back, as well.

Driving 50 miles an hour, I get 20 miles to a gallon of gas instead of fourteen or fifteen.

The furnace thermostat is set at 65 degrees and I wear a sweater around the

house and in the office. Storm windows and doors are on and tightly closed.

People tell me lighting three lamps costs only nine cents a month in electricity. If every family in the Town of Barnstable burned three fewer lamps than usual, a total of \$450 worth of electricity would not burn needlessly.

That would provide me with enough electricity for two years, at current prices.

Multiply these figures by all the families on Cape Cod, all in New England, all in the country; then you begin to appreciate what saving nine cents a month may do to help every one of us.

Let's make Christmas, this year, a celebration of really caring about one another. Let's examine our habits for little thoughtless acts, even selfish ones, perhaps, that we can change to make this a better world.

That's what Christianity and Christmas is all about, you know. Being your brother's keeper, doing unto others as you'd be done by, loving your neighbor as yourself.

Don't believe it won't work. Believe it WILL work! Unless you believe, and I believe, and the guy down the street begins to believe, it can't work. But if we do believe, it not only can, it will.

Light your candles and celebrate Christmas, 1973, in the spirit of love, remembering there was no electricity, no heat but that of the soft breath of the animals in the barn where the Infant lay in the manger, no lights but open oil lamps -- and a bright star in the East -- on the night Christ was born.

Its been known to snow on Christmas Eve in Bethlehem.

Best wishes to you all for a generous, joyful Christmas!