Baby Chickens and Christmas

I used to bring home a hundred babies, fresh out of their eggs, and stuff them by handfuls under an old rusty brooder stove. The stove was a circular contraption about five feet in diameter and one foot high. Since baby chickens are delicate, it was important for them to stay close to the stove's regulated heat.

However, baby chickens are also prone to be curious and don't always know what's good for them. They didn't realize that if they went to explore the rest of the brooder house surrounding their stove, they'd probably freeze. So, in order to keep them close to the heat, the stove was equipped with a bright light planted right at its center. Since the rest of the brooder house stayed fairly dark, and since baby chickens enjoy bright light, they crawled as close to the middle of the stove as their companions would let them.

If the whole brooder house had been lit, the baby chickens would have walked all over the place in search of adventure. As it was, the light kept them where they needed to be in order to thrive. They wouldn't have been attracted to the light on which their lives depended unless they were surrounded by at least a measure of darkness.

We live in a darkening world. People are mad at Osama bin Laden, who is probably planning to blow up the U.S. Capitol, before he found it necessary to go into hiding, he had some words for us. In a 1996 issue of Nida'ul Islam magazine, he pointed out that "the evidence overwhelming shows America ... killing the weaker men, women and children in the Muslim world and elsewhere ... upholding the banner of freedom and humanity, whilst [the] deeds which they did, you would find that the most ravenous of animals would not descend to.

And we're about to celebrate Christmas ... with lights, songs, gifts, tinsel, music, trees, parties, colored paper, chocolate and other good foods ... while several million refugees in Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan consider it a miracle just to be alive ... day after day. Then there's the situation in Iraq. And when we look beyond the hot spots in the Middle East, we see suffering and unrest all over the globe ... more than can be mentioned here. And I could talk about the shakiness of our planet ... using words such as "global warming," "deforestation," and ... et cetera ... but enough said. Indeed, the world these days looks kind of dark.

Isn't it ironic that Christmas is coming? And all that it means ... like "peace on earth good will to all-of-us" and the words about "the light that shines in the darkness?"

Perhaps. Like baby chickens, darkness drives us to light. We can't fully perceive "light" until we can define it against its opposite. We can't grasp the concept of darkness until we know it isn't all there is.

This Christmas season, may the darkness appearing to descend upon our world draw us ever closer to the light and, in relation to the darkness, may that light shine ever brighter.

K.J.S.