

December 2009

Let me tell you about my two best friends. Sarah, the donkey, and I check in with each other several times a day by standing nose to nose. That way we can talk and share secrets. Do you have a friend you like to share secrets with? The small pony named Whiskers is my other buddy. He's about 3 years older than me but that doesn't matter. We like to play and run around the pasture together. I'm glad I have these two friends. The other Fjord horses are around, too, but they're a lot older and don't like to play. We also have some cats at Joy Ranch. Sometimes they stay warm by sitting on the older horses' backs. I guess it doesn't bother the other horses; they just let the cats sit there. If it was me I'd think the cats wanted to play so I would run around or try to buck them off.

The other Fjord horses and I stay outside year round. If it gets bitterly cold Pam Walton will take us into the stalls in the riding arena or the barn, but that's rare. When it's gotten cold this fall the older horses made a circle around me to keep me warm. Wow, that really felt good! We have a small shed in the middle of our pasture where all the animals meet. Our hay is there plus we stay warmer when we group together.

Pam told me that this shed is like the stable where Jesus was born about 2000 years ago. Mary and Joseph were traveling on a donkey (my friend Sarah liked that part!). They couldn't find any place to stay in Bethlehem so an innkeeper let them stay in his stable. All of the innkeeper's animals had gathered there to eat and keep warm. When baby Jesus was born the animals circled around Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus to keep them warm. Mary even laid baby Jesus on the hay in the manger. During the night the stable welcomed some other visitors. Shepherds came from the surrounding hills to see the new baby and worship him. Not long afterwards the shepherds left the stable and went to tell their family and friends about what they'd seen and to share the Good News that Jesus was born and that we're all a part of God's family now.

This story reminds me of something that happened at Joy Ranch recently. A couple of months ago I was able to meet the Sunday School from Scandinavia Lutheran in Aberdeen. They came to visit Joy Ranch and bring their gift of money for the playground. It was really fun for me and all of the other animals to meet our new friends. I think the children enjoyed their visit, too. We didn't gather at the shed where we animals eat but we did ask the children and adults to go home and share the news about Joy Ranch with their family and friends. I hope I'll get to meet you someday, too. But, in the meantime, I hope you'll share the excitement of Joy Ranch with your family and friends; tell them about this exciting camp that welcomes **everyone** to come and have fun, learn new things and experience the joy of being a part of God's family.

Your friend,

Sven

