

# The Connection

## Messages of Hope



**HOPE**  
CHURCH | RALEIGH  
WORSHIP. GROW. SERVE.

A Weekly Online Newsletter: Edition 760

December 6, 2023

## “Is It About the Gift or the Giving?”

Some of you might remember this story I shared some years ago, but I wanted to tell it again this year. This is a true story.

Two weeks before Christmas a nine-year old girl was walking with her friend down the street, sliding on the ice. The two of them were talking about what they hoped to get for Christmas. They stopped to talk to an old man named Harry, who was on his knees pulling weeds from around a large oak tree. He wore a frayed, woolen jacket and a pair of worn garden gloves. His fingers were sticking out the ends, blue from the cold.

As Harry responded to the girls, he told them he was getting the yard in shape as a Christmas present to his mother, who had passed several years before. His eyes brimmed with tears as he patted the old oak. “My mother was all I had. She loved her yard and her trees, so I do this for her at Christmas.” His words touched the girls and soon they were down on their hands and knees helping him weed around the trees. It took the three of them the rest of the day to complete the task. When they finished, Harry pressed a quarter into each of their hands. “I wish I could pay you more, but it’s all I’ve got right now,” he said.

The girls had often passed that way before and as they walked on they remembered that the house was shabby, with no wreath, no Christmas tree or other decorations to add cheeriness, just the lonely figure of Harry sitting by his curtain less window. The quarter seemed to burn a hole of guilt in one of the little girl’s mind as they returned to their homes. The next day she called her friend and they agreed to put their quarters in a jar marked “Harry’s Christmas Present” and then they began to seek out small jobs to earn more. Every nickel, dime, and quarter they earned went into the jar.

Two days before Christmas, they had enough to buy new gloves and a Christmas card. Christmas Eve found them on Harry’s doorstep singing carols. When he opened the door, they presented him with the gloves wrapped in pretty paper, the card, and a pumpkin pie still warm from the oven. With trembling hands, he tore the paper from the gloves, and then to their astonishment, he held them to his face and wept.

I thought of this story as I heard the song *“The Christmas Shoes”* by songwriters: Eddie Carswell / Leonard Ahlstrom. **Here are the lyrics:**

It was almost Christmas time, there I stood in another line  
Tryin' to buy that last gift or two, not really in the Christmas mood  
Standing right in front of me was a little boy waiting anxiously  
Pacing 'round like little boys do  
And in his hands he held a pair of shoes  
His clothes were worn and old, he was dirty from head to toe  
And when it came his time to pay  
I couldn't believe what I heard him say  
Sir, I want to buy these shoes for my mama, please  
It's Christmas Eve and these shoes are just her size  
Could you hurry, sir, daddy says there's not much time  
You see she's been sick for quite a while

And I know these shoes would make her smile  
And I want her to look beautiful if mama meets Jesus tonight  
He counted pennies for what seemed like years  
Then the cashier said, "son, there's not enough here"  
He searched his pockets frantically  
Then he turned and he looked at me  
He said mama made Christmas good at our house  
Though most years she just did without  
Tell me Sir, what am I going to do,  
Somehow I've got to buy her these Christmas shoes  
So I laid the money down, I just had to help him out  
And I'll never forget the look on his face when he said  
Mama's gonna look so great  
Sir, I want to buy these shoes for my mama, please  
It's Christmas Eve and these shoes are just her size  
Could you hurry, sir, daddy says there's not much time  
You see she's been sick for quite a while  
And I know these shoes would make her smile  
And I want her to look beautiful if mama meets Jesus tonight  
I knew I'd caught a glimpse of heaven's love  
As he thanked me and ran out  
I knew that God had sent that little boy  
To remind me just what Christmas is all about  
Sir, I want to buy these shoes for my mama, please  
It's Christmas Eve and these shoes are just her size  
Could you hurry, sir, daddy says there's not much time  
You see she's been sick for quite a while  
And I know these shoes would make her smile  
And I want her to look beautiful if mama meets Jesus tonight  
I want 'er to look beautiful if mama meets Jesus tonight

The more I think about Christmas it is about the giving and not the gift. Yes, gifts are nice and there are certainly needs that can be met, but if the giving never happens, the gift is never received. Think about **John 3:16 “God so loved the world that He gave...”** The gift was Jesus and thank you Father for the gift of Jesus, but we would have never gotten the gift of Jesus unless God gave.

It reminds me of another John passage where he writes in his first letter. **1 John 3:17-18 “...whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? Little children, let us not love with word and tongue, but in deed and truth.”** It is about giving not the gift itself. Let us love in **“deed and truth,”** God’s word states.

Maybe this Christmas our hearts will once again be opened to give, as we have ability, and when God presents the opportunities. Just a little something for us all to think about as we celebrate the greatest gift ever GIVEN, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessings my friends,  
Pastor Marty - HOPE Church Raleigh  
Worship . Grow . Serve

# HOPE Calendar

## Wednesday, December 6

Wednesday Night Devotion & Prayer  
@ 7:00 p.m.

## Thursday, December 7

No Worship Team Practice

## Saturday, December 9

The Computer Lab @ 9:00 a.m.  
Women of HOPE @ 1:00 p.m.

## Sunday, December 10

### 2nd Sunday of Advent

Worship @ 9:30 a.m.  
Fellowship Time @ 10:50 a.m.  
Sunday school @ 11:10 a.m.  
Session Meeting @ 12:00 p.m.  
REBOOT Vision Team @ 12:00 p.m.

## Wednesday, December 13

Wednesday Night Devotion & Prayer  
@ 7:00 p.m.

## Helping Hands Ministries

Fellowship - December 10  
Church is Providing

ProPresenter - December 10  
Elizabeth Floyd

Soundboard - December 10  
Ben Pierce

Live Streaming - December 10  
Diane Williams

Communion - December  
Elizabeth Floyd

Greeter - December 10  
Joan Rollinson

Nursery Volunteer - December 10  
Volunteer Needed

Scripture Text and Sermon  
This Sunday

## 2nd Sunday of Advent

Luke 2:1 - 7

“Let’s Go to Bethlehem”



## Outreach Ministries

**Don't forget our  
Christmas Outreach Opportunity  
- Deadline This Sunday**

**“Food of the Month”**  
for the Raleigh Dream Center  
Food Pantry  
**Pop Top Soups**  
We have a collection bin in the foyer

**HOPE Meal Ministry**  
Take a meal from the freezer if  
needed for you or someone else.

**The Computer Lab**  
Saturday, December 9  
@ 9:00 a.m.

**TLC Devotion**  
4th Wednesday each Month  
@ 11:00 a.m.

## Spiritual Growth Ministries

**Women of HOPE**  
Saturday, December 9  
@ 1:00 p.m.

## ***NO Wednesday Night Supper until January***

There will be no Wed. Night Supper until  
January. We will have a Devotional and  
Prayer Time beginning 11/29 through  
12/20. Wed. Night Supper, Study, and  
Prayer resumes 1/3/24

## Quote of the Week

**“I wish not merely to be  
called Christian, but also  
to be Christian.”**

Saint Ignatius

## Prayer Requests:

Revill & Mary Lane Mallory, Jamie  
Baldwin, Donna Williams, Diane Williams,  
Carol & Colin (Kathy Herriman's Sister &  
Brother-in-law), Loretta (Sandi  
Underwood's daughter), Joan Summers,  
Shelley, Diane Mack's Sister-in-law,  
Jordan & Cinnamon (son and daughter of  
Lynn Joyner's family members), Tommy  
and Billy Lanphere (Lynn Joyner's  
brothers), Gene & Becky Hale, Dave &  
Dot Geil, Carlyle and Cynthia Franklin  
(Sandra Pierce's dad and stepmom),  
Brian Adam's dad, our Military, our  
Missionaries, our Nation, and the world.  
If you have those you would like added to  
our prayer concerns, please email me  
those names.

## Wednesday Night, Devotion & Prayer December 6

@ 7:00 p.m.  
*In person or via Zoom*



## Upcoming Dates

**Christmas Eve Service**  
Sunday, December 24  
@ 5:00 p.m.

## Invite a Friend

**16th Anniversary Service**  
Sunday, January 7th  
Covered Dish Meal After  
Worship

**HOPE Church Raleigh**  
An Evangelical Presbyterian Church  
4911 Green Rd  
Raleigh, NC 27616  
919-508-6827

**Worship Time: 9:30 AM**

[www.HopeChurchRaleigh.org](http://www.HopeChurchRaleigh.org)

[www.facebook.com/HOPEChurchRaleigh](https://www.facebook.com/HOPEChurchRaleigh)

Twitter: @HopeChRaleigh

YouTube.com (type “HOPE Church Raleigh”  
in the search box)

## Daily Devotions

### For This Coming Week

Dec. 10	Ezekiel 46
Dec. 11	Ezekiel 47
Dec. 12	Ezekiel 48
Dec. 13	Daniel 1
Dec. 14	Daniel 2
Dec. 15	Daniel 3
Dec. 16	Daniel 4

# Christmas Gifts for Homeless Children at Millbrook East Middle School

## Christmas gifts:

1. You can purchase a \$25.00 Walmart or Target gift cards. We would like the children to know that these gifts reflect the true meaning of Christmas, so if you can, please enclose the gift card inside a Christmas card.
2. You can purchase Christmas treats and/or stocking stuffers [unwrapped]
3. You can donate money which will be used to purchase additional gift cards. Please notate on your Check "Gifts for the Homeless Children".

**Due date is THIS Sunday: December 10th.**