

CHRISTMAS IN REMEMBRANCE OF JESUS

In the beginning there was God's presence, and His presence was Light, and that Light was fellowship – a very good and pleasing fellowship.

But soon came a lie, and the false promises of that lie seemed good, so man received it. And then there was darkness, and that darkness broke the fellowship between God and man.

Darkness brought with it a curse of pain, blindness and emptiness.

God longed for restored fellowship, so He sent His law to reveal His Holy character and give people access to Him.

But man could not keep the law. He stumbled under its weight, unable to obtain the holiness needed to be in the Light.

No matter what God did to redirect man's heart toward the wonderful Light of His presence, man continued to rebel and to miss the blessing.

Man's path became darker and darker. His dark thinking led him into detestable living: doing things that drove him further and further from the Light.

But God loved all the people in this world so much that He sent His only begotten Son to make a way for man to return to God's original intent – that good and pleasing fellowship.

God sent His Son into this world as a man. He was miraculously born of a virgin named Mary, who was the wife of Joseph, a carpenter of no great standing.

Jesus grew up among the Jewish people with whom God had made a covenant (a sacred promise) to deliver them from all the effects of the darkness caused by lies.

When Jesus was about 30 years old, He began to teach people the truth about God's intended plan for His creation. He gave commands and directives that would point us back into the Light. He also blessed multitudes with healings and deliverance from darkness' oppression.

So many realized and believed that Jesus was the Savior, God's Light for the world. Yet, there were many others who opposed Jesus. They saw Him as a threat to their position and status because He fearlessly exposed their dark deeds. So, they had him killed on a cross.

But in keeping with His covenant, God raised Jesus from the dead!

The night before Jesus died, He gave His disciples the sacrament of Holy Communion, that we would always remember Him – bread to remember His physical presence in this world, and a cup to remember His blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins.

Some time later, the Church instituted a holiday we call Christmas: a day to remember and celebrate the birth of Jesus – God's gift to us.

Soon after, though, more lies were given to distract people from the Light. The celebration of Christ's birth turned into a celebration of each other and temporary gifts.

But the True Light who gives Light to every person continues to hold His hand out to us. He promises to bring us into the very life we all long for. A life of peace, security, value, purpose and contentment – in abundance!

But the father of all lies wants us to continue to grope in his darkness, eating and drinking more false promises, finding only morsels of pleasure, deceiving us to believe there is satisfaction outside of the Light.

How silently this wondrous gift remains, until those who have received the True Light rise and shine, reminding the world that the first Christmas gift is still the very best gift ever. Joy to the world, the Lord has come!

~ Chaplain Bill Goodrich



ONWARD IN CHRIST

In John 16:33, Jesus declared, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart (take courage), I have overcome the world". We can see these words of Jesus fulfilled throughout the book of Acts.

Chapter One begins with Jesus giving His followers a mandate: to wait for and receive the Holy Spirit, then in His power, go and share the Gospel message – everywhere. And they did. In Chapter Two, thousands believed their message, were baptized and joined them. It was wonderful! A time of joy, fellowship and unity. Immanuel was truly with them!

Yet, in Chapter Four, the challenges began, and they continued to the last chapter of the book of Acts. They are the same kinds of challenges we face today: opposition, hindrances and even persecutions that came through unbelievers who were influenced by the devil. The devil knows that it is through the name of Jesus and His Word that salvation comes to anyone who believes and calls upon His name. So, he works through whomever he can influence, to stop the Good News from being shared.

How did our Church fathers overcome the many hindrances and trials they faced? One primary way was through prayer. As they prayed, the Holy Spirit miraculously intervened in circumstances, emboldening and encouraging them to continue spreading His Word. Yes, confident prayer was an essential discipline. In fact, prayer is referenced over 30 times throughout the book of Acts.

Today, as there are many hindrances to our great mission work, we must remember that our prayers are the first step to the intervention and grace needed from God. He loves the residents and staff and wants them

to find His hope and peace. But this will not happen without His Word reaching them, and you are one of the vehicles Jesus wants to use to deliver this treasure. So, take heart! As we align our prayers with His Word, the Lord will intervene, doing what we cannot do, so that we can do what He called us to do.



He will make a way where there is no way.

Though the isolation of residents has been an enormous mistake, causing much desolation and despair, I believe that the government's initial mandates were well-intended: to stop the spread of a deadly virus. There is nothing wrong with that intent. However, Jesus has given us supreme mandates – to visit and care for the disenfranchised, and to spread His Good News. God is able to make a way so that we can fulfill His supreme mandates while upholding the good intent of others. Therefore, let us not grapple with people who are not influenced by the Holy Spirit. Instead, let us continue in prayer as did the first disciples. Jesus will enable us to overcome and to bear much fruit if we never give up. ~ B.G.



O Lord, teach me the value of a soul so I may be bold to proclaim the gospel – the gospel which saves to the uttermost. Give me a passion to

speak of Jesus unashamedly every day, all the days of my life. ~ Your child, Carol Horn 2007

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" ~ Isaiah 52:7

BREAKING THROUGH

While there are many obstacles to visiting residents in care homes, there is one very important thing we can do to impact them anywhere and at any time: PRAY. Prayer is our opportunity to ask God to do what we cannot do. I have begun the following practice, and because of its impact, I want to encourage you to embrace it:

- Contact the care home's Administrator. Share who you are and that you and your care team are praying for them.
 - Ask for any specific prayer needs.
- Next, hold a similar meeting with your Activity Director.
 - A handwritten note a few days after these meetings would be a great encouragement to them.

Points to Consider:

- Your Administrator may or may not be a believer...
- Keep your meeting under ten minutes, and be encouraging and humbly cheerful.
- There is great value in making this personal connection with the Administrator or the Activity Director, but if they are not available, you can still pray.
- When visiting is not allowed due to quarantine, we recommend you still have your team gather in the parking lot to pray over the home. If weather permits, walk around the campus in small groups as you pray.
- Pray on a weekly basis or as often as you normally visit.
- Recruit others from your church who would be willing to pray and keep them informed.

***"Your prayers and gifts to the poor
have come up as a memorial
offering before God." ~ Acts 10:4***

A Fifteen Minute Prayer Time

These prayers can be lifted up individually or as a team within a 15-minute span. Prepare a prayer list and give it to all team members.

Here are a few prayers to include with the requests you receive from staff:

1. That God would lift the pandemic and remove the restrictions that are causing the residents to be isolated.
2. That God would provide enough caring staff needed to meet the residents' needs.
3. That God would give the staff stamina, strength and the grace needed to fulfill their responsibilities.
4. That this care home would be a refuge of peace and hope for all residents.

We welcome your testimonies on how the Lord has answered prayers for your care home ministry!



WITH THANKSGIVING

In addition to the prayers of our many friends, we are deeply encouraged and grateful by the generosity of those who have given financially. Your support has helped to spread Christ's love and word to residents in thousands of our nation's care homes. Though we have not yet reached our 2021 budget goals, we are trusting the Lord to provide. He always has! Thank you for entrusting God Cares with the stewardship of some of your eternal investments. We strive to honor the Lord and bless the people within the care home mission field with all He entrusts in our care.

May the Lord bless you with His surpassing peace. ~ Chaplain Bill, Board & Staff

ANSWERED PRAYER

Two weeks before Thanksgiving, I received notice from the Activity Director of our care home. (Our team ministers in two of their units almost weekly.) The AD explained that they had to go into quarantine because one of the residents “who is very socially active in the home” tested positive for Covid-19. She included that “even the dining room and all group gatherings must be stopped” and that “we might be able to open for Thanksgiving, if everything clears up.”

What a disappointment for our care team! As I thought about it, I realized that it is also a disappointment to the residents and the staff.

When our next scheduled visiting date came around, two of us from the team met at the home and did our first prayer walk. We walked the perimeter of the building several times, praying for God to remove the virus from this home and from the earth, to open the doors of the care home, to protect the residents and staff from illness, for strength, endurance, blessings, etc...

I felt a little uncomfortable and self-conscious at first, but by the second lap, I was completely focused on my prayer time and interceding for the occupants of the building we were circling in prayer. I followed up by sending a letter to the Administrator, letting her know that we were praying for the home.

It should have been less of a surprise than it was when the Activity Director called to let me know that the home was re-opening to visitors four days earlier than anticipated, and in time for Thanksgiving and our gatherings! The residents were so encouraged, and so were we! God is so gracious and good in hearing and answering our prayers. He loves the residents as He does all His children and does not want them to be without the opportunity of hearing His Word and singing His praise.

It has been three weeks since our prayer walk, and the doors remain open. Thanks be to God!

PLOWING THE FIELD

Chaplain Chris Finley of Baptist Village Communities, OK, shared the following story:

One of our team members reached out to a care home because she heard that the quarantine had been lifted, and they could resume group services. She phoned the Activity Director and Administrator who were both new, but did not receive a call back.

Discouraged, she called Chaplain Chris for advice on how to proceed. He encouraged her to invest into the relationship by going to the home in person. Janet did so, but during that visit, she learned that the chapel was now being used for PPE storage and there were no plans for a church service.

Not knowing what to do next, Janet again contacted Chaplain Chris. They prayed, and he encouraged her to go back to the AD and the Administrator, and let them know she has been praying for them, and to share the reasons she believed the residents needed to have worship services.

This meeting went better than imagined! After expressing her concerns and listening to their points, Janet actually prayed with them. Then the Administrator smiled and said, “You know what? We’ll take care of it.” A few days later, the chapel was cleaned up and a worship service was added to the calendar. Janet was so grateful!



The team soon held their first service in the chapel. When it was over, one of the residents lingered behind, asking to speak with Janet. After some conversation, Janet was able to lead this resident in a prayer to receive Jesus into her heart!

Janet’s love for the residents compelled her to be persistent in her desires and in prayer. She did not demand or pressure the home’s leadership, but prayerfully worked with them to find a way to meet an essential need of the residents. An added blessing to Janet’s efforts is that she established a friendship with the AD and Administrator. God certainly answered her prayers!

And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. ~ Galatians 6:9



William G. Creekmore
From Bonnie Mae Creekmore

Anna Thomay
Eleanor Varga
From Bob & Rosemary Thomay

Jack Schuler
From Harry & Debbie Deal

Ed & Eleanor Kisiel
From Roberta & Ed Kisiel

Don Hall
From Joyce R. Hall

Dave Griffey, Sr.
Olive Griffey
From Dave & Mary Jo Griffey

Mary L. Borawiec
From Pauline Grekis

Doug Feller
From Deb Feller
Lori Spurlock
Ilona Mansfield
William & Annette Mohler
Fran Palffy
Larry & Kris Looney
Forest City Technologies
God Cares Ministry staff

Hilda Smith
From Pat Dilling

Roger Davies
From Roberta Davies

Lou Baumgartner
From Sophie Baumgartner

Bill Moench
From Ralph & Marylyn
Kuivinen

Sarah Coune
From Al Coune

Mildred I. Kellum
From Donald B. Kellum, Jr.

Patricia A. Tanner
From W. T. Tanner

Robert Hess
From Elizabeth Hess

Rachel Cook
From John & Susan Exoo

Carol J. Horn
From Terry Lee & Susie Hager

Elcor Nursing Facility
Friends

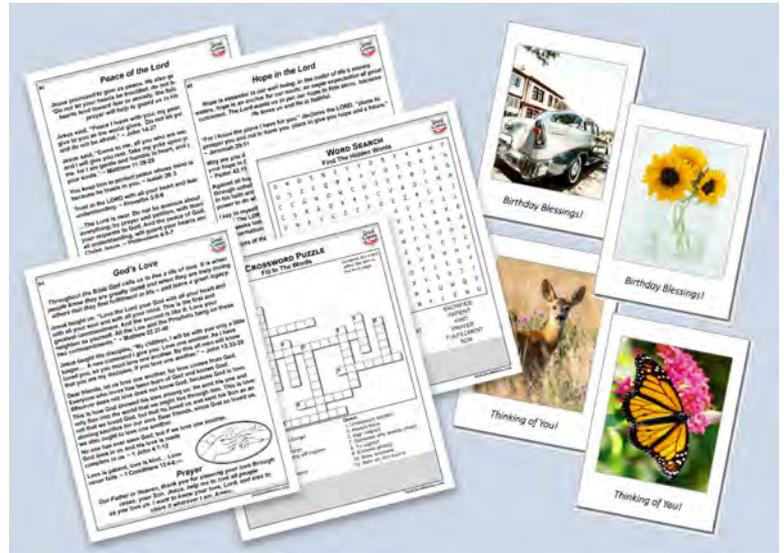
From Mrs. Mary C. Perrott

Leontina Rosenfeld
From Sandra & Mitchell
Chapman

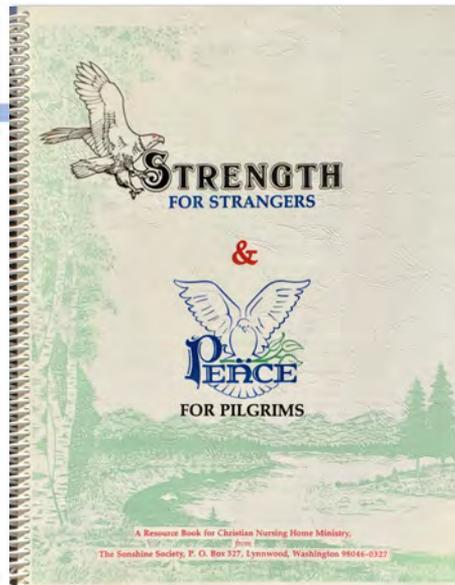
Betty Mathis
From Ralph & Marian Beutler

IN HONOR OF
Sharon Haakenson
From Arlene Noyes

RESOURCE CORNER:



We want to remind you of the free giant-print "Words of Comfort and Encouragement" Scripture sheets on our website. There are 52, in both English and Spanish, which you can copy and give to your residents. They are a great Bible study handout as well. You can also find several greeting cards that you can download and share in your care home. These include Christmas and other holiday themes. Click on the resource button at the top of our website to see the many items created to assist you in helping your friends grow closer to Jesus.



As a potential Christmas gift, consider the giant-print devotional, **Strength & Peace**, created by the SonShine Society. This giant-print, spiral bound devotional contains over 70 Scripture stories

found from Genesis through Revelation. Each of these includes a related devotional to help care home residents find strength and peace in Jesus.



God Cares Ministry
P.O. Box 355
Avon Lake, OH 44012
info@GodCaresMinistry.com
www.GodCaresMinistry.com
440-930-2173

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through Him. ~ 1 John 4:9

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S.
Postage Paid
Elyria, Ohio
Permit No. 548

God Cares is a 501 c (3) ministry based in Avon Lake, Ohio. Our newsletters are sent to encourage, instruct and inform Christians who desire to share the love and word of Jesus with residents of care homes. Past issues are available on our website, or you may contact our office for a copy (or to unsubscribe).

God Cares Ministry Board of Directors

Bill Goodrich, President
Dennis Barta, Vice President
Craig Raycraft, Treasurer
Fran Palffy, Secretary
Mary Kerner Bowman
Brian Hassett
Larry Looney



*The first
Christmas
gift is
still the
very best
gift ever!*

