



ADVENT

MISSIONS MOMENT

DECEMBER 2022

Advent Blessing

Be people of hope.

Let hope live in your heart and share the hope of Christ with all you meet.

Share hope by noticing someone else's humanity.

Share hope by listening to someone's story.

Share hope by praying for our world.

In this Advent season, we need to see, feel, and share hope.

As you go out into the wonder of God's creations, share hope with those you meet. Amen.

(Submitted by Rev. Susannah DeBenedetto, Christ Congregational Church & Takoma Park Presbyterian Church, Takoma Park MD, LiturgyLink.net)

Let's take a moment to really fulfill this advent blessing. In it we are encouraged to "share hope by noticing someone else's humanity" and are inspired to "share hope by listening to someone's story:

Lesley is a survivor of abuse and trafficking who shared her story in the War Cry of the Southern Africa Territory. After years of trauma and abuse, from childhood through her adult years, Lesley was able to escape her abuser. Not knowing how to move forward in life, she wanted to end her life. However, she was rescued by a Christian at the last minute. Soon after she was connected with Beth Shan, a ministry of the Southern Africa territory that provides housing, counseling, life skills and job training for those who have escaped trafficking situations. She recounts:

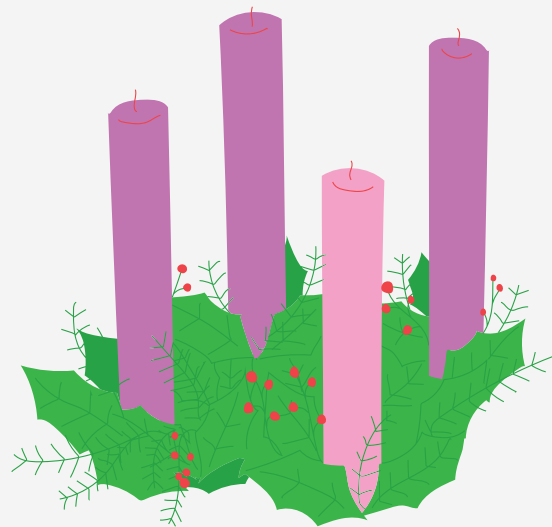
"The experience made me realize that I had no one else but God on my side. I prayed to God and reached out for assistance and help. I met Major Moya who welcomed and greeted me with a warm smile. Her warm welcome made me to feel safe and protected after many years of trauma. My bruises healed but they discovered I had a fractured skull. My physical injuries healed faster than the emotional injuries did. I sometimes wonder whether I will ever get over the abuse and having been stripped of my dignity.

At Beth Shan, I was not alone as there were many other women who also experienced varied forms of exploitation and abuse in their lives. I am grateful and thank everyone at Beth Shan and the Pretoria Corps for providing me with a home, a place of safety, and the opportunity to be part of a family. I am grateful for my house mothers who taught me to clean and take care of things, as I really had no idea how. One staff member not only taught me about crafts but helped to rekindle my passion for artwork. They helped me trust again.

The weekly outings to the Thursday Women's group and Church on a Sunday were difficult at first, especially since I had been kept in isolation for long periods by my perpetrator. The isolation had made it difficult for me to be around lots of people, especially people who were so loving and caring towards me. The counselors were very good to me, they would listen to my chaos as we discussed and reflected on my past experiences. The counselors knew I had struggled to accept that I once had a high-powered career and that I now felt like such a failure. Major Moya's guidance, support and encouragement were an inspiration and a positive part of my life ever since. She is always there for me especially when I am at a crossroads. I know that I can still count on her. She has shown me love, compassion as well as how valuable humility can be.

After my three months at Beth Shan my heart was filled with so much fear. I had the foundations that were laid there but I still had a long road ahead as it is not easy starting one's life over at age 50. My everyday is about getting stronger, and I continue to pray for the bad memories that haunt me to go away. My past will always be a part of me as they have molded me into the woman I have become. Thank you, Beth Shan for being an influence in turning my life around. I know that Beth Shan has not only turned my life around but the lives of many women and their children, not only in the past, but will continue to do so in the future."

As we listen to Lesley's story, and see her humanity, we partner with our Salvationist family in South Africa in sharing hope with our neighbors.



Finally, we have been challenged to “share hope by praying for the world”
- Let’s pray together:

Father, as we live through this advent season, we take a moment to thank you for the gift of Jesus who brings hope into our lives each day. In this season of giving, help us to give of our time and our resources. Remind us of the importance of not only seeing people’s needs but noticing their humanity. Help us to make time to listen to people’s stories, to genuinely hear and care for them. We pray for our world, for The Salvation Army ministering in over 130 countries. Be with our brothers and sisters who are serving their communities, listening to and meeting the needs of their neighbors. We pray for those who are persecuted for their faith, who celebrate this season behind closed doors. We pray for those who are suffering from hunger, sickness, loneliness, displacement, and war. May your presence and peace be their stronghold this season. Lord, as we practice generosity with our friends and family through gift-giving this time of year, may we be moved towards generosity in our giving to serve the needs of The Salvation Army, both at home and around the world. We celebrate your coming presence into the world by dedicating this season to sharing hope with the world around us. We pray this in the name of Jesus, our Hope. Amen



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