

December 2016

Dear Sustaining Partner,

*“...there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel...” (Luke 2: 25)*

THERE IS no question Simeon received the desire of his heart that first “Christmas.” I love the example God gives us through Simeon’s life: God knows about and He regards the longing of our hearts. In fact, longings, which I quite successfully bury during most of the year, spring to life during The Holidays (Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year). Broken families, broken relationships, broken fellowship with God all feel more acute this time of year—the longing for reconciliation is greater and the pain more intense because I am more aware of those areas that need mended.

Maybe you too have those schizophrenic moments this time of year. I’m talking about moments when I experience great joy because I KNOW the significance of God’s great gift, but in the next instant come feelings of profound sorrow, sadness and loss. So which is it? My dilemma is I often don’t appreciate that life is but a series of inconsistencies. I expect (and I want!) one or the other. I look for things to stuff into the void I feel rather than allow God, who orchestrated my emptiness, to fill the place with Himself. I’m convinced if those areas of pain did not get my attention, I’d sail through the holidays totally focused on what is NOT real---Santa, happy conclusions like the Christmas movies and Norman Rockwell family scenes. The danger is that I could easily begin to believe and behave as if these are true.

Each untruth fuels my focus on fantasy, which serves to keep the reality about the sadness in my life at bay. I cry, “Can’t I just be happy?” I’m even willing to “count my blessings”—anything rather than to talk about what’s really going on and the fact that all is not well. Money’s tight, kids rebel, serious illness moves in to stay and relationships shatter. I act sometimes as if I’d settle for less to be pain free, rather than acknowledge the joy of knowing I have God and when I have him, I have THE best. Scripture is very clear, there is no guarantee I’ll ever be thrilled in any circumstance.

Unlike Simeon, I lean in the direction of short-term escapes from my situation. I might have bolted from the temple and gone in search of something to take my mind off the reality—“God, I’m STILL waiting.” I’m battered by waves of despair, which reinforces my reasons to doubt. Nevertheless, nothing is strong enough to extinguish the slight spark of light nearly buried in the very depth of my soul, and so I choose to believe while I slog-on despite my circumstances. So comes the contradiction—Hope when there is no hope, because my spirit

bears witness that from beginning to end, Jesus IS the very center of it all. He is the reason I celebrate and the reason I continue to wait. I feel excitement even when all appears lost because I KNOW God hasn't had the last word. I rather imagine Simeon was going about his regular day when, WHAM! In his arms, he held not just the fulfillment of his own longing, but also that of all creation. Yes, "Tidings of comfort AND Joy!" All at the same time...This is our AMAZING God whom I can trust! It may not be Currier & Ives, but I'm good with it, and I pray you are as well.

Now, as we go into 2017 we dare not think of why we can't, but only why we must continue to trust and grow despite the economy, political climate and the lack of moral compass in our community. I refuse to allow negative thinking, lack of faith and worry about finances to knock me off course. On a cold, rainy February night in 2002, I agreed with God that I would "die on the hill" called the sanctity of life. The only change is that I am far more committed to reducing the number of abortions in our community than ever before. **I've seen enough broken lives, broken families, broken hearts! Enough unfulfilled longing!**

It is my earnest hope that you are of the same heart---God's heart---and that I can count on you now and *throughout this next year* to make sure WE do all He is calling US to do to make abortion THE LAST choice for women and families in our community. I say "we" and "us" because this war requires an army.

The foundational issue--- the bedrock of what we do stems from our conviction that all life is sacred. Are we going to act on what we say we believe? I can assure you, I am here until God releases me from this position, and then, I will continue in the battle until He takes me home to Glory. **I do not hesitate to ask that you join me because I know the blessing that comes with obedience.**

Please use the enclosed envelope to mail your end-of-the year gift. We will send 2016 tax year receipts for all gifts mailed by December 31. I also ask that if you are not already a monthly sustaining partner, you consider setting up a monthly electronic funds transfer. Perhaps you've partnered with us for years, and if so, I thank you more than I can articulate. Yet, I boldly ask--"**Is it time to increase that monthly amount?**"

This time of year, we think, we pray and we ponder God's heart as He continues to offer His Son wrapped in the flesh of a tiny, helpless baby. I can't help but see the parallel as we advocate for the unborn. What would He have you give to ensure we persist to save lives, save souls and save families because Pregnancy & Family Resource Center is still here, going and growing stronger than ever? When we bury our treasure in Him, we will find the longing in our heart is met.

**Be comforted and be joyful as He reveals Himself to you during this holiday season!**

I will always be ... Yours for Life!!

Lisa J Stiefken  
Executive Director