



CHRISTMAS IS FOR THOSE WHO ARE HURTING

Standing in the checkout line, I overheard the young cashier say she was going home soon, which would thrill her young son. Earlier that morning, he had begged her not to leave. She said, "I asked him, 'Do you want Christmas to come or not?' He said 'yes'. So I told him, 'Then, I have to go to work.'"

Later I wondered, "Did she really think Christmas wouldn't come for her son if she didn't go to work?" In the sense of having presents under the tree, perhaps it wouldn't. But don't we understand that Christmas is more than presents?

Even the Grinch learned that Christmas still comes without presents. "It came without ribbons! It came without tags! It came without packages, boxes, or bags!"

Some of us stumble when trying to celebrate Christmas without making it about the presents, decorations, cards, or cookies. It's not the parties or stress of trying to keep up with others' expectations.



For others, it's hard to find joy in Christmas because of pain and heartache. Depression, grief, and loneliness intensify during December. Some are hurting because a loved one is not home but serving in a war. Some parents cannot afford many, if any, presents for their children but instead worry about food and heat. Others are grieving for those who have died.

There are people who think they can't experience Christmas joy because of their pain. But that's not right. **Christians celebrate Christmas to remember that Jesus came to save a world in need. God sent His Son to heal those who**

are hurting. We sing wonderful counselor, prince of peace, and joy to the world. These are promises of healing and comfort. Christmas is for those who are hurting.

So who dressed up Christmas as a holiday only for those who can afford it? Christmas is not on layaway waiting for people to pay off the bill. The price has been paid.

Who decided that some people do not belong on the guest list? Too often, those who are hurting get this message: "There's no room for you."

We steal the joy of Christmas from others when we put the emphasis on material things and outward appearances. Christmas is not about those who can buy the biggest presents. It's not about the most decorated house or the tastiest cookies.

Christmas is knowing God's peace that comes when we accept Jesus now on this Earth. It's sharing what you have with those who have less, reaching out to others who are hurting, and knowing that someone cares about you.

How do you include those who hurt? Ask people if they'd like to talk about their loss or struggles. Then make an effort to listen without trying to fix everything or take the pain away. Be present with people where they are hurting and let them know they are wanted, even if grief or pain comes along.

Many people already find joy outside the box. But if you need ideas, consider these: Ring the bell for the Salvation Army; give warm coats and mittens to shelters; donate to charities in honor of a loved one; send a care package to someone in the military; teach children the joy of giving homemade presents or gifts of service; sing carols at a nursing home; spend time with someone who is grieving; seek out those who are alone and invite them to your family gatherings. Don't mistake me for the Grinch. There's room for festive parties, and even gifts with ribbons and bows. But if those who are suffering don't feel comfortable at our gatherings, or aren't even invited, then we fall short. This Christmas, make room for those who are hurting.

Posted on December 14, 2011 by [Nancy Berns](#). This article first appeared in the *Des Moines Register* on December 14, 2011



One of our beloved supporters and a former Board member of PCCF went home to be with the Lord on October 16, 2014. Vinetta Schweitzer was a powerful and supportive prayer warrior who we could depend on to take us before the throne of God. Vinetta was a humble servant of God who was gifted in various ways. She was an accomplished flautist. She played in the Phil. Spittainy All Girls Orchestra, and received the honor of playing Second Flute in the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, and the National Orchestra!

In addition to being a full time, single mother after the death of her husband in 1962, she served God by leading a group of Pioneer Girls, providing shelter, financial support, and prayer support to various people who were in need, and chauffeuring many people to doctor appointments, the hospital, shopping, and church. Vinetta showed love to many by listening attentively, offering words of encouragement, and praying with those who shared their needs with her. She lived by the promptings of the Holy Spirit. We will miss her, but she is now enjoying her much deserved reward of being in the presence of the Lord she loved.

FELLOWSHIP DINNER PICTURES



PCC Counselors Patricio, Carlos, Sarah, Eva, Ellen, and Eliana (not pictured Caren)

We want to thank Katherine McEwen for her many years of counseling service with PCCF. Kathie She will be focusing on her private practice, located at 315 East 86th Street, Suite 1G East, New York, NY 10028. You may contact Kathie at 212-289-2121.



The Pastoral Counseling Center participated in the Missions Conference at First Baptist Church of Flushing. Our Director, Ellen Van Etten spoke, giving an overall snapshot of our work. She also gave a brief history of the Pastoral Counseling Center. PCCF wishes to thank FBCF for including us in their Missions budget. You have been a blessing to us.



Staff and Spouses

The New York Christian Mission Church, where Board Member Abraham Koo is pastor, hosted a PCCF Recognition Sunday. Former PCCF counselor, Tom Hui, preached at both services, including some useful information regarding PCCF. Several Board Members and their spouses attended.



PCCF welcomes our newest Counselor Patricio Penaherrera.

Patricio Penaherrera has earned a Masters Degree in Mental Health Counseling, and a Masters Degree in Theological Studies. He will counsel in English and Spanish. He has experience as a youth development counselor, an athletic director, director of student ministries, as well as a variety of other positions. He will continue his employment at The New York Psychotherapy Counseling Center. He and his wife, Skalry, expect their first child in April 2015.

Did you know PCCF will be turning 30 next year? Keep an eye out for more information on our celebration coming in 2015.