

A LIVE-GIVING CHRISTMAS: WEEK ONE

*“Hope...next year, things will be different!”*

## SERMON STARTER

**Rev. N. Neelley Hicks,**  
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## SCRIPTURAL FOCUS: *Romans 13:11-14*

*11-14* But make sure that you don't get so absorbed and exhausted in taking care of all your day-by-day obligations that you lose track of the time and doze off, oblivious to God. The night is about over, dawn is about to break. Be up and awake to what God is doing! God is putting the finishing touches on the salvation work he began when we first believed. We can't afford to waste a minute, must not squander these precious daylight hours in frivolity and indulgence, in sleeping around and dissipation, in bickering and grabbing everything in sight. Get out of bed and get dressed! Don't loiter and linger, waiting until the very last minute. Dress yourselves in Christ, and be up and about!

**Focus:** Although the apostle Paul wrote this passage long ago, it perfectly describes the challenge for this season. Day-to-day obligations increase as Christmas nears and people think about the entertaining, shopping, decorating and duties that have come to define a perfect Christmas. Yet the best point remains; deliverance is near! Dawn is about to break! God intercedes in human affairs to provide something life giving, real, lasting. Far from the temporal satisfaction humans get from acquiring goods, God's incredible love is dwelling among us. We are receiving a gift beyond anything conceived by humanity and marketed on store shelves.

If we truly want a life-giving Christmas, drawing closer to God needs to take priority over any material desire on this year's wish list. For week one of Advent, we focus on living into eternal hope, carrying that hope for others, knowing that no matter what we go through, we are never alone. God will break through our circumstances and shed light. The focus of the service and other activities of the week should put one's Christmas list in perspective to seeking God first.

# “Hope”

## **PRACTICAL APPLICATION:**

People want a deeper hope and clear focus but often do not know how to achieve it. One sermon will not change the week ahead unless people practice what they have learned. Here are suggestions to encourage your congregation to practice hope building throughout the week.

- Post today's Scripture throughout the week on your church's Facebook page, with new questions each day for application. Examples: Day 1, Where does time with God fall on today's "to do" list? Day 2, Look for hope in today's news stories. How is God at work?
- Encourage journaling throughout Advent. Encourage "fridge journaling" for those who do not want to participate in traditional journaling. Ask participants to keep a notepad on the refrigerator and jot down a time when God got them through something that, at the time, may have seemed hopeless. Through these memories, have participants look for ways to share that hope with people in the community. Encourage reading Psalm 124 for further reflection. Send a card to someone in a nursing home, write a note to a youth who may be having a tough time, or call someone and reconnect. If you do not think you'll get around to sending cards to a long list of people this year, think of those to whom it may mean the most. Invest your love and energy in sending those few cards. Share Christ's hope, and your hope will be increased as well.
- Lead your congregation in a social justice effort this season. Create awareness around an issue of oppression, and help people speak out - making signs of hope amid seemingly hopeless situations. Building a hope-filled world is one of the responsibilities of Jesus' disciples who truly desire to transform the world. With God, possibilities for healing and restoration are endless. Use Isaiah 61 for this further reflection. If you need ideas, visit the General Board of Global Ministries and the General Board of Church and Society to connect with a meaningful project. [www.umpower.org](http://www.umpower.org), [www.umc-gbcs.org/umseminar](http://www.umc-gbcs.org/umseminar), <http://new.gb-gm-umc.org/work/peace-justice/>, <http://new.gb-gm-umc.org/work/immigrationrefugees/>, or <http://new.gb-gm-umc.org/work/hunger/>.

## INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE:

As participants prepare for Christmas, they should name three things they will do differently this Advent season, substituting things that bring renewed hope and faith, rather than depleting energy and bank accounts. Work with friends to identify the substitutions. Chances are, friends may remember even better from past years what was exhausting. Together, encourage one another to press on toward the goal. For example, “Instead of spending all day Saturday shopping for the perfect gifts, I will spend Saturday morning having coffee and devotion with someone for whom I’ve not made time lately.” Or, “I will spend time with my children to help them develop a common wish list.” By promoting a common wish list, children will be encouraged to negotiate with one another in individual desires, spend time together and share their gifts.

## OUTBOUND CHALLENGE:

Promote this series within the community – not just as a worship series to attend, but also as a way to “keep Christmas.” Many people celebrate Christmas, even if they do not celebrate Christ. The deep living that should come from Christmas may differentiate a Christian Christmas from a secular Christmas. Write for your local newspaper or write a blog about what your congregation is doing. Spread the word, and you may affect lives far beyond the walls of your church.

## CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE:

*Create a Prayer Tree using glass bulbs filled with congregational prayers.*

Include strips of writing paper inside your bulletins. Invite the congregation to write their real Christmas wish/prayer. Collect the prayers in an offering plate or basket, and have a prayer team pray over the requests as they place them in clear glass bulbs. Decorate a tree in your sanctuary or welcome area with the bulbs. It will become a symbol throughout the series of the deep wishes for Christmas of your congregation.

## SOCIAL MEDIA:

*Pre-message: What is your deepest hope this Christmas?*

*Post-message: “Hope is faith holding out its hand in the dark.” (George Iles)*

## MULTIMEDIA RESOURCES:

- Play the video “Hope” from “A Life-giving Christmas” as a prelude to the message.
- Encourage further reflection in small groups, inviting your congregation to think of ways to build hope, so someone may give hope. Use the questions listed below for reflection.
- If your congregation does not have multimedia equipment for worship, consider sharing the video from “A Life-giving Christmas” on your Facebook or web page.
- “We Are the Church” is available free for download at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGFVNmgEp0w&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGFVNmgEp0w&feature=player_embedded). This is a good video to play in the welcome area, or in the time prior to worship to focus on the full meaning of “church.”

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

*(Use the video “Hope” from “A Life-giving Christmas” multimedia package.)*

- 1) The subject of this worship video, Purity Muthoni, lost both parents and wondered where her next meal would come from. Invite study participants to relate to this scenario, using either personal experiences or a current event.
- 2) Which Scriptures are you reminded of? Psalm 121 (seeking help); Matthew 25: 31-46 (feeding those who hunger); James 2:5 (God’s love for the poor) are possibilities.
- 3) Read the parable of the great banquet. Luke 14:15-24. When Purity moved out of dire poverty, she remembered those who were living a similar story and invited them to feast at her table. How do we stay connected to others who may be living similar stories to our own? How can we extend hope out of the hope we have received?
- 4) Reflect on the feasts you may attend or prepare during Advent. Whom might you invite to the table?

A LIVE-GIVING CHRISTMAS: WEEK TWO

*“Peace...strength to hold on”*

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## SCRIPTURAL FOCUS: *Matthew 3:11-12*

“I’m baptizing you here in the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. The real action comes next: The main character in this drama—compared to him I’m a mere stagehand—will ignite the kingdom life within you, a fire within you, the Holy Spirit within you, changing you from the inside out. He’s going to clean house—make a clean sweep of your lives. He’ll place everything true in its proper place before God; everything false he’ll put out with the trash to be burned.”

**Focus:** Peace exists within the kingdom life, but we don’t have to wait for that life as if it were a distant dream. Putting into practice the way of peace will manifest peace in our lives and the world. We will find peace with God, peace with others and peace in our actions – from home to communal life, and far beyond. We will experience a deep, abiding sense within that we know our purpose and that by God’s grace we will live into God’s dreams for us.

Often we seek material things to bring us peace, but in seeking Christ, we actually find it. At this time of the year, we become unsettled over things. Our normal routines are usurped by the “have tos” of the season, and we may feel our lives are out of control. The recession may be affecting some of your members more than others. They may especially feel a sense of restlessness. Peace may feel far away. This Scripture beckons us to put things in perspective. The kingdom life exists when we keep the main character the main thing. It seems natural around Christmas that Jesus would be central, yet so often we lose that focus in preparing for the holidays.

How can we keep Jesus the main character in Christmas? Imagine you are a stagehand for Jesus. Your only role is to set things up for Jesus to be seen, heard and experienced. What will you do? How will you focus the spotlight? How will you elevate Jesus? What kind of mood will you create so Jesus is best received? If we were to live as Jesus’ stagehands, how would we build a “set” for peace? How would we live our lives as part of that “set”?

Truly, this is what we do in worship. We set the stage for Christ to be honored. We can extend this mentality into our daily lives. The more we focus on Jesus, the more peace we will find. The song, “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus” eloquently points to this truth:

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus*

*look full in His wonderful face*

*and the things of earth will grow strangely dim*

*in the light of his glory and grace*

Reordering our lives with that focus in preparation for Christmas and the coming year should include intention for those things that make us both receivers and givers of peace.

## INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE:

Check in with your prayer partner on your wish lists. How are you doing? A large part of spiritual growth is surrounding oneself with those who will hold us in loving accountability. Think of a situation where you desire peace, either in your life or in the world. Prayerfully ask God to guide you in doing something this week to strive for peace. It could be writing a letter to someone from whom you have become separated or it may be writing a letter to your legislator about an injustice. As you become a peacemaker, you will find peace.

## OUTBOUND CHALLENGE:

Identify areas within your community that need peace. What can you do to promote peace? Where destruction and violence exist, let your congregation offer a kingdom view—an alternative view. Go to the dark places and offer signs of Christ. If you see gang graffiti, place signs of God's peace nearby (be sure to check with your city ordinances). Where you find encampments of people without homes, offer food and Upper Room devotional booklets ([upper-room.org/devotional](http://upper-room.org/devotional)). For further ideas, see [www.bagsofgrace.org](http://www.bagsofgrace.org). Wherever you go, invite people to worship with you. Connecting your actions with following Jesus may stir curiosity in people who want what you have. Your congregation will find ways to manifest for the community the real hope of Christmas – that through Christ, people will find peace and hope.

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

- Post today's Scripture daily on your church's Facebook page, with new questions each day for application. Examples: Day 1, How are you keeping Christ the main character in your life this week? Day 2, How does focusing on Jesus give you peace?
- You can refine inner peace through outward action. Practice peace. Where you hear gossip, offer a good word. Where people experience brokenness, do what you can to heal. Where sickness and death prevail, offer a moment of life's joy. If you have tumultuous relationships in your life, do what you can to bring about peace (Romans 12:18). Pray for your enemies that they may be blessed and find peace by trusting that God knows their deepest needs.
- Listen to others. To find peace, people need to feel heard and to know they are not alone in their suffering. Infuse the conversation with God's grace, perhaps sharing today's Scripture. Let the hope and peace of Christ assure you that no matter the situation, peace can prevail.

“Peace”

## CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE:

Passing the peace is often a meet-and-greet experience. Today, let it go further. Remind your congregation that peace is a physical representation of God's grace that goes beyond understanding. Make this a focal point before Communion. Remember to explain this process completely so that even first-time visitors will understand what is happening. Consider having your congregation gather in a circle around the sanctuary, sharing with one another the peace of Christ and serving one another Holy Communion.

## SOCIAL MEDIA:

Pre-Message: If peace were to show up at your door, what would it look like?

Post-Message: "Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal." Martin Luther King Jr.

## MULTIMEDIA OPTIONS:

- Play the video "Peace" from "A Life-giving Christmas" as a prelude to the message.
- In small groups, use the video to encourage further reflection on making peace a reality for today. Use the questions listed below for reflection.
- If your congregation does not have multimedia equipment for worship, consider sharing the video from "A Life-giving Christmas" on your Facebook or Web page.

# QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

*(Use the video “Peace” from “A Life-giving Christmas” multimedia package.)*

- 1) The prisoners of war created a gift for their captors. What does this say about how they may have been treated? What does this say about the prisoners’ faith?
- 2) Read Acts 16:19-40. How does the story of Paul’s compassion toward his jailer parallel the story of the POW Nativity? The common link is Jesus Christ. Reflect on how Jesus can bring peace, even within prison walls.
- 3) Invite participants to bring recent newspaper clippings of stories where peace is needed between “enemies.” Discuss ideas for reconciliation. Pray for all those involved – victims and perpetrators.
- 4) The story concludes with this quote from Marvin Chickering at Algona (Iowa) First United Methodist Church: “We need to work hard as individuals to try to treat others as we would want to be treated – the golden rule. And if we all do that, peace is attainable.” Consider how this statement could affect your daily life. Post the quote on your refrigerator and your desk and in your car. Follow up with the group to see how you are practicing peace.

REFLECTION  
REFLECTION

A LIVE-GIVING CHRISTMAS: WEEK THREE

*“Joy...to get me through the tough days”*

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## SCRIPTURAL FOCUS: *Isaiah 35:1-10*

**1-2** Wilderness and desert will sing joyously, the badlands will celebrate and flower—Like the crocus in spring, bursting into blossom, a symphony of song and color. Mountain glories of Lebanon—a gift. Awesome Carmel, stunning Sharon—gifts. God’s resplendent glory, fully on display. God awesome, God majestic.

**3-4** Energize the limp hands, strengthen the rubbery knees. Tell fearful souls, “Courage! Take heart! God is here, right here, on his way to put things right And redress all wrongs. He’s on his way! He’ll save you!”

**5-7** Blind eyes will be opened, deaf ears unstopped, Lame men and women will leap like deer, the voiceless break into song. Springs of water will burst out in the wilderness, streams flow in the desert. Hot sands will become a cool oasis, thirsty ground a splashing fountain. Even lowly jackals will have water to drink, and barren grasslands flourish richly.

**8-10** There will be a highway called the Holy Road. No one rude or rebellious is permitted on this road. It’s for God’s people exclusively— impossible to get lost on this road. Not even fools can get lost on it. No lions on this road, no dangerous wild animals—Nothing and no one dangerous or threatening. Only the redeemed will walk on it. The people God has ransomed will come back on this road. They’ll sing as they make their way home to Zion, unfading halos of joy encircling their heads, Welcomed home with gifts of joy and gladness as all sorrows and sighs scurry into the night.

**Focus:** The forced expectations of joy at this time of year often highlight what is wrong or missing in people’s lives. If people see a stark contrast between their lives and what is presented as a cultural norm, they can feel isolated and depressed. Joy received from God can restore a sense of wholeness and community.

Joy is not a surface-level happy – it is deeply seated in one’s character. Joy may not always manifest itself in smiles and laughter, but rather in grace and assurance. Joy might be described as knowing something better exists, and holding onto that which is better.

In today’s message, it is important to highlight the Scripture’s focus on contrast – that in opposition to brokenness, wrongs, sorrows and sighs, God will prevail, and one day all shall be well. Consider the many issues people face today. What are some of the issues that participants need joy to contrast? You can name such issues as job loss, changes in relationships, health concerns and aging. Doing so can help people suffering in silence.

During the course of the service, be careful not to steal people’s joy! In naming what may be wrong, let us not forget what is right. The time spent on naming our challenges should be less than the time spent focusing on the good news. Often, it seems, whatever we focus on grows larger. Look at the places where God’s reign is evident—where the hungry are fed, where the naked are clothed, where people lift others from their places of lowliness. As you praise God, you will draw strength knowing that no matter the issue, joy truly “comes with the morning” (Psalm 30).

Think about your worship setting. Are the aesthetics somber or joyful? Does your sanctuary look like you are preparing for the birth of a King? How can you help those parishioners who are visual learners experience pleasure through sight? Does the music for this day reflect the joy of the Lord that is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10)? How can you encourage lively singing this day? Create awareness around passing the peace, so this too may become a time of recognizing the joy that comes through forgiveness from God and one another.

## **INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE:**

Ask participants to consider once again their wish lists of truest desires. Were any of them based on joy? Think about the actions in which you currently participate to develop that joy. Pray for guidance, and be intentional about how you spend your time. Focus on at least one activity this week to increase your assurance in God's goodness prevailing. Double that joy by sharing it with others.

## **OUTBOUND CHALLENGE:**

Consider having a "Longest Night" or "Blue Christmas" service, not only for your congregation, but also for the community. Recall events of the past year and be intentional about inviting those who have suffered in your community. Publicize the service through different media outlets and post fliers at local coffee shops and restaurants. God's restorative work may bring more joy to lives than you can imagine, especially if you build and sustain relationships..

# CHALLENGE

## CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE:

The song “*Trading My Sorrows*” shares the message of joy found when we trust God with our burdens. Consider using this song as today’s sermon response. Invite people to come to the altar for prayer. Have stones available with the word “joy” written on them, so people can take them as a reminder of trading the weight of burdens for the joy of the Lord.

### *Trading My Sorrows*

(<http://www.christianlyricsonline.com/artists/darrell-evans/trading-my-sorrows.html>)

*I'm trading my sorrow*

*I'm trading my shame*

*I'm laying it down for the joy of the Lord*

*I'm trading my sickness*

*I'm trading my pain*

*I'm laying it down for the joy of the Lord*

*Chorus:*

*And we say yes Lord yes Lord yes yes Lord*

*Yes Lord yes Lord yes yes Lord*

*Yes Lord yes Lord yes yes Lord Amen*

*I'm pressed but not crushed persecuted not abandoned*

*Struck down but not destroyed*

*I'm blessed beyond the curse for his promise will endure*

*And his joy's gonna be my strength*

*Though the sorrow may last for the night*

*His joy comes with the morning*

*Trading My Sorrows*

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION:

- Post portions of today's Scripture throughout the week on your church's Facebook page, with new questions each day for application. Examples: Day 1, How do you define joy? Day 2, Where have you "seen" God lately?
- If your congregation will go Christmas caroling, consider planning a yearly schedule of caroling. Visit nursing homes for Valentine's Day and invite residents to sing along with old-fashioned love songs. Look at the calendar for holidays and find music to share with others. Be careful to practice joy building throughout the year.
- Consider the downtrodden of your community. What burdens might they experience alone? Set up support groups for single parents, parents of children struggling with addiction, divorce care and so forth. You will find many resources online to help, and professionals in your community may give their time to assist. As you share the burdens, you will also increase the joy.

## SOCIAL MEDIA:

*Pre-Message: If peace were to show up at your door, what would it look like?*

*Post-Message: "Peace is not merely a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal." Martin Luther King Jr.*

“Joy”

## MULTIMEDIA OPTIONS:

- Play the video “Joy” from “A Life-giving Christmas” as a prelude to the message.
- Use the video to encourage further reflection on making peace a reality for today. Use the questions below for reflection.
- If your congregation does not have multimedia equipment for worship, consider sharing the video from “A Life-giving Christmas” on your Facebook or Web page.
- “We Are the Church” is available free for download at:  
[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGFVNmgEp0w&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGFVNmgEp0w&feature=player_embedded)

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

*(Use the video “Joy” from “A Life-giving Christmas” multimedia package.)*

- 1) How does Mitch Mitchell personify joy? How does the little girl’s expectation exemplify joy? Consider the statement that “joy is knowing something better exists, and holding onto that which is better.” How do Mitch’s actions illustrate that point? How does his giving to missions rather than accepting the money actualize that belief for the world?
- 2) Read Acts 20:33-35. Discuss the ways happiness is increased when a person gives. Ask participants to name a time when they found joy in giving.
- 3) Invite participants to share their plans for giving to others at Christmas. How do the gifts convey hope, peace, joy and love? Classify gifts based on momentary happiness and lasting joy. Encourage gift giving that invites shared memories, future time together and thoughtfulness over expense.

REFLECTION  
REFLECTION

A LIVE-GIVING CHRISTMAS: WEEK FOUR

*“Love...gotta have it”*

## SERMON STARTER

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## SCRIPTURAL FOCUS: *Romans 1:1-7*

I, Paul, am a devoted slave of Jesus Christ on assignment, authorized as an apostle to proclaim God's words and acts. I write this letter to all the believers in Rome, God's friends.

**2-7** The sacred writings contain preliminary reports by the prophets on God's Son. His descent from David roots him in history; his unique identity as Son of God was shown by the Spirit when Jesus was raised from the dead, setting him apart as the Messiah, our Master. Through him, we received both the generous gift of his life and the urgent task of passing it on to others who receive it by entering into obedient trust in Jesus. You are who you are through this gift and call of Jesus Christ! And I greet you now with all the generosity of God our Father and our Master Jesus, the Messiah."

**Focus:** This passage culminates A Life-giving Christmas and describes for us the very essence of life – Christ Jesus through whom hope, peace, joy and love are truly made possible. The prophetic reference of Christ's birth reminds us of God's grace that goes before us making a new way. The way is not for individuals to receive and delight in on their own. God's great gift is at its best when it is shared with others. Then it grows for all to enjoy.

The deeper qualities of a faith-filled life should have been amplified throughout this series to contrast with the social-volume levels of materialism, greed and superficiality. By this point, your congregation may have testimonies to share about living differently this season, and may need outlets to share. Consider making time in worship for testimonies. Changed lives are the most authentic word to preach.

As we focus on love, it is important to recognize the different forms of love. At this time of year, relational expectations are at an all-time high. Whether it is family, romantic or communal love, people want to feel acceptance and reassurance. God, through Christ, has done just that – accepted humanity and assured it with life that does not end. Not just any life, but life abundant with the things that matter. And when this physical life ends, a new life begins. What greater love is there? This is the kind of love that we want to convey today and throughout the year.

Consider what you can do in this service to help people experience agape. Be sure to have a larger-than-usual number of greeters throughout your church. For welcoming tips, see <http://www.umcom.org/site/c.mrLZJ9PFKMG/b.4838963/k.EF26/Welcoming.htm>. Affirming and greeting people as they enter and giving them invitations to return when they leave are important. Those "small" gestures can make a world of difference to someone who is hurting. Involve people in the service who are not the "regular volunteers." Pay particular attention to children, older adults and people with physical challenges. Help people use their gifts for God in worship. Invite the unexpected.

## INDIVIDUAL CHALLENGE:

Christmas is coming soon. Which of your lists has gotten the most attention—the one with your deepest wishes or the one you had to consult constantly? This series is not meant to make anyone feel guilty – only to raise the better truth one can live if attention is focused in the right place. Meet with your prayer partner to see how love is best exemplified in your life. Think about ways to extend your wish list beyond the advent season.

**Outbound Challenge:** Consider those within your faith community and surrounding community who may be lonely. With whom will they eat on Christmas Day? With whom will they celebrate on Christmas Eve? Would individuals within your congregation be willing to open their homes to others? Can you plan an outing for Christmas Day (even as simple as attending a movie) that would include those who otherwise would be forgotten?

## OUTBOUND CHALLENGE:

Consider those within your faith community and surrounding community who may be lonely. With whom will they eat on Christmas Day? With whom will they celebrate on Christmas Eve? Would individuals within your congregation be willing to open their homes to others? Can you plan an outing for Christmas Day (even as simple as attending a movie) that would include those who otherwise would be forgotten?

RETHINK

## PRACTICAL APPLICATION

- Post portions of today's Scripture throughout the week on your church's Facebook page, with new questions each day for application.

Examples:

**Day 1: How do life and love go hand in hand?**

**Day 2: How can you practice love, even when you do not feel it?**

- Consider any rifts within your community, or abroad. How can you demonstrate Christ's love, extending good to others? Plan to love radically, and you will be a living example of undeserved love and God's grace.
- What young adult programs do you currently offer? Offer ways for young adults to meet and practice the faith together. Consider the Covenant Disciple Group model. Learn more at <http://www.gbod.org/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=nhLRJ2PMKsG&b=6125877&ct=8520689>.  
The combination of inward reflection, with worship, compassion and justice, offer a full model of living and growing in the faith.

## SOCIAL MEDIA

*Pre-Message: Name a time that you experienced undeserved love.*

*Post-Message: "The most important thing in life is to learn how to give out love, and to let it come in."*

*(Morrie Schwartz)*

“Love”

## MULTIMEDIA OPTIONS:

- Play the video “Love” from “A Lifegiving Christmas” as a prelude to the message.
- Use the video in a small group for reflection. Questions are listed below.
- If your congregation does not have multimedia equipment for worship, consider sharing the video from “A Lifegiving Christmas” on your Facebook or Web page.

## QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

*(Use the video “Love” from “A Life-giving Christmas” multimedia package.)*

- 1) How does Fort Worth First United Methodist Church act as a channel for God’s love?
- 2) By giving people the necessary supplies to communicate, the church helps others to convey love. How might the gifts you give this season help others to show their love?
- 3) Read Luke 6:27-36. If you were going to develop a Christmas list for your “enemies,” what might it include? Consider including at least one of those persons on your list. Let this Scripture ring true through your actions.
- 4) Hosea Scurry said at the end of this video, “I have my own place now, and if they want to, they can come visit. Couldn’t visit me before, because I slept outside under bridges and stuff. Things are looking way up. And God has blessed me so much. I couldn’t believe it.” Discuss opportunities for creating more testimonies like this one. What might your congregation do to show God’s love to those often forgotten?

REFLECTION  
REFLECTION