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Ruminations of a Reluctant Grandfather

I think it was two days before Christmas when I learned that my unmarried daughter was pregnant. It was a Sunday morning and I was dressed for church. My 22 year old daughter was still asleep, wrapped deep in her covers. I had something on my mind...an insight, some wisdom maybe, the topic of which is beyond recall. I shared my words with her, feeling clever as I talked. I thought my words would have an impact and that they would touch her. Instead, she didn't respond at all. I was disappointed, a little miffed. Then she sat up, and said, "Dad, I have to tell you something."

I remember being afraid. The feeling came on instantly and I braced myself for what she was about to say. I was worried that she was going to confess she had lost her job or she had wrecked her car or maybe she had been arrested. I was braced for any of those...I was not braced for the words "I'm pregnant."

There were no tears that day. There was no yelling. Those things came later. It was several days before I even got around to worrying about what was going to happen to my little girl.

Over the next several days I experienced every emotion conceivable. Worse, the emotions were like caricatures of normal emotions, assuming an exaggerated and nightmarish quality. And, shamefully, over all of these emotions was the embarrassment...What would my family think? My friends and neighbors? And, perhaps most of all, my church?

I am going to admit something else here that I am not proud of. There was a piece of me, a part that lurked deep in my heart, that wished she had never told me. Because once I knew, I had to follow what I said I always believed...that abortion is murder and could never be condoned under any circumstances. It is so easy to smugly sit back, married and content, and wag a condescending finger at those that condone abortion as a choice, looking down my nose at those that would defend such a heinous act. But on that Christmas Eve I contemplated the death of my own grandchild. If only my daughter had simply gone out and done what so many do every day... if she had simply fixed "the problem"...

Instead, my daughter saw a sign for The HOPE Center. She had been close to a decision to abort; but the sign was a calling, and she acted on it. She called The HOPE Center and talked to a counselor for a couple of hours. I later spoke with the same woman and she assured me that she had experienced a divine appointment with my daughter that night.

After several months my daughter married the child's father in a simple outdoor ceremony. Few were there, but she was surrounded and protected by those who love her; just as the unborn child was surrounded and protected by the love of her mother. My daughter recently asked me if the photos she posted online of her getting married while pregnant embarrassed me...I was surprised by the question because the thought had never even occurred to me.



Seven months have passed since that birth. There have been struggles, times of frustration, issues to work through for all of us. There will be more problems - more opportunities to be shaken from complacency and apathy and grow in God's grace. But through it all, there has been a beautiful baby girl...proof positive that God is still in the ashes-to-beauty business. It is simply inconceivable that something so tiny could so completely consume and change the hearts of so many. And I realize that seven months into life she is still much closer to our loving Father than I am; perhaps she remembers Him, and His touch of Life in a way that words could never express even if she could speak them.

MANY THANKS to our Church Supporters:

Bascomb United Methodist Church
Cherokee Presbyterian Church
Christ the King Church of Greater Atlanta
CrossRoads Community Church of Woodstock
Dayspring Church
Faith Family Church
Fellowship Bible Church
*First Baptist Church Canton
*First Baptist Church Woodstock
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Stonecrest Baptist Church
*Transfiguration Catholic Church
Woodstock Christian Church
Woodstock Community Church

*Baby Bottle Boomerang Supporters

Baby Bottles Boomerang to provide 2009 Window to the Womb



Father Larry Niese (center) presents filled bottles to Cindy O'Leary, Executive Director and Dave Zandstra, volunteer.



Father Ricardo Bailey blesses the baby bottles as part of Transfigurations's Lenten Focus.

What a blessing to have the opportunity to partner with both St. Michael the Archangel and Transfiguration Catholic churches in tremendously successful Baby Bottle Boomerang campaigns.

The total in funds raised for The HOPE Center exceeded the \$31,369.00 budget for the Window to the Womb ultrasound program in 2009. Ultrasound was given the tagline "Revealing Life to Save Life" by Focus on the Family's Option Ultrasound program, and ultrasound continues to be an amazing tool that God uses within the ministry of The HOPE Center to change hearts and save lives.

Beyond the funds provided through the Baby Bottle Boomerang are the awareness-raising components that constitute the overall success of the campaigns. The HOPE Center experiences an increase in volunteer support following a Baby Bottle Boomerang – we provide a "mission field" for those looking to serve without "leaving home," allowing church members see an increase in ministry opportunities through the broad range of services offered at The HOPE Center including adoption education and referral, material resources through the Baby & More Thrift Store, and post-abortion support through Healing Hearts Ministries.

Our thanks and gratitude go out to the 1,500 plus individuals and families that contributed to the Transfiguration and St. Michael baby bottle campaigns, to the Respect Life liaisons, and to church staff members that made possible such a wonderful outpouring of support.

Woodstock Freedom Run

The 4th of July celebration in Woodstock starts at 7:30 am with Mayor Donnie Henriques and Pastor Tony Crawford kicking off what will be the 13th annual Woodstock Freedom Run. The HOPE Center is the sole beneficiary of the event's funds, and we would love to welcome you as a participant in the 5K Race, the 1 Mile Run, or, for the little ones, the Tot Trot. Register online at www.woodstockfreedomrun.com. If you would like to volunteer to help with this BIG race with a small town feel, please call The HOPE Center's Volunteer Coordinator, Vanessa Martin, at 770-924-0864.

Men of HOPE – Guys for Life

The HOPE Center is preparing to more fully embrace the mission statement that drives our ministry – **The HOPE Center exists to share the love of Jesus Christ, promote sexual purity, value human life, and provide help, hope, and healing to individuals facing pregnancy or relationship issues.** The preparation involves a group of seven men who have either completed or are in the process of completing a twelve-week training program through the national organization Guys for Life. The end goal of the training is to equip men to serve as male mentors for individuals seeking services through The HOPE Center. The Guys for Life Online Mentoring Academy curriculum includes the following topics:

- How to identify “Joe” – the boyfriend, husband, or father involved in an unplanned pregnancy
- Understanding “Joe” – his challenges and what he wants and needs
- Mentoring Tools – how to assist with a short-term outcome and a long-term outlook
- Developing a successful and sustainable Men’s Ministry

In addition to the Guys for Life training, the Men of HOPE have undertaken assignments to expand center programs and referrals, potentially to include Dave Ramsey’s Financial Peace University, a Fathering Program to augment our Earn While You Learn (EWYL) curriculum, and Discipleship Training after the model of Operation Timothy. If you feel God’s leading to volunteer through The HOPE Center, whether male or female, please don’t hesitate to call our Volunteer Coordinator, Vanessa Martin, at 770-924-0864.



Choose Life of Georgia, Inc.

Choose Life license tags bring blessings for abortion vulnerable women who need alternatives, for pregnancy centers who counsel for adoption, and for babies who need a loving home. The HOPE Center benefits directly when Choose Life tags are purchased in Cherokee County! Please support this effort in the following ways:

1. Purchase your personal tag.
2. Promote the purchase of tags by friends and neighbors.

The HOPE Center has received \$2,945.00 in funds program-to-date through Choose Life Georgia!

Baby & More THRIFT STORE



A Ministry of The HOPE Center

Surprise for a New Mom

Submitted by Monti Price,
Baby Store Manager

from your mentor. Congratulations on your new baby!” She responded in tears saying, “All of this is for me?!” Then, as she continued to cry, she told me of how The HOPE Center had *truly* given her HOPE. She and her husband were not expecting to be pregnant and were not prepared financially to handle another child. They were considering terminating the pregnancy. She sought out The HOPE Center and found encouragement regarding all of the ways we could help her. She told me, “ I was afraid that I would not be able to provide things for my child, especially things that are normally pricey. Then I come here (to the store) and I’m able to easily afford nice things for my child. This truly is a place of HOPE!”

Check us out on the web at www.babyandmorethriftstore.com



Teresa Stolte, Mother of Israel award recipient, says "I realized that I was good for nothing if I didn't help God. Money and a good job are not enough to make a life."

Mother of Israel Award Recipient: Teresa Stolte

Meet The HOPE Center's 2008 Mother of Israel award recipient - **Teresa Stolte**. The award is given annually to the volunteer that best exemplifies the heart of The HOPE Center in their interactions with clients, volunteers, staff, and, in Teresa's case, those calling The HOPE Center for information or to schedule appointments.

Teresa began her work here when she saw a sign in the window of The HOPE Center that described a need for volunteers. The following day Teresa met The HOPE Center's Spanish-speaking Program Director, Roz Heaton. She was initially overwhelmed at the thought of mentoring clients, but Roz explained that it was essentially talking with clients, praying with them, and sharing what Jesus had done in Teresa's life that would help build relationships with them.

So faithful to her desire to volunteer for the Lord, Teresa asked to maintain her one-day-a-week volunteer mentor schedule when she came on board as the Receptionist for the Center in October, 2008. She continues to exemplify the heart of The HOPE Center – the heart of her Savior and King!

{ The Winter edition of Vision of Hope will highlight another phenomenal volunteer, Jackie Brackman, The HOPE Center's Mary and Martha Award recipient. }

An Adoption Story – God's Gift submitted by Pam Flowe, RN

I am often amazed and overwhelmed at the depth of need and hurt that accompanies many of our clients. It makes me so grateful that God has given us this work to do, but He has not left us alone in our service. He is never overwhelmed.

I shared previously about a client named K. She was referred to us by a Stephen-type Ministry at a local church. I was immediately drawn to K. She was bright and articulate and loaded with pain. As she shared her story with me my heart was broken. She had had several abortions already. She thought it would be a good idea to do it again, saying that "It wasn't so bad." She left extremely abortion-minded but considering placing her baby for adoption.

Many things occurred over the next several months, and God directed her steps. Even though she still has not crossed the line of faith in Christ, He is guiding her. She is beginning to open up to the truth of the gospel, and she decided to place the baby for adoption. Through completely miraculous circumstances, God provided a Christian mom to adopt her baby. Several weeks ago I had the privilege of going to the hospital to see K and her little miracle. She is a beautiful, healthy baby girl. K hugged me and thanked me for the service that The HOPE Center had given her. She said, "You were there when I needed you most." K was radiant. She knew she had done something extraordinary and selfless.

Later that day, I was blessed to meet the baby's adoptive mom. She threw her arms around me and said, "Thank you for saving my baby!" The circumstances are undeniable that God had a plan. It was an experience of a lifetime. We don't often see such obvious, in-your-face fruit at the Center. It is a reminder to me that God can do anything. He is my Rescuer...K's Rescuer!

Please join us in praying for K. Her battle is not over. I cannot imagine the grief of placing a baby for adoption. Pray that she will soon see the Truth for her very own. Pray for the other K's that are right outside our door—and maybe your door. Pray they will be drawn to The HOPE Center and ultimately to man's only hope, Jesus. Pray that we will be faithful to love with His heart, to hear with His ears, and to act with His hands.



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be removed from our mailing list.

