



Christmas: A Season of Joy

Christmas is a celebration of life. During this special time of year, we remember God's gift of Himself to us in the form of a little child born in Bethlehem, on the outskirts of civilization, to parents who found themselves to be temporarily homeless and in need of warmth and shelter. The child Jesus came to us in poverty to teach us that love is the one thing we truly need to thrive and grow as persons made in the image and likeness of God.

God's Love is the greatest gift we can receive. It is what makes life worth living, and it comes to us freely and without any qualifications. No matter who we are, regardless of our circumstances, our social status, or our financial resources, God loves us and affirms our fundamental dignity as His children.

Christmas celebrates this fundamental truth. It surrounds us with images of warmth and beauty, and it urges us to set aside our fears and anxieties, trusting that God's love and goodness will keep us safe and secure during the pressures of this holiday season and throughout the new year ahead.

RamTell, Inc. is proud to support organizations that celebrate the gift of life. Especially at Christmas time, we give thanks for the many life-affirming pregnancy and maternity centers that serve women and families in our local communities. To honor the people who make this work possible, this issue of the RamTell E-Newsletter features two organizations, Little Way Pregnancy Center and Lifehouse Maternity Home, that serve women and their families all year long, but with an extra dose of love during this special time of year.

Merry Christmas to all!



The Joy of Christmas at Little Way Pregnancy Center

The warmth of our homes makes the Christmas season extra special, creating a sense of joy, peace and comfort, bringing us closer to each other and to our Savior whose birth is the reason for the season. At Little Way, we use this opportunity to bring the warmth and peace of Christ to our clients. The decorated Christmas tree on the landing, a creche tucked into our bookshelf nook, and soft instrumental Christmas music playing, help our clients to feel that something is different, special. We have “gifts” under our tree for clients to pick out; an assortment of donated hand-made hats and blankets that touch the hearts of our clients.

During this season, individuals and parishes are extra-generous with baby closet items and clothing, so with shelves well-stocked, we, in turn, are able to generously give to clients attending our Parenting For Success educational and tangible assistance program. Along with the usual diapers, wipes, formula, etc., small toys are added in their bags, as well as precious Christmas outfits, and they are sent on their way with a hug and a prayer and a Merry Christmas.

At The Rose, the newest ministry of Little Way whose mission is to help provide ongoing support and stability for single struggling moms and their families, Christmas is extraordinary. This beautifully renovated turn of the century home located next door to the pregnancy center represents “new beginnings” for many of our clients who have taken the step to continue the journey of growth that began at Little Way, often during a time of crisis and uncertainty. At The Rose, a “family” is formed as they participate in one-on-one support, group support, and financial coaching throughout the year. Clients are heard to describe The Rose as their “second home” where they experienced love, faith, acceptance, and a new sense of purpose and direction.

Many want to stay connected, and what better time to be with those you love than at Christmas. Our Christmas open house for current and former support group members welcomes them with special treats for all the senses – the smell of hot cocoa and freshly baked gingerbread cookies, the sound of traditional songs and laughter as the kids create holiday crafts, and most importantly the beauty of our historic mantles decorated with fresh greenery, the Christmas tree lit

and adorned with special ornaments of God's hope and promise, and the nativity sets displayed throughout the home telling the miracle of the Christmas story. It is also a time to reconnect and celebrate with joy our priceless blessings, all the babies born the past year to our clients at The Rose, represented by special candles on the mantles. Each family leaves with a family gift bag, ideas for creating family traditions in their own homes, and a warm heart turned ever more toward the Christ Child.

For a few special, financially struggling clients, Little Way partners with St. Louis

Bertrand Church to shower extra love on those unable to provide Christmas for their little ones. Their Advent Angel Tree allows these clients to receive presents for their children, who otherwise would miss out on the joy that gifts under a tree can bring at Christmas time.

The love we show during the Christmas season is simply an extension of the love shown every day of the year at Little Way.

Ellen Wichman, Executive Director, Little Way Pregnancy Center



A Lifehouse Christmas

Lifehouse Maternity Home is a safe home where women in crisis can find hope and healing. During the Advent and Christmas seasons, special attention is paid to the opportunities for joyful giving and receiving that are such an important part of this unique time of year.

Throughout the year, Lifehouse addresses the spiritual, physical, and emotional needs of pregnant and

parenting women by transforming their lives through the healing touch of Christ. Lifehouse's year-round goal is to help end the cycle of abuse, neglect, generational poverty, and social services dependency of pregnant and parenting women. At Christmas time, area churches and other organizations adopt Lifehouse women and families and provide Angel Trees with gifts for all. Individual donors help to ensure that no one is overlooked, and everyone contributes to the distinctive sights and sounds of the season, adding an extra degree of warmth and welcome to the Lifehouse atmosphere.

The large Christmas Tree located in our atrium contains ornaments with the names of current and former Lifehouse

participants. Decorating begins immediately after Thanksgiving, and each ornament is color-coded to reflect the children (past and present) who have celebrated the Christmas holiday at Lifehouse Maternity Home.

Some program participants spend the Christmas holidays with family members. Others spend their holidays here at Lifehouse Maternity Home. Regardless of where participants spend the holidays, our goal is to provide a Christ-centered home environment with a safe place to live, emotional support, prenatal care, and a loving team to guide them into becoming the mother and woman God plans for them to be. During the weeks leading up to Christmas, we provide Advent devotional services that help women and families prepare to celebrate the spiritual blessings of Christmas. These Advent services complement the Bible Study sessions that are offered during the rest of the year.

Occasionally, the holiday season can be a time of stress for those who are struggling with personal, family, or financial issues. Our case managers and social workers pay special attention to all the women who live here. We want to make sure that all are cared for with dignity and respect, especially in times of difficulty or distress. Lifehouse Maternity Home is designed to be a safe environment for all—expectant

mothers and women who need a home for themselves and their children after childbirth. All year long, participants receive help in all aspects of daily living including the basics of parenting and childcare, financial help, referrals for legal assistance, spiritual counseling and social skills. Especially at Christmas time, we strive to let the welcoming experience of Christ's love fill our hearts and give true peace and joy to all.

All through the year, Lifehouse offers a safe home, food and essential pre-natal care for both mothers and their small children. Whether participants choose parenting or are considering adoption, Lifehouse offers a structured, secure, Christ-centered environment where each participant can learn to become a confident, independent woman. Lifehouse's full-time staff, 24/7, onsite House Mentors, and fellow program participants help expectant, and new mothers understand they are not alone. This is especially important during the Christmas season when mothers and their children are shown the same love and respect that we give to the mother of Jesus and her newborn child.

As we say to women who are considering becoming program participants, "Whatever your situation this holiday season, Lifehouse can help."

*Dolli Neikirk, Chief Executive Officer,
Lifehouse Maternity Home*