

# THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS

by Pam Baynes

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*Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (Romans 15:7)*

I have spoke of my personal experience about when and why we went church shopping 11 years ago. We had begun to feel that either we had changed, our church had changed or a combination of the two. It is always hard to start something new when you really don't know what you are jumping into. Especially when it comes to faith and the house where faith is practiced. I had been to churches in my life that are not always accepting of newcomers. You had to follow so many rules to be a part of it.

Mantua Center Christian Church opened it's doors to us and we ran in to find that it was our home. A warm home full of nothing but pure love. It was not just "store bought" love. It was made from scratch.

True and genuine from the hugs of the greeter that day (Laura Parker) to Pastor Len breaking bread and saying "All means all". One of the hymns we sang

that Sunday was "Here I am, Lord". All of the signs were there. We were home. It was the hospitality and love that I had been seeking for my children and my husband. The best part is that I experience it every time I walk into our church. It does not matter if I am dropping off bread or coming in for a Sunday service. The walls wrap me in a warm embrace when I walk in and the doors pat me gently on my back as I go to leave, as if to say "You got this, go in peace".

**DEAR HEAVENLY FATHER,  
WE KNOW WHEN OUR TIME ON EARTH  
IS DONE WE WILL BE WELCOMED INTO  
YOUR HOME WITH A WARM EMBRACE.  
MAY WE ALWAYS WELCOME ANY AND  
ALL WHO SEEK SHELTER FROM LIFE'S  
STORMS. PROVIDE US WITH STRENGTH  
TO HOLD THEM WHEN THEY COME  
INTO OUR LIVES AND ALSO WHEN IT IS  
TIME FOR THEM TO MOVE ON. IN YOUR  
NAME WE PRAY, AMEN**