



## *Finding Treasure for the Lord*

By Lisa Harmon



During my college years, I remember sharing with my dad my desire to be a missionary. We both came to the conclusion that I could accomplish this desire while I was at home as well as in some distant land. As I look back, the Lord has given me the desire of my heart to minister to people through music, through experiences from starting a church in Russia to praying for people in the aisles of Wal-Mart. I recently discovered that treasure hunting is another way to bring Jesus' love to others.

For my first treasure hunt, I thought I would be going with my support group, but the Lord had another plan for me. He impressed on me that I should go treasure hunting one Friday morning in early September. I told Him I had an errand to run at a local store and that I would really like to find His treasure there while shopping. He gave me my clues a few hours before I was to set out on my adventure. I remember feeling excited and a bit apprehensive at the same time.

As I approached the doors of the store, I told the Lord, "Okay, Lord,

here we are. You are going to have to do all the work. I am your mouth-piece, just tell me what to say." I immediately went to the area of the store where I expected the treasure to be. No one meeting the first clue (the make-up department) was there yet. I proceeded to shop for all the items on my list. It was about thirty minutes later that I went back to where I started and there she was. She was wearing red, which fit my second clue. I noticed she was talking on the phone, so I decided to stroll down the aisles on either side of the one she was on so as not to appear that I was stalking her. When her phone conversation ended, I casually approached her and said, "Excuse me, I am on a treasure hunt, and I believe you are my treasure." I proceeded to show her my clues on my treasure hunt list: make-up, red shirt, Anna, shoulder/arm pain. I told her that I was not sure about her name and she chuckled and said her name was Evangela, but her friends called her Vanna. She said it was close enough for her.

She said that she had to take an early retirement from teaching be-

cause of so much pain in her arms and shoulders. I proceeded to ask permission to lay hands on her to pray. She kept claiming her healing as I prayed. I knew this lady loved Jesus and was confident that the Lord was doing a mighty work in her. When I finished praying, I asked her if she felt better. She said she did and knew that the Lord had healed her. She wanted me to know that the clues helped her because she always needed confirmation from the Lord. The Lord gave me a confirmation too when I first approached her. On the front of her shirt was printed "Expect Miracles."

It turns out that she was a pastor's wife and they were moving to a small town not too far away. She loved to pray for others when she went shopping or wherever the Lord took her to minister. I shared about the treasure hunting book that I was reading. She wrote down the title of the book so she could read about how to go treasure hunting as well. We both departed feeling blessed and encouraged.

It was so refreshing to be able to go out with an expectant faith that

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# Georgia to Georgia with Love

By Mike Firmin

Some of you may know that I have been involved in humanitarian aid to the people of the Republic of Georgia since they regained independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1993. In the course of the nine trips made over there, most recently in 2014, I have come to be good friends with many people including the President of the Baptist Union, the Catholic Bishop, and several priests. I could have never foreseen that one fruit of my efforts would be the newest member of our family, Tornike Jelia (Tor-knee-kay Jay-lee-ah).

Tornike just finished college and

## Treasure

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the Lord was going to show up, do all the work and see Him use me as His vessel to touch and heal someone. I was on cloud nine that day. I am reminded of one of the things that Kevin Dedmon said in *The Ultimate Treasure Hunt* that jumped off the page. He said, "If we open our eyes, then He will open their eyes." My desire for all of us is that we will constantly have our eyes open to see the hurting, the lost and the lonely and that we will take the time to stop and allow the Lord to open their eyes to see His love for them. Come, Lord Jesus, and do the work that you have called all of us to do.

**Lisa Harmon** volunteers as a music teacher at Alleluia Community School. She has been a Full Covenant member since 1991. She and her husband, Bob, are the parents of three children. She and her family are currently looking for a new church home.

was attending church at the Catholic cathedral, and working at the clinic run by an order of priests. He heard about the world-wide lottery run by the U.S. State Department every year that opens up 55,000 slots for legal immigration to the United States, and so he put his name in the hat. Lo and behold, Tornike won a slot! One requirement is that he had to find a host family — someone who could offer a place to stay, help with getting a job and navigating the U.S. and our culture. Well, you guessed it! Bishop Giuseppe gave him my name and contact information. About five months ago, Tornike messaged me on Facebook and explained his situation, and asked for help.

Meanwhile, Bev and I had been praying about offering hospitality to some of the persecuted Christians who were trying to get to safe lands and new homes. Bev had even contacted the Chaldean Church officials in Los Angeles and offered our hospitality. Nothing had come of it, but we continued to pray. So when Tornike contacted us, we had a sense in our hearts that this was how God wanted to answer our prayers. And as I thought about it, what better place to land, for a 23-year-old young man who wants to have an unimaginable opportunity to start a new life, than in Faith Village, U.S.A.?

Tornike is the only child of his parents, Ana and ZaZa. They and his aunts and uncles and cousins are excited for him, and the accessibility of video skype and phone calls has eased the natural sorrow of being separated. Tornike is already enrolled in the English-as-a-Second-Language course at Augusta Tech, and will receive his social security card shortly, then will look for a job. His college degree is in Health Administration and Public



Tornike Jelia and Mike Firmin

Health. His goals are "to help my new family in any way I can, make money and get a Master's Degree."

Bev and I are so happy to be used by God to help Tornike start a new life and eventually become an American citizen. We're hoping all of you in Alleluia welcome him, pray for him and let us know of any job opportunities. He understands that he may well have to do manual labor and figure out a new career, depending on how much of his Georgian education credits will "count" in our American system. But he's eager to get started! He's already studying to get his driver's license.

I'll take this opportunity to exhort all my brothers and sisters to pray for a renewed grace of hospitality; openness of heart and openness of home to Him, our Savior Jesus who may come knocking in the disguise of a person or family in need! This welcoming attitude is typified by my daughter-in-law, Saray, who was an immigrant and just became an American citizen; her reaction to the news of Tornike's arrival was, "That's great! Now Rafael and Isabel have a new uncle!"

**Mike and Beverly Firmin** moved to Augusta from their native Louisiana in 1981 to join Alleluia Community, and signed Covenant as permanent members in 1983. They are parents of nine children and have ten grandchildren. They attend St. Joseph Catholic Church. Mike retired from Golden Harvest Food Bank in 2013. He provides spiritual direction to men in the Augusta area and recently established the Alleluia School of Spiritual Direction.

# Traveling to Serve the Lord

By Chester Andrews

On September 24, I traveled to Philadelphia with eight Alleluia brothers and sisters. Our mission was to serve at a charismatic conference called "Gathering of the Renewal for a New Evangelization of the Family" which coincided with the Pope's visit to celebrate the World Meeting of Families. The trip was a blessing on many levels: developing deeper fellowship with my brothers and sisters, serving the Lord in predictable and unpredictable ways, and attending an event with Pope Francis.

On Thursday, we gathered at the Bell Tower at 9:00 a.m. News 12 was there, chronicling our pilgrimage, having interviewed Dan Almeter earlier in the week. On the way, we sang songs, prayed the rosary and strengthened our fellowship. It did not seem like ten hours arriving in Hammon- ton, N.J. at the home of our host family.

We were greeted with love by Pastor Dan McCanney and wife Marcia. We introduced ourselves, thanked them for their hospitality and went to bed. Everyone had a place to sleep. I shared a floor mattress with Milo (one of their dogs). In the night, Milo smacked me in the face with a wag of his tail. I woke and thanked the Lord for His blessing and drifted off.

Friday morning Shannon (the Mc- Canney's youngest daughter) offered coffee. I thought, "What a servant!" simultaneously reminding me the purpose of the trip — to serve the Lord.

After coffee, we ate breakfast in Hammonton and met Andy, a leader in his charismatic Christian community. He studied Alleluia for 30+ years and modeled his community's covenant after Alleluia's. It was fascinating to discover the reach and impact of Alleluia's founders.

Next we drove to explore Phila-

delphia. The streets were strangely quiet and almost deserted as we easily found an available parking lot. The attendant informed us that we entered the "Red Zone" and traffic could be cordoned off at any moment to enhance security for the Pope's visit. On his sage advice we left, avoiding getting trapped until the restrictions lifted.

Instead of exploring Philly, we agreed to visit The National Shrine of St. John Neumann — the fourth Bishop of Philadelphia and first American male to be canonized. The shrine is an architectural gem and St. John Neumann an exemplary servant of the Lord. Learn more about him at <http://www.stjohnneumann.org>

Next lunch. While waiting, we noticed "Pope Francis" T-shirts for sale. Fifty percent was earmarked to feed the homeless by posting alms slips on a bulletin board. Anyone could take one for a free slice of pizza or even a complete meal. Driving home, some of us discussed the concept and hope to introduce the idea to Augusta.

That evening we visited the Saint Katharine Drexel Shrine which is steeped in rich history. Briefly, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament "desire to effect unity and community among all peoples." (Learn more at <http://www.katharinedrexel.org>). While there, we picked and ate apples from their orchard, attended Mass with other pilgrims from the Diocese of Savannah, and met numerous religious (including Fr. John Johnson, an Alleluia alumnus). We were treated to music and a "Taste Of Philadelphia" for dinner. We drove home early, knowing we had little time for sleep.

On Saturday, we arrived at the Wells Fargo Center at 5:00 a.m. ready to serve the charismatic conference. We were assigned specific tasks: reg-



Riding SEPTA to see Pope Francis

istration, multilingual customer service, SEPTA token table, hospitality and ushering. Approximately 5,000 guests attended. Each presentation was communicated in English and Spanish. The theme was thought provoking words from charismatic leaders around the world on "The Family is Alive in the Power of the Spirit." The talks were uniquely inspiring, only punctuated by charismatic praise, worship, song, and singing in tongues. The event concluded with a celebration of the Eucharist by Cardinal Peter Turkson (President of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace). Read more about Cardinal Turkson and the other speakers here at [www.wmofcharismatic.org/speaker\\_bios.html](http://www.wmofcharismatic.org/speaker_bios.html).

After Mass, a few of us helped with the collection and counting the money. The rest of the group thought they were off to a well-deserved lunch but, while counting the money, a problem surfaced. There were extra Eucharists needing to be consumed. I gathered the entire Alleluia contingent before they started lunch, and for 20 minutes we consumed Communion. Needless to say, we were not very hungry for lunch after that, but we were certainly filled with the Lord.

The last leg of our pilgrimage (aside from our 10+ hour trip home) was nigh: Saturday night's event with the Pope. The Lord blessed us with seated tickets and we took SEPTA (the

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# Serving Others

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local transit system) into the heart of the Red Zone. We cleared the security checkpoint, walked the streets (for what seemed like miles), and made it to our seats around 4:00 p.m. It was windy and cool as we waited with anticipation for the Pope. Finally the rumble of the motorcade and procession grew louder. We glimpsed the popemobile and Pope (observing more on the jumbotrons). The celebration began with entertainment and speeches. (The Pope sure knows how to throw a good party!) Six married couples (from around the world) addressed the Pope with their concerns and hopes for raising their families in our turbulent societies. The Pope blessed them and others before addressing the audience. Unfortunately, we needed to leave early (for our trip home) and only heard the Pope on the jumbotrons.

That night this message from our pilgrimage was reverberating through my mind: the Pope cherishes and celebrates the traditional family yet welcomes and desires the unity and community of all peoples.

Psalm 133:1, "How good and how pleasant it is, when brothers dwell together as one!"

In Jesus's name, Amen.



The Alleluia group having lunch with Pastor Dan McCanney and Andy

# Collecting for the Homeless Veterans Program

By Judy Hartney

As Veterans Day fast approaches, the ACS students are collecting "move-in" items for the Augusta HUD-VASH Program for homeless Veterans. VASH stands for Veterans Affairs Sustainable Housing. New or gently used items will help furnish veterans' new homes as they usually come into the program with nothing.

Homeless Veterans enrolled in this program get the proper treatment to help them manage their finances, pay bills on time, shop for groceries and even learn how to cook if needed. The program also provides transportation and assistance in job training.

This local program works with the Augusta Housing Authority to provide vouchers for Chapter 8 housing with the VA paying the difference between the veteran's income-based rent and the actual cost of the housing unit.

The veterans usually graduate from the VA assistance and become self-supportive. Each veteran has a case manager who meets with them on a regular basis to assure they are doing well and following the suggested guidelines.



Photo from 2014: Judy Hartney, Bob Garrett and Senior Class President, Ethan Balducci with VA Volunteers

## List of Items Sought

### Kitchen

- Dish towels, cloths,
- Dish soap, scrub pad
- Sets of dishes, glasses, silverware
- Cooking utensils
- Pots, pans, skillets
- Can opener
- Coffee maker
- Water pitcher
- Salt/Pepper shakers
- Dish drainer
- Trash bin/trash bags
- Mop/Broom/Dust pan

### Bathroom

- Bath/Hand towels
- Wash clothes
- Hand/Bar soap
- Shampoo
- Toothbrush/toothpaste
- Disposable razors/shaving cream
- Shower curtain/liner/hooks
- Trash can
- Toilet brush/cleaner
- Cleaning products for bathroom

### Bedroom(s)

- Queen sheets/pillow cases
- Pillows
- Blankets
- Bedspread/comforter
- Clothes hangers
- Alarm clock

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