



MINUTE FOR MISSION

Christmas Joy gifts help bring about happy endings after tragedies strike

In 2014, Elisabeth Scotland's college graduation day turned from joy and celebration to trauma and heartache in an instant.

After receiving her diploma from Boston University, Elisabeth, along with family and friends, went to a baseball game at Fenway Park. While waiting for an elevator, Elisabeth casually leaned against the elevator doors. The doors opened at the wrong time, and Elisabeth fell 20 feet down the elevator shaft. Her multiple injuries included a brain injury that put her in a coma for a week.

Her parents, Rev. John and Anne Scotland, spent two months in Boston by Elisabeth's side during her hospitalization and rehabilitation. The congregation John serves, Community Presbyterian in Brigantine, New Jersey, graciously granted John leave, but there were living expenses in Boston to be paid, and someone had to fulfill John's pastoral duties while he was away.

Thanks to a Shared Grant from the Presbytery of West Jersey and the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, the Scotlands' expenses in Boston were covered, and a newly ordained pastor from Community Presbyterian handled the congregation's pastoral duties during John's absence.

Caring Presbyterians in West Jersey Presbytery rallied around the Scotlands with prayers and financial gifts. Another crucial component of their support came from Presbyterians across the country who had given to the Christmas Joy Offering, which supports the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions.

The Christmas Joy Offering gifts also helped the Scotlands two years earlier when Superstorm Sandy damaged thousands of homes in their island community. Four feet of water flooded their basement, ruining the heating system, electrical panels, appliances, and other possessions. They received an Emergency Assistance Grant from the Board of Pensions to help with replacement costs.

"I think the emotional support was more important than the financial support," John says. He explains that it was comforting to "know that somebody outside the community knew we were hurting and wanted to help."

Thankfully, life is much better these days for the Scotlands and their community. In early 2017, Elisabeth, now an accountant in Philadelphia, passed her CPA exam. Also this year, John and Anne made a gift to the Assistance Program to help others get the kind of help they received.

"Having a Presbyterian family was a big blessing to us and helped us come through tragedy," he says.

The Christmas Joy Offering is one way the Presbyterian family blesses people in need. Half of your gift will help current and retired church leaders and their families who are in critical financial need. The other half will help Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools and colleges train future leaders. Your gift will make a difference for the church today and tomorrow. **Please give generously.**

Let Us Pray

Faithful God, we give thanks that you walk with us and strengthen us when we encounter times of distress. We pray for those who are dealing with various types of calamities. Help us to serve them as agents of your compassion and transformation. **Amen.**