“*Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”*



2 Corinthians 9:7

Have you ever experienced a warm sensation after doing a good deed or having expressed a kindness to someone? I think that’s what Harriet Crosby meant when she wrote, “Simple gratitude helps us experience God at work in every moment of every day.” It is the kind of feeling that you can only sense when you give genuinely out of the goodness of your heart. In his second letter to the church in Corinth, Paul writes God loves and blesses those who give from the bottom of their hearts. Whenever we give to church, a charity or nonprofit organization we want to give good heartedly, not begrudgingly. But we must be selective because of the endless opportunities. We must decide what and to whom we can be generous. One of Trinity’s traditions is filling up shoeboxes for little children around the world. Maybe it’s a “doll, a candy cane, a stuffed dog or a washcloth. Every item lovingly added to an Operation Christmas Child shoebox has the potential to impact one lonely child. [A true story taken from the Samaritan Purse website tells of one young lady [who,] at the age of 8, loved the treasures](http://links.samaritanspurse.mkt5705.com/ctt?kn=4&ms=MTE5ODAwNzUS1&r=NTYzMTAxNDMzODUS1&b=0&j=NTIzNTM1NDEzS0&mt=1&rt=0) she received *so much* she kept the box and its items almost completely intact for 17 years! Every item in that shoebox brought her joy at a time when she had lost all hope. It was a gift that opened her heart to something that changed her life forever. A stuffed animal communicated God’s love. A snow globe showed her very specifically that God answers prayer.”

For me, the biggest heartache is knowing there are children who do not get “invited” to these parties to receive a Christmas Shoe Box simply because there aren’t enough to go around. Can you imagine not telling one of your kids about Christmas because you didn’t have enough presents for everyone?

Thinking of Christmas in July gives us time to plan ahead, buy things we’d like to put in our shoeboxes later this year. And with a Thrivent Action card we can pay the $7 postage for 35 boxes! Defraying some of our costs offers opportunity to fill one more box. A goal of 50 shoe boxes is not out of reach and it seems like a drop in the bucket when you consider the millions of potential recipients. The more boxes, the less chance of leaving a child out. “Simple gratitude helps us experience God at work in every moment of every day.”

Besides it’s fun to shop for children and even greater fun to shop *with* children *for* other children. Plan a special trip with your child, niece, nephew, grandchild, or grab a neighbor’s or friend’s child (just let them know first) and let this become an annual summer activity. Take a moment, today in the swelter of summer, to dream of the special memories of Christmas past. More than likely some of your best memories are of small thoughtful presents rather than large and expensive ones. God’s grace continues to rain blessings upon us and our children. As we walk down memory lane, relax and enjoy these many gifts from God. We know we are blessed even midst our heartaches, because we know God loves us. Flood your heart with all the possibilities you have to offer little children around the world who have not been touched by such rainfall and who have never heard of Jesus or even know of His amazing love. Enjoy this beautiful summer and know...

*“You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God.”*

*2 Corinthians 9:11-12*

 ***Pastor Cheri***