

Message From Antlers

By Paige Namuth

When I was a child I had glamorous parents who were photojournalists. My dad worked on the team that won the Pulitzer Prize. Newspaper people back then worked hard and played hard. When I was about eight years old my dad's alcoholism clicked on and just about destroyed our family.

My mother was on a 17-day long assignment in Nevada to cover the last atomic bomb test and left us home with my dad who was drinking heavily at the time. The dog got run over. My dad couldn't manage a grade school girl and a preschooler and we were in chaos.

During this time of my life I decided to join a church. One of my classmates, Nancy Ryder, said I could join hers and it was the only one I could walk to without crossing a busy street. Despite the addiction, my parents were very loving and overprotective and wouldn't let us out of their sights.

I loved belonging to this church. I proudly sang in the children's choir and waved a palm branch with great style on Palm Sunday. Nancy's mother was the church secretary and she always had time for me and would notice if I was missing.

I think that's the greatest gift I could have possibly received from that church; to have someone notice if I was missing.

Years later, the associate pastor's wife played a huge, huge role in the adoption of my daughter Elizabeth. I went from just living life to being a mother in two days and Mrs. Haas just grinned and said, "This is how God works." She handed me a boatload of courage. Life would be terrible if Elizabeth were missing. I wouldn't have my four grandchildren either.

My friend Diane always kept me abreast of how normal people behaved and she told me I needed to give 10% of my income to the Lord, so I dutifully plunked a nickel in the collection. One thing children of alcoholic families struggle with is knowing what is normal so I appreciated her advice. I like to think that my nickel went really, really far.

I will always be grateful to that church for their attitude toward me. When I needed more than my family could give me, they held me up until we were back on our feet again. Their kindness changed the course of my history.