

## The Surprise Guests

“I happened to be standing while on the telephone and looking out my office window. As the couple and child approached I instinctively knew that they would be at the door of the church in a matter of seconds. I heard the familiar sound of the opening of the exterior door and then the unsuccessful pulling and turning of the locked interior door. The office staff, through the technology of the doorway camera, and seeing a rather docile and defeated family through the monitor, allowed them entrance. Three gentle faces appeared in the doorway of my office and I waved them in as I concluded a call. A quiet round of introductions lead to the heart of the matter. They were in great need of food, of work, of shelter and besides the young woman was very pregnant. Their charming 3 year old daughter made herself right at home in my office. She found comfort in an adult chair while the couple took a seat on the small couch. I listened to their story sensing their reluctance to ask for too much or to assume too much. A warm spot developed quickly in my heart for them in the face of such need. Within a span of an hour or so we were getting into my van and heading to an old motel where they had spent their last night and where their meager and bagged belongings were being held by the operator either for pick-up or disposal. They were very grateful for the rescue trip of the little they had. But more so, we could travel together with hope—more hope than did Mary and Joseph heading to Bethlehem, because of hospitality awaiting at the Jesus People Shelter. A phone call to this Chicagoland manger, equipped to welcome, to care, to feed, to house, gave me the delight of knowing that the light of Christ would shine upon them at a place of hope.”

“When we arrived the “intake” care received quelled some of their fears and offered the provision of a meal at the hall across the street. I could feel their uneasiness in such a new place and in the presence of strangers with needs of all sorts. They settled at a table and then entered the line and ate heartily and thankfully. Over the next hours they eased into their new dwelling among new friends. Most amazing, however, was the fact that that very night a baby was to be born! Equipped to love in the style of God on the straw, the staff got this young couple to the hospital where prenatal care had been given. A child was born!”

“What does it mean to live and to love like Jesus? It means that much of what most people find as necessary and treasured is swept away by what’s needful. And, what’s needful is what the Spirit accomplishes through the hospitality of God’s people committed to community in a city where community is threatened at every corner by fear, greed, and racism. It’s been a couple Christmases since Paul and Deb and their little princess stepped into our church. But there’s no way that I can ever walk toward the Manger of God’s provision for humanity without seeing that burdened family head toward the door of the church and not think of the surprise guests at the inn for whom there was no room but in a manger stall. God be thanked that the world is loved to such an extent!”

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For more information about the homeless shelters with Jesus People Covenant Church write to:  
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Or visit us at [www.ccolife.org](http://www.ccolife.org) | phone: 773.271.8163 | fax: 773.271.8245