



December 2024

**Dear Friends and Partners with Olive Branch Mission:**

As we prepare our 157<sup>th</sup> Christmas dinner we are thankful for the thousands of individuals that have celebrated Christmas at the Mission. Our doors open on *welcome hinges*. When Residents enter, their time spent at the Mission is free of judgment or condemnation related to past transgressions. They are welcomed with open arms and hearts.

For some, Christmas is a harsh reminder of the failures and losses that have occurred over the years. They dread everything associated with the holiday, because it's too painful to bear. For others it's a season of belonging. So much time is spent living on the outskirts of society, feeling like they are part of a family brings them joy. It provides a welcome escape from their current circumstances, long enough to revel in the blissful feeling of *hope*. They're filled with excitement at the very thought of gathering around the dinner table, holding hands to pray and enjoying good food, laughter and welcoming companionship. For the first time in a long time, they feel accepted and loved unconditionally.

Our tables are filled with the most unlikely guests. Paths that would have never crossed outside of the Mission are dinner companions. Their faces, backgrounds and stories are very different, but their needs are the same. They are in need of kindness, warmth, comfort and love during a most difficult time.

The clanking of silverware and glasses can be heard while lively conversations fill the dining room. As I walk through the elaborately decorated room looking at the residents, I think to myself, this could be a *family* Christmas dinner at any home around the world. Each table revealed a different conversation; *"Where are you from again? The Gold Coast?!" "Well, I lived in this area my whole life!" "WOW! That guy over there is from Africa and he has the same accent as the Frenchman!" "These string beans tastes just like the ones my grandma use to make when I was a kid." "I can't believe the Mission has people serving us! I feel so fancy!" "I heard they have presents for us too!" "This is the best Christmas I've had in a REALY long time!" "This the best Christmas I EVER had in my entire life!" "I guess you guys are my family now!"*

The physical meal is undeniably enjoyable and satisfies their hunger. However, the *spiritual* meal is lifesaving. Heaping portions of Grace, Mercy and Hope are always on the menu. There's a buffet that boasts forgiveness and restoration. The unlimited Living Water quenches any thirst. The exquisite, one-of-a-kind main course of Salvation is served in abundance. The dessert of Eternal Life brings peace and unspeakable joy. How blessed we are to be able to dine because the check has already been paid in full.

As you enjoy Christmas dinner and all the wonderful memories it brings, remember that your generosity helped to provide a wonderful Christmas for the ones that gathered around the Mission's table.

**Katrina Coleman – President/CEO**

Please cut/tear off this section and mail with your tax-deductible contribution

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For each **homeless man, woman and child** at Olive Branch Mission. (DEC 2024)

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**OLIVE BRANCH MISSION PLEDGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

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