



All Santa Wanted

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Chapter One

It had all started as a dare and 50 years later, he was still at it. But now he was done! This year would be his last!

When one of Walter Nicholas' frat brothers teasingly nicknamed him "Saint" Nicholas all those decades ago, others chimed in and dared him to apply for the seasonal Santa job at the mall. Walt had no interest in children or in Christmas for that matter. And he was about as far from being a saint as one could get, but he never backed down from a dare. So that's how it all began.

Being Santa became Walter Nicholas' yearly routine. He discovered quickly that the job came with some pretty nice perks. Initially it was easy extra income for a money-hungry college student. And Walt could never get enough cash. A surprise benefit, he learned, was the great impression it made on the opposite gender. When he casually informed college girls that he spent his December playing Santa Claus for hundreds of children, they were immediately smitten. In fact, he figured it was that job that snagged his wife for him. He remembered Millie saying to him when he proposed, "I figure that anybody who is willing to give joy to boys and girls at Christmas must be a good guy at heart." Millie was wrong. Little did she know then that Walt had almost zero interest in the children who plunked on his lap. The young Walter was an opportunist and being Santa was just a way for him to get what he wanted.

After graduation he and Millie married and he plunged into a high-powered financial investment career. He no longer needed the extra money the part-time job paid. So he intended to quit being Santa. But somehow the company president got wind of what he did and expressed great admiration for such a worthy contribution to the community. Walt wanted to keep on the good side of his boss, so his Santa gig turned into a leg-up on the corporate ladder. Instead of impressing giggly sorority girls, he began to look for opportunities to casually let it slip to potential clients what he did as a moon-lighting job. Without fail, the information brought praise and affirmation and won him more than one lucrative account. Plus the job provided him a never-ending supply of Christmas riddles and funny kid anecdotes that charmed more than one potential investor.

So, what started out as a joke, became a life-long habit. Not that Walt enjoyed it, because he didn't. He was kicked, poked, bit, drooled on, and even peed on by multitudes of kids. He detested the tantrums and the whining and the whisker-yanking. He forced fake smiles for photos. Luckily, the beard camouflaged his cynical sneer pretty well. But if playing Santa Claus served as a tool to gain greater respect from his

clients and consequently greater success, Walt figured it was worth enduring. So every year he repeated his Santa act.

Walt was a workaholic and perfectly content to fill his days with business pursuits. He had little time for Millie and was not thrilled when ten years into their marriage, a daughter, Karyn arrived unexpectedly. He admitted that she was much cuter and smarter than the kids who gave him their lists each December but he was just too busy to pay much attention to her. As years passed, Millie and Karyn begged him to spend time with them, but Walt was consumed with chasing down new clients, or cooking up new ventures to bring in more money. Convinced he was being a good husband and father by providing a very comfortable life for his family, he packed every month with work. December was the worst of them all, because on top of his regular job, he held down the Santa job too. Millie and Karyn came to resent Christmas!

Millie was a faithful wife and loved Walt, sticking with him, in spite of his self-centeredness. She continued to believe that somewhere hidden under his uncaring mask, was a soft heart. She was a strong Christian and talked to Walt about Jesus and His love. But Walt was a self-made man, and didn't see any need for a relationship with an invisible Deity.

Then, after 35 years together, Millie died. With her mother's passing Karyn moved away and quit communicating with her father altogether. Walt poured himself even more into his work and tried to keep himself occupied with any thoughts other than the years he had wasted. But it seemed that every year his sorrow and regret increased. Ten years passed. He was president of his own corporation, richer than he had ever hoped to be, but very much alone. Where had the years gone?

When he turned 70 the week before Thanksgiving, the firm threw him a fancy retirement party, presented him with an engraved plaque, showered him with a lot of polite accolades, gave an expensive watch and said goodbye. He had no family and now he had no job, except for being Santa. He loathed it more than he ever had.

"Yes, well... I may as well get on with it," Walter muttered to himself. "Thankfully this will be my last Black Friday as Santa Claus!" He pulled the red cap onto his head. With a scowl he put his arms through the sleeves of the heavy red jacket and buttoned it. He picked a piece of lint from the white fur trim on the cuff. He jammed his feet into shiny black boots and took one final look in the mirror. The fake beard and wig were no longer needed because Walt's own wavy snow-white hair and bushy beard were perfect for the part and much more authentic-looking.

There was no Santa-like twinkle in his eyes, but then, there never had been. He shook his head in disgust. He would do his duty and finish out this year, but with no motivation to impress others, he saw no reason to keep on being Santa in the future.

Walt left the house, squeezed his pillow-stuffed belly behind the wheel of his Lexus and headed for the first day of his last Christmas ordeal.

Chapter Two

Walter Nicholas gave a perfunctory nod to the two young women who would be directing the children to Santa. The girls were dressed as toy soldiers, complete with red curly wigs poking out from beneath high furry black hats, their faces painted red white and blue, with enormous pinocchio-like noses covering their own. Walt had to give credit to the mall for the great job they did each year with the costumes and North Pole scenery. He took his place on his golden Santa throne and braced himself for the Black Friday rush. "Let's get this show on the road," he barked with a reluctant thumbs up to his soldier helpers.

The lines seemed to get longer every year. And the children got ornery-er! When the first baby brought to him spewed half-digested breast milk all over him, Walt moaned inwardly. This was going to be a tough year. He knew it. As the morning progressed, he got requests for the most bizarre things... "a dollar-bill-dropping drone," "a robot doll that could



repeat the alphabet in five languages," and "an automatic dog treat launcher toy." Gone were the requests for baby dolls, teddy bears, baseball gloves and tinker toys. It seemed to Walt that almost every Christmas wish was for something computerized, grotesque or violent. If he were honest, he would have to admit that there were still some decent, polite children who asked for innocent-enough things like rolls of Scotch tape, or tubs of Cool Whip. But they tended to get obliterated by the obnoxious little tyrants. Some of the children even brought along their lists, not written on paper in child-like scrawls, but displayed on the screen of their own smart phones. For *Saint* Nicholas, Walt thought some very sinner-like thoughts.

By late afternoon, Walt was in a sour mood. He looked at the line of waiting parents and children and frowned. Then he motioned impatiently for the next child in line.

It was a boy, cappuccino-skinned, with black wavy hair and

chestnut-colored eyes. He looked foreign to Walt... maybe Middle-Eastern... maybe Italian... maybe Spanish. Walt wasn't very good at geography. The youngster approached Walt with a confident stride and stood directly in front of him.

"So what do you want?" Walt had already dropped the jolly, "Ho-Ho-Ho... and what can Santa bring you this Christmas?" He was a less-than-merry Santa for sure. But the boy seemed unintimidated.

"I don't want anything," the boy stated simply with a twinge of an accent.

"Well, you stood in line for an hour to talk to Santa... you must want something." Walt judged the boy to be about eight years old... the age many kids outgrew belief in Santa. He had talked to his share of smart-alecs who just wanted to make a mockery of Santa Claus. Walter figured he was about to be the butt of some disrespectful joke.

"No, I don't want anything," the boy repeated calmly and stared at Walt again.

"Do you think you've been bad and Santa won't bring anything for you?" Walt was getting frustrated.

"Oh no." The stare was penetrating.

"So... why are you here?" Walt barked. "There are other children waiting."

"I came to ask you Sir Santa, what *you* would like for Christmas." Walter blinked and tilted his head in confusion... it had been years since any child had addressed him as "Sir" and he couldn't remember a single child ever asking him what he wanted for Christmas. Walt was a little taken-off-guard. This boy was different. But time was passing and the line was getting longer by the minute.

"I don't want anything," Walt retorted, "and if that's all you wanted to say, just turn and smile at the camera and Miss Military, over there will show you the way out.

"Okay." The boy gave a big grin, reached out to shake Walt's hand and then as an after-thought said, "Santa Sir, do you know how sheep in Mexico say, "Merry Christmas?" Without waiting for Walt to answer he said, "Fleece Navidad!" He threw back his head, laughed and left.

Walt watched him join a man who, he guessed was his father. "Strange boy," Walt thought to himself as the two disappeared down a busy aisle. He turned his attention to the next cranky toddler, but for the rest of the day, he couldn't get that boy and his haunting question out of his mind.

December 3rd. A week had passed, along with several hundred gift-wanting children. Walter prepared himself for a second hectic holiday weekend and gave a reluctant signal to the toy soldiers to let the first child approach. In his mind he was crossing off each day. He couldn't wait until he could hang up the red coat for good. The trouble was, he wasn't sure what he would do next... he had no family, no job and no close friends. He missed Millie. She was always there when he got home. She was always singing Christmas carols and smiling. He hadn't realized just how much her peaceful presence meant to him, until it wasn't there anymore.

Walter shook himself back to the present and turned to face the first "brat" as he often mentally labelled the children lined up by the rail. By lunchtime he had been told that he really should go on a diet. Another sassy kid warned him that his use of reindeer for his sleigh was animal cruelty and he should be arrested. A bossy ten year old ordered him to not forget to bring batteries along this year. And yet another

asked Walt to bring him a pair of pliers so he could pull out all his teeth, so the tooth fairy would bring him a lot of money.

By late afternoon Walt was weary and longing for quitting time. For a brief moment, he propped his elbow on the arm of the throne and rubbed bushy eyebrows. When he looked up, he was looking straight into a chestnut gaze.

"It's you again," Walt stated. "So, ho-ho-ho... did you finally think what you would like Santa to bring you this year?"

"Oh, I don't want anything," the boy replied. "I came back to ask you Santa Sir, what *you* would like for Christmas."

This kid was irritating. "Nothing... I don't want anything..."



and furthermore I'm the one who brings the presents each Christmas... you know... the sleigh, the reindeer, the sliding down the chimney... it's my job and I'm good at it and ... what's your name anyway?"

"Ori."

"Okay Ori... I don't know what you really want, coming here like this... *you're* not Santa Claus. I am... so smile for the camera and get going!"

Ori flashed a smile at the camera, but turned back to Walt. "Santa Sir, do you know where snowmen keep their money? In a snowbank!" He slapped his leg and laughed heartily, then grabbed Walt's gloved hand with both of his, shook it solidly, and rejoined his waiting father.

Walter motioned for the next child, but his focus lingered on Ori as his black head faded from view. "I don't get him," Walter muttered under his breath, "Strange kid!" But as he greeted the next child, he realized he was feeling a little less mad, but unexplainably, a little more sad.

Friday, December 10 arrived. For Walt this was the halfway mark of the Christmas season. He was eager to be on the home stretch. Over the last couple of weeks, he had added more strange requests to his collection. One child had handed him a paper with ten long web addresses, so Santa could just order those items on-line and have them shipped directly to the child's address. Another told him to text her dad because he could forward Santa her entire list. And another boy, trying to be helpful to Santa, gave Walt the specific model number of a Droid phone and informed him it was available at the Verizon store at the mall.

"Oh my! Santa has hit the age of technology!" Walt lamented. It made him extra eager to be done with the whole business.

Just before his supper break, Walt saw the boy approach-

ing. Outwardly he rolled his eyes, but he had secretly hoped the boy would come.

"Master Ori... you're back *again!*" Walter greeted him gruffly. "By the way... I'm curious... what's your nationality? I mean, were you born in the United States?"

"Oh no Santa Sir... I was born in Italy. But I live here now. And what is your nationality?"

"I'm Santa Claus... I don't really have a nationality," Walt retorted.

"Oh, but you do," Ori announced. "You're North POLISH!" Ori giggled loudly. Walt was too used to being a grouchy Santa to join in Ori's laughter.

"Very funny," he growled. "I hope you've finally decided what you want me to bring you for Christmas."

Ori just stared at the old man for a moment. "I don't want anything, Sir Santa. I have so much already. What do *you* want for Christmas?" The boy's tone was almost pleading.

"Ori... you're a nice enough kid, but this is getting old..." Walt paused and then was surprised to hear himself mumble, "You can't give me what I want anyway!" His thoughts had suddenly turned to Millie and how much he missed her... and his daughter and how he had driven her away with his neglect. But then he could have kicked himself. Why had he blurted out such a sentimental thing to this meddlesome young whipper snapper? "Look, I don't know why you keep coming back... I think you just need to tell your father over there to stop wasting his time and mine."

Familiar with the routine, the boy smiled for the camera. Then he reached for Walt's hand and squeezed it tightly. "Good-bye Santa Sir! I hope some day you will tell me what you want for Christmas! I will pray and ask Jesus to help you."

Then he skipped down the exit ramp.

"Oh great... a religious kid!" Walter muttered. He frowned as Ori and his dad disappeared into the crowds. But suddenly he remembered Millie and her prayers and he didn't want to admit it, but deep down he knew he longed for both.

All week the boy kept coming to Walter's mind. His persistent question dominated Walt's thoughts... "What *did* he want?" He had spent almost an entire lifetime resenting the foolish wishes of others. But at the same time he had feverishly pursued what he wanted, only to end up now feeling very empty. "What *did* he want?"

When the next Friday, December 17 arrived, Walt thought he was ready for Ori. As children filed through his North Pole castle, he kept glancing over their shoulders, waiting for the khaki-skinned boy. He wasn't going to let this kid get to him... he would keep the upper hand. He mentally prepared the grilling he would give the child.

But Ori didn't come and when it was time for Walter to take a Santa supper break, he delayed as long as possible, hoping the child would appear. He hurried through his meal and back to his post, for the first time in his long Christmas career, anxious to return to work. But still Ori didn't come. Walt was bitterly disappointed.

Then five minutes before mall closing, a panting, stocking-capped Ori came running towards Walt. Snow flakes clung to his long eyelashes. His father, huffing and puffing, stopped at the gate of the castle to await his son.

"Oh Santa Sir," Ori stopped to catch his breath, "I was almost too late. I had a program practice at church. But now I am here!" The chestnut eyes bored into Walt's.

“Yes, I can see you are, Ori, and before you tell me again, I already know you don’t want anything for Christmas, so I won’t ask you. But today I have some other questions for you... “Do you know what fear of Santa Claus is called?” Walt tried to sound intimidating. Ori looked puzzled for a moment then his mouth curled in a grin. “Yes, Santa Sir... that would be *Claustrophobia!*”

Walter was impressed. “How about this one... What do you call Santa if he goes down a lit chimney?”

Ori didn’t miss a beat. “Krisp Kringle!” This time he chuckled.

Walt was enjoying pulling from his accumulated collection of Santa jokes and he figured if he could keep firing questions, Ori might be side-tracked from his usual question. “So, what do reindeer have that no other animals have?”

“Oh, Santa Sir... that is easy... Baby reindeer!”

“How do you know all these?” Walt asked.

“I google Santa jokes on the internet.” Walter should have figured... technology. Then before he could launch another riddle, Ori interjected. “I cannot stay any longer. My father said it is late and I need to get home. But please Santa Sir... Jesus told me I should ask you again, What *do* you want for Christmas? Everybody tells Santa what *they* want... I wish someone would give Santa what *he* wants for a change.”

“Sorry Buddy,” Walter replied. “I don’t have an answer for you.” Then, seeing Ori’s face fall, he continued with sudden tenderness... “but thanks for asking! Run along now!” Walt reached out his hand to Ori who shook it respectfully, posed briefly for the camera and hurried off to his waiting father.

Walter Nicholas put up the “Santa will be back at 10 AM sign,” said goodnight to the toy soldiers who waved merrily at him, and trudged to the parking lot. He had lied to the boy. He did have an answer to that question, but he didn’t want to admit it to himself, let alone a peculiar kid.

Chapter Three

When Friday, December 24 arrived, Walter was sad. He had thought he would be ecstatic about his last day as Santa Claus, but he was actually feeling downright depressed. At least this job gave him something to do. After today, he would have no purpose. And in spite of the thousands of children he had interacted with, he realized that he had been a big fake all along. He hadn’t really cared about them, but now that he was about to lose them all forever, he suddenly wanted to hang onto them. All day Walter clung to each child a little longer than normal, feeling that as each one passed from his presence, he was losing more of himself.

Being Christmas Eve, his shift would end at 5 o’clock... so Santa would have time to get to the North Pole to load his sleigh... or that’s the explanation the mall management put on the sign at the castle entrance.

Walt wanted to see Ori, but was doubtful the boy would come. He would probably be enjoying Christmas Eve festivities with his family. And Walt certainly couldn’t blame him for giving up on such an uncooperative Scrooge of a Santa.

But, at the stroke of five, Walt almost jumped off his throne! The final child of his career walking towards him... a smiling little guy with wavy black hair and chestnut eyes.

“Ori! I am SO glad to see you! Ho! Ho! Ho! Can I bring you

something for Christmas? I’ll be loading my sleigh in a few hours you know!”

“Oh Santa Sir... I don’t want anything... except...” Walter leaned in. “Except... I want to know what *you* want!”

Walter lowered his eyes. He couldn’t face the chestnut-gaze but he had to be honest with this child. “What I want, no one can give me Ori. What do I want? I want my wife Millie back! I want my life to count for something more than a big fat paycheck, a nice house and car! I want to know what it is to love and be loved!” A tear ran down Santa’s rouged cheek into his silver beard.

Ori stepped closer and held out a crookedly-folded paper. “Please Sir Santa... my parents said I could invite you to our house tonight. This is the address. We will eat at 6:30. My mother makes delicious food from Italy! Later we will go to church. I will sing in the choir. Please come Sir Santa... please!”

Ori threw his arms around Walt and gave the old man a big hug. He tucked the invitation paper into the patch pocket on the side of Walt’s red coat. And with that the boy waved to the cameraman and ran off.

The toy soldiers put up the “Santa’s gone to the North Pole... See you next year!” sign. Walter said a muffled, “Merry Christmas” to the helpers and watched them hurry off into the crowds, no doubt on their way to family events. But Walter just stayed sitting, head down, wiping stray tears from his eyes.

What’s green, covered in tinsel and goes “ribbet, ribbet”?

Walt didn’t want to go home... what was there to go home to? Reluctantly he removed his Santa cap and stuffed it in his pocket. And as he did, he felt Ori’s invitation.

Walter pulled it out and unfolded it. It was obviously printed by the boy himself. Walter read, “Please Sir Santa... I do want something for Christmas. I want to see you again. Please come to our house tonight at 6:30 PM. I do not want you to be late! 444 Holly Lane.” And it was signed, “Your friend, Ori.” A P.S. followed... “What’s green, covered in tinsel and goes, ‘ribbet, ribbet?’ Give up? A mistle-TOAD!”

Walter Nicholas laughed out loud and suddenly he knew precisely what he wanted to do. “After years of making promises I’ve known I could never keep... I can finally make one child’s wish come true!” But he would have to hurry. Walt became a Santa on a mission. He headed to a sports store and bought a baseball and glove, stopped at the toy store for a model airplane kit, the bookstore for a book of jokes for kids, and then, realizing he should also pick up something for Ori’s parents, he selected a plaid cashmere scarf for the dad. He considered getting Ori’s mother a scarf as well, but then out of the corner of his eye, he spied the music box store. He rushed over and there in the window was a glistening snow globe containing an intricately-carved nativity scene, complete with shepherds, angels, Mary, Joseph and of course baby Jesus. The clerk said it was the only one they had. Walter cradled the fragile piece and then cautiously wound the gold key on the base. “Joy to the world, the Lord is come, let earth receive her King.” The melody and words were ingrained in his brain from years of background carols played at the mall, and the many

years of hearing his dear Millie sing.

Walt looked out the door of the shop and fixed his attention on his Santa throne, now empty at the end of the corridor. Millie had once told him that he had never truly put Jesus on the throne of his life. She had been right. Walter had made himself king and he realized now it had been a very costly mistake.

“Lord, forgive me,” he whispered, clutching the Holy Family in his hands. “Jesus, please give this sinner a second chance!”

Paying quickly for the treasure, he made one more stop at the gift-wrapping station and dropped an extra-big donation for them to wrap the presents in record time. Walter looked at his watch. He had completed all the shopping in one hour. He strode to the exit. He would make it to Ori’s house by 6:30!

But as the automatic doors slid open, Walter groaned. He hadn’t realized it had started to snow... the asphalt was already coated. Traffic would be crawling. He wouldn’t make it on time! “Lord, I know I don’t deserve a Christmas miracle... but maybe You could help me out!”

Determined to fly, if necessary, Walter strode towards his car. He passed the city bus shelter without a glance at the crowd huddled beneath its roof. And suddenly through the wintry night he heard a familiar voice.

“Sir Santa! Sir Santa!”

Walter stopped so quickly, his boots almost skidded out from under him. He turned to see Ori running towards him, arms open wide. Walter dropped his shopping bags and wrapped his Santa arms around the boy in a joyous hug.

“Ori... I was just on my way to your house. I wanted to give you what you wanted, but I thought I would be too late.”

“And we missed our bus, so I thought I would miss you too!”

“Well, we can go together in my car!” Walter was almost giddy with happiness. “Where is your father?”

Ori turned and pointed towards the stable-shaped shelter and two figures stepped from the shadows into the snow-speckled light of the street lamp. The first one, Walt recognized immediately as Ori’s dad and took a step towards him, hand outstretched for a formal introduction but then stopped abruptly.

Because stepping hesitantly from behind her husband was a young woman with a red, white and blue painted face. Now minus plastic pinocchio nose, red curly wig and black furry hat, she looked completely different. Brown wavy hair spilled over her snow-covered shoulders. A sweet smile, so much like one he remembered, was illuminated by the moonlight and tears glistened with snowflakes on her cheeks. Walt stared in disbelief.

“Karyn! Karyn... Is it really you?” He thought he must be dreaming.

“Yes, Daddy... it’s me!” And she ran to him and buried her head on his thickly-padded shoulder.

Ori was hopping up and down with excitement. He bent over, scooped up mitten-fulls of snow and tossed them jubilantly into the night air. “It’s even better than we prayed for! Jesus gave us the best Christmas ever! But... I’m really freezing! And I’m really hungry too!”

“So what are we doing standing out here in this blizzard?” Walt exclaimed. “There’s my car and I believe we’re all headed the same place. Then we have some catching up to do!”

Ori and his dad climbed into the back of Walter’s sedan

and Karyn slid into the front beside her father. As they drove slowly through the snow-covered streets, intermixed with laughter and tears, Karyn’s story unfolded.

“Daddy, I’m sorry for tricking you... but I wasn’t sure you would want to see me again, considering the way I left when Mom died. I always resented how busy you were with your work and I decided I didn’t need you in my life. So I accepted an offer for a job in Italy. That’s where I met Nico. We married and then Ori came along and just a few months ago, we moved back here. Ori kept begging me to tell him about his grandpa and I realized that I never really knew much about you. When I was growing up I had always wanted so badly for you to enter my world, but never considered that I could have chosen to enter yours. So I applied for the toy soldier job at the North Pole.”

“And I told Mommy I always wondered why nobody asks Saint Nicholas what he wants and so we got the idea that I could ask you myself!”

Two hours later a very happy family, now stuffed with incredibly delicious ravioli and cannoli’s gathered in front of the Christmas tree. Walter, still in his red Santa jacket, drew his cap from his pocket and fit it triumphantly on his white head. He stood up and turned to face the trio of loved ones snuggled on the sofa.

“Karyn... can you ever forgive me for being so consumed with *me* that I failed to see the treasure I had in you? You are so like your mother. I believe her many prayers for me were answered tonight. Nico... thank you for loving my daughter and grandson and for making room in your heart for a sour old Santa. And Ori...” Walter choked up... “I don’t deserve such an amazing grandchild. Thanks for not giving up on me!”

Then Walter presented three beautifully-wrapped packages to Ori.

“But Santa Sir... I mean Grandpa!” Ori corrected himself. “I told you I don’t want anything for Christmas!” But he tore off the paper and was clearly delighted with each gift... especially the joke book. Nico expressed great appreciation for the scarf and, winding it around his neck with a dramatic flourish, posed for a smile-filled picture with his newly-acquired father-in-law. Then Karyn gingerly loosened the tape on her package, folded back the foil paper and reached into the box. She lifted the exquisite globe and held it up to the light. The silvery snow shimmered in the glow of the tree lights. She carefully wound the key and the lovely carol began playing.

Karyn sighed. “Dad... I believe the Lord Jesus has truly come and given us a second chance... starting tonight!”

“You’re right Karyn... I know He has!”

Walter Nicholas playfully ruffled Ori’s hair and with the merriest twinkle in his own chestnut-colored eyes, proclaimed with certainty... “And that’s *exactly what Santa wanted!*”



December 2017

Dear Friends,

Many of you are like me... we look forward to the December newsletter, just waiting to read Sharon’s latest Christmas story! We need wait no longer... here it is! Throughout this entire season, may we celebrate in meaningful ways the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ! Then, as 2018 begins, let’s invite Him to continue working out His amazing plan and purpose in and through us!

It’s been a good year. We’re through our “transition,” having sold the Brickerville property while continuing to enjoy use of the same building... actually, the very same counseling offices which we’ve used for over 35 years. The organization which purchased the 33-acre property shares their building with ALM, while offering services which complement without overlapping ALM’s ministry. I think it’s what is called a win-win!

Finally, let me say quite sincerely that we are very grateful for your prayers and financial support through this past year. Just today I rejoiced over a turnaround – a couple had been separated after years of turmoil and distance; God has worked a real change of heart in both husband and wife! We will continue encouraging and coaching as they now replace years of negative habits with life-giving expressions to each other!

A strong financial year-end is needed to wrap up 2017 “in the black.” It’s what I’m praying for. We’ve tried to be very alert this year, looking for ways to reduce operating costs while not hindering our effectiveness in ministry. We deeply appreciate your gifts!

Merry Christmas!

John Charles (for Sharon and the rest at ALM)

If you want your gift to be recorded in 2017, the check must be dated AND the envelope must be postmarked by 12/31/2017 (This is an IRS requirement). If you prefer, you can provide a financial gift using your debit or credit card. Just go to our website ***AbundantLivingMinistries.org*** and click on “Donate”. The PayPal feature is very easy to use and will accept your debit as well as, VISA, MasterCard and Discover.

Merry Christmas from all of us at ALM

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