Stretching toward the love of Christ
November 10, 2019

It has been twenty-one years since my husband died. As I look back at the last two decades of my life, I am reminded of the many miracles in my life both large and small (can there be "small miracles"?). Buying houses and cars twice, dealing with an aging, ailing parent and then navigating the probate system following her death, getting news that my youngest son was nearly killed during an assault and the aftermath of his long recovery, and then having six surgeries in less than four years myself. Whew! Then there are all the little inconveniences of the day-to-day living without a partner. The basement that floods when a Nor'Easter comes through, trim that needs painting, light fixtures that don't work, Sunday afternoons alone, carting heavy things down from the attic, the list goes on and on. But through it all God has been with me! He promises to give special care to the widow and the orphan. I'm both, so I am twice blessed! God has sent "angles" (some who attend this church) every time there was a need that I couldn't handle alone. He has raised me up from the depth of despair and set me in high places to keep me safe and secure. He is my rock. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of death, thou are with me. Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me". Then comes the best part: "Thou prepares a table before me." Life is a banquet when you know the Lord. I see His goodness towards me every day. Do I have down day? Sure. But I KNOW that I am loved and that's the best feeling in the world.

For me, the mission of our church that sends a message of love into the community is our Thrift Shop. We welcome people every day to find refuge from the weather, have their clothing needs met, be greeted with a smile, and accepted for who they are. Then we give thousands of dollars away to other missions and programs to validate who they are and to extend our own ministry on the SouthSide of Bethlehem. It is a powerful message of God's love.

Connie Gilbert