

December 2018

The story is told of thousands of orphans who were left without homes and families following extensive bombing raids in Europe during World War II. These children who survived were gathered up and taken to camps where they were cared for by Allied Forces personnel. They had plenty to eat during the day and were now safe from the trauma, death and destruction that had once surrounded them.

Still, they could not sleep. The thought of once again being left homeless and without food gripped them with uncertainty and terror.

It was suggested that each of the children be given a slice of bread to hold once they were put to bed at night. Amazingly, that worked. Just knowing that they had something in hand was enough to overcome their fears and provide the comfort necessary for a good night's rest.

Decades later and an ocean away, that same scenario is being played out today. Many of our retired Southern Baptist ministers and widows face similar uncertainties as to how they will pay their bills, if they'll get their medicines or what they will eat. It can be a traumatic time that takes its toll in lots of ways, including being unable to sleep well.

I'm reminded of this fact on almost a daily basis but one of my most vivid memories is from a visit to Idell Austin. She and her husband Jessie served small churches in North Carolina for 36 years. As Idell told about their ministry journey and the financial challenges she was facing after Jessie's death in his late sixties, she also let me know why Mission:Dignity was so important.

I've gone to bed hungry because I want my bills paid. I've got to pay for my medicine. I can't even describe how much you all have helped me. I just say, "Lord, bless them. I've got something to eat tonight and it wasn't just a piece of toast."

Psalms 3:24 has a promise for those who live righteous lives: "...when you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet."

That's a tremendous assurance that comes from a godly life. But it's also the result of the care and compassion of people like you whose Mission:Dignity gifts provide daily bread and so much more to God's faithful ministers and their spouses each month.

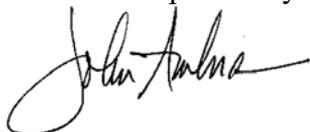
As you have the opportunity to gather with family or friends during the holidays, you'll likely pause before your meal to "say grace" — to express thanks for an abundance of food and for God's hand of blessing on your life. But this is also a great time of year to "do grace" and be a blessing to someone else.

You have done that through your Mission:Dignity gift this month and we are so very grateful. Every dollar you've shared will find its way directly to a retired minister or his widow so they can buy groceries, pay for utilities this winter and get much-needed life-saving prescriptions — plus so much more.

Thank you for being Christ's hands extended to Idell Austin and nearly 1,800 others so they can have rest for today and food for tomorrow. Just knowing that people like you are there for them through Mission:Dignity gives these precious servants a much-needed slice of comfort, assurance, dignity — and grace.

After all, grace isn't just something we say before eating, it's something we share so that others can eat.

Grace and peace to you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Ambra". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "A".

John Ambra
Director of Development