



# St. Elizabeth Mission Society

A Ministry of the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, NY

Christmas 2018

## Bringing God's Light to Others

*"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."  
— John 8:12*

*"When a crystal is touched or struck by the rays of the sun, it gives forth brilliant sparks of light. When the man of faith is touched by the light of God's grace, he too must give forth sparks of light in his good words and deeds, and so bring God's light to others."  
— Saint Anthony of Padua, Sermon #274*

Dear Friend,

Peace and blessings this Christmas season! We chose the above verse from John when creating our annual Mission Society Christmas card. Heath's handwritten letter (see sidebar) came the following week. A week after that, I was in a class for Franciscan leadership and saw the St. Anthony quote. This is what I love about our work—we never know where the Holy Spirit will lead us! To me, all three of these things fit together perfectly.

Part of the St. Elizabeth Mission Society's ministry is to provide grants to programs in which Franciscan Sisters and their Associates are engaged. These people, who have such compassion for those who are poor, shine with the "light of life" because our Lord is working through them. They bring this light to countless others—people who are hungry, homeless, sick, outcast, alone and in need of hope.

In July 2017, the Mission Society awarded a \$5,000 grant to the Brunswick County Homeless Coalition (BCHC), located in North Carolina. BCHC supports families in their transition from homelessness to a place of security, identity and a sense of belonging. Mission Society funding supported their "Home at Last" program, helping three families move from unstable living situations to permanent residences. Families are required to complete an application for funding for a security deposit, first month's rent and moving expenses.

Rita Canfield, who is a Franciscan Sisters of Allegany Associate, applied for the grant. She is a founding board member of BCHC and serves in numerous capacities within



L-R: Heath; his daughters, Kaitlin and Emily Darlene; and Rita Canfield, FSA Associate and Brunswick County Homeless Coalition founder and volunteer.

### Heath's Story - Home at Last

Two years ago, Heath was losing weight and having trouble keeping food down. After ER and doctor visits, he learned that he had Stage 4 cancer with masses on his kidney, aorta, spleen, large intestine and stomach. The masses were removed, but the healing was long and painful.

"In the meantime, I lost my place and my ride, and my kids were in Pennsylvania with their mother. I was always with my two girls, so I felt very alone," said Heath. "With one of my old friends, I found God again. And when I got my girls back, we went to church as often as we could.

"At one point, we lived with a couple and met their neighbor. She fell in love with my girls and helped me with them in so many ways. She was God-fearing and truthful. After many trials, Rita stepped in and gave me the next big hope. A key to get a life back. I am now back with the mother of my girls and happier than I've been in years."

Mission Society funds enabled Heath and his family to move into a new home by paying for the first month's rent, security deposit and moving expenses.

## Christmas Intentions

*Please remember the following persons and intentions in the Christmas Eve Mass at the St. Elizabeth Motherhouse Chapel in Allegany, NY and in all the Masses celebrated during the Christmas Season.*

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the organization. Rita, along with BCHC's president, Barbara Serafin, is "on-call" one to two weeks every month, responding to calls for assistance for housing, temporary shelter, transportation, medical care, etc. Rita's goal is to "end homelessness," and this program provides a real opportunity to do that for families in Brunswick County, NC.

Rita says that there is no "typical" family in Brunswick County with whom they work. They have worked with people struggling with short-term homelessness or are more long-term transient individuals. They have provided temporary shelter in local motels, funded utility bills, assisted with medications and transportation, and have helped with rent to prevent evictions. Many of their clients are mothers with three or four school-age children, and possibly a disabled husband with a range of medical needs, and unreliable transportation.

A total of three families were helped with the Mission Society's grant for BCHC's "Home at Last" program. One was Heath's family (see sidebar on the other side), and one was the Boldue family. The third one was the Coleman family who moved from Colorado to North Carolina with the promise of a job that did not happen, thus causing them to be homeless. Another family applied for BCHC housing assistance, but they ended up finding housing in another county. I would like to share their story because it is representative of many people who find themselves unexpectedly homeless.

Bonnie, her husband, Stephen, and Bonnie's four children moved to North Carolina in 2016 to be with her parents. Due to a fraudulent person, the money they paid for a rent-to-own home was lost, and they were homeless. After working and living for a year in New York with Stephen's parents, they moved back in with Bonnie's parents. Bonnie's family used their house deposit money to help her parents with some financial struggles. When her parents had to move to more affordable housing, Bonnie's family had to move, too.

**In Bonnie's BCHC application she said,**

*“The reason I think we deserve this grant is for our children.*

*Through the last two years, they have had to move from place to place and school to school. They deserve a nice stable home and their own bedrooms again. During this whole process, we have not heard the kids complain. They deserve to be rewarded for once and recognized for their patience.”*

I ask you to prayerfully consider a gift that will bring hope and comfort to someone's life. Please accept our Christmas card as our gift to you by indicating how many you would like in the form below. On behalf of all the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany, thank you for your mercy for those who are poor. You have helped our Sisters and their partners in ministry bring God's light to those who are poor in Jamaica, Brazil, Bolivia and the United States.

May God bless you and your family with the light of life,

*Laura C. Whitford*

Laura Whitford  
President, St. Elizabeth Mission Society

*“I hope you truly understand how much this means to me and the stability it will bring to the things I hold dear in this world. Thank you.”*

*A Truly Humbled Man,  
Heath*



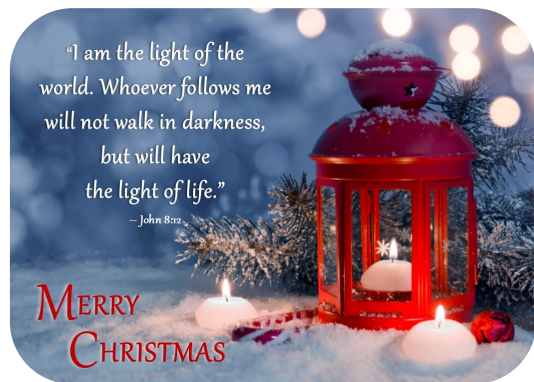
Pictured (L-R) outside Heath's new home: Barbara Serafin, BCHC president; Heath's daughter, Emily Darlene; and Heath.

**2018 Christmas Card**

Give the gift of prayer this Christmas by including your loved ones' intentions in Christmas masses at the Motherhouse Chapel.

**Inside message:**

Let God's light be the light that shines this holiday season and all throughout the year.



**New York Nonprofits Change the World**

**#NYGIVESDAY**

**Tuesday, November 27, 2018**

A day nonprofits across the Empire State will work together to raise awareness, collect donations, and continue changing the world for the better!

To join the movement, go to [www.NYGivesDay.org](http://www.NYGivesDay.org) and search **St. Elizabeth Mission Society**.

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ Christmas cards.

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Donations can also be made anytime on our website, [www.FranciscanHope.org](http://www.FranciscanHope.org)**



**Yes!**

I would like to help the Franciscan Sisters of Allegany reach out to those who are poor in Jamaica, Brazil, Bolivia and the U.S.

- I am enclosing my gift of:  \$200     \$50  
 \$100     \$25  
 \$75     Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to: **St. Elizabeth Mission Society**