



FIRST METHODIST CHURCH of FORT WORTH
FOUNDATION

Wise Gifts

“Give and it will be given to you...

For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Luke 6:38

As we think of gifts this season, we recognize that greatest gift: the gift to us from God of Jesus Christ our Savior. Often, our thoughts of gifts also bring to mind the story of the three Magi, the men who brought offerings to the baby in the manger. The Magi are often popularly referred to as wise men.

We recently heard from one of our wisest men, former Foundation executive director Dr. Lamar Smith. Dr. Smith recalled a bittersweet memory of a series of Christmases beginning when he was ten. We asked him to share his story of giving and receiving with you at this very special time of year.

The Smith family was a large one. Lamar and his six siblings (another came along later) lived with his mom and dad very modestly in Mineola, Texas. Though they were not starving, the family was a humble one. His dad had a car for business, but they didn't own a personal car, nor did they own their home. The year Lamar was 9, his oldest brother Joe Jr. (Jody), having experienced quite a few challenges growing up, decided to join the Navy even before the United States entered World War II. At age 19, Jody's decision to enlist lent a strangeness to the happy holiday that year.

On Christmas morning, the Smith children lined up in their parents' bedroom. The youngest, Dorothy, was first, then Lamar, then Don -- all eighteen months apart. The older children followed the parade into the living room where Lamar's mother had hung her own long stockings at the fireplace. Jody brought up the rear. Each stocking held a precious orange and candy sticks within it. The youngsters also received one present each from Santa Claus. It was Jody's last Christmas at home until after the war.

(By the time Christmas 1945, five of the Smith sons were in the military services.)



Pearl Harbor was attacked two years later, just before Christmas, 1941. The Smith family wished to visit Corpus Christi where Jody was stationed, but they lacked the means for the trip. Lamar's dad was troubled by the situation, so Lamar quickly offered his lawn mowing proceeds of three dollars to his parents to help fund the journey. In all, five family members made the trip. That offer of help from a boy

to his dad reflected a true understanding of what a gift can mean. And the trip was a gift from his family to Jody. Their presence was their present, one they all enjoyed in equal measure.

For Lamar and his siblings, giving and receiving held great meaning. A single orange in their stockings was a precious item. In fact, the scent of an orange would remind Lamar of Christmas for many, many years to come. There were many gifts, in many forms, for this wonderful family.

First Methodist Church of Fort Worth Foundation gifts have arrived over the years in many ways, too, in any number of styles and from lots of different sources. Each one adds to the Foundation endowment, creating income sources that further benefit our Church.

For example, over the past 51 years, donors have contributed homes, oil and gas wells, a fruit orchard in the Rio Grande Valley, \$25 honoraria or memorial, automobiles, artwork, and much, much more. No matter the size, the type, or the source, each gift is so much more than a transaction. Foundation gifts, just as family Christmas gifts, create memories, imbue stories with color and texture, and add to lives that grow in meaning and significance.

Thank you for your gifts ~ beautiful measures of your love, your spirit and your faith. Merry Christmas to you and yours, from everyone at the Foundation.