

# **Hope For Every Tongue, Every Tribe, Every Nation**

**An Original Play Written by Rev. Mary Hendrickson, Lisa Eastman, Kalin Griffin, and Dacey Tidwell**

**First performed on December 6-8, 2012 at Faith Covenant Church in Sumner, WA**

**CAST:**

**ADULT CHOIR**

**CHILDREN'S CHOIR**

**DRUM CORE**

**DANCERS**

**MRS. RUTH GABRIEL AKA "MAMA LUTA"**

**JESSICA (American teenager)**

**HER MOTHER**

**SAKI (Congolese teenager)**

**NICIA (Saki's mother)**

**CONGOLESE PASTOR**

**DOCTOR**

**SHADOW/BACKGROUND ACTORS**

## **PREFACE:**

This is a story about hope. Hope for a single parent family about to be homeless in a small town, and hope for a single parent family in the Congo. The lead character is a retired missionary who narrates and acts throughout the entire play. She reflects on her experiences in the Congo as she tells her story to a teenage girl who doesn't think God cares. The lead character is based off of a real person-former missionary to the Congo, Ruth Hill, "Mama Luta." The play encompasses traditional Christmas Carols and African Carols (Silent Night in Lingala) as well as African drum lines, the message of Hope for the world through the Christmas story and through the response of the hope found in Christ, which moves us to action-to help others. The play uses multi-media to get its message across (shadow acting, video, music, drama, lighting, beautiful African Costumes). Opportunities to sponsor children in the Congo were available in the church narthex/displays were set up and volunteers available to assist during the original performance of this play.

## **OPENING SCENE**

(Risers for choir are at top center of stage, scrim with "American scenes" on stage left, scrim with "Congolese scenes" on stage right – cube pre-set for fire later on in script. Lights come up to a neutral setting and CHOIR and CAST enter center stage. All come in singing SONG ONE – "Joy to the World")

(SONG ONE transitions into matching with AFRICAN DRUM melodies which becomes SONG TWO – "Jambo Rafiki")

(At last verse of SONG TWO choreography has cast go into a "swirl pattern" with CHILDREN'S CHOIR, and MRS. GABRIEL in the CENTER. Those not in SCENE ONE filter offstage, ADULT CHOIR up to risers, and leads to "HOME SETS" while CHILDREN and Mrs. Gabriel are center stage)

(Lights go dark center stage and stage left and stage right slowly have lights rise as words are spoken overhead)

**MRS. GABRIEL:** One thing I've learned in life is that God knows what's best for me. If I stick with Him, nothing can ever really get me. Sometimes life gives us challenges. Sometimes they're big. Sometimes they're small. Sometimes they come at ya all at once in bunches, and sometimes they're just plain overwhelming. But God is there, giving us a hope and a future, because he knows the plans he has for us (summary of Jeremiah 29:11). He's got us in the palm of His mighty hand, even if we aren't sure we believe in Him one bit. That's love.

(During voice over leads are doing ordinary things through life, but some are sad and lead audience to believe something is wrong with both – acted out behind the scrims – acting defined later)

(Voice speaks again)

**MRS. GABRIEL:** I teach Sunday school classes every Sunday, never missed a one. Since my Bob passed on, being with the kids really lifts my spirits. And mercy, I'll tell you, no one knows what these kids are going to say or do one Sunday to the next. (soft smile) it's why I love em'.

(Lights on stage left and stage right are low, Leads are frozen)

## SCENE 2

(Lights out homesets)

(Lights up on center stage)

(SONG THREE – “Angels We Have Heard On High” (Third Day version of song) is sung by CHILDREN’S CHOIR as they dance around a bit, some craziness ensues. As song ends, they all plop down on the floor. MRS. GABRIEL stands there addressing them as their Sunday School teacher)

MRS. GABRIEL: Ok, ok, calm down and take a seat. I know you’re all itchin’ for Christmas to be here, what with presents under the tree and all, but I’ve got a story to tell ya. It’s about one of the greatest presents of all time.

TAYLOR: (raises hand and speaks before being pointed to) Like a bicycle?

MRS. GABRIEL: (grinning) Even better. It’s about a little baby boy that was a gift to every single one of us in one single, solitary night. (CHILDREN lean in intently) God sent us his son, Jesus, wrapped in swaddlin’ clothes and lying in a manger. Just a little bitty, baby who was going to save the whole world. We didn’t even deserve the gift of Jesus, but we got it anyway. We needed Jesus, all of us, and God always gives the best presents, and this was His finest.

(SARAH waves hand frantically.)

MRS. GABRIEL: Yes, Sarah?

SARAH: (excited to share her question) Like when my parents gave me my birthday present last month even though I wasn’t really nice to my little sister?

MRS. GABRIEL: (chuckles) I suppose so sweetie. And since God gave us the wonderful present of Jesus, we should share that love we were given by helping those in need. In John 13: 35 it says, “By this everyone will know you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” God always calls us to love our neighbors. Do any of you have an idea for what our service project should be this Christmas that could help those around us?

TAYLOR: Presents?

KIDS: (all together or kinda mixed) Yea! (they all start discussing ideas and little voices pop out ideas like the following) A bike!...dollies!...candy!...a hat!...once I got hot wheels for Christmas... we had candy canes and it stuck to my sister’s hair...(etc).

MRS. GABRIEL: (calming them all down) Ok, How about this? What do you guys think of a giving tree? It’s where people who need presents for themselves or their families write it on tags that get put on a tree, and then you and your families, and other people in the church take the tags, buy what is written on them and then deliver them to those who need them?

KIDS: Yeah! We could get presents for everybody!

MRS. GABRIEL: Who would also be up for raising money to make sure every gift is given?

KIDS: (raising hands) I will! Me. Me!

MRS. GABRIEL: (smiling) Well then...I think we have a plan!

(Music starts and they sing SONG FOUR – “O Come All Ye Faithful” (song is from recording artist Yancy-and is a very upbeat contemporary version) as shadow montage happens of tree being set up, tags being removed, buying/wrapping gifts, coins falling into jars and cans, and lastly coat being wrapped and handed to MRS. GABRIEL)

(As SONG FOUR fades, lights focus on center)

### SCENE 3

(CENTER MRS. GABRIEL now stands, holding the wrapped gift in her hands)

MRS. GABRIEL: Goodness, gracious! Those kids sure worked hard making sure all those gifts got given out. It wears a soul out, I tell ya! (looking up) Sometimes I wonder if I'm too old for this, Lord (grinning and still looking up) Lord, Bless the little children for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these...and please give me the strength to keep up, if You don't mind? (chuckles and looks at audience) Things are pretty quiet around here sometimes when I'm just by my lonesome, but you can bet I talk the Lord's ear off every chance I get...(chuckles and looks down at gift in her hand) Well, I better get this last one delivered. Wouldn't want a present not to make it by Christmas Eve, hm? So let's see, which house is this one for? (looks at tag and smiles) Well what do you know? That new family on Elm Street that just moved in a couple weeks ago. Brought em' a welcome to the neighborhood basket, but with the giving tree my attention was a bit tied up. Didn't say much more than hello. This time though, I can have a proper conversation...and I'll just grab a plate of these cookies too (grabs a plate of cookies and heads out...looks up as she does) Lord knows there ain't no better way to love your neighbor than with cookies. (chuckles and smiles)

### SCENE 4

(MRS GABRIEL picks up gift and exits behind scrim stage right. Center lights out. Lights come up stage right. JESSICA rocking in front of scrim with teddy bear clutched in her arms staring off into space a bit. MRS GABRIEL comes to the front door and knocks. MOTHER moves past her daughter with concerned look in her direction, but then opens the door with a tentative word)

MOTHER: Oh, Mrs. Gabriel. Hello! How are you? Come in, come in. (ML is ushered in and she smiles)

MRS. GABRIEL: Good evenin' darlin'. I just came by to drop off a gift for your daughter, and some cookies if you don't at all mind?

MOTHER: Oh, how kind! Jessica, Mrs. Gabriel has a gift for you honey.

JESSICA: (sullen with a stubborn air, still holding her teddy bear and not looking at either of them) No, thank you.

MOTHER: Jessica! (a little surprised at the abruptness) Please come over here and thank Mrs Gabriel for the gift she brought you.

(JESSICA doesn't move, MOTHER sighs and looks apologetically to MRS GABRIEL, but she smiles gently and shrugs)

MRS. GABRIEL: It's all right. I'll just set it here. (Sets gift close at hand and turns to the mother) Maybe, we can just have a little visit, if you don't mind?

MOTHER: (she smiles and then nods) I'll make us some coffee. (exits)

(JESSICA doesn't turn around MRS GABRIEL turns and sits down a bit away but next to her and says gently, holding out the tray of cookies)

MRS. GABRIEL: Would you like one? The little ones in my Sunday School class helped make them. I think they may have added an extra chocolate chip or two than what the recipe called for.

(JESSICA looks at ML, the cookies and then takes one, gently biting it.)

JESSICA: They're good. Thanks.

MRS. GABRIEL: You're welcome. Have you had that bear for some time?

JESSICA: (looks at the teddy bear in her hands) I've...um, had him for a while I guess. He was the only one mom said we could keep when we moved.

MRS. GABRIEL: Well it's wonderful to keep things close from when you were younger. (smiles encouragingly)

JESSICA: (looks down at the ground and seems far away) It's...we had a garage sale. To try to make up rent money. It didn't work. Mom tried hard it just...didn't work. (pause then shakes off the reverie) Thank you for the gift, but...you can give it to someone who needs it because I don't. We're fine. (she pauses and looks up at her with tears in eyes) Mom and I are just fine...even if God doesn't care and won't help.

MRS. GABRIEL: (she absently pushes the plate of cookies closer and gently says) Sometimes we can't always see Him, but I believe He is always there helping us and giving us hope.

JESSICA: (almost interrupts) He's not helping! We're doing it all on our own. God isn't there! Maybe you think so, but God doesn't care about my mom and me, and well...I doubt He'll ever do anything to show us kindness or hope! He never would have let Dad leave...and I would still have my.and...(she seems to be getting very upset and babbling all together and then she says)...He's not here.

MRS. GABRIEL: (smiles sadly) I once heard someone else say that same thing...and you and she are not that different.

## SCENE 5

(CUE for next scene to start. Lights stage right dim to as MRS GABRIEL speaks last line and then pantomimed as though she is telling the story and lights come up center on DRUM CORE) (Drumming is quiet at first and we hear MRS. GABRIEL'S voice)

MRS. GABRIEL: Life isn't always easy or fair, and the Lord had just handed me a challenge. This little gal had a sadness in her eyes and needed to see good in the world, and apparently God wanted me to help. I could feel Him pushin' and proddin' me to tell the story of another time where life didn't seem to be fair or kind. You see, when my Bob was alive, he and I had our heart's firmly planted in Africa. The village of Monzaya in the Democratic Republic of Congo to be precise...

## SCENE 6

(DRUMS get louder and lights go to full)

(CHOIR is on risers and this starts the African piece - SONG FIVE - "African Alleluia" - DRUM CORE/DANCERS - Covenant Kids Congo video runs here)

(MRS. GAREIL and JESSICA still pantomime storytelling and listening to the story as stage left scrim is backlit. NICIA does domestic tasks as they sing and drum. SAKI is there as well as baby. Scene ends with NICIA singing lullaby to her baby (SONG SIX - "Congo Lullaby")

(We hear MRS. GABRIEL'S voice again)

MRS. GABRIEL: We had been working at the village's small church running what was a tiny school where the local children could come for a few Bible lessons and a small, yet nutritious meal. We had hoped to get a missionary doctor assigned to the area, but it hadn't been easy. With signs of a civil war loomin' on the horizon we didn't even know if we would be able to stay and help much longer.

(Drumming takes on ominous tone)

(As MRS. GABRIEL speaks there is a shadow story behind the scrim of MRS. GABRIEL and SAKI getting to know one another - playing together, with her siblings as well, etc)

(Lights to 1/2 on stage right as MRS. GABRIEL continues)

MRS. GABRIEL: Saki came to our school when she was able to. She often had to help her family as all children in the area did and it took some time for me to get to know her and her brothers. She was a genuine sweetheart and her brothers were just as kind. I soon loved them as my own, but then that civil war came and it had no regard for kindness or sweetness...

(Stage right lights down to 1/2)

(Scrim stage left turns red as shadow pictures show scenes of chaos. People running, being chased, punching and fighting. NICIA runs in front of scrim as she looks around in terror trying to protect the baby she holds in her arms and find the rest of her family)

(SAKI runs in through the hut door calling to her mother in a panicked voice)

SAKI: Mama! Mama!

(NICIA grabs the girl and holds her tight as she relays the following information)

SAKI: We were just workin'...all of us and...and then (sobs interrupt portions of the words she speaks). Daddy was there..and then a man came up and...all of them Mama! Daddy tried to protect us, but...and then they were trying to take all us somewhere and I was so frightened I ran! I'm sorry Mama! I ran and I don't know where anyone else is! (she speaks fast and frightened and NICIA tries to not show how she is slowly breaking down inside at the news. SAKI whispers gently as she clings to mother the last words) They're all gone Mama... (cling to one another and freeze)

## SCENE 7

(Lights up 1/2 stage right where MRS. GABRIEL and JESSICA are sitting. MOTHER has come to sit and listen, being a silent support during the rest of the story)

MRS. GABRIEL: The war was devastating. So many were displaced and unable to avoid the chaos and violence. Families were torn apart. Not only had poverty been eating away at those in the area, but the biggest killer of all, malaria, spread by mosquitos moved in. Saki and her mother had to move often to avoid the fighting. A mother and her young daughter and baby boy were just not safe by themselves. They scavenged for food and moved on when they had to...sometimes not staying in one place for more than a few days.

JESSICA: (almost thinking to herself, yet speaking aloud) Saki must have had a hard time making friends if she had to move so much (pause) and being hungry is no fun either.

MRS. GABRIEL: I'll be honest darlin'...things were pretty bad for Saki and her mother. And then the unthinkable happened.

(Lights out)

## SCENE 8

(NICIA screams in anguish)

(Stage left scrim up and shadow story of baby being held by NICIAR and child goes limp. SAKI tries to comfort mother as they slump to the floor)

(Scrim fades to 1/2 lights)

(Stage right scrim up to 1/2 as MRS. GABRIEL continues)

MRS. GABRIEL: (she looks sad, and JESSICA has moved closer to her mother, almost snuggled up next to her pulls away when she hears the scream) It was those darn mosquitos. They had brought malaria and were a plague for us all...and poor baby Oudry was not able to fight it off.

JESSICA: (gasps) After everything else, the baby too...(she pauses angry) No, it can't be. That isn't fair! How could God do that to them!?

MRS. GABRIEL: God didn't darlin'. Violence and war took her husband and older sons, and a tiny insect took her baby boy.

JESSICA: (angry) It isn't fair.

MRS. GABRIEL: (patient) Oh darlin'...I know. But I also know that God was with her. He always keeps us next to His heart and comforts us when the world looks bleak and so so unfair...

(SONG SEVEN – “Close to His Heart” – sung by soloist goes here about God being with you) (During the song MRS GABRIEL goes behind scrim and to Congo set.)

## SCENE 9

MRS. GABRIEL: (in voice over above) The war moved on from the village and we were able to return to those we had known and loved. Saki and Nicia were able to return as well and when I heard their story my heart broke, but I was so glad that they were now safe with us again.

(Scrim lights up stage left. MRS. GABRIEL hugs SAKI as she tells her in pantomiming what has happened. MRS. GABRIEL'S story continues)

MRS. GABRIEL: (still voice over) I was so happy to have them back in my life, but Saki had changed. She was sad and nervous and desperately protective and worried for her mother. Ever since her baby boy's passing Nicia had been deeply rooted in her loss, unable to focus on much else around her.

(NICIA comes through the hut door and sits on the floor without focusing on anything specific in front of the scrim)

MRS. GABRIEL: Saki begged me to come and visit her mother and I agreed.

(STAGE RIGHT LIGHTS go off and MRS. GABREL and SAKI enter through the hut door)

## SCENE 10

MRS. GABRIEL: Merry Christmas Nicia. Saki was over visiting me at the church and helped me to make this wreath.

(ML holds up a wreath made of woven grasses)

MRS. GABRIEL: These are a tradition where I come from. (NICIA does not react) We thought it would look pretty on your door.

(NICIA still does not react and SAKI shrugs and looks apologetically at ML)

(ML gently sets the wreath down)

MRS. GABRIEL: I'll just set it here and if you'd like to use it, you can. I just wanted to tell you how happy I am to have you and Saki near again. I was so worried about you. God has given me a Christmas gift in the form of the both of you.

(NICIA speaks though still looks down or out in space)

NICIA: I am no gift. Christmas is nothing and life holds nothing to expect.

(SAKI moves to her mother)

SAKI: Mama, you have me. Am I nothing?

NICIA: Oh child, you are so young. When I look at life I do not see an end or a beginning... nothing to strive for. Your life and mine hold no hope of moving past this suffering...and change is not meant for us.

MRS. GABRIEL: Oh dear sister, I know I cannot understand or grasp a hint of the pain you feel, but Jesus, when we trust in Him is able to share our pain and bring hope when we need it so desperately. In the Psalms His book tells us that when we hope in Him, He is our strength and our shield.

SAKI: Yes, Mama. That's what Pastor (name) says. Jesus is our hope.

(NICIA still stares off into space and absently reaches for SAKI's hand and holds it tight, shaking her head sadly)

(In the distance music is heard. May start from the Narthex and get closer as the scene progresses. It arrives on stage as the actors go out the door)

SAKI: Mama let's go to church this morning. Mama Luta (nodding toward MRS. GABRIEL) tells me there will be singing and candles...please mama?

(NICIA looks at her child but says nothing)

SAKI: Do you hear that Mama? (she is getting excited and peers outside) It's the lanterns! Mama come and see with me! (she still has her mother's hand and pulls on her arm) Please Mama! Everyone seems to be out there. We'll miss it, please come with me Mama?

(Repeated until NICIA goes out the door with her. They join the lantern processional which proceeds off left then around the front of the stage and up the ramp. Lights off in stage left as actors exit the hut and stand center stage as the processional meets them there)

(Lights up full center stage. We see the village mission church. CHOIR is in center stage already singing. This includes the ADULT and CHILDREN'S CHOIR as well as the DRUM CORE groups and are joined by those who are in the lantern processional. The pastor is directing the choir and there is clapping and singing – SONG EIGHT – “Silent Night-Lingala”)

(The ACTORS move away from the main processional and SAKI joins the CHILDREN'S CHOIR singing and swinging a lantern. MRS. GABRIEL and NICIA go to stage right and sit on cubes to watch the service unfold. After the singing is over the PASTOR comes out to the very center stage and addresses the congregation and the audience)

(Lights on 1/2 on stage right as MRS. GABRIEL and NICIA watch the sermon and the following events)

(PASTOR gives his sermon)

PASTOR: Sermon on Psalm 33:20-22 – transitions to announcement about COVENANT KIDS CONGO POWERED BY WORLD VISION)

## SCENE 11

(Lights on MRS. GABRIEL and NICIA and up on JESSICA)

NICIA: Why would someone so far away want to do these things for us? I don't understand.

JESSICA: Helping complete strangers? Why?

(MRS. GABRIEL speaks to both – both pay attention to her – as though stories are intermingling)

MRS. GABRIEL: That's how Jesus works in people's hearts darlin'. He tells us to honor one another over ourselves and help those in need. We should never stop doing what the Lord calls us to do and to be patient in affliction, faithful in our prayer and joyful in hope and to share with God's people who are in need. God loves us and we respond because we can trust in Him and His unfailing love through the kindness of others.

JESSICA/NICIA: It is quite strange...

SAKI: (comes running over and hugs her happily) It's wonderful Mama! Just what we need! Merry Christmas Mama!

(All lights fade out)

## SCENE 12

(MRS. GABRIEL voice is heard overhead)

MRS. GABRIEL: Time continued to move on and our days were full of new things. Saki and Nicia worked hard to get a new garden going, the tiny school was able to grow thanks to the kindness of those sponsoring children in the area and even a small medical clinic was built. And praise the Lord, we were able to finally get that doctor we'd been waiting for all this time.

He/She was busy that next year. As more refugees returned to their homes, malaria was still waiting on the other side to snatch up those unaware. So many children were still undernourished despite all the progress, and when they would get infected, many were not able to fight off the disease.

(Lights up 1/2 stage right)

MRS. GABRIEL: (speaking to JESSICA) One day Saki woke up feeling unwell. She was hot, feverish, and at times was not sure exactly where she was.

JESSICA: (voice of disbelief, softly) Oh no...

MRS. GABRIEL: Nicia rushed her to the clinic as fast as she was able.

(Scrim up stage left – shadow story plays out of DOCTOR examining SAKI. A stethoscope is held to her chest, laying her on a bed, covering her with a cloth up to her waist and putting a rag on her forehead. NICIA stands by wringing her hands and pacing back and forth)

JESSICA: (a little louder than before) Not again...

(Shadow story continues with DOCTOR praying over SAKI. Then both DOCTOR and NICIA come in through the hut door and story continues in front of the scrim)

NICIA: I can't lose her. She is the last of my life. I just know she is going and I can do nothing. (sobbing, clinging to DOCTOR)

DOCTOR: You have to have hope. She is stable right now. Be at peace and pray that God will watch over her, for that is what He does for His children.

(SONG NINE – “His Love” (duet) – DOCTOR sings about God's love to NICIA)

(DOCTOR and NICIA end up singing the song together)

DOCTOR: We should pray for your daughter and that God will watch over her this night and provide a blessing upon her.

CONGOLESE MOTHER: I have suffered much, and I will try this one last thing to save the only child I now call my own.

DOCTOR: (starts the prayer) Lord, we call upon your mercy, your guidance and your love. We ask for your healing your help and your strength.

NICIA: Lord (spoken tentatively) I do not know what to say, but only that she is all I have left. My only child now. Please spare her...please (overcome with speechlessness for the moment).

DOCTOR: (continues after laying a comforting hand on NICIA'S shoulder) We wait for you and your hope. You are our help and our shield. We rejoice with hearts because we can trust in You always. May Your unfailing love rest upon us, O Lord, as we put our trust and our faith in you...to spare this small child's life in this world of great chaos. Be with our hearts and give us hope. Amen.

(Scene freezes)

MRS. GABRIEL: (from stage right) The sponsorship program had not only helped us get a medical clinic, and a doctor...but medicines as well. Including the medicine that poor Saki desperately needed.

(Stage left – shadow story of SAKI rising from bed – sitting up – and clinging to her mother who hugs her tightly)

(Both exit the scrim and come in front of the scrim)

NICIA: Oh Bless You Lord ! I did not know what to say or ask, but You have given me the desires of my heart! My child is well! My child is well!

SAKI: I told you He's real Mama.

NICIA: I know now, child. I know. And I will set Him that gives me strength inside my heart so I will never lose Him.

(Lights go down to 1/2 stage left then fade as dialogue begins again on stage right)

### SCENE 13

JESSICA: Just a simple bit of medicine and she was better!? That's...it's a miracle! I was so worried her mom would lose her just like all the others. What a relief!

MRS. GABRIEL: (smiling) Yes, things got even better as time went on. With more money from more sponsorships of children in the community, more children were able to go to school, get better food for themselves and their families, and also mosquito nets started to arrive. They prevented the mosquitos from staying alive to spread the illness of malaria, and after some time the sickness faded somewhat. In fact, people came in letting those in the village know they could sign up for a program which would benefit the entire community, bring wells, food, healthcare, and eventually sustainability to the land. It would be a long process, but those from millions of miles away would be providing help to the community and they could develop relationships with them through letters and time.

(Lights off stage right. Lights on stage left)

(SAKI runs in holding an envelope and a piece of paper unfolded in her other hand. Her NICIA is already in the room doing her daily tasks)

SAKI: (excitement is evident in her eyes) MAMA! Guess what? You remember the program we signed up for? This letter is for me Mama! I have a sponsor! They sent me a letter so quickly the people told me! They want to sponsor me! To help us Mama! Listen! (reading)

Dear Saki,

I am very honored to be a help to you and your mother. I wanted to let you know that you and I share the same birthday, and that is why I chose to be your sponsor. I have never had

anyone to share my birthday with, and I am glad it is you. I hope to hear from you soon and to learn more about your mother and what life is like where you live. Here things are rainy often, but I know some would be envious of that when those around here might be sick of it.

(SAKI smiles)

SAKI: (aside) Just like here Mama!!

Please write back and let me know anything and everything about you, if you'd like to. I would love to read anything you send. Inside is a picture of me and a few stickers. I hope you like them. May God bless you and keep you safe.

Josie Proctor, Sumner, Washington USA. (Lights out)

## SCENE 14

AMERICAN CHILD: She got a sponsor?! That's so awesome! I bet her mom was excited!

MRS. GABRIEL: She did, and her mother was very grateful that someone so far away would care enough about her and the daughter she loved to send letters and donations to help not only them, but their community. And you see darlin', that is why the story is not all that different between you and she. Sometimes there is hope where we least expect it.

JESSICA: Well, I mean, God did wonderful things for them. Big, unexpected miracles and kindness from strangers, but He hasn't done anything like that for... (ML raises an eyebrow as a child may just realize something as she looks to the package still wrapped and finishes the sentence as she goes over to it)... me.

MRS. GABRIEL: Sometimes we all need a little help. Why don't you open it and see what the Lord has blessed you with?

JESSICA: (opens the package and pulls out the coat, joy filling her face) A coat! I needed a coat! How did you...?

MRS. GABRIEL: (smiles and winks) Not me child...God. He always provides...we just need to have hope.

(Scrims dim and center light comes up on ADULT AND CHILDREN'S CHOIR. CHOIR sings SONG TEN – "African Noel – Joy to the World-He Reigns" (medley). The ACTORS join in from their respective sets and the song closes out the story.)