



## **Magic at the Rummage Sale**

By Barbara J. Simon

Last year, when I stepped through the lower-level church doors into Fellowship Hall where the yearly Spring Rummage sale was, I paused for a moment to scan the room. It's always fun to shop this local sale, knowing I might find some unexpected treasure and that the sale supports the church women's work at home and beyond our congregation. So many tables of intriguing items, arranged so attractively – where to start?

Before leaving home, I went through my belongings to get a sense of what might be the most practical, useful items I should bring home with me. There is always room for a few more cozy baskets to contain collections of office supplies, hair ornaments, or large pinecones found on my walks in a nearby park. I'd keep an eye out for those.

My toaster oven wasn't working well, and honestly, I preferred the silver Vintage 1940s two-slice, pop-up toaster of my childhood. The style is still popular all these years later - maybe there was a working replica there.

And a lady can never have too many pairs of vintage clip earrings. One of my church friends oversaw the jewelry table and I'd agreed to spend some time there with her helping the shoppers find their favorites. So that's where I started – catching up on the news about her daughters' recent dance performances and trying to help the customers find what they wanted.

One woman was snapping lots of close-up photos of the earrings, emailing them to her mother, and simultaneously talking to her on her phone. "Do you like this mom? Or these – they would look great with your hair. What about that dark blue blouse, don't you need a pair that goes with that? Tell me what you want - I'll buy anything you'd like." After ending the long call, she gathered a large collection to purchase, and I said, "That's so nice of you to bring your mom along with you today via mobile phone." She replied, "We lost my dad a few weeks ago. She's not ready to leave the house yet. I'm doing anything I can think of to let her know we all care about her."

Tears sprang to my eyes. I wasn't expecting that. In a flash, she was comforting me instead of her mother. "He had a good life, and we are all so grateful for our time with him." We packed up the earrings - she handed over some cash, including an extra donation, and headed out.

My friend went for lunch at the little outdoor café that was set up in the church courtyard - complete with an entertaining waiter who would do a little dance when you tucked a tip in his back pocket. When she came back, she took over the booth and I started wandering through the many display tables.

In the back hallway was a long row of tall bookshelves. A small purple hardbacked book titled "What Cats Teach Us..." leaped off the shelf into my hand. With a photo series of darling felines, and life advice like, "Look forward to someone you love coming home" and "Never underestimate the power of a purr" – it quickly became my first must-have choice.

I also found a red ceramic basket-shaped bowl, with air flowing through the weaving, to keep fruit together and fresh in my kitchen. Recently, I found a similar one in white, on sale in a neighborhood store, and it sits near my front door - but it had since collected my winter gloves, and now that seemed the best place for them. So, a second one in the kitchen (this one only for fruit!) had become necessary. And they almost looked like a matched set – I might re-purpose them near each other in some future home décor.

There was a one-of-a-kind novelty duck-shaped basket that would be perfect for my nail polish products: cotton pads, polish remover, various emery boards, and 3 tiny bottles of base coat/ peach color/ and protective shimmering topcoat. It would be eye-catching, stored up on a display shelf most of the time. These products would not get easily separated and could make a quick move to the table by my comfy chair for nail polish application – while I watched YouTube videos as the polish dried. I felt lucky to be the first one to recognize how useful this quirky container would be.

On the back table with electronic items, I actually found my toaster. Just like the one my parents had. There was an electrical extension cord that I could test it on, and yes – it worked! It was beginning to feel like this was my lucky day, or there was simply a flow of good energy at this Rummage Sale.

So, with the book, duck basket, ceramic bowl, and toaster in hand – I considered it a successful trip. Making one more circuit around the tables, I saw a huge collection of coffee mugs with various novelty graphics. I drink morning coffee, as well as the occasional afternoon tea, and have as many mugs in my home as I need. But a familiar image caught my peripheral vision, so I looked back at the table – and gasped. There was Elphaba, with her black hat and crooked smile, with Glinda in white, whispering in her ear, and the distinctive Broadway logo for "Wicked" printed down the mug handle. This was worth more to me than everything else I was carrying – it's my favorite musical. And for just a few coins.

As I was juggling all these items at once, trying to get my wallet out at the cashier's table, several church women whom I knew caught up with me, each with a different mug in their hand. "Here!" they called. "Would you like these too?" They had noticed my choice and my excitement so picked out other similar mugs from the table - displaying characters from Broadway, movies, or Disney, and offered them to me. I was a little embarrassed but also touched – they wanted everyone to enjoy their purchases as much as I did. I said gratefully, "No, really, this is the only one I want. But thank you so much for caring."

I purchased my treasures and flew home.