

## The Shoes

There they were again - those shoes. They weren't all that special - just an old pair of tap shoes complete with grosgrain ribbon ties and no taps. I noticed them each Sunday morning, flying over the pedals of the organ as she so lovingly played those glorious old hymns and anthems. The shoes just seemed so out of place - black patent leather, so old and abused they were more gray with wide white cracks. She was always so elegant - so "put-together" - that the shoes just didn't look right.

She'd come in each Sunday morning, dressed for worship - gorgeous dresses, shoes and accessories matching perfectly. And then, just before worship began, out they came. She'd slip off her beautiful dress shoes and slip on the others - the ones that were faded and cracked. She'd tie them tight and then slide across the organ bench. Then they'd create magic - she and the shoes. The music that flowed from that organ seemed to come straight from the heart of God. The tinkling treble notes and the rumbling bass notes combined to create a tapestry of sound that enveloped us all and pulled us into the presence and adoration of God.

One Sunday morning I asked her about the shoes. "Why don't you replace them?" Her reply was simple - "They've still got a lot of songs left in them."

The next Sunday, I was surprised to see shiny, black shoes on the pedals - no faded, black patent leather, no white cracks. These shoes seemed to glisten as they glided over the pedals.

After church, I approached her. "You got new shoes," I said. She chuckled and said, "No, I told you they had lots of songs left in them. I just gave them a new coat." She lifted her feet from beneath the organ and as I looked closer, I saw the old shoes shining back at me, resplendent in a new layer of shiny, black electrical tape. They were completely covered in strips of tape. They looked shiny and new again.

Over the years, I watched those shoes. Week after week, they helped lead us in worship, seldom seen by anyone but those in the choir. They worked hard. I'd watch them fade and crack as months went by and then, suddenly, one Sunday, there they'd be - shiny and bright again. A new layer of tape!

I don't know how long this went on. I've been told she wore them for 40 years or more. I seriously doubt that there was much of the original leather left. It was probably just layers and layers of tape, all the way down.

The time did come when they were finally retired. A friend gifted her with a new pair that fit the requirements: comfortable enough to wear week after week; flexible enough to feel the pedals through the soles; and strong enough to withstand the hours of abuse they'd take each week as she practiced.

But those old shoes remain a symbol to me. They're what we should be - strong and resilient, ever working for the Lord. We might fade and crack and feel like giving up, but then with prayer and a little "tape" from the Lord, we're renewed and ready to sing again. Each of us always has a "lot more songs" in us. We just have to let them out.

