

Arvada
United Methodist Church

Nov 14, 2010

Signs of a Future

by Rusty Butler

Scripture Genesis 19: 12-26

I was at a meeting this week, a couple of pastors were there, they are from churches in the northwest Metro area. They were lamenting the fact that their church buildings just cost so much to maintain and they were basically used just on Sunday's. During the week there were hardly any members or people from the community walking into the church. One pastor even told our District Superintendent they were thinking about starting a church without a building that they just couldn't afford the overhead.

It made me stop and think. Every week at our staff meeting we go over the church calendar for the coming two weeks. We do that so that we are all on the same page about what's going to happen, try to head off scheduling problems before they become crisis, at least that's what we try to do.

Now, I know some of you may not come to the church except on Sundays. You may or may not have some idea of what happens at church on any given weekday. It may even look to some people that nothing much goes on with the ministers or with the rest of the staff except to get ready for Sunday. I got a note on Friday from someone who has not come to church for a number of years and they requested that either Valerie or I go to their house to offer some Spiritual Guidance, not once or maybe twice, but weekly. I'm not opposed to that but weekly? Well we'll see about that...

You may not know that:

- Every day, we have our preschool kids and parents here from 9-noon, right now there are 88 children enrolled from 78 different families.
- Every day during the week Meals on Wheels volunteers organize approximately 40 meals and get them ready to be delivered.
- Every day we house the Interchurch Arms Emergency Services office and each week ARMS volunteers come and meet with people in need of assistance. Last year, ARMS gave almost \$200,000 in housing/rent/utility assistance to help people from Arvada. Last year

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- More than 5,000 people were helped by Interchurch Arms. Hundreds of those people come through our doors each year.
- Each week, we have two different counselors coming in to use space in the church, one of the counselors works with domestic abuse cases, the other does general counseling work.
- Each week we have English as Second Language students and teachers using a number of our classrooms. Currently we have 35 tutors and 65 students coming each week. Over the past 12 years over 650 students from 54 different nations have learned English at AUMC. Right now, 40 students are on the waiting list for a tutor.
- Every week there is a Toastmasters group who meet here, One of our members is vying to be an International Director for Toastmasters...
- Every Week after our bible study, between 10 and twenty stroke victims and caregivers gather in the chapel for a Stroke Recovery group.
- Every month there is a monthly Alzheimer's care group who meet here,
- Every month there is a group who gathers here called New Garments Always who buy and collect new garments and then give those garments to various helping agencies across the metro area.
- Not only do we serve our community in those ways but we also host
- Every week, winterguard and color guard drill teams use the fellowship center to practice, every week men's basketball teams come and use the center to play their games, every month the Jefferson County Band and Swing bands come and practice, every week lite fitness groups and yoga groups come and do their thing,
- We host Senior Game Days, and 50+ Suppers,
- I could go on...should I?
- We have reiki being done in the Reiki room and spiritual journey groups meeting, we host a monthly labyrinth walk, and over a year's time we have dozens of one time special occurrences like the PEO rummage sale, and the Christian educators meeting, the annual Helping Hearts and Hands luncheon, model train convention, we have an aquarium group meet and sell fish to each other, we've

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become the place where numbers of immigrants from Russia do their receptions after their weddings, the high schools Awest and Arvada

- High School use our facilities to take honors tests and ACT tests here. Of course, the nursery is used many nights to take care of children for parents who are in the various activities.
- We host movies for the congregation and the community, next week we'll have Food Inc. shown here.
- We host the annual big fourth of July event.
- At least once a month during the first week we have different people helping to cart food that is collected to three different food banks every month, we host the Arvada Peace Commission, help with Habitat for Humanity, Urban Peak the Teen Shelter and last year we gave almost \$200,000 to help support the United Methodist church in the Rocky Mountain conference and in wider missions, including helping our sister church Jefferson Ave UMC.

We do that and in addition, we hold dozens of classes of ours which meet through the year, hundreds of meetings, we provide a place where the musical groups practice, where the choir and bell choir do their rehearsals, UMW circles, care team and visitation teams meet.

And even after all listing all that, I'm sure I've missed loads of events that happen, have failed to talk about groups that meet, and who are connected to AUMC.

AUMC is not the perfect church, like Robert Frost once wrote, the woods are lovely dark and deep and we have miles to go before we sleep. We have miles to go to be the church we want to be...but even saying that, I submit to you that if the question were asked of us, "what would the community miss, if the church weren't here?" We can give an important answer.

I don't know about you, but I keep hearing different version of a story on the news about people believing that their children here in America will not have as good a life as they had, and the implication is that the years behind us were the best years. In the same way, there are churches who believe

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their glory days were in the past. Just like there are people who believe their glory days were in the past.

And the question it seems to me is, do people come here because it reminds them of their past, or because it helps them find a future? Whatever we are about, it must be that we are can help people navigate their way through these sometimes tricky, difficult waters.

Mrs. Lot looked back...wanted to go back...that is where her children grew, where her friends were, her history...don't you understand how difficult it is not to look back to those days...that's what the story was trying to tell people...it still is telling us. When you look back...you may become like a chunk of salt, a preservative.

But the messengers of God said to Lot, Move forward, lest ye be consumed.

What you do today with this consideration of your pledge you help us all to move forward...to be vital and to make a difference in lives, hundreds and hundreds of lives. I'm asking you to do that...let's do it together, building on what we have and moving forward into a good future...

Your giving helps us to be this. Your giving helps us to change lives for the better, to help families and individuals have some hope for a better today and a better tomorrow.