

*Arvada*  
United Methodist Church

May 3, 2009

*Part of the Play!*

Rev. Rusty Butler

Acts 8:26-40

It sounded like a good idea at the time, a couple of months ago. We would go downtown as a group to help feed those hungry teenagers at Urban Peak. I figured I'd go with a group from here and then get to see what Urban Peak looked like. We've been providing those teenagers a meal a month for over 10 years. But I'd never been down there. So I thought why not. Our Social Concerns group was going, I thought why not, so I volunteered. But then yesterday came around, and you know it was cold and rainy...and it would have been easier just to stay at home with a good book or watching a movie. But I felt guilty and didn't want to back out so I went with nine other people from our church.

We made a taco bar for those young hungry people. I don't think you could call it a real culinary feast but we were told that that was their favorite meal... "well any meal with meat," someone said. And by the time it was done there was just a few corn chips and some shredded lettuce left...they ate everything.

I have to tell you I didn't tax myself down there. There were enough of us there that it was probably in everybody's interest that I didn't get in the way. But after it was done I felt good about being a part of it and I noticed that those young people weren't all that different from the young people who come to church here and who are part of the youth group on Sunday nights.

It all reminded me of any number of different activities through the years. About how instead of watching what happened, I got sucked into actually taking part...and once I did it made a difference.

Would you pray with me?

O God may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts help move us down this road of faith. Amen.

Now this morning, we have visitors from Rocky Ford United Methodist Church with us. They attended a conference here in Denver on Friday and Saturday...and slept over at our church. It is good to be able to host groups like that and we do that for a handful of groups each year.

Some of you know that Rocky Ford is the church that Lynn and I were at for about six years. I don't know how many of you grew up in small towns. But it takes some doing for an outsider to become part of the small town life, you didn't grow up there...you didn't go to school there, you are an outsider really. But people in Rocky Ford were so kind to us...they wanted to do their best...to make us feel like we were a part of the community.

The first year I was in Rocky Ford, Lynn and I were invited to go out and watch some cattle being branded. I'd never seen that done and so we went out to this ranch, and we watched all the cattle being herded into the pens, guys on horseback and everything and I thought hey this is exciting. We're getting up close and personal and then Vernon John, a

303 421 5135 6750 Carr Street 80004 [arvadaumc.org](http://arvadaumc.org)

*A church where science, religion and life are compatible*

*Arvada*  
United Methodist Church

member of the church who owned the cattle, he hollered over to me and said well come on in here. And I thought to myself, I'm going to get a front row seat to this play.

But he had another idea in mind and asked if I wanted to give shots, hold the cattle down or do the branding. Somehow I got this red hot branding iron. I sensed myself being drawn into this play.

I wasn't very good at branding those cattle, but I got an appreciation for what it takes to do that, and how good a cold beer tastes after you get done with an afternoon of branding cattle.

I suspect my adventures or misadventures are similar to yours. You spend a good 20-25 years watching other people taking care of their babies and feeding them and cleaning them, and teaching them and then one day you've got one of your own. And oh man....it is different! You cannot just watch from afar. You are in it.

You see your father or your mother running their business, dealing with all the things they dealt with and then one fine day you decide to go it on your own and form your own business. And I bet that is a wakeup call. And so it goes.

Life has this way of continuing to invite you into something deeper, something adventurous, giving you a chance to become something more than what you were...and you can accept the invitation or like a lot of folks you can just kind of steer away.

This Philip, the person in the story in Acts was a finance person. He was one of seven people who were appointed by the disciples of Jesus to make sure the Greek speaking Jewish widows and orphans were getting their fair share of the offerings being given to the church. The newly formed church was trying to help out the widows and the children, but you know how the story goes, a lot of the money was being funneled to the widows who spoke Aramaic, or Hebrew.

Can you imagine it? Philip has a finance background, he's no evangelist. The story says he was traveling and he meets another finance person on the road. Maybe they started talking about accounting, I don't know...but then Philip noticed what he was reading, some scripture. And that started them down a whole other road.

I imagine both Philip and the Eunuch probably were just minding their own business but circumstances fell just right and they became engaged with each other. Significance, part of the play.

There is a question that the Eunuch asks Phillip, "How can I understand unless someone guides me?"

Here is what I think we can get from this story, not only to be open to the adventure of faith but, that we do not come to faith alone.

303 421 5135 6750 Carr Street 80004 arvadaumc.org

*A church where science, religion and life are compatible*

*Arvada*  
United Methodist Church

That seems so simple doesn't it? We do not come to faith alone. We learn from others and try to pass what we learn on to others. Last week, we had a two hour administrative council meeting. I was in another class during the first half of the meeting. When I came back they were in the midst of a discussion, passionate. I just sat and listened. Sometimes that's what you pay me to do...listen.

I thought to myself, these people are passionate about this...smart too. They are trying to help each other see through it.

Wednesday, a Bible study at noon, Friday a 7:00 a.m. morning class filled with people just sitting around drinking coffee and talking about Einstein and religion.

And Friday night and Saturday, The Dance of Life, 30 people coming together to be with each other to learn something new.

Whatever this story of Philip and the Eunuch says to us, part of it must be that we do not do it alone. Faith is a team sport. We grow together.

We are part of the play and we are in it together for better or worse. But right now just now...it's for the better. Amen.