

The Sharing Org

Ministry to the Adult Foster Care Community

MARCH, 2015

MINISTRY MOMENT:

After the service, he introduced me to his friend. He was rubbing her cold hand to warm it up. She is 93; he is 81. She is wheelchair bound, and he loves walking the courtyard outside. He introduced her as his favorite person and proceeded to tell me what a special person she was.

As he was telling me all of this, my mind was thinking that this is yet another fleeting romance in the nursing care home between lonely people. (Please don't be too harsh on me for thinking this. I'm regularly asked to perform marriages for people who have never made me regret that I said "no.")

As I sat there with him talking, it dawned on me this was not a romance at all but a relationship of kindred spirits. It was not romantic but utilitarian - and yet there was a love that went beyond a simple utilitarian relationship. As he rubbed her hand he genuinely desired for her to feel better. Not at all like some of the other relationships that I have witnessed. These two loved each other as friends and they comforted each other as family.

I remember asking a friend of mine who was a missionary in Macedonia what one of the greatest cultural differences was there. She told me that she was a little shocked to see how affectionate the people were in Macedonia. How men and women would show their genuine affections toward their friends of the same gender in ways that would make us Americans uneasy. I have always remembered her description of people who showed affection without any romantic assertions what-so-ever. And while I appreciated her description, I suspect that I was just too American to see any affection that isn't based on romantic intent.

This whole episode reminds me of how important human touch is to loving our neighbor as ourselves.

When I lived in New Jersey by myself, one of the ladies at church realized that I was far away from my family and she gave me a genuine mom-hug. It was amazing how that hug affected me. Another time I remember sitting with an agitated high-risk patient at a hospital when the nurse's aide simply started rubbing the patient's shin and he miraculously calmed at her touch. My nephew, who is in the NICU after having been born more than 3 months premature, gets daily skin-to-skin cuddles (Kangaroo Care) with his parents as a way to boost his health. Again, when Jesus was confronted with the leprous man in Mark 1, he didn't just heal him but compassionately touched the man. I suspect that no one had touched him in such a long time that he was surprised by it, and Marks tells us he was instantly healed. My grandmother attends services with me at four of the homes. She gives each person there a kiss on their head and graciously touches each one. She shows the love of Jesus in the simplest of ways, her touch.

I am reminded of how important the touch of another human being is to us all, and I think it is doubly important to those who really only know the medicinal touch of caregivers any more. As the gentleman sat rubbing warmth into the hand of his friend, I was warmed to see the genuine concern that only the honest human touch can express.

~John

PRAYER LETTER:

In March I am privileged to spend a night with my fellow ministers at our annual North American Elders Conference in Grand Rapids. Usually it is a meeting of a few dozen American pastors and their spouses and church leaders, but this year our ministry cooperation is flying in pastors from the many churches in our network around the world. I'm looking forward to this. Please pray for me as I will be driving out early March 10th and then home later that next evening. It will be a whirlwind trip, but I am so looking forward to time to hear of God's doings around the world.

Kayla is a volunteer who provides worship services in three homes. I am so very thankful for her faithfulness. Please be in prayer for her as she is expecting another baby and trying to juggle her family, her job, her health, and her ministry to the residents. She loves her mission, but we all know that things can get crazy during a pregnancy.

Please pray for our volunteer Sheri as she travels some 1.5 hours round trip to visit one of the homes every other week to read aloud to the ladies. She's not just reading but is intentional about making sure that the ladies are challenged by the truth of the Gospel.

Please pray for our volunteer Terry who has

traveled out-of-state to visit a relative over the next month. Please pray for traveling mercies and grace for her journey.

And please pray for Virginia (my grandma) as she pushes herself to visit a couple of the homes with me each week. Even though she sometimes feels like staying home and lounging, she loves being a blessing to the residents.

Of course, please pray for me as I attempt to share a message of hope that really does lose much in the translation of human words. Please pray that the Holy Spirit of God does a work that only He can do in the lives of the residents. While I accomplish what it is that I think I can do, I fully recognize that I am not as necessary as I sometimes think I am. Please pray that I would keep it real.

Defying logic in His service,



John Rock