

Another word December 8, 2020

To our friends and family of First Christian Church

It's hard to believe, but here we are in the second week of Advent. We've even had our first measureable snow fall. But even with all the unsettling events going on around us, we can take comfort and joy in knowing God cares for us.

We received a thank you note from Kingston of Ashland. It was signed by the whole staff of the activities department, showing their appreciation to us for caring so deeply for their residents. It's amazing how many lives are touched by the smallest act of kindness. We also received a thank you from The Head Start Program of Ashland. (More about that later in this letter.) The cards collected this week will be delivered to Kingston.

Our scriptures for this Sunday are: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11, and John 1:6-8, 19-28. "I am the voice..." how about you?

As we enter into a time of prayer, please remember Sandy Bally facing surgery next week. David Franklin, surgery today. Arlene Whitmer, Carol Cochie, Joyce Bradley, David and Lana Bell, Jim and Wanda Bateson and Susie Carmen's family, and other families affected by the virus as well as other health issues.

May we pray. O Holy and gracious God, in a time when our lives should be filled with joy and love, we find ourselves facing uncertainties, pain, fears, and loss. We know and accept that these are a part of living. There are times when we feel overwhelmed and wonder how we will ever again see the light of day. But then You, knowing our needs send

us a smile, a note of encouragement, even someone to take our burden from us. You are always with us, guiding us through the challenges of life, and we are truly grateful. We ask that you open our eyes and heart for opportunities that we may, through your love and our actions, encourage others to know you better. We ask this in Jesus' most precious name. Amen.

We've all heard the phrase "If the shoe fits, wear it!" It's a not so subtle way of saying; you made this mess of your life, live with it. However, I would like to look at it in a little more positive light.

A number of years ago, a friend of mine, who helped people in depressed regions of eastern Kentucky, called me with a simple request. A man he knew there had secured a job interview. One thing needed was a pair of black dress shoes. They were needed not only for the interview, but for the job itself, if hired. Being from coal country, dress shoes are quite scarce.

At that time, I was working with men's shelters and thrift stores around the state and could secure most any item needed, especially a pair of used dress shoes. However, the request was for a pair of black lace up shoes, (so far so good) in size 15. Size 12 and even 13's are fairly common, but 15's are next to impossible to find. After checking with our resources, I called my friend and said it would be easier if we just ordered a brand new pair and shared the cost.

Two weeks earlier, I had made an appointment with a men's shelter in Youngstown for the following day. As I was talking with the administrator, their manager stopped by to say hello. I asked her if she had a pair of men's black shoes in size 15. Her eyes opened wide and said with a laugh, "are you serious?" then walked on down the hall. Ten

minutes later she was back with a look of amazement on her face. She then handed me a pair of size 15, men's black lace up dress shoes. Her comment to me was, "these just came in 5 minutes ago."

1 Timothy 6: 17-18 says to "not put your hope in wealth, but to put your hope in God, who provides us with everything for our enjoyment." And we are "commanded to do good, be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share." We are to provide for another's physical needs through the love of Christ. Someone had shoes that were not needed any longer. Someone else, 350 miles away needed a pair of shoes. God, in His perfect plan provided for that man's physical needs through the generosity of others.

In this same vein, how about another story of generosity. We just received a thank you note from The Head Start Program about our willingness to help with their Thanksgiving meals. They received so much "extra" food they were able to have a mini food pantry for the families in greatest need. But the best part of her letter was about the turkeys we donated with the extra money you, the church contributed. She was afraid to ask anyone to supply turkeys, and was having sleepless nights worrying because they only had enough money to supply a few. Then along comes FCC with the exact amount to supply enough turkeys for the remaining families. In her words, she wrote, "I feel God used you (FCC) to teach me what charitable giving truly is. Through your generous congregation, I am able to see how good our God is. Abundantly, lavishly, wonderful! - Doing more than I imagined. It was a faith strengthening moment working with you!"

Don't you just love being used by God! To be part of His grand plan and touch others in ways we can sometimes only imagine. This season of

Advent is the perfect time to look around and see who needs help, and then with God's direction, to act. Oh, and by the way. The man had his interview, secured the job and was able again, to provide for his family. The last words I heard from him were, "the shoes fit perfectly; they felt as if I broke them in myself, that they were a part of me." When the shoe fits, well, you know the rest!

In His Peace,

*Rich*