



Week of Compassion



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The Week of Compassion Special Offering is **FEB 16-23, 2014**

Drops in the Bucket: Putting Your Compassion into Action

Rev. Jolin Wilks McElroy serves as Pastor of First Christian Church, Charlotte, NC. She offers this reflection on how the ministry of Week of Compassion has inspired a ministry of generosity in her congregation:



I received an email one day from a man in our neighborhood. Since Dilworth Soup Kitchen began serving meals to folks on the street in our church fellowship hall, our neighbors have felt a need to speak more candidly with us--for good or for ill! The neighborhood surrounding our church is comprised of nice homes, and not everyone has been happy about our ministry to the "least of these."

However, this particular email came from "Carl," someone I knew from officiating at a family wedding, and it was different from all the rest. Carl explained that a member of his family was living on the streets. There had been some kind of falling out with this individual and the rest of the family; they had not seen him in two years or more, but suspected that he was coming to our church for lunch at the Dilworth Soup Kitchen. Carl and his wife were certain that if they came to the soup kitchen as volunteers, they might scare their family member away. It made them feel good to know that the ministry in their neighborhood might be doing something that they couldn't. Carl included a picture of his family member with a note: "If you happen to see him, it would help us to know that he is doing okay and that this church is doing what our family can't do."

I promised to be on the lookout. The very next lunch we served, I was in charge of opening the door. Guess who was in the front of the line! I greeted him as I would anyone else, but quickly

let Carl know that the family member did come and eat with us, that he looked to be relatively healthy, and that he seemed to be among friends.

When we started this ministry, we couldn't have guessed how it would be a blessing. We knew we'd be feeding people who needed food. What we couldn't have imagined were the friends we'd make, the families we'd help, the lives we'd watch, and the victims we'd see the streets claim. We couldn't imagine loving the people who came through our doors and worrying about them on cold winter nights. We didn't know what we were in for, but we knew that Jesus called us to do it. This calling has blessed more people than those in our church or those who come to eat. Carl and his family are a part of God's work here.

Years ago, I heard Johnny Wray preach following one of his trips to Haiti. He was commenting about how we so often look at our efforts to fight poverty as futile by saying "Anything we try to do is just a drop in the bucket!" Sometimes it feels that way. Those we reach, those lives we touch, those people we serve—seem like we're just adding just a few drops of relief to the bucket of the great need in this vast and often dangerous world. But then, from time to time, we're reminded that each drop in the bucket--*every single drop*--is a person, a family, a neighborhood. Ministry happens in ways we never expect. Who would have thought that our soup kitchen would be a blessing to a broken family living in our upscale neighborhood? The answer is simple. God did.

Week of Compassion ministers to people in crisis, often when they are at their most vulnerable, and when they face the most difficult challenges of their lives. On first glance, when we give to this ministry, we think that we're providing blankets for individuals who have lost their homes, or that we're specifically offering clean water for a handful of families in a refugee camp, and that the blessing of the gift ends with the obvious need being addressed. What I have learned is that others are watching, and our gifts sometimes fulfill a deep yearning in those who don't know how to begin fixing what has been broken. Sometimes, all a person needs in order to begin is to receive permission to do so. Sometimes, the momentum for real change in this world begins with the hope provided by someone out there who cares.

What we are doing through our churches and through Week of Compassion reaches far beyond what we can see. The world is watching, and some are marveling that people like you actually care. Your gift is far more than a drop in the bucket. You are one way God is speaking to the pain and suffering in this world.

Thanks be to God!

To put your Compassion into Action, consider partnering with us through your church or by giving online (<https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/1441205>).

SEARCH OPENED FOR WEEK OF COMPASSION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Office of the General Minister and President (OGMP) seeks a dynamic and innovative leader to serve as the Executive Director for Week of Compassion. The Executive Director serves as a member of the OGMP team with primary responsibility to oversee the relief, refugee and development fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). As the main avenue for Disciples disaster response giving, Week of Compassion also supports refugee assistance, sustainable development and humanitarian projects through denominational and ecumenical partnerships around the world.

The full job description including desired qualities is available here

(<http://www.weekofcompassion.org/job-openings/>). Applications will be accepted through March 16, 2014. Questions regarding the Week of Compassion Search may be directed to Dr. William Lee, Search Committee Chair, c/o Beth Sullivan at bsullivan@disciples.org.