

“Celebrating the Blessing of Mission and Outreach Ministry”

Luke 6:31-38
October 13, 2019

Pastor Cathy L Hamblin
Hayward United Methodist Church

Call to Worship Psalm 112:1-6

Praise the LORD! Those who honor the LORD, are truly happy! Their descendants will be strong throughout the land. **The offspring of those who do right will be blessed; wealth and riches will be in their houses.**

Their righteousness stands forever. They shine in the dark for others who do right. **They are merciful, compassionate, and righteous.**

Those who lend generously are good people—as are those who conduct their affairs with justice. **Yes, these sorts of people will never be shaken; the righteous will be remembered forever!**

Prayer of Invocation

Lord, open us to all that you would have us be for you and for others. Breakthrough into our lives and our church with new possibilities. Come, Holy Spirit, Come! Amen.

The Word Luke 6:31-38

“Here is a simple rule of thumb for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for *them*! **If you only love the lovable, do you expect a pat on the back? Run-of-the-mill sinners do that. If you only help those who help you, do you expect a medal? Garden-variety sinners do that. If you only give for what you hope to get out of it, do you think that’s charity? The stingiest of pawnbrokers does that.**

“I tell you, love your enemies. Help and give without expecting a return. You’ll never—I promise—regret it. Live out this God-created identity the way our Father lives toward us, generously and graciously, even when we’re at our worst. Our Father is kind; you be kind. **“Don’t pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. Don’t condemn those who are down; that hardness can boomerang. Be easy on people; you’ll find life a lot easier.**

Give away your life; you’ll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. **Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity.”**

Living the Word

I want to begin today by saying that I have served 7 churches before this one and this one is by far, the most generous with their mission work and giving. It took me about a year to get to know all of the places that mission work was being done, not just by the church but also through the church by individuals. Then it took me the second year to list all of the places we had an outreaching presence in the community and beyond. They are now all listed in the fellowship hall on the bulletin board for you to see.

Each year through our four quarterly Loose Change offerings, that are suggested by members and presented by the Outreach Team, we are able to fill the jar and more to both long distance and local mission opportunities. Do you remember last Christmas the long list of animals we were able to buy for Heifer International? The first quarter of 2019 we filled the jar with change to aid the local Meals on Wheels program.

Second Quarter went to ECHO – buying seeds for the future sustainability of farming practices. We have just finished the third quarter putting our change together for Operation Christmas, which begin their yearly work this week to bring Christmas dinner to 250 families in the Hayward Area. The jar just has the first week of the fourth quarter collections in it so far. IT is going to help us be good neighbors to New Reflections/Pathway to Hope, a Women’s shelter across the road.

The first time I helped our church with a turn at the Community Supper, which is served at First Lutheran Church, I notices that some of our people had on a blue shirt which had the flame & cross on the front next to

Hayward United Methodist Church; on the back It says 'The Church has left the building.' That can say a lot to those outside the congregation about who we are. There are a few extras if anyone would like one – see me later.

We do other 'hands on ministries.' School Supplies were recently delivered to St Francis Mission School. The faces of the students and the two nuns who teach them, light up when we arrive and invite them to take what they need. We go back to visit them again in February as we deliver all of the hats, scarves and mittens that you have bought for them, along with the hats and mittens that Barbara Foster makes all summer while enjoying their summer home in Hayward. Late winter last year, we began to collect baby clothes to be sent around the world through the United Methodist Midwest Distribution center.

I will admit that even though I have boxes of half used pens and pencils floating around my house, I still enjoy going to buy some new school supplies for the kids still in school. There is a kind of movement in that part of the store just before school starts that I want to be included in. It is the same with the hats and mitten buying part way through winter. By then I am ready for a new pair of gloves and I can pick up a few pair for the kids. These things feed my soul.

At Christmas when we are invited to take a tag or two to get a present for a child...well who doesn't like to imagine the face of someone opening a present that you have chosen, knowing that they will appreciate it no matter what is inside!

Yet, to go and ponder all of the baby options they have now is like a new world of wonder, as it is several years since I have needed to buy there. One of the joys of motherhood for me was a clothes line covered with little outfits on one end and white cloth diapers on the other end. I have forgotten the amount of work and how long it took to do the work, but the sweet memory of the clothes in a row and the fresh smell of those diapers as they were folded ready for use again – that is still in me. So when I go to buy for others, who I know need the cloth diapers as they don't have the convenience of the disposables, I find joy in imagining those diapers hanging on a line somewhere in Asia or South America or Appalachia, USA .

Now add to all of that mission apportionments paid in full, supporting disaster response, hospice programs, Medical teams, volunteers in mission teams; and these are just a few of the programs. Give yourselves a hand for the great work you are doing...

Yet, there is much more to do...Can we even see the poor? Maybe you are like some who get frustrated with those who continue to take, so we have to keep giving. The Apostle Paul writes in his first letter to the Corinthians 13:3 *"If I give everything that I have and hand over my own body to feel good about what I've done but I don't have love, I receive no benefit whatsoever."*

Possibly you resent the fact that you work hard for your money and some don't work at all. In the Gospel of Luke 12:48, Jesus said: *"Much will be demanded from everyone who has been given much, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked."*

Or there are those who feel that we should keep our money here, not sending it to other countries. How many of you chose to be born in this country? How many of you chose the circumstances of your up-bringing, which have brought you to where you are now? It is the same for everyone on this earth. There is little choice as to where and how your life will begin; the choice comes with what you will do with what you have. Proverbs 28: 27 reads: *"Those who give to the poor will lack nothing, but those who turn a blind eye will be greatly cursed."* Ouch! The opposite of being cursed is to be blessed. I'd rather go there.

Matthew 19:21, *Jesus said: "If you want to be complete, go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor. Then you will have treasure in heaven."* It is all about what path you take...who you decide to serve: God or yourself.

You might be thinking: Well Pastor, you sure have large expectations for our time and our money. Please hear that I will share with you many opportunities, your work is to decide what you can and want to support. What projects touch your heart?

We know that we are able to do more together than we can apart. The church helps make that possible by offering us opportunities to pool our resources to serve God through serving others.

This summer we were able to host my sister Cindy, who lives in Hong Kong and is a director of a Charis Bible College there. She came to share a part of her story of 19 years working in China. This church supports her by listening and praying for those people half way around the world. I plan to join her for a few weeks in Asia next year at this time. You support her by giving me the time to go. And I promise I will have lots of first hand news for you when I return!

You don't have to go to China to be in mission. The United Methodist Church has a large program of 'Volunteers in Mission.' There are one week trips and some go for the winter! Costs are kept low and usually meals are included. One of my colleagues, Pastor Gil White, who was serving at Danbury and Webster, WI, retired a few years ago.

When I asked him what came next for he and his wife Sharon, he told me they were going to 'hit the road.' They have joined a United Methodist Group entitled the Nomads. They travel from one work project to another, living in their camper somewhere warm, all winter long. Some of the work is construction, but some is just helping people back on their feet through conversations and smaller jobs. Interesting opportunity...

So where do each of us go from here? Most of us are already serving somewhere in mission. In the business world, when a job you have done for a while gets monotonous, sometimes you can ask to cross train for another job. What if you considered all of the other community opportunities and chose one to learn more about, with the possibility of also training someone new into what you do. Trying a new opportunity may take you into new possibilities.

The first year after I came as your pastor, I was 'kind of' looking for a place to serve the community. In my former location I had been active with the local Food Shelf, so one evening I visited Ruby's Pantry. One night a month for under 4 hours. I knew one of the registration volunteers and so I sat by her to see what was happening. What I found was a program that benefits everyone who walks through the door: guests and volunteers alike.

I was asked to come back and help the next month. That was 2 ½ years ago. I have chosen to take on more responsibilities, part of which is recruiting other volunteers for the registration area. Raise your hand if you have helped at Ruby's Pantry. I believe there are about a dozen from here that have served there. Quite a good number, yet there is room for more to join in. Many of the places listed on the bulletin board in the fellowship hall are looking for or willing to accept more help: Hayward Community Library; Food Shelf, several Thrift Stores which help people and/or animals; 4-H; Historical Society and the list goes on.

Some of them may not be looking for hands on help, yet would appreciate our prayers. You could choose one to pray for. Some of them have opportunities for your to encouragement. For instance, you might like to visit on a SCOPE Active Day, encouraging the kids and they learn new outdoor skills; Or cheer on the Fishing Has No Boundaries Pontoons as they go out to fish or come back with fish; Or be at the police Youth Academy Graduation to see what they have learned over the last 10 weeks. Look - there are more.

Jesus said in Matthew 10:40-42 *"Those who receive you are also receiving me, and those who receive me are receiving the one who sent me. Those who receive a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward. Those who receive a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. I assure you that everybody who gives even a cup of cold water to these little ones because they are my disciples will certainly be rewarded."*