

FaithBIT



The Capacity to Help

Reflection by David Beach

I've helped served breakfast many times at the emergency overnight shelter in the basement of Simpson United Methodist Church. Hundreds and hundreds of eggs, pancakes, sausages, hash browns and dirty dishes later, it's still easily the most worthwhile, satisfying thing on my far-too-short list of "Things I Do for Others."

The truth is, plus or minus a couple of degrees, any one of us could suddenly find ourselves homeless and in desperate need of support. Honest. I've certainly never served anyone at Simpson who looked like they "deserved" or "wanted" to be there. But one real bad break can lead to another. And another. And another.

Some of us are "lucky," I guess, but none of us are truly immune. Homelessness is very complicated, and there are surely as many unfortunate, frustrating stories as there are individuals at Simpson. Life's just not easy for anyone, and I'm confident God is acutely aware of that. He sees all our sufferings, of every variety, and He knows the score.

So, we're "called to care and sent to serve," even if we don't have the power to solve the many underlying issues that drive our biggest challenges. Providing a hot breakfast meal at least offers sustenance—maybe even a measure of hope—to some folks that could really use either or both. And if we have the capacity to help, why wouldn't we?

When they're done, diners deposit their dirty dishes in a plastic bin in a passthrough window between the kitchen and dining room areas. Invariably, a handful of folks out of the 50 or 60 we serve each morning stick their heads through that window and joyously express their gratitude for our efforts.

We shout back something like "You're welcome." And in that moment, both the cooks and the diners are exposed for what they are: Human beings fighting the good fight. There but for the grace of God we all go, as they say, plus or minus a couple of degrees.

Note: Immanuel is scheduled to serve at Simpson again this Fall. Please contact kim@immanuel.us if you're interested in serving in this capacity.