

## **A Knock at the Door**

For a while I had prayed that God would show us a way to become more relevant to the needs of the community outside the walls of our church. Nevertheless when that opportunity presented itself through the FISH Hospitality Program, my initial reaction was hesitation. How does a church our size (averaging 75 regular attendants) respond to such a challenge? How many of our members would be prepared to leave the comfort of their beds at night? Would we really have enough volunteers to cover all those shifts, and all those meals? Occasional visits to a soup kitchen or making donations to a thrift store is one thing. This was not just an excursion into the land of the needy, but a commitment to remain on "Jericho Road" in a manner of speaking. The one ingredient missing from my reasoning was that compassion is a gift placed by God Himself in the heart of believers, and not something we achieve through our own efforts.

I soon discovered how wrong I was by the overwhelming response from our church members. Over fifty percent of our membership volunteered at first, and by our second time of hosting the families, that had grown to over seventy five percent. This past month was our third time hosting, and now what once to me promised to be difficult is now a smooth and routine operation. This reinforces a truth I read recently that "God's work, done God's way, will receive God's supply."

I soon realized that volunteering was not so much about me "doing something for the Church," but more a God-given opportunity for spiritual growth. It challenged my tendency to view persons through the lens of a label (like homeless) rather than seeing them as individuals, each with a different story as we struggle along life's journey. My wife Joy, who volunteered overnight with me on two occasions, was also moved by her interactions with our guests and the daily challenges they face. So recently she donated the cost of a shower to our church so that the guests stay would be a bit more comfortable. (Insisting that it not be "any old shower" but something of quality).

It is amazing what can be accomplished by Christians simply responding as Christians to the challenges of our society.

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock"..... (Rev 3:20). What a tragedy it would have been if "New Beginnings Church" had failed to open our doors.

Joy and I remain grateful for this opportunity to serve.

Thanks

Verity and Joy Robertson

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