

#505 Faith Formation in the Small Church with Everyone in the Circle WorKship

WorKship – Blankets of Love: Comfort & Healing Tying Fleece Blankets for “Project Linus”

CALL TO WORSHIP (responsive)

ONE: Give thanks to the Lord for God is good, and his mercy endures forever.

ALL: The people cried to the Lord in their trouble, and God delivered them from their distress.

ONE: God sent forth the Word and healed them, and saved them from the grave.

ALL: The Lord is righteous in all ways, and loving in all God’s works.

ONE: The Lord upholds all who fall, God lifts up all those who are bowed down.

ALL: The Lord sustains them on their sickbed, and ministers to them in their illness.

ONE: The Lord is our strength and our song, and God has become our salvation. **ALL:** Give thanks to the Lord for God is good, and his mercy endures forever. Let us worship God together.

***HYMN “I’VE GOT PEACE LIKE A RIVER”**

***CALL TO PRAYER**

We gather in God’s presence, bring all our needs, and bringing with us the needs of the world.

***PRAYER OF PRAISE & ADORATION** (unison)

God of healing and wholeness, we come with thanksgiving in our hearts for all the evidence of your goodness and mercy - found not only in stories of old, but in lives today. Lives needing healing and comfort, finding consolation when touched by your gracious Spirit; lives of hurt and suffering have hope renewed through the power of the living Christ. We praise and adore you for hearts and lives transformed by your grace and mercy and we pray that our lives will reflect your great acts of kindness. Arouse in us we pray, a love like yours so that we reach out with comfort and healing to this world with the compassion of Christ. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

***ASSURANCE**

Listen to these words of Jesus, words that we can trust: ‘Don’t be afraid.’ ‘I love you.’ ‘Your sins are forgiven.’ ‘I will be with you always.’ Write these words in our hearts, loving God, let them take root in our living. Thanks be to God. Amen.

TIME FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US –

Definition of the noun “*comfort*” – strengthening aid; assistance, support; consolation in time of trouble or worry; a feeling of relief or encouragement; contented well-being; a satisfying or enjoyable experience; strength and hope.

Comfort is.....

Blanket

Warm Sweater

Cup of Hot Chocolate

Curl up with a good book

Comfort Foods:

Fried Chicken & Mac ‘n cheese

Chocolate

Chocolate chip Cookies

Tomato Soup & Grilled Cheese Sandwich

Chicken Soup

LITANY OF COMFORT

Response: May the God of healing, comfort you

For those whose lives are broken by distress and for those whose lives are broken by fear

May the God of healing comfort you

For those whose lives are broken by anger and for those whose lives are broken by pain

May the God of healing comfort you

For those whose lives are broken by illness and for those whose lives are broken by sin

May the God of healing comfort you

God of healing gently touch these lives with your Spirit. Bring warmth and comfort life and wholeness restoration into fractured lives and souls.

All God’s people said, Amen.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

For the word of God in scripture, for the word of God among us, for the word of God within us, thanks be to God.

SCRIPTURE

Old Testament: Isaiah 40:28-31

New Testament: Matthew 5:1-9

LISTENING EXPERIENCE - “Still My God” by Avalon
(Words printed on an insert for folks to read as they listened to the song)

REFLECTION

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.” 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

PRAYER PRACTICE – Band-aid of Comfort

The Gospels speak of Jesus’ compassion for those who were distressed and disheartened. He placed Himself among the suffering, offering them healing, hope and salvation. We follow His example by caring, loving and serving one another during the good and bad times in life. Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with references to healing, healing children and adults both. Healing is an important metaphor for understanding the nature and significance of God's love for us and of salvation in Christ.

Ask God to give peace and strength in the midst of pain and healing. Put a bandage on the back of your hand as a reminder of the prayers you are sharing for another.

PRAYER

Jesus, people came to you when they were in trouble or pain. Friends carried them, strangers told you about them; some invited you into their homes or met you walking on the road. You listened to them, you prayed with them and you brought hope, comfort and healing into their lives. So today we bring into our minds and hold in God’s presence those for whom we remember with our band-aids. Jesus, you welcomed children and blessed them; you gave their parents courage and hope. We thank you for all engaged in the ministries of healing and comfort, for those who work in hospitals and hospices, for doctors and nurses, for caregivers and counselors. Amen.

MISSION PROJECT - TYING BLANKETS for “Project Linus”

About Project Linus

“I didn’t invent the security blanket, I simply discovered an effective way to market it,” says Karen Loucks Rinedollar the founder of Project Linus. Project Blankie was the first idea, but Karen thought that name sounded “pathetic, wimpy,

and uninspiring!” The image of Charlie Browns’ best buddy quickly came to mind, and Project Linus immediately replace Project Blankie, it was 1995. *(Search Project Linus or other beneficiary for your blankets. Project Linus was started in Colorado so it is near and dear to our hearts, but most hospitals accept fleece blankets but check their requirements.)*

Blankets were all precut to size and the strips cut to tie. Laid out on tables (2 long rectangular tables put together) so blankets lay flat with chairs on all four sides for tying.

Instructions for tying knots on the Blanket

As you tie your knots I will share some stories from Project Linus. You are also invited to silently lift up prayers of healing and comfort as you tie the knots.

SHARING THE STORY - from “Working for Peanuts”

By Karen Loucks Rinedollar (Founder of Project Linus”)

Specifics for your Project:

Our 8 Blankets made with love and prayers will be distributed through a local Project Linus chapter to Denver area hospitals. Also thankful for the \$250 grant from Thrivent Financial that provided the funds to purchase all the fabric and supplies.

PRESENTATION OF OUR OFFERINGS &

BLESSING OUR BLANKETS – Laying of Hands on the Blankets

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (unison)

Gracious God, our Comforter, we dedicate this offering of gifts both money and service to you. We are disciples of Jesus Christ, commissioned to share the good news. May all that we dedicate here—our abilities, our blessings, our gifts, and these blankets for Project Linus, all of our resources—announce your love and presence in the world. We give with joy and serve with delight, thank you for this opportunity to share what you have given. Amen.

PRAYERS OF COMFORT AND HEALING

Loving God, we gather here this day, where many have come before us seeking your healing, strength and love. You know us, God: you understand who we are, you know what troubles and puzzles us, what makes us smile and what makes us sad. You listen to our questions and our prayers. God of Comfort, as we have gathered in this time and place, we remember all those who are in need of your

healing touch. We offer those names both with our lips and with the sighs of hearts that are too deep for words. We remember especially.....

Generous God, We offer our thanks and praise to the God who listens when we call out. Grant us grace to trust your mercy for all for whom we pray. In the name of our Savior Jesus Christ, be strengthened and filled with God's grace, that we may know the comforting and healing power of the Spirit.

We pray all of this in the name of Jesus Christ, who taught us to pray.... The Lord's Prayer.....

HYMN

"KUM BA YA"

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Verse 1 | Kumbaya My Lord, Kumbaya |
| Verse 2 | Come by Here, My Lord, Come by Here |
| Verse 3 | Someone's crying Lord, Come by Here |
| Verse 4 | Someone's suffering Lord, Come by Here |
| Verse 5 | Someone's praying Lord, Come by Here |

THE CHARGE AND BLESSING

Go in the name of God our maker, Jesus our healer, Holy Spirit of love and life

Seek healing, bring comfort, find wholeness,

Go in peace.

Amen.

WORKSHIP - “Love Your Neighbor”
**Disaster Awareness & Cleaning Buckets for PDA (Presbyterian
Disaster Assistance) or Church World Services**

CALL TO WORSHIP (responsive)

ONE: In the midst of a world where violence and brokenness abounds,

ALL: We proclaim the God of Compassion.

ONE: In the midst of despair that threatens to swallow up whole lives,
and whole peoples,

ALL: We proclaim the God of Hope.

ONE: In the midst of indifference and apathy,

**ALL: We proclaim the God of Love. Come let us worship together and share our
witness of God’s living presence in the world. Glory be to God.**

***HYMN** **“BLEST BE THE TIE THAT BINDS”**

***OPENING PRAYER** (responsive)

ONE: God calls to every generation, every age. God calls children; Jesus welcomed
children with open arms.

ALL: We remember Samuel who heard God’s voice while still a child.

ONE: God calls youth, and makes them leaders of the people.

**ALL: We remember Jeremiah and David who led the nation of Israel
even in their youth.**

ONE: God calls adults for various tasks of ministry.

**ALL: We remember the disciples, men and women who followed Jesus, and our
many ancestors in the faith.**

ONE: God calls people of older years.

**ALL: We remember Simeon and Anna, John the Evangelist, and others whose years
of experience helped form our faith.**

ONE: In thanksgiving for all generations, for all who are called by God and serve God,
let us pray.

**ALL: God of the prophets and the prophet’s children, God who called our fathers
and mothers of past generations, we thank you that nothing could stop people from
sharing your love in word and deed. You have called us, too, O God. Use our words
and deeds to express your love for all people, in this time of worship and in the
experiences of each day. Amen.**

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (unison)

Statement of Faith from “Together We Triumph”

We Believe.....

...that God calls all people, to respond to disaster as a witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

...that all people can be prepared, through skill building, Bible Study, and learning activities, to take an active part in relief and recovery efforts following disasters.

...that all people have energy, concern, and commitment to offer to those who are suffering from the effects of both major, wide-spread disasters and local emergencies. With training, all people can fully participate with others in the work of clean-up and rebuilding.

From *“Together we Triumph: Youth Response to Disaster”*

ACTIVE PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

As you hear our words of scripture today, draw, write, or just doodle on your tile with the permanent markers, however you are led by the words you hear, the emotions you feel or in reflection of this familiar New Testament story.

Supplies: 4 inch square white tile (bathroom tile from a hardware store) – 1 per person
Permanent colored markers – 2-3 colors/person to then share

Later: Hammer

Thick pillow case or towel doubled & sewn into a bag

Wood frame for a cross (whatever size you choose for a mosaic)

SCRIPTURE

Old Testament: Psalm 46

New Testament: Luke 10:29-37

TIME FOR THE CHILD IN US – Brokenness of Disaster

Collect the tiles, put them in the bag and place the bag on a carpeted surface that won't be damaged by hammer. Talk about the side effects of disaster, asking folks and prompting with “What is Disaster?” from Together We Triumph. As the things that cause us pain or brokenness are mentioned hit the bag with the hammer. The broken tiles will be used for the Prayer Station later to create beauty and healing out of the brokenness in disaster. This is a powerful lesson as the work people have created seems to be destroyed. Let the reactions come, later they will see how brokenness can be transformed into beauty.

REFLECTION

“I Saw My Church Last Week”

Beverly G. Bass from “Together We Triumph: Youth Response to Disaster”

-Adapt with your church address & name

HYMN

“O GOD, WE’VE PRAYED IN WIND AND RAIN”

(Sung to the tune of “Amazing Grace” – Carolyn Winfrey Gillette)

PRAYER PRACTICE – Remember to Breathe!

Talk a few moments about the importance of breathing. This exercise will remind us that just like plants need water and sunshine, and cars need gasoline to run, and

our bodies need food to grow and function, we need air to feed oxygen to our blood. We need oxygen in our brains to think clearly, and we need to think clearly to make quick decisions in emergencies. Often when we are scared or tense, we forget to breathe as much as we should. I invite you to close your eyes, and in a minute I will ask you to breathe in slowly, if you raise your arms out in front of you and over your heads you will find that you can take in a bigger breath. We will hold for the count of five. Then quickly let your arms drop back down, exhaling quickly as your arms come down. We will do this three times.

- Take in a breathe as you raise your arms up and over your head
- One, two, three, four, five
- Arms down quickly as you exhale

Do this 3 times. Invite them to open their eyes.

We are going to do this again, breath in; arms up for a count of 5; arms down and exhale; all 3 times. Except this time as we breathe in each time I am going to share a time when we need to remember to breathe. Repeat that silently to yourself as we count to five.

- When I am scared: Breathe in... 1;2;3;4;5...breathe out...relax!
- When I am tense: Breathe in... 1;2;3;4;5...breathe out...relax!
- When I am frustrated: Breathe in... 1;2;3;4;5...breathe out...relax!

Now open your eyes. We need to learn ways to help us relax when we are in stressful situations. This breathing exercise is one way to relax. It is also a simple breath prayer. You can also do it by breathing in God's peace and exhaling out your tensions, your stress.

PRESENTATION OF OUR OFFERINGS

INVITATION TO GIVING & BLESSING OUR DONATIONS (Laying on of Hands for the donated cleaning products for PDA Buckets)

***DOXOLOGY**

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION** (unison)

God of the hungry, Shelter of those without homes, we are in need of your mercy. We ask your blessing on all people everywhere who are facing lives turned upside down. Bless all who are hungry and without their homes, all who have lost much due to natural disasters. Provide them with the food they need, shelter them in the warmth of your love, and safeguard them from the loss that surrounds them. Turn our eyes and hearts to their needs. Give us courage to act for their good. We ask this, relying on your compassion and confident of your love known to us in Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

PRAYERING THROUGH DISASTERS - Hands-on Prayer Stations

(Play music in the background as people move freely between 4 Prayer stations set up in your space- set aside enough time for folks to try all four 15-20 minutes?)

1. **PEOPLE IN DISASTER** – Table or Wall

Variety of pictures/photos are laying on table or posted on a wall. (Magazine cutouts, or downloaded photos of natural disasters– fires, earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, winter weather, tornadoes) **Card with instructions:**

- Look at the pictures of disasters on the table, lay a hand on a photo that grabs your attention, as you silently pray.

2. **DISASTERS AROUND THE WORLD** – round table

World map laid in the center of the table, with sticky notes (heart shaped) **placed on map where current disasters are** (PDA website will help). **Map papers** (scrapbooking supplies) **cut into 3-4 inch heart shapes to write prayer on. Card with instructions:**

-There are sticky note hearts on the map representing locations of disasters around the world, choose a location, write a word or two of prayer. Take a map cutout and write the location and your words of prayer. This heart is yours to keep to remind you of the area and people you are praying for.

3. **BROKEN AND BEAUTIFUL**– rectangular table

This is where the broken tiles are transformed into a beautiful cross of healing. Need a wooden cross shape as your base, liquid Elmer's glue to affirm pieces to wood. Later you can add tile grout in between the tiles for a smooth surface. Wipes for cleaning hands. Instruction card:

-Choose several pieces from the pile of broken tiles and glue them in place on the cross. Together we create a beautiful cross as a reminder that God takes our Brokenness and makes it Beautiful! {Remind folks that edges will be sharp so be careful)

4. **REBUILDING WITH HOPE** – table, wall with a sheet of butcher paper

Rectangles of paper & tape or larger sticky notes to represent bricks for a wall. Scripture quotes of God with us, giving us strength & hope printed out.

Instructions:

-Read some of the scripture quotes laying on the table, reflect on words of HOPE for those whose lives have been turned upside down through disasters. Write words of HOPE on a Brick and add it to the Wall as a symbol of Rebuilding with Hope!

(After Folks have finished the Prayer Stations and return to their seats)

Closing Prayer:

Gracious God, our world is full of noise. The noise of vehicles, of phones and music, of children playing, of people shopping. These are the sounds of life as we

know it, rushed and busy, comfortable and easy. Help us, above the noise of our own lives, to hear the cries of those whose lives have been touched by disaster. Help us, dear God, above the joyful noise around us, to hear the cries of our neighbors. Give us ears to hear:

people who are lonely, anxious, or in pain,
people who are defeated, afraid, or discouraged,
people who are weak, lonely, depressed,
people who struggle with problems we cannot solve or sickness that cannot be healed.

Holy and gracious God, grant us new hearing. Amen.

***SONG “HE GOT THE WHOLE WORLD IN HIS HANDS”**

- He’s got the ... Victims of Hurricanes in His hands
... Earthquake Survivors in His hands
... Victims of Fires in His hands

SHARING THE STORY - “Big Muddy”

From “Together We Triumph”

PDA CLEANING KITS PUT TOGETHER – have cards printed that have the list of what goes into a bucket. In teams pack all the items in the buckets.

SURVIVAL KITS & INFO CARDS – We demonstrated and put together a Survival Kit for vehicles and distributed cards so folks could create their own at home. Local Disaster websites can provide lists including: flashlights, emergency radio, candles, emergency food, blanket, water, etc.

We all know how important it is to be prepared for emergencies, or at least have pieces in place to help us walk through an emergency of disaster.

Survival Bag – On the Table in front talk through the items that you keep in your car.

Helpful Tips for Info. Cards–

1. Make a can of Crisco into a candle by adding a small votive outside of the metal holder or sticking a wick directly in.
2. Olive oil in a jar with a wick or pipe cleaner
3. Keep important phone #'s written on a card in case your cell phone battery is dead.
4. Store matches in a jelly jar with sandpaper insert for striking matches
5. Have a Portable Solar USB Power Bank to keep your cell phone charged - \$55 Spysite.com
6. Emergency Candles kept in a jar with a ring of PVC to hold 1 emergency candle. Store the candles and matches in the quart jar.

7. Making your Toilet an Emergency toilet by turning the water off, flushing the water out, then lining the bowl with a Kitchen trash bag, using duct tape to secure. Add a few cups of kitty litter or pour bleach in the bottom of it. Have twist ties handy for easy disposal. Also works with a bucket.

***HYMN “CALLED AS PARTNERS IN CHRIST’S SERVICE”**

***THE CHARGE AND BLESSING**

Go out into God’s world!

Knowing that you are called to love your neighbor as yourself

To be caring and compassionate to those who need your support

Knowing that God is always with you and your neighbor

To keep you safe in steadfast love.

May God of the journey Bless you and Keep you and give you Peace! Amen.

WorKship - Home Sweet Home
Blessings Bags for Homeless Individuals

CALL TO WORSHIP (responsive)

ONE: In caring and compassion, God's arms hold us when we are without shelter.

ALL: With ideas and inspiration, God pushes us to grow and thrive.

ONE: With divine generosity, God shares all creation with us.

ALL: God calls us as partners to build a world of joy and hope.

ONE: Let us join our hearts, hands, and voices with people the world over in praise, thanksgiving, and commitment to our one, our wondrous God.

ALL: May we worship our God together through our Worship and work this day.

***HYMN** **"TAKE MY LIFE, AND LET IT BE"**

***CALL TO PRAYER**

***PRAYER FOR THOSE WITHOUT A HOME** (unison)

Hear our prayer today for all women and men, boys and girls who are without a home this day. For those sleeping under bridges, on park benches, in doorways or bus stations. For those who can only find shelter for the night but must wander in the daytime. For families broken because they could not afford to pay the rent. For those who have no relatives or friends who can take them in. For those who have no place to keep possessions that remind them who they are. For those who are afraid and hopeless. For those who have been betrayed by our social safety net. For all these people, we pray that you will provide shelter, security and hope, O Holy God. We pray for those of us with warm houses and comfortable beds that we not be lulled into complacency and forgetfulness. Jesus, help us to see your face in the eyes of every homeless person we meet so that we may be empowered through word and deed, and through the resources we have, to bring justice and peace to those who are homeless. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE

God, in gracious love, gives us the awareness of how far we fall short of caring for this earth and our brothers and sisters and the strength to change our lives.

Forgiveness is the pivot that turns repentance into reconciliation.

Thanks be to God, Amen.

LITANY OF HOMELESSNESS (responsive)

ONE: The homeless are poor, dear God, because we lost everything.

ALL: The homeless feel miserable, dear God, because we lack the opportunity for shelter and security in time of our dire need.

ONE: The homeless are angry, dear God, because we are hungry, thirsty and naked and have no place to turn.

ALL: The homeless are depressed, dear God, because we easily fall into hopelessness as there isn't much to hope for.

ONE: The homeless are infuriated, dear God, because we are alienated, feared and avoided as if we are a different species.

ALL: The homeless are oppressed, dear God, because the burden of poverty and pain weighs us down and bends our backs.

ONE: The homeless are furious, dear God, because we are accused of being mentally ill or abusers of substances.

ALL: The homeless are down, dear God, because most of our nights are filled with tears and our days approach despair.

ONE: The homeless are helpless, dear God, because many of us are victims of violence; we are wounded and powerless.

ALL: The homeless are crying out, dear God, for acceptance, love and compassion. Amen.

SCRIPTURE

Old Testament: Deuteronomy 15:7-11

New Testament: Luke 6:20-22

REFLECTION

“But by the Grace of God, Go I”

(Stories found on the local Homeless Shelter for Youth webpage)

Sometime in our lives we have either said it, thought it or heard someone else voice it. “No-one is needlessly homeless in America today – they must have done something to bring it on themselves.” Today, let’s dig deeper, let’s consider the real story, let’s discover what homelessness really means for the People of God who find themselves without shelter, hope and even the resources they need to survive one day to the next. Let’s explore how we can make a difference and reach out to those without a home, a real home to call their own.

Hear the voice of a young person: “I am seventeen. My mom has a baby and a toddler with her new partner, Dave. There wasn’t room for me. I’m staying with my grandmother, though her health’s not good, so I’m looking to move out. I’ve got a friend who says I can sleep on the floor in his room but his parents aren’t too cool with it.”

The voice of a veteran: “I spent 3 tours in Iraq. After I came home, my marriage broke up, I started drinking. There seemed to be nothing else for me but the street.”

And the voice of a mom: “I am married with three children. My husband had a good job driving a truck and we had a mortgage. Then out of the blue, he got epilepsy, he couldn’t drive any more. The house was repossessed, and we were put out. There’s a women’s shelter in town but they won’t take my husband. If I take the kids and go, they’ll be 20 miles from their father.”

Voices of homelessness. Did you know that more often than not, most who become homeless have fallen under circumstances largely outside their control? Studies suggest that homelessness is more pervasive than many realize, and includes children and individuals of both sexes who may not appear to be homeless, but lack housing. Only a fraction of homeless actually live full-time on the streets. In a study by the Denver Foundation which had 812 residents of metro Denver respond, 1 out of 10 people that responded (812) had once been homeless themselves. And 1 out of 5 had come close to being homeless. So now our voice says: “But by the grace of God, go I”. And “What can I do about it?”

BUILDING A HOME (Shelter)

I need 3 Volunteers please.

- With these supplies; Sheets of large cardboard or large boxes, duct tape, a tarp, a wooden crate, a blanket and a trash bag, together please build a shelter.
- Could all 3 of you get in it?
- Would it keep you dry? Warm? Safe?

I want to share with you all some Myths about Homelessness.

(Myths typed on strips of paper are handed out before Worship starts for people to read – Large Sticky notes with the myth busters (The truth is...) are then added to the Built shelter/home)

Myth #1. Homeless people want to be homeless.

The truth is: less than six percent of the homeless are without a home by choice. Most outreach workers can count on one hand how many people have declined accepting service from them.

Myth #2. Homeless people are to blame for being homeless. They've done something wrong to bring this upon themselves.

The truth is: most of the homeless are victims. Some have suffered the death of a loved one, loss of a job, or prolonged physical or psychological illness or disability that has left them homeless. Some veterans have been abandoned by the government they served.

Myth #3. Most of the homeless aren't looking for jobs and tend to be freeloaders who aren't interested in finding a job.

The truth is: many homeless people are among the working poor. People earning minimum wage can't earn enough to support a family or pay rent. An annual homeless survey that reached 3,978 individuals, found that 23% of respondents reported that they or their families had received some money from working during the month preceding the survey. And 8.4% of all surveyed had moved to Denver from other cities or states specifically to find work.

“Homeless individuals without fixed addresses or stable living conditions face significant challenges in securing and maintaining jobs. Many homeless individuals who seek employment also lack transferable job skills or a consistent work history and are often overlooked in this highly competitive employment market.”

Myth #4. Homeless people are mentally ill.

The truth is: only about 25% of the homeless are estimated to be emotionally disturbed. 1% may need long-term hospitalization; the others can become self-sufficient with help. Mental health resources for care and medications are hard to find within the homeless community.

A national campaign called 100,000 Homes, which has provided housing to 100,000 homeless people over four years, has had an 80 % success rate keeping people off the streets. The organization was founded on the principle that it is too difficult for individuals to combat addictions, mental or physical health problems, or find steady employment while simultaneously being homeless.

Myth #5. Many of the homeless are alcoholics and heavy drug users.

The truth is: some homeless veterans are substance abusers (research suggests one in four). Many of these are included in the 25 % who suffer from mental illness. Data has shown that 65% of addicts also have co-occurring mental health issues.

Myth #6. Homeless people are dangerous.

The truth is: while some encounters with homeless people may end in tragedy, it is extremely rare. Generally, homeless people are among the least threatening groups in society. They are more often victims of crimes rather than the perpetrators.

Myth #7. Homeless people are usually single men.

The truth is: It turns out that the majority of the homeless are actually in families, and most of them do not live on the streets. Families make up a large and growing

percentage of the homeless population. Colorado has one of the highest rates of homeless youth in the country.

Myth #8. Homeless people are a fixed population who are usually homeless for long periods of time.

The truth is: the homeless population is quite diverse in terms of their length of homelessness and the number of times they cycle in and out of homelessness. Research on the length of homelessness states that 40% have been homeless less than six months, and that 70% have been homeless less than two years.

Myth #9. Setting up services for homeless people will cause homeless people from all around to migrate to a city.

The truth is: studies have shown that homeless people do not migrate for services. To the extent they do move to new areas, it is because they are searching for work, have family in the area, or other reasons not related to services. A recent study found that 75% of homeless people are still living in the city in which they became homeless.

Myth #10. Homeless people commit more violent crimes than housed people. The truth is: homeless people actually commit less violent crimes than housed people. The arrest records in Baltimore found that although homeless people were more likely to commit non-violent and nondestructive crimes, they were actually less likely to commit crimes against person or property.

(Search online for local data and up-to-date data)

Information supplied by the [National Coalition for the Homeless](#) and [ECHO \(Ending Community Homeless Organization\)](#)

What surprised you the most about these facts?

***HYMN**

“O GOD, YOU GIVE WELCOME”

to the tune of “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise”

Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

MISSION PROJECT – BLESSING BAGS

- Items donated & collected in the preceding weeks – washcloth, small toiletries, small Kleenex, hand warmers, granola bars, hard candies, packaged nuts, packaged snacks, drink mixes – for water, hot chocolate, cider, oatmeal packages – Anything that will fit into a small ziplock bag.

- Tables were set up with items sorted so folks could just pick up and add to the bags.
- Walk around the tables and fill the bags adding item(s) from each table. Starting with the washcloth & toiletries and placing finished bags on the empty table in the hallway.

SHARING Real Life Stories - Linda & Robert
(Stories downloaded from local Homeless Shelter website)

LINDA

For now, the greyhound bus is parked in a Westminster trailer park. Nicknamed BRB, for “Big Red Bus,” the rusted vehicle has been converted into a home where 59-year-old Linda lives with her husband, two dogs, and the youngest of six kids. On an August morning, she sits just outside her home in a wheelchair she uses because of chronic pain and remembers all of the things that went wrong when so much should have been going well. In February 2012, Linda’s daughter Chantel gave birth to a healthy baby girl in Texas, where she lives. Two weeks later, though, Chantel was in the hospital with an MRSA infection, an antibiotic-resistant infection that can be deadly. Linda didn’t hesitate: She took time off work as a customer service representative for a health-insurance provider and drove 13 hours to stay with her daughter while she recovered. She was back to work within a week. Two months later, a horse she’d been feeding panicked and knocked her to the ground, where it stepped on her hand and kicked her in the ribs. She was unable to work for eight weeks and took short-term disability through her employer. She received only 60 % of her paycheck as bills emptied her savings. Linda began to panic. She had health insurance, which was helping with her medical expenses, but she’d maxed out several credit cards to stay financially stable while paying for everything insurance didn’t cover. Then, in August 2012, complications during a heart surgery left her father unable to care for himself. She asked her employer for unpaid leave to help him at the end of his life and was denied. She went to be with her father anyway; she felt like she had to. “Your parents help you take your first steps in this world,” she says, explaining why the decision was easy to make. Any of these medical crises—one of the main reasons people become homeless—would be difficult to overcome, but three in seven months was financially devastating. Linda has struggled to find a full-time job since leaving her customer-service job, especially because chronic pain limits her to work that doesn’t involve lifting anything heavier than five pounds. She thought about becoming a commercial driver but can’t because she uses medical marijuana to help her sleep. (You need to pass a drug test to earn a commercial driver’s license.) There isn’t enough money to rent a house, so her family converted an old bus into mobile living quarters. Linda distracts herself each day by doing

something that feels natural: caring for her family. She sits outside in the morning in her wheelchair to let the dogs play, run, and scratch the ground. She checks up on her children and her grandkids. When her two sisters call to ask for advice, Linda still plays counselor, even though she has too much pride to ask them for financial help. “That’s what families do,” she says of making difficult choices to take care of the people she loves—again and again. “If we don’t, what’s the point?”

ROBERT

When Robert was 15 years old, his mother told him he was adopted. He found out that he had been born to drug-addicted parents and that he had 11 biological brothers and sisters. His relationship with this mother began to suffer and when they would argue, she would kick Robert out of the house. He would stay at friends’ houses, in cars, or on the street. He would come back to the house and ask his mother if he could come home. Sometimes she would say yes, but only if he slept in the laundry room. Other times, she would tell him that he couldn’t come back. Robert would then call the police and tell them his mother had kicked him out. After two years of living this way, Robert called social services and reported his mother for her behavior. He was placed in two different foster homes. After the second home, he found out about Job Corp and left his foster home. He completed his culinary certification, got his GED and driver’s license. Robert then lost his job and wasn’t sure where he was going to go or what he was going to do, when a friend mentioned Urban Peak Youth Shelter. While at Urban Peak, Robert was involved in the shelter, Rocky Mountain housing, and also worked with an Education & Employment counselor. He says that Urban Peak showed him possibilities and gave him the drive to make changes in his life. “Just because you are in a certain situation you don’t have to always be in that situation, you can change it. No matter how many times you fall you can get back up again.” Robert says that one of his successes is learning to deal with some of his negative defense mechanisms. His experiences have made him wary of close relationships and worried that people will let him down or hurt him. In the past, he would push people away so they wouldn’t have the opportunity to let him down. Now he is getting better at recognizing this and trying to trust people and let them into his life. Robert is currently working and attending Johnson & Wales University, learning new culinary arts skills and meeting new people who share his passion for cooking. His ultimate dream is to open his own restaurant where he could specialize in Italian or French food. “If doors don’t open up for you, then you just build your own door. People are always saying, ‘I want to do that’, or ‘I wish I could do that’, instead of just saying ‘I’m going to do it’.”

PRESENTATION OF OFFERINGS & BLESSING OUR PROJECT

- Laying on of hands on the Blessing bags

-

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Gracious God, You are the Creator and Source of all things good. You have showered us with greatness and love all of our days. Look into our hearts and receive this heartfelt thanksgiving we offer to you. Thank You for all the gifts and blessings You have showered upon us and our families. You have provided us with a family, friends, a home and food to eat for each day. As You have been generous to us, we offer You these gifts as symbols of our utmost gratitude for Your kindness. Bless all of those who need and receive these Blessing Bags, O God, with continued graces and blessings for each day. May these gifts multiply and that everyone in our community can benefit from them. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ. All God's people said; Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE HOMELESS

ALL: Lord, when did we see you homeless?

ONE: Tonight almost 6000 men, women and children in Denver will sleep in shelters or on the streets.

ALL: Lord, when did we see you with insufficient wages?

ONE: A person working full-time at minimum wage lives five thousand dollars below the poverty line for a family of three.

ALL: Lord, when did we see you in need of housing?

ONE: Almost 4,000 people with families in Denver cannot afford to rent a 2 bedroom apartment.

ALL: Jesus replied, "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head." (Matt. 8:20)

ONE: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters." (1 John 3:16)

ALL: "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth."

(1 John 17-18)

CLOSING PRAYER –

God of justice, Have mercy on those who sleep...on the streets or in hostels, on the floor or on a sofa, in store rooms or offices, and those who know their friends' hospitality is at breaking point. Help us to build a fairer society, where having no home does not exclude anyone from work and health and respect. Help us to build a society where all may 'dwell in safety'. In the name of the Christ, let me see you in others. Christ, let others see you in me.

Christ, let me see. You are the poor.
You are the stranger at my door.
You are the wanderer; The unfed.
You are the homeless with no bed.
You are the man, with no job to support his family.
You are the child, crying in pain.
You are the other, who comes to me
Open my eyes that I may see.
Amen.

CHARGE & BLESSING

Go out into the world sharing the Love of Jesus Christ
Giving thanksgiving for the roof above our heads,
Being reminded of those who do not have a place to call home.
Be with us as we reach out in the name of Jesus to care for the homeless.
Guide us through the Holy Spirit to care for all of God's people.
Go with love, peace and grace. Amen.

WORKSHIP – “HOMETOWN HEROES”

Grab & Go Snack Buckets for Local First Responders

WELCOME

This morning our Workship, experience, a work project woven into worship is “Hometown Heroes”. We are exploring the story of the Good Samaritan as it relates to those who step in and serve as Heroes to rescue us, particularly our volunteer First Responders and Firefighters here in town. As you received your Bulletin you also received a card and some colored pencils. Throughout our Workship this morning you are invited to color in the card. They will be added to our Mission Project to support and thank our local volunteers at the Fire Station down the street.

GATHERING AROUND GOD’S WORD

GATHERING WORDS (Responsive)

ONE: We come to this sanctuary entangled with the worries of the world and our community...

ALL: The cost to repair our car

The images of violence embedded upon our mind’s eye

Whether or not the candles will get lit properly

Why the microphone is not turned loud enough

Whether we will like the chosen hymns

What kind of mission project will be completed today.

ONE: We needed *one* more cup of coffee...

ALL: One more hour of sleep

One more deposit in the bank

One more week of vacation

One more hour in each day

One more day in each week

ONE: As we roll our shoulders to relieve the stress, as we lift our eyes to your holy table, as we let go and let God, remind us that you are *the* One.

ALL: With intention, we shake off our worldly cares, turn our eyes to you in glad praise and trust your Spirit to rescue us again! Come on, together let us worship the One!

ONE: Let us pray.

May worship be what nothing else is—a softening of the edges of doubt, a tickling of God’s great mystery upon our innermost being, a wordless answer to the great questions of life, a tender blowing of the Holy Spirit, an assurance that there is a better way to live together on this planet and that you, O God, are that way.

May your presence be inviting today, dancing alive with your great mystery. May our voices in song fill the very air with grace. May our prayers be authentic, heartfelt and healing. May our tears be the morsels of confession that are just so good for the soul. We are here with you. We are together, and we are glad. Amen.

*HYMN “Count Your Blessings”

*RESPONSIVE CONFESSION & ASSURANCE

ONE: We remember the stories of Jesus reaching out to help those who needed a helping hand.

ALL: How many times, O God, have we been blinded and not seen the one needing help right in front of us?

ONE: We remember Jesus telling the story of the Good Samaritan and the lesson that we should go and do likewise.

ALL: How many times, O God, have we turned our attention to the other side of the road and looked away?

ONE: We remember that Jesus taught that we should love our neighbor as ourselves and care for them always.

ALL: How many times, O God, have we cried out for help, receiving your grace as you rescued us, you always save?

ONE: We remember your mercy, O God, and ask to be restored to your side knowing that in all we are forgiven no matter what.

ALL: Master of Caregiving, Lover of the Helping Hand, Bringer of Peace, teach us how to abide in you in all things. Amen.

*GLORIA PATRI

TIME FOR THE CHILD IN ALL OF US What is a Hero?

The Comic Book hero is as popular as ever. In 2017 alone, six superhero movies accounted for more than \$4 billion in box office sales. Hero stories are popular and we all like to see the good guy or girl win. The Bible is filled with lots of Heroes as well – Moses, Joshua, David, Daniel, Jesus, Paul. In all of those stories there’s a hero, a villain, a people in need of rescue, and plenty of action. Jesus is our hero of the New Testament, he reaches out to everyone needing rescue!

A Hero is an imaginary or legendary figure often with great strength or ability; also an illustrious warrior; a person admired for their achievements and qualities; one that shows great courage.

Today we discover a hero in the Bible and celebrate our hometown heroes. Men and women who gave strength and ability through their training who are admired for their achievements and qualities, and for their great courage. Today we recognize those

firefighters and first responders who are rescuers, caregivers and healers, providing help, rescue and care.

SCRIPTURE Luke 10:33-34, 36-37

REFLECTION “The Good Samaritan”
(“The Good Samaritan” from *Liturgy for the Whole Church*, Susan K. Bock)

Reflection continued....

This verse is from Jesus’ parable about the Good Samaritan, who helped a man who was lying by the road beaten and robbed. He bandaged the man, cared for his wounds, and carried him to safety. From this parable, the term Good Samaritan has come to mean a person who voluntarily offers help or compassion in times of trouble or distress.

- Do you think that the Samaritan thought about whether he would help this man or not? *No, he saw a man who was hurt and needed help and voluntarily and automatically helped him.*
- Can you imagine yourself in the Samaritan’s place? Would you react differently?
- How does the Samaritan compare to community helpers and heroes like the Firefighters and the First Responders? *Just like the Samaritan, community helpers and heroes help others in need. They help them immediately and carry them to someone that can continue to help them.*

We even have the Good Samaritan Law that covers someone legally who stops and helps with good intention. Local fire and rescue workers and particularly volunteers are, in some ways, Good Samaritans. They give of their time to help those in distress. It does not matter who they victims are of the convenience of assisting them, it matters that they are our neighbor and they are in need. The fire and rescue workers serve them out of love. We will be showing support and appreciation for their service. But let’s not forget the person the Good Samaritan helped: the man who lay beaten and robbed by the side of the road. Even though tragedy had struck, the story of the Good Samaritan reminds us that God’s love is always there for us. We can be just like the Good Samaritan: concerned and responsive to someone who has experienced adversity. We discover that a little support may give others the courage and confidence needed to face challenges and recover their lives. We also can hold others in prayer. Years ago, a young boy not even in school told be that every time he heard or saw a fire truck or ambulance he prayed. I have never forgotten the wisdom of that young boy. Now whenever I hear a siren, I lift up a simple prayer for the first responders, any victims and the families that will be affected by the emergency.

MISSION PROJECT – Grab n’ Go Buckets

This morning our project is to create Grab n’ Go Buckets for our First Responders and Firefighters in town just down the street. Thanks to your donations we are making a trail mix/snack mix in large ziplock bags then dividing the mix into smaller bags. Also donated were Propel/Gatorades that we will then put in the bottom of the buckets then top with the snack mix bags. Following Worship we will deliver the Grab ‘n Go Buckets to the Station House with our thanks for their time, energy and care in serving our community. Our hometown heroes are modern day Good Samaritans. We are being Good Samaritans to them by showing our appreciation for them keeping us safe.

Instructions:

1. Large ziplock bag with a little of all the snack donations
2. Gently mix and then divide into smaller snack bags – gloves & cups
3. Fill a large ziplock with the smaller bags of snack
4. Add the notes to the bags of snacks
5. Propels in the bottom of the buckets with the snacks added to the top.
6. Blessing tied on to each Bucket

BLESSING THE BUCKETS

Laying on of hands around the tables with the Completed Buckets.

Thank you God for the Good Samaritans in our community that help others out of love, regardless of the convenience of differences. Help us to be like them, serving others automatically and voluntarily because of our love for You and our neighbor. Help us to open our eyes to the needs of others and always act with compassion and love as the Samaritan. Bless these Buckets that they might renew our Firefighters and First Responders when they are tired, in need of refreshing or just a pick me up. May they know that we are thankful for their service and care for the community. May they also experience the love of a community that appreciates the hard work, life threatening, work and rescuing they do as our hometown heroes. Please keep them all safe as they help those in need. All God’s people said....**Amen.**

- Return to our seats and bring the Buckets to the Lord’s Table for the Offering

*UNISON PRAYER FOR HEROES

God of Comfort, you have put angels here on this earth in the form of Firefighters and First Responders. You have given them the ability to rescue and to heal. They are our friends, our rescuers, our family, and our support system. Give them inspiration when they don’t feel inspired. Give them energy when they have

none. Give them patience with those they care for. Above all else, God, let them know your Spirit's presence. Work through them, through their hands and feet, eyes and ears, voices and hearts. Amen.

***HYMN** “God Will Take Care of You”

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE & COMMUNITY

God, we know you don't cause bad things to happen. We know you take all things, both good and bad, and make them work together for the good of those who love you. Give us patience, God. Give us strength. Open our eyes to the big picture, so we see things we would otherwise have missed.

We ask that you hear our prayers for all those who need your rescue, to all those who need your help and healing.

Lord's Prayer (sins and sin against)

PRESENTATION OF OUR GIFTS

In addition to all the donations that have filled the Grab 'n Go Buckets we also give thanks to God for all that we have through our offering.

***DOXOLOGY** (inside cover of hymnal)

***PRAYER OF BLESSING**

Let us pray. We lean on the everlasting arms of our mercy, O God, and dwell in the hope of your grace fulfilled. Whatever good we do we owe to your power within us. The work of our hands is a gift of your love. Nourish our mission outreach with your sustaining Spirit and accept our efforts, and our gifts, as in Christ we seek to fulfill your all-encompassing will. All God's people say.....Amen.

***HYMN** “It Is Well With My Soul”

***THE CHARGE AND BLESSING**

We go out into the World this day honoring & celebrating our Hometown Heroes.

May God's Blessing be upon us and our firefighters and first responders.

May Jesus Bless the work of our hands and feet as we too are Good Samaritans.

May the Holy Spirit push us always to think of others and reach out and help them.

Go in Peace to serve the world!

CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE

In Response to God's word and message this day, I invite all who are willing to join us as we walk over to the Fire Station and deliver our Grab 'n Go Buckets to the Firehouse Heroes.