



The New Pastor

A pastor transformed himself into a homeless person and went to the church that he was to be introduced as the head pastor at that morning. He walked around his soon to be church for 30 minutes while it was filling with people for service. Only 3 people said hello to him, most looked the other way. He asked people for change to buy food because he was hungry. Not one gave him anything.

He went into the sanctuary to sit down in the front of the church and was told by the ushers that he would need to get up and go sit in the back of the church. He said hello to people as they walked in but was greeted with cold stares and dirty looks from people looking down on him and judging him.

He sat in the back of the church and listened to the church announcements for the week. He listened as new visitors were welcomed into the church that morning but no one acknowledged that he was new. He watched people around him continue to look his way with stares that said you are not welcome here.

Then the elders of the church went to the podium to make the announcement. They said they were excited to introduce the new pastor of the church to the congregation. "We would like to introduce you to our new Pastor." The congregation stood up and looked around clapping with joy and anticipation. The homeless man sitting in the back stood up and started walking down the aisle.

That's when all the clapping stopped and the church was silent. With all eyes on him....he walked up the altar and reached for the microphone. He stood there for a moment and then recited so elegantly, a verse from the bible.....

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'" Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'" The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for the least of my brothers and sisters, you did for me.'

After he recited this, he introduced himself as their new pastor and told the congregation what he had experienced that morning. Many began to cry and bow their heads in shame. "Today I see a gathering of people here but I do not see a church of Jesus. The world has enough people that look the other way. What the world needs is disciples of Jesus that can follow this teachings and live as he did. When will YOU decide to become disciples?

He then dismissed service until the following Sunday as his sermon had been given.



Tent City & Other News

As most of you have read by now, the province has given an eviction notice for the campers. They must now be out by February 25th. I've been working hard with *Together Against Poverty* and *Christ Church Cathedral* in support of the campers. We're trying to get an injunction by the court to give them more time on provincial land. Still, the numbers at tent city continue to grow. The options that the province have offered are twofold: 1. another temporary shelter run by Cool-Aid in town or 2. moving to the old juvenile jail in View Royal run by Our Place. Some of the campers are happy with the options while others are not.

The Dandelion Society continues to support the campers in any way they can. It has consumed a great deal of my time but I think that's where the gospel would have us be.

We have placed two more of the hardest to house in these last couple of months, one of them a male and the other one a female. One was with the Pacifica Housing Society and the other with the Cool-Aid Society. It's a major victory for us as no one else would touch them because of their issues.

The Dandelion Society continues to support Mr. Rees, now 75 years old. He is in the Gorge restaurant facility run by the Vancouver Island Health Authority. We try to get him out once a week if possible - just a little ride around the city to get his mind going.

We also helped the hoarder clean his storage area, which was a major undertaking that saved his housing.

Other Highlights

January 22 - 24 : Flyer distribution at concerts

Board members distributed Dandelion Society flyers to audience members at the "Musical of Musicals" performances at Berwick House.

February 7 - Al preaches at Christ Church Cathedral

A rousing sermon and a spell-bound congregation were a real treat to board members in attendance. Enthusiastic applause at the end. There were two services 9:15 and 11:30am. The topic was a challenge to the Church "Feed my Sheep". See the associated story on page 2.

March 8 - Dandelion Society special meeting

Day-long meeting and seminar at Sands Funeral Home; 10am.

March 25 - Good Friday service & breakfast at Centennial Square

This is a yearly Dandelion Society event. In charge is Brian Cameron <brian-cameron@me.com>. He will need all the board to help. Robin Tomaz is getting the city permit, so all is in order. Please call Brian and offer your help.

On aging



As I grow older now, moving into my 70th year, I write this for all of you who are in my decade or older. As we grow older our strength diminishes, our energy level and the aches and pains of our body remind us of that every day. However, old age can make some people bitter and despairing; they become angry with life, with themselves in their weaknesses, and with their awareness of the nearness of death and the end of their lives.

Yet at our age we still have choices to make. We can die miserable, angry and disappointed, or we can live our life as a gift to others. Hopefully we live with a smile on our face and an encouraging word coming from our mouth. So let's stop complaining about the pains of the old body and laugh out loud about our farts.

Remember this is the only time in our lives that the mistakes we've made and the gifts we held can be passed on to others. This is a time of life where we can support the younger generation by giving them our hopeful spirit to live on in them and in the universe.

The Camper

The following was a story at the end of Al's sermon on Feb.7 at Christ Church Cathedral

He was sitting at the camp fire early one morning as the sun broke over the majestic mountains. "God bless you Rev Al" he said. The deep wrinkles & furrows on his face revealed a lifetime on the Street. His layers of clothing over a skeleton of a man revealed the condition of his health. The familiar odour of his unbathed body revealed the suffering, trampled-down Christ. Yet this man, his humility, his littleness, his gentleness, his openness, his total welcome to all who approached him, reveals him as a living disciple, a man of wisdom, a deeply spiritual man.

I have seen consistently over the years- the way he gives away his personal items that he has found, as he has dug them out of the dumpster, offering others the only things he has.

As I sat down beside him, he reached into his worn out dirty backpack that he carries around with him day in and day out. "Rev, I found a set of rosary beads in a dumpster last night and I thought of you", he said as he handed me the rosary with his right hand. He closed my hand with his left hand saying, "they should be kept warm and close to the heart".

He has given to all who take a moment to just look into his eyes the gift of love & the gift of his tenderness. To all who have the courage to look into his eyes.....

He is showing his age, now near the end of his life. Just perhaps this is the last winter he will touch me and others with his tenderness. As I walked away, etched in my mind was the look of his wine-colored eyes as he gazed into my heart. They were the eyes of the weary Christ, the feminine Christ, the trampled down Christ, the poor Christ with a gift in his hand freely offered to all who have the courage to be.

Hope is found in Jesus calling us from the shore: "Come eat with me". When we have "the courage to be," he breaks bread with us and pours the cup and offers his life for our salvation, challenging us to go out and feed his sheep. The adventure is not over after all the campers have called out from across the street, "Come and eat with us".

**Don't forget the meeting & day-long seminar:
Tuesday, March 8, 10am - Sands Funeral Home.**