

The Pastor's Report

To the People of the Park,

As she has done on any number of occasions over the years, the other day Linda told me that I should write a book about what parish ministry is *really* like. Or, more to the point, how wonderful parish ministry can be (and that, no, the “church” is not dying in spite of the worst efforts of many). My response, however, is always the same: what could I possibly add to the conversation/topic? Figuring it out is fairly straightforward, and there isn't an awful lot that is new under that particular sun. It is the *doing* of church that is the challenge. The only book that illuminates in this regard is the “Good Book.”

That said, over the past few weeks I admit I *have* begun to open myself up to the very real possibility of writing a book; though specific in scope. What excites me is the topic: The Church Fundraiser: How To Get Good At Them While Doing Good (And Why They Matter).

I am, of course, being a little tongue in cheek here but not completely. Over the past 25 years I've witnessed our congregation grapple with a very important question that, quite honestly, should be grappled with a whole lot more than it is in any number of areas of life. That is, **“What are we doing here?!?”**

Not to belabor the obvious, but the stated purpose of the yearly Rummage Sale(s), Cabbage Roll Sale, Bazaar and all the other fundraisers we have (or have ever had) at the church is (you guessed it) to raise funds! But that's not why we do them, is it? We do them

for other reasons. Reasons that are even more important. Fellowship, chief among them. Rolling cabbage and sorting clothes is the opportunity we give ourselves to know and be known by others.

Then there is the mission part of these endeavors; which is to say the good we do. While folks may *like* cabbage rolls, what they like *more* is someone delivering a meal to one's home as a sign of being cared for and remembered. For the rummage sale, it is getting quality goods, clothes, shoes, and household items into the hands of those who greatly need them at very affordable prices.

I know that every year *vast* numbers of cabbage rolls and pie are given away to the homebound. This year the rummage sale went from a certain cost per item, to a flat fee of \$5/bag on Friday and \$1/bag on Saturday (unless otherwise marked, like big ticket items). Then, in the final hour of the sale after lunch on Saturday everything was *free!* The result? About the very same amount was raised regardless of pricing method.

How can this be, you ask? The answer is, when we approach life with a sense of abundance rather than scarcity we create a sense of abundance in others and this leads to generosity (“All that for \$5!?! Here, take \$10.”). I mean, let's face it, we all have enough of what we need. Why wouldn't we share some with others? For a person to do so is commendable. For a church to do so is a responsibility.

When we have each other, we have all we need...and more,

- Rev. Mike

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” - Luke 6:38