



Out, But Not Alone, On The Streets

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“Hey, I’ve got some Cracker Jacks. You want some?” I heard her ask. I heard her after the fact, but those who were there that day heard the joy-filled question firsthand. Cracker Jacks, after all, represent joy. Though not the most nutritious, they’re fun, especially if you find the little prize inside. Even their variants, like Poppycock usually come out for festivities. Who doesn’t love munching on kettle corn while wandering around the fair? Yes, we want some Cracker Jacks!

Cathy Manthei asked this question on a frigid February afternoon last week, as she greeted people who had come to Apostle Presbyterian Church, West Allis. Those present were offered more than Cracker Jacks. Hot minestrone soup was ladled into to-go cups by Apostle volunteers. The West Allis Fire Department was on hand with its Mobile Integrated Health Unit, including paramedics and mental health professionals who are adept at helping those getting by on the street and those fighting addiction. They provided medical testing as well as counseling. The Street Angels, an outreach and advocacy organization for people experiencing homelessness, has also partnered in this community endeavor, bringing food and clothing for those who drop by. Another organization has promised to supplement the meal that can be offered. On this Wednesday in February, a news crew was on hand to [catch the story](#).



Each Wednesday from 2-4 pm, Apostle and these vital community organizations join together to welcome visitors, extend hospitality, and offer assistance. It took more than a month of planning before it came together, but now it’s growing. A second stop has been created nearer to the Presbytery Office and nearby towns are asking about replicating it in their area.

Cathy describes the program as fluid, rather than fixed in stone. You plan, but then you tweak as the real needs of the community become known. As with any good outreach program, it’s driven by what others need and can offer in return, not simply by how we think a problem should be fixed.

While Apostle, like our other congregations, has had regular worship and programming interrupted by the pandemic, it didn’t turn its focus only inward. Instead, it saw the deepening need just outside its closed doors. It chose to act.

The goal of our Matthew 25 vision as a Presbytery is to be aware of ingrained societal problems like systemic poverty and structural racism, and then to move toward action. We give thanks to God for the willingness of Apostle and other congregations to directly counter these problems through action. Cathy, in turn, offers her thanks to the Presbytery and its many leaders who are opening our eyes and nudging the church into action: “I ... am so very sad that we can't gather in person as a Presbytery but BOY OOO BOY these virtual meetings have certainly brought me to a place of wanting to find more help for the folks that need it the most. THANK YOU for pushing us towards that place--THANK YOU for planning meetings that have a ‘punch’---THANK YOU for all you do for us. God is moving and I believe, with your HUGE efforts, we Presbys are following.” Amen! Oh, and pass the Cracker Jacks, will you?