

First, a little something from the Sermon on the Mount:

“Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So when you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward.” (Matthew 6:1-2, NRSV)

Now an example of this teaching. Here’s a note the Generosity Task Force received from Rachel Rosendahl, pastor at Grace Presbyterian Church in Winona, Minnesota...

At the edge of our Presbytery, in a beautiful little town called Winona, surrounded by bluffs and rivers, you will find Grace Presbyterian Church. The building of which holds no grandeur, nor does it assume to be known as the church of any one thing in particular. In fact, there was a time when you could go into Winona, Minnesota asking about Grace Presbyterian Church at the corner of Franklin and Broadway to receive only puzzled glances. "I didn't know we had a Presbyterian Church in this town." you might hear. But if you ask the right people, you might come to understand that Grace is simply a church that takes to heart the directions in Matthew 6:1-2.

For example; if you were to ask the local Food Shelf about Grace Pres, you would hear that their little church of fewer than 100 members consistently raises over \$5,000 every year in March for the March Minnesota Food Share.

If you were to ask the local Islamic community they would tell you about their friendship with Grace Church and the cemetery that was given to them when it was learned that, because of their religious customs, it is difficult to find a cemetery that will allow burial on their grounds.

If you ask someone from the UCC, Methodist, or ELCA congregations they will say "Oh, Grace Church folks are our good friends! We often have special worship services together and work together on mission projects." Beginning in 2019, our churches raised \$15,000. Those dollars alleviated just over two million dollars in medical debt in Wisconsin and Minnesota through a partnership with “RIP Medical Debt”.

If you ask someone in the community that happens to attend one of the AA or NA meetings you will hear that Grace Presbyterian Church was the only building willing to take the risk and allow their very vulnerable groups to meet in-person, with all proper precautions, during the pandemic. A risk that has paid off time and time again for those to whom isolation was just as deadly as the virus.

You may also hear that we have the best Chicken Q in town, but I digress. Grace Presbyterian Church in Winona, Minnesota is small but mighty. The people who attend service there are generous and giving. It is a place where you come in a stranger and leave as family. We may not boast often about our generosity in our community (except for the Pastor, she boasts a lot), but we do it all because we know that is what we are called to do. For what is the purpose of the body of Christ if it does not connect with the community, serve the vulnerable, and quietly offer the resurrective power of redemption. There is no quid-pro-quo here, there is just Grace.

Grace and Peace to you and yours,
Pastor Rachel