

By the Rev. Jeanie Shaw, leader of new worshipping community Eventide



I wish I had thought to bring communion as today I witnessed one of the most sacred meals I have ever seen.

For the last seven years we have hosted a “Giving Room”, a room filled to the ceiling with sleeping bags, tents, jackets, gloves, socks and hats; and our homeless Brothers and Sisters have been able to take what they needed for Sacramento’s wet winter weather. This year, with the pandemic, we had to reinvent our Giving Room. With the help of our amazing Social Worker Candy Pullium who located several of our unhoused friends; Antonio Ramos, who contacted fellow friends on the streets; and the generosity of our Eventide Community, we met at my house to “caravan” to find those in need.

Antonio had coordinated with many friends who live on the streets and they arrived in a parking lot on Watt Avenue as we were pulling in. We opened the backs of our cars, tailgating style, and Antonio introduced us. “This is my church,” he told the group, “They are here to help us,” and one by one they came up to the trunks of our cars.

The first thing they all said was, “Do you have any food?” We directed them to Antonio’s truck which he had made into a kind of parking lot table, the hood filled with pies and bread, cans of food, juice boxes, cliff bars and peanut butter and jelly. About nine men and women gathered around the hood, politely sharing food, fellowship and stories. It felt like Thanksgiving. I wish I had brought wine and bread to serve communion. It was a sacred meal.

Paul had opened his trunk to reveal the most organized and generous assortment of everything you need on the street. “What do you need,” he would ask, and then prod, “are you sleeping on the ground?” at which point he would pull out a mat and sleeping bag, a tent or tarp, and while they nodded, their faces with an expression of pure disbelief; Paul would then quietly continue, “What about a jacket?” “Do you have a hat, heat is lost through your head, you know,” while pulling out new hats, socks, and gloves.

We learned that Cindy had been on the street for six years. She was tiny, almost childlike and Paul gently helped her try on a pair of gloves till they fit her perfectly.

We saw three of our Eventide friends in that parking lot. “We miss you, Pastor Jeanie,” they said, and I realized that they BELONGED to Eventide. We all have so many belongings, not only things, but places. We belong in our homes, have an address and belong in a neighborhood. We belong to clubs and classes and workplaces. Where do you belong if you don’t own anything and have no home? To many of our friends on the streets, I realized, their place of belonging was Eventide, the one day a week where they were welcomed and not shooed away, where they were fed and welcomed at a table to enjoy Candy’s amazing meals. When you are homeless, maybe the hardest part is not belonging.

Candy had organized gift boxes to others in our community. Bettye is now in a mobile home, Gail in an apartment in North Sacramento, Jay and Jen in a hotel downtown, and Gab in rehab in South Sacramento. He was amazed when we appeared at the door of his rehab home with a stocking and gifts. “I miss you all,” he said, “You guys really live out being Christian, you mean what you believe by how you act.” He asked Nancy and I to tell everyone he loves you.

I wish I had brought Communion, but maybe, just maybe, today was a Sacrament.

Even in the midst of a pandemic, thank you for being Eventide!

Jeanie