

**From:** [Chelsea Morse](#)  
**Subject:** Street Church: Coming Alongside  
**Date:** Monday, May 31, 2021 8:44:54 AM

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“...But will people come?”

“All we can do is hold space... and ask God to do the rest.”

It occurs to me that it was around this time last year that the Rev. Carey Connors and I were asking this question to each other as we prepared to start gathering folks together at the Red Roof Inn on a Sunday morning. Our attraction model strategy was solely based on Krispy Kreme Donuts, Fresh Wawa Coffee, community (in a pandemic) and Jesus.

As a church planter, I have asked this same question each week. My internal fears wrestle inside my head asking if we are “doing it right” or holding space in an authentic way. Are we offering our neighbors the opportunity to have ownership and giving them the authority to lead their community? Does the Spirit have room to work in our model of accompaniment with our neighbors, versus taking over and making them a bystander? This is a question we fight to answer each week as we show up for God and let the worship of the people come through with one community voice, led by God’s most precious people.



**[Image: Brian and Joe show up early to get our tables set up]**

Despite the rainy and dreary fall morning...I mean, Memorial Day weekend weather?? My fears of neighbors sleeping in and forgetting we had church was halted when I walked into our building yesterday. I was hit with the comforting smells coming from the kitchen. Even at 8:30 AM, God was at work. Our neighborhood teams showed up in abundance! Three neighbors were in the kitchen cooking sausage, pancakes, and preparing for guests to arrive. We had four others who were ready to help set up tables, chairs and the altar. We even got done thirty minutes early, which gave everyone an opportunity to socialize and have

fellowship together. It was a beautiful flurry of helping hands of those who showed up to be helpers (some for the first time!)



[Image: Caitlin, "Bear," and Marvin getting breakfast prepared]

As we prepared for worship, we even had a full bus load of friends come to church for the first time on the bus. A big thank you to Mike Cotter (FUMC) who has been helping us with this needed ministry which helps our neighbors (some with mobility issues) to get to church when the public bus-line does not run on Sundays. [L] [SEP]



**[Image: A full house at Street Church]**

We decided to worship inside, out of the rain, with the vaccination and infection rates being low enough for worshipping safely. Our tables and chairs set up for our brunch style Street Church filled the room with friendly voices. I saw friends I have not seen for some time, including our friend George!



**[Image: George D and Pastor Chelsea Reunion]**

We also had the opportunity to welcome new faces for the first time into our community, including one of the presiding Assistant Bishops of the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia, Bishop Jennifer Brooke-Davidson who discreetly blessed us with her presence and gave us a blessing at the end of the service.





**[Image: Street Church Leaders with Assistant Bishop Jennifer Brooke-Davidson of the Episcopal Church in Virginia]**


It was also the first time we were able to sing inside for worship. Hearing the voices lifted up in praise to God, was a heavenly chorus that had my Methodist heart strangely warmed.

What I continually realize is that despite my own human fears, God continues to show up and show off in a big way through our community each week. During our “Collective Homily” I stood in awe at how the Spirit was moving through the stories lifted up at our beloved Street Church. Friends spoke up and shared their struggles together. We lifted up the reduced sentencing of one of our neighbors, Mike Kearney, who we prayed for before his trial. We also celebrated the release from “supervision” or probation from one of our older neighbors, Joe Sanders! Others lifted up future court hearings and friends who were struggling with addiction and grief. Together, we cried out to God who meets us in the dark, to answer our earthly questions like the story of Nicodemus meeting Jesus in our gospel reading from the book of John.



**[Image: At Street Church, everyone participates in the clean up]**

On this Trinity Sunday, I became keenly aware that God is at work as the Triune God-Head in this community, in these very holy moments of gathering on Sunday mornings. Like a song with a three-part harmony, we can witness God's beautiful dynamics at work in the one song we lift up as a community. God (the Creator) works ahead of us in creation, bringing these precious humans into our fold; the Son (the Redeemer) whose sacrificial love shows up in our acceptance of his justifying grace (no matter where we have come from), and the Holy Spirit (Sustainer) actively running through our lives, connecting us together as mysteriously as the wind blows. Yet, all are actively present in a tangible way through our prayers, presence, and worship as we are invited to participate in what God is already doing in our community.

 In a context where our neighbors have experienced deep loss and even homelessness, we intentionally strive to make Sunday morning their “homecoming” in God’s house. We want them to be so invested in the Sunday morning gathering that they know that it can’t happen without their team-work and support. Volunteering at church gives us (all) a sense of purpose. Our neighbors often do not feel worthy of this responsibility and it is our job to help them realize their potential and worthiness in the eyes of God.



**[Image: Bear and Marvin doing breakfast in the Kitchen]**

That is why when we provide space for them to set up the coffee, to make the breakfast, and to lead all components of Sunday morning Worship. Percolating the grounds is more than making “a cup of joe.” It is our active participation in the work that God is already doing, to host and receive guests who may experience God for the first time, in this place.

Whether it is making the coffee, turning the sausage, or flipping the pancakes, by working as a team, our neighbors feel empowered to love on others who have had a shared experience, and welcome them into the house of the Lord. Together, we are doing what the Lord requires us... to act with mercy, to love kindness, and walk humbly with God as one body of Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God, Amen.

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Chelsea

*Street Church meets at 1915 Charles St at 10:00 AM and all are invited to come and see what the Lord is doing in the Streets of Fredericksburg.*

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Grace and Peace,

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**Do Justice. Love Kindness. Walk Humbly with God.**

Love is a Verb: Find out more  
<https://www.micahfredericksburg.org/give-help/volunteer/>

