

Touching hearts, changing lives

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“I think this is the best Christmas I ever had!”

I had just handed him a toasted bagel, slathered with cream cheese, and a cup of hot chocolate with peppermint-flavored marshmallows. We were in the 1st Presbyterian Church Annex (15th and Walnut, Boulder) on Christmas day, and he was about to join several dozen other homeless folks for



a showing of *Christmas Story* (“You’ll shoot your eye out!”), followed by *Up!* In addition to the films, they were invited to a sit-down Christmas meal, served by Bridge House at the United Methodist Church.

“Being homeless for Christmas isn’t a good thing,” he went on.

I agreed. Especially if our movie and bagel made it his best Christmas. Raisin bread and bagels donated by Panera, tea stirred with candy canes, a warm place to rest during the day, a friendly smile and listening ear—that was all we offered. Though I discovered later that afternoon that—once McDonald’s and Starbucks closed at 3 p.m.—we were the only place in the city a homeless person could find a bathroom.

“Thanks for giving us the opportunity to serve our Lord with you today,” a friend commented.

Giving people a chance to serve may be what the Lamb’s Ministry does best. We meet at 1st

Pres, because they allow us to use their kitchen and rooms for our Saturday lunch, Thursday breakfast, and Tuesday laundry ministries. Volunteers from 1st Pres, Boulder Chinese Baptist Church, Boulder Valley Christian, Calvary Bible, Flatirons, Rock Creek, and other groups—ranging from Bible studies to Scouts to Naropa students to Fellowship of Christian Athletes—serve at the



Lamb’s ministry. They buy, prepare, and serve quality meals for 80 to 130 people. They chat and pray with our homeless guests, clean tables, wash dishes, and vacuum. Our oldest volunteers include out-of-town grandparents who join their families to serve on holiday visits; our youngest so far, I believe, was an eight-month-old.

This is what I've been learning this week ...

In addition to food preparation, serving, and cleanup, pastors, youth leaders, a family band, and other volunteers provide someone to bring a message and/or Christian music to the Saturday lunches. This is an area where we need more volunteers—youth choir or band, speakers, anyone who could bring a touch of the arts to the ministry.



“When do we get to go to the Lamb’s Lunch again?”

A volunteer dad told me his daughter asked that before Thanksgiving. I’ve also heard it from members of youth groups, Scout troops, and adult Bible studies. As one of my teens

said, after a long Saturday of cleaning floors and bathrooms, “You know, it just feels so good to really help people!”

Please talk to strangers today.

When we train the volunteers before each meal, we tell them something like this: “This is the Lamb’s Lunch, and we don’t know what to do with the apostrophe. It’s *Lamb-*apostrophe-S, because Jesus is the Lamb of God Who came to take away the sins of the world, and this is His ministry. But it’s also



*Lamb-*apostrophe, because Jesus said He is our Shepherd, so we, and our guests, are His lambs. Sometimes you see homeless people on the street corners, and they look scary or weird. But they are made in God’s image, just like we are. So we’re here to welcome our

guests to a meal served in God’s house by our hands.”

If there are children in the group, which is usually the case, the training continues, “All your lives, your parents and teachers have told you, *Don’t talk to strangers!* Well, I’m here to tell you that today—with your parents and leaders here—please **do** talk to strangers! Jesus said, ‘Whatever you do for one of the least of these, you do for Me.’ So smile when you scoop those mashed potatoes onto a plate, because you’re giving them to Jesus!”