



“Thank you for making me so wonderfully complex!
Your workmanship is marvelous — how well I know it.”

-- Psalm 139:14
(New Living Translation)

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Thanksgiving 2014

Dear Friends:

As the Thanksgiving season approaches, we are so grateful to God for placing us in such a wonderful place of ministry where we can touch so many diverse people with such diverse needs with the love of Jesus Christ. And we are thankful for so many of you who make this ministry possible by your generous support.

As Psalm 139 expresses our thanksgiving for the wonderfully complex way God has made us, that wonder is multiplied by all the people we see each day. The gathering of people at the Mission is a beautiful exhibition of all the diversity included in God's creation of people in his image.

One Wednesday morning recently I am amazed as I sit at a table in the chapel at the Mission and look around. I pause for a moment and start making a list of all the people surrounding me and everything happening around me.

I overhear one of our regular guests thanking Mary Lynn for the new CD of worship songs that she is playing. He says it is one of his favorite songs and it encourages him to face the day ahead.

One of our volunteers, a gentle and sensitive young woman, comes by serving coffee. She stops and sits next to one of the more troubled guests at the Mission for a few minutes. I don't know if they are able to have any meaningful conversation, but I do know that her presence is appreciated. She will be heading off to her office down the street soon.



A deaf man who is trying to teach me some sign language comes by to show me the sign for "Good Morning" again. I try to thank him for his effort and wish I was learning more quickly.



I notice one of the men who is fairly new at the Mission trying to gather other men for a Bible study. He sits at the round table in the big room and begins to read a passage from his Bible as the other men listen and comment. It does not last very long, but the men seem to appreciate it.

The microwave in the kitchen stops working and we start to discuss the cost of replacing it. It gets a lot of use by guests at the Mission as well as the staff.

One guest reads quietly from her Bible at a table. It is her regular habit and she smiles when she notices that I am looking at her.

A man in a wheelchair struggles to get through the front door. His electric chair is in the shop for repairs and he is forced to use his old manual chair. Several regular guests notice his difficulty and go to the front to help him into the building.



A young woman grabs a man's hat and starts to run away with it. They playfully chase each other around the tables in the chapel. I get up and remind them that they need to keep the noise down.

Several men and women gather at a table and begin to play cards. The game is louder than I thought cards should be played, but it is a serious (but friendly) competition. It continues with a revolving cast of players throughout the morning.



The volunteer who decorates the Mission for Christmas comes in with his brother. They are worried about their mother. She is in the hospital and will probably need to go to a nursing home. Mary Lynn helps them find a smock for her to wear in the hospital.

I notice that a little baby not more than a few weeks old is being passed around among the guests. They all have suggestions for the mother about the best ways to get the baby to sleep more regularly. Several suggest that the baby may have colic.

Watching the baby, I think about the discussions Mary Lynn and I have had about the opportunities and challenges of providing activities for children at the Mission when they visit with their parents, especially when school is out. We are hoping to begin some kind of "children's corner" for them when necessary staff and resources are available.

A smelly man staggers into the Mission wearing only a hospital gown. He has probably been wearing it for several days, but claims that he has just come from the hospital. He takes a shower and we find him some clean clothes to change into.

Several long-time guests start to collect coffee cups from the tables and return them to the kitchen. I tell one of them that we appreciate the help.

One man begins to pound on the piano in the chapel and someone comments that his playing is not improving very much. I joke that we may need to require him to bring a note from his piano teacher, but the noise is tolerated by most of the guests who understand the man's difficult circumstances.

A big African-American man convinces the piano player to stop for a few minutes and tries to lead everyone in prayer. The general din in the chapel quiets somewhat as he prays in a very loud and dramatic voice. Some of the people appreciate his heart-felt prayer deeply. Most are happy to join in the amen at the end.

Two blind men who are frequent guests at the Mission bump into each other. I watch to make sure that they both realize it was not intentional. A woman who is also a frequent guest at the Mission comes to their assistance before I can get there and helps them find their way out the door.

A donation of several bags of clothing comes to the front door and several guests help to bring it in and put it in the appropriate place for sorting. Although we prefer donations in the afternoons when there is less chaos, it seems to work out relatively smoothly this time.

A man asks about our transition house and Danny spends a few minutes talking with him. He seems to be receptive to the type of serious recovery program offered at the house, including regular church attendance. Danny arranges for a more formal interview with him later in the week.

Someone anxiously informs me that two men are getting ready to start a fight outside the building. Although I take the warning seriously, I do not rush to the door. The potential combatants are gone by the time I am able to investigate and prepare to intervene.

An older man begins to play a banjo and tries to get people to join him in singing old Gospel songs. Several people are enthusiastic about the opportunity to sing.



A former resident of the Mission's transition house and his wife who are trying to regain custody of their daughter thank Mary Lynn for allowing them to wash and dry a load of clothes, including some baby clothes. They are grateful for the ability to save a few dollars in their tight budget by doing their laundry at the Mission.

Another man stands in front of the Bible displayed on a stand in the hallway. He moves his finger along the text and reads quietly to himself. It is obvious that he struggles with the words, but he smiles as he recognizes the truth God is communicating to him.

A young man with a guitar sits down on the steps in the front of the chapel and begins to play some worship music. An obviously intoxicated man is welcomed as he sits next to him and joins him in the singing. It is loud, but a genuine expression of praise for at least some of those who join in.

A man begins clapping in the kitchen for no apparent reason and with no obvious rhythm.

An older woman who loves to volunteer at the Mission begins playing "How Great Thou Art" on the piano and several people begin to sing along. Later she plays "At Calvary" and a different group starts to sing along.



Our Mission

To share the love of Jesus Christ with the people of Springfield by providing opportunities that meet their spiritual and physical needs.

In the middle of all this activity, God's love is being communicated gently and persistently. The truth of the Gospel is being preached in the music, in the Bible reading, and especially in the quiet presence of caring people. We see thanksgiving to God rising in many hearts each morning.

It is truly awesome to have such a unique glimpse on God's diverse world. And to know that God who made us with such diversity must enjoy it as well. He loves each one and wants to embrace all of us in the love of Jesus that he demonstrated on the cross.

We often say that there are no typical days at the Mission. But that's probably just because there are no typical people. We are so thankful to be entrusted with the task of sharing God's love in this crazy place.

And we are grateful for your generous support especially in this Thanksgiving season.

In the Love of Jesus,

Kenneth E. Mitchell
Executive Director