

# benevolence & almsgiving

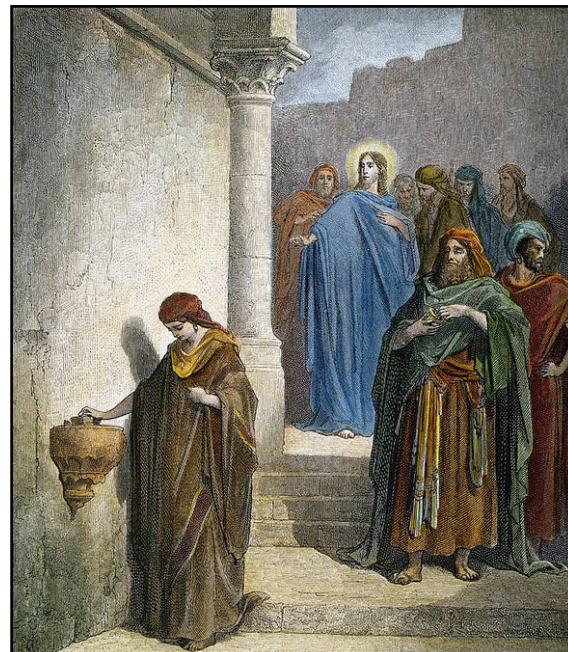
by Fr. Benjamin Wall

**B**enevolence is the quality of being well-meaning. To be benevolent is to be kind, compassionate, generous, considerate, and of goodwill toward oneself and others. Theologically speaking, benevolence is a way of rightly naming faith as lived in the light of Jesus' life, ministry, and teaching of loving others as oneself, and to do so publicly. In Christianity, benevolence is rooted in the holy tradition of the giving of alms—which consist of material goods such as meals/food, money, or other tangible goods generously and sacrificially offered to people living in conditions of poverty and plight, and to those who are less fortunate or live on the margins. Throughout the history of the church, Christians have believed that almsgiving (benevolence) is a visible expression of love founded upon the love God has demonstrated to the world in and through the son of God, Jesus Christ, who offered himself as an act of love for us. In other words, Christ's love compels us to love others in tangible ways and to do so generously, considerately, and sacrificially without conditions.

There are many ways almsgiving is practiced at Redeemer. Like many churches, our parish designates a portion of our annual tithes and offerings for the

support of our mission in relation to relief for those in need within and outside our local community. This money has allowed our church to assist people with dental, medical, and healthcare needs and to obtain reliable transportation, secure affordable housing, financially assist with utilities, vehicle and home repairs, and much more. Other ways our community has and continues to tangibly demonstrate our love toward those on the margins is through our Free Farmer's Market which provides a reprieve in a county that is food-health insecure. In addition, our farm ministry provides combat female veterans the space and opportunity to engage in horticulture-focused therapeutic peer support. In all these ways and many more, the Spirit of God continues to guide us in the way of love that is compassionate, generous, and considerate, a way of life that we are called into more and more day by day, year by year.

This way is the way of Jesus Christ. For the mystery of the gos-



pel is not that Jesus came to serve the poor and those on the margins but became poor and lived at the margins. Benevolence is the way of Christ. May we continue in this way never content with all we've done, but hopeful that God will continue to do this work in and through us all the more. May we continue to excel still more in the quality of being well-meaning. May the love of Christ compel us to love others in tangible ways that can only be characterized as generous, considerate, and sacrificial without conditions.

## — stephen ministry — “Christ caring for people through people”

I WAS PART OF THE INITIAL STEPHEN MINISTRY TRAINING AT REDEEMER from 2018-2019, facilitated by Hunter Van Wagenen and Father Dan Nobles. There were six of us—three women and three men of diverse ages and walks of life—meeting all day Saturday once a month. Those times together were such rich, rewarding times of building relationships and community with each other, as we learned how to come alongside hurting people in our midst. Each of us was provided a comprehensive study guide and several books to read (and later keep in our libraries for reference); there was a teaching video for each class; and we spent time roleplaying with each other, activating what we were learning. The guidance of Hunter and Dan as trained facilitators was a valuable part of our learning, bringing to us their own perspectives and experiences. As we continued to meet, our confidence in the program and in ourselves increased, as did our realization of our total dependence on the Holy Spirit and His ability to equip us and use us in His ministry. Unfortunately, COVID interrupted all our lives before we were able to fully complete the program and be sent out. I am so thankful that Deacon Ashley Davis and Father Ben Wall have taken on the leader training to renew the program at Redeemer, and I look forward to getting up-to-speed and seeing more and more Stephen Ministers raised up and sent out to be additional hands and feet of Christ at Church of the Redeemer.

BY LUANNE ARRINGTON

MY TIME WITH CAREGIVING THROUGH STEPHEN MINISTRY HAS BEEN AN ENRICHING EXPERIENCE. I first met with my care receiver back in late 2019. We talked about Stephen Ministry and what would be involved. Stephen Ministers typically meet with their care recipients once a week. We looked at our calendars and decided to meet up for breakfast on Saturday mornings at a local diner.

Each time we met and shared a meal, we talked about what was going on in each other's lives and got to know each other. There were times we couldn't meet up, and we would call or text each other just to check in. Even though I was assigned to be a caregiver, what ultimately happened is that we mutually cared for each other and walked alongside each other for a season. When the pandemic hit, we weren't able to meet in person any longer, but we kept up through phone calls and texts, where we would share prayer requests and pray for each other.

Each caregiving relationship in this ministry will be different depending on the needs and the situation. However, God shows up in ordinary things like eating breakfast and sending texts. My mindset going into the relationship was to be a blessing to the other person, but as often happens, in the end my life was also blessed.

BY REV. RYAN KILDOO

