

Testimonials Are Us

A Compelling Call to Serve

It was a cold-to-the-bone winter day when a band of Centenary's good hearts moved food they had prepared into the tight quarters of a closet size kitchen. From there they would feed a wholesome meal to a gathering of hungry souls of 35 to 50 people. It is a routine the mission team has had every fourth Thursday for approximately five years: prepare, cook, serve, love; prepare, cook, serve, love. This time Centenary's mission team included Larry and Karen Crouch, Wayne and Katharyn Tummonds, and Matt Bell. Over the years, the team has consisted of various Centenary members including, Caroll and Faye Rice, Sydney Lawson, David Pratt, Kathy Taylor, Clyde Sharp, and Helena Kruer.

The folks they are feeding are God's Kitchen regulars. People down on their luck, homeless, needing a hot meal and a caring hand. God's Kitchen, an ecumenical ministry started by Victory Baptist Church, 715 Main St, serves those in need a hot lunch, Monday – Friday, 52 weeks per year. Opening at 9AM with coffee and often, donated (day-old) doughnuts, a hot lunch follows at 11:30. The meals are served by one of several different churches who alternate days in the month to feed the lunch crowd. When school is out, families with children may come to be fed, but this Thursday it's adults who needed a safe place out of the elements to eat a warm meal.



Larry Crouch, left, and Wayne Tummonds, starts dishing up lunch for the lunch crowd at God's Kitchen, February 26th.

Kitchen ministry has blessed them in a special way. Larry describes the ministry as helping "the working poor, whoever needs a hot meal and can't afford one. There's always someone who thanks us. Several will bless us and thank us for being kind or generous. Some will ask us to share prayer with them. Pray with them for lost family members. They express their appreciation."



While fellow Methodists are preparing the meal, Matt Bell brings the morning devotional at God's Kitchen.



Karen Crouch brings a smile and a lunch.

Ask retirees, Larry and Karen Crouch, why the dedication and they know the question's answer immediately, "it's scriptural". First Larry, then Karen, then simultaneously the couple explain, "We want to help. We have been truly fortunate. Not everybody can be so successful and it's through no fault of their own." Larry summarizes, "it's our mission through scripture we know from our abundance, we are to do more."

That's a loving heart paraphrase, Larry, of Luke 12:48b . . .

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

Longtime members of Centenary, Larry and Karen have served the Lord through the church in numerous ways, but the God's

Wayne and Katharyn Tummonds will celebrate their anniversary of being part of Centenary's family on Easter Sunday. It was Easter 2014 when the Tummonds, visiting for the first time, "had the feeling", says Katharyn, "this would be our church". The Spencer County couple had lived around the country starting from upstate New York, and most recently had lived in Columbus Ohio before moving to Kentucky to be more conveniently located near their children and grandchildren. Their Methodist background had not kept them from trying a variety of area churches before they visited Centenary. "When we visited Centenary we got the feeling from everyone, this is" 'your church,' " says Katharyn. Their second visit to Centenary found them setting in a pew between John Foster and Don Earnst. Don and John are Wayne and Katharyn's fathers' names respectively, it felt like a blessing. Plus Centenary's Don and John, and others, "were so very helpful about things", recalls Katharyn. Including things like explaining there were four adult classes for Sunday School. Their first visit to the Seekers Class "was a fit" smiles Katharyn who says they immediately "felt right in being a part of the class".

Before retirement, Wayne had not been able to join Katharyn in a soup kitchen ministry, 'Soup for the Soul', in Ohio where she regularly served. When they learned of God's Kitchen, they felt called to serve. "Each passing year," Katharyn realizes, "Wayne and I are reminded through various things that we are so fortunate. Much of the time it is not their fault" (when people are in need). "We believe this is one way to pay back for our blessings or to pay it forward," says Katharyn. "We are sharing the gifts God has shared with us."



Left to right, Katharyn, Karen and Wayne preparing lunch.

Matt Bell, Centenary Youth Director, often delivers a devotional for the God's Kitchen lunch bunch. Standing before people who may count their God's Kitchen lunch as their best or only meal of the day gives Matt a loving perspective. "I want people to know that speaking to them is not unlike speaking to any other group in any other venue. There will be people who are and are not paying attention. Some are looking for a meal. Some take the message in and consider it. Some dismiss it outright. They are typical of any group you speak to except they may be down on their luck." Matt recognizes, "Some of them are part of a growing population of the working poor. This group is struggling. I see some of them working around town every day but this meal helps them make it.

Matt emphasizes, "I want people to understand that these people are no different than I am. The only difference is their current situation is more difficult.

We can and should minister to people who have been marginalized. It's a ministry Jesus would do. When we are helping people like the ones we help at God's Kitchen, we're getting it right."

Larry, Karen, Katharyn, Wayne, and you, too, Matt, what you are saying sounds like God's Holy Word to us.

³⁵ *For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,* ³⁶ *I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'*

³⁷ *"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?'* ³⁸ *When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you?'* ³⁹ *When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'*

⁴⁰ *"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'* **Matthew 25:35-40 New International Version (NIV)**