

# Mission Moment

## *God's Work, Our Hands*

By Jamie Charlton

Pastor Chris wrote an article for December's Windsor Window which highlighted the good work our church family does in partnership with Family Promise of Greater Des Moines. Lives are indeed changed through this program which helps homeless families receive services, food, and shelter. But the guests whom we serve in Family Promise are not the only ones who experience change. When you become involved in this ministry (or other ministries at WHLC), *you* will be changed as well! I have had the privilege of coordinating this ministry for about two years. God continues to change me, teach me, and bless me.

Please allow me to share five of the gifts I have received from volunteering this ministry.

**1. I am thankful.** I have done nothing to deserve the many blessings I have—a loving family, good health, a warm home, steady work, a supportive community. I thank God for these gifts. I read somewhere that 7 out of 10 Americans are one paycheck away from homelessness. I don't know if that's true. But I do know that I have been blessed beyond measure. I am deeply, bewilderedly grateful for all that I have.

**2. I admit my neediness.** One of the parts I least enjoy about serving in this ministry is asking for help. I am a person who likes to open my own jars. I'd rather not eat the pickle than to admit my weakness. But I think God desires us to need each other — in order to experience the beauty of living in community, to keep us humble, to be the body. Not one of us could on our own do the monumental task of providing food and shelter to homeless families 365 days a year! *We need* one another. It is a good thing to be needed and it is a good thing to ask for help. I will be asking you soon!

**3. I pray in the cold.** The coldest I have ever been was when I made the mistake of going deer hunting with my Dad when I was about 15. It was brutal. It was horrifying. And I ended up spending most of the day locked in the car, and am now a vegetarian. But that experience was my choice. And I had a warm home to return to — with hot cider, a sympathetic mother, and heavy blankets. I cannot imagine experiencing such coldness with no promise of warmth. And to experience it with my children is unthinkable. On these cold days, when I am on the verge of cursing Ed Wilson, I think of those who are desperately, hopelessly cold, and I pray.

**4. I see my neighbor.** Sometimes the people who most need to be seen are the most invisible. I confess that at times I have chosen to NOT see the man holding a sign on the side of the off-ramp. But that man deserves to be seen. So does the exhausted mother of 8 who is the night manager at Dollar General. So does the kind-hearted

grandmother caring for her disabled grandchild. So does the quiet boy beginning the schoolyear at yet another new school and trying to find out where he belongs. These are all persons who have been our guests in the Family Promise program. It is good to see *everyone* as who they truly are: God's children.

**5. I am humbled.** God uses me. God uses you. Isn't that amazing? We are called by the Creator of All to be God's hands. That is a beautiful, powerful, humbling, and life-changing task!

I invite you too to consider how you are being changed by the work you do in God's name.

Praise be to God!