

“Entertaining Angels”

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A funny little snippet of a story has been rattling around in my head for some time now and I will relate it as indicative of the overriding sense of being graced, thus offering grace, which was the central theme of Christ Community Church for as long as it existed.

In the late 70s and throughout the 80s, during that heady time of growth and ourselves finding out who we really were, we "hosted" many souls who would stop by for emergency funds, food, or to relate a hard-luck story on a sympathetic and listening ear. There was the farm woman, for instance, trying to get back to Iowa, in need of gasoline money. There was the fellow who slept a few nights in a back hallway, leaving his empty bottle under a chair for us to find in the morning. We may have gained a reputation for being a place to come for just such aid and empathy. Being located on a state highway through the village, we were visible and easily accessible.

One afternoon I was working a bit later than usual. Everyone had gone home and I was finishing some project or another before doing the same, when suddenly, it seemed to me, appeared four young people, in their 20s, I would guess, asking if we might have some food for them. They were traveling and were hungry, that's all I knew. The food pantry we maintained on the premises was locked up for the night and I did not have access to the key at the time. But, I had that day gone to Henry Casemier's grocery store down Exchange St. and purchased some bread and peanut butter, and I had it in the office ready to take home. I explained the circumstances of the locked pantry, but offered them bread and peanut butter, if they would have it. They were delighted and said they would eat outside on a bench. I took the food with some paper plates I found and utensils out to them and they thanked me many times.

I went back in, finished what I had to do, locked up and looked out the door. It was only a few minutes that I had been gone and I expected they might still be there, but they had vanished, leaving half a loaf of bread and the remaining peanut butter on the bench.

The next morning I related the story to one of the pastors and he said, "Maybe you have entertained angels". Seeing the puzzlement on my face, he cited Hebrews 13:2: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares".

I don't know to this day whether he was joshing with me or not, but I have remembered the incident ever since, and it has come back to me many times as a precious little vignette of some of the time when we had Christ Community Church.