

Mission Moment

There is an expression from central Africa that says: "We will carry your water." It is a term I learned from our fellow HCC members Germain and Jeanine Bindika from Congo. It means something like this: We've got you covered. We are behind you all the way.

You can lean on us. We'll be there for you. We will carry your water.

I thought of this as I thought about our upcoming Crop Walk as well as my recent trip to Rwanda. While there I saw people walking everywhere. Women and children carrying water in jerry cans like this. Rwanda is lush and beautiful with streams and rivers everywhere. But you still have to get to the source and haul it back to you home. Even short distances become long when you carry water.

The good news? This church has been a faithful community which has shown "We will carry your water". I want to lift up all of you this morning, all of us, for being a people who are willing to be there for others--to help carry the load.

You have been leaders in carrying the water for hundreds of families in our community through our food bank, our fishes and Loaves ministries, our long and generous support of Crop Walk.

But not only that. Almost a decade ago this church raised the funds to fly a woman you had never met, Rose Gakwandi Mukankaka from Rwanda and opened your hearts and homes so as to learn from her how it is one woman turns personal loss and tragedy into compassion and healing for thousands. By your willingness to carry her water, you opened doors for her ministry. Contacts with folks at MSU, such as Laura Apol with the Dept. of Education, and Ken Bialek with his entrepreneurial vision, have expanded into on going projects with Rose, which support thousands in Rwanda to this day.

Can you believe it? You all- Haslett Community Church, and the Church and Society Committee led so well by David Arnosti supplied the means for these contacts to blossom and grow. You were the first to carry the water, to take that the first leap of faith which watered the gardens for these ministries to flourish.

One morning in Rwanda, I woke up beside Lake Kivu with this thought: Rose's ministry could provide fertile soil for the education of divinity students. What a place for students to learn the ways one woman can transform tragedy into compassion. At breakfast, when I shared that idea with Rose, her eyes grew large, her energy quickened, she embraced this idea with open arms and great enthusiasm. She quickly wrote up a proposal.

I got a contact name from Erin. That person directed me to another person. After six months of phone calls, e-mails, letters, I can tell you that Princeton Seminary is going to list Rose's Beloved Child Association as one of its ten international sites for field education for Princeton Students.

Not only is that, but a professor McKee at Princeton, upon learning more and more about Rose through our conversations, wants to build an entire course on Women Christian Leaders in Africa, even wants to help Rose write her own story so that Rose's faith and work can become the centerpiece of this graduate course. Jesus always spoke of the mustard seed and a widow's tiny coin as the genesis for great wonders.

Wonders still unfold! Let these good tidings give us renewed energy and joy. Our upcoming Crop walk offers another opportunity. If you haven't walked before, maybe this is your year to join in. Being a friend. Have that friend bring a friend. It's fun.

The river is wide and God is still speaking. The water we have carried has born great fruit. Let us all continue to carry the water.

HK. Swearingen
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