

God's grace through community

May 29, 2024



The Episcopal
Church in
Alabama

Dear Friends:

Recently I visited with a woman, named Sue, who is 97 years young. I wanted to thank her for her gift to Sawyerville kids. She told me that she had recently fallen three times at home and though she wasn't injured in her falls, falling signaled the end of her driving herself and getting out without help. For the first time in her life, she hired a caregiver, a woman of color, who had never visited a white neighborhood before.

The caregiver had two small children and really needed the work. Lately, she's been helping Sue walk with a walker outside in the fresh air. She's become a friend to this elderly woman and now Sue is sharing books with her caregiver, giving her Jane Austen novels and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. They are educating each other.

All that is lovely, but the most interesting thing is that when the caregiver takes Sue to church for a Thursday noon Eucharist, now she's going inside and worshipping with Sue. She's even taking her little girls with her. All of a sudden, the kingdom has come near. Not because Sue went door to door or was trying to convert this person, but just because Sue was reaching out to be kind and loving and she did not hide her faith. Only God knows what all this may mean to both of them as time passes, but I imagine it will mean Good News both ways. I like to think that many demons are being cast out.

A famous physician and psychotherapist named Gerald May says people who care about each other in church can be a force for healing. Dr. May writes:

"God's grace through community involves something far greater than other people's support and perspective. The power of grace is nowhere as brilliant nor as mystical as in communities of faith. Its power includes not just love that comes from people and through people, but love that pours forth among people, as if through the very spaces between one person and the next. Just to be in such an atmosphere is to be bathed in healing power."

The Sawyerville ministry kicks off yesterday and will touch the lives of hundreds of kids, youth and adults in the next four weeks. Playing games, reading scripture together, singing songs, eating snacks and most of all, swimming, becomes the formula for healing and hope. God's grace comes when we least expect it and brings Good News. The Good News will sneak up on us, capture us, and we may realize that God is doing for us what we can't do for ourselves. Please join me in praying for the ministry of Sawyerville these next three weeks. Thank you for your pool noodles, swim suits, meals, endless art supplies, beach towels. Thank you for your love and prayers. God willing, we will all find some healing. I hope I see you at church.

Blessings,

+ Bishop G