

Dear Epiphany,

For the sixteenth time in sixteen years, the Service & Outreach Group invites our Epiphany family and friends to Have a Heart. We will gather to raise money for several nonprofit organizations that regard Epiphany as a trusted and reliable funder. Year after year, parishioners have pooled their gifts to support the most important work in the world: caring for people.

Every year, these invitations remind me of all those who won't be at the party. They are the very people, the names and faces and lives, for whom these organizations exist in the first place. If there had been no malnourished street kids living on The Ave back in the 1980s, the ER nurses at University Hospital wouldn't have organized a network of help that eventually became Teen Feed. If there were no people living under a dripping tent or in their cars, Sound Foundations and tiny home villages wouldn't be necessary. If conditions in Haiti didn't leave destitute children on its streets, Father Joseph Constant would not have founded the Haiti Micah Project.

Fifty years ago, Epiphany's funding for social service ministries—in those days raised by The Women of Epiphany's Trinkets and Treasures thrift shop on Capitol Hill—went to organizations such as Seattle Emergency Housing Service, Union Gospel Mission, Amigos de las Americas, Northwest Second Harvest, Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief, Senior Rights Assistance, First Avenue Service Center, American Mission to Lepers, Friends of the Jailed, and more. The nonprofits Epiphany supports today provide similar care.

Human problems don't seem to change much. People lose their jobs. They get kicked out of housing. They go hungry and get sick and grow old. They never worked outside the home and so have no pension. They age out of foster care unprepared to live on their own. They flee war and violence in their own country or in their own home. They are members of ethnic groups or whole countries that have endured injustice for generations.

They are the reason we have held Have a Heart every year since 2011. It isn't on the liturgical calendar, but this event on the first Sunday of February could certainly be celebrated as a feast day of our church. (A feast day with lots of good food!) It is our affirmation that we at Epiphany are committed to uphold the great double-barreled commandment to love God and neighbor.

In my mind this event has always been an exercise in spiritual formation. When we do any kindness for another person, that action changes us in a subtle but significant way, nudging us a little farther along on our spiritual journey. What does the money we raise at Have a Heart ultimately do but fund the practical and material expressions of kindness and compassion?

We will be the ones having a well-fed good time at Have a Heart Sunday night, but it really isn't our party. It's never been about us. It's about them. Please join us in this most important work of providing for their care.

Gratefully,
Holly Boone, Chair, Epiphany Service & Outreach