

Building Bridges of Hope
Creating Moments of Mercy and Moments of Grace
Sandra Lommasson

“Building bridges of hope. Creating moments of mercy and moments of grace.” It’s how new *Bread of Life* board member Bill Johnson describes the work of the Center, but what does this work actually look like?

It looks like Christopher, the young man who came to church again last Sunday with a skateboard tucked under his arm. I remembered him from this time a year ago when he popped into another Sunday service and then returned later that week to sit upstairs in the quiet of the *Bread of Life* prayer room. I can’t tell whether it’s life on the streets, mental illness, drugs or a combination of the three that darken his eyes, but regardless, there’s something that draws him to church at least once a year.

He came to the Advent Wreath-making Event after the service where several people extended a welcome and helped him secure a cup of hot soup. Then he sat at a table staring vacantly through the activity of those around him. What do we say after “Hello” to someone like Christopher? Somebody offered him a shaped coat-hanger with a few greens attached and I asked if he’d ever made a wreath. “Nope.” “Do you want to?” Long pause. “Maybe for someone else. Don’t have anywhere to put it.” He started, growing gradually more animated as it took shape, tying the green gardener’s tape into big floppy bows on top. When I commented on his artistic flair, the hint of a smile crossed his face and then disappeared when he realized I’d noticed. On the streets it’s dangerous to let yourself be touched.

He started to talk, mostly about God. “You know what it says in the Bible?” he asked abruptly. “It says, ‘Don’t put God in a box.’” He looked up from the wreath and stared intently into my eyes. Then he wandered into a disconnected reverie that eventually led to how it made him mad enough to throw glass when people tried to box God. His eyes glittered; I felt a chill around my heart. Then, “Do you know *Footprints*?” I realized he was referring to the famous picture of footprints on a sandy beach where the artist realizes that Christ has carried him through tough times. I nodded. His eyes teared suddenly, “What if Jesus comes and he doesn’t see me?” I reassured him that he is very visible and very precious to Jesus. He looked doubtful. I continued, “Your name – Christopher – means ‘Christ-bearer.’ Maybe someone knew you’d need help remembering how special to be to God.” He started winding the gardener’s tape back and forth across the middle of the wreath. “It’s a dream-catcher,” he finally said. Another long pause. “It’s me. I’m the dream-catcher.” He finished and then crossed the room to pick up a broom and help the folks beginning to sweep the Fellowship Hall. He felt connected enough to want to contribute. After good-byes and an invitation to come back, he hesitated, grabbed his skateboard and then carefully picked up his dream-catcher advent wreath and took it with him into the street where he lives.

Bridges of hope. Moments of mercy. Moments of grace. Beginnings. They may be small, but then so is the grain of mustard seed of which Jesus spoke. The mission of the *Bread of Life* Center is to help create such moments of real meeting where persons and groups and institutions might allow themselves to be touched in new ways by the Dream-giver who can’t be put in a box. Your partnership with us in creating bridges of hope helps every season to become an advent season of promise. We thank you and invite you to come and hear more about what we’re doing, or to simply come and pray in the beautiful quiet of our prayer room upstairs. It’s open every day for dreamers, dream catchers, and those who have forgotten how.