

PLANTING SEEDS FOR HARVEST

I am constantly amazed and humbled by the discipleship of many in our family of faith. Below is a story about a few of our number – and one person in particular – which demonstrates how Kincardine United Church continues to make a difference in this community and in the world.

She wakes to the familiar aches and pains in her joints. Brushing her hair back from her forehead, she slowly sits up and massages her arthritic fingers. She feels some soothing relief from the pain as she sits for a time pondering the day ahead. She



cannot leave the locked down facility, but someone will be calling her to breakfast soon. She sighs as she rises, wishing to wash her face, brush her hair and get dressed before the meal arrives. Immediately after settling into her chair, there is a knock on her door.

The staff person greets her with a cheery “Hello.” They share a bit of small talk while walking toward her shared table in the dining room. The aroma of hot oatmeal with brown sugar tantalizes as she leans over to inhale deeply. She nods absently as the staff person bids her farewell until lunch, knowing there are a few others still needing to be summoned. She tucks in. With her satisfying breakfast filling her stomach, she returns to her room – alone.

Alone. It’s a word that seems to imply the absence of connection, of relationship, perhaps even of meaning. Not for her. She has a secret that not many know. She has purpose even during this time of pandemic lock-down at Trillium Court. She smiles in anticipation for her task ahead. Alone is not what she feels. She has her dolls.

As her fingers swiftly but economically move to the cadence of her knitting needles, she no longer notices the arthritis in her fingers. Instead, she imagines the children overseas, their Moms, their dire situation of poverty amidst war. As her fingers move, she imagines love flowing down the needles, saturating the wool, enlivening each row with a spirit of peace, of joy, of play and of comfort. Every child needs a doll to love, to hug, to snuggle in the terror of the night. What better doll than one soaked in faithful prayer, one that has its own personality gestated from the colours and textures of the yarn and one that is nurtured in her heart?





It's getting close to lunch and she wants to finish this next doll before fellow Trillium Court resident Art Postuma arrives. He said he wanted to take a picture of her with her next batch of dolls. She likes Art. His gentle presence, his quiet humour and his caring are always a delight. He never seems to be upset or troubled, even though he is no longer allowed to walk around town for exercise. After all, as he had recently shared with her, the management don't want him to risk contact with the virus "at his age." He winks because she's older than he is and he is more fit than most of the staff. Instead, he makes due with walking many laps each day, circling the building outside to get in his exercise.

His smile lights up the room when he arrives. After the obligatory chit chat, she asks him why he wanted to take a picture with her next batch of dolls for the Izzy Doll Foundation. He grins and tells her that Katrena Johnston, as the Co-ordinator of the Foundation in North West Ontario for the past 15 years, wants to publicize the project through an article in the



Kincardine Independent. The picture would be a publicity photo for the article to encourage others to volunteer while celebrating her contributions as one of many volunteers. Satisfied, June MacGregor poses for him on the chesterfield overlooking her second-floor view of the inner courtyard of the facility. On a hassock in front of her she has arranged a display featuring 30 of her Izzy Dolls. There are three more bags full of them beside her. Her smile shows a subtle, quiet pride in this next batch totalling 300 dolls. She has now knit over six thousand of them over the years.



No, she is not alone. When she has Art and Meta as neighbours, when she knows Katrena is looking out for her and keeping in touch with her, when she gets to know the individual personalities of each doll,

when she feels the spiritual connection with the children and Moms overseas, she knows she has purpose. Her purpose is to make a difference for others and for the environment. Her purpose also nurtures her own soul and fills her heart with meaning.

There may be some people, she figures, who believe she is one of the forgotten ones – confined to the facility as she is. She knows that each doll eliminates the need for packing materials like bubble wrap, plastic air packs or foam chips. Instead, these Izzy Dolls are packed around the peace relief packages that go specifically to developing regions in the world, supplying medical materials as well as providing for the needs of children and their Moms.



Through these dolls, she is not alone.

Through her relationships with others from the Kincardine United Church family of faith, she knows she is valued and loved – part of the family. Through her volunteer work, she knows that she makes a difference in the world. She grins to herself. This is her personal call to follow the Way of Jesus.



She remembers a passage from Matthew's Gospel that speaks to these seeming small gifts as she walks back to her room. "And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because she is my disciple, I tell you the truth, she will certainly not lose her reward."¹ Sitting once again in her comfy chair in her room, massaging her fingers once again, she smiles with appreciation. Her reward is knowing she has touched others with love, with compassion, with sharing and with caring. That is enough.

If you wish to make a special gift to Kincardine United Church to honour how people of our church make a difference, mark it "Gord's Haircut." If a total of over two thousand dollars is raised by June 14th – our anniversary Sunday – I will shave all the hair off my head. I will even post the process on our YouTube channel for your viewing pleasure.

¹ Matthew 10:42 (the change of gender is my contextual edit).