

Celebrating the Ordinary

Celebration is the acceptance of life and the constantly increasing awareness of its preciousness. We can only really celebrate when we affirm our present condition. It is the recognition that something is there and needs to be made visible so that we can say “yes” to it. To be present to the moment is an affirmation of each other in the many different ways we experience life.

When I enter with the children into their joy, I enter also with them into their unique understanding of value in the ordinary discovered completely by surprise.

In the ending days of our summer lunch program, two tanned barefoot boys ran to our van and eagerly exclaimed “yesterday my brother and me found two baby chicks running in the trailer park.” He digressed, “oh they are so beautiful, one is black and one is white.” He continued, “we begged our mom to keep them. “Only,” she said, “if you can find a big box. Our trailer is too small for animals to be running around.” “We remember that you brought big boxes to carry the lunches you deliver to the children and we told her we were very sure you’d let us have one for our chickens’ new home.”

Not only did we have big boxes, but we had little ones and middle-sized ones. We had choices, wonderful choices! We consecrated the chickens’ new home and left with more respect for an ordinary cardboard box.

It is odd how these “little celebrations” of surprise and kindness can link us to the diversity of our ministry:

- A mother finding a suit in our MUST-Wear Clothes Rack for her son to wear to the senior prom
- Mental Health Consumers unloading donuts and bread in a joyful community effort
- A guest in the Elizabeth Inn sharing with his case manager that he has been sober for thirty days, whereas he had never gone more than fourteen
- The words overheard on a cold winter day in the soup kitchen, ‘this cornbread is almost as good as my grandmother’s.’
- A single mother of three exclaiming to her delight, “Because I had childcare and support, I’ve stayed long enough at my job to get benefits; that’s never happened before.”
- A family of five taking groceries from the food bank and returning the next week, after the father got his paycheck at the end of the month, with a small box of food to say thank you

My days at MUST are made of ordinary moments where life is fully celebrated in kindness and affirmed in truth.

As the winter days stretch into longer light, and I discover the surprise of the early buds of spring resting in the limbs of the tree outside the shelter, I remember in celebration the beautiful words of the Psalmist, “kindness and truth shall meet” (Psalm 85).