

Mark's Blog: Recycling

It is always dangerous to single out people for recognition in a congregation. So many people do so many things, most often behind the scene, that you run the risk of slighting someone's contribution by acknowledging another's work. But I want to break my own rule by citing Gary Bell's work recycling paper, boxes, bottles and cans at church. Nearly every Tuesday morning Gary makes his rounds collecting items from the recycling bins at church. From the church kitchen to the coffee hour space to the Parish House he bags paper, bottles and cans, breaks down cardboard boxes, loads all of it in his PT Cruiser and totes it to the town's recycling center. He serves with the same intentionality as the postal service: "neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays this courier from the swift completion of his appointed rounds."

I never asked him to do this. He started on his own perhaps 10 years ago simply following his own call to environmental stewardship. I did some rough calculations (about 50 lbs of recycling items per week/52 weeks per year (*because none of us step forward to do it for him on those weeks he is away*)/ 10 years) and realized Gary has collected 13 tons of recyclables as part of his ministry. One sheet of paper, one aluminum can, one empty soda bottle at a time.

Mother Teresa said: "*In this life we cannot do great things. We can only do small things with great love.*" Sometimes those small acts are acts of resistance against unjust and unwise political and social forces that seek to diminish and demean people. Sometimes those small acts are acts of kindness that remind both the giver and the receiver of their shared humanity. Sometimes those small acts are acts of love that cannot be demanded or earned, only given as a blessing.

The challenges and divisions in our lives and in our world often seem to weigh more than 13 tons. And some days it sure is tempting to retreat into isolation or anger or fatalism. But each week Gary gives me a dose of reality and hope at the same time, one page at a time.