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**Title:** #beCHURCH: Be Helpful

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**Text:** [1 Peter 4:8-11](#)

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Kate stepped out of the bookstore where we worked to a cold evening chill. She pulled her scarf up to her chin and hurried across the parking lot to her car. She had one stop to make, at the grocery, and then she would be home. It was so cold that in the short time that it took her to get from work to her car, that her fingers became so

cold they began to ache. She wished she had put on her gloves

As she got going, she came to the grocery store, and on the side of the entrance to the store was a man out in the cold holding a sign that said HOMELESS PLEASE HELP. His collar was turned up as high as it could go, but her gaze rested on his bare hands. She thought about how cold her own bare hands had been. She thought about how cold his hands must be sitting there in the cold

She went into the store. She began shopping for the things she needed. Eggs, bread, yogurt. One by one she checked off her mental list. Then there was a nudge, a nudge she couldn't explain. She hit one more aisle. She checked out, got back to her car, got in, and went to the exit where she came in. The man was still sitting there. She rolled down her window and he brought his bucket over. She didn't hand him any money, instead, she handed him the warmest pair of gloves she could find in that grocery store. A tear came down his eye and a tear came down hers. She realized it wasn't a lot, but it was something. So often, when thinking about those who are experiencing homelessness, Kate had found herself helpless. She always wanted to be helpful but would feel helpless. On his night, she didn't feel helpless

It was a simple act; however, she couldn't help but think that the nudge she felt to go to one more aisle, God was using her in some way to care for one of God's children.

It is amazing to think that in the grand design of everything, the church still stands as God's primary way of caring for God's children.

We are in the third week of our #beChurch series, giving vision to our four mission priorities. Today, we are looking at the priority of serve, the priority of being helpful. I've said the first two weeks that is not a series about church attendance, rather it is a series about church engagement, about engagement with what God is doing in our own lives, in the community, and the world.

Today as we think about serving, it's simple. One of the most tangible and meaningful ways to be Church is to be helpful to God's children, to serve God's children.

One of the most powerful ways to be church is to serve God's children at all times and in all places.

I love what Madeline L'Engle writes, *"We do not draw people to Christ by loudly discrediting what they believe, by telling them how wrong they are and how right we are, but by showing them a light that is so lovely that they want with all their hearts to know the source of it."*

When we offer our lives to others to serve in the name of God, that is when this light shines the brightest.

The writer of 1 Peter, which written to a group of Christians who were scattered throughout various places in the Roman Empire, people. who had come to faith through a branch of the ministry of Paul. The writer speaks about the power of love, saying that love covers a multitude of sins, that when we hold fast to loving one another, it can overcome all. The writer then describes what love looks like in the Christian community.

*"Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen."* 1 Peter 4:9-11

There are three traits of the Christian life lifted in these verses... did you hear them? Christians have gifts. Christians are stewards. Christians serve.

Those who seek to follow Jesus have gifts, but these are not gifts of our own making, they are gifts entrusted to you and me by God.

We are stewards of these gifts, for their use is entirely up to us, we are responsible for the use of these gifts. The opportunities to use them will present themselves daily, but the decision to use them is yours.

And finally... we serve, the use of these gifts is for the building up of God's kin-dom here on earth.

The writer imagines that these three truths work together so that the power of God, the love of God is made real through the service of followers of Jesus Christ.

1Peter is saying to us, above all, if you do anything at all, use the gifts that have been given you to love, to serve. If you do anything at all, be helpful. Be helpful in building up God's reign on earth.

Our family loves Harry Potter books and movies. The very first book starts with an eleven-year-old Harry Potter living with his aunt, uncle, and cousin Dudley. They are horrible to him and force him to live in a small room under the stairs. They are constantly berating him and making him feel less than. He is told that his parents died in an auto accident when he was young, and they have done Harry a favor by taking him in. They also steal any mail that Harry receives. One day he receives an invitation to enroll at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Well, his Uncle Vernon will have none of that, he does not want Harry to find out that he is special, that he is a rather extraordinary wizard. He does not want Harry to know that he is extremely gifted and there is more to his life than living under Uncle Vernon's stairs. The next day Harry receives another invitation, which Uncle Vernon throws away. The next day more invitations come and the next day more invitations come, so many that it is overwhelming for Uncle Vernon and the invitation reaches Harry.

I believe that the opportunities to serve, to be Helpful, often come like this. If we miss one, more come. If we choose to ignore the call of God to serve, the nudge and the opportunity become too great for us to ignore. If we are to follow Jesus, we simply cannot be faithful disciples and ignore the needs of others. If we are to follow Jesus, we must use our gifts from God to meet the needs of others.

We are resetting the ways we serve, both inside and outside of the church. No matter the size of the church or the size of the church staff, churches are largely volunteer-run organizations. In most cases, there is no church without the service and ministry of those who call that church home. When the pandemic first hit and ministry moved online, a lot of our teams serving in the church were paused. For some, it was a well-needed break. For others, it allowed them to serve in a new way. One of the things that church leaders and pastors have learned is that most people are not resuming their volunteer commitments, including church commitments, at the same rate as

they were volunteering or serving, before the pandemic. At the same time, we are looking at the new ways and the new opportunities we have for people to serve, both inside the church walls and outside.

I desire for Geist Christian Church to be thought of as a mission station that energizes followers of Jesus Christ to change this community and this world through, the ways they serve. Remember the three traits of the Christian life that our text lifts:

Christians have gifts.  
Christians are stewards.  
Christians serve.

This church, this world, needs your gifts. We each have something to offer. And the call is clear, it's not enough to just *have* something to offer, but we must put our gifts into action. We must #beChurch

There is a story about the Mount Calvary Monastery in Santa Barbara, California. The monastery was originally located on fifteen sweeping acres atop a mountain overlooking the city of Santa Barbara. There were sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean. It was removed, quiet, and still. The silence was broken only by birds, bells, or monastic chants. It felt like heaven on earth to most.

In November of 2008, a wildfire destroyed the entire facility. The monks had to flee down the mountain and relocate with the sisters of St. Mary's convent, an order whose house sat behind the Santa Barbara Mission in a busy residential section of town.

The monks fled down the mountain to join the sisters of St. Mary's Convent, an order whose house sat behind the Santa Barbara Mission in a busy residential area. They lived together for a while, sharing in a monastic community. After much prayer, the monks chose to sell the property and remain at St. Mary's. Now, when one walks the labyrinth there, it isn't quite as silent. Across the creek, school children play. People are walking around, talking on their cell phones. The distant lull of traffic is constant in the background. The mission is full of life, serving the least and the left-out.

They realized that even though that mountain top location was scenic and serene, they were becoming mere bystanders to what God was doing. They were removed from everything, removed from the opportunities to use their gifts to serve God and serve others.

They recognized what Garth Brooks sings about, *"life is not tried, but merely survived when you are standing outside the fire."*

Friends, as followers of Jesus, we have a higher calling and a higher purpose.

Each of us have gifts from God.  
Each of us are stewards of those gifts.  
Each of us are called to use these gifts to serve others.

We each have something to offer. And the call is clear, it's not enough to just *have* something to offer, but we must put our gifts into action. We must #beChurch. Amen.