## WHO WAS BLESSED? THE BOULDER FOOTWASH, AN OUTREACH OF THE LAMB'S LUNCH by Elsi Dodge

Abraham was blessed by the Lord so he could be a blessing to others (Genesis 12:1-3). Saturday, March 23, was the 18th annual Boulder Footwash celebration, the closing activity of the Lamb's Lunch outreach to the homeless of our community. Dozens of volunteers from many churches and ministries in the area came to 1st Presbyterian Church to serve more than 100 guests. Blessings abounded throughout the day, but I must question: who was most blessed?

Volunteers skidded through the winter storm at 7 in the morning to get everything organized for the day. The doors were to open at 9, but guests began to arrive about 8. We couldn't bear to leave them out in the deepening snow, so they came in early, enjoying coffee, tea, lemonade, fruit, and bread during the morning. Bob Litsey from 1st Pres blessed the guests by taking the lonely but essential job of guarding backpacks all day, even eating his lonely lunch in the backpack area.

Boulder Food Rescue supplemented the menu with fresh vegetables and fruit from local stores, and Panera Bread donated bagels and others breads for the guests' enjoyment.

Evan Ruzanski, one of our regular volunteers, donated and prepared lemonade and brought cream cheese for the bagels. He said, "Maybe this cream cheese and toaster changed a life today. Maybe it started this person on a journey toward proclaiming Jesus Christ as their Savior, and one day we'll smile and share a warm, toasted bagel together in the eternal kingdom of heaven."

What a blessing!

Two professional hair stylists volunteered to cut hair and trim beards for five hours, serving 45 men and women. "My hat is off to Peggy and Mary for their patience, skill, and poise," said Dennis Miller, the haircutting lead.

Ryan Kirkpatrick, his mother Jan, and Kristen Latas (who donated the most of the clothing) gave out jeans, shirts, long underwear, and toiletries to 92 guests, a record-breaking number. "They were so grateful," said one volunteer, "for hand lotion, cough drops ... little things that make such a difference!" And one guest told several people how excited he was that we had jeans in his size—a size that is normally available only by special order.

Definitely a blessing.

"Would you like a bunny?" young people asked guests, explaining that "bunnies are part of Easter because they are a symbol of new life!" More than a hundred washcloths rolled into bunnies, with face and tail added at the facepaint table, hopped out into the snow in backpacks and bags.

Asked which station he wanted to help at, a 7th grader said, "But, I want to do it *all*!" And indeed, he participated in every station except manicures. He was blessed.

Jany Teets and her face painting team did more than decorate bunnies. They painted flowers and rainbows on cheeks, and did full-face cats and other cultural styles for guests and volunteers alike.

"This is the most fun day!" Jany said later—blessed to be a blessing.

Two tables and four volunteers couldn't meet the demand for manicures, and Betsy Remnant's group of teens expanded to polish and decorate nails for men and women throughout the morning. In addition to nail polish, they offered listening ears and hearts.

"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet," Jesus told His disciples (John 13:14), "you should also wash one another's feet." Washing feet is the centerpiece of Boulder's Footwash, of course. Sandy Sterling and her team of dedicated servers ministered to numerous guests, washing and massaging 30 pairs of tired, dirty feet. One guest, after slipping on a pair of new socks, asked the woman serving her, "May I wash your feet now?" And she proceeded to anoint the volunteer's feet with oil and pray over her.

Who was blessed?

Nurses from Saint Benedict's Health and Healing Ministry checked blood pressure and provided other health care services, counseling and listening in love. Volunteers from a healing prayer group prayed with innumerable guests who needed help, love, and the peace of the Lord.

One praying volunteer later shared, "It was humbling to have had the privilege of listening to men and women pour out their needs, many expressing their deep desire to change their lives. Their needs are basic yet complicated. I was surprised at how the Holy Spirit gave me the ability to get past the fear of relating with the homeless folk. By the end of the morning, I was gifted with the profound experience of sharing God's deep love with those who most need it."

Blessed, indeed.

Guests lined up eight deep for toenail clipping and pedicures from volunteer Community Hospital Nurses—such a blessing.

The egg dyeing station was moved inside to escape the weather, and Renee Von Rohn, her grandchildren, and several guests dyed 20 dozen eggs. The children then carried Easter baskets around, distributing colorful eggs to guests and volunteers. "You can have this egg," a little girl said cheerfully, holding up a smeared yellow egg. Small children, learning the blessings of serving others.

The Gideons sent Philip Ostwald to hand out Bibles. "Next year I'll bring lots more!" he said. And, after a difficult interaction with an unhappy guest, he said softly, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

Our scheduled cook had a family emergency and had to leave town three days before the Footwash. Beth Sheveland, from Rock Creek Church, cheerfully stepped in and prepared ham, homemade macaroni and cheese, vegetables, tossed salad, and ice cream sundaes for 200. "I think God planned this weekend for me," she said.

The tables sported real tablecloths (courtesy of Shari Parrs), flatware rolled in Easter napkins, nests of eggs and flowers, and placemats made by children in 1st Pres's elementary school Base Camp and Calvary Bible's Sunday school. Teens from youth groups at Calvary Bible and Boulder Chinese Baptist churches, as well as members of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at Niwot High, served more than 150 meals in a restaurant-style, family setting. Later one young man asked, "Do you do this all year? Can I volunteer in the fall?"

After lunch, the guests left, carrying clothing, toiletries, Easter eggs, and washcloth bunnies, many of their faces sporting intricate designs, with clean socks on their feet and fresh polish on their nails. One man poked his head into the kitchen, where the clean-up crew was tiredly finishing the dishes. "Thank you all!" he called cheerfully. "God bless you!"

Clearly, God has indeed blessed us.