

## 'Not only my feet, but also my hands and head,' homeless say - Boulder Christianity

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BOULDER – Kathleen King grew up in a church where members regularly wash each others feet so she thinks it's normal for Christians to take the rite to this city's streets where it's really needed.

"Here it's really cool," said King as she trimmed nails and buffed callouses on a homeless man's feet at what organizers call the Boulder Footwash, a 16-year tradition that's held on the Saturday before Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week for Christians.

"At church our feet are clean; Here it's needed," said King, a foot care professional who joined 62 Boulder-area volunteers in washing the feet of 36 homeless men and women at the annual event.

The Boulder Footwash, which this year offered 102 guests a free meal, haircut, manicure, health check, clothes, face painting and letter writing, commemorates Jesus Christ washing his disciples' feet before he was tried, beaten and crucified.

After Doug Prince was treated to a comforting foot wash in warm water, the homeless man was escorted to King, one of four specialists who trimmed and filed toe nails, scrubbed corns and callouses, and looked for signs of more serious problems.

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"These things are really hard for them to do," said King, who reminded Prince and others that clean socks and foot hygiene are paramount to overall health.

More serious problems, like poor circulation or fungus on toe nails and skin, were referred to nurses with the Saint Benedict Health and Healing Ministry, which provided free blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol screenings, as well as free anti fungal medication.

"The more health education we can get out to people, the better the chances of catching something (serious) before it's too late," said Joan Dudley, a nurse volunteer from Holy Comforter in Broomfield, an Episcopal Church.

"With our economy, we're seeing more people losing their jobs, and they can't afford

health insurance. They really appreciate what we do,” said Dudley.

Supported by the Episcopal Diocese of Colorado, the Saint Benedict Ministry offers free clinics at St. John’s Episcopal and Trinity Lutheran churches in Boulder, and at the Sister Carmen Community Center in Lafayette.

Volunteers, speaking both English and Spanish, washed, dried and moistened the feet of a grateful Jeremiah Weir before handing the former inmate a new pair of socks.

“It’s nice to know that a fellow soldier for Christ was doing it,” said Weir, who learned during his incarceration that Christians are in a war with a real adversary.

“I had strongholds that I wasn’t able to get loose from,” said Weir, a two-year member of City on the Hill Church in east Boulder.

Besides a foot wash, Jannene Barrett had a pedicure and manicure topped with bright red nail polish on both feet and hands.

This is the third year Barrett has attended the spring event at First Presbyterian Church, and she received a new pair of jeans, socks, a shirt, and personal hygiene items.

“It’s nice being pampered for a day after a hard winter,” said a grateful Barrett, chocking back tears as volunteer Stacie Joos applied a final coat of nail polish.

Joos, like other volunteers, credits God for touching Barrett’s life and the lives of other homeless people. “God did it through me,” said Joos, a member of Calvary Bible Church in Erie.

Joe Bernard Hall, an associate minister at Second Baptist Church, said he brought his family to the Footwash to serve people as an act of devotion to God.

“I love the Lord,” said Hall who also serves as a representative for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, mentoring students at the University of Colorado, as well as Niwot, Fairview, Boulder and Monarch high schools.

Besides Hall, other ministry leaders worked behind the scenes, preparing meals in the cafeteria at First Presbyterian, home of the Boulder Footwash and the Lamb’s Ministry, a homeless outreach supported by Boulder-area churches.

Four volunteer hair stylists washed, cut and towel dried 43 heads of hair, according

to Diana Goodfellow, a Footwash organizer and member of Calvary Bible Church of Boulder.

The Mens Ministry of First Presbyterian prepared meat and vegetarian hamburgers, hot dogs, with chili and cheese, buttered corn, french fried potatoes and yams, which was served by volunteer waiters.

Jim Remnant, a First Presbyterian deacon, said the Footwash culminates the weekly outreaches of the Lamb's Ministry that commence in November with a community dinner on Thanksgiving day.

Remnant and Footwash coordinator Sandy Sterling encourage volunteers to have their feet washed, too.

"I want to do it because I'm in the Peter-kind of mentality," said Remnant, referring to the Apostle Peter's opposition to Jesus washing his feet.

Sterling knew six years ago that she was called to foot washing because it was out of her comfort zone.

"I didn't even like feet," said Sterling, who coordinates volunteers using small tubs of warm water, gentle soap and soft towels.

For its free medical services at Boulder churches and in Lafayette, the Saint Benedict Health and Healing Ministry can be reached at 303.830.3132.

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