

SEEING & SERVING OUR NEIGHBORS

"Do you know anything about power wheelchairs?" was the message Carmel's Outreach Minister, Angela Schlottman sent to Jon Chin, husband of a Carmel staff member and aviation mechanic missionary, at the end of April.

"Well, they can't be any harder than airplanes." Jon replied.

And thus began a new relationship with Mr. Smith.

Mr. Smith lives in the Cherry neighborhood just outside of Myers Park in Charlotte. Diagnosed with COPD, a lung disease that leaves him struggling to breathe on his own, Mr. Smith had recently moved into a new assisted living facility when COVID restrictions hit in March. At the same time, his power wheelchair was having major problems leaving him confined to his bed in his new location for nearly two months while his routine assistance services were cut off. As you can imagine, that made "simple" things like getting food nearly impossible for Mr. Smith, let alone attempting to have his wheelchair repaired.



As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

- I Peter 4:10



When COVID hit our area in March and most support services for those in need in our community had to close or make a major shift, Carmel partner FORCLT was asked to coordinate the emergency response for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area and CharMeck Responds was formed. Carmel's own Angela Schlottman has served as CharMeck Responds' South East Charlotte Regional Lead, coordinating food packing for Second Harvest, food distribution at area schools, and meeting numerous needs of our neighbors. When Baptists on Mission were coordinating food supplies for distribution, they met Mr. Smith, found out about his wheelchair and mentioned it to Angela.

Usually, Jon works with mission aviation organizations, Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) and JAARS in Waxhaw and at different locations around the world. However with COVID restrictions in place *"everything came to a sudden stop...you can't do aircraft repairs via Zoom! And if you did, I wouldn't trust them!"* As a result, he had offered to help in any way he could during this season.

After receiving Angela's message, Jon met Mr. Smith at his home and set to work diagnosing the problem with his wheelchair. After a few new parts and a few hours of work, Mr. Smith was able to go outside for the first time since arriving in his assisted living home.

Naturally, he needed to test drive his chair, but Jon was surprised by his enthusiasm - darting out the door on his new wheels with a portable oxygen tank. Mr. Smith proudly took Jon on a tour of his neighborhood, telling stories of the

Cherry area and his life. They enjoyed talking and sharing stories, culminating in Mr. Smith asking for a Bible although he can't read. He shared that if he had a Bible, if he were ever confined to his bed again, he would have something to listen to. To Mr. Smith, the Bible has been a curiosity, something he wanted to know what the "fuss was all about." He said he knew there should be something more. This week, through Baptists on Mission, Jon received an audio Bible for Mr. Smith from Faith Comes By Hearing, he will give it to Mr. Smith on their next visit.

That day, as they were riding around, Mr. Smith found a smooth black rock and told Jon to take it home to remember him, a stone of remembrance. Jon says, *"Although most of my work has been overseas, I'm challenged by the needs that exist in our own neighborhoods, behind the shiny doors that look so well kept. You never really know the agony and painful stories of others. I have appreciated this quarantine period, where I could take the time to learn about someone else's journey."*



The opportunities to love and serve our nearest, our neighbors and the nations are great even in the midst of disruption. The Body of Christ is bigger than just one group or organization, Carmel Baptist, CharMeck Responds, the Baptists on Mission and JAARS and MAF all worked together in an unconventional way to reach a neighbor like Mr. Smith. It is a blessing and a privilege to be the hands and feet of Jesus, even in the simplest ways.



Did You Know?

Baptists on Mission usually focuses on disaster relief, but during COVID they have been asked by North Carolina Emergency Response to care for those who call 211 for food assistance across the state. To date, more than 50 calls from those in need of food have been received in Mecklenburg County (including Mr. Smith) - families who have nowhere else to turn, unable to get to food assistance organizations. For more information on how you can help neighbors in need, email neighbors@carmelbaptist.org.



Carmel is committed to making disciples of those Nearest, our Neighbors and the Nations.

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