

June 18, 2020

Some members of Trinity United Methodist Church of Denver who are reading this letter on the church's website may not know how it came to be. I have been a volunteer at the St. Francis Center, our day shelter for homeless people, for over twenty years. A couple of years ago a prominent member of Trinity, Gary Moore, asked me to write stories from the shelter whenever I observed something notable. Gary collected and copy edited them for publication as a small book: *Stories from the Shelter*. All proceeds would go to the St. Francis Center. Just after it was published the pandemic struck, eliminating the chances of a runaway best seller.

Deb Meyer then got an idea. Yes, the Deb Meyer who has been nominated for the Most Valuable Player Award in the National League of Churches. Knowing that my wife Laini and I live in downtown Denver, Deb invited me to write an occasional "Story from the Sidewalk" for the Trinity website. This is one of them and it has its origins in a story from the book: It was about Stan the Barber, who has a shop one and one-half blocks of sidewalk from our loft. Knowing I worked as a volunteer at the shelter he gave me a couple of gallons of aftershave, what our shelter guests call "smellgood," and he was delighted when I told him they liked it. One guest said it was "better than Aqua Velva."

I picked up the old phone this morning and said, without particular creativity, "Hello."

"Dr. Phil, this is Stan the barber." I thought he might go on to castigate me for not getting a haircut in months, but he had something else on his mind. He wanted to make an offer to the St. Francis Center. One of his barbers got a DUI and needs to do community service, 48 hours of it. Would it be possible to work that out by giving 48 free haircuts to homeless men at the St. Francis Center? I became excited and said I would be happy to send the proposal to Tom Luehrs, the Director of the shelter. I am so pleased by this proposal that I am writing this as a story for Deb to use in the sidewalk stories series.

If it works out, I promise that after the 48 free haircuts are completed, I will walk the sidewalks on the block and a half between Brooks Tower and Stan's Barber Shop. And I will pay the \$26 for it and a handsome tip. STOP THE PRESSES. As I was writing the previous sentence a new email popped up at the lower right hand corner of my computer screen from Tom Luehrs. It says: "Hi Phil, that sounds great. Let's figure out how to make it happen."

"Thanks, Tom."

Phillip K. Tompkins