Sometimes, I’m the mom.
By Tonette Winston,
Dispatch Center Manager

The other night I was in the Dispatch Center when I heard a commotion outside. I checked it out. Two clients were in a heated discussion. I asked what was up, and asked them to lower their voices.

They were boarding our courtesy van, driven by volunteers. The van hauls folks to our shelter in the U District. They were fighting like kids over who would get to sit in the front seat! There was no common ground, so I decided the client with physical challenges would be seated in the front. The other client ranted on and on about being first in line and how unfair this whole system was. “He has to be kidding!!” I thought.

As the van prepared to leave, the client who was so upset confessed that he appreciated the way I made the decision. His life is so out of control lately that the ability to control anything is hard to give up.

I often think of the daily struggles of our clients, and my own personal challenges, and wonder “Why am I here?” I don’t know the answer, but if I can make someone feel better about their predicament, isn’t that a nod from God? A mom needs that!

Your support gets people off the street every night.

The pizza matters
By Rev. Rick Reynolds

I was in the back of a local shelter, keeping an eye on some pizzas still in the oven. The other street minister was out front, cutting the cooked pizzas and loading plates with pepperoni slices. The rich smell of pizza floated through the shelter—run by another organization who is gracious enough to let us invade once a week.

“Am I doing anyone any good back here?”
(I remember thinking.)

Almost instantly, some guy I never saw before stuck his head in at the kitchen door.

“Hey Rev! Can you say a prayer for me?”

I’m not even sure how he knew I was back there, laboring in solitude.

“Sure, Brother, What’s your name?” “Shaq,” he replied

I put my hand on Shaq’s shoulder. “Lord, grant Shaq the wisdom to know your will, and grant him the strength of the Holy Spirit to do it.” Shaq thanked me and melted back into the night of the darkened shelter.

It’s not just about the pizza. But the pizza matters.

Lord, we can do nothing without your guidance, and your strength. Grant these to us all, in abundance. ♦
Handshake and fear
By Michael Cox, Street Minister

I have been talking with Larry and his girlfriend, Karen, every Monday for a few months.

They are always drunk. Sitting in their own little world on the same bench, they seem to never move. I wonder how they get booze if they never get up from the bench. They have always been kind and friendly to me. “Hey Mike, you out here doing your thing!”

I love to hear Larry and Karen talk about their childhoods. What elementary school they went to, bus rides, teachers that gave them attention. I tell Larry he would be a good teacher or coach. He is patient and loves kids. He is moved by the encouragement. His favorite high school teacher told him the same thing.

Larry asks me if I know why his feet are numb. They have been tingling for a month. He tells me that it started after his mom died. “She was my everything.” I offer my condolences and talk about my mom’s recent passing. We talk about stress and anxiety manifesting in the form of physical ailments. I tell him that alcohol abuse can damage your body, affecting blood flow, organ function, etc. Sometimes God speaks to us through what we are experiencing with our body. His tingling feet could be the Holy Ghost trying to tell him something. I offer to pray for him.

Larry stretches out his hand and grips mine. It’s not a halfhearted hand-grab. He is holding on for dear life. We pray and he shakes my hand again. I offer to take him to the hospital, and give him my card.

I hope he gets sober. I hope he doesn’t drink himself to death.

*Hold Larry, God.* “I cling to you; your right hand upholds me (Psalm 63:8).”

Nightwatch relies on the support of folks like you. Please give today.