

Churches assist their communities in a myriad of ways

by Randy Bright <http://www.tulsabeacon.com/?p=5687>

After hearing that the Share Christmas event at my church had provided Christmas presents to more than 260 children from low-income families, it struck me that so few people know just what an impact churches have on their communities.

It's a popular notion that all churches send missionaries to Africa, but it's just that – a popular notion. While some churches do in fact send missionaries to Africa, that is a very small part of the giving that churches do.

Churches are able to give because the people in our churches are without a doubt the most giving people in the world. America is known for its generosity to the rest of the world because its Christian roots have generated a culture and belief that selfless giving is good.

Christians are generous people even outside of the church, giving millions to worthy causes, but the money they give to their organized churches makes it possible to do ministries that support their communities as well as meeting the needs of those abroad.

Churches provide more than financial assistance to missions and community needs. Church people provide thousands of hours of volunteer work to help those in need. When we think of volunteers we may visualize serving food in a cafeteria to homeless people, but we may not think about more subtle and impactful examples.

One of the greatest contributions churches can make to their communities is to simply develop people who can be admired for their honesty and character, and who can have an impact on others inside and outside of the church walls. These kind of role models help develop young people into responsible men and women that contribute to society by mentoring – actively or passively – young people into emulating the kind of admirable lifestyle that makes a community strong and viable.

If, for example, young people can be taught to seek out a spouse with Christian qualities that build strong marriages and functional families, then the communities where they live will benefit. So when a man has been taught in church to be kind and loving to his wife, and a woman has been taught to be loving and respectful to her husband, and their children watch and imitate their parent's marriage in their own marriage, then the chances that multiple generations of these families will ever be a burden on society are virtually nil.

As an extension, congregations think of themselves as a family, and those who are from dysfunctional families who join the church family will find themselves among role models that can help them break the cycle of dysfunction, and again, community benefits.

Churches do multiple things for their communities. They feed people who are hungry. They provide clothing. They provide financial assistance to people who are losing their homes. They hold a “mother’s day out” for exhausted single moms who just need a few hours to themselves. They hold automotive workshops for people who can’t afford to repair their cars. Through their churches, Christian doctors and dentists provide free medical services. Churches provide education to help people find jobs. They send crews out to the homes of elderly to mow their yards or do housework. They provide wholesome events for latchkey kids after school. They send people to other countries to provide medical services, dig water wells, build homes or to teach people how to grow food. The things that churches do for their communities and others are endless, and most of them are unsung and unnoticed by the media.

But it is interesting to note that there are even atheists who see value in churches. An article on the An Apostate’s Chapel website listed three social functions that churches do well .

The first social function mentioned was that churches build communities by providing activities that promote fellowship. The second was that they help people through transitions in life, and the third was to provide “material and financial assistance to those in need”. The admiration of how well churches do these functions led to the writer’s conclusion that “Our challenge as humanists is to learn from what churches do well and to start doing it better.”

Humanists, secular society and government has been trying to imitate what the church has always been good at since the church began. The reason that they have never been able to do so is because they don’t understand why church people do it with such selfless joy. It’s not about duty. It’s not about acquiring approval. It’s not because it’s a job. It’s because of the love of Jesus Christ. That’s why the church can never be replaced with an equal alternative in community.

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