



November 2024

Coincidence or Divine Providence?

Dear Friends and Partners with Olive Branch Mission:

In times of hopelessness God can completely change any situation. We might feel like we're sinking further into despair, and the very moment we give up is when God shows out. God doesn't follow our timeline or our expectations. God works behind the scenes in ways we don't see, preparing the solution we had no idea was coming. Our impatience or desperation doesn't determine how or when God is going to move. His timing is perfect. He can open doors we never knew existed, bring provision from unexpected places, and make a way where there seems to be no way. I was reminded of this over and over again on Sunday, August 25, 2024, the day of our outdoor Back to School service. God revealed Himself in so many ways.

During the outdoor service a timid unassuming elderly lady walking past stopped and took in the scene of men and women raising their hands in worship and carefree children frolicking around. She closed her eyes and swayed to the music as the worship leader sang, **"You are important to me. I need you to survive."** She made her way to one of the chairs and sat in the back row mesmerized throughout the entire service. When service ended, she made her way to the front and grabbed the arm of Reverend Carol Riley. She said, "Ma'am, can you help me? I'm 69 years old and I'm homeless. My friend lets me sleep on her couch. I try to stay out of her way, so I leave out early and walk all day long." Reverend Carol immediately escorted the lady to the Senior Case Manager, Mrs. Mitchell, who *happened* to be working this particular Sunday. We had one empty bed open- it was waiting for *her*. **Divine Providence!**

Excitement filled the air! Loud laughter could be heard while the children played games and ran across the grassy field chasing each other with water balloons. The adults sat soaking in the sun while eating their lunch and talking. The smoke and aromas from the grills permeated the air. Tables filled with potato salad, baked beans, mac and cheese, cakes, cookies and more lined the streets. Then a very pregnant and seemingly distressed young lady stumbled into the midst of the festivities and caught the attention of Reverend Carol. Once they made eye contact the young lady exclaimed in the most distraught tone I've ever heard, "I'M SO HUNGRY! MAY I PLEASE HAVE SOME FOOD?!" Again, Reverend Carol found Mrs. Mitchell and delivered the young lady to her while she rushed to get her food. When Reverend Carol returned with the overloaded plate, she heard the young lady tell Mrs. Mitchell through ravenous forkfuls of food, "Please help me. I'm 39 weeks pregnant and I don't want to have my baby on the streets." Within hours, Mrs. Mitchell was able to obtain placement for her into a facility that assisted expecting moms. She had her baby days after arriving at her new home. **Divine Providence!**

The pleasant gentleman that entered the shelter the night before sat quietly eating his lunch. A former Mission resident strongly suggested he come to the Mission. He had nowhere else to go and he didn't feel "safe" riding the trains all night. The former resident spoke so highly of the services he received when he was homeless that the gentleman decided to give it a try. After reluctantly sitting through the intake process, he decided this might be a suitable place to stay for a night or two. A week into his stay at the Mission, he was shocked to learn that *several* homeless individuals were executed on a train, just like the train *he* had ridden so many times. **Divine Providence!**

Some people would chalk these encounters up to "coincidences", but we know that these were guided events that proved to be part of God's Providential plan. God shows up when we most need Him and least expect it. Even when things seem chaotic and out of control, God is still in charge. We sometimes worry about what's happening to us because we don't know what's best for us... but God does. We take solace in knowing God sees us and loves us.

Pastor Tomoyo Akemoto, Donor Relations - 11 Year Mission Employee

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