

Chalica – Week Five – Generosity

This fifth week of Chalica, we lift up our value of GENEROSITY, through which we cultivate a spirit of gratitude and hope. We covenant to freely and compassionately share our faith, presence, and resources. Our generosity connects us to one another in relationships of interdependence and mutuality.

Chalice Lighting

This chalice is a lighthouse,
a beacon reaching across the vast spaces.
This flame beckons all travelers,
come, enter, and be welcome.
Join us on our mutual quest.

Prayer

May we be open to being the force of change our communities need, be those changes small or large.

Message by Christine Slocum

Not atypical of Buffalo, there's a vacant house next door. And not atypical of vacant houses, it has a garage with a missing window. It became home to woodchucks, skunks, and cats. I recognize the first two as forces of nature, but the cats are invasive. When I moved into my house, neighbors told me that a former occupant had fed the feral cats. "Yeah, not me," I said. I'm a bird lover. Feral cats decimate song bird populations. We were not pleased, but we were patient. This is the texture of an urban environment. I felt more inclined to live with it than change it.

Peering out the kitchen window one morning, we saw kittens bounding through the yard.

A tabby watched them. "Oh," I thought. The feral cat begets more cats.

A colleague referred me to a local nonprofit which advises the community on humane ways to deal with feral cats. They call it trap-neuter-vaccinate-release. You trap cats, bring them for spaying and neutering, the vets vaccinate them, and you bring them back. OK, I thought. If it needs to be done, let's do it.

So I began to trap the feral cats. This is not something I foresaw myself doing. I borrowed the traps, used time off from work to get them to the appointments, cared for them in my garage, and released them when it was time. It was a process that took three weeks. Training them to go into the traps meant that we've started feeding them and giving them water. The kittens went through growth spurts. After releasing two males, and watching one of them stick around, I realized that I've accidentally become the caretaker of this colony. Our decision to be the neighbors who take the lead on this problem means that we will now own it in our community.

Part of being in community is noticing what's needed. Part of being in community is doing what is necessary but unclaimed. Being part of a community means being willing to own what might not be easy or comfortable. I also learned that being part of a community means being willing to own one's power, which required me to stretch beyond what I thought I'd be willing to do.



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Generosity



Generosity means sharing with a giving attitude – in our church we share our time, money, knowledge, and faith. We also share these things with our greater community. And, of course, all of this sharing helps us grow. Generosity is like watering a plant.

The color of Generosity is GREEN like a growing plant.