

In the name and love of Jesus Christ!

The morning after the EF-4 tornado decimated the village of Fairdale on April 9, 2015 a representative of the Bless You Inc. ministry attempted to contact the First United Methodist Church of Kirkland to offer their resources to the town's sister community. The non-denominational, non-profit Iowa ministry provides fully-stocked RV travel trailers to victims of natural disasters in the name and love of our savior Jesus Christ.

"We purchase travel trailers and stock them with bedding, toiletries, food and water, and other necessities," said Duane Drost, president and founder of the all-volunteer Bless You Inc. ministry. "We then drive them to the disaster-stricken area, and work with local churches and civic organizations to identify individuals and families left homeless by the disaster." The stocked campers operate as transitional housing while folks rebuild their homes and lives. Families may remain, free of charge, in the trailers for up to a year or more depending on the situation. The two-year-old ministry currently has nine trailers still in use in Oklahoma following the series of tornadoes in 2013.

After Bless You Inc. representatives contacted the Rochelle United Methodist Church to offer assistance, Bill Vanstone from a Rochelle UMC, passed on the information to Mary Ellen Taylor, whom he knew had transferred membership from Kirkland to Rochelle UMC two years earlier when she and her husband, Randy, moved to Rochelle. "When I received this contact information from Bill, I just felt that God had placed me here to help connect the dots between the Bless You Inc. ministry and the people who could benefit from their help," Taylor said. "When I found out Duane (Drost) was an Iowa farmer, I thought it was a perfect fit to allow his ministry to help out other farmers, by allowing them to remain on their land taking care of their livestock as they rebuild their homes."

One call to her former pastor, Rev. Kay Kyeong-Ah Woo, of First United Methodist Church of Kirkland, and the final puzzle piece fell into place. Without hesitation, Pastor Woo accepted responsibility of the two trailers and for the church to act as bridge between the Bless You Inc. ministry and the families. "What a blessing and great opportunity for us to reach out to our neighbors and be connected! On behalf of the entire congregation, I would like to express my deep appreciation for the Bless You Inc. ministry," Rev. Woo said.

With that detail settled on Tuesday, Duane Drost and Clint Klaassen, a 21-year-old truck driver who works for Drost, began their plans to deliver the trailers the following Saturday. Long-time Kirkland UMC members, Ron and Linda Johnson offered their home in Christian hospitality to host the drivers for their overnight stay.



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The Metcalfs and Bell were overwhelmed by the generosity and compassion of Bless You Inc. “It’s a feeling like no other that you have when your home is gone,” Pam Metcalf said. “You have no home – no home – it’s a weird feeling.” Howard and Pam are now cozily reunited after having to stay in separate homes following the tornado. “This (trailer) is perfect for us. We had been trying to get one through our insurance company and kept being handed off from one agent to another with nothing getting accomplished,” Metcalf said. “We are so thankful to Duane and Bless You Inc. for the use of this trailer as we

rebuild.” Tom Bell couldn’t believe it when his friend and neighbor, Lora Stevens, a Kirkland UMC member, told him she had found a trailer for him to use. Bell was using his sister’s camper for shelter after the storm, but a nephew was willing and able to join him for the summer to assist in rebuilding but he had nowhere to house the young man. “I am humbled and just so appreciative of the help I have received,” Bell said. “You know, I’m not a real religious guy, but this is making me think about things. First of all, if there is a God, why does He allow things like this to happen? But secondly, if there isn’t a God, then why are there hundreds of His followers, complete strangers to me, coming out here and spending hours and hours volunteering their time and money to help me pick up the pieces? It just makes you wonder.”



Drost, the lanky, soft-spoken farmer from Milford, Iowa, has no doubt about his mission and ministry in the name of Christ. He blessed the Kirkland UMC congregation by sharing his testimony during Sunday’s worship and how the Bless You Inc. ministry was formed. Drost explained that although he had always attended church, he was an angry and bitter man the first 45 years of his life. He and his brother had suffered a great deal of physical abuse from their father in childhood, an 18-year marriage ended in bitter divorce, and the final blow was the death of his 20-year-old daughter 10 years ago to diabetes. A lifetime of physical and emotional pain drove him to the brink and Drost attempted suicide via a shotgun blast to his abdomen. Drost was later told that doctors at the ER simply tied up a few pieces and draped towels over his body expecting him to die. It was at this lowest point that Drost said he experienced love for the first time in his life. Fellow members of the Good News Community Church kept constant vigil over Drost during his long hospital stay. He sees God’s hand at work through all those who lovingly prayed him back to life. Drost said he learned how to be a Christian through those people. “You can talk about being a Christian and study the Bible all you want, but until you actually do something, what good is it?” Drost asked. “God has been with me through a lot of terrible things and I will be with people until they get a house again or as long as they need us.” Drost has the loving support of his wife, Lisa, and has partnered with other disaster relief organizations such as Samaritan’s Purse, Joshua Foundation and Firefighters for Christ.

As their website states, “We’d like to remind everyone that Bless You Inc. is not just one Iowa farmer, and it’s not just a single-ministry mission; God has brought together several ministries and many volunteers to help people all over the country.” For more information about Bless You Inc. or ways to partner with the ministry, please visit their website at www.blessyouinc.com.

Mary Ellen Taylor