

Paying it Forward

It happens every once in a while. You order at the drive-through and get to the window with credit card in hand, only to find out that the folks in the car in front of you has already paid for your order. A couple of years ago we went to dinner with Russ's siblings and spouses – just the 6 of us for a nice dinner out on the town. When we asked for our checks, we were told the bill had already been paid. We immediately started looking around to see who might have done it. It was in our small hometown where the other 4 of the siblings/in-laws still live, so we knew a few people there. No one had a sneaky look on their faces or acted as if they were the culprits. We never found out who had gifted us with a lovely dinner, but it was a surprising grace that I've not forgotten.



It was a surprising grace when we met with the late Mack Duncan's family to discuss how money from Mack's legacy gift to the church could be used. If you knew Mack, you know that missions (as defined as helping people in need right now) was Mack's passion. The first of that legacy gift is to be used as a "Pay It Forward" initiative to help people in need.

Twenty envelopes containing \$100 each were given out in worship on August 28. Children and families received envelopes, as well as teachers/professors, and healthcare workers. The idea was to decide as a household how that money could best be used to help someone who needed help and let us know how you used the money. The stories have already started coming in, and I am keeping a log – a "story corps" if you will – to see how far Mack's Mission of Pay It Forward goes. I think your hearts will be as warmed as ours at all of the surprising graces:

- An online study aide was provided for a college student who could not afford it otherwise.
- One family added some of their own money, then got a matching gift from the mother's company and turned \$100 into \$600 for Park Road Montessori Elementary School.
- A donation was made to an organization that works to clean up the ocean.
- Two families in Charlotte who have recently had to move in with family friends had some very specific basic needs met.
- A donation was made to Novant cancer center transportation fund to provide rides for patients in need.

- Four kindergarten students were provided headphones for class.
- Homeless individuals were given help with shelter/food.
- A family at this teacher's school house burned down. She gave her \$100 to that family as they are having to replace almost everything.

Then others who did not get an envelope on that Sunday had the bright idea, compelled by this Pay It Forward initiative, to give in memory of Mack other creative surprising graces. Out of their own money:

- One family sent \$100 for a friend's mission trip to Kenya. The donation will provide one family's rent for the remainder of 2022.
- One family gave \$1000 to "Mack's Mission" to be added to another project from this legacy gift.
- One family has added \$1000 to Pay It Forward disbursement so there will be more envelopes to hand out in the coming weeks.
- Someone was selling a new Sony Mini Stereo system online. Upon learning the buyer was a teacher wanting it for his classroom, she gifted it to him instead of selling it.

There are more stories to be shared, so if you got an envelope or were inspired by this new project, let me know what you did with the money so I can continue to add to this "story corps." The first Sundays of October, November, and December we will hand out more envelopes, so think about who is in need right now - for whom \$100 would go a long way.

In these stories, I have heard a bit of the joy in giving. Anne Lamott says, "Joy is always a surprise, and often a decision. Joy is portable. Joy is a habit, and these days, it can be a radical act."

So how are you Paying It Forward these days?

- Amy