

Augustana College
Chapel of Reconciliation

These are God's Hands

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Good Morning, I was asked to be part of a series of sermons that addressed the body of Christ. Darcie Rives-East spoke to the issue last week in a very meaningful way.

I would like to begin by pointing out the way in which I see Christ embodied in others and I would like to share with you how others have embodied Christ for me.

In the scriptures for today, we hear two accounts of Christ walking among us and in both accounts he reaches out his hand and takes the hand of another to quell doubt and offer grace.

With Peter, Jesus reaches out to save him from the water but also to allow him to overcome his doubt and fear. Jesus gives Peter the promise of safety by stretching out his hand. To the girl, and to her family, Jesus offers new hope and the promise of joy by taking the girl's hand.

For me, these two stories illustrate the embodiment of Christ for us today. I have been thinking a lot about the promise and responsibility we offer, and take on when we extend our hand to others.

From the first moments of life we are being taught the promise and responsibility of holding hands. When an infant hand finds the finger of another person, their muscles are triggered to close around it.

For me as a new parent, that moment came with a profound realization of the responsibility I had assumed in taking that hand.

As children grow, we ask them and tell them to hold our hands...

there are too many people here or

there are cars,

here I can help you walk...take my hand...

There are times even now when I will extend my hand as a silent offer and one of my daughters will slip her little hand into mine.

My hand is meant to promise safety, security, love.

Before I knew the promise I would offer to my daughters, I learned a life changing lesson from a wonderful young woman named Donna.

Donna had come to live with us from a small town in Iowa. She had a mother and a brother that she shared a home with after her father died.

Donna, I told people was my foster sister. It wasn't true because she came from a loving home. But I had no sisters and I wanted one so I called her my foster sister.

The year she came to live with us I was 15 and she was 18. She came to work with my parents in the church in preparation for her entry into seminary the next year.

The church asked that she move into an apartment to establish her ability to live on her own. Not an unreasonable request. However, the only place she could find to live on the salary she was being paid was in downtown Des Moines.

Donna had a 1 bedroom apartment that I helped her decorate. She was doing great and demonstrating what we all knew, she was mature and perfectly capable of living on her own.

One summer night a couple of months after my 16th birthday a call came in at 10:30pm. I don't know why but I answered the phone in time to hear my father say "Donna, is that you? Donna? What's wrong."

I can't fully recall with precise detail the next 10 minutes but it consisted of us coming to understand that Donna had been brutally raped and left for dead. She had managed to crawl to the building manager's apartment and was waiting for the police to arrive.

My parents called a neighbor to look after my brothers and didn't say anything when they saw me come upstairs, dressed and get into the car.

I cannot explain why, but I knew I needed to go.

For reasons passing understanding, when we arrived there was no ambulance available to take her the 4 blocks to the nearest hospital. Also, the police felt compelled to interview her in the kitchen of the apartment of the super as though she was the suspect when clearly she was the victim.

When they finally brought the suspect down for her to identify, I remember vividly hiding behind the apartment door and peeking through the crack at her attacker. But she didn't cry or shrink back at the sight of him.

When still no ambulance had arrived, it was decided that the policeman would take her in the back of his car to the hospital. I hopped in the back and hugged her as we drove.

My mother went with Donna at the ER and I waited for my father to arrive in the waiting area. I was surprised to see my mother return after only a few minutes. "She wants you Heather." My mother said.

"Me, but I don't know what to do. What should I do?" I sort of pleaded with my mom.

"Just hold her hand. Even if you have no words, just hold her hand" my mom said as she hugged me and pushed me towards the door.

One thing that stands out to me about that experience is how Donna handled the situation. I really had no words. So, I took my mother's advice and just held her hand.

We sat in silence.

I tried to stay brave but I looked at her face swollen from the beating she took and I couldn't help but stare at the purple marks on her neck from the strangling she endured.

After a while she squeezed my hand and mustered something approximating a smile. She said, "are you okay?"

Was I okay?

I didn't fully understand then but upon reflecting on the situation as I thought about my topic today, I realized she was for me in that moment Christ's body, broken.

She could have gone through any number of responses or just remained silent, but she extended her hand to me and showed me the hand of Christ outstretched to Peter, calm your fear, heal your doubt and accept my grace.

In my life, there have been many people who have embodied Christ for me in the taking of my hand.

In fact, on that top step in front of me, I joined hands with my soul mate and made public the promise already implicit in the joining of our hands.

His hand has been steady and faithful to the promise and responsibility of that commitment.

I hope that I have been faithful to the promises I have made to those to whom I have extended my hand.

As we approach this season of Thanks giving, I give thanks for all those whose names are upon my heart because their hands have taken mine.

If you are so inclined, take a moment or two during this busy time of the year, to reach out your hand to another.

And when you encounter the hand outstretched to you, remember the promise and responsibility that comes with the taking of the hand.

May God send you a hand to hold to remind you of God's promise of love, security and grace Amen.

Dismissal

L: Go in peace. Christ is with you.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

“Now Thank We All Our God”

Paul Manz

CAMPUS MINISTRY ANNOUNCEMENTS

FOOD COLLECTION - Campus Ministry will be collecting non-perishable food items for the Food Pantry during the month of November. Simply drop off your offerings on the altar steps. We will deliver the food to the Pantry on Nov. 24th.

CLEAN WATER PROJECT - *For All Who Are Thirsty:* Let's work together to eliminate dirty water! USF, Sioux Falls Seminary, and Augustana are partnering to bring clean water to people who need it - here and abroad. If you're interested in helping, **sign up in the narthex or email** Hannah Miller at hmmiller08@ole.augie.edu or Kayla Rockwell at krockwell07@ole.augie.edu **Project will culminate in a silent auction and concert on Monday, Nov. 23rd, 7 pm in the chapel.**

CHAPEL DECORATING PARTY - Please join us on **Sunday, Nov. 29th at 8 pm** for a chapel decorating party. There will be cookie decorating, Christmas tunes and lots of fun putting the chapel in the Christmas spirit. Everyone is welcome! Bring a friend!!!

Chapel Schedule:

Monday (23rd) Silent Auction 5:30 pm - Charity Concert - 7:30 pm - chapel

THANKSGIVING BREAK - 25th - 28th

Sunday (28th) Chapel Decorating Party - 8 pm. All are welcome!!

Monday (30th) Worship, 10 am - Bob Preloger, Marketing