

“The Miracles on Pacific Street, Stamford” by Chris Cole

Miracles are funny things. A miracle to one person may not be to another. Some are small, some large. Sometimes they are hard to see at first, or they take time to develop and make themselves known. The following story seems to be evolving into each of the above...

I have changed the name to protect the innocent, because he really is. Let's call him Jesse. Jesse from Jamaica – man. Too old, at eighteen, for much State-sponsored support. An American citizen by the fact that his father is American. Called to Stamford twenty months ago by his father, whom his mother had assured Jesse had past away when he was two. Excited to meet a father he never knew existed. Deflated to learn this same father had another wife and child. Happy to meet his stepsister. Never had one of those before. The new wife had her hands full with a five year old. The eighteen-year-old young man had to go. To the streets of Stamford. To the Men's Shelter on Pacific Street, behind the train station. To a difficult place for all involved, a real place. Too real for a junior in high school, trying to do his homework, make class, work in the mall, stay away from bad elements, without guidance, money and now without family.

I did not think about it as a small miracle until we returned to the Shelter to clear out his locker today. A middle-aged man, a frequent “guest” of the Shelter, passed us as we entered. “Make sure you appreciate and take care of your little miracle,” the man suggested, opening his arms wide in a friendly, inclusive way. Upon leaving, Jesse echoed the man's sentiment, “man, I feel so lucky to be out of here.” Jesse was going back to our home where the night before he had been introduced to our fifteen year old son, a Greenwich HS freshman, and our yellow lab Tobey, and the first *safe* night of sleep in many months.

Jesse had arrived late for the Shelter dinner where my wife, son and I and a young couple from the First Church of Round Hill had prepared and served food for 50. He stood out for his youthful face, discomfort, and innocence. We chatted briefly. A very polite young man. Many of the men at the Shelter are similarly polite. Reverend Randy Day, the new Minister for the First Church, had asked my wife and me to fill in for the regular crew last night. Not exactly my wife's first choice for our 23rd anniversary, but as she explained, “at least it was a night out!” That morning in Church we had sat next to one of Reverend Day's daughters, a middle-schooler in Greenwich, and one of the two children Randy and his wife Emily have adopted from Haiti. Their brood of four children lives in the historic parsonage, the Brown-Kenworthy house, next to the Church, where John Street and Round Hill meet. Randy, Emily, and family have injected a new vitality to First Church, a vitality teeming with welcomeness, caring, and global overtones. His office and home are adorned with fascinating mementos from some of the 81 countries he has visited, worked and lived in, time capsules from more than 40 years he has spent traveling to emerging countries. In fact, Randy had only just returned from a mission trip to Africa. Sitting next to his Haitian daughter, I marveled at the small miracle that had brought her to this pew, this family, this Church. What were the odds?

The odds were better because Randy and Emily sought to help, cared to care. They travel to learn and live their mission every day. Fortunately for Jesse and my family, their message got through, or at least it seems to be playing out that way.

As we were leaving the Shelter after serving the “guests,” a gaunt, small man with kind eyes, spoke directly to us with purpose and compassion. “He is too young to be here. This is not the right place for him.” We knew instinctively that he was right – all three of us. Maybe because of Randy and Emily’s example, I do not know. But we knew that this little man was right, Jesse needed something good to happen to him, soon. Of course the same can be said for each of these Shelter “guests.” I guess it was just Jesse’s turn.

We will do our best. And while they do not know it as yet, the small, yet growing, community that is the First Church of Round Hill will have another community member. I invite you to experience the unique combination of traditional religion, global perspective, and down-home friendliness. Come for Mother’s Day! Try us out. Please. You will meet nice people and may, just may, have a little miracle happen to you.

First Church of Round Hill – Rev. R. Randy Day, Pastor
464 Round Hill Road, Greenwich, CT 06831 – 203-629-3876
www.firstchurchofroundhill.org
Sunday Worship – 10 am

Pacific House – Shelter for the Homeless
597 Pacific Street, Stamford, CT 06902 – 203-348-2792
www.shelterforthehomeless.org

To volunteer, contact Reverend Day for details: 203-629-3876