

A FREE Gift by Dan Flynn

In the spring, a member of St. Luke, Ann Arbor came to me with an idea. Cecilia Knox is a well established potter and retired art teacher with a deep desire to reach people for Christ using ceramics as a means. As I listened, I became confident we could do something special for the Ann Arbor Art Fair. Cecilia's idea was to produce a thousand plus vases that could be handed out to people, free of charge, with the words "Holy to the Lord" (Zechariah 14:21) on them. This message of hope reads, "every cooking pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be set apart as Holy to the Lord Almighty" and speaks to the final realization of God's Kingdom in which nothing is used without sacred purpose. Cecilia's pottery is set apart to applaud the work of Christ in her life and she wanted to share that joy with others.

So, the journey began to produce vases. Cecilia has a kiln to fire the vases as well as the means to glaze the vases in the Living Water (a site of St. Luke) blue or glossy green. Church Extension Fund of the Michigan District approved a grant request to purchase the clay and the glazes so we could focus on finding volunteers and establish a format to produce the large number of vases.

Cecilia's studio was open during the weekday for families, small groups, or individuals to participate in producing the vases. One hundred and fifty people were involved in the production and distribution of the vases. By the end of July, 1,050 vases were ready.

St. Luke's volunteers manned a booth in the non-profit section of the Art Fair. A sign read, "Free Vases." Frankly, people didn't know how to take "free." I offered a woman a vase, and she said she already belonged to a church. I said, "It doesn't matter. Enjoy the vase." She resisted. There had to be catch. I assured her there was no catch, just enjoy it. As she took the vase she remarked that never before had she heard of such a thing.

Inside of each vase was placed a gospel statement that God has no conditions on His love for us in Jesus Christ. The vase reflected that free gift. A book mark was also placed inside, with St. Luke's website address for the recipient to find out more about the church.

Not all people came to the booth and some even ran from it! Others were curious and asked questions.

Because of the grant from CEF and the faithful heart of Cecilia, connections were made – not only in the broader community but also among the volunteers. People laughed, talked, and made vases for a cause that is far bigger than any of us – the cause of sharing Jesus' love with the world.

Rev. Dan Flynn is an associate pastor at St. Luke, Ann Arbor. He serves at St. Luke's Living Water, Whitmore Lake site.

