

## ***The Tale of a Spaghetti Dinner***

*Pastor John Holland, Point Pleasant Presbyterian Church*

I posted the following to Facebook Wednesday, September 17<sup>th</sup>:

*Brandy is one of my parishioners. She developed peripartum cardiomyopathy and gave birth to her daughter a month early before being life-flighted to UPMC – Presbyterian Hospital in Pittsburgh. Monday she underwent open heart surgery to have an LVAD [left ventricle assist device, i.e. a heart pump] installed. She is doing well and was transferred from ICU to the floor today.*

*Point Pleasant PC is sponsoring a benefit spaghetti lunch tomorrow. The response is so great that I was sent to get a lot more sauce and containers etc. When I was checking out, the cashier, who knew the church was making the purchase, commented that I must be planning to feed a multitude. I briefly told her what was going on.*

**\*\*\*\* *The lady behind me and the couple behind her, total strangers,* \*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\* *each gave me \$20 for the cause, for Brandy.* \*\*\*\***

Part of me wants to say, “I wish the dinner had gone off without a hitch,” but I can’t. Another part of me wants to say, “Praise God! Praise God! Praise God!” and I am!

Orders had to be phoned in no later than 10 a.m. Tuesday. We were hoping for at least three-hundred meals and as of Monday afternoon we were nowhere close and we were praying. Late Tuesday afternoon, I got a call that we had five-hundred meals ordered, gulp, and that is why I was sent to the store while the others cut and shredded cabbage for coleslaw, got the bread ready to make garlic toast, and did everything else that needed doing.

By the time Thursday morning rolled around, the number of orders had topped eight-hundred. What had started as a pretty big task, preparing 300 meals for carry-out and delivery had grown to “We’re an hour and a half late getting people’s lunches to them!!” We were completely swamped so we just kept bailing sauce onto the spaghetti in the serving boxes as fast as we could, hoping that the folks waiting for lunch would be understanding. “We’re doing the best we can <crooked grin, shoulder shrug>”

As far as I know, only six (6) people wanted a refund. The others were gracious. As I walked in with the meals, an hour and a half late, I would say, “Well, I certainly won’t be accused of being early today.” They smiled and asked, “How many orders did you all have?” “Oh, we were hoping for three-hundred but ended up with over eight-hundred.” “**WOW! THAT’S FANTASTIC!** No wonder you’re running a little behind. Have you heard anything about how she’s doing today? Thanks so much.”

One of my folks who was working herself into the ground was wring her hands, saying, “I have failed. We’re an hour and a half behind. I’m trying but we just can’t keep up.”

No, you haven’t failed because this is not a failure; **this is utter success!!!**

Yeah, the job was more than we could handle but we were working for the Lord and the Lord was working through us.

Yeah, the job was more than we could handle but not because *we failed* but because *so many loved*. It was the love and compassion of our church and, indeed, of the entire community that made this job more than we could handle and for that I say, "Praise God! Praise God! Praise God!"

*"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'*

*"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'* (Matthew 25:37-40)