

A Privilege to Give

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Gratitude is not a passive response to something we have been given; gratitude arises from paying attention, from being awake in the presence of everything that lives within and without us. Gratitude is not necessarily something that is shown after the event; it is the deep, a-priori state of attention that shows we understand and are equal to the gifted nature of life.

Gratitude is the understanding that many millions of things come together and live together and mesh together and breathe together in order for us to take even one more breath of air, that the underlying gift of life and incarnation as a living, participating human being is a privilege.

—David Whyte, excerpts from Whyte's poem "Gratitude," *Consolations: The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words* (2015)



I have developed a keen sense of awareness of the correlation between gratitude and generosity. The quote above from the contemporary English poet David Whyte conveys a concept of gratitude that is deeply enmeshed with the fullness of living. As a social worker for more than 32 years, I believe I have developed a true sense of empathy and the ability to walk in another's shoes. I may never truly understand the hardships many individuals face, but I believe it is my responsibility as a human and Christian to reach out and offer compassion and hope. I also believe it is my job to work at overturning unjust systems of oppression that cause many of the hardships people face on a daily basis. Thus, because of the privileges I have been afforded in life, I believe in sharing my financial gifts with causes that are dear to my heart and to which my faith calls me to respond.

My work over the past eight years heading up the National Benevolent Association has been a true blessing to me. Every day I get to witness the life-altering ministries that are taking place across our denomination, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). I reflect on the many people who have touched my life and whom I have had the privilege of ministering alongside.

I remember my growing up years at Memorial Christian Church in Peoria, Illinois, where I was nurtured and sustained by faithful pastors and lay leaders. Their ministry taught me about grace, love, and compassion for the world. My college years at Phillips University knitted together lifelong friendships who have brought me laughter and joy throughout the years. My professional career had me holding the hands of people dying from cancer and AIDS, teaching me about strength and enduring hope. And my family has brought me the most joy. Every day I am grateful for the honor to be called son, brother, uncle, nephew. It is by their example I learned to love unconditionally, hope eternally, and give of myself and my resources unselfishly.

So, this brings me full circle. I've become conscious over the years that my level of generosity is associated with my level of gratitude. I financially support the National Benevolent Association because of my gratitude for the staff who spend endless hours fulfilling a mission they are deeply passionate about. I'm grateful for a Board of Trustees who volunteer their time to guide and offer wisdom and insight to the ministry they hold gently in their hearts. I'm thankful for our partners in ministry who, every day, amaze me with their tenacity, compassion, and drive to change their communities. And, I'm deeply indebted to our donors, who see what I see - life-altering ministering that is taking place throughout the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

I'm a donor to the National Benevolent Association because I'm grateful, and it is a privilege to give.

As the health and social services general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the National Benevolent Association partners with congregations, regions, general ministries, and a variety of Disciples-related health and social service providers to create communities of compassion and care. Founded in 1887 by six women responding to the needs of the day and on their doorsteps, for more than 130 years the NBA has continued to serve "the least of these." Learn more at www.nbacares.org.