

THE CHURCH ON THE DESERT ROAD

Acts 8: 26-40

Rev. Hugh Appel

Seventy-eight year old Estella Pyfrom is a special lady. She taught school for 50 years in Florida. During the last Super Bowl she appeared on the large screens in a commercial for Microsoft. They showed Estella sitting in a bus with a group of students in need of technology called, "Estella's Brilliant Bus." The students are able to study technology which they otherwise cannot afford.

Lou Gellows, spokesman for Microsoft explained that the company equipped the bus with computers and, having heard about Estella's project to help students in need of a better life, rather than joining a street gang. How did Estella pay for it all? She used her retirement savings, all of it! To date she has reached more than 60,000 students and is aiming for one million. Who would spend their total savings to help others?

It's never about the money. It's about the plan. Jesus told us to go and preach the gospel, the message of salvation. Philip was the first one to preach the gospel outside of Jerusalem, of all places in Samaria. Samaritans were considered half breeds by the Jews and were despised for that. Scripture tells us that, hearing the good news, "So there was great joy in the city of Samaria." Philip received a message from Christ to go the Desert Rd. No doubt he wondered, "There is no one there in the desert. What is God's plan?" People often wonder about God's plan and often question it.

When I was a student preparing for the ministry, I had many questions. How are we going to make it all happen? I had to give up my job; we had two children. How will it all work out? A minister told me, "God will open doors no one can close." I was appointed as student minister to a two- point rural charge. It meant, driving back and forth to Knox College, Toronto - two hours one way; serving two congregations, my family, writing sermons, studying, writing papers, preaching etc. When it came time for graduation and ordination, no doubt God was laughing and saying, "I told you I open doors for you."

Philip being on the Desert Rd. met the finance minister from Ethiopia who was reading from the book of Isaiah chapter 53. Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip explained the portion the Ethiopian was reading, telling him that it was

about Christ who suffered for our sins. The Ethiopian accepted Christ and was baptized. It says, " He went home rejoicing."

Has the church always been open to that? Is the church in our world not watering the gospel down??? How important is the message of salvation? Do we understand what we are reading? Why is it that so many people find it difficult to talk about their faith? Francis of Assisi, who lived in the 12th century, said, "Preach a sermon every day, if necessary use words." We are called to live the gospel; to experience Christ and His power. We are called out of the pulpit and pew to share the joy in Christ, being His followers. "Do we understand what we are reading?" Christ will meet us anywhere. Have you met Him?