

**Bring What You Have**  
**Ryan Jones (September 2019)**

One of the strengths I've always appreciated about The Springs is the willingness of leadership to consider an idea, bless it, and send you forth to "Go." My experience has been that everyone's gifts and ideas are valued.

When Melody and I were new here, we found ourselves looking for the best opportunity to get plugged in. We decided to attend training for the Benevolence Ministry; after all if there's training, that must be a good place to start! Our church has long offered financial assistance to both church and community members in need, primarily for rent or utilities. At that very first meeting we learned about forms and processes, but we also heard some of the history and experiences that had led to the development of our particular system.

Monty recently spoke in our adult Bible class about Gideon, who was told to leave his army behind and go to battle with a small fraction of his force. Gideon is an inspiration because he was the epitome of one of the hard lessons of faith...God calls us to "bring what we have," and to trust him. That's exactly how our Benevolence ministry grew. The church office received calls for help, so Monema and others responded to find a way and the ministry grew as God guided and provided.

That first morning in training Monema extended an offer to continue the discussion, with whomever was willing, about next steps for the ministry. How could we be less reactive and more proactive with our assistance? How could we address more than just a financial need, which is often a symptom not a cause? So a small group of us began to meet on a regular basis. Who was I to engage that conversation? I was idealistic, but knew little about poverty alleviation. We did research, read books, and contacted other organizations. Together we learned and grew.

We tried some new things. A couple times we've offered community education through Faith & Finances classes. We've tried one on one coaching from that curriculum. Now we've begun a partnership with the HOPE Ministry here in Edmond; a non-profit specializing in emergency assistance and poverty alleviation, developed and supported by a council of local churches. And we continue to learn and adjust, bringing what we have and trusting God.

I have a couple reasons for writing this particular story. First, to say thank you. Thanks to all of you for creating a place where everyone's gifts are valued and respected. Second, I want to encourage you to "bring what you have." You certainly have a gift, idea or question that can help us all grow and inspire new Kingdom work. Contacting any of our ministry Delegates (listed on the website and in the bulletin) would be a great place to start. Finally, in whatever work you're engaged, I pray the Spirit will provide guidance and power as you carry faith, hope and love into our community.