

Katina Dudley sent me a text message with a picture of the Church on Wednesday, June 20th at 1:31pm. That's 1:31pm EST – I was in Seattle, WA at the time, so when I got it - it was 10:31am there. It wasn't one of those beautiful photos of Chestnut Grove with the rainbow in the background – although those are quite lovely. I think it's my new favorite. To me, this photo is a truer, more accurate, and even more beautiful picture of the Church. Let me tell you the story.

This spring I got some joyful news; my daughter and her husband were expecting their first child. My daughter asked if I'd come out to Seattle to help out when the baby was born. Without a moment's hesitation I said, "Yes!" and immediately started organizing my calendar to make that possible. My calendar is pretty full these days. My Dad, Carl Knauer, aka "Pop" lives in Charlottesville but no longer drives. As he has difficulty hearing, I've been going with him to the various doctor's appointments that increase exponentially with age.

I had my ticket, my knitting was packed – just one more doctor's visit and I'd be on my way. Pop was going to the dermatologist. He had some skin cancer removed from his ear and it was time to get the stitches out. We weren't worried – he'd had these before. But the doctor surprised us when he said that this spot looked more aggressive than the others and that Pop would require a series of radiation treatments. I asked if it could wait until I got back from Seattle -I knew the baby wouldn't wait. He said no – this treatment was time sensitive. So, we started anxiously brainstorming options when a familiar phrase brought peace, "God will provide." We weren't sure how, but God has always provided for our needs in the past and we were confident that He would again.

Pop attends the Faith Builders Sunday School class. Everyone in the class is a Christian – a follower of Jesus Christ. For years, these folks have been encouraging each other to live a Good life – to follow the example of Jesus, to listen to His voice and respond as His hands and feet in this world. Every week they gather to discuss, reason and learn from God's message to us as recorded in the Bible. They share the stories of the ways they see God working in their lives. They pray for each other, they laugh with each other, they joke with each other and they gracefully and caringly correct each other. From time to time they share meals together, they enjoy music together (-especially at local wineries and breweries where some of the more musically talented in the group perform!), they cry together and they celebrate together. They support and care for each other. So when we weren't sure how to get Pop to his 20 radiation treatments – we went there first for help.

My husband Alan and I made a sign-up sheet asking for volunteer drivers. We passed it around the class and the entire sheet was filled up. Word got out that Pop needed rides and by the end of the day a second sheet was full. You see, there are lots of groups like the Faith Builders class at Chestnut Grove. They've spent so much time "training" to be like Jesus that they gracefully and selflessly respond like Him. I left for Seattle knowing my Dad would be in the caring, capable and loving hands of the Church.

Steve Turner once said, "The plural of Christian is Church" – I don't know if he was the first to say it, but he gets the footnote in my book. Day after day I would call my Dad to hear stories of folks who: picked him up extra early to be sure he would be on time, told him funny stories to set him at ease, went

out to lunch or spent some time doing a puzzle afterward (there's always one in progress at my Dad's house) just to make the focus of the day about something other than a medical treatment. There were so many stories of so many thoughtful and caring friends. The medical staff noticed that rarely did the same person bring Pop to his treatment twice. When I returned from Seattle, the receptionist asked about Pop's "fan club" – who were all of these folks? My answer was simply, "Church."

So, now you can open the photo. I can't tell you the joy that it brought to my heart when I opened that text message. But this is only a small part of my story, my testimony, how I witnessed God's love during this time. If you had a year, I'd add more details of that month to my story: selling our house, safe travels, scary medical tests, packing, moving, phone calls and text messages answered with patience and kindness even when I forgot about the time difference, flooding rains, faithful friends who helped, and helped and helped, exhausting days and astonishingly beautiful grandchildren. It could have been unbearable, and at times it did feel overwhelming but God is so good, and as always, He provides. Thank you for reading my story. It has been a blessing to me to tell it.