

Wider Net Celebrates 15 Years

To mark the 15th anniversary of "A Wider Net," we continue our series about how "A Wider Net" was birthed and how it has evolved over its history. In this insert, Northminster pastor Chuck Poole and Northminster member Suzanne Boone talk about the Wood Street Bible Class, one of the earliest and longest-running Wider Net ministries.

Chuck Poole

The Wood Street Bible Class was one of the earliest ministries of "A Wider Net." The Bible Class began with a "listening tour." On an early Spring day in 2002, I went on a listening tour of the neighborhood, walking door to door with longtime Mid-City leader Horace Kelly. We listened to residents talk about some of their hopes and dreams. One consistent theme was the desire for some sort of gathering for senior adults in the neighborhood.

Thus, a few weeks later, in May of 2002, the Wood Street Bible Class met for the first time. I remember showing up at ten o'clock in the morning with coffee, cookies and a Bible; not knowing if anyone would come. But, a small group gathered, and, fourteen years later, we are still gathering, week after week; to pray, think, study, learn and grow together.



WIDER NET

15th ANNIVERSARY

Because some have died, and others have joined, our group has changed across the years. But, all through the years, there has been, and remains, a consistent core of weekly attendees.

Across fourteen years we have laughed a lot and learned a lot, with and from one another. We have had many holiday parties (Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day, Fourth of July) provided by Suzanne and Bill Boone. Through the years, other Northminster members have attended from time to time; some (Wayne Parker, John Palmer, Jr., Bob Boteler) on a weekly basis.

We continue to meet each week in the Yellow Church, praying, reading, thinking; drawing strength from, and finding joy in, one another.

We sometimes say that the Wood Street Bible Class has changed who will be at our funeral when we die, a small, beautiful reminder of the virtue of staying in one place, and doing one thing, over and over again, until what once was a mission eventually becomes a friendship.

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Suzanne Boone

My story of the Wood Street Bible Class is one of friendships which are very special to me, and I believe to those who attend. How did I get involved? I can't exactly remember. And while this is not meant to be a story about me, in some sense it is my journey with these friends.

Eight years ago, I decided to give a Christmas party for the Wood Street Bible Class, and I invited three Northminster friends with whom I have celebrated birthdays and special holidays for 30 years to join me. Being a Delta girl, I knew I must set a pretty table and serve good food, and I wanted a "happy" which would say "we care about you." What a happy time for all of us! And so from that beginning I decided I would do something special for my new friends on special occasions and holidays. One year, the Bible Class and I even managed a surprise birthday party for Pastor Poole.

There have been many memorable parties. For example, on Mother's Day one year, Thelma Brown told us how her mother, Mrs. Brown (a frail little woman who always led us in singing at the end of Bible Class), would rub Thelma's back and shoulders when she was in pain. Who would have guessed that, a few short months later, Thelma would be dead of lung cancer, of which we were not aware. Isn't it wonderful that, on that Mother's Day, Mrs. Brown heard such lovely affirmation from her daughter?

I have learned so much about simple faith from those involved in the Bible Class. The way my Bible Class friends explain some passages we study is different from the ways I have learned, and yet when I listen and hear their thoughts and beliefs, I realize that God's love and grace in their lives is lived out in deep ways...ways I may never fully understand but I am strengthened.

In many other ways, my life has been blessed by these friends. Dolly Taylor was one of my mother's beloved sitters, who also attended her memorial service at Northminster. Lucinda Bell helped raise the children in our neighborhood from the Parkers' home. Helen Taliaferro and Susannah Jenkins came when Jill was ordained, bringing two wonderful homemade cakes from Mrs. Taliaferro's kitchen. It was my privilege to attend with Jill the celebration of Mrs. Jenkins's life at the True Vine MB Church not far from Wood Street.

In my Bible, I keep a list of everyone who has come to the Bible Class through the years, always giving thanks for the privilege of their friendship, the Christian fellowship we share, and the love they give me.

Suzanne delivered these comments at a Wednesday night supper in the Spring of 2011, and she graciously allowed us to use them for this publication. Her comments were edited here to fit this page.

