

A peculiar energy

By [Ruth Everhart](#)

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For the last few Sundays I've filled the pulpit for a small church that has lost its critical mass. Attendance has dwindled to a faithful few, all of whom are running out of energy. Not a happy situation. Still, when I enter the church building, I feel a sense of welcome and warmth from the folks who are keeping the place afloat.

Last Sunday we had visitors, an older couple, tall and friendly-faced. They arrived early to get a seat. (God bless them!) They were the first ones at church, other than myself, the organist, and the person tending the coffeepot. We chatted and I discovered that they were from out of town and just passing through. Eight more people showed up for worship, bringing us to a dozen.

Because the numbers are small, I've been informal. Before reading the scripture and sermon, I've tried a sharing time to help us engage a different part of our brain before hearing the word. On this Sunday, our theme was treasure. "What do you treasure?"

The visitors sat in the front row and contributed to the sharing time, which brought a different energy to the group. That energy persisted as I read and preached on the story of the [rich young ruler](#), whom Jesus told: *Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.*

After the sermon we had a time of intercessory prayer and I asked for prayer requests. The visitors offered a request that was so heartfelt the tears flowed down their cheeks. It turns out they were not just "passing through" but traveling for very personal reasons, which they shared with us. Of course, I immediately prayed for them, and continued to pray for them throughout the week.

This is not a proper miracle. This is not a tale of resurrection. This marginal church is still marginal. If it isn't actually dying, it's at least on life support.

But for an hour, that body of Christ was able to receive and give the peculiar kind of energy that comes when believers pause to consider scripture, and let the Spirit

move between them. It's the peculiar energy that transforms strangers into friends in Christ. Such a moment is not everything. It is maybe not enough. But it is something. It is worth pausing to notice. It reminds us why the church began in the first place. We are not just individual Christians trying to make it on our own. We are knit together by a peculiar energy into a larger body, which has a power that is greater than the sum of its parts.

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