

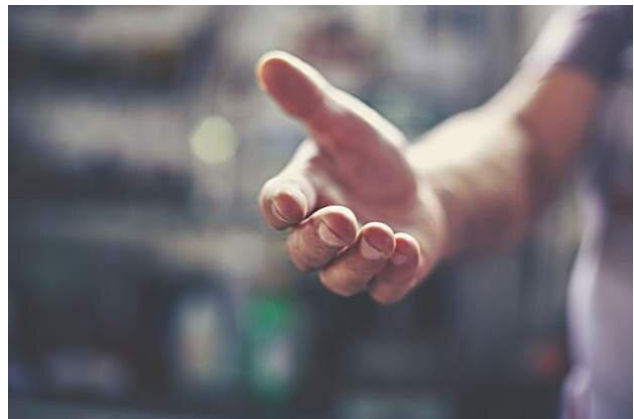
THE MAYOR OF FIFTH STREET

by Rev. Elder Dwayne Johnson

Most days when I walk to the church I receive a wonderful gift. Many in our neighborhood have nicknamed this gift The Mayor of Fifth Street. Lamar is a positive force for good. Often I see him twice a day. Lamar's morning greeting includes a smile and a genuine question that is not a platitude: "Good morning Dwayne, how are you doing?" Lamar knows I'm the Senior Pastor of MCCDC. Yet with affection that has grown through the years he simply calls me Dwayne. I like that.

The second time I see Lamar is on my way home. Often he is sitting on his 5th Street stoop enjoying a snack. He always offers me some. One summer he gave me a slice of the best cantaloupe ever. Maybe it tasted so great because it was from him.

We call him Mayor out of respect and because he keeps an eye on the neighborhood. Lamar knows what is going on. When one of our neighbors passed he created a beautiful, small memorial near a tree close to her home. He talks to everyone, offering his gift of wisdom. He never pushes advice. Yet it comes through. Sometimes I'll see him huddled with a group of youth, and I know he is helping them find their way.



Recently he shared wisdom with me at a moment when I really needed it. I was walking to church in a somewhat down mood, struggling with angst about c19 and how this Christmas season feels so different. Lamar does odd jobs just to stay active and bring in some income. He had a bucket and was scrubbing away at an ironwork fence. It was gleaming. I said, "Wow, you're really making that shine". Lamar said, "I'm cleaning the bird droppings off the fence. I'm grateful for the birds and their droppings because it gives me a job." What most see as mess on a fence, Lamar sees as opportunity.

The Mayor of Fifth Street reminds me that blessings are often disguised as mess. He reminds us that beyond complaint there is a reason for gratitude if

we look for it. I am grateful for a wonderful gift named Lamar, The Mayor of Fifth Street, a bright light in our neighborhood and city.