

## PERSPECTIVE

Earl Palmer

**"G**od is raising up his heroes, and he places them where they are needed—and the world does not know where they came from."

This A.B. Simpson quotation has meant a lot to us at University Presbyterian Church this year. Denny Rydberg, our former director of university ministries, first shared it with the students at a Tuesday evening meeting, and in a way this saying has been a watchword for our students throughout the year.

It is true, too. God does raise up

gave us the best definition without even knowing it. Paul writes to his friends at Philippi that he wants to live his life each day so that Jesus Christ is honored, and then he writes, "It is my prayer that with full courage now as always Christ shall be honored in my body, whether by life or by death" (Phil. 1:20).

The word Paul uses here that the English Bible translates *courage* is literally the Greek word *openness*—by implication, *with full openness*. Yes, that is the definition of a hero—someone out in the open where they

open or behind the scenes. Paul is a hero in Philippians—but so is his young friend Epaphroditus, who risked his neck for Paul. They were both heroes—the one famous and the other with a name few of us can pronounce.

The best part of all is that when God places his heroes into their posts of responsibility, the world does not know where they came from. Where did this **Nobel Peace Prize** winner Mother Theresa come from? Who ever heard of such a quiet and behind the scenes thing as a ministry to dying folks in Calcutta becoming an heroic event of world-wide consequences? How did Holland produce people like the family that hid the Otto Frank family with their daughter Anne from the Nazi invaders?

Heroes are ordinary people just trying to do what seems right as human beings who have experienced God's love. Heroes are rarely famous, though some are later recognized for what they are. This is what A. B. Simpson meant when he wrote, "The world does not know where they came from." ♦

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from among us men and women, girls and boys to be his models of hope—real people in real places who make a difference where they are needed in the world. When we belong to Jesus Christ, and when his love is at work in and through our lives, we become available for God's grand purpose in the world.

This quote should mean a lot to everyone of us who are part of Christ's church because one of the most important tasks we have as a Christian church is the business of encouraging, strengthening, and deploying God's heroes.

But what is a hero? I think St. Paul

can be spotted when they're really needed. A hero does not necessarily feel braver than other people; a hero simply stays in a place of risk just a few minutes longer than others are willing or able to do. That exposure, whether in public view or behind the scenes, makes that man or woman a hero.

What the world needs are heroes who are servants of Christ with full courage. We don't need more hidden, secret, silent Christians. Although there are times when each of us needs to retreat in order to gather strength and focus, our destiny is to be heroes in ways unique to us.

We are meant to become that man or woman who actually does something concretely good in the



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