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How many of you have ever helped plan a wedding? What are things that need to be done in preparation for that special day? ... Lots of details! But no matter how much planning one does for a wedding, there's bound to be something that doesn't go right. In addition to all the many details, the bride often tries to carry several things with her during the wedding: something old, something... (You know the old saying.)

During a recent wedding the bride was panicking because she couldn't find the box that contained all the objects, and I was sent to find the bride's mother to track down the elusive box of items, and finally someone found it. Little did I know at the time that the tradition to carry these objects was inspired generations ago from an Old English rhyme:

Something old, something new  
Something borrowed, something blue  
And a silver sixpence in her shoe.

The *something old* represents continuity with the past; the *new* offer optimism for the future; *borrowed* symbolizes borrowing happiness from a

family whose marriage has been joyful; *blue* for love and purity; and a *sixpence* for prosperity.

In the many weddings I've done, I've often wondered if the rhyme should instead say:

Something old, something new  
Something borrowed, something blue  
And on the wedding day  
Something will likely go wrong for you.

It seems as though some detail always gets overlooked in the rush of planning the day. In the last wedding I did, the bride discovered right before the ceremony that she didn't have the groom's ring; in a wedding in another couple's backyard the dogs got out of the house and ran down the aisle to be an unexpected guest at the wedding; and in a wedding out of state the candle wax dripped on the floor and started burning the carpet. In all cases the problem was resolved—the bride borrowed another ring, the dogs were quieted, and I stepped on the fire to put it out.

But I'm not sure I would have known what to do if I encountered the problem that Jesus faced while attending a wedding at Cana: the host of the

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wedding party ran out of wine. Mary jumped into action when she learned of the problem—she told her son Jesus to do something about it. He finally agreed and asked the servants to bring the stone jars filled with water for purification—the washing of hands. I can just imagine their conversation:

“What did he ask us to do?”

“To get the purification jars containing water.”

“But his mom wanted more wine, not water for the washing of hands.”

“Who knows? Let’s just do it.”

And then a few moments later after delivering the water, the conversation may have continued:

“You do it.”

“No, you do it. Take the water to the wine steward. I’m not going to get into trouble for making a fool of our guest Jesus.”

“I guess I might as well. He seemed so insistent that I take this water to him to taste. Ah...excuse me sir. In light of our wine problem, I suggest you taste this.”

“Where did you get this? It tastes wonderful! Usually the host serves the best wine first and brings out the poor quality wine when the guests have become drunk, but the groom has saved the best wine for now!”

Imagine the perplexed look on the servant’s face, wondering how the hand-washing water turned into wine!

Water to wine. Not something you or I could do, but grapes do it every day. They take water, sunlight, and nutrients and turn them into juice, which becomes wine. You and I may not be able to perform such an amazing transformation, but just imagine all the other ways we can make changes in the world. To someone in despair, we can offer hope. To someone experiencing frustration, we can offer meaning. In the midst of sadness, we can offer a listening ear. Change and transformation are something we *can* each do, with the possibility of even transforming a pair of used blue jeans into helping a homeless family move off the streets.

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What? How does that work? “While it sounds like economic [magic], converting used jeans into security for a struggling family is exactly what founders imagined when they established Chalice Thrift, the new outreach ministry of First Christian Church of Decatur, Ga.”

Here’s how it works: Olivia outgrew her new jeans before she had the chance to even wear them more than once. Her parents dropped these gently used items off at Chalice Thrift shortly after the church asked for donations.

A few days later, someone bought the jeans from the thrift store. That income, along with sales of dozens of other donations, quickly generated sufficient funds for Chalice Thrift to make a \$500 gift to Hagar’s House.

Hagar’s House, a program of Decatur Cooperative Ministries that helps homeless families become self-reliant, converted the unexpected donation into a number of unbudgeted items, including gas cards for clients.

One of the gas cards helped a young mom fill the tank of her car, so she could get to her new job. The new job is empowering the mom to support her young family, which only weeks earlier had been living on the street.<sup>1</sup>

Water becomes wine. Amazing! A pair of used jeans becomes the means to help a family move off the streets. Amazing!

And more amazing: the transformation began as the congregation was struggling to discern how to use their space. An agency had been renting their space, but when the group’s funds dried up, the tenant had to move out of the church. Members of the congregation began to dream about how they could use their space for mission, and soon the idea emerged to host a thrift store with funds designated for outreach. In just three months, the store generated \$3500, and because volunteers run the operation, about 90% of the income goes to mission.

When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the church at Corinth, I think he had something similar

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in mind. No one person or congregation can meet all the needs in the world, for none of us have all the skills and abilities to reach every person. But that's not an excuse to do nothing. These words written to the church 2000 years ago echo in our ear today:

God's various gifts are handed out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various ministries are carried out everywhere; but they all originate in God's Spirit. God's various expressions of power are in action everywhere; but God himself is behind it all. Each person is given something to do that shows who God is: Everyone gets in on it, everyone benefits. All kinds of things are

handed out by the Spirit, and to all kinds of people!<sup>2</sup>

How might we together change used jeans into hope? Or how might our building be a place of welcome to those in need of safety? What are the gifts within you that can transform despair into new life?

Water turned into wine! Amazing! Your gifts turned into hope. Even more amazing! I challenge each of us to find one way to change something—maybe not water into wine—but something to reach out in mission to offer God's hope.

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<sup>1</sup> Patricia Case, "Retail recycling registers redemption," Disciples News Service, December 2012.  
<http://www.disciples.org/Home/WhoWeAre/DisciplesNewsService/tabid/58/itemId/1343/Retail-recycling-registers-redemption.aspx>

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:4 ff *The Message*