

Outside justice building, an offer of prayer

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Passers-by have varying responses when the people of prayer stationed outside the Charlotte T. Zietlow Justice Center approach on Tuesday mornings.

"Good morning," Don Cross says as two young men walk past. "Can we pray with you?"

"I've already prayed this morning, but thank you," one responds, hurrying by. A sharp-dressed lawyer steers clear, avoiding eye contact as he dashes up the steps.

A woman wearing black adorned with glittery gold pauses, accepting the offer of prayer. Donna Drichel and Cross each take one of her hands in theirs. They stand in a small circle, heads bowed, praying quietly.

She thanks them and ascends the justice building steps.

"We don't force anyone to pray. It's basically at their initiative," Cross says. "We are here advocating for justice, trying to provide help for people going in that building, and the ones coming out, who are facing whatever it may be, good or bad. We don't get a lot of push-back."

Contentious divorces. Custody battles. Sentencing hearings. Trials. Adoptions. Evictions. A lot happens beyond the security checkpoint at the front door.

From 8 until 10:30 a.m. every Tuesday, volunteers with Courtside Ministries pray beside a table laden with brochures that address life's difficult paths.

"Violence: Why it Happens."

"When Trust is Lost: Healing for Victims of Sexual Abuse."

"When We Don't Measure Up: Escaping the Grip of Guilt."

"Hope: Choosing Faith Instead of Fear."

"When We Just Can't Stop: Overcoming Addiction."

Drichel, Verna DeLuce, Tanya Chasteen and Teresa Nethery joined Cross this past Tuesday. Five people from different churches praying with and for strangers on the street. They put their faith in the power of prayer.

"We believe that if God is involved, then things are going to work out the best they can for everyone because God cares, and he loves us," Cross explains. "Of course, we all mess up, but we believe in a God who sees the whole picture and who forgives. We're not selling anything or pushing anything."

When the bookkeeper for the New Hope Family Shelter passes by, the group prays for the parents and children the shelter serves.

These are not fair-weather prayer people. They appear every Tuesday morning, no matter what the weather. Someone might need them.

"You know, there are a lot of people down and out and hurting," Cross says. "They need hope. We see a lot of hopelessness."

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