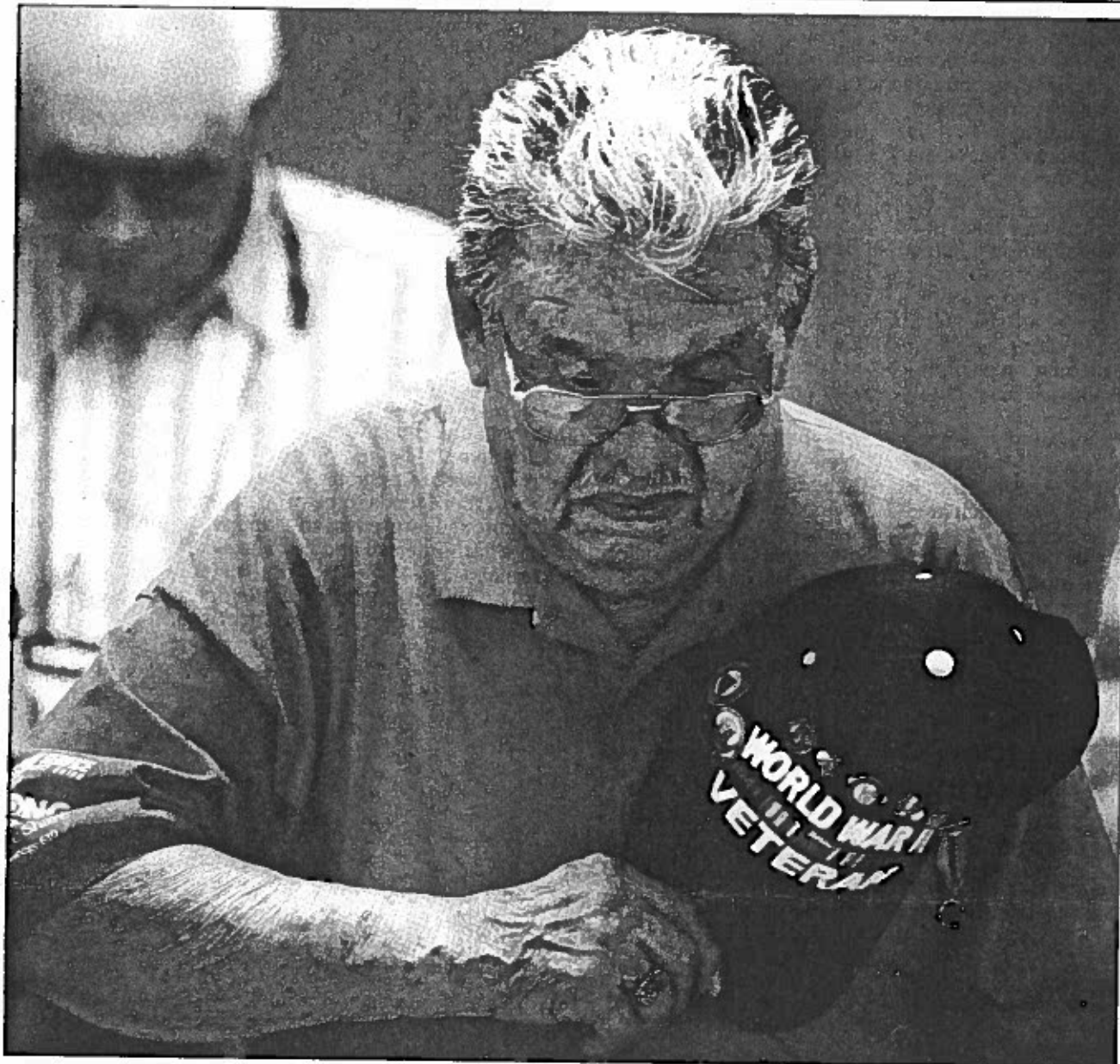


Faith and religion



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World War II veteran Joe Rodriguez bows his head in prayer at the conclusion of a recent breakfast for veterans at the Lake Avenue Baptist Church.

GIVING

Food 'n' fellowship

Lake Avenue Baptist reaches out to area veterans

BY JON POMPIA
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

For Pastor Tim Reed and the Lake Avenue Baptist Church, charity centers around providing a regular meal and fellowship for veterans.

For the past year, the church at 1345 Lake Ave. has hosted a monthly (third Saturday) breakfast for veterans. Reed said the focus was turned to area veterans after church members searched for a precise way to be of benefit to those in need.

"Like all churches here, we are swamped with people needing help — those who need money for gas or the light bill or whatever," Reed said. "We felt our resources were being scattered and we wanted to help, but we weren't sure if we were doing any good."

After a time of prayer and discussion, the idea of helping area veterans surfaced.

"So we decided to focus on that one thing: having a free breakfast every month for veter-



Pastor Timothy Reed (left) listens as Vietnam veteran Pablo Marquez talks about his post-war experiences during a recent veterans breakfast at Lake Avenue Baptist Church.

ans," Reed said. "That's the one need our people felt most comfortable filling. With Pueblo be-

ing the Home of Heroes and with so many active

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veterans groups, it made our a choice a natural one."

Along with the home-cooked meal — scrambled eggs, gravy and biscuits, a meat dish, and so on — the monthly event also features an informational program on such matters as employment for vets, post-traumatic stress syndrome, the experience of combat survivors and so forth. Music often plays while veterans dine.

While attendance at the breakfasts averages about 30, Reed said as

many as 100 people have attended.

"We not only want to feed the veterans but connect with them, get to know them," Reed said. "This breakfast has piggybacked with our church's men's group, so when the men go fishing, if vets want to come along, we take them. Some vets also accompanied our men's group to the auto show at the Fairgrounds earlier this summer.

"We make these opportunities available to vets and the church foots

the bill."

Reed said that, for the most part, those veterans who participate are appreciative not only for the meal but for the fact that "someone recognizes them. A very small percentage are only here for the free meal."

The program is funded through church coffers, private donations and a grant from the American Baptist Region. As many as 12 volunteers — many of whom are vets — converge each month to prepare and serve the food and visit with the

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We not only want to feed the veterans but connect with them, get to know them.

TIM REED
PASTOR

participants.

The breakfast starts at 8:30 a.m. on each third Saturday. Call 542-0113 to learn more, volunteer or donate.

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April 1, 2014

The Rocky Mountain American Baptist

A Newsletter of the American Baptist Churches in the Rocky Mountain Region

Curtis Park Grant Helps Lake Avenue Baptist Church with Veteran's Ministry

Like most churches, Lake Avenue Baptist Church (LABC) wanted to serve the community. We handed out food with CO Care and Share, had a homeless ministry and helped individuals who came to the church with needs. But we felt scattered, ineffective, and suspicious that we were enabling people, and unable to build any real connections with the community and those we were serving. So we began a church-wide season of prayer. Our Congregational Life Team looked at community needs and we accepted recommendations from the congregation at large. It was one of those suggestions that immediately seemed right to us – that God was calling us to serve veterans.

This connected with us because we have veteran's in our congregation. But more importantly, it connected with the community because Pueblo is known as the 'Home of Heroes'. With a population of only around 100,000, Pueblo is home to four Medal of Honor recipients. And a fifth Medal of Honor recipient lived in Pueblo for several years. The Veteran' Bridge is part of Pueblo's famous Riverwalk.

So, in March 2013, LABC hosted its first Veteran's Breakfast. These breakfasts have been held the third Saturday of every month. Our people cook, the food is provided by our people and by funds from the Curtis Park grant.

Each month we advertise the breakfast by posting fliers at the VFW, American Legion and DAV halls, placing a notification in the Pueblo Chieftain and announcing at the Military Affairs Meeting.

Each breakfast begins with the Pledge of Allegiance, Announcements and Prayer. We provide a resource list for veterans. This includes the names, addresses and numbers of various veterans' agencies, housing agencies, food pantries, job agencies, etc. After the breakfast we have a speaker. We have had a WWI veteran share his story, speakers



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from Spanish Peaks (mental health), Pueblo Vet Center (PTSD) Pueblo Work Force Center, etc.

Too, we have supplemented the monthly breakfast by linking to the community in other ways. I attend the monthly Military Affairs Meeting at the Pueblo Chamber of Commerce. We are the only non military organization there. Additionally, I attend the monthly meeting of the Pueblo Veteran's Council. Our Men's Group took some veterans on our annual fishing day, joined with American Legion Post 2 in serving Christmas Dinner at Pueblo's Veteran's Nursing Home, and transported veterans to the free day at the Airplane Museum.

We had about 60 veterans at our February breakfast! We are building relationships with individual veterans and becoming known in the community as the 'church that helps veterans'. None of this has yet translated to increased church attendance; but it has given us a sense of purpose and unity, an anticipation of how God will eventually reward us with 'fruit', and the satisfaction that we are obeying God in serving others. We would not be able to sustain this ministry if it were not for the Curtis Park Grant. Thank you!!

*Pastor Tim Reed
Lake Avenue BC*

