

New York Pastor Sets Up Peanuts-Style Prayer Booth

A New York pastor is offering spiritual advice for five cents, similar to Lucy van Pelt of Peanuts fame.

Gregory Fryer, the pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in the Upper East Side, speaks Jesus from the streets as people pull up outside his booth and ask him for prayer.

Fryer has been praised for the “audacity, the courage to brazenly sit there out there in public and offer to deal with important matters.”

Of his booth, Fryer says:

I do this booth both for fun and for real. Passersby often give me a smile, but many of them are off to work on Tuesday mornings when I have my booth. Still, some take a seat on the stool. “I think I’m getting a cold. Could you pray for me?” “I am on my way to a job interview. This is very important. Could you pray for me?”

I do. I take their hand and pray for them. One young woman sat down and burst into tears. She was worried for her grandmother in Florida. People take a seat to talk about romance and family and illness and grief. “Could you pray for me?” And I do.

The sign says “5 cents,” but that is simply part of the joke. I have a plate full of nickels for people to use if they want to put one into Lucy’s jar. People smile and put money in the jar—nickels and quarters and bills. I think they like the idea of a pastor being on the sidewalk.

At first, when I began my Tuesday-morning booth, I hoped people would notice our church, maybe go inside for some free coffee or to pray. So, at first, I hoped that people would notice us. But now, I find myself noticing them, more and more. I imagine that I am Jason Bourne, and I try to memorize the faces of the people streaming by. They are our neighbors. This booth is confirming what many of us suspect: There is spiritual need in our town. {eoa}