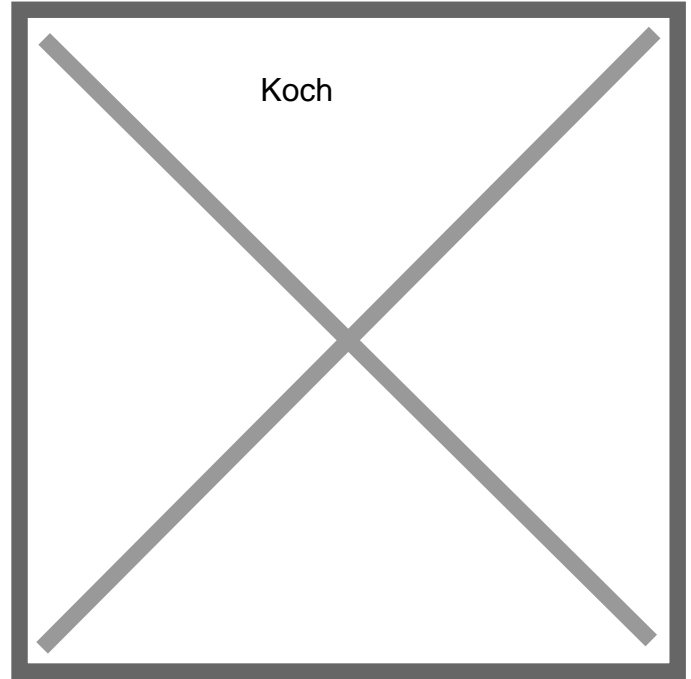


An envoy for all seasons



Envoy Gerry Koch

BY BEE BRYANT –

“A friend used to say that if you do social work right, if you do the gospel right, you can’t tell them apart,” said Envoy Gerry Koch.

Envoy Gerry Koch does both right. As the head of social services for the Intermountain Division, he has spent the last 20 years taking care of the less fortunate in the Denver metro area.

Right now, Koch’s most visible role is as the head of the Denver Christmas Warehouse. “It gives me an opportunity to have some actual client contact ...a chance to demonstrate the gospel.” He coordinates the intake of 5,000 families every year and the distribution of gifts, and food to those families.

His most important roles are not so visible, however. As an envoy, Koch has spent many years in Denver, developing a relationship with the community that allows his ministry to happen.

“You need to spend a lot of time in meetings in order to be effective at the critical times,” Koch said.

Recently, the city of Denver passed an ordinance that would prevent accepting offenders into Salvation Army facilities and Koch went into action. He said, “We are getting that changed through the cooperation of some of the people on the city

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council, as well as all of the different agencies that are involved in housing people that may or may not be offenders.”

Koch has initiated many programs during his time in Denver. One of the most important was the Lambuth Transitional Housing Center, a program that keeps families intact while they move toward self-sufficiency. The program was started inside the Safe Harbor building (a Harbor Light type ministry to men). Six apartments were set up to house families. However, Koch had something larger in mind. “I located a building for Lambuth...and I went out to look at the building, [and] fell in love with it immediately. I spent a year walking the neighborhood and meeting with neighborhood groups in order to get it through city council for a zoning permit.” It is this kind of willingness to do detail work that makes him so effective.

Koch ties the ministry and social services aspects together. “I think our social service ministry needs to demonstrate the love of God in very practical ways. Then you have a chance to take the next step, and help them see that God does love them, and there’s some possibility in their lives. I really see that social services is the heart of the gospel.”