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**GRAY MATTERS**

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## From the pulpit: 'Your life shapes the lives of others'

The actions of everyday people change the world profoundly



Cody Duty, Houston Chronicle

Small things -- like the flap of a butterfly's wing -- can have enormous consequences.

**By Rev. Thomas A. (Tommy) Williams, for the Houston Chronicle**

August 31, 2014

*This is the first installment of a new Sunday feature: Essays and condensed sermons by Houston faith leaders. Today's is an excerpt from a sermon by the Rev. Thomas A. "Tommy" Williams, who delivered it last week at **St. Paul's United Methodist Church**. For the unabridged version, go **here**.*

The disciple Peter, a fisherman, is very human. Very much a mixed bag. And to this Peter, Jesus gives the keys to the car, the house, the whole thing. Peter becomes the foundation for the church.

It is quite astonishing, really, that this Peter is given this role. It is fascinating that God invites us and in some ways relies on human beings to carry forward the message and the story of redemption.

Andy Andrews wrote a little book called "The Butterfly Effect" in which he catalogues the extraordinary impact of simple and courageous efforts.

In short, the butterfly effect is a theory by Edward Lorenz, a scientist who proposed that the flap of a butterfly's wings and that slight push of air makes little changes in atmospheric conditions that, along with millions of other conditions, can alter weather movements on the other side of the world.

At first his theory was laughed off but now is adopted by many scientists. The flapping of a butterfly's wings doesn't cause or create a tornado, but rather something that tiny does contribute to a change in the system that can bring that about.

I will let the scientists in this room debate that one. But I know it's true in life. An ordinary fisherman plays a pivotal role in the story of God's work in the world that is shaping our lives, our story, even now -- and so do you, in your own way.

Your life shapes the lives of others. Small gestures or heroic acts all play a role in God's work in the world.

Maybe one of you is a school teacher who will give encouragement to a student who will see something in herself that she hadn't and in turn befriend another student who was on the verge of giving up on life.

Or maybe someone here will choose to volunteer with a child at MacGregor School, our partner, and one of those kids will discover a passion for language and will grow up to be the poet laureate or simply and powerfully be one who reads to children.

Or maybe something you say in Sunday school will shape the faith of someone who hadn't been to church in

ages but happened to be in church today and who will go on to a faithful life.

We each serve our role. Peter and you and me.

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit: Amen.

[Gray Matters](#) is very human, very much a mixed bag. For [more](#) of its contents, click [here](#).

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