

HEARTBEATS- Staying Connected 2/1/2021



Dear Friends in Christ,
ONE AT ONE – Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, February 2 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, let our prayers be for those who are struggling greatly through this time. Include those who have lost jobs, those who are unemployed, those who do not have enough to feed themselves and/or their family. Thank God also for the ways that we, as a church, have been able to help some through our ministries.

I thought this was going to be a sprint. I didn't imagine that it would be a marathon. But it is. This pandemic is turning out to be a very long race. Long-distance runners will tell you that there is an invisible wall that you hit when you're running a marathon. You reach a point where the energy stored in your muscles is depleted and you feel like you just can't go on. Do you feel like you're hitting the wall?

There are things that runners do that also apply to getting through times like this. Here are some suggestions:

Pace yourself. Recognize that this is marathon. Don't become so focused on getting to the finish line that you lose track of the small steps that need to be and are being taken along the way. Right now, vaccinations are being given with the goal of a million to a million-and-a-half a day. That's good news. But there are more than 250 million people in the US, so it's going to take a while before enough

people have received the vaccine to reach the level of immunity that allows us more freedom to gather. The lock-down has been lifted, but we're still far from being back to "normal." So instead of looking only to the finish line of normalcy, give thanks for the small steps that are happening as we move forward.

Distract yourself. Find things to do or learn including perhaps some new things that can keep yourself from focusing too much on the frustration you may be feeling. Find a new hobby. Read a book. Clean out a closet. Write some letters. Exercise. There are lots of ways that we can keep from thinking about how long this is taking. Do whatever you can to change your focus.

Energize yourself. What gives you energy? Make an effort to include that kind of activity regularly. Is it listening to music? Going outside? Talking to friends. Create the habit of doing what will bring you the kind of energy that helps you avoid feeling worn down.

Stay flexible. Recognize that things are not always going to move in the direction you would like. When that happens, take a moment to see if there are other directions in which you can move yourself. Even ask yourself what it is God is trying to teach you. Often the things we want most will also bring us the greatest challenge. If you want God to give you patience, expect to be put in more trying circumstances in order to build up your fortitude. If you want stronger faith, know that times will come that will push your faith to the limit. Often it is through the tests of life that God brings us closer to where God wants us to be. Be open to what God is doing and celebrate the new place to which God is bringing you.

The Letter to the Hebrews encourages us for those times when we feel most like we are hitting the wall. In chapter 12, verses 1-2, the author writes, "Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith." And as we seek to keep our eyes on Jesus, let us not forget that we are not running alone. We do this together, seeking to help each other to faithfully finish the race.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey