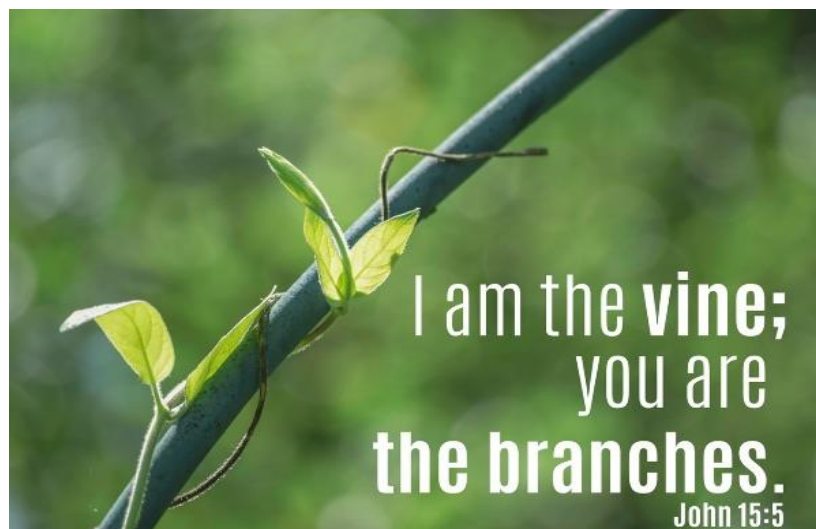


HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 4-3-2021



Dear Friends in Christ,

In John's Gospel, Jesus tells us, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5). Abiding in Jesus means spending time with Jesus. Regularly. Daily. Even hourly. It's about having a relationship.

An hour on Sunday, is not abiding. It's like a drive-by wave. During the pandemic, that's how we've had to do celebrations—with drive by waves and perhaps cautiously spoken words or gifts given. They've required effort to maintain a connection, but have also left us wanting more. Imagine basing your relationship with your spouse, or your parents, or your kids, or your closest friends on just an hour each week. Not much of a relationship, is it? No, we have to make time with Jesus part of each day. We have to make time for a relationship.

Nurturing our relationship with Jesus means setting our heart and mind on the kingdom of God. If this hasn't been your practice, it can be difficult to make that change. But if you do it a bit at a time, it can become regular and meaningful. Even if you have regular activities you do to connect with Jesus, adding little things can deepen that connection. Consider adding one or two practices until they become comfortable and not something that requires extra effort. Here are some things from which you might choose:

X Christ in Our Home is a daily devotional St. Andrew makes available to any who wish to have it. Find a time in the morning, at the end of breakfast, or another time to do this daily reading and prayer.

X Pray before meals. Take time to think about all who were involved in growing, harvesting, shipping, and preparing the meal. Thank God for these life-giving blessings.

X One-at-One is an encouragement to spend one minute in prayer each day at one o'clock for a specific need. The suggestion for each week is sent out on Monday at the beginning of the Staying Connected article.

X Read the Bible. Block out a period of time, like fifteen minutes to half-an-hour to spend time with God's word. Pick a book of the Bible and work your way through it. Make notes of your thoughts on the reading and how it relates to other portions you have previously read, as well as how it might inform your day ahead.

X Intentionally pray whenever you see a situation that needs change. During the news, while you're out driving, when talking to another, be aware of things that are named that you could bring before God and then do so, either at that moment, or at the end of the day.

X Keep a journal of times when you were more aware of God's presence in your life. How was God made known to you? What impact did that awareness make on you? How might it move you closer to God?

X Read a faith encouraging or meditative or Bible-based book. Spend time each day reading a few pages or a chapter.

X Attend a Bible study class. Even though we're still in a pandemic, there are many Zoom classes offered that focus on the Bible or growth in faith. Find one that fits your schedule.

Regular and frequent involvement in these small activities is the way developing a vibrant faith life. It first requires commitment to make a small change—to giving a portion of your day intentionally to time with Jesus. But if we want to produce the kind of fruit that Jesus is talking about—kingdom fruit—then each small shift we can make closer to Jesus will help us do that. And whatever our effort may be, God will bless it and cause it to grow, adding new meaning to our life.

In Christ's love,

Pastor Jeffrey