

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 1/24/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, January 25 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for peace in our world, especially between the Ukraine and Russia. Ask God to give world leaders the vision and commitment to find nonviolent ways of resolving conflict. Pray for the good of all people.*

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I have on my desk a weathervane with a rooster on it. I bought it when studying to be a pastor because of the weathervane at Wartburg Theological Seminary where I attended. That weathervane was placed on top of the tall tower by Kent Knudsen, the former president of the seminary. Dr. Knudsen had it put there so he could see it from his office window to remind himself of Peter.

Dr. Knudsen (and I) recognize that there is a lot of Peter in all of us. We, at times, are the insightful, committed believers like Peter, who confessed that Jesus was the Christ, the Messiah. And we, at times like Peter—sometimes even in the next instant—are so full of ourselves that we think we know better even than God how things should happen. Peter, after making that great confession then tried to prevent Jesus from going to Jerusalem, which led Jesus to confront Peter with the words, “Get behind me, Satan.”

Peter also opposed including Gentiles in the early Christian movement, believing it should be only for the Jews. Then God sent Peter a vision of a sheet being lowered from heaven with all kinds of animals on it and telling Peter to eat. Peter, seeing animals that Jews believed were unclean, refused, saying that he would never eat anything that was unclean. Then that voice from heaven told Peter, “Do not call unclean anything that God has made clean.” Just after that, some Gentiles showed up asking Peter to meet with them because the Holy Spirit had come upon them and totally changed Peter’s idea of how things should be. The lesson was that these Gentiles had been made “clean” by their faith, revealed in the Holy Spirit’s presence in their lives.

Jesus had given Simon the nickname Peter, which means “rock.” Rocks can be solid foundations at times, but if a rock gets rolling in the wrong direction—well, look out. That’s how Peter was and how we sometimes can be: faithful and solid at times, and, too often, rolling at downhill speed in the wrong direction. The rooster is a reminder of that night when Peter, initially so confident of his loyalty to Jesus that he would even die for his Lord, denied three times being part of Jesus’ group or even knowing Him. While we like to think we are strong, faithful believers, the truth is there are plenty of times where we go rolling off the wrong way. Thankfully, we have the grace of God who, even when we stray, still loves us and calls back. Perhaps we could all use a rooster placed where it can remind us of Peter, and perhaps it might help us to avoid becoming too confident in our own power, turning instead in those most challenging moments to the power of God’s love in Jesus.

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey