

## **HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 3/11/2022**

Dear Friends in Christ,

In the past few years, we've been hearing and seeing more and more about political correctness and the now "more accurate" terms to be using in various situations. I'll admit that sometimes, it seems overboard and just makes me want to roll my eyes. But I also recognize that there are times when these adjustments to our language are important and necessary if we are going to treat people more wholly and respectfully.

Recently, my daughter and son-in-law lost their baby they were expecting this fall, who also would have been our first grandchild. The term most often used for this is "miscarriage." This term has its origin in the more basic term "miscarried." Though these are words we've been using for as long as I can remember, it occurs to me now, that this is an inaccurate and directly or indirectly hurtful description of what has happened.

Did you know that one in four pregnancies result in the loss of the baby before birth? And there are a multitude of reasons that this can happen. Genetics, infection, exposure to environmental hazards, external trauma, hormonal irregularities, improper implantation of the fertilized egg in the womb, lifestyle factors, like smoking or chemical use, and more can be contributors to premature end of pregnancy. Mothers have no control over many of these factors. Yet, the terms "miscarriage" and "miscarried" imply that the mother had done something wrong. She has not carried the baby properly.

The loss of an expected child can be devastating to potential parents. How much more so when the words we use imply blame. Perhaps we can find better, more accurate, and more sensitive terms for this tragic situation. Modern medicine sometimes uses the phrase "spontaneous abortion," but with all the politics connected with the word "abortion," this too, is unhelpful. The phrase that seems most acceptable now is "pregnancy loss," but even this feels too clinical. Yet, I have been unable to come up with anything better.

In any case, what seems most important is to be as sensitive and sympathetic as possible when someone we know has suffered this kind of loss. It is essential that as we allow the ones who have experienced such a loss to share their feelings in ways that are affirming and caring of those emotions. Most of all, we should do all we can to avoid conveying any sense of blame in the situation. Rather, our task should be to compassionately value the person and to recognize that feelings are genuine and will take time to process.

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey