

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 5/9/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, May 10 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for all who have lost someone because of the pandemic. Specifically name those you know who mourn over someone who died from COVID. Ask for God's comfort and assurance. Seek to find ways that you might be of service to those who are still grieving.*

---

In the next few days, we will reach more than one million deaths in America due to COVID. That's a staggering number and difficult to even grasp. It is like the number of deaths we hear about in major wars. One million deaths are more than double the number of Americans who died during World War II and just somewhat less than double the number who died in the Civil War. It is a tragic indication of how devastating this pandemic has been.

I doubt that there are any of us who do not know of someone who has died because of COVID. All of us have been touched by this heartbreaking loss of life. Yet there are several more dynamics to this pandemic that go beyond just the death of those who are dear to us. Many still struggle because of these additional factors that have resulted because of this global virus.

I think one disheartening consequence of COVID has been the massive number of people who have died alone, or with only medical staff present. Family members have not been able to be there at the end of the life of a loved one. Not only is that heart-rending for the person at the time of death, it also is it overwhelming for the family members who were not even able to witness the end of life of one for whom they cared deeply. That is tremendous sadness.

Another painful outcome of the pandemic is how many have been unable to have closure for a lost loved one because of the restrictions regarding services following death. And not just services for those who have died from COVID, but for most deaths during this time of pandemic. Funeral homes and cemeteries had to eliminate funeral and graveside services or greatly limit how many were able to attend. Mortuaries, in order to keep their staffs safe, refused to deliver bodies to locations for worship services for the departed other than to cemeteries. The result is that many have been unable to celebrate and remember the life of the deceased, and to hear the proclamation of hope that comes from the resurrection of Jesus. You are likely among those who are feeling the emptiness of an incomplete farewell for one or several who were important to you.

Still, I think we, the church, can provide help and hope in this situation. I believe that one of the ways in which we can offer support and a sense of finishing and goodbye is through conversation. First, we must begin with ourselves and find occasions to talk with family members and friends in meaningful ways about the lives of those lost. What were the qualities of the one who has died? What are some of the special memories of times with that person? How has the family been affected by the loss? These kinds of discussions can help us feel more the closure that currently is lacking. Second, we can give others the opportunity to also share their thoughts and feelings. Who are those that you know that have lost someone, but were unable to have a service of life celebration and remembrance? When could you gather with them to offer time for these kinds of conversations? Storytelling can be a powerful way to

hold on to the memories while also freeing ourselves from the sense of loss. One of the best things we can offer, especially as we reach this terrible milestone, is a concerted effort to help ourselves and others to find the closure we might otherwise be feeling at this time. Let us intentionally seek to minister to others through loss and offer the words of hope that comes because of and through the love of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In Christ's love,  
Pastor Jeffrey