

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 6/27/2022

Dear Friends in Christ,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, June 28 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, as our country's divisions seem a bit wider again, pray for unity. Ask God to help us find common grounds for our relationships. Pray that the Holy Spirit give us patience and openness when interacting with those who's view differ from us. Pray that we might respond in all things with mercy and kindness.*

How much does your Christian faith impact your life? Your daily life beyond your time attending church on Sunday? How much do you think about it and how much does it affect the decisions you make? Here are some things you might consider to help you evaluate your faith life:

Do you pray before meals? After meals? Out loud? How about when you are somewhere public like a restaurant? Do you pray here? If so, do you pray out loud?

How many of your co-workers know that you are a Christian? How many of your neighbors know? If they do, how did they find out? What kinds of things in your office or house testify to your faith in Christ? How often do you talk with these people you see regularly about your faith?

When was the last time you told a stranger that you were a believer? How did it come up? Was it awkward or were you comfortable telling someone you didn't know about your faith?

When was a decision you made influenced by your faith? How difficult was it to make that choice? What made it easy or hard?

Every year, many of the restaurants on Second Street just up the street from our home in Long Beach hold what's called a "Stroll & Savor." Many people come out, purchase tickets and then walk up and down the Second Street using their tickets to purchase food items from the local businesses. This past week was such an event and Sandy and I took part. Toward the end of the evening, we had just a few tickets left. I had a group of two tickets and another of three tickets and decided to go use the three tickets just a couple blocks back. I made my selection and handed the server my three tickets. Except that a short time later, when I took my remaining two tickets out of my pocket, there were three. I realized I had handed the server at that restaurant the wrong group that had only two. No big deal, right? They'll never know, and even though each restaurant is reimbursed from the ticket sales, they'll never miss one ticket, will they? Nevertheless, I tore off one ticket from the three, gave Sandy the two for her to go get something she wanted elsewhere and went back to the place I had short-changed.

When I arrived, I handed the ticket to the server and explained that had given her too few tickets. She smiled, took the ticket and thanked me. And then she said, "We never would have known. So, why did you come back?"

I told her, "I believe in Jesus, and this is what I think Jesus would want me to do."

She looked at me a moment, as did the customer standing next to me, and then she said, "That's cool. Thank you."

I know I made the decisions to go back because my faith told me to. When asked about my decision, I saw it as an opportunity to witness to my commitment to Christ. I probably will never know if it my words had impact on the woman with whom I spoke or the other customer. But I trust that, if seeds are planted, the Holy Spirit will cause the to grow in God's good time. And even if this seed never sprouts, I became just a bit more comfortable sharing my faith. With a stranger. In a public place. We all can do this.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Jeffrey