

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 8/22/2022

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, August 23 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for those affected by the changes in climate in the area where they live. Ask GOD to provide relief from weather that creates hardship. Pray that those in distress received care from agencies that will provide needed assistance.*

As I've already said, names are important. They are the means by which we identify each other in a personal way. Consider the difference in how you feel when someone say, "Hey, you!" versus when someone says, "Hey, (insert your name here)." Of course, tone matters, but being called by your name often creates a much more positive feeling than just a neutral identification.

Years ago, I heard a story about a professor in a nursing school who gave an exam. Fifty percent of the grade was based on one question, "What is the name of the custodian for this school?" They had seen this person regularly for months, but the students were dumbfounded when they read the question. "You never told us to find out the custodian's name." The teacher explained that in caring for people, we can easily become so wrapped up in the illness and treatment that we forget that the patients are people with real feelings and identities, and it is at least as important to get to know the people with whom we work as it is the work we are doing.

I used to challenge my children in the same way. When we would eat in a restaurant, after we had placed our order, I asked them the name of our server. Initially, they had no idea. Soon, because they knew I was going to ask, they learned to pay attention to the person serving us and to get to know her/his name. It helped them to think about that person as more than "just the one who was bringing us our food."

Former president Jimmy Carter tells a story from when Habitat for Humanity began building homes in the county where he lived. A very wealthy woman from this county called Millard Fuller, the founder of Habitat. "Why don't you build a house for my maid?" she angrily demanded. "She needs a new home as much as anyone." Fuller explained the criteria for choosing homeowners, and then began to ask a few questions.

"How long has she worked for you?"

"Twenty-three years."

"Is she a good and reliable worker?"

"Of course. She comes every day, without fail."

"What is her name?"

"I don't know her last name, but her first one is Maude."

Like Maude's employer, many of us really don't know the names of our neighbors or of folks with whom we regularly come in contact.

Learning names is an important way to break down barriers and build bridges. That may be difficult for some of us as we are hesitant or resistant to speaking to people we don't know. Yet it is a crucial first step if we are going to create the kinds of relationships that might lead us to invite someone to church. Our congregation provides a wonderful setting for overcoming that fear and to practice relationship-building. With our current blended service, there may be others worshiping with us whose names we do not know because they previously attended the other service from the one we did when we had two. So, let me invite you to take a moment to go up to someone with whom you are not familiar, and to simply say, "I'm sorry. I don't know your name, but I'd like to get to know you. My name is..." You may feel a bit uncomfortable at first, but I'll bet this encounter actually goes pretty well. Think how you would feel if someone took the time to get to know you and then offer that gift to someone else. You may meet someone who becomes a good friend. At the very least, you will let another person know that they are valued and help them feel more a part of the faith community in which we worship.

In CHRIST'S LOVE,
Pastor Jeffrey