

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 11/18/2022

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

Young children are always quick to let us know what is and what is not (from their perspective) fair. When I was young my parents would have one of us serve up whatever was the special treat or desert we were going to eat and then have another decide who got which serving. If you were the server, you made very sure that all servings were absolutely equal so that when the other made their choice, you got exactly the same amount. That was fair.

But fair isn't always as easy as making sure everyone gets an equal portion of the same thing. This week I read about a teacher called Aimee who on the first day of school each year teaches her young students a valuable lesson on fairness. She asks them to raise their hand if they've ever scraped their elbow. Of course, they all raise their hands, so Aimee chooses one to tell the story of their elbow scraping and then she puts a Band-Aid on the child's elbow. Then she asks if anyone has ever bumped their head. Again, hands go up and she asks for one of those to tell the story of the head bump. Then she says, "I am so sorry you hurt your head. Here's a Band-Aid for your elbow." The kids are now a bit confused. Next Aimee asks who has ever scraped their knee. Hands go up, Aimee asks one for the story, and then says, "I'm so sorry you scraped your knee. Here's a Band-Aid for your elbow." Now she has a conversation with her students about how, even though everyone got the exact same thing—a Band-Aid for their elbow—it wasn't always helpful to them. She concludes that "fair" doesn't mean everyone gets the same thing. "Fair" means everyone gets what they need to be successful. In her class this includes when the kid with diabetes gets an extra snack, or the one with autism gets noise-cancelling headphones, or the one with ADHD gets to use a fidget spinner during class. If someone complains that the "extra" another student receives isn't fair, Aimee just says, "Band-Aid," and the one complaining remembers the Band-Aid exercise and once again understands.

In the church, we sometimes, in our effort to help others, forget about meeting needs rather than just giving the same to everyone. Some years ago, the youth group at the church I was serving wanted to do something for local people that were in need. They decided to make sandwiches that we could distribute in the park where the unhoused primarily dwelt. Wanting to connect it to our call as Christians to share the gospel, they asked if we could also hand out the paperback New Testaments our church kept on hand. The kids were shocked when they got to the park and the people who came forward asked for a New Testament rather than a sandwich. They somehow had gotten the idea that they could only have one or the other, and they were choosing the Good News. In spite of their situations, these unhoused people had systems for getting food, but to get a Bible was a rare, and for many, treasured opportunity. (By the way, the youth explained to the people that they could have both, which they gladly accepted, but it was a wonderful lesson for the kids on how many covet the chance to have a Bible of their own.)

There are times when we, as a church, have shared our resources to work to meet the needs rather than just giving out "Band-Aids." A good example is the funds we raised as a congregation for San Juan Camino de Esperanza Church in Lima, Peru. Often people will send money or food to places that they may have perceived to have great need. But through conversations held with San Juan Camino de Esperanza by our Mission and Service Commission, we were able to know what their real need was. Money for school lunches, yes, but also screens to protect the children from the scorching heat during the school day, and funds for vocational training.

Fairness is not always about make sure everyone gets some help or the same help. Fairness is about doing what we can to meet specific needs. The goal, whenever possible, should be to tailor our giving so that it is more than just Band-Aids, and toward that end, it helps to actually talk to and get to know those you hope to help. Our efforts, as much as we can, should be about meeting needs.

In CHRIST'S love,  
Pastor Jeffrey