

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 1/30/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, January 31 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for one other person who you know is in need of GOD'S love and support. Specifically name those things that challenge or trouble or burden this person. Ask that, in addition to GOD'S intervention, this person may also come to know more deeply GOD'S presence in her or his life.*

Why do we worship? Why do we gather as a congregation to sing and pray and listen and give and all the other things we do? Each person probably has their own reasons but let me list some. Perhaps there will be some you hadn't considered but are part of the reasons why you come.

1) **TO WORSHIP GOD** – Most would give this answer first and hopefully it is true for all of us. We come together to offer thanks and praise to GOD for all that GOD has done and continues to do in our lives.

2) **TO SEE FRIENDS** – Many of us have made lasting bonds with people who also share the same faith. Weekly, we come to see these dear friends and touch base with people who matter to us.

3) **TO ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER** – We worship better the larger our community of worshipers is. When we lend our voices to the songs, our thoughts to the prayers, our well-wishes and support to the sharing of the peace, our worship is more powerful and meaningful. You may consider skipping worship because you just don't feel like you need it this week, but there may be someone else there who needs what you have to offer.

4) **TO BETTER GET OUT OF THE WAY** – That may sound strange, but worship helps us to put our agendas and priorities aside so that we can be more fully committed to what GOD is doing and of which GOD invites us to be a part. Worship can help us to put our questions and concerns in the context of GOD'S plan for the world and for our lives. Worship allows us to let go of those things that can interfere with our relationship with GOD and reorient us as GOD'S people.

5) **TO BE EQUIPED FOR THE WEEK AHEAD** – The promise of GOD is to give us what we will need for what comes next for us. We don't know what that will be and when it comes, we may not even recognize GOD'S hand in providing the words, or feelings, or actions that will allow us to respond in the ways needed. Nevertheless, the preaching, the hymns, the prayers, or other parts of the service may give us a perspective, or temperament, or approach, or motivation for that which will come to us in the next few days. This equipping can also include the support we need to carry through when we are in the midst of struggle. Worship helps to assure us that GOD goes with us through difficult times and free us from feeling that presence.

6) **TO LEARN THE FAITH** – You may not realize that this has happened to you, but it is part of what worship is about. When parents bring their children for baptism, the parents and sponsors make a commitment to raise their children as best their able in the way GOD wants them raised. They promise to bring their baptized child to the services of GOD'S house and to teach their child the LORD'S Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. One of the best places for this teaching to happen is in worship. Though we don't recite the Ten Commandments each week, we do speak

together the LORD'S Prayer and the Creed. When I visit people who have Alzheimer's disease, I have found that, though they may seem to have no awareness left, I can still say the LORD'S Prayer with them and have them repeat or show recognition of it. This prayer was learned in worship. And if I asked you what you believe about GOD, most likely your answer would be profoundly shaped by the words you learned in the Apostles' Creed.

7) TO SHARE IN GOD'S MISSION – GOD calls us to make disciples. When others come to worship with us, we are helping to “teach them all that I have commanded you,” as JESUS asked us. We hear about possibilities to share in the mission of our congregation or the larger church and are invited to be a part of those efforts. More than this, we are often challenged in worship to consider how we can be GOD'S hands and voice in the world once we leave the place of worship.

I'm sure there are many other great reasons to worship, but these are a few of the ones that came to mind. Worship has great value for us as we seek to fulfill our commitment to GOD and show our appreciation of all the ways that GOD has blessed us. All of these things will help us to move deeper into the connection we have with the ONE who made us, who loves us, and who desires to be in close relationship with us.

In CHRIST'S love,
Pastor Jeffrey