

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 7/24/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, July 25 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, continue to pray for all across the world who are affected by the extreme heat of this season. Ask that GOD through us and others provide suitable shelter and hydration to all in need. Pray for diminishing of excessive heat and for safety during this time.*

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Selma Bergen chose for her own memorial service a wonderful passage from the Letter to the Hebrews that seems as valuable and appropriate today as it did when it was first written. Hebrews 10:24-25 in particular contains valuable words of encouragement to all Christians and especially those who have drifted away from regular worship: *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.* It seems that even back in those times, falling out of the habit of worshiping was an ongoing problem for a number of people.

Regular and frequent worship is certainly valuable for keeping one's faith active and vibrant. And, of course, a living faith is essential for one's salvation. But there are other very good reasons for attending worship. Studies show that attending worship can improve both your physical and mental health. Here are some of the identified health benefits that come from worship:

- Spiritual practices like prayer can reduce stress and anxiety. The Journal of Health Psychology found that spirituality and frequent prayer have been tied to lower cortisol levels. Cortisol has been called the “stress hormone” and higher levels of stress produce increases in cortisol.
- Duke University Medical Center studies show that those who are active religiously have better immune functions than those who do not due to the sharing of positive thoughts or experiences as happens in worship.
- The Mayo Clinic's research on the topic of the benefits of worship found that “religious involvement and spirituality are associated with better health outcomes, including greater longevity, coping skills, and health-related quality of life (even during terminal illness) and less anxiety, depression, and suicide.”
- An epidemic of loneliness and lack of community is contributing to a rapid rise in what is being called “deaths of despair” from suicide and substance abuse. Belonging to a faith community and participating actively within it can foster the sense of community that is missing in the lives of many.
- People who attend religious services tend to have more close friendships, which in turn promote better health outcomes. One study found that cancer patients who belonged to a church choir had better vitality and mental health despite no improvement in their physical conditions. Simply having social support and coming together to sing was enough to improve one's sense of well-being.
- Harvard researchers found that men and women who attend services weekly reduced their risk of dying a death of despair by 33% and 68% respectively.
- Another study found that those who were more involved with their church had better cardiovascular health because their faith community supported and encouraged them in making lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking or eating healthier.

There is a decline in regular worship attendance in America today. The fastest growing religious segment of the U.S. population is now “nones” who claim to have no religious affiliation. Once we realize that our connection to and participation in a worshiping community goes far beyond just personal spirituality, we may begin to discover the breadth and depth of benefits to our lives in many other areas than just religious issues. Being an active part of a church is just plain good for you!

In CHRIST'S love,

Pastor Jeffrey