

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 11/13/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

***ONE AT ONE*** – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, November 14, you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for our world and all of GOD'S creation. Pray that we find better ways to care for our world and to restore it to better health. Ask forgiveness for the ways we have abused it. Seek GOD'S guidance on ways you can be a better steward of the world into which GOD has placed us.*

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Are you concerned about declining membership in your church? Do you wonder why more isn't being done to bring in new members? Do you think someone needs to do something? Now?

Statistics reveal the answer is...you.

Why do people start attending a church?

- 86% A friend invited me.
- 6% An organized visitation program.
- 6% The pastor invited me.
- 2% Advertising.

The truth is that people bring people to church.

Think about how you came to the church you attend. Certainly, some found their church when they moved into a new community through the yellow pages, internet, or some other sort of search. But many of us were influenced by someone we knew. People are more comfortable coming to a new church when they already know someone who worships there. And the closer that relationship, the more likely they are to consider attending.

Of course, there are many new challenges today than in past times. Younger people are less likely to consider organized religion when it so often gives messages of condemnation for some people. Many people have been turned off by the scandals of some church bodies and congregations and no longer trust the church. And many have been hurt by words that suggest that GOD can't or doesn't love them. Nevertheless, there are many people in our communities who would love to connect with a group of friendly, warm, welcoming people. The problem is they're hesitant to enter a new, unknown environment alone. And no one has invited them.

That's where you come in. A simple invitation can make the difference for someone who otherwise is without a church home.

For many of us, the vast majority of our friends are also church-goers, often to the same congregation. We just don't know many people who don't attend church somewhere. When JESUS said, "Go, and make disciples of all nations," HE was reflecting the truth that we need to make an effort to get to know new people—people who don't attend worship somewhere. My late wife, Lori, would do our household shopping early Sunday morning before church. And each week she would go to the same checker and visit with her. They developed a sort of friendship and Lori often talked about the church where we worshipped that she would attend later that day. Of course, her friend worked on Sundays, so that was a problem. But one week her schedule changed, and she came to visit our church. Lori recognized her right away and welcomed her and guided her through worship and introduced her to others from the congregation.

If we want to see new people coming to our church, we have to invite them. And, if we don't know anyone who doesn't go to church, we have to find them. Once we do, we develop a relationship with them that creates

friendship and trust. And eventually, GOD will show us the right time to invite them to come. This is how you grow a church. And the key word there is “you.”

In CHRIST'S love,  
Pastor Jeffrey