

RANSOM RAMBLINGS

Share a Smile and a Hug

The snow is history. We survived and now on to spring. I expect the tulips to pop up most any moment - well maybe it will be several moments, but oh the joy of seeing smiling daffodils, bright-red tulips, or even a pansy face. During the recent broad predictions of snow for Sunday, many services were closed, including where I usually attend in Springfield, IL.

Fortunately, the staff quickly recorded the music, announcements, and sermon on Saturday evening, ready to be shown Sunday morning. I was able to hear the brilliant message by our minister the next day without getting my dog sled out and scurrying with the furry, four-legged ones down the snowy road. I stayed home in front of my computer while nibbling on a sweet roll.



As I reflected back on the day, however, I realized something was missing. Something had been stolen. Yes, exactly. I was missing smiles, hugs, friendly interaction with friends, handshakes from a stranger or two, and mini-conversations. The church is a community, and there was no community in my apartment.

Brooks, the minister, smiled back at me (well, at all of those watching online that day), but that is different. I couldn't personally smile back or thank him for helping my brain think and reflect during the sermon. I truly missed spotting guests, intentionally approaching them, and introducing myself. (Well, I can still remember my own name, just not the name of most other people).

Was it nice not to have to scurry, shower, grab a cup of coffee and my teaching material, and dash to the car? Was I glad it did not necessitate hooking up the computer and speaker system for the class I teach so most of the attendees would be able to see and hear? Of course, it was nice. Even my car stayed nice and warm in the garage, but I was lonely.

Ultimately I realized, or maybe just remembered, that Acts 20:7 reminds us that "On the first day of the week **WE** (Paul and others) **came together** to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight." Now, I would rather not stay out that late at my age, but it does seem that there is history of the church assembling together. Yes, during the time of covid separation, it was wonderful to be able to flick on the TV or computer and participate in worship, but there was one giant void — NO COMMUNITY of BELIEVERS sharing with each other. In addition, bringing unbelievers or strangers to a closer relationship with the Lord is much more difficult. In-home worship is wonderful for shut-ins, people who have jobs with conflicting times for the service, or occasional incidents of personal illness or emergencies.

The U.S. Census Bureau's Household Pulse Survey's recent report stated that one in eight people report feeling lonely "always" or "usually." That number jumps to nearly a quarter of younger adults aged 18-29. Where better than dragging/inviting your lonely friend to worship? Who will be present to greet that lonely teen or timid adult who might accidentally wander in from his or her quiet homey nest? You, my friend, can help reach and care. So, my challenge to each reader today, as soldiers in God's army, let's attempt to get everyone into active duty. Our military cartoon friend, Beetle Bailey, seems to frequently get away with extra nap time, but real soldiers are expected to be on the front line.

**Let's Set a 2025 Goal to Reach Out Actively
To Help Build Our Christian
Community Be Part of the Team**