



Link in Community

Gracious God, thank you for the diversity of human beings that surround me on every side. In the ideas, in the hopes, in the dreams, and in the struggles of those who share this earthly life, let me find that through a community of human beings I am made fuller and more alive. Let the fullness given by community give me the courage to offer my own unique self with humility to the lives of others. As we all share in the life that you have so graciously given us, may we be the lights of your love to one another. Amen.

We are all longing to go home to some place we have never been – a place half-remembered and half-envisioned we can only catch glimpses of from time to time: **Community**. Somewhere, there are people to whom we can speak with passion without having the words catch in our thoughts. Somewhere a circle of hands will open to receive us, eyes will light up as we enter, and voices will celebrate with us whenever we come into our own power. Community means strength that joins our strength to do the work that needs to be done. Arms to hold us when we falter. A circle of healing. A circle of friends. Someplace where we can be free. – Starhawk

Fall Worship Schedule

- 10 /5 The Journey Begins!
- 10/12 Live in Gratitude
- 10/19 Lead with Grace
- 10/26 Learn in Relationship
- 11/2 Link in Community I
- 11/9 Link in Community II
- 11/16 Love by Serving
- 11/23 United Methodist Charge Conference

Core Values – *Link in Community*
First United Methodist Church

NEW BEGINNINGS

Link in Community

“The religious community is essential, for alone our vision is too narrow to see all that must be seen. Together, our vision widens and strength is renewed.” Mark Morrison-Reed

A Question of Belonging

Who am I – We derive our identity from the community in which we live.

Why am I here – We derive our satisfaction in life from the standards of the community

What will become of me – We derive our faith within the life of the community

➤ The Benefit of **encouragement**

If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! (v.10)

➤ The Benefit of **relationships**

Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm.
But how can one keep warm alone? (v.11)

➤ The Benefit of **protection**

Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken. (v. 12)

Three Key Commitments for a stronger Community at First Church

1. A commitment to **Sunday Morning** (for worship and an adult disciple class)
2. A commitment to a **Spiritual Disciplines** during the week to deepen your spiritual life.
3. A commitment to **serve** the body of Christ using your spiritual gifts.

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Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NCV)

Friends and Family Give Strength

- 9** Two people are better than one,
because they get more done by working together.
- 10** If one falls down,
the other can help him up.
But it is bad for the person who is alone and falls,
because no one is there to help.
- 11** If two lie down together, they will be warm,
but a person alone will not be warm.
- 12** An enemy might defeat one person,
but two people together can defend themselves;
a rope that is woven of three strings is hard to break.

Encouragement – to add courage

Jerry Bridges – mental or physical strength to persevere in the face of difficulty, to fortify with the spiritual strength to persevere despite hardships.

Briquette Principle

Life in Palestine, the temperature drops in the desert, close to a family member you stay warm and can rest comfortably. Warmth of the pack, like charcoal briquettes burns best together. Pile all the briquettes together, don't spread them out to get them all to glow.

If we live alone and isolated, we will grow cold in our love for God and others. Spiritual disciplines, serving without gifts, we will check out and live for ourselves. We need the warmth and hospitality of the community. They spur us on in Christ.

As we go through life there are two kinds of things we can give our lives to.

1. Some people try to **accumulate possessions**. They are constantly trying to get more or better stuff. It is attributed to the late Malcolm Forbes to have said, "He who dies with most toys wins." However, since he has died, he knows that not to be true. If we spend all our lives

trying to accumulate more and more possessions, we will never truly be happy and fulfilled.

2. On the other hand we can decide to focus on **building relationships**, trying to make friends and to be a friend.

Today, I want us to grasp the fact that if we are going to live and move Forward in Faith, then we must a deeper sense of community. Be the initiator.

Proverbs 18:24 – Friends come and friends go, but a true friend sticks by you like family. (MSG)

Story of the USS Indianapolis

On July 30, 1945 the U.S.S. Indianapolis was on its way from Guam to the Phillipeans when it was struck by two torpedoes and sank in approximately 12 minutes. Of the 1,200 men crew, only 900 men abandoned ship. In the open ocean, uncertain any rescue would be forthcoming, they battled dehydration, despair, and of course, sharks for 5 days on the open oceans. Blazing sun during the days and hypothermia at night took their toll. After 5 day only 316 were rescued and lived to tell the story.

How did they do it?

*Huddled together for warmth and to protect those on the inside. Together they protected and watched over one another against the dreaded shark attacks. They collected life jackets to keep afloat the group. The pleaded with one another to not give up, to remember the loved ones back home, to remember that great thanksgiving meal they would have when they were rescued, anything to keep their spirits up
It was the only way to survive.*

Whoever swam off to avoid the sharks were immediately vulnerable and quickly devoured. None survived without the group.

Satan's plan is to isolate, to separate us from others so we will lose our strength and give up the fight for Christ. Many will succumb to apathy and simply give up the fight.

What makes us vulnerable and isolated from community?

- (1) Work – thinking about work, stress and fear of work
- (2) Possessions – acquiring and managing things that won't last
- (3) Media – television or internet isolate us from friends and family
- (4) Busyness and over committed that we are scattered in our time and our relationship.