



United Methodist Church of Vista

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Issue 54

June 2017

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Pastor's Ponderings

Attending church is good for your health. Many studies have been done showing that people who attend church regularly have more social connections, and less depression. Church attenders smoke less, lead healthier lives and even live longer. In a very real and quantitative way, Church is good for you.

‘Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.’ Paul’s letter to the Corinthians details the characteristics of love and care between people. Truthfully, Paul also challenged the people of Corinth to quit being jerks, in addition to teaching about love. Sometimes the church and church people make mistakes, but we keep coming back to this faith-based ethic on love. Loving acts of respectful kindness require practice and that practice makes you healthier.

Attending church lets us practice forgiveness, compassion and a relationship with the divine. That’s worth a lot in this world today when everyone stares at their cell phone and forgets the person on the other end! Diana Butler Bass says in her book *Grounded*, “Spirituality is about personal experience — the deep realization that dirt is good, water is holy, the sky holds wonder; that we are part of a great web of life, our home is in God, and our moral life is entwined with that of our neighbor. But none of this is for the sake of feeling good, individual prosperity, or guaranteeing a blessed afterlife. It is about tracing the threads of the interconnected universe, about finding God in nature and in community — and, in finding God, discovering that we really are one.”

People who are regular church attenders get to mingle with different generations, experience mentoring and engage in altruism. There is a wisdom that comes from listening to the stories of our grandparent’s generation and seeing the naïve sweetness of our children’s generation. Coming to church assures that you will hear stories of those who have less than you do. You will be given the opportunity to reach out and share your resources to give someone else food to live or resources for education or even more. All of these have been proven to add happiness and joy to your life.

Everyone knows that the Church is not perfect. We struggle and even fail with regularity. It is easy to point to our flaws BUT what about the ways that we offer health, life and happiness to our community and the world!! What about the ways we make a difference! “Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you,” says Isaiah (41:10). Our God is with us and challenges us to be Godly people, fierce with justice and bold in compassion. Jesus came to offer us health and abundant days to experience all this with one another.

May your everyday erupt with joy and go to sleep with gratitude!

Rev. Dr. Leigh Ann Shaw