

Please see the last page for current announcements, including a special re-opening opportunity

Dear Faith Family,

Over the past couple weeks I've had a handful of conversations with people who are sick and tired of staying home, are missing church, and are finding this quarantine lifestyle to be a real burden. While it's better than being sick and tired due to the actual virus, it's still hard. And without the bright light of a weekly church service, surrounded by fellow believers, praising God together, seeing each other's faces in real communion and fellowship, life is a little darker, gloomier and, well, sad. All that and I haven't even mentioned all this rain we've been having...

In light of conversations like these, I continue returning to the BLESS method of caring for one another, checking in on one another and reaching out in love and concern for one another. Right at the outset I want to ask you, when was the last time you checked-in on someone from our church family? When was the last time someone checked on you? Amidst the turmoil of our time, let's not forget our responsibility (and privilege) to carry out Galatians 6:2: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

With that said, let's continue talking about how we can BLESS one another. So far we have learned to Attend & Observe, Ask key questions, Act, and Repeat, looking for clues and signs as to whether the person we are speaking with is struggling in any of the categories of need—belonging needs, livelihood needs, and emotional needs are the ones we've studied so far. Today we look at a person's safety needs.

Besides the danger of the virus itself, the global pandemic and its required lockdowns have propagated a rise in dangers that were already lurking under the surface during normal times. Some of these include:

- Higher risks for individuals struggling with depression and other mental health illnesses, including self-harm and suicidal tendencies
- A rise in domestic abuse and child abuse, as individuals are unable to get away from violent relationships
- Aging adults not receiving the care they need become more likely to hurt themselves trying to do things on their own
- People with pre-existing health conditions fail to get the medical care they need in fear of going to the Dr.

Let's go through the process to see what to look for, what to ask, and what we can do.

- **Attend&Observe:** First, look for clues/signs as to whether or not the individual is truly in danger. Warning signs include:
 - Bruising on their body either from abuse, falls, etc.
 - Increased fear in their eyes and voice, constantly looking over their shoulder, etc.
 - Increased sensitivity to loud noises, movement, changes of any kind, etc.
 - Signs or conversations about financial coercion from partners, caretakers, etc.

- Dismissing, ignoring, or downplaying recent struggles they've had—talking about them as “no big deal” or coming up with irrational explanations for how they happened
 - Unstable emotional state—sudden crying or outbursts of anger for minor reasons
 - Talk about wanting to end their life, or indications that the world would be better without them, etc.
- Ask: If you see or hear anything that is amiss, or your intuition (the Holy Spirit) seems to be telling you something is wrong, proceed to ask these kinds of questions:
- How are you doing these days? Do you feel more safe or afraid?
 - Is there something or someone that is making you afraid?
 - How is your household coping with this lockdown? Are you guys getting along?
 - What are you doing to help you cope with the stress of this lockdown? Is it working? Is it healthy?
 - When was the last time you were out of the house? Are you able to get out and exercise at all? Do you have the supplies and medications you need?
 - Do you need any help?
 - When was the last time you spoke to your doctor?
 - Do you have someone you can call if your life were in danger?
- Ask about suicide: For someone you think might be veering towards suicidal thoughts and actions, it is important to ask direct questions and not beat around the bush. This lets the person know you are comfortable talking about this with them and that you truly want to help. Ask the following questions:
- It sounds like you're talking about hurting yourself or suicide? Has that thought ever crossed your mind?
 - Have you ever formulated a plan for taking your own life?
 - Are you on any kind of medication or drugs or alcohol that may be contributing to this?
 - It sounds like you have some strong reasons for ending your life, but what reasons do you have for staying alive?
 - Have you talked to anyone else about this? Did it help?
 - Is there anyone else we can talk to that would help you feel better?
 - Would you be willing to talk to a professional (counselor, psychologist) if I were to help you get ahold of one?
- Act: After talking with someone in distress, connecting to their pain and showing empathy and concern for where they are at, you may need to refer or report this person so they can receive the proper care they need. While we sometimes struggle with sharing personal information someone gave to us in confidence, it is necessary to do so when that person's safety is on the line. Our goal is not gossiping and spreading rumors, our goal is to protect them and get them the help they need. Possible places to refer or report a person to:
- In case of emergency (including suicidal tendencies) call 911
 - Disaster Distress Helpline: 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746
 - National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224
 - National Institute on Drug Abuse Hotline: 1-800-662-4357
 - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255
 - SAMHSA (substance abuse) National Helping: 1-800-662-4357
 - The Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-422-4453

Other agencies you can research and get help from:

- Administration for Community Living (i.e., Coronavirus resource page for older adults and those with disabilities; Eldercare Locator)
 - Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
 - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
 - Department of Homeland Security Center for Faith and Opportunity Initiatives
 - Johns Hopkins University CSSSE Interactive Web-Based COVID-19 Dashboard
 - NAMI (National Alliance of Mental Illness) Coronavirus Helpline
 - U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
 - World Health Organization (WHO)
- Repeat: Continue to stay with the person if necessary or check-in with them regularly until you can be assured the danger is past. Remember to offer comfort and hope in a genuine way, while maintaining a humble attitude that lets the person know you don't have all the answers, but you are there to help them find the answers they need. Pray for and with them and seek wise counsel to help you carry this burden as well.

For more detailed information about this approach, please go to www.spiritualfirstaidhub.com

Announcements

Kids Hang-out: This Friday, June 19th, kids are invited to hang out with us via zoom, from 2 to 3 p.m. Talk to pastor Andrew for the zoom link. Kids, bring an art project to share with us!

Teen Bible Study: This Sunday, June 21, our teens will be wrapping up their study of 2 Thessalonians. The zoom meeting runs from 11 am to 12 noon. Following this week's meeting, we will go on summer break.

Soft opening opportunity: On Friday, July 3 at 9:45 a.m., we are opening the church to a limited number of participants (25 max), for people who wish to listen to Pastor Andrew's sermon live, see a few people, and enjoy the comfort of being in church. Please email pastor Andrew at andrewedmonds@gmail.com to reserve your spot and receive safety instructions. There will be no music, no ushers, no food or fun; just a sermon and the chance to connect with a few friends (from a safe distance). Our regular, Sunday service will still be made available online!