

Pastor's Ponderings

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their hard work. If either should fall, one can pick up the other... Also, one can be overpowered, but two together can put up resistance. And a three-ply cord doesn't easily snap.

– Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

A friend recently sent me an excerpt from *Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne. Pooh and Piglet notice that they haven't seen Eeyore in a few days, so they put on their coats and boots and trudge over to Eeyore's house to ask if he's okay. Eeyore hesitates and then says that, really, he is "feeling rather Sad, and Alone, and Not Much Fun To Be Around At All. Which is why I haven't bothered you." To Eeyore's surprise Pooh and Piglet sit down, one on each side of him and just stay there, the three of them in silence for a while, and then "Eeyore started to feel a very tiny little bit better."

When I read this, I began to think of stories of small-town America in the mid-20th century, where children roamed neighborhoods freely, and people were regularly in each other's homes (and listening in on each other's phone calls on the party line). That kind of community seems largely gone in our 21st century culture. One of the few places where we can still be part of and experience a close, caring community is the church.

Newcomers to our church often comment on how friendly and welcoming our congregation is, and that there is a real sense of community. They stay because they value this, and they do not find it elsewhere.

As we enter this new year, let us cherish and nurture and appreciate the Christian community we have here at Faith UCC. And let us be and become the kinds of friends who trudge across the 100 Acre Wood to sit with a friend when we realize we haven't seen them in a while.

Beginning in January we will no longer be checking people in at the front doors or trying to keep a record of who attends each week. This practice was started in the 1980s in the form of "Friendship pads" for people to sign and pass along the pews so that the pastor and others on a Care Team could be sure to notice when people were missing and follow up to see if they were okay. The system migrated from the Friendship pads to the front door check-in/sign-in process when COVID mandated it. When it was pointed out to me that this can seem to some a sort of off-putting gate-keeping thing, we began to question whether we need to continue tracking attendance in this way or in any way. We decided we do need to track *numbers* of people attending and we do want to notice if people who normally attend are missing, but we don't really need to take attendance per se.

What we really need is for everyone to notice who is regularly part of our community and especially if someone is missing for a few weeks. If you do notice someone is missing, please point this out to me in case I have not noticed or mention it to Tim Plewik as Head Deacon. You are also free to follow up yourself with a phone call to the person if you are comfortable doing so. We all feel just a little bit better knowing we are missed and cared about.



Thank you all for being part of this Faith community and for helping to make it the welcoming and caring community it is.

Tej