

INSIDE:

+ **Seeking fellowship
in the church body**



A Publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance
August 2022



**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT
TO GO TO CHURCH
EVERY WEEK?**



Ellis County Ministerial Alliance

ONE is the official publication of the Ellis County Ministerial Alliance (ECMA) which guides its mission, content, and theme. The ECMA encourage submissions from ECMA congregations. Photographs, stories, testimonies, and other submissions should be directed toward your church leaders or sent via email to

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Editor's Note:

This month we asked our writers to tell us, "Why is it important to you to go to church every week?"

Our Fellow Christians Encourage Us to Keep Growing

Written by:

Rev. Josh Gelatt

Hebrew 10:24 says, "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works."

When I was in my early 20's, the church I attended was going through a rough patch. A few years earlier, the church had called a new head pastor. Just enough time had passed for the honeymoon to wear off, and irritations had begun to fester. Little huddles sometimes formed on Sunday mornings as the naysayers gathered to rile each other up with the latest vexation. I'm ashamed to admit I increasingly found myself joining this group.

One Sunday morning I felt particularly bold and

began sharing my discontent with an elderly parishioner. She patiently listened as I explained why I thought the pastor was wrong in his last sermon, and I further listed off several more of the pastor's peccadilloes. As if to prove my point with flare, I added how much the pastor had offended me.

It was at this point that my elderly friend finally spoke up. Laying a hand on my shoulder, she simply said, "In my experience, offense usually isn't something that is given. It is usually something that is taken. Perhaps you need to reflect further on whether the pastor truly offended you, or if you are simply choosing to be offended."

I was angry (and offended!) that she would

speak to me that way. If I recall, I spent the rest of the afternoon trying to convince myself she was out of line. But deep down inside I knew she was correct. While I didn't realize it at the time, this elderly sister in Christ was being gentle with me. But she was also guiding me towards a better path. She embraced her role as a sister in Christ and realized that allowing me to continue to grumble and complain was doing me no favors. In love, she challenged me to look at my own heart and change my perspective.

This is just one example of the value of spiritual community. When we come around others who desire to grow in their faith, we allow ourselves to be

Fellow Christians Encourage Us to Keep Growing (Continued)

encouraged and challenged (or sometimes even rebuked, when necessary). Scripture recognizes that a healthy spiritual community is one that “stirs one another up towards love and good deeds.” In other words, we encourage each other to continue to grow in our faith, or to be more loving in our attitudes, or to be more forgiving towards

others, and so much more.

Church is so much more than the sermons and songs. Those are massively important in shaping our hearts and minds. But attending church also brings us into relationship with other Christians—some who encourage us and some who need our encouragement. While I still have much growing and maturing to do, I wouldn’t

be where I am today if it weren’t for the scores (even hundreds) of fellow congregants who loved on me, encouraged me, and sometimes even challenged me to keep on growing in Christ.



Rev. Josh Gelatt is the pastor at North Oak Community Church in Hays.

Jesus Himself Reminds Us: No Holy Life Is Lived Alone

Written by:

Rev. Cana Moore

The line “no man is an island” gets bandied around a lot, at least in terms of overused cliches. However, this phrase is spoken often because the concept holds true: What we do affects other people, and what they do affects us. We cannot live, nor have any ever lived, in a way that is completely self-sufficient. Even our own personalities, instincts, preferences, and DNA are affected by other people.

In America, especially in white western communities, we often

overemphasize the individual. I understand this impulse, and I work hard to push past my first impulse to do everything myself.

Sometimes this impulse results because we collectively perceive reliance as weakness, or reliance as vulnerability. If we are reliant on other people, we can be exploited through that space. What if they don’t do something up to our standards? What if they do poorly and the whole system falls apart? What if we are blamed collectively when it was their fault? Only as strong as the weakest

link, and all that.

We also fear that if we are reliant on others, we are vulnerable to disappointment, harm, or grief. If we trust people and they let us down, can we recover? We worry about feeling foolish, led on, or to seem like we are easy prey for someone to take advantage of. Because of all these things, we lean heavily on the ideas of independence and individualism, afraid of what might happen if we find a middle space of interdependence instead.

There are lots of underlying reasons that

No Holy Life Is Lived Alone (Continued)

might make us wish to do things on our own. We see systems and organizations fall apart every day because one powerful or charismatic leader allowed or led groups into great evil. Maybe in our own families, we have felt the trauma of dependence, and it taught us early on that trusting others is too risky. However, it is important to distinguish for ourselves that the inherent threats of interdependence are not the same dangers as the risk of unquestioning obedience and submission.

Churches can sometimes be terrible places. They have people who can be petty, jealous, controlling, nosy, angry, judgemental, and even directly threatening. It is no wonder that sometimes it is easier to avoid the gathering of a church body altogether. So why do we gather together, and what does the meeting of the

church body mean for those who believe in God?

The Christian scriptures talk often, especially in the New Testament, about what we do to "one another," most of which are positive instructions for the community of God's people. We see in these passages verbs like instruct, encourage, comfort, consider, bear with, care for, accept, be patient with, forgive, be devoted to, honor, teach, pray, and love.

They are woven into nearly every book of the New Testament, and the task of one another-ing is therefore a central and unifying thread for Christian life. This tells us that it is not enough to simply believe right things, to practice our righteous actions, and to offer service to our neighbors, if it is in isolation from a community with whom we can be united.

Without a group of faithful followers around us,

we may be unaware of important truths, become too self focused, lose our desire for the work of God, or not be held accountable when we are living sinfully.

A full walk of faith requires many things, and gathering with other Christian believers cannot be left off the list. Jesus reminds us also by his example that there is no holy life lived alone, as all of his miracles and teachings were done among the people, in their cities and towns, in their religious spaces, and among the faithful disciples. If Jesus, wholly God and wholly man, found it necessary to live a life together, then we should seek to follow in his steps.



The Rev. Cana Moore is the pastor of Hays Christian Church



"Some Christians try to go to heaven alone, in solitude. But believers are not compared to bears or lions or other animals that wander alone. Those who belong to Christ are sheep in this respect, that they love to get together. Sheep go in flocks, and so do God's people." - Charles Spurgeon

The Key Question Is: How Much Can I Encourage Others?

Written by:

Brandon Nimz

Scripture is clear that believers are to live in community for a variety of reasons, including mutual encouragement, strengthening, sharing joys and sorrows, and fellowship. Ephesians 4 says, *"There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all."*

It also talks about how we, as members of the body who are being equipped by the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, *"will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."* This image of the church was true for the believers in Ephesus and everywhere when Paul wrote this letter. It remains true today.

This church that is spoken about in Ephesians,

however, is the body of believers—the group of people who are seeking after Christ, regardless of whether those people are members of a given denomination or even if they are not part of an institutional church.

Institutional churches also contain people who are not true believers—these would be those whom Jesus talks about in Matthew 7: *"On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'"*

With that in mind, what does it mean to be in community with others in the body of believers?

First and foremost, we need to be in communion with Christ in our daily lives. The scriptures indicate that He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. We are not the ones who do this; He is.

With that in mind, we must all be listening to the "head" of the body for the

body to move together well. While listening to Him does involve active prayer and seeking, it also involves following the tenets written down in scripture, which include living in community with other believers.

Is it possible to attend a local church without being in true community with other believers? Yes, it is. Is it also possible to not attend Sunday services but be in community with other believers? Again, yes it is. The real difference between the two is how we look at Jesus' commands.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus highlighted two different ways of viewing the law. The letter-of-the-law method was to look at a biblical principle, such as "don't murder," and allow anything up to that line to occur in our lives without crossing the line.

The spirit-of-the-law method involves trying to find out how far into embodying the idea behind a law we can go. In the case of "do not murder," this would involve not calling anyone an idiot, not having hate in our hearts, and even abandoning religious

How Much Can I Encourage Others? (Continued)

ceremony to go out of our way to make peace with anyone who had anything against us.

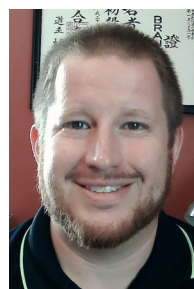
If we apply the spirit-of-the-law mindset to the many passages relating to living in community with other believers, the question is not "how often do I need to passively attend a corporate event to check off a box?" The question becomes "how much can I support other believers, love them, walk with them, encourage them, and how much can I develop community with

other believers in my own life?"

For many, the answers to these types of questions will involve becoming active in a local church. Others may be led to step out and create new communities of believers or to reach across denominational lines to help parts of the body interact more fluidly. The answers to these questions should look a little different to each person, as we are all unique parts of the body.

Hopefully we are all asking Christ how much we can be involved in

community with other believers and following through with what we hear from Him. As more of us do that, we will likely find the Ephesians 4 imagery becoming more evident around us: "As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love."



Brandon Nimz is the Director of Unite Ministry in Hays.

'I Go to Mass Because It Is a Gift'

Written by:
Cheryl Glassman

I remember when I was a child my mom and dad would take us with them to church. Sometimes it was not a welcome adventure. I am not an early riser, and in those days there were no afternoon, evening, or late morning services. My brother, sister, and I would grumble and sit cross armed in the car as we drove to church. It was interesting, though. When

we arrived, people were always happy to see us and would say hello or ask my parents questions about their week. They would say things like how nice we looked or how pretty our dresses were (no pants in those days).

When we entered the sanctuary and found our seats, the first thing we did was kneel and pray. Then we would sit and wait for the service to begin. My dad would always pull out

the hymnal and find the number for our opening hymn. As soon as the opening hymn was announced and we stood up, we would start singing, and Dad would smile at me and start singing harmony. I would feel my defenses melt and would always have a good time singing, listening to the readings and homily, and being with my family.

We were raised Catholic, and although

'I Go to Mass Because It Is a Gift' (Continued)

Dad was Methodist most of his life, he always attended Mass with us. Those days are long behind me. My mom and brother passed 21 years ago. My sister and I have our own families, and Dad, at 96, enjoys praying and reading the Bible from home.

So why, then, do I feel it is important for me to go to church every week? I asked two of my friends to tell me why THEY feel it is important. Here are their answers:

"To be able to attend Mass is the ultimate prayer, uniting us with Christ and His people. The sequence of penitence, scripture, petition, and offering culminate in the reception of the body and blood of Christ. The final Thanksgiving and 'sending forth' invites and challenges us to continue the faith journey and witness throughout the week. A real blessing in our lives for this opportunity--not one to take for granted." Geralyn Allen, St. Nicholas of Myra Church, Hays.

"I go to worship my God

and Savior. Spending this time of worship with others that believe as I do, His church, renews my heart, mind, and soul. Through the Holy Spirit, my spiritual strength is revived.

Matthew 18:20 says, *"For where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there in the midst of them."* Dee Glassman, Prestonwood Baptist Church, Plano, Texas.

Dee and Geralyn come from two completely different backgrounds. Yet, if I didn't know better, I could be inclined to think they attended church together. It's cool isn't it?

For me, I don't feel complete if I don't go to church. It doesn't really matter where I am-- Hays, Kan., or New York, N.Y.-- when I enter a church it feels like home. Home. Where you are welcome. Your family is there--not the immediate family I used to sit with as a child--but my Christian family, people who welcome me and allow me to welcome them.

As a Catholic, we are "obligated" to attend Mass each Sunday, but I have

never felt pushed or negative about that. I go to Mass because it is a gift to be able to celebrate my faith with others. I think about the first believers, worshiping in hiding, and those in certain countries throughout the world who still worship in hidden places. As Geralyn said, it is not something "to take for granted."

There are some people who don't like the structure or "rigidity" of certain church cultures, who want to worship and pray alone. I love to pray alone. But I also love to be in communion with others. It truly lifts my spirit. One definition of a translation of the word "church" is "assembly." All are welcome. As the verse my dear sister-in-law Dee quoted, Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there."



Cheryl Glassman is the Minister of Music at St. Nicholas of Myra Catholic Church in Hays.