

# Community Lost ?

**W**ebster defines community as, a society of people, having common rights and privileges, or common interests, civil, political or ecclesiastical (church); or living under the same laws and regulations.

There are many types of community---neighborhood communities, retirement communities, school communities, faith communities, families and internet communities

One of my classes for school this year is missions. They discuss a great deal the fact that we minister in the context of a given community, whether that is a neighborhood, city, nation or the world itself. So I have done a good deal of reflecting on the whole idea of community. In this age the philosophical shift has been to the individual. My rights, needs and desires are more important and take precedence over other's rights needs or desires.

I shared this very topic at this year's Emergency Services Appreciation Dinner. After months of reading and reflection on community I was called out to the home of one from our congregation because the home was on fire.

When I arrived, I witnessed community all over the place. Firefighters working together. Each trained for his own task. Neighbors opening their homes to the victims. Friends offering comfort and aid of every means imaginable. Folks offering support, shelter and coffee to the firefighters. What I discovered that night is that community is built and strengthened when someone or something matters more than I do. Everyone there that night had something else to do, but changed those plans and put someone else first. And community happened.

Often I hear folks say, there is no sense of community in our world or in our valley these days. The truth is there are many communities all around us. We have just chosen not to participate in them. Our rights, needs and desires have preceded theirs. Or the communities we have chosen to participate in have preceded others.

This is in fact a large contributing factor to the decline in the mainline churches. The rights needs and desires of the church have kept us from ministering to those outside the community of faith.

Something hit me the other day when I received a wonderful encouraging e-mail and was asked to send it on. As I scanned my address book I noticed loads of pastors, members of our congregations, fellow family members who are believers, but few names of those outside the community of faith.

One of the first things Jesus said to the disciples after the resurrection was: " As the Father has sent me so I am sending you... ." Later he commands them and us to go make disciples of all nations (communities). These commands tell us simply that the mission of the church is to invite other communities into the community of faith.



Check your e-mail addresses, your address book and your calendar for the past six months. We participate in the communities that we value and the communities where we participate or fail to participate say something about our values.

If you participate in a faith community; who have you invited to join you in the last week? Month? Year? Let's commit ourselves to growing the kingdom. On your calendar for the next three months mark one day each week and send a note of encouragement to someone outside the church, and mark one Sunday each month to bring someone to worship with you. Pray for each opportunity.

If you are not participating in a faith community, what is keeping you from it? Let's commit ourselves to seek the kingdom of God. For the next three months mark one day each week and read something from the Bible and mark one Sunday each month to attend worship.

Let's get together. The Lord will be glorified, and we'll all be strengthened.

Pastor Duane