



October, 2021



Gleanings

In last month's article, I asked you to consider what God might be leading us to do as we look for ways to reach out to our neighbors with the love of God. We have family and friends that we would love to see active in our churches. We see people out and about on Sunday mornings who could benefit from a loving encounter with Jesus. We also have co-workers, the families of our children's friends, and the people we meet through our extra-curricular activities who would be blessed if they knew Jesus. There is no lack of people who would be blessed to know that God cares for them and wants them to know it.

That brings us to **THE** question facing us today: What is our mission? Why do we profess a relationship with Jesus? Why do we read our Bibles, pray, attend worship, and order our lives around opportunities to serve others? There are probably many answers that satisfy most if not all of these questions, but only one has the potential to give life to all: We follow Jesus as disciples because that is the only thing that fills us with the joy we need to survive in this world.

Think about it. If you did not have the love of God being poured into your heart every minute of every day, you would have a hard time even maintaining the status of church attender. That some have lost the connection that keeps us living for and loving others is only too apparent when we look at our congregations. The lack of new faces mixed in with the regular attenders lets us know that we have grown content and complacent. We are content with our status and place in God's kingdom, and we are complacent because we believe we have reached the point of having enough without feeling overcrowded. Both attitudes are deadly.

So, what are we to do? We have tried the usual things to get more people to join us in worship. Unfortunately, the action of the COVID-19 virus has cut out activities that draw people together. We don't know what new thing we can do to draw people to us. Maybe it is time for a reset.

The old models of evangelization asked us to put together activities that would make people want to take part. We had groups for women, men, children, youth, singles, young adults, and empty nesters who were then invited to participate in music, mission, and ministries of every kind. It took a lot of work, but when this is the center of family life, everyone pitches in in some way. We don't see that happening today.

Where are the people today? Sports events, pursuing a hobby or leisure activity, visiting with family, resting up from an over-loaded weekend schedule; not in worship. What can we do? As odd as this may sound, our first step just might be to talk with those who are not worshipping

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regularly. We all know people who do not go to church on Sunday mornings (if you don't, you need to get out more). Some may profess to being Christians or disciples, but if they are not joining a congregation of believers in worship as often as they are home, they are candidates for a conversation.

Ask them what is going on in their lives. Have there been changes in their lives that have left them feeling cutoff from God's love? Are they having struggles at home, at work, at school, or within their extended family? Are the situations in their families caused by money, drugs and/or alcohol abuse, grief, divorce, or relationship difficulties? You know the kinds of troubles that are out there. How has knowing God's forgiveness, the love of Jesus, and the help of the Holy Spirit enabled you to make it through each day? Then ask them: What can I do? What can we do? How can I/we help? Be a friend. Be the presence of Jesus for them and with them asking Jesus to guide your heart, thoughts, and words.

Most of all, trust God to lead you in the path that enables you to be a friend to the person God places before you. Ask for help. Don't be afraid to try new things that have the potential to open your un-churched friends to experience the love of God every day. And, most importantly, pray for your friend that God will lead both of you into a transformed relationship that makes the most of God's love for all. It is a new world, and we are having to learn new ways of working in it. Persevere. The goal of helping people to be disciples is worth every bit of effort we can put into it.

We will talk more,
Pastor Braxton ><>



Prayer Requests

Jacky Reavley	Janet Rhodes
Verna Anderson	Our Church
Ron Hickey	Our Schools
Alice Keahy	Our County



Grace UMC Vision Statement

Celebrating God's
love by spreading it,
teaching it, and
living it.



Saturday, October 30
6:00 - 7:30 p.m.

Come with your trunks decorated and full of candy or treats. Rain date will be Sunday, October 31.



Hixson UMC will be hosting a "Rise Against Hunger" meal packing event on Saturday, October 23, from 9:30 – 11:30 a.m. If you like to participate go to <http://events.riseagainsthunger.org/SetupHixsonEvent> to register.