

Building a Sense of Community: Remembering 51 'One Another' Commands

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A friend by the name of Dick Meyer (not the interim at Valentine and Holdrege, Neb.) wrote two books entitled "One Anothering." He noted that there are 51 "one another" commands in the Bible. You might want to look for them. The whole point of his books was to build small group Bible studies around the passages as a tool for developing small group ministry and a sense of community.

Most of the people who have been in the presbytery for any length of time are willing to say that we have done a great deal to improve the sense of community in our presbytery meetings. Many, however, are saying that we need to broaden that sense of community.

For the past four years it has been a major effort of the presbytery to encourage churches to partner with "one another" in such endeavors as mission work trips and sharing new programs. Our congregational mission reports at presbytery meetings were developed as a means of helping people get acquainted with what others are doing and encouraging those partnerships. The council is moving in the direction of developing teams that are specifically designed to work with churches in the presbytery rather than committees that serve the presbytery.

More recently, our pastors have indicated that our sense of community and collegiality among the clergy is not what they would like it to be. The Spring Pastor's Retreat is an effort to address that concern.

Trying to build community is a tricky thing because it takes at least two to make the effort or nothing will happen. We have to be ready to make the "one another" effort if we are going to build community.

I am asking that all of us, whether ministers, elders or other lay people, to stop to think about what we might do to build a strong sense of community in this presbytery.

How might we be of service to a church in the presbytery other than our own? How might we serve the presbytery? Can I be the person who takes the first step to introduce myself to someone I don't know? Can I introduce my pastor or elder commissioner to others in the presbytery they don't know?

Can I report back to my local church the happenings at the last presbytery so we have a strong sense of being partners?

Can we begin to think in terms of committing to the church beyond our local congregation?