
Church is Good for You!

An article for the *Cathedral Times* by The Rev. Canon Cathy Zappa
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According to the U.S. Surgeon General, church is good for you. Well, those aren't the *exact* words that Dr. Vivek Murthy used in his latest public advisory, [Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation](#). But that is what I heard: Church is good for you! Church is good for all of us!

In the advisory released on May 3, Dr. Murthy says plainly and publicly what many of us have known to be true for some time: people—many of *us*—are feeling lonely, disconnected, disheartened. He cites surveys reporting that more than half of Americans feel lonely, with the numbers being greatest among young people. (That statistic alone, along with the advisory, should go a long way to destigmatizing loneliness and helping the lonely feel less alone!)

This is not just about how we feel as individuals, either. It is a critical *public* health concern. Loneliness and disconnection are strong factors in our current mental-health crisis, tragic acts of violence, polarization and the disintegration of dialogue, and the erosion of trust in major institutions and in one another. What's more, they are having detrimental effects on our physical health, workplace and school performance, level of civic engagement, and the quality of public life.

The solution, according to Dr. Murthy, is social connection and community. He calls for us, as a nation and as individuals, to strengthen social infrastructures, nurture healthy communities that foster healthy interaction and dialogue, and take steps in our personal lives to rebuild connection to one another.

That sounds like church to me. I hear in this a new spin on an old call to Christians: to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers. To participate in local communities of faith. To witness to and practice connection, unity, and reconciliation in your life together. To love one another, as Christ loved you. Indeed, according to the Catechism, this is the mission of the church: "to restore all people to unity with God and each other in Christ." It is also at the very root of the word "religion," which comes from a Latin word meaning "re-binding," or "bind together." The church is uniquely positioned and *called* to help us all re-bind and re-connect.

We do this by remembering God's love for all people, and by proclaiming in word and deed our hope in healing and reconciliation. We do this by continuing to gather in public; providing spaces and programs that bring people together and build community; and going out into the world to love and serve. We do it by worshipping, praying, studying, serving, together. By welcoming strangers, phoning a friend, paying attention to the people around us, sharing from our hearts and listening to others, visiting one another, and being visited.

There are many members of our community who are not able to come to church or to make a commitment to a ministry or group. If you are trying to find a way to connect here, please let us know so we can help! If you are not able to get to church, please let us come to you! We want to stay connected! We need to stay connected! One of our wonderful ministries of connection is Eucharistic Visits to those who cannot get to church, either temporarily or for the long-term. Our clergy and lay Eucharistic Visitors will be the first to tell you what a blessing it is to them to be able to visit and to connect in this way.

In this current epidemic of loneliness and isolation, whoever you are, wherever you are, reading this, know this: You are not alone. You belong. Come to church! Or let church come to you!

To request a Eucharistic Visit, or to become a Eucharistic Visitor, please contact Canon Cathy Zappa, czappa@cathedralATL.org, or 404-365-1043.

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