

ARTICLE FOR GAZETTE

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Orting United Methodist Church

According to a recent study in *Medical News Today* (March 29) if you are over 50 years old and are lonely, your blood pressure could be elevated as much as 30 points. The older a lonely person gets, the higher his or her blood pressure seems to get, according to the study done at the University of Chicago. But just socializing is not the antidote.

Youth and children also suffer if they don't have deep, caring relationships. Research shows that children are more likely to succeed in life if they have at least one caring relationship with an adult in addition to their own family ties. We need to form meaningful, lasting relationships with others.

Much of our life in this day and age pulls us in the opposite direction. Technology—we spend hours alone in front of a television or computer and even children's games are no longer centered in relationships, but on interaction with a video screen. Competitive sports—we become spectators with no personal attachment to the players or the other spectators. Mall hopping and window shopping in which the only relationship formed is with things rather than people. Mass rallies for religious or political purposes—do you ever feel lonely in a crowd? I suspect many of us do.

We are not meant to “go it alone” in this world. The language of the Bible usually speaks of salvation in terms of community life, not individual. To follow Jesus Christ is to come together as one body. In Peter's letter we read, “Once you were no people, but now you are God's people.” Notice that it doesn't say, “Once you were not a person, but now you are a person.” This is about the community that God calls us to become. G.K.

Chesterton wrote, “A man can no more possess a private religion than he can possess a private sun or moon.”

We are approaching the day of Pentecost, the day we celebrate God's filling the disciples with the Holy Spirit and empowering them to begin the Christian Church nearly 2000 years ago. We sometimes refer to this as the birthday of the church. The church is a place where we can feel a sense of connection and belonging, where we can know each other and be known for who we really are. In the church we are able to understand in ways we never have before, to look deep into each other's souls, to realize how much we need one another, to forgive, and to move out of loneliness into the deep peace of Christ.