

Column

The early followers of Jesus would have nodded their heads at the opening line of the 1979 pop hit: “We are family!” After all, following Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, that is what they became, a band of brothers and sisters.

Luke in Acts tells us what that looked like on the ground in Jerusalem: “Neither was there any among them that lacked.” (4:34).

Today this concept that your fellow church members are your family gets obscured, often with good things like planning programs, organizing worship services and maintaining buildings and grounds. We therefore need reminders.

Last week, following the death of a dear soul in our church, another member said very matter-of-factly: “You know, Miss Jane taught this church how to be a family.”

As she soon as she said this, it was as if a light came on in my head. That is exactly what Miss Jane did. She was one of those reminders of which I just spoke.

Miss Jane, you see, had lost her husband a number of years earlier and had no family. The local parish church became her family, as she would frequently tell people.

When she had a hip replacement, it was I who waited in the waiting room and later took her home. Afterwards, others took over, performing whatever tasks she needed.

When it became necessary for her to breakup housekeeping and go into an assisted living facility, it fell to me as her Durable Power of Attorney to sell her house and oversee her finances. In preparation for selling her house, members of the women’s group spent weeks clearing out her house.

Another parish member, her Medical Power of Attorney, assumed the responsibility of overseeing her medical care. Fortunately, this person was a Registered Nurse and was able to make informed decisions which made her last days happy.

On Sundays, another church family would pick her up at her assisted living home and bring her to church. It was a real team effort from beginning to end.

The Apostle Paul had a wonderful way of describing this familial relationship that exists between Christians. “Every one members one of another,” he writes in Romans 12:5.

Miss Jane caused his words to come alive in the life of the parish church. And now, being dead, she still teaches us.

“We are family.” Living like this, at the end of the day, may well be the best and most effective form of evangelism.

ALMIGHTY God, we entrust all who are dear to us to thy never-failing care and love, for this life and the life to come; knowing that thou art doing for them better things than we can desire or pray for; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Rev. Victor H. Morgan is rector of St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, Blue Ridge.