

## START OF TRANSCRIPT

**[00:00:00]**

The following is a message from Wellsprings Congregation.

**[00:00:05] Rev. Lee Paczulla**

Hi, everybody.

**[00:00:09]**

Boy, has this felt like a week when caring for each other and caring about ourselves. It's right at the front of our mind. We might feel pressure for all kinds of reasons right now, fears about our health, fears about what's happening in politics.

**[00:00:36]**

Plus, the things happening in our own families and our own lives and our own communities.

**[00:00:43]**

There are a lot of things happening right now that give us even more reasons to care about ourselves and the people in the world around us. It feels like a good time for this message series. Being a friend.

**[00:01:02]**

Beginning this month leading up to Easter Sunday in April.

**[00:01:09]**

Reverend Ken and I and Rodney, in two weeks, I think we'll be talking a little bit about all the ways that we grow relationships, relationships and friendships that are encouraging and healthy and mutual. So that we can all have more of these supportive people and communities around us to hold us up when things are difficult. And we know that this isn't always easy to do. Ken talked about this last week, right? When you are young, you are in school, you are surrounded by people. Some of us in our workplaces have this. We have a little community of people we see all the time. Some of us don't. And at least when we are in the prime of our adulthood, making friends sometimes looks a lot like this.

**[00:02:01]**

How to make friends as an adult. Step one, say we should hang. Step 2 do not hang. Step 3 we should hang again. Six months later. Step four, cancel. Step five Respect their cancellation, then reschedule. Actually hang, and say we should do this more often. Step 10 die.

**[00:02:26]**

This is sometimes what our lives like our lives are like when we have pressure on our schedules, when we have worries on our minds carving out space and time just for friends. Feels like a luxury. I know I have treated it like a luxury at times. I want to share with you all because this topic for this message series is actually very close to my heart. A few years back, I decided it was time to kind of re-up with my therapist to start seeing her regularly again for about a year and a half. This was, I think, late 2016 and at the time I felt so frustrated, so stressed all the time, so overwhelmed by all of the responsibilities I felt on my shoulders. And my wakeup call moment was that I heard myself say out loud to someone, I don't want my personal life to be something I do in my spare time. That was how I was treating it. I don't want my personal life to be something I do in my spare time. The priority always went to work, to my calling, to things that mattered to me, to obligations I had, to responsibilities my personal life, got the sloppy seconds, got the crumbs.

**[00:03:53]**

I was doing this way too much. I didn't want to get to step 10 without changing anything.

**[00:04:02]**

My personal life. Was not a luxury.

**[00:04:08]**

It was necessary. For my thriving and my surviving. And I realized I needed some help if I was going to actually make that change. And it did help.

**[00:04:21]**

One of our core beliefs here at Wellsprings and also as a Unitarian Universalist is that we are all inter dependent on each other. I know how much we love our independence in this country. We've got a whole day for it. Well-deserved. But we are also all dependent on each other.

**[00:04:43]**

None of us can do it alone.

**[00:04:46]**

Here at Wellsprings, we say it this way in our core beliefs, we say we believe in the power of community, that healthy human relationships are not just nice to have, they're not even just good for us. They offer a connection to the sacred. They are nothing less than our way of knowing ourselves in the light of God or love or grace, however you want to put it. We feel that power of connection only through our relationships. There's a Christian pastor. He's a little more conservative than I am. Tim Keller, some of you might have heard of him. Very well known. He writes a lot about theology and relationships. And he has a quote that I have always loved.

**[00:05:35]**

He says to be loved but not known as superficial. That's celebrity, right, to be loved but not known. It's superficial to be known but not loved. It's our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved. Well, that's a lot like being loved by God. To be fully known and truly loved.

**[00:06:08]**

That is nothing less than the power in our meaningful relationships, whether they're with family or a partner or with a friend.

**[00:06:20]**

But finding our true friends. It's risky.

**[00:06:26]**

Because to be fully known, we have to be fully known. Right. We have to be willing to show up and let ourselves be really seen for who we are. A colleague of mine, the Reverend Elizabeth Mount, she shared this tweet on her Facebook page the other day from somebody else person, and Heather Hogan said A guy who lives on my street rang my doorbell and said, Are you the lesbian who saves the cats?

**[00:06:53]**

And I said, Yes, that's exactly who I am. Let me get my coat.

**[00:07:04]**

Heather is known right and known in a way that it seems she is thrilled to be known. But when my friends shared it, they said, you know, this made me really curious if you were known this well. As the blank who blanks.

**[00:07:26]**

What would your title be?

**[00:07:31]**

Journal on that one later, if you were known as the blank, who blanks, what would your title be in the comments below their question, a bunch of people answered. Somebody said I'd probably be the guy that plays the bagpipes. It's hard to miss that guy. Somebody else said I'd be the lady that grows all the tomatoes here at church. We probably even do this with each other, right? The guy who is always in the tech booth and walking around the back go on like this, making sure the sounds OK. Yeah, that's Carl. I can't tell you how many times I have talked to someone about their first time visiting Wellsprings and they say, you know, the woman who greeted me, gosh, she was so sweet. Taller woman, a little older glasses, short white hair. And I say, oh, yeah, that's Carole. I had that conversation with my own mother about.

**[00:08:31]**

Who are you in this world? How are you known? And is it how you want to be known?

**[00:08:43]**

It's challenging to get to know each other, really, especially these days. Things have changed in the world. Some of you might know this comedian behind me, Sebastian. And have you ever seen any of his things online? So he has this bit about how much things have changed as opposed to 20 years ago when the doorbell rings at your house.

**[00:09:09]**

So 20 years ago, he says the doorbell rings and your faces light up. It was a happy moment, right?

**[00:09:17]**

It was called "Company." Somebody is here. The whole family ran to the door. The kids are sliding in their socks.

**[00:09:23]**

One of the grown-ups opens it up and says, look who's here, what are you doing here?

**[00:09:28]**

And the person would say, I was in the neighborhood. I thought I'd stop by, see how the kids are. Your parents would say, come on. We're gonna have cake. Come on.

**[00:09:36]**

And your mother would have some Entenmann's coffee cake on top of the fridge. Right. She made an announcement when she bought it. Do not touch this cake. This is for company.

**[00:09:48]**

And you would visit for hours sometimes. Now, he says 20 years later, when the doorbell rings, you're like, Jesus. What, did you invite anybody over?

**[00:10:02]**

Comes over rings the doorbell. Turn off the lights. Get down. Maybe they'll go away.

**[00:10:10]**

It's true, right, the way we Internet interact and connect. It just changes sometimes as the world changes and a lot has changed in the way we interact and connect in the last 20 years. But there are also some things inside of us, some things about human nature. That don't change as much. There's a Lutheran minister from Minnesota. His name's Jeff Merrion and he wrote an article about this. This ambivalence that we have around connection. He says if you go back to the origin story of humanity that so many of us in America at least first learned the story of the Garden of Eden right in the Jewish Torah or the Christian Old Testament. What happens when the two characters, Adam and Eve, realize that their naked.

**[00:11:08]**

What happens? The cover up.

**[00:11:12]**

They're ashamed. He says sometimes I wonder if we've all been playing hide and seek with each other ever since then.

**[00:11:22]**

Whether we believe this story has grown up in any literal way or not. I wonder if it still resonates. He says, because so many of us carry some kind of desire to hide.

**[00:11:36]**

Some kind of embarrassment or shame.

**[00:11:41]**

Even as we want to hide, we are also so desperate to be found. By someone or something that loves us.

**[00:11:53]**

That sees us and knows us and accepts us for who we are.

**[00:12:00]**

But our fear of rejection is still there. Because we've been burned. We know what it feels like to be judged or rejected. So we play this game of hide and seek. Intimacy, he says. Is our deepest desire and our greatest fear. Intimacy is our deepest desire. And our greatest fear.

**[00:12:33]**

It really can save us. To be truly known and loved. When the chips are down, when we are overwhelmed or isolated or feeling powerless, that's real. To have someone in our lives that reflects our beloved ness back to us.

**[00:12:55]**

Our connections to each other. Our friendships. They are the bonds of resilience and resistance to all that crap going out there in the world. They're what help us feel stronger, especially in times like these.

**[00:13:12]**

It really matters how we see each other. And how we treat each other. And how we connect. It keeps all of us thriving and surviving.

**[00:13:29]**

I've told a lot of stories in my time here preaching about my friends. But since Reverend Ken told one about me last week, I want to share one about him. There are no creepy 70s cartoon characters in my story. Don't worry. You know, Ken and I have been doing something for nearly seven years now, regular practice. When I first arrived here in 2013. Almost seven years ago. Yeah, I know. I was an intern. So Ken was my supervisor. I was in my last stages of training as a minister. And part of the rules of an internship is that we were required to spend a week together in supervision or up an hour a week together in supervision. So once a week, we would sit down together, we would talk. And over the years, as our roles started to change, as Ken decided to go back to school, as his hours paired back and I took on more responsibility. That hour a week became really vital. Sometimes it was two hours. We would connect about what was happening in the church, but it also became a time to check in with each other. How were we handling all these changes? How are we feeling about what was shifting in our roles and also in our lives? We decided to start doing something around that time to begin our weekly meetings with spiritual practice makes sense for two ministers, right?

**[00:15:06]**

We would sit when we first came together in silent meditation for 20 minutes. The beginning of every meeting.

**[00:15:16]**

And that wasn't all. When that bell rang to bring us out of our meditation time. We allowed ourselves however long it took to both answer a few questions.

**[00:15:29]**

What came up for you while you sat? What did you notice? What's emerging for you right now?

**[00:15:40]**

If you do that with someone every week. For the better part of seven years, you will be known by each other. You don't have to do exactly that. But that ritual and that commitment that we made to have a container where we could truly show up.

**[00:16:05]**

Our friendship emerged from that Ken and I were not fast friends. He was my boss, remember? But that space. Allowed us to see each other in a way that is all too rare in the world. And I share this today because Ken talked last week about how we often find our friends through shared stories. Right. We sometimes recognize a story and another person that is a common experience for us and it makes us feel like we might belong together.

**[00:16:43]**

But if you are feeling hopeless or alone. If you are scared to tell your story, perhaps you fear that no one will understand. I want to remind us all. We can also create shared stories from scratch.

**[00:17:04]**

We can set an intention, we can create rituals with each other. But allow friendship to emerge.

**[00:17:15]**

One of the nice things about creating a friendship ritual like this is you can kind of start with the chicken or the egg. The chicken is the friend in this situation. The egg is the ritual. So you can think about your existing chickens, right. The people, you know, your friends, your acquaintances. And you can invite them into some kind of regular ritual. You can say, hey, why don't we do an hour each week at the gym together or a breakfast date? Once a month. Maybe set a regular time for a walk or a phone call or a playdate with your kids. Now, they might say no for any number of reasons, but you're already not doing it right, so there's not too much to lose. And they will probably take it as a compliment even if they say no.

**[00:18:12]**

You can start with the chicken, but you can also start with the egg. You can commit to a ritual practice for yourself. And then start looking around. And seeing who is there with you.

**[00:18:29]**

Our spiritual development ministry creates a resource guide for every message series, there's probably still some over there on the welcome table. And one of the articles that they included this time around, it's called 21 Ways to Make Meaningful Connections. It talks about one of those ways as being spending regular time in what they call being spaces, places where people just go and sit and congregate, places like parks or coffee shops, barbershops, salons, community centers, churches, anywhere that people come together and stay awhile. Just being there on a regular basis and people watching you can kind of go at your own pace. You can choose every now and then to make a little connection, to offer a compliment, maybe. To notice a book that somebody is reading and ask them about it. To ask what somebody thought of the message or one of the songs. If you go to a coffee shop once a week. And every time if you treat yourself or if you treat someone there to a cup of coffee, pretty soon you're that guy at the coffee shop who always buys a cup of coffee for somebody.

**[00:19:53]**

If you sit in the park on Tuesdays at lunch and you pet all of the dogs, pretty soon you are the Tuesday lunchtime dog lady.

**[00:20:03]**

You could be the lesbian who saves the cats. You could be the guy that plays the bagpipes without the bagpipes or the one at church who always makes sure the sound is right or the one who has greeted half the congregation at the door with a warm smile.

**[00:20:23]**

Who do you want to be in this world? How do you want to be known?

**[00:20:30]**

Not for the sake of your reputation or your legacy, but for the sake of your own power to connect. For the sake of really experiencing that feeling of being known by people and connected. I'll leave you with one last example of something that you might try to practice to do this. There's a Canadian author named Kelly Powell when she wrote an article for a food blog called Five Rules for Hosting a Crappy Dinner Party.

**[00:21:06]**

This is the picture that came with the article. I don't think that's crappy enough. Personally, I see a table runner on that table. I own a table runner, but it doesn't live on my table. Kelly talks about really wanting to do this more often, right. To have friends over to her house for a meal to spend that time together. But she feels that very relatable hesitation. Right. If I invite somebody over, I have to clean. I have to put on a bra. Right. I have to dress up. I have to fold the laundry that's on the couch. I have to figure out why the bathroom sink smells and fix it.

**[00:21:46]**

It was too much. Then one of her oldest friends, a woman named Laura, she left town. She moved for work and she was away for about two years, living in a tiny little community in northern Saskatchewan, in Canada. And when she moved back. She said to Kelly, you know, they used to do the weirdest thing up there. Friends would just show up at each other's houses unannounced and they would feed each other whatever happened to be in their kitchen. And there was no preparation and no stress.

**[00:22:23]**

And she said, I want to try that.

**[00:22:27]**

Kelly said OK, but she said her husband bet that she would not be able to do it. He said you will be cleaning at the last minute when you realize this is really happening. She's coming over.

**[00:22:38]**

Kelly said, no, I won't. But she did say minutes before that first crappy dinner party at her house. Her seven year old trudged through the living room in muddy shoes.

**[00:22:51]**

She took a deep breath and she said, this is fine. I'm OK. Very cool with this. And then her 9 year old announced that she was going to start a really gluey paint based project on the kitchen floor. Great. So, Kelly, cool.

**[00:23:11]**

And then her 7 year old and her 4 year old started a physical fight just as the doorbell rang.

**[00:23:18]**

But they all got through it. Laura is a person too. Laura knows how these things happen.

**[00:23:29]**

Kelly said, I will admit that that first dinner party, I had to take a lot of deep breaths.

**[00:23:35]**

I learned a lot about myself. And what I was afraid people would think of me. And Laura dashed all those fears.

**[00:23:46]**

Besides, he said that wasn't even the worst one, the worst one was when Laura threw her back out and couldn't get off her couch. But instead of canceling, we all came over and she just yelled out instructions while we rummaged through her freezer.

**[00:24:00]**

Now that, she said is comfortable and real, an honest friendship. These are the rules from the article. Case, you want to give it a try? Rule 1 No housework is to be done prior to the guests arrival. That's already too hard for some of you, I'm sure. Rule to the menu must be simple and not involve a special trip to the grocery store. Rule 3 You must wear whatever you happen to have on maybe put on a bra rule for no host gifts are allowed. So for the person coming, you can't do anything either. And Rule 5, she said it's an optional rule. Even if you have planned it ahead of time, you should still act surprised when your friend shows up at the door just for fun. Kelly said, because we keep these promises with each other. Laura and I see each other now all the time.

**[00:25:00]**

There's nothing crappy about that.

**[00:25:05]**

The crappy dinner party may have rules and they may even be called rules, but rules like this, of course, do not feel much like rules.

**[00:25:15]**

They feel like grace.

**[00:25:17]**

They feel like agreements and commitments we make that allow ourselves to be more fully known and loved.

**[00:25:25]**

However, we show up.

**[00:25:28]**

They can be containers for that grace. We want to extend and receive. And that we can all find for ourselves if we take the time to build them to nurture. Each other and ourselves. And to remember what really matters most.

**[00:25:51]**

Which is us. All of us.

**[00:25:59]**

And may you live in blessing. Will you pray with me?

**[00:26:07]**

God of our hearts.

**[00:26:12]**

May we find the space? Maybe just for one moment. Just for today. To let go of the idea that we are supposed to have it all together. To consider the possibility just to try it on. That how we feel right now is how we are supposed to feel right now. But the things that are unfinished in our lives just are unfinished. And that may be the answer doesn't lie in our own little brains, turning over problems and solutions constantly. But maybe the answer lies in someone else's brain. In someone else's hands or arms. That may be the thing that will save us. Is showing up with all of who we are. And trusting that it will be exactly what someone else needs.

**[00:27:13]**

And that they might have something we need to give him return.

**[00:27:19]**

For the prayers I've spoken out loud and for the prayers each of these people carry on their hearts. We say amen.

**[00:27:26]**

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END OF TRANSCRIPT



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