

One Is Missing

Ever since the children left home our family has come together every year during the Christmas holidays. We always have a big "Christmas" meal, exchange gifts, usually go to a movie and do the other things families do when they get together. There are sixteen in our immediate family: six adults (our three children and their spouses) and eight grandchildren plus Margaret and me. It is a time we all look forward to and there is a little sadness when we say good-bye to each other. However, this year was different - one was missing!

Jeff, our second son, is in Afghanistan working on his (civilian) job with the Corps of Engineers. Our family did all the things we normally do when we get together but something was missing. Even though he had a good reason for being away his absence affected the other 15 members of the family. There was an empty place at our table and in our hearts that could only be filled by his presence. Each member of our family wrote a personal note to Jeff to let him know he was missed and that we are not a complete family when he is away.

Reflecting on our family's experience this holiday season, I realized it is the same in our church family. All of us understand that when we miss service(s) of the church we miss the edification, encouragement and joy that comes from being with our spiritual family. We cannot stir up love and good works in one another when we are away from our brothers and sisters. But do we consider the effect our absence has on others in our spiritual family?

Our spiritual family at Karns is complete when we are all present at our gatherings and when we miss service(s) we are hurting ourselves individually and the other members of our church family. Our notes to those who miss service(s) should express the sentiment to our brothers and sisters that they are missed and are needed to make our family complete.

Truly, we are members of one another. We are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another (Rom. 12:5). Even when we have a good reason to be absent, it still hurts all of us. Please don't miss the services of the Lord's body in the year 2012.