

7/17/2006 - For the Good of All of US

When something good happens to one of us, it happens to all of us! Each time I hear these words the same hopeful, positive feeling occurs in me. They define “community” at its best (i.e., sans jealousy, hard feelings, greed, frustration, et al.). In a supportive fellowship, the opposite is likewise included. We sing, “We share each other's woes, our mutual burdens bear; and often for each other flows the sympathizing tear. United Methodists have embraced this "joined at heart" theme through the connectionalism that has served us well through our history. Here, we have the structure that fosters cooperation and enables us to fix festering problems and address crises. Yet, sometimes we have forgotten our opportunities to lift one another, to celebrate God's goodness in our midst, and to serve appropriately. We become tangled in the root causes that bring about calamities and point fingers at persons we judge to be at blame. Huge lessons were learned from the hurricanes of 2005. Though there was frustration with the lack of preparation, the poor judgment, the delayed response, and the failure to build levees that would hold a mammoth storm, we did nonetheless understand that the real need was caring for those persons who suffered losses physically and emotionally. We managed to set aside assignment of blame to rescue and rebuild lives. One of the regular criticisms that we encounter is that we will go several hundred miles or around the world to address cries for help when we turn a blind eye on that around the corner. Perhaps, we focus too much upon the blame factor and let it dampen our resolve to bear each other's burdens. Clearly, there are wounds, financial crises, and ministry challenges in our midst. When asked to help, think about our connection and our ability to lift one another. If you feel better about diagnosing the problem, go ahead. Then, invest yourself by being a supportive community for the good of all of us.

Ed Tomlinson