

To Aid One Another in Sickness and Distress

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay. (The First Baptist Church of Waterville's Covenant)

Am I my brother's keeper? Cain callously asked God knowing that he had murdered his brother, Able. The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.

Moses reminds Israel that Aaron and his sons are to bless Israel by reminding them that it is the Lord that blesses and keeps you (Numbers 6:24). It is because the Lord watches over us that we are to be especially mindful of the needs and circumstances of our brothers and sisters in Christ. While God is indeed our Keeper, we gratefully share in the privilege and responsibility of care taking.

Each member of the body of Christ cares for other parts of the body. So often, we want to shift our privilege and responsibility away from us and onto "the pastor" or "the deacons", but in doing so, we miss opportunities to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world and in our church.

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). Paul's argument is simple; Christ gave Himself for our salvation and benefit. So then, we ought to give ourselves in service to Christ by serving one another in love. Paul reminds us that while he was in Thessalonica that he understood his responsibility to his brothers and sisters was "to care for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well. Surely you remember, brothers and sisters, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed." (I Thessalonians 2:7-10).

Prayer is essential. Aid is also essential. James teaches that actions must follow our prayers. "What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds. "Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds." (James 2:14-18).

It has been said that Sunday morning worship services are a "gathering of strangers". We come, we meet, and we leave. How well do you know the circumstances of the

person sitting next to you on Sunday morning? How willing are you to get to know their story? If I don't know, am I free from service? Is ignorance bliss? As Baptists, we state publicly in our covenants that we are our brother's keeper and therefore, own the privilege and responsibility to "carry each other's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ."