



Rebuild Christ Church

September 26: The Gift of Relationships

Maria joined her nearby Episcopal Church many years ago, deeply moved by the liturgy and the way her church looked at faith and Holy Scripture. She became very active, began teaching Adult Sunday school, eventually heading up the adult Christian formation program. Then 'Life' stepped in. After going through several personal and family crises, Maria found herself attending church less and less. With her faith at its lowest point ever, Maria felt she had no place to go for help. What surprised her the most was that **no one from church seemed to notice she stopped coming.**

So, she decided to wait until someone from church called to check on her. Twice the annual pledge campaign letter arrived in her mailbox like clockwork, with pledge card duly enclosed. But the letter was always addressed, "Dear Member of All Saints Church." **Into the trash went the anonymous letter and pledge card,** and *Maria's relationship with All Saints Church.* What is most sad about this story, however, is that **the loss of Maria from All Saints Church was entirely preventable.** An active TeleCare ministry at her church would make it extremely unlikely that this story would ever happen.

In short, TeleCare ministry is a lay-led ministry that expresses your church's care and concern to every member—and "permanent visitor"—on your parish membership list. You call with one question: "We're just calling to see how you are and if there's anything you want us to pray for?" That's it. *Best of all, it's free!* All it takes is a little organization, commitment, and people who are willing to call others, to pray with them over the phone and remind them of your congregation's love for them. Such a small act upholds the care for others demonstrated in today's lesson from James, and the Gospel lesson, looking out for those new to the faith. Unfortunately for All Saints, Maria attends a different church now.

Developed in the 1990's by the Rev. David Davidson-Methot and Deacon Fran Sweet in California, **TeleCare ministry is a true form of stewardship:** It is the care and tending of **relationships.** Bestselling author Brené Brown writes, "Connection, along with love and belonging (two expressions of connection) is why we are here, and it is what gives purpose and meaning to our lives." Jesus models for us the ideal of self-giving relationships, relationships based on mutual love, compassion, and respect, which is essential to being human. Elegantly simple and lacking presumption, *TeleCare ministry fosters that sense of connection* in that it is an expression of the church's love and belonging for its members.

Do you feel called to start a TeleCare ministry in your church, to prevent a story like Maria's from happening? If so, please send me an email for a free PDF that outlines a basic form of TeleCare ministry, with ideas for training callers and practice scenarios. Discover how this "phone call of love" might be just the thing your people need from their church following a year of COVID-19 induced separation and isolation.

The Rev. Canon Timothy M. Dombek is Canon for Stewardship and Planned Giving for the Diocese of Arizona, Rector of Advent Episcopal Church in Sun City West, AZ, and a member of the board of TENS. He can be reached at timothy@adventaz.org

Was there a time when someone contacted you just at the right moment in friendship and love?

Please tell a friend about what it meant to you and ask your friend to share their story.



Questions
for Reflection

Was there a time when someone contacted you just at the right moment in friendship and love? How did it change you?



THE EPISCOPAL NETWORK FOR STEWARDSHIP