

### **Encouraging each other**

Before you start working on a plan, it might be good for you to think and talk about how well you find, gather and spread courage. That's right, "courage." Guts, nerve, valor, daring, bravery, audacity—you get the picture. The rest of the picture: No courage, no action. No action, no change.

Here's how encouragement works:

1. Any good idea can stay catalogued in the comfort of your long-term memory, but that's not good enough when it comes to changing your behavior.
2. Courage is one of the fundamental requirements for motivation.
3. You get courage from other people—from their example, their words and their suggestions.
4. Because you read, understand and mimic the faces of people you admire, moments of encouragement are usually face-to-face.
5. "Encouraging" sometimes means that the encourager and the encouragee walk together, probably prayerfully.

So, how encouraging are you and your congregation? Or to say it another way, who are the encouragers? If you'd like to know, try some of these actions:

- Revisit courageous moments in your congregation's history. Who were the leaders during those times? How did they behave?
- Read the announcements, invitations or reports you include in worship bulletins, newsletters, letters or annual meetings. Where do you find courage, and where do you find its opposites?
- Name the "Lily's" in your congregation—don't forget youth and children here!—who seem to be able to inspire other members to take action, to volunteer, to sense their calling.

Once you've found the encouragers, talk with them about their ways of thinking, their skill at cheering others along, heartening people, giving confidence or supporting people who otherwise might be hiding behind fear, inferiority or false humility. Collect what you've heard into a set of descriptive stories, and save them for use when you're looking for leaders who might have the nerve to work with you in lifestyle change.

Can you see Jesus' face? He's saying: You can do this!