

## **The Gift of Presence: Why Companionship Matters Most During the Holiday Season**

As we enter the holiday season, many people look forward to celebration, connection, and joy. But for countless individuals in our congregations, communities, and neighborhoods, this season can also be a time of deep loneliness, grief, stress, and emotional strain. The pressure to “be merry,” the memories of loved ones no longer with us, the financial burdens, or the weight of unmet expectations can make this time of year feel overwhelming.

That is where Companionship becomes not just a model, but a ministry of hope.

### **A Season That Needs Gentle Souls**

The holidays often reveal the gaps in people’s lives—places where relationship, understanding, or support are missing. When someone is navigating loss, living with mental health challenges, feeling isolated, or simply carrying more than they can hold, what they long for is not advice or solutions.

They long for presence. Someone safe. Someone who listens. Someone who sees them.

This is the heart of Companionship.

Through the simple yet powerful practices of hospitality, neighborliness, shared journey, attentive listening, and dignity, we offer a reminder that no one is meant to navigate their struggles alone.

### **A Light in the Dark**

During these shorter, colder days, the light we carry matters.

A Companion’s presence can be the spark that helps someone feel:

- Seen when they are used to feeling invisible
- Heard when silence has surrounded their pain
- Connected when life feels fragmented

- Held when their spirit feels fragile

Companionship is not about fixing. It is about being — being a safe place where someone can breathe again.

### **The Holidays Can Stir Old Wounds**

This season often awakens memories and emotions:

- The grief of a chair that sits empty at the table
- The tension of family relationships
- The pressure to appear “okay”
- The loneliness that grows when everyone else seems connected

Companionship offers a sacred alternative — the assurance that someone is willing to sit with us in our truth, without judgment and without rushing us through our stories.

### **A Call for Us All**

As Pathways continues its mission to cultivate compassionate responses to mental and emotional distress, the holiday season offers a unique opportunity.

This is a time when Companionship can shine the brightest.

Whether it’s greeting someone warmly, checking in on those who seem withdrawn, offering a listening ear, or simply slowing down long enough to notice someone’s humanity — every act matters.

The most meaningful gift we can give this holiday season is ourselves — our presence, our compassion, and our willingness to walk beside one another.

### **An Invitation**

Let us, as a Pathways community, commit to embodying the spirit of Companionship intentionally over the next several weeks.

Let us be the steady, unhurried presence someone desperately needs.

Let us remember that healing often begins the moment someone realizes they are not alone.

This holiday season, may we give the gift that truly changes lives: the gift of compassionate presence.

*Bishop Bonnie L. Radden*

**Companionship Coordinator**

**Pathways 2 Promise**

[bradden@pathways2promise.org](mailto:bradden@pathways2promise.org)

310-600-6590