

DON'T COUNT THE SHEEP
John 10:1-10

Economist and seer E.F. Schumacher had a lovely story about an old shepherd. "Don't count the sheep," he said, "or else they won't thrive." By this he meant that counting the sheep turned each live, unique animal into an abstraction, a symbol of a sheep, each one like the next one. In this way one would begin to lose sight of them as individual sheep. One would fail to notice whether they looked healthy, acted normally, and in general were becoming their best sheep selves. The late John Holt, school reformer/ educator/amateur cellist who tells this story, concludes with the observation that "What we easily forget, in our enthusiastic twentieth-century love affair with abstract thinking, is that to make an abstraction out of some part of reality we must take some meaning out of it." (See Holt's *Learning All the Time* [Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley Publishing Co., 1989], 104.) Remember: the shepherds with whom Jesus was familiar knew each of their sheep by name and called the flock to their side each morning.

When we make abstractions of our neighbor we forget they are children of God and loved by God just like we are. May we never lose sight that each person we meet is made in the image of God and is loved by God. We are called to love them just as God loves us.

God bless,
Pastor Barbara