

## Becoming a Closer Community

Here's a reprint of the bulletin insert distributed at yesterday's worship service. Look it over and get back to Pastor Chris (at [pastorchriskwpc@gmail.com](mailto:pastorchriskwpc@gmail.com)) if any of these possibilities would help KirkWood be your "community" even more.



"What would help KirkWood be your "community" even more?

Email Pastor Chris at [pastorchriskwpc@gmail.com](mailto:pastorchriskwpc@gmail.com) if you personally would be interested in any of the following group ideas. (Or if you have an idea of your own, let him know.)

- A monthly weekend walking group (we did this a few times during the height of the pandemic)
- A weekly or biweekly midday casual social hour in the fellowship, just to connect with others at KirkWood
- A monthly get-together with 1-2 others at KW where you could develop deep friendships and be each other's spiritual companions
- A KirkWood book club, where we'd read through and discuss a Christian book together
- A monthly Zoom seminar on subjects of interest to the congregation
- A biweekly in-person or Zoom small group for relationship-building, learning, prayer, and fun"

## Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Community

Here are those citations from "The Communion of Saints" and "Life Together" by D. Bonhoeffer that Pastor Chris read during the sermon yesterday, followed by the five takeaways he highlighted:

"Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. No Christian community is more or less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily fellowship of years, Christian community is only this. We belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ.

What does this mean? It means...that a Christian needs others because of Jesus Christ... God's Word can come only from the outside of ourselves. Therefore, the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's Word to him. He needs him again and again when he becomes uncertain and discouraged, for by himself he cannot help himself...

The Christian needs his brother as a bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation...The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother's is sure.

And that also clarifies the goal of all Christian community: they meet one another as bringers of the message of salvation. As such, God permits them to meet together and gives them community. Their fellowship is founded solely upon Jesus.

The first service one owes to others in a community involves listening to them. Just as our love for God begins with listening to God's Word, the beginning of love for others is learning to listen to them. God's love for us is shown by the fact that God not only gives God's Word, but also lends us God's ear...We do God's work for our brothers and sisters when we learn to listen to them.

...Sin demands to have a man by himself. It withdraws him from the community. The more isolated a person is, the more destructive will be the power of sin over him, and the more deeply he becomes involved in it, the more disastrous is his isolation. Sin wants to remain unknown. It shuns the light. In the darkness of the unexpressed it poisons the whole being of a person. This can happen even in the midst of a church.

... When God was merciful to us, we learned to be merciful with our brethren. When we received forgiveness instead of judgment, we, too, were made ready to forgive our brethren. What God did to us, we then owed to others. The more we received, the more we were able to give; and the more meager our brotherly love, the less were we living by God's mercy and love...

Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate. We have one another only through Christ, but through Christ we do have one another, wholly, and for all eternity."

#### Highlights - Christian community is distinctive because...

- 1) ...It only exists because of Christ.
- 2) ...It is how and where Christ teaches us how badly we need each other.
- 3) ...It is so we can hear God's voice in others when we can't hear it any other way.
- 4) ...It begins with listening to each other.
- 5) ...It frees us from the fear and isolation of our own brokenness because of its priority on forgiveness and mercy.

## More on Community this Week

- All the "one another" verses in the New Testament in one infographic: [All the "One another" Bible verses in one infographic](#)

- Emotional safety is the bedrock on which community is built; a lack of relational safety ensures that community cannot exist: [Safe People, by Henry Cloud and John Townsend](#) and [What are Safe People?](#)

- A spiritual director's reflection on Christian community: [The Spiritual Practice of Community](#)

- We've shared this article once before, but it's worth passing along at least once more - from Michael Frost (who wrote "Surprise the World!") on the loneliness in churches: [The Lonely Crowd: churches dying due to friendlessness](#)