

Community of Fellowship

Acts 2:37-42

What is the first word that comes to your mind when you hear the word “fellowship”? Coffee, donuts, and meals. We, Methodists, have been known as very serious people when it comes to having meals together. I have confirmed that since I came to Carleton UMC. As you know, Christian fellowship is more than sharing meals or refreshments on Sunday mornings at the fellowship hall.

The Greek word for fellowship is *Koinonia*. When this was used in a secular world in the Roman Empire, it was the most intimate relational word between human beings - “*engagement*.” Even though we are not from the same parents, we can be family together by engaging with each other. When the word *Koinonia* started to be used in the church, it had a different meaning but still contained the sense of human intimacy: *fellowship, sharing, or participating in one another*. What did they share in the church? They shared their hearts and lives together.

Today’s Scripture is a part of the Apostle Peter’s address on the day of Pentecost, possibly at the Temple of Jerusalem, where Jews and God-fearers (those who had faith in God as Gentiles) all over the world came to celebrate the season according to their tradition.

“*Koinonia*” is a special gift from God after we have faith in Jesus Christ.

When people heard Apostle Peter’s message, they asked him and the other Eleven apostles, “**Brothers, what should we do?**” (Acts 2:37b NRSV). Peter answered, “**Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.**” (Acts 2:38-39 NRSV).

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a special gift to all people from all nations and languages. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is transgenerational, transcultural, and transnational. So what happened to them? When they heard the Gospel message of Jesus, they felt convicted (Acts 2:37). After hearing and accepting Peter’s message, about 3,000 people were baptized.

According to today’s Scripture, “**They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.**” (Acts 2:42 NRSV)

Fellowship is a special gift from God to any Christian community that has repented of their sins and experienced God's forgiveness. As a gift from God, we are called to enjoy it and actively participate in fellowship.

“Koinonia” is a clear sign of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

From the beginning of his message, Apostle Peter quotes Joel 2:28-32 about the coming of the Holy Spirit in the last days.

“Then afterward I will pour out my spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days I will pour out my spirit.” (Joel 2:28-29, quoted in Acts 2:17-18)

When we say “the last days,” it is the time between Jesus’ first Advent and his second coming to earth. So, we are living in the last days. According to the message of the prophet Joel, the last days can be marked as the days of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the loving and caring community because God does not exist alone. God exists as a community of Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. God exists in fellowship as a Triune God. So, when the Holy Spirit is with us, we reflect the Triune God’s fellowship with us. Our fellowship is a natural indication of God’s presence among us.

“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.” (1 John 1:3 NIV)

“Koinonia” is a power of the Church that overcomes its challenges and confirms its missional identity.

When Apostle Peter delivered the message, the disciples were in danger of persecution. However, 3,000 new believers joined the church. Now, the situation has changed. The Jerusalem church has been spiritually charged and has become energetic. They devoted their time and energy to the Apostles' teaching, fellowship with the new church family, breaking bread, and praying together. They were obedient to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Even though they were in persecution, they faithfully followed the Holy Spirit and did their best to get together and have fellowship.

Koinonia is not a word confined to internal church activity. The Holy Spirit directs us to the desire and will of God in our fellowship. So, the direction of our fellowship is always toward God and toward the world.

“If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the

light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:6-7 NRSV)

At the center of our fellowship, we have to have Jesus Christ. People in the world have to see our fellowship with Jesus as we walk in the light, in the way of Jesus Christ, and in the way of love and grace. That is what the Holy Spirit does in our fellowship.

How can we live a life of genuine fellowship as God’s people together?

1. Pray for genuine fellowship with God in your lives.

Let me read the prayer Jesus prayed to God in John 17. This prayer is called the High Priest’s prayer.

“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.” (John 17:20-21 NLT)

Our fellowship together has to be based on our relationship and intimacy with God. Our time together as a fellowship reflects the quality of our fellowship with God. The deeper our fellowship with God, the more intimate we are with one another.

When people see and experience our genuine fellowship, they will be attracted to God and will long for a new relationship with God.

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35 NRSV)

2. Desire to get together for fellowship.

The Bible teaches us clearly that we must prioritize fellowship together as the church is being tested and struggling.

“And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24-25 NRSV)

When the letter of Hebrews was written, the church was under persecution, causing the Christians to suffer social, economic, and possibly physical consequences for their faith. The Bible says, “Never give up on your fellowship. Provoke one another to love and do good deeds. The Day is coming.” That is what we must hold onto as God’s community, as we have hope for the Coming Day of Salvation and Judgment.