

14th June 2020

Fellowship

“Almighty God, you have knit [us] together ... in one communion and fellowship in the mystical Body of your Son: Give us grace so to follow your blessed saints ... that we may come to those ineffable joys that you have prepared for those who truly love you ... Amen.”

The Book of Common Prayer, Collect for All Saints Day

The concept of fellowship enshrined in the Collect from the “Book of Common Prayer” above is central to the Church of the New Testament.

By no stretch of the imagination could I call myself a scholar of New Testament Greek. But I can read books ... So I know that the root of “fellowship” in Greek is *koinōnia*, which classically means an “association or partnership”, a “spirit of generous sharing in contrast with an attitude of selfish grasping”. *Koinōnia* (and associated words) underpins the values, purpose and practices of the early Church. It encapsulates involvement in friendships; a practical sharing; partnership in Christian service; being together “in the faith”; the idea of “one in the Spirit”; living “in Christ” and “with God”. Wonderful stuff!

How, then, do we deal with *koinōnia* in the Church’s life when we are separated from one another? How do we find *koinōnia* in isolation?

It’s amazing how people are finding fellowship in these trying times: Zoom, WhatsApp, FaceTime, Twilio, Podcasts, Live Streams, YouTube, phone-calls, emails, FaceBook, Messenger ... all to keep us in contact and bind us together, new ways of enhancing *koinōnia*. And though we crave the physical in our fellowship, Church is more than that. The late professor William Barclay suggests: “Surely there is no greater [word than] *koinōnia*. The Christian shares ... in the common experience of joy and tears ... in the things divine and in the glory that shall be.”

Koinōnia – a depth of fellowship we need to be aware of and develop more than ever before. Now, that’s no longer Greek to me!

A prayer for today

Loving God, hold me in the embrace of the saints and angels and in communion with all the people of God, that I might know again the mystery of sharing in your Love, and have a glimpse of the divine in the glory of fellowship. Amen.

An original reflection by © Tom Gordon

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