

Come & join us!

Over the last few months life has been very different. We've had to learn to communicate with each other and stay linked in very different ways than before. Our church services have happened in print, on television and online. Our care for each other in the church has happened through telephone calls and Zoom meetings, on Skype and in parks. Our relationships have changed too: people have told me that conversations are often longer and deeper, that they're getting the chance to get to know each other more deeply than before. Many are missing the chance to see larger groups of people and chat over a cup of tea at the end of a service but they're valuing some of the ways friendships have changed.

In the coming months life will continue to be different although it will continue to change and develop. We are led to wonder, as generations have done at different times before us, how we express the fundamentals of our faith in this changing and changeable context. So for the next 5 weeks we'll be wondering what fellowship is and how we live it now as the world changes round us but God's call to live in God's love remains.

In our Bible Studies we have been greatly inspired by this quote from the book Holy Habits.

**"...sharing their lives with each other and the world around,
in a prophetic symbol of the Kingdom of God.
A powerful sign of a Spirit-filled way of life
that stands against the sinfulness of selfishness.
A wonder of hope, reconciliation and generosity.
A true community of belonging and service"**

Andrew Roberts, Holy Habits

How wonderful it would be if those around us saw the way we lived and described us in this way

Call to worship:

In the beginning,
was a conversation,
God wondered and imagined
company and community
love and trust
sharing and abundance
and God spoke
and it was
and it was good

Throughout time
God has listened
to cheers of joy and tears of grief,
to shouts of triumph and screams of pain
to whispers of contentment and shouts of
anger
and has wondered and imagined
and healed and restored
and it is good

Now in this time
in this place
in the rooms we sit in
and in our gathered spirits
God wonders and imagines
company and community
love and trust
sharing and abundance for all
and God calls
and invites us
and it is very good.

Let us worship God.

StF 37 You're calling us (call the seeker)

**You're calling us
And so we are gathered here
You're building us
Into a house of prayer
A holy place
Where stories of grace are told
A sacred space
Where miracles unfold
And praises rise
From the offering of our lives
Let's fill this house
Let's fill this house**

***Call the seeker
Call the stranger
Call the children
Let's hear their praises
Call the lonely
Call the broken
Young and old***

Will sing hosannas

Let's fill this house

Let's fill this house

With praise

We're living stones

Built together here

With nail-pierced hands -

Oh teach us holy fear

And prayer will rise

For all nations

And open skies

Will pour your glory down

And there'll be praise

For the Lord is in this place

Let's fill this house

Let's fill this house

Graham Kendrick

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Time of Adoration and Praise

StF 81 Now thank we all our God

**1 Now thank we all our God
with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom his world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.**

**O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us,
to keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
of this world in the next.**

**All praise and thanks to God
the Father now be given,
the Son and Spirit blest,
who reign in highest heaven
the one eternal God,
whom heaven and earth adore;
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.**

Reflection by Jane Bennett

Reading: Acts 2:37-47

Come and join us

What does fellowship look like or feel like?

I did an image search and these were the first 2 I noticed:



They appealed to me - there was a strong sense of togetherness and support. I imagined myself part of the group and I felt safe. But then I began to wonder how it would be to be outside the group - the only way in is to break the links and destroy the support and the community- I wouldn't be able to do this.

The image of fellowship in Acts 2 is of a group that welcomes newcomers, where the main entrance criterion is that they want to know more of God's love. It is a group that responds to that love through sharing with each other, taking care of those in need, learning, praying, worshipping and eating together.

So my image of fellowship has become more of a conga line than a closed circle. It's life is infectious. It draws others to join in, wants others to join, allows its path and its movement to be changed by others who join but all within the overall movement and energy of God's life and love.

I wonder how your descriptions of fellowship may have changed over the last few months. Before lockdown, if we talked of fellowship our conversations may well have focused on events and activities within church buildings. Now as I talk to people there are comments about relationships deepened through phone calls and Zoom meetings. It feels as if the quality of our relationships may have changed. For some of us we may have had fewer longer

and deeper conversations with a smaller group of people than we would normally.

What might this teach us for how we could be church together in the coming weeks and months?

How can we
“...[share our] lives with each other and the world around,
in a prophetic symbol of the Kingdom of God.

A powerful sign of a Spirit-filled way of life that stands against the sinfulness of selfishness.

A wonder of hope, reconciliation and generosity.

A true community of belonging and service”?

Andrew Roberts, Holy Habits

StF 409 Let us build a house where love can dwell

**Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive;
built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
All are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.**

**2 Let us build a house where prophets
speak, and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness and
as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:**

**3 Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground,
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space,
as we share in Christ the feast that frees
us:**

**4 Let us build a house where hands will
reach beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger bear the
image of God's face;**

let us bring an end to fear and danger:

5 Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and
claimed as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:

Marty Haugen (b.1950)

Prayers

Act of Commitment and Offering

StF 449 Lord of creation

Lord of creation, to you be all praise!
Most mighty your working, most wondrous
your ways!
Your glory and might are beyond us to tell,
and yet in the heart of the humble you
dwell.

Lord of all power, I give you my will,
in joyful obedience your tasks to fulfill.
Your bondage is freedom, your service is
song;
and, held in your keeping, my weakness is
strong.

Lord of all wisdom, I give you my mind,
rich truth that surpasses man's knowledge
to find.
What eye has not seen and what ear has
not heard
is taught by your Spirit and shines from
your Word.

Lord of all bounty, I give you my heart;
I praise and adore you for all you impart;
your love to inspire me, your counsel to
guide,
your presence to cheer me, whatever
betide.

Lord of all being, I give you my all;
if ever I disown you, I stumble and fall;
but, sworn in glad service your word to
obey,
I walk in your freedom to the end of the
way.

Jack Copley Winslow

The Blessing