

Worship on July 25, 2021 (Baptism)

Order of worship

We Gather

- Welcome and Announcements
- Call to worship
- Praise song – Come now is the time to worship
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- Scripture: Colossians 3:12-17
- Sermon: True fellowship
- The Prayer for the people of God

We Respond

- Offering – One Voice

We Serve

- Benediction

Ponder Upon Questions

Announcements:

. Welcome! Grace and peace to you all who are worshipping God with us live right now and those who are worshipping God through this video. This is Sunday, July 25th, 2021. As we worship God today, let us give our full attention to God.

. Graveside burial of Mary Duthie will be on Tuesday, July 27, at 11am at Aurora Cemetery. If able, please join.

. Bible study after worship. Please stay for sharing lives and thoughts, and prayer for each other.

. Worship volunteers are always welcome.

. Thank you for your support with your gifts. God may use our gifts and us for this world and our community.

As we come into the presence of our God, let us calm down our hearts and minds, and focus on our Lord.

Responsive Call to Worship

One: Great is the Lord who is worthy of praise.

All: No one can ever measure the greatness of our God.

One: Let us worship God who is faithful in all things.

All: We will sing of God's power and speak of God's loving kindness.

One: O God, we proclaim you our ruler in all things,

All: and we will praise your holy name forever and ever.

Praise song – Come now is the time to worship

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

Gracious and generous God, we gather each week in wonder, marvelling at your mysterious presence in the awesome beauty of the world, and in surprising encounters in our lives. We gather with grateful hearts, amazed by the abundance in your creation, abundance we can share at our tables and in our communities, abundance in food, in friendship and in faithfulness. We gather with hopeful hearts, seeking another taste of your love for us, hoping that others will share in the wonders of that love. Your love for us all is mysterious and miraculous, O God, with the power to transform times that overwhelm us and lives that hunger for hope. We gather, trusting that you will move once again in our worship, and open before us the new possibilities you create for all your people in Christ, the Bread of Life, bread for our journeys.

Gracious and Generous God, we gather each week to be fed by your love, trusting that you embrace each of our lives. We confess that we are not nearly so generous with our love. We hold back what we have, fearful we lack enough for our own purposes and desires. We take advantage of opportunities for ourselves, and forget to see if someone else is in need. Forgive us, O God, when our fear makes us stingy with your gift of abundant love.

This time, we come to you in prayer that you taught us how to pray: (The Lord's Prayer:) **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

Words of Assurance

Sisters and brothers in Christ at St. Andrew's, The Letter to the Ephesians declares that Christ dwells in our hearts through faith, for we are being rooted and grounded in his love. The forgiveness he offers is a gift of this love that is wider and deeper than we can ever imagine. Receive God's forgiveness with faithful hearts, and be at peace with God, be at peace with yourself and be at peace with one another.

Prayer for Illumination:

Speak to us through the scriptures this day, O God, and by the power of your Holy Spirit, give us a deeper understanding of your Word for our lives and our times, through Christ, the Living Word. Amen.

Scripture: Colossians 3:12-17

12 As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. 13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

"This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God."

SERMON: True Fellowship

Today's sermon title is "True Fellowship."

Last week, we gathered in our church building for the first time after we decided to close our building because of the pandemic. We had some technical difficulties, but it was very meaningful and thankful day. Also, after the baptism of the couple, we accepted two new members into our church family. I appreciate everyone for your faithful service and patience.

Today, our book, The Purpose Driven Life, chapter 18. It talks about fellowship. Usually, when we use the word 'fellowship,' we think of snack time after church services. Fellowship is our coffee time.

However, fellowship is much more than just having snack with church family. The Bible defines fellowship shared life, shared experience. Fellowship is unselfish loving, honest sharing, practical serving, sacrificial giving, sympathetic comforting, and all the other "one another" commands from the Bible.

In short, fellowship is community building within God's people.

1 Peter 2:9 defines God's people. **"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."**

Fellowship is the outcome of our true identity. May true fellowship be within our church.

In true fellowship, we experience Authenticity, Mutuality, Sympathy, and Mercy.

ONE, authenticity. Authentic fellowship is not superficial surface-level chit-chat. It is genuine, heart-to-heart, sometimes gut-level, sharing. It happens when we get honest about who we are and what is happening in our lives. In authentic fellowship, we are able to share our hurts, we can reveal our feelings, we can confess our failures, disclose our doubts, admit our fears, acknowledge our weaknesses, and we can ask for help and prayer.

True belongingness. True care. True support. We can face our honest selves in authentic fellowship.

Of course, having authentic fellowship does not happen naturally. We need both courage and humility. We need to face our fear of exposure, rejection, and being hurt.

We don't want to take risk. We don't want to lower ourselves. But, without overcoming our fear and our self-arrogance, we cannot experience true fellowship, but true fellowship is so much valuable than our own pride and self-satisfaction.

Comparing God-given fellowship to our own? Non-sense. It's too much to lose. Look into your hearts, let us look deep inside our hearts.

What is hindering us to be honest before God and God's people?

TWO, in true fellowship, we experience mutuality. Mutuality is the art of giving and receiving. It's not totally depending on me or the other person. It depends on EACH OTHER.

1 Corinthians 12:25 (MSG), "The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part."

All the body parts are equally valuable. None of them is more precious nor more important. They are one body and they share responsibilities, and they help each other. We are the same. Church

is the same. We are to build mutual accountability, mutual encouragement, mutual serving, and mutual honouring. We are not responsible for each other, but we are responsible to each other. We are to hold our hands together and we are to uphold each other.

THREE, in true fellowship, we experience sympathy. Sympathy is sharing the pain of others. We say, “I understand what you are going through, and what you feel is completely normal.”

Sympathy meets two fundamental human needs: the need to be understood and the need to have our feelings validated. Every time we understand and affirm someone’s feelings, we build fellowship. When other people express their feelings, let us remind ourselves our true identity.

12 As God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. “As God’s holy people, let us be sympathetic, kind, humble, gentle, and patient.”

FOUR, in true fellowship, we experience mercy. Fellowship is a place of grace. Everyone makes mistakes and making mistakes is okay. We are more merciful than just. Because we all stumble and fall, we all need mercy **2 Corinthians 2:7, “When people sin, you should forgive and comfort them, so they won’t give up in despair.”** In relationships with others, we cannot avoid hurts. We all have imperfect, sinful, and selfish nature. In true fellowship, **13 Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.** God’s forgiveness is the motivation for showing mercy to others. God showed his mercy upon us first. However, although we forgive instantly, we don’t allow them to hurt us again. We forgive, but we don’t trust them equally as before. We still encourage and support others, but the broken trust needs time to recover. **“16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom;”** We all have weaknesses and we all need time and support in true fellowship.

As we build our community together, may God’s presence and help be upon us. Let us come before God with humble hearts as we build our community in real fellowship with authenticity, mutuality, sympathy, and mercy of God.

Let us pray.

Gracious and loving Father God, thank you for calling us to your side. You called us your people. We were in darkness. We were suffering in our sin, but you, God, delivered us from our death. Thank you. You gather us together to build community of love. With your guidance, we desire to build true fellowship within our church. Change our hearts and let us accept each other and love each other. We need you. We need you all the time. Be honoured through lives. In Jesus’ precious name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer for the people of God – let us continue to pray for the people of God.

Gracious and loving Father God, with our humble hearts, we come before you and lay down our honest hearts. As we pray, build the two-way connection in our hearts, so we can talk to you with honesty, and we can listen to you with our humble hearts.

First of all, we pray for the family of Mary Duthie. She was called to you on July 10th. We thank you for her faithful faith journey with you. Encourage and comfort her family as they remember her and grieve for her. And fill their hearts with hope of the reunion in your kingdom. Strengthen their faith and hope in you as they remember Mary. Also, there will be funeral on Tuesday. May all things go smoothly and let this time be true fellowship of God’s people. Let us show our love and care for each other.

We pray for our church. There are many who are taking vacations whether we are going away or staying home and resting, let us refresh ourselves with this opportunity. Also, as we stop from our busy work, turn our focus from our busy life to you. So we can restore our relationship with you, so we may gain the strength to live our lives with your power and might.

Also we pray for those who have their prayer needs. It could be their physical health, emotional restoration, financial stability, or relational resolutions. Let us honestly confess to you our needs. God, listen to our needs. Open our hearts, so we may know how you are working in our lives.

Gracious Father God, keep us safe as we carry out our daily lives and let us walk with you and glorify you and display your love and presence through our lives. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering. The story of Jesus feeding the crowd with a few loaves and fishes is a parable of God's power to multiply our gifts offered in Jesus' name. So make your offering to God as you are able, and trust that God will create abundance from what we have to give to the Lord. Let us pray.

Offering prayer:

God of abundant love, we offer our gifts to you willingly, yet sometimes we wonder what they can achieve in a world of great need. Bless our gifts and multiply them in your love. Surprise us with your power, working in us and through us, to accomplish worthy things in the name of Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life. Amen.

Praise song – One Voice

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. In our fellowship, let authenticity, mutuality, sympathy, and mercy be overflowing as we love and care for each other. Let the name of the Lord be lifted up and be praised through our lives.

Benediction

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.

Ponder Upon Questions:

1. What one step can I take today to connect with another believer at a more genuine, heart-to-heart level?
2. What would make it easier for me to be able to share my needs, hurts, fears, and hopes with others?