

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

**A Call to Live as a Christ-Centred  
Community**

Acts 2:42-47



Our Scripture this morning presented a lovely picture of community which the first believers formed. Initially they continued to worship in the synagogue until there was too much friction and they were forced to meet in private homes for communion, prayer and teaching about Christ.

We have been created by God to be in relationship and to love one another. 16 times in the New Testament we are commanded to love one another. We are called to be in community. I'd like to share a story that illustrates a sense of community that we don't see as much as we used to. In times past, neighbours used to know each other more than they do today, spent more time helping each other than they do today and got together to share a meal or entertain each other more than they do today. But for many of us times have changed. Community is much harder to find today.

**Illustration:** The story is told of a farm boy who accidentally overturned his wagonload of hay on the road. His neighbour came over to give him a hand. "Hey, Willis," the neighbour said, "forget your troubles for a while and come and have dinner with us. Then we can come back and I'll help you overturn your wagon." "That's nice of you," Willis answered, "but I don't think Dad would want me to." "Aw, come on, son!" the neighbour insisted. "Well, okay," the boy finally agreed, "but Dad won't like it." After a hearty dinner, Willis thanked the host, saying, "I feel a lot better now, but I know my dad is going to be real upset." "Don't be silly!" said the neighbour. "By the way, where is your dad?" The boy replied, "Dad's under the wagon!"

If we hired an observer to come to our congregation and make a careful analysis of our congregation's life, what would that person find? What would that person observe about the way we relate to each other about the way we interact with each other away from Sunday worship? Would they notice a willingness or an unwillingness to support each other in time of need?

The Bible reminds us as Christians we are never meant to live out our faith alone. one. The apostle John tells us there are 3 principles we should follow as Christians.

1. Ensure our community is grounded in God's word.
2. Depend on each other for united strength
3. Renew our faith daily through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew tells us we are to glow like lights, to show what Christ is like. He tells us we are not to hide our faith by keeping silent about it or denying we follow Jesus but explain it to others and help others in need to find hope through Christ.

Jesus said that we are the light of the world. He is speaking to YOU and ME – to US!! Our greatest significance is found in the darkness, not in the light. The smallest light will defeat the darkest night.

I believe GOD has a plan to do great things through our church. Are we willing to live into God's plan as we prayerfully create a vision together? Our willingness to embody the vision of our church will have a direct impact on our credibility as a Church. How active are you in talking about Jesus to your family and friends? I know it is easy to share your beliefs in your footy team, a political party or a cause you feel strong about and this is all fine. But if you filled in the card from last week and your answer included something like: I believe Jesus is the Saviour of the world, the Lord of the earth and sea – you MUST live as you believe it to be. People can sniff out a phony a

mile away. Your excitement for Jesus will be contagious and your excitement for Christ's church will be evident and contagious as well.

Do your family and friends know how much Chelsea Community Church of Christ means to you? Do your neighbours and even those you pass at the shops know that you value Christ and Christ's Church above all other things? Have they been invited by you to be a part of Christ's body – this church? Is it evident to them that this church makes a significant impact on your life – for the better?

You may have asked someone to come to our church and they haven't ventured here yet, but don't give up, keep planting that seed and praying for the Holy Spirit to draw them to God.

Author Neil Cole wrote an article about the outreach idea of a church. "The church sent their choir to the local mall to sing Christmas carols as a means to get the Gospel out and they considered it was successful. However, there was no real fellowship; no-one was spoken to; no relationships made; no one was able to ask a single question of the churched people standing there singing. All that happened was that people heard songs sung that were already playing in and around the area.

This leads me to consider our Inter church Council's Christmas Event. The songs and speakers do tell a story but no-one takes the time to get into a conversation with the attendees to make the Gospel story personal to them.

For those who have flown before, do you pay attention to the Flight Attendant's Safety talk at the beginning of the flight, or do you dismiss it by saying – I've heard all this before. If something happens, will you really remember the instructions considering they are announcing important information of life and death.

The people who listen and sing the carols may react in the same way. They've heard it all before yet we are sharing with them important information for their life and death.

If we want to win this world for Christ, we are going to have to sit in the smoking section, this is where lost people are found. If you make them put out their cigarette first to hear the message, all they will be thinking about is: when can I get another cigarette.

God didn't expect us to come to Him in Heaven. He came to us. He lived life on our terms and on our turf. God became incarnate, which means He became flesh. God came to us through a birth canal, just like the rest of us. God had to have someone change His nappies and for a time could communicate only by crying, just like all other people since Adam and Eve.

God was poor and lived among us. God got His hands dirty and served the people. Eventually, God even came to me and to you somewhere in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century after His life, death and resurrection. We need to let God come to the lost today as well. We are now Jesus' feet, hands, eyes and mouth. We are the body of Christ. We are His temple and His Spirit dwells within our flesh. We must let the Word of Christ and the Spirit of God richly dwell within us so that His divine presence is noticeable.

I like to think of the church as a chain with many links, and each of the links depends on the others. And like the old saying goes, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link – that's why each of us must do our best to be faithful to the Lord and to the church.

A real Christian community will draw others to Christ. Community is not only something we need, it is something the lost need and it is something they are looking for. Larry

Crabb, a Christian psychologist wrote: “A central task of community is to create a place that is safe enough for the walls to be torn down, safe enough for each of us to reveal our brokenness.”

Do you remember the TV show Cheers. It’s song was about a place “where everybody knows your name.” - it is a place where people care about you, accept and include you; is unshockable; you can tell people secrets, and they usually don’t tell others or even want to.

God has put into the human heart the desire to know and be known, to love and be loved, and so many seek a counterfeit through various addictions. With all my heart, ‘I believe that Christ wants His church to be unshockable, a fellowship where people can come in and say, “I’m sunk, I’m beat, I’ve had it.” Alcoholics Anonymous has this quality — our churches too often miss it.”

The Church is sent into the world to continue what Christ came to do in the power of the same Spirit, reconciling people to God. The beginning of any great Vision is recognising the problem. This recognition combined with a clear objective and creative energy can accomplish a lot. God has already given us all we need. There are solutions right in front of us if we only have eyes to see and ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches.

As a way to remember to tell others about the Gospel and your faith in Jesus as God’s Son and Saviour, I am giving each one of you a small torch. As Jesus said – we are the light of the world, to shine in the darkness. Each time you use the torch and some glow in the dark, I pray that you would say a prayer that God will bring into your space someone who needs Him in their life.