

**[OPENING SLIDE]**

*Our Fellowship in Christ:  
Conditions of Our Fellowship*

*“That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have **fellowship** with us; and indeed our **fellowship** is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”*

**Introduction**

I met a woman some months back by the name of Nancy. She was the roommate of someone I was visiting in the hospital. Where, as I was sharing Scripture and a prayer with one of our members, I'd hear an occasional “Amen” or “That’s so nice” from the other bed. So after visiting with our member, I introduced myself to Nancy, sharing a Word and blessing with her as well.

She went on to relate how blessed she was to be a member of one of the local churches in town. Inquiring into why she had such high praise she said it was the **fellowship**. Where, her face beamed as she recounted all her church had done while she was in the hospital. I left the visit thinking that one doesn't have to think too long as to why one would want to be a member of a church like that.

**[SLIDE #2]**

**Main Thought:** *“What life have you, if you have not life together? There is not life that is not in community, and no community not lived in praise to God.”*  
(T. S. Eliot, “Choruses from the ‘Rock’”)

Where, it is Jesus' crucifixion that forged such a community, and the empty Tomb that confirmed – placing fellowship with God and with each other on solid ground.

AS GOES OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST, SO WILL OUR FELLOWSHIP BE  
WITH OTHERS IN HIS NAME.

Amen.

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**[SLIDE #3]** As an expression of the light of God's love in the world ... WE ARE  
CREATED FOR FELLOWSHIP.

*Koinonia*. A deep sharing. “Participation in a common thing” – with both heavenly and earthly ramifications. (TLSB, 1902)

**[SLIDE #4]** It's reflected in what the fathers of the church called *perichoresis* – a divine “dance” – within the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – in/of one another – 3 Persons, 1 divine essence. A beautiful mystery to behold!

Appearing a dozen and a half times in the N. Testament (4 occurrences in our text) – fellowship is an essential component that defines the church’s resurrected life!

**[SLIDE #5] Acts 2:42**

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the **fellowship**, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

Romans 15:26

“For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some **contribution** for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem.”

**[SLIDE #6] 1 Corinthians 10:16**

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a **participation** in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a **participation** in the body of Christ?”

2 Corinthians 6:14

“Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what **partnership** has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?”

**[SLIDE #7] 2 Corinthians 8:4**

“For they gave according to their means ... and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of **taking part** in the relief of the saints.”

2 Corinthians 9:13

“By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your **contribution** for them and for all others.”

Galatians 2:9

“When James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of **fellowship** to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.”

**[SLIDE #8] Philippians 1:5**

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, because of your **partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now.”

Philippians 3:10

“Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord ... that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may **share** his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.”

**[SLIDE #9] Hebrews 13:16**

“Do not neglect to do good and to **share** what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”

Fellowship with one another flows directly *from* the fellowship and sharing we have *with* the Father and the Son.

*1That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 2the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—3**that which we have seen and heard** (with regards to Jesus, the incarnate Word) **we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have** (continual) **fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.** 4And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.*

Fellowship – with God/each other – is all gift, forged at the Cross, authenticated at the empty Tomb – an act of sheer grace!

1 Corinthians 1:9

“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the **fellowship** of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

[SLIDE #10] 1 Corinthians 13:13

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the **fellowship** of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

... It is a gift of God that is FORMED and SHAPED (first) BY WAY OF CONFES-  
SION & (second) FORGIVENESS.

*5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 **If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk** (continually) **in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.** 7 **But if we walk** (continually) **in the light, as he is in the light, we have** (in real time) **fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.***

What is Confession? The *Small Catechism* states it this way:

“Confession consists of two parts: First, that we confess our sins, and second, that we receive absolution, that is, forgiveness from the Pastor (and each other) as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven.”

*8 **If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.** 9 **If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** 10 *If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.**

[SLIDE #11] Fellowship begins with admitting our need for it ... our need to be in fellowship with our heavenly Father that was once fractured and frayed by our sin.

“In confession,” writes Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his classic work *Life Together*, “the breakthrough to community takes place.” Where, sin demands to have us by ourselves. It withdraws [one] from the community ... It shuns the light.

In the darkness of the unexpressed it poisons the whole being of a person ... [But] in confession the light of the Gospel breaks into the darkness and seclusion of the heart ... The unexpressed must be openly spoken and acknowledged. All that is secret and hidden is made manifest. It is a hard struggle until the sin is openly admitted.”

Confessed sin creates fellowship. Unconfessed sin prevents it. Where, in acknowledging that the vertical relationship is broken and in need of repair, the horizontal one has hope – and is given a blessed chance.

[SLIDE #12] Whereby, with sin duly and daily confessed, we are brought to God’s greater work ... the forgiveness of our sins!

***2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate (παρακλητος, “one called alongside” us) with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. 2 He is the propitiation (“atoning sacrifice”<sup>1</sup>) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.***

Where does confession ultimately seek to bring us? To Jesus. To the Cross.

Wherein, not only does Christ’s Word of forgiveness “finish, accomplish, complete” our salvation, His forgiveness now forms the basis of our proclamation of forgiveness to the world, beginning right here – among one another – and extending into all of the places where we live, move and have our being.

“Your sins, all of them, are expiated by the blood of Jesus. ... ‘Bodied and blooded’ together with Him, with each other ... Easter joy!” (Nagel, *CJ*, 14:1, 72)

Whereby, receiving and drinking in such sweet fellowship from God in Christ ...  
FELLOWSHIP IS now EXPRESSED BY LOVING ONE ANOTHER.

*<sup>3</sup> And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.*

*<sup>4</sup> Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, <sup>5</sup> but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: <sup>6</sup> whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*

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<sup>1</sup> A “sacrifice offered to meet and satisfy the just wrath of God for the sins of the whole world; an offering offered by God himself ... (John 3:16).” (Richter, *CPR*, 10:2, 30)

**<sup>7</sup> Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning.** *The old commandment is the word that you have heard.* **<sup>8</sup> At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.**

<sup>9</sup> *Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness.* <sup>10</sup> *Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.* <sup>11</sup> *But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

[SLIDE #13]

“A new commandment [which is not really new, but now it has received a “blood transfusion”] I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (John 13:34)

Philippians 2:1

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any **participation** in the Spirit ... which is yours in Christ Jesus.”

Philemon 6

“I pray that the **sharing** of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ.”

We will explore this further in the coming sermons, but the eventual expression of our fellowship with Christ is the “common disposition to work together and serve one another – [possessing in our spirit] the ‘attitude’ of Christ” (CSB, 1818) ... expressed in 1. “Thinking the same thing;” 2. “Having the same love;” 3. “Having a common soul;” 4. “Setting your mind on only one thing.” Vertical love, now expressed horizontally, in a unity of thought, feeling and action!

[SLIDE #14] Brought about by ... THE MEANS OF GOD’S GRACE.

<sup>12</sup> *I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.* <sup>13</sup> *I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father.* <sup>14</sup> *I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

✚ Sins forgiven for Jesus’s sake, now expressed in Word/deed towards each other.  
✚ [SLIDE #15] Knowing Him – as you spend time with him in His Word; pondering the significance of your Baptism; receiving him in Holy Communion.

Here, Jesus “speaks; [and] you listen and respond. More and more, you lose yourself and you become more like him. Strangely, you begin to see him everywhere rather than reflections of yourself.” (Nadasdy, CPR, 6:4, 26)

Rejoicing that with every sin confessed and forgiven, and every square inch of what you once were, now becoming captive to the mind and heart of Christ ...

✦ [SLIDE #16] You overcome the ways of the evil one. You send Satan packing, who has no hold on you or your friends in Christ.

✦ [SLIDE #17] Because the Word of God abides in you.

Yes, what changes as a result of the Spirit's "filling, sealing, empowering, gifting, cleansing, enabling and praying" for us? We are given to:

1. Service, like Christ; 2. Humility, like Christ; 3. Obedience, like Christ; 4. Sacrifice, like Christ (cf. 2:5-11; Nadasdy, CPR, 24)

### Conclusion

[SLIDE #18] Pastor and Confessor Dietrich Bonhoeffer once expressed unity of faithful in this way:

"Visitor and visited in loneliness recognize in each other the Christ who is present in the body; they receive and meet each other as one meets the Lord, in reverence, humility, and joy. They receive each other's benedictions as the benediction of the Lord Jesus Christ. But if there is so much blessing joy even in a single encounter of brother with brother, how inexhaustible are the riches that open up for those who by God's will are privileged to live in the daily fellowship of life with other Christians."  
(*Life Together*, 20)

OR ...

[SLIDE #18] Pastor and Preacher Charles Spurgeon once expressed unity of the faithful in this way:

"Communion is strength; solitude is weakness. Alone, the fine old beech yields to the blast and lies prone on the meadow. In the forest, supporting each other, the trees laugh at the hurricane. The sheep of Jesus flock together. The social element is the genius of Christianity." (*The Quotable Spurgeon*)

Thanks be to God for such an inexpressible gift – fellowship with God, forged on the crucible of love – connecting us vertically, for a life of fellowship now lived horizontally – all to His glory.

AS GOES OUR FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS, SO WILL OUR FELLOWSHIP BE  
WITH OTHERS IN HIS NAME.

Like Christ – risen, indeed! Alleluia!

*Amen.*