
The Word is Koinonia!

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An article from the *Cathedral Times* by Dean Sam Candler.

It was an exhilarating Homecoming Sunday we celebrated last week! Double rows of ministry tables circled completely around the parish hall, and each table was filled with goodies and smiles and joys. What fun to see old friends again! What joy to notice new faces and to introduce them to someone at a ministry table!

Once again, one of my most moving moments came during communion. Our custom is that the Sunday preacher becomes the paten bearer (administering bread) at one of the “floor stations” for communion, the station right below the pulpit. (The celebrant of the service will customarily administer communion inside the rail at the Peachtree side of the altar.) I love administering communion at a floor station, because then I can see faces. I can see the delightful procession of all of us, young and old, dancing and shuffling, moving forward to be nourished by the Body of Christ. In fact, that procession is itself the Body of Christ! Nourished by communion, we become the Body of Christ in the world.

During the sermon, I introduced a word that is new to many of us, and I promised to spell it later—HERE! In the *Cathedral Times*! The word is “koinonia.” It is a Greek word that, at its simplest, means “community” or “fellowship.” But, in the New Testament, the word “koinonia” connotes a deeper kind of sharing, and communion, in the gospel of Christ. At 1 Corinthians 1:9, Paul says, “You were called into the fellowship (koinonia) of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” At Philippians 1:5, Paul says he is thankful because of your “sharing” (koinonia) in the gospel. At 1 Corinthians 10:16, Paul asks, “The bread that we break, is it not a sharing (koinonia) in the body of Christ?”

In my Sunday sermon, I prayed that every parishioner and friend of the Cathedral experience koinonia this year. By that word, I meant community, but I meant “true Agape-love community,” “spiritual communion.” “Koinonia” means God-given community, God-graced community. It means community not just for people’s sake, but for God’s sake. Koinonia means fellowship and care and service, but it also means connection to something transcendent and life-giving.

The word is “koinonia.” It means where we learn about intimacy and companionship, but also about transcendence and greater truth. I daresay, it is what the word “Church” has been supposed to mean for a long time! I continue to believe that the Church offers a quality of community—a communion—that no other organization or institution or team or family can offer. Thus, the koinonia we nurture here is a sacred treasure.

During this fall, I will talk more about “koinonia.” And the Cathedral will begin to describe many of our Cathedral groups as designated “koinonia groups”—that is, groups which nurture integral elements of the gospel life: prayer, teaching, service, and mission. It is my hope that every member of the Cathedral will be a part of koinonia, and will even be a part of some “koinonia group,” where he or she can practice and learn about integral elements of the Christian faith.

So, join koinonia at the Cathedral this year! Acts 2:42 says that the early Christians “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers.” And, in our baptismal covenant this past Sunday, we promised the same, that we would “continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.” Well, the word for “fellowship” in Acts 2:42 is our word for this year: KOINONIA. It was what we richly enjoyed

this past Sunday!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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