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## *Letters to a Young Episcopalian: Communion*

*This letter is part of a series of fictional letters by Canon George Maxwell intended for Episcopalians young and old who wonder what it means to be faithful in the world today.*

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Dear Anna,

I am delighted to hear about your new friends.

I think I do know what you mean when you say that you feel a sense of freedom when you are with them. It is liberating to find friends who like what you like, and want to do what you want to do.

Who knew there was anyone else so completely fascinated by soccer and Shakespeare, or that you would be hanging out with so many people from so many different backgrounds?

You are, I suspect, beginning to get a new sense of who you are and who you might become.

You might also be getting a new sense of how much who you are depends on others.

We aren't as self-sufficient as we sometimes think. When we were younger, we depended on someone else to birth us and to raise us, and now that we are older we still need someone else to love us and to care for us. Our friends make us who we are in a very real sense.

As Christians, we believe that these relationships are most life-giving when they follow a particular pattern.

We believe that God is love. We can see what this love looks like in the relationship that Jesus has with his Father, whom he calls Abba, and how that relationship shapes his life. The Holy Spirit is the power of this relationship that calls us to participate in it.

In his book *Mysteries of Faith*, Mark McIntosh describes this participation as like being drawn into a conversation. When we choose to enter into the conversation between Jesus and the one he calls Abba, then the power of their love for each other begins to transform our hearts and minds. This transformation draws us out of the preoccupation with ourselves that so often imprisons us and into the practices of loving and caring for others that promise true freedom.

This is why I told you that I find theology interesting.

It's not just talk about God, as if God were something you could understand.

It is, as McIntosh quips, "God's talk," which turns out to be a conversation that creates communion among those who participate in it.

In other words, this is a conversation about love and, as we come to understand that love is what we most like and what we

most want to do, then we begin to realize that there is no limit to how many new friends we will find.

Your affectionate uncle,

Ames

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