**Fellowship and worship**

One subject this morning, but separated, although both are captured in the concept of being church.

Both combined can lead to some difficult questions like when we call our Biblestudy group, our mission group, or any home group, an equal part of the church, are they still church when they go for a meal together in a restaurant or perhaps for drink in the local pub?

Besides, when we look to the Nave of the church as compare it with a ship, what kind of ship is the church? Is it a cruise ship or a battle ship?

**FELLOWSHIP**

Following the Dictionary a fellowship is a friendly association, especially with people who share one's interests.

What does fellowship mean in the Bible?

The word is derived from the Greek word Koinonia and is described as *the unity of the Spirit that comes from Christians' shared beliefs, convictions, and behaviors. When those shared values are in place, genuine koinonia (biblical fellowship) occurs. This fellowship produces our mutual cooperation in God's worship, God's work, and God's will being done in the world.*

Conclusion: Fellowship means Church. But koinonia and ecclasia (Greek for church) is not the same.

Koinonia is first and foremost as what John says about it in 1 John 1:3 ‑ *that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ*.

Paul even mentions it in his relationship to Jesus Christ in Philippians 3:10 ‑ *that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death*.

Our reading from Hebrews emphasis it: *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope*. But then it urges us not to stop meeting together. That meeting we call the church, or better perhaps a koinonia?

Easter is fast approaching and it are in particular Easter and Christmas when quite a few people come to the church, whom we don't see coming back before next Easter or next Christmas. It appears that visiting the church on a non‑regular or regular basis has often to do with priorities. The church has to compete with many other activities on a Sunday morning and many people choose for the other options offered instead . At best those who have chosen for the other options will integrate going to church on a basis of ‘when time and circumstances permits'.

It ‘s a problem for people to make a choice in everything else that is on offer on a Sunday morning. But at the same time, the Church faces the problem on how to be contemporary but not compromising. The church often finds itself bang in the middle of not becoming an inward looking sect of like minded worshippers neither becoming a purely social focussed or perhaps entertaining gathering on a Sunday.

It brings us all back to the first and most difficult question of what is the church?

Ignatius and Polycarp were already in friendly conflict with each other about its meaning and vocation in late 1st, early 2nd century church.

Hans Kung, a RC priest and scholar, did write a standard work on ‘The Church’ in 530 pages. Kung was professor in ecumenical theology at Tübingen University

Kung wrote: *Every age has its own image of the Church, arising out of a particular historical situation; in every age a particular view of the Church is expressed by the Church in practice, and given conceptual form by the theologians of the age.*

It is as CofE Bishop professor Nicolas Wright once wrote: *A one and true doctrine hammered throughout the churches in the New Testament never existed.*

Kung finds in the NT 3 descriptions of the church: 1. the church as the People of God 2. the church as the Creation of the Spirit, and 3. the church as the Body of Christ.

Being the people of God and the body of Christ, Küng maintains that *all Christians are taught and led and supported by the Spirit directly, without mediation, and they are all to live by the Spirit. The anointing is not just given to prophets and kings, but to the whole community, each individual being filled with the fullness of God. We all have direct access to God, allowing ourselves to be a spiritual offering to God thus becoming holy in every action. We are all called to be preachers, not simply with words but with actions, not simply in the church building but in all of our lives.*

And as we read in Hebrews; it is through the koinonia that we can encourage one another to do this and to be encouraged to do it ourselves also.

**WORSHIP**

Worship has become the same as church for many. Any service in a church seems to be called a worship service.

Britannica Encyclopedia explains: Three types may be distinguished: corporate exclusive worship; corporate inclusive worship; and personal worship.

Exclusive corporate worship is worship that belongs to the group alone.

The second type is corporate inclusive worship. Members are by birth, included as members or at least potential members.

The third type of worship is that on the individual level.

Churches have become both exclusive and inclusive, but where is it on a personal level?

Rick Warren wrote a few years ago ‘The Purpose Driven Church’ and he commended that the church is a place for Christians as well as for non‑Christians. Warren's approach to church is that it consists of people in many different stages of Christian commitment, but with the intention to bring all into discipleship of Christ.

Warren bases his idea of the church as being a gathering of people from those who have some curiosity for the Christian religion to those who call themselves committed Christians and everybody in between.

A good Calvinist will vehemently oppose this idea, because Calvin was of the opinion the real church can only consists of believers. One of the most contemporary critics of Warren was Bill Hybels (from Willow Creek) who was fulminating against an open approach to the church as a body for everybody.

Those critics argue that Jesus Christ never commissioned His followers to go out into the world and "church" lost people. They believe that the church was created with and for the redeemed only and that Christians should invite the lost to Christ with an open Bible, a convicting Spirit and a working knowledge of scripture, outside the church sanctuary.

The problem with making the church ‘for the redeemed only', however, is the danger of the church sliding into sectarianism or becoming a place of solitarily like minded people and losing its connection with its surrounding community. Particularly for our churches in village communities being loyal to the Church of England origins, the church should be the place open to the whole community, but with the message of salvation through Christ only and with the ethics of the Kingdom Jesus preached.

Worship in the church is first and foremost to acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord and to be thankful to God for this. Worship in church can be enjoying as on a cruise ship in the Mediterranean, in the sunshine, but with the air-conditioning at hand. But, it is at the same time the church remains a battleship focussing on a serious mission, while ensuring that every person aboard serves a vital function. Perhaps that's as much as important than a cosy worship service in the church.

The main calling of the church remains to preach the Word in every part and place of society, in a multitude of ways, expressing through manifold ways the love which God has for the whole world. Küng writes: *Every believer can and must, having been taught by God, teach others; can and must, having received the word of God, be its herald in some form or other.*

Kung is right when he wrote that the early church was able to spread the Christian message so quickly and thoroughly because it was proclaimed by all through the work and power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of all believers, not simply through the anointed message of a charismatic evangelist.

Those within the Church have a responsibility which goes far beyond simply inviting someone to church. The believer, not just the clergy, is charged to devote themselves to others, through prayer and service allowing the light of Christ to shine even in the darkest places. The believer "lives before God for others and is in turn supported by others." Worship then develops from being worship within the community to being worship within the everyday secular world." A worship which would radically transform the church itself, and radically impact the world which we are called to serve.