

Called to Community – The Life Jesus wants for his People

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NAN Conference 2024

⇒ Moore, Charles E. (Ed.); *Called to Community. The Life Jesus wants for His People; Walden (New York); 2016*

Part 1: Why do we need to live in community?

1. As human beings we are called to reflect God's nature = cmtty

- God is perfect community – F/S/HS –
- There is a communal order & balance between the stars & planets
 - From the school of fish to our closest non-human relatives
 - Human being: the peak of creation - the desire for cmtty -embedded in us

2. Satan's greatest interest - to destroy community

- the nature of sin is the destruction of cmtty/relationship
 - Satan knows: when he is able to destroy cmtty – the creational project fails
- The first chapters of the Bible – horror stories about the destruction of community
 - **Cain & Abel (Gen 4)**
 - Better to be alone – the one & only
 - Envy, jealousy, rivalry – the roots of destruction of cmtty.
 - **Lamech (Gen 4, 19ff.)**
 - (23) *I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. (24) If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times*
 - Instead of forgiveness and reconciliation – vengeance & retaliation
 - **The tower of Babylon (Gen 10)**
 - Where-ever cmtty is built without God / against God
 - Forced cmtty = dictatorial strategy to rule the heavens & the earth –
 - The fascist concept of strictly ordered cmtty – through control & uniformization - makes people fear cmtty even more

3. The „People of God“: God's answer to the self-destruction of human cmtty (Gen 12, 1-7)

The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; ...and they set out for the land of Canaan, and they arrived there... The LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built an altar there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

God through Abraham – forming a People for Himself - counteracting this anti-communal human behaviour – Israel to become the ideal cmtty / nation / new mankind

- = answers to this **3 areas of destruction from Gen**

- Overcoming rivalry & Self-Isolation (the sin of Cain) - Only together we are whole, healthy, successful, fruitful...
- Overcoming human wrongdoing and mutual harming (the sin of Lamech) – accountability; forgiveness; reconciliation & new trust
- Overcoming human kingdom (the Tower of Babylon) –
 - God has to be the King whenever the Christian Church(es) bonded with the secular leadership – they compromised God’s will & priorities.
 - balance between collective effort and the need for individual freedom

First Samuel 8, 4-7: So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. “...now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have.” ...Samuel...prayed to the LORD... And the LORD told him: “Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king.”

Part 2: Seven elements of the Regula Fundamentalis - Acts 2 & 4, 32-34

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them.

1. The teaching of the Apostles

- a. the OT-law into another light - grace instead of legalism!!!
- b. The cmtly after Pentecost lives under the Word of God = Gospel of Grace
- c. The NT is followed by the teaching of the Church - as the HS leads
- d. Many Church „Tradition“ have been watered down
- e. What is important for our cmties?
 - The priority of the Holy Scriptures
 - cultivate a NT lifestyle out of an extended knowledge of the Bible
 - We teach the „Full Gospel“ – stand for some biblical positions –
 - IPECC: to operate out of a common teaching package

2. Living in Community

- a. It is the calling of the NT-Church to become the healed mankind
- b. The call to cmtly - to realize this Church calling in radical form
 - Not every Christian is called to this form of Cmtly
 - Cmties are not based on human desire and strength but on God’s power
 - Freedom: A need for a healthy exit scenario
- c. Cmties of the 3rd Way - Neither religious orders (commitment) – Nore classic congregations/parishes (style of life)
- d. Community & Covenant & Commitment

- Covenant as God's particular Grace for an extraordinary mission
- Covenant is not a contract – as it is more than fulfilling commands
- Commitment is a free-will act of dedication to the calling (Jer 31, 33)
- A concrete contract clarifies the details of commitment.
- e. Community = Love becomes real
- f. A new form of relationship between true brothers/sisters
 - loving encouragement,
 - overcoming fear and rivalry,
 - a constructive way of dealing with conflicts
 - an environment of trust, honesty,
 - mutual care and practical support
- g. Living together - in a „tribal form“
 - All forms of life
 - All stages of life
- h. Cmty-life & proximity - Cmty needs **time & space** to be real
 - We need to spend a significant portion of our time together
 - We need to physically present in each other's lives.
 - Easier to be fulfilled – when members live as close as possible
 - Cmty-settlements / Christian neighborhoods / Clustering
 - spending day to day time together (incl. freetime)
 - Raising children & youth together
- i. Working together for their daily living (see more: element 5)
 - a new style of even secular occupation –
 - A prophetic new way of economy – values of the Kingdom
- j. Developing a new Christian sub-culture – without becoming Christian Ghetto!!!
- k. Community only functions well as an ordered society –
 - Stephen Clark: „Patterns of Christian Community“ – leadership & submission
 - a participative style of leadership –
 - overcoming all forms of authoritarian abuse
- l. All of this under the principle of Subsidiarity: Family – Neighborhood - local cmty – denomination / church affiliation - „Family of cmties“ (like NAN) – IPECC
 - Why do we need „Family of cmties“ and even IPECC?
 - „People of God“-experience
 - Help for cmties in crisis
 - The accountability of the (local) leadership
 - Multiplication of gifts for **our common mission**
- m. The goal of cmty: a prophetic sign for the coming „Heavenly Jerusalem“

3. Breaking the Bread - in the Houses

- a. **The (extended) Family** –
 - The Family as the first cmty (e.g. Jewish Family tradition)
 - Having other people living with us
- b. **The House-Church / Cell-group**
 - healthy integration & care for the individual
 - the system of house-churches (cell-groups...) - backbone of the pastoral system

- every member integrated in a small size community
- sharing relationship with friends
- The role of eating together...
- honesty – laying everything on the table: accountability
- all the values of communitarian relationship have to be reflected there
- c. Other forms of pastoral care** are necessary in addition:
 - Mentoring (during certain stages of life) – Mentoring System
 - Personal Counseling (in cross-road situations & times of crisis) –

4. Common Prayer

- a. The priority of prayer in all dimensions of cmtly-life
- b. Taking part in the heavenly liturgy
- c. common praise & worship –
- d. the central role of our „Lords-Day-Celebrations“ (Shabbat-tradition)
- e. Liturgical prayer – The Prayer of the Hours
- f. personal prayer life & maturing as a Christian
- g. 24/7 prayer chains or prayer-houses
- h. sacramental ceremonies in (different) denominational settings
- i. Worshipping and cooperating with others outside of the cmtly

5. Having everything in common – (to care for the poor!)

- a. to turn „fellowship“ into „koinonia“
- b. The material use of creation works for the good and not for rivalry and sin...
- c. The prophetic sign of the „First cmtly in Jerusalem“
- d. The radical prophetic sign of the „Bruderhof“-Cmtly
- e. Cmtly only works when there is enough money stored for the Kingdom treasure
- f. The tithing system as the biblical minimum
- g. Caring for the poor - common ownership to finance diaconia

6. Daily new members joining the Christian cmtly

- a. Evangelizing & integrating the next generations – the multigenerational cmtly
- b. Evangelism to outside as a life-style for all members in our cmties
- c. Diaconia – just the other side of the same coin
- d. Conversation – not only proclamation
- e. Integration – how to avoid closed society (ghetto-mentalities)
- f. Initiation – new forms of a catechumenate for new cmtly members
- g. Local cmties not growing in membership will die
- h. The special focus on our next generations
- i. Evangelism together with partners in our regions

7. Acting in Power in the fear of God

- a. The Charismatic nature & spirituality of our cmties
- b. The charismatic dimension as the foundation of our ecumenical calling
- c. Everything what we do – may be done in the power of the Spirit
- d. The prophetic/apostolic nature of our cmties – for such a time as this
- e. „training & use“ of **all (!)** the spiritual gifts

No comment on „Ecumenical Communities“ – as they have not been envisioned in the NT

The holy list of „One Anothers“

- *Outdo one another in showing honor (Rom 12, 10)*
- *Live in harmony with one another (Rom 12, 16)*
- *Admonish one another (Rom 15, 14)*
- *Greet one another with the holy kiss (Rom 16, 16)*
- *Wait for one another (1 Cor 11, 33)*
- *Have the same care for one another (1 Cor 12, 25)*
- *Be servants of one another (Gal 5, 13)*
- *Bear one another's burdens (Gal 6, 2)*
- *Comfort one another (1 Thess 5, 11)*
- *Build one another up (1 Thess 5, 11)*
- *Be at peace with one another (1 Thess 5, 13)*
- *Do good to one another (1 Thess 5, 15)*
- *Put up with one another in Love (Eph 4, 2)*
- *Be kind and compassionate to one another (Eph 4, 32)*
- *Submit to one another (Eph 5, 21)*
- *Forgive one another (Col 3, 13)*
- *Confess your sins to one another (James 5, 16)*
- *Pray for one another (James 5, 16)*
- *Love one another from the heart (1 Pet 1, 22)*
- *Be hospitable to one another (1 Pet 4, 9)*
- *Meet one another with humility (1 Pet 5, 5)*

Life in community is no less than a necessity for us – it is an inescapable „must“ that determines everything we do and think. Yet it is not our good intentions and efforts that have been decisive in choosing this way of life. Rather, we have been overwhelmed by a certainty – a certainty that has its origin and power in the Source of everything that exists.

Eberhard Arnold; Why We Live in Community & God's Revolution

If we are no longer here for all people, if we can no longer concern ourselves with the need and suffering of the whole world, community life has lost its right to exist.

Community life is like martyrdom by fire: it means the daily sacrifice of all our strength and all our rights, all the claims we commonly make on life and assume to be justified. In the symbol of fire the individual logs burn away so that, united, its glowing flames send out warmth and light again into the land.

Efforts to organize community artificially can only result in ugly, lifeless caricatures. Only when we are empty and open to the Living One – to the Spirit – can he bring about the same life among us as he did among the early Christians. The Spirit is joy in the Living One, joy in God as the only real life; it is joy in all people, because they have life from God. The Spirit drives us to all people and brings us joy in living and working for one another, for it is the spirit of creativity and love.

Everywhere the world is going to pieces. It is crumbling and rotting away. It is going through a process of disintegration. It is dying. And in these fearsome times, through the Holy Spirit Christ places the city-church with its unconditional unity right into the world. The only help for the world is to have a place of gathering, to have people whose will, undivided and free of doubt, is bent on gathering with others in unity.