

BUILDING COMMUNITY 2 – TUNING IN

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1 Cor 13; Phil 1: 9-11. Phil 3: 17-20

Kia ora, tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

Kei te pehea koe? How are you. Kei te pai. Tumeke.

We celebrate Waitangi this weekend.

The Maori have a proverb: He waka eke noa - which means 'we are all in the canoe together, no exception, no one should miss out. '

GROWING GREAT COMMUNITY



3 aims for pastoral care:

- provide a safe context
- build community
- empower each other to care for one another.

VALUE 3: we need to be in community

Last week Richard spoke about how...to mature we need tougher conditions not the optimal ones...doing life together is like iron sharpening iron...its hard and it knocks off rough edges.

The proper way for a Christian to be though, is in community. We need to give our

hearts, mind and soul to the interests of the other. Work to create a living community.

When we do this, we create a wake which draws our family into it and our friends and plants seeds in others lives that at some point bear wonderful fruit. Reject the constant, selfish march towards privatism, to getting what **we** need out of church.

The Christian community is or should be a distinctive one. A 'contrast' society, since our aims and interests are vastly different, even opposite to a world-oriented one as Paul describes in Phil 3. Our citizenship is in heaven rather than loyal to the aims and goals of the world's leadership. We look forward to a time when we will be together with Jesus in a whole new way. And in the meantime we are to stand out. Be marked by our love for one another. By our unity and by our integrity.

Phil 3: 17-20 **But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,** ²¹ *who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

Being Tuned in to Community and each other is our metaphor for today.

The transistor radio is a thing of the past. It was tricky to get on the station.

Otherwise you had to endure static and not get a clear signal.

There are lots of things we need to tune into. Be attuned to.

Community is one of those things. I would suggest that we are no different in our skills and ability to be community, even though we profess to be Christian. We have to let love grow up.

So when we moved from Katikati to Invercargill with two young children, it was with the express purpose of being in community and team ministry with friends with three young children.

Naively thinking that we could do community together in a manse with 5 children.

We lasted 6 months.

There were issues around how we raised our children, around space and privacy.

We wanted to be a team in ministry but my expectations or conception of that didn't match the other.

We were doing life together, we were serving together, we were praying together, we established some rituals together, but it was miserable, an unmitigated disaster from which our friendship has barely survived.

Community is rather like a marriage in which the partners each bring their own stuff. Their own unhealthy and unhealed ways of dealing with conflict, their misbeliefs based around what they experienced in childhood, their family codes, their naivety

and you put the two in the same environment and bingo you can have a recipe for disaster.

jealousy, anger, withdrawal, confusion.

Talk about a radio off the station!

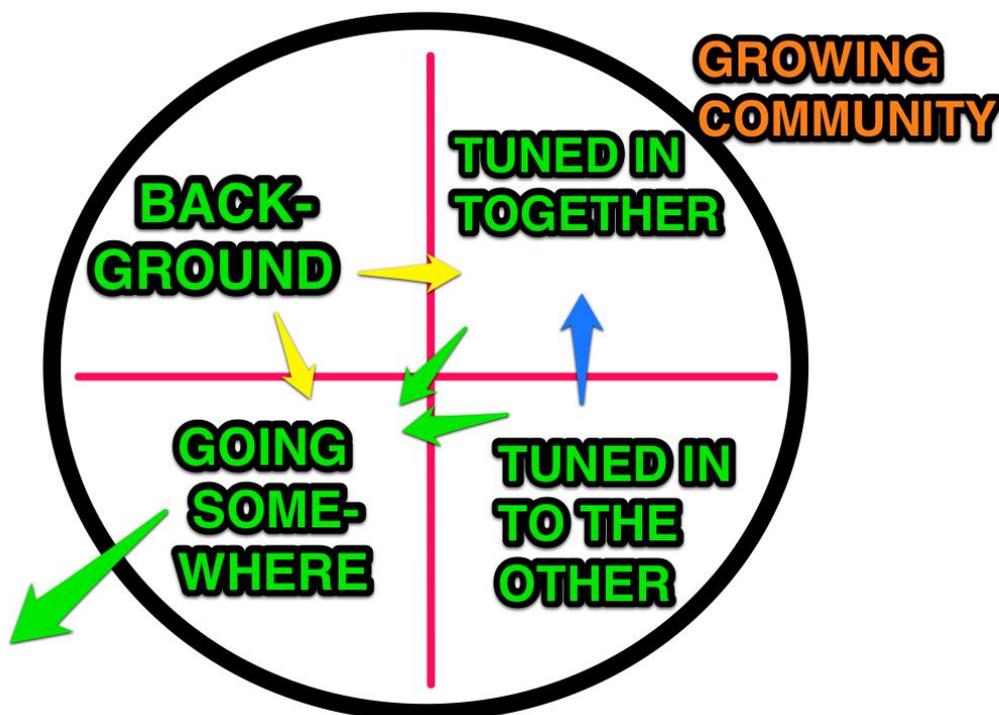
This experience sent me on a long journey to mental and emotional health. We were all unhealed and not least of all me.

There was a lot of static in my sense of attunement and belonging.

I didn't have a healthy sense of my own identity. I learnt I was co dependent and depressed. My journey out of this was long and hardwork.

- I learned that the more I love myself and gain wholeness the better I am able to love and to receive love. I have to let myself be loved. And thus the more whole the community in general will be when we all work on our own stuff.
- Inasmuch as it is up to me be at peace with everyone. Sort out every relationship with humility and forgiveness.
- It created a desire within me to build community that was healthy and real. Get rid of static

Here's how I think Community can look. In the light of newcomers...trying to establish our identity, vision and values.



WHITE NOISE IN THE BACKGROUND

1. the background structures that hold things in place. It's a bit like white noise. It runs in the background and you soon don't notice it. But when it's not there or has broken down you sure notice it.

So here's what I strive to create in the background of this church community. Also expressed in the values.

GOD-CENTRED, PRAYERFUL, SAFE, NON TOXIC AND NON ABUSIVE, EMPOWERING, LOVING, PROBLEM-SOLVING, SUPPORTIVE AND GROWTH- CHALLENGING
Encouraging, humility, transparency, working through our problems with honest skill.

TUNED IN TOGETHER:

2. THE SECOND THING a community needs especially in a place which is changing is some sort of commonality...shared experiences, rituals and events that distinguish us. Establishing our values together.

I am wondering if we can identify some of those already here:

Communion,

Worship

Camps,

Small groups

Wearing red at Pentecost

Palm Sunday all age service...the Passover

Easter

Christmas

TUNED IN TO THE OTHER:

3. your responsibility ...skills

Attendance

Love/care/encouragement

Hospitality

Prayer

Generosity

Listening

4. GOING SOMEWHERE for future sermons

FOCUS ON LOVE and LISTENING

In 1 Cor 13, PAUL LINKS TRUE SPIRITUALITY WITH OUR ABILITY TO LOVE OTHER PEOPLE WELL

Paul was addressing a problem in the Corinthian church. Evidently the church were gifted, influential and intelligent people...high IQ but they appear to be weak in their ability to love...low EQ, emotional intelligence.

13 If I speak with **human eloquence** and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the **creaking of a rusty gate. Like a radio of the station.**

² If I speak God's Word with power, **prophecy**, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have **faith** that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing.

³⁻⁷ If I **give everything I own to the poor** and even go to the stake to be burned as a **martyr**, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm **bankrupt without love.**

I can be in the church praying and worshipping and doing all the holy spiritual things, but may not be connecting, may only have surface relationships and may not be growing towards anything much.

I don't think this is church.

How this passage clashes with our understanding of spiritual maturity!

How do we separate our love for God from our love for people. The quality of our love inside and outside the church is not really much different.

Yet the essence of true Christian spirituality is to love well. Love the Lord and love your neighbour as yourself.

What characterised Jesus and community?

Vulnerability.

The events of the easter week turned the notion of being together upside down. In one act of washing the disciples feet the Master became the servant. The social norms of being on top were reversed.

And then Jesus did the unthinkable, he laid down his life, complete surrender to the needs of the other.

The disciples following in his footsteps, learned to be real. They created an amazing community.

Their success as evangelists was not because of their charisma...tongues and prophecy...but because their community gave off the scent of love that was irresistible.

Scott Peck in *A Different Drum* says: *the church likes to refer to itself as the Body of Christ. But it behaves as if it thought it could be the Body of Christ painlessly, as if it could be that without having to be stretched, almost torn apart as if it could be the*

Body of Christ without having to carry its own cross, without having to hang up on that cross in the agony of conflict.

The process of community building begins with a commitment. A commitment to not drop out, a commitment to hang in there through thick and thin, through the pain of emptiness and chaos and to grow in capacity to make it healthy.

Paul's prayer in Phil 1:9

**My prayer is that your
love will abound
more and more in
knowledge and
depth of insight.**

Over summer I began to pray this prayer over myself.

Let my love abound. Let my love abound. Let my love grow and expand.

May I grow in insight and knowledge and compassion.

Now I am going to add the words of 1 Cor 13 to my prayers.

What I realise is that I am still an infant. I still want others to give to me.

I want my way. I lived most of my life in survival mode and it's hard to deny that, to purely focus on the other, not wanting to get something back. But I am tuning in to that. Trying to put aside the static to be with the other.

TO LOVE WELL WE NEED SKILLS

There are two key skills that emanate from love:

1. hospitality. Eg NEIGHBOURS WEEKEND March 29-30

2. listening...to practise the presence of people as well as the presence of God.

Most people do not listen with the intent to understand,
They listen with the intent to reply.

The rests in music...the silence are just as important as the notes (sound). The flow of the music is like the flow of relationships, listening and speaking.

Let's practice the skills of listening of tuning in to the other. Of getting on the station and giving this gift of love and life.

LEARNING TO LISTEN WELL

Phil 1⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.

| ATTUNEMENT OFFERED | ...RECEIVED |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| I see you | ...You feel seen |
| I hear you | ...you feel heard |
| I correctly understand your internal experience | ...you feel understood |
| I join in your emotions | ...you feel I am with you |
| I genuinely care about you | ...you feel that I am glad to be with you. |

Attunement is an especially powerful form of relational connection.

When there is an attunement connection between individuals, vulnerable individuals, such as children, can temporarily share the neurological, emotional and spiritual resources of stronger individuals. For example, if we are in a painful situation that is beyond our capacity and/or maturity skills, but we are linked to Jesus and others in our community through attunement, we can borrow capacity and maturity skills from Jesus and others who are stronger or more mature.

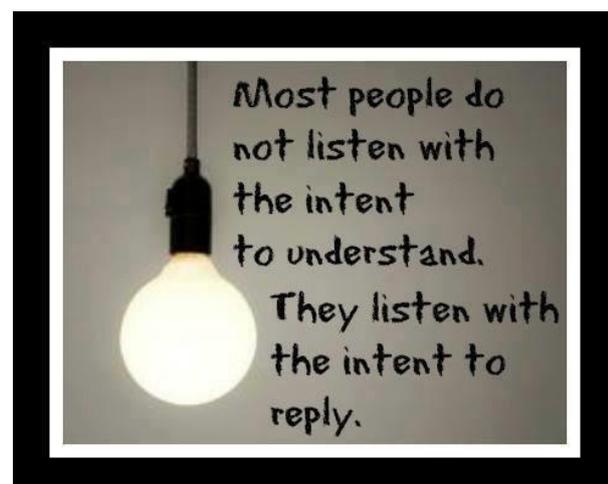
So if a person, child or teen or adult goes through a painful experience with safe, strong friends or family who are attuning to him, he will almost always be able to receive such tremendous assistance from them as to be able to process the painful experience without being traumatized. Most traumatic memories on the other hand include the absence of attunement.

This kind of incarnational listening is listening at the heart level, attuned to the words and non verbal cues of another person, not giving advice, finishing other people's sentences, interrupting or defending.

TO LISTEN TO ANOTHER'S SOUL...MAY BE ALMOST THE GREATEST SERVICE THAT ANY HUMAN BEING EVER PERFORMS FOR ANOTHER. Douglas Steere

GUIDELINES FOR LISTENER:

- Give the person your full attention
- Step into their shoes...feel what they are feeling
- Avoid judging or interpreting
- Reflect back as accurately as you can what you heard them say.



- When you think they are done, ask: 'Is there more?'
- When they are done, ask them, 'Of everything you have shared, what is the most important thing you want me to remember?'

GUIDELINES FOR SPEAKER:

- Speak in the 'I'
- Keep it reasonably brief
- Stop to let the other person paraphrase
- Include feelings
- Be honest.

Set some practical goals for expressing Love: Eg

1. Meet and invite someone you don't know for lunch this term
2. Upskill yourself in listening.
3. Get involved in some practical aspect of community building.
4. Join a small group
5. Pray the Philippians prayer daily: Let my love abound. Let my love grow up. Let my love know compassion. Let my love take action. Let my love be skilled.

FOR SMALL GROUPS:

COMMUNITY: TUNE IN

- How do you define community and how do you see this church as fulfilling your need for community?
- What is our community like? How can it grow in unity?
- What do you contribute to it? What is your responsibility to the church community?

SKILLS OF LOVE: LISTEN WELL

- Discuss times when you felt someone tuned in to you. Is this normal?
- How well do you listen?
- Practise the exercise on the previous page by choosing a topic and taking turns to listen to one another. Be sure to paraphrase back what you are hearing and check that you got it right.

PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER that each may abound in love.

Ka kite ano

Haere pai atu hoki pai mai

See you again

Travel safely.