

Theological Background

1/2

Koinonia: fellowship

The use of the original Greek word emphasises the strength and importance of this concept within the Christian faith.

Koinonia means 'that which is in common' and is often translated as 'fellowship' or 'community'. Other translations might include 'union', 'partnership', or 'being yoked together'. A yoke is a shaped piece of wood that goes across the shoulders, often linking two animals. By combining their strength, it helps work to be done and burdens to be carried.

Koinonia expresses the quality of relationship within the Christian community. It is based on fellowship with Jesus. Through him, Christians share the relationship that Jesus has with God. In John 17, Jesus prays that all his followers may be 'perfectly one' as he and the Father are one. Through him, Christians become sons and daughters of God and therefore brothers and sisters of each other. They are all members of the same family.

A central element of being a family is interdependence: all are needed and valued and each person is important to the whole. The same message is found in Paul's image of the Christian community as the body of Christ. Each member of the body shares the joys and sufferings of the others and each depends upon every else.

The foundation of Christian koinonia is Christ's self giving on the cross, the supreme demonstration of his love for all. We love because he loved us first.

For the first Christians, this was expressed in a genuine common life with shared meals, shared possessions and practical support for the poor. The Christian church today continues to serve not only those within the Christian community but any who are in need.

Theological Background

2/2

Biblical References

Acts 4:32-35

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body ...

1 Corinthians 12:24-26

But God has combined the members of the body ...so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

2 Corinthians 13:14

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.