

The Watford Word

www.watfordchurchofchrist.org

What's on

Sunday 28 June: Church service. Special communion by Emi.

Sunday 05 July: Church service. Malcolm speaking



Other Events

Friday 24th to 27th July: ICCM Preteen Camp

Saturday 25th to 31st July: ICCM Teen Camp

Saturday 20 to 24 August: Thames Valley Teen Camp

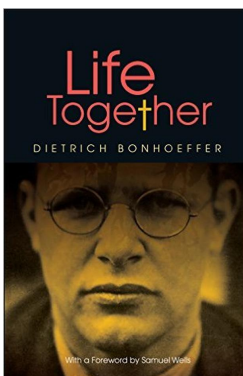
Friday 11th - 13 September: UK & Ireland Young Professionals Retreat in Chesham. Registration: <https://iccmisions.churchsuite.com/events/gtrhbmni>

Sept 30th - Oct 04th: Spirituality Retreat. <https://shop.thewayministry.global/2026-csr/home>

Friday 30th October to Sunday 01st November: Autumn Student Retreat for the UK & Ireland.

Thursday 12-15th November: UK, Ireland and Nordics leadership retreat.

Refreshing Hearts: Love One Another



Some thoughts based on notes I made on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book, "Life Together".

Dietrich Bonhoeffer's vision of love within Christian community challenges both sentimental idealism and individualistic spirituality. Christian fellowship, he writes, is "not an ideal, but

a divine reality" - a truth that fundamentally shapes how believers are called to love one another.

The Nature of Spiritual Love

Bonhoeffer distinguishes between human love and spiritual love. Human love seeks to create its own community, often driven by personal desires and unrealistic expectations. Spiritual love, however, recognises that Christian community exists only because of Christ's mediation. This spiritual love emphasises prayer over direct confrontation and intercession over instruction.

Embracing Reality Over Vision

The greatest threat to genuine Christian love is what Bonhoeffer calls "visionary dreaming." When we bring idealistic expectations about what Christian community should look like, they inevitably become disillusioned and judgmental toward the actual people God has placed in their fellowship. True love accepts the reality that "it is only when he is a burden that another person is really a brother." This means loving people as they actually are, not as we wish them to be.

The Interdependence of Community

Bonhoeffer's vision of love recognises that "not only do the weak need the strong, but also that the strong cannot exist without the weak." This mutual dependence means that loving one another requires humility from those who appear strong and dignity for those who seem weak. The elimination of either group destroys the fellowship, because each person is "an indispensable link in a chain."

Practical Expressions of Love

Love in Christian fellowship expresses itself through five essential ministries. The ministry of listening recognises that "listening can be a greater service than speaking" - a profound act of love that mirrors God's willingness to hear us. The ministry of helpfulness involves being willing to be interrupted by others' needs. The ministry of bearing means literally carrying one another's burdens as the fulfilment of Christ's law. The ministry of proclaiming requires speaking truth

with both courage and discernment. These practical ministries transform abstract love into concrete service.

The Balance of Solitude and Fellowship

Paradoxically, Bonhoeffer insists that genuine love for the community requires times of solitude. "Let him who cannot be alone beware of community" - because only those who can encounter God alone can truly love others without selfish need. Similarly, "let him who is not in community beware of being alone" - because isolation breeds self-deception and spiritual pride.

Ultimately, Bonhoeffer's vision calls Christian communities to love one another not through human effort or emotional manipulation, but through recognition that Christ himself creates and sustains their fellowship, making genuine, sacrificial love both possible and necessary.

Questions for Personal Reflection

On Spiritual vs. Human Love:

- When you think about the people in our church community, are you more likely to pray about them or talk directly to them about their issues?
- Can you identify times when your disappointment with others in our church stemmed from your own expectations rather than their actual failures?

On Embracing Reality:

- What "visionary dreams" do you carry about what our church community should look like? How might these dreams prevent you from loving the actual people God has placed around you?
- Who in our community feels like a "burden" to you? How might God be calling you to see them as a brother or sister instead?

On Community Interdependence:

- Do you see yourself as primarily strong or weak in our Christian community? Are you overlooking your need for those who seem different from you?
- Are there people in our fellowship whom you've written off as having nothing to offer? What

would it mean to see them as "indispensable links"?

On Practical Love:

- Which of the five ministries (listening, helpfulness, bearing, proclaiming, authority) comes most naturally to you? Which is most challenging?

- When was the last time you were truly interrupted by someone else's need? How did you respond?

On Solitude and Fellowship:

- Do you find it easier to be alone with God or in community with others? What does this suggest about where you need to grow?

- How does your time alone with God prepare you to love others better? How does your time in community drive you to seek God more deeply?

Your brother, Malcolm

Articles

If anyone would like to contribute to the Watford Word please let me know. Articles about scripture, poetry, personal devotional reflections, good news, prayer requests, testimonials and more are all welcome.

Watford Contribution Details

Church bank account: Three Counties churches of Christ HSBC

Sort Code: 401915

Account Number: 04759613



Watford



Media