

# From the Pastor

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In the church, we need each other. This is a simple concept, but we need to really believe it. The New Testament teaches us that the church is an interdependent community. Each of us is dependent upon others to meet our needs, and each of us is responsible to others to meet others' needs. When we walk through the door into Jesus' kingdom community, we acknowledge that these two realities will now define us: dependency and responsibility.

This applies in various ways. We mutually sustain each other in struggling against sin, in holding fast to our confession of Christ, in training for godly living, in admonishing and being admonished with the Gospel. As St. Paul reminded us in 1 Cor 12:21, no one member of the body can say to another, "I have no need of you".

I've noticed that this is easy to talk about, but not so easy to believe in and practice. For some reason, one might claim that he or she depends on others, but then doesn't act like it very often. Many of us struggle through decisions, work through problems, fight sin, and pray about it all alone, or perhaps with one trusted friend or spiritual advisor. The bald fact is: without each other, we really might not make it. I really might not make it. Sin, despair, unbelief, and apathy all flourish in isolation. And you and I, and those around us, are not exempt from this principle. If I and each one of us are going to act like the interdependent community that walks with Christ, we are going to have to be purposeful.

Let me suggest targeting two areas in which we struggle. First of all we have to address our busy-ness. We are fighting against that ravenous monster of our age: having little or no time to meaningfully be with our brothers and sisters. This is a sad situation and a dangerous one. When we stuff our lives so full of activities that we cannot deepen fellowship in our church community, we are hanging over the cliff. Below us lie the bleached bones of those whose isolated commitment to a persevering faith eventually collapsed. Or, it may be that even when we ourselves *do* find the time to spend with others, we have the perception that the others do not. We are afraid to initiate time together because we worry that our offer will burden them. They may accept an invitation to get coffee, we think, but then they will take a deep breath after hanging up the phone.

My advice here is coming from what I recently learned from people who, like me, were struggling with physical illness. First, try not to give the impression to others that you are too busy to spend time with them. If you have to say no sometimes, that's fine, but suggest another time and let them know that their initiation is welcome. Second, let us be courageous enough to take other people's time. I don't mean that we should be insensitive to their schedules, but that someone needs to cut through the perception of busy-ness that we live with and initiate. The reality is that you need them, and they need you.

The second thing to consider is willingness to talk about serious issues. Some people can do it, but most people can't. We need space, not only to be together, but to have those more serious conversations. We need intentional time where life in Christ is the subject on the table. It may be through intentional one-on-one breakfasts, it may be through inviting families over, it may even be over the phone. Even then, these conversations may be awkward sometimes, but we must push on into deeper fellowship. If we don't, we will forever stay splashing around in the kiddie pool of small talk.

That's the true life in Christ's church - life of dependency and responsibility. To live in light of this, we need to make an effort, no matter how uncomfortable at first. We need a commitment to arrive at the end of our lives or the end of this world with growing faith and growing purity—together.

+ *Father Roger*