

The image features a teal-colored background with several bright pink paper clips scattered across it. The clips are arranged in a circular pattern around the central text, with some overlapping. The text "Life Together" is written in a bold, yellow, cursive font, centered in the middle of the image. The word "Life" is on the top line and "Together" is on the bottom line, both in a flowing, handwritten style.

Life
Together

Why paper clips?

Norwegian inventor Johan Vaaler is credited with creating and patenting a version of the paper clip, which was called a “binder” in Norway. During World War II, paper clips were worn by Norwegians as a silent protest and symbol of unity and resistance against Nazi occupation. Lutheran pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer was vocal and active in resistance to the Nazi dictatorship, and was ultimately executed at Flossenbürg concentration camp, only days before it would be liberated. Paper clips are included in this series graphic to honor that resistance, and to serve as a reminder that we are bound together in beautiful, powerful ways as we work toward liberation for all of God’s children. Since World War II, the symbol of the paper clip has grown into a global movement, continuing to inspire action to combat prejudice, hatred and discrimination. For more information, visit oneclipatatime.org.

Dear friends and family of Keller UMC,

We are so grateful you have decided to take this journey with us through *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. This will be a five-week sermon series where we will explore what it means to do life together. If you have not received a copy of the book for your household yet, please stop by the Welcome Desk to pick one up, as the book will play an important role, not only during worship times, but in Connection Groups as well. Each week, you are invited to begin your class by checking in with one another. A great way to do this is with the question,

How is it with your soul?

This question seeks to go beyond “how are you doing” and move towards the deeper emotions. This question seeks to bring about the joys, as well as the sorrows, in one’s life. Following a check-in time, please use this curriculum to lead you in discussion and reflection about the reading you will have completed from the week leading up to our gathering time. We pray God will guide us in our worship, conversation and devotion.

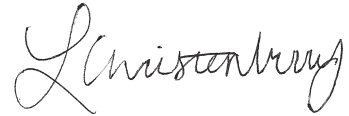
Grace and peace to you,
Your Keller UMC Pastors



Estee Valendy
Co-Senior Pastor



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Pastor of Connectional Ministries

Keller United Methodist Church - Hearts Turning to God and Neighbor

Chapter One: Community

Theme: Life together as a community in and through Christ our Lord

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, grant to Your Church Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom which comes down from above, that Your Word may not be bound, but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, that in steadfast faith we may serve You and, in the confession of Your name, abide unto the end; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Bible Study: God's Own People

1 Peter 2:9-10

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

*Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.*

Discussion Questions about the Scripture

1. How are Christians addressed at the very beginning of this passage? What does this say about the author's understanding of the Christian community?
2. How do you respond to the assertion that as a Christian you are part of "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation"?
3. What, from this text, is the Christian community called to do?
4. How have Christians been constituted as (created, built into) "God's own people"?

Discussion Questions about Chapter One

1. How do you personally define community?
2. Is there a difference between community and Christian community? Why or why not?
3. What is the goal of Christian community?
4. How do we know if/when we have achieved the fullness of community?

5. As we think about the topic of community, what words would you use to describe the nature of the community that is found at Keller United Methodist Church?
6. What aspects of Christian Community do you take for granted? Which ones do you neglect?
7. In chapter one on pg. 21 Bonhoeffer states, "*Christianity means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ.*" This is the true form of community. What does this statement mean to you? What does this kind of community look like?
8. If we bring anything other than Christ to the center of community, how do we risk jeopardizing community?
9. How does this chapter call us to turn our hearts to God and neighbor?

Closing Prayer: We thank You God, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have graciously brought us together this day; and we pray that You would forgive us our sins where we have gone wrong, and graciously keep us as we depart. For into Your hands we commend ourselves, our bodies, and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with us, that nothing may pull us away from You. Amen.

Chapter Two: The Day with Others

Theme: Each new day the Christian community receives manifold gifts from God through prayer, hymns and Holy Scripture.

Prayer: Faithful God, whose mercies are new every morning, we humbly pray that You would look upon us in mercy and renew us by Your Holy Spirit. Keep safe our going out and our coming in, and let Your blessing remain with us throughout all our days. Preserve us in Your righteousness, and grant us a portion in that eternal life which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Bible Study: The New Community

Acts 2:37-47

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and to the other apostles, "Brothers, what should we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him." And he testified with many other arguments and exhorted them, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

Discussion Questions about the Scripture

1. How is the new community formed?
2. Describe the shape of the life of the new community in Acts. With what activities does the new community of faith involve itself? What activities does it not involve itself with?
3. What elements of the life of Keller UMC relate to the description given in Acts 2?

Discussion Questions about Chapter Two

1. What practices of devotion and prayer did you find new or entirely unfamiliar? (word of Scripture, the hymns of the Church, and the prayer of fellowship. pg. 44)
2. What practices listed above are a part of the ongoing life of Keller UMC? Which practices do you find most difficult to participate in? What do you enjoy the most?
3. How does table fellowship bind Christians to the Lord and to one another (pg. 67)?
4. What is the relationship between prayer and work?
5. On pg. 54, what does Bonhoeffer mean by, *"Our salvation is external to ourselves."*?
6. How does this chapter call us to turn our hearts to God and neighbor?

Closing Prayer: Eternal Creator of Light, Yours is the morning and Yours is the evening. Would You continue to draw us to Yourself so that there would be no darkness within us? All praise to You, our Holy and Triune God. Amen.

Chapter Three: The Day Alone

Theme: The Christian spends time alone for meditation, prayer and intercession, so that they are strengthened for the benefit of the community.

Prayer: Almighty and everlasting God, You make us both to will and to do those things that are good and acceptable in Your sight. Let Your hand ever guide us through prayer, meditation and intercession through Your Son, Jesus Christ. Grant that Your Holy Spirit ever be with us to direct us in the knowledge and obedience of Your Word, that we may obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

Bible Study: Meditation and Prayer

Matthew 6:5-15

“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. “Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

Discussion Questions about the Scripture

1. What does this Scripture communicate to you about spending time in solitude?
2. Describe your prayer life. Where did you learn to pray? Who taught you to pray? What kind of prayer are you most comfortable with?
3. What different types of solitude do you practice? What do you do during your moments of solitude?

Discussion Questions about Chapter Three

1. What is the difference between silence and solitude? How does Bonhoeffer describe silence and solitude of the Christian life? Why is it important? How comfortable are you with solitude and silence? To what extent do you seek it? Or run from it? What is hard about it?
2. How does Keller UMC practice silence and solitude? What helps? What hinders? How might we learn better to experience God's presence and purpose in silence?
3. On pg. 78 Bonhoeffer says, *"Let him who cannot be alone beware of community. Let him who is not in community beware of being alone."* What does this warning mean to you?
4. What are the dangers of seeking community simply as an antidote to our loneliness?
5. How do you understand our identity as "belonging to one another" even when we are not together? How are we still "community"? On pg. 89 Bonhoeffer says, *"This is the proper metaphor for the Christian community. We are members of a body, not only when we choose to be, but in our whole existence. Every member serves the whole body, either to its health or to its destruction."* What do you make of this teaching in relation to belonging to one another?
6. How does this chapter call us to turn our hearts to God and neighbor?

Closing Prayer: Dear God, speak gently in our silence. When the loud, outer noises of our surroundings and the loud, inner noises of our fears keep pulling us away from You, help us to trust that You are still there. Even when we are unable to hear You. Give us ears to listen to your small, soft voice saying, "Come to me, you who are overburdened and I will give you rest. For I am gentle and humble of heart." Let that loving voice be our guide. Amen.

Chapter Four: Ministry

Theme: Justification by faith leads the Christian community to actively serve others through meekness, listening, helping, bearing and proclaiming.

Prayer: Heavenly Creator, grant Your mercy and grace to Your people in their many and various callings. Give us patience, and strengthen us in our Christian vocation of witness to the world and of service to our neighbor in Christ's name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Bible Study: The New Life in Christ

Romans 12:1-8

I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect. For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness.

Discussion Questions about the Scripture

1. What do you think Paul means by linking bodies, living sacrifice and worship?
2. What does it mean to say “individually we are members one of another”?
3. Why do we need one another within the body of Christ (the Church)?

Discussion Questions about Chapter Four

1. Why is it important that no member in the Christian community be “unemployed” in ministry? (pg. 94)
2. What makes the ministry of holding one's tongue essential for a community of believers?
3. Why is the ministry of meekness important for the life of Christian community?

4. What does it mean, and/or what does it look like, to listen attentively and patiently to one another?
5. How do people's lives intersect regularly in our congregation? How do we go beyond just being a church on Sundays and live as a church throughout the week?
6. Where does Keller UMC find it challenging to "bear" others within the community of faith? What in our life together helps us to bear each other?
7. Where do you see the ministry of proclamation in our congregation? What is challenging about proclaiming the Word to one another?
8. How does Bonhoeffer's vision of authority ring true within the context of a vision of the *"ministry of all believers"*? (pg. 108)
9. How does this chapter call us to turn our hearts to God and neighbor?

Closing Prayer: God we are no longer our own, but Yours. Put us to what You will. Place us with whom You will. Put us to doing, put us to suffering. Let us be put to work for You or set aside for You. Praised for You or criticized for You. Let us be full, let us be empty. Let us have all things, let us have nothing. We freely and fully surrender all things to Your glory and service. And now, O wonderful and Holy God, Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, You are ours and we are Yours. So be it. And the covenant which we have made on earth, let it also be made in heaven. Amen.

Chapter Five: Confession and Communion

Theme: The Christian community is bound together in fellowship with one another chiefly through the fellowship of forgiveness of sins through confession and the Lord's Supper which comes through God's grace in Christ Jesus.

Prayer: Almighty God, merciful One, by Word and Sacrament You have created Your Church in this world to be a godly communion and family, united by baptism into the body of Christ. Grant to us, Your fellowship of believers, steadfast confidence and trust in Your gracious gifts spoken unto us through confession and absolution of sins and in the reception of our Lord's body and blood for life and salvation. Through Jesus Christ, Your Son, Our Lord. Amen.

Bible Study: A Radical Togetherness

"live in harmony with one another" (Romans 12:16)

"welcome one another" (Romans 15:7)

"are servants of one another" (Galatians 5:13)

"comfort one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

"bear with one another lovingly" (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

"do good to one another" (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

"are subject to one another" (Ephesians 5:21)

"confess our sins to one another" (James 5:16)

"forgive one another" (Corinthians 2:13)

"love one another from the heart" (1 Peter 5:5)

"pray for one another" (James 5:16)

"have fellowship with one another" (1 John 1:7)

Discussion Questions about the Scripture

1. What strikes you about this list?
2. Which of these have you experienced at Keller UMC? Which would you like to see more of?
3. Which are harder to practice than others? Which is easier?
4. What promotes and enables the practice of radical togetherness at Keller UMC as described in these passages?
What blocks it?

Discussion Questions about Chapter Five

1. How would you describe the practice of confession and forgiveness in your personal life? How would you describe this practice in the life of Keller UMC?
2. Why is true humility required for us to engage in the practice of confession and sin?
3. How do we move from “confessing our sins to ourselves” to confessing our sins to God?
4. On pg. 122 Bonhoeffer says communion is the place where *“the community has reached the goal.”* Before reading this chapter how would you have described communion? Did you believe it was individual or corporate? What are your thoughts now?
5. What has this study of *Life Together* given you that has helped or challenged you in your Christian faith?
6. How does this chapter call us to turn our hearts to God and neighbor?

Closing Prayer: Merciful God, we confess that we have not loved You with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done Your will, we have broken Your law, we have rebelled against Your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

As you complete this study of *Life Together*, look back over your notes and take a moment to jot down your key ideas or insights from each chapter in the space provided:

Community:

The Day With Others:

The Day Alone:

Ministry:

Confession and Communion:

Where would you like to change or develop practices that you learned as a result of this study?

What change is needed in our congregation to cultivate a more meaningful life together?

What is the next step you feel that God is calling you to take?

We invite you to continue this exploration of living life together through the following:

- Spend time in the different ministries of Keller United Methodist Church
- If you are not already a part of one, join a Connection Group at Keller United Methodist Church
- Join us for Evening Prayer every night on Facebook and Livestream at 9pm
- Serve at the Keller UMC Resource Center
- Read *The Cost of Discipleship* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- Read *In the Name of Jesus* by Henri Nouwen
- Read *Stranger God* by Richard Beck

In Closing...

In chapter one of *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer writes: *"Our community with one another consists solely in what Christ has done to both of us"* (p. 25). We give thanks for the community of Keller United Methodist Church that is formed by God's grace. We invite you to respond to Christ's offering and God's grace in this community by making a financial commitment to support the ministry of Keller United Methodist Church in 2022. Returning your Commitment Card enables the Finance Team to project the KUMC budget for 2022.



If you would like to complete your 2022 Commitment Card online, you may do so by scanning the QR code with your smart phone camera and follow the link to the digital form.

Keller United Methodist Church - Hearts Turning to God and Neighbor

This resource was created through the work of Kerry Irish, Dale Ziemer, Christ Fellowship, Grace Seattle, and Lauren Christenberry.