

“How Then Shall We Live?”
by Rev. Frances Savill
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Annual Congregational Meeting

Acts 4:32-35

With the wondrous strains of Easter’s Hallelujah still echoing in this place, with the empty tomb still proclaiming Jesus’ resurrection, the cross still draped in white and gold as sign of Jesus’ victory over death, in light of all of this, how then shall we live?

Easter proclaims again all the good gifts we have received from God. We are a community founded on the generosity of God. We are all here because of the gracious invitation of Jesus. We are all here because of Jesus gifts given to us.

We are a community founded on the generosity of God. *Everything* we have, *everything* we are, is a gift from God that we have received by faith.

How then shall we live?

We shall live learning to be children of our heavenly Father. We were made to participate in God’s gift giving. The Apostle Paul tells us that we are to be imitators of God as beloved children.

We are to do what we see have seen Jesus do, what God does. God has given us all that we have not just for our own enjoyment, benefit and salvation, but God has given it to us so that we might share all that we have with others.

That is actually how we find the good life. That’s the picture that is painted for us in Acts 4. *All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them.*

Many of us in the church have experienced moments of it – deep communion with God – in the company of other believers.

It is how we know the church should be. We long for this to be the reality all the time. We long to be deeply connected to Christ, and deeply connected and caring for one another.

It is the dream behind all the other dreams God has given us – it is the foundation of the dreams God has given us.

When I was a student minister, a lot of years ago, I interned at a church in which most folks had a growing dynamic relationship with Jesus, and they cared for each other well. People were brought to faith, new people were added to the church, and the community, the watching world, knew God was at work, lives were changed, and people were cared for.

They had a practise of giving “love offerings”.
It was something the church people did frequently.

A few people would see a need, or just want to help with something, or just wanted to encourage and bless someone else, and money would go anonymously, there were no tax receipts given, but people were blessed and changed by the graciousness of God and God’s people.

A family went through a crisis of personal bankruptcy, credit card debt got the best of them, they had 3 sons in elementary school. They lost their home; they lost their car. The parents both had jobs to get to. The church helped – helped with groceries, helped with getting a vehicle, helped with first and last month’s rent, helped with the kid’s expenses, and helped the family carry on and learn new ways, and supported them. A year after the crisis, when they were back on their feet, everyone was moved to tears as David thanked God for the support of the congregation.

We all experienced what the Elder is talking about:
We were blessed to be part of that congregation.

How then shall we live?

We are a new community that is being transformed by the love of God. We are an Easter people who know that Jesus has forgiven us, so we can confess our sins, and live forgiven lives. We are becoming a joyful community that is in communion with God the Father and the Son, and one another.

I know that is happening. We are growing together, we are caring for people in our midst, we are caring for people in our community, and the watching world is seeing. Calvin makes a difference in North Bay.

A long time ago, when I was graduating from Knox College, another graduate was given some advice that he shared with several of us. The advice was when you go and interview with a church and they ask you all kinds of questions, ask the search committee and church members this question: "If your church closed its doors tomorrow, would it make a difference to the community?" Not the members of the church, but the community.

I know that if Calvin closed its doors, the city of North Bay would notice, many people would notice in this community and beyond. You make a difference together. And I believe that in the days and months ahead we will make a greater difference because God is at work in our midst.

We are the church; the bride of Christ, a place of hope, where we can admit our mistakes because we can be forgiven and given a new start, a beacon for the lost, a light in the midst of the darkness, a community that reflects the love of Jesus our Lord.

Today, in our Annual Congregational meeting we pause to give thanks for all that God has done in our midst, and to work together so that God might continue His work in us and through us, as we journey together.

Thanks be to God!