

Community (Definition) *A group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common. A feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals.*

Community is a very big deal in the Reformed tradition of faith which is the theology that Presbyterians embrace. But far from being a dried up doctrine it is a resounding celebration. We understand that God has called us to be together, to support and guide, love and teach, serve and study...to live not just for ourselves but for the sake of others. Wow! This remains one of those radical notions of God's unique purpose for all of us that we underestimate in its potency for transformation.

This sacred idea of community doesn't just belong to the church or religion. This is the idea for all humanity. It's been central across the ages in literature, "*No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less...*" (John Donne) politics, "*indivisible with justice for all...*" and human experience, "*Alone we can do so little; Together we can do so much*" (Helen Keller). I hope you have a favorite quote that inspires community to add to the treasury. If you have one I encourage you to bring it out, blow the dust off and make it prominent in your life.

We must remember we are all in this together! We all want basically the same things, such as a world at peace, a safe, healthy and prosperous future for our children and their children, a beautiful world that inspires art and gives us respite. But the sticking point that derails our progress is how we go about getting there. Perhaps for the sake of community we can begin to engage in civil conversations about the sameness of our desires for this world. Perhaps by starting with what we might all agree we want, we can begin to be more creative with an unleashed imagination for ways to work together that has been thus far untapped.

As humans we are wired for community. We come together in churches, parks, stadiums, neighborhoods, movie theaters, clubs, fraternities, teams and a million other ways. It's never just the venue or the show that we seek but we are also seeking one another. Too much isolation can take its toll on a person's ability to stay intact let alone thrive. We are very fortunate here in San Marino. We have so many opportunities to encounter and experience community just by a walk in Lacy Park or a tour of the Huntington gardens. We can also build our community and deepen our sense of community in collaborating to care for and protect those who are vulnerable and needy among us. What wonderful things we can do when we do them together!

Of all the definitions for community that are available, my favorite by far comes from author, teacher and theologian Henri Nouwen who says, "*Community is first of all a quality of the heart...it is the fruit of our capacity to make the interest of others more important than our own...The question, therefore, is not 'How can we make community?' but 'How can we develop and nurture giving hearts?'*"