



2023 LENTEN STUDY

with Bishop Ken Carter

Lenten Reflection
Bishop Ken Carter
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Dietrich Bonhoeffer offers a beautiful phrase, “life together under the Word.” The phrase has two implications:

We are created for community.
And we are called to listen to the scriptures for guidance and direction.

These two implications are necessary. We desire community, and yet we often experience the fracturing of community. Relationships become strained. Other people disappoint us. We harm another person. We miss an opportunity to bless or encourage. Sometimes life alone is easier than life together. And yet we are created for community.

Community is possible as we live “under the Word”. For Bonhoeffer, the core of this implication was forgiveness. The forgiveness we have experienced through Jesus Christ. And the forgiveness our sister, brother, sibling has also experienced through the same Jesus Christ.

Only in Jesus Christ is community possible. To say this another way, only a forgiven and forgiving people can have a life together.

Jesus lived in community, with an inner circle of disciples, Peter, James and John, and with the twelve disciples. The disciples often disappointed Jesus. They did harm to him. They missed opportunities.

Yet Jesus stayed in community with his disciples. He prayed for them. He blessed them. He forgave them.



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So much has happened over the past three years. A global pandemic. Hate crimes. A large scale war. Political polarization. Public displays of racism. Strained mental health. Exhaustion. Fear.

Let us confess that often, through it all, we have not always been at our best. I confess that.

One of the casualties of the past three years is our life together.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer lived in a historical moment of crisis. The rise of White Supremacy. The Holocaust. An often silent church. Families divided. Yet he yearned for something in the midst of that: “life together under the Word.”

This week , I invite you to go deeper into the Word. You will meet a God who is always offering forgiveness to you. And I invite you to work through the challenges of the past three years as these have made “life together” more a memory than a present reality.

Question: What step could you take to build a life together, with at least one other person? And why is it important that you take this step?

Each reflection will conclude with a blessing.

Hear the good news: You were created for community, for life together, through the cross of Jesus Christ, who has already healed our divisions. Nothing can separate us from the love of God (Ephesians 2; Romans 8).