



Southern Roots Run Deep

Fellowship. A word in Christ's community that can hold a world of meaning and take various forms. When I think of fellowship, I am immediately transported back to the small country fellowship hall of the church when I was growing up. Memories of church potlucks, youth gatherings, and events to celebrate life's milestones - like my great aunt and uncle's 50th wedding anniversary - fill my mind.



Erin with a freshly picked sunflower from her granny's garden.

I remember from a young age always being fascinated by how all the mothers and grannies of the congregation at each of these get-togethers so diligently and deftly prepared and presented an array of delicious dishes that filled many a table, all the while recounting the stories that comprised the history of the savory samplings and delightful desserts made with love for those gathered in fellowship.

These communal gatherings were built on many years, often decades, of friendship and membership in my home congregation. Moreover, moments like these serve as treasured memories of how brothers and sisters in Christ can create a community of faith with one another. As I reflect in the present, it is truly a precious gift of God to have been a part of such a steadfast family of faith as I grew up in the church.

Fast, Fleeting, or Fake?

So, you can imagine, with this experience of fellowship, with a focus on personal bonds sometimes created throughout a lifetime, my initial feelings of uncertainty when I realized that Tim and I would be on the road

visiting churches for five months this year to meet and share about our missionary work.

Each week, we would meet new congregations and get to know, just briefly, the individuals we were asking to partner with us in our mission as we prepare to move overseas to Cameroon next year. My thoughts swirled around the seemingly monumental task of making meaningful connections in just one morning with people I didn't know and who never knew I existed until I walked into their church on Sunday. How on earth could solid and meaningful relationships be built with these perceived impossibilities? You can bet my faith was surely being tested as my anxiety mounted as Tim and I packed our bags.

Faith's Firm Foundation

Little did I know, though, how God was going to deepen my faith through the experience of fellowship in the journey ahead. Over the past couple of months, Tim and I have experienced the warm embrace of the family of God as we share about His ministry to the Subula with the congregations we visit.

Through acts of generosity, words of encouragement, and plenty of prayers, we have seen the zeal and steadfastness of so many of Christ's faithful for two people and a family of believers halfway around the world in Cameroon that they had never known.

In each encounter, God continues to impress upon me what is foundational to our fellowship as Christians: our



Rev. and Mrs. Ulm took us to an Escape Room where we set a record time.



Carl shared of his long-term support of LBT missionaries, the Grulkes.

shared identity and purpose as the Body of Christ. Little by little, He continues to restore my sense of awe, humility, and thankfulness to their appropriate boundaries.

God notably placed this truth firmly before my eyes during the times Tim and I stayed with members of the churches we visited during our travel. From loved-worn empty nesters to lively young families, these fellow brothers and sisters in Christ wholeheartedly embodied their Savior and graciously served their journeying neighbors.

They personified the heartening call in Hebrews 10:23-25: “[23] Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. [24] And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, [25] not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another...”

Fellowship Forged in Christ

To be welcomed into these blessed spaces by Christian fellowship freely and abundantly given has and continues to be a spiritual wellspring to strengthen my faith. Through the providence of this fellowship, God conveyed that these grace-filled acts were grounded in the love freely and abundantly given by our Savior on the cross. Our fellowship as the Body of Christ merely reflects His

amazing love. Because of Him, we find that fellowship among Christ’s followers is present before we ever thought to seek it. Not only does He build these bonds of fellowship, but through His Spirit, we all have been given the faith we need to go forth and find fellowship with one another. What joy and comfort this brings!

Moreover, when I reflect on Tim and I’s visit to Cameroon earlier this year, it was in and through this same spirit of our Savior that the Subula people welcomed us so wholeheartedly into their community of faith. Through what other gift than faith in our risen and living Lord could two missionaries from the West meet in joyful celebration and fellowship with brothers and sisters living halfway around the world!

The Word of God is life-giving, and the steadfastness of its truths holds hope for us, not only in our lives individually but in our lives together. The family of God is big and beautiful. I count Tim and I as truly blessed to have met so many of Christ’s faithful who so richly bear the image of our beloved Jesus. Eager to show love and share their faith with those who still wait for the Good News of the One who saves and sustains! With this shared foundation in mind, let us give thanks for the gift of fellowship found in Christ and conveyed by the living power of God’s Word to the ends of the earth. Soli Deo Gloria!



Members of Concordia - Macungie, PA, visit our table.



Sharing the Good News of the “Light of the World” in the Sunday sermon.



Erin joins the Subula in their dancing.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Pray for continued safety as we finish out our year of church visits.
- Pray that God would continue to raise up prayer and financial partners in the various churches we visit.
- Give thanks with us for the many partners God has led us to already.
- Pray that the Subula will continue to be stirred up by God’s word.
- Pray for peace and stability in Cameroon and the surrounding region.
- Pray for my father as he prepares to accept a new call.

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