

# Lent reflections 2021

## Introduction

In this year's lent reflections, I am inviting people to think about fellowship. This is an important subject and perhaps broader and deeper than many of us would usually think. We generally think of fellowship as spending time with other Christians, time with Christian friends. But is that all that it is, or all that it should be? Should it be something bigger, should it be something more fundamental in the life of the Church and in the life of each Christian?

Fellowship is the way in which we relate to each other, how we socialise and spend time together, but also how we support one another in good times and bad. Our fellowship is not just with each other. As the body of Christ, our fellowship is a key part of our relationship with God. As people outside the Church look in, they see fellowship within the body of Christ and judge not only us but God himself, they should see the image of God reflected within his body, the Church.

I'm sure that these kinds of questions are good questions at any time but, as we hopefully move towards the end of lockdown and begin to think about rebuilding, I believe they are more pressing than ever. After the loneliness of the last year, what kind of fellowship are we returning to, what kind of fellowship do we want to be, and what kind of fellowship might we be inviting people to join?

*Many of the thoughts in these reflections will be informed by this reading.*

## **Unity and Maturity in the Body of Christ**

4 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says:

“When he ascended on high,  
he took many captives  
and gave gifts to his people.”

9 (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 11 So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, 12 to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all

reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

*Ephesians 4:1-16 New International Version (NIV)*