

Becoming Friends
成为朋友
August 8 月 16, 2026

Lyrics From the 1994 hit sitcom "Friends" we read these words

1994 年的热门情景喜剧《Friends》有这样几句歌词：

I'll be there for you (When the rain starts to pour)

我会在你身边（当大雨倾盆而下的时候）

I'll be there for you (Like I've been there before)

我会在你身边（就像我从前陪伴你一样）

I'll be there for you ('Cause you're there for me too)

我会在你身边（因为你也一直在我身边）

No one could ever know me

没有人能真正了解我

No one could ever see me

没有人能真正看见我

Seems you're the only one who knows what it's like to be me

好像只有你知道，做我自己到底是什么滋味

Someone to face the day with, make it through all the rest with

有人陪我面对每一天，陪我把日子走下去

Someone I'll always laugh with

有人总能和我一起欢笑

Even at my worst, I'm best with you, yeah!

即使在我最糟的时候，有你在身边，我也能成为更好的自己！

It's like you're always stuck in second gear

有时候，人生就像一直卡在二档，怎么也走不快

When it hasn't been your day, your week, your month, or even your year - I'll be there for you

当今天不顺、这一周不顺、这个月不顺，甚至这一整年都不顺——我还是会在你身边。

Wouldn't it be wonderful if all our relationships carried the spirit of those words: "I'll be there for you"? What would our homes, our church, and our community look like if we truly learned to know one another, see one another, and stand with one another? What might happen if friendship were not simply something we enjoyed, but something we intentionally gave?

如果我们所有的人际关系，都带着这句话的精神——“我会在你身边”——那该多好。想一想，如果我们真的愿意去认识彼此、看见彼此、陪伴彼此，我们的家庭、教会和社区会变成什么样子？如果友情不只是我们想要享受的一份礼物，而是我们愿意主动送给别人的一份礼物，又会发生什么呢？

Pastor Rick Warren once observed, "People are not looking for a friendly church, they are looking for friends." There is a difference. A church can be warm at the door, pleasant over coffee, and still leave people wondering whether there is really a place for them. I suspect many people who have come to TBC came because someone invited them, noticed them, or made room for them. I know that has been true for some of our ELL students, who first found friendship with a teacher or another student and then began to discover a larger community of faith.

华理克牧师曾经说过：“人们寻找的，不是一间友善的教会；他们寻找的是朋友。”这两者其实不一样。一间教会可以在门口很热情，喝咖啡的时候大家也很亲切，但一个新来的人仍然可能心里在想：“这里真的有我的位置吗？”我想，今天来到三一浸信会的许多人，最初也许就是因为有人邀请他、留意到

他，或者愿意为他腾出一点空间。我们一些 ELL 的学生也是这样，他们先和老师或同学建立了友情，后来才慢慢发现，原来这里还有一个更大的信仰群体，可以成为他们属灵的家。

Friendship matters because it helps shape us. Friends influence what we value, how we see ourselves, and whether we feel that we belong. Spiritual friendship goes even deeper. It becomes one of the ways God forms us in Christ. Jesus himself placed a high value on friendship. He did not simply call his disciples servants; he called them friends. The Christian life was never meant to be lived alone.

友情很重要，因为友情会塑造我们。朋友会影响我们看重什么、怎么看自己，也会影响我们有没有归属感。属灵的友情更深一层，它甚至是神在基督里塑造我们的一个方式。耶稣自己非常看重友情。祂不只是称门徒为仆人，祂也称他们为朋友。基督徒的生命，从来不是要我们一个人走。

Our text this morning helps us think about this gift of friendship and, perhaps even more importantly, how we can become the kind of people who give that gift to others. It comes from Paul's letter to the Philippians, a congregation he loved deeply and clearly regarded as friends.

今天这段经文帮助我们来思想友情这份礼物；更重要的是，它也帮助我们思想：我们怎样才能成为一个愿意把友情送给别人的人。这段经文来自保罗写给腓立比教会的信。保罗深爱这间教会，也很明显把他们看作自己的朋友。

If you have been a Christian for some time, you probably know more familiar verses from Philippians, relative to its size, than from almost any other New Testament letter: "he who began a good work in you"; "let this mind be in you...the same as it was in Christ Jesus"; "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"; "I have learned to be content"; "God will supply all your needs"; "I press on toward the goal"; and "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection...and the fellowship of his suffering." All of these come from this little letter.

如果你信主已经有一段时间，你可能会发现，腓立比书虽然很短，却有许多我们很熟悉的经文：“那在你们心里动了善工的”；“你们当以基督耶稣的心为心”；“当恐惧战兢，作成你们得救的工夫”；“我无论在什么景况都可以知足”；“我的神必照祂荣耀的丰富，供应你们一切所需用的”；“我向着标竿直跑”；还有“使我认识基督，晓得祂复活的大能，并且和祂一同受苦”。这些大家熟悉的话，都来自这封小小的书信。

But Philippians is more than a collection of favourite verses. It is a deeply personal letter from Paul to people who loved him and whom he loved. There is sadness because they are separated, concern for one another's welfare, gratitude for practical care, and a longing to know that the other is doing well. In the world in which Paul lived, these were the marks of genuine friendship - and they fill this letter.

但是腓立比书不只是一些金句的集合。它是一封非常个人、非常有感情的信，是保罗写给一群爱他、而他也深爱的人。信里面有因为分离而有的挂念，有对彼此处境的关心，有对实际帮助感谢，也有一种很深的盼望——希望对方一切都好。在保罗所处的文化里，这些都是深厚友情的表现，而整封腓立比书都充满了这种感情。

The letter seems to arise out of two pressures. First, the Philippian believers were facing opposition. Paul tells them not to be frightened by those who oppose them, and he reminds them that they are sharing in the same struggle he knows so well.

这封信似乎是在两种压力之下写成的。第一，腓立比的信徒正在面对外来的反对。保罗劝他们不要被敌对他们的人吓倒，也提醒他们：他们现在所经历的争战，其实也是保罗自己非常熟悉的争战。

Second, there was a threat from within: disunity. Several times Paul uses language such as "striving together" or "side by side." The Greek word is sunathleo - sun, meaning "with" or "together," and athleo, from which we get our word "athlete." The picture is of teammates competing together toward the same goal. Think of a hockey team in the Stanley Cup playoffs. There may be gifted players, but no star wins the Cup alone. It takes a team.

第二个压力来自教会里面，就是不合一。保罗好几次用到“同心努力”、“并肩作战”这一类的表达。希腊文是 sunathleo。sun 的意思是“和.....一起”，athleo 就是我们英文 athlete，也就是“运动员”这个字的来源。保罗给我们的画面，是一群队友朝着同一个目标一起努力。你可以想象史丹利杯季后赛的一支冰球队。队上也许有明星球员，但没有一个明星可以靠自己赢得史丹利杯。一定要整个团队一起。

That is why Paul's concern about Euodia and Syntyche in chapter 4 matters. He does not ask the church to choose sides. He urges these women to recover their unity because they belong to the same gospel team. Friendship does not mean we never disagree. It means our disagreements are not allowed to become more important than the Christ who has joined us together.

所以保罗在第四章特别提到友阿爹和循都基，就很有意思。他没有要教会选边站，也没有问谁对谁错。他劝这两位姊妹重新同心，因为她们其实是在同一个福音团队里。友情并不表示我们永远不会意见不同；友情是说，我们不能让彼此的分歧，变得比那位把我们连在一起的基督更重要。

And here is what is striking: Paul is writing from prison, under pressure and in chains, yet two themes keep flowing from his pen - thanksgiving and joy. His circumstances are difficult, but when he remembers these people, he remembers that he is not alone.

更令人感动的是，保罗写这封信的时候正在监狱里，承受压力，身上还带着锁链；可是从他的笔下不断流露出来的，却是两个主题：感恩和喜乐。他的处境很艰难，但当他想起这些人，他就再次记得：我不是一个人。

I love the way the letter begins. After his greeting, Paul gets to the heart of it immediately:

我很喜欢这封信一开始的方式。问安之后，保罗马上就说到了心里的话：

3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

“我每逢想念你们，就感谢我的神；每逢为你们众人祈求的时候，常是欢欢喜喜地祈求；因为从头一天直到如今，你们都在福音上与我一同有分。”

That is an amazing declaration considering where Paul was when he wrote it. He was in prison awaiting what might happen to him. Chains are not comfortable things. Yet in the middle of uncertainty, Paul still finds room for gratitude and joy. Why? Because these people cared for him, and he cared for them. Their relationship had become more than pastor and congregation. They had become friends.

想想保罗写这些话时的处境，这真是很特别。他在监狱里，不知道接下来会发生什么。锁链当然不是舒服的东西。可是在这样的不确定里面，他仍然有空间感恩，也仍然有喜乐。为什么？因为这些人关心他，他也关心他们。他们之间的关系，早已不只是“牧者和会众”的关系。他们已经成为朋友。

So what can we learn from them? What helps friendship grow - not just polite acquaintance, but the kind of friendship that strengthens faith and sustains us when life becomes hard? I see at least three things in this letter.

那么，我们可以从他们身上学到什么？一段友情要怎样才会成长——不只是礼貌地认识，而是那种能够坚固我们的信心，在人生艰难的时候扶持我们的友情？我在这封信里至少看到三件事。

1. Contribute to the other person's well-being

1. 关心并促进对方的福祉

One of the key words in Philippians is partnership - koinonia in Greek. We often translate it as fellowship or community. In church language, fellowship can bring to mind potlucks, hymn sings, coffee after worship, and catching up on the week. Those are good things. But koinonia reaches much deeper.

腓立比书里面一个很重要的词，就是“伙伴关系”——希腊文 koinonia。我们常常把它翻成“团契”或“相交”。在教会里面，一讲到团契，我们可能会想到聚餐、唱诗、崇拜之后喝咖啡，大家聊聊这一周发生了什么。这些当然都很好。但 koinonia 的意思，其实比这些深得多。

In the New Testament, fellowship means sharing life in a way that seeks the good of another person. Acts describes believers holding things in common and making sure that people in need were cared for. Paul can say, "We are partners working together for God." Jesus reminds us that what we do for "the least of these" we do for him.

在新约里，团契的意思，是彼此分享生命，并且真心寻求对方的益处。使徒行传形容初期教会的信徒凡物公用，也确保有需要的人得到照顾。保罗可以说：“我们是与神同工的伙伴。”耶稣也提醒我们，我们为“这些最小的弟兄姊妹”所做的，就是做在祂身上。

Aristides, a second-century observer of the early church, was impressed by this very thing. He wrote that Christians welcomed strangers as brothers and sisters and, when someone among them was poor, some would even go without food for a time so that the person in need could be supplied. (Quoted in McArthur, Body Dynamics, p. 153.)

第二世纪有一位名叫 Aristides 的旁观者，他对初期教会这一点留下很深的印象。他观察到，基督徒看见陌生人，会把他们当作弟兄姊妹接待；如果当中有人贫穷缺乏，有些人甚至愿意自己少吃几天，好让有需要的人得到供应。（引自 McArthur, Body Dynamics, p.153）

That, my friends, is koinonia. It is more than enjoying someone's company. It is being willing to rearrange something in my life so that another person may be strengthened. The Philippians understood this in the way they supported Paul.

弟兄姊妹，这就是 koinonia。它不只是“我喜欢和你在一起”，而是“我愿意调整一点自己的生活，好让你得到帮助、得到力量”。腓立比教会就是这样支持保罗的。

15 And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. 16 ... (Philippians 4:15-16).

“腓立比人哪，你们也知道，我初传福音离开马其顿的时候，在收支的事上，除了你们以外，并没有别的教会和我有这样的伙伴关系……就是我在帖撒罗尼迦的时候，你们也不止一次供给我的需要。”（腓立比书 4:15-16）

Paul is thankful because their friendship took practical form.

保罗之所以感恩，是因为他们的友情不是停留在口头上，而是变成了实际的行动。

Grace and I have spent a number of years overseas, sometimes ministering in very challenging circumstances - not knowing the language, struggling with the culture, and finding even simple things difficult. The first year in WH was especially hard. There were moments when we wondered whether we could keep going.

Grace 和我有好几年在海外服事。有些时候环境非常困难——语言不通，文化不熟悉，甚至连一些很简单的生活事情都变得很不容易。我们在 WH 的第一年尤其辛苦。有些时候，我们真的会想：我们还能不能继续下去？

Then an email would arrive, or a Skype call would come, or we would remember the people who were praying for us and supporting us. I can still remember some of them: a widow, a senior, a single mother, and many others who quietly prayed and gave. They may never have realized how much their faithfulness meant to us.

But on days when we wanted to quit, remembering them helped us keep going.

就在那些时候，可能有一封电邮进来，或者一个 Skype 电话打来；又或者，我们会想起那些一直为我们祷告、支持我们的人。直到今天，我还记得其中一些人：一位寡妇、一位长者、一位单亲妈妈，还有许许多多默默祷告、默默奉献的人。他们也许永远不知道，他们的忠心对我们有多重要。可是每当我们想放弃的时候，一想到他们，我们就又有力量继续走下去。

So I can understand something of Paul's words: "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you...because of your partnership in the gospel." Koinonia is not merely coffee after church. It is contributing to one another's well-being, especially when life is hard.

所以我很能够体会保罗说的：“我每逢想念你们，就感谢我的神.....因为你们在福音上与我一同有分。”Koinonia 不只是礼拜后一起喝杯咖啡；它是我们彼此关心、彼此扶持，特别是在对方最艰难的时候。

And here is a simple pastoral question for us: Who is stronger because you are in their life? Who is less lonely, less discouraged, or less burdened because you noticed them? We do not need to solve every problem. Sometimes friendship begins with a phone call, a meal, a ride, a prayer, a quiet gift, or the willingness to listen without hurrying away.

这里我想给大家一个很简单、也很实际的问题：有没有一个人，因为你的生命里有他、他的生命里有你，所以他变得更坚强一点？有没有一个人，因为你留意到他，所以他少一点孤单、少一点灰心、少背一点重担？我们不需要解决别人所有的问题。很多时候，友情就是从一个电话、一顿饭、一次接送、一个祷告、一份安静的帮助，或者愿意坐下来好好听对方说话开始的。

There is also a challenge here for a congregation. We can be a friendly church and still unintentionally form closed circles. The people we already know are easy to talk with. The harder work of friendship is noticing the person standing alone, the newcomer who does not know where to sit, the older person whose world has become smaller, the young person who feels unseen, or the immigrant who is still trying to find a place to belong. Gospel friendship keeps making room.

对一间教会来说，这里也有一个挑战。我们可以是一间很友善的教会，却不知不觉形成一个个封闭的小圈子。和我们已经熟悉的人聊天很容易；真正需要我们用心的，是去看见那个一个人站着的人，看见那个第一次来、不知道该坐在哪里的人，看见那个生活圈越来越小的长者，看见那个觉得没有人注意自己的年轻人，也看见那个还在努力寻找归属感的新移民。福音所塑造的友情，总是愿意再腾出一点空间。

2. Cultivate a common purpose

2. 培养共同的目标

Paul writes: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ...standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27).

保罗说：“你们行事为人要与基督的福音相称.....同有一个心志，站立得稳，为所信的福音齐心努力、并肩争战。”（腓立比书 1:27）

Again, the image is of teammates - side by side, moving toward the same goal. Friendship often deepens when people are not merely looking at one another but looking together in the same direction. A shared purpose gives people something larger than themselves to live for.

这里再次出现的是“队友”的画面——肩并肩，朝着同一个目标前进。很多时候，友情真正加深，不是因为两个人一直彼此看着，而是因为两个人一起朝着同一个方向看。共同的使命，会让我们为了一个比自己更大的目标而活。

I grew up on Howard Avenue in Duncan, B.C., on Vancouver Island. It was an ordinary street in an ordinary small town. I can tell you many good stories from those years, and a few sad ones. Duncan had two well-known pubs in those days - the Tzouhalem, often called "the Zoo," which catered largely to the Indigenous community, and the Commercial, which was frequented mostly by the non-Indigenous community. Between them was a broad boulevard where, from time to time, young men who had drunk too much would meet to discover who had the harder head.

我是在温哥华岛 Duncan 的 Howard Avenue 长大的。那是一条很普通的街，也是在一个很普通的小镇里。关于那段成长岁月，我可以讲很多美好的故事，也有一些不太愉快的故事。当年的 Duncan 有两间很有名的酒馆，一间是 Tzouhalem，大家常叫它“The Zoo”，主要是原住民去的地方；另一间是 Commercial，大多数是非原住民去的。两间酒馆中间有一条很宽的林荫道。有时候，一些喝多了的年轻人会在那里碰上，大概是要看看谁的头比较硬。

This was before cable television, the internet, or cell phones. What else were young men with too much energy and not enough wisdom supposed to do on a weekend? Those days are gone, but that was part of the town of my youth. And you can imagine what it was like for an immigrant boy trying to find his place in a town where he did not fully belong to either of the dominant communities.

那是还没有有线电视、互联网和手机的年代。周末的时候，一群精力太多、智慧又不太够的年轻人，还能做什么呢？那些日子已经过去了，但那就是我童年的小镇。你也可以想象，一个移民家庭的孩子，要在一个自己并不完全属于两个主要群体中任何一边的地方寻找自己的位置，会是什么感觉。

It wasn't easy. But eventually I found a kind of shelter for that identity struggle: street hockey. That's right - street hockey with a bunch of boys in our neighbourhood. On the street, with a hockey stick in your hands, everybody was judged by the same simple questions: Can you shoot the ball? Can you pass? Can you play as part of the team? The rules were simple and the purpose was clear.

说实话，并不容易。不过后来，我在这种身份挣扎中找到了一点“避风港”——街头曲棍球。没错，就是和邻居一群男孩子在街上打球。手里拿着球杆，在街上大家判断你的标准很简单：你会不会射门？你会不会传球？你会不会和队友一起打？规则很简单，目标也很清楚。

When I think back to my childhood, those street hockey games still bring a smile to my face. Chasing a ball down the road with a bunch of neighbourhood boys yelling at the top of our lungs gave me a place where I belonged, even if only for an afternoon. It gave me some shelter from the harder parts of growing up as a visible minority in small-town B.C.

今天回想童年，那些街头曲棍球的日子还是会让我微笑。一群邻居的小男孩，在街上追着球，大声喊叫，哪怕只有一个下午，也让我觉得自己有一个属于我的地方。对于一个在卑诗省的小镇长大、又是少数民族裔的孩子来说，那些时光给了我一点喘息，也给了我一个可以暂时躲避成长艰难的地方。

Those boys and I did not begin as close friends. Friendship grew as we played side by side. Ray, Nick, Rick, Geony, Donny, Jim, Neil, Paul - they had my back on those streets, and I had theirs. A common purpose gradually created a common life.

那些男孩子一开始并不是我的好朋友。我们的友情，是在一次又一次并肩打球的过程中慢慢长出来的。Ray、Nick、Rick、Geony、Donny、Jim、Neil、Paul——在那些街道上，他们照应我，我也照应他们。一个共同的目标，慢慢塑造出一段共同的生活。

That is true in the church as well. Some of the deepest friendships are formed when we pray together, serve together, teach together, visit someone together, prepare a meal together, welcome refugees together, help in ELL together, care for children together, or quietly carry out some ministry that nobody else notices. We discover friendship while doing the work Christ has given us to do.

教会也是一样。有些最深的友情，往往是在我们一起祷告、一起服事、一起教导、一起探访、一起预备饭食、一起欢迎难民、一起参与 ELL、一起照顾孩子，或者一起默默做一些没有人看见的服事时形成的。当我们一起去做基督交托给我们的工作时，我们常常就在不知不觉中成为了朋友。

And this is important: Christian unity is not the same as sameness. Paul was not asking the Philippians to have identical personalities, backgrounds, opinions, or preferences. He was asking them to remember their common Lord and their common gospel. We do not need to agree about everything in order to stand side by side in Christ.

这里还有一点很重要：基督徒的合一，并不等于大家都一样。保罗没有要求腓立比人要有同样的个性、同样的背景、同样的意见、同样的喜好。他要他们记得：我们有同一位主，也有同一个福音。我们不需要每一件事都意见一致，才能在基督里肩并肩地站在一起。

So perhaps the question is not only, "Who are my friends?" but also, "Who am I serving beside?" If we feel disconnected from the church, the answer may not always be to search for people who are just like us. Sometimes friendship grows when we step into a shared task and discover that Christ has placed someone beside us.

所以，也许我们不只是问：“谁是我的朋友？”我们也可以问：“我现在和谁一起服事？”如果我们觉得自己和教会没有什么连接，答案不一定只是去找一些和我们很像的人。有时候，友情是在我们走进一项共同的服事以后才开始成长的；然后我们才发现，原来基督已经把某个人放在我们身边。

3. Carry each other's burdens

3. 彼此担当重担

Near the end of the letter Paul writes, "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me...Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble" (Philippians 4:10, 14). That little phrase - "share my trouble" - says a great deal about friendship.

到了这封信快结束的时候，保罗说：P（腓立比书 4:10,14）“分担我的患难”这几个简单的字，其实已经把友情讲得很深了。

In the HBO series Band of Brothers, there is a scene where one soldier describes what happens in war. In the end, he says, you do not fight merely for a flag, an idea, or even a country; you fight for the person beside you, the person with whom you have entrusted your life and who has entrusted his life to you.

在 HBO 的剧集《Band of Brothers》里，有一幕是一位士兵谈到战争的经历。他说，到最后，你不是单单为了旗帜而战，也不是为了一个观念、一个理想，甚至不只是为了国家；到最后，你是在为你身边的那个人而战。因为你已经把自己的生命交托给他，而他也把自己的生命交托给你。

There is something in that picture that helps us understand Christian fellowship. Community grows when we entrust something of our lives to one another. We allow another person to know where we are hurting, where we are afraid, where we need prayer - and we become willing to carry something of their burden too.

这个画面可以帮助我们明白基督徒的团契是什么。真正的群体，是当我们愿意把生命的一部分交托给彼此时，才慢慢建立起来的。我们愿意让别人知道我们哪里受伤、哪里害怕、哪里需要祷告；同时，我们也愿意替别人分担一点他的重担。

During the first year of COVID, Grace and I joined an online memorial service for a friend who had served with us in China. She had died suddenly in her apartment. The news shocked us because she had been so full of life. She once said she would die in China, and in the end she gave her life to the calling God had placed before her, loving God and loving the Chinese people to the very end.

新冠疫情的第一年，Grace 和我参加了一场网上追思礼拜，纪念一位曾经和我们一起在中国服事的朋友。她在自己的公寓里突然离世。听到消息时，我们非常震惊，因为她一直是一个充满生命力的人。她曾经说过，她会死在中国。到最后，她真的把自己的一生献给了神给她的呼召——爱神，也爱中国人，一直爱到生命的最后。

Friends who were still in China arranged the Zoom service so those of us who had returned home could take part. It was deeply moving to remember her. But I was also moved by the fact that they remembered us. Some had served much longer than we had, yet the bonds remained.

那些仍然留在中国的朋友安排了 Zoom 追思会，让我们这些已经回到家乡的人也可以参加。一起纪念她，当然非常感动我；但另一件让我感动的事，是他们也还记得我们。有些人在那里服事的时间比我们长得多，但多年过去，那份关系仍然没有断。

We came from different countries, different cultures, different backgrounds, and different political perspectives. Yet the relationships were deep because we had learned to contribute to one another's well-being, to share a common purpose, and perhaps most of all, to walk through difficulty together. Shared struggle can forge relationships that comfort alone rarely produces. When people have wept together, prayed together, endured disappointment together, or walked through uncertainty together, friendship becomes more than pleasant companionship. We have placed something of our lives in one another's hands.

我们来自不同的国家、不同的文化、不同的背景，也有不同的政治观点。但是彼此的关系仍然很深，因为我们学会了关心对方的需要，我们有共同的使命，更重要的，也许是我们一起走过了艰难的日子。一起受过苦，常常会建立一种单靠舒服日子无法建立的关系。当人一起哭过、一起祷告过、一起经历失望、一起走过不确定的时候，友情就不再只是“大家相处得很开心”。我们已经把自己生命的一部分，放在彼此的手里。

Paul says simply, "It was kind of you to share my trouble." Sometimes the most Christlike thing we can do for another person is not to fix their trouble but to share it - to stay near, to listen, to pray, to show up again tomorrow, and to remind them that they do not have to carry it alone.

保罗只是简单地说：“你们和我一同分担患难，实在是好的。”有时候，我们能为一个人做最像基督的事，并不是把他的困难解决掉，而是愿意陪他一起走——留在他身边，听他说话，为他祷告，明天仍然再出现，并且提醒他：你不需要一个人扛。

That also means we must learn to let others carry us. Some of us are much better at helping than being helped. We are comfortable serving, but uncomfortable admitting weakness. Yet friendship requires both giving and receiving. Paul, the great apostle, was not ashamed to say that the Philippians' care had strengthened him. There is no spiritual maturity in pretending we never need anyone.

这也表示，我们自己也要学习让别人来扶持我们。有些人很会帮助别人，却很不会接受别人的帮助。我们很习惯服事，却不习惯承认自己软弱。但真正的友情需要有给予，也需要有接受。连伟大的使徒保罗都不觉得难为情，他坦白说，腓立比人的关怀给了他力量。假装自己永远不需要任何人，并不是什么属灵成熟。

Words such as "side by side," "together," "share," "partnership," and "partakers" fill this letter. The message is clear: koinonia is much more than being in the same room or having pleasant conversations. It is the fruit of lives being joined together in Christ - contributing to one another's well-being, serving a common purpose, and carrying one another's burdens.

“并肩”、“一起”、“分享”、“伙伴”、“一同有分”——这一类词在腓立比书里不断出现。信息很清楚：koinonia 远远不只是大家坐在同一个房间里，聊得很愉快。它是我们的生命在基督里彼此连接以后所结出的果子：我们关心彼此的福祉，一起承担共同的使命，也彼此担当重担。

In my view, the spiritual health of a congregation is not measured primarily by its size, its attendance, or the number of programs it offers. It is seen much more clearly in the way people love one another—how they protect the dignity of every person, make room for those who are lonely, and seek to practice justice, mercy, and humility in their life together.

在我看来，一个教会属灵是否健康，最重要的衡量标准并不是教会有多大、有多少人聚会，或者有多少事工和活动。更重要的是看弟兄姊妹怎样彼此相爱——是否尊重每一个人的尊严，是否愿意为孤单的人留出空间，也是否在彼此相处中努力活出公义、怜悯和谦卑。

For me, these are signs of a people who are learning to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. And perhaps one of the most important callings of God's people in the twenty-first century is simply this: ****to become friends to those who are lonely, overlooked, or pushed to the margins.****

对我来说，这些都是一个群体正在学习跟随耶稣脚踪的记号。也许在二十一世纪，神的子民其中一个最重要的呼召，就是这么简单的一件事：****成为那些孤单、被忽略、甚至被推到社会边缘之人的朋友。****

Why does this matter so much?

为什么这件事这么重要呢？

Because loneliness has become one of the serious social and health challenges of our time. The World Health Organization has drawn attention to the growing problem of social isolation and loneliness.

因为孤独已经成为我们这个时代一个严重的社会问题，也是一个严重的健康问题。世界卫生组织也特别提醒我们，社会隔离和孤独的问题正在不断增加。

Dr. Vivek H. Murthy, the 19th and 21st Surgeon General of the United States, described it this way:

美国第 19 任和第 21 任卫生总监维韦克·穆尔蒂医生 (Dr. Vivek H. Murthy) 这样形容这个问题：

“Loneliness is far more than just a bad feeling—it harms both individual and societal health. It is associated with a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, dementia, stroke, depression, anxiety, and premature death. ... the harmful consequences of a society that lacks social connection can be felt in our schools, workplaces, and civic organizations, where performance, productivity, and engagement are diminished....”

“孤独远远不只是一种难受的感觉——它会伤害个人的健康，也会影响整个社会的健康。孤独与心血管疾病、失智症、中风、抑郁、焦虑以及过早死亡的风险增加都有关系.....当一个社会缺乏人与人之间的联系时，它所带来的伤害也会出现在学校、工作场所和社会团体中，使人的表现、生产力和参与程度都受到影响.....”

Behind those statistics are real people—people who may live beside us, worship beside us, or even sit quietly among us on Sunday morning.

但这些统计数字的背后，是一个个真实的人。他们可能就住在我们隔壁，可能每个星期和我们一起敬拜，甚至可能就在主日早晨，安安静静地坐在我们中间。

Sometimes we say that people are looking for a friendly church. But I think they are looking for something deeper than that.

有时候我们会说，人们都希望找到一间友善的教会。但我想，其实他们所寻找的，比一间“友善的教会”还要更深。

****They are looking for a friend.****

****他们真正需要的，是一个朋友。****

Friendship is not something incidental to the Christian life. It is part of Christian maturity, because Jesus Himself valued friendship deeply. In John 15:15 He says:

友谊并不是基督徒生命中一件可有可无的事。它其实是属灵成熟的一部分，因为耶稣自己非常看重朋友之间的关系。在约翰福音 15 章 15 节，耶稣这样说：

“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

“以后我不再称你们为仆人，因为仆人不知道主人所做的事；我乃称你们为朋友，因为我从我父所听见的，已经都告诉你们了。”

Jesus did not simply teach His disciples from a distance. He walked with them, ate with them, listened to them, corrected them, encouraged them, and shared His life with them.

耶稣不是远远地站着教导祂的门徒。祂和他们一起走路，一起吃饭，听他们说话；他们需要纠正的时候，祂纠正他们；他们灰心的时候，祂鼓励他们。祂把自己的生命和他们分享。

In my first letter to you in June, I wrote these words:

今年六月，我在写给你们的第一封信里，曾经这样说：

“To be a friend is to share what you know, what you carry, what is true. Not to manage someone from a distance, but to walk alongside them. This is what Jesus offers us. And I believe it is what He calls this church to be.

“做一个朋友，就是愿意分享你所知道的，也愿意分享你心里所背负的，并且用真诚彼此相待。朋友不是远远地管理别人，而是愿意走到他的身边，陪他一起走。这正是耶稣为我们所做的。我也相信，这正是祂呼召这间教会要成为的样式。

We are called to be a worshipping community, yes. A community of disciples. But we are also called to be something harder and more personal than that—a community of friends. People who care for one another without agenda. Who do not compete but support. Who offer heartfelt counsel, when invited.”

是的，我们蒙召成为一个敬拜神的群体，一个跟随主、作门徒的群体。但除此之外，我们还蒙召成为一个更不容易、也更加深入个人生命的群体——**一个朋友的群体。** 我们彼此关心，不带自己的目的；我们不是彼此竞争，而是彼此扶持；当别人愿意听的时候，我们也真诚地分享从心里而来的劝勉。”

There is much more we could say about what it means to become a community of friends, but perhaps we can begin with three simple practices:

关于怎样成为一个真正彼此为友的群体，我们当然还有很多可以谈。但也许，我们可以先从三个很简单的操练开始：

Contribute to one another's well-being. 彼此促进对方生命的美好

Cultivate a common purpose. 一起培养共同的目标

Carry one another's burdens. 彼此担当重担

I have been connected with this congregation for more than thirty years, and I have seen many of you live these things out. Pastors have come and gone, seasons have changed, and the congregation has changed along the way—but there has remained a core of people who have cared for one another faithfully and stood by one another through the years.

我和这个教会已经有三十多年的关系了。这些年来，我亲眼看见你们当中很多人就是这样生活的。牧者来了又走了，教会也经历过不同的季节，弟兄姊妹也不断有变化；但是一直都有一群人，几十年来忠心地彼此关怀，在顺境逆境中彼此陪伴、彼此支持。

That is something precious. 这是非常宝贵的。

So continue doing it. But don't keep that friendship only among those who already know one another well. Make room in the circle. Share that same care with the newcomer, the lonely person, the person who feels uncertain about whether they belong.

所以，请你们继续这样做。但不要只把这种友谊留给那些彼此已经很熟悉的人。**把我们的圈子打开一点，为别人多留一个位置。**把同样的关怀给那些刚来到教会的人，给那些孤单的人，也给那些心里还在犹豫、不知道自己是否真正属于这里的人。

Let friendship become one of the cornerstones of your spiritual life together.

让彼此之间真实的友谊，成为你们共同属灵生活的一个重要根基。

Because a healthy church is not simply a place where people attend worship. It is a place where people are known, where burdens are shared, where no one has to walk through life entirely alone, and where the love of Christ becomes visible in the friendships we offer one another.

因为一间健康的教会，不只是一个大家来参加崇拜的地方。它应该是一个**有人真正认识你、有人愿意和你一起承担重担的地方；是一个没有人必须独自面对人生的地方；也是一个让人能够从我们彼此之间的友谊，看见基督之爱的地方

And as we continue this journey together, I leave you with Paul's words—words that speak not only about what God is doing in each of us individually, but about what Christ continues to do among a community of people who belong to Him:

当我们继续一起走前面的道路时，我想用保罗的话来勉励你们。这句话不只是讲神在我们每一个人生命中的工作，也提醒我们，基督仍然在一个属于祂的群体当中，不断地工作：

6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ... Amen!

“我深信那在你们心里动了善工的，必成全这工，直到耶稣基督的日子。”.....阿们！