



Mid-Week Checkpoint Week of February 21, 2021

Community is not defined by geography. It is created by what we have in common: common goals, common aims, and common loves. The commonalities are greater than the differences of the people who comprise the community.

Beginning around the third century, some early Christians moved to the deserts of Egypt, Syria, and other places. Known as the Desert Fathers and Mothers, they shared a common desire for safety from persecution and for God's inspiration and guidance. They devoted their lives to God and their lives soon attracted others who wanted to live in love and harmony with one another. They learned the value of community.

The Desert Fathers and Mothers prayed, sang psalms, fasted, and gave alms to the needy so they could *be* what God desired. Their *doing* manifested itself as compassion, kindness, gentleness, humility, meekness, patience, love, forgiveness, etc. Their community was bound together in Christ's love. They welcomed visitors to their community and became known for their hospitality and wisdom.

- How could we benefit from the example of the Desert Fathers and Mothers?

In his book *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, "So the Christian, too, belongs not in the seclusion of a cloistered life but in the thick of foes." He says that with without Jesus, we will experience discord with others, but Christ serves as a mediator who makes peace with God and others.

- What community practices at First Farragut UMC (prayer, service, worship, etc.) help feed your soul?
- How do Christian practices and community help you survive in "the thick of foes"?

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.
Colossians 3:14 (NRSV)

- As a church, what are some ways we can "clothe ourselves in love"?
- How could our love draw others to Christ?

Questions for All Ages –

How have you found community through sports, hobbies, book clubs, etc.? What helps these groups stay together? Do you always agree with each other or are there sometimes differences?

Prayer: Lord, your love binds Christians together like the threads in a quilt. Hold us together even when the world threatens to tear us apart. Amen.