



Building healthy communities

sermon outline

PPT Sardinia. Susan Pinker, a writer for the Wall Street Journal, gave a TED talk in 2017 titled, [“The Secret to Living Longer May Be Your Social Life”](#). In her research she discovered that the Italian island of Sardinia had 10 times as many centenarians as other countries like Australia. Why? It wasn’t the olive oil. It wasn’t the sunny climate. It wasn’t the gluten-free diet or personality types. It was the quality of close personal relationships and face-to-face interactions. She concluded her talk this way:

“Building in-person interaction into our cities, into our workplaces, into our agendas ... sends feel-good hormones surging through the bloodstream and brain and helps us live longer. I call this building your village, and building it and sustaining it is a matter of life and death. It’s good for your health, it turns out, to be in rich communal relations with others.”

W. David O. Taylor, [The Open and Unafraid: The Psalms as a Guide to Life](#), Thomas Nelson, 2020.

The Book of Acts tells the story of the early Church’s dedication to regularly meeting together – and building “rich communal relations with others”. The fruit of their devotion was growing and healthy communities of believers.

PPT “The believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. All the believers were united and shared everything. They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God’s goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42–47, CEB).

PPT In the Australian film, *The Castle*, Darryl Kerrigan is about to lose his low-priced home in the suburbs to an airport expansion masterminded by a large corporate company. The local community come together to oppose the plan and it reaches the High Court. The best argument that the solicitor Dennis Denuto can offer is that it is against “the vibe” of Australia’s Constitution. His claim turns out to be true.



PPT What is “the vibe” of a healthy community that is founded on Jesus Christ? What is “the vibe” of the Christian community we see in Acts 2?

A healthy, spiritual community is one that is looking to follow Jesus and guided by the Holy Spirit. We see the community is “devoted to the apostles’ teaching” and “their prayers”. They understand their need for God’s word and prayer to guide their life together. It is a spiritual community that needs food for their souls and has a sense of awe and wonder about God.

It is also a community that understands the Christian faith is not just an individual private faith between God and a person. The Christian faith draws us into a community of others – brothers and sisters – who are also made in the image of God, and also in need of God’s grace and mercy. “It takes a village to raise a child” is an African proverb that reminds us of the importance of growing up in a healthy community. We need one another to grow and mature as human beings and flourish in life. This was “the vibe” of the Christian community in Acts.

It is also a community that ate together, and shared meals in one another’s homes. They cared for one another holistically – spiritually and materially. They were generous with their time and possessions, welcoming, inclusive, loving and honest. It is an attractive community – and so effective in caring for people, working for justice and creating faith pathways that lead people to Jesus.

We live in an increasingly fragmented and individualistic world. People are looking for healthy communities. The local Christian community is intended by God to be a loving, healthy community.

We build healthy communities because we believe that people are enriched by generous and supportive relationships with others. The biblical image of God is a healthy community of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. People find wholeness and mutual encouragement through connections. We look to build on the assets or strengths of every community and to provide safe, inclusive and welcoming communities for all people. This begins at the local level with our own corps and teams and works out into the wider community. Out of their love for Jesus, the Salvos community in Darwin is looking to serve the community in their area.

PPT Watch Video:  Darwin Corps www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5FtK5EcNFw

What is “the vibe” of our church/corps community? How are we living out our Christian faith together as a community? How does the wider community see our community? Is it an attractive community for “an outsider”?



If you were a newcomer or visitor to our community, would you feel welcomed? Would you be surprised at the generosity of our community?

Healthy Christian communities are always looking to serve the wider community – to serve God and others. They are not “clubs” for members, but communities that are looking to participate in God’s mission in the world.

“Jesus didn’t found a church as we think of ‘church’ today. He founded a movement. A movement that gathers in order to be scattered ... By definition, a movement invests most of its time and energy for those who are not in the movement. William and Catherine Booth, and their beginning Army, founded a movement whose focus and obsession was a sea of drowning and desperate humanity.”

(Phil Needham, *Christ at the Door: Biblical Keys to Our Salvationist Future*, Crest Books, The Salvation Army USA National Headquarters Alexandria, 2018, p. 35)

Suggested songs

Theme: Building healthy communities

Songs that call for unity, commitment and transformation

Song	Artist/Author	Where to find it
<i>Hear Our Praises</i>	Reuben Morgan, Hillsong	https://songselect.ccli.com/
<i>Build My Life</i>	Housefires/Bethel	https://songselect.ccli.com/
<i>Build Your Kingdom Here</i>	Rend Collective	https://songselect.ccli.com/ https://rendcollective.com/
<i>Bind Us Together</i>	Bob Gillman	https://songselect.ccli.com/
<i>Send The Fire</i>	William Booth (also Transmission version)	SASB 326 http://www.ussmusicandarts.org/transmission
<i>Kingdom Come</i>	Darlene Zshech	https://songselect.ccli.com/
<i>Christ For The World We Sing</i>	Samuel Wolcott	SASB 917



Building healthy communities

all age worship
discussion

(please draw on any other PPT slides and suggestions in the notes above)

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The Book of Acts tells the story of the early Church's dedication to regularly meeting together. The fruit of their devotion was growing and healthy communities of believers. Out of their love for Jesus, the Salvos community in Darwin is looking to serve the community in their area.

PPT "The believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the community, to their shared meals, and to their prayers. A sense of awe came over everyone. God performed many wonders and signs through the apostles. All the believers were united and shared everything. They would sell pieces of property and possessions and distribute the proceeds to everyone who needed them. Every day, they met together in the temple and ate in their homes. They shared food with gladness and simplicity. They praised God and demonstrated God's goodness to everyone. The Lord added daily to the community those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42-47, CEB).

We live in an increasingly fragmented and individualistic world and people are looking for healthy communities. The local Christian community is intended by God to be such a loving healthy community.

PPT Think

- What are some of the characteristics or "the vibe" of a healthy community?
- What are some of the characteristics or "the vibe" of an unhealthy community?

Discuss

- Share your reflections on healthy and unhealthy communities.
- How can we help build a healthy Christian community in our church/corps?
- How can we help contribute to building a healthy community in this area?

PPT Pray

- Thank God for the people in your church/corps working to build a healthy community.
- Ask God to show you ways to serve others, be generous, listen and speak with grace in your community.



Act

What is something you can do to help build a healthy Christian community?

- Offer to pray with someone
- Cook a meal for a new mum, a single parent or a person who is unwell
- Send an encouraging text message to someone going through a difficult time
- Offer to babysit a child so the parents can have a night out
- Share a meal with someone who is new to the church