

Thriving in Community
By Darby Leicht

Today's topic is "Thriving in Community."

Say what?

Whoever said anything about *thriving*?

Keeping your head above water, yes; managing to stay afloat, OK; keeping up with the Joneses, *meh*. But excelling, prospering, succeeding, all synonyms for the "Thr"-word, at the same time?

Come on!

When I signed on to be a member of the Community Church of Durham, I knew it was a "Community" because it says so, right on the sign outside the front door. That it is itself a "caring" community also goes without saying, because caring is what churches do. But what kind of community, or subset of a community—beyond the aforementioned obvious, ecclesiastical one—are we talking about here?

As it turns out, the Community Church of Durham accommodates many such subsets, grouped together in a lively network of ministries, teams and church committees. Ministries include Education and Faith Formation, Justice & Witness, Spiritual Nurture, where the choir resides, and Stewardship. Special teams and committees include the CARE team, whose task is to arrange visits with those who are sick and homebound, the Immigration Service Team, whose members accompany and assist people who are seeking a home in the United States.

The strongest sense of community I feel in the Community Church of Durham—or almost anywhere else, in fact—is when I am singing with the Community Church choir, where I know that I am being listened to by the congregation, by the director, and most keenly and especially by another singer or singers.

No matter what the emotional content, or where you join in, the bond is strong, urgent even, and compelling. It transcends quantitative categories such as presence and absence, what is there and what is not, from unseen individuals to unseen social groups, from family to town to larger societies, and ultimately, to issues not only social, but keenly personal, of which I myself—and you yourself in turn—may not have been aware.

This awareness, I would propose, may come to represent a sort of “thriving” in the Community Church of Durham, or in any other place where paying attention counts.

The possibilities are unending and omnipresent.

At the risk of coming to an end which might seem too abrupt, allow me to leave you, then, with a word or two of advice:

Happy listening . . . and even happier thriving!