

Community – The Strength of Spiritual Family

"Right, get the tent up, we have incoming!" Sergeant Davies barked, the sound of artillery in the distance a familiar, dull thud. The 407th Field Dressing Station was a well-oiled machine. Captain Alistair Finch, the surgeon, already had his scrubs on, the aroma of antiseptic preceding him. "Two minutes, Alec, or I'll operate on your pride," he called to the anaesthesiologist, Lieutenant Alex 'Alec' Chen, who was meticulously checking his ether supply and masks. Corporal Sarah Jenkins, their 'triage whiz', was already at the stretcher drop, her keen eyes instantly assessing the walking wounded from the critical. "Private Miller, you're on the morphine drip, four more units needed here," she directed, her voice calm amidst the chaos.

The next few hours were a blur of organised madness. The thump-thump of Davies' boots was everywhere—organising supplies, ensuring clean water was boiled, maintaining morale with a steady stream of dry jokes and strong tea. He was the heart of the operation, the one who made sure everything ran on time. Finch worked with practised speed; the shrapnel wound to the soldier's leg a challenging but manageable task. Chen kept the soldier steady, his hand on the pulse monitor, whispering reassurance and adjusting the ether just so. Jenkins managed the flow of casualties, the queue shortening thanks to her sharp decisions.

As dawn broke, the tent quietened. The team, exhausted but successful, shared a quick meal. They were a motley crew from different backgrounds and with distinct skills but together, they were a lifeline at the edge of the battlefield, a small pocket of order in a world of war. Their specialities created a functional unit, a testament to teamwork and survival.

Yes, you have guessed it. The above is a fictional story. Sergeant Davies, Captain Finch, Lieutenant Chen, Corporal Jenkins and Private Miller and the 407th Field Dressing Station didn't exist to my knowledge during the Second World War. Their story serves as an analogy of a team where each member brings something to the table for the good of the whole.

A little bit like God's design for His church.

The church is made up of "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5) who use whatever God has entrusted to them for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). Like the members of the 407th Field Dressing Station, members of the church selflessly and meaningfully contribute to ensure that others flourish. The church of Jesus Christ truly is beautiful in community where the success, wellbeing and health of others are a higher priority than one's own. Consider this verse that believers hold near and dear from the book of Philippians,

"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves."
- Philippians 2:3

Are you aware of another organisation that champions such values? Where it is the duty and the delight of each member to ensure nothing is done with selfish ambition. Where each member practises the discipline of not thinking too highly of oneself or having an excessive self-interest.

When faced with sorrow, heartache, disappointment, loss or grief, does it not provide meaningful and tangible encouragement to know that you are surrounded by others who will care for you spiritually, emotionally and physically? When met with blessing, success, victory, accomplishment and the realisation of dreams, is it not wonderful to know that those in the church will celebrate and rejoice with you, knowing that to do so is a glad expression of the nature and character of our Saviour, Jesus Christ?

The apostle Paul writes to the believers in Rome and in effect to Christ-followers everywhere and charges them to,

"Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honouring each other." - Romans 12:10

Truly, the church is a blessed community where we get to flourish together!

So how do we ensure that we play our part? To use again the example of the 407th Field Dressing Station, these five members chose to bring their experience and expertise to the table. They were a crack team, comfortable and confident in their abilities. But, to get there would have cost them time, effort, energy and much practise! They grew into their abilities and acumen by choice and action.

If, in 2026 and beyond, we as believers are to flourish together, we too should aim to be proactive. We are to daily practise Christlikeness. The apostle Peter says that God's divine power has granted us everything we need for a life of godliness (2 Peter 1:3). We play our part in partnership with the Holy Spirit when we choose to make every effort to become more like Jesus whenever we are able. Peter puts it this way,

"In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone." - 2 Peter 1:5-7

Did you note what I have highlighted in the paragraph above?

Make every effort.

This is a profound passage from the Holy Spirit as penned by the apostle Peter. During our fast today, meditate on his words and allow me to encourage you toward three specific prayer points:

1. Pray for the ongoing favour and blessing of God's elect. Ask the Lord to cause the "living stones" of Living Hope Church to enjoy rich community and strength within spiritual family in 2026.

2. Ask the Lord to show you how to make every effort to respond to His promises and how to actively supplement your faith.

3. Ask the Lord for an opportunity to encourage and bless another within our church family today.