



Better Together, Part 1

What if our theology could get up out of our armchairs and into the real world? That would be something worth talking about. This is The Armchair Anabaptist podcast.

*Father we've forgotten
that you've called us together
to bear each others burdens
and worship you as one.*

“Community loneliness - that might be the great evangelistic opportunity of our time, the great wound in the world that needs healing.”

“Mixing our faith with a political party is like mixing ice cream and horse manure. It doesn't do much damage to the manure, but it really messes up the ice cream.”

“It's very early. It's very primal. It's very deep within the human community, is that we are people who do not want to be alone.”

“I'd love to see us stand more in solidarity with one another, not looking down on one another, but together finding that level ground at the foot of the Cross of Jesus and sharing in the hope of the resurrection.”

*One church,
One light,
One body,
Found in Christ.*

Introduction

Jesse Penner: You're listening to The Armchair Anabaptist. I'm Jesse Penner.

Andrew Dyck: And I'm Andrew Dyck. You are joining us for our new season, starting with our first episode called “Better Together, Part One”.

JP: So those of you who have been with us since our beginning last year, since the first season, will notice that there is a new voice next to me on the other side of the microphone here.

Kevin Wiebe was my co-host for the first season of this podcast, and in a lot of ways Kevin was actually sort of the driving engine behind this. He's the one who approached me and asked if I would be willing to come alongside him and step into this world of The Armchair Anabaptist and sort of take that journey with him.

He's also the one who had radio experience and a bit of a background in recording and those sorts of things. Kevin has stepped away from the mic for this season of the podcast. He's no longer officially involved with The Armchair Anabaptist, but boy, he's been a good resource for us as we've been putting this together. And so I certainly want to take a moment here as we begin and thank Kevin profusely for all the effort that he has put in for the sort of germ of this idea, for making this thing reality, because certainly without him, I don't think this podcast would exist.

And we continue to be grateful for him as he's been helpful in helping us think through and plan and so with the technical aspects too, of getting the second season going. But I think it's important to introduce our new cohost here who you heard in the introduction. I'll let him introduce himself.

AD: Yes, I stated my name. I'm Andrew Dyck. I'm also a pastor with the Evangelical Mennonite Conference. I spent season one of this podcast as an avid listener, really appreciating what Kevin and Jesse did and all the contributions of the guests as they covered lots of fertile ground talking about the life of peace, one of these Anabaptist distinctives and just really appreciated the way in which this theology was brought down to a very relevant and life-changing perspective.

And so when it came time for season two and knowing that one of the co-hosts was moving on in a way just wanted to make sure that the project could keep going. And so I offered any services that I could provide and I'm just really grateful to now, having spent time in season two, being able to work with Jesse and being able to have some really significant and great conversations with the many guests that you'll hear throughout this season.

JP: One of the incredible things about this format is that it allows us to talk with all sorts of interesting people and we don't actually have to be the experts here. We get to talk with a variety of people who come in from a variety of perspectives. Lots of people who've spent a long time thinking deeply about theology, have been trained well in theology, lots of pastors and people with boots on the ground who are kind of working through these things in a practical way, and we just kind of get to soak it in.

I'll introduce myself to for those of you who are maybe jumping in here in season two. My name is Jesse Penner. I'm also a pastor here, so we're both pastors in the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, which is a church conference, a Mennonite conference, in Canada.

And both of us have some theological training. Both of us have a love for this.

AD: Absolutely.

JP: And this is an amazing excuse for us to sort of engage with these questions in an intentional way and to bring you guys hopefully along for the journey with us.

AD: Well, it's a good thing, Jesse, that we don't have to be the experts that's been something that I've been reminded of.

Our conversations with our guests have always led to just great follow-up questions for me to think along with this. And really what we've been looking at in during this time and what we want to look at together with you as listeners is this overarching theme of community.

So where season one was focused on the Anabaptist distinctive of a life of peace, we were trying to unpack another big idea of how Anabaptist theology has really celebrated and expressed community both throughout the years and also continues to do so today.

And so while we are not experts in this area, we certainly do live this out in the church and in our role as pastors. But even though I thought I knew a lot about it, I've learned so much more and am excited to pass some of that on to you as listeners as well.

JP: Right. Our goal here with this podcast has been to look at some of these sort of big tentpole distinctives within Anabaptist theology, not to say that these things are unique to Anabaptists, or that other denominations or streams of Christianity aren't thinking about these things, but that these are things that are close to the heart of Anabaptism. When we look at the history of anabaptism, they've been distinct lives that have mattered very much to our community over the years. And so, as Andrew said, we dealt with peace that first season, and I think it was a pretty clear choice to jump into community for this season at this time. I think it felt like a good place for us to go.

AD: It was. It's not just an Anabaptist distinctive. I think the last few years have really shown the importance of community and some of the hardships in community when it doesn't always work out the way that we would like it to, or that Scripture might design it for or show the design for. And so I think it really was this convergence of what Anabaptist theology has been about for a long time, and then the very real-world pressures that were put on community over the past three or four years.

JP: Every single person in different ways had to ask big questions about what it means to be a part of community through the last couple of years here. And so inside and outside of the church, this is something that people grapple with and certainly as we look at social media and we look at the ways in which we engage with other people and how that's changing and some of the implications around that, as we look at the divisions that are being created within our world, certainly that's nothing new.

But we're seeing it over and over again and we're seeing new versions of it today where people are taking sides and finding camps to be a part of and these sort of us versus them mentality that can exist within the world. It felt like this was a really good topic to kind of sink our teeth into over the course of a season and ask some big questions about what God's intention is around this idea of community.

AD: And we're going to start with this real theological foundation of the fact that we are better together. But why? Why is this an important question to ask? Why is community such an important topic to address, biblically speaking? Is this something that from the Word of God we see stressed? And I think the easy answer is yes. But again, we have some guests

that we're going to introduce here now that are going to take us on a deeper journey as to why community is important, why this is a valuable conversation to have.

JP: So today, we're going to be speaking with Layton Friesen, Stuart Murray, Meghan Larissa Good and Steve Bell. They're going to be our contributors to this episode.

And as I say that I should mention again, for some of you who may be hopping on to the podcast, we've got a little bit of a unique format here. Many podcasts will bring on a guest and they'll have that guest speak over the course of the half-hour, 45 minutes, an hour about a topic. The way that we've chosen to structure this here has been that we rather center each episode around a question or a couple of questions that we want to ask, and then we bring on, you could call it a panel, I guess. They're not talking with each other, but we bring on people who have different perspectives or ideas about what this could mean or about how to answer those questions well, and let them speak and process those things together.

AD: So you've heard a lot from us. Thank you for just allowing us to be able to introduce ourselves and to be able to help frame this season and this episode.

We are going to now hear from some of these guests. And again, let's continue to learn together and ask these questions together as these new ideas are brought forward.

Why Community?

JP: The first question that we asked our guests today is why is community an important topic to address for us? Kind of a big picture, table-setter question that begins to help us wrap our heads around why this is something that we need to be thinking about from a theological perspective in terms of what God is calling us to, and also when we think about what it means to be a part of a society and a part of a church, why is community important?

We've talked about this a little bit, now we're going to give our guests a chance to speak into this. The first voice you will be hearing here is Layton Friesen. Dr. Layton Friesen is the academic dean of Steinbach Bible College, as well as the former conference pastor for the Evangelical Mennonite Conference, where Andrew and I pastor in Canada.

His most recent book is called *Secular Nonviolence and the Theodrama of Peace*. We asked Layton the simple question, "Why is community an important topic for us to address on a podcast like this?"

Dr. Layton Friesen: Well, I think there's probably a couple different ways to answer a question like that. You could go first to the biblical perspective, the biblical story, if you think right back to the very beginning of the story, the story of Adam and Eve and God's creation of the Garden in Genesis chapter one, you find a problem arising in the very beginning, even before sin comes up, God identifies this problem in Adam, which is that he's alone. That there is doesn't seem to be anybody or anything around Adam to form any sort of camaraderie or companionship or partnership. He's essentially by himself. And then, of course, he goes through the whole animal kingdom investigating all the different animals,

giving them names, which is another way of saying kind of looking into their character, looking into their nature to try to figure out, is this a suitable companion for me? And Adam doesn't find any.

And so finally God creates woman. And then Adam says, "bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh" and so on, indicating that here at last he has found community, he's found relationship. And so, I find it really interesting that even in the story of the Garden of Eden before sin, before the fall, you have, first of all, Adam being alone as a problem, as a deficiency that needed to be corrected.

But also being corrected then. God creates this partner, this companion, this person to be beside Adam as a way to complete, I guess might be the word for it, complete the creation of the human race. And so right from the beginning you have this partnership between man and woman, which is then supposed to kind of work its way through the human community, resulting in the human race, multiplying, filling the earth, but always as man and woman related to one another. This partnership of being the same. They're both human beings, but they're different. They're man and woman. And I think that's the basis upon which the Bible really starts to see community happening. It's very early. It's very primal, it's very deep within the human community, is that we are people who do not want to be alone.

We do not want to be found without a companion, without somebody to talk to, without somebody to love, without somebody who's going to push back at us. That's I think what we find in the whole story. And then the whole quest for it happens across the biblical story is the quest for is the quest for community going right on up to the church and the kingdom of heaven. So that's there's the biblical side of it.

I think you can also look at this question from a cultural perspective. I think we've all heard people talking about what is called an epidemic of loneliness in our society, and that's very real. And so I think the church needs to be talking about community from that perspective as well.

I think there's a massive dilemma at the heart of the Western world and that dilemma can be expressed in the following question - can I be an individual and can I be in community at the same time? Can one be both an individual and somebody in community at the same time? The Western world has struggled with that question. It's the question of the one and the many. It has struggled with that question for centuries. And I think we're still wrestling with that. And so on the one hand, we have a movement that says, let's go and become individuals, let's become unique, let's become special, let's explore the specific individuality of every human person, and let's allow every person to come to create their path, to manufacture their destiny and to chart their way in the world. So that's extreme individualism on the one hand. And that just results in loneliness.

I mean, what you have if you go down that path, is autonomous, isolated individuals who are yes, they are being themselves, but they're not fitting into any community. They're not

they're not meeting anybody else in a relationship. They are they're simply being themselves. And so that's on the one hand.

On the other hand, though, you have movements within the Western world that say, okay, individuals don't matter. We're just going to chase the collective, we're going to chase the community, we're going to ignore individual happiness and success, and we're just going to look for a utopian kind of society that we create on the backs of individuals.

And of course, the 20th century is a classic example of what happens when you kind of pursue the dilemma in that direction, too, which is the gulags and the death camps and the killing fields of 20th-century utopianism of various kinds.

And so we keep bouncing back and forth between these two poles, if you want. Extreme individualism on the one hand and then extreme, I don't know, call it communism or utopianism on the other. And we can't quite seem to find this beautiful place of being people, persons who are known as persons and who yet live in a community that is somehow larger than ourselves. That's, I think, the big quest in the Western world. And we haven't found that. And I think if you look at our artists, I think they are the ones who detect this, this inner loneliness and fear that resides in us because we're chasing this unresolvable dilemma.

This morning, as I was preparing for this, I was thinking of an old song from my youth by Billy Joel. It's called *The Piano Man*. And it's a song about this neighbourhood bar where all these sort of sad, disappointed, cynical, lonely people come together to drink in the evenings and listen to the piano man. And at the end of the song, there's this line that I've always remembered. It says, "Yes, they're sharing a drink they call loneliness, but it's better than drinking alone. They're sharing a drink they call loneliness, but it's better than drinking alone." I think that just expresses this dilemma is that we keep trying to come together, but when we come together, we're really expressing our loneliness and that becomes our community, actually.

So I think that's something that the church needs to speak into. Not that the church has solved this dilemma. I don't think any of our congregations would be able to say that. But we have glimpsed a vision of the kingdom of heaven that attracts us and that draws us forward into this quest for true Christ-centered communion where both the individual and the community will be beautiful and strong and resilient and respected.

AD: Doctor Meghan Larissa Good is the lead pastor at Trinity Mennonite Church and the theology chair of the Jesus Collective. She is also the author of several books, including *Divine Gravity: Sparking a Movement to Recover a Better Christian Story*. I also asked her the same question: why is community an important topic to address for us today?

Dr. Meghan Larissa Good: Well, what's interesting about that question, I think, is there's a lot of different angles to come at it. We could talk about it kind of anecdotally, about what people are experiencing or theologically, but one of the things that has been on my mind a lot in the last few years because of some curiosity and research I've been doing, is just what

the actual stats of loneliness look like right now in Western cultures and how that is impacting people.

The health insurer Cigna did a study a few years ago that showed that 47% of adults say they often feel alone and 35% of Americans over age 45 say they feel perpetually lonely. And there are all sorts of impacts of that, practically, that you can tease out.

We know that loneliness has the equivalent health impact of smoking 15 cigarettes a day. We know that social disconnection increases the rate of death by 29%. On the happier end, we also know that social connection is the biggest factor in people's happiness scores overall, in their life satisfaction rates. So from a purely kind of human practical standpoint, psychologically, lifestyle-wise, health-wise, all those things, community is perhaps the dominant factor in how people experience the goodness of their lives, which I would argue theologically, we know that. This is how God designed us to be, and this is why we have a Gospel of God reconciling the world and putting people and things back together.

AD: I found the statistics that Dr. Meghan Larissa Good shared with us to be staggering on just how significant that negative impact of loneliness is on us as people and in our society, and so I asked her, as a follow up question, is it not even an exaggeration to say that this epidemic of loneliness could be a life or death issue?

MLG: Absolutely. I mean, the numbers are just staggering. This is why you're seeing even governments begin to pay attention to the increasing rates of social disconnection, and it has a direct impact on death rates and people are more aware of that in the post-COVID era because we saw it play out so acutely when people were in a situation of isolation, but these numbers were already stark and startling prior to that. There are a lot of things going on culturally that make people less likely to be in community than they used to be. And it appears the effects of that are fairly psychologically devastating. I think it could be the cultural question of our time, which is just one of the reasons it's important for the church to discuss.

In my judgment, community loneliness, that might be the great evangelistic opportunity of our time, the great wound in the world that needs healing.

JP: That's a powerful response from both of them. I think those words from Meghan, the idea that this may be the great evangelistic opportunity of our time, this wound that needs healing, I think community, sometimes we see it as a bit of a touchy-feely, happy thing. It's nice to have community, it feels good to be in relationships with people. But the way that Layton and Meghan both characterize this is much more extreme. The language is pretty strong in the way that they speak about it here.

AD: Absolutely. This is not something to be taken lightly. This isn't just a feel-good story about the church. There is a deep longing in the human soul, and it's not a longing that's being met in many places in the world that we live in right now. And so I think it is a great place to just acknowledge the severity of what's happening in our world and also acknowledge the opportunity that comes with that, that as we look more and more into this

biblical understanding of community, God has designed us not just individually, but us as the people of God, to be able to do something profound for one another and then to be able to look to the world around us and say we can offer something that maybe the world can't.

And so the numbers are there. They're fairly staggering. But it also then draws us back into this design conversation. That's something that Layton talked about quite specifically,

JP: Right. Exactly. This idea that this is what we have been created for. Again, it's not some it's not some extra, it's not some bonus. It's not the icing on the cake. Rather, this is at the core of who we have been created to be as people.

And that's something that we're going to explore a little bit more down the road as we look at some of the sort of theological cornerstones for how we think about community. But that's a great way to begin to open this up and to acknowledge the severity of this. I noticed that they both used this phrase the epidemic of loneliness.

That's a loaded word these days, coming through the season that we've been in. But maybe it does speak exactly to the severity of or the importance of dealing with this in an intentional way.

AD: Yeah. And one of the details that came from Layton's response in particular was how he also acknowledged that this is part of the initial design of God, this design of community, how Adam and Eve were created to be together was not a result of the fall. We don't need one another because of the effects of sin. We were always meant to and designed to rely on one another in a unique way.

The more things change, the more things stay the same. We see all these issues in the world around us and we see from the very beginning God has had a response to this. He's had a design for this. He's had an answer to this question. And so why is community important? Well, it's always been that way from the very beginning.

JP: We're continuing asking this question, why is community an important topic for us to address today? Now we're going to hear from Stuart Murray.

Dr. Stuart Murray is co-founder of Urban Expression and the Anabaptist Network, as well as director for the Center of Anabaptist Studies in Bristol. He is the author of over 20 books, including *The Naked Anabaptist*, and a new book coming out now in January called, *The New Anabaptists: Practices for Emerging Communities*. Here's Stuart Murray.

Dr. Stuart Murray: I think my understanding of the Anabaptist tradition is that perhaps more than most other traditions, it has emphasized the importance of being disciples together, that we're not simply individual pilgrims, but we are together on the journey.

We have a responsibility to each other and for each other. And I think that is demonstrated in a variety of ways through some of the practices which characterize the early Anabaptists and certainly to some extent, I think still characterize Anabaptist communities. So baptism was not simply a personal profession of faith it was also incorporation into the community

and included an admonition to the other brothers and sisters: help me. Help me stay on the journey, correct me when you need to, but help me to be a disciple. And that was a very strong commitment to baptism, I think, which opened up the possibility of more than superficial relationships together.

I think also the way in which early anabaptists practiced communion had something akin to that, that as well as the vertical dimension of giving thanks to God for Jesus, there's also a very strong sense of giving thanks for each other, of recommitting members one to another. Some of Balthasar Hubmaier's work, as he took the Catholic catechism and re-anabaptized it, there's a very strong sense of pledging love to one another, pledging commitment to each other.

I think beyond that you have the practicalities of mutual aid and certainly for some parts of the tradition, campus communities. So a very strong sense we're in this together. We're not simply individuals.

Something which I've been particularly inspired by has the multi-voiced dimension of Anabaptist gatherings. The expectation that when you come together, everybody has something to contribute, there are gifts scattered across the community and there is an expectation that Spirit will inspire one after the other, very, very different from the rather mono-voiced approach in the state churches.

So in all those ways, I think there was a strong emphasis on community, on being together in this journey of discipleship.

JP: Next, we're going to hear from Steve Bell. Steve Bell is an award-winning singer, songwriter and storyteller from Winnipeg, Manitoba, who has been performing for over 30 years. In 2022, he was inducted into the Order of Canada. He's also an author and has released seven books on the spirituality of the Christian calendar called Pilgrim Year. When I asked Steve Bell this question about why it is important to be talking about this idea of community, this was his answer.

Steve Bell: Well, I think community is vital theologically, for one. And I think and I won't go too deep into this, but if God is Trinity, God is communion, God is community. And if we've been made in the image of God, there's something there that sort of like "if this, then that." So if I want to take seriously that we have been made in the image of God, what that actually means is that I belong to you and you belong to me, and that we need to live that out some way and that we actually constitute each other.

So in the Trinity you have the Father, but a father can't be a father if there's not a child. The child actually makes the father the father. Right. And that child can't be the son or the daughter, whatever, without the parent like they you need the other to be what you are. And so when I think about myself, what I love about Steve Bell, everything I love about me actually requires someone else to be true.

I'm a son. I kind of need my parents to be a son. I'm a grandson. I kind of need my grandparents to be that. I'm a husband. I kind of need a spouse to be a husband. I'm a neighbour. I kind of need... I'm a father of a grandfather. I actually need other people to make me who I am.

And I don't think that's an accident. I think that's design, I think we've been created in the image of God. So I think community is theologically vital. But I think the other thing is it's just practical. When my wife and I were newly married, I came out of Baptist roots, so Baptist evangelical, the particular brand that I grew up in didn't really take our history... I don't know anything about the Baptists. I don't know a thing about it. There was no sort of ethnic culture there. We were all about heaven. We weren't about where we came from. It was basically get people saved and into heaven. We were absolutely future oriented and almost had no past, right?

So this is how I thought, you know, and then we, I got married, Nancy and I moved into the Wolseley area of Winnipeg, and there was a church community there, and it was a group of people that took community seriously. It was intentional community, is how they talked about it. We started going because it was in the neighbourhood and all of a sudden I started to realize how, well for one I had never thought of faith in community terms before, I always thought it in individualistic terms.

And all of a sudden these are practical people. They shared cars, they shared lawnmowers, they shared childcare. And the whole idea was that if we could get together and share a life, we could be more simple so that we could be free to do ministries and other things. And so it was a surprise to me. I wasn't expecting, and I'd never known people that saw faith in that way before. But man, is it practical when you're young and you've got kids and, you know, your marriage is constantly kind of wobbly because you're new at this and you've got no money? And so there was a practical side to it as well that we got together because we actually needed each other.

And the problem with our world now is that we're wealthy. In a sense, it's hard to recognize our need of each other because we kind of don't. Like, I've got enough money, I've got you know, I've got a warm house, you know, and I can pretend that I don't need community for those things to exist.

But I actually kind of do. Right. But we can convince ourselves that this is not true. So I think it's theological, community is theological. I think it's vital that way. I also think it's just practical. I think our wealth and our relative safety has made communities seem unnecessary, but I think that's going to change very soon. I think we to have to understand it deeply.

Interestingly, I hope this is not too long, I just sang for a convention of Hutterite teachers, you know, and I said to them, you guys know how to do this. We're going to need you soon. Because I think as structures that we're used to relying on break down and I think they're

going to, we're going to need people that know how to do this. I looked at those people and says, we're going to need you, don't go away. You've been practicing this for a long time.

AD: Both Stuart Murray and Steve Bell approached this a little differently. And they talked about community being important not just as an antidote to loneliness, but also as a requirement, a requirement that we need other people in order to really impact us in this journey of discipleship, in our relationship with Jesus, and they also help define who we are in relationship with one another. We need other people in and of our journey and our own life with them.

JP: In some ways, they approached it from different angles. Stuart Murray and Steve Bell did, but they kind of got around to the same main point, that this is something that helps us to grow into being the people that we are meant to be, the people that God has designed us to be.

Steve Bell talks about this idea. I liked what he said, where it's I can't be a father without a son and I can't be a grandfather without a grandkid and I can't be a husband without a wife. And the recognition that a part of our identity and our purpose comes from our relationships with those around us.

And then Stuart Murray took that idea and put it into the context of this core Christian principle of discipleship and recognizing that when we are called into a life of following Christ, it's more than just me and Jesus., it's that we're called into a community that forms us through those relationships.

AD: Yeah, and you've got some young kids, right Jesse? You have young kids at home. And so it's not that long ago where you can remember becoming a father for the first time. And I think that's a very great analogy because for, for all those parents who've had that chance, you know in that moment that you are not the same as you were before, you have, at least in some sense, this deep understanding that your identity is now different because something has happened in that way.

But yet, of course, this is not the relationship that ultimately defines you. And that's where I think having this notion of discipleship is important. Yes, these people around us, they do affect us, they do help define us. But it is ultimately our relationship with Jesus that defines us the most. And so to bring this back to discipleship, how we just enrich our relationship with Christ and deepen our identity in Christ by healthy relationships around us, that takes the analogy of father-son or parent-child and then grounds it in the most important relationship and identity that we have.

JP: It's this amazing thing that we see through this podcast over and over again. It's something that we were talking about a little bit before we started recording here. The fact that we talked with four different individuals and simply gave them this question to work with, right? We gave them the question of "why is community important" and what we see through Layton's answer and Meghan's answers are the recognition of the epidemic that we exist in this loneliness that permeates our society, this wrestle between what it means to be

an individual and what it means to be a part of a community from a theological perspective, as well as simply from a cultural perspective.

And then we have Steve and Stuart giving us sort of the aspirational look at this. What does it mean? How do we benefit from engaging in and stepping into meaningful, intentional community?

AD: There's just so many different ways that are all true of why we are better together.

JP: As we close out this episode, we thought that it would be appropriate to have the closing song be the same as our intro song.

This is a song called *Making Us One* by Shades, and we picked it because it speaks in a very specific way to the necessity and the value of community. There's a line there in the second verse it says, "Father, we forgotten that you've called us together to bear each other's burdens and worship you as one." We need to recognize that the call to community isn't just something that we are thinking about on our own, it is something that God is calling us to. And this song does a beautiful job of capturing that call. The Father's heart and desire for us to be together as one. Here's *Making us One* by Shades.

Making Us One, Shades

Father we have wandered
Fashioned empty idols that serve ourselves
Cast in our own image
Remind us who You are

Father we've forgotten
That You've called us together
To bear each other's burdens
And worship You as one

Lord You tore down the walls
And You're making us one
Heal divisions between, give us unity
In Your bond of peace

At the cost of our desires
Teach us to be humble as You were
With gentleness and patience
To serve each other's needs

Father be our anchor
In the storms that can divide us
Teach us how to listen
Build us up in love

Lord You tore down the walls
And You're making us one
Heal divisions between, give us unity
In Your bond of peace

One Word, one truth, one Spirit, one hope
One church, one light, one body found in Christ
One Word, one truth, one Spirit, one hope
One church, one light, one body found in Christ

Lord You tore down the walls
And You're making us one
Heal divisions between, give us unity
In Your bond of peace

And all the people sing
One Word, one truth, one Spirit, one hope
One church, one light, one body found in Christ
One Word, one truth, one Spirit, one hope
One church, one light, one body found in Christ

Closing

AD: We begin each episode asking this rhetorical question, what if our theology got up out of its armchair and really changed the way that we live. I think it's an important question to revisit at the end of each episode as well. We heard so many different, wonderful ideas. So I ask you, Jesse, what does this look like up out of the armchair in our lives, this notion of why community is such an important thing to talk about and to live out.

JP: I think as we've got going here and of course have the opportunity to do some of these interviews already and begun thinking more intentionally about this season, one of the things that's been true for me and what are the things that I want to encourage you with listeners is simply to prayerfully and thoughtfully develop an awareness of the ways in which we are connected to other people. Maybe that's a good place to start, is to simply begin to take some level of, of an audit, of the communities that we are a part of and the ways in which we are reliant on people and the ways in which we benefit from engaging with others.

And of course, I think about that especially in a church context, to just be aware of the ways in which we are connected to a Christian community and how that impacts our lives.

AD: Yes, I think it does circle back to this notion of discipleship. We are disciples of Jesus. We are the best disciples of Jesus when there's a healthy Christian community around us and just a great thing to consider thinking about how that looks in each of our lives as we live this out.

Thanks for listening. Thanks for learning with us.

The Armchair Anabaptist is a Theodidaktos podcast and Theodidaktos is a publication of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference.

You can check us out online at www.thearmchairanabaptist.ca and you can find us on iTunes, Spotify, and wherever podcasts are found.

A special thanks to our guests who have joined us today. That was Layton Friesen, Meghan Larissa Good, Stuart Murray and Steve Bell.

Our intro song is Making Us One by the band Shades, and we've also included that today as our closing song. Our executive producer is Erica Fehr. Our producer and audio engineer is Jesse Penner and our administrative assistant and social media manager is Betty Ramones. I'm Andrew Dyck, and I'm Jesse Penner, and we have been your hosts for The Armchair Anabaptist.

We certainly hope that what you have heard today will do more than stay as merely food for thought, but that it could help inspire each of us to get up out of the comfort of our armchairs and translate into living more like Jesus. Join us next time as we continue this conversation with Better Together, Part Two, asking specifically about how Anabaptists have traditionally shown the importance of community. That's next time on The Armchair Anabaptist.

Edited for clarity.