

# **Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Life Together***

## **Discovering the Essence of Christian Community** Winter 2011 – Boston Chinese Evangelical Church

### **What is "Trellis"?**

A *trellis* is a structure a vine grows on. For BCEC College Ministry, in keeping with the word picture in John 15 of the vine and branches, the Trellis is the written word of God. Trellis isn't a traditional Sunday School class. It's the primary large group gathering of college-aged folks for our College Ministry. We hope you don't just come to a class, but participate in a community. Many of our college students gather in small groups on different weeknights. They discuss life and the Bible, share life, and hang out. Please see our welcome area for more information on those small group we call TWIGS.

### **Course Description:**

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German protestant theologian, pastor and martyr. He wrote *Life Together* during his two-year position as headmaster of the Preachers' Seminary of the Confessing Church in Finkenwalde in 1935. He taught, lived and ate with his students setting an example of Christian community at a time when Hitler solidified his power over the German government and state churches. This book will challenge us in two ways: our common biblical notions of community; and stretch us to live in a community that exemplifies Christ on our campuses.

### **Meeting Time and Place:**

We will meet in Josiah Quincy Upper School cafeteria from 11:15-12:30PM every Sunday except for the off days noted on the Course Schedule.

### **Learning Objectives:**

At the end of the semester, the student will

1. Be challenged in their concepts of community.
2. Understand their roles and participation in a community

### **Textbooks:**

#### **Required Texts:**

The Bible, preferably the New International Version, New American Standard Version.  
Or English Standard Version  
Life Together by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, HarperCollins

**Course Assignments & Requirements:**

You will be asked to read the chapters we will cover *before* class on that day from the book *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

**Instructor Information:**

Enoch Liao, Assistant Pastor  
Boston Chinese Evangelical Church  
Office Hours: by appointment.  
Work Phone: (617) 426-5711 x66.  
Email: [enoch.liao@bcec.net](mailto:enoch.liao@bcec.net)  
Virtual Office (for course materials): <http://blog.karenoch.com/trellis/>

## Course Schedule

READING ASSIGNMENTS ARE DUE ON THAT DAY OF CLASS

All reading assignments from *Life Together*

Lesson	Date	Topics	Reading Due
1	1/9	Introduction to Course	
2	1/16	Finding Community in Christ	pp. 17-26
3	1/23	The Reality of Christian Community	pp. 26-39
4	1/30	The Day with Others – Part 1: Morning Devotionals	pp. 40-50
5	2/6	The Day with Others – Part 2: Reading the Word of God	pp. 50-57
6	2/13	The Day with Others – Part 3: Praying and Praising with Others	pp. 57-67
7	2/20	The Day with Others – Part 4: Fellowship at the Table	pp. 67-75
8	2/27	The Day Alone – Part 1: ROUS's: Retreats Of Unusual Silence A Lesson in Meditation	pp. 75-84
9	3/6	The Day Alone – Part 2: Listening in Prayer	pp. 84-89
10	3/13	Ministry – Part 1: Humbleness	pp. 90-98
	3/20	College Retreat	
11	3/27	Ministry – Part 2: Active Service	pp. 99-109
12	4/3	Ministry – Part 3: A Fellowship Based on Accountability	pp. 110-118
13	4/10	Confession and Communion	pp. 118-122

**Discussion Question:**

1. What are some necessary characteristics of community?
2. What have been some of your fondest (or worst) memory of Christian community?

**The Life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer:**

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Feb. 4<sup>th</sup>, 1906 – April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945) was born to a family that was part of the German cultural elite. He lived a comfortable and protected life in his early years.
- 1923 – 1929: Dietrich's seminary career included studying abroad in Rome where he discovers how church, faith, doctrine and life fit in his personal life. He earned a doctorate with his paper *Sanctorum Communio* (Communion of Saints).
- 1930 - Dietrich spent a year in New York City where he observed a diversity of Christian churches especially in Harlem.
- 1931 – 1934: He returned to Germany to teach just as Hitler assumes governmental power. He spoke against the authority Hitler has over the state run German Church.
- 1935 – 1937: He became the headmaster of the Preachers' Seminary of the Confessing Church in Finkenwalde. The Gestapo declared the seminary illegal and closed it in the Fall of 1937 forcing the seminary to teach underground. He wrote the *Cost of Discipleship* and *Life Together* during this period.
- 1939: Dietrich was in New York City lecturing when World War Two starts. He decided to return to Germany to support his former students and oppose Hitler.
- 1940 – 1943: Dietrich joined the Abwehr, a resistance group in Germany. He continued to teach while he acts as a courier to Abwehr. He met and became engaged to Maria von Wedemeyer. He is arrested because of his ties to Abwehr.
- 1945: Dietrich was hanged at the gallows on the morning of April 9<sup>th</sup>, 1945. His body was burned along with other prisoners at Flossenburg Concentration Camp. A memorial service was held on July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1945 in London where his parents learned of his death.