

Imagine yourselves living in Philippi at the time this was written—possibly around 60 CE

You're part of the first European Christian Church established when Paul came through the area

A few years later he came back through Macedonia and encouraged folks (Acts 20:1-6)

There are a couple of other Christian groups in Macedonia, but not very many

Likely, you have heard some pass on greetings as they travel through the area

But mostly, this Christian community is pretty isolated

Then one day, a letter arrives in Philippi—a letter from Paul and Timothy!

I can imagine everyone telling their friends to come quick and gather at the Meeting Place

To get a letter from Paul and Timothy was an important event

I'm guessing that the letter was also carried to the other Macedonian Churches after Philippi

This letter was read and re-read as they gleaned life and teachings from their friends

The letter begins with greetings from Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus

Probable author is Paul, yet he gives Timothy equal standing as co-author and minister

It is written to all the saints in Christ Jesus in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons

Saints – This refers to Christians, rather than a comment on the “sainthood” of people

In this sense, we are actually all saints because of our relationship with God

Bishops and deacons – Leaders in the church, rather than particular offices

Then he greets them... “*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Greeting of Shalom – all that makes them whole in God

The beginnings of this letter follow the conventions of first century letter writing

Addressing the letter and a greeting, followed by giving thanks and a prayer

While it may follow convention, it is done with a Pauline style

It centers on Christ and their place in the Christian community

These are words Paul writes to the church at Philippi, but they could be written to North Seattle Friends...

*I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.*

*And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.*

*Philippians 1:3-11 NRSV*

The people at Philippi are Paul's friends and he remembers them with joy and love as he prays for them

He sees God at work in their lives and even at the beginning, is confident that it will flourish

What God has begun in them... God will finish

Their love and care for one another is reciprocal, with a common purpose and goal

He concludes this section by praying blessing over them

*What of Paul's words to the Philippians speaks to your heart and the community at North Seattle Friends?*