

TOGETHER

**THOUGHTS AND STORIES
ABOUT LIVING IN COMMUNITY**

J E F F H A M P T O N

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PREFACE

I never intended to write a book about “community”—what that word means and what living in community means and looks like. With the advent of social media, I was invited by the associate pastor at my church to be one of several bloggers to offer weekly thoughts that would be posted on the church’s Facebook page. I jumped on the opportunity and seized it as a challenge to have a submission every week.

At the risk of sounding boastful, while other bloggers have come and gone or have been more sporadic, I have submitted something every week. The only deviation from that has been when the associate pastor has placed us on hiatus to provide other offerings during Advent and Lent. Even then, I’ve continued to post thoughts on my own website. I’ve now been doing this consistently for almost ten years.

For me it has been a writing challenge, probably coming out of my training and early work as a newspaper reporter where, if I wasn’t assigned something every day, I was challenged and encouraged to find good stories to tell. More important, it’s been a spiritual stretching of sorts. Some readers have called it a ministry. That may be true; that’s for them and now you to decide. But for me, the act of working out my thoughts at a keyboard has forced me to explore what I believe and whether or not I practice what I preach.

In the midst of this, we’ve made an interesting discovery. I say “we,” because my wife LeAnn suggested that I gather some of these writings in a book. She went back and began rereading them all, noting what she thought were the strongest and categorizing them by general topic. And that’s when we discovered that an overwhelming and recurring theme in these writings—week after week, year after year—has been community. Not “community” as defined by the census bureau and the chamber of commerce, but rather all the different types of community we live in. That includes family, friends, neighbors, churches, workplaces, towns, states, countries, races, and humankind. At different times we all live and interact in these communities—usually in several simultaneously.

The question then—and what these writings seem to ask—is how do we live in these communities? Are we contributors or detractors? Do we bring good or harm? Are we active or do we watch from the sidelines? What is our role for better or for worse?

The writings that follow pose these questions. Sometimes I suggest answers, sometimes I only hint at answers, and quite often I simply stir the conversation. I do this with personal stories and observations; sometimes the point is obvious, and sometimes it is resting between the lines. My hope in your reading is that you will join the conversation in whatever way you wish. I’m not asking you to go out and

join a community. You don't need to because you're already a member—of several, in fact. Instead, consider your place in your communities, your roles, what that means to them, and what that means to you.

—Jeff Hampton

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Published Contributions

American Builders Quarterly
American Cranes & Transport
Austin Magazine
Baptist News Global
Baylor Arts & Sciences Magazine
Branson: On-Stage in the Ozarks
Canadian Builders Quarterly
Commercial Aviation Report
Convenience Store News
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McLane Company: The First One Hundred Years, 1894–1994
Nation's Building News
New American Luxury
Texas Business
Texas Construction Magazine
Texas Sports
Texas: A State for All
The Baylor Lariat
The Baylor Line
The Creatives Magazine
The Dallas Morning News
The New York Times
Vitality
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