The Original Congregational Church

A Sermon Delivered January 23, 2022

1 Corinthians 12:12-31 “All the Members of the Body, though Many, are One Body”

***We Need You***

What I love about this passage from the Apostle Paul is that he has body parts talking to each other to illustrate how the church works.

He is comparing the church to way the human body works.

Every part is important. Every part relies on the function of the other parts.

No part is so small that it is insignificant. No part is so big that the others don’t matter.

Every part is needed for the good of the whole.

Imagine the human body. We have like 206 bones. Something like 639 muscles.

We’ve got organs like skin, plus ligaments, cartilage, veins, arteries, glands.

And you have to include stuff like blood, blood platelets, nerves, and what are those things that fire up thought in your brain? Neurotransmitters? Mine aren’t always firing!

Not to mention fat. Where did all this body fat come from. Could you imagine the conversation happening in my body? The middle aged belly says to the mouth “Thank You!” And “Hey, let’s order a large pizza—with extra cheese!!!!”

You know the story. You stub your toe. (Stub toe on pulpit base). It really hurts. The pain from your toe is saying to your eyes: Hey! Put your glasses on. You’re killing me down here.

The Apostle Paul is right. The eye can’t say to the hand, “I have no need of you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I have no need of you.”

And yet of course what do we know that Paul didn’t quite get into in his days. In contemporary medical practice we can in fact remove body parts that don’t work or that threaten the health of the whole system and we make up for it in other ways. The lesson: each part impacts all parts.

We are inventive, creative, imaginative, resilient, stubborn and willful. That’s when the rest of the body says to the brain, “Hey thanks for coming up with that brain!”

But the truth behind the comparison is that we are system that works best together. If compared to a church, a group of caring individuals, we become One in the Spirit.

Together we can do amazing things.

Functioning together, we can overcome great health challenges. Together we can overcome great life conditions and crisis. Together we can get a lot of stuff done.

And this is how it all works: No one part seeks to dominate the other parts. Each part does its part for the whole. Each part seeks the well-being of the other members of the body.

So the most powerful parts do not overwhelm the less powerful parts, but watch out for them.

The most honorable amongst us may actually be the unsung, undervalued, overlooked parts.

In the caring community we ask each of each other’s welfare:

Who is vulnerable? Who is at risk? Who is lonely? Who is sick? Who is troubled? Who is in danger? Who is lost? Who has stubbed their spiritual toe? Who has misused the body and made huge mistakes?

“Do all work miracles?” asks the Apostle Paul. No, not every part is the miracle worker. But together we work towards understanding, overcoming, hanging in there, and being redeemed.

One of the lines from all the Scripture that has informed and framed my career in ministry to the local parish is 1 Corinthians 12:26, “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together in it.”

When one member is suffering, we too are grieving. When one member is honored, we too join in the rejoicing. The well-being of one is the well-being of us all!

This defines living a Godly life. This defines being a follower of Christ. This defines our purpose and identity as people of faith. Who is hurting? Address the hurt. Who is celebrating? Let us celebrate and give thanks to God for each other.

So my foot says to my eyes: I need you. My hand says to my ears: I need you. My knees say to my hambone: I need you. My heart says to my head: I need you. My soul says to God: I need you.

This is our prayer for though we have many members, we are one body. And we are all in great needfulness. We all stand in the need of prayer, individually and altogether.

*Oh Lord, let what is right about our body serve with compassion what is wrong with our body, and in your great mercy, make our whole system turn out right, we pray in your name. Amen.*