

January 27, 2019, "Many Members, One Body", Rev. Thandiwe Dale-Ferguson

Corinthians 12:12-31 Common English Bible (CEB)

Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink. Certainly the body isn't one part but many.

If the foot says, "I'm not part of the body because I'm not a hand," does that mean it's not part of the body? If the ear says, "I'm not part of the body because I'm not an eye," does that mean it's not part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, what would happen to the hearing? And if the whole body were an ear, what would happen to the sense of smell? But as it is, God has placed each one of the parts in the body just like God wanted. If all were one and the same body part, what would happen to the body?

But as it is, there are many parts but one body. So the eye can't say to the hand, "I don't need you," or in turn, the head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you." Instead, the parts of the body that people think are the weakest are the most necessary. The parts of the body that we think are less honorable are the ones we honor the most. The private parts of our body that aren't presentable are the ones that are given the most dignity. The parts of our body that are presentable don't need this.

But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the part with less honor so that there won't be division in the body and so the parts might have mutual concern for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part gets the glory, all the parts celebrate with it. You are the body of Christ and parts of each other.

In the church, God has appointed first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, the ability to help others, leadership skills, different kinds of

tongues. All aren't apostles, are they? All aren't prophets, are they? All aren't teachers, are they? All don't perform miracles, do they? All don't have gifts of healing, do they? All don't speak in different tongues, do they? All don't interpret, do they? Use your ambition to try to get the greater gifts. And I'm going to show you an even better way.

Will you pray with me? Holy God, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of all of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

This morning's scripture picks up right where last Sunday's scripture let us off. If you recall, Paul writes this letter to the church in Corinth in response to conflicts and division that are happening there. In the first twelve verses of chapter 12, Paul calls the Corinthians to value ALL of their many and varied spiritual gifts, reminding them that everyone receives these gifts from the ONE Spirit.

Today, Paul uses the metaphor of a body and humor to show the Corinthians that they need each other and that all are important and essential to the functioning of the whole.

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Our congregation is a microcosm within the larger body of Christ -- we, too are like a body with many parts, each of them important to our ability to be whole. We can't all be ears or hearts or hands. We need kidneys and tonsils and funny bones. We need the humerus and the eyeball, toenails and eyelashes. All of it. We need each other.

Over the last year and a half, we have experienced some significant loss. As a congregation, and as a body we have some healing to do as we grieve the departures of the last pastor Erin, our director of children and youth ministries Robbie and a good number of our members and

friends. We have experienced divisions that have risen to the fore of our life together. We need healing.

This morning, we get to do some healing and also to have some fun together. I have set up four different stations for you to participate in.

A tree; A body; A mirror; A table with candles.

The tree -- In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells us: I am the vine, and you are the branches. This is another metaphor, like the metaphor of a body, to help us understand that we are all part of ONE WHOLE. You are invited to pin your photo to the tree if you brought one. Otherwise, we have a polaroid camera that you can use.

You'll notice that there are some photos already on the tree from our past -- people who have been part of this congregation and have died or have left but whose contributions continue to be part of our church history and family.

The body -- I've drawn the outline of a body on a large piece of paper. Imagine what part of the body of Christ you might be and either draw the body part -- it does not have to be anatomically correct or even recognizable -- or write down the name of that body part in its place-- it could be an arm or a leg, a heart or a kidney, a tooth or hair or the gall bladder. If someone has already written down the body part you are thinking of, that's okay, you can write it down again.

The mirror -- Each of us has a body. Each of us IS a body. As you approach the mirror, look at your body and know that it is part of Christ's body. Know that you are beloved, a precious child of God and beautiful to behold. On the mirror write down a gift that you bring to the body of Christ and give thanks to God.

Finally, **a table with candles** -- you are invited to light a candle for someone who has been part of this congregation and is no longer. The candle represents the light that they shared with us that we continue to carry even after they have left. It also represents our need for God's light

of healing in our lives as we grieve people's departure. If you feel so inclined, you can also write the person's name on a piece of paper and put it in the basket. Even after folks have left, we continue to hold them in our hearts.

You have about 10 minutes to participate in as few or as many of these stations as you would like. If mobility is difficult for you, please use paper and write or draw something for each station. I will come around (wave if I haven't come to you) and place your additions to each of our stations.

Friends, we need each other. We are part of the one body of Christ -- each of us belongs, and together we can be whole. As the music plays, please come on up! And have fun with it all!