

BETTER TOGETHER

“Many Members, One in Christ”

We finish our sermon series “Better Together.” This month has encouraged us to focus on our relationships and our calling to live out our faith in Jesus. We have dedicated our work, celebrated grandparents, and intergenerational relationships and last week we focused on grace that pushes us to see every human being as a child of God. This Sunday we finish with celebrating that we are many, but in Christ we are one. It is so easy to push away those who disagree with us, but as Jesus told the disciples: “Whoever is not against us is for us.” (Mark 9: 40) It is hard to believe that those with whom we do not see eye to eye are also part of the Reign of God. This weekend was to be a PRIDE celebration. Most activities have been canceled because of the Covid numbers, but this is the newest place where Christians are stretched as to whom we welcome with their many gifts and how we celebrate those gifts. Every generation struggles with who to include in order to more deeply live into the grace and love filled kingdom of God. May these weeks we live into “Open Hearts, Open Minds and Open Doors” as we embrace the truth that we are “Better Together.” Pastor Cindy

Things I'd like to remember from today's sermon: “Many Members, One in Christ”

This week's sermon may be viewed at <https://boxcast.tv/channel/f9yfyjzko2esfwfc5vkn>

Prayers for the Week

*O God, I come with gratitude for these moments when I can ease the pace of my life and listen for your voice. Create a spirit within me that truly draws me toward you and toward my brothers and sisters, a spirit deep, perceptive, gentle, and bold. Clear my mind, open my heart, and touch me with your presence and your power, that I may love you and serve you.
In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

Study Guide

Monday, September 27, 2021 1 Corinthians 12: 12-13

In the beginning of this chapter Paul is writing to the church at Corinth to remind them every person who is part of the community of faith is there for a reason. Each person is gifted, in one way or another: “There are different ministries and the same Lord and there are different activities but the same God who produces all of them in everyone.” (12: 5-6) The section we read on Sunday uses the analogy of the human body. The body has many parts but is still one body and the body of Christ is made up of many, many different kinds of people. In the early church this was so new and difficult, but in some ways, it is not easier in the 21st century.

Since the reformation, the church has continued to be challenged into new understandings and new kinds of leadership. The idea of being Better Together is challenging in each generation. *In a general sort of way, who do you think the church struggles to include? Who would groups be that would replace “Jew or Greek, or slave or free” in the modern community of faith?*

Tuesday, September 28, 2021 1 Corinthians 12: 14-18

Here Paul moves into almost ridiculous examples of how parts of the body might reject being part of the whole body. Having a “foot” proclaim it isn’t part of the body because it is not a “hand” is silly. And yet, how often are similar excuses used as to why someone “can’t” do something in the life of the community of faith? I am not good enough or smart enough or faithful enough to be part of the ministry of the church. The excuses used keeps the community of faith from being all that God has created it to be. *What excuses have you used to not attend or participate or work within a church, or organization or mission? Why would you believe your gifts and efforts are unworthy?*

Wednesday September 29, 2021 1 Corinthians 12: 19-23

So, if it isn’t a body part that considers itself unworthy, sometimes other parts try to rule the entire body. Paul again mentions a ridiculous example, “Eyes can’t say to hands I don’t need you!” Sometimes of course in a human body, there may be parts that do not work well or at all and the rest of the body compensates. Even the most “private” of parts according to Paul are important to the function of the whole. The body is Better Together for ALL the parts helping one another. *Have you experience parts of the community of faith who claim that you are, or your gifts are unimportant? Unacceptable? Have you ever given that impression to someone else? How does the church do that to others?*

Thursday September 30, 2021 1 Corinthians 12: 24-27

Paul ends this example with “You are the body of Christ and parts of each other.” In other words, we are Better Together. Sometimes the church struggles with being part of one another. That has included divisions over race, over culture and language, women, and the LGBTQ community. Even when we do not want to acknowledge who we consider “other” we are reminded that we are ONE in Christ, even if we do not want to be. We are called to suffer with the parts that are suffering and celebrate with the parts that are celebrating. *Is there a “part” of the church which is hard for you to accept as being part of the body of Christ? Can you pray for Christ to open your heart and spirit to learn how to live into a new relationship with those parts that are hard for you to accept?*

Friday, October 1, 2021 Mark 9: 38-41

This short experience in Mark is also seen in the gospel of Luke. There are people doing ministry in Jesus’ name but are not “part” of the group that are following him. The disciples are unhappy and command them to stop. Jesus comes back and says “Don’t stop them. Whoever does something in my name is not against us, but for us.” We are Better Together according to Jesus. Jesus goes on to speak of ministry offered in his name and that will be blessed and rewarded. This is often hard for the community of faith. The church wants people to “belong” to the particular understand they have of being a follower of Jesus. Jesus is far more open than that. *Today, pray for the ministry and mission of the church. Pray that your life and witness might invite others to faith and might include others in the outreach of Christ.*