

1 Corinthians 12:12-26
Unity in the Spirit

January 30, 2022 Sermon by Rev. Alex Creager

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

¹⁴Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²²On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴whereas our more respectable members do not need this.

But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, ²⁵that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

This week has been a humbling week for me. As many of you know Hannah, Alanna, and I finally moved into our new home this past Thursday. No more commuting from Williamsburg! Very excited for that.

As some of you may not know, though, my gifts for anything practical, especially home maintenance and repair are not the strongest. There’s an old episode of the Office where the boss Michael Scott takes the female staff out for a day. And on the way back, they get a flat tire. They look to him to for help, and he sees first the jack, and tries using it to unscrew the hubcaps, not knowing what it’s for. When Pam Beasley asks him what tool he needs, he has no idea, so he makes one up, and asks her, “Do you have a crescent allen?” I have never related more to a TV character in my life. That is me. Trying to unscrew a hubcap and a jack, and asking for a crescent allen.

So this past week, I have had to rely on so many people. Friends gave us boxes and gifts for the move. Church members offered to help pitch in with trucks and hands. I had issue with balancing our heat (an important one for this very cold weekend) and Claude Foster gave me a call back at 10pm one night to talk me through it. Alanna was with her grandparents this week so we'd have more space. And family members of all types have helped us paint, put on weather stripping, repair crib wheels, and unpack lots and lots and lots of boxes. Even the IT person for Verizon was a huge help in talking me through getting our internet at home finally hooked up.

I am humbled not because it's been a bad week, but because we have been surrounded by such community, care, support, and many, many gifts. It's been a big reminder to me that we are better not alone, not trying to do everything by ourselves. But we are better in community.

That is Paul's message to us this day as well. That we as the church are better in community. Our mission, our faith, our witness, and work is strongest not when it's just me or Janet or Connor or anyone person trying to do it all themselves. But when we worship, grow, serve, and pray together as one.

Like very church everywhere, we may not always agree on everything. I'm sure right now in this room and online we have people of very different political, social, and even theological views worshipping together. And even more than that, we have very different gifts and areas we are passionate about.

For many here, music and worship is where you invest so many of your gifts and time. For others, it's the work of justice and community building both within and outside these walls. For others, it's teaching classes and journeying with others in a deeper spiritual journey. For others it is making meals and offering space for fellowship. And that just touches the surface of all the different hands and feet, eyes and ears of the one body of Christ Paul mentions here today. And it's okay, it's actually great, if you have your specific areas of care and gifts and passion. None of us are meant to be doing it all.

But what can be a temptation and a challenge, at every church, is to focus, care and support only the ministries you are a part of, or that you have gifts for, and forget all the other areas and ministries, and especially people that are not doing the same things you do. It's the temptation of siloing off, and saying only this matters – only these gifts, these ministries these people.

That can be where we as the body of Christ can become most splintered and divisive. It's how we also can lose sight of what we truly are doing here – to be a community of love and welcome, where the Holy Spirit is alive binding us together, proclaiming God's justice, grace, and new life in Jesus Christ.

So how can we work to become that full community Christ calls us to be? Our first step is to get a wider view. To not just look at the areas we may be most connected with, but to remember and lift up all the ministries and gifts and people of the church. And that is what I want to invite you to do this week.

I want to invite you this week to consider an area of the church you may not be personally that involved with or connected to. Maybe it's music and choir. Maybe it's our communications team. Maybe it's Chef's club or RISC. Maybe it's our children's ministry or buildings and grounds, or those who steward our finances. Think about one that you are not that closely connected with. And then consider a person or two who is actively serving that ministry with their gifts. And this week, I want to invite you to write them a note, to that team or that person – an email or letter, or phone call, and let them know what a difference their gifts make to the wider church. Let them know that the church is stronger because of them and their ministry. I have to tell you, as someone who many of you have already written many notes to, each one means so much. And I know that will mean so much to people serving alongside you here at BAPC.

That is where we can start, as a community of various body parts and gifts. To be one that encourages. That lifts up. That shows value and gratitude to one another.

This week, I am so grateful that God calls us to walk this earth not alone. But in community. With people of various backgrounds and experiences, gifts and passions. Because I know I can't do it alone. But I can in community. I can with support. I can with love and encouragement. As the Psalmist says:

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! – Psalm 133.

Amen.