

October 22, 2017

“One in Spirit, One in Ministry”
I Corinthians 12:4-27, Matthew 28:16-20

Last Sunday was Laity Sunday, planned and led by our five lay servants. One of the themes of the service was that we are one body of Christ with different gifts and graces. That’s what Jesus calls us to be, one body of Christ.

Today, we will start our Stewardship season of the year. Some may not like the word, stewardship, associating it only with monetary contributions to the church. Let’s see what stewardship is, anyway?

According to Merriam/Webster on-line dictionary, it is,” the conducting, supervising, or managing of something; *especially*: the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care.”

An example is: stewardship of natural resources.

Personally, Stewardship season is an important season to me because it is the time for me to remind myself that all I think I have or own is actually God’s. Anything I refer to using the possessive pronoun, “my,” is not actually mine, but God’s, God’s gift to me for me to cherish, appreciate and offer back to God for God’s glory. They are, here I use the possessive pronoun, my time, my life, the gifts and talents God has given me, my body, and any material things I own. They are entrusted to my care as God’s gifts. The people I love are God’s gifts to me too. My family, friends and congregation.

So, my response would be: “with thankfulness I wisely take care of what’s given and entrusted to me, and use it to bring glory to God.” In a way, to be a good steward of God’s resources, God’s gifts, is a spiritual worship and offering to God.

That’s what we do in church, isn’t it? We offer our gifts of time, talents and resources to God and work together. Each has a different gift, whether it is a specific talent, a gift of time, monetary resources, a gift of love and caring. Whatever the gifts might be, we are called to offer them to build up the body of Christ so that we may be able to go out and “make disciples of all nations,” as Jesus commissioned his disciples then and now before he ascended to heaven.

I believe our church is in a good place now in many ways. Financially, we paid off the mortgage we had had from the construction of the new building over 15 years ago with the money left from the sale of the former parsonage and from the purchase of the new parsonage this year.

We have six lay servants, who are our spiritual leaders. Deacon Glenn Adone joined us as our Youth Director, appointed by our bishop. We have strong and dedicated leaders - developing, organizing and overseeing the programs and ministries of this congregation, as well as making sure that the buildings where those ministries take place are safe and sound. We have many faithful supporters and helpers as well.

I know many of you have recently received a phone call from our Nomination and Leadership Development team, thanking you for your ministry among us and asking you to continue to serve in many ways.

As I was making a list of the people for the Nomination team to call, I was wonderfully surprised at the long list of people I had in the end. It listed 55 people. Isn't it wonderful!

I don't mean that all those people have the same load of responsibilities or serve in similar capacities, but all are offering their gifts of time and talents. Praise God!

Our church can move forward **together** to a greater mission God has for us: making disciples of Jesus Christ and serving people in our community and beyond.

Let us direct our attention to "together." I hope and pray that we will continue to see the church as a whole, not as "our side and your side" or not as "our side and their side," but from the standpoint of "one body," serving together, covering the weaknesses of one another.

The Apostle Paul wrote in today's first lesson:

*"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."* (1 Cor. 12:25)

If a part of our body is weak or hurting, other parts cover it, don't they? If our right arm or shoulder has a problem, our left arm or shoulder covers. That's what God wants us to do with each other, supporting each other and covering the weaknesses with love and care as the body of Christ.

As I trust we all know and have experienced it, this congregation is a caring congregation. Let's continue to grow in our caring, which will unite us and bring us together.

Many people who joined our church in the past have said how welcoming this congregation was to them when they started to come to worship. They often say that that's one of the big reasons why they have joined our congregation.

Let's continue to grow as the church of "Open hearts, Open minds and Open Doors,"- welcoming all, as Jesus did .

May God continue to guide and bless us as we strive to be the church God has created us to be. Amen.