

Many of us think that we 21st century Christians invented church conflict. That is not the case. The text we are about to read from the Bible was written to address conflict that was going on in this early Christian church.

One of the issues that was going on in the early church was conflict over speaking in tongues. It was believed that people who spoke in tongues were more spiritual than people who could not speak in tongues. If you are unsure what it means to speak in tongues don't worry you are not alone.

Speaking in tongues is a spiritual gift where one utters a language which is not discernable by most of the people around you but is able to be understood by God. There are apparently some people who can interpret the language. If you have been involved in a Pentecostal church you are somewhat more familiar with speaking in tongues than you are in your typical Presbyterian Church.

So Paul writes to the church at Corinth to let them know that speaking in tongues is one gift among many. This is what we are about to read now. In attempting to teach about how to understand tongues in relation to other gifts Paul is going to use the image of the body working together.

Read I Corinthians 12:1-11 and refer to the rest of the chapter concerning the body

I am so excited that we have a Technology Task Force meeting on Wednesday night. Maybe it's not a big deal but I think it is a big deal. I think it is a big deal because of what is happening in this church. I think this Task Force shows how God is adding to the church foundation that was laid last year.

Last year when the Session met for our retreat we sensed that God was guiding us to lay a new foundation. Seeking to lay a new foundation led us toward the theme of “Making Connections.” We felt that God wanted us to reach out and make connections to others in our community and share and receive the love of Christ. Little did we know at the time that making connections would lead us to create what has been created across the street.

Making connections led us to build a walking track and to build a prayer chapel. Making connections led us to building picnic benches. Making connections led us to create a field across the street that is heavily used now by people in our community for exercise and spiritual development.

When the Session met a few weeks ago for our 2016 retreat, we discussed an article about how to reach out to younger adults. As we explored the suggestions in this article we realized that the information contained in the article was applicable in making connections to not just younger adults but a wide range of ages. Young adults. Older Adults. Teenagers.

One of the first suggestions in the article was that churches needed to increase their web presence. In other words, churches need to make better use of the World Wide Web to reach out and make connections to people. We should no longer think that folks showing up for worship in this building on a Sunday morning as the only way to make connections.

This attempt to expand our web presence is what has led to the technology task force that will begin meeting this Wednesday. They will begin to review our current web technology and what changes need to be made so that we can reach out and make connections to a broader range of people.

I share information about this task force because I think that pulling people together who have a passion and knowledge of technology is a wonderful example of what Paul is talking about in the passage which we have read today.

Paul uses the image of the body to talk about how the body needs eyes and ears and all of the body parts working together for the body to work best. If the body is missing any parts then the body is not as effective. All of the parts are important. No part is more important than other parts.

Churches historically have done a poor job of using the many talents that people have in the congregation. We tend to look for people that can teach a class or for people that have the gift of certain types of leadership. As a result, lots and lots of people never get connected to the life of a congregation because we value some gifts over others.

Saying that some gifts were more important than others is what Paul writes to the Corinthians about. Some thought that they were smarter than others in the church so therefore they were more important. Some thought that speaking in tongues was a better gift so they felt as though they were more spiritual. Paul tried to inform the church in Corinth that all of their gifts were important and needed.

I hope that having a technology task force to help us expand our web presence is another turning point for us. Another example of how God uses people with the gift of technological innovation to advance the ministry of this congregation. And there is space on the task force if there are others here who want to come on Wednesday night and share your talents.

There are many opportunities here for you to share your gifts and talents and be a part of this body. And there may be ways that you are called to bring in your gifts and create ministries that we do not currently have.

I was at a workshop this week and the person leading the workshop brought in this wonderful piece of wood sculpture. The sculpture was of Jesus being tempted in the desert. This piece of art was made by a member of this person's congregation. Every gift that we have can be used to bring glory to God and share the love of Jesus Christ.

Today in worship we will be ordaining and installing our newest class of elders. We in the Presbyterian Church are unique in that we ordain lay people into service. We don't set them above others but ordination is an act that recognizes that everyone has gifts of ministry.

We are one body here with many members. We have many members with many gifts.

I encourage you to prayerfully consider how God is calling you to share your gifts, whatever those are, to further the ministry of this church.

I encourage you to use your gifts, whatever they are, to help this body to give a greater witness to the love of Jesus Christ. AMEN.

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-Given: January 17, 2016 in Allison Creek Presbyterian (York, SC)