

Barre Congregational Church

October 9, 2022: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost** ~

Stewardship Sunday

“Living Together”

Our services can be found on our website at www.barrechurch.com

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12 v 12-27

I. Introduction:

When we live in one house, or work together, play sports for a team, and perform with others in a musical group and more, we bring our own personalities, gifts, and creativity, needs and desires and more to this family unit or group. Things go well for the most part when everyone experience the comfort and support from those around them. When things are not so good, for example, when one person feels sick or there are misunderstandings, everyone else is affected by that. If the household or any of these groups mentioned have a culture of support and unity, then the person who does not do or feel well, finds that those around her/him make things feel much better. We know that it is not always the case, that we sometimes have disunity and arguments, and sadness in our homes and in our workspaces, and we carry that around and it affects us negatively.

II. Living and working together as one Body

At the beginning of our Stewardship campaign, we as a congregation have the opportunity to reaffirm our connection to God as children of God, bound together by the Holy Spirit, with Christ as the Head of the church. In this relationship we live and work together in the spirit of building up the church through the gifts we each bring as individuals to our congregation. We therefore echo what Paul is reminding the Corinthians of here in our passage, to not be ignorant, but to remember that as a church they are first and foremost the church of Jesus Christ, their Lord through the Holy Spirit. Outside that proclamation, they would just be another group of some sort. From that proclamation, they are now reminded that they each have spiritual gifts which are different from person to person and

while they offer their unique services to the community of faith, that the same God works through all of them through the same Spirit. This is an important mission statement for them, and how they must be thinking of themselves as a church. This proclamation is the foundation upon which they must operate, and therefore no one must divide the Body by suggesting that one person is better than the other, that one person is less important and less useful than the other. They all must humble themselves and admit that they need each other. Paul Gardner in the Commentary on 1 Corinthians states that the grace-gifts must build up and unite the Body, rather than divide it, referring to verse 25 and 27 in our passage, “v 25: So that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other, and v 27: Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.” In his view Paul advocates for mutual interdependence that holds the body together. In other words, lean on and learn from each other, because each one brings something unique to the table; support one another, because you will need each other in this God-work on earth.

III. Learn from our physical bodies

Paul uses the metaphor of the physical body, which he says, was arranged in different parts by God, just the way God wanted them to be and act in their own unique way. In the same way must it be with the church, the Body of Christ, in verse 12. He describes how the ear, even though it may say it doesn't belong to the body, because it is not the eye, is still part of the body. The same with the foot, saying I am not the hand, and therefore I am not part of the body...it is still part of the body. If the whole body would be the eye, where would the sense of hearing come from? And so, the eye cannot say to the hand, I don't need you! Paul continues to talk about the parts of the body that seem weaker and less honorable but are in fact the ones that need to be treated with care and special honor. What would it be like if the whole body is only made up of the eye? Where would the body be? He turns around the idea of how the elite and the arrogant may treat those lesser beings in their eyes, which is not what the Body of Christ looks like and acts like. In God's eyes everyone comes with their unique gifts and are viewed and treated in the same way.

IV. A personal story

I grew up in a large family, where each of us siblings had unique personalities and different gifts and talents. I do not know how my parents managed to keep everything together with eight children in the house, but they did well! We were taught to be at peace with one another, which was not always easy! We were to respect each other's education and abilities. No one was better than the other. We just knew and accepted that so and so was doing this and accomplished that. We would be proud of the accomplishments and support the one who would struggle. Life was not perfect living together in one home. Money was not always there, but the gift of living together as a family with very different gifts and abilities was precious. I am so appreciative of my parents, and my siblings for a life with them, the values instilled in us as children, the fun we had, the challenging and sad times we had, and the parental encouragement as we started our lives outside the home.

Families, we know are not always the "perfect picture" of the mom and dad with their kids in a comfortable home. The family make-up through the years had shifted to look very different from the social norm, but where loved ones are together in whatever way or form, that is where family is. Family life can feel like there is wholeness, and sometimes it can feel somewhat broken. Through it all we live together and pray to God to make it work.

V. Conclusion

Paul is encouraging us this morning to look at our physical bodies, which again are not perfect. Some of us feel pretty good most days, and some of us have some aches and pains. Disease have struck some of our bodies, and many others have been affected by physical challenges. He encourages us to look at our bodies and see the value of every bodily part. The parts that feel weak, must be treated with honor and respect and care. He then wants us to look at our families, however we are made up, and see each other the way God sees us, filled with love, even though life is not always easy with some family members, or there is some weakness and struggle. We are called to live with one another in peace, love, and respect. Then he brings us into our church life and instructs us about the Body of Christ which is like our own bodies. In the same way as we would not regard any of our limbs as useless and lesser than, we ought to treat everyone in this Body of Christ as one. So, as we

reaffirm our commitment to God as the Body of Christ during this Stewardship month, may God help us to be in a deeper spiritual relationship with God and one another. May we live and work together as God would want us to and be a light in the world around us. Amen.