

We're not Lacking if We Have the Same Mind

DEVOTIONALS : 22 - 28 JANUARY 2023

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:1-18

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he declares that the church has everything it needs to be the church. That's an amazing and powerful statement of faith. Too often, we spend time wishing – wishing we had more people or more resources or more volunteers or more ministries/activity. But what if, instead, we were simply thankful? Thankful for the gifts we have, for the people we have, for how they give of themselves and their resources and give thanks for the mission and witness that we are able to do week by week.

Of course, we want to encourage more. But not because we are lacking. No, we encourage more because we don't want anyone to miss out on the joy of being the body of Christ, the joy of serving, the joy of worship. Let us come from an attitude of abundance and not scarcity.

"Have the Same Mind?" - this is a hard one, don't you think? In our increasingly antagonistic society and world, to consider the community as having the same mind as a sign of the kin-dom, might be a bit of an overreach. Yet this is the call from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. In fact, this is the first call the Apostle Paul gives us in this letter, so he at least thinks it is important.

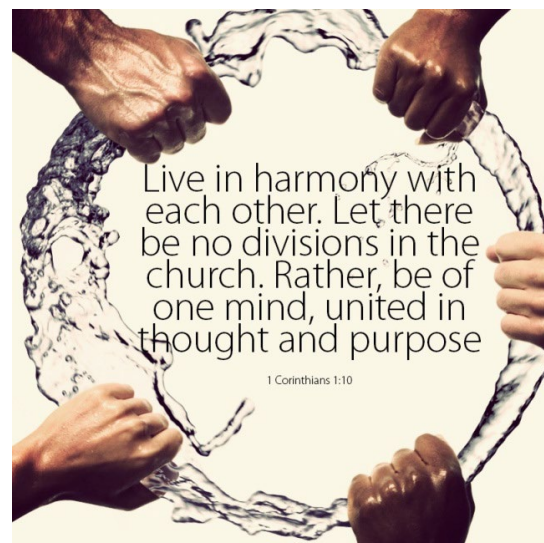
Yes, just reading verse 10 will tell us how seriously Paul takes it as he makes his approach to all that is going on in the church at Corinth.

"Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

How many times does he say the same thing in that single verse? "Be in agreement" and "no divisions among you" and "be united in the same mind" and "the same purpose." All repetitions or at best nuances of the same idea. For Paul, what is tearing the church apart is the fact that they don't agree. Unfortunately, Paul doesn't tell us exactly what it means to be of the same mind. Does it mean that we have to agree on every single point of doctrine and ethics? Does it mean that we have to read the scriptures in exactly the same way every time? Does it mean that there is absolutely no room for differences or nuance? That you have to apply the word to your life in exactly the same way that I apply the word in mine?

What if we back up a moment and examine what Paul might have had in mind when he told the church in Corinth to be of the same mind? The first thing to note is that he addresses them as ***"brothers and sisters."*** He uses a familial reference, even when trying to correct their behavior or at least their thinking about their behavior. "Brothers and sisters," he says, we are connected, we are united, we are the family that was created not by blood, but by the life and witness and death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ. Even in a conflicted situation, there needs to be a sense of connection, a belief in community. So, might we say that being of the same mind is that we all agree that our primary effort is in building up the body – ***"the needs of the many, outweigh the needs of the few, or the one."***

So, let's not mute this high calling "to be in agreement" by saying it is something less than what it is. This isn't a live and let live approach, or an indication that nothing really matters as long as we're nice to each other. There is more here. More gospel, more truth, more invitation than we might realize. But there is also a clear prioritizing of approach and understanding. What Paul argues is that the community needs to take a higher place than we might think. In the USA, we sometimes overvalue the individual, and some branches of the Christian faith say that it is all about me and Jesus.



Paul argues for something else. Yes, of course, the individual is important, but so is the **church**, so is the **community of faith**. We are in this together. Again and again, the gospel indicates that we are not in this alone, that we are made to work this out together; we are meant to be reconciled(reunited); we are meant to be in relationship with God and with neighbor. If one of our prime values is the building up of the body, then we approach differences and disagreements with a clear goal toward reconciliation. We want to preserve the community and not simply be right. This influences how we argue, or how we resolve differences or variations of interpretations of scripture or applications of the gospel in our lives.

And maybe he is asking us to consider how our internal squabbles look to the wider world. They don't get wrapped up in the detail of the theology behind the debate, rather they only see how we (the church) treat one another when we disagree, and that reflects badly on the larger Church. So, Paul reminds us the crux of our proclamation looks very different from the outside.

That might be a leap, I admit. But the call to watch how we live out our faith is clear. Even when we disagree, even when we have differences of interpretation, can we be on the same mind that Christ is the way of hope and of salvation? Can we come back to the principal and find common ground even as we continue to move in different directions? Can we live in grace always?

In verses 1-9; we celebrate our abundance, in the next 9 verses, we give thanks for our relationships. We can celebrate the life of the community, in fellowship, in learning together and serving together. We rejoice in our reach, which is always greater together than separately. There is an African proverb that says: ***if you want to go fast go alone; but if you want to go far, then go together.*** Friends, I hope and pray that we are in this relationship for the long haul, all the way to the kin-dom of God. And along the journey, we will live by kin-dom rules, we show kin-dom values, we rejoice in kin-dom priorities, which sometimes means - ***I set aside my personal preferences for the good of the whole.*** And we realize more often than not, that personal (self) good is fulfilled by the good of the whole community.

So, let us sing of the church and the joy that we have in communion and fellowship. We pray for the healing of broken relationships and misunderstandings so that our witness can be stronger. We give thanks for our leaders and teachers and pillars who have sacrificed much to help us be the church we are. And we continually look out for ways to be open to invite and include those who are not yet a part of the fellowship of the church. We live hand in hand inside but with an intentional and committed outward focus and hope. ***We are making disciples of Jesus Christ, and there is always, always room for more.***

God of unity, we come before you dismayed at our own divisions. We have struggled as your church to live in unity; but we are divided – along the fault lines of our societies. The ruptures in our families, among friends, among denominations, among nations are wide and deep. When we attempt to get on the same page, we build taller walls and dig deeper trenches. God, help us! We know that Christ is not divided. We know that it is your baptism to which we have been called. It is your service to which we are compelled. You have called us to proclaim the gospel, but we even fight about what that is. Help us, God! Help us give up our power and our privileges. Help us to yield for the sake and cause of the cross of Jesus. Help us to want the unity you share, for you are one; in you, there is no division. Help us to embrace and to live a life emptied of power and given to service, in the likeness of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Help us to walk in salvation – in the name of the servant Christ, amen. (Carolyn W. Dandridge, The Africana Worship Book)

Stewardship for the Whole Congregation

People in our congregation are in different places financially. We are working towards ensuring our stewardship ministry disciple all. **“But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.”** Jeremiah 17:7-8



People find themselves in different places financially. We have folks who are stressed out, struggling to meet their monthly bills, and wondering how they're going to get through the month. We also have others who are making it from month to month but are in unrealized danger because they're not being intentional enough with their money. And we have those who are blessed with relatively abundant resources but aren't maximizing the impact of their situation for *making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world...*

God calls all of us to Biblical standards of stewardship. But exactly what that looks like differs in different circumstances. Jesus told the rich young man to sell everything and give to the poor, then come and follow him; but he made no such request of Zacchaeus, who nonetheless demonstrated Biblical stewardship in his own way (compare Matthew 19:16-22 with Luke 19:1-9).

Stewardship means being faithful with God's resources in whatever situation we're in. We can be faithful stewards (or not) in the midst of debt. We can be faithful stewards (or not) in the midst of plenty. Faithfulness in stewardship is not so much about where we are financially, but more about being obedient with God's resources in that situation.

WITH GRATEFUL HEARTS...Please return your pledge card by Jan. 29, 2023

PRAYER & CONCERNS

HOW CAN WE PRAY FOR YOU TODAY?

- We are praying for miraculous healing for **Mr. Brett Barnett** as he was admitted to the hospital with several medical concerns. "Great Physician, look upon Mr. Brett with eyes of mercy. May Your healing hand rest upon him; may Your life-giving powers flow into every cell of his body; cleansing, purifying, restoring Mr. Brett to wholeness and strength for service in Your Kingdom. Amen." Cards and notes of healing and support can be mailed to: Mr. Brett and Ms. Mary Barnett, 932 Hillcrest Street, West Bend, WI 53095.
- Words cannot begin to express the heartfelt sadness and grief we are experiencing for the passing of our beloved **Ms. Beverly "Bev" June Vogel**. To Ms. Bev's family: "Always be assured that you have our full support, prayers and love." May God grant us grace, that in pain we may find comfort, in sorrow hope, in death resurrection. Amen.
- The theme of our Fall Stewardship was "Earn, Save, Give" as we passionately prayed for God to bless us indeed, and enlarge our territory! We believe our church will demonstrate their faith and their gratitude for God's gifts by making generous pledges to continue supporting the mission and ministry of Fifth Ave. United Methodist Church in 2023. Thank you to all who completed their 2022 pledge commitments and have already turned in their 2023 pledge forms, and a heartfelt *thank you* to those who made new pledges or increased their pledge! Every gift is welcome and needed to help support our ministry.
- **We still need YOU! We need leaders and volunteers to serve in various positions on committees and boards. You may not think you have the gift, talent, and/or time to serve, but all are called to work in the kingdom. We need you!**
- We extend our deepest condolences and prayers of love and support to **Mr. Brett Barnett** on the passing of his sister, **Ms. Jerrie Barnett**. A Celebration of Life Service will be held, December 18th, in Michigan. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. Cards and notes of condolences and support can be mailed to: Mr. Brett and Ms. Mary Barnett, 932 Hillcrest Street, West Bend, WI 53095.
- With love and support, we extend our heartfelt condolences to **Mr. Leslie Dalton** on the passing of his sister, **Alice Dickmann** on Dec. 7. Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen. Messages and cards of care and condolences can be mailed to: Mr. Leslie and Mrs. Alana Dalton, 4959 Lake Drive, West Bend, WI 53095
- **Mr. Don Walters** is still experiencing several medical challenges. We're keeping Ms. Joyce in our thoughts and prayers as well. Letters and notes of encouragement and love can be mailed to: Mr. Don and Mrs. Joyce Walters, 5368 Woodlawn Summit, West Bend, WI 53095.

- **Ms. Jeri Bowerman**, had cardiac stents inserted. Please send her your cards and notes of love, support and courage: Ms. Jeri Bowerman, New Perspectives Senior Living, 2130 Continental Drive, #322, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Ms. Sandy Wamser** having been diagnosed with Epilepsy, is still working with her medical team to find the correct medications and doses to control the seizures. She is very grateful for your love, prayers and support. Special prayers for Mr. Pat as he cares for Ms. Sandy. Cards and notes can be sent to: Mr. Pat and Mrs. Sandy Wamser, 3742 Pleasant Valley Road, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf**, appreciates your continued prayers for healing and strength as she continues to struggle with illness. You can send emails of prayers and support to: alankempf33@gmail.com; or cards and notes to Mrs. Janice Liepert-Kempf, 414B. South Pleasantview Road, Plymouth, WI 53073; phone number: 920.838.1830.
- **Mr. Ralph Hensel**. A Celebration of Life Service was held on Saturday, November 19, 2022 for Mr. Ralph. Continue to pray and care for Ms. Bonnie and the family. Cards and notes of support and love can be mailed to: Mrs. Bonnie Hensel, 629 Highland View Drive, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Bro. Bob Krell**, prayers for strength and continued healing. Please mail cards and notes of prayer and encouragement to: Bro. Bob and Mrs. Jean Krell, 804 Lenora Drive, West Bend, WI 53090
- **Mr. Chuck Rogge** is still on a journey of healing. He is grateful for the cards and notes of support. Please continue to flood the mailbox with love and support to: Mr. Chuck and Mrs. Sue Rogge, 5011 Hwy. P, West Bend, WI 53095
- **Ms. Nancy Whitson** is still admitted at The Pavilion at Glacier Valley. She requests your prayers and support as she continues to journey with health concerns. Please send cards and notes of encouragement to: Mrs. Nancy Whitson, 922 Hickory Street, West Bend, WI 53095
- **Mr. Dick Simmons**, diagnosed with acute leukemia. "Dear God, we place our worries in your hands. We place Mr. Dick's sickness under your care and humbly ask for strength and comfort. Be near him in times of weakness and pain; sustain him by your grace, that Mr. Dick's strength and courage may not fail; give him confidence in the power of your grace, that even when he is afraid, may he put his whole trust in you. We pray all of these things in Your name. Amen. Mr. Dick, Ms. Shirley and family, we are sending you love, hugs, support and prayers during this difficult time. Cards, notes filled with prayers and support can be mailed to: Mr. Dick and Mrs. Shirley Simmons, 2908 Valley Avenue, West Bend, WI 53095.
- Lord, we ask you to plant seeds of courage and hope in **Ms. Lora Santiago**, daughter of Mr. Peter and Ms. Katie Glaser, as melanoma cancer has been found in her leg despite having immunotherapy. Your seeds of love and care through cards and notes can be mailed to: Ms. Lora Santiago, C/O Ms. Katie Glaser, N166 W21211 Glencoe Lane, Jackson, WI 53037.
- **Mr. Len McGinnis, Jr.**, continues to quietly face medical challenges. Your cards and notes of support and well wishes for Mr. Len and Mrs. Shelia McGinnis can be mailed to: 1230 Vogt Drive, West Bend, WI 53095.
- **Ms. Linda Green**, sister of Mrs. Debra Matthies, thank you for your continued prayers for strength and courage as her cancer has returned and has metastasized. She is starting another round of chemotherapy and request your prayers that it will be successful. Please send her your cards and notes of support and faith. Her mailing address is: Ms. Linda Green, 2920 Donahue Ferry Road, Pineville, LA 71360.
- Many of our **church family members and friends** are experiencing health concerns. Please join me in praying for their healing and restoration. Amen.

PRAYER: Dear God, I know that the first step in all spiritual healing is to believe. I believe! I open my mind and heart believing in your infinite power and possibility. I believe that healing is a dynamic and reachable experience, a reality that can be experienced right now. I maintain a patient and loving attitude, for I believe that your healing activity is now at work in my mind and body. I look forward, with joyful expectation, to the perfect wholeness that you are now bringing into manifestation through me. I believe in your constant expression of perfect good in and through me. I rest in the certainty of your healing power. I know that with you all things are possible. In Jesus Christ's name, Amen.

Pastor Clarissa & Bro. Martín