

In Ephesians 4, Paul shared that “Jesus gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ”.

We want everyone to attain the whole measure of Christ. Later in that section of text Paul says, “From Christ the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love as each part does its work.”

The language of the bible is that everyone has a part and if we each do our part, the church is built up and edified.

When God blesses His children with gifts and talents, He desires them to be used to build up His church. There is no better fulfillment, both church-wide and personally, than when we use what God has given us to bless others. Some of these gifts and talents are public and some of them happen behind the scenes, but all are God-honoring. God has so blessed this church. As leaders, we’ve been blessed to see and experience this. Thank you!

We wrestle with two questions: “Are we using all of our Missional Partners in the way God has purposed and gifted?” and “If not, what effect does that have on the church and on God’s mission?” That wrestling has been in the form of seeking, above all, to follow God’s leading, while also recognizing that change can be hard on his followers. Paul writes, after listing many gifts, in 1 Corinthians 12:11: “All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.” We have asked ourselves, “Are we quenching the Spirit?” We have also asked, “Are everyone’s gifts and talents being used to the fullest, both church-wide and personally”?

The elders of the OP Church believe all faithful Missional Partners should be able to fully participate in our worship to serve and to build up the church as they are gifted. Therefore, the elders have determined that when we start meeting in the building again in October, in both services we will begin using the gifts of any of our faithful Christian women who desire to serve. This is a change for our acapella service that we said one day would happen, and we believe now is the right time.

We have prayerfully waited to make this change. We know for some of you this change is long overdue, and we appreciate your patience. We also know that for some of you this will be difficult, but please give us the opportunity to share some things that we hope will help in understanding why we believe God is calling OP Church in this direction. This Sunday, Gilbert will begin a new sermon series where he will take us on a journey through the Scriptures, helping us to better understand why we are convinced that this change is both biblically grounded and missionally appropriate. We ask you to listen to these sermons with an open mind and a humble heart and, as always, we will be available to discuss any questions you may have.

I also want to note that when we re-enter the building our early service will remain acapella.

*We want to close with a couple of scriptures that share two important results of what God did through Jesus for all of us.*

*Jesus told his disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the promised Spirit came. When that happened, Peter addressed the crowd by quoting the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions and your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy... (Acts 2:17-18)"*

*You are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26-28)*

We love you!

Your Elders

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.