

## **We are One Body!** **1 Corinthians 12:12-27**

### **Vacation**

This is Labor-day weekend. After today, official vacation season will be over, summer fever will die down and people get back to their ordinary lives. Do you lament the end of summer and your vacation time? Actually, I do not really miss my vacation month! I took the month of August off for study which was really more difficult than my usual work and so I am really glad that my vacation is over! And also really happy to be back at the church with all of you!

During my time off, I participated in worship services online which was good for many reasons. First, I didn't have to prepare sermons so I could relax during the worship service. Second, all the messages were so wonderful that I would love to hear from Asbury preachers again. The music was beautiful, and of course, I could drink my coffee during the service. Furthermore, the upgraded worship equipment ran really well and now I know where to look when I talk to those who worship at home!

Most of all, it was wonderful because I could sense how our Asbury UMC works together as one body of Christ even during the times of my absence. As Apostle Paul said, "there is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body!" As a pastor, I sometimes feel that I am responsible for the church. However, this vacation time reminded me that we are the church and I am blessed to be a part of this wonderful community.

As I wrote in my monthly newsletter, the morning glories in my backyard finally bloomed. [ppt] A small vine found its way upward and gradually climbed up the wall and reached an old pine tree of my neighbor. It grasped one of its branches and kept climbing up and on its way, it has bloomed beautiful flowers. I felt as if the old pine tree finally bloomed with flowers. This collaborative work gave me some strength while I endured my month-long vacation.

Similar to this pine tree and morning glory, I have seen how the Asbury UMC community has developed close relationships with one another and shared in collaborative leadership. When Asbury UMC needed to apply for our outdoor concert permit, I knew whom to ask for help. When the concert had to be canceled due to the hurricane, Joan White and Kerri Dorsey made a wise decision for all of us. While I was away, the Asbury outreach committee received a grant from the New England Conference and actively prepared for our Food for Soul project to serve our neighbors. The Finance Committee, Trustees, Bazar committee... and every one of you who were here on Sunday mornings... you, as one body of Christ, have built our beautiful Asbury church together and I could see it and feel it when I stepped back from the church and you carried on. So I would like to thank you for your love for one another and love for Asbury, including your pastor.

### **One Body**

We are different and our diversity is our strength. I am not good at singing, so when I need someone to lead a worship song, I call Alice and Ned. I am not good at decorating things so I rely on the Chancel guild on such matters. For any building issues, I call Warren. I am not good at numbers, so I count on the finance committee. Do you know what I am good at? I am pretty good at asking for help from others! So when your pastor asks you to do something, please don't say, 'no.'

Some of you may feel that you have nothing to offer to the church because of your health, age or financial situation. But it has been said, “Nobody is so poor he has nothing to give, and nobody is so rich he has nothing to receive.” We all need each other. So I ask you to share your gifts, whatever they are, share them with Asbury and one another to build up our beautiful church.

I know that Asbury is a welcoming and loving community. But we must acknowledge that we are not perfect in love. We should not stop growing in faith and love until our journey in this world ends. How can we be a more loving church? I have read a story about a small monastery where the monks were constantly at each other’s throats, fighting and cursing at one another. One night, during evening worship, a mysterious guest knocked at the chapel door. When they opened the door, this guest said “One of you is Jesus Christ” and suddenly disappear. Can you guess what happened after that? The hostile atmosphere in the monastery changed at once. Not sure which one was Jesus, but knowing Jesus was among them, each monk treated the other with respect and awe. In that way, they became the church. How can we be a more loving community of faith? By treating one another as we would treat Jesus. By cherishing one another as we cherish Jesus. By loving one another as we would love Jesus. In that way, our Asbury will become a more loving and healthy church!

## **Baptism**

Apostle Paul reminds us that to be one body of Christ, we need to give more attention and care to weaker members with great honor and love. In that way, the church can be united as one and grow in love. We all need one another to be one body of Christ. No matter who you are, you are precious and indispensable for this church. That means our children are indispensable members of Asbury.

Today Ella, Jacob and Carter will be baptized and will become members of Asbury UMC. They are kids, so they are weaker members. It means that we, Asbury UMC, have responsibility for their well-being and spiritual growth. I ask all of you to pray for them as they become members of this holy body and help them to feel God’s love for them through your hands and words. Children know if they are loved, so love them! I am sure that watching them grow in faith and love at Asbury UMC will be our great joy. It is also a sign that we are still alive and a vibrant church in the world.

My friends, we are one body in Christ. Christ has made us a new family. This is the blessing. So let us continue to build our church in faith and nurture our members with love and respect. As we become perfect in love, we will foretaste the joy of God’s loving kin-dom. With grateful hearts, let us celebrate the baptism for Ella, Jacob and Carter.