

*12For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 21The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; 24whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, 25that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. 26If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.*

*27Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. 28And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. 29Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31But strive for the greater gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.*

It started when I rode my exercise bike. I seldom do. I prefer to walk. But on that cold day when the streets were icy I went down to my basement and started pedaling. By the time I was done the muscles around my left knee were sore.

A few days later I noticed an area on the ball of my left foot. It felt like I had badly bruised it. I thought it meant that my walking shoes were worn out. I talked with my doctor about it. He suggested that sometimes one injury will cause another, that maybe I was walking differently because I had injured something else. I thought of my knee.

Since that time a few weeks ago both knee and foot are better. I am thankful for that.

But the whole experience has reminded me just how connected everything is in our bodies.

*Just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many are one body so it is with Christ. If one member suffers all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.*

Christians are connected as much as my knee is connected to my foot. We are connected in Christ - one body.

But we are not all the same. The eye does not do what the ear does, nor the hand what the foot does - one but different, yet all essential.

Can this church do without you? You know that it cannot. Without you part of what God intends would be lost. You are as expendable as an elbow joint, or an ear or a thigh muscle. Now you and I may not give any thought at all to an elbow joint or an ear or a thigh muscle until there is an injury or pain. Only then are we reminded what an elbow means - or how difficult hearing loss is - or what it is like to walk with a limp.

So many of you contribute and serve and no one seems to notice. No one says thanks. Sometimes it is not until someone is gone that we realize how essential their gifts have been to us all.

Others of you would give your gifts but no one will ask. You are like an eye on a person who walks with his eyes closed. How precious what you have to give! But no one will receive it and the whole body suffers.

What if the nose said, "I do not want any help from the eyes or the ears?" Can you imagine trying to cross the street by sniffing to detect the aroma of an approaching car? The nose is important indeed but the body would soon die. Yet I find that in the church I have a hard time sharing. I like to be the one who visits the shut-ins. I like to hear their words of gratitude. But once I began to share this task I heard many words of appreciation about the people who were also doing this visiting. Am I less important to the shut-ins now? I think so. But what we do together here is not about how important I am or you are – it is about how the love of Christ may be lived and shared.

New people come here to worship with us. Are they a threat to the parts of the body that are most honored now? If one of them reads the lesson or heads the committee or does the task that you have been doing some of the honor that was yours will be lost. Are they needed? If the nose will let the eyes and the ears help with crossing the street, it will soon be apparent just how much they were needed. But the nose won't be nearly as important.

What Paul wanted to impress upon the Corinthians is that life in the church is not about me. Life in the church is not about you. Life in the church is about Christ – how Christ claims each of us and all the world. But when you or I are thinking only about ourselves then Christ is not able to do his work.

It is like this: what happens when I sit and do nothing. I get fidgety - an ache here, an itch there. The various parts of my body all want some attention and the only way to get it is to make me uncomfortable. But when I am involved in a task the aches and itches disappear, the more intensely I am involved the more I may not even notice serious pain.

The body of Christ gets into trouble when we are sitting and doing nothing. When we forget what Christ needs for us to do together and start thinking about ourselves then the itches and the aches are everywhere. Complaining, finding fault – these are the aches and itches of the body of Christ.

Christ has so much work for you to do. If your spirit is full of aches and itches it is time to stop resting and start serving your neighbor.

Christ has so much work for us to do. If your gifts are not being used look around and see something that needs changing, someone who needs listening, some task that needs doing. Look around for someone whom you can ask for help with the task.

You are the body of Christ.

There is so much that Christ wants to accomplish.