

## **SUNDAY October 5, 2025 “We are One”**

### **Psalm 118 I Corinthians 12 12-27 Luke 8:4-8, 11-15**

Glenwood United Church is celebrating 70 years of faithful ministry in the name of Jesus Christ! Praise be to God! It is a day to be excited for not only are we celebrating our birthday we are also looking to the future to envision what God is saying to us here and now! We are striving to understand the path ahead when we know that what occurred in the past with hundreds of kids in Sunday School, and the need to have 40 people on the Board, is no longer the church of today. We need to remember that our foundation is Jesus Christ.

It is a special day in the life of the church for each Anniversary is a vital signpost in the life of the church. We need to commemorate and give thanks for the ways God has led us in the past, blessed those who went before us and how God has called us now and will continue to do so. But we must remember that the church is the people who commit themselves to serve Christ with others who have similar faith beliefs and truly love God!

In Paul's First letter to the Corinthians, the church is described using visible parts of the human body. This is what would have been known and understood at the time. There were no CAT scans, MRI machines, x-rays or ultrasound machines to see within the human body so Paul wrote about the parts he could see and kept this analogy easy to visualize. He describes the relationship between foot, hand, eye, ear and nose as each being equally important but only in relationship to the whole. Paul writes that God arranged the members in the body each one of them as he chose because it made sense for the purpose of the whole body. Paul also states that the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, those we think are less honourable are clothed with greater honour and those perceived as less respectable members are treated with greater respect. God has arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member so that there may be no dissension within the body. This is so that all may care for one another. This is also important if one suffers we all suffer, if another part is honoured we all rejoice together! And isn't this the ideal for the church? Then Paul states- you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. But what does this mean for us in this moment? How do we describe ourselves as Christ's body?

WE are the people who are committed in faith, willing to serve and put in many hours of expended energy and tireless effort and work, all for the purpose of striving to do and be what we think the church should be in 2025. But what the church moving to is and will be different from what it was in the past at least in the memories we have. This is and has been true for every generation. Just think for a moment how everyone needed to dress up, with hats, gloves

suit and ties to be present. This was reflective of the times when everyone wore shirts and ties and dresses to work and even to do housework!

But times have changed and so has priorities in our lives. Priorities which for many people do not include an affiliation with any church, mosque or synagogue. Yet for we who sitting together in this moment whether in person or online-- the church community, the body of Christ is a priority in life because of many reasons. Some people have shared with me the reason to come to church-- this is my family away from blood relatives, this is my source of weekly hugs, this is where for one hour I can stop and listen and experience God's Spirit and it is the place where good friends which last a lifetime are made. It is where Jesus' love is shared, shown and taught. And it is where peace may be experienced.

What is the ideal church? Various schools of thought float about, but most often reflect about the building or property and what is lacking, needs fixing or replacing. Very rarely have discussions focused on- the needs- spiritual and pastoral needs -of the people and how these needs are being met.

The Ideal church does not exist -because those who are members and adherents to each and every church are sinners who need to hear again and again the message of hope and forgiveness in Christ. But we also hear is why is the church in another area growing? What is it that we are missing? What sets the church of Jesus Christ apart from service clubs, sports facilities or even staying at home? Maybe we need to look beyond being the hand, eye, foot or ear- the visible parts of the body and see what exists or what drives us spiritually from within.

As minister my three main tasks to which I was ordained focus on word, sacrament and pastoral care. When we worship together we share the Good News through scriptures and sermons. Just last week we shared in the waters of baptism and today we will have communion. But it is the third task which to me sets the church apart is unique.

Where else can a whole family of all different varieties- make up, background, ages = come together and be welcomed with hugs and handshakes for just being present? This is the church and as such what we do beyond the Sunday worship time is what is known as pastoral care. And pastoral care is a part of everyone's task as a believer in Christ for he is the One who leads and teaches us. How are we being the body of Christ and tending to the needs of the those we call our members-- weaker, indispensable, honourable, respected, or even the inferior or those young in faith or those early in a faith journey but seeking to learning more about Christ as adults. Maybe this is the renewed vision that the body of Christ, the church needs?

Or maybe we need to seek God's help to discern what it is that we are called to do? As church membership shrinks we cannot do what we could do even 6 years ago prepandemic. It

has been statistically shown that the pre-covid church was already in decline; the covid years expedited changes. Yet what we know as the post- modern church of today, is similar to the church that Paul writes to in Corinth. A church pivoting to something new; seeking its place, looking for guidance and wondering what it means to live and be the body of Christ.

In these last years there have been several moments of what to do next, how are we going to get things done, and always with on our minds and hearts is the money to make things happen. There have been both joys and struggles in these times. Along with this, mistakes were made, people were hurt, and yet we continue to be, knowing that by faith we can and do forgive others. This also shows that we have grown spiritually as Christ has lead us.

It would be great if the technology of today- CAT/ MRIs/x-ray and ultrasound could zero in on our spiritual selves as individuals and as a church family to discover where we are in our faith. But this is not possible. So by mirroring ourselves what do we know about Glenwood UC today?

The community knows who we are- not only as the place for book sales and bake sales with a big parking lot, but the church that cares and reaches out. We are the ones who reached out to help when people were coming from Ukraine to Canada; we are the ones who supported Trukiye's relief efforts for items needed overseas after an earthquake; we are the ones who open our doors to community groups as a place of welcome and retreat when needed.

We are the church with signposts at Dominion and Grand Marais which point to where we are and who we are. Our tree of life logo offers hope to people and leads us to become one for all of eternity. And it is this tree that reflects the stories and teachings from Genesis to Revelation as God's Spirit moves us to understand the tree of life which leads to life eternal. We are also the community of faith that welcomes everyone - no clarification or description required- - you are welcome to the table of Jesus Christ just as you are, for who you are, a child of God and who God calls you to be.

We are also the community of faith that shares with the Windsor Korean First Presbyterian Church and have done so for 16 years. We have worshiped together, shared the kitchen, cleared tables of food and mess and then filled them again. This is because who we are together is greater than what we could ever be on our own.

So what are we to do as we enter the next years of ministry? We are to remember the past. Just as God formed His people in the past, God is still forming or working on us. As in the words of the Creed, God has created and is creating in us people who will live out their lives in faith to be received in the promised heaven above. And we as co-creators with God are to care for others pastoral and plant seeds of hope. Plant seeds like the sower in the parable as shared

form Luke 8. We are to take a chance by sharing seeds of hope- by telling Jesus' story to all whom we meet. We will not know if these seeds will grow, but nothing will happen if we don't try.

For as the parable states, that some seed landed and was trampled on and eaten by birds. Some seed fell on rocks, grew for a short time and then withered away without water. Some seeds fell amongst thorns, grew a bit with them, and then were choked to death. And still other seeds fell into great soil- grew well under great conditions in balance and in need and eventually produced well.

And this job is lifelong- sowing seeds of faith, of hope and praying that all will grow and live long and prosper. It is those seeds that fall where they can be nurtured, watered and cared for, that will lead to something good. But we must invest time in having the seed to sow, and letting God lead us.

Churches grow because there is a vision that is caught by people of all ages -- we all count- whether 90, 9 or a baby- for without any vision to grasp onto and move forward with, there is no future. And the vision we need to hold on to as we look to the future is planting seeds for tomorrow while we look within ourselves and seeing beyond the parts of the body that are visible. Really seeing what we as church people are capable of doing, giving thanks for this and asking for God's Spirit to lead us in doing it.

We are called by God's grace to reflect light that shines for the world today. This light is Jesus in our hearts and minds. And it is up to us to tell His story. For it is in Christ that we are one. One in Christ, one with each other and one for the world to see. Jesus is the One True Head of the Church so let us offer to God our thanks and praise. Amen.