

SUNDAY, January 26, 2025 EPIPHANY3 "part of the body"

Nehemiah 8:1-10 | Corinthians 12: 12-31 Luke 4:14-21

Mission statements for non-profit charitable organizations have been written and rewritten time and again in order that those who are a part of the organization whether in leadership, stakeholders or committed members are clearly informed as to know the scope of work or best practises for the organization.

For example the Windsor regional hospital vision is: Outstanding Care - No Exceptions! The mission is to " Provide quality person-centred health care services to our community." With care being spelled out as compassion, accountability, respect and excellence. These ideas are what is needed to ensure everyone is cared for well at WRH.

As we approach the end of the first month of 2025 what is the mission of the church and specifically Glenwood United Church? Glenwood church is preparing to celebrate its 70th anniversary this year along with the UCC celebrating its founding after 100 years. From where do we derive our mission/ our purpose our reason to continue to share the good news?

We must start with who we deem as the one on whom we follow. Who is Jesus? This is a foundational question of faith as followers of Jesus and as a church which professes Jesus Christ as lord. But what do we understand when we ask, "Who is Jesus?"

Last week we learned about the first miracle Jesus shared as an invited guest to a wedding. When they ran out of wine, Jesus made more with the water in the water jugs filled by the servants. This showed that Jesus was not just an ordinary man, but of God who could do amazing things. Our gospel reading today from Luke 4 marks the beginning of Jesus' ministry in the sense of his preaching/ teaching. For we must remember that Jesus' purpose was not to perform miracles; yes these were great and drew the crowds to him, but his purpose was to seek and save those lost from God. This passage from Luke, strives to tell the connection between God the father and Jesus the son as it states very clearly Jesus' mission or purpose on earth. The passage Jesus chose to read in his home synagogue of Nazareth was a statement from the prophet Isaiah 61:1-2. And after Jesus reads it, he states, 'today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' Those hearing him, were not sure what to think. But many did act and tried to get rid of him. Jesus passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

What had they objected to? THE words of the prophet? Or that Jesus declared himself to be the one upon whom the spirit has anointed to do the tasks clearly presented. Why was the crowd angry? They had known Jesus all his life in the community and nothing was said, but with

this declaration they were just not sure what to do. Where was their faith in God to fulfill what he said he would do? OR was the crowd just not sure what to do? And then there was division in the midst of the people- how could this be? Jesus- The carpenter's son, the messiah? How? Had they doubted their faith and were blaming others? Were they not gifted to see who Jesus was/is/would be? How could Jesus be the One? Why couldn't Jesus be the promised messiah?

Sometimes it is difficult to see Jesus for who he is and how the church may respond. Such is the case that Paul encounters through the young church at Corinth. We need to remember that Paul wrote letters to the churches at different times early in the ministry to help combat problems, conflicts and just what would be best for the church. Paul begins by saying he doesn't want them to be uninformed. Every Christian is spiritual, or one of the "spiritual ones," because every Christian has the Holy Spirit because the spirit upon an individual signifies belonging to God and his church. Only those with the Holy Spirit can truthfully and sincerely say "Jesus is Lord," and every believer can say that Spiritual gifts, acts of service, and other godly activities come in a wide variety. What they have in common is that each one comes from the Holy Spirit, given and to be used in service to Jesus. Each one is possible only through the power of the same God the Father. Spiritual gifts are not about the people who use them; they are ultimately about God and His purposes.

How often we forget this! That the church is not about us as individuals or specific groups- but about God, Jesus and the spirit. And we are reminded of this as Paul writes to the people at Corinth. We need to remember that the letters of Paul were instructions about the church that was just established. People were unsure of what to do and receive and so they asked questions- in order for Paul to answer- about God, Jesus, the church and spiritual gifts. Paul urged the Corinthians to think of their church, and the worldwide church in general, as a kind of body. A human body is just one thing, one organism, but it is made up of many different parts, all with different functions. In the same way, the church is made up of many believers, all connected by the Holy Spirit in them, and it is just one thing: Christ's body on earth. It would be ridiculous for body parts to declare they were quitting the body because they can't be another part. It would be equally silly for any body part to say it doesn't need the other parts. Christians, too, should discover how essential their role in Christ's body really is, as well as learning to value how needed every other function is. Even those parts thought of as "less honorable" are given special care and honor, because we instinctively know how important they are! The same ought to apply to how Christians treat each other as we use and encourage spiritual gifts.

Paul then writes, that in the church at Corinth, the first, second, and third most essential gifted positions were apostle, prophet, and teacher. This seems to suggest that those are the roles most impactful, or at least the most potent, in fulfilling the church's role. But as Paul has stated in this chapter, however, those gifts cannot be effective unless the other members of the body are being honored, and being active. All roles need to be contributing in order to make the body function well. This is also true of our own physical body. An ear may receive sound signals but unless the brain responds and turns them into something it understands as words, sounds or voices, the function of the ear is lost. IF one's heart pumps blood everywhere but the feet, the feet suffer and cannot perform. Such is the case of the church.

We must make it clear that the head of the church is Jesus Christ for Paul wrote to the church at Colossae (Colossians 1:17–18a) “And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church.” The church is the body, and Jesus is the head. Jesus was before all things and holds all things together. Jesus is the one true head of the church. But do we always remember this?

How might we show this relationship between Jesus his faithful followers, like us, who serve him in his church? Paul states that there is an excellent way--to do this. And this will be our focus for next week, one of the most well known passages from Paul's letters a depiction of Christian love as God intended it to be.

BUT meanwhile how do we see our mission in 2025? IS Christ the one true head of the church? How do we come together for worship, outreach and friendship? How might we expand this? For we must remember that the mission of the church according to Matthew is to actively go out into the world and make disciples of Jesus Christ by sharing the Gospel, baptizing new believers, and teaching them to follow Jesus' commands and ultimately bringing people into a community of faith and worshiping God together. This is what binds us and guides us for we each strive to live in perfect love for eternity.

Let us pray.

God of grace and hope we praise you and ask for your blessing upon this church family. Remind us of our mission, our purpose and that we are each a part of the body of this community of faith with Jesus as the head. Help us to hear your word for us today as we seek to grow in strength and in hope. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.