

ALL EYES

Nehemiah 8, I Corinthians 12:12-31

The human body has 206 bones, 639 muscles, and about 6 pounds of skin, along with ligaments, cartilage, veins, arteries, blood, fat, and more. Every time we hear a sound; every time we take step; every time we take a breath, hundreds of different parts work together so that what we experience is a single movement, our minds and bodies working as one unit. Even the greatest engineers struggle to achieve anything like it in mechanical form. The human body represents one of the most complex systems in existence.

The metaphor offered by Paul in this Letter to the Corinthians is of individual members together comprising one complete body and offers the hearer the image of how churches function as people come together to worship, educate, for fellowship, and for mission.

I have said before, and I will repeat it many times before I leave FPC, it is not by accident that we are here, together at this particular time. Each of us is here for a reason and a purpose. We are here by God's design and for God's purposes.

Each of us has a particular ability or talent that is needed in this body of Christ to accomplish God's purposes here. All of us are not eyes. We cannot all be ears. Who would have need of all hands?

Each of us belongs to the body. We come to the water of baptism as individuals, independent and relatively self-contained. We pass through the waters and come out CHANGED! Our identity is no longer solitary; we can no longer truly be known without reference to the community into which we have been incorporated. The Body of Christ. The church. We are more than just ourselves...we are in relationship...satisfying one of the basic human needs...we belong.

One of the primary responsibilities of the Church is to provide those whom God brings into our midst a place to experience hope and find a sense of belonging. Belonging means participating. Belonging...being a part of the Body of Christ...means that because you have, and continue to experience the joy that comes from a close personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and being an active disciple in service with other disciples, you WHAT - feel compelled - to share that with every one you meet. That joy is contagious.

Two weeks ago we met as a congregation to discuss this congregation and the future. Yesterday your elders met for the majority of the day to address the future and to discern how God is calling FPC to move forward. This is just a beginning. But one thing of which we are certain, God is calling us to identify the abilities...the things each of you do that gives you joy, and then plug you into the mission of this church. So...I want to see a show of hands...who among you likes to paint? Cook? Clean? Write? Decorate? Fish? Organize trips? Plan parties? Drive groups? Sew? Knit? Crochet? Do crafts? Raise money? Talk on the telephone? Work on the computer? Write letters and notes?

Also, a product of our time together yesterday was the acknowledgement that FPC has been in this same place several times in the past 10-20 years and you have heard, and/or said, the same things of that period of time. And as a result, there is certain amount of disbelief, or negativity surrounding the ideas and thoughts that bubble up as we move and talk about renewal. I am asking each of you to commit and concentrate on the

positive...AND if you hear one of the parts of the body speaking negatively...stop them and, in a very loving way, help them to refine their thoughts in a positive way.

There is a box in the Narthex awaiting your suggestions for ways we can renew the life of the congregation. USE IT. I will be checking each week. Get excited. Pray daily for God's direction. Be open to how God is speaking to you about the mission and vision for FPC. Listen for God's direction and for God's affirmations. Listen as God helps you identify the role you are to play in this BODY of CHRIST. Identify and engage your gifts giving God the glory for all you do. Amen.