

1 Corinthians 12:12-31

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 honourable we clothe with greater honour, 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 honour 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 honoured, 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.

Luke 4:14-21

14Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. 15He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. 16When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 18“*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, 19to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.*” 20And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

The Body of Christ. Sermon by Revd David Treharne

“Now you are the body of Christ” St Paul says in Vs 27 of Chapter 12. What a powerful statement! You are the Body of Christ... You, the church, God’s people, those in relation to him are Christ’s body!! What does it mean to be the Body of Christ? What does it look like for us?

1. The body is One... (1 Cor 12:12).

One body, not multiple bodies. No factions or divisions – we are all joined together in the one Christ. How appropriate to reflect on this in this week of prayer for

Christian Unity. The Christian (those in Christ) community has a call to be one, echoing the prayer of Jesus “Father, may they be one as you and I are one”. The call to unity. The call to be joined together in Christ. In love. Love one another (John 13:34). Paul is talking here about a real connectedness to each other in Christ.

What does this mean? What might this look like?

Well, Toni and Neil and their family are with us today. It’s lovely to have you here. On the one hand we rejoice with them as their banns are read and we await their wedding ceremony here in a few weeks time. But they have also had the devastation of bereavement in the family this last week. Now we may not have known each other for long or particularly well, but the principles and reality of what it means to be the Body of Christ hold true. We are connected to one another in and through Christ. We are related to one another in and through Christ. We have a responsibility and unity with one another through Jesus Christ. We weep with you, and we will rejoice with you.

One of my hopes is that in what is a year of community for us here we will learn once again what it is to be the Body of Christ, connected together in Christ... one in him. We are lots of different groups of people; a mixture of traditions, experiences, backgrounds, ages, genders all joined together in Christ (In Christ is an expression used over 70 times in the New Testament)... called to...

Be devoted to one another, live in harmony..., accept, instruct, use gifts for each other, share, greet, serve, bear one another’s burdens, be kind, forgive, look to one another’s interests, love, bear each other, encourage, build up, live in peace, spur one another on to good works, confess sins to each other, pray and be hospitable. This is what the church should look like. The ONE ANOTHER’S are a real working out of what it is to be the Body of Christ, the church.

In Christ let us discover and rediscover that one anotherhood through the one Spirit that we all share. Welded together by love (1 Cor 13 – more excellent way). **That genuine Christian unity which brings healthy vibrant growth.**

2. Re-membered Body

Being one in Christ has many challenges. Parts of the Body of Christ have been detached, even dismembered because of Covid and that has been painful. Indeed, I freely admit that my relationship with God has suffered these last 2 years from not being able to gather properly as church, because it’s not only a ‘me and God’ faith, it’s ‘we and God’ faith.

Covid aside it’s so easy to become detached, disconnected and dismembered from the Body of Christ, and it is a task to ‘re-member’ where possible. Playing on the word, ‘RE-MEMBERING’ is a central act of our faith. “Do this to remember me”

(Luke 22:19). Bring back together those that are ‘dismembered.’ We are called to ‘re-member’ Christ’s body.

Each part of the Body is crucial, but I am aware that there are those who are missing, some who have left, or are on the edges, or have not yet arrived. The body is incomplete without the ear lobes, the eyebrows, the shoulder blades. There may indeed be indispensable parts missing!

People with gifts that are crucial to the life, health and vibrancy of the body, 1 Cor 12:14-16

verses 21-24 the problem of those who deny others’ gifts.

1 Cor 12:18-20 We need everyone to use their gifts that God gives for the building up of the Church if we are to function well as the local church.

Crucially, we must always remember that Christ is the head of the Body, the Church, and it is vital to remain in relationship to him. We are the body of Christ and as such we must be prepared to take a lead from the HEAD who is CHRIST! It is Christ who defines us. Without Christ we are nothing but a social club and a headless chicken!

Some of you may remember that story about a large vine that grew against a cathedral in a European city. For many years the vine was a tourist attraction, flourishing because its roots drew nourishment from fresh underground streams. But then it became diseased and unfruitful. The city authorities began an investigation into the cause and discovered that, deep underground, the roots of the vine had entered a broken sewer pipe. Rather than drinking clean spring water, the vine had been drawing in dirty, contaminated water, and this had made the plant diseased.

The vine had become detached from the source of its life and health.

Jesus says, John 15:4-8, **⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.**

⁵ “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

We are called to abide, that is, to live in and remain attached to Christ. He is the Christian’s life source, for “without Me you can do nothing” John 15:5.

3. A Body in Shape. (One Body... Remembered)

And finally, let's think about the health of the body. When I arrived in the Parish I had an image about us as a body needing to get into the right shape. Most of us know what it's like to be out of shape!

What steps do we need to take to get into the shape God wants for us? What spiritual, emotional and physical exercises do we need to be undertaking as individuals and as a community so we are in the best shape to undertake the mission Christ has for us?

We have our identity 'in Christ' as part of His body. But the body is not equipped and empowered and built up for its own sake. It is built up and empowered to carry out a purpose and mission. Christ had/has a mission and that mission also belongs to His body, the church. Christ's mission is our mission. If we're not functioning right as individuals and as a community it may well be a struggle for us to carry out the mission entrusted to us.

(Luke 4) the mission he has for His Body to do!

- Good news to the poor
- Proclamation of release to the captives
- Recovery of sight to the blind
- Let the oppressed go free
- Proclaim the year of the Lord's favour

*"But you are **a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession**, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light." 1 Peter 2.*

May we learn and relearn what it is to be God's people once again. May we remember the Body of Christ in this place and get into the shape he wants so we can live and work to his praise and glory.