

“Now You”
January 24, 2010
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Well, I have been a resident of the Hamptons for one week and one day now. Thanks be to God! We are almost completely settled. We even have our pictures hung up! The transition has been smooth thanks to a great beginning. Last Saturday was our moving day. At 8:00 in the morning, eight folks from church—including two youth (which really amazes me) swept down on our ramshackle apartment in Ware and quickly and efficiently packed us up in about an hour—bureaus, cabinets, chairs, tables, dishes, books, this, that and the other—*everything* out in about an hour. Now, moving days are usually horrid. But not this one—it was a *great moving* day.

We worked like we were *one body*... We had a common goal, and a common purpose, and although we were many, we functioned as one. I think most of us have worked among others like we were all part of a greater body, at one time or another. Most of us have probably taken part in helping someone move, or stacked firewood, or maybe even helped to build, renovate or expand a building. In those situations you have to find ways to function collectively for anything to go smoothly.

When we were moving last week we naturally fell into different roles: now you would be lifting and hauling; now you would be scoping out what would fit where; now you would be strategizing about how to haul a bulky washing machine up narrow steps. We would fluidly take on one task and then move to the next task, adopting several roles over the course of the move. No one was unnecessary, and everyone contributed to the whole.

Paul tells us that the same is true for the Body of Christ. Now, it can be easy to imagine that our own role in the Body of Christ is small, or maybe even insignificant. But, hear again these words from our brother Paul: “the members of the body that seem to be weaker are *indispensable*...”¹ Not tolerated, not acceptable, not merely OK—but indispensable! That’s a powerful message for every one of us who may feel like we aren’t too important in the church. The Church universal—which we make up in this particular place and time—needs every one of us to really *be* the Body of Christ. We need everyone who is a mover and shaker, and we need the folks who sometimes just stand on the sidelines. We need everyone who is an expert on scripture, and all the folks who are confused and befuddled by the big book. We need everyone who has a thriving faith, and everyone who needs to find the spark of inspiration to bring them back through the door. Without the full array of who we are, the Body of Christ remains incomplete.

¹ 1 Corinthians 12:22.

Now, make no mistake...this religious community business is not always harmonious. Not every day is a great moving day in church. It is not always easy, it is not always quick, and it is sometimes downright sloppy. Emotions run high and can be hard to hold back when we have disagreements. We sometimes work with people who challenge us in one way or another. Occasionally we may confront people with whom we feel we have no common ground.

But we do not come together as church in order to forward our own personal agendas. We do not gather in church to remind ourselves of our differences. We gather in church to discern Christ's agenda *for us*. That's what makes our church different from an ethical society, or a country club. Now, like those other groups, we do gather for common purposes. But we understand our common purpose to be discerning God's will. We work for the Lord, not a human agenda. God is immense. God is a lot bigger than any one of us, or all of us. So, of course we are going to bump heads on the way to discerning God's will for us, and we need a variety of opinions and perspectives to figure it all out.

It's OK to struggle and strive together, because that's what people do when they gather—but we do so in our faith community with the ultimate goal of “no dissension within the body.”² That's the ideal: *no dissension* within the body. We get there by remembering first and foremost that as Christians we are called to care for one another, and that in order for the Body of Christ to function we *need* to work together. We are each individual parts in the Body of Christ, but our common goal is that the Body prospers. Because, as Paul reminds us: “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”³

Almost two thousand years ago Jesus Christ had a physical body. He walked the earth. He slept and ate, cried and shouted, loved, preached, worked miracles, and healed. Now *you* are Christ's Body in the world. *Now you* are called to do all Christ's good work. Now you, although an individual, although but one member, *now you* are called to work for the greater good of Christ's will. And if that thought doesn't terrify you on some level, you are far braver than I am. That's why God gave us one another to partner with in doing Christ's work.

Jesus started this whole thing. Now you keep it going. Now you urge it on toward harmony and completion. Now you, you, you—all of us—see it through. I know we can do it. I have seen us come together in meetings and worship, at bedsides and out in the world. I have faith in us. On this day of our Annual Meeting, and in all our meetings and actions going forward, let's truly come together as the Body of Christ, and make every day a great moving day.

² 1 Corinthians 12:25

³ 1 Corinthians 12:26.

Amen.

1 Corinthians 12:12-27

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.