

**Community of Servanthood**

1 Corinthians 12:12-26

Do you remember the title of our sermon series? [Essentials-Being A Church In A Troubled World](#). Today, we will delve into one of our identities as the servants of God. It reminds us of Jesus Christ's call in the world in Mark 10:45, "**For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.**" (Mark 10:45 NRSV). Our call to be God's servant is an extension of Jesus Christ's servant ministry.

However, we must always be very careful not to be spiritually arrogant and think of ourselves as superior to other people. As Jesus and His disciples traveled to Capernaum, the disciples argued among themselves about who was the greatest (Mark 9:33-35). Even though Peter, James, and John witnessed Jesus' transfiguration on Mount Tabor or Mount Hermon, they, along with the other disciples, asked Jesus who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:1-4). When Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem where he would be crucified, James and John asked to sit at Jesus' right and left in His glory (Mark 10:35-45), which prompted anger among the other disciples (Mark 10:35-45). At the Last Supper, an argument broke out among the disciples over who was the greatest among them (Luke 22:24-47). The argument erupted immediately after Jesus Christ spoke of His impending death and resurrection as He instituted the Lord's Supper (communion) for His disciples.

We need to be very careful about who we are as God's servants and remember Jesus Christ's words, "**Anyone who wants to be first must be very last, and the servant of all.**" (Mark 9:35 NIV).

Apostle Paul planted the church in [Corinth during his second missionary journey \(Acts 15:36-18:22, AD 49-52\)](#), as recorded in Acts 18. He spent 18 months there, teaching and developing the new Christian community. After Paul left, he received reports from the church that divisions, immorality, and doctrinal misunderstandings were rampant in the Corinthian church. So, 1 Corinthians is Apostle Paul's response to the rising challenges and theological questions the Corinthian church faced.

One of the challenges they faced was about their spiritual gifts. God abundantly blessed the Corinthian church with different kinds of spiritual gifts. This means that God wanted to use the church to reveal His holiness and love to the community of Corinth, where moral and sexual decadence was their idol.

However, Christians there bragged about their spiritual gifts. Some who had extraordinary spiritual gifts, such as speaking tongues and prophecy, felt superior to their church members who had so-called “ordinary” spiritual gifts, such as serving others and caring for other members.

In this kind of spiritually unruly situation, God spoke to them through Apostle Paul about the meaning of Christian ministry and the things they had to remember and hold onto as they tried to be the church of God in the broken and corrupt city of Corinth.

As we are called to be a Community of Servanthood, we must remember the following three lessons from the Corinthian church.

**First, our servant ministry must reflect the unity of the Holy Spirit.**

“For 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.” (1 Corinthians 12:13 NRSV).

Our ministry is not about us but about our God. Our focus of ministry is not just doing something for God but being God’s vehicle to reveal who God is, His love and holiness. When we focus on ourselves, we will lose our power and influence over the world. The only way we can maintain our transformative influence over the world is to keep the unity of the Holy Spirit in us. By doing so, people will be led to Christ.

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *abad* is used for both “worship” and “work” or “service.” The Greek verb *leitourgeō*, meaning “to minister,” is the root of our English word “liturgy.” Thus, in both the Old and New Testaments, worship is service, and service is worship. They are inseparable.

“Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace. For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future.” (Ephesians 4:3-4 NLT).

Please remember that it is your job to protect the unity of our church.

**Second, our ministry is to build up one another.**

“Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If 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. And 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. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body

were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?” (1 Corinthians 12:14-17 NRSV).

We belong to one another and need one another. The goal of our lives is sanctification. To achieve that goal, God has blessed us with Carleton United Methodist Church. In our fellowship as a church, we support one another, encourage each other, and walk together through all circumstances, utilizing the spiritual gifts He has given us.

There are three primary ways to discover your spiritual gifts. Firstly, seek feedback from those around you about the gifts they perceive in you. Secondly, consider volunteering in ministries that interest you to explore potential fit and suitability. Lastly, utilize the “Spiritual Gifts Inventory” provided by The Discipleship Ministries. By completing the 80-question assessment on their website, you can gain insights into your potential spiritual gifts. However, the most effective approach is often to consult with family and friends for their honest assessment of your spiritual gifts.

Let me remind you of one of the membership vows you made when you joined the church. [“United Methodists vow to faithfully participate in the church’s ministries by their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their service, and their witness.”](#) By doing so, we will come to understand more about God, His love, and our purpose. This understanding will transform us to love God and our neighbors more sincerely and more like Jesus Christ. That is our sanctification.

Please remember 1 Corinthians 12:18, [“But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it.”](#) (1 Corinthians 12:18 NLT). We are here at Carleton UMC because God has brought us together according to His will. We are meant to be His church together.

**Lastly, when we honor and give our focus on the weaker parts of the body, we can overcome any conflicts and challenges in the body.**

[“On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and 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, whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body,”](#) (1 Corinthians 12:22-25 NRSV)

One day, my father’s family gathered at my grandfather’s house to celebrate Korean Thanksgiving. Suddenly, I screamed in pain. I had been playing in my father’s car when I accidentally jammed my left index finger in the door. The pain

was beyond anything I could have imagined. Have you ever experienced that? Without hesitation, I held my finger with my right hand, jumping up and down frantically. My entire focus was on the pain in my index finger. For several minutes, my whole body reacted to the pain, leaving no room in my mind to think about anything else. This experience showed me how our bodies work together to RESPOND to challenges, heal, and restore. It took my entire body to heal that injury. Whenever I read 1 Corinthians, it reminds me of that accident. **“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.”** (1 Corinthians 12:26 NRSV)

As we continually focus on the weak in our body, our body will be stronger and more splendid, reflecting God’s Kingdom on earth. Please know that God knows every effort we make to serve others. **“For God is not unjust; he will not overlook your work and the love that you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do.”** (Hebrews 6:10 NRSV)