

Brian's Sermon Text for Sunday Worshiping at Brentwood

Sunday, Sept 20, 2020

Together in the Spirit

(Psalm 145:1-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-31)

**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 the one Spirit.
(1 Cor 12:13)**



Word to Ponder = Together

Congregational Wisdom = united, love, gathering with intention, connected in unity, community, working together for the greater good, respect, strength, eyes off self, at times challenging to live into, God integrating us, love of neighbour, pay attention to weakness, consult together on possibilities and plans, the 'we' that occurs at Brentwood, but not everywhere else

The divisions in Corinth were chronic.

They generated stress injuries that weakened the social fabric.
The city was held together by the imposition of imperial power.
Religious communities held together by a rigid legalism.

And the church?

Well, the church was hardly hanging together at all.

It was made up of an excited and diverse lot.

They were excited by the new freedoms offered by this new faith.

They came from every background you could imagine.

They gathered with all their enthusiasms and eccentricities to form a community to continue Christ's missioning for the world.

But their divisions were getting the best of them and weakening their witness to the forgiving and reconciling love of God.

But God saw potential here,
as our Creator, Redeemer, and Reformer always did – and does.
Through the person of Jesus Christ, God sent Paul to heal the divisions,
to reform the various parts of the dis-eased body
into a healthier communal ambassador (*presbeuo*)
of God's peaceable kin-dom project.

That's what the Spirit is bringing us together for.

At Brentwood, over these past 10 years or so,
we've been brought together around a flow of words
that seems to capture that purpose well.

We are ambassadors of God's kin-dom project
By nourishing souls to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ
through worship, learning, fellowship, and service.
We cultivate space and support for the Spirit to do that together with us
serving as the body of Jesus Christ in this world.

By God's mercy and grace, we have not experienced
the divisions that other congregations have faced
or that various parts of Christ's body face in the church universal.

We are a diverse lot,
but we manage our differences well
by welcoming and respecting the manifold gifts such variety offers.
And a powerful reason for that is our common purpose.

We resolve any conflicts that emerge
by asking each other what serves that purpose best,
ensuring everyone who want to has a voice has it.
Then a decision is made with all who desire to participate

and we move forward together in our missioning.

That's the Presbyterian way of being church,
of being faithful, wise, and effective participants
in the missioning of the triune God in that God's world.

To remember and respect words
that Presbyterians around the world for generations have used,
we seek to take away all occasion for tyranny
in both church and civic relationships
by enabling full participation to ensure full responsibility.

That participatory process is the core principle for Presbyterians
as they work together with the Spirit as the Body of Christ
for the kin-dom of God.

I won't spend time this morning
chronicling the ways that principle is under attack
in our church and civic relationships,
but we all know it is.

Resisting such tyrannical dynamics was the driving passion
of people like John Lewis and Ruth Bader Ginsburg in the US
and, interestingly enough, of John Turner in Canada.
They all caused 'good trouble' to protect and enhance
institutional ways of working together
that welcomes and values the gifts of all in our togetherness.

We've got significant decisions to make as a church in the next few months
– a new trustee, new elders, expanded facilities, enhanced programs,
all in the service of nourishing souls to flourish in the grace of Jesus Christ
through worship, learning, fellowship, and service.

Even in these times of pandemic precautions,
we will figure out ways of ensuring
that everyone who wants to will have a voice in these matters.

That's the way Presbyterians do church and missioning.

We are reformed and always reforming under the illumination of the Spirit.
So, if there are ways you think we can do this better, let us know.

Your Session (governing council) here at Brentwood meets tomorrow
to consider these matters and other ones.

Please keep us in your prayers,
especially for guidance in ensuring your participation

in being the body of Jesus Christ together.

My Notes



My Prayers

Prayers of the People

Assure us deep in our souls that you have heard these prayers
spoken aloud into this worshiping
or quietly within.

And hear these common prayers this morning:
for divisions in your world that need to be healed;
for families who mourn the passing of loved ones;
for those who have trouble enjoying your gift of breath,
whatever the cause;
for all suffering losses from the disasters that plague us;
for all helping in the midst of those disasters;
for our dreams and schemes for serving you better.

And help us hear again the comfort and challenge of your prayer
that has inspired your people for generations:

[singing of the Lord's Prayer]