



# the Source

*Let anyone who is thirsty come to me...*

I remember when my first niece was born. Everyone wanted to be right there the moment she arrived and we couldn't wait to welcome her into our family. Recognizing that she would be with us our whole lives didn't change the magic of those initial days when the first grandchild changed the nature of the family forever.

The same feelings come back every time we have a baptism in the church. My heart tunes to the same music when my favorite words are spoken: *Brothers and sisters in Christ: Through the Sacrament of Baptism we are initiated into Christ's holy Church. We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the Spirit. All this is God's gift, offered to us without price.*

These words signal growth in the body of Christ and in this congregation of the United Methodist Church. The community responses call forth remembrance of my own baptism, inspire gratitude for ancestors in the faith, and kindle hope for the future.

When the candidate for baptism is an infant, we get a special glimpse into the nature of the body of Christ. An adult brings observable gifts and graces, and we can envision how they will fit in and where they will give back, but a new baby is a mysterious mix of precious and helpless, good for nothing and full of potential. They represent our weakest members, and yet the Bible records Pharaoh and Herod, both powerful men, fearing infants because of their potential. In fact, I imagine God looking at each one of us in the same tender way we watched my newborn niece sleep her first week, knowing that we will both disappoint and amaze.

In the same way a baby reminds us that we are all made in the image of God and reliant on one another, baptism affirms and reminds us that we are anew the body of Christ.

— Jennifer Garen, First Church member

## A Family Affair

When you have a really big job to complete do you find it easy to tackle it all by yourself? Ponder with your family about a time when your family had something really big to accomplish. Perhaps you were building a swing set in the backyard. If every person were responsible for counting the number of screws and bolts, the swing set would never get built. However, if everyone finds their *place* to lend a hand, each taking an individual part, the swing set could be built. Open the Bible to the New Testament and read together 1 Corinthians 12:21-31.

Each of our body parts work independently from the other and yet the parts are dependent on each other. Our church is like is like that. Each church member uses his or her gifts and talents to reach a common goal. We need all the parts of our church body doing individual tasks for the bigger picture. Each part is integral to another.

When each person follows their passion and finds their place to lend a hand, we reach our goals.

*Dear Lord, we want to work together to reach our goals. Please guide us, not in competing against one another, but unifying for your glory. Amen.*

— Tammy Parks, Elementary Coordinator

## Monday: 1 Corinthians 12:21-31

After candidates for baptism are presented, the pastor addresses the congregation: "Do you, as Christ's body, the Church, reaffirm both your rejection of sin and your commitment to Christ?" We answer, "We do."

- This could easily be interpreted as a deeply personal question. Why do we answer it collectively?
- How does this introduction to the Christian life form the newest member? The body?

## Tuesday: 1 Corinthians 12:21-23

Again, the pastor asks: "Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include these persons now before you in your care?" The world has the prerogative to reject the weakest link or the biggest competition; the church has the responsibility to care for them most deeply.

- Have you ever had to nurture someone whom you did not care for? Has that person ever been you? How do these experiences shape a life more obedient to Christ?
- Is it possible to be a solitary Christian? Offer a prayer of gratitude for the influences in your life.

## Wednesday: 1 Corinthians 12:24-25

The congregation responds: "With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ."

- What is the good news in our Scripture passage?
- What does it look like when all members of a congregation "have the same care for one another"?
- How do we become aware of and accept God's help?

## Thursday: 1 Corinthians 12:26-27

The church continues: "We will surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their service to others." An individual must meet its needs for life, achieve safety, feel love and belonging, and develop a sense of self-esteem before he or she can move beyond self to give back to others. It is in giving of ourselves that we most discover ourselves. The body of Christ promises not to ignore its weaker members' well-being.

- Where is there suffering in the body?
- Who can you surround with love and forgiveness today?

## Friday: 1 Corinthians 12:28-31

The body of Christ concludes: "We will pray for them, that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life." Our bodies are only whole and healthy when each part is whole and healthy. Likewise, we pray for our pastors who order the life of the church and the staff who administer our programs and maintain our facilities, for our teachers who build up the body and our missionaries who extend our presence in the world, and for all the children who will grow into these roles themselves.

- Pray that we may all be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.

All excerpts from The Baptismal Covenant II, The United Methodist Hymnal, page 39.