



## **“A Living Organism”**

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### **Scripture (CEB):**

#### **I Corinthians 12:12-23**

<sup>12</sup> Christ is just like the human body—a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though there are many. <sup>13</sup> We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body, whether Jew or Greek, or slave or free, and we all were given one Spirit to drink. <sup>14</sup> Certainly the body isn't one part but many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot says, “I'm not part of the body because I'm not a hand,” does that mean it's not part of the body? <sup>16</sup> If the ear says, “I'm not part of the body because I'm not an eye,” does that mean it's not part of the body? <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, what would happen to the hearing? And if the whole body were an ear, what would happen to the sense of smell? <sup>18</sup> But as it is, God has placed each one of the parts in the body just like he wanted. <sup>19</sup> If all were one and the same body part, what would happen to the body? <sup>20</sup> But as it is, there are many parts but one body. <sup>21</sup> So the eye can't say to the hand, “I don't need you,” or in turn, the head can't say to the feet, “I don't need you.” <sup>22</sup> Instead, the parts of the body that people think are the weakest are the most necessary. <sup>23</sup> The parts of the body that we think are less honorable are the ones we honor the most. The private parts of our body that aren't presentable are the ones that are given the most dignity.

## Sermon:

Not quite 2,000 years ago there was a Jewish guy who wrote a letter to his good friends in Greece. They were arguing with one another, name-calling and gossiping, and highly critical of one another. Yet, they were supposedly together, they were supposed to be, maybe had been, a loving community.

Well, he wrote to his friends and reminded them:

1 Corinthians 12:12-23 Common English Bible (CEB)

***a body is a unit and has many parts; and all the parts of the body are one body, even though they are many.*** <sup>13</sup>

***.<sup>15</sup> If the foot says, "I'm not part of the body because I'm not a hand," does that mean it's not part of the body?<sup>16</sup> If the ear says, "I'm not part of the body because I'm not an eye," does that mean it's not part of the body?<sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, what would happen to the hearing? And if the whole body were an ear, what would happen to the sense of smell?<sup>18</sup> If all were one and the same body part, what would happen to the body?<sup>20</sup> But as it is, there are many parts but one body.<sup>21</sup> So the eye can't say to the hand, "I don't need you," or in turn, the head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you".***

And so it is for us as well, here in our city of Spokane (not Corinth!)

- Church... can you say to Spokane, "I am a churchgoer, so I am not a part of the life of the city"?
- Labor unions, can you say to the city, "I am not a corporation so I am not a part of the city"?
- City of Spokane, can you say to the homeless, "because you do not have a permanent address, you are not a part of the city"?
- Can the suburbs say to the city core, "because you are not lined with trees and schools, parks and homes, you are not a part of the city"?

As it is, we are one city.

A large living interconnected body of many parts.

And we need each other.

- For if all of us were tree-lined streets, where would the movie theaters, the pubs, the restaurants, and concert venue's be?
- And if all of us were businesses, where would the schools and the churches, the temple and the mosque be; where would the nonprofits be; all these parts of the city, dedicated to community building and service, healing and advocacy?

- Indeed, if all of us were tradespeople, where would our university community be?
- And if all of us were lonely individuals, where would the community for the children be?

As it is, we are a large living interconnected body of many parts.  
And we need each other.

Spokane is more than buildings. Spokane is more than it's streets, it's workers, it's hospitals, it is more than Providence, or Fairchild Air Force Base, or people experiencing homelessness, or the river that runs through our downtown, or the parks.

It is all of this in interconnection; needing one another to live, to grow, to heal.

So, this guy from long ago...he wrote:

***So the eye can't say to the hand, "I don't need you," or in turn, the head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."***

We must not say to Labor, or to business, to schools, or to the river, to this church, or the Jewish temple or the Sikh gudwara, or to undocumented laborers, or transgender persons: ***"I don't need you"***.

We **do** need one another. We **are** interconnected...

This guy, Paul of Tarsus, also wrote: ***"If one part of the body suffers, all suffer together with it, if one part is honored, all rejoice together."***

Yes, we do suffer as a whole city. Yes, we do know the pain of one another's needs. Whether it is the pain of homeless youth, or the frustration of our firefighters and police officers when they were underfunded and unappreciated. Whether it is the suffering of I.C.E. harassment, or white supremacist violence. Whether it is the insecurity of small businesses trying to remain viable, or the hospital ER's swamped by the sick and the suffering who have no insurance...

We do suffer with one another. We are in this together.

Yet, today, we also celebrate together, as one large, joyous body.

A birthday, an anniversary, an acknowledgement of our life together. ***As one part is honored, we all rejoice together.***

Rejoicing and celebrating the life we share.

That Westminster has been a part of since the very beginning.

- It was just barely “Spokan Falls”(with no ‘e’) when Henry and Lucy Cowley arrived. It was meadows, and a roaring river, a few homes and a sawmill, when they got together on the evening of May 22, 1879 in a wooden cabin for a prayer meeting and the founding of this church.
- When the builders of this church put the cornerstone in place in 1890 Westminster was there, with the town that had almost burned to the ground.
- Westminster was with the boomtown that used the bell we rang this afternoon, to call volunteers together whenever there was a fire or natural disaster or emergency.
- Westminster members were among those who helped dream up Riverfront Park for the World’s Fair in 1974 that changed the core of our city forever!
- Westminster has been here for Marriage Equality, Apprentice Utilization in Building, Sick and Safe Leave for our citizens, peaceful protest against Westboro Baptist and their hatemongering...

**We are STILL here with you Spokane.**

*Because the eye just can’t say to the hand, “I don’t need you” and the head can’t possibly say to the feet, “I don’t need you.”*

We do indeed need each other.

We are in this together.

A living body.

***A life called to do good, to heal and restore and transform the world.***

To build a future with one another.

Halleluiah, Amen.