

As We Make the Turn

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:1 - 13

1 Corinthians 14:1 – 12

Aug. 28th, 2022

In golf there is a phrase that one uses when you have completed the first nine holes and you start the back nine holes. I am using this phrase for the title of this message because at the end of this year, I will have completed my 3th year of ministry here and I will then become the second longest tenured minister at the Bethany Beach Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Our longest tenured minister here at BBCC (DOC) is Rev. Dr. Chris Hobgood at a little over 10 years.

The phrase is - ‘As We Make the Turn’.

In many ways with Covid seemly behind us and Live Streaming services now normal, I feel that we are making the turn. So what are we going to do on the back nine? And a more direct question - What does it mean to belong to this incredible institution called church? What does it mean to belong to the Bethany Beach Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)?

What we need to think about now is that we are a church with two groups in it. We are a church with in person worshippers and virtual worshippers. This is a new dynamic and something we have adjusted well too.

We understand that Christ is the foundation upon which we build the church, but what kind of community is it we are establishing? What difference does church membership make in our lives? What does it mean to belong to the Body of Christ?

These are questions we will address together as we consider our common life in the church.

Always when I do a wedding, I am ask to read 1st Corinthians 13:1 - 13. It is a beautiful passage about love. It extols the power of love in a covenant relationship.

What many people do not realize is that the passage is nested into a much larger section of scripture that has to do with spiritual gifts that are used to build up the church. Among these gifts we find faith, hope, & love - of which the greatest is love. This gift of love is the corner stone to the building of a community of so many people with so many diverse gifts. Love is the key stone to the building of a church!

The love I am speaking of is the love of God, the love of Jesus Christ, the love of the church, and probably the hardest love to give - the love of each other. I have seen and felt so many times in ministry the love for each other in a church. But I have also seen and felt the love of each other tested by anger, difference of opinion, and difference political positions. I have witnessed the difficulties in loving each other when gossip creeps in, outside situations enter in here, and past history rears its ugly head.

Our binding agent is this table. If you cannot come together to this table because you are so anger, then we have a spiritual problem that can kill a church. If you cannot come together to this table because you are a difference of opinion, then we have a spiritual problem that can kill a church. If you cannot come together to this table because of a political difference, then we have a spiritual problem that can kill a church.

So let us show our love for each other by telling someone near you, telling your neighbor, telling your brother in Christ, or telling your sister in Christ that you love them. Tell someone or tell many - I Love you!

(Pause)

Now look skyward and tell Jesus that you love him - say I Love Jesus! (Pause)

In 1st Corinthians 14, Paul addresses a critical issue facing the church in Corinth. There were many people in the church who had the gift of speaking in tongues and many of these people had decided that their gift of speaking in tongues was a greater gift than any other spiritual gift because it had a more mystical nature. They considered themselves better Christians with a higher calling than anyone else around them. You know this attitude - I can do this and you cannot so I am better than you!

Paul realized immediately that this smug and elite attitude was destructive to the church and it could not help in the building up of the church. Paul's words are aimed at helping us understand the one fundamental truth about any and all spiritual gifts - the only valuable spiritual gift is the gift that builds up the church!

The question we have been asking ourselves is - How are our gifts going to help build up God's Kingdom on Earth?

We are all children of God. We all have a gift or gifts that God has blessed us with. As we consider our life in the church, we are challenged to determine which of our gifts are more likely to build up the church and which of those are not.

I am a good golfer and I have golfed with some of you. I know God is not opposed to fun & fellowship on the golf course, however, I will not presume that any gift I have for golf or any other sport can build up the church effectively. I also have been given the gifts of pastoral leadership and those are the gifts that I consider will build the church more effectively than my golf game. I do not ever think that you are going to say - He is a good golfer so his idea about building up the church is a good one!

The challenge for us as followers of Christ is to reflect upon the gifts we have received and to offer a true assessment of those gifts to determine which of them can most effectively build up the church. Then we are challenged to offer those gifts to the Body of Christ which is the church. So, my challenge for you is to reflect upon the gifts you have received from God and evaluate which gifts can most effectively build up the church.

Remember that the cornerstones of our church is our love of God & our love of Jesus Christ. May your gifts to the church make our church stronger in faith!

Let us pray:

Let us always gather in a covenant of love which binds us to God and to one another. Let us worship together to celebrate with thanksgiving the saving act and presence of Christ in our lives and our church. Let us be a church of kindred hearts. Let us be a people of God who see strangers and sojourners as opportunities to share our faith in Jesus Christ.

We pray this in Jesus' name – AMEN.