

**1 Corinthians 12:12-21, 26-27** <sup>12</sup> For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. <sup>13</sup> For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free -- and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. <sup>14</sup> For in fact the body is not one member but many. <sup>15</sup> If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? <sup>16</sup> And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? <sup>17</sup> If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? <sup>18</sup> But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. <sup>19</sup> And if they were all one member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup> But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. <sup>21</sup> And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." <sup>22</sup> No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. <sup>23</sup> And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor; and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, <sup>24</sup> but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, <sup>25</sup> that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. <sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

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Last week I relearned something very important, each body part is important. Last week, my right ear was clogged up to the point where at times at least it was almost impossible to hear out of it. And I was amazed or should say dismayed at how that one body part not working quite right could make life pretty miserable at times. I know I am not alone in this experience. It is a fairly common human experience. Each of you at one time or another has had one body part or another not quite working right. It could have been an eye, and ear, a leg and arm or whatever. But you know that losing the use of one body part threw your whole body for a loop.

This common experience is exactly what Paul uses today to explain how the body of Christ works. He teaches that if the body of Christ loses one ear, one eye, or one arm, the whole body can be thrown for a loop. Life in the body can get quite miserable.

In the day to day life of any church there are two categories of body parts. Paul understood this truth. There are those parts that either see themselves or are seen by others as important body parts and those who either think themselves or are seen by others as minimally important body parts. Some are arms and legs, other are toenails and eyebrows.

Today in church we are installing the elected officers of the church. Indeed these people have been elected to carry out important functions in the church. They have been called to be the arms and the legs for the body of Christ here in Ellsworth. And without them and their service, the church would grind slowly to a halt. We thank God for them and their willingness to serve.

But then there are others here today who have never been elected to anything at this church. They have never attended a voter's meeting. They have never collected an offering, never helped serve the Lord's Supper. But yet they are parts of this body all the same. Yes they may be the toenails and eyebrows of the congregation, but Paul reminds us that they are just as important.

Which body part are you? I have a feeling most you likely know where you fit in this congregation right away.

Regardless of what body part you are Paul has instructions for you. First, Paul has some words for the arms and legs of the congregation. He says that if you are a body part that is recognizably important, do not forget that you can't do everything by yourself without the rest of the smaller parts. It is not just you in the body. Each and every person that is in the body of

Christ is very important. You can't do it without them. So treat them as such. Don't ignore the eyebrows or the toenails. Without proper care the eyebrows can grow over the eyes and leave the body blind. And anyone who has ever had an ingrown toenail can tell you that a toenail gone awry can take the body of its feet quickly. So make sure that you care for, talk to, and listen to the seemingly less important parts.

But what if you are one of those seemingly less important parts? What about you toenails or eyebrows? What does Paul say to you today? He reminds you that you can't decide that even if you were gone you would not be missed. Paul calls you to recognize that while you may not visibly be the most important part of the body, you are just as important as the legs and arms. You have a role to play. Don't just sit there. If you have not been called to lead, then follow with great boldness. If you have not been called to teach, then learn with great diligence. If you have not been called to an elected office, help those who have with your time and talents.

Each of you whether arms or legs, or toenails and eyebrows, have been made to be important. One the day of your baptism you were made part of the body of Christ. As Paul says all of us who were baptized into Christ were made to drink of the spirit. In other words, we are all made equal in our standing with God. Whether you are six or sixty, male or female, rich or poor, you are of immeasurable value to God. Legs, arms, toenails and eyebrows all have drunk from the same spirit at their baptism. Legs, arms, toenails, and eyebrows continue to drink from the same spirit at the altar of the Lord. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are those means by which the true community of the body of Christ is established and maintained. We are not members of one body because we seek to make it that way, but rather we are one body because God has joined us together.

I am sure all of you remember or have heard the children song, “them bones.” It says, “Your toe bone connected to your foot bone, Your foot bone connected to your ankle bone, Your ankle bone connected to your leg bone, Your leg bone connected to your knee bone, Your knee bone connected to your thigh bone, Your thigh bone connected to your hip bone, Your hip bone connected to your back bone, Your back bone connected to your shoulder bone, Your shoulder bone connected to your neck bone, Your neck bone connected to your head bone.”

The point that the song makes is this: Wherever you fall along the way, you are connected to the head bone. And in slightly differently and perhaps more adult words, that is Paul’s message for us today. No matter where you fall along the line, you are connected to the head, who is Christ. And since we are all connected to Christ, our head, we are members of the same body. And members of the same body must recognize that ever part, legs and arms, toenails and eyebrows are important to that body. You are the body of Christ! Amen.