

Have you ever thought about our relationship with God and the form that it takes? How do you visualize your relationship with God? There are many different ways in which we can picture that relationship such as the shepherd and the sheep. There is the relationship of the father or parent and the child especially with the story of the prodigal son. And one of my favorite visions of our relationship with God is found in today's second reading.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul explains that there is just one body, but many members. The body of Christ has Christ Jesus as the head as it is Christ who holds the body together and takes care of its needs through the Holy Spirit.

As we look at our own body, it is easy to see that we all have a variety of different parts with their own functions. As you put all of these parts together we have a body that is able to accomplish a variety of things. As one example, we will come forward to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion in a few minutes. As you come forward, your legs will carry you and then I will place a wafer into your hands which you will then dip into the wine and put in your mouth. Your ears will hear the words, the body of Christ given for you and the blood of Christ shed for you. You have the sense of taste that will react to the wine or juice and then your legs will carry you back to your pew.

All of these functions of our body help to bring the sacrament of Holy Communion to us. Each one has its own purpose in helping us to celebrate and partake in Holy Communion and the same is true for everything we do. Our different body parts help us to get things done because they have different abilities or functions.

Paul uses the image of the body to describe our relationship in God. We do belong to the body of Christ and so we are the different body parts. Some of us may be like the leg which helps to carry the body or some may be like the hand that reaches out and gives a physical touch to somebody. The point that Paul is making is that each one of us is part of the Body and we each have our own responsibilities or functions to help the Body remain complete and whole.

That is the cool thing about the body of Christ. We all are a part of it and we all work together as we live in this world. From the beginning of the Christian church when the Holy Spirit came into the world, the body of Christ has been present. It was the work of the Spirit who held the body together in helping to form the church and then sent the apostles out into the world in order to bring more people into the body of Christ.

Even here in Salina, the Spirit is at work bringing more people into the Body of Christ. In 1870, the population of Saline County was 1,870 after the Kansas Pacific Railroad was completed to Salina just 3 years earlier. People were coming to the area and I imagine that it was a rugged life for them, but the Spirit of God was here.

Dr. A.W. Dahlsten and Mr. Carl Hoahn Broden from Salemsburg and Rev. Olsson from Lindsborg gathered the scattered Lutherans in the city of Salina and talked about the Word of God. On May 11, 1870, the Spirit of God blew life into this congregation when 39 Swedish men and women assembled in the old Methodist Church and Swedish Lutheran took on life in this community.

Throughout its life, the disciples of Swedish Lutheran and then Immanuel have been active parts in the body of Christ. Generation after generation have stepped up and taken their place in the ministry that we do here. As Paul would say, it doesn't matter what we do as long as we are a part of the body of Christ because it is the Holy Spirit who will bring glory to God through our work.

Today, we are the next chapter in Immanuel's history. We are the parts of Christ's body, called to serve and share God's love with all people. It doesn't matter which part we are or what we do because the Holy Spirit brings all of us together to make ONE body.

Paul reminds us in verse 13, "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 one Spirit." We are all individuals who have been gathered together by the Spirit of God and it is the Spirit who continues to blow life into our lives. It is the same Spirit and the same life that the founders of this congregation received 140 years ago. All we need to do is trust in that Spirit.

God will use our whole being in the body of Christ so that we can continue God's ministry for Immanuel Lutheran Church. Are you up for that task? Our founders were up to the task and what they started, we will continue. On January 11, 1910, the congregation of Swedish Lutheran Church met at a special congregational meeting and voted to change the church's name to Immanuel Lutheran Church. Immanuel literally means "God with us."

God is with us as we live together as the body of Christ. Let us live as that body as we bring more people into the body of Christ.