

WPC
Rev. Ken Sunoo
October 30, 2011 – Reformation Sunday

Being the Church: The Body of Christ
1 Cor. 12: 1-27

This is the final sermon in a series of sermons called “Being the Church.” We’ve been remembering what the church is all about, why we choose to be part of a local church, and what the church asks of us. This sermon series has also functioned as this year’s Inquirer’s Class. If you’ve heard the four sermons in this series and would like to join Wallingford Presbyterian Church, you’re invited to do so. Just let me know.

At the beginning of this series, we looked at the Apostle Peter’s confession of faith in Jesus as the Son of God. The church makes sense only in light of faith in Jesus Christ. The resurrected Jesus is the head of the church. He’s the foundation on which everything else rests.

In week 2, we looked at the first gatherings of the followers of Jesus Christ in the book of Acts. Connection with the local church is not optional to faith in Jesus Christ, it’s a necessity to faith in Jesus Christ. We don’t just go to church – we are the church. Gathering together to worship, to serve, and to fellowship is central to what it means to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

In week 3, we saw Paul calling on every believer to use the gifts that God has given to build the kingdom of God, whether they're gifts of time, treasure, or talents. Everyone can make a difference.

Today, in this final sermon, we put the whole picture together by looking at Paul's metaphor of the church as the body of Christ.

Our relationships with one another are as necessary as our relationship with God. That's why there are two tables in the Ten Commandments: the first four deal with our relationship with God, and the last six deal with our relationships with others. The problem is that the church is made up of imperfect human beings.

There's no perfect church because I'm in it, and you're in it. So what does it mean that we're in the church together? It means that even though we make mistakes, we're united in our faith in Jesus Christ, and we're united as Christ's body investing in each other's lives, and we're united in serving by using our gifts together in ministry. This community we call church is not simply a human creation; it's been created by our faith in Jesus Christ. We're all part of the body of Christ, no matter whether we're the foot, or the hand, or the ear lobe. We're all integral members of this body. And notice that our roles in the body of Christ are not static – they change over time.

Being the church is not simply a duty to be performed, nor a responsibility we fulfill; the church is God's creation that you and I get to fulfill together. Listen to what Paul says about the body of Christ: "You are the body of Christ. And each one of you is a part of it." This means we believe God has placed you and me in this place at this time for a reason. Being a part of the church is not just about being in a small group, or volunteering, or becoming an officer (although I really hope you'll do those things). Being a part of the church is not first an activity, it's a theological conviction that you are a part of God's family, the body of Christ.

Like all families, the church family has had its share of conflict and disagreements. Today is Reformation Sunday, when we remember the 16th century split within the Western Church led by Martin Luther and other reformers who called the church to reform practices they considered corrupt. One result of the Reformation is the formation of our branch of the church family, the Presbyterian Church.

To learn more about this part of the church, I'm going to show you a video called *Who Are We Presbyterian*. As we watch this video, I'd like to point out two things to watch for: First, some of you may remember a UW student named Emily Meyers who used to attend our church about 12 years ago – she has a cameo in the video. And second, pay attention to the 3 Johns

in the Presbyterian Church: John Calvin, John Knox, and John Witherspoon.

The reason I've preached this sermon series is that I wanted to give all of us a chance to say (or to say again), "I'm in. I'm a part of the body of Christ in this congregation." For those of us who feel God has called us to this place at this time, I invite you to make a commitment. Next Sunday is Stewardship Sunday – it's an opportunity for everyone, no matter what your age is, to make a commitment to share their gifts of time, treasure, and talent with the church. I hope you'll all accept that invitation. Amen.