

Body Building  
Reinbeck UMC  
July 8, 2007

Hello fellow “reinbeckians!” Since arriving in Reinbeck we have been welcomed in many ways. Handshakes, “welcome to towns,” “glad you’re here”, “do you need anything?” Then there is the food. The green beans, the pies, being invited to supper and gift certificates to Nana Rosas. And I can’t forget Pork Burgers and yummy pie. There is something special about eating together. There is something special about meeting people over food that brings us closer together.

All of that made me feel welcome, but finally I knew everything would be OK when I walked into the park food tent and Quentin threw me a dishrag and barked, “wipe up over there!” I knew that I was part of the community because I had been given a job. The job was not to clean tables as you might expect, but to tease Quentin Mayberry at least as much as he teases me. That has become my Job! Because we only tease the ones we love. Right Quentin?

Seriously, a big part of feeling part of a community is finding your job. I come with an advantage of a readymade niche as (as I’ve told some people) the pastor of the largest United Methodist church in Reinbeck. And that gets me about 4 seconds of respect. Then people go back to trying to figure out who I am and how I am going to fit in around here.

On the other hand, we have three people in our midst who haven’t been here for a while. Bill and Brianne and Blake, who has actually never been here before. Do you all feel welcome! Of course you do. In an important way, this is home, isn’t it?. That’s why you came here for Blake’s baptism.

That’s because what we have here, is much bigger than Robyn and Richie and I- it is much bigger than Bill and Brianne and Blake. What we have here is the BODY OF CHRIST.

**Austin set us up this morning by introducing the concept of the body of Christ.** He read, that God “appointed him (Christ) to be head over everything for the church, which is his body.”

*Paul is using the word body here, not the word flesh. When Paul speaks of flesh it is a dirty word. It is filthy and sinful and corrupt. When he speaks of the body, that is the skin and bone part of us which is given life by the spirit. The part we can see, the part we can touch, the part that gets the work done.*

*So here Paul is saying that the church is the new earthly body of Christ, who's first earthly body has been killed. He has been raised to rule over his new earthly body; the church. The church is the part of Christ we can see, the part we can touch and the part that gets the work done. That's us! We are the body of Christ!*

So what part of the body are you? An eye, a hand, a foot, the hair, the spleen?

After you know me for a while you may think I am the mouth or the cute, but apparently useless ear lobe, maybe I'd rather not think about all the body parts you might use to describe me, but I would like to think of myself as an eye. Connecting the inner world to the outer world, seeing where the church is, seeing where we can go, but dependent on all the other parts: dependent on the brain, the nerves, the muscles, the feet and ankles to respond and get us where we want to go.

What part of Christ's body are you? The other eye? A hand? A foot? The heart? The liver? What part of the body are you? Be careful not to define yourself only by your job. As organist, or usher, or Sunday school teacher. Even though that is important Think about who you are in relationship to the rest of the body. What is your function? What is your place? What is your part in Christ's body the church.

**Then in I Corinthians Paul says further that not only is the church the body of Christ, but each of us.** Each of us individually is a member of that body, an organ or limb or appendage. And each and every one of us is critically important to the health and wholeness of the body. It is easier to imagine the church without a building than without the people. In fact it would be much easier to build a new building than to replace any one of you in the body of Christ.

We just had a kidney transplant in our community, but I dare say that Brandi will not be the same as she was before. She will be healthier and happier and stronger.

You might say our church just had a transplant. Pastor Dave has been removed and I am being stitched in place. Is his place still here? of Course, many of you loved him very much and he loved all of you. Will I take Dave's exact place and do the exact same job? NO? Even if we are the same part of the body, we are different people. You know hard it is to get an exact match for an organ transplant? Well, Dave and I don't have anywhere near the same DNA or even blood type. The church will be different under my leadership, simply because I'm me. Not necessarily better, or worse, but different.

Robyn's presence among us will be different. You have never had a permanent deacon in your congregation. What will be different? We don't even know completely, but we'll all figure it out together.

Richie comes today as part of the body of Christ, he brings his own set of gifts that you will soon discover.

In baptism today, Blake is publicly identified as part of the body of Christ. The body will never be the same. How? Again I don't know exactly, but we and his congregation in California take on the responsibility to bring him up in the body, help him to find his place in the body and help him to understand that he too is critically important to Christ's body the church.

Each one of you, brings your own set of gifts. If everyone preached who would wash the dishes, and if everyone washed the dishes who would chair the board, and if everyone wanted to chair the board, who would fold the bulletins, and if everyone folded the bulletins who would be in the praise team? Get the picture? No matter who you are, you cannot be replaced, no matter what! It doesn't matter if you think you are just the little toe of the church. They say it is awfully hard to learn to balance yourself again without your little toe. No one else can do exactly what you do in this body. No one else can be exactly who you are in this body. No one else can love and be loved in exactly the same way you are.

Thanks be to God for the body of Christ in this place. For Pastor Dave, Brainne, Bill, Blake, Richie, Robyn, . . . add you name to the list. Thanks be to god for each and every one of you because together we are the body of Christ.