

Rev. Janet R. Doyle
Elmer Presbyterian Church
12th Sunday after Pentecost
Sunday, August 16, 2026
Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12: 4-27
Sermon: No Spectators

It was Children's Day in a church in the West Indies. All the boys and girls had come to church wearing their Sunday best. Each brought a gift to lay on the Communion Table at the proper time. During the service the minister noticed a small, poorly dressed girl at the rear of the church. She did not have a gift with her as did the other children. At the close of the service, the minister asked the children to walk down the aisle to the table, place their gifts upon it and then return to their seats. After they had done so, the minister led the congregation in prayer. Following the "Amen" the minister opened his eyes and noticed that the girl he had been watching was no longer standing in the back of the church. Quickly he looked around for her, but at first could not locate her anywhere. Then he glanced at the Communion Table and saw her sitting in the middle of all the presents. When the minister asked her what she was doing there, she said, "I had nothing else to give, so I gave myself." Nothing to give except herself! Yet that was the gift most needed.

When we give our lives to Christ, when we say we have nothing left to give but ourselves, we are ready for our new life to begin. We are ready to give God control of our lives and when we do that we have an instant family— our brothers and sisters in Christ. Family is bigger than the family you were born into.

When you become a new creation in Christ, realizing who Christ is and what he did for you, you are included into the family of God and you belong to God.

Isn't it wonderful to think that you have sisters and brothers around the world? In our travels we have met many.

The Body of Christ is a wonderful thing. It isn't the building that makes the church, it is the people.

Many people feel as though they don't need to come to church as a Christian, but you miss so much fellowship and learning and sharing and growing together. God gave us the church as a gift to work together to build the kingdom of God.

A plant does not grow when it is in the darkness— it grows when it is watered and in the light. The church is a place for us to be watered and to get reenergized so that we can continue to serve Christ in the world.

Matthew 5: 15 says from the Message: “Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.”

Ministry is so much more fun when we light up the world together. We all have gifts and talents that God wants us to use and to grow in.

But do you know one difficulty that plagues the Christian Church today? We focus on the symptoms of our distress, not the cause. People do not generously give their finances, their time, or their talents to the Lord. They hide them and don't use them for the building of the kingdom. We do not fully surrender our hearts and minds to the Lord.

When you give yourself to the Lord, everything else flows from you naturally and your cup is full and overflows with blessings. You serve the Lord because it is your way of giving to the Lord and making your relationship with Christ your first priority and everything else will fall into place and God's timing.

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body and we are the Body.

Ephesians 4 talks about the unity of the Spirit. It says, “From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” (Eph 4: 16) The whole Body of Christ grows stronger when individual parts function as they should. It is a delicate balance.

What part are you in the Body of Christ? Are you an eye, ear, a hand or foot? Are you a part of the body helping the body move forward? We

need to hear from God what ministry God wants us to be involved with this coming year.

Ministry is exciting and because we follow Christ we too are called to be servants. The Christian community is a servant community.

We are called to open ourselves to each other—sharing with each other our brokenness, our wounds, pain and sorrow as well as our joys and celebrations. Our life as a family of God is critical to our going into the world as lights of Christ. As we allow ourselves to be in the world but not of the world, we need the encouragement and support of each other. We are also called to pray for those who are going through persecutions as Christians around the world.

I read an article written by one of my professors from Princeton Seminary. Daniel Migliore said: “Did we somewhere, sometime forget to dance before the Lord? Have we lost touch with David and the Psalmist and those people at the party for the returned prodigal? Have we drifted away from the declaration that the chief end of human life is to glorify God and enjoy God forever? We have become confused about the kind of movement God seeks from us: not an endless funeral procession but a joyous dance. A dance is a communal affair. I don’t think the church today dances very much. We know how to stand still, and we know how to march. We have all this magnificent diversity among us and we don’t know how to celebrate it, how to hold it together. As Ecclesiastes reminds us, there is a time to mourn as well as a time to dance. There is indeed pain to be shared, prophetic witness to be borne, and hard work to be done. We do need a theology of the cross. But let us not forget: in Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven, little miracles do happen, small victories are won, smashing parties are held for prodigals to come home. The promise of the gospel is that again and again you will be surprised by grace. Today and tomorrow and in the days ahead you may be given unexpected opportunities to do a little dancing before the Lord”

To be in the presence of God is to celebrate. I like his image about us being able to dance before the Lord. To come before Him with praise and adoration. Many Christians who are living with persecution are dancing and joyous before the Lord because He is doing great things among them and they see God working in their lives. They expect God to work in their lives.

The church's mission is to participate in the ministry of Jesus Himself. "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." (John 20:21)

Giving to others greatly contributes to staying involved with the Body of Christ. The church is a vehicle to express those gifts in meaningful and productive ways. There is no room to just sit and watch ministry—you need to be out on the field playing, not in the bleachers watching.

When we imagine that we, as Christians and humans, can live in total independence and self-sufficiency, we are deluding ourselves. God from the beginning never intended that we should go through the journey alone.

We simply cannot fully experience the power and delight of life with God without also being drawn into life together with our sisters and brothers in Christ. Without experiencing such life together, we will not discover how wonderful the news about Jesus really is.

The Body of Christ—the church around the world, simply makes the gospel a lived reality.

The Body of Christ has diversity of people and ministry. It teaches it is a place of rest and refreshment for our hungry soul and it is a place of fellowship and it is a training ground for missions and it allows opportunity for service.

How to get involved and become a part of the Body of Christ?

1. You need to be here: Your presence is needed.
2. Be disciplined: Be ready and eager to learn and study to hear from God.
3. Participate: Look for at least one place where you can serve well and in which you can use your gifts and talents and be faithful in doing whatever you commit to. Discover what your gift is if you don't already know.

No one member of a church can do it all and I know the pastor can't do it all either. It takes teamwork. We are all needed. Each member is a part of the Body and each person is important to the Body. It takes everyone to get the church to grow and mature.

Therefore, brothers and sisters I urge you to walk in the ministry to which you have been called, members together of one Body, knit together in the faithful service of God as each does its part.