



followers of Christ... good neighbors in the world

Good afternoon, Church Family!

29 April 2008

We need to take some time to talk about the many opportunities that are presenting themselves each week for folks at CiB to get involved and serve one another. Every Sunday that we gather there are folks who “gift” everyone else by sharing of their abilities and resources. A short list could look something like this: bringing food and drinks, leading Communion, leading Prayers of the People, speaking and providing messages (I mean “preaching,” I’m just not overly fond of that word), reading our scripture passages, leading our closing blessing, writing down the Prayers of the People for emailing out during the week, preparing and leading our children’s study time and activity at 10:30am, running the lyrics and video from the balcony, etc.

It made me tired just typing that list... trying to get it all done week to week is even harder, especially after throwing in preparing the prayer stations, altar and bulletin. And we haven’t even talked about audio recording for podcasting, creating the videos and creatively choosing and prepping for the next “thoughtful treasure.” We also didn’t mention the selection of music, making copies, getting to rehearsals, etc.

I bet you figured out where I might be going with this “opportunities” idea? That’s right... we’re talking about volunteers and how absolutely essential they are for our functioning as a congregation in worship and serving our community at large. Volunteers: we need you.

At the end of the letter I am going to present some volunteer needs in the form of a list. By then, I’d like you to be thinking about the area(s) where you might find some unknown and unexpected joy in serving. By then, I hope that you are sufficiently excited about the great opportunities available to you to practice a little self-expression and simultaneously grow in an environment of safety, acceptance, and most of all, love.

I don’t like to just go find a passage of scripture with a word in it and use it in a classic “proof-texting” way, but one passage always comes to mind for me when thinking about the many people who help make a congregation function: from Ephesians 4... *"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: 'When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.' ...to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ... speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ. 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."*



Of course, I cut that passage down and left out some of the specific examples of gifts that Paul mentioned. If you'd like to read the whole passage it is Ephesians 4:1-16. I made my cuts and splices to more directly see some the elements that I've mentioned, namely that 1) we each function in the church, "*...as each part does its work,*" and 2) that we each function out of God's love and presence and the church then becomes an arena of that love, "*...one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all... speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the head, that is, Christ.*"

It's not too revolutionary an idea that we use the gifts and abilities that God and has given us and that we do so expecting love, grace and appreciation from one another in the process. What is revolutionary is the idea of doing anything in "public" when you've never really done it before. I know it's intimidating for many to consider leading a public prayer, speaking in the communion time or reading a passage in public. Many folks have never been called on to do these things. Thankfully, not all our needs put you up front... we still need someone to transcribe the Prayers of the People, someone to run the computer in the balcony, etc. But those needs should not be a complete license for everyone to ignore these other opportunities. Not only does it bless the whole congregation when you lead in these public readings, prayers and speaking, but it also blesses you.

So, before everyone signs up for bringing donuts and running the computer for song lyrics... let me offer an encouragement and a suggestion. My encouragement: Please think about stretching your comfort zone a little to engage an activity you've not thought you were suited to perform, like prayers, readings, speaking, etc. My offer is two-fold: First, as you bring these new and unexpected gifts and service to the church family, no one will devalue or ridicule your efforts, but graciously and thankfully enjoy them. And secondly, I'd like to schedule some times for folks to get together and practice some of the things that frighten us most, like praying or reading publically. No one is on their own here, it's a community effort.

In an effort to keep this letter from getting any longer, I'm going to give you that list of opportunities to consider. Don't worry that you'll get sucked into too much too fast or be swamped each week as you enter the building! And don't worry that you'll be signing up to have to carry any great burden this coming weekend. I'm going to start a little list of who's interested in what, who's interested in a small group to practice, and then we'll go from there. And by the way... we find ourselves in need of someone to take over the responsibilities of being our "volunteer coordinator." This is a person who can send out emails and follow up with an occasional phone call to make sure that volunteers are organized and ready, especially for the Sunday worship services week to week. Are you interested?

With all my thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Todd', enclosed within a circular scribble.

Todd





Serving Opportunities

Feel free to print out this list and hand it to me, or just email me the information.

My name is _____ and I'm interested in helping by...

- Reading scripture
- Leading public prayers
- Leading Prayers of the People
- Leading communion
- Helping deliver messages
- Making announcements
- Leading the closing blessing
- Running the computer and song lyrics
- Writing down the Prayers of the People
- Playing an instrument in worship
- Helping lead singing in worship
- Creatively dreaming of and implementing prayer stations
- Helping organize Sunday morning foods and drinks
- Becoming a volunteer coordinator!

- And I'd be interested in a time when a small group goes over the fundamentals and practices skills for... what would you like to practice specifically? (reading, praying, etc.)

The best phone number for me is _____ it's a home/cell. (please circle one)

The best email to reach me is _____.

