

Give God's Spirit a Chance

Blaise Pascal once said, 'God is a circle whose centre is everywhere and circumference nowhere.' I like that image; a God that's all centre and no boundaries, a God that's all centre at the centre of our lives. But if we change that position and put ourselves into the centre, God can be no more than an item on a shopping list: something we can choose, like groceries, to fill a temporary need. But we, as Christians must acknowledge God as the centre, as the creator, as the liberator, as the sustainer, as a strong mother, as a gentle father, as our closest friend and most patient teacher. That's why we are here today; we are always in need of adjustment, to let God back into the centre of our lives. It is vital for us to discern together what God is calling us to do, and pray together for 'Thy will, not ours, be done'.

How many times do you think you have said 'The Lord's Prayer' in your life? And how many times do you think you actually meant '*thy* will be done', and really practiced it? Before we ask God for anything, I think we need to keep in mind the following words. The Lord says, In Isaiah 55:8, "My thoughts and my ways are not like yours. Just as the heavens are higher than the earth, my thoughts and my ways are higher than yours." That makes us humble, and allows us to be attentive to new ways and new words from God. We gather as a church because our hope and our faith are in God; our trust in God, no matter our circumstance, is the key to our spiritual growth.

Last Tuesday, using the same text we have today, the Bible study group talked about how to be the body of Christ. Someone inspired me, pointing out that we are all different, but it is the Spirit who works with and through us, and that same Spirit is within all of us. That was already mentioned in the Bible, in 1 Corinthians 12:13, "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." But this time, the words opened my eyes to the Spirit. 1 Corinthians 12 is a familiar text, and I usually focus on the diverse gifts that the Spirit gives to everyone. I still strongly believe that finding and sharing everyone's gift is vital to church growth. But,

what if we ignore the one who gave us such gifts? We say the church is the body of Christ. But, what if we forget whose body it is? We celebrate our diversity as a gift, but it becomes a challenge when we forget where we all came from, whose voice we are to follow, and why we are called to be the church.

As I read the text over, I was impressed by Paul's deep trust in the Holy Spirit. That is, I think, the key to being the body of Christ. And that is the key to our talking circle event with the Presbytery and the Conference today. Here is how and why I started organizing the event. As your minister, I am privileged to see how the Spirit works in you, with you and through you. There is no question that the Spirit is alive in our worship, in our fellowship, and in our service to each other, to Ladysmith and beyond. You are a wonderful congregation with diverse gifts. As I have listened to your stories, I have come to understand that you have tremendous pain and anger which I can't ignore, and I don't want anyone from the Presbytery or the Conference to ignore. I acknowledge that there are different issues and reasons which cause the pain, but for me it is the knowledge of broken trust that causes my pain. The pain that you have, I have and others might have is not good for anyone, and not good for the church we love; the body of Christ, *our* body, needs healing. So I asked for help from the Presbytery, the Conference and from you to acknowledge our pain first, and to help heal our pain, and to rebuild the trust that has been broken. It is not my goal to fix, or try to fix all the problems, but to give everyone who is wounded a chance to speak, to unburden themselves, and find a new understanding with each other. I hope that this new understanding will bring us healing and eventually a new relationship. I dared to start organizing our talking circle because I trusted, and I still trust the Spirit within us. That's all I can do. Let's give God's spirit a chance, and accept the challenge to truly live the Lord's Prayer, believing with faith that God's will, will truly be done.