

BLESSINGS ALWAYS
September 10, 2020
Association Minister Message
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WELCOME. ACCOUNTABLE. “*WELCOME those who are weak in faith, but not for the purpose of quarreling over opinions.*” (Romans 14:1). It is surprising to read Paul’s message about inclusion, for we read about Paul’s earlier endeavors to hunt “Christ-followers” to persecute them. After becoming a “Christ-follower” himself, the early members of the church were suspicious of him and were afraid to WELCOME him into their midst because his reputation as a tormenter of Christians went before him.

The words “*weak in faith*” seem to describe persons who have doubt, fear, helplessness, and not being good enough to be a follower of Jesus Christ. However, upon careful reading of Paul’s words following the *WELCOME*, Paul is witnessing to the Christian faith that includes a diversity of people who express faith differently. The United Church of Christ has a saying, “*No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are welcome here.*” Simply put, we are one in Christ, but diverse in how faith is expressed. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul describes the church as one body with many parts.

We certainly have learned during this pandemic different and new ways of being the church. Whatever and however we are the church, Paul reminds us we are to “*...honor the Lord and give thanks to God. We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves.*” (vs. 7) It takes all of together with our different gifts and graces to be the Body of Christ.

Christ is the glue that holds us together. We have been blessed by God, both individually and together, with amazing and unique gifts both human and divine. Someone wrote, “*It isn’t about ‘I’ or ‘You.’ It’s about ‘We’ and ‘Us.’*” As children of God, it takes all of us—*no matter who we are or where we are*—to affirm this world as God intends it to be. “*So then, each of us will be ACCOUNTABLE to God.*” (vs. 12) We are ACCOUNTABLE to God and one another by loving one another, bringing hope in all circumstances, and being firmly or weakly grounded in faith. God shares with us the creation and calls us to be co-creators in relationship as stewards, caretakers and care-givers for and with one another and the creation. We are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength AND our neighbor as ourselves. BLESSINGS ALWAYS.