



HEARTLAND CONFERENCE

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
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The Apostle Paul's Declaration of Interdependence

"For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 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." (1 Corinthians 12:12)



Dear Friends in Christ,

With Independence Day now behind us, I have been thinking about the remarkable reframing of life which the Apostle Paul offered the church in Corinth. It seems the early church had succumbed to the energies of a world bent on ego and division. A liturgy of independence was starting to take root in the life of the Corinthian church with apparent ill effect. In response, Paul called the early church to a life of intentional inter-dependence. He reminded them that each was essential to the other and could not live into the fullness of their Christian calling apart from each other.

I wonder what might happen to the world if the church local and global and everywhere in-between were to engage a liturgy and practice of inter-dependence as the core foundation and focus of life. Might we begin to see one another more graciously? Could it deepen our capacity to listen as the first act of love? Could compassion grow in our hearts and form our words for healing? Could it help us to act less reactively? Could we see one another more clearly as belonging to each other?

The truth is independence is an illusion. Let me be clear that independence is different than agency, the freedom to act for the good, which in Christ is our high calling. But there is nothing in our lives that we do apart from the influence and engagement of others. I recently invited some folks to consider the simple act of rising from sleep in the morning and all the things which such rising includes: the bed from which one rises, the water that one drinks, the food one eats, the house in which one lives, and everything else, is a witness to the inescapably inter-dependent reality of life as God has created it.

This foundational inter-dependence is at the core of our life together in United Church of Christ, though often times the idea of autonomy takes center stage. This inter-dependence is the foundation of our covenantal life. Next week, the General Synod of the United Church of Christ will gather in virtual space bringing together delegates from across the country. It will be an expression of our consent to the truth of God's inter-dependent design of life and to our desire to be shaped by a love that knows no independence. There will be worship and resolutions, keynotes and committees, prayer, praise, and sacred pause. The Body of Christ will be wonderfully joined. It will be a public witness not only to ourselves but to a world often worshipping the dead-end of independence.

You can still register to be a visitor to this unique online Synod by going to www.generalsynod.org. You can view each of the three worship services without registering (Sunday, July 11th, at 5 pm; Wednesday, July 14th at 8 pm, and Sunday July 18th at 6 pm) by going to the United Church of Christ YouTube channel or by going to the UCC's Facebook page. My prayer is that together we will discover anew the great power of being "Rooted in Love", connected to each other, and held in the heart of God in whom we live and move and have our being. May inter-dependence become the liturgy and practice of our life together in ever new ways! Thanks be to God who has already joined us. Blessings and Godspeed!

-Pastor Dave