

## Any Volunteers? [Text -Romans 12:1-13]

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Listen again to these words from Paul's letter to the church in Rome: "For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ....We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness....Love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor."

In the First Century, like today, the city of Rome was a tremendously diverse and cosmopolitan community. And from the tone and content of Paul's letter, it appears that the Christian community in Rome was also quite diverse. Therefore, the Oneness to which Paul refers, doesn't derive from a homogeneous group of single-minded people. Quite the contrary, that Oneness emerges from a genuine appreciation and celebration of the marvelous mix of people and perspectives, talents and gifts - that make-up that diverse Family of Faith. I think the same can be said of *this* multi-talented and gifted Family of Faith - that our collective strength arise from the wonderful variety of contributions that each and every one of us makes.

Ten years ago, when we were reformulating our Mission Statement as the Brecksville United Church of Christ, we also considered what language we might use to best describe the way we approach that mission. One seemingly simple thing we did, was to change our "committees" into "ministries." [Personally, I'd rather attend a *ministry* meeting, than some boring *committee* meeting!] And even though a lot of what our Ministries do, looks

strikingly similar to the work of our previous Committees, it's important that we recognize that *all* we do here, is an integral part of this Church's entire ministry.

In a healthy human body, every part and system performs its particular function effectively and well. Yet it takes the coordination and cooperation of each part to keep that body healthy and whole, active and alive. A healthy Church, or Body of Believers, requires that same kind of cooperation and coordination. The 23 people listed each week in our bulletin as "Participants in This Sunday's Service" each provide an important service that, all together, enhances the quality of our worship experience - from those who warmly greet us when we arrive, to those who clean-up and lock-up when we leave.

Our choirs and instrumentalists work together under the marvelous leadership of Dave Debick, our Director of Music, who helps them blend their individual gifts into one unified sound of worship and praise. Our faithful and dedicated Sunday School teachers not only tell and show our children about the Love of God, they also involve them in sharing that love with one another and with people in need - both locally and throughout the world. Of course, what we do here on Sunday morning is just part of our Church's overall ministry.

Food and money we collect are distributed to food banks and other agencies, where they can make a positive difference in the lives of others. Last week we collected \$1,477 and a variety of household items to assist women who are overcoming addiction at Edna House. And every day, every one of us can let the light of Christ's love shine - in the way we speak and act and interact with others. Now, admittedly, that's not always an easy thing to do - as I know from my own personal experience. Fortunately, however, once a week Sunday comes along! And we come back together to encourage and lift-up one another - to be fed and

nourished with Divine Word and Sacrament; to be refreshed and re-energized so that we can live-out our faith, every day. And for that, I am truly thankful!

So in conclusion, I want to offer a word of heartfelt thanks to all of you who generously give of your time and talents to faithfully praise and serve the holy One - through your music, your teaching, your care of our finances and facilities, your stewardship and outreach, your warm hospitality and your gracious welcome to all those who come among us. And let us also give thanks and praise to our loving and gracious God - the One who calls us, and keeps us together, as One Family of Faith.