

Ephesians 4:11-13
“Exercising Together”

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Imagine that you are a member of a church search committee, looking for a pastor for your congregation. Suppose that you read through some candidate profiles and found one that describes him or her as: 1) entrepreneurial, with ideas about how to reach out into the community, 2) a good preacher, bold, through whom we hear God speaking, 3) likes to invite others to the church and into the faith, 4) genuinely cares for and mentors church members, and 5) an engaging teacher. Wouldn't you be interested in this candidate?

These five qualities are the five spiritual gifts listed in the epistle to the Ephesians for this Sunday: Apostleship, Prophecy, Evangelism, Pastoral Care, and Teaching. Who wouldn't think: “Wow! That sounds like a good minister, one who has it all and can do it all.”

But wait. Let's go back to this reading. The verses leading up to this list speak about the Body of Christ – the church – *not* just the minister of a local congregation. It then states that grace and gifts have been bestowed upon “each of us” by Christ. **So the author is *not* describing a single minister, but the gifts for ministry that have been showered upon the people - the church.** It is not telling them what to look for in a candidate profile, but to nurture gifts in each other to build up the Body of Christ!

As I was studying this text, I'm not sure why – I guess it was the building up the body language – but the theme song from the movie *Rocky* came to mind. I googled “getting strong now” and up came the video of him working out to that powerful piece. We tend to think of Rocky as a loveable individual, but *a team* trained him, and it took him a long time to finally be able to run up the seventy-two stairs to the entrance of the Philadelphia Museum of Art! What I hadn't remembered in that iconic video was that during this victory run, people came out from every corner to join him, including kids, not only to cheer him on, but to run *with* him.

Ephesians says: “*some* in the church are apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, in order to equip ALL of us, **until ALL of us together come to maturity and grow into the full stature of Jesus Christ.**” **Ministry is a group endeavor.**

So when you fill out your profile as a congregation and can identify your gifts for ministry, it is more likely that you will find a new minister who complements them, and the purpose of an interim period is not to find a perfect pastor *who will do it all*, but to exercise your Christ-given gifts and get stronger as you do ministry. **In other words, you and I are ‘working out’ together!**

And I perceive that many of you are really developing in your spiritual gifts through these challenging times. The pandemic, moving online, racial justice issues, asking “what do our kids need?” and discerning when and how to return to the building while you are the Body of Christ outside of it, *all of these challenges* are like weights and

aerobics that are actually equipping you and building muscle in you and me! Thanks be to God!

The Question for Reflection:

Do you see any of these gifts in RCC folks? If so, which and who?

Prophecy, Service, Teaching, Exhortation, Generous Giving, Leadership, Compassion, Apostleship, Evangelism, and Pastoral Care.