

## **Barre Congregational Church**

August 4, 2024: A Pastoral Message by Pastor Margaret Keyser

~ **Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost**~

*“We are One in Faith”*

Our services can be found on our website at [www.barrechurch.com](http://www.barrechurch.com) and Facebook page.

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### **Scripture Reading: Ephesians 4 v 1-16**

#### **I. Introduction:**

When we experience difficult times, whether it is emotional, financial, work wise, health wise, or otherwise, it is easy to experience loneliness, to be in despair, and to be depressed. In these situations, one can feel as if the condition will not improve, and that there is no or little hope. The money is not coming in, this affliction, or illness is not improving, or is very slow in getting better, and work is hard. To go through such feelings of loneliness and despair can be hard and can make one feel disconnected from others. It can also make one feel imprisoned by one's own circumstances. For some, it is easier to cope with their circumstances than others. Does this sound familiar to you? Have you been through situations like these?

#### **II. We are One in Faith:**

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians while he was in house arrest / prison in Rome. He was arrested more than once, beaten, and eventually according to church tradition, beheaded in Rome and died for his faith. It was during his imprisonment in Rome that he wrote several letters to a number of churches, including this letter to the Ephesians. To be imprisoned must be quite a challenging situation, being isolated from the world and loved ones, and perhaps being in very difficult circumstances. It must be a very lonely experience at times. For Paul it would not have been very different, because of the suffering he endured.

However, despite his circumstances he starts off this letter as follows, “As a prisoner of the Lord...”, and then he appealed to the congregation in Ephesus to live a life worthy of the calling they received. He asks them to be completely humble and gentle, to be patient, and to put up with each other in love, and to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through Christ.

He, despite his circumstances knows that he belongs to God and that he is united with God, and that Christ is near to him in his situation of suffering and isolation, says Clinton E. Arnold in his commentary on Ephesians. He now reminds the congregation in Ephesus that they ought to live in unity with one another, because of what Christ did for them. He then makes this declaration in verse 4 -6 that there is one Body and One Spirit, One Lord, one faith and one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. This, Arnold says is a confession of faith which serves as a reminder of their identity in Christ.

The church in Ephesus is the unified Body of Christ, and therefore they ought to live a life worthy of this unified Body of Christ. They must be humble, because God opposes pride and arrogance, and with humility comes wisdom, states Proverbs 11 v 2. In the Song of Mary, in Luke Chapter 1 v 52, she declares that God brought down rulers from their thrones and lifted up the humble. They must be gentle, which is one of the fruits of the Spirit, an important characteristic to live in harmony with one another. They must be patient with one another, and they must love one another and show that in action.

### **III. Conclusion:**

Paul knew why he wrote these words to that congregation. He knew that they too would suffer, and before that happens, and as a sign of who they truly are in Christ, they must live in harmony and in unity with one another and be there for one another. They must strengthen their bond of love and be true to their identity as the Body of Christ. They must be there for each other.

As a congregation here in Barre, we are reminded this morning of our own identity as the Body of Christ, and Paul makes his appeal to us as well to live worthy of that identity, in unity and in love. This means we must be in tune with what the other is going through and understand what it means to go through the things that make life hard. It means reaching out, being there for the other, checking in, and praying intentionally for one another. We must continue to develop ourselves and our resources to be a church of the light, who loves and who cares, and to be deemed worthy of the One who died for us. May God help us to fulfil our purpose as the Body of Christ here in Barre and beyond. Amen.