

Thursday, June 4, 2020

A wonderful variety of gifts

- Pastor Hank French

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone (1 Corinthians 12:4-6).

Diversity is a wonderful thing. Humanity is nothing if not diverse. None of us is exactly like anyone else, and that is a good thing. Imagine how boring it would be if we were all clones of each other. And imagine how static life would be, how unchanging if we all thought and felt and dreamed the same things. Without diversity we would be little more than mass-produced machines. Human diversity is our strength, and it seems to be the will of God for us.

In my 45 years as a pastor, I have known a lot of people whose diversity of gifts and personalities, whose diversity of opinions and interests, whose diversity of beliefs and commitments, whose diversity of age, gender and race enlivened and gave energy and focus to the congregations I have served. These diverse folks often butted heads with each other in their diversity, but more often than not they talked to each other, compromised with each other, respected each other and worked together for the sake of their community of faith and for the sake of the larger communities where their church was planted.

Be it in Japan, throughout the churches in Asia which I visited as a representative of the ELCA, or in the United States, I have found a wonderful diversity, a wonderful variety of gifts. And I have witnessed the truth that, although diversity can, at times, inhibit creativity and innovation in ministry, more often than not it encourages creativity and innovation.

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I have known so many people of faith who have wondered about what gifts the Spirit has given them and used those gifts for good; I have seen those folks wonder what service Jesus has equipped them to perform and then simply served others; I have witnessed those Christians wonder what activities God has enabled them to participate in and then seen them dive in and be a part of the church's ministry. It is both wonderful and humbling.

I have often thought that I have the best job in the world—working with good people for the sake of the world God loves.

Prayer: All praise be to you, Holy God for the marvelous diversity you have created in humankind. May I never despise it. Amen.