

**We Need Each Other - Interdependence** (Ephesians 4:7-16 & 1 Corinthians 12:12-30)

What a great hymn that is. Whenever I sing it I have one vision in my mind. It is of a Welsh male voice choir singing their hearts out. Which on reflection is interesting because the song is not a corporate affair at all. The hymn is very individualistic.

**Guide *ME*, O thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land;  
*I* am weak, but Thou art mighty,  
Hold *ME* with Thy powerful hand:  
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,  
Feed *ME* now and ever more,  
Feed *ME* now and ever more.**

And that is only the first verse. The last words we sung in the hymn were

***I* will ever give to Thee,  
*I* will ever give to Thee.**

It is *me* and *I* all the way through. And many, many of our hymns are in the first person singular, i.e. they talk about I and me and myself and me worshipping God. This can make us, if we are not careful into thinking that Christianity is about me and God and no-one else.

This week I had occasion to look at the Baptist Union of Great Britain, BUGB's Website. On the part labelled *Local Church* you read this

**Local churches form the front-line of Baptist mission. Over 2,100 churches belong to the BUGB, each of them autonomous, self-funding and the majority of them financially independent.**

**Most churches have their own building but others meet in homes, schools, community centres and other public places. Some follow a traditional style of worship whilst others are trying new ways of doing church to attract people that can find church alien to their culture and way of life. Churches will normally meet for worship on Sunday but will also have meetings during the week like bible study groups, parents and toddlers, youth clubs, lunch clubs etc.**

**Some churches in the Union are not solely Baptist but a combination of two or more denominations known as a Local Ecumenical Partnership (LEP). Baptist churches in some areas have formed a 'cluster' and many work with other denominations on joint mission events and projects for their communities.**

**There are Baptist churches with a team of ministers whilst others may have a part-time minister or no minister at all. A national fund, Home Mission, provides grants to those churches who would struggle to finance a minister's wages or an evangelism project on their own. Home Mission also pays for publications, training events and support for all local Union churches from regional associations and the national resource centre in Didcot.**

As it says each church is autonomous and all the dictionary definitions I can find mention self-governing and independent in their definitions of autonomous.

And the problem is that we live in a society where we are all seen as being independent, as being autonomous. We are called upon to be independent, to live our own lives, to make me happy and successful. It was in the 1980s when we were encourage to make religion a private, independent affair. This means we cannot involve others, we should not talk to others about it, especially try to convert them.

Just this week the head of the Hindu faith has come out and said that trying to convert people to another religion should be banned, globally. The response from other faith leaders was that they wanted to meet with the Hindu head and carry on the dialogue.

However in the reading we had and one of Paul's best known analogy for the church is the body. Ephesians 4:11

**“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.”** (Ephesians 4:11-13 NIV)

And to continue he says

**“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”** (Ephesians 4:14-16 NIV)

**So that the body of Christ may be built up... From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament.** We are the body of Christ and a body may be independent, but the parts of the body certainly are not. The parts of a body have to work together or else the body does not really work.

I can remember one Sunday morning waking up and getting out of bed and promptly falling back onto it. Not that I was asleep or needed more sleep, it was just that I went dizzy and basically fell over. Well I put it down to getting up too quick, so I toggled off to the bathroom with a certain amount of uncertainty, as I was still a little unsure. I was certain it would pass off as I showered and had breakfast. Well I was not too bad and I happened to sitting on the front row of the congregation for some reason whist Sue was leading the first part of the service and then I was on to preach. I stood up and Bethel had two little steps onto the platform and as I went up the steps, the dizziness came back big time and I then quickly descended the steps, unable to do anything else. My body was not responding to my brain, my legs seemed to have a life of their own. I did get up to the lectern and made some joke about why I had nearly fallen off of the platform, but I was never so thankful for something to grip onto for the duration of the sermon.

I found out that week, by visiting the doctor that I had labyrinthitis, an infection of the semi-circular canals in the inner ear which causes a loss of balance. It cleared up, but the doctor said it could return at anytime and the way to overcome it is to stare at a distant object, so If I talk to you and appear to be staring at something over your shoulder, it might be that I am looking at the horizon to stay upright!

The body of Christ has already been symbolised this morning in the bread, but this is not the only analogue of the body. We are the body of Christ, with Christ as our head. Therefore we cannot be independent, we have to be...

*[INTERDEPENDENCE VIDEO CLIP]*

Yes we have to be interdependent. Just as Baptist church should not be independent of each other, they should be interdependent, so we are part of this church should not be independent of each other, we should be interdependent with each.

What Interdependence Does Not Mean

**Clones** - Does this mean that we have to be clones of each other? No because why else would Paul say in verse 11

**“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers,”** (Ephesians 4:11 NIV)

If we were meant to be clones then we would not have different roles, different tasks, different functions to play. My body is not one organ, there are many organs, wonderfully put together. It did begin as one cell but very quickly different sets of cells in different parts of the growing foetus became differentiated and so grew into a heart and lungs and a liver and kidneys and so on and so forth.

**No Disagreements** – Does interdependence mean that I cannot disagree with people? No because Paul expects this as we are to speak the truth to each other, but in love. Verse 14

**“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”** (Ephesians 4:14-15 NIV)

We need to be those who follow the truth and who are not afraid to stand up for it, so we can disagree, but in a right way.

So as we are interdependent, what are the

Benefits

**Growth** – When we work together we grow. Verse 12

**“to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up”** (Ephesians 4:12 NIV)

Growth is vital to all life. A baby does not stay as a baby but we all know that it will grow. A baby grows physically, but also mentally, emotionally and spiritually and it needs others around her or him to do that. I was telling someone this last week that until I was seven years old the only person who understood me was my mother – I had a terrible stutter caused by me trying to say things too quickly! Then a teacher told me to sing when I spoke to her, because no-one stutters when they sing. Looking back I probably felt a right idiot singing questions and answers to the teacher, but it began my road to near perfect speech, except of course for the Essex but then I was brung up at Brain’ree!

**Unity** - We need others to grow and as we do that hopefully as we do that we will be united, there will be unity. Remember that this is not uniformity, clones, but as Paul writes, verse 12

**“to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach *unity* in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.”**  
(Ephesians 4:12-13 NIV)

That we may reach unity in matters of faith and knowledge of Jesus and his work for us. Jesus died for us and we need to know that. He died for our sins and rose again showing that his sacrifice as he died on the cross did wipe away our sins when we ask his forgiveness and follow him.

**Maturity** – and we all want people to be mature. Again verse 11

**“to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach *unity* in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become *mature*, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.”**  
(Ephesians 4:12-13 NIV)

We may be mature, mature not to become independent, but interdependent – we still need each other. Notice that all the way through Paul talks about ‘*We*’

**“until *we* all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ. Then *we* will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, *we* will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”** (Ephesians 4:13-15 NIV)

It is *we* and *us* plural because when I reach maturity, I then help others. At one time the educational system was based on this. The teacher would teach the older pupils who then would spend some time teaching the younger pupils.

**Strength** - We are all together, helping each other to mature and then this gives us strength. This is the strength to combat heresy, to be taken off on flights of fancy, to be taken off by our culture – everyone else does it, so it must be OK for me. This too is when we need each other, we need to be interdependent.

**Love** – Also we are to love and love is far more likely to develop out of interdependence than independence. We are to speak the truth in love and we can be very hurtful if we are not interdependent, but have an independence mentality.

In the year 2000, in Swavesey we had an artist approach the Parish Council because he wanted to bury a time capsule on the village green. He had no connection with the village so why choose Swavesey. Well Swavesey is on the Meridian line even though his preferred burial site for the capsule was not on the Meridian line, but not too far, but he wanted his plaque to be seen and not hidden. However he and his agent began to mess up about, because we were two independent groups and not working together, not interdependent on each other.

In the end the Parish Council had to get a bit stroppy with the artist and his agent to get them to meet us and start a real dialogue!

Love comes from interdependence. Love is needing each other.

So how do we become interdependent?

**Trinity** – firstly we need to look to the Trinity, to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This is part of a painting by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo with the title *The Heavenly and Earthly Trinities*. We see here the heavenly Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In God we see perfect interdependence as Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together in Creation – both during the act itself and also the keeping things going. We see the interdependence in Redemption, in our Salvation.

**Finding Our Role** – This is what Voyage of Discovery is all about – finding our role, how we can serve, how we can be interdependent and not just independent. Do come on Thursdays. The meal is at 7.30pm and we begin to serve coffee and tea at around 8.00pm. Do come and learn with others. If you missed last week's, don't worry, just sign up. It would be great to have you all there, so we can learn how to be interdependent together.

As we work together, as we grow and mature together, we then become stronger together to witness to the world, to those around us, to those at work, to those that we spend leisure time with. WE will also be more in unity together and there will be more love exhibited which will show the world around that we belong to Christ.