**Springfield Presbyterian Church**

**June 12th, 2022**

**Welcome to the Family**

1. Not a Cult

I must admit that after naming this sermon, I thought it might

come across as a little…cult-y. Despite that reality though, I often refer to you all as my Springfield family. You are my brothers and sisters in Christ, and we seek to be in unity as we serve our God. You are my family and as Paul would say, I give thanks to God when I think upon you.

 This is a story I’ve told many times, but it’s just too pertinent not to share again. When I was interviewed by the Pastoral Nominating Committee via phone, I remember this as our first contact as we sought whether I was the right fit. The words of Bob Steppling still ring true when he said clearly that Springfield is a family and while we have our squabbles, we are a family who stick through this life together.

 As the years have passed, I have found Bob’s statement to be authentic and true. Yes, we have seen conflict and heartache, but we have also seen immeasurable love in and through this community. There is no denying it. We are family.

 This is hard to say, but as I look at other congregations where my fellow clergypeople serve, I hear about the rumor mills and the complete systematic dysfunction that runs rampant. We are by no means perfect and we are certainly on a journey, but I believe this congregation is special – granted, I’m biased. Yet there is something uniquely special about this place, so as we think about membership this morning, I come to it with the lens of the beautiful family we are and we are continually growing as we live, love, and serve together.

1. 1 Corinthians

As I think upon our first text this morning from First Corinthians,

it is a familiar metaphor relating the physical body from heads, knees, and toes to the body of Christ. The essence is that there is great diversity within the church and that is to be celebrated. If we were all financial geniuses, that might be nice on one hand, but had no pastoral hearts – our body would be lacking. We need each person to share their own perspectives, experiences, knowledge, and gifts in order for us not to only grow in numbers but to grow in the strength of Christ.

 I like the end of this passage in particular, this sense that some folks will think they are less important than others, but really, they are indispensable. So if you think you are the pinky toe of this family, I’d tell you that you are probably not, but even so, you give us balance. The pinky toe is way more valuable than it’s given credit.

 On the same hand, this passage is also a good reminder to those of us who sometimes get too big for our britches to settle down and humble our hearts. Maybe we do not offer up a task because we are afraid we are the only ones who can do it ‘right’. Or maybe we aren’t great delegators. I’ve found myself in this category, where I thought that if I did it all, if I stretched myself so thin, I would be really serving Christ. I forgot that I am part of the body, part of a diverse body, and delegating is not only a gift for me, but it’s also entrusting someone else to do something and let their light shine and their gifts grow.

 As our new members official join, I encourage you to remember that you are now a committed part of this body and we encourage you to share your gifts, your passions, and your hopes with all because with you, we will be a more robust and beautiful body of Christ.

1. Ephesians

The second text is split in two portions and each part has a

multitude of blessings. In the first one, we recognize that we are family, and we are no longer strangers. We know one another’s names, we’ve seen each other at our best and our worst, and we’ve said that we believe in God as our foundation. We also celebrate that we citizens with the saints, not only the saints here on earth, but you have a great cloud of witnesses to support you and encourage you. I think of those saints who have passed who some of you love, like Julian of Norwich or Henri Nouwen. Or maybe the saints who have passed who were there to teach you as a little one, like a grandmother or another relative whose words and ways of living have stuck with you. As you continue to commit to this journey of discipleship, we once again acknowledge that we are held by God and held by all who have come before us.

 The second part of Ephesians speaks again to diversity, similar to our First Corinthians text. The phrase that has stuck out in my mind this week is this sense of “speaking the truth in love.” Those five words melded together are much easier said than done.

 Yet I spoke before about family conflict and indeed, there will be times where we have different viewpoints and sometimes in light of the world we live in, it can become heavy. So I plead with you, with me, with all in this community, to follow those words – speak the truth in love. Speak what you need to, you are safe here, but let those words be spoken with love for that person. As hard as it can be to remember in moments of conflict, we are called beloved by God, and so we need to remember that as we live in community together.

 Sometimes, it’s all about how you say it. With everything going on in this world, we need a safe and brave place to speak what is on our hearts and our minds. We are already creating this space, it has been crafted, but as we continue to live and grow together, we need to joined in love and unite on those things we can find unity in, rather than see all that separates us.

1. Membership

As we have our sacred time of welcoming Christy, Barbara,

Bobby, and Hubert officially into membership and fellowship with us, we do it with a heart that is seeing the Spirit move right before us. As we profess our faith together, we remember what we hold central as our foundation. As we look around this sanctuary, we remember that our sanctuary expands far beyond these walls, and now we call these individuals to also be the voice of Springfield in our community and in our world. As we do this holy act, we remember that God has already called us family from far before we entered this building.

 My friends, I pray you give thanks today. Give thanks for those who have chosen to call Springfield their home. Give thanks for those who have been here forever and continue to enjoy the ups and downs of our family life. Give thanks to God who has divinely placed us here – may we call it a blessing and thus be a blessing to one another and to the world around us. Alleluia and amen.