

Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson decided to go on a camping trip. After dinner and a bottle of wine, they lay down for the night, and went to sleep. Some hours later, Holmes awoke and nudged his faithful friend. "Watson, look up at the sky and tell me what you see." Watson replied, "I see millions of stars." "What does that tell you?" Watson pondered for a minute.

"Astronomically, it tells me that there are millions of galaxies and potentially billions of planets."

"Horologically, I deduce that the time is approximately a quarter past three."

"Theologically, I can see that God is all powerful and that we are small and insignificant."

"Meteorologically, I suspect that we will have a beautiful day tomorrow."

"What does it tell you, Holmes?"

Holmes was silent for a minute, then said: "It tells me - that someone has stolen our tent!"

Watson was looking for answers in the wrong place – he was failing to connect his immediate experience with reality.

EM Forster wrote these well known words in the novel 'Howards End'

'Only connect! That was the whole of her sermon. Only connect the prose and the passion, and both will be exalted, and human love will be seen at its height. Live in fragments no longer.'

We have some world class sculptures around us in this cathedral which invite us to 'only connect.' The sculptures can be received in a number of ways. We can look at the popular long elegant peacock by Geoffrey Dashwood by the south door and we might simply see a tall blue, smooth peacock, turning his head to look behind him. That is a start but as yet there are no links – no connections. The sculpture of the peacock, a bird that symbolises immortality, points us to the peacock on the font and makes us reflect upon our own baptism. Godparents answered on our behalf at baptism; do you turn to Christ? and so we began our journey of faith.. From the sculpture we have linked and connected with our own Christian journey and our hope for immortality. There are many other connections to be made by engaging with the sculptures. 'Only connect'

Paul speaks not only of intellectual connecting of our daily experiences with our faith but a connecting which involves actively working together. He is

suggesting that we too 'don't live in fragments any longer 'but work together as one functioning body.' Paul's image has enormous staying power - although our bodies are made mostly of water and gases and elements, the body has to work as one unit in order to function at all. With all our innovative 21st century technology, this ancient image is still highly relevant. We all know how we function differently if even a small toe is stubbed – or we have an ear infection – or an ankle is twisted. We focus on that one specific part eager for its recovery so that we can feel 'normal' again. The central nervous system reminds us constantly of the pain and will not allow us to ignore any one part of the body that is damaged.

We are placed physically near to the people around us of all shapes, sizes and personalities – we are no static piece of art but a living moving sculpture – we are each made in God's image reflecting God's love and creativity, even God's sense of humour. Paul says that if the Holy Spirit is at work, then everyone will live harmoniously, with all the individual parts joined together, like a human body.

The image of the church as one body where all members are linked and interdependent is very familiar to us all – maybe even too familiar so that we may not respond enthusiastically to the image.

If two people in a congregation or a church or denominations disagree or argue, then the rest of the body is affected and thereby damaged. As soon as we criticise unfairly any one person it breaks the connectivity between us. In one church I was in, a person asked if two people could stop arguing because all she wanted to do was to come to church to worship and not to witness dissension between other members. We thank God we **are** all diverse in nature and although diversity can sometimes cause disputes, it also brings a variety of gifts given by God's grace for us to connect.

Paul says we have the same spirit but different gifts, we have different ministries but the same Lord, we have different activities but the same God.

All gifts in a community and especially within a Christian community are vital to the body connecting and functioning effectively....those who wash and clean the linen for services, those who arrange flowers, those who act as sides-people, all who attend services to worship and so on – every individual is an essential part to our worship - with no-one either less or more important than another. The weaker members in terms of health are

as essential as the stronger ones: those who have attended services for years but are now house bound are as important as those who are physically present. We need everyone linked to feel that our body is healthy. There are challenges within the Church of England alone, where there are disagreements concerning, for instance, same sex marriage and ethical decision making in terms of editing genes. The church lives in tension recognising that there is internal disagreement but still trying to work and connect as one united body. Beyond the local church is the global church reaching out to the world. Maybe all churches can be linked by holding out a hand to those in Sierra Leone affected by the mud slides, those in Barcelona suddenly bereaved and those affected by the earthquake in Italy. Strangely, the church is sometimes at its best when Christians work in one spirit and body to help those in need.

‘Only connect – live in fragments no longer’

As soon as we were baptised, we chose connectivity rather than living disjointedly. With the sculpture of the peacock, we connect with our faith and our own lives. Paul tells us how to live connectedly as Christ’s body both locally and globally. If we don’t identify our gifts and work as one body, then our body becomes fractured and we know even for a twisted ankle how long it takes to heal. When we share the peace in this service we are making a statement of unity – we are saying we want to connect – want to work together as one functioning, healthy body united in Christ.

Only connect – live our lives in fragments no longer. When we recognise that none of us can do everything but all of us can do something. When we begin to see the connections in the whole picture, like Sherlock Holmes, when we begin to see the connections between each other and Christ crucified, then we will operate together with Christ at the centre with all our limbs fully functioning as the body of Christ. We pray that we might function in fragments no longer but behave as though we firmly believe that ‘We are the body of Christ’. We pray that as that body, we celebrate that, ‘in one spirit we were all baptised into one connected body’.

Canon Jane Brooke