

Dear friends in Christ, imagine with me that we have a letter from Paul. He writes to us from afar, from quite a distance in time and space.

If we were to read on in this portion of this letter to the people of Corinth, Paul will call us children which echoes today's reading: “When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways” (13:11). Sometimes we are children, my friends. While we should have a childlike faith, our faith eventually needs to mature – eventually we must put an end to our childish ways. Whatever problems we have in our community can be healed, but first we have to have the desire to make a change – to make a change of heart. We have to want change.

I know that you all have heard the old joke “How many Anglicans does it take to change a light bulb?” The answer often is a horrified “Change? In an Anglican church? I think not!” or better yet “Change a light bulb? Why my grandmother gave the church that lightbulb!!!” But a more mature answer might be “Well, first you have to form a committee...” A thoughtful theological answer from a traditional Anglican might be “None. The old one is complete and sufficient unto itself and should not be changed according to the world's whims.” A more practical Anglican traditionalist answer might be: “Four. One to call the electrician, one to clear it with the vestry, and two to argue about how much better candles were.” Another answer might be: “Five. One to screw in the new bulb and four to found an organization for the preservation of the old bulb.” And another answer might be “The whole parish gathered at their annual meeting. One to move that the bulb be changed while the other debate *ad nauseam* until the room spins. For less progressive Anglicans the answer might be “Three. One to change it and two to storm out in protest if the person changing it is too progressive!” Some of us would say “10. One to actually change the bulb; 9 to say how much they liked the old one.” Then

you always need to add one more Anglican to write a thank you note to the old light bulb for its faithful service.

We Anglicans are a diverse group with many different philosophies. The beauty of the Anglican way is that it is the *via media* – the middle way. Anglicans are able to embrace ambiguity. We have the ability of agreeing to disagree and still function, and function well. We can agree to disagree and still love one another. Do we hear Paul speaking to us about our unity in diversity? Do we realize what God is doing among us through his apostle Paul and Paul's aides? Paul had his ambassadors for Christ. Timothy and Apollos were his coworkers in bringing oneness to the people of Corinth – oneness with God and oneness with one another. These servants of God may have been accused of being imposters by the people of Corinth, but they were true to God and to Paul's teachings. As agents of God they acted in good faith to try to bring unity to the Corinthians who felt they were bad teachers after they felt rejected by Paul.

Paul had learned that the people of Corinth had misunderstood his teachings. Paul had taught in his usual affectionate manner – a style in sharp contrast to the different styles of Paul's coworkers. So Paul wrote from Macedonia after he had left Ephesus about the need for change – about their need to make a change of heart. He trusted his closest followers who were trying to hold the diverse peoples of Corinth together as a people of God. Paul wrote to combat the evil that had arisen in the Christian community he had founded. Paul told the Corinthians that God was offering them grace – undeserved love – and that they could be restored to union with God and one another. All they needed to do was accept God's love. We know this from reading the collection that is the 2nd Letter to the Corinthians.

Titus brought news to Paul that these letters indeed had brought a change of heart – that the Corinthians were willing to correct the problems in their own community. Through Paul's efforts – and those of his aides – these new Christians were able to make a needed change. They put away their childish ways and gained a more mature faith that

would include all of them in all their beautiful diversity. They were able to regain the unity with God that we all desire.

My brothers and sisters, we all come from differing traditions, and we are all in need of repentance and transformation. God is calling us to a holy Lent, a time to repent, and time to be open to that transformation. Let us run the race of faith together. Let us support one another this Lent. Let us find ways to be a transformed and a transforming community together. To do that we often choose a Lenten discipline. I want to suggest one that I read in the Presiding Bishop's Lenten letter this year – that is the Presiding Bishop of the US Episcopal church. She says we may need to make a change in how we eat. She suggests that we be very conscious of eating, what we eat, yes, but also where and with whom. By doing so we can stand in solidarity with Anglicans from every walk of life and from every different philosophy. But we also stand with all those who are hungry – hungry for food, but also those who hunger for shelter or peace or dignity or recognition or those who hunger for love. In Lent we are preparing ourselves for the great Easter feast – a feast where we can be united in all our diversity.

This Lent may we put aside our childish ways and embrace our many and diverse ways of worshipping and believing. May we learn about those who differ from us – our brothers and sisters in Christ – so that we realize we are not so different after all.

Lord, may it be so.

Amen.