

**LESSONS FROM THE GEESE**  
**September 23, 2012 – I Corinthians 12: 12-27**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

This time of year at my parent's townhome, on a small lake, the geese begin their trek southward for the winter. They will make a journey of a thousand miles. But they cannot get there by themselves. They need one another to get there. It is the lesson from the geese. In staff meeting a while back, a staff member shared a story by Milton Olson, entitled, "Lessons from the Geese" and this serves as the inspiration for this sermon.

As the geese are making this impossibly long pilgrimage as each bird flaps its wings it creates "uplift" for the bird following. Flying in a "V" formation provides 71% more flying range than if each bird flew alone. People who share a common direction and a sense of community can get to their goals a lot quicker together than apart. Silly goose, you cannot go it alone. Whenever one goose falls out of formation, it begins to fall behind and you can hear it honking trying to catch up. It needs the lifting power of community. Silly goose, you cannot go it alone. When a goose gets tired it falls back into formation; the lead goose constantly is changing its lead position with another goose who is uplifted and refreshed. Silly goose, hard tasks require community and shared leadership and being interdependent with one another. The geese behind in the V formation honk encouragement to the lead goose up front. Silly goose, we all get there when we encourage one another not criticize one another. When a goose becomes sick or overly tired, two other geese will drop out of formation, and either enable the fallen goose to catch up, or they rejoin another formation. Silly goose, don't you know we need to stand by one another just like that? Silly goose, don't you know we cannot go it alone? Silly goose, don't you know by now just exactly how much we need one another? **Lessons from the geese.**

You know, we live at a strange time. Community has broken down. The relationships that make for a strong church, a strong community, a strong nation are broken and are breaking down. Do we even know our neighbors? The person sitting next to us in the pew? We don't even have front porches to sit on to see our friends and neighbors as they take walks in the evening. We are too busy to attend a church supper. We are too tired to care about the person living across the street, let alone someone we have never met a mile away. We have become isolated and autonomous. And, no, texting and tweeting and Emailing are not substitutes for real community, where people really are together. It requires being with someone; it requires real face time, not virtual reality on Facebook. There's nothing "virtual" about community. Real community does not consist from the number of friends you have on "Facebook" but the real relationships you have with others. Community takes time; its messy; it's a bunch of geese honking at a school board meeting or a congregational meeting. Its associating with people who are different than you are; who may hold differing opinions. The relationships that make for community are breaking down. Is it any wonder we cannot accomplish what we were able to accomplish 40 years ago? If there's no community there's no flying a 1,000 miles together on some essential project either. Big, seemingly impossible tasks require people to be together. The things that demand our heart and our life today cannot be accomplished alone. You can get 71% further with community; you'll fly and soar 71% less without it. The great tasks before us in the church, or in Washington, PA, or in our nation will not happen without community. We really do need one another. We really cannot go it alone. Community, that basic connectivity with others, is the pre-condition for anything else to happen. No community—nothing happens. Much community—all things are possible. Silly goose, don't you know by now if we don't first work on community nothing else good will happen either.

Our scripture for today is on the connections it takes for there to be community. *“If one member suffers, all suffer together”* it notes (1 Corinthians 12: 26) If one goose needs attention a couple of others better drop down and be concerned. We are to be so connected in the Body of Christ that it is like we are a literal human body. You are the hand and I am the feet; you are the eyes and someone else are the ears. So connected one to the other are we to be that we function like a body and we become The Body of Christ, the living and breathing embodiment of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We’re in a formation, if you will, like geese, if you will, and we receive uplift from one another and from Jesus Christ Himself. The spiritual bonds of the Holy Spirit bind my heart to your heart, and your heart to other’s hearts, and then as it says, *“Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.”* (v. 27) **TOGETHER...we are the Body of Christ.** Not a lone goose; not a lone ranger Christian. We cannot say to one another, *“I have no need of you.”* (v. 21) But someone so spiritually connected to Jesus Christ and so spiritually connected to their brothers and sisters in Christ act in tandem with one another, they fly in formation, if you will, and they and Christ in us, provide the uplift we need for the journey. People need the Lord. People need Jesus alive in their hearts. People need the Holy Spirit to empower their lives. Ah, but people need one another; we need to be connected through Christ and in the Holy Spirit in order to do the ministry and the mission and the tasks facing us in this place where we live, called Washington. My heart connected to your heart. We’ll never get to the Promised Land if we’re a lone goose. We’ll never do anything of significance with our life or in our community if we’re a lone goose. We’ll never accomplish the purpose and the plan God has placed in our heart if we say –*“I have no need of you.”* The seemingly impossible journey of a thousand miles begins by getting into formation, following Jesus as our lead goose, and receiving the power and the uplift from the Spirit.

I had lunch with a local pastor, not of our denomination, and we both spoke together about the fact that there is not even a ministerial association here in Washington. Even ministers don’t get together and have lunch together. We both shared with one another the desire in our heart for community, for connection with one another, with the developing of relationships that transcend churches, denominations and creeds. I do believe there is something stirring in the heart of the people of Washington. I do believe we know, both what we have lost, and also what we so desperately need. I think we can see the pressing need before us. I think we know the things which Christ would have us do and be. But I think we are overwhelmed with the tasks at hand. We become overwhelmed when we forget we are not alone. We have God and He has promised that we will be *“more than conquerors through Him who has loved us.”* We are not alone. We have a whole church family to go on the journey ahead with us. We can do this. We can do what God is calling us to do...when we do it in HIS power... and when we do it with one another by our side. I call for community. In the name of Jesus Christ, I call for community. In the name of Jesus Christ and for the sake of those in need in our community, I call for community. Winston Churchill, English Prime Minister, whose indomitable spirit led England through the trials, buzz bombs and destruction of WWII, was fond of flashing a V for victory sign with his fingers. Long before victory was actually achieved, he claimed it to be so. May I say, VICTORY begins by getting into a “V” formation –and being formed and led and empowered by a Living Savior. Victory requires community. Silly goose, you cannot go it alone...We need the Lord...and we need one another...If you would be willing to be part of the solution, and if you would be willing to set aside differences and denominational barriers and everything that might divide us, then I ask you to flash a V for victory sign. When we do what God calls us to do together and in community we have victory. Victory in Jesus. Victory in community. There is no journey too difficult for God. It is LESSONS FROM THE GEESE. Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*