

You've Got Mail

Do you remember when we'd go to the mailbox with anticipation of a letter or postcard from a relative or friend? We, of course, would have to write something in return. We usually wrote things out by hand or, in special cases, by typewriter. As a Freshmen Orientation Group Leader in college, I remember sitting in the training session and hearing Dean Norm Hiersche say, "You will send hand-written letters to each of your Freshmen before they arrive for Orientation." We didn't have computers at our disposal in 1981, so, of course, it meant that we were going to write to them.

Those letters, and those that we received, were our way of communicating with our families before emails, texting, and all-inclusive phone plans were in style. It was a big deal to make a long-distance call, even out of your area code. So, letters were the way to communicate with anyone who was away from you.

Letters and messages were simply a way of life, dating back to the time when Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Paul helped establish early Christian communities in Corinth, where he spent about a year. Some

scholars believe that this occurred in the late 40s. This letter would be after he left and was in Ephesus, based on a reference in Chapter 16.

You can imagine that while he was with them in Corinth, issues could be addressed immediately, and people would generally behave well while the leader was around. It doesn't mean that the people were afraid of Paul but did so out of respect. Paul's two letters to the Church in Corinth dealt with some pretty specific issues. Paul had received a letter from one of the church leaders that outlined areas of concern. The people were in disagreement about the spiritual leadership of the church with Paul and others, issues around what to eat and what not to eat, and issues around sexual relationships. It also appears that there were issues about their care and concern for one another.

It is also important to note that Paul, like many other followers of "The Way," was convinced about the imminent second coming of Christ. Paul devoted some of his letter to this as he reminded them not waste their time on fighting about which church leader to follow but to love each other dearly. "Without love, I am a noisy gong or clanging

symbol,” and reminds them of their responsibility to love one another as faith, hope, and love remain, “but the greatest of these is love.”

Here we are in 2026, and we are still fighting about who we will follow, how we will live out our lives, what we’re willing to do or not do, or the importance of loving our neighbors and church members as we love ourselves. We have to recognize that we are the recipients of the love of God, the love of Jesus, and the receivers of the Holy Spirit. We are followers of Christ who still make mistakes in how we live out this call to live out and spread the Gospel message. We can get carried away by what message we receive, how a message is perceived, and what we look like to the outside world.

Imagine if we encountered Jesus and inquired as to where he lived or where he was staying. Given what we know about his love of the poor, do we think he might be staying at a nice hotel? How many of us would actually respond to his reply, “Come and see?” Would we trust Jesus enough? I ask this because the people of Corinth were asked to trust enough to love each other.

I believe that our churches in Westfield and Southwick are being asked to “Come and see” where we find Christ staying, living, breathing, and existing in our communities. We are being asked to respond with love—the same love that the early Christian community in Corinth was reminded to show. Where will our call to being Christians take us? Much like the Corinthian, “we’ve got mail,” and we have to figure out how we are going to respond to it.