

The Wake we Leave Behind

1 Corinthians 12:4-7 Living Bible

Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service to God, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are many ways in which God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work in and through all of us who are his. The Holy Spirit displays God's power through each of us as a means of helping the entire church.

Paul says the manifestation of God's Spirit is given for the benefit of all. He told the Ephesians that the many gifts of leadership were to ["equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ," Ephesians 4:12 RSV](#). But the Spirit may bless us in ways that surprise us, and the building up of the body may be done by those who seem unlikely to be bricklayers.

Ruth came to our congregation late in life. She didn't like to give her age, but she was in her eighties. Ruth's love for God and her joy found expression in prayer and above all in song. Through song she was able to lift her ageing voice to express her faith enthusiastically and ecstatically. She never missed a week even after her sight began to fail, though she often came wearing odd shoes. To help her, we gave her sheets with the hymns printed out in large print. When she could no longer read the words, someone would sit beside her and quickly say in her ear the words of the next line of each hymn so she might still join in the singing. Eventually she could no longer manage living on her own and was moved to a care home some distance away.

So was that it, an old woman who came into our fellowship for a few short years and left, just to be forgotten? After all, she never preached a sermon, led services, made the tea and coffee or any of the other tasks that we may think contribute to the life of a congregation. Far from it. Ruth always sat in the second row and because very few people ever sat in the front row, in effect she was at the front of the congregation, so we could all see her. Her heartfelt worship lifted us up and if we were feeling tired or dispirited or were struggling with the problems of the past week, we only had to look to Ruth. We could follow in her wake.

When boats motor out of a marina they will leave a wake behind them which will rock all the other boats they pass. If they go too fast, nearby boats are jerked around on their moorings or thrown against the quay. Some Marinas put up stern notices that warn inconsiderate speed-mongers: 'You are responsible for your wake'. But Ruth's gentle wash was able to inspire our collective worship. She is no longer with us but what she gave to us lives on. As Paul says, some of the parts that seem weakest and least important are really the most necessary, **1 Corinthians 12:22**. Would that there were more little boats like her, chugging into our lives under the power of the Spirit.