

Let's Think About It  
Romans 12:1-2  
First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
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Rev. Jill Cameron Michel

What is faith? Is it something you have? Is it something you do? Is it a commitment of the heart? Is it a set of beliefs to choose or to reject? Is faith an action lived out in your daily life? Is it an inheritance, something simply passed on from your ancestors?

This Lenten season we are claiming that our faith is something we are invited to engage with our whole selves. And that is so important.

After all, there have been many occasions across time and space when people were asked to leave their minds at the door, where faith has been treated as a non-thinking experience. Other times and places where brains were deeply engaged, but emotional expressions of faith were looked down upon.

There have been people called “good Christian people” or at least “good church people” who practiced their faith on Sundays for an hour or two in the church building, but went about their lives Monday through Saturday hardly impacted by their claim of being followers of Jesus.

So, this Lenten season we are claiming that faith is something that connects with all of who we are...mind, body, heart, soul.

And maybe, for those of us who come from the Campbell-Stone movement which birthed what we now know as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), that should seem natural. After all, our history is rich. It includes everything from revivals, like that held at Cane Ridge, Kentucky and filled with stories of emotional expressions of faith, to numerous debates where leaders clearly articulated beliefs and understandings. The history of our faith includes long commitments to active engagement standing up for justice and responding to the needs of people, and it includes the establishment of colleges and universities because of the closely held belief that clergy shouldn't be the only Biblically literate people in the sanctuary.

We are a people who have worked to find the balance of engaging our whole selves in this work of following Jesus.

And, if we are engaging all of who we are, that includes our minds.

Paul, writing to the church at Rome, says, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, on the basis of God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship” (Romans 12:1, NRSVUE).

I want to pause there for a minute, partially because there are some concepts here that can trip us up.

Rev. Dr. Frank L. Crouch writes this, “Paul never forgets that we are embodied creatures. Everything we think, say, or do, we do in a body. ... If we want to know our inmost motives and values, we can look at what we do each day in our bodies. ... Over time, our actions, choices, and recommendations cumulatively create a body of work, so to speak. Essentially, that body of work is the body Paul is talking about....The goal is to have a body, a body of work, that is a ...living, breathing, daily ‘offering to God’” ([Commentary on Romans 12:1-8 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)).

So, what we do with our lives, how we live each day, this is the offering we give to the God who loves us.

Paul goes on writing, “Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect” (Romans 12:2, NRSVUE). In other words, it is through our thinking and our discerning that we learn to make choices, not only about what we understand with our brains, but how we will live our lives.

I think one of the great gifts that we get as members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is the gift of being invited, in fact really being expected, to engage our brains in the work of our faith.

While freedom of expression and understanding are values within our denomination, these are not values apart from intentional and thoughtful work. While we recognize that we can read the same scriptures or have the same experiences and understand them differently, this does not mean that anything goes.

Rather our founders, while encouraging individuals to be free to explore and interpret scriptures, always asked that this work be done in community and in conversation both with other people and also with tradition, reason, and experience.

We are compelled to bring our minds to our faith, to discern carefully what God is asking of us, and to be willing to allow our beliefs and understandings to be changed and challenged as we grow and learn. In fact, a mature faith is one that can change its mind. A mature faith isn’t one that simply accepts what is said without any exploration or questioning, but rather one that says, “Let’s think about it” as ideas and experiences are thoughtfully explored from all sides.

Friends, ours is a faith of our whole selves, and that includes our minds. Ours is faith that invites us to question, to seek, to learn, to discern, and to change. Ours is a faith that has room for asking, “But what about this?” and that invites us to wonder and to think together. May it be so.