

## *Life in the Spirit*

### **Knowing and Living into our Spiritual Gifts**

**St. David's Episcopal Church**

#### *Gifts for the Spiritual Life*

*Discerning our Gifts and Growing in Faith*

#### **Discovering our Gifts**

The New Testament is very helpful about describing *charismata*, gifts, but it doesn't offer a lot of help for discovering what they are. St. Paul goes to great lengths to clear up some serious misunderstandings and abuses, yet says very little about how to identify the gifts each person has been given, see 1 Corinthians 12-14. If we knew which gifts are ours, then we could spend less time pursuing ministries and activities that don't really fit God's intentions and gifts for our lives and be more efficient and effective in using the gifts that we have been given. I have prepared a gifts inventory survey for each of you to take as one means for discovering your gifts, but, recognizing that this is not a completely certain way of discernment, want to offer you some spiritual practices that will assist you in discernment and ministry.

First, we all need to understand that we have been called by God. Jesus calls His followers one by one and that is how we have been called. It is personal and, coming from the God of love, is for us to know the love of God and to make that love known to others. Listen for and obey the call that God has on your life.

If God has called you as His own, and we know that that is His intention for all of us, and that He promises to send us gifts of the Spirit, then a healthy spiritual response would be obedience. Ask the question, "God, if you have called me, what do you want me to do?" And, "What gifts have you given me to fulfill this call on my life and support your church?" Answers will come, some clearer than others, as we live in obedience to God's call on our lives. It is the first step of the Christian life, to follow, and it comes with a promise that God will make Himself known.

Second, begin a study about the spiritual gifts. I have been sprinkling scriptural references throughout these lecture notes and they make a good start. As Christians in the Episcopal Church, we believe that the Old and New Testaments are the word of God and contain all things necessary for salvation, so read the Bible. 1 Corinthians, chapters 12 through 14, are an excellent place to begin your study. Many of the gifts are listed and the purpose for the gifts are defined clearly.

Third, examine your feelings. A tremendous amount of work in physiology and neurology has been accomplished over the last three decades and these studies reveal that religious feelings and behavior come from the right brain. Some scientists have even posited that there is a specific place in the brain where religious feelings are located. This, then, is where many of us will be able to discover where our true gifts lie. Imagine that you have a gift and how you might exercise it. What does that feel like for you? Are the feelings positive or negative, fearful or pleasing?

Fourth, experiment with the gifts. Wanting to have a particular gift is okay, but doesn't guarantee that God has or will give you that gift. The only way to know for sure is to experiment with it. How would you know if you have the gift of hospitality unless you exercise it? Or, how would you know that you have the gift of teaching unless you try it out in real time? And how would you know if you have the gift of administration unless you take on the responsibility of organizing some ministry at St. David's? Experimentation is important.

The inventory you're getting ready to take will be helpful in bringing up the gifts you may have and most people's gifts appear in the top six of their highest scores. Start with the gifts that you identify in the survey and experiment with using them.

Finally, expect God to produce results through your exercise of His gifts. Results don't belong to us and you will find, along with countless Christians through the ages, that you may never know the results of your faithful use of the gifts God has given you. Using our spiritual gifts always produces God's intended results and are for God's glory, even though we may never know how it happened or whose gifts were required. The only consistent result of your faithful use of your gifts will be that you will be drawn closer to the source of the power behind our gifts and more deeply into God's presence and peace and grace and love.

### **Spiritual Gifts Inventory**

Rank each of the following statements as it applies to your experience or inclination.

**Much (3), Some (2), Little (1), or None (0)**

This is a self survey and not a test. There are no right or wrong answers. Therefore, be sure to let your responses reflect your opinions of yourself.

#### **Spiritual Gifts Inventory Survey**

- \_\_\_ 1. I make a point to be with people of other cultures and ethnic backgrounds.
- \_\_\_ 2. I see destructive patterns in people's lives and help them find healthier ways of living.
- \_\_\_ 3. I listen as people tell me about their religious experiences and spiritual journeys.
- \_\_\_ 4. People often seek me out and ask me to pray with them.
- \_\_\_ 5. I can explain in simple ways complex ideas about God and how to be a Christian.
- \_\_\_ 6. I often praise coworkers for their good work and attitudes.
- \_\_\_ 7. I carefully get all information I need before moving into action.
- \_\_\_ 8. I can share deep truths with others about their problems.
- \_\_\_ 9. When I see a need, I spring into action and do something about it.
- \_\_\_ 10. I am materially blessed, and I give what I can to others freely.
- \_\_\_ 11. Being in charge doesn't mean I have to control everything.
- \_\_\_ 12. I can sit and simply listen to someone who needs a listening ear.

- \_\_\_13. I do the best I can and leave the rest in God's hand.
- \_\_\_14. I speak up and tell others when I don't believe they are telling the whole truth.
- \_\_\_15. I have experienced times when something miraculous happened.
- \_\_\_16. I look for opportunities to bring hope and God's comfort to those who are sick.
- \_\_\_17. I have spoken out loud in praise to God in words not readily understandable.
- \_\_\_18. I have been able to learn foreign languages easily.
- \_\_\_19. I am energized and feel joy when organizing a project.
- \_\_\_20. I know when there are conflicts between good and evil forces and feel empowered to struggle against evil.
- \_\_\_21. I offer friendship and other services to strangers without hesitation or fear.
- \_\_\_22. I have a special sense of knowing when others need my prayers.
- \_\_\_23. My circle of friends looks like a meeting of the United Nations.
- \_\_\_24. I am energized when I speak about what needs to be changed in church and other areas of community life.
- \_\_\_25. Inviting others to join me in something I enjoy is something I do every week.
- \_\_\_26. I find myself time and again listening to people's spiritual struggles and offering guidance.
- \_\_\_27. When I am a student in a class or the teacher of a class, other participants are energized and motivated.
- \_\_\_28. I am able to work with people and help them do their best.
- \_\_\_29. I am able to grasp deep truths about God and make sense of them.
- \_\_\_30. I am able to use my knowledge in complex situations and know what's right.
- \_\_\_31. I don't mind lending a hand and doing trivial jobs that are often overlooked.
- \_\_\_32. I give 10 percent of my income to church and more to other charitable needs.
- \_\_\_33. When I am working on a group project, I make the extra effort to communicate with everyone.
- \_\_\_34. Stopping what I am doing to help someone in need is a normal part of my day.
- \_\_\_35. When I believe that something is of God, I act boldly on my belief.
- \_\_\_36. My friends often ask me to help sort out what is real and what is phony.
- \_\_\_37. God has mysteriously intervened in extraordinary ways in my presence.
- \_\_\_38. I am able to counsel others to help restore them to mental and spiritual health.
- \_\_\_39. I have spoken in a language that I am not normally able to speak.

- \_\_\_40. I can hear verbal sounds not understood by others and understand what is meant.
- \_\_\_41. Organizing ideas, people, resources and schedules is easy and enjoyable for me.
- \_\_\_42. I need to know and to name a demonic force in order to pray effectively for its elimination.
- \_\_\_43. I sense a special opportunity for ministry when my routine is interrupted by guests or strangers.
- \_\_\_44. Praying is my most enjoyable spiritual activity.
- \_\_\_45. I give thanks that the Church has such a wide diversity of people.
- \_\_\_46. I can see change coming and am not afraid to help people make the needed changes.
- \_\_\_47. Sharing how I came to a deeper faith comes naturally for me.
- \_\_\_48. I can be called on when someone needs help in making difficult decisions.
- \_\_\_49. I am good at giving directions to people so that they can complete projects successfully.
- \_\_\_50. I make a point to say a kind word to those whose abilities I admire.
- \_\_\_51. I am deeply satisfied when I study in order to explain hard concepts to others.
- \_\_\_52. I don't panic in difficult situations, but weigh the possibilities to find a solution.
- \_\_\_53. I'd rather stay in the background doing the labor than be out front teaching or speaking.
- \_\_\_54. I spend a lot of time earning and raising money and an equal amount of time giving it away.
- \_\_\_55. I am good at organizing and leading a group to meet their goals.
- \_\_\_56. I walk gently with people who are grieving, and can walk with them through the time of healing.
- \_\_\_57. I live the best I can each day, one day at a time, not worrying about tomorrow.
- \_\_\_58. I can "see through" people and circumstances and know what's real and what's not.
- \_\_\_59. Time and again I have seen miracles.
- \_\_\_60. I am able to help, comfort, and counsel when people are deeply troubled.
- \_\_\_61. I have had the experience of speaking in prayer-praise language.
- \_\_\_62. I am able to move into another culture, speak another language, and feel at home.
- \_\_\_63. I am good at carrying the responsibility for organizing group activities toward some stated goal.
- \_\_\_64. God uses my obedience to free others from evil forces.
- \_\_\_65. I do not mind and am unafraid to welcome strangers into my church or my home.
- \_\_\_66. I feel urges to pray for others at various times.

## Spiritual Gifts Inventory Answer Sheet

The numbers on the chart correspond to the numbered inventory items you just ranked. Look back at the survey to see the value you assigned to each item and pencil in the value (3,2,1, or 0) next to the numbered question. After listing the 66 values, add your total horizontally for each row, across the page. Put the sum on the line in the total column. The sum should range from 0 to 9 in each category of gift.

The total for each row indicates the extent to which you may be gifted or inclined to operate the gift named. Look and see which gifts have the highest totals to see which gifts God has already given you or is preparing to give you. Next, pray for God to show you ways and to give you opportunities to exercise this gift. For example, if the total for teaching is high, you will want to ask God to give you opportunities to use this gift. It's the same with all of the gifts. One caution, this survey is obviously imperfect and many of us are new to the idea that God has given us spiritual gifts to operate for God's glory. Be mindful that having opened yourself up to the Holy Spirit, other gifts may come at God's instigation.

### Spiritual Gifts Inventory Answer Sheet

<b>Gifts</b>	<b>Questions</b>		<b>Total</b>
Administration	19	41	63
Apostle	1	23	45
Discernment	14	36	58
Evangelism	3	25	47
Exhortation	6	28	50
Exorcism	20	42	64
Faith	13	35	57
Giving	10	32	54
Healing	16	38	60
Hospitality	21	43	65
Prayer	22	44	66
Interpretation	18	40	62
Knowledge	7	29	51
Leadership	11	33	55
Mercy/Compassion	12	34	56
Miracles	15	37	59
Pastor	4	26	48
Prayer-Praise Language	17	39	61
Prophecy	2	24	46
Serving	9	31	53
Teaching	5	27	49
Wisdom	8	30	52

As you can see from your totals, gifts are not always singular and each of us may have several gifts of the Spirit for use in the building up of the Body of Christ and for drawing us closer to knowing and acting on the will of God as it touches our lives and those

around us. I encourage you to pray about these gifts God has given you and ask God to show you ways that you may exercise these gifts at St. David's and in the broader community. I would also encourage you to ask others whether they see these gifts in you and ask them to offer examples so that you can confirm that God has indeed blessed you in specific ways.

Many of you are already using your gifts and I invite you to be confident that they come with the power of God to make them effective. After discerning your gifts, you may want to page through St. David's Mission and Ministry Book sent to you this fall and see where you may best offer your gifts to God and grow in the Spirit.

The gifts you have been given have been given with a purpose that is corporate and private. As you use your gifts, you will find that your ministry is effective and that your life will be drawn more intimately into the life and the will of God. You may also come to recognize others' gifts and be more open to allowing them to exercise their gifts as you exercise yours.

### **Understanding What the Gifts Are**

There are varieties of gifts and some of us, most of us, have been given more than one gift. All of these supernatural or "extra-natural" gifts are used for building up the community of the church, for drawing us into the sphere of God's presence and power. Some of the gifts work together and some require companionship. That is, some of the gifts are used in conjunction with another person who has been given a complimentary gift. For instance, an evangelist, one who 'brings people to a decision to follow Jesus as Lord', needs an apostle in the community to set the stage for persons to be ready to receive God's love for their lives.

God gives gifts as signs of God's love for us. We use them according to God's purposes and the results are truly remarkable and life-giving for the person exercising their gifts and the community receiving the gifts.

***Administration or Ministry*** comes from the Greek word *kubernesis* and often describes the position and responsibility of a pilot or a helmsman of a ship. It is a directional and managerial gift. This extraordinary ability manifests itself in organizing and coordinating persons and materials effectively to reach objectives and goals consistent with God's plan for the church. It is different from leadership in the sense that it does not require overall vision for the community, but a specific vision for a particular function. The Administrator pursues objectives and plans laid out by the corporate wisdom of a church and has gifts for organization, appraisal, use of time and others' skills, and the practical application of others' gifts and the church's resources. The Administrator finds more joy in the smooth operations and forward movement than in the actual completion of the project.

***Apostle*** comes from the Greek word *apostolos*, which means ambassador or delegate or messenger or herald. The Greek word has two primary uses, one nautical and one political. The nautical term refers to a vessel carrying authorized cargo and the political

terms refers to a person who represents another with full power and authority – kind of like a power of attorney. The word appears 79 times in the New Testament.

The Apostle in a general sense forms a strong attachment to the personality, teaching and influence of Jesus Christ. The person then spreads the teachings and extols the virtues of Christ and is sent out to bear Christ's authority. The Apostle is different from a disciple, a follower of or learner from Christ; in the sense the she or he has an extraordinary ability to cultivate a receptivity toward Christ and Christ's ongoing ministry. Others may "win" people to Christ, but the Apostle is the ambassador, organizer, and cultivator of means for ministries. They may possess an aura of spiritual authority and power that brings about cohesion and unity among persons who differ widely in attitude and interests and the gift has the ability to move beyond the local church to unite and inspire many local churches under Christ.

**Discernment** or the gift of discerning (Gr. *diakrisis*) the Spirits is the power to estimate, to judge, separate, discriminate, oppose, dispute or be free from doubt. This gift is the extraordinary ability to know good and evil, right and wrong, and what is either human nature or God's grace. It is a knowledge that is critical for the protection and health of the body of Christ. Many people have this gift, but not enough of us exercise it to assist in determining a course of action and what urgings or signs are coming from God or from someone or something else. Persons with this gift, though, are not quick to judge and rely on prayer and reflection to see clearly an entire issue. They may also appear more introverted, but have a strong ability to utilize their feelings to hear from God, especially when relying on their feelings through prayer. One interesting note about this gift, 90% of clergy spouses seem to possess this gift.

**Evangelism** comes from the Greek word *euangelizamai*, meaning to declare, to announce, to proclaim, or to present good news to win new persons to Christ. Although used rarely in the new Testament, it is a word that is rich in a sense of jubilation or to express liberation from some great hindrance. Evangelism is the extraordinary ability to give such a witness to the love of God as expressed in Jesus Christ that it moves others to accept that love and become disciples of Christ. Through the efforts of the evangelist using her gifts, new birth into the kingdom is possible. The evangelist is the "harvester", to use agricultural symbol, that "wins" persons after others in the church have done their works of love, teaching, encouraging, etc.

Authentic evangelists are not always preachers. Most evangelists are laypersons. They are interested in others' spiritual welfare and know the importance of their church in the nurture of persons. The most impressive result of people using the gift of evangelism is the growth of the body.

**Exhortation** comes from the Greek *parakaleo* or *paraklesis* a word related to the Holy Spirit the *Paraclete*, and can be translated shortly as comforter or strong companion. It is a word with two parts, one meaning 'call' and the other 'companionship.' Together that form a ministry of being with and for one another. Exhortation is the extraordinary

ability to inspire, encourage, and strengthen others in and through their efforts to live out God's will and calling as Christians in pain and pleasure, want and plenty.

Christian living is no easy undertaking and God has equipped the Church with members who are powerful in their ministry of encouragement. Exhorters are often quick to speak a word of caution or instruction as well as comfort, but all with an unmistakable spirit of caring. They tend to be person centered rather than project oriented and are just as willing to be with a person in need as a companion rather than as a problem solver. Exhorters are persons with the gift for bearing the light in dark places.

**Exorcism** is not on St. Paul's list and I would prefer to steer away from it, but is clearly a gift he and others exercised in the early church and by our Lord Himself. It is not a comfortable concept for most of we moderns because it does not fit our scientific worldview which precludes attributing power to anything except what can be quantified or measured. Exorcism comes from the Greek word *exorkistes* and it basically means to expel, cast out, force out, release, diffuse, extricate, to free. The definition of the gift is the ability to use various means of faith, prayers, spirit-music, and other gifts to liberate persons from evil-centered hindering forces so that they may be in effective ministry to and for the body of Christ.

The gift carries a yearning to free others from obvious enslavement to evil and usually comes with strong gifts of discernment and mercy. In proper practice, the demonic power passes from the possessed to the gifted and diminishes under the powerful influence of grace and love. Peace is always the result, a peace that is extraordinary and lasting.

**Faith** is in all of us, but the gift is distinctive. A general faith is basic to our relationship with God and Christian discipleship. The gift of faith is an extraordinary ability to extend general or saving faith to serve corporate and individual needs specifically related to the church life as the body of Christ. The Greek word *pistis*, denotes a strong conviction about and dedication to, in this case, Jesus Christ. We recognize this gift in persons who are well-seasoned Christians and demonstrate their gift in powerful works. They are persons with a child-like faith who have a special sense or feeling about something that is the will of God. When they are persuaded that God is doing something they begin to live and behave as though the object of their faith has already happened and become a channel of God's grace.

**Giving** is also something we all participate in as followers of Christ, but this gift is the ability to manage one's resources of income, time, energy, and skills to exceed what is considered to be a reasonable standard for giving to the church, an amount that brings joy and power to do more for further service. The Greek root, sometimes translated as generosity or liberality, is *metadidomi*, meaning to turn over, to share, to transfer.

The behavioral traits of this charismatic generosity include the intense desire and motivation to give and special abilities and opportunities to give abundantly. While giving manifests itself beyond money, if it is money, one's ability and opportunity to

make money accompanies the gift. It is also comes with a sense of joy in the giving itself, giving that feels good. It is a quiet gift. Persons with this gift don't want the left hand to know what the right hand is doing. If our spiritual gift is giving, God will provide the resources to do the impossible.

**Healing** has always been a centerpiece of the Christian community. Our Lord healed many, many people in heart, mind and body and His work continues in us. Our modern day hospitals are rooted in the hospitality and healing ministries of the various monastic communities who helped establish healing as a ministry of the church.

The New Testament words for healings are *iamaton* and *therapeia*, meaning cures or serving to make whole and it goes beyond physical illnesses to include mind, emotions, society, morals, theology, and philosophy. The specific reference to a spiritual gift of healing in 1 Corinthians 12:9 is actually a plural form and indicates this holistic view of healing at the hand of God. The gift of Healings, then, is the extraordinary ability God gives to certain members of the church to cure or to be cured of ill conditions that hinder effective ministries for Christ, the church, or individuals. This definition narrows the full possibilities for healing only in the sense that healing ministries are not limited to the church, but the gift of healings within the church is a gift given for the life of the church specifically. Healing builds up the church for specific ministries.

Like other spiritual gifts that free, the gift of Healing often goes with the gift of discernment allowing the gifted person the knowledge of the conditions of a person or of a community. These persons also do not always know the effects of the use of their gift. When they do learn of them, they usually have no need to publicize their importance. Rather, in a quiet and meditative manner, sometimes with the laying on of hands and anointing and sometimes not, the healer prays. And the results vary for God is not only interested in our physical and mental well being, but in the healing of the entire person which may not require that an illness or deadly condition be removed.

**Hospitality** is another of those gifts not named directly by St. Paul in his lists of spiritual gifts, but it clearly represents a gift of the Spirit and is practiced throughout the New Testament and the early church. Now, hospitality doesn't refer to good cooks or workers in the kitchen, as important as they are. And it is not limited to ushers and greeters and members of the Newcomer's Committee. The spiritual gift of Hospitality does not function in this way. The word *philonexia* in Greek means love or fondness of strangers and is made up of two words (*philos* – friendliness, accepting, openness and *zenos* meaning stranger, alien or outsider). The definition of the gift of Hospitality is the ability God gives certain persons to extend caring and sharing to persons (strangers) beyond their intimate circle of friends and acquaintances to demonstrate and establish the unlimited and inclusive companionship of Christ.

Like most of the animal kingdom, human beings are territorial creatures who tend to protect our ground or habitat from unfamiliar and unwanted intruders. Christianity was to be different. Jesus commissioned us to go to all people (*ta ethne*), to offer loving attention to aliens and strangers. Persons who have the charismatic gift of Hospitality actually attract outsiders and show a sincere concern for them. They tend to prefer

strangers and delight in meeting new people. They are quick to respond to particular concerns of individuals and are always at the ready to help others. They are strictly people persons. The difference between the evangelist and the person with the gift of Hospitality is that the latter sees Christ in the stranger and the evangelist sees the stranger *in Christ*, in the communion. The gift of Hospitality makes visitors to a church know that they are wanted or needed and new members learn from these gifted persons that the gospel is good news for people, not merely a good subject for some program or product for and institution.

**Prayer** is another one of those basic constructs of the Christian life, like Faith, that is available and appropriate for all persons, but it is also a particular gift of the Holy Spirit. The Greek root, *enteuxis*, means conference, petition, a bringing together, or intervention on another's behalf. The definition of this spiritual gift is that it is the extraordinary ability to know when, how, and for whom or what to pray with effective results.

The persons with this ability characteristically feel the need to pray for another, others, or a situation, and stick with it until they sense a release. Unlike basic Christian prayer, this form of praying persists until something happens. Gifted pray-ers are prompted by a sense of the Holy Spirit who often reveals to them the special need to pray for others. Many such persons also have a gift of a special prayer language that facilitates their intercessions, as a means of concentration and a sign of God's presence in their prayer. For them, praying is a vital part ministry and not idle words or nods in God's direction. It is meaningful, joyful, fulfilling, life-giving work designed to accomplish something. Yet they do not delight so much in bringing God to act on the needs of others as they do in bringing others and their needs into the presence of God.

**Interpretation of Tongues** is alphabetically correct, but oddly placed since it should rightly follow speaking in tongues. Yet this particular gift of interpretation actually goes beyond translating *glossolalia* or heavenly languages. The Greek word for interpretation is *diermeneuo*, meaning to make clear, to explain a message, to expound on a meaning, or to translate into another language or vernacular for understanding. Interpretation is the extraordinary ability to hear, comprehend, and translate spiritual messages given by others in unknown languages or to clarify spiritual messages from someone who speaks in a known language, not known by the interpreter to a functional vernacular.

Interpretation is a gift of unfolding a mystery hidden in a foreign language and also a vital ministry of expounding the good news of Christ's redemption in a known language. An example of the latter is the story in Luke 24 on the road to Emmaus where the unrecognized Christ unfolded the scripture to two disciples so that they would understand the purpose of Jesus' death and resurrection. God gives the gift of interpretation as a means for ensuring that a sound and 'correct' spiritual message is delivered. Interpretation is the power to explain a situation or another person's words or actions whether it is the Bible, a foreign language or a heavenly tongue.

Having said that, I don't want to pass over the matter of the classical need of interpreters to clarify what is being said by people who speak in tongues so that they might build up the body of Christ. We will delve into tongues shortly, but St. Paul is clear that

interpretation is a requirement for the use of tongues in public worship. My take on this is that St. Paul was trying to discourage a misuse of this showy gift and one way to ensure its proper use was to make sure that one or another one had the power of interpretation – for without interpretation the message is lost and therefore useless.

**Knowledge** is not necessarily the sense of acquired data or information that may pertain to the natural world and the order of things, but a special bias toward God's particular relationship with the church and its relationship to the world. The Greek word, *gnosis*, means to know universal and timeless truths and facts relating to God's will and mission for the church. Knowledge, then, is the extraordinary power to understand the universal and timeless truths of God and to link them with the church and its mission through Christ for justice and right living (righteousness) in the world.

Although every Christian has a general knowledge of God given through the power of the Holy Spirit about the nature of Christ, God gives some persons an elevated understanding. Persons with this gift are prone to think and speak theologically. That is, they speak often in terms that link God and human life. It is not merely book learning of theologians, nor is it limited to knowledge of the scripture and Bible verses, it translates the Jesus of history into the Christ of faith. Persons with this gift speak with a ring of authority and can simplify the most complicated spiritual truths into understandable language. They also tend to inspire a sense of trust in the hearers that truth is being made known. It also can often be measured by the natural gifts of reason and logic.

**Leadership** comes from the Greek word, *proistemi*, and suggests the position of a sailor who stands on the bow of the boat to point out the way to a destination and to guide the skipper around dangers that may come along the way. Translated into a spiritual gift, leadership leads, guides, or directs members of the Body of Christ to fulfill the church's commission. It also equips its recipients to offer effective guidance to individuals who want to be effective in their ministry. Unlike the gift of teaching that can be used in hypothetical situations, the gift of leadership is a gift that instructs in a specific location.

The person who has the gift of leadership has an extraordinary ability to envision God's will and purpose for the church and to demonstrate persuasive skills to capture the imaginations, energies, skills and spiritual gifts of others to pursue and accomplish God's will. Leaders can set goals, always derived from God's directing if they are Godly aims, to see what is essential for the well-being of the community and to motivate in such a way that there is harmony as the community works to accomplish God's goals for a particular community.

Leaders are always out front and may appear to have their heads in the clouds, but can see the entire view. Unlike persons with the gift of exhortation who inspire and encourage by being and doing with others, leaders often stand at a distance. Therefore a large amount of faith and energy is required to operate this gift and a stubborn belief that God is at work in individuals and in the life of a community. Another reality of the gift of leadership is that people follow.

Leaders, on the other hand, are not always good followers. God gifts them to lead and not to follow and they are usually quick to volunteer to lead a project even though they may know very little about it at first. And, while leaders are by nature and position, ahead or out front, they may never hold themselves deliberately aloof from followers nor consider themselves superior. Leaders want to be trusted because they consider trustworthiness one of the highest Christian virtues and because people follow because they see the virtue of Christ in the leader.

***Mercy or Compassion*** is a gift that all of us have in some measure. It is, after all, the sign by which people will know we are followers of Christ. At the Last Supper, Jesus told His first followers that people will recognize that you are my followers because you love. But like others, mercy comes as a gift of the Spirit as well, the special gift of *eleeo* – the extraordinary ability to feel and to act upon genuine empathy for others who are suffering physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual pain. The acting upon is an attempt to relieve the sufferer of the distress, pain or discomfort.

Mercy is a supersensitive ability that causes the gifted to feel the discomfort of the sufferer. It is a feeling with and for a person in misery that demands an act to relieve the person in distress. *Eleeo* also describes God's loving and redeeming acts toward the undeserving, initially toward Israel and eventually toward the whole world. Mercy is the only gift that is the subject of one of Jesus' beatitudes (Matthew 5:7) "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Cheerfulness and compassion are the dominant traits of the merciful. Rarely do they speak of 'doom and gloom' and criticism of others is seldom heard. Instead they are always encouraging and hopeful, assuming that the love and mercy of God will prevail.

***Miracles*** is another gift I have added to the lists of the apostles because it is such a persistent and consistent part of the Christian story and the Christian life. Some people assume that miracles ended with the first century and often people within the church today don't always recognize miracles. You and I are more likely to hear the largest numbers and the most dramatic miracles in medical, social and educational fields. This is not new. St. Augustine, writing in the 4<sup>th</sup> century wondered in his writings that Christians are fearful of talking about miracles because they don't want other Christians to think that they're crazy. Sound familiar?

Miracle is a dubious translation of two Greek words, *energemata dunameon*, which more correctly produce the words energies and power. *Energemata* can also be understood as operations in English, so perhaps we should consider miracles better as powerful operations or powerful works. So, the definition would be the extraordinary ability God gives to some persons to do powerful works that transcend other gifts and our perception of natural laws and means.

Some characteristics resemble the operation of the gift of faith, but with a slight difference in the lack of intentionality. Often, the person who has this gift doesn't

necessarily know what's happening. She or he is prompted by some inner stirring of the Holy Spirit and something eventually comes to light that is extraordinary. As such, they don't proclaim, "And now I'm going to perform some miracle. Stand back and behold!" The gifted are often surprised by the outcome of their active response to a prompted need. The gift of miracles is a channeling of God's grace for a particular situation and, interestingly, is rarely repeatable. A person with the gift of miracles is usually someone who is being faithful in using the gifts of the Spirit and has developed a habit of being open to the grace and the power of God.

**Pastor** is not one of the offices noted in the New Testament, such as deacon, elder, presbyter, and bishop; yet in many modern churches a pastor is a title of office. In our ordination service, it is one of the responsibilities of the priest. The fact is that a person may be one of the officers mentioned in the scripture, yet not have the gift (*charisma*) of pasturing. The truth is that many non-ordained persons are really excellent pastors and have the gift of the Spirit.

The Greek word for "pastor" is *poimen*, meaning shepherd. The word means to protect, to oversee, to manage, to care for, to assemble and to feed. The definition of the gift is the extraordinary ability to carry varieties of spiritual, physical, and social concerns for groups and individuals and to persist over long periods of time and circumstances as effective care-givers.

The spiritual gift of pastor carries the drive and capacity to shoulder concern for many people at one time. It tends to be concerned about spiritual and physical needs related to maturation and effective participation in the body of Christ. The pastor responds to a call for help, but also seeks to get others involved in the work. To the one gifted with pastoring, ministry is not a solo act. It is the affair of the flock or the church, but never at the expense of confidentiality and privacy. The pastor is also concerned with peace, harmony, cohesion, unity, purpose, common goals and fellowship with the overall goal of uniting a community, like the shepherd bringing the sheep in to the fold. So, it is a gift that, while handy as an ordained person, cannot be limited to the clergy to build an effective, loving Christian community.

**Prayer-Praise Language** or **Tongues** is commonly known as *glossolalia* and refers to a language or languages of prayer and praise. Usually people refer to it as speaking in tongues, but I prefer calling it prayer-praise language because it better describes the most persistent application of the gift. In other words, prayer-praise language is a gift that frees the mind from the structure of sentences to allow persons with this gift to pray to and offer praise to God.

The Greek word *glossolalia* is a combination of two words: *glossa* meaning tongue and *lalia* signifying the utterance of sound. The word does not appear in the new Testament, but has come to be used to describe the phenomenon of tongues Paul writes about in 1 Corinthians 12-14. A definition of the spiritual gift is the extraordinary ability to pray and to praise God with beneficial wordless phrases or utterances not familiar to known languages, and with such a joy-filled intimacy with Christ that faith is strengthened and

ministries become effective. It is a confusing gift and one that Paul strictly urges people to use privately or with someone with the gift of Interpretation and never to hold as a requirement for being a Christian.

Persons gifted with *glossolalia* have a very real and active prayer life. They are inclined to pray out loud, involving the entire body. They tend to pray with a vision of health and wholeness. Usually, they begin praying in their known language and then move into a higher level of prayer, which requires less effort and cognitive thought. It cannot be taught, but is, like all the other gifts, is initiated by the Holy Spirit working in and through an individual. It may manifest itself in public settings, but is almost always a private, personal prayer language given to individuals by the grace of God for their edification and the building of their faith and relationship with God.

**Prophecy** comes from the Greek word *propheteia*. It means revealing, manifesting, showing forth, making known, divulging, speaking out, or announcing vital information needed for spiritual living and development. It is the extraordinary ability to link Biblical truths with God's will for today's living and to be an instrument of revealing or interpreting previous or current messages from God for righteous and just living in today's world. It does not work in the common use of prophecy as "predicting" of future events, but more of a forth telling of the truths of God for living in right relationship now.

The gifted persons are usually articulate and are particularly concerned with issues of justice and injustice within a church community and in the world surrounding the community. As with persons gifted with mercy, prophets easily identify with victims of injustice or social ignorance. Normally they have a broad view of God's kingdom and righteousness, both spiritual and physical, and, like the prophets of the Bible, are concerned with the interconnection of the two.

Theologically, prophets are less interested in Biblical content as application and they have a strong sense of the end of time in mind when they speak and teach. From Matthew 25, they notice that nothing escapes the notice and judgment of Christ. All that is done, good and bad, has a one-to-one correlation in their relationship with God both now and in an age to come.

**Serving** is another of those activities that is at the core of all Christian life. In fact, it is part of the purpose for the Holy Spirit sending gifts upon the Christian community so that we may grow together in that "serving love" or agape love St. Paul so eloquently describes in 1 Corinthians 13. All of are called to serve as Christ has served us.

The Greek word for service is *diakonia*. It is a God-centered gift that manifests itself in various ways. As a gift, it is the extraordinary ability to elevate any needed ministry or act that aids the church or another person to a deeper quality of worship and sense of holiness. *Diakonia* is often translated in English as ministry and the word suggests a humble and lowly state – not inferior, but gratefully humble. Humility, however, was not the original Greek understanding of the word. During the time of Jesus, *diakonia* (service) was used to describe a social position of self-abasement or forced humiliation

represented by waiting on tables, serving food and wine, or cleaning up after meals. Jesus transformed the meaning as the model for how we should serve one another.

Men and women with the gift of service will respond to any need without concern for social importance or rank. They respond not out of the apparent needs of others, but as an act of worship to God. To them, the worship of God goes beyond one-hour on Sunday morning to all the other hours of the week. Their service to anyone or any group is seen as an act of worship, a service to Christ.

**Teaching** comes from the Greek word *didaskalia*, which means to teach, to instruct, to clarify, to elucidate, to illuminate, or to simplify. As a spiritual gift, teaching is a ministry of instructing and clarifying things about God and our response to God under the influence of the Holy Spirit. This gift is the extraordinary ability to discern, analyze, and deliver Biblical and other spiritual truths in an effort to help others to comprehend and accept the clear calling of God to live justly and righteously.

Communication is the key to the power of this gift and it is a two-way flow – the communicator and the receiver or responder. The person gifted with teaching has the ability to communicate to the degree that the hearers will understand what is being taught. And what is being taught in whatever form is the presence of the living Christ.

Charismatic teaching is different from secular models of teaching. That is, it is not merely imparting knowledge, not merely pouring some amount of information into another's head. It carries a deeply relational feature that causes the teacher to identify with their students on a personal level, one that energizes the heart and the mind. There is a partnership with the learners.

The person with the gift of teaching displays three qualities of familiarity, whether in public or in written form. First, there is an unquestionable familiarity with God. God's presence is a large part of what the teacher presents. Second, there is a unique relationship to the subject matter. The teacher knows the material in personal ways and can understand how others may receive it in other, personal ways that may be different from the teacher. And third, there's a bond that connects the teacher with the learners that transcends the more secular models we are used to.

**Wisdom** comes from the Greek word *Sophia* and means a practical application of knowledge, divine or natural, to specific situations that call on God's grace. Wisdom is the extraordinary ability to make concrete and specific applications of divine knowledge received directly from God. It is not merely a flash of divine insight from time to time, but a way of approaching the world that calls on the truths of God.

Persons with the gift of wisdom are able to act, speak, write, or draw to apply God's eternal truths to everyday realities. They often appear to have an uncanny ability to make statements that, at first, may not make total sense, but eventually solve serious problems simply and completely. An example would be St. Augustine's often repeated phrase, "Love and do what you will" or "Love God and sin boldly." Its simplicity is sometimes

embarrassing, but when we truly love God, we will do whatever God wants and that will please both God and us.

Charismatically wise persons cut through to the real issue quickly and effectively, asking both practical questions and sensible suggestions that have a sting of realism. They also have the ability to see divine and spiritual significance in seemingly insignificant or inconsequential events and situations. They perceive God's glory and presence in ordinary things and persons and expect God's presence in every activity and every person.

### **The Holy Spirit and the Gifts Spirit brings gifts**

Four Biblical passages deal specifically with gifts: Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Ephesians 4:1-16; and 1 Peter 4:10,11. Although these letters differ in context of the experience of the Spirit, they form a unity of meaning that cements the church's two-fold ministry to itself and its ministry to the world. In these passages, listing some twenty specific spiritual gifts, including

<b>Romans 12:1-8</b>	<b>1 Corinthians 12:1-31</b>	<b>Ephesians 4:1-16</b>	<b>1 Peter 4:10,11</b>
Prophecy	Wisdom	Apostles	Speaking
Ministry	Knowledge	<i>Prophets</i>	Serving
Teaching	Faith	Evangelists	
Exhorting	Healing	Pastors	
Giving	Miracles	<i>Teachers</i>	
Leader	<i>Prophecy</i>		
Compassion	Discernment		
	Tongues		
	Interpretation of Tongues		

One can see that the gifts relate most specifically to the life and the work of the Church, though there are some areas of crossover in daily life, especially in our day. These are all activities common to the church, that is 'jobs to be done', but the Holy Spirit makes it more than merely a job, but a partnership between a person and God.

As we consider these gifts, we discover certain principles that help us understand the importance of the gifts.

**The gifts are for service.** They are not for personal adornment, status, power or popularity. They enable us to do effective service for the Body of Christ, the church, and through the church, the world.

The Biblical word for service is *diakonia*, and it refers to something done with *agape* love (see 1 Cor. 13) 1 Peter 4:10,11 declares that each has received a gift that it may be employed for one another and draw us to Christ. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says it another way, "To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good." Ephesians 4:12 states that the gifts are for "building up the body of Christ."

Spiritual gifts are not personal property. Nor are they merely natural qualities to be used as we please. They are divine energy creating, molding, directing new abilities for special ministries to the world through the Church.

**God assigns and empowers the gift.** The gifts come from God and there is nothing we can do beyond being open to the movement of the Spirit in our lives. It's a little like wanting to be taller or to have more hair, we can't do anything beyond asking and being open.

Romans 12:6 says, "Having gifts according to the grace *given* us . . .", and 1 Corinthians 12:6 says, "All those (gifts) are inspired by the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as He wills . . ."

We don't have to be scriptural literalists on this, but it appears to work just this way in practice and is consistent with God taking the initiative, a gift or gifts given. God alone knows what we need for the "building up of the body of Christ" and the "common good of the Church." (Ephesians 4:12 and 1 Cor. 12:7)

**All Christians are included in the giving of gifts.** Everyone is gifted by God for special ministries. Some of you may say you aren't because you don't have the talent to natural abilities. But the truth is that all Christians are given spiritual gifts that carry extraordinary powers and responsibilities and God knows what each community needs and will "raise up" these gifts in people as they are needed and as people are open to the Spirit.

**Only God know the limit to the variety of gifts.** Because we can only count twenty gifts does not mean that that's all there are. At different times and in different places other gifts may arise from God to accommodate particular situations.

**The use of gifts determines health and growth.** Paul consistently uses the metaphor of the body to describe the equality of gifts and the need for the use of all the gifts in the community of the church. The church is a single organism made up of many parts and if the church is going to function well and be faithful to God's call for mission in the world, it requires that all the gifts be used. It requires us all to use the gifts God has given us at the appropriate time. When we use the gifts that have been given us, our gifts mature and the church matures and deepens.

### **Open to the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit takes the initiative in drawing us to God and giving us gifts for ministry within the church and to the world. Our responsibility is to be open to the movement of the Spirit: to receive the gifts and then to use them.

Gifts are for something, not merely to have and to hold. They are to be exercised in the community for building up the community. We are rarely called to wield these gifts in ways that are beyond our comfort level and they tend to be closely associated with our personalities and abilities, but not always so. St. Paul is an evangelist, that is the gift God

gave him for the purpose of bringing the world to Christ. Being an evangelist is close to some of his natural and acquired abilities, but the Holy Spirit transformed Paul by the giving of this gift, and others.

One of my favorite stories of people having gifts and using them comes from a long-time friend of mine who talks about a man known as Mr. Bill in his church. Mr. Bill was not given any 'flashy' gifts and was not a leader in the community. Mr. Bill stood at the entrance to the Sunday School building and greeted the children and youth with a smile and a word of welcome Sunday after Sunday for over thirty years. When Mr. Bill died, the church was packed with men and women and children who came, not only from the local church, but from all over the country. When my friend asked people why they had come from so far, many of them said that Mr. Bill was the first person to help them understand that they were loved by Christ because he loved them and welcomed them into the church. It is the single largest congregation my friend has ever led in worship.

Be open to the Spirit in your life and use your gifts.