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Many years ago, I found an antique wooden clock in the attic of the house in which I grew up, a relic left behind by the former owners of our family home. An older gentleman taught me the technique of refinishing clocks, and that began my passion to collect and restore antique clocks. In addition to the wood finish sometimes needing a renewal, sometimes the inner workings of a clock don't seem to work. That begins my quest to discern the problem.

Often, it's one part that has broken, one tiny piece that affects the swing of the pendulum, a tiny nut that holds the hands onto the face of the clock, or a hook that holds the counterweights to the chains. Without that one particular part, the clock will not run, no matter how much I wind it or set the pendulum in motion. Today it's much easier to find the parts online than when I first started repairing clocks, and through the years I have gained an appreciation for each tiny part inside an antique clock. All the parts are necessary for the clock to run. No part is unnecessary. All play a role in keeping time.

Interconnected
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The apostle Paul knew nothing of my antique clocks, but he was aware of the same lesson I learned from my clocks—that each part is important, or as he called them, each spiritual gift within the church is necessary. He outlined several gifts as he wrote to the church in the city of Corinth: wisdom and knowledge, the ability to heal or do miracles, speaking prophetic words, or speaking or interpreting strange-sounding languages. All these gifts come from God's Spirit. A variety of gifts. A variety of service. All done for the same God. All needed for the church to function.

Being in a small church, it's sometimes hard to find enough people to do everything we want done, isn't it? When someone disappears from our community of faith, either by moving to a new location or due to death, we feel a gap in our gathering, a missing piece. We have become so interconnected, just like the gears of a clock that keep it running. We need one another.

Research has begun to explore how even our brains may need one another. Have you ever had a problem remembering something and someone else

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

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helps by reminding you? The book *The Extended Mind* suggests that our intelligence goes beyond our brain, extending to those around us. The author Annie Murphy Paul suggests that

Our bodies, our social networks and our surroundings...are “extra-neural” inputs that have a profound influence on cognition. Intelligence can be found, in part, in our brains, but perhaps even more importantly in our hearts and skin, in the architecture of the physical spaces we surround ourselves with and in the friendships we keep.¹

The author of the book seems to suggest a similar thing that the author of 1 Corinthians discerned 2000 years ago—that we are all interconnected. Our minds mysteriously work together as we strive to care for God’s creation.

That seems to run counterculture, though, doesn’t it? We’re taught at an early age to get ahead for ourselves, to be independent, to ensure our own safety, sometimes at the expense of others. But in doing so, we end up harming ourselves, for if we are interconnected, like parts of an antique clock,

then a part that’s not working affects our own ability to function as well.

When we realize how interconnected we are, that perspective may impact how we treat one another, which is something a church in downtown Youngstown, Ohio, discovered after they installed a new security system with locks on the windows and deadbolt locks on all the rooms.

During the day, only the door near the office was left unlocked, and that was relocked as soon as the workday ended. One morning, the custodian discovered a window in the kitchen broken out, apparently from the inside. This was reported to the police, and later in the day, an officer stopped by to tell the church staff that the previous evening he had stopped a boy of 12 who was behaving suspiciously near the building. After the report of the broken window, the officer had questioned the boy again, and the boy admitted that he had snuck into the building while the single door was unlocked and had been looking around. The boy didn’t say so, but the officer suspected that the boy was looking for something of value to steal. In any case, he didn’t take anything, but by the time he was ready to leave the building, the door had been locked. And since it could not be unlocked

from the inside without a key, he was in fact trapped in the building. He finally got out by breaking the window.

When a few church members who happened to be meeting in the building that day learned what had happened, one man said that the church should press charges. One woman, however, asked the officer some questions about the boy's background. He was from a poor family, with no father in the home. He had not been in trouble with the law before, however. This woman argued that under the circumstances, the congregation should react first as a church. She asked the staff not to press charges and to give her a few days to come up with a better solution, and the staff agreed.

When Sunday came, this woman told her Sunday school class what had happened and asked them to contribute enough to purchase a membership at the local YMCA for the boy so that he'd have a positive place to spend his free time. She also encouraged the class to try to establish a relationship with this boy's family.²

Being interconnected isn't just about those of us on the inside of the church, for we're interconnected to those outside as well. Our mission isn't to trap people inside the building, but to extend God's grace to those who may wander inside these walls and to those who may never enter inside.

Each of you, whether "live" here this morning or watching online [or listening on the radio] are interconnected to one another. What you do affects us all. But our church isn't the only part of this interconnection, for people are gathered all over the world in large and small congregations, reaching out to God, connecting to God's Spirit. Isn't that a comforting thought? Even though we may be small, we are part of something much bigger—a vast interconnected network of people of faith woven together in God's loving Spirit.

¹ Emily Balcetis, "Where does great thinking come from? Look beyond the brain," June 18, 2021, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/where-does-great-](https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/where-does-great-thinking-come-from-look-beyond-the-brain/2021/06/17/3ff2ace-cadd-11eb-81b1-34796c7393af_story.html)

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² Homiletics, January 14, 2007.