

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Adopted by Session January 6, 1992

We believe in the ministry gifts, the motivation gifts, and the manifestation gifts. We believe they are valid for today and should be operative according to Biblical order. Love is the basis for all of the gifts.

I Corinthians 12, 13, 14

1. There are varieties of gifts.
I Corinthians 12:4 *“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.”*
2. There are varieties of ministries.
I Corinthians 12:5 *“There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.”*
3. There are varieties of effects.
I Corinthians 12:6 *“There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.”*
4. Manifestation of the gifts are for the common good.
I Corinthians 12:7 *“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”*
5. The Spirit distributes gifts as He wills.
I Corinthians 12:11 *“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”*
6. The body of Christ has many members; all with different gifts.
I Corinthians 12:12-30
7. We do not all have the same gifts.
I Corinthians 12:28-30 *“And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret?”*
8. Gifts exercised without love are useless to Christ’s Kingdom.
I Corinthians 13
9. Love is the over-arching gift.
I Corinthians 13:13 *“And now these three remain; faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”*
10. Pursue love with Spiritual gifts.
I Corinthians 14:1 *“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.”*

11. Speaking in tongues edifies oneself. Tongues never speak to other humans but only to God. It builds up, edifies the person speaking. All through Chapter 14, Paul states he practices this gift. Tongues can be revealing God's work but we can never know unless there is an interpreter. Unless people understand, it does not edify the people but only the person speaking. It is between God and the person speaking. If God gives you a tongue, you should pray He will give you the interpretation. If you do not get the interpretation, it is best one keep silent in the church. Do not exercise this gift hoping there may be someone who will give the interpretation. There may be someone in the assembly who will give the interpretation but wait and see if God will give you the interpretation.
12. The appropriateness of tongues in church services.
I Corinthians 14:5-19 *"I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified. Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say 'Amen' to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But in the church, I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue."*
13. Tongues are a sign to unbelievers.
I Corinthians 14:22 *"Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers."*
14. Prophecy is a sign to believers. Prophecy is a very prominent gift. It is a word which comes from God, and is a word to others about God. It is a forth-telling and a fore-telling. It is reading the Word of God, teaching the Word of God, and preaching the Word of God. It is a special word, at a special time, for a special gathering. Prophecy may come through a tongue but not unless there is an interpretation. It is never in a language which no one understands. Prophecy builds up and edifies. It tells who we are in Christ. It encourages. It comforts. It causes us to be able to feel for others, calms our fears, and helps us to rest in Jesus.
15. Let all things be done for edification.
I Corinthians 14:26 *"What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church."*

16. God is not a God of confusion.
I Corinthians 14:33 *“For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.”*
17. Let all things be done properly and in order.
I Corinthians 14:40 *“But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.”*
18. Paul’s instruction in Chapter 14 is not talking to individuals but to the church in assembly. The church in Paul’s day met in homes in small groups. It was not in a church building with a large congregation such as we have in Myrtle Grove Presbyterian Church.
19. There is no one gift that is evidence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer.
20. The results of our gifts belong to God.
21. The presence of the Holy Spirit brings fruit. Galatians 5:22-25
22. The Holy Spirit is always consistent with the Word of God.
(See Addendum #2 - Selected Phrases - Back Section)
23. The Holy Spirit will always cause us to be obedient to Christ.
John 14:15-26
24. We should seek all gifts.
25. Love should cover all gifts.
26. Sin divides, separates, splinters. Salvation unites us to Christ and fellow believers. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring unity. Where the Holy Spirit reigns there is unity. (Ephesians 4)
27. The Church is the Body of Christ and is one in Christ, one in the Holy Spirit.
28. The Holy Spirit produces fruit.
29. Gifts are from the Holy Spirit and not something we possess.
30. A gift one Spirit The Giver.

The Body of Christ needs to be taught in the whole area of gifts from the pulpit, in Adult Sunday School, in Kinship Groups, and individual discipling, and in written newsletter form. This will set the stage for teachings in the sign gifts area which have created some difficulties for us. These written, video and audio teachings need to be preserved and reproduced for each New Members Class as well as taught to the membership periodically. Hopefully, the pulpit teachings can also be kept in video form for the same reasons.

The pastor should discern whether a word or a tongue is to be called forth and at what point in the service. This requires trust by the Session and the Congregation of the pastors. The mature and the leadership should model the appropriate use of all gifts including the sign gifts. This includes personal contacts, Kinship Groups, Wednesday night service, and Sunday morning worship and Sunday School.

Generally speaking the word or tongues should be related to the sermon and this would be an indication of its validity as we seek the truth and depth of the Lord beyond natural understanding which only the Spirit can give.

In cases where the tongue or word of interpretation seems out of order, it should be so signified by the pastor and tested or declared out of order. If a speaker humbly seeks the Lord and does not desire personal attention but edification of the assembled body, then testing of a prophecy or tongue and interpretation should be welcome. All this would be done in a loving, gentle and educational manner. In case of doubt, immaturity or out of order, a standing committee of three Session members would meet with the individual for discussion, teaching, and instruction. This would be for the individual's and congregation's edification.

In an overview, it should be very rare that a non-member would speak. On the other hand, we do not want to squeeze the life out of the service and lose the opportunity to hear from the Lord. We should be expecting to hear from the Lord. Spontaneity and freedom will come with mature expression and modeling of all gifts over time.

We should definitely teach the difference between singing in the Spirit, a prayer language, and a word or a tongue and how these manifest in the service.

ADDENDUM #1

Brick Bradford, Releasing the Power of the Holy Spirit, Pages 30 and 31

. . . . of God which is within them. One cannot take for granted that Jesus Christ will use him/her in the same way permanently. His call upon us may change from time to time; so, we must attune ourselves to His Spirit daily for guidance.

The splendid Guidelines adopted by the 182nd General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. in 1970, which were contained in the widely distributed Report quoted earlier should be studied by all in the Presbyterian/Reformed tradition. It would seem appropriate to quote at length from this section of the Report because of its wisdom and insight:

“We believe the Church needs to pray for a sensitivity to see the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in our world today. We are not unmindful that the problems of discrimination between the true and the fraudulent are considerable, but we must not allow the problems to paralyze our awareness to His presence, nor should we permit our fear of the unknown and the unfamiliar to close our minds against being surprised by grace. We know the misuse of mystical experience is an ever-present possibility, but that is no reason to preclude its appropriate use. We believe that those who are newly endowed with gifts and perceptions of the Spirit have an enthusiasm and joy to give, and we also believe that those who rejoice in our traditions of having all things done in ‘decency and order’ have a sobering depth to give. We therefore plead for a mutuality of respect and affection.

Guidelines for All

1. Be tolerant and accepting of those whose Christian experiences differ from our own.
2. Continually undergird and envelop all discussions, conferences, meetings, and persons in prayer.
3. Be open to new ways in which God by His Spirit may be speaking to the church.
4. Recognize that even though spiritual gifts may be abused, this does not mean that they should be prohibited.
5. Remember that like other new movements in church history, Neo-Pentecostalism (charismatic renewal) may have a valid contribution to make to the ecumenical Church.

“The criteria by which we judge the validity of another’s religious experience must ever be its compatibility with the mind and spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we know them in the New Testament. If the consequence and quality of a reported encounter of the Holy Spirit be manifestly conducive to division, self-righteousness, hostility, exaggerated claims of knowledge and power, then the experience is subject to serious question. However, when the experience clearly results in new dimensions of faith, joy, and blessings to others, we must conclude that ‘this is what the Lord hath done’ and offer Him our praise.”¹

As we Christians walk in the Spirit, we should anticipate many blessings, many anointings, many infillings, many experiences from the Holy Spirit. The Heavenly Father sent the Promised Spirit to enable us to be conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ and to be His witnesses throughout the earth. We, as the body of Christ, are called to fulfill the very mission of Christ Jesus. We can do this if and only if the Holy Spirit empowers us to live and to proclaim the Gospel incarnated in Jesus Christ to the glory of the Father.

Notes: 1. UPCUSA Report of the Special Committee on the Work of the Holy Spirit to the 182nd General Assembly (1970), pp.22-23.

ADDENDUM #2

Selected Phrases - Quotes from J. Rodman Williams,
Renewal Theology, Pages 352, 382, 386, 387

1. “True prophecy is an expression of the mind of Christ and Spirit of Christ.” (Pg. 386)
2. “True prophecy is harmonious with God’s own word in Scripture. Because the Scriptures have the Holy Spirit as their ultimate Author and it is the same Spirit who speaks in prophecy, there can be no dissonance.” (Pg. 387)
3. “It (prophecy) is revelation that is subordinate to what God has specially revealed to apostles and prophets and has been set forth in Scripture.” (Pg. 382)
4. In writing about wisdom which also applies here, “. . . it (a word of wisdom) adds nothing to scripture but exposes same depth or height of what Scripture attests.” (Pg. 352)