

Partners in Ministry, by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. X5060514  
Acts 8:26-40 and 1 John 4:7-21  
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Perhaps you have seen the advertisement for the UCC on TV. You haven't seen it on the major networks, because they have rejected it. But, you may have seen it on the History Channel, TNT, E, Lifetime, or CNN networks. It's called "The Ejector Seat." It begins with a young single African-American mother sitting, holding her crying baby in a large, high-ceilinged gothic church sanctuary. The baby's cries are obviously drawing the attention of nearby worshipers and disturbing them. In a swift cutaway, we see a thumb press a red button, and whoosh! The mother and baby are shot out of the pew and through the roof of the sanctuary. In quick succession, a gay couple, a latino, and a senior with a walker are ejected. The ad ends, "God doesn't reject people and neither do we." "The United Church of Christ: No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here".<sup>1</sup>

Today on Mother's Day, also called the Festival of the Christian Home, we are reminded that families come in all shapes and sizes and ages. Some families have a mother and father. Some families have single parents. Some families have no children. Some families have two fathers or two mothers. Some families are single individuals. God rejects none of these forms of family, and neither do we. God does not reject a single parent with a crying baby, and neither will we!

The reason for this is that this is a house of prayer for all people. It was the prophet we call Third Isaiah who said that.<sup>2</sup> He said it to a church that tended to eject foreigners – now there's a timely subject! And, he said it to a church that did eject eunuchs– males who were considered imperfect because they were neutered: they could not have offspring. They could not "be fruitful and multiply."<sup>3</sup>

That is profoundly good news to us– for none of us is perfect: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." Isn't that good news? We are welcome here, imperfections and all!

We find a eunuch in the New Testament reading, the one from Acts 8. This is a story of double evangelism– double good news. It is a story of spreading the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and it is a story of what that good news is all about: inclusiveness! Philip acted as an evangelist, sharing the story of Jesus. He demonstrated the radical inclusive love of God.

In the first letter of John, we are exposed to some simple basics of the Christian church: "Let us love one another." Why? Because love is from God, and everyone who loves is born of God. If you don't love, you don't know God because God is love. If we can't love our brothers and sisters who we can see, then we can't love God whom we haven't seen.

The apostle Philip was a partner in ministry. He took seriously Jesus' command to go into the whole world to make disciples, and he acted in love to spread that love. One day he headed south out of town on the road that leads to Gaza. He met a eunuch, a secretary to the Candace, the Queen of Ethiopia, riding in a chariot. Six hundred years after Third Isaiah, Eunuchs still were not accepted by the Jewish synagogue. Because they were rejected in the law found in the book

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<sup>1</sup>The ad can be seen at [www.stillspeaking.com](http://www.stillspeaking.com)

<sup>2</sup>Isaiah 56:7

<sup>3</sup>Genesis 1:28

of Deuteronomy,<sup>4</sup> they were not welcome.

The eunuch was reading from the prophet Isaiah. Philip engaged him in conversation. Do you see some of the steps here in being a partner in ministry? 1) Take seriously the command of Jesus to go into all the world to make disciples. 2) Be interested in others: friends and strangers– even those society rejects. 3) Listen to their questions. 4) Be willing to teach them about Jesus, the church, and about God’s extravagant love for all people.

Note that Philip did not throw up any roadblocks to membership in the body of Christ. The eunuch said, "Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?" Philip did not say, "Well, you have to go to a membership class. Or, "to a confirmation class. Or, even "an inquirer’s brunch."

Philip demonstrated that there was nothing to prevent this man from becoming a member of the church. He did not ask him to memorize doctrine or scripture. He did not even ask for a confession of faith! Philip was willing to be God’s servant: to simply welcome him and baptize him into the body of Christ.

You and I are called to be partners in the ministry of Jesus Christ. We are called to give of our time to listen to others. Share the good news of God’s love. Invite others to come and be a part of the choir, or Sunday school class or Bible study, or Second Time Around, or to serve a meal at the homeless shelter or help give parents of special needs children respite on the first Friday of a month.

The eunuch went on his way rejoicing! That’s what it’s all about. He heard about God’s love through Jesus Christ, he saw it demonstrated through Philip’s attention to him, and it made him feel good. He went on his way, on the long journey back to Ethiopia rejoicing!

Spread joy this week. Spread God’s love to someone new this week. Demonstrate the radical inclusiveness of Jesus Christ. Let someone rejoice because you are a partner in ministry. Rejoice yourself, because you helped someone experience God’s love!

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<sup>4</sup>Deuteronomy 23:1