

Series: Community and Diversity; *Sermon:* **The Extraordinary Impact of an Ordinary Community**; *Delivered by:* **Dr. Josh Moody**, senior pastor; *Date:* **January 29, 2017**

Bible text explored: Romans 16:1–16

¹I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae, ²that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well.

³Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. ⁵Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. ⁶Greet Mary, who has worked hard for you. ⁷Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. ⁸Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. ⁹Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. ¹⁰Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. ¹¹Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. ¹²Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena and Tryphosa. Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord. ¹³Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well. ¹⁴Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers who are with them. ¹⁵Greet Philologus, Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with them. ¹⁶Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ greet you.

[ESV]

Review and application:

At first glance, Paul appears to be closing his letter with sentimental greetings to a random set of acquaintances who've preceded him to the empire's capital city. But Pastor Moody explained why this listing carries a deeper significance.

1. How (vv. 1-2) is Phoebe to be welcomed?
In verses 2, 3, 5b-10, 11 and 12-13, what is similar about Paul's description of the individuals mentioned?
2. How does Paul use this deliberate repetition to practically apply a theme prominent throughout the preceding epistle? (See Rom. 1:6, 7:4, 8:9 and 14:8.)
Is that a primary way we characterize our own status?
How about the way we mentally position others in our fellowship?
3. The church in Rome was diverse in its horizontal relationships. What indicates that the people mentioned in verses 3-4, 6-7 and 11 were Jews? (See also Acts 18:2-3.)
The remaining names are probably those of Gentiles. How (v. 5b) is this made explicit for Epaenetus?
The names in verses 8 through 10, scholars tell us, are those of either slaves or freedmen. What, though, does the description of Phoebe as a patron (v. 2) say about her social and financial status?
4. How would focusing on the vertical bond Paul emphasizes here outweigh these horizontal differences in the church at Rome?
How would applying the same focus enhance acceptance, getting along, and working together in our own church family?
5. Greeting each other with a kiss (v. 16) was the way Christians in Paul's day welcomed each other. For showing genuine acceptance in our culture, are hugs or fist-bumps culturally appropriate and pure alternatives to the handshake?