

Worship Service: Unity

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. We have an election coming up soon in our country, so our theme for today is **unity**, something that elections bring up often. How would you define "unity"?

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask that your Holy Spirit bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and as we confess our sins, for forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology, p. 1

Statement of Faith (page 1): Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth, p. 2

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us, p. 3

Amazing Grace, p. 4

First reading: Psalm 133. A Song of Ascents. Of David.

Behold, how good and pleasant it is
when brethren dwell in unity!

²It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down on the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down on the collar of his robes!

³It is like the dew of Hermon,
which falls on the mountains of Zion!
For there the Lord has commanded the blessing,
life forevermore.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 5

Jesus Loves Me, p. 6

Second reading: Ephesians 4: Paul, after describing God's inexhaustible love for them:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.⁷ ...

¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ

¹⁵...[S]peaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Softy and Tenderly, p. 7

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, p. 8

Interactive Homily:

Let's talk more about unity.

- What is the root of the word "unity"? UNI – meaning *one*. (examples: unicorn, uniform, unicycle, etc.) I wonder what you think that means for the word "universe"? What is a universe?
 - One place, one vision, one story of creation...
- What might be some definitions of unity?
 - Not being multiple – being one, single, whole, and sometimes the same, like a single flock of birds flying in the same direction
 - A condition of harmony, different things working together, like a song with many parts
 - A combination of things that makes up one thing, like the parts of a body or a symphony
- What are some examples of things you do with others?
 - choirs, building projects, raising kids, serving in the military, work projects
- In the Ephesians passage, how does the apostle Paul describe unity in the church, the body of believers? How should we act with one another?
 - Humility
 - Gentleness
 - Patience
 - Bearing with one another in love
 - Eager to maintain unity
 - One body with one Spirit
- How does Paul *describe* the body when it is unified? (Can talk about a few of these in more depth)
 - Equipped for the work of ministry – helping others
 - Unity of faith and knowledge of Christ
 - Attaining maturity in the fullness of Christ – what would that look like?

- Speaking the truth in love – kindness to one another
- Each part joined together, working properly
- Built up in LOVE
- Why do you think our country called the *United States* of America?
- What do you think are the best ways to promote unity in our community here, in this country, and in the world?

... Let's take a moment to silently pray and reflect on God's gift of unity.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, thank you Now let us say the Lord's prayer together:

Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymns:

This is My Father's World, p. 9

It is Well with My Soul, p. 10

Standing on the Promises, p. 11

Third Reading: *Unity*, from *Spiritual Literacy*¹

Unity refers to living in harmony with other people. It means working for a common cause with those around the globe who know that when one person gains, all gain, and when one fails, all fail. ... [Unity] helps us learn to respect differences and celebrate diversity in the Creation. Unity is about affirming commonalities. This can be as simple as acknowledging how you are like another person. It can lead to actions demonstrating your solidarity with others. Without unity, there is little hope for compassion, justice, or peace. ...

Unity is more than a passing acquaintance with our neighbors, a temporary agreement among parties, or a superficial feeling of community. Feelings of harmony run deeper and last longer. They broaden your spiritual life in all directions.

¹ <https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/practices/alphabet/view/33/unity>

Hymns:

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing, p. 12

Shall We Gather at the River, p. 13

Fourth Reading: “The Good News” by Thich Nhat Hanh, a Vietnamese monk

*They don't publish
the good news.*

*The good news is published
by us.*

*We have a special edition every moment,
and we need you to read it.*

*The good news is that you are alive,
that the linden tree is still there,
standing firm in the harsh winter.*

*The good news is that you have wonderful eyes
to touch the blue sky.*

*The good news is that your child is there before you,
and your arms are available:
hugging is possible.*

They only print what is wrong.

Look at each of our special editions.

We always offer the things that are not wrong.

*We want you to benefit from them
and help protect them.*

*The dandelion is there by the sidewalk,
smiling its wondrous smile,
singing the song of eternity.*

Listen. You have ears that can hear it.

Bow your head.

Listen to it.

*Leave behind the world of sorrow,
of preoccupation,
and get free.*

*The latest good news
is that you can do it.*

Hymns:

Blest Be the Tie that Binds, p. 14

I Need Thee Every Hour, p. 15

Closing Blessing: (If you have one, strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)
The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, p. 23