



Worship Service Theme: Community

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith on this beautiful day. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. Today we'll be looking at the idea and value of **community**. What is your definition of community? Do you think this [*gesture to the room*] is a community?

I believe our community isn't limited to the people you see here. It includes but is not limited to our families, friends, caregivers, other people of faith; really anyone you can think of with whom you have something in common. We are also part of a world community of human beings. We'll talk more about this during our time today.

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

Statement of Faith: 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.

Suggested Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us

Amazing Grace

First reading: Deuteronomy 15: 7-11

According to Jewish law, every seventh year the Lord decreed that all debts should be forgiven, all loans cancelled, and all slaves would be released with provision; that the Lord himself would take care of his people and bless them. So that's the background for this passage on how to treat people:

⁷“If among you, one of your brothers should become poor,... you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, ⁸but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. ⁹Take care lest there be an unworthy thought in your heart and you say, ‘The seventh year, the year of release is near,’ and your eye look grudgingly on your poor brother, and you give him nothing, and he cry to the Lord against you, and you be guilty of sin.¹⁰ You shall give to him freely, and your heart shall not be grudging when you give to him, *because* for this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. ¹¹For there will never cease to be poor in the land.”

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

Suggested Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy

Jesus Loves Me

Second reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 (various)

¹² For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ

¹⁴ The body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵ If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it

any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body.

¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? ...

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” and the head cannot say to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ... But God has so composed the body, ... that the members may have the *same care* for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

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

Suggested Hymns:

Softy and Tenderly

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: Let’s talk more about community.

- Who here has ever taken care of someone? (a child, a spouse, a friend)
How did you do that?
- Did someone help you care for that person? Did you have a spouse, or friend, who helped with kids or loved ones?
- Who here has had a job that they did all by themselves? What kind of work did you do by yourself?
- Who here has ever worked with a group? What kind of work was that?
- How do you feel when you care for someone by yourself or when you work on a task by yourself? (satisfied; valuable; tired!) How about when you do it with others—how does that feel?
- What, then, creates community? Is a community just one person alone?
 - Working *together* to care for others, complete a task, share common values, ideas, activities
- What part do you like to play in your community here? What do you like to do here, with others?
 - Sharing memories
 - Sharing meals
 - Helping people who are hurting
 - Making people laugh
 - Giving hugs and smiles
 - Praying for people

- We all have different roles in a community, including this community, just like different parts of the body.

It's both fantastic and humbling to think that there are people around the world doing exactly what we're doing – gathering to worship God – in their own way and with their own words, but with the same meaning. This, for me, is a great example of community!

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

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, hear our prayers. Now let us pray 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.

Suggested Hymns:

This is My Father's World

It is Well with My Soul

Standing on the Promises

Third Reading: A Lighthearted Story about Community¹ 😊

[If possible, print color pictures of the Ice Age characters so people can see how different they are from one another!]

In the cartoon movie "Ice Age," when saber-tooth tigers attack a tribe of nomads, a mother and her baby are cornered at a raging waterfall. The little boy is discovered and saved by a woolly mammoth named Manfred, a sloth name Sid, and a saber-tooth tiger named Diego. These three unlikely companions unite on a common mission to return the baby to his father.

¹ <https://www.crcna.org/resources/church-resources/reading-sermons/ingredients-true-community>

As the group treks through a mountainous terrain of ice and snow carrying the baby, at one point the mammoth, sloth, and tiger realize they're on an erupting volcano. The heat of the lava melts a glacier bridge, separating Diego (the tiger) from the others. Isolated on a quickly melting island of ice, Diego jumps to reach the others, but falls short. Dangling from the edge of the ice field, his grip falters, and he falls. Manfred (the woolly mammoth), unwilling to let Diego perish, leaps into a chasm after him and tosses the tiger up to safety. Diego, realizing the danger involved in the rescue, is moved by Manfred's compassion, courage, and sacrifice.

"Why did you do that?" Diego the tiger asks. "You could have died trying to save me."

Humbly, the mammoth responds, "That's what you do when you're part of a herd. You look after each other." Amazed at the way life has brought the three of them and the baby together, Sid (the sloth) says, "I don't know about you guys, but we are one strange herd."

Suggested Hymns:

**Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing
Shall We Gather at the River**

Fourth Reading: Quotes on Community

"One of the marvelous things about community is that it enables us to welcome and help people in a way we couldn't as individuals. When we pool our strength and share the work and responsibility, we can welcome many people, even those in deep distress." – Canadian Catholic theologian and humanitarian Jean Vanier

Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. –Hebrews 10:24-25

"We have all known the long loneliness and we have learned that the only solution is love and that love comes with community." –Dorothy Day, Catholic social activist

Suggested Hymns:

Blest Be the Tie that Binds

I Need Thee Every Hour

Closing Blessing: (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 (Reprise)