



Worship Service Theme: 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. In the United States, this is election season, so our theme for today is **unity**, something that elections often bring up.

Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask your Holy Spirit to 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: Psalm 133:1-3. In this passage, unity among people is described like oil and morning dew—symbols of healing and refreshment.

¹ Behold, how good and pleasant it is
when brethren dwell in unity!
² It 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!
³ It 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.

**Suggested Hymns:
Holy, Holy, Holy
Jesus Loves Me**

Second reading: Ephesians 4: This is from the Apostle Paul (St. Paul), writing from jail. This is what Paul says just after describing God's inexhaustible love for the believers.

¹ I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit ... ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷ ...

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

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.

Suggested Hymns:

Softly and Tenderly

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: Let’s talk more about unity.

- What is the root of the word “unity”? UNI – meaning “one.” (Examples: unicorn, uniform, unicycle, union, universe, etc.)
- What might be some definitions of unity?
 - Being one: Not being multiple – being single, whole
 - A group of different things intentionally working together: A condition of harmony, like an orchestra with many instruments all playing the same song, or a flock of birds all flying in the same direction
 - A combination for one goal: Many different things that make up one thing, like the parts of a body working together
- 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? (*reread verses 2-3: “...with 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.”*)
 - Humility
 - Gentleness
 - Patience
 - Bearing with one another in love
 - Eager to maintain unity in peace

- Paul says there is one Body of Christ and one Spirit. What happens in a physical body when one part isn't working right? For example, if you have a bum knee, how does that affect the rest of the body?
 - Doesn't work at full strength; weaker
- How does Paul describe the Body of Christ when we are unified? (*reread v. 12-16:*)¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God ...¹⁵ ...[S]peaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,¹⁶ from 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..."
 - 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 is called the *United* States of America?
 - Many parts (states), one country
- Do we all always agree on everything? Is agreement what makes unity?
 - No. Unity is a commitment to love, value, and respect all parts of the whole, knowing that everyone has a role to play.
- What do you think are the best ways to promote unity in our community here, in this country, and in the world? Again, verses 2-4:
 - Humility
 - Gentleness
 - Patience
 - Bearing with one another in love
 - Eager to maintain unity in peace

... Let's take a moment to silently pray and reflect on God's gift of unity, and to pray for the church and for our nation, that we would value and work for unity.

(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: *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.

Suggested Hymns:

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

Shall We Gather at the River

Fourth Reading: "Human Family," by the American poet Maya Angelou²

I note the obvious differences
in the human family.

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

² <https://allpoetry.com/Human-Family>

Some of us are serious,
some thrive on comedy.

Some declare their lives are lived
as true profundity,
and others claim they really live
the real reality.

The variety of our skin tones
can confuse, bemuse, delight,
brown and pink and beige and purple,
tan and blue and white.

I've sailed upon the seven seas
and stopped in every land,
I've seen the wonders of the world
not yet one common man.

I know ten thousand women
called Jane and Mary Jane,
but I've not seen any two
who really were the same. ...

We love and lose in China,
we weep on England's moors,
and laugh and moan in Guinea,
and thrive on Spanish shores.

We seek success in Finland,
are born and die in Maine.
In minor ways we differ,
in major we're the same.

I note the obvious differences
between each sort and type,
but we are more alike, my friends,

than we are unlike.

We are more alike, my friends,
than we are unlike.

We are more alike, my friends,
than we are unlike.

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. In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology (Reprise)