



## **Worship Service Theme: Community**

### **Helpful elements:**

Green table covering (Ordinary Time)

**Welcome:** Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate our faith and to worship God. My name is \_\_\_\_ and I'll be leading our worship time. Today we'll be looking at the idea and value of **community**. Let's pause for a moment and just look around the room: Who is part of your community? What is a community?  
[pause for responses]

Community isn't limited to the people you see around you. Community includes our families, friends, caregivers, other people of faith – anyone with whom you have something in common. We are also part of a world community of human beings. We'll talk more about our roles as members of God's community during our time today.

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 that passes all understanding. Amen.

### **Opening Hymn: Doxology**

**Statement of Faith:** Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23, "The Lord is My Shepherd," together:

<sup>1</sup>The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

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

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

<sup>4</sup> Yea, 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.

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

<sup>6</sup> Surely 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:**

**We Gather Together**

**Amazing Grace**

**First reading:** Deuteronomy 15:7-11

Background to this passage: 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. That's the setting for this passage:

<sup>7</sup> "If among you, one of your brothers should become poor,... you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, <sup>8</sup> but you shall open your hand to him and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be. <sup>9</sup> Take 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. <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> For 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 12:12-27 (various). This is the apostle Paul speaking to the early church in Corinth.

<sup>12</sup> For just as the body is one ... and has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

<sup>14</sup> The body does not consist of just one part, but of many parts. <sup>15</sup> If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make the foot any less a part of the body.

<sup>17</sup> 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?

<sup>24</sup> God has so composed the body ... <sup>25</sup> that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup> If one member suffers, all members suffer; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. <sup>27</sup> Now you are part of the body of Christ, individually and as members of it.

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

### **Suggested Hymns:**

#### **The Church's One Foundation 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)? Think of an experience when you cared for something or someone.
- How did it feel when you cared for someone *by yourself*?
  - Satisfying, knowing you did a good job.
  - Valuable; loving and caring for someone is time well spent.
  - Tired! It takes energy and stamina.
- In contrast, how does it feel when you *have help* in caring for someone?
  - Similar satisfaction ... but the burden is shared and lightened.
- [optional question:] Who here has ever worked with a group? What kind of work was that? How was doing that work in a group different than doing it by yourself?
  - Two or more heads are better than one; there's additional creativity and the work is spread around.
- So I wonder what you think creates community? Is a community just one person alone?
  - Being in community means *being together and functioning together* to:

- Care for others
  - Complete a task
  - Share common values, ideas, activities
- What part do you play, or would you like to play, in your community where you are right now?
  - There are parts for every single person to play in a community. You don't get to say you have nothing to contribute or that you don't matter! God knows where you are, and he has a role for you to play – the same way an eye or an ear has a role in the body.
  - Generate ideas for how you'd like to participate in this community! Such as:
    - Giving hugs and smiles
    - Helping and listening to people who are hurting
    - Sharing memories
    - Sharing meals, extending hospitality where you are
    - Making people laugh, share joy
    - Praying for people: ALL of us can do this, praying for people far away or right where you are.
- Just like the body has different parts, we all have different roles in a community, including the community where you live right now.
  - *You matter* to the body of Christ, and you *contribute* to the functioning of the body of Christ—just by BEING YOU.

It's both fantastic and humbling to think that we are part of a worldwide body, and 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 is a great example of community: lifting up and loving God and our neighbors.

Let's take a moment to silently thank God for the blessing of community and ask God what role he would have us play in 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**

**O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing**

**Third Reading:** A Lighthearted Story about Community<sup>1</sup> 😊

*[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,” a lost 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.

As the group treks through a mountainous terrain of ice and snow carrying the baby, at one point, isolated on a quickly melting island of ice, Diego the tiger jumps to reach the others but falls short. Manfred the 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?” the tiger asks Manfred. “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:**

**He's Got the Whole World in His Hands**

**Blest Be the Tie That Binds**

**Fourth Reading:** Quotes on Community

*Ubuntu* is an African Zulu word for the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity. Desmond Tutu, the former South African archbishop and human rights activist, said that “a person with ubuntu is open and available to

---

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

others, affirming of others ...[A person with ubuntu has] a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that [they belong] in a greater whole and are diminished when others are humiliated or oppressed.”

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

Where there is not community, trust, respect, [and] ethical behavior are difficult for the young to learn and for the old to maintain. –Robert K. Greenleaf, founder of the Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership

**Suggested Hymns:**

**Oh When the Saints Go Marching In  
God Be With You Till We Meet Again**

**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)**