



Worship Service Theme: Unity

Helpful elements:

Green table covering (Ordinary Time)

White board

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; and at all times, it is our calling as people of faith to be humble, patient, and loving. In that light, our theme for today is **unity**.

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, "The Lord is my shepherd," together:

¹The 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:
We Gather Together
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.

¹Behold, how good and pleasant it is
when brethren dwell together 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.

Suggested Hymns:
Holy, Holy, Holy
Jesus Loves Me

Second reading: Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16

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.

¹I 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 ... ⁵one Lord, one

faith, one baptism, ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ...

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, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint ..., 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:

Softy and Tenderly

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

Interactive Homily: Let's talk more about our calling to unity.

- What is the root of the word "unity"? UNI – meaning "one." What are some examples of words that start with "uni"?
 - Unicorn, unicycle, uniform, union, universe, etc.
- What might be some definitions of unity?
 - Being one: Not being multiple – being single, whole.
 - Many different things that make up one thing, like the parts of a body working together.
 - A combination of people or entities for one goal.
 - Examples: a sports team, an aid organization, the *United States*
 - A group of different things intentionally working together in condition of harmony.
 - Examples: an orchestra with many instruments all playing the same song; a flock of birds all flying in the same direction
- *[optional:]* What are some examples of things you do with others?
 - Singing in a choir, building a house together, raising kids, serving in the military, work projects
- In the Ephesians passage, how does the apostle Paul describe unity in the church? How should we act to promote unity? (*reread or write on a white board the key words from Ephesians 4:2-3*):
 - **Humility**

- **Gentleness**
- **Patience**
- Bearing with one another in **love**
- **Eager** to maintain unity in **peace**
- Do we all always agree on everything? Is agreement what makes unity?
 - No. Unity is a commitment to love, truth, and respect for all parts of the whole, knowing that everyone is valuable and has a role to play.
 - Speaking the truth *in love*: kindness to one another, not using or twisting truth as an excuse to beat up other people.
 - We act so that the church is “built up in LOVE.” Love is the bottom line! Love (not agreement) is the core of unity.
- What do you think are the best ways to promote unity in your community, in your country, and in the world? Again, refer to Ephesians 4:2-4. Holding in our hearts attitudes of:
 - Humility – not always thinking you’re right and everyone else is wrong
 - Gentleness – a softness of spirit, not bluster or arrogance
 - Patience – taking time to understand others
 - Bearing with one another in love – giving others the charitable assumption: believing that they’ve got things going on that may be causing them to act out harshly
 - Eager to maintain unity in peace – Making unity a priority, rather than focusing on all the things that make us different

... 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 in love.

(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 I Surrender All

Third Reading: *Unity*, from Spiritual Literacy¹

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, we all gain, and when one fails, all fail.

Unity is about affirming [what we have in common]. This can be as simple as acknowledging how you are like another person. It can lead to actions demonstrating your solidarity with others....

Unity is more than a passing acquaintance with our neighbors, or a temporary agreement among parties, or a superficial feeling of community. [Unity runs] deeper and lasts longer.

Suggested Hymns:

He's Got the Whole World in His Hands
When the Saints Go Marching In

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

I note the obvious differences
in the 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.

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

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

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
How Great Thou Art

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)