

## Home service sheet for Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 - “Unity”

Welcome to our service together this morning. May we praise our Lord God for his goodness. This morning we are thinking about ‘unity’ how we as Christian should be of one accord, in solidarity and harmony, seeking only to live a life worthy of our calling.

### Call to worship

“Father God, draw us together today united in faith, love and purpose, with Christ and one another. Help us to have the same mind and the same goal: to seek your kingdom and do your will. Teach us what it means to be your children, your people, your family, and help us to honour you through honouring that calling” Amen

*(Nick Fawcett 2004)*

As we think this morning about living in unity in the body of Jesus, this hymn reminds us that we have all sinned, and all need Jesus to free us from sinfulness, which may stand in the way of our relationships with one another and with God.

### Hymn 424 in Singing the Faith – “God forgave my sin in Jesus name”

God forgave my sin in Jesus' name.  
I've been born again in Jesus' name  
And in Jesus' name I come to you  
To share his love as he told me to.

*He said 'Freely, freely you have received;,, freely, freely give.  
Go in my name, and because you believe others will know that I live.*

All power is given in Jesus' name  
In earth and heaven in Jesus name  
And in Jesus' name I come to you  
To share his power as he told me to

God gives us life in Jesus' name  
He lives in us in Jesus' name  
And in Jesus' name I come to you  
To share his peace as he told me to.

*Carol Owens (b1931)*

### Prayers of Thanksgiving

Lord we give thanks for your great goodness, for all the things you do for us, and continue to do even now, and even when we are not always following your ways. We cannot make a list of all the things we are thankful for Lord, it would be endless, but in a moment of quiet we think of those things we individually thank you for today and every day. We thank you for loving us and for the gift of your precious son Jesus Christ. Amen

## Prayers of Confession

God of mercy, your love for us is strong but our love for you is weak.  
You call us to follow Jesus, but we are slow to obey.  
You care for all that you have made, but we ignore the needs of others and misuse your creation.  
We are sorry for our sins. Forgive us, and help us to please you by the way we live through Jesus  
Christ our Lord. Amen

*(Methodist Worship Book 1999, p198) Peterborough Methodist Publishing House*

## The 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,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.*

## Today's Bible readings

May we learn as we read to ourselves this passage of scripture. Today's reflection will particularly consider a reading from Ephesians.

## Ephesians 4:1-16

Thanks be to God for his word

## Reflection

In Paul's letter to the Ephesians he spent the first three chapters reminding them of the wonder of the spiritual blessings of a life in Christ, and all that God has done for us. It should be natural to serve Him and obey Him in gratitude. Whilst giving thanks and prayers for their growing church, Paul expresses his unhappiness at some of the things he had heard they were doing, and how they were behaving, in particular the way the Gentile Christians were poorly treating the Christians of Jewish origin. He emphasizes that living in Christ is the only way to live, and will bring countless blessings, but it is one church, one God, one Lord – we are all equal in God's eyes. In Chapter 4 Paul emphasizes this unity in Christ. (4 verses 1 – 16). Here he speaks of unity in the body of Christ, which should be in harmony, in accord and in agreement. He does not want one group thinking they are better than others, reminding them that we are all united in Christ, which is just as true today as it was then. Christian unity is a fact, we are all bound together by a shared

faith, sharing a similar life; with loyalty and purpose to serve our Lord and master. He encourages us to treat each other with humbleness and gentleness, with patience and love. (v2)

Paul lists the seven 'ones' (v 4 – 6) which we all share equally & in unison.

1. One body
2. One spirit
3. One hope
4. One Lord
5. One faith
6. One baptism
7. One God and Father of all

Just as in 1 Corinthians 12: 12 -31 which tells of all the parts of the body which are important to our task of being a church worthy of God, none can function without the other. Paul lists the roles that some may fulfil, but none is more important than the other. v11 – “*some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors, some teachers*, they are all working towards a common goal – that of “*preparing God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we reach unity in faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God*” v12 – 13), to become mature as Christians.

We are all different, we are not identical in temperament, in talents, in skills or in abilities. Each one of us is just as important as another. We must constantly try to bear with each other and to keep unity in our churches. Often dissatisfaction and discontent arises when there are squabbles – about the colour of carpets, the choice of tea cups, where people can sit, the use of funds, musical preferences, children should be ‘seen, but not heard’, the use of the premises, which groups are OK and which are not! – the list is endless. (I’m sure you can think of some that your church is pondering about currently)

The Methodist church has also been contemplating issues of gender, sex and race; how do these fit in with all the ‘ones’ that Paul lists in Ephesians 4:4-6. In the eyes of God, we are all equal and made in his image, therefore there should be unity and cohesion not disconnectedness and separation, we are better when we all work together for our common goal – always to “strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness” Matthew 6:33.

When arguments gain momentum they end up in division and disunity. Paul in his letters is saying this should never happen if everyone is motivated by love for each other, love that we have received a thousand fold from God and Jesus Christ. If we all work in the power of the Holy Spirit, and use our gifts for the common good we will grow together and mature, until we will be as Christ wants us to be, and maybe we will also be a growing church, one that many others want to be a part of.

Our next hymn reminds of our tasks and motivation to each other in our church and in our lives

**Hymn 611 in Singing the Faith – “Brother, sister, let me serve you”**

Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey,  
and companions on the road;  
we are here to help each other  
walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christlight for you  
in the nighttime of your fear;  
I will hold my hand out to you,  
speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping;  
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;  
I will share your joy and sorrow,  
till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven,  
we shall find such harmony,  
born of all we've known together  
of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you;  
let me be as Christ to you;  
pray that I may have the grace to  
let you be my servant too

*Richard A.M. Gillard (b 1953)*

**Now we come to our prayers of Intercession**

We pray in confidence knowing that we bring our prayers to a merciful and loving God. Give us grace to rebuild bonds of trust that together we may work for the dignity and flourishing of all people through Jesus Christ our Lord.

We pray for political leaders and activists and for all those who are working to shape our society. Let them be guided by the example of Jesus putting understanding and compassion ahead of self-interest and material gain and working for a better world.

**Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer**

Father God we pray for the young people in our families and communities. May they grow up knowing love and hope, valuing life and respecting others. Give them courage and resilience as they face changes in their lives and help them to see opportunities in all the challenges that stretch out before them.

**Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer**

Gracious God we pray for your healing touch to rest upon those who are sick; your strength to be felt by those who are tired; your wisdom and your love to encourage those who live with despair and fear. We think of the people we know who are suffering in mind or body and offer our personal prayers for them, now.....

**Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer**

Mighty God, through the ministry of your son Jesus Christ you have freed us from the grip of the tomb. We pray for those who have departed this life and ask you, through your loving kindness, to have mercy on their souls. We pray too for those bereaved by their passing, hold them close in their grief.

**Lord, in your Mercy: Hear our Prayer**

Almighty God may your presence be seen clearly in everything we do and say each day throughout the coming week. We pray that your joy and your love will flow freely in us and through us as we follow where you lead us.

**Merciful father, accept these prayers for the sake of your Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen**

*(Adapted from prayers published by the Costa Blanca Anglican Chaplaincy, Church of England)*

Our closing hymn reminds of the need to be in harmony and in unity – one voice strong and true, bring people to know and love the Lord always regardless of who they are, their race, colour creed, sexuality, disability. We are all yours today and always

## Hymn 689 Singing the Faith – “Summoned by the God who made us”

Summoned by the God who made us  
rich in our diversity  
Gathered in the name of Jesus,  
richer still in unity.

*Let us bring the gifts that differ  
and, in splendid, varied ways,  
sing a new Church into being,  
one in faith and love and praise.*

Radiant risen from the water,  
robed in holiness and light,  
male and female in God’s image,  
male and female, God’s delight.

Trust the goodness of creation;  
trust the Spirit strong within.  
Dare to dream the vision promised,  
sprung from seed of what has been.

Bring the hopes of every nation;  
bring the art of every race.  
Weave a song of peace and justice;  
let it sound through time and space.

Draw together at one table,  
all the human family;  
shape a circle ever wider  
and a people ever free

*Delores Dufner , OSB*

### ***Blessing***

***Lord today we have been thinking about unity and how we can serve you in all we do, with all we meet. Bless us in our strivings, and hold us safe in your loving arms today and always. Amen***