

The Watford Word

www.watfordchurchofchrist.org

What's on

Sunday 20 August - 10:30AM. 'Devotional' Sunday
Sunday 27 August - 10:30AM. Barry Lamb speaking.
Sunday 03 Sept - 10:30AM. Stefan speaking
Sunday 10 Sept - 10:30AM. Sunday service
Sunday 17 Sept - 10:30AM. Dr Andy Boakye
Sunday 24 Sept - 10:30AM. Malcolm speaking
Sunday 01 Oct - 10:30AM. Stefan speaking
Sunday 08 Oct - 10:30AM. Malcolm speaking
Sunday 17 December - 10:30AM. Carol service

Prayers

- For Tanya and family in Ukraine
- For students making decisions about future study
- For our youth as they go to camps this summer
- For safe journeys as many go on holiday over the summer
- For our local and national government to implement wise policies to benefit all our country's citizens (1 Timothy 2:1-5).

Complete Unity

Today I start a series of lessons on Christian unity. What it is, what it is not, and how God helps us to make "every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Eph 4:3

In today's lesson we will explore an example of Jesus building unity and another example of the early church maintaining unity. Below are some unity principles which will form the foundation for our study together. Much could be written on this topic, and these thoughts here barely scratch

the surface, but I hope they provide some healthy stimulus to help us engage with this vital topic.

1. Unity matters to Jesus

"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." John 17:22-23

What does this passage tell us about unity? It is relational (John 14.23), aspirational (in that it is never finished), and it is missional (John 13.34-35)

2. Unity is maintained when we focus on Jesus

"Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose." (1 Corinthians 1:10 NRSV)

We are not called to be loyal to people, positions, practices or programmes, but Jesus. Christ is our leader and model (Philippians 2:1-11; 4:2). Unity is not about agreeing on programmes, plantings or paradigms, but holding Christ at the centre, treating one another with love and acting in humility towards one another.

3. How to be united as disciples of Jesus

- a. **Minimalism.** When unity is threatened the best response is to focus on the essentials. The greatest test of early church unity was the matter of circumcision. Should Gentiles be required to be circumcised to be Christians? A council was convened in Jerusalem to resolve the issue. The conclusion was, "...it has

seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” (Acts 15:28–29 NRSV) They wisely kept the list short.

- b. Do what you can.** When unity is weak, it is up to all of us to do something - even small. Attempt unity - “If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.” (Romans 12:18 NRSV)
- c. Some suggestions:** Don't avoid difficult conversations; don't ignore the warning signs; don't entertain gossip; give up your personal rights for the benefit of the community when to do so does not compromise scriptural commands or your conscience.

Conclusion

Jesus told us, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” (Matthew 5:9 NRSV) When we attempt unifying actions and live unifying habits we are living up to our calling as children of God. Unity is a God thing, not a human thing.

For Reflection

Unity is never finished. It is not like a box we can store on a shelf. It is important that we do not get tired of maintaining unity. To help us reflect practically on our response to this topics, here are a few questions.

- Why do you think Jesus values unity so highly?
- What can you do to promote unity?
- What will motivate you to do so?
- What will you do today/this week?

A passage worth meditating on is Ephesians 2:11-22. In this inspiring section of Scripture we
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learn that we have been brought close to God by the blood of Christ, that we are one in the Spirit, and that we are “no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

May God give us the strength to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace to his glory, to our joy, and to the benefit of the world.

God bless, Malcolm

Christians and Climate Change

'An evening encounter with our creator God on Climate Change'

Sunday 24th September,
5.30pm, St Mary's church, 1
Church Street, WD18 0EG

Guest speakers: Dr Martin
and Rev Margot Hodson;
Rachel Johnson



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