



# CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

## **A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Tenth Sunday after Pentecost, August 1, 2021**

### **Maturing Unity**

**By Daniel H. Wilcox**

#### **Ephesians 4:1-16**

4:1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called,

4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

4:3 making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

4:4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling,

4:5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

4:6 one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

4:7 But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift.

4:8 Therefore it is said, "When he ascended on high he made captivity itself a captive; he gave gifts to his people."

4:9 (When it says, "He ascended," what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?

4:10 He who descended is the same one who ascended far above all the heavens, so that he might fill all things.)

4:11 The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,

4:12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

4:13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

4:14 We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming.

4:15 But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

4:16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

“One for all and all for one” as an adage associated with Alexandre Dumas and his classic novel, *The Three Musketeers* also can be ascribed to the 17<sup>th</sup> century society. William Shakespeare used it in one of his famous poems. This appeal to unity of spirit and effort echoed fraternal collaboration throughout European civilization. Unity functioned as a critical core principle and rallying cry.

Apostle Paul implores the Ephesian church, diverse in religious origins, cultures, and ethnicities to a unified life in Christ. Paul appeals to the high calling of Christ for noble service that transcends origin, culture, or ethnicity, yielding accord in the community of faith. Diverse gifts come from the One Lord and work in compatibility with each other to produce a singular goal of maturation for all. Maturity for each one and their gifts engender productive cooperation for the entire Kingdom. Each spiritual gift functions as an appropriate part of the whole, not for its hierarchical prominence. Oneness in the form of unity appreciates diversity, differing perspectives, attitudes, and approaches, not coerced monolithic conformity. The church as the Body of Christ celebrates unity as a rallying principle, valuing contributions of each that achieve its ultimate purpose, maturity.

Let us lead mature lives worthy of Christ's calling, committing to spiritual harmony and cohesion in the Kingdom of God.

**TALK:** Take a moment to be silent, reflect, and share (write down)— Reflecting on the scripture, share a time/instance when you have trusted unity in Christ as a guiding principle? How did this experience make you feel or direct you?

**PRAY:** Let your continual mercy, Lord, cleanse and defend your Church; and, because it cannot continue in safety without your help, protect and govern it always by your goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Ghost, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

*Adaption from The Book of Common Prayer*

**ACT:**

1. During the Kingdomtide season, produce a program emphasizing unity of spirit as described in Ephesians 4:1-16 and share with a diverse or divided community. Journal your experience and reflect on your spiritual journey. Do what you can to protect the health of others and yourself by practicing social distancing as much as possible, washing your hands often, wearing face

covering to help prevent the spread of COVID-19, and prayerfully considering getting the vaccine when it is available—See: <http://www.amechealth.org>.

2. See also the activity that accompanies this devotion.

**Song:**

Christ, From Whom All Blessings Flow  
AMEC Hymnal, #529

1. Christ, from whom all blessings flow,  
Perfecting the saints below,  
Hear us, who Thy nature share,  
Who Thy mystic body are.  
Who Thy mystic body are.
2. Join us, in one spirit join,  
Let us still receive of Thine;  
Still for more on Thee we call,  
Thou who fillest all in all.  
Thou who fillest all in all.
3. Move and actuate and guide,  
Divers gifts to each divide;  
Placed according to Thy will,  
Let us all Thy work fulfill.  
Let us all Thy work fulfill.
4. Never from our office move,  
Needful to each other prove,  
Use the grace on each bestowed,  
Tempered by the art of God.  
Tempered by the art of God.
5. Sweetly may we all agree,  
Touched with loving sympathy,  
Kindly for each other care:  
Every member feel its share.  
Every member feel its share.
6. Many are we now, and one,  
We who Jesus have put on:  
Names, and sects, and parties fall;  
Thou, O Christ, art all in all!  
Thou, O Christ, art all in all!

Physical space—You may wish to create a dedicated space for your time of devotion. You may choose to place a candle, bible, and special symbols or material/fabric to help you focus and center during this time of reflection and prayer.

If you use this meditation and exercise in a time of family or group devotion, share in the leadership; allow different persons to read or lead different parts of this meditation.



**WE ARE  
CALLED TO  
BE GOD'S  
PEOPLE**

**What Difference Can You Make?**

**Christ**

unity  
in the  
body  
of

EPHESIANS 4:1-16

*The Christian Education Department will continue to develop resources that can be used as times of personal and collective devotion and study during this pandemic to help us all sustain and strengthen our faith and resolve.*