

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

A Devotion During This Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic Eighth Sunday after Pentecost, July 18, 2021

Accepted Unity in Christ

By Daniel H. Wilcox

Ephesians 2:11-22

2:11 So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called "the uncircumcision" by those who are called "the circumcision" --a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands--

2:12 remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

2:13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

2:14 For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

2:15 He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,

2:16 and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

2:17 So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near;

2:18 for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God,

2:20 built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

2:21 In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;

2:22 in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

An alien in nationalistic terms is a person who is not a member of a country and needs special identification to enter and reside in that country. The privileges of that country are not afforded to aliens. They live as strangers in a foreign land hoping for benevolence and generosity of the country in which they are. Hospitality serves as their sole lifeline of safety and salvation.

Apostle Paul commends unity of believers in that all those who trust God will be welcomed in the beloved community. The outsiders, Gentiles once estranged from God and community, have gained access through Christ as does the commonwealth of Israel. Israel exhibited inclusion in community through the physical sign of circumcision as an indication of heartfelt faith and obedience. Christ himself, the paragon of faith and obedience, provides access for any believer in God to the Kingdom by His crucifixion and resurrection which avails for all humanity. This justification at Calvary avails for even Gentiles, us as outsiders, experiencing the peace of God through our faith and obedience. The solitary foundation of Christ evokes hope and faith in whosoever will confess Christ as Lord and profess obedience to Christ. With Christ as our foundation, Gentiles join the faithful as the household of God and the body of Christ unified in prayer, praise, and purpose.

Let us seek the unity of community and communion desired by Christ as we worship, witness, work together, welcoming aliens, outsiders, and strangers.

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: Almighty God, the fountain of all wisdom, you know our necessities before we ask and our ignorance in asking. Have compassion on our weaknesses, and mercifully give us those things which for our unworthiness we dare not, and for our blindness we cannot ask; through the worthiness of your son Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Ghost, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Adaption from The Book of Common Prayer

ACT:

1. During the Kingdomtide season, devise a project that focuses on unity and execute it in your neighborhood. 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:

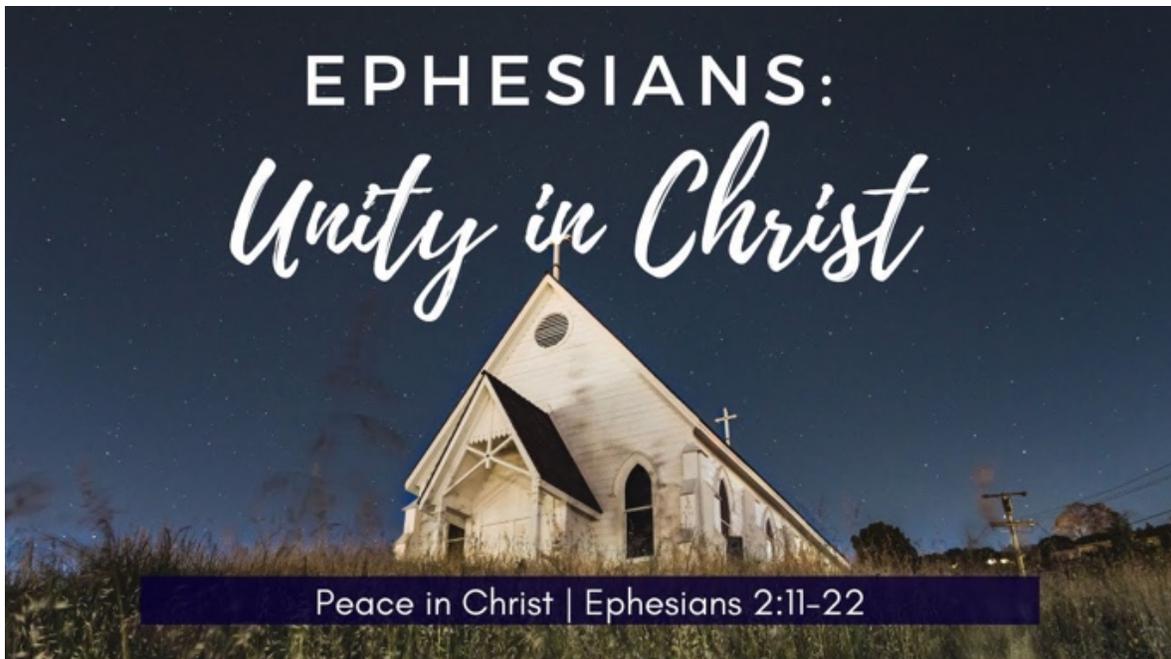
The Church's One Foundation
AMEC Hymnal, #519

1. The Church's one foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord,
She is His new creation
By water and the word.
From heaven He came and sought her
To be His holy bride,
With His own blood He bought her,
And for her life He died.
2. Elect from every nation,
Yet one o'er all the earth,
Her charter of salvation,
One Lord, one faith, one birth;
One holy name she blesses,
Partakes one holy food,
And to one hope she presses,
With every grace endued.
3. Though with a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distressed:
Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, "How long?"
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song.
4. 'Mid toil and tribulation,
And tumult of her war,
She waits the consummation
Of peace forevermore;
Till, with the vision glorious,
Her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious
Shall be the Church at rest!
5. Yet she on earth hath union
With God the Three in One,
And mystic sweet communion

With those whose rest is won,
O happy ones and holy!
Lord, give us grace that we,
Like them, the meek and lowly,
On high may dwell with Thee.

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.



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.