



STAYING CONNECTED

A WEEKLY NEWSLETTER FOR OUR MCIVOR CHURCH FAMILY

MAY 26, 2024

WORSHIP – UNITY HYMN

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*Christ come have mercy on us
Come and mend what we separate
We are divided over things
That are not Your heart
Spirit come show us the way*

*O Hallelujah Christ is with us
In Him we live and move and breathe
So with this breath inside our lungs now
And forever we will sing*

*Father we come for forgiveness
We have surrendered to fears of our day
Turning brothers and sisters to enemies
Jesus we need Your grace*

*Your love unites us
Your love unites us Lord
Oh what can separate us from (Your love)*

*O Hallelujah Christ is with us
In Him we live and move and breathe
So with this breath inside our lungs now
And forever we will sing*

PRAYER FOCUS – PRAYING PAUL'S PRAYERS

Whatever happens, may we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. May we stand together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith which is the Good News, without being intimidated in any way by those who oppose us. (from Philippians 1:27-28)

Therefore if we have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship together in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, may we be like-minded, love one another and work together with one mind and purpose. May we do nothing out of selfishness trying to impress others. Rather, let us be humble, valuing others above ourselves, not looking out only for our own interests, but taking an interest in others too. (from Philippians 2:1-4)



UNITY IN CHRIST – PASTOR MIKAYLA

There are many times in our lives where we will disagree with people. I've had experiences where good, healthy conversation can come from it. But on the other hand, there are times when it creates further division and can be difficult with that person going forward.

I found it so fitting when I recently went to a conference in Boise, Idaho. We talked about subjects like faith deconstruction, women and abuse in the church, LGBTQ+ and politics. So basically all the conversations that Christians tend to get either riled up about, or like to avoid. I was amazed at how the conference went about many of these issues. There were speakers who had many different views on many things and yet there was space to talk about them without making assumptions and getting angry at the other. There were well researched ideas coming from different positions. There was a mutual love for Christ which was obvious and stood out and above the disagreement.

Now our whole passage for today can be seen through the light of the opening verse, "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ."

Remember what Paul is saying here: may the gospel of Christ be shown through the way we conduct ourselves.

Paul is writing to a group of people who have been experiencing great pressure. Philippi was a place that had many Roman army veterans and there was a deep allegiance to Roman law and customs. This made following the way of Christ difficult and discouraged. Knowing this historical context helps as we read the book of Philippians. Paul encourages the people to stand firm, to strive together in one faith of the gospel and not to be frightened of those who oppose them.

As we move into chapter 2, we learn more about why

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the people might be experiencing disunity. Rather than a difference of opinion on theological issues, their biggest threat of division comes from this idea hierarchy. It had been ingrained into their heads that one's rank in society makes them superior.

I know there are times where hierarchy is present today, but my bigger concern for the current church is disunity based on secondary theological differences. Not just the object of disagreement itself, but the way we talk about it and how we treat those who disagree. It sucks the passion and life out of the church.

Looking at primary issues or core beliefs can help us focus on what is essential. Some examples of essential core beliefs, include that: we are sinners in need of a Saviour, Christ died for our sins and that He was resurrected on the third day, Jesus is the only way to God and Scriptures are inspired and trustworthy. These are some core beliefs we share as Christ followers.

Then there are secondary issues: creation and end times point of view, descriptions of heaven and hell descriptions, women in ministry and frequency of communion. These remain important, but are not the vital truths that we base our faith on.

We need to make sure we know what constitutes a primary, essential core belief and what is secondary. If something is considered a secondary doctrine, this does not mean we should downplay its potential impact on the Church, or avoid the conversation simply because we can agree to disagree. But these secondary issues are not essential for salvation, or a relationship with Christ.

Let us be wise in how we form our opinions and views. As Christians it is our duty to know what we believe and why, with a space in the Church to wrestle with these matters. Some of the most fruitful conversations come from people who have opposing views, but they are seeking, praying, reading the Bible with integrity and willing to go beyond their comfort zone. Though we may come to different conclusions, we can grow in love for each other, continuing to strive for unity in Christ.

A man at the conference talked about his experience as a gay person in the church. He mentioned how he prayed for his situation to be different and for God to take away his attraction to men. And through wrestling with this part of his life and his reading of Scripture, he had the conviction that marriage was between a man and a woman. So he continued his journey as a celibate gay man following Christ.

Just as for gay and straight people, singleness and celibacy can have their own temptations and struggles. This man stressed the importance of community. If

you are married, it can be easy to take for granted that feeling of closeness, the feeling of constantly having someone in your life.

God's law commands sacrificial community, not just sexual integrity. People intentionally welcoming others into daily life in messy homes, doing everyday tasks together. People intentionally surrounding others with Christ's love. Sacrificial community.

What does sacrificial community look like? How might we be more unified through sacrificial community?

We can find answers in Philippians 2:3, "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."

In order to be unified, we must sacrifice selfish ambition, pride and self interest. One study Bible says this, "Selfish ambition can ruin a church, but genuine humility can build it. Being humble involves having a true perspective about ourselves, but it does not mean we should put ourselves down. Before God, we are sinners, saved only by God's grace, but we are saved and therefore have worth in God's kingdom. We are to lay aside selfishness and treat others with respect and common courtesy. Considering others' interests as more important than our own links us to Christ, who is the true example of humility."

May we encourage healthy, biblical debates. May we be Christ-like in how we approach these conversations. May we be attentive to our community and how we might have to sacrifice and serve others. May all of this be done with the goal of unity in Christ, the one who died for all our sins and loves each one of us.

WAYS TO GIVE

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Wednesday, 7–8:30 p.m. – Kids Club and Youth
Thursday, 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. – Harvest Food Bank
June 23 – Celebration Sunday
June 27, 7 p.m. – Thursday Worship Service

WATCH OUR SERVICES

Our services are available to livestream, or watch: <https://mcivorchurch.com/worship-together/>

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