

# OneWith

A topical sermon series that draws on the Table 2 Communion Ritual from the United Methodist Book of Worship and the context of the African American community to foster unity grounded in the power of the Holy Spirit, our shared work in ministry, and our common bond of humanity.

## Time of Year/Length of Series (The When?):

Ordinary Time – 5 weeks, February to March.

## Synopsis (The Why?):

According to Scripture, the nature of the church is to live as the body of Christ: each person and each church a diverse and interdependent part of a unified whole. Unity. Not uniformity. Unity is both difficult and essential to living faithfully. One way in which we practice unity is through the sacrament of Holy Communion. In this sacred act, the Table is open to all and as United Methodists our challenge is to remain at the Table, even in times of discord and disagreement. We have crafted this worship series outline in an effort to resource and inspire churches seeking to proclaim this identity moving into and beyond General Conference 2019. In that this is also Black History Month, we will draw on the wisdom and experience of the African American Christian community to inform our commitment to oneness in the Spirit.

## Frames:

Week 1 – February 3

- **By Your Spirit**

Week 2 – February 10

- **Make Us One**

Week 3 – February 17

- **Ministry to All The World**

Week 4 – February 24

- **Until...** (Christ comes in final victory)

Week 5 – March 3

- **And...** (We feast at his heavenly Banquet)

**FRAME SYNOPSIS:**

*"If it had not been for the Lord on our side, where would we be?"<sup>1</sup>* As the United Methodist Church boldly faces our future and strives to maintain unity, we can take comfort in knowing that unity will come but not by might, nor by power, but by God's Spirit. This understanding is illustrated in the experience of African Americans as they navigated the stony roads of slavery and endure the bitter chastening rods of oppression. While there is strength in numbers, collective might will only take us so far and personal power is destined to fail. Thus, the sustaining strength that carried them through was and is the power of God's Spirit.

**SCRIPTURE FRAGMENTS: ZECHARIAH 4:1-6**

**4** Then the angel who talked with me returned and woke me up, like someone awakened from sleep. <sup>2</sup> He asked me, "What do you see?" I answered, "I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lamps on it, with seven channels to the lamps. <sup>3</sup> Also there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl and the other on its left." <sup>4</sup> I asked the angel who talked with me, "What are these, my lord?" <sup>5</sup> He answered, "Do you not know what these are?" "No, my lord," I replied. <sup>6</sup> So he said to me, "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord Almighty.

**SERMONIC MOMENT**

Video introduction related to the impact and influence of God's Spirit during slavery, the Civil Rights Movement and current day challenges in creating unity and fostering progress.

- **Necessity of the Spirit**
  - Might (strength of many) and Power Express Human strength (mental, moral, physical)
  - What's needed for unity is the influence of the divine spirit
- **Nature of the Spirit**
  - Enlightening, Renewing, consoling
- **Assurance of the Spirit**
  - Our Weakness is no obstacle for God
  - God's strength is perfected in our weakness

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 124:1 KJV

**FRAME SYNOPSIS**

As Jesus prepares for betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion, he prays one final time for his disciples. He prays that just as Christ knows complete oneness with the Father, so too would Christ's followers be made one: with Christ himself, with one another, and in their ministry to declare the Kingdom to the world. He knew that faithful work in the world must be grounded in Oneness forged through shared suffering as much as shared rejoicing. The African American community embodied the art of unity as they struggled with the common experience of slavery, oppression, and the fight for civil equality. After a lifetime in Apartheid South Africa, Bishop Desmond Tutu defined this oneness as Ubuntu, or the realization that, *"my humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours... A person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are."* How can we seek Ubuntu as the fulfillment of Christ's prayer for us?

**SCRIPTURE FRAGMENTS: JOHN 17:20-23**

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one—<sup>23</sup> 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.

**SERMONIC MOMENT**

Video introduction related to power of oneness and Christian unity and how this unity impacted the success of surviving slavery and the ability to obtain victories in the Civil Rights Movement.

- Unity Originates with God (vs. 21)
  - Unity is a divinely inspired initiative
  - Christ and his father were one
- Unity is realized through Christ (vs. 22)
  - Remain united with God
  - Receive God's glory given by Christ
  - Reach (continually strive for) complete unity
- Unity Effectiveness (vs. 20-23)
  - Impacts our witness to the world
  - Inspires those beyond the household of faith to believe in the mission of Jesus Christ
  - Awakens faith

## **FRAME SYNOPSIS**

The United Methodist Church exists to make [new] disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. *The world*. And how might this happen? Imagine it: each congregation and Christian, united in Christ and in this mission, affecting change in their specific corner of the world. The Civil Rights Movement did not change the world because of one person or even one community. It was a collective effort that relied on people of all ages, races, nations, and denominations determined to see a transformed world. It was planted by the justice work of generations before, and watered by prophetic scriptural witness to the Kingdom. It transformed the laws of the United States and the African American communal experience, and the world. How might true unity in Christ transform us? And through us, the world?

## **SCRIPTURE FRAGMENTS:**

6 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

- - 1 Corinthians 3:6-8

## **SERMONIC MOMENT**

Video introduction regarding our shared Christian ministry and the impact of the common ministry of standing for justice impacted the African American community.

- Partnership in mission
  - Go therefore and make disciples Matthew 28:19-20
- Partnership message
  - The ultimate objective of the mission is to give and tell the message of the gospel which is the good news of Jesus Christ.
- Partnership method
  - Everyone does not do it the same way some plant some water
  - The implication of this text is that God is dependent upon us to do our part

**FRAME TITLE:       “UNTIL... (CHRIST COMES IN VICTORY)”       Feb. 24, 2018**

## **FRAME SYNOPSIS:**

Throughout the history of Blacks in America there has been a carrot dangling in front of us promising freedom, inclusion, equality. Although great strides have been made, we still have a long way to go. The disciples were also waiting for a time of completion – the Kingdom of Heaven. Now as we wait for the fulfillment of the Promise of America we also wait for the Promise of Heaven. The question is, “How do we wait?”

## **SCRIPTURE FRAGMENTS:**

I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. - - Philippians 1:3-6 Then the Lord replied:

“Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. 3 For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay. - - Habakkuk 2:1-3

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”  
4 Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. 6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of birth pains. - - Matthew 24:3-8

## **SERMONIC MOMENT**

HOW Do We Wait (Until)

Video introduction related to the spiritual fortitude that African Americans drew on to make it through the meantime and how we can rely on that same spirit to sustain us until a change comes.

- We wait in hope/faith/trust – Phil 1:6
- We wait with purpose – Hab 2:1-3
- We wait with love – John 13:35

## **FRAME TITLE: “AND... (WE FEAST AT HIS HEAVENLY BANQUET)” MARCH 3, 2018**

### **FRAME SYNOPSIS:**

*And* is a powerful word. It implies that no matter what we have known before, there is still more to come. It is a sign of continued possibility. Addition. Inclusion. And hope. *Christ died, Christ was risen, **and** Christ will come again.* We all wonder: what will the end be like? Isaiah describes a banquet, a true feast where all are welcome. Yes, People of Every And. So come, and listen, and eat, and delight.

### **SCRIPTURE FRAGMENT:**

On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine— the best of meats and the finest of wines. - - Isaiah 25:6

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. - - Isaiah 55:1-2

### **SERMONIC MOMENT**

Video introduction related to the power of hope that is gained from feasting together and enacting the future fulfillment of scripture where we are all together, equally at the table, and have enough as we feast on the delicacies of God’s goodness.

Remember a time when you would go to a relative’s house for a holiday meal. There may be cousins or neighbors (known or unknown) together. God has prepared such a table for us.

1) What keeps us from coming to the table? Anxiety; fear, guilt, shame, unworthiness

2) How do we keep others from the table? Judgment, magnifying their sin while minimizing our own?  
Romans 3:23

3) God’s table is for ALL! (Isaiah 55:1-2) Even a sinner like ME! Matt 11:28, Gal 3:28-29