

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

The Unifying Power of the Spirit

Old Testament: Jeremiah 32:38-39 (NRSV, 1989)

³⁸They shall be my people, and I will be their God.

³⁹I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for all time, for their own good and the good of their children after them

New Testament: John 17:20-21 (NRSV, 1989)

²⁰I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us,² so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

General Concept: There is unity in the diverse expressions of faith, practice, and worship. Unity is expressed in the common confession of Christ and adherence to the Statement of Faith, conformity to the programs and policies of the church, sharing of gifts among churches, and a common witness in the community.

Key Concepts in the Different Age Levels in Sunday School

N/K/YE: **The Holy Spirit brings us together.**

ME/OE: **The Holy Spirit unites all people.**

Y: **The Holy Spirit works through the church and other groups with their varied gifts to support the cause for greater unity among God's children.**

A: **There is unity in the diverse expressions of faith, practice, and worship. Unity is expressed in the common confession of Christ and adherence to the Statement of Faith, conformity to the programs and policies of the church, sharing of gifts among churches, and a common witness in the community.**

Exegesis of the Biblical References

Jeremiah was imprisoned by king Zedekiah because of his subversive prophecies against the king and his policies (cf. ch. 37:11ff.). Though king Zedekiah did not believe, Jeremiah continued warning the king of the eventual capture and exile to Babylon as God's punishment for their disobedience, unjust practices and idolatry, which was later on fulfilled. Through Jeremiah, God spoke both of God's anger, but also of God's desire to once again gather God's people and restore to them the land that God had given them. Here, God once again spoke about the covenant God made with their forebears saying "they will be my people, and I will be their God." God intends God's chosen people to come together with hearts and actions united as one nation worshiping one God. Despite the sinful ways of God's people the ultimate will of the Lord is still to unify and reconcile God's people.

God's intention to unite God's people continued throughout history even until the time of Jesus as manifested in Jesus' prayer for unity.

Prayer has always been part of Jesus' life, which is why before Jesus was arrested he uttered several prayers: for himself, his disciples and for all believers. Just like God, Jesus desires for unity among believers in love and grace so that others will witness and believe in him as God's expression of love, thus, many more will encounter and experience God's love and grace.

The world desires for unity and peace, but only God in Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit can genuinely bring together people towards real unity. The church is a concrete example of unity of people brought together by the Holy Spirit though not yet perfect. Hence, despite its diversity and division, unity in the church becomes possible in and through Christ.

Companion Guide for the Teachers and Other Users

The Spirit is not a spirit of division but of unity. Essentially, unity among believers is a reality already achieved in Christ who is the one Lord and Savior of believers. In actual fact, however, it remains a quest and a goal of the church as the one body of Christ. Disunity in the church is a scandal before God.

Owing to the global ecumenical reaches of the churches, church unity may best be shown at the level of its basic unit – the individual churches and congregations. In the writings of Paul and also in Luke's Acts, evidence of divisive threats may be found at two levels: at the level of a congregation; and between the Jerusalem Church, and the churches of the Jewish Diaspora and of non-Jewish Christians (gentiles). Both cases were dealt with by Paul in his Letters.

The UCCP is addressing the issue of church unity at several levels. It is itself an organic union of several churches founded by the Protestant missionaries at the turn of the 20th century. The UCCP's local churches are integrally bound to the Conferences while maintaining the principle of local autonomy; the Conference composes the UCCP's basic *ecumenical* unit. Finally, it is in conciliar unity with the NCCP and with wider ecumenical bodies worldwide.

The UCCP has laid out a road map for actualizing in concrete form the essential unity of the church of Jesus Christ. The UCCP Statement of Faith was formulated to gather its members to forge a unity around a document stating the content of its faith for use in worship, education and program building. Another expression of unity may be seen in its "wider mission" giving in which local churches contribute to a wide array of programs at both the national and Conference levels.

Still, the UCCP needs to break more grounds especially in the areas of biblical interpretation and social witness. These aspects of its work have become both a point of convergence and a source of disunity. Some congregations have *de facto* broken off from their Conferences as a protest to the church's bolder stand in crucial issues affecting the country. Others have formally remained within the national body but their worship, educational programs and social witness demonstrate a dissenting spirit. For the UCCP, unity is both a fact and a continuing quest.

Nursery/Kindergarten/Younger Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. state that the Holy Spirit brings us together;
2. demonstrate ways by which believers are united in fellowship; and
3. express one's thanks for the unifying work of the Holy Spirit.

II. **Concept:** The Holy Spirit brings us together.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), offering plate or basket, flowers for the worship center, song chart, see additional materials for creative activity below

III. Learning Experiences

A. *Opening Worship*

1. Welcome time: Warmly greet each child as they arrive. Invite them to sit in a circle and prepare for worship.
2. Opening prayer: "Dear God, thank you for bringing us together through the Holy Spirit. Thank you for this time where we can fellowship together. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."
3. Opening songs: Sing familiar joyful songs and teach this song:

We are One in the Spirit

We are One in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord (2x)
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored
For they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love!

B. *Getting Ready*

As a way to review last Sunday's lesson, ask the children what they have done in the past week to share about Jesus. Have them share their experiences.

C. *Learning Time*

1. Prepare the class to listen to the story by singing this song.
Open them, shut them, open them, shut them, give a little clap
Open them, shut them, open them, shut them, lay them on your lap.
2. Say, "Now we listen carefully," and tell them this story.

God's Love Brings Us Together through the Holy Spirit

(Based on John 13:31 - 17:21)

Jesus' time on earth was almost over, so he talked to his disciples. Jesus told them all about God's love. Jesus told them that he loved them. Jesus told them that they must love one another. Jesus told them that they must tell all the world about God's love. Then, Jesus prayed to God. Jesus prayed that the Holy Spirit may make us all believe that God indeed loves us. Jesus prayed that the Holy Spirit may bring us together. So even today, the Holy Spirit still brings us together through Jesus.

3. Tell the class to sing "Tell All the World about Love"
Tell all the world about love,
Tell all the world about singing
Until everybody is singing in tune, sing in tune
It's a song of peace, a song of joy,
A song for every little girl and boy
A song that says, "God loves you!"
La lalala, la lalalalalala 2x
(Repeat the whole song)

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

- Ask these questions.
1. What did Jesus do when his time on earth was almost over? (Jesus talked to his disciples.)
 2. What did Jesus tell them? (Jesus told them about God's love. Jesus told them that he loved them.)
 3. What did Jesus say the disciples must do? (They must love one another.)
 4. What must the disciples tell all the world? (They must tell about God's love.)
 5. What did Jesus do after he talked to his disciples? (He prayed.)
 6. What did Jesus pray about? (He prayed that the Holy Spirit may make us all believe that God loves us.)
 7. What else did he pray about? (He prayed that the Holy Spirit may bring us together.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: "Does the Holy Spirit still bring us together today?" (Yes, the Holy Spirit brings us together through Jesus.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Lead the children to memorize the verse in John 17:21a: "That they may all be one."
2. Crafts/Artwork/Other creative activities:

Nursery/Kindergarten

- a. Materials: 1 construction paper cut-out of people (see instructions and pattern below) per child; crayons; glue or paste
- b. Have each child color her or his people cut-out any way she or he wants. Tell them they will offer their work during closing worship. Instructions for the people paper cut-out for the teacher to make:

- 1) Fold construction paper in half crosswise. Fold it again in half still crosswise. Fold crosswise in half one more time, so that now you have 8 sections of folds, all crosswise.
- 2) Keep the paper folded and draw this pattern along the main fold:
- 3) Cut along your pattern and open up the paper. You should see 4 "people".



Younger Elementary

- a. Materials: 1 construction paper (folded crosswise 3x with the pattern drawn as above) per child; enough pairs of scissors for the class; crayons; glue or paste
- b. Have each child cut along the pattern on the paper and have her/him open up the paper. (Keep a close eye on them as they use the scissors. Tell them to be very careful.) Have the children make designs on each cut-out. Tell them they will offer their work during closing worship.

G. Closing Worship

1. Have the class recite together the memory verse: "That they may all be one."
2. Sing the song, "We are One in the Spirit"
3. Offertory: Have each child offer her/his cut-out. To demonstrate the unity of believers in fellowship, assist the children to glue their cut-outs together at the "hands" so that all the cut-outs are standing with the "holding hands" in one big circle. Have the children give their offering.
4. Closing prayer: Lead the children in a prayer together. "Dear God our Parent, Thank you for your love. We thank you that Jesus loves us. Help us to love one another. Thank you for bringing us together in the Holy Spirit. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen."
5. Closing Song: "Tell All the World about Love"

Middle and Older Elementary Levels

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. state that the Holy Spirit unites all people;
2. observe how the fellowship of believers are united through the help of the Holy Spirit; and
3. express one's thanks for the unifying work of the Holy Spirit.

II. Concept: The Holy Spirit unites all people.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), offering plate or basket, flowers for the worship center, song chart, construction paper, crayons, glue or paste

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Warmly greet each child as they arrive. Invite them to sit in a circle and prepare for worship.
2. Opening prayer: Dear God, thank you for uniting us and bringing us together through the Holy Spirit. Be with us as we fellowship together as believers. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
3. Teach this song:

We are One in the Spirit

We are One in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord (2x)
 And we pray that all unity may one day be restored
 For they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
 Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love!

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand (2x)
 And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land
 And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
 Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love!

B. Getting Ready

As a way to review last Sunday's lesson, ask the children what they have done in the past week to show that they follow Christ. Have them share their experiences.

C. Learning Time

1. Prepare the class for the story by teaching this song.

We are One in the Bond of Love

We are one in the bond of love;
 We are one in the bond of love.
 We have joined our spirits with the Spirit of God;
 We are one in the bond of love.

Let us sing now, everyone;
 Let us feel God's love begun.
 Let us join our hands, that the world will know;
 We are one in the bond of love.

2. Tell them this story.

God's Love Brings Us Together through the Holy Spirit

(Based on John 13:31 - 17:21)

Jesus' time on earth was almost over, so he talked to his disciples. Jesus told them all about God's love. Jesus told them that he loved them. Jesus told them that they must love one another. Jesus told them that they must tell all the world about God's love. Then, Jesus prayed to God. Jesus prayed that the Holy Spirit may make us all believe that God indeed loves us. Jesus prayed that the Holy Spirit may bring us together. So even today, the Holy Spirit still brings us together through Jesus.

3. Tell the class to sing "Tell All the World about Love"
Tell all the world about love, tell all the world about singing
Until everybody is singing in tune, sing in tune
It's a song of peace, a song of joy, a song for every little girl and boy
A song that says, "God loves you!" La lalala, la lalalalalala 2x
(Repeat the whole song)

D. Deepening Activity/Sharing Time

Ask these questions.

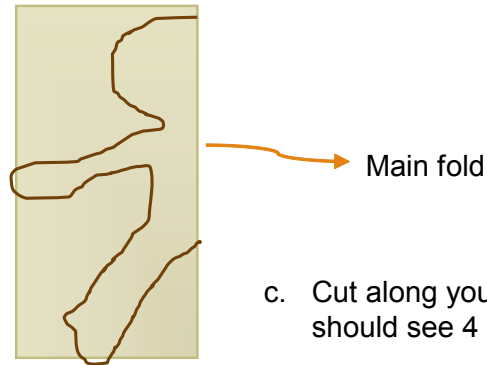
1. What did Jesus do when his time on earth was almost over? (Jesus had a long talk with his disciples.)
2. Did Jesus tell them about something they already knew? (No. Jesus told them mostly about things he had not told them before.)
3. What did Jesus tell them? (Jesus told them about God's love. Jesus told them that he loved them.)
4. What did Jesus say the disciples must do? (They must love one another.)
5. What must the disciples tell all the world? (They must tell about God's love.)
6. What did Jesus do after he talked to his disciples? (He prayed.)
7. Why? (Because prayer was always part of Jesus' life)
8. What did Jesus pray about? (He prayed that the Holy Spirit may make us all believe that God loves us.)
9. What else did he pray about? (He prayed that the Holy Spirit may unite us in God's love through Jesus.)

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Say: Does the Holy Spirit still unite us today? (Yes, the Holy Spirit still unites us in God's love through Jesus.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

1. Lead the children to memorize the verse in John 17:21a, b: "That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us."
2. Crafts/Artwork/Other creative activities: Have each student follow these instructions:
 - a. Fold construction paper in half crosswise. Fold it again in half still crosswise. Fold crosswise in half one more time, so that now you have 8 sections of folds, all crosswise.
 - b. Keep the paper folded and draw this pattern along the main fold:



c. Cut along your pattern and open up the paper. You should see 4 "people".

3. Have the students write on each "person" one observation of the ways by which the fellowship of believers are united. They will therefore write 4 observations. Have them make designs on each cut-out. Tell them they will offer their work during closing.

G. Closing Worship

1. Have the class recite together the memory verse: "That they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us."
2. Sing the song, "We are One in the Spirit"
3. Offertory: Have each child offer her/his cut-out by reading her/his observations of unity among believers. To demonstrate the unity of believers in fellowship, have the students glue their cut-outs together at the "hands" so that all the cut-outs are standing "holding hands" in one big circle. Have the children give their offering.
4. Sing the song, "We are One in the Bond of Love"
5. Closing prayer: Lead the children in a prayer together. "Dear God our Parent who indeed loves us, thank you for your love. We thank you that you have shown this love through Jesus. Help us to love one another. Thank you for the unifying work of the Holy Spirit. This we pray in Jesus Christ's name. Amen."
6. Closing Song: Tell All the World about Love

Youth Level

I. Objectives

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. state that the spiritual gifts are enabled by the Holy Spirit in bringing us together;
2. demonstrate ways by which believers are united in fellowship; and
3. express one's thanks for the unifying work of the Holy Spirit.

II. Concept: The Holy Spirit works through the church and other groups with their varied gifts to support the cause for greater unity among God's children.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRSV), offering plate or basket, flowers for the worship center, song chart, individual notebooks and pens, construction paper, crayons, glue or paste

III. Learning Experiences

A. Opening Worship

1. Welcome time: Warmly greet each one as they arrive. Invite them to sit and fellowship in a circle in preparation for worship.
2. Opening prayer: Dear God, thank you for being our God and for making us your people. Thank you for uniting us in Jesus and for bringing us together through the Holy Spirit. Be with us as we fellowship together as a church. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
3. Teach this song:

We are One in the Spirit

We are One in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord (2x)
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored
For they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love!

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand (2x)
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love!

We will work with each other, we will work side by side (2x)
And we'll guard each one's dignity, with Jesus as our guide
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love!

B. Getting Ready

As a way to review last Sunday's lesson, ask the students how they were empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to Jesus' love in the past week. Have them share their experiences.

C. Learning Time

1. Prepare the class for discussion by teaching this song.

We are One in the Bond of Love

We are one in the bond of love;
We are one in the bond of love.
We have joined our spirits with the Spirit of God;
We are one in the bond of love.

Let us sing now, everyone;
Let us feel God's love begun.
Let us join our hands, that the world will know;
We are one in the bond of love.

2. Discussion:
 - a. Have each student silently read the Old Testament and New Testament texts.
 - b. If they read the texts in English, have them translate the texts in their own tongue.
 - c. Have each student write in their notebook their own understanding of the texts they have read.
 - d. Have them share their thoughts and lead them in a discussion.
3. Tell the class to sing "Tell All the World about Love"
Tell all the world about love, tell all the world about singing
Until everybody is singing in tune, sing in tune
It's a song of peace, a song of joy
A song for every big girl and boy
A song that says, "God loves you!"
La lalala, la lalalalalala 2x
(Repeat the whole song)

D. Deepening Activity/ Sharing Time

1. Read this part of the Exegesis, one student per sentence:
 - a. God once again spoke about the covenant God made with their forebears saying "they will be my people, and I will be their God." God intends God's chosen people to come together with hearts and actions united as one nation worshipping one God. Despite the sinful ways of God's people the ultimate will of the Lord is still to unify and reconcile God's people.
 - b. God's intention to unite God's people continued throughout history even until the time of Jesus as manifested in Jesus' prayer for unity.
 - c. Prayer has always been part of Jesus' life, which is why before Jesus was arrested he uttered several prayers: for himself, his disciples and for all believers. Just like God, Jesus desires for unity among believers in love and grace so that others will witness and believe in him as God's expression of love, thus, many more will encounter and experience God's love and grace.
2. Ask these questions.
 - a. What can we do as young people to show that we are God's people?
 - b. How can we as a church show that we are united in fellowship, especially as UCCP?
3. Have them roleplay their answers to the above questions.

E. Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask: Through whom does God work in the world today, united with the help of the Holy Spirit? (The church.)

F. Applying the Biblical Truth

Crafts/Artwork/Other creative activities:

1. Have each student follow these instructions:
 - a. Fold construction paper in half crosswise. Fold it again in half still crosswise. Fold crosswise in half one more time, so that now you have 8 sections of folds, all crosswise.
 - b. Keep the paper folded and draw this pattern along the main fold:



- c. Cut along your pattern and open up the paper. You should see 4 "people".
 2. Have the students write on each "person" ways by which the fellowship of believers are united. Have them make designs on each cut-out. Tell them they will offer their work during closing worship.

G. Closing Worship

1. Sing the song, "We are One in the Spirit"
2. Offertory: Have each learner offer her/his cut-out by reading her/his demonstrations of unity among believers. To demonstrate the unity of believers in fellowship, have them glue their cut-outs together at the "hands" so that all the cut-outs are standing "holding hands" in one big circle. Have them give their offering.
4. Sing the song, "We are One in the Bond of Love"
5. Closing prayer: Have each one say a sentence prayer of thanks. Together say. "Dear God our Parent who indeed loves us, thank you that we are your people. We thank you for your love shown in Jesus. Help us to love one another. Thank you for the enabling of the Holy Spirit to be united in Jesus. This we pray in Jesus Christ's name. Amen."
6. Closing Song: Tell All the World about Love

Adult Level**I. Objectives**

At the end of the session, the learners are expected to:

1. define the meaning of unity in diversity in relation to common confession of Christ, to faith doctrines, to spiritual gifts, and common witness in the community;
2. explain how the church ministries and programs through the Holy Spirit address the need for unity; and
3. express one's thanks for the unifying work of the Holy Spirit.

- II. Concept:** There is unity in the diverse expressions of faith, practice, and worship. Unity is expressed in the common confession of Christ and adherence to the Statement of Faith, conformity to the programs and policies of the church, sharing of gifts among churches, and a common witness in the community.

Materials: The Holy Bible (preferably NRS), offering plate or basket, flowers for the worship center, hymnals, worksheets, individual journals or notebooks and pens

III. Learning Experiences**A. Opening Worship**

1. Welcome time: Warmly greet each one as they arrive. Invite them to fellowship with each other.
2. Opening prayer: Dear God, thank you for being our God and for making us your people. Thank you for uniting us in Jesus and for bringing us together through the Holy Spirit. Be with us as we fellowship together as a church. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.
3. Teach this song:

We are One in the Spirit

We are One in the Spirit, we are one in the Lord (2x)
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored
For they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love!

We will walk with each other, we will walk hand in hand (2x)
And together we'll spread the news that God is in our land
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love!

We will work with each other, we will work side by side (2x)
And we'll guard each one's dignity, with Jesus as our guide
And they'll know we are Christians by our love, by our love
Yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love!

B. Getting Ready

As a way to review last Sunday's lesson, ask the learners how they were empowered by the Holy Spirit to witness to Jesus' love in the past week. Have them share their experiences.

C. *Learning Time*

1. Prepare the class for discussion by teaching this song.

We are One in the Bond of Love

We are one in the bond of love;
We are one in the bond of love.
We have joined our spirits with the Spirit of God;
We are one in the bond of love.

Let us sing now, everyone;
Let us feel God's love begun.
Let us join our hands, that the world will know;
We are one in the bond of love.

2. Discussion:
 - a. Have each one silently read the Old Testament and New Testament texts.
 - b. Have each student write in their notebook their own understanding of the texts they have read.
 - c. Have them share their thoughts and lead them in a discussion.

D. *Deepening Activity/Sharing Time*

1. Say: Based on this section of the Statement of Faith:
We believe that the Church is the one Body of Christ, the whole community of persons reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and entrusted with God's ministry.
and Section 3 of the Declaration of Principles:
The United Church of Christ in the Philippines is a united and uniting Church, in response to the prayer of Jesus Christ "that they may all be one . . . that the world may believe that thou has sent me" (John 17:21, RSV), write your own definition of unity in diversity as a church.
2. Give time for sharing of definitions.

E. *Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Ask: Through whom does God work in the world today, united with the help of the Holy Spirit? (The church.)

F. *Applying the Biblical Truth/Closing Worship*

1. Have the class read this Covenant Prayer from the UCCP Constitution, one learner per sentence:

O gracious God, behold your people. You have called us to remain in covenant with you and with one another.

From the beginning you have always been the solid foundation of the Church. Your providence has been our shelter in the storms of life; your strength our stay as we pursue the vision of our founding parents for a united and uniting, reformed and transforming Church.

You have given us diversity of heritage in our union, which has enriched our capacity for witness and reconciliation as a community of faith.

As we renew this covenant,

May your Spirit guide us into greater sensitivity, openness of hearts and minds, and a truly creative response to the challenges of our time;

May the guidance, blessing and the empowering presence of your Son, Jesus Christ, be upon us, even as we strive to be faithful to the true spirit of the covenant we today have forged anew.

Grant, we beseech you, O God, that this symbol of our resolve for greater service may be accompanied by your most assuring love and mercy.

To you alone we give glory and honor, knowing you are the Author of all perfect wisdom and truth.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

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2. Have each one give a one-sentence reflection on how one can contribute to forging unity.
3. Ask the class to sing "We are One in the Spirit"