

Unity...Not Me!

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interest but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus... *Philippians*
2:3-5

Goal for Church Covenant Study

To understand and fulfill our covenant relationship with God (God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit) and each other.

Objective

As a result of participating in this Covenant Discipleship Group learning experience, we will be able to discuss how we come together in unity by addressing the following questions:

- What is the basis of our unity?
- How is our unity expressed? What does our unity look like?
- What do we do when our unity is jeopardized or threatened?

Covenant Emphasis for this Session

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers and service above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, toward its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world. In case of difference of opinion in the church, we will strive to avoid a contentious spirit, and if we cannot unanimously agree, we will cheerfully recognize the right of the majority to govern.

What is the basis (bond) of our unity?

The basis of our unity is found in the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit. Once the Holy Spirit leads us to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, profess our faith, be baptized, and enter into covenant with one another as members of the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit leads us to pledge to continue in union with each other in Christian love. All that we describe and pledge in this covenant statement is a description of and our response to the work of the Lord our God whom we identify as Trinity (God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit). It is our God who brings us together and empowers us to remain together with God and each other.

How is our unity expressed? What does our unity look like?

Our unity is expressed in how we relate to the church and to each other in the church. The church for us is more than institution or social organization. The church is the body of Christ and we are individually members of it. In the church we are drawn into unity with Christ. It is in the church that Christ relates to us, shares with, cares for and works through us. This is some of what we mean when we say Christ is the head of the church which is his body.

This being the case in relating to the church and to each other in the church, we are living out our relationship with Christ. In the church, we love Christ and Christ loves us as we love one another. The declaration we make in this section of the church covenant is our way of describing in more contemporary language what it means for us to keep commandments one through four. This is our way of telling you how we are going to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind.

What do we do when our unity is jeopardized or threatened?

Our unity is threatened when disagreement causes us to turn against one another because sin makes us want to and insist on having our own way. This happens for many reasons--each of which seems right and important to us at the moment. Our covenant counsels us to prevent our unity from being jeopardized by yielding. The dictionary defines yielding as: "tending to do or willing to do what other people want." (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

The Apostle Paul in Philippians 2:3-8 counsels his readers to yield to one another. He says, *"Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interest but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-even death on a cross."*