

*As we unite in worship today, we extend a warm welcome to each one present.  
May we together experience the presence of God*

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**We Gather to Prepare Our Hearts to Meet Our Lord**

**Prelude  
Welcome**



**“Love Never Ends:  
Being the Body of Christ”**

**Week 2**

We begin this week with an emphasis on giftedness. God’s love for us is shown in the work that we do and in the gifts that we use. We see God’s love in the way service builds relationships and then those relationships create community. So, for the next several weeks we will turn to the epistles to the Corinthians.

Corinth was called “Sin City” in its day. There was so much going on there and suffice it to say that it was hard to be a follower of Jesus in a city like that. It was hard to maintain purity, hard to stay out of the dog-eat-dog business of the surrounding community. It was so hard, in fact, that the ethos of the surrounding area leaked into the church.

These letters (and scholars believe that there were so many letters burning up the postal routes between wherever Paul happened to be and the church in Corinth) were written to address issues in the church. We will not go into all the issues, but we will certainly focus on the central problem, at least from Paul’s perspective: disunity.

Paul felt it was the core of the issues that were facing the church in Corinth and, we might even say, in the United Methodist Church and every church today. This is why our focus begins with giftedness, but from the perspective of creating unity.

“There are varieties . . . but the same” is the formula Paul uses to talk about this subject: Diversity in unity. Individuality for the cause of oneness. I don’t believe Paul would suggest that the individual doesn’t matter or is somehow absorbed into the whole, but he would argue that love as the motivating power of giftedness. “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (12:7). Discipleship grows in relationship. We are gifted in our variety of ways, he argues, so that we can be united by the Spirit and joined together to work for transformation of ourselves, of our community, and of the world.

Gifts, services, activities: are these the same things, just with different names? Are they different ways of talking about a common experience? One of the problems in the church at Corinth was the feeling of superiority among a few. Paul could be trying to level the playing field in response to those who hold themselves above others because of the kinds of gift they display. And no doubt, like now, there are those who think they don’t have any

particular gift of the Spirit. But they engage in activities, says Paul; they provide service. It is all motivated by the Spirit. The grandest and most jaw-dropping action and the simplest, most modest acts are all part of building up the community and are all empowered by the Spirit.

Paul is trying to remind everyone that each of our faith journeys or discipleship paths was and is supported, empowered, and made possible by the Spirit.

We think we got here on our own. We think we have wrestled this faith thing into place by our goodness or our efforts or abilities that have gotten us this far on the path. And certainly, we are called to work out our own salvation; we are called to expend effort to grow in faith. But we are aided all along the way. We have a Spirit behind us, or within us, enabling us to move forward, to grow.

Paul's real goal is to say that in our diversity is our unity, in our individual giftedness is our communal strength.

Let us be open to the movement of the Spirit in individuals and in community as we gather in person or online to be the body of Christ at work in the world.

## **A Call to Worship**

<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/2225/worship-connection-january-17-2021>

By Nancy C. Townley

God knows each one of us personally and God loves each one of us.

**Thanks be to God for such wondrous love!**

Come this day into the presence of God.

**We come with overflowing hearts!**

Celebrate God's mercy and compassion.

**Praise be to God who offers us hope. AMEN.**

## **Opening Prayer**

**Awesome God, you knew us before we were born. You love us into life. Open our hearts and our spirits today to hear your word for us. And, upon hearing the word, may we be convinced of our call to ministry and mission through the church. Bless us with your presence and your powerful love, for we ask this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.**

## **Praise Hymn UMH #384 "Love Divine, All Loves Excelling"**

*Author: Dan Schutte (1981) Copyright: © 1981 OCP Notes: Hymnal states text and tune copyright 1981, 1983, 1989 Daniel L. Schutte and NALR, however, copyright has been resigned*

1 Love divine, all loves excelling,  
joy of heav'n, to earth come down,  
fix in us thy humble dwelling,  
all thy faithful mercies crown.

Jesus, thou art all compassion,  
pure, unbounded love thou art.

Visit us with thy salvation;  
enter ev'ry trembling heart.

2 Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit

into ev'ry troubled breast.  
Let us all in thee inherit,  
let us find the promised rest.  
Take away the love of sinning;  
Alpha and Omega be.  
End of faith, as its beginning,  
set our hearts at liberty.

3 Come, Almighty, to deliver,  
let us all thy life receive.  
Suddenly return, and never,  
nevermore they temples leave.  
Thee we would be always blessing,  
serve thee as thy hosts above,  
pray, and praise thee without ceasing,  
glory in thy perfect love.

4 Finish, then, thy new creation;  
true and spotless let us be.  
Let us see thy great salvation  
perfectly restored in thee.  
Changed from glory into glory,  
till in heav'n we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before thee,  
lost in wonder, love and praise.

## ***We Hear God's Word***

**New Testament Reading..... 1 Corinthians 12:1-11**

### **New Revised Standard Version Spiritual Gifts**

*12 Now concerning spiritual gifts,[a] brothers and sisters,[b] I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans, you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.*

*4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.*

The word of God for the People of God, **Thanks Be to God**

**Children's Message**

## **Faith Hymn TFWS #2001 “As a Fire Is Meant for Burning”**

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As a fire is meant for burning  
with a bright and warming flame,  
so the church is meant for mission,  
giving glory to God's name.  
Not to preach our creeds or customs,  
but to build a bridge of care,  
we join hands across the nations,  
finding neighbors everywhere.

We are learners; we are teachers;  
we are pilgrims on the way.  
We are seekers; we are givers;  
we are vessels made of clay.  
By our gentle, loving actions,  
we would show that Christ is light.  
In a humble, listening Spirit,  
we would live to God's delight.

As a green bud in the springtime  
is the sign of life renewed,  
so may we be signs of oneness  
'mid earth's peoples, many hued.  
As a rainbow lights the heavens  
when a storm is past and gone,  
may our lives reflect the radiance  
of God's new and glorious dawn.

### **\*Meditation\***

#### **Pastoral Prayer**

Patient and Wise God, you have called this church into being to serve you in this world by helping others. We rejoice in the many ways we are able to be of help. We offer our prayers for each other, for those near and dear to us, for the situations of difficulty and strife in community and world. You hear our voices cry out and with your eternal compassion you respond in loving care to each of us. We gather here this day, meeting and greeting each other, celebrating fellowship and friendship, welcoming each other in your name. You remind us that you are with us always. What have we to fear? But we fear far too often the unknown tasks that lie ahead of us. We always want to be assured of the happy outcome of our efforts. Help us to trust your guidance and presence, Lord. Help us remember that there is no time in which we are out of your care. Enable us to be in serving ministry and mission with joy and confidence. Heal our wounds, bind up our bruises and broken spirits. Put us on a pathway of peace. For we ask this in Jesus' Name. Who taught us to pray... Our Father....

## Departing Hymn #2184 "Sent Out in Jesus Name"

Author: Anon.

Publication Date: 2001

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Sent out in Jesus' name,  
our hands are ready now  
to make the earth the place  
in which the kingdom comes.

Sent out in Jesus' name,  
our hands are ready now  
to make the earth the place  
in which the kingdom comes.

The angels cannot change  
a world of hurt and pain  
into a world of love,  
of justice and of peace.  
The task is ours to do,  
to set it really free.  
O help us to obey  
and carry out your will.

***Repeat the verse 2 more times***

### **SENDING FORTH**

And may God rejoice over you and call you "My Delight";  
May Christ Jesus bring out the best in you, to his glory;  
And may the Spirit equip you all with gifts for the common good.  
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord,  
...In the name of Christ. Amen.