



One light : one world

UNITY AND THE SCRIPTURES

This selection of texts aims to locate the search for the unity of the Church within the broader purposes of God for creation.

Unity is a divine mandate. We search for unity not primarily because it is more efficient or effective, but because the love of Christ compels us – to be in unity and fellowship with one another, as part of the reconciling work of Christ.

The texts therefore start with the affirmation of the one-ness of God: a oneness which is about the divine nature, a oneness of integrity, constancy and wholeness, just as much as a 'numerical oneness'.

The texts continue to chart the unity of creation, the human race and all people created in God's image. This is the world – the cosmos – that God so loved that he gave his only Son. The movement of the texts is therefore to point to the reconciling work of Christ.

Unity is both Gift and Calling. We look at the Spirit's gift, and then at the kind of community of believers that we are meant to be, and how this works out in our day-to-day existence, our practical inter-relationships.

Each section of texts contains narrative, reflection and doxology.

The doxologies – whether from the Psalms or from the Epistles – are expressions of gratitude, awe and wonder. They invite us to join in the unending hymn of praise sung by the Church through the ages.

The narratives may provide different ways of engaging with the story of God's way with his people. Some of the narratives were first delivered as parables, spoken or acted; some are offered here inviting imaginative engagement or allegorical interpretation.

The ecumenical vision and endeavour has very often focussed on John 17: our Lord's Prayer that his followers may be one. The missiological imperative of that text cannot be understated. What needs stating alongside this, is that the oneness for which Jesus prays is part of the Father's purposes for the whole of creation – it is that which this selection of texts tries to illustrate.

Now read below more about the Unity of the Church: Gift and Calling.

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The text below, a product of the Faith and Order Commission, was adopted by the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches held in Canberra, Australia in 1991

1.1 The purpose of God according to Holy Scripture is to gather the whole of creation under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in whom, by the power of the Holy Spirit, all are brought into communion with God (Eph. 1). The Church is the foretaste of this communion with God and with one another. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit enable the one Church to live as sign of the reign of God and servant of the reconciliation with God, promised and provided for the whole creation. The purpose of the Church is to unite people with Christ in the power of the Spirit, to manifest communion in prayer and action and thus to point to the fullness of communion with God, humanity and the whole creation in the glory of the kingdom.

1.2 The calling of the Church is to proclaim reconciliation and provide healing, to overcome divisions based on race, gender, age, culture, colour and to bring all people into communion with God. because of sin and the misunderstanding of the diverse gifts of the Spirit, the churches are painfully divided within themselves and among each other. The scandalous divisions damage the credibility of their witness to the world in worship and service. Moreover, they contradict not only the Church's witness but also its very nature.