

## Core Value 3: Diverse Unity

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**Doctrine (truth)** After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: (C)

**Devotion (relationship)** *All inclusive* *Continued Diversity*

**Duty (action)** [ "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." ]

*Revelation 7:9-10*  
*Future of the Church*

We come now to our third core value and that is the value of diverse unity. We're going to cover this in three pages.

The first one is focused on this passage from Revelation 7, this vision of the future of the church. And so I will read this. The Apostle John is the author and he is telling about a vision he had, and he says: "After this I looked," and here's what he saw.

"There before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language. Standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

'Salvation belongs to our God,  
who sits on the throne,  
and to the lamb.'

This is a passage that's very significant to us as a church. John highlights that every nation, tribe, people, and language was included. I'm convinced that in this fourfold description, we don't have to worry so much about what are all the differences in these terms. What John wants to communicate is this is all-inclusive, that people from all the different groups on earth are included. No group is left out. There are individuals who are not included, those outside of the grace of Christ. But it's all-inclusive in terms of the people who are welcomed and who are part of it.

And we are fascinated by the idea that John looked and saw this. And so this was a continued diversity. So it seems that in this vision for what the church is to become, people didn't all in in some sense didn't all of a sudden look alike and even sound alike. There was continued diversity. And yet they were together, with A loud voice, with a unity of voice, giving praise to God. And so we love this picture of the future of the church.

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**Doctrine (truth)** We deeply value our unity in Christ in the midst of the richness of diversity of His body and in our congregation.

*↪ Across churches ↪ in our church*

**Devotion (relationship)** We believe that what makes us the same as human beings (in particular, we are made in the image of God yet spoiled by sin, so we are in need of a savior, and Jesus Christ is the Savior for all who believe) is more fundamental than all of the differences between us.

*of great value* *Romans 2:1-4; Ephesians 4:4-6*

**Duty (action)** Diversity provides many rich benefits to the Body of Christ.

*Human Body* *1 Corinthians 12:27-30*

At the same time, we recognize the complexity that diversity can bring.

*It takes love* *← 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13*

So our core value is based upon this idea, that we deeply value both our unity in Christ and the richness of our diversity. And so the unity is a definition of who we are because of who Jesus is. And yet it is diverse because of the people He has called. It is a unity of His body and of our congregation.

So "of his body", we look at this as being the diversity and unity across churches and in our church. And so we delight in the diversity that we experience together as a church and we delight in what we see when we look across churches.

It is true, we believe that what makes us the same as human beings, so what makes us the same as each other, is more fundamental than all of the differences. So there's a fundamental nature that what we share. And so we highlight here, in particular, we are all made in the image of God. It is very significant: all people are made in the image of God, having inherent value because of His creation in us. And yet all of us are spoiled by sin. And we all share this. Every last one of us. So we are all in need of a savior, and Jesus Christ is the Savior for all who believe. So we share the richness of the image of God in our humanity, and we share our brokenness. And we share the fact that there is a need for a savior, and Jesus is the one Savior for all. And that is more fundamental than all of the differences.

And yet there are very important and good differences between us. So, in fact, we say that these differences are of great value, that we gain so much, we value so much, in terms of our differences. So the statement continues: diversity provides many rich benefits to the body of Christ.

And one of the metaphors that highlights the value of diversity is the human body. The Apostle Paul says, "What would the body be like if all we had were eyes or all we had were ears?" The human body is functional, is powerful, is good because of all the differences. So we find many rich benefits in those differences.

A number of years ago, our family was traveling in the mountains in Colorado, and on entire mountain sides, the trees were dying or were all dead. And they were evergreen trees, so it took a long time to be able to see that they were dead. But whole mountain sides died all at once. And the reason they all died at once is that they were all the same species and all the same age. And when they were uniform, they were all susceptible to the same dangers. And so some sort of bug came and killed them all, because they were all susceptible to the same thing. One of the rich benefits of the body of Christ is it protects us against things that otherwise the whole group would be blind to. We'd all be in danger of the same risk. When there's diversity, we have the strengths of different people having strengths in different areas, and that brings a greater strength to the body, a greater protection in the body.

We also see the beauty of many colors, which is something quite different from a uniform setting. So we do believe and see and experience many rich benefits of diversity in the body of Christ.

At the same time, we recognize that there is complexity that diversity brings. And so this passage in 1 Corinthians, continuing on from the previous one about the rich benefits, it takes love. It takes love to live well in the body and in the midst of diversity. And so the Apostle Paul says that the greatest of these things, of these virtues, is love. And we recognize that as an important part of what it means to live in the diversity of the church.

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Doctrine  
(truth)

• We pursue unity in Christ Ephesians 4:1-6

*One Lord, Faith, Baptism*

• We intentionally pursue diversity in Christ 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Devotion  
(relationship)

• We endeavor to walk in humility Philippians 2:1-4

*Put needs of others first*

• We value "healthy discomfort"

*languages  
Patterns of interaction*

Duty  
(action)

• We place each part of each difference under God,  
pursuing the values expressed in His Word with great humility.

And so, what do we do? We highlight that we pursue unity in Christ. And this is something, that we pursue. It is not something that we can simply be passive about and hope it will come. But we pursue the reality that there is one Lord over all of us. There's one faith that we all share. There's one baptism that is the one way in which we all are joined together to Christ and in his body.

We also, just as we pursue unity, we also intentionally pursue diversity. We want to pursue that which brings this manifold wisdom of God. The Apostle Paul said that he became like others for the sake of the gospel, that he chose to enter the world of people who were in different categories of life. He chose to enter into the lives of others and their different experiences from his own for the sake of the gospel. And we choose to do the same thing, because of the benefits that are ours. We endeavor to walk in humility.

And a key part of that is put the needs of others before ourselves. We see this as the model in Christ. And this is an important part of what it is to walk in humility, to say, "Something might not affect me, but it affects you, and so I will make adjustments." Or perhaps, "You can see something that I can't see, so I'm going to trust what you can see." "There's a real humility that is a significant part of this journey for us.

Another way to express this humility is to step into healthy discomfort. So we believe there are ways in which I put the comfort, the preferences of other people, before my own, and that can make me uncomfortable in a very healthy way, in a very rich way. Of course, there are unhealthy ways of being uncomfortable. But we believe that it is valuable and good for us to put the needs, the comfort of others, first. And part of how we express this and experience it is the use of multiple languages in our worship service. This can be uncomfortable. It can be challenging. And yet we do it to show our value for other people. This can be expressed in our

patterns of interaction. When we when we talk, when we interact, we might say, "I would be more comfortable just speaking very directly, but for the sake of others, I'm going learn to interact in a way that's different from what I'm used to." So healthy discomfort is a way to express this pursuit of unity and diversity in humility.

And we recognize that it takes discernment in looking at these differences. So we place each part of each difference under God, pursuing the values expressed in His Word, with great humility. In other words, not every difference is a good difference. Not every difference is a neutral difference. Sometimes, in each of our cultures, are aspects that are not godly. There are others that are deeply godly. And some that are just different. And so we are committed to saying, as we encounter differences, "In humility, we're going place those differences under God" and understand, is this just different? Is it a trade-off? Is it better? Or is there a way in which this is not a direction to go? And so, we are choosing to engage in that dialogue, in great humility, to learn together, because we're convinced that there are many rich benefits to our church, to the body of Christ, as we experience the unity that He has designed and envisioned for His people.

### **Reflection Questions**

- What are some of the benefits of our unity in Christ?
- What are some of the benefits that diversity brings to the Body of Christ?
- What are some of the benefits that diversity brings to our congregation?
- Why is it important to pursue unity in Christ?
- Why is it important to pursue diversity in Christ?