



In Praise of Diversity

SUGGESTED SETTING:

Table with items/pictures representing diversity: Examples - rainbow, crucifix, Jewish star, cultural symbols of different countries, world map, etc.

The leader could ask each person to bring a symbol(s) and those participating by phone could tell what symbols come to mind for themselves.

LEADER:

Oh God, you reign over all nations and all peoples. All the earth reflects your beauty and your bounty. Each culture and people shows us your glory. May we learn about you through learning about each other. May we come to appreciate diversity and understand how it enriches our life and brings us closer to you.

ALL:

We pray this day for the grace to tear down walls that divide us and to build bridges of understanding and unity. We praise you, God, for the gift of diversity, in all its forms, in our world. Help us to listen more deeply and connect with the "other," who may have a different perspective, a different skin color, a different religion, a different sexual orientation, a different political stance, a different socio-economic background. We ask this in the name of Jesus, your son and our brother. Amen.

SONG: All One People – by Dan Schutte (YouTube)

Chorus: We are all one people of one same birth
And we all share the wealth of one same earth,

We are one great song from the heart of God
We are all the beloved of one great love.

With sun and stars I created you
The likeness of my soul,
With delight I look on my handiwork
And found it very good.

CHORUS: (above)

The earth still groans in its labor pains
To bring God's love to birth,
So we work with Christ to prepare that day
When all will be complete.

CHORUS: (above)

READINGS:

Jeremiah 22 3-4

Yahweh says this: Practice honesty and integrity; rescue the person who has been wronged from the hands of his oppressor; do not exploit the stranger, the orphan, the widow; do no violence, shed no innocent blood in this place. (Pause briefly)

Isaiah 61: 1-2

The spirit of the Lord Yahweh has been given to me, for Yahweh has anointed me. He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to bind up hearts that are broken; to proclaim liberty to captives, freedom to those in prison; to proclaim a year of favor from Yahweh. (Pause briefly)

Mark 12: 30-31

This is the first commandment....you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second

is this: You must love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these. (Pause briefly)

Matthew 25: 35-40

For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me; in prison and you came to see me.....I tell you solemnly in so far as you did this to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me. (Pause briefly)

Galatians 3: 28

....there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus. (Pause briefly)

Colossians 3: 12-13

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness, and humility, gentleness and patience. (Pause briefly)

PAUSE and REFLECT on the readings:

What are issues of diversity we face in the world today and in my own life?

What are the readings telling me/us today?

What changes can I make in my own life through pray, intention, attitude and/or action relating to diversity?

TIME of SHARING:

PRAYER: Psalm 72 - Taken from; Psalms for Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness by Nan C. Merrill (Read alternately)

Side 1: Bring justice to the peoples, O Beloved, and your mercy to generations. May the people be known for mercy, rendering justice to the poor. Let their spirits soar as the eagle; let joy abide in every heart.

Side 2: May you heed the cry of the poor, the young and the old, setting free all those in need, melting the hearts of oppressors.

Side 1: May we know you as long as the sun endures, and as long as the moon, through all generations. May we acknowledge you in the rain falling in the fields, like showers that water the earth.

Side 2: In our day may justice flourish and peace abound, throughout all nations. May every heart open to your love from sea to sea, from the river of life out to the universe.

Side 1: May fears that imprison the people be brought to light, and rise from the depths. May the leaders of nations from all the earth listen to your word. May they spend time in silence before they counsel.

Side 2: May the leaders surrender to your love, and the nations serve the Most High. For you heed the needy when they call, the poor and those who have no friend.

Side 1: You have compassion on the weak and downtrodden, and give them strength and hope.

Side 2: From injustice and oppression, you redeem their life; and precious are they in your heart.

SONG: We Are Many Parts – by Marty Haugen

CHORUS: We are many parts; we are all one body,
And the gifts we have, we are given to share.
May the spirit of love, make us one indeed.

One, the love that we share,
One, our hope in despair,
One, the cross that we bear.

God of all, we look to you,
We would be your servant true,
Let us be your love to all the world.

CHOURS: (above)

So my pain is pain for you,
In your joy is my joy too,
All is brought together in the Lord.

CHORUS: (above)

All you seekers great and small,
Seek the greatest gift of all,
If you love then you will know the Lord.

CHORUS: (above)

CONCLUDING PRAYER – Prayer for a Diverse Community, by Education for Justice

ALL: Creator of all races and ethnicities, help us to see that a diverse community is the way to deepen our lives and to know you more deeply. Guide us to see that entering into a vital and just relationship with others who are different from us is a way to make ourselves whole. Guard us from fear of the other, from the fear that our own security is threatened if we become truly willing to make a place at the table for all. Open us to live out what we profess to believe:

That our true security is in you and in your call to justice and peace,
That we are a part of your global family,
That, because of your incarnation, the human dignity of everyone is sacred,
And that we are constantly called to conversion and inclusive community.

We pray that you help us recognize any form of racism in our hearts, and in our legal systems and social structures. Forgive us for our sins of exclusion. Heal our souls and spirits. Ground us in compassion for all through your grace. Help us take the steps you call us to take. To build a more just community, where difference is respected and where we can join hands and rejoice in the common good. Through the mercy of God, we pray. Amen