

Unity in Mission summary

Ch. 5 – Unity as an Instrument of Communion

1. We cannot begin to offer a strategy on how to proceed in handling conflict if we do not proceed in common mission under the headship of Jesus Christ.
2. The early church was as deeply divided by things as we are; for example, the church arose out of Jewish sacramental and religious practices that directly conflicted with the Gentile way of life.
3. Yet the early church survived by embracing the Gospel truth that Christ is our unity: per Paul, what glues the Church together is “the message of the Cross.” In the end, our diverse but faithfully held positions shall be laid at the altar of God.
4. The culture wars have created a great lie within the Church – that if we are not unified on sexuality, we must not be unified at all.
5. Christ calls us to cease judgment of each other and, instead, to serve one another through mercy, forgiveness, love, and kindness.
6. Common marks of Anglican tradition: we are rooted in scripture, shaped by worship, ordered for communion, and directed to God’s mission in the world.

a. Rooted in scripture:

- 1) We read, study, and reflect upon the Bible corporately and individually.
- 2) We read scripture in a community and a context, also using reason and tradition in our study, creating a dynamic, revelatory practice.
- 3) We willingly accept the challenge of listening to others and their interpretations, recognizing that new situations call for fresh expressions of a scripturally informed faith.
- 4) We do not worship scripture. Rather, we worship God: Creator enfleshed in the Living Word speaking through the Holy Spirit.

b. Shaped by worship:

- 1) We share a road map that unites us with others to acknowledge the holiness of God, to hear God’s word, to sing God’s praise, to offer prayer, and to celebrate the sacraments.
- 2) We are formed as a community, learning who we are and whose we are.
- 3) We proclaim a faith that is apostolic (ancient), catholic (universal), and present (now).

c. Ordered for communion:

1) We are ordered globally across the Anglican Communion and our own Episcopal Church into a common life.

2) We see our unity and potential life as a global family of God despite our differences in culture and geography.

d. Directed to God's mission:

1) We recognize that our chief work is proclaiming the Good News through the unique witness of God in Christ Jesus.

2) We acknowledge that national concerns and colonial desires have, at times in our history, caused us to ignore God's call and our own Baptismal Covenant that we will seek and serve Christ in all persons, working for justice, peace, and the dignity of every human being.

3) We engage with humility in Episcopal and Anglican relationships that honor leaders unlike ourselves and support them in their mission work.

7. Our creeds remind us that our faith is a faith of mercy, forgiveness, and unity.

8. In ranking a hierarchy of conformity, of utmost concern are the creeds, historic councils, three-fold order of ministry, and prayer book worship. Entwined and linked to these elements are the two Gospel sacraments, Baptism and Eucharist.

9. The whole Anglican Communion recognizes the two Gospel sacraments. In standing and making our promises as part of the Baptismal Covenant, we create a verbal vessel of grace that draws us ever closer to God and to each other.

10. The other five sacraments were not given to the Church by Jesus Christ but were created by the Church through the guiding of the Holy Spirit as we live out the kingdom of God.

11. While those five sacraments are a means of grace, our Catechism says that they "are not necessary for all persons in the same way that Baptism and Eucharist are." (BCP 860).

12. The sacrament of marriage is important; it does not, though, merit the divisiveness of lawsuits, loss of members, and loss of energy for proclaiming the Gospel.

13. We must say "No" to the ever dividing nature of humanity that boosts ego over community.

14. Unity and interdependence mean that we are self-differentiated while also embracing and working together with those who differ; in the business world, this is called

“both/and”; in the Episcopal Church and Anglican Communion, it is known as the via media.

Ch. 6 - Essential Foundations of Marriage

1. An icon of the eternal, ideal, and real relationship between Christ and His Church.
2. Prayer book defines goals of marriage as mutual joy, mutual help and comfort, and for the Godly procreation and raising of children.
3. Love for another (not self), a loving relationship that requires mutual love, devotion, fidelity, and personal bonds.
4. Christian marriage as a communal relationship; commitment to total partnership as a form of Christian obedience.
5. Requires faith in navigating good and bad, trials and tribulations and celebrations.
6. Open to bearing of children. If not possible, then invitation to adopt or embrace role of helping care for the children of the church community.
7. Discussion on Christian marriage requires discussion of the theology, liturgy, and culture inherited from the past.
 - a. Polygamy to single unions.
 - b. Sacrament grounded in a post-Fall world.
 - c. Jesus: marriage as a lifelong faithful response to God’s love: difficult (at times), monogamous, lifelong.
 - d. Sacrament of Christian marriage is most threatened by the Church’s failure to be the Church: failure to speak clearly and persuasively of God’s loyal love; failure to teach the theology and practice of marriage as Christian discipline; failure to hold up the sacred and iconographic nature of marriage; failure to support couples in their real life struggles.
 - e. We have little to say on the sanctity of marriage if we are willing to ‘divorce’ each other as the Church whenever we disagree.
 - f. Unity of marriage no matter what the circumstances – for better, for worse, . . . – should be mirrored by the body of Christ, his bride.
 - g. The love that sticks with it through thick and thin is a gift from God.
 - h. Fidelity to one another as icon of God’s fidelity to us through Christ.

- i. No rite of marriage recorded in the Bible. Civil ceremony taken on by church, first liturgy for marriage appears in Middle Ages.
 - j. Marriage as meaning and covenant in a heterosexual relationship is not changed by extending the rite to same-gender relationships; expanding the sacrament to benefit others.
- 8. Divorce is a “defeat” of the Christian vision of marriage; Christian marriage must intend a lifelong covenant relationship when vows are exchanged.
 - 9. Lengthy process of accepting remarriage of divorced people whose former spouses remained living. Not until 1973 was remarriage of a divorced person whose spouse was still alive formally countenanced. A 177-year process.
 - 10. Jesus spoke against divorce and remarriage.

Ch. 8 - A Communal Response

- 1. A Christian seeks to listen as well as to speak; shows fellow sinners kindness and respect; and has the humility to acknowledge that his perspective or opinion is neither the right one nor the only one.
- 2. Christian conversation means reading the whole text, even the parts with which we disagree, and conversing with others, even with those who have a different perspective.
- 3. We must reject the common cultural notion that we should be with only the like-minded.
- 4. We manifest our commitment and witness to God by manifesting our commitment and respect to each other.

Ch. 9 - A Strategy for Unity in Mission

- 1. We honor diverse perspectives by holding one another's views as sincere.
- 2. We pray over the issue at hand, we educate ourselves about the complexity of the issue at hand, and we pray for each other.
- 3. We witness to the world by staying in community while acknowledging our differences; we recognize that as God's beloveds, we are always more alike than different.
- 4. We serve our neighbors together, not letting differences in perspective on a single issue divide us.