



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

In Search of Unity During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

2 Corinthians 13:11-14 - ¹¹ Finally, brethren, farewell. Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.¹² Greet one another with a holy kiss.¹³ All the saints greet you.¹⁴ The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

Over the past three weeks, we as a country and we as the Church have witnessed a flurry of activity that climaxed in nearly destroying our nation and the democracy we have come to honor and cherish.

In the last year, we have witnessed a pandemic, the outbreak of racial discord, the spewing of hateful rhetoric from individuals who sought voters with similar sentiments; all of which caused a deep division in our nation, among individuals and families, and lastly, within the church.

The entire menagerie of these activities should have opened our eyes to the necessity of the Church, the body of Christ, standing up and calling for all of this bantering and bickering to cease. After all, we who make up the body of Christ are to be peacemakers and disseminators of the love of Christ. Sadly, many have either remained silent or encouraged discord.

This is supposed to be the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. However, as a pastor, I struggle with the notion of unity within the body of Christ, when either there was silence, measured talk, or blatant encouragement.

Paul's final appeal in II Corinthians is a call for unity. In the first nine chapters, he addressed the majority of the Christians in the Corinthian assembly. In chapters 10 - 13:10, his words were directed primarily to those who questioned his integrity. In fact, he is not even certain if these are true believers. But now in his closing statement, the

apostle turns his attention once again to those who really love and appreciate him, as he calls them "brethren" (v. 11). The apostle sees beyond all the fragmentation in Corinth to the basic unity of the Church. God created that unity. Christians belong to each other. They are part of the family of God and Paul says they ought to act that way.

Paul now summons these Corinthians to be mature, content, and in unity, which has not been a characteristic of the Corinthian assembly. He urges them to enter into the comfort of the Lord and he reminds them of the availability of divine love and peace. Such unity was to be exhibited with a "holy kiss." Since ancient times, this kiss has been a form of greeting and a gesture of love and fellowship. However, it was usually exchanged between members of the same sex.

In closing, the saints with whom Paul was staying at the time he wrote II Corinthians send their greetings (v. 13). Paul also included the blessing of the triune God so that the grace manifested by the Son, the love expressed by the Father, and the fellowship created by the Holy Spirit might be experienced in Corinth (v. 14). This is one of the clearest references to the Trinity found in the New Testament.

As Christians, if we are depending on the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, walking in the love of God, participating in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, and not walking in the flesh, we can and will be a part of the solution and not a part of the problem. That is the kind of a Christian I want to be. If we focus on this attitude, we may finally have true Christian unity.

Blessings,
Reverend Dr. Melvin L. Grimes, Executive Director
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About Churches United of the Quad City Area:

On January 22, 1961, the organization that would become Churches United of the Quad City Area was founded. Throughout the years, we have grown in response to the changing needs of our community. Today, we serve as a cooperative of 148 churches providing food, shelter, and financial assistance to those in need. We also come together in ecumenical worship. As we look to the future, we are committed to serving the community, revitalizing the Church, and celebrating Christian unity.

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