

## Many Voices, One Spirit

Bible Readings: Acts 2:1-11 / Ephesians 4:1-6: First Nation Version

Every once in a while, we do something and a little voice inside says, There that's it, or That's why you're here. I believe we have voices within us, one that's in the mind and the others is in the heart and soul, I challenge you to sit in the quiet and listen to them both. The spirit is a voice that one feels more than hears. We acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the Lord and Giver of life, through whom the creative, redeeming love of God is ever at work among us. Let us pray, open our hearts and minds by the power of your Holy Spirit, that, as the Scriptures are read and your Word proclaimed, we may hear with joy what you say to us today and challenge our faith. May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Happy Pentecost to all! The message for today **Many Voices, One Spirit** is inspired by a prayer by Damber Khadka, originally published for 40 Days of Engagement on Anti-Racism in 2025. We will divide the prayer into five part and five challenges.

First part of the prayer, **You are the One who created all that is, shaping the universe with intention, beauty, and diversity. You breathe life through every language spoken on earth, move with grace through every culture, and dwell within every shade of human skin. From the very beginning, you chose to speak life not in uniformity, but through multitudes. You shaped humanity as a vast mosaic—each tone, each dialect, each culture bearing your image and your presence.**

Diversity is a gift, do you believe it is central to how humanity reflects the image of God. Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another's uniqueness. The United Church views the religious practice of all people of goodwill with respect and gratitude. We believe the Spirit of God is at work in many different faith communities. Does our Spirit really recognize all people as kin? Today, differences are everywhere around us and, we should believe it's a great cause for celebration.

Second part of the prayer, **In this time of shifting demographics, generational transformation, and widening global connection, we offer our thanks to you. We thank you for languages both ancient and newly evolving, for cultures deeply rooted and those still emerging, and for the wide variety of human expression through which your Spirit continues to move. We give thanks for the blessing of difference, and for the even greater blessing of what it means to be in relationship with one another across that difference.**

Last week was the Cathedral Arts Festival, anyone here watch the programs or visited the venues? For me what makes it a Festival is because of the difference of Arts, different talents, different music, different instruments, different food, different way of cooking, do you believe in the blessing of differences? Imagine a festival that you will just watch the same show, eat the same food and do the same thing. When we watch the Regina Mandolin Orchestra, they played different music from different countries, Many voices, one spirit. In our reading in the Book of Acts, "all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability". Speaking differently became a blessing. Amazed and astonished

represented that gathering. Are we amazed and astonished when we experienced other people's culture and music.

**Third part, Yet, we also come with confession. You already know the ways we have fallen short. We have inherited harmful narratives and have continued to live them out. Too often, we have valued One Specific language above other languages and equated particular race/ethnicity with what is good or acceptable. We have made assumptions about one another—based on speech, skin tone, clothing, names, or cultural practices—and have failed to recognize your image in those who are different from ourselves. Forgive us, God. Forgive us for every table we have left too small, every voice we have silenced or ignored, and every language we have failed to honour simply because we did not understand or refused to try. Liberate us from the myth that sameness is sacred, and from the lie that some lives carry more worth than others.**

One of the challenges I believe I will face in Ministry in the Church or in Chaplaincy is when people see me, see the color of the skin, or realize I am Filipino, the way they embrace the message I share and the prayers I bring, their reactions will be different. Racism exists out loud and in silence. Racism is when a person is treated worse, excluded, disadvantaged, harassed, bullied, humiliated or degraded because of their race or ethnicity. The United Church of Canada has made a commitment to becoming an anti-racist denomination. As Moderator Jordan Cantwell put it in 2017, "We need to name and examine our fears, prejudices, and assumptions. The privilege that many of us are born with may desensitize us to the injustice, exclusion, and hate that some in our community experience on a daily basis." Only in that way can we build, as "That All May Be One" envisioned, a church and society "where all are welcome, where all feel welcome, and where diversity is as natural as breathing."

April is Celebrate Diversity Month, not sure as a Church if we give an effort and explore to celebrate Diversity. It should be a time to honor the many cultures, identities, and lived experiences that shape our communities and the world. Dr. Maya Angelou's life reflected this truth. From her years living and working in Ghana and Egypt to her deep commitment to civil rights, she believed that understanding one another across differences was essential to building a more compassionate and just society. For Dr. Angelou, diversity was not something to simply acknowledge; it was something to embrace, learn from, and uplift. Many Voices, One Spirit, I challenge you to listen more closely, learn more deeply, and honor the voices and stories of others that will broaden our understanding of one another. The Spirit came into our lives and hearts, It was not the end, it was the beginning.

**Fourth part, We affirm today that your Spirit is alive and active beyond our limitations. You are not confined to one era or one way of being. You speak fluently across generations and cultures—from sacred scripture to everyday conversation. You move through Arabic, Tagalog, Mohawk, Urdu, Cree, Spanish, French, Portuguese, American Sign Language, and many more languages. You are a God who is always present and never out of touch. So we ask, O God: May your Church reflect that same expansive grace. Let our communities of faith become places where laughter is heard in many accents, where our prayers are shaped by many rhythms, and where leadership reflects the rich diversity of your people. May our worship cross generational lines—honouring the hymns of our elders and the music that resonates with our youth. May our learning**

**be decolonized, our theology be inclusive, and our hearts remain open to continual growth.**

I want to show the First Nation version of the New Testament. Ephesians Chapter 4. Let me read again the challenge of the scripture, "Walk with a humble and gentle spirit, patiently showing love and respect to each other. Let his Spirit weave you together in peace as you dance in step with one another in the great circle of life. In this circle we are joined together in one body, by one Spirit, chosen to follow one purpose. **May our faith communities transform into spaces where laughter resonates in multiple tones, where our prayers are influenced by different rhythms, and where leadership embodies the vibrant diversity of everyone.** Next week is Asian Heritage Sunday, I pray that you find time to celebrate it and be empowered. "We are not alone," is the first line of "A New Creed," one of our statements of belief. The United Church of Canada has a long history of welcoming people of all backgrounds and orientations – wherever you are in your faith journey. Many Voices, One Spirit, let us embrace it and let us show it.

The final part of the prayer is also our closing prayer for this Message

**We know we are not yet who we are called to be, but we trust that your Spirit holds us as we become. Guide us, shape us, and encourage us to continue the journey. Help us to unlearn what does not serve love. Help us to relearn what justice and compassion require. Teach us to walk humbly in faith—with open spirits to listen, open hands to share, and open hearts to love. We pray this in the name of Jesus Christ, the Word who became flesh, the One who built bridges instead of walls, the One who embraced difference and made room for all. Thine is the One who still speaks through every voice and meets us in every language. Amen**