

Seeking unity and celebrating our diversity

By DR. SCOTT H. CARR
Special to the News

PASTORAL VIEWS

What do you think of when you hear or see the word "unity"? It is used within other words, such as union and unite. Its meaning involves a joining and gathering together of two or more things or people into one unit. There is a oneness, an agreement, and a sense of harmony where the separate parts of the whole work together as one unit or body.

Jesus prays for all believers in John 17. A major thrust in his prayer is towards unity in the body of Christ. We must first be united with God the Father through a personal and growing relationship with Jesus Christ, and then we are to be united with all our brothers and sisters in Christ in our common purpose and mission.

God the Father and Jesus the Son are in perfect unity. They are one, and yet, they are two distinct personalities. His Holy Spirit was given and resides in each disciple of Christ in order to make us one church under Christ. We are parts of one body who desperately need one another. Just like an orchestra has many members who supply a part of the musical composition to make one harmonious product; we, too, are many members of the bride of Christ who supply our individual parts of his body to make one harmonious product of love.

We are living in a time when many Christians are more focused on ethnicity, cultural norms, social class, political correctness and denominational ties than on Jesus Christ and

what makes us one in him. We often allow our differences to become our hindrances to the Holy Spirit's work in the life of the church. We allow petty arguments to erupt and divide us, which smears the name of Christ.

Redemption and reconciliation are to be our business because they are the Father's business as proven by the death, burial and resurrection of his Son in order to pay the price for our sins and save our eternal souls from hell.

As his bride, let us celebrate our diversity within the parameters of our unity with Christ, because he is coming again to rapture his bride, and that bride will be without spot, blemish or wrinkle.

The problem facing the church at this point in history is that we do have spots, blemishes and wrinkles — and many of them. We are asleep in the light. Jesus sets us apart for God's service, but too many of us have allowed ourselves to become lulled by and desensitized to the ways of the world, and as a result, have lost much of our effectiveness upon the lost whom we come in contact with on a daily basis who are desperately searching for the truth, who is Jesus Christ.

There are legitimate differences between different sections of the body of Christ, but these differences should not be of such importance that they, in turn, divide us from one another and from the Great Commission given to us by our Lord himself!

Why is it so important to be united together as his church? Jesus makes

it crystal clear that he and the Father are one, and we are to be one as we are united together with him. As a result, the world will know he was sent by the Father and that the Father loves us as much as the Son. Jesus says that the world will know us by our love; not by our bickering over our differences.

In regard to our differing racial, cultural, social, political, denominational backgrounds and anything else that separates us, let us become richer by breaking down barriers that divide us and crossing over to embrace one another for the cause of the cross of Christ, and allow the Holy Spirit to unite us to the centrality of our faith: the Lord Jesus Christ! For the ground is level at the foot of the cross. Let us agree to disagree agreeably in his love.

If we are not in union with the Father through a union with Christ, then there is no way we will be able to be in union with one another. But, when we are in union as just stated, let us strap ourselves in for an awesome Holy Spirit adventure of seeing the lost won to Christ and disciplined for the praise of his glory.

Are you seeking to be a faithful witness by helping the world see Jesus in you by tangibly expressing your love for God, your family in Christ, and the lost around you? You can do this by studying and obeying the Word of God; interceding for other Christians and the lost; permitting yourself to be propelled by the promptings of the Holy Spirit; avoiding gossip; building others up rather than yourself; working together in humility with those who are different from you; investing

your time, energy and money in things of eternal value; exalting Christ in every area of your life; submitting one to another out of reverence for our God; trusting him in all situations; acting justly; loving mercy; forgiving others; discipling a young believer; doing good to all; living as his servant; loving your enemies; honoring those in authority; sharing and showing him; respecting everyone; fearing and walking humbly with him; striving to be a peacemaker; and refusing to cause division in the body of Christ by arguing over matters that divide his body. When we live in such a manner, we are putting into practice what Colossians 3 instructs us to do in putting off the old self and putting on the new self.

It is time to cross unbiblical boundary lines and come together for the cause of Christ in order to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandment of loving our God and our fellow man by discovering our giftings and fulfilling the essential parts that we each have been given by the Holy Spirit in the church under the lordship of Christ to be Jesus to a lost and dying world during our brief pilgrimage here.

Satan, God's arch enemy, loathes us and desires to divide and conquer the church, but 1 John 4:4 says, "... he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." Jesus boldly states in Matt. 16:18, "... the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (the church)." Isaiah 54:17 promises, "... no weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed ..." We are winners in Christ!

May the Holy Spirit of God infuse

us with his power to become the church that Christ gave His very life's blood to save, purify and sanctify in order that many lives would be saved for all eternity. God, please forgive us for our lack of sensitivity to your Holy Spirit's promptings. Help us not to grieve him, but instead, fill us afresh with yourself. Empower us not to allow the devil to gain a foothold in our lives, and if we have, free us from it. Mold us and make us to have your passion to fulfill your purposes for our lives. May our lives produce much fruit for the praise of your glory as we, the differing branches, remain connected to Jesus, the Vine, in one accord. Enable us to live in unity in the community you have called us to in the body of Christ.

May this be the prayer of every Christian today and every day until we meet our Savior face to face and give him the glory for the great things he has done to, in and through us as the body of Christ. It is the desire of our Father's heart that we, his children, live in union and communion with him and with one another as he accomplishes his purposes through a spirit of unity by the indwelling Holy Spirit to be the people of God working together to reflect the Son of God in his church upon the earth, so that others will be drawn to him.

Rev. Dr. Scott H. Carr Sr. of Scott Carr Ministries is a member of Carr's Corner Community Fellowship. He can be contacted at P.O. Box 994, Bridgeton, NJ 08302 or by phone (856) 455-9734 or scott@scottcarrministries.com.