

Sermon Title: “The Courage To Be As A Part”

Preacher: Rev. Olivia Maxwell

Scripture: Ephesians 2:11-12 & 17-22 (NIV)

February 19, 2023

Scripture:

¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—¹² remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.

¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Sermon Notes:

In Ephesians Paul writes (verse 19) that believers “are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people. This sermon calls our attention to a particular challenge we face: the tension between being A PART and being APART. Rev. Maxwell first shared with us the principle that unity does not equal uniformity. As unique individuals, we are challenged to be ourselves even while participating with others.

We were then led to the second principle in the sermon: it takes courage to be yourself as A PART with others. For example, it takes courage to accept that the new stands on the shoulders of the old. It takes courage to navigate generational divides, diversity, and different ways of doing the same things. The Apostle Paul, she pointed out, called for a new humanity that lived in peace with differences and moved from a “me” mentality to a “we” state of mind.

Finally, Rev. Maxwell shared the African concept of Ubuntu. It means “I am what I am because of who we all are.” God created us to be family, household, community, dwelling place. God never created us to be separate. Because Christ inhabits us, He makes us the dwelling place of God. The courage to be A PART means we are called to offer ourselves as a space for God and for each other. We are called to care for one another, to pray for one another, to hold one another. In Christ, we are a dwelling place for God. Ubuntu.

Sermon Points:

1. Unity does not equal uniformity.
2. The old and the new are intended to coexist.
3. Ubuntu: We are God’s permanent habitation.

Discussion Questions

1. When you were a child, were you taught the principle of Ubuntu? If so, how did that impact you?
2. Describe a situation where it took courage for you to be A PART with others when it would have been easier to be APART.
3. What does it mean to you to be God’s permanent habitation, why is it important?
4. Being A PART of the Ebenezer family, how have you contributed at Ebenezer?
5. Give positive examples of how you have experienced “the old and the new coexisting.”