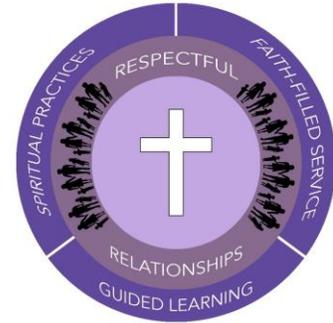


Mid-Week Series on Ephesians
July-Aug 2021

The worship lectionary for this summer includes a 7-week journey through Ephesians. This letter celebrates the author's vision for the church. Each week we will look at these readings through the lens of faith formation. Today's theme is Respectful Relationships.



July 21 [Ephesians 2:11-22](#)

Discuss: Who are some of the people at Bethel Lutheran Church you look forward to seeing when you come to worship or other church events?

At the beginning of the pandemic, I hoped that the need to care for one another and to fight a common battle against COVID-19 would become an opportunity for people to come together. I hoped that some of the divisions that had been escalating would subside, at least for a while, and we would find a measure of unity in our care for one another. And there was some of that. We encouraged our first-responders and other normally unseen people who do so much for our society. We supported restaurants by ordering take-out more than we did before. For the most part people followed the rules to help stop the spread, at least for a while.

But over the course of this past year, other divisions became wider. It is hard to live together when our opinions and beliefs differ so greatly. In this second chapter of Ephesians, Paul points out the division between Christians of Jewish heritage and Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians. The Gentiles hadn't experienced the same history of God's saving work the Jews had grown up with. The Jewish Christians wanted to keep some of their rituals and the Gentiles didn't find the same meaning in them.

Paul is calling both sides to come together, to see one another as part of the same family of God. Faith formation relies on being involved in a community of faith that is centered in Christ and based in respectful relationships. We may not always agree with each other. We like different styles of worship music, participate in different ministries, and have different opinions about our future together.

The key is to stay together. The word Bethel means "House of God" and we live into that identity when we gather and develop relationships with one another centered on our faith in Christ. We can be in respectful relationships even when we don't agree because Jesus is the mortar that joins us together making us a dwelling place for God.

Pray: *O God, sometimes we struggle to respect one another, even those we worship and serve with at church. Open our hearts to listen and learn from others, and to remember that you love them just as you love us. Grant us your peace, in the name of Jesus. Amen*

Ritual: Think about someone you have difficulty with. Make a list of all the things you have in common. Seek an opportunity to get to know them better.