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Aug

Unity of Praise

Praise Break

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST, YEAR A

This final week highlights belonging as the heart of praise, drawing on the unity described in the psalms. It invites congregations to embrace practices like singing and prayer that foster connection, reminding us that as we worship together, we grow in belonging—to God and to one another—and offer praise as a shared, communal experience.

REFERENCES

Genesis 45:1-15

Psalm 133

Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

Matthew 15: (10-20), 21-28

COLORS

Green

Worship Planning Notes

Focus text: **Psalm 133**

In just a few short verses, the writer of Psalm 133 transports me to that moment on Christmas morning when wrapping paper is all over the floor, kids are playing with new toys (or the boxes they came in), and the adults are sitting around drinking coffee and chatting. Or it reminds me of that moment when my spouse and I went to a Chicago Cubs baseball game at Wrigley Field and joined thousands of fans in cheering every time they scored. It's like that moment when you

finally get to be with your best friend after months apart, and your heart feels seen and known. How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

At the heart of this psalm is belonging. It is a psalm in praise of God, who saves us into a family, who, by grace, shows us that we belong to God and to one another. When we live into this belonging, the natural outflow is praise.

Consider, then, what practices in weekly worship build belonging and emphasize those this Sunday. Encourage people to check in with one another during the passing of the peace. Remind those gathered that the creed or statement of faith joins us together as a family in Christ. Take a moment to breathe together and to sing! **Recent studies** have explored the cognitive and emotional benefits of singing, but what hasn't been explored as much is that if an individual singing helps regulate emotions, then group singing is an act of co-regulation—of helping one another ease the anxieties we bring to a space and find our center and balance in community. So, when we sing in church, we are participating in an act that builds our sense of safety and belonging with one another. Taking this a step further, when we sing praise, we give God glory and participate in an act that draws us closer to God and to one another. Singing does a lot! But so does praying. When we pray in unison or take time to slow down together and rest in a posture of prayer within worship, praying as a community can also build our sense of belonging as we share burdens and joys. Thus, as we conclude this series, explore how you can help the gathered body recognize that our praise and our sense of belonging are deeply joined as we grow in our Christian journey together.

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