

December 31, 2017

Faith to Unite

Ephesians 4:1-16

Two years ago, a middle school basketball team in Kenosha, Wisconsin, made national news for standing up for one of their cheerleaders, Desiree Andrews, who has Down syndrome. During a Lincoln Middle School game, the players noticed that “kids in the audience were picking on D, so we all stepped forward.”¹ “Three players went into the crowd during a timeout” and asked for the bullying to stop.² Desiree described the boys’ action as “sweet, kind, awesome, and amazing.” Player Scooter Terrien said, “It’s not fair when other people get treated wrong, because we’re all the same; we’re all created the same; God made us the same way.”³

This Bible lesson is about the church finding unity despite our differences. In reference to division within The United Methodist Church, our author writes, “Any hope for church unity will have to begin with love and appreciation for the difference of others.”⁴ We have many differences – culture, theology, interpretation, race, language, gender, and health. Our differences can bring us joy when we see and experience the rich ways God creates each of us.

Ephesians speaks of the church reaching a maturity “marked by ‘humility, gentleness, and patience.’”⁵ Few adults would use the word “maturity” for middle schoolers, but the students at Lincoln Middle School demonstrated humility, gentleness, and patience by standing up for a fellow student who is different. We hope and yearn for the day when humility, gentleness, and patience are words used by non-believers to describe the church.

1. When have you witnessed someone stand up to bullies? How does it make you feel to stand up for someone who is being mistreated in society?
2. How would you define the word “unity”? How is unity different from uniformity? What witness could a unified church bring to the Christian faith in this broken and hurting world?
3. How are humility, gentleness, and patience marks of maturity?

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¹ Amara Grautski, “When a cheerleader with Down syndrome is bullied, boys’ basketball players walk off court to make it stop,” New York Daily News, <http://www.nydailynews.com/sports/players-leave-court-defend-cheerleader-syndrome-article-1.2146837> (accessed December 20, 2017).

² Bill Chappell, “Athletes Help Cheerleader With Down Syndrome Defy Bullies, NPR, <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2015/03/13/392782830/athletes-help-cheerleader-with-down-syndrome-defy-bullies> (accessed December 20, 2017).

³ Grautski.

⁴ *Adult Bible Studies, Winter 2017-18*, by Chuck Aaron, (Cokesbury, 2017); page 39.

⁵ From *Adult Bible Studies*, page 37.