

Awaken to God's Presence | Blessings of Community

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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SPEAKERS

Wendy Brian

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Greetings, sojourners. My name is Wendy Brian. I'm a minister, spiritual director and spiritual formation specialist in Community of Christ. It's really good to be with you today.

In Community of Christ, we have nine enduring principles that guide our lives, our ministry, and our stories. These nine principles are, all are called, Worth of All Persons, Responsible Choices, Pursuit of Peace (Shalom), Unity in Diversity, Blessings of Community, Grace and Generosity, Continuing Revelation, and Sacredness of Creation. Today, I offer you a meditation on Blessings of Community.

As we begin, please know that silence in meditation is a gift, it is a chance to listen. From time to time in this process today, there will be silent moments. Let them speak to your heart. You may want some paper and something to write with as you move through the time with a divine today. Feel free to press pause for those silent moments.

As we hold this time together, begin to think about who your community is. Is it those who work with? Those who live in your neighborhood? Those in your faith community? Friends that you are drawn to? Family? Perhaps it's a mix of several of these. The Oxford Dictionary defines community as "a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals." What is your definition of community? Pause here and think about that.

What characteristics should community have?

What actions should come from community?

In Community of Christ scripture, Doctrine and Covenants 161:3c: "Be patient with one another, for creating sacred community is arduous, and even painful. But it is to loving communities such as this that each is called. Be courageous and visionary, believing in the power of just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world. Be assured that love will overcome the voices of fear, division and deceit." Let me read this one more time, but before we do, make sure you're comfortable and whatever position you find yourself in and take three deep breaths.

“Be patient with one another for creating sacred community is arduous and even painful. But it is to loving community such as this, that each is called. Be courageous and visionary believing in the power have just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world. Be assured that love will overcome the voices of fear, division, and deceit.”

Does hearing these words again help you refine your definition of community? How are our faith communities different from other communities we participate in? If you have a connection with a faith community, how is that community put into action? How is that demonstrated?

Make a list of all the ways your community has been a blessing to you. And another list of how your community has been a blessing to others. Pause now for a time of writing that list.

Pause once more, and write a short story about an example of how you see blessings of community fulfilled. Invite the divine into this writing. Where did you see the influence of divine in your story? How can the fulfillment of blessings of community be turned towards service to others and other kinds of ways?

As we close this time together, recall the phrase, “creating sacred community is arduous.” Know that anytime we join together, we will have differences, disagreements, uncomfortable discussions. And in those times, we will also know that we have been blessed.

I'd like to close this meditation with thoughts from Jan L. Richardson, a minister in the United Methodist Church and prolific spiritual writer. This is from her book *Sacred Journeys*. Again, breathe deeply as you listen to these words. Each community has a different rhythm created by the movements of its comings and goings, work and play, meetings and parties. The rhythms of the community itself may change over time, depending on how it discerns its own identity in the midst of a changing world. We have our own individual rhythms with this community. Some people thrive on contact, while others prefer a more solitary life. And some devote their lives to the daily maintenance of the community, while others breath life into it through their art, music, and poetry. We may find ourselves in a radically altered relationship to this community as we move to its edges or outside it entirely for brief or lengthy periods of time. We know that the rhythms of community can be both life giving and stifling, liberating and oppressive. So in these days, we listen to and follow the spirits own rhythms as it moves with us. Seeking to intuit its sacred movements, we listen to stories of others in other communities, praying for new language as well as new hearing. We gather at their table to listen to learn to commune in our communion, may we better understand what it means to be a creative spirited community, of healing, of hope, of resistance and of transformation. May these words be so in your life is my prayer.