

Awaken To God's Presence | Unity in Diversity

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

diversity, unity, divine, Christ, community, ubuntu, sawubona, shiboka, oneness, greeting, equality

SPEAKERS

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Joelle Wight 00:00

A gift of peace in the midst of troubling times. Project Zion Podcast offers this series of guided practices to help you connect with the divine. No matter where you are and what's going on around you. Take a deep breath and allow your Spirit to find calm in the storm of life.

Wendy Brian 00:28

Greetings sojourners. My name is Wendy Brian. I'm a minister, spiritual director and spiritual formation specialist in Community of Christ. It's 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 Unity in Diversity.

As we begin, please know that silence and 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 this time with the divine today. Feel free to press pause for those silent moments.

Unity in Diversity. This phrase can conjure up all kinds of thoughts for us. For some, it may bring excitement for the opportunity to hear and see people and opinions that may not match our own. For others, it may bring fear that the world they're living in feels unsafe because experiences, circumstances and beliefs that are widely different and unfamiliar and difficult to process. Where do you find yourself on the spectrum? Be honest with yourself when answering this question. Pause here and process your thoughts on Unity in Diversity.

Many faith traditions exemplify the concept of unity in diversity. Early Sufi philosophers talked about unity in diversity as a oneness of being. It's also written about in the Hindu, Baha'i and mystics of all faiths. Where was this concept first introduced in your life? Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu is quoted as saying, "We think of ourselves too frequently as just individuals separated from one another. Whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world."

Recognizing and appreciating each other's differences, be it how we look, how we dress, our political and theological beliefs, our gender identity, or whom we love creates an environment that can be inclusive to everyone. It is one of the best ways for groups to think creatively and generate ideas for impactful living.

Diversity allows us to recognize our differences as a good thing. When have you been in situations where diversity was not honored? And when have you been in situations where it was honored? What kind of communities were built around those different way of thinking? Pause here and recognize how your soul felt, and those different circumstances.

I'd like to introduce you to three new words today, perhaps you've heard them before. And I hope I'm pronouncing them correctly. Umbutu, Sawubona, Shiboka. I'll spell those out for you, so you can write them down. Umbutu ... U M B U T U, Sawubana ... S A W U B O N A, Shiboka ... S H I B O K A. These are all words from the Zulu mostly reside in southern Africa. Umbutu means, "I am because you are," or some will say, "we are many, we are one." Sawubona means, "I see you, you are important to me, and I value you." By giving this greeting is as it is expected that one looks directly into the eyes of the other. Shiboka is a response to Sawubana meaning "I exist in you."

Repeat these three words. Feel their meaning deep inside you. Practice saying them out loud until they comfortably become part of your vocabulary.

To express these words does not mean all people are part of the sameness. Quite the contrary. It means I accept you and your opinions, beliefs and circumstances. And I honor them even if they are different from mine. Pause here for some silent meditation on these three words. Breathe them and the meaning of them in and feel them deep within you.

Take these words with you from this place. Greet each one you meet, as if you believe umbutu. Greet each one as if you were saying sawubona, and greeted back with shiboka.

From Doctrine and Covenants, Community of Christ scripture section 165:3c-e. "You do not fully understand many interrelated processes of human creation. Though it's through its wonderful complexity. Creation produces diversity and order. Be not consumed with concern about variety in human types and circumstances as you see them. Be passionately concerned about forming inclusive communities of love, oneness and equality that reveal divine nature. Oneness and Equality in Christ do not mean uniformity. They mean unity and diversity and relating in Christ like love to the circumstances of others, as if they were one's own. They also mean full opportunity for people to experience human worth and related rights, including expressing God given giftedness in church and society." And then further on in 6b it reads, "As Christ's Body lovingly and patiently bear the weight of criticism from those who hesitate to respond to the divine vision of human worth and equality in Christ. This burden and blessing is yours for divine purposes."

My challenge for you today is to go and find a community that is not like yours, be it a neighborhood, a shopping center, or a faith community. Go to it and breathe in the Spirit of umbutu. Engage in

conversation with others, looking in the eye, as if you greeting them with Suwabona. Listen, without interruption and embrace the change in your own life. Amen.