

Main Passage

Acts 8:26-40 [NRSV]

Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a wilderness road.)²⁷ So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship²⁸ and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.²⁹ Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.”³⁰ So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?”³¹ He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.³² Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth.”³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.”³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?”³⁵ Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.³⁶ As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?”³⁸ He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him.³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.⁴⁰ But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

Additional Scripture Passages

Leviticus 19:33-34 [NIV]

³³ “When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them.³⁴ The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

Ephesians 2:11-13 [The Message]

¹¹⁻¹³ But don’t take any of this for granted. It was only yesterday that you outsiders to God’s ways had no idea of any of this, didn’t know the first thing about the way God works, hadn’t the faintest idea of Christ. You knew nothing of that rich history of God’s covenants and promises in Israel, hadn’t a clue about what God was doing in the world at large. Now because of Christ—dying that death, shedding that blood—you who were once out of it altogether are in on everything.

Ephesians 2:17-19 [NIV]

¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household,

Book of Order References

F-1.01 God's Mission [second paragraph]

The mission of God in Christ gives shape and substance to the life and work of the Church. In Christ, the Church participates in God's mission for the transformation of creation and humanity by proclaiming to all people the good news of God's love, offering to all people the grace of God at font and table, and calling all people to discipleship in Christ. Human beings have no higher goal in life than to glorify and enjoy God now and forever, living in covenant fellowship with God and participating in God's mission.

F-1.0301 The Church Is the Body of Christ

The Church is the body of Christ. Christ gives to the Church all the gifts necessary to be his body. The Church strives to demonstrate these gifts in its life as a community in the world (1 Cor. 12:27–28):

The Church is to be a community of faith, entrusting itself to God alone, even at the risk of losing its life.

The Church is to be a community of hope, rejoicing in the sure and certain knowledge that, in Christ, God is making a new creation. This new creation is a new beginning for human life and for all things. The Church lives in the present on the strength of that promised new creation.

The Church is to be a community of love, where sin is forgiven, reconciliation is accomplished, and the dividing walls of hostility are torn down.

The Church is to be a community of witness, pointing beyond itself through word and work to the good news of God's transforming grace in Christ Jesus its Lord.

F-1.0403 Unity in Diversity

"As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:27–29).

The unity of believers in Christ is reflected in the rich diversity of the Church's membership. In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regard less of race, ethnicity, age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) shall guarantee full participation and representation in its worship, governance, and emerging life to all persons or groups within its membership. No member shall be denied participation or representation for any reason other than those stated in this Constitution.

G-1.0302 Welcome and Openness

A congregation shall welcome all persons who trust in God's grace in Jesus Christ and desire to become part of the fellowship and ministry of his Church (F-1.0403). No person shall be denied membership for any reason not related to profession of faith. The Gospel leads members to extend the fellowship of Christ to all persons. Failure to do so constitutes a rejection of Christ himself and causes a scandal to the Gospel.

Questions:

1. How do these passages speak about **Belonging**.
2. In what ways does your Church or Ministry Setting embody **Belonging** as it is reflected in the passages used in this study.
3. In what ways does Presbytery embody **Belonging** as it is reflected in the passages used in this study.
4. In light of our reflections this morning, how have you experienced **Belonging** in your faith life.