



Divided we stand!

This is an adaptation of the drama set for the 2014 international service of Christian unity.

Stage set with long table and five chairs.

1 Corinthians 1: 1 – 17

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, to the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge — God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."

Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Five people come on stage more or less separately, welcome each other with usual Hello's and possibly handshakes and then take their places around a table as a committee – Chairperson + 4

Chairperson):

Now that we are all seated and comfortable, let's begin. Firstly thank you all for coming everyone and welcome to our Unity Planning Committee. This is the first time we have done this so I suppose we could call it Corinth Churches Together. I think you all know each other but just in case, maybe each of you would say which church group you represent please.

William: Well, I am a follower of Paul's tradition – they call us Paulinists.

Rosary: Our group are known as Appollosians and our founder was Apollos

Stephen: As Cephasites our **inspiration comes from Cephas**

Clodagh: We don't have any of those traditions – we are a modern independent church who aim to follow Christ

Chairperson:

Thankyou. Now, we have just two items on our agenda for tonight. The first is to plan the Corinth Church Unity Service. As I have said, this is the first time we have tried this – so we can show solidarity and unity to the non-believing world.

All: mix of comments like 'great idea'

Chairperson

The first item on our agenda is to plan this service and as you know, the date has already been fixed for 21 March 0080 so we only have to work on the content. As I am just the facilitator, I will throw the meeting open now for your views and ideas.

PAUSE – each looking at the other to see who is going to start.

WILLIAM

Well, I will start the ball rolling – *(hesitatingly)* -I must say that for us in the Pauline Church it's difficult to share in worship with those whose doctrine may be deficient.

ROSARY

I suppose you mean us.

WILLIAM

Well, there have been some serious concerns about your pneumatology.

STEPHEN

What on earth is 'new matology'? We haven't even got any OLD matology!

CLODAGH

He means the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

STEPHEN

Oh. Are you the ones who are still waiting for the Holy Spirit to come?

ROSARY

That's all a big misunderstanding. It's true that in the beginning our dear founding Elder Apollos did have some points lacking in his preaching but Priscilla and Aquila sorted them out long ago.

WILLIAM

So why do you use such difficult words? Ordinary people can't understand them.

ROSARY

You must realise that Apollos was a highly educated man. He'd studied in the best schools in Alexandria and spoke perfect Greek with a faultless accent.

WILLIAM

The Apostle Paul was well educated too, at the feet of the Rabbi Gamaliel in Jerusalem.

ROSARY

Yes, I suppose that's part of the trouble. What with his frequent use of Jewish terms and his thick Cilician accent, it's a wonder the philosophers of Athens could understand him at all. Even so, they called him a seed picker!

STEPHEN

Old Father Cephas had an accent too, pure Galilean Aramaic. We reckon he spoke just the way Jesus did.

CLODAGH

I'm glad one of you has mentioned Jesus; isn't it all really about following him? You may call yourselves WILLIAM and ROSARY and STEPHEN but the important thing is that we're all Christians, isn't it?

WILLIAM

I thought you'd say that. Even though you say "we're not a denomination, we're just Christians", I'm sure you've developed your own traditions, too. They didn't all start at the beginning.

ROSARY

What do you mean?

WILLIAM

The traditions which really bother me are not the ancient ones but the new ones, especially any I might have started myself: once is an innovation, twice is a precedent, three times and "we've always done it this way!"

CLODAGH

So let's get down to planning this service. Which hymnbook are we going to use?

ROSARY

Ours is the finest collection of classical Greek hymns. Each one has been carefully examined to ensure that it is theologically correct and grammatically sound.

WILLIAM

Yes, and they sound awful! If any non-Christians hear you singing, they think somebody's died!

STEPHEN

We sing in Aramaic. Only one or two people have hymnbooks but most of us know all the hymns off by heart.

WILLIAM

But what about the Gentile Christians? Do they have to learn Aramaic in order to join in with Christian worship? That's getting too close to expecting them to become Jews before they can become Christians and we sorted that one out long ago.

CLODAGH

We have a worship book full of songs in modern language with music of the present day.

ROSARY

It might have been modern thirty years ago when it was written but popular culture moves at a pace so your modern songs aren't modern any more.

WILLIAM

What we need is a new start. Let's get together and write new words and new music for a new age when we worship all together and not just in our separate groups.

STEPHEN

Yes, let's do that... then nobody will know any of the hymns and we can all groan and mumble together! They say that the one sure thing about united Christian worship is that nobody will know all the hymns!

ROSARY

Or even if we do manage to sing from the same hymn sheet, we are singing different tunes!

CLODAGH

Let's not give up. If what we have in common is our faith in Jesus Christ and we are obeying his command to go into the world and make people his disciples, we must be able to build on the unity beneath our diversity.

WILLIAM

Why don't we each bring something distinctive about our Church as a gift which everybody can receive?

STEPHEN

Our cat brought us a present last night, something he thought was a precious gift: he laid a dead mouse on the kitchen mat! He couldn't understand why we threw it in the bin.

WILLIAM

Well if we're going to receive each other's precious gifts we'll need to learn how to appreciate a few dead mice too!

ALL: a little bit of chaos while each starts to introducing comments about what they can bring – a bit of talking over one another

CHAIRPERSON

Ok folks.....hold on. if we each try to focus on our differences and OUR OWN perceived strengths we won't achieve much, much less impress the world at large. I suggest we start on the thing we have most in common of all – anyone like to suggest what that might be?

STEPFEN

....er. I suppose it has to be Jesus.

CHAIRPERSON:

YES! All of us recognize that he came to this world to die for each one of us, – and there are lot's of things about Him that we agree on – so let's focus on those things, encourage one another and then plan the service

Pause while this sinks in

Tell you what.....let's take a tea break so we can chat casually with one another about these things and then come back and plan the service so we can make a living statement to those who don't have that experience of Jesus.....a statement that Jesus is very relevant in the modern world as Lord and Saviour.

PAUSE to allow last statement sink in

ROSARY (*getting up to leave*)

I'll put the kettle on – *and leaves stage*

OTHERS (except Chairperson) after short pause follow off stage in casual fashion.

CHAIRPERSON *last to leave and when the others are off stage, speaking to congregation NOTE – it is very likely that applause breaks out here – but Chairperson should sit that out and when it ceases then.....*

I do hope they can focus on Jesus.

Pause and then walks off after the others.

1 Corinthians 1:1-17

New International Version (NIV)

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:

3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving

4 I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. **5** For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— **6** God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you.

7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. **8** He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Church Divided Over Leaders

10 I appeal to you, brothers and sisters,^[a] in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. **11** My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. **12** What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"^[b]; still another, "I follow Christ."

13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? **14** I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, **15** so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. **16** (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) **17** For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.