

# **CONFIRMATION MANUAL**

OF THE  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

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## **FOREWORD**

The MANUAL FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP is to assist our local churches and their pastors, church elders and members in the preparation of new members of the body of Christ to be knowledgeable and appreciative of the meaning of such membership. As the United Church of Christ in the Philippines continues to grow and make its presence and witness felt in the world, its membership likewise needs intelligent and deep commitment to its discipleship. But such a commitment can only be achieved when there is a clear understanding of what it truly means to be members of one body in Christ or disciples together.

We hope the Manual will help the planners and facilitators of church membership classes make comprehensible what it means to be Christ's followers as new members of our Church and to plan and implement church membership classes that are exciting and meaningful.

Welcome to the family of growing children of God!

**BISHOP ERME R. CAMBA**  
General Secretary  
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## INTRODUCTION

### I. CONFIRMATION? COMMUNICANT? CHURCH MEMBERSHIP?

The familiar word CONFIRMATION actually means the confirmation of the baptismal vows made by parents for their child when baptized at infancy. At baptism the children are too young to speak for themselves. The parents or the godparents/sponsors present them and promise to bring them up in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord".

There comes a time in the life of the child when s/he reaches sufficient maturity to speak for her/himself. At that time the pastor takes the child into a special class to instruct her/him in the doctrines and life of the church. This is Confirmation class. At the end of the instruction the child may, if s/he has the desire and qualifications, CONFIRM the vows made in her/his baptism. Confirmation is the validation or firming up of the promises that the parents and sponsors made for an infant at baptism. In this act, the youth or adult who is confirming the vows of her/his parents, guardians, sponsors, is assuming the responsibilities for herself/himself as a member of the church. It is an act of offering oneself in the service of Jesus Christ.

At baptism as an infant, a person becomes a member of the body of Christ. At confirmation (which usually takes place when a person is 12 years old) s/he confesses her/his own faith in Jesus Christ and assumes the responsibility of a mature member of the church.

*The General Assembly Executive Committee has approved the lowering of the age of confirmation as an option for the parents to request of the Church Elders and pastor. This is to be based on their honest assessment of their children's capacity to grasp what it means to be a member of the church or a disciple of Jesus Christ. This also presumes that they see in their children unusual maturity and exemplar character which are concurred in by the members of the church. Hence, a child may be confirmed anywhere from eight (8) to twelve (12) years old.*

In the past, a baptized infant, although s/he was admitted as a member of a church, was not allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. S/he waited until s/he becomes a COMMUNICANT member which was when s/he had been confirmed and had become a responsible MEMBER OF THE CHURCH.

However, in a recent action of the General Assembly Executive Committee, as presented by the Faith and Order Committee, a child when baptized can already be served the Holy Communion if the parents feel that the child is already physically able to take in the bread and drink. They only need to know how to carefully receive the elements as they are served. The child need not know as yet what the sacrament is all about, but as s/he grows older, the parents have the responsibility of slowly making that child grasp some understanding of that sacrament. The parents who know their child better than anyone else are to help her/him begin to learn the meaning of the Lord's Supper according to her/his readiness.

When a person begins partaking of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion, that person has already become a COMMUNICANT member. The *communing* or *communicating* with the rest of the Church is where the word *communicant* comes from.

In order for anyone to become a confirmed member of the Church, there are certain requirements which have to be met, such as undergoing Confirmation or Church Membership classes. This is what this Manual is all about. It is prepared for teachers/enablers of confirmation classes as well as confirmands and/or their parents who wish to study its meaning on their own.

Adult churchgoers, who come from other denominations or who have not been admitted into the membership of the church, may also be invited to attend these classes or some portions of it before they are received into full membership of the UCCP.

## **OBJECTIVES**

Confirmation or church membership classes are held to instruct and prepare the candidates for confirmation in their responsibilities and privileges as mature members of the church. Specifically, the objectives of a confirmation class are:

1. The participant will acquire a deep understanding of what it means to be a Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ, or a responsible church member.
2. The participant will develop a desire to continue learning about the church and its mission; the responsibilities and privileges of a church member; God's way and will and to follow them.
3. S/He will develop an interest in reading the Bible and other Christian literature, in observing a discipline of prayer and in faithfully maintaining a habit of regular worship with other church members.
4. S/He will be moved to dedicate her/his life to the mission of the church to and in the world.
5. S/He will develop a love for all God's creation – persons and nature – and care for them while in community.

## **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

### **KNOWLEDGE**

The participant will acquire a knowledge of the theological beliefs and practices of the church including the sacraments, the history, life and work, structure and program of the UCCP; the responsibilities and privileges of a maturing church member.

### **SKILLS**

The participant will develop a discipline of personal and group prayer and will learn to lead in prayer, the use of the Bible for meditation and study, and participate meaningfully in corporate worship, and even in leading study and prayer groups.

### **VALUES**

1. The participant will appreciate and acquire the attitude of cooperation with and respect for others and the whole of God's creation.

2. The participant is willing to change and accept the importance of active participation in church activities and the various avenues of learning.
3. The participant will continue to love the church and together be with other members involved in its life and mission willingly and joyfully.

## **II. WHEN AND WHERE TO CONDUCT CONFIRMATION CLASSES**

Confirmation classes may be held on Sundays or other days of the week depending on the convenience of the teacher and students. On Sundays they may be conducted during Sunday school time or in the afternoon. On other days, they may be scheduled after school or on Saturday mornings or afternoons. It is suggested that churches offer these classes for a full ecclesiastical year, meeting during the regular church school hour.

Each session should last 1-1/2 to 2 hours — or even longer -- to allow ample time for discussion, interaction, reflection and creative methods of study. There may be a series of daily sessions or weekly meetings (during weekends). Set the date for the Confirmation Sunday and schedule the sessions with sufficient time prior to the confirmation Sunday to ensure coverage of the whole curriculum.

The classes may be held in church, in the Christian Education building, in the parsonage, in the houses of members, moving from one to another or in a seminar or retreat house especially if a whole day or two full days are set aside to cover several sessions.

### **WHO CONDUCTS THE CLASSES**

The proper/suitable persons to conduct the communicants classes are the pastor, members of the church who have had theological training and are active in the church's life together with the elders of the church. The responsibility of coordination falls on the Christian Education and Nurture board or committee in cooperation with the Board or Committee of Elders. In consultation with the pastor they should schedule the confirmation classes and Confirmation Sunday, identify and gather the prospective confirmands, and then assign, orient, and train the teachers with the help of this manual. In the absence of any of the above-mentioned committee or individuals the pastor will assume their responsibilities together with the church Council.

### **HOW TO CONDUCT THE CLASSES**

Confirmation classes are not just a matter of acquiring knowledge on church doctrines and sacraments, church history, and the responsibilities of a prospective member. While these are important, it is equally necessary that the participants will gain certain attitudes, values and motives in life which are well-informed in Christian doctrine and discipline. These gains go deeper than head knowledge and, it is hoped, will continue to be enriched in the confirmand's lifetime, manifesting themselves in a transformed life.

How do we develop these attitudes and values in the participants? Since they involve not only the mind but the heart, soul, and body as well, the classes should incorporate methods that touch these aspects of the human-person. Lectures should not be the sole method of teaching. Simulation exercises, small group discussion, workshops, case studies, exposures, (to the community and mission fields), field trips ( to the conference office, etc.), role-play, the use of visuals (charts, maps, films, pictures, etc.), drama, songs and poetry are other means which encourage active participation from the class, build community, and develop their creative thinking and expression.

Moreover, the classroom should already be a microcosm of the kingdom of God where each one is important and has a role to perform and the essence of community is already being experienced and articulated. Spiritual, social and personal values in the Kingdom of God should already be at work in the relationships between teacher-pastor-elders and student-learners-confirmands and among the students themselves.

Each session may begin and/or end in a short creative worship which will actively involve the participants so that they will already have the actual experience of participating in corporate worship and even in the planning of one.

### **THE LITURGY AND CERTIFICATE OF CONFIRMATION**

The liturgy of confirmation is the dramatic act of the confirmand's entry into the church as an adult. It ought to be a very meaningful experience for her or him and all those involved. (See Appendix 1, p. 14) A Certificate of Confirmation is given as a reminder to the confirmand of this significant event and of the responsibilities and privileges that go with it. The certificate of confirmation which has a stub, should also be filled up and sent to the National UCCP Offices. For the churches who can afford it, a Bible may be given to each confirmed person, inscribed with the appropriate message and which may also serve as the certificate if so planned by the church committee. Often the Bibles are given by the parents of the confirmand as a symbol of their desire for their child to make the Bible a part of their maturing discipleship.

### **FOLLOW-UP CLASSES**

Churches are expected to hold follow-up classes for those who have already been confirmed or for those who have been church members for a number of years. This may be through the Sunday School classes, Discipleship courses or Lay Formation Programs. A Lay Formation Program manual outlines a curriculum for laypersons that may serve to build up on the topics taken up during the confirmation classes. These will have more depth and breadth in order to meet the growing need of the members to be equipped as disciples. The journey to discipleship has no end.

### **III. THE ROLE OF ELDERS, TEACHERS AND PASTOR IN CONFIRMATION**

The Church Elders are those elected - from among the church members because of their maturity in faith, their exemplary lifestyle, and capacity for leadership. They have charge of the spiritual aspects of the life of the local church. The admission of persons into full membership of the church as signified by this Confirmation requirement -- is one of their foremost responsibilities.

The Church Elders, in consultation with the Board/Committee on Christian Education study and plan together for this important part of the life of the church. Together they will assess those who are ready to offer their lives as full-time members of the church. They will inform the congregation, as a whole, while writing individually to those who have come to the ripe age for preparation for membership. They will interview all those who wish to enter the confirmation class.

The Church Elders will also be part of the teaching and leadership team of the Confirmation program of the church, being present at the class sessions and/or taking full responsibility for facilitating one or two subjects in the confirmation. The educational ministry personnel and the pastor also take turns in this part of the program.

After the confirmation classes are over, the Church Elders again will form the committee for determining who among the confirmands are ready to confirm their baptismal vows (or be baptized if it concerns an adult convert). This information will then be passed on to the parents and/or guardians of the candidates and preparation for the Confirmation Liturgy will begin.

Again, together with the educational ministry persons of the church and the pastor, plans will be made with regards to the confirmation liturgy, incorporating into it the confirmand's own contributions and suggestions. The confirmands may decide to write their own affirmation of faith or memorize or sing their affirmation of faith. The parents/guardians will be properly informed of the details of the liturgy and their participation in it.

When there is a sizeable number of confirmands, it is wise to hold a briefing and rehearsal before the appointed time. The pastor will officiate at the confirmation ritual as well as, in the liturgy for the morning or for that occasion.

The church elders again will serve as partners of the pastor in the ritual as they represent the church. The laying on of hands will be properly explained and other parts of the ritual, such as the parents' participation in the laying on of hands, the presentation of Confirmation Certificates and/or Bibles, and presentation to the congregation.

Parents may lay their hands on the head or shoulders of their children to be confirmed, together with the pastor and church elders. Sometimes, some families or the confirmands themselves name special friends or family members to attend as additional parent-surrogate or sponsors in this important event. They, too, may participate in the laying on of hands as a sign of their willingness to assist in the continuing nurture of the confirmands.

### **IV. THE CURRICULUM**

As suggested in "When and Where to Conduct Confirmation Classes" each session of the class should run for at least 90 minutes (1-1/2 hours). The reason is to allow more participation from the class members and enough time for creative learning activities. (Do not bore the members with long lectures and kill their enthusiasm for church membership with "deadly" formal methods of teaching and moralizing). This manual is intended as a guide and should therefore be used as such. By all means, use creativity and imagination, and build on what is found here. Add more topics if necessary, or just select portions of the material in the Facilitator's Notes. A lesson may run for more than one or two sessions if the time allotted in the session is limited.

**Lesson 1: What is Church Membership All About?**

**Lesson 2: The Story of the Christian Church**

**Lesson 3: The Story of the UCCP**

**Lesson 4: The Structure of the UCCP**

**Lesson 5: The UCCP Statement of Faith**

- a) What We Believe about God
- b) What We Believe about Persons
- c) What We Believe about the Church
- d) What We believe about the Holy Bible
- e) What We Believe in the Kingdom God will Establish
- f) What We Believe in the Resurrection.

**Lesson 6: The Life of the Christian**

- a) The Life of Discipline
- b) The Wholeness of Life
- c) The Need for Repentance and Conversion
- d) The Place of Worship in a Christian's Life
- e) The Christian as Witness
- f) The Christian Lives in and for Community

*Note: Facilitators and candidates for confirmation are encouraged to have a copy of **Understanding the Bible**, a resource handbook for the Bible, **Like a Mustard Seed**, both published by the UCCP Christian Education and Nurture Desk.*

**LESSON 1**

**WHAT S CHURCH MEMBERSHIP ALL ABOUT?**

**OBJECTIVES**

This lesson will serve to:

1. draw out the understanding and expectations of the participants about church membership and confirmation;
2. orient them on the general purpose of the classes, the content and the learning activities; and
3. most important of all, acquaint them with each other and set the foundation for the building of a creative, participative, and joyful studying community.

**FACILITATOR'S NOTES**

The word "confirm" means to make firmer or stronger, to agree to what were promised on your behalf;

1. You will make firmer or stronger the sacred vows your parents took for you when you were baptized and you will agree to live by them all your life.
2. God will make firmer and stronger God's claim upon you.

3. Your membership **in** the church will be made firmer and stronger. You will become a full member, and will join in the activities of the adults and all who have been confirmed before you.

A good summary of the meaning of confirmation would be: "Confirmation is the renewal of the baptismal covenant. The baptized children, having been instructed in the Christian faith, publicly confess their faith in their Savior Jesus Christ, promise obedience to him until death, and are received by the church into active membership."

### **WHY DOES OUR CHURCH HAVE CONFIRMATION REQUIREMENTS?**

The act of confirmation is very old and very sacred. For many centuries boys and girls, men and women became full members of the Christian church when they were confirmed. Confirmation goes back to the time of the first century Church. The act of confirmation was instituted by the first Apostles, fulfilling the promise that Jesus Christ made about the Holy Spirit.

*Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them that they may receive the Holy Spirit; for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit. (Acts 8:14-17)*

Thus confirmation is also understood as the "receiving of the Holy Spirit". The apostles and the believer confirm their faith in Jesus Christ and their trust in the Holy Spirit. In the early Christian church baptism by water in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ was the believer's act of conversion (accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior). The act of confirmation followed as the "baptism by the Holy Spirit" with the prayers and the laying on of hands by the apostles. This act manifests the believer's readiness and willingness to be guided by the Holy Spirit and become a full member of the church. Thus, in confirmation, they "receive the Holy Spirit".

In the early Church confirmation came right after baptism and there were two parts to one rite. In the first, the confirmand was anointed with oil; in the second, the minister prayed for the confirmand and laid his hands on the confirmand's head. As the years went by confirmation was usually separated from baptism, and the first part of the rite was used less and less. Our own church uses only the second part, the praying and laying on of hands.

As more and more people became Christians, they also wanted their children baptized as soon as possible. Eventually, the parents would prefer that their babies be baptized. This became a common practice until today. Their parents brought their babies to the church and there dedicated them to God in baptism. It was then that as babies they "joined the church" and became part of a new environment and "engrafted" into Christ. (Cullman). But they were too young to make their own promises of loyalty, or faithfulness. So, their parents made the promises for them. When they were old enough to make the promises themselves, then they were confirmed.

As the Heidelberg Catechism puts it, confirmation "is our way of receiving persons into full membership." Our Church uses this way of helping persons grow up as Christians and as members of the Church.

### **BAPTIZED CHILDREN ARE ALREADY COMMUNICAM MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH**

In the UCCP it has been the practice to confirm the 12-year-old baptized members of our church after which they are given the privilege to participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The word communicant comes from this privilege to participate in the Holy Communion or Lord's Supper or to communicate. However, with the recent action in the UCCP to allow children to take communion after baptism, whether confirmed or unconfirmed, they have become communicant members. "The Church and the Christian parents claim God's promise for the child, by faith. And the benefits of the sacrament come to the child in response to the faith of the parents and of the Church." (D.M. Baillie) It is also an initiation into dependency upon the community for their faith and nurture (Acts 2:39). The baptized children's participation in the Lord's Supper is based on our church belief in God's prevenient grace -- meaning, that God's love and mercy are already surrounding and available to the child and it is God working in and through the Church which shows its love and concern to the child. To withhold the Lord's Supper from baptized children is to negate or deny our belief in God's prevenient grace or of God's love being available even before we can deserve or desire it. God receives us and loves us even before we even think of God or can understand God and God's love. "God's initiative precedes our faith, our faith follows." (Donald M. Baillie)

### **SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

1. It is suggested that in conducting confirmation classes we use the language/dialect of the participants.
2. Use name tags and games to have the members of the class to get to know each other. Use games that encourage participation and cooperation within groups. For example: small groups, ask them to arrange themselves according to their birth months from January to December: or from the tallest to the shortest; from the youngest to the oldest, etc. Another game is the name game where the members sit in a circle. Begin with one member who gives her/his name together with an action. Move on to the next member who says the first person's name and corresponding action and then give her/his own name and so on to the last member who has to say everybody else's name and do the corresponding action before s/he gives her/his name and action.
3. Have the participants sit in 3's or 4's and get to know each other better by using any of the following exercises:
  - a. Using 3 letters in their names give 3 adjectives to describe themselves beginning with those 3 letters  
example:  
 Maria: Mahiyain or Mischievous  
           Approachable or Aktibo  
           Restless or Reticent
  - b. Tell how they got their names, what they mean, if any, who gave their names to them and whether they like their names or not.
  - c. Let them each complete the following
    1. When I'm in a group I \_\_\_\_\_ (examples: I feel nervous or I enjoy myself).
    2. One thing that makes me happy (or excited, etc.) is \_\_\_\_\_.
    3. One thing that makes me sad (or angry; or hurts me) is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Have them share one expectation each or one understanding of confirmation classes with a partner (or in dyads). Then let their partner share in the big group.
5. The facilitator will give the general purpose of the confirmation classes and the theological and historical background of the practice, picking up what are relevant for the participants.
6. It will be interesting if definitions of words repeatedly used in Confirmation classes (e.g. of confirmation, or body of Christ, Church) are attractively written in advance on cardboards or flash cards or simply put up on the board as the facilitator mentions them.
7. Have a closing evaluation for every session and ask each participant to share what they have learned by completing these sentences:
  - a. One or two things that I learned from our session today is/are \_\_\_\_\_.
  - b. One or two things that I have discovered about myself today is/are \_\_\_\_\_.
  - c. One thing that I liked with our session today is \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Have a closing song, or ask each participant to sing a sentence prayer with "Thank you, God, because....".

## LESSON 2

### THE STORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

#### OBJECTIVES:

1. This lesson will give a brief history of the Christian Church. Church history should make the confirmands know their roots and be familiar with the trials, challenges and changes that the church went through after its beginnings as recorded in the book of Acts.



2. This lesson will show the growing church and the splits and divisions that gave birth to different expressions of faith, such as Methodism, Baptists, Orthodox, etc.
3. At the same time it should make them appreciate the work of the Holy Spirit in the growth of the universal church and the movement towards ecumenical unity.

### **FACILITATOR'S NOTES**

#### **THE STORY OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (What Protestants Believe)**

The Church is more than a building. In fact, it may not even have a building. It is more than the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. The UCCP is only one denomination and there are many others. The word Church comes from the Greek word *ekklesia* meaning "called out" (from the world) which later on came to mean the "assembly of people who belong to God". The Church is thus understood as an assembly of people who believe in God through Jesus Christ and are called out of the selfish ways of the world. It is a community of believers who profess their faith in Jesus Christ. The Church is a worshipping, fellowshiping, caring and sharing community (Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-37) who follows the teachings of Jesus Christ. Thus, the Church is actually all those in every land and in every age who believe and belong to the Lord.

There was a time when there were no Roman Catholic or Protestant Church or any other kind. There were no church buildings, no Christian ministers, no Christian Bible, no Christian hymns, no Christians. How did they all come to be?

#### **THE CHURCH TOOK SHAPE AND SPREAD THROUGH THE ROMAN EMPIRE**

The Church began, of course, with Jesus. Jesus came and taught about God's will for the world: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10). A few disciples followed Jesus, believing in his teachings about God's love and forgiveness of sins. Their whole lives were changed by Jesus as he revealed to them the truths about God's Kingdom -- how it is to live in community with God and with others. Jesus' life with them was short, lasting for only about three years after which he was killed by the Jews according to his prophecy (Luke 18:31-33). The prophecy continued to be fulfilled in Jesus' resurrection and Ascension to heaven.

On the fiftieth day after Christ's resurrection (the first Easter Sunday or his Resurrection Day) came Pentecost. (The word *pente* means "fiftieth"). This became known as the birthday of the Christian Church. On this great day the disciples were gathered together with many others in one place. Then something happened to them and in them. They were convinced beyond all doubt that the God whom they had seen so clearly in Jesus was still present with them. They called this Presence the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). On this Day of Pentecost many were added to the fellowship of the disciples of Jesus Christ. They had the same beliefs about Jesus and God. They also met daily in the temple and in one another's homes to pray and to break bread as Jesus had done at the Last Supper. It was a happy Christian fellowship, but as yet it was only in one city, Jerusalem.

Unfortunately, the Jews did not like this growing community, claiming that these Christians blasphemed against God for they believed a mere carpenter's son to be God's son. Consequently, the Jews persecuted the Christians. These persecutions were led by persons like Saul of Tarsus who hated the Christians. He arrested many Christians and encouraged others to kill them (Acts 7). So the Christians had to flee. They scattered everywhere. Some went to Antioch, a city north of Jerusalem, and established a second center from which Christ's message continued to be preached. Meanwhile the Church at Jerusalem went underground. The Christians who could not leave Jerusalem had to hide in caves and underneath houses.

But the Lord Jesus Christ intervened. Christ's Spirit confronted Saul of Tarsus when he was on his way to Damascus to persecute and arrest the Christians hiding there (Acts 9). Saul of Tarsus was converted and believed that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, the Son of God. He changed his name to Paul. He became the one who, instead of persecuting the Church, began to plant churches everywhere. He went from place to place, to Corinth, Ephesus, Galatia, and even Rome. His evangelizing efforts and zeal in preaching the Gospel set an example for the following disciples to go on missionary work. They too, preached to the non-Jews or the gentiles, and to all peoples. This followed Christ's Great Commission to make disciples of all the nations. (Matthew 28:19-20).

The first converts to the Christian faith came from the Jews who assumed the leadership of the Church. But there were also Gentiles who were converted and they soon grew in number and surpassed the Jewish membership. This later resulted in the split between the Jewish and Gentile converts.

Meanwhile, the majority of the Jews never accepted/acknowledged Jesus as their Messiah or lord and considered faith in Jesus as blasphemous. One of them was Paul who persecuted the Christians. The persecution of Christians, however did not put an end to the Church. It may have even propelled its growth. There was persecution from the Roman imperial government as well, such as in the time of Herod Agrippa I, an Idumean, who ruled Palestine under the Roman government at the time of the early church; under Domitian who was a fierce persecutor of the Christians at about the time that the Book of Revelation was written; and under the infamous Roman emperor Nero.

By A.D. 200 there was a church organization running from southern France to the Tigris and Euphrates valleys in Asia. The churches grew in number and more people were converted. They marveled at the Christians who lived a happy and peaceful lifestyle. They were people whom one could trust for they were honest, genuinely concerned towards the poor, shared their resources and were respectful of others, even towards their enemies. Their love served to convince others of the possibility of building a happy, abundant and Peaceful community that follows the teachings of Jesus Christ. Two hundred years later, in 400 AD, the Roman empire itself was converted and became one big church - the Roman Catholic Church. (Catholic means "universal").

How did all these happen? We believe that God had much to do with it. God, in the Holy Spirit, was working through the disciples and apostles. The Holy Spirit moved Paul and Peter to preach and proclaim the Good News to all and convinced people to believe and obey the teachings of Jesus Christ.

#### **THE CHURCH REACHED THE PEAK OF ITS POWER AND BEGAN TO DECLINE**

Centuries passed and the Christian communities expanded further and further from East to West. Along with the expansion was the rise of different practices and forms of worship. The churches in the eastern side began drifting apart from the West. They could not agree on how to express their faith. The Eastern church, for example, preferred to use images (icons) in their churches while the Western church did not. In 1054 the pope in Rome or the West, declared that the eastern half of the church was no longer a part of the true Church. Of course, the Church in the east did not agree. Since that time the Church has been divided into the Roman Catholic Church (Western Church) and the Eastern Orthodox Church (Eastern Church).

The Church of the west grew in power politically and economically. The pope became as powerful as the emperors and kings. When Gregory VII was pope and Henry IV emperor, there arose a dispute over who had the right to appoint bishops in the Church. The pope ruled (excommunicated) that the emperor was no longer a member of the Church. So all the emperor's subjects could rebel against him. So powerful was the pope in 1077 that the emperor came to northern Italy to the town of Canossa, where the pope was staying, and stood before the gate three days in his bare feet during the cold winter to make peace. The Church had come a long way from the humble and loving Jesus. This marked almost the peak of the Church's power -- but not quite.

Innocent III, one hundred years later, was probably the most powerful of all the popes. He actually made the king of England pay taxes to him, as though England belonged to the pope.

One of the best known periods of the Church's life during these years was the time of the Crusades. The Turks had taken the Holy Land, and Christians were kept from going to see the places where our Lord had walked. All through Europe people gathered together for the task of setting the Holy Land free. There were endless battles. Many thousands of people were killed in the battles. The saddest part of the story of the Crusades is that of the Children's Crusade. A boy in France and another in Germany called other children together for a crusade of their own. Slave traders got the French children together into ships by offering to take them to Palestine, but instead they sold them as slaves in Egypt. Most of the children from Germany perished as they crossed the Alps into Italy, and those who survived were turned back by the pope.

The great pope, Innocent III, was in power at the start of the thirteenth century. The Crusades were in full swing. Francis and Dominic were carrying out their work as monks. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest thinker of the Roman Catholic church, lived in this century. But it is difficult to remain humble before God and kind to all people when

things are going well. The Church was strong, rich, powerful, but not as good as it had once been. In the fourteenth century some people began to think of righting the wrongs in the Church.

John Wycliff tried to do this in England. He believed that the Bible should be the one guide that the church should try to follow. Because the people could not read the Latin Bible, he translated it into English. He also reminded the people that the Church was not composed of priests and high officials only but of all believers in Christ. Priests and high officials should not decide by themselves what the church ought to be doing but all the believers should decide.

At about the same time there lived in Bohemia John Huss. Huss read what John Wycliff wrote, and held many of the same views. He also opposed the sale of "indulgences" (forgiveness of sin through removal of temporal punishment after performing certain sacrificial acts and paying a price.) The Roman Catholic church held that the goodness of Christ and the saints was like savings stored in a bank. Some amount could be checked out or withdrawn by sinners to pay for exemptions from punishments. One could get this stored-up goodness by paying money to the Church. Huss thought this was wrong. His views did not please the Roman Catholic, and he was killed, burned at the stake.

Martin Luther, who also desired reforms, was one of the first to break away and form a new church. Luther had been a monk in the Catholic church but could not seem to find peace of mind no matter how much he tried. He had studied the writings of Augustine and also the Bible. Gradually he had come to understand that people are not, saved by their good deeds but by God's gracious love. He believed that Christians should put their faith in this great love of God. When John Tetzel came to Germany to sell indulgences and said that as soon as the money hit the collection box some souls would be saved. Luther was upset and disturbed. Luther nailed on the church door at Wittenberg a paper containing ninety-five theses (statements) against such corrupt practices. This act started off the Protestant Reformation (a period of reforming or making over the Church.)

Meanwhile to the south, in Switzerland, a man named Ulrich Zwingli was protesting against the same things Luther was protesting. Zwingli was also a priest. He too went back to the Bible as the only rule of faith and life for Christians and had similar conclusions: we are saved "by grace through faith." In 1522 he prepared sixty-seven statements against corrupt practices in the church and called for reform. His followers left the Catholic church and formed one of the many Reformed churches.

In Geneva, a reformer named John Calvin started the Presbyterian Church. John Calvin believed that the church is indeed composed of all who believe in Jesus Christ. Presbyterianism is a protest against ecclesiastical powers. It is a form of Church government that involves the participation of the laity. The lay should be involved in the local church, in the presbytery or Conference and in the synod or the General Assembly.

The Baptists came from some friends of Zwingli in Zurich who felt that he did not go far enough. They did not believe in baptizing children as Catholics do. They felt it was better to wait till people were old enough to make promises for themselves. The Baptist teachings spread in Germany and Holland, but mostly in England and America.

For many years the English people had not cared to be ruled by the pope in matters of religion. About this time Henry VIII, king of England, wanted to divorce his wife and marry another. The pope would not agree to the divorce, so in 1533 King Henry broke with Roman Catholicism. The next year Parliament set the English Church entirely free of the pope and placed it under the English king. Out of the Church of England (or the Anglican Church) came the American Episcopal churches. ("Episcopal" means ruled by bishops.)

Meanwhile in England there were those who wanted more than just to be free from the pope. They wanted to make the Church "pure" of many Roman Catholic practices. These were the Puritans. For example, they did not like the fine robes of the priest, because they seemed to set the priests apart from the ordinary members. From among the puritans came the Congregationalist branch of the Church. The first Congregationalist church was started by Robert Browne in 1581.

The chief founder of the Methodist branch was John Wesley. He was the son of a minister of the Church of England. While studying at Oxford, he with his brother Charles and others formed a club. They were nicknamed "Methodists" because they planned their daily lives with such detailed method. On May 24, 1738, at 8:45 P.M.,

John Wesley was sitting in a meeting in London. Some of Luther's writings were being read. Suddenly he felt his heart "strangely warmed" and was sure that he was saved by Christ. The next year he organized the first real Methodist congregation. The Methodist Church, like its founder, has made much of how a Christian feels in his heart. It reached the middle-class people in England with the Christian gospel, and has become strong in America.

In summary, the early Christian church could be distinguished by the following characteristics.

### **1. THE EARLY CHRISTIANS BUILT UP A SERVING COMMUNITY.**

As we have read, the early Christians practised a life of sharing. Everything shared according to the needs of everyone. They also shared their wealth and gave much attention to the orphans and the widows or to the less fortunate people during their time. They broke bread together and recalled Jesus' Last Supper with them and so strengthened their faith in him.

### **2. THE EARLY CHRISTIANS BUILT UP A WORSHIPPING COMMUNITY.**

Their experience was holistic — they practised the so-called action-reflection approach. They did not only try to be of service but they also maintained regular reflections/meditations about what they did — whether it was helpful and truly according to God's will. They always set aside time for listening to the Word of God through the words of the Apostles and discussing their meaning among themselves.

### **3. THE EARLY CHURCH BUILT UP A WITNESSING COMMUNITY:**

The most striking nature of the Early Church was their courage in witnessing to a Risen Lord who offered salvation to God's people. They were not afraid to be identified with the apostles who were branded as subversive simply because they opposed the evil ways in their society. To be placed under surveillance under the Roman government had become a part of the life of the early church. But this did not stop them from doing what they believed as their responsibility. They remained faithful to the way of God shown by Jesus Christ to them amidst persecution, harassment and death.

### **SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

1. Use colorful maps to show the spread of the Christian Church and Paul's missionary journeys. (These should be prepared in advance.)
2. Use attractive charts to present graphically imaginatively the important points and events in the history of the Christian Church. The Facilitator's Notes can be used to further explain them.
3. Another way to study history is to give portions of the material in the Facilitator's Notes to small groups and to have them report it to the whole class, using visuals in their presentation. This is suited to students who are exposed to this kind of activity.
4. Let the children role play some dramatic moments in history and together reflect on the meaning of these moments in the life of their ancestors.

## **LESSON 3**

### **THE STORY OF THE UCCP**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

1. This lesson will provide a brief background on the rise of our church: the United Church of Christ in the Philippines.
2. This will also provide the foundations of the faith of the UCCP, following the articulated faith in the UCCP Statement of Faith.
3. The Structure and program thrusts (1990-1994) will also be shared to the confirmands in order that they may respond according to the challenges of our Church.

## **FACILITATOR'S NOTES**

### **THE STORY OF THE UCCP (A HISTORICAL PANORAMA)**

The churches that merged in 1948 to form the UCCP, were planted in this country in the early years of the American occupation. The churches that sent missionaries had long been established in the U.S.A. but they themselves were immigrant churches from England, Scotland and Germany.

The five ancestor churches were the METHODIST EPISCOPAL, THE PRESBYTERIAN, THE CHURCH OF CHRIST DISCIPLES, UNITED BRETHREN IN CHRIST and the CONGREGATIONAL CHURCHES. All of them traced their lineage back to the early Christian church.

The missionaries who came to the Philippines at the turn of the century were ardent offsprings of the Reformation. They came, prepared to convert Roman Catholics, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and spirit worshippers to the Protestant Faith and faith in God as revealed through Jesus Christ in the Holy Bible. While their faith was ardent, they did not want to perpetuate the "scandal of denominationalism" in this country. By 1901 they organized the Evangelical Union, the purpose of which was to bring about "a spirit that will eliminate competition and effect harmony for the common task." In 1921 the Union included Filipino church leaders.

Members of the Evangelical United Church recognized two kinds of Christian unity:

1. Organic union of two or more churches into one;
2. Cooperation of separate churches in performing specific tasks through federations or councils.

They worked for both. In 1909, the Union appointed a committee to begin work on the basis of union for the members represented in it. In 1921, it seemed that plans for the union of the five churches did not materialize. It was therefore decided that those who wished to do so, should unite, but leave the door open for others to join later. After considerable negotiation, three churches--the Presbyterian, the Congregationalist, the United Brethren and the United Church of Manila were invited and an assembly was held in Manila. On March 15, 1929, the basis of Union was formally adopted and the UNITED EVANGELICAL CHURCH came into being.

The new church grew in strength from year to year and the sense of unity deepened. Incidentally, later, several smaller denominations and non-Roman Catholic organizations met together and in 1932 these were united into the Iglesia Evangelica Unida de Cristo.

The second world war came. It devastated not only the nation, but also shook the foundations of the churches. Battle lines separated the various sections of the United Evangelical Church and wartime conditions made communication almost impossible. Furthermore, the religious section of the Japanese Army wanted non-Catholic churches to join the Philippine Federation of Evangelical Churches under their auspices.

Because of the hardships and hatred engendered by the war it was deemed wise not to push for church union in the first years after the war. Time did heal the wounds and Christian grace mellowed human hearts.

On May 25-27, 1948, 167 delegates from three church bodies met at Ellinwood Malate Church. They were the Evangelicals, the Philippine Methodist and the United Evangelical Church in the Philippines. Each body reported that its constituents had voted to accept the Basis of Union. And so, the UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES was born.

### **THE UCCP LIVES UNDER THE MANDATE OF THE GREAT COMMISSION**

The UCCP lives under the mandate of the Great commission: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). It articulates its service according to the pattern of Jesus' ministry, to wit:

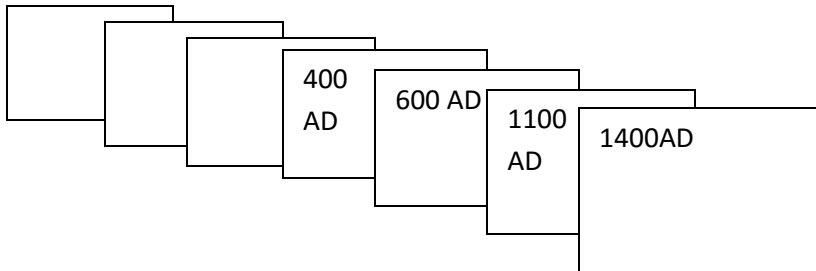
*"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke 4:18-19)*

Unfortunately, the Church has problems like any other human institution. Its problems have to be constantly addressed through study, prayers and reasoning together until all shall become mature who would "obey God rather than persons."

### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Use attractive charts or time line to present graphically and imaginatively the important points and events in the history of the Christian Church and the UCCP. The Facilitator's Notes can be used to further explain them.
2. Another way to study history is to give portions of the material in the Facilitator's Notes to small groups and to have them report it to the whole class, using visuals, actions or songs. They may even write poetry or songs based on the information in their presentation.
3. Still another way to study history is to write key events on individual cards (preferably colored cartolina or any attractive material) using letters large enough for everyone to read (e.g. using felt pens). Place them on the board one by one as you present and explain the different historical periods. Or these cards may be hung on a long string in sequence of events and times. This will help the students see the chronological sequence of events. As a review, ask the students to put them up in the correct order and say something about the card.
4. The class may invite a pioneer of our church to share her/ his recollections of the church in earlier years.
5. The children/youth may interview some church members who remember some of our pioneers:

*Bishop Cipriano Navarro,  
Bishop Leonardo Via,  
Bishop Enrique Sobrepeña,  
Bishop Proculo Rodriguez, etc.*



### LESSON 4

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE UCCP

### OBJECTIVES:

The Confirmands should be able to:

1. Picture the structure of the UCCP
2. Describe the role and relationships between the positions and entities of the structure.
3. Understand the underlying ideas behind such a structure -- what it fosters and what it discourages.

### FACILITATOR'S NOTES:

The UCCP is an ecumenical Church, which values and respects the variety and diversity of faith expressions. Recognizing that faith, worship, rituals, and beliefs may vary according to the history and context of a people, the UCCP upholds that everyone still believes in the One True God who can be called by different names. The UCCP's

basic commitment is organic unity, where denominations and religious groups may be able to co-exist and work side by side without absorbing or being absorbed by their different faith expressions.

Organic unity, however, is hard to attain because of many factors. Foremost is the strong spirit of denominationalism in

many Protestant church leaders in the country. Nevertheless, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines is committed to unity. It has become a conciliar member of various groups and denominations who also believe in the ecumenical movement. UCCP has participated in various councils and associations engaged in the ecumenical movement, is represented in such councils and is an active implementor of the ecumenical expressions and proclamations.

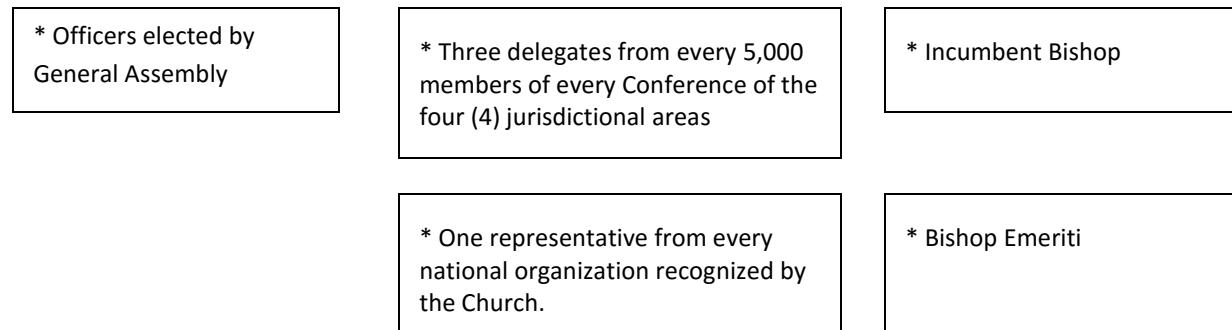
The organizations in which the UCCP is a conciliar member are as follows:

1. The National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP)
2. Christian Conference of Asia (CCA)
3. World Council of Churches (WCC)
4. World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC)
5. World Methodist Council (WMC)
6. United Methodist Church (as affiliated autonomous church)
7. Christian Peace Conference (CPC)

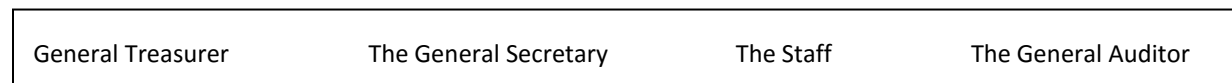
The ecumenical commitment of the UCCP is a natural part of its being. That is why it is not easy for the UCCP to reject participants in programs conducted by non-ecumenical groups. It pains us when we do because of the Church's ecumenical nature. But we have no other choice if we are to safeguard the dignity of our ecumenicity.

The following chart presents the current Organizational Chart of the UCCP:

**THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**



**(The Secretariat)**



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chair of the General Assembly</li> <li>• Vice-Chair of the General Assembly</li> <li>• 8 elected at-large by the G.A.</li> <li>• National Treasurer</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The General Secretary</li> <li>• Incumbent Bishops</li> <li>• 1 representative from each national organization</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

### **(Working Committees)**

#### **THE JURISDICTIONAL CONVENTION**

- Moderators of Conferences in the Area
- Bishops Emeriti in the Area
- Officers elected by the Convention
- Bishop of the Area
- Representative from Jurisdictional organizations
- 3 delegates from every 5,000 members of every Conference

#### **(JURISDICTIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE)**

- Chair of the Convention
- Bishop of the Area
- Moderators of the Conferences in the Area
- Lay representatives of each Conference in the Area
- Representatives of each organization in the Area
- Others as may be adopted by the Convention.

*NOTE: The national territory of the UCCP is divided into four Jurisdictional Areas: 1. North Luzon, 2. South Luzon, 3. Visayas, 4. Mindanao*

#### **THE CONFERENCE (Composition)**

- All church workers under Conference assignment
- All ministerial students under Conference care
- Inactive ordained ministers with special relations
- Bishops of the Area
- Fraternal workers in the Area
- 1 elected delegate from every 200 members to the Conference of a local church
- Heads of church-related institutions in the Conference

#### **THE CONFERENCE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (Members)**

- The Chair
- Vice-chair
- Vice-Moderator
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Auditor
- Area Bishop
- 4 ministers elected by the Conference
- 4 lay elected by the Conference
- Presidents of every Conference organization
- Heads of Church-related institutions

#### **THE LOCAL CHURCH**

A local church is a group of at least 50 baptized believers, 12 years of age or over, having officers and a regular time and place of worship, and duly recognized by the Annual Conference with which it shall be related.

#### **MEMBERSHIP IN A LOCAL CHURCH**

Membership in a local church of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines shall be based upon faith in Jesus Christ, the Son, the living God, as Lord and Saviour. Reception into membership shall be in accordance with the requirements set forth in the New Testament -- baptism in the name of the Trinity.

The local church shall be governed by a Church Council, which shall be constituted as follows:



- a. The Pastor
- b. The Board of Ruling Elders
- c. The Board of Christian Education
- d. Other workers in full-time service
- e. Chair of the Church Council
- f. Elected officers of the church, including the Secretary, the Financial Secretary, the Treasurer, and such other officers as may be designated to become members of the Council;
- g. The Chair of the Christian Education Board
- h. The Board of Stewards
- i. Presidents or heads of various recognized organizations or departments of the local church (CWA, UCM, CYF, etc.).

#### **DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF ELDERS**

In cooperation with the pastor, the Board of Elders shall have oversight of the spiritual interests of the local church, especially in the following matters:

1. The admission of persons into full membership of the church and the granting of certificates of transfer
2. The care of the conduct of members with power to exercise discipline through the judicial committee appointed by and from among the Board of Ruling Elders
3. Assisting the Pastor in the administration of the sacraments, including the preparation of the table for the Lord's Supper
4. The supervision of all services of public worship
5. The responsibility for the use of the church building and properties, unless assumed by a Board of Trustees
6. The visitation of members, particularly the sick.
7. The planning and carrying out of a program of church growth and evangelism.

#### **DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF STEWARDS**

1. It shall be the duty of the Board of Stewards to exercise general oversight over the finances of the church and to serve as finance committee of the church. The financial secretary shall be the chair of the Board of Stewards.
2. It shall have the responsibility for the upkeep development and maintenance of the church properties (unless there is a Board of Trustees) and the relief and welfare work of the church, including the care of the poor.
3. The Board of Stewards shall meet a few weeks before the end of the fiscal year to prepare a budget for the church for the coming year. It shall also make plans for the financial campaign of the church, and after its approval by the Church council, shall conduct the financial campaign, under the direction of the Financial Secretary.
4. It shall meet regularly once a month, or more often as special circumstances may make necessary or at least hold special meetings to transact the business of the church.

#### **DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

1. Give general oversight to the teaching-learning program of the church, and plan a comprehensive and coordinated program of Christian Education for the entire church.
2. To examine regularly Christian Education facilities and equipment and recommend changes and improvements as needs arise.
3. When the need arises to call a Director of C Education, the Church Council is expected to i representation from the Board of Christian Education on the committee to nominate the Director.
4. To recruit and train personnel for the total teaching program of the church.
5. To study, recommend and procure curriculum and study/learning guides appropriate for the church members and relevant to the issues of the day.

6. To study budget needs and recommend to the F Committee an annual Christian Education budget.

#### **SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

1. For the UCCP structure, present the material graphically in a simplified chart and explain verbally.
2. Assign the students to get the names of the ( Secretary, the bishop in their jurisdiction, their moderator, and the local church leaders and officials.
3. Bring the participants on a tour to the offices in local church, the Conference office, jurisdiction or the national offices where possible. Let them see the church workers at work and actually hear from them about their work.
4. For our beliefs about the church, let them study the biblical texts in Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 6:1-7 and dramatize them, adding their own interpretation. Follow this up with a discussion on the present Church set-up and the functions of the boards and committees. Do the early church and our church today have similar activities or not? What are the beliefs or reasons behind the early church's activities and the present?
5. Let each confirmand study the IJCCP Constitution and discuss the relationship between the members of the church and the ecclesiastical positions. Let them describe the responsibilities of each position.
6. Let the confirmands attend the meetings of some of the Board/Committees or Church Council. They will then share in class their feelings, observations, learnings from the experience.

#### **STATEMENT OF FAITH OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES**

##### **WE BELIEVE**

In One God: Redeemer and Sustainer, who provides order, purpose, meaning and fulfillment to all creation.  
That in Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, God became human and is Sovereign Lord of life and history.  
That in the Holy Spirit God is present in the world, empowering and guiding believers to understand and live out their faith in Jesus Christ.

##### **WE BELIEVE**

That persons are created in the image of God-and destined to live in community with God, with other persons and with all creation.

That, by disobedience, they have become sinful, but, by grace through faith, they are redeemed in Jesus Christ.

That being entrusted with God's creation, they are called to participate in the establishment of a just and compassion-ate social order.

##### **WE BELIEVE**

That the Church is the one body of Christ, the whole commu-nity of persons reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and entrusted with God's ministry.

##### **WE BELIEVE**

That the Holy Bible is a faithful and inspired witness to God's selfJ revelation in Jesus Christ and in history to illumine, guide, correct and edify believers in their faith and witness.

##### **WE BELIEVE**

God is at work, to make each person a new being in Christ, and the whole world, God's Kingdom in which love, justice, and peace prevail.

The Kingdom of God is present where faith in Jesus Christ is shared, where healing is given to the sick, where food is given to the hungry, where light is given to the blind, and where liberty is given to the captive and oppressed.

### **WE BELIEVE**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has overcome the power of death and gives assurance of life after death. And we look forward to His coming again in all fullness and glory to make all creation new and to gather all the faithful under God's Kingdom. Amen.

*Revised*

*FAITH AND ORDER COMMITTEE*

*September 3, 1992*

## **LESSON 5: THE UCCP STATEMENT OF FAITH**

### **A. WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT GOD**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

At the end of the lesson, the confirmands should be able to:

1. explain in their own creative way their knowledge of God.
2. Point out the Biblical foundations of the Trinitarian perception of God.
3. Share their experiences, understanding and faith in God as Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of their lives and all of creation.

#### **CONCEPTS**

1. Trinity. This means "Three in one" -- that God basically is one, but God (Parent) is known in three ways through God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit or God in three "persons".
2. The word "person" comes from the Latin word *persona* which is a mask an actor wore on the stage during those times. The actor can play many roles by wearing different masks, but it is the same actor who plays those different roles. That is how Trinity was explained by the Early Church Fathers. It is also like fire. There's the fuel (wood), the flame and the smoke but one fire. This is clearly stated in the Athanasian Creed which was written about six hundred years after Christ.
3. The Nature of God: Our Church also expresses the Trinitarian doctrine as God the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all life. But in essence, God is like a Father and a Mother to everyone, who loves and takes care of us all.

#### **FACILITATOR'S NOTES**

Our church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, confesses and affirms its belief in one God:

#### *WE BELIEVE*

*In One God: Redeemer and Sustainer, who provides order, purpose, meaning and fulfillment to all creation. That in Jesus Christ, who was born of Mary, God became human and is Sovereign Lord of life and history. That in the Holy Spirit God is present in the world, empowering and guiding believers to understand and live out their faith in Jesus Christ.*

No one can fully understand nor completely explain who God really is. But various individuals and religions have acknowledged in their deep spiritual searchings the reality of a Power, a Force, a Supreme Being whose existence is undeniable. For the Christians, the Jewish Christian heritage of faith and experience have helped us in our understanding of God.

## ONE GOD

Christians believe only in one God and to them there are no other gods. It is this God who created everything. And this one God made the divine self known in different ways so we also experience and encounter God in different ways. From the Old Testament to the New Testament the Early Church and modern times we continue to experience God's revelation in different ways. These experiences of God have caused people to call our God in many names. The following shows a brief survey of the names that were attributed to God. (Isa. 44: 6-11, Ephesians 4:6).

### FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

**One God** (Deut. 6:4; Isa. 44:6; Eph.4:6);

**Creator** (Gen. 1 & 2; Ps. 19:1, 100:3, 104);

**Yahweh** (YHWH) -- This means "I am who I am" and "I will be who I will be." (Ex. 3:14);

**Elohim** -- This is the plural form of El and conveys the sense of one Supreme being who is the only true God. Deliverer (Ex. 3:8; Deut. 5

**Mother Eagle** (Deut.32:11);

**Woman** (Isa. 42:14; Hosea 11:1-4);

**Father** (Deut. 32:6);

**Shepherd** (Ps. 23:1);

**Rock** (Deut. 32:4);

**Judge** (Gen. 18:25, Ps. 50:6, 58:11, 94:2);

**Justice** (Isa. 42:1, 61:8; Amos 5:24; Deut. 32:4). King (Ps. 10:16, 29:10);

**Suffering Servant** (Is. 52:13, 53:1-12);

**Spirit** ("breath of life", "rushing wind" Gen. 1:2 Isa 61:1, 63:10 & 11, 59:21, Ex. 15:10, Judges 13:25, 15:14 Some of the activities of the spirit in the Old Testament are: Creator Spirit, inspiring heroes and mighty persons like the Judges and prophets active in the wisdom and the Judgment of rulers and law givers, especially manifested in prophecy and others. .J

**Son** (Isa. 7:14, 8:8, 9:6)

### FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT/EARLY CHRISTIANS

**Abba** "Father" (Luke 11:2 Luke 2:49b, John 8:38) 'Abba' does not simply mean Father. It is the very intimate familiar form of address reserved for the intimate family circle. It might be best translated as 'dad' or 'papa'; This contrasts very sharply with the attitude that makes people approach God in fear and trembling, the attitude that keeps God at a distance because of God's supreme sovereignty and holiness,; The research of Jeremias has placed it beyond all doubt that Jesus addressed God as Abba and that Jesus taught others to do the same. "(Nolan p. 80)

**Jesus** (It is a Greek word for Joshua or Yasha which means "God saves us." Matt. 1:25)

**Messiah** "Christ" — This is a Hebrew word which means anointed. Jesus was "the anointed one." (Mark 8: 29)

**Lord/Master**-- It is God in the Old Testament translated from Yahweh, Adonai and Elohim. In the New Testament, Greek Kyrios (Master) is Sovereign Lord which indicates possession of authority (Mk 10:51, Lk 2:29, Mt 1:20)

**Rabbi** - Teacher (John 3:2, Matthew 4:23, Luke 4:15).

**Redeemer** (Lk 1:68-75, Jn 3:14-16, 4:18, 6:51-56, Mt 26:26-28, I Tim. 2:6).

**Son of Man** (Luke 19:10, Mark 2:10). The Word Son of Man in Daniel 7:13 stands for a personification of the Saints of the most High. In other apocalyptic literature, a superhuman being, the Elect One destined to appear in judgment as the messianic ruler of the kingdom. (Mark 1:11, 9:7, 15:39)

**Servant** (Phil. 2:7)

**ICHTHUS** - This is the Greek word for FISH but is ingeniously used by the early Christians during the time of persecution where they had to meet underground in the catacombs (burial places) using secret codes and symbols to communicate, ICHTHUS is actually an acronym for "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior". This fish symbol showed a powerful declaration of faith, "I believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior.

**Holy Spirit/Spirit** -- In the New Testament the Holy Spirit is described as the power that inspires believers to do good, to spread the good news of Jesus' resurrection, to endure hardships and sufferings for God's sake and to overcome evil. (Lk. 1:41, 67, Mt. 3:11)

### **SOME MODERN CHRISTIAN NAMES**

**Master, Teacher, Friend**

**Holy Spirit** - In this modern times Christians believe that the Holy Spirit continues to empower God's people to do good things to overcome evil.

**Mother God** - In the past God is portrayed as a male God or Father. Today we are trying to help people to realize that God can also be experienced as woman who gives love and care to her children. Experience, further re-reading and reflection of biblical materials have led to the rediscovery of the feminine qualities of God from the following texts: Ex. 19:3-6, Deut.32:11- 12, 1sa. 42:14-15, 49:14-15; Mt. 23:37, Lk. 13:34.

### **JESUS CHRIST**

Jesus Christ is the way God became human and lived among people. Jesus lived a life that taught us to live close (John 1:14) to God's people and all of God's creation (Matt.. 1:20b-23).

Jesus as a child played with friends in their neighborhood went to school in the synagogue, worked at home with the family and also questioned practices, laws and actions of people that were not making people live peacefully and happily. (Luke 2:21-52).

Jesus as an adult was teaching people about God's Kingdom -- helping and caring for one's fellow human beings, healing and praying over those who were sick, feeding the hungry people, exorcising demons; forgiving and loving sinners, showing kindness and caring for children, and correcting those who considered themselves good and godly but were making others unhappy. Jesus primarily taught people two important things. First, to love, have faith and trust in God and, second, is to love one's neighbor or human being as God loves us. (Luke 4 and 5; Matt. 22:37-39).

God in Jesus Christ loved us so much (John 3:16) that God wanted us to live a happy and abundant life (John 10:10). And it is Jesus' death on the Cross that made it possible for men, women and children to live happily and abundantly. Jesus saved us from our sinfulness and we should be thankful for him. (John 10:10; Ephesians 2).

### **HOLY SPIRIT**

God the Holy Spirit as discussed in the Old Testament is present in the world since the beginning of Creation. Even in the New Testament it is present, guiding and leading Christ's followers.

However, after Jesus resurrected and ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit, as promised by Jesus, appeared to the disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:5). When the disciples and early Christians received the Holy Spirit, they were no longer afraid to *speak the truth* about Jesus' resurrection. This is what Jesus promised in Luke 24:49, Acts 1:8, and John 14:16-17. The life of the Spirit is a life of truth, humility, change and renewal, simplicity, honesty, compassion and confession. But, most of all, a life in the Spirit is a life of community and fellowship. We can recognize the Holy Spirit through experience guiding us and giving us power to do what God wants us to do. Today the Holy Spirit continues to work through those who are willing to recognize and accept it.

## **THE HOLY TRINITY**

Our faith ancestors of the Early Christian Church tried to put into one word what God meant to them by using the word "Trinity". This attempt to express what kind of God led the Early Church Fathers to formulate the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. With this doctrine, they hoped to solve the many questions about the relation of God the Parent, Son and Holy Spirit. And yet the word Trinity is not found in our Bible although we can read a statement about it in Matt. 28:19. This doctrine explains that there is only one God who is revealed in three ways -- Father (Parent), Son and Holy Spirit.

As the Father (Parent), God is understood by people as Creator and that all comes from God's power. God is the beginning of all things and created everything.

In another time in history, people experienced God as a human being, in Jesus, joining and participating in the affairs of the people which God created. And the people said, "Immanuel!" (God is with us). Because of this Jesus Christ was called by the people as Son of the Creator God.

At the time when Jesus Ascended to heaven, the people again experienced God's presence even if Jesus was no longer with them. This presence of God they called the Holy Spirit.

These three ways of God's revelation tell us the depth of God's mystery. And so we have to acknowledge our limitation of fully knowing who God is and to settle with the concept of a "trinity" to describe this mystery.

So the Father or Parent is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God. And yet they are not three God's, but one God. So likewise the Father or Parent is Lord, the Son Lord, and the Holy Spirit Lord. And yet not three Lords, but one Lord. And in this Trinity none is before or after another. None is greater or lesser than another. But the whole Three persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal.

Today, among modern Christians, the Trinity is being viewed as the Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer.

These inclusive words Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer also describe who God is. When we say God is Creator it also tells us that God is redeemer and sustainer because it is God who creates. God creates new life and redeems the old to make it new and moreover sustains what is being created and re-deemed because God is continually a Creator God.

This is a more inclusive explanation of who God is than the Trinity which is exclusive and sexist. Today, people have realized that God cannot be limited to fixed standard explanations. God is more than the Trinity and is continually revealing to people and the whole of creation. God's revelation on inclusivity of all creation which includes men, women, children and nature or the whole of creation leads today's Christians to reflect on the sexist portrayal of God as Father and Son. Today it is also acknowledged that God is also a Mother or Parent God.

Let us keep in mind that God is mystery and the words that we have discussed are just limited attempts to try to explain who God is. Our study of God should not end here but we need to continue to experience God's continuing revelations to us in order to deepen our faith, trust and understanding of who God is.

### **SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

1. Let the class make a mural of God's creation trying to make it as comprehensive as possible. They may cut out from magazines or draw pictures. Everyone should participate. Do this outdoors.
2. In small groups, have the participants dramatize scenes demonstrating the different qualities of God such as the creator God, redeeming God, providing God, etc. based on their experience or observation. Let the class guess the quality of God being presented or portrayed.
3. Let the participants sit in small groups of circles (on mats or on the ground if possible), preferably outdoors, close to nature. Give each group a set of cards with one of the names of God, listed above, printed one on each card, and lay the cards on the center. Let each one pick a card to share or talk about.
4. Have them write a letter to Jesus Christ in response to what Jesus has done for us.
5. Have them illustrate in drama/poetry, song or art work how the Holy Spirit was experienced by the believers gathered in Jerusalem (Acts 1).

6. Ask the participants to find titles referring to God from the following biblical verses. Let them write these titles anywhere on the board as soon as they find them. This will get their active participation and will show the different ways that God was known by the people in the Bible. The learners may work in small groups or in dyads or triads.

You may add to the list of texts.

- |                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| a. Isaiah 64:8a  | b. Psalm 119:137     |
| c. Matthew 6:9   | d. Ecclesiastes 12:1 |
| e. Matthew 16:16 | f. Isaiah 63:16a     |
| g. John 1:34     | h. Exodus 3:14       |
| i. John 14:26    | j. Matthew 11:27     |
| k. Acts 1:8      | l. John 4:24         |
| m. Genesis 17:1  | n. Exodus 6:3        |
| o. Psalm 99:9    |                      |

After the activity, lead the participants to think about their experiences of God:

- a. Do the names or titles of God in the Bible reflect your own experiences or understanding of God?
  - b. Can you share your own title or name for God? Why do you use that name for God? What is your experience of God?
7. Have them make a collage/poster of what Christian lifestyle is or what it means to follow Jesus Christ.
  8. Lastly, let them make a statement of faith on their own...
  9. Conduct several sessions on the lesson about God to fully allow the participants to internalize, reflect, and affirm their faith in Jesus Christ.

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## LESSON 5: THE UCCP STATEMENT OF FAITH

### B. WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT PERSONS

#### OBJECTIVES

After the lesson, the confirmands should be able to:

1. explain their beliefs about themselves as human beings
2. describe what it means to be created in the "image of God."
3. express what it means to be "truly human".
4. demonstrate the purpose of our createdness.
5. explain why persons remain sinful

## CONCEPTS

1. Human beings- scientifically, the human being is the most complicated living being. From the size of the brain to the dexterity of the hand and fingers, the human being alone has the most creative potentials compared to other breathing and moving animals.
2. Image of God - In biblical times, Kings and emperors were attributed the divinity of having the "image of God": divine, majestic, endowed with great power, considered honorable and deified by their subjects. The "imaging of God" refers to the spiritual, divine and holy character, not the physical character.
3. Personhood/creaturehood - human beings are persons created by God. Personhood refers to the unique personality of an individual or each person. Each person has rights, potentials, and the freedom to be what they want to be. Creaturehood refers to the createdness of the individual. This puts the individual in a special relationship with the Creator.
4. Responsibility/Freedom - God created persons with responsibility (care and stewardship) over God's creation and freedom to obey and worship God. The purpose of God creating human beings was for them to be partners, co-creators, and friends with God.
5. Sin - is disobedience to God or the breaking off of our relation to God, or putting the self at the center of life and attention.

## FACILITATOR'S NOTES

### WE BELIEVE

*that persons are created in the image of God and destined to live in community with God, with other persons and with all creation; that by disobedience, they have become sinful, but by grace through faith, they are redeemed in Jesus Christ; that, being entrusted with God's creation, they are called to participate in the establishment of a just and compassionate social order.*

### IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

The affirmation that human beings are created in God's image is central in our faith as Christians. The affirmation portrays our basic understanding of what is "truly human".

The phrase "Image of God" was a religious and political concept that prevailed in the ancient kingdoms and empires. Kings, emperors, rulers claimed themselves as gods and that they alone have the "image" of God. All people should honor them as such. (An example is King Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 3). It is similar to "the divine rights of kings" in the Middle Ages and the authoritarian rule of modern-day dictators. The ruler is deified and some kind of a religious cult is built around him/her.

Our faith ancestors were against this practice and belief which teaches that only certain persons have such status. The tendency of attributing divinity to some persons only causes the degradation and dehumanization of other persons. Ordinary

people become non-persons, devoid of the power to choose and to live with dignity. The Hebrews, on the contrary, believed that God created every person equally with dignity and freedom.

The phrase "let us make *persons* in our image" is like a two-edged sword. Our faith ancestors, while declaring their faith, protested against the prevailing religious belief and political practice. They were saying that the ruler is not the only "image" of God on earth. Rather, each person, born into this world is God's image.

Such a statement concretely shows that to be human is to be able to image the qualities and nature of God. And the divine qualities that persons are endowed with are the ability to love, understand, speak, and create with their hands. To image God does not mean, however, that we become God ourselves. To deny our creaturehood and usurp God's position makes us less human or become inhuman.

### SINFUL



We believe that the human person, though created to image God, is sinful. The Yahwist writers affirmed that the human person's downfall and misery is rooted in her/his refusal to trust and obey God. (Genesis 3) S/he wants instead to be like God. In the language of the biblical text, s/he desires to know what is "good and evil" (Gen. 3:4-6).

To know "good and evil" means to know everything. But only God can know everything. Hence, desiring to know "good and evil" would mean desiring to be like God.

In contemporary terms, when a person desires to be like God, it often means s/he would like to be always at the top. And s/he would do everything s/he can, in order to be there and remain there. Greed and selfishness would rule her/his life. Hence, s/he inevitably would dominate and exploit others for her/his own sake.

The "desire to be like God" is also seen in the contradictions between the rich and the poor, between the ruling powers and the suffering masses, between the superpowers and the powerless nations. In other words, sinfulness on the individual level affects relationships of peoples and nations, as well as the systems and structures of societies. Jesus and the prophets talked about the bankruptcies and hypocrisies of religious institutions (Amos 5; Matt. 23). Paul discusses how sin came to life through the Law (Romans 7), and the whole of creation is groaning in travail in need of salvation (Romans 8).

Sin, therefore, concerns the breaking of relationship -- the relationship between the person to herself/himself, to God, to other human beings, and the rest of God's creation. Sin, therefore, has an individual as well as a social dimension.

Ultimately, it must be seen that the human problems in the world are brought about by willful and continual disobedience to the will of God. Because of disobedience we are doomed to die. And to die is to be cut off from the streams of life even while alive. But God loved the world so much. Jesus Christ, the Light of the World came, giving us life and reconciling us to God (John 1:1-4, 3:16; Ephesians 2:1-10).

### **ENTRUSTED WITH GOD'S CREATION . . .**

#### **ESTABLISH A JUST AND COMPASSIONATE SOCIAL ORDER**

God has a purpose in creating human beings. Genesis 2:15 shows God putting Adam (the human being) in the "garden of Eden to till it and keep it" or to guard and preserve it. The garden represents God's will for all of life, that it be perfect and abundant. Human beings are to make sure that it remains so. But because of human disobedience, the world is marred and poverty surrounds it.

Jesus again reminds all persons of this responsibility of caring for God's "household" in his parables (Mt. 24:45-51) about the wise and good servant (steward). This is the same as caring for God's creation, making sure there is food for everyone -- and for all creation -- including plants, trees, animals, and even the soil. If one part of creation is abused or neglected it will suffer. As one part suffers, the whole body also suffers. All because of human sin.

In Leviticus 25:1-7 we note that Sabbath observance does not apply to persons alone. All creation needs a Sabbath, a time of rest. The animals, the land that we till, and all helpers also need to rest and be rejuvenated. For the Hebrews, ***Sabbath is a time for rest and rejuvenation for the whole of God's creation.***

This clearly shows the a biblical understanding of the workings of nature and why creation should not be abused. This includes ourselves, the land that we depend on for life, and the domestic animals we keep. The Hebrews knew the importance of letting the land lie fallow for a period of time.

Good farming practice teaches that to plant the same kind of crops throughout the year tend to exhaust the nutrients of the soil. Planting different crops each year recognizes the fact that the land needs rest to replenish its lost nutrients. Different plants use up different nutrients and leave different minerals in the soil.

Caring for the whole world involves all of life: from administering the government, the management of one's own home, the observance of environmental considerations in business to the way we dispose our trash and relate to our neighbor. This is what good stewardship is all about.

### **SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

1. Group Discussion/Brainstorming. Group the class into small groups of 4 or 5 males or females (according to gender). Ask them to study Genesis 1:27; 2:20-23 and share their answers to the following questions
  - a) What qualities do we have that are like God? or What qualities does God have that we as persons also have?
  - b) Compare each other's character, what you are good at, and what you are weak in. How does each one of you complement the other?
  - c) Does the scripture say about differences between the male and the female? If there are, what are they and why do you think there are such differences? More importantly, what are the commonalities?
  - d) Are there practices in our family, church and society in relation to women which contradict God's purpose for women or their being created in God's image? How should these practices be transformed according to God's will?

After the group sharing, ask the all-male groups to give a short summary of their sharing to the whole class. Then have the all-female group do the same. Let the two groups discuss their agreements or disagreements and what ought to be changed in some of our individual, family, church and social practices.

2. Interview - Invite a science teacher, or a doctor, and let him/her share the following:
  - a) Unique features of the human being (anatomy) over the other animals.
  - b) The potentials of the human being (speak, think, create, etc.) and how the human being could do them.
  - c) What, in their opinion, is the purpose of the human being in this life?
3. Simulation Exercises. Have the class do the following:
  - a) Prepare in advance 3 sets of 50 drinking straws and 20 pins for each group. (For those who can't have these materials, substitute with bamboo sticks or coconut midribs of same length and sizes (50) and masking tape of same number and sizes (20). Divide the class into 3 groups. Appoint or have them choose a leader for their group. Call the leaders and give each one of them one of the following sets of instructions written on a piece of paper.

**Group I -- Dictatorship:** Your group is to build a structure out of the drinking straws or bamboo sticks and pins. The structure will be judged for its height, strength and beauty. You will design it and give detailed instructions for the group. No member of the group may move without your instruction. They may not talk with each other. There should be 100% silence. You have 15 minutes to do this.

**Group II -- Laissez Faire:** Your group is to build a structure they can out of the drinking straws and pins or bamboo sticks/midribs and tapes. You will tell the group this information and nothing else. They are free to do as they choose in building the structure. They are not to solicit help from you or anyone. You may even leave them as they are working. They have 15 minutes to do this.

**Group III -- Democracy:** Your group is to build a structure Out of the drinking straws and pins or bamboo sticks/ midribs and tapes. You will participate in the planning or designing of the structure and its building. You will encourage everyone to participate and will try to create an atmosphere of trust and cooperation. You have 15 minutes to do this.

After the exercise, ask the whole class to come together to share their experiences. Ask the leader of Group I to relate *what happened* in his/her group and what he/she *felt*. Then let the members of Group I do the same. Ask Groups II and III to follow with their sharing.

Then ask the class the following questions.

- a. Which type of leadership among the three do you prefer? Why?
- b. Which type of leadership makes possible the establishment of a just and compassionate family, church and society which builds a community?

- c. What kind of family, church and social order do we have now? What needs to be changed in it?
4. Role Play: Portraying divine and evil characters: Divide the class into groups of 5, and let them portray any of the opposing characters listed below in a short skit.
- Friendly/Hostile.; Hateful/Loving; Cruel/Kind; Selfish/Generous; Insensitive/considerate; Hardworking/Lazy; Honest/Liar; (Other contrasting characters may be added.)
- After the Role play, let them discuss which characteristic do they often portray in the home, in school, or at play.
5. Covenant Writing (creative writing through poem or a song): Let them write down what characteristics of God would they like to "image" as they grow up.

## LESSON 5: THE UCCP STATEMENT OF FAITH

### C. WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE CHURCH

#### OBJECTIVES:

After the lesson the confirmands should be able to:

1. Explain the significance of the Church in the Life of the world.
2. Point out by whose power the church is able to give light, grow and increase.
3. Cite the biblical foundations of the "church" as the people of God.

#### BIBLICAL TEXTS

Deuteronomy 4:10; Matthew 5:13-16; Acts 9:31

#### CONCEPTS

1. **Church:** translated from the Greek word *Ekklesia* meaning "the assembly of those who are called." This assembly was originally a gathering of citizens to exercise their political rights. The Early Christians adopted the word giving it to mean "The assembly of people called by God." It was used to describe their worship gatherings or their assemblies to decide on courses of actions regarding issues that affected their community.
2. The People of God: This phrase was used by the Hebrews after they had the covenant with God. This means "the people who belong to God."

#### FACILITATOR'S NOTES

##### *WE BELIEVE*

*That the Church is the one body of Christ, the whole community of persons reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and entrusted with God's ministry.*

The concept of "church" as the people of God has its roots in the Old Testament. As the Hebrew people were brought out of bondage from Egypt, they entered into a covenant with God, that they will be God's people, and God will be their God. Deuteronomy is an account of how the people of God tried to establish themselves as a community in the promised land. They had to follow rules and regulations set by God in order to survive and build a strong community. These laws were to be taught from generation to generation to ensure their continuity.

Their community was not to be just a community for themselves, but a community for others. They were to be "a blessing to all people on earth" just as God had told Abraham (Gen. 21:18; Acts 3:25), and a "light unto the nations" (Mt. 5:14) as Jesus had told his disciples.

Our Statement of Faith affirms that the church is a community of persons, composed of those who believe in God. A person can only be Christian in relation to others. The church exists only when there is a group of people that

comprise it. Fellowship is the vital aspect of this life. People find strength in their studying, worshipping, serving and praying together even as they love and respect each other.

We can learn from the life and nature of the early church as told in Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35 for our Church today. (Review Lesson 2)

The church then is a community of all persons - young and old, women and men, lay and clergy bound by the love of Jesus Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. The early Christian church believed that they were the One Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:27)-the extension of his life in this world. So, we are to minister and to give service to people in need, as Jesus did, fulfilling our role as the light and salt of the earth.

Georgia Harkness gives an insightful view of the church:

*Every lay person knows that "my church" means more than the building in which s/he worships, more or less regularly, on Sunday mornings; it means s/he and the other people who assemble there. In fact, it means many more than can be found in church on any ordinary Sunday morning. . . .*

*In the New Testament the Greek word laos means "the people of God." The derivation of the word "lay" is from the Greek laikos (Latin laicus), signifying that a lay person belongs to the chosen people of God. In the beginning there were no ordained clergy; all Christians were lay.*

*In the New Testament the word "kleros" when it is used in regard to the new community in Christ is always meant as the body of men and women who share in God's gift of redemption and glory, which is their "inheritance" (kleros), because they are incorporated in the Son. There is no shimmer of an idea of a definite body, called Clergy.*

*So, in the early days of the Christian Church, all that we now call layperson and clergy were of one status, equally important in the eyes of God, all together making up one fellowship. Within this fellowship there were varying gifts and hence diverse functions, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. (See Eph. 4:11). Often we read into these terms a higher clerical status than that of the ordinary Christian of New Testament times. Yet in the beginning all were laity (laikoi). The most common term for the member of the Christian fellowship was "saint"; and the "saints in Caesar's household" were as much a part of the Christian ministry of witness and service as being deacons, presbyters, or in the latest New Testament writings, bishops.*

*In the New Testament, "Laypersons are members of the people of God called to a total ministry of witness and service in the world." It is what in the fullest sense today a layperson ought to be and be regarded as such. The lay and the clergy are both equally important in the church.*

#### **SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

1. Evaluate your own church programs following the guide questions:
  - a) Are your church programs service oriented? How?
  - b) Are your worship services a witness to the community? How?
  - c) What is your main reason for being a church?
  - d) Are your members effective witnesses to their neighbors in the community? If yes, how are they effective witness? If not, why are they not effective witnesses.
2. Describe your general church membership and discuss how the following factors affect your witnessing as a church to the community:
  - a) What are the general character of the membership in your church in terms of professions. Make a random listing. Draw or act out the possible impact they have among their companions.
  - b) What age groups dominate the church? Why? How do they dominate?
  - c) What are the general background of your church members? (Are they Protestants by birth? or converts from other religion or denomination? etc.)

3. Make a simple survey to be distributed around the community with the following possible questions:

a) Do you know (name of your church)?  
( ) Yes ( ) No

b) Do you know anybody who goes to (Name of your church)?  
( ) Yes ( ) No  
If "yes", name at least three:

c) If you are new to the place and were to be invited to (name of your church), would you come?  
( ) Yes ( ) No  
Kindly give a brief explanation for your answer:

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4. Each one Write on a piece of paper what you want your church to be. Write down the things that you want the following to do to achieve what you want the church to be: Pastor, elders, Stewards, Christian educators or Sunday School, yourself, your parents, your brothers and sisters.

Let them share these hopes and desires for the church with the whole class. Then challenge the confirmands on what they could do to attain these hopes.

5. Let the class analyse their church and find out whether or not there is community among the members: no discrimination, women and men have equal opportunities to be leaders or to speak up, children and youth are welcomed and given special attention, or the poor and the handi-capped have a place in the church especially at worship time, etc.

After such analysis, let them then list down the ways by which the church can begin to become a real community of loving, caring persons.

If possible, let the confirmands send their findings and recommendations for change to the Church Council.

6. Learn and sing the song, "I Am the Church, You are the Church, We are the Church together."

**"I Am the Church"**

*Refrain:*

*I Am the Church, You are the Church, We are the Church together*

*All who follow Jesus all around the world, Yes, we're the Church together*

*The Church is not a building The Church is not a steeple*

*The Church is not a resting place The Church is people. (Refrain)*

8. Role play a situation in the church which is familiar to the class members i.e., greeters at the door welcoming worshippers, or a social hour in church, or a fellowship activity of the youth or women or men. Show the sense of community or lack of community in the role plays and discuss the reasons why they are there and how they can be eliminated slowly.

**LESSON 5: THE UCCP STATEMENT OF FAITH**

**D. WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT THE HOLY BIBLE**

**OBJECTIVES:**

This lesson will help the learners to:

1. understand that the 66 books in the Bible are all a record of a relationship between God and God's chosen people in a specific political, social and religious history;
2. know the general content and historical background of the books of the Bible;
3. reflect on how the Bible is a gift of God to God's people for their mutual upbuilding, correcting, repentance, faith deepening and renewed commitment to serve God and God's people and all creation;
4. study the Bible, interpreting its message for daily application and to participate in the work of God today.

## **FACILITATOR'S NOTES**

### *WE BELIEVE*

*That the Holy Bible is a faithful and inspired witness to God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ and in history to illumine, guide, correct and edify believers in their faith and witness. ,*

## **THE BIBLE IS A LIBRARY**

Most people think of the Bible as a book, even though they know that it has many parts written by many people.

The Bible is not one book, but sixty-six (66) books bound together between two covers. The name "Bible" really means a library of smaller books. The word Bible comes from the Greek word, *ta biblia* which means "little books" or "booklets".

Turn the page at the beginning of your Bible that lists the names of the books in the Old Testament. Hold your finger at this place and then find the list of names of the books in the New Testament. Now look at the two lists.

You will notice that some of the books have strange names that have no meaning for you, such as Deuteronomy and Ecclesiastes. Others are named after chief characters in the book, as Joshua, Isaiah or Ruth. Still others are named for the writer, as Amos, Jeremiah, or Luke. Some are named for the people to whom they are written as Romans or Timothy.

Now look at the bookcase below. You will notice that the books of the Bible group themselves into a certain classification. First, you will notice that there are two main sections — the Old Testament and the New Testaments. Then you will see that each of these sections are divided into subdivisions. In the Old Testament, there are four subdivisions: the Pentateuch or the Law, the Historical books, the Poetical or Wisdom books, and the Prophets. In the New Testament there are four subdivisions: the Gospels, History, Letters and Revelation.

## **THE GENERAL CONTENT OF THE BIBLE**

The following is an overview of the content and historical background of the books in the Bible.

1. The Pentateuch: "The Pentateuch", is the first five books of the Bible, called "Torah" in the Hebrew Scriptures. Though we often call these books "The Law," Torah does not mean "law," but "teaching". Basic to the Torah is the idea of the covenant. A covenant is an agreement. In the Bible covenants are special, because God is one of the parties to the covenant. Biblical covenants have three parts:
  - 1) a statement about God's saving act (what God brings to the agreement);
  - 2) a statement about what God expects from humanity in response;
  - 3) a sign or symbol as a reminder of the covenant..

The Torah is, in part, a record of God's covenant with Israel and the implications of the covenant for human life in society then and today.

2. The Historical Books: "The Historical Books" include Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. In the Jewish canon, the books are split into two categories.
  1. Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings are called "The Former Prophets."
  2. All the rest are included in "The Writings", the third major collection of the Hebrew Scripture.

These books are history in the best sense that they do more than present data about past events. They present the data in a form that tries to explain what the events mean and how God was working in them.

3. The Poetical and Wisdom Books: In the Hebrew canon, these books are included in the "Writings." The books of poetry include the *Psalms*, *Song of Solomon*, and *Lamentations*. The wisdom books are *Job*, *Proverbs*, and *Ecclesiastes*. This does not mean all poetry in the Bible is found in *Psalms* and *Song of Solomon*, nor that all wisdom is found in only three books. Poetry abounds in the Torah and the Prophets.

Much of the wisdom literature is written in poetic form, but wisdom is also found throughout the Bible.

4. **The Prophets:** Prophets in Israel were persons who interpreted the actions of God in the events of history. They tried to keep alive the memory of the Exodus event and re-interpret the meaning of the ancient faith for new times, and to proclaim God's will (based on the Sinai covenant) in national crises. After the national disasters of the fall of Israel (722) and Judah (598-586) they began to speak words of hope and comfort.

The writings are called the major and minor prophets. The terms 'major' and 'minor' have to do with the size of the books, and not the importance of the message. In the Hebrew canon, the prophets are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve. Daniel is included among the writings in the Jewish Scripture, but we list that book with the prophets.

5. **The Gospels:** The word Gospel is from the Anglo-Saxon "godspell", meaning **good news**. The word comes from the Greek **euangelion**, also meaning good news. Gospel can mean the good news preached by Jesus, or the good news preached about Jesus. Both meanings are the ones found in the Bible. Gospel can also mean the books that contain the memories of Jesus which we find in our New Testaments.

Gospels are accounts of the life and teaching of Jesus, but they are also reflections on who Jesus is and what he means for the world. Each of the gospel writers wanted to say something specific about the meaning of Jesus and carefully selected materials to do this. The gospels contain a great deal of historical information, which are always interpreted by the writers to show Jesus as Son of God and Savior of the world.

There are four gospels. *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* are called **Synoptic** gospels, because they follow a common synopsis, or routine. These three gospels can be studied in parallel because they follow the same basic outline, use many of the same words and the same order. Much of modern biblical study is based on the assumption that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a basic source and outline. **The Gospel of John** is entirely different in that it does not follow the same outline, has a three-year ministry for Jesus instead of one year, and contains long reflections about the meaning of Jesus.

6. **The Acts of the Apostles:** **Acts** is a unique book in the Scripture. It is really volume 2 of Luke's Gospel and tells the story of the beginnings of the church. It begins with the Ascension of Jesus, records the giving of the Spirit at Pentecost, and the life of the early church. It is not, however, the story of the whole church, or even of all the apostles. It focuses on the beginnings of the church, then on the work of Peter, and finally on the work of Paul. Luke wanted to show how the church spread from Jerusalem, all over Palestine and then to the Gentiles.

Luke reports a series of episodes in the life and faith of the early church to show how Christianity rose out of Judaism and has deep roots in the Jewish faith. He shows the struggle of the disciples in moving out in a mission to Gentiles. One of the major themes in the book is the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding and strengthening the church as it spread across the Mediterranean world. More than one-half of Acts is devoted to the ministry of Paul and his travels to preach the good news.

7. **The Letters of Paul:** Paul's letters are the oldest Christian documents we have. The first was written within 25 years of Jesus' death, and the last may have been written before any of the gospels. These letters are also the largest collection of writings by any one person in the New Testament. They are in order of length, with the longest letter to a church first and the letters to individuals last.

Paul's letters teaches a great deal about his faith and understanding of what Jesus Christ means for the life of the ordinary Christian. We also learn some of the problems that churches and persons faced because of their faith and what Paul said was an answer to the problem.

8. **The General Epistles and Revelation:**

**Hebrews** was written to Jewish Christians, saying that Christ is the perfect sacrifice and the true **High Priest**. Hebrews emphasizes the humanity of Jesus more than any other letter in the New Testament. It also

emphasizes the role of Jesus as the mediator between God and humanity and who brings forgiveness once and for all.

**James** was also written to Jewish Christians to remind them that need faith is manifested in the little acts of daily living. Church tradition says the book was written by James the Lord's brother.

**1 Peter** was written to encourage the church in Asia Minor in a time of persecution with hope in Christ. It is this hope that sees us through tough times we are called to live a life of hope and love in the world.

**2 Peter** is a reflection of the belief in the early church that Jesus would return at any moment. It calls the church to be faithful and continue to expect Jesus to return.

**1, 2, and 3 John** are (1) a sermon, (2) a letter to a church and (3) a letter to an individual. **1 John** urges Christians to return to fundamental loyalties. It stresses that Jesus came in the flesh, probably to combat heretics who were teaching that Jesus only seemed to be human. The writer says that believers experience eternal life now, that to know God is to obey God's commandments, and that the mark of eternal life is love. **2 John** was written to a church to emphasize the commandment of love. **3 John** is a letter to a church leader warning against a false teacher.

**Jude** was written to warn against a doctrine that said God's grace is an excuse for immoral living.

**Revelation** is a book about the struggle between good and evil and the ultimate triumph of Christ and the church. It was written in a time of persecution, probably around A.D. 95. Writing in coded language, the author encourages his readers to stand fast in the face of persecution, for only the faithful will share in the final triumph of Christ. Some of the great hymns and prayers of the early church are found in this book.

#### **SOME HELPFUL BIBLICAL PASSAGES**

1. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)
2. The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-15)
3. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-20)
4. The Love Chapter (I Corinthians 13)
5. The Shepherd's Psalm (Psalm 23)
6. The Two Ways (Psalm 1)
7. Jesus' Ministry and Ours (Luke 4:13-19)
8. What God Requires (Micah 6:8)
9. The Spirit as Change-Agent (Isaiah 11:1-2)
10. In Time of Trouble (Psalm 42:5; Rom. 8:28)
11. When you have done something wrong (Isa. 55:7; I John 1:8-9)
12. When someone you love died (John 11:25-26, 14:1-2)
13. When you are tempted to do something wrong (Hebrews 4:14-16; James 1:12-15)
14. When you have an enemy (Matthew 5:43-46, 18; 21-22)
15. When you are very thankful and happy (Psalm 103; Psalm 150)
16. When you are not sure what the right way of life is (Matthew 25:31-46)

#### **SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES Memory Verses**

1. Begin the lesson by asking each participant to recite a memory verse and cite the reference (book, chapter and verse).

From here explain the two divisions in the Bible. (*Testament* means *covenant* and the New Testament is the new covenant or relationship God made with the people through Jesus while the Old Testament is really the Hebrew Bible and contains the old covenants God made before Jesus' time.) Then present the library of the Bible Using an enlarged and attractive chart of the illustration found in the Facilitator's Notes.

2. **Bible Study.** Group the participants into 4's or 5's and assign a passage to each group, taken from the list given in the Facilitator's Notes. Ask them to answer the following questions:
  - a. What is the passage saying to you?



- b. Do you know who wrote it? When was it written?
- c. Where and to whom?

After the groupings and without asking them to share what they have shared in their groups, explain that the Bible is our guide in living as God's people. It is inspired by God who worked through human writers and oral transmitters. It uses different literary forms and should therefore be read and interpreted accordingly. The Bible was written and edited by different persons at different times but all the books have a unity in their message as well as authority and inspiration. Refer to the Facilitator's Notes for more information.

3. **Dramatize.** Let the students choose and dramatize one passage in their small group but have them situate it today in the Philippine setting. Have a discussion after the presentations to draw the reflection that the Bible continues to speak to us in our time and is the living Word of God.
4. **Life Application.** In small groups, let the participants share practical and concrete ways by which they have been illumined, guided, corrected, and edified by the Bible. Have them present their experiences graphically and creatively in drawings. Then let each group have an exhibit of their works for the other groups to see.
5. **Personal Diary.** Assign the participants to keep a personal journal or diary of their daily Bible readings and their experiences of having been guided, illumined, corrected and edified by the Bible.
6. **Have a Contest.** Divide the class into teams. At a given signal from the teacher/facilitator, they will search the Bible for what is being asked for.

Examples:

The text which says where Jesus was born.  
 The text which shows "We are the light of the world."  
 The longest book of the Bible.  
 The shortest book of the Bible.  
 The book of statistics. Etc.

The team that answers the most, wins.

7. **Play Bible Baseball.** Have the group divide into teams. Decide who will be *on bat* and the other in the field. Each pitch by the pitcher is a question from the Bible. When a batter from the other team is able to answer correctly, s/he runs to first base, and soon. When three questions are asked and they are not answered correctly it means three 'outs' the players change roles: *on bat go* to the field, and the other way around. Number of home runs depends on whether all three players that batted can make homes depending on their team-mates' capacity to answer correctly the questions thrown to them.

## LESSON 5: THE UCCP STATEMENT OF FAITH

### E. WHAT WE BELIEVE IN THE KINGDOM GOD WILL ESTABLISH

#### OBJECTIVES:

It is hoped this lesson will help the learners to:

1. share their images/beliefs of the Kingdom of God;
2. study Jesus' teachings on the Kingdom of God;
3. realize or form an idea of the brokenness or gap between the present realities and Jesus' vision of the Kingdom;
4. identify values, attitudes, character traits and lifestyle consistent with the Kingdom of God.

#### FACILITATOR'S NOTES

##### WE BELIEVE

*That God seeks to make each person a new being in Christ, and is at work in the whole world, God's Kingdom, in which love, justice and peace prevail. the Kingdom of God is already present*

*where faith in Jesus Christ is shared  
where healing is given to the sick,  
where food is given to the hungry,  
where light is given to the blind, and  
where liberty is given to the captive and oppressed.*

The theme of God's kingdom is central to both Old and new Testaments. In the Old Testament the kingdom expresses God's rule over all things, that God controls nature, governs Israel and oversees the life of all nations. (Psalm 9:7-8) Jesus Christ, in the same way emphasized God's Kingdom in all his teachings. He says: "Instead be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God and with what he requires of you, and he will provide you with all these other things." (Matthew 6:33)

The importance of the symbol of the Kingdom of God is best illustrated by Jesus who began his ministry by proclaiming that "the Kingdom of God is near." The preaching and teaching of Jesus were all centered on the Kingdom of God as God's hope for the world. Jesus' parables were mostly about the Kingdom, representing the shape of human relations to come, the demands, orientations and hopes of the life in the kingdom.

Jesus also showed by his actions that God's kingdom was at work through him. He reversed every aspect of life which was hostile to God's new world: disease; demon-possession; guilt; a ritualistic empty religion; a caste system of purity and impurity; the shortage of food (he fed hungry crowds); hostile nature (he calmed a storm); economic exploitation (he drove the money-changers from the temple; and even death.

The kingdom marks the end of all that disfigures or destroys what God has created 'very good'. Where the kingdom is, there people are wholly reconciled to God, to one another and to nature; fear, aggression, selfishness, falsehood and suffering are unknown; creation itself is 'set free from its slavery to decay'.

The Statement of Faith emphasizes that God is working with and through people for personal and social renewal. Its personal dimension is making "each person a new being in Christ." Its social dimension is making "the whole world God's kingdom." What is involved is not only the conversion of each person but also the remaking of society and of the whole world in all their structures and patterns of relationships.

The rest of the article uses the words "The Kingdom of God is **present** ..." and not "The Kingdom of God is fulfilled ...". This calls us to recognize the presence of the Kingdom rather than to presume its fulfillment. We can give only approximations of it and provide signs that indeed these signs give witness to its presence in our midst.

The sharing of faith in Jesus Christ means full trust in the promise and faithfulness of Jesus Christ as Lord. Where faith is shared, God's Kingdom is there.

The healing of the sick implies immediately the treatment of physical handicap and infirmity and more importantly, the recovery of wholeness to life. It is providing conditions for persons to recover wholeness physically, socially, psycho-logically, economically, culturally and politically.

The giving of food to the hungry is a sign of God's care and provision. It is no wonder that eating bread and drinking wine have become a sacrament of God's presence and grace in the world. The building of structures and patterns of social and economic life that ensure the physical well-being of all so no one will be hungry is a sure sign of the Kingdom.

The giving of light to the blind implies more than giving eyesight to the physically blind. It is to insist on truth as opposed to lies. It is fighting social, cultural, and political structures and habits that promote lies and falsehood.

Liberty or freedom is when people are free from all forms of captivity that destroy life and where they become captives or slaves only to God's will and purpose for life. Captivity to God's will is true freedom because it enhances life.

#### **BIBLICAL TEXTS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

Mark 1:14-15 tells us that the Good News that Jesus Christ preached is about the reign of God or the Kingdom of God.

This is what is told in Matthew 4:23 and Mark 4:43. Here we can see that the synoptic gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are one in recognizing that the main task that Jesus recognized as his mission from God is to preach the Good News about the Kingdom of God.

Luke 4:18 tells us also about the mission of Jesus and this message has great connection to the prophecy of Jesus about the new situation that he has preached to the poor in Luke 6:20-21 "Blessed are the poor for yours is the Kingdom of God."

What is the meaning of the message that Jesus preached?

1. The good news about the Kingdom of God is for the poor.
2. This is good news because who are suffering will experience relief and liberation.
3. This tells about changes in the world, in life, in relationships and the whole of creation.

All of what Jesus did like healing, forgiving and loving are signs of the good news that he preached. (Matt, 1 2-28)

The coming of the Kingdom of God is one of the great hope of the Jewish people expected to happen especially during the time of the Roman Imperial control. They longed for God to reign over Jerusalem and save Israel from the Romans.

In this context Jesus started his ministry and in his preaching and teachings he proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom of God.

The Jews especially those who were in the temple administration, the rich and powerful expected that when the reign of God comes they will take the place of the Romans in governing Israel. But Jesus preached that in the Kingdom of God the ones who can enter first are the least attended to, the poor, and those who were without voice or power (Luke 6:20- 23) and the Kingdom will judge the rich and the powerful (Luke 6:24-26).

#### **QUALITIES OF LIFE IN THE KINGDOM**

1. It is not to gain power to dominate but the power to serve the least. (Mk. 10:42-45, Mk. 9:35).
2. It is not to become wealthy and make more profit but to be sharing, caring and giving (Mk. 10). This is also how the rich can enter the Kingdom (Lk. 14:13-14).
3. The Kingdom of God is not a competition for prestige and power (Lk. 6:26. Matt. 23:5-7, Mark 12:28-40, Lk. 11:43, Lk. 14:7-11). Because for Jesus the greatest in the Kingdom is a little child (Matt. 18:1-4).
4. Jesus exemplified and preached love in the midst of discrimination and oppression (Lk. 6:27-28,32). The gospels show Jesus acceptance of the sinners, the sick, the women and children and the outcasts/enemies of the Jewish society. By this, Jesus has taught the early church to take care of the least in society (Matt. 25).
5. The Kingdom of God has been likened to a house holding a banquet. The image is compared by Jesus to that of the Kingdom where it accommodates and cares for the lowly (Lk. 14:12-24).

This Kingdom according to Albert Nolan is "the Kingdom of God, like any other kingdom, it is something wherein a human being can live." It is a state or condition where the people live joyfully serving each other and doing the will of God. And this condition needs to be worked out and to be built.

The church believes that this is its major task because Jesus said, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:23).

And he said, "He who believes in me will also do the works, that I do; and greater works than these will he do" (in. 14:12).

To fulfill the coming of the Kingdom of God but we will help build it in our present time so we say our prayer, "Thy will be done, Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

#### **SUGGESTED LEARNING. ACTIVITIES**

1. Songs. Begin the sessions on the Kingdom of God by singing a song on the Kingdom, for example "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God".

2. **Word Association.** To draw out their images or concepts about the Kingdom of God, ask each member of the class to write on flashcards one word or phrase that comes to their minds when they hear the words "Kingdom of God". Then put these up on the walls of the room. Refer to them as you continue to study the article about the Kingdom of God.
3. **Parable Analyses.** Divide the class into groups of 4 or 5 and assign each group one of the following parables of the Kingdom:
 

a. Matthew 22:1-10	b. Matthew 25:1-13
c. Matthew 25:14-30	d. Matthew 21:33-46
e. Matthew 20:1-6	f. Matthew 13:24-30
g. Matthew 13:31-32	h. Matthew 13:47-50

They are to share what they understand about the Kingdom of God from the parables guided by the following questions:

- a. What attitudes, values or character traits does a citizen of the Kingdom possess?
- b. Where is the Kingdom of God?
- c. When will it come or has it come already?
- d. What is one description of life in the Kingdom you can find in the parable?
- e. Who will bring the Kingdom of God?

Gather the whole class and ask each group to share some of the important points in their group discussions. The facilitator may add his/her input from the Facilitator's Notes and relate it to the 5th article of the STATEMENT OF FAITH and Luke 4:16-20.

4. **Field trip.** Divide the class in small groups to observe the different sectors and areas in their community. They are to describe the activities in the community and of each sector or group. Let them write their observations in a notebook.

In the next session let the groups share their observations by answering the following questions:

- a) How did each sector or grouping in the community relate to the others?
- b) Was there sharing?
- c) Were there hungry people, sick, blind, idle, without work, captives, and without faith?
- d) Is there a message from the parables you studied which applies to your community situation?
- e) Is there any church, group or agency helping these various situations?

5. **Writing or Drawing and Reflections.** Let the class members write down or draw their dream of ideal family, ideal church, ideal class and ideal society. Then have them share this in groups of 3s or 4s. Then ask them to summarize and share to the whole class their common ideals or dreams. After the sharing lead the class to analyze the values behind these dreams and the relationships necessary to make them happen. Are these values related to the parables they studied? Is there sharing of faith, healing, being fed, being given light, being freed? Assign them to reflect in church at Wednesday prayer meetings or cottage prayer meetings or a Sunday morning worship, what they can do to start making their dream family, class, church and community real.

6. **Sentence Completion.** Let the class work in small groups. The idea is for the group to be able to complete the sentences given below with the most realistic and attainable answers.

Our family is most like the Kingdom of God when \_\_\_\_\_.

Our confirmation class is most like the community of God when we are all \_\_\_\_\_.

Our neighborhood can begin to be a place like God's Kingdom when \_\_\_\_\_.

I know the Kingdom of God is in me when I \_\_\_\_\_.

## LESSON 5: THE UCCP STATEMENT OF FAITH

### F. WHAT WE BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION.

#### OBJECTIVES

At the end of the lesson the participants will be able to:

1. share their own understanding of resurrection;
2. understand the basic meaning of resurrection;
3. believe and trust in the power of Jesus' resurrection.
4. believe in God's promise of resurrection;
5. identify resurrection experiences that happen in our everyday life\_

#### CONCEPTS

The resurrection of Jesus Christ:

- is the rising from death to life.
- is overcoming the power of death.
- is victory from sin and evil.
- is changing from old to new.
- makes us hopeful in our everyday living. gives us hope in times of loss and suffering.
- gives us hope and assurance of life after death.

#### BIBLICAL TEXTS:

Ephesians 2:1-10; Romans 6:8-23; Rev, 2:8-10; Matthew 28:1-ff; Psalms 16:9-11; I Thess. 4:13

#### FACILITATOR'S NOTES

"WE BELIEVE

*that the resurrection of Jesus Christ has overcome the power of death and gives assurance of life even after death.*

*And we look forward to His coming again in all fullness and glory to make all creation new and gather all the faithful into the Kingdom of God." (UCCP Statement of Faith.) Ephesians 1:9-10*

The word resurrection simply and literally means "rising from the dead." It is like a plant that dies in the summer heat and blooms again when the rain comes.

Early beliefs in the resurrection was developed from the cyclical pattern of annual resurrection or seasonal rising of a vegetation from the dead in ancient Near East but this was not picked up by the Hebrews because of its relation to fertility cult of the gods.

However, the Hebrews still believed in the resurrection because of their belief in the most powerful God. God is the Giver of life, Creator and Lord of all Life. God is so powerful that even dry bones will have flesh and live again. This was what Ezekiel saw in the valley of dry bones. (Ezekiel 37:1-6). Hosea also prophesied the mercy and power of God. God has the power to revive us from death. (Hosea 6:2) Therefore, God is the Lord over life and death. These affirmation developed into the fact of resurrection, that after death we will live again. In the Old Testament there were stories recorded about persons who were brought back to life (I Kings 17:20-24, II Kings 4:32-37).

In the New Testament, there were accounts about the dead that were raised back to life by Jesus (Mark 5:41-43, John 11:43- 44) and by Peter and Paul respectively (Acts 9:40-41, Acts 20:9- 12). But the most important resurrection experience that makes our faith strong and true is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead, without which our faith will be futile and dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ declares God's power against the power of death, sin and evil, sufferings and difficulties, decay and despair, problems, persecution, failures and defeat. The resurrection of Jesus Christ shows us the victory, hope and power to claim and possess in our Christian lives.

So our Lord's resurrection has taught us three things:

Firstly, we need to accept the reality of suffering, pains, problems and death that happen in our daily life. Like Jesus, who was faithful to God's mission, we will also undergo persecution, suffering and even death. This is always the prelude to the resurrection: the flood, then the rainbow; the wanderings in the wilderness then the promised land; Jesus' rejection and shameful death then the resurrection.

Secondly, we need to believe that resurrection can be experienced in the "here and now", today or everyday. Ephesians 2:1-10 tells us that when we choose to turn away from our sinful ways then we experience resurrection as we live new lives. We experience resurrection when we forgive the person who hurt us for we bury our pride and selfishness and rise to new relationships. When we keep ourselves hopeful in times of troubles and pains, we experience resurrection. When we laugh and smile at our own mistakes and accept that we are capable of making mistakes, we are experiencing resurrection. When we see plants blooming under the early morning sun after watering the night before, that is resurrection. When we see the rising sun behind the dark clouds, that is resurrection. When we find relief from our fears and assurance of being loved and accepted, that is hope and power and the resurrection. When children play together, sharing their toys and food, that is resurrection. When we speak the truth even if somebody gets hurt, it is a celebration and affirmation of life because truth has won!

Thirdly, we are to claim the hope of our resurrection or life eternal after death which God has assured us. This is the resurrection that we shall experience in the future when Jesus comes back and will gather all God's children in God's Kingdom. The texts given at the beginning will point to us about the "here and now" and the "future" resurrection. Hope is the essence of the resurrection faith.

Indeed, the resurrection of Jesus teaches us more to strengthen our faith by believing and claiming God's promise of resurrection, everyday of our life i.e., -- living in hope -- until life beyond death catches up with us there where God awaits us!

#### **SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

1. **Word Association.** The participants are to share what picture/images/word/ feelings come to mind when they hear or see the word "resurrection". Let them express those pictures in words on strips of paper which they will paste on the board. Let them classify the words that are closely related and those that are different. The facilitator will summarize it and begin the discussion, deepening the idea about the resurrection.
2. **Acting out:** The participants share their feelings about resurrection and then let them dramatize or act it out an incident or an event in which they experienced some kind of resurrection or newness of life. Reflection will follow.
3. **Bible Study/Discussion:** The participants will read and study the story of Jesus' resurrection and discuss the events leading to it and the possible reaction of people when Jesus is discovered to have resurrected.
4. **Memory Verse/Poster Making:** Let them choose a verse on resurrection and let them memorize it. Share and articulate to the group why she/he is choosing it. They may even make a poster of it.
5. **Study** the life cycle of a caterpillar turning to a butterfly, or plant mango seeds and Watch its transformation as a plant. Relate it to the-resurrection idea.
6. **Interview adults/parents** of their beliefs of resurrection.
7. **Statement Writing:** Let them write their own belief and faith in the resurrection as a statement.
8. Memorize the Statement of Faith portion on Resurrection.

#### **REFERENCES:**

Dictionary of the Bible Grant and Rowley, We Believe., in the Resurrection, Bible Study for Children (UCCP)

## LESSON 6: THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

### A. THE LIFE OF DISCIPLINE

#### OBJECTIVES

1. To help the confirmands grasp the meaning -- both in thought and in lifestyle -- of what it means to be 'disciplined in Christ' like an athlete or a soldier and its relation to becoming a member of Christ's body.
2. To be able for them to feel with the early Christians what it was like to be righteous and empowered by the love of Christ and how this can be recaptured for today.
3. To help them begin to be sensitive to the actions and stirrings of the Spirit in their life and the life of others as well as in the world and see God at work in them.
4. To help the confirmands to begin to practice a life filled with Christ-consciousness and the discipline necessary for such a life.

#### BIBLICAL TEXTS:

Matthew 4:16-17; John 14; Acts 2:42-47; I Corinthians 12:4; 1 Timothy 6:8-10; Revelations 2:7;

#### FACILITATOR'S NOTES

The life of the new being in Christ ... the new Christian ... is a life of discipline. The discipline is so much like that of (a) an athlete and (b) a soldier. Paul teaches, from his own experience, "severe discipline for two reasons: in order not to fall into temptation and in order to be more wholly at God's disposal, to be able to run in the service of the Christ."

For Paul, to be righteous is not so much a matter of obeying the law -- rules and regulations -- but rather the love of Christ. Whoever loves Christ will be obedient to him because s/he has given him first place in her/his life. This is DISCIPLINE, freely accepted and which is simply an expression of her/his faith. When the great love of God has entered a person, that person will be more faithful and obedient to the humble duties of daily life.

And so the discipline asked firstly of the new follower of Christ as a soldier or an athlete is seen in Paul's letter and admonition to Timothy.

*Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer. And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules. (11 Timothy 2:3-5)*

Like a soldier, the Christian belongs to the army of Jesus Christ and therefore, the "Kingdom", the interest of the Kingdom, comes first and all other matters are unimportant. And the discipline asked of the soldier of Christ are: Word and prayer. In other words, we are asked to be constantly attuned to God's Word in the Scriptures and in our prayers. And the sword of the Word of God is called "the sword of the Spirit". It is by the Holy Spirit that the word of Scripture becomes the Word of God:

*Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)*

And this living WORD which speaks to us through the Bible has been 'made flesh' in Jesus Christ, who judges, calls, consoles and directs us. To listen to Jesus Christ each time is to be nourished by the Word. This is the first discipline of the Christian. Jesus said,

*If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth and the truth will make you free. (John 8:31)*

The new Christian is to continue in the reading, studying, and reflecting on the Word of God as found in the Holy Bible. A knowledge of what God wants and what God teaches makes us able to face life with all its demands and temptations and we are not tempted by them, we do not succumb to them, we are free from their burdens they impose on us.

The second weapon of the Christian is PRAYER, the prayer of the Church, to which each of us will contribute her/his own prayer. When we do, we are then supported by the rest, and we support them in their turn and lo Jesus Christ, the intercessor, stands among us. That is why we pray in Jesus' name as he prays for us, watches over us and in us before God.

We are also to be like an athlete, says Paul, who runs a race whether on the track, the field or a stadium. A runner has her/his eyes fixed on the goal; the finish line. While s/he runs that goal, that finish line is all that matters. As a Christian, we look only at Jesus Christ, run towards him, in order that we may receive the crown of life of fullness. Jesus also invites the whole church -- all the believers together -- to have but one thought in common, to run towards this goal -- the Lord who comes, for whom we wait, whom the church serves, and of whom we want to be worthy.

*Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own ... but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil, 3:12-16)*

Thus the first responsibility asked of the new follower of Christ is to discipline both body and senses. S/He wants to make her/his body an obedient and flexible instrument of the Holy Spirit. After all, the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and transformed only by the Spirit. This is to be a constant reminder for us who live in a time like ours when there is so much temptation to live an easy life, in which the life of all the senses claims to be important and master.

Not only are we to discipline our body, but we also are to discipline our minds and not wander 'all over the place' as we are also not to turn in a haphazard way. The Christian is one who knows where s/he is going. S/He neither speaks nor acts at random. God has given direction to one's life, once for all. The Christian therefore will discipline her/his thoughts, words, actions. The Christian will be careful about the use of time and resources in order that everything may contribute to the realization of God's Kingdom. And it is this self-mastery that will make her/him a free person -- free for God and free for the service of all of God's creation. That is why we keep attune to God's Word and we keep close to God in our *prayers*.

But full experiencing of a life of discipline can only be lived in community of where forgiveness and a humble spirit are necessary characteristics. It means learning to love and serve one another in the midst of our imperfections. The community makes Jesus Christ visible in the world. It is a place of struggle, conflict, pain and anguish as we wage the battle with the false values around us and within us. It is a place to grow in truth, wholeness and holiness. This faith community generates a faith strong enough to enable us to survive as

Christians. It is here where we are connected to Jesus Christ again and again — where we are confirmed, comforted and challenged. (Romans 1 2:1-1 2)

## **DISCIPLINE**

Every confirmand is expected to practice discipline in her/ his life during confirmation preparation and especially, after confirmation. Someone has divided disciplines into inward, outward, and corporate categories, making it obvious that it is possible — even desirable -- to practice many disciplines.

The inward disciplines -- meditation, prayer, fasting and study, or even play -- are personal practices that affect one's inward spiritual journey.

The outward disciplines -- simplicity, solitude, submission, and service -- reflect inward realities that affect one's lifestyle or response to the world. They are primarily personal disciplines, although participation in a group that practices any of these would be reinforcing. The corporate disciplines, which necessarily take place in a group context, are confession, worship, guidance and celebration.

Each candidate for confirmation must decide what spiritual discipline is appropriate for herself-himself. With growing in your relationship with God as your goal, begin considering the use of your time, energy, and resources that match your goal.

*Patricia Levering, Disciplines for Discipleship, UCC-USA, 1990*



## A SHORT GUIDE TO THE DUTIES OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

All baptized and confirmed members of the Church must play their full part in its life and witness. That you may fulfill this duty, we call upon you:

To follow the example of Jesus Christ in home and daily life, and to bear personal witness to him.

To be regular in private prayer day by day.

To read the Bible carefully and daily.

To come to church every Sunday.

To receive the Holy Communion faithfully and regularly.

To give personal Service to Church, neighbors and community.

To give money for the work of the Church at home and overseas.

*The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, 1954*

## SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Have a race among the participants. Divide the class into two or more teams. Set for them a goal to be achieved and the ways by which they may achieve the goal. Let them then race by teams. At the end, let them analyze what happened, how each one participated, where were the problems why this or that team lost, what were the attributes of the team that won that were not present in other teams. Link up what Paul was saying about setting body and mind on the goal and running towards the goal.
2. Let each one in silence go over their lives from the time they wake up in the morning until the time they go back to sleep at night. What happened each step of the way, what thoughts entered their minds, what preoccupied them, what did they do. Help them see what it means to discipline body and mind on the things that God in Christ teach as best for us. Let each one write a letter to themselves castigating or praising themselves at certain points "I promise to ...". At the end of the letter, there has to be some resolve to change and to follow some discipline in their lives. Let each one share one thing that they wrote as discipline for themselves.
3. On another session, they may make a poster which they will hang in their rooms or beside their bed. The poster may carry a phrase from Paul's teachings about running a race or disciplining the mind which will serve as a reminder for them each day they wake up. It could be their own motto for themselves, worded in their own words.
4. Study the biblical texts as they arise in the course of this lesson. Help them to understand what Paul was like as a Christian and the kind of discipline he achieved in himself and what kind of a person he turned out to be.
5. Plan together as to how each one may begin to practice the Disciplines and Duties of Church Members suggested here.
6. Sing, "Time to Change" or "I Thank You, Lord."

### ***It's time for us***

*It's time for us to make our dreams come true.*

*A guiding voice will tell us what to do*

*It's the time to change ourselves and show the world*

*That we still care for men, and we'll lead them there.*

*We'll lead them to a place beyond the sea.*

*A place of love where everyone is free*

*Don't despair the path to happiness is wide*

*If we must change our ways call on God for our guide.*

### ***I Thank You Lord***

*Thank you Lord  
For the trials that come my way  
In that way I can grow each day  
As I let you lead  
And I thank you Lord  
For the patience those trials come  
In the process of growing  
I can learn to care*

Chorus

*But it goes against the way I am  
To put my human nature down  
And let the spirit take control  
Of all I do.  
Cause when those trials come  
My human nature shouts  
The things to do,  
And God's soft prompting  
Can be easily ignored.*

*I thank You Lord  
For the victory that growing brings  
In surrender of everything  
Life is so worthwhile  
And I thank You Lord  
That in everything's put in place  
Cause Your way if escaping  
Is easier to bear.*

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**LESSON 6: THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN**

**B. A LIFE OF WHOLENESS**

**OBJECTIVES**

1. To let the class participants share their dreams of the happy life.
2. To lead the participants to analyze what needs to be changed in their personal and life with others.
3. To help them reflect on and appreciate biblical teachings regarding wholeness of life.
4. To help them discover how and to resolve to attain wholeness of life.

**BIBLICAL TEXTS**

John 10:10b; Isaiah 65:17-25; Ephesians 4:17-32

**FACILITATOR'S NOTES**

In New Testament Greek the word for "to heal" is the same for "to make whole". A whole person is a healed or healthy person. Wholeness of life means health in all aspects of life -- physical and spiritual, personal and social, human and environmental, etc. How does one attain wholeness of life? Perhaps this question is not even asked by our children today or not in these words. But children already dream of the happy life they would like to live now or in the future. Some may say they want to be rich. Others want to be popular or famous or be like their movie/TV idols. Hence it will be helpful to let them think of their dreams or fantasies and then lead them to a realistic reflection of true happiness or wholeness of life.

Even before Jesus, philosophers had already been searching for the happy life and arriving at different answers. Some saw it in giving up one's desires; others in indulging on them. Still others prescribed a calm acceptance of one's situation in life. What did Jesus himself say? In John 10:10b he declares, "I came that they might have life and have it to the full." So Jesus is saying that in the example of his own life and by his empowering through the Holy Spirit we will find wholeness of life. Is this indeed the answer to the philosopher's quest, our young people's fantasies, and our desire?

If we look at Jesus' life we can see him surrounded by crowds who were looking for healing and meaning in their broken lives. There were the physically ill and crippled -- the blind, the deaf, the paralytic, etc. -- who came to him for healing and who left whole, leaping and rejoicing. There were those suffering from guilt and shame -- the adulteress, the tax collectors, the lepers -- whom he welcomed and treated as persons worthy of his friendship. There were those who needed to hear that life was not a set of laws to be followed but that it was a precious gift from a loving parent to be enjoyed. So they hung on to his words, as he preached and taught and their minds and spirits became enlightened. Gradually, things came together and their questions and fears were quieted.

Then, when Jesus died a shameful death, their doubts returned and even the closest followers --the disciples -- were shattered. But what seemed to them the ultimate defeat and disillusionment turned out to be the greatest victory -- the final conquest of death itself. Now life was even possible beyond earthly existence and wholeness was added another dimension.

With the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost the community of believers -- the church -- was born. The social nature of life became more apparent. Wholeness of life was expressed in a caring, healing, teaching and preaching community. One could not really be whole when one's neighbor or community was sick. The Kingdom of God that Jesus preached resided not only in the heart of the individual but was present in the interrelationships in a community. So as Christians we believe that life is whole, not dichotomized into body and soul or chopped into the secular and the sacred, the personal and the social, or divided between men and women, children and adults, the married and the unmarried.

Paul's letter to the Ephesians gives details about this life. It is not indulgence in lust and desire, but a life committed to justice and holiness born out of truth. A Christian does not steal but works with honest labor. S/He is not bitter or full of malice but is kind, compassionate, and forgiving as God forgave us in Christ. These qualities are not only lived out in interpersonal relations but are to be manifested in social structures and systems as well and Isaiah 65 brings this out. Isaiah has a vision of a community where everyone is healthy, economically prosperous and where peace and goodwill prevail not only among persons but in the natural world also. So a Christian has the vision of the Kingdom of God sweeping the whole world and its countless communities while acting this vision in her/ his daily interaction with people and in her/his local community. For wholeness of life begins with the mustard seed of faith in Christ and grows into a spreading tree where everyone is welcome to enjoy its fruits.

And wholeness of life manifests itself in an undivided or uncompartimentalized life where religiosity is separate from life in the world. To be a Christian is to act and live out what Jesus teaches in all aspects of one's life. A person who has encountered God or Christ in the worship act, or the Sunday School class, or in the Bible study group cannot help but manifest the meaning of that encounter in other aspects of her/ his life, more importantly, to live life in its wholeness means to be consistent, as much as possible, in what one says s/he believes and in what one does or how one behaves. This is what we call a life of integrity.

#### **SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

1. Draw out from the class their understanding of wholeness of life by asking them to give words beginning with W, H, O, L, or E that express an aspect of it. List all the words they give on the blackboard beside each of their respective letters.

Or, instead of the above activity, group them into 4's or 5's to share their dream of the happy life.

2. Ask the class to draw or dramatize specific areas in their present personal and community life which they feel need to be changed or improved. Present or put these up for everybody to watch or see.
3. Divide the class into 2 groups to study the biblical texts. Group A will study John 10:10b and Ephesians 4:17-22 and group B, John 10:10b and Isaiah 65:17-25 guided by the following questions.
  - a) What is the message of the texts for you?
  - b) What are they asking you to do?
  - c) How do you intend to respond to it?
  - d) Is your dream of a happy life consistent with it?

Let them share their group's answers to the whole class. Have a discussion and deepen their reflection with the notes for the facilitator.

4. Have a closing worship with a song on Wholeness of Life such as:

*New Life in Christ  
Abundant and free,  
What joy is mine  
Let glory shine  
What wondrous blessings I see!  
For in Christ I have found new life".*

*My past with its sin  
The searching and the strife  
Forever gone, there's a bright new dawn  
For in Christ I have found new life.*

Let each one pray silently or aloud, committing herself/ himself to live a whole life with God's help.

## **LESSON 6: THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN**

### **C. A LIFE OF CONTINUING REPENTANCE AND CONVERSION**

#### **OBJECTIVES**

This lesson will help the participants to:

1. Understand that God's mission of SHALOM or global community cannot be attained unless people repent and are converted again and again towards the way of life of Jesus Christ.
2. Accept the fact that a man or a woman does not become a child of God as a result of her/his upbringing alone, or by her/his own moral efforts, nor by her/his own religious affiliations nor by any other way except by an experience of and encounter with Jesus Christ and accepting him as Lord.
3. Reflect and internalize the theological meaning and implications of repentance and conversion.
4. Believe that God, out of love for the whole world, called us to be changed and share in the life that Jesus taught and brought.
5. Describe/Express creatively their personal conversion and transformation in their lives.
6. Explain why people need continuous conversion. ,

## CONCEPTS

1. Repentance is the breaking with all that alienates/separates people from each other and from God.
2. Conversion is the transformation into something new, where the old has passed away and replaced by a new being. Conversion comes from the Greek word *Episptrepho* that can mean "to turn" (Acts 3:19 passive meaning, Mark 5:30 in its active meaning); and "return" (Matt. 10:13, 12:44). Conversion denotes the response which „ the good news demands and without which salvation cannot be received. It is cutting off the old selfish, cruel habits, thought forms and lifestyle.
3. Need for Conversion: The UCCP believes that everyone needs continuous conversion. Accepting the truth of this from Scripture: "Help us, LORD! There is not a good man left; honest men can no longer be found" (Psalm 14:1); "there is no one who does what is right" (Psalm 53:1b), and Apostle Paul's exhortation, "There is no one who is righteous, no one who is wise or who worships God. All have turned away from God; they have all gone wrong; no one does what is right, not even one." This recognizes the frailty of human beings who is in constant need of conversion, guidance and regeneration.

## BIBLICAL TEXT

Repentance: Lk. 7:36-50, 24:45-47; Mk 1:15; Mt. 1:17;  
Conversion: Mt. 10:13, 12:44; Mk 5:30; Acts 3:19, 9

## FACILITATOR'S NOTES

In Luke 24:45-47 we see that repentance and forgiveness are lifted up as the immediate first response to the Kingdom. Likewise Matthew and Mark have as the first words of proclamation on the lips of Jesus, "The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the good news."

Repentance is more than the sorrow of the person for the sins of the past. It is breaking with all that alienates/separates people from each other and from God. It is turning about our whole life, accepting new values and pursuing new goals. It is resting our eyes on the goal of life eternal or of wholeness as we have seen in the past lessons.

While the Kingdom is itself good news to all humankind and creation, faith is necessary for people to embrace that good news for themselves. Faith expresses the embracing of the new world, a new outlook, and we express that faith in our commitment to it renewed again and again.

Repentance and faith in these terms involve an internal transformation. In the story of the woman who lived an immoral life and who sought out Jesus (Luke 7:36-50), we find that repentance, faith, love and forgiveness constitute a whole process of human liberation, a picture of the transformation which the kingdom offers -- not only the promise but the reality of new beginning which is *conversion*, or a whole new beginning. It is a changed intellectual position, an outlook as in posture, not only in Mind but in heart; not only in world view but in behavior, not only in thought but in actions.

Conversion is a basic change in life's direction. It is always turning away from old values/habits and turning towards the values of new age. It begins with repentance and proceeds to faith. Conversion begins with the individual but is always for the sake of the world. And this process happens again and again in small and big ways. We are weak and prone to sin. So we need to confess our sins again and again and resolve to live new lives -- again and again.

John R. W. Stott in his DOCTRINE OF CONVERSION says,

*'Mission' is the loving service which God sends his people into the world to render. It includes both evangelism and social action, for each is in itself an authentic expression of love and neither needs the other to justify it. Yet because of the appalling lostness of man there is an insistent urgency about our evangelistic task - the faithful proclamation of the good news -- with 'salvation' which its goal is personal freedom through Christ,...*  
**Conversion** denotes the response which the good news demands and without which salvation cannot be received....

## IMPLICATIONS OF CONVERSION

1. **Lordship of Christ** - repentance and faith are the twin demands of the gospel; both constitute conversion, element of repentance was prominent in the Lord's message (Mk 1:15, Luke 13:3, 5) and of his apostles (Acts 2:38, 3:19, 17:30); a new life in Christ will inevitably bring in its wake new attitudes, new ambitions and new standards. (2 Cor. 5:17).
2. **Church membership** - Christian conversion introduces people into the Christian community, gathers them into the worshipping community, the teaching community and the community of service to all men; in the Bible, God is seen as calling out a people for himself, a people to be distinct from the world in their convictions and standards while remaining immersed in it, Peter's summons was not only to repent and believe but to be baptized.... saved and added to the new community of the Spirit (Acts 2;40-47).
3. **Social responsibility** - commitment to Christ involves commitment to the world to which and for which he came; conversion envisages a double movement: turning away from preoccupations with one's own interest and turning towards the interests of the neighbor (Philippians 2:3).
4. **Work of the Spirit** - no person can turn nor save his own self; no person can turn or save another; only the Holy Spirit can open a person's eyes, enlighten his/her darkness, liberate him/her from bondage, turn him/her to God and bring him/her out of death into life; Repentance and faith are declared in the NT as duty of men (Acts 2:38, 16:31,17:30) but they are also the gift of God (Acts 11:18, Eph. 2:8, Phil. 1:29)

A classic biblical example of conversion is that experienced by Paul the Apostle (Acts 9). Originally named Saul of Tarsus, he was a prominent Pharisee who despised and hated the Christians. He believed in his mind and heart that the teachings of Jesus Christ was a blasphemy against the God that he believed in. He led the persecutions against the Christians.

But God, through Jesus Christ, intervened to convince him that he was wrong. On the road to Damascus, Saul of Tarsus had warrants of arrests for all professed Christians there. But then, Jesus Christ appeared to him in a bright light and spoke to him. There he was converted and he changed his name to Paul. He became the leading apostle, a pioneer missionary and planted many churches, fulfilling the Great Commission to make all nations Christ's Disciples.

Paul's pioneering work as a missionary and evangelist to all peoples paved the way to the conversion of the whole Roman empire into Christianity. We know this now as the Roman Catholic Church.

The goal of Biblical conversion is not to save souls apart from history but to bring the Kingdom of God into the world with explosive force; it begins with individuals but is for the sake of the world. Conversion marks the birth of the movement out of a merely private existence into a public consciousness. It is the beginning of active solidarity with the purposes of the Kingdom of God in the world. The gospel of the kingdom sparks a fundamental change in every life and is an intrusion into any social order, be it first-century culture or our 20th century world. Evangelism then, calls for and expects a radical change in behavior and lifestyle.

## SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. Questions for Discussion:
  - a) Repentance and faith are said to be both external and internal. How can the two go together? Does not one follow the other?
  - b) How do we bring about change and transformation internally and externally? Name some examples of internal change as well as external change. Cite examples from what you have seen in other persons/ groups of people.
  - c) Share with the group your experiences of repentance and conversion. what was life like before repentance and conversion? What helped you to see what was wrong and how did it happen? Where do you think God was in the process?

- d) Does each of us need to receive a call from God and be converted? What is a call from God like? How do we know it is God calling? Explain. Share. Cite examples in other persons you know about.
  - e) What are the contemporary implications of repentance? Conversion? Include in the sharing the many times this happened in your life or another person's life.
2. In groups of four, discuss the following questions among themselves.
    - a) What are the contemporary implications of: "repentance", "conversion", "Lordship of Jesus Christ" in your life as individuals? in our life as the body of Christ? in the present age?
    - b) What is the meaning of the phrase "conversion by the Holy Spirit"?
  3. Illustrations of Conversions:
    - a) On two sheets of Manila paper, draw or paste pictures of people who need conversion on one manila paper and on the other what ought to happen to them after conversion/ transformation.
    - b) On two Manila paper, draw or paste pictures of creation that need conversion/transformation and on the other how God intended creation to be.
  4. Testimonies/Interview: Invite a person who has been converted from one religion/denomination to another. (ex. Muslim to Christian, or Roman Catholic to Protestantism, or Protestantism to Charismatic), if two or more persons are available, let them give their testimonies on separate sessions so one will not know the Testimonies of the other two.
  5. Interview persons who have been converted from bad to good, or who were able to stop smoking, or who stopped being an alcoholic. Let them share with the class how they feel after their "conversion", what they are doing now in terms of work, and how their relationship with others are faring.
  6. Dramatize the story of the Apostle Paul (Saul), on the road to Damascus. Let them write their own script, if possible. Present this on one Sunday to the Congregation as the message.
  7. Sing the song "God's Love".

***"God's Love"***

*Something happened to my heart  
The day that I met Him  
Something that I never felt before  
Now He's always on my mind  
No matter what/do  
And every day it seems I love Him more.*

***Chorus:***

*God's love is warmer than the warmest sunshine, softer than a sigh;  
God's love is deeper than the deepest ocean, higher than the sky;  
God's love is brighter than the brightest star that shines every night above.  
And there is nothing in this world that can ever change God's love.*

*I used to think God's love  
was meant for anyone else but me  
I used to think He'd never come my way  
But now it only goes to show  
How wrong we all can be;  
And now I want to serve Him everyday. (chorus)*

*People always talk of love but never seem to feel,  
They face the world and say that things are fine  
But deep, I think, must run the thought that it is not for real  
And I hope that they will realize in time (chorus)*

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John R. W. Stott, *Doctrine of Conversion*.

Jim Wallis, *The Call to Conversion*.

## LESSON 6: THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

### D. THE CHRISTIAN AT WORSHIP

#### OBJECTIVES:

1. Persons preparing for membership in the church will be guided in their understanding of and participation in meaningful worship
2. They will be able to discover the biblical foundations of Christian worship and trace its roots and development.
3. They will become excited about ways of worship which are different from the usual experience they have on Sunday morning or other times.
4. They will be able to plan for themselves and with each other orders of worship, especially for their own Confirmation Service.

#### BIBLICAL TEXTS

Isaiah 6; Acts 2:42-47

#### FACILITATOR'S NOTES

Worship is the single most important activity that a church has during a given week. The central aim of worship is to give to God glory. But flowing from the worship of God is the growth and enrichment of human life. As the congregation gathers regularly for worship, it dramatizes its oneness as the body of Christ or the people of God.

Worship is an expression of our religious faith. When we seek meaning and values only within the confines of our immediate needs and situations in life, life tends to be empty, aimless, and meaningless. Religious faith needs a life that is lived on a deeper plane and within a context of broader values, which worship is to provide.

Worship is the primary human experience that conveys, shapes, and reinforces religious conviction. Worship is important, therefore, because it is the point in our lives where we celebrate everything that gives meaning to life. It expresses our ultimate concerns, nurtures our ideals, and focuses upon human life as it is meant to be. It is the occasion of our seeking God and God finding us. It is an occasion of our seeking unity with God and other human beings. Worship ought to be that moment of life in which we act out all that gives meaning, purpose, and direction to every dimension of human relationships, personal and social.

Worship will fulfill its humanizing and life-giving role more readily when it is rooted where people live and search for meaning. The relationship of faith to life will be seen more readily when worship probes the depths of life lived. Life will have clearer direction when worship leads us to God, who is present in the depths of existence urging us forward to the realization of human possibilities.

Although worship centers upon God, indeed, God is central in worship, it needs to be defined in a way that underscores God's presence, God's actions in humanizing life and building the world into the Kingdom.

Worship therefore is not to escape from this world, to look for God at the edge of life, at the threshold of another world, but to celebrate God in the depths of this world, in mundane affairs, at the very center of life, calling us to a new future or creative possibilities.

Therefore, utilizing its rich heritage of myth and symbol, Christian worship is an encounter with life at its deepest level of meaning; a celebration of God as a dynamic, active, energizing presence at the heart of life; an affirmation that life has ultimate significance, for in Jesus we discover what it means to be fully human; a response to live a



resurrection life of newness and future possibility, of growth and becoming, to take part in building a new world — a world of justice, peace and love.

*Harold M. Daniels, "What To Do With Sunday Morning"*

## **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF WORSHIP**

**Isaiah 6** - the order of worship

**Acts 2:42** - the component parts of worship

**Ephesians 1:3-6** - Worship is to praise God and that the chief end of humans is to glorify God and enjoy God forever.

**Col. 3:17; Matt. 18:20; John 14:14,15:16; 16:23** - worship has to be in Christ's name.

**Neb. 7:23-25, 9:25, 10:19-22, 13:15** - worship is to be according to God's Word and in obedience to God's Word and in Christ's name, worship is more than the mere human work. It is the work of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:15-27, Rom. 8:15, Acts4:25, Ep1h35:119). Even preaching has to be in the Spirit (Mark :1)

**I Cor. 14:1-6** - everything in worship is to edify the church, that is, it should teach or build up the church.

**I Cor. 10:16-17, 11:17-22** - it is in coming together for worship that we become the church. It is here that we are united together into one body by God's Spirit, that we are made participants in the coming Kingdom.\*

*(Hughes Oliphant Old, Guides to the Reformed Tradition)*

## **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE WORSHIP**

People who have experienced worship know when they were faithful to God, and when they were not. But all of life has possibilities for an encounter with the Eternal. This is our constant hope.

In the worship service, the whole community gathers together as one body as God's people and in their corporate acts they present their varied needs and concerns. The words "service to God" comes from the Greek word *Leitourgeia* which means "work of the people". This includes the people's response to God in worship, bringing into it the joys, pains, hopes and fears of all their work and all of life.

*(Niguidula, Celebration.)*

When we give ourselves completely to God we find that the following experiences come to us.

1. We think of God, how holy God is, how mighty God is, how good God is. We recall all that we know about God and then have the feeling of how great God is -- much greater than we can imagine. Christians call this act adoration.
2. Then, our thoughts turn to ourselves. Having seen God's holiness, we see more sharply our own unholiness. When we see ourselves in God's light, we see our failures, our weaknesses, our sins. We realize that we have not measured up to God's expectations for us. In humility we ask God to forgive us, to let us start afresh. In worship this is repentance or confession.
3. Our Biblical heritage and Jesus' saving acts assure us of abundant love. God forgives our past sins and releases us from our old selves. This glorious feeling of being cleansed again by God's and pardon reconciles us to God, our fellow human beings and God's creation.
4. We are now ready to hear what God's will is for our lives. . God has a message for us and we listen and reflect upon it. This is the proclamation of God's word and will for us.
5. We accept God's challenge. We promise to be true to the new light God has given us. This is our dedication, our acceptance of God's will. And God's will for us is to be concerned about others and God's creation by offering our lives once again to God and God's service.

## **THE ORDER OF WORSHIP**

*(This order may be changed according to occasion, theme, need of the hour as is needed in contemporizing worship)*

**a. We turn our thoughts toward God**

Prelude

(quiet music or complete silence that helps us to turn our thought toward God).

Opening Sentence or Quiet Meditation --

In the Name of the Creator God, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen. (We acknowledge God and God's presence.)

**b. We Feel Our Unworthiness and ask for God's Forgiveness**

Confession of Sin --

"Almighty and most merciful God, we humble ourselves before you, under a deep sense of our unworthiness and guilt." or something of this essence, fitted to the occasion

Assurance of Pardon --

The Pastor says, "I announce and declare, by the authority and in the name of Christ, that your sins are forgiven."

**c. We Listen and Learn What God Wants Us to Do**

The Holy Scriptures

(which tell what God does for us and wants us to do).

The Apostle's Creed

(We request the Affirmation of Faith of our faith ancestors or our own declaration of our beliefs.)

Message in Song or the Anthem

(in which we thank God for God's goodness, remember all who need God, and seek to know . and do God's will).

Sermon

(in which the minister/preacher explains what God does for us, and what God wants us to do).

**d. We Give Ourselves to God's Will and Care**

We renew our commitment to God and our faith, manifesting itself in our new life.

Offering

(in which we offer our gifts, tithes, pledges, farm products, etc., and ourselves to the service of God and people)

Hymn of Dedication/Consecration to God's will

(We offer ourselves - and all that we are and have -- to God and in serving others.)

Benediction

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen." or something similar, fitted for the occasion.

Postlude

**SYMBOLISM OF COLORS AND LITURGICAL SEASONS**

**Hangings** on altars, lectern and pulpit are to a church, while curtains and drapes are to a home. Whenever they appear in churches, the changing colors attract, add variety and point to the significance of the season or the festival. The same colors are used for the pastor's or liturgist's stoles.

**Violet** is used in Advent and Lent. It denotes penitence and mourning. It also signifies royalty referring to the King of Kings or the Prince of Peace.

**Red** depicts divine zeal on the day of Pentecost, a reminder of the tongues of fire that alighted on the believer's heads, and refers also to the bloodshed by of the martyrs of the church.

**White** is used at Christmastide and Eastertide, symbolizing light, joy, glory and perfection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Green is the universal color of nature, signifying hope and life — new life. It is used during Kingdomtide.

**Black** is the color of darkness, grief and sorrow and used only during Good Friday.

## **THE CHURCH SACRAMENTS**

You probably do not remember your own baptism. Either it took place when you were quite young. But you have seen others baptized. Why the water? What does it mean? One boy said he thought baptism was just a way of giving a baby a name. is 'that all it is? Some people speak of baptism as "christening". Why? All Christians speak of it as a sacrament. What is a sacrament?

Doubtless, you have been in church when the Lord's Supper was served. You have noticed that the service is somewhat different from the usual order of worship. At a given point all take bread and eat it, and then drink from a cup or small glass. Why do they do this? Why the bread and wine? If members of the church are ill, the pastor will give them communion in their home. Why does he/se do this? We speak of the Lord's Supper too as a sacrament. What is a sacrament?

### **WHAT Do WE MEAN BY "SACRAMENT"?**

The word sacrament meant merely "something sacred". Sacrament was a sacred vow that a Roman soldier took when he joined the army. Sacrament was the money deposited in a sacred place beforehand by the two parties in a lawsuit. In time Christians used it when they speak of what was sacred to them. Bernard of Clairvaux, the monk who called men to set out upon the Second Crusade, speak of ten sacraments. Another church leader who lived about the same time mentioned only five. The Roman Catholic church today speaks of seven sacraments. We, in our own denomination, along with other Protestants, have only two sacraments -- Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

### **THE SACRAMENTS WERE INSTITUTED BY JESUS.**

Both Baptism and the Lord's Supper go back to Jesus himself what he did, as well as, what he said.

You remember how, when he left his carpenter shop in Nazareth, he went forth into the river Jordan and was baptized by John. This was the beginning of his ministry. It was then that he consecrated himself wholly to God's will, that he felt surer than ever before of his nearness to the Father. After he had gone, the early Church remembered him as saying to them: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

You know also, how on Thursday evening of that last week of Jesus' life, just before his arrest, he and his disciples gathered in an upper room for the Last Supper together. This is a scene that Christians have never forgotten. Everytime we observe the Lord's Supper we call this scene to mind. Our Lord himself began this observance, and he himself told us to keep it up in remembrance of him and as we wait for his coming. (I Corinthians 11:23b-26, Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:19-20).

### **SYMBOLISM IN THE SACRAMENTS**

Both Baptism and the Lord's Supper are symbolic acts. They stand for something spiritual.

In Baptism we see that water is used. But, there is much that we do not see. We do not see the repentance and the consecration of the adult person who is being baptized. In infant baptism we do not see the hopes and dreams and plans of the parents as they bring their baby to God and the Church. We do not see the Christian Church of which the child or grown person is becoming a member, for it goes around the world and back through the ages. We do not see God's gracious love reaching out to forgive the sins of the adult and make her/him clean and pure, or to make and keep the baby pure and good.

In the Lord's Supper, we see the bread and wine (or grape juice). But again, there is much that we do not see. We do not see, the many hearts whose cares and worries grow less, as God's love in Jesus becomes real to them, in the breaking of the bread. Nor do we see the many hearts, in which new resolutions are being made, to follow Jesus wherever he would have them go. We do not see the spirit indwelling human hearts. We do not see God's gracious love, continually seeking out to make and keep us pure -- the love which was made so clear to people when our Lord's body was broken and his bloodshed on the cross.

We, therefore, believe that a sacrament is a sacred observance coming from God and combining something seen with something unseen. As quoted from the Evangelical Catechism it says, "A sacrament is a holy ordinance of the Church, instituted by Christ himself, in which by visible signs and means he imparts and preserves the new life"

### **WHAT BAPTISM MEANS**

*"In Holy Baptism God imparts the gifts of the new life unto a person, receives her/him into God's fellowship as God's child, and admits her/him as a member of the Christian Church".*

When the one being baptized confesses her/him faith in Christ and resolves to give up whatever is evil in his/her life, then God through the Holy Spirit opens the way into a new life. This Christian way of life takes place in the Church, and it is through a minister of the Church of Jesus Christ that the new Christian is received into this great fellowship. So often, as we witness a baptism, we think only of the visible participants -- the candidate for baptism and the minister. But unless God is active in the process it is not complete, it is not sacred, it is not a sacrament.

### **CHURCH PRACTICES IN BAPTISM**

The churches use water in baptism to represent the inner cleansing of a person's life. Just as his/her body is made clean with water, so he/she is to become clean within as he/she begins the new life of a Christian. Read Ezekiel 36:25-27 and see how, even in Old Testament times, water had this meaning. John the Baptist, of course, is best known for practicing baptism to help prepare the way for the coming of the Saviour. The Christian Church has also used the symbolism of water in baptism throughout the centuries.

In our church it is our custom to sprinkle or pour some water over the head of the child/person being baptized. Or, the person goes down the stream or tank of water until he/she is completely covered. This is called immersion. Do you think it makes any difference how much water is used or what process is practiced? Why?

In some churches the baptismal font is placed inside the main entrance. They say that baptism is a sign of entrance into the Christian Church; therefore, to have the baptism occur at the door of the church makes the act even more symbolic. Most of our churches have it in front, in full view of the worshipping congregation. What is the symbolism of this?

### **WHAT DOES LORD'S SUPPER MEAN**

"The Lord's Supper is the sacrament by which we receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ as the nourishment of our new life, strengthen the fellowship with Christ and all believers, confess that he died for us and wait for his coming again. As we eat and drink in the Lord's Supper, we receive forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. For so it is written: "Broken and shed for you for the remission of sins." We receive the blessings of the Lord's Supper only as we eat and drink with heartfelt repentance and true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

You will want to read for yourself the oldest account we have, of how the Lord's Supper was begun. (See I Corinthians 11:23-25) This event took place the night before Jesus was crucified (when his body was broken and his blood was shed on the cross). Ever since that time, the bread and the wine recalled for Christians our Lord's death on the cross: There also God's love for humankind was shown most clearly. Can you see why many people feel closer to Jesus and to God in the Lord's Supper than at any other times?

Sometimes the Lord's Supper is called the Eucharist. Eucharist comes from a Greek word meaning "thanksgiving". For what should we be especially thankful in the communion service?

Are there any others with whom we might feel a close fellowship or communion? What about the other Christians in the sanctuary who are joining with us in this solemn observance? What about other Christians who are at the

same moment or at other times joining this observance? What about those who have gone before us, "the whole glorious company of the redeemed of all ages who have died in the Lord, and now live with him forevermore"? How about those whose varied status, age class, political lines, gender, hobbies and interest, come together before the table of the Lord.

Some churches use wine, and others use unfermented grape juice. Some use ordinary bread, and other use bread made without yeast into thin round wafers. Do you think it makes any difference which elements are used? But Jesus did use bread, ordinary bread of that time.

### SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1. **Opinionaire:** Give each one a copy on which they can write their responses. Otherwise, write the statements on the board and the participants can write on the "answer sheets".

Encircle your choice/opinion with regard to the following statements --

- a. Worship is the people's response to an awareness of the presence of God.  
 Agree                       Disagree
- b. Worship takes place on Sundays only.  
 Agree                       Disagree
- c. Worship can only be done inside the Church.  
 Agree                       Disagree
- d. Worship follows a certain order or movement.  
 Agree                       Disagree
- e. Christmas, Lent, Kingdomtide are
  - 1) seasons in the Church year
  - 2) holidays
- f. We use colored hangings in our church
  - 1) as decoration
  - 2) to mean and say something
  - 3) to beautify
- g. Kneeling in church means
  - 1) praise
  - 2) humility
- h. We have
  - 1) one
  - 2) two
  - 3) sevensacraments in Church.
- i. Baptism involves
  - 1) the person baptized and God
  - 2) the person baptized and the church
  - 3) all three
- j. Water in baptism symbolizes

- 1) life
  - 2) cleansing
  - 3) chaos
- k. The Lord's Supper was started by
- 1) the early church
  - 2) Jesus
  - 3) the disciples
- l. The Lord's Supper
- 1) remembers Jesus' sacrifice
  - 2) means thanksgiving
  - 3) means fellowship
  - 4) all three
- m. Baptism was commanded by
- 1) John the Baptist
  - 2) Jesus
  - 3) the disciples
- n. Baptism is practiced in order to
- 1) give the baptized a name
  - 2) receive the baptized into the fellowship of the church
  - 3) open to the baptized the way to a new life
2. **Reflection/Discussion:** After everyone is through, group them in 3's or 4's to share and discuss their responses. Then let each group present a summary of their answers as well as questions raised. Then explain that you will be discussing and clarifying these things in your study of worship and sacraments.
  3. **Bible Study:** To introduce the subject of the order of worship, let the participants study in small groups Isaiah 6:1-8. This is the Jewish format. Then let them present in drawings or mime the different stages of Isaiah's experience of God's presence and his response to it (adoration, confession, etc.). Also study Acts 2:42 which practices the Lord's Supper, thus, making the practice Christian.
  4. **Color Explanation:** Have a set of colored cards on which are printed in big letters the different seasons of the church year, with the colors corresponding to the seasons. Put them upon the board, talk or lay them on the floor. Let the participants stand and move around the cards (if they are on the floor) or go to the board and pick up one card each. Have two participants share one card. Let the pair explain to the class what they know about the season. Another pair clarify or add to their understanding if there is another card of same color. Then let them arrange the cards in their chronological order on the board, for as many cards as there are available.
  5. **Acting Out:** Divide the participants into two groups and assign them one of the following sets of passages.
    - a. Luke 3:1-18; 21-22 "John the Baptizer"; Matthew 28:19-20 "Discipling the Nations"
    - b. Matthew 14:13-21 "Jesus Feeds Five Thousand"; I Corinthians 11:23-29 "Remembering the Lord's Supper"

Let them imagine and share in their smaller group what the characters in the stories (Jesus, John, the crowd, the soldiers, the tax collectors, the disciples, etc.) must have felt at the time. Each one may focus on one character. Then let them act the story out with feeling before the other group. Have a discussion of the meaning of the present day practice of the church in celebrating the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
  6. **Research:** Let them inquire from adults or parents their understanding of "Baptism" and "Lord's Supper". Group them for sharing. Summarize group reports and let them research still on the additional meanings.

Have them observe these sacraments practised in Church. Share reflections after the event especially on the most meaningful, touching part.

7. Work out a possible order of worship for Confirmation Liturgy. Study together as a class or in small groups what parts will be needed in a liturgy like that. Consider the congregation that will be present, the possible weather of that day, and then proceed to outline the worship service.

Think of the symbolism and meaning of each part you will want to include and plan them in such a way that they will be meaningful to you and to all who will be there. Above all, keep in mind the presence and participation of God in such a worship act.

#### **PRAYER FOR HOLINESS OF LIFE**

*O God, the God of all goodness and of all grace, who are worthy of a greater love than we can either give or understand, fill our hearts, we beg You, with such love towards You, that nothing may seem too hard for us to do or to suffer in obedience to Your will; and grant that thus loving You we may become daily more like You, and finally obtain the crown of life which You have promised to those that love You, through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

*19th century Harnham Hostel Manual*

## **LESSON 6: THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN**

### **E. THE CHRISTIAN IS A WITNESS**

#### **OBJECTIVES**

1. To let the participants share their own understanding of the word "witness."
2. To let the participants discover the biblical meaning of witnessing
3. To help the participants reflect on the meaning of and their responsibility to witness in our present situation.
4. To inspire the participants to witness in word and deed: as an individual or a member of a group or organization.

#### **BIBLICAL TEXTS**

Matthew 28:17-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:44-48; Acts 1:8, 21-22

#### **FACILITATOR'S NOTES:**

Perhaps our children in the church do not quite understand the word "witness". So the session can start by drawing out their understanding of the word before they study the biblical meaning of it.

Today, the word "witness" is more often used in the legal sense to refer to a person who has seen or witnessed an accident or a crime and is asked to talk or testify before the court what s/he had seen or witnessed. The legal meaning of "witness", therefore, is not too different from the Christian meaning of the word.

Christians are witnesses to the event of Christ's presence and power in the world as it moves in an individual's life, in the community, and even in the whole created world. Certainly, God had already been at work in the world in the beginning, but with Christ's coming people's eyes were made to clearly see God's presence and power in the world. This was especially proven in the event of Christ's resurrection or the first Easter. Because they witnessed Christ raised from death, the disciple's faith in him as Lord and Savior was strengthened and their doubts disappeared. And because of this faith and trust in Jesus they became open channels for his power to flow through them. This power came in the form of the Holy Spirit which made them bold to witness about Jesus for the first time on Pentecost Day.

It was also the Holy Spirit which gave them the power to leach, heal, and cast out demons. Because of what the disciples spoke and did more people believed in Jesus as their Lord and Savior and more people became his

followers and witnesses. This process of believing and witnessing through the centuries has resulted in the birth of the church, its spread from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and throughout the world including our own country. Our grandparents became believers through the witness of the American missionaries and our parents became Christian through the witness of our grandparents and so the movement has gone on.

Today we are called to continue the task of witnessing to Christ. What does this mean in our time?

First of all, the task of witnessing must be guided by what we are witnessing to (content) and where or to whom we are witnessing (context). Jesus preached, taught and healed people in their context and according to their needs. So also are we called to witness to Jesus to our brothers and sisters in our society in their present situation and needs.

What are these needs? Majority of our people in our country today are victims of physical diseases, economic poverty, political injustices and corruption, moral, cultural and religious crises and bankruptcy. So as witnesses to Jesus who came that we might have abundant life we need to take a stand for physical psychological health, economic prosperity, political peace and justice and religious and cultural wholeness. This means being aware of the problems in these areas of the personal and social life of our brothers and sisters, being sympathetic and empathetic with them and doing what we can do in word and in action to change the situation towards Jesus' vision of the Kingdom of God.

Our tasks can include sharing with a classmate or a friend about our personal experience of having been helped or empowered by Jesus or contributing money for the funds of victims of natural calamities or victims of inhuman treatment of a company. We can pray for the local and national officials, speak out where they do wrong and support deserving candidates during elections. We can visit shut-ins or practice/ promote pranic healing and other oriental ways of promoting health, or be simply earth-friendly and protective.

We can maintain our personal devotional life as well as be active as leaders and participants in our church's program to reach out and to witness to our community. We can do small things or big things, personal or social, visible and invisible, and we will be witnessing to Christ if our words and actions speak and demonstrate Christ's loving power and presence for others through us, his witnesses.

Witnessing negatively can take place in the kinds of words and expressions that automatically come out of our lips -- in curses, vulgarities, and profanities. As Jesus had pointed out, it is what comes of our mouths that makes a person clean or unclean. (Matthew 15:10-11). We also witness through the kinds of events we enjoy or despise, the people we like and don't like, what makes us happy, what makes us sad, or angry. In all these, persons around us will know who we are, what our values are, and the kind of Lord we believe in. Yes! Our witnessing of *whose we are*, has to be seen in both personal, individual lives and also in our historical, communal lives as the Christian community.

As Christians, we are to develop a kind of spirituality that enjoys Christian fellowship but does not neglect our responsibility to those outside the church. This is our Christian witness.

This duty is to be a witness to Jesus Christ, and to seek all available means to spread to others the saving knowledge of our Saviour. Our confirmation includes this task. When the Minister lays his hand on your head, it is not only to assure you of God's blessing but to commission you to go forth into the world as a witness to Jesus Christ. You and the other lay members are out there in the world and it is your responsibility to witness there.

But how do you witness?

1. **By your prayers.** Your prayers of supplication and intercession for others in the world will evolve out of an earnest concern for the conditions of life out there.
2. **By your example.** You can talk a great deal about faith and God but if you do not show it in what you are, your words will have little effect. Your humility and unselfishness, your calmness and the control of your tongue will witness a great deal to what you believe and who you are.
3. **By your personal Testimony.** Love persons, not things. Be tactful, be discreet and courteous. Spend time with others. Be patiently waiting for an opportunity to tell others humbly and simply what Christ means to you' and what it means to start a new life.



4. **By your Church work. Every** member is a church worker, not only the minister. The Church is a community with work for everyone, no matter how simple, humble and seemingly insignificant. There are also greater responsibilities like teaching, visiting, singing in the choir, serving in committees. Use your talents and serve.
5. **By your gifts.** The free will offering of your money is a manifestation of the joyful dedication of yourself to Christ. Let your giving be systematic, sacrificial and thoughtful and remember to be cheerful.
6. **By your service in the community.** Christianity has always pioneered in social service through the years. There are still very many opportunities left for Christians to help in voluntary social service or in services planned and organized by you and others like you. There is a great need also to be involved in local government and civic leadership-- o be sure let it be a different kind of service and leadership. It is a calling to love and a testimony to the source of love, Jesus Christ himself.

Here then is the balance of the Christian life. We pray that every confirmation candidate, having begun to tread the Christian way by wholehearted, personal commitment to Jesus Christ, may bring honor to her/his Lord and Saviour by her/his deepening Christian belief and shining Christian behavior.

*Adapted, J.R.W. Sott, Your Confirmation*

### **SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

1. Let the participants share their understanding of the word "witness" with a partner. Then let them share it with the whole group by acting it out with their partner or by giving a definition of it.
2. Have two (2) sets of partners form a group of 4 and read the biblical texts for this lesson and answer the following questions:
  - a) what do the texts tell you about witnessing?
  - b) How were the disciples supposed to witness?
  - c) To whom will you witness today? How?

Let the small group share their answers with the whole class. Deepen their sharing with a discussion.

3. Let the whole class make a collage by gathering their individual drawings or slogans expressing practical and concrete ways of witnessing today.
4. Have a closing worship meditation by singing "Go Tell Everyone". Have a quiet reflection on the song followed by spontaneous sentence prayers from the participants.
6. Let each one start a DIARY or a Daily Logbook where s/he would write down each night where and how s/he "witnessed \* or failed to witness, through deeds, words, or attitude as s/he recalls the day's events and encounters. These may be shared in the class' act of worship either as an act of praise or thanksgiving or repentance and penitence.

*Adapted: Trueblood, The Company of the Committed.*

### **GO TELL EVERYONE**

*God's Spirit is in my heart  
 God has called me and set me apart  
 This is what I have to do,  
 What I have to do.*

*Chorus:  
 God sent me to preach the good news to the poor  
 Tell prisoners that they are prisoners no more  
 Tell blind people that they can see  
 And set the downtrodden free  
 And go tell everyone  
 The news that the Kingdom of God has come*

*And go tell everyone the news  
that God's Kingdom has come.*

*Just as the Father sent me  
So I'm sending you out to be  
My witness throughout the world  
The whole of the world.*

## **LESSON 6: THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN**

### **F. THE CHRISTIAN LIVES IN AND FOR COMMUNITY**

#### **OBJECTIVES**

1. Confirmation class participants will be able to bridge the meaning of God's intention to establish a global community of SHALOM and the life of the members of the church.
2. They will gain a deeper and broader understanding of the meaning of fellowship, relatedness, togetherness, or community.
3. They will begin to live out this community as a class of confirmands even while they are still preparing to become full members of the church.
4. They will gain a practical understanding of what it means to share belongings, to care for each other's pains, and to bear one another's burdens.

#### **BIBLICAL TEXTS**

Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-35; Galatians 6:1-10; Ephesians 1:9-12, 2:19-22

#### **FACILITATOR'S NOTES:**

How did the Early Christians live in communities? Christians at the beginning were associated with a particular pattern of life. Their faith produced a discernable lifestyle of life, a way of life, a process of growth visible to all. The first Christians had clear social results. They became well-known as a caring, sharing, and open community that was especially sensitive to the poor and the outcast. Their love for God, for one another and for the oppressed was central to their reputation. Their refusal to kill, to recognize racial distinctions, or to bow down before the imperial deities was a matter of public knowledge. According to Aristides' description before the Roman emperor:

*"They love one another, they never fail to help widows; they save orphans from those who would hurt them. If they have something they give freely to the man who has nothing; if they see a stranger, they take him home, and are happy, as though he were a real brother. They don't consider themselves brothers in the usual sense, but brothers instead through the Spirit, in God."*

To follow Jesus meant to share Jesus' life and to share it with others. From the beginning, the kingdom would be made manifest through a people who shared a common life. Their visible fellowship would be the sign and the first fruits of God's new order begun in Jesus Christ. Those who had left every-thing to follow Jesus were given the gift of community with one another. Henceforth they would belong to Jesus and be inextricably bound together as brothers and sisters in the family of God. The call of Jesus was not only to a new commitment; it was also to a new companionship, a new community established by conversion. The fervent character of Christian love spilled over the boundaries of their own communities and extended to all in need. The economic sharing practiced by the Early Christians together with their generosity toward the poor was one of the most evangelistic characteristics of their life. Radical, practical love became the key to their public reputation.

*(Jim Wallis. The Call to Conversion. 1981)*

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul talks about the purpose of Christianity or what God's intention is in sending Christ into the world. Three ideas come out very strongly in this letter:

1. God did and still does have a purpose and that is, all will dwell together in unity and community, humans and all other creation.
2. The people God created were to be united first with God, and then to one another until a unity of God and human beings is created, one body in whom the Spirit dwells.
3. The only reason for human beings in life is to live for the praise of God's glory and in this, all people are called to be one and to have the same goal.

In fact, this is the goal of all pastoral work and that is to form communities which live for God. And Christianity is to help persons change from self-centeredness and self-sufficiency to building and reinforcing social relationships. If Christianity in the world is the Church's goal, it is to form groups of Christian communities with certain principles accepted or certain values acquired, to have a relationship with Christ which are to lead them into communities. To build communities which make it possible for a person to live a Christian life, it is necessary to affirm three principles:

1. That a person's beliefs, attitudes, values and behavior patterns (and hence the person's Christianity) are formed to a great degree by his/her environment, and therefore the normal person needs a Christian environment if he/ she is going to live Christianity in a vital way.
2. That environmental factors are more basic than institutional factors in Christian growth and therefore the primary pastoral concern should be in forming Christian environments rather than in reforming Christian institutions, and
3. That when society as a whole cannot be expected to accept Christianity it is necessary to form communities within society to make Christian life possible.

### **BASIC CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES**

A basic Christian Community is a sample of how community may be achieved as it is an environment of Christians which can provide for the basic needs of its members to live the Christian Life. It is the smallest self-sustaining unit of Christian living. In it, the members can find on a regular basis all the basic needs a person has in order to be able to live as a Christian. The BCC has the following characteristics:

- a) It must be Christian. Christianity must be accepted in an open way by those in the grouping and it must be the openly accepted basis of everything that is done in it.
- b) It must be an environment. There must be interaction between the people in the social grouping that is personal, relationship-oriented and not just talk-oriented.
- c) It must be organized. In order for the grouping to meet the needs of its members, it must have enough organization for the members to be able to work together in service.
- d) It must be large enough. It should be larger than a small group because there are not enough resources in a small group.
- e) It must be local. The members are close enough to one another to be in regular contact, so that the grouping can meet their regular needs to live as Christians.
- f) It must be complete. It is not a specialized community, concerned with all of what is involved in being a Christian.
- g) It must have a unity. The basis for the life of the community which hold everyone together is Jesus Christ.

*Stephen Clark, Bask Christian Communities*

### **SUGGESTED LEARNING ACTIVITIES**

1. Comparative Study. What commonalities can you find in the Early church and your own church based on Acts 2:42- 47. Make a list of their life together in the early church and also, the present-day characteristics of the church.

2. Reflection. What are the possible factors or reasons why we have lost that visible style of life which gave the Early Christian communities its compelling power and authority.?
3. Draw, Sketch, make a Collage or Pantomime. Divide the class in small groups and let them present creatively Acts 2:42-47 or Acts 4:32-37. Or, let them choreograph, with their own song and dance based on the same texts. This can be integrated at worship, link with worship commit-tee or pastor at a midweek, vesper or Sunday worship whichever is possible.
4. Identify Church people's needs: Sickness, unemployment, hunger, rejection, needy, out-of-school, hooked on alcohol, smoke, drugs, gambling, pornography, elderly, shut-in, lonely. Envision, plan how Jesus' love can be experienced by them even in simple ways.
5. Share testimonies. How sharing each other's burdens. have been experienced or how sharing of belongings or goods have been done or practiced by certain Christian families and groups living now.
6. **Evaluation.** Have an assessment on how the Confirmation class is beginning to become a 'community' or is not showing any signs that it is becoming a community. Let the class evaluate their life together as a class. Look for signs of barriers to relationships which can be remedied or signs of hope which can be perpetuated.

**PRAYER FOR THOSE PREPARING TO BE CONFIRMED:**

*Look down, O Lord, in Your loving goodness upon all those who are preparing themselves for confirmation. May they turn to Your Son, Jesus Christ, in simple repentance, faith and surrender. Grant that what they thus secretly possess they may then openly profess, so that, having received Your Holy Spirit into their hearts by the hearing of faith, they may be assured thereof by the laying -on of hands, and go forth strengthened by Your grace to serve You in the fellowship of Your Church and of Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*Adapted, J.R.W. Stott*

**IV. THE CELEBRATION OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

**A. SERVICE OF CONFIRMATION AND RECEPTION INTO CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

*(All this is part of a Sunday Morning service. This may take place as part of the Act of Dedication or Commitment after the Sermon.)*

**PRESENTATION OF THE CANDIDATES FOR CONFIRMATION**

The following young people have studied God's Word, have learned the beliefs and practices of God's people, specifically in the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. They are here to declare their faith, and to be joined with us in the service of Jesus Christ and the community of faith .

**ADDRESS TO THE CONFIRMANDS** (by the Minister)

Hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit."

"Everyone who acknowledges me before people, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven."

Friends, Jesus Christ has chosen you, and in baptism, has joined you to himself. He has called you, together with us, into the Church, which is his body. Now, he has brought you to this moment and to this place, so you may confess his name before all people, and to go out to serve him as faithful disciples

**AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

Minister: Who is your Lord and Saviour?

Confirmands: Jesus Christ, my Lord and Saviour, the Son of God Almighty who created me.

Minister: Do you trust him?

Confirmands: Yes, with all that I am and hope to become. Yes!

Minister: Do you intend to be his disciple, to obey his Word, and to live out and show the world his Love?

Confirmands: Yes, the Spirit helping me.

Minister: Will you be a faithful member of this congregation, giving of yourself in every way, and will you seek the fellowship of the church wherever you may be, serving the needy wherever you are?

Confirmands: Yes, I will. So help me God.

Minister: *(To parents, guardians, sponsors)* As parents, guardians and sponsors, you have earned the right to participate in this confirmation service by placing your hands on your children's head or shoulders. For while it is true they are about to become full members of the Church, they will continue to need your support and your nurturing concern as they continue to mature in the faith.

Will you promise to do all in your capacity to continue to guide and nurture these young people in love and grace of God?

Response: I will and I promise, God helping me.

### **THE ACT OF CONFIRMATION**

*(The confirmands will kneel in front of the Minister and the Church elders; with their parents, guardians and/or sponsors behind them. The Minister and Elders together with parents/ guardians/sponsors will place their hands on the heads or shoulders of the confirmands.)*

### **THE CHARGE** (Minister) *(The congregation will stand)*

Friends, you are disciples of Jesus Christ. Hellas commissioned you. Live in his love, and serve him. And, be filled with gratitude. Let the message of Christ dwell among you in all its richness. Whatever you are doing, whether you speak or act, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Bless, O Lord, these your children whom we set apart today as your disciples, growing in faith and love, in Jesus' Name. Amen.

### **THE PRAYER BY THE CONGREGATION** (led by an Elder)

O God, our Creator: we praise you for calling us to be a servant people, and for gathering us into the body of Christ. We thank you for choosing to add to our community these young men and women of faith. Together, may we live in your Spirit, and so love one another, that we may have the mind of Jesus Christ our Saviour, to whom we give honor and glory forever. Amen.

### **THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP** (Minister and Elder)

*(The confirmands will rise and the parents will move to the side)*

Welcome to the ministry of Jesus Christ through this Church. Go, and serve the Lord.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

### **PRESENTATION OF THE CONFIRMATION CERTIFICATES AND SYMBOLS OF RECEPTION TO CHRIST'S BODY.**

#### **PRESENTATION TO THE CONGREGATION**

*(The Confirmands face the Congregation/parents and elders to the sides.)*

Minister: Friends, commend to your love and care these whom we today have received as maturing members of the Church.

Congregational Response:

We rejoice to recognize you as members of (name of Church),--and bid you welcome to the fellowship, life and ministry of this congregation. With you we renew our vows to uphold our ministry by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our service. May God help us all. Amen.

### **CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

*(Here the Lord's Supper will proceed as is the custom or as a special celebration for this occasion.)*

*Adapted, Sill/man University church, March 6, 1988*

### **PRAYER FOR OUR DAILY WORK**

*O Lord Jesus Christ, who at the carpenter's bench did manifest the dignity of honest labor, and gives to each of us our tasks to perform, help us to do our weekday work with readiness of mind and singleness of heart, not with eye-service as people-pleasers, but as Your servants, laboring heartily for You and not for anyone else, so that whatever we do, great or small, may be to the glory of Your Holy Name.*

## **IV. THE CELEBRATION OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

### **B. AN ORDER OF SERVICE FOR CONFIRMATION OF BAPTISM**

*At the designated time in the order of the worship service, the minister shall call the candidates for confirmation to come forward. Or the Chairperson of the Board of Elders will present to the minister and the Congregation the candidates for Confirmation. The candidates shall face the minister as they come forward and stand in front.*

#### **ADDRESS TO THE CONGREGATION AND THE CANDIDATES**

Minister: Friends, we are about to receive into full membership of the Church those persons whom we have called and who now stand before us. As infants, they were baptized in the Christian church and God laid the divine claim on each of them and in that act they were already received into the fellowship of the Church. Today, on their own, they come before you and before God, to confirm what was done for them at baptism and to confess their faith in Jesus Christ and claim him as the Lord and Saviour of their lives. In this act, they are also presenting themselves to God as instruments in Kingdom-building. In this act, they also wish to pledge with us as members of this church and the whole Church of God to be our co-workers and co-seekers after truth. Let us now hear from them their statements of faith and intention.

*(To the Candidates) Do you confess with us your faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord? And will you now make your confession of faith?*

#### **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

*(Here the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed, or the UCCP Statement of Faith or any contemporary creed which they have chosen may be read together by all. If the candidates have written their own statement of belief, they may use the same here instead of other creeds.)*

#### **CONFIRMATION OF BAPTISMAL VOWS**

Question: *(To the Candidates) Having confessed your faith in God Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; "and in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, do you now promise with the aid of the Holy Spirit to be Christ's faithful disciple to your life's end?*

Answer: I do.

Question: Do you confirm the vows taken for you in Baptism and with a humble and contrite heart put your whole trust in the mercy of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?

Answer: I do.

Question: Do you promise to make diligent use of the means of grace, to share faithfully in the worship and service of the church, to give of your substance as the Lord may prosper you, and to give your whole heart to the service of Christ and his Kingdom throughout the world?

Answer: I do.

Minister: *(To the Parents/Guardians/Sponsors)* May we now request the parents, guardians, sponsors- together with our church elders- to come forward and participate in the act of confirmation.

*(Parents, guardians, sponsors or special friends stand behind the candidates while the elders stand beside the minister in front of the candidates.)*

Friends, as parents, guardians and sponsors of these persons who are about to be confirmed, you have earned the right and privilege of laying your hands on these youth as a symbol of your love for them and concern for their continued growth and nurture in the Lord; thus, together with the church elders and the minister, you enter into a partnership with the Church in guiding these young people in the fellowship and mission of Christ's Church. Let us now attend to the act of confirmation.

Let us pray.

Eternal God, our loving Parent, we give you thanks for these your servants to whom you have granted knowledge of your Son Jesus Christ. Strengthen them now, we beseech you, by your Holy Spirit-the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge, piety, and godly fear. Enable them to be faithful members of your Church, continuing steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and the prayers. May they be faithful and effective in service and witness, enjoying their gifts for the common welfare as good stewards of your grace. Grant that, upholding the truth in love, they may grow up in every way unto him who is the head, even Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. Amen.

#### **THE ACT OF CONFIRMATION**

*(The candidates shall kneel and the minister, elders, parents and sponsors lay their hands on the heads or shoulders of the candidates.)*

Minister: The Lord defend you with his heavenly grace, and by his Spirit confirm you in the faith and fellowship of all true disciples of Jesus Christ. And may love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control be the Holy Spirit's gifts to you, this day and always. Amen.

*(Minister, parents, guardians, sponsors and elders lift their hands to bless the candidates.)*

Minister: O Lord God, great has been your kindness toward these persons whom you have brought to yourself in many different and wondrous ways. May they never cease to thank you and to glorify you for all that you have done for them. Help them to guard the rich deposit of faith with the help of the Holy Spirit who dwells with us, and make them strong in the grace which is theirs in Christ Jesus. Help them to witness mightily to your steadfast love. May the Spirit of Christ so fill their lives that all who come to know them shall be blessed and shall give glory to your name. In Christ's Name. Amen.

#### **THE LORD'S PRAYER (by all)**

#### **THE PRESENTATION OF CERTIFICATES OF CONFIRMATION**

*(The confirmands will rise, their parents/sponsors stand to the sides, certificates of confirmation are given to them and other tokens/symbols if any.)*

#### **THE RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP**

Minister and Elders: Receive our right hand of fellowship. *(The minister and elders shall extend their right hand of fellowship to each of the candidates, welcoming them to the community. The parents or guardians may give their children a kiss of peace and the right hand of fellowship.)*

## **PRESENTATION TO THE CONGREGATION**

*(The parents, guardians and sponsors shall return to their seats as the newly confirmed turn around and face the congregation. The congregation shall be asked to stand.)*

Minister: Beloved members of the body of Christ, I commend to your love and care these persons whom we this day receive into the membership of this congregation. Do all in your power to increase their faith, confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

Congregation: We rejoice to recognize you as members of Church, and bid you welcome to the fellowship of this congregation. With you we renew our vows to uphold them by our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our Service. May God help us. Amen.

## **BLESSING**

Minister: Go forth in peace and be of good courage; hold fast that which is good, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*or*

May God be within us to refresh us, around us to protect us, before us to guide us, and above us to bless us, now and in the days to come. Amen.

*(The candidates return to their seats and the service of worship continues.)*

*Adapted, Niguidula. Celebration.*

## **CONCLUSION**

... BUT THE JOURNEY TO DISCIPLESHIP is not over. Indeed, there could not be any conclusion to this activity, for every human being is always *on probation* before God. AU of life is a probationary period. .. always growing to maturity... always in the process of becoming.

It is God's purpose that while we are alive we are to continually turn to Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, and then through him grow into balanced, healthy, active, useful, happy, holy people. This is God's will for our lives. But this will cannot be fulfilled unless we cooperate. Every Christian must see herself/himself working hand in hand with God. And our greatest incentive is to know that we are collaborating with Jesus Christ in and through the work of the Holy Spirit, whose power and presence we are to acknowledge all our days.

Our prayer is that every confirmation candidate, having begun this journey of the Christian way by wholehearted, personal commitment to Jesus Christ, may bring honor to her/his Lord and Savior by her/his deepening Christian belief and her/his shining Christian behavior in all of life.

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