

# Discipleship Training

Prepared by Rev Dr Chris Walker  
National Consultant, Theology & Discipleship

## Contents

Introduction

Course outline

Comments from Minister involved in the first course

Sample advertising brochure

Leader's notes for the course

## Introduction

This discipleship training course was developed as a basic resource for local church ministers and other leaders wanting a flexible resource that will introduce people to what it means to live as a follower of Jesus Christ.

As indicated in the course outline that follows, there are four components to each of the 12 two hour sessions. These include biblical, theological, historical and practical components. It is desirable to change the sequence each week so that the pattern varies.

The 12 sessions can be conducted in a range of ways. It might be a two hour evening session. A few sessions could be held over a weekend. There could be 6 sessions then a break before completing the second half of the course. It is a matter of working out what suits the local context best.

Involving people in the course is important and in the second half of the course in particular people can take responsibility for leading sessions on subjects of interest to them.

Note that while a series of biblical passages is suggested, it is quite in order to replace one or more of the passages with others if that will help the local situation. There is a certain flow to the passages which include both Old and New Testament passages so alternative readings should still reflect this.

Similarly, in relation to the theological concepts, some of the concepts could be replaced by others. Again it is important to look at the coverage.

Rather than deal with church history as such, famous Christians are deliberately chosen. They provide inspiration to discipleship. Possible

people to learn about are suggested but it is up to those in the course to decide which ones to investigate. As part of learning about such famous Christians, it will be helpful to ask the question, "What do we learn about discipleship from this person?"

The practical sessions can also take into account the needs of the local group and involve different people in leading them. Again what is dealt with could vary from what follows.

In asking people to write a paper or lead a presentation the intention is to get them to do their own research. People may need to be encouraged to do this and told that they will not be faulted for grammatical or spelling mistakes. People do not necessarily need to present a paper. Other ways of leading the presentation should be fostered.

At the end of the course the personal conversation with people is very important. The two basic questions given at the end of the course outline provide the basis for the conversation. This enables both feedback on the course and invites people to consider what is possibly next for them in their discipleship.

This is a basic discipleship training course so it will be helpful to have some options for people to consider as a next step especially when conducting the conversation with people at the end of the course.

## Course Outline

### Introduction

This training course aims to equip people for Christian discipleship in the church and the world. It does this through teaching, sharing, encouraging and involving people. The emphasis is on growth in personal discipleship leading to more intentional involvement in ministry.

The course will involve 12 x 2 hour sessions. This could be 12 nightly sessions or include a one day component that could cover 2-3 of the sessions plus a meal. Each session will involve four different aspects in a 20-30 minute section. Active participation will be the approach using adult learning methods.

Included in the learning experiences which make up the course are the following:

- Developing strong spiritual awareness
- Considering foundational biblical passages
- Understanding our faith through attending to key theological concepts
- Being inspired by learning about famous Christians past and present
- Identifying gifts and thinking about one's role in ministry
- Enabling each person to be more confident in speaking and leading

- A paper will be prepared by each person on a topic of their choice in the area of a social issue, or a world religion, or a famous Christian.
- People will engage in and reflect upon particular experiences

As people commit themselves to this intentional and growing experience, God will enrich them and enable them to be disciples of Christ in new and stronger ways.

## Course Components

### Biblical passages - key readings

- Creation stories Genesis 1 & 2
- The call of Abraham Genesis 12:1-9
- The call of Moses Exodus 3:1-17
- The 10 commandments Exodus 20:1-17 (Deut.5:1-22)
- The call of Isaiah Isaiah 6:1-8
- Micah's challenge Micah 6:6-8
- Ruth and/or Esther
- Mark's summary of Jesus' ministry Mark 1:14-15
- The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5:1-16
- True greatness Mark 10:35-45
- Resurrection Luke 24:13-35
- Receive the Holy Spirit John 20:19-29
- The Christian life Romans 12

### Theological concepts - selected themes

- What is theology?
- Revelation and faith
- God and creation
- Humanity and evil
- Salvation
- Justification/reconciliation
- Sanctification - personal & social
- Trinity: God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- The church and the kingdom of God
- Understanding the UCA and the Basis of Union
- The Sacraments - baptism, the Lord's supper
- Identity theologies - liberation, feminist, black, hyphenated theologies that relate to the multicultural context of many people in Australia

### Famous Christians - past and present (some of these)

Polycarp Irenaeus Origen Antony Augustine Patrick  
 Benedict Thomas Becket Francis of Assisi Ignatius Loyola  
 Teresa of Avila Erasmus Martin Luther John Calvin  
 Vincent de Paul John Bunyan George Fox  
 John and Charles Wesley William Carey Hudson Taylor

William and Catherine Booth    Deitrich Bonhoeffer    C. S. Lewis  
Dorothy Day    Gladys Aylward    Karl Barth    Martin Luther King Jr  
Oscar Romero    Pope John XXIII    Mother Teresa    John Flynn  
Alan Walker    Billy Graham    Nelson Mandela    Desmond Tutu  
Mary Mackillop    Charles Harris

**Practical skills - for life and ministry**

communication    listening skills    personal awareness (Myers-Briggs)    prayer    reading the bible (pamphlet given out)  
speaking skills    impromptu speeches    present assignments  
caring skills    spiritual gifts    faith sharing    group dynamics  
mentoring    ability to reflect on life experience theologically  
(handout provided)

**Possible topics for papers**

**Religions and sects:**

Islam    Hinduism    Buddhism    Judaism    New Age    Scientology  
Jehovah's Witnesses    Mormonism    Interfaith Dialogue

**Famous Christian**

**Social issues:**

Eating disorders    HIV/AIDS  
People smuggling    Modern forms of slavery  
Domestic violence    Euthanasia  
In Vitro Fertilisation    Abortion  
The Arms trade    Terrorism  
Indigenous issues    Climate change  
Non violent action    Other

The papers are to be about 1500 words. If presented to the group alternative approaches could be used such as an interview or pictures that are spoken about.

At the conclusion of the course there will be a consultation with each participant (involving course leader, minister and participant) about next steps in discipleship for them. Two basic questions are used: How did you find the course? and What are the next steps in discipleship for you

---

**Comments from Minister involved in the first course**

**Discipleship Course**

**Rev Geoff Stevenson**

**Minister, Northmead Uniting Church**

**December, 2009**

This year Northmead Uniting Church conducted a Discipleship Course, which was developed and led by Rev Dr Chris Walker. We had 13 participants across a range of ages (mid 20's to 80's), faith development and experience, theological perspectives and church background.

The course ran for 12 weeks and was extremely well received by all participants. The participants especially appreciated the structure of 4 different segments each session. These covered a Bible study, theological theme, practical skill and either a famous Christian whose life is inspirational or an issue related to faith and discipleship. Over the weeks various participants contributed to the input on famous Christians and faith issues and these were very well received.

Overall, the participants indicated that they gained a great deal from the Bible studies that reflected key readings and themes from the Old and New Testaments. The range of theological issues provided participants with depth in their understanding and ability to think theologically, as well as understand the Uniting Church's history, structure and theology. The practical skill section was always an engaging and enthusiastically received element, with much noise, laughter, fun and significant learning. It covered areas such as listening, impromptu speaking, faith sharing, pastoral skills, personality...

Through the course, each participant was encouraged to prepare a 1500 word essay on any topic that engaged them. Some chose work related issues. Others chose famous Christians they wanted to know more about. A few chose ethical themes that required a reasonable level of theological enquiry.

At the conclusion of the course Chris and I interviewed each of the participants and were able to receive feedback on the course. We were also able to encourage the participant to engage more fully with discipleship and theological issues that emerged for them from the course. These conversations were very significant and it was obvious that this course touched the participants deeply. It opened their eyes to new possibilities, linked theology and the Bible to the issues they are interested in or the work they are doing. Many are seeking further means of deepening their faith and discipleship as a result of the course.

Chris has developed a very solid and usable course that can be reproduced by leaders within the local congregation. Armed with Chris's course notes and our experience of the course and supporting him in some of the leadership, we will offer the course again next year. It is already eagerly anticipated by some who couldn't do it this time around.

I highly recommend this course as a very significant means of nurturing deeper faith in people of all ages and backgrounds. It is flexible, engaging, fun, has depth and provides a wonderful opportunity to engage with Christian faith and to discover new possibilities for personal and corporate discipleship.

(Below is the advertising brochure used for the second course conducted in 2010)

---

# Discipleship Training

## Northmead Old Toongabbie Uniting Church

**Course Commences:** Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> June, 7.20 for 7.30, concludes 9.30pm

**Led by:** Rev. Geoff Stevenson and Edwin Perrin

**Venue:** Back hall behind kitchen



12 x 2 hours sessions ; each session includes:-

Opening devotions and sharing

4 x 20 minute segments on:

- Key Bible Passages
- Understanding our Faith
- Famous Christians
- Practical Skills, e.g. praying, caring, listening, group dynamics, understanding our personalities

### **Supper provided**

This course helps Christians to grow in personal discipleship through teaching, sharing, encouraging, and involving them.

The course also aims to equip people for more intentional involvement in ministry, both in the Church and beyond.

Included in the learning experiences which make up the course:-

- Developing strong spiritual awareness
- Considering foundational biblical passages
- Understanding our faith through attending to key theological concepts

- Being inspired by learning about famous Christians past and present
- Identifying gifts and thinking about one's role in ministry
- Enabling each person to be more confident in speaking and leading
- A paper will be prepared by each person on a topic of their choice in the area of a social issue, a sect or another religion
- People will engage in and reflect upon some appropriate field experience

As people commit themselves to this intentional and growing experience, God will enrich them and enable them to be disciples of Christ in new and stronger ways.




---

## Discipleship Training

### Leader's notes for the course

(As developed for the first course)

#### Week 1

Welcome and introductions - welcome everyone, then in pairs: share your name, one thing about you, and one thing you hope to gain from this course. Get some responses.

#### Overview of course

This course is not a long term Bible Study course like Bethel or Disciple. It does not aim to be a Lay Preachers' subject. What it does hope to do is to be an interesting and encouraging course that touches on a range of subjects. So if one area does not particularly interest you, it will only be 20-30 minutes before we move to the next section. As you can see in the outline there are four sections: Biblical passages, theological reflection, famous Christians and practical skills. The course does intend to help people grow in their faith and confidence to enable them to be more effective disciples in their daily lives and through the church. So be open, ask questions, participate as you are comfortable and enjoy the course.

The outline tells you something of the range of things we will cover. But flexibility is built into the course and we will not deal with everything. That would be impossible. We will cover the majority of topics and seek to deal with that which is of most interest to you.

By the third week it would be good if people decided which paper they were going to write. Do it on a subject of interest to you. Speak to me about it.

### **Discipleship**

What is a disciple? (a follower of Jesus, someone committed to walking Christ's way, living with Christ at the centre of his or her life, sharing his love and message with others)

The primary call is the call to discipleship. Jesus called people to be his followers. In Mark's gospel one of the first things we are told Jesus did was to call Simon and Andrew, James and John to leave their fishing and follow him (Mark 1:16-20).

What do you think might have been going through their minds when they first became Jesus' disciples? (adventure, great cause, be involved in something significant) As time went on how well did they respond to Jesus? (displayed mistaken ideas, field trip went well, could not understand Jesus' talk of suffering)

To others, such as the man with the many demons that went into the herd of swine, when he asked to go with Jesus he was told, "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you" (Luke 8:39). His role was to witness to what God had done through Jesus in his life. Jesus would also have expected him to live as a faithful disciple now his mental health had been restored.

All who respond to Jesus' call are to learn from him, to look to him, to become more like him in the quality of our lives, to be engaged in his mission concerning the reign of God.

While we do have to respond positively to Jesus in order to become his disciples, it is important to recognise that the initiative is with Jesus. He calls, we respond. We overemphasise our role if we think in terms of us choosing to follow Jesus. It is a privilege and a responsibility to realise that Jesus wants us to be his followers. We can reject his call but will be missing out on that which would give our lives their central purpose if we do so.

Jesus calls us to a shared discipleship. We are to share our lives with him and with others. John says, "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Discipleship is Christian living. It is more than belief and knowledge. It is being formed more and more into the likeness of Christ. It does involve learning more about the Bible and the faith but not for its own sake. The goal is that we become better people, more loving, more patient, more

generous, more faithful; that is we become more like Jesus in the quality of our lives. That is discipleship. It is an ongoing journey.

**Biblical passage** - Genesis 1:1-2:25 Creation (get people to read one paragraph at a time)

Emphasis: point out there are two stories of creation, God is the Creator, called creation 'good' that is according to God's purposes, and gave humans in a special place in creation.

Genesis 1:1-2:4 Seven days of creation - one story

Genesis 2:4-25 The creation of man and woman - a second story

**Famous Christian - St Francis of Assisi**

### **Communication**

Message, sender and receiver

The message is encoded and sent in some form (note tone and body language)

The message has to be decoded and interpreted

Noise is any element that interferes with the communication process

- In the sender - attitudes, biases, frames of reference, the appropriateness of how it is expressed
- In the receiver - background, attitudes, experiences

Good communication sends the message so that the receiver can benefit

**Closing prayer from Kierkegaard** - Danish philosopher/Christian writer

Our Father,

you called us in order to make us more like your Son,  
our Lord Jesus Christ.

Change us, day by day, by the work of your Holy Spirit

so that we may grow more like him

in all that we think and say and do,

to his glory. Amen

## **Week 2**

### **Introduction**

Invite people to express any insights or questions that emerged from last week's session (first in pairs then in total group). Ask people if they have thought about a topic for a paper. Let me know if they are interested in presenting it to the group.

**Theological concept** - What is theology? (Theos - God, logos - word)

Theology as the name implies is concerned with seeking to understand the faith. The starting point is revelation, ie revelatory experiences recorded in the Bible and supremely in the revelation given in Jesus Christ. Theology is reflection upon those special encounters with God which are held to disclose the true nature of reality. We look at our experience in the light of this in developing our theology. Though personal, theology is carried out in

relation to the Christian community in particular. It also has reference to the world.

Any Christian theology has three aspects:

- A positive element, namely religious experience or encounter with God.
- Symbols and language. The church has the role of mediating these to people, eg through worship, encouraging Bible reading and prayer etc.
- Rationality - we seek to make sense of faith and life.

John Macquarrie says, "Theology may be defined as the study which, through participation in and reflection upon a religious faith, seeks to express the content of this faith in the clearest and most coherent language available."

Theology is an intellectual activity. Good theology should inform and assist us to live as Christians. Theology has both conservative and radical roles. It can preserve insights which are in danger of being lost (eg the reality of sin, justification by faith). It can also question the tradition and challenge accepted ideas (eg the adequacy of theories of atonement). It can run the danger of being out of touch or of becoming heretical. At best it serves the Christian community eg Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics*.

A theology is inevitable. Self conscious theology is required. We are called to a deepening understanding of the faith and its implications. Doubt or questioning has a role in this. Theology is an ongoing task for times, issues and language change. Good theology is in touch with the community of faith, the world and the Holy Spirit.

Sources and influences upon theology include: scripture (primary), tradition, experience (and culture) and reason (including imagination).

We will be looking at a number of important theological concepts.

**Famous Christian - Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

### **Listening skills**

Read passage in uninspiring way. Get people to write down as much as they can of what they heard. Read it again in an engaging way. Get people to comment on the difference. Ask in what ways did they listen better the second time. Comment on what makes for good listening: really attending to the other person, appropriate body language, eye contact (note cultural differences however), non distracting environment. Draw the speaker out by invitational questions, brief but encouraging comments, open-ended questions, attentive silence with just a nod or verbal indication of interest. Reflective listening: paraphrasing, appreciate feelings, hear the meaning, summarising in order to check you are hearing the accurately.

**Biblical passage - Genesis 12:1-9 The Call of Abraham**

Emphasis: the first 11 chapters are prehistory and universal, God chooses to have a special relationship with Abraham and his descendents for the sake of all people,

three religions look to Abraham: Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Genesis 1-11 is primeval history - universal in scope, God enabled humanity to multiply, diversify and disperse over the face of the earth. The ancestral history deals with God's special relationship with Israel's ancestors in order that they be a blessing to all the families of the earth.

**Closing prayer from Dag Hammarskjöld - UN General Secretary (1953-61)**

You who are over us, You who are one of us, You who are also within us,  
May all see you in me also, may I prepare the way for you, may I thank you  
for all that shall fall to my lot, may I also not forget the needs of others.  
Give me a pure heart that I may see you, a heart of love that I may serve  
you, a heart of faith that I may abide in you. Amen

**Week 3**

**Introduction**

Invite people to express any insights or questions that emerged from last week's session (first in pairs then in total group). Ask people to share the topic of their paper.

**Biblical passage - Exodus 3:1-17 The Call of Moses**

Emphasis: Note where Moses was, namely keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, God called to Moses out of the burning bush, God heard the cries of the Israelite people in slavery in Egypt, God called Moses to be his instrument of liberation, Moses understandably was reluctant.

**Personal awareness - from Myers-Briggs: personality types**

(introvert/extravert, intuitive/sensory, thinking/feeling, judging/perceiving. Explain the traits. Get people to discuss them in groups of three then have some general discussion.

**Famous Christian - Augustine**

**Theological concept - Revelation and faith**

Revelation has to do with disclosure and hiddenness. God who is hidden from us acts to make God's self known. Human sinfulness compounds this because we can ignore and reject God and be faithless.

There is an objective and subjective dimension to revelation. The first has to do with God's initiative in making known God's will and person. The second refers to its reception by people eg Abraham, Moses, and Paul. Revelation leads to faith and action.

God discloses God's self in various ways eg nature - Moses and the burning bush, in worship - Isaiah in the temple, on the road - Paul, especially through the biblical witness culminating in Jesus Christ.

There is a sense in which all knowledge is revealed ie it dawns on you. Physical objects can be examined but their truth still has to come to us. Knowing a person requires a relationship and self disclosure to really know that person. This is even more so with God. God is not visibly present but can use many means to reveal God's self. It is a revelation from Subject to subject.

God's will and character are made known eg the Exodus shows God to be a liberating God, the cross a compassionate and saving God. Revelation is not so much a body of information as God's Word for a situation. This became oral then written tradition. The scriptures are foundational records of God's dealings with people. Their centre and climax is Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh.

Revelation and inspiration are related. We need the Spirit as well as the Word for understanding. There is classic and subsequent revelation. The former are those clear experiences recorded in scripture. The latter are times when God has made God's self known to people. We can have a progressive understanding of revelation without presuming to know God personally more than previous generations eg the psalmists.

The effect of revelation is to become a person of faith consciously related to God's purposes. Discipleship is call for. People's outlook and values are changed. God as revealed by Jesus Christ becomes central to our lives. Revelation provides not only truth but power, comprehension and motivation. Trust and loyalty are expected as basic components of faithful living in response to revelation.

**Closing prayer from Mother Teresa** (used by worldwide Missionaries of Charity)

Here I am Lord - body, heart and soul. Grant that with your love I may be big enough to reach the world and small enough to be at one with you.  
Amen

## **Week 4**

### **Introduction**

Invite people to express any insights or questions that emerged from last week's session (first in pairs then in total group). Ask people to share the topic of their paper if they have not already done so.

### **Prayer**

Prayer is basic to fostering our relationship with God. In prayer we communicate with God. As Christians we pray to God through Jesus Christ and in the Spirit.

For Jesus prayer came from his life and active ministry - out of his work of compassion, healing, teaching, deliverance... Jesus prayed for people and situations.

Therefore, prayer (listening to God) leads to action (the work/mission of God) leads to prayer (interceding for people and situations), leads to action...

Types of prayer: spontaneous prayers, set times of prayer, corporate prayer. Prayer and personality (comment on the differences).

Components of prayer: praise and adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, petition, dedication. There are various prayers in relation to worship and the sacraments eg invocation, dedication of offering, prayers in relation to the Lord's Supper, blessing.

Mention other spiritual disciplines: which include worship and the Lord's Supper, scripture, prayer, meditation, fasting, giving. Sharing with other Christians, visuals such as candles and music assist our spirituality.

### **Famous Christian - John Wesley**

#### **Theological concept - God and creation**

The idea that God is the Creator is a basic Christian conviction. Historically creation was slow to become central to Israel's faith. It was God's mighty acts in history whereby God made God's self known and constituted Israel as God's covenant people which were basic. Later reflection came to appreciate that the God of Israel, the God of history, was the Creator as well as Lord.

The doctrine of creation is primarily an affirmation about the sovereignty of God and the absolute dependence of the creature. Christians came to affirm that creation was out of nothing, "ex nihilo." This means the following.

God alone is the ultimate source of creation. Absolute beginning is involved. There is no second eternal principle or material. Creation came about according to God's power and will. Science can only proceed towards the origins.

The finite world is dependent on God. It is real and good, despite evil. Nothing is less than a creature of God. There is unity, variety and change in creation.

The action of God is to be understood in terms of freedom and purpose. The doctrine of creation is an affirmation of who was responsible for creation. Scientific approaches can help us to understand the processes involved. Christian faith affirms creation was not by chance, not is it eternal, but is due to the sovereign will of God who has a purpose for creation.

God as Creator transcends the creation. God alone is eternal and there is a distinction between God and creation. It has a relative independence so that God does not directly cause every event.

God is also immanent with creation through the Spirit. God's creative act brought it into being and holds it in existence. God sustains it and God's creative activity is ongoing. Creation is dynamic, not static, and God is involved.

God created in freedom. God did not have to create yet out of love chose to create something other than God. This means that God is lovingly related to the world and is affected by it. While God is not limited by anything beyond God, God has willed to limit God's self in creating the kind of world that has been created. God acts through creation and its processes rather than against it, such as in miracles.

God will be the fulfiller of creation. Ultimately there will be new, transformed creation.

The Christian understanding of creation holds the following for us humans. We are created by God so humility is called for. God's purposes call for us to be actively involved with God. We are called to be responsible stewards of God's good creation.

**Biblical passage** - Exodus 20:1-17 (Deut.5:1-22) The 10 Commandments  
Emphasis: Note the opening statement about God liberating the people out of slavery in Egypt, the first four have to do with God and the next six with relationships between people. (Compare Jesus' two commandments Matthew 22:37-40). Though stated in the negative they are to enable positive relationships and faithful community.

**Closing prayer** - ask someone from the group

## Week 5

### Introduction

Invite people to express any insights or questions that emerged from last week's session (first in pairs then in total group).

**Biblical passage** - Isaiah 6:1-8 The Call of Isaiah  
Emphasis: The context was the divided kingdom. Isaiah had a vision of God in the temple in a time of worship. The holiness of God is emphasised. (Compare with the words we use in the liturgy in the Lord's Supper.) He was conscious of being a sinner in the presence of the holy God. God provided forgiveness. Then God called him and Isaiah readily responded, unlike Moses or Jeremiah.

## Reading the Bible - 12 simple guidelines

Go through the pamphlet making comments.

### Famous Christian - George Fox

#### Theological concept - Humanity

##### 1. The uniqueness of humanity - nature and spirit

Humanity is part of nature, ie physical, subject to change, limited by necessities, born to live and die. The human spirit sets people apart, ie self-transcendent, able to reflect on life and history, seeks meaning for life. Genesis 2 speaks of people being formed from the dust and God breathing life into them.

In biological terms people are part of the animal kingdom. Unlike other species they have no specific environment and are weak in instincts. This means more adaptability. Socialization for each generation is important. People have to learn how to live within the culture and contribute to it.

Religions endeavour to provide humanity with the deeper understanding of life which people desire. A religious dimension is inescapable for humans even in secular societies for people inevitably ask questions such as: *Why am I here and what happens after I die?*

In the biblical view humanity is to be understood primarily from the standpoint of God. God created human beings with a capacity for a relationship with him. Though given the freedom to reject God, true life is to be found only in relation to God and his purposes. God desires that his special creatures, human beings, freely respond to God and accept his reign.

##### 2. Humanity as made "in the image of God" and sinful

The Christian faith has a high estimate of human beings implied in the concept of being made in the image of God and paradoxically also a low estimate in view of human sinfulness.

The image of God is not a matter of physical form (though all creation reflects God to some extent.) It is not even to be looked for in certain capacities e.g. intelligence, conscience, freedom, self-awareness, or concern. How these are used shows whether they reflect God or not (e.g. saints). Jesus Christ is the standard and goal. He is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15).

Unfortunately humanity is also sinful. The image is distorted, marred. Sin has to do with separation from God, a broken relationship. Sin originates in failing to heed God and instead acting in a self interested way. It is a misuse of God given freedom. Turning away from God and into self is the first sin. Luther spoke of being curved in on ourselves. There is a bias toward sin in all people. Sin leads to various sins. Yet there is a difference between egoity (or self esteem) and egoism. Sin in the Bible is described as rebellion, transgression and falling short. All have fallen short of the God's

will (Rom 3:23). The two basic attitudes are pride and irresponsibility. The whole person is affected by sin which results in a sinful world. Social relationships are affected e.g. racism, exploitation, militarism.

The Christian faith views sin with realism but not despair. God has acted supremely in Jesus Christ to deal with sin. We can be forgiven and renewed.

3. The reality of evil is the most powerful argument against the biblical understanding of creation as deriving from a good Creator. (cf Dualism and Naturalism.) We need to distinguish between human evil (sin, moral evil) and natural evil (ie physical disasters). Satan refers to those evil forces against God. Paul speaks of principalities and powers but nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:38-39).

**Closing prayer** - ask someone from the group

## **Week 6**

### **Introduction**

Invite people to express any insights or questions that emerged from last week's session (first in pairs then in total group).

### **Biblical passage** - Micah 6:1-8 Micah's Challenge

Emphasis: God has a controversy with the people because they have forgotten the saving acts of the past. True worship is to live according to the covenant. In verse 8 the prophet sums up the legal, ethical and covenantal requirements of religion. The major themes of Amos (Amos 5:24), Hosea (Hosea 2:19-20, 6:6) and Isaiah (Isaiah 7:9, 30:15) are drawn upon.

### **Impromptu speeches** - 2 rounds

In pairs people are given a topic then told to brainstorm ideas for 2 minutes, jot down notes for 1 minute, and one person to speak for 1 minute.

Possible topics: ants, the colour blue, mobile phones, procrastination, walking, a Bible character.

In the second round choose one of the fruit of the Spirit that Paul speaks of: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity (or goodness), faithfulness, gentleness (or humility) and self-control.

At the end comment on the process for making speeches: brainstorm, put ideas into a structure, speak confidently, have content and examples or illustrations. Public speaking is a common fear yet to be able to share one's ideas publically is desirable and fosters leadership and influence.

### **Famous Christian** - Johann Sebastian Bach

### **Theological concept - Salvation**

Salvation is a basic religious concept. It has to do with being rescued, set free, enlightened, renewed. The Nicene Creed speaks of the coming of Jesus as being "for us men (and women) and our salvation." Jesus Christ is typically referred to as Saviour and Lord. God is a saving and redeeming God.

Salvation is a large concept. Paul can speak of all creation waiting with eager longing (Rom 8:19). Final salvation has to do with all creation being renewed, ie a new heaven and a new earth (Rev 21). It comes at the end of history and involves judgment and new creation.

The coming kingdom and salvation are bound up together. To enter the kingdom is to be saved. Salvation has past, present and future dimensions. We hope for future salvation. We look forward to the fulfilled kingdom. We wait for the return of Christ. Resurrection to eternal life is the promised hope we are given.

There is also a past dimension to salvation. God has acted in the past to liberate and save. Jesus Christ lived, died on the cross and was raised for our salvation. Forgiveness and renewal are available in him. God has acted in Jesus Christ to provide salvation. He fulfilled his ministry to the uttermost. Jesus completed his work.

In the present we can receive that salvation. It is made possible by God's grace and is to be received by faith. The very name Jesus means "God saves" or "God will save."

The Greek word "save" has a two-fold meaning: to restore to physical health and to deliver from the final divine wrath. Jesus' healing ministry was a sign of God's authority at work in him. It pointed to the deeper meaning of salvation in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God. In acknowledging our need, recognising our sin, and responding to Jesus' message, we receive salvation and enter God's realm.

Paul can also speak of "working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation" (Phil 2:12). We need to hold on to faith, grow in maturity and keep close to God. We do so with the aid of God's Spirit at work in our lives.

We are saved from various powers depending on our culture and outlook: from the wrath of God in the last judgment, from malign forces at work in the world, from ignorance and blindness concerning reality, from the power of sin, guilt and death, from mortality, from meaninglessness and a sense of insignificance, from ourselves.

We are saved for God, for cooperating with God in his purposes in the world, for responsible freedom, for life, for making a contribution to the total well-being of others.

Salvation is something we can experience, yet still hope for. It includes blessing and promise and also responsibility. For God would have us work with him to bring about reconciliation, peace and justice as we look forward to the final realisation of the reign of God.

Closing prayer - ask someone from the group

## Week 7

### Introduction

Invite people to express any insights or questions that emerged from last week's session (first in pairs then in total group).

### Theological concept - Justification/reconciliation through faith

Justification and reconciliation have the same theological meaning, namely to be put right with God. 'Justification by grace through faith' was a key concept for the Protestant reformers (See Romans 3:28, 5:1, Galatians 3:24).

Having a right relationship with God occurs through faith. God's Word is heard and God's grace is accepted. This comes about through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit would lead a person to the point of faith. This can be spoken of as prevenient grace, that is the grace that goes before.

Faith is primarily a response rather than a decision. God has taken the initiative to restore our broken or estranged relationship with God and provide salvation. In Jesus Christ God acted to provide forgiveness and enable us to enter God's reign. Faith is a sure trust in God through Jesus Christ. Faith is not based in itself, nor is it a calculated choice, nor a matter of interpretation. It is less a human decision than a gift received from God.

We are justified, set right, by grace through faith. Hence we can speak of justifying grace and justification by faith. This means we do not enter a right relationship with God according to our own efforts or our own works (Romans 3:28). Before God we stand as sinful. In legal terms we come as people deserving condemnation. Yet God, because of Jesus Christ, is prepared to acquit us and declare us right or innocent. Righteousness is imputed to us. It is not that God ignores the facts of human sinfulness. Rather God is prepared to forgive us and accept us. God treats us as innocent and righteous because of God's graciousness.

The seriousness of sin is not overlooked. In sending Jesus Christ the depth of our sin and of our alienation from God was highlighted and overcome. Jesus, the Son of God who acted for people's wellbeing, suffered and was crucified by responsible religious and political leaders despite his innocence. His death was called for by the crowd and carried out by the soldiers. Jesus

took our sin and made forgiveness and reconciliation available to us (2 Cor.5:19). We receive salvation by faith in him.

Faith is primarily trust rather than knowledge or assent. While some understanding is required, as is acknowledgement, more basic is trust. We rely on God; we put our lives into God care confident of God's steadfast love. Christian faith is faith in God as the source and goal of life. Through Jesus Christ and in the Spirit we can know God personally, be accepted back as sons and daughters of God, and experience God's guidance. To accept Jesus as saviour and lord is to have God's Spirit at work in our lives.

To be justified, put right with God, reconciled, consists of two things. One is a forgiving or counting righteous. The second is a healing, renewing and making righteous. The latter effect of a restored relationship with God is the beginning of sanctification. Coming to faith calls for further development of what it means to live as a disciple of Christ.

**Famous Christian - C. S. Lewis**

**Biblical passage** - Mark 1:14-15 Summary of Jesus' message  
Emphasis: the commencement of Jesus' ministry is after John's arrest in Mark's gospel, good news, timing, the kingdom or reign of God - already and not yet, the response called for - repentance and faith, (relate 'the reign of God' in the synoptic gospels to 'eternal life' in John's gospel)

**Basic Caring Skills**

Concern for the other person's well being rather than focus on self.

Empathy more than sympathy.

Listen more than speak.

Not advice giving but helping people to see the options for them.

Boundaries, confidentiality, referral.

Seek to show love, be a channel of God's love, patience and kindness.

Pray with and for the person as appropriate.

**Closing prayer** - ask someone from the group

**Week 8**

**Introduction**

Invite people to express any insights or questions that emerged from last week's session (first in pairs then in total group).

**Famous Christian - Mother Teresa**

**Discipleship discussion through a Biblical text** - Esther

Emphasis: Esther acts courageously to save her people from an anti-Semitic pogrom.

Relate this to discipleship – use one’s position and opportunities, seek God’s guidance, talk with others, take courageous stands if necessary.

### **Theological concept - Sanctification**

Sanctification has to do with growth in Christian maturity. In older terminology it is being made holy. In the strict sense only God is holy. We are called to acknowledge the holiness of God. Yet God also wants us to become holy. Peter quotes the Old Testament, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). Similarly Paul says Christians are called to be saints (Romans 1:7). As we allow God to determine our lives we become holy. By reflecting upon and participating in God we become like him. (This is so generally – we become like those we admire.) For Christians it is as we identify with Jesus and let his Spirit guide our lives we become more like him. As we become more Christ-like so we become more holy as he was. By holiness we mean in touch with God and seeking to do the will of God.

Sanctification is a gift as well as a goal. In coming to faith we are justified and sanctified says Paul (1 Cor. 6:11). The beginning of sanctification is ‘the new birth.’ We are born again, born from above. At the point of faith the Christian life is begun. This may occur dramatically or over a period. What matters is coming to definite, owned faith. This is the start of the process of growth in grace. So, while we are accepted by God as forgiven and with the righteousness of Christ, we are then to live up to our calling as people of God, as disciples of Christ. We commence the process of becoming holy, of being made saints.

The Holy Spirit gives us assurance that we are the sons and daughters of God. God’s Spirit joins with our spirits to testify that is the case (Romans 8:16). Yet we also become aware of continuing sin and need the forgiveness and renewal God provides throughout our lives. Jesus Christ is the standard and goal of Christian living and we seek to become fully mature like him (Ephesians 4:13).

It is the Holy Spirit at work in our lives, which can transform us and enable us to grow in holiness. Calvin spoke of the third use of the law, which was as a guide to Christian living. John Wesley drawing on Catholic sources, held out the possibility of ‘entire sanctification’ by which he meant perfect love of God and neighbour. It was a gift to be prayed for and striven after in this life. Eastern Orthodoxy, drawing on 2 Peter 1:4, speaks of divinisation, becoming like God. Through the Spirit we are transformed by degrees. This occurs through sanctifying grace.

Sanctification is not just a matter of our personal lives and our relationship with God. It includes love of others and concern for society. The ways of the reign of God are to be practiced by us and the Christian community and sought to be realised in the wider community for the sake of all people. We seek God’s reign of love, justice and peace.

**Biblical Passage - Matthew 5:1-16 The Beatitudes**

Emphasis: God's favour towards those who seek to live under God's rule, poor (spiritual poverty and actual poverty - those who know their need seek God), meek, humble or gentle (they will inherit the new earth, ie the kingdom), those who show mercy will receive mercy on the day of judgment, pure of heart (single-mindedness, motives), peacemakers (active in making peace), acceptance of opposition/suffering due to being a disciple, Jesus is realistic about this.

**Closing prayer**

## **Week 9**

Invite people to express any insights or questions that emerged from last week's session (first in pairs then in total group).

**Biblical Passage** - Mark 10:35-45 True Greatness

Emphasis: James and John still misunderstand the nature of the reign of God, the cup and the baptism refer to suffering, God the Father grants the places, the others are angry probably for selfish reasons, Jesus stresses that true greatness is a matter of service, he came to serve even when it led to suffering and death, he demonstrated servant leadership, his death was costly and for others, Paul used other images to speak of Jesus' death being 'for us'. The crucifixion was Jesus' ultimate act of self giving love demonstrating the suffering love of God.

**Spiritual Gifts** - use handouts, speak about the self awareness window, the personal growth chart, then spiritual gifts, invite people in pairs to identify gifts in others, then to discuss what is shared, invite comments in the larger group.

**Presentation: Other Religions: Hinduism**

**Theological concept** - The Trinity (mention the Nicene Creed)

Immediately following the resurrection the followers of Jesus began to worship him, pray to God through him, and to regard him as more than a human person. Various titles were applied to him: Christ (Messiah), lord, saviour, Word, Son of God. Jesus was held to be one with God. The incarnation (Phil 2, John 1). The early church had to work out how it understood Jesus, especially in the face of extreme or inadequate positions, heresies, which came to be viewed as contrary to orthodox belief. The Council of Nicea (325AD) affirmed the full divinity of Jesus Christ, and the Council of Chalcedon (451AD) that he was both truly human and truly divine.

The Spirit in the OT is somewhat different than the Holy Spirit in the NT. In the OT the Spirit is bestowed on particular individuals and is involved in creation. In the NT there is a close relationship with Jesus Christ, first in Jesus' ministry and then in the Christian community. The work of the Spirit is connected to the work of Jesus Christ. It has to do with revelation and

redemption. There are fruit and gifts of the Spirit. After the council of Nicea the status of the Spirit arose. It was concluded that the Spirit was of the same essence as the Father and the Son.

So the doctrine of the Trinity emerged. The NT has expressions which provide the basis for it (1 Cor 12:4-6, Eph 4:4-6, 2 Cor 13:13, Matt 28:19). The Apologists of the second century drew on the idea of the Logos. Tertullian and Origen helped with language. What was said at Nicea was enlarged at the Council of Constantinople (381AD). Augustine wrote at length on the Trinity yet concluded with a prayer.

Tritheism (three gods) is rejected. Hodgson speaks of the difference between mathematical and organic unity. Some stress the unity and speak in terms of the one personal God existing in three modes of being. Others speak of a social Trinity, God as community, which is the favoured approach now. Explain the immanent and economic Trinity. Trinitarian Christianity prevents us from falling into mistaken unitarianisms. We come to God as Father through Jesus his Son and in the Spirit.

#### **Closing prayer from Queen Salote of Tonga**

God our heavenly Father, we draw near to you with thankful hearts because of all your great love for us. We thank you most of all for the gift of your Son, in whom alone we may be one. We are different from one another in race and language, in material things, in gifts, in opportunities, but each of us has a human heart, knowing joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain. We are one in our need of your forgiveness, your strength, your love; make us one in our common response to you, that bound by a common love and freed from selfish aims we may work for the good of all and the advancement of your kingdom. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## **Week 10**

Invite people to express any insights or questions that emerged from last week's session (first in pairs then in total group).

#### **Theological concept - The Church**

Jesus' central concept was the kingdom or reign of God. The church is to proclaim Jesus and serve the reign of God. The church lives between the time when the kingdom was first proclaimed by and embodied in Jesus and the time when it will be realised in its fullness at the end. It was Jesus' proclamation and ministry concerning the reign of God that led to people becoming disciples and the church being formed.

The kingdom is not to be identified with the church. Rather the reign of God is the cause and purpose of the church. It is meant to come under God's rule, witness to it and serve it. The church is not the only place where God's rule is felt and God's Spirit is at work. That occurs beyond the church also. Nevertheless the church is the primary instrument of God's

reign for it is the fellowship of those who have consciously experienced God's sovereign grace and confess Jesus as Lord. The church is called to be a sign of God's rule. In its own life it is to manifest something of God's reign by practicing forgiveness, reconciliation, love and justice. It is to be a herald to the whole community proclaiming the good news of Jesus crucified and risen and to make disciples. The church is also to be a servant community. It is to be concerned for people especially the poor and those who suffer for various reasons.

The church is upheld by God's Spirit and has an important role to play in God's purposes. It can be overvalued and undervalued. Its confidence is not in itself as an institution but in what God entrusts it to be and do. Confidence in the gospel needs to be coupled with humility. The Christian community needs to be self aware and self critical for it is always imperfect and needing reform. It points people away from itself to Christ, the living lord, and the kingdom of God.

The church is called to continue the ministry of Jesus Christ. The life of the church is one of worship, witness, service and fellowship. These need to be interrelated. The four main functions of the church are: priestly (worship, teaching, pastoral care), servant (welfare), evangelical (proclaiming, faith sharing) and prophetic (calling for justice and peace). The church is to be more than a presence in the wider community. It is to make disciples and evaluate social developments from a biblical-theological perspective under the guidance of the Spirit.

The one ministry of Christ is carried out by his people in various ways. All Christians are called to be involved in ministry using their gifts and talents. The ordained ministry is primarily one of leadership and equipping. Ministry by the whole people of God is to be practiced.

The church is both a gathered community and scattered throughout the wider community. It comes together for worship, teaching and fellowship. It scatters to witness and serve by life and word. Three key expressions for the church are: the people of God, the body of Christ, and the community of the Spirit.

**Famous Christian - Martin Luther King Jr.**

**Faith Sharing** - Comment on 1 Peter 3:15-16, be ready to share one's faith and hope "but do it with gentleness and respect", then get people to share in pairs: 1) how they came to be a person of faith and 2) why they are still a Christian. Get comments in total group after each round. Speak about looking for appropriate opportunities to share something of one's faith and inviting people into contexts where they will hear the Christian message genuinely presented.

**Biblical Passage - Luke 24:13-35 The Resurrection**

Emphasis: The two on the road to Emmaus were not among the 12, Cleopas and another - possibly his wife, they were depressed as a result of Jesus'

crucifixion, the movement seemed over. Jesus joins them, invites them to share then explains the scriptures, at the breaking of the bread they recognise him, he vanishes for the appearances of the risen Jesus are both physical and more than physical. They realise that their hearts burned with new faith and hope as he explained the scriptures, they hurry back the 11 kilometres to Jerusalem to tell the others who say the Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon, we do not have an account of this appearance (but see 1 Cor. 15:3-8). The resurrection appearances were for a period of time to convince the disciples that death was not the end, Jesus is raised and is now reigning with God, death and evil do not have the last word, God and life and hope do, the resurrection was for us that we might know that Jesus is risen and is spiritually with us always.

**Closing prayer** - ask someone from the group

## **Week 11**

Invite people to express any insights or questions that emerged from last week's session.

**Bible Passage** - John 20:19-29 Receive the Holy Spirit

Emphasis: the risen Jesus appears among the disciples, he reassures them by saying 'Peace be with you' twice and also showing them his hands and side. He then commissions the disciples and empowers them by breathing on them and saying, 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (compare with Genesis 2:7 and Acts 1:8), they are given authority for ministry. Thomas was understandably sceptical, but is given an experience of the risen Jesus a week later, his response then is a clear affirmation of Jesus' divinity, 'My Lord and my God', the final comment from Jesus is for the readers of John's gospel, for us, 'Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.'

**Presentation: Orphan children's summer camps in Russia**

**Small groups and mentoring**

Ask what groups people have been involved with and what benefits they gained.

Types of small groups: friendship groups, interest/sport groups, Bible study groups, support groups, personal development groups, study groups, task groups, fellowship groups, prayer groups, meditation groups, mission and evangelism groups.

Small groups provide the opportunity for sharing and caring, developing friendships and inclusion, they have the danger of lack of confidentiality and exclusiveness.

Keys for effective small groups: determine the aim, plan, have a pattern for each meeting, hold regular leaders' meetings, evaluate regularly.

Group needs: task, individual needs, group maintenance (keep these in balance).

Stages of group development: forming, storming, norming, performing, mourning.

Ask what people have been mentors to them. How might they be a mentor to others? What is involved: concern for the other person, commitment over a period of time, desire to assist the other person to grow, experience and trust required of mentors.

### **Theology** - Understanding the UCA and the Basis of Union

The United Church is both a new church (inaugurated on 22 June 1977) and stands in the tradition of the three churches that came into union. It helps to know something of the three previous traditions: Presbyterian (oversight by elders, disciplined, ordered, government by a hierarchy of courts, Calvinist theology), Congregational (autonomy of each congregation, lay leadership, Calvinist), Methodist (functional response to the growing movement, groups, singing, lay preachers, supreme authority in the conference, Wesleyan theology).

The United Church is governed by a series of interrelated councils, each of which has its responsibilities, made up of ministers and lay people, men and women. The basic unit is the congregation; the presbytery provides oversight of congregations and people in ministry in its area; the Synod has in particular responsibilities for property and finance, education and welfare activities; the Assembly has determining responsibility in relation to doctrine, worship, government and discipline, sets standards for theological education, fosters ecumenical relationships and partnerships with other churches, especially in Asia and the Pacific.

The United Church is known to be broad, strong on caring activities, social justice, women in leadership, multicultural and ecumenical.

The emblem: the cross stands over a darkened world - redeeming it through grace and truth. People are bound to Christ and each other. The Holy Spirit (dove and flame) empowers and guides us to be witnesses to Jesus Christ. The U points to the fact we are uniting, the renewal of the church and world are incomplete.

The Basis of Union is its primary document. It is a careful theological statement. Go through paragraphs 3 and 13 in particular of the 18 paragraphs (provide handout).

### **Closing prayer from Karl Barth** - Swiss Reformed theologian

O Lord our God:

You humbled yourself that we might be exalted. You became poor that we might be enriched. You came to us that we might come to you. You became a man like us that we might share in eternal life.

All this was done by virtue of your free grace which we have not deserved, and through your Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

## Week 12

Invite people to express any insights or questions that emerged from last week's session.

### **Theology - The Sacraments: Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

Christian worship includes both word and sacrament. While Protestants have emphasised the word proclaimed, there is now a convergence so that Protestants and Catholics appreciate the need for both word and sacrament, proclamation verbally and through the symbols of water, bread and wine. Protestants recognise two sacraments as instituted by Jesus Christ which Roman Catholic, Anglican and Orthodox churches also acknowledge as the primary ones.

Christian baptism derives from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The risen Jesus commanded his followers to make disciples and to baptise them (Matthew 28:18-20). Baptism is a sign of new life through Jesus Christ. It unites people with Christ and the church. There are several meanings surrounding baptism. 1) It means participating in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. We die to our old selves and are raised to new life in Christ. 2) Baptism implies conversion, pardoning and cleansing. 3) Baptised persons are promised the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of people before, in and after their baptism. 4) Baptism incorporates people into the body of Christ, the church universal. 5) Baptism is a sign of the kingdom of God. It initiates people into the reality of the new life given in the midst of the present world. Baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that gift. It looks towards growth in maturity as a disciple of Christ. (Confirmation is a matter of personally affirming one's baptism if baptised as an infant.)

The Lord's Supper, Holy Communion or the Eucharist continues the meals of Jesus with his disciples and others and in particular the last supper he had with his disciples (Luke 22:14-20, 1 Cor. 11:23-25). In the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, Christ grants communion with himself. The meanings related to the Lord's Supper are as follows. 1) We give thanks to the Father for creation, redemption and sanctification. 2) The Lord's Supper is a memorial of the crucified and risen Jesus Christ. 3) The Spirit is invoked to make Christ really present to us in the holy meal. 4) It is a meal of communion with Christ and the community of the church. 5) It is a foretaste and anticipation of the kingdom of God. From the celebration of the Lord's Supper, the members of the body of Christ are nourished and strengthened to be servants of Jesus Christ engaging in his reconciling ministry and mission to the world.

**Presentation: Interfaith Dialogue**

**Thinking theologically (provide handout)**

All of us who seek to live as Christians are theologians. Some of us have done more study than others concerning it. So how do we think theologically rather than just respond to situations and people?

Thinking theologically involves describing and analysing a situation, framing a view, then making a judgment and acting on it. We do so as disciples of Jesus Christ with others in community. It means theological analysis and theological construction. We can draw upon both logical and intuitive thinking.

The resources we can utilize are: Scripture, tradition, reason and experience.

Theological thinking has three aspects:

- 1) interpreting the situation from the perspective of the Christian faith,
- 2) correlating two or more views (compare and contrast them)
- 3) assessment as to Christian appropriateness, intelligibility, moral integrity and validity.

Some key questions we can ask ourselves are:

- How does this relate to the gospel? (the good news of Jesus Christ)
- What is implied about the human condition? (sin and salvation)
- What is fitting from a Christian perspective? (we can act "because of" e.g. Jesus' example and teaching, or "in order to" looking to the outcomes we think God desires)

Case study. A homeless person walked in on the worship committee. The church organist quickly got up from her chair and ushered the man out, pressing a five dollar bill into his hand. At the break there was a lively discussion as to what should have been done. Discuss.

As we grow in our discipleship and ability to think theologically, we will find that our previous reflections on theology and life will inform our practice more readily.

**Biblical passage** - Romans 12 The Christian life (read and comment on each section at a time)

Emphasis: our whole lives are to be lived as an expression of worship honouring God, we are to live counter cultural lives following Jesus and letting the Spirit renew our minds, live as those belonging to the coming age; live with humility and faith as part of the body of Christ, make use of God given strengths and gifts; live authentic lives of love and hope and generosity; be empathetic, do not seek vengeance but leave judgment to God, practice what is good even in the presence of evil, overcome evil with good in God's strength. Paul here is echoing Jesus' teaching about loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44).

**Closing prayer from UIW2**

Word of mission

Go in peace; may you carry God's wisdom, speak forth God's Word, and embody God's presence wherever you are in the name and Spirit of Christ.

Blessing

The love of God enfold you, the wisdom of Christ enlighten you, and the fire of the Spirit enflame you; and may the blessing of the holy triune God rest upon you and abide with you, now and evermore. Amen.

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*

\*