

The Church towards a common vision

Chapter 1
Summary and
Questions

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- Welcome to the 1st Study session!

Most merciful Father,

we confess that we have done little to forward your kingdom and advance your glory.

Pardon our shortcomings and give us greater zeal for your service.

Make us more ready and diligent in our prayers, by our alms, and by our examples, to spread the knowledge of your truth and to enlarge the boundaries of your kingdom;

and may we do it all to your glory. Bishop How (1823-1897)

Read Acts 17: 22- 34

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A. God's design for the world and the church (1 - 4)

- Creation
- Restoration
- Ministry of hope, reconciliation and healing
 - Christ's ministry
 - Community of witness, worship, discipleship
 - Church as the body of Christ

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QUESTIONS

1

Archbishop Rowan Williams is quoted as saying “It is not the Church of God that has a mission, but the mission of God that has a church”. How do you understand this insight?

2

Paragraph 4 reminds us that the Church, as the Body of Christ, shares in the ministry of Christ.

In what ways does your local church community fulfill this evangelistic vocation?

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B The Mission of the Church in History (5 – 7)

- •The church proclaiming the Good News of salvation in Christ
- •From Jerusalem.... to the ends of the earth...
- •Some confusion when Christianity aligned to culture
- •Positive impact of the Gospel message in many lands and cultures
- •Religious pluralism, changing means of communication, various expressions of the Christian faith
- •Increased secularisation
- •Loss of confidence in organisations, including the church
- •Describe the current situation from your point of view...

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QUESTION

- 3 *Paragraph 5 uses the term 'eucharist', and does so throughout this document. Many of the members of the UCA prefer to say 'the Lord's Supper' or 'Holy Communion'.*
- *Do you think the term used affects how we approach this sacrament?*



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4. *Although the actions of early missionaries were well-intentioned, we now know that harm was done to Indigenous communities around the world, and in Australia. The Uniting Church in Australia has endeavoured to 'right' some of the wrongs done by colonizing churches to the First Peoples of Australia. Discuss what has been done so far, and consider ways in which we could move in the future.*

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C The Importance of Unity (8 – 10)

- Divisions from the beginning – and they continue
- And this is despite the prayer of Jesus for his disciples and those following
- (read John 17:20-23) – noting that this unity is not for itself alone, “but that the world may believe”
- The confession and claim that the church is “one, holy, catholic, apostolic Church”
- Continued challenges of differences in doctrine, practice, ministry
- Continuing divisions as to ‘where is the Church of Christ’

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QUESTION

5

*Do you experience the
'unity' of the church of
God in your local
context? How?*



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- 6. Is the ecumenical question ever asked in the Councils of your church i.e. “can the matter we are discussing be done with other churches?”
Both the Assembly and several Synods have agreed that this question should be asked – is it, in your experience?*

On August 27th, 1953 the third World Conference on Faith and Order, meeting in Lund, Sweden agreed a text “A Word to the Churches”.

A part of this text was what became known as ‘The Lund Principle’ or ‘the Ecumenical Question’; should not our churches ask themselves whether they are showing sufficient eagerness to enter into conversation with other churches, and whether they should not act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately?

For examples, see assembly.uca.org.au/unity/when-churches-join OR request the pamphlet on The Ecumenical Question used by the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania from maureenpostma@yahoo.com.au

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Basis of Union

- The Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia, in fellowship with the whole Church Catholic, and seeking to bear witness to that unity which is both Christ's gift and will for the Church hereby enter into union under the name of the Uniting Church in Australia. (Para 1)
- The Uniting Church in Australia lives and works within the faith and unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. The Uniting Church recognizes that it is related to other churches in ways which give expression, however partially, to that unity in faith and mission. (Para 2)

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- *Are you made aware that the UCA professes this relationship, and how do you see it exercised?*



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY