

The Church: towards a common vision

Chapter 4 – The Church:

In and for the world

Summary and Questions

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- Welcome and Opening Prayer

○ God of unchangeable power and eternal light,
look favourably on your whole church,
that wonderful and sacred mystery; and by the peaceful
operation of your providence, carry out the work of our salvation.
And let the whole world feel and see
that things which were cast down are being raised up,
and things which had grown old are being made new,
and all things are returning to perfection
through him from whom they took their origin;
even through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Gelasian Sacramentary, 7th century

- Read: Matthew 5:13–16

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A reminder of Chapter 4 read over this last week... **AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION**

A God's Plan for Creation:

The Kingdom (58 – 60)

**The reason for mission: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son”
(John 3:16)**

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- The Church is to serve the divine plan for the transformation of the world
- The Church participates in the divine mystery by proclaiming the Gospel, celebrating the sacraments, manifesting the newness of life in Christ, thus anticipating the Kingdom already present in him

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- Proclaiming the Gospel – the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ, and witness to God's reconciliation, healing and transformation, including the promotion of justice and peace

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Acknowledging religious freedom, respecting others of different faiths (or none) and treating them with dignity, fostering interreligious dialogue.

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QUESTIONS

1 The document values the role of preaching, the sacraments, repentance and forgiveness with the local church as a means of 'living' the mystery of Christ. Would this be your experience? How can we better manifest new life in Christ?

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- 2 What are the appropriate Christian responses to people of different faiths in our community?*
- 3 The churches in Australia, as institutions, have been much criticized for failures in ministry and practice. Does this affect our ability to live and preach the Good News of Jesus Christ? If so, how can we overcome this present reality?*

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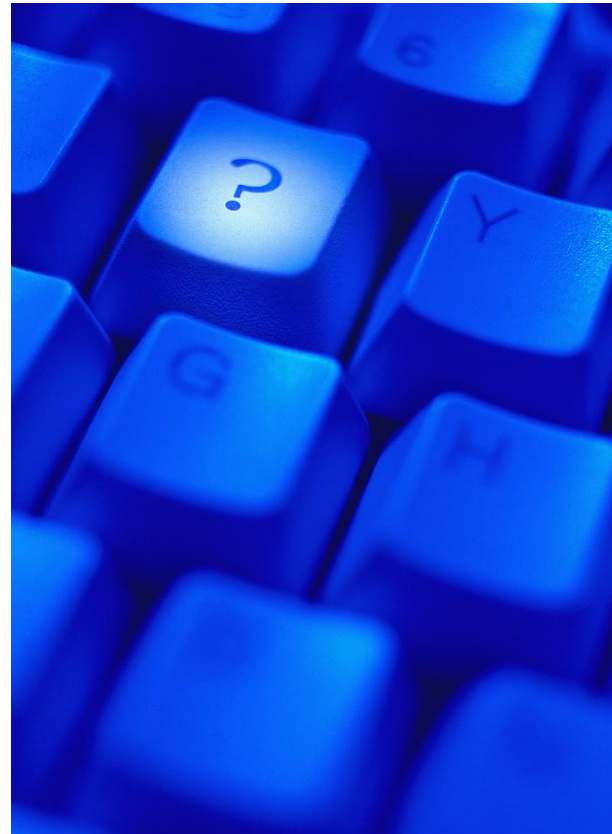
B The Moral Challenge of the Gospel (61 – 63)

- recognise our own need of forgiveness and grace
- the ethics of Christians come from God the creator and revealer, and take shape in the community. We are to work with people of other faiths (and none) to promote the value of all human beings and life on the planet. The message of the gospel extends to both the personal and communal aspects of life.

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QUESTION

- 4 *How do you understand 'The Moral Challenge of the Gospel'? Does it affect your life and witness in the communities in which you live and work?*



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C The Church in Society (64 – 66)

- As followers of Jesus Christ, we are challenged by the needs of the world – sicknesses, inequalities, destitution and enslavement, war and violence
- Churches, and Christians have sometimes condoned these injustices – the task is for us to challenge each other to find ways to be ‘the light of the world’

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- As the Church is comprised of people from all socio-economic groups, it is possible for us to `model' in our own communities the life of compassion, care for creation, justice and peace to which we are called.



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QUESTION

5 What are the main ways in which you – and the UCA – can engage with society?

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Basis of Union

“The Church as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit confesses Jesus as Lord over its own life; it also confesses that Jesus is Head over all things, the beginning of a new creation, of a new humanity.

“God in Christ has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation.

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“The Church’s call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself”.

(Para 3)

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- Can we affirm the uniqueness of Christ and accept religious pluralism?
- How do you – and your local church – respond to this tension?

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Thank you for participating in these Studies.
Remember – if you would like to provide some input to the UCA's formal response to the World Council of Churches, please address the questions on Page 3 of the document – and send any material to the Revd Dr. Chris Walker at cuwg@nat.uca.org.au