

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIAL *on the* UCCP DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

ADULTS

Lesson 1: How do we understand the “Declaration of Principles?”

**Trinity Sunday and
Communion Sunday**
First Sunday after Pentecost
June 7, 2020

General Concept: The Declaration of Principles are set of pronouncements and standards from which the church’s stand and governing laws of conduct are derived. This declaration lays down a set of principles upon which we stand as a church. In addition to the Statement Faith, this is what we affirm as members of the UCCP.

Biblical References: *Psalm 119:1-8; Deuteronomy 6:2; Isaiah 2:3; Matthew 5:17;*

Age Level Concepts

- The Declaration of Principles are set of pronouncements and standards from which the church’s stand and governing law of conduct are derived.
- Our church has its own Declaration of Principles.
- We use our Declaration of Principles as basis of our decisions, stand on issues, and conduct.
- To be a UCCP member means to uphold the values and principles found in the Declaration.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session the learners are expected to:

- Explain the significance of the UCCP Declaration of Principles in the life and work of the Church, community and the member’s personal life.
- Examine how the UCCP DOP can enhance their Christian life.
- Design methods which can be inculcated in the life and work of the church.

Materials: Bible (Preferably NRSV), Chart or printed copies of the Declaration of Principles (UCCP Constitution and By-laws, Article 2)

Biblical Background

Obedience to the Law of God is a pervading theme in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy Moses emphatically declared the obedience to God manifested in obeying the Torah results to abundance and blessings. Thus it is very important for parents to teach and inculcate the law in the hearts and minds of the children as stated in Deuteronomy 6:2. The teachings of Moses greatly influenced the teaching of the succeeding prophets of Israel including Isaiah (2:3). Moses' teachings also influenced Israel's worship life as evidenced in Psalms.

Psalms 119 which is considered as the longest psalter proclaims about the significance of obeying the law of God. God's law must be the guiding principle of every person to achieve happiness in life and to enjoy the blessings of God. Verses 1-8 randomly declares a person can be happy. The original Hebrew word used is "Ashrei." This could be translated in English as happy, blessed or fortunate. These verses describe what a happy, fortunate or blessed person is. He or she regularly ruminates on the laws and precepts of God and obeys them at all times. Thus he or she is deemed blameless, righteous or without sin. Righteousness therefore is dependent on a person's adherence to the law. Does this kind of person exist? Even the Psalmist said in 14:3 "They all have gone astray, they are all alike perverse, there is no one who does good, no, not one." This same thought is supported by Paul Romans 3:10 and 23. Both the Psalmist and Paul emphasize that nobody is righteous, blameless and sinless. While no one is fully righteous, it does not mean that one cannot work on trying to live a righteous and blameless life.

The course of Israel's history has greatly affected their concept of obedience and righteousness. They viewed the Babylonian Exile as God's way of chastising them for their failure to be loyal to God by not adhering to the laws God gave to them through Moses. After the Babylonian Exile legalism has become a major character of the Jewish faith. Every Jew has to follow around 613 commands which they call Mitzvot. The laws included in here are either positive (it requires an adherent to do something) or negative laws (prohibits an adherent to do something). The concept of righteousness has become dependent on one's level of adherence to these laws. Jesus, on several occasions, has been accused of not following the law. In Matthew 5:17 Jesus declared that he came to fulfill the law and not to abolish it. This statement of Jesus is followed by a long teaching about various laws (Murder, adultery, vengeance, compassion and compassion). In this long discourse about the various Jewish laws Jesus highlights the law of love. It is not enough to love our neighbors or friends. True followers of God must go beyond the borders. True believers are called to love even the enemy. Jesus ends his long discourse by emphasizing that every believer must strive for perfection. "Be perfect, therefore, just as your heavenly Father is perfect." Righteousness is not the end result of being able to follow all the rules. It is the process of trying to do what good because of love.

Suggested Lesson Outline

Greeting Time

Opening Hymn “Sing With Hearts” Hymnal of Faithful Journey,17
Refrain: Sing to God, dance to God, hearts and souls united
Come offer joyful praises, in melodies and gladness.

May every heart open up to your glory
Let all the heavens hear our hearts rejoice
For You are God, you bestow on us graces
From you begins the music in our voice.
O Lord we sing with joyful hearts
with soul and body offer we our arts. (refrain)

May each one’s soul blossom out with your beauty
Let every being feel our loving theme
For you are God, you have granted us wisdom
And You fulfill reality and dream
O Lord we sing with joyful hearts
With soul and body offer we our arts.

Opening Prayer (Teacher may ask someone from among the learners to lead the prayer)

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth

Request one of the Participants to read Psalm 119:1-8, Deuteronomy 6:2 and Matthew 5:17.

Discuss the text using the following guide questions:

1. Psalm 119:1 says “Happy are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord” (NRSV). Other versions use *blessed* instead of *happy*. What is your understanding on this?
2. Based on Psalm 119 what are those things that contribute to a person’s happiness?
 - Walk in the law of the Lord
 - Follow the decrees of the Lord
 - Do no wrong or do not commit sin
3. Why is it necessary to heed the Law or the Command of God?
4. Based on Psalm 119:6, what is the result of adhering to the Law of God?

5. Psalm 119:4 demands that God’s precepts must be followed diligently. Identify instances in the bible where God’s people either followed diligently or not. What were the results of their actions?
6. Jesus has been accused several times of disobeying the Law/Torah but why was Jesus deemed as blameless or sinless? Below are some instances where Jesus was accused of disobeying the Law:
 - Healing of a paralyzed man on a Sabbath – John 5, Mark 3, Matthew 12:9-14)
 - Jesus allowing the disciples to harvest on a Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-8)
7. In what way did Jesus fulfilled and obeyed the Law?

Lessons Learned

- Laws and guiding principles are important in putting order in every aspect of life.
- Laws and Principles followed not restrict people from being loving and caring.
- The laws and in the case of the UCCP the Declaration of Principles serves as guidelines in making sound and unassailable decisions, stand on issues affecting the community and the conduct of every leader and member

Applying the lessons Learned

- Commit to brief daily devotion and reflection of on any aspect of the DOP
- Underscore the values and principles stipulated in the DOP and inculcate it the minds and hearts of every member of the family.

Closing Time

Offertory

Closing Hymn “Trust and Obey” Hymnal of Faith Journey,312

When we walk with the Lord in the light of his Word
 What a glory he sheds on our way!
 While we do his good will, he abides with us still
 And with all who will trust and obey.

Refrain: Trust and obey for there’s no other way
 To be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey.

Closing Prayer (led by the Pastor or facilitator)

Lesson 2: How did our Declaration of Principles Come To Be?

Freedom Sunday

Second Sunday after Pentecost

June 14, 2020

General Concept : The Declaration of Principles was formulated in 1993 during the Constitutional Convention aimed to articulate the church's self-understanding of its identity, task and mission as a community of faith and as an institution.

Biblical References: *Joshua 24: 1-15; Acts 15: 1-21*

Age Level Concepts

- The Declaration of Principles was formulated in 1993 during the Constitutional Convention and was duly ratified by the Conferences.
- The Declaration of Principles articulates the church's self-understanding of its identity, task, and mission as a community of faith and as an institution.
- As UCCP members, we are duty-bound to uphold and adhere to the set of principles set by the church.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session the learners are expected to:

- Identify the significant milestones that led to the formulation of the declaration of principles
- Explain how the DOP helps inculcate the church's self-understanding of its identity, task, and mission as a community of faith and as an institution in every member
- Ascertain ways by which observance of the Declaration of Principles is best manifested

Materials: Bible (Preferably NRSV), Chart or printed copies of the Declaration of Principles (UCCP Constitution and By-laws, Article 2)

Biblical Background:

Joshua 24: 1-15; Acts 15: 1-21

Joshua 24 is a prominent text. The chapter's main thought is capsulized in verse 15 which says "Now if you are unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." This is Joshua's final exhortation to the people of Israel. He gathered them at Shechem and recounted God's wonderful, faithful and liberating acts for the people of Israel. Joshua urges the people to respond to the favors God has granted to them by serving God and adhering to the statutes of God. God has shown his unfathomable love, grace and mercy to Israel amidst their unfaithfulness and frailty. However verse 15 emphasizes that worshipping, serving and obeying God must be done with

utter volition and with a willing mind and not because God forces people. Worship, service and obedience should not just be perceived as duties but rather they are expressions of love and gratitude for all of God's goodness, blessings and grace. The Israelites has always believed that adherence to God's laws bring about blessings and abundance. Disobedience on the other hand results to destruction, disorder and destitution.

Such stringent adherence to the law trickled even to the New Testament Era. Acts 15 records one of the great debates in the church. The main issue tackled is circumcision. As Christianity spread in and outside of Jerusalem various Christian sects also emerged. One Christian sect that emerged was referred to as "Judaizers". They emphasize that it is necessary to adopt Jewish customs and practices, especially those found in the Law of Moses in order to be saved. Their stand created a rift between them and the Gentiles who were converted to Christianity. The council of Jerusalem culminated with compromise. Gentile Christians will not be obliged to undergo circumcision but must adhere to other laws as mentioned in verse 20. Though a decision and a compromise has been made, if we read through the letters of Paul it could be noticed that the issue affected various Christian churches and communities.

Suggested Lesson Outline

Greeting Time

Opening Hymn "Hymn of our Faith Journey " Hymnal of Faith Journey, 1

The Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, is the great Triune God of our lives
All creation finds purpose and meaning and fulfillment in God's wondrous plan.
In Christ God became flesh to dwell among us
Through the spirit we're guided along
God empowers us all to live out our faith, to the glory of the Triune God.

Opening Prayer - Request a participant to lead the prayer

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask one of the learners to read the biblical texts. Raise the following questions for discussion:

- What was Joshua's final word and reminder to the people of Israel?
- Identify the wondrous act of God in Joshua 24:1-13. Why was it necessary to recount all these acts of God?
- How did the people respond to Joshua's challenge? (Verse 18)

- Acts 15 discusses about 1 pertinent law in the Jewish tradition. When the church decided that Gentiles need not undergo circumcision can it be considered as disobedience? Why?
- How did the interpretation of the law affected the life of the early church?
- What “principles” can we draw out from the biblical texts that can serve as guide to the life and faith of the people?

Lessons Learned

Share the History of the UCCP Declaration of Principles.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ACTIONS FEB. 25-27, 1993

EC 93-38

That the delegation to the Constitutional Convention will be as follows:

1. Present members of the Executive Committee
2. All Past General Officers, past Chairpersons of the General Assembly, past General Secretaries, National Treasurers and past Bishops who have served at least one term.
3. Delegates elected by the Annual Conferences: two (2) Ordained ministers and two (2) lay persons for every 5,000 members or major fraction thereof, plus two (2) youth who are non-pastors provided that they are not more than 30 years old at the time of the first day of the Constitutional Convention.
4. Six delegates from CREATE and two delegates from the hospitals.
5. In addition to the two (2) lay persons, local churches with at least 500 members and above shall be entitled to one (1) delegate, (a) provided that said local churches have no delegates elected by the annual conference, and (b) provided further that at least one half (1/2) of the delegation from the conferences shall be women in so far as practicable."

The Constitutional Convention which was supposed to happen in October 1992 was postponed to 2nd week of September which is to specifically start on September 14, 1993. It was held in UCCP-Ellinwood, Malate, Manila.

The UCCP Declaration of Principles was written as part of the UCCP Constitution and By-Laws which is in Article 2. In 1993, the Constitutional Convention was convened and provided the UCCP the opportunity to redefine and reposition itself. The Convention offered the golden opportunity for UCCP to articulate the church’s self-understanding of its identity, tasks, and mission as a community of faith and as an institution. What was the resulting UCCP self-understanding of its identity and mission? As Bishop Reuel Marigza remarked, “the Heart and Soul of our Constitution are the Covenant Prayer and Declaration of Principles. The Covenant Prayer, which serves as Preamble, is the “heart” as it expresses the desire of our faith community, that is to *remain in covenant relationship with God and with one another*. This covenant relationship exists to en flesh the vision of our “founding parents of a united and a uniting church, reformed and transforming church.” The bias for the unity of the Church is clearly stated, to be expressed both in the conciliar-ecumenical form and in the form of organic union. While the latter form has been relegated to the side as an

aim of the ecumenical movement, the UCCP, even as it affirms its commitment to the ecumenical movement, sees the organic union as still a valid missional and ecclesiological concern and thrust. The Declaration of Principles, is the “soul” of the 1993 Constitution, detailing the essence of UCCP’s being. Like the Covenant Prayer, it, too, covers a lot of missional grounds it is the basis of our decisions, stand on issues, and conduct.”

The UCCP Constitution and By-Laws paid way of unifying the various Local Churches who experienced and still experiencing disunity amount its members and church workers. It became the basis of our faith understanding of who we are as a Church and who we are as people of God who are called to be partners in doing God’s mission to the whole creation. (Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza)

From the brief story of the how the Declaration came to be, ask the following:

1. Who were involved in the gathering?
2. Why do you think the gathering was important?

Applying the Lessons Learned

- Identify ways by which the UCCP can truly manifest what it means to be a holy, catholic and apostolic Church of Jesus Christ.
- Identify ways by which the UCCP can fully manifest its nature as a united and uniting church amid diversities and even conflicting stands on pertinent issues of the church and community.

Closing Time

Closing Hymn: “A United and Uniting Church” Children Praise God,²⁴⁴
A united and uniting church, that they may all be one
Reformed and transforming, in mission and in faith.
Onward UCCP, Building God’s kingdom of peace.

Come, let us all remember, a heritage of faithfulness
Of Argentina men and women, demoted to Christ’s way
covenanting as one together with God’s Spirit sole Enabler.

Closing Prayer: (Each one will share a one line prayer on what value they want to develop which they believe would greatly help strengthen the Church. they may also express their appreciation for coming up with a Declaration of Principles.)

Lesson 3: What is the significance of having principles to the life and work of the Church?

Father's Day

Third Sunday after Pentecost

June 21, 2020

General Concept: The declaration of principles is the “soul” of the UCCP Constitution and By-laws, in that it expresses the essence of UCCP’s being and identity.

Biblical References: Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Matthew 28: 18-20

Age Level Concepts

- The declaration of principles is the “soul” of the UCCP Constitution and By-laws, in that it expresses the essence of UCCP’s being and identity.
- We stand by our principles.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session the learners are expected to:

- Elucidate the reason/s why the Declaration of Principles is deemed the “soul” of the constitution.
- Appraise the current approaches implemented by the church in carrying out the values and tenets underscored in the Declaration of Principles
- Advocate approaches on how the values emphasized in the Declaration of Principles are best employed in various facets of the life of the church

Materials: Bible (Preferably NRSV), Chart or printed copies of the DOP, pieces of paper, ballpen or pencil, jar, bottle or box

Biblical Background

"The LORD our God is one LORD." This creed is very important in the life and faith of the Israelites and is recited daily by the Jews even up to the present times. This simple but profound creed summarizes and articulates briefly and concisely the first four commandments of the Decalogue. The belief in one God is the heart of all other Jewish, Christian and even Islamic beliefs, practices and traditions. This creed however is not just something to be recited. It has to be taught and handed down to every generation. It must serve as the foundation of every aspect of life and in all relationships whether personal or communal. Affirming that there is but One God cannot be disengaged from loving God. And loving God cannot be disengaged from loving our neighbors. This foundational belief must be taught to every generations and must be obeyed no matter what the cost is.

The teaching of the precepts and obeying them are the very same reminders of Jesus to the disciples in the great commandment. Jesus in Matthew gave various instructions and reminders on what it means to be a true child of God and what it means to members of God's kingdom. The instructions included the following

- Love your enemies
- Fulfill your religious duties to please God and not the people
- Do good especially to the least
- The Golden Rule
- Righteousness and justice

Jesus taught many things but one very significant character that Jesus wants every believer to have is obedience. Love God and obey God's commandments. Obedience is a character every parent desire from their children. Thus Matthew declares that a true child of God is one who obeys the will and purpose of God. Jesus himself modeled this. As Son of God, he obeyed God's command even at the point of death.

Paul on the other hand stresses the importance of being steadfast, immovable and excelling in doing God's work. He was cognizant of the cultural and political condition of the City of Corinth. It had a reputation for gross materialism and deep sinfulness. Shrines and temples for Greek gods and goddesses abound in the city and some Christians, in order to avoid persecution and discrimination, continued to attend banquets prepared by their friends in the dining rooms of these temples (1 Corinthians 10:18-21). In the face of this reality Paul admonishes the Christians in Corinth to do the following:

- a. Be steadfast in their faith which they must remain loyal to God even if it means persecution
- b. Be immovable which means not to settle for compromises just so that they will be accepted and safe.
- c. Continue to excel in doing good things for God. This means being obedient to the will and purpose of God always.

Suggested Lesson Outline

Greeting Time

Opening Hymn "Spirit of God Descend Upon My Heart"

Hymnal of Faith Journey, 181

Spirit of God, descend upon my heart,
Wean it from earth, though all its pulse move,
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as you are
And make me love you as I ought to love.

Teach me to feel that you are always nigh,
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,

To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh,
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.

Opening Prayer (Request from among the learners to lead the class in prayer)

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth

Request a participant to read the texts. Discuss the text using the following guide questions:

- Based on Deuteronomy 6:4, point out the fundamental belief of the Israelites which the Christians also accepted.
- In Deuteronomy 6:5, identify how this fundamental belief is best manifested.
- Allow each participant to share their perception on the following phrases:
 - Keep these commands in your heart
 - Recite to your children
 - Bind on their hands
 - Put as an emblem on their forehead
 - Write on the doorposts of their houses
 - Write on their gates
- a. What do the following body parts signify: Heart, Hand, Forehead
- b. What do the following parts of the house signify: Doorposts and gate
- c. Belief in God requires loving God. How did the Israelites manifest their love for God?
- d. What did Jesus say about love and how should this love be manifested?
- e. Illuminate the connection between love, obedience and steadfastness.

Lessons Learned

- Examine what characteristics you, the church, and the community have that discloses love and faith in One God.
- The Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) reminds the Israelites that the key principle of faith is the belief in one God. Their worship life and laws are founded on this key principle. As UCCP we hold on to the same belief. How is this belief demonstrated in our life and work as a church?
- Based on the UCCP Declaration of Principles what do you believe is the best identity that UCCP members can best show to the wider community?
- How would our community describe UCCP?

Applying the Lessons Learned

- a. Point out at least 3 activities each family can do to ensure that the Declaration of Principles can be inculcated in the daily routine of every family member.
- b. Point out at least 3 ministries or approaches that the church can execute to ensure that every member of the church will stand by the principles of the church.

Closing Time

Offering

Closing Hymn “We’ve a Story to tell to the Nations” Hymnal of Faith Journey, 310

We’ve a story to tell to the nations,
That shall turn their hearts to the right,
A story of truth and mercy,
A story of peace and light,
A story of peace and light.

Refrain:

For the darkness shall turn to dawning,
And the dawning to noonday bright;
And Christ’s great kingdom shall come on earth,
The kingdom of love and light.

We’ve a song to be sung to the nations,
That shall lift their hearts to the Lord,
A song that shall conquer evil
And shatter the spear and sword,
And shatter the spear and sword.

Closing Prayer:

- Each one will write one important thing they learned and place it in the jar, box or bottle.
- The Minister or facilitator will lead everyone in the closing prayer.
- The jar will be placed in the altar together with the offering

Lesson 4: What do we mean by being an “integral part of the Church” of Jesus Christ?

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

June 28, 2020

General Concept: Being an integral part of the Church of Jesus Christ means we are connected with other community of Christian believers and we are part of a bigger and wider body.

Biblical References: 1 Corinthians 1:2; 12:4-14; 21-27

Age Level Concepts

- Being an integral part of the church of Jesus Christ means we are connected with other community of Christian believers.
- We work with other Christian communities for greater service.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session the learners are expected to:

- Rationalize the meaning of being an integral part of the Church of Jesus Christ.
- Explore the various methods connecting with other community of Christian believers.
- Engage in joint mission related endeavors with other communities of faith

Materials: Bible (Preferably NRSV)

Biblical Background

1ST Corinthians was written by Paul to correct the many problems and issues the church was facing. There was disunity in the church because of the members' allegiance to various personalities rather than to Christ. There were also objections on Paul's decision to make a living through his trade which is tent making so as not to be dependent on the church for his needs. Issues about marriage, spiritual gifts, worship, food, and even on the understanding of Christ's resurrection has placed the church on the verge of schism. It is for this reason that Paul used the analogy of the human body to elucidate the truth that the church is the body of Christ. There are many parts with different functions but all are functioning for the benefit of the whole body. The text emphasizes that each part of the body is absolutely conjoined. To live in disunity and disharmony is to dismember the body of Christ. But more than this, Paul emphasizes the need for the members to live together as a community. Interconnectedness is essential even as each one practices his or her own unique calling and vocation. Since there is interconnection individual actions affect each other. Thus, it is important for each member not to boast of any gift he or she possesses but to ensure that whatever that gift may be will build up the whole body.

Suggested Lesson Outline

Greeting Time

Opening Hymn "Open My Heart that I May See"
Open my eyes that I may see glimpses of truth Thou hast for me;
Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free.

Refrain:

Silently now I wait for Thee, Ready, my God, Thy will to see;
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit Divine!

Open my ears that I may hear Voices of truth Thou sendest clear;
And while the wave notes fall on my ear, everything false will disappear.

Open my mouth and let me bear tidings of mercy everywhere;
Open my heart and let me prepare Love with Thy children thus to share.

Open my mind that I may read More of Thy love in word and deed;
What shall I fear while yet Thou dost lead? Only for light from Thee I
plead.

Opening Prayer (Request one of the Elders to lead the class in prayer)

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth. Let one of the learners read the text.

Discuss the text using the following guide questions:

- Write your description of Corinth on the 1st half of the board or Manila paper.

- What prompted Paul to write a letter to the Church? Why was it necessary for Paul to use the analogy of the human body with many parts?

- Describe how the members' connectedness in Corinth was placed in jeopardy.

Lessons Learned

- Compare and contrast the modern church with that of the church in Corinth. Write your description of the modern church on the 2nd half of the board or Manila paper.

- Reflect on what is shared on the board or Manila paper. As a body of Christ where does the present Christian Church stand?

- Share your assessment of the following:
 - The relationship between and among church members
 - The relationship between the local churches and higher church judicatories
 - The relationship with other members of the community where the local church is situated.
 - The relationship with other faith communities or faith denominations

- How is the church doing as a body of Christ?

Applying the Lessons Learned

- Reflecting again on what is written on the board or Manila paper pause for a moment of silence and think of what you can contribute to help strengthen the unity of the church and community.
- Think of a church nearby. This church need not be a UCCP church. Make an initial plan on how you could have a fellowship with this church.
- Identify an issue in the community and formulate a letter for faith communities to come together for a unified action.

Closing Time

Closing Hymn: “Many Gifts, One Spirit”

God of change and glory, God of time and space,
When we fear the future, give to us your grace.
In the midst of changing ways give us still the grace to praise.

Refrain:

Many gifts, one Spirit, one love known in many ways.
In our difference is blessing, from diversity we praise
One Giver, one Lord, one Spirit, one Word
Known in many ways, hallowing our days.
For the Giver, for the gifts, praise, praise, praise!

God of many colors, God of many signs,
You have made us different, blessing many kinds.
As the old ways disappear, let your love cast out our fear.

Freshness of the morning, newness of each night,
You are still creating endless love and light.
This we see, as shadows part, many gifts from one great heart.

Closing Prayer (Moment of Silence. Request a participant to read this prayer)

“United in Your Love” (a prayer by Helen Weaver)

Almighty God, who are mother and father to us all,
Look upon your planet Earth divided.
Help us to know that we are all your children,
That all nations belong to one great family,
And that all of our religions lead to you.

Multiply our prayers in every land
Until the whole Earth becomes your congregation,
United in your love.
Sustain our vision of a peaceful future
And give us strength to work unceasingly
To make that vision real.

Lesson 5: What do we mean by “One Church of Jesus Christ”?

Communion Sunday

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

July 5, 2020

General Concept: The One Church of Jesus Christ is the community of believers that proclaims Christ’s Lordship.

Biblical References: Ephesians 4:5-6, 15-16; Galatians 3:28

Age Level Concepts:

- The One Church of Jesus Christ is the community of believers that proclaims Christ’s Lordship.
- The One Church of Jesus Christ affirms that there is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the session the learners are expected to:

- Expound the underpinnings of the faith statement “Jesus Christ is Lord”
- Examine the basic foundation of the unity of the Christian Church
- Demonstrate operative modes of proclaiming the Lordship of Jesus Christ

Materials: Bible (preferably NRSV)

Biblical Background

In the 1st century BC, Ephesus was deemed as one of the centers of trade in the Greco Roman world. A quarter of a million people dwell in this important seaport. Ephesus was home to many Greek, Romans and other settlers all over the Mediterranean world. This condition brought about a highly pluralistic culture. Religious and moral beliefs as well as traditions were highly diverse. Such diversity may have threatened the unity of young Christian Church. Anyone who claims to have the “right religion” and “the only God” is bound to face persecution. Paul in his Letter to the Christians in Ephesus uses the analogy of the human body as he did in his letter to the Corinthians to emphasize the significance of the being united. In here, Paul presents not just the importance of unity but also the main reason for the unity. Christians are part of a universal family through faith in Jesus Christ. The word “One” is repeated several times in this short passage. This indicates a

strong emphasis to be one or to be united even in the midst of a high diverse and pluralistic world. Paul emphasized that the followers are because of the following:

- **There is one Lord** – The use of “Lord” clearly refers to Jesus. Declaring that Jesus is Lord was viewed both as a statement of faith and as a political statement. To declare that Jesus is Lord is also a way of declaring that the Roman Emperor is not God.
- **There is one faith** – Faith signifies the importance of the foundational tenets of the Church. These tenets or principles are pertinent in ensuring the unity of the church.
- **There is one baptism** – This is a highly debated upon statement. When we say “One Baptism” do we mean the form or the way it is being done? Baptism is closely connected with salvation. A person who is saved experiences an inward transformation but true transformation is shown outwardly through ones actions. Thus somebody said that “Baptism is the outward testimony of the inward transformation. It is not the ritual or the method that counts. It is the how the saved individual gives a testimony to the one who caused the transformation. And that one is none other than Jesus Christ. A baptized believer is a transformed being. He/she exudes love (Verse 15-16). This love to God radiates in how he/she relates with other people.

Suggested Lesson Outline

Greeting Time

Opening Hymn “Fairest Lord Jesus” Hymnal of Faith Journey, 112

Fairest Lord Jesus!
Ruler of all nature!
O Thou of God and man the Son!
Thee will I cherish,
Thee will I honor,
Thou, my soul’s glory, joy, and crown!

Fair are the meadows
Fairer still the woodlands,
Robed in the blooming garb of spring;
Jesus is fairer,
Jesus is purer,
Who makes the woeful heart to sing!

Opening Prayer (Request a CWA member to lead the class in prayer)

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth

Request a participant to read the texts. Give a brief background of the biblical text.

Deepen the discussion through posing the following questions:

- a. Why do you think Paul used the “One” repeatedly?
- b. What does the word “One” imply?
- c. Do a brainstorming on the following phrases:
 - One Lord
 - One Faith
 - One Baptism

Lessons Learned

Divide the participants into three groups .Assign to each group one of the following for them to ponder upon:

- How are the following underpinnings of unity made visible in the life and ministry of the church:
 - Group 1 - One Lord
 - Group 2 - One Faith
 - Group 3 - One Baptism
- Discuss the reflection of each group.
- Deepen the discussion by raising the following questions:
 - a. What are the marks of being a “One Church of Christ” as based in Ephesians 4:15 -16?
 - b. In what way can we say that we are growing in Christ?
 - c. What are the marks that show that the church has grown in Christ?

Applying the Lessons Learned

Let the participants randomly discuss how they can proclaim Christ’s Lordship in the following areas where they are located:

- At home or to their children
- In their respective work place
- In their community.

Closing Time

Closing Hymn “Jesus Shall Reign”Hymnal of Faith Journey,173
Jesus shall reign where’er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;

His Kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till moons shall wax and wane no more.

To Him shall endless prayer be made.
And princes throng to crown His head,
His name like sweet perfume shall rise
With every morning sacrifice.

People and realms of every tongue
Dwell on His love with sweetest song;
And infant voices shall proclaim
Their early blessings on His name.

Blessings abound where'er He reigns:
The prisoner leaps to lose his chains,
The weary find eternal rest,
And all the sons of want are blest.

Closing Prayer:

- Facilitator: Lord Jesus Christ, you call us to follow you as disciples.
Help us to respond wholeheartedly without counting the cost.
- Participants: Lord Jesus Christ, you invite us to proclaim your gospel of hope
and salvation here at home and to all nationals and peoples. Teach
us to be faithful evangelists in word and in action.

(moment of silence)

- Facilitator: Lord Jesus Christ, you have given us every spiritual and material
blessing. Show us how to share our gifts with others, and inspire us
always to follow your example of generous self-giving.

- Participants: Gracious Lord, teach us to give with a joyous and grateful heart
that we may provide hope, consolation, and pastoral care to your
people and thus give glory and honor to your holy name. AMEN

(Moment of silence)

The prayer is taken from

[https://www.rcav.org/uploadedFiles/Diocesan Offices/Stewardship/Stewardship%20Prayers\(2\).pdf](https://www.rcav.org/uploadedFiles/Diocesan%20Offices/Stewardship/Stewardship%20Prayers(2).pdf)