

Lesson 31: What are the concrete manifestations of our pastoral witness?

Epiphany Sunday

Second Sunday after Christmas

January 3, 2021

General Concept: The UCCP engages in programs and establishes institutions that aim to respond to the needs of people as a means /manifestation of its pastoral witness (like Clinical Pastoral Care [CPE], hospitals,schools and hotels.)

Biblical References: Luke 4:31-44;Matthew 25:34-37

Age Level Concepts

- The UCCP engages in Clinical Pastoral Education Program to equip and train people to be able to attend to people in pain and sick.
- The UCCP has established healing institutions like hospitals to be able to cater to the needs of sick people.
- The UCCP has teaching institutions like schools and ministerial formation centers that provide education and training.
- The UCCP has established hotels to provide accommodation to traveling people and venues for training.
- We take pride in what the church has established that manifests its pastoral witness.

Learning Objectives

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

- Identify the different programmatic expressions of our church's pastoral witness
- Point out the different functions and purpose of these programmatic expressions
- Express affirmation for the efforts of the church in living out its pastoral witness

Materials: Bible, hymn books, manila/bond paper, pentel pens

Biblical Background

Luke 4:31-44

While in Capernaum Jesus preached in the local synagogue. People noticed that his teaching was very much different from that of the Jewish religious teachers. Instead of arguing about small points of the law he taught the truth of God plainly. All who heard had no doubt that this was God's message taught with his authority ([Mark 1:21-22](#)).

On this occasion, however, Jesus' teaching was violently opposed by evil satanic powers that had taken control of a man in the audience. Such demons opposed Jesus throughout his ministry, but they were never victorious over him. News of Jesus' authority over evil spirits spread quickly throughout northern Palestine ([Mark 1:23-28](#)).

Further examples of the ministry of Jesus show the presence and power of the kingdom of God in healing those afflicted by Satan (Matthew 4:23-25; Mark 1:29-34). (For the significance of the kingdom of God see earlier section, 'Jesus and the Kingdom'.) On one occasion when Jesus was staying in Capernaum, he went outside the town to find a quiet place to pray to his Father. Peter thought he was losing valuable opportunities, as the town was full of people looking for him. Jesus replied that no matter how many needy people were in Capernaum, he could not stay there all the time. He had to work and preach in other towns as well (Mark 1:35-39).

Hebrews 13:1-3

Before closing his letter, the writer gives instruction on a variety of matters that need attention. First, Christians should act with love, not only towards those within their church, but also towards strangers. Some of these visitors may be messengers God has sent to them (cf. Genesis 18:1-8; Genesis 19:1-3). They should also help fellow Christians who are imprisoned or in some other way suffering ill-treatment (13:1-3).

Romans 12:13-21

Christians must be sincere and straightforward in everything they do. They must in particular have a loving care for those who are fellow members of Christ's body (9-10). Besides being spiritually enthusiastic, they must work hard at developing qualities of perseverance and prayerfulness. They must also be generous in giving practical help to their fellow believers (11-13).

These positive attitudes must be shown also towards those who are outside the church, even to persecutors (14-16). Christians should not look for revenge against those who do them wrong, but should try to live peacefully with everyone (17-18). The punishment of persecutors is a matter for God to decide. The responsibility of Christians is to treat them as if they were friends. This may in the end make the persecutors feel so ashamed that they will repent of their wrongdoing (19-21).

Notes:

MISSION STATEMENT ON THE HEALING MINISTRY Executive Committee
20-27 August 1987

The UCCP engages itself in wholistic health ministry in obedience to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ for abundant life for all.

In affirmation of this conviction, we thus further state that health is a basic human right.

While it is the duty of the State to provide health care, the Church has a moral responsibility towards the attainment of a wholesome and healthy life for everyone as

God intended, recognizing that the art and science of healing is an integral part of the message of salvation.

The active participation of the people of God through her various institutions shall enable the Church to fulfill her healing ministry.

Though the Church focuses her attention upon people, she cannot close her eyes to the ills of society which give rise to poverty of body and spirit. It is therefore necessary for the Church to address herself to the historic problems of domination, unequal distribution of land, inequality in economic opportunities and resources, and oppression and exploitation of less privileged and marginalized Filipinos.

Ref: Executive Committee, 20-27 August 1987

POLICY FOR CHURCH-RELATED SCHOOLS Executive Committee 6-11 December 1954

1. Church-related schools, when their aim is definitely Christian and when administered efficiently, are to be regarded as a vital part of the program of the Church's evangelistic outreach and at the same time a valuable agency in the preparation of young people for responsible citizenship.
2. A school which fulfills the requirements for assuming a Church-related school status will be assisted in planning and implementing its total program, particularly with reference to the Christian aim, and will be extended well-defined financial aid when possible and necessary. This aid might be given in the following forms:
 - a. The providing of full salary of one qualified and approved teacher of Bible, who has completed a four-year course of study in Christian or religious education in one of our recognized theological institutions.
 - b. The providing of the necessary textbooks when the curriculum of Bible courses has been planned or approved by the Department of Christian Education.
 - c. By approving; when feasible, grants or subsidies from United States Mission Boards for occurring any special needs with particular consideration being given to those institutions which seek capital funds for the purchase of land to be used for agriculture projects thus to provide for both self-support and a training experience for the students.
3. The Church, while interested in strengthening the program of Bible instruction, is likewise concerned that the Church-related schools have a unifying philosophy of

education which regards all truth as one, with God as its author, whether it be scientific, historical, or religious, so that every subject taught will contribute to the implementation of the Christian aim of the school and every teacher will be committed to the realization of that aim: namely, that of acquainting the student with God and His truth in all aspects so as to effect his well-rounded growth and fit him for a useful life in the community and nation.



**United Shalom Hotel Services, Inc.
(UCCP Shalom Center)**

VISION, MISSION & CORE VALUES

VISION

A UCCP-INSPIRED WORTHY PLACE FOR REST, RELAXATION AND RECREATION STAR – RATED NATIONWIDE HOTEL

MISSION

- PROVIDE AFFORDABLE, COMFORTABLE AND WHOLESOME HOTEL SERVICES AND SHALOM EXPERIENCE TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS
- SERVE AS A REGULAR REVENUE STREAM OF UCCP PROGRAMS AND MINISTRIES

CORE VALUES

SERVANTHOOD

We consistently provide humble and selfless service to our stakeholders and perform our jobs with a positive and persevering attitude.

INTEGRITY

We practice honesty, transparency, fairness and moral uprightness in all our transactions and assume full accountability for all our actions.

EXCELLENCE

We continuously strive for competence, creativity and innovativeness in responding to the varying and changing needs of our stakeholders and conduct ourselves in a professional manner at all times

COMPASSION

We uphold the worth and dignity of our stakeholders and consistently demonstrate our sensitivity to their well-being and our responsiveness to their needs

STEWARDSHIP

We recognize that all our talents and resources come from God and we commit to use them efficiently and effectively individually and as a team to serve His purpose.

Suggested Lesson Outline

Greeting Time

Announcement and/ or Birthday Greetings

Opening Song “My Task” Hymnal of Faith Journey, 311

To love someone more early eve'ry day,
To help a wand'ring child find the way,
To ponder o'er a noble thought and pray,
And smile when evening falls, and smile when evening falls,
This is my task.

To follow truth as blind ones long for light,
To do my best from dawn of day till night,
To keep my heart fit for Christ's holy sight,
And answer when he calls, and answer when he calls,
This is my task.

Opening Prayer

We raise our praise to you Lord as we face the new year with hope and thanksgiving. Now, as we come together to study and learn, may Your abiding spirit be with us just as You were with us the past year. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask from among the learners to read the biblical texts. Ask the following questions for discussion of the texts:

1. In what circumstances did Jesus manifest his healing power?
2. What could be the reasons why Jesus heals the sick?
3. Why do you think Paul reiterated in his letters to take care of strangers or to show hospitality to those who are not even members of the church?
4. In what other ways can Christians manifest its faith?

Lessons Learned

Divide the class into three (3) groups. Provide each group a copy of UCCP's statement and resolutions related to today's lesson. Tell the groups to read and point out the following:

- Specific program or institution established
- Purpose and goal
- important points in the statement which the class needs to be aware of.

Ask each group to give a report based on the points given above.

Applying the Lessons Learned

- Identify program expressions of pastoral witness which your conference or local church is actively engaged in.
- Identify institutions (schools, hospitals, hotels) which are related to UCCP and its impact to the community
- How do you feel about these program expressions and institutions?

Closing Worship

Offering

Closing Song “Pray for a World” Hymnal of Faith Journey, 371

Pray for a world where every child finds welcome in a sheltered place,
Where love is tender undefiled and firmness intertwines with grace.

Closing Prayer (the facilitator may end the session with a prayer)

Lesson 32: How do we understand our prophetic witness?

Baptism of the Lord

First Sunday after the Epiphany

January 10, 2021

General Concept: Prophetic witness means to speak courageously the will of God whenever and wherever the prophetic message is demanded in critical issues and human events in order to help empower the faith communities in making their united responses.

Biblical References: *Mark 13: 24-37; Jeremiah 1:10; Joel 2:28*

Age Level Concepts

- Prophetic witness means to speak courageously the will of God whenever and wherever the prophetic message is demanded in critical issues and human events in order to help empower the faith communities in making their united responses.
- We are all called to be prophets in our time and commit ourselves to this task.

Learning Objectives

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

- Articulate their own understanding of task as prophets of our present time
- Cite situations and issues of today that demand the church to speak courageously
- Give reasons why prophetic witness is needed

Materials: Bible, hymn books, manila/bond paper, pentel pens

Biblical Background

Mark 13: 24-37

Just as the first leaves on a fig tree indicate that summer is coming, so when the disciples see the false messiahs, the persecution and the approach of the Roman armies, they will know that the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation is upon them. People of Jesus' day would see the fulfilment of these things in their own lifetime ([Matthew 24:32-35](#); [Luke 21:29-33](#)).

As for the day when the Son of man will return in the glory of his kingdom, no one knows when that will be except the Father ([Matthew 24:36](#); cf. [Daniel 7:13-14](#)). People will be carrying on their daily business, ignoring God's warnings just as people did in the days of Noah. But just as the flood was God's means of judgment on those people, so Jesus' return will bring judgment on sinners and salvation to his people ([Matthew 24:37-41](#); see notes on [Luke 17:22-37](#)).

Jesus' coming will be as unexpected as that of a thief who breaks into a house while the owner is asleep ([Matthew 24:42-44](#); see notes on [Luke 12:39-40](#)). The disciples of Jesus must therefore be prepared for his return at all times. They must not settle down to a life of self-pleasing but live faithfully for him ([Matthew 24:45-51](#); see notes on [Luke 12:42-46](#)). (Donald C. Fleming, Bridgeway Bible Commentary)

Jeremiah 1:10

Jeremiah belonged to a priestly family that lived not far from Jerusalem. However, he may never have practised as a priest, for God's will was that he be a prophet. His prophetic ministry lasted at least forty years. It began in 627 BC (the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign) and continued into the era that followed the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC (1:1-3).

God had chosen Jeremiah to be a prophet before he was born. He was to be God's messenger to Judah and the surrounding nations (4-5). At the time God called him to be a prophet, Jeremiah was probably no more than twenty years of age. When he objected that he was too young and inexperienced for such a task, God replied that he would be with him and give him the message to speak. Jeremiah had no cause to be afraid (6-8).

Much of Jeremiah's message would not be popular and at times would appear to be pessimistic because of its repeated announcements of God's judgment. Nevertheless, judgment was necessary, because proud self-confidence must be broken down and the corruption of sin removed before new spiritual life can grow up (9-10).

Joel 2:28

Among the prophets of the Old Testament, Joel differs from most of the others in that he does not state the period during which he preached. One suggestion is that he prophesied in Judah around the period 835-830 BC, during the reign of the boy-king Joash. This would explain why the book does not mention Syria, Assyria or Babylon, the chief enemies during the time of the divided kingdom, as these nations had not yet begun to interfere in Judah's affairs. It would also explain why the prophet does not mention a reigning king, for at that time the government of the country was largely in the hands of the priest Jehoiada (2 Kings 11:1-21; 2 Kings 12:1-2). The prominence of Jehoiada may also account for Joel's interest in the temple and its services (Joel 1:9; Joel 1:13; Joel 2:12; Joel 2:15-17).

An alternative suggestion is that the book was written after the Jews' return from captivity. The most likely period is either 520-510 BC (after the ministry of Haggai and Zechariah and the rebuilding of the temple) or around 400 BC (a generation or so after the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah). According to these suggestions, Joel is among either the first or the last of the writing prophets.

Promise of the Spirit (2:28-32)

People may readily turn to God in days of hardship, but many of them just as readily forget God and become self-satisfied as soon as prosperity returns. They will be more obedient to God when they have a better understanding of God's will. They will be more genuine in their devotion when they realize that God's blessings consist of more than grain, wine and oil. Joel looks forward to the day when God will give people this better understanding by putting God's Spirit within each one, regardless of age, sex or social status. It will not be like former times, when God gave the Spirit only to certain people for special tasks on special occasions (28-29).

All this must happen before the final great day of the Lord dawns. The darkness and terror of the locust plague is only a faint picture of the horror of that last great judgment. On that day believers will be saved but sinners will perish (30-32).

In New Testament times Peter saw a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy in the remarkable events of the Day of Pentecost. With the death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, a new age had dawned. The Spirit was now given to all God's people. Those who called on God's name had the assurance of salvation, but those who persisted in their sin had the assurance of judgment and condemnation (Acts 2:14-21; cf. John 16:7-15).

Suggested Lesson Outline

Greeting Time

Announcements and/or Birthday Greetings

Opening Song "Sing Praise to God for Life" Hymnal of Faith Journey, 372

Sing praise to God, sing praise to God for life

For beauty, hope and love, for tenderness and grace

Sing praise to God, sing praise to God for life

With all of earth, sing the praise of God's life.

Open your ears to hear the cries of pain,
Arising from the poor and all who are oppressed,
Open your eyes and use your wits to find,
Who are the cause of this world's unjust ways.

Opening Prayer

It is indeed a blessing for your people to come together and find time to reflect on moments and things that affect our life and faith. Despite difficult circumstances, we open our hearts and minds to Your calling. Grant this day be a moment of reflection and learning. in Jesus' name. Amen

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth

Divide the class into three (3) groups. Assign each group a biblical text to discuss and reflect on.

Group 1- Joel 2: 28-32

Group 2 - Jeremiah 1:10

Group 3- Mark 13: 24-37

Tell the groups to respond to the following questions:

1. What life situations are reflected in the text?
2. How did God respond to the life situations of people?
3. What was expected from the people especially those whom God gave favor to?
4. What are the truths that people need to speak about?
5. What is the role of the prophet that the church needs to emulate?

Lessons Learned

- Tell the groups that after their discussion and sharing, they are to come up with their own definition or understanding of the concept "prophetic witness".
- Have each group share their definition/articulation of the concept. Collate their ideas and have the whole class agree on their understanding of "prophetic witness".

Applying the Lessons Learned

Listening to a Church Statement. Ask someone to read the statement of our church published in February 1990. Tell the learners to take note of the similar situations we find ourselves today.

A DECLARATION AGAINST VIOLENCE Executive Committee 23 February 1990

... Because the land is full of bloody crimes and the city is full of violence ...

Ezekiel 7:23

We are greatly disturbed and alarmed by the escalating cases of violence in our country. Senseless killings of church people and other civilians, and of police and military personnel are indicative of this worsening situation in which we live.

We believe, however, that the upsurge of crimes and violent acts are symptomatic of graver and more basic problems such as those of widespread poverty, exploitation and oppression. Such a situation has deadened the moral and spiritual nerve of our people.

Greatly contributing to the state of violence are the total war policy of our government in dealing with the insurgency problem and the interventionist policy of the United States government in the affairs of the Philippines. Moreover, economic dominance in collaboration with the local and national big business enterprises contribute to the upsurge of violence in our midst.

Since the total war policy of our government was implemented with the support of the U.S. senseless killings, massacres, and disappearances of persons have markedly increased. Several of those who carry firearms have become emboldened to use arms indiscriminately. Indeed, many violent acts have been attributed to armed civilian groups which enjoy the support of the military establishment. Such actions of the very people entrusted with the task of peace-keeping have pushed many civilians to take the option of armed struggle. Indeed, outright killing or salvaging has become the rule and due process has become a myth.

The rise of politically and economically related and motivated crimes is very alarming. Those who are supposed to establish peace and order, and to protect the life and property of our people, have often been found to be the perpetrators of horrible killings and massacres of the hapless and helpless civilian population. Added to these are the criminal and terroristic activities of outlawed elements of our society. Indeed, the land is full of bloody crimes and the city is full of violence.

Ezekiel 7:23

What has our Christian faith to say to all these?

- Our faith affirms that persons are created in the image of God. There is no distinction. All persons have equal worth in the sight of God.
- We affirm as Christians that life is a divine gift; therefore, it has to be regarded with dignity and sanctity. No one is to be a judge, jury and executioner of any one's life. That is a divine prerogative.
- We affirm as Christians that wholehearted trust and reliance in God is much better than alliances with and reliance on powerful nations.
- We affirm as Christians that shalom or holistic peace is God's will for his people. Shalom means wholeness, well-being growth, harmony, security, equality and not just absence of conflicts and war. Genuine peace happens when the roots of conflict and violence are removed; when a just social structure is built; and, when human rights and dignity are held sacred.

The time has come for all of us to act.

Let us pray for the fulfillment of God's promise:

I will make your overseers peace and taskmasters righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in your land; devastation or destruction within your borders

Isaiah 60:17-18

We call on our leaders in the government to:

- Abolish the Citizens Armed Force Geographical Units (CAFGUs) and other para-military units; as mandated by the Constitution.
- Serve notice for the non-continuance of the United States military bases beyond 1991.
- Pursue aggressively and purposively independent foreign and national policies.
- Institute measures and enact laws that address to the basic socio-economic needs based on the common cries and demands of the less fortunate members of society.

We call on all parties involved in the strife: AFP, NPA, MNLF, MILF RAM and other armed groups:

- Stop all strafings, bombings and ambushes which destroy life and property, and drive thousands away from their homes, farms and means of livelihood, thus aggravating poverty causing deaths to both children and adults;
- Respect the rights of civilians and other non-combatants; and stop immediately all violent and terroristic acts; black listing, name calling, and labelling people as the enemy, because all these contribute to the atmosphere of fear, despair and destruct in one another;
- Call for a ceasefire. Return to the negotiating table to deal with a comprehensive settlement of this terrible and costly conflict by seriously dealing with the root causes of insurgency and other crimes against life and property.

We call on all manufacturers of weapons and instruments of war to:

- Stop making weapons and instruments of war and stop making war as a business industry.
- Instead, produce equipment that support and enhance life. Let the prophecy of Isaiah be fulfilled through you ... and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 3:4).

We call on all Christian homes and institutions to:

- Liberate themselves from all forms of structures, systems and expression that propagate militarism and enhance the development of military culture.

We call on all Christians and peoples of various faiths and persuasion to:

- Be true instruments of peace, doing only all acts that make for peace;
- Be ever vigilant to defend firmly but peacefully the rights of the least fortunate members of society;
- Promote what is just and denounce what is unjust.

Moreover, let us all be steadfast and immovable in our faith, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain (I Cor. 15:58).

Done on the 23rd of February, 1990 at the Conference Room of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Quezon City, Philippines.

The General Assembly The Executive Committee United Church of Christ in the Philippines
Bishop Juan A. Marigza Northern Luzon Jurisdiction
Bishop Patrocinio A. Apura Visayas Jurisdiction
Bishop Gabriel A. Garol Southern Luzon Jurisdiction

Ask the learners to cite life situations of people today in which the church must courageously speak of or manifest its prophetic witness.

Let the learners respond, “Why do you think the church’s prophetic witness is needed in certain life situations and issues?”

Closing Worship

Offering

Closing Song “The Hands of God” Hymnal of Faith Journey, 295

The hands of God that make the whole creation new
That guides us through the path that we must tread
They lifted up the lowly and the poor
Hands that brought down the mighty from their thrones
Refrain:

The hands of God that guide us through the years,
From doubts and fears those hands have led us through
They call for faith and hope and love to reign in us
The hands of God that work through you and me.

The hands that make the lame to walk and blind to see
The hands that work to set our people free
the hands that touch the sinners and the lonely
Are hands of God that work through you and me. (refrain)

Closing Prayer (Ask an elder to end the session with a prayer)

Lesson 33: What are the concrete manifestations of our church’s prophetic ministry?

Prayer for Christian Unity Sunday

Second Sunday after the Epiphany

January 17, 2021

General Concept: The UCCP manifests its prophetic ministry through its alliance work with sectoral groups; networking with agencies; establishing programs on JPHR, community ministry and migrant ministry.

Biblical References: *Luke 4:18-19; Isaiah 64:1-2*

Age Level Concepts

- The UCCP manifests its prophetic ministry through its alliance work with sectoral groups; networking with agencies;
- The UCCP manifests its prophetic ministry through establishing programs on JPHR, community ministry and migrant ministry

- The UCCP released statements and resolutions on matters and issues that affect the life of the people.

Learning Objectives

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

- Distinguish the different programs of the church that manifest its prophetic witness
- Identify the different groups with whom UCCP had established alliances
- Study statements on societal issues that UCCP made a stand
- Express appreciation and affirmation of the church's stand, programs and alliance work that manifest its prophetic witness.

Materials: Bible, hymn books, manila/bond paper, pentel pens

Biblical Background

Luke 4:18-19

“People’s movements and non-government organizations would also point to the poor and their struggles as their reasons for being. Churches since time immemorial have considered caring for the poor as their cornerstone of their mission and ministry. As a matter of fact, the church started as a movement of poor people, and not simply poor but persecuted poor.

Essentially, option for the poor is not only a “preference”, as the bishops of Latin America are saying; rather it is a must, if the church were to be a true church of Christ. Jesus’ statement that “the poor will always be with you” (Mk. 14:7) does not always mean that there are always poor people around; but rather it does also mean that if and when there are poor people, Christians should always care for them. they should always be on the side of the poor.

Good News to the Poor

What then is the good news to the poor? Jesus’ life and ministry shows us that the good news to the poor is none other than the realization that God is on the side of the poor. God sides with the poor not because they are many in number or because they are morally upright; rather because they suffer so much.

Jesus said “Blessed are your poor; the Kingdom of God is yours” (Luke 6:20). The poor always thought that they don’t have a place in the Kingdom of God in the same way that they don’t have a place in the kingdom of this world. this was what religious and political authorities were saying. The poor didn’t have the right to complain. Poverty was traditionally considered as a sign of God’s curse. It was the rich not the poor who were supposed to have been blessed by God.

But here comes Jesus saying that the poor are blessed by God. And by his word and deed, Jesus identified himself fully with their sufferings and hopes. He fed the hungry among them, cured the sick, and forgave the sinners. In his parable of the Final Judgment, he emphasized that what we have done to the “least of the brethren”- the poor people- we have done it unto God (Mt. 25:31-46)

Hence, we are making a mockery of God, if and when we manipulate the poor for our own selfish ends, politically, religiously, economically or otherwise. And Apostle Paul reminds us in his letter to the Galatians that God cannot be mocked, we shall reap in due time exactly what we plant (Galatians 6:7).” (Rev. Luna Dingayan)

Suggested Lesson Outline

Greeting Time

Announcements and/or Birthday Greetings

Opening Song ”If I Had a Hammer”

If I had a hammer, I’d hammer in the morning,
I’d hammer in the evening, all over this land,
I’d hammer out danger, I’d hammer out warning,
I’d hammer out love between my brothers and my sisters,
O-oh, all over this land.

If I had a bell, I’d ring it in the morning,
I’d ring it in the evening, all over this land,
I’d ring out danger, I’d ring out warning,
I’d ring out love between my brothers and my sisters,
O-oh, all over this land.

Opening Prayer

We come as your people, Lord. We come wanting to hear you speak to us.
We come wanting to know you more. We come seeking Your face
amongst those who are in pain and suffering. We come seeking Your face
amongst the grateful and faithful. We come longing for Your presence.
Amen

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth

Let someone from among the learners read the biblical texts. Ask the following for discussion:

- Why should Christians give importance to the needs and struggles of the poor?
- How can the poor be of help to the poor?
- Why should the church- as Christ’s body in the world gives “preferential option” for the poor?

What is the good news for the rich?

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth

Let someone from among the learners read the biblical texts. Ask the following for discussion:

- Why should Christians give importance to the needs and struggles of the poor?
- How can the poor be of help to the poor?
- Why should the church- as Christ's body in the world gives "preferential option" for the poor?
- What is the good news for the rich?

Lessons Learned

Know our Programs/Ministries. Point out examples of the ministries our UCCP is engaged in. Give the learners an overview of the different ministries of the church, then under the boxes below, let them fill out the different programs/ activities under each ministry.

Justice, Peace and Human Rights

Community Ministry

MIGRANT MINISTRY

UCCP Migrant Ministry

UCCP Migrant Ministry is grounded in the pastoral care of migrants and their families, in local churches, and mounted in solidarity campaigns for specific individuals such as Mary Jane Veloso, and advocacy expressed through national (Philippine), regional (Asia and the Pacific), and international (United Nations) mechanisms. Biblical and theological foundations support this ministry, owing to the shared image of Divinity and the ongoing prophetic calls for freedom and dignity of Hebrew slaves. With UCCP's invitation to Presbyterian World Mission co-worker Rev. Cathy Chang since 2016, this ministry is designed to inform and engage UCCP leaders and constituents, as well as US Presbyterian constituents towards mutual solidarity and accompaniment with migrants.

Historically this ministry was under the umbrella of Justice Peace and Human Rights (JPHR). In more recent years, the ministry also has been attempting further collaboration with Community Ministry. UCCP Migrant Ministry is an expression of

the ongoing partnership with Migrante International (migranteinternational.org), Churches Witnessing with Migrants (nccphilippines.org/cwwm) and Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (apimigrants.org).

The UCCP Council of Bishops has also endorsed several pastoral statements of support for Mary Jane Veloso and Jennifer Dalquez. After 10 years, Veloso still is imprisoned in Indonesia and waiting to testify against her traffickers. More recently, Dalquez won an appeal from death penalty in the United Arab Emirates. UCCP Conference Ministers and National Office staff members signed a letter to the Philippine Supreme Court to support Mary Jane Veloso's testimony in the trial against her recruiters. UCCP South Luzon Jurisdictional Area Bishop Joel Tenderso participated in an international delegation to visit Veloso in September 2018. Former UCCP General Secretary Bishop Marigza signed letters addressed to the Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, on behalf of Jennifer Dalquez.

UCCP church workers have participated in regional and national consultations, in which they can learn and network with other churches and faith communities, and migrant-serving organizations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, regional online dialogue dialogues were convened in Visayas and Mindanao to respond to the needs of repatriated and stranded migrants.

Several UCCP churches and fellowships serve migrant workers in different countries. These UCCP church workers are mostly endorsed through the Office of the General Secretary with additional support from their jurisdictional area bishop and conference minister. Often these church workers also serve beyond their pastoral responsibilities as social workers and advocates for migrants. Most recently Revs. Frank and Gloria Hernando served as ecumenical workers with Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), while also working with Filipino migrant communities. Rev. Fred Carmelo is the Resident Pastor in the United Arab Emirates. Rev. Joram Calimutan serves as the pastor at UCCPians Hong Kong. There are UCCP gatherings in Japan and other countries where there are Filipino migrants.

Several UCCP local churches have launched anti-human trafficking and migrant ministry programs, through modest funding support received from US Presbyterian churches. At the UCCP Dumaguete city church, the Tahas Atong Dangpanan (TADI) ministry helped to launch Youth Advocates of Negros Oriental (YANO). These theatrical advocates create and act out dramatic presentations about human trafficking and migration for different audiences. UCCP Ekklesia in Iloilo City, launched Youth Advocates for Panay Island (YAPI). In addition to a similar theatrical advocacy program, the church also supports migrants and their families.

Going forward, UCCP Migrant Ministry is open to more opportunities to strengthen both pastoral care and accompaniment with migrants and their families. For more

information, please contact Rev. Cathy Chang, Mission Co-worker, Presbyterian Church (USA), at cathy.chang@pcusa.org.

RESOLUTION FOR THE CREATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS DESK General Assembly 21-26 May 1978

WHEREAS, as a church body, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines should look at the prevailing universal concern for human rights as a great opportunity to advance the Christian concern for the dignity and well-being of people;
WHEREAS, we believe that human rights are gifts from God, and that His will is for us to enjoy the fullness of our humanity;
WHEREAS, there is an urgent need for us as a Church to make more manifest our concern for human rights;
THEREFORE, It is hereby resolved that a desk for human rights be created within the structure of the Church, and that human rights be among our major thrusts in the next quadrennium.
Ref: General Assembly, 21-26 May 1978. The Resolution is in Appendix XXII, p. 564.

UCCP STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE NEXT JUBILEE 2002

We ushered the new millennium with the approval of our Strategic Plan for the Next Jubilee. This plan hopes to galvanize our work starting from our own Local Churches by strengthening this faith community, to the end that we will enrich the life-work of the community where our Local Churches are located, and deepening our impact as we respond to societal issues and concerns confronting the Filipino people by unifying the broadest possible members of our Church.

POLICY ACTION ON COMMUNITY MINISTRY 2006

Is where the venue for our integrated implementation of our ministries, our Local Churches are called to respond to Human rights issues, develop faith based and community oriented ministries on justice and peace where every member will stand for other people's issues and the integrity of creation is promoted.

The Task of Community Ministry therefore is the holistic expression of our three goals...

for this is where we strengthen our faith community (being and knowing),

thereby mobilizing our programs to the end that we will enrich the community where our LCs are located (doing)

...and deepening the impact of our collective response (partnerships and linkages).

Synthesis: These are few examples of the church's expression of its prophetic witness to the world. It is our attempt to be faithful to the mission of Christ from which the church draw its goals and mission.

Applying the Lessons Learned

Listening to our Statement. Ask someone to read the statement. Ask the learners:

- Does the statement manifested the church's prophetic task? How?

A DECLARATION OF UCCP CHURCHES AS SANCTUARIES AND ZONES OF PEACE Executive Committee 23 February 1990

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), committed to peace and justice, is strongly advocating for the establishment of a society where peace prevails. Following up and strengthening its previous statements Peace Making: Our Ministry (August 21, 1986) and its Pastoral Letter and Advent Message (December, 1989), the United Church of Christ in the Philippines through its Council of Bishops and the Executive Committee in session on February 21-23, 1990 declares as sanctuaries and zones of peace all its church buildings, parsonages and lands, hospitals and schools, and other church-owned institutions and their premises.

As sanctuaries, these places and premises are open to all people — regardless of color and creed, sex and status, and of political and religious affiliation — at all times in all circumstances of need. We welcome those needing sanctuary to use these places for protection, study, reflection, retreat, prayers and meditation, or simply for rest and quiet.

As zones of peace, these church places and premises are to be used for activities that build community and contribute to a deeper understanding of and commitment to peace and justice.

- No arms, except those of employed security guards, and weapons of war should be brought to nor stored in these church places and premises.
- No individuals nor groups should be allowed to use these places and premises as camps and assembly points for planning and launching of any kind of armed struggle and conflict.

We call upon

- All armed groups and sectors to respect and honor this church declaration for the sake of peace and justice for all.
- All our church people, ecumenical partners and church groups to support and abide by this church declaration, and to see to it that it is faithfully obeyed at all times for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Done on the 23rd day of February 1990 at the National Office Conference Room of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Quezon City, Philippines.

The General Assembly Executive Committee United Church of Christ in the Philippines

Bishop Juan A. Marigza <i>Northern Luzon Jurisdiction</i>	Bishop Gabriel A. Garol <i>Southern Luzon Jurisdiction</i>
Bishop Patrocinio A. Apura <i>Visayas Jurisdiction</i>	Bishop Lorenzo C. Genotiva <i>Mindanao Jurisdiction</i>
Bishop Erme R. Camba <i>General Secretary</i>	Atty. Emilio C. Capulong, Jr. <i>Chair, General Assembly Executive Committee</i>

Or Ask the learners to identify organizations in the community (sectoral or religious) which their local church or conference has closely worked with in activities for the community.

Closing Worship

Offering

Closing Song "Awit ng Sakada"

Bakit kaya nagkaganyan ang atong kapaligiran,
Ngayon dito ay luhaan, kahit saan may tangisan.
Bakit kaya naghihirap, yaong mga lumilikha
Ng yaman ng ating bansa, yaong mga manggagawa.

Koro: Tanong ko sa inyo isa lamang mga kaibigan ko,
Tanong ko ay pakinggan n'yo,
Saan tayo patutungo, saan mula rito?

Closing Prayer

We thank you Lord for our church, the UCCP for its commitment to be faithful to Your mission. May through the different programs and ministries of the church, we truly express our prophetic witness to others. Help us always Lord as we continue to live out our faith to the world. Amen

Lesson 34: What do we mean by "holistic redemption"?

National Bible Sunday

Third Sunday after the Epiphany

January 24, 2021

General Concept: Holistic redemption means deliverance not only from personal sin but covers all areas of life where any form of bondage exists.

Biblical References: *Isaiah 40: 1-11; Psalm 85: 1-2; Luke 19:1-10*

Age Level Concepts

- Holistic redemption means deliverance not only from personal sin but covers all areas of life where any form of bondage exists.
- Our church supports the people's aspirations for holistic redemption from any forms of bondage.
- We participate in the work of redemption to experience the reign of God.

Learning Objectives

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

- Articulate their understanding of "holistic redemption"
- Connect their understanding of redemption to conditions of sinfulness and different forms of bondage
- Identify different forms of personal sin and conditions of bondage that affect all areas of life
- Pray for forgiveness and redemption from all forms of sin and bondage

Materials: Bible, hymn books, bond paper, offertory plates

Biblical Background

Isaiah 40:1-11

According to Israelite custom, when the members of a family received an inheritance from their father, the eldest son received twice the amount that the others received. The nation Israel, being God's 'firstborn son' ([Exodus 4:22](#)), likewise receive double from God, in punishment as well as blessing. The people's punishment in being taken captive to Babylon is proof that they are still God's 'firstborn son' and that he still has a special love for them. Now that he has dealt with their sins, he is ready to bless them afresh (40:1-2).

Just as people prepare a smooth highway for a king when he travels across the country, so God has prepared the way for his people to return to their land. Loyal subjects may watch a royal procession, but the whole world will watch when Israel returns to its homeland (3-5).

The prophet, representing the new Jerusalem, announces this good news to the captives. What people do is unreliable and temporary, but what God does is reliable and permanent. The restoration of ruined Jerusalem and the regathering of scattered Israel is certain, because God will do it (6-9). By his mighty power God will conquer the enemy. His reward will be to enjoy fellowship with his people again, caring for them as a shepherd cares for his sheep (10-11).

Luke 19: 1-20

Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector of Jericho and was wealthy. He wanted to see Jesus, and Jesus wanted to talk to him. So Jesus went to his house, much to the disapproval of the local citizens (Luke 19:1-7).

The outcome of Jesus' visit was that Zacchaeus repented and believed in Jesus. To show that his repentance was genuine, Zacchaeus repaid (with generous interest) those he had cheated and gave freely even to those he had not cheated (Luke 19:8). Being a tax collector, he was despised by his fellow Jews as one not worthy to be called a 'son of Abraham'. But that was no reason for him to be cut off from salvation. On the contrary, sinners such as this were the people that Jesus came to save. And once Zacchaeus was saved, he was a true 'son of Abraham', a genuine believer (Luke 19:9-10).

Psalm 85:1-2

Israel had again suffered God's punishment in being defeated by its enemies. The psalmist reminds God that when this happened in the past, God forgave his people and poured out his blessings on them afresh (85:1-3). Would he not, therefore, in the present crisis do the same once more (4-7)? The psalmist thinks longingly of the spiritual paradise that results when people are living in a right relation with their God. Steadfast love flows down from God and is met by covenant faithfulness from his people (8-11). And as people respond to God's unfailing goodness, the land will enter a new era of fruitfulness, bringing fresh benefits to God's people (12-13).

Suggested Lesson Outline

Greeting Time

Announcements and/or Birthday Greetings

Opening Song "If I Have Wounded Any Soul Today" Hymnal of Faith
Journey, 66

If I have wounded any soul today,
If I have caused one foot to go astray,
If I have walked in my own willful way,
Dear Lord, forgive.

If I have uttered idle words or vain,
If I have turned aside from want or pain,
If I offended others through the strain,
Dear Lord, forgive.

When you have given me some fort to hold,
Yet I have longed for shelter in your fold,
And I have been perverse or hard or cold,
Dear Lord, forgive.

Forgive, the sins I have confessed to you,
Forgive the secret sins I do not know,
O guide me, love me, where'er I go,
Dear Lord, my God.

Opening Prayer

We come together acknowledging your faithfulness and goodness to us Lord. We become worthy of Your presence when we acknowledge your greatness over us. With all humility, we ask You to bless this session and with Your Spirit, we find discernment of your message through our study. In Jesus' name. Amen

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask three learners to read the biblical texts. The facilitator may share the background of the biblical texts. To further understanding, the following may be asked:

- What forms of sinfulness writers of the texts are trying to point out?
- What aspects of life can a person or people be sinful of or be in bondage?
- How does the writers of the texts describe the life of redemption?

Lessons Learned

Divide the class into four (4) groups. Tell the groups to do the following:

- List down the forms of sinfulness/bondage in the different aspects of the people's lives

Group 1 - personal life

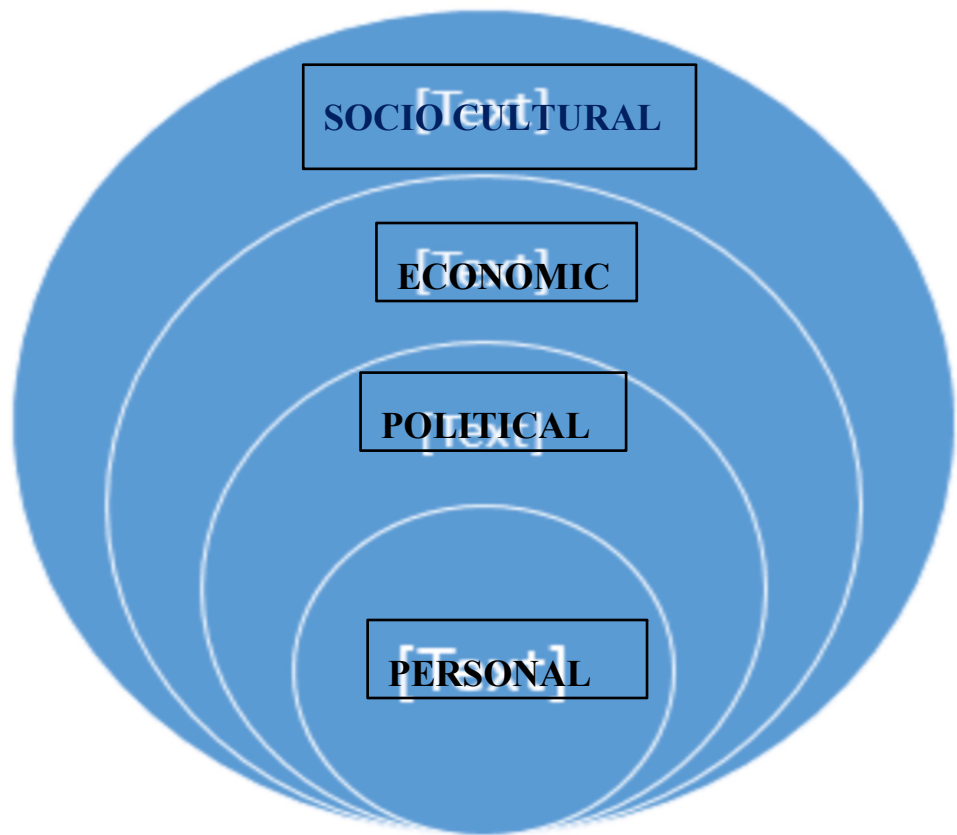
Group 2 - economic life

Group 3 - political life

Group 4 - socio-cultural life

- Write down also the corresponding form of redemption the people need

Tell the groups to share what they have discussed among them. Write their responses to the diagram posted on the board. Outside the diagram, write down the form of redemption the people needed.



Based on their sharing and the diagram, ask the followingÑ

- How do we relate our understanding of sin to our understanding of holistic redemption?
- How would you explain holistic redemption after looking at the diagram?

Applying the Lessons Learned

Individual Prayers. Distribute pieces of paper to the learners. Tell them to write their own prayers taking into account the different forms of sin that the people are bound to. Place their prayers in a box.

Closing Worship

Offering

Closing Song "God's Call for Today" Hymnal of Faith Journey, 362

From the many nations we have come
 With burning hearts and minds,
 To share to all what we have seen and heard,
 As God's call in our lands and seas.

Refrain:

We have seen the struggles of the poor,

We have seen our bond of unity,
We have heard God calling us today,
Pray for peace, work for justice and restore creation's dignity.

We have heard the lessons of the past,
How greed destroyed humanity,
The nations rise and fall in flames of war,
And the people live in misery. (refrain)

Closing Prayer (the Pastor may be asked to close the session with a prayer)

Lesson 35: What do we mean by “abundant life”?

Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

January 31, 2021

General Concept: Abundant life means the state of fullness where needs of people are met, God-given resources are equitably shared and also described as “life in all its fullness”

Biblical References: Isaiah 65: 17-25; Psalm 126; John 10:10

Age Level Concepts

- Abundant life means the state of abounding fullness where needs of people are met and God-given resources are equitably shared.
- Jesus has come that all may have abundance- abundance of grace, peace, love, life, and salvation.
- We practice a life of sharing and caring to help ensure each one's well-being.

Learning Objectives

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

- Articulate their understanding of “abundant life”
- Mention ways how abundant life can be achieved today
- Explain why we work to achieve abundant life

Materials: Bible, hymn books, bond paper, offertory plates

Biblical Background

Isaiah 65:17-25

Israel's condition in the time of the prophet is then contrasted with conditions in the new Jerusalem, the kingdom of the Messiah. That kingdom is not an improved version of the old Israelite kingdom, but is something entirely new. It is a new creation, where the quality of life will be different from that of the present world. Sorrow will be replaced by rejoicing. Life will not be cut short except where God acts in judgment (17-20).

In the new creation people will have complete satisfaction. They will not experience the sufferings and frustrations that result from sin, but will enjoy life as God intended them to enjoy it (21-23). The absence of sin will mean that, above all, they will live in perfect fellowship with God. The world of nature also will benefit in this new era of genuine peace and harmony (24-25).

These life conditions however, are something that needs to be established wherein God's people are called into. These life-conditions prophesied and promised are something God's people need to speak about, to profess and witness to.

John 10:10

That they might have life - Jesus' doctrine tends to life, because it is the true doctrine - that of the false and bad shepherds tends to death, because it neither comes from nor can lead to that God who is the fountain of life.

Might have it more abundantly - That they might have an abundance, meaning either of life, or of all necessary good things; greater felicity than ever was enjoyed under any period of the Mosaic dispensation; and it is certain that Christians have enjoyed greater blessings and privileges than were ever possessed by the Jews, even in the promised land. It signifies more abundant life; that is, eternal life; or spiritual blessings much greater than had ever yet been communicated to man, preparing for a glorious immortality. Jesus has come that all may have abundance; abundance of grace, peace, love, life, and salvation. '

Suggested Lesson Outline

Greeting Time

Announcements and/or Birthday Greetings

Opening Song "Life of the World" Hymnal of Faith Journey, 240

Life of the world and God's beloved Son,
Jesus the Christ in whom we are all one,
One body we, one spirit and one call,
One mighty God above and in us all.

Behold, your people in these desperate days,
Suffering from war and want and sins decay,
Call us from death to your eternal life,
Grant us your peace and end this night of strife.

Opening Prayer

Bless this day O Lord. Bless the coming together of Your children. Bless the thoughts, words and reflections that come out from studying Your word. Bless those whom you call and given gifts to teach for the growth of Your body. In Jesus' name. Amen

Learning Time

Discovering the Biblical Truth

Ask someone from among the learners to read the biblical texts. The facilitator may share the biblical background provided as guide in the discussion. Ask the following:

- How would you describe the life of the people as expressed in the texts?
- How did God respond to their situation?

Lessons Learned

To further the discussion, the following may be asked:

- How do we understand “abundant life”? (responses may be written on the board)
- According to the texts being read, what consist “abundant life”? (Responses may be written on the board)
- How can we say that our understanding of “abundant life” is consistent to what the Bible teaches us?

Our understanding of abundant life	What consist “abundant life”?

Applying the Lessons Learned

Divide the class into two groups. Assign each group a question for them to discuss and respond to:

Group 1 - “Why should we involve in the work to achieve abundant life?”

Group 2 - “What can Christians do to achieve abundant life for all”?

Closing Worship

Offering

Closing Song “Life of the World” (3rd and 4th stanza)

We are your hands to lift up people’s load
We are your feet on paths where suff’rings goad,
We are your voice of witness to the Word,
We are your church, your gift of love unfurled.

Life of the world bestowed by God above,
Flow through our lives in loyalty and love,
Make known your grace to every needy one,
Your kingdom come, your holy will be done.

Closing Prayer (ask an elder to close the session with a prayer)

