

**Lesson 46. What is the essence of the agreements and covenants that uphold human rights?**

Third Sunday of Easter

April 18, 2021

**General Concept:** *The different agreements and covenants on human rights intend to safeguard and uphold the rights of those who cannot defend themselves.*

**Biblical References:** Psalms 8:4-9 & 82:3, *Proverbs 31:8-9, and John 3:16*

**Age Level Concepts**

- The different agreements and covenants on human rights intend to safeguard and uphold the rights of those who cannot defend themselves.
- We uphold women and children’s rights as reflected in the VAWC Law.
- We work together to ensure observance of human rights as stipulated in the documents.

**Learning Objectives**

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

- Articulate our Human Rights based on the international and national covenants
- Cite ways how to assert and defend our rights and uphold others’ rights of women and children
- Affirm the church’s stand in upholding human rights as stipulated in the documents.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (preferably the New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]), song chart/ Powerpoint, offering plate or basket, Documents about Human Rights, UCCP Pastoral Statements On Human Rights, Philippine Constitution Article III

**Biblical /Background Notes**

“No Christian who reads the Bible and prays every day should miss the fact that the protection and promotion of human rights are central to the agenda of our biblical faith.” (Ferdinand Anno)

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines upholds the inviolability of the rights of persons as God’s gift and will for all humanity. Jesus’ missiological purpose is for all to have a meaningful and abundant life (John 10:10). Meaningful and abundant life is not about material accumulation and being ahead in the dragged race of capitalist commercialist “perfect world” but that all not just an individual or a group but all may experience abundant and meaningful life free from dehumanization, poverty, and powerlessness.

Throughout the biblical stories, Yahweh never ceases to uphold the rights of the poor and oppressed. The Exodus event opened up God’s salvific act in freeing the people of Israel from bondage and oppression. God revealed God-self in the context of people’s

struggle for humanization, being free, and living an abundant and meaningful life for all. God's solidarity with those dehumanized people raised leaders, judges, and prophets to lead God's people to liberation freeing them from imperial bondage and national oppression under tyrannical rule. As God God-self is vigilant in bringing God's people to a kinship living, we as God's people would always be vigilant in standing for our rights and the rights of others.

Documents about International Human Rights are engraved in our Philippines Constitution specifically found in Article III Bill of Rights section 1-22. Created after Martial Law, the leading revolutionaries intentionally and purposively imprinted the basic human rights of every person in our constitution so that never again that we Filipinos will experience such dehumanization and injustices of the Marcos Regime.

The UCCP has been vocal in adhering to the rights of the poor and oppressed especially our Lumad brothers and sisters. With such life-work, our church has currently under fire through the means of red-tagging, filling up unsubstantial criminal charges, and to the extreme, we have been targeted in the summary execution by the state. But despite all these, we continue to work as human rights workers for this is what Jesus Christ commanded us to do. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for, in the same way, they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Mt 5:11-12)."

As a Church, we published Pastoral Letters to condemn injustices, dehumanization, militarization in the countryside, and oppression of the poor. With such letters circulated among churches, we continue to stand as one no matter what power hinders us to do so. We also stand together with partners and co-workers for peace, justice, and integrity with God's Creation in adhering to and protecting humanity's rights and creation's dignity. (Dr. Ferdinand Anno, BTR on Human Rights, Human Rights Week Celebration Guide 2020.

<https://www.uccpchurch.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/HUMAN-RIGHTS-WEEK-CELEBRATION-GUIDE-2020.pdf>)

### ***Psalms 8:4-9 & 82:3***

Human beings are all important to God's sight. Though uniquely different from other creatures such uniqueness made humanity so special in God's sight. With special concern, God gave humans dominion not to rule over but to care for God's creation. Such power means to complement God's wondrous work and not for destroying and manipulating other creatures for one's benefit. The likeness/ image of God does not make us co-equal with our Creator but to be entrusted with the care, protection, and promotion of life to all creatures' well-being. Psalm 82:3 urged God's people to defend the poor and fatherless and do justice to the afflicted and needy. To defend means to fight for the rights of those who have no money to enter and carry on a suit, who have no friends to assist and advise them, and those who have no influence to carry justice and due process in the court of law. God's people are commanded to commit

themselves to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. We believe in God who is the Parent of all parentless, great Judge of the widows, and Helper of the poor.

### ***Proverbs 31:8-9***

The wisdom literature is addressed to King Lemuel in the voice of his father. Because of our sinful nature, power and wealth tend to be corrupting influences. Earlier verses addressed the tendency of kings to overindulge in sex through the collecting of harems and thus being destroyed, a common problem among the Israelite kings (1 Kings 11:1-6). The book also addressed the problem of drunkenness which cause the king to forget to provide justice to the poor and oppressed. God intends for the people in power to be a voice for the voiceless. One has to have the heart of God and the Spirit of God to know how to defend the rights of the poor and needy. To speak up for the poor and oppressed is our engraved accountability to God. We are called by God to be courageous, to stand up, and speak up for what is true and just for all.

### ***John 3:16.***

Considered as the center of the message of the bible, the passage demonstrates how God loves the world that God gave God's begotten of God's only son that whoever believes in him will have eternal life. Such love for the world embraces us to love not only humanity but the whole creation.

## **Suggested Lesson Outline**

### **Greeting Time**

Announcements and/or Birthday Greetings

Opening Song "Christ Our Peace" Hymnal of Faith Journey, 360

Refrain: Lift up the cross, lift up our hearts,

Christ is the King who died for peace.

Carry the Cross to Calvary, Simon Cyrene we all must be  
Evil shall die and Christ shall live; Peace everywhere  
Shall reign indeed. (Refrain)

Carry the cross to Calvary, brothers and sisters let us be,  
Justice shall reign for Christ has died, sing for the dawn  
That burst with light. (Refrain)

### **Opening Prayer**

With grateful hearts we come before Your presence, Lord. We are grateful for being created in your image and for having received the dignity afforded to all that which You created. We continue to seek understanding of Your marvelous works for your creation as we study Your Word. Amen

### **Learning Time**

### *Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Assign learners to read the biblical texts. After reading the texts, ask the learners:

- What particular phrase or words from the texts being read that strike you the most?
- What does the text try to tell us readers?

The facilitator may discuss the biblical/background notes provided for this session.

### *Lessons Learned*

Divide the class into three (3) groups. Assign

Group 1 to read the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** adopted by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948.

(<https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Publications/FactSheet2Rev.1en.pdf>)

Group 2 to read the **Philippine Bill of Rights**,

(<https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/constitutions/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines/the-1987-constitution-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines-article-iii/>)

and Group 3 to read the **VAWC Law**.

Let the groups respond to the following:

- What human rights are usually violated against?
- How does the covenant/agreement/law provide protection to people against violators or perpetrators?
- Why do you think these covenants/bills/laws are made? Does it serve its purpose?
- Why should the church stand in adherence to and for the protection of human rights and dignity?

### *Applying the Lessons Learned*

Reading of the Church's Stand. Ask someone to read the statement

UCCP Pastoral Statement: Woe to Those Who Make Unjust Laws, and Issue Oppressive Decrees, Statement on the Anti-Terrorism Law. February 4, 2021,

(<https://www.uccpchurch.com/woe-to-those-who-make-unjust-laws-and-issue-oppressive-decrees/>)

## **Closing Worship**

Offering

Closing Song        “Mahimo Ba Ang Alawiton”  
                                 Hymnal of Faith Journey,368

Samtang gigutom kadaghanan ug giuhaw sa katarongan,  
Nanghingapin sa adunahan, pagkaon ug ang hudyaka,  
Nagsobrang kadagaya.

Refrain:    Buksan na ang kalangitan,ipaulan ang mga damgo ta,  
                 Pahayaga ang paglaum, O Ginoo, ayaw kawanga ning  
                 pagtuo.

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

*Lesson 47.*    **Why should the church protect, promote and enhance the ecological balance and integrity of creation?**

Earth Day Celebration  
Fourth Sunday of Easter  
April 25,2021

**General Concept:** The church protects, *promotes and enhances the ecological balance and integrity of creation because we are interwoven with God’s whole creation.*

**Biblical References:**    Colossians 1:16; Genesis 1, 2:15;

**Age Level Concepts**

- The church protects, *promotes, and enhances the ecological balance and integrity of creation*
- *We are interwoven with God’s whole creation.*
- *We commit to engage in activities that promote the protection of God’s creation.*

**Learning Objectives**

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

- Explain why the church needs to protect, promote, and enhance the ecological balance and integrity of God’s creation.
- Draw a connection of how humans are interwoven with God’s whole creation.
- Commit to engage in activities that promote the protection of God’s creation

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (preferably the New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]), song chart/ Powerpoint, offering plate or basket, copies of the statement

**Biblical/Background Notes**

The UCCP Statement of Faith stated that God provides order, purpose, meaning, and fulfillment to all creation. God gave us dominion not in terms of gaining profit, exploiting, and abusing all creation to satisfy our greed. God gave us dominion to be God's responsible stewards of all creatures. We are called to care, defend, and stand for the wellness of all creatures of the world. This is what Jesus means about experiencing abundant and meaningful life for all.

### **Colossians 1:16**

Through Christ Jesus, all things were created, both heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. The passage redefines God's creation as interconnected to the very plan and purpose of God as expressed in Christ Jesus. The plan is redemption not just for humanity but to the whole creation, the purpose is not just to live a life and die, but to live a life in abundance and meaningful life for all as interconnected and interrelated to other creatures.

### **Genesis 2:15**

One of the most important lessons which we can draw out from this verse is that immediately after God created the whole creation, God gave humanity a God-given purpose to care for God's creation. Humanity's existence engraved a purposive mission to work for caring and maintaining the well-being of the whole eco-system.

## **Suggested Lesson Outline**

### **Greeting Time**

Announcement and/or Birthday Greetings

Opening Song "Creator God" Hymnal of Faith Journey, 19

Creator God, this very hour we pray  
For strength to live our very best today,  
Draw near to us that we may be,  
The persons you would want us to be,  
Draw near to us that we may be,  
The persons that you would want us to be.

In serving others we are certain, Lord,  
That we are also truly serving you,  
Mold us O God to fit in your great plan  
That on this earth, Your sov' reign will be done,  
Mold us O God to fit in your great plan  
That on this earth, Your sov' reign will be done.

Opening Prayer

God, our Creator, we come with humility knowing that You are mindful of us being one of your creations. Thank you for your wonderful works we experience everyday. For you continue to teach us of your purpose and

creative plan in the lives of people and the rest of creation. This we affirm today, in Jesus' name. Amen

### **Learning Time**

#### *Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Divide the class into two groups (those seating at the right and left pews). Assign the groups a biblical text to read and discuss its connection to the lesson today.

Then, tell them to prepare questions which they are going to throw at the other group and vice versa. The group may pinpoint who should answer the question.

Since, there had been previous discussions (from other study materials) on God as Creator; human beings as created in the image of God and part of God's created world; this session will serve as an evaluation on how far they have understood the stand of the Church on promotion and protecting the integrity of creation.

After the question and answer, the facilitator may discuss further the texts using the background notes provided for this lesson.

#### *Lessons Learned*

Ask the learners,

- *“Why should the church protect, promote and enhance the ecological balance and integrity of creation?”*
- *How do you see yourself in relation to other creations?*

Encourage answers from among the learners.

#### *Applying the Lessons Learned*

Read the Church Statement. Ask someone to read the statement of the Church on integrity of creation.

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### **A Statement of the Preservation of the Integrity of God's Creation General Assembly 21-26 May 1990**

"And God saw everything He has made and behold it was good."  
(Genesis 1:31)

"The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein." (Psalm 24:1)

We, the Church leaders, officers of and delegates to the Fourth Quadrennial General Assembly of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP), meeting in plenary session on May 26, 1990 at Cebu City, discussed and made this statement on the preservation of the integrity of creation.

#### THE BIBLICAL BASIS

The Scriptures remind us of the timeless truth that God, the Sovereign Maker, created the heavens, the earth and all things therein. God declared His creation as very good. Moreover, God created man and woman in His own image. He entrusted to them the care and protection of all that He has made: land, seas, air, water, birds, beasts, plants and all creeping, living and even inanimate things. He charged man and woman to till the land and keep it. In other words, God made human beings stewards of His good and beautiful creation. The Bible tells us that human beings accepted this responsibility when they recognized God as the Lord of their lives and of history.

#### THE REAL SITUATION

Human beings failed miserably as stewards. Through indifference and neglect or through deliberate, inconsiderate and greedy decisions, they defaced and destroyed the earth to enhance personal profits at the expense of God's good and beautiful creation. Through their lust to possess and to amass for themselves the wealth and bounty of the earth, mixed with total abandon and disregard for the welfare of creation, human beings committed disastrous acts, such as:

- a. In the mining industry, for example the Benguet Open Pit Mining, thoughtless of consequences, intensified the adverse and destructive effects on the rivers, forests, mountains and on the people and living creatures near the mining site. Likewise, other mining companies operating in other parts of the country contributed to the grave pollution and destruction of the environment.
- b. The logging industry resorted to and abetted the indiscriminate and illegal cutting of trees. These caused the rapid disappearance of our forests and denudation of our mountains. When the rains came, rivers swelled into floods that inundated farms and towns. When dry season came, the rivers, lakes, streams and springs dried up. Rain or shine, people suffered.
- c. Industrialized farming encouraged the use of inorganic fertilizers and commercial pesticides by both big and small farmers. This caused adverse side-effects on the fertility of the land and on the health of the people.
- d. The presence and active operation of about one thousand (1,000) foreign multinational corporations throughout the land make them as the principal cause of the acute pollution of many of our rivers, lakes, seas, air, population centers and environs. They also serve as concrete vestiges of foreign domination and control of our economy and sovereignty.
- e. The general pollution of our environment may cause the destruction of the ozone layer, a covering that protects the earth from intense heat or ultra violet rays from the sun. Exacerbate this with the destruction of forests to pave the way for the greenhouse



effect — the warning of global temperature to such an extent that earthly life may not be able to bear it.

#### THE CALL

The UCCP General Assembly has set forth the following challenges and calls to:

1. Every Farmer/Individual
  - a. To use organize fertilizers and pesticides in farming and gardening, in order to preserve the fertility of the land and to avoid side effects harmful to people's health.
  - b. To adopt SALT (Sloping Agricultural Land Technology) method in farming, an appropriate way to cultivate mountains and hills that prevents soil erosion and promotes land fertility.
  - c. To challenge individual Christians to live and practice seriously his/her stewardship of God's creation and to combat all forces that desecrate God's earth.
2. Local Churches and Communities
  - a. To strongly support the proposal to enforce a policy on total logging ban for twenty-five years.
  - b. To support the government's plant-a-tree program by starting a small scale but systematic reforestation project beginning with land owned by the local church or by church members.
  - c. To conduct a massive education program, in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental agencies concerning stewardship of God's creation. The program will avail of all study materials produced by the NCCP and UCCP for use by the church constituency, as well as by the community, at large.
3. The Government: Local and National
  - a. To give serious and immediate attention to the problem of pollution and the destruction of forests and trees by investing more money and resources for the restoration, development, preservation, and protection of our natural resources;
  - b. To institute a policy on total logging ban for at least twenty-five (25) years in order to foster a faster restoration of denuded and eroded mountains and hills.

DONE and APPROVED by the Fourth Quadrennial General Assembly of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) on May 26th, 1990 at Cebu City, Philippines.

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After reading the statement, ask the learners what other ways they can suggest to promote, protect and enhance the ecological balance and integrity of God's creation?

#### **Closing Worship**

Offering

Closing Song

“Creator God” Hymnal of Faith Journey, 19

In serving others we are certain, Lord,  
That we are also truly serving you,  
Mold us O God to fit in your great plan  
That on this earth, Your sov' reign will be done,  
Mold us O God to fit in your great plan  
That on this earth, Your sov' reign will be done.

Closing Prayer (The facilitator may ask the oldest member attending Sunday School to close the session with a prayer)

**Lesson 48. Why do we nurture the faith of the people in the church?**

Fifth Sunday of Easter

May 2, 2021

**General Concept:** *Nurturing the faith of the believers is one of the primary responsibilities of the church to equip them in their faith and witness.*

**Biblical References:** *Matthew 28: 18-20; Deuteronomy 6:3-8; 2 Timothy 3:14-17;*

**Age Level Concepts**

- *Nurturing the faith of the believers is one of the primary responsibilities of the church to equip them in their faith and witness.*
- *We commit to take part in the nurturing ministry of the church.*

**Learning Objectives**

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

- Explain the importance of nurturing the faith of the believers as a primary responsibility of the church.
- Identify ways of nurturing the faith of the believers especially the young people and children in one's local church.
- Commit to take part in the nurturing ministry of the church.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (preferably the New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]), song chart/ Powerpoint, offering plate or basket, Manila paper, tape, marker pens

**Biblical/Background Notes**

Christian nurturing begins from womb to tomb and culminates from resurrection to life eternal living. Such missiological task directs the life work of Christianity to "Kingdom living". Nurturing believers as a primary responsibility of the church aims to live out their faith in Jesus Christ as a community of faith. Nurturing promotes the knowledge of one's being, doing one's calling, and defining a transformative community based on God's purpose and plan for the world.

### **Matthew 28:18-20**

Known as the “Great Commission” of Jesus to his disciples. It defines the purpose and calling of every follower or believer of Christ Jesus. It is a commandment from Jesus himself of how his disciples ought to live. There are three distinct points about the purpose of how are we to grow God’s kindom. First, “*Go and make disciples*”. It involves going out from its comfort zone and go out to the unknown and find people to nurture. Nurturing for the multiplication of the disciples is the purposive task of this point. Second, is to “*Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit*”. Nurturing promotes understanding of one’s faith in Jesus Christ, owning and experiencing God’s amazing grace, and eventually come into a lifelong commitment of making Christ Jesus one’s Savior and Lord of one’s life. Lastly, “*teach*” them about the life and work of Jesus, life work and traditions of Christian believers, and modeling to live a life in Christ Jesus. We teach others so that others may also be Christ’s disciples who will make themselves more disciples. (Connie Rowland, What Is the Purpose of Life? Master’s Hand Collection. February 17, 2020. Bible Study, Christian Life.)

### **Deuteronomy 6:3-8**

Known as “Shema” Hear O Israel... As God’s commandments promote how to live life to the fullest, nurturing is a vital role of God’s people to their children and their children’s children. As God’s people grow in number from one generation to another, teaching such commandments from God must be handed on and thoroughly impart and engraved in day-to-day living. The Fear of God in the heart will be the most powerful principle of obedience. Not we only, but to the upcoming generations should fear the Lord. (Matthew Henry’s Concise Commentary.

### **2 Timothy 3:14-17**

Paul drew a strong contrast between the worldly, wicked behaviors or false teachers, and the conduct Timothy has seen from him. Teaching by living an example is the method of Paul’s nurturing imparted to Timothy his protege. Paul strongly taught Timothy about the Scriptures’ value to one’s growth and maturity. All Scripture is breathed out by God, where God can be heard speaking, teaching, reproofing, correcting, and equipping for every good work. All Scripture from Old to New Testament is profitable for us to be equipped and competent in doing God’s mission and work. (Morgan, Bryce. God is Speaking to You.

### **Suggested Lesson Outline**

#### **Greeting Time**

Announcements and/or Birthday Greetings

Opening Song “I Was There To Hear Your Boring Cry”

Hymnal of Faith Journey,45

I was there to hear your boring cry,

I’ll be there when you are old.

I rejoiced the day you were baptized

to see your life unfold.  
I was there, when you were but a child,  
With a faith to suit you well,  
I'll be there in case you wander off  
And find where demons dwell.

When you found the wonder of the Word,  
I was there to cheer you on,  
You were raised to praise the Living God,  
To whom you now belong.  
Should you find someone to share your life  
And you join your hearts as one,  
I'll be there to make your verses rhyme,  
From dusk till rising sun.

I was there to hear your borning cry  
I'll be there when you are old,  
I rejoiced the day you were baptized  
To see your life unfold.

#### Opening Prayer

Despite restrictions and threats to our life and health, we cannot cease to  
study Your Word and hear your voice through life's experiences and  
challenges. So, bless our activity, Lord. May it be face-to face or virtual.  
May we continue to do our task of teaching and nurturing despite trying  
times. In Your name, we pray Amen

#### Learning Time

##### Discovering the Biblical Truth

Let learners read the biblical texts. Post questions on the board for the  
learners to pick one and answer. Others may also respond if they want to.

What are the primary tasks of  
Jesus' followers/disciples?

How was teaching being  
implemented in the olden times?

How do we understand nurture  
based on the texts being read?

Why did Jesus give the command  
to go out and teach?

What are the methods of teaching  
being imparted based on the texts  
being read?

Why is teaching important in the  
life and faith of the believers?

#### Lessons Learned

Make a brief evaluation of how teaching and nurture is being implemented in the local church. Cite the activities done, what makes it successful and are the hindering factors why it does not work in your local church.

<u>Activities</u>	<u>Factors for success</u>	<u>Factors for failure</u>

Applying the Lessons Learned

Solicit from the learners suggestion on how to effectively teach and nurture believers especially the young people and children. Tell the groups to write them on the Manila paper and choose a reporter from among them for the sharing.

**Closing Worship**

Offering

Closing Song “I Was There to Hear Your Borneing Cry”

In the middle ages of your life,  
Not too old, no longer young,  
I’ll be there to guide you through the night,  
complete what I’ve begun.  
When the evening gently closes in,  
And you shut your weary eyes,  
I’ll be there as I have always been,  
With just one more surprise.

I was there to hear your borneing cry,  
I’ll be there when you are old,  
I rejoiced the day you were baptized,  
To see your life unfold.

Closing Prayer (Ask the Pastor to close the session with a prayer)

*Lesson 49. What does “autonomy of the Local Church” mean?*

**Mother’s Sunday**

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 09,2021

**General Concept:** *Autonomy of the Local Church means the right of the local church to freely conduct its ministry and mission yet ensures that the unity of the church is sustained.*

**Biblical References:** *Ephesians 4: 14-16; 1 Corinthians 12: 12-14; Galatians 5:13; Psalm 119: 45;*

### **Age Level Concepts**

- Autonomy of the Local Church means the right of the local church to freely conduct its ministry and mission yet ensures that the unity of the church is sustained.
- Our church can freely and creatively express its life-work and mission provided that it is within the church's governance.
- We recognize that the local church's life and work are an integral part of the whole UCCP.
- We help ensure that the unity of the church is sustained.

### **Learning Objectives**

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

- Explain and give an example of how the Local Church Autonomy is being expressed
- Draw a connection of the local church's life and work to the ministry and programs of the whole UCCP.
- Commit to working for the sustainability of the local church's autonomy.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (preferably the New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]), song chart/ Powerpoint, offering plate or basket

### **Biblical/Background Notes**

Autonomy is defined as the right or condition of self-government. An agent can act following an objective morality rather than under the influence of desires. (Google Dictionary, <https://www.google.com/search?q=autonomy+meaning&oq=autonomy&aqs=chrome2.69i57j0l9.5306j0j15&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>). It defines one's creativity and uniqueness in living as an individual and as a community.

As the local church is the primary locus of God's mission, the UCCP upholds the autonomy of the Local Church particularly as to its right and power to conduct its ministry free from outside control, provided the same is in line with the Constitution, By-Laws, and statutes of the Church, thereby enabling the Local Church to become an effective instrument in the ministry and mission of the Church and ensuring its positive contribution to the unity and strengthening of the whole Church. (UCCP Amended By-Laws Article 3 section 27). The autonomy of the local church contextualized Christ's ministry and mission to one's community where the church is located. It makes the message of Christ Jesus palatable to the locals and highlights the tradition and life's culture of the people's spirituality. Though each local church is free it doesn't have the right to undermine other local churches and other jurisdictional bodies.

### ***Ephesians 4: 14-16.***

God gave gifts to the believers for the task of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry and also for the building up of the body of Christ. This will aim to work out until all will attain or in the Greek word “Katantao” which means arriving at one’s destination. For Paul, the goal is in equipping is the building up of the body of Christ. As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Maturity in Christ Jesus is the goal of every believer who surrendered to the Word. People who die daily to themselves, are obedient to what God says and are walking by faith, experience the living presence of the fullness of Christ. We are to be no longer children that are tossed here and there by waves. All are to grow and be matured in one’s faith in Jesus Christ.

### ***1 Corinthians 12: 12-14.***

Paul explained that there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences in ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. There are 9 spiritual gifts mentioned, diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. Though gifts may differ from each other, the Holy Spirit’s purpose is to build up the whole body of Christ to do God’s mission.

### ***Galatians 5:13***

The passage focuses on what those in Christ should do with our freedom in Christ. One has to guard it especially from those who would pressure us to follow the law. Paul was confident the Galatians would resist the one leading them in the wrong direction. Paul also warns us not to waste our freedom in Christ to selfishly serve ourselves instead of serving each other in love. The entire law is fulfilled in that one word: love. Those who serve themselves, though, will always end up in conflict with each other. (Bible Reference. (<https://www.bibleref.com/Galatians/5/Galatians-5-13.html>))

### ***Psalms 119: 45.***

To walk at liberty means walking in the open square of a city, hence a wide, open, free space. In obeying God’s commandments the psalmist will not feel oneself under constraint, but a wholly free agent. For one seek God’s precepts. Inclination, not a constraint, makes him obey God’s precepts- seeking and loving God. (Bible Hub. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/psalms/119-45.htm>)

## **Suggested Lesson Outline**

### **Greeting Time**

Announcements and/or Birthday Greetings

Opening Song “Christ is Made the Sure Foundation”

Hymnal of Faith Journey, 237

Christ is made the sure foundation, Christ the head and the cornerstone;

Chosen of our God and precious, binding all the church in one;

Holy Zion's help forever, and our confidence alone.

To this temple we call you, come, O God of Hosts today;  
With your constant, loving kindness, hear your people as they pray;  
Give your fullest benediction, grace to follow Christ the Way.

#### Opening Prayer

We come to worship you O God, whose Son gave his life for us all that we might have the kind of life that You intended us to have. As part of your body, we seek You to unite us with the whole so we may be able to truly follow you. Be with us now, bind us into common understanding of your message today. Amen

#### Learning Time

##### *Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Request learners to read the biblical texts and tell the rest of the class to read along silently. After reading the texts, ask the learners to pick out words or phrases that are related to the lesson topic today.

Write the words or phrases on the board and ask learners to explain the phrases in relation to the topic on "autonomy"

Examples:

Psalm 119:45 - "walk at liberty", "sought your precepts"

Galatians 5:13 - "called to freedom", "do not use freedom"

1 Corinthians 12:12-14 - "one spirit", "all members of the one body"

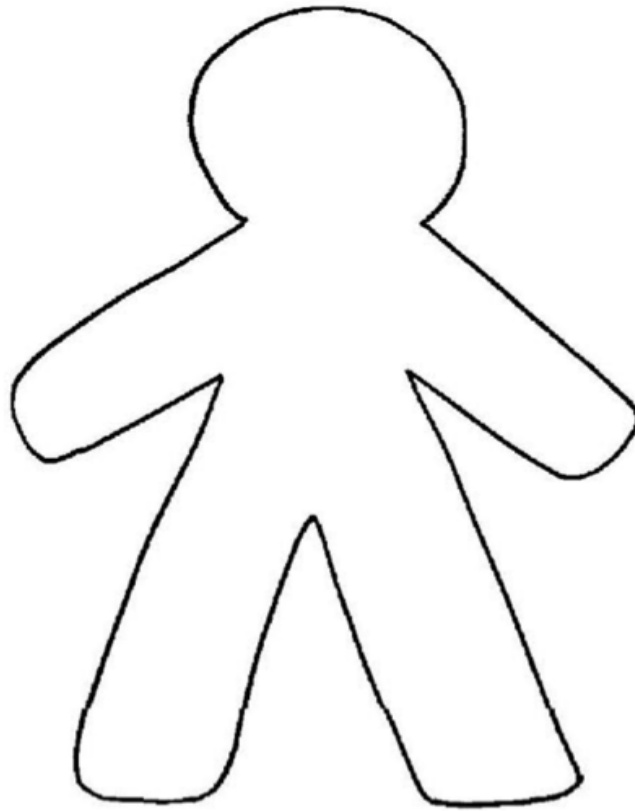
Ephesians 4:14-16. - "no longer children", "joined and knit together by every ligament"

After the sharing, the facilitator may further the discussion by using the background notes provided for this session.

##### *Lessons Learned*

Post an image of a body. Ask the learners to relate or connect the concept of "autonomy" to the concept of the "church as a body."





*Applying the Lessons Learned*

Evaluate.

- How does “autonomy” being expressed in the life and work of your local church?
- How should your local church view itself in relation to the conference and other church judicatories?

**Closing Worship**

Offering

Closing Song

“With Gifts that Differ By Your Grace”

Hymnal of Faith Journey, 245

Come, Spirit, build your church anew, that all may do their part,

Together finding life in you, diverse yet one in heart.

So may your people seek your will, transformed in all our ways,

We offer body, mind and skill, a sacrifice of praise.

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

*Lesson 50. What is the scope of the autonomy of the Local Church?*

Seventh Sunday of Easter

May 16, 2021

**General Concept:** The scope of the Local Church's autonomy is stipulated in the Constitution and By-Laws Article 3, section 28.

**Biblical References:** *Psalm 25: 8-10; Deuteronomy 11:1; John 15:14; John 14:15; Exodus 15:26; Romans 5:19*

### **Age Level Concepts**

- The scope of the Local Church's autonomy is stipulated in the Constitution and By-Laws Article 3, section 27.
- Understanding the scope and limitation of the local church's autonomy is essential to all church members
- We abide by the provisions of the church's Constitution and By-Laws and help ensure its implementation.

### **Learning Objectives**

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

- Explain the scope of Local Church's autonomy as stipulated in the UCCP Amended By-Laws Article 3, section 27.
- Point out the importance of understanding the scope and limitation of the Local Church's autonomy by all members
- Commit to abide by the provisions about local autonomy as found in the UCCP Amended Constitution and By-Laws.

**Materials:** The Holy Bible (preferably the New Revised Standard Version [NRSV]), song chart/ Powerpoint, offering plate or basket, copy of the UCCP Amended By-Laws Article III Section 27

### **Biblical/Background Notes**

“Personal freedom ends where another's safety begins.” It refers to the boundary where one can act but has to stop when it approaches the boundary of another. It is about the demarcation of liberties of an individual to the next individual. We each have our own space and there is a boundary. So also with our Local Church's Autonomy where there are restrictions or limitation on one's autonomy to secure the basic lifework, heritage, and tradition of our Church. It aims for protecting the whole UCCP Church's unity and harmony as a National and integral Church.

**In the UCCP Amended By-Laws Article III Section 27** which stated the Scope of Local Autonomy. It defines the autonomy of the Local Church which includes the authority to do the following:

*a. To call and support its Pastor and other Church workers, keeping in mind the basic policy of the Church to call to its ministry pastors and Church workers belonging to the UCCP, subscribing to the UCCP Statement of Faith and paying allegiance to the Constitution, ByLaws, and statutes of the Church.* Pastors,

ministers, and workers of other churches affiliated with the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) may be requested to serve in the Local Church with the prior written permission of the General Assembly or the National Council, through the General Secretary; (As Amended by NC 2002-30, Condor, Damortis, La Union, Oct. 23-26, 2002) *A m e n d e d C o n s t i t u t i o n a n d B y - L a w s , M a g n a C a r t a f o r C h u r c h W o r k e r s a n d J u r i s p r u d e n c e*

***b. To administer, maintain, encumber or dispose of its personal or real properties pursuant to a resolution of its Board of Trustees and approved by its Church Council*** and, where real properties are involved, with the written consent of the General Assembly or the National Council, through the General Secretary;

***c. To invite pastors, ministers, workers and lay leaders of other churches to speak, preach or otherwise enter into fellowship with the Local Church***, from time to time, in consonance with Article II, Section 7, of the Constitution, and the Policy on Ecumenical Relations issued in 1986, provided that the authority and integrity of the UCCP, as well as the unity of the Local Church, shall never be impaired or compromised; (As Amended by NC Action 2015-50, UCCP Magugpo Cathedral, Tagum City, August 21, 2015)

***d. To nominate and elect its officers***, in accordance with the Constitution and By-Laws, and hold annual and such special meetings as it may deem necessary and proper;

***e. To admit qualified persons into the membership of the Local Church***, help ensure their nurture and spiritual development, and promote and develop among them the idea of loving service, stewardship and missionary outreach;

***f. To celebrate its worship services that are orderly and solemn, yet joyful and meaningful, reflective of the faith and life of the Church and responsive to the needs of the community in terms of witness, service and prophetic ministry***;

***g. To support the ministerial and lay formation program of the Church and recruit, recommend and support candidates for the ministry.***

***h. To adopt its own budget and financial program and fulfill its obligations to the wider bodies***; and,

***i. To do all things as it may deem wise, necessary and proper, without encroaching on the prerogatives of, and interfering with, the wider Church bodies, ensuring at all times that its action contribute to the unity and strengthening of the whole***

***UCCP. ( UCCP Amended Constitution and By-Laws.***

***[https://uccpchurch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/final-uccp\\_cbl.pdf](https://uccpchurch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/final-uccp_cbl.pdf)***

***Psalm 25: 8-10***

King David in this psalm declared the goodness of God. God's goodness to the humble moved God to teach them of God's ways and guides them to do justice. God's ways are at times like heavy wagon tracks, and they cut deep into our souls, yet they are all of mercy and love. In place of Local Church Autonomy, the ways of declaring and living out God's goodness varied from different local churches. The ways may differ but it has the foundation of God's mercy and love. The autonomy of the local church must not be separated from the very core and nature of the UCCP. It should align always with God's way. (Bible Hub. <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/psalms/25-8.htm>)

***Deuteronomy 11:1***

God commanded Israel to love God. It is a commitment to take, a choice that one must take. Why do we love God? It is because of God's steadfast love for people who redeemed them from the bondage of Egypt, who provided all their needs, and made them a people who has a land of their own and a government under God - Theocracy. Autonomy is God's gift to the people to creatively express their responses to God's goodness and living out their love to God. (Enduring Word, <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/deuteronomy-11/>)

***John 15:14***

Continuing Jesus' intimate conversation with his disciples, Jesus expressed this concern to them. They are considered His friends if they do what he commanded them to do. He then humbled himself and washed the disciples' feet and said: "a new command I give unto you that you love one another in the same way that I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples- my friends." (Knowing Jesus, <https://dailyverse.knowing-jesus.com/john-15-14>)

**Suggested Lesson Outline**

**Greeting Time**

Announcements and/or Birthday Greetings

Opening Song "People of God, Let Us Adore Together"

Hymnal of Faith Journey, 241

People of God, let us adore together

Christ who has called us from night into day;

We've been redeemed by his eternal goodness,

To live up to his love and holiness.

Body of Christ, magnificent is our name,

We are in holy communion with the Lord;

We trust him for the life that he has given,

To save us from our death and sin and shame.

### Opening Prayer

As member of the whole, we come united in Spirit and love. Bind us always Lord, in your Word and will. May our gathering, be it virtual or face to face, become an opportunity for study and learning so that we may build up each other in faith and in doing our mission. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen

### Learning Time

#### *Discovering the Biblical Truth*

Divide the class into three (3) groups. Assign each group a biblical text.

Group 1-*Psalm 25: 8-10 (Scope a- c);*

Group 2: *Deuteronomy 11:1 (Scope: d to f);*

Group 3: *John 15:14 (Scope g-l)*

*Ask the following questions:*

1. What does the passage talk about?
2. How does it connect with the topic about the scope of the church's autonomy? Explain and give an example of the assigned scope.
3. What are the pros and cons of Local Church autonomy?

#### *Lessons Learned*

Let each group fill the graph and be part of the reporting.

<i>ADVANTAGE</i>	<i>DISADVANTAGE</i>

*After the sharing, ask the following:*

- How does the provision from the Amended UCCP By-Laws Article 3 section 27 able to guard the unity and harmony of the church?
- *What are the practices and traditions that are uniquely found in your local church?*

#### *Applying the Lessons Learned*

Encourage the learners to share their comments and opinions as to how can the Church ensure that unity is preserved despite the autonomy given to the local churches.

### Closing Worship

Offering

Closing Song "People of God, Let Us Adore Together"

Called to be saints, all consecrated are we;

Christ's willing servants in service for the world;

We're called to serve the lost, the high and the lowly,  
And anyone who needs his saving grace.

Closing Prayer (Ask a member of the CWA to close the session with a prayer)

Evaluation Session

Pentecost Sunday  
May 23, 2021

## UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES

### Laity and Local Church Development Ministries

Christian Education and Nurture

### Survey on UCCP Sunday School Guide

1. Are you using the UCCP Sunday School Materials?			
	YES		NO
2. What Sunday School Lessons have you finished since 2018?			
	On UCCP Statement of Faith		On UCCP Declaration of Principles
	On UCCP Vision, Mission and Goal		
3. Briefly, please provide us your feedbacks on our Sunday School Materials? (Strengths and Weaknesses)			
4. Please give us your suggestion:			

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5. Do you conduct a regular Sunday School teachers' meeting?

	YES		NO
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6. How regular is your meeting?

	Once a month		Twice a year
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	Quarterly		
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	Others:		
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	(Please specify)		