



Christian Young Adults Fellowship United Church of Christ in the Philippines 877 EDSA, West Triangle, Quezon City, Philippines

UCCP EY 2023- 2024 Theme

"Rebuilding and Restoring with Hope: Heralding the Unity of the Body of Christ"



CYAF WEEK GUIDE

Christian Young Adults Fellowship



Theme:
Rebuilding and Restoring With Hope:
Heralding the Unity of the
Body of Christ

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES 877 EDSA, West Triangle Quezon City, Philippines UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST IN THE PHILIPPINES - CHRISTIAN YOUNG ADULTS FELLOWSHIP

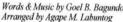
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Christian Young Adults Fellowship Anthem



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GREETINGS FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY

y warmest greetings of love and peace from the Office of the General Secretary. I am glad and pleased to bring greetings to all the leaders and members of the Christian Young Adults Fellowship coming from different Local Churches, Conference, and National Officers. Celebrating Christian Young

Adults Week is always a challenge to many leaders as young adults. I admire the NCYAF for using our Quadrennial theme for this year's along with our 75th Diamond Jubilee Celebrations and it is just right for you to conduct your gathering on the same theme, "Rebuilding and Restoring with Hope: Heralding the Unity of the Body of Christ."

With our theme, we affirm that what necessitates the work of rebuilding and restoring with hope for the Unity of the Body of Christ in the Church is the very mission and ministry that Christ has given us to do, "to preach good news to poor, to give sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed and proclaim the year of God's favor" or the Jubilee - the liberation from indebtedness, landlessness, injustice and war. Also, the Church needs to strengthen its unity to support communities in their rebuilding and restoring processes.

It entails strong CYAF organizations at the Local Church and Conference levels and constituencies are grounded in the basic faith foundations and mission and ministry orientations so that they can fully participate in various facets of community life-work.

I would like to see and hear our young adults articulate and live out our UCCP identity. In the description of our identity, among others, is that our concerns are universal and inclusive, our spirit is progressive and our attitude is open minded. These are the marks of our identity both in the personal and organizational levels which ought to be lived out in our faith-communities and in the broader social context. I hope and pray that all the leaders and members will increase their level of cooperation, understanding and camaraderie. May you achieve the objectives you have set for this gathering and harvest good results. Let every participant discern and pray for empowerment in the work of rebuilding and restoring heralding the unity of the body of Christ within and without the Church.

May our God: Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer enable you to strengthen your unity and let each presence bless and empower another, and may your courage and perseverance abound to meet your needs.

Bishop Melzar D. Labuntog

General Secretary
United Church of Christ in the Philippines



MESSAGE FROM THE NCYAF CHAPLAIN

Dear friends,

e are living today in a society where material possession is made as the ultimate measurement of success and happiness. It also ensures power. Thus, for many, they have to do everything to have more. Surely, this social standard pushes peo-

ple to be more selfish and materialistic. No wonder why many have no more time for God. Many have no more time for others. This is actually an idolatrous act; it is a worship of mammon god. This god however is very dangerous. It makes people to desire for more and more with no satisfaction.

On the other hand, our Lord Jesus Christ demands us to love God and to love others (Lk 10:27). He calls us to share what we have and to give our lives for others (Luke 6:30, John 15:13) He mandates us to be servants of all (Mk. 10: 44).

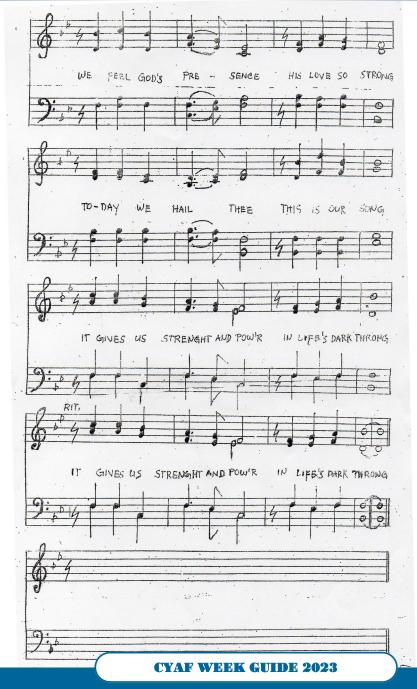
I am really grateful to you Christian Young-Adults of our church for being faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ. In the midst of a strong culture of individualism and materialism in our society, you remain committed and active in the mission-work of our beloved Church, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. Sharing what you have – your knowledge, skills, talents, strength, resources and others for the different ministries of our church is a manifestation of your love to our God and your love for others.

May this occasion of the observance of CYAF week celebration be an opportunity for your collective learning and united prayer and reflection. With profoundest joy in my heart, may I implore all CYAF to actively participate in this celebration using this prepared material.

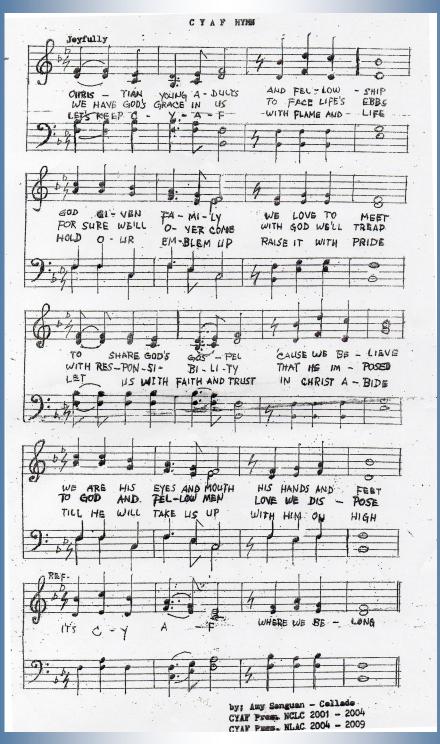
Agbiag ti Christian Young-Adult Fellowship!
Agbiag ti United Church of Christ in the Philippines!



Bishop Joseph G. AgpaoaBishop Assigned to North Luzon Jurisdictional Area
NCYAF Chaplain/Adviser



United Church of Christ in the Philippines - Christian Young Adults
Fellowship





WORDS FROM THE NCYAF PRESIDENT

llow me to greet you a happy and a blessed day! I am certain that you are all excited to receive this NCYAF WEEK CELEBRATION GUIDE 2023 as you are well prepared for this year's NCYAF SUNDAY OCTOBER 1, 2023 Celebration!

May this be of great help to all of us Christian Young Adults (CYAF) in all our local churches, conferences, jurisdictions as we reflect on the daily spiritual guide with our UCCP Theme for EY 2023-2024 " Rebuilding and Restoring with Hope: Heralding the Unity of the Body of Christ."

Allow me to congratulate the Liturgy and Worship Committee headed by Bro. Azil Aplaon and his members for their unwavering commitments in making and producing this year's wonderful daily reflection guide for all of us.

My prayers that we all live in unity with Christ. As we live united with God we become the channel in creating unity in the church. Let us live together with hope and unity for with it we will have victory!

A joyful and a meaningful National CYAF WEEK CELEBRATION 2023 TO ALL CHRISTIAN YOUNG ADULTS FELLOWSHIP!



Joan B. Missiona
National President
Christian Young Adults Fellowship



FOREWORDS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Kumusta mga ka-CYAF!

ur CYAF Sunday is fast approaching thus we are happy to introduce to you our CYAF Celebration Guide for Ecclesiastical Year 2023-2024 (the 75th anniversary year) of the United Church of Christ

in the Philippines guided by the theme "Rebuilding and Restoring with Hope: Heralding the Unity of the Body of Christ".

As usual, this is just merely a guide to help in celebrating the CYAF Week. You are free to modify and change the contents of this guide to suit according to the needs of your organization in your respective judicatories and different localities.

Let me extend my sincerest thanks to all who have contributed in the making of the guide. I am grateful as we properly acknowledged the countless sources and the various contributions of our distinguished brethren for their support in the coming out of this weeklong celebration guide. I also thank Ms. Alexandria Cabalida as well as my son, Ace CJ George C. Aplaon for some encoding works they have done. For easy access to the suggested worship liturgy a link is being provided.

Let us celebrate our CYAF Sunday with thanksgiving and joy. Let us make the celebration significant and memorable as we offer this CYAF Week Guide and all our endeavors for God's glory.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow!



Azil E. Aplaon

Chairperson
Worship and Liturgy Committee
National Christian Young Adults Fellowship

NOTES = NOTES = NOTES = NOTES

United Church of Christ in the Philippines Christian Young Adults Fellowship (CYAF)

OTHER SUGGESTED CELEBRATION ACTIVITIES



Aide/Ayuda
Assistance Programs to urban poor, peasant, lumads, etc.
(Local Churches, Conference or Jurisdictions)

Exposure or Community Immersion



Church Recognized Organizations, Local Churches or by Conference Level



Campus or Student Ministry

"Dugtungan"

Parada

(Human Rights Forum and Concert)

Festival of Faith

- Choir Festival
- Dances
- Teatro

Fun Run/Walk



Palarong pang-CROs Palarong Pinoy



THEME EXPOSITION



THE QUADRENNIAL THEME "Rebuilding and Restoring with Hope: Heralding the Full Life"

EY 2023-2024 (75th): Rebuilding and Restoring with Hope: Heralding the Unity of the Body of Christ

elebrating its diamond anniversary, the church turns introspective and focuses on its story, identity, and self-understanding as a church (UCCP ecclesiology) focusing on its pioneering role in ecumenical witness in the country, its unity given its diverse traditions, and its passion for organic union. This story, identity, and character of the UCCP are its counter-discourse to any attempt to revise the UCCP story.

Secondly, like our Eucharistic recapitulation of God's salvific acts in history, to remember and understand our root story or where we came from as a church is a "medicine [of immortality]" and a source of energy (Ignatius of Antioch). To remember and re-affirm our identity as a united and uniting, reformed and reforming church is medicine to whatever that ails us as a church.

Source:

Faith and Order Commission Report to the National Council United Church of Christ in the Philippines October 11-14, 2021

REBUILDING AND RESTORING
WITH HOPE:
HERALDING THE UNITY OF
THE BODY OF CHRIST

Theme for EY 2023-2024 (75th Anniversary)

Suggested Texts:

1 Corinthians 12: 12-31

n times where unity of the church is challenged, it is appropriate to think, look back, and contemplate; how is our church doing? Our church is very popular for its democratic processes in governance, where members can freely express their sentiments and

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opinions, however its unity in implementing decisions keep the vigor of our church much stronger. The pandemic affected our churches' routine. Worship, bible studies, and other church activities were suspended in fear of the coronavirus escalation. However, it motivated our churches to be more creative and more receptive to the call of our times. The Struggle for Unity in various discussions especially in property development of our church shook our strength but this made the member churches more aware, more concerned, and more responsive. It can be seen in our accomplishments and performances. especially the overwhelming wider mission support extended by various conferences. It is also a clear manifestation of the presence of democracy in all systems and processes of our church governance.

When Apostle Paul mentioned "ONE BODY, MANY PARTS", it talks about unity of believers in the church regardless of their differences, whether race, especially the Greeks and the Jews, social status, culture and practices. Believers of the church of the Corinth the faith rooted in the life of Jesus Christ. He inspired them to recognize their individual diverse talents and challenged them to coordinate and synchronize their moves with the central of the head

that is Jesus Christ. Apostle Paul emphasized the importance of unity in the church by submitting themselves to its right beliefs according to the teaching of Jesus Christ exemplified by his life.

The Unity of the Church is essential, it gives us hope despite our diverse heritage. Our Statement of Faith remains a true and correct guide to all of us. We are the body of Christ, the united community of those who have been restored to God through Iesus Christ, and entrusted with his work. Our unity is vital in Rebuilding and Restoring our hope. When we herald the Unity of the Body of Christ, we also proclaim our trust and submission to the greatest authority of that One Body.

SYMBOLISM OF ELEMENTS

Centralizing our 75th vears of UCCP Founding Anniversary takes us back to our biblical and protestant historical rootedness. The White-Cross - Represents Christ's work of reconciliation. Like Christ, reconciled all humanity and creation to God, we are also called to work for reconciliation rather than division, we are challenged to take the first move to connect and begin to reunite with those who departed from us. Like the organic union of UCCP, we

SUGGESTED WEEKLONG ACTIVITIES

Day	Self	Group	Church/Community
Mon	Read and Reflect on the Monday Devotional Re- flection	 Sharing and expectation on "Why we celebrate CYAF week" Acquaintance and Orientation Organize and form your local CYAF Organization 	 Invite old and new friends to join the CYAF Week Celebration Sharing on the BTR Update CYAF Membership Profile Form
Tue	Read and Reflect on the Tuesday Devotional Reflec- tion Make a list of your fear, doubts, hopes and dreams on this changing time	 Discuss with a partner the list you made and share them with the group Visit in-active mem- bers and encourage them to join CYAF Week Celebration 	 Visit in-active Church members, try convinc- ing them to get back to Church Sharing "What make them get away from Church?
Wed	Read and Reflect on the Wednesday Devotional Reflec- tion Make a list of the things you want to help/to do church Evangelism Program	Coastal CleanupCommunity cleaningKapihan Sa Simbahan	 Lead Midweek Service Agape Meal Dialogue with other CROs in involvement in Church Affairs
Thu	Read and Reflect on the Thursday Devotional Re- flection	Tree PlantingOutdoor ActivityStreet Children Feeding	 Creative Activity— dramatic, song, com- position, poem writing, art work Concert for a Cause
Fri	Read and Reflect on the Friday Devotional Re- flection	 Discuss what you can do as a group in the general development of the church ministry Peacetahan (showcase of talents advocating for Peace 	Fun nightParlor GamesFilm Showing with Reflection
Sat	Read and Reflect on the Saturday Devotional Reflec- tion Write a prayer of Confession and commitment, bring this to closing Wor- ship as Offering	 Visitation to jail, hospital, slum areas, and or rehabilitation center Brigada Iglesya Church Operation Linis 	 Poster making on the theme Sports fest Songfest Choir practice on CYAF Hymn and Anthem
Sun	• Read and Reflect on the Sunday Devotional Reflection	 Evaluation of the whole week celebration Nature Trip Evening Musicale 	 Closing of the Liturgy Lead worship service Potluck or Fellowship Lunch Make Special Offering for the CYAF

partment of Defense, the Department of Justice, the AFP and the NTF-ELCAC. This embodies the "One Nation Approach" an intiinsurgency strategy that is now being strengthened by additional funding by the various government offices such as the Department of Education, and other branches of government.

The ATL has been used to quell dissent from the various sectors of society impacted by the iron-clad policies that justifies illegal arrests, red-tagging, the filing of trumped-up charges against individuals and institutions that are at the service of the poor, deprived and oppressed. Recently, illegal arrest and fake surrender of environmental activists Jonila Castro and Jhed Tamano that happened in Orion, Bataan on the night of September 2, 2023 has been blamed on the malicious acts of the NTF-ELCAC. This government agency should be prosecuted and disbanded.

Also, the Law Against Terrorism funding being operationalized through Anti-Money Laundering Act of 2012, has been implemented that impacts the finances and real property holding of suspected institutions and organizations and the UCCP has been the guinea pig of the law wherein the UCCP Haran account was frozen by AMLAC and similarly the bank account of UCCP Fatima, Bohol.

All these are vestiges of Martial Law that still remain in our country and these will continue to be used to persecute and oppress persons, institutions and organizations that are critical of government policies. However, victims and survivors do their share of advocacy for protection of human rights, and giving humanitarian services to marginalized communities and struggling sectors of society.

Yet, we are not wearied or discouraged, for we know that God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love and self-discipline (2 Timothy 1:7).

THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

21 September 2023

need to open up and possibly unity with other faith communities. White Cross also represents the purity of our thoughts, intention, and humility. It brings us back to our historical rootedness and beginning and the chalice of the sacramental bread invites us all to celebrate Christ's presence from the beginning of our existence until today and towards our ecclesiastical future.

The bushes represent the burning bush of Moses that called him to let God's people go. God's liberation from all forms of bondage is the very core of ecclesiastical existence. It also represents ONE BODY, MANY PARTS. The clock symbolizes our rich and meaningful heritage and historical journey as a church amidst the changing times. The various watercolor Christian symbols represent our mark of service to the world. We are known for our biases toward the poor, Lumad, and the oppressed, known for our ecumenical and interfaith solidarity, and partners and in solidarity with others who work for peace, development, and protection of all creatures. The Pentagon or five sidelines symbolizes the five Protestant traditions of the UCCP. The Pentagon also represents our Diamond Celebration of our UCCP.

At the center, you can see the symbol of "Two Hands holding together". It represents Christ's Hand with the nailed mark and the follower of Christ responded to the calling to be partners of God's Mission to the world.

Below the theme reveals the following symbols; Scroll represents an emblem of the Apostles. It symbolizes heralding. Black lines represent the Bible. Our action and our proclamation are deeply rooted in the Holy Bible. Mechanical Gear, UCCP Logo, and Cross which best describe our mechanism of the UCCP Life Work. The mechanical gear rotates the movement of our ecclesiastical life work founded by God's word. It is used to increase the power of a turning force that in a way gives us a view of our "sola scriptura" principle. It also represents progress, work, and innovation. In this logo, gear represents focus in this quadrennium - rebuilding and restoring - with hope that God is with us in our innovations.



United Church of Christ in the Philippines 12th General Assembly Handbook May 23-26, 2022

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE ON THE THEME

Title:

"Rebuilding and Restoring with Hope: Heralding the Unity of the Body of Christ"

Biblical Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

I. The Gathering

Opening Song

Opening Prayer

Loving God, our great teacher, we come before you with hearts full of gratitude and joy as we gather here to-day for our Sunday School. We thank you for the opportunity to grow in faith, knowledge, and love for you. Lord, bless our time together. Open our minds and hearts to receive your word and teachings. May the lessons we learn today inspire us to live according to your will and to share your love with others. May your Holy Spirit be present among us, illuminating our understanding and strengthening our faith. This is our prayer, in Jesus' name. Amen.

II. Introduction of the Text

• Reading the text 1 Corinthians 12:21-35

Short Background and Context of the Text

1 Corinthians 12 is a chapter from the New Testament written by the apostle Paul, specifically within the First Epistle to the Corinthians. This chapter is part of a larger letter addressed to the Christian community in the city of Corinth. The context of 1 Corinthians is crucial to understanding Chapter 12.

they lose the constitutional guarantees of people's civil liberties and human rights. The present government of Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. has shown regression in instituting and administering justice and is not willful to realize livable economy and sustainable peace in the country.

We would like to remind our UCCP faith communities that our Church is one of the few Churches that denounced Martial Law as elucidated in the statement issued by the 1978 General Assembly, "Whereas, in keeping with the democratic tradition of evangelical churches in the Philippines that these civil and political liberties and the machinery of Martial Law be scuttled."

In the same statement was emphasized that UCCP is against the perpetuation of a oneman rule in the country; that it is for the immediate restoration of all the civil and political liberties of the citizens; and that it is for the immediate dismantling of the machinery of Martial Law in the country. Our faith in the God of justice and peace is the strong foundation of our ethical response we have been expressing in the many challenging historical junctures of our society and the world.

Gleaning from our Statement of Faith, we declare that "the Kingdom of God is present, where faith in Jesus Christ in shared, where healing is given to the sick, where food is given to the hungry, where light is given to the blind, and where liberty is given to the captive and oppressed." Because the State's failure to protect human rights of the people, we assert of our ethical responsibility to protect human rights of every member of the Church and every citizen in our community and help people in distress, defend their human dignity and extend moral, material and legal assistance to them.

More so, we admonish our faith communities to keep abreast of the laws and the State's instrumentalities violative of the constitutional rights, civil liberties, equity and social justice. We have been subjected to the Anti-Terrorism Law (ATL) implemented by the various departments of the government particularly by the De46

A PASTORAL STATEMENT ON THE COMMEMORATION OF THE 51ST YEAR OF THE DECLARATION OF MARTIAL LAW IN THE PHILIPPINES

UCCP | Posted on September 21, 2023



Photo Courtesy of **CNN Philippines**

This 21st of September 2023, we join the nation in commemorating the 51st year of the Declaration of Martial Law. The night-marish experiences of one-man rule taught us to defend and value democracy and declare that never again should our civil liberties be imperiled, our human dignity violated and human life desecrated.

In the light of the present realities obtaining in the country, we would like to admonish the youth to re-read history, learn, reflect and should plant in their minds and hearts the lessons of the Filipino people's history. The youth should overcome their fears lest

The city of Corinth was known for its diverse population and culture and its moral and religious challenges. The Christian community in Corinth faced various issues, including divisions, conflicts, and disputes. In the preceding chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul addressed these issues and guided topics such as marriage, food sacrificed to idols, and the proper conduct of worship.

Chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians primarily focuses on the theme of spiritual gifts and the unity of the body of Christ. Paul begins by emphasizing the diversity of spiritual gifts that the members of the Corinthian church possess. The Holy Spirit gives these gifts and serves various purposes within the Christian community. Paul uses the metaphor of the human body to illustrate the interconnectedness and interdependence of the members of the church. Just as different parts of the body have distinct functions but are essential for the wellbeing of the whole, so are the various spiritual gifts necessary for the health and vitality of the church. The chapter also discusses the idea that no one gift is superior to another, and no member of the church should consider themselves more important than others based on their spiritual gifts. Instead, Paul emphasizes the need for unity and mutual support among believers. At the end of 1 Corinthians 12, Paul lists some spiritual gifts, such as wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, and speaking in tongues. He underscores the importance of love as the greatest virtue that should underpin the exercise of these gifts.

Lastly, 1 Corinthians 12 serves as a reminder to the Corinthian Christians that they are part of a larger spiritual body, and their unique gifts are meant to contribute to the edification and unity of the church rather than causing division or competition. It encourages believers to appreciate the diversity of spiritual gifts and use them in love and cooperation.

III. Questions for Discussion:

(You may divide the participants into four groups. Each group is assigned to a particular question.)

- 1. In 1 Corinthians 12:26, Paul writes, "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." How can this verse guide our relationships with fellow believers, and how can we better support and care for one another within the church?
- 2. Paul uses the analogy of the human body to explain the church's functioning. What insights can we gain from this analogy?
- 3. How does Paul's analogy of the body help the early church deal with issues of division? What are some practical ways we can apply in our churches today?
- 4. In 1 Corinthians 12:21-35, Paul mentions various spiritual gifts and roles within the church, such as apostles, prophets, teachers, and those with gifts of healing. What lessons can we draw from this text, and how can these help modern-day Christians build a more harmonious and effective community within their church and the broader faith community?

IV. Sharing in the Big Group

V. Synthesis (by the facilitator)

VI. Closing Song "A United and Uniting Church" HFJ # 244 Refrain:

A united and uniting church, that we may all be one Reformed and transforming, in mission and in faith Onward UCCP, building God's kingdom of peace.

Come, let us all remember, a heritage of faithfulness, Of ardent men and women, devoted to Christ's way; Covenanting as one together, with God's Spirit sole enabler. of society who are suffering from the impact of political and economic governance reiterates the following:

- Affirm the sovereignty of the Filipino people and their right to self-determination, freedom from any external interference by modern empires encroaching in the country's territory and subvert people's political and economic rights (cf. COB, 19 March 1986);
- Assert the Church's abhorrence and resistance to repressive and tyrannical governance of the nation and calls for the restoration and protection of all civil and political liberties of the citizens, the abrogation of the Anti-Terrorism Law (ATL) and the counter insurgency pseudo-state agency, such as the NTF ELCAC (cf. UCCP GA 1978, A Resolution on Civil, Political liberties);
- Reiterate our stand for genuine and sustainable human development in the context of climate emergency and the global economic crisis, seeking solidarity with the people—the peasants, workers, urban poor, and other marginalized sectors in their struggle for justice and liberation, (cf. UCCP GA, 1978, Epistles to the Christians of today);
- 4. Engage in various forms of Christian service to those who are victims of red tagging, imprisoned due to trumped-up charges, offer spiritual comfort and pastoral care to farm and industrial workers seeking just wages and decent living, to the poor and underprivileged who need to feel the touch of Christ's love, (cf. UCCP GA 1974).
- 5. Nurture and educate our Church members to imbibe the biblical and Christian principles of freedom, justice and peace in all educational programs so that the Christian spirituality of compassion and love will be nourished and strengthened.

On this occasion, we pray with all Christian faithful that freedom that comes from Christ, enable us to pursue and exemplify the kind of life God intends for all people, within and outside the Church. May we strengthen our wills against the lure of the flesh – the sinful state of human beings, a power in opposition to the Spirit, so that the freedom we have will bring us closer to our people and to God in Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

12 June 2023

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LET FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE REIGN IN OUR LAND!

UCCP | Posted on June 12, 2023

(A Pastoral Statement on the Commemoration of the 125th Philippine Independence)



Photo courtesy of *Philippine Star*

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh [a]; rather, serve one another humbly in love. (Galatians 5: 1, 13)

We commemorate the 125th anniversary of the declaration of Philippine independence this 12th day of June. The Protestant branch of the Church that set foot on the country at the beginning of the 20th century came at the juncture of the newly-formed independent Republic from Spanish Crown and the snatching of that freedom by the American colonialism. Rising from the heaps of ravages of the revolution waged against the colonial powers, and the establishment of a national government, 125 years after, genuine independence and basic freedoms are still found wanting.

The Council of Bishops in view of the day's significance to the life and ministry of the Church and in solidarity with the basic sectors Come, lets reclaim together the vision of the pioneers, To serve beyond all burdens, reach out to one and all. In obedience to God's divine will, We seek for the reign of God.

Come, dreamers, visionaries, Examples of true witnesses, Leaving the trace of footprints, for people to tread on, With a burning faith and commitment, proclaiming God's message of love.

VII. Closing Prayer (All)

Gracious God, as we conclude this blessed Sunday school gathering, we come before You with hearts full of gratitude for the time we've spent together learning about the body of Christ. Lord, we thank You for the reminders that we are all unique parts of this divine body, each with our purpose and role. Help us, dear God, to embrace our place in the body and to use our gifts and talents for the glory of Your kingdom. We ask that You strengthen the bonds of love and unity among us, just as the various parts of the body work together harmoniously. May we always remember that we are called to support and care for one another, just as the body cares for its own. Let the knowledge and understanding we have gained today be a source of inspiration and transformation in our lives. May we be living examples of the body of Christ, sharing Your love, grace, and truth with the world. We pray all these things in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

This Bible Study Guide is prepared by:

Rev. Wella Hoyle-De Rosas Faculty, Divinity School Silliman University



REFLECTIONS TO PONDER

[GROUP ACTIVITY – DIVIDE THE GROUP ACCORDING TO THE NUMBER OF REFLECTIONS AND THEY WILL DISCUSS AND SHARE THEIR REFLECTIONS AMONG THEMSELVES]

From the Worship Materials during the ORIENTATION OF UCCP IDENTITY AND LLCDM and RE-ORIENTATION ON CYAF CBL held at UCCP Mapatag, Hamtic, Antique



SIX LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES TO LEARN FROM AN EAGLE

1. Eagles fly Alone and at High Altitudes.

They don't fly with sparrows, ravens, and other small birds.

MEANING: Stay away from narrow-minded people, those that bring you down. Eagle flies with Eagles. Keep good company.

2. Eagles have an Accurate Vision.

They have the ability to focus on something as far as 5km away. No matter the obstacles, the eagle will not move his focus from the prey until he grabs it.

MEANING; Have a vision and remain focused no matter what the obstacles and you will succeed.

3. Eagles do not Eat Dead things. They Feed only on Fresh Prey.

MEANING; Do not rely on your past success, keep looking for new frontiers to conquer. Leave your past where it belongs, in the past.

4. Eagles Love the Storm.

When clouds gather, the eagle gets excited, the eagle uses the storms wind to lift itself higher. Once it finds the wind of the storm, the eagle uses the raging storm to lift itself above the clouds. This gives the eagle an opportunity to glide and rest its wings.

created the heavens and the earth, who saw the distress of the Israelites while they were captives and heard their cry at the Red Sea.

When Ezra said that those who disobeyed and rebelled against God's will were the ones who killed the prophets, it was like the recent posts made by an enemy deceiving everyone about our mission and commitment to the God who is great, mighty, and awesome. The risks they are now putting on our shoulders are reason enough not to listen to these individuals.

The perpetrators of these atrocities are those who have failed to do what the Lord expects of us - act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8). Putting our church personnel in danger through unfounded charges puts our entire churches at risk. They are tearing apart our togetherness and integrity. As a result, it is our solid witness as a church to defend our church workers, who are selflessly serving the least, last, and lost in the community, as they act as the prophet in our time.

This red-tagging on Rev. Jay Sichon and other church workers is a proof that they are faithfully carrying-out God's prophetic ministry. This is why we need to take a stand against these attacks which endanger our churches and church workers in their local church assignments. We strongly condemn these attacks on Rev. Jay Sichon and our other church workers.

In our Lord's infinite kindness, let us continue to pray for church unity and strength for today's prophets. Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might (Ephesians 6:10).

Reference:

CL. RENJELYN MENTAL UCWO President, SCSDC

REV. AMY O. RAFALEZConference Minister, SCSDC

CYAF WEEK GUIDE 2023

United Church of Christ in the Philippines - Christian Young Adults Fellowship

STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY: STOP THE ATTACKS!

UCCP | Posted on July 13, 2023



SCSDC UCWO United Church Workers Organization

26 "Nevertheless, they were disobedient and rebelled against you and cast your law behind their backs and killed your prophets, who had warned them in order to turn them back to you, and they committed great blasphemies. 27 Therefore you gave them into the

hands of their enemies, who made them suffer. Then in the time of their suffering they cried out to you, and you heard them from heaven, and according to your great mercies you gave them saviors who saved them from the hands of their enemies. Nehemiah 9:26-27

During the time of Prophet Nehemiah, the entire people of Israel gathered to confess their sins and the crimes of their forefathers. The Israelites stood in their place and read from the book of the Lord's law as they confessed and honored the Lord their God. As the national assembly continues, Ezra recounts how the Lord liberates the people, beginning with their exodus experience and ending with the sins they have done. God continues to show kindness to the people of Israel, despite their recurrent rebellion. It is clearly stated that they were disobedient, rebellious, blaspheming, and, worst of all, killing the prophets who had warned them to return to the Lord.

What is happening now is almost identical to what Prophet Nehemiah experienced. The attacks on our church workers, including Rev. Jay Sichon and all those committed to their prophetic witness, are an act of abandonment of God's mission—God, who

In the meantime, all the other birds hide in the branches and leaves of the tree.

MEANING; Face your challenges head on knowing that these will make you emerge stronger and better than you were. We can use the storms of life to rise to greater heights. Achievers are not afraid to rise to greater heights. Achievers are not afraid of challenges, rather they relish them and use them profitably.

5. Eagles Prepare for Training.

They remove the feathers and soft grass in the nest so that the young ones get uncomfortable in preparation for flying and eventually flies/ when it becomes unbearable to stay in the nest.

MEANING; Leave your Comfort Zone, there is No Growth there.

6. When the Eagle Grows Old,

His feathers become weak and cannot take him as fast and as high as it should. This makes him weak and could make him die. So he retires to a place far away in the mountains. While there, he plucks out the weak feathers on his body and breaks its beaks and claws against the rocks until he is completely bare; a very bloody and painful process. Then he stays in this hiding place until he has grown new feathers, new beaks and claws and then he comes out flying higher than before.

MEANING; We occasionally need to shed off old habit no matter how difficult, things that burden us or add no value to our lives should be let go of.

Never give up. Be an Eagle.

Author Unknown

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THE STORY OF THE DONKEY AND TIGER

The donkey told the tiger: "The grass is blue".

The tiger replied:

"No, the grass is green".

The discussion became heated up, and the two decided to submit the issue to arbitration, and to do so they approached the lion, King of the Jungle.

Before reaching the clearing in the forest where the lion was sitting on his throne, the donkey started screaming:

"Your Highness, is it true that grass is blue?".

The lion replied:

"True, the grass is blue".

The donkey rushed forward and continued:

"The tiger disagrees with me and contradicts me and annoys me please punish him".

The king then declared:

"The tiger will be punished with 5 years of silence".

The donkey jumped for joy and went on his way, content and repeating:

"The grass is blue"...

The tiger accepted his punishment, but he asked the lion:

"Your Majesty, why have you punished me, after all, the grass is green?"

The lion replied:

"In fact, the grass is green".

The tiger asked:

"So why do you punish me?"

The lion replied:

"That has nothing to do with the question of whether the grass is blue or green. The punishment is because it is not possi-

risks and challenges in its recovery path, including a prolonged wave of the pandemic and a slower-than-expected global recovery. Businesses face potential financial distress with implications for lower potential growth due to the scarring effects of a prolonged downturn." Since the Marcos administration has continued to implement neoliberal economic policies in the same manner as his predecessors, the country's economic track is still skewed in favor of local and international elite. Regarding his plans for the economy, Marcos Jr. has not been particularly clear. However, it is clearly evident that rather than changing failed neoliberal policies, his administration will build on the legacy of his predecessor. The first year was likely the most important time to break with the past, including poverty, inequality, and underdevelopment as well as the previous administration. The Marcos Jr. government did nothing with this opportunity and, if anything, shown its inability to even conceive of any significant fundamental reform. To the disadvantage of local workers and farmers, this has resulted in a continuous dependence on importation policies, service privatization and liberalization that has raised the cost of public utilities, and the suppression of salaries and labor rights.

Marcos Jr.'s' administration has definitely veered its allegiance more toward the US as it opens the way for more broad US military action and raised regional tension. As a lamblike gesture, Marcos has allowed the expansion of additional "agreed locations" under the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement. Without taking tangible steps to end long-standing abuse patterns and ensure justice for previous human rights crimes, President Marcos' talks lack credibility. He needs to show more than just platitudes about democracy and the rule of law. President Marcos needs to do more than just issue statements about democracy and the rule of law to demonstrate a genuine commitment to human

While Marcos Jr. has pledged to alleviate the situation of Overseas Filipino Workers, Mary Jane Veloso's case, who had been languishing in an Indonesian jail for a crime she was falsely accused of, has received little attention thus far. Hitherto, all his election campaign promises remain to be empty rhetoric and his avowals mere bombast words.

Marcos Jr's initiative to achieve genuine and long-lasting peace has not yet been seen. As of yet, there has been no evidence of the government's willingness to pursue peace negotiations with the NDFP as a viable option for bringing about peace and stability in the nation. Instead, he has carried on his predecessor's harsh counter-insurgency campaign to crush resistance and prop up power. The Marcos Jr. government has, in fact, bolstered its red-tagging against perceived enemies and critics.

As members of the church, we call on President Bongbong Marcos to tell the truth about the country's current state so that everyone can hear it. We also call on the Filipino people to join hands in the struggle for justice, peace and decent life. We say YES to good governance and a resounding NO to Maharlika Investment Fund! Uphold Philippine Sovereignty!

THE COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

20 June 2023

rights.

UCCP PASTORAL STATEMENTS AND STATEMENT OF SOLIDARITY

LET THE TRUTH BE HEARD

UCCP | Posted on July 23, 2023

(A Pastoral Statement on Marcos Jr's 2nd State of the Nation address 2023)



Photo Courtesy of <u>Bulatlat.com</u>

"Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another". – Ephesians 4: 25 "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15).

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and his family have been living extravagant lifestyles for the past 11 months while the majority of Filipinos wallow in extreme poverty and hunger as a result of skyrocketing inflation, low wages, and insufficient social services.

In an effort to hide the horrific history of his dictator father's Martial Law regime, he promotes dubious solutions like the Maharlika Investment Fund and resuscitates down the drain schemes like Masagana 99 program. "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions" (Luke 12:15).

Based on observations and studies, the nation has not yet fully recuperated from the pandemic's ill-effects. The ASEAN+3 Macroeconomic Research Office (AMRO) said "The Philippine economy continues to face multiple downside

ble for a brave, intelligent creature like you to waste time arguing with a donkey, and on top of that to come and bother me with that question".

The worst waste of time is arguing with the fool and fanatic who doesn't care about truth or reality, but only the victory of their beliefs and illusions. Never waste time on discussions that make no sense. There are people who for all the evidence presented to them, do not have the ability to understand, and others who are blinded by ego, hatred and resentment, and the only thing that they want is to be right even if they aren't. When ignorance screams, intelligence shuts up. Your peace and tranquility are worth more.

Author unknown



"EVERY MINUTE SOMEONE LEAVES THIS WORLD"

by Marianne Baum

"Every minute someone leaves this world behind. Age has nothing to do with it.

We are all in "the line" without knowing it.

We never know how many people are before us.

We cannot move to the back of the line.

We cannot step out of the line.

We cannot avoid the line.

So while we wait in line:

Make moments count.

Make priorities.

Make the time.

Make your gifts known.

Make a nobody feel like a somebody.

Make your voice heard.

Make the small things big.

Make someone smile.

Make the change.

Make love.

Make up.

Make peace.

Make sure to tell your people they are loved.

Make sure to have no regrets.

Make sure you are ready..."

WORK IS NOT SCHOOL, THE BOSS IS NOT OUR TEACHER

Some young adults join the workforce expecting the boss to behave just like their teacher. But the boss is not our teacher and work is not school. Here are 10 ways the two are different.

#1. Decisions

In school, our teacher's mission is to help us succeed. Decisions revolve around us because our success comes first and the school's success comes second.

At work, our boss's mission is to help the organization succeed. Decisions cannot revolve around us because the success of the organization comes first and our success comes second.

#2. Issues

In school, our teacher knows the issue better than any student. Everyone learns the same thing from the teacher and the teacher advises us what to do.

At work, no boss knows every issue better than every staffer. We all report to the boss on a different issue. We're the ones who must advise the boss what to do on particular issues.

#3. Effort

In school, trying our best is good enough. What matters most is our effort. Our teacher praises us for our effort to encourage us to keep going.

At work, trying our best may not be good enough. What matters most are the results. Don't expect the boss to praise us if our effort failed to produce any results.

#4. Deadlines

In school, missing a deadline does not lead to serious repercussions. We can ask our teacher nicely for an extension and all problems can be solved.

At work, missing a deadline affects real decisions, policies, people, opportunities or profits. Asking our boss nicely for an extension usually doesn't solve any problems.

#5. Equality

In school, we're told everyone is equal. This is the notion of an egalitarian society.

conference, this will be divided as follows; United Ci. 175 % for the Conference CYAF

ii. 25 % for the Jurisdiction CYAF

- 4. **Special Sunday Offering** during the CYAF Sunday Celebration every October. The proceeds will be divided using the following scheme (60-40 sharing scheme):
 - The local CYAF will keep the 60 % and remit the 40% to Conference CYAF;
 - Of the total amount received by the Conference CYAF, 40 % be remitted to the Jurisdictional CYAF;
 - Of the 40 % of the amount received by the Jurisdictional CYAF, proceeds will be remitted to the CYAF National Treasurer.
- 5. **Faith Coin Offering** The proceeds will be remitted to the National CYAF Treasury. This will serve as the organizational fund for Church Development, Evangelism and Mission work. The Faith Coin Offering will be scheduled in one Sunday of February, which the Membership month of the church calendar. Sharing scheme still follows as that of the Special Sunday Offering (60-40 sharing scheme).

6. The CYAF Banner

To have uniform sizes of **CYAF banner**, the NCYAF Ways and Means Committee was tasked to produce a uniform banner for each Conference and Jurisdictional guided by their assigned color:

North Luzon Jurisdiction red Middle Luzon Jurisdiction orange South Luzon Jurisdiction yellow East Visayas Jurisdiction green West Visayas Jurisdiction blue Northwest Mindanao Jurisdiction indigo Southeast Mindanao Jurisdiction violet **CYAF** National rainbow

The CYAF logo must be prominently placed in the banner.

Each judicatory must observe the following sizes and the lay-out must be in portrait.

Local CYAF organization - 2 feet x 3 feet
Conference CYAF organization - 2 feet x 4 feet
Jurisdictional Area CYAF - 3 feet x 5 feet
National CYAF - 3 feet x 6 feet

RECOGNIZED 2006

NCYAF STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN PROGRAMS

1. **Conference Annual Due** (CYAF By-Laws, Article VII Section 2b) to the national in the amount of One Thousand Pesos (Php 1,000.00).

Payment of CYAF Conference Annual Dues will commence on the year the conference CYAF was organized. The reference point of collection is year 2006 especially for those organizations that already existed prior to the recognition of the CYAF as one of the UCCP National Church Recognized Organization.

2. **One-time Membership Fee** in the amount of Php 100.00 per member breakdown as follows:

25.00 - Local Church CYAF 25.00 - Conference CYAF 25.00 - Jurisdictional CYAF 25.00 - National CYAF.

The collection must be through the local CYAF Treasurer where 75.00 pesos of the amount paid by each member will be remitted to the Conference CYAF Treasurer.

The Conference CYAF treasurer in return will remit 50.00 pesos to the Jurisdictional CYAF and the Jurisdictional CYAF Treasurer will remit the remaining 25.00 pesos to the CYAF National Treasurer.

For those local churches CYAF who already collected their membership fee they are reminded to remit what is due to higher judicatories.

All members must fill up the CYAF membership form. Membership ID will be issued

3. **The CYAF Individual Annual Contribution**. After each member has paid his/her one-time membership fee, each one is encouraged to pledge 100.00 pesos starting the following year and thereafter. The sharing scheme of the collected amount is outlined below:

Out of the collected amount, 50% goes to the local CYAF treasury while 25% goes to the conference and the other 25% to the National.

Of the total 25 % remitted by the local CYAF to the

At work, not everyone is equal. The organization pays our boss more than it pays us. From a resource optimization perspective, the organization wants the boss to do things of his "pay-grade" and not things we are paid to do.

#6. Roles

In school, every teacher will be a friend, nurturer and counsellor. At work, every boss will be a supervisor, enforcer and judge. We hope our boss is also our friend, nurturer and counsellor, but that will not always happen.

#7. Mistakes

In school, we learn that to err is human. We're still kids. We can freely make mistakes because our mistakes don't generally involve serious consequences.

At work, we should try to reduce our mistakes. It may be human to err but we're now adults. Mistakes with consequences on ourselves may be acceptable but not mistakes with consequences on the organization.

#8. Forgiveness

In school, after making a mistake, the most important action is to apologize and ask our teacher for forgiveness. At work, after making a mistake, the most important action is to clean up the mess we created before asking our boss for for-

#9. Teamwork

giveness.

In school, our success depends largely on ourselves. Our teacher and friends can hate us but we can still do well if we're good. At work, our success depends at least partly on others. If our boss and colleagues hate us, we'll find it hard to do well even if we're good.

#10. Purpose

In school, we pay school fees. The school sets up a system with the purpose of helping us grow. We can think of ourselves as part of the school's problem.

At work, the organization pays us a salary. We are part of the system set up to help the organization grow. We have to behave as part of the organization's solution and not its problem.

REFLECTION FOR RESPONSIBLE VOTING

The Senator Chooses Between Heaven And Hell

|By David McElroy | March 31, 2012 (https://davidmcelroy.org/?p=12044) [This material is lifted from the CYAF Celebration Guide 2021, page 43]

While walking down the street one day a Senator is tragically hit by a truck and dies.

His soul arrives in heaven and is met by St. Peter at the entrance.

"Welcome to heaven," says St. Peter. "Before you settle in, it seems there is a problem. We seldom see a high official around these part, you see, so we're not sure what to do with you."

"No problem, just let me in," says the man.

"Well, I'd like to, but I have orders from higher up. What we'll do is have you spend one day in hell and one in heaven. Then you can choose where to spend eternity."

"Really, I've made up my mind. I want to be in heaven," says the senator.

"I'm sorry, but we have our rules."

And with that, St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell. The doors open and he finds himself in the middle of a green golf course. In the distance is a clubhouse and standing in front of it are all his friends and other politicians who had worked with him.

Everyone is very happy and they are in evening dress. They run to greet him, shake his hand, and reminisce about the good times they had while getting rich at the expense of the people.

They play a friendly game of golf and then dine on lobster, caviar and champagne.

Also present is the devil, who really is a very friendly guy who has a good time dancing and telling jokes. They are having such a good time that before he realizes it, it is

Take My Life, God, Let It Be" [TH # 3791-3& 5th Stnazs only]

Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee. Take my moments and my days; let them flow in ceaseless praise. let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love. Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee, swift and beautiful for thee.

Take my voice and let me sing always, only, for my King. Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee. filled with messages from thee.

Take my will and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine. Take my heart it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne, it shall be thy royal throne.

† CLOSING PRAYER [Minister]

† BENEDICTION

Minister: May the God, who challenged us to a deep and meaningful response

of service, gives us a humble heart that is pierced with compassion and love in heralding our united mission, dreams, and vision as a

Body of Christ as it extends to live for others.

People: May God give us strength to be bearers of hope for an abundant

life in Christ.

Minister: May Jesus, who innovated the ways to be able for us to follow fruit-

fully, teach us to reexamine ourselves as we are called in the wider and ecumenical service in rebuilding and restoring with hope for the

community of faith and community of all creations.

People: May we open our hearts to God's call to love others as we love

ourselves.

Minister: May the Spirit guides us to make decisions that will continue to up-

hold. Protect, and promote life and dignity.

ALL: May the creative love, redeeming love and sustaining love contin-

ue to enable, equip and empower us all to choose justice and always justice in rebuilding and restoring with hope towards herald-

ing the unity of the body of Christ. Amen.

(UCCP DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION BOOKLET)

TRESPONSE Five-Fold Amen

† POSTLUDE

This English Liturgy is prepared by:

Rev. Irish Tibus CEN Minister Silliman University Church

https://docs.google.com/document/d/12D3TDnLcpENqPF8aYtultUg8WyGHocmQ/edit?usp=drive_link&ouid=118303347625816168509&rtpof=true&sd=true



CYAF WEEK GUIDE 2023

Act of Dedication & Commitment

CALL TO OFFERING [Leader]

"God is generous to us through giving God's own Son so that we may live a life that honors the Divine and encourage us to herald our love and unity as body of Christ." In response to what God has done for us, let us bring our gifts to God as an act of worship.

OFFERTORY

♦ OFFERTORY RESPONSE [HF] #94 2nd Stanza]

Praise God the Source of life and birth; Praise God the Sone who came to earth; Praise God Spirit, Holy Flame; All glory, honor to God's name. Amen.

THANKSGIVING PRAYER [Unison]

WE GIVE THESE BOUNTEOUS GIFTS TO YOU, OH GOD, IN GRATITUDE FOR GRACING US WITH MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS. THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORD ENCOURAGING US, ESPECIALLY THE YOUNG ADULT, TO PARTICIPATE IN YOUR MINISTRY ACTIVELY. KNOWING THAT YOUR PROVISION IS CONSTANTLY AVAILABLE; WE GIVE OURSELVES AND ALL WE ARE. LET OUR THANKSGIVING ENABLE US TO WITNESS YOUR TRANSFORMATIVE POWER AND LOVE AS A FAITH COMMUNITY. WE OFFER THIS PRAYER THROUGH CHRIST, AMEN.

COMMUNION HYMN "Let us Break Bread Together" [TNCH#330]

Let us break bread together on our knees Let us break bread together on our knees

Refrain:

When I fall on my knees, with my face to the rising sun. My God have mercy on me

Let us drink wine together on our knees

Let us drink wine together on our knees [Refrain]

Let us praise God together on our knees

Let us praise God together on our knees [Refrain]

CELEBRATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation

Consecration and Institution

Distribution of Elements

Prayer of Thanksgiving (UNISON)

WITH BURNING HEARTS, WE THANK YOU, O GOD, FOR MAKING CHRIST KNOWN TO US IN BREAKING OF BREAD AND IN THE POURED-OUT WINE. NOW MAY THIS MEAL ENABLE US TO INCREASE IN FAITH, PERSEVERE IN HOPE, AND GROW UP IN LOVE AS WE JOURNEY AS A COMMUNITY OF FAITH. MAY THIS WITNESS TO CHRIST'S DEATH DRAW OTHERS INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS AND WITH YOUR CHURCH SO THAT ALL YOUR CHILDREN WILL BE GATHERED IN TO SHARE WITH US THE JOY OF YOUR SALVATION. SEND US OUT FROM THIS PLACE BY YOUR SPIRIT, OUR EARS OPEN TO YOUR WORD, OUR MINDS ALERT TO THE CALLING YOU GIVE US, OUR HEART FULL OF ZEAL TO REBUILDING AND RESTORING WITH HOPE: HERALDING THE UNITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST, IN OUR VOICES CONFESSING THE NAME OF IESUS, OUR LORD AND OUR GOD. AMEN.

(UCCP DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION BOOKLET

CYAF WEEK GUIDE 2023

time to go.

Everyone gives him a hearty farewell and waves while the elevator rises....

The elevator goes up, up, up and the door reopens on heaven where St. Peter is waiting for him.

"Now it's time to visit heaven."

So, twenty four hours pass with the senator joining a group of contented souls moving from cloud to cloud, playing the harp and singing. They have a good time and, before he realizes it, the 24 hours have gone by and St. Peter returns.

"Well, then, you've spent a day in hell and another in heaven. Now choose your eternity."

The senator reflects for a minute, then he answers: "Well, I would never have said it before, I mean heaven has been delightful, but I think I would be better off in hell." So St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell.

Now the doors of the elevator open and he's in the middle of a barren land covered with waste and garbage. He sees all his friends, dressed in rags, picking up the trash and putting it in black bags as more trash falls from above.

The devil comes over to him and puts his arm around his shoulder. "I don't understand," stammers the senator. "Yesterday I was here and there was a golf course and clubhouse, and we ate lobster and caviar, drank champagne, and danced and had a great time. Now, there's just a wasteland full of garbage and my friends look miserable.

What happened?"

The devil looks at him, smiles and says, "Yesterday we were campaigning. Today you voted."

Moral of the Story: Vote wisely.



DINNER TABLE DEVOTIONS AND DISCUSSION STARTER

Introduction

f you've rarely read and discussed God's Word together as a family, it can be awkward at first. But that initial awkwardness fades as conversations are sparked and understanding deepens. We have a treasure to pass to our children - the Bible, which contains God's message to us and the answers to life's greatest questions. Because it is so important to us, we want to talk about it.

The one-week devotion is designed for everyone around the table to share and interact with it. You might choose to have a different family members read the various verses, and you can encourage conversations by discussing the questions at the end of each devotion. The first question is answerable for family members of all ages, elementary and up. It is designed to draw family members in and to get everyone talking about their own thoughts and experience. The next two questions are more thought provoking and in some cases more personal.

Paul wrote, "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10: 31) I'm praying for you as you seek to glorify God around your dinner table – that He will be pleased, and that your family or group will have some laughs, perhaps shed some tears, and grow together toward God.

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come and worship You. As we observe Christian Young Adult Fellowship Sunday, let Your Spirit enfold us, allowing us to see that everyone has an important role in the life of Your Church. Inspire the Young adult to lead and testify Your abounding grace that we may all grow in the body of Christ. May Your Word speak to us so that we may share our hope, increase our trust, and strengthen our communion with You. We bring this prayer in Jesus' name, who came to give us life and have it abundantly. Amen.

GLORIA PATRI [Gloria Patri, H #18]

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, World without end. Amen. Amen.

The Act of Confession...

CALL TO CONFESSION [Leader]

God shows us what honors Him. Unfortunately, we insist on following our desires and choose to turn away from the Holy One. We pattern our ways to the trends and values of this world. Instead of living out the Gospel, we use our strength and gifts for self-gratification. But God is able to forgive and restore us. Let us draw near to God in repentance with the comfort from the Scripture: "He who conceals his transgression will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion."

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (All)

COMPASSIONATE GOD, WE ARE SO SET IN OUR WAYS AT TIMES. WE ARE TOO BUSY FOR OUR PERSONAL GRATIFICATION. WE ARE STUBBORN. WE ARE SELF-CENTERED. WE REFUSE TO SHARE OUR GOD-GIVEN GIFTS IN BUILDING UP YOUR CHURCH. WE CONFESS FOR WE HAVEN'T LIVED OUT YOUR VALUES EXEMPLIFIED BY JESUS. WE ADMIT OUR SIN AND BROKENNESS, FOR WE CHOSE TO NEGLECT YOUR WORD AND DO THINGS THAT ONLY SATISFY US. O GOD, AWAKEN US TO YOUR SPIRIT, LET CHRIST'S CROSS MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR LIVES, AND GRANT US YOUR FORGIVENESS AND PEACE. AMEN.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S FORGIVENESS AND LOVE [Minister]

RESPONSE:

How Great Thou Art

[Refrain only]

Then sings my soul, my Savior God to Thee How great Thou art, how great Thou art. (2x)

CHURCH IN PRAYER [Minister]

Response

Sweet Hour of Prayer

TH #432

Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, Thy wings shall my petition bear To Him whose truth and faithfulness, engage the waiting soul to bless. And since He bids me seek His face, believe His Word, and trust His grace, I'll cast on Him my every care, and wait for Thee, sweet hour of prayer.

The Act of Proclamation

† SCRIPTURE READING

MESSAGE THRU SONG

CYAF Members

SERMON

CYAF WEEK GUIDE 2023

CYAF SUNDAY THE ORDER OR WORSHIP

https://docs.google.com/document/d/12D3TDnLcpENqPF8aYtultUg8WyGHocmQ/edit? usp=sharing&ouid=118303347625816168509&rtpof=true&sd=true

The Act to Gather ...

SILENT MEDITATION

"The temple of God is the holy people in Jesus Christ. The Body of Christ is the living temple of God and of the new humanity."

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship

PRELUDE

LIGHTING OF CHRIST'S CANDLE
GREETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Act of Praise...

CALL TO WORSHIP [Responsive]

Leader: Come, people of God, let us offer God a worship of praise,

and lift the Holy name in the presence of all.

People: For the works of our God are incomparable. Everything the

Lord does reveals the divine glory and majesty.

Leader: Come, the body of Christ. Let us offer God a sacrifice of

thanksgiving and open ourselves to the enabling power of

the Holy Spirit.

People: We come to herald our oneness in Christ, to build our hope

and restore our spirit.

All: For God delights those who come to the Maker. Let us sing

and worship God together!

THYMN OF PRAISE "People of God, Let Us Adore Together" [HF] #241]

People of God, let us adore together

Christ who has called us from night and 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.

Called to be saints, all consecrated are we;

Christ's willing servants in service for the world;

We're call to serve the lost, the high, the lowly;

And anyone who needs His saving grace.

O Bride of Christ, from heaven He came to call us

Into the baptism in in His purity;

We are the new Jerusalem that will be;

People of God through all eternity.

† OPENING PRAYER [Unison]

Our Faithful God, whose presence we lovingly adore, we gather together with praise and hope. Despite the challenges of time, we choose to

CYAF WEEK GUIDE 2023

MONDAY

THAT'S NOT FAIR!

When God our savior revealed his kindness and love, he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.

TITUS 3:4-5

Have mercy in me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins.

PSALM 51:1

God had mercy on me so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they, too, can believe in him and receive eternal life.

1 TIMOTHY 1:16

e live in a world that teaches us, "The early bird gets the worm," "No pain, no gain," "There is no such thing as a free lunch," and "You get what you pay for". We buy the idea that people get what they deserve, at least in theory. Whenever we experience hardship or difficulty, we quickly say, "I don't deserve this!" Believing we have a right to fairness, we feel violated when we think we haven't gotten what we deserve.

On the surface, a perfectly fair world appeals to us. But would we really want to live in such a world? In a completely fair world, there is no room for grace—receiving what you don't deserve. There would be no room for mercy either—being spared from getting the punishment you do deserve. We deserve punishment but receive forgiveness; we deserve judgement but experience love; we deserve death but get showered with God's mercy.

Since we live in a world where we don't always get what we deserve and where we sometimes get what we don't deserve, we will experience loss. But this also means we can receive mercy. Ultimately it is not "fairness" we want from God. If he gave us what is fair—what we really deserve—we would have to pay for our sins. What we really want from God is justice (doing what is right) and mercy (not giving punishment we've earned). And we can be confident that his abundant mercy will keep us from getting what we really deserve.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Can you think of a time when you said, "That's not fair"? How do we know what is fair?
- Are there ways God is not fair but is right?
- Do you want other people to treat you with fairness or with grace and mercy? Why?

TUESDAY

WHO'S IN **CHARGE?**

Jesus came and told his disciples. "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth."

MATTHEW 28:18

The Father... has given the Son absolute authority to judge.

JOHN 5:22

This is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ-everything in heaven and on earth.

EPHESIANS 1:10

ave your parents or your teachers ever left you in charge of things at your house or in your classroom? "You're in charge," they say as they walk out of the door. Authority means power and privilege. When people have authority, that means they've been trusted to lead other people. They have been given more responsibility than others have. They are able to determine and decide things, to make judgement, and to oversee certain rights and privileges.

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Jesus said that God gave him "all authority in heaven and on earth." Jesus is in charge of this world and everything in it, as well as everything beyond it! There is nothing Jesus doesn't have authority over—nothing he doesn't have the right and the power to do with as he pleases.

Jesus showed this when he walked the earth. He had authority over disease, healing the sick. He had authority over nature, telling the storm to be still. He had authority over demons, commanding them to leave a man and enter into a herd of pigs. He had authority to forgive sin. He had authority over his own life, giving it up on the cross when it was the right time, and taking it up again three days later when he rose from the dead.

Many people in this world don't recognize the authority of Jesus. They think they're in charge of their own lives. But that is just an illusion. The day is coming when "at the name of Jesus every knee [will] bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord" (PHILIPPIANS 2:10-11). On that day, no one will question who's in charge.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Think of things that Jesus is in charge of. Then go around the table and name some of those things.
- Think of the people in your life who are in authority. How did they get their positions of authority? And where did Jesus' authority come from when he was on earth?
- What is something you can do this week to show that Jesus is in charge of your life?

† AWIT SA PAGTUO "ANG TAWO NGA BUOT MOALAGAD KANG JESUS" APP # 304 Ang tawo nga buot moalagad kang Jesus, kinabuhi ihalad, Bisan kinsang malipay sa pagpangalagad kasingkasing magmaya.

Koro:

Kalipay naangkon ta kon kauban siya, Kahayag niya nagbanwag sa kinabuhi ta.

Ang kapakyasan mo itugyan mo kang Jesus ug magmauswagon ka, Lunsay nga pag-alagad may kabulahanan panalangin ang bunga . (koro)

Magadayeg tanan sa Ginoong si Jesus, masadyang pag-alagad. Buksan ang kasingkasing pasudlon si Jesus kinabuhi itugyan. (koro)

† PAG-AMPO [Pastor]

† BENEDICTION

Minister: May the God, who challenged us to a deep and meaningful re-

> sponse of service, gives us a humble heart that is pierced with compassion and love in heralding our united mission, dreams, and vi-

sion as a Body of Christ as it extends to live for others.

May God give us strength to be bearers of hope for an abun-People:

dant life in Christ.

May Jesus, who innovated the ways to be able for us to follow fruit-Minister:

> fully, teach us to reexamine ourselves as we are called in the wider and ecumenical service in rebuilding and restoring with hope for the

community of faith and community of all creations.

May we open our hearts to God's call to love others as we love People:

ourselves.

May the Spirit guides us to make decisions that will continue to Minister:

uphold. Protect, and promote life and dignity.

ALL: May the creative love, redeeming love and sustaining love

> continue to enable, equip and empower us all to choose justice and always justice in rebuilding and restoring with hope towards heralding the unity of the body of (UCCP DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION BOOKLET)

Christ, Amen.

† TUBAG-AWIT [Koro lamang sa "Ang Tawo Nga Buot Moalagad Kang Jesus" APP # 304] Kalipay naangkon ta kon kauban siya, Kahayag niya nagbanwag sa kinabuhi ta.

PANAPOS NGA HUNI

SOURCES:

CEN GUIDE 2023 OF THE NEGROS DISTRICT CONFERENCE UCCP DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION BOOKLET

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https://docs.google.com/document/d/127vCdv8Xs3O72wpNtooz8ZjfisHQ_CnH/edit? ive link&ouid=118303347625816168509&rtpof=true&sd=true

PINAAGI SA AWIT

CYAF Members

PINAAGI SA MENSAHE

TAWAG SA PAGHALAD (Pangulo)

Si Apostol Pablo sa iyang sinulat nag-ingon "Sa unang adlaw sa semana ang usag-usa kaninyo magahin ug kwarta sumala sa inyong kinitaan." Karon, dad-on ta ang atong mga halad sa kinabuhi ug hinagoan alang sa buluhaton sa Dios.

PAGHALAD UBAN SA PAG-AWIT "O Katawhan, Duol Na" APP # 28

O katawhan duol na, pasalamat awiton, Ang abut hipuson ta sa di pa magaulan, Dios ang Magbubuhat ta, Magsasangkap sa tanan, Duol ug simbahon ta, Ang Dios atong awitan.

Panalangin sa uma ug sa tanaman usab, Ang bungahoy napuno ug mga hinog gayod. Magatubo, modaghan mikalanap sa yuta, Gibubu-an sa ulan gikan kanimo O Dios.

Gikan kanimong tanan, panalangin gihatag, among pagadaygon ka, pasalamatan ikaw. Umari, O katawhan, huni atong awiton, duol ug simbahon ta. Ang Dios atong awitan.

† DOKSOLOHIYA

† PAG-AMPO ALANG SA HALAD

ANG PAGSAULOG SA BALAANG PANIHAPON SA GINOO

PAG-AWIT "Tipkang Tinapay sa Kinabuhi" APP #356

Tipkang tinapay sa kinabuhi sama niadtong imong pagtipik. Tudloan mo ako sa gugma mo. Ug kanimo lang magpuyo ako.

Buhing tinapay ko ikaw gayud, pulong mo maoy kaluwasan ko, Unya tanang gapos malugtas na, ug ang pagdait mo madawat ko.

LITANIYA SA PAGPASALAMAT

PAGPANALANGIN

PAGPAKIG-AMBIT SA PAN UG BINO

† PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING (UNISON)

WITH BURNING HEARTS, WE THANK YOU, O GOD, FOR MAKING CHRIST KNOWN TO US IN BREAKING OF BREAD AND IN THE POURED-OUT WINE. NOW MAY THIS MEAL ENABLE US TO INCREASE IN FAITH, PERSEVERE IN HOPE, AND GROW UP IN LOVE AS WE JOURNEY AS A COMMUNITY OF FAITH. MAY THIS WITNESS TO CHRIST'S DEATH DRAW OTHERS INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS AND WITH YOUR CHURCH SO THAT ALL YOUR CHILDREN WILL BE GATHERED IN TO SHARE WITH US THE JOY OF YOUR SALVATION. SEND US OUT FROM THIS PLACE BY YOUR SPIRIT, OUR EARS OPEN TO YOUR WORD, OUR MINDS ALERT TO THE CALLING YOU GIVE US, OUR HEART FULL OF ZEAL TO REBUILDING AND RESTORING WITH HOPE: HERALDING THE UNITY OF THE BODY OF CHRIST, IN OUR VOICES CONFESSING THE NAME OF JESUS, OUR LORD AND OUR GOD. AMEN. (UCCP DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION BOOKLET)

CYAF WEEK GUIDE 2023

WEDNESDAY

WHAT MAKES JESUS CRY?

When Jesus saw [Mary] weeping and saw the other people wailing with her, a deep anger welled up within him, and he was deeply troubled. "Where have you put him?" he asked them. They told him, "Lord, come and see." Then Jesus wept.

JOHN 11:33-35

He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.

REVELATION 21:4

e cry for all kinds of reasons-when we watch sad movies, when we're celebrating joyous occasions, when we skin our knees, when our feelings get hurt, when we're reunited with people we love, and when we say good-bye.

The Bible tells us about several times that Jesus cried. Jesus was fully human, with emotions like ours. What brought Jesus to tears? Jesus wept when his friend Lazarus died. But in some ways that's strange, because Jesus knew he was about to raise Lazarus from the dead. So why would he cry?

It troubled Jesus deeply when he saw Mary's despair over her brother's death and when he saw the wailing mourners with her. Perhaps he could see in her weeping and hear in their wailing a kind of unbelief. This unbelief robbed them of being able to grieve with and left them with only despair. As followers of Christ, we can't escape the pain of grief. But it is different for the believer than it is for those who do not know Christ— at least it should be. Jesus' tears weren't just because he was frustrated over their despairing grief. Jesus wept because he was personally pained that death caused to people he loved. His tears were tears of compassion for Mary and Martha, and tears of determination, perhaps, to finish the work he came to do—to win a victory, once and for all, over the power of death. It breaks the heart of God that death has so much power to hurt those he loves. We see tears on the face of God because he feels the hurt and emptiness and death leaves in its wake, and he longs with us for the day when death is destroyed forever.

PISCUSSION STARTERS

- What makes you cry? What do tears mean?
- Is it okay to cry? Is it okay not to cry
- How does it make you feel to know that there are sometimes tears on the face of God?

THURSDAY

EXAMINE YOURSELF

Not everyone who calls out to me, "Lord! Lord!" will enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

MATTHEW 7:21

Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith.

2 CORINTHIANS 13:5 ave you ever known someone with diabetes? Many diabetics have to prick their fingers several times a day to draw blood to test the level of sugar in their bloodstreams. It is not something they can know just by feeling. They have to test themselves.

The Bible says that we need to test ourselves. Not by pricking our fingers, but by examining ourselves for evidence of genuine faith.

One way we can examine ourselves is to ask this question: Am I trusting Christ right now to make me right with God? Or is there something else I am trusting in to save me (like doing good works or coming from a family of faith or attending church)? Trusting Christ to save you is not a one-time thing, and it's not about reciting details about a conversion experience in your past. The work he did to save us happened one time, but he keeps saving us each day. If your testimony of saving faith is real, it should be a testimony of ongoing trust in Christ to save you and keep you faithful today and every day.

A second question to ask yourself is this: Is there evidence of the Holy Spirit making me new? Do I see growth in my life as the Holy Spirit in me, producing love, joy, and peace? Do I have a growing love for God's Word and an increasing desire to center my life around God?

God doesn't intend for us to go through life fearful of whether or not our relationship with him is real. He wants us to be confident in our relationship with him—confident that he has his grip on us and won't let go. But Scripture also says, "Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine." It is a good thing to do a checkup on ourselves to see if the faith we claim is a reality in our lives.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

- We generally don't like to take tests. Why is that?
- What kinds of things change when a person becomes a believer in Christ?
- When you think about examining yourself by asking the question in today's devotion, what is your reflection? What can hold us back from taking a good look at our lives?

mabuhong kami sa Imong kaalam, pag-atiman samtang magapadayon kami pagkinabuhi uban Kanimo. Amen.

† TUBAG-AWIT "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY" HFJ 73

Holy, holy, holy, My heart, my heart adore you My heart is glad to say the words, You are holy God.

Dios ikaw balaan, Ang kasingkasing ko Nalipay'ng nagdayeg kanimo, O balaan ka.

TAWAG SA PAGHINULSOL [Pastor]

Ang Dios nagmando sa katawhan sa Judah sa pag-atiman sa katawhan ug sa dapit nga sila nabihag. Kita usab gidasig sa pag-atiman sa dapit diin kita nagkinabuhi, apan napakyas kita sa pag-atiman sa uban sa mga panahon nga adunay nagkinahanglan kanato.

AWIT SA PAGHINULSOL "WI

"WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN ME" Aleluya # 128

Why have you chosen me out of millions your child to be.

You know all the wrong that I have done,

Oh how could you pardon me, forgive my iniquities.

To save me give Jesus Your son.

But Lord help me be, what you want me to be.

Your word I will strive to obey

My life I now give, for you I will live

And walk by your side all the way

PASALIG SA PASAYLO [Pastor]

Ang Dios nahigugma kanato ug nagapamati sa atong mga pag-ampo. Pagkaanindot sa iyang saad kanato nga siya andam pagpasaylo kanato sa tanang nabuhat nga sala. Tungod sa Iyang kaluoy ug gahom gipasaylo na kita sa Dios. Lauman ta nga Siya magabag-o ug magagiya nga dili na kita makasala pa samtang magahalad ug magasimba kita Kaniya uban sa mapaubsanon nga kinabuhi . Dawaton ta ang pasaylo sa Dios.

TUBAG-AWIT "Thank You, Lord"

Thank you Lord for saving my soul. Thank you Lord for making me whole. Thank you Lord for giving to me, Thy great salvation so rich and free.

KATILINGBANON NGA PAG-AMPO

TUBAG AWIT "GOD ANSWERS PRAYER"

God answers prayer in the morning, God answers prayer at noon. God answers prayer in the evening. To kept your hearts in tune.

† ANG PAGBASA SA BALAANG KASULATAN

† AWIT-TUBAG "Daygon Tang Magbubuhat" APP #81

Daygon tang Magbubuhat, ang Manunubos ug Magsasangkap; Gikan pa sa sinugdanan, karon ug sa kanunay, Magapadayon sa kahangtoran.

CYAF WEEK GUIDE 2023

SUGGESTED LITURGY

CYAF SUNDAY TALAMDAN SA PAGSIMBA

https://docs.google.com/document/d/127vCdv8Xs3O72wpNtooz8ZjfisHQ_CnH/edit?usp=drive_link&ouid=118303347625816168509&rtpof=true&sd=true

ANG PAGPANGANDAM (Music Instrumental)

PROSESYONAL

PASIUNANG AWIT ".

"AS THE DEER"

As the deer panteth for the water, so my soul longeth after you. You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship you.

Refrain

You alone are my strength my shield. To you alone are my spirit yield. You alone are my heart desire and I long to worship you.

You're my friend, and you are my brother even though You are a King. I love you more than any other, so much more than anything. (Ref.)

MGA PAGTAGAD SA IGLESYA TAWAG SA PAGSIMBA:

Pangulo: Atong duolon ang Ginoo ug awitan ta Siya kay Siya nag-

buhat ug katingalahang butang.

CYAF: Gipahayag sa Ginoo ang iyang pagdaug, gipaila niya sa

tanang kanasoran ug ang iyang walay katapusang gahom.

Pangulo: Gituman niya iyang mga saad sa katawhan uban sa walay

paglubad gugma ug pagkamaunongon.

TANAN: Dios sa gugma ug paglaum, diha Kanimo lamang ang

among kahayag sa kinabuhi latas sa mga pagsulay. Takus

gayud Ikaw dayegon ug simbahon.

† AWIT SA PAGDAYEG "O KATAWHAN SA DIOS" APP # 421

O katawhan sa Dios naga-ambahan si Cristo nagatawag sa kanunay Sa iyang kaayo kita giluwas, mabala-an ug maghigugmaay

Lawas ni Cristo O pagkahamili, may pakigdugtong kita sa Ginoo, Nagsalig ta kaniya nga mulowas, gikan sa kamatayon ug sala.

Ginatawag kita nga mabalaan, alagad ni Cristo sa kalibotan. Nga mag-alagad sa tanang katawhan, nga nagkinahanglan sa grasya nya.

O katawhan nga gitawag ni Cristo, ngadto sa bantilis mo sa kaputli nya, Bag-ong Jerusalem kitang katawhan. Iya sa Dios sa way katapusan

† PAMBUKAS NGA PAG-AMPO [Pangulo]

Niining kabuntagon O Dios nagaduol kami diha kanimo tungod sa Imong pagkamatarong ug kamaayo sa among kinabuhi. Dawata ang among mga pag-ampo ug mga pag-awit kay kini maoy among pag-ila sa Imong pagkahalangdon. Panalangini kami ug hinaut nga diha sa mga Pulong nga among madungog mao kini magagiya kanamo. Naga-ampo kami niining pagsaulog sa Christian Young Adults Fellowship Sunday

CYAF WEEK GUIDE 2023

FRIDAY

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IMPOSSIBLE TO UNDER-STAND?

The teaching of your word gives light, so even the simple can understand.

PSALM 119:130

All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16

Such things were written in the Scriptures long ago to teach us.

ROMANS 15:4

ave you ever opened the pages of the book only to discover it is written in another language that you don't know? Or have you ever opened a high-level textbook about a subject you know nothing about and it seems impossible to understand?

Sometimes people can feel that way when reading the Bible—it seems like it's in a foreign language or it's written at a level they can't comprehend. It's true that the Bible is like a treasure of knowledge that can be opened over and over in your lifetime, offering deeper levels of understanding. But no advanced degree or special experience is required to understand the Bible. Everything we need for salvation and for living the Christian life is clear in Scripture.

Understanding the bible is more of a spiritual ability than a intellectual ability. God is the one who opens our minds so we can grasp what we read in his Word. "People who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

God makes Scripture understandable for people who don't know him but are reading it to find him. And he makes Scripture understandable to people who do know him but need help making sense of what they read. So when we come to something in the Bible we don't understand, we know that have a fresh opportunity to discover something about God. We can ask for God's help and search the Scripture intently, believing that God will show us what we need to learn.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

- When was the last time you learned something new? How did you go about doing it?
- What is something in the Bible that is hard for you to understand?
- What is something in the Bible you understand better than you used to?

SATURDAY

WHAT ARE YOU BUILDING ON

Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won't collapse because it is built on bedrock. But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn't obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.

MATTHEW 7:24-27

Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. . . . But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it.

JAMES 1:22, 25

o you know the song "The Wise Man Built His House upon the Rock"? It says that when the rains came down and the floods came up, the house on the rock stood firm, while the house on the sand went splat.

So what was the difference between the wise person and the foolish person? When we read the parable Jesus told, we see that they had many things in common. Both of them heard God's Word. In modern terms, it is as if they both attended church and sat through the sermon Sunday after Sunday. And both of them experienced the storm. They each faced trouble and difficulty. But the story tells us that the wise person's house did not collapse, while the foolish person's house fell with a mighty crash.

What does it mean to build your house on solid rock versus unstable sand? The difference is in the way you respond when you hear God's Word. One Bible version says that the wise person not only hears God's words but also "puts them into practice" (MATTHEW 7:24, NIV). The foolish person heard God's Word but ignored it. It is as if this person thought being in church was good enough. Wise people let God's Word change and shape them, strengthen and prepare them for when the storms of life come.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Can someone lead in singing the song based on this parable? (If you don't know the song, you can look on the Internet or in a songbook to find the words.)
- What was the difference between the wise person and the foolish person?
- What can you do now to prepare for the storms of life that will surely come?

SUNDAY

GOD'S DREAM

They sang a new song with these words: "You are worthy to take the scroll and break its seals and open it. For you were slaughtered, and your blood has ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. And you have caused them to become a Kingdom of priests for our God. And they will reign on the earth."

REVELATION 5:9-10

People will come from all over the world—from east and west, north and south—to take their places in the Kingdom of God. And note this: Some who seem least important now will be the greatest then, and some who are the greatest now will be least important then.

LUKE 13:29-30

n August 28, 1963, Martin Luther King Jr. stood in front of the Lincoln Memorial and said, "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood. . . . I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character." His was an amazing, God-honoring dream. But it was just scratching the surface of God's ultimate dream, his plan for the redemption of all races.

God's dream is really more than a dream. It is a sure and coming reality that all of history is moving toward—the restoration of all things. It's bigger than how people of different skin colors and backgrounds relate to each other. It's about people from every race, every language, every tribe on the planet worshiping together around the throne of God. God's desire is for people from "every tribe and language and people and nation" to be united by our worship of our one and only King.

When we overcome our natural prejudices and join hands with people of other races to glorify God together, we experience a little bit of heaven here on earth.

DISCUSSION STARTERS

- Who do you know of another race who also worships King Jesus?
- What do you think is at the root of racial prejudice? How does God feel when his children of different races look down on each other?
- What is something you can do to live out God's vision for racial harmony right where you are?