



Together in Christ

Lutherans and Catholics Commemorating the Reformation

An Ecumenical Study: Participant's Guide

Together in Christ

Participant's Guide — Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Session 1: Commemorating the Reformation | 3 |
| Five Ecumenical Imperatives..... | 9 |
| Session 2: Conflict Breaks Communion..... | 10 |
| Session 3: From Conflict to Communion..... | 15 |
| Session 4: Growth in Communion Through Dialogue..... | 20 |
| Session 5: Commitment to Communion..... | 25 |
| Resources for further Reflection and Conversation | 32 |
| Glossary | 34 |

Materials have been prepared by a working group established by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops (CCCC) and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC). We hope you enjoy this ecumenical study.

(August 2016)

Together in Christ

Session 1:

Commemorating the Reformation Participant's Guide



Together in Christ
Lutherans and Catholics Commemorating the Reformation

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,
this evening (morning/day ...)
you have brought this community together
to explore what it means to commemorate the Reformation.

Lead us into a journey
of remembrance and repentance,
reconciliation and renewal.

Open our minds to the wisdom of the Scriptures.
Open our hearts to the presence of Christ.
Open our hands to the signs of your peace.
Open our lives to the lives of our neighbours.

Gracious God,
bless our time together
in the name of the Father (+), the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Reading (Ephesians 4: 1–6)

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Silence

Praying with Scripture

Sisters and brothers, let us centre ourselves for prayer.
Let us call to mind the needs and concerns of our community.
Let us place these needs and concerns before God.

For the grace to live lives worthy of our calling ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For humility and gentleness, patience and forbearance ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For the wisdom to rejoice in "One God and Father of us all" ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For all who gather here; for those who lead ... and learn ... and love ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For ... [intentions may be added]

Gracious God,
you invite your people to journey together
and to strive for unity in the Spirit.
Bless our conversation this evening (morning / day...).
Keep us attentive to the perspectives of others
and mindful of our being called to witness to your grace and love.
In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen.**

Presentation

Joint Ecumenical Commemoration of the Reformation 2017

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhZ8KMf_pteFMQcEgEwMbBri4wAxYAvM

Discussion

Do you have Lutheran or Catholic friends, colleagues, family members? How much do you know about their church life? Does the fact of belonging to different Christian communities affect your interaction in any way (positively or negatively)? How do your experiences contrast with the stories you've heard from your parents and grandparents?

~ BREAK ~

Bible Study on Ephesians 4:1–6

Reading

I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Commentary

The epistle to the Ephesians opens with a hymn announcing God’s eternal plan to gather together or “sum up” in Christ everything that exists in heaven and on earth. This theme is developed in the letter’s first three chapters and followed in chapters 4–6 with a reflection on practical implications for Christian living.

Today’s text, at the beginning of the fourth chapter, exhorts its hearers to *lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called* and highlights some specific Christian virtues. The list begins with humility which, in fact, would not have been valued in contemporary Greek society and is often misunderstood or misinterpreted in ours. It has been used as a tool to silence protest and to demand submissiveness; yet, the example of Jesus provides a new understanding of humility calling us all to lives of service to others. (Philippians 2:2–11, John 13).

The text continues with a seven-fold formula of unity which confirms the author’s conviction that the fullness of time has been reached and the unity of all things under Christ is a fact. The letter’s focus is historical (ie. unity has already been given) rather than eschatological (ie. unity will be achieved in the future). The death and resurrection of Jesus has brought forgiveness of sin and opened-up God’s saving plan to the Gentiles. In the church, Jews and Gentiles are reconciled with one another because they are first reconciled with God. Together they form the new humanity, an example of what is to take place in the world.

The Church, the body of Christ, is the sphere into which the love of Christ flows. Christ, who first loves us, exercises his saving power in the world through the love of believers (3:17f, 5:25ff), the very love with which he accepted his death (5:2). At a time when Christians were minority groups in the great cities of the ancient world, Ephesians dares to call them the “community of God” (1:14, 2:19), the universal instrument for peace in the world—a community which takes up the fight against “the rulers of the world” and the powers which cause unrest (3:10, 6:12ff).

Discussion

In baptism, the Christian is united in Christ through the seal of the Spirit (1:13), becoming a new creation and called to live a new history. How have you experienced something brand new and fresh in your own life? In your own life or in the life of the world, what would a “new creation” look like? How seriously have we considered the implications of our one baptism? How does it change our search for Christian unity if we begin with the spirit of humility as Christ did?

Closing Prayer: Thanksgiving for Baptism

The community gathers around (or turns its attention toward) the bowl, pitcher and lighted candle. The leader offers these words:

Called to acknowledge one Lord and to profess one faith,
we were immersed in the waters of baptism, given new life,
and urged to lead lives worthy of our calling
as members of Christ’s body, the Church.

Let us remember and give thanks for our baptism
into our Lord’s death and resurrection.

Lord Jesus, you have given us a share in your passion, death and resurrection,
by which you redeemed the world.

We remember and give thanks.

Lord Jesus, you have set us free from our bondage to sin
and you never cease to protect us from the power of evil.

We remember and give thanks.

Lord Jesus, you have opened to us the path to reconciliation
and given us the promise and hope of eternal life.

We remember and give thanks.

Lord Jesus, you have filled us with your Spirit’s gifts, given for the common good
and for our more perfect unity with you and with one another.

We remember and give thanks.

Lord Jesus, you have enlightened our minds and our hearts
that we might walk always in your divine light.

We remember and give thanks.

Lord Jesus, you have made us a new creation
and have clothed us with dignity as children of God.

We remember and give thanks.

Lord Jesus, you have given us a share in your priestly, prophetic and royal mission
that the world might come to know and treasure your merciful love.

We remember and give thanks.

Lord Jesus, you have opened our ears to hear your word
and unsealed our lips to proclaim your praise.

We remember and give thanks.

Lord Jesus, you have placed in our hearts the desire
to be one at your Table with all who believe in you.

We remember and give thanks.

Let us profess the faith we share:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Water is poured into the basin as the leader says:

Let us pray for God's blessing on this water
to remind us of the life we share in Christ Jesus.

Almighty God,
in the sacred signs of our faith, you renew your life within us.
We give you thanks for this water and call upon your blessing.

As we use this water in remembrance of our baptism,
may we affirm our commitment to be one in your Son,
who lives with you and your Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

All are invited to dip their fingers in the water and to trace the sign of the cross over themselves. When all have had an opportunity to make the sign of the cross, the Lord's Prayer is led.

Let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

To conclude the evening's study, people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace using these or similar words:

**Peace be with you. or The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.**



Together in Christ

Five Ecumenical Imperatives

From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation, is a Report of the Joint Lutheran—Roman Catholic Commission on Unity.

Issued in May 2013, the text concludes with a reflection on five ecumenical imperatives.

Although they are addressed specifically to Lutherans and Catholics, these imperatives offer insight to every Christian who is committed to the ecumenical journey.

The five imperatives are:

- I. Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.
- II. Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith.
- III. Catholics and Lutherans should again commit themselves to seek visible unity, to elaborate together what this means in concrete steps, and to strive repeatedly toward this goal.
- IV. Lutherans and Catholics should jointly rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our time.
- V. Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world.

Together in Christ

Session 2:

Conflict breaks Communion Participant's Guide



Together in Christ
Lutherans and Catholics Commemorating the Reformation

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,
this evening (morning/day ...)
you have brought this community together
to learn of conflict that breaks communion.

Hold us to this journey
of remembrance and repentance,
reconciliation and renewal.
Open our minds to the wisdom of the Scriptures.
Open our hearts to the presence of Christ.
Open our hands to the signs of your peace.
Open our lives to the lives of our neighbours.

Gracious God,
bless our time together
in the name of the Father (+), the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Reading (Romans 5:1–11)

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Silence

Praying with Scripture

Sisters and brothers, let us centre ourselves for prayer.
Let us call to mind the needs and concerns of our community.
Let us place these needs and concerns before God.

For peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For such suffering as produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For hearts full of love, and for the gift of the Holy Spirit ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For our Lord Jesus Christ and his gift of reconciliation ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For all who gather here; for those who lead...and learn...and love...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For ... [intentions may be added]

Gracious God,

you invite your people to journey together
and to strive for unity in the Spirit.

Bless our conversation this evening (morning / day...).

Keep us attentive to the perspectives of others

and mindful of our being called to witness to your grace and love.

In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen.**

Presentation

Conflict and Division: The Sixteenth Century Reformation

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhZ8KMf_pteFMQcEgEwMbBri4wAxYAvM

Discussion

Conflict and opposition are rarely straightforward. The roots of conflict in the sixteenth century Reformation are in a desire on the part of both sides to defend the truth of the gospel. Reflect on your own experience of conflict and the breakdown of relationships. What are some of the factors that contribute to conflict? What stands out to you in this history of the Reformation concerning the factors contributing to conflict? How does this recounting of our shared history help you to see the sixteenth century Reformation in a new way?

~ BREAK ~

Bible Study on Romans 5: 6-11

Reading

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

Commentary

Writing to introduce himself to the Christian community in Rome, Paul seeks to explain how his mission as apostle to the Gentiles fits into God's plan of salvation. More specifically, he discusses why there is no need to impose the Law on the Gentiles and reflects on the mystery of Israel's ongoing separate existence. Chapters 9–11 represent the climax of the letter and the apostle's concept of justification fits within that framework.

Today's text reflects Jewish expectations that the Messiah would come at a time when people were either totally pious or utterly guilty. Convinced that the Messiah has come, and that the time is not completely good, Paul has no difficulty in detailing the sinfulness of both Gentile and Jew. He identifies the "right time" as a point when all are unworthy, incapable of doing anything to achieve righteousness before God. His reference to the possibility of dying for a really good person brings out even more clearly the altruism in Christ's action and highlights justification as a pure gift of God's grace.

The statement that "God proves his love for us" completely rules out any doctrine of the cross that would set God and Christ over against each other. God's love is poured out "through the Spirit" and manifested in the death of Christ. We are justified and share in the life of Christ; the Christian can even boast in God.

Increasingly sensitive to the Jewish background of Paul's thought, contemporary Scripture scholars interpret "being justified by [Christ's] blood" not as a matter of paying recompense or a ransom but as a consecration of life. For the Jewish people, blood is life: "the life of the flesh is in the blood"—thus, the kosher requirement to drain the blood from an animal before eating it (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:10–14). In the context of covenant-making, therefore, the common sprinkling with blood symbolizes a sharing of life and purpose. This is not so archaic as it may sound. Think for a moment of the Canadian Blood

Services motto: "It's in you to give." More than blood cells and plasma are at stake. Do we not mean that life itself is in us to give? that Christ gives his blood—his life—and binds our life and purpose to his own?

Discussion

Paul insists that there is no law we must keep in order to be made right with God. We are made right—justified—as a free gift. In what ways have you experienced love as a free gift? How does that affect the way you understand the love of God as a free gift? How do we respond to the love of God as gift? Why is the ongoing reception of the gift of reconciliation so hard?

Closing Prayer: Seeking Reconciliation in Christ

The community gathers around (or turns its attention toward) the light. The leader offers these words:

Through the death and resurrection of Christ,
we were reconciled to God and to one another.
We were made righteous in the sight of God.
Through no merit of our own,
God has embraced us in our sinfulness
and called us to be one in faith and love.

We come before the Lord this day (morning / night ...),
in a spirit of repentance,
mindful that our attitudes, our words and our deeds
give rise to brokenness in the body of Christ.

We beg of the Lord the gifts of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace.

Let us place ourselves in the presence of the Lord
and respond to each invocation with the words "Lord, have mercy."
For our failure to open our hearts to your living word. **Lord have mercy.**
For our failure to trust in your forgiveness and mercy. **Lord have mercy.**
For our failure to turn with confidence to you in our need. **Lord have mercy.**
For our failure to be patient in times of trial. **Lord have mercy.**
For our failure to honour one another's baptismal dignity. **Lord have mercy.**
For our failure to be responsive to your Spirit's prompting. **Lord have mercy.**
For our failure to work together for unity in your Church. **Lord have mercy.**
For our failure to listen to one another with love and respect. **Lord have mercy.**
For our failure to speak and act with heartfelt love. **Lord have mercy.**
For our failure to let go of past hurts. **Lord have mercy.**

For our failure to forgive our sisters and brothers. **Lord have mercy.**
For our failure to place all our hope in you. **Lord have mercy.**

Let us pray. *Silence.*

Lord our God,
you created us in love and redeemed us in mercy.
Pour out your mercy on us as we acknowledge our sins.
Direct our steps on the path of peace
that we may experience anew the life you have given us
in Jesus Christ, your Son, for he is Lord, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

As God's beloved children, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

To conclude the evening's study, people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace using these or similar words:

**Peace be with you. or The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.**

Together in Christ

Session 3:

From Conflict to Communion Participant's Guide



Together in Christ
Lutherans and Catholics Commemorating the Reformation

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,
this evening (morning/day ...)
you have brought this community together
to honour the path from conflict to communion.

Support us in this journey
of remembrance and repentance,
reconciliation and renewal.

Open our minds to the wisdom of the Scriptures.
Open our hearts to the presence of Christ.
Open our hands to the signs of your peace.
Open our lives to the lives of our neighbours.

Gracious God,
bless our time together
in the name of the Father (+), the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Reading (John 17: 20–23)

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Silence

Praying with Scripture

Sisters and brothers, let us centre ourselves for prayer.
Let us call to mind the needs and concerns of our community.
Let us place these needs and concerns before God.

For ourselves and all who will believe through our message ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For all who seek to be counted as one with the Father and the Son ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For all who believe that Jesus was sent by God ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For all who love others as God has loved them ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For all who gather here; for those who lead ... and learn ... and love ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For ... [intentions may be added]

Gracious God,
you invite your people to journey together
and to strive for unity in the Spirit.
Bless our conversation this evening (morning / day...).
Keep us attentive to the perspectives of others
and mindful of our being called to witness to your grace and love.
In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen.**

Presentation

The Ecumenical Turn of the Twentieth Century

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhZ8KMf_pteFMQcEgEwMbBri4wAxYAvM

Discussion

What can be learned from the example of the pioneers of Christian unity? Name some examples of reconciliation in your own communities. What are some of the ways that we can continue to create spaces for dialogue, mutual knowledge and trust, and deepening communion in our local communities?

~ **BREAK** ~

Bible Study on John 17:20–23

Reading

I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

Commentary

In John's gospel, Jesus closes his farewell discourse to his disciples at the last supper with a prayer of communion with his Father and benediction for his followers both immediate and in future generations. The prayer has been widely studied and interpreters have identified links with Hebrew as well as Greek traditions. Today's text is frequently used in ecumenical discussions with the presumption that it refers to Church unity.

What does John's gospel say about Christian unity? In the first place, the very fact that Jesus prays to his Father for unity indicates that the key to it lies in God's power. The oneness of believers, Jesus says, flows from his giving to them the glory that the Father has given to him. Unity is not simply a matter of human community or the harmonious interaction of Christians. Holding up the relationship of Father and Son as the model of unity, John seems to imply some type of vital, organic unity in the Church.

Unity is not an end in itself but is to remain characteristic of the church "so that the world may believe." For unity to be visible enough to challenge the world to believe in Jesus, it would seem to require more than a purely spiritual union. In the allegory of the vine and branches (15:5–6) which has the same last discourse context as this prayer, the notion of unity with Jesus implies community. In this community, the mutual love of Christians both participates in and gives visibility to the mutual love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus presented a challenge to the world because he identified himself as one with the Father; now Christians are part of this unity and so present the same challenge. Christian unity shows forth both the oneness and diversity of Persons in the Trinity that is its model and principle.

Discussion

John speaks of unity as something that is already given to us. What is the specific sign of hope or witness that Christian unity presents to the world? How have we failed to reflect the unity of which John speaks? In 1952, the World Council of Churches Commission on Faith and Order formulated the Lund Principle which calls on the churches to act together in all matters except where deep differences of conviction require them to act separately. How does the Lund Principle reflect the commitment to unity in this text?

Closing Prayer: Thanksgiving for Renewal

The community gathers around (or turns its attention toward) the light. The leader offers these words:

The prayer of Jesus that all may be one in him,
and our awareness of those things which have divided the members of the Church,
call us anew to walk on the path of renewal and reconciliation.

At this moment in our history,
we thank God for the paths which the Spirit has opened for us
so that we might journey together towards the unity for which Christ prayed.

Let us place ourselves in the presence of the Lord
and respond to each petition with the words "We give you thanks, O God."

That we can come together to listen to and to study your word in the Scriptures.
We give you thanks, O God.

That we can lift up our voices in common songs of praise.
We give you thanks, O God.

That we are united in prayer for all in our world who are oppressed and stand in need.
We give you thanks, O God.

That we are able to collaborate in the works of justice and mercy.
We give you thanks, O God.

That we can be one in our efforts to care for the earth which is our common home.
We give you thanks, O God.

That we can enjoy one another's friendship and build up the Christian community.
We give you thanks, O God.

That we can enter into dialogue and engage in mutual study of the truths of our faith.
We give you thanks, O God.

That we can bear common witness to the dignity of all human life.
We give you thanks, O God.

That we can work together to defend the rights of the most vulnerable in our society.
We give you thanks, O God.

That we can unite our efforts to promote peace and seek reconciliation in places of conflict.

We give you thanks, O God.

God of every time and place,
in our day you continue to pour out your Spirit upon your Church.
You set our hearts on fire
with a longing to be one in bearing witness to the depth of your love
revealed in Jesus, your Son.
Enlighten our minds and hearts with the gift of your Spirit.
Give us the courage to walk on the path of renewal
that leads to reconciliation, peace, and life in its fullness.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

To conclude the evening's study, people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace using these or similar words:

**Peace be with you. or The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.**

Together in Christ

Session 4: Growth in Communion Through Dialogue Participant's Guide



Together in Christ
Lutherans and Catholics Commemorating the Reformation

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,
this evening (morning/day ...)
you have brought this community together
to show us how we might grow together in dialogue.

Sustain us in our journey
of remembrance and repentance,
reconciliation and renewal.

Open our minds to the wisdom of the Scriptures.
Open our hearts to the presence of Christ.
Open our hands to the signs of your peace.
Open our lives to the lives of our neighbours.

Gracious God,
bless our time together
in the name of the Father (+), the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Reading (Ephesians 2:13–18)

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Silence

Praying with Scripture

Sisters and brothers, let us centre ourselves for prayer.
Let us call to mind the needs and concerns of our community.
Let us place these needs and concerns before God.

For all who have been brought near to God through Jesus Christ ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For such peace as destroys barriers and makes us one ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For a new humanity born of the cross ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For all who preach peace whether near or far ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For all who gather here; for those who lead ... and learn ... and love ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For ... [intentions may be added]

Gracious God,
you invite your people to journey together
and to strive for unity in the Spirit.
Bless our conversation this evening (morning / day...).
Keep us attentive to the perspectives of others
and mindful of our being called to witness to your grace and love.
In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen.**

Presentation

Overcoming Conflict, Uncovering Communion in Faith Through Dialogue

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhZ8Kmf_pteFMQcEgEwMbBri4wAxYAvM

Discussion

What are some of the conditions necessary for dialogue to take place in your daily life? In the life of the churches? How have you experienced the fruits of dialogue and growth in mutual understanding? What are some concrete examples? (Some examples may include: inter-church marriages; shared chaplaincies; joint theological formation; common prayer; common witness; etc.).

~ **BREAK** ~

Bible Study on Ephesians 2: 13–18

Reading

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Commentary

Noted Lutheran scholar, Krister Stendahl, claims that the key to interpreting the thought of the apostle Paul lies in his struggle to understand the relation between Jews and Gentiles in God's plan of salvation. This is the precise issue which is addressed in today's text from the letter to the Ephesians. It also sheds light on matters that we deal with in Canada today, such as the movements of immigrants and refugees, and the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

In the letter to the Ephesians, one historical fact stands in the foreground: the gulf between nations or, more specifically, between Jews and Gentiles. Excluded from the promise to Israel given through Abraham, the Gentiles were alienated from God (4:18). Without access to the one true God, they were separated by a stone barrier and prohibited from entering the inner court of the Temple. This was but a token of a whole system of separation that went into every phase of life. Since the Jews were God's holy, consecrated people, they were to keep themselves from all defiling influences, and the Law had been raised like a protective barrier between the nations. This made real social interaction impossible as rigorous dietary and legal obligations made contact a source of anxiety.

According to Paul, the Church as God's community is the sphere in which the breach between Jew and Gentile is healed and all nations are given the gift of peace. The Church is itself a sign of reconciliation: Both the Gentiles who are "far off" and the Jews who are "near" are reconciled in Christ through the cross; both groups "have access in one Spirit to the Father." The barrier of hostility is broken down and Christ creates in himself one new humanity in place of the two. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for all are one in Christ (Galatians 3:28).

This idea is explored in story form in Luke's parable of the prodigal son (15:11–32) as the merciful father reaches out to the "far off" younger and the "near by" older son, affirming the family bonds of both. Matthew's parable of the vineyard owner (20:1–16) offers another perspective on this notion. The Jews have laboured all day and clearly belong among those who work for the vineyard owner and receive

their pay. The Gentiles, even though they have done next to nothing, are welcomed and paid in full at the last minute anyway. Each of these parables highlights God's freedom and mercy—a mercy freely given—which challenge our usual way of looking at the world.

Discussion

Paul writes specifically about the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. In what way can you see Paul's thoughts extending to the relationships between our churches? In what ways do Paul's thoughts inform our own responses to immigrants and refugees, or to the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples? What are the barriers that Christ has broken down? In what ways do we try to keep those standing? How do we become witnesses through dialogue and through collaboration?

Closing Prayer: Christ is Our Peace

The community gathers around (or turns its attention toward) the light. The leader offers these words:

Through the blood of his Cross,
our Saviour, Jesus Christ,
has reconciled us to one another and to the Father.

Called to share in the mystery of his death and resurrection,
we bear witness to Christ's continuing presence
and reconciling action in our world.

In the midst of conflict and division,
we know that it is Christ
who turns our minds to thoughts of peace.

It is his Spirit which changes our hearts
so that enemies speak to one another,
those who were estranged join hands in friendship,
and nations seek the way of peace together.

It is his Spirit at work
when understanding puts an end to strife,
when hatred is quenched by mercy,
and vengeance gives way to forgiveness.

Let us call to mind Christ's reconciling power
at work in our lives and which has brought about peace.

Silence.

Let us pray that we may be effective instruments of Christ's peace.

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

**Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.**

**O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.**

**For it is in giving that we receive.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned.
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.**

[Prayer attributed to St. Francis.]

Let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

To conclude the evening's study, people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace using these or similar words:

**Peace be with you. or The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.**

Together in Christ

Session 5:

Commitment to Communion Participant's Guide



Together in Christ
Lutherans and Catholics Commemorating the Reformation

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,
this evening (morning/day ...)
you have brought this community together
to encourage us to commit ourselves to communion.

Lead us into a bold future
of remembrance and repentance,
reconciliation and renewal.

Open our minds to the wisdom of the Scriptures.
Open our hearts to the presence of Christ.
Open our hands to the signs of your peace.
Open our lives to the lives of our neighbours.

Gracious God,
bless our time together
in the name of the Father (+), the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Reading (1 Corinthians 12: 12–26)

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the

head to the feet, "I have no need of you." On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

Silence

Praying with Scripture

Sisters and brothers, let us centre ourselves for prayer.
Let us call to mind the needs and concerns of our community.
Let us place these needs and concerns before God.

For all who are baptized into the one body of Christ ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For all who know their need of their sisters and brothers in Christ ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For those who suffer with those who suffer, even as they rejoice with those who rejoice ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For all who seek to honour every member of the body of Christ ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For all who gather here, for those who lead ... and learn ... and love ...

Lord have mercy. **Christ have mercy.**

For ... [intentions may be added]

Gracious God,
you invite your people to journey together
and to strive for unity in the Spirit.
Bless our conversation this evening (morning / day...).
Keep us attentive to the perspectives of others
and mindful of our being called to witness to your grace and love.
In Jesus' name, we pray. **Amen.**

Presentation

Ecumenical Imperatives Today

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLhZ8KMf_pteFMQcEgEwMbBri4wAxYAvM

Discussion

What are some of the concrete consequences of committing to the five ecumenical imperatives? What are some of the possible steps that you might undertake both personally and as a community to sustain relationships of growing communion between Lutherans and Catholics, and with other Christians?

~ BREAK ~

Bible Study on 1 Corinthians 12: 12–26

Reading

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot were to say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear were to say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many members, yet one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and those members of the body that we think less honourable we clothe with greater honour, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honour to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. For if one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it.

Commentary

New Testament scholar James Dunn has written extensively on early Christian beliefs about the Holy Spirit. In his view, the shared experience of the Holy Spirit was fundamental to the unity of the early Christian communities. This is well illustrated in today’s reading from 1 Corinthians.

The Greek word, charisma (χάρισμα) means free gift, favour. Introduced into religious language by the apostle Paul, the term implies a free gift of grace. In everyday English usage, “gifted” people may be tempted to think of themselves as a cut above others. For Paul, however, this cannot be valid because “gifted” means receiving a gift (4:7). A charism is a gift having its source in the charis—grace or favour

—of God and destined for “the common good” (12:7). It is a gift bestowed by the Holy Spirit for building up the body of Christ. In the Christian community, charisms are many and all are related to various services and functions.

Among the Corinthian Christians, a preference for the gift of tongues had led to dissension, and the apostle is determined to stress unity. The gift of tongues, he affirms, is but one of a great variety of gifts, all of which come from one and the same Spirit. Not only is there a variety of gifts but, he insists, there is a variety of service and the gifts are essentially gifts of service. Thus, Chapter 13—the well-known chapter on love—which may read like a digression between chapters 12 and 14, becomes central to the apostle’s argument. An all-embracing love which shows itself in action is the measure of all other gifts. Only those charisms which are an expression of love, of concrete being and doing for others, are to be welcomed and valued. In response to the Corinthians’ inquiry about which spiritual gift is best, Paul’s answer is clear: in the light of love, all gifts are important, for all gifts contribute to the life of the community.

While the body imagery in this text clearly affirms the unity of gifts in the Christian community, it also emphasizes their diversity. Reflecting on the evolutionary process, Jesuit paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin notes that “union differentiates”—the more closely an entity or group is united, the more differentiated its parts become. Teilhard turns to human relationships to illustrate his point: when two people are most fully in love they are the most fully themselves. In the church, then, unity does not imply uniformity but instead supports diversity, a diversity that is held together by love.

Discussion

Paul has not only written about how the unity of the body of Christ supports diversity, but also about how diversity strengthens the body of Christ. How can we act more like the body of Christ? What can we do to strengthen the body? How do we value one another’s gifts in the church? In what ways have you come to learn from and receive the gifts of another tradition?

Closing Prayer: Commitments: The Five Imperatives [from *Common Prayer*, pp. 17–19, www.lutheranworld.org/resources]

The community gathers around (or turns its attention toward) the light. The leader offers these words:

Sisters and brothers, let us centre ourselves for prayer. *Silence.*

Our ecumenical journey continues. In our concluding devotion, we commit ourselves to grow in communion. The five imperatives found in *Commemorating the Reformation* will guide us.

Another member of the community continues and so for the five commitments:

Our first commitment: Catholics and Lutherans should always begin from the perspective of unity and not from the point of view of division in order to strengthen what is held in common even though the differences are more easily seen and experienced.

A candle is lighted.

Our second commitment: Lutherans and Catholics must let themselves continuously be transformed by the encounter with the other and by the mutual witness of faith.

A candle is lighted.

Our third commitment: Catholics and Lutherans should again commit themselves to seek visible unity, to elaborate together what this means in concrete steps, and to strive repeatedly toward this goal.

A candle is lighted.

Our fourth commitment: Lutherans and Catholics should jointly rediscover the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ for our time.

A candle is lighted.

Our fifth commitment: Catholics and Lutherans should witness together to the mercy of God in proclamation and service to the world.

The last candle is lighted.

Song

Intercessory Prayer

“Ecumenical engagement for the unity of the Church does not serve only the Church but also the world so that the world may believe.” Let us pray for the world, the Church and all those in need with the response “Hear our prayer.”

God of peace, bend that which is inflexible. Remove the barriers that divide. Loosen attachments that thwart reconciliation. Bring peace in this world, especially in [name countries, places...]. Restore wholeness among us and show us your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God of mercy, throughout history your goodness prevails. Open the hearts of all people to find you and your mercy that endures forever. **Hear our prayer.**

God of justice, healer and redeemer, heal those who suffer from illness, poverty or exclusion. Hasten justice for those suffering under the power of evil. Give new life to all and show us your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God, rock and fortress, protect refugees, those without homes or security, and all the abandoned children. Help us always to defend human dignity. Show us your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Creator God, all creation groans in expectation. Convert us from exploitation. Teach us to live in harmony with your creation. Show us your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God of mercy, strengthen and protect those who are persecuted for faith in you and those of other faiths who suffer persecution. Give us the courage to profess our faith. Your mercy endures forever. **Hear our prayer.**

God of life, heal painful memories, transform complacency, indifference and ignorance; pour out a spirit of reconciliation. Turn us to you and one another. Show us your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God of love, your son Jesus reveals the mystery of love among us. Strengthen the unity that you alone sustain in our diversity. Your mercy endures forever. **Hear our prayer.**

God our sustenance, through your grace assist us in journeying towards the unity we seek, leading us to that day when we can be nourished together at your eucharistic table. Nurture within and among us a communion rooted in your love. Your mercy endures forever. **Hear our prayer.**

In confidence that you, O God, hear our prayers for the needs of this world and for the unity of all Christians in their witness, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial**

**and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

To conclude the evening's study, people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace using these or similar words:

**Peace be with you. or The peace of Christ be with you.
And also with you.**



Together in Christ Resources for Further Reflection and Conversation

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) was signed by representatives of the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation on October 31, 1999. The text offers a differentiated consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and is ultimately able to affirm that the subscribing churches have reached “a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification” and “that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations” (*JDDJ*, paragraph 5, see also paragraphs 40 & 41).

From Conflict to Communion: Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017 was published in May 2013. The document includes chapters on commemorating the Reformation, new perspectives on Martin Luther and the Reformation, a historical sketch of the Lutheran Reformation and the Catholic response, basic themes of Martin Luther’s theology, a call to common commemoration and a reflection on five ecumenical imperatives.

Both the above texts are available on the websites of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity [www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/chrstuni/index.htm] and The Lutheran World Federation [www.lutheranworld.org].

A Study Guide From Conflict to Communion may be downloaded from the website of the Strasbourg Institute [www.strasbourg-institute.org/en/study-guide-for-from-conflict-to-communion/]. Drafted and published by the Planning Committee of the Roman Catholic Dioceses of Pittsburgh and Greensburg and the Pittsburgh Byzantine Archdiocese and the Southwest Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 2015, it walks readers through sections of *From Conflict to Communion* guided by prayer and open-ended questions.

Declaration on the Way: Church, Ministry and Eucharist was prepared by a task force of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Published on October 30, 2015, it is a declaration of the consensus achieved by Lutherans and Catholics on the topics of church, ministry and Eucharist as the result of ecumenical dialogue between the two communions since 1965. This text is available on the websites of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America [www.elca.org/Declaration-on-the-Way] and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops [www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/ecumenical-and-interreligious/ecumenical/lutheran/index.cfm].

A number of Common Statements from the international Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity are also available on the websites of the Strasbourg Institute [www.strasbourg-institute.org/en/] and the Centro pro Unione [www.prounione.urbe.it/new/eng/index.html]. These include:

- *The Gospel and the Church* (Malta Report—1972)
- *The Eucharist* (1978)
- *All Under One Christ* (1980)
- *Ways to Community* (1980)
- *The Ministry in the Church* (1981)
- *Martin Luther—Witness to the Gospel* (1983)
- *Facing Unity—Models, Forms and Phases of Catholic-Lutheran Church Fellowship* (1984)
- *Church and Justification* (1993)
- *The Apostolicity of the Church* (2006)



Together in Christ

Glossary

Apostolicity: The mark by which the Church of today is recognized as continuous with the Church founded by the Apostles. This is what is meant when Christians confess in the creed that the church is “apostolic.” Like the apostles, contemporary Christians are sent forth into each new context to proclaim and to hand down the same message, the gospel of Christ.

Apostolic Succession: The teaching in Christianity that bishops succeed one another in a continuity of ministry and teaching from the apostles of Jesus Christ. For this reason, bishops are called “successors of the apostles.” In the second century, Irenaeus, the Bishop of Lyon, argued against the gnostics, who considered the knowledge of faith as a secret known only to a small group of elite. He countered that the teaching of Christ is handed down publicly through the ministry of those who succeed in the apostle’s ministry. An important aspect of the bishop’s ministry is to watch over the faithful handing on of Christ’s teaching.

Augsburg Confession: The confession of faith or summary of teaching formulated by the Lutheran reformers in 1530 to settle the religious conflict of the Reformation. Its first part (articles 1–21) presents Lutheran teaching held to be in agreement with the doctrine of the catholic church; its second part deals with changes that the reformers initiated to correct certain practices understood as “misuses”(articles 22–28), giving reasons for changing these practices.

Council of Trent (1545–1563): The nineteenth ecumenical council convened at Trent in response to the doctrinal and disciplinary concerns raised by Protestant Reformers. The three orders of business for the council included the healing of divisions, reforming the church, and establishing peace in Western Christendom in view of a united resistance against the threat of invasion by the Ottomans.

Diet: An assembly or meeting called by the Holy Roman Emperor for theological discourse and debate. These meetings, held between the 12th and 19th centuries, were attended by the nobility and higher clergy.

Ecumenical Council: A worldwide meeting of bishops and other leaders to deliberate on questions of doctrine, administration, discipline. Such councils are considered “ecumenical” because their participants represent Christians from throughout the whole inhabited earth. Most Christian churches accept the first seven great councils as “ecumenical,” but dispute the ecumenical character of those assemblies held since the great schism between Eastern and Western churches in 1054. While the Catholic Church continues to refer to meetings of the worldwide Catholic episcopate as “ecumenical councils” some scholars have suggested it would be more appropriate to call them “great synods” or “councils” of the Western Church, since their teachings have not been received by all.

Faith and Order Commission: A theological commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC) that focuses on overcoming the disputes relating to the doctrine and organization of the churches in view of their full, visible unity. The membership of the commission transcends the organizational structure of the WCC by including representatives from non-member churches. Since 1968, Roman Catholic theologians have participated fully in the work of the commission.

Indulgences: A remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, the guilt of which has already been forgiven. This practice was introduced in the Middle Ages as a way for the ministers of the church to lighten the penitential practice of sacramental discipline. In 1567 Pope Pius V outlawed the practice of exchanging money for indulgences, a practice harshly criticized by the Reformers.

International Missionary Council: The International Missionary Council emerged from the world missionary conference held at Edinburgh in 1910 and was officially established in 1921. In 1961 the International Missionary Council was integrated into the structures of the World Council of Churches. This stream of the ecumenical movement testifies to the necessary link between Christian unity and the mission of the church.

Life and Work: Founded in 1925 by the Lutheran Bishop Nathan Soderblom in Stockholm, Sweden, Life and Work was one of the founding bodies that prepared the way for the creation of the World Council of Churches. Emphasizing the importance of common Christian witness in service to the world, it sought to bring churches together for social ministries, international affairs, and relief services.

Lund Principle: Developed by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches at its meeting in Lund, Sweden, in 1952, to guide ecumenical relations between Christian churches, the Lund Principle calls upon the churches to act together in all matters except those in which deep differences of conviction compel them to act separately.

Office of Keys: This expression refers to the sacrament of reconciliation, in particular, to the authority to retain and to forgive sins. The warrant for this practice is rooted in Jesus' promise to Peter and the disciples, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:19; cf. 18:18).

Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (PCPCU): Initially established as a Secretariat within the organization of the Roman Curia on June 5, 1960 by Pope John XXIII to support Catholic engagement in the contemporary ecumenical movement. The staff of the Secretariat made a substantial contribution to the Second Vatican Council, co-ordinating the participation of ecumenical observers and drafting the texts of the *Decree on Ecumenism*, the *Declaration on Religious Liberty*, and the *Decree on Non-Christian Religions*. Designated as a "Pontifical Council" in 1988, it continues to promote an ecumenical spirit within the Catholic Church, supporting dialogue and collaboration with the other churches and World Communions.

Second Vatican Council: The twenty-first ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, Vatican II was the second such assembly to be held at St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City. Convoled by Pope John XXIII, some 2,500 bishops gathered together with ecumenical observers, and lay and religious auditors in four sessions from 1962 to 1965 to address the updating and renewal of the Catholic Church, including relations with other Christians, with non-Christian religions, and with the modern world.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF): A global communion of 145 churches in the Lutheran tradition, representing over 72 million Christians in 98 countries. The LWF was founded on July 1, 1947 in Lund, Sweden, as the successor to the Lutheran World Convention (an exclusively North Atlantic organization). Liberated by God's grace, LWF is a communion of churches in Christ living and working together for a just, peaceful, and reconciled world.

Tradition: Tradition is used variously to refer to the content of faith or the message revealed by Jesus Christ, and to refer to the act of handing on his teaching. In the history of Protestant-Catholic relations, Reformers criticized Catholic leaders for teaching precepts or requiring the observance of certain practices that were not found in the Scriptures. Regarding many such practices as merely human traditions, they argued for the priority of sacred Scripture to guide the life of the church. Biblical scholars today are widely agreed that Scripture and tradition are interdependent realities. For example, the texts of the New Testament reflect the influence of a variety of traditions and perspectives from the diverse communities of the early Christian Church. (Hence, there are four Gospels rather than a single, harmonized account.) In a real sense, the gospel was carried by a living tradition before it was recorded in written texts. Similarly, the doctrinal tradition of the church might be understood as one of the ways in which the Christian community has received and interpreted the Word of God throughout history. Tradition remains a dynamic, living reality. The teaching of the Second Vatican Council acknowledges the priority of the biblical witness for church teaching when it affirms that the magisterium, that is to say, the official exercise of the teaching office by the bishops, is not above, but is at the service of the Word (*Constitution on Divine Revelation, Dei Verbum, §10*).

World Council of Churches (WCC): An ecumenical organization founded in 1948 as a worldwide fellowship of churches seeking unity, common witness and Christian service. The WCC is not a church, but understands itself to be an instrument through which the churches can bear witness together in their common allegiance to Jesus Christ, search for that unity which Christ wills for his one and only church, and co-operate in matters which require common statements and actions. The WCC works for the unity and renewal of the Christian denominations and offers them a forum in which they may work together in the spirit of tolerance and mutual understanding.

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