



Sharing in Community of Christ: Exploring Identity, Mission, Message and Beliefs

Lesson 4 - Our Community

This lesson is based on 'Sharing in Community of Christ' pages 34, 29 and 31.

Guide Times

- Introductions – 15 minutes
- Worth of All Persons – 40 minutes
- All Are Called – 15 minutes
- Unity in Diversity - 10 minutes

Introduction (5 minutes)

Script

Today we are going to consider some of the Enduring Principles which form part of the core principles and foundational concepts on which the church is built.

Enduring Principles can be described as the essence of and the heart and soul of the church. They form the identity, mission and message of Community of Christ. These underlying truths and affirmations shape the personality of Community of Christ as expressed in our congregations and affiliate organisations.

The activities and discussion for our study today are taken from Enduring Principles of Community of Christ and can be found in the booklet "Sharing In community of Christ Exploring Identity, Mission, Message and Belief".

They include:

- Worth of All Persons (page 29)
- All are Called (pages 29,30)
- Unity in Diversity (page 31)
- Blessings of Community (pages 31,32)
- Humanity (Basic Beliefs page 34)

Welcome to each one of you. Your presence and contributions are greatly valued as we seek to better understand, together, what it means to be part of Community of Christ.

Activity 1 - Introductions (10minutes)

Sit in a circle. (Have this set up prior to starting to save time. If there is a large group, more than 10, you may need to have more than one circle.)

Ask each participant to turn to the person on their right, smile and say,

“Hello, my name is ----- and I like -----,”then do the same to the person

on their left so that everyone has spoken to the person on either side of them.

Now go round the circle asking each person to introduce the person on either side of them saying, “This is ----- and they like ----- and this is ----- and they like -----.”

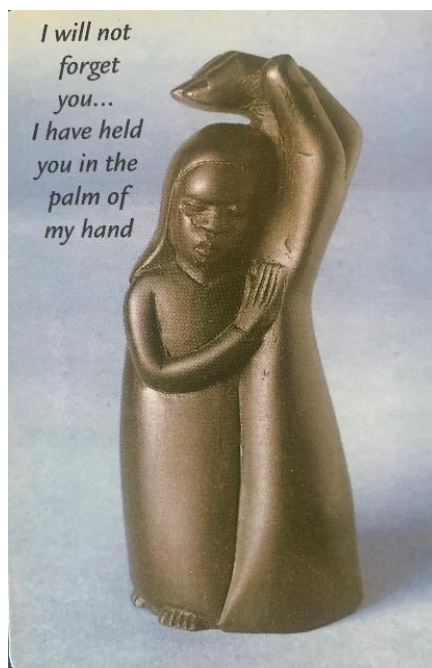
Ask one or two people to share what it felt like to say and hear their name being spoken.

Script - Our name is important. It forms part of our identity. It is who we are, and it matters.

Activity 2 (10 minutes)

Script - God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth (page 29).

Take 30 seconds to look at and reflect on this image based on Isaiah 49 v15,16.



Ask participants to share their thoughts with the group.

What does it say to them personally?

How does it feel to be held in a loving embrace?

What does it tell us about God's love?

Allow a few minutes for one or two to share about a time when they felt held in God's loving embrace.

Activity 3 - 20 minutes (in preparation for this activity collect pictures of a variety of well-known people and some unknown ones too, for example: royalty, celebrity, sports person, musician, politician, nurse, firefighter, homeless person, refugee, criminal, a child, etc.)

Ask the group to discuss and decide on how to order them **vertically** according to how society may view them in importance. (most important at the top, least at the bottom).

What does this tell us about our society and how we view people?

Now ask them to rearrange the pictures based on the church's enduring principle 'The Worth of All Persons'.

How does it look now? (The pictures should be arranged horizontally and in any order)

Ask the group to name unjust systems that diminish human worth, (some may be global, some may be systems witnessed in their own communities)

How can we challenge these systems individually and as a body?

Has anyone ever challenged an unjust system? What was it and what did they do or say?

Stand and sing the first verse of hymn 636 in Community of Christ Sings "I have called you by your name, you are mine."

All Are Called

Script

God graciously gives people gifts and opportunities to do good and share in God's purposes.

Jesus Christ graciously invites people to follow him by becoming disciples who share His life and ministry. (pages 29, 30)

The scriptures tell us that Jesus went about doing good, for God was with Him (Acts 10).

In Ephesians 4 v,32 we are encouraged to 'Be kind'

Activity 4 (15 minutes) For this you will need copies of the grids 'Have you Ever?' and 'My Gifts' along with a short piece of quiet music to play.

Ask the group to complete the grids by ticking the boxes that apply to them.

Script

We share in Jesus' life and ministry by doing good in the places we are, with the opportunities we are given and the gifts we have been blessed with.

Whilst the music is playing, take time to reflect on:

- **The opportunities you have had to do good.**
- **The times someone has done good to you (give thanks).**
- **The gifts with which you have been blessed and can use for God's purposes.**

Say or read the Mission Prayer.

Unity in Diversity (10 minutes)

Script

The church embraces diversity and unity through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We seek agreement or common consent in important matters. If we cannot achieve agreement we commit to ongoing dialogue and lovingly uphold our common faith in Jesus Christ and the mission of the church. (page 31)

Effective relationships are key to understanding each other and working together for the good of the congregation and wider church body.

Research has shown that there are three fundamental skills to making effective relationships. These are: **respect, empathy and genuineness**.

Good relationships enable people to work together more productively and harmoniously and they make an important contribution towards the development of a positive organisational ethos.

Let us consider these three important skills in turn.

Respect: These are behaviours which convey to others that they are worthwhile, unique and valuable.

Empathy: these are behaviours which show that you understand the other person's world as they are experiencing it – you see it from their perspective, background, experiences, expectations and values.

Genuineness: These behaviours convey to others that you are real, sincere and trustworthy – being open about yourself in an appropriate manner.

We can add to these qualities **an accepting attitude of mind** which enables us to avoid prejudging people and situations so that we do not make assumptions about them and their needs.

Personal reflection Ask the participants to consider the following question.

As individuals and as congregations do we show each other a good measure of **respect, empathy, genuineness and acceptance** or do we have more work to do in these areas?

Blessings of Community (pages 31, 32) (10 minutes)

Script

A teacher asked his students, "How can we determine the hour of dawn, when the night ends and day begins?"

Ask the group for suggestions of what the answer might be.

The teacher explained to his students, "It is when you can look into the face of another human being and you have enough light in you to recognise your brother or your sister. Until then it is night and darkness is still with us. Let us pray for the light."

Henri Nouwen (Finding My Way Home).

Our Enduring Principles state:

- True community includes compassion for and solidarity with the poor, marginalised and oppressed.
- True community upholds the worth of persons.
- Sacred community provides nurture and growth opportunities for all people.
- We are called to create communities of Christ's peace in our families and congregations and across villages, tribes, nations and throughout creation.
- Let us walk in the light of God's love and seek the peace of Christ in our hearts.

Conclusion - Humanity (taken from Basic Beliefs page 34) (2 minutes)

Script

Every human being is created in the image of God in Jesus Christ. God took on the limits of human flesh and culture and is known through them.

We therefore affirm, without exception, the worth of every human being.

We also affirm that God has blessed humankind with agency: the ability to choose whom or what we will serve within the circumstances of our lives.

All are called to serve. YOU are called to serve.

Whom or what do you choose?

Go in peace, knowing that you are held in God's everlasting love.

Please note resources for this class are on the following pages.

*I will not
forget
you...
I have held
you in the
palm of
my hand*



HAVE YOU EVER?	Tick
Smiled at or offered help to a stranger	
Performed a random act of kindness	
Cooked a meal or made a cake for a neighbour	
Prayed for someone	
Helped a homeless person	
Shopped for someone who is housebound	
Visited someone who is sad, lonely or grieving	
Mowed a neighbour's lawn	
Made someone a drink at work	
Given someone a lift to where they needed to go	
Sent a card to show someone you care	

Add something you have done recently.

MY GIFTS	Tick
Good listening skills	
Praying for others	
Welcoming people warmly with a smile	
Encouraging others	
Faithfulness	
Reliability	
Gentleness	
Kindness	
Patience	
Optimism	
Offering hospitality	

Add your own thoughts and ideas.