UNITING PRAYER AND FASTING

LIFE OVERFLOWING

"Alive with Christ" Ephesians 2:5



Anne Hibbard

A Prayer book by Uniting Prayer and Fasting (ministry of Liverpool Uniting Church) to be used in the 40 days before and during the Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia 2012, 12th June - 21st July.

Daily reflections on Ephesians and Basis of Union by Rev Anne Hibbard (Minister of the Word, Liverpool Uniting Church) Bible Studies - Bella and Anne Hibbard.

Cover photo: "The Fruitful Olive graft" by Rev Anne Hibbard.

Songs, forward and reflection on ministry by Rev Dr. Andrew Dutney (President Elect of Uniting Church in Australia)

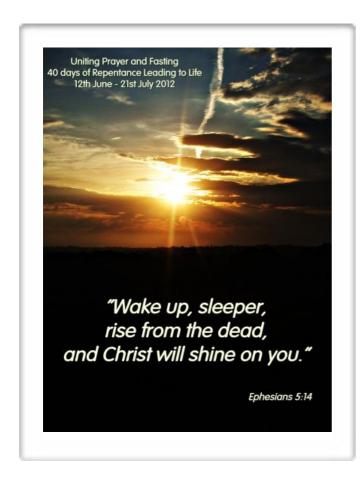
Daily prayers by Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin (General Secretary Uniting Church in Australia)

Editing: Bella Hibbard

The cup: Rev Roger Hibbard

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Dedicated to the Uniting Church in Australia with love



"Wake up sleeper,
Rise from the dead,
Let Christ shine on you
(Ephesians 5:14)."

FOREWORD by Rev Dr. Andrew Dutney

Dear friends

New Testament scholar James Dunn once said that mission is "finding out where the Holy Spirit is at work and joining in". That kind of "finding out...and joining in" is impossible without constant prayer; through which we discern what God is up to and receive the strength and creativity to find our place within it. Wherever I get to know people and communities of faith genuinely engaged in mission I soon discover that at the heart of what they are doing is a deep commitment to prayer.

I was introduced to Uniting Prayer and Fasting several years ago through Facebook, being one of the thousands who are encouraged and nourished by the prayers and scripture passages included in its regular updates. In recent months I've learned more about this significant ministry of Liverpool Uniting Church. One priority of Uniting Prayer and Fasting is to maintain constant prayer support for the Assembly of the Uniting Church – its officers, agencies and international partner churches. In preparation for the Thirteenth Assembly Uniting Prayer and Fasting is conducting a forty day devotional process of "repentance leading to life". This process will begin in both the Liverpool congregation and in the virtual community of participants around the country who join in from where they are. During the Assembly itself those who are able will travel to Adelaide and continue to pray while the Assembly is in session, including a daily celebration of Holy Communion in one of the nearby city churches.

I commend this "40 Days of Life Overflowing" to you and invite you to join me in attending to the heart of the church's business – in prayer.

Yours in Christ

Andrew

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thank you to Raymond Quinn for permission to use some of his photos.

Thank you to Liverpool Uniting Church for their ongoing prayers, support, and patience during the writing of this book.

Finally and most importantly I give thanks to God the Father, for this book has been written only by His grace, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit to His eternal glory.

"Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to His power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all generation, forever and ever. Amen (Eph:3:20-21)."

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LIFE OVERFLOWING - INTRODUCTION

Intro: Ever since I was little, I was fascinated with life. I had some unusual pets growing up that helped me understand what life was made up of. I bred mice to study hereditary characteristics. I had an ant farm with a Queen ant that laid eggs and I had some pets that grew and multiplied that could only be seen under a microscope. I loved all my pets, mammals, insects and minuscule critters alike. In caring for and watching these life forms I began to understand a little about the wonder of life.

So what is life?

Biologists rarely answer this question probably because it is so complex and amazing, and still beyond humanity to create life out of something that has no life (although we are getting close to make an artificial bacterial like cell). However, biologists answer this question in another way. They have identified 7 different characteristics that are found in all living organisms from a simple amoeba to a complex animal like my cat Maddie. Although there are some minor differences between different biologists most

commonly these **characteristics of life** are agreed to be...

1. All Living Things are made up of cell (s).

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zafJKbMPA8

- a) These cells are incredibly complex, ordered and wonderful in composition, function and design.
- b) All living cells have what is called DNA that determines the traits or characteristics of the organism. Except for a few organisms like Bacteria, the DNA is found in the nucleus in the centre of the cell.



A living cell. In the centre is the nucleus the holds the DNA.

- c) There are single cell organisms or multi cell organisms. Something incredible happens for the multi cell organisms. The cells divide and grow and join together with like cells in the organism to form tissue, and then organs that have a specific function for the good of the body. The cells of a single celled organism are very multifunctional whilst the cells of a multi cell organism tend to differentiate based on function for the common good. Not all cells can carry out every task.
- 2. *Living organisms can make energy and get rid of waste.* This is called metabolism (eating, for example). They also need respiration. Plants use light to get energy. This is called photosynthesis.
- 3. Living Organisms can grow, develop and heal
- 4. Living organisms can reproduce
- 5. Living organisms can respond to stimuli.
- 6. *Living organisms can regulate themselves* to keep constant despite changes in the environment. This is called homeostasis.
- 7. *Living organisms can over generations adapt* with genetic changes for long term longevity for the species.

The church is more than an organization. It is a living organism

A living church

In scripture, Paul describes the church as more than an organization. He says it is the body of Christ, or in other words, a living organism. The church is alive, with Christ Jesus himself as the head. If the church is a living organism, does it line up with the characteristics of living things that we've just talked about? Could these characteristics of life help us understand about the life of the Christian church?

Invitation to go on a journey

I invite you to go on a 40 day journey to explore these questions and to discover more about our life in Christ individually and together. We will be reflecting on these questions by using daily scripture readings, prayers and reflections from the book of Ephesians. There will also be daily readings from the Basis of Union of the Uniting Church in Australia. There are 20 days of reflections and readings. When you finish the 20 days, repeat these again to complete the 40 days. The second cycle will take us all deeper in prayer and reflection.

This book is not an academic book on the church, which theologians call ecclesiology. Nor is it a biology textbook. Rather it is a devotional prayer book written for a particular context. I am an ordained minister of the Uniting Church in Australia. At the time of writing this book, our church has been in substantial decline across the country for a few years now. We appear to be heading in the opposite direction to life. This for me is a matter needing much prayer not just for a couple of individuals but for the whole of the church to seek the Lord on bended knees. My prayer is that this book will somehow by God's grace help us to pray.

Life Overflowing

This year, in 2012, the Uniting Church has its triennial National Assembly. The theme of this Assembly, "Life Overflowing" was chosen by the incoming President, Rev Dr. Andrew Dutney. http://introducingtheuca.typepad.com/ introducing the uniting c/2010/11/life-overflowing.html

The question that is important, not only for our church denomination but for the whole of Christ's body, is: *How can we as individuals and as the church, have this* "*life overflowing* that we can then share with the world?



"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (NRSV

(Photo by Raymond Quinn)

This prayer book was written to be used in the 40 days leading up to and during this Assembly in a season of prayer and fasting for repentance and revival in Jesus' name. It comes out of a movement in Liverpool Uniting Church called Uniting Prayer and Fasting. However I would like to think that the book could be helpful in the years to come for any part of Christ's body irrespective of denomination, who want to seek and understand more about the gift of life that God has given by grace to the church. This is my prayer as you use this book during the 40 days, either alone or in a small group.



Life to the brim
Life overflowing
Life pouring out in compassion and grace
Spirit of God
Well up within us
Bring us to life in this time and this place

Life to the brim
Life overflowing
Life flooding in from below and above
Spirit of God
Pour out upon us
Bring us to faith and to hope and to love

Come Holy Spirit
Lord and Giver of Life
Make us Your People
Make us the Body of Christ

Life to the brim
Life overflowing
Foretaste and sign of the healing to come
Spirit of God
Strengthen and Guide us
Take us and use us till your kingdom's come.

Rev Dr. Andrew Dutney 2011

http://www.unitingprayerandfasting.com/index.php?p=1_16



"Life to the Brim" by Rev Dr. Andrew Dutney

DAY 1 - BEGINNINGS 12th June, 2nd July

"Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" Eph 1:2



DAY 1: *Bible Reading:* Ephesians 1:1-2 (Background reading: Acts 18; 19, 20:13-36; Revelation 2:1-7)

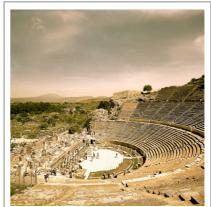
What came first, the chicken or the egg? Where did life begin and how? How did individual species come into being? Did they evolve or where they intelligently designed?

All these questions are about beginnings, the beginning of life as we know it. I'm not going to try to answer

these questions in these next 40 days (20 days repeated once). Instead together we are going to attempt to understand life in a different way. We're going to read Ephesians and see what it has to teach us about our theme "life overflowing." At the same time we're going to look at life in nature and see if it can help us understand this amazing book of Ephesians. So let's start at the beginning.

As background reading, you might like to read Acts 18-20 to understand the church in Ephesus, when it began, and how it grew. You also may like to read Revelation 2:1-7 to learn where the church in Ephesus ended up and about Christ's warnings given to John concerning her.

In the first three verses of Ephesians there is a lot that will help us gain some context. First of all we learn that Ephesians was written by Paul, an



Ephesus in Turkey. In the beginning of Ephesians we find that the book of Ephesians was written by Paul to the Christians who lived in this city.

apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God (1:1a). At the end of Ephesians we learn that Paul describes himself as an ambassador in chains (6:20), so we know that Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter. Then we find out who he's writing to. It is to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus (1:1b). When he says saints he doesn't mean people especially set aside in the Catholic Church that have done amazing things. Rather he means all those who have been made "holy" by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, through his blood forgiving their sins, those who are faithful in Christ Jesus (Eph 1:4, 7). In other words, it's to all the Christians in Ephesus. Ephesus was in what we know now as Turkey.

Now we know who wrote the letter and who to, Paul gives a greeting. This greeting is more than just a greeting. For it describes where life overflowing comes from and what it brings. Our life overflowing comes from grace and results in peace. Both are given as a blessing to the Ephesian Christians from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is our first day, or our 21st if you're beginning again for the 40 days. I pray that this journey of discovery will be a blessing to you and you will learn much about "life overflowing."



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union.

Read below the first few sentences from the Basis of Union that describe the beginning of the Uniting Church in Australia and compare to Ephesians 1:1-3. There are similarities with the beginning of Ephesians. In both, Jesus Christ and God the Father are mentioned. In both, the Lord's will is mentioned. In both, we are drawn to "grace" and in both we begin with praise. The Mission of God through Christ in the church occurs in both (see v. 10 in Ephesians)

"1. THE WAY INTO UNION The Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia, in fellowship with the whole Church Catholic, and seeking to bear witness to that unity which is both Christ's gift and will for the Church, hereby enter into union under the name of the Uniting Church in Australia. They pray that this act may be to the glory of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They give praise for God's gifts of grace to each of them in years past; they acknowledge that none of them has responded to God's love with a full obedience; they look for a continuing renewal in which God will use their common worship, witness and service to set forth the word of salvation for all people (paragraph 1 Basis of Union)"

??? Questions

- **?** What came first, the chick or the egg? Why do people find it important to find out the beginning of how things came to be? Have you ever started to watch a movie part way through and found that you never really understood it? If so, what movie? Why are beginnings so important?
- **?** Watch the video on YouTube of the Early Church in Ephesus. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TW5-J0hSrm0&feature=related What have you leant than can help you understanding this book?
- **?** What can we learn in the first 3 verses of Ephesians that can give us a glimpse of what is to come?
- **?** What strikes you at the beginning of the Basis of Union? There is much humility in the beginning, focussing on what the Lord is doing rather than our own incomplete efforts. This is called grace. Why is this important at the beginning of starting something new? As a church do we still live in place of humility and grace that the church began with?

Prayer: Heavenly Father¹, thank you for beginnings. Thank you for the book of Ephesians. Thank you for the beginning of the Uniting Church in Australia. Thank you for the humility and reliance upon your grace for the establishment of the Church. Help us to recapture what it means to live by grace. May every person reading this book, either through the 40 days or later, receive much blessing from reading your word. By your lavish gift of grace through the power of the Holy Spirit may all who are seeking life overflowing find what they are looking for. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin:

National Council of Churches (June 7): for the ecumenical life of the churches in Australia as the traditional structures are under stress that God will enable new ways for the institutional church to express its commitment to the unity that Christ prays for. Bless local ecumenical undertakings in shared mission. Pray for churches here that have come from overseas and are concerned about the treatment of Christians in their homeland, especially the Copts and the Assyrian Church of the East.

¹ I know for some the use of the term "Father" for God is a difficult one for many reasons including child abuse at the hand of an earthly father. I also found it hard to call God "Father" for many years. However on the road to my healing in Christ I discovered the incredible joy that I have a Heavenly Father and that He is good. I pray for those that still find it difficult. I can do no other than call God "Father" now, because Christ himself taught me to pray "Our Father."

DAY 2 - CHRIST IS OUR SPIRITUAL DNA (13th June, 3rd July)

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." Ephesians 1:3



Day 2 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 1:3-14

What is life? Every living thing is made up of cells. I remember the day I heard I was pregnant with my first daughter. It was so incredible to think that a life was within me. That life started as one single cell, a fertilised egg, with a seed from both my husband and myself. Now that cell, is an amazing young woman whom I enjoy very much getting to know as an adult.

For Bella, that initial cell formed at conception was the beginning of her life, a union of love between a husband and a wife. That original cell had DNA, that even though Bella grew and grew, those genetic traits remained the same. Those genetic traits are what makes Bella, Bella.

So also for the church. In our passage today we have a very long sentence that lasts in the original language from verses 3-14. In this sentence we come to understand the very essence of the life or blessings of the



The DNA of the church is Christ

church. Even though the church has grown through history, the DNA of our life remains the same, of who we were originally created to be.

What is the DNA of the church? God had planned and chosen us as the church to have all of these blessings of spiritual life even before the creation of the world. They aren't something that we need to earn, as Bella didn't have to earn her genes. Our spiritual blessings are received by grace through our faith in Christ. Nor are they something we can pick and choose. When we are born again they

become part of who we now are. They are as much a part of the church as genetic makeup is to a human being us. Each and every one of these blessings of life are "In Christ", for it is only "In Christ", that the Church and each individual member within her has life. Over and over in these verses 3-14 there is mention of being "in Christ." Our blessings or traits of life are "in Christ", for they describe the very nature of Christ himself. For Christ is our life, Christ is our identity, Christ is our spiritual DNA.

The spiritual blessings of life that are freely given by grace to the church and the members within, as described in this passage from Ephesians are to:

- 1) be holy and blameless before God, receiving forgiveness of sins, by grace, through Christ's blood (v 4,7)
- 2) to be adopted as God's children through Jesus Christ (v 5)
- 3) to live for the praise of God's glory because of our hope in Christ (v 12)
- 4) to be included in Christ, by hearing the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation (v 13)
- 5) to be marked in Christ with a seal, a deposit, the promised Holy Spirit, by faith in Christ (v 13b-14)



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union.

Like Ephesians, The Uniting Church in the Basis of Union, emphasizes our foundation and DNA in the Lord Jesus Christ. Read and reflect on this passage from paragraph 3 on the One Lord Jesus Christ.

"The Uniting Church acknowledges that the faith and unity of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church are built upon **the one Lord Jesus Christ.** The Church preaches **Christ the risen crucified One** and **confesses him as Lord to the glory of God the Father (**Paragraph 3 Basis of Union)."

The Uniting Church in the Basis of Union, also identifies the spiritual blessings of having our DNA in Christ. Read the following spiritual blessings as identified in our passage from Ephesians today, and then read a corresponding passage from the Basis of Union.

- 1) to be holy and blameless before God, receiving forgiveness of our sins, by grace, through Christ's blood (Eph 1:4,7).
 - "In love for the world, God gave the Son to take away the world's sin (Paragraph 3 Basis of Union)."
- 2) to be adopted as God's children through Jesus Christ (Eph 1:5).
 - "Baptism into Christ's body initiates people into Christ's life and mission in the world, so that they are united in one fellowship of love, service, suffering and joy, in one family of the Father of all in heaven and earth, and in the power of the one Spirit (Paragraph 7 Basis of Union)."
- 3) to live for the praise of God's glory because of our hope in Christ (Eph 1: 12).
 - "Thus the people of God, through faith and the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, have communion with their Saviour, **make their sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving**, proclaim the Lord's death, grow together into Christ, are strengthened for their participation in the mission of Christ in the world, and **rejoice in the foretaste of the Kingdom which Christ will bring to consummation.** (Paragraph 8 Basis of Union)"
- 4) to be included in Christ, by hearing the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation (Eph 1:13).
 - "The Word of God on whom salvation depends is to be heard and known from Scripture appropriated in the worshipping and witnessing life of the Church (Paragraph 5 the Basis of Union)."
- 5) to be marked in Christ with a seal, a deposit, the promised Holy Spirit, by faith in Christ (Eph 1:13b-14).
 - "God in Christ has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole of creation (Paragraph 3 Basis of Union)."

??? Questions:

- Do I have any genes that I wished I didn't have, instead of seeing them as a blessing, I see them as a curse?
- What do I think about the idea of the five spiritual blessings being like spiritual genes for the church? Do I have any difficulty with accepting any of them in my own life?
- The Uniting Church consists of many different forms, congregations, presbyteries, Synods, and Assembly. As we consider the different forms, what is it that makes us the church?
- What is common to all forms? What does it mean for unity in the church that our DNA is Christ?



Prayer:

Thank you Father, for giving us a new identity when we came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you that you have made us a part of a new humanity all with a common spiritual DNA. That spiritual DNA is Christ himself. Forgive us when we have lost our way and become insecure in who we are in Christ. Forgive us when we have tried to boost up our own self esteem in many ways that have been unhelpful and even damaging to us and to the body of Christ. In trying to find our life, we have lost it. Sometimes we have identified one aspect of who we are and believed the lie that is all we are. Teach us the good news that now our primary identity is in Jesus Christ our Lord. Our spiritual DNA has been transformed, and now we can receive from you, Father, all the spiritual blessings that Christ himself has inherited. By your grace help the Uniting Church in Australia to rediscover our spiritual DNA in Jesus Christ, in every aspect of who we are, for your glory, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia:

Church in the Land of Papua as they continue to experience the eroding of their civil rights under the pressure of increased immigration from other parts of Indonesia.

"Each and every one of these blessings of life are "in Christ", for it is only "in Christ", that the Church and each individual member within her has life (page 10 Life Overflowing)"

DAY 3- ENERGY, FOOD AND KNOWING CHRIST (14th June, 4th July)

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better." Ephesians 1:17



Day 3 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 1:15-23

Every living thing has a capacity to make energy and grow. Life is amazing, whether it be a gumtree, a cow or a lizard. Each living organism takes something from the environment that gives it power and energy to live, move and grow. Plants receive energy from light, whilst animals, birds, insects and reptiles find this energy in food.

In this passage from Ephesians today, Paul is praying to God for the church in Ephesus. It is a prayer for energy, or overflowing life within the church. More than anything, we get our energy from knowing Christ better (v.17).



Animals receive energy and grow from eating. Red Pandas are eating leaves for nourishment. As Christians our energy, nourishment, and growth comes from knowing and having faith in Christ.

(Photo by Raymond Quinn)

This is our food, this is our life. If we want overflowing life in the church, this should be our prayer for each and every member. For Christ is the one on whom the faith and unity of our church is built.

As a switch in our home turns on the electricity for those who know it is there, it is knowing and having faith in Christ that turns on the power within the church (v.19). This power is the same power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him at Christ's right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion and every name that can be invoked in the heavenly realms (v. 20-21).

The strength and overflowing life of the church is found in Christ, and Christ alone. He is our head. He is our strength. All things have been placed under his feet. He has been appointed head over not just the church, but over everything for us, his body (v 22). We are more than an organisation. We are a living organism. We are the body of Christ (v 23). Christ is the One who fills everything in this world in every way. We are His fullness (v 23). For the church is Christ overflowing into the world.

"As a switch in our home turns on the electricity for those who know it is there, it is knowing and having faith in Christ that turns on the power within the church (page 13 Life Overflowing)."



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union.

The Lord Jesus Christ in the basis of Union is described as the Living Head of the Church and head over all things. Read the below statements from the basis of Union. Compare them to Ephesians 1:22-23.

"To this end they declare their readiness to go forward together in sole loyalty to Christ the living head of the Church (Paragraph 1 Basis of Union)."

"The Church as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit confesses Jesus as Lord over its own life; it also confesses that Jesus is Head over all things, the beginning of a new creation, of a new humanity (paragraph 3 Basis of Union)."

The Basis of Union describes the reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole of creation. See below section. Compare to Eph 1:10; Eph 1:23.

"God in Christ has given to all people in the Church the Holy Spirit as a pledge and foretaste of that coming reconciliation and renewal which is the end in view for the whole creation (Paragraph 3 Basis of Union)."

??? Questions:

- When you need strength, what particular food gives you energy (short term or long term)?
- What is the spiritual food that gives the church energy? How does Christ fill everything in every way, and in what way is the church Christ's fullness?
- What authority does Christ have (v. 19 -21)? Who else receives this power (v. 19)?
- What is Christ described as the head of (v. 22, and Paragraph 3 Basis of Union)?
 How does this change our thinking in how we view the church in the world?

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia:

Timor Leste – as they strive to make a constructive contribution in a land where there is great poverty but the potential for significant resources to flow from the oil and gas resources off the coast.

Prayer: Father, thank you so much for your son the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you also for his body, the church. We pray today for the church that we all might receive the Spirit of Wisdom and revelation so that we would know Christ better. May knowing Christ better, become our daily food in the church, where we seek our energy and strength. We pray that the eyes of our hearts might be enlightened in order that we might know the hope to which he has called us, and the riches of his glorious inheritance in his people. We pray that you would open our eyes to see the incredible power and energy that you want the church to be able to live and move in. This power is the same power that you used to raise Christ from the dead. It is greater than any power or force in heaven and earth, for it is the very power and life of Christ your Son. You have blessed us your church with a capacity to be the body, the fullness of Christ here on this earth. We pray that through the church, the life of Christ would overflow into the world and fill everything. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

DAY 4 - SAVING BEETLES AND THE GIFT OF GRACE (15th June, 5th July)

"Because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved" Ephesians 2:5



Day 4 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

When I was growing up, we had an above ground pool in our back yard. I often would go out and try to rescue little black beetles that had wandered into the pool. We had this large net to get rid of all the leaves. I would scoop the beetles up and lift them out of the pool and put them onto the grass. That's all many of them needed. Some, however, were dead in the water. Like humans, they need air, not water to breathe. I placed some of these dead ones on the path near the pool and pressed gently down upon their bodies and sometimes out came some water and then they would start to wriggle. Just occasionally my efforts were rewarded and these beetles that once had no life, became living again.

Today in our passage from Ephesians we are told that we once were dead, not in water, but in our sins following the ways of the ruler of the kingdom of the air; that is, the devil. Just like being immersed in water brings death to beetles, being immersed in sin brings death to humanity. Ephesians describes "sin" in verse 3 as "gratifying the cravings of



As the beetles couldn't save themselves from my swimming pool and were reliant upon me to scoop them out and give them life, so we cannot save ourselves from sin. We are reliant upon God's grace and the gift of Christ's blood to wash us clean from sin and give us everlasting life.

Those few fortunate beetles had a rescuer, and that was me. I did it because I loved little beetles and wanted them to live. They couldn't rescue themselves, no matter how hard they tried. In Ephesians we are told the wonderful news of our own spiritual rescue from death to life. God has made a way to rescue us from spiritual death. All of this is done, because He loves us and because He is rich in mercy, even while we were in our transgressions (v 4). We are told that we are made alive with Christ (v 5). Just like the beetles were no longer in the pool, we too by faith in Christ, are no longer in sin, for we are raised with Christ in the heavenly realms so that others might know the incredible riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus (v 7). The beetles couldn't earn their own rescue by striving hard to get out of the water, or by being very good little beetles. Nor can we earn our way out of sin and death. It is the gift of God's grace. Our part is to have faith in our redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ and all that he did upon the cross. We then become born again created in Christ Jesus to do good works (v 10). These good works are not to free us from the pool of sin, but are a result of our now being alive in Christ.

our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. All of us lived like this at one time, and we were all



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union.

The Basis of Union in paragraph 3 and 10 talks about this central truth that we have just talked about in Ephesians 2:1-10, that it is by grace we are saved through faith, not by our works, a gift of God so that no one can boast. Read the following passages and compare to Ephesians 2:1-10.

"Jesus of Nazareth announced the **sovereign grace of God whereby the poor in spirit could receive God's love (**Paragraph 3 Basis of Union)."

deserving of God's wrath (v 3b).



🥸 Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union continued

"To God in Christ all people are called to respond in faith. To this end God has sent forth the Spirit that people may trust God as their Father, and acknowledge Jesus as Lord. The whole work of salvation is effected by the sovereign grace of God alone (Paragraph 3 Basis of Union)."

"The Uniting Church continues to learn of the teaching of the Holy Scriptures in the obedience and freedom of faith, and in the power of the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, from the witness of the Reformers as expressed in various ways in the Scots Confession of Faith (1560), the Heidelberg Catechism (1563), the Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), and the Savoy Declaration (1658). In like manner the Uniting Church will listen to the preaching of John Wesley in his Forty-Four Sermons (1793). It will commit its ministers and instructors to study these statements, so that the congregation of Christ's people may again and again be reminded of the grace which justifies them through faith, of the centrality of the person and work of Christ the justifier and of the need for a constant appeal to Holy Scripture (Paragraph 10 Basis of Union)."

Questions:

- What were some of your early experiences of the death of living things? What's the difference between a dead thing and an inanimate object?
- Before we had faith in Christ, how does Ephesians describe how we all used to live (2:1-3)? How do we move from spiritual death to life? As the beetles needed a rescuer, in what way does each individual member of the church need a rescuer? Have I received this for my own life?
- In our salvation what is the role of God, (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), and what is our role? What does the Basis of Union have to say about this in the paragraphs mentioned above? The ministers and instructors of the church are told to remind the congregation again and again of the grace which justifies us through faith. Is this being done in our church? Why? Why not? Why is it so important?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you so much for sending your son, our Lord Jesus Christ to rescue us from sin that leads to death. Thank you that you loved us even while we were still sinners, and by your grace you have made a way for us to move from spiritual death to becoming alive in Christ. Through faith in him, you have raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms. Help us never to forget that it is a gift, by your sovereign grace alone that we have been saved through faith. It is not by our hard work or effort, so that none of us can boast. Grant us the humility to receive this gift of grace by responding in faith without trying to add our own strivings to it as well. Thank you also that we have been born again, created anew in Christ to do good works which you prepared long ago for us to do. Help us to be faithful, as we live this abundant life in Christ, to do Christ's work on earth for your glory. Help us to be faithful to remind people again and again of the grace which justifies us through faith. In Jesus' name.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia: The Methodist Church of Fiji – as it continues its third year of repression under the military dictatorship and is still unable to undertake its normal functions because it is unable to meet as a Conference, District and even at a congregational level without permission of the government authorities. Pray for the staff of UnitingWorld and in particular Bruce Mullan the Pacific Secretary and Kerry Enright the National Director as they navigate a way through the political challenges involved in their support for the church and a change in government policy.

DAy 5 - SPIRITUAL TRANSPLANT + THE PERFECT MATCH (16th Jne, 6th Jly)

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ" Ephesians 2:13



Day 5 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 2:11-18

It is possible for something that is foreign to our body to become part of our body, however it is very difficult. Anyone who has had the grief of themselves or a family member in need of a transplant of some kind knows this. If our body is no longer functioning the only hope for survival for some people is a transplant from a donor. However there is a great chance of rejection with any transplant. What is needed is close enough match as possible, so that sometimes only brothers and sisters can be donors as in the case with bone marrow transplants. Each sibling needs to do a blood test to see if their blood or tissue is close enough in match to the one needing the transplant.

Our passage today from Ephesians talks about the Gentiles (not Jews) being excluded from citizenship in

Israel, foreigners to the promise in the covenant, and without hope and without God in the world (v 12). However now Christ's blood has done something incredible. We who were far away have been brought near by his blood (v 13), we've been made one with the Jewish people and one with God, through the cross (v 16). Through Christ, peace has come to reign in our life (v 14, 17).

As a blood and tissue match is needed for transplants, we need a way for us to be one with God and with His people. There is only one blood match that can enable this to happen without rejection. That blood match is the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. His blood destroys the hostility between us, and God's people (v 16) so that we can now both be reconciled to God. If we try



Organ transplants need a match of blood or tissue to counteract rejection. Jesus Christ is our perfect spiritual blood match so that we can be made one and have peace with God and His people.

and graft ourselves in without Christ's blood it is like trying to transplant an organ into a donor with no consideration of blood and tissue match. There will be rejection and the transplant will most likely be fatal. What Christ brings us is peace, peace to God, and peace to God's people (v 17). For only through the cross can both Jews and Gentiles come to the Father through by one Spirit (v 18).

For what Christ has done is even more than a transplant that we might have a new heart without rejection (Ezekiel 36:26). By abolishing in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations, he has created in himself one new humanity of the two, thus making peace (Ephesians 2:15). When we have faith in Christ and what he has done upon the cross, not only do we get a new heart, but by his blood shed, we become part of this new humanity with the DNA of Christ.

"But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 2:13)".



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union.

How did the Uniting Church made up of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational churches in Australia get to be one church? The Basis of Union says that unity is both Christ's gift and will for the Church. It is Christ who brings Unity to the Church.

"The Congregational Union of Australia, the Methodist Church of Australasia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia, in fellowship with the whole church Catholic, **and seeking to bear witness to that unity which is both Christ's gift and will for the Church,** hereby enter into union under the name of the Uniting Church in Australia (Paragraph 1 Basis of Union)."

The Uniting Church was brought into being, not only as a union of three denominations in Australia but her life is described as being part of the faith and unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. We also made a commitment to enter more deeply into the faith and mission by working together and seeking Union with other churches. Read the passages below and compare with the passage in Ephesians 2:19-21. It is in Christ that the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

"The Uniting Church in Australia lives and works within the faith and unity of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church (Paragraph 2 Basis of Union)."

??? Questions:

- Have I ever given blood, been an organ donor, or had a family member in need of a transplant? Why is the correct match so important?
- What is the only blood match that can enable us to be grafted in the olive shoot of God and His people?
- What do you think it means that Christ has made a new humanity (Ephesians 2:15 and Paragraph 3 Basis of Union) How was this accomplished? Who is part of this new humanity?

for all those who are suffering in sickness awaiting a transplant of some sort. May they soon find a matching donor and receive the gift of life. Thank you that you have given us a blood match in Jesus Christ, so that we can be made one with your people, be reconciled with you and become part of a new humanity in Christ. Help us remember that our unity and peace with you and with your people as part of this new humanity, has been wrought only through the blood of Christ your Son, shed upon the cross. May the church understand more of this incredible gift of life and receive it with thankfulness. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia:

Christian Church in Japan – as it seeks to find ways of responding to the ongoing needs of marginal and disadvantaged groups in the ongoing aftermath of the earthquake, tsunami and radiation leaks. Give thanks for the generosity of the people in the UCA who enabled a grant to be given through the Assembly to the national Christian body in support of their work with the most vulnerable to being overlooked – the non ethnic Japanese.

DAY 6 CHRIST THE GREAT CARPENTER (17th June, 7th July)

"In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a



Day 6 - Bible Reading: Ephesians: 2:19-22

This last week, my husband and I bought some furniture which arrived in many boxes. Over a couple of days we had to do a great jigsaw puzzle and try to fit the pieces together. At one stage I was stuck and couldn't work out how to build the frame for the bedside tables. I looked everywhere and couldn't find any hole in the cross pieces to put the screws. I rang up the store and found that I'd been looking in the wrong place. It was hidden right at the very end in the metal. Thankfully, once I had found where these holes were, I could connect the pieces tightly with screws.

To join anything in carpentry you need to make a hole in both parts that are going to be put together. If there isn't a hole in one part there will be no long lasting joining. Jesus, who was a carpenter by trade, would have known this, and would have been an expert in bringing pieces of wood together (Mark 6:3). In todays passage we hear that it is in Christ that those who are saved by grace through faith (v 8-9) are joined together with God's People (Israel). This building has a foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone (v 20). It is Christ's excellent spiritual



A bedside table that I eventually put together. To join something in carpentry you need to make a hole in both parts that are going to be joined. Christ's very wounds upon the cross become the place where we can be joined with him.

carpentry skills that creates this amazing organic building that rises to become a holy temple in the Lord (See also 1 Peter 2:5). It is Christ Jesus that builds us together into a dwelling where God can live by his Spirit.

So what are the holes that enable the joining to take effect in this living building? My mentor John Mallison, who has only just passed away, once gave me a book a few years ago by Andrew Murray called "Abiding in Christ. To be honest I didn't start reading this book until when I began to prepare for this prayer book a few months ago. I had found a quote mentioned on the internet by Andrew Murray that tied well into the book. To my amazement I found that it was the very book John had given me with a small greeting inside the cover from John. Andrew Murray says: "In the death on the Cross, Christ was wounded, and in His opened wounds a place prepared where we might be grafted in (Abide in Christ, Andrew Murray ,Kindle Edition, Wilder Publications (c) 2010 pg. 44)." Christ's very wounds upon the cross, become the place where we can be joined with him. For He is the cornerstone to which each plank in this living temple must be nailed. If we want to become part of this dwelling where God lives, there is no other way than to join in Christ at the cross. We must allow the holes in our life, our very sinful nature, meet the holes in his hands and feet. If we would allow Christ to unite us into this wondrous building with God and God's people we cannot avoid the cross. The great Carpenter became the living wood that sin and death was nailed to (Col 2:15). If we would receive the abundant life of Christ, we must unite with him and abide with him in his death (Romans 6:5).



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union.

The Basis of Union in paragraph 3, speaks of the incredible ministry of Christ reconciling the world to himself. It is God's love that enabled this to happen when he sent His son, to take away the world's sin.

"In Jesus Christ 'God was reconciling the world to himself' (2 Corinthians 5:19 RSV). In love for the world, God gave the Son to take away the world's sin (Paragraph 3 Basis of Union)."

The Basis of Union also talks about Jesus beginning a new order of righteousness and love, and being the beginning of a new creation and a new humanity. Compare these passages from the Basis of Union with the Ephesians passage we have just read.

"In raising him to live and reign, God confirmed and completed the witness which Jesus bore to God on earth, reasserted claim over the whole of creation, pardoned sinners, **and made in Jesus a representative beginning of a new order of righteousness and love (**Paragraph 3 Basis of Union)."

"The Church as the fellowship of the Holy Spirit confesses Jesus as Lord over its own life; it also confesses that Jesus is Head over all things, **the beginning of a new creation, of a new humanity** (paragraph 3 Basis of Union)."

??? Questions

- Have you ever bought any furniture that has to be put together at home? If so, how did you go? What was the most difficult part for you?
- Do you think that it is true that in carpentry there needs to be a hole in both pieces needing joining?
- Watch this short video of Lupe putting together a lounge.
 www.youtube.com/watch?
 v=5cmSMwa8mpk
- In what ways is Jesus the great carpenter.
- How can I be joined to God and God's people? What holes are needed so this can happen? In Christ? In us?
- What does it mean for us as a Uniting Church to be part of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church?



Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the gift of your Son, the great Carpenter, the one who joins us to you and to your people through the precious gift of his wounds upon the cross. Help each of us as living planks, to come humbly and be joined with you and your people in the death of your Son. May we rise in Christ so that together we would become a holy temple and a dwelling where you can live by the Spirit. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia:

The Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga – in Tonga as it deals with the great challenges created in Tongan society by young Tongans who are deported back to Tonga after serving time in jail in other countries.

"Abide in the wounds of Jesus; there is the place of union, and life and growth. There you shall see how His heart was opened to receive you; how His flesh was rent that the way might be opened for your being made one with Him, and having access to all the blessings flowing from His divine nature (Abide in Christ, Andrew Murray Wilder Edition (c) 2010 pg 44)."

DAY 7- GRAFTED INTO THE OLIVE TREE (18th June, 8th July)

"This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus." Ephesians 3:6



Day 7 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 3:1-13

Earlier this week, my husband and I were setting up our house and I was wanting a finishing touch to the table we had made the day before. At the same time I was thinking about this prayer book and had begun exploring examples in the bible that talk about our union with Christ. Romans 11:17 especially came to mind that talks about the wild olive shoot being grafted in. I knew nothing about growing olive trees, let alone the process of grafting so I spent some of the day reading about it. The next morning we went shopping. I didn't really know what I was looking for to go on our table, until there in front of me in Target was a replica of an olive tree filled with olives. It was on special too. It now sits proudly on our dining room table with Romans 11:17 resting upon it. There's a mystery that the Lord wants to help us understand and I believe it's through olive trees that the explaining is to happen.

Our passage from Ephesians today talks about this mystery. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles (that's you and me unless you're Jewish) are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (Eph 3:6). This mystery was once kept hidden in

God (v. 5, 9), but now through the Spirit, it was revealed to God's holy prophets and apostles. The preaching of this mystery to the Gentiles became Paul's key call from the Lord (Eph 3:7-8).

So how can olive trees help us understand this passage as well as help us to understand about our life in Christ? Paul talks about the same thing he is talking about here also in Romans chapter 11:17

"If some of the branches have been broken off, and you and though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others, and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not consider yourselves to be superior to those other branches." Romans 11:17-18a

In my reading I discovered that there are two types of olive trees. There are ones that are cultivated called *kallielaios*. They have rich and abundant fruit. The second are wild olives called *agrielaios*. These sprout up naturally and sometimes quite quickly in the ground close to the cultivated olive tree. However, they have little fruit and the fruit they do have is tasteless, and sometimes not even suitable for human consumption. Olive gardeners graft a



The "olive tree" that sits on my dining room table. Wild olive trees are grafted onto cultivated olive trees so that they can bear much fruit. It is through the gospel that we are grafted onto the Olive Tree of God's family.

branch from the cultivated olive tree and place it onto the wild olive tree. Good fruit then starts to grow where this graft is successful. In Romans 11, Paul describes the grafting in the opposite way. We as Gentiles are wild olive trees, and are grafted onto the cultivated olive tree of Israel, with the roots in the nourishing sap of Christ. We are not to go boasting about our union with Christ (Eph 2:8-9). It is by grace we have been saved through faith, not by works so that no-one can boast. We have nothing to give to the cultivated olive

tree. We don't earn our union with the tree by our own goodness or striving. Our grafting is not from any need of God for more life, rather it is a gift of grace.

It is through the gospel that we are grafted onto the olive tree of God's family (Eph 3:6). That is why the preaching of the good news of what Jesus accomplished upon the cross is so important. It is through the church (v 10) that this good news is to be shared not only to people but also to rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. The mystery is that through faith in Christ and what he accomplished on the cross we can be heirs together with Israel, one in body and in promise in Christ (v 6). We are grafted not only into relationship with God, but also into relationship with God's people through the ages. It is in Christ and through faith in Christ that people of Israel and gentiles can approach God with freedom and confidence (v 12).

There is a wonderful mystery that has now been revealed in the grafting of Gentiles. As Andrew Murray says: "This Almighty God reveals Himself as our perfect Saviour, even to the unimaginable extent of seeking to renew our fallen natures by grafting them into His own Divine nature (Abide in Christ, pg 24").



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union.

As Paul was given the grace to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ (v 8), in paragraph 1 of the Basis of Union the Uniting Church at its beginning names the mission of the church as the commission of the Risen Lord Jesus, to make disciples of all nations. This mission also includes serving the world for which Christ died.

"In this union these Churches commit their members to...hear anew the commission of the Risen Lord to make disciples of all nations (paragraph 1 Basis of Union)."

"they look for a continuing renewal in which God will use their common witness and service to set forth the word of salvation for all people (Paragraph 1 Basis of Union)."

"In entering into this union the Churches concerned are mindful that the Church of God is committed to **serve the world for which Christ died** and that is awaits with hope the day of the Lord Jesus Christ on which it will be clear that the kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of the Christ, who shall reign for ever and ever (Paragraph 1 Basis of Union)."

The basis of Union in paragraph 11, acclaims that God doesn't leave the Church without people who can interpret scripture faithfully and scholarly. Read paragraph 11 below, and reflect on the passage from Ephesians 3:1-13, especially in relation to why the study of scripture and preaching the gospel is so important.

"The Uniting Church acknowledges that God has never left the Church without faithful and scholarly interpreters of Scripture, or without those who have reflected deeply upon, and acted trustingly in obedience to, God's living Word. In particular the Uniting Church enters into the inheritance of literary, historical and scientific enquiry which has characterized recent centuries, and gives thanks for the knowledge of God's ways with humanity which are open to an informed faith. The Uniting Church lives within a worldwide fellowship of Churches in which it will learn to sharpen its understanding of the will and purpose of God by contact with contemporary thought. Within that fellowship the Uniting Church also stands in relation to contemporary societies in ways which will help it to understand its own nature and mission. The Uniting Church thanks God for the continuing witness and service of evangelist, of scholar, of prophet and of martyr. It prays that it may be ready when occasion demands to confess the Lord in fresh words and deed (Paragraph 11 Basis of Union)."

??? Questions

- Have you ever grafted one plant to another? What's the usual purpose of grafting?
- What is the mystery that Paul talks about? How do you feel about being one with Israel?.
- How do people get to hear the good news?
- Why do you think Paul describes us as being wild olive shoots grafted on to the cultivated olive tree rather than the other way around?
- What is God's intent for the church now as described in Ephesians 3:10? Why is the study of scripture so important for this to become a living reality?
- How can we confess the Lord in fresh words and deeds?

"This Almighty God reveals Himself as our perfect Saviour, even to the unimaginable extent of seeking to renew our fallen natures by grafting them. into His own Divine nature." Andrew Murray (Abiding in. Christ, page 24)



Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you so much that you have made a way that not only the people of Israel can come to you and receive bountiful blessings, but also those who aren't Jewish. Thank you that this is through Christ your son and what he accomplished upon the cross. Thank you that now we can be grafted into your family in Christ and through faith in him. Help us not to boast, but remember that this wonderful mystery now revealed is a gift of grace. Thank you also for the gift of your Living Word, the Holy Scriptures. Strengthen us as a church to value the scholars in our midst who study and carefully interpret these scriptures and this amazing message of grace. As we understand more of the deep mystery of Christ as revealed in scripture help us to confess Jesus Christ in fresh words and deeds. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia:

Our partners in Korea - the Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) and the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) as they continue their ongoing witness in Korea and around the world that they will work in partnership with local churches in other countries and that their work for the successful hosting of the General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 2013 will go well

"We become grafted with Christ by grace through faith, and now we also become strengthened in Christ, by grace through faith (Life Overflowing pg 24)."

DAY 8 - GROWING IN STRENGTH AS A GRAFT (19th June, 9th July)

"And I pray that you being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" Eph 3:17



Day 8 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 3:14-21

Olive trees are grafted in the middle of summer when the olive tree is growing. A small twig called a "scion" is taken from one tree. All the leaves are removed and it is trimmed diagonally at the base. The second tree with good roots called the "understock" is cut off at a low level and then cut vertically. The scion is then placed beneath the bark or cambium layer into the cut on the stock. It is very important to line up the inner

bark lines as this is where the bonding will take place and the joint life will flow. The sap flows through from the stock to the scion at this point. To hold the two together whilst they are growing as one, the graft is bound with soft plastic tape. Then grafting wax is put on to stop any sap loss. It will be obvious if the graft is successful because new growth will start shooting on the scion in a few weeks. www.abc.net.au/gardening/stories/s221685.htm

In our reading today from Ephesians Paul prays for the growth of the Christians in Ephesus. He prays first that out of God's glorious riches they may be strengthened with power through their Spirit in their inner being so Christ can dwell in their hearts through faith (v 14). Using our picture of the olive tree graft, it is a prayer that now we have been made one with Christ, we might receive strength from the sap of His tree that we have been grafted into. We become grafted with Christ by grace through faith, and now we also become strengthened in Christ, by grace through faith (v 17). Our Heavenly Father is the gardener, that was working by the Spirit that we might be grafted in, and now knits us together, so that Christ dwells in us and we in him (see John 15). The union of Christ dwelling in our hearts is established.

Paul then prays that we would be rooted and established in love, so that that



Grafting a tree. A small branch called a scion is taken from one tree and graft onto second tree cut diagonally (scion). As the graft takes, sap from the stock flows into the scion. So we too now being grafted into Christ, receive His strength, life and love.

together with all the Lord's people we might grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ. His prayer is that we might know the love that surpasses knowledge and be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (v 18b-19). Our roots are no longer our old roots. We have been grafted in to the stock of Christ. Christ and His love is now where we receive our nourishing sap. In all this we remember that upon the cross, Christ was cut off at a low level, and pierced for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:5), ready for us as scions to be grafted in. This is love. All that Christ did for us upon the cross was love. As we receive the incredible gift of divine sap, again and again, we remember the wonder of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. As Andrew Murray said (Abide in Christ pg 44), our place of joining with Christ is in his wounds. We learn to abide in this place, for this is where we remember that Christ went to the cross because his roots were deep in love for the Father and love for us. Now we too, having been grafted into this sacrificial stock of love, become established in love ourselves. This is not from our own effort or striving, but rather because the boundless riches of Christ's sap of compassion and love is now flowing into the depths of our soul. His roots are now our roots and we are filled to the measure of the fullness of God.



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union

Holy Communion is described in the Basis of Union, paragraph 8 as being a means by which the presence of Christ with His people is signified and sealed repeated over and over again in the Church. Compare Ephesians 3:14-19 with paragraph 8 below. Reflect on how Holy Communion can help us grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ.

"The Uniting Church acknowledges that the continuing presence of Christ with his people is signified and sealed by Christ in the Lord's Supper or the Holy Communion, constantly repeated in the life of the Church. In this sacrament of his broken body and outpoured blood the risen Lord feeds his baptized people on their way to the final inheritance of the Kingdom. Thus the people of God, through faith and the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, have communion with their Saviour, make their sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, proclaim the Lord's death, grow together into Christ, are strengthened for their participation in the mission of Christ in the world, and rejoice in the foretaste of the Kingdom which Christ will bring to consummation" (Paragraph 8 Basis of Union).

??? Questions

- Watch an olive tree being grafted on YouTube from Greece. http://www.youtube.com/watch?
 v=Pq08CF2HAts
- What do you think about being a "scion"?
- When we receive by faith all that Christ has done upon the cross where are now our roots?
- How do we grow and become established in love and why?
- Christ was cut low for us upon the cross and pierced for our transgressions. Why is it important to remember and abide in this?
- Why is celebrating Holy Communion important in helping us to understand what it means to abide in Christ? (see John 6:53-58)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you so much for your Son Jesus Christ who became the understock for us, cut down, pierced for our transgressions, ready to receive the graft of our lives. Thank you that as we receive salvation by grace through faith, we can now grow and abide in Christ by grace through faith. Thank you that Christ's roots are now are roots. The old has gone, the new has come. Father, you are the gardener. You are working in us that we might be established in abiding in your Son and His love, and that we might be filled to the measure of all your fullness. Help us to be faithful in celebrating Holy Communion as Christ commanded, that we would understand more and more of your love in Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia

Indonesian churches – living out the Christian faith in a multicultural and developing third world country.

DAY 9 - ONE LORD, ONE BODY (20th June, 10th July)

"As a prisoner for the Lord then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received"



Day 9 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 4:1-7

Over the last few days we have been looking at different images for the church as described in Scripture. We have looked at a building then an olive tree, and now we are focussing upon the church being the body of Christ. Each can help us understand what it means to have life overflowing in Christ. Even as we focus upon one image it is important to keep remembering the others, as together they help us glimpse the mystery of who God has created us to be together in Christ.

The human body is an incredibly complex multi-cell living organism. I don't know about you, but I seem to go best when I get a balance in my life of caring for the different facets of my body, mind and soul. When I'm going well, I get into a rhythm of daily physical exercise, brain games, eating well, time to pray, worship, work and time with family and friends. When one part of my body has been injured it needs more care and attention. It's tempting, instead to get fed up with that part as it throws everything else out. I've done that in the past, which has led to an increase of personal tension in body, mind and spirit. I'm learning to have more patience even with myself, and different parts of my body. After all I am one body. So it is with the body of Christ.

The first three chapters of Ephesians have focussed upon the incredible plan of God to bring us into a new life in Christ through faith in what Christ did upon the cross. This is a gift of grace by God. In the next three chapters we look at how to live this life. Paul urges us to live a life worthy of the calling we have received (Eph 4:1). As mentioned in the last few days we have been grafted into a new life in Christ. What we need to do now is live in this new life. It is very important to remember that when we became a Christian we didn't simply become one with God. We also became one with his body. We were grafted into his church. The love we have one for another is very much part of the calling we have received. In 1 John 3:23 it says: "And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ and to love one another as he commanded us.

Now that we have our roots in Christ and his love, this love needs to become evident in how we treat our fellow believers. We must have the same attitude as Christ (Phil 2:5). Paul, in Ephesians, encourages us to be completely humble with one another and gentle, be patient with one another, bearing with one another in love (Eph 4:2). We are to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Eph 4:3). Why is this so important? We weren't grafted into Christ on our own. It is not as if there are many different bodies of Christ. Even though when it comes to organisations there are many churches, many denominations. When it comes to the living organism that the true Church is, there is only one body (Eph 4:4). Paul then goes on to describe more about the unity of the body, in describing the unity of our faith. There is one Spirit, just as we were called to one hope when we were called, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and father of all who is



We are the body of Christ. There is only one Lord and one body.

over all, through all and in all (v 4-5). When it comes to living the life to which we have been called, it is important to remember that all who have faith in Christ Jesus as their Lord and Saviour are grafted into Christ, and become part of His spiritual body, with the same DNA as one another. We all have the DNA of Christ. To each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it (v 7).



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union

In the Basis of Union, in paragraph 1, the Church commits its members to acknowledge one another in love and joy as believers in Christ. Compare this with Ephesians 4:1-6 and Paul's call to the church to live in unity and love with one another.

"In this union these Churches commit their members to acknowledge one another in love and joy as believers in our Lord Jesus Christ (Paragraph 1 Basis of Union)."

Baptism is discussed in Paragraph 7 of the Basis of Union. Ephesians 4:3-6 is a plea for unity, and to remind us all that there is only one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and Father of us all. Read the below passage from paragraph 7 in the Basis of Union and compare with Ephesians 4:3-6.

"The Uniting Church acknowledges that Christ incorporates people into his body by Baptism. In this way Christ enables them to participate in his own baptism, which was accomplished once on behalf of all in his death and burial, and which was made available to all when, risen and ascended, he poured out the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Baptism into Christ's body initiates people into Christ's life and mission in the world, so that they are united in one fellowship of love, service, suffering and joy, in one family of the Father of all in heaven and earth, and in the power of the one Spirit (Paragraph 7 Basis of Union)."

??? Questions:

- How have you developed a balance or peace in your own body, mind and soul?
- Has one part of your body been sick for a while? How did that affect the rest of you? What does it mean to have patience with yourself?
- We are called to live a life worthy of the calling we have received?
 What does this life look like?
- Why is it so important to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace?
- Have you been baptised? What
 does it mean that there is only one
 Baptism? How does the Basis of
 Union describe baptism? Why is
 baptism important for the unity of
 the body of Christ?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for the life that you have given us in Christ. Help us to live it in a manner worthy of the calling we have received. Strengthen us to be completely humble, gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love. Help us to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Give us understanding to know that we have been grafted not only into Christ, but also into Christ's body. Give us understanding what this unity is all about. We thank you for the gift of baptism. Grant us also understanding, how baptism relates to our Unity in Christ. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia

The Presbyterian and Methodist Churches (and others) as they continue to wrestle with the pastoral and missional issues that have arisen from the earthquakes in Christchurch. Give thanks for the generous people of the UCA who have enabled grants of over \$A100,000 to be given through the Assembly to our partners in Aotearoa – New Zealand to support recovery work undertaken by the Methodist Mission in Christchurch and the Presbytery of Otago.

DAY 10 - GIFTS AND GRACE, HOW A BODY GROWS (21st June, 11th July) "From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. Eph 4:16

>>> Day 10 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 4:7-16

The growth of a human being is incredible. It begins as a single cell conceived in the womb. This single cell divides over and over again. Then something wonderfully complex happens in the growth of a human being, as in all multi-cell organisms. The cells begin to divide into functional groups. Each cell in the human body has a purpose to benefit the whole body, and unites with other cells with the same purpose.

The cells with similar functions or gifts begin to form tissues, and these tissues then form organs. For human beings, they form hearts, lungs, noses, brains, kidneys, etc. Each part has a function that builds up the whole of the body. The power that enables this to happen so naturally, without even effort from the organism, is life. Growth in the human body is interwoven with function and gifts. All multi-cell living things grow in this amazing way and this functional growth brings unity and maturity to the body as a whole.

The growth of a human being in the womb is incredible. The single cell after conception divides over and over. Then the cells begin to divide into functional groups, with the

The growth of a human being in the womb is incredible. The single cell after conception divides over and over. Then the cells begin to divide into functional groups, with the cells forming tissues and the tissues organs each with a purpose to benefit the whole of the body. In the same way each cell in the body of Christ receives not only the DNA of Christ, but also a special function to join with others of like function to build up the body of Christ.

In the passage from Ephesians today we learn that each of us is given grace as Christ apportioned it (v 7). Each individual who believes in Christ and

accepts Him as their Lord and Saviour becomes grafted into the body of Christ as a living cell with Christ's DNA. Each cell, as in a human being, is given a function to perform in the human body. This is given, as with living organisms, not as a result of our goodness, but as a result of becoming part of the awesome life of Christ. Our spiritual gifts are gifts of grace, not of reward.

Jesus Christ descended to the earth and became a human being. He was crucified, rose again and then ascended higher than the heavens (v10). It is his ascension that allows the release of the gifts of heaven into his body on earth. In his ascension, death is made captive and the gift of life in all its abundance is released to the church (v 8, 10). Christ ascended higher than all the heavens, so that the whole universe might be filled with his life and presence. Christ ascended so that the church could be conceived on the day of Pentecost and His living Spirit be released into the cells now grafted into His body. The early church grew in the same way as a human body in the womb grows. For example, there was a grouping of function, as the disciples chose seven full of the Spirit and wisdom. They were chosen for the daily distribution of food so that the apostles might focus on prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:1-4). Immediately following this dedication and grouping of function, we are told that the word of God spread, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, including a large number of priests (Acts 6:7). Rather than bringing disunity, this separating and grouping of the disciples into functional groups brought unity and much growth.

In Ephesians, it is Christ himself that gives apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (v 11). These living cells form tissues and organs which together with other similar cells have the aim of equipping the body for works of service. These gifts are the gifts of life which enable the rest of the body to do its work. When all the grafted cells are working as they should, the body of Christ is built up (v 12).

It is only when each part does its work that the body can become one (v 13). The pathway to the unity of the body of Christ, is the releasing of the gifts and functions of each living cell grafted into the olive tree. We will then become mature as a church, and will receive the whole measure of Christ's fullness (v 13). We cannot become mature in Christ by ourselves. Can a single cell become mature on its own in a human body? Maturity in Christ is brought to fruition only in community. It comes to fullness in the living, breathing organism of the body of Christ.

Have you been struggling in your effort to grow into maturity as a Christian? Have you been tossed here and there by the latest fad of teaching in the world and even in the church? Have you been deceived, tricked into following people's agendas, rather than the word of God (v 14)? God is calling us to understand that when we became a Christian we became part of a living organism, each with the DNA of Christ, but also with different functions. We are called to live our Christian life discovering our part in the whole and being faithful in that function. The spiritual gifts that all believers are given, are a direct result of becoming alive in Christ, and becoming part of his living spiritual body. As we speak the truth with love we will grow up into Christ who is the head of the body (v15). It is Christ who joins us together by every supporting ligament. It is Christ who causes us the church to grow and build up in love, as each part does its work. (v 16)

"From him the whole body,
joined and held together
by every supporting ligament,
grows and builds itself up in love,
as each part does its work"

(Ephesians 5:16)

"That's what
inspires me –
seeing that ideal of
the church as the
body of Christ
being *lived*(I Corinthians 12)."

(Dr. Andrew Dutney page 31)



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union

The Basis of Union discusses in several places, especially in paragraph 3, 13 and 14, the importance of spiritual gifts in the body of Christ. Read the paragraphs below and compare with Ephesians 4:7-16. In both, the gifts aren't for personal gain but rather to build up the whole.

"The Church's call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation, **a body within** which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself (Paragraph 3 Basis of Union)."

"The Uniting Church affirms that every member of the Church is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant. It acknowledges with thanksgiving that the one Spirit has endowed the members of Christ's Church with a diversity of gifts, and that there is no gift without its corresponding service: all ministries have a part in the ministry of Christ" (Paragraph 13 Basis of Union)."

The Basis of Union in paragraph 14 discusses the Ministry of Ordination, specifically the Ministry of the Word. The Church lives by the power of the Word. It is the Word of God that has a great emphasis within the Uniting Church, hence calling ordained leaders, Ministers of the Word. Read the description below in the Basis of Union Paragraph 14a) and compare with Ephesians 4:11-15. Note that the Minister of the Word is to minister in such a way that all may be equipped for their particular ministries. Compare with Ephesians 4:12. They are also to maintain the apostolic witness to Christ in the church. This is similar to the gifts in Eph 4:11, that protect against the tossing back and forth in the wind as described in v 14 by enabling the church to reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. As the truth is spoken in love by leaders such as Ministers of the Word, we will be able as the Church to grow up into Christ the head. It is ascended Christ that confers gifts on the Church (Eph 4:7-11). Read also Basis of Union on other giftings in the church below.

Minister of the Word

"Since the Church lives by the power of the Word, it is assured that God, who has never failed to provide witness to that word, will, through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, call and set apart members of the Church to be ministers of the Word. These will preach the Gospel, administer the sacraments and exercise pastoral care so that all may be equipped for their particular ministries, thus maintaining the apostolic witness to Christ in the Church. ... In this act of ordination the Church praises the ascended Christ for conferring gifts upon men and women. It recognises Christ's call of the individual to be his minister; it prays for the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to equip the minister for that service (Paragraph 14 a)."

Elders, Leaders: It will seek to recognise in the congregation those endowed by the Spirit with **gifts fitting them for rule and oversight** (Paragraph 14b)."

<u>Diaconate:</u> "The Uniting Church recognises that at the time of union many seek a renewal of the diaconate in which women and men offer their time and talents, representatively and on behalf of God's people, in the service of humanity in the face of changing needs (Paragraph 14c)."

<u>Lay Preachers</u>: "It will seek to recognise those **endowed with the gift of the Spirit for this task**, will provide for their training, and will gladly wait upon that fuller understanding of the obedience of Christians which should flow from their ministry (Paragraph 14 Basis of Union)."

MISSION AND DISCERNMENT: by Rev Dr. Andrew Dutney (President Elect of Uniting Church in Australia)

The editor of the Queensland Synod's newspaper, Journey, recently asked me if I would write a short statement on "What inspires me". It was for their back page (where ordinary papers put the sports headlines) and would sit with a few other people's thoughts on the same theme. This was easy – a real Dorothy Dixer. I wrote:

My students inspire me. They really do. I have the great privilege of being the Principal of a College that people come to because they want to become more faithful disciples of Jesus and more effective leaders in their local congregations or agencies. Some of the students are responding to a call to the ministry of the Word or ministry of Deacon. Others are ministers wanting to reflect on their ministry experience and to equip themselves for the next challenge. And because I'm the Principal I get to have one-on-one conversations with most of them about why they have come to the College to study. I'm inspired by their stories of risky, costly commitment to God's call. But I'm inspired especially by the evidence their stories give me that God is deeply engaged with the world and the church in this generation too.

God has a mission and calls members of the church to participate in it in a variety of ways. As I listen to people telling me what God has called them to do I'm also hearing what God is up to in our generation – and challenged to join in.

The Basis of Union brings a theological perspective on this, especially in paragraph 13.

- The one Spirit has endowed the members of Christ's Church with a diversity of gifts.
- There is no gift without its corresponding service: all ministries have a part in the ministry of Christ.
- The church will provide for the exercise by men and women of the gifts God bestows upon them, and will order its life in response to God's call to enter more fully into mission.

That's what inspires me – seeing that ideal of the church as the body of Christ being *lived* (I Corinthians 12).

In these challenging times, when many of our familiar and trusted ways of being the body of Christ in our own towns and neighbourhoods are proving hard to sustain it's natural to wonder what we should do next. The answer is easy to say but harder to do. We should do whatever it is that God is calling us to do. We should find out where the Holy Spirit is at work around us and join in.

James Dunn has noticed that if the definition of mission is 'finding out where the Holy Spirit is at work and joining in', then 'discernment is the first act of mission'. In our times (as in all times) discernment needs to be central to the life of every Christian community. One key aspect to that discernment is to be continually seeking to identify the gifts that the Holy Spirit is giving to the members of the community. It's less a case of saying, "It's time to organize carols by candlelight again and we need a keyboard player. Is there anyone you can think of who could do that?" It's more a case of saying, "We're learning that Susan and James have a real gift and passion for hospitality. Is there a way that we could help them lead our congregation in extending the hospitality of Christ to our neighbourhood?"

To discern the diversity of gifts which the Holy Spirit is giving to the members of Christ's body, we should routinely start with the members – with one another – rather than the congregation's calendar of activities, programs and obligations that need volunteers. Discernment starts with one another, not with the calendar. The habit of honest, loving fellowship, of prayer and mentoring – the habit of discernment – is the habit of a genuinely missional church.

??? **Questions:**

Watch a video about fetus development

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgT5rUQ9EmQ

- How does a fetus grow? Why do you think multi cell organisms start to divide and then gather together in function groups before much growth can happen?
- What does this say to the church today? What are the purposes of spiritual gifts in the church?
- Do I know what function I have in the body of Christ? Am I grouping together with like functioned cells to form spiritual tissues and organs? Do I respect and value those with different gifts to me?





Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the church, the body of Christ. Help us not to forget that we together are a living organism, not just an organisation. Help us understand how life works from its conception, including the division of cells into functions to form tissues and organs. Forgive us when we have tried to come to maturity and fullness in Christ all by ourselves. Teach us that we are part of the whole of Christ's body, and we too have a role and function. Teach us this function individually and together that the body might be built up and that we would reach unity and maturity in our faith in Christ. Help us value and love each and every part of the body. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, **General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia**

The Methodist Church in Zimbabwe in its difficult situation and its presiding Bishop.

"To discern the diversity of gifts which the Holy Spirit is giving to the members of Christ's body, we should routinely start with the members – with one another – rather than the congregation's calendar of activities, programs and obligations that need volunteers. Discernment starts with one another, not with the calendar. The habit of honest, loving fellowship, of prayer and mentoring – the habit of discernment – is the habit of a genuinely missional church (Life Overflowing, Rev Dr. Andrew Dutney page 31)."

DAY 11 - OFF WITH THE OLD. ON WITH THE NEW (22nd June, 12th July)

"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, ... to beand to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Eph 4:22-24



Day 11 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 4:17-25 Living with the new self

Today we are returning to our image of grafting an olive tree to help us understand our passage for today. Andrew Murray talks about grafting a tree "so that only a single branch bears good fruit, while many of the natural branches remain, and bear their old fruit. (p 37)" For him this is a believer where a small part of their life is sanctified however because of ignorance and other reasons, the old life still has more dominion.

Our passage today from Ephesians Paul warns us to no longer live like the Gentiles do in the futility of their thinking (4:17). For those who don't know Christ, their understanding is darkened and they are separated from God's life (4:18). He explains that this separation from God's life is because they are ignorant due to hard hearts. They aren't sensitive to God and what is good. Instead of yielding to God, they have handed themselves over to sensuality, or in other words to the prime directive of meeting their own needs irrespective of what impure or greedy deeds they do to meet this end (4:19).

Now comes the challenge. Paul reminds the Ephesian Christians that they were taught to put off their old self which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires (4:22).



An abundant olive tree. To be bear much fruit in our lives the whole of our life must be grafted in to the life of Christ. We must put off the old self and put on the new (repentance).

This is like Jesus' teaching in John 15 where Jesus tells that he is the vine and the Father is the gardener (John 15:1). Every branch that doesn't bear fruit is cut off by the gardener (John 15:2). We are called to abide in Christ and Christ in us, and then we will bear much fruit (John15: 5). However once again comes the warning. If we do not remain in Christ, we become like a branch that is thrown away, withers, and finally thrown into the fire and burnt.

The whole of our life needs to be grafted into Christ. In the same way, Christ needs to be grafted into the whole of us. We are talking here about something organic not legalism or rules. In our life, every branch of our old self needs to be cut off. We need to be diligent in watching that old shoots with bad fruit don't start springing up again. However we can also give thanks that our Heavenly Father is the gardener, and the pruner. He will not only help us to abide in Christ, but he will also keep us continually pruned of our old way of being and thinking.

In John, the Father is active in the cutting off of the fruitless (John 15:2). In Ephesians, it is we ourselves who are called to do the action. Both are important: trusting God to do the work in us; as well as becoming active in this chopping ourselves. Our part to play is to renew our thinking and attitudes (Eph 4:23). This is called **REPENTANCE.** The true meaning of repentance is to change our mind. We are also called to actively put on our new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (v 24).

A prime aim of these 40 days of prayer and fasting is to pray for repentance in Jesus' name in our own life, the life of our family, church, town, city, region, country and the world. Sometimes we are so used to the old self, we do not see anything wrong with those things we are doing that are still far from Christ, individually and corporately. Each of us needs the courage to ask Christ to "come, assess and deal with us" (Paragraph 4: Basis of Union). If we ask the Holy Spirit to shine in our darkened thoughts, what is still of the old life we be illuminated. It is the Holy Spirit that can soften our hard hearts and make us sensitive to the truth. It is the Holy Spirit that can lead us to find "the repentance that leads to life." (Acts 11:1



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union

In the Basis of Union, we are encouraged to remain under constant reform under His word. It is the Lord that comes, addresses and deals with us through the news of His completed work. Even though we are part of the new creation, there is still a process of sanctification that is needed. In both justification and sanctification, Christ is the active player. Our role is to respond in faith. Compare this with Ephesians 4:17-25.

"They remain open to constant reform under His word (paragraph 1 Basis of Union)."

"The Uniting acknowledges that the Church is able to live and endure through the changes of history only because **its Lord comes, addresses, and deals with people in and through the news of his completed work** (Paragraph 4 Basis of Union)."

??? Questions:

- Have you ever done any pruning of fruit trees? How do you decide what to cut? What's the purpose of pruning?
- What do we need to do with our old self?
 What are to we now put on? (v 22-24)
- Why is "putting off our old self" and "putting on the new" so important? What personally to you need to "put off" and "put on"
- In the Basis of Union it says that we can live and endure through the changes of history only because our Lord comes, addresses and deals with us through the news of his completed work. What does this mean? What role do we have in repentance, and what role does Christ have?

Prayer from Andrew Murray. "Language of the tree to the gardener..." When you graft me, O spare not a single branch; let everything of the old self, even the smallest bud, be destroyed, that I may no longer live in my own, but in that other life that was cut off and brought and put upon me, that I might be wholly new and good" (page 37 Abiding in Christ)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we ask you this day to help us because to be honest we know that we are blind to the old life still living in us. Sometimes it's because we've become so hard in our hearts, so insensitive to your Spirit and your truth. Forgive us by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Give to us new hearts and new minds to turn from our old life of destruction and to learn to walk in the life of Christ. Change our hearts and minds that we might be open to constant reform under your word. Father, thank you that Christ comes, assesses and deals with us so that we might be able to live and endure through the changes of history through the news of your completed work in Christ. Come Lord Jesus Come! In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia

The triennial national Conference of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) which meets from July 3 – 12. God's leading as they make important decisions about the shape and resourcing of the national work of Congress. For a clear vision and a sense of God's leading into its fulfilment.

DAY 12 - ALL THE OLD SNAKESKIN MUST COME OFF (23rd June, 13th July) "Be imitators of God, therefore as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Eph 5:1-2



Day 12 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 4:25-5:2

In nature often new life rises from the death of the old. How many times through history has the birth of a baby come soon after a death of a grandparent or even a parent? Some mother spiders die soon after they lay eggs. There are several species of the Banksia bush in Australia that have pods that open only after the intensity of the heat of a bush fire. Often the plant that bore the pods dies in the fire, but out of this death comes new life for the pods. Even within a single organism this rhythm of the new replacing the old occurs. We all lost teeth as children, and had the joy of discovering that new and bigger ones grew back.

Mammals shed their skins somewhat slowly. Snakes get rid of the old skin in one go. Underneath is a new skin already grown that fits their body now much better than the old. Unfortunately sometimes some of the old skin is left on the snake. This becomes a real problem, and can potentially be a feeding ground for parasites and infections.

So it is with our spiritual life. Yesterday we heard how we are called to put off the old self and put on the new (Eph 4:22-24). Romans 6:1-14 talks about old self being crucified with Christ (v 6) and our new life with the raising of Christ (v 4b). For we must not only embrace the new life. Paul, in both Ephesians and Romans, exhorts us to completely get rid of the old. We need to keep watch, to see if any of our old nature remains,

like the old skin clinging to a snake. For this old skin, this old self that remains will lead to infection in the new, the devil getting a foothold (v27). A complete shedding of the old is the answer to spiritual growth.

Anyone who has owned a snake will understand what this means. The new skin in all its glory has been revealed, yet sometimes patches of the old remain, and they must be removed for the health and ongoing growth of the snake. Our reading from Ephesians today has some very practical examples of what areas of the old self need to be removed and why. All are to do with relationship, moving from a self centred life, to a life of love.

First of all, all lies must go. That's part of the old skin, our old self. It doesn't matter the motive for our lies, lies break rather than build the body of Christ and our relationship with God. Instead of lying, we should speak truthfully to our neighbour because we are all members of one body (4:25). For our new self is the way of love (5:1). Speaking truthfully now becomes a living expression of this new way.



Snakes shed their skins, they take off the old for the new. However infection sets in when a bit of the old skin is not removed. So we too must take off all the old self and live the life of Christ.

Secondly, we're to get rid of sinning in our anger, and holding anger from one day to the next (4:26). If we keep this old self of anger with the new self, Paul warns us that the devil could get a foothold in our life. He's speaking here not to unbelievers, but believers.

Thirdly, we're to get rid of stealing (4:28). That's the old self. Instead, we are to walk in the way of love. We need to work doing something useful with our hands, not so that we have enough for ourselves, but so that we have something to share with those in need.

Fourthly, we're no longer to let obscenities come out of our mouth (4:29). Once again, that's the old life. The way of love is that whatever we say must be helpful for building others up according to their needs, so that not only they benefit, but anyone else who is listening.

Fifthly, we're to put off grieving the Holy Spirit (4:30). Our old self wasn't sensitive to God's grief at our actions (4:19). We're to walk in the way of love, not only to our neighbour and fellow believers, but also to God. The Holy Spirit is our seal for the day of redemption. Grieving the Spirit mocks that gift.

And finally, we're to put off our bitterness and hardness towards others, including rage, anger, brawling, slander and malice (4:31). Instead, as before, we are to walk in the way of love. We are to be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ God forgave us (4:32).



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union

In the Basis of Union, in paragraph 4, Jesus Christ the Word of God has a very active role in the process of repentance (see below). The Uniting Church also seeks ways in which the baptized may be led into deeper commitment to the faith and service into which we've been baptized. Compare these paragraphs from the Basis of Union with our readings from Ephesians 4:25-5:2.

"Christ who is present when he is preached among people is the Word of the God who acquits the guilty, who gives life to the dead and who brings into being what otherwise could not exist (Paragraph 4 Basis of Union)."

"You were taught with regard to your former way of life,
to put off your old self,
which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires,
to be made new in the attitude of your minds;
and to put on the new self,
created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."

Ephesians 4:22-23

??? **Questions:**

- When in nature, have you seen new life come when the old has died?
- http://www.youtube.com/watch? v=7qj4gNxwBv8 Watch a skin shedding its skin. The snake needs to completely shed it's old skin to be healthy or infection and parasites can grow. The snake owner looks carefully to check that no old skin remains. Ask the Lord humbly to come, assess and deal with you, individually and as the church to find any remains of the old self.
- What one of the six characteristics of the old self mentioned above, do you find hardest to let go of? Ask the Father, to help you take your old self off and put the new on.
- It is Jesus Christ who acquits the guilty, who gives life to the dead, and brings into being what otherwise could not exist. In what ways is Jesus doing that in your life during this time?



M Prayer:

Heavenly Father, Come Lord, assess and deal with us. You've made us new, given us a new life, the way of love. Yet there are still remnants of the old self that cling to us. Have mercy on us, because in those very areas, the devil keeps getting a foothold in our life. First of all, show us what they are. Reveal them to us so we can see what needs to be removed. And secondly, by your grace, by the blood of the Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit empower us to completely remove this aspect of our old self from our life. Empower us to leave the old, so that we can more fully enter into the way of love you have called us to. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia

Pray for the small group leaders, members of the facilitation group, chaplains and the many other roles that are required in order for the Assembly to function effectively as a community of faith seeking the will of God.

"For we must not only embrace the new life. Paul, in both Ephesians and Romans, exhorts us to completely get rid of the old. We need to keep watch to see if any of our old nature remains, like the old skin clinging to a snake. For this old skin, this old self that remains will lead to infection in the new, the devil getting a footbold (v27). A complete shedding of the old is the answer to spiritual growth (Life Overflowing page 35)."

DAY 13 - MOVING LIKE CHRIST (24th June, 14th July)

"Be imitators of God, therefore as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." Eph 5:1-2



Day 13 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 5:1-14

Every living thing can respond to stimuli. This response is movement. For all living things have movement, whether it is at the cellular level, or movement of the whole living organism from one place to another. Within our body there is incredible movement all the time. Every system has some sort of movement going on whether it be cardiovascular, neural, digestive; etc. There is movement within a plant as the sap moves up from the roots to nourish the whole of the plant. Even a single cell in our body has movement within it. For movement is life, and life is movement.



All animals have unique ways of movement. Here a bird is in full flight at the dawn of a new day. In the same way those who have been grafted into Christ have a new distinctive way to move. We are to move like Christ. (Photo by Raymond Quinn)

Then there is also the movement of the whole living organism from one place to another. What joy it is to watch mammals, birds, reptiles, insects, and fish move. They all have their unique ways of moving. I love going away to my place on the central coast of NSW and watching all the birds either swimming on the lake or flying across the sky. There is such life in the movements. Every living thing has been granted a distinct way that it can move. Mammals can walk, sit, stand and run. Some like dolphins and whales are expert at swimming and others like bats can even fly. Reptiles can slither. Fish can swim. Insects can crawl and fly. Birds can fly and some can swim and duck under the water to find some fish. Even plants respond to stimuli. Who has put a plant in a certain position, and then come back in a few weeks time and find that the plant has moved towards the sun, towards the light? All these movements are distinct, dependent upon the type of living thing and the species.

That too is the same for the church. We are a living organism, the body of Christ. We have a distinct way of moving that is part of the life that we know live. What is that movement?

Watchman Nee, in his book "Sit, walk, stand", spoke of three distinct movements in Ephesians that we all have as Christians. The first movement is to sit, the second to walk, and finally to stand. We learnt about sitting in the heavenly realms in the first three chapters of Ephesians, specifically Ephesians 2:6. Watchman Nee says

"Most Christians make the mistake of trying to walk in order to be able to sit, but that is a reversal of the true order. Our natural reason says, If we do not walk, how can we ever reach the goal? What can we attain without effort? How can we ever get anywhere if we do not move? But Christianity is a queer business! If at the outset we try to do anything, we get nothing; if we seek to attain something, we miss everything. For Christianity begins not with a big DO, but with a big DONE" ("Sit, Watch, Stand" Watchman Nee, Trade Paper Edition (c) 2009 CLC Industries)

So we cannot turn to chapters 4-6 in Ephesians that speak about the second movement of walking, till we have sat before Christ in humility and received the gift of being born again. When we received this gift of

grace, it then becomes our new nature to live and move in a new way. It is like asking a dog to fly. We cannot walk in this new way, until we are transformed into a new life. This life is the life of Christ. Once we have, by

grace through faith, received our salvation and are sitting with Christ as a new creation in the heavenly realms, it is then we need to learn to move in this new life that we have been grafted into.

Now we are in Christ, **we are to move and live like Christ** (Eph 5:1). Three times in Ephesians 5 we are asked to live in a certain way (Eph 5:1; 5:8; 5:17). The Greek word used in these three verses is "peripato" which means "walk, or "live. What are these three movements of walking that we as a new Creation are empowered to do?



"Wake up sleep, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Ephesians 5:14

Firstly, we are called to **walk in the way of love** (5:1). This

word is "agápē." Agápē is an active word, and can best be explained in what Christ did for us upon the cross. He gave himself up for us as a sacrifice to God, because of his love for us. Yesterday we learnt more about what walking in the way of love is all about. It is day by day action of, instead of living in the old way focussed upon our self, living as Christ lived in tenderness, love and forgiveness of others.

Our second way to walk as a new creation is to **walk or live as children of light** (v 8). We once were darkness (v 8) but now we are light in the Lord. Our new movement, the way we now walk as God's children, is a walk of light. In this passage we aren't called to just "walk in the light." We are called to walk as "children of light" because we are now "light in the Lord." Where we walk now fruit of the light will grow not only in our own life but in the life of others.

Have you ever tried to grow a plant in the dark? It cannot happen. Without Christ we cannot walk as light. There will not be spiritual growth in those we try to reach. However when we are transformed from darkness to light through faith in Christ, wherever we walk, fruit will begin to blossom. "Goodness, righteousness and truth" will spring up within us, and behind us touching those we have drawn near to (v 9). Even as we walk as children of light into very dark places the darkness will be exposed by the light and everything will become visible (v 13).

Have you been born again? Are you a new creation, sitting with Christ in the heavenly places? That is wonderful. However, now it is time to wake up and begin to move, begin to learn to walk the way of love, as a child of light (v 14). How are we children of light? Very simply, our light is simply a reflection of the brilliance of Christ, the Light of the World, shining on us and in us. Wake up, start moving, children of God, born again of water and the word. Start moving, start walking, step by step in love, in light, and tomorrow we will learn, in wisdom.

"Most Christians make the mistake of trying to walk in order to be able to sit, but that is a reversal of the true order..... If at the outset we try to do anything, we get nothing; if we seek to attain something, we miss everything. For Christianity begins not with a big DO, but with a big DONE" ("Sit, watch, stand." Watchman Nee page 12)



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union

As a new creation in Christ, we are to walk in the way of Christ. The Basis of Union in paragraph 3, describes how Christ walked. Compare this to Ephesians 5:1-2. In what way are we to be imitators of Christ and how?

"Jesus himself, in his life and death, made the response of humility, obedience and trust which God had long sought in vain (Paragraph 3 Basis of Union)."

Read the passage below from paragraph 4 in the Basis of Union. How is it that Christ wakes us up, purifies and matures us? How does this compare with Ephesians 5:1-13 especially verse 14?

"Through human witness in word and action, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ reaches out to command people's attention and awaken faith (Paragraph 4 Basis of Union)";

"It is Christ who by the gift of the Spirit confers the forgiveness, the fellowship, the new life and the freedom which the proclamation and actions promise; and it is Christ who awakens, purifies and advances in people the faith and hope in which alone such benefits can be accepted (Par 6)."

Questions:

- What living thing do you like to watch moving the most? Watch the video of Toby the dog moving.
- http://www.youtube.com/watch? v=yhuvPTytsus&feature=BFa&list=UL eB -L1-DOnl
- How does a baby learn to walk?
- How do you respond to Watchman Nee's words that many Christians make the mistake of trying to walk before they sit? What does he mean " If at the outset we try to do anything, we get nothing; if we seek to attain something, we miss everything."
- What does it mean for you to walk as a new creation in the way of love and as light?
- How does Christ wake us up? What does Christ do when we awaken? (See v 13 and paragraph 6 Basis of Union)

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you so much that you have given us new life in Christ. Show us the amazing wonder of what that means. We aren't the same any more. You've given us a new way to live and move and have our being. This new way is to walk in the way of love as Christ walked. It is to live as children of *Light, for we now are Light reflecting the brilliance of* your Son who is within us. Wake us up. We've been asleep, sitting for so long. Some of us have been trying to move in our old ways and it hasn't worked. Please forgive us. We've gone back to trying to find our place with you by our own effort. That's not what walking in the way of love is all about. It is about the transformation that you have done in our hearts and then walking in that transformation. Forgive us for our slumber and for our ignorance in not understanding. Command our attention and wake us up. Stir us from sleep, shine upon us and purify us. Raise us up to move together, so that the world might be blessed with Christ's tender heart of mercy and Light. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia

Pray for the local Administrator, Mrs Gwenda Kerley, the arrangements Committee and volunteers as they bring all the loose ends of a complicated event together to the glory of God.

DAY 14 - LIVING LIKE A FROG (25th June, 15th July)

"Be very careful then how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil" (Eph 5:15)"



Day 14 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 5:15-21 Living as wise

When I was a young teenager I went adventuring with a friend of mine to a small creek near where we used to live. We were out to catch some tadpoles. Amazingly, I caught some and took them home. I had a small nursery shed out the back and placed them in a container filled with water with a cover over the top. It was my delight watching those tadpoles grow. Then slowly, changes starting happening. One of them, whom I later called Sebastian Bonaparte, started transforming, growing legs and eventually grew into a small brown frog. He began to explore on land, the enclosure I had around the pond. One day Sebastian was no longer in the enclosure as he had become an expert moving with his new legs and had jumped away.



As a tadpole cannot move and breathe on land until it is transformed into a frog, we cannot move and breathe in the Holy Spirit until we have become a new creation in Christ.

It would have been very silly of me to take Sebastian out of the water when he was still a tadpole and tell him to jump. First of all he would have not survived because he needed water at that stage. And secondly, he didn't have any legs. This is the same for us. We cannot move in the way that Ephesians is talking about in chapters 4-6 until we have been transformed into a new creation as described in Chapters 1-3.

But once we have been transformed then it is time for us to wake up and learn how to move in the new way that we have been given. Yesterday we learnt about two new ways of walking that we are to have, now that we have become a new creation. We are to walk in the way of love (5:1), and to walk as children of Light.

There is a third new way of walking that we will look at today. In verse 15 we are told to be careful how we live, not as unwise but as wise making the most of every opportunity because the days are evil. It's no good if we stay in the water and continue with our old ways of moving, not realising that we've been transformed. Even though I was very upset at the time, it was a good thing that Sebastian learnt to jump. Living in unwise foolish ways is like swimming around under the water all the time even though we have legs and lungs to get out of the water and to jump away.

Walking in wisdom is our new way of moving. It is a gift from our transformation. This wisdom has several parts. Firstly we are to make the most of every opportunity because the days are evil (v 16). This means our new way of moving is to not give up or give in to the darkness because of evil that has happened to us or to others. That is precisely the place that we are called to walk in love and be light as we talked about yesterday. That is the place where we are called to forgive instead of becoming bitter. We are to hold onto the promise that: "And we know that in all thing God works for the good of those who love him who have been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28)."

Secondly we are not to be foolish but rather to understand what the Lord's will is. The legs we have been given through our transformation are legs to do the Lord's will. They aren't legs for our own power or benefit. We will never learn to walk in wisdom if we are still in the water. The water is our own selfishness and pride. However we have been transformed to live and to breathe in air. This air is the Holy Spirit of God.

Are we ready to get out of the water and to fill our lungs with the breath of God, rather than get drunk on wine?

All of us are thirsty for something. When you hear the theme of this book "Life overflowing", you may think of times in your life when you were really happy. Perhaps it was at a party or a club when everyone was happy, singing and dancing. Is that life? Yes and no. That is life for a tadpole, for how we were before we were born again. However now we have been transformed from darkness into light in the Lord (v8). Alcohol, drugs or whatever we are trying to fill ourselves with, doesn't fill our soul. It may make us happy for a short while but then it is short lived. Paul says that it leads to life falling in ruins (v 18).

BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

For those of us who by grace through faith are saved, we don't have to stay in the water any longer. We are a new creation. We have legs to get out and move and lungs to breathe the breath of God. Paul calls us to be filled with the Spirit (v 18). Air is a gift not for a tadpole, but for a frog. The Holy Spirit is a gift not for an unbeliever, but for one who has faith in Christ. To be filled with the Spirit, in our new life, is to walk in the way of wisdom, for the Holy Spirit leads us to do that which is God's will.

The Holy Spirit also empowers us not only in giving us new ways to move, but also to empower what comes out of our mouth (v19). The sounds that a tadpole makes are very different to the sounds a frog makes. There is no comparison, because it takes breath to make sound. The sound that the Holy Spirit gives to us is the sound of worshipping God. Worship is what we were originally created to do at the beginning of time. We are called to do this not only alone but with one another, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (v 19).

We are told to sing and make music in our hearts to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ (v20). Obscenity, foolish talk and course joking have no place anymore in our life as a Christian (v 4). Instead what comes out of our mouth should be songs of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord (v 19-20). We are to thank God our Father for everything in Jesus' name for he is the one who has delivered and transformed us into this incredible new life in Christ.



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union

The Basis of Union in paragraph 1, encourages the members daily to seek to obey God's will (paragraph 1 Basis of Union). Reflect on Ephesians 5:15-17 and think about what this might mean.

"In this union these Churches commit their members to...daily to seek to obey his will (Paragraph 1. Basis of Union)."

The Basis of Union in paragraph 17 speaks of the free obedience of the children of God and looking to the final reconciliation of humanity under God's sovereign grace. Free obedience, is another way of saying that a tadpole can't jump and breathe air, till it becomes a frog. When we are born again and become children of God we are given a new nature that has a capacity for obeying God freely as His children.

"The law of the Church will speak of the **free obedience of the children of God,** and will look to the final reconciliation of humanity under God's sovereign grace (paragraph 17 Basis of Union)."



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union (cont)

We as the church are on the move in the Basis of Union. We are on the way to the promised end. We are called to be in prayer, that through the gift of the Spirit, God might constantly correct that which is not good in our life. There are areas where we are still living as tadpoles even though we are now frogs. Our prayer is for unity and that our worship, witness and service but be for God's eternal glory through Jesus Christ the Lord. Read Ephesians 5:18-20. Compare this with Paragraph 18 of Basis of Union below.

"The Uniting Church affirms that it belongs to the people of God on the way to the promised end. The Uniting Church prays that, through the gift of the Spirit, God will constantly correct that which is erroneous in its life, will bring it into deeper unity with other Churches, and will use its worship, witness and service to God's eternal glory through Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen (Paragraph 18 Basis of Union)."

??? Questions:

- Watch a video about the change of a tadpole to a frog.
- http://www.youtube.com/watch? v=GgCL3JenMCs
- 2. Why would it have been ridiculous for me to ask my tadpole to jump?
- What does it mean to walk in the way of wisdom?
- Why can't a tadpole breathe air?
 Why can't someone who hasn't come to faith in Christ be filled with the Spirit? What should be the result of us being filled with the Spirit?
- What does "free obedience of the children of God" in paragraph 17 of the Basis of Union mean?
- What should the movement be of the Uniting Church in Australia as described in Paragraph 18 of the Basis of Union.



Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you so much for making us a new creation in Christ. Thank you that by your grace, we can now move not only with love and light but also with wisdom, not because of our own efforts, but because we have been transformed like tadpoles to frogs. We can walk in your will where once we could only swim in darkness. We can breathe in and be filled with your Spirit, where once we could not survive in the air of your holiness and glory. Thank you that as your children, we can leave the foolish, erroneous ways of the past and learn to understand and do what is your will. Thank you that you have blessed us with not only new ways to move but with a new capacity to worship and thank you with our voice. This day we dedicate ourselves afresh to you as individuals and as a church. Enable us to live and move for you with this new life you have given us. To your eternal glory through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia

The President – elect, Rev Dr Andrew Dutney, as he continues his preparation for taking up the office of President on July 15. That the Lord of the church who has called him will grant him peace, wisdom, grace and peace as he proceeds through these final stages of preparation.

DAY 15 - MARRIAGE, GIBBONS + A POWERFUL SONG (26th J, 16th July)

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. Ephesians 5:25-27



Day 15 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 5:21-33

The last few days we've been talking about moving and walking in this new life that we have been given. As new creations we are called to walk with love, walk as children of the light, and walk with wisdom filled with the Holy Spirit. Now Paul explains to us how walking in this new life will impact some of our key relationships. He begins with marriage, then children and parents and finally slaves and masters, which for our context is workplace relationships.

Not only does every living organism have a unique way of moving, but also for most multi-cell organisms each has a unique way of relating to other living things that it comes across. This is whether it relates to living organisms of the same life form or different. There is a distinct Christian way of being in community that is in stark comparison to the world. It is neither a democracy or a dictatorship. Verse 21 sums this up.

"Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." This phrase in the original language of Koine Greek, doesn't have an active verb, and relates back to the previous conversation about living as wise people and being filled with the Spirit.

What is so distinctive about our relationship now is, that in every relationship, we offer love, submission or respect to the other, as if it were to Christ. This is very much in line with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 25:40 "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

Yesterday we thought about the Holy Spirit breathing and filling our new being. The Holy Spirit transforms our heart of stone to a heart of flesh, (Ez 11:19; 36:26) that we might be empowered to live Christ's way in community, with God and with one another, and to walk the way of love. Love (agape) is defined not as an emotion or feeling, but rather as humble respect and submission, willing to lay down our life for the good of the other despite the consequences upon our own life. That is Christ's love.

Marriage

What does this agape love look like in marriage? It is the wife submitting in everything to her husband as to Christ (v22), for as Christ is the head of the church, the husband is the head of the wife (v 23). The wife is to relate to her husband in the same way the church relates to Christ. There is a deep mystery, for as she respects her husband as head, she respects Christ. Likewise, agape love in marriage is the husbands loving their wives as Christ loved the Church. Rather than loving their wife as to the Lord, they are asked to place themselves in Christs' shoes, and love their wives as Christ loved the Church. We remember how Christ loved the church. He gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word (v 26).

Gibbons are amazing mammals in that, unlike other animals, they mate for life and stay together in the same territory of 12-53 hectares, swinging from tree to tree and gathering fruit. They stay close to their partners and young and guide them and protect them potentially other mates. Gibbons also groom one another.

In our reading today Christ is seen grooming the church in a sacrificial way, making her clean and holy by washing her through water and the word. It is through his life laid down, the water that poured forth from his side and his word's of forgiveness and mercy that the church is made clean. She is prepared by Christ and

then presented to Christ as a radiant holy and blameless church, without stain or wrinkle or blemish (v. 27). This tender picture of Christ and the church is to be the relationship between a husband and a wife. The husband is to love the wife as his own body (v28).

There is also one other amazing trait about gibbons. The male and female gibbon who are mated together sing a duet in the forest. This is to claim their territory, but also to strengthen the pair bond. In their song together they act as one in protection of their land and their children. It is only when the duet is weak and not in sync that other male gibbons attempt to come in and take over the male's position.

We are reminded that in marriage the man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife and the two become one flesh (v 31). This is the

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Gibbons mate for life and sing a song to one another. When this song is strong it protects against any invasion. So also husbands and wives have a song of agape love from the Lord to sing to one another, a song of mutual submission and respect.

mystery of a man and wife becoming one, but it is also the deeper mystery of Christ and the church becoming one living organism, with Christ as the head, and the church as the body. The love and respect in both the relationship of Christ and the church, and a husband and wife in marriage is like the duet song of the gibbons, that keeps back the predators of apostasy and divorce.



🧽 Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union

The Basis of Union in paragraph 3 talks about Christ feeding the church with Word and Sacraments. Compare with Ephesians 5:29. Reflect on how this relationship between Christ and the church informs our understanding of what a husband's love should be for his wife.

"The Church is a pilgrim people, always on the way towards a promised goal; here the Church does not have a continuing city but seeks one to come. **On the way Christ feeds**the Church with Word and Sacraments, and it has the gift of the Spirit in order that it may not lose the way. (Pargraph 3 Basis of Union)."

In the Basis of Union, in paragraph 4 it is the Lord that comes, addresses and deals with people in and through the news of his completed work. This is similar to Ephesians 5:25-27, where Christ is described as making the church holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, to present her to himself as a radiant church, without, stain or wrinkle or any other blemish. Reflect on how Christ may be doing this in your local church and in the Uniting Church as a whole. How important is the Word of God in preparing the bride of Christ in Ephesians 5 and in the Basis of Union paragraph 5 below?

"The Uniting Church acknowledges that the Church is able to live and endure through the changes of history only because its Lord comes, addresses, and deals with people in and through the news of his completed work (Paragraph 4 Basis of Union)."



🍪 Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union (cont)

How important is the Word of God in preparing the bride of Christ in Ephesians 5 and in the Basis of Union paragraph 5 below?

"The Uniting Church acknowledges that the Church has received the books of the Old and New Testaments as unique prophetic and apostolic testimony, in which it hears the Word of God and by which its faith and obedience are nourished and regulated. When the Church preaches Jesus Christ its message is controlled by the Biblical witnesses. The Word of God on whom salvation depends is to be heard and known from Scripture appropriated in the worshipping and witnessing life of the Church (paragraph 5 Basis of Union)."

Questions:

- What do you think the phrase "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" means?
- 2. If you are married and a wife, in what ways can you submit and respect your husband? When is this hard? In what way can "doing it to the Lord" help?
- 3. If you are married and a husband, in what ways should you be loving your wife tenderly? When is this hard? In what ways can "loving your wife just as Christ loved the church" help?
- Watch a video of a pair bonded Gibbons singing a duet to protect their land and children. What can you learn from this about the union of a husband and wife, and Christ and the church?
- http://www.youtube.com/watch? v=85MBsMXIY6Y
- What does it mean for Christ to wash the church with water through the word? How is your church allowing Christ to do this?
- How can love and respect be like the Gibbons song, with Christ and the church, and in marriage?



Prayer:

Father, this is a hard teaching. It's fairly easy to talk about your Son living within us, but much harder to talk about how this affects our key relationships. Submission for many of us is a dirty word that has been misused. We feel more comfortable doing as we please, except that if we're honest we know that much of what we do is really rebellion and outside the new life that you have given to us. Teach us the mystery of submitting as to Christ. Strengthen also all wives praying this prayer today to submit to and respect their husbands as their head, as to you Lord. Strengthen all husbands to love their wives, as Christ loved the Church. Bless all marriages everywhere and may they be a living testimony of the deep mystery of the wonder and tenderness of the unity of Christ and the church. In Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia

For the 280 voting members of the Assembly as they receive their papers and make their plans to attend. Pray for openness to the Holy Spirit's leading and a heart for discernment as they undertake their responsibilities at the 13th Assembly meeting.

DAY 16: TRAINING A CHICK IN THE WAY IT SHOULD GO (27th June, 17th July) "Honor your father and mother - which is the first commandment with a promise - so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth" Eph 6:2-3

>>> Day 16 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 6:1-4

One characteristic of a living organism is that they can reproduce. This is true of mammals, birds, lizards, plants, fish, and even single celled amoeba. Some animals have very little to do with their offspring. However others feed and train them until they are ready to leave the nest. For mammals it is mostly the mother that looks after the young. However, for most birds, both male and female parents care for the chicks because it takes so much work to feed and train them.

For instance, there is a bird called the Thick-billed Murre. It lives in the Pacific Coasts of Canada. It looks a little bit like a penguin as it is black and white but it is actually a type of Auk. When the egg is laid the male and female birds take turns keeping it warm until finally it is hatched. Both parents then continue to keep it warm and fed until it is about three weeks of age. Then it prepares to leave the colony with the male parent. They migrate together to the water, and the male parents trains the chick in flying and diving. This training with the father bird and the chick lasts until the chick is about 2 months age and can fly and feed itself.

As marriage was a distinctive relationship for the Christian so is the family. Once again verse 5:21, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ", is a good summary of how families should relate together. It's not easy when people live together. Throughout the history of humankind we have developed different ways of being together. Basically these ways are either dictatorship or democracy. However for those who live the life of Christ as new creatures, we are encouraged to embrace neither of these models. Instead we are to have a life of Christlike responsibility one with another, with some raised up as the compassionate head or leader, and others as respectful and loyal followers. All are valued equally, but each has a different role.



The male Thick-billed Murre and the baby chick leave the female bird to migrate to water. In the next few weeks the father bird trains the chick until the chick can fly and feed itself. In the same way Fathers are called to bring their children up in the training and instruction in the Lord.

This is what we learnt about in terms of marriage, with the husband being the head, and the wife to submit, just as Christ is the head of the Church. And now we see that it is similar with children and parents.

Once again we do not see a democracy. Children are told first of all to obey their parents in the Lord, for this is right (6:1). Note as with the wife that the submission, obedience comes as to the Lord, or in this case, "in the Lord." It may be very difficult at times for Christian children to obey parents who they disagree with, or they don't understand why they can't do what they want to do. It is the relationship with Christ, being "in him" that gives the strength to be able to do this with honour and respect. For they are told not only to obey but to honour. Children are promised as they honour their father and mother that it would go well with them and that they would enjoy long life on the earth (6:3).

Secondly, in regards to the father's role, we do not see a dictatorship, even though they have been given the role as head of the wife, and now the family. Yes, they have been given leadership, but with it also comes

responsibility. Fathers are told to not exasperate their children (6:4a). They are not to dominate and pick at them with negative words and actions to meet their own needs. Instead they are challenged to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. As the male thick-billed Murre's final primary duty was to train his chick, so training and instruction is the father's primary role. There is an action that is "in the Lord" for both the children and the fathers. For the fathers prime role is to train up their children in the Lord's way. This is so there would truly not only be a genetic reproduction but also a spiritual, so that one day these children might also become new creations by grace through their own faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is significant that the church is not only called a body, a building, and a bride, but it is also seen as a family. In Ephesians 2:19 it says: "Consequently you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members and God's household." Together as the body of Christ we are more than coworkers or colleagues. We are family together in the Lord. As a family in Christ, rather than our churches running as dictatorships or democracies let us learn from this passage today how to live in community where the Lord raises up particular people into leadership whether it be as Minister, Elders, or Church Councillors. There is a Godly respect that should be given to our leaders within the church, more akin to honouring our fathers and mothers, than the respect for bosses. Likewise, lording it over and dominating people without care for their personal feelings should have no place in a leader's care for their flock. There is a great wisdom in this way of walking. It is the way of Christ. Let us humbly learn it in our families and in our church, for it is now part of our new spiritual DNA. For we are a living organism - Christ's living community, his body and family.



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union

The Basis of Union, in paragraph 15 talks about how Christ is supreme in his Church, and how each council knows the limits of its authority and give heed to other councils of the church. This is so that the whole body of believers may be united by mutual submission in the service of the gospel. Reflect on Ephesians 6 and the relationship encouraged between children and parents and parents to children. How can these two passages inform how we live in church together? Why is mutual submission so important for unity?

"The Uniting Church acknowledges that Christ alone is supreme in his Church, and that he may speak to it through any of its councils. It is the task of every council to wait upon God's Word, and to obey God's will in the matters allocated to its oversight. Each council will recognise the limits of its own authority and give heed to other councils of the Church, so that the whole body of believers may be united by mutual submission in the service of the Gospel (Paragraph 15 Basis of Union)."

The Basis of Union affirms the place of leadership in the church. Read the following passages and reflect on the importance of leadership for the service of the gospel. Why is it important for the church to respect leaders and also value those being led?

The Uniting Church, from inception, will seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit to recognise among its members women and men called of God to **preach the Gospel, to lead the people in worship, to care for the flock, to share in government and to serve those in need in the world (**Paragraph 14 Basis of Union)."



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union continued

"The Uniting Church recognises that responsibility for government in the Church belongs to the people of God by virtue of the gifts and tasks which God has laid upon them. The Uniting Church therefore so organises its life that locally, regionally and nationally government will be entrusted to representatives, men and women, bearing the gifts and graces with which God has endowed them for the building up of the Church. The Uniting Church is governed by a series of inter-related councils, each of which has its tasks and responsibilities in relation both to the Church and the world (Basis of Union)."

"The Elders' or Leaders' Meeting (the council within a congregation or group of congregations) consists of the minister and those who are called to share with the minister in oversight. It is responsible for building up the congregation in faith and love, sustaining its members in hope, and leading them into a fuller participation in Christ's mission in the world (Paragraph 15b Basis of Union)."

??? Questions:

 Watch a video about Thick-billed Murres. What does the Father bird need to teach the chick.

http://video.nationalgeographic.com/ video/animals/birds-animals/seabirds/ murres thickbilled/

- How do you react to the word "obey"? Some in our society see obedience as immaturity, and rebellion as a sign of growth. What do you see it as?
- In Luke 2:51-52 Jesus went back from the temple when he was 12 years old and obeyed his parents. He "grew in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and men." Why is obedience the pathway to growth and long life on earth?
- In what way are we called to live in community in families and in our church family? How is this different to democracy and dictatorship?

Prayer: Heavenly Father, once again this is a hard teaching. Strengthen every young person reading this to know the wisdom in obeying and honouring their parents. Show them how to obey "in the Lord." Teach us a church family the wisdom of obedience as the pathway to growth. Thank you for all those you have raised up to be leaders. Thank you for all fathers and mothers who you have set aside to lead in their families. Teach them by your grace to live in a new way, where they are active in training and instructing their children in your ways, without exasperating them. Grant us the grace Heavenly Father, to live responsibly as families of Christ with honour and respect to our leaders, and care and love for those who are being led. Show us how to be united as a body of believers in mutual submission to one another in the service of the gospel you have given us to preach. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia

Pray with thanksgiving for the work of the many Agencies, Working Groups and Committees that enable to work of the Assembly, and church, to be advanced through their gifts, dedication and hard work. They present their reports on Tuesday and Wednesday July 14 and 15.

DAY 17: LIFE IN THE WORKPLACE + THE DESERT MOLE RAT (28th June, 18th July)
"Serve wholeheartedly as if you serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the
Lord will reward each one of you for whatever good you do, whether you are slave or free.

Ephesians 6:7-8

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Day 17 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 6:5-9

All animals work. The dictionary defines work as "exertion or effort directed to produce or accomplish something; labour; toil." Animals work to find food, shelter, protection from enemies, and also for some upbringing and training of the young. Occasionally animals work together in complex hierarchical societies with different members taking on different roles. This is called eusocial. Most examples of this are in the insect world, including ants, bees and termites. However there are two species of mammals where this also occurs. They are both species of mole rats: the naked mole rat and the Damaraland mole rat. The naked mole rat, or desert mole rat, is a rodent that lives in East Africa. They live in colonies of up to 100 creatures in large burrows under the desert and grass lands.

The colonies are very well organised into a sophisticated social system. A large queen mole rat rules the roost, with the largest males being her mates. The rest of the colony are non-breeding males and females that take on different roles in the community.



The desert mole rats have different roles in the community. Some clean and feed weaned babies. Others collect food, and yet others are set aside to dig or be soldiers. It is the queen rat that alone gives birth to young and rules the roost. As each works for the good of the community in their set role, whatever we do in the workplace should be done to the Lord, whether we are a leader or a worker. Unlike the bossy Mole Rat Queen, each of us should treat the other with respect for there is no favouritism with the Lord.

Only the queen gives birth to young and suckles them. However, there are workers whose role it is to clean and feed weaned babies. The smallest mole rats are given the role of collecting food such as plant roots. As the mole rats get bigger they are given other tasks such as being diggers and soldiers. Sometimes the queen patrols the tunnels pushing and shoving the workers and checking on the breeding state of females. When the queen finally dies there is a battle to see who will be next queen. (Exploring the secrets of nature Editor Michael Bright (c) 1994 Readers Digest pg 128-129).

In our passage today Paul addresses the third group of relationships in which we should walk wisely, that of slaves and masters. For our context we will talk about workers and bosses. Slaves have responsibilities in their work for their masters. They are called to obey their earthly masters with respect, fear and sincerity of heart, just as they would obey Christ (6:5). Once again as with wives and children, the submission, respect and obedience to the leader is to be done to and in the Lord. This changes our response in the workplace. It doesn't matter what work we are doing, whether it be manual labour, a professional job, studies, or work at home, all that we do should be done to the Lord, with respect and obedience to our earthly bosses. Paul tells the slaves, to obey their masters not only to win their favour when their eye is on them but as slaves of Christ, doing God's will from their hearts (v 6:6). This is walking in our new life as light, understanding what pleases the Lord (5: 10) and in wisdom, understanding the Lord's will (5:17). Our goal as workers in the workplace is to do God's will from our heart, to serve wholeheartedly as if we were serving the Lord not men (6:7). Even if our bosses don't see what we are doing, the Lord sees and we are promised a reward from God for our faithfulness (6:8).

As with all the other relationships, there are responsibilities not only for the follower or worker, but also for the leader, in this case the master, or boss. In the time Ephesians was written Masters had no responsibility at all regarding their slaves. They were possessions to do with as they wished. However, here masters are told to treat their slaves in the same way remembering that the Lord's reward for doing good is not only for the slave but also for the free. They are told not to threaten their slaves, or workers because the One who is master of all is in heaven, and there is no favouritism with Him (6:9). If we have workers under us in any situation it is humbling to remember that there is always somebody above us who is watching at all times how we treat our workers. Are we more than a desert mole rat controlling her burrow with intimidation and threats, ordering and pushing herself around as if nobody else mattered? All that we do as bosses is also to be done in and to the Lord. That is the mystery and wonder of community living as Christians.

The last three readings have been all to do with social responsibility: in marriage; in families; and in the workplace. In all three we have pictures of leaders and followers each with responsibility so that the relationships and community that is built, is life giving for all. These passages don't talk of the rights of each group but rather the responsibilities of each group. All are called to humbly do their part as to the Lord, with respect of the other. All are equally valued, yet they have different roles.

🤲 Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union

In the following paragraphs, the Basis of Union encourages servant leadership like Christ. Reflect on the relationship between slaves and masters in Ephesians 6 and compare with the following passages. How can we as a church, live with different functions and roles for individuals and councils, with each and every person sees themselves in the form of a servant of Christ? How can we respect the role of leadership and the authority of councils, yet at the same time remember that there is no favouritism with God and each is called to serve one to another?

"The Uniting Church recognises the responsibility and freedom which belong to councils to acknowledge gifts among members for the fulfilment of particular functions. The Uniting Church sees in pastoral care exercised personally on behalf of the Church an expression of the fact that God always deals personally with people, would have God's loving care known among people, and would have individual members take upon themselves the form of a servant (Paragraph 16 Basis of Union)."

In entering into this union the Churches concerned are mindful that the Church of God is committed to serve the world for which Christ died. Paragraph 1 Basis of Union

"The Uniting Church affirms that every member of the Church is engaged to confess the faith of Christ crucified and to be his faithful servant (Paragraph 13 Basis of Union)."

(Synod) It has responsibility for the general oversight, direction and administration of the Church's worship, witness and service in the region allotted to it, with such powers and authorities as may from time to time be determined by the Assembly (Par 15d. BOU)."

(Assembly) It has determining responsibility for matters of doctrine, worship, government and discipline, including the promotion of the Church's mission, the establishment of standards of theological training and reception of ministers from other communions, and the taking of further measures towards the wider union of the Church. It makes the guiding decisions on the tasks and authority to be exercised by other councils. It is obligatory for it to seek the concurrence of other councils, and on occasion of the congregations of the Church, on matters of vital importance to the life of the Church (Paragraph 15 (e) Basis of Union)."

Questions:

- Watch a video about the naked mole rats (desert mole rats). What role does work have in their society?
- http://www.youtube.com/watch? v=YHp4bKRoh7M
- What is your job, or what jobs have you done in the past? Have you ever found it difficult to respect or obey your boss? When and how?
- Have you ever been a boss of others? What was it
- How does Paul say we should live as workers in the workplace? As bosses with workers under us?
- The Basis of Union talks about all individual members taking on the form of a servant. What is the difference between servant leadership and leadership as we know in the world? What changes do we need to make in our own leadership style?
- How can we as a church, live with different functions and roles for individuals and councils, with each and every person sees themselves in the form of a servant of Christ?
- How can we respect the role of leadership and the authority of councils, yet at the same time remember that there is no favouritism with God and each is called to serve one to another?

A Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us the gift of work. Teach us what it means to do our work as Slaves of Christ, as to the Lord. May each person praying this prayer find a new value in the work that they do, as they do it to serve you. We pray that you would help workers to respect and obey their bosses and to do their work wholeheartedly. Help bosses to not intimidate and threaten their workers but always be mindful that you are their Master and you see what they are doing. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia

Pray for the four nominees for President elect; and any others who are nominated after this list was established. They are Rev Dr Chris Walker (from NSW / ACT), Rev Dr Anita Monro (from NSW / ACT), Rev Ken Williams (from WA) and Mr Stuart McMillan (from the Northern Synod) that the Lord of the church will uphold them as they go through this process and that the Holy Spirit will guide the members of the Assembly about who is to be elected as President – elect. The first ballot will be Wednesday July 15.

"There is a distinct Christian way of being in community that is in. stark comparison to the world. It is neither a democracy or a dictatorship. Verse 21 sums this up. "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." What is so distinctive about our relationship now is, that in every relationship, we offer love, submission or respect to the other, as if it were to Christ (Life overflowing, page 44)."

DAY 18:THE MUSK-OX +SPIRITUAL WARFARE (29th June, 19th July)

"Be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes." Ephesians 6:10-11.

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Day 18 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 6:10-18 life of battle in the Lord

Almost every animal has some means of protection against predators. They do this in many, varied and sometimes ingenious ways. Some find safety in numbers, such as the catfish. Others learn how to stay very still so as not to be noticed, such as the deer. Others can change their appearance to fool predators, create an illusion or disguise themselves, such as the ostrich, glass frog and mantis. And still others play possum and some even let off offensive smells such as the skunk. There are also some that have inbuilt armour they can draw upon in the time of attack, such as the armadillos, tortoise and echidna; whilst others can move

very fast away from danger, such as the Australian kangaroo. And still there are others who simply by their size dissuade other animals from taking them on, such as the rhinoceros.

Some animals, when confronted by danger, take their stand together and at the same time protect their young. One such animal that does this is the musk-ox from the Arctic. When they get threatened they form a circle with their young in the middle and their sharp horns facing outwards towards their foes. They can be fearsome against an enemy charging with their massive bulk and deadly horns.



The musk-oxen when confronted with danger stand together in a circle facing out, with their young in the middle. We are called to stand our ground with our full armor on when the day of evil comes.

Watchman Nee tells us in his book on Ephesians "sit, walk, stand" that we first are to learn to

sit with Christ in the heavenly places

Secondly we then are to learn to **walk** in our relationship with others
and finally we are called to **stand** when faced with our enemy the devil. (page 45)

We cannot learn to stand against the devil's schemes unless we have first learnt to sit with Christ in the heavenly places, for it is only in Christ that we can stand. We will forget that the victory has already been won and our part now is not battle but standing. Until we learn to walk in love, light and wisdom with others we will also find it difficult when faced with Satan, because we will confuse where our battle truly lies.

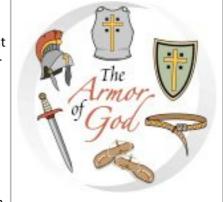
In Ephesians 6 Paul describes how we should respond to the devil's attack. As with walking, we are called to be strong, not in ourselves but in Christ (v. 10). If we attempt to be strong in ourselves we will fail. The tortoise is protected because of its shield of armour around it. It is defenceless without this. Christ is our shield. In him we can be strong and powerful. We are called to put on the full armour of God so that we can take a stand against the devil's schemes. Christ is the one who protects us and stands around us in the battle. For the very pieces of armour that we are to put on are Christ himself. We are called to put on each piece, for if we fail to put on one we are vulnerable.

We are reminded that our battle isn't against people but against the rulers, authorities, power of this dark world, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (v 12). Already, we have learnt how to walk with wisdom as to the Lord with people in authority over us as described in the readings in our last few days. That is not where the battle lies. It is against evil spiritual forces both on earth and in heaven.

Again, we are called to put on the **full armour of God** so that when the evil day comes we may be able to stand our ground and then, after we've done everything, to stand (v 13). We are not called to use

defensive methods such as playing dead, illusion, fleeing, smell disguise that many different animals use in nature. Instead like the Musk-ox we are called to stand firm with our full armour on. What is this armour that we are to put on? It can't be an earthly armour (2 Cor 10:4) because our battle isn't against flesh and blood.

The first part of the armour is the **belt of truth** buckled around our waist. When Paul wrote Ephesians, the belt was important for the soldiers of the day as they placed weapons such as swords upon it, but also it held everything else in. It is truth that holds us together in the battle. In todays world the notion of truth is seen as suspicious and even



intolerant. However Jesus himself said in John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth and the life: no one comes to the Father, but by me." Christ himself is our truth.

The second piece of armour is protection for our heart, the **breastplate of righteousness** (v. 14b). The heart undefended is an easy target for the enemy. So too the devil will attack us in this area. However it is Christ's righteousness that protects us. He has made us clean, and we stand in faith not in our own purity but in the righteousness of Christ.

Thirdly, we are called to put on our feet the readiness that comes from the gospel of

peace. It is interesting that in the battle, in the fight, we are to wear shoes of peace. Sometimes during the time when Ephesians was written the Roman soldiers would have spikes on their shoes, so that they could stand their ground and fight. What enables us to dig in to the battle, is our readiness to declare the peace that Christ brings: peace with God, and peace with others, for Christ is the prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).

Fourthly we are to take up the **shield of faith** reading to put out all the flaming arrows of the evil one (v16). The biggest danger for the soldiers were arrows tipped with flames sent against them. Even in this, it is Christ who is the faithful one. We trust not in our own effort to build up faith, but in Christ's faithfulness, remembering that Christ said all we need is faith as small as a mustard seed. This faith in Christ's faithfulness becomes a shield in front of us, and we are promised that this shield will put out all these flaming darts sent against us by the devil.

Fifthly we are to take up the **helmet of salvation.** This is the protection for our minds against the devil. Much of our battle against the evil one and its minions will be in the mind. We are told in 2 Cor 10:5b "We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." We have been saved by grace through faith, not by works so that no one can boast (Eph 2:8-9). Our helmet of salvation isn't earned. Rather it is a gift from God because of what Christ has done for us upon the cross in paying the penalty for our sins. Christ is our helmet, Christ is our salvation.

Finally, we take up the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God (v17b). All the other pieces of armour are for our defense. The sword of the Spirit is our only weapon for attack. Again, it is Christ who is our sword, because he is the Word that was in the beginning through whom all things were made (John 1:1-3). It is as we soak ourselves in the revelation of Christ as testified in the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Spirit gives us the power to speak God's word for that specific occasion that will obliterate the devil's forces. In other words, "Read the word, Speak the word, Live the Word"



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union

Read below the following passage from Paragraph 8 and paragraph 15 (c) in the Basis of Union. Compare and contrast with the armour of God and standing our ground against the evil one, mentioned in Ephesians 6.

"Thus the people of God, through faith and the gift and power of the Holy Spirit, have communion with their Saviour, make their sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, proclaim the Lord's death, grow together into Christ, are **strengthened for their participation in the mission of Christ in the world,** and rejoice in the foretaste of the Kingdom which Christ will bring to consummation (Paragraph 8 Basis of Union)."

(Presbytery) "It will in particular exercise oversight over the congregations within its bounds, encouraging them to **strengthen one another's faith**, to bear one another's burdens, and exhorting them to fulfil their high calling in Christ Jesus (Paragraph 15 c Basis of Union)."

The Basis of Union, speaks about the different parts of the armor of God. Read the passages below and reflect what each might mean as we stand our ground in spiritual warfare.

Belt of truth:

"The Uniting Church will keep its law under constant review so that its life may increasingly be directed to the service of God and humanity, and its worship to a true and faithful setting forth of, and response to, the Gospel of Christ (Paragraph 17)."

"The Uniting Church enters into unity with the Church throughout the ages by its use of the confessions known as the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed. The Uniting Church receives these as authoritative statements of the Catholic Faith, framed in the language of their day and used by Christians in many days, to declare and to guard the right understanding of that faith (Paragraph 9 Basis of Union)."

Breastplate of righteousness

"made in Jesus a representative beginning of a **new order of righteousness and love** (paragraph 3 Basis of Union)."

Shoes readiness to announce good news of peace

"In this union these Churches commit their members... to hear anew the commission of the Risen Lord to **make disciples of all nations (**Paragraph 1 Basis of Union)."

Shield of faith

To God in Christ **all people are called to respond in faith** (Paragraph 3 Basis of Union)." Christ reaches out to command people's attention and **awaken faith** (Paragraph 4 Basis of Union)."

It is Christ who awakens, purifies and advances in people the faith and hope in which alone such benefits can be accepted (Paragraph 6 Basis of Union)."

"The Uniting Church acknowledges that the Church has received the books of the Old and New Testaments as unique prophetic and apostolic testimony, in which it hears the Word of God and **by which its faith and obedience are nourished and regulated (Paragraph 5** Basis of Union)."

"So that the congregation of **Christ's people may again and again be reminded of the grace which justifies them through faith (**Paragraph 10 Basis of Union)."



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union continued

Helmet of salvation

"they look for a continuing renewal in which God will use their common worship, witness and service to set forth the word of salvation for all people Paragraph 1Basis of Union)."

"The Word of God on whom salvation depends is to be heard and known from Scripture appropriated in the worshipping and witnessing life of the Church (Paragraph 5 Basis of Union)."

The whole work of salvation is effected by the sovereign grace of God alone (Pargraph 3 BOU)."

Sword of Spirit - word of God

"When the Church preaches Jesus Christ, its message is controlled by the Biblical witnesses (Paragraph 5 Basis of Union)."

"They remain open to constant reform under His word (paragraph 1 Basis of Union)."

??? Questions:

- Which animal's defense do you most closely identify with that you use yourself when attacked.
- Watch a video of the Musk-ox? Why was the baby attacked in the first story? How did they do better in the second?

http://www.youtube.com/watch? v=pb6Rke7jiTc

- What defense should we have against the devil's schemes? (See verse 10-11) In what ways is that like the Musk-ox? What do we need to put on?
- What schemes of the devil have you been facing lately? How does our reading today from Ephesians help you in this battle?
- The Musk-oxen strengthen one another in unity as they stand against an enemy.
 The Basis of Union calls presbyteries to "strengthen one another's faith." How can we do that for one another?



Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you that you are growing us in our new life in Christ to not only sit with Christ in the heavenly realms, walk with others in love, light and wisdom, but also to stand firm against our enemy, the devil. Help us to be faithful in putting on each piece of the armour. Help us not to be arrogant thinking that we can face the devil without it. Clothe us with your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our defence and our shield, the fulfillment of every piece of armour that we are called to wear. Remind us that it is only through Christ that we have the victory over the devil and his minions and can stand our ground. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr. Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia

Remember the General Secretary and the staff of the Secretariat as they manage the process for the Assembly preparations. Pray for the General Secretary as he awaits the discernment of the church about whether he should receive an extension for another three year term from the end of 2012

DAY 19 - THE HEARTBEAT OF PRAYER (30th June, 20th July)

"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests." With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. Eph 6:18

>>> Day 19 - Bible Reading: Ephesians 6:18-20 - Life of prayer

If I told you to beat your heart you would look at me strangely. Your heart doesn't stop beating. It doesn't need to be told to beat. It is our heart that pumps oxygen around our body to give life to every organ, every

tissue, every cell within the body. If our heart stops beating for very long we cease to live, because there is no part of our body that can survive without oxygen.

In our reading from Ephesians today we are told to pray in the spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests (6:18). We are also told to be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints. It reminds us of Ephesians 5:20, when we are told to always give thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Most people see this challenge to always pray these prayers of petition, and thanksgiving as an extreme that is not meant to be taken literally. However, what if our prayers in the Spirit were meant to be more like a heartbeat than an action that we sometimes do when we remember? Oswald Chambers said: "Prayer is the vital breath of the Christian; not the thing that makes him alive, but the evidence that he is alive (Oswald Chambers, Prayer, a Holy Occupation, page 142)."

Our heart pumps oxygen to every cell in our body, giving life to each

part. We do not need to tell our heart to beat to do this pumping. In the same way we are called to pray in the Spirit for all kinds of prayer and requests. These prayers give life to the body. We are to always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. By the power of the Holy Spirit, our prayers are to become more like a heartbeat rather than an action.

The key to this is to pray in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who gives

us the power to change a ritual into an integral part of our very existence. The Holy Spirit can change our prayer life from a liturgy into an unceasing heart beat which brings life to every part of the body which is prayed for. As the heart pumps oxygen to every cell, it is prayer, worship and thanksgiving that pumps Christ's presence, life and love to every tissue, organ, and cell within the body of Christ. This capacity to pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks is what God wants for us (1 Th 5:17-18). It can only be "in Christ Jesus." As all of Ephesians 4-6 is impossible without our new life with Christ, so is this call to unceasing prayer and thanksgiving. However when we are grafted into Christ and his family by grace through faith, our new DNA has this capacity, because Christ has it, and his DNA is now ours. As with the armour of God, this too is an important part of our standing firm against the enemy from our position of sitting with Christ in the heavenly realms.

Paul asks the Ephesian church to not only pray for all the saints but to pray specifically for him. He asks prayers not that he would be freed from prison, but that he would be given the words to fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel. This gospel is why he is now an ambassador in chains. He asks again that he may declare it fearlessly (6:19-20).

Our prayers for one another need to take a lesson from this prayer request. We are not to pray for one another's comfort alone, but rather for courage and determination to do all that Christ is calling us to do, despite the consequences. Our prayers should be that each person be flowing in agape love; Christlike love that lays down our lives for the good of another, despite what might happen to us as a result. If the Lord answered this prayer request, what would most likely be the answer? Paul was not only imprisoned, he ended up dying for his faith in love for his Lord, and in love for all the people especially Gentiles to whom he told the good news of Jesus Christ.

We are nearly at the end of 20 days, or 40 if you have repeated this book. This book is meant to be encouraging all of us in praying in Jesus' name for repentance and revival in our own life, the life of our family, church, workplace, town, city, region, country and the world. I pray that the Lord would be encouraging your prayer life through these daily reflections on the word, and that each of us grow in worship, prayer and thanksgiving to our Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit from ritual to heart beat, life overflowing.



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union

In the Basis of Union, prayer is encouraged in many ways. Read the following paragraphs and compare with the prayer Paul encourages in Ephesians 6:18-20

"The Uniting Church prays that, through the gift of the Spirit, God will constantly correct that which is erroneous in its life, will bring it into deeper unity with other Churches, and will use its worship, witness and service to God's eternal glory through Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen (Paragraph 18 Basis of Union)."

"They pray that this act may be to the glory of God the Father, The Son and the Holy Spirit (Paragaph 1 Basis of Union)."

It prays that it may be ready when occasion demands to confess the Lord in fresh words and deeds (Paragraph 11)."

"The Presbytery **will ordain by prayer and the laying on of hands**.... It recognizes Christ's call of the individual to be his minister; **it prays** for the enabling power of the Holy Spirit to equip the minister for that service (Paragraph 14a Basis of Union)

"It invites any such continuing bodies (Agencies) immediately to enter a period of self—examination in which members are asked to consider afresh their common commitment to the Church's mission and their demonstration of its unity. **The Uniting Church prays that God will enable them** (agencies) to order their lives for these purposes (Basis of Union)

"Prayer is the vital breath of Christians; not the thing that makes us alive, but the evidence that we are alive."

Oswald Chambers, *Prayer: A Holy Occupation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 1992), 142.

•??? Questions:

- Watch a video on circulation http://www.youtube.com/watch?
 v=Pgl80Ue-AMo. What does our heart do?
- For a moment place your hand on your heart and feel your heart beating. Why is it silly to ask your heart to beat?
- How can we pray without ceasing and in everything give thanks? What would it mean practically in shifting the understanding of our prayer life from a ritual to a heart beat?
- What do we pray for others? What did Paul asked to be prayed for? Are we courageous enough to pray this prayer for our loved ones despite the consequences?
- What does the Basis of Union encourage us to pray for? Are we doing this?



Heavenly Father, thank you so much that you have called us all in Christ, to a life of prayer. Forgive us for not understanding and ignoring those words of scripture that call us to unceasing prayer. Teach us by the power of the Holy Spirit to move from prayer as a habit or ritual into Christlike prayer which is the very heartbeat of our life. May our prayers give life to your body throughout the world. Teach us also by your Spirit and your grace to pray prayers for one another that are more in keeping with your will, rather than our own needs and wants. Grant us the grace to pray courageous prayers that will empower the church to become a vessel of Christ's agape love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia

Pray with thanks for, and on behalf of, Frontier Services as it brings a proposal that the UCA recommit itself to standing in support with the people of remote Australia, in this the centenary year of the foundation of the Australian Inland Mission (of which it is a successor organisation).

"The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power to change a ritual into an integral part of our very existence. The Holy Spirit can change our prayer life from a liturgy into an unceasing heart beat which brings life to every part of the body which is prayed for. As the heart pumps oxygen to every cell, it is prayer, worship and thanksgiving that pumps Christ's presence, life and love to every tissue, organ, and cell within the body of Christ (*Life Overflowing*, page 57)."

"Pray also for me, that.
whenever I speak, words
may be given me so that I
will fearlessly make
known the mystery of the
gospel, for which I am an.
ambassador in chains.
Pray that I may declare it.
fearlessly, as I should."
Ephesians 6:19-20

DAY TWENTY - ENDINGS AND THAT WHICH DOESN'T END (1st July, 21st July)

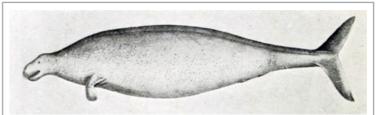
"Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love" Eph 6:24



>>> Day 20 - Bible Reading: Eph 6:21-24

This is our final day, either day 20 or day 40 for those who have repeated it. Almost everything has an

ending. Even species of living organisms through history have become extinct. We remember such animals as the dinosaur Tyrannosaurus Rex, the Quagga which is half zebra and half horse; the Tasmanian Tiger native to Australia and New Guinea; the huge water living Steller's sea cow, the Irish Deer which was the largest deer ever to live and the Persian or Caspian Tiger from the Middle East.



The Steller's sea cow is now extinct. Most things come to an end even sadly species of animals. However in the final verse of Ephesians the blessing of grace is given to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love. It is faith, hope and love that will continue, however the greatest of these is love.

However at the very end of Ephesians, Paul

describes one thing that doesn't have an ending. He gives a blessing of Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love (6:24). Is there one thing about your life that you hope would never perish? In 1 Corinthians 13 we are told that three things remain: faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love. Let us go over in a short summary what the book of Ephesians has said about love.

Ephesians began remembering God's love and richness of grace given to us through Jesus Christ that we might have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (1:7). We remembered in Ephesians 2 that it was because of God's great love for us that God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ, even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace we have been saved (2:4). We then recalled in Ephesians 3, Paul's prayer that the Ephesians be rooted and established in love, and that they might have the power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge (3:17b-19a). In the latter part of Chapter four, we learnt how, now we live a new life in Christ, we are called to put off the old and put on the new. In each instance the new life was the way of love. In Chapter 5 we are called to imitate God, and walk in the way of love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God. The bar was set high with Christ's agape love becoming our standard. We observe in the latter part of Chapter five and the first part of Chapter six several examples of relationships, the first being the husband loving the wife, as Christ loved the church. We then looked at spiritual warfare and prayer.

This life overflowing that we have talked about in the last few weeks doesn't come to an end like most things on this earth, because this life is centred in the rich grace and love of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and this love is eternal. Those who receive this love by faith, are empowered by the Spirit and by grace in turn to walk in the way of love with others. The key to life overflowing is love: first of all receiving love from the Father; and then loving others; and finally in the last verse of the whole book, the grace to love Christ with a love that never dies. We sit in the heavenly realms in Christ's love, we walk in love for one another here on the earth, we battle and stand against the devil, against hatred, that love might prevail, and finally we love Christ with an undying ,eternal love. This is the living organism of Christ's body called the church, being brought into being through faith, hope and love. This is life overflowing. This is eternal life.



Golden Nuggets from the Basis of Union

The basis of Union finishes with the following paragraph. Read and compare with the ending in Ephesians especially of grace and love. Again the focus comes back in prayer for our hope for the future, not in our own action and ability to call ourselves to repentance, but instead to the gift of God's grace by His Spirit, to constantly correct that which is erroneous in our life. This utter dependance upon God finishes with humility and grace in the same way that the Basis of Union started. Reflect what it would mean for the Uniting Church if we really prayed that, through the gift of the Spirit, God would constantly correct that which is erroneous in our life.

"The Uniting Church affirms that it belongs to the people of God on the way to the promised end. The Uniting Church prays that, through the gift of the Spirit, God will constantly correct that which is erroneous in its life, will bring it into deeper unity with other Churches, and will use its worship, witness and service to God's eternal glory through Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen (paragraph 18)."

??? Questions:

Watch a movie about extinct animals

http://www.youtube.com/watch? v=PbeTrnfk9v4&feature=related

- . What is your favourite that you wish was still alive today?
- Who does Paul give grace to in the very last verse of Ephesians.
- In what ways is agape "love" a key theme of Ephesians?
- What have you learnt from these last 20 or 40 days? What have you grown in understanding in?

"Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love (Ephesians 6:24)."

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, We worship you this day and thank you for sustaining us through these last 20 or 40 days. May all that we have learnt bear good fruit in our lives. We ask you this day to grant to us more and more understanding how wide, and long, and high and deep is your love through Jesus Christ our Lord. Help us not only to receive more and more of this love to ourselves as we sit in the heavenly realms with Christ, but empower us to keep on walking the way of love with other people in our life. Strengthen us to stand against the hatred of the devil and to keep on praying and wearing the armour that your give us. Finally empower each and every one of us to love your Son our Lord Jesus Christ, with an undying love. All glory and honour and praise and power be to you now and forever more. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

Prayer Points from Rev Dr Terrence Corkin, General Secretary of the Uniting Church in Australia

Pray for UnitingWorld and its staff as it brings together a program for the 40 plus overseas visitors from our partner churches who will be in attendance and all the practical arrangement involved.

"Breath In (Breathe out)" by Rev Dr. Andrew Dutney

Breathe in, breathe out Breathe deep and slow Let life be alive in you Rest and let go

Instrumental

Breath in, breathe out
Rest and let go
One word in a frenzied mind
"Be still and know"

Instrumental

Rest and let go Be still and know

Rest and let go Be still and know

Andrew Dutney 2011

http://introducingtheuca.typepad.com/introducing_the_uniting_c/2012/02/index.html

In considering the influence of the Holy Spirit in shaping the church,

I offer a vision of the Church

as a CUP,

a CUP filled with various human activities, human structures, church traditions, which consume time and energy.

The CUP is to be emptied of all physical focus, all activities structures and traditions.

These are to be spread around the CUP

which is filled and overflowing with the Holy Spirit

The Spirit flows out into every part of the church and all that has been placed around the CUP is moved along by the Spirit.

Those aspects of the life of the Church which God desires to keep will float those expressions of church that are no longer part of God's plan will sink.

In this vision total control of the shape of the future church is given over to the Holy Spirit.

Traditions which may have been very dear might sink and be replaced by new structures, new traditions

Such obedience to the Will of the Spirit may be painful, but there must always be openness to the Tide of the Spirit.

What is to the shape of the church in the future?

That is in the hands of God and the movement of the Holy Spirit,

with our part being to flow with the Spirit,

as we are directed to our place within the

Living Creation known as the Church.

Roger Hibbard

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE OVERFLOWING

Lesson One: Identity in Christ

Outcome: As Christians our identity is in Christ. God has given us spiritual blessings that we receive in Christ.

Preparation at home: Read Day 1, Day 2, Day 3 of prayer book, focussing on Day 2 (pg 10-12)

Fellowship: Enjoy talking together while people arrive. You might like to have some refreshments.

Opening Prayer

Life in Nature: DNA

Read out loud these two paragraphs that Rev Anne wrote. They come from page 10 of the prayer book.

What is life? Every living thing is made up of cells. I remember the day I heard I was pregnant with my first daughter. It was so incredible to think that a life was within me. That life started as one single cell, a fertilised egg, with a seed from both my husband and myself. Now that cell is an amazing young woman whom I enjoy very much getting to know as an adult.

For Bella, that initial cell formed at conception was the beginning of her life, a union of love between a husband and a wife. That original cell had DNA, that even though Bella grew and grew, those genetic traits remained the same. Those genetic traits are what makes Bella, Bella.

1)	Do I have any genes that I wished I didn't have; instead of seeing them as a blessing, I see them as a
	curse?

2) What genes do I have that I think are a blessing?

Life in Scripture

Read out loud Ephesians 1:3-14

1) What spiritual blessings are mentioned.	v 4 and 7	
,		
v 5	v 12	
v 13	v 13b and 14	
2) How many times does "in Christ" or something similar occurs?		
3) Why is this significant?		

Read out loud together the following paragraphs from page 10 of the prayer book

In our passage today we have a very long sentence that lasts in the original language from verses 3-14. In this sentence we come to understand the very essence of the life or blessings of the church. Even though the church has grown through history, the DNA of our life remains the same, of who we were originally created to be.

What is the DNA of the church? God had planned and chosen us as the church to have all of these blessings of spiritual life even before the creation of the world. They aren't something that we need to earn, as Bella didn't have to earn her genes. Our spiritual blessings are received by grace through our faith in Christ. Nor are they something we can pick and choose. When we are born again they become part of who we now are. They are as much a part of the church as genetic makeup is to a human being us. Each and every one of these blessings of life are "In Christ", for it is only "In Christ", that the Church and each individual member within her has life. Over and over in these verses 3-14 there is mention of being "in Christ." Our blessings or traits of life are "in Christ", for they describe the very nature of Christ himself. For Christ is our life, Christ is our identity, Christ is our spiritual DNA.

Christ's life in me, Christ's life in us

1)	What do I think about the idea of the spiritual blessings being like spiritual genes for the church?
	Do I have any difficulty with accepting any of them in my own life?
2)	A denomination such as the Uniting Church consists of many different forms eg., congregations, presbyteries, Synods, and Assembly. As we consider the different forms, what is it that makes us the church?
3)	What is common to all forms?
4)	How does having our spiritual DNA in Christ affect our understanding of unity?

Life in Prayer

Pray together the prayer below and /or pray your own prayers for each other. Pray a blessing on each person that they may become strong in their identity in Christ and that they might receive fully all the spiritual blessings from the Lord.

Thank you Father, for giving us a new identity when we came to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you that you have made us a part of a new humanity all with a common spiritual DNA. That spiritual DNA is Christ himself. Forgive us when we have lost our way and become insecure in who we are in Christ. Forgive us when we have tried to boost up our own self esteem in many ways that have been unhelpful and even damaging to us and to the body of Christ. In trying to find our life, we have lost it. Sometimes we have identified one aspect of who we are and believed the lie that is all we are. Teach us the good news that now our primary identity is in Jesus Christ our Lord. Our spiritual DNA has been transformed, and now we can receive from you, Father, all the spiritual blessings that Christ himself has inherited. By your grace help our church to rediscover our spiritual DNA in Jesus Christ, in every aspect of who we are, for your glory, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen

Lesson Two: Saved by grace

Outcome: We were dead in our transgressions but because of His love, God has saved us by grace through faith in Christ.

Preparation at home: Read day 4, day 5 of prayer book, focusing on day 4 (pg 15-16)

Fellowship: Enjoy talking together while people arrive. You might like to have some refreshments.

Opening Prayer

Life in Nature: Saving beetles

Read Rev Anne's story below (page 15 of the Prayer Book)

When I was growing up, we had an above ground pool in our back yard. I often would go out and try to rescue little black beetles that had wandered into the pool. We had this large net to get rid of all the leaves. I would scoop the beetles up and lift them out of the pool and put them onto the grass. That's all many of them needed. Some, however, were dead in the water. Like humans, they need air, not water to breathe. I placed some of these dead ones on the path near the pool and pressed gently down upon their bodies and sometimes out came some water and then they would start to wriggle. Just occasionally my efforts were rewarded and these beetles that once had no life, became living again.



As the beetles couldn't save themselves from my swimming pool and were reliant upon me to scoop them out and give them life, so we cannot save ourselves from sin. We are reliant upon God's grace and the gift of Christ's blood to wash us clean from sin and give us everlasting

......

1)	What were some of your early experiences of the death of living
	things?

2) What's the difference between a dead thing and an inanimate object?

Life in Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10

Read Ephesians 2:1-10.

1)	Before we had faith in Christ, how does Ephesians describe how we all used to live (2:1-3)?
2)	How do we move from spiritual death to life? v 4-9
3)	In our salvation what is the role of God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), and what is our role? v 4-9

Read the following paragraphs from page 15 of the prayer book

Today in our passage from Ephesians we are told that we once were dead, not in water, but in our sins following the ways of the ruler of the kingdom of the air; that is, the devil. Just like being immersed in water brings death to beetles, being immersed in sin brings death to humanity. Ephesians describes "sin" in verse 3 as "gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. All of us lived like this at one time, and we were all deserving of God's wrath (v 3b).

Those few fortunate beetles had a rescuer, and that was me. I did it because I loved little beetles and wanted them to live. They couldn't rescue themselves, no matter how hard they tried. In Ephesians we are told the wonderful news of our own spiritual rescue from death to life. God has made a way to rescue us from spiritual death. All of this is done, because He loves us and because He is rich in mercy, even while we were in our transgressions (v 4). We are told that we are made alive with Christ (v 5). Just like the beetles were no longer in the pool, we too by faith in Christ, are no longer in sin, for we are raised with Christ in the heavenly realms so that others might know the incredible riches of his grace expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus (v 7). The beetles couldn't earn their own rescue by striving hard to get out of the water, or by being very good little beetles. Nor can we earn our way out of sin and death. It is the gift of God's grace. Our part is to have faith in our redeemer, the Lord Jesus Christ and all that he did upon the cross. We then become born again created in Christ Jesus to do good works (v 10). These good works are not to free us from the pool of sin, but are a result of our now being alive in Christ.

Christ's life in me, Christ's life in us

1)	As the beetles needed a rescuer, in what way does each individual member of the church need a rescuer?
2)	Have I received this for my own life?
3)	In the Basis of Union in the Uniting Church in Australia, the ministers and instructors of the church are told to remind the congregation again and again of the grace which justifies us through faith. Is this being done in our church?

Life in Prayer:

Read the following prayer from the prayer book and/or pray your own prayers for one another. Pray for any who would like to come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father, Thank you so much for sending your son, our Lord Jesus Christ to rescue us from sin that leads to death. Thank you that you loved us even while we were still sinners, and by your grace you have made a way for us to move from spiritual death to becoming alive in Christ. Through faith in him, you have raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms. Help us never to forget that it is a gift, by your sovereign grace alone that we have been saved through faith. It is not by our hard work or effort, so that none of us can boast. Grant us the humility to receive this gift of grace by responding in faith without trying to add our own strivings to it as well. Thank you also that we have been born again, created anew in Christ to do good works which you prepared long ago for us to do. Help us to be faithful, as we live this abundant life in Christ, to do Christ's work on earth for your glory. Help us to be faithful to remind people again and again of the grace which justifies us through faith. In Jesus' name.

LESSON THREE: United with God and God's People

Outcome: Through faith in Christ, we share with Israel the promises of God and are united in one body with all who believe.

Preparation at home: Read day 6, day 7 and day 8 of prayer book, focusing on day 7 (pge

15-16)

Fellowship: Enjoy talking together while people arrive.

Opening Prayer

Life in Nature: Olive Graft

Read the following passages about grafting from the prayer book and/or watch the YouTube clip about grafting Watch an olive tree being grafted on YouTube from Greece.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pg08CF2HAts

In my reading I discovered that there are two types of olive trees. There are ones that are cultivated called **kallielaios**. They have rich and abundant fruit. The second are wild olives called agrielaios. These sprout up naturally and sometimes quite quickly in the ground close to the cultivated olive tree. However, they have little fruit and the fruit they do have is tasteless, and sometimes not even suitable for human consumption. Olive gardeners graft a branch from the



The "olive tree" that sits on my dining room table. Wild olive trees are grafted onto cultivated olive trees so that they can bear much fruit. It is through the gospel that we are grafted onto the Olive Tree of God's family.

cultivated olive tree and place it onto the wild olive tree. Good fruit then starts to grow where this graft is successful. pg 21



Grafting a tree. A small branch called a scion is taken from one tree and graft onto second tree cut diagonally (scion). As the graft takes, sap from the stock flows into the scion. So we too now being grafted into Christ, receive His strength, life and

Olive trees are grafted in the middle of summer when the olive tree is growing. A small twig called a "scion" is taken from one tree. All the leaves are removed and it is trimmed diagonally at the base. The second tree with good roots called the "understock" is cut off at a low level and then cut vertically. The scion is then placed beneath the bark or cambium layer into the cut on the stock . It is very important to line up the inner bark lines as this is where the bonding will take place and the joint life will flow. The sap flows through from the stock to the scion at this point. To hold the two together whilst they are growing as one, the graft is bound with soft plastic tape. Then grafting wax is put on to stop any sap loss. It will be obvious if the graft is successful because new growth will start shooting on the scion in a few weeks. pg 24

Have you ever grafted one plant to ano	ther?
What's the usual purpose of grafting?	
, , , , ,	

Life in Scripture: Ephesians 3:1-21

Read Ephesians 3:1-21 out loud

,	, ,	

Read Romans 11:24. In Romans 11, Paul describes the grafting in the opposite way to what is described in normal grafting on the opposite page. We as Gentiles are wild olive trees, and are grafted onto the cultivated olive tree of Israel, with the roots in the nourishing sap of Christ. It is through the gospel that we are grafted onto the olive tree of God's family (Eph 3:6). Why does Paul place this around the opposite way?

- 3) How does the image of grafting in Romans 11:24 link with our readings from Ephesians ?.....
- 4) When we receive by faith all that Christ has done upon the cross, where now are our roots? v17......

In our reading today from Ephesians Paul prays for the growth of the Christians in Ephesus. Using our picture of the olive tree graft, it is a prayer that now we have been made one with Christ, we might receive strength from the sap of His tree that we have been grafted into, so Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. We have been grafted in to the stock of Christ. Christ and His love is now where we receive our nourishing sap. In all this we remember that upon the cross, Christ was cut off at a low level, and pierced for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:5), ready for us as scions to be grafted in. This is love. All that Christ did for us upon the cross was love. As we receive the incredible gift of divine sap, again and again, we remember the wonder of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. As Andrew Murray said (Abide in Christ pg 44), our place of joining with Christ is in his wounds. We learn to abide in this place, for this is where we remember that Christ went to the cross because his roots were deep in love for the Father and love for us.

5) Christ was cut low for us upon the cross and pierced for our transgressions. Why is it important to remember and abide in this?

Christ's life in me, Christ's life in us

LIFE IN PRAYER Read the prayer below together and/or pray for one another Heavenly Father, thank you so much that you have made a way that not only the people of Israel can come to you and receive bountiful blessings, but also those who



An abundant olive tree. To be bear much fruit in our lives the whole of our life must be grafted in to the life of Christ.

aren't Jewish. Thank you that this is through Christ your son and what he accomplished upon the cross. Thank you that now we can be grafted into your family in Christ and through faith in him. Help us not to boast, but remember that this wonderful mystery now revealed is a gift of grace. Thank you so much for your Son Jesus Christ who became the understock for us, cut down, pierced for our transgressions, ready to receive the graft of our lives. Thank you that as we receive salvation by grace through faith, we can now grow and abide in Christ by grace through faith. Amen.

LESSON FOUR: One body, many gifts

Outcome: Just as different parts of the body have different functions, each member of Christ's body has been given a gift to edify the whole body.

Preparation at home: Read day 9 and day 10, of prayer book, focusing on day 10 (pg 28-32)

Fellowship: Enjoy talking together while people arrive.

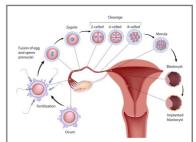
Opening Prayer

Life in Nature: amazing growth in the womb

Read the following passages from page 28 in the prayer book and/ or Watch a video about fetus development www.youtube.com/watch?v=UgT5rUQ9EmQ

The growth of a human being is incredible. It begins as a single cell conceived in the womb. This single cell divides over and over again. Then something wonderfully complex happens in the growth of a human being, as in all multi-cell organisms. The cells begin to divide into functional groups. Each cell in the human body has a purpose to benefit the whole body, and unites with other cells with the same purpose.

The cells with similar functions or gifts begin to form tissues, and these tissues then form organs. For human beings, they form hearts, lungs, noses, brains, kidneys, etc. Each part has a function that builds up the whole of the body. The power that enables this to happen so naturally, without even effort from the organism, is life. Growth in the human body is interwoven with function and gifts. All multi-cell living things grow in this amazing way and this functional growth brings unity and maturity to the body as a whole.



The growth of a human being in the womb is incredible. The single cell after conception divides over and over. Then the cells begin to divide into functional groups, with the cells forming tissues and the tissues organs each with a purpose to benefit the whole of the body. In the same way each cell in the body of Christ receives not only the DNA of Christ, but also a special function to join with others of like function to build up the body of Christ.

- 1) How does a foetus grow?
- 2) Why do you think multi cell organisms start to divide and then gather together in function groups before much growth can happen?

Life in Scripture : Ephesians 4:1-16 Read out loud Ephesians 4:1-16

- 1) In verses 7-8, 11 who is the giver of the gifts?.....
- 2) Who receives them? v7
- 3) What are the gifts mentioned in verse 11?.....
- 4) How do they help the body?..v 12-14

 - 5) What happens as each part does it's work? v 16.....

Read out loud the following passages from the prayer book page 28-29

In the passage from Ephesians today we learn that each of us is given grace as Christ apportioned it (v 7). Each individual who believes in Christ and accepts Him as their Lord and Saviour becomes grafted into the body of Christ as a living cell with Christ's DNA. Each cell, as in a human being, is given a function to perform in the human body. This is given, as with living organisms, not as a result of our goodness, but as a result of becoming part of the awesome life of Christ. Our spiritual gifts are gifts of grace, not of reward.

In Ephesians, it is Christ himself that gives apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (v 11). These living cells form tissues and organs which together with other similar cells have the aim of equipping the body for works of service. These gifts are the gifts of life which enable the rest of the body to do its work. When all the grafted cells are working as they should, the body of Christ is built up (v 12).

It is only when each part does its work that the body can become one (v 13). The pathway to the unity of the body of Christ, is the releasing of the gifts and functions of each living cell grafted into the olive tree. We will then become mature as a church, and will receive the whole measure of Christ's fullness (v 13). We cannot become mature in Christ by ourselves. Can a single cell become mature on its own in a human body? Maturity in Christ is brought to fruition only in community. It comes to fullness in the living, breathing organism of the body of Christ.

Christ's Life in Me, Christ's life in us

- What does this say to the church today?
 What are the purposes of spiritual gifts in the church?
 Do I know what function I have in the body of Christ?
 Am I grouping together with like functioned cells to form spiritual tissues and organs?
- 6) Do I respect and value those with different gifts to me?

Life in Prayer

Pray the following prayer, and/or pray for each person that they would know their part in the body of Christ.

Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the church, the body of Christ. Help us not to forget that we together are a living organism, not just an organisation. Help us understand how life works from its conception, including the division of cells into functions to form tissues and organs. Forgive us when we have tried to come to maturity and fullness in Christ all by ourselves. Teach us that we are part of the whole of Christ's body, and we too have a role and function. Teach us this function individually and together that the body might be built up and that we would reach unity and maturity in our faith in Christ. Help us value and love each and every part of the body. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

LESSON FIVE: OFF WITH THE OLD AND ON WITH THE NEW

Outcome: When we become Christians we are called to put off our old sinful ways and are called to be like Christ.

Preparation at home: Read day 11, day 12, day 13 and day 14 of prayer book, focusing on day 12 (pg 35-37)

Fellowship: Enjoy talking together while people arrive.

Opening Prayer

Life in Nature: Shedding of snake skins

Read the follow paragraphs from the prayer book from page 35, and or watch a YouTube clip on a snake shedding it's skin. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qj4gNxwBv8

In nature often new life rises from the death of the old. How many times through history has the birth of a baby come soon after a death of a grandparent or even a parent? Some mother spiders die soon after they lay eggs. There are several species of the Banksia bush in Australia that have pods that open only after the intensity of the heat of a bush fire. Often the plant that bore the pods dies in the fire, but out of this death comes new life for the pods. Even within a single organism this rhythm of the new replacing the old occurs. We all lost teeth as children, and had the joy of discovering that new and bigger ones grew back.

Mammals shed their skins somewhat slowly. Snakes get rid of the old skin in one go. Underneath is a new skin already grown that fits their body now much better than the old. Unfortunately sometimes some of the old skin is left on the snake. This becomes a real problem, and can potentially be a feeding ground for parasites and infections.



Snakes shed their skins, they take off the old for the new. However infection sets in when a bit of the old skin is not removed. So we too must take off all the old self and live the life of Christ.

Why does the snake need to completely shed it's skin?

Life in Scripture: Ephesians 4:25-5:2

Read Ephesians 4:25-5:2 out loud

What does the passage tell us that we need to let go of?

v. 22	 	 	
V. JI	 	 	

at do we need to put on?	
3	
4	
5	
8	
9	
2	
-2	

Read out loud the following passages from page 35 of the prayer book

We are called to put off the old self and put on the new (Eph 4:22-24). Romans 6:1-14 talks about old self being crucified with Christ (v 6) and our new life with the raising of Christ (v 4b). For we must not only embrace the new life. Paul, in both Ephesians and Romans, exhorts us to completely get rid of the old. We need to keep watch, to see if any of our old nature remains, like the old skin clinging to a snake. For this old skin, this old self that remains will lead to infection in the new, the devil getting a foothold (v27). A complete shedding of the old is the answer to spiritual growth.

Anyone who has owned a snake will understand what this means. The new skin in all its glory has been revealed, yet sometimes patches of the old remain, and they must be removed for the health and ongoing growth of the snake. Our reading from Ephesians today has some very practical examples of what areas of the old self need to be removed and why. All are to do with relationship, moving from a self centred life, to a life of love.

Christ's Life in Me, Christ's life in us

1)	What one of the characteristics of the old self mentioned in the passage do you find hardest to let go of?
2)	As a snake has the risk of infection if it doesn't get rid of all it's old skin, what happens to us if we keep living with our old self after we have been saved?
3)	In the Basis of Union in the Uniting Church in Australia it says "It is Jesus Christ who acquits the guilty, who gives life to the dead, and brings into being what otherwise could not exist." In what ways is Jesus doing that in your life during this time?

Life in Prayer

Pray the prayer below and/or Pray together, praying prayers of repentance for areas in your old life that are hard to let go. (Confess your sins to one another – James)

Heavenly Father, Come Lord, assess and deal with us. You've made us new, given us a new life, the way of love. Yet there are still remnants of the old self that cling to us. Have mercy on us, because in those very areas, the devil keeps getting a foothold in our life. First of all, show us what they are. Reveal them to us so we can see what needs to be removed. And secondly, by your grace, by the blood of the Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit empower us to completely remove this aspect of our old self from our life. Empower us to leave the old, so that we can more fully enter into the way of love you have called us to. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

LESSON SIX: LIVING IN RELATIONSHIPS

Outcome: Within relationships God has called some people to lead and some to follow. We should all submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Preparation at home: Read day 15, day 16, and day 17 of prayer book,

Fellowship: Enjoy talking together while people arrive.

Opening Prayer

Life in Nature: Desert Mole Rats

Read the following passage about desert mole rats and/or watch a You Tube video about them.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YHp4bKRoh7M

The naked mole rat, or desert mole rat, is a rodent that lives in East Africa. They live in colonies of up to 100 creatures in large burrows under the desert and grass lands. The colonies are very well organised into a sophisticated social system. A large queen mole rat rules the roost, with the largest males being her mates. The rest of the colony are non-breeding males and females that take on different roles in the community. Only the queen gives birth to young and suckles them. However, there are workers whose role it is to clean and feed weaned babies. The smallest mole rats are given the role of collecting food such as plant roots. As the mole rats get bigger they are given other tasks such as being diggers and soldiers. Sometimes the queen patrols the tunnels pushing and shoving the workers and checking on the breeding state of females. When the queen finally dies there is a battle to see who will be next queen. (Exploring the secrets of nature Editor Michael Bright (c) 1994 Readers Digest pg 128-129).



The desert mole rats have different roles in the community. Some clean and feed weaned babies. Others collect food, and vet others are set aside to dig or be soldiers. It is the queen rat that alone gives birth to young and rules the roost. As each works for the good of the community in their set role, whatever we do in the at home, work, or church should be done to the Lord, whether we are a leader or a follower. Unlike the bossy Mole Rat Queen, each of us should treat the other with respect for there is no favouritism with the Lord.

1)	Who is the leader of the colony?
2)	Why do mole rats need a leader and then need others to follow?
3)	Can you think of any other animals where there are leaders and followers?

Life in Scripture: Ephesians 5:21 - 6:9

Read out loud Ephesians 5:21-6:9

1)	1) What do you think the phrase "Submit to one ano	ther out of reverence for Christ" means? v 21

2)	What relationships does this passage talk about in regards to submitting to one another?
5: 22, 5:	: 25
6:1; 6:4	;
6:5; 6:9	
. In	what ways are each called to submit? (See above verses)
3)	Why is it important to do this out of reverence for Christ? 5:22; 5;25; 6:1; 6:4; 6:5-8; 6:9
Chris	t's Life in Me, Christ's life in us
1)	Which one do you most identify with?
2) Which one do you most struggle with?
3)	How do you react to the word "obey"?
4)	Some in our society see obedience as immaturity, and rebellion as a sign of growth. What do you see it as?
	The Basis of Union in the Uniting Church in Australia talks about all individual members taking on the form of a servant. What is the difference between servant leadership and leadership as we know in the world?
_	What changes do we need to make in the way we lead and the way we follow?

Life in Prayer

Pray the following prayer and/or minister to one another, praying for one another in the areas of marriage, family and workplaces. Pray especially for those who are married. Pray for strength for wives to submit to their husbands and for husbands to love their wives. Pray for children in your group to obey their parents, and parents to bring their children up in the Lord. Pray for workers (at work and at church) to obey their leaders and to do it to the Lord, and for bosses and leaders to not threaten people but to remember that God is their boss and he shows no favouritism. Pray that all may do all this to the Lord.

Heavenly Father, thank you that you have placed us in relationships. Thank you that you have called some of us to be leaders and some of us to be followers in these relationships. Help us to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ and to always respect, love and value one another whether we are leading or following. Forgive us for when we have failed in our relationships with one another and have not respected and honoured those you have placed in leadership. Forgive us also when we have been called to lead but have treated people disrespectfully and without love. We have treated them as if they were our servants to boss around and dominate instead of us being servant leaders ready to wash their feet. We have forgotten that there is no favoritism with you. Teach us to do everything in our relationships whether we are leading or following to serve wholeheartedly as if we were serving your son, our Lord Jesus Christ, not people. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

LESSON SEVEN: SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Outcome: God has given us armour to help us stand in our fight against the devil. Our battle is not against people but against spiritual forces of evil.

Preparation at home: Read day 18, day 19, and day 20, focusing on day 18 (page 53-56)

Fellowship: Enjoy talking together while people arrive.

Opening Prayer

Life in Nature: Musk-ox

Almost every animal has some means of protection against predators. They do this in many, varied and sometimes ingenious ways. Some find safety in numbers, such as the catfish. Others learn how to stay very still so as not to be noticed, such as the deer. Others can change their appearance to fool predators, create an illusion or disguise themselves, such as the ostrich, glass frog and mantis. And still others play possum and some even let off offensive smells such as the skunk. There are also some that have inbuilt armour they can draw upon in the time of attack, such as the armadillos, tortoise and echidna; whilst others can move very fast away from danger, such as the Australian kangaroo. And still there are others who simply by their size dissuade other animals from taking them on, such as the rhinoceros.

1) Which animal's defense do you most closely identify with that you use yourself when attacked?.

Read the following passages about the musk-ox and/or watch a YouTube clip about them

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pb6Rke7jiTc

Some animals, when confronted by danger, take their stand together and at the same time protect their young. One such animal that does this is the musk-ox from the Arctic. When they get threatened they form a circle with their young in the middle and their sharp horns facing outwards towards their foes. They can be fearsome against an enemy charging with their massive bulk and deadly horns.



The musk-oxen when confronted with danger stand together in a circle facing out, with their young in the middle. We are called to stand our ground with our full armor on when the day of

2)	(from YouTube) Why was the baby attacked in the first story?
3) H	low did they do better in the second?

Life in Scripture: Ephesians 6:10-20

Read out loud Ephesians 6:10-20

1) What defense should we have against the devil's schemes? (S	See verse 10-11)
2) In what ways is that like the Musk-ox?	
3) What do we need to put on? v 11	
4) Who is our battle against? Who is not against? v 12	
5) What different types of armour has God given us? v 14-18	
6) Why are we called to put on the full armour of God? v 13	
Christ's Life in Me, Christ's life in us	
1.What schemes of the devil have you been facing lately?	
2.How does our reading today from Ephesians help you in this battle?	
3.The Musk-oxen strengthen one another in unity as they stand again presbyteries to "strengthen one another's faith." How can we do th	•

Life in Prayer

Pray the following prayer and/or pray for one another that you might put on the full armour of God and be able to stand your ground against the devil's schemes. (Pray a prayer putting on each piece of armour)

Heavenly Father, thank you that you are growing us in our new life in Christ to not only sit with Christ in the heavenly realms, walk with others in love, light and wisdom, but also to stand firm against our enemy, the devil. Help us to be faithful in putting on each piece of the armour. Help us not to be arrogant thinking that we can face the devil without it. Clothe us with your son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is our defence and our shield, the fulfillment of every piece of armour that we are called to wear. Remind us that it is only through Christ that we have the victory over the devil and his minions and can stand our ground. In Jesus' mighty name we pray. Amen.

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