

The Church: towards a common vision

Chapter 2
Summary
and Questions

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Welcome to the summary of Chapter 2:

The Church of the Triune God

Hear our prayer, O Lord;

bles, protect and sanctify all those who bow their heads before you, through the grace, mercy and love of your only-begotten Son, to whom with you and your most holy, gracious and life-giving Spirit be blessing now and forever, to the ages of ages.

Amen. Eastern Orthodox Church

- Read Romans 11: 11-36

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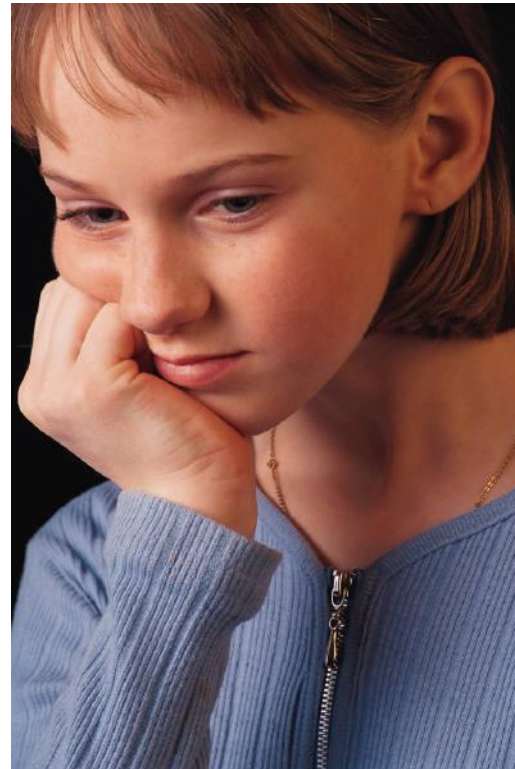
A reminder of Chapter 2 read over this last week...AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

A. Discerning God's Will for the Church (aa and 12)

- The foundations of what we believe about the church (including images and metaphors) demonstrate the diversity of the early church which continues to be experienced by us today.

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- **QUESTION**
- *How do you discern the will of God in your life? What is the role of Scripture, tradition, experience and reason in discerning the will of God for the Church in the 21st century?*



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B The Church of the Triune God as Koinonia (13 – 24)

The initiative of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (13 – 16)

- *Koinonia* – communication, participation, fellowship, sharing; the church belongs to God and is by its very nature missional (called and sent to witness in its own life of the communion which God intends for all humanity).
- The church is centred and grounded in the Good News of Jesus Christ, and is empowered by the Holy Spirit and experienced in sacraments and service.

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The prophetic, Priestly and Royal People of God (17 – 20)

- •The covenant with Israel – the choosing by God of a people, through whom all the nations will be blessed.
- •These themes are reflected in the New Testament, and models of leadership and authority are developed.

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Body of Christ and Temple of the Holy Spirit (21)

Faith in Christ is fundamental to membership of the Church, and the role of sacraments is mentioned (Baptism and the Lord's Supper). The Holy Spirit enlivens and equips the Church for the task given to it by Jesus Christ.

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The One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church (22 – 24)

- A description of the various attributes of the Church as described in the historic creeds,
- reinforcing the notion that the Church is a communion of the Triune God.

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- **QUESTION**

2 *Paragraph 20 notes that ‘the royal priesthood of the whole people of God (1 Peter 2:9-10) and a special ordained ministry are both important aspects of the church and not be seen as mutually exclusive alternatives’.*

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- *How do the non-ordained members of your community express their 'royal priesthood'?*
- *Are these gifts and ministries valued by the church community?*



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C The Church as Sign and Servant of God's design for the World (25 – 27)

- The mission of the Church is fulfilled by its members through the witness of their lives, in words and actions. There is an intimate relationship between Christ and the Church, celebrated in the liturgy.
- While all agree that God is the author of salvation, there are differences of opinion as to the nature and role of the Church and its rites in that saving activity.

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QUESTION

3 *How can the Church be a sign and instrument of God's intention for the world? When does it fail to do so?*

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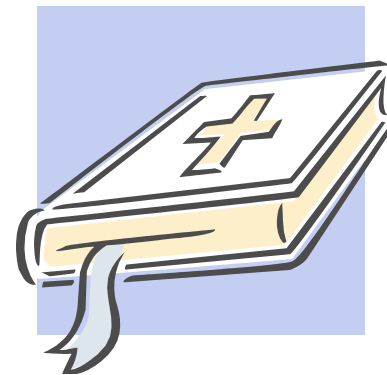
D Communion in Union and Diversity (28 – 30)

- While there is legitimate diversity in gifts, Christians within communities and of different traditions are encouraged to the unity that they have as followers of Jesus Christ.

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- There are `essentials', however, that need to be identified in doctrine and practice.



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QUESTION

4 *In the early church, its leaders sought to encourage people in their faith without imposing rules and regulations from founding members who had come from the Jewish faith. We are reminded, however, that 'essentials' have to be preserved.*

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- *How do we, in the UCA, affirm the traditions and practices inherited within the claimed membership of the 'one, holy, catholic, apostolic church' and cope with changed circumstances?*



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- E Communion of Local Churches (31 and 32)
- Local churches do share a special form of communion because of their physical proximity and sharing of understanding of the local situation. Local churches are wholly church, but not the whole Church.

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- The differences in traditions may also be identified within local geographic areas, some churches very aware of the links with their Bishops or other churches of the same tradition, while others see the local church as the congregation of believers without much reference to a wider communion.

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QUESTIONS 5

- *What is the relationship of your worshipping community with churches of other traditions in your area?*
- *Are the different structures and understandings helpful or a hindrance to closer communion?*
- *What do receive as a 'gift' from the other churches in your area?*

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- 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... The Uniting Church lays upon its members the serious duty of reading the Scriptures, commits the ministers to preach from these and to administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as effective signs of the Gospel as set forth in the Scriptures. (Basis of Union, Para.5)

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- These requirements are basic, and yet seem a real challenge for some; how can we encourage one another to be faithful to this calling?

