

Prepared by a sub-group of the Christian Unity Working Group of
Unity and International Mission.

The group describes its focus as:

*Mission and Unity: 'liberal' and 'evangelical' perspectives in a
conversation on faith sharing and witness*

And its aim:

*To talk and work together so that our Church may not be divided
but be so truly united that it can effectively proclaim the good
news of Christ to the world.*

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Towards a common witness

A discussion starter for groups
and congregations



prepared by the Christian Unity Working Group of
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Setting the scene

Thanks for being involved!

This outline is designed to promote whole-hearted, open, informal discussion between groups of people of different theological persuasions and backgrounds within the Uniting Church.

- **Informality:** it is suggested that the discussion take place in an informal atmosphere of fellowship, such as an extended meal or a home setting.
- **Time:** a time of at least 2 hours is assumed for this discussion
- **Approach:** each participant is encouraged to see this discussion as a process of 'seeking to walk a mile in the other's moccasins'. This requires a real commitment to genuine listening, along with the desire for one's own ideas to be understood.
- **Assumptions:** the discussion is based on the belief that
 - * Jesus Christ is central to our faith;
 - * it is only the Spirit who can enable us to declare 'Jesus is Lord' with authenticity (1 Cor 12.3);
 - * this is the basis on which we join with each other to explore our common witness:
 - * There are many other important issues which flow from this discussion. This is intended as a starting-point.

Our hope is that feedback from the groups will help us assess the usefulness of the material. It is a means to promote greater mutual understanding, respect, unity and indeed love within the church. Together we bear more

effective witness to Jesus Christ in the world.

5. The way forward in common witness

Accepting the sincerity of our various understandings and commitments, and Christ's call for us to be one (John 17.21):

- a) Are any of our differences of sufficient importance to prevent our continuing to think, talk, work and pray together?
- b) How can we think, talk, work and pray together on a practical everyday basis?
- c) Will you follow up this 'discussion starter'?
 - with a deeper study of what holds us together in Christ's mission to the world?
 - through feedback to the wider Church?

Prayer: You may like to have a brief time of prayer, and/or finish by saying the Grace together.

4. Responses

Having listened to each other's understanding and experience of Jesus and the gospel, are there

- surprises
- affirmations
- dismay
- celebration
- agreement
- confusion
- disagreement?

Share some of these with the group

1. Introduction

- a) Introduce yourselves by name.
- b) Tell each other very briefly about someone who has helped you in your faith journey.
- c) Is there anything in the 'setting the scene' section you would like to comment on?

Prayer suggestion for leader or group member:

Affirm God's presence in the midst of your discussion, and ask for understanding of each other's ideas and mutual appreciation of one other as God's family.

2. Jesus Christ

A basic affirmation of the New Testament is 'Jesus is Lord' (Romans 10:9). The Greek word is *Kyrios* which means Lord, ruler, master (of servants). In the Greek translation of the Old Testament *Kyrios* is used for 'the LORD' (Hebrew *Yahweh* - the name which Jewish people, in reverence, would not speak).

What kind of 'Lord' is Jesus?

- a) Which of the images shown on the next page best represent your idea of what Jesus is like? Share why.
- b) How would you express your faith in Jesus?
Complete the sentences -
 - * I believe Jesus is...
 - * In everyday life I experience Jesus as/when...

3. The gospel

The Greek for gospel is *euangelion*, 'evangel', which means 'good news'.

a) What do you see as the essential points of the 'Good News'?

b) What does this mean in practice?

- for you
- for the Church
- for society

