

That All May Be One:

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Vocations
of Christian Discipleship



A four-session study and discussion series for
churches and small groups

Introduction

This study is intended as a basic introduction for parishes and small groups to the connections between following Jesus and reaching out to our neighbours in other churches and religious communities. It includes four video presentations of approximately 20-25 minutes in length, to be followed by about 30 minutes of facilitated conversation and discussion. Adjustments to the needs of your context are entirely appropriate.

The sessions could be offered during any portion of the year, but one especially fitting time to run this study might be in mid-late January through early-mid February to overlap with the global commemorations of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (January 18-25 annually) and World Interfaith Harmony Week (February 1-7 annually). This also coincides with the liturgical season of Epiphanytide, which has many natural connections to the content themes.

Session One: In the Same Boat

Watch –

View the video for session one together online or in person.

Discuss –

1. In what ways have you seen how uncertainty and fear ('the shipwreck experience') breeds distrust and division? In your own life? In the world?
2. Can you think of some specific examples and stories from the life of Jesus where he reached across the lines of religious, cultural, and societal difference in his day?
3. When do you think the Church has done a good job of dialogue with those who are different? When has it failed miserably at it?
4. How do you feel about the idea that the unity or divisiveness of Christians might obscure the truth of the message of Jesus?
5. Do you think humanity is becoming more or less unified? Do you think the Church is becoming more or less unified?

Pray –

Holy Trinity, One God, in three Persons; draw us ever more deeply into your vision for the world, where we cling together in love instead of pushing each other apart. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

Session Two: Hospitality and Embassy

Watch –

View the video for session two together online or in person.

Discuss –

1. Do you have experiences of receiving hospitality from a religious and spiritual community other than your own?
2. Do you have experiences of practicing embassy within a religious and spiritual community other than your own?
3. Can you think of other biblical examples of the people of God practicing hospitality and/or embassy to the various 'others' they encounter?
4. Do you think the Anglican tradition is uniquely disposed towards encouraging these ways?
5. What are the challenges to living in these ways?

Pray –

Creator God, you invite us and all you have made to share in your hospitality. In Jesus you came in embassy to us all, to pave the way for a restoration of peace. Inspire us to share in these Divine callings, and to embody the kind of reconciled and reconciling community which is your dream. Amen.

Session Three: The Ecumenical Vocation

Watch –

View the video for session three together online or in person.

Discuss –

1. Why is unity with other Christians so difficult (sometimes more difficult than with others who are further apart)?
2. What do you think the visible communion of churches is meant to look like? Is it about institutional unity? Spiritual closeness? Cooperation in action? Something else?
3. What are some of the most significant things that have disagreed about in the past? Do you think all of these all carry the same weight in the present, or has some of that changed?
4. What are the big things that tend to divide Christians today? Are all of them equally critical? Which ones are most important?
5. Are there other realities and issues of our time which have the capacity to encourage Christian unity?

Pray –

Lord of the Church, you have made us who are baptized in your name to be members of One Body through the Cross and Resurrection of your Son. Gather your scattered disciples together once again, that our churches may reflect the forgiveness and unity that is your desire for all people and nations. Through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Session Four: The Interfaith Vocation

Watch –

View the video for session four together online or in person.

Discuss –

1. Do you have a close relationship with a person from another faith tradition than your own? What have you received and appreciated from them?
2. Is there a belief or practice of another religious community than your own that you find particularly interesting or meaningful? Or one you would like to understand more about?
3. Some have claimed you can't recognize truths in another religion without diminishing the truth of your own. How would you respond to this?
4. It has been suggested that you can learn more about your own faith through learning more about others. Can you comment on ways this might be the case, or speak from experience of it?

Pray –

God who is infinitely beyond all we can ask or imagine, thank you for the signs of your Holy Spirit present in the spiritual seeking of all the peoples of the Earth in every time and place. May we who have come to know you Incarnate in the person of your Son Jesus Christ always be open to recognizing your Truth when we see it, and unafraid to extend our hands to all our neighbours in peace and friendship. In your name we ask. Amen.