

## **We are the Church.**

### **Reflect on these Bible readings and questions:**

1. The church is described as a family.

- a) How should members of a family treat one another? [Ephesians 4:31-32](#)
- b) What is the most important ingredient that holds a family together? [1 Corinthians 12:27-13:13](#)

2. How the body functions. Read [1 Corinthians 12:12-26](#) and answer/reflect on these questions:

- a) What parts of the body are mentioned in the above verses?
- b) Do you think any part of your natural body is insignificant?
- c) Why are you important to the body? ([verse 18](#))
- d) How should the members of the body of Christ treat one another? ([verse 25-26](#))

3. Leaders in the church.

- a) What qualities does the bible request of leaders in the church? ([1 Timothy 3:1-7](#))
- b) Read [1 Timothy 5: 17-19](#) How are church members expected to treat overseers or leaders in the church?

4. Reading [1 Timothy 5: 17-19](#) can be challenging

- a) What claims and assumptions are made in the letter to Timothy make you feel uncomfortable and how do you deal with those?
- b) How do you think the Church's understanding changed and developed since its beginning?

We all bring our own baggage, bias, hurts and prejudices with us to church. How can we accept, honour and value one another even though we have different experiences, upbringings and views?

Being the Church, one body, and there being no distinction between “Jew or Gentile, male or female, slave or free” ([Galatians 3:28](#)), we are all called to be active in our calling to work together for the overall good of the body of Christ, ([1 Corinthians 12:12](#)), to live in harmony with each other and be like-minded ([Philippians 2:2](#)), and to be productive in bearing fruit for Christ.

Will we grow in our knowledge and understanding of one another?

Will we be open to learn and develop, deepening in love and appreciation of difference, to go beyond our own perspective or experience, and to cross divides?

This involves having a curious, humble and generous attitude. The body of Christ is much more than a metaphor. We are called, gifted and commissioned – to reach out and to deepen and strengthen relationships in ways we have never imagined.

Diversity refers to the existence of variations of different characteristics in a group of people. These characteristics could be everything that makes us unique, such as our cognitive skills and personality traits, along with the things that shape our identity. Diversity is about recognising the benefits of different values, abilities, and perspectives, and celebrating people’s differences. This means promoting an environment that welcomes and values diverse backgrounds, thinking, skills and experience, and encouraging diversity means to actively respect, appreciate and empower people for who they are. Martin Luther King Jr once pointed out that Sunday was the most segregated (or most homogenous) day of the week. With regard to racial reconciliation and diversity on Sunday mornings, not much has changed. The majority of churches clustering for their worship gatherings still remain primarily uniform, similar and alike.

The real interpretation of [Galatians 3:28](#) is not blindness to difference, but Paul encouraging Christians to see one another as equals, that we all (no matter what the cultural distinction) make up the body of Christ. Paul doesn't call us to disregard our uniqueness. But he does remind us not to let what makes us special divide us as a Church.

**Here are some questions on which to reflect:**

- 1) "The majority of believers are comfortable with the level (or lack) of diversity that exists in their church." Ed Stetzer
  - Do you agree with this quote? Why?
- 2) What kinds of concerns or fears might church members have about encouraging wider diversity?
- 3) Can you think of a time or incident from your wide experience (home, school, work, church etc) that made you feel excluded?
  - How did you feel?
  - What could have been done differently so that you didn't feel excluded?
- 4) What could you and your church do to make it a more inclusive place, where everyone can be heard and all feel welcomed?