

**MODEL UNIT
BAND D
LEVEL 2**

A UNIQUE COMMUNITY

LIFE CONCEPT: GOD GATHERS PEOPLE INTO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

YEAR: SUGGESTED DURATION: 12–14 HOURS

DATE OF USE: FAITH STATEMENTS: ① ② ③

UNIT-SPECIFIC GOALS (highlighted)
1. THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS THE COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS CREATED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT
1a investigate the life of the church described in the New Testament

1b analyse the similarities and differences in Christian denominations and sects

1c explore how the Holy Spirit works through local Christian communities

2. GOD HAS GATHERED HIS PEOPLE TOGETHER THROUGHOUT HISTORY
2a investigate the major historical movements within the Christian church

2b investigate the contribution of significant leaders in the Christian church

3. LUTHERANS IN AUSTRALIA WORK TOGETHER IN MINISTRY AND MISSION
3a investigate the Lutheran church's contribution to Australian society

3b investigate ways Lutheran congregations minister to their local community

STUDENT ASSESSMENT
ASSESSABLE STUDENT OUTCOMES

Use their preferred mode of presentation to show their understanding of what the New Testament says about the church as community. (1a,1c)

Either give a written report or present a display with commentary on a contemporary Christian congregation — Lutheran or another denomination. (3b)

Either give a written report or present a display with commentary about a movement in the history of the Christian church. (2a)

ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

⇒ TRS D2/2, TRS D2/3; individual and group work samples

⇒ individual or group work sample

⇒ individual or group work sample

UNIT SUMMARY

Students examine the concept of the Christian church as a community of people who have diverse backgrounds, who are not perfect yet are forgiven, and who have a common bond and a common purpose. Students first examine the New Testament's description of the church as a community and then investigate how Christians today and in the past have given expression to that community.

UNIT NOTES

The unit aims to present what is unique about the Christian church as a community of people. While 'a community of Christians' is the term mostly used in the unit, it is interchangeable with the term 'the Christian church'.

INTRODUCTION

1. PEOPLE SEARCH

This activity is a way of gauging students' understanding of and attitudes towards the topic. It may identify aspects of the unit which need emphasis and parts of the unit which need to be adapted. Throughout the unit refer to student responses.

Students mingle and complete Teacher Resource Sheet (TRS) D2/1. They share their answers. Collate some of the responses, eg how many different denominations are represented in your class? What common ideas and stereotypes about church exist? List questions about the church that students would like to ask a member of the church.

An alternative activity for students is *What is Church?* in the Development Activities Menu.

2. COMMUNITIES

Students list different groups of people which are described as communities. In groups students select a secular community to profile. They record their ideas on a large sheet of paper. This will be an ongoing activity in the unit, and students will work in the same groups for a number of activities. Discuss:

- How was the community formed?
- Where is the community located?
- What are the activities of the community?
- What difference would it make to its members if the community ceased to exist?

Students read Acts 2:1–11, 22–24, 36–41. Revise with students how the community of Christians known as church came into existence.

Students discuss the imagery New Testament writers use to describe the church as a community of Christians. What do the various images suggest about community life?

- Luke 12:32 Romans 12:4–8
- 1 Corinthians 12:12, 14–20, 27
- Ephesians 2:19–22
- 1 Peter 2:4, 5 1 Peter 5:2

Students read Acts 2:44–47; 4:32–35 as an example of community life in the early Christian church. They compare and contrast the church as a community with the other communities.

DEVELOPMENT

3. A COMMUNITY OF SAINTS AND SINNERS

Working in the same groups as in Section 2, students describe the composition of the membership of the secular community they are profiling. They list what constitutes membership in the community and describe the special identity the community gives to its members. They add their ideas to the community profile.

Students share their impressions of the kind of people who are members of a church. What do they think is expected of people who attend church? They complete TRS D2/2 and summarise in one sentence the main idea represented in each box.

Students assess what is unique about membership in the community of Christians. What difference does membership make to the way each member views him/herself, others in the community and those outside of the community? Discuss the slogan: 'Christians are not perfect, just forgiven'.

4. A COMMUNITY WITH A COMMON BOND

Students identify what members of the secular community they are profiling have in common, eg members of a suburban community live in the same locality, share a community centre, library, hospital, newspaper. Students discuss the importance of these common features to the life of individuals within the community and to the existence of the community, eg what is the effect of the closure of the only bank in a community?

In groups students read one or two of the following Bible passages and identify what unites people in the community of Christians.

Romans 12:5	Galatians 3:26–28
Galatians 5:6	Ephesians 4:3–6
Ephesians 4:15, 16	Ephesians 1:13, 14
Ephesians 1:22, 23	Ephesians 2:12–14, 18
Philippians 2:1, 2	Colossians 3:15
1 Peter 2:10.	

Students compare the New Testament references with what the Apostles' Creed (formulated two centuries after the New Testament writings) states is the common belief and experience of a community of Christians. What is identified in the Lord's Prayer (given to a community of Christians) as common to all Christians?

Students list *one another* phrases from the New Testament. Look up in a Bible concordance words such as love, comfort, encourage, forgive, honour, teach. What implications does the common bond of Christians have for life in their community? (this is summarised in 1 Corinthians 13).

Examine a problem faced by early communities of Christians: the matter of food being sacrificed to idols in 1 Corinthians 8 or Romans 14. The NIV Study Bible provides sufficient background information. How does Paul suggest Christians in the Corinthian or Roman community should approach the problem? What is to be the motive for whatever action is taken?

5. A COMMUNITY WITH A COMMON PURPOSE

Students discuss the purpose each secular community being profiled serves, eg do people's welfare or survival depend on the community?

Students make a list of suggestions for what they think is the purpose of the Christian church (see E Nolan's *What Is Church For?*, *Christian Beliefs Book 2*).

Discuss which people in a community are held in honour and esteem and how the community does this. Students investigate how holding God in honour and high esteem determines the purpose and aims of the Christian church. They complete TRS D2/3.

Give students examples of 'mission statements' developed for businesses. Students identify the vision and the purpose of the business. Find examples of the goals a business sets itself to fulfil its purpose (you can refer to S Covey's *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Habit 2). To conclude this section, students write a 'mission statement' and a set of aims for a community of Christians, based on New Testament teaching.

6. PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Each group of students presents their understanding of the church as a community according to the New Testament, using their preferred mode of presentation, eg poster, mural, a series of human sculptures, mime, poem, drama, song set to a known piece of music. At the end of the presentations students compare the secular communities previously profiled with the Christian church. According to the New Testament writers what makes the Christian church a unique community?

RESPONSE

7. THE COMMUNITY UNDER SCRUTINY

Students refer to the introductory activity. What were their feelings, impressions, ideas, assessment of the Christian church at the start of the unit? In light of what they have learnt from the New Testament study of the church, they add to the questions for church members.

The National Church Life Survey books (see Recommended References Menu) have statistics, evaluations and cartoons which show how Christians themselves assess the church and their role in it. Use these to identify some of the concerns Christians have about how churches are fulfilling their purpose.

The aim of this section is for students to investigate the diverse range of approaches which exist among Christians on how best to live as a community of Christians and fulfil God's purpose for the church and all people.

Students work individually, in groups, or as a whole class to investigate one of the following:

- a local congregation
- several denominational groups in their local community
- the work of several Lutheran congregations
- a movement within Christianity, eg monasticism, pietism, the charismatic movement (see *A Rich Tapestry* in Development Activities Menu).

Encourage students to do first-hand investigation as suggested on TRS D 2/4.

It is easy to identify the shortcomings and failures of the church. Encourage students to acknowledge the contribution of the church and the importance of God's grace and love in the church's survival and growth.

Students present their research in the form of stories, or a report or a display with written or spoken commentaries. Their presentation should address each aspect of the task requirements in TRS D2/4.

To conclude the unit, students discuss the extent to which communities of Christians

- reflect the times in which they exist;
- reflect the New Testament teaching about the church;
- are unique communities;
- are an outdated concept for contemporary society.

YOU WILL NEED

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Bibles○ large sheets of paper○ TRS D2/1,2,3,4○ to organise library research for students investigating movements in the history of Christianity | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ to contact local congregations to explain the nature of the investigation you have asked of the students and to make a point of contact for students. You will need to give students names and telephone numbers of relevant people. |
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INTEGRATING INTO OTHER CURRICULUM AREAS

Find out what students are doing in other curriculum areas in relation to

Topics

- living in communities
- organisation of communities.....

Skills

- first-hand research: interviews, observation
- evaluating activities in light of purposes

UNIT EVALUATION

Which activities worked well in this unit?

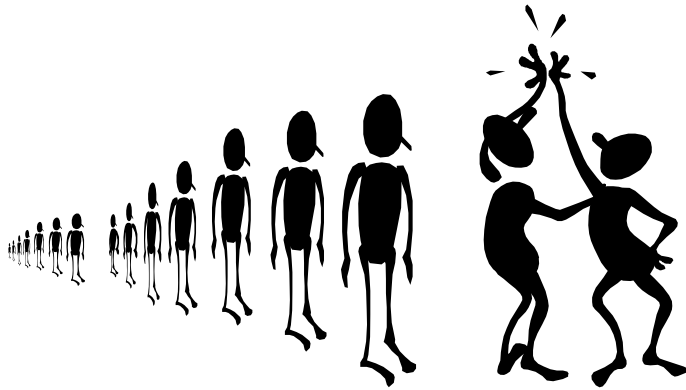
Which resources were useful in the implementation of this unit?

How did I respond to the range of students' understanding and experience in relation to the Christian church?

How did I respond to the range of students' attitudes towards organised Christian communities?

What would I do differently if I was teaching this unit again?

How will I use and build on knowledge, understandings, skills, attitudes, and values students have developed in this unit?



PEOPLE SEARCH

Write the name of the person and/or what the person says.

FIND SOMEONE WHO ...

belongs to a community

can explain the difference between
an organisation and a community of
people

can draw what a church looks like

has the same denominational
identity as you or as one of your
friends

has attended a Christian
church service twice this year

can give the names of three different
churches in the local community

can give you five words to describe
the type of people who go to church

can describe what churches do

can give you three different feelings
and attitudes people express about
church

can tell you what this means:
Christians do not go to church;
they are the church



COMMUNITY OF SAINTS AND SINNERS

The Bible texts and questions in each box will help you to create a profile of the members of the community of Christians in New Testament times.

What sort of people were members of the community of Christians?

Matthew 22:8–10 Luke 4:40
Luke 7:37,38,48,50 Luke 18:16
Luke 19:1–10 John 4:39–41
John 5:6,14 John 8:3,10,11
Acts 4:13 Acts 6:1,4
Acts 8:9,13,27,36–38
Acts 11:1 Acts 10:34,35
Romans 1:7 1 Corinthians 1:26–31
2 Corinthians 4:7 Ephesians 2:11

What words are used by the writers that describe the members' new identity?

Romans 8:14 1 Corinthians 1:2
2 Corinthians 5:17,20
Galatians 3:26–28 Ephesians 1:1
Ephesians 5:25–27 Philippians 1:1
Colossians 1:2 Titus 3:3–7
1 Peter 1:1 1 Peter 2:9

What did a person have to do to become a member of the community of Christians?

John 3:16 Romans 10:9
1 Corinthians 12:3
2 Corinthians 5:17–19
Galatians 3:26,27
Ephesians 2:4,5,8,9

What do the following verses tell you about the reality of being a member of the community of Christians?

Romans 5:1 Romans 7:15–25
Romans 8:1,2,5,9 Galatians 5:16–18
Ephesians 4:22–32
Philippians 3:12–14 Colossians 3:13
1 Peter 2:11,12 1 John 1:9



A COMMUNITY WITH A COMMON PURPOSE (God's purpose)

Read the Bible verses listed under each question.

Write a paragraph which summarises the content of the verses and answers the question.

How is God to be honoured and held in high esteem?

What is God's purpose for the church?

John 17:4	Romans 12:1,2	Romans 14:7,17–19	1 Corinthians 7:19b
1 Corinthians 10:31–33	1 Corinthians 14:12,26	1 Corinthians 16:14	Ephesians 4:1
Ephesians 5:19	Philippians 1:27	Philippians 2:14–16	Colossians 1:10–12

How can the community of Christians honour and esteem God in the community?

What is God's purpose for the community of Christians?

Acts 2:42	Romans 1:11,12	Romans 12:4–8	Romans 12:13
Romans 15:14	1 Corinthians 10:16,17	1 Corinthians 12:27,28	Ephesians 4:11–13
Philippians 1:9–11	Hebrews 10:23–25	2 Peter 1:12,13	1 John 4:7

How can the community of Christians fulfil God's purpose for all people?

Matthew 5:13–16	Matthew 28:19,20	John 17:18,21	Acts 1:8
Romans 1:16	Romans 10:11–17	Ephesians 1:10	Ephesians 5:8
Philippians 1:5	Colossians 1:6		



YOUR TASK

- to investigate the common bond a community of Christians experiences
- to investigate how a community of Christians cares for its members
- to investigate how a community of Christians tries to fulfil God's purpose for all people.

AN APPROACH

- Make a list of questions that will help you find the appropriate information (see below).
- Collect printed material of the community (eg church bulletins, newsletters, promotional material, tracts). What does the material tell you about the types of activities in which members of the community are involved? Does the community have a mission statement?
- List people you need to interview (eg young people, mature people, men and women, long-standing members, newcomers to the community and to the Christian faith).
- List activities you need to research/observe that will help you gain a comprehensive understanding of the community of Christians being investigated.
- Arrange for interviews and visits. Explain who you are, the purpose of the interview and the nature of your assignment.
- Organise your time. Allow time to speak to people, visit the community centre, read material, write up your findings.

SOME QUESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED

How does the community of Christians communicate/share the good news of Jesus with the wider community? eg are there special services to which the community is invited?

Are there special classes/activities for newcomers?

Is the community involved in caring for people in need in the wider community?

What different kinds of people are members of the community?

What social activities does the community organise?

What activities are organised to help members in their everyday life? (eg marriage training courses)

What different activities help members to grow in their understanding of the Christian faith?

How does the community cater for all the different age-groups in the community?

How important is the Sunday worship time in the life of the community? for individual members?

How involved are members in the care and organisation of the community?

How strong are the friendships in the community?

About what sorts of issues are there disagreements?

On which points of belief or practice are all members of the community in agreement?

How is conflict resolved in the community?

How important is forgiveness in the life of the community?

Does the community have much involvement with other communities in either the same denomination or other denominations?

How much emphasis is there on members of the community living God's way?

What is the role of people your age in this group?