

# HOLY/UNIVERSAL

## CHECKLIST: WHAT YOU NEED

- Paper and pen or pencil
- Copies of the downloadable “Litany” and “Prayers & Thanksgivings” booklets
- Copies of the lesson handout
- Copy of the leader’s notes
- OPTIONAL: Bibles (ESV or similar recommended)
- OPTIONAL: A white board, easel pad, or chalk board with markers/chalk
- OPTIONAL: Have notebooks on hand for teens to take home and use as prayer journals if they wish

## ICE BREAKER: RELAY ART

Have your group sit in a circle. The first person begins with a pen and paper and draws one line (it can be curvy or straight), then passes the paper on. The next person also creates a single line and passes the paper on. Together, the group is trying to create a single picture, but without any discussion. The paper continues to go around the circle till the page is full or time is up. Provide a few minutes for your group to discuss their artwork, agree on a title and present it to you or to each other (depending on whether you have multiple groups or just one).

IF YOUR GROUP CONSISTS OF MORE THAN SIX PEOPLE, YOU WILL WANT TO BREAK INTO SMALLER GROUPS.

## THE LITANY: BEGINNING WITH PRAYER

Begin the formal part of the lesson by saying together the Litany, leaving off the Grace (which can be said at the close of the lesson).

AT THIS POINT IN THE LESSON, ASK IF THE TEENS SUCCEEDED IN DOING LAST WEEK’S CHALLENGE, HOW IT WENT, AND WHETHER THEY HAVE ANYTHING TO SHARE.

## DISCUSSION: SOLO VS. ENSEMBLE

As an introduction to the lesson ask the teens to discuss the following questions.

DEPENDING ON THE COMFORT LEVEL FOR SHARING IN YOUR GROUP, IT MAY BE EASIER TO HAVE THEM VOLUNTEER ANSWERS WITH ALL RESPONSES WRITTEN TOGETHER ON A BOARD.

- When you have an assignment to do, do you prefer to do it alone or with a group? Why?
- What are some of the challenges you face in working with others? What are some of the benefits?
- Are there some tasks that you simply cannot do on your own? (Or things you’d rather not do on your own?)

*A few things worth pointing out (if they don’t otherwise arise during the discussion):*

- *Most of us have a decided preference for work alone or in a group. Often this has to do with our personality and there are advantages to both kinds of work. If we like to work in groups, then solo work can force us to put in more effort and challenge us to do things ourselves that we might otherwise rely on others for. On the other hand, those who prefer to work alone can be challenged to look at things differently and learn from the strengths of others.*
- *Chances are your teens have experienced groups that don’t work well: these are groups where not everyone pulls their weight or where the negative contributions of some members outweigh the positive contributions of others. But in a good group, everyone is challenged, encouraged and supported by one another.*
- *There are a lot of things in life that you simply cannot do on your own: picture trying to play on a seesaw, lift something really heavy, or sing a duet. If you go through a difficult time such as an illness, you may find you need*

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*people more than ever: to make you a cup of soup if you have a cold or to help you tie your shoelaces if you break a wrist. Perhaps you have some examples of your own.*

## THE LESSON: EPHESIANS 2+4

The first part of the lesson (below) can be read aloud. Then the teens are asked to read the Bible text (either silently to themselves or aloud together), followed by some additional questions for discussion.

*That it may please thee to rule and govern thy holy Church universal in the right way,  
We beseech thee, good Lord.*

Two creeds are found in our Book of Common Prayer which date back to the earliest days of Church history and are still recognized today as concise statements of what Christians believe.

The Nicene Creed sets out four defining characteristics (or “marks”) of the Church when it states, “we believe *one holy catholic* (which means universal) and *apostolic* Church”. The Apostles’ Creed uses a shortened version that includes only “holy” and “catholic” – words that are echoed in the petition from the Litany. In brief, these defining characteristics tell us that the Church is a unified whole, called out from the world and set apart by God, comprised of faithful Christians in all times and places, and rooted in the teachings of the apostles.

As we reflect on the nature of the Church, we are reminded that “the Christian life is not a solitary walk but a pilgrimage undertaken with other Christians. Even if you set off alone, you will soon find that you are journeying onward to heaven in the company of many fellow pilgrims. You will help to uphold them as they stumble and struggle, and they will bear you up along the way” (Sue Careless).

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In his letter to the Ephesians, St. Paul manages to touch on each one of the four “marks” listed above. Notice how he emphasizes the spiritual reality of the invisible Church, while also addressing the struggles and deficiencies that can characterize our visible churches.

Refer to Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:3-7, 11-16.

(VERSES HAVE BEEN CLIPPED FROM THE READING FOR THE SAKE OF BREVITY AND FOCUS, BUT IF YOU HAVE TIME TO EXPLORE THE PASSAGE FULLY, FEEL FREE TO READ IT IN ITS ENTIRETY: EPHESIANS 2:19-22, 4:3-16.)

(THE TEXT IS PROVIDED ON THE BACK OF THE HANDOUTS AND IN THESE LEADERS’ NOTES SO THAT EVERYONE CAN MARK IT UP AND MAKE NOTES ON IT IF DESIRED. ALTERNATIVELY, YOU CAN READ OUT OF A BIBLE).

Read through the text. Then ask the teens to respond to what they’ve just read. Here are some questions to help guide the discussion.

- What are some of the metaphors for the Church that St. Paul uses in this passage?
- What are some concerns that St. Paul expresses in the passage?
- What do you think our church – and our group – can learn from this text?

*A few notes and reflections for reference:*

- *Some of the metaphors for the Church that he uses include: the “household of God” (2v19), a “holy temple” (2v21), a “dwelling place for God” (2v22), the “body of Christ” (4v12).*
- *St. Paul is giving the Ephesians a lesson on what the Church should be like with an emphasis on maturity and unity. He wants to be clear about who forms the foundation of the Church. Jesus is the cornerstone and the apostles and prophets form the foundation (2v20). He picks this thread up again when he speaks of Christ as the head. These notes relate directly to the concerns he expresses about false doctrines, human cunning, craftiness and deceitful schemes (4v14). He wants the Ephesians to be firmly rooted in the truth so that these things don’t derail them. St. Paul is also*

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concerned that his readers should behave in a way that reflects Christ’s character and that supports the unity of the body: “with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (4v2-3), using gifts to build one another up (4v11).

- The lessons that St. Paul sets forth in this text are always relevant because we are imperfect and our churches are imperfect. The exhortations to maturity and unity are therefore applicable to us all. Challenge your teens to pray specifically about the points that they have raised.
- Note: In the Ephesian church as in other Christian communities at this time there was a division often manifesting itself between Jewish and Gentile Christians. The apostles were especially concerned with making clear that in Christ, both groups are united, but they also took pains to emphasize the doctrinal grounds on which this unity is based.

DURING EACH LESSON, IF THE TEENS RAISE THEOLOGICAL OR BIBLICAL QUESTIONS THAT YOU DON’T FEEL CONFIDENT ABOUT ANSWERING, SAY SO, BUT LET THEM KNOW THAT YOU’LL FIND THE ANSWER AND RESPOND AT THE NEXT MEETING.

## PREVIEW: AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Take a brief moment to look at the at-home challenge together.

THE WEEKLY “AT-HOME CHALLENGE” IS TYPICALLY A SIMPLE ASSIGNMENT TO SPEND SOME QUIET TIME IN PRIVATE PRAYER. ENCOURAGE THE TEENS TO GET NOTEBOOKS THAT CAN BE USED AS PRAYER JOURNALS. ASSURE THEM THAT THEY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO SHOW THEIR JOURNAL OR THEIR PRIVATE PRAYERS TO ANYONE.

**Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.**

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER))

**Before you conclude for the day:** Take out pieces of paper and ask each person to write down their name and two or three things that they’d appreciate prayer for during the week ahead; then fold them and mix them together. The prayer requests can be personal or general concerns. Each person in the group takes one piece of paper belonging to someone else and commits to spend time praying for those requests each day during the coming week.

**Spend time each day this week praying for the requests of your group member on the paper you selected. Remember that someone else in your group is praying for your requests.**

- OPTIONAL -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

*Most gracious God, we humbly beseech thee for thy holy Catholic Church. Fill it with all truth; in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where any thing is amiss, reform it; where it is right, strengthen and confirm it; where it is in want, furnish it; where it is divided and rent asunder, make it whole again; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

(PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH UNIVERSAL, BCP PAGE 39)

## CLOSING PRAYERS

Close with any prayers that might be appropriate in the context of the discussion of the day.

AT THE END OF EACH LESSON, IF YOU FIND THAT YOU STILL HAVE LOTS OF TIME REMAINING, YOU MIGHT CHOOSE TO TAKE SOME TIME TO EXPLORE THE “PRAYERS AND THANKSGIVINGS” SECTION IN THE BCP (PAGES 39-62, OR YOU CAN USE THE DOWNLOADABLE BOOKLET). AS YOUR GROUP MEMBERS COME ACROSS PRAYERS THAT THEY FIND RELEVANT, PAUSE AND PRAY THEM TOGETHER. IF YOU’RE PRESSED FOR TIME, YOU MIGHT CLOSE WITH THE THEMED PRAYER FROM THE AT-HOME CHALLENGE.

Then finish with the “Grace”, printed at the end of the Litany booklet.

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## EPHESIANS 2+4: **WALKING TOGETHER**

**2** <sup>19</sup>So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup>built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup>in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit...

**4** <sup>1</sup>I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. <sup>7</sup>But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift... <sup>11</sup>And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, <sup>12</sup>to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup>until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup>so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. <sup>15</sup>Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.