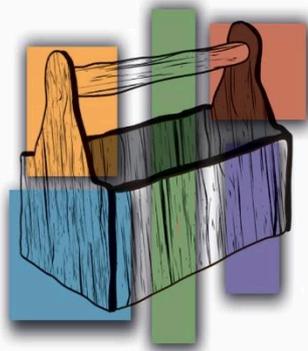


do it yourself



Congregational Life

DIY  
C2

The call to faithfulness  
in changing times:  
COVID-19 and beyond

## Module Overview

## Leader's Guide

### Aim

The aim of this module is to engage participants in reflection and discussion on the essential aspects of our congregational life in changing times.

### Participant outcome

When they have completed the work for this module, participants will be able to further explore and articulate something of what they hold to be essential in their own faith journey and to be able to listen to others in sharing what is important to them. Together, participants will be encouraged to further delve into and discuss what it means to be church in the UCA, for them as a community, in this time and place.

### Leader's role

The main role of the leader in this module is to encourage participants to be critically reflective regarding the nature of the church, but also importantly to allow individuals to express their opinions safely when different from others' views. The first activity is an introduction to the topic that will help the group begin (or continue) to explore their community's experience of living with and through, local and worldwide crises. As such, the leader also needs to be in a 'facilitating mode', and a 'pastoral mode', listening for expressions of lament and hope.

Note: If the group is meeting online, it is helpful if the leader is able to use the facilities of 'breakout groups' and 'screen-sharing'. For larger groups, split the group into smaller discussion groups using a 'breakout rooms' facility. When sharing feedback, use 'screen-sharing' so all can see the ideas shared.

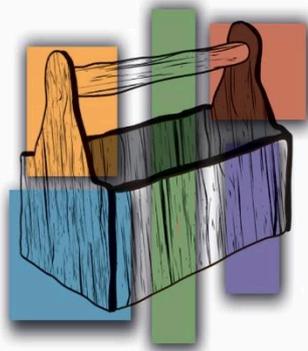
Providing a safe space for conversations is critical for the participants' learning. Please provide a relaxed, friendly and an environment that is open for sharing and listening respectfully to different viewpoints. Have brief breaks, as necessary. If meeting online, this is particularly necessary, as people fatigue faster, so have a break after each activity.

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## Resources

Prior to the session, the leader will need to:

- provide a copy of Handout 1 (C2H1) and Handout 2 (C2H2) to each participant

Each participant will also need:

- Individual highlighters and drawing pencils or crayons
- Plain paper

## Session outline

100 mins - 2 hours

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| 1. Introduction  | 5 min.  |
| 2. Small group Activity 1 with C2H1 with larger group activity | 30 min. |
| 3. Small group Activity 2 with C2H2 with larger group activity | 40 min. |
| 4. Larger group questions and discussion                       | 20 min. |
| 5. Close   | 5 min.  |

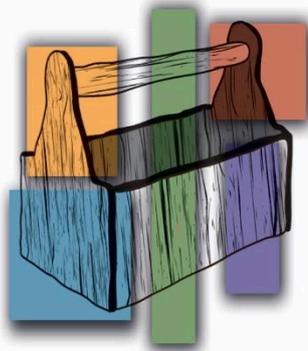
The time is given here as a guide; it is more helpful to the group and the discussion to take time and space for sharing and consideration of questions and answers.

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## 1. Introduction

Tell the group: *"In the session on 'The changing face of the church' (C1), we recognised that the world around us is constantly changing, sometimes rapidly, and thus influencing the life and nature of the church. With change all about us and within the church, it is important for us to reflect on what we need to hold onto and what we can let go. This session commences, or perhaps continues, that reflection. It is an opportunity to listen to one another and discover the views that are similar to one another and those that are different. It is also an opportunity to begin, or continue to ponder, 'What are the essential aspects of being the church, in this place, in the early twenty-first century?'"*

Commence the time together in prayer. (5 min.)

## 2. Activity 1 with C2H1

Prior to the session, ensure that each participant has a copy of Handout 1 (C2H1).

In groups of 5 or 6 complete Activity 1, with groups offering back to the whole group to share their discussion. (10 min.)

1. With the wider group, discuss the questions: *"What did you discover in completing this activity?"*

(Possible responses: that only a few aspects are essential for church life; we have differing views about what is essential etc. Participants may also voice their loss about things/activities that have changed or disappeared due to Government restrictions. Some may express relief at being able to let some things go. Others may express some hope for the future. In the history of Christian faith, lament and hope have been strange but necessarily close companions on the journey.) (10 min.)

2. *Where does/did our local church expend, and sometimes burn up, much of its energy?* Participants may find it helpful to think about different areas in which energy might be expended – financial, emotional, spiritual, physical, etc.

3. *As a community of faith, where do we want to put our energy going forward from now?* Participants may not be able to answer this question now; this may be a question for further discernment over a period of time. However, it can be helpful to even ask the question – to allow the possibility and to invite space to discern again, God's call for this community. (10 min.)

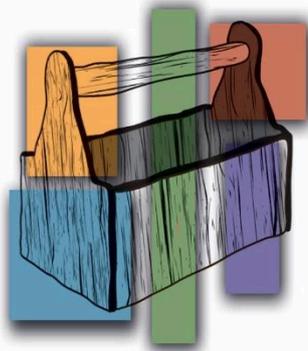
*"In discovering what are the essentials of our church life we are reminded of words of scripture that help us to discern together what is of importance. In this next activity we delve into Scripture to discover anew its words for today."*

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### 3. Activity 2 with C2H2

In groups of 4 or 5 complete Handout 2 (C2H2). (30min.)

With the wider group, share significant comments from the group discussions. (10 min.)

### 4. Group discussion: What is essential?

In conclusion and summary, discuss in the wider group the following questions. If meeting face-to-face, write responses on newsprint, or whiteboard. If meeting online, write and share answers through a 'shared screen' option.

Ask the group: *"What can we affirm are the essential aspects of our life together as a community of faith in these changing times/this time and place?"* (5 min.)

(Possible answers: keeping our eyes fixed on Christ; not putting our hope solely in human endeavours; expending our energies on the important things and not the trivial etc.)

Ask the group: *"What can we affirm about God in changing times?"* (5 min.)

(Possible answers: that God will always be faithful to us; God is both our companion and our goal; God loves and cares for us, and all God's creation; God is steadfast etc.)

### 5. Close

Tell the group: *"In closing, we note that the Uniting Church's Basis of Union states that what is essential for a congregation is 'worship, witness and service in the fellowship of the Spirit'. It does not spell out how, when or where we do these, just that these are the essential parts. (Give the group some time to hear this – you may like to share this sentence again.) Perhaps this frees us up to letting go practices which are no longer helpful. Perhaps it also frees us to finding ways to put these essential features into practice in ways which are meaningful today – to us as a community and to those we seek to serve."*

Invite the group to reflect on these thoughts and to pray about them individually and together.

Close the time together in prayer. (5 min.)

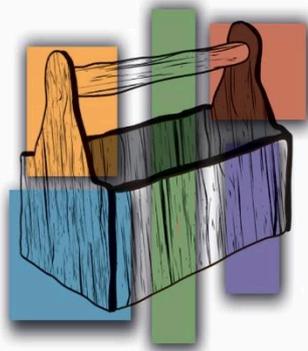
*Note: participants might like to follow up this module with **DIY L10 – Leadership Skills: Discerning decisions** and/or **DIY C7 – Congregational life: Intentional and creative community (engaging pastoral ministry in varying circumstances)**.*

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C2 H1

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## Handout 1

### What is essential?

In groups of 5 or 6 review the following aspects of church life. Add any other aspects of your church community's life that were considered important before the initial social-distancing and other measures were introduced.

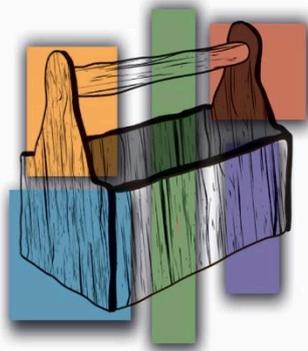
choir	elders
pews	Together in Song
cross	Bible studies
fellowship teas	Scriptures
youth group	Minister
pulpit	Basis of Union
tennis club	Lay Preacher/s
finance committee	Uniting in Worship 2
flower roster	organ
people	drop-in-centre
music band	Church Council
worship leader/s	treasurer
communion	community outreach
church building	child (& other) safe church
meeting together for worship	meeting face-to-face

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*In these times of global pandemic, discuss (and use different colours/emojis, etc to mark) in your group which aspects you have found:*

- *easy to let go of*
- *neither easy nor hard to let go of*
- *difficult to let go of*
- *initially difficult to let go of, but over time it has become easier*
- *initially easy to let go of, but over time it has become more difficult*
- *initially difficult and increasingly painful to let go of*

(10 mins)

These questions might also be helpful for your reflection:

*Are you grateful for the opportunity for change?*

*Are there things/activities you would like to try now that things have changed but didn't quite have the courage or audacity before? (But wanted to or hoped you could someday ...)*

*Things or activities you would like to let go of/not pick up again when we can meet again face to face?*

*Discuss what it has been like for you and your church community to make these decisions.*

*How it has been to name the difficult and easy and share them with the group? (Note: some participants may find this task challenging. Some however, may find it helpful to share with others.)*

*In communion with the church throughout the ages, we also experience times of joy and comfort, lament and struggle. What has this time been like for your community?*

Then as a group, consider anew/again God's invitation to new life. Which four aspects would you take with you as a community of faith who are pilgrims of hope and God's people on the way? Does reframing the situation in terms of God's call and Christian hope, change something of how you view your journey as a community of faith going forward from here? (10 min.)

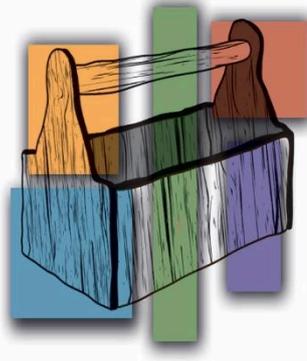
Be prepared to share your decision with the rest of the participants in the wider group.

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## Handout 2

### Biblical passages

Each group is to take one passage of scripture, preferably so that all readings are covered.

- Revelation 21:1-6 A new heaven and a new earth
- 2 Corinthians 5:16-19 Joined in Christ we are a new being
- Galatians 5:1, 19-23 Christ has set us free
- Psalm 146:1, 3, 5, 8-10 No human being can save you
- Matthew 10:5-10 Do not carry a beggar's bag for the journey
- John 1:1-14 The Word became flesh

In your group of 4 or 5 read the selected passage several times: Firstly, read the passage individually, taking time to prayerfully meditate as you read. Read the passage again. What words or phrases stand out for you from the text? Then, as a group, read the passage aloud, listening again for those words or phrases, or others. Read the passage aloud as a group again, carefully listening to what stands out for you from the text.

- What words or phrases from this passage stay with you, or have the most impact upon you? (5 min.)
- In a sentence re-phrase the key thought in the passage. (5 min.)
- What does this passage say, or what can we infer about us as humanity? (5 min.)
- What does this passage tell us about God and/or Jesus? (5 min.)

Be prepared to share briefly key thoughts in the whole group.

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