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Our Unity in Christ

The church is God's family on earth: serving, studying, and worshiping together. Looking to Jesus as its Leader and Redeemer, the church is called to take the good news of salvation to all people.

Number 12 of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church states, in part: "The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. In continuity with the people of God in Old Testament times, we are called out from the world; and we join together for worship, for fellowship, for instruction in the Word, for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, for service to humanity, and for the worldwide proclamation of the gospel."

But what do we mean by church? Who belongs to the church? The answers to these questions depends in part on our definition of the church.

A church is certainly the local community of believers in Jesus who obey the Lord and who assemble themselves for worship and service. They can meet in house churches or in larger congregations (*Rom. 16:10, 11*). By church we also mean the building in which Christians assemble. But this is hardly the best definition of the church. The church is about people, not about buildings.

In the New Testament, the church sometimes is referred to as a group of believers in a particular geographical area. So, when Paul addressed the church in Galatia, he referred to many local congregations in towns and villages in that region (*Gal. 1:2; see also 1 Pet. 1:1*). Additionally, by church we sometimes mean a group of people who

belong to a particular denomination or who call themselves by a particular name given for their beliefs and heritage.

Yet, all of these definitions are incomplete. The church is the people of God all over the earth. And although Christ has faithful followers in various denominations (many of whom will join God's remnant in the final crisis [Rev. 18:1–4]), this quarter we are going to focus on our church, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and what unity in Christ means to us.

Fundamental Belief 14, called Unity in the Body of Christ, states: "The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation. Through the revelation of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures we share the same faith and hope and reach out in one witness to all. This unity has its source in the oneness of the triune God, who has adopted us as His children."

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The purpose of this series of Bible study lessons is to provide biblical instruction on the topic of Christian unity for us as Seventh-day Adventists, who, now, as always, face challenges to that unity, and will until the end of time.

However, in the Scriptures we find numerous insights and instructions on how to live God's gift of oneness in Christ. Those insights, those instructions about living out and expressing in our church the unity we have been given, are the focus of this quarter.

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How to Use This Teachers Edition

Get Motivated to Explore, Apply, and Create

We hope that this format of the teachers edition will encourage adult Sabbath School class members to do just that—explore, apply, and create. Each weekly teachers lesson takes your class through the following learning process, based on the Natural Learning Cycle:

1. Why is this lesson important to me? (Motivate);
2. What do I need to know from God’s Word? (Explore);
3. How can I practice what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Apply); and
4. What can I do with what I’ve learned from God’s Word? (Create).

And for teachers who haven’t had time to prepare during the week for class, there is a one-page outline of easy-to-digest material in “The Lesson in Brief” section.

Here’s a closer look at the four steps of the Natural Learning Cycle and suggestions for how you, the teacher, can approach each one:

Step 1—Motivate: Link the learners’ experiences to the central concept of the lesson to show why the lesson is relevant to their lives. Help them answer the question, Why is this week’s lesson important to me?

Step 2—Explore: Present learners with the biblical information they need to understand the central concept of the lesson. (Such information could include facts about the people; the setting; cultural, historical, and/or geographical details; the plot or what’s happening; and conflicts or tension of the texts you are studying.) Help learners answer the question, What do I need to know from God’s Word?

Step 3—Apply: Provide learners with opportunities to practice the information given in Step 2. This is a crucial step; information alone is not enough to help a person grow in Christ. Assist the learners in answering the question, How can I apply to my life what I’ve learned?

Step 4—Create: Finally, encourage learners to be “doers of the word, and not hearers only” (*James 1:22*). Invite them to make a life response to the lesson. This step provides individuals and groups with opportunities for creative self-expression and exploration. All such activities should help learners answer the question, With God’s help, what can I do with what I’ve learned from this week’s lesson?

When teachers use material from each of these four steps, they will appeal to most every student in their class: those who enjoy talking about what’s happening in their lives, those who want more information about the texts being studied, those who want to know how it all fits in with real life, and those who want to get out and apply what they’ve learned.