



Over three days, the principal of United Theological College Rev. Peter Walker led the Synod 2019 meeting through a series of Bible Studies. Synod members have said that these studies were one of the meeting's highlights. We have made all three of these studies available online as a resource for congregations and small groups. Rev. Walker has also provided some questions for groups to use after watching the study videos on our Vimeo channel: [vimeo.com/nswactuca](https://vimeo.com/nswactuca)

## The Purpose of the Living Church

Matthew 28: 1-20

**Read Matthew 28: 1-20 and watch the study 'The Purpose of the Living Church':**

1. Without feeling there are right or wrong answers, how would you reply if asked 'What is your definition of the church?'
2. And how might you reply if asked, 'What does the church offer that I cannot find elsewhere?'
3. What was your response to the statement, "The living church is always and only ever identified by the presence of the living Lord"?
4. What are the signs of the presence of the living Lord in your church community?
5. The *Basis of Union* speaks of the importance of the church's role to bear "human witness in word and action" to the Christ who reaches out through our human witness to awaken faith and call people to discipleship. Are you a 'word' person, an 'action' person, or both? What might help you to feel better resourced and supported in your calling to be a witness to the living Lord? Who could you ask for those resources and support?

## The Focus of the Living Church

2 Corinthians 3: 1-18

**Read 2 Corinthians 3: 1-18 and watch the study 'The Focus of the Living Church'**

1. If your church community has experienced times of disunity, by what means have you sought to overcome it? If not, can you bring to mind signs of disunity you have seen in the wider church and ask, again, how have you observed people seeking to overcome the disunity?
2. What 'treatment' does Paul provide for disunity in Corinth?
3. Did you find Nicholas of Cusa's exercise around the all-seeing gaze a helpful or unhelpful way to reflect on how we deepen our knowledge (vision) of God? Why?

4. Did you find Nicholas' exercise a helpful or unhelpful way to think about the church as a community in which there is both unity and diversity? Why?
5. How, and through whom, has your own knowledge (vision) of God been deepened? Who, or what, has helped make the Invisible visible to you?
6. 'The unity of the living church is located in the One upon whom we are all called to focus; the one face upon whom our diversity of faces are fixed. And it is he, not us, who holds responsibility and authority to form from us an image of himself on earth.' If Christ has responsibility and authority to form

## The Identity of the Living Church

Philippians 2: 1-11

**Read Philippians 2: 1-11 and watch the study 'The Identity of the Living Church'**

1. Paul addresses the problems in Corinth and Philippi with reminders of the one who unites Christians – the living Lord. Where is your church community looking for solutions to its problems? And the wider church?
2. The study seeks to broaden our sense of the phrase 'Let the same mind be in you' (Phil 2:5) so that we may grasp Paul's original intention. 'Minding' is a doing thing at least as much as having a particular 'frame of mind'. Do you find this analogy helpful? If so, which gifts do you bring to the calling of 'minding Christ'?
3. It is life-giving to know we have a personal relationship with a God who reaches out to our inner self, yet our identity is vested in something greater than the inner self, or our favoured group. What is your identity? How has your identity been formed – and continues to be formed?
4. "There is no more 'us or them'. There is not even 'us and them'. There is only we, in Him." Is this achievable or just nice-sounding theology? Give some thought to any biblical passages, characters, or stories that come to mind as you read over this statement.
5. The identity of the living church is found in our living Lord. How might you, your church community, and the Uniting Church in Australia become more closely identified with Christ?