# Generous Life Project – One Goal: The Kingdom of God

**Session 2**

**Theme**: Working together for the one goal of living into the Kingdom of God

**Hook: What is the Kingdom of God like?**

**Text:** Luke 13:18-21, 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, Isaiah 40:4-5

**Video**: Congregations Working Together

**Learning Goal:** Explore potential conference partners for your work in the Kingdom of

God

**Learning Activity**: Small Group work, congregation and neighborhood analysis

**Sending:** Isaiah 40:4-5

**Preparation/Need**

1. Newsprint tracking the “Images of the Kingdom of God” from the last session
2. Congregation and Neighborhood analyses work from the last session
3. Newsprint paper
4. Markers

## Welcome

**Hook: What is the Kingdom of God like?**

**Theme:** The focus will be on congregations working together within a conference for one goal – the Kingdom of God.

**Prayer:** Reveal your glory, O God, in your unending generosity to your people. Teach us to trust that your abundance will always give us more than enough. Open our hands and our hearts to bring in the Kingdom. We pray in Jesus’ name. **Amen.**

## Video

Congregations Working Together

### Relevant Quotes

Pastor Pat: Only God could move that many hearts to work together for a common cause, a common goal of starting a new ministry. I think that’s wonderful news – if we just allow God to help us work together.

Chrystal: ... and I loved how they had the candles lit and how they had Mary and Joseph come up to the altar and lay down baby Jesus and I loved the Christmas song. I told my mom, the next Sunday, if I could come to church with my aunt and I kept coming and I brought my mom and dad.

VO: Helped by the generosity of the Central Coast Conference Churches, Iglesia Luterana Santa Cruz grew.

VO: …one sound from different parts of the Body of Christ made beautiful. Churches of the Southwest California Synod generously serving others in the Kingdom of God.

Carolyn Foster: Dr. King was about all people, not just one people … cause we are working for one cause and that is for the Kingdom of God.

### Biblical Foundation

What Bible passages or stories did this video bring to mind?

Last week, we shared some of our own impressions and imaginings about what the Kingdom of God is like. Are there any scriptural images or passages that you remember which speak to what the Kingdom of God is like?

Add relevant ideas to the “Images of the Kingdom of God” newsprint.

Have someone read Luke 13:18-21.

**18He said therefore, “What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? 19It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.”**

**20And again he said, “To what should I compare the kingdom of God? 21It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in withthree measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”**

### Commentary

Luke 13 and Matthew 13 contain a whole series of parables which cast images of what the Kingdom of God is like. Robert Farrar Capon reviews these by noting that the Kingdom of God is everywhere, already, and now:

The Sower sowed seed *everywhere.*

Farmer planted the *whole* field in wheat

Woman kneaded *whole* batch of flour with yeast

Guy who found the treasure bought the *whole* field

Net caught *everything* in the ocean, not just fish, not just good fish

(Capon 1985, 118).

More from Robert Capon:

“..yeast enters the dough by being dissolved in the very liquid that makes the dough become dough at all – just as there is not a moment of the dough’s existence, from start to finish, in which it is unleavened dough - so this parable insists that the kingdom enters the work at its creation and that there is not, and never has been, any unkingdomed humanity anywhere in the world” (Capon 1985,119).

“The Church is not the kingdom, the church is the sign of the kingdom that is hidden in the whole world” (Capon 1985, 121).

“…progress in history is not a transition from non-kingdom to kingdom; rather, it is a progress from kingdom-in-mystery to kingdom-made-manifest.”

David Teide says these are “parables of remarkable growth, drawn from natural examples, and conveying a dynamic sense of the “Kingdom of God” as a divine force or energy or strength (Teide 1988, 251).

### Conversation Starters

**Elbow Buddies**

What do you notice in these ideas/texts?

Where is the Kingdom of God?

What would you say to the idea that the Church is the Kingdom of God on earth?

What relationship does the Church have to the Kingdom of God?

How about your congregation?

Share insights and record relevant images of the Kingdom of God on newsprint.

## Biblical Foundation

The video joins two concepts: the Kingdom of God and the Body of Christ. Let’s explore that connection.

Have someone read: 1 Corinthians 12:12 -27

**12For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. 14Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. 15If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20As it is, there are many members, yet one body. 21The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” 22On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; 24whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member,25that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. 26If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.**

**27Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.**

**Commentary**

Note that Paul concludes by saying we “ARE” the body of Christ. This is not a metaphor, it is our identity. And it is a gift. We don’t create it by agreeing with one another. We are given this identity by the Spirit in God’s Baptismal waters. We are the living presence of Christ in the world. What we do, as individual Christians and as the Church, informs people’s experience of God. Paul’s list of gifts, in the very next section of chapter 12, are those skills/attributes given by God for use in the Kingdom of God. Through our acting on our identity with the skills we have received from God, we reveal the Kingdom of God. Pastor Lawrence Becker of Trinity Lutheran Church in Hawthorne filmed the video for this session and adds: “Paul is not describing what we have to do… he’s describing **what we are** and how we are empowered by the Spirit to be that.” Paul’s argument comes to a peak in 1 Corinthians 13 where he names the greatest gift, which encompasses them all. “Jesus lives in and through us, the church, so that we are bound together in Christ, in Love.”

 Paul is emphatic that the body is both unified and diverse. The different parts are not in competition – one against another –instead they all work together. Competition will break the body apart. Together in our diversity we reflect the body of Christ and the reign of God on earth now.

**Conversation Starters:**

**Small Groups:**

Good old American individualism – our native culture – can work against the unity we share as the body of Christ. There’s a balance between individuality and community that is sometimes hard to find. Where do you see individuality in Paul’s description of the Body of Christ? (You may want to read 12:27-31 to get the list of gifts Paul lays out). Where do you see a sense of community and working together?

Hand out a piece of paper to each small group. Ask them to draw a line lengthwise through the middle of the paper. On the right side of the line ask them to write “Individuality,” and on the left side “community.” While referring back to the 1 Corinthians text, have the small groups fill in their new chart.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Individuality | Community  |
|  |  |

How does this play out in your congregation? Is there a balance between individuality and community – or is it leaning one way or the other?

How does this affect your being the body of Christ going about the task of revealing the kingdom of God in your neighborhood?

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Share insights

How does the Central Coast Conference with its support of Iglesia Luterana and the African Descent Strategy Team with the MLK celebration reveal the Kingdom of God to the world?

Share insights.

What examples of the divine energy working in and through the church to reveal the Kingdom of God did you hear about in the video?

Share insights.

**Large Group**

Which congregation is physically closest to yours?

**Small Group**

Who does your congregation feel it is in competition with from the outside? Other congregations, neighborhood activities, et cetera?

Share insights with the larger group.

**Small Group**

How does the spirit of competition get expressed *within* your congregation?

Share insights with the larger group.

### Learning Activity

**Large Group**

Revisit your congregation and neighborhood analysis and add a circle outside of the two linked circles. Label it “Obstacles”

How is competition an obstacle to your congregation’s ability to work together?

 Add ideas to the new circle.

How does the balance between individuality and community in your congregation threaten your ability to work together for the neighborhood?

 Add ideas to the new circle.

What are the obstacles which block your congregation’s ability to work with neighboring congregations?

 Add ideas to the new circle.

What would help you grasp the vision of the Body of Christ at work together for the One Goal of living into the Kingdom of God?

Document ideas on “Images of Kingdom of God” newsprint.

**Sending**

Read: Isaiah 40:4-5

**4Every valley shall be lifted up,
    and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
    and the rough places a plain.
5Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,
    and all people shall see it together,
    for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”**

**Dismissal:**

Leader: Let it be so

**People: Amen!** [[1]](#endnote-1)

1. Robert Farrar Capon. 1985. The Parables of the Kingdom. Grand Rapids: Zondervan

David Tiede.1988. “Luke” Augsburg Commentary of the New Testament. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress [↑](#endnote-ref-1)