

**Lutheran Church of Australia**

**South Australia-Northern Territory**



Real Grace, Real Life, Real Community is a vision for the local church in the
SA-NT District, and was launched at the 2023 District Convention of Synod.

Real Grace is where our relationship with God is restored.

Real Life is where God's love changes the way we live.

Real Community is where we extend God's love to others
and learn to bring the good news into each other's lives.

**Bible Study Week 1**

**WHY CHURCH?**

Why do we gather? Why do we celebrate the Word and Holy Communion? What is the purpose of the local church? What are we here for?

These are important questions for us to ask as we carry out the work of Jesus in the world. Let’s take the time to ask these big questions as we read the Bible together.

Are there some things that we need to repent of or return to? Sometimes the local church can become self-serving. Sometimes we are riddled with doubts and fears. What might it look like if we were to come back to Jesus and find our strength in him? What might happen if we devoted ourselves anew to reading God’s Word and to prayer? These are all questions that remind us of why we are here and motivate us to be the Church in the world.

**OPENING**

What is a part of church gatherings and worship times that you really appreciate?

What is it that has kept you coming back to the church where you belong?

In what ways are you encouraged by the people you worship next to?

**STUDY**

When Jesus died the disciples were confused and frightened. Even though Jesus had told them that he would die and on the third day he would rise again his disciples struggled to believe. But Jesus ministered to them in their unbelief. Then he sent the Holy Spirit to empower them. In
John 20 Jesus broke through their fear, he brought his peace to them, and he send them out to take his peace to the world.

**Read John 20:18-30**

Why were the disciples fearful? What were they afraid would happen?

What do you think “Peace be with you” meant to the disciples?

What are some of the ways the Church is fearful today? What are we afraid of?

In what ways is Jesus’ peace with us today?

What does it look like when we bring Jesus’ forgiveness to someone?

In Matthew 28 Jesus gives his disciples a command to take on his ministry, he calls them to make disciples of all nations. A disciple is a follower, who learns from their teacher, devotes themself to their teaching and disciplines themself to do what their teacher does. Jesus tells his disciples that they are now to become the teacher helping others to know Jesus and live in his ways.

**Read Matthew 28:16-20**

Again, there are doubts among the disciples even as they worship the risen Lord Jesus. The disciples didn’t know everything at this point so how can they become teachers?

Alongside worship, we see a community here born to learn and live in Jesus. In what ways have you learnt to live in Jesus’ ways?

Discipleship means that we are always learning inside and outside of the “classroom”. In what ways have you experienced both in your faith journey?

What is the value in reading the Bible together rather, than just individually?

**APPLICATION**

What are some of the doubts and fears that you would like our churches to leave behind?

Who are the people in the community around you that need the peace of Jesus?

What might need to change for your church to prioritise discipleship more?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION TIME**

**Read Psalm 84**

Have you ever desperately longed to worship in God’s presence?

Why do you think the psalm writer is so hungry to seek God?

Do church gatherings feel like home to you? Why?

This is a pilgrimage psalm. Why do you think God commanded the Jews to make three pilgrimages to the temple each year?

In what ways are we pilgrims here on earth?

How might you encourage those you worship with so that they are strengthened for their journey?

**Bible Study Week 2**

**REAL GRACE**

Real Grace is where our relationship with God is restored. In Real Grace we gather as God’s people. Real Grace was modelled by Martin Luther who was gritty, open, honest and real.

We value the emphasis that Lutheran theology has placed on grace throughout the centuries. The core of our faith is what God has done for us: God’s grace that heals hurts, grace that accepts the lost, grace that welcomes and restores our lives.

**OPENING**

Do you like giving gifts? And are you good at giving gifts? Why, or why not?

What does the hymn “Amazing Grace” say to you?

In what ways is forgiveness powerful?

**STUDY**

We are created, redeemed and sustained by grace, it is a gift from God. What difference does it make in your life knowing that everything you have is a gift?

**Read Romans 5:1-11**

List the actions that God is doing for us in this passage.

If someone were to say, “I’m a pretty good person, God would let me in to heaven”, what could you say to them?

If someone were to say, “I’m such a terrible person, God could never allow me into heaven”, what could you say to them?

**Read Ephesians 2:1-22**

What does it look like when we are dead in sin?

How would you describe or illustrate grace?

What is the relationship between grace and works? (Verses 8-10)

How do we as a church community show grace to someone who is still learning the ways of Jesus?

**Read Luke 15:1-10**

What answer do these stories give to the Pharisees and the scribes?

How can we as a Church be like the shepherd and the woman in these parables?

Our churches are places where people can find healing and grace. How has the Church been a place of healing and belonging for you?

**APPLICATION**

Name the ways you have experienced God’s grace, and together as a group write/offer a prayer of thanks to God for all these things.

If Jesus died once and for all for our sins why do we keep talking and singing about it in worship every week? Why do we confess our sins in church again and again?

What kind of environment does grace create in our church community? How does it change/motivate/inform the way we interact with each other?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION TIME**

**Read Psalm 23**

Which part of this psalm stands out to you? Why?

What would it look like for Jesus to lead you to rest today?

Why do you think Jesus has to lead us through the dark valley of death? Why couldn’t we just skip it?

When have church gatherings been a place of rest for you?

**Bible Study Week 3**

**REAL LIFE**

Real Life is where God’s love changes the way we live. In Real life we Grow as God’s people.

Real Life was taught by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who challenged us to live in selfless community together.

We are not afraid to embrace Real Life. When things don’t look perfect, we know that God’s grace and love will see us through. Real Life is acknowledging our mistakes and learning from our struggles. Real Life is trusting in God in the midst of those struggles.

**OPENING**

What does it look like when God softens a heart of stone?

In what ways has God been patient with you? What is so powerful about God’s patience?

What does it take to make lasting change in a person’s life?

**STUDY**

When Jesus called his 12 disciples to come and follow him what do you think began to change in them?

When they lived with Jesus what do you think the disciples may have found hard to adapt to?

**Read Romans 6:1-18**

Since we are no longer under the law what is wrong with indulging our sinful nature once in a while?

The idea of death is mentioned 15 times in this passage of Scripture. How does Jesus’ death and resurrection connect with our relationship with sin?

In his Small Catechism, Martin Luther encourages us to drown the old sinful nature we were born with and to let the new nature we have in baptism to come alive day after day. What parts of the old sinful nature nag at you? And what is the new life way of responding?

How does the Holy Spirit help us as we let this new nature come to life?

**Read Galatians 5:13-26**

What does Paul mean when he encourages us to keep in step with the Spirit?

The acts of the sinful nature listed by Paul in verses 19-21 sound pretty nasty. Why would we want to do those things?

What part of your sinful nature would you like to be crucified and buried?

What fruit of the Spirit (v22-23) would you most like to see the Holy Spirit grow in you?

What are the things that most help you to leave the old life of sin behind?

**APPLICATION**

When new people come to our church how can we support them in their struggle with sin?

People’s personal battles make life messy in the Church. Why is it important for them to feel safe and to know that they belong at these times?

How do we see the work of the Spirit in the people who are struggling in our church community?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION TIME**

**Read Psalm 103**

What part of this psalm encourages you today?

List some of the wonderful things the Lord has done in your life.

In what way does the psalm writer talk to himself and what is he saying?

What could this psalm teach you about your own self talk?

**Bible Study Week 4**

**REAL COMMUNITY**

Real Community is where we extend God’s love to others and learn to bring the good news into each other’s lives. The need for this real community leads us to go as God’s people.

Real Community was modelled by those who began the LCANZ journey in our countries. They put up with each other. They forgave and moved on. They cared for each other in the hard times. They taught real grace and ‘real faith’ not only on Sundays and in school rooms, but at camps and picnics and throughout the week — in real life.

We do Real Community as we live in grace together. The Church is a place where you can belong, where you can make real friends. Where you can discover your calling as we work together.

**OPENING**

When you have guests over for dinner, what do you do to welcome them? What is different from a normal family meal?

If you managed a boarding house or accommodation venue where would it be and what would it be like?

What does it look like when lost or lonely people to find acceptance and belonging?

**STUDY**

**Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-27**

The human body is such an interesting analogy to describe the church. What part of the body do you think you could use to describe yourself or the others in your group?

What does Paul mean in verse 22 when he says some parts that we think are weaker are actually indispensable?

How do you think the different parts of the body of Christ can serve the wider community outside your walls?

How could your spiritual gifts bring blessing to your neighbourhood?

What help do you need from the rest of the body to better serve your neighbour?

When people come to faith for the first time, or reengage with the Christian faith later in life they often come with many questions and a passion to learn. Describe the kind of environment you could create for them to explore these questions?

**Read Ephesians 4:11-32**

What kind of works of service has God put before you (either now or in the past) - in your congregation? In the wider community?

What works of service might he be putting before you and your congregation in the future?

How have pastors, teachers, church leaders and other church workers helped you to be prepared for the works of service that God has put before you? How could they help you more at this stage in your life?

Think of those in your church community who are younger or less experienced than yourselves. In what ways do they need our help to know God more and grow in Christian maturity? (see v13)

We certainly live in a crazy world blown about by pagan ideas and sinful desires (see vv14-16). How can we help the people around us find stability and grace in the midst of their busy lives? How can we help each other to shine the light of Christ?

**APPLICATION**

Where can you see God moving and working in the local community outside of your church walls? What might it look like for you to get more involved with him?

In what ways do people in your church community show welcome and kindness to new people when they come to worship with you?

What are some new ways you could extend warmth and hospitality to them?

**PERSONAL REFLECTION TIME**

**Read Psalm 1**

What part of this psalm speaks to you today?

David says that when we are planted in God we yield fruit in season. What season do you feel like you are in at the moment?

At this stage in your life do you feel more like you are blown about or standing tall?

How would you like to be more planted in the streams of water that are God’s goodness?

Which part of the Scriptures do you delight in?

**FEEDBACK**

As you finish up your study please take a moment to send us a few notes at the District Office. We’d love to hear any stories or responses that you would like to share with us.

Send us an email at administration.sa-nt@lca.org.au
or post your notes to 137 Archer Street North Adelaide SA 5006

We look forward to sharing in stories from all around South Australia and the Northern Territory.

To find out more about Real Grace, Real Life, Real Community:

https://www.sant.lca.org.au/resources/real-grace-real-life-real-community/