



Most of us are familiar with the famous social networking websites that have become increasingly popular within the global culture. Some of the most popular being Snapchat or Instagram. Many of the youth in the Imago Dei Youth Ministry spend hours on these social media platforms and have developed their own profiles. The youth ministry staff members have even created their own Instagram and Snapchat profiles! (check out @imagodeiyouth)

Q1: Look at the picture above. What is communicated by the images? What is the purpose of Snapchat, Instagram and other social media platforms?

There is a strong desire within the emerging and youth culture to belong and exist in community. The current generation of youth and young adults will organize around just about anything.

Young people's voracious appetite for social media isn't rooted in a love for all things digital, but in a nagging loneliness and a persistent human longing for deep belonging and connection.

-Andrew Zirschky

Q2: Aside from social networking, what are other ways youth form communities? What are some of the communities you are a part of that are important to you and why?

We value community and connection to other people so much so that one of the ways we sometimes experience “punishment” is by being removed from a community. Some of you may have been sent to the corner or put in timeout when you did something wrong as a child. Posts or status updates sometimes inform the online community that a particular student has been sent to their room or grounded from cell phone, computer, and friends. i.e. cut off from community. One of the worst forms of legal punishment is called solitary confinement, when a prisoner is sent to a room by themselves and completely isolated from the prison community.

The same was true in the days of Jesus. Separation from the community was one of the more difficult experiences a person could endure. One of the ways people were cut off from the community was by being *unclean*. People were considered *unclean* by committing particular sins, contracting a variety of diseases, and even certain natural experiences could cause people to be *unclean* and separated from the community.

READ Luke 5:12-16

Q4: How does Jesus respond to the leper (a person with an infectious skin disease known as leprosy)? What does Jesus then ask him to do and why would this be significant?

The leper in this story was *unclean*, potentially for years. He had been isolated from family, friends, worship, and maybe faith. He probably had not experienced any physical human contact for quite some time. That's because if anyone did they thought they could contract the disease and become *unclean*, too. Yet, in this story, Jesus not only offers his willingness to set the man free from disease (he could have done this with words alone), but also offers him a physical connection, a touch that no one else would have offered him. The leprosy



man is then instructed to return to the house of worship and show himself to the priests. There would be no reason not to restore him to the community- he was transformed and made clean by Jesus.

In a world divided between clean and unclean, Jesus brings unity. The unclean are made clean, the isolated are welcomed, and the separated are included. Jesus brings new meaning and new people into a new kind of community. This is what we call the church, i.e. *a faith community*.

Read Ephesians 2:13-22

Q5: How does Ephesians describe the community of Christ? What has happened and how was this made possible? Write in your own words a summary of Ephesians 2:13-22 and how does it relate to the story in Luke 5?

The invitation of Jesus is not only about personal transformation, but also communal participation. Jesus heals the leper and then returns him to the fellowship. If we believe that the Christian faith is solely about Jesus living in *my* life, Christ making *me* new, we have only heard half the story. We are called to live in community with one another. Some of us have felt so isolated and rejected by community that all we know is what it means to be alone. Whether it is what we have done or what has been done to us, sometimes we forget what it looks like to have genuine and loving connection with other people, even with God. We feel like our sole identity is *unclean* and *cut-off from the community*.

The beautiful witness of the story in Luke 5 and the description in Ephesians 2 is that in Jesus we are offered a new type of community, made up of a long list of people in transition from being *unclean* towards *clean*, excluded to included. The church exists as a renewed people gathered together for the mission of God.

Re-read from Lesson 1.8 *The PCUSA Book of Order description of the Church and its mission:*

"The Church seeks to include all people and is never content to enjoy its benefits of Christian community for itself alone." (F-1.0302)

"In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God sends the Church into the world to share the gospel of God's redemption of all things and people." (F- 1.0302d)

Q6: How do these statements describe the Christian church and its mission? Who are we and what are we called to do?

READ Ephesians 2:10

Q7: What are God's people created for? How does this relate to the idea of community?

The confirmation experience represents our claiming of our baptism and the covenant our parents made with God. Confirmation is also the proclamation before the faithful community called the Church that we intend to participate as active members the hope of the world and the glory of God. As you move into the day of your confirmation, be reminded that this represents not the end of a journey. Instead, this is a new beginning in your walk with Christ and service within the community of the body of Christ- the Church.

Q8: What are some ways that you already demonstrate your commitment to the Christian community of Westminster and beyond? How do you hope to further your participation in this community after your confirmation?

The Apostle's Creed was adopted by the early church in efforts to convey what they believed about God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the church, and other elements of the faith. It is a *creed*, or confession of faith, which we still recite today. *The creed is a communal "confession of hope" (Hebrews 10:23)*. Throughout the year we will work on understanding this beautiful tradition within the community of Christian faith.

Read begin to memorize the Apostles Creeds which describes what the church believes about God.

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, dead, and buried;
He descended into hell.
On the third day he rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Q1: Look at the picture above. What is communicated by the images? What is the purpose of Snapchat, Instagram and other social media platforms?

Q2: What are some ways that people can form communities through facebook? What are other ways youth form communities, whether online, in person, for a cause, etc.?

Q3: What are some of the communities that you are a part of that are important to you? What are some ways that you demonstrate that these communities are a significant component to your life?

Q4: How does Jesus respond to the leper (a person with an infectious skin disease known as leprosy)? What does Jesus then ask him to do and why would this be significant?

Q5: How does Ephesians describe the community of Christ? What has happened and how was this made possible? Write in your own words a summary of Ephesians 2:13-22 and how does it relate to the story in Luke 5?

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