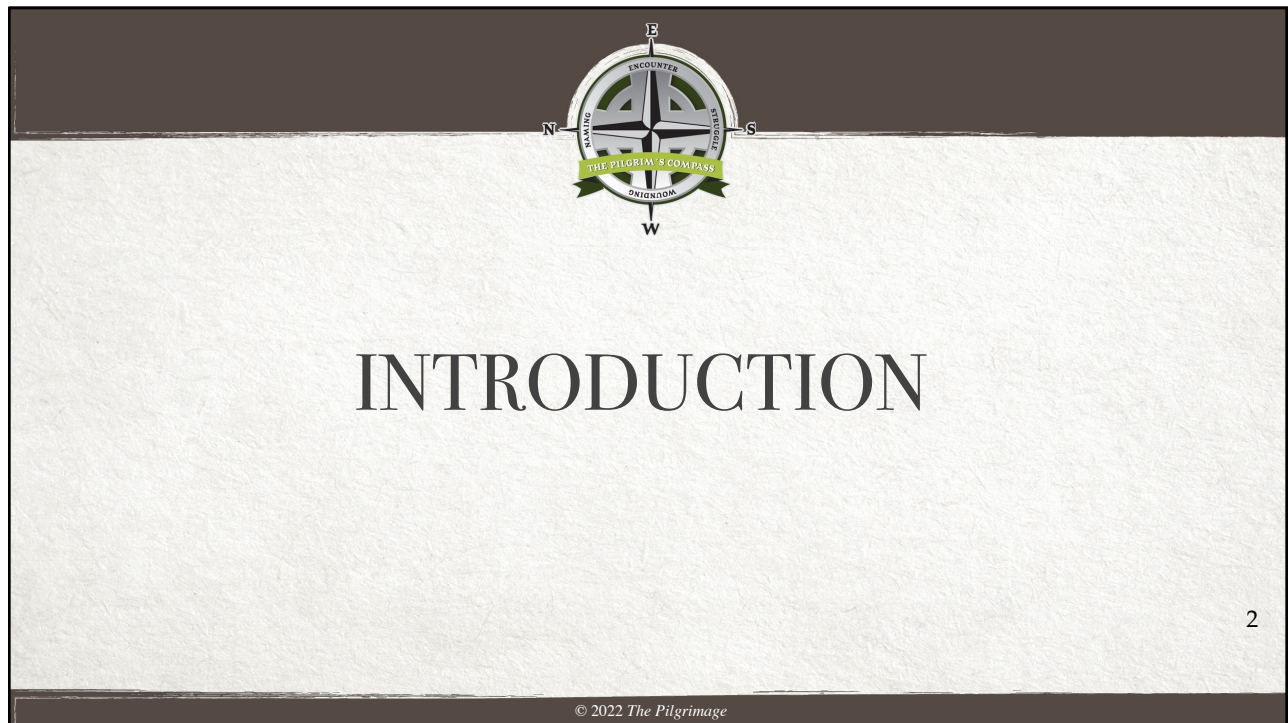


1



2

LIVING CHOICES

- Response
- Reminder
- Faithful
- Mindset
- Start



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“Those who attempt to act and do things for others . . . without deepening their own self-understanding, freedom and capacity to love, will have nothing to give others. They will communicate to others nothing but the contagion of their own obsessions, their aggressiveness, their ego-centered ambitions, their delusions about ends and means, their doctrinaire prejudices and ideas.” (Thomas Merton from *Contemplation in a World of Action*)



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What binds us together with others is “shared fear and disdain, not common humanity, shared trust, respect, or love.” We feel “afraid to disagree or debate with friends.” “We’ve turned away from one another and toward blame and rage. We’re lonely and untethered. And scared. So damn scared.” (Brené Brown from *Braving the Wilderness*, page 33)



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CLASS OUTLINE

- Week One—One Community
 - Introduction
 - Interdependence over individualism
 - Relationships over rules
 - Oneness over sameness
- Week Two—One-On-One
 - Recognition over tolerance
 - Empathy over distance
 - Grace over retribution
 - Service over self
- Week Three—Loving One Another
 - Human dignity over dehumanization
 - Charity over acquisition
 - Love over fear
 - Conclusion



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CLASS FORMAT

- For each choice
 - Presentation
 - Small group discussion
- Handouts
 - PowerPoint slides
 - Small group prompts
- On *THE PILGRIMAGE* web-site
 - Related scripture and quotes



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SUMMARY OF THE PILGRIMAGE

- An adult faith formation ministry sponsored by the PCUSA's Institute for Church Renewal
- **Mission Statement:** For Christians hearing the call to go deeper—The Pilgrimage creates a community and provides tools and experiences through which we learn to hear the call of God and respond in faith, journeying together with friends on the path to a Spirit-led and joyful life.



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SUMMARY OF THE PILGRIMAGE

■ Provides:

- Programs and teaching to inspire all who are interested in investing in your relationship with God
- Provides a small group ministry (Compass Groups) for those who desire to become pilgrims within a community of on-going support
- Provide opportunities to complete prerequisites to go on a travel pilgrimage with a group. Prerequisites are: attending a Compassing Retreat, completing at least six The Pilgrimage courses for credit, and faithful participation in a Compass Group.

- For more information ask Pastor Paul for *A Pilgrim's Handbook*



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COMPLETING THIS COURSE FOR CREDIT

- Attend each class and participate
- Within 30 days following course completion complete two activities
 - Consider and make a personal list of your own living choices
 - Complete one of the following:
 - Read and consider the “Related Scripture & Quotes” handouts for the three classes OR
 - Read and consider a biography of a man or woman of faith



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COMPLETING THIS COURSE FOR CREDIT

- Details for completing both activities are in your class handout
- For both, you may either submit a one page reflection/summary or schedule a visit with Pastor Paul to discuss
- If you choose to read a biography, your handout includes a:
 - List of suggested persons of faith
 - List of biographies in the CPC library



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QUESTIONS

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ENCOUNTER
WALKING
THE PILGRIM'S COMPASS
ADVENTURE
ORIENTATION

INTERDEPENDENCE OVER INDIVIDUALISM


13

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¹² For 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. ¹³ For 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.

(1 Corinthians 12:12-13)



ENCOUNTER
WALKING
THE PILGRIM'S COMPASS
ADVENTURE
ORIENTATION

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INDIVIDUALISM

- Self-reliance and independent
- No self-sacrifice
- Individual rights are more important than the needs of society



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WE LIVE IN AN INDIVIDUALISTIC SOCIETY (Malcom Gladwell)

- Demand “our rights”
- Dismiss our impact on others
- Success from individual effort; need from laziness
- Individual assets valued over public assets (Marilynne Robinson)
- Relationships are transactional and impersonal (Andy Crouch)



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WE LIVE IN AN INDIVIDUALISTIC SOCIETY

- Highly mobile— not rooted in our communities
- Individual near-term benefit over posterity (Marilyn Robinson)
- Exploit others to get what we want



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WE BRING INDIVIDUALISM INTO OUR FAITH

- Focus on what it means to me and not to humanity (E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien)
- In today's church we see:
 - Judgmentalism
 - Worship as entertainment and a place for affirmation
 - Bigger as a measure of church success (Linda L. Belleville)
- Focus on individual sin and deny communal and institutional sin (David Firth), including ancestral sin



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CONSEQUENCES OF INDIVIDUALISM

- No agreement on common good
- Few if any close friends and confidants (Robert D. Putnam)
- Limited empathy
- Loneliness (Dorothy Day)
- Attempt connection remotely and via a common loyalty (Brené Brown)



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CONSEQUENCES OF INDIVIDUALISM

- Environmental destruction (Conor Cunningham)
- Inequality (Conor Cunningham)
- Poverty, famine, and disease (Conor Cunningham)
- Ultimately, an intolerable society
 - Have-nots responding in violence
 - Haves demanding the imposition of order



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"We are social creatures to the inmost centre of our being. The notion that one can begin anything at all from scratch, free from the past, or unindebted to others, could not conceivably be more wrong." (Karl Popper quoted by Bryan Magee in *Popper*, page 69)



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INTERDEPENDENCE

- Being mutually reliant on others
- Not transactional or law based
- Based on self-giving love and grace
- Not collectivism (only society has rights)



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INTERDEPENDENCE IN SCRIPTURE

■ Creation

- Not good to be alone (Genesis 2:18)
- Created in God's image (Genesis 1:37)
- Caretaker of the garden (Genesis 2:15)

■ Israel

- From Abram a great nation that will bless all families of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3)



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INTERDEPENDENCE IN SCRIPTURE

■ The Church

- Peter the rock upon which Christ builds his Church (Matthew 16:16-18)
- One body, all needed (1 Corinthians 12:14-26)
- To pursue peace and mutual upbuilding (Romans 14:13-23)
- Enslaved to one another in love (Galatians 5:13-15)
- Bear one another's burdens (Galatians 6:1-2)



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CHOOSING INTERDEPENDENCE

- Can be messy given conflicting interests and priorities (e.g. transportation project planning)
- Find strength in differences in background, skills, perspective, interests, knowledge, experience
- Joy is found in giving and deferring (e.g. sharing the road)



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SMALL GROUP

- What lessons, experiences, and influences in your life make it easy to choose individualism and difficult to choose interdependence?
- Paul says in 1 Corinthians:

“²² On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and 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, ²⁴ whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, ²⁵ that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶ If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” (1 Corinthians 12:22-26)

How might this concept be applied to our daily actions with others? In what ways would doing this build community?



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RELATIONSHIPS OVER RULES


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³⁶ “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷ He said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹ And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

(Matthew 22:36-40)



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WE ARE MADE FOR RELATIONSHIP

- “In the beginning was the relationship.” (Martin Buber, Jewish philosopher)
- God is a triune relationship and God created humankind for the sake of relationship.
- “I read somewhere that a thing that does not exist in relation to anything else cannot itself be said to exist.” (Reverend Ames in novel *Gilead*)
- “I am because you are” (Ancient African concept of Ubuntu) means “My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human together.” (Desmond Tutu)



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WE LIVE IN A RULE FOCUSED CULTURE

- View relationships in terms of rules, laws, contracts, and transactions
- Assume a rule is broken unless applied 100 percent of the time
- Assume a rule is unfair unless applied equally to everyone
- Assume God is fair and so “God’s rules” apply equally to all people
(E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O’Brien)
- Grace is lacking



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WE LIKE TO BE RIGHT AND CERTAIN

- Focus on being good, right, and entitled to judge
- Define rightness by codified standards and limit our risks
- Can never be left not knowing or uncertain
- Sensitize ourselves to the possibility of injury and are unforgiving when injured

(Rowan Williams)



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WE BRING OUR RULE FOCUS INTO OUR FAITH

- We use rules:
 - Narrow God's expectations
 - Make our relationship with God transactional
 - Justify ourselves (Isaiah 1:12-17)
 - Neglect justice, mercy, and faith (Matthew 23:23-24)
- We are willing to sacrifice relationships and love on an altar of rules
- Good works and pure doctrine are inadequate substitutes for love
(Robert H. Mounce) (Revelation 2:2-4)



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RULES DO NOT AROUSE LOVE

(E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O'Brien)



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RIGHTEOUSNESS

- Dictionary definition: “acting in accord with divine or moral law”
- The Bible adds: righteousness is being “in right relationship.” (Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible)
- “We are to love our enemies, not to satisfy some standard of righteousness, but because God their Father loves them.” (Reverend Ames in novel *Gilead*).

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THE BIBLE IS NOT ABOUT RULES

- It is not an ethical guidebook (John Stott)
- It is not an answer book; it is unclear on some topics (Andrew Wilson)
- It is a collective memory of God and humanity, presenting “portraits of people who were wrestling with loving God and loving their neighbors” (D.L. Mayfield)



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OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- Our relationship with God is not quid pro quo (something for something)
- Our relationship with God is like that of a parent
 - God loves us
 - God's discipline is for the sake of what God wants us to become

(Mark Galli)



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OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

- The Great Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) is not a rule
- Grace, faith, holiness are relationship terms not legal terms
- Israel did not keep God’s law for centuries
 - God complained
 - Exile came when Judah had abandoned the relationship
 - God renewed the covenant

(E. Randolph Richards and Brandon J. O’Brien)



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CHRIST AS EXAMPLE

- Jesus said “I am the way and the truth, and the life.” (John 14:1-14)

The Way	Demonstrated in person	More than survival	Service and sacrifice
The Truth	Living embodiment not just spoken	More than rules	Personal and relational
The Life	Sacrificial love	More than an escape from death	Life lived in a relationship of love with God

- The way is love; the truth is love; and the life is love.

(John R. Franke)



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FAMILY EXAMPLE



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SMALL GROUP

- Why can rules be helpful in making ethical decisions?
- During the presentation, what challenges and difficulties came to mind regarding choosing relationships over rules?
- What in the presentation or from past experience do you find helpful in addressing such challenges?



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ONENESS OVER SAMENESS

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²⁰ “I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word, ²¹ that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. ²² The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, ²³ I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

(John 17:20-23)

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SAMENESS

- We like sameness
 - Like to fit in
 - Can share common interests
 - Feel validated by people like us
 - Do not know what to expect from or interact with those unlike us
- At our best, with those “not the same,” we practice:
 - Equity, proportionality, and fairness (Andrew Wilson)
 - Transactional relationships
 - Cordiality, courtesy, and sociability (Karen Shepard)



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SAMENESS

- At our worst, our preference for sameness allows us to use differences:
 - As a measure of worth and status
 - To define people by broad categories
 - As a means to assign blame and credit
 - To justify barriers
- Either way we are:
 - Divided
 - Denying ourselves the full benefits of humanity's and the church's diversity



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ONENESS ASSUMES:

- Humanity together is one body
- Every individual makes a unique contribution to the whole
- Contributions of all are needed for the welfare of the whole



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ONENESS IN CHRIST

- Christ asks the Father that all those who believe be one (John 17:20-23)
- Paul says:
 - One in Christ (Galatians 3:27-28)
 - Heirs together (Galatians 3:29)
 - Have the same master and face the same judgement (Ephesians 6:9b) (Andrew Wilson)
 - One body and all needed (1 Corinthians 12:12-26)
 - Varieties of gifts, services, activities but same giver (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)
- To follow Jesus is to be part of a covenant community of faith (Richard Mouw, Tim Stafford, Bruce Milne)



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BASIS FOR ONENESS IN THE CHURCH

- The Holy Spirit called the Church into being and its cornerstone is Christ (Ephesians 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2:9)
- Ground of our mutual calling is election by God not agreement on doctrine (John 15:16) (R. Milton Winter)
- The church is a new society in covenant (Jeremiah 31:31-34) (Christopher J.H. Wright)
- Vertically we belong to Christ; horizontally we part of one body. (Grant Osbourne)



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ONENESS IN THE CHURCH

- Together, we share:
 - Our common inheritance
 - Our common service
 - Our mutual responsibility (John Stott)
- Our identity as a follower of Christ trumps all other identities (Christian Cleveland)



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ONENESS IN THE CHURCH

■ Members should find:

- Fellowship (John 15:12-17 and 1 John 1:5-7)
- Support (Romans 14:1-23)
- Encouragement (1 Thessalonians 5:11)
- Guidance and discipline (Hebrews 3:12-13, James 5:19-20, and Matthew 18:15-17)
- A place to serve (1 Peter 4:10-11)



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ONENESS IS CHALLENGING

■ Early Church

- Acts 10:30-34—Is Christ's salvation only for Israel?
- Acts 15:22-29—Do Gentile converts need to fulfill the requirements of Jewish law?
- Galatians 6:11-16—Do male Gentile converts need to be circumcised?
- 1 Corinthians 8:1-13—Are members concerned about eating meat sacrificed to idols overly sensitive and being silly?
- 1 Corinthians 1:10-17—I follow Paul. I follow Apollos. I follow Cephas. I follow Christ.



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ONENESS IS CHALLENGING

■ Reformation and Today

- Are the traditions of the church as authoritative as the Bible?
- Should only adults be baptized and then only by immersion?
- Is salvation only by faith or faith and works?
- Are dancing, card playing, and going to movies sinful?
- Is the United States a nation uniquely blessed by God?
- When does human life begin? Is abortion murder?
- Should marriage only be between a man and a woman?
- Is laissez-faire capitalism Christian and social welfare evil?



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WHEN WE DISAGREE, REMEMBER:

- All elected by God to be brothers and sisters
- None of us are infallible
- What unites us is greater than what divides us (R. Milton Winter)
- Ours is a faith of grace and not works
- In our disagreements, we are still called to love and not to judge
- Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Romans 8:38-39)



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TAKING ONENESS INTO DAILY LIVING

- All persons were made in the image of God and loved by God
- Society and our own lives are enhanced by diversity
- All persons have gifts and a place from which to contribute to society
- All we say and do should be marked by love and grace
- “And remember, Christ is with us always, to the end of the age.”
(Matthew 28:20b)



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SMALL GROUPS

- The final slide suggested five aspects of Christian community that are also applicable to the way we view and act toward others in daily living
- How could they be helpful when thinking about and interacting with those with whom you strongly disagree on:
 - Today’s cultural issues
 - Lifestyle choices
 - Christian faith and practice
 - Other
- Why is this challenging?

1. All persons were made in the image of God and loved by God
2. Society and our own lives are enhanced by diversity
3. All persons have gifts and a place from which to contribute to society
4. All we say and do should be marked by love and grace
5. “And remember, Christ is with us always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20b)



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These materials are based on a concept by and were prepared by John Page (of Cary, NC) in consultation with The Rev. Dr. Paul H. Lang for *The Pilgrimage*, a ministry of the Presbyterian Foundation's The Institute of Church Renewal, Presbyterian Church (USA)

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