

WEEK 2 “Seek after you” FOR THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH, Book of Common Prayer, p. 257

OPENING INVITATION *Read aloud the prayer slowly. After a time of silence each person identifies a word or phrase that catches your attention.*

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you, bring the nations into your fold, pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

Consider how the words and images in this collect reflect the mission of the Church at large. Then, share specifically how you understand or see that broader mission connecting to the stated mission or vision of your worshipping community or congregation. Is there a clear connection? Have you experienced your connection to the mission of the Church ebb and flow in your lifetime?

If technology and time permit, watch the accompanying video.

CONTEXT & HISTORY OF THE COLLECT *Take a few minutes to discuss the context of the prayer.*

Prayers for the mission of the Church date back to solemn collects used on Good Friday. The prayer in its original form was only for those in holy orders. In 1549, a new version included all members of the “congregation” which was later changed to “Church”. This prayer embodies a number of scriptural quotations: Acts 17:26; Ephesians 2:17, Isaiah 57:19 and Acts 2:17.

How does the context affect your understanding of the collect?

After allowing each person to share, take a moment in prayer and ask God to speak through the Word. Then read the collect again, together aloud, slowly. Now, let each person read over the collect silently while being on the lookout for three things to notice and perhaps share:

	Light bulb: This should be something that ‘shines’ from the passage—whatever impacts most or draws your attention.
	Question mark: Anything that is difficult to understand in the collect or a question that may be raised as a result.
	Arrow: A personal application from your life.

SCRIPTURE *Read aloud and consider these scriptural verses as they relate to the collect.*

Ephesians 2:17-22. How does this scripture expand or challenge what you see, hear or feel in this collect? How might you answer these questions: Who are “the seekers” in our own communities? In what way, as mentioned in the video, have we been Prodigal children or Emmaus disciples seeking to be found by God? How did you feel during those times?

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND CONVERSATION *These questions are only suggestions. Use one, all, or none. Create your own questions; let the group decide where the conversation might go.*

Recalling the video questions:

1. What does it mean that the mission of the Church is tied to the sometimes-raw reality of extending peace to those far off and those near?
2. How can we become better adept at extending that peace both in our churches and beyond?

CLOSING *Pray the collect together as a group or using your own words and inspiration, takes turns in offering a prayer for the mission of the Church.*

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you, bring the nations into your fold, pour out your Spirit upon all flesh, and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen.