



## Tool 1

### **Workshop model for exploring the relevance to churches of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

#### **Section I – Many Needs, Many Gifts**

*Human beings are created with a diversity of intersecting needs and gifts*

**Bible verses:** Psalm 145:15-16; Luke 4:4

**Themes:** intersection of needs; God's good creation; dependence on God and community

#### **Theological Reflection:**

As people of faith, we celebrate the varied gifts with which the Creator has blessed humans and all of creation. We also recognize the varied needs of creation that make us dependent on God and one another for our well-being as individuals within communities. We recognize the bodily needs for food and clean water as most immediate, but we also know that “one does not live by bread alone” (Matthew 4:4). Education that empowers persons to develop their talents and pursue meaningful vocations; health care that fosters well-being and enables workers to pursue livelihoods; justice and peace that protect vulnerable communities and enable individuals to contribute in meaningful ways to the political decisions of their communities; and policies and practices that protect the natural environment for future generations are just some of these needs.

Each of these needs implies not just a resource that must be exchanged or obtained. Each implies a particular relationship – with other people, with non-human creation, and with social systems and structures – that, when marked by justice, fosters well-being. The church, called to protect and preserve the well-being of all, is thus committed to its part in God's work of restoring just relationships among peoples and all of creation.

#### **Possible Activity:**

##### 1) Knowing Our Needs

- a. Objective: Participants will identify and discuss their many interrelated needs and the relationships necessary to fulfilling them.
- b. Set-Up
  - i. Leader opens with discussion of Sustainable Development Goals. This is a very brief discussion – just an overview of the goals. On a large poster board is an outline of a generic person. Participants are invited to think of the different needs that must be fulfilled for a life of well-being, the needs that are implied in the development goals. Participants are asked to list the “need” by a part of the body it pertains to. For example: food would go by the stomach, education by the head, companionship by the heart or hand.
  - ii. In large group or in pairs, participants are asked what relationships help them fulfill these needs. After a few minutes discussing, they share out to the larger group.

- iii. The leader then asks how the needs might be connected. As they name connections, the leader can indicate these on the poster board by drawing lines between the needs listed around the drawing of the person.
- c. Biblical References
  - i. Luke 4:4 – Leader reads or invites a participant to read the story of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. Jesus is tempted by the devil with the fulfillment of some important needs. The first is food, but Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy: “one does not live by bread alone.” There are deeper needs that go beyond mere physical food.
  - ii. This theme is carried through Jesus’ earthly ministry. Participants are asked: What other human needs does Jesus fulfill? (Examples: health by healing, faith, fellowship by dining at the table, the need for meaningful vocation by calling and commissioning the disciples)
  - iii. Psalm 145:15-16 – God cares for our every need.
- d. From Needs to Assets
  - i. Leader returns to the board and asks participants, “How do we help others meet these needs?”
  - ii. After some discussion, leader asks, “What are some things that make it difficult for us to help others meet their needs – or that make it difficult for others to help us meet our needs?”
  - iii. Objective is to identify the assets each of us brings to fulfilling needs within our communities.
- e. The Church
  - i. Leader asks, “How does the church help meet the interrelated needs of our neighbours? Think about needs that are met at the local level by individual congregations, those that are met through national level structures, and those met by our partners.”
  - ii. Leader allows a few minutes for discussion.
- f. Leader returns to the Sustainable Development Goals
  - i. SDGs highlight the opportunities that can be created if barriers to meeting our needs together are resolved.
- g. Story-Sharing
  - i. Leader shares story of churches in Colombia helping meet the needs of the community.
  - ii. Leader asks participants to share stories of meeting multiple needs within their own projects and programmes.
  - iii. Leader asks: How might violence and conflict make meeting needs difficult in a country or region? How does working for peace through restored relationships make meeting other needs possible?

**Area for Growth**

With the group, think about some ways your church or organization might increase its impact in communities. Read the story below for an example of how the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Colombia is responding in multiple ways to the needs of its neighbors. Or, together look over some of the suggestions listed in your results from the Self-Assessment Tool.

### **Story**

In 2016, the government of Colombia and the Revolutionary Armed Forces from Colombia (FARC), one of the oldest guerrilla groups in the country, signed a historic agreement. The agreement ended the armed conflict between the government and FARC. Thanks to this agreement, FARC has re-constituted itself as a political movement within Colombia and is working with the government to help members re-enter society as civilian workers and citizens.

After so many years of conflict, achieving peace is not without its challenges. Working within communities, the Evangelical Lutheran Church from Colombia (IELCO) and the Mennonite Church are helping the government, former members of FARC, and local communities to build a lasting peace.

IELCO's "From War to Peace" project is aimed at helping communities be better prepared to integrate former FARC members back into peaceful life in community. To this end, the project helps to strengthen mechanisms of self-protection for the community, develop psycho-social skills for peaceful coexistence, and guide people toward a life plan following their time with FARC. In other words, the Lutheran church's project is intended to help overcome the distrust and resentment of communities to give peace a chance for Colombia's future.

The "Sanctuaries of Peace" program, a joint initiative between the Mennonite Church and the Christian center Justapaz, is also aimed at the creation of conditions for a lasting peace in Colombia. The program seeks to promote the action of individuals, churches, and communities in the practice of nonviolence, particularly by helping churches, ecclesial organizations, community organizations, and educational institutions become "sanctuaries of peace" – spaces free of violence. Workshops on topics such as "Building peace in school environments," "Building peace in ecclesial environments," and "Creating healthy groups" provide opportunities to learn how to create sanctuaries, particularly for people persecuted because of their beliefs and people who are affected by violence and injustice. These spaces of protection are important resources as Colombia moves toward a lasting peace for all people.

### **Section II. God's Intentions for the World**

*God's intentions as reflected in scripture are for a just world where all may enjoy the fruits of creation.*

**Bible Verses:** Revelations 7:16-17; Jeremiah 31:33

**Themes:** grace sustains creation; God's intentions for restoration of relationships between humans, non-human creation, and God; responsible stewardship of creation

### **Theological Reflection:**

By the grace and abundance of God, humans and all of creation are knit together in relationships of dependence and responsibility. Humans are dependent on the goods of creation for their health and well-being; at the same time, we are called toward responsible stewardship of creation both for its own sake and to ensure equitable access to the goods of creation for all beings. When injustice and exploitation sever these relationships, all of creation "groans" (Romans 8:22-23.)

God's intentions for the world are reflected in Holy Scripture. In Genesis, we see the interrelationship between humans and all of creation from the beginning of the world. When human sin disrupts the relationships between humans, all of creation, and the Creator, the prophets call the community to "return to the Lord, your God" (Joel 2:13), with the promise of restoration and renewal of the people's relationship to God (Jeremiah 31:33) and within all of creation (Isaiah 11:6). Indeed, "all of creation waits with eager longing" (Romans 8:19) for God's restoration of the world. God's promise of this restoration grounds the hope of people of faith, who

look to the day when “they will hunger no more, and thirst no more, [when] God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:16-17).

The Sustainable Development Goals reflect the interrelatedness of creation and the interdependence of human needs. By grace we have been invited to be part of this work of God for our world today, even while knowing that perfect justice and perfect peace await us only in the full reign of God to come. Scripture reminds us that while we long for this full reign, the church universal is called to work for justice in the here-and-now, to ensure that the needs of our neighbours are met, and to advocate for the rights of all peoples.

In the full reign of God, “they will hunger no more.” In our world today, we can ensure that all who hunger are fed.

In the full reign of God, “they will thirst no more.” In our world today, we can ensure that everyone has access to clean water to slake thirst.

In the full reign of God, “nation shall not lift up sword against nation” (Isaiah 2:4). In our world today, we can ensure that strong, just institutions prevent violent conflict and hold abusive powers accountable.

In the full reign of God, “the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast” at which all shall be fed (Isaiah 25:6). In our world today, we can ensure that every community has access to the resources they need for well-being and that none are inhibited from the opportunity to share in the abundant gifts of God.

In the full reign of God, “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17). In our world today, we can ensure that all voices are heard and that each person has the chance to develop and utilize their gifts for the sake of their community.

In the full reign of God, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female” (Gal. 3:28). In the world today, we can ensure that all life is treated as sacred and bear witness to the belief that every individual, created in the image of God, should have full and equal value by working for gender justice and resisting oppression, discrimination, and degrading or dehumanizing treatment of our neighbours.

Faith calls the people of God to be part of the transformation of the world by striving for justice and peace in every land. The Sustainable Development Goals provide concrete markers for progress toward this transformation. They also reflect what the church has been doing since its inception: in faith, accompanying neighbours toward a just world that reflects the intentions of God, our Creator and Redeemer.

### **Possible Activities**

- 1) God’s Intentions for the World and the SDGs
  - a. Divide large group into smaller groups of 3-5. (This could also be done in pairs, if the group is small.)
  - b. Distribute the following bible verses to the small groups:
    - i. Revelations 7:15-17
    - ii. Isaiah 2:2-4
    - iii. Isaiah 25:6-8
    - iv. Galatians 3:27-29
    - v. Luke 4:18-19
  - c. In small groups, participants should discuss these questions:
    - i. What does the verse say about God’s plan for the world?
    - ii. Where do you see glimpses of God’s promised future in the world today?

- d. Come back together as a large group and invite each pair or small group to share highlights from their conversation.
- e. Place the verses as headings on a wall, with space below each one.
- f. Ask the participants to list under each heading ways that the church works to reflect the promise of God in each verse. As they name them, list the examples under the appropriate scripture verse.
- g. Distribute papers with the Sustainable Development Goals listed on them. (One goal per sheet.)
- h. As a group, invite the participants to place the SDGs on the wall, under the scripture verse they most closely pertain to. (These do not have to be exact, and there are no right answers.)
- i. Debrief with the group once all the SDGs are placed.
  - i. The Sustainable Development Goals are not developed with Christian faith in mind, but they do reflect things that Holy Scripture alludes to and that the church is already working on.
  - ii. The hopes for the world that we have as Christians are similar to the hopes for the world that all people share. The difference is that we know through faith that God will fulfill these promises and that the church is invited to be part of this work.
- j. To conclude, read the following:
  - i. In the full reign of God, “they will hunger no more.” In our world today, we can ensure that all who hunger are fed.
  - ii. In the full reign of God, “they will thirst no more.” In our world today, we can ensure that everyone has access to clean water to slake his or her thirst.
  - iii. In the full reign of God, “nation shall not lift up sword against nation” (Isaiah 2:4). In our world today, we can ensure that strong, just institutions prevent violent conflict and hold abusive powers accountable.
  - iv. In the full reign of God, “the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast” at which all shall be fed (Isaiah 25:6). In our world today, we can ensure that every community has access to the resources they need for well-being and that none are inhibited from the opportunity to share in the abundant gifts of God.
  - v. In the full reign of God, “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams” (Acts 2:17). In our world today, we can ensure that all voices are heard and that each person has the chance to develop and utilize their gifts for the sake of their community.
  - vi. In the full reign of God, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female” (Gal. 3:28). In the world today, we can ensure that all life is treated as sacred and bear witness to the belief that every individual, created in the image of God, should have full and equal value by working for gender justice and resisting oppression, discrimination, and degrading or dehumanizing treatment of our neighbours.