Christian Greetings

Let's turn to our Bibles to 2 Timothy chapter 4, 2 Timothy chapter 4 verses 19 to 22, 2 Timothy chapter 4 verses 19 and following. Let us listen attentively to the word of God. Greet Prisca and Aquila in the household of Onesiphorus.

Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus, sick. Do your utmost to come before winter. Eubulus greets you as well as Hurens, Linus, Claudia, and all the brethren.

The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

Let us pray. As we are finishing up here, God, these letters to the young pastor Timothy, here we have a closing greeting, a common form of that day and age, and we can still see here some lessons, I pray, and encouragements to what it means to be the household of God, to have care and consideration for one another, although we may not have the same biological roots, the same ethnic or social backgrounds as well, yet we are one in Christ with one baptism, and therefore we have a Christian greeting. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, may we be strengthened and encouraged thereby to continue on with a show of love in the power of your spirit to have such care for one another in these proper kind of Christian greetings.

We ask this by your blood alone. Amen. What does a greeting imply? Have you ever thought about that? We do it often, but they don't always mean the same thing.

Generally, it implies a friendliness or being a good neighbor at least. We offer such to those close to us and even to strangers that we meet. Often it is an introduction to who we are and the beginning of a conversation.

Other times it is a mere formality, however, to show that we mean well, and that's about it. Here at the end of Paul's letter, the greetings are heartfelt expressions of people near each other and who care for one another. So it depends upon the relationship mostly, and of course your intent in giving such a greeting.

And although we often send greetings at the beginning of letters, Paul followed a different pattern, this pattern they had back then pretty common, he does in other letters as well. He gives the greetings at the end with a list of names. But the point is still the same.

Christian greetings here express our unity in Christ. We should be friendly to all, but especially to the household of faith, as Galatians reminds us. Let us see more here.

Christian Greetings

Therefore, Christian greetings. Greetings, friendly considerations, as I said at the beginning here, or a mere formal social formality, letting people know that you exist perhaps. Hello, I'm here, don't run into me, all kinds of ways.

It's a sign here especially of caring and of consideration. Paul in sending such greetings is not just a mere formality clearly, but a heartfelt love from the saints to Timothy and vice versa and all the other combinations here. Greet, in this case from himself to these others.

Greet Prisca and Aquila and others. And on the flip side, he mentions Ubelis greets you as well as Claudia and others. So you have him greeting others and others in addition to Paul greeting Timothy back and forth to show that they care for one another.

If he had not done this, they would have probably thought, as we would do amongst our friendships here, why can't you say hello? You know, what's going on here? So it's not a little thing in many ways. There are degrees of greetings, of course, of salutations depending upon the level of friendliness we seek out as well as the level of friendship we already have or relationship we have with the person before us. The closest friends, of course, receive the warmest greetings.

And you probably hear about them the most often. And in fact, the first couple here, Priscilla and Aquila, we hear of them in other parts of the Bible more often than these others names. These other names are like, I've never heard of these people before.

Strangers, of course, are often the most briefest of replies. It doesn't mean you hate them. It's just, I don't know.

You know, I'm just, well, hello, I'm being friendly. Bye, have a nice day. And that's okay.

Even among Christians, right? Even among Christians, we can't be best friends with everybody. We can't know every Christian everywhere in all churches everywhere. And so if we meet somebody, we say, you know, hello, how are you? Maybe you'll never see him again.

Maybe you're busy. Whatever the case is. So we don't have to feel like we have to be best friends with everybody, even though they are Christians.

But we do certainly have a special bond. If something comes up, we will think of them, pray for them, and even help them if the situation allows for it, which is a little different than other people across the world that we don't know anything about. Greetings to Christians in particular.

So that's the kind of greeting here that's, again, a very personal and earnest greeting. But it's to Christians, not just to any Tom, Dick, and Harry, as we used to say. A special people, followers of Jesus.

What Luke describes there in the book of Acts, as you recall, the way, followers of the way. A new and special way, of course, of salvation in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. And the followers of Jesus, or Christianity, is made up of doctrine and practice.

That's what makes us stand out from other organizations, institutions, and religions, what we believe and what we do. And so we, of course, write that down in a confession so the world knows, because they don't have time to read the Bible, and that we can know

amongst each other what we believe. And specifically, greetings to the visible Christians of the church.

And that can't but be the case. Paul, as much as he is an apostle, has a special unction of the Holy Spirit, could do miracles as we know, can't read people's hearts. He doesn't really know who's saved or not.

The way Jesus did, and John too, where he did not commend himself, or the word is believe, to them, to these other men who believed in his miracles, because he knew what was in every man's heart. He knew that they didn't really believe in him as much as they loved the miracles. Paul couldn't do that.

Often, we read of Paul and others, they interact with everyone around them, as though, like the rest of us, I just take your word, I evaluate by your actions, I'm dealing with the visible. I can't deal with the invisible. I don't have access to that.

And Paul doesn't ordinarily either. And so we are, therefore, speaking of greetings to those in the visible church. The visible church is described in our confession, chapter 25 of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

Chapter 25, paragraph 2. In paragraph 2, we read, the visible, I'm going to skip a little bit. Puritans, as you know, can write very long, intricate sentences, with lots of clauses hanging off, and you lose track of the original subject, verb, and object, sometimes. So I'm going to condense it a little bit.

The visible church consists of all those throughout the world that profess the true religion, and of their children, and is the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, the house and family of God, out of which there is no ordinary possibility of salvation. So it's to be expected, if you are saved, you're going to be baptized into the church. You may not be a member of a particular church, that happens like in the case of war, or in the development of a new church denomination, and a new frontier, perhaps.

We don't have that as much anymore, of course. Churches are virtually everywhere. You may not be a member of a local church.

In fact, we allow that in our Presbyterian form of government. You can transfer your membership to the regional church of the Presbyterian of the Dakotas. We've done that.

So you're not being washed over by any particular church, because your church folded, you've got nowhere else to go, and you're planning on moving or something. So we give you some accountability. The point being, our confession is not saying any particular church, but that you're a member of at least the church universal.

That's how it's described. It consists of all those throughout the whole world that profess the true religion. Do you profess the true religion? Have you been baptized? You're a Christian, even if you haven't, at this time, been a member of church.

1 Corinthians 1-2 and 1 Corinthians 12 are some of the proof texts the confession uses for this visible church that is what we see outside, external. To the church of God, 1 Corinthians 1-2, which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, call to be saints with all who are in every place, call in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. Paul's letter is, again, not written to the invisible church.

Only those in the invisible church can read the first letter to the church of Corinth, and the rest of you guys, sorry, this is gibberish to you. No, they can all read it. It's the visible church.

It's the members at the church or churches, as we read elsewhere, at Corinth, the city of Corinth, who are sanctified, that is visibly sanctified, set aside presumably by baptism, it ought to be, and called to saints with all who in every place call on the name of the Lord. That is verbally, outwardly, expressively, not hidden in their heart. It's a visible public entity is the emphasis here.

Everyone knows it's a church. 1 Corinthians 12, 12 and 13, for as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body being many are one body, so also is Christ. For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and all have been made to drink into one spirit.

And so there in 1 Corinthians 12, that great passage in which he describes the great impacts, the metaphor of a body, the church being described as a physical body, and we each are playing a different part in that body, an arm, a leg, an eye, an ear, and the like, he describes them as what? For by one spirit we are all baptized into one body, and you may be tempted to think, depending on how you were raised, I know I was raised to think this way, oh, baptized, baptized in the spirit, this is the internal regeneration, it is not. We are all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free. What is Jew, what is Greek, what is slave, what is free, but outward categories of human conditions.

And he's saying, we know you're a slave, we know you're free, and you're both baptized. We know you're a Jew and a Greek, and you've both been baptized. This is an external act he's referring to, and therefore the external church.

But he mixes it all up, this is where people get confused. Paul mixes it all, I use the word mix, it's interwoven is a better way I'm supposed to say, he's not just randomly, oh, I'm just kind of like a crazy writer. No, it's interwoven, because of how God has so designed the human condition, that the body and soul act as one, don't they? And so when we get together corporately, ideally, that should be the case as well.

If we are born again, we're going to confess it with our mouth. And so I can't read your heart, I read your confession, however, we already know this. And so churches act this way, and the Bible speaks this way of going back and forth between the internal and the external.

With the assumption being, the charitable assumption being, unless we have proof otherwise, it could be the case, I could be wrong. But from my perspective, you're all saved, you've all been baptized, I can talk to you like you're Christians. That's what Paul does through all his letters, doesn't he? Even for the kids.

So this, of course, is important in the historical debates when you have the Anabaptists and others and whatnot, who are downplaying the visible church and saying, I have the spirit, I don't need pastors, I don't need whatever. That still happens in America, by the way, even today. I think you know this.

So the greetings here are to the people who are visible. Visible, baptized, and visibly set aside by their confession before the world and the like. And he greets them and treats them as Christians.

And the greeting here, I mentioned greetings, and greetings to Christians in particular, the visible church specifically. And even beyond that, we have even more specificity in the text here, if you think about it. It's his circle of friends.

Is this like a greeting from all the churches that he's ever been in contact with? It's not. He doesn't even say these are greetings from the church of Rome, because he's in Rome right now on his second imprisonment. Remember, we went over this last week.

And they all left him, they forsook him, as we read in verse 17. No one stood by me. They all left me.

Verse 16, excuse me. At my first defense, no one stood with me, but all forsook me. None of the Christians.

Well, he doesn't mean none. He speaks like we speak as humans. Elsewhere, you find out all these other people he obviously is on good terms with, Priscilla and Aquila.

Well, in fact, he has people with him. In verse 21, Obilus greets you. He must be nearby, as well as Pudas, Linus, and Claudia, and all the brethren.

So he's got these other people who are close to him at the time, who apparently did not abandon him or perhaps weren't around to be with him, as the case may be, but are certainly friendly towards him and friends with him. So Paul didn't greet every Christian, nor all the Christians greet one another. And he's greeting, of course, to Timothy and to others here, specifically Priscilla and Aquila.

I want to send greetings to them. I want to send greetings to others as well. And so again, it goes back to what I mentioned before.

We don't have to feel bad that we had to be best friends with every Christian in the world. It's just not the case. It's not the human condition.

When you're born again, you're still a human. It hasn't changed. And you're finite, and you're only going to have so many friends.

Some people you click with, other people you don't click with. As I like to point out, you got that crazy uncle you don't click with in your family, but he's still family. You have Christians you don't click with, but they're still Christians.

You still treat them with that proper respect. So I'm sure Peter had a circle of friends that probably didn't overlap with Paul's circle of friends, because they went different ways and established different churches in their work. And that's okay.

The names here, Priscilla and Aquila, as you can see, it's spelled a little differently here. It's Prissa. You can say Priscilla elsewhere.

It's the same shortened form of it. It's a couple we read about a number of times with the apostles, a little more detail in Acts 18, for example. The wife of Aquila is Priscilla, and they're always mentioned together.

Sometimes she is first, sometimes she is second. People try to make a big deal out of that. I don't know what big deal they're going to make.

He just changed his order because they also, again, the Bible was written by humans who thought like humans and put things together like humans. Sometimes humans are inconsistent, but the Spirit makes sure it's not a contradiction. Just their own peculiar personality comes out in the text, it seems to me.

And so she's there with Aquila in a private conversation with Apollos in Acts 18. Aquila means eagle, Easton's Bible dictionary, the one I recommend to you. Again, I haven't read every entry, but everything I have read has been good.

He's a Presbyterian. He's a native of Pontus by occupation, a tent maker. Who else was a tent maker? That's why we hear so much about him.

Paul was a tent maker, whom Paul met on his first visit to Corinth in Acts 18. Along with his wife Priscilla, he had fled from Rome in consequence of the decree of 50 AD by Claudius, commanding all Jews to leave the city. That was during the time of Paul in 50 AD.

All the Jews were told to leave the city of Rome. Paul sojourned with him, Aquila, at Corinth, and they wrought together at their common trade. They worked together at the common trade, making Sicilian hair cloth for the tents.

On Paul's departure for Corinth after 18 months, Aquila and his wife accompanied him to Ephesus. So they got around, and they could, because they had their own home business. They made tents.

Just took the material with you or bought it at the new town, and they just up and left apparently, where they remained while he proceeded to Syria in Acts 18. When they became Christians, we are not informed, but in Ephesus, they were Paul's helpers in Christ Jesus. We find them afterwards at Rome in Romans 16.3, interesting themselves still in the cause of Christ.

They are referred to some years after this as being at Ephesus here in 2 Timothy 4. This is the last notice we have of them. Next character we have, gentlemen here, Onesiphorus, means bringing profits. I'd like to name your kid that.

An Ephesian Christian who showed great kindness to Paul at Rome. He served him many things and had oft refreshed him. Paul expresses a warm interest in him and his household.

So in other words, those who go the extra mile, of course, we tend to remember them. And so he sends greetings to him. We have Erastus at Corinth.

That means beloved. Companion of Paul at Ephesus, who was sent by him along with Timothy into Macedonia, Acts 19. Corinth was his usual place of abode.

And so again, these are names that Paul sends greetings to that he has a special affinity towards. Paul has friends. The Apostle has friendship.

He is human like the rest of us. Trophimus at Miletus, a foster child, an Ephesian who accompanied Paul during a part of his third missionary journey, Acts 21, 29. He was with Paul at Jerusalem and the Jews, supposing that the Apostle had brought him with him into the temple, as you recall that event, raising a tomb which resulted in Paul's imprisonment because the guy was not a Jew and circumcised.

What are you doing bringing him into the temple? That was the event. These are Christian friends. We ought to have, if we can, by God's grace, Christian friends.

It's good to have friends in general, but especially that they become Christian, that they are Christians. When we can have mild or loose friendships and associations with unbelievers, and we do, probably because through family associations and growing up with them in school or whatnot, they're friends with them. I don't have a problem saying that.

It's not like a bad word necessarily, but it's the adjective. They're very close friends. I'm hanging out with them and they're a bad influence.

That's where the problem comes in. And we ought to be careful of that. Again, you can have them at work, you can have them at clubs and co-workers with common projects.

We must be careful. They are of the world. We are not.

They don't think like we do. They don't interact with things that we do. They don't have the same ultimate desires that we do, and it will come out.

And if you get your heartstrings attached to them as good friends, it could really drag you down. It could be dangerous. So be careful.

That's why it's good to have Christian friends, that they ideally can be a good influence upon you. Second point, Christian requests. So first we have a Christian greeting.

Christian Request

Next we have a Christian request here in verse 21. Do your utmost to come before winter. Hurry up.

Beat the weather. You don't want to jump on a boat, a ship, excuse me. I'm not a sailor.

I guess they're called ships. And the Mediterranean in winter time, that's dangerous stuff. So he wants Timothy by his side.

Why? We don't know specifically, but certainly it seems to me by common human interaction, he wants some moral support, physical support perhaps for preaching opportunities. He was his protege after all. Paul was the mentor.

So they have a close father-son relationship. Again, church officers need assistance and friends as well as the rest of us. So we ought to pray for them.

If you know of any in other churches, especially I think of those pastors out in the far countryside, like we have in the Dakotas, right? In Wyoming. There are small towns. They may not have a lot of contacts and friends.

Keep them in your prayers. More greetings from the other side here under this request of verse 21. Ubalas greets you as well as the other gentleman here and a woman as well and all the brethren.

So he does include a lot of others that Timothy knows who these guys are, all of the other brethren, but he does give these specific names, intimating that he has a special connection to them. Ubalas means of good counsel, one of the members of the church at Rome at the time of Paul's second imprisonment in that city. We read in one of the Bible dictionaries.

Pudens means bashful. He was a Christian at Rome as well. Linus, one of Paul's friends in Rome during his second and last imprisonment in that city.

He was one of the few who remained faithful to the apostle, even when most of the Christians had forsaken him. Tradition has it that he became the Bishop of Rome, but we don't know. Claudia, here we go, one of Paul's friends in Rome during the second and last imprisonment in that city.

He was one of, okay, that's, no. My copier repeated the same paste, sorry. So Claudia, we don't know much about either.

Just, again, another friendly contact there. Some surmise that she's the father of Linus or something. They come with these weird traditions sometimes in history.

We don't know much about these people at all, just the name and their somewhat connection to Paul. The point being, church has lots of names and lots of friends, and we all have lots of names and friends, I hope, that we can speak of in such a manner of sending greetings to one another, even between churches and between families. And he says lastly here, all the brethren, reminding us again of the unity we have in Christ.

These greetings are Christian greetings. They're not given to just anybody else, but with a heartfelt desire for those whom we have so much in common. We have the same baptism, the same Lord, the same spirit, as we read in Ephesians 4. 1 Corinthians 12, many parts of the body of Christ, as I read before, and yet one church, one holy body, although separated by perhaps even thousands of miles across the entire globe.

We all have differing gifts and differing opportunities. But there is some overlapping commonality among us. We have a twofold commonality sometimes.

The first part, broadly, we're all human. That's something. That's a beginning.

But more specifically, churches exist in local places in time and space. The Christian greetings here were from those in Rome. There are others in the church of Ephesus.

And the church that existed then, as they exist now, take in whom? The locals. Members of our church, the members of Rome, members of Ephesus, members of Jerusalem, aren't people living halfway across the world, jumping on a boat and joining the church. They're locals who come to these local churches.

And so they're going to express the local peculiarities of human relationships, of human society and human cultures. You have all kinds of people, merchants, perhaps slaves. They have a common language, a common history, things that do not change because you're born again.

And so you don't have to learn a new language when you're here at our church, but you would if you joined the church of Japan. We have our missionary who was here a few Sundays ago in the evening and going over Murayu-moto. They have a Japanese church.

And in Japan, they do things differently. They do things the same way as we'll talk about in the second commonality, the spiritual commonality. They preach, they have the Lord's Supper.

There's a lot of cultural things that come out even in the activities of the church and the interactions between the people of the church and the way they express formalities and respect in the fifth commandment looks different in different cultures. And there's nothing wrong with that. We talk about diversity in America a lot like it's a religion.

That's diversity. Japanese church, American church, an African church, Ukrainian church. They do Ukrainian things.

They do Japanese things. That's fine. That's how God designed it.

We're not the Tower of Babel. We're not trying to destroy all distinctions. This is how God designed it.

And so a church that has been created in this way often has this commonality. We have a lot of commonality. I grew up in Colorado.

I grew up in Denver. A number of you grew up in Denver. We could talk about the same places.

We remember the same events. And that brings us closer together. In a way, it doesn't.

If you come from outside and you kind of try to mix in, you're like, well, I don't understand the history. You know, we have one of our elders here. He hears some of the history of these people we talk about, we prayed for.

I've been here in this church for 30 years. Remember all the names and all the faces. And the new people are coming out here, who's this guy again? You don't have that connection anymore, do you? It makes it a little harder.

It just takes time. But you start making your own connections and our own history together. The longer we stay together as a church.

This is not supernatural. This is ordinary human growth and community. And God does not eradicate that, but builds upon that a greater commonality.

The second point, spiritual commonality. So we have a double bond. We are all Americans.

We all speak the language. We all have a common history. And, of course, all the more if you have a common Colorado history, like a lot of us do.

But here we have a spiritual commonality. We are united by one faith, one Lord, and one baptism. It's a double blessing, brothers and sisters, like a family.

Having one is a great source of support and comfort, or it ought to be. But having one that is saved and your family is a double blessing. And so when you have here an extended family, biologically speaking, that we have a lot of commonality, or perhaps we have relatives in the smaller communities that they had for thousands of years.

America and the larger nations are kind of odd the last 100 years. Most people had a lot of connections in their communities, many generations. That's great.

Now they're all saved. That's even better. It's added upon what is already natural.

And so we have the Bible. We pray together. We worship together.

And so this is part of what we have here, this supernatural blessing. And so he gives this greeting to these people, some of whom may have been Jews, many, of course, who are Greeks. But of course, they all have, it seems, a common language.

And they did all speak, most of them speak a very similar language back then. This should not blind us to the sinful reality that's out there. We shouldn't be naive as Christians that being Christian somehow fixes everything.

It doesn't mean our greetings should turn off our brain. Christian sin, Paul has just mentioned earlier in verse 16, some people abandoned me. And so if we put too much hope in a church, hope in one another, instead of in Christ, we ought to have some hope in one another.

But be careful, because pastors tend to speak with rhetoric. You're going to have some kind of hope, or you can't rely upon each other. What's the point? You're supposed to have some kind of reliance upon one another, but not such that you fall apart when you see them sin.

Children realize this as they get older. Their parents are, whoa, they sin. I thought everything they did was perfect.

I thought, like, my daughter's like telling me, Dad, I thought you knew everything. No, no. It just seems that way because you don't really know much.

And you can be really disappointed if you put too much hope in your parents, in your church, in your pastors. That's a danger. And so we shouldn't be blind to that.

But at the same time, of course, not to be isolated. Paul wasn't isolated. He had lots of contacts.

He had lots of friends. And so it's okay if we meet somebody, another Christian, ask them questions, get to know them a little better, see if we're on the same page. Because even if you have the same confession, as we found out these many years, the same Christian tradition, doesn't mean you're on the same page, unfortunately.

I wish it were so. And even if you were on the same page, I mentioned before, the human dimension. You don't always click.

You just don't have the same interests, the same way of thinking about things. You find people, you're like, we always seem to draw the same conclusions all the time. How is that possible? Well, that's how God worked it out.

So you two are on the same page and you guys click it off, as it were, as good friends. There's nothing sub-Christian about that. There's a strand of Christianity that's kind of sentimentalist, I guess, or I don't know what adjective to use here, that's not realistic.

Like, we're all Christians, can't we all just get along? I guess it's a variation of Rodney King theology, we used to call it back in the early 90s, the LA riots, right? Can't we all just get along? Well, I wish, but there's actually sinners out there. But even if it wasn't sin, there's human differences of characteristics, of expectations, of priorities, of even minor issues at times. Why do you drive that way? Why do you eat those things? Why do you do these? Because you have family differences.

If you have family differences, what other differences do you have? You have church differences. Not every church is for every Christian. The sooner you realize that, the better it becomes for you, because you get very disappointed.

Why are people joining our churches? Well, we don't always fit with everybody. Not all churches fit with everybody. Like, all families don't fit with everybody.

The number of families I'm sure you're like, I wouldn't want to live in that family. I would go back. That's not sinful, it's just you're different.

That's what I'm talking about. And so here, Paul is nevertheless sending the greetings, because although they are different, some are from Rome or some are from Ephesus, they have perhaps different traditions. I'm sure they do.

They had a lot of diversity back then, because it was a Roman empire. And how do you keep diversity together in a society, in a nation? An iron fist of Rome did it. That's how they did it.

Otherwise they'd be off in their own little nations. Rome didn't want that. Rome wanted all the power, and the glory, and the greed.

There's a lesson in that, but we won't go into there. And so here, Paul nevertheless, regardless of how much differences they may have in everyday life, in the natural realm, we have this much unity that he can send these glorious greetings, these compassionate greetings towards them. And lastly, he leaves Timothy with a Christian blessing.

Christian Blessing

The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. Amen.

Here we have an apostolic prayer. For the longest time when I was younger, I'm like, this is interesting. What is this? It's a benediction.

It's a special thing. What is benediction? It means good word. That's all the word means.

Bene, good, good word. But it's specifically a type of prayer. The Lord, it's a good prayer.

The Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Grace be with you. That's a prayer of the Apostle Paul.

It's a prayer that you can imitate, that you can use yourself. It's not a special prayer like it's super holy, only the pastor could do it at the end of a sermon. It's a prayer.

It's all of this. All I'm giving you at the end of this, the end of the congregational, the worship time this evening is a prayer, a short prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. It is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ, God, the God-man who would be with you.

That is, be with you, of course, and a blessed in a good way. And he adds upon that grace, a common farewell by Paul. Grace be with you or grace to you.

Expressing a desire for good things and blessings upon Timothy himself. It is a fine blessing that we can give one another. Christian greetings are unique because they're not greetings because we're simply humans or we have a common relationship because we're Americans

or Coloradans, but rather because we are united in Christ Jesus regardless of our backgrounds.

The unity does not destroy those differences or distinctions, by the way, but they do rise higher and above it in a marvelous unity as expressed here by Paul, that we share the same Lord, the same baptism. Therefore, let us continue this tradition with visitors and with each other to bless and to greet one another in the name of Lord Jesus Christ. Let us pray.

Father God above, help us in this regard if we struggle to be friendly towards Christians. If we are living too cautiously at the same time, may we not be and realize that Christians can be different and indeed Christians can sin. And in all this, may we have the humility and the strength and the love to share Christian greetings for one another and to others.

We pray this by the blood of Jesus Christ. Amen.