

# The Church and Contemporary Challenges

## *In the context of ...*

1) **global anxiety resulting from COVID-19 and its attendant social and economic impact**

⇒ *Do we as church embody faith in a Christ who offers hope for the present, not simply for “the next world,” but who also challenges the notion that self-interest is the only interest, and that sectional/partisan interests are more important than “the common good” and solidarity?*

2) **Chat-GPT, artificial intelligence, and the world of social media**

⇒ *Do we as church embody faith in a Christ who can speak to the complexity of today’s world, avoiding “disinformation”/“misinformation” and offering more than “virtual” relationships?*

3) **a culture that combines—uneasily—a hunger for authenticity, suspicion of institutions, and escape into “celebrity”**

⇒ *Do we as church embody faith in a Christ who is fully human—he grows, suffers, eschews glib answers, and is not one-dimensional, inflexible, or apathetic—and also reveals God as the source of fulfillment that transcends and challenges self-sufficiency?*

4) **anti-racism, religious pluralism, and “decolonial theory”**

⇒ *Do we as church embody faith in a Christ who calls us to an identity whose particularity includes addressing past injustices, resisting present ones, while recognizing, respecting, and responding to the movement of grace in all people, and guarding against the hegemony of a single culture?*

5) **the pluralism of human experience in matters of gender and sexuality**

⇒ *Do we as church embody faith in a Christ who calls us to listen to, learn from, care for, be in dialogue with, support, serve, and nurture hope in all people?*

6) **anxiety for the future in light of “the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor”**

⇒ *Do we as church embody faith in a Christ whose incarnation in the physical world affirms the world as God’s creation, and so underpins care for the earth and the option for the poor, for those excluded from all that reflects God’s abundance?*

7) **prevalence of “nones,” “disaffiliation” from the church, decline in the social influence of the churches, and the association between the church and multiple forms of scandal**

⇒ *Do we as church embody faith in a Christ whose Spirit promotes holiness through self-criticism and communal discernment of possibilities for creatively faithful change in structures and greater exercise of co-responsibility?*