

Resources for
THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
and throughout the year

2024

You shall love
the Lord your God ...
and your neighbour as yourself

(Luke 10:27)

Jointly prepared and published by
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Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches

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TO THOSE ORGANIZING THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

The search for unity: throughout the year

The traditional period in the northern hemisphere for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is 18-25 January. Those dates were proposed in 1908 by Paul Wattson to cover the days between the feasts of St Peter and St Paul, and therefore have a symbolic significance. In the southern hemisphere where January is a vacation time churches often find other days to celebrate the Week of Prayer, for example around Pentecost (suggested by the Faith and Order movement in 1926), which is also a symbolic date for the unity of the Church.

Mindful of the need for flexibility, we invite you to use this material throughout the whole year to express the degree of communion which the churches have already reached, and to pray together for that full unity which is Christ's will.

Adapting the text

This material is offered with the understanding that, whenever possible, it will be adapted for use in local situations. Account should be taken of local liturgical and devotional practice, and of the whole social and cultural context. Such adaptation should ideally take place ecumenically. In some places ecumenical structures are already set up for adapting the material; in other places, we hope that the need to adapt it will be a stimulus to creating such structures.

Using the Week of Prayer material

- For churches and Christian communities which observe the Week of Prayer together through a single common service, an order for an ecumenical worship service is provided.
- Churches and Christian communities may also incorporate material from the Week of Prayer into their own services. Prayers from the ecumenical worship service, the "eight days", and the selection of additional prayers can be used as appropriate in their own setting.
- Communities which observe the Week of Prayer in their worship for each day during the week may draw material for these services from the "eight days".
- Those wishing to undertake bible studies on the Week of Prayer theme can use as a basis the biblical texts and reflections given in the eight days. Each day the discussions, which this year includes a challenge, can lead to a closing period of intercessory prayer.
- Those who wish to pray privately may find the material helpful for focusing their prayer intentions. They can be mindful that they are in communion with others praying all around the world for the greater visible unity of Christ's Church.

BIBLICAL TEXT FOR 2024

Luke 10:25-37

A lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher”, he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live”.

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” Jesus replied, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend”. Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” He said, “The one who showed him mercy”. Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise”.

New Revised Standard Version

INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME OF THE YEAR 2024

“You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself”

(Luke 10:27)

The materials for the 2024 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity were prepared by an ecumenical team from Burkina Faso facilitated by the local *Chemin Neuf* Community (CCN)¹. The theme chosen is “You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself” (Lk 10:27). Brothers and sisters from the Catholic Archdiocese of Ouagadougou, Protestant Churches, ecumenical bodies and the CCN in Burkina Faso collaborated generously in drafting the prayers and reflections and experienced their work together as a real path of ecumenical conversion.

Loving God and neighbour in the midst of a security crisis

Burkina Faso is located in West Africa in the Sahel region, which includes the neighbouring countries of Mali and Niger. It covers 174,000 km² and has 21 million inhabitants, of about sixty ethnicities. In religious terms, approximately 64% of the population is Muslim, 9% adheres to traditional African religions and 26% is Christian (20% Catholic, 6% Protestant). These three religious groups are present in every region of the country, and in virtually every family.

Burkina Faso is currently experiencing a serious security crisis, which affects all the communities of faith. After a major jihadist attack was mounted from outside the country in 2016, the security situation in Burkina Faso, and consequently its social cohesion, deteriorated dramatically. The country has endured a proliferation of terrorist attacks, lawlessness and human trafficking. This has left over three thousand dead and almost two million internally displaced persons in the country. Thousands of schools, health centres and town halls have been closed, and much of the socio-economic and transport infrastructure has been destroyed. Attacks targeting specific ethnic groups exacerbate the risk of inter-communal conflicts. In the context of this dire security situation, social cohesion, peace and national unity are being undermined.

Christian churches have been expressly targeted by armed attacks. Priests, pastors and catechists have been killed during worship and the fate of others who were kidnapped remains unknown. At the time of writing, more than 22% of the national territory is outside the control of the state. Christians can no longer openly practice their faith in these areas. Because of terrorism, the majority of Christian churches in the north, east and north-west of the country have been closed. There is no longer any public Christian worship in many of these areas. Where worship is still possible, with police protection, usually in large cities, it has been necessary to shorten services owing to security concerns.

It must be recognised that despite the efforts of both the state and religious communities, the country is becoming increasingly unstable as extremist groups become more widespread. Nevertheless, a degree of solidarity is emerging between the Christian, Muslim and traditional religions. Their leaders are working to find lasting solutions for peace, social cohesion and

1. Further information about CCN can be found in Appendix 3.

reconciliation. To this end, for instance, the Christian-Muslim Dialogue Commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Burkina-Niger is making a major effort to support inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue and cooperation.

Following the government's calls for prayers for peace, social cohesion and reconciliation, individual churches continue to organise daily prayers and fasting. Action by the various Catholic and Protestant churches has intensified to assist displaced persons. Reflection and awareness-raising meetings have been organized to promote better understanding of the situation and of the value of fraternity, and to develop strategies for a return to lasting peace. This hope is also reflected in the traditional Mossi² proverb: "No matter the nature or duration of the fight, the moment of reconciliation will come."

The invitation to work together on the texts for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 challenges the different churches in Burkina Faso to walk, pray and work together in mutual love during this difficult period for their country. The love of Christ that unites all Christians is stronger than their divisions and the Christians of Burkina Faso commit themselves to walking the path of love of God and love of neighbour. They are confident that God's love will overcome the violence that currently afflicts their country.

The Biblical Text

The centrality of love in Christian life

Love is the 'DNA' of Christian faith. God is Love and "the love of Christ has gathered us into one".³ We find our common identity in the experience of God's love (cf. Jn 3:16) and reveal that identity to the world by how we love one another (Jn 13:35). In the passage selected for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 (Lk 10:25-37), Jesus reaffirmed the traditional Jewish teaching from Deuteronomy 6:5, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might"; and Leviticus 19:18b, "you shall love your neighbour as yourself".

The lawyer in the gospel passage immediately asks Jesus, "and who is my neighbour?" The question of how far the biblical obligation to love should reach was a disputed one among doctors of the law. Traditionally, this obligation was believed to extend to fellow Israelites and resident aliens. Later, with the impact of invasions by foreign powers, the commandment came to be understood as not applying to foreigners from occupying forces. In time, as Judaism itself fragmented, it was sometimes understood to apply only to one's own particular faction. The question asked of Jesus by the lawyer is therefore a provocative one. Jesus responds to the question with a parable illustrating love extending far beyond the limits expected by the lawyer.

Many early Christian writers such as Origen, Clement of Alexandria, John Chrysostom and Augustine saw the trajectory of God's plan for the salvation of the world in this parable. They saw the man coming down from Jerusalem as an image of Adam – *ie* all humanity – coming down from paradise to this world, with all its dangers and brokenness, and the robbers as an image of the hostile earthly powers that assail us. They saw Christ himself as the one who, moved by compassion, came to the aid of the half-dead man, treated his wounds and brought him to the safety of an inn, which they saw as an image of the Church. The Samaritan's promise to return was seen as foreshadowing the Lord's promise to come again.

Christians are called to act like Christ in loving like the Good Samaritan, showing mercy and compassion to those in need, regardless of their religious, ethnic or social identity. It is not shared identities that should prompt us to come to the aid of the other, but love of our 'neighbour'. However, the vision of love of neighbour that Jesus puts before us is under strain in the world

2. The Mossi people are the largest ethnic group in Burkina Faso.

3. *Ubi caritas* (attrib. Paulinus of Aquileia).

today. Wars in many regions, imbalances in international relations and inequalities generated by structural adjustments imposed by western powers or other external agencies all inhibit our capacity to love like Christ. It is by learning to love one another regardless of our differences that Christians can become neighbours like the Samaritan in the Gospel.

The Way of Ecumenism

Jesus prayed that his followers would all be one (cf. *Jn 17:21*), and so Christians cannot lose hope or stop praying and working for unity. They are united by their love of God in Christ and by the experience of knowing God's love for them. They recognise this faith experience in one another when they pray, worship and serve God together. However, in inter-church relations, including in Burkina Faso, this remains a challenge. Lack of mutual knowledge between churches and suspicion of one another can weaken commitment to the way of ecumenism. Some can be anxious that ecumenism may lead to a loss of denominational identity and prevent church 'growth'. Such rivalry between churches is counter to the prayer of Jesus. Like the priest and the Levite in the gospel passage, Christians often miss the opportunity to connect with brothers and sisters because of fear. During the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we ask the Lord to come to our assistance, to tend our wounds and so enable us to walk the way of ecumenism with confidence and hope.⁴

Christian unity in the service of wider peace and reconciliation

The specific context of Burkina Faso reflects the need to place love at the centre of the quest for peace and reconciliation. This search has often been undermined by the loss of values and of a shared sense of humanity and by a diminished concern for the common good, probity, integrity and patriotism. The search for reconciliation has also been weakened by spiritual impoverishment and by the pursuit of easy gains. Faced with these realities, the imperative to witness to the love of God is all the more pressing.

Moving from division to unity in Burkina Faso

Christian communities in Burkina Faso try to live the call to love through mutual hospitality. This is particularly evident during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. They have committed both human and financial resources to translating the ecumenical French text of the Bible (*Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible*) into local languages, thus helping to lead Christians to the 'inn' of the Word of God (cf. *Lk 10:34*). In addition, they visit each other's churches and share in worship. They also cooperate in the promotion of human fraternity, peace and security in Burkina Faso. They bring Christ to their brothers and sisters when they tend the wounds of those who fall into the grip of poverty and hardship.

However, as an African proverb says, "The tree must not hide the forest". These positive ecumenical examples cannot disguise the fact that there remain many challenges to unity. Despite their efforts to be the neighbour of all who confess the Triune God, the churches of Burkina Faso struggle to truly love each other as Christ commands. They sometimes relate to each other like Samaritans and Jews, divided culturally and theologically and living in unfriendly or hostile relationships. Continued disunity disfigures them and they acknowledge the need for ecumenical conversion, so that they can pour the oil and wine of healing on each other's wounds.

The inn in the parable of the Good Samaritan was frequently interpreted by Church Fathers as an image of the Church. Just as the Samaritan brought the wounded man to the inn, so Christ entrusts the world's wounded and needy to our churches, to tend their brokenness and help restore them to health. This mission in service of the world is also the pathway towards the unity which is God's gift for God's people.

4. For information about how churches in Burkina Faso are working together, see Appendix 2.

THE PREPARATION OF THE MATERIAL FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2024

The international team appointed jointly by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches to review and finalise the materials for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024 met in Rome from 25 to 29 September 2022. The meeting took place at Casa San Giuseppe di Cluny, which, since 2016, has been administered by the *Chemin Neuf* Community, whose members make a special commitment to Christian unity.

The drafting of the materials had been entrusted by the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity to an ecumenical team from Burkina Faso, coordinated by the *Chemin Neuf* Community in that country. Ecumenical openness and cooperation have not always been strong in Burkina Faso, but representatives from the Catholic Archdiocese of Ouagadougou, Protestant Churches and ecumenical bodies accepted the invitation willingly and collaborated generously in drafting the prayers and reflections. The political and social situation in Burkina Faso is unstable and there are many threats to peace and social cohesion. Preparation of the texts for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity during such a precarious period in their country's history helped the ecumenical drafting group to recognise that the love of Christ unites all Christians and is stronger than their divisions. At the end of the work, they recognised that working together in this way had been a real experience of ecumenical conversion for them.

Unfortunately, the four members of the local group who were expected to take part in the meeting in Rome were unable to attend in person, owing to a last-minute strike by air traffic controllers. However, they participated in the meeting remotely. The meeting was chaired jointly by Revd Dr Mikie Roberts of the World Council of Churches in Geneva and Revd Anthony Currer of the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity in Rome.

Members of the international group:

Revd Fr Martin Browne OSB	Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity (Rome)
Revd Peter Colwell	Churches Together in Britain & Ireland (London)
Revd Anthony Currer	Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity (Rome)
Revd Fr Miguel Desjardins CCN	Bishops' Conference of France (Paris)
Dr Ani Ghazaryan Drissi	World Council of Churches (Geneva)
Sr Leticia Candelario Lopez FMVD	Verbum Dei Missionary Fraternity (Singapore)
Revd Dr Odair Pedroso Mateus	World Council of Churches (Geneva)
Revd Fr James Puglisi SA	Centro pro Unione (Rome)
Revd Dr Mikie Roberts	World Council of Churches (Geneva)
Pastor Dr Jochen Wagner	Association of Christian Churches of Germany (Frankfurt)
Dr Clare Watkins	University of Roehampton (London)

Members of the Burkina Faso drafting group:

Revd Ousman Justin Bande	St John the Baptist Seminary, Ouagadougou
Ezechiel Amadou Hebie	<i>Chemin Neuf</i> Community
Revd David Ilboudo	Archdiocese of Ouagadougou
Pastor Tegwende Léonard Kinda	Association of Reformed Evangelical Churches
Pastor Patrice Kobamba	Bible Society of Burkina Faso

Yvonne Nikiema
Henri Rouamba
Sr Yolande Tapsoba CCN
Florence Zaongo
Alix Zongo

Archdiocese of Ouagadougou
Chemin Neuf Community
Chemin Neuf Community
Chemin Neuf Community
Chemin Neuf Community

ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE

Instructions for those preparing the worship

This year the ecumenical celebration was prepared by a team representing different Christian traditions in Burkina Faso facilitated by the local *Chemin Neuf* Community (CCN).

The choice of biblical and liturgical texts is inspired by the image of the good Samaritan from the parable (Lk 10: 25-37) in which Jesus demonstrates what it means to love one's neighbour, in answer to a question about the Old Testament commandment: "You will love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself" (Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18b).

In preparation for the celebration of the worship, several objects are needed. For the gathering action, Sharing God's Love, a calabash or container filled with water is required. The worship begins with liturgical assistants processing with the calabash or another suitable container to the front of the sanctuary as the reader invites the community to gather. A member of the host community offers water from the calabash to representatives of the other communities present to drink. Alternatively, this action can take place at the entrance of the church. When this ritual of welcome has been completed, the worship leaders and the representatives of the communities present join in the procession, while a hymn is sung or music is played.

If Christians from West Africa participate in the celebration, it would be desirable to invite them to sing some hymns in their own language during the worship. In addition, bouquets of differently coloured flowers can be brought forward by representatives of the various churches present – to illustrate the richness of God's love and the diversity of God's people.

The texts assigned to the leader (L) may be divided between the various clergy or representatives from the different traditions present. Likewise, texts assigned to a reader (R) may be distributed among several persons.

At the end of the celebration, the calabash or container of water is brought forward and held up before the congregation, as the leader pronounces the dismissal. The sending and the blessing may be proclaimed jointly by minister/representatives of the different communities present.

Order of Worship

- L Leader
R Reader
A Assembly

Gathering and Sharing God's Love

- R In Burkina Faso, a calabash⁵ is used to share water with guests who arrive tired from their journey. It expresses welcome, hospitality and fellowship. After the visitor has been refreshed, conversation can begin and the purpose of the visit can be expressed. As we gather and enter into prayer, we welcome you in the same way as Abraham welcomed the three visitors and provided water for their refreshment. We invite you to be refreshed by sharing the water from this calabash.

Water from the calabash is shared by a member of the host community with representatives of the other churches present. As the calabash is being returned to the front of the sanctuary, worship leaders join in the procession while a hymn is sung or music is played.

Invitation to Pray

- L In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
A **Amen.**

- L We are gathered as brothers and sisters to pray for the visible unity of Christians. At the heart of our worship is the story of the Good Samaritan where we hear the divine call to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves.

Let us prepare to meet the God of Love in thanksgiving and joy, remembering his command to love.

- A **Glory to you, Father, for you reveal yourself in your creation
and call all people to live in your presence.
Glory to you, Christ Jesus,
for you give yourself entirely to each one of us and invite us to do the same.
Glory to you, Holy Spirit,
for you gather us together in love and unity.
Glory to you, God of Love,
in whom we are created, redeemed and made one.
Amen.**

Hymn

5. Dried and hollowed-out fruit of the calabash tree used as a vessel for food or drink.

Litany of Praise and Thanksgiving

R Let us turn our hearts to God in praise:

Praise to you Lord for you have poured out your love into our hearts so that we never lose hope. You free our lives from fear because of your love, and dress our wounded and injured hearts. Praise to you for all the women and men who sow seeds of love and hope for their neighbours around the world.

A Lord, we praise you.

R Eternal God, we thank you for the gift of Jesus your Son, the Redeemer of all people. Thanks be to you for the grace of conversion and all the seeds of faith, hope and charity among your people and everywhere. Thanks be to you for the faith we received from the apostles, for Jesus' prayer for unity, and for the gift of the Good News of salvation.

A Lord, we thank you.

L God of love, we adore you for the generosity of your love for all people – a love so perfect, it is beyond our understanding; a love in which there is no distinction on grounds of race, gender or social status. We adore you, who out of love sent your Son, Jesus Christ, into the world and continue to fill our lives with your love through the Holy Spirit.

A Lord, we adore you.

Prayers of Confession

L We come before you now, O God, to confess our sins:

R By seeking happiness without God and ignoring the command to love, we have turned away from God and from our neighbour. Our selfishness and our desire to possess and control separate us from God.

Silence

R Merciful God:

A forgive and heal us.

R When we accept ideologies that demean the humanity of others, we build walls of division, sow the seeds of hatred and violence and abandon the Lord's command to love one another.

Silence

R Merciful God:

A forgive and heal us.

R We have hardened our hearts and deceived ourselves. In our lack of compassion, we no longer see Jesus in those who are different from ourselves.

Silence

R Merciful God:

A forgive and heal us.

R We fail to open our hearts and minds to the infinite and unconditional nature of God's love for all. By being closed to this love, the world is darkened by selfishness, violence, indifference and absence of meaning.

Silence

R Merciful God:

A forgive and heal us.

L God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ whom you sent in the fullness of time to redeem all creation, we ask you to have mercy on us, forgive us our sins and transform us by your Holy Spirit.

A Glory to God, whom we praise with one voice.

Trisagion⁶

A Holy God!

Holy Strong!

Holy Immortal, have mercy on us!

Old Testament Reading *Genesis 18:1-8*

R The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day. He looked up and saw three men standing near him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent entrance to meet them, and bowed down to the ground. He said, "My lord, if I find favour with you, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree. Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on –since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of choice flour, knead it, and make cakes." Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds and milk and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate.

Responsorial Psalm *Psalm 138*

R I give you thanks, O Lord, with my whole heart;
before the gods I sing your praise;
I bow down towards your holy temple
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness;
for you have exalted your name and your word above everything.

A On the day I called, you answered me.

R On the day I called, you answered me;
you increased my strength of soul.
All the kings of the earth shall praise you, O Lord,
for they have heard the words of your mouth.

A On the day I called, you answered me.

6. 'Thrice holy' – one of the most ancient of Christian prayers. It is sung frequently in the worship of churches of both the East and the West. Some traditions hold that it was first exclaimed by Nicodemus as he removed the body of Jesus from the Cross.

R They shall sing of the ways of the Lord,
for great is the glory of the Lord.
For though the Lord is high, he regards the lowly;
but the haughty he perceives from far away.

A On the day I called, you answered me.

R Though I walk in the midst of trouble,
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;
you stretch out your hand,
and your right hand delivers me.
The Lord will fulfil his purpose for me;
your steadfast love, O Lord, endures for ever.
Do not forsake the work of your hands.

A On the day I called, you answered me.

R Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

**A As it was in the beginning, is now,
and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

Gospel Reading *Luke 10:25-37*

R A lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher", he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself." And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live".

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend'. Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy". Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise".

Hymn

Sermon / Homily

Followed by a moment of silence or a hymn.

Affirmation of Love *inspired by 1 Cor 13*

Read antiphonally, with one half of the congregation reading the first part of each stanza and the other half reading the second.

- I I may speak in the languages of people and angels,
but if I lack love, I am simply a resonant metal, a loud cymbal.
- II I may have the gift of prophecy, understanding of all mystery and all knowledge;
I may have the fullest faith, that moves mountains; but if I lack love, I am nothing.
- I I may distribute all my goods to hungry people,
I may even deliver my body to the flames, but if I lack love, I gain nothing.
- II Love demands patience. Love serves. It does not walk away. It is not jealous.
It does not brag. It does not seek its own interest.
It is not irritable. It does not hold a grudge.
- I Love does not celebrate injustice, but finds its joy in the truth.
It excuses all. It believes all. It hopes for all. It endures all.
- II Love has no end. Prophecies? They will finish. Tongues? They will come to an end.
Knowledge? It will pass.
- A Faith, hope and love continue.
The greatest of these is love.**

Hymn

This moment can also be used as an opportunity to gather the offering.

Prayers of Intercession

- L We have been invited to live the divine call to love God and our neighbour as ourselves.
As we renew our commitment to this call, may this love strengthen our unity as Christians.
- R With all our hearts, we desire to dwell in God's love and to have the grace to love our
neighbours as ourselves.
- God of boundless love, we pray that all people may come to know your unlimited mercy and
believe in your desire to fill us with your infinite love.
- A Fill us with your love! Make us one in you.**
- R We join our prayers to that of Jesus, who prayed for the unity of all who follow him.
- God of communion, we pray that we may work together for your greater glory and
spread the Good News of salvation for all.
- A Fill us with your love! Make us one in you.**
- R Our hearts are broken because of the confusion and division in our world.
- God, our healer, we who are scattered like sheep without a shepherd, ask you to gather us
into one fold. Enliven us by your Spirit and send us again, two by two, to be the light of the
world and the salt of the earth.

A Fill us with your love! Make us one in you.

R Our world is scarred by terror and violence. Millions are forced to leave their homes in search of refuge and safety.

God of welcome, grant us the grace to risk embracing the stranger, tending their wounds and standing in solidarity with them. Strengthen our resolve to be kind and merciful and to act towards our sisters and brothers at all times as you do towards us.

A Fill us with your love! Make us one in you.

R In our weakness and fear we know that we often pass by on the other side, turning away from those who need our help.

God of power, despite our lack of charity, open our hearts to experience the length, width, height and depth of your love, so that we may love you more and love our neighbour as ourselves.

A Fill us with your love! Make us one in you.

The Lord's Prayer

L As children of the one God, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**A Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

Hymn

Closing Prayer

**A Lord Jesus, who prayed that all might be one,
we pray to you for the unity of all Christians,
according to your will, according to your means.
May your Spirit enable us to experience the suffering caused by division,
to see our sin and to hope beyond all hope. Amen.⁷**

7. Daily Prayer for Christian Unity of the Chemin Neuf Community.

Sending

The calabash or container of water is brought forward and held up before the congregation, as the leader says:

L Refreshed by the water of life,
let us go forth to love God, and to love our neighbour as ourselves,
united in Christ and enlivened by the Holy Spirit.

A **Everything we can do together, let's do it! Amen!**

Hymn

BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE EIGHT DAYS

DAY 1

*A lawyer stood up to test Jesus.
“Teacher”, he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”
(Lk 10:25)*

Help us, Lord, to have a life turned towards you

Additional scripture passages

Romans 14:8-9

Psalm 103:13-18

Reflection

“What must I do to inherit eternal life?” This crucial question asked of Jesus by a lawyer challenges every believer in God. It affects the meaning of our life on earth and for eternity. Elsewhere in the Bible, Jesus gives us the ultimate definition of eternal life: “... that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (Jn 17:3). Knowing God means discovering and doing his will in our lives. Every person wants a life of fullness and truth, and God desires this for us too (cf. Jn 10:10). Saint Irenaeus said, “The glory of God is a human being fully alive”.

The existential realities of life, with divisions, selfishness and suffering, often distance us from the quest for God. Jesus lived the mystery of intimate communion with the Father, who desires to fill all his children with the fullness of his eternal life. Jesus is “the Way” that leads us to the Father, our ultimate destiny.

Thus, our quest for eternal life brings us closer to Jesus, and in so doing brings us nearer to each other, strengthening our closeness on the path toward Christian unity. Let us be open to friendship and collaboration with Christians of all churches, praying for the day when we can all stand together at the Table of the Lord.

Prayer

God of life,

You have created us to have life, and life in all its fullness.

May we recognise in our brothers and sisters their desire for eternal life.

As we follow Jesus’ way with determination, may we lead others to you.

We pray in his name. Amen.

DAY 2

*The lawyer answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind;
and your neighbour as yourself"
(Lk 10:27)*

**Help me Lord to love you, my neighbour and myself
with all that I am**

Additional scripture passages

Deuteronomy 10:12-13

Psalm 133

Reflection

The lawyer's answer may seem simple, drawn from the well-known commandments of God. However, to love God in this way and our neighbour as ourselves can often be difficult.

God's commandment to love him requires deep commitment and means abandoning ourselves entirely, offering our hearts and minds to serve God's will. We can ask for the grace to follow Christ's example, he who offered himself up completely and said, "Not my will but yours be done" (Lk 22:42). He also manifested his great love to all, including his enemies. We do not get to choose our neighbours. Loving them means being attentive to their needs, accepting their imperfections and encouraging their hopes and aspirations. The same attitude is needed on the path of Christian unity, with regard to one another's different traditions.

The call to love your neighbour "as yourself" reminds us of the need to accept ourselves as we are, conscious of God's compassionate gaze upon us, always ready to forgive. Consider that we are God's beloved creation. Respect yourself. Seek peace with yourself. Similarly, we can each ask for the grace to love and accept our own church or community, with its failings, entrusting all things to the Father, who restores us through the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

Lord, give us the grace to know you more deeply,
in order to love you with all of our being.

Grant us a pure heart, to love our neighbour as ourselves.

May the gift of your Holy Spirit

enable us to see your presence in our sisters and brothers,

that we may love each other with the same unconditional love with which you love us.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

DAY 3

“Who is my neighbour?”
(Lk 10: 29)

Lord, open our hearts to those we do not see

Additional scripture passages

Romans 13:8-10

Psalm 119:57-63

Reflection

The teacher of the law wanted to justify himself, hoping that the neighbour he is called to love is one of his own faith and people. This is a natural human instinct. When we invite people to our homes, they are quite often people who share our social status, our outlook on life and our values. There is a human instinct to prefer places of familiarity. This is also true of our ecclesial communities. But Jesus takes the lawyer, and his wider audience, deeper into their own tradition by reminding them of the obligation to welcome and to love all, regardless of religion, culture or social status.

The Gospel teaches that loving those who are like ourselves is not extraordinary. Jesus steers us towards a radical vision of what it means to be human. The parable illustrates in a very visible way what Christ expects from us – to open wide our hearts and walk in his way, loving others as he loves us. In fact, Jesus answers the lawyer with another question: it is not “who is my neighbour”, but, “who proved to be a neighbour to the man in need?”

Our times of insecurity and fear confront us with a reality where distrust and uncertainty come to the forefront of relationships. This is the challenge of the parable today: to whom am I a neighbour?

Prayer

God of love,
Who write love in our hearts,
instil in us the courage to look beyond ourselves
and see the neighbour in those different from ourselves,
that we may truly follow Jesus Christ,
our brother and our friend,
who is Lord, for ever and ever. Amen.

DAY 4

*When he saw him, he passed by on the other side
(Lk 10:31)*

May we never turn away from those in need

Additional scripture passages

Isaiah 58:6-9a

Psalm 34:15-22

Reflection

The priest and Levite who walk by on the other side may have had good religious reasons for not helping: they may have been ready to perform certain religious rituals and might have risked ritual defilement if the man had been dead. Yet on many occasions, Jesus is critical of religious leadership for placing the rules of religion ahead of the obligation to always do good.

The beginning of the text for the Week of Prayer tells us how the teacher of the law wanted to justify himself. The priest and the Levite in the parable would have felt justified in what they had done. As Christians, how far are we prepared to go beyond convention? Sometimes our ecclesial and culturally conditioned short-sightedness can prevent us from seeing what is being revealed by the life and witness of sisters and brothers of other Christian traditions. When we open our eyes to see how God's love is revealed by our fellow Christians, we are drawn closer to them and so are drawn into deeper union with them.

This parable of Jesus not only challenges us to do good, but also to widen our vision. We do not only learn what is good and holy from those who share our confessional or religious worldview, but often from those different from ourselves. The Good Samaritan is often the one we do not expect.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

As we journey with you towards unity,
may our eyes not look away,
but be wide open to the world.

As we travel through life,
may we stop and reach out, bind up the wounded
and in so doing experience your presence in them:
you who live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

DAY 5

*He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them
(Lk 10:34)*

Lord, help us see the wounds and find hope

Additional scripture passages

Joel 2:23-27

Psalm 104:14-15, 27-30

Reflection

The Good Samaritan did what he could out of his own resources: he poured wine and oil and bandaged the man's wounds and put him on his own animal. He went further still by promising to pay for his care. When we see the world through the Samaritan's eyes, every situation can be an opportunity to help those in need. This is where love manifests itself. The example of the Good Samaritan motivates us to ask ourselves how to respond to our neighbour. He gave wine and oil, restoring the man and giving him hope. What can we give, so that we can be a part of God's work of healing a broken world?

This brokenness shows itself in our world in insecurity, fear, distrust and division. Shamefully, these divisions also exist between Christians. Though we celebrate sacraments or other rituals of healing, reconciliation and consolation, often using oil and wine, we persist in divisions that wound the Body of Christ. The healing of our Christian divisions promotes the healing of the nations.

Prayer

Gracious God,

You who are the source of all love and goodness:

enable us to see the needs of our neighbour.

Show us what we can do to bring about healing.

Change us, so that we can love all our brothers and sisters.

Help us to overcome the obstacles of division,
that we might build a world of peace for the common good.

Thank you for renewing your Creation

and leading us to a future which is full of hope:

you who are Lord of all, yesterday, today and forever. Amen.

DAY 6

*Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn,
and took care of him (Lk 10:34)*

Lord, turn our churches into ‘inns’, to welcome those in need

Additional scripture passages

Genesis 18:4-5

Psalm 5:11-12

Reflection

The man who fell into the hands of robbers was cared for by a Samaritan. The Samaritan saw beyond prejudice or bias. He saw someone in need and brought him to an inn. “The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend” (Lk 10:35).

In any human society, hospitality and solidarity are essential. They require the welcoming of strangers, foreigners, migrants and homeless people. However, when faced with insecurity, suspicion and violence, we tend to mistrust our neighbours. Hospitality is an important witness to the Gospel, particularly in contexts of religious and cultural pluralism. Welcoming ‘the other’, and being welcomed in turn, is at the heart of ecumenical dialogue. Christians are challenged to turn our churches into inns where our neighbours can find Christ. Such hospitality is a sign of the love that our churches have for one another and for all.

When we as followers of Christ move beyond our confessional traditions and choose to practice ecumenical hospitality, we move from being strangers to being neighbours.

Prayer

Father of love,

In Jesus, you showed us the meaning of hospitality,
by caring for our fragile humanity.

Help us to become a community
that welcomes those who feel abandoned and lost,
building a house where all are welcome.

May we come closer to one another as we offer the world your unconditional love.

This we pray in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

DAY 7

*Jesus said: "Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour?"
(Lk 10:36)*

Lord, show us how to respond to our neighbour

Additional scripture passages

Philippians 2:1-5

Psalm 10:17-18

Reflection

At the end of the parable, Jesus asked the lawyer: who was the neighbour to the man victimized? The lawyer replied "the one who showed him mercy". He does not say "the Samaritan" and we might imagine that the hostility between Samaritans and Jews made that answer hard to admit. We often discover neighbours in the most unexpected people, even those whose very name or origins we find difficult to utter. In today's world, where polarized politics often set those of different religious identities against one another, Jesus challenges us through this parable to see the importance of our vocation to cross borders and walls of separation.

As with the lawyer, we are challenged to reflect upon how we live our lives, not merely in terms of whether we do good or not, but whether, like the priest and the Levite, we are neglecting to act mercifully.

Prayer

Holy God,

your Son Jesus Christ came among us
to show us the way of compassion.

Help us by your Spirit to follow his example,
to serve the needs of all your children,

and so give united Christian witness to your ways of love and mercy.

We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

DAY 8

*Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise"
(Lk 10:37)*

Lord, may our fellowship be a sign of your Kingdom

Additional scripture passages

Romans 12:9-13

Psalm 41:1-2

Reflection

Through these words – “Go and do likewise” – Jesus sends each of us, and each of our churches, to live out his commandment to love. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, we are sent out to be “other Christs”, reaching out to suffering humanity in compassion and mercy. Like the Good Samaritan towards the injured man, we can choose not to reject those who are different, but instead cultivate a culture of proximity and goodwill.

How does Jesus’ invitation to “Go and do likewise” speak to my life? What does this call of Christ imply for my relationships with members of other churches? How can we charitably bear witness together to God’s love? As ambassadors for Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:20), we are called to be reconciled to God and to one another, for fellowship to take root and grow in our churches and in areas affected by inter-communal conflict, such as the Sahel region.

As mutual trust and confidence increase, we will become more willing to reveal our wounds, including ecclesial wounds, that Christ’s love may visit and heal us through each other’s love and care. Striving together for Christian unity helps rebuild relationships, so that violence can give way to solidarity and peace.

Prayer

Heavenly Father,

we thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit, the giver of life,
who makes us more open to each other, resolves conflict,
and strengthens our bonds of communion.

May we grow in mutual affection

and in the desire to announce the Gospel message more faithfully,

that the world may come together in unity

and welcome the Prince of Peace.

Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

APPENDIX 1

Suggested songs for use during the Worship*

O JESUS PRINCE OF PEACE

$\text{♩} = 100$ Bm A D G A Dsus⁴ D Bm

1. O Je - sus prince of peace, my life and my be - lo - ved, my sa - viour and my rock. O Je - sus, my strong tower, my joy and strength you are, Cre - a - tion's mor - ning star.

1. O Jesus prince of peace,
my life and my beloved,
my saviour and my rock.
O Jesus, my strong tower,
my joy and strength you are,
Creation's morning star.

Bm A D
G A D4 D
Em F# Bm
B Em A D
Em F# Bm
F# Bm

2. O Jesus, living Word
Bread broken for all people
And strength upon their way
O Jesus, flame of love
The broken spirit's rest
The Truth, the light of day.

3. O Jesus, rising sun
On all our human suffering
My shepherd and my hope
O Jesus promised land
My treasure, my sole good
My maker and my Lord.

3. O Jesus, risen Son
The hope of every nation
My one consoling friend
O Jesus, Master, King
My brother through your blood
My Saviour and my God.

Original Title (FR) : Jésus prince de paix
Text and Music : Chemin Neuf Community
© 1992 Les Ateliers du Chemin Neuf
Desert Day, Friday, Hymn for Morning Prayer in
Ordinary Time, Morning, Ordinary Time
SECLI : D621

*. These songs are proposed by the writing group from Burkina Faso which prepared the first draft of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024.

WE PRAISE YOU LORD

Words and music: Chemin Neuf Community

$\text{♩} = 120$

The musical score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of 120 beats per minute. It consists of seven staves of music. The first staff (measures 1-4) has a vocal line with lyrics: "We praise you Lord we bless your name You are our God, our re - dee - mer, On". The second staff (measures 5-7) continues the vocal line: "this ve - ry day, is your love re - vealed, In our hearts O Lord your, light will shine". The third staff (measures 8-11) features a guitar accompaniment with chords and lyrics: "— You are ri-sen to- day, and you have con- quered death You are the king of glo - ry, Lord be". The fourth staff (measures 12-14) continues the guitar accompaniment: "mag- ni - fied! Who will keep us, O God, a - way from your ten- der love? In our". The fifth staff (measures 15-17) includes a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.) with lyrics: "hearts O Lord your, light will shine! Al-le-". The sixth staff (measures 18-21) features a vocal line with triplets and lyrics: "lu - ia Al-le - lu - ia Al-le - lu - ia Al-le - lu - ia Al - le". The seventh staff (measures 22-24) continues the vocal line: "lu - ia Al-le - lu - ia In our hearts O Lord your, light, will shine!".

Chords: C, G, Am⁷, B^b, F, Dm, Gsus⁴, B^b, Am, F, G, Am, B^b, Dm, G, F, G, Gsus⁴, G, C, G, F, G, C, G, F, G, Dm, B^b, Gsus⁴, G.

Lyrics:
 We praise you Lord we bless your name You are our God, our re - dee - mer, On
 this ve - ry day, is your love re - vealed, In our hearts O Lord your, light will shine
 — You are ri-sen to- day, and you have con- quered death You are the king of glo - ry, Lord be
 mag- ni - fied! Who will keep us, O God, a - way from your ten- der love? In our
 hearts O Lord your, light will shine! Al-le-
 lu - ia Al-le - lu - ia Al-le - lu - ia Al-le - lu - ia Al - le
 lu - ia Al-le - lu - ia In our hearts O Lord your, light, will shine!

APPENDIX 2

The Ecumenical Situation in Burkina Faso*

As the Christian churches in Burkina Faso have sensed a greater need for unity, various ecumenical bodies have been formed. These include the Federation of Evangelical Churches and Missions (FEME), with Pastor Henri Yie as President; and the Council of Evangelical Churches, Missions and Ministries (CEMMEB), a grouping of Protestant churches who are not members of FEME, led by Pastor Karim Zongo of the International Church of Ouagadougou. There is also the Association of Reformed Evangelical Churches of Burkina Faso, led by Pastor Moumouni Ouédraogo. This is a young grouping of local churches. It is a member of the Fellowship of Christian Councils and Churches in West Africa, the All Africa Conference of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the World Council of Churches.

Regarding the Catholic Church, the meeting of the ordinary assembly of the Episcopal Conference of Burkina-Niger in February 2014, on ecumenism, included participation from the Assemblies of God. It established an episcopal commission for ecumenical dialogue, which embarked on research on the various ecclesial communities present in Burkina Faso and the reception of the 1982 World Council of Churches Faith and Order 'Lima Text', *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*. The main focus of the research was on the mutual recognition of baptism and on the challenges to be overcome and a synthesis of the research was produced at the *Centre National Cardinal Paul Zoungrana* in November 2017.

There is a living awareness and desire among Christians to rediscover their unity in Christ. The churches in Burkina Faso are conscious that divisions between Christians wound not only the Church, but also wound Christ and us as Christians too, and so have built bridges, committing themselves 'irrevocably to following the path of the ecumenical venture, thus heeding the Spirit of the Lord'.⁸

Places of ecumenical dialogue

There is collaboration between churches in the direction of ecumenical dialogue. An important example is the work of the Bible Society on the translation of the Bible, making it available in the various languages of the country. The Bible is distributed through the organisation of Bible Days or Bible Months.

"Spiritual Ecumenism" is lived through the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which is known as the soul of ecumenical action in Burkina Faso. During it, parish churches sometimes organise joint concerts. The Catholic Church and some other communities recognise the baptism of other Christian denominations that baptize with water according to the Trinitarian formula. Tangible fruits of ecumenical dialogue regarding biblical convergence, as well as solidarity in the dialogue of works are evident.

*. This text is reproduced under the sole authority and responsibility of the local group from Burkina Faso which wrote the source texts for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2024.

8. Pope John Paul II, *Ut Unum Sint* §3 (1995).

Discernible difficulties

Obstacles are perceptible in drive to work for the unity of Christians. These include lack of motivation and enthusiasm, the persistence of attitudes marked by mutual fear, suspicion and mistrust; the lack of people trained in churches on ecumenical issues; the question of representativeness; the problem of mutual recognition of baptism; the lack of a forum for academic dialogue and joint preparation for interchurch marriages.

Regarding these difficulties, the Christian churches and confessions of Burkina Faso can endorse this question of Pope John Paul II, who asked, “how much further we must travel until that blessed day when full unity in faith will be attained and we can celebrate together in peace the Holy Eucharist of the Lord”.⁹

Glimmers of Hope

Several steps towards deeper relationships and reconciliation between churches are possible. For example, deepening and jointly organizing the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and other ecumenical prayers and celebrations; promoting courtesy visits between churches; translating official texts on ecumenism; forming Christians in the ecumenical spirit; availing of the experience of the *Chemin Neuf* Community in the preparation and support of interchurch couples, as well as the sharing of spiritual experiences. It is necessary for churches to include ecumenical initiatives in their pastoral plans and to promote ecumenical formation among pastoral workers and all the faithful.

A true spiritual, pastoral and ecclesial conversion without proselytism is essential for real ecumenical dialogue, without false irenicism. Christian Unity, which has its source and ultimate goal in the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, is a grace for which it is necessary to turn to God in prayer.

9. Ibid, §77.

APPENDIX 3

Presentation of the *Chemin Neuf* Community

The *Chemin Neuf* Community (CNN) is a Catholic community with an ecumenical vocation, born in Lyon in 1973 and now established across five continents. Inspired, like so many new communities, by the dynamics of Vatican II, it is rooted in both the Ignatian tradition and the experience of Charismatic Renewal – *ie* life in the Holy Spirit. Couples, consecrated brothers and sisters, women and men, from different countries and different cultures have chosen the adventure of community life following Christ. Living in the same area or under the same roof, they experience daily that sharing actually increases what they have. Sharing who they are makes them more truly brothers and sisters. On this humble path of shared daily life, they experience how much the meeting of their differences is a richness, especially as it experiences the challenge of reconciliation. From this communion spring the joy and celebration which are at the centre of the community.

2,400 people are members of CCN, present in 30 countries, in 80 dioceses; among them are 400 consecrated celibates, including 120 priests. The founder of the community is Père Laurent Fabre. He was succeeded as leader of the community in 2016 by Père François Michon. In Burkina Faso, CCN has about seventy committed members, mainly married couples, but including also priests and consecrated sisters. (For more information, see: <https://www.chemin-neuf.fr> or <http://bf.chemin-neuf.org>.)

The *Chemin Neuf* community has an ecumenical vocation: “That they may all be one” (Jn 17:21). “We dare to believe in the visible unity of the Church, and we have received a call to work for that unity with all our strength” (*Constitutions*, p. 20). Jesus was the first to pray for unity, and members of CCN desire to make this prayer their own. “Anything we can do together, let’s do it.” Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Orthodox and Anglicans, they share their daily life and carry out their missions together. They do this in order to bear witness together to the love of the Father for all his children. On this journey, they offer various ecumenical formations and desire to involve their respective churches with them, forging strong bonds with those around them.

APPENDIX 4

Prayer for the Unity of Christians as prayed by the *Chemin Neuf* Community

*Inspired by a prayer of the Abbé Paul Couturier,
Pioneer of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity*

Lord Jesus, who prayed that we might all be one,
we pray to you for the unity of Christians,
according to your will,
according to your means.
May your Spirit enable us
to experience the suffering caused by division,
to see our sin, and to hope beyond all hope.
Amen.

APPENDIX 5

Office for the Unity of Christians as prayed by the *Chemin Neuf* Community

The symbol of the empty chalice and paten

Every day, members of the *Chemin Neuf* Community pray, asking Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, to “enable us to experience the suffering caused by separation”.

To illustrate and experience this, two people carry in procession an empty chalice and paten, and place them on the altar, symbolizing our separation and the sin of division. At the same time, those praying ask “to hope beyond hope”, believing that one day we will all be gathered at the same table to break the bread together – to “do this in remembrance of me”, as Jesus said (Lk 22:19).

The singing of Psalm 122

Typically, during this procession to the altar with the empty chalice and paten, the congregation sings Psalm 122, the words of which refer to a walk, a pilgrimage, up to Jerusalem, the holy city, with its promise of unity.

I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the Lord!”
Our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.

Jerusalem – built as a city
that is bound firmly together.
To it the tribes go up,
the tribes of the Lord,
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
For there the thrones for judgement were set up,
the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May they prosper who love you.
Peace be within your walls,
and security within your towers.”
For the sake of my relatives and friends
I will say, “Peace be within you”.
For the sake of the house of the Lord our God,
I will seek your good.

Typical Order of Service

Welcome and presentation

With an explanation of the empty chalice and paten, and the specific Prayer for the Unity of Christians.

Opening

O God, come to our aid.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Glory be to the Father...

Psalm 122 (I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!”)

Sung as a hymn, standing, with the procession of the empty chalice and paten to be placed on the altar.

Psalmody

One or two psalms or hymns, sung while seated, with antiphons before and after each psalm.

Scripture reading

All sit during the biblical reading. The reading may be followed by a homily, a testimony, a presentation of about a church or of an ecumenical event, or a reading from a Christian writer.

Canticle of Zechariah (Luke 1:68-79)

Sung, standing, with an antiphon before and after the canticle.

Intercessions

Including petitions (or thanksgivings or blessings) for our churches, their leaders or a particular Christian event.

Prayer for the Unity of Christians

See Appendix 4, above.

The Lord’s Prayer

Concluding prayer

Conclusion

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

Themes 1968 – 2024

*Materials jointly prepared by the WCC Faith and Order Commission
and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (now Dicastery) were first used in 1968*

- 1968** To the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:14)
- 1969** Called to freedom (Galatians 5:13)
(Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1970** We are fellow workers for God (1 Corinthians 3:9)
(Preparatory meeting held at the Monastery of Niederaltaich, Federal Republic of Germany)
- 1971** ...and the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:13)
(Preparatory meeting in Bari, Italy)
- 1972** I give you a new commandment (John 13:34)
(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1973** Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1)
(Preparatory meeting held at the Abbey of Montserrat, Spain)
- 1974** That every tongue confess: Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:1-13)
(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1975** God's purpose: all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-10)
(Material from an Australian group – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1976** We shall be like him (1 John 3:2) or, Called to become what we are
(Material from Caribbean Conference of Churches – Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1977** Enduring together in hope (Romans 5:1-5)
(Material from Lebanon, in the midst of a civil war – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva)
- 1978** No longer strangers (Ephesians 2:13-22)
(Material from an ecumenical team in Manchester, England)
- 1979** Serve one another to the glory of God (1 Peter 4:7-11)
(Material from Argentina – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1980** Your kingdom come (Matthew 6:10)
(Material from an ecumenical group in Berlin, German Democratic Republic – Preparatory meeting held in Milan)
- 1981** One Spirit - many gifts - one body (1 Corinthians 12:3b-13)
(Material from Graymoor Fathers, USA – Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1982** May all find their home in you, O Lord (Psalm 84)
(Material from Kenya – Preparatory meeting held in Milan, Italy)

- 1983** Jesus Christ - the life of the world (1 John 1:1-4)
(Material from an ecumenical group in Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Céligny (Bossey), Switzerland)
- 1984** Called to be one through the cross of our Lord (1 Corinthians 2:2 and Colossians 1:20)
(Preparatory meeting held in Venice, Italy)
- 1985** From death to life with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-7)
(Material from Jamaica – Preparatory meeting held in Grandchamp, Switzerland)
- 1986** You shall be my witnesses (Acts 1:6-8)
(Material from Yugoslavia (Slovenia) – Preparatory meeting held in Yugoslavia)
- 1987** United in Christ - a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17-6:4a)
(Material from England – Preparatory meeting held in Taižé, France)
- 1988** The love of God casts out fear (1 John 4:18)
(Material from Italy – Preparatory meeting held in Pinerolo, Italy)
- 1989** Building community: one body in Christ (Romans 12:5-6a)
(Material from Canada – Preparatory meeting held in Whaley Bridge, England)
- 1990** That they all may be one...That the world may believe (John 17)
(Material from Spain – Preparatory meeting held in Madrid, Spain)
- 1991** Praise the Lord, all you nations! (Psalm 117 and Romans 15:5-13)
(Material from Germany – Preparatory meeting held in Rotenburg an der Fulda, Federal Republic of Germany)
- 1992** I am with you always... Go, therefore (Matthew 28:16-20)
(Material from Belgium – Preparatory meeting held in Bruges, Belgium)
- 1993** Bearing the fruit of the Spirit for Christian unity (Galatians 5:22-23)
(Material from Zaire – Preparatory meeting held near Zurich, Switzerland)
- 1994** The household of God: called to be one in heart and mind (Acts 4:23-37)
(Material from Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Dublin, Republic of Ireland)
- 1995** Koinonia: communion in God and with one another (John 15:1-17)
(Material from Faith and Order – Preparatory meeting held in Bristol, England)
- 1996** Behold, I stand at the door and knock (Revelation 3:14-22)
(Material from Portugal – Preparatory meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal)
- 1997** We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20)
(Material from Nordic Ecumenical Council – Preparatory meeting held in Stockholm, Sweden)
- 1998** The Spirit helps us in our weakness (Romans 8:14-27)
(Material from France – Preparatory meeting held in Paris, France)
- 1999** He will dwell with them as their God, they will be his peoples (Revelation 21:1-7)
(Material from Malaysia – Preparatory meeting held in Monastery of Bose, Italy)
- 2000** Blessed be God who has blessed us in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14)
(Material from the Middle East Council of Churches – Preparatory meeting held La Verna, Italy)
- 2001** I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (John 14:1-6)
(Material from Romania – Preparatory meeting held at Vulcan, Romania)
- 2002** For with you is the fountain of life (Psalm 36:5-9)
(Material CEEC and CEC – Preparatory meeting near Augsburg, Germany)

- 2003** We have this treasure in clay jars (2 Corinthians 4:4-18)
(Material churches in Argentina – Preparatory meeting at Los Rubios, Spain)
- 2004** My peace I give to you (John 14:23-31; John 14:27)
(Material from Aleppo, Syria – Preparatory meeting in Palermo, Sicily)
- 2005** Christ, the one foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:1-23)
(Material from Slovakia – Preparatory meeting in Piestany, Slovakia)
- 2006** Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them (Matthew 18:18-20)
(Material from Ireland – Preparatory meeting held in Prosperous, Co. Kildare, Ireland)
- 2007** He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak (Mark 7:31-37)
(Material from South Africa – Preparatory meeting held in Faverges, France)
- 2008** Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:(12a) 13b-18)
(Material from USA – Preparatory meeting held in Graymoor, Garrison, USA)
- 2009** That they may become one in your hand (Ezekiel 37:15-28)
(Material from Korea – Preparatory meeting held in Marseille, France)
- 2010** You are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:48)
(Material from Scotland – Preparatory meeting held in Glasgow, Scotland)
- 2011** One in the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer (cf. Acts 2:42)
(Material from Jerusalem – Preparatory meeting held in Saydnaya, Syria)
- 2012** We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58)
(Material from Poland – Preparatory meeting held in Warsaw, Poland)
- 2013** What does God require of us? (cf. Micah 6:6-8)
(Material from India – Preparatory meeting held in Bangalore, India)
- 2014** Has Christ been divided? (1 Corinthians 1:1-17)
(Material from Canada – Preparatory meeting held in Montréal, Canada)
- 2015** Jesus said to her: Give me to drink (John 4:7)
(Material from Brazil – Preparatory meeting held in São Paulo, Brazil)
- 2016** Called to proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord (cf. 1 Peter 2:9)
(Material from Latvia – Preparatory meeting held in Riga, Latvia)
- 2017** Reconciliation - The love of Christ compels us (2 Cor 5:14-20)
(Material from Germany – Preparatory meeting held in Wittenberg, Germany)
- 2018** Your right hand, O Lord, glorious in power (Ex 15:6)
(Material from the Caribbean – Preparatory meeting held in Nassau, Bahamas)
- 2019** Justice and only justice you shall pursue (Deut 16:18-20)
(Material from Indonesia – Preparatory meeting held in Jakarta, Indonesia)
- 2020** They showed us unusual kindness (Acts 28:2)
(Material from Malta – Preparatory meeting held in Rabat, Malta)
- 2021** Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit (cf. John 15:5-9)
(Material from Community of Grandchamp – Preparatory meeting held at Areuse, Switzerland)
- 2022** We saw the star in the East, and we came to worship him (Mt 2:2)
(Material from the Middle East Council of Churches, Lebanon – Preparatory meeting held online)

- 2023** Do good; seek justice (Isaiah 1:17)
(Material from the Minnesota Council of Churches, USA – Preparatory meeting held at Bossey, Switzerland)
- 2024** “You shall love the Lord your God ... and your neighbour as yourself” (Luke 10:27)
(Material from Burkina Faso – Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)

KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

- c. 1740** In Scotland a Pentecostal movement arose, with North American links, whose revivalist message included prayers for and with all churches.
- 1820** The Rev. James Haldane Stewart publishes “Hints for the General Union of Christians for the Outpouring of the Spirit”.
- 1840** The Rev. Ignatius Spencer, a convert to Roman Catholicism, suggests a “Union of Prayer for Unity”.
- 1867** The First Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops emphasizes prayer for unity in the Preamble to its Resolutions.
- 1894** Pope Leo XIII encourages the practice of a Prayer Octave for Unity in the context of Pentecost.
- 1908** First observance of the “Church Unity Octave” initiated by the Rev. Paul Wattson.
- 1926** The Faith and Order movement begins publishing “Suggestions for an Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity”.
- 1935** Abbé Paul Couturier of France advocates the “Universal Week of Prayer for Christian Unity” on the inclusive basis of prayer for “the unity Christ wills by the means he wills”.
- 1958** Unité Chrétienne (Lyon, France) and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches begin co-operative preparation of materials for the Week of Prayer.
- 1964** In Jerusalem, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I prayed together Jesus’ prayer “that they all may be one” (John 17).
- 1964** The Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II emphasizes that prayer is the soul of the ecumenical movement and encourages observance of the Week of Prayer.
- 1966** The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity [now known as the Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity] begin official joint preparation of the Week of Prayer material.
- 1968** First official use of Week of Prayer material prepared jointly by Faith and Order and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity.
- 1975** First use of Week of Prayer material based on a draft text prepared by a local ecumenical group. An Australian group was the first to take up this plan in preparing the 1975 initial draft.
- 1988** Week of Prayer materials were used in the inaugural worship for The Christian Federation of Malaysia, which links the major Christian groupings in that country.
- 1994** International group preparing text for 1996 included representatives from YMCA and YWCA.

- 2004** Agreement reached that resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity be jointly published and produced in the same format by Faith and Order (WCC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (now Dicastery) (Catholic Church).
- 2008** Commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. (Its predecessor, the Church Unity Octave, was first observed in 1908).
- 2017** Marking the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, the materials for the Week of Prayer in 2017 were prepared by Christians in Germany.