

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2014



ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE

Introduction to the Service

As we gather for worship during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, we respond to God's call to us and we seek to be renewed and to build up our mutual relationship in Christ through song, word and gesture. This celebration may also serve as an invitation to explore or recall the eight days of reflection, which are linked textually to 1 Corinthians 1:1-17. We recognize Paul's provocative question – "Has Christ been divided?" – as a joyful challenge to prayer and to self-examination as persons and as Christian communities. This biblical text and worship outline is an opportunity to consider that challenge anew in your context.

Here are some of the distinctive features of this year's service that may require some advance preparation:

The **Gathering of the Community** includes an invitation to pray while turning to face different directions, in the tradition of some of the indigenous people of Canada. You will need to be aware of where the compass points lie for the worshipping congregation, so that they can turn clockwise as the prayer unfolds. They will need to return to the front of the worship space for the "upward" and "downward" directions, as noted. You may need to alter the prayers to reflect your own geographical context.

The **Ecumenical Exchange of Spiritual Gifts** is a way of responding to Paul's concern that the Corinthians have divided into factions, and his challenge: "Has Christ been divided?" We cannot live in the solitudes of our individual Christian communities and assume that we have unity. We must be willing and able to receive each other's gifts. This is a step beyond naming a gift we have to give. It asks us to consider others, and to see in them charisms that enrich the whole body of Christ. The "Exchange" is explained in detail below. It requires some advance planning. We suggest the following:

Invite representatives of the different churches in your local area to reflect together on what "gift" all *receive* from each. The goal is to identify together one gift from each community that the others can agree to "receive." Either local gifts or gifts of their wider tradition may be selected. Representatives of the different churches bring objects representing the gifts that their tradition brings to the whole Christian community.

Ideally, you will also obtain a symbolic representation of each gift to be brought forward during the "Ecumenical Exchange of Spiritual Gifts."

The gifts are brought forward and then placed on a table. As the gifts are brought forward, they are announced using this or a similar form of words: "From the _____ church, we gratefully receive the gift of _____, represented here by _____."

This "Ecumenical Exchange of Spiritual Gifts" can of course be adapted as befits each local situation.

The **Intercessory Prayers** lift up the Eight Millennium Goals of the United Nations. We encourage you to print these prayers for the worshipping congregation so they can see the specific goals embedded in the prayers.

You may wish to note for worshippers that the eight responses in the **Commitment to Unity** match the themes of the resource materials for the Eight Days of Prayer for Unity included in this package.

Those who sing "pray twice." We have offered some suitable **hymns and sacred songs** from the repertoire of Canadian hymn writers and composers, commissioned especially for this 2014 Week of Prayer. These can be found at www.ecumenism.net/music. We hope you will strive to include as much music as you can in this time of ecumenical worship!

L: Leader(s)
C: Congregation

Order of Service

WE GATHER IN HOPE AND UNITY

Processional hymn

The worship leaders and others may enter in procession.

Gathering of the community

L: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

L: This worship service was prepared here in Canada. The word “Canada,” in the language of some of the country’s first people, the Iroquois, means “village.” As members of the household of God, Christians around the world indeed inhabit one “village.” When Christians worship, they link themselves to this vast global village, so full of beauty, of struggle and of hope. Dear friends, we welcome you to join together in prayer through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

L: Loving God, you call all of us: from our homes and our offices, from our mines and our factories, from our fields and our shops, from our fishing boats and our herds, from our schools and our hospitals, from our prisons and our detention centres, to be one in fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

C: Make us one in Christ.

L: The indigenous peoples of Canada honour an ancient ritual of praying while facing in different directions. With them, let us unite in prayer, facing each of the directions as indicated:

Facing East

L: From the East come peace and light and wisdom and knowledge.

C: We are grateful for these gifts, O God.

Facing South

L: From the South come warmth and guidance and the beginning and the end of life.

C: We are grateful for these gifts, O God.

Facing West

L: From the West comes the rain, purifying water, to sustain all living things.

C: We are grateful for these gifts, O God.

Facing North

L: From the North come the cold and mighty wind and the white snows, giving us strength and endurance.

C: We are grateful for these gifts, O God.

Turning towards the front, and looking upward

L: From the heavens we receive darkness and light and the air of your breath.

C: We are grateful for these gifts, O God.

Looking downward

L: From the earth we come and to the earth we will return.

C: We are grateful, O God, for your good creation, our earthly home.

L: May we walk good paths, blessed God, living on this earth as brothers and sisters should; rejoicing in one another’s blessing, sympathizing in one another’s sorrows, and together with you, in the name of Jesus, and with the Spirit’s awakening breath, renewing the face of the earth.

C: Amen.

Hymn of praise

Prayers of Repentance

L: Inspired by Paul’s appeal to the community of Corinth, let us confess our sins.

L: Gracious God, through our union with Christ Jesus you have made us rich in speech and in knowledge of every kind. In our pride, we attribute these gifts to ourselves and do not recognize their true source. Forgive us, Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy or Kyrie eleison (may be sung).

L: Gracious God, in Christ we are not lacking in any spiritual gift. Yet, often we are too timid or self-absorbed to share the marvels of this life-giving message with those around us. Forgive us, Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy or Kyrie eleison (*may be sung*).

L: Gracious God, you call us to fellowship in your Son, Jesus Christ. For our lack of enthusiasm to be united in one mind and one purpose, and for readily allowing divisions and quarrels to persist among us, forgive us, Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy or Kyrie eleison (*may be sung*).

L: Gracious God, you remain faithful even while seeing our weakness. Forgive our sins of mediocrity and our easy acceptance of divisions among us. By the grace of your Holy Spirit, rekindle our zeal to take concrete steps to honour our covenant of unity with you, one another and all of creation.

C: Amen.

WE LISTEN FOR THE WORD OF GOD

Scripture readings: Isaiah 57:14-19; Psalm 36:5-10; 1 Corinthians 1:1-17; Mark 9:33-41

Message

WE RESPOND IN FAITH AND UNITY

Affirmation of Faith

(*The Apostles' Creed or another affirmation of faith may be used.*)

Hymn of Faith and Commitment

Ecumenical Exchange of Spiritual Gifts

L: From the _____ church, we gratefully receive the gift of _____, represented here by _____.

C: We are grateful for these gifts, O God.

Prayer

L: Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, "Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you." Regard not our sins, but the faith of your church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly city, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and forever. C: Amen.

Intercessory Prayers

Together, Canadian churches have embraced the United Nations' Eight Millennium Goals. The following prayers lift up these goals.

L: We pray for all people who suffer day to day in *poverty and hunger*. Their precarious state often causes divisions; may Christ's love restore justice and peace. Gracious God, hear our prayer,

C: And in your love, answer.

L: We pray for all those striving for *universal education*. May their thirst for knowledge build bridges between our churches and restore respect in our differences. Gracious God, hear our prayer,

C: And in your love, answer.

L: We pray for those striving for *equal dignity and rights of man and woman*. May the image of God be honoured in all women and men. We remember especially the need for equal access to jobs, goods and services. As we become one in Christ Jesus, may we fully receive the gifts of both men and women. Gracious God, hear our prayer,

C: And in your love, answer.

L: We pray for the young who are sick and those who seek to improve *child health*. As we take care of children, we welcome Jesus himself. Gracious God, hear our prayer,

C: And in your love, answer.

L: We pray for women who bear children, and for their *maternal health*. May we take care of these mothers who carry new life and whose love for their children reminds us of God's uniting love for us. Gracious God, hear our prayer,

C: And in your love, answer.

L: We pray for those who combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. May we hear the voices of those denied a life of dignity, and work to create a world in which all people are respected and cared for, and where no one is excluded. Gracious God, hear our prayer,

C: And in your love, answer.

L: We pray for all who suffer the consequences of the poor stewardship of creation, and for all endangered species. Guide us to *environmental sustainability* so we can be reconciled with creation. Gracious God, hear our prayer,

C: And in your love, answer.

L: We pray for those who practise international solidarity and *global partnership*. As we favour a fair trade of goods and cancel debt in the poorest countries, may we also strive for justice. Gracious God, hear our prayer,

C: And in your love, answer.

L: As we strive to realize these goals, may we discern your voice, O Lord, and journey together towards the Kingdom for which you prayed. And so we pray:

The Lord's Prayer (*said or sung*)

Sign of Peace

L: When the French came to Canada in the 16th and 17th centuries, they found a land rich in resources, and were helped by its First Peoples. Their sense of gratitude led to naming the ship that brought the founder of Québec City "*Don de Dieu*," which means "Gift of God."

In many of the Eucharistic rites used in Canada, people are invited to holy communion with the words "The Gifts of God for the People of God." The unity for which we pray is restored ecclesial communion with one another, and will be marked by receiving the Eucharistic gifts together. Yet even on the journey to visible unity, we give and receive other gifts from one another, gifts of God for the people of God.

In Québec, the expression *Don de Dieu* – "gift of God" – has a fresh vitality in the Christian community and in popular culture. It recalls a sense of gratitude for the gifts of God that comes from a time when their ancestors were able to share in thanksgiving with the First Nations of Canada. As a sign of our peace and as a way to recognize the gifts we receive from one another, let us say to each other with French Canadians, "*Don de Dieu*."

The worshippers greet one another with an embrace, bow, or handshake as they say:

C: Don de Dieu.

Offering hymn

A collection is taken during this hymn for the benefit of The Canadian Council of Churches or its regional partners.

WE GO FORTH INTO THE WORLD

Commitment to Unity

L: Paul challenged the Christians in Corinth to know in their hearts and to show in their actions that Christ has not been divided. He challenges us as well, to realize more fully the unity we already have in Christ.

With all those in every place who call on the Lord Jesus Christ,

C: Together, we are called to be saints.

L: Graced by God in every way,

C: Together, we give thanks for one another.

L: Rich in the many blessings God has given us through our union in Christ,

C: Together, we are not lacking in any spiritual gift.

L: Confident in the God who strengthens us for love and service,

C: Together, we affirm that God is faithful.

L: Embraced by Jesus Christ,

C: Together, we are called into fellowship.

L: United in the same mind and purpose,

C: Together, we seek to be in agreement.

L: Overcoming our quarrels about the One who was crucified for us,

C: Together, we belong to Christ.

L: Has Christ, then, been divided?

C: No! Together, we go into the world to proclaim his good news!

Sending hymn

BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH

The blessing may be bestowed by several clergy/worship leaders present, using the form below or another form.

L: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

L: May the love of the Lord Jesus draw you to himself,
may the power of the Lord Jesus strengthen you in his service,
may the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your spirit,
and may the blessing of God Almighty,
the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you forever.

C: Amen.

L: Go in peace,
to love and to be loved,
to welcome and to belong,
to serve and to be nourished.

C: Thanks be to God!

Postlude