



FACILITATOR'S HANDBOOK

Christian Youth Summit

Introducing Young Adults to Ecumenism

“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

John 17: 20-23

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this resource

To equip you with all the tools you need to run a successful local Christian Youth Summit experience.

This resource is meant to allow for flexibility according to the needs of each local community.

The purpose of the original Christian Youth Summit in 2018 in Brisbane was to hear the voice of young people as they considered what meaningful Christian Church collaboration looked like in the modern world.

It is hoped that this resource will support local communities to host Christian Youth Summits of their own, adapting the content in this resource to make a meaningful experience happen locally.

Who is this resource for?

- Those who wish to organise a local Christian Youth Summit experience.
- Those looking for examples of ecumenical content and activities to engage young adults in ecumenical dialogue.

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN YOUTH SUMMIT?

Background to the Christian Youth Summit

The Christian Youth Summit was a unique ecumenical initiative that was inspired by the Catholic and Lutheran Churches joint commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and a desire to celebrate their shared mission within the Kingdom of God.

On Wednesday 1 November 2017 the Lutheran Church of Australia Queensland District and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane celebrated the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation at St Peters Lutheran College, Indooroopilly.

The organising team wanted the service to not only look back on the history of the Reformation but to also look forward and consider what the future might hold for the Churches' shared mission. It was decided that a Christian Youth Summit should be organised so that the Queensland Heads of Churches could hear the voice of young people and particularly their views on the future of shared Christian mission in Queensland. Teresa McGrath, Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane, and Aaron Glover, Lutheran Church of Australia Queensland District, were commissioned at the Reformation commemoration service to coordinate and lead this initiative.

Goals

- To provide a space for young adults to learn more about ecumenism.
- To create a space where young adults from various denominations can come together to build relationship with each other.
- To give young adults a positive experience of Christian denominations working together.

GETTING STARTED

Find your key drivers

Your organising team will be the main drivers behind getting a Summit up and running.

This team can be between 2-4 people. It is encouraged to consider past participants of a Christian Youth Summit to be a part of the organising team, if possible. Otherwise, please ensure that more than one denomination is represented on the organising team.

Questions your organising team will need to consider include:

- Selecting a venue
- How they will invite participants to the event
- Which church might cover the indemnity / insurance for the event
- How to collect participant registrations
- Who will complete risk management assessments
- Where will the budget for the event come from (are there any grants you can tap into?)
- Who will be your MCs for the event
- How long your event will be (is it the full 24hr event? Is it shorter? Is it longer?)

Invitations

Consider inviting all Christian denominations in your local area to take part in the Summit. Ideally, you would have church leaders nominate two young adults (18-30 years old – one female and one male) from their denomination to participate in the Christian Youth Summit.

Denominations you might consider inviting (not exclusive):

- Anglican Church of Australia
- Australian Christian Churches
- Baptist Union
- Churches of Christ
- Greek Orthodox
- Lutheran Church of Australia
- Presbyterian Church
- Congregational Fellowship

- Roman Catholic
- Salvation Army
- Uniting Church of Australia
- Wesleyan Methodist Church of Australia

Participants

When inviting participants to be a part of the Summit experience, it may be helpful to make it clear that they are being invited to:

- Listen to other participants and contribute as fully as they can.
- Consider the elements of ecumenism being explored and then respond with their own views and priorities.
- Interact with those from different denominational traditions.

Resource list

Here is the beginning of a resource list you may use to start to gather all the resources needed to for a Christian Youth Summit experience.

- Christian Youth Summit Video Series (access online via NCCA website)
- Projector
- Speakers
- Laptop
- Post-it notes
- Pens
- Butchers Paper
- Copies of hand outs
 - Theological Ecumenism session
 - Spiritual Ecumenism session
- Prayer equipment (musical instruments or speakers and iPod)

PRE-EVENT PREPARATION

Timeline to event

Weeks to Event	Action/Task
20 weeks	Initial Planning Meeting Venue & Catering Booked Budget Developed Confirm MC/s
16 weeks	Letter to Local Pastors inviting them to nominate participants for Summit
8 weeks	Email welcome to participants with pre-event homework and registration links
4 weeks	Email reminder to participants re pre-event homework and registration
2 weeks	Complete Risk Management Assessments
1 week	Pre-event Email to participants with last minute details
Christian Youth Summit	
-1 weeks	Debrief Meeting

Pre-event Homework

The Christian Youth Summit experience for participants commences six weeks before the event with an invitation to complete some pre-event homework.

Participants are invited to visit each other's churches and complete a Church Visit Worksheet (See Appendix).

The intent behind this activity is to help participants reflect on both their own tradition and to gain an understanding of another Christian denomination.

THE CHRISTIAN YOUTH SUMMIT VIDEO SERIES

How to use the videos

This video series is meant to help provide quality, introductory content on Ecumenism.

The video series' primary purpose has been to standardise the level of quality of input a summit experience might offer young adults, no matter where such an event takes place.

The video series can be utilised as needed during the Summit process. It is advised that your organising team watch the videos series in their entirety before making decisions about what to include in your local Summit experience.

Things to consider:

- How much time will you have? Are you running an overnight Summit or a 1-day event?
- Have a look at the suggested activities and reflection questions for each topic to help you decide what videos you'd like to utilise, particularly if time is short.

Encouraging interaction

It is most important that during the summit experience, you consider different techniques to engage the participants in the topic being explored. This means it's important to consider a variety of personal, paired, small group and whole group activities, where possible.

Priority should also be placed on encouraging participants to interact with those from different denominational traditions.

The invitation to all participants through the Summit experience is to invite each person to consider the content that is being explored and then to respond with their own views and thoughts.

CHRISTIAN YOUTH SUMMIT PROGRAM

Template Schedule

This schedule is based on the program developed for original Christian Youth Summit in 2018

Time	What
FRIDAY	
5:00pm	Welcome & check in
6:00pm	Dinner
7:00pm	Session 1: Introduction to Ecumenism
9:00pm	Closing prayer
SATURDAY	
8:00am	Breakfast
8:45am	Morning prayer
9:00am	Session 2: Exploring theological ecumenism
10:30am	Morning tea
11:00am	Session 3: Exploring practical ecumenism
12:30pm	Lunch
1:30pm	Session 4: Exploring spiritual ecumenism
3:00pm	Afternoon tea
3:30pm	Closing/wrap up
4:30pm	Depart

FRIDAY – Session 1: Introduction to Ecumenism

Aim: To provide a brief, yet holistic, introduction to Ecumenism.

Key concepts:

- Ecumenism refers to the Spirit-driven task of unifying divided Christian churches.
- Christ’s prayer for unity – John 17:20-23
- Unity does not mean uniformity.
- The work of ecumenism has not been completed.
- A history of the Ecumenical Movement.
- Our time is one of evaluating “what has been achieved?” And of searching for new ways forward.
- The 4 key challenges of ecumenism:
 - The perception of an “ecumenical winter”
 - Pluralism
 - Ecclesial identity
 - Questions surrounding full visible unity
- Ecumenism cannot be reduced to merely the attainment of co-operative relationships.

Outline of the session:

Time		What
7:00pm	15mins	Opening worship
7:15pm	30mins	Introduction
7:45pm	15mins	Video 1 (11:40)
8:00pm	10mins	Activity
8:10pm	10mins	Video 2 (8:56)
8:20pm	10mins	Activity
8:30pm	15mins	Video 3 (10:46)
8:45pm	10mins	Activity
8:55pm	5mins	Closing prayer
9:00pm		

Opening worship

- Consider simple acts of worship designed with a broad ecumenical nature in mind e.g. prayer and worships songs.
- Select worship songs that have broad use and appeal across denominations
- Be mindful that participants come from varied Christian traditions and that worship concepts familiar to you may need explaining in simple terms to avoid confusion.
- Consider including an activity that symbolises the commencement of the summit and the participant's involvement.

Introduction

- Provide an outline of the schedule for the evening
- Explore icebreakers / sharing that covers the introductory questions: Who are we? Where are we from? What are our strengths?
- Provide a brief overview of the denominations present this weekend (This is a great place to include any stories from field visits i.e. the pre-event homework)
- Explore together some ways to create a safe, respectful space over the duration of the Summit. Consider asking: What environment do we want/need for our time together?

Some general suggestions:

- There are 3 videos to cover in this introductory session. We suggest that you follow the pattern of video, activity then video 2, activity 2 etc. in order to encourage maximum engagement with the content of the videos.
- Change up the style of activity after each video to keep participants as engaged as possible (i.e. personal reflection, pair sharing, large group exploration etc.)
- The above outline is a template only and we'd recommend that you consider how you'd like to split up the time allocated for the 3 activities (i.e. one might take 15mins, another 5mins, another 10mins etc.)

Resources:

- Christian Youth Summit Video Series
 - Video 1: "What is Ecumenism and why does disunity matter?"

- Video 2: “What has been achieved? What is there still to accomplish?”
- Video 3: “What challenges face us in working towards Christian unity today?”

Possible reflection questions:

- Video 1: “What is Ecumenism and why does disunity matter?”
 - What do you think Christ wants for his Church?
 - How does Christian disunity affect our ability to bring the Good News to others?
 - What reasons are there to engage in ecumenism?
 - Do you think Christian disunity is still a problem? Why or why not? In what ways?
 - Can you imagine what a unified Christian community might look like? What would be the benefits of such a community, in terms of mission and witness to the world?
- Video 2: “What has been achieved? What is there still to accomplish?”
 - What do you think of the fact that the Ecumenical Movement began from prayer movements for unity led by young people?
 - What are some of the achievements of the Ecumenical Movement?
 - What do you think of the present state of ecumenism? Do you think it is “old and unexciting news”?
 - What do you think are some of the “hardwood” obstacles facing the quest for Christian unity today?
- Video 3: “What challenges face us in working towards Christian unity today?”
 - What do you think of the key challenges facing the quest for Christian unity (ecumenical winter, pluralism, ecclesial identity, and full visible unity)?
 - Which challenge/s do you think are most pressing?
 - What other challenges does ecumenism face? How might we be able to respond to some of these challenges?
 - How do you think we can best go about ecumenism today? What key aspects of our identity as Christians should we keep in mind?

Possible activities:

- Personal reflection
- Sharing in pairs
- Sharing in the large group

SATURDAY – Session 2: Exploring Theological Ecumenism

Aim: To explore Theological Ecumenism.

Key concepts:

- Theological Ecumenism is ecumenism of the head.
- Theological Ecumenism involves ecumenical activities that primarily focus on doctrinal or theological concerns, on seeking to understand each other’s beliefs and ecclesiology, in order to reach theological and doctrinal consensus.
- It involves rigorous and expert intellectual study and dialogue.
- Ecumenical dialogues usually result in an agreed statement, which is signed by the heads of both churches.
- It is conducted by ecumenical professionals, theologians and academics.
- Theological ecumenism has been very successful in clearing up misunderstandings among Christian groups.
- To avoid becoming abstract, theological ecumenism needs to be grounded in the context of each church community (practical ecumenism) and be open to the workings of the Spirit (spiritual ecumenism).

Outline of the session:

Time		What
9:00am	5mins	Intro & recap
9:05am	8mins	Video (6:52)
9:13am	7mins	Reflection Questions
9:20am	30mins	Activity Part A – Agreement on doctrine
9:50am	10mins	Collate results in large group and identify the areas that need to be prioritized in ecumenical discussions
10:00am	20mins	Activity Part B – Discussion
10:20am	10mins	Large Group Conclusion
10:30am		

Resources:

- Christian Youth Summit Video Series

- Video 4: “What is Theological Ecumenism?”

Possible reflection questions:

- What are your experiences of theological ecumenism in action?
- Why do you think it is important that our Churches engage in theological ecumenism?
- What challenges or opportunities for theological ecumenism do you see?
- What key doctrinal points do you think it would be helpful for our Churches to dialogue on?

Possible activity:

Identify theological areas where there is ecumenical agreement and prioritise ecumenical areas to be discussed.

Part A

Identify the theological areas where there is ecumenical agreement:

- Apostles & Nicene Creeds
- Christology (related to the nature [person] and work [role in salvation] of Jesus Christ)
- Doctrine of Trinity
- Gospel / Evangelism
- Holy Communion
- Baptism
- Scripture
- Creation
- Prayer
- Priesthood
- Missiology (the study of mission)
- Ecclesiology (the study of the Christian Church, the origins of Christianity)
- Men/Women in Church
- Spiritual Gifts
- Baptism of the Spirit

In groups of four, participants are asked to rate their agreement on each of these general areas of doctrine with A = full agreement and E = complete disagreement. Participants may also find that no decision is made, which could then be noted as a “?”.

Participants are then asked to identify the theological areas that should be prioritised in ecumenical discussions. Consider having the participants raise their hand to vote whether each topic is a priority to agree upon, and include the number of votes in a table (see appendix).

Part B

After identifying the topics that are a priority in ecumenical discussion, split the group into two and allow participants to self-nominate to be a part of a conversation in one of the two highest priority focus areas.

SATURDAY – Session 3: Exploring Practical Ecumenism

Aim: To explore Practical Ecumenism.

Key concepts:

- Practical Ecumenism is ecumenism of the hands.
- Practical ecumenism involves efforts primarily directed towards mission, and churches working together on a common issue or task, or simply getting together and interacting with each other socially.
- This is ecumenism practiced as a grassroots, pastoral level and is often undertaken by laypeople.
- Practical ecumenism focuses on Inter-church cooperation on a practical problem.
- Practical ecumenism focuses on cooperation and joint mission, and can sometimes be satisfied with peaceful coexistence, rather than pushing for full visible unity. Hence, it must be challenged by theological ecumenism.

Outline of the session:

Time		What
11:00am	5mins	Intro & recap
11:05am	8mins	Video (5:17)
11:13am	7mins	Reflection Questions
11:20am	20mins	Activity Part A – Document church activities
11:40am	15mins	Activity Part B – Divide the post-its up
11:55am	10mins	Pair share
12:05pm	20mins	Large Group Discussion
12:25pm	5mins	Draw any conclusions together
12:30pm		

Resources:

- Christian Youth Summit Video Series
 - Video 5: “What is Practical Ecumenism?”

Possible reflection questions:

- What are your experiences of practical ecumenism in action?
- Why do you think it is important that our Churches engage in Practical Ecumenism?
- What challenges or opportunities for practical ecumenism do you see?
- What key projects or issues do you think it would be helpful for our Churches to work on together?

Possible activities:

Identifying examples of practical ecumenism in action.

Part A

Using post-it notes, document all the activities that are held in local churches and denominations (these activities could range from outreach events to prayer and worship events to social events). Write each activity on a separate post-it note.

Part B

On a board, display the headings “Yes”, “Depends or Maybe” and “No”. Each participant is then asked to post their post-it under one of these headings, dependant upon whether they believe the activity could be facilitated ecumenically.

Ask the participants to talk to the person next to them about any trends they saw across the board and give participants the opportunity to speak to why they put an activity under a particular column.

SATURDAY – Session 4: Exploring Spiritual Ecumenism

Aim: To explore Spiritual Ecumenism.

Key concepts:

- Spiritual Ecumenism is ecumenism of the heart.
- The term Spiritual Ecumenism refers to the underlying impetus of ecumenism itself – that all ecumenical activities are in fact, driven by the Spirit, for the purpose of achieving Christian unity.
- Spiritual Ecumenism is not another type of ecumenism, rather, it is the basis of all ecumenical activity.
- Spiritual Ecumenism focuses on conversion (not learning about other churches nor working together with other Christians), but on how our church, and ourselves as followers of Christ, can move ever more deeply towards Christ.
- Spiritual Ecumenism is not only the soul of the Ecumenical Movement, but also the context and grounding of ecumenism, in all its forms, whether more theologically focused or more practically oriented.
- Spiritual Ecumenism is important because it recognises that Christian unity is the work of the Spirit.

Outline of the session:

Time		What
1:30pm	5mins	Intro & recap
1:35pm	10mins	Video (9:30)
1:45pm	15mins	Reflection Questions
2:00pm	15mins	Pair Share
2:15pm	40mins	Individual Biblical Reflections and Prayers Activity
2:55pm	5mins	Bring Large Group together for opportunity to share
3:00pm		

Resources:

- Christian Youth Summit Video Series
 - Video 6: “What is Spiritual Ecumenism?”

Possible reflection questions:

- What are your experiences of spiritual ecumenism in action?
- How important do you think it is that our Churches engage in spiritual ecumenism?
- What challenges or opportunities for spiritual ecumenism do you see?
- How could you seek to explain to someone else that Christ's prayer in Jn 17:21 is at the core of ecumenism?
- How important do you think it is for Christians of different denominations to pray together?

Possible activities:

- Explore the following websites for appropriate prayers you might be able to use:
 - National Council of Churches of Australia (NCCA)
 - World Council of Churches (WCC)
- The Biblical Reflections and Prayers for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2020, would be particularly useful in this space:
<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/commissions/faith-and-order/xi-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity/worship-and-background-material-for-the-week-of-prayer-for-christian-unity-2020>
- Give participants time in personal prayer and reflection to consider all that they have learnt about ecumenism and seek God's heart.

SATURDAY – Closing/wrap up

Aim: To consider ways Christian Unity can be realised today.

Key concepts:

- Realising Christian Unity today means to remain centred on Christ, to “lean” into the Spirit, and to listen to the Spirit.
- Keep in mind that ecumenism is an act of love above all.
- Four key virtues in particular are involved in ecumenism: Love, Hospitality, Humility and Hope.
- The virtuous activity of ecumenism is emphasised in a new approach called Receptive Ecumenism.
- Receptive Ecumenism, instead of focusing on what others need to learn from us, instead leads us to ask: What can our church learn from other churches?
- The focus of Receptive Ecumenism is on interior conversion – moving past learning about each other to learning from each other.

Outline of the session:

Time		What
3:30pm	5mins	Intro & recap
3:35pm	10mins	Video (9:05)
3:45pm	15mins	Reflection Questions
4:00pm	10mins	Large Group Discussion on Receptive Ecumenism
4:10pm	15mins	Closing Prayer
4:25pm	5mins	Evaluation Forms & Thank you’s
4:30pm		

Resources:

- Christian Youth Summit Video Series
 - Video 7: “How can we best go about realising Christian Unity today?”

Possible reflection questions:

- How can we balance all three aspects of ecumenical activity (head, heart, and hands)?

- Thinking about your own engagement with working for Christian unity, do you feel more called towards theological, practical, or spiritual ecumenism?
- In relation to Receptive Ecumenism, what do you think your church could learn from engaging with another Christian tradition?
- Why do you think working for Christian unity is important? What can you do to participate?

Ideas for closing prayer:

- Consider following a similar worship approach to the opening worship time.
- Include prayers that have been used during the summit and worship songs that participants will be familiar with.
- Consider including an activity that symbolises the conclusion of the summit and the sending out of participants

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not be possible without the support and assistance of many individuals.

Firstly, we'd like to acknowledge the role of the Queensland Heads of Churches who commissioned the initial Christian Youth Summit to take place in 2018. Without their leadership and dreaming in this space, the experience of that first Youth Summit would not have occurred.

Similarly, we acknowledge the work of Teresa McGrath and Aaron Glover who were originally commissioned by the Queensland Heads of Churches to make a Christian Youth Summit happen in 2018. We thank them for their vision and skill in pulling the right team together to run a rich and successful Youth Summit experience, upon which this resource is based.

For this resource to come into being, we had the fantastic support of a variety of groups. We'd especially like to thank the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA) for approving our application for a grant to access the funds needed to pull off a project like this. We'd also like to thank Shawn Pang from Lamplight Media for his professionalism and efficient work in shooting the content for and then producing the Christian Youth Summit Video Series.

Of course, without quality and expert input at a Christian Youth Summit, the experience of the event would be vastly different. As a result, we'd like to particularly acknowledge the significant work and expertise Dr Antonia Pizzey from the Australian Catholic University (ACU) poured into preparing the content of Christian Youth Summit Video Series, as well as her willingness to present some of this content to camera and to help us produce a richer resource.

The key drivers behind producing this Christian Youth Summit resource and video series were Melissa Ledwich (Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Brisbane) and Aaron Glover (Lutheran Church of Australia Queensland District). Margaret Naylon, Executive Officer at the Brisbane Roman Catholic Commission for Ecumenism and Inter-religious Relations, also played a vital role connecting the right people and provided expert local knowledge of the Ecumenical network in Australia, so that the best support could be offered to get this project off the ground.

Lastly, we thank the 12 young adults who participated in the first Christian Youth Summit in Brisbane in 2018. Without their 'yes' to come along and explore what this Summit might be, and their subsequent feedback and excitement to have an experience like this offered to other young adults, we would not have had the idea to create this resource.

APPENDIX

In this section, you will find examples of the following documents:

- Pre-event Church Visit Worksheet
- Theological Ecumenism Worksheet
- Theological Ecumenism Activity - Summary Table
- Suggested Spiritual Ecumenism Exercise

Pre-event Church Visit Worksheet

Participate in and reflect on a worship service first at your own home church (doing your best to take the perspective of an outsider/newcomer), and then at one from another denomination. Do a little research before you go, make observations while you're there, and then reflect afterwards (including noting the differences between the two).

Section 1: Before you visit	Your own home church	The church you visited
Name of Church		
Which denomination is it?		
Using website, Facebook page or other sources, describe the kind of church you're expecting to find, and something about its range of activities.		
From what you have learned, what do you expect in terms of worship style, theological distinctives, approaches to mission (including evangelism)?		
Section 2: While you're there	Your own home church	The church you visited
What is the name of the service		
Who is involved in leading it? (ordained, lay, team, music, readers, servers etc.)		
What books, song sheets, orders of service were used?		
Was a written liturgy used in which the congregation could participate?		
How would you describe the style of music? What instruments were used?		
What prayer or other spiritual practices were evident? How would you describe them?		
How would you describe the style of the whole worship service? From what you know of this denomination, was it typical or unusual?		
Did the service incorporate the Eucharist/Communion? If so, how did that happen? Were you invited to participate?		
How long was the sermon, and what was the key theme/message? What scripture was used and how?		
Section 3: Reflecting after the	Your own home church	The church you visited

service		
Did you notice any theological distinctives evident in the nature of worship, content of sermon etc.? What were they?		
Did participating in this worship service challenge or change any perceptions you had of this denomination?		
Did you note any evidence of openness to partner with other churches or Christian organisations in worship, mission or community service?		
Do you think young adults could make this local church/denomination home? Why or why not?		

Section 4: Reflect on the two experiences

Reflect a little more deeply by comparing and contrasting the two experiences.

<p>What would you describe as the most obvious theological differences between the two denominations (as encountered in these two worship services)?</p> <p>Would you say those differences are minor, moderate or major in terms of those two denominations being able to explore ecumenical dialogue?</p>		
<p>What would you describe as the most obvious "style" differences between the two worship services? To what extent might these style differences be grounded in distinct theological perspectives?</p>		
<p>In what ways were the two experiences similar? What unites these two denominations (think practical and theology)?</p>		
<p>If a new Christian came to either church and was formed in their faith through the approach and practices of that church, what kind of Christian would they become?</p>	<p>Your own home Church</p>	<p>The Church you visited</p>

Theological Ecumenism Worksheet

Group: _____

In your group, note your level of agreement across these general areas of doctrine.

Use the scale where A = full agreement and E = complete disagreement.

Where no decision can be made, please note this with a “?”

Theological Ecumenism - Priority Focus Areas	
Topic	Agreement on doctrine
Apostles & Nicene Creeds	
Christology	
Doctrine of Trinity	
Gospel/Evangelism	
Holy Communion	
Baptism	
Scripture	
Creation	
Prayer	
Priesthood	
Missiology	
Ecclesiology	
Men/Women in Ministry	
Spiritual Gifts	
Baptism of the Spirit	

Theological Ecumenism Activity – Summary Table

For large group discussion:

Theological Ecumenism – Priority Focus Areas					
Topic	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Priority to Agree	Topic Discussed
Apostles & Nicene Creeds					
Christology					
Doctrine of Trinity					
Gospel/Evangelism					
Holy Communion					
Baptism					
Scripture					
Creation					
Prayer					
Priesthood					
Missiology					
Ecclesiology					
Men/Women in Ministry					
Spiritual Gifts					
Baptism of the Spirit					

Spiritual Ecumenism Exercise

The following are Biblical Reflections and Prayers from “They Showed Us Unusual Kindness: Resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and throughout the Year 2020” Copyright © 2019 WCC Publications. Accessed via <https://www.oikoumene.org/en>. Used with permission.

Some of the scriptures, prayers and reflections found here may be useful as a point of personal reflection for participants during the Summit.

BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE EIGHT DAYS

DAY 1

Reconciliation: Throwing the cargo overboard

Acts 27:18-19,21

“We were being pounded by the storm so violently that on the next day they began to throw the cargo overboard and on the third day with their own hands they threw the ship’s tackle overboard... Since they had been without food for a long time, Paul then stood up among them and said, ‘Men, you should have listened to me and not have set sail from Crete and thereby avoided this damage and loss.’”

Psalms 85

Luke 18:9-14

Reflection

As Christians from different Churches and Traditions, we have unfortunately, over the centuries, accumulated abundant baggage consisting of mutual distrust, bitterness and suspicion. We thank the Lord for the birth and the growth of the ecumenical movement over the past century. Our encounter with Christians from other traditions and our common prayer for Christian unity encourage us to seek mutual forgiveness, reconciliation and acceptance. We must not allow the baggage of our past to hinder us from drawing closer to one another. It is the Lord’s will that we let go, in order to let God!

Prayer

Forgiving God,
set us free from the painful memories of the past, that wound our shared
Christian life.
Lead us to reconciliation
so that, through the Holy Spirit we may overcome hatred with love,
anger with gentleness, and suspicion with trust.
We ask this in the name of your beloved Son, our brother Jesus. Amen.

DAY 2

Enlightenment: Seeking and showing forth Christ's light

Acts 27:20

“When neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest raged, all hope of our being saved was at last abandoned.”

Psalm 119:105-110

Mark 4:35-41

Reflection

Christ is our light and our guide. Without the light and guidance of Christ, we become disorientated. When Christians lose sight of Christ, they grow fearful and divided from one another. Moreover many people of good will outside the Church are unable to see the light of Christ because in our Christian division we reflect Christ's light less clearly or, at times, block it out completely. As we seek the light of Christ, we are drawn closer to one another, and so mirror this light more clearly, becoming truly a sign of Christ, the light of the world.

Prayer

God, your word is a light to our steps
and without you we are lost and disorientated.
Enlighten us so that, through your word, we may walk your path.
May our churches crave your guiding, consoling and transforming presence.
Give us the honesty we need to recognize
when we make it difficult for others to see your light, and the grace we need
to share your light with others. We ask this in the name of your Son,
who calls us, his followers, to be light to the world. Amen

DAY 3

Hope: Paul's message

Acts 27:22,34

“I urge you now to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship... none of you will lose a hair from your heads...”

Psalm 27

Matthew 11:28-30

Reflection

As Christians belonging to churches and traditions that are not fully reconciled to one another, we are often discouraged by the lack of progress towards visible unity. Indeed, some have given up all hope and see this unity as an unattainable ideal. Others do not even see unity as a necessary part of their Christian faith. As we pray for this gift of visible unity, let us do so with steadfast faith, enduring patience and expectant hope, trusting in God's loving providence. Unity is the Lord's prayer for the Church and he is accompanying us on this journey. We will not be lost.

Prayer

God of mercy,
lost and disheartened, we turn to you. Instil in us your gift of
hope.

May our churches hope and strive for the unity
for which your Son prayed on the eve of his passion.

We ask this through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever.

Amen.

DAY 4

Trust: Do not be afraid, believe

Acts 27:23-26

“For the last night there stood by me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship, and he said, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before the emperor; and indeed, God has granted safety to all those who are sailing with you.’ So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will be exactly as I have been told. But we will have to run aground on some island.”

Psalm 56

Luke 12:22-34

Reflection

In the midst of the tempest Paul’s encouragement and hope contradicted the fear and despair of his fellow travellers. Our common call to be disciples of Jesus Christ entails being a sign of contradiction. In a world riven with anxieties, we are called to stand as witnesses to hope by placing our trust in God’s loving providence. Christian experience shows us that God writes straight on crooked lines, and we know, against all odds, we will not drown or be lost. Because God’s steadfast love endures for ever.

Prayer

Almighty God,
our personal suffering leads us to cry out in pain
and we shrink in fear when we experience sickness, anxiety or the death of loved
ones.
Teach us to trust you.
May the churches we belong to be signs of your providential care.
Make us true disciples of your Son who taught us to listen to
your word and to serve one another.
In confidence we ask this in the name of your Son, and in the power of the
Holy Spirit. Amen.

DAY 5

Strength: Breaking bread for the journey

Acts 27:33-36

“Just before daybreak, Paul urged all of them to take some food, saying, ‘Today is the fourteenth day that you have been in suspense and remaining without food, having eaten nothing. Therefore I urge you to take some food, for it will help you survive; for none of you will lose a hair from your heads.’ After he had said this, he took bread; and giving thanks to God in the presence of all, he broke it and began to eat. Then all of them were encouraged and took food for themselves.”

Psalm 77

Mark 6:30-44

Reflection

Paul’s invitation to eat is an exhortation to those in the boat to strengthen themselves for what lies ahead. This taking of bread marks a change of attitude, as those in the boat move from despair to courage. In a similar way the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper provides us with food for the journey and re-orientates us to life in God. We are made strong. The breaking of the bread – at the core of Christian community life and worship – builds us up as we commit ourselves to Christian service. We long for the day when all Christians will be able to share at the same table of the Lord’s Supper and draw strength from one bread and one cup.

Prayer

Loving God,
your Son Jesus Christ broke bread
and shared the cup with his friends on the eve of his passion. May we grow together in
closer communion.
Following the example of Paul and the early Christians,
give us strength to build bridges of compassion, solidarity and harmony. In the power of the
Holy Spirit,
we ask this in the name of your Son,
who gives his life that we might live. Amen.

DAY 6

Hospitality: Show unusual kindness

Acts 28:1-2, 7

“After we had reached safety, we then learned that the island was called Malta. The natives showed us unusual kindness. Since it had begun to rain and was cold, they kindled a fire and welcomed all of us round it... Now in the neighbourhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who received us and entertained us hospitably for three days.”

Psalm 46

Luke 14:12-24

Reflection

After the traumas and conflicts of the storm at sea, the practical care offered by the islanders is experienced as an unusual kindness by those washed up on the shores. Such kindness demonstrates our common humanity. The Gospel teaches us that when we care for those in distress we are showing love to Christ himself (cf. Matthew 25:40). Furthermore, when we show loving kindness to the weak and dispossessed we are attuning our hearts to the heart of God in which the poor have a special place. Welcoming outsiders, whether they be people of other cultures or beliefs, immigrants or refugees, is both to love Christ himself, and to love as God loves. As Christians, we are called to step out in faith and reach out with God's embracing love, even to those we find difficult to love.

Prayer

God of the orphan, the widow and the stranger, instil in our hearts a deep sense of hospitality.

Open our eyes and hearts

when you ask us to feed you, to clothe you and to visit you.

May our churches participate

in the ending of hunger, thirst and isolation

and in overcoming barriers that prevent the welcome of all people. We ask this in the name

of your Son, Jesus,

who is present in the least of our sisters and brothers. Amen.

DAY 7

Conversion: Changing our hearts and minds

Acts 28:3-6

“Paul had gathered a bundle of brushwood and was putting it on the fire, when a viper, driven out by the heat, fastened itself on his hand. When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, ‘This man must be a murderer; though he has escaped from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live.’ He, however, shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. They were expecting him to swell up or drop dead, but after they had waited a long time and saw that nothing unusual had happened to him, they changed their minds and began to say that he was a god.”

Psalm 119:137-144

Matthew 18:1-6

Reflection

The locals realized that their judgment of Paul as a murderer was wrong, so they changed their minds. The extraordinary event with the viper enables the islanders to see things in a new way, a way which might prepare them to hear the message of Christ through Paul. In our search for Christian unity and reconciliation we are often challenged to rethink how we perceive other traditions and cultures. This demands an ongoing conversion to Christ in which the churches learn to overcome their perception of the other as a threat. As a result, our pejorative views of others will be cast away, and we will be drawn closer to unity.

Prayer

Almighty God,
we turn to you with repentant hearts. In our sincere quest for
your truth,
purify us from our unjust opinions of others and lead the churches to
grow in communion. Help us let go of our fears,
and so better understand each other and the stranger in our midst. We ask this in the name
of the Just One,
your beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

DAY 8

Generosity: Receiving and giving

Acts 28:8-10

“The father of Publius lay sick in bed with fever and dysentery. Paul visited him and cured him by praying and putting his hands on him. After this happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases also came and were cured. They bestowed many honours on us, and when we were about to sail, they put on board all the provisions we needed”.

Psalm 103:1-5

Matthew 10:7-8

Reflection

This story is full of giving and receiving: Paul received unusual kindness from the islanders; Paul gives healing to the father of Publius and others; having lost everything in the storm, the 276 receive abundant provisions as they set sail. As Christians we are called to unusual kindness. But in order to give we must first learn to receive – from Christ and from others. More often than we realize, we are recipients of acts of kindness from people who are different from us. These acts also point towards the generosity and healing of our Lord. We who have been healed by the Lord are responsible for passing on that which we have received.

Prayer

God, giver of life,
we thank you for the gift of your compassionate love which soothes and
strengthens us.
We pray that our churches
may be always open to receive your gifts from one another.
Grant us a spirit of generosity to all
as we journey together in the path of Christian unity.
We ask this in the name of your Son
who reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. Amen.