

## **Introduction to the Worship Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2009**

**The main Theme:** *“that they may become one in your hand” (Ezek 37: 17)*

- This worship service is based on Ezekiel 37 and calls us to interpret - *in the light of Christ* - the prophet's call for the unity of the people of God.
- The key biblical metaphor is Ezekiel's inspired prophetic gesture of joining together two pieces of wood, representing the reunification of the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel: “join them together into one stick, so that they may become one in your hand” (Ezekiel 37: 17). This image offers visual and liturgical, as well as teaching and reflection possibilities. For Christians, this can be seen above all as an anticipation of the cross of Jesus through whom God seeks to reconcile all things.
- The service seeks to invite us to share God's mission. Just as God relied on his prophet Ezekiel to help bring about this work of renewal in unity. so, in our own day, we are, as Christians together, called to announce to the world that it is God's wish to bring together the tribes and “hold them together in his hand”; to call the people to repentance in order to prepare the way for God's reconciliation and peace (which will only come about through sincere conversion); and to rekindle hope through renewal of faithfulness to God. Our prayers are for all peoples seeking national unity but, above all, we, as Christians, sent to all the nations, hope and pray for full communion *in Christ*.

### **Key features in the Order of service**

- It is suggested that the celebration begins with the *sound of a gong*, evocation of our communion in prayer with the Christians of Korea.
- In the spirit of Ezekiel calling his people to conversion, the *penitential rite* urges us - as faithful servants of God and Christian unity - to follow the paths of the personal and ecclesial renewal which lead towards full communion.
- *The service of the word* opens by calling us to strengthen our faith in the Father's desire for unity (Ezek 37: 15-19, 22-24a). The Epistle to the Romans (Rom 8: 18-25) assures us that together with creation itself we are held in the hands of God and that the Holy Spirit intercedes in our favour. The gospel (John 17: 8-11) affirms that the gift of our spiritual unity has been won for us through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Through *the intercessions* we share in Jesus' hope and prayer for our perfect unity, and in his impatience to see us working in the unity of love for the regeneration of the world, through justice and peace.
- At the conclusion of the service we proclaim with Romans 8: 38 that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, for God our Father has made all things new in him. We are sent to *witness to God's new creation*. It is an encouragement for all those Christians who, through their ecumenical commitment also contribute to this new state of unity in the risen Christ.

***Material needed: gong, Bible, about a dozen wooden sticks or poles and some means of tying them together for the symbolic action.***

## Order of Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2009

*L: Leader R: Reader A: Assembly*

**Opening** *(The gong is sounded three times to indicate the beginning of the service.)*

### **Gathering of God's People: Welcome and Introduction to the theme**

**L1:** Dear friends in Christ, as we gather here in this place we acknowledge the traditional owners of this land and pay respect to them for their care of it over thousands of years. We give thanks to God for the creation of this great southland of the Holy Spirit and for the work of grace throughout the ages.

We remember today the journey which we and our churches have made towards the unity for which Jesus prayed. We give thanks for the steps which our churches in Australia have taken to share in prayer together, to covenant together nationally and locally, and to share in caring for our world. As members of the one body, we recognise that we are called to be the one church and need to travel on.

**L2:** The grace and peace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all

**A:** *And also with you*

### **Opening song or hymn: with Procession of worship leaders**

*Worship leaders process together with those participants who are carrying the Bible and the sticks/poles which can be bound together as a symbol of unity inspired by the Ezekiel text. The pole bearers stand before the cross or in the liturgical space at the head of the church.*

*(moment of silence)*

**Leader:** Kadja Heemang-e dju-nim-kke *(Korean)*  
Come near to God, let us come near to God, who is merciful towards us  
and the source of our hope and longing.

*(This invitation could be spoken in Korean to underline the fact that it is the Christians of that country who are helping us to pray for Christian unity this year).*

### **Penitential rite**

**L1:** This year's worship has been proposed by Christians in Korea,  
one people divided into two countries.

**L2:** We will hear the prophet Ezekiel who had a vision  
of God uniting two separate pieces of wood.

**L1:** We gather as Christians from divided communities,  
praying for forgiveness for the scandal of our disunity and  
our inability to be ambassadors of reconciliation in the world.

**L2:** We gather as Australians, looking to the Lord to bring us  
together as one, and make us ambassadors of reconciliation.

**L1 & 2:** What paths of personal and ecclesial conversion  
must we take to arrive at full communion in Christ?

*(Silence)*

- during this moment of silence the pole bearers - seated at the front of the church or with the worship leaders – may disperse among the congregation as a sign of our divisions and our sin against unity in Christ)

**L1:** Let us kneel or be seated, to discern God’s reconciliation

**L1:** Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord,  
Lord, hear my voice.

**A:** *Lord, come to our help, Christ come to our help, Lord, come to our help*

**L2:** May your ears be attentive to my prayer.

**A:** *Lord, come to our help, Christ come to our help, Lord, come to our help*

**L1:** If you should remember our sins, O Lord, who would survive.

**A:** *Lord, come to our help, Christ come to our help, Lord, come to our help*

**L2:** But in you, Lord, there is forgiveness, that you may be revered.

**A:** *Lord, come to our help, Christ come to our help, Lord, come to our help*

**L1:** I await the Lord with all my soul, and I long for his word.

**A:** *Lord, come to our help, Christ come to our help, Lord, come to our help*

**L2:** Ezekiel speaks this word of the Lord: I will deliver them from all their iniquities and will cleanse them. Then they shall be my people and I shall be their God. They shall be one in my hand. God, you are our only hope.

### **Celebration of the Word of God**

Ezekiel 37:15-27 *that they may become one in your hand*

Romans 8:18-25 *the creation itself will be set free*

### **A Song/Hymn/Psalm may be sung**

John 17:6-11 *so that they may be one, as we are one*

**The Sermon** *(after which a period of silence may be kept).*

### **Address**

*(followed by silence)*

### **Prayers of Intercession**

**L:** With faith we pray to God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit

**A:** *“Lord, hear our prayer”* (said or sung)

**R1:** Let us pray for our local Christian communities, our churches & ecumenical groups; for those here present, and those who are absent from our assembly today.

**R2:** Gracious God, forgive us when we are indifferent to each other, and bring your healing to the wounds and divisions that keep us apart.

**R1:** Let us pray for a deeper appreciation of our common baptism into the one body of Christ.

**R2:** Loving God, sustain each of us and our communities as we continue on the path towards the unity you desire for all your disciples.

**A:** *Lord, hear our prayer*

**R1:** Let us pray for our spiritual leaders and church authorities:

**R2:** May the Spirit continue to enlighten them and grant them the grace to work in harmony, joy and love.

- R1:** Let us pray for all civil authorities.
- R2:** Compassionate God, grant that they may work towards justice and peace, and give them wisdom to attend to the needs of all, especially the most vulnerable.
- A:** *Lord, hear our prayer*
- R1 :** Let us pray for all the nations and communities who live with deep divisions, remembering especially the people of Korea, north and south
- R2:** Despite political divisions and separation, may their search for unity bear fruit,
- R1:** Let us pray for our own nation, as we look towards a future of peace and unity.
- R2:** God of new creation, heal our divisions, and make us a sign of hope for all who seek reconciliation.
- R1:** Let us pray in thanksgiving for those who, inspired by God, have held an important place in our lives of faith, and for all who have reflected Christ's forgiveness, compassion and love.
- R2:** God of all times and places, may their gifts and generosity inspire our own desire to give and to serve with our lives.
- A:** *Lord, hear our prayer*
- R1:** Let us pray for all those who bring the gospel to bear on the great ethical challenges of our times.
- R2:** God of new life, may we each learn to play our part in mitigating the global and ecological disasters which bring human suffering and threaten your creation.
- R1:** Let us pray for all Christian churches and ask for your help,
- R2:** Lord, one day may we be able to gather around the table and share the fellowship of holy communion.
- A:** *Lord, hear our prayer*

### **Our Father and Sharing of Christ's Peace**

- L:** Each in his or her own language, let us pray together in the words Jesus gave us:
- A:** *Our Father...*
- L:** As a sign of our commitment to seek reconciliation, let us now offer one another a sign of peace.  
(*during which the Korean song 'Come now, O God of Peace' (O-So-So) or other song of peace may be sung*)

### **Symbolic action**

*(The pole bearers may now bind together the wooden poles/sticks, two by two, as a sign of our reconciliation being the work of God, who holds us united in his hand. During the confession of faith the cross could be presented, symbolically linking it with the bound poles. In churches where there is a baptistry in a central location, the symbolic action could be carried out there, as a reminder of the baptism which already holds us "united in the hand of God".)*

### **Confession of faith in the Risen Christ, the reconciler of all things**

- L:** Let us join together in professing our common faith in Christ:
- A** *May we joyfully give thanks to the Father who has enabled us to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible,*

*whether thrones or dominions or rulers of powers – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. (Col 1 : 12-20)*

**Song or hymn** *(during or after which a collection may be taken)*

### **Sending out of God's People**

**R:** *(preferably a young person)*

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*(Romans 8: 38)*

**L1:** We leave this place of prayer to return to the particular circumstances of our own lives. Let us go forth strong in our faith and our hope, for God our Father has made all things new in Jesus Christ. He sends us to witness to his love and to play a role in the new creation.

**L2:** May God, who knows our joy, our anger and our pain, guide us always, and may we be courageous, stay faithful and live worthy of the Christian faith.

**L1:** Lord God, bring us together as one,  
reconciled with you and reconciled with each other.  
You made us in your likeness, you gave us your Son, Jesus Christ.  
He has given us forgiveness from sin.

**A:** *Lord God, bring us together as one,  
different in culture, but given new life in Jesus Christ,  
together as your body, your Church, your people.  
Lord God, bring us together as one: reconciled, healed, forgiven,  
sharing you with others as you have called us to do.*

*In Jesus Christ, let us be together as one. Amen* (concluding prayer written by Bishop Arthur Malcolm:)

### **Blessing**

**L:** We Christians gathered here today, brothers and sisters in faith, you/we who would wish to be a sign of reconciliation through the power of the cross.

We Australians, those who have carried this land's heritage for generation upon generation, and those who come from nations across the earth,  
hope and pray for the reconciling love of Christ to be known among us:

May the Lord bless you/us and keep you/us

May the Lord make his face shine upon you/us and be gracious to you/us

May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you/us and give you/us peace

**A:** *Amen.*

**Closing song/hymn** *(Possibly one celebrating God's reconciliation with his people through the cross. During this hymn, the pole bearers take up their poles again and give them to members of the congregation representing different Christian communities, as a sign of their ties of communion.)*

## **Additional worship resources from Korea**

*Woo-Ri Gi-Do* (Listen to our prayer, Korean song)

God, listen to our prayer.

You know what we need and you listen to us.

Grant us your peace.

### **Common Prayer for Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula, 2006**

We hope our reunification will be strong and beautiful.

We hope it will set aright our history of pain and suffering,

Bring unity to our nation, and offer hope to the whole world,

...

Lord, in You, once again we dream a great dream.

The dream you dreamed on the cross in that ancient time,

The great dream of every person and all of history abiding in You,

Is our dream also.

### **Common Easter Prayer of the Churches of South and North Korea April 2007**

O Lord, who overcame death and rose to life! ("I have overcome the world" Jn 16:33)

We praise our risen Lord who,

in the end,

overcame the cross,

left behind the empty tomb,

and rose, clothed in white.

Our risen Lord,

whose tears in Gethsemane made spring flowers bloom,

whose pain on Golgotha brought light to the darkness,

who transformed the anguish outside the tomb to joy,

is the eternal Hope of all humankind.

Now,

we who are weary of the long darkness of division,

we who, bearing the cross, have wandered in this land as in a wilderness,

we who have walked the thorn-infested road until the new dawn,

here, today,

across every valley through the length of our land,

churches of north and south gathering as one,

Christians of south and north uniting warm hearts,

praise God for Easter's new morning.

O God,

that we may become living witnesses of the resurrection,

let our hands, bloodied by hammering the nail of hatred

and thrusting the spear of condemnation,

become hands that bind the wounds, hands that reach out in reconciliation.

On the road of suffering,

help us to regain our voices of comfort, our steps of peace.

And, finally, help us to realize that we can transform the history of death.  
Then, as the cross and resurrection are one,  
as the Daedong River in the north and the Han River in the south meet in one sea,  
from Halla Mountain in the south to Baekdu Mountain in the north,  
from Kaesong in the west to the Keumgang Mountains in the east,  
may our incomplete liberation become perfect reunification.  
And, further, may our Lord's Easter greeting, "Peace be with you,"  
reach beyond our land to Asia and all the world  
and unite us all in peace, joyful shouts, laughter, the embrace of friendship.  
And may the uncertain days of the global village become, rather,  
the Third Day of hope.  
We pray in the name of the risen Jesus Christ who guides our land to become one country, a  
new creation.

*This Common Prayer was jointly written by the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) and  
the Korean Christian Federation (KCF).*

### **The Cross**

by Yun Dongju (A poet and martyr who strove for the independence of Korea in the Japanese colonial  
period. He was put to death in 1945.)

The sun-lights,  
Following me behind  
Until a minute ago,  
Are now stuck upon the cross  
At the top of the church.  
I wonder how they could climb  
So high a pinnacle.  
I was walking up and down restlessly,  
Whispering,  
No church bell ringing.  
And if a cross were ever allowed to me  
The same as to the agonizing man,  
To the happy Jesus Christ,  
I would dribble silently  
The blood blooming like a flower,  
Hanging down my neck,  
Under the sky falling to dusk.

Let us be One  
Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name - the name you gave me  
- so that they may be one as we are one.  
As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.  
For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified: I in them and you in me. May  
they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them  
even as you have loved me.

## Further suggestions:

*Come to us now (Uso-o-so-so)*

*Some Good News must be coming (Jo-un-ili It-su-ri)*

*With Passion in our Hearts (Ttugoun maum)*

Words: Ik Hwan Moon, Korea      Music: Don Hwan Cho, Korea

English trans.: S T Kimbrough, Jr., USA, © 2000 General Board of Global Ministries, GBG Music, 475 Riverside Dr., New York, NY 10115.

*Dream on, Dream on*

Words: Hae-Jong Kim, Korea;      Music: Sunkyung Lee, Korea

from *Come, Let Us Worship* (Louisville: Geneva, 2001, © 2001 The United Methodist Publishing House).

*God who, by your Word*

Words: Won Yong Kang, Korea (English trans.: Edward Poitras (Pak Tae In) para. Geoffrey Wainwright, UK/US)      Music: Unsu Kang, Korea

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These additional worship resources have been kindly sent us by the preparatory group in Korea and other ecumenical friends. For lack of space (and reasons of copyright) we are unable to reproduce all the material in full.