



DAILY SCRIPTURE & PRAYER RESOURCE for the WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 12 MAY – 19 MAY 2013

DAY 1—SUNDAY 12 MAY

“Walking in conversation”

Scripture Readings

Genesis 11: 1-9	The story of Babel and legacy of our diversity
Psalms 34:11-18	“Come...listen”. God’s invitation to conversation
Acts 2: 1-12	The outpouring of the Spirit, the gift of understanding
Luke 24: 13-25	Conversation with the Risen Jesus on the road

“Walking in conversation”

We reflect on the importance of the practices of dialogue and conversation as a means of overcoming barriers. Both in ecumenism, and in the struggles for liberation of people across the globe, the skills of speaking and listening are recognised as essential. In such authentic conversation we can come to recognise Christ more clearly.

Commentary

To walk humbly with God means to walk as people speaking with one another and with the Lord, always attentive to what we hear. And so we begin our celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity by reflecting on scripture passages which speak of the essential practice of conversation. Conversation has been central to the ecumenical movement, as it opens up spaces for learning from one another, sharing what we have in common, and for differences to be heard and attended to. In this way mutual understanding is developed. These gifts from the search for unity are part of our basic call to respond to what God requires of us: through true conversation justice is done, and kindness learnt. Experiences of practical liberation from all over the world make clear that the isolation of people who are made to live with poverty is forcefully overcome by practices of dialogue.

Today’s Genesis reading, and the story of Pentecost, both reflect something of this human action, and its place in God’s liberating plan for people. The story of the tower of Babel first describes how, where there is no language barrier, great things are possible. However, the story tells how this potential is grasped as a basis for self-promotion: “Let us make a name for ourselves!” is the motivation for the building of the great city. In the end this project leads to a confusion of speech; from now on we must learn our proper humanity through patient attentiveness to the other who is strange to us.

The experience of the disciples on the road to Emmaus is a conversation taking place in a context of travel together, but also of loss and disappointed hope. As churches living with levels of disunity, and as societies divided by prejudices and fear of the other we can recognise ourselves here. Yet it is precisely here that Jesus chooses to join the conversation – not presuming the superior role of teacher, but walking alongside his disciples. It is his desire to be a part of our conversations, and our response of wanting him to stay and speak more with us, that enables a living encounter with the Risen Lord.

All Christians know something of this meeting with Jesus, and the power of his word “burning within us”. This resurrection experience calls us into a deeper unity in Christ. Constant conversation with each other and with Jesus – even in our own disorientation – keeps us walking together towards unity.

It is with the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost that understanding across differences is made possible in a new way, through the power of Jesus’ resurrection. Now we are invited to share the gift of speech and listening orientated toward the Lord, and towards freedom. We are called to walk in the Spirit.

Questions for reflection/discussion

1. Do you speak a language other than English? Do you regularly interact with people of another language, religion or culture? Why or why not? What do you talk about?
2. Who do we converse with, and who is not included in our conversations? Why?
3. Where do branches of the church practice true conversation, across the various differences that separate us?
4. Is our conversation orientated towards some grand project of our own, or towards justice and positive change [new life] which brings hope of resurrection?

Prayer for the Day

Jesus Christ, we proclaim with joy our common identity in you, and we thank you for inviting us into a dialogue of love with you and others. Open our hearts to share more perfectly in your prayer to the Father that we may be one, so that as we journey together we may draw closer to each other. Give us the courage to bear witness to the truth together, and may our conversations embrace those who perpetuate disunity. Send your Spirit to empower us to challenge situations where dignity and compassion are lacking in our societies, nations, and the world.

God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen



National Council of
Churches in Australia
Faith and Unity Commission