

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

1 - 8 June, 2014

Has Christ been divided?

1 Cor (1:1-17)

GUIDELINES

To Those Organising 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. Here 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 a symbolic date for the unity of the Church. In 2014 the Week of Prayer in Australia will be observed from 1-8 June in the week between Ascension and Pentecost.

Mindful though 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 that 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 own worship for each day during the week may draw material for these services from the 'eight days'.
- Those wishing to do 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 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.

Additional Resources

Additional resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2014 are available on the website "Ecumenism in Canada" at the following address:

<http://ecumenism.net/music>

The files listed there have been submitted in response to an open call to Canadian composers to submit music on the theme of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2014 (Has Christ Been Divided? 1 Cor 1: 1-17) or on the general theme of prayer for Christian unity.

Please download any or all of these pieces and use them in your prayer for Christian unity.

Introduction to the Ecumenical Worship 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 as linked textually to 1 Corinthians 1:1-17. We recognise 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 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 turn 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. 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:

1. 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 the community that the others can agree to "receive".
2. Ideally, you will also obtain a symbolic representation of each gift to be brought forward during the "Ecumenical Exchange of Spiritual Gifts".
3. 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 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 that they may 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 the resources for this year.

Suitable **hymns and sacred songs** from the repertoire of Canadian hymn writers and composers, commissioned especially for this 2014 Week of Prayer are offered and 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.