**Week of Prayer for Christian Unity**

**28 May - 4 June, 2017**

***“Reconciliation – The Love of Christ Compels Us”***

*(cf 2 Corinthians 5:14-20)*

**Order of Service**

**Commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation**

The Churches in Germany decided to commemorate this anniversary as a *Christusfest (*an ecumenical celebration of Christ). The Reformation was the occasion of a renewed focus on salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. We rejoice in God’s salvation centered on the cross of Christ, who overcomes division and draws us together. This worship openly confesses and asks forgiveness for the sins of division which followed the Reformation. The service will celebrate Christ and his act of reconciliation, which moves the hearts of divided Christians to become ambassadors for Christ as ministers of reconciliation.

**The Contents of the Worship Service**

The theme ‘Reconciliation – the Love of Christ compels us’, celebrates the irrevocable reconciliation that we have received through faith in Jesus Christ. Christ’s love becomes the driving force that moves us beyond our division toward acts of reconciliation.

Candles and other instructions for the Service

The following could be included in the Order of Service booklet.

***1989 saw the fall of the Berlin Wall, that began with the Peace Prayer Movement in the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) in which people placed candles in windows and doorways and prayed for freedom. Horst Sindermann, a member of the GDR Leadership until 1989, noted “We had planned everything. We were prepared for everything, just not for candles and prayers”. It is fitting that we will use candles in this service to remind us that the power of prayer, together with hope in the light of Christ can bring about peace and unity, not just in our churches, but throughout the world.***

Each person will need to be given a candle/tea light as they gather for the service.

Nine people will need to be designated to bring candles to the Easter candle, during the ceremony, and later light and distribute the light amongst the assembly.

Readers will also need to be prepared.

**Order of Service**

**Reconciliation - The Love of Christ Compels Us**

**(cf 2 Corinthians 5:14-20)**

*In a central space in the church (perhaps near the altar table) a simple cross and the Easter/large candle are visible. An Aboriginal artifact is near the cross and candle. (If an Aboriginal person is present they could carry this in the entrance procession and acknowledge/welcome to country after the gathering hymn).*

**L** Leader

**C** Congregation

**R** Reader

1. **Gathered in Jesus' Name**

**Gathering Hymn** *(will be chosen locally)*

**Procession** with Bible/Lectionary, Aboriginal person carrying artefact.

**Opening**

**L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C Amen.**

**L** Grace and peace from God, who has reconciled us to himself through Christ, be wit h you all. (2 Cor. 5:18)

**C And also with you.**

**L** Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, this year many

Christians throughout the world will be commemorating the anniversary of the Reformation. Here in Australia we are also celebrating NAIDOC week, so as we gather we remember with gratitude the (name the traditional group) people who were stewards of this land for many thousands of years. Saint Paul reminds us that God has reconciled us through Jesus Christ and that the love of Christ compels us to be ministers of reconciliation. Let us worship and praise God together in the unity of the Holy Spirit!

Psalm 98 (sung) or a hymn of praise

1. **Divided by our Sins (Confession)**

**Invitation to confession**

L At various times, visionary leaders have felt the need to call upon the church to follow Christ more authentically. Sometimes the many moments of renewal have led to unintended divisions. This fact contradicts what Jesus asks the Father in John 17:23: ‘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.’ Let us confess our sins and pray for forgiveness and healing for the wounds which have resulted from these divisions.

Silence

L Let us pray:

God and Father in heaven, we come to you in Jesus' name.

We experience renewal through your Holy Spirit, and yet so often we choose to walk in darkness rather than follow Christ, who is our light showing us the way.

We humbly stand before you praying for forgiveness and healing.

C Amen.

*As each statement is made, a designated member of the assembly comes forward and places an unlit candle near the Easter candle.*

R1 We remember the times when we haven’t shown love to our neighbors, especially those who seem ‘different’. *(pause)* For this we are sorry.

C Gracious God forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

R2 We remember the times we have falsely accused a friend, family member or stranger. *(pause)* For this we are sorry.

C Gracious God forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

R1 We remember the times we have discriminated those of another race or creed, especially our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sisters and brothers. *(pause)* For this we are sorry.

C Gracious God forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Sung response: "Lord, forgive us" or Lord have mercy etc.

***(Local committees choose their own sung response)***

R2 We acknowledge the division that continues to remain in our different church traditions. *(pause)* For this we are sorry.

C Gracious God forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

R1We recognize that we are often intolerant towards each other, especially those seeking asylum in our country. *(pause)* For this we are sorry.

C Gracious God forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

R2We acknowledge that our young people in prisons, especially our Aboriginal sisters and brothers, are often harshly and unjustly treated. *(pause)* For this we are sorry.

C Gracious God forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Sung response: "Lord, forgive us".

R1 We remember the many wars that continue to be waged in the name of religion. *(pause)* For the many innocent people who have died, we are sorry.

C Gracious God forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

R2 We acknowledge the grave abuse of power and trust towards children and young people by some leaders of our church and society. *(pause)*

For this we are sorry.

C Gracious God forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

R1 We are aware that many people in our society feel isolated, especially the homeless, those with some form of addiction, or those who are ill, and yet we do not always reach out to them. *(pause)* For this we are sorry.

C Gracious God forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Sung response: "Lord, forgive us".

L Let us pray:

Gracious God, so often we have been children of the darkness rather than daughters and sons of the light.

Forgive our sins. Heal us.

Make us one in you.

C. Amen.

Hymn/Song/Meditative music

1. **Be reconciled to God - Hear God's Word**

**First Reading**: Ezekiel 36:25-27

**Responsorial Psalm**: 18:25-32 (sung)

**Response: I love you, O Lord, my strength.**

With the loyal you show yourself loyal;

with the blameless you show yourself blameless;

with the pure you show yourself pure;

and with the crooked you show yourself perverse.

For you deliver a humble people, but the haughty

you bring down.

**Response: I love you, O Lord, my strength.**

It is you who light my lamp;

the LORD, my God, lights up my darkness.

By you I can crush a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall.

This God - his way is perfect;

the promise of the LORD proves true;

he is a shield for all who take refuge in him.

For who is God except the LORD? And who is a rock besides our God?

the God who girded me with strength, and made my way safe.

**Response: I love you, O Lord, my strength.**

Alleluia (sung)

**Second Reading**: 2 Corinthians 5:14-20

**Alleluia (sung)**

**Gospel Reading** Luke 15:11-14

**Sermon**

**Hymn**

1. **Respond in Faith - Live Reconciled**

L Let us pray:

Gracious God and Father in Heaven,

we have heard your word that you have reconciled us to yourself through your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord.

By the power of the Holy Spirit transform our hearts of stone.

Help us to become ministers of reconciliation and heal our churches' divisions so that we may better serve as instruments of your peace in the world.

C Amen.

Hymn/Song (Collection/Offering)

**The Peace**

L The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Let us give one another a sign of peace.

*At the end of the peace those who brought their candles during the confession come and* *light their candles from the Easter candle and distribute the light throughout the congregation. All hold lighted candles.*

1. **Respond in Faith - Proclaim Reconciliation**

**Intercessory Prayers**

R l Almighty God, you sent your Son Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to yourself.

We praise you for those whom you sent in the power of the Spirit to preach the Gospel to all nations.

May your Spirit awaken in every community a hunger and thirst for unity in you.

Let us pray to the Lord:

Spoken/Sung response: Lord, hear our prayer.

R2 Creator God, you made all of us in your own image

and redeemed us through Jesus Christ, your Son.

We thank you for the first peoples of Australia, who, in answer to the Spirit, lived in harmony with each other and all of creation and ensured the legacy of country for all of us to share.

Help us to grow in respect for each other,

and for those who seek to make our land their home.

Let us pray to the Lord:

Spoken/Sung response: Lord, hear our prayer.

R3 Gracious God, we pray for our churches.

Fill them with all truth and peace.

When Christians go astray, redirect them;

when they fail to proclaim your Gospel, reform them;

when they witness to what is right, strengthen them;

when they are in need, provide for them;

and when they are divided, reunite them.

Let us pray to the Lord:

Spoken/Sung response: Lord, hear our prayer.

R4 Giver of Life, we pray for ourselves.

Awaken in each of us compassion and love.

Give us strength and courage to work for justice in our neighborhoods, to create peace within our families, to comfort the sick and dying, and to share all we have with those in need.

Let us pray to the Lord:

Spoken /Sung response: Lord, hear our prayer.

**The Lord's Prayer**

L As daughters and sons of the light through our common baptism we dare to say:

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come,

Your will be done,

On earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread,

Forgive us our sins

As we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

And deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,

Now and forever. Amen.

1. **Ambassadors for Christ - Ministers of Reconciliation**

**Blessing and Sending**

**L** We call out to you, most merciful God:

Let all who seek reconciliation experience your help

so they may proclaim your mighty deeds of Love!

We ask this in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C Amen.**

**L** May the blessing of Almighty God,

the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit

come upon you and remain with you forever.

**C Amen.**

**L** Carry the Light of Christ into the dark places of our world.

Be ministers of reconciliation!

Be ambassadors for Christ!

Go in God's Peace.

**C Thanks be to God.**

**Hymn/Song**

"Sonne der Gerechti1Jkeit'; by Christian David ('Rise, 0 Sun of Righteousness", translated by Frank W. Stoldt), *or other song selected by the local planning committee*.

