

*Resources for*

**THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY**  
*and throughout the year*

We will all be changed by the  
Victory of our Lord Jesus  
Christ  
(*cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58*)

*Jointly prepared and published by*  
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## **IN MEMORIAM**

### **Monsignor Eleuterio Francesco Fortino**

During the meeting of the International Committee in Warsaw, Poland in September 2010, news was received of the death of Monsignor Eleuterio Francesco Fortino, Under-Secretary of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and long serving member of the International Committee for the preparation of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. His passion and dedication for the cause of Christian unity and especially for the promotion of prayer for the unity of Christians was one of many gifts he possessed and shared willingly with the other members of the Committee. This year's text is dedicated to his memory. May praying with these texts bring closer the fulfillment of Christ's prayer, "That they all may be one... so that the world may believe".



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# **TO THOSE ORGANIZING 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. 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 also a symbolic date for the unity of the church.

Mindful 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 which 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 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.

## **BIBLICAL TEXT**

1 Corinthians 15:51-58

Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When this perishable body puts on imperishability, and this mortal body puts on immortality, then the saying that is written will be fulfilled: 'Death has been swallowed up in victory.' 'Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us **the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

New Revised Standard Version

## INTRODUCTION TO THE THEME FOR THE YEAR 2012

“We will all be changed by the Victory of our Lord Jesus Christ”  
(cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58)

The material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 2012 was prepared by a working group composed of representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church and Old Catholic and Protestant Churches active in Poland.

Following extensive discussions in which the representatives of various ecumenical circles in Poland took part, it was decided to focus on a theme that is concerned with the transformative power of faith in Christ, particularly in relation to our praying for the visible unity of the Church, the Body of Christ. This was based on St. Paul’s words to the Corinthian Church which speaks of the temporary nature of our present lives (with all its apparent “victory” and “defeat”) in comparison to what we receive through the victory of Christ through the Paschal mystery.

Why such a theme?

The history of Poland has been marked by a series of defeats and victories. We can mention the many times that Poland was invaded, the partitions, oppression by foreign powers and hostile systems. The constant striving to overcome all enslavement and the desire for freedom are a feature of Polish history which have led to significant changes in the life of the nation. And yet where there is victory there are also losers who do not share the joy and triumph of the winners.

This particular history of the Polish nation has led the ecumenical group who have written this year’s material to reflect more deeply on what it means to “win” and to “lose”, especially given the way in which the language of “victory” is so often understood in triumphalist terms. Yet Christ shows us a very different way!

In 2012 the European Football Championship will be held in Poland and Ukraine. This would never have been possible in years gone by. For many this is a sign of another “national victory” as hundreds of millions of fans eagerly await news of winning teams playing in this part of Europe. Thinking of this example might lead us to consider the plight of those who do not win - not only in sport but in their lives and communities: who will spare a thought for the losers, those who constantly suffer defeats because they are denied victory due to various conditions and circumstances? Rivalry is a permanent feature not only in sport but also in political, business, cultural and, even, church life.

When Jesus’ disciples disputed over “*who was the greatest*” (Mk 9,34) it was clear that this impulse was strong. But Jesus’ reaction was very simple: “*Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all*” (Mk 9,35). These words speak of victory through mutual service, helping, boosting the self-esteem of those who are “last”, forgotten, excluded. For all Christians, the best expression of such humble service is Jesus Christ, His victory through death and His resurrection. It is in His life, action, teaching, suffering, death and resurrection that we desire to seek inspiration for a modern victorious life of faith which expresses itself in social commitment in a spirit of humility, service and faithfulness to the Gospel. And as he awaited the suffering and death that was to come, he prayed that his disciples might be one so that world might believe. This “victory” is only possible through spiritual transformation,

conversion. That is why we consider that the theme for our meditations should be those words of the Apostle to the Nations. The point is to achieve a victory which integrates all Christians around the service of God and one's neighbour.

As we pray for and strive towards the full visible unity of the church we - and the traditions to which we belong - will be changed, transformed and conformed to the likeness of Christ. The unity for which we pray may require the renewal of forms of Church life with which we are familiar. This is an exciting vision but it may fill us with some fear! The unity for which we pray is not merely a "comfortable" notion of friendliness and co-operation. It requires a willingness to dispense with competition between us. We need to open ourselves to each other, to offer gifts to and receive gifts from one another, so that we might truly enter into the new life in Christ, which is the only true victory.

There is room for everyone in God's plan of salvation. Through His death and resurrection, Christ embraces all irrespective of winning or losing, "*that whoever believes in him may have eternal life*" (Jn 3,15). We too can participate in His victory! It is sufficient to believe in Him, and we will find it easier to overcome evil with good.

### **Eight Days reflecting on our change in Christ**

Over the coming week we are invited to enter more deeply into our faith that we will all be changed through the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The biblical readings, commentaries, prayers and questions for reflection, all explore different aspects of what this means for the lives of Christians and their unity with one another, in and for today's world. We begin by contemplating the Christ who serves, and our journey takes us to the final celebration of Christ's reign, by way of His cross and resurrection:

**Day One:** Changed by the Servant Christ  
*The Son of Man came to serve* (cf. Mk 10:45)

On this day we encounter Jesus, on the road to victory through service. We see him as the "one who came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life, a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). Consequently, the Church of Jesus Christ is a serving community. The use of our diverse gifts in common service to humanity makes visible our unity in Christ.

**Day Two:** Changed through patient waiting for the Lord  
*Let it be so now, for it is proper to fulfil all righteousness* (Mt 3:15)

On this day we concentrate on patient waiting for the Lord. To achieve any change, perseverance and patience are needed. Prayer to God for any kind of transformation is also an act of faith and trust in his promises. Such waiting for the Lord is essential for all who pray for the visible unity of the church this week. All ecumenical activities require time, mutual attention and joint action. We are all called to co-operate with the work of the Spirit in uniting Christians.

**Day Three:** Changed by the Suffering Servant  
*Christ suffered for us* (cf. 1 Pt 2:21)

This day calls us to reflect on the suffering of Christ. Following Christ the Suffering Servant, Christians are called to solidarity with all who suffer. The closer we come to the cross of Christ the closer we come to one another.

**Day Four:** Changed by the Lord's Victory over Evil  
*Overcome evil with good (Rom 12:21)*

This day takes us deeper into the struggles against evil. Victory in Christ is an overcoming of all that damages God's creation, and keeps us apart from one another. In Jesus we are called to share in this new life, struggling with him against what is wrong in our world, with renewed confidence and with a delight in what is good. In our divisions we cannot be strong enough to overcome evil in our times.

**Day Five:** Changed by the peace of the Risen Lord  
*Jesus stood among them and said: Peace be with you! (Jn 20:19)*

Today we celebrate the peace of the Risen Lord. The Risen One is the great Victor over death and the world of darkness. He unites His disciples, who were paralysed with fear. He opens up before us new prospects of life and of acting for His coming kingdom. The Risen Lord unites and strengthens all believers. Peace and unity are the hallmarks of our transformation in the resurrection.

**Day Six:** Changed by God's Steadfast Love  
*This is the victory, our faith (cf. 1 Jn 5:4)*

On this day we concentrate our attention on God's steadfast love. The Paschal Mystery reveals this steadfast love, and calls us to a new way of faith. This faith overcomes fear and opens our hearts to the power of the Spirit. Such faith calls us to friendship with Christ, and so to one another.

**Day Seven:** Changed by the Good Shepherd  
*Feed my sheep (Jn 21:19)*

On this day the Bible texts show us the Lord strengthening His flock. Following the Good Shepherd, we are called to strengthen each other in the Lord, and to support and fortify the weak and the lost. There is one Shepherd, and we are his people.

**Day Eight:** United in the Reign of Christ  
*To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne (Rv 3:21)*

On this last day of our week of prayer for Christian Unity we celebrate the Reign of Christ. Christ's victory enables us to look into the future with hope. This victory overcomes all that keeps us from sharing fullness of life with him and with each other. Christians know that unity among us is above all a gift of God. It is a share in Christ's glorious victory over all that divides.

## **THE PREPARATION OF THE MATERIAL FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY 2012**

The first draft of this year's week of prayer material was prepared in February-June 2010 by a group of representatives brought together at the invitation of The Commission for Dialogue of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate and the Polish Ecumenical Council. We would like to thank all of those who contributed, particularly:

Edward Puślecki (General Superintendent of the United Methodist Church in Poland, Warsaw)

Bishop Krzysztof Nitkiewicz (Roman Catholic Church, Bishop of Sandomierz)

Mrs. Monika Waluś (Roman Catholic Church, Józefów)

Mrs. Kalina Wojciechowska (Evangelical Lutheran Church, Warsaw)

Rev. Andrzej Gontarek (Polish Catholic Church, Lublin)

Rev. Ireneusz Lukas (Evangelical Lutheran Church, Warsaw)

Rev. Henryk Paprocki (Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, Warsaw)

Rev. Sławomir Pawłowski SAC (Roman Catholic Church, Lublin)

The texts proposed here were finalized during the meeting of the International Committee nominated by the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity. The group met in September 2010 at the secretariat of the Catholic Bishops' Conference (Sekretariat Konferencji Episkopatu Polski) in Warsaw and records its thanks to the Conference and its President for generously hosting the meeting. The Committee is also grateful to Archbishop Jeremiasz, President of the Polish Ecumenical Council, and to Bishop Tadeusz Pikus, President of the Council of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate for Ecumenism, who formed the local working group in Poland ; to the coordinators of the working group, Rev. Ireneusz Lukas (Evangelical Lutheran Church) and Rev. Sławomir Pawłowski (Roman Catholic church) and to all those who assisted the work of the International Committee.

# **ECUMENICAL WORSHIP SERVICE**

“We will all be changed by the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ”  
*(cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58)*

## **Introduction to the Service**

The Ecumenical Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2012 comes to us from Poland where an ecumenical group has written a liturgy that draws on the experience of Polish Christians who have lived through times of joy and adversity. The history of Poland has been marked by a series of defeats, victories, invasions, partitions and oppression by foreign powers and hostile systems. The constant striving to overcome all enslavement and the desire for freedom are a feature of Polish history.

The service takes as its theme 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 which speaks of the transformative power of faith in Christ, particularly in relation to our praying for the visible unity of the Church, the Body of Christ. As we pray for and strive towards the full visible unity of the church we - and the traditions to which we belong - will be changed, transformed and conformed to the likeness of Christ. This is an exciting vision but it may fill us with some fear! The unity for which we pray may require the renewal of forms of Church life with which we are familiar. Such unity is not merely a “comfortable” notion of friendliness and co-operation. It requires a willingness to dispense with competition between us. We need to open ourselves to each other, to offer gifts to and receive gifts from one another, so that we might truly enter into the new life in Christ, which is the only true victory.

## **Order of Service**

### **A: Opening**

According to local custom, there may be a processional hymn which is followed by an opening prayer and act of penitence.

### **B: The Word of God**

There are three readings from scripture. The reading from 1 Corinthians 15 is essential to the theme. This is followed by a sermon/homily or other exposition of the readings. A confession of faith (such as a Creed) may follow.

### **C: Prayers for Unity and Transformation**

The focus for the prayers of intercession are unity and transformation of different situations. These prayers are followed by the “sign of peace”.

#### *Sign of peace and the sharing of the opłatek*

Poland has a particular custom of sharing a special wafer, the “opłatek” (plural: “opłatki”), in people’s homes before the Christmas Eve meal, and also over Christmas in meetings in churches, and even at work. This custom is so precious to Poles, living at home and abroad, that it is practiced not only by people of different confessions, but also by non-believers. Each person is given a wafer. People then share this wafer by breaking off a piece of another person’s wafer and eating it. In doing so they convey their best wishes to each other. This sharing of the wafer expresses unity, love, and forgiveness between people to whom the

Saviour came. Although it is not the Eucharist, nevertheless resembles it and symbolizes the presence of Him who was born in a House of Bread (Bethlehem) and who himself became the bread of life - Jesus Christ.

If no opłatek or wafer is available bread may be used.

This exchange of the “sign of peace” may be done according to local custom if preferred.

#### **D: Conclusion**

This contains a Prayer of Commitment which is based on the themes for each of the eight days. The service concludes with a blessing which can be done according to local custom.

## **Order of the Service**

- L:** leader  
**R:** reader  
**C:** congregation

### **A. Opening**

#### **Hymn on entry or prelude**

*During this time, the clergy and other assisting persons can enter in a procession.*

#### **Greeting**

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

**C:** *And with your spirit.*

#### **Introduction**

*After the greeting or presentation of those present, a short introduction may be given leading into the theme. The leader may say:*

**L:** Listen, I will tell you a mystery! We will not all die, but we will all be changed.

**C:** *Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**L:** God in Christ is the Victor.

Victory requires effort and struggle. As we pray for and strive towards the full visible unity of the church we - and the traditions to which we belong - will be changed, transformed and conformed to the likeness of Christ. Christians want to make this effort together, without triumphalism, in humility, serving God and their neighbour according to the example of Jesus Christ. In striving for unity, this is the attitude we desire to ask of God together.

#### **Opening prayer**

**L:** Almighty God,  
Through Jesus you say to us  
that whoever wishes to be first must become the least and the servant of all.  
We enter into your presence,  
knowing that your victory is won through the powerlessness of the cross.  
We come to pray that your church may be one.  
Teach us to accept humbly that this unity is a gift of your Spirit;

Through this gift, change and transform us  
and make us more like your Son Jesus Christ.

C: *Amen.*

### **Prayer of repentance**

L: Almighty God, in spite of the Unity we receive in Christ, we persist in our disunity.  
Have mercy on us!

C: *Have mercy on us! (or sing "Kyrie Eleison")*

L: We harden our hearts when we hear the Gospel. Have mercy on us!

C: *Have mercy on us!*

L: We fail to serve You in our brothers and sisters. Have mercy on us!

C: *Have mercy on us!*

L: The disobedience of Adam and Eve brought suffering and death to us, and creation was wounded and torn apart. Have mercy on us!

C: *Have mercy on us!*

*(A moment of silence is kept)*

L: May God Almighty have mercy on us, forgive our sins, and lead us to eternal life.

C: *Amen.*

## **B. The Word of God**

**Bible readings** Habakkuk 3.17-19; 1 Corinthians 15.51-58; John 12.23-26

Hymn/Song

### **Homily**

*Moment of silence or instrumental music.*

### **Confession of Faith**

*Creed (e.g. the Apostles' or Nicene-Constantinople) is recited.*

### **Hymn/Song**

*during which the "oplatki" are brought to the front and placed on a central table.*

## **C. Prayers for Unity and Transformation**

L: United in Christ who gives us the victory, let us pray to God:

For the Church, the Body of Christ, that we might truly live the unity we receive through the Holy Spirit. God our strength:

C: *Change us by your grace.*

L: For the leaders of our churches that they may be faithful to the unity to which all Christians are called. God our strength:

C: *Change us by your grace.*

L: For the nations of the world, that they may live in peace with one another and promote justice for all. God our strength:

C: *Change us by your grace.*

L: For all people, that we may be good stewards of the earth. God our strength:

C: *Change us by your grace.*

L: For the people of our society, that we may be transformed to live as caring neighbours to each other. God our strength:

C: *Change us by your grace.*

L: For the sick and suffering, that they may be transformed by your healing presence. God our strength:

C: *Change us by your grace.*

L: For all families and households, that their struggles and joys may find their fulfilment in your love. God our strength:

C: *Change us by your grace.*

L: For the dying, that they may be comforted by your presence. God our strength:

C: *Change us by your grace.*

L: Lord, stand in our midst and grant us unity and peace.

C: *Amen.*

### **The Lord's Prayer**

L: When the disciples asked Jesus, "how shall we pray", he responded - when you pray use these words:

C: *Our Father...* (could be sung)

### **Sign of peace and the sharing of the oplatek**

*Poland has a particular custom of sharing special wafer, the "oplatek", in people's homes and churches at Christmas. Each person is given a wafer. People then share this wafer by breaking off a piece of another person's wafer and eating it. In doing so they convey their best wishes to each other. This sharing of the wafer expresses unity, love, and forgiveness. We invite you to do the same as a sign of peace and unity.*

L: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: *And with your spirit.*

L: Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

## **D. Conclusion**

**Hymn** (a collection may be taken during this hymn)

### **Prayer of commitment**

L: We remember what the Paul the Apostle writes in the First Letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 15, 57-58):

Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain.

Praise to the Lord, who leads us into unity! Father, we dedicate this week to pray for the deepening of our unity in Christ. He has overcome death, and called us into new life in the Spirit. And so we pray:

L: Changed by the Servant Christ -

C: *Send us and together we will go!*

L: Changed through patient waiting for the Lord -

C: *Send us and together we will go!*

L: Changed by the Suffering Servant -

C: *Send us and together we will go!*

L: Changed by the Lord's victory over evil -

C: *Send us and together we will go!*

L: Changed by the peace of the Risen Lord -

C: *Send us and together we will go!*

L: Changed by God's steadfast love -

C: *Send us and together we will go!*

L: Changed by the Good Shepherd -

C: *Send us and together we will go!*

L: United in the reign of Christ -

C: *Send us and together we will go!*

### **Blessing and sending forth**

*The blessing may be bestowed by several clergy in the form below, or in another form.*

L: The Lord be with you.

C: *And with your spirit.*

L: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you.

The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.

C: *Amen.*

Or

L: May the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be upon you.

C: *Amen.*

L: Go forth in the peace of Christ!

C: *Thanks be to God!*

### **Closing hymn or postlude**

# **BIBLICAL REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS FOR THE ‘EIGHT DAYS’**

## **DAY 1      Theme: Changed by the Servant Christ**

**Text:**      The Son of Man came to serve (cf. Mk 10:45)

### **Readings**

Zech 9:9-10      A king righteous and victorious – and humble  
Ps 131              My heart is not proud  
Rom 12:3-8        We have different gifts with which to serve  
Mk 10:42-45        The Son of Man came to serve

### **Commentary**

The coming of the Messiah and His victory were accomplished through service. Jesus wants a spirit of service to fill the hearts of His followers as well. He teaches us that true greatness consists in serving God and one's neighbour. Christ gives us the courage to discover that He is the one for whom *to serve is to reign* – as an early Christian saying has it.

Zechariah's prophecy concerning a victorious and humble King was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. He, the King of Peace, comes to his own, to Jerusalem – the City of Peace. He does not conquer it by deceit or violence, but by gentleness and humility.

Psalm 131 briefly but eloquently describes the state of spiritual peace which is the fruit of humility. The picture of a mother and child is a sign of God's tender love and of trust in God, to which the entire community of believers is called.

Paul the apostle challenges us to make a sober and humble assessment of ourselves and to discover our own abilities. While we have a diversity of gifts we are one body in Christ. In our divisions each of our traditions has been endowed by the Lord with gifts that we are called to place at the service of others.

*For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many* (Mk 10.45). By His service, Christ redeemed our refusal to serve God. He became an example for repairing all relations between people: *Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant* – those are the new standards of greatness and priority.

In the Letter to the Romans, Paul reminds us that the diverse gifts given to us are for service: prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership and compassion. In our diversity we are always one body in Christ, and members of one another. The use of our diverse gifts in common service to humanity makes visible our unity in Christ. The joint action of Christians for the benefit of humanity, to combat poverty and ignorance, defend the oppressed, to be concerned about peace and to preserve life, develop science, culture and art are an expression of the practical ecumenism which the Church and the world badly need. The imitation of Christ the Servant provides eloquent testimony to the Gospel, moving not only minds, but also hearts. Such common service is a sign of the coming Kingdom of God – the kingdom of the Servant Christ.

## Prayer

Almighty and eternal God, by travelling the royal road of service your Son leads us from the arrogance of our disobedience to humility of heart. Unite us to one another by your Holy Spirit, so that through service to our sisters and brothers, Your true countenance may be revealed; You, who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

## Questions for reflection

1. What opportunities for service are most threatened by pride and arrogance?
2. What should be done to ensure that all Christian ministries are better experienced as service?
3. In our community, what can Christians of different traditions do better together than in isolation to reveal the Servant Christ?

## DAY 2      **Theme: Changed through patient waiting for the Lord**

**Text:** Let it be so now, for it is proper to fulfil all righteousness  
(Mt 3:15)

## Readings

1 Sam 1:1-20	Hannah's trust and patient waiting
Ps 40	Patient waiting for the Lord
Heb 11:32-34	Through faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice
Mt 3:13-17	Let it be so now, for it is proper to fulfil all righteousness

## Commentary

Victory is often associated with immediate triumph. Everybody knows the taste of success when, after a difficult struggle, congratulations, recognition, and even tributes are paid. At such a joyful moment, hardly anyone realises that from a Christian perspective victory is a long-term process of transformation. Such an understanding of transformative victory teaches us that it occurs in God's time, not ours, calling for our patient trust and deep hope in God.

Hannah witnessed to such patient trust and hope. After many years of waiting to be pregnant, she prayed to God for a child, at the risk of having her weeping prayer dismissed as drunkenness by the priest at the doorpost of the Temple. When Eli assured her that God would grant her prayer, she simply trusted, waited, and was sad no longer. Hannah conceived and bore a son, whom she named Samuel. The great victory here is not that of nations or armies, but a glimpse into the realm of a private and personal struggle. In the end, Hannah's trust and hope results not only in her own transformation, but that of her people, for whom the God of Israel intervened through her son Samuel.

The psalmist echoes Hannah's patient waiting for the Lord in the midst of another kind of struggle. The psalmist too sought deliverance from a situation which remains unknown to us, but which is hinted at in the language of the "desolate pit of the miry bog." He gives thanks that God has transformed his shame and confusion, and continues to trust in God's steadfast love.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews recalls the patience of people like Abraham (6.15) and others who were able to be victorious through their faith and trust in God. The realisation that God intervenes and enters into the narrative of human history eliminates the temptation to be triumphant in human terms.

In the gospel, the voice from heaven at the baptism of Jesus announcing *This is my Son, the Beloved*, seems to be a guarantor of the immediate success of his messianic mission. In resisting the evil one, however, Jesus, does not succumb to the temptation to usher in the Kingdom of God without delay, but patiently reveals what life in the kingdom means through his own life and ministry which leads to his death on the Cross. While the Kingdom of God breaks through in a decisive way in the resurrection, it is not yet fully realised. The ultimate victory will only come about with the second coming of our Lord. And so we wait in patient hope and trust with the cry “Come, Lord Jesus.”

Our longing for the visible unity of the Church likewise requires patient and trustful waiting. Our prayer for Christian unity is like the prayer of Hannah and the psalmist. Our work for Christian unity is like the deeds recorded in the Letter to the Hebrews. Our attitude of patient waiting is not one of helplessness or passivity, but a deep trust that the unity of the Church is God’s gift, not our achievement. Such patient waiting, praying and trust transforms us and prepares us for the visible unity of the Church not as we plan it, but as God gives it.

### **Prayer**

Faithful God, you are true to your word in every age. May we, like Jesus, have patience and trust in your steadfast love. Enlighten us by your Holy Spirit that we may not obstruct the fullness of your justice by our own hasty judgements, but rather discern your wisdom and love in all things. ; You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

### **Questions for reflection**

1. In what situations in our life should we have a greater trust in God’s promises?
2. What areas of church life are particularly at risk from the temptation to act hastily?
3. In what situations should Christians wait, and when should they act together?

**DAY 3      Theme:      Changed by the Suffering Servant**  
**Text :**            Christ suffered for us (cf. 1 Pt 2:21)

### **Readings**

Is 53:3-11      The man of sorrows accustomed to suffering  
Ps 22: 12-24    He did not despise the affliction of the of the afflicted  
1Pt 2:21-25    Christ suffered for us  
Lk 24:25-27    Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things?

### **Commentary**

The divine paradox is that God can change tragedy and disaster into victory. He transforms all our sufferings and misfortunes, and the enormity of history’s pain, into a resurrection that encompasses the whole world. While appearing to be defeated, He is nevertheless the true Victory whom no one and nothing can overcome.

Isaiah’s moving prophecy about the suffering Servant of the Lord was completely fulfilled in Christ. After suffering enormous agony, the Man of Sorrows *shall see His offspring*. We are that offspring, born from the Saviour’s suffering. In this way we are made one family in Him.

One can say that Psalm 22 is not only about Jesus, but also for Jesus. The Saviour Himself prayed this psalm on the cross, when He used its desolate opening words: *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?* Yet in the second part of the psalm the lamentation, the imploring full of pain, changes into praise of God for His works.

The apostle Peter is *a witness of the sufferings of Christ* (1 Pt 5,1), which he presents to us as an example: it is to this suffering for the sake of love we are called. Jesus did not curse God, but submitted to Him who judges righteously. His wounds have healed us, and returned us all to the one Shepherd.

Only in the light of the presence of the Lord and His word does the divine purpose of the Messiah's sufferings become clear. Just as for the disciples on the way to Emmaus, Jesus is our constant companion on the stony road of life, stirring our hearts and opening our eyes to the mysterious plan of salvation.

Christians experience suffering as a result of humanity's fragile condition; we recognise this suffering in social injustice and situations of persecution. The power of the cross draws us into unity. Here we encounter Christ's suffering as the source of compassion for and solidarity with the entire human family. As one contemporary theologian puts it: the closer we come to the cross of Christ, the closer we come to one another. The witness of Christians together in situations of suffering assumes remarkable credibility. In our shared solidarity with all who suffer we learn from the crucified suffering servant the lessons of self-emptying, letting go and self-sacrifice. These are the gifts we need from His Spirit on our way to unity in Him.

## **Prayer**

God of consolation, you have transformed the shame of the cross into a sign of victory. Grant that we may be united around the Cross of your Son to worship Him for the mercy offered through his suffering. May the Holy Spirit open our eyes and our hearts, so that we may help those who suffer to experience your closeness. ; You who live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

## **Questions for reflection**

1. How can our faith help us in our response to long-lasting suffering?
2. What areas of human suffering are unnoticed and belittled today?
3. How can Christians bear witness together to the power of the cross?

**DAY 4**      **Theme: Changed by the Lord's victory over evil**  
**Text:**      Overcome evil with good (Rom 12:21)

**Readings**

Ex 23:1-9	Do not follow the majority in wrongdoing
Ps 1	Happy are those whose delight is in the law of the Lord
Rom 12:17-2	Overcome evil with good
Mt 4:1-11	Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only

**Commentary**

In Jesus we learn what 'victory' really means for human beings - that is, happiness with one another in God's love through His overcoming of all that keeps us apart. This is a sharing in Christ's victory over the destructive forces that damage humanity and all of God's creation. In Jesus we can share in a new life which calls us to struggle against what is wrong in our world with renewed confidence and with a delight in what is good.

The words of the Old Testament give a categorical warning against engaging in wrongdoing and injustice. The attitude of the majority must not in any way provide an excuse. Neither do wealth or other situations in life entitle a person to do wrong.

Psalms draw attention not only to the need to observe the commandments, but especially to the joyful fruits of doing so. A person who loves the law of the Lord above all else is called happy and blessed. The word of God is a sure guide in adversity and is the fulfilment of human wisdom. Meditating on the word of God *day and night* enables a person to lead a life full of fruitfulness for the good of others.

In the apostle's admonitions we find encouragement to *overcome evil with good*. Only good can interrupt the endless spiral of hatred and the human desire for revenge. In the struggle for what is good, not everything depends on human beings. However, the apostle Paul calls for every effort to be made to maintain peace with others. He understands our continuous struggle against our instincts to harm those who hurt us. But Paul appeals to us not to let ourselves be overcome by these destructive feelings. Doing good is an effective way of combating wrong-doing among us.

The gospel reading describes the Son of God's struggle against Satan – the personification of evil. Jesus' victory over the temptations in the desert is fulfilled in His obedience to the Father, which leads Him to the Cross. The Saviour's resurrection confirms that here God's goodness ultimately wins: love overcomes death. The risen Lord is near! He accompanies us in every struggle against temptation and sin in the world. His presence calls Christians to act together in the cause of goodness.

The scandal is that because of our divisions we cannot be strong enough to fight against the evils of our time. United in Christ, delighting in His law of love, we are called to share in His mission of bringing hope to the places of injustice, hatred, and despair.

**Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank You for Your victory over evil and division. We praise You for Your sacrifice and Your resurrection that conquer death. Help us in our everyday struggle against all adversity. May the Holy Spirit give us strength and wisdom so that, following You, we may overcome evil with good, and division with reconciliation. Amen.

## Questions for reflection

1. Where do we see evil in our own lives?
2. In what way can our faith in Christ help us to overcome evil and the Evil One?
3. What can we learn from situations in our community where division has given way to reconciliation?

## DAY 5 Theme: Changed by the peace of the Risen Lord

**Text:** Jesus stood among them and said: Peace be with you! (Jn 20:19)

## Readings

- Mal 4:5-6 He will turn the hearts of parents to their children and the hearts of children to their parents
- Ps 133 How good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!
- Eph 2:14-20 To reconcile both groups to God in one body, putting to death hostility
- Jn 20:19-23 Jesus stood among them and said: Peace be with you!

## Commentary

The final words of the last book of the Old Testament convey the promise that God will send His chosen one to establish harmony and respect in all households. Usually we fear strife between nations or unexpected aggression. But the prophet Malachi draws attention to one of the most difficult and enduring conflicts - the heartbreak in relations between parents and their offspring. This restoration of unity between parents and children is not possible without God's help – it is God's emissary who performs the miracle of transformation in people's hearts and relationships.

The psalm shows what great joy such unity among people can bring. The human person was not created to be alone, and cannot live contentedly in a hostile atmosphere. Happiness consists in living in a human community in harmony, peace, trust and understanding. Good relations between people are as dew upon the dry earth and a fragrant oil which furthers health and pleasure. The psalm refers to the goodness of living together as a blessing and undeserved gift from God, like the dew. Living together in unity is not restricted to family members only – this is rather a declaration of the closeness between people who accept the peace of God.

The epistle tells us of Him whom the prophet Malachi announced. Jesus brings unity, because He has demolished the *wall of hostility* between people in His own body. Generally, a person's victory involves the downfall and shame of those who have been defeated, who prefer to withdraw. Jesus does not reject, or destroy, or humiliate; He puts an end to alienation, He transforms, heals and unites all, that they may become *members of God's household*.

The gospel recalls the gift of the risen Lord, given to His uncertain and terrified disciples. *Peace be with you* – that is Christ's greeting and also His gift. It is also an invitation to seek peace with God and establish new, lasting relationships within the human family and all of creation. Jesus has trampled down death and sin. By the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Risen Lord invites His disciples into His mission of bringing peace, healing and forgiveness to all the world. As long as Christians remain divided, the world will not be convinced of the full truth of the Gospel message that Christ has brought about one new humanity. Peace and unity are the hallmarks of this transformation. The Churches need to appropriate and witness to these

gifts as members of the one household of God built upon the sure foundation of Jesus as the cornerstone.

## Prayer

Loving and merciful God, teach us the joy of sharing in Your peace. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit so that we may tear down the walls of hostility separating us. May the risen Christ, who is our peace, help us to overcome all division and unite us as members of His household. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, to whom with You and the Holy Spirit be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen

## Questions for reflection

1. What forms of violence in our community can we as Christians confront together?
2. How do we experience hidden hostilities that affect our relationship to each other as Christian communities?
3. How can we learn to welcome each other as Christ welcomes us?

## DAY 6                      **Theme: Changed by God's Steadfast Love**

**Text:**     This is the victory, our faith (cf. 1 Jn 5:4)

## Readings

Hab 3:17-19	God, the Lord is my strength
Ps 136:1-4,23-26	His steadfast love endures forever
1 Jn 5:1-6	This is the victory that conquers the world, our faith
Jn 15:9-17	No one has greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends

## Commentary

In the Old Testament text, it is faith in God that keeps hope alive in spite of all failure. Habakkuk's lamentation turns to joy in God's fidelity that supplies strength in the face of despair.

Psalm 136 confirms that the memory of the marvellous deeds of God in Israel's history is a proof of God's steadfast love. Because of God's intervention, the people of Israel experienced extraordinary and surprising victories. Recalling God's great works of salvation is a source of joy, gratitude and hope, which believers have for centuries expressed in prayer, hymns of praise, and music.

The epistle reminds us that *that which has been born of God* is what overcomes the world. This does not necessarily mean victories which can be measured by human standards. Victory in Christ involves a change of heart, perceiving earthly reality from the perspective of eternity, and believing in the final victory over death. This victorious force is faith, the bestower and source of which is God. And its most perfect manifestation is love.

In the words of the gospel, Christ assures His disciples of God's love, the final confirmation of which is the Saviour's death on the cross. At the same time, He invites and challenges them to show love to one another. Jesus' relationship to his disciples is based on love. He does not treat them merely as disciples, but calls them His friends. Their service of Christ consists in conforming their lives to the one commandment of love, resulting from internal conviction and faith. In a spirit of love, even when the progress on the way to full visible unity seems slow, we do not lose hope. God's steadfast love will enable us to overcome the greatest

opponent and the deepest divisions. That is why *the victory that conquers the world is our faith and the transforming power of God's love.*

## **Prayer**

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, by Your Resurrection You have triumphed over death, and have become the Lord of life. Out of love for us You have chosen us to be Your friends. May the Holy Spirit unite us to You and to one other in the bonds of friendship, that we may faithfully serve You in this world as witnesses to Your steadfast love; for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God for ever and ever. Amen.

## **Questions for reflection**

1. How should we express Christian love in contexts of different religions and philosophies?
2. What must we do to become more credible witnesses of God's steadfast love in a divided world?
3. How can Christ's followers more visibly support one another throughout the world?

## **DAY 7      Theme: Changed by the Good Shepherd**

**Text:**    Feed my sheep (Jn 21:19)

## **Readings**

1 Sam 2:1-10    Not by might does one prevail  
Psalm 23        You are there with your rod and your staff  
Eph 6:10-20    Be strong in the Lord  
Jn 21:15-19     Feed my sheep

## **Commentary**

Those who prevail over suffering, need support from on high. That support comes through prayer. We read about the power of Hannah's prayer in the first chapter of the Book of Samuel. In the second chapter, we can find Hannah's prayer of thanksgiving. She realised that some things happen only with the help of God. It was through his will that Hannah and her husband became parents. This text is an example that strengthens one's faith in what would seem to be a hopeless situation. It is an example of victory.

The Good Shepherd of Psalm 23 guides his sheep even through the darkest places, comforting them with his presence. Those who place their trust in the Lord have no need to fear even the shadows of dissolution or disunity, as their shepherd will lead them into the green pastures of truth, to dwell together in the Lord's own house.

In the Letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul urges us to *be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power* by putting on spiritual armour: truth, righteousness, proclaiming the Good News, faith, salvation, the word of God, prayer and supplication.

The risen Lord urges Peter - and in his person each disciple - to discover in himself a love of Him who alone is the One True Shepherd. If you have such love, then *Feed my sheep!* In other words, feed them, protect them, care for them, strengthen them – because they are mine and belong to me! Be my good servant and tend to those who have loved me and who follow my voice. Teach them mutual love, cooperation, and boldness as they go along the twists and turns of life.

As a result of divine grace, the witness to Christ that has been confirmed in us obliges us to act jointly for the sake of unity. We have the ability and the knowledge to bear such witness! But are we willing to? The Good Shepherd, who by His life, teaching and conduct strengthens all who have put their trust in His grace and support, invites us to cooperate with Him unconditionally. Thus fortified, we will be able to help one another on the road to unity. So let us become strong in the Lord, that we may strengthen others in a joint testimony of love.

## **Prayer**

Father of all, You call us to be one flock in Your Son, Jesus Christ. He is our Good Shepherd who invites us to lie down in green pastures, leads us beside still waters, and restores our souls. In following him, may we so care for others that all see in us the love of the one true Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

## **Questions for reflection**

1. How does the Good Shepherd inspire us to comfort, revive, and restore the confidence of those who are lost?
2. In what ways can Christians of various traditions strengthen each other in confessing and bearing witness to Jesus Christ?
3. For us today, what can be the meaning of St Paul's exhortation: "Be strong in the Lord... put on the whole armour of God"?

## **DAY 8      Theme: United in the Reign of Christ**

**Text:**      To the one who conquers I will give a place with me  
on my throne (Rev 3:21)

## **Readings**

I Chr 29:10-13    It is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all  
Ps 21:1-7        You set a crown of fine gold on his head  
Rev 3:19b-22    To the one who conquers I will give a place with Me on My throne  
Jn 12:23-26     Whoever serves me, the Father will honour

## **Commentary**

Jesus Christ is the first born from the dead. He has humbled Himself and been exalted. Christ is not covetous of His victory, but shares His reign and exaltation with all people.

David's hymn, born of the joy of the king and the people before the Temple was built, expresses the truth that everything happens by grace. Even an earthly monarch can be an image of the reign of God, *in whose hand it is to make great and to give strength to all*.

The king's psalm of thanksgiving continues this idea. Christian tradition also gives it a Messianic sense; Christ is the true King, full of blessing and life, the perfect presence of God among people. In a certain sense this image can also refer to people. Are not human beings the crowning achievement of creation? Does not God want us to become 'co-heirs with His Son' and 'members of His royal household'?

The letters in the Book of Revelation to the seven local churches constitute a message to the Church in all times and places. Those who admit Christ into their homes will all be invited to

share with him in the banquet of eternal life. The promise regarding sitting on thrones, previously announced to the Twelve, is now extended to all who are victorious.

*Where I am, there will my servant be also.* We can link Jesus' *I am* to the unutterable Name of God. The servant of Jesus, whom the Father honours, will be where his Lord is, who has sat on the right hand of the Father in order to reign.

Christians are aware that unity among them, even if requiring human effort, is above all a gift of God. It is a share in Christ's victory over sin, death and the evil which causes division. Our participation in Christ's victory reaches its fullness in heaven. Our common witness to the Gospel should show the world a God who not limit or overpower us. We should announce in a way that is credible, to the people of our day and age, that Christ's victory overcomes all that keeps us from sharing fullness of life with Him and with each other

## **Prayer**

Almighty God, Ruler of All, teach us to contemplate the mystery of Your glory. Grant that we may accept Your gifts with humility and respect each person's dignity. May Your Holy Spirit strengthen us for the spiritual battles which lie ahead, so that united in Christ we may reign with Him in glory. Grant this through Him who humbled Himself and was exalted, who lives with You and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

## **Questions for reflection**

1. In what ways do false humility and a desire for earthly glory manifest themselves in our lives?
2. How do we express together our faith in the Reign of Christ?
3. How do we live out our hope in the coming Kingdom of God?

## **ADDITIONAL WORSHIP RESOURCES**

*The following prayers for the days 1-8 are based around the theme of the day. Together with the set of Biblical readings and the prayer for each day of the week they could be used to form a simple prayer structure for each day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.*

### **DAY I**

#### **The Serving Victor**

- L:** Lord, the disobedience of Adam and Eve brought suffering and death to us, and the family of man was wounded and torn apart. Have mercy on us!
- C:** *Have mercy on us!*
- L:** Christ, we hardened our hearts when You taught us through the servants of Your word. Have mercy on us!
- C:** *Have mercy on us!*
- L:** Lord, You know that we have not served You in our brothers and sisters. Have mercy on us!
- C:** *Have mercy on us!*
- L:** May God Almighty have mercy on us and, forgiving our sins, lead us to eternal life.
- C:** Amen.

## DAY II

### Changed through patient waiting for the Lord

- L: Lord, we pray to You.  
For the gift of looking at our life in the light of Your wisdom, we ask You!
- C: *Hear us, O Lord!*
- L: For the divine gift of patience in situations when human justice fails, we ask You!
- C: *Hear us, O Lord!*
- L: For the ability to pray and wait in those situations where only Your gift can meet our need, we ask You!
- C: *Hear us, O Lord!*
- L: Hear us as we call, O God, and grant that we may discern the fullness of Your justice, through Christ, our Lord.
- C: Amen.

## DAY III

### Changed by the Suffering Servant

- L: The cross is the sign of victory. And so we call: we worship You, O Lord!
- C: *We worship You, O Lord!*
- L: For Your cross – the cathedral of truth and the court of mercy.
- C: *We worship You, O Lord!*
- L: For your cross – the tree of life and the throne of grace.
- C: *We worship You, O Lord!*
- L: For your cross – the sign of compassion and the sign of hope.
- C: *We worship You, O Lord!*
- L: Lord, You died on the cross to *gather into one the dispersed children of God*. May the contemplation of Your cross transform our understanding of suffering, for You live and reign forever and ever.
- C: Amen.

## DAY IV

### Changed by the Lord's victory over evil

- L: The arrival of the Kingdom of God is the defeat of the kingdom of Satan. Jesus, when He defeats the tempter in the desert, and frees people from the power of evil spirits, anticipates the great victory of the Hour of His Passion. The ruler of this world is cast away. In the last request of the Lord's Prayer – *But deliver us from evil* – we pray to God for Him to reveal the victory already won by Christ. In the spirit of this request, we call: Save us, O Lord!
- C: *Save us, O Lord!*
- L: From all evil

**C:** *Save us, O Lord!*  
**L:** From every sin  
**C:** *Save us, O Lord!*  
**L:** From Satan's traps  
**C:** *Save us, O Lord!*  
**L:** From hatred and all ill will  
**C:** *Save us, O Lord!*  
**L:** From eternal death  
**C:** *Save us, O Lord!*  
**L:** Save us, O Lord, from all evil, and support us in Your mercy, You who live and reign forever and ever.  
**C:** Amen.

## **DAY V**

### **Changed by the peace of the Risen Lord**

**L:** Let us pray to the risen Lord for Christians and all people on earth: Grant us Your peace !  
**C:** *Grant us Your peace !*  
**L:** Grant the blessing of peace to the nations.  
**C:** *Grant us Your peace !*  
**L:** Sustain those who are working for the visible unity of your church.  
**C:** *Grant us Your peace !*  
**L:** Look upon those whom You have called to shepherd Your flock.  
**C:** *Grant us Your peace !*  
**L:** Strengthen the love between spouses.  
**C:** *Grant us Your peace !*  
**L:** Bring reconciliation within families, neighborhoods and societies.  
**C:** *Grant us Your peace !*  
**L:** Lord, stand in our midst and grant us unity and peace, You who live and reign forever and ever.  
**C:** Amen.

## **DAY VI**

### **Changed by God's Steadfast Love**

**L:** To Him who alone is worthy of faith, we call: Amen – I believe!  
**C:** *Amen – I believe!*  
**L:** In the one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
**C:** *Amen – I believe!*  
**L:** In the Son of God, who became a man.

- C: *Amen – I believe!*  
 L: In His death, resurrection and ascension.  
 C: *Amen – I believe!*  
 L: In the gift of the Holy Spirit.  
 C: *Amen – I believe!*  
 L: In Christ's coming again in glory.  
 C: *Amen – I believe!*  
 L: That His grace is stronger than sin.  
 C: *Amen – I believe!*  
 L: That love is more powerful than hatred and death.  
 C: *Amen – I believe!*  
 L: In the resurrection of the body and life without end in the kingdom.  
 C: *Amen – I believe!*  
 L: Lord, look upon the faith of Your Church in its pilgrimage through all the world, and lead Your children to see the brightness of Your majesty face to face, You who live and reign forever and ever.  
 C: Amen.

## **DAY VII**

### **Changed by the Good Shepherd**

- L: The Lord has not abandoned us. In all life's experiences he guides us with rod and staff. He is our Good Shepherd. That is why we say: we give you thanks, Lord!  
 C: *We give you thanks, Lord!*  
 L: For life and all gifts with which You have strengthened us  
 C: *We give you thanks, Lord!*  
 L: For the gift of Your Word  
 C: *We give you thanks, Lord!*  
 L: For perseverance in faith  
 C: *We give you thanks, Lord!*  
 L: For credible witnesses of Your Gospel  
 C: *We give you thanks, Lord!*  
 L: For all things which we cannot count or fail to realise  
 C: *We give you thanks, Lord!*  
 L: Thank You, Lord, for all gifts You have given us, so that we might not stop on the way or weaken in our spiritual struggle, You who live and reign forever and ever.  
 C: Amen.

## DAY VIII

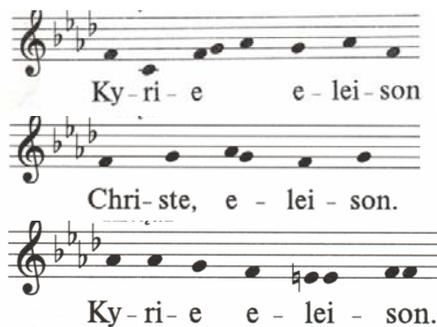
### United in the Reign of Christ

- L:** From an ancient homily:  
*The heavenly throne is already prepared, servants are waiting in attendance, the nuptial chamber has been erected, the food is ready, the eternal living place adorned, eternal treasures have been opened, and the Kingdom of Heaven, prepared since the creation of the world, is already open.*
- L:** Desiring greatly to abide with Christ, let us worship Him and say: Be exalted forever!
- C:** *Be exalted forever!*
- L:** Lord of time and eternity
- C:** *Be exalted forever!*
- L:** The firstborn from the dead
- C:** *Be exalted forever!*
- L:** Who holds the keys of death and hell
- C:** *Be exalted forever!*
- L:** Who are Lord of those who rule and King of those who reign.
- C:** *Be exalted forever!*
- L:** Who were, who are and who will come.
- C:** *Be exalted forever! Amen*

## Kyrie

Melody: Warsaw (1874)

*Śpiewnik Ewangelicki (Evangelical songbook), Bielsko-Biała 2002*



The image shows three staves of musical notation for the Kyrie melody. The first staff has the lyrics "Ky-ri-e e-lei-son". The second staff has the lyrics "Chri-ste, e-lei-son." and the third staff has the lyrics "Ky-ri-e e-lei-son." The melody is written in a treble clef with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

# Our Father

English adaptation: S. Takis

N. Kedrov: Russia

**Lento**

*pp* Our Fa - ther, who art in hea - ven, hal - low - ed be Thy name. Thy king - dom  
*sempre legato*

come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in hea - ven. *p* Give us this day our

dai - ly bread, and for-give us our tres - pass - es, as we for-give those who tres - pass a-against

us. And lead us *mf* not in - to temp - ta - tion, but de - liv - er us from e - vil. *pp*

English adaptation © 2001 S.J. Takis.

## Ciągły niepokój na świecie

Text and melody: Zofia Jasnota (1971)

Śpiewnik Ewangelicki (Evangelical Songbook), Bielsko-Biała 2002

*Em* *E7* *Am*  
Ciąg - ly nie - po - kój na świe - cie,

*D* *D7* *G* (*H7* | *F#*)  
woj - ny i woj - ny bez koń - ca.

*Em* *E7* *Am*  
Jak - że nie - pew - na jest zie - mia,

*Em* | *H* *H7* *Em* *D7* | *F#*  
ję - kiem i gnie - wem drga - ją - ca!

**Ref.** *G* *C* (*E7* | *H*) *A*  
Po - kój zo - sta - wiam wam, po - kój swój

*D* (*F#7* | *C#*) *H* *H7*  
da - ję wam, nie tak jak da - je

*Em* *C* *D7* *G*  
dzi - siaj świat - po - wie - dział do nas Pan.

It is not peace that reigns on earth,  
but war and conflict,  
oppression and chains  
that shackle so many to silence.  
Peace be with you,  
I leave you peace,  
my peace I give you,  
not as the world gives today -  
the Lord said to us.

## Hymn of International Ecumenical Fellowship

Music composed by the famous Polish composer Wojciech Kilar  
(beginning of 1990s). Author of words unknown.

Song



Kró - luj nam Chry - ste po wie - czny czas. Za - wsze i wszę - dzie Ty pro - wadz nas.

Bądź na - szą Dro - gą u - czyni ten cud, a - by - śmy by - li je - dno Bo - ży lud.

Bądź na - szą Pra - wdą, spełń Oj - ca plan, a - by - śmy by - li je - dno. A - men.

Bądź na - szą Pra - wdą, spełń Oj - ca plan, a - by - śmy by - li je - dno. A - men.

A - men.

Come to us now, Lord, reign in our hearts, Be for us now and always our guide.  
Bring us together, may we be one. Bind us together as the people of God.  
Lord, be for us the truth and the way, fulfill the Father's plan and make us one!  
Come, be our life and give us your peace, May we be one in Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.  
Amen.

# INFORMATION ABOUT POLAND THE ECUMENICAL CONTEXT

## Basic Information

Poland, officially the Republic of Poland, is a country situated in Central Europe and lying on the Baltic Sea. It borders with Germany on the west, the Czech Republic and Slovakia on the south, Ukraine and Belarus on the east, Lithuania on the north-east and Russia on the north (Kaliningrad Oblast). In the Baltic Sea, Poland also has maritime borders with Denmark and Sweden.

With an area of 312,700 km<sup>2</sup> Poland is the ninth largest country in Europe. It has a population of over 38 million. Its capital is Warsaw.

Poles make up almost 97 per cent of the country's population. Until 1939, one third of the population consisted of ethnic minorities. About 6 million people perished during World War II (including about 3.5 million Jews in the Shoah). Nowadays, ethnic minorities make up small percentage of Poland's population. The most numerous are Ukrainians, Belarusians, Germans (who are represented in parliament), Roma, Lithuanians, Slovaks and Czechs.

Poles speak Polish, which belongs to the Slavonic family of languages. The law guarantees ethnic minorities the use of their own language.

As a result of emigration for economic and political reasons which began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, about 15 million Poles went to live outside the borders of their country. Currently the most numerous diasporas are expatriate Polish communities in the United States, Germany, Brazil, France and Canada.

## Historical Outline

Christianity in Poland has a history of more than a thousand years. The first Christian communities arose as a result of the missionary work of Cyril and Methodius. Church life in Poland became organised during the reign of the first historical ruler, Mieszko of the Piast family, who united the Slavonic tribes living in the Vistula river basin. 966, the date when Mieszko was baptised, is recognised as the year the Polish state was formed.

The first archbishopric on Polish land to have independent jurisdiction was established in 1000 in Gniezno. In that year, three monarchs – German, Czech and Polish – met in congress at the grave of the bishop and martyr St. Wojciech (the contemporary congresses of Gniezno, which have been organised since 1997, allude to that event with their international and ecumenical character). Bolesław the Brave was the first to be crowned king of Poland, in 1025. He considerably extended the state's borders and supported missionary campaigns. Foreigners found a place for themselves and appealing living conditions on Polish lands from the very beginning. They were primarily Jews, Karaites (since the 12<sup>th</sup> century) and Muslim Tatars (since the 14<sup>th</sup> century).

The 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries are known as the golden age of Polish history. This was the time when political, economic and cultural brilliance was at its height. It was also the time when Reformation ideas reached Poland. The teachings of Martin Luther found favour with burghers, while those of John Calvin and Huldrych Zwingli attracted the aristocracy (former knights). Against the backdrop of western countries engaged in mutually destructive religious wars, Poland stood out for its considerable religious tolerance and became a refuge for Protestant dissidents.

The 17<sup>th</sup> century was the period of the Counter-Reformation, when Protestants were deprived of political rights and Arians – the Polish Brethren – forced to emigrate, which put the brakes on effectively halted the development of Polish Protestantism. In 1791 the Sejm (the Polish parliament) passed the world's second constitution (after that of the United States), guaranteeing freedom of confession and religious practice.

Unfortunately, between 1772 and 1795 Poland was partitioned on three separate occasions between the superpowers of Prussia, Russia and Austria. As a result, for 123 years the country did not exist on the map of Europe. Poles attempted to regain their independence in a series of national insurrections such as the Kościuszko Uprising (1791), the November Uprising (1830), the Spring of Nations (1848), the January Uprising (1863) and revolution during World War One. Poland did not regain freedom and independence until 1918.

The inter-war years (1918-1939) were a time of reconstructing the country's statehood after the ruinous policy of the partitioning powers and wartime destruction. The short period of independence (20 years) was also one of rapid growth. Poland emerged successfully from the global economic crisis in 1920-1930, its industry prospered, universal education was introduced, and conditions were created for the development of science and culture.

One of the most tragic periods in Polish history was World War II (1939-1945). When Nazis Germans attacked the country on 1 September 1939, Poles spent six weeks fighting the invader's overwhelming military might. The situation became even more difficult when, on 17 September 1939, the Soviet Red Army annexed eastern parts of Poland.

A resistance Home Army and underground state structures were formed on territory occupied by the Germans known as the General Government. In April 1943 an uprising broke out in the Warsaw ghetto (the sealed-off Jewish district). The entire Jewish district was methodically burnt and razed to the ground. In August 1944 the Warsaw Uprising broke out in the capital, in which about 200,000 insurgents and civilians were killed. When the uprising collapsed, the remaining population was displaced, and 95 per cent of the capital was demolished by the Nazis.

Polish soldiers fought on many fronts all over the world: in Norway, England, Italy, Holland, the Soviet Union, the Middle East and Africa.

After the war, in 1945, as a result of treaties signed by the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union in Yalta and Potsdam, Poland found itself within the Soviet sphere of influence and became a communist republic. Its previous borders were moved. The USSR took over Poland's eastern territories, and the western border was set along the Oder and Neisse rivers. Both these decisions had far-reaching political, economic, social and religious consequences. Millions of people of various nationalities were resettled or displaced.

At the end of the 1970s the country faced economic collapse. Throughout Poland strikes occurred and discontent, which increased at this time, resulted in the formation of a powerful social and political movement. In 1980 the independent trade union 'Solidarity' was created, with about 10 million people members. It was led by Lech Wałęsa. The political transformations in the USSR ("perestroika") and the powerful trade union and independence movement in Poland contributed to the democratic changes in Europe, and brought sovereignty to Poland.

In 1989 the political system changed to a parliamentary democracy with a return to a market economy. The first free parliamentary elections were held, and new political parties and extra-government organisations came into being. In 1999 Poland joined international structures of security (NATO) and economic exchange (WTO, OECD). Since 2004 the country has been a member of the European Union, chairing it from July to December 2011.

## **The Religious Situation**

The largest church in Poland is the Roman Catholic Church, to which about 95 per cent of the population belongs. This church has played a big part in preserving Polish national identity and independence down through the ages, particularly during the partitions (1772-1918) and in the communist period (1945-1989). The election of a Polish pope in 1978 was of tremendous significance for the social and political changes. John Paul II (who died in 2005) was known throughout the world for advocating respect for different religions, peace among nations, human dignity and freedom.

The second biggest church is the Polish Orthodox Church (approximately 550,000 followers). Its origins are closely related to the missionary activities of saints Cyril and Methodius (9<sup>th</sup> century). Orthodoxy was a permanent feature of the country's religious structure. Since 1925 the Orthodox Church in Poland has had the status of an autocephalous church.

In 1596, as a result of the Union of Brest, a number of Orthodox priests and believers recognised the Pope as the head of the Church and accepted Catholic dogma, while retaining the Byzantine rite. The Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church consequently came into being, which today has approximately 100,000 followers.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church (about 75,000 followers) and the Evangelical Reformed (Calvinist) Church (about 3,500 followers) originated in the Reformation of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Evangelical Methodist Church (about 5,000 followers) and the Baptist Union (about 5,000 followers) have existed in Poland since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

There are also two churches which came into being at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and belong to the family of Old Catholic churches: the Mariavite Church and the Polish Catholic Church. The Old Catholic Mariavite Church (about 25,000 followers) separated from the Roman Catholic Church in 1906. The Polish Catholic Church arose among Polish expatriates in America. It numbers approximately 22,000 followers and belongs to the Union of Utrecht.

There are also other Protestant churches active in Poland, such as the Pentecostal Church, the Seventh Day Adventist Church, the Fellowship of Christian Churches, and the Church of Evangelical Christians. Some of these churches are affiliated in the Evangelical Alliance. Poland is also home to religious groups such as the Union of Jewish Religious Communities, the Karaite Religious Union and the Muslim Religious Union.

## **The Ecumenical Situation**

In previous centuries Poland was considerably more diversified in terms of confessions, taking pride in a long tradition of freedom, religious tolerance and ecumenical cooperation. The contemporary religious landscape is the consequence of many historical events, particularly World War II and its accompanying border shifts and mass migrations of people.

The historical traditions of ecumenism in Poland reach back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In 1570 a notable event was the Sandomierz Agreement signed by Lutherans, Calvinists and Czech Hussites. In 1777, Lutherans and Calvinists formed a union; in 1828-1849 both confessions had a joint consistory.

The first inter-denominational organisation in Poland was the Polish Branch of the World Union for the Propagation of Friendship between Nations, which came into being in 1923 through the agency of churches. Initially, six churches belonging to the Lutheran, Reformed and United traditions belonged to the Polish Branch, resolving matters of dispute among themselves and engaging in joint actions. When the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church

joined the union in 1930, the possibility was realised for a historic meeting of two separate Christian traditions – Evangelical and Orthodox - in a joint organisation.

During World War II, towards the end of 1942, a Provisional Ecumenical Council was set up. It drew up the ecumenical “Confession of Faith of Polish Christians” (Polish Confession), formulating dogmatic principles regarded as a common good.

In 1945, representatives of five Protestant churches – Evangelical Lutheran, Evangelical Reformed, Evangelical Methodist, Baptist Union and Evangelical Christians – formed a joint official mission known as the Council of Protestant Churches in the Republic of Poland, whose chairman was Rev. Konstanty Najder, general superintendent of the Methodist Church.

The Polish Ecumenical Council (PEC) was officially constituted in Warsaw on 15 November 1946. Delegates representing 12 confessions took part in this. Rev. Zygmunt Michelis (1890-1977) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church was elected chairman of the PEC.

Until the end of the 1960s, relations between the Polish Ecumenical Council and the Roman Catholic Church had an unofficial character. However, many Catholics, both clergy and lay members, took part in services marking the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, organised by PEC member churches.

The first ecumenical service in a Catholic church, which took place before the Second Vatican Council with the participation of invited representatives of other Christian confessions, was held in St. Martin’s church in Warsaw on 10 January 1962. This year (2012) is the fiftieth anniversary of that event.

The Mixed Committee of the Polish Ecumenical Council and the Committee of the Episcopate for Ecumenism was inaugurated in 1974. It enabled official contact to be established between the Roman Catholic Church and the PEC. In 1977 the Mixed Committee appointed a Sub-committee for Dialogue, to be concerned with talks on theological subjects.

Twenty years later (1997), on the basis of the cooperation to date, a Committee for Dialogue of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate and the Polish Ecumenical Council was established. One of the important results of the cooperation between the PEC and the Roman Catholic Church took place in 2000, when the heads of six member churches of the Polish Ecumenical Council and the Roman Catholic Church signed a document on “The Sacrament of Baptism as a Sign of Unity”, in which the signatories declared their mutual recognition of the validity of baptism.

Since 2000 the Committee for Dialogue has been examining the issue of mixed marriages. In 2009 an ecumenical draft concerning such marriages was presented.

An important event coordinated by the Bible Society in Poland was the publication in 2001 of an ecumenical translation of the New Testament and the Psalms. Eleven churches were involved in the translation work. Work is currently in progress on an ecumenical translation of the Old Testament.

This year (2012) a brochure for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has been published for the fifteenth time, prepared jointly by representatives of the PEC and the Roman Catholic Church.

In 2009 a book entitled “On The Road To Christ. Christian Churches In Poland Talk About Themselves” was published, in which the churches affiliated in the Polish Ecumenical Council, as well as the Roman Catholic Church, present themselves – for the first time in Polish post-war history, in a single publication.

Also noteworthy is the fact that popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI met clergy and members of churches affiliated in the Polish Ecumenical Council during ecumenical prayers on their pilgrimages to Poland.

Currently, seven churches belong to the Polish Ecumenical Council: the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church, the Polish Catholic Church, the Old Catholic Mariavite Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Evangelical Reformed Church, the Evangelical Methodist Church, and the Polish Baptist Union. The Bible Society in Poland and the Social Association of Polish Catholics have affiliated member status.

## **WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY**

### **Themes 1968-2012**

*In 1968, materials jointly prepared by the WCC Faith and Order Commission and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity were first used.*

- 1968 To the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:14)  
Pour la louange de sa gloire
- 1969 Called to freedom (Galatians 5:13)  
Appelés à la liberté  
(Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1970 We are fellow workers for God (1 Corinthians 3:9)  
Nous sommes les coopérateurs de Dieu  
(Preparatory meeting held at the Monastery of Niederaltaich,  
Federal Republic of Germany)
- 1971 ...and the communion of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 13:13)  
...et la communion du Saint-Esprit
- 1972 I give you a new commandment (John 13:34)  
Je vous donne un commandement nouveau  
(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1973 Lord, teach us to pray (Luke 11:1)  
Seigneur, apprends-nous à prier  
(Preparatory meeting held at the Abbey of Montserrat, Spain)
- 1974 That every tongue confess: Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:1-13)  
Que tous confessent : Jésus-Christ est Seigneur  
(Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1975 God's purpose: all things in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-10)  
La volonté du Père : Tout réunir sous un seul chef, le Christ  
(Material from an Australian group. Preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)

- 1976 We shall be like him (1 John 3:2) or, Called to become what we are  
Appelés a devenir ce que nous sommes  
(Material from Caribbean Conference of Churches.  
Preparatory meeting held in Rome, Italy)
- 1977 Enduring together in hope (Romans 5:1-5)  
L'espérance ne déçoit pas  
(Material from Lebanon, in the midst of a civil war.  
Preparatory meeting held in Geneva)
- 1978 No longer strangers (Ephesians 2:13-22)  
Vous n'êtes plus des étrangers  
(Material from an ecumenical team in Manchester, England)
- 1979 Serve one another to the glory of God (1 Peter 4:7-11)  
Soyez au service les uns des autres pour la gloire de Dieu  
(Material from Argentina - preparatory meeting held in Geneva, Switzerland)
- 1980 Your kingdom come (Matthew 6:10)  
Que ton règne vienne!  
(Material from an ecumenical group in Berlin, German Democratic Republic -  
preparatory meeting held in Milan)
- 1981 One Spirit - many gifts - one body (1 Corinthians 12:3b-13)  
Un seul esprit - des dons divers - un seul corps  
(Material from Graymoor Fathers, USA – preparatory meeting held in Geneva,  
Switzerland)
- 1982 May all find their home in you, O Lord (Psalm 84)  
Que tous trouvent leur demeure en Toi, Seigneur  
(Material from Kenya - preparatory meeting held in Milan, Italy)
- 1983 Jesus Christ - the Life of the World (1 John 1:1-4)  
Jesus Christ - La Vie du Monde  
(Material from an ecumenical group in Ireland - preparatory meeting held in Céligny  
(Bossey), Switzerland)
- 1984 Called to be one through the cross of our Lord (1 Cor 2:2 and Col 1:20)  
Appelés à l'unité par la croix de notre Seigneur  
(Preparatory meeting held in Venice, Italy)
- 1985 From death to life with Christ (Ephesians 2:4-7)  
De la mort à la vie avec le Christ  
(Material from Jamaica - preparatory meeting held in Grandchamp, Switzerland)
- 1986 You shall be my witnesses (Acts 1:6-8)  
Vous serez mes témoins  
(Material from Yugoslavia (Slovenia), preparatory meeting held in Yugoslavia)
- 1987 United in Christ - a New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17-6:4a)  
Unis dans le Christ - une nouvelle création  
(Material from England, preparatory meeting held in Taizé, France)
- 1988 The love of God casts out fear (1 John 4:18)  
L'Amour de Dieu bannit la Crainte  
(Material from Italy - preparatory meeting held in Pinerolo, Italy)

- 1989 Building community: one body in Christ (Romans 12:5-6a)  
Bâtir la communauté : Un seul corps en Christ  
(Material from Canada - preparatory meeting held in Whaley Bridge, England)
- 1990 That they all may be one...That the world may believe (John 17)  
Que tous soient un...Afin que le monde croie  
(Material from Spain - preparatory meeting held in Madrid, Spain)
- 1991 Praise the Lord, all you nations! (Psalm 117 and Romans 15:5-13)  
Nations, louez toutes le Seigneur  
(Material from Germany - preparatory meeting held in Rotenburg an der Fulda, Federal Republic of Germany)
- 1992 I am with you always ... Go, therefore (Matthew 28:16-20)  
Je suis avec vous...allez donc  
(Material from Belgium - preparatory meeting held in Bruges, Belgium)
- 1993 Bearing the fruit of the Spirit for Christian unity (Galatians 5:22-23)  
Pour l'unité : laisser mûrir en nous les fruits de l'Esprit  
(Material from Zaire - preparatory meeting held near Zurich, Switzerland)
- 1994 The household of God: called to be one in heart and mind (Acts 4:23-37)  
La maison de Dieu : Appelés à être un dans le coeur et dans l'esprit  
(Material from Ireland - preparatory meeting held in Dublin, Republic of Ireland)
- 1995 Koinonia: communion in God and with one another (John 15:1-17)  
La koinonia : communion en Dieu et les uns avec les autres  
(Material from Faith and Order, preparatory meeting held in Bristol, England)
- 1996 Behold, I stand at the door and knock (Revelation 3:14-22)  
Je me tiens à la porte et je frappe  
(Preparatory material from Portugal, meeting held in Lisbon, Portugal)
- 1997 We entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God (2 Corinthians 5:20)  
Au nom du Christ, laissez-vous réconcilier avec Dieu  
(Material from Nordic Ecumenical Council, preparatory meeting held in Stockholm, Sweden)
- 1998 The Spirit helps us in our weakness (Romans 8:14-27)  
L'Esprit aussi vient en aide à notre faiblesse  
(Preparatory material from France, meeting held in Paris, France)
- 1999 He will dwell with them as their God, they will be his peoples (Revelation 21:1-7)  
Dieu demeurera avec eux. Ils seront ses peuples  
et lui sera le Dieu qui est avec eux  
(Preparatory material from Malaysia, meeting held in Monastery of Bose, Italy)
- 2000 Blessed be God who has blessed us in Christ (Ephesians 1:3-14)  
Béni soit Dieu, qui nous a bénis en Christ  
(Preparatory material from the Middle East Council of Churches, meeting held La Verna, Italy)
- 2001 I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (John 14:1-6)  
Je suis le chemin, et la vérité et la vie  
(Preparatory material from Romania and meeting held at Vulcan, Romania)

- 2002 For with you is the fountain of life (Psalm 36:5-9)  
Car chez toi est la fontaine de la vie (Psalm 35, 6-10)  
(Preparatory material CEEC and CEC, meeting near Augsburg, Germany)
- 2003 We have this treasure in clay jars (2 Corinthians 4:4-18)  
Car nous avons ce trésor dans des vases d’argile  
(Preparatory material churches in Argentina, meeting at Los Rubios, Spain)
- 2004 My peace I give to you (John 14:23-31; John 14:27)  
Je vous donne ma paix  
(Preparatory material from Aleppo, Syria - meeting in Palermo, Sicily)
- 2005 Christ, the one foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3 1-23)  
Le Christ, unique fondement de l’Eglise  
(Preparatory material from Slovakia - meeting in Piestaňy, Slovakia)
- 2006 Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am among them  
(Matthew 18:18-20)  
Là où deux ou trois se trouvent réunis en mon nom, je suis au milieu d’eux.  
(Preparatory material from Ireland - meeting held in Prosperous, Co. Kildare, Ireland)
- 2007 He even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak (Mark 7:31-37)  
Il fait entendre les sourds et parler les muets  
(Preparatory material from South Africa – meeting held in Faverges, France)
- 2008 Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:(12a) 13b-18)  
Priez sans cesse  
(Preparatory material from USA – meeting held in Graymoor, Garrison, USA)
- 2009 That they may become one in your hand (Ezekiel 37:15-28)  
Ils seront unis dans ta main  
(Preparatory material from Korea – meeting held in Marseilles, France)
- 2010 You are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:48)  
...de tout cela, c’est vous qui êtes les témoins  
(Preparatory material from Scotland – meeting held in Glasgow, Scotland)
- 2011 One in the apostles’ teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer (cf. Acts 2:42)  
Unis dans l’enseignement des apôtres, la communion fraternelle, la fraction du pain et la prière  
(Preparatory material from Jerusalem – meeting held in Saydnaya, Syria)
- 2012 We will all be Changed by the Victory of our Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor 15:51-58)  
Tous, nous serons transformés par la victoire de notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ  
(Preparatory material from Poland – meeting held in Warsaw, Poland)

## **KEY DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY**

- c. 1740 In Scotland a Pentecostal movement arose, with North American links, whose revivalist message included prayers for and with all churches.
- 1820 The Rev. James Haldane Stewart publishes “Hints for the General Union of Christians for the Outpouring of the Spirit”.
- 1840 The Rev. Ignatius Spencer, a convert to Roman Catholicism, suggests a ‘Union of Prayer for Unity’.
- 1867 The First Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops emphasizes prayer for unity in the Preamble to its Resolutions.
- 1894 Pope Leo XIII encourages the practice of a Prayer Octave for Unity in the context of Pentecost.
- 1908 First observance of the ‘Church Unity Octave’ initiated by the Rev. Paul Wattson.
- 1926 The Faith and Order movement begins publishing “Suggestions for an Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity”.
- 1935 Abbé Paul Couturier of France advocates the ‘Universal Week of Prayer for Christian Unity’ on the inclusive basis of prayer for “the unity Christ wills by the means he wills”.
- 1958 Unité Chrétienne (Lyons, France) and the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches begin co-operative preparation of materials for the Week of Prayer.
- 1964 In Jerusalem, Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Athenagoras I prayed together Jesus’ prayer “that they all may be one” (John 17).
- 1964 The Decree on Ecumenism of Vatican II emphasizes that prayer is the soul of the ecumenical movement and encourages observance of the Week of Prayer.
- 1966 The Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity [now known as the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity] begin official joint preparation of the Week of Prayer material.
- 1968 First official use of Week of Prayer material prepared jointly by Faith and Order and the Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity [now known as the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity]

- 1975 First use of Week of Prayer material based on a draft text prepared by a local ecumenical group. An Australian group was the first to take up this plan in preparing the 1975 initial draft.
- 1988 Week of Prayer materials were used in the inaugural worship for The Christian Federation of Malaysia, which links the major Christian groupings in that country.
- 1994 International group preparing text for 1996 included representatives from YMCA and YWCA.
- 2004 Agreement reached that resources for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity be jointly published and produced in the same format by Faith and Order (WCC) and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Catholic Church).
- 2008 Commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. (Its predecessor, the Church Unity Octave, was first observed in 1908)