

Resources for

THE WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
and throughout the year

One in the apostles' teaching,
fellowship, breaking of bread
and prayer
(*cf. Acts 2:42*)

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Scripture quotations:

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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 this flexibility concerning the date, we encourage you to understand the material presented here as an invitation to find opportunities 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 at the local level. In doing this, account must be taken of local liturgical and devotional practice, and of the whole social and cultural context. Such adaptation should normally 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

Acts 2:42-47

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

(NRSV)

Introduction to the theme for the year 2011: Acts 2:42-47

The church in Jerusalem, yesterday, today, tomorrow

Two thousand years ago, the first disciples of Christ gathered in Jerusalem experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and were joined together in unity as the body of Christ. In that event, Christians of every time and place see their origin as a community of the faithful, called together to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Although that earliest Jerusalem church experienced difficulties, both externally and internally, its members persevered in faithfulness and fellowship, in breaking bread and prayers.

It is not difficult to see how the situation of the first Christians in the Holy City mirrors that of the church in Jerusalem today. The current community experiences many of the joys and sorrows of the early church; its injustice and inequality, and its divisions, but also its faithful perseverance, and recognition of a wider unity among Christians.

The churches in Jerusalem today offer us a vision of what it means to strive for unity, even amid great problems. They show us that the call to unity can be more than mere words, and indeed that it can point us toward a future where we anticipate and help build the heavenly Jerusalem.

Realism is required to make reality of such a vision. The responsibility for our divisions lies with us; they are the results of our own actions. We need to change our prayer, asking God to change us so that we may actively work for unity. We are ready enough to pray for unity, but that can become a substitute for action to bring it about. Is it possible that we ourselves are blocking the Holy Spirit because we are the obstacles to unity; that our own *hubris* prevents unity?

The call for unity this year comes to churches all over the world from Jerusalem, the mother church. Mindful of its own divisions and its own need to do more for the unity of the Body of Christ, the churches in Jerusalem calls all Christians to rediscover the values that bound together the early Christian community in Jerusalem, when they devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. This is the challenge before us. The Christians of Jerusalem call upon their brothers and sisters to make this week of prayer an occasion for a renewed commitment to work for a genuine ecumenism, grounded in the experience of the early Church.

Four elements of unity

The 2011 prayers for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity have been prepared by Christians in Jerusalem, who chose as a theme Acts 2:42, '*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*' This theme is a call back to the origins of the first church in Jerusalem; it is a call for inspiration and renewal, a return to the essentials of the faith; it is a call to remember the time when the church was still one. Within this theme four elements are presented which were marks of the early Christian community, and which are essential to the life of the Christian Community wherever it exists. Firstly, the Word was passed on by the apostles. Secondly, fellowship (*koinonia*) was an important mark of the early believers whenever they met together. A third mark of the early Church was the celebration of the Eucharist (the 'breaking of the bread'), remembering the New Covenant which Jesus has enacted in his suffering, death and resurrection. The fourth aspect is the offering of constant prayer. These four elements are the pillars of the life of the church, and of its unity.

The Christian Community in the Holy Land wishes to give prominence to these basic essentials as it raises its prayers to God for the unity and vitality of the church throughout the world. The

Christians of Jerusalem invite their sisters and brothers around the world to join them in prayer as they struggle for justice, peace and prosperity for all people of the land.

The themes of the eight days

There is a journey of faith that can be discerned in the themes of the eight days. From its first beginnings in the upper room, the early Christian community experiences the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, enabling it to grow in faith and unity, in prayer and in action, so that it truly becomes a community of the Resurrection, united with Christ in his victory over all that divides us from each other and from him. The church in Jerusalem then itself becomes a beacon of hope, a foretaste of the heavenly Jerusalem, called to reconcile not just our churches but all peoples. This journey is guided by the Holy Spirit, who brings the early Christians to the knowledge of the truth about Jesus Christ, and who fills the early Church with signs and wonders, to the amazement of many. As they continue their journey, the Christians of Jerusalem gather with devotion to listen to the Word of God set forth in the apostles' teaching, and come together in fellowship to celebrate their faith in sacrament and prayer. Filled with the power and hope of the Resurrection, the community celebrates its certain victory over sin and death, so that it has the courage and vision to be itself a tool of reconciliation, inspiring and challenging all people to overcome the divisions and injustice that oppress them.

Day 1 sets forth the background to the mother church of Jerusalem, making clear its continuity with the church throughout the world today. It reminds us of the courage of the early church as it boldly witnessed to the truth, just as we today need to work for justice in Jerusalem, and in the rest of the world.

Day 2 recalls that the first community united at Pentecost contained within itself many diverse origins, just as the church in Jerusalem today represents a rich diversity of Christian traditions. Our challenge today is to achieve greater visible unity in ways that embrace our differences and traditions.

Day 3 looks at the first essential element of unity; the Word of God delivered through the teaching of the apostles. The church in Jerusalem reminds us that, whatever our divisions, these teachings urge us to devote ourselves in love to each other, and in faithfulness to the one body which is the church.

Day 4 emphasises Sharing as the second expression of unity. Just as the early Christians held all things in common, the Church in Jerusalem calls upon all brothers and sisters in the church to share goods and burdens with glad and generous hearts, so that nobody stays in need.

Day 5 expresses the third element of unity; the Breaking of the Bread, which joins us in hope. Our unity goes beyond Holy Communion; it must include a right attitude towards ethical living, the human person and the whole community. The Jerusalem church urges Christians to unite in "the breaking of bread" today, because a divided church cannot speak out with authority on issues of Justice and Peace.

Day 6 presents the fourth mark of unity; with the church in Jerusalem, we draw strength from spending time in prayer. Specifically, the Lord's Prayer calls all of us in Jerusalem and throughout the world, the weak and the mighty, to work together for justice, peace and unity that God's Kingdom may come.

Day 7 takes us beyond the four elements of unity, as the Jerusalem church joyfully proclaims the Resurrection even while it bears the pain of the Cross. The Resurrection of Jesus is for Christians

in Jerusalem today hope and strength that enables them to remain constant in their witness, working for freedom and peace in the City of Peace.

Day 8 concludes the journey with a call from the Jerusalem churches to the wider service of reconciliation. Even if Christians achieve unity among themselves, their work is not done, for they need to reconcile themselves with others. In the Jerusalem context this means Palestinian and Israeli; in other communities, Christians are challenged to seek justice and reconciliation in their own context.

The theme of each day has therefore been chosen not only to recall for us of the history of the early church, but also to bring to mind the experiences of Christians in Jerusalem today, and to invite us all to reflect upon how we may bring that experience into the lives of our local Christian communities. During this journey of eight days, the Christians of Jerusalem invite us to proclaim and bear witness that Unity - in its fullest sense of faithfulness to the Apostles' teachings and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers - will enable us together to overcome evil, not just in Jerusalem, but throughout the world.

The preparation of the material for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2011

The initial work leading to the publication of this booklet was done by a group of Christian leaders from Jerusalem. They gathered at the invitation of the World Council of Churches. Their work was facilitated by the Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre. We want to thank in particular those who have contributed:

His Beatitude the Latin Patriarch Emeritus, Michel Sabbah
His Grace Bishop Munib Younan, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land
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Rev. Frans Bouwen, of the Roman Catholic Church
Fr. Alexander, of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem
Fr. Jamal Khader, of the University of Bethlehem
Mr Michael Bahnam, of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch
Mrs. Nora Karmi, of the Armenian Orthodox Church
Mr Yusef Daher, of the Greek Catholic Melkite Church.

The texts proposed here were finalized during the meeting of the international preparatory group appointed by the World Council of Churches Faith and Order Commission and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, of the Roman Catholic Church.

The meeting of the international preparatory group took place at the St. Christophorus Monastery in Saydnaya, Syria. Participants wish to extend their thanks to his Beatitude Ignatius IV, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and his staff in Damascus and Saydnaya for their warm welcome and gracious hospitality, and to church leaders from different Christian traditions for their support and encouragement.

Introduction to the Ecumenical Worship Service

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teachings and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42)

This year’s theme offered for our meditation by the Churches in Jerusalem invites Christians everywhere to pause and reflect on their relation to the mother Church of Jerusalem, so as to look afresh at our own situations. It is from this Jerusalem community that all other communities are born. The earthly community of Jerusalem is a pre-figuration of the heavenly Jerusalem where all peoples will be gathered around the throne of the Lamb in eternal praise and adoration of God.

The Christians of Jerusalem invite our ecumenical gatherings in 2011 to meditate on the importance of our devotion to the teachings of the apostles and fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and the prayers; elements that unite us, though we are many, in the one Body of Christ. The churches in Jerusalem ask us to remember them in their precarious situation and to pray for justice that will bring peace in the Holy Land. The ecumenical liturgy presented here is intended to lift up the fundamental dimension of all Christian witness, namely love in the service to the Gospel of reconciliation with God and with all of humanity and creation.

Order of Service

The order of service is divided into: (I) gathering, (II) celebration of the Word of God, (III) prayers of repentance and peace, (IV) litany of Christian unity, (V) sending.

I) Gathering

Following local customs, appropriate symbols may be brought forward and placed before the assembly while the *opening hymn* is sung. After the initial greeting by the person presiding some *words of welcome* may be offered to the communities and leaders who have gathered to celebrate. The assembly is then invited to prepare to celebrate and praise God through the opening sentences and an opening prayer in the form of a litany in the traditional Eastern form.

II) Celebrating the Word of God

The reading from the Acts of the Apostles is central and organizes the next parts of the service. In selecting the text from Acts, the planning committee from Jerusalem wanted to accentuate the ideas of fidelity to the teaching of the apostles and the sharing of all things in common as the key to Christian unity. The homily may develop these themes, as well as emphasize the need for Christians around the world to support in prayer their sisters and brothers witnessing to the Gospel of love in the Holy City.

Following the homily there may be a period of meditation, silent or accompanied by music. An offering or collection to aid the Christians and their institutions (schools, hospitals, etc) may be taken and sent to an appropriate Church organisation.

III) Prayer of repentance and peace

A symbolic action may take place during this prayer.

Option one: Several candles that were carried in procession in the opening of the liturgy and placed in view of the assembly may be extinguished one by one after each petition of sinfulness leaving one Christ candle or Paschal candle lighted as the lights of the church are turned off. At the conclusion of the peace small candles are distributed to those present. The confession of faith which may be done according to the Nicene creed or the Apostles creed or some other traditional expression of faith follows the exchange of peace in semi darkness. The extinguished candles are then lit (from the Christ candle or the paschal candle) one by one after each intention in the litany

of Christian unity. The participants are encouraged to take home the candles they received and to light them each night during the week of prayer and, if appropriate, place them in their windows as a continuation of this prayer vigil and a remembrance of Christians in the Holy Land and elsewhere who suffer because of their faith.

Option two: A group (for example of children/youth) prepares beforehand the „mosaic“ (an image of Christ, a cross, a picture of a church, any other symbol for unity may be used as appropriate) and cuts it into large pieces. During the litany of Christian unity, various representatives of the communities present place the mosaic piece by piece in a frame before the assembly. At the conclusion of the litany the mosaic will represent the unity of all in the one body of Christ with the diversity as the rich gift that God gives to the churches.

Option three: Some incense may be offered by members of each community after each petition of sinfulness representing God’s mercy which covers our sins and God’s grace that heals us. A container holding some lit charcoal may be placed in the centre of the assembly or next to the place where the scriptural readings are read. After each confession of sinfulness the reader or another member of the assembly will place some incense on the charcoal. This gesture represents the willingness of the assembly to acknowledge sin and welcome the response of God’s mercy.

IV) Litany of Christian Unity

These petitions are inspired from the situation of the churches in Jerusalem. However, each local situation may substitute their own petitions which demonstrate how each place is seeking to overcome division and find full visible communion. The Litany is lead by the leader and reader with the assembly responding each time. The litany is concluded by the recitation of the Lord’s prayer. Each one may pray it in his or her own language or in Aramaic, the language used by some Christians in the Holy City today (see appendix).

V) Sending

The assembly invokes the blessing of God upon its members, who are sent forth as ambassadors of the Good News of reconciliation. A hymn may conclude the service.

Order of the ecumenical worship service

L: Leader
A: Assembly
R: Reader

I) Gathering

Opening Hymn

Opening Invocation

L.: In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
A.: Amen.

L.: From all Christians in Jerusalem to the faithful of NN, in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace! (1 Thessalonians 1:1).
A.: Thanks be to God.

Greetings

L.: Compassionate and loving God, you created us in your likeness.
A.: For this we praise and thank you.

L.: We gather in your name, to beseech you to restore the unity of all those who confess your Son Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour of all.
A.: O God, hear us and have compassion on us all.

L.: Help us in our weakness and strengthen us with your Holy Spirit.
A.: Send forth your Spirit and make us one.

L.: Let us pray to the Lord:
R.: Kyrie, kyrie eleison.

L.: Gracious God, you have promised through your prophets that Jerusalem will be home to many peoples, mother to many nations. Hear our prayers that Jerusalem, the city of your visitation, may be for all a place to dwell with you and to encounter one another in peace. We pray to the Lord.
R.: Kyrie, kyrie eleison.

L.: Merciful God, may your life-giving Spirit move in every human heart, that the barriers that divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease, and that, with divisions healed, your people might live in justice and peace. We pray to the Lord.
R.: Kyrie, kyrie eleison.

L.: Loving God, hear our prayers for your holy city, Jerusalem. End her suffering and make her whole. Make her your home once again, a city of peace, and a light to all peoples. Foster harmony in the holy city among all her inhabitants. We pray to the Lord.
R.: Kyrie, kyrie eleison.

L.: Open now our ears and hearts to hear your Word proclaimed and aid us to live it more faithfully in all that we do and say, to the glory of your name and the spreading of your kingdom, most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
A.: Amen.

II) Celebrating the Word of God

L.: Wisdom. Let us be attentive!

Old Testament: Genesis 33:1-4 or Isaiah 58:6-10

Psalm 96:1-13

A.: O sing the Lord a new song and bless his holy name
(or another hymn based on Psalm 96)

R.: Vv 1, 2, 3
R.: Vv 4, 5, 6
R.: Vv 7, 8, 9
R.: V 10
R.: Vv 11, 12a
R.: Vv 12b, 13

Epistle: Acts 2:42-47

Alleluia (*sung*)

Gospel: Matthew 5:21-26

Alleluia (*sung*)

Homily / Sermon

Hymn

III) Prayer of Repentance and Peace

L.: With the Churches in Jerusalem we pray to the Lord -
Recalling that the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, we confess our failure to uphold faithfulness and fellowship.
We pray to the Lord:

A.: Lord have mercy.

L.: With the Churches in Jerusalem we pray to the Lord -
Recalling that awe came upon them and they saw many wonders and signs, we confess a lack of vision that prevents us from seeing the glory of your work in our midst.
We pray to the Lord:

A.: Lord have mercy.

L.: With the Churches in Jerusalem we pray to the Lord -
Recalling that all who believed held things in common and supported those in need,
We confess that we hold on to possessions at the expense of the poor.
We pray to the Lord:

A.: Lord have mercy.

L.: With the Churches in Jerusalem we pray to the Lord -
Recalling that the believers spent much time in prayer and breaking bread at home with
glad and generous hearts, we confess our failure of love and generosity.
We pray to the Lord:

A.: Lord have mercy.

Assurance of God's Forgiveness

L.: This is what was spoken through the prophet Joel, "in the last days it will be, God
declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, then everyone who calls on the
name of the Lord will be saved".
As we wait for the coming of the Lord we are also assured that in Christ we are forgiven,
renewed and made whole again.

The Peace

L.: Christ is our peace. He has reconciled us to God in one body on the cross; we meet in His
name and share His peace.
The peace of the Lord be always with you.

A.: And also with you.

The Creed (*Apostles, Nicene-Constantinople or other suitable form*)

Hymn

IV) Litany of Christian Unity

L.: In Christ, the world is reconciled to God who entrusts to us the message of reconciliation.
As the ambassadors of Christ's reconciling work, we make our petitions to God:

L.: When we pray together from our diverse traditions,

A.: Holy One who makes us one, make our unity visible and bring healing to the world.

L.: When we read the Bible together in our diversity of language and context,

A.: Revealing One who makes us one, make our unity visible and bring healing to the world.

L.: When we establish relations of friendships among Jews, Christians and Muslims, when
we tear down the wall of indifference and hatred,

A: Merciful One who makes us one, make our unity visible and bring healing to the world.

L.: When we work for justice and solidarity, when we move from fear to confidence,
A.: **Strengthening One who makes us one, make our unity visible and bring healing to the world.**

L.: Wherever there is suffering through war and violence, injustice and inequality, disease and prejudice, poverty and hopelessness, drawing us near to the cross of Christ and to each other,
A.: **Wounded One who makes us one, make our unity visible and bring healing to the world.**

L.: With Christians of the Holy Land, we too are witnesses to the birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem, his ministry in Galilee, his death and resurrection, and the descent of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem; when we yearn for peace and justice for all in the sure and certain hope of your coming Kingdom,
A.: **Triune One who makes us one, make our unity visible and bring healing to the world.**

Lord's Prayer (*each in one's own language*)

V) Sending

The assembly invokes the blessing of God upon its members, who are sent forth as ambassadors of the Good News of reconciliation. A hymn may conclude the service.

L.: May the Father, who is faithful to his promises and unfailing in his help, sustain you as you go forth to strive for justice and seek an end to division.

A.: Amen.

L.: May the Son, who sanctified the Holy Land by his birth, ministry, death and resurrection, bring you redemption, reconciliation and peace.

A.: Amen.

L.: May the Spirit, who gathered the first believers in Jerusalem as one, unite you in faithfulness to the teaching and fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers, and inspire you to preach and live the Gospel.

A.: Amen.

L.: May the One God, Father, Son and Spirit, bless you and keep you, as you go forth to proclaim his Good News to the world.

A.: Thanks be to God.

Blessing

A.: May the blessing of the God of peace and justice be with us;
May the blessing of the Son
Who weeps the tears of the world's suffering be with us;
And may the blessing of the Spirit
who inspires us to reconciliation and hope be with us
from now into eternity.
Amen.

Hymn

Biblical reflections and prayers for the ‘eight days’

Day 1 – The Church in Jerusalem

Readings

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Joel 2:21-22, 28-29 | I will pour out my spirit on all flesh |
| Psalm 46 | God is in the midst of the city |
| Acts 2:1-12 | When the day of Pentecost had come |
| John 14:15-21 | This is the spirit of truth |

Commentary

The journey of this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity begins in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, at the beginning of the Church’s own journey.

The theme of this week is “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers.” The “they” is the earliest Church of Jerusalem born on the day of the Pentecost when the Advocate, the Spirit of truth descended upon the first believers, as promised by God through the prophet the Joel, and by the Lord Jesus on the night before his suffering and death. All who live in continuity with the day of Pentecost live in continuity with the earliest Church of Jerusalem with its leader St James. This church is the mother church of us all. It provides the image or icon of the Christian unity for which we pray this week.

According to an ancient eastern tradition, the succession of the church comes through continuity with the first Christian community of Jerusalem. The Church of Jerusalem in apostolic times is linked with the heavenly Church of Jerusalem, which in turn becomes the icon of all Christian churches. The sign of continuity with the Church of Jerusalem for all the churches is maintaining the “marks” of the first Christian community through our devotion to the “apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers.”

The present Church of Jerusalem lives in continuity with the apostolic Church of Jerusalem particularly in its costly witness to the truth. Its witness to the gospel and its struggles against inequality and injustice reminds us that prayer for Christian unity is inseparable from prayer for peace and justice.

Prayer

Almighty and Merciful God, with great power you gathered together the first Christians in the city of Jerusalem, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, defying the earthly power of the Roman empire. Grant that, like this first church in Jerusalem, we may come together to be bold in preaching and living the good news of reconciliation and peace, wherever there is inequality and injustice. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who liberates us from the bondage of sin and death. Amen.

Day 2 - Many Members in One Body

Readings

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Isaiah 55:1-4 | Come to the waters |
| Psalms 85:8-13 | Surely salvation is at hand |
| 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 | For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body |
| John 15:1-13 | I am the true vine |

Commentary

The Church of Jerusalem in the Acts of the Apostles is the model of the unity we seek today. As such, it reminds us that prayer for Christian unity cannot be for uniformity, because unity from the beginning has been characterized by rich diversity. The Church of Jerusalem is the model or icon of unity in diversity.

The narrative of Pentecost in the Book of Acts' tells us that there were represented in Jerusalem on that day all the languages and cultures of the ancient Mediterranean world and beyond, people who heard the gospel in their diverse languages, and who through the preaching of Peter were united to each other in repentance, in the waters of baptism, and through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Or, as St Paul would later write, "For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." It is not a uniform community of the likeminded, culturally and linguistically united people who were one in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, but a richly diverse community, whose differences could easily erupt into controversy. Such was the case between the Hellenists and the Hebrew Christians over the neglect of the Greek widows, as St Luke relates in Acts 6.1. And yet the Jerusalem church was at unity within itself, and one with the Risen Lord who says "I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit."

Rich diversity characterizes the churches in Jerusalem to this day, as it does around the world. It can easily erupt into controversy in Jerusalem, accentuated by the current hostile political climate. But like the earliest Jerusalem church, Christians in Jerusalem today remind us that we are many members of one body, a unity in diversity. Ancient traditions teach us that diversity and unity exist in the heavenly Jerusalem. They remind us that difference and diversity are not the same as division and disunity, and that the Christian unity for which we pray always preserves authentic diversity.

Prayer

God, from whom all life flows in its rich diversity, you call your Church as the Body of Christ to be united in love. May we learn more deeply our unity in diversity, and strive to work together to preach, and build up the Kingdom of your abundant love to all, while accompanying each other in each place, and in all places. May we always be mindful of Christ as the source of our life together. We pray in the unity of the Spirit. Amen.

Day 3 - Devotion to the Apostles' Teaching Unites Us

Readings

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| Isaiah 51:4-8 | Listen to me, my people |
| Psalms 119:105-112 | Your word is a lamp to my feet |
| Romans 1:15-17 | Eagerness to proclaim the gospel |
| John 17:6-19 | I have made your name known |

Commentary

The Church of Jerusalem in the Acts of the Apostles was united in its devotion to the apostles' teaching, despite the great diversity of language and culture amongst its members. The apostles' teaching is their witness to the life, teaching, ministry, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Their teaching is what St Paul simply calls "the gospel." The apostles' teaching, as exemplified by St Peter's preaching in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. In his use of the prophet Joel, he connects the Church with the biblical story of the people of God, drawing us into the narrative that begins in creation itself.

Despite divisions the Word of God gathers and unites us. The apostles' teaching, the good news in all its fullness, was at the centre of unity in diversity of the first Church of Jerusalem. Christians in Jerusalem remind us today that it is not simply the "apostles' teaching" that united the earliest church, but devotion to that teaching. Such devotion is reflected in St Paul identifying the gospel as "the power of God for salvation."

The prophet Isaiah reminds us that God's teaching is inseparable from God's "justice for a light to the peoples." Or, as the psalmist prays, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart."

Prayer

God of Light, we give you thanks for the revelation of your truth in Jesus Christ, your Living Word, which we have received through the apostles' teaching, first heard at Jerusalem. May your Holy Spirit continue to sanctify us in the truth of your Son, so that united in Him we may grow in devotion to the Word, and together serve your Kingdom in humility and love. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

Day 4 - Sharing, an Expression of Our Unity

Reading

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Isaiah 58:6-10 | Is it not to share your bread with the hungry |
| Psalms 37:1-11 | Trust in the Lord and do good |
| Acts 4:32-37 | Everything they owned was held in common |
| Matthew 6:25-34 | Strive first for the kingdom of God |

Commentary

The sign of continuity with the apostolic Church of Jerusalem is “devotion to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of the bread and the prayers.” The Church of Jerusalem today, however, recalls to us the practical consequences of such devotion - *sharing*. The Acts of the Apostles states simply that “All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute to all, as any had need” (Acts 2.44-45). Today’s reading from the Book of Acts links such radical sharing with the powerful apostolic “testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.” The later Imperial Roman persecutors of the Church would note with certain accuracy: “see how they love one another.”

Such a sharing of resources characterizes the life of Christian people in Jerusalem today. It is a sign of their continuity with the first Christians; it is a sign and a challenge to all the churches. It links proclamation of the Gospel, the celebration of the Eucharist and the fellowship (or communion) of the Christian community with radical equality and justice for all. In so far as such sharing is a testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and a sign of continuity with the apostolic Church of Jerusalem, it is equally a sign of our unity with one another.

There are many ways of sharing. There is the radical sharing of the apostolic church where nobody was left in need. There is the sharing of one another’s burdens, struggles, pain and suffering. There is the sharing in one another’s joys and achievements, blessings and healing. There is also the sharing of gifts and insights from one church tradition to another even in our separation from another, an “ecumenical exchange of gifts.” Such generous sharing is a practical consequence of our devotion to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship; it is a consequence of our prayer for Christian unity.

Prayer

God of Justice, your giving is without bounds. We thank you that you have given what we need, so that all may be fed, clothed and housed. Guard us from the selfish sin of hoarding, and inspire us to be instruments of love, sharing all that you give us, as a witness to your generosity and justice. As followers of Christ, lead us to act together in places of want: where families are driven from their homes, where the vulnerable suffer at the hands of the powerful, where poverty and unemployment destroy lives. We pray in the name of Jesus, in the unity of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day 5 - Breaking the Bread in Hope

Reading

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Exodus 16: 13b-21a | It is the bread the Lord has given you to eat |
| Psalms:116: 12-14.16-18 | I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice |
| 1 Corinthians 11:17-18.23-26 | Do this in remembrance of me |
| John 6:53-58 | This is the bread that came down from heaven... |

Commentary

From the first Church at Jerusalem until now, the 'breaking of bread' has been a central act for Christians. For the Christians of Jerusalem today, the sharing of bread traditionally speaks of friendship, forgiveness and commitment to the other. We are challenged in this breaking of bread to seek a unity that can speak prophetically to a world of divisions. This is the world by which we have all, in different ways, been shaped. In the breaking of bread Christians are formed anew for the prophetic message of hope for all humankind.

Today we, too, break bread 'with glad and generous hearts'; but we also experience, at each celebration of the Eucharist, a painful reminder of our disunity. On this fifth day of the Week of Prayer, the Christians of Jerusalem gather in the Upper Room, the place of the Last Supper. Here, whilst they do not celebrate the Eucharist, they break bread in *hope*.

We learn this hope in the ways God reaches out to us in the wilderness of our own discontent. Exodus relates how God responds to the grumbling of the people he has liberated, by providing them with what they need - no more, and no less. The manna in the desert is a gift of God, not to be hoarded, nor even fully understood. It is, as our Psalm celebrates, a moment which calls simply for thanksgiving - for God 'has loosened our bonds'.

What St. Paul recognises is that to break the bread means not only to celebrate the Eucharist, but to be a Eucharistic people - to *become* Christ's Body in the world. This short reading stands, in its context (1 Cor 10 - 11) as a reminder of how the Christian community is to live: in communion in Christ, determining right behaviour in a difficult worldly context, guided by the reality of our life in Him. We live "in remembrance of him."

As a people of the breaking of bread, we are a people of eternal life - life in its fullness - as the reading from St. John teaches us. Our celebration of Eucharist challenges us to reflect on how such an abundant gift of life is expressed day to day as we live in hope as well as in difficulties. In spite of the daily challenges for the Christians in Jerusalem, they witness to how it is possible to rejoice in hope.

Prayer

God of Hope, we praise you for your gift to us of the Lord's Supper, where, in the Spirit, we continue to meet your Son Jesus Christ, the living bread from heaven. Forgive our unworthiness of this great gift - our living in factions, our collusion with inequalities, our complacency in separation. Lord, we pray that you will hasten the day when your whole church together shares the breaking of the bread, and that, as we wait for that day, we may learn more deeply to be a people formed by the Eucharist for service to the world. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Day 6 - Empowered to Action in Prayer

Reading

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Jonah 2:1-9 | Deliverance belongs to the Lord! |
| Psalms 67:1-7 | Let the peoples praise you, O God! |
| 1 Timothy 2:1-8 | ...prayers should be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions... |
| Matthew 6:5-15 | Your kingdom come, your will be done... |

Commentary

Following devotion to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship and the breaking of the bread, the fourth mark of the earliest Church of Jerusalem is the life of prayer. It is experienced today as the necessary source of the power and strength needed by Christians in Jerusalem - as everywhere. The witness of Christians in Jerusalem today calls us to a deeper recognition of the ways we face situations of injustice and inequality in our own contexts. In all this, it is prayer that empowers Christians for mission together.

For Jonah the intensity of his prayer is met with dramatic deliverance from the belly of the fish. His prayer is heartfelt, as it arises from his own sense of repentance at having tried to avoid God's will: he has abandoned the Lord's call to prophesy, and ended up in a hopeless place. And here God meets his prayer with deliverance for his mission.

The Psalm calls us to pray that God's face will shine upon us - not only for our own benefit, but for the spread of His rule 'among all the nations'.

The apostolic Church reminds us that prayer is a part of the strength and power of mission and prophecy *for the world*. Paul's letter to Timothy here instructs us to pray especially for those with power in the world so that we may live together in peace and dignity. We pray for the unity of our societies, and lands, and for the unity of all humanity in God. Our prayer for our unity in Christ reaches out to the whole world.

This dynamic life of prayer is rooted in the Lord's teaching to his disciples. In our reading from Matthew's Gospel we hear of prayer as a 'secret' power, born not from display or performance, but from humble coming before the Lord. Jesus' teaching is summed up in the Lord's Prayer. Praying this together forms us as a united people who seek the Father's will, and the building up of His Kingdom here on earth, and calls us to a life of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Prayer

Lord God our Father, we rejoice that in all times, places and cultures, there are people who reach out to you in prayer. Above all we thank you for the example and teaching of your Son, Jesus Christ, who has taught us to long in prayer for the coming of your Kingdom. Teach us to pray better as Christians together, so that we may always be aware of your guidance and encouragement through all our joys and distress, through the power your Holy Spirit. Amen.

Day 7 - Living in Resurrection Faith

Reading

Isaiah 60: 1-3 . 18-22 You shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates, Praise
Psalm: 118:1. 5-17 I shall not die, but I shall live
Roman 6: 3-11 ...we have been buried with Christ by baptism into death...so we too
 might walk in newness of life
Matthew 28:1-10 Jesus said to them, 'Do not be afraid...

Commentary

The first Christians' devotion to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of the bread and the prayers was made possible, above all, by the living power of the Risen Jesus. This power is living still, and today's Jerusalem Christians witness to this. Whatever the difficulties of the present situation in which they find themselves - however much it feels like Gethsemane and Golgotha - they know in faith that all is made new by the truth of Jesus' resurrection from the dead.

The light and hope of the Resurrection changes everything. As Isaiah prophesies, it is the transformation of darkness into light; it is an enlightening for all peoples. The power of the Resurrection shines out from Jerusalem, the place of the Lord's Passion, and draws all nations to its brightness. This is a new life, in which violence is put aside, and security found in salvation and praise.

In the Psalm we are given words to celebrate the central Christian experience of passing from death to life. This is the abiding sign of God's steadfast love. This passing from the terrors of death into new life is the defining reality of all Christians. For, as St. Paul teaches, we have, in baptism, entered into the tomb with Christ, and been raised with Him. We have died with Christ, and live to share his risen life. And so we can see the world differently - with compassion, patience, love and hope; for, in Christ the present struggles can never be the whole story. Even as divided Christians, we know that the baptism that unites us is a bearing of the Cross in the light of the Resurrection.

For the Christian Gospel this resurrection life is not some mere concept or helpful idea; it is rooted in a vivid event in time and space. It is this event we hear recounted in the Gospel reading with great humanity and drama. From Jerusalem the Risen Lord sends greetings to His disciples across the ages, calling us to follow Him without fear. He goes ahead of us.

Prayer

God, Protector of the widow, the orphan and the stranger - in a world where many know despair, you raised your Son Jesus to give hope for humanity and renewal to the earth. Continue to strengthen and unify your Church in its struggles against the forces of death in the world, where violence against creation and humanity obscures the hope of the new life you offer. This we pray in the name of the Risen Lord, in the power of His Spirit. Amen.

Day 8 - Called for the Service of Reconciliation

Reading

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Genesis 33:1-4 | Esau ran to meet Jacob, and embraced him...and they wept |
| Psalms: 96:1-13 | Say among the nations, 'The Lord is King!' |
| 2 Corinthians 5:17-21 | God...reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation |
| Matthew 5:21-26 | Leave your gift before the altar, and go: first be reconciled to your brother or sister... |

Commentary

Our prayers of this week have taken us on a journey together. Guided by the scriptures, we have been called to return to our Christian origins - that apostolic Church at Jerusalem. Here we have seen devotion - to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers. At the end of our reflections on the ideal of Christian community presented to us in Acts 2:42, we return to our own contexts - the realities of divisions, discontents, disappointments and injustices. At this point the Church of Jerusalem poses us the question: to what, then, as we conclude this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity are we called, here and now?

Christians in Jerusalem today suggest an answer to us: we are called, above all, to the service of *reconciliation*. Such a call concerns reconciliation on many levels, and across a complexity of divisions. We pray for Christian unity so that the Church might be a sign and instrument for the healing of political and structural divisions and injustices; for the just and peaceful living together of the Jewish, Christian and Muslim peoples; for the growing in understanding between people of all faiths and none. In our personal and family lives, too, the call to reconciliation must find a response.

Jacob and Esau, in the Genesis text, are brothers, yet estranged. Their reconciliation comes even when enduring conflict might have been expected. Violence and the habits of anger are put aside as the brothers meet and weep together.

The recognition of our unity as Christians - and indeed as human beings - before God leads us into the Psalm's great song of praise for the Lord who rules the world with loving justice. In Christ, God seeks to reconcile to Himself all peoples. In describing this, St. Paul, in our second reading, celebrates a life of reconciliation as "a new creation". The call to reconcile is the call to allow God's power in us to make all things new.

Once again, we know that this 'good news' calls us to change the way we live. As Jesus challenges us, in the account given by St. Matthew, we cannot go on making offerings at the altar, in the knowledge that we are responsible for divisions or injustices. The call to prayer for Christian unity is a call to reconciliation. The call to reconciliation is a call to actions - even actions which interrupt our church activities.

Prayer

God of Peace, we thank you that you sent your Son Jesus, so that we might be reconciled to yourself in Him. Give us the grace to be effective servants of reconciliation within our churches. In this way help us to serve the reconciliation of all peoples, particularly in your Holy Land - the place where you demolish the wall of separation between peoples, and unite everyone in the Body of Jesus, sacrificed on Mount Calvary. Fill us with love for one another; may our unity serve the reconciliation that you desire for all creation. We pray in the power of the Spirit. Amen.

Additional worship resources

Prayer by the Heads of churches in Jerusalem

(3 persons to pray different sections)

Heavenly Father,

We give you thanks and praise for your gift to us of your only Son, Jesus - His birth in Bethlehem, His ministry throughout the Holy Land, His death on the Cross and His Resurrection and Ascension. He came to redeem this land and the world. He came as the Prince of Peace.

We give thanks to you for every church and parish around the world that is praying with us this day for peace. Our Holy City and our land are much in need of peace.

In your unfathomable mystery and love for all, let the power of your Redemption and your Peace transcend all barriers of cultures and religions and fill the hearts of all who serve you here, of both peoples - Israeli and Palestinian - and of all religions

Send us political leaders ready to dedicate their lives to a just peace for their peoples.

Make them courageous enough to sign a treaty of peace that puts an end to the occupation imposed by one people on another, granting freedom to Palestinians, giving security to Israelis and freeing us all from fear. Give us leaders who understand the holiness of your city and will open it to all its inhabitants - Palestinian and Israeli - and to the world.

In the land you made holy, free all of us from the sin of hatred and killing. Free the souls and hearts of Israelis and Palestinians from this sin. Give liberation to the people of Gaza who live under unending trials and threats.

We trust in you, Heavenly Father. We believe you are good and we believe that your goodness will prevail over the evils of war and hatred in our land.

We seek your blessing especially on the children and young people, that their fear and the anxiety of conflict may be replaced with the joy and happiness of peace. We pray too for the elderly and the handicapped, for their well-being and for the contribution they can make to the future of this land.

We pray, finally, for the refugees scattered across the world because of this conflict.

God give the politicians and governments responsible for them the wisdom and courage to find suitable and just solutions.

All this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen

Lord make me a channel of your Peace

Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there is hatred let me bring your love.

Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord

And where there's doubt, true faith in you.

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek

So much to be consoled as to console

To be understood as to understand

To be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace

Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope

Where there is darkness, only light

And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Make me a channel of your peace
 It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
 In giving to all men that we receive
 And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

(Prayer attributed to St. Francis)

Songs:

Yarabba ssalami

Palestine

Ya - ra - bba ssa - la - mi am - ter a - lay - na ssa - lam.
 Ya - ra - bba ssa - la - mi im la' qu - lu - ba - na sa - lam.

Traditional from Palestina.

| | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| أمطر علينا السلام | يارب السلام |
| املاً قلوبنا السلام | يارب السلام |

(God of peace, pour peace on us – God of peace, fill our hearts with peace)

Kyrie eleison

Mt. Athos Melody, Greece

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e -
 le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

Lord, have mercy / Herr, erbarme dich / Seigneur, aie pitié de nous / Señor, ten piedad de nosotros.

Alleluia

Ancient Syriac Liturgy

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia,
al - le - lu - ia! Our Lord is mer - ci - ful, our Lord is
mer-ci - ful. God's name is for - e - ver praised, God's name is for - e - ver
praised. A - men, al - le - lu - ia!

As taught by Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim and Bishop Nareg Alemezian

Halle, hallelujah

Traditional

Syria

♩ = 108
Hal-le, hal-le - lu - jah. Hal-le, hal-le-lu - jah. Hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah,
hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le - lu-jah, hal - le-lu-jah, hal - le - lu-jah.

As taught by Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim
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Ecumenical Life in Jerusalem

From Jerusalem, Jesus sent the apostles to be his witnesses “till the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). In their mission, they encountered many and rich languages and civilisations and started proclaiming the gospel and celebrating the Eucharist in these many languages. As a consequence, Christian life and liturgy acquired many faces and expressions that enrich and complete each other. From early times, all these Christian traditions and churches wanted to be present together with the local church in Jerusalem, the birthplace of the Church. They felt the need to have a praying and serving community in the land where the history of salvation unfolded, and around the places where Jesus lived, exercised his ministry and suffered his passion, thus entering into his paschal mystery of death and resurrection. In this way the church in Jerusalem became a living image of the diversity and richness of the many Christian traditions in the East and the West. Every visitor or pilgrim in Jerusalem is, in the first place, invited to discover these various and rich traditions.

Unfortunately, in the course of history and for various reasons, this beautiful diversity has also become a source for divisions. These divisions are even more painful in Jerusalem, since this is the very place where Jesus prayed “that they all may be one” (John 17:21), where he died “to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad” (John 11:52), and where the first Pentecost took place. However, at the same time, it must be said that not a single one of these divisions has its origin in Jerusalem. They were all brought to Jerusalem by the already divided churches. As a consequence, almost all the churches around the world bear their part of the responsibility for the divisions of the church of Jerusalem and therefore are also called to work for its unity together with the local churches.

At present there are in Jerusalem thirteen churches with an Episcopal ministry: the Greek Orthodox Church, the Latin (Catholic) Church, the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Coptic Orthodox Church, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, the Greek Catholic (Melkite) Church, the Maronite (Catholic) Church, the Syrian Catholic Church, the Armenian Catholic Church, the Chaldean (Catholic) Church, the Episcopal Evangelical Church, and the Lutheran Evangelical Church. Alongside these, a considerable number of other churches or communities are present in Jerusalem and the Holy Land: Presbyterian, Reformed, Baptist, Evangelical, Pentecostal, etc.

All together the Christians in Palestine and Israel, number between 150.000 and 200.000, constituting between 1 and 2% of the total population. The large majority of these Christians are Arab speaking Palestinians, but in some of the churches there exist also Hebrew speaking groups of faithful who intend to be a Christian presence and witness in Israeli society. Besides these there are also the so-called Messianic Assemblies that may represent about 4 to 5 thousand believers, but usually are not counted in the numbers given for the Christian presence.

For recent developments in ecumenical relations in Jerusalem, the pilgrimage of Pope Paul VI to the Holy Land, in January 1964, remains a landmark. His meetings, in Jerusalem, with the Patriarchs Athenagoras of Constantinople and Benedictos of Jerusalem signal the beginning of a new climate in inter-churches relations. From that point on, things started moving in a new way.

The next important stage was during the time of the first Palestinian intifada, in the late 1980's. In the midst of a climate of insecurity, violence, suffering and death, the heads of the churches started meeting in order to reflect together on what they could and should say and do together. They decided to publish common messages and statements and to initiate some common initiatives for the sake of a just and lasting peace.

Since that time, every year the heads of the churches in Jerusalem publish a common message for Easter and for Christmas, as well as statements and messages on some special occasions. Two statements deserve special mention. In November 1994, the heads of the thirteen churches signed a common memorandum on the significance of Jerusalem for Christians and on the rights that result thereof for the Christian communities. From that time on, they meet regularly, almost every month. They published a second updated statement on the same subject in September 2006.

Until now, the ecumenical inauguration of the third millennium on Manger Square in Bethlehem, in December 1999, remains the most significant expression of this new ecumenical common pilgrimage. It was then that the heads and faithful of the thirteen churches, together with pilgrims coming from all over the world, spent an afternoon together, singing, reading the Word of God and praying together.

In 2006, the creation of the Jerusalem Inter-Church Centre, in collaboration with the local churches, the World Council Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches, is another expression of the growing collaboration among the local churches and of the strong links between them and the churches worldwide. It is at the same time a precious instrument in the service of this ecumenical growth.

The Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel was initiated in 2002 in coordination with the local churches and the WCC. It involves volunteers coming from churches all over the world with the aim to collaborate with the Israelis and the Palestinians to alleviate the consequences of the conflict, and to accompany them in places of confrontation. This initiative constitutes another powerful tool for strengthening the links of solidarity, both in the Holy Land and with the churches where the volunteers come from.

Many more informal ecumenical groups exist in Jerusalem. One of them, the Ecumenical Circle of Friends, which meets once a month, has been coordinating the annual celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in Jerusalem for about 40 years now. Each year this constitutes a remarkable event in the life of the churches.

The interreligious dialogue in Jerusalem, city considered holy by Jews, Christians and Muslims, also has far-reaching ecumenical repercussions thanks to the members of different churches who work very closely together in it. Together, in this dialogue they create the experience of the necessity to overcome past disagreements and controversies and to finding a new common language in order to be able to witness to the one evangelical message in an attitude of mutual respect.

For the Christian faithful at the grass-root level, in Palestine and Israel, ecumenism is part and parcel of daily life. Their constant experience is that solidarity and collaboration are of vital importance for their presence as a small minority in the midst of the majority of believers of the two other monotheist religions. Christian schools, institutions and movements spontaneously work together, across the borders between churches, offering a common service and bearing a common witness. Marriages among members of the different churches have become a generally accepted reality and can be found in almost all families. As a consequence they share each other's joys and sorrows, in the midst of a situation of conflict and instability, reaching out to their Muslim brothers and sisters with whom they share the same language, the same history, the same culture and with whom they are called to build a better common future. Together they are ready to collaborate with Muslim and Jewish believers in preparing the ways for dialogue and for a just and lasting solution of a conflict in which religion has too often been used and abused. Instead of being part of the conflict, true religion is called to be part of the solution.

What is also significant is that the church in Jerusalem continues to live in a political climate that is in many ways similar to the life of the early Christian community. Palestinian Christians have become a small minority facing serious challenges that threaten their future in many ways, while they are longing for freedom, human dignity, justice, peace and security.

In the midst of all of this, the Christians of the Jerusalem churches address their brothers and sisters around the world through this week of prayer for Christian unity to pray with them and for them in order to reach their aspirations for freedom, and dignity and the end of all kind of human oppression. The Church lifts up its voice in prayer to God in anticipation and hope for itself and the world so that we all may be one in our faith, in our witness, and in our love.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

Themes 1968-2010

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 à 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 (Psaume 36 [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)

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

- 1994 Federation of Malaysia, which links the major Christian groupings in that country.
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).